

INHERITED BOVINE ASPECTS IN GREEK REFLEXES OF THE INDO-EUROPEAN
SERPENT-SLAYING MYTH

by

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(Under the Direction of Jared Klein)

ABSTRACT

Numerous Greek reflexes of the Indo-European serpent-slaying myth retain an inherited theme in which cows are liberated from the serpent. In some reflexes, the cows are replaced by a goddess or woman, but even in these instances, vestiges of the goddess' or woman's erstwhile bovine identity persist. The release of the cattle is marked by a reference to COW and CALF, for which there are comparable expressions in Sanskrit, Anatolian and medieval Irish and Scandinavian reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth, indicating that the dyad COW and CALF is also inherited from the Indo-European proto-myth. The polysemy exhibited by the cows, which alternately signify the dawn, water and poetic inspiration in Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth, also derives from the proto-myth. The same bovine polysemy surfaces in Rigvedic, Irish and Icelandic reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth.

INDEX WORDS: Calf, Cow, Comparative Mythology, Dawn, *Edda*, Formulaic Syntagm, Greek Mythology, Indo-European, Milk, Poetic Inspiration, *Rig Veda*, Semiotics, Serpent, *Táin Bó Cúalnge*

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DEDICATION

For Moo-Moo the Cow-Cow

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INTRODUCTION

Mythological traditions of Indo-European (IE) origin, including that of ancient Greece, exhibit reflexes of an inherited narrative referred to as the “serpent-slaying myth.” The proto-myth is thus called because of the event at its climax, at which the hero slays his opponent. As Calvert Watkins has capaciously demonstrated, the proto-myth expressed this climactic act by means of the syntagm SLAY SERPENT, for which precise etyma can be reconstructed. SLAY is expressed by means of the marked root IE **g^when-*, and the SERPENT is identified by means the lexeme IE **h₃og^whi-/ *ang^wo-*.

The syntagm SLAY SERPENT is perfectly reflected in Rigvedic Sanskrit *áhann* (< **g^when-*) *áhim* (< **h₃og^whi-*) “he slew the serpent,” the formulaic phrase which designates Indra’s defeat of the serpent Vṛtra throughout the *R̥g Veda (RV)*.¹ Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth also inherit this syntagm. At *Pythian* 10.64, Medusa replaces the generic **h₃og^whi-* ‘serpent,’ but the original verb is retained: ἔπεφνεν (< **g^when-*)...Γοργόνα “[Perseus] slew the Gorgon.”² Inversely, at *Pythian* 4.249-50, the verb undergoes lexical substitution, although the marked root **g^when-* persists in the adjacent epithet of the Colchian snake: κτεῖνε...ὄφιν (< **h₃og^whi-*)... Περίοφονόν “[Jason] killed the serpent, Pelias’ bane,” where -φονός ‘bane’ is from the o-grade of **g^when-*.³

¹ Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 304-12.

² Ibid., 364.

³ Ibid., 370-2.

Reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth also retain the thematic content of the proto-myth. The release of cows from the serpent is a central theme.⁴ This bovine theme figures prominently in Rigvedic accounts of the Vṛtra myth, where Indra repeatedly liberates cows from their ophidian jailor. Cows also figure in Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth. Herakles' acquisition of cattle from the serpentine Geryon has long been posited as a comparandum to the Vṛtra myth.⁵ Chapter 1 demonstrates that the liberation of animals also figures in other Greek reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth, as well as in medieval Irish outcomes of the same proto-myth.⁶

The IE serpent-slaying myth functions on several semantic valences. The cows participate in this polysemy and assume a range of symbolic values. Greek reflexes of the proto-myth inherit this bovine polysemy. Chapter 1 treats Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth in which the cow is a symbol for the dawn. Chapter 2 examines other reflexes in which the cow signifies water. Chapter 3 investigates instances in which the cow symbolizes poetic inspiration.

Chapter 4 addresses Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth in which cow is replaced by goddess or woman, a substitution which appears to be based on a traditional collocation of women with cows. Such a collocation figures in Irish reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth and in the related Hittite myth of Telipinu's disappearance.

⁴ Bruce Lincoln, *Priests, Warriors and Cattle: A Study in the Ecology of Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 96-133.

⁵ Ibid., 109-13.

⁶ The serpent is also a retainer of cattle in Slavic reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth. This thesis does not incorporate the Slavic comparanda, which is amply discussed by V. Ivanov and V. Toporov, "Le mythe indo-européen du dieu de l'orage poursuivant le serpent: reconstruction du schéma," in *Échanges et communications: mélanges offerts à Claude Lévi-Strauss à l'occasion de son 60ème anniversaire*, ed. Jean Poullion and Pierre Maranda (Paris: Mouton, 1970): 1190-2.

Chapter 5 argues that the recurring reference to COW and CALF in reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth is an inherited topos. This reference to the dyad COW and CALF indexes the liberation of the imprisoned cows from the serpent.⁷

While we can reconstruct the proto-myth's themes, semantics, and textual fragments (SLAY SERPENT, COW and CALF), its original onomastics are, however, less stable. As a result of this onomastic flexibility, the serpent-slayer, whatever his original incarnation, adopts a culturally appropriate identity amongst the myth's reflexes. In the Rigvedic reflex of the myth, the martial god Indra assumes the role of serpent-slayer. In Greek, a range of bellicose figures, including the warrior Odysseus and the archer Apollo, dispatch their ophidian opponents.

The **h₃og^whi-/ *ang^wo-* SERPENT is also susceptible to cultural appropriation. In Vedic, Vṛtra and his analogues, such as the demonic cave Vala, fulfill the role of the SERPENT, while in Greek, reflexes of the SERPENT range from actual ophidians like Geryon and Acheloo to the Cyclops Polyphemus and the goddess Circe. Amidst this onomastic fluctuation, however, the themes, semantics and verbal articulation of the proto-myth remain largely constant.

I investigate a large number of myths from a wide variety of temporally and geographically disparate IE cultures. For the ease of the reader who is not familiar with comparative IE mythology, I provide at this point a list of the most important myths. I include the texts in which these myths are recounted and the approximate dates of these texts. In instances where the date of a text's composition is unknown, I give the dates of its author instead. By referring to the list, the reader may situate these myths in their linguistic and temporal context.

⁷ I have already addressed this topic in my talk at the 23rd Annual Harvard Celtic Colloquium, October 10-12, 2003, as well as in a previous publication, and I intend to improve upon my earlier analysis in this thesis. For my earlier treatment see John McDonald, "The Cow and Her Calf: A Case in Indo-European Poetics and Iconicity," in

Anatolian

Telipinu's disappearance: fragmentary text in Old Hittite (1700-1500 B.C.E.)

Indic

Indra and Vṛtra: *R̥g Veda* (c. 1500 B.C.E.)

Greek

Odysseus and the Cyclops: *Odyssey* 9 (c.725 B.C.E.)

Odysseus and Circe: *Odyssey* 10

Hermes' cattle raid: *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (late 8th century B.C.E.)

Persephone's rape: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*

Herakles and the cattle of Erytheia: *Geryonis* of Stesichorus (active c. 600-550 century B.C.E.)

Orestes' matricide: Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (458 B.C.E.)

Herakles and Acheloos: *Trachiniae* of Sophocles (c. 495-406 B.C.E.)

Dionysian *mania*: Euripides' *Bacchae* (408-6 B.C.E.)

Mnemosyne's spring: Orphic gold leaves (5th and 4th centuries B.C.E.)

Polyidos and Glaukos: *Library* of Apollodorus (c. 180 - after 120 B.C.E.)

Latin

Orpheus' βουγονία: *Georgic* 4 (20s B.C.E.)

Medieval Irish

Asal's distraint of Mogh's milk cows: *Senchus Már* (16th century C.E.)

Cú Chulainn and the Morrígan as eel: *Táin Bó Cúalnge* (earliest copy of Recension I from *Lebor na hUidre*, c. 1100 C.E.)

Cú Chulainn and the Morrígan as poet: *Táin Bó Regamna* (*Yellow Book of Lecan*, 14th century C.E.)

Cú Chulainn and C R: *Aided Con Rói (Yellow Book of Lecan)*

Cú Chulainn and Connla: *Aided Énfir Áifi (Yellow Book of Lecan)*

Bóand and Nechtan's spring: *Dindsenchas* (900-1200 C.E.)

Medieval Icelandic

Óðinn and Mímisbrunnr: *Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson (1179-1241 C.E.)

CHAPTER 1

AURORAL COWS

Rigvedic Dawn Cows and their Hellenic Congeners

When Indra slays Vṛtra, he releases the dawn along with the cows. In the densely layered semiotics of the *R̥g Veda*, the cows and the dawn become homologous entities. This interrelationship is indicated by the adjective *usríya-* ‘auroral’ which is frequently applied to the cows, or by the corresponding noun *usrá̃* ‘dawn,’ which is used as a metonymic term for ‘dawn cow,’ for example at *RV* 4.1.13c-d. Here the Uśijes, poet-priests, supplant Indra as the cows’ liberators, and the demonic cave Vala, Vṛtra’s etymological and functional analogue, replaces the serpent as the cows’ retainer: *áśmavrajāḥ sudúghā vavré antár/ úd usrá̃ ājann* “[the Uśijes] expelled the lactiferous **dawn cows** that had been hidden in the cave.”

1. Polyphemus’ Auroral Flocks in *Odyssey* 9

The Greek dawn goddess Eos is connected with the expulsion of animals from a cave in the Cyclops episode of *Odyssey* (*Od.*) 9: ἥμος δ’ ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος **Ἥως**... **ἄντρου ἐξήλασε** πίονα μῆλα “When early, rosy-fingered **Eos** appeared, [Polyphemus] **expelled** his plump flocks **from the cave**” (*Od.* 9.307, 312). The sequence of Eos’ appearance followed by the exodus of the animals from the cave parallels the motivic nexus of cave and expelled dawn cows in the *R̥g Veda*. Furthermore, the liberation of the dawn cows at *RV* 4.1.13c-d occurs in the context of the Vala myth, where Vala functions as an allomorph of the SERPENT. The Cyclops episode of *Odyssey* 9 is also a reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth. Polyphemus stands in for

the SERPENT.⁸ In fact, Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemus is probably to be compared with Indra's excision of Vṛtra's eye in Classical Indian literature.⁹ Thus, both the liberation of the Rigvedic dawn cows from the cave and the expulsion of the flocks from the Cyclops' cave at dawn appear to derive from the IE serpent-slaying myth.

Homer obfuscates the relationship between the rising of Eos and the exodus of the flocks from the cave. He portrays the succession of these two events as a mere temporal coincidence. From a diachronic perspective, however, it is no accident that the sheep and goats emerge from the cave at the appearance of Eos. Rather, these two events constitute a bifurcated equivalent of the Vedic dawn cows' expulsion from the cave.¹⁰ In fact, Greek iconography retains Eos' direct involvement in another reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth, depicting her hovering above Apollo as he slays the serpent Python.¹¹

The Cyclops' sheep and goats are thus Hellenic congeners of the Vedic dawn cows. The shift from dawn cows to auroral sheep and goats, while innovative from an IE stance, occurs elsewhere in Eos' mythology. Sappho 104 also connects the dawn goddess, here in her Aeolic variant Auos, with sheep and goats: Ἑσπερε πάντα φέρων ὅσα φαίνολις ἔσκέδασ' Αὖως/ φέρεις **οἶν**, φέρεις **αἶγα**¹² "Hesperus, you bring back everything that radiant Auos has scattered: you bring back the **sheep**, you bring back the **goat**."

⁸ Watkins, *Dragon*, 402-7.

⁹ E.g. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 6.1.1.4.

¹⁰ Compare Deborah Boedeker, *Aphrodite's Entry into Greek Epic*, *Mnemosyne* supplement No. 32 (Lugduni Batavorum: Brill, 1974), 90 for a similar observation.

¹¹ Krater Brit. Mus. F 149, as seen in Francis Vian, *Les Origines de Thèbes: Cadmos et les Spartes* (Paris, Klincksieck, 1963), 49.

2. Circe's Auroral Pigs in *Odyssey* 10

The expulsion of the pigs from Circe's sty in *Odyssey* 10 reenacts the exodus of the flocks from Polyphemos' cave in the previous book. In fact, the narrative of *Odyssey* 10 is yet another reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth. Circe's role in the narrative is twofold. On the one hand, she functions as the SERPENT. While Indra slays Vṛtra and releases the imprisoned cows, Odysseus threatens to slay Circe,¹³ and later secures the release of the pigs from their enclosure. On the other hand, Circe is also involved in the serpent-slaying myth's auroral aspect. Douglas Frame points out that Aiaia, the island on which Circe dwells, is also the home of Eos,¹⁴ and Deborah Boedeker observes that the description of Circe dressing herself in radiant garments at dawn correlates with the Rigvedic topos of Uṣas putting on shining vestments.¹⁵ Circe thus conflates both the SERPENT and Eos.

As such, Circe's pigs are analogues of the Cyclops' auroral flocks and the Vedic dawn cows.¹⁶ Alongside this creative shift to porcines, however, *Odyssey* 10 retains the original bovines of the IE serpent-slaying myth. After the pigs have been expelled from the sty and transformed back into men, they surround Odysseus and, in an extended simile, are compared to πόριες περὶ βοῦς "calves around the cows" (*Od.* 10.410). As Helene Foley points out, this passage is one of many Homeric gender-inverted similes.¹⁷ In this respect at least, it is a Homeric innovation. However, in light of the fact that it occurs in the context of the serpent-

¹² Denys Page, ed., *Poetarum Lesbiarum Fragmenta* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 86, fragment 104.

¹³ The verb used is κτείνω, which routinely replaces *g^when- in Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth. See Calvert Watkins, "The Comparison of Formulaic Sequences," in *Reconstructing Languages and Cultures*, ed. Edgar Polomé (Berlin: Mouton, 1992), 405.

¹⁴ Douglas Frame, *The Myth of Return in Early Greek Epic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 48.

¹⁵ Boedeker, 72-3.

¹⁶ Frame, 50.

¹⁷ Helene Foley, "Reverse Similes and Sex Roles in the *Odyssey*," *Arethusa* 11 (1978): 20.

slaying myth, the bovine simile may also reflect a vestigial retention of the proto-myth's dawn cows.

3. Apollo's Dawn Cows in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*

While *Odyssey* 9 replaces the dawn cows with goats and sheep, and *Odyssey* 10 with pigs, the original auroral bovines are retained in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* (*H. Herm.*). In this text, Hermes rustles Apollo's cattle. Apollo follows the tracks and recovers the cows from Hermes, who κιών παρὰ λάινον ἄντρον/ ἐς φάος ἐξήλαυνε βοῶν ἴφθιμα κάρηνα “going the length of the rocky cave, expelled the stocky cows into the light” (*H. Herm.* 401-2). The cows' emergence into φάος ‘light’ identifies them as dawn cows. The corresponding adjective, φαεινός ‘radiant,’ is applied to Eos in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* (*H. Aphr.*), where she leaves her bedchamber and θύρας...ἐπέθηκε **φαεινάς** “closed the radiant doors” (*H. Aphr.* 236). As Boedeker points out, Eos' association with radiant (φαεινός) doors has a Vedic comparandum. At *RV* 1.48.15a-b, the poet addresses the Indic dawn goddess Uṣas, Eos' etymological and functional analogue: *bhānúnā/ ví dvārān ṛṇāno divālī* “you will push apart the doors of the sky **with [your] radiance**.” Skt. *bhānū-* ‘radiance’ is cognate with Gk. φαεινός ‘radiant,’ both from IE **bheh₂-* ‘radiant.’¹⁸ The affiliation of both Eos and Uṣas with the root **bheh₂-* appears to derive from an inherited collocation.¹⁹ This collocation suggests that φάος into which Apollo's dawn cows emerge has auroral connotations.

The related verb φαίνω ‘show,’ i.e. ‘bring to light’ is used of Eos in *Odyssey* 9: ἥμος δ' ἡριγένεια **φάνη** ῥοδοδάκτυλος **Ἥως**... ἄντρον ἐξήλασε πίονα μῆλα “When early, rosy-

¹⁸ Boedeker, 77.

¹⁹ For more instances of this collocation see Ranko Matasović, *A Theory of Textual Reconstruction in Indo-European Linguistics* (New York: P. Lang, 1996), 171.

fingering **Eos appeared**, [Polyphemus] expelled his plump flocks from the cave” (*Od.* 9.307-8).

H. Herm. 401-2 demonstrates the same collocation of **bheh*₂- with the expulsion of animals

from a cave: κιῶν παρὰ λάινον ἄντρον/ ἐς φάος ἐξήλαυνε βοῶν ἴφθιμα κάρηνα

“[Hermes], going the length of the rocky **cave**, **expelled** the stocky cows into **the light**.” While

φαίνω is linked directly to Eos in *Odyssey* 9, φάος in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* has auroral connotations.

4. Geryon and the Solar Cattle of Erytheia

Herakles’ raid on the cattle of Erytheia also derives from the IE serpent-slaying myth. Instead of being associated with Eos, these cows belong to Helios.²⁰ This same shift from auroral to solar cattle occurs in another version of Hermes’ cattle raid, in which he rustles Helios’ cows rather than Apollo’s auroral herd.²¹

The Erytheian cows are guarded by the serpentine Geryon. In the *Geryoneis*, Stesichorus likens Geryon’s drooping neck, after it has been pierced by Herakles’ arrows, to a μάκων...

αἶψα ἀπὸ φύλλα βαλοῖσα²² “poppy suddenly casting off its petals.” Although the direct intertext to these lines is Homer’s comparison of Gorgythion’s head to a poppy (*Iliad* 8.306-8),

Stesichorus’ simile also echoes the description of Vṛtra’s remains at *RV* 1.32.5c, where, having been struck by Indra, the serpent lies “like branches lopped off by an axe” (*skándhāṁsīva*

kúliśenā nínṛkīā). The demise of Vṛtra’s analogue Vala is also described with an image of

defoliation at *RV* 10.68.10a-b, where Vala, having been bereft of his cows, is compared to trees

bereft of their leaves: *himéva pariṣṭā muṣitā vānāni/ bṛhaspátinākṛpayad való gālī* “Like trees

²⁰ Apollodorus 1.6.1.

²¹ Immanuel Bekker, ed., *Anecdota Graeca* (Berlin: G. C. Nauckium, 1814-21), 2: 752.

[bemoan] their leaves stolen by winter, Vala bemoaned the cows stolen by Br̥haspati.” In both the *Geryonis* and the *Ṛg Veda*, the dying serpent is compared to a damaged plant, suggesting that these botanical similes have their roots in the poetics of the IE serpent-slaying myth.²³

Dawn Cows in Medieval Irish Epic and Legal Literature

1. *Táin Bó Cúalnge*

Auroral bovines also figure in medieval Irish reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth. *Táin Bó Cúalnge* ‘Cattle Raid of Cooley’, the greatest of medieval Irish epics, is a lengthy prose narrative, extant in several recensions. This text recounts the efforts of the Ulstermen to recover their cows, stolen by raiders from Connacht. *Táin Bó Cúalnge* is replete with archaic components, including a reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth, which, given the epic’s bovine subject matter, is perhaps unsurprising.

The episode deriving from the serpent-slaying myth is the Ulster hero Cú Chulainn’s encounter with the Connacht warrior Lóch and the Morrígan, an antagonistic goddess, whose mythological profile is of IE antiquity.²⁴ During the combat, the Morrígan assumes the form of an *escung* ‘eel,’ literally ‘water-serpent,’ where the morpheme *-ung* is cognate with Lat. *anguis* ‘snake’ and with *-ankaš* in Hitt. *illuyankaš* ‘eel-serpent,’ all from IE **ang^wo-* ‘serpent.’²⁵

²² Denys Page, ed., *Supplementum Lyricis Graecis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 11, fragment S 15 ii, lines 15-17.

²³ Vala’s lamentation at *RV* 10.68.10 is also an archaic detail and has an Iranian comparandum in *Yasna* 44. See Peter Jackson, “Allusions to the Vala-myth in *Yasna* 44,” *Orientalia Suecana* 51-2 (2002-3): 225-30.

²⁴ Garrett Olmsted, *The Gods of the Celts and the Indo-Europeans* (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 1994), 28-30, 201-5.

²⁵ Joshua Katz, “How to be a Dragon in Indo-European: Hittite *illuyankaš* and its Linguistic and Cultural Congeners in Latin, Greek, and Germanic,” in *Mír Curad: Studies in Honor of Calvert Watkins* ed. Jay Jasanoff, Craig Melchert and Lisi Oliver (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 1998): 320.

When Cú Chulainn is attacked by the anguiform Morrígan, he *benaid in n-escongain*²⁶ “strikes the eel.” I propose that *benaid in n-escongain* “he strikes the eel” is a reflex of the syntagm SLAY (*g^when-) SERPENT (*h₃og^whi-/ *ang^wo-). The verb has undergone substitution, but the original *ang^wo- ‘serpent’ has been retained, even if embedded in the compound *escung* ‘water-serpent.’ The *ang^wo- also occurs in composition in the Hittite reflex of SLAY SERPENT: ^{MUS}*illuyankan kuenta* “[the Storm God] slew the eel-serpent.”²⁷

Immediately after Cú Chulainn strikes the eel, the cattle that the Connachtmen have herded on the bank of the ford stampede. Although the text identifies Cú Chulainn’s tumultuous conflict as the reason for the cows’ panicked state, this is surely a synchronic reevaluation of an originally causative sequence of events. From an IE perspective, the cattle’s stampede signals their release from the Morrígan as eel. In fact, the Morrígan figures as a cattle rustler elsewhere in medieval Irish literature. In the *Táin Bó Regamna*, one of the many *remscéla* ‘prologues’ to *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, Cú Chulainn deprives the Morrígan of a recalcitrant cow. In fact, the *Táin Bó Regamna* considers this deprivation to be the Morrígan’s motivation for her assault upon Cú Chulainn in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*.

After Cú Chulainn has repelled the eel, the Morrígan then makes a second attack upon him, this time in the guise of a she-wolf. He defeats her again, putting out one of her eyes. This detail parallels Odysseus’ blinding of Polyphemus and Indra’s excision of Vṛtra’s eye.²⁸

The Morrígan then advances for a third time, this time as a red heifer at the head of a herd of cows, which she leads against Cú Chulainn. She is defeated yet again when Cú Chulainn

²⁶ Cecile O’Rahilly, ed. and trans., *Táin Bó Cúalnge: Recension I* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), line 1996.

²⁷ Watkins, *Dragon*, 321-3.

²⁸ McDonald, 83. For the inherited status of the collocation of eel and impairment of eyesight in *Táin Bó Cúalnge* see Joshua Katz, “To Turn a Blind Eel,” in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, ed. Karlene-Jones Bley *et al.* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 2005): 272-5.

breaks the heifer's leg. In light of the fact that the Rigvedic dawn cows are regularly red (*aruṇá/aruṣá*), as are the solar cattle of Erytheia (φοῖνιξ),²⁹ the red (*derg*) coloration of the heifer is probably an inherited detail indicating its auroral status.

2. *Senchas Már*

The opening passages of the massive medieval Irish legal compendium *Senchas Már* 'The Great Tradition' also derive from the IE serpent-slaying myth. The first of these treats a case of distraint, the legally sanctioned seizure of another's property as compensation for a previous loss. In the case at hand, Asal makes such a claim on Mogh's three milk cows. Asal comes to the latter's house *ar toidriuch*³⁰ "at dawn" and expels the cows. The expulsion of these bovines at dawn indicates their filiation with the Vedic and Homeric dawn cows.

The text then proceeds to use Asal's seizure of Mogh's cows as a template with which to illustrate a similar instance of distraint in the next episode, the so-called 'Saga of Fergus mac Léti.' Here Fergus seizes Conn's land and cattle as compensation for Conn's killing of Eochu, who was under Fergus' protection. Fergus later enters into combat with a *muirdris* 'sea serpent'³¹ and slays it. The saga of Fergus mac Léti is thus yet another Irish reflex of the serpent-slaying myth.³² As such, the previous narrative of Mogh's milk cows is doubtless not to be understood as an independent episode at all. Rather, both Asal's distraint of the milk cows at dawn and the adjacent saga of Fergus mac Léti appear to be dissimilated and sequentially inverted fragments

²⁹ On the ruddy coloration of the Erytheian cattle see Apollodorus 2.5.10. For a similar analysis of *Táin Bó Cúalnge*'s bovines as dawn cows see Philippe Jouet, *L'aurore celtique: fonctions du héros dans la religion cosmique* (Paris: Les Éditions du Porte-glaive, 1993), 194.

³⁰ *Ancient Laws of Ireland* (Dublin: H. M. Stationery Office, 1865-1901), 1: 64 line 5.

³¹ The morpheme *-dris* is probably cognate with Gk. δράκων. On the etymology see Watkins, *Dragon*, 447.

³² Watkins, *Dragon*, 441-7. On a syntactic archaism of IE provenance in this saga see *idem*, "Towards Proto-Indo-European Syntax: Problems and Pseudo-Problems," in *Papers from the Parasession on Diachronic Syntax*, ed. Sanford Steever *et al.* (Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1976), 308.

of one originally unified narrative: the slaying of the serpent and subsequent release of the dawn cows. The textual contiguity of these two episodes points to their erstwhile integrity.

Watkins argues that the auroral status of Mogh's cattle is also expressed in the text's opening line, *teora ferbba fira* "three milk cows," where *fira* is the gen. sg. of OIr. *fīr* 'milk.' Watkins posits that *fīr* derives from IE **ueh₁-r* 'water,' and further suggests that its Skt. cognate *vār* 'water' is used as a metaphor for the milk of the dawn cows at *RV* 4.5.8:³³ *usrīyāṇām āpa vār...vrān* "they disclose the **milk** of the dawn cows." If Watkins' analysis is correct, both Vedic and Irish would retain a tradition of employing **ueh₁-r* 'water' as a mythopoeic term for the milk of the dawn cows.

Opening Doors and Milking the Dawn Cows: Two Inherited Auroral Motifs

The opening of doors for the dawn cows and the subsequent milking of the same bovines are both recurring motifs in reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth, and appear to be inherited from the proto-myth. Both of these motifs index the myth's auroral component.

1. Opening Doors

When Polyphemus releases his flocks from the cave, he removes the door-stone: ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ροδοδάκτυλος Ἥως... ἄντρον ἐξήλασε πίονα μῆλα/ ῥηιδίως **ἀφελὼν θυρεὸν** μέγαν "When early, rosy-fingered Eos appeared, he drove his plump flocks from the cave, **moving aside** the massive **door-stone** with ease" (*Od.* 9.307, 312-13). Similarly, Circe

³³ *Idem*, "Two Anatolian Forms: Palaic *aškummaūwa*, Cuneiform Luvian *wa-a-ar-ša*," in *Festschrift for Henry Hoeningwald on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. George Cardona and N. Zide (Tübingen: Narr, 1987), 402-3; *idem*, *Dragon*, 72, 441.

opens the doors of the sty when she drives out the pigs: **θύρας...ἀνέωξε** συφειοῦ/ ἐκ δ' ἔλασεν “she **opened** the **doors** and drove [the pigs] out from the sty” (*Od.* 10.389-90).

Polyphemus’ removal of the doors-stone and Circe’s opening of the pigsty’s doors accord with the frequent opening of doors for the Rigvedic dawn cows, as at *RV* 6.17.6c-d: **áúrñor dúra usriyābhyo ví dṛlḥá/ úd ūrvád gá asṛjo áṅgirasvān** “you [Indra] **uncovered** the firm **doors** for the auroral cows [and], with the Aṅgirasas, released the cows from the cave.” Skt. *dūr-* ‘door’ is, moreover, probably cognate with both Gk. **θύρα** ‘door’ and its derivative **θυρεός** ‘door-stone,’ all from IE **dhur-* ‘door.’³⁴ The opening of the doors for the auroral animals in both Homer and the *Ṛg Veda* thus appears to reflect a motif inherited from the IE serpent-slaying myth. The *Senchus Már* also retains this motif: Asal drives Mogh’s dawn cows *o dorus tige*³⁵ “from the **door** of the house,” where OIr. *dorus* ‘door’ again from **dhur-*.

This motif signals the auroral identity of the animals for which these doors are opened. Uṣas is associated with the opening of doors throughout the *Ṛg Veda*, as at 1.48.15a-b: **bhānúnā/ ví dvārāv ṛṇávo diváh** “you **pushed apart the doors** of the sky with [your] radiance.” Eos is also connected with doors in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* where, having left her bedchamber, **θύρας...ἐπέθηκε φαεινάς** “she closed the radiant **doors**” (*H. Aphr.* 236).³⁶ The presumably original version of this formula is applied to Eos’ hypostasis Circe in *Odyssey* 10, where the

³⁴ The deaspiration of the Skt. derivative is explicable by means of assimilation to *dvā* ‘two.’ See Matasović, 167 fn. 121.

³⁵ *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, 1: 66 lines 7-8.

³⁶ Aurora, the Roman etymological and functional correlate of both Uṣas and Eos, is also associated with the root **dhur-*. At Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* 2.110-11 *patefecit...Aurora fores* “Aurora opened the doors.” I do not suspect Hellenic influence here; rather, the conjunction of dawn and doors appears to be native to Roman mythopoeics: Ennius similarly describes the *lux* ‘light’ accompanying the rising sun as emanating *foras* ‘forth’ < **dhur-*. For the text see Otto Skutsch, ed., *The Annals of Q. Ennius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 77, fragment. xlvii. That Ennius collocates the dawn not with doors *per se* but with an etymologically related adverb further rules out borrowing. Ennius’ description of the evening also derives from IE mythopoeia. See Joshua Katz, “Evening Dress: the Metaphorical Background of Latin *vesper* and Greek ἑσπερος,” in *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, ed. Karlene Jones-Bley *et al.* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 2000): 78.

goddess, having left her house in order to greet Odysseus' men, **θύρας ὥϊξε φαεινὰς** “opened **the radiant doors**” (*Od.* 10.230, 256).³⁷ The radiance of Circe's doors indicates her auroral aspect.

The formula **θύρας ὥϊξε φαεινὰς** “[Circe] opened the radiant doors” recurs, minus **φαεινὰς** and plus the preverb **ἀνά-**, when Circe releases the pigs: **θύρας...ἀνέωξε** **συφειοῦ/ ἐκ δ' ἔλασεν** “**she opened the doors** and drove [the pigs] out from the sty” (*Od.* 10.389-90). The fact that **θύρας...ἀνέωξε** echoes its overtly auroral antecedent **θύρας ὥϊξε φαεινὰς** confirms that Circe's opening of the sty's doors designates the pigs' auroral status.

Polyphemus' opening of the **θυρεός** ‘door-stone’ for his flocks occurs in conjunction with the dawn: **ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἥως... ἄντρου ἐξήλασε πίονα μῆλα/ ῥηιδίως ἀφελὼν θυρεὸν μέγαν** “When early, rosy-fingered **Eos** appeared, he drove his plump flocks from the cave, shifting the massive **door-stone** with ease” (*Od.* 9.307-13). The coincidence of dawn and door reinforces the auroral identity of the Cyclops' flocks. Polyphemus supplants Eos as the agent of the opening, but the simultaneity of the opening with the appearance of Eos maintains a trace of the original state of affairs.

Asal also drives Mogh's milk cows from the door of the house *ar toidriuch*³⁸ “at dawn.” Again, the conjunction of dawn and door is indexical of the cows' auroral aspect.³⁹

³⁷ Matasović, 83 presents evidence for an IE formula DAWN OPENS DOORS, for which all three original etyma can be reconstructed.

³⁸ *Ancient Laws of Ireland* (Dublin: H. M. Stationery Office, 1865-1901), 1: 64 line 5.

³⁹ The opening doors motif may also be reflected at *H. Merc.* 116, where Hermes drags the cows **θύραζε** (< IE **dhur-* ‘door’) ‘outside’ the cave. The same shift from doors proper to an etymologically related adverb occurs in

2. Milking the Dawn Cows

At dawn, the Cyclops milks his flocks: ἤμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος **"Ἠώς...**
ἤμελγε κλυτὰ μῆλα "When early, rosy-fingered **Eos** appeared, he **milked** his famous flocks"
 (*Od.* 9.308-9). This auroral milking, like the reference to opening doors, is a motif inherited from
 the IE serpent-slaying myth. As discussed above, the Vedic dawn cows are also milked at *RV*
 4.5.8: *usríyāñām ápa vā̃r...vrán* "they disclose the **milk** of the dawn cows."⁴⁰ Mogh's dawn
 cows also lactate. After escaping their captor Asal, *laith find fos tellraig*⁴¹ "their white **milk**
 [flowed] upon the earth." The milking motif, like that of opening doors, is thus another
 indication of the animals' auroral identity.

The milking of a dawn cow also occurs in the aftermath of Cú Chulainn's struggle with
 the Morrígan in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*. Having repelled her in her third and final heifer manifestation,
 Cú Chulainn redirects his attention towards his other opponent, Lóch, and defeats him. He then
 reclines, exhausted, on the bank of the ford. The Morrígan, disguised as a one-eyed crone, then
 emerges from a nearby *síd* 'fairy mound,' leading a milk cow with three teats. In light of the fact
 that the Vedic dawn cows and their Homeric congeners emerge from a cave, the exodus of the
 Morrígan's cow from the *síd* probably also signifies its auroral identity.⁴²

Cú Chulainn is approached by the crone and her cow and, ignorant of her true identity, he
 asks for some of her cow's milk. She grants his request, giving him some milk from each of the
 cow's three teats, and in gratitude, he prays that she be healed of any injuries. As a result, the
 three wounds incurred by the Morrígan in her serpentine, lupine and bovine guises are cured. Cú

Ennius' *Annales*. See fn. 36 above. The solar cattle's connection with the place name Pylos 'gate' also derives from the opening doors motif. On Pylos and the solar cattle see Frame, 87-95, 166.

⁴⁰ Compare *RV* 3.31.11.

⁴¹ *Ancient Laws of Ireland* 1: 66 line 3.

⁴² Jouet, 134 similarly compares the *síd* to Vala.

Chulainn's prayer, *bennacht dé 7 andée fort*⁴³ “the blessing of gods and of non-gods upon you” has correlate oaths elsewhere in IE,⁴⁴ furthering attesting to the antiquity of this episode.

Summation

Polyphemus' flocks, Circe's pigs, Apollo's cows and the cattle of Erytheia all descend from IE mythological tradition. In light of the correspondence between the Vedic and Irish dawn cows, Apollo's auroral bovines and Helios' solar cattle represent the original state of affairs, while the sheep and goats of *Odyssey* 9 and the pigs of *Odyssey* 10 are zoomorphically innovative.

The auroral identity of the Cyclops' flocks is indicated by the simultaneity of their exodus from the cave with the appearance of Eos. The matutinal milking of the Cyclops' flocks is also an auroral motif, and corresponds to the milking of the Vedic and Irish dawn cows.

Polyphemus' opening of the θυρεός 'door-stone' also has an auroral significance. Doors are associated with Eos, who **θύρας**...ἐπέθηκε φαεινός “closed the radiant **doors**” (*H. Aphr.* 236), and with Eos' hypostasis Circe, who **θύρας** ὥιξε **φαεινός** “opened **the radiant doors**” (*Od.* 10.230, 256). The motif of opening doors also signals the auroral aspect of the pigs in *Odyssey* 10, where Circe opens the doors of the sty.

Apollo's cattle are not directly connected with Eos or her analogues, but their emergence from the cave into φάος 'light' alludes to their auroral aspect. The root **bheh₂*- 'radiant,' from which φάος derives, is associated with Eos and Circe, who open radiant (φαεινός) doors.

The cattle of Erytheia are the solar counterparts to the Rigvedic, Irish and Hellenic dawn cows. Their red coloration is an inherited detail, having comparanda in the ruddy coloration of the Vedic dawn cows and the Morrígan as a red heifer.

⁴³ O'Rahilly, *Recension 1*, line 2043-4.

⁴⁴ Matasović, 80-2.

CHAPTER 2

AQUATIC COWS

Rigvedic Aquatic Cows and their Hellenic Congeners

When Indra releases the imprisoned dawn and cows from Vṛtra, he also liberates the waters retained by the serpent. The *R̥g Veda* homologizes the cows with these waters. At *RV* 9.108.6a, the cows are said to be both *usríyāḥ* ‘auroral’ and *ápyāḥ* ‘watery.’ Elsewhere, the aquatic aspect of the cows is expressed metaphorically. At *RV* 1.32.2c-d, Indra slays the serpent and *vāśrā́ iva dhenávaḥ syándamānā/ áñjaḥ samudrám áva jagmur ápaḥ* “like lowing milk cows, the rushing waters flowed straight to the sea.”

Herakles’ contest with the river god Acheloos, yet another reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth,⁴⁵ provides a Hellenic comparandum to the aquatic cows of the *R̥g Veda*. Acheloos functions as the SERPENT, as is clear in Sophocles’ *Trachiniae* (*Trach.*), where he assaults Herakles in three shapes: first as a serpent, then as a bull, and lastly as a bull-headed humanoid.

This series of transformations corresponds to the triple guises of the Morrígan, two of which, the eel and the heifer, accord precisely with Acheloos’ serpentine and bovine forms. Similarly, *RV* 1.32.9 likens the ophidian Vṛtra and his mother Dānu to bovines: *úttarā sūr ádharāḥ putrá āsīd/ dānuḥ śaye sahávatsā ná dhenúḥ* “above was the mother, below the son: Dānu lay like a **milk cow** with her **calf**.” The correspondence of tauriform Acheloos, the

⁴⁵ Watkins, *Dragon*, 410.

Morrígan as heifer, and Vṛtra likened to a calf suggests that we are dealing here with a topos inherited from the proto-myth in which the serpent assumes the shape of a bovine.⁴⁶

In some versions, Herakles' encounter with Acheloos is a contest for the horn of Amalthea, which several mythographers identify as bovine.⁴⁷ The horn of Amaltheia won by Herakles is thus an allomorph of the proto-myth's liberated cows. In the *Trachiniae*, Herakles fights Acheloos for the hand of Deianeira, so that woman replaces cow. Nonetheless, the bovine aspect of the myth persists. When Herakles wins Deianeira as his bride, Sophocles likens her to a calf: κάπο ματρὸς ἄφαρ βέβαχ' / ὥστε πόρτις ἐρήμα "and suddenly she has wandered from her mother, just like a maverick **calf**" (*Trach.* 529-30). This simile appears to be a vestigial recollection of Deianeira's previously bovine status.

Diodorus Siculus (4.35) makes no reference whatsoever to cows in his account of Herakles' encounter with Acheloos. Instead, he rationalizes the hero's struggle with the river god as a topographic labor in which Herakles diverts the river's course so that it might better irrigate the land of the Calydonians. This labor is functionally equivalent to Indra's liberation of the aquatic cows from Vṛtra. Acheloos' water is thus a substitute for the liberated cows.

By superimposing all three of these versions, an alternation between bovines (Amaltheia's horn, Deianeira as calf) and water comes into focus. While the cows are identified with water in the Rigvedic mythopoeic tradition, cows and water are allomorphs in the Acheloos myth.

⁴⁶ The hero's enemy is also compared to a bovine in Achilles' struggle with the Skamandros, which Homer describes as μεμυκώς ἥύτε ταῦρος "bellowing like a bull" (*Iliad* 21.237). Scholiast B compares this passage to Herakles versus tauriform Acheloos.

⁴⁷ E.g. Apollodorus 2.7.5.

Irish Aquatic Cows and their Tripartite Mutilation: *Táin Bó Cúalnge* and the Bóand *dindsenchas*

The cows of *Táin Bó Cúalnge* also demonstrate an aquatic affinity, charging into the waters of the ford with the Morrígan in her heifer manifestation leading them on. The aquatic aspect of these cows is further exemplified by another medieval Irish narrative, the Bóand *dindsenchas*.

Bóand is the cow goddess of the Irish pantheon. The first element of her name is OIr. *bó* ‘cow.’ Campanile suggests that the second morpheme of her name is from IE **wid-* ‘know’ and points out that Bóand would then have an etymological equivalent in Skt. *govindu-* ‘he who finds cows’, a Vedic epithet of the god Soma.⁴⁸ Bóand’s theonym would thus be of IE antiquity, suggesting that her mythological profile might have equally archaic components.

In the *dindsenchas*, the medieval Irish toponymic tradition, Bóand comes to the spring of her husband Nechtan. Nechtan is etymologically and functionally related to other aquatic deities elsewhere in IE, including the Rigvedic Apām Napāt and the Roman Neptūnus.⁴⁹ The IE provenance of both Bóand’s name and the name of her husband Nechtan further suggests that the Bóand *dindsenchas* might possess other inherited components beyond its onomastics. In fact, while Nechtan is married to the cow goddess Bóand, Apām Napāt possesses a lactiferous milk cow (*RV* 2.35.7). This correspondence indicates that the mythological profile of Nechtan’s and Apām Napāt’s IE precursor included a bovine component.⁵⁰ Bóand as Nechtan’s wife thus derives from an inherited association.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Campanile, “Old Irish Bóand,” *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 12 (1985): 477-9.

⁴⁹ Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 3.21-89. For a more recent treatment see Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 277-83.

⁵⁰ The Greek functional equivalent of Apām Napāt and Nechtan is Poseidon. As observed by Bruce Louden, “Bacchylides 17: Theseus and Indo-Iranian *Apām Napāt*,” *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 27 (1999): 57-78, the radiant Nereids inhabiting Poseidon’s submarine hall in Bacchylides 17 are congeners of Apām Napāt’s luminous nursemaids described in *RV* 2.35. I would add that Apām Napāt’s milk cow mentioned in the same hymn also has a correlate in Bacchylides 17, where Poseidon’s wife Amphitrite is called βoῶπις “cow-faced.” For text see Herwig Maehler, ed., *Bacchylidis: Carmina cum Fragmentis* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970), 63 line 110. Amphitrite’s bovine

Upon reaching Nechtan's spring, Bóand gazes into its waters, which rise up and strike her in three successive blows, the first maiming her foot, the second her eye, and the third her hand.⁵² Bóand then flees, but the water pursues her all the way to the sea, where she drowns. In her wake, however, numerous rivers are generated, including the Boyne, named after its generator Bóand.

As Garrett Olmsted observes, the Morrígan's triple wounding in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, first to the eel's ribs, next to the she-wolf's eye, and lastly to the heifer's leg, virtually replicates the three injuries sustained by Bóand in the *dindsenchas*.⁵³ The occurrence of this triple wounding motif in both texts suggests some sort of filiation between the cows that the Morrígan as heifer drives into the ford and the cow goddess Bóand. While Bóand's wounds result in the generation of rivers, perhaps the injuries sustained by the Morrígan similarly indicate the aquatic aspect of her cows. The Irish mythological tradition thus appears to identify its aquatic cows by means of a triple wounding motif.

While Cú Chulainn's encounter with the Morrígan derives from the IE serpent-slaying myth, the Boyne, the river named after its generator Bóand, also demonstrates a filiation with the same proto-myth.⁵⁴ In the *dindsenchas*, the monster Matha desiccates the Boyne.⁵⁵ Matha is thus functionally equivalent to the dehydrating serpents Acheloos and Vṛtra. All three have a

epithet indicates that she, like Bóand, is a theomorphic descendant of the cows associated with the IE water god anteceding Apām Napāt, Nechtan and Poseidon. On the antiquity of the epithet βοῶπις see Matasović, 44.

⁵¹ Compare Olmsted, 234. Nechtan's equine associations are also inherited from IE. See William Sayers, "The Irish Bóand-Nechtán Myth in the Light of Scandinavian Evidence," *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* 1 (1983): 63-78.

⁵² Edward Gwynn, ed. and trans., *The Metrical Dindsenchas* (Dublin: Academy House, 1903-35), 3: 30-1.

⁵³ Olmsted, 203. For Norse comparanda see William Sayers, "The Three Wounds: Tripartition as a Narrative Tool in Ireland and Iceland," *Incognita: International Journal for Cognitive Studies in the Humanities* 1 (1990): 52-5, 61-4. Sayers argues that the three wounds motif has its source in IE trifunctional semantics. I add an Indic comparandum to the dossier: Rudra's destruction and restoration of the sacrifice. In this myth, Rudra knocks out the teeth of Pūṣan, the eyes of Bhaga, and the testicles of Kratu. For the text see Wendy Doniger, *Hindu Myths: a Sourcebook* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 124, 117-8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 205-6.

⁵⁵ Gwynn, 3: 100 line 12.

common antecedent in the SERPENT of the proto-myth. The *dindsenchas*' reference to the *lecht in máthai iarna guin*⁵⁶ 'grave of Matha after its slaying' confirms Matha's IE origins: OIr. *guin* 'slaying' < IE **g^when-* 'slay,' the marked verb of the formulaic syntagm SLAY SERPENT.

Similarly Apām Napāt, the Rigvedic congener of Bóand's husband Nechtan, directly appropriates the role of SERPENT. *RV* 1.186.5 refers to Apām Napāt as Ahi Budhnya 'Serpent of the Deep.' The second element of this theonym, Budhnya, is cognate with the name of the Greek serpent Python, both < IE **bhudh-* 'bottom,' indicating that this root probably yielded an epithet of the SERPENT already in the proto-myth.⁵⁷ It thus appears that the IE water deity from whom Nechtan and Apām Napāt derive and the bovine associated with this deity (Bóand, Apām Napāt's milk cow) were treated as allomorphs of the SERPENT and the imprisoned cows already in IE. This allomorphy yields Matha's desiccation of the Boyne and Apām Napāt's byname Ahi Budhnya.⁵⁸

In light of the fact that the *dindsenchas* combines the IE serpent-slaying myth with Bóands' mythology, Bóand, like the cows of *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, has her origin in aquatic cows of the IE serpent-slaying myth. Her tripartite mutilation is a motivic indication of this aquatic affiliation.

Summation

The aquatic cows that Indra releases from Vṛtra have a Hellenic correlate in the myth of Herakles' combat with Acheloo. Bovines figure in some versions of this myth, while Diodorus Siculus presents it as an irrigational feat. This alternation between cow and water corresponds to the homologous value of the cows and the waters in the Vṛtra myth.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2: 12 line 25.

Irish reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth also retain the aquatic cows. These cows' association with water is indicated by a triple wounding motif. This motif figures in both *Táin Bó Cúalnge* and in the Bóand *dindsenchas*.

⁵⁷ Watkins, *Dragon*, 460-3.

⁵⁸ Olmsted, 234.

CHAPTER 3

COW AS SYMBOL FOR POETIC INSPIRATION

The Vedic *dákṣiṇā* Cow and its Hellenic Congeners

In numerous hymns of the *Ṛg Veda*, the divine poet Bṛhaspati, as well the Aṅgirasas, the Uśijes, and other clans of poet-priests either accompany or supplant Indra as liberators of the cows. In these instances, the polysemous cows adopt yet another semiotic value and become symbols of poetic inspiration.

As Watkins points out, this symbolic value of the cow derives at least in part from the *dákṣiṇā*, the cow with which the Vedic patron reimbursed his poet.⁵⁹ On a practical level, the *dákṣiṇā* cow is the wealth that enables the poet to make a living, thus encouraging the poet to continue producing compositions. The *dákṣiṇā* cow's practical involvement in the poet's craft is metaphorically reassessed in the mythopoeic semantics of the *Ṛg Veda*. Here the cow is not simply the pecuniary enabler of the poet's compositions. Instead, the cow itself is the ultimate source of the poet's creativity. The mythical poet's liberation of the cows and subsequent poetic inspiration is thus equivalent to the historical poet's acquisition of the *dákṣiṇā* cow.

Comparative evidence indicates that the *dákṣiṇā* cow is of Indo-European antiquity, since it also figures in the medieval Irish economy. Admittedly, the Irish *dákṣiṇā* cow eventually came to lose its status as the preferred means of currency from patron to poet, as expressed in an

⁵⁹ Watkins, *Dragon*, 72. For a discussion of the historical *dákṣiṇā* cow of Vedic India and its mythical analogues in the *Ṛg Veda* see Boris Ouguibénine, *Essays on Vedic and Indo-European Culture* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998) 124-34.

invective quatrain: *ro-cúala/ ní tabair eochu ar dúana/ do-beir a ní as dúthaig dó/ bó*⁶⁰ “I have heard that he does not bestow horses for poems; he gives what is not appropriate for him: a cow.” However, the *dákṣiṇā* cow persists in the medieval Irish economy despite its apparent devaluation. The so-called ‘Preisverzeichnis,’ a versified instruction manual for the proper execution of financial transactions, goes into great detail on the topic: a *dían* poem is to be rewarded with a heifer, a *sétrud* with a pregnant white cow, a *lóid* with a milk cow, an *anair* with four cows and a *nath* with five.⁶¹

While there is no trace of a *dákṣiṇā* cow in the economic system of ancient Greece, a variation on this bovine currency occurs in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, in which Apollo recovers his stolen cattle from Hermes’ cave. This scenario correlates with the Rigvedic poet-priests’ liberation of the cows from the cave.⁶² After having regained his herd, Apollo becomes enamored with Hermes’ lyre, and offers his herd of cattle in exchange for both the lyre itself and tutelage in its use. Here the poet does not receive cows in exchange for a composition, but inversely gives them as payment for poetic talent.⁶³ The equivalence established between the cows and the lyre is clear in Apollo’s exclamation: πεντήκοντα βοῶν ἀντάχια ταῦτα μέμηλας “you have discovered something equal in worth to fifty cows” (*H. Herm.* 437).

The same exchange of a cow for a lyre figures in the Mnesiepes inscription, a text from the Archilochean *temenos* at Paros narrating that poet’s encounter with the Muses. Archilochus meets these goddesses disguised as women on the way to the market place, where he is going to

⁶⁰ E. Windisch, ed. and trans., *Irische Texte* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1880-1900), 3: 67.

⁶¹ Kuno Meyer, “Miscellanea Hibernica,” *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 2 (1917): 21-2.

⁶² Frame, 69-73, 76 connects the inspiration attained by the Rigvedic poet-priests when they expell the cows from the cave with Homer’s references to Odysseus’ intelligence in the Cyclops episode of *Odyssey* 9. He also observes references to mental activity in the related Circe episode of *Odyssey* 10. See Frame, 51-3.

⁶³ George Dunkel, “Fighting Words: Alcman *Partheneion* 63 *mákhontai*,” *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 7 (1979): 256; Oguibénine, 151; Paul-Louis van Berg, “Hermes and Agni: a Fire-God in Greece?” in *Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, ed. Martin Huld *et al.* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 2001): 200.

sell a cow. Archilochus engages in banter with the Muses, and they ask if they might purchase his cow. Archilochus agrees, and the Muses take the cow and reimburse Archilochus with a lyre, thus inaugurating his career as archaic Greece's greatest iambic poet. The exchange of cow for lyre in the Mnesiepes Inscription is an exact match to the arrangement Apollo makes with Hermes.⁶⁴

Inherited Bovine Metaphors for Poetic Inspiration in Vedic and Greek

The *R̥g Veda* expresses the poetic significance of the cow by means of two metaphors. Both of these metaphors have Greek comparanda, and thus appear to be inherited from the IE mythopoeic tradition.

1. Greek ἵχνη and Sanskrit *padám*: the Track of the Cow

When Hermes rustles Apollo's herd, he drives the cattle backwards, so that their ἵχνη 'tracks' will point in the opposite direction and thus mislead Apollo in his pursuit. As Paul Louis Van Berg observes, it is by deciphering the riddle of these inverted hoof prints that Apollo eventually attains his abilities as a lyric poet. This situation has a correlate in the *R̥g Veda*, where knowledge of the cow's *padám* 'track' is a metaphor for poetic inspiration.⁶⁵ The metaphor's significance is explicit at *RV* 7.87.4, where the *vípra* 'inspired poet' is associated with the cow's *padám* 'track': *trīṇi sapta nāmā ághnyā bibharti/ vidvān padásya gúhyā ná vocad/ yugāya vípra úparāya śikṣān* "the **cow** bears thrice seven names; he who knows the **track** should tell [the names] like secrets if he wishes to be an **inspired poet** for later generations." The cows' ἵχνη in

⁶⁴ Jesper Svenbro, "Der Kopf des Kirschkafers. Kerambos und der Mythos des 'lyrischen'," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 1 (1999). *Nōn vidī*.

the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* have a similar significance. While an understanding of the cow's *padām* leads to inspiration for the Vedic poet, Apollo's decipherment of the cryptic ἵχνη appears to be a prerequisite to his schooling in lyric poetry. The poetic registers of both Homeric Greek and the *R̥g Veda* thus appear to retain an inherited metaphor in which the cow's TRACK(S) (Gk. ἵχνη, Vedic *padām*) represents the poet's progression towards an inspired state.

Elsewhere in the *R̥g Veda*, the lexeme *padām* 'track' is not simply linked to poetic inspiration, but actually undergoes semantic shift and comes itself to mean 'word,' specifically a poetically marked verbal utterance.⁶⁶ In fact, *padām* must be read twice at *RV* 4.5.3, once in its etymological sense 'track,' and then again in its secondary sense '[poetic] word':⁶⁷ *padām ná gór āpagūlhanī vividvān/ agnīr máhyam préd u vocan manīṣām* "Agni, having found the **word** like the hidden **track** of the cow, shall speak forth this understanding to me." Knowledge of the cow's *padām* is thus both a metaphor for poetic inspiration and a term for the resultant poetic utterance itself.⁶⁸

A similar equation of the cow's track with words figures in the Greek myth of Autolykos, who steals a portion of Sisyphus' cattle. In order to apprehend the thief should he return, Sisyphus brands the remaining cows' hooves with his monograph,⁶⁹ or in another version, with

⁶⁵ Van Berg, "Hermes and Agni," 200. On the poetic significance of *padām* in the *R̥g Veda* see Oguibénine, 124-8, 158-9; Watkins, *Dragon*, 73.

⁶⁶ The pair ἔπος and μῦθος demonstrates a similar distinction between marked and unmarked speech. See Richard Martin, *The Language of Heroes: Speech and Performance in the Iliad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 14-30.

⁶⁷ Karl Geldner, trans., *Der Rig Veda* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), *ad loc.* For a survey of the scholarship on this verse see Sebastian Carri, *Gaveṣaṇam or on the Track of the Cow and in Search of the Mysterious Word and in Search of the Hidden Light* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2000), 20.

⁶⁸ On the semantic shift of *padām* from 'track' to 'word' see George Thompson, "The Pursuit of Hidden Tracks in Vedic," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 38 (1995): 1-30; *idem*, "From 'Footstep' to 'Word' in Sanskrit," *Semiotica* 106 (1995): 77-98.

⁶⁹ Hyginus *Fabulae* 201.

the statement Αὐτόλυκος ἔκλεψεν ⁷⁰ “Autolykos stole [me].” When Autolykos rustles the remaining cows, Sisyphus is able to follow the hoof prints and retrieve his cows. Much like Rigvedic *padām* in its secondary sense ‘word,’ the inscription on the hooves of Sisyphus’ cattle function as verbal utterances.

2. Minos’ Mulberry Cow and a Rigvedic Formulaic Syntagm: Naming the Cow

NAME(S) OF COW(S) is a formulaic syntagm occurring throughout the *R̥g Veda*. While knowing the cow’s *padām* signifies the poet’s attainment of inspiration, knowledge of the NAME(S) OF THE COW(S) is also a metaphor for poetic inspiration. The significance of this metaphor is clearly expressed at *RV* 8.41.5, where, in a *figura etymologica*, the *kavī* ‘poet’ develops his *kāvyā* ‘poetic talent’ by means of familiarity with the cows’ names: *yá usrāñām apīcyā/ véda nāmāni gúhyā/ sá kavīḥ kāvyā purú/...puṣyati* “the **poet** who knows the secret **names of the dawn cows**, which ought to be concealed, significantly increases his **poetic talent**.” Elsewhere, the formula NAME(S) OF COW(S) is collocated with the cow’s *padām*: *trīḥ sapta nāmā āghnyā bibharti/ vidvān padāsya gúhyā ná vocad/ yugāya vipra úparāya śikṣān* “the **cow** bears thrice seven **names**; he who knows the **track** should tell [the names] like secrets if he wishes to be an inspired poet for later generations” (*RV* 7.87.4). The juxtaposition of these two metaphors doubly indicates the poetic significance of the verse.

NAME(S) OF COW(S) occurs in the context of the serpent-slaying myth. At *RV* 4.1.16 the Uśijes, upon releasing the cows from the cave, *manvata prathamāni nāma dhenóḥ* “remember the supreme **name of the milk cow**.” The Uśijes’ recollection of the milk cow’s

⁷⁰ Polyaeus 6.52.

names signifies their acquisition of poetic inspiration.⁷¹ A similar notion figures in a Greek reflex of the serpent-slaying myth, Polyidos' revival of Glaukos (Apollodorus 3.3.1). The Cretan king Minos, whose son Glaukos has disappeared, consults his seers on the matter. He learns from them that whoever can best describe a triply hued cow in his herd will be able to divine the boy's whereabouts. Polyidos triumphs in this contest. He likens the cow, which is white, red and black,⁷² to a mulberry at various stages of ripeness, and thereby divines that Glaukos has drowned in a vat of honey. This act of verbally articulating the cow's coloration, quasi naming it, and Polyidos' resultant prophetic powers, descends from the same tradition underlying the Rigvedic formula NAME(S) OF COW(S).⁷³ The Uśijes' recollection of the milk cow's *prathamāṇi* "supreme" name is semantically equivalent to Polyidos' ability to "best describe" the coloration of Minos' cow. Furthermore, instances the formula NAME(S) OF COW(S) and the Polyidos myth both involve the IE root **wid-* 'know.' While the Vedic poet *vēda* (< **wid-*) "knows" the NAME(S) OF THE COW(S), Polyidos, whose name means 'the one who knows (< **wid-*) many things,' divines the ultimate description of the cow. The occurrence of **wid-* 'know' in these two related situations indicates an inherited collocation of this root with the cow in its poetic guise.

⁷¹ Geldner, *ad loc.*; Carri, 19; Watkins, *Dragon*, 72.

⁷² Sophocles iconically distributes the three colors over three separate lines of verse. For text see A. C. Pearson, ed., *Fragments of Sophocles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 2.60 fragment 395.

⁷³ I first made the connection between Polyidos' description of Minos' cow and the Rigvedic formula NAME(S) OF COW(S) in my talk at the 23rd Annual Harvard Celtic Colloquium, October 10-12, 2003. I have been refining my understanding of their filiation since that time. In a recent paper, Paul Louis van Berg, "Spit in My Mouth, Glaukos: A Greek Indo-European Tale about Ill-gotten Knowledge," in *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, ed. Karlene Jones-Bley *et al.* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 2005): 78-9 similarly compares the riddle of Minos' mulberry cow to bovine riddles in the *R̥g Veda*. Van Berg's like-minded analysis not only felicitously reinforces my own treatment, but extends into further inherited archaisms of the Polyidos myth beyond the scope of this thesis. For other IE aspects of Minos' mythological profile see van Berg, "Daidalos, Theseus, and the Others: the Melding of Indo-European and Mediterranean Traditions," in *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference*, ed. Karlene Jones-Bley *et al.* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 2004): 29-30.

Minos' cow is a source of divinatory rather than poetic inspiration, but NAME(S) OF COW(S) encompasses inspiration of the prophetic variety as well. At *RV* 9.87.3, Soma, who is called both *ṛṣi* 'seer' and *vīpra* 'inspired poet,' *viveda...apīcyāṇi gūhīyaṇi nāma gónām* "found the hidden, secret **name of the cows**." While the name of the Rigvedic cow is *apīcyāṇi* 'hidden' and *gūhīyaṇi* 'secret,' the superior description of Minos' cow as a mulberry is also obscure and must be guessed.⁷⁴

The inherited origin of Minos' cow is also indicated by its tripartite coloration, which reflects the IE mythico-religious and socio-economic color scheme of white, red and black. In fact, the cows in the *Book of Leinster* recension of *Táin Bó Cúalnge* also participate in the same color triad, the Morrígan first assuming the form of a black eel, then a red she-wolf, and finally a white heifer at the head of a herd of white cattle.⁷⁵

When Polyidos divines that Glaukos has drowned in a vat of honey, Minos is unsatisfied, and demands that his son be restored to him alive. He imprisons Polyidos along with Glaukos' corpse. During this period of incarceration, a snake slithers towards the boy's body, and Polyidos seeks to protect it. In a lexically renewed reflex of the serpent-slaying formula, δράκοντα ... ἀπέκτεινε "[Polyidos] slew the serpent" (Apollodorus 3.3.1). The original sequence of serpent slain followed by cows released has been disrupted in this reflex of the proto-myth, but both the ophidian and bovine components, even if chronologically rearranged, persist nonetheless.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ The cow is also connected with secret speech at *Agamemnon* 36-7, where the watchman, who is determined to keep quiet with respect to Klytaimnestra's machinations, states: βούς ἐπὶ γλώσση μέγας/ βέβηκεν "a great ox has trod upon my tongue."

⁷⁵ On the IE origin of this trichromatic pattern see Sayers, "The Three Wounds," 57.

⁷⁶ Van Berg, "Spit in My Mouth, Glaukos," 85, 88 suggests a Mediterranean pedigree for these snakes and their salubrious grass. While the association between snakes and healing in Greek appears to be a borrowed concept, I would contribute to van Berg's analysis the observation that aside from their medicinal aspect, the presence of the ophidians in the Polyidos myth is inherited from IE.

Expectorating Inspiration: Another Inherited Motif

After Polyidos has slain the serpent, another snake approaches it and places some grass upon its body. This grass revives the dead serpent, and Polyidos strews some of it upon Glaukos in order to revive him as well. Minos then forces Polyidos to train Glaukos in the art of divination, but on the last day of this tutelage the seer, as he is sailing away from Crete, orders his pupil to spit into his mouth. By means of this trick, the art of divination abandons Glaukos and reenters Polyidos.

Glaukos' expectorating of inspiration derives from a motif of the IE serpent-slaying myth. The Indic comparandum is from *RV* 10.108. Here Indra sends his bitch Saramā in search of the cows rustled by Vala and the demonic Paṇis. Saramā locates the Paṇis, and they attempt to convince her to lie to Indra about having found the cattle, offering her a share of their bovine spoils. Saramā, however, does not fall sway to their blandishments, but warns the Paṇis that the Ayāsyas, Angirases and Navagvas, all clans of sacral poets, as well as Bṛhaspati, will retrieve the cattle. She also threatens that the Paṇis will *vācaḥ...vāman* "vomit [their] words" (*RV* 10.108.8d).

Synchronically, Saramā's statement is little more than a fanciful way of telling the demons that they will regret what they have said. From a diachronic standpoint, however, the Paṇis vomiting of their words is a metaphor for their surrender of the cows and the poetry which these bovines entail. The spitting in the Polyidos myth similarly signifies the departure of divination from Glaukos back into Polyidos.⁷⁷

Cow as Symbol for Poetic Inspiration in Irish

1. A *dákṣiṇā* Cow in *Táin Bó Regamna*

The cows which the Morrígan drives into the ford during her combat with Cú Chulainn also signify poetic inspiration.⁷⁸ This symbolism, though not explicit in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, is overt in the *Táin Bó Regamna*, the *remscél* ‘prologue’ to Cú Chulainn’s fight with the Morrígan in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*. Here Cú Chulainn encounters the Morrígan, who is posing as a satirical poet, driving a recalcitrant cow, and orders her to relinquish it. She retorts by claiming that the cow was given to her as a *duais n-airchedail*⁷⁹ “reward for a poem.” This cow is an Irish equivalent of the Vedic *dákṣiṇā* cow. Cú Chulainn’s recuperation of this cow, like Apollo’s and the Rigvedic poet-priests’ recovery of their cattle, signals the acquisition of poetic inspiration.

2. Bóand and *imb*as

Cú Chulainn’s contest with Elcmaire along the Boyne also combines cow with poetic inspiration.⁸⁰ The cow goddess Bóand is the eponymous generator of the Boyne. This river is a source of *imb*as < **imb-uid-t-* ‘great wisdom,’⁸¹ the inspirational essence sought by poets in medieval Irish literature. It is for *imb*as that Cú Chulainn comes to the Boyne. The conjunction of *imb*as and the bovine Boyne reflects the inherited tradition of cow as symbol for poetic inspiration.

⁷⁷ Spitting is certainly an index of poetic inspiration in the Norse myth of Óðinn and Suttungr’s mead, a myth which I have elsewhere analyzed as constituting a reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth. See McDonald, 82 fn. 18.

⁷⁸ For a similar analysis of this episode’s poetic aspect, although without reference to the cows, see Joseph Nagy, “How the *Táin* was Lost,” *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 49-50 (1997): 603-9.

⁷⁹ Windisch, 2: 44 line 40.

⁸⁰ For the text see John Koch and John Carey, eds., *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales*, 3rd ed. (Oakville: Celtic Studies Publications, 2000), 67-8.

⁸¹ Patrick Ford, “The Well of Nechtan and ‘La Gloire Lumineuse’,” In *Myth in Indo-European Antiquity*, Gerald James Larson, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974): 71 fn. 9.

Bóand's name, probably a compound of OIr. *bó* and IE **wid-* 'know' and thus cognate with Soma's epithet *govindu-* 'he who finds cows'⁸² also indicates the inherited status of her association with poetic inspiration. A nexus of the root **wid-*, cows, and inspiration also figures in Vedic, where *vidvān padāsya gūhyā ná vocad/ yugāya vipra úparāya śikṣān* "he who **knows** the track should tell [the names of the cows] like secrets if he wishes to be an inspired poet for later generations" (*RV* 7.87.4) and Soma *viveda...apīcyāṇi gūhyanī nāma gónām* "**found** the hidden, secret name of the cows" (*RV* 9.87.3). The same nexus also occurs in Greek, where Polyidos "he who knows (< **wid-*) many things" divines the supreme description of Minos' cow and thereby acquires prophetic inspiration. The comparative evidence suggests that both Bóand's theonym and Soma's cognate epithet *govindu-* derive from an inherited nexus of cows, the root **wid-*, and inspiration.

Orpheus' βουγονία in *Georgic* 4: Cow Slaughter as a Source of Poetic Inspiration

The ancients knew of an apicultural ritual, the βουγονία 'coming into being from a bovine,' according to which the pulverization of a rotting bovine carcass was supposed to generate bees. The generation of bees from the slaughtered bovine parallels the generation of rivers from moribund cow goddess Bóand. Furthermore, while the river Boyne formed out of Bóand's demise contains the poet's *imbas*, I propose that the βουγονία generates not only apian fertility but also poetic inspiration. The Bóand myth and the βουγονία thus appear to have a common IE source.

The primary evidence for a connection between the βουγονία and poetic inspiration comes from *Georgic* 4. Here Virgil incorporates the βουγονία into the myth of the poet Orpheus

⁸² Campanile, "Old Irish Bóand," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 12 (1985): 477-9.

who, after he has been thwarted in his attempt to recover Eurydike and dismembered by the Maenads, kills off Aristaeus' bees in revenge. Aristaeus learns from Proteus that Orpheus' ghost will be appeased if he should perform a βουγονία as a funerary ritual for Euridike. Aristaeus does so, and acquires a new hive of bees in the process.

Many proposals have been made for the artistic motivation behind Virgil's juxtaposition of the Orpheus myth with the Aristaeus epyllion. Conte, for instance, claims that the connection between these two episodes is more than consequential. He posits that they are thematic analogues, both Orpheus and Aristaeus suffering a loss (Eurydike, bees) and undertaking a *katabasis* (Hades, Proteus' cave).⁸³ I agree with Conte's interpretation, but I will also argue that while Virgil exploits the thematic similarities between the Orpheus myth and the Aristaeus epyllion, the combination of Orpheus with the βουγονία is not a Virgilian invention. Rather, this collocation is traditional and, in fact, inherited from IE.

Orpheus' IE origins are indicated in part by his name, which appears to be etymologically related to that of the Ṛbhus, the three divine craftsmen of the Indian pantheon. In addition to this onomastic correspondence, Michael Estell posits functional and biographical similarities between Orpheus and the Ṛbhus. Dual paternity is ascribed to both Orpheus and the Ṛbhus. Orpheus is sired alternately by either Apollo or Οἶαγρος, whose name Estell derives from the root of οἶσω, the suppletive future of φέρω, and *Fαγρος 'cudgel,' thus 'cudgel bearer.'⁸⁴ The Ṛbhus, similarly, are called sons of both Sudhanvan 'he who possesses a good bow,' whom Estell connects to the archer Apollo, and of Indra, the great cudgel-bearer of Indic mythology.

⁸³ G. B. Conte, "Aristaeus, Orpheus and the *Georgics* once again," in *Poets and Critics Read Virgil*, ed. Sarah Spence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001): 50.

⁸⁴ Michael Estell, "Orpheus and the Ṛbhus Revisited," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 27 (1999): 328-30.

Estell also notes that while the Ṛbhus are primarily craftsmen, the root with which they are often associated, Skt. *takṣ-* < IE **tētkʼ*- ‘craft, fashion,’ is elsewhere associated with the crafting of poetry. At *RV* 6.32.1d, for instance, the poet proclaims *vācāṁsy... takṣam* “I have crafted words.” I would take Estell’s observation one step further and point out that the Ṛbhus’ craftsmanship is compared to the composition of poetry throughout the *Ṛg Veda*.⁸⁵ The Ṛbhus are thus functionally a lot closer to the poet Orpheus than initially meets the eye.

IE **tētkʼ*- is also used of verbal crafting in Greek. Pindar, for instance, refers to poets as ἐπέων...τέκτονες “crafters of words” (*Pythian* 3.113).⁸⁶ Orpheus himself is not directly associated with this root. However, Estell observes that Timotheus’ Ὀρφεὺς χέλυν ἐτέκνωσεν ‘Orpheus begot the lyre’ (*Persae* 222) is reminiscent of *H. Herm.* 25: Ἑρμῆς...χέλυν **τεκτῆνατ** (< IE **tētkʼ*-) “Hermes **crafted** the lyre.” Estell argues that both Timotheus’ Ὀρφεὺς χέλυν ἐτέκνωσεν and the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*’s Ἑρμῆς...χέλυν τεκτῆνατ derive from a formula CRAFT (**tētkʼ*-) LYRE (χέλυς). *H. Herm.* 25 retains the original verb, while Timotheus replaces **tētkʼ*- with the phonetically similar verb τεκνοῶ ‘beget.’⁸⁷ In light of the fact that Timotheus’ line is underlyingly “Orpheus crafted (**tētkʼ*-) the lyre,” we can reconstruct an original state of affairs in which Orpheus is affiliated with the root **tētkʼ*-.

The comparative evidence indicates that the IE precursor of Orpheus and the Ṛbhus, whom I style **Orpheus*, was both a carpenter and a poet. **Orpheus*’ association with the semantically bivalent root **tētkʼ* alludes to his dichotomous character.

⁸⁵ Matasović, 161.

⁸⁶ For a survey of the semantics of **tētkʼ*- and similar roots in Greek see Gregory Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 297-300.

⁸⁷ Estell, 331.

There is another potential connection between Orpheus and the Ῥbhus that Estell has not explored. The Ῥbhus perform a series of miracles involving the revival of a dead cow. At *RV* 1.167.7, for instance, they extract a new cow out of an old hide. The emergence of the cow from the hide is reminiscent of the βουγονία, in which bees emerge from the carcass of the pulverized bovine. While the Ῥbhus execute a series of bovine miracles, Orpheus demands that Aristaeus perform a βουγονία. The IE *Orpheus must therefore have been involved in the enactment of a ritual that I refer to as the BOUGONIA, in which new life emerged from a dead bovine. That Orpheus and the βουγονία are to be viewed as a nexus is also indicated by the fact that the Germanic Elves, probable etymological congeners of Orpheus and the Ῥbhus, are also associated with cows.⁸⁸

There is also evidence internal to Greek myth for a connection between Orpheus and the βουγονία. As Llewelyn Morgan points out, Proclus presents Orpheus' dismemberment by the Maenads as a sort of reenactment of the Titans' dismemberment of Dionysus.⁸⁹ According to Nonnos, who actually claims Orpheus as his ultimate source, Dionysus assumes the form of a bull when he is torn apart (*Dionysica* 6.205). The dismemberment of taurine Dionysus followed by his subsequent rebirth corresponds formally and semantically to the βουγονία, in which a pulverized bovine gives birth to bees. In fact, one of Dionysus' epithets is Βουγενής 'born from a bovine,' the adjectival equivalent of the noun βουγονία. The epithet Βουγενής probably refers to Dionysus' tauriform dismemberment.⁹⁰ In light of the fact that Proclus presents Orpheus' dismemberment as a reenactment of Dionysus' bovine death and rebirth, a traditional affiliation between Orpheus and the βουγονία seems likely.

⁸⁸ Jean Haudry, *La religion cosmique des Indo-Européens* (Paris: Arché, 1987) 264-5.

⁸⁹ Llewelyn Morgan, *Patterns of Redemption in Virgil's Georgics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 189.

While the Rigvedic reflex of the BOUGONIA is primarily a miraculous resurrection, the Ṛbhus' cow is also connected with poetry, for after it has been revived, its duty becomes to pull the chariot of the divine poet Br̥haspati (*RV* 1.161.6). *RV* 9.87.3 may also be relevant. Here Soma is called a *ṛbhúr dhīra* "skillful Ṛbhu" when he *viveda...nāma gónām* "found the name of the cows." The Ṛbhus' connection with the formula NAME(S) OF COW(S) and their cow's association with the poet Br̥haspati suggests that the BOUGONIA is polysemous, signifying both a miraculous resurrection and poetic inspiration. This polysemy recalls the flexible semantics of the root **tēk'-*, which connotes both physical carpentry and poetic craftsmanship. In fact, **tēk'-* is the very root used to describe the revivification of the cow at *RV* 4.34.9b: *dhenúm tatakṣúr ṛbhávaḥ* "the Ṛbhus **crafted** a milk cow."

Orpheus' βουγονία, similarly, while prominently a remedy for lost bees, may also signify poetic inspiration. The bees which emerge from the putrefying carcass may indicate the poetic element of the ritual, an indication of which Virgil seems to be aware.⁹¹ Bees and honey are symbols of poetic inspiration throughout Greek tradition.⁹² Furthermore, while the βουγονία combines a bovine and bees, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* combines cows with honey: in exchange for the lyre and training in its use, Apollo gives Hermes both his cows and the so-called 'Bee Maidens,' a triad of prophetic sisters who feed on honey. The association of cows and honey occurs in an overt context of poetic inspiration in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*,

⁹⁰ On the significance of Dionysus' epithet Βουγενής I am contra Olmsted, 278.

⁹¹ On this point I disagree with Jasper Griffin, *Latin Poets and Roman Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 167-8.

⁹² Honey is more prevalent than bees, but see for instance Aristophanes' *Birds* 749-51, where the poet Phrynichus is compared to a bee.

suggesting that the bees emerging from the cow in the βουγονία derive from the same semiotic tradition.⁹³

In fact, the apian component of the βουγονία may also be inherited. Numerous verses of the *R̥g Veda* collocate the poets' liberation of the cows with flowing honey. At *RV* 2.24.3-4, for instance, the divine poet Br̥haspati simultaneously expels the cows from the cave and clefts the honey-filled rock. This association of cows and honey parallels the dyad of bovine and bees in the βουγονία. Br̥haspati's association with honey is transparent symbolism for poetic inspiration, suggesting that the bees in the βουγονία possess a similar semantic value.

Milk as Metonymy for Cow in Norse Myth and Greek Religion

RV 2.35.7 relates how a milk cow inhabits the underwater abode of Apām Napāt, the Rigvedic congener of Bóand's husband Nechtan. This cow's lactic aspect has an allomorph in the image of Apām Napāt suckling milk from the breasts of his nursemaids in verse 5 of the same hymn. The cow and the lactic imagery associated with Apām Napāt's aquatic residence corresponds to the cow goddess Bóand's association with the water of Nechtan's spring.

Nechtán's spring has a Norse analogue in Mímisbrunnr 'Mímir's spring' and a Greek analogue in Mnemosyne's spring. While both Nechtán's spring and Apām Napāt's submarine dwelling are connected with cows (Bóand, Apām Napāt's milk cow), neither Mímisbrunnr nor Mnemosyne's spring have a bovine aspect. However, while Apām Napāt's cow is lactiferous, both Mímir's and Mnemosyne's springs are associated with milk. Mímisbrunnr and Mnemosyne's spring thus employ milk as a metonymic substitute for cow.

⁹³ A nexus of bees, honey, cow and inspiration figures in the Polyidos myth. On the mellifluous component of the

1. Mímisbrunnr and OIce. *aurr*: Milk of the Dawn Cows in the *Edda*

As John Carey notes, the mutilation of Bóand's eye at Nechtan's spring appears to have a Norse analogue in Óðinn's deposition of his eye into Mímisbrunnr 'Mímir's spring.'⁹⁴ Mímisbrunnr is one of three springs located at the roots of the cosmic axis, the world tree Yggdrasill. The geography of Mímisbrunnr corresponds to that of Nechtan's spring, next to which grows Crimall's hazel tree.

In Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, the head of the Norse pantheon Óðinn seeks to drink from Mímisbrunnr, the water of which bestows wisdom upon the one who consumes it. The spring's guardian Mímir, however, demands that Óðinn first excise his eye and deposit it into the spring.⁹⁵ The sacrifice of physical eyesight in exchange for increased cognitive perception parallels the fate of the Greek prophet Teiresias. In Callimachus *Hymn* 5, Athena blinds Teiresias as punishment for watching her bathe naked in the Hippokrene, the spring generated by the hoof of the horse Pegasus. However, in exchange for depriving him of his vision, Athena bestows inner vision upon Teiresias, making him one of Greece's most prominent prophets.

Óðinn's acquisition of Mímisbrunnr's wisdom in exchange for his eye corresponds to Bóand' mutilated eye and the subsequent generation of the Boyne, from which poets derive *imbas*. The disparity between wisdom and poetic inspiration is minor. In fact, wisdom and poetic inspiration are allomorphs in the mythology of the Hippokrene. While Teiresias gains wisdom as a result of watching Athena bathe in the Hippokrene, this spring is otherwise associated with the Muses.

Polyidos myth see van Berg, "Spit in My Mouth, Glaukos," 79-86.

⁹⁴ John Carey, "Irish Parallels to the Myth of Odin's Eye," *Folklore* 94 (1983): 215-7.

⁹⁵ Jean Young, trans. *The Prose Edda of Snorri Sturluson* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), 43.

Unlike the Boyne, Mímisbrunnr is not connected with a cow. However, next to Mímisbrunnr is Urðarbrunnr ‘the spring of Urðr.’ Urðr is one of a triad of goddesses, the Norns. According to Snorri, the Norns use the water of their spring and the white mud around it to moisten the bark of the world tree Yggdrasill. Here Snorri quotes the Eddic poem *Völuspá*, in which Yggdrasill is described as being *ausinn/ hvítaauri* ‘drenched with white mud.’⁹⁶

I suspect that *aurr* ‘mud’ functions here as a mythopoeic term for milk. OIce. *aurr* probably ultimately derives from IE **ueh₁-r* ‘water.’ A semantic shift from water to mud, i.e. watery earth, is credible. In fact, *Aurr* occurs as a Scandinavian hydronym, indicating its original meaning ‘water.’⁹⁷ Phonologically, the derivation is not entirely clear. The zero grade of **ueh₁-r* ‘water’ already yields OIce. *úr* ‘light rain, drizzle,’ while the full grade produces OIce. *vári* ‘water.’ Furthermore, while *aurr* has the look of an o-grade, the expected o-grade outcome of **ueh₁-r* in OIce. is **ór*. However, the irregular phonology of OIce. *aurr* has a match in the Greek derivative of IE **ueh₁-r* ‘water.’ The Thessalian river Ἀναυρος was often desiccated, and its name is doubtless to be analyzed as the alpha privative and an otherwise unattested noun **ᾠρα* ‘water,’ which Pokorny derives from **ueh₁-r*.⁹⁸ The similar vocalism of OIce. *aurr* ‘mud’ and Gk. **ᾠρα* ‘water’ further points to a derivation of OIce. *aurr* ‘mud’ from some outcome of IE **ueh₁-r* ‘water.’⁹⁹

As discussed above, Watkins argues that the *R̥g Veda* employs *vár* ‘water,’ the Skt. outcome of **ueh₁-r*, as a metonymic term for the milk of the Rigvedic dawn cows.¹⁰⁰ He also posits an OIr. cognate in *fír* ‘milk,’ the lexeme used to describe the lactiferous state of the Irish

⁹⁶ Young, 46; Hans Kuhn and Gustav Neckel, eds., *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1962-8), 2.5.

⁹⁷ Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 20.

⁹⁸ Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke, 1959), 268.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 268; de Vries, 646.

dawn cows in *Senchus Már*. Old Irish *aurr* ‘mud,’ a probable cognate of *vár* and *fír*, appears to demonstrate the same semantic shift, signifying milk in the mythopoeic context of Óðinn’s visit to Mímisbrunnr.

Furthermore, while both *vár* and *fír* figure in reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth, the snake Niðhöggr resides in a third spring, Hvergelmir, next to those of Mímir and Urðr. This neighboring ophidian suggests that the myth of Óðinn at Mímisbrunnr derives from the IE serpent-slaying myth.¹⁰¹ The legitimacy of treating Mímisbrunnr and Hvergelmir as allomorphs is confirmed by the fact that Gjöll, the name of the drinking horn with which Óðinn imbibes from Mímisbrunnr, is also the name of one of the rivers emanating from Hvergelmir.¹⁰²

Presumably Óðinn slew Niðhöggr, liberated dawn cows, and acquired their *aurr* ‘milk’ in a pre-Eddic incarnation of the myth. While the bovine aspect of the IE serpent-slaying myth has become defunct in the Eddic myth of Óðinn at Mímisbrunnr, the milk of the dawn cows persists, as does the use of **ueh₁-r* ‘water’ as a mythopoeic term for this milk.

The lexeme *aurr* is overtly mythopoeically marked in other instances. In *Alvíssmál* 10, the dwarf Alvis tells Thór that earth is called *iörð* by human beings, *fold* by the Æsir (a group of deities), *vega* by the Vanir (another class of gods), *ígræn* by the giants, *gróandi* by elves, and *aurr* by powerful gods.¹⁰³ As Vladimir Toporov observes, this series of synonyms stratified amongst various groups of beings derives from a metalinguistic tradition inherited from IE, the

¹⁰⁰ Watkins, “Two Anatolian Forms: Palaic *aškumāuwa*, Cuneiform Luvian *wa-a-ar-ša*,” in *Festschrift for Henry Hoenigswald on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. George Cardona and N. Zide (Tübingen: Narr, 1987), 402-3, *idem*, *Dragon*, 72, 441.

¹⁰¹ Compare Olmsted, 230-1. For a survey of Niðhöggr’s IE brethren see Watkins, *Dragon*, 460-1.

¹⁰² Bruce Lincoln, “Waters of Memory, Waters of Forgetfulness,” in *Death, War and Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991): 54.

¹⁰³ Kuhn and Neckel, 125.

contrast between the ‘language of gods’ and the ‘language of men,’¹⁰⁴ here amplified beyond a human/ deity dichotomy to include other mythological races as well. This mythopoeic device occurs in Homeric as well, as in the description of Achilles’ combat with the river ὄν Ξάνθον καλέουσι θεοί, ἄνδρες δὲ Σκάμανδρον “which the gods call the Xanthos, but which men call the Skamandros” (*Iliad* 20.74).¹⁰⁵ *Alvíssmál*’s inclusion of *aurr* in a metalinguistic figure of IE origin provides further evidence for this lexeme’s mythopoeic antiquity.

Another instance in which *aurr* occurs in a metalinguistic ‘language of gods’/ ‘language of men’ figure may link this lexeme specifically to milk. According to Snorri’s *Edda*, the cosmogonic frost-ogre is generally known by the name Ymir, but is referred to as Aurgelmir by his own kind. The etymology of the second element of this name, *-gelmir*, is uncertain,¹⁰⁶ but the first morpheme is clearly *aurr*. In light of the fact that one of the main items in Ymir’s biography is his nursing on the four streams of milk which pour forth from the udder of the primaeval cow Auðumbla,¹⁰⁷ I suspect that the morpheme *Aur-* in his byname Aurgelmir might allude to milk.

Óðinn’s acquisition of wisdom at Mímisbrunnr and the myth of the Boyne’s generation thus both exhibit the same nexus of a spring (Mímir’s, Nechtan’s), an adjacent tree (Yggdrasill, Crimall’s hazel tree), a bovine aspect (the cow goddess Bóand, Urðarbrunnr’s *aurr*, which signifies the milk of the dawn cows), and inspiration (the water of Mímisbrunnr, which grants sagacity to the one who drinks it, the Boyne’s *imbas*).

¹⁰⁴ Vladimir Toporov, “Die Ursprünge der indoeuropäischen Poetik,” *Poetica* 13 (1981): 206-8. Toporov’s analysis of *Alvíssmál* is discussed by Calvert Watkins, “Language of Gods and Language of Men: Remarks on Some Indo-European Metalinguistic Traditions,” in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. Jaan Puhvel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970): 3-5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 201.

¹⁰⁶ For a possible etymology of *-gelmir* see de Vries, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Young, 34.

2. Mnemosyne's Spring and a Lactic Initiation: Inherited Mythopoeia in the Orphic Gold Leaves

As Lincoln notes, Mímisbrunnr has a Greek congener in the spring of Mnemosyne.¹⁰⁸ This spring is mentioned in the Orphic gold leaves, a set of formulaic texts inscribed on gold *lamellae* found at burial sites in Southern Italy, Thessaly, and on Crete and Lesbos. These *lamellae* provide instructions for the soul of the deceased on how to proceed to the afterlife. They are perhaps to be connected with the Indic concept *samsāra* 'transmigration' and similar notions of metempsychosis in a Hittite ritual text, suggesting that their doctrine has its origin in IE religious belief.¹⁰⁹

The correspondence between Mnemosyne and Mímir's springs is on the one hand onomastic. While Mímir's name comes from IE **(s)mer-* 'remember,' Mnemosyne, whose name derives from IE **men-* 'think, remember' is Memory deified.

Mnemosyne's spring and Mímisbrunnr are also functionally similar. According to the Hipponion *lamella*,¹¹⁰ there is a spring located on the right of Hades's hall. The text warns the soul to eschew this spring, and to continue onto an adjacent one, that of Mnemosyne, a drink from which will initiate the soul into the afterlife. While Óðinn drinks from Mímisbrunnr, the Hipponion *lamella* urges the soul to drink from the spring of Mnemosyne.

The genetic filiation between these two springs is also indicated by the λευκὴν ... κυπάρισσον¹¹¹ "white cypress" growing next to the spring beside Mnemosyne's. This white cypress is surely to be compared with Yggdrasill, which the Norns lave with white *aurr*.

While the initiate attains the afterlife by drinking from Mnemosyne's spring in the Hipponion *lamella*, other *lamellae* have the initiate achieve transmigration by conceiving of

¹⁰⁸ Lincoln, "Waters of Memory," 54-5.

¹⁰⁹ Watkins, *Dragon*, 277-91. Compare Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 300 who makes passing reference to Yoga in his study of the Orphic gold leaves.

¹¹⁰ Richard Janko, "Forgetfulness in the Golden Tablets of Memory," *Classical Quarterly* 34 (1984): 99.

himself as an animal falling into milk. The Pelinna leaf describes this process in an epiphoric figure: ταῦρος εἰς γάλα ἔθορες/ αἶψα εἰς γάλα ἔθορες/ κριὸς εἰς γάλα ἔπεσες¹¹² “a bull, you fell into milk, swiftly you fell into the milk, a ram, you fell into the milk.” Imbibing from Mnemosyne’s spring and falling into milk are thus allomorphic metaphors for transmigration. A phrasal echo between the Hipponion and the Thurii *lamellae* further suggests their allomorphism. The Hipponion leaf states that the spring of Mnemosyne is located ἐπὶ δεξιᾷ¹¹³ “on the right” of Hades’ hall, while the Thurii leaf combines a similar phrase with the animal falling into milk: θεὸς ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου/ ἔριφος ἐς γάλα ἔπετες/ χαῖρε, χαῖρε. δεξιὰν ὁδοὶ πόρει¹¹⁴ “From a man you were born a god, a kid, you fell into the milk. Rejoice, rejoice, travel the road **to the right**.” The association of the right hand side with both metaphors reinforces their allomorphism.

The Orphic gold leaves thus demonstrate the same nexus seen in both the Bóand myth and that of Óðinn at Mímisbrunnr: a bovine aspect (γάλα, Bóand, *aurr*), a spring (Mnemosyne’s, Nechtan’s, Mímir’s), an adjacent tree (the λευκὴν κυπάρισσον, Crimall’s hazel tree, Yggdrasill) and inspiration (transmigration, the Boyne’s *imbas*, Mímisbrunnr’s wisdom). Both the Bóand myth and the Eddic myth of Óðinn’s visit to Mímisbrunnr are versions of the serpent-slaying myth. The SERPENT Matha desiccates the Boyne and the snake Niðhogg, an otiose reflex of the SERPENT, lives next to Mímisbrunnr. In light of the fact that the Orphic gold leaves demonstrate the same nexus, it appears that the Orphic *lamellae* have appropriated the mythical landscape and semantics of the IE serpent-slaying myth. The *lamellae* make no reference to the slaying of a serpent. However, as Watkins notes, DEATH is often an allomorph

¹¹¹ Janko, 99 line 5.

¹¹² Watkins, *Dragon*, 278.

¹¹³ Janko, 99 line 4.

¹¹⁴ Watkins, *Dragon*, 283.

of the SERPENT, and even replaces the SERPENT in variants of the inherited syntagm SLAY SERPENT.¹¹⁵ In light of the fact that SLAY DEATH is a variation of SLAY SERPENT, I propose that the soul's transmigration, equivalent to overcoming death, is a semantic allomorph of slaying the serpent.

The Orphic gold leaves maintain the bovine aspect of the serpent-slaying myth in the metaphor of animal falling into milk. While the cows of the proto-myth are associated with poetic inspiration, the Orphic *lamellae* link milk to sacral inspiration, the initiate becoming a god by means of his lactic ablution. The Orphic *lamellae* thus exploit the cows' original association with poetic inspiration, but then subvert the variety of inspiration by making a shift from poetic to sacral.

Milk as Symbol for Sacral Inspiration in Greek Religion

Milk is also a symbol of sacral inspiration in the *mania* 'mental frenzy' (< IE **men-* 'think, remember') of Dionysian cult. The messenger in Euripides' *Bacchae* vividly describes this *mania*:

ἀγελαῖα μὲν βοσκήματ' ἄρτι πρὸς λέπας/ μόσχων ὑπεξήκριζον, ἡνίχ' ἥλιος/ ἀκτῖνας
ἐξίησι...ὠλόλυξεν...μυκήμαθ' ὥς ἤκουσε κεκροφόρων βοῶν...δορὰς\ ὄφει
κατεζώσαντο...αἱ δ' ἀγκάλαισι δορκάδ' ἢ σκύμνους λύκων/ ἀγρίους ἔχουσαι λευκὸν
ἐδίδοσαν γάλα/ ὅσαις νεοτόκοις μαστὸς ἦν σπαργῶν ἔτι/ βρέφη λιπούσαις...θύρσον δέ
τις λαβοῦσ' ἔπαισεν ἐς πέτραν/ ὅθεν δροσώδης ὕδατος ἐκπηδᾷ νοτὶς...ἄκροισι
δατκύλοισι διαμῶσαι χθόνα/ γάλακτος ἐσμούςς εἶχον· ἐκ δὲ κισσίνων/ θύρσων γλυκεῖαι
μέλιτος ἔσταζον ῥοαί (*Bacchae* 677-9, 689, 691, 697-702, 704-5, 709-11).

[Pentheus'] herds of grazing calves were just reaching the summit of the crag at the time when the sun sends forth its rays...[Agave] raised a cry when she heard the lowing of the horned cows...[the Bacchantes] girded their hides with snakes...some, cradling fawns or wolf cubs in their arms, gave their white milk to the wild animals, as many as had a breast still full to bursting because they had abandoned their new-born infants...one grabbed a thyrsus and struck it against

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 391-7.

a rock, and the wetness of dewy water gushed out of it...they gouged the earth with their fingertips and acquired streams of milk; sweet streams of honey dripped from their ivy thyrsos.

This description of the Bacchantes' behavior appears to be a reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth. Although the messenger portrays the coincidence of the Bacchantes' *mania* with the cows' climbing the crag at dawn as a mere temporal accident, the simultaneity of these two events bespeaks an erstwhile intrinsic filiation. I propose that Pentheus' herds descend from the dawn cows of the IE serpent-slaying myth. The snakes which with the Bacchantes gird their garments are otiose reflexes of the SERPENT. In fact, Euripides uses ὄφις to refer to these snakes. Gk. ὄφις derives from IE **h₃og^whi-* 'serpent,' the original lexeme designating the SERPENT. The cows' ascension of the crag at dawn articulates their release from the cave. The Bacchantes' subsequent release of milk from the earth overtly recapitulates the theme of the cows' liberation, and corresponds to the milking of the Vedic and Irish dawn cows.

While the Rigvedic poet-priests acquire poetic inspiration from the cows, the milk that emerges from the Bacchantes' lactating breasts and from the earth during their *mania* is a symptom of their inspired state. *RV* 2.24.3-4 affords an even more direct comparison. Here the divine poet Br̥haspati simultaneously expels the cows from the cave and clefts the honey-filled rock. The nexus of cows, honey, and cloven rock at *RV* 2.24.3-4 is almost identical to the nexus of milk, honey and cloven rock in Euripides' description of Bacchic *mania*.

The validity of the Bacchantes as correlates of the Rigvedic poet-priests is confirmed by *Ion* 534A, where Socrates compares the inspired state of the poet to that of the Bacchantes, during which ἀρύνονται ἐκ τῶν ποταμῶν μέλι καὶ γάλα "they extract honey and milk from rivers." Socrates' comparison suggests that poetic and sacral inspiration both occupy the same continuum in Greek thought. Furthermore, while Socrates compares the Bacchantes' extraction

of honey and milk from rivers to the poet's inspiration, Pindar relates the doublet of honey and milk directly to poetry, referring to his composition as μεμιγμένον μέλι λευκῶ σὺν γάλακτι "honey mixed with white milk" (*Nemean* 3.77-8).¹¹⁶

Both the Orphic gold leaves and Dionysian cult appear to appropriate aspects of the IE serpent-slaying myth. The milk in both the Orphic *lamellae* and Bacchic *mania* derives from the cows of the proto-myth. In a religious context, however, the semiotic value of this milk shifts from poetic to sacral inspiration.

While many elements of Dionysus' cult are thought to be of Eastern origin, this deity's name is attested as early as Linear B inscriptions. From an onomastic perspective, therefore, Dionysus' status in the Greek pantheon is longstanding, possibly even native. In light of the fact that his theonym goes as far back as Mycenaean, it is reasonable to perceive equally archaic elements in Dionysus' mythological profile.¹¹⁷ I propose that the lactic symptom of Bacchic *mania* is one such archaism, and that this milk has its origins in the liberated cows of the IE serpent-slaying myth.

Milk and Memory: an Inherited Collocation

Dionysian cult, the Orphic gold leaves, and the myth of Óðinn at Mímisbrunnr associate MILK (γάλα, *aurr*) with MEMORY (*mania*, Mnemosyne < IE **men*- 'think, remember'; Mímir < IE *(s)*mer*- 'remember'). Both Greek religion and Norse myth thus appear to retain an inherited collocation of MILK and MEMORY in a context of inspiration.

¹¹⁶ The metaphor of poetry as a liquid is of IE provenance. See Leslie Kurke, "Pouring Prayers: A Formula of IE Sacral Poetry?" *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 17 (1989): 113-25; Matasović, 172-6; Watkins, *Dragon*, 16.

¹¹⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 162. On some possibly genetic similarities between Dionysus and Śiva see Wendy Doniger, "Dionysus and Śiva: Parallel Patterns in Two Pairs of Myths," *History of Religions* 20 (1980): 81-111.

Vedic also demonstrates the same collocation of MILK and MEMORY in a context of inspiration. At *RV* 4.1.16a, the Uśijes *manvata prathamāṇi nāma dhenóḥ* “**remember** the foremost name of the milk cow,” where *manvata* ‘they remember’ is from IE **men-*. NAME(S) OF COW(S) is a formulaic metaphor for poetic inspiration. Furthermore, as Watkins points out, the fact that the Uśijes specifically *manvata* “remember” the cow’s name doubly emphasizes the theme of poetic inspiration. The root **men-* is overtly associated with poetry in Greek myth, where Mnemosyne, the mother of the Muses, and perhaps Μοῦσα itself derive from **men-*.¹¹⁸

In conjunction with the Uśijes’ recollection of the cow’s name, the dawn becomes visible *yáśasā góḥ* “through the glory of the cow” (*RV* 4.1.16d). This *yáśas-* ‘glory’ probably refers to the cows’ milk, the same lexeme being directly connected with milk elsewhere in Vedic.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the cows that the Uśijes release are said to be *sudíghāḥ* ‘lactiferous’ a few verses earlier on in the same hymn (*RV* 4.1.13c). The parallelism between Dionysian *mania*, the Orphic gold leaves, the Eddic myth of Óðinn at Mímisbrunnr and the *R̥g Veda* affirm the inherited status of the collocation MILK (γάλα, *aurr*, *yáśas-*) and MEMORY (*mania*, Mnemosyne, Mímir, *manvata*) in a context of inspiration (the Bacchantes’ *mania*, the soul’s transmigration, Óðinn’s acquisition of wisdom, the Uśijes’ poetic inspiration).

Summation

Greek reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth have inherited a semiotic valence in which the cow functions as a symbol for poetic inspiration. This symbolism derives partly from the economic tradition of the cow as the poet’s reward as seen in the Vedic *dákṣiṇā* cow and its medieval Irish

¹¹⁸ Watkins, *Dragon*, 73. This derivation of Μοῦσα is also suggested by Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1968-80), 716.

¹¹⁹ Geldner, *ad loc.*; Watkins, *Dragon* 72.

analogue. In Greek myth, the *dákṣiṇā* cow undergoes modulation and is essentially inverted, so that instead of gaining a cow in exchange for a poem, the poet gives a cow in exchange for poetic inspiration. In both the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* and the Mnesiepes Inscription, this exchange of cow for poetic inspiration manifests itself specifically as an equivalency between cow and lyre. Apollo trades his cattle for Hermes' lyre, and Archilochus sells his cow to the Muses and gets a lyre in return.

The Rigvedic metaphors *padám* 'track (of the cow)' and NAME(S) OF COW(S), both of which are associated with poetic inspiration, have Greek correlates. Apollo's decipherment of the cows' ἵχνη parallels the poet's knowledge of the cow's *padám* in the *R̥g Veda*. The sequence of Polyidos' description, quasi naming, of Minos' mulberry cow, and resultant prophetic powers derive from the same inherited tradition underlying NAME(S) OF COW(S).

The βουγονία also alludes to the inherited tradition of cow as symbol for poetic inspiration. Bovine slaughter as a means of achieving poetic inspiration also figures in the Bóand myth and in the R̥bhus' bovine miracles, which are the precise congeners of Orpheus' βουγονία in *Georgic 4*.

The metaphor of animal falling into milk in the Orphic gold leaves also reflects the tradition of cow as symbol for poetic inspiration. However, the original symbolism undergoes two shifts in the Orphic *lamellae*. In the first place, cow is metonymically replaced by milk. In the second instance, this milk signifies sacral instead of poetic inspiration. This shift from poetic to sacral inspiration in a religious context also occurs in Dionysian cult, where milk is a symptom of Bacchic *mania*. The original poetic significance of this milk is indicated by Socrates' comparison of poetic inspiration to Bacchic *mania*, and by Pindar's metaphor of milk as poem.

CHAPTER 4

COWS, WOMEN AND GODDESSES

In several Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth, the cows are replaced by a woman or goddess. Even in these instances, however, vestiges of the woman's or goddess' erstwhile bovine identity persist. This substitution of woman or goddess for cow appears to be based upon a traditional collocation of cattle and women inherited from the IE serpent-slaying myth. Such a pairing of cows and women is especially prominent in Irish reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth, as well as in the related Hittite Telipinu myth.¹²⁰

Woman and Goddess as Substitute for Cow in Greek Reflexes of the Serpent-Slaying Myth

1. Deianeira as Maverick Calf

As I discussed in my second chapter, Herakles does not liberate cows by defeating Acheloos, but rather wins the hand of Deianeira. Sophocles, however, recalls Deianeira's original bovine status in a simile: κάπο ματρὸς ἄφαρ βέβαχ' / ὥστε πόρτις ἐρήμα "and suddenly she has wandered from her mother, just like a maverick **calf**" (*Trach.* 529-30). While this bovine simile retains a vestige of the proto-myth's cows, bovines no longer figure as active participants in the narrative. Instead, the woman Deianeira replaces the cows.

¹²⁰ An alternation between cow and woman occurs in Greek myth outside the serpent-slaying myth as well. Peter Walcot, "Cattle Raiding, Heroic Tradition and Ritual: the Greek Evidence," *History of Religions* 18 (1979): 350

2. Persephone Μελίβοια

Walter Burkert compares the myth of Persephone's rape to the Hittite Telipinu myth, noting that Demeter's wrath, her departure from Olympus, and the subsequent failure of crops correlate with Telipinu's rage, his disappearance, and the resultant ecological collapse.¹²¹ While I consider Burkert's Anatolian comparandum valid, there is an additional stratum at work in the Persephone myth: the IE serpent-slaying myth.

Michael Janda provides evidence suggesting that the characters of the Persphone myth have etymological correlates in the Vṛtra myth. Janda reconstructs Triptolemos' name as *Τριπτέλυμος.¹²² Gk. ἔλυμος 'millet' and Skt. *vr̥-* 'surround, encompass,' the root from which Vṛtra's name derives, both come from IE **wer-* 'surround, encompass.' Triptolemos thus appears to be Vṛtra's onomastic congener. Janda also proposes that Demeter, originally Δᾱμᾱτηρ, whose name appears to be a compound of IE **dah*₂- 'water' and **mah*₂*tēr* 'mother,' is the Greek analogue of Vṛtra's mother Dānu. Dānu's name is also probably from IE **dah*₂- 'water.' While Demeter's maternal aspect is encoded in her very name, Dānu's maternal role is at the forefront of her mythological profile.¹²³

In addition to onomastic correspondences, Janda also demonstrates thematic similarities between the Persephone myth and the IE serpent-slaying myth. While the SERPENT withholds cows, Hades imprisons Persephone in his subterranean realm. Persephone thus appropriates the role of the cows. Her abduction and subsequent recovery is functionally equivalent to the

observes that while Pindar has the Dioskouroi quarrel with the Leukippides over cattle (*Nemean* 10.60), Theocritus presents the same conflict as being over the Leukippides' sisters, whom the Dioskouroi seek as brides (*Idyll* 22.137).

¹²¹ Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 123-9.

¹²² Michael Janda, *Eleusis: das indogermanische Erbe der Mysterien* (Innsbruck: Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck, 2000), 291.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 294. Earlier etymologies of Demeter's name are unconvincing. In fact, Chantraine, 273, is at a loss as to its derivation.

confinement and ensuing liberation of the proto-myth's cows. The situation is similar to the Acheloos myth, where Deianeira is liberated from her undesirable suitor Acheloos by the preferable suitor Herakles. Furthermore, while Sophocles likens Deianeira to a maverick calf, Persephone's previous bovine identity has not been entirely forgotten. Janda points out that Persephone's cult name on Lasos is Μελίβοια. The first element of this name is Gk. μέλι 'honey.' The second morpheme -βοια derives from IE *g^wou- 'cow.'¹²⁴ The theonym Μελίβοια thus means something like 'she who possesses cows yielding honey.' The cows that Indra liberates from Vr̥tra are also associated with honey, suggesting that the semantics of Persephone's cult name Μελίβοια has its roots in IE.¹²⁵ Thus, in a pre-Homeric incarnation, the Persephone myth probably involved not only her rape but also the seizure of mellifluous cattle with which she was closely identified.

3. Klytaimnestra's Lactating Breast and the Milk of the Dawn Cows

Another Greek reflex of the serpent-slaying myth, Orestes' matricide, demonstrates a shift from bovine to woman. Again, however, a remnant of the bovine aspect of the myth is retained in the imagery of Klytaimnestra's lactating breast. Klytaimnestra thus appropriates the liberated cows of the proto-myth.

This hypothesis becomes more credible in light of the fact that Klytaimnestra also appropriates the role of the SERPENT. Aeschylus compares Klytaimnestra to a serpent throughout the *Oresteia*.¹²⁶ Euripides also alludes to her ophidian aspect in his *Electra* (*Elec.*). Here the chorus juxtaposes Perseus brandishing **λαίμοτόμαν**... κορυφὰν Γοργόνης "the Gorgon's head, severed at the **neck**" (*Elec.* 459-60) with the similarly jugular wound that they

¹²⁴ Ibid., 213.

anticipate Orestes will inflict upon Klytaimnestra: φόνιον ὑπὸ δέραν...αἷμα χυθὲν “murderous blood spills from beneath her **neck**” (*Elec.* 485-6).¹²⁷ Furthermore, as Watkins notes, Pindar articulates Orestes’ matricide by means of the serpent-slaying formula, with emphatic doubling of the marked root *g^when-:¹²⁸ πέφνεν (< *g^when-) τε ματέρα θῆκε τ’ Αἴγισθον ἐν φοναῖς (< *g^when-) “he both slew his mother and placed Aigisthos in gore” (*Pythian* 11.36-7).

When Aeschylus’ chorus recounts Klytaimnestra’s ominous dream in which she nurses a serpent at her breast, the serpent sucks out ἐν γάλακτι θρόμβον αἵματος “a clot of blood in the milk” (*Choephoroi* 533). In interpreting this nightmare, Orestes assigns himself the role of the snake, and perceives in the bloodsucking a symbol of his imminent matricide.

The paradox of Orestes the serpent-slayer as snake himself derives from a topos of the IE serpent-slaying myth which presents the hero’s slaughter of the SERPENT as a violent and negative act.¹²⁹ An Indic comparandum to Orestes as serpent clarifies the IE origin of this topos. Polluted because of his matricide, Orestes is pursued by the Furies and must undergo purification. Indra also becomes polluted because he has committed Brahmanicide in killing Vṛtra. As a result, he is hounded by an avenging goddess, whom Wendy Doniger even calls a Fury,¹³⁰ and must undergo purification.¹³¹ More to the point, while Orestes identifies himself with the serpent of Klytaimnestra’s nightmare, Indra is likened to a snake after he slays Vṛtra.¹³²

¹²⁵ Ibid., 216.

¹²⁶ *Agamemnon* 1233, *Choephoroi* 249, 994, 1047.

¹²⁷ For a discussion of this chorus and its imagery see Michael O’Brien, “Orestes and the Gorgon: Euripides’ *Electra*,” *American Journal of Philology* 85 (1964): 22.

¹²⁸ Watkins, *Dragon*, 371.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 398-407. On the transfer of serpentine imagery from Klytaimnestra to Orestes see Anne Lebeck, *The Oresteia: A Study in Language and Culture* (Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 1971), 14; Froma Zeitlin, “The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*,” *Arethusa* 11 (1978): 158, 164.

¹³⁰ Doniger, *Hindu Myths*, 86-7.

¹³¹ While Joseph Fontenrose, *Python: a Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 199 notes that Indra’s guilt and subsequent purification after slaying Vṛtra corresponds to Apollo’s *miasma* and ensuing expiation after slaying Python, he does not extend his analysis to Orestes’ matricide. For Orestes’ matricide as a *tertium comparationis* to the Vṛtra and Python myths see Udo Strutinsky, “The Three

In light of the fact that the serpentine imagery of Klytaimnestra's ominous dream derives from the IE serpent-slaying myth, the lactic component of the dream may derive from the same source. I suggest that the imagery of the dream is functionally bipartite. On the one hand, the blood being drawn from the breast signals the slaying of the SERPENT Klytaimnestra, but on the other, the milk which is drawn at the same time appears to be a relic of the proto-myth's bovine aspect.

Klytaimnestra's lactating breast is thus compatible with the milking of the Rigvedic and Irish dawn cows, as well as of Polyphemus' auroral flocks. The same shift from cow's udder to woman's breast is seen in Dionysian *mania*, where the Bacchantes' lactation is an anthropomorphic equivalent to the milking of the dawn cows.

The serpent suckling at Klytaimnestra's breast thus compresses the sequence of serpent slain and cattle released into one image. Klytaimnestra herself functions as both the SERPENT and the liberated bovines. This functional collapse is similar to Circe's conflation of the SERPENT and the auroral aspect of the serpent-slaying myth in *Odyssey* 10.

Aeschylus refers to Klytaimnestra as a cow at *Agamemnon* 1125-8, where Cassandra intones: ἄπεχε τῆς βοῦς/ τὸν ταῦρον· ἐν πέπλοισιν/ μελαγκέρῳ λαβοῦσα μηχανήματι/ τύπτει· πίπτει δ' ἐν ἐνύδρῳ τεύχει "Keep the bull away from the **cow**. She, having entrapped the black-horned one in cloth through scheming, strikes him; he falls down in the bath full of water." As Campanile points out, this passage is just one of many instances in Greek and elsewhere in IE where bovines metaphorically refer to human beings.¹³³ Aeschylus' application of such a metaphor to Klytaimnestra in particular may, however, also have been influenced by

Functions of Indo-European Tradition in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus," in *Myth and Law among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. Jaan Puhvel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970): 218-20.

¹³² For text and analysis see Doniger, *Hindu Myths*, 76, 85. A complete transfer of ophidian identity from the snake to the supposed hero figures in a Norse reflex of the serpent-slaying myth. See McDonald, 82 fn. 18.

her appropriation of the serpent-slaying myth's bovine aspect.¹³⁴ While Sophocles recalls Deianeira's erstwhile bovine status in a simile of cow and calf, Aeschylus employs the poetic register of metaphor to incorporate Klytaimnestra's bovine aspect.

Collocation of Cows and Women in Irish and Anatolian

While certain Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth replace the cows with women, related Irish and Anatolian texts collocate cows with women. The Greek substitution of women for cows appears to derive from an innovative distillation of such an original dyad.

1. Cattle Rustling and the Abduction of Women in *Aided Con Rói* and *Táin Bó Cúalnge*

In *Aided Con Rói*, yet another Irish reflex of the serpent-slaying myth, Cú Chulainn not only liberates stolen cattle from his opponent Cú Rói but also rescues the maiden Blathnat, whom Cú Rói has abducted along with the cows.¹³⁵ This suggests that the IE serpent-slaying myth involved not only the release of rustled cattle, but also the liberation of abducted women, a dyad which is reduced in several Greek reflexes to the rescue of abducted women alone (Deianeira, Persephone).

Lending support to this hypothesis is an extremely archaic line of *Táin Bó Cúalnge* that collocates the seizure of cattle with the abduction of women. When Cú Chulainn's father Sualtaim tries to warn the Ulstermen that Connacht raiders have stolen their cattle, he is ignored. In his frustration, Sualtaim tumbles off his horse and is decapitated in the fall. His severed head, however, continues to declaim its warning with renewed vigor: *fir gontair, mná brattair, baí*

¹³³ Enrico Campanile, "IE Metaphors and Non-IE Metaphors," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 2 (1974): 248.

¹³⁴ In fn. 74, I note that the watchman's metaphor of the ox stepping on his tongue derives from an inherited association of the cow with secret speech. The *Agammemnon* thus exhibits two bovine metaphors deriving from IE mythopoeia.

*agthar*¹³⁶ “men are slain, women are abducted, cows are driven,” and finally the Ulstermen take heed.

The IE antiquity of these three clauses, which is already suggested by the tricolon itself,¹³⁷ is even more strikingly indicated by the exceptional occurrence of their verbs in final position. The syntax of the Gaelic Celtic languages is almost exclusively verb-initial. There are instances in which the verb does occur in final position in Old Irish.¹³⁸ However, as Watkins points out, almost all such cases demonstrate alliteration.¹³⁹ None of the three clauses of Sualtaim’s harangue are alliterative, so that some other process must be at work here.

Matasović notes that the final clause, *baí agthar* “cows are driven,” has an etymological match in the Rigvedic syntagm *aj- gās* ‘drive cows,’ which formulaically expresses the release of the cows from *Vṛtra* and his analogues. Matasović thus reconstructs the formula **g^wō(n)s h₂eg’-DRIVE COWS*, the verb-final syntax of which persists in its Irish reflex.¹⁴⁰ We can strengthen Matasović’s case by adding a Greek comparandum to the dossier, the formula *βοῦς ἤλασε(ν)* “he drove the cows,” which describes Hermes’ expulsion of Apollo’s dawn cows from the cave (*H. Herm.* 102) as well as Herakles’ rustling of the solar cattle of Erytheia (*Theogony* 292). Aside from lexical renewal of the verb, *βοῦς ἤλασε(ν)* is syntactically and semantically identical

¹³⁵ See R. I. Best, ed. and trans., “The Tragic Death of Cúroí mac Dáiri,” *Ériu* 2 (1905): 18-35 for the text.

¹³⁶ O’ Rahilly, *Recension I*, line 3425; *idem*, ed. and trans., *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1967), line 4011. There is a problem, possibly a scribal error, with the form *agthar* in the first recension. The 3rd pl. passive verbal ending is *-tair*. The proper form is thus *aghtair*.

¹³⁷ This tricolon resonates with another one uttered by Sualtaim just a few lines earlier. See William Sayers, “*Mani Maidi an Nem...*: Ringing Changes on a Cosmic Motif,” *Ériu* 37 (1986): 102.

¹³⁸ Osborn Bergin, “Syntax of the Verb in Old Irish,” *Ériu* 12 (1938): 197-214.

¹³⁹ Calvert Watkins, “Preliminaries to a Historical and Comparative Analysis of the Syntax of the Old Irish Verb,” *Celtica* 6 (1963): 36.

¹⁴⁰ Matasović, 78-9.

with $*g^w\bar{o}(n)s\ h_2eg'$. Watkins, in fact, notes that the monosyllabic form of the acc. pl. $\beta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ in this formula is probably an archaism, comparable with Vedic $g\acute{a}s$.¹⁴¹

Matasović does not, however, provide any evidence for the inherited status of the two clauses preceding *baí agthar, fir gontair* “men are slain,” and *mná brattair* “women are abducted.” In the case of *mná brattair* “women are abducted,” however, while the precise syntagm is probably no earlier than the composition of *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, the thematic collocation of cattle and women appears to be inherited from the IE serpent-slaying myth. The archaic syntax of the inherited formula *baí agthar* “cows are driven” thus appears to have triggered parallel syntax in its neighboring clause *mná brattair* “women are abducted,” a clause which, from a thematic perspective, is of equal antiquity. In fact, the collocation of cows and women is reiterated in the Ulster king Conchobar’s reply to Sualtaim’s warning: *dobér-sa cach bó 7 cach ben díb cá lias 7 cá machad*¹⁴² “I will restore every cow and every woman to home and abode.” This repetition attests to the collocation’s thematic importance.

Joseph Nagy has demonstrated that Sualtaim’s loquacious severed head derives from the same IE tradition as the equally vociferous severed heads of Orpheus, the Indic Dadhyañc and the Norse Mímir.¹⁴³ It is thus only appropriate for Sualtaim’s to head intone its warning using archaic syntax.

2. Maternal Instincts in the Telipinu Myth

The Hittite Telipinu myth also collocates women with cows. This myth is not properly speaking a direct reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth. It derives from the vanishing god myth type, which

¹⁴¹ Watkins, *Dragon*, 466 fn. 4.

¹⁴² O’Rahilly, *Book of Leisnter*, line 4046.

¹⁴³ J. Nagy, “Hierarchy, Heroes and Heads: Some Indo-European Structures in Greek Myth,” in *Approaches to Greek Myth*, Lowell Edmunds ed. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990): 215-28.

concerns the disappearance of a deity. This myth type is, however, structurally and thematically similar to the serpent-slaying myth, and has fallen together with it in the case of Persephone's rape. As Burkert observes, the sequence of Demeter's wrath, her departure from the gods, and the ensuing failure of the crops parallels Telipinu's rage, his disappearance, and the subsequent ecological turmoil. The Vedic reflex of the vanishing god myth type, Agni hiding in the waters, is also associated with the serpent-slaying myth. Agni conceals himself inside Vṛtra at *RV* 10.124. The conflation of the serpent-slaying myth and the vanishing god myth thus appears to have taken place already in IE.¹⁴⁴ As such, I proceed to treat the Telipinu myth as though it were simply a descendant of the serpent-slaying myth, and thus directly comparable with the other myths examined in this thesis.

At the beginning of the text as we have it, Telipinu becomes enraged, departs from the gods, and goes into hiding. His departure has a Vṛtra-like effect on the environment: the rivers become desiccated, the logs in the fireplace are stifled, and reproduction grinds to a halt. Maternal instincts degenerate as well, so that mothers reject their offspring. This maternal degeneration is described in an epiphoric figure: UDU-uš-za SILÁ-ZU mi-im-ma-aš GUD-ma AMAR-ŠU mi-im-ma-aš¹⁴⁵ “the mother sheep rejected her lamb. The cow rejected her calf.”¹⁴⁶

The gods then send various emissaries in search of Telipinu. The bee finally locates him and coaxes him to return, so that nature might flourish again. In another epiphoric figure, maternal instincts resume: nu-za an-na-aš DUMU-ŠU pí-en-ni-iš-ta UDU-uš SILÁ-ZU pí-en-ni-

¹⁴⁴ I am thus contra Burkert, *Greek Mythology and Ritual*, 125-9, who posits Graeco-Anatolian cultural contact as the reason for the similarity between the Persephone and Telipinu myths.

¹⁴⁵ Johannes Friedrich, ed. *Hethitisches Elementarbuch* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1940-6), 2: 53 lines 8-9.

¹⁴⁶ Hoffner, Harry Jr., *Hittite Myths*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1998), 15 line 2.

iš-ta GUD-ma AMAR-ŠU pí-en-ni-iš-ta¹⁴⁷ “then the mother looked after her child. The sheep looked after her lamb. The cow looked after her calf.”¹⁴⁸

Telipinu’s return is thus functionally equivalent to the slaying of the serpent, and the renewed attention which the previously negligent mother cows lavish upon their offspring is functionally equivalent to the liberation of the cows following the serpents’ defeat. Furthermore, while Irish reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth collocate cattle rustling with the abduction of women, Telipinu’s departure affects the behavior of both human and bovine mothers: nu-za **an-na-aš** DUMU-ŠU pí-en-ni-iš-ta UDU-uš SILÁ-ZU pí-en-ni-iš-ta **GUD-ma** AMAR-ŠU pí-en-ni-iš-ta “then the **mother** looked after her child. The sheep looked after her lamb. The **cow** looked after her calf.” This collocation probably reflects the dyad of cows and women in the IE serpent-slaying myth.

Summation

The substitution of woman or goddess for cow in Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth appears to be a reduction of an inherited collocation of cows with women. Both the bovine and feminine components of the original dyad are retained in Irish reflexes of the serpent slaying myth, as well as in the related Telipinu myth.

¹⁴⁷ Friedrich, 2: 55 lines 24-5.

¹⁴⁸ Hoffner, 18 line 28.

CHAPTER 5

REUNION OF COW AND CALF: AN INHERITED TOPOS

While the eponymous event of the IE serpent-slaying myth is articulated by means of the formula SLAY SERPENT, the subsequent the liberation of the cows is marked by a reference to the dyad COW and CALF. Numerous reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth inherit this reference.

When Indra defeats Vṛtra's analogue the demon Namuci at *RV* 5.30.10, he reunites the liberated cows with their calves: *ihéha vatsair víyutā yád āsan/ sáṇi tá indro asṛjad* "Then Indra reunited [the cows], which had been separated from their **calves** on all sides."¹⁴⁹

The dyad COW and CALF figures in *Senchus Már* as well. According to the text, the cause for which Mogh's cows flee from their captor Asal is that *facubsat a laegu....i. ro be tucait a n-elaidi*¹⁵⁰ "they had left their **calves**...i.e. this was the reason for their straying." Again, the reunion of cow and calf indexes the termination of their captivity.

The resolution of the Telipinu myth, where Telipinu's return is equivalent to the slaying of the serpent, is also marked by the reunion of cow and calf: nu-za an-na-aš DUMU-ŠU pí-en-ni-iš-ta UDU-uš SILÁ-ZU pí-en-ni-iš-ta **GUD-ma AMAR-ŠU** pí-en-ni-iš-ta¹⁵¹ "then the mother looked after her child. The sheep looked after her lamb. The **cow** looked after **her calf**".¹⁵²

A reflex of the topos COW and CALF also surfaces in a visual representation of the serpent-slaying myth on the smaller Golden Horn of Gallehus, an artifact from 5th century Scandinavia. Watkins notes that the runic inscriptions upon the horn are syntactically and

¹⁴⁹ Compare Indra's association with a cow about to birth her calf at *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 8.2.2.9.

¹⁵⁰ *Ancient Laws of Ireland*, 1.66.2-3.

¹⁵¹ Friedrich, 2: 55 lines 24-5.

¹⁵² Hoffner, 18 line 28.

stylistically of Indo-European antiquity,¹⁵³ and Bruce Lincoln demonstrates that the series of images accompanying these inscriptions consists of a compressed yet impressively archaic narration of the serpent-slaying myth.¹⁵⁴ I would add to Lincoln's analysis that the young animal suckling on the teat of its mother next to the left of the slain serpents is also an iconographic archaism. It is a derivative of the same topos underlying the reference to COW and CALF in textual reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth.

The reunion of COW and CALF also figures in Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth. When Circe releases the pigs from the sty and transforms them back into men, there is a shift to bovine imagery: ὥς...πόριες περὶ βούς... ἀμφιτιθέουσι/ μητέρας “just like **calves** around the **cows** surround their mothers, thus [the men] surrounded [Odysseus]” (*Od.* 10.410, 414-5). Foley draws attention to the characteristically Homeric reverse gender aspect of this simile, which portrays Odysseus as a mother cow.¹⁵⁵ However, this detail is a synchronic embellishment upon the inherited reference of COW and CALF. The sudden and unmotivated zoomorphic shift from pig to cow further suggests that this simile is to be interpreted as a relic component of an erstwhile predominantly bovine myth.

A reflex of the topos COW and CALF figures in *Odyssey* 9 as well. Before Polyphemus drives his flocks from the cave, he milks them and ὑπ' ἔμβρυον ἦκεν ἐκάστη “positioned the youngling beneath each [mother]” (*Od.* 9.309). Again, the reunion of mother and offspring accompanies the expulsion of these animals from their enclosure. The syntagm ὑπ' ἔμβρυον ἦκεν ἐκάστη is repeated under isometric conditions at lines 336 and 342. The threefold repetition of this formula suggests that the reunion of the mother with her offspring is a thematically significant detail.

¹⁵³ Watkins, *Dragon*, 23.

¹⁵⁴ Lincoln, *Priests, Warriors and Cattle*, 113-15.

Separation of COW and CALF: Functional Reevaluation of the Inherited Topos

Some reflexes retain the topos' formal components, COW and CALF, but their functional value undergoes reassessment. In the process of this reevaluation, the reflexes of the topos in both the *Trachiniae* and *Aided Énfir Áifí* experience a directional inversion, so that COW and CALF are separated instead of reunited.

1. COW and Maverick CALF in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*

Sophocles draws upon the inherited topos COW and CALF to signal Herakles' liberation of Deianeira from the serpentine Acheloos. When Herakles defeats his opponent and wins Deianeira's hand in marriage, the chorus anticipates the imminent separation of the bride from her mother in a bovine simile: *κάπο μᾶτρὸς ἄφαρ βέβαχ' / ὥστε πόρτις ἐρήμα* "and suddenly she has wandered from her **mother**, just like a maverick **calf**" (*Trach.* 529-30). In light of the fact that Deianeira functions as an allomorph of the liberated bovines of the serpent-slaying myth, Sophocles' simile most likely draws on the inherited reference to COW and CALF indexing the cows' release from the serpent.

However, whereas COW and CALF are reunited in the Indic, Irish and Hittite, Scandinavian and Homeric reflexes of the inherited topos, a directional inversion has occurred in Sophocles' simile, so that the calf is instead separated from its mother. Thus Sophocles, while retaining the formal constituents of the inherited topos, has reevaluated its functional value. On the one hand, the bovine simile in the *Trachiniae* maintains the original placement of the topos COW and CALF directly after the serpent's defeat and is thus conservative from the perspective of textual chronology. On the other hand, the bovine simile no longer signals the liberation of

¹⁵⁵ Foley, 20.

cows from the serpent. Instead, Sophocles assigns to the inherited topos the synchronic function of expressing the nubile Deianeira's imminent separation ἀπο μητρός "from her mother."

2. FROM MOTHER: A Greek Lyric Formulaic Syntagm and Its Zoomorphic Context

Greek lyric employs the same syntagm FROM MOTHER to index a girl's separation from her mother upon sexual maturation. The significance of the syntagm is explicit in Anacreon 408: ἀγανῶς οἶά τε νεβρὸν νεοθηλέα/ γαλαθινὸν ὅς τ' ἐν ὕλῃ κεροέσσης/ ἀπολειφθεὶς ἀπὸ μητρός ἐπτοήθη¹⁵⁶ "...gently, like a young fawn, unweaned, who trembles in the forest because she has wandered off **from** her antlered **mother**." Although these lines are fragmentary, the scenario is quite clear: a man gently (ἀγανῶς) seduces a girl, whose transition into sexual maturity is compared to the wandering of a fawn from her mother.

Archilochus' Cologne Epode provides a comparandum to Anacreon 408. Here the girl is also likened to a fawn as she is being gently (ἡπίως)¹⁵⁷ caressed by her seducer. The formulaic syntagm FROM MOTHER is not directly employed here, but earlier on in the epode the seducer, in an effort to encourage his hesitant lover, addresses her as Ἀμφιμεδοῦς θύγατερ...ἣν νῦν γῆ κατ' εὐρώεσσαν ἔ[χει]¹⁵⁸ "daughter of Amphimedo, whom the dank earth now holds down." The seemingly subordinate reference to the deceased mother is actually quite pointed, emphasizing the girl's isolated state and thus anticipating the erotic encounter soon to follow.

While Anacreon's ἀπὸ μητρός indicates the girl's distancing from her mother during sexual engagement, Sophocles' ἀπο μητρός is a proleptic reference to Deianeira's transfer from her mother to her groom Herakles.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, both Anacreon's ἀπὸ μητρός and

¹⁵⁶ Denys Page, ed., *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 203, fragment 408.

¹⁵⁷ M. L. West, ed., *Elegi et Iambi Graeci* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971-2), 77a, fragment 196a, line 48.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 77, fragment 196a, lines 10-12.

¹⁵⁹ Compare P. Easterling, ed., *Trachiniae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 149.

Sophocles' κάπο ματρὸς occur within zoomorphic contexts, Anacreon comparing the girl to a fawn and her mother to a doe, and Sophocles likening Deianeira to a calf and her mother to a cow.

Just as Sophocles' ἀπο ματρὸς alludes to Deianeira's imminent marriage to Herakles, the probable Sapphic reflex of the syntagm FROM MOTHER, ἄπυ μᾶτερι, also appears to refer to a marital situation.¹⁶⁰ The majority of Sappho 104 is easily translated: Ἐσπερε πάντα φέρων ὅσα φαίνολις ἐσκέδασ' Αὖως/ φέρεις ὄιν', φέρεις αἶγα¹⁶¹ "Hesperus, you bring back everything that radiant Auos has scattered: you bring back the sheep, you bring back the goat." The second line, however, also contains a third clause, the translation of which is problematic. The syntax of this third clause is basically the same as the preceding two, except that it has been amplified by means of the segment under scrutiny: φέρεις ἄπυ μᾶτερι παῖδα.

The interpretation of ἄπυ μᾶτερι is complicated by the fact that we are probably not dealing with a prepositional phrase here, as indicated by the accentuation of ἄπυ, Theodore Bergk's emendation of the *Etymologicum Genuinum*'s incoherent ἄποιον.¹⁶² As a preposition, ἀπύ, the Lesbian dialectal equivalent of Attic-Ionic ἀπό, is oxytone, but in Sappho 104 this lexeme has undergone anastrophe, the process by which disyllabic prepositions functioning as verbal prefixes undergo a forward shift in their accentuation when they occur in tmesis after their verb. Bergk's ἄπυ must thus be taken in conjunction with φέρεις, so that we are really dealing with the compound verb ἀποφέρω. Understanding ἄπυ in this way also elucidates μᾶτερι, for while Arcado-Cypriote ἀπύ does take the dative, there is no evidence to suggest that the Aeolic

¹⁶⁰ Compare Richard Seaford, "The Tragic Wedding," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 57 (1987), 106 fn. 2.

¹⁶¹ Page, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, 86, fragment 104.

¹⁶² Theodore Bergk, ed., *Anthologia Lyrica* (Lipsia: Teubner, 1883), 207.

equivalent does the same.¹⁶³ On the other hand ἀποφέρω, which can mean ‘bring away from,’ frequently takes the so-called *dativus sympatheticus*, as do other verbs of separation.¹⁶⁴

The verb ἀποφέρω, however, can mean not only ‘bring away from’ but also the exact opposite, ‘bring back, return,’ a duplicity in meaning which has caused a certain degree of controversy as to how the verb is to be interpreted here. D. Kidd, who understands it as ‘bring back, return,’ argues that Sappho is merely describing the child coming home to its mother in the evening.¹⁶⁵ Hesperus, however, is not associated with the family unit, but rather with erotic and nuptial situations.¹⁶⁶ As a result, many scholars interpret Sappho’s address to Hesperus as an *epithalamium*. Catullus 62.22, where Hesperus is addressed as *qui natam possis complexu avellere matris* “you who are able to remove the daughter from the embrace of her mother” provides a comparandum and is probably a direct imitation of Sappho 104.¹⁶⁷

A passage from Ovid’s account of the Romanized version of the Persephone myth presents an even closer parallel to Sappho’s description of the celestial vicissitudes. Here Ceres is so relentless in her search for Proserpina that *illam non udis veniens Aurora capillis/cessantem vidit, non Hesperus* “neither Dawn, rising with her dewy locks nor Hesperus saw her ceasing” (*Metamorphoses* 5.440-1). The inevitable cycle of dawn and dusk indicates the futility of Ceres’ quest, which cannot revoke Persephone’s betrothal to Hades, suggesting that the parallel rotation of Aous and Hesperus in Sappho 104 also articulates the inevitability of the daughter’s sexual maturation.

In the context of an *epithalamium*, the clause φέρεις ἄπυ μᾶτερι παῖδα would presumably translate “you bring the child (sc. daughter) away from her mother,” ἄπυ μᾶτερι

¹⁶³ Ekaterini Tzamali, *Syntax und Stil bei Sappho* (Dettelbach: J. H. Röhl, 1996), 390.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ D. Kidd, “Hesperus and Catullus 52,” *Latomus* 33 (1974): 26.

¹⁶⁶ François Lasserre, *Sappho: une autre lecture* (Padova: Antenore, 1989), 45, 48-9.

reflecting the formulaic syntagm FROM MOTHER and its attendant significance. Some, however, while interpreting Sappho 104 as an *epithalamium*, persist in translating φέρεις ἄπυ μᾶτερι παῖδα “you bring the child to her mother.”¹⁶⁸ In order to maintain the nuptial aspect of the fragment, these scholars are required to postulate a fourth clause, now lost, in which Hesperus now brings the girl to her bridegroom. I would suggest that if ἀποφέρω is interpreted as a having separational value, such an additional clause becomes unnecessary, since the formula FROM MOTHER functions in and of itself as a periphrastic allusion to the bride’s transaction to her groom. No overt reference to the groom is necessary: Sappho’s use of FROM MOTHER ensures that he is already *sous entendu*.

A supposed fourth clause would also mar the integrity of what is currently an elegant tricolon. In fact, the second line of Sappho 104 demonstrates Behaghel’s Law of Increasing Members, originally A + B + epithet C, and by extension A + B + any constituent C. The third clause of the second line, which has been syntactically expanded by ἄπυ μᾶτερι, fulfills this criterion.

In addition, Jenny Clay suggests that the triple anaphora of φέρεις with reference to Hesperus in Sappho 104 responds to Hesiod’s likewise triply anaphoric lines on Hesperus’ counterpart Eos (*Works and Days* 578-81).¹⁶⁹ This further vouches for the integrity of Sappho 104 as extant. The triple anaphora of Archilochus 2 is also relevant for Sappho 104. As Nancy Felson observes, the first two clauses, ἐν δορὶ μὲν μοι μᾶζα μεμαγμένη, ἐν δορὶ δ’ οἶνος / Ἰσμαρικὸς¹⁷⁰ “My kneaded bread is in my spear, my Ismaric wine is in my spear”, are both

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, Gregory Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 258.

¹⁶⁸ Cecil Bowra, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 224, David Campbell, ed., *Greek Lyric Poetry* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1967), 282, Anne Carson, ed. and trans., *If not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 373.

¹⁶⁹ Jenny Clay, “Sappho’s Hesperus,” *Philologus* 124 (1980): 304-5.

¹⁷⁰ West, *Iambi et Elegi*, 2 fragment 2.

semantically and syntactically compatible.¹⁷¹ In the third clause, however, Archilochus makes a shift in sense and syntax: πίνω δ' ἐν δορὶ κεκλιμένος “I drink while leaning on my spear.”

Sappho 104 exhibits a similar device. The first two clauses describe Hesperus returning the sheep and goat, but the third, in a sudden and jarring directional disjunction, describes the separation of daughter from mother.

Ekaterina Tzamali compares Sappho's combination of anaphora and semantic discontinuity to yet another anaphoric Hesiodic passage at *Works and Days* 514-19, where the chill of Boreas διάησι δασυστέρνων περ' ἐόντων/ καὶ τε διὰ ῥινοῦ βοὸς ἔρχεται...καὶ τε δι' αἶγα ἄησι...πῶεα δ' οὔτι...οὐ διὰησι...καὶ τε διὰ παρθενικῆς...οὐ διὰησιν ἢ τε δόμων ἔντοσθε φιλη παρὰ μητέρι μίμνει “blows through even shaggy animals, and it blows through both the cow's hide and the goat, but it does not blow through fleece, nor does it blow through the maiden who remains inside the house next to her dear mother.”¹⁷² This passage also deserves to be compared with Sappho 104 because of the contrast between the human world and the sphere of animal existence upon which both are based. While Hesiod's Boreas is able to blast through animals' fur, but does not affect the girl who is protected by her mother, Sappho's Hesperus returns animals to their byres, but wrenches the daughter away from her mother.

It seems quite certain that the syntagm ἄπυ μάτερι in Sappho 104 reflects the formula FROM MOTHER also seen in Anacreon's ἀπὸ μητρὸς and Sophocles' ἀπο ματρὸς. Anacreon compares the girl to a fawn and Sophocles likens Deianeira to a calf. Sappho's ἄπυ μάτερι also occurs within a zoomorphic context, the daughter's separation from her mother being in contrast to the sheep and goat returning to the fold.

¹⁷¹ Nancy Felson, “Radical Semantic Shifts in Archilochus,” *Classical Journal* 77 (1981): 6-8.

¹⁷² Tzamali, 390.

Sophocles adapts the inherited topos COW and CALF by incorporating the Greek lyric syntagm FROM MOTHER and its associated zoomorphism. This conflation triggers a directional inversion, so that traditional reunion of COW and CALF seen in Indic, Irish, Hittite, Scandinavian and Homeric is reversed. The CALF Deianeira instead experiences separation from her mother.

3. COW, CALF and a Bovine Funerary Rite in *Aided Énfir Áifi*

The dyad COW and CALF has undergone similar directional inversion in the Irish text *Aided Énfir Áifi* ‘The Death of Aife’s Only Son,’ where Connla is the only son of Aife and Cú Chulainn.¹⁷³ This narrative, in which Cú Chulainn slays Connla, is not a direct descendant of the serpent-slaying myth, but rather a reflex of another myth of IE provenance, the *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* ‘father-son combat.’ Aside from Cú Chulainn’s encounter with Connla, the *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* occurs in Persian epic, where Sohrab slays his own son Rustam, and in Russian ballad, where Il’ya slays his own son Sokolnichek.¹⁷⁴

Aided Énfir Áifi, however, conflates the *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* with the serpent-slaying myth. The serpent-slaying aspect of *Aided Énfir Áifi* is demonstrated by its similarity to Cú Chulainn’s struggle with the Connacht warrior Lóch and the anguiform Morrígan in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*. Cú Chulainn encounters the Morrígan in the waters of a ford; he engages Connla in a river. Furthermore, Cú Chulainn slays both Lóch and Connla with his unique weapon, the *gae bolga*.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ For text, see Kuno Meyer, ed. and trans., “The Death of Connla.” *Ériu* 1 (1904): 113-21.

¹⁷⁴ For a full treatment of the IE *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* see Dean Miller, “Defining and Expanding the Indo-European *Vater-Sohnes Kampf* Theme,” *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 22 (1994): 307-28; Anna Ranero, “An Old Indo-European Motif Revisited: the Mortal Combat Between Father and Son,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual UCLA Indo-European Conference* ed. Karlene Jones-Bley *et al.* (Washington: Institute for the Study of Man, 1998): 123-41.

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Nagy, “Otter, Salmon and Eel in Traditional Gaelic Narrative,” *Studia Celtica* 21 (1985-6): 131.

Aided Énfir Áifi's conflation of the *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* with the serpent-slaying myth may reflect a traditional association. Filicide also figures in the Hittite reflex of the serpent-slaying myth, the Storm God's defeat of the *illuyankaš* 'eel-serpent.'¹⁷⁶ In this myth the Storm God enters into combat with the *illuyankaš* in the sea and slays both his ophidian opponent and his own son.¹⁷⁷ The correlation between *Aided Énfir Áifi* and the *illuyankaš* myth suggests that the *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* and the serpent-slaying myth were affiliated already in IE.

Aided Énfir Áifi retains the bovine aspect of the serpent-slaying myth. After Cú Chulainn has slain Connla, the Ulstermen honor his death by separating the mother cows from their calves for three days: *co cend trí tráth nicon reilgthe láig día mbúaib la hUltu ina diaid* "to the end of three days, no **calf** was let to their **cows** by the men of Ulster to commemorate him."¹⁷⁸ Although the quarantining of cows from calves figures as a funerary rite in another medieval Irish text,¹⁷⁹ the inherited reference to COW and CALF which indexes the liberation of these bovines is probably also at work here. However, while *Aided Énfir Áifi* retains the formal components COW and CALF, it reassesses their functional value. The topos does not signal slaying of the serpent and subsequent release of cattle in *Aided Énfir Áifi*. Instead, COW and CALF signals the slaying of Connla. Connla thus replaces the SERPENT. Unlike the original SERPENT, Connla is not a withholder of cattle. As a result, the topos COW and CALF undergoes a functional shift in order to remain a viable and coherent component of the narrative. It does so by merging with the medieval Irish funerary rite in which cow is separated from calf. The resultant directional inversion from the original reunion of COW and CALF to separation in *Aided Énfir Áifi* parallels Sophocles' bovine simile, in which the CALF Deianeira is separated from her mother.

¹⁷⁶ McDonald, 84 fn. 24. Katz, "Eel," 276 fn. 35 also adds the *illuyankaš* myth to the IE *Vater-Sohnes-Kampf* dossier.

¹⁷⁷ Hoffner, 13.

¹⁷⁸ Meyer, "Connla," 120.

Mother and Offspring: Theomorphic and Anthropomorphic Variations on the Inherited Topos

In two Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth, Persephone's rape and Orestes' matricide, the inherited topos COW and CALF undergoes a shift from zoomorphic to theomorphic and anthropomorphic imagery.

1. Demeter and Persephone

Demeter's recovery of Persephone from Hades is functionally equivalent to the liberation of the cows from the serpent. As noted above, her erstwhile bovine associations are reflected in her cult name Μελίβοια 'she who possesses cows yielding honey.' In light of the fact that Persephone replaces the bovines of the serpent-slaying myth, the reunification of Demeter and Persephone is perhaps a theomorphic adaptation of the inherited topos COW and CALF, in which Demeter replaces COW and Persephone CALF.¹⁸⁰ While the reference to the reunion of COW and CALF originally signals the cows' liberation, the reunion of Demeter with her daughter indicates Persephone's recovery from Hades.

However, while the image of Demeter and her daughter falls together with the topos COW and CALF, the dyad of Demeter and Persephone itself derives from a scenario of IE antiquity, in which an aquatic goddess is portrayed with her offspring. Demeter, whose name Janda derives from IE **dah₂*- 'water' and **mah₂tēr* 'mother,' has a Vedic analogue in Vṛtra's mother Dānu, whose name is also probably from **dah₂*-. While Demeter and Persephone are reunited, Dānu hovers over Vṛtra at *RV* 1.32.9c: *úttarā sūr ādharahī putrá āsīd/ dānuḥ śaye sahāvatsā ná dhenúḥ* "Above was the mother, below the son: Dānu lay like a **milk cow** with her

¹⁷⁹ Hull, Vernam, "The Death of Connla," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 29 (1962-4): 190-1.

¹⁸⁰ The reunion of Demeter and Persephone is memorably described in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 385-9.

calf.¹⁸¹ Here Dānu and her son are overtly likened to COW and CALF. It can hardly be a coincidence that both Demeter’s reunion with Persephone and the genetically related image of Dānu reclining with Vṛtra merge with the inherited topos COW and CALF. That Dānu and her son are overtly likened to bovines confirm that Demeter and her bovine daughter Persephone Μελίβοια are theomorphic substitutes for COW and CALF.

2. Klytaimnestra and Orestes

Like Persephone, Klytaimnestra replaces the cows of the serpent-slaying myth. Her bovine aspect is reflected in the imagery of her lactating breast in the *Choephoroi*, as well as in the *Agamemnon*, where Cassandra’s prophecy refers to her as a cow: ἄπεχε τῆς βοῶς/ τὸν ταῦρον· ἐν πέπλοισιν/ μελαγκέρωι λαβοῦσα μηχανήματι/ τύπτει· πίπτει δ’ ἐν ἐνύδρῳι τεύχει “Keep the bull away from the **cow**. She, having entrapped the black-horned one in cloth through scheming, strikes him; he falls down in the bath full of water.”

In light of the fact that Klytaimnestra stands in for the bovines of the serpent-slaying myth, the image of the serpent Orestes suckling at Klytaimnestra’s breast may be an anthropomorphic reflex of the inherited topos COW and CALF, Klytaimnestra replacing COW, and her son Orestes CALF. The image has been appropriately perverted here. The original significance of the topos COW and CALF is positive, signaling the liberation of the imprisoned cattle and subsequent reunion of the mothers with their offspring. Orestes’ reunion with his mother, on the other hand, is a polluted event that anticipates his imminent matricide. Viewing

¹⁸¹ Miriam Robbins Dexter, “Reflections on the Goddess *Donu,” *Mankind Quarterly* 31 (1990), 52-3 suggests that Danaë is also a Greek congener of Dānu. The match is etymologically possible if Danaë’s name is derived from the zero grade of IE **dah₂-* ‘water.’ Danaë’s mythological profile also focuses on her maternal aspect: she and her son Perseus are imprisoned in a chest and set afloat on the sea. This scenario is poignantly described by Semonides. For the text see Page, *Poetae Melici*, 284, fragment 543.

the dyad of Klytaimnestra and Orestes against the backdrop of the positively valenced topos COW and CALF brings into even more prominent relief the horrific nature of Orestes' crime.

Maternal *Mania* in Dionysian Cult

Bacchic *mania*, the setting and symptoms of which derive from the IE serpent-slaying myth, also demonstrates a semi-anthropomorphic variant of COW and CALF. When the Bacchantes become inspired, they abandon their babies and nurse wild animals instead: αἱ δ' ἀγκάλασι δορκάδ' ἢ σκύμνους λύκων/ ἀγρίου ἔχουσαι λευκὸν ἐδίδοσαν γάλα/ ὅσαις νεοτόκοις μαστὸς ἦν σπαργῶν ἔτι/ βρέφη λιπούσαις “some, cradling fawns or wolf cubs in their arms, gave their white milk to the wild animals, as many as had a breast still full to bursting because they had abandoned their new-born infants” (*Bacchae* 699-702). Like Klytaimnestra's lactating breast in the *Agamemnon*, the milk emanating from the Bacchantes' breast appears to derive from the motif of milking the dawn cows. The validity of this claim is confirmed by the fact that the Bacchantes' lactation takes place in conjunction with Pentheus' cows ascending the crag at dawn.

The Dionysian reflex of the inherited topos is simultaneously conservative and innovative. On the one hand, the topos' formal components COW and CALF are duly replaced by Bacchant and wild animal. On the other, these wild animals usurp the role of the Bacchantes' infants, whom the mothers neglect as a result of their frenzied condition. The original genetic kinship between the topos' original constituents, COW and her own CALF, is violated in Dionysian cult: the Bacchantes tend to strange beasts instead of their own offspring. This violation reflects the bouleversement of normal behavior that is the essence of Dionysian *mania*.

Summation

The inherited topos COW and CALF indexing the bovines' release surfaces in numerous Greek reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth. In some instances, the constituents of the inherited topos have been formally renewed. Demeter and Persephone are theomorphic substitutes, and Klytaimnestra and Orestes anthropomorphic replacements for COW and CALF. Despite the formal shift from bovines to goddesses or humans, the original significance of the topos is retained. While the COW and CALF signals the cows' liberation, Demeter's reunion with Persephone punctuates her return from Hades, and the dyad of Orestes and Klytaimnestra anticipates the imminent matricide, which is functionally equivalent to the slaying of the serpent. An anthropomorphic reflex of the topos COW and CALF also figures in Euripides' description of Dionysian *mania*, where the lactation of the Bacchantes' breasts is equivalent to the milking of the dawn cows.

In the *Trachiniae*, Sophocles maintains the formal constituents COW and CALF, but the semantic value of the topos has been reevaluated. As a result of its conflation with the Greek lyric formulaic syntagm FROM MOTHER, Sophocles' reflex of the inherited topos refocuses its attention on the CALF Deianeira's imminent separation from her mother.

CONCLUSION

Greek reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth retain the motifs, semiotics, and precise textual fragments of the proto-myth's bovine aspect.

The inherited tradition of cow as symbol for dawn manifests itself in Greek as the Cyclops' flocks, which exit the cave at the appearance of the dawn goddess Eos. The simultaneity of the flocks' expulsion and Eos' appearance signals the auroral aspect of these animals.

The pigs of *Odyssey* 10 also descend from the dawn cows of the proto-myth. Their expulsion from the sty by Eos' hypostasis Circe indicates their auroral aspect.

Apollo's cattle retain the original bovine identity of the proto-myth's dawn cows. Hermes drives these cows from the cave into φάος 'light' (*H. Herm.* 402). Gk. φάος derives from IE **bheh₂-* 'radiant,' a root which is associated with both Eos and her Indic analogue Uṣas. The cows' emergence into φάος is an allusion to their filiation with dawn.

The recurring motif of opening doors also indicates the myth's auroral component. Eos is connected with doors at *H. Aphr.* 236: **θύρας**...ἐπέθηκε **φαιινὰς** "[Eos] closed the **radiant doors**." Eos' hypostasis Circe appropriates this auroral formula in *Odyssey* 10: **θύρας** ὥϊξε **φαιινὰς** "[Circe] opened the **radiant doors**" (*Od.* 10.230, 256). The formula recurs, minus φαιινὰς and plus the preverb ἀνα-, when Circe releases the pigs: **θύρας**... ἀνέ~~ω~~ξε συφειοῦ "she **opened** the **doors** of the sty" (*Od.* 10.389). The application of the formula in the context of the pigs' expulsion indicates their auroral aspect.

The opening of doors also figures in *Odyssey* 9. The motif's auroral semantics are indicated by means of its collocation with the appearance of Eos: Polyphemus moves aside the $\theta\upsilon\rho\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$ 'door-stone' of his cave and sends his flocks to pasture at dawn.

Polyphemus' milking of his flocks also alludes to their auroral identity. Again, the auroral semantics of the milking is indicated by means of temporal conjunction with the appearance of Eos: the Cyclops milks his flocks at dawn. This matutinal milking corresponds to the milking of the Rigvedic and Irish dawn cows.

The lactation of Klytaimnestra's breast in the *Choephoroi* derives from the milking motif of the IE serpent-slaying myth. Klytaimnestra's appropriation of the cows' role is confirmed in Cassandra's metaphor of Klytaimnestra as cow.

A Greek reflex of the IE serpent-slaying myth also retains the aquatic symbolism of the cow. The cows' association with water in the Acheloos myth is indicated by the allomorphy of bovines and water amongst its alternate versions. In some accounts, Herakles wins the horn of the bovine Amaltheia; in the *Trachiniae*, Herakles wins Deianeira. However, Sophocles compares Deianeira to a calf. In Diodorus Siculus' interpretation of the myth, Herakles diverts the course of the river Acheloos. Water and bovine (Amaltheia's horn, Deianeira as calf) are thus functional allomorphs in the Acheloos myth.

Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth also inherit the semantic stratum in which cow is a symbol for poetic inspiration. This symbolism is reflected in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, where Apollo gives his cows to Hermes in exchange for the lyre and tutelage in its use. The same transaction figures in the Mnesiepes Inscription, where the Muses purchase Archilochus' cow and give him a lyre in exchange, thus inaugurating his career as an iambic poet. This exchange of cow for poetic inspiration in Greek myth is the inverted equivalent of the *dākṣiṇā*, the cow with

which the Vedic patron rewarded his poet. In light of the fact that the *dákṣiṇā* cow has a medieval Irish correlate, it appears to be of IE antiquity. The Hellenic exchange of cow for lyre is thus an innovative inversion of this inherited transaction. While the poet gains a cow in exchange for a composition in Vedic and Irish, the Greek poet gives a cow in exchange for the skill to compose.

The ἵχνη ‘tracks’ of Apollo’s cattle also signify their association with poetic inspiration. The TRACK(S) of the cow is an inherited metaphor for poetic inspiration. This metaphor also figures in Vedic mythopoeia, where the poet who knows the *padám* ‘track’ of the cow achieves poetic inspiration.

Naming the cow is another metaphor for poetic inspiration of IE origin. This metaphor figures in the Polyidos myth, where the sage describes, quasi names, Minos’ cow and gains prophetic abilities as a result. The Vedic correlate to this situation is the formulaic syntagm NAME(S) OF COW(S). This formula is associated with both poetic and prophetic inspiration. While Polyidos gains prophetic powers by knowing the superior description of Minos’ cow, the Vedic poet gains poetic inspiration by knowing the NAME(S) OF THE COW(S).

The βουγονία also demonstrates an association between bovines and poetry. The bees emanating from the pulverized bovine carcass symbolize poetic inspiration. Orpheus’ association with the βουγονία in *Georgic* 4 indicates the ritual’s poetic significance. The cow created by the Ṛbhus, Orpheus’ Indic analogues, is also associated with poetry. The parallelism between Orpheus’ βουγονία and the Ṛbhus’ revival of the cow suggests that these two rituals derive from an IE precursor, the BOUGONIA. The Irish reflex of the BOUGONIA is the Bóand myth, in which the cow goddess’ slaughter results in the generation of the river Boyne, a source of *imbas* for poets in medieval Irish literature.

The Orphic gold leaves appropriate aspects of the IE serpent-slaying myth. The bovine aspect of the serpent-slaying myth figures as the metaphor of animal falling into milk in the Orphic *lamellae*. While the cows and their milk are associated with poetic inspiration in the serpent-slaying myth, the Orphic gold leaves make a shift from poetic to sacral inspiration. As a result, the animal falling into milk metaphor signifies the transmigration of the soul rather than poetic inspiration. The milk's shift from poetic to sacral symbolism also figures in Dionysian cult, where flowing milk is a symptom of the Bacchantes' inspired state.

Several Greek reflexes of the IE serpent-slaying myth replace the original bovines of the proto-myth with a woman or goddess. Herakles rescues Deianeira instead of liberating cows from Acheloos in the *Trachiniae*. However, Sophocles alludes to Deianeira's erstwhile bovine status by likening her to a maverick calf.

Persephone also supplants the cows. Her abduction and subsequent release from Hades are functionally equivalent to the cows' imprisonment and ensuing liberation. A relic of Persephone's original bovine identity persists in her cult name Μελίβοια 'she who possesses cows yielding honey.'

Klytaimnestra also assumes the role of the cows. Cassandra's prophecy, which refers to Klytaimnestra as a cow, directly attests to her bovine aspect. Her lactating breast also indicates that she replaces the cows. Klytaimnestra's lactating breast is an anthropomorphic allomorph of the milking of the dawn cows in Rigvedic and Irish, as well as the milking of Polyphemus' flocks in Homeric.

The substitution of woman or goddess for cow derives from the distillation of an original collocation of cows and women. Irish reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth and the related Telipinu myth retain the original bipartite collocation.

Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth inherit the reference to COW and CALF that indexes the cows' liberation from their ophidian jailor. In light of the fact that its reflexes are so numerous, the topos COW and CALF appears to have been considered a profoundly important detail. Much like the persistent formulaic syntagm SLAY SERPENT, which articulates the myth's eponymous act in a vast number of its reflexes, COW and CALF appears to be an essential component of the myth's bovine aspect.

The women and goddesses that replace the cows in certain Greek reflexes of the serpent-slaying myth subsume the topos COW and CALF. Demeter replaces COW and her daughter CALF in the Persephone myth. Likewise, Klytaimnestra stands in for COW and her son for CALF in the myth of Orestes' matricide. Finally, the Bacchantes are substitutes for COW, and the wild animals they nurse assume the role of CALF.

In its Sophoclean reflex, the COW and CALF are formally retained but undergo functional reassessment. Since the SERPENT Acheloos does not withhold cattle, the functional value of the topos is in danger of becoming opaque. Therefore, Deianeira is separated from rather reunited with her mother. This directional inversion is triggered by the Greek lyric syntagm FROM MOTHER, which expresses a girl's sexual maturation. Sophocles' COW and CALF thus indexes the separation of the bride from her mother rather than the liberation of the CALF Deianeira from the SERPENT Acheloos. While conserving the formal components COW and CALF, Sophocles innovates away from the original value of the inherited topos. This creativity ensures that COW and CALF do not become functionally anachronistic. Instead, by reevaluating their function within the narrative, Sophocles synchronically reinvigorates COW and CALF, thereby ensuring that the archaic topos continues to hold significance for the contemporary audience.

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