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CUSTOM AND  
MYTH

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*Custom and Myth New Edition:*

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# Andrew Lang

## Custom and Myth

### New Edition

## PREFACE

Since the first publication of *Custom and Myth*, many other works have appeared, dealing on the same principles with matters of belief, fable and ritual. Were the book to be re-written, numerous fresh pieces of evidence might be adduced in support of its conclusions. In Mr. Frazer's *Golden Bough* (Macmillan) the student will find a carefully conceived argument, and a large collection of testimonies, bearing on the wide diffusion, among savages and civilised peoples, of ancient rites and ancient ideas. The works of Mannhardt have practically been introduced to the English reader by Mr. Frazer, with much new matter of his own. The main topics are the worship of human gods and the superstitions connected with vegetation. To push a theory too far is the common temptation of mythologists, and perhaps Mr. Frazer's cornstalk does rather threaten to overshadow the whole earth and exclude the light of sun and sky. But the reader, whatever his opinions, will find great pleasure and profit in Mr. Frazer's remarkable studies, and in those of Mannhardt, which

were unknown to myself when I wrote *Custom and Myth*.

In Miss Harrison's volume on Athenian Myths the student will find the ætiological theory (namely, that many myths were invented to explain obscure points of ritual) applied in a number of classical instances. A singularly ingenious study of Roman myths is presented in Mr. Jevons's edition of Plutarch's *Romaine Questions* (Nutt). These are recent instances of the use of the 'anthropological' method, first firmly established by Mr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, and now holding its own as a recognised instrument in the study of the historical development of the imagination. In Rosscher's *Ausführliches Lexikon* of Greek and Roman mythology, the earlier method of the philologists is usually adopted, and the work, still in course of publication, is most useful for its recondite learning.

These notes are meant for the guidance of any reader who may care to push his studies further than the sketches of the present volume.

On one or two points some remarks may be necessary. The author has been not unnaturally accused of seeing Totems everywhere. He would therefore protest that he does not regard every beast and bird which appears in myths or in religious art as necessarily a Totem. But he inclines to think that where Celts or Greeks claim descent from a god who pursued his amours in animal shape, or where a tribe bears the name of an animal, regards that animal with religious respect, and places its effigy beside that of a god, the Totemistic hypothesis colligates the

phenomena, and deserves consideration. These and other early features of religion occur mainly in Greece after the Homeric age. It has been suggested, for example, by Mr. Walter Leaf, that Homer's people, the Achæans, were free from all such ideas as Totemism, worship of the dead, ritual of purification for homicide, the mysteries, and so forth. These were notions held by the Pelasgi, and revived or retained by the Ionians, an older and distinct stock of Pelasgian origin. I am unable to convince myself in this matter, not knowing how much of the refinement in the Homeric poems is due to the genius of the poet, who might ignore practices with which he was familiar. They may have been Pelasgo-Ionians, who derived Helen's birth from the Swan, or Homer may have chosen to slur over an Achæan legend, and so on in other cases; for example, as to the descent of the Myrmidons from Zeus in the shape of an Ant. On another point a word may be said. One has been accused of believing that identical popular tales, the same incident in the same sequence of plot, might arise simultaneously in savage imaginations in all parts of the world. In *Custom and Myth* it will be plain that I say nothing of the sort. 'The Far-Travelled Tale' is one instance chosen to show that such a story must probably have drifted, somehow, round the world. On the other hand, in 'Cupid and Psyche,' it is asserted that *the central incident* might be invented wherever the nuptial taboo on which it is based was recognised. The exact sequence of incidents in the 'Cupid and Psyche' of Apuleius, on the other hand, could probably only be invented once for all. But

we find the central incident where we do not find the sequence of incidents which make up 'Cupid and Psyche.' A full statement of my ideas is prefixed to Miss Roalfe Cox's *Cinderella* (Folklore Society). As a rule, the incidents in *Märchen* are common to all races; an artistic combination of many of these in a plot must probably be due to a single imagination, and the plot must have been diffused in the ways described in *Custom and Myth*. Independently evolved myths may closely resemble each other when they account for some natural phenomenon, or are based on some common custom. Wherever a sequence of such incidents is found in a distinct and artistic plot, we may provisionally assign diffusion from an original centre as that cause. Singular as are the coincidences of fancy, it is unlikely that they ever produced *exactly* the same tale in lands which have never been in communication with each other. I am unable to conjecture why Mr. Jacobs, M. Cosquin, and probably other critics, regard me as maintaining that all similar tales in all countries have been independently evolved. I have always allowed for the possibility both of diffusion and, to a certain extent, of coincidence, as in the Red Indian forms of 'Cupid and Psyche' and of 'The Dead Bride,' a shape of the story of Eurydice. Discussion would be simpler, if controversialists took the trouble to understand each other.

In the Report of the Folklore Congress of 1891 (p. 65) I find that I said 'the suggestion that exactly the same plot, in exactly the same shape, and with exactly the same incidents, can have been invented by several persons independently, seems to me

inconceivable,' and on p. 74 I find M. Cosquin alleging that my opinion is the very reverse, followed by Mr. Jacobs (p. 85). I have tried to explain that I believe in no such exact coincidences of imagination, though how far precisely coincidence may go is a delicate question.

# INTRODUCTION

Though some of the essays in this volume have appeared in various serials, the majority of them were written expressly for their present purpose, and they are now arranged in a designed order. During some years of study of Greek, Indian, and savage mythologies, I have become more and more impressed with a sense of the inadequacy of the prevalent method of comparative mythology. That method is based on the belief that myths are the result of a disease of language, as the pearl is the result of a disease of the oyster. It is argued that men at some period, or periods, spoke in a singular style of coloured and concrete language, and that their children retained the phrases of this language after losing hold of the original meaning. The consequence was the growth of myths about supposed persons, whose names had originally been mere 'appellations.' In conformity with this hypothesis the method of comparative mythology examines the proper names which occur in myths. The notion is that these names contain a key to the meaning of the story, and that, in fact, of the story the names are the germs and the oldest surviving part.

The objections to this method are so numerous that it is difficult to state them briefly. The attempt, however, must be made. To desert the path opened by the most eminent scholars is in itself presumptuous; the least that an innovator can do is to

give his reasons for advancing in a novel direction. If this were a question of scholarship merely, it would be simply foolhardy to differ from men like Max Müller, Adalbert Kuhn, Bréal, and many others. But a revolutionary mythologist is encouraged by finding that these scholars frequently differ from each other. Examples will be found chiefly in the essays styled '[The Myth of Cronus](#),' '[A Far-Travelled Tale](#),' and '[Cupid and Psyche](#).' Why, then, do distinguished scholars and mythologists reach such different goals? Clearly because their method is so precarious. They all analyse the names in myths;<sup>1</sup> but, where one scholar decides that the name is originally Sanskrit, another holds that it is purely Greek, and a third, perhaps, is all for an Accadian etymology, or a Semitic derivation. Again, even when scholars agree as to the original root from which a name springs, they differ as much as ever as to the meaning of the name in its present place. The inference is that the analysis of names, on which the whole edifice of philological 'comparative mythology' rests, is a foundation of shifting sand. The method is called 'orthodox,' but, among those who practise it, there is none of the beautiful unanimity of orthodoxy.

These objections are not made by the unscholarly anthropologist alone. Curtius has especially remarked the difficulties which beset the 'etymological operations' in the case

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the names in Greek myths are Greek, and intelligible. A few others (such as Zeus) can be interpreted by aid of Sanskrit. But even when the meaning of the name is known, we are little advanced in interpretation of the myth.

of proper names. ‘Peculiarly dubious and perilous is mythological etymology. Are we to look for the sources of the divine names in aspects of nature, or in moral conceptions; in special Greek geographical conditions, or in natural circumstances which are everywhere the same: in dawn with her rays, or in clouds with their floods; are we to seek the origin of the names of heroes in things historical and human, or in physical phenomena?’<sup>2</sup> Professor Tiele, of Leyden, says much the same thing: ‘The uncertainties are great, and there is a constant risk of taking mere *jeux d’esprit* for scientific results.’<sup>3</sup> Every name has, if we can discover or conjecture it, a meaning. That meaning – be it ‘large’ or ‘small,’ ‘loud’ or ‘bright,’ ‘wise’ or ‘dark,’ ‘swift’ or ‘slow’ – is always capable of being explained as an epithet of the sun, or the cloud, or of both. Whatever, then, a name may signify, some scholars will find that it originally denoted the cloud, if they belong to one school, or the sun or dawn, if they belong to another faction. Obviously this process is a mere *jeu d’esprit*. This logic would be admitted in no other science, and, by similar arguments, any name whatever might be shown to be appropriate to a solar hero.

The scholarly method has now been applied for many years, and what are the results? The ideas attained by the method have been so popularised that they are actually made to enter into the education of children, and are published in primers and

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<sup>2</sup> Compare De Cara: *Essame Critico*.

<sup>3</sup> *Revue de l’Hist. des Rel.*, ii. 136.

catechisms of mythology. But what has a discreet scholar to say to the whole business? 'The difficult task of interpreting mythical names has, so far, produced few certain results' – so writes Otto Schrader.<sup>4</sup> Though Schrader still has hopes of better things, it is admitted that the present results are highly disputable. In England, where one set of these results has become an article of faith, readers chiefly accept the opinions of a single etymological school, and thus escape the difficulty of making up their minds when scholars differ. But differ scholars do, so widely and so often, that scarcely any solid advantages have been gained in mythology from the philological method.

The method of philological mythology is thus discredited by the disputes of its adherents. The system may be called orthodox, but it is an orthodoxy which alters with every new scholar who enters the sacred enclosure. Even were there more harmony, the analysis of names could throw little light on myths. In stories the names may well be, and often demonstrably are, the latest, not the original, feature. Tales, at first told of 'Somebody,' get new names attached to them, and obtain a new local habitation, wherever they wander. 'One of the leading personages to be met in the traditions of the world is really no more than – Somebody. There is nothing this wondrous creature cannot achieve; one only restriction binds him at all – that the name he assumes shall have some sort of congruity with the office he undertakes, *and even*

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<sup>4</sup> *Sprachvergleichung und Urgeschichte*, p. 431.

*from this he oftentimes breaks loose.*<sup>5</sup> We may be pretty sure that the adventures of Jason, Perseus, Œdipous, were originally told only of 'Somebody.' The names are later additions, and vary in various lands. A glance at the essay on '[Cupid and Psyche](#)' will show that a history like theirs is known, where neither they nor their counterparts in the Veda, Urvasi and Pururavas were ever heard of; while the incidents of the Jason legend are familiar where no Greek word was ever spoken. Finally, the names in common use among savages are usually derived from natural phenomena, often from clouds, sky, sun, dawn. If, then, a name in a myth can be proved to mean cloud, sky, sun, or what not (and usually one set of scholars find clouds where others see the dawn), we must not instantly infer that the myth is a nature-myth. Though, doubtless, the heroes in it were never real people, the names are as much common names of real people in the savage state, as Smith and Brown are names of civilised men.

For all these reasons, but chiefly because of the fact that stories are usually anonymous at first, that names are added later, and that stories naturally crystallise round any famous name, heroic, divine, or human, the process of analysis of names is most precarious and untrustworthy. A story is told of Zeus: Zeus means sky, and the story is interpreted by scholars as a sky myth. The modern interpreter forgets, first, that to the myth-maker sky did not at all mean the same thing as it means to him. Sky meant, not an airy, infinite, radiant vault, but a person, and, most

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<sup>5</sup> *Prim. Cult.*, i. 394.

likely, a savage person. Secondly, the interpreter forgets that the tale (say the tale of Zeus, Demeter, and the mutilated Ram) may have been originally anonymous, and only later attributed to Zeus, as unclaimed jests are attributed to Sheridan or Talleyrand. Consequently no heavenly phenomena will be the basis and explanation of the story. If one thing in mythology be certain, it is that myths are always changing masters, that the old tales are always being told with new names. Where, for example, is the value of a philological analysis of the name of Jason? As will be seen in the essay '[A Far-Travelled Tale](#),' the analysis of the name of Jason is fanciful, precarious, disputed, while the essence of his myth is current in Samoa, Finland, North America, Madagascar, and other lands, where the name was never heard, and where the characters in the story have other names or are anonymous.

For these reasons, and others too many to be adduced here, I have ventured to differ from the current opinion that myths must be interpreted chiefly by philological analysis of names. The system adopted here is explained in the first essay, called '[The Method of Folklore](#).' The name, Folklore, is not a good one, but 'comparative mythology' is usually claimed exclusively by the philological interpreters.

The second essay, '[The Bull-Roarer](#),' is intended to show that certain peculiarities in the Greek mysteries occur also in the mysteries of savages, and that on Greek soil they are survivals of savagery.

'[The Myth of Cronus](#)' tries to prove that the first part of the

legend is a savage nature-myth, surviving in Greek religion, while the sequel is a set of ideas common to savages.

‘[Cupid and Psyche](#)’ traces another Aryan myth among savage races, and attempts to show that the central incident of the tale may have had its origin in a rule of barbarous etiquette.

‘[A Far-Travelled Tale](#)’ examines a part of the Jason myth. This myth appears neither to be an explanation of natural phenomena (like part of ‘[The Myth of Cronus](#)’), nor based on a widespread custom (like ‘[Cupid and Psyche](#)’). The question is asked whether the story may have been diffused by slow filtration from race to race all over the globe, as there seems no reason why it should have been invented separately (as a myth explanatory of natural phenomena or of customs might be) in many different places.

‘[Apollo and the Mouse](#)’ suggests hypothetically, as a possible explanation of the tie between the God and the Beast, that Apollo-worship superseded, but did not eradicate, Totemism. The suggestion is little more than a conjecture.

‘[Star Myths](#)’ points out that Greek myths of stars are a survival from the savage stage of fancy in which such stories are natural.

‘[Moly and Mandragora](#)’ is a study of the Greek, the modern, and the Hottentot folklore of magical herbs, with a criticism of a scholarly and philological hypothesis, according to which Moly is the dog-star and Circe the moon.

‘[The Kalevala](#)’ is an account of the Finnish national poem; of all poems that in which the popular, as opposed to the artistic, spirit is strongest. The Kalevala is thus a link between *Märchen*

and *Volkslieder* on one side, and epic poetry on the other.

'[The Divining Rod](#)' is a study of a European and civilised superstition, which is singular in its comparative lack of copious savage analogues.

'[Hottentot Mythology](#)' is a criticism of the philological method, applied to savage myth.

'[Fetichism and the Infinite](#)' is a review of Mr. Max Müller's theory that a sense of the Infinite is the germ of religion, and that Fetichism is secondary, and a corruption. This essay also contains a defence of the *evidence* on which the anthropological method relies.

The remaining essays are studies of the '[History of the Family](#),' and of '[Savage Art](#).'

The essay on '[Savage Art](#)' is reprinted, by the kind permission of Messrs. Cassell & Co., from two numbers (April and May, 1882) of the *Magazine of Art*. I have to thank the editors and publishers of the *Contemporary Review*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, *Fraser's Magazine*, and *Mind*, for leave to republish '[The Early History of the Family](#),' '[The Divining Rod](#),' and '[Star Myths](#),' '[The Kalevala](#),' and '[Fetichism](#).' A few sentences in '[The Bull-Roarer](#),' and '[Hottentot Mythology](#),' appeared in essays in the *Saturday Review*, and some lines of '[The Method of Folklore](#)' in the *Guardian*. To the editors of those journals also I owe thanks for their courteous permission to make this use of my old articles.

I must apologise for the controversial matter in the volume. Controversy is always a thing to be avoided, but, in this particular

case, when a system opposed to the prevalent method has to be advocated, controversy is unavoidable. My respect for the learning of my distinguished adversaries is none the less great because I am not convinced by their logic, and because my doubts are excited by their differences.

# THE METHOD OF FOLKLORE

After the heavy rain of a thunderstorm has washed the soil, it sometimes happens that a child, or a rustic, finds a wedge-shaped piece of metal or a few triangular flints in a field or near a road. There was no such piece of metal, there were no such flints, lying there yesterday, and the finder is puzzled about the origin of the objects on which he has lighted. He carries them home, and the village wisdom determines that the wedge-shaped piece of metal is a 'thunder-bolt,' or that the bits of flint are 'elf-shots,' the heads of fairy arrows. Such things are still treasured in remote nooks of England, and the 'thunder-bolt' is applied to cure certain maladies by its touch.

As for the fairy arrows, we know that even in ancient Etruria they were looked on as magical, for we sometimes see their points set, as amulets, in the gold of Etruscan necklaces. In Perugia the arrow-heads are still sold as charms. All educated people, of course, have long been aware that the metal wedge is a celt, or ancient bronze axe-head, and that it was not fairies, but the forgotten peoples of this island, who used the arrows with the tips of flint. Thunder is only so far connected with them that the heavy rains loosen the surface soil, and lay bare its long-hidden secrets.

There is a science, Archæology, which collects and compares the material relics of old races, the axes and arrow-heads.

There is a form of study, Folklore, which collects and compares the similar but immaterial relics of old races, the surviving superstitions and stories, the ideas which are in our time but not of it. Properly speaking, folklore is only concerned with the legends, customs, beliefs, of the Folk, of the people, of the classes which have least been altered by education, which have shared least in progress. But the student of folklore soon finds that these unprogressive classes retain many of the beliefs and ways of savages, just as the Hebridean people used spindle-whorls of stone, and bake clay pots without the aid of the wheel, like modern South Sea Islanders, or like their own prehistoric ancestors.<sup>6</sup> The student of folklore is thus led to examine the usages, myths, and ideas of savages, which are still retained, in rude enough shape, by the European peasantry. Lastly, he observes that a few similar customs and ideas survive in the most conservative elements of the life of educated peoples, in ritual, ceremonial, and religious traditions and myths. Though such remains are rare in England, we may note the custom of leading the dead soldier's horse behind his master to the grave, a relic of days when the horse would have been sacrificed.<sup>7</sup> We may observe the persistence of the ceremony by which the

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<sup>6</sup> A study of the contemporary stone age in Scotland will be found in Mitchell's *Past and Present*.

<sup>7</sup> About twenty years ago, the widow of an Irish farmer, in Derry, killed her deceased husband's horse. When remonstrated with by her landlord, she said, 'Would you have my man go about on foot in the next world?' She was quite in the savage intellectual stage.

monarch, at his coronation, takes his seat on the sacred stone of Scone, probably an ancient fetich stone. Not to speak, here, of our own religious traditions, the old vein of savage rite and belief is found very near the surface of ancient Greek religion. It wants but some stress of circumstance, something answering to the storm shower that reveals the flint arrow-heads, to bring savage ritual to the surface of classical religion. In sore need, a human victim was only too likely to be demanded; while a feast-day, or a mystery, set the Greeks dancing serpent-dances or bear-dances like Red Indians, or swimming with sacred pigs, or leaping about in imitation of wolves, or holding a dog-feast, and offering dog's flesh to the gods.<sup>8</sup> Thus the student of folklore soon finds that he must enlarge his field, and examine, not only popular European story and practice, but savage ways and ideas, and the myths and usages of the educated classes in civilised races. In this extended sense the term 'folklore' will frequently be used in the following essays. The idea of the writer is that mythology cannot fruitfully be studied apart from folklore, while some knowledge of anthropology is required in both sciences.

The science of Folklore, if we may call it a science, finds everywhere, close to the surface of civilised life, the remains of ideas as old as the stone elf-shots, older than the celt of bronze. In proverbs and riddles, and nursery tales and superstitions, we detect the relics of a stage of thought, which is dying out in

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<sup>8</sup> 'At the solemn festival suppers, ordained for the honour of the gods, they forget not to serve up certain dishes of young whelp's flesh' (Pliny, *H. N.*, xxix. 4).

Europe, but which still exists in many parts of the world. Now, just as the flint arrow-heads are scattered everywhere, in all the continents and isles, and everywhere are much alike, and bear no very definite marks of the special influence of race, so it is with the habits and legends investigated by the student of folklore. The stone arrow-head buried in a Scottish cairn is like those which were interred with Algonquin chiefs. The flints found in Egyptian soil, or beside the tumulus on the plain of Marathon, nearly resemble the stones which tip the reed arrow of the modern Samoyed. Perhaps only a skilled experience could discern, in a heap of such arrow-heads, the specimens which are found in America or Africa from those which are unearthed in Europe. Even in the products of more advanced industry, we see early pottery, for example, so closely alike everywhere that, in the British Museum, Mexican vases have, ere now, been mixed up on the same shelf with archaic vessels from Greece. In the same way, if a superstition or a riddle were offered to a student of folklore, he would have much difficulty in guessing its *provenance*, and naming the race from which it was brought. Suppose you tell a folklorist that, in a certain country, when any one sneezes, people say 'Good luck to you,' the student cannot say *à priori* what country you refer to, what race you have in your thoughts. It may be Florida, as Florida was when first discovered; it may be Zululand, or West Africa, or ancient Rome, or Homeric Greece, or Palestine. In all these, and many other regions, the sneeze was welcomed as an auspicious omen.

The little superstition is as widely distributed as the flint arrow-heads. Just as the object and use of the arrow-heads became intelligible when we found similar weapons in actual use among savages, so the salutation to the sneezer becomes intelligible when we learn that the savage has a good reason for it. He thinks the sneeze expels an evil spirit. Proverbs, again, and riddles are as universally scattered, and the Wolufs puzzle over the same *devinettes* as the Scotch schoolboy or the Breton peasant. Thus, for instance, the Wolufs of Senegal ask each other, 'What flies for ever, and rests never?' – Answer, 'The Wind.' 'Who are the comrades that always fight, and never hurt each other?' – 'The Teeth.' In France, as we read in the 'Recueil de Calembours,' the people ask, 'What runs faster than a horse, crosses water, and is not wet?' – Answer, 'The Sun.' The Samoans put the riddle, 'A man who stands between two ravenous fishes?' – Answer, 'The tongue between the teeth.' Again, 'There are twenty brothers, each with a hat on his head?' – Answer, 'Fingers and toes, with nails for hats.' This is like the French '*un père a douze fils?*' – '*l'an.*'<sup>9</sup> A comparison of M. Rolland's 'Devinettes' with the Woluf conundrums of Boilat, the Samoan examples in Turner's 'Samoa,' and the Scotch enigmas collected by Chambers, will show the identity of peasant and savage humour.

A few examples, less generally known, may be given to prove that the beliefs of folklore are not peculiar to any one race or stock of men. The first case is remarkable: it occurs in Mexico

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<sup>9</sup> Compare Cleobulus, Fr. 2: Bergk, *Lyr. Gr.*, iii. 201. Ed. 4.

and Ceylon, and has been found in other regions. In *Macmillan's Magazine*<sup>10</sup> is published a paper by Mrs. Edwards, called 'The Mystery of the Pezazi.' The events described in this narrative occurred on August 28, 1876, in a bungalow some thirty miles from Badiella. The narrator occupied a new house on an estate called Allagalla. Her native servants soon asserted that the place was haunted by a Pezazi. The English visitors saw and heard nothing extraordinary till a certain night: an abridged account of what happened then may be given in the words of Mrs. Edwards:

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Wrapped in dreams, I lay on the night in question tranquilly sleeping, but gradually roused to a perception that discordant sounds disturbed the serenity of my slumber. Loth to stir, I still dosed on, the sounds, however, becoming, as it seemed, more determined to make themselves heard! and I awoke to the consciousness that they proceeded from a belt of adjacent jungle, and resembled the noise that would be produced by some person felling timber.

Shutting my ears to the disturbance, I made no sign, until, with an expression of impatience, E – suddenly started up, when I laid a detaining grasp upon his arm, murmuring that there was no need to think of rising at present – it must be quite early, and the kitchen cooly was doubtless cutting firewood in good time. E – responded, in a tone of slight contempt, that no one could be cutting firewood at that hour, and the sounds were more suggestive of felling

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<sup>10</sup> Nov., 1880.

jungle; and he then inquired how long I had been listening to them. Now thoroughly aroused I replied that I had heard the sounds for some time, at first confusing them with my dreams, but soon sufficiently awakening to the fact that they were no mere phantoms of my imagination, but a reality. During our conversation the noises became more distinct and loud; blow after blow resounded, as of the axe descending upon the tree, followed by the crash of the falling timber. Renewed blows announced the repetition of the operations on another tree, and continued till several were devastated.

It is unnecessary to tell more of the tale. In spite of minute examinations and close search, no solution of the mystery of the noises, on this or any other occasion, was ever found. The natives, of course, attributed the disturbance to the *Pezazi* or goblin. No one perhaps has asserted that the Aztecs were connected by ties of race with the people of Ceylon. Yet when the Spaniards conquered Mexico, and when Sahagun (one of the earliest missionaries) collected the legends of the people, he found them, like the Cingalese, strong believers in the mystic tree-felling. We translate Sahagun's account of the 'midnight axe': —

When so any man heareth the sound of strokes in the night as if one were felling trees, he reckons it an evil boding. And this sound they call *youaltepuztli* (*youalli*, night; and *tepuztli*, copper), which signifies 'the midnight hatchet.' This noise cometh about the time of the first sleep,

when all men slumber soundly, and the night is still. The sound of strokes smitten was first noted by the temple-servants, called *tlamacazque*, at the hour when they go in the night to make their offering of reeds or of boughs of pine, for so was their custom, and this penance they did on the neighbouring hills, and that when the night was far spent. Whenever they heard such a sound as one makes when he splits wood with an axe (a noise that may be heard afar off), they drew thence an omen of evil, and were afraid and said that the sounds were part of the witchery of Tezcatlipoca, that often thus dismayeth men who journey in the night. Now, when tidings of these things came to a certain brave man, one exercised in war, he drew near, being guided by the sound, till he came to the very cause of the hubbub. And when he came upon it, with difficulty he caught it, for the thing was hard to catch; nathless at last he overtook that which ran before him; and behold, it was a man without a heart, and, on either side of the chest, two holes that opened and shut, and so made the noise. Then the man put his hand within the breast of the figure and grasped the breast and shook it hard, demanding some grace or gift.

As a rule, the grace demanded was power to make captives in war. The curious coincidence of the 'midnight axe,' occurring in lands so remote as Ceylon and Mexico, and the singular attestation by an English lady of the actual existence of the disturbance, makes this *youaltepuztli* one of the quaintest things in the province of the folklorist. But, whatever the cause of the noise, or of the beliefs connected with the noise, may be, no one

would explain them as the result of community of *race* between Cingalese and Aztecs. Nor would this explanation be offered to account for the Aztec and English belief that the creaking of furniture is an omen of death in a house. Obviously, these opinions are the expression of a common state of superstitious fancy, not the signs of an original community of origin.<sup>11</sup>

Let us take another piece of folklore. All North-country English folk know the *Kernababy*. The custom of the ‘Kernababy’ is commonly observed in England, or, at all events, in Scotland, where the writer has seen many a kernababy. The last gleanings of the last field are bound up in a rude imitation of the human shape, and dressed in some tag-rags of finery. The usage has fallen into the conservative hands of children, but of old ‘the Maiden’ was a regular image of the harvest goddess, which, with a sickle and sheaves in her arms, attended by a crowd of reapers, and accompanied with music, followed the last carts home to the farm.<sup>12</sup> It is odd enough that ‘the Maiden’ should exactly translate *Kόρη*, the old Sicilian name of the daughter of Demeter. ‘The Maiden’ has dwindled, then, among us to the rudimentary kernababy; but ancient Peru had her own Maiden, her Harvest Goddess. Here it is easy to trace the natural idea at the basis of the superstitious practice which links the shores

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<sup>11</sup> Mr. Leslie Stephen points out to me that De Quincey’s brother heard ‘the midnight axe’ in the Galapagos Islands (*Autobiographical Sketches*, ‘My Brother’).

<sup>12</sup> ‘Ah, once again may I plant the great fan on her corn-heap, while she stands smiling by, Demeter of the threshing floor, with sheaves and poppies in her hands’ (Theocritus, vii. 155-157).

of the Pacific with our own northern coast. Just as a portion of the yule-log and of the Christmas bread were kept all the year through, a kind of nest-egg of plenteous food and fire, so the kernababy, English or Peruvian, is an earnest that corn will not fail all through the year, till next harvest comes. For this reason the kernababy used to be treasured from autumn's end to autumn's end, though now it commonly disappears very soon after the harvest home. It is thus that Acosta describes in Grimston's old translation (1604) the Peruvian kernababy and the Peruvian harvest home: —

This feast is made comming from the chacra or farme unto the house, saying certaine songs, and praying that the Mays (maize) may long continue, the which they call *Mama cora*.

What a chance this word offers to etymologists of the old school: how promptly they would recognise, in *mama* mother — μήτηρ, and in *cora*— κόρη, the Mother and the Maiden, the feast of Demeter and Persephone! However, the days of that old school of antiquarianism are numbered. To return to the Peruvian harvest home: —

They take a certaine portion of the most fruitefull of the Mays that growes in their farmes, the which they put in a certaine granary which they do calle Pirua, with certaine ceremonies, watching three nightes; they put this Mays in the richest garments they have, and, being thus wrapped and dressed, they worship this Pirua, and hold it in great

veneration, saying it is the Mother of the Mays of their inheritances, and that by this means the Mays augments and is preserved. In this moneth they make a particular sacrifice, and the witches demand of this Pirua, 'if it hath strength sufficient to continue until the next yeare,' and if it answers 'no,' then they carry this Mays to the farme to burne, whence they brought it, according to every man's power, then they make another Pirua, with the same ceremonies, saying that they renew it, to the ende that the seede of the Mays may not perish.

The idea that the maize can speak need not surprise us; the Mexican held much the same belief, according to Sahagun: —

It was thought that if some grains of maize fell on the ground he who saw them lying there was bound to lift them, wherein, if he failed, he harmed the maize, which plained itself of him to God, saying, 'Lord, punish this man, who saw me fallen and raised me not again; punish him with famine, that he may learn not to hold me in dishonour.'

Well, in all this affair of the Scotch kernababy, and the Peruvian *Mama cora*, we need no explanation beyond the common simple ideas of human nature. We are not obliged to hold, either that the Peruvians and Scotch are akin by blood, nor that, at some forgotten time, they met each other, and borrowed each other's superstitions.<sup>13</sup> Again, when we find Odysseus sacrificing a black sheep to the dead,<sup>14</sup> and when we read that the

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<sup>13</sup> In Mr. Frazer's *Golden Bough* is a very large collection of similar harvest rites.

<sup>14</sup> *Odyssey*, xi. 32.

Ovahereroes in South Africa also appease with a black sheep the spirits of the departed, we do not feel it necessary to hint that the Ovahereroes are of Greek descent, or have borrowed their ritual from the Greeks. The connection between the colour black, and mourning for the dead, is natural and almost universal.

Examples like these might be adduced in any number. We might show how, in magic, negroes of Barbadoes make clay effigies of their enemies, and pierce them, just as Greeks did in Plato's time, or the men of Accad in remotest antiquity. We might remark the Australian black putting sharp bits of quartz in the tracks of an enemy who has gone by, that the enemy may be lamed; and we might point to Boris Godunof forbidding the same practice among the Russians. We might watch Scotch, and Australians, and Jews, and French, and Aztecs spreading dust round the body of a dead man, that the footprints of his ghost, or of other ghosts, may be detected next morning. We might point to a similar device in a modern novel, where the presence of a ghost is suspected, as proof of the similar workings of the Australian mind and of the mind of Mrs. Riddell. We shall later turn to ancient Greece, and show how the serpent-dances, the habit of smearing the body with clay, and other odd rites of the mysteries, were common to Hellenic religion, and to the religion of African, Australian, and American tribes.

Now, with regard to all these strange usages, what is the method of folklore? The method is, when an apparently irrational and anomalous custom is found in any country, to look for a

country where a similar practice is found, and where the practice is no longer irrational and anomalous, but in harmony with the manners and ideas of the people among whom it prevails. That Greeks should dance about in their mysteries with harmless serpents in their hands looks quite unintelligible. When a wild tribe of Red Indians does the same thing, as a trial of courage, with real rattlesnakes, we understand the Red Man's motives, and may conjecture that similar motives once existed among the ancestors of the Greeks. Our method, then, is to compare the seemingly meaningless customs or manners of civilised races with the similar customs and manners which exist among the uncivilised and still retain their meaning. It is not necessary for comparison of this sort that the uncivilised and the civilised race should be of the same stock, nor need we prove that they were ever in contact with each other. Similar conditions of mind produce similar practices, apart from identity of race, or borrowing of ideas and manners.

Let us return to the example of the flint arrow-heads. Everywhere neolithic arrow-heads are pretty much alike. The cause of the resemblance is no more than this, that men, with the same needs, the same materials, and the same rude instruments, everywhere produced the same kind of arrow-head. No hypothesis of interchange of ideas nor of community of race is needed to explain the resemblance of form in the missiles. Very early pottery in any region is, for the same causes, like very early pottery in any other region. The same sort of similarity was

explained by the same resemblances in human nature, when we touched on the identity of magical practices and of superstitious beliefs. This method is fairly well established and orthodox when we deal with usages and superstitious beliefs; but may we apply the same method when we deal with myths?

Here a difficulty occurs. Mythologists, as a rule, are averse to the method of folklore. They think it scientific to compare only the myths of races which speak languages of the same family, and of races which have, in historic times, been actually in proved contact with each other. Thus, most mythologists hold it correct to compare Greek, Slavonic, Celtic, and Indian stories, because Greeks, Slavs, Celts, and Hindoos all speak languages of the same family. Again, they hold it correct to compare Chaldæan and Greek myths, because the Greeks and the Chaldæans were brought into contact through the Phœnicians, and by other intermediaries, such as the Hittites. But the same mythologists will vow that it is unscientific to compare a Maori or a Hottentot or an Eskimo myth with an Aryan story, because Maoris and Eskimo and Hottentots do not speak languages akin to that of Greece, nor can we show that the ancestors of Greeks, Maoris, Hottentots, and Eskimo were ever in contact with each other in historical times.

Now the peculiarity of the method of folklore is that it will venture to compare (with due caution and due examination of evidence) the myths of the most widely severed races. Holding that myth is a product of the early human fancy, working on the

most rudimentary knowledge of the outer world, the student of folklore thinks that differences of race do not much affect the early mythopœic faculty. He will not be surprised if Greeks and Australian blacks are in the same tale.

In each case, he holds, all the circumstances of the case must be examined and considered. For instance, when the Australians tell a myth about the Pleiades very like the Greek myth of the Pleiades, we must ask a number of questions. Is the Australian version authentic? Can the people who told it have heard it from a European? If these questions are answered so as to make it apparent that the Australian Pleiad myth is of genuine native origin, we need not fly to the conclusion that the Australians are a lost and forlorn branch of the Aryan race. Two other hypotheses present themselves. First, the human species is of unknown antiquity. In the moderate allowance of 250,000 years, there is time for stories to have wandered all round the world, as the Aggrry beads of Ashanti have probably crossed the continent from Egypt, as the Asiatic jade (if Asiatic it be) has arrived in Swiss lake-dwellings, as an African trade-cowry is said to have been found in a Cornish barrow, as an Indian Ocean shell has been discovered in a prehistoric bone-cave in Poland. This slow filtration of tales is not absolutely out of the question. Two causes would especially help to transmit myths. The first is slavery and slave-stealing, the second is the habit of capturing brides from alien stocks, and the law which forbids marriage with a woman of a man's own family. Slaves and captured brides would bring

their native legends among alien peoples.

But there is another possible way of explaining the resemblance (granting that it is proved) of the Greek and Australian Pleiad myth. The object of both myths is to account for the grouping and other phenomena of the constellations. May not similar explanatory stories have occurred to the ancestors of the Australians, and to the ancestors of the Greeks, however remote their home, while they were still in the savage condition? The best way to investigate this point is to collect all known savage and civilised stellar myths, and see what points they have in common. If they all agree in character, though the Greek tales are full of grace, while those of the Australians or Brazilians are rude enough, we may plausibly account for the similarity of myths, as we accounted for the similarity of flint arrow-heads. The myths, like the arrow-heads, resemble each other because they were originally framed to meet the same needs out of the same material. In the case of the arrow-heads, the need was for something hard, heavy, and sharp – the material was flint. In the case of the myths, the need was to explain certain phenomena – the material (so to speak) was an early state of the human mind, to which all objects seemed equally endowed with human personality, and to which no metamorphosis appeared impossible.

In the following essays, then, the myths and customs of various peoples will be compared, even when these peoples talk languages of alien families, and have never (so far as history

shows us) been in actual contact. Our method throughout will be to place the usage, or myth, which is unintelligible when found among a civilised race, beside the similar myth which is intelligible enough when it is found among savages. A mean term will be found in the folklore preserved by the non-progressive classes in a progressive people. This folklore represents, in the midst of a civilised race, the savage ideas out of which civilisation has been evolved. The conclusion will usually be that the fact which puzzles us by its presence in civilisation is a relic surviving from the time when the ancestors of a civilised race were in the state of savagery. By this method it is not necessary that 'some sort of genealogy should be established' between the Australian and the Greek narrators of a similar myth, nor between the Greek and Australian possessors of a similar usage. The hypothesis will be that the myth, or usage, is common to both races, not because of original community of stock, not because of contact and borrowing, but because the ancestors of the Greeks passed through the savage intellectual condition in which we find the Australians.

The questions may be asked, Has race nothing, then, to do with myth? Do peoples never consciously borrow myths from each other? The answer is, that race has a great deal to do with the development of myth, if it be race which confers on a people its national genius, and its capacity of becoming civilised. If race does this, then race affects, in the most powerful manner, the ultimate development of myth. No one is likely to confound a

Homeric myth with a myth from the Edda, nor either with a myth from a Brahmana, though in all three cases the substance, the original set of ideas, may be much the same. In all three you have anthropomorphic gods, capable of assuming animal shapes, tricky, capricious, limited in many undivine ways, yet endowed with magical powers. So far the mythical gods of Homer, of the Edda, of any of the Brahmanas, are on a level with each other, and not much above the gods of savage mythology. This stuff of myth is *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, and is the original gift of the savage intellect. But the final treatment, the ultimate literary form of the myth, varies in each race. Homeric gods, like Red Indian, Thlinkeet, or Australian gods, can assume the shapes of birds. But when we read, in Homer, of the arming of Athene, the hunting of Artemis, the vision of golden Aphrodite, the apparition of Hermes, like a young man when the flower of youth is loveliest, then we recognise the effect of race upon myth, the effect of the Greek genius at work on rude material. Between the Olympians and a Thlinkeet god there is all the difference that exists between the Demeter of Cnidos and an image from Easter Island. Again, the Scandinavian gods, when their tricks are laid aside, when Odin is neither assuming the shape of worm nor of raven, have a martial dignity, a noble enduring spirit of their own. Race comes out in that, as it does in the endless sacrifices, soma drinking, magical austerities, and puerile follies of Vedic and Brahmanic gods, the deities of a people fallen early into its sacerdotage and priestly second

childhood. Thus race declares itself in the ultimate literary form and character of mythology, while the common savage basis and stuff of myths may be clearly discerned in the horned, and cannibal, and shape-shifting, and adulterous gods of Greece, of India, of the North. They all show their common savage origin, when the poet neglects Freya's command and tells of what the gods did 'in the morning of Time.'

As to borrowing, we have already shown that in prehistoric times there must have been much transmission of myth. The migrations of peoples, the traffic in slaves, the law of exogamy, which always keeps bringing alien women into the families – all these things favoured the migration of myth. But the process lies behind history: we can only guess at it, we can seldom trace a popular legend on its travels. In the case of the cultivated ancient peoples, we know that they themselves believed they had borrowed their religions from each other. When the Greeks first found the Egyptians practising mysteries like their own, they leaped to the conclusion that their own rites had been imported from Egypt. We, who know that both Greek and Egyptian rites had many points in common with those of Mandans, Zunis, Bushmen, Australians – people quite unconnected with Egypt – feel less confident about the hypothesis of borrowing. We may, indeed, regard Adonis, and Zeus Bagæus, and Melicertes, as importations from Phœnicia. In later times, too, the Greeks, and still more the Romans, extended a free hospitality to alien gods and legends, to Serapis, Isis, the wilder Dionysiac revels,

and so forth. But this habit of borrowing was regarded with disfavour by pious conservatives, and was probably, in the width of its hospitality at least, an innovation. As Tiele remarks, we cannot derive Dionysus from the Assyrian *Daian nisi* ‘judge of men,’ a name of the solar god Samas, without ascertaining that the wine-god exercised judicial functions, and was a god of the sun. These derivations, ‘shocking to common-sense,’ are to be distrusted as part of the intoxication of new learning. Some Assyrian scholars actually derive *Hades* from *Bit Edi* or *Bit Hadi*— ‘though unluckily,’ says Tiele, ‘there is no such word in the Assyrian text.’ On the whole topic Tiele’s essay<sup>15</sup> deserves to be consulted. Granting, then, that elements in the worship of Dionysus, Aphrodite, and other gods, may have been imported with the strange Ægypto-Assyrian vases and jewels of the Sidonians, we still find the same basis of rude savage ideas. We may push back a god from Greece to Phœnicia, from Phœnicia to Accadia, but, at the end of the end, we reach a legend full of myths like those which Bushmen tell by the camp fire, Eskimo in their dark huts, and Australians in the shade of the *gunyeh*— myths cruel, puerile, obscene, like the fancies of the savage myth-makers from which they sprang.

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<sup>15</sup> *Rev. de l’Hist. des Rel.*, vol. ii.

# THE BULL-ROARER

## A STUDY OF THE MYSTERIES

As the belated traveller makes his way through the monotonous plains of Australia, through the Bush, with its level expanses and clumps of grey-blue gum trees, he occasionally hears a singular sound. Beginning low, with a kind of sharp tone thrilling through a whirring noise, it grows louder and louder, till it becomes a sort of fluttering windy roar. If the traveller be a new-comer, he is probably puzzled to the last degree. If he be an Englishman, country-bred, he says to himself, 'Why, that is the bull-roarer.' If he knows the colony and the ways of the natives, he knows that the blacks are celebrating their tribal mysteries. The roaring noise is made to warn all women to keep out of the way. Just as Pentheus was killed (with the approval of Theocritus) because he profaned the rites of the women-worshippers of Dionysus, so, among the Australian blacks, men must, at their peril, keep out of the way of female, and women out of the way of male, celebrations.

The instrument which produces the sounds that warn women to remain afar is a toy familiar to English country lads. They call it the bull-roarer. The common bull-roarer is an inexpensive toy

which any one can make. I do not, however, recommend it to families, for two reasons. In the first place, it produces a most horrible and unexampled din, which endears it to the very young, but renders it detested by persons of mature age. In the second place, the character of the toy is such that it will almost infallibly break all that is fragile in the house where it is used, and will probably put out the eyes of some of the inhabitants. Having thus, I trust, said enough to prevent all good boys from inflicting bull-roarers on their parents, pastors and masters, I proceed (in the interests of science) to show how the toy is made. Nothing can be less elaborate. You take a piece of the commonest wooden board, say the lid of a packing-case, about a sixth of an inch in thickness, and about eight inches long and three broad, and you sharpen the ends. When finished, the toy may be about the shape of a large bay-leaf, or a 'fish' used as a counter (that is how the New Zealanders make it), or the sides may be left plain in the centre, and only sharpened towards the extremities, as in an Australian example lent me by Mr. Tylor. Then tie a strong piece of string, about thirty inches long, to one end of the piece of wood, and the bull-roarer (the Australian natives call it *turndun*, and the Greeks call it ῥόμβος) is complete. Now twist the end of the string tightly about your finger, and whirl the bull-roarer rapidly round and round. For a few moments nothing will happen. In a very interesting lecture delivered at the Royal Institution, Mr. Taylor once exhibited a bull-roarer. At first it did nothing particular when it was whirled round, and the audience

began to fear that the experiment was like those chemical ones often exhibited at institutes in the country, which contribute at most a disagreeable odour to the education of the populace. But when the bull-roarer warmed to its work, it justified its name, producing what may best be described as a mighty rushing noise, as if some supernatural being 'fluttered and buzzed his wings with fearful roar.' Grown-up people, of course, are satisfied with a very brief experience of this din, but boys have always known the bull-roarer in England as one of the most efficient modes of making the hideous and unearthly noises in which it is the privilege of youth to delight.

The bull-roarer has, of all toys, the widest diffusion, and the most extraordinary history. To study the bull-roarer is to take a lesson in folklore. The instrument is found among the most widely severed peoples, savage and civilised, and is used in the celebration of savage and civilised mysteries. There are students who would found on this a hypothesis that the various races that use the bull-roarer all descend from the same stock. But the bull-roarer is introduced here for the very purpose of showing that similar minds, working with simple means towards similar ends, might evolve the bull-roarer and its mystic uses anywhere. There is no need for a hypothesis of common origin, or of borrowing, to account for this widely diffused sacred object.

The bull-roarer has been, and is, a sacred and magical instrument in many and widely separated lands. It is found, always as a sacred instrument, employed in religious mysteries,

in New Mexico, in Australia, in New Zealand, in ancient Greece, and in Africa; while, as we have seen, it is a peasant boy's plaything in England. A number of questions are naturally suggested by the bull-roarer. Is it a thing invented once for all, and carried abroad over the world by wandering races, or handed on from one people and tribe to another? Or is the bull-roarer a toy that might be accidentally hit on in any country where men can sharpen wood and twist the sinews of animals into string? Was the thing originally a toy, and is its religious and mystical nature later; or was it originally one of the properties of the priest, or medicine-man, which in England has dwindled to a plaything? Lastly, was this mystical instrument at first employed in the rites of a civilised people like the Greeks, and was it in some way borrowed or inherited by South Africans, Australians, and New Mexicans? Or is it a mere savage invention, surviving (like certain other features of the Greek mysteries) from a distant state of savagery? Our answer to all these questions is that in all probability the presence of the  $\rho\acute{o}\mu\beta\omicron\varsigma$ , or bull-roarer, in Greek mysteries was a survival from the time when Greeks were in the social condition of Australians.

In the first place the bull-roarer is associated with mysteries and initiations. Now mysteries and initiations are things that tend to dwindle and to lose their characteristic features as civilisation advances. The rites of baptism and confirmation are not secret and hidden; they are common to both sexes, they are publicly performed, and religion and morality of the purest

sort blend in these ceremonies. There are no other initiations or mysteries that civilised modern man is expected necessarily to pass through. On the other hand, looking widely at human history, we find mystic rites and initiations numerous, stringent, severe, and magical in character, in proportion to the lack of civilisation in those who practise them. The less the civilisation, the more mysterious and the more cruel are the rites. The more cruel the rites, the less is the civilisation. The red hot poker with which Mr. Bouncer terrified Mr. Verdant Green at the sham masonic rites would have been quite in place, a natural instrument of probationary torture, in the Freemasonry of Australians, Mandans, or Hottentots. In the mysteries of Demeter or Bacchus, in the mysteries of a civilised people, the red-hot poker, or any other instrument of torture, would have been out of place. But in the Greek mysteries, just as in those of South Africans, Red Indians, and Australians, the disgusting practice of bedaubing the neophyte with dirt and clay was preserved. We have nothing quite like that in modern initiations. Except at Sparta, Greeks dropped the tortures inflicted on boys and girls in the initiations superintended by the cruel Artemis.<sup>16</sup> But Greek mysteries retained the daubing with mud and the use

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<sup>16</sup> Pausanias, iii. 15. When the boys were being cruelly scourged, the priestess of Artemis Orthia held an ancient barbaric wooden image of the goddess in her hands. If the boys were spared, the image grew heavy; the more they were tortured, the lighter grew the image. In Samoa the image (shark's teeth) of the god Taema is consulted before battle. 'If it felt heavy, that was a bad omen; if light, the sign was good' – the god was pleased (Turner's *Samoa*, p. 55).

of the bull-roarer. On the whole, then, and on a general view of the subject, we prefer to think that the bull-roarer in Greece was a survival from savage mysteries, not that the bull-roarer in New Mexico, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa is a relic of civilisation.

Let us next observe a remarkable peculiarity of the *turndun*, or Australian bull-roarer. The bull-roarer in England is a toy. In Australia, according to Howitt and Fison,<sup>17</sup> the bull-roarer is regarded with religious awe. ‘When, on lately meeting with two of the surviving Kurnai, I spoke to them of the turndun, they first looked cautiously round them to see that no one else was looking, and then answered me in undertones.’ The chief peculiarity in connection with the turndun is that women may never look upon it. The Chepara tribe, who call it *bribbun*, have a custom that, ‘if seen by a woman, or shown by a man to a woman, the punishment to both is *death*.’

Among the Kurnai, the sacred mystery of the turndun is preserved by a legend, which gives a supernatural sanction to secrecy. When boys go through the mystic ceremony of initiation they are shown turnduns, or bull-roarers, and made to listen to their hideous din. They are then told that, if ever a woman is allowed to see a turndun, the earth will open, and water will cover the globe. The old men point spears at the boy’s eyes, saying: ‘If you tell this to any woman you will die, you will see the ground broken up and like the sea; if you tell this to any woman, or to

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<sup>17</sup> *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 268.

any child, you will be killed!' As in Athens, in Syria, and among the Mandans, the deluge-tradition of Australia is connected with the mysteries. In Gippsland there is a tradition of the deluge. 'Some children of the Kurnai in playing about found a turndun, which they took home to the camp and showed the women. Immediately the earth crumbled away, and it was all water, and the Kurnai were drowned.'

In consequence of all this mummerly the Australian women attach great sacredness to the very name of the turndun. They are much less instructed in their own theology than the men of the tribe. One woman believed she had heard Pundjel, the chief supernatural being, descend in a mighty rushing noise, that is, in the sound of the turndun, when boys were being 'made men,' or initiated.<sup>18</sup> On turnduns the Australian sorcerers can fly up to heaven. Turnduns carved with imitations of water-flowers are used by medicine-men in rain-making. New Zealand also has her bull-roarers; some of them, carved in relief, are in the Christy Museum, and one is engraved here. I have no direct evidence as to the use of these Maori bull-roarers in the Maori mysteries. Their employment, however, may perhaps be provisionally inferred.

One can readily believe that the New Zealand bull-roarer may be whirled by any man who is repeating a *Karakia*, or 'charm to raise the wind': —

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<sup>18</sup> Fison, *Journal Anthropol. Soc.*, Nov., 1883.

Loud wind,  
Lasting wind,  
Violent whistling wind,  
Dig up the calm reposing sky,  
Come, come.

In New Zealand<sup>19</sup> 'the natives regarded the wind as an indication of the presence of their god,' a superstition not peculiar to Maori religion. The 'cold wind' felt blowing over the hands at spiritualistic *séances* is also regarded (by physical researchers) as an indication of the presence of supernatural beings. The windy roaring noise made by the bull-roarer might readily be considered by savages, either as an invitation to a god who should present himself in storm, or as a proof of his being at hand. We have seen that this view was actually taken by an Australian woman. The hymn called 'breath' or *haha*, a hymn to the mystic wind, is pronounced by Maori priests at the moment of the initiation of young men in the tribal mysteries. It is a mere conjecture, and possibly enough capable of disproof, but we have a suspicion that the use of the *mystica vannus Iacchi* was a mode of raising a sacred wind analogous to that employed by whirlers of the turndun.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Taylor's *New Zealand*, p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> This is not the view of le Père Lafitau, a learned Jesuit missionary in North America, who wrote (1724) a work on savage manners, compared with the manners of heathen antiquity. Lafitau, who was greatly struck with the resemblances between Greek and Iroquois or Carib initiations, takes Servius's other explanation of the *mystica*

Servius, the ancient commentator on Virgil, mentions, among other opinions, this – that the *vannus* was a sieve, and that it symbolised the purifying effect of the mysteries. But it is clear that Servius was only guessing; and he offers other explanations, among them that the *vannus* was a crate to hold offerings, *primitias frugum*.

We have studied the bull-roarer in Australia, we have caught a glimpse of it in England. Its existence on the American continent is proved by letters from New Mexico, and by the passage in Mr. Frank Cushing's *Adventures in Zuni*.<sup>21</sup> In Zuni, too, among a semi-civilised Indian tribe, or rather a tribe which has left the savage for the barbaric condition, we find the bull-roarer.<sup>22</sup> Here, too, the instrument – a 'slat,' Mr. Cushing calls it – is used as a call to the ceremonial observance of the tribal ritual. The Zunis have various 'orders of a more or less sacred and sacerdotal character.' Mr. Cushing writes: —

These orders were engaged in their annual ceremonies, of which little was told or shown me; but, at the end of four days, I heard one morning a *deep whirring noise*. Running out, I saw a procession of three priests of the bow, in plumed helmets and closely-fitting cuirasses, both of thick buckskin – gorgeous and solemn with sacred embroideries and war-

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*vannus*, 'an osier vessel containing rural offerings of first fruits.' This exactly answers, says Lafitau, to the Carib *Matoutou*, on which they offer sacred cassava cakes.

<sup>21</sup> *The Century Magazine*, May, 1883.

<sup>22</sup> A minute account of the mysteries of Pueblo Indians, and their use of the bull-roarer, will be found in Captain Bourke's *Snake Dance of the Moquis*.

paint, begirt with bows, arrows, and war-clubs, and each distinguished by his badge of degree – coming down one of the narrow streets. The principal priest carried in his arms a wooden idol, ferocious in aspect, yet beautiful with its decorations of shell, turquoise, and brilliant paint. It was nearly hidden by symbolic slats and prayer-sticks most elaborately plumed. He was preceded by a guardian with drawn bow and arrows, while another followed, *twirling the sounding slat*, which had attracted alike my attention and that of hundreds of the Indians, who hurriedly flocked to the roofs of the adjacent houses, or lined the street, bowing their heads in adoration, and scattering sacred prayer-meal on the god and his attendant priests. Slowly they wound their way down the hill, across the river, and off toward the mountain of Thunder. Soon an identical procession followed and took its way toward the western hills. I watched them long until they disappeared, and a few hours afterward there arose from the top of ‘Thunder Mountain’ a dense column of smoke, simultaneously with another from the more distant western mesa of ‘U-ha-na-mi,’ or ‘Mount of the Beloved.’

Then they told me that for four days I must neither touch nor eat flesh or oil of any kind, and for ten days neither throw any refuse from my doors nor permit a spark to leave my house, for ‘This was the season of the year when the “grandmother of men” (fire) was precious.’

Here then, in Zuni, we have the bull-roarer again, and once more we find it employed as a summons to the mysteries. We do not learn, however, that women in Zuni are forbidden to look

upon the bull-roarer. Finally, the South African evidence, which is supplied by letters from a correspondent of Mr. Tylor's, proves that in South Africa, too, the bull-roarer is employed to call the men to the celebration of secret functions. A minute description of the instrument, and of its magical power to raise a wind, is given in Theal's *Kaffir Folklore*, p. 209. The bull-roarer has not been made a subject of particular research; very probably later investigations will find it in other parts of the modern world besides America, Africa, New Zealand, and Australia. I have myself been fortunate enough to encounter the bull-roarer on the soil of ancient Greece and in connection with the Dionysiac mysteries. Clemens of Alexandria, and Arnobius, an early Christian father who follows Clemens, describe certain toys of the child Dionysus which were used in the mysteries. Among these are *turbines*, κῶνοι and ῥόμβοι. The ordinary dictionaries interpret all these as whipping-tops, adding that ῥόμβος is sometimes 'a magic wheel.' The ancient scholiast on Clemens, however, writes: 'The κῶνος is a little piece of wood, to which a string is fastened, and in the mysteries it is whirled round to make a roaring noise.'<sup>23</sup> Here, in short, we have a brief but complete description of the bull-roarer of the Australian *turndun*. No single point is omitted. The κῶνος, like the *turndun*, is a small object of wood, it is tied to a string, when whirled round it produces a roaring noise, and it is used at initiations. This is

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<sup>23</sup> Κῶνος ξυλάριον οὗ ἐξῆπται τὸ σπαρτίον καὶ ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς ἐδονεῖτο ἵνα ῥοιζῆ. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus* (i. p. 700).

not the end of the matter.

In the part of the Dionysiac mysteries at which the toys of the child Dionysus were exhibited, and during which (as it seems) the κῶνος, or bull-roarer, was whirred, the performers daubed themselves all over with clay. This we learn from a passage in which Demosthenes describes the youth of his hated adversary, Æschines. The mother of Æschines, he says, was a kind of 'wise woman,' and dabbler in mysteries. Æschines used to aid her by bedaubing the initiate over with clay and bran.<sup>24</sup> The word ἀπομάπτων, here used by Demosthenes, is explained by Harpocration as the ritual term for daubing the initiated. A story was told as usual, to explain this rite. It was said that, when the Titans attacked Dionysus and tore him to pieces, they painted themselves first with clay, or gypsum, that they might not be recognised. Nonnus shows, in several places, that down to his time the celebrants of the Bacchic mysteries retained this dirty trick. Precisely the same trick prevails in the mysteries of savage peoples. Mr. Winwood Reade<sup>25</sup> reports the evidence of Mongilomba. When initiated, Mongilomba was 'severely flogged in the Fetich House' (as young Spartans were flogged before the animated image of Artemis), and then he was 'plastered over with goat-dung.' Among the natives of Victoria,<sup>26</sup> the 'body

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<sup>24</sup> *De Corona*, p. 313.

<sup>25</sup> *Savage Africa*. Captain Smith, the friend of Pocahontas, mentions the custom in his work on Virginia, pp. 245-248.

<sup>26</sup> Brough Smyth, i. 60, using evidence of Howitt, Taplin, Thomas and Wilhelmi.

of the initiated is bedaubed with clay, mud, charcoal powder, and filth of every kind.' The girls are plastered with charcoal powder and white clay, answering to the Greek gypsum. Similar daubings were performed at the mysteries by the Mandans, as described by Catlin: and the Zunis made raids on Mr. Cushing's black paint and Chinese ink for like purposes. On the Congo, Mr. Johnson found precisely the same ritual in the initiations. Here, then, not to multiply examples, we discover two singular features in common between Greek and savage mysteries. Both Greeks and savages employ the bull-roarer, both bedaub the initiated with dirt or with white paint or chalk. As to the meaning of the latter very un-Aryan practice, one has no idea, unless it represents the impure uninitiated condition, cleansed later by ceremonies of initiation. It is only certain that war parties of Australian blacks bedaub themselves with white clay to alarm their enemies in night attacks. The Phocians, according to Herodotus (viii. 27), adopted the same 'aisy stratagem,' as Captain Costigan has it. Tellies, the medicine-man (μάγντις), chalked some sixty Phocians, whom he sent to make a night attack on the Thessalians. The sentinels of the latter were seized with supernatural horror, and fled, 'and after the sentinels went the army.' In the same way, in a night attack among the Australian Kurnai,<sup>27</sup> 'they all rapidly painted themselves with pipe-clay: red ochre is no use, it cannot frighten the enemy.' If, then, Greeks in the historic period kept up Australian tactics, it is probable that

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<sup>27</sup> *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, p. 241.

the ancient mysteries of Greece might retain the habit of daubing the initiated which occurs in savage rites.

‘Come now,’ as Herodotus would say, ‘I will show once more that the mysteries of the Greeks resemble those of Bushmen.’ In Lucian’s *Treatise on Dancing*,<sup>28</sup> we read, ‘I pass over the fact that you cannot find a single ancient mystery in which there is not dancing... To prove this I will not mention the secret acts of worship, on account of the uninitiated. But this much all men know, that most people say of those who reveal the mysteries, that they “dance them out.”’ Here Liddel and Scott write, rather weakly, ‘to dance out, let out, betray, probably of some dance which burlesqued these ceremonies.’ It is extremely improbable that, in an age when it was still forbidden to reveal the ὄργια, or secret rites, those rites would be mocked in popular burlesques. Lucian obviously intends to say that the matter of the mysteries was set forth in *ballets d’action*. Now this is exactly the case in the surviving mysteries of the Bushmen. Shortly after the rebellion of Langalibalele’s tribe, Mr. Orpen, the chief magistrate in St. John’s Territory, made the acquaintance of Qing, one of the last of an all but exterminated tribe. Qing ‘had never seen a white man, except fighting,’ when he became Mr. Orpen’s guide. He gave a good deal of information about the myths of his people, but refused to answer certain questions. ‘You are now asking the secrets that are not spoken of.’ Mr. Orpen asked, ‘Do you know the secrets?’ Qing replied, ‘No, only the initiated men of

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<sup>28</sup> Περὶ ὄρχήσεως, c. 15.

that dance know these things.’ To ‘dance’ this or that means, ‘to be acquainted with this or that mystery;’ the dances were originally taught by Cagn, the mantis, or grasshopper god. In many mysteries, Qing, as a young man, was not initiated. He could not ‘dance them out.’<sup>29</sup>

There are thus undeniably close resemblances between the Greek mysteries and those of the lowest contemporary races.

As to the bull-roarer, its recurrence among Greeks, Zunis, Kamilaroi, Maoris, and South African races, would be regarded by some students as a proof that all these tribes had a common origin, or had borrowed the instrument from each other. But this theory is quite unnecessary. The bull-roarer is a very simple invention. Any one might find out that a bit of sharpened wood, tied to a string, makes, when whirred, a roaring noise. Supposing that discovery made, it is soon turned to practical use. All tribes have their mysteries. All want a signal to summon the right persons together, and warn the wrong persons to keep out of the way. The church bell does as much for us, so did the shaken *seistrum* for the Egyptians. People with neither bells nor *seistra* find the bull-roarer, with its mysterious sound, serve their turn. The hiding of the instrument from women is natural enough. It merely makes the alarm and absence of the curious sex doubly sure. The stories of supernatural consequences to follow if a woman sees the turndun lend a sanction. This is not a random theory, without basis. In Brazil the natives have no bull-roarer,

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<sup>29</sup> *Cape Monthly Magazine*, July, 1874.

but they have mysteries, and the presence of the women at the mysteries of the men is a terrible impiety. To warn away the women the Brazilians make loud 'devil-music' on what are called 'jurupari pipes.' Now, just as in Australia, *the women may not see the jurupari pipes on pain of death.* When the sound of the jurupari pipes is heard, as when the turndun is heard in Australia, every woman flees and hides herself. The women are always executed if they see the pipes. Mr. Alfred Wallace bought a pair of these pipes, but he had to embark them at a distance from the village where they were procured. The seller was afraid that some unknown misfortune would occur if the women of his village set eyes on the juruparis.<sup>30</sup>

The conclusion from all these facts seems obvious. The bull-roarer is an instrument easily invented by savages, and easily adopted into the ritual of savage mysteries. If we find the bull-roarer used in the mysteries of the most civilised of ancient peoples, the most probable explanation is, that the Greeks retained both the mysteries, the bull-roarer, the habit of bedaubing the initiate, the torturing of boys, the sacred obscenities, the antics with serpents, the dances, and the like, from the time when their ancestors were in the savage condition. That more refined and religious ideas were afterwards introduced into the mysteries seems certain, but the rites were in many cases simply savage. Unintelligible (except as survivals) when found among Hellenes, they become intelligible enough among savages,

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<sup>30</sup> Wallace, *Travels on the Amazon*, p. 349.

because they correspond to the intellectual condition and magical fancies of the lower barbarism. The same sort of comparison, the same kind of explanation, will account, as we shall see, for the savage myths as well as for the savage customs which survived among the Greeks.

# THE MYTH OF CRONUS

In a Maori pah, when a little boy behaves rudely to his parents, he is sometimes warned that he is 'as bad as cruel Tutenganahau.' If he asks who Tutenganahau was, he is told the following story:

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'In the beginning, the Heaven, Rangi, and the Earth, Papa, were the father and mother of all things. "In these days the Heaven lay upon the Earth, and all was darkness. They had never been separated." Heaven and Earth had children, who grew up and lived in this thick night, and they were unhappy because they could not see. Between the bodies of their parents they were imprisoned, and there was no light. The names of the children were Tumatuenga, Tane Mahuta, Tutenganahau, and some others. So they all consulted as to what should be done with their parents, Rangi and Papa. "Shall we slay them, or shall we separate them?" "Go to," said Tumatuenga, "let us slay them." "No," cried Tane Mahuta, "let us rather separate them. Let one go upwards, and become a stranger to us; let the other remain below, and be a parent to us." Only Tawhiri Matea (the wind) had pity on his own father and mother. Then the fruit-gods, and the war-god, and the sea-god (for all the children of Papa and Rangi were gods) tried to rend their parents asunder. Last rose the forest-god, cruel Tutenganahau. He severed the sinews which united Heaven and Earth, Rangi and Papa. Then

he pushed hard with his head and feet. Then wailed Heaven and exclaimed Earth, "Wherefore this murder? Why this great sin? Why destroy us? Why separate us?" But Tane pushed and pushed: Rangi was driven far away into the air. "*They became visible, who had hitherto been concealed between the hollows of their parents' breasts.*" Only the storm-god differed from his brethren: he arose and followed his father, Rangi, and abode with him in the open spaces of the sky.'

This is the Maori story of the severing of the wedded Heaven and Earth. The cutting of them asunder was the work of Tutenganahau and his brethren, and the conduct of Tutenganahau is still held up as an example of filial impiety.<sup>31</sup> The story is preserved in sacred hymns of very great antiquity, and many of the myths are common to the other peoples of the Pacific.<sup>32</sup>

Now let us turn from New Zealand to Athens, as she was in the days of Pericles. Socrates is sitting in the porch of the King Archon, when Euthyphro comes up and enters into conversation with the philosopher. After some talk, Euthyphro says, 'You will think me mad when I tell you whom I am prosecuting and pursuing!' 'Why, has the fugitive wings?' asks Socrates. 'Nay, he is not very volatile at his time of life!' 'Who is he?' 'My father.'

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<sup>31</sup> *New Zealand*, Taylor, pp. 119-121. *Die heilige Sage der Polynesier*, Bastian, pp. 36-39.

<sup>32</sup> A crowd of similar myths, in one of which a serpent severs Heaven and Earth, are printed in Turner's *Samoa*.

‘Good heavens! you don’t mean that. What is he accused of?’ ‘Murder, Socrates.’ Then Euthyphro explains the case, which quaintly illustrates Greek civilisation. Euthyphro’s father had an agricultural labourer at Naxos. One day this man, in a drunken passion, killed a slave. Euthyphro’s father seized the labourer, bound him, threw him into a ditch, ‘and then sent to Athens to ask a diviner what should be done with him.’ Before the answer of the diviner arrived, the labourer literally ‘died in a ditch’ of hunger and cold. For this offence, Euthyphro was prosecuting his own father. Socrates shows that he disapproves, and Euthyphro thus defends the piety of his own conduct: ‘The impious, whoever he may be, ought not to go unpunished. For do not men regard Zeus as the best and most righteous of gods? Yet even they admit that Zeus bound his own father Cronus, because he wickedly devoured his sons; and that Cronus, too, had punished his own father, Uranus, for a similar reason, in a nameless manner. And yet when *I* proceed against *my* father, people are angry with me. This is their inconsistent way of talking, when the gods are concerned, and when I am concerned.’

Here Socrates breaks in. He ‘cannot away with these stories about the gods,’ and so he has just been accused of impiety, the charge for which he died. Socrates cannot believe that a god, Cronus, mutilated his father Uranus, but Euthyphro believes the whole affair: ‘I can tell you many other things about the gods which would quite amaze you.’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The translation used is Jowett’s.

We have here a typical example of the way in which mythology puzzled the early philosophers of Greece. Socrates was anxious to be pious, and to respect the most ancient traditions of the gods. Yet at the very outset of sacred history he was met by tales of gods who mutilated and bound their own parents. Not only were such tales hateful to him, but they were of positively evil example to people like Euthyphro. The problem remained, how did the fathers of the Athenians ever come to tell such myths?

Let us now examine the myth of Cronus, and the explanations which have been given by scholars. Near the beginning of things, according to Hesiod (whose cosmogony was accepted in Greece), Earth gave birth to Heaven. Later, Heaven, Uranus, became the husband of Gæa, Earth. Just as Rangi and Papa, in New Zealand, had many children, so had Uranus and Gæa. As in New Zealand, some of these children were gods of the various elements. Among them were Oceanus, the deep, and Hyperion, the sun – as among the children of Earth and Heaven, in New Zealand, were the Wind and the Sea. The youngest child of the Greek Heaven and Earth was ‘Cronus of crooked counsel, who ever hated his mighty sire.’ Now even as the children of the Maori Heaven and Earth were ‘concealed between the hollows of their parents’ breasts,’ so the Greek Heaven used to ‘hide his children from the light in the hollows of Earth.’ Both Earth and her children resented this, and, as in New Zealand, the children conspired against Heaven, taking Earth, however, into

their counsels. Thereupon Earth produced iron, and bade her children avenge their wrongs.<sup>34</sup> Now fear fell on all of them, except Cronus, who, like Tutenganahau, was all for action. Cronus determined to end the embraces of Heaven and Earth. But, while the Maori myth conceives of Heaven and Earth as of two beings which have never been separated before, Hesiod makes Heaven amorously approach his wife from a distance. Then Cronus stretched out his hand, armed with a sickle of iron, or steel, and mutilated Uranus. Thus were Heaven and Earth practically divorced. But as in the Maori myth one of the children of Heaven clave to his sire, so, in Greek, Oceanus remained faithful to his father.<sup>35</sup>

This is the first portion of the myth of Cronus. Can it be denied that the story is well illustrated and explained by the New Zealand parallel, the myth of the cruelty of Tutenganahau? By means of this comparison, the meaning of the myth is made clear enough. Just as the New Zealanders had conceived of Heaven and Earth as at one time united, to the prejudice of their children, so the ancestors of the Greeks had believed in an ancient union of Heaven and Earth. Both by Greeks and Maoris, Heaven and Earth were thought of as living persons, with human parts and passions. Their union was prejudicial to their children, and so the children violently separated the parents. This conduct is regarded as impious, and as an awful example to be

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<sup>34</sup> *Theog.*, 166.

<sup>35</sup> Apollodorus, i. 15.

avoided, in Maori paha. In Naxos, on the other hand, Euthyphro deemed that the conduct of Cronus deserved imitation. If ever the Maoris had reached a high civilisation, they would probably have been revolted, like Socrates, by the myth which survived from their period of savagery. Mr. Tylor well says,<sup>36</sup> ‘Just as the adzes of polished jade, and the cloaks of tied flax-fibre, which these New Zealanders were using but yesterday, are older in their place in history than the bronze battle-axes and linen mummy-cloths of ancient Egypt, so the Maori poet’s shaping of nature into nature-myth belongs to a stage of intellectual history which was passing away in Greece five-and-twenty centuries ago. The myth-maker’s fancy of Heaven and Earth as father and mother of all things naturally suggested the legend that they in old days abode together, but have since been torn asunder.’

That this view of Heaven and Earth is natural to early minds, Mr. Tylor proves by the presence of the myth of the union and violent divorce of the pair in China.<sup>37</sup> Puang-ku is the Chinese Cronus, or Tutenganahau. In India,<sup>38</sup> Dyaus and Prithivi, Heaven and Earth, were once united, and were severed by Indra, their own child.

This, then, is our interpretation of the exploit of Cronus. It is an old surviving nature-myth of the severance of Heaven and Earth, a myth found in China, India, New Zealand, as well as in

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<sup>36</sup> *Primitive Culture*, i. 325.

<sup>37</sup> Pauthier, *Livres sacrés de l’Orient*, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Muir’s *Sanskrit Texts*, v. 23. Aitareya Brahmana.

Greece. Of course it is not pretended that Chinese and Maoris borrowed from Indians and Greeks, or came originally of the same stock. Similar phenomena, presenting themselves to be explained by human minds in a similar stage of fancy and of ignorance, will account for the parallel myths.

The second part of the myth of Cronus was, like the first, a stumbling-block to the orthodox in Greece. Of the second part we offer no explanation beyond the fact that the incidents in the myth are almost universally found among savages, and that, therefore, in Greece they are probably survivals from savagery. The sequel of the myth appears to account for nothing, as the first part accounts for the severance of Heaven and Earth. In the sequel a world-wide *Märchen*, or tale, seems to have been attached to Cronus, or attracted into the cycle of which he is centre, without any particular reason, beyond the law which makes detached myths crystallise round any celebrated name. To look further is, perhaps, *chercher raison où il n'y en a pas*.

The conclusion of the story of Cronus runs thus: He wedded his sister, Rhea, and begat children – Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon, and, lastly, Zeus. ‘And mighty Cronus swallowed down each of them, each that came to their mother’s knees from her holy womb, with this intent, that none other of the proud children of Uranus should hold kingly sway among the Immortals.’ Cronus showed a ruling father’s usual jealousy of his heirs. It was a case of Friedrich Wilhelm and Friedrich. But Cronus (acting in a way natural in a story perhaps first invented by cannibals) swallowed

his children instead of merely imprisoning them. Heaven and Earth had warned him to beware of his heirs, and he could think of no safer plan than that which he adopted. When Rhea was about to become the mother of Zeus, she fled to Crete. Here Zeus was born, and when Cronus (in pursuit of his usual policy) asked for the baby, he was presented with a stone wrapped up in swaddling bands. After swallowing the stone, Cronus was easy in his mind; but Zeus grew up, administered a dose to his father, and compelled him to disgorge. 'The stone came forth first, as he had swallowed it last.'<sup>39</sup> The other children also emerged, all alive and well. Zeus fixed the stone at Delphi, where, long after the Christian era, Pausanias saw it.<sup>40</sup> It was not a large stone, Pausanias tells us, and the Delphians used to anoint it with oil and wrap it up in wool on feast-days. All Greek temples had their fetich-stones, and each stone had its legend. This was the story of the Delphian stone, and of the fetichism which survived the early years of Christianity. A very pretty story it is. Savages more frequently smear their fetich-stones with red paint than daub them with oil, but the latter, as we learn from Theophrastus' account of the 'superstitious man,' was the Greek ritual.

This anecdote about Cronus was the stumbling-block of the orthodox Greek, the jest of the sceptic, and the butt of the early Christian controversialists. Found among Bushmen or Australians the narrative might seem rather wild, but it astonishes

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<sup>39</sup> Hesiod, *Theog.*, 497.

<sup>40</sup> Paus., x. 24.

us still more when it occurs in the holy legends of Greece. Our explanation of its presence there is simple enough. Like the erratic blocks in a modern plain, like the flint-heads in a meadow, the story is a relic of a very distant past. The glacial age left the boulders on the plain, the savage tribes of long ago left the arrow-heads, the period of savage fancy left the story of Cronus and the rites of the fetich-stone. Similar rites are still notoriously practised in the South Sea Islands, in Siberia, in India and Africa and Melanesia, by savages. And by savages similar tales are still told.

We cannot go much lower than the Bushmen, and among Bushman divine myths is room for the 'swallowing trick' attributed to Cronus by Hesiod. The chief divine character in Bushman myth is the Mantis insect. His adopted daughter is the child of Kwai Hemm, a supernatural character, 'the all-devourer.' The Mantis gets his adopted daughter to call the swallower to his aid; but Kwai Hemm swallows the Mantis, the god-insect. As Zeus made his own wife change herself into an insect, for the convenience of swallowing her, there is not much difference between Bushman and early Greek mythology. Kwai Hemm is killed by a stratagem, and all the animals whom he has got outside of, in a long and voracious career, troop forth from him alive and well, like the swallowed gods from the maw of Cronus.<sup>41</sup> Now, story for story, the Bushman version is much less offensive than that of Hesiod. But the Bushman story is just the sort of story we

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<sup>41</sup> Bleek, *Bushman Folklore*, pp. 6-8.

expect from Bushmen, whereas the Hesiodic story is not at all the kind of tale we look for from Greeks. The explanation is, that the Greeks had advanced out of a savage state of mind and society, but had retained their old myths, myths evolved in the savage stage, and in harmony with that condition of fancy. Among the Kaffirs<sup>42</sup> we find the same 'swallow-myth.' The Igongqongqo swallows all and sundry; a woman cuts the swallower with a knife, and 'people came out, and cattle, and dogs.' In Australia, a god is swallowed. As in the myth preserved by Aristophanes in the 'Birds,' the Australians believe that birds were the original gods, and the eagle, especially, is a great creative power. The Moon was a mischievous being, who walked about the world, doing what evil he could. One day he swallowed the eagle-god. The wives of the eagle came up, and the Moon asked them where he might find a well. They pointed out a well, and, as he drank, they hit the Moon with a stone tomahawk, and out flew the eagle.<sup>43</sup> This is oddly like Grimm's tale of 'The Wolf and the Kids.' The wolf swallowed the kids, their mother cut a hole in the wolf, let out the kids, stuffed the wolf with stones, and sewed him up again. The wolf went to the well to drink, the weight of the stones pulled him in, and he was drowned. Similar stories are common among the Red Indians, and Mr. Im Thurn has found them in Guiana. How savages all over the world got the idea that men and beasts could be swallowed and disgorged alive, and why they fashioned the

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<sup>42</sup> Theal, *Kaffir Folklore*, pp. 161-167.

<sup>43</sup> Brough Smyth, i. 432-433.

idea into a divine myth, it is hard to say. Mr. Tylor, in *Primitive Culture*,<sup>44</sup> adds many examples of the narrative. The Basutos have it; it occurs some five times in Callaway's *Zula Nursery Tales*. In Greenland the Eskimo have a shape of the incident, and we have all heard of the escape of Jonah.

It has been suggested that night, covering up the world, gave the first idea of the swallowing myth. Now in some of the stories the night is obviously conceived of as a big beast which swallows all things. The notion that night is an animal is entirely in harmony with savage metaphysics. In the opinion of the savage speculator, all things are men and animals. 'Ils se persuadent que non seulement les hommes et les autres animaux, mais aussi que toutes les autres choses sont animées,' says one of the old Jesuit missionaries in Canada.<sup>45</sup> 'The wind was formerly a person; he became a bird,' say the Bushmen. *G' oö ka! Kui* (a very respectable Bushman, whose name seems a little hard to pronounce) once saw the wind-person at Haarfontein.

Savages, then, are persuaded that night, sky, cloud, fire, and so forth, are only the *schein*, or sensuous appearance, of things that, in essence, are men or animals. A good example is the bringing of Night to Vanua Lava, by Qat, the 'culture-hero' of Melanesia. At first it was always day, and people tired of it. Qat heard that Night was at the Torres Islands, and he set forth to get some. Qong (Night) received Qat well, blackened his eyebrows, showed

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<sup>44</sup> i. 338.

<sup>45</sup> *Rel. de la Nouvelle-France* (1636), p. 114.

him Sleep, and sent him off with fowls to bring Dawn after the arrival of Night should make Dawn a necessity. Next day Qat's brothers saw the sun crawl away west, and presently Night came creeping up from the sea. 'What is this?' cried the brothers. 'It is Night,' said Qat; 'sit down, and when you feel something in your eyes, lie down and keep quiet.' So they went to sleep. 'When Night had lasted long enough, Qat took a piece of red obsidian, and cut the darkness, and the Dawn came out.'<sup>46</sup>

Night is more or less personal in this tale, and solid enough to be cut, so as to let the Dawn out. This savage conception of Night, as the swallower and disgorger, might start the notion of other swallowing and disgorging beings. Again the Bushmen, and other savage peoples, account for certain celestial phenomena by saying that 'a big star has swallowed his daughter, and spit her out again.' While natural phenomena, explained on savage principles, might give the data of the swallow-myth, we must not conclude that all beings to whom the story is attached are, therefore, the Night. On this principle Cronus would be the Night, and so would the wolf in Grimm. For our purposes it is enough that the feat of Cronus is a feat congenial to the savage fancy and repugnant to the civilised Greeks who found themselves in possession of the myth. Beyond this, and beyond the inference

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<sup>46</sup> Codrington, in *Journal Anthropol. Inst.*, Feb., 1881. There is a Breton *Märchen* of a land where people had to 'bring the Dawn' daily with carts and horses. A boy, whose sole property was a cock, sold it to the people of this country for a large sum, and now the cock brings the Dawn, with a great saving of trouble and expense. The *Märchen* is a survival of the state of mind of the Solomon Islanders.

that the Cronus myth was first evolved by people to whom it seemed quite natural, that is, by savages, we do not pretend to go in our interpretation.

To end our examination of the myth of Cronus, we may compare the solutions offered by scholars. As a rule, these solutions are based on the philological analysis of the names in the story. It will be seen that very various and absolutely inconsistent etymologies and meanings of Cronus are suggested by philologists of the highest authority. These contradictions are, unfortunately, rather the rule than the exception in the etymological interpretation of myths.

The opinion of Mr. Max Müller has always a right to the first hearing from English inquirers. Mr. Müller, naturally, examines first the name of the god whose legend he is investigating. He writes: "There is no such being as Kronos in Sanskrit. Kronos did not exist till long after Zeus in Greece. Zeus was called by the Greeks the son of Time (Κρόνος). This is a very simple and very common form of mythological expression. It meant originally, not that time was the origin or source of Zeus, but Κρονίων or Κρονίδης was used in the sense of "connected with time, representing time, existing through all time." Derivatives in -ίων and -ίδης took, in later times, the more exclusive meaning of patronymics... When this (the meaning of Κρονίδης as equivalent to Ancient of Days) ceased to be understood, ... people asked themselves the question, Why is Ζεύς called Κρονίδης? And the natural and almost inevitable answer was,

Because he is the son, the offspring of a more ancient god, Κρόνος. This may be a very old myth in Greece; but the misunderstanding which gave rise to it could have happened in Greece only. We cannot expect, therefore, a god Κρόνος in the Veda.’ To expect Greek in the Veda would certainly be sanguine. ‘When this myth of Κρόνος had once been started, it would roll on irresistibly. If Ζεύς had once a father called Κρόνος, Κρόνος must have a wife.’ It is added, as confirmation, that ‘the name of Κρονίδης belongs originally to Zeus only, and not to his later’ (in Hesiod elder) ‘brothers, Poseidon and Hades.’<sup>47</sup>

Mr. Müller says, in his famous essay on ‘Comparative Mythology’<sup>48</sup>: ‘How can we imagine that a few generations before that time’ (the age of Solon) ‘the highest notions of the Godhead among the Greeks were adequately expressed by the story of Uranus maimed by Kronos, – of Kronos eating his children, swallowing a stone, and vomiting out alive his whole progeny? Among the lowest tribes of Africa and America, we hardly find anything more hideous and revolting.’ We have found a good deal of the sort in Africa and America, where it seems not out of place.

One objection to Mr. Müller’s theory is, that it makes the mystery no clearer. When Greeks were so advanced in Hellenism that their own early language had become obsolete and obscure, they invented the god Κρόνος, to account for the patronymic

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<sup>47</sup> *Selected Essays*, i. 460.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 311.

(as they deemed it) Κρονίδης, son of Κρόνος. But why did they tell such savage and revolting stories about the god they had invented? Mr. Müller only says the myth ‘would roll on irresistibly.’ But why did the rolling myth gather such very strange moss? That is the problem; and while Mr. Müller’s hypothesis accounts for the existence of a god called Κρόνος, it does not even attempt to show how full-blown Greeks came to believe such hideous stories about the god.

This theory, therefore, is of no practical service. The theory of Adalbert Kuhn, one of the most famous of Sanskrit scholars, and author of *Die Herabkunft des Feuers*, is directly opposed to the ideas of Mr. Müller. In Cronus, Mr. Müller recognises a god who could only have come into being among Greeks, when the Greeks had begun to forget the original meaning of ‘derivatives in –ων and –ιδης.’ Kuhn, on the other hand, derives Κρόνος from the same root as the Sanskrit *Krāna*.<sup>49</sup> *Krāna* means, it appears, *der für sich schaffende*, he who creates for himself, and Cronus is compared to the Indian Pragapati, about whom even more abominable stories are told than the myths which circulate to the prejudice of Cronus. According to Kuhn, the ‘swallow-myth’ means that Cronus, the lord of light and dark powers, swallows the divinities of light. But in place of Zeus (that is, according to Kuhn, of the daylight sky) he swallows a stone, that is the sun. When he disgorges the stone (the sun), he also disgorges the gods of light whom he had swallowed.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ueber Entwicklungsstufen der Mythenbildung* (1874), I. 148.

I confess that I cannot understand these distinctions between the father and lord of light and dark (Cronus) and the beings he swallowed. Nor do I find it easy to believe that myth-making man took all those distinctions, or held those views of the Creator. However, the chief thing to note is that Mr. Müller's etymology and Kuhn's etymology of Cronus can hardly both be true, which, as their systems both depend on etymological analysis, is somewhat discomfiting.

The next etymological theory is the daring speculation of Mr. Brown. In *The Great Dionysiak Myth*<sup>50</sup> Mr. Brown writes: 'I regard Kronos as the equivalent of Karnos, Karnaios, Karnavis, the Horned God; Assyrian, KaRNU; Hebrew, KeReN, horn; Hellenic, KRoNos, or KaRNos.' Mr. Brown seems to think that Cronus is 'the ripening power of harvest,' and also 'a wily savage god,' in which opinion one quite agrees with him. Why the name of Cronus should mean 'horned,' when he is never represented with horns, it is hard to say. But among the various foreign gods in whom the Greeks recognised their own Cronus, one Hea, 'regarded by Berosos as Kronos,' seems to have been 'horn-wearing.'<sup>51</sup> Horns are lacking in Seb and Il, if not in Baal Hamon, though Mr. Brown would like to behorn them.

Let us now turn to Preller.<sup>52</sup> According to Preller, Κρόνος is connected with κραίνω, to fulfil, to bring to completion. The

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<sup>50</sup> ii. 127.

<sup>51</sup> *G. D. M.*, ii. 127, 129.

<sup>52</sup> *Gr. My.*, i. 144.

harvest month, the month of ripening and fulfilment, was called κρονίων in some parts of Greece, and the jolly harvest-feast, with its memory of Saturn's golden days, was named κρόνια. The sickle of Cronus, the sickle of harvest-time, works in well with this explanation, and we have a kind of pun in Homer which points in the direction of Preller's derivation from κραίνω: —

οὐδ' ἄρα πῶ οἱ ἐπεκράαινε Κρονίων,

and in Sophocles ("Tr." 126): —

ὁ πάντα κραίνων βασιλεὺς Κρονίδας.

Preller illustrates the mutilation of Uranus by the Maori tale of Tutenganahau. The child-swallowing he connects with Punic and Phœnician influence, and Semitic sacrifices of men and children. Porphyry<sup>53</sup> speaks of human sacrifices to Cronus in Rhodes, and the Greeks recognised Cronus in the Carthaginian god to whom children were offered up.

Hartung<sup>54</sup> takes Cronus, when he mutilates Uranus, to be the fire of the sun, scorching the sky of spring. This, again, is somewhat out of accord with Schwartz's idea, that Cronus is the storm-god, the cloud-swallowing deity, his sickle the rainbow, and the blood of Uranus the lightning.<sup>55</sup> According to Prof. Sayce, again,<sup>56</sup> the blood-drops of Uranus are rain-drops. Cronus

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<sup>53</sup> *De Abst.*, ii. 202, 197.

<sup>54</sup> *Rel. und Myth.*, ii. 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ursprung der Myth.*, pp. 133, 1, 5, 139, 149.

<sup>56</sup> *Contemporary Review*, Sept., 1883.

is the sun-god, piercing the dark cloud, which is just the reverse of Schwartz's idea. Prof. Sayce sees points in common between the legend of Moloch, or of Baal under the name of Moloch, and the myth of Cronus. But Moloch, he thinks, is not a god of Phœnician origin, but a deity borrowed from 'the primitive Accadian population of Babylonia.' Mr. Isaac Taylor, again, explains Cronus as the sky which swallows and reproduces the stars. The story of the sickle may be derived from the crescent moon, the 'silver sickle,' or from a crescent-shaped piece of meteoric iron – for, in this theory, the fetich-stone of Delphi is a piece of that substance.

It will be observed that any one of these theories, if accepted, is much more 'minute in detail' than our humble suggestion. He who adopts any one of them, knows all about it. He knows that Cronus is a purely Greek god, or that he is connected with the Sanskrit *Krāna*, which Tiele,<sup>57</sup> unhappily, says is 'a very dubious word.' Or the mythologist may be quite confident that Cronus is neither Greek nor, in any sense, Sanskrit, but Phœnician. A not less adequate interpretation assigns him ultimately to Accadia. While the inquirer who can choose a system and stick to it knows the exact nationality of Cronus, he is also well acquainted with his character as a nature-god. He may be Time, or perhaps he is the Summer Heat, and a horned god; or he is the harvest-god, or the god of storm and darkness, or the midnight sky, – the choice is wide; or he is the lord of dark and light, and his children are

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<sup>57</sup> *Rev. de l'Hist. Rel.*, i. 179.

the stars, the clouds, the summer months, the light-powers, or what you will. The mythologist has only to make his selection.

The system according to which we tried to interpret the myth is less *ondoyant et divers*. We do not even pretend to explain everything. We do not guess at the meaning and root of the word Cronus. We only find parallels to the myth among savages, whose mental condition is fertile in such legends. And we only infer that the myth of Cronus was originally evolved by persons also in the savage intellectual condition. The survival we explain as, in a previous essay, we explained the survival of the bull-roarer, by the conservatism of the religious instinct.

# CUPID, PSYCHE, AND THE 'SUN-FROG.'

'Once upon a time there lived a king and a queen,' says the old woman in Apuleius, beginning the tale of Cupid and Psyche with that ancient formula which has been dear to so many generations of children. In one shape or other the tale of Cupid and Psyche, of the woman who is forbidden to see or to name her husband, of the man with the vanished fairy bride, is known in most lands, 'even among barbarians.' According to the story the mystic prohibition is always broken: the hidden face is beheld; light is brought into the darkness; the forbidden name is uttered; the bride is touched with the tabooed metal, iron, and the union is ended. Sometimes the pair are re-united, after long searchings and wanderings; sometimes they are severed for ever. Such are the central situations in tales like that of Cupid and Psyche.

In the attempt to discover how the ideas on which this myth is based came into existence, we may choose one of two methods. We may confine our investigations to the Aryan peoples, among whom the story occurs both in the form of myth and of household tale. Again, we may look for the shapes of the legend which hide, like Peau d'Ane in disguise, among the rude kraals and wigwams, and in the strange and scanty garb of savages. If among savages we find both narratives like Cupid and Psyche, and also

customs and laws out of which the myth might have arisen, we may provisionally conclude that similar customs once existed among the civilised races who possess the tale, and that from these sprang the early forms of the myth.

In accordance with the method hitherto adopted, we shall prefer the second plan, and pursue our quest beyond the limits of the Aryan peoples.

The oldest literary shape of the tale of Psyche and her lover is found in the Rig Veda (x. 95). The characters of a singular and cynical dialogue in that poem are named Urvasi and Pururavas. The former is an Apsaras, a kind of fairy or sylph, the mistress (and a *folle maîtresse*, too) of Pururavas, a mortal man.<sup>58</sup> In the poem Urvasi remarks that when she dwelt among men she 'ate once a day a small piece of butter, and therewith well satisfied went away.' This slightly reminds one of the common idea that the living may not eat in the land of the dead, and of Persephone's tasting the pomegranate in Hades.

Of the dialogue in the Rig Veda it may be said, in the words of Mr. Toots, that 'the language is coarse and the meaning is obscure.' We only gather that Urvasi, though she admits her sensual content in the society of Pururavas, is leaving him 'like the first of the dawns'; that she 'goes home again, hard to be caught, like the winds.' She gives her lover some hope, however

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<sup>58</sup> That Pururavas is regarded as a mortal man, in relations with some sort of spiritual mistress, appears from the poem itself (v. 8, 9, 18). The human character of Pururavas also appears in R. V., i. 31, 4.

– that the gods promise immortality even to him, ‘the kinsman of Death’ as he is. ‘Let thine offspring worship the gods with an oblation; in Heaven shalt thou too have joy of the festival.’

In the Rig Veda, then, we dimly discern a parting between a mortal man and an immortal bride, and a promise of reconciliation.

The story, of which this Vedic poem is a partial dramatisation, is given in the Brahmana of the Yajur Veda. Mr. Max Müller has translated the passage.<sup>59</sup> According to the Brahmana, ‘Urvasi, a kind of fairy, fell in love with Pururavas, and when she met him she said: Embrace me three times a day, but never against my will, and let me never see you without your royal garments, *for this is the manner of women.*’<sup>60</sup> The Gandharvas, a spiritual race, kinsmen of Urvasi, thought she had lingered too long among men. They therefore plotted some way of parting her from Pururavas. Her covenant with her lord declared that she was never to see him naked. If that compact were broken she would be compelled to leave him. To make Pururavas break this compact the Gandharvas stole a lamb from beside Urvasi’s bed: Pururavas sprang up to rescue the lamb, and, in a flash of lightning, Urvasi saw him naked, contrary to the *manner of women*. She vanished. He sought her long, and at last came to

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<sup>59</sup> *Selected Essays*, i. 408.

<sup>60</sup> The Apsaras is an ideally beautiful fairy woman, something ‘between the high gods and the lower grotesque beings,’ with ‘lotus eyes’ and other agreeable characteristics. A list of Apsaras known by name is given in Meyer’s *Gandharven-Kentauren*, p. 28. They are often regarded as cloud-maidens by mythologists.

a lake where she and her fairy friends were playing *in the shape of birds*. Urvasi saw Pururavas, revealed herself to him, and, according to the Brahmana, part of the strange Vedic dialogue was now spoken. Urvasi promised to meet him on the last night of the year: a son was to be the result of the interview. Next day, her kinsfolk, the Gandharvas, offered Pururavas the wish of his heart. He wished to be one of them. They then initiated him into the mode of kindling a certain sacred fire, after which he became immortal and dwelt among the Gandharvas.

It is highly characteristic of the Indian mind that the story should be thus worked into connection with ritual. In the same way the Bhagavata Purana has a long, silly, and rather obscene narrative about the sacrifice offered by Pururavas, and the new kind of sacred fire. Much the same ritual tale is found in the Vishnu Purana (iv. 6, 19).

Before attempting to offer our own theory of the legend, we must examine the explanations presented by scholars. The philological method of dealing with myths is well known. The hypothesis is that the names in a myth are 'stubborn things,' and that, as the whole narrative has probably arisen from forgetfulness of the meaning of language, the secret of a myth must be sought in analysis of the proper names of the persons. On this principle Mr. Max Müller interprets the myth of Urvasi and Pururavas, their loves, separation, and reunion. Mr. Müller says that the story 'expresses the identity of the morning dawn

and the evening twilight.’<sup>61</sup> To prove this, the names are analysed. It is Mr. Müller’s object to show that though, even in the Veda, Urvasi and Pururavas are names of persons, they were originally ‘appellations’; and that Urvasi meant ‘dawn,’ and Pururavas ‘sun.’ Mr. Müller’s opinion as to the etymological sense of the name would be thought decisive, naturally, by lay readers, if an opposite opinion were not held by that other great philologist and comparative mythologist, Adalbert Kuhn. Admitting that ‘the etymology of Urvasi is difficult,’ Mr. Müller derives it from ‘*uru*, wide (εὐρύ), and a root *as* = to pervade.’ Now the dawn is ‘widely pervading,’ and has, in Sanskrit, the epithet *urûkî*, ‘far-going.’ Mr. Müller next assumes that ‘Eurykyde,’ ‘Eurynome,’ ‘Eurydike,’ and other heroic Greek female names, are ‘names of the dawn’; but this, it must be said, is merely an assumption of his school. The main point of the argument is that Urvasi means ‘far-going,’ and that ‘the far and wide splendour of dawn’ is often spoken of in the Veda. ‘However, the best proof that Urvasi was the dawn is the legend told of her and of her love to Pururavas, a story that is true only of the sun and the dawn’ (i. 407).

We shall presently see that a similar story is told of persons in whom the dawn can scarcely be recognised, so that ‘the best proof’ is not very good.

The name of Pururavas, again, is ‘an appropriate name for a solar hero.’ ... Pururavas meant the same as Πολυδεύκης, ‘endowed with much light,’ for though *rava* is generally used of

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<sup>61</sup> *Selected Essays*, i. 405.

sound, yet the root *ru*, which means originally ‘to cry,’ is also applied to colour, in the sense of a loud or crying colour, that is, red.<sup>62</sup> It is interesting to learn that our Aryan fathers spoke of ‘loud colours,’ and were so sensitive as to think violet ‘loud.’ Besides, Pururavas calls himself Vasistha, which, as we know, is a name of the sun; and if he is called Aido, the son of Ida, the same name is elsewhere given<sup>63</sup> to Agni, the fire. ‘The conclusion of the argument is that antiquity spoke of the naked sun, and of the chaste dawn hiding her face when she had seen her husband. Yet she says she will come again. And after the sun has travelled through the world in search of his beloved, when he comes to the threshold of Death and is going to end his solitary life, she appears again, in the gloaming, the same as the dawn, as Eos in Homer, begins and ends the day, and she carries him away to the golden seats of the Immortals.’<sup>64</sup>

Kuhn objects to all this explanation, partly on what we think the inadequate ground that there is no necessary connection between the story of Urvasi (thus interpreted) and the ritual of sacred fire-lighting. Connections of that sort were easily invented at random by the compilers of the Brahmanas in their existing form. Coming to the analysis of names, Kuhn finds in Urvasi ‘a weakening of Urvankî (*uru + anc*), like *yuvaça* from *yuvanka*,

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. *ruber, rufus*, O.H.G. *rôt, rudhira*, ἐρυθρός; also Sanskrit, *ravi*, sun.

<sup>63</sup> R. V., iii. 29, 3.

<sup>64</sup> The passage alluded to in Homer does not mean that dawn ‘ends’ the day, but ‘when the fair-tressed Dawn brought the full light of the third day’ (*Od.*, v. 390).

Latin *juvencus*; ... the accent is of no decisive weight.' Kuhn will not be convinced that Pururavas is the sun, and is unmoved by the ingenious theory of 'a crying colour,' denoted by his name, and the inference, supported by such words as *rufus*, that crying colours are red, and therefore appropriate names of the red sun. The connection between Pururavas and Agni, fire, is what appeals to Kuhn – and, in short, where Mr. Müller sees a myth of sun and dawn, Kuhn recognises a fire-myth. Roth, again (whose own name means *red*), far from thinking that Urvasi is 'the chaste dawn,' interprets her name as *die geile*, that is, 'lecherous, lascivious, lewd, wanton, obscene'; while Pururavas, as 'the Roarer,' suggests 'the Bull in rut.' In accordance with these views Roth explains the myth in a fashion of his own.<sup>65</sup>

Here, then, as Kuhn says, 'we have three essentially different modes of interpreting the myth,'<sup>66</sup> all three founded on philological analysis of the names in the story. No better example could be given to illustrate the weakness of the philological method. In the first place, that method relies on names as the primitive relics and germs of the tale, although the tale may occur where the names have never been heard, and though the names are, presumably, late additions to a story in which the characters were originally anonymous. Again, the most illustrious etymologists differ absolutely about the true sense of

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<sup>65</sup> Liebrecht (*Zur Volkskunde*, 241) is reminded by Pururavas (in Roth's sense of *der Briüller*) of loud-thundering Zeus, ἐρίγδουπος.

<sup>66</sup> *Herabkunft des Feuers*, pp. 86-89.

the names. Kuhn is disposed to see fire everywhere, and fire-myths; Mr. Müller to see dawn and dawn-myths; Schwartz to see storm and storm-myths, and so on. As the orthodox teachers are thus at variance, so that there is no safety in orthodoxy, we may attempt to use our heterodox method.

None of the three scholars whose views we have glanced at – neither Roth, Kuhn, nor Mr. Müller – lays stress on the saying of Urvasi, ‘never let me see you without your royal garments, *for this is the custom of women.*’<sup>67</sup> To our mind, these words contain the gist of the myth. There must have been, at some time, a custom which forbade women to see their husbands without their garments, or the words have no meaning. If any custom of this kind existed, a story might well be evolved to give a sanction to the law. ‘You must never see your husband naked: think what happened to Urvasi – she vanished clean away!’ This is the kind of warning which might be given. If the customary prohibition had grown obsolete, the punishment might well be assigned to a being of another, a spiritual race, in which old human ideas lingered, as the neolithic dread of iron lingers in the Welsh fairies.

Our method will be, to prove the existence of singular rules of etiquette, corresponding to the etiquette accidentally infringed by Pururavas. We shall then investigate stories of the same character

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<sup>67</sup> Liebrecht (*Zur Volkskunde*, p. 241) notices the reference to the ‘custom of women.’ But he thinks the clause a mere makeshift, introduced late to account for a prohibition of which the real meaning had been forgotten. The improbability of this view is indicated by the frequency of similar prohibitions in actual custom.

as that of Urvashi and Pururavas, in which the infringement of the etiquette is chastised. It will be seen that, in most cases, the bride is of a peculiar and perhaps supernatural race. Finally, the tale of Urvashi will be taken up again, will be shown to conform in character to the other stories examined, and will be explained as a myth told to illustrate, or sanction, a nuptial etiquette.

The lives of savages are bound by the most closely-woven fetters of custom. The simplest acts are ‘tabooed,’ a strict code regulates all intercourse. Married life, especially, moves in the strangest fetters. There will be nothing remarkable in the wide distribution of the myth turning on nuptial etiquette, if this law of nuptial etiquette proves to be also widely distributed. That it is widely distributed we now propose to demonstrate by examples.

The custom of the African people of the kingdom of Futa is, or was, even stricter than the Vedic *custom of women*— ‘wives never permit their husbands to see them unveiled for three years after their marriage.’<sup>68</sup>

In his *Travels to Timbuctoo* (i. 94), Caillié says that the bridegroom ‘is not allowed to see his intended during the day.’ He has a tabooed hut apart, and ‘if he is obliged to come out he covers his face.’ He ‘remains with his wife only till daybreak’ – like Cupid – and flees, like Cupid, before the light. Among the

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<sup>68</sup> Astley, *Collection of Voyages*, ii. 24. This is given by Bluet and Moore on the evidence of one Job Ben Solomon, a native of Bunda in Futa. ‘Though Job had a daughter by his last wife, yet he never saw her without her veil, as having been married to her only two years.’ Excellently as this prohibition suits my theory, yet I confess I do not like Job’s security.

Australians the chief deity, if deity such a being can be called, Pundjel, ‘has a wife whose face he has never seen,’ probably in compliance with some primæval etiquette or taboo.<sup>69</sup>

Among the Yorubas ‘conventional modesty forbids a woman to speak to her husband, or even to see him, if it can be avoided.’<sup>70</sup> Of the Iroquois Lafitau says: ‘Ils n’oscent aller dans les cabanes particulières où habitent leurs épouses que durant l’obscurité de la nuit.’<sup>71</sup> The Circassian women live on distant terms with their lords till they become mothers.<sup>72</sup> Similar examples of reserve are reported to be customary among the Fijians.

In backward parts of Europe a strange custom forbids the bride to speak to her lord, as if in memory of a time when husband and wife were always of alien tribes, and, as among the Caribs, spoke different languages.

In the Bulgarian ‘Volkslied,’ the Sun marries Grozdanka, a mortal girl. Her mother addresses her thus: —

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<sup>69</sup> Brough Smyth, i. 423.

<sup>70</sup> Bowen, *Central Africa*, p. 303.

<sup>71</sup> Lafitau, i. 576.

<sup>72</sup> Lubbock, *Origin of Civilisation* (1875), p. 75.

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