

The Transference and Coalescence of Primitive Indo-European and Near Eastern
Systems of Knowledge in Ancient Greece:
The Case of Bellerophon

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1. *Iliad* 6.160–162

τῷ δὲ γυνὴ Προΐτου ἐπεμήνατο δι' Ἄντεια 160
κρυπταδίῃ φιλότῃτι μιγήμεναι· ἀλλὰ τὸν οὐ τι
πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέοντα δαΐφρονα Βελλεροφόντην.

And the wife of Proetus, dazzling Anteia lusted madly for him, 160
to have intercourse in secret love; but him she was by no means
persuading – combat-minded Bellerophon, thinking rightly.

2. Near Eastern parallels:

Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 37 and 39-41)
Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers" (Papyrus D'Orbiney [P. Brit. Mus. 10183])
David and Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Samuel 11)
Sargon-Urzababa tablet 3N T296 (Old Babylonian date; possible Ur III composition)

3. πρῶτον; lines 179–183: the Chimaera; three-bodied monster

4. δεύτερον; lines 184–185: the Solymi; καρτίστην δὴ τήν γε μάχην φάτο δύμεναι
ἀνδρῶν 'he affirmed this to be the hardest battle with men he had plunged into'.

5. τὸ τρίτον; line 186: the Amazons; κατέπεφνεν Ἀμαζόννας ἀντιανείρας 'he slew
Amazons, the equal to men'.

6. Samson kills a thousand Philistines (Judges 15: 9–17).

7. *Iliad* 6.200–202

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ καὶ κείνος ἀπήχθετο πᾶσι θεοῖσιν 200
ἧ̃ τοι ὁ κάπ πεδίον τὸ Ἀλήϊον οἶος ἀλᾶτο
ὄν θυμὸν κατέδων, πάτον ἀνθρώπων ἀλεείνων·

But when that one too became hated by all the gods 200
he wandered alone across the Aleian Plain
devouring his own spirit, avoiding the path of humans.

8. Pindar *Isthmian Odes* 7.42–48

τὰ μακρὰ δ' εἵ τις
παπταίνει, βραχὺς ἐξικέσθαι χαλκόπεδον θεῶν

ἔδραν· ὃ τοι πτερόεις ἔρριψε Πάγασος
δεσπότην ἐθέλοντ' ἐς οὐρανοῦ σταθμούς
ἐλθεῖν μεθ' ὀμάγυριν Βελλεροφόνταν
Ζηνός. τὸ δὲ παρ δίκαν
γλυκὺ πικροτάτα μένει τελευτά.

45

Who gazes
upon the far off will come short in gaining a seat upon the
bronze floor of the gods: so winged Pegasus threw off
his master Bellerophon who wished to come
to the dwelling of heaven, into the assembly
of Zeus.

45

9. Porphyry *Quaestionum Homericarum ad Iliadem pertinentium reliquiae* Z 200.10

Ἀντίμαχος δὲ ἐν τῇ Λύδῃ, ὅτι τοὺς Σολύμους ἀνεῖλε θεοῖς ὄντας προσφιλεῖς, διὰ
τοῦτο μισηθῆναι αὐτόν φησιν ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν.

But Antimachus in the *Lyde* [writes] that he [i.e. Bellerophon] destroyed the
Solymi, who were beloved among the gods, and because of this, they say, he was
hated by the gods.

10. Herodotus 6.95: τῆς Κιλικίης . . . τὸ Ἀλήϊον πεδῖον 'the Aleian Plain of Cilicia' (see
also Strabo 12.3.27 and 14.5.17; Arrian *Anabasis* 2.5.8; Pliny 5.91)

11. Xenophon *Anabasis* 1.2.22: πεδῖον μέγα καὶ καλόν, ἐπίρρυτον, καὶ δένδρων
παντοδαπῶν σύμπλεων καὶ ἀμπέλων 'a great and beautiful plain, flowing with waters,
completely full of all sorts of trees and vines'

12. Defining the structure of the primitive Indo-European myth of the dysfunctional
warrior is a set of six fundamental features:

- (1) CRISIS OF THE WARRIOR (overview of the combat experience)
- (2) FLIGHT AND A DISTANT LOCALE (in a traumatized state, the warrior travels into
distant space: the movement is realized as either the return of the enraged warrior
from a remote space of combat into the space of his own society, or as the retreat
of the isolationist warrior to a remote locale, characterized as aqueous and filled
with lush vegetation)
- (3) FEMININE EROTICISM (crucial to the reintroduction of the warrior into society
and the restoration of his functionality is a conspicuously erotic feminine to which
the warrior is exposed and whose gaze he must avoid)
- (4) CLAIRVOYANT WOMAN (associated with the erotic feminine is a clairvoyant
woman who effectively mediates between the local space of the society and the
distant space of the warrior's combat trauma / retreat)
- (5) APPLICATION OF WATERS (also fundamental to the tradition is the presence of
water, either inundating the remote space of the traumatized warrior's retreat or

utilized in removing the wrath of the warrior who directs his combat mania against society)

(6) ORDER AND INAUGURATION (the warrior is restored to society and regains functionality as the protector of society)

13. Euripides *Stheneboea* Fr. 661

... ὧ κακῶς φρονῶν,
πιού· τί μαίνῃ; τλήθι . . .

... O such lowly thinking,
be persuaded! Why do you rage? Be daring . . .

14. ἀλύω: Euripides *Stheneboea* Fr. 665: τοιαῦτ' ἀλύει 'in such a way her passion rages'

15. Plutarch *Moralia* [*De mulierum virtutibus*] 247f–248b:

(247f) Τὸ δ' ἐν Λυκίᾳ γενέσθαι λεγόμενον μυθῶδες μὲν ἔστιν, ἔχει δέ τινα φήμην ὁμοῦ μαρτυροῦσαν. Ἀμισώδαρος γάρ, ὡς φασιν, ὄν Ἰσάραν Λύκιοι καλοῦσιν, ἦκεν ἐκ τῆς περὶ Ζέλειαν ἀποικίας Λυκίων, ληστρίδας ἄγων ναῦς, ὧν Χίμαρρος ἠγεῖτο, πολεμιστῆς μὲν ἀνὴρ ὠμὸς δὲ καὶ θηριώδης. ἔπλει δὲ πλοίῳ λέοντα μὲν ἔχοντι πρῶραθεν (248A) ἐπίσημον, ἐκ δὲ πρύμνης δράκοντα, | καὶ πολλὰ κακὰ τοὺς Λυκίους ἐποίει, καὶ πλεῦσαι τὴν θάλατταν οὐκ ἦν οὐδὲ τὰς ἐγγὺς θαλάττης πόλεις οἰκεῖν. τοῦτον οὖν ἀποκτείνας ὁ Βελλεροφόντης φεύγοντα τῷ Πηγάσῳ διώξας, ἐκβαλὼν δὲ καὶ τὰς Ἀμαζόνας, οὐδενὸς ἐτύγχανε τῶν δικαίων, ἀλλ' ἦν ἀδικώτατος περὶ αὐτὸν Ἰοβάτης· ὅθεν εἰς τὴν θάλατταν ἐμβὰς ἠΰξατο κατ' αὐτοῦ τῷ Ποσειδῶνι τὴν χώραν ἄκαρπον γενέσθαι καὶ ἀνόνητον. εἴθ' ὁ μὲν ἀπῆει κατευξάμενος, κῦμα δὲ διαρθέν ἐπέκλυζε τὴν γῆν, καὶ θέαμα δεινὸν ἦν ἐπομένης μετεώρου τῆς θαλάττης καὶ ἀποκρυπτούσης τὸ πεδῖον. ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν (b) ἀνδρῶν δεομένων τὸν Βελλεροφόντην ἐπισχεῖν οὐδὲν ἔπειθον, αἱ γυναῖκες ἀνασυράμεναι τοὺς χιτωνίσκους ἀπήντησαν αὐτῷ· πάλιν οὖν ὑπ' αἰσχύνης ἀναχωροῦντος ὀπίσω καὶ τὸ κῦμα λέγεται συνυποχωρῆσαι.

The thing that is told to have happened in Lycia is myth-like; but at the same time it gains some repute in conjunction with the reported evidence. For, they say, Amisodaros, whom the Lycians call Isaras, arrived from the colony of the Lycians near Zeleia, bringing ships of brigands, of whom the chief was Chimarrus – a warrior – a savage man and beast-like. And he came sailing in a ship that had a lion image on its prow, and a serpent image coming out of the stern. He was committing numerous horrid acts against the Lycians: it was possible neither to sail the sea nor to inhabit cities near the sea. Bellerophon killed this man, pursuing him on Pegasus as he fled. Bellerophon also drove out the Amazons, but got no just compensation; instead, Iobates was most unjust toward him. Because of this, Bellerophon, when he had walked out into the sea, prayed to Poseidon against Iobates – prayed for the land to become unfruitful and useless. Then, when he had prayed earnestly, he went away, and a wave

was lifted up that flooded the land. The spectacle of the ensuing sea rising up and obscuring the plain was terrible. And when the [Lycian] men implored Bellerophon to stop it, but did not persuade him, the women hitched up their frocks and went out to face him; out of shame, then, he withdrew and the wave, it is said, retreated with him.

16. Pausanias 2.2.4

άνιοῦσι δὲ ἐς Κόρινθον καὶ ἄλλα ἐστὶ κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν μνήματα καὶ πρὸς τῇ πύλῃ Διογένης τέθαπται ὁ Σινωπεύς, ὃν κύνα ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλοῦσιν Ἑλληνας. πρὸ δὲ τῆς πόλεως κυπαρίσσων ἐστὶν ἄλλος ὀνομαζόμενον Κράνειον. ἐνταῦθα Βελλεροφόντου τέ ἐστὶ τέμενος καὶ Ἀφροδίτης ναὸς Μελαϊνίδος καὶ τάφος Λαΐδος, ᾧ δὴ λέαινα ἐπίθημά ἐστι κριὸν ἔχουσα ἐν τοῖς προτέροις ποσίν.

Going up into Corinth there are monuments along the way and near to the gate is buried Diogenes of Sinope, whom the Greeks call by the surname the Dog. Before the city is a grove of cypress trees called Κράνειον. There is the *temenos* of Bellerophon and the temple of Aphrodite Melaenis and the grave of Laïs, on which is mounted the image of a lioness holding a ram in her front paws.

17. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 13.588e

διαζηλοτυπούμενη δὲ ποτε ἡ Λαῖς Φρύνη πολὺν ἐραστῶν ἔσχηκεν ὄμιλον, οὐ διακρίνουσα πλούσιον ἢ πένητα οὐδ' ὑβριστικῶς αὐτοῖς χρωμένη.

And once when engaged in a rivalry with Phryne she was having a great throng of lovers, not discriminating between rich and poor and not being insolent toward them.

18. Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* 13.588c

ἢ καὶ Ἀφροδίτη ἡ ἐν Κορίνθῳ ἡ Μελαϊνὶς καλουμένη νυκτὸς ἐπιφαινομένη ἐμήνυεν ἐραστῶν ἔφοδον πολυταλάντων

and the Aphrodite who in Corinth is called Melaenis appearing to [Laïes] by night used to reveal to her when extremely wealthy lovers were coming

19. Upaśruti, a spirit of divination; Śacī, wife of Indra; the goddess Night (Nisā or Rātrī)

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