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## Roman Myth and Mythography

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## SLOW CYRELE'S ARRIVAL

In 204 BC the Romans festively introduced into their city the Anatolian goddess Cybele, whose stone had arrived by ship from the Troad.<sup>1</sup> Her sea-journey was completely unmemorable; but around the last stage of her journey, from Ostia to Rome, there arose a legend, several of whose details will be discussed below.<sup>2</sup> Our main source is Ovid, who gives the following<sup>3</sup> account:

She had arrived at Ostia, where the Tiber divides to join the sea and flows with ampler sweep. All the knights and the grave senators, mixed up with the common folk, came to meet her at the mouth of the Tuscan river. With them walked mothers and daughters and brides, and the virgins who tended the sacred hearths. The men wearied their arms by tugging lustily at the rope: hardly did the foreign ship make head against the stream. A drought had long prevailed: the grass was parched and burnt: the loaded bark sank in the muddy shallows. Every man who lent a hand toiled beyond his strength and cheered on the workers by his cries. Yet the ship stuck fast, like an island firmly fixed in the middle of the sea. Astonished at the portent, the men did stand and quake. Claudia Quinta traced her descent from Clausus of old, and her beauty matched her nobility. Chaste was she, though not reputed so. Rumour unkind had wronged her, and a false charge had been trumped up against her: it told against her that she dressed sprucely, that she walked abroad with her hair dressed in varied fashion, that she had a ready tongue for gruff old men. Conscious of innocence, she laughed at fame's untruths: but we of the multitude are prone to think the worst. When she had stepped forth from the procession of the chaste matrons, and taken up the pure water of the river in her hands, she thrice let it drip on her hand, and thrice lifted her palms to heaven (all who looked on her thought that she was out of her mind), and bending the knee she fixed her eyes on the image of the goddess, and with dishevelled hair uttered these words: 'Thou fruitful mother of the Gods, graciously accept thy suppliant's prayers on one condition. They say I am not chaste. If thou dost condemn me, I will confess my guilt: convicted by the verdict of a goddess, I will pay the penalty with my life. But if I am free of crime, give by thine act a proof of my innocency, and, chaste as thou art, do thou yield to my chaste hands.' She spoke, and drew the rope with a slight effort. My story is a strange one, but is attested by the stage.'

Ovid's version, as he himself (326) indicates, was evidently influenced by the fact that this tale of Claudia was acted out on the stage. The most likely occasion for such a performance of Claudia's feat was the Megalesia, the yearly festival of the Magna Mater, during which, since 194, plays had been performed. One can hardly doubt that a play concerning a noble lady whose behaviour was not beyond suspicion must have been highly attractive for a public

<sup>1</sup> On the historical background, see T. Köves, 'Zuni Empfang der Magna Mater in Rom', *Historia* 12 (1963), 321-347; F. Bömer, 'Kybele in Rom', *Röm. Mitt.* 71 (1964), 130-151; T. P. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics* (Leicester, 1979), 79ff; D. Porte, 'Claudia Quinta et le problème de la lavatio de Cybèle en 204 av. J.C.', *Klio* 66 (1984), 93-103; F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985), 304f; D. M. Cosi, *Casta mater Idaea* (Venice, 1986), 22-27. On Cybele, see most recently M. J. Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis* (London, 1977), and *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque* (= *CCCA*), vols. 1-9 = *EPRO* 50 (Leiden, 1977ff); F. Nauman, *Die Ikonographie der Kybele in der phrygischen und der griechischen Kunst* (Tübingen, 1983); W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985), 177-179, 419f; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 107-115.

<sup>2</sup> For all sources, see E. Schmidt, *Kultübertragungen*, RGVV 8, 2 (Giessen, 1910), 1-30; O. V. Henkel, *De komst van de Mater Magna naar Rome* (Diss. Utrecht, 1979), 192-225.

<sup>3</sup> *Ov.* F. 4, 291-328 (tr. J. G. Frazer), cf. Bömer *ad loc.* For the iconography, see *CCCA* 3, no. 218f and index s.v. Cybele: for the conditional confession (320f), see R. Pettazzoni, *La confessione dei peccati*, vol. 3 (Bologna, 1936), 123; for the form of her prayer, see A. Henrichs, *HSCP* 80 (1976), 275f.

confronted with the attempts of Augustus to improve the morals of precisely the class to which Claudia belonged.'

Claudia's miracle is first mentioned around 16 BC when Propertius (4. 11. 51) praises the *matrona* for having moved 'slow Cybele' (*quae tardam movisti fune Cybellen*). Cicero, however, who mentions Claudia on various occasions (*Har. resp.* 27, *Cael.* 34), is completely silent about the lady's miraculous feat. It seems, then, that this particular legend developed in the second half of the first century BC.'

It is hard to determine the reasons for this development. Wiseman has well summarized the mixed attitudes Cybele evoked among the Romans: 'To the superstitious crowd, Cybele was an awesome power, a worker of miracles: to the rationalising philosopher, she was an allegory of Mother Earth; to the Roman statesman, she was the first of the deities annually honoured by the aediles' games. But many Romans in Virgil's lifetime thought of her in terms of madness and high camp — a sinister alien goddess served by a priesthood of contemptible half-men.'" Even though Cybele was promoted as an acceptable goddess in Augustus' time, many Romans must still have felt somewhat uneasy about her rites. It is this uneasiness which may well explain the curious detail of Cybele's 'slowness'. Littlewood has suggested that the silting of the Tiber played a role in this respect.' but such a 'realistic' reading overlooks the resemblance to other legends relating the 'slow arrival' of a statue. We shall therefore approach the problem in a different, more structuralist manner, but must first look at some other interesting legends.

Pausanias reports the following local legend from Erythrae:

The statue (of Heracles) at Erythrae is not like the statues they call Aeginetan or the most ancient Athenian statues, but sheer Egyptian if ever a statue was. There was a wooden raft the god sailed on from Phoenician Tyre, though why this should happen even the Erythraeans are unable to say: but when the raft reached the Ionian sea they say it anchored at the Middle Cape, which is a mainland cape, the midmost that you pass sailing out of harbour at Erythrae to the island of Chios. When the raft came to the cape, the Erythraeans took great trouble and the Chians showed no less enthusiasm each to bring the statue to their own city. Now there was an Erythraean who lived by fishing out at sea and had lost his eyesight from a disease; in the end the fisherman (who was called Phormion) saw in a dream that the women of Erythrae had to cut off their hair and the men must plait the women's hair into a cable and pull home the statue with it. The city women utterly refused to obey the dream, but those Thracian women who were enslaved or living in freedom in Erythrae allowed their hair to be cut off, and so the Erythraeans hauled in the raft. The Thracians are the only women allowed into the Herakleion, and the people there still preserve the rope of hair even in my time: and in fact they say the fisherman's eyes were open and he could see for the rest of his life."

To these two legends a third has to be added. Motifs like those encountered in the classical legends can also be found in the medieval 'Anschwemmungslegenden'. From these legends we

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. J. Littlewood, 'Poetic Artistry and Dynastic Politics: 'Ovid at the Ludi Megalenses (*Fasti* 4. 179-372)', CQ 31 (1981), 381-395. On the Augustan reforms, see most recently S. des Bouvrie, 'Augustus' Legislation on Morals — which Morals and what Aims?', SO 59 (1984), 93-113; E. Badian, 'A Phantom Marriage Law', *Philologus* 129 (1985), 82-98; A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Propaganda and Dissent? Augustan Moral Legislation and the Love Poets', *Klio* 67 (1985), 180-184 (with earlier bibliography).

On the development, see J. Gérard, 'Legende et politique autour de la Mère des dieux', REL 58 (1981), 153-175.

<sup>5</sup> T. P. Wiseman, 'Cybele, Virgil and Augustus', in A. J. Woodman and D. A. West (edd.), *Poetry and Politics in the Age of Augustus* (Cambridge, 1984), 117-128, esp. 119, 225-9. On Cybele in Rome, see also G. Arrigoni, 'Alla ricerca della meter Tebana e dei veteris di', *Scripta Philologica*, vol. 3 (1982), 7-68; D. M. Così, 'L'ingresso di Cibele ad Atene e a Roma', *Atti C. R. D. A. C.* 9 = N.S. 1 (1980-XI [1984]), 81-91.

<sup>7</sup> Littlewood (n. 4), 393 n. 60.

<sup>8</sup> Paus. 7. 5. 5-8 (tr. P. Levi, spelling slightly adapted), 242f; cf. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 300-3.

may adduce that of the Wimpassinger Kreuz, a thirteenth-century crucifix — more than seven meters high and four meters wide — which perished in 1945 in the fire of the Stephansdom at Vienna. Around 1350 a great cross with the image of the crucified Saviour painted on it floated down the Danube and was stranded near Rossau where it proved to be immovable. The following day a procession of the clergy arrived with the local population, and a simple Franciscan pulled the statue out of the river with his girdle without any difficulty."

When we compare these legends, we notice the following similarities:

1. There is a rather unusual statue.
2. It arrives from a distant place.
3. Near its place of destination it runs aground.
4. The statue is moved by or through mediation of persons who are outside or at the margin of society or the ruling social class.

It is the aim of this final chapter to discuss the last two motifs. Why is the solution brought about by an 'outsider' and why did these statues run aground before arriving at their place of destination? Our point of departure will be the second of these two motifs: the statues come from a distant place. They are therefore — it is immaterial for our purpose if this is in reality or according to the legend — strangers who are incorporated into a new society. This means that our problems have to be situated in the context of the rites of passage. It is now nearly seventy years ago that Arnold van Gennep published his classic study on the rites of passage. Van Gennep showed that a fixed scheme could be discovered not only in the important passages in the life-cycle — such as birth, maturity, marriage, and death — but also in territorial passage and in the transition from peace to war and from Old to New Year. The scheme is well-known. At first there is the separation from the old situation, the 'rite de separation', next the period of transition, the 'rite de marge', and finally the passage to a new situation, the 'rite d'aggrégation'. These rites receive more or less attention depending on the importance of the passage.<sup>10</sup>

From a theoretical point of view little progress has been made since Van Gennep in the analysis of the rites of passage. This is why we have to be brief on our first problem, since no study of the person who brings about a passage is available."

Yet, as regards this person a pattern seems to exist. Claudia is suspected of unchastity and does not behave like a proper *matrona*. The statue of Heracles is brought in on advice of a blind man after a sacrifice of *Thracian* women, that is to say, non-Greek women.<sup>11</sup> Here we even have a double opposition to normality: women and aliens." The Wimpinger Kreuz is landed by a mendicant friar, the lowest class of monks.' These examples are not unique. Prometheus, who brought about the passage from chaos to civilisation by his capture of fire

<sup>9</sup> Cf. L. Schmidt, *Die Volkserzählung* (Berlin, 1963), 265-276; Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 303.

<sup>10</sup> A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage* (Paris 1909) = *The Rites of Passage*, tr. M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (London, 1960). In a recent reprint (Paris, 1969), the notes in Van Gennep's own copy have been added. On Van Gennep, see K. van Gennep, *Bibliographie des oeuvres d'Arnold van Gennep* (Paris, 1974); H. A. Senn, 'Arnold van Gennep: Structuralist and Apologist for the Study of Folklore in France', *Folklore* 85 (1974), 229-243; N. Belmont, *Arnold van Gennep*, tr. D. Coltman (Chicago/London, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> But see E. Leach, *Culture and Communication* (Cambridge, 1976), 82.

<sup>12</sup> For Thrace as the foreign country *par excellence*, see I. Chirnsi Colombo, 'The Role of Thrace in Greek Religion', in *Primus Congr. stud. Thrac. = Thracia 2* (Sofia, 1974), 71-79; F. Graf, in Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London, 1987), 99-101.

<sup>13</sup> For women as marginals in the polis, see J. Gould, *JHS* 100 (1980), 571; P. Vidal-Naquet, *Le Chasseur noir*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1983), 267-288.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. G. Widengren, *Orientalia Suecana* 2 (1953), 78-85.

(below), was a Titan, a being in between gods and men." The culture-hero is indeed often a smith or someone else who is at the margin of society. Even if he is a god, he is generally characterised as a trickster, the rogue who moves about outside the social order." In all these cases the transition is effected by someone who is at the margin or outside the human or divine society. Evidently order cannot be established by a person who is already part of that order.

On the second problem, we are better placed. Various scholars have studied the classification of the rites of passage." In particular the liminal period, the proper rite of transition, has received full attention from the late Victor Turner who has shown that this period is characterised by reversals and confusion of status and a series of oppositions to normal life such as different clothes, behaviour, and place of habitation.<sup>15</sup> Progress has also been made on rites of separation and incorporation. Already in 1916 it was demonstrated — on the basis of some rites of passage — initiation, wedding, funeral and mourning rites — that the element of delay and resistance is an important factor in these rites. Society and/or the individual has, or pretends to have, great difficulty in changing status or position." There is often resistance against this change but — and this was largely overlooked by scholars of the nineteenth century — this resistance is never carried through to the very end.

Examples of this ritual delay and resistance can often be found in ancient Greece as the following examples from initiation, the wedding and funeral rites may illustrate. To begin with the initiation and some non-Greek instances. Among North-American Nootkan tribes 'the affair was initiated by the kidnapping of the principal novice by (men dressed up as) Wolves who pounced on him without warning and carried him off. Of course, this was all staged: the novice had to be in the right place at the right time.' Among the Nawbede of Togo, future novices were surprised in their house and, although they tried to escape, were carried by force to a place where they were tattooed on their shoulders and on their face: the sign that initiation had started. Among the Wagenia of Zaïre, during their most recent initiation, only the very first novices (but in the light of other parallels this seems to be a later development) were forcibly captured during a game of football (!), a trap designed by the novices of the previous initiation.<sup>20</sup>

A similar capture for which the Greeks explicitly used the word *harpagē*, 'robbery, capture, seizure', occurs in an initiatory context in Greece, namely on Crete. Here, at the end of the initiation the novices, provided that they had both famous ancestors and were of a captivating beauty, were captured by an adult for a pederastic relationship, a well-known part of many initiations. During this capture it was necessary for the boy to run away, to be pursued by his prospective lover and his own friends until he was taken to his lover's *andreion*, or 'men's

<sup>15</sup> On Prometheus see most recently J.-P. Vernant, *Mythe et pensée chez les Grecs*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1971), vol. 2, 5-15, and *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris, 1974), 177-194.

<sup>16</sup> Smith: H. Tegnæus, *Le Héros civilisateur* (Uppsala, 1950). Trickster: see most recently M. Luscott-Rickets, 'The North American Trickster', *History of Religions* 5 (1965-66), 327-350; L. Makarius, 'Le mythe du "Trickster"', *Rev. Hist. Rel.* 175 (1969), 17-46; B. Babcock-Abrahams, 'A Tolerated Margin of Mess', *The Trickster and His Tales reconsidered*, *Folklore Institute* 11 (1975), 147-186.

<sup>17</sup> J. van Baal, *Symbols for Communication* (Assen, 1971), 133-9; L. Honko, 'Zur Klassifikation der Riten', *Temenos* 11 (1975), 61-77, and 'Theories concerning the ritual process: an orientation', in L. Honko (ed.), *Studies in the methodology of the science of religion = Religion and Reason* 13 (The Hague, Paris, New York, 1978), 526-554.

<sup>18</sup> V. W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (London, 1967), 93-111; *The Ritual Process* (Harmondsworth, 1974); 'Process, System and Symbol: New Anthropological Synthesis', *Daedalus* 3 (1977), 61-80. On Turner (1920-1983), see B. A. Babcock, *J. Am. Folklore* 97 (1984), 461-4.

<sup>19</sup> E. C. Parsons, 'Holding back in crisis ceremonialism', *Am. Anthropol.* 18 (1916), 41-52.

<sup>20</sup> Nootkan: Ph. Drucker, in *Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin* 144 (Washington, 1951), 392ff, 399 (a mass kidnapping). Togo: D. Paulme (ed.), *Classes et associations d'âge en Afrique de l'Ouest* (Paris, 1971), 41-52. Zaïre: A. Droogers, *The Dangerous Journey* (The Hague, Paris, 1980) 91.

house'. The ritual character of the novice's resistance against his capture appears from the fact that this 'kidnapping' was really a *must* since it was considered a disgrace not to have had one, at least if one came from the proper class. It is therefore completely understandable that Plutarch (*Mor.* 1 IF) calls the practice 'the so-called capture'."

A similar capture was also part of many wedding ceremonies. It is superfluous to adduce here examples, since the rite has been extensively described by Victorian scholars such as McLennan.<sup>22</sup> Dargun,<sup>23</sup> Robertson Smith,<sup>24</sup> Spencer<sup>25</sup> and Westermarck.<sup>26</sup> They were fascinated by this ritual and generally considered it a survival of the (desirable) times that the women were really captured."

Much less attention was given to the fact that the bridegroom too in some cases had to be forced to marry. Among the Caucasian Abschases the bridegroom ran away on his wedding-day and hid himself, and, finally, had to be forced to come back." A similar custom existed among some Indian Garo tribes as a former deputy commissioner of Eastern Bengal and Assam reports: '... it is the custom for a man to refuse at first to marry the girl who has sought his hand, and to run away and hide himself. A party of friends seek for him, and bring him back by force — and apparently very unwilling — to the village, whence he usually escapes. He is captured a second time, but should lie run away a third time. it is taken for granted that lie really does not wish to marry the girl, and he is allowed to go.' The custom could cause certain complications since the commissioner notes: 'I have known this custom to form the subject of judicial proceedings. for a man appeared in court one day. at Tura, and filed a petition in which he claimed compensation from the father of a girl having failed to give him his daughter in marriage. The complainant explained that he had been chosen by the girl but, according to custom. he had refused to marry her and had run away. To his disgust, nobody came to seek for him, and the girl chose and married another man who was less strict in his ideas of Garo etiquette.'"

The ritual character of this kind of resistance has been seen for the first time in the classic study on the funerary rites by Robert Hertz, who explained the capture as a resistance against

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bremmer, 'An Enigmatic Indo-European Rite: Paederasty', *Arethusa* 13 (1980), 279-298; H. Patzer, *Die griechische Knabenliebe* (Wiesbaden, 1982), 70ff; B. Serpent, *L'Homosexualité dans la mythologie grecque* (Paris, 1984), 36-53.

<sup>22</sup> J. F. McLennan, *Primitive Marriage, An Enquiry into the Origins of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies* (Edinburgh, 1865). The recent reprint (Chicago, London, 1970) contains a valuable bio- and bibliography of McLennan by Peter Rivière.

<sup>23</sup> L. Dargun, *Mutterrecht und Raubehe und ihre Reste im germanischen Recht und Leben* (Breslau, 1883). On Lothar von Dargun (1853-1893), see the *PolSKI Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 4 (Warsaw, 1938) 436f.

<sup>24</sup> W. Robertson Smith, *Kingship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1903), 89-99. On Smith, see T. O. Beidelman, *W. Robertson Smith and the Sociological Study of Religion* (Chicago, London, 1974).

<sup>25</sup> H. Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology* I (London, 1876), 652-7; *The Fortnightly review*, ns 21 (1877), 895-902 (a polemic against McLennan). Spencer explained the resistance of the bride as being due to real or pretended sexual coyness — an explanation typical of the Victorian bachelor that Spencer was. On Spencer, see J. D. Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer, The evolution of a Sociologist* (London, 1971).

<sup>26</sup> E. Westermarck, *The History of Human Marriage* I (London, 1891), 383-402, and *The History of Human Marriage*, vol. 2, 5th ed. (London, 1921), 240-277. On Westermarck, see most recently T. Stroup, 'Edward Westermarck: a reappraisal', *Man* 19 (1984), 575-592.

<sup>27</sup> For modern anthropological views see E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Position of Women in Primitive Society* (London, 1965), 14; R. Firth, *Symbols, Public and Private* (London, 1973), 110; J. Goody, *Production and Reproduction* (Cambridge, 1976), 2.

<sup>28</sup> N. V. Seidlitz, *Globus* 66 (1894), 40.

<sup>29</sup> A. Playfair, *The Garos* (London, 1909), 67.

the transition from one group to another." Shortly after, he was followed by van Gennep who, probably independently, had arrived at the same conclusion." Such a capture — the same word *harpagē* is used — could also be found among the Spartans where it preceded the wedding ceremony. Our source, Plutarch (*Lyc.* 15. 4), is unfortunately rather short: but McLennan already noted that from his report it appears 'that the seizure was made by friendly concert between the parties'.<sup>30</sup> The third example comes from the funeral rites. The Greeks in the Archaic Age believed that the souls of the dead did not go immediately to the Underworld but remained in the vicinity of the dead body until the funeral rites had been concluded, which was a process of some days. Evidently, it took some time before it became tolerable to imagine that the deceased had left this world forever."

Although it should now be clear that the elements of resistance and delay in the rites of passage were encountered among the Greeks, one more example may be adduced. It is reported that every year the inhabitants of Locris sent two girls to Ilion who were obliged to remain there for a year. There is one element of this rite which is of interest for our argument. Aeneas Tacticus (31. 24) relates that the inhabitants of Ilion were unable to prevent the girls from entering the city, even though they did their utmost to stop them. It is clear that here too we have a case of a ritual, not real, resistance since it is unthinkable that so small a city as Ilion should have been unable to prevent the maidens from entering."

Compared with Greece, our knowledge of Roman ritual is poor. In historical Rome, initiation rituals are not attested but a 'capture-scene' occurred in the Roman wedding ritual where the bride had to be pulled away from her mother's lap. A similar scene took place when the pontifex maximus removed and led away a Vestal recruit from her father, 'as if she had been taken in war' (*veluti hello capta*). It is precisely at these highly dramatic moments when a Roman girl leaves her home for ever that we would have expected elements of resistance to occur."

The idea of delay can be found in Christian Rome. When the English bishop Augustine asked Pope Gregory the Great whether it was permitted for a man who had had intercourse with his wife to enter the church before he had washed, the pope answered that 'it has always been the custom of the Romans *from* ancient times, after intercourse with one's wife, to seek purification by washing and reverently to abstain from entering the church *for a brief period*'. Even if purified, a man cannot enter the church directly: the transition would have been too abrupt."<sup>31</sup>

One example remains, though a literary one. When Aeneas has gone down the Underworld to pluck the golden bough, the plucking is described in the following way (*Verg. Aen.* 6. 210f):

corripit Aeneas extemplo, avidusque refringit.  
cunctantem, et vatis portat sub tecta Sibyllae.

<sup>30</sup> R. Hertz. *Death and the Right Hand*, tr. R. and C. Needham (London, 1960). 27-86 (first published in 1907). On Hertz, see most recently F. Isambert, in Ph. Bcsnard (ed.), *The Sociological Domain. The Durkheimians and the Founding of French Sociology* (Cambridge, Paris, 1983). 152-176. esp. 165-172.

<sup>31</sup> Van Gennep (n. 10), 124.

<sup>32</sup> McLennan (n. 22), 13. M. Torelli. *Lavinio e Roma* (Rome, 1984), 75f, and J.- P. Vernant, *La mort dans les yeux* (Paris, 1985), 45, still support the idea of a real capture.

<sup>33</sup> Bremmer. *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (Princeton, 1983), 89-94.

<sup>34</sup> Locrian Maidens: F. Graf. 'Die lokrische Mädchen', *Studi Storico-Religiosi* 2 (1978), 61-79. Small size of Ilion: J. Cook. *The Troad* (Oxford, 1973). 100.

<sup>35</sup> Wedding: Festus 364L, misinterpreted by Torelli. *Lavinio e Roma*, 76f: see also Cat. 61. 56ff, 62. 33. and perhaps Macrob. *Sat.* 1. 15. 21. Vestal recruit: Aul. Gell. 1. 12. 10-14. cf. M. Beard. *JRS* 70 (1980), 13-15.

<sup>36</sup> Beda. *Hist. Eccl.* 1. 27.

'At once Aeneas takes hold of the bough and breaks it off avidly, *although it resists*, and carries it to the home of the prophetic Sibylla.'

Illustrious Virgilian scholars such as Norden and Austin want to explain *cunctantem* as a mere botanical detail: the tree is tough. It is true that the plucking of a bough normally meets with some resistance — a detail for which Virgil could well have cared — but this does not explain the stress laid on the detail, a stress which is accentuated by the enjambement of *cunctantem*. No, here the delay dramatizes the plucking of this highly important bough. Certainly, Aeneas will receive the bough but he will not gain possession without resistance.

To these classical examples of delay and resistance a few instances from other cultures may be added. Among many peoples myth tells how the change from chaos to civilisation could only be brought about by the robbery of a vital element, usually fire." The myths speak, however, not only of fire. The possession of all sorts of vital elements for the life of the community or group — such as water, cereals, *Rauschtrank* and *soma* — are explained through a 'robbery-myth'.<sup>38</sup> Curiously, attention has virtually never been paid to the question of why these elements had to be stolen in the first place. We suggest that it was necessary to the 'primitive' mind that the robberies took place since in every case man is promoted to a higher level of existence; such a promotion could not possibly have been imagined to occur without a certain resistance from the side of the gods or whoever was thought of as possessing the vital element.

Finally, one example from the Old Testament: Saul's election as king (1 *Samuel* 10. 21-23). When it was clear that Saul would be the future king, the people went looking for him; 'and when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they inquired of the Lord further, if the man should yet come thither. And the Lord answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence ...'. The example is unique in the Old Testament, but when we compare similar hidings in other rites of passage, we can hardly escape the conclusion that the author of *Samuel* gives us here a valuable insight into the way the king's election must have happened in real life.

It will by now be clear why, in our vision, the ship with Cybele ran aground, and the raft with Heracles and the Wimpassinger Kreuz became stuck fast not far from their destination. When the Roman imagination had to dramatize the arrival of Cybele, it evidently could not imagine that the alien goddess had been accepted on Roman soil without any delay or resistance. In this way the story is an instructive illustration of the mixed feelings the Romans had about the goddess. Despite all the Augustan propaganda, *tarda Cybele* remained a marginal in the Roman conscience."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Cf. A. Kuhn, *Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des Götterdranks*, 2nd ed. (Gütersloh, 1886); J. G. Frazer, *Myths of the Origin of Fire* (London, 1930); S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Copenhagen, 1956), 224; C. Lévi-Strauss, *Le cru et le cuit* (Paris, 1964); M. Kuusi, 'Beiträge zur Feuermythologie', in *Miscellanea K. C. Peeters* (Antwerp, 1975), 384-9; H. Aufenanger, 'Die Herkunft des Feuers im religiösen Denken schriftloser Völker', in H. Janssen et al., *Carl Laufer MSC. Missionar und Ethnologe auf Neu-Guinea* (Freiburg, Basle, Vienna, 1975), 244-257.

<sup>38</sup> Water: A. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (London, 1913), 42-4; F. Boas, *Bella-Bella Tales* (New York, 1932), 5; A. Krause, *The Tlingit Indians*, 1st ed. 1885 (Seattle, 1956), 178; Thompson, *op. cit.*, 1941; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Zande Trickster* (Oxford, 1967), 38f. Corn: T. Obayashi, 'Das Körnerdiebstahl-Motiv in Ostasien', in *Festschrift A. E. Jensen*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1964), 433-459. *Rauschtrank*: R. Doht, *Der Rauschtrank im germanischen Mythos* (Vienna, 1974), 36-168. *Soma*: U. Schneider, *Der Somaraub des Manu. Mythos und Ritual* (Utrecht, Antwerp, 1966), 124f.

<sup>39</sup> An earlier version of this chapter appeared in M. J. Verniersen (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* = EPRO 78 (Leiden, 1979), 9-22. I should like to thank once again Fritz Graf and Theo Korteweg for their comments on that version.



