

## SUN MYTHS AND RESURRECTION MYTHS.

THERE is a type of resurrection myth, originating in Thrace and in North Greece, the connexion of which with the sun and moon worship is at present unduly set aside in favour of the Demeter-Persephone derivation. This type is seen in the stories, so popular in the art and drama of fifth century Athens, of the wife or husband who prevails against death, for a time at least, by recovering the beloved one. The most famous examples form a triad which is frequently mentioned, the tales of Laodamia, Alcestis, and Orpheus.

The beautiful slab representing Orpheus and Eurydice at the fatal moment when

restitit, Eurydicensque suam iam luce sub ipsa  
immemor heu victusque animi respexit

was made no doubt under the influence of the great Parthenon sculpture and very possibly about the time of the production of the *Alcestis* of Euripides in 438.<sup>1</sup> Indeed in the *Alcestis* (348 ff.) there is one passage in which the three myths are linked. There is a reference to the plot of the *Protesilaos* of Euripides in the use of the image-motive, immediately followed by a reference to the journey of Orpheus. I quote the translation by Gilbert Murray:—

‘ O, I shall find some artist wondrous wise  
Shall mould for me thy shape, thine hair, thine eyes,  
And lay it in thy bed; and I will lie  
Close, and reach out mine arms to thee and cry  
Thy name into the night and wait and hear  
My own heart breathe; “Thy love, thy love is near.”  
A cold delight; yet it might ease the sum  
Of sorrow . . . And good dreams of thee will come

<sup>1</sup> Gruppe in Roscher, 3, pt. 2, Sp. 1173, calls the slab the oldest example of the use of the Thracian costume for Orpheus, which began, as he thinks, in the second half of the fifth century. He puts the date of the original about the time of the Archidamian war. This change to the Thracian dress would very well suit the time in which, as Dr. Leaf suggests in his article on the *Rhesus*, the interest in

Thracian things had been quickened in Athens by the founding of Amphipolis. Kekulé von Stradonitz in *Bildwerke im Berliner Museum, V. Jahrhundert*, puts the original of the Medea slab ‘in der Epoche des Parthenonfrieses’ and on the following page (172) says that ‘das Orpheusrelief im ersten Vorbild der gleichen Epoche angehört.’

Like balm. 'Tis sweet, even in a dream, to gaze  
 On a dear face, the moment that it stays.  
 O God, if Orpheus' voice were mine to sing  
 To death's high Virgin and the Virgin's king  
 Till their hearts failed them, down would I my path  
 Cleave and naught stay me, not the hound of wrath  
 Nor the grey oarsman of the ghostly tide,  
 Till back to sunlight I had borne my bride.'

Of the Alcestis myth Mr. Thomson in his delightful chapter on Alcestis and her Hero writes:—

'Her worshippers might call her here Kore, and Semele there and Alcestis somewhere else. At heart under all these names and in spite of local variations in her ritual, the *Rediviva* is everywhere and always one and the same, being in fact the Earth, who appears to die in winter and to come to life again in the spring' (*The Greek Tradition*, p. 115).

Wilamowitz, too, in his militant manner, says in a footnote in his *Isyllos von Epidaurus* (p. 75, n. 50) that 'the fact that anyone could have the daring, after K. O. Mueller's demonstration that Admetus is Hades, to refer the myth to the Sun and his rising and setting shows the depth to which the study of mythology has sunk.'

This imperious dictum was written in 1885, and Miss Harrison's paper on Helios-Hades has since its writing shown that 'Helios is the bright side of Hades.'<sup>2</sup> It has also become clear that Hecate-Selene is the bright side of Hecate-Persephone. The statement made by Wilamowitz on the authority of K. O. Mueller, and followed universally so far as I have observed by other scholars, that Admetus is Hades I believe to be erroneous. It rests on a line of the *Iliad* (9, 158) and on the doubtful phrase (33 f.) in the second idyll of Theocritus, in which the interpretation of τὸν ἐν ἕδα ἀδάμαντα by R. J. Cholmeley as meaning 'the gate of hell' is probably right. The word in the *Iliad* is ἀδάμαστος, used in Homer only here in this form. In the form ἀδάματος it is used by the dramatist of unwedded girls and of untamed beasts; ἀδάμαστος itself is used by Xenophon of an unbroken horse. Except for the proper name Admetus, this form (ἄδμητος) is found only in the feminine in Homer and of unbroken animals, while the form ἀδμῆς is used of unwedded girls, in which sense ἀδμήτη is found in Aeschylus and Sophocles. I can find no support for the statement that "Ἄδμητος, the unconquered, is a common title of Pluto' (Hayley, following Mueller, *Alcestis*, p. xi):

On the other hand the epithet ἄδμητος is appropriate to Helios, who afterward in these very Balkan regions in which his early cult was so strong was known as ἀνίκητος and Sol Invictus. Further we find an Admetus among the descendants of Helios. This phenomenon frequently means that an epithet has been detached from the Sun himself and given to a child of his, as for example Phaethon and Phoibos. In Polygnotus' picture at Delphi

<sup>2</sup> Thomson, J. A. K., *The Greek Tradition*, p. 119.

there appeared an Admetus,<sup>3</sup> son of Augeias, whose name is also one that refers to the light of the sun. Augeias is the son of Helios, to whom his father gave this 'gift pre-eminent, to abound in flocks above all men, and Helios himself did ever and always give increase to the cattle, for upon his herds came no disease, of them that always minish the herdman's toil. But always more in number waxed the horned kine, and goodlier year by year, for verily they all brought forth abundantly and never cast their young and bare chiefly heifers' (Theocritus 25, 117 ff., Lang's translation). Another Sun-god, Apollo, in the home of Admetus of Pherae rich in flocks, caused all the cows to bear twins. In the genealogy of the Thessalian heroes one comes constantly on the track of the Sun-god. There is the notable sinner, Phlegyas, the Flaming; his son Ixion, the Sunwheel (Cook, *Zeus*, p. 197 ff.), who is sometimes son of Aithon, the Gleaming; Peirithoos, the Revolving, and Asklepios, whose epithets *Αιγλάης* and *Ἀγλαόπης* mean *Shining*, and in whose very name, as Wilamowitz says, 'steckt Glanz.'<sup>4</sup> The Hesychius definition adduced by Wilamowitz, following K. O. Mueller (*Isyllos*, 75), and by Farnell (*Cults*, ii. 475) to show that Admetus is a god of the lower world has, I believe, been misinterpreted. In it Hecate is defined as *Ἀδμήτου κόρη*. Elsewhere, with the exception of the fragment of Bacchylides in which she is called the 'child of blackrobed Night,' she is the child of heavenly parents and is called Perseis.<sup>5</sup> I think it probable that in this late gloss Hecate has been understood as Selene and is called daughter of Admetus, as in the *Phoenissae* (175) Selene is addressed as daughter of Helios. Cf. Schol. Arat. 445, *παρὰ τοῖς τραγικοῖς Ἡλίου θυγάτηρ*.

Since the Hesychius passage is the one on which the identification of Admetus and Pluto chiefly rests, and since Admetus elsewhere is a child of light with evident traits of the Sun-god in his holiness and his rich flocks, I can see no reason for connecting the hero with the deity of the lower world, and feel that Mr. Thomson is right when he says 'It was to Admetus in his shining aspect—as it were the Sun-god himself—that Alcestis was married on the day of the strange procession.' It is wrong, however, as I think, to identify Admetus with Pluto as Mr. Thomson does on page 118. Admetus does not even, like Heracles and so many others of the family of the Shining Ones, descend into Hades' realm to reappear again, or to remain forever for some sin.

I do not wish to advocate the theory of the German scholar who comes under the ban of Wilamowitz in the passage cited from his 'Isyllos' for maintaining that in the marriage of Alcestis and Admetus there is a picture of the marriage of the Rose of Dawn or the Rose of Twilight to the Rising or the Setting Sun. Dawn does marry in Greek mythology, but it is the primitive feeling about the love and marriage of the Sun and his sister the Moon that has expressed itself in countless myths about unhappy lovers of the hero type from ancient times down to the present. To the union of the

<sup>3</sup> Paus. x. 25, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Isyllos von Epidauros*, 92 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Warr in *C.R.* ix. 390-393.

heavenly bride and bridegroom Frazer ascribes the establishing of the Olympian games, and Cornford adds much interesting material in the sixth chapter of Miss Harrison's *Themis*. The pair are said by Hesiod to be brother and sister, children of Theia and Hyperion. Here the epithets have become the parents as so often epithets have become the offspring of the Sun and Moon. In a Roumanian folk-song there is preserved a myth of the love and longing of the Sun for his sister and their punishment and parting.

'Helen of the long gold hair  
 And thou Sun so shining fair,  
 Thou who from all sin art pure,  
 Sun and Moon ye are condemned  
 While my heavens shall endure,  
 Till eternity shall end,  
 To seek each other through the skies,  
 Following with yearning eyes,  
 Never having power to meet  
 On the high celestial street,  
 Only following endlessly,  
 Lifted over land and sea,  
 Wandering heaven day and night,  
 Filling all the world with light.'<sup>6</sup>

It is the Christian Lord God who in this song condemns the Sun and Moon to pine forever, but the rest of the myth consists of the primitive Balkan belief in the Sun and Moon, modified by the Hellenic story of Helen, the fair.

Another song from Roumania which preserves the marriage myth is this<sup>7</sup>:—

'You see I know all the white moon's dark secrets.  
 It is she herself that kills the sun  
 And on the sky her knife is bloody,  
 But the sun rises from his tomb,  
 And every night she has to kill again.

\* \* \* \* \*

But the sun rises every morning from his red tomb.  
 Now to-day I have heard a strange thing, my fair husband,  
 The moon still loves the sun  
 And they are wedded;  
 They have a marriage ring,  
 It is made of the gold of the sun and the silver of the moon  
 Exactly like our own.'

'The Moon herself,' Plutarch says, 'revolves in love of the Sun and desiring ever to wed with him.' We are told (Proclus on Hesiod, *Works*,

<sup>6</sup> Jewett's *Folk-Ballads of Southern Europe*, 23 ff.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 271 f.

5, 280) that the Athenians chose the time of the new moon for the celebration of marriage and the 'theogamia,' holding that this was the time when the Moon was going to her marriage with the Sun. We have the authority of Pindar for the interest of the Sun in the prayers of men who are in love while the Moon listens to the lovesick woman (Schol. on Theocritus, *id.* 2, 21). These stories of the heroes and heroines in which the theme is nuptial love and parting reflect an old and widely spread conception of the union (*σύνοδος*) of Sun and Moon at the *νουμηνία*. (Cf. the interesting passage, Eur. *Suppl.* 990 ff., where the *σύνοδος* of Sun and Moon makes a good omen for the marriage of Capaneus and Evadne.) They are influenced also in their Greek form by the drama of the other year deities, and Eurydice and Alcestis have points of contact with Persephone, just as the Balkan goddess of the Moon, Artemis the Queen, Hecate and Brimo are sometimes one with the dread goddess of Hades. In the *Phoenissae* (108) Euripides, who understands such things well, calls Hecate the royal child of Leto; in the *Ion* (1048) Enodia is addressed as 'Daughter of Demeter, who dost rule the haunting things, which come by night.' Again in the *Helen* (579) Hecate has the epithet *φωσφόρος* and is entreated to send blessed visions. In the next line she is Enodia. In *I.T.* (21) Artemis is *φωσφόρος θεός*. The Thessalian goddess Pheraia, worshipped at Pherae, the home of Admetus, is Hecate-Enodia-Brimo-Artemis, the great Moon-goddess of the Balkans, who has her dwelling in the lower world as well. The names of the three heroines, which are usually interpreted as epithets of Persephone, can as well refer to the Moon-goddess, Alcestis, the Mighty, Laodamia, Her who quells the Folk, and Eurydice, Her of the Wide Sway. It was Hecate-Brimo of Pherae, who according to the Hellenised form of the tale is Artemis, whose wrath at not receiving sacrifice brought the doom of death upon Admetus. The children and grandchildren of the Sun are often sinful, as for example Ixion, Peirithous, Medeia, and Circe. So Admetus, the heroised namesake of the Sun, is guilty of remissness toward the Moon-goddess.

In Orpheus as in Paean we have a spirit of healing. Paean deals with *φάρμακα* and Orpheus with the *ἐπωδή* (*Cyclops*, 646). Paean becomes identified with Apollo, who assumes the character of medicine-god, and Orpheus, whose healing is more psychological, the enchanter and singer, gives his life for the sake of the Sun-god (according to Aeschylus in the *Bassarids*). In the picture of Polygnotus<sup>8</sup> Orpheus is without his bride in Hades. In the famous slab we see him at the moment in which he offends against the law of magic, which demands that one should not look upon the magic act. So Medeia, in a fragment (491) of Sophocles' *Rootdiggers*, cuts her magic herbs with head turned away. In the version of the *ἀναγωγή* of the bride which is regarded as the first, Orpheus brings up, perhaps successfully, Argiope or Agriope.<sup>9</sup> These are plainly moon-epithets, either of the shining or the baleful face of the moon. A. B. Cook (in his *Zeus*, p. 537) discusses Europe, daughter of Argiope, as a moon-goddess. The name

<sup>8</sup> Paus. x. 30, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Hermesianax ap. Athenaeum, xiii. 597 f.

Argiope is formed like Antiope, who, as Mr. Cook shows (p. 738), was as early as the eighth century B.C. the wife of Helios and probably a moon-goddess. Antiope, according to Mr. Cook, following Gruppe, 'is a highly suitable appellation for the full moon, which at its rising exactly faces the sun.' If then the first wife of Orpheus was a moon-hypostasis, we may assume the same of Eurydice and regard the parting as originally that of the loving Sun and Moon rather than that of Spring leaving the Earth. I should like to suggest here a derivation which I have not seen advocated for another Thessalian heroine, the mother of Asklepios, Aigla or Koronis, who was daughter of Phlegyas and beloved of Apollo. Aigla is obviously a moon-epithet; Koronis can well refer to the sickle-shape of the new moon. We are told by Isyllos that she was given the name Koronis for her beauty. Wilamowitz, who connects the name with the crow or raven, says that it is indeed peculiar that she should be called *Koronis* for her beauty's sake. 'Aber die Griechen scheinen doch Koronis als ein auszeichnendes Beiwort, als einen Namen, bei dem man an Schönheit dachte, empfunden zu haben.' Since Koronis was the beloved of Apollo, who fell in love with her as she dipped her feet in the lake of Phoebus or Phoebe, it seems reasonable to see in her a heroine whose names both come from the moon. The meaning of the words τὸ κάλλος δὲ Κορωνίς ἐπεκλήθη, which are so puzzling to Wilamowitz, may be clear if we think of the beauty of the new moon. The comparison of Dido, retreating from contact with Aeneas in the lower world, to the new moon seen dimly through the clouds is unspeakably lovely:—

obscuram, qualem primo qui surgere mense  
aut videt aut vidisse putat per nubila lunam.

In the story of Laodamia we see the longing of the Moon for the Sun typified more clearly than in the other two myths. Protesilaos appears to have been worshipped as a fructifying daemon in his home in Phylace (Pindar, i. 1, 21) and in Etæus (Philostratus, *Her.* 2, 8; *Hdt.* 9, 116; *Thuc.* 8, 102). In the fifth century version, preserved in several sources, Laodamia asked the gods below that her husband might return to her. She obtained the boon of three hours of companionship with him in the upper world. At the expiration of this time, when her husband had left her, she had a bronze or wax or wooden image of him made, which she placed in her chamber under the pretext of offering sacrifice, and began to worship it. She was found by her returning husband, according to Eustathius, embracing the statue. In another account a servant, seeing her embrace the statue, believed that she had admitted a lover to her room and reported the thing to her father, who burned the statue. Laodamia in grief, according to this version, threw herself on the fire and was burned to death. The use made in the plot of Euripides' *Protesilaos* of the image-motive is not certain and has been discussed most fully by M. Mayer in his paper entitled 'Der Protesilaos des Euripides.'<sup>10</sup> I make the suggestion that the statue was used by

<sup>10</sup> See Mayer, M., 'Der Protesilaos des Euripides,' *Hermes*, xx., 101 ff.

Laodamia in the play of Euripides in a ritual (*γοητείας*) like that ascribed to the *Ghost-raisers* of Aeschylus. Compare Phryn. Bekk. 73, 13: *τοὺς τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν τεθνεώτων γοητείας τισὶ (ἀν)άγοντας τῆς αὐτῆς ἐννοίας καὶ τοῦ Αἰσχύλου τὸ δράμα ψυχαγωγί.* The statue, if of wax, as suggested in some sources, would be such a 'koros' as is mentioned in fragment 493 of Sophocles: *κόρον ἀιστώσας πυρί.* Its use would be that of sympathetic magic, like that employed by Simaetha in the second idyll of Theocritus for the purpose of making Delphis melt with love for her. It would be very appropriate for a Thessalian heroine, who owes her name to the moon-goddess, to use magic in order to make Protesilaos feel her longing for him even in the underworld. In a passage near the close of the *Alcestis*, in which Admetus expresses the fear that Alcestis may be a phantom from the world of shades, Heracles says 'No *ψυχαγωγός* (ghost-raiser) hast thou made thy friend' (Murray). As the play of Aeschylus had this name, and as Euripides was a close student and sometimes a critic of Aeschylus, he may be referring to the plot of that play, which he may have copied in some details of his *Protesilaos*. The *Alcestis* in that case marks an advance in his treatment of the resurrection theme.

We know the exact date of the production of the *Alcestis* to have been 438 B.C., and I have noted that the style of the sculptured slab depicting Orpheus turning toward Eurydice on the upward way is in the manner of that period. Resurrection myths of the Balkan-Thessalian type were a frequent theme in Athens at that time. Dr. Leaf<sup>11</sup> has shown that the *Rhesus* was in all probability composed with reference to the settlement of Amphipolis by an Athenian colony in 437. In this too we have a resurrection myth which embodied a deep-seated religious belief of the Danubian regions and one that is connected with sun-worship. 'Like many Thracian heroes Rhesus has a dash of the Sun-god in him, the burning targe, the white horses and the splendour. Like them he is a boaster and a deep drinker, a child of battle and of song. Like other divine kings he dies in his youth and strength, and keeps watch over his people from "some feasting presence full of light," where he lies among the buried silver-veins of Pangaion.' (Introduction to *Rhesus*, Murray, p. xii.)

The Muse says of her son's fate:—

' My son shall not be laid in any grave  
Of darkness; thus much guerdon will I crave  
Of Death's eternal bride, the heavenly-born  
Maid of Demeter, Life of fruits and corn,  
To set this one soul free. She owes me yet  
For Orpheus widowed an abiding debt.  
To me he still must be—that know I well—  
As one in death, who sees not. Where I dwell  
He must not come, nor see his mother's face.  
Alone forever, in a caverned place

<sup>11</sup> *J.H.S.* 1915, p. 1 ff.

Of silver-veined earth hid from men's sight  
 A Man yet Spirit, he shall live in light;  
 As under far Pangaion Orpheus lies,  
 Priest of great light and worshipped of the wise.'

(*Gilbert Murray's Translation.*)

The immortalising 'Getae, who live between the Balkans and the Danube (Bulgaria), had a belief in a similar life after death, in which they personally would spend an eternity of revelling with their *δαίμων* Salmoxis, who is a form of the Sun-god priest. Herodotus (iv. 94) says that these are the Getae who on occasion of thunder and lightning shoot arrows into heaven, threatening the god, believing only in the existence of their own god.' I think that the meaning of this passage has been misunderstood by Erwin Rohde<sup>12</sup> (*Psyche*, 2, 28) in that he regards Salmoxis as the Getan god and thinks the god against whom they direct their arrows is one in whom they do not believe. Their procedure is rather sun-magic, like that practised by the Paeonians in worship of or magic dealing with the same god. Salmoxis is a rude Danubian daemon and sun-priest, who never assumed a beautiful Greek form as did Orpheus, though he got so far as to be transformed into a follower of Pythagoras according to the theory of some Greeks from the Black Sea, to whose statement Herodotus attaches no great importance. The *penteteris*, given by Herodotus as the time intervening for the messengers to Salmoxis who are tossed against the spears, points to the sun and moon *penteteris*. (See page 231 of Miss Harrison's *Themis*: Cornford's discussion of the time reckonings.)

The resurrection myths of Alcestis, Eurydice, and Protesilaos were humanised and stamped with the beauty of the Periclean period by the genius of an unknown worker in marble in the depiction of the Orpheus myth, and by Euripides in his *Alcestis* and his *Protesilaos*. They had their roots in their myths about the sun and moon which found their way from the Danube and Thessaly in the sixth (see Farnell, *Cults*, ii. 508, for Hecate) and fifth centuries. They were 'myths' to the Greeks, but came from deep-rooted folk superstitions and beliefs in the Balkans and Thessaly, where the magico-religious cult of the moon-goddess was so strongly seated and where sun-worship produced a cult of medicine destined to be fruitful for good in the worships of Paeon of Paeonia and Asklepios of Tricca in Thessaly.

The tales of Salmoxis in his cave, Orpheus on Pangaeos, worshipping the Sun, Brimo-Hecate at Pherae, Koronis and Apollo at the Shining Lake, Artemis and Apollo in Greek art and literature, are the product of, or have been profoundly affected by, the worship of Sun and Moon in the Danubian lands from which their cult has never wholly perished.<sup>13</sup> Poetry and custom and religion in those places still celebrate their *πρέσβιστον σέβας*.

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<sup>12</sup> Dr. Farnell (*Cults*, v. 94) appears to follow Rohde.

<sup>13</sup> See *Servia by the Servians*, Chapter xii.,

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Manners and Customs, by S. Troyanovitch, Director of the Ethnological Museum in Belgrade.