# Reviews of Books

THE WIDER CONTEXT : COMMON ELEMENTS IN INDO-IRANIAN, GREEK AND OTHER POETIC TRADITIONS AND MYTHOLOGIES. By M. L. West. (Indo-European Poetry and Myth). pp. xii, 525. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

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*This review article aims (a) to introduce this book to a wider readership (b) to present concisely what I see to be its most important findings for the study of Indo-European poetry and mythology (c) to add some additional material from my knowledge of this field, especially within the Indo-Iranian tradition, and (d) to make an over-all evaluation of the book.*

When Martin West was awarded the Kenyon Medal for Classical Studies by the British Academy in 2002 he was described in the dedication as "the most brilliant and productive Greek scholar of his generation, not just in the United Kingdom, but worldwide". Though by his own admission he is not a comparative philologist[1], he has taken an increasing interest in the place of Greek in the Indo-European stemma and as early as 1973 he wrote an article on metre in the parent language.[2] In 1988[3] he published a seminal study of semantic and linguistic parallels between the earliest Greek and Sanskrit literature. While this was much indebted to recent work by Rüdiger Schmitt[4], Marcello Durante[5] and Enrico Campanile[6] among others, it showed great judgment in assessing the merits of the various parallels adduced by those scholars. It also shows that West was developing a good working

[1]M. L. West, *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* (Oxford, 2007), henceforth West 2007, v: "I write as a professional Hellenist, as much an amateur in Indo-European studies as in oriental. I have furnished myself with a working knowledge of some of the relevant languages".

[2]'Indo-European Metre' *Glotta* 51 1973 161–187. By way of background it may be noted that when in 1860 Rudolf Westphal compared Vedic and Avestan and Ancient Greek metres and found significant similarities between them, he opened the way for further exploration of a possible link to their pre-history. Antoine Meillet's work in this field published in 1923 provided the impetus for the study of metres used in other Indo-European language groups with the aim of establishing a common source. The broader question of the survival of Indo-European poetry was first raised by Adolf Kaegi in his *Der Rigveda, Die Älteste Literatur der Inder* (Leipzig, 1881), 128 n. 12, cf 158 n. 82. The most important recent contributions to the study of Indo-European poetry and myth have been made by Rüdiger Schmitt in *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1967), which is also a valuable summary of what had gone before, and Calvert Watkins, especially in his book *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (New York, Oxford, 1995). West acknowledges his considerable indebtedness to the work of these scholars.

[3]M. L. West, 'The Rise of the Greek Epic' *JHS* 108 (1988). He had touched upon the subject also in 'Greek Poetry 2000–700 B.C.', *Classical Quarterly* 23 (1973) pp. 179–192.

[4]Rüdiger Schmitt, *Dichtung und Dichtersprache in indogermanischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1967) and Rüdiger Schmitt (ed.) *Indogermanische Dichtersprache.* Wege der Forschung, p. 165 (Darmstadt, 1968).

[5]Marcello Durante, *Richerche sulla preistoria della tradizione poetica greca* (Rome, 1971, 1976) (from *Rendiconti dell' Accademia nazionale dei Lincei* xiii (1958) pp. 3–14; xv (1960), pp. 231–49; xvii (1962), pp. 25–43.

[6]Enrico Campanile, *Richerche di cultura poetica indo europea* (Pisa, 1977), and later *La riconstruzione della cultura indo europea* (Pisa, 1990) et al.



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knowledge of Sanskrit among other languages.[7] When freed from the trammels of bureaucracy by his appointment as a Research Fellow of All Souls, he found time to turn his attention to the prehistory of Greek epic and the influence of other literatures and cultures upon its development; this would entail an examination of the Indo-European inheritance and the debt to Near Eastern poetry. It was the latter study that first engaged him. The striking result of this was the large book (he intended it to be 'a separate little book') entitled *The East Face of Helicon* published by the Clarendon Press in 1997. The comparative material here is drawn mostly from Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Syrian and Biblical sources. Debts to other Indo-European literatures apart from Hittite are not discussed in any detail. These were clearly saved for the volume under review. This is not the place to appraise West's achievement in *The East Face of Helicon* other than to say that it is incomparably the most comprehensive and credible attempt ever made to assemble and analyse this subject. What can we expect after this when the North (i.e. Indo-European) Face[8] of the mountain is explored? West hints at the answer in his Preface and at the same time warns us that the focus of this book is different from that of the 1997 volume. Here the main subject is not Greek poetry, although it provides fundamental evidence, but the whole Indo-European tradition as far as it can be discovered in the surviving literatures. This is a "heritage from the past, not a continuing irradiation".[9]

In the introduction to *Indo-European Poetry and Myth*, West establishes his methodology by proposing a stemma identifying three levels for the original languages, the first being Proto-Indo-European which divides at the second level into Anatolian and 'Mature' Indo-European[10] and at the third level (c.2300 BCE) into Western (Italic and Celtic), Northern-Central (Germanic, Baltic, Slavic) and Eastern (Greek, Armenian, Indo-Iranian). All three levels will form part of the study and 'Indo-European' will be used as a 'shorthand' term. Most of the evidence will involve the second and third levels. There is an important caveat: what is identified here as Indo-European does not exclude the possibility that similar material may exist in Semitic and other literate cultures[11]; it is important therefore to distinguish what seems to be a specifically historic connection and one that can be attributed to horizontal transmission, which is a way of describing borrowings between literatures or cultures in the recorded period.[12] "When we have parallels that extend all the way from India or Iran to the Celtic world, their probative value may be rated particularly high, because horizontal transmission seems virtually ruled out".[13] He defends his inevitable use of late sources for a number of language groups[14] by using the analogy of comparative philology where conclusions are drawn about the parent language

[7] In the preface to *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford, 1997), henceforth West 1997 p. xi he notes "the beginnings of a new and welcome trend for classicists and ancient historians to study at least one oriental language" and that such study "must become a firm part of our agenda for the twenty-first century".

[8] For wholly proper reasons West disclaims the appropriateness of the title *The North Face of Helicon* for this book, but one cannot resist the temptation to say that two faces of Helicon, East and North by West might look like geographical overkill!

[9] West 2007 p. v.

[10] West coins this term to distinguish the residuum after the divergence of the Anatolian group represented by Hittite and related languages of Asia Minor. In this he follows the widely accepted groupings which are set out in Thomas V. Gamkrelidze and V. V. Ivanov, *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans* (Berlin, New York, 1995).

[11] A rather extreme example of this will be found on page 108 where, in discussing "the questioner's suggestions negated in turn", he states, "I could fill several pages with examples from Hittite, from the Indian epics, from Old English and Norse, from Armenian, Russian and Serbo-Croat heroic poems, and from Lithuanian ballads, but it is sufficient to note the fact and to cite references". At the end of the references he adds "There are several instances also in Ugaritic" and refers to West 1997 p. 198.

[12] As an example of horizontal transmission West gives the sudden appearance of the doctrine of metempsychosis around the sixth century BCE in both Greek and Indian sources, though it is not attested elsewhere. The possibility of a common source (Persian Empire) is raised, although nothing is found in Iranian sources to confirm this.

[13] West 2007 p. 23.

[14] Among frequently quoted sources, insular Celtic material begins around 600 CE, Germanic in the eighth century CE and Slavic in the twelfth century CE.

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from data as chronologically diverse as Hittite and Vedic texts, which are over three thousand years old, and evidence from Albanian or Lithuanian which has only been recorded in the last five or six centuries. This analogy will not convince all West's readers. Reconstruction of the original language by linguists meets with understandable scepticism when attempts are made to reconstruct 'real' words, phrases and sentences. West himself wittily quips that when it comes to reconstructed roots peppered with laryngeals he defers to the authorities "whom some may view as the unreadable in pursuit of the unpronounceable".[15] This fails to recognise that, however algebraic the forms postulated by philologists may seem, they do represent a consistent scheme of explaining the origin and relationship of the known reflexes; they should not be viewed as phonetic representations of actual words. The validity of the comparative method in constructing the Indo-European linguistic stemma has been proved by its convincing results, as West is ready to acknowledge; indeed he believes that a similar method can be used with poetry and mythology. The proof of such a belief can only be judged by its results. The results are set out fully in this book and it will be for the reader to decide. There is no objective canon, as in comparative philology, and West admits that judgement will be made by the "intrinsic appeal" of the evidence in the absence of hard facts. He also admits the possibility that the best that can be done in this field is the identification of 'isomyths' which he defines as "elements shared by a particular pair or a particular constellation of peoples, acknowledging that they may date only from a comparatively late phase in the long history of the diaspora".[16]

Before discussing the body of material which forms the substance of the book, something needs to be said about the use of late sources, as they may mislead by an appearance of antiquity which they do not possess, despite the disclaimers of the author. A case in point is the occasional citation of Firdowsi's *Shāh-nāma* which dates from about 1000CE. While the oldest parts of the Avesta are written in a language comparable in antiquity to the Rigveda and, like the Younger Avesta,[17] are essential for the Iranian component in any study of Indo-European, the same cannot be said for the medieval Persian epic. West justifies his use of it by stating that "it does not continue a native tradition of epic, but it does embody much ancient myth and folktale". There is no evidence for written epic poetry among Iranian peoples; even the existence of an oral tradition is difficult to document, despite its probability. Those like Mary Boyce who have painstakingly assembled what slight evidence exists for it acknowledge that from so much that has been distorted and lost, especially with the coming of Islam, a case for continuity into the era of Firdowsi cannot be proved definitively.[18] The myth and folklore embodied in the *Shāh-nāma* must therefore be viewed with some caution and no certain conclusions can be drawn about its origins or about its significance in such a study as this. The same caveat applies *a fortiore* to the use of Ossetic Nartä tales, folk legends of the northern Caucasus, which have only been studied quite recently.[19] They have an Iranian substratum which warrants their inclusion in the material

[15] West 2007, p. v. Despite this disclaimer West shows himself able to trade 'unpronounceables' with the best of them; witness his treatment of the Indo-European name for 'earth' on pages 173 and 174 and the reconstruction of a prototype for Pūṣán/Pan on page 282.

[16] West 2007, p. 24.

[17] West dates the Younger Avesta as "probably between the eighth and fourth centuries BCE, the *Vidēvdāt* being the latest part". Most Iranian scholars these days would be inclined to place many parts of the latter work in the first centuries of the Common Era.

[18] Mary Boyce, ' Middle Persian Literature', in I. Gershevitch (ed.) *Handbuch der Orientalistik. Iranistik – Literatur*, pp. 31–66 (Leiden, 1968) and 'Parthian Writing and Literature', in E. Yarshater (ed.) *Cambridge History of Iran Volume 3, Part 2* 1151–1165 (Cambridge, 1983). In the second of these articles she cautiously states, "Parthian heroic poems are thus mainly known through Persian and Arabic redactions of the lost Middle Persian *Xwadāy-nāmag* and notably through Firdausī's *Shāh-nāma* which in style probably owes something to the old Iranian epic tradition, doubtless not yet wholly lost in the Khurāsān in his day". (1157).

[19] Georges Dumézil, *Légendes sur les Nartes* (Paris, 1930) and *Le livre des héros. Légendes sur les Nartes* (Paris, 1965); the latter is a translation of *Narty kaddžystä* (Dzaudžykau, 1946). Dumézil was a pioneer in the field and remains a principal authority on the Ossetic Nartä legends. His translations were used by John Colarusso in *Nart Sagas from*

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presented here, but they have a most complex pedigree and any comparisons must be considered at best speculative.[20]

All judgments about content in the main body of the book must be made in the light of West's warning that he has not attempted to provide a compendium of all available material, but only "a selection representing a personal vision, or rather vista".[21] The first chapter deals with the poet and his craft; metaphors of weaving, carpentry, sailing and chariot-riding are discussed before an excellent discussion of versification where the author shows his great expertise in this field. After reconstructing the main features of a metrical system based on quantitative prosody and lines of indeterminate length which applies to Greek and Indo-Iranian texts, he looks at Italic, Celtic and the admittedly much more recent Slavonic material and finds there sufficient evidence to connect the latter to the former. This strongly suggests that we can discern metrical features going back to the 'Mature' Indo-European period (Level 2). He admits that the Baltic and Germanic evidence is inconclusive, as is the material which can be gleaned from the small traces in Tocharian of a syllabic prosody with cola of between three and eight syllables combined into lines of unequal length grouped in four line strophes. In his discussion of poetic genres he leaves open the question of the existence of Indo-European epic; though well-represented in Greece, India, medieval England and among South Slavs and Albanians, there is little or no trace of it over a large expanse of Indo-European territory. The chapter ends with some striking observations about assemblies[22] and contests between poets; the latter often involves riddles with the loser forfeiting his or her life.

The second chapter continues to examine the art of poetry, this time concentrating on aspects of vocabulary and phraseology, much of it familiar since such etymological correspondences as Vedic *śrávás akṣitam* and Homeric κλέος ἄφθιτον have been collected since Adalbert Kuhn's mention of this example in 1853.[23] Here the discussion broadens into lexical and semantic correspondences without the necessity of direct etymological links. In dealing with similes West is at pains to point out that the short comparison type is so common as to be an almost universal feature of poetry, but that the developed similes which are so striking in the Homeric poems are very rare elsewhere. In *The East Face of Helicon* some notable examples are given from Sumerian, Akkadian and the Old Testament but, apart from one extended simile in *Beowulf*, West can offer nothing in Indo-European outside Greek

*the Caucasus* (Princeton, 2002). See also H. W. Bailey's chapter in A. H. Hatto (ed.) *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* (London, 1980–89), pp. i. 236–67.

[20]Fridrik Thordarson, 'Ossetic' in *Compendium Linguarum Iranicarum* (Wiesbaden, 1989) p. 457 : "In contradistinction to the other Iranian languages, Ossetic has developed in entirely non-Iranian surroundings for nearly two millennia".

[21]West 2007, p. vi.

[22]Here West alludes to Durante's clever suggestion that Vedic *samaryám* 'meeting (of poets)' might have a hitherto unrecognized cognate *ὅμαρος in Greek which might explain Homeridae not as 'sons of Homer' but as 'those taking part in poetic meeting'. West himself went further and proposed that the name of the poet Homer, for which there is no convincing explanation, was a back-formation from Homeridae. See M. L. West, 'The Invention of Homer', *Classical Quarterly* 49 (1999) pp. 375–382. He does not mention two interesting parallels which belong here. The first is his own suggestion that Cinyras, the legendary king of Byblos, is in reality nothing but the mythical eponymous ancestor of the Kinyradai, the guild of temple musicians who controlled the Paphian cult; and Kinyradai is a Greek rendering of a Phoenician *b$^{e}$nê kinnúr 'sons of the lyre', Semitic idiom for 'professional lyre-players'. (West 1997) p. 73. Perhaps this is a similar back formation? See also John Franklin 'Kinyras at Pylos' (forthcoming – submitted to *Kadmos*).The second is discussed by Peter Wilson in 'Thamyris: the archetype of the wandering poet?' in *Wandering Poets in Ancient Greek Culture*, eds, R. Hunter and I. Rutherford (Cambridge, 2009) pp. 46–79. He raises the possibilty that the name Thamyris might,as suggested by Durante, be retro-invented from a group of Thamyridai or Thamyradai.

[23]West 2007, p. 28 in discussing Vedic *kavi-* etc. gives the basic meaning of the underlying root **keu* as 'see, behold'. This is not in accordance with his quoted authority which gives 'hear' as the primary meaning.

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epic. He therefore tacitly dismisses examples from the *Rāmāyaṇa* in the battle book *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*.[24] This may be because some which seem to belong here have been excised as late additions in the critical edition.[25] He does, however, cite a good example where exactly the same comparison, the tired swimmer's relief on reaching land, is found in a developed form in the *Odyssey* and in a short version in the *Mahābhārata*.[26] The most impressive collection of data in this section is, I think, to be found in very wide-ranging examples of the juxtaposition of like terms with different inflections (polyptoton). Some of the most convincing evidence for Indo-European poetry will be found here, but West surprisingly does not make the telling point that the inflected nature of Indo-European language is preeminently suited to this figure. Similar expressions do, it is true, occur in other Near Eastern languages, notably in divine titles. In *The East Face of Helicon* West is no doubt correct to call ἄναξ, ἀνάκτων in Aeschylus *Supplices* 525 an unprecedented expression in Greek[27] which must be an imitation of frequently occurring Near Eastern titles. Those which he quotes include titles on a Hittite-Akkadian bilingual, but there is no mention of the title, *shāhān shāh*, so common in the Iranian tradition, perhaps for the reason that it might originate simply as a translation of Aramaic *MLKYN MLK*. Because of its linguistic antiquity the title of the Nartä lord *xucauti xucau* which Bailey translates 'autocrat of autocrats' should be included here.[28] The chapter ends on a very strong note with examples of what West calls the Augmented Triad, which is a verse containing three proper names, the third furnished with an epithet. Sufficient for illustration are Λάμπον τε Κλυτιόν θ' Ἰκετάονα τ'ὄζον Ἄρηος in *Iliad* 3 147 and *damaṃ dāntaṃ damanaṃ ca suvarcasam* in *Mahābhārata* 3 72.[29] The preliminary work for this treatment will be found in West's 2004 contribution to the Joachim Latacz Festschrift entitled 'An Indo-European Stylistic Feature in Homer'[30] where copious examples are displayed from the Vedas, Indian epics, the Younger Avesta, Homer and Hesiod, Germanic and Celtic; to these he now adds some from Hittite and Latvian. It seems difficult not to see an Indo-European inheritance in the widespread usage of this quite distinct feature and I agree with the author that "here we seem to find a remnant of the Indo-European storyteller's building work: a recognisable structural component with the lineaments of its verbal patterning still in place".

Gods and Goddesses are the theme for the third chapter. Amid much familiar material from the earliest texts many original and valuable insights will be found. The fact that there are so few shared names in the different pantheons receives close examination and West bases his discussion on the fact that divine names may be expected to express some idea and are not likely to be invented arbitrarily.

[24] *Rāmāyaṇa* 2.74.21, 75.14, 89,15, 98.8–9, 17–18,25,28,42 and 106.2–18. See John Brockington, 'Figures of Speech in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *JAOS* 97 1977 pp. 441–442 – reprinted in Greg Bailey and Mary Brockington (ed.), *Epic Threads* (Oxford, 2000) pp. 126–127.

[25] *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vamlīki*, critical ed., G. H. Bhatt and U. P. Shah, 7 vols. (Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1960–75).

[26] *Od*.23.233–9; *Mahābhārata*.7.116.12.

[27] This seems surprising as ἄναξ, ἀνδρῶν is so common in Homer.

[28] See H. W. Bailey, 'Ossetic' in A. H. Hatto (ed.) *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* (London 1980–89), pp. i. 254. He traces *xucau* to an older Saka **hvaθyāva-* which appears in Sogdian *xwt'w* and Parthian *xwd'wn* as a calque on the Greek αὐτοκράτωρ. The word has now been found in Bactrian χοαδηο; this in turn has been borrowed into late Sogdian as *xyδyw* whence come Persian *xidēv* and English *khedive*. See N. Sims-Williams, 'Ancient Afghanistan and its Invaders' in N. Sims-Williams (ed.) *Iranian Languages and Peoples* (Oxford, 2002) pp. 228–229.

[29] This clear parallel must have struck many budding Sanskritists as it appears on the first page of the Story of Nala which, because of its simple style, is often used as an introductory piece in course books. The pattern involved is, according to West, a special case of Otto Behaghel's 'Gesetz der Wachsenden Glieder' (Behaghel's Law) convenient to the versifier because it gives him some room for manoeuvre in the clausulae. It would be productive, I believe, to study this phenomenon in connection with the pattern of hexametric cola of increasing length in Homer for which G. S. Kirk coined the rather inelegant term 'rising threefolder' since 'augmented triads' often naturally fall into this pattern.

[30] M. L. West, 'An Indo-European Stylistic Feature in Homer' in A. Bierl, A. Schmitt, A. Willi (edd.), *Antike Literatur in neuer Deutung: Festschrift für Joachim Latacz anlässlich seines 70. Geburtstags* (Munich-Leipzig, 2004) pp. 33–49.

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He supports this by reference to the earlier two-gender system which distinguished between animate and inanimate. There are many such cases: for example, the Indo-Iranian word for 'contract' (Sanskrit *mitrám* Avestan *miθrəm*) is transferred from the inanimate to the animate gender to become the god of contracts (*Mitráḥ/Miθrō*). In dealing with the formation of divine names, he expands the concept of a nominal expression and its derivative in *–no-* 'controller of' discussed by Benveniste[31] by adding female names which have derivative in *-nā-* so that to the collection including Hittite *Tarḫunna*, Vedic *Varuṇa*, Latin *Volcanus* and Lithuanian *Perkunas* are added Latin *Bellona*, Gallic *Epona*, Lithuanian *Žemýna* etc. Examples are also given of words for 'leader' or 'lord' which might be used of gods: Greek κοίρανος, Latin *dominus*, Gothic *Þiudans*, Old English *dryhten*, Old Norse *drottinn*. In all these cases the original noun can be clearly identified.[32] The minor part which female gods played in the earliest scheme of things is apparent, if, with West, we regard the Vedic situation as our best evidence for this. It is also significant that no feminine counterpart has been found for the most important name of all, that of the sky-god **d(i)yéus* and its derivative **deiwós* which has representation in almost all branches of Indo-European. Turning to mythological themes, West has much of interest to say about divine assemblies and means of transport, the recurrent motif of 'gold' and 'golden', the shared heritage of a divine smith[33], the idea of special food and drink for the gods including where it comes from,[34] and their possession of a special language. A full set of examples of divine words and their human counterparts in Greek poetry was made by West in his edition of Hesiod's *Theogony* in 1966.[35] From the Sanskrit examples given here, it would seem that this concept was not a pervading or important one in the Indian tradition. It is worth adding that Zoroastrian theology of the good and evil creations was profoundly significant in producing the Iranian phenomenon of a double vocabulary for good and evil creatures in which many common words were given 'Daevic' equivalents; the common word is seen as Ahuric, that is belonging to the good creation and its divinities, but it has a counterpart in the evil creation, the world of the Daevas.[36] As this may be a post-Gathic development West has some justification in leaving it out of account. He does, however, in the final part of this chapter which deals with conflict between present gods and an earlier pantheon, discuss allusions in the Sanskrit epics to battles between the earlier Asuras and the later gods (Devas), pointing out that the situation is reversed in the Avesta where it is the Daevas who were evil and the Ahuras good. In Zoroastrian terms the Daevas represent the 'heathen' divinities of the religion before its reformation by the prophet.

Gods and Goddesses lead on naturally to Sky and Earth, the subject of the next chapter. As pointed out above, the most important Indo-European god, indeed the only one that can be traced linguistically across the whole expanse from India to Italy, is **d(i)yéus* and its derivative **deiwòs*. The root **di-* is associated with 'light', 'day' and the 'bright sky'. The oldest word for 'earth'[37] is rarely used for the mother goddess for whom different terms are current in different cultures. Many of the attributive adjectives used with words for 'earth' are the same and may point to a common inheritance. More

[31] Émile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society* (London, 1973) pp. 89–94.

[32] The less obvious κοίρανος has *korjos (Germanic *harja, Middle Irish cuire, Lithuanian kārias) 'army' as its first element.

[33] Kurdalagon in the Ossetic Nartä legends seems to belong here.

[34] Widely distributed sources attest to nectar and ambrosia being found in inaccessible places such as mountain peaks and being brought to the gods by birds. Circe's information on this subject (*Od.* 12.62–5) accords in this respect with Rigvedic and Avestan descriptions of the bringing of the divine intoxicant (Soma/Haoma) to the place of libation.

[35] M. L. West, *Hesiod. Theogony* (Oxford, 1966) p. 387.

[36] See Tatyana J. Elizarenkova, *The Language and Style of the Vedic Ṛṣis* (New York, 1995) pp. 74–75 and Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism Vol 1* (Leiden, 1975) p. 298. The double vocabulary has been seen as a rationalization of dialect differences: see L. H. Gray, *JRAS* 1927, pp. 427–441. T. Burrow, *JRAS* 1973, pp. 123–140, argued that the Daevic words belonged to a Proto-Indo-Iranian substrate.

[37] Seen in reflexes such as Hittite *dēgan*, Tocharian *tkaṃ/ keṃ*, Vedic *kṣám-*, Greek χθών, Latin *humus*, Old Irish *dū*, Old Church Slavonic *zemlja* etc. The last is used in various forms in Slavonic for the Earth Mother.

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significant is the pairing of sky and earth. Prominent in Vedic, the theme is also attested specifically in Hesiod and, interestingly, in the Germanic tradition in an old English ploughing prayer where the earth is asked to become pregnant in God's embrace. West argues that the Christian God has replaced the old Sky-god and that the prayer may descend from the same source as the invocation of Zeus and Demeter for the same purpose in *Works and Days* pp. 465–469. Advice by Hesiod given to the farmer to plough and sow naked may also have a very early origin since it is referred to by the Elder Pliny (*HN* 18.131) where it is accompanied by a ritual prayer; it is attested for Germanic by the description given in Jan de Vries's *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* of German and Danish peasants stripping naked to plough and protecting their crops from birds by rising at dawn, removing their clothes and going around the fields three times reciting the Our Father. In the *Golden Bough* Frazer noted that in India in time of drought men remain indoors while women perform naked ploughing. The same has been observed in recent times in Uttar Pradesh (1979) and Nepal (2002), as reported in English newspapers. Bulls and cows naturally belong in this discussion; not surprisingly in view of their prominence in the Rigveda they are equated with Heaven and Earth in several of its hymns, but it is doubtful whether the Russian riddle[38] quoted by West is relevant here. Of greater moment is the strong similarity which the author goes on to evince between the 'Sons of God' who appear in Lithuanian and Latvian songs and the divine twins of Greek and Indian literature. The Aśvins and Dioskouroi have long been seen as a possible remnant of Indo-European mythology, but the case is immeasurably strengthened by the material that links them to the *Dieva dēli* of Baltic folklore so well presented here.

West has the rare facility of being able to present a complicated linguistic argument with perfect clarity. At the beginning of the fifth chapter he elucidates the relationship between reflexes of the word for 'sun', which he admits to be 'a problem of great complexity',[39] by explaining how the neuter forms of Vedic *svàr* and Avestan *hvarə* along with the Latin masculine sōl continue the neuter prototype for this word (*$sh_2$wl), but that Vedic *sū́r(i)ya-*, Greek ἥλιος (masculine) and Lithuanian *saulė* (feminine) were created by adding the suffix *–(i)yos/yā*. The Proto-Germanic form **sun-nōn* (feminine) which has the ending *–n* not *–l* derives from the same prototype in an oblique case in a heteroclite declension with *l/n* alternation. Such alternation is not otherwise attested but is quite probable in view of the well-established *r/n* heteroclite paradigms.[40] The feminine gender prevails in northern Europe. In Old Irish *súil* 'eye' (feminine) is thought to be the same word. The concept of the eye of the all-seeing sun is widely attested, as West's varied examples show. Oaths by the sun are common, but the dubious example from the *Shāh-nāma* might well be omitted. The passage of the sun through the sky seems to have been the subject of speculation in the earliest period and various explanations are given: the sun is a wheel or a wheeled vehicle either self-propelled or drawn by horses[41] or a boat. The latter, sometimes in the form of a large cup, conveys the sun from west to east during the night. Various pictorial devices for the solar wheel are mentioned here; they are broadly distributed from earliest times and include the swastika which may be an Iron Age representation of a spoked wheel in motion.[42] Shared vocabulary for the path of the sun's horses is exemplified; there is even a possible etymological equivalence between *mahó ájmasya* describing the sun's 'great drive' in the Rigveda and μέγας ὄγμος the phrase used to describe the moon's orbit in a later Homeric Hymn.[43] Considering its prominence

[38]Earth and Heaven is the answer to the conundrum "two bulls are butting, they do not come together".

[39]West 2007, pp. 194–196.

[40]Examples of this alternation are a feature of Hittite noun morphology, but are familiar from such Latin words as *iter/itin(eris)*.

[41]The ordinary Indo-Iranian word for 'chariot' (Vedic *rátha-*/Avestan *raθa-*) is the Indo-European word for 'wheel' seen in Latin *rota* etc.

[42]The humble hot cross bun may "perpetuate the ancient solar symbol of the cross-in-circle or four-spoked wheel". West 2007, p. 215.

[43]*RV* 4.53.4; *Homeric Hymn* (To the Moon) 32.11.

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in Egyptian solar mythology,[44] no exclusive claims of Indo-European origin can be made for the sun's boat or cup well-known in the Greek mythology of Herakles[45] and in an elegy of Mimnermus which is quoted here in full.[46] However, a Latvian parallel is available, which West wryly calls an "integrated transport system, wheeled vehicle in the morning connecting with night ferry".[47] In *The East Face of Helicon* he was prepared to state categorically that the horses and chariot of the sun were imported "to Greece from outside, and presumably from the East, though it is difficult to determine its place of origin".[48] Here he is more guarded, no doubt by reason of his more recent review of the evidence. He rightly draws attention to the strong possibility that when the motif of the sun's horses and chariot appears later in Egypt and China it is borrowed from an Indo-European source; in the latter case it may be, as Pulleyblank has suggested, from the Tocharians.[49]

There are many similar features both in timing and performance in the way in which the sun is worshipped in cultic observance among Indo-European peoples; festivals at the beginning of spring and at the summer solstice are common; ring-dances like the Athenian κύκλιοι χοροί may well have originally been designed to recall the sun's shape and movement. It is worth adding to West's information that circular dances have a special association with the Greek sun-god Apollo.[50] Salutations of the rising and setting sun are too common throughout the world to be hard evidence in this discussion, but the sacred prayer of the Brahmans (*RV* 3.62.10) is ancient and important enough to warrant quotation, as is the survival of a Scots Gaelic chant of like character found in Carmichael's collection.[51] It was recorded in the Western Isles from a ninety-nine-year-old man. In it the sun is invoked as the 'eye of the king of the living' *sùil Rìgh nam beò* in which West ingeniously recognises the title *víśvasya bhúvanasya rā́jā* used of Indra and Varuṇa in the Rigveda.[52] The poetry of dawn next receives extended treatment,[53] but most of this is drawn from the copious and beautiful descriptions in Greek and Indian verse, with rare excursions outside; most interesting here is bovine imagery which has the marks of great antiquity. Bulls and cows named Day and Night draw the chariot of the Hittite storm-god. 'New dawns' is the traditional understanding of the Gathic Avestan 'bulls of days' *uxšānō asnąm*.[54] Reference in Vedic hymns to dawn as a cow being milked may well shed light on the mysterious Homeric phrase describing some time of night when stars are shining, possible just before daybreak. The received literal translation of νυκτὸς ἀμολγῷ has been 'the milking time of night' or

[44]The journey of the sun-god through the underworld in the *Amduat*, a New Kingdom funerary text, is cited by West (348) in a comparison he makes with an illustration on a razor found near Roskilde in Denmark and dated about 900 BCE. See Erik Hornung, *Aegyptische Unterweltsbücher* (2nd edn., Zurich-Munich 1984) pp. 185–188.

[45]Notably Stesichorus *Geryoneis*. See D. L. Page, *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford, 1962) p. 185.

[46]Mimnermus fr. 12. 5–11.

[47]West 2007, p. 209.

[48]West 1997, p. 507.

[49]See E. G. Pulleyblank *JRAS* 1966, pp. 31–36.

[50]See Peter Wilson, *The Athenian Institution of the Khoregia* (Cambridge, 2000) 17, p. 314- n.22 and Peter Wilson (ed.) *The Greek Theatre and Festivals. Documentary Studies. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents* (Oxford, 2007) pp. 167–169. Incidentally, if the κύκλιοι χοροί are an inheritance this is important in discussions about the dithyramb and weighs against d'Angour's ingenious theory about its original shape. See Armand d'Angour, 'How the Dithyramb got its Shape', *Classical Quarterly* 57 2 1997, pp. 331–351 and J. S. Sheldon, 'Iranian Evidence for Pindar's "Spurious San"?' *Antichthon* 37 2003, pp. 54–61.

[51]Alexander Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica*, vol iii (Edinburgh 1928–1959) p. 274.

[52]*RV* 3.46.2 etc.

[53]West 2007, p. 84 in dealing with the Vedic adjective *bhadrā́* in descriptions of Dawn p. 84 connects it to the root *bhā –. This is not the normally accepted etymology. See Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960) 981 and Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* i (Bern, 1959) p. 10.

[54]There is some doubt about the meaning of this. It is more likely that is *uxšan-* is not the word for 'bull' here, but is connected to the verbal root *vaxš-* 'increase, grow'. It should also be noted that on page 221West cites the Avestan mythical mountain Ušidam (Yt.1.28, 31; 19,2,66) as 'Dawn's House'. This meaning is not accepted in the recent editions of the *Zamyād Yasht*. See H. Humbach and P. R. Ichaporia, *Zamyād Yasht* (Wiesbaden, 1998) and Almut Hintze, *Der Zamyād-Yašt* (Wiesbaden, 1994) and should not used as evidence here.

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something similar and has often been judged to be meaningless or corrupt.[55] West is the first scholar, as far as I am aware, to suggest that the phrase might be an archaic survival of the idea of Night and Day as cows and further investigation of the phrase on these lines is now required. A separate though closely related deity is the Daughter of the Sun. Although an important figure in the Rigveda and prominent in Baltic and Slavonic lore,[56] her appearance in Greek in the guise of Helen, if West's attribution is correct, takes centre stage. The problem is that she is the daughter of Zeus, not the sun. West, who is now on home ground, summons all his expertise to make out a convincing case for the identification, starting from the fact that she is sister of the Dioskouroi, just as the Daughter of the Sun in Vedic is closely associated with a divine pair, the Aśvins, and in Baltic and Slavonic with the *Dieva dēli*. The link between the three sets of brothers has already been confirmed and this is most suggestive. Helen's association with St Elmo's fire, her birth from a goose egg, even her seduction by Paris find their counterparts in the Daughter of the Sun elsewhere. As the Dioskouroi are her brothers she cannot, like her Vedic, Baltic and Slavonic counterparts, have them as her suitors; these are replaced by another pair of brothers Agamamnon and Menelaus. The abduction of the Sun-maiden is a topos[57] and Helen was twice abducted; the second occasion caused the Trojan War. West will not, however, convince all readers that her name was originally *Swelénā to be derived from the word for 'sun' discussed above, but the etymological reconstruction is impeccable, based as it is on the initial digamma in the name as it appears on two Laconian inscriptions and various grammarians;[58] it connects her etymologically with Vedic Sūryā́. The whole argument is highly ingenious and may well be right. It is supported by rites associated with the Daughter of the Sun in the relevant cultures.

All chapters in the book have doublets in their title and the next one is 'Storm and Stream'. Here we find the god of thunder and his weapon, the water dragon, the gods of wind and fire, as well as fire in the water and the waters themselves. It is almost automatic for the classicist to associate storm and thunder with the chief sky god, Zeus or Jupiter, but in other traditions the god of thunder and storm is a separate being and this almost certainly represents the Indo-European situation. His functions have been assumed later by the Greek and Roman deities, but not without leaving some trace – or so it would seem from the link which West makes between the Baltic thunder god Perkūnas and Greek κεραυνός[59] and much more speculatively with a conjectural Latin *Quercūnus, an exact etymological equivalent.[60] Perkūnas has counterparts in the Norse god Fiorgynn and the Slavonic Perún.[61] He is especially associated with the oak tree which he splits and inseminates with his fire.

[55]See H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum* (Leipzig, 1885) p. 97 for early attempts at elucidation which often involve unconvincing emendation and etymologising and for more recent suggestions Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960) p. 94. For survival of ἀμολγός in Modern Greek see G. P. Shipp, *Modern Greek Evidence for the Ancient Greek Vocabulary* (Sydney, 1979) p. 65.

[56]West 2007, p. 233 refers to the Nartä tale of Soslan pursuing the golden hart which turns out to be Aziruxs, the daughter of the sun. West translates the name as 'this light'. It should be 'strong light' according to the explanation given by H. W. Bailey, 'Ossetic' in A. H. Hatto (ed.) *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* (London 1980–89), i.1980–98 242: Digoron *Ŭaciroxs*, Iron *Acyruxs* from *ŭac/ac* 'strong'.

[57]West 2007, p. 437 is not quite correct. "An abducted wife is a major theme in each of the two Indian epics". This is true of the *Rāmāyaṇa* where Sita is abducted by Rāvaṇa, but the abduction of Draupadī mentioned here is is a minor episode in the *vanaparvan*; earlier Draupadī is wagered and lost in the dice game by Yudhisthira, then shamed by the Kauravs who attempt to disrobe her.

[58]In Homer neglect of the digamma in the name in most of its occurrences is typical and cannot be used as an argument either way.

[59]This is the word for the thunderbolt of Zeus in historical times, but is quite possibly the obsolete name of a thunder god.

[60]Latin *quercus* 'oak' from **perkwos* shows the same retrograde assimilation as *quinque* 'five' from **penkwe*. West is cautious about these attributions but he describes the link between *Keraunos* and **Per(k)aunos* as "too great to be coincidental". (West 2007, p. 244). For the connection between Jupiter and oak trees West quotes Servius on Virgil Eclogue I.17 '*Quercus in tutela Iovis est*'. (West 2007, p. 248).

[61]The etymological connection between Perkūnas and Perún is not clear.

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**perkwu -s* is well established as an Indo-European word for 'oak'.[62] The word is seen in Celtic guise in the 'Hercanian' mountains.[63] In any case, Perkūnas, to give him his Lithuanian name, may well be the survival of the original Indo-European god of thunder and storm.[64]

Attention turns to the Vedic situation where, although Indra is preeminently the god of thunder and storm, Parjanya is also closely associated with such natural phenomena; tempting as it seems, West finally rejects proposed hypotheses to connect his name etymologically with Perkunas and focuses on the principal god of the Rigveda. Indra has all the hallmarks of antiquity: he is named in the Hittite treaty recorded between Suppiluliuma and Mitanni and is mentioned as a Daeva in the Avestan *Vīdēvdāt*. He shares many of the activities and attributes of the other storm gods which, as West speculates, he may have taken over from Parjanya. Like Perkunas he is compared to a bellowing bull, but his activities on the battle field show developments within the Indo-Iranian tradition itself. One of his chief epithets is vṛtrahán-, 'smiter of Vṛtra'. With this must be compared Vərəθraγna, the name of an important divinity in the Avesta. Much learned ink has been spilt over the relationship between the two since Louis Renou and Émile Benveniste, two of the greatest names in Indo-Iranian studies in the twentieth century, combined in 1934 to publish their findings.[65] Calvert Watkins wrote extensively on this in *How to Kill a Dragon* and the position he adopts there is basically that of Benveniste but with some important reservations.[66] West seems to accept Watkins's position and, in his usual way, reduces a complex discussion into a lucid and well-balanced summary: in brief, and at risk of over-simplification, I take his suggestion to be that in the Indo-Iranian period the prototype of vṛtrahán-Vərəθraγna, which clearly means 'victorious' in Avestan,[67] was an epithet of Indra.[68] After the two peoples divided the Indic tradition retained the epithet of Indra as vṛtrahán- but gave it the meaning 'smiter of Vṛtra' and interpreted Vṛtra as the name of a monster. In the Iranian tradition Indra was relegated to the status of a Daeva but the epithet Vərəθraγna became the name of an important Ahuric deity who was primarily a battle god. It is, however, unlikely that the later Armenian Vahagn who derived from Vərəθraγna provides useful evidence here, any more than does the Wahram of Zoroastrian Middle Persian who is rightly omitted. The monster Vṛtra is described as a snake or dragon and in one of the best known Vedic hymns to Indra (*RV* 1. 32), which West translates and sets out *in extenso*,[69] the words *áhann áhim* "he smote the serpent" are identical to Avestan *janat azim* with the same meaning in the Hymn to Haoma.[70] In the Avestan context the dragon is the three-headed Aži Dahāka and he is smitten by

[62] Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* i (Bern, 1959) p. 822.

[63] Though some doubt has been cast on it, this place name is accepted as Celtic in Patrick Sims-Williams, *Ancient Celtic Place names in Europe and Asia Minor* (Oxford and Boston, 2006) p. 170.

[64] Thor, thunder-god of Old Norse mythology shares much with Perkunas; for example both ride in cars drawn by goats. The original meaning of the Homeric epithet of Zeus αἰγιϝόχος translated as 'aegis-bearing' is likely to have been been 'goat-driven' or something similar. The formation of the adjective precludes 'aegis' which, in any case, has never been satisfactorily explained.

[65] E.Benveniste and L.Renou, *Vṛtra* Vərəθraγna. *Étude de mythologie indo-iranienne*. (Paris, 1934).

[66] Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics* (New York, Oxford, 1995) p. 298.

[67] Vərəθraγna is a neuter noun meaning 'assault, victorious attack' in Avestan. It could have independent value or be a back-formation from Vərəθraγna which appears as a neuter noun for 'victory' (lit. 'striking, repelling assault') and as a masculine proper noun for the God of Victory. See Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904, repr. Berlin, 1961) 1420 – 1423 and Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore, 1987) p. 102. See also West 2007, p. 260 n 70 where his statement that 'Dahāka is related to Vedic dāsá- 'devil' is far from secure. cf. H. W. Bailey, 'Iranian *arya-* and *daha-*' *Transactions of the Philological Society* 1959 [pub. 1960] pp. 71–115. Bailey is surely correct to see Vərəθraγna in the name of the Ossetic Nartä giant Eltagan instead of the Turkish etymologies which have been proposed. See H. W. Bailey, 'Ossetic' in A. H. Hatto (ed.) *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* (London, 1980–89), pp. i. 237.

[68] What he actually says is that Vərəθraγna "presumably began as the by-name of an Iranian Indra, though he has developed into an independent figure". West 2007, p. 246.

[69] West 2007, pp. 256–257.

[70] Yasna 9. 8, also Yt. 14. 40. Watkins 1995 gives cognates and variants of the phrase in Hittite, Indo-Iranian and Greek.

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θraētaona; West makes the link with Vedic Trita Āptya who defeated a three-headed dragon called Viśvarūpa (lit. 'of all shapes')[71], but does not mention that one of the epithets of Aži Dahāka in the Avestan hymn is *hazaŋra.yaoxštay-* 'of a thousand senses' which is very close in meaning. Viśvarūpa was a possessor of cows which were released by Trita Āptya. This leads on naturally to the cow-capturing exploits of Herakles to whose opponent Geryon, mentioned above in connection with the solar boat or cup, Greek poets assign a triple body with six arms and legs. In his role as thunder-god Zeus strikes down his chief opponent Typhoeus, a monster with a hundred heads.[72] A common theme is the use of fire in the defeat of the dragon by the storm-god. A striking example which has been adapted to a Zoroastrian setting is the contest for *xᵛarenah-* 'divine glory' between the spirits of good and evil, Spenta Mainyu and Aŋra Mainyu. It is fought out between them by their champions Ātar 'fire' and the evil Aži Dahāka and forms a highly dramatic passage in the Zamyād Yasht of the Younger Avesta.[73] In the Rigveda Agni 'fire' is often personified as a god and is of immense ritual significance; it is the subject of over two hundred hymns which are always placed first in the book collections. Avestan Ātar is of comparable scope, but in the monotheism that followed the reforms of Zoroaster, was not worshipped as a god, although treated with such reverence that outside observers such as Herodotus[74] believed this to be so. To this day the Parsees are at pains to point out that despite its supreme sanctity fire is not given divine status in their religion. The cultic significance of the domestic hearth, Hestia or Vesta, in the Graeco-Roman world is in many ways comparable to the Vedic and Avestan situation and West goes further afield to justify his claim that "the cult of the hearth goes back to Indo-European times".[75]

The ancient figure of Āpām nápāt- in Vedic and Āpąm napāt- in Avestan, 'Grandson of the Waters' can possibly be recognised in motifs in Greek literature which West assembles. It may even be that the seals of Proteus described by Homer in *Od.* 4. 404 as νέποδες καλῆς Ἁλοσύδνης have a place here, as νέποδες has long been recognised as a cognate of Latin *nepotes* and therefore of *nápāt-*.[76] Mankind's acquisition of fire is explained in various traditional myths and West is again on home ground in his treatment of the figure of Prometheus in early Greek literature. The reverence accorded to water from the earliest times is shown by the invocation of rivers and springs as witnesses to Hittite treaties, by hymns dedicated to the Waters in the Veda, by the sanctity of water as early as the Gātha of the Seven Chapters in the Avesta, by Hesiod's divine genealogies of rivers, by Herodotus's inclusion of water among the objects of Persian worship, by the cult of Father Tiber in Rome and by cogent later examples from Celtic, Germanic, Slavic and Baltic. Here West examines in detail the possible connection of Latin Neptunus with Āpām nápāt- and Irish Nechtan propounded especially by Dumézil and accepted by Puhvel and other notable authorities only to reject it on the grounds that the element of fire in the waters, so fundamental in this theory, is quite unproven for the Roman god. He does not discount the possibility that other Celtic water gods existed; in Roman Gaul there are a number of inscriptions in which the name Neptunus is used for them.[77] From the evidence which he provides

[71]See Ilya Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra* (Cambridge, 1959 repr. 1967) p. 187 and Christian Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch* (Strassburg, 1904, repr. Berlin, 1961) p. 187.

[72]Robin Lane Fox in *Travelling Heroes* (London, 2008) pp. 298–318 has many interesting observations to make about 'Typhon', in particular, comparison with the Hittite storm-god's battle against his dragon foe. He expresses his paramount indebtedness for his own volume, initially inspired by West's commentary on *Theogony*, to *The East Face of Helicon* which he describes as 'unsurpassable.' *Travelling Heroes* was published one year after *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* and neither author makes reference to the other's book.

[73]Yt. 19. pp. 45–54.

[74]Herodotus, *Histories* 1.131 ff.

[75]West 2007, p. 269.

[76]West cites B. Louden, *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 27 (1999) pp. 57–78.

[77]West notes that in these inscriptions Neptunus is associated with water of all kinds, and is not used exclusively of the sea. One cannot help but recall, although West does not quote it, the famous words in Catullus's Sirmio

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here, West is justified in saying that the prevalence of this theme "must be due at least in some degree to the power of Indo-European tradition".[78]

Lesser deities associated with water are discussed fully in Chapter 7 along with sylvan nymphs, elves, dwarves, satyrs and giants. The elusive Pan, who makes a late appearance in Greek mythology, has a possible equation with Pūṣán, a Vedic god who shares sufficient of his characteristics to warrant the close examination devoted to this at the beginning of the chapter. The linguistic analysis deriving the two names from the root * peh$_2$ 'protect' is rather sophisticated and the argument is not strengthened by the fact that Hermes, it would seem, shares even more of Pūṣán's qualities than Pan. West thinks it likely that panhellenic Hermes and the more localised Pan may have been originally the same. Hermes's name may derive[79] from ἕρμα which is early attested as 'support for a beached ship', 'stones used as ballast', 'column of stones' among other similar meanings, the last cited well-known from the herms, columns surmounted by a bust of the god, set up before houses in Athens and elsewhere in Classical times as fertility symbols. Stone cairns in the mountains were used as landmarks; if they were once thought to belong to Pan he may have been later remembered as the ἕρμα god. This is not strong evidence for the identification in my opinion. West is, however, rightly sceptical of any early connection between Pūṣán and Pan on the one hand, and the Roman Mercury on the other, the latter a god of commerce who was equated with Hermes. We are on much firmer ground with female spirits of the waters, woodlands and mountains for whom the Greek name 'Nymphs' is a convenient generic description. There is a wealth of comparative material. The Indian *Apsarás-*, while not playing the major role given to nymphs in Greek lore, share a large number of their characteristics. The Iranian tradition starting as it does from Zoroastrian scriptures has little occasion to mention such creatures and it is unlikely that the much-discussed *Ahurānīś Ahurahyā* of the Gāthā of the Seven Chapters in the Avesta are relevant here (pace West). Discussion of them belongs with the Vedic and Avestan Āpas. As noted by Mary Boyce, the great historian of Zoroastrian religion, they have a counterpart in Vedic Varuṇāni, the wives of Varuṇa and, according to her, 'the Ahura' was an Iranian cult invocation of Varuṇa's.[80] She also suggests that the Ahura of the genitive *Ahurahyā* was probably originally Āpąm Napāt-.[81] Even if Humbach has correctly conjectured that Aramaic *'hwrnyš* on the trilingual inscription at Xanthos in Lycia is an attempt to translate Greek Νυμφῶν by *Ahurānīś*,[82] this is of purely linguistic significance and cannot be used as evidence that *Ahurānīś* were water nymphs in Iranian popular mythology. The Ossetic legend of the daughters of Donbettyr has some points of similarity to nymphs elsewhere but is recorded at the end of mixed tradition where the Iranian substrate is subject to contamination from other cultures. The basic meaning of νυμφή in Ancient and Modern Greek is 'bride'[83] and this must be born in mind in discussing the noun when used of Calypso or Circe in Homer.[84] It is an easy semantic shift to the meaning of 'nymph' as commonly used of the beautiful young maidens who pervade Greek folklore. West provides a useful summary of their existence as spirits of the sea, lakes,

poem (31): '*insularum . . . quascumque in liquentibus stagnis marique vasto fert uterque Neptunus*' where the last two words are best interpreted as 'Neptune in either capacity', ie. either as god of seas or as god of inland waters; so C. J. Fordyce *Catullus* (Oxford, 1961) pp. 167–168. He does, however, quote Catullus 64 in connection with the Parcae on page 381.

[78] West 2007, p. 279.

[79] There are other possibilities. See Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg, 1960) pp. 561–564.

[80] See Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the History of Zoroastrianism* (Chicago, 1984) p. 53. For the replacement of Varuṇa by Ahura Mazdā in the Iranian tradition see West 2007, p. 172. See also Ilya Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra* (Cambridge, 1959 repr. 1967) p. 5 where it is noted that in the Rigveda the term Asura is 'predominantly applicable' to Varuṇa.

[81] Mary Boyce, 'Ābān' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* Vol I (New York, 1985) p. 58.

[82] Helmut Humbach, 'Die aramäischen Nymphen von Xanthos', *Die Sprache* 27 (1981) pp. 30–32.

[83] As in English this includes the future and newly-wed bride.

[84] This could have been made clearer in the context in West 2007, p. 286.

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rivers, forests and mountains, their cults and their unions with mortal men. They were an early import to Italy where they become part of Roman folklore, but there is little evidence for their existence in early Italic culture. Some traces of ancient Illyrian mythology may be present in the nymph-like beings in Albanian legends. In later German folklore copious examples of nymph-like creatures of both sexes have been collected by Grimm and Mannhardt[85] and West judiciously selects those most relevant for comparison in this context. Celtic, Slavonic and Baltic material is equally telling.

Nymphs have male counterparts in elves, goblins, dwarfs and satyrs, the last-named representing a class of half human, half animal beings found widely among Indo-European peoples. In Sanskrit epic[86] we meet the Kiṃpurusas who attend on Kubera, lord of northern climes. Such monsters in Greek mythology, though sometimes mischievous and destructive, can also be wise like Achilles's tutor Chiron. Other creatures of the wild not possessing animal features have similar qualities. Though scantily attested,[87] the Kerkopes would certainly seem to belong here and West is surely correct to view them as "a species of goblin rather than rascally humans". Elves are important beings in the Old Norse Edda and it is conceivable that they are etymologically connected to the Indic Ṛbhus, skilled craftsmen who later acquired divine status, or with Greek Orpheus, though West is non-committal. Dwarves seem chiefly to belong to the world of Germanic mythology with possible appearances elsewhere such as the Rūkis of Latvian folklore. It is unlikely that Greek Hephaestus can claim kinship despite the interesting observations of the author. Unlike this group who are part of our world, giants are normally remote figures living in a world of their own, the subject of stories, often an extinct race, rarely interacting with mankind and not the object of supplication or associated with cults. It is only in Greek and Germanic that giants form a separate class. As individuals they appear in Celtic, Baltic and Slavonic. The Greek Cyclopes are by no means the only one-eyed giants; they appear in Irish and Lithuanian as well in Ossetic Nartä tales among which is a striking parallel to Odysseus' meeting with Polyphemus.[88] In the latter case it is hard to see an Iranian residue as giants seem wholly absent from the Indo-Iranian tradition, which weakens their status as an Indo-European legacy. West does not make this point, but, as he modestly says, he is looking here only "for motifs that may suggest an element of shared heritage". One such motif is stone-throwing. In Greek poetry the Gigantes, the Cyclopes and the Laestrygonians[89] famously hurl boulders but so do over-sized ogres in Ossetic, Celtic, Germanic and Baltic stories. They also use stones for building. It is hardly surprising that large-scale ancient ruins were attributed to the work of a giant race. In surveying the wealth of material collected in Chapter 7 West gives a balanced assessment of its value as proof of Indo-European origin and admits that there are "more questions than answers".[90]

Chapter 8 is perhaps the least valuable part of the book, if West's sole purpose were to establish Indo-European status for its contents. On the other hand, for students of Indo-Iranian and Greek it is in some ways the most valuable because of its excellent collection of comparative material involving hymns in the two traditions. It can only convince the reader that here we have reached the Graeco-Aryan level and that any horizontal transmission would be so unlikely as to be irrelevant. Although he quotes Hittite hymns, West is cautious about them since they owe much to Mesopotamian traditions. No such reservations are necessary about what is found in early Greek literature, in the great corpus of Rigvedic

[85]Jacob Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* 4 vols (London, 1883–8) and Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte* 2nd edn. 2 vols (Berlin, 1905).

[86]*Rāmāyaṇa* 7. 79. 22 ff. The word is a coinage and literally means 'How are they men?'.

[87]West does not give references, but the earliest seem to be those in the Testimonia of the Epic Cycle found, for example, in Oxford Classical Text *Homeri Opera* vol V 59–60 and in vol 57 of the Loeb Classical Library.

[88]As West points out, this folk tale has currency outside the Indo-European world. Add to authorities cited O. Hackman, *Die Polyphemsage in der Volksüberlieferung* (Helsinki, 1904). See also H. W. Bailey, 'Ossetic' in A. H. Hatto (ed.) *Traditions of Heroic and Epic Poetry* (London, 1980–89), pp. i. 256.

[89]Homer, *Od.* 10. pp. 86, 120.

[90]West 2007, p. 302.

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hymns or in the Gāthās and Younger Avesta. Despite its name the Younger Avesta contains much that is pre-Zoroastrian. The antiquity of the Gāthās is assured by their more archaic language; West accepts the view commonly held that they were written by Zoroaster himself. What tells against this, in my opinion, is that this is nowhere stated in the tradition; the suggestion was first made by Martin Haug in the middle of the nineteenth century and he only applied it to some of the Gāthās. From that time it has been accepted as an article of faith by Zoroastrians.[91] In presenting the comparisons, West deals with them by theme and gives quite extensive quotations, most in bilingual form,[92] some only in English translation. In studying the stylistic features and structure of the hymns the author is beholden to Eduard Norden's *Agnostos Theos*[93] for detail and methodology, but goes well beyond him in subject matter. Norden compared Greek and Latin hymns and prayers with those found in Jewish and oriental traditions and did not deal with Vedic and Avestan. From West's earlier work he is also able to cite Near Eastern parallels when appropriate.[94] Appeals to gods involving narration of their past deeds does not usually occur in Near East hymnology, but is found extensively in Vedic, Avestan and Greek. Sometimes this takes the form of a long connected narrative, familiar from the Homeric Hymns[95], at other times it is more a series of allusions. Both types are amply presented here. In prayers everywhere invocation is followed by supplication; the god may be reminded of past services done by the supplicant to encourage him to show favour once more. This is frequent in Greek literary prayers. In *The East Face of Helicon*[96] West pointed out that this may well be a literary motif, not reflecting cult practice since there is no trace of it in inscriptions; at the same time he gave examples from Hittite, Akkadian and the Old Testament. In the book under review he can now add some examples which he has discovered in Sanskrit epic[97] which weigh against the theory that the motif was borrowed in Hittite and Greek.

Within the corpus of Vedic poetry it has long been noted that compared with the Rigveda the Atharvaveda contains much material of a more popular character including magic, spells and incantations. As West explains, the difference between prayers and spells is that the first involves persuasion, "man proposes, God disposes" while the second has automatic efficacy. In dealing with spells he disclaims any attempt to survey Indo-European magical arts in general but offers only "a review of some noteworthy points and comparisons concerning the verbal aspects".[98] Among these are repetition, symmetrical phrasing, assonance and refrains;[99] the examples given here from Vedic, Avestan, Latin, the Umbrian Tabulae Iguvinae and Old Norse show these in varying degrees. Nine and thrice nine as sacral numbers are widespread though not found in Indo-Iranian. Good examples of binding spells are given from the Atharvaveda, Greek and Old Norse. The use of incantations in healing is often accompanied by the application of herbs and or some other therapy. The most impressive case of the last-mentioned from a comparative point of view was a discovery made a century and a half ago

[91] More and more western scholars are beginning to challenge Zoroaster's authorship, but others were and continue to be influenced by the authoritative writings of Mary Boyce who in one place described it as 'self-evident'. See Calvert Watkins 1995 p. 57 n.11.

[92] West's second example of double negative formulation from Vedic is a little misleading as it does not contain a double negative, although such a meaning may be implied. He translates *yásmād Índrād bṛhatáḥ kíṃ canémṛté* as "great Indra without whom nothing"; there is no *na* and therefore it is literally "anything without this great Indra".

[93] Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede* (Berlin, 1913).

[94] For example Akkadian hymns with the 'not without thee' theme. West 2007, p. 301 n. 8.

[95] West reminds us that these 'hymns' are the productions of epic-style composers, were certainly recited at festivals, but were not, it would seem, part of a liturgy.

[96] West 1997, p. 273.

[97] *MBh*. 8. 67.20 and *Rm*. 5. 51.24; 6. 78. 31.

[98] West 2007, p. 326.

[99] West does not include a Greek example here, but does refer later to the refrain in the binding song of the Erinyes in Aeschylus *Eumenides* 306 ff. Although from a late literary source the magical refrains in the Second Idyll of Theocritus are so striking and well-known that they might well be recalled here.

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by Adalbert Kuhn[100]: a passage in the Atharvaveda has a spell accompanying the restoration of severed parts of the body where parallel phrases "bone to bone, sinew to sinew, skin to skin etc." are used. A similar spell is found in Old High German in the Merseburg charm of which later versions have been found in Scandinavia and Britain, Latvia and also attested in an Old Irish spell. West accepts it as a stylistic feature traditional in Indo-European healing incantations.

Many wide-ranging linguistic parallels, particularly in phraseology, are found in cosmological descriptions of heaven and earth which appear at the beginning of Chapter 9. The word for 'sky' equates with 'stone' in some traditions, with 'cloud' in others. As West pointed out in 1971[101], the obscure Akmon mentioned as the father of Ouranos in Alcman and elsewhere may be this very 'sky' word; in Avestan, Old Persian and Middle Iranian dialects *asman-* can mean 'heaven'. The later Iranian tradition associated the sky with metals.[102] The concept of a metallic sky is reflected in the Homeric epithets χάλκεος πολύχαλκος σιδήρεος 'made of bronze, iron' which may reflect modifications of the concept of a stone sky in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Imagery of the earth is shared quite widely; men travel on its back; forests are its hair and rocks its bones. Its navel (*nā́bhi-*) is localised at the place of sacrifice in the Rigveda and the cognate ὀμφαλός, 'navel' of the earth, describes Delphi.[103] A column supporting the sky adapted in the Greek figure of Atlas has counterparts in Vedic and Germanic, but in view of its occurrence in Near Eastern Mythology and elsewhere, West is no more prepared to stake a claim for Indo-European heritage here than he is in the case of the world tree which is virtually restricted to Norse mythology. The idea of a celestial river is also left open. δι(ε)ιπετής, an epithet of some rivers in Homer, remains a puzzle. Does it mean 'falling' or 'flying' in the sky? A third possibility which occurs to me is that it might mean 'stretched out in the sky'[104] which would be particularly apt in the case of the Milky Way if, as he suggests, this may have been conceived as a celestial river. Lüders'[105] collection of Vedic evidence for rivers in the sky conjoined with this supports the view that such a concept was Graeco-Aryan. It is perhaps worth adding that in Arabic astronomy the constellation Eridanus is represented as a river. West concludes that "the study of astronomy was not much developed among the Indo-Europeans, and probably only a few individual stars and star-groups had established names".[106] Ursa Major may be one such. The Sanskrit Seven Rishis may have originally been the Seven Rikshas ('Bears') according to an authoritative Vedic prose text.[107] The singular in Greek is not easily explained and its alternative Ἅμαξα 'waggon'[108] may, as West supposes,[109] be taken from Babylonian nomenclature. Ingenuity has been expended on finding an etymological link between Greek Sirius, the Vedic Tisíya and the Avestan Tištryra who is the subject of one of the best known of the Yashts. It remains only a possibility. Interesting are the examples cited of words and phrases describing the sky as 'ornamented' and connected with the Indo-European root **peik* such as Vedic *péśas-* and Greek ποικίλος. 'Star-adorned' *stəhrpaēsah-* is the beautiful description of the heaven "that Ahura Mazdā wears as a garment" in Avestan. The example from Seneca's *Medea* of stars *quibus pingitur aether* is relevant etymologically, but it comes from a source unlikely to retain

[100] Adalbert Kuhn, *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung* 13 (1864), pp. 128–135. This journal was founded by Kuhn.

[101] M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford, 1971) pp. 196, 243.

[102] See H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Ratanbai Katrak Lectures), (Oxford 1943 repr. 1971) Chapter 4 'Asmān'.

[103] The word Delphi itself contains the body imagery of the womb, but West does not comment on this.

[104] Other adjectives are so formed from πετάννυμι e.g. ἀναπετής, διαπετής.

[105] Heinrich Lüders, *Varuṇa* (Göttingen, 1951–9) pp. 138–44, 146–151.

[106] West 2007, p. 351.

[107] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 2.1.2.4.

[108] Homer says, "the Bear which men also call the Wain". (*Iliad* 18. 487) In a paper in 1962 O. Szemerényi (Scr.Min. vol i Innsbruck 1987 55 ff) suggested that Ἄρκτος might be a hellenisation of Akkadian *ereqqu* 'waggon'.

[109] West 1997, 29 ff.

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archaic usage and might well have been omitted here. In the section headed 'The Solitary Twin' West develops a complex argument to show that the cosmogonic 'twin' (Ymir in the Edda, Tuisto in Germanic, Vedic Yama and his Avestan counterpart Yima) is actually the product of the merging of two mythologies, one involving a primal hermaphrodite progenitor of the first man, the other a primal giant who is dismembered to make up the structure of the world. Given the obvious disparities in the texts quoted, the analysis is impressive and the conclusion convincing. The next section is devoted to methods of expounding cosmological and other arcane lore found among the Indo-European people; verse catalogues and catechetic verses show similar modes of expression which are demonstrated here from across a spectrum from India to Iceland. Nearly nine pages are devoted to riddles. Discussed in the first chapter in the context of poetic contests, they are shown here in much wider usage, often involving the same dire consequences for unsuccessful attempts to solve them. While some riddles are designed to test an individual's special knowledge, more typical are those which require lateral thinking, deduction and interpretation of metaphor. They can also be embedded in the language of ritual, as in the two Vedic hymns to Agni quoted here,[110] where in one 'the sisters' refers to fingers operating the fire-drill and in the other 'the mothers' are its two wooden components. Similar formats for posing riddles are demonstrated and discussed from a wide spectrum of Indo-European cultures; they are often couched in similar language, as well as having the same content. The familiar riddle of the Sphinx provides a good example. Although it can be traced well beyond the cultures under consideration ("it has reached Finno-Ugric peoples and Fiji"[111]), it is thought by West to have relevance to the traditional antithesis of two-footed and four-footed creatures which he discusses in Chapter 2 of this book. He has no hesitation, however, in assigning the 'three-footed' man with the stick to the Indo-European period on the basis of its appearance in the Rigvedic, Hesiodic and early Welsh passages cited here. Many riddles concern the year and West presents in some detail the work of Antti Aarne who distinguished four models for them.[112] Days appear as spokes of the year's wheel in the Veda and Sanskrit epic;[113] in the latter they also appear as three hundred and sixty cows. To Homer the cattle and sheep on the island of the sun-god, each numbering three hundred and fifty,[114] may not have had calendrical significance but West is surely right to see an ancient riddle embedded here. As Aristotle noted, the cattle and sheep must be the days and nights of the lunar year.

Chapter 10 is concerned with mankind's speculations about its origins, the fates that guide its destiny, about death and posthumous fame. The concept of a single progenitor of mankind is best represented in Sanskrit *manu-* which is both 'man' and personified Manu, his mystical ancestor, and Germanic Mannus used likewise as a common and proper noun. The genesis of the first man often involves birth from the earth or its trees and stones. His lifespan was one hundred years – or at least this is what we find in a Rigvedic mantra, in a hymn from eighth-century Ireland and in a christening toast from Lithuania. Personified Fates, nearly always females depicted as spinning, are represented so widely that it is surprising to find virtually no trace of them in Indo-Iranian. In fact, were it not for this lacuna, they are among the strongest pieces of evidence assembled in this book for surviving Indo-European mythology. They appear in Bronze Age Anatolia in the Hittite Gulses; referred to more vaguely in Homer, they are numbered and named in Hesiod's *Theogony*; they are the Parcae[115] of Latin literature where they may be in part a Greek importation and in part a native inheritance; the three Norns[116] of

[110] West 2007, p. 365.
[111] West 2007, p. 368.
[112] Antti Aarne, *Vergleichende Rätselforschungungen* (Helsinki-Hamina, 1918–20) pp. i. 74–178.
[113] *RV*. 1.164. 48 etc; *MBh* 1.3.64.
[114] *Od*. 12. pp. 129–131.
[115] West prefers Varro's etymology from *pario* 'give birth' to the usual one from *parco* 'spare'. Varro gives their names as Nona, Decuma and Morta which, according to West, "may seem to express the blunt doctrine that the child is born in the ninth month or the tenth, or dead"!
[116] In Homer Κῆρες are the personifications of fated death. In the pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles* they are represented as female figures dragging men to death from the battlefield and are given the names of the three

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Norse mythology sit beneath the world ash tree at the well of Urð, a word connected with weaving elsewhere in Germanic[117] which in other places provides examples of spinning goddesses; there are seven goddesses who "fashion the threads of life" in an eighth century Irish hymn; in Lithuanian and Latvian folklore they are found in varying numbers, sometimes hundreds but also seven and three; examples abound in Slavonic folklore and they are also are found in Albanian. Before moving on to discuss death, West explains the prevalence of the idea of weaving in connection with destiny and analyses aspects of this ancient craft both physically and metaphorically: at the physical level incoherent threads are converted into something definite by the action of the spinning wheel; in terms of metaphor there is "the intimate connection in Indo-European speech between turning and eventuating".[118]

In the section dealing with death we are confronted with the dichotomy of death in the course of nature and a premature cessation of life as a result of accident, violence and so on. Much of the quoted material is of a general nature – death seen as a kind of sleep, an underworld abode of the dead, the one-way journey thither[119] and the river to be crossed *en route*. Only the last two seem to have a fair claim to be considered specifically Indo-European; underworld rivers are given names such as Acheron in Greek and Vaitaranī in Indic sources; West's suggestion that Latin *tarentum* 'tomb' originally meant 'ford' or 'crossing-place' cognate with similarly used *tīrthám* in Vedic has much merit. It is not only in Aristophanes' *Frogs* that the ferryman of the dead collects coins; he is equally employed in Baltic and Slavic folklore. In the Iranian tradition attention is focussed on a bridge over the river of hell which the soul must cross. The peculiar feature of this 'Accountant's Bridge' (Avestan *činvat.pərətus*) is that for the virtuous it is a broad, easy passage, but for the sinner it is thin as a knife-edge. It is hard to see mere coincidence between this and the words in an old northern English song sung at wakes "the bridge of dread, no brader than a thread". A bridge leading to the underworld is found several times in Norse folklore.[120] We find dogs guarding the entrance to the underworld in Vedic, Avestan, Greek, Nordic and Baltic mythology. Yama's two dogs in the Rigveda are four-eyed and spotted; *śabála-* 'spotted' may well connect etymologically with Cerberus. Likewise two dogs in the Avestan *Vidēvdāt* guard the Accountant's Bridge. It is worth adding to what West says here that four-eyed dogs have an important role in the *Vidēvdāt* in connection with purificatory rites for bodies of the dead.[121] As four-eyed dogs did not exist, pious Zoroastrians interpreted this to mean dogs with two spots above the eyes which do exist (the Australian sheep-dog or kelpie is one such). Without making an etymological connection James Darmesteter wrote in his introduction to his translation of the *Vidēvdāt*, which was the first in English: "This reminds us at once of the three-headed Kerberos, watching at the doors of hell, and, still more, of the two brown, four-eyed dogs of Yama, who guard the ways to the realm of death".[122] A festival for the souls of the dead is found across the spectrum of Indo-European cultures, but the

Moirai (possibly by an interpolator). Although the task of bringing warriors from the battlefield to Valhalla is the task of the Valkyies in Norse mythology, they are sometimes depicted as weaving men's destinies like the Norns.

[117] Urð appears in the Edda as the name of one of the Norns representing the past. The word is from Indo European **vert-* 'turn, become' (Pokorny, 1156–1158) and the Sanskrit past participle *vṛttá-* can mean 'happened'. Old English Wyrd is a weaver of destinies and West compares the Weird Sisters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. He opines that the Eddic names might be due to Classical influence, since Plato and later writers give Lachesis the task of telling of the past, Klotho of the present and Atropos of the future. West 1997, pp. 33–34 discusses trees and groves as places of prophecy in Greece noting that a holy spring is often found in their vicinity; he finds Old Testament parallels in the Soothsayers' Oak at Schechem and the palm of Deborah at Bethel adding that "as in Greece, sacred trees and groves are often associated with a sacred spring". See W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 3rd ed. (London, 1927).

[118] West 2007, p. 385.

[119] West 1999, shows that this motif is well established in Sumerian and Akkadian and occurs in the Old Testament.

[120] Saxo Grammaticus 1.8. 14 p. 30 and Gylfaginning p. 49.

[121] *Vd. Fragard* VIII 3 16 *et passim*.

[122] James Darmesteter, *The Zend Avesta* Part I *The Vendidad*, Sacred Books of the East (ed. F. Max Müller) vol. 4 (Oxford, 1887) p. lxxxvii. Darmesteter's translation of *śabála-* as 'brown' is not strictly accurate. It should be 'brindled' or 'spotted' as above.

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attestations are relatively late. The *Gṛhyasūtra* provides an example for Indic, the Χύτροι on the last day of the Anthesteria in Athens for Greek, the Parentalia and Lemuria in Rome for Italic. Other practices of this sort are shown from Germanic, Baltic and Slavonic, but the Christian influence of the Feast of All Souls cannot be discounted here, in my opinion. The most developed of all such practices is found in the Iranian Feast of All Souls, Avestan *Hamaspathmaēdaya*, to which West makes a passing reference.[123] Its antiquity is assured by its detailed description in Yasht 13 of the Younger Avesta and, according to Mary Boyce, it has hardly changed down the centuries.[124] It still occurs on the last day of the Persian calendar year and the last ten days of the year are also sacred to the *fravašis* or souls of the dead.[125]

The idea that one way of obtaining immortality is from posthumous fame seems to have endured in the Indo-European culture from very early times. Poets were often seen as powerful agents in this process; the importance of fame (I.E. **kléwes-*) is shown by the number of times this word occurs in proper names of people. They abound in Sanskrit; two hundred and fifty have been collected by Solmsen for Greek;[126] if Tawagalawas in Hittite records has been correctly seen to represent Etewoklewēs, he belongs here along with his namesake on the Mycenaean Linear B tablets; Roman names such as Cluentius, Gaulish names beginning with Cluto- etc, like those in Germanic beginning in Chlodo- etc, have their place here, as do Norse names such as Hlédís and even a Welsh Clotri (**kluto-rēg-*, 'famed king'). An impressive collection indeed! Further analysis of names, typically two-part compounds, with other common and often cognate elements, makes a strong case for Indo-European origin and it is notable how often they reflect a warrior society. West has some interesting remarks about patronymics, but they are not as compelling evidence in this context as what has gone before. Specific statements in texts about life after death through fame, though West describes them as "thinly scattered", are nonetheless widely distributed and have some force; but there are parallels in the Near East, as he has shown in *The East Face of Helicon*[127] and his caution is therefore justified.

The concluding two chapters of the book contain much of interest to students of comparative literature and ethnography but they do not to any great extent advance its main argument. The topics dealt with are under the broad headings 'King and Hero' and 'Arms and the Man'. The author begins by noting that "not a single name of an Indo- European hero has come down to us". What are studied here then are characteristics of recorded heroes which might allow generalisation. We are really in the realm of anthropology when West goes on to analyse the meaning and function of 'king', examining the etymology of the word, its distribution and contexts, following in the recent footsteps of Benveniste whose study of Indo-European vocabulary and its implications for ancient society remains a classic work in its field.[128] He notes evidence for elective rather than hereditary kingship in several early

[123]West 2007, p. 394. The feast became known as *Fravardigān*. The word *fravašis* has been plausibly derived by Bailey from *fra-* and **vṛti-* 'valour' reflecting a cult of valour in which the souls of brave heroes had power to protect the living. See H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Ratanbai Katrak Lectures), (Oxford, 1943 repr. 1971) p. 109.

[124]Mary Boyce (with F. Grenet), *A History of Zoroastrianism Vol I* (Leiden, 1989) p. 123.

[125]West 2007, p. 393 discusses the idea that death is seen in a range of cultures as 'going to the fathers'. For the Indian tradition it can be added that the idea that the *preta* or departed soul is not properly reunited with the *pitaras* or departed ancestors for a year after death is found in Rigvedic Hymns. Similarly in the Iranian tradition, the soul of the departed leads a somewhat separate existence for thirty years, during which time the next of kin may perform rites on its behalf. After this time separate rites are not performed but the soul receives a share of those offered for All Souls at the time of the celebration of that feast. It is worth adding that the Christian Feast of All Souls also occurs close to the end of the liturgical year. The new liturgical year begins with the First Sunday of Advent which falls at the end of November or the beginning of December depending on the weekday of Christmas; in Catholic tradition November is the month of the Holy Souls. Although commemorations of souls of the dead are recorded quite early, the present feast is of too late a date to have influenced, or been influenced by, Iranian practice, although it is not inconceivable that it contains elements adapted at an early period of contact.

[126]Felix Solmsen, *Indogermanische Eigennamen* (Heidelberg, 1922) p. 115.

[127]West 1997, 514 f.

[128]Émile Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society* (London, 1973).

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Indo-European societies as well as cases where a man becomes king by marrying a widowed queen. He goes a little too far, I think, in claiming that "the correspondence between Vedic *rā́jñī* and Old Irish *rígain* points to the existence of an Indo-European title 'ruler-female'". The story of the personified Mead-Queen may indeed have an ancient origin in a ritual in which the king imbibed sovereignty by drinking this beverage, if Princess Mādhavī in the *Mahābhārata* has a lexical cognate in the Medb of Irish legend; the tales told about them are remarkably similar. The Aśvamedha 'horse sacrifice', whose performance is described fully in the Yajurveda and has always attracted attention because of its combination of spectacular pageantry and lurid detail, inevitably makes its appearance here. Claims for its Indo-European origin have often been made and need to be assessed. West's examination seems to me to show that while horse sacrifice was practised among Indo-European, as well as Finno-Ugric and Turkic people, the Indian royal ritual was a local development. In the same way, the particular details of the svayaṃvara, where the princess chooses her husband from eligible suitors assembled by the king, are not found before the period of the epics and the parallels involving assemblages and contests of suitors which West enumerates reflect an old story pattern of which the svayaṃvara was an indigenous poetic elaboration. The husband's return typified by Homer's *Odyssey* seems to belong to universal folklore, but the comparativist may be interested to be introduced to the tale of Alpamysh with many similar features in the Turkic epic tradition. Another widely transmitted wandering folk-tale involves the separation of father and son and their reunion, often in tragic circumstances. It seems to me that a disproportionate amount of space is accorded to this in the light of West's own "prudent diagnosis" that this "is just the kind of dramatic motif[129] that might readily be taken over from one people to another and attached to different national heroes". In other words all the examples he gives are probably horizontally transmitted. The same criticism may be applied to the last chapter in the book.

While West is the first to admit the possibility of horizontal transmission and is at pains to avoid disguising it, we find too many examples in Chapter 12 of what can only be reasonably attributed to this or other means of transmission which do not require descent from Indo-European for their explanation. In this category I would place the discussions headed 'Alarming symptoms' showing a hero as an object of fear, 'Eagerness to fight', 'Altercations', 'Exhortations', 'Events of the Field' which are typical battle scenes, 'Divine participation', 'Archers', 'Chariots' and 'Single Combat'. Other readers might add to this list; after all West did stress at the outset that judgements will be subjective. Hallmarks of high antiquity are certainly found in the section on weapons with a remarkable number of heroes from different traditions within the Indo-European family possessing unique or non-standard accoutrements often with a special pedigree. Horses belong to the earliest Indo-European culture and therefore the poetic vocabulary which describes them and the roles which they play, including the special relationship they often have with their heroic riders, is important. The chariots they draw, which might, from the surviving literature, be thought to be of equal antiquity, are more problematic since they do not appear in the Indo-European domain until the beginning of the second millennium BCE and must certainly be excluded from the earliest stratum. In battle scenes in Vedic and Sanskrit epic they are used as mobile platforms for archers, but in Homeric, as in later Gaulish, Irish and Germanic warfare, they are employed more as a means of transport. The charioteer in Indian, Greek and, it seems, Irish tradition often acts as confidential adviser to his master. The most striking example, not mentioned here by West, is in the *Mahābhārata* when Arjuna's charioteer is revealed as the god Krishna whose advice to him comprises the *Bhagavadgītā*, the most sacred of Hindu texts. Catalogues of fighting troops, enumeration of the forces and identification of warriors are widespread and parallels abound in the surviving literature, but none of this can have secure claim to remote antiquity. Horizontal transmission cannot be ruled out in the closeness of detail found the night raids described in the Tenth Books of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Iliad*.[130] Most of the material surveyed in the sections that follow is

[129]He calls it "the Sohrab and Rustam motif" taking the famous story in the *Shāh-nāma* as typical.
[130]Homeric resonances in Sanskrit epic or the reverse remain an area of uncertainty.

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drawn from Indian and Greek sources and may bring us back to the Graeco-Aryan stratum but hardly beyond that. West's disclaimer in dealing with skulls of enemies used as drinking cups in the section on 'Vindictive victory' is applicable to a number of other examples in this chapter: "The evidence does not allow us to treat this as a distinctive or originally Indo-European practice".[131] There is a brief return to the subject of similes which was dealt with extensively in Chapter 2 in order to add some examples in warfare from Sanskrit and Greek epic in the battle context before an interesting survey of hero's funerals from a wide range of sources. Nothing here, as West admits, "takes us back before the Late Bronze Age, and we simply cannot project it back to the proto-Indo-European era". He thinks it unlikely that the Indo-Europeans practised cremation, whereas archaeological discoveries trace burial back to the fourth millennium BCE. The last word goes appropriately enough to funeral rites and dirges. There is plenty of evidence, possible though not conclusive for Indo-European, of the suicide of a wife concomitant with that of her husband. Perhaps the best known case of this is the Indian suttee (from Sanskrit *satī* 'good woman'), although this is not strictly speaking an example of suicide since the Vedic evidence seems to show that the wife, having lain down with her husband on the pyre, descended before it was ignited.[132] As a parting *jeu d'esprit* West gives us his own 'Elegy on an Indo-European Hero' cleverly incorporating only names and motifs which have credibility for the earliest period.

So why call this book *Indo-European Poetry and Myth* rather than *Elements in the Poetry and Myth of Indo-European Peoples which may be attributed to a Common Origin?* The latter title, though unwieldy, is without question an accurate description of its contents. The former implies that solutions have been found to the problem of recognising incontrovertible examples of Indo-European poetry and mythology. The answer perhaps is that we should not judge a book by its cover or, in this case, by its title. There are no extravagant claims for solutions here and, although he has not given us the last word on the subject, West has provided us with more than the 'vista' he promised at the outset. It is, in fact, a virtual compendium of the most relevant material distilled by one of the finest minds to venture into this field.[133] This book will remain a tool of immense value to scholars.

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Castles of God: Fortified Religious Buildings of the World. By Peter Harrison. pp. iv, 304. Woodbridge, Boydell, 2004 (reprinted in paperback, 2007).
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At different times, and in many regions of the world, religious communities have felt the need to fortify their places of worship. The results are, as might be expected, conditioned by such factors as: the local construction materials and indigenous building traditions; the monetary resources available to the patrons; and the nature of the (real or imagined) external threat. Some monuments were built with

[131] West 2007, p. 493.
[132] Atharvaveda 18.3.1.
[133] Writing about handling the complexity of Greek mythology in its relation to the over-all Indo-European picture, Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore, 1987) p. 143 says, "This is a task requiring thorough familiarity with both the immense store of Greek myth and the vast secondary literature as well as the external comparands, a combination rarely possible by either specialists in classical studies or generalists in mythology". To judge by this book West is a *rara avis* possessing these qualifications in ample measure.

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