MYTH AND THE TREATMENT OF NON-HUMAN ANIMALS IN CLASSICAL AND AFRICAN CULTURES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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by

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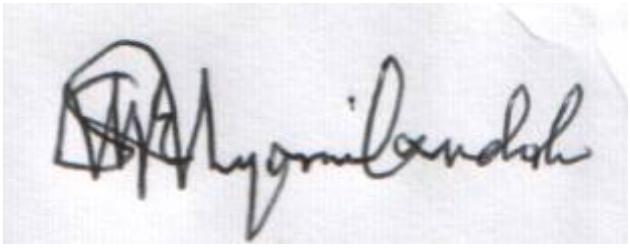
I wish to dedicate this work also to all classicists teaching Classical Studies in Africa. To them I say: 'They *can*, because they feel they can' (*possunt quia posse videntur*).

DECLARATION

I declare that “Myth and the Treatment of Non-human Animals in Classical and African Cultures: a Comparative Study” is my own work and that all the sources which I have used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

S.E.M.T. Nyamilandu



ABSTRACT

This dissertation of limited scope, part of a Course-work Master's in Ancient Languages and Cultures, consists of five chapters which deal with issues relating to the perception and literary treatment of non-human animals in African and Classical traditional stories involving animal characters. The focus of the research was placed upon arguing that: human characteristics were attributed to animal creatures in the myths/traditional stories from both cultures; both cultures made attempts to explain how certain animals became domesticated and how others remained wild; mythical thinking is not a preserve of one culture, it is rather part of human nature; mythical monsters are present in both cultures and that they have always to be destroyed by man, though not easily; myths served several functions for both cultures, ranging from educational entertainment to socializing purposes, to making attempts to explain ancient man's environment and its happenings. The study was undertaken in the hope of enabling certain recommendations to be formulated, on the basis of the findings, to effect a better and more informed strategy for teaching Classical Mythology and Classics, in general, in the Mawian/African context.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introductory comments

This chapter includes a concise discussion of the background to Classical studies in Malawi; an elucidation of the purpose of this study and of the research questions to be addressed; an outline of the investigation and a brief glossary of terms used throughout.

1.2 Background to Classical Studies in Malawi

The teaching of Latin as a Classical language was introduced in Malawi in the 1940s by the early Scottish missionaries. Latin began to be taught at a few national secondary schools, but mostly at the Seminaries; it is at the latter institutions that Latin is currently offered, up to Junior Certificate level. The only élite secondary school offering Classical languages (both Greek and Latin) is the renowned Kamuzu Academy, nicknamed 'Eton of the Bush', founded by the first president of the Republic of Malawi, the late Dr. Hastings Banda. This institution opened its doors to the first student intake in November 1981.

At tertiary level, it is only Chancellor College, a constituent College of the University of Malawi, that offers Classical studies in two branches: the Classical language-based courses and the Classical civilization courses; the Classical Mythology course is one of

the offerings at second year level. At Chancellor College, Classics was instituted in 1983 as a 'Department of Classics and Philosophy', and became a separate department in 1985. The pioneer Classics lecturer at Chancellor College was Caroline Alexander, a USA scholar.

During the initial stages of post-colonial democracy in a multiparty era (after independence in 1964), it was strongly felt that whatever Dr. Hastings Banda, who had been a dictator, had initiated should follow him into oblivion. Even though the study of Classics in Malawi, and at Chancellor College in particular, was established through a formal process, following recommendations emerging from a feasibility study conducted in 1989 by the late Professor Robert Ogilvie (School of Humanities at St Andrew's, UK), it is still felt, in some quarters, that the introduction of this discipline into the educational curriculum of an African nation was an arbitrary imposition by Dr Banda, and that, in consequence, the teaching and learning of Classics should be discontinued at both secondary and tertiary levels.

Commenting on the position of Classical Studies in Malawi, Dr. Thomas Knight, a USA scholar, who once lectured in the Department of Classics at Chancellor College, made the following observations (1996:14):

> On independence in 1964, the State President and eventual dictator, Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, promoted Classics with an almost evangelical fervor. In his sponsorship of Classics Banda was exploiting a widespread feeling of inferiority about African traditions among the past colonial ruling classes in Malawi. He maintained, as a matter of pedagogical principle, that only Europeans were qualified to teach the future leaders of Malawi, and he held that a man who did not know both Latin and Greek was not properly educated [….]

> Hence in Malawi, a classical education was the privilege of a few destined to rule a closed society in which thought and culture were tightly regulated. So oriented, Banda founded an élite college preparatory school, called Kamuzu Academy, styling it as a sort of Eton of the Bush, as much a personal monument as a political instrument of perpetuating Banda's personal values and influence. The Department [of Classics at Chancellor College] began as an offshoot of the Philosophy department, though it was not necessarily a natural outgrowth of student interest. Indeed, it is still widely believed that this department would not now exist had it not then enjoyed the favour of Dr. Banda. Even now the popular perception is that Classical studies in Malawi are tainted by having been so warmly embraced by the self-styled *pater patriae* of Malawi.

1.3 Statement of the problem

I argue that the study of Classics is not clearly understood and, therefore, not duly appreciated in the African context, Malawi in particular. The discipline of Classics is viewed in Malawi as not being very relevant (if not completely irrelevant), to the extent that some educationalists, who do not know Classics since they have never studied the discipline, have called for its abolishment, basing their arguments on its purported lack of relevance and applicability. It appears that Classics teachers have not succeeded to teach Classics courses to their African students in sufficiently meaningful ways to justify the retention of the discipline at tertiary level.

My particular concern, here, is to consider the possibility of teaching Classical Mythology in an African context by comparing Classical myths to African folklore tales, which might render the study of Classics more palatable, relevant and beneficial to African students.

1.4 Purpose of this study

Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to offer some elements to strengthen the basis for the teaching of Classical Mythology in an African context, in order to render the learning of Classical Mythology enjoyable and relevant by applying a comparative approach to classical myths and African folklore stories, and thus investigating what traditional mythical narratives from the two cultures may suggest about human-animal relationships.

Although the literature on world mythologies is vast, I have not been able to trace significant comparative studies on the specific theme of human-animal relationships based on correlations between Classical and African myths. My study, therefore, proposes to go some way towards addressing this gap, by seeking to establish what certain Classical and African traditional stories may reveal about humans' approach to, or interaction with, their non-human counterparts in their respective cultural environments. Included in this broad discussion is an examination of differences and correlations between selected myths and folklore tales depicting animal themes in Classical antiquity and African cultures.

It is envisaged that my proposed approach may foster richer opportunities for African learners to appreciate Classics and Classical Mythology and that, in turn, African (particularly Malawian) students may develop a greater interest in, and appreciation of, also their own African myths. In addition, it is hoped that this study, even within its limited scope, may encourage African students to appreciate and interrogate aspects of

another culture, by exploring its myth constructs and patterns in relation to those of their own.

Specifically, the purpose of my study is to

1. provide Classics teachers, especially those teaching mythology, with an accessible model of comparative approach, which they can easily apply in their teaching of myths;
2. motivate both teachers and students to develop an interest in a comparative approach in teaching and learning classical myths in an African context;
3. encourage classicists and education planners to formulate appropriate policies regarding the teaching of Classics in the African context, by considering the adoption of a comparative approach applied across all aspects of tuition in Classics.

1.5 Research questions

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of this study, I formulated specific research questions, focusing on human-animal treatment or interaction in classical myths and African myths, as follows:

1) What do the stories reveal about the initial type of relationship between human beings and animals?

2) Were human characteristics attributed to animals in the myths?

3) How did certain creatures become domesticated or sacred (etiological stories)?

4) How did man treat domesticated and wild animals, respectively?

5) What correlation may be detected between the mythical thinking of Africans (Malawians, in particular) and that of classical antiquity?

6) What was the purpose of inserting monstrous animal beings in the stories?

7) Of what moral importance were animal stories to African and classical antiquity?

1.6 Limitations of the study

This study limits itself to traditional stories or myths that show human involvement with animals to a significant degree; traditional stories that involve human and non-human animals to a lesser degree, were not taken into account. Although the primary purpose of my study is to pinpoint differences and correlations in human-animal interaction in African and classical tales, I was mindful of the fact that it would not be possible to find a myth or traditional story dealing completely with animals for the Classical stories (except in the case of Aesopian fables) that would allow for comparison with African traditional stories. Therefore, I have dealt only with stories, or excerpts from stories, which display human and animal interaction in a significant way. It has required much reading to identify Classical stories involving animal creatures that could be compared *meaningfully* with traditional African stories.

Also, it is important to mention that the nature of this study, at the present stage, is *exploratory*, as it treats myths only from classical antiquity and from the Sub-Saharan region, of which Malawi is part.

1.7 Glossary of proper names, terms and concepts

I provide below a concise explanation of proper names, terms and concepts which I frequently employed:

Aesop: Aesop was a teller of fables who lived in the early Classical Greek period, the sixth century B.C. His fables were turned into Latin verse by another Greek slave, Phaedrus, who eventually received his freedom from the first Emperor of Rome, Augustus.

African myths: in this study the term has been used to cover an eclectic body of folklore tales from the African continent. The bulk of the stories surveyed emanate from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Animal: in this study, an 'umbrella' term covering non-human creatures: terrestrial, celestial or aquatic creatures, including insects and even monsters.

Classical myths: in this study, **'**classical myths' designate a group of traditional stories from Greco-Roman antiquity.

Culture: the term is interpreted, following Mbiti (1975:7), as explained below:

> The word culture covers many things such as the way people live, behave and act, and their physical as well as their intellectual achievements. Culture shows itself in art and literature, dance, music and drama [….], in religion, ethics, morals and philosophy, in customs and institutions of the people, in their values and laws, and in their economic life.

Hercules: Son of Zeus, the father of the gods, and of Alcmena, a mortal. He was renowned for his extraordinary feats of strength, particularly the 'Twelve Labours'. Hercules was one of the seven great destroyers of monsters and the mightiest of all the Greek heroes.

Myth: The term myth has been interpreted in this work according to Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* (quoted in Morford and Lenardon 1991:1), as follows:

> a story that is usually of unknown origin and at least partially traditional, that ostensibly relates historical events usually of such character as to serve to explain some practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon, and that is especially associated with religious rites and beliefs.

Treatment: here, it designates the way human beings regard, react to, and relate with non-human animals in the traditional stories.

Tribe: the tribes with which certain traditional tales are associated are the following:

Chewa: a Bantu tribe speaking chiChewa, a language found in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique;

Sena: a Bantu tribe speaking Sena, a language found predominantly in the Lower Shire Valley (Southern Region of Malawi) and also in parts of Mozambique;

Tumbuka: a Bantu tribe found in the Northern Region of Malawi and also in parts of Tanzania.

1.8 Concluding remarks

In this introductory chapter I have sketched, in brief, the historical background of the study of Classics in Malawi. Furthermore, I have attempted to justify the need for carrying out this study, clarify the envisaged research questions, and outline the limitations of the research scope. A Glossary of names, terms and concepts, as used in this study, has been appended. The next chapter will be devoted to a review of the relevant scholarly literature, with the purpose of clarifying the research gap this study aims to begin to address.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introductory comments

This chapter offers a brief review of secondary literature on mythical thinking about non-human creatures, as expressed in traditional stories from Classical and African lore. In order to facilitate an understanding of my investigation, the chapter explores relevant scholarship along the following lines: i) background to mythical thinking; ii) definitions of myth; iii) myth theories (specifically, aetiological theory, Max Müller's 'Allegorical Nature' myth theory, and psychological myth theories (Freudian and Jungian), which are briefly reviewed and whose applicability is discussed. In conclusion, iv) a brief note on animal stories in general is appended and, finally, v) the functions of myths in general are outlined.

2.2 Background to mythical thinking

Before the advent of *lógos* - scientific reasoning and deductive interpretation - , mankind attempted to explain in a variety of ways both natural phenomena and the characteristics of its own immediate and broader environments, which included its relationship with animal beings. Hamilton's observation is relevant here (1942:13):

> When the stories were being shaped, we are given to understand, little distinction had as yet been made between the real and the unreal. The imagination was vividly alive and not

> checked by reason. [M]yths are early science, the result of men's first trying to explain what they saw around them.

And maintaining a similar line of thought, Earl Toppings in Bulfinch (1965: 6) asserts that

> In a mysterious universe, says Arnold Toynbee, a man tries to express what he can of the ineffable… Myths helped explain the natural world, the weather, the heavens. They were grounded in physical reality, though their imagination reached far beyond the boundaries of empirical experience.

In connection with this observation, Harris & Platzner (1998:6-7) clearly explain as follows:

> As universal as dreaming, myth-making characterizes every known people and culture throughout the world. From prehistoric India and aboriginal Australia to Africa and Polynesia, myths express the common experience of all humanity. Like the most vivid dreams, myths also have an intriguing connection with external reality.

From these observations, one may safely conclude that mythical thinking is not the preserve of only one culture and that, regardless of his geographical location on earth, early man sought to explain the environment around him through mythical representations. What constitutes a myth is the subject of the next stage of review, but, before proceeding further, it may be useful to remind ourselves of the gradual process which led to the separation of *mythos* and *logos*, in ancient Greece, a process which has proved deeply influential for later elaborations of the idea of myth. Jean-Pierre Vernant provides a clear summary (1982:186-187):

> The concept of myth that we have inherited from the Greeks belongs, by reason of its origins and history, to a tradition of thought peculiar to Western civilization in which myth is defined in terms of what is not myth, being opposed to reality (myth is fiction) and, secondly, to what is rational (myth is absurd). If the development of the study of myth in modern times is to e understood it must be considered in the context of this line of thought and tradition. […] Between the eighth and fourth centuries B.C. a whole series of interrelated conditions caused a multiplicity of differentiations, breaks and internal tensions within the mental universe of the Greeks which were responsible for distinguishing the domain of myth from other domains: the concept of myth peculiar to classical antiquity thus became clearly defined through the setting up of an opposition between *muthos* [sic] and *logos*. Henceforth seen as separate and contrasting terms.

2.3 Towards a definition of 'myth'

Harris & Platzner (1998:8) note that the word 'myth' comes from Greek *mythos*, an 'utterance'. Therefore, a myth connoted something which had been spoken and the term eventually came to mean a 'tale' or a 'story'. Werner (1968:117) cites a definition of myth as: 'A story told to account for ['to explain'] something'. Morford and Lenardon (1991:3) quote H.J. Rose, who defines myth as 'the result of the working of naïve imagination upon the facts of experience'.

Clearly the first two definitions above confirm that myths are stories, to begin with. As for the third definition, it implies an aetiological impulse, in that myths are viewed as stories that came about when early man tried to explain the otherwise incomprehensible events and encounters which characterized his environment.

The dictionary definition offered by *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, which Morford and Lenardon (1991:1) cite, defines myth as

> a story that is usually of unknown origin and at least partially traditional, that ostensibly relates historical events usually of such character as to serve to explain some practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon, and that is especially associated with religious rites and beliefs.

This definition underlines the main components of a myth, the key words being 'a traditional story' of 'unknown origin', which serves the function of throwing light upon the complexities - environmental, religious, political - of human contexts.

Discussing the intricate nature of myth, H. Frankfort *et al*. (1964:16) argue that

> myth is a form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth; a form of reasoning which transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims; a form of action, of ritual behaviour, which does not find its fulfilment in the act but must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth.

This definition of myth is strongly based upon the connection of myth to rituals, in that it argues that myths are narrated with the specific purpose of explaining certain rituals or certain aspects of rituals. Summers (2008:27) sees myth as 'a story, a narrative with a dramatic structure and a climax', and notes that myths 'have succeeded in becoming traditional […] important enough to be passed from generation to generation'.

In other words, myths are stories which, owing to a particularly significant kernel, relevant to *societal* or *religious* concerns, have become deeply embedded in tradition.

From the definitions cited above, one cannot but observe that the nature of myth is a complex topic, which has given rise to multiple definitions.

At this point, it is worth reminding ourselves that myths are of different types and that they may relate to many subjects or areas. In this connection, Morford and Lenardon (1991:2) caution that, much as we may wish to draw a clear demarcation line between myth and folktale, 'whose function is to present a story primarily for the sake of entertainment', we should, however, 'be aware that folktales with their thematic motifs may be intended to do more than merely entertain'. Morford and Lenardon go on to distinguish myth and folktale from saga or legend, by stating that the latter pair are used interchangeably to refer to stories which 'however fanciful and imaginative, [are] rooted in *historical fact*' (1991:3; my emphasis).

Inasmuch as there are attempts to distinguish between types of traditional stories, the most important factor common to myths, folktales, legends or sagas remains that they are all 'traditional tales' which have been 'passed from generation to generation'. Thus, folktale elements may be found in some myths and mythical elements in some folktales. In this connection, Harris & Platzner (1998:10) observe that attempts made by some scholars to

> differentiate between myth and categories of traditional tales are misleading and that all non-historical Greek narratives should be classed as myths.

From the scholarly comments reviewed so far, I would conclude that every society has accumulated, over centuries, a wealth of folktales, which were usually passed on orally from generation to generation, and that no *rigid* distinction needs to be made between

myths and folktales, apart from observing that, generally, folktales are told *to a large extent* for mere entertainment, whereas myths often seek to explain some belief or practice, or to speculate about challenging existential issues, such as human suffering and death. In addition, myths may present a strong connection to religion or ritual.

Consequently, the working definition of myth I have chosen to adopt for this study is the dictionary definition in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, quoted in Morford and Lenardon (1991:1, cited above). The greatest merit of this definition is that it is comprehensive and all-encompassing, embracing elements of myth, folktale, fable, saga or legend.

2.4 Theories of Myth

The nature of myth being such a complex issue, it has elicited diverse theoretical approaches, although no single universal theory has been elaborated which may be applicable to all myths:

> Although no one theory or definition of myth has yet won universal acceptance, scholarly attempts to break myths down into their component parts and discover some unifying element behind almost infinite variety have greatly increased our knowledge of what myths are and what they are not.
>
> (Harris & Platzner 1998: 34-35)

For the purposes of my discussion, I thought it fruitful to briefly review the three main theories that have guided my study. The theories in question fall under two major headings, and these are the 'Externalist' (aetiological myth theory; Max Müller's

'Allegorical Nature' myth theory) and the 'Internalist' (psychological myth theories – Freudian and Jungian), respectively.

Externalist theories regard myth as being a product of the *environment*. Such theories 'view myth as a pre-scientific attempt to explain natural phenomena or to provide justification for social, religious, or political customs or institutions' (Harris & Platzner, 1998: 35), whereas Internalist theories explore myth as a product of the *mind*. Here myth-making is seen 'as spontaneous and internal, an instinctive expression of the human mind' (Harris & Platzner, 1998:10). Let us first review selected Externalist myth theories and, thereafter, the Internalist ones.

Externalist Theories

2.4.1 Aetiological myth theory

This is an Externalist theory, which states that traditional tales or myths should be interpreted as aetiological explanations of the *origin* of some fact or custom. In other words, this theory regards myths 'as attempts to explain the cause or origin of things' (Harris & Platzner 1998:35). In addition, Harris & Platzner (1994:37) further on point out that the aetiological method operates at two levels: at the first level, myth is regarded as a tool of 'primitive science', intended to explain the causes of the phenomena 'of the natural world'. At the second level, the generic etymological meaning of the word 'aetiology' is activated, putting emphasis on the 'broadly explanatory purposes of myth', whereby a 'myth can also give theological and metaphysical' interpretations of the human condition.

2.4.2 Max Müller's 'Allegorical Nature' myth theory

This theory contends that myths arose out of man's attempts to find an explanation for natural phenomena. According to its proponent, Max Müller, 'all myths are [regarded as] nature myths' (Morford and Lenardon 1991:6). Concurring with this view, to a certain degree, Harris & Platzner (1998: 35) approvingly state that

> nature myth theory is […] essentially a reaction to the awe-inspiring power of physical nature, particularly those phenomena that directly affect human life: the continuing cycles of day and night, sunshine and darkness, summer and winter, heat and cold, fair weather and storm, rainfall and drought, plant life and death.

Just as the aetiological theory cannot account for all myths, similarly the 'Allegorical Nature' myth theory, as Harris & Platzner (1998: 36) correctly observe 'fails to account for the full content of most myths […]'.

Internalist Theories

2.4.3 Psychological myth theory

i) Sigmund Freud

Psychological myth theory contends that myths arise out of dreams. The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) argues that myths 'reflect waking man's effort to systematize the incoherent visions and impulses of his sleep world' (Morford and Lenardon 1991:10) and asserts that myths and dreams work according to similar mechanisms. To that end, he emphasizes the role of the unconscious mind in both myths and dreams, for he believes that dreams serve a psychological function during

sleep, namely to express repressed desires and fears. Morford and Lenardon (1991: 9-10) outline Freud's argument as follows:

> Dreams for Freud are the fulfillments of wishes that have been suppressed or repressed and disguised. In order to protect sleep and relieve potential anxiety, the mind goes through a process of what is termed 'dream-work', which consists of three primary mental activities: 'condensation' of elements; 'displacement' of elements in terms of allusion and a difference of emphasis; and 'representation', the transmission of elements into imagery or symbols, which are many, varied, and often sexual.

ii) Carl Jung

The other scholar who contributed substantially to psychological myth theory is Carl Jung (1875-1961). Jung also believes that myths and dreams reveal aspects of the *unconscious* mind, but he regards these as the result of the 'collective consciousness', arguing that there are certain universal symbols, which hold the same meaning in every culture. He calls these symbols 'archetypes'. According to Harris & Platzner (1998:40), an archetype is 'the primal form or original pattern of which all other things of the same kind are representative copies'.

Jung further individuates a *therapeutic* dimension in myths, since they are concerned with human problems and tensions, personal and social; they reveal the unconscious *fears* of modern (as well as of ancient) man and, therefore, may help people to deal with the problems and complexities of their existence. According to Jung, the collective unconscious spans virtually all human beings' activities, including dreams, religious visions and mythologies (Harris & Platzner 1998:41). Morford and Lenardon (1991:12)

point out that ‘Jung’s theories are open to the same limitation as others, namely that they *are not the only key* to an understanding of mythology.’ (my emphasis).

Emile Durkheim and Bronislaw Malinowski, using elements of both aetiological and ritual theories, studied the causal relationship of human society to its mythology and folklore, though they reached opposite conclusions: whereas Durkheim regarded the ‘collective conscience’ of a society as a product or effect of its rituals and myths, Malinowski, while retaining Durkheim’s ‘functionalism’, considered the rituals and myths of a society to be the products of the human psyche.

In the light of Morford and Leonard’s observation above, I would conclude that several theories may be applied to a specific myth, depending on its content and possible purposes.

2.5 A Note on Animal Stories

Knappert (1970:8) remarks that ‘animal fables are probably the most typical African forms of oral literature’. Similarly, Kruus (2002:184) observes that, although other continents’ traditional imaginary does contain animal stories, ‘Africa has been very prolific in producing animal lore, and there are several excellent collections of animal stories, fables or fairy tales’. As for Classical antiquity, extant animal stories are not as numerous, with the exception of Aesop’s fables and certain narratives appearing within larger Greek myths, which involve mythical monsters or animals.

i) *Mythical Monsters*

Hamilton (1942:12) appropriately notes that the mythical monster is present in any number of dire shapes (Gorgons, Hydras and Chimaeras), but these only serve to give the hero his meed of glory. Hamilton further elaborates that mythical monsters are necessary for the heroes to measure themselves against and unfailingly defeat, as for example, the Greek mythical hero Hercules, who fought monsters and 'freed the earth from them.'

ii) *Non-Human Animals*

In connection with non-human animals, which humans regard as dumb, Catherine Osborne (2007:vii) argues that 'dumb beasts' and 'dead philosophers' have one thing in common, namely that 'we find it hard to be sure how effectively we are communicating with them. They do not speak to us in our language'. And she goes further to advise us that we can obtain an alternative view-point, if we resort to 'poetry or story telling', as she recommends as follows (2007:5):

> sometimes it is more effective to resort to poetry or story-telling in order to offer a way into an alternative view-point. Yet the reader who clings to argument and rational debate is in danger of remaining blind to such alternatives - blind largely because of those very blinkers that refuse to see what can only be shown and not proved.

The observation quoted above hints at the need for us to take into account seriously the folktales or traditional stories that deal with non-human animals, whom we perceive as

dumb, for such stories may contain deeper or embedded meanings from which *we may learn more about our human condition*.

2.6 Functions of myths and traditional stories

Mbiti (1975:7) remarks that

> stories, proverbs, riddles, myth and legends handed down orally, which are found in large numbers among all African people, do serve a purpose. Some are there to give a mere record of historical events, but most of them are created by people's imaginations.

Mbiti (1975:5) further outlines the specific purposes of African myths or stories as follows:

> Some entertain, others warn, others stimulate the imagination of the listeners; some are told as a commentary of people's lives in a given period.

Similarly, Knappert (1970:5) notes that the *main purpose* of all story tellers in traditional tales is to inculcate 'strongly *moral* lessons in their audiences' (my emphasis). Discussing the functions of myth, Skinner (1969: xiii) strongly argues that while folktales are generally narrated for their entertainment value, their *primary* function is *educational*. And, most of all,

> the folktales even when dealing with fabulous creatures and events serve as media for the socialization of successive generations […].

Further, Harris (1998:8) points out that

> myth has a truth of its own that transcends mere fact. Conveying realities that cannot be verified empirically, ancient tales typically articulate a culture's world-view, including its understanding of life's goals and the dangers attending them.

Aligned to these strong views of the educational function of both myth and folktales is Kruus' comment (2002:192): 'the domain of literature of the fable and the story […] is to teach, warn against and protect from natural hazards.'

Within this context, it may be useful to reflect on the following remarks by Don Cupitt (1982:29):

> So we may say that a myth is typically a traditional sacred story of anonymous authorship and archetypal or universal significance which is recounted in a certain community and is often linked with a ritual; that it tells of the deeds of superhuman beings such as gods, demigods, heroes, spirits or ghosts; that it is set outside historical time in primal or eschatological time or in the supernatural world and the world of human history; that the superhuman beings are imagined in anthropomorphic ways, although their powers are more than human and often the story is not naturalistic, but has the fractured, disorderly logic of dreams; that the whole body of a people's mythology is often prolix, extravagant and full of seeming inconsistencies; and finally that the work of myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide action or to legitimate. We can add the myth-making is evidently a primal and universal function of the human mind as it seeks a more or less unified vision of the cosmic order, the social order, and the meaning of the individual's life. Both for society at large and for the individual, this story-generating function seems irreplaceable. The individual finds meaning in his life by making of his life a story set within a larger social and cosmic story.

Having looked at definitions of myth, theories of myth, animal stories, and the functions of myth in general, I now conclude this brief review of the relevant literature.

2.7 Concluding remarks

In summary: the above review of literature shows that i) mythical thinking is a universal feature amongst both primitive and sophisticated cultures; ii) the definition of myth presents a multiplicity of aspects and a very important characteristic of myth is its role as a 'traditional story'; iii) no monolithic theories may be applied to all myths or to the analysis of particular ones. Myths or traditional stories (folktales, fables) serve a variety of purposes, as Harris & Platzner (1998:27) note, when they point out three principal areas of function:

> myths give meaning to traditional practices, such as rites; myths explain the causes of natural phenomena; or they retroactively justify social conventions whose actual origins had been forgotten.

Thus, all the theories surveyed above may be found to be, in varying degrees, relevant and helpful towards the analysis of myths or traditional stories in general.

Consequently, by comparatively studying traditional folklore, involving animal creatures, which emanates from different cultures, we may make some progress in learning more about how human beings in the distant past viewed and related with non-human creatures in their environment.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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3.1 Introductory comments

In this chapter, selection and procedures for data collection and analysis are concisely discussed and presented.

3.2 Methodology

As Guba and Lincoln remark, representativeness in qualitative studies refers to data rather than to settings or subjects. For this reason, the purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize results, but rather to obtain rich data relating to specific topics. The selection and interpretation of data is, further, governed by 'questions of paradigm':

> Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways.
> (Guba and Lincoln 1994:105)

Given the comparative nature of this study, in-depth analysis - in preference to a more generalized approach - was conducted on a restricted number of examples, namely six stories (three from classical, three from African culture), selected on the basis of a commonality of thematic features.

3.2.1 Data selection

I conducted research at the Chancellor College Library and at the mini-library of the Classics section at Chancellor College, in addition to Internet searches. To select material for this study, I read and collected stories touching on animal themes from Classical mythology and from African folklore. After studying the narratives that appeared to be relevant to my topic, I selected those that, within the brief compass of the present research, appeared to offer the clearest and most fruitful material for comparison. I selected a total of six stories, three from Classical antiquity and three from African tradition: these were, to a significant degree, similar and closely connected within the ambit of their themes relating to animal beings. The following stories were chosen for comparison:

1. *Equus et Aper* ('The Horse and the Boar'), Aesop's classical story, will be compared with *Cock becomes a Domesticated Bird* (African). The myth's purpose, here, is considered to be aetiological.
2. *The Lernean Hydra*, a myth detailing Hercules' Second Labour, will be compared with the African story *The Twelve-Headed Monster*. The Jungian theory of universal archetypes provides the background, here.
3. *Androcles and the Lion* will be compared with the African story *A Hunter and his Game-pit*. The moral substratum is important here.

3.2.2 Data analysis

The stories from Classical antiquity and African folklore will be compared bearing in mind theoretical approaches emanating from secondary literature, with the purpose of clarifying the roles played by animals in the myths of both cultures, as illustrated in the chosen tales. The selected stories will be briefly summarized, before effecting detailed comparisons.

3.3 Concluding remarks

The chapter has briefly described the data collecting procedures and the mode of analysis of the chosen myths from Classical antiquity and African cultures.

The next chapter presents the results of the study and their interpretations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

4.1 Introductory comments

This chapter presents analyses of each of the selected Classical and African myths; points of comparison are discussed in separate sections. Some conclusions which emerge from the analyses are also advanced.

4.2 Classical myths and African myths

The myths from the two cultures (Classical antiquity and African, respectively) were chosen on the basis of *thematic similarities*, as they involve, and relate to, non-human creatures (animals). I consider each pair of stories chosen for comparison separately. In each case I present a general comparison of an African story and a classical counterpart, followed by a specific comparison. Wherever necessary, I give the version of the story in my own words, in summary form; I present the shorter stories in full, otherwise all the complete stories are given in the Appendices.

4.2.1 Comparison between *Equus et aper* ('The Horse and the Boar') (Classical story) and 'Cock becomes a Domestic bird' (African story)

Equus et aper (‘The Horse and the Boar’)

The Latin version and English translation may be found in Appendix A. Here, I offer a simple paraphrase:

> A horse desired water. But a boar was muddying the water. The horse feared wild animals and did not attack. Then he saw a man, Balbus. Therefore the horse hastened, he placed Balbus on his back and carried him, for he did not fear the man. Then the horse and the man attacked the boar. The man threw spears and finally wounded the boar. But the man did not set free the horse. ‘I will have you to carry me always!’ He therefore prepared the harness and kept the horse as his servant.

As can be observed from the Classical story above, the horse had sought assistance from man to help him drive away the wild boar, which the man later killed. The horse could now drink the water peacefully. The horse had willingly submitted to carry the man, so that they might join forces against the boar. The man, however, did not set the horse free after winning the battle, but instead tied the harness to the horse in order to tame it. And the words, ‘I will have you to carry me always!’ testify to the fact that the man wanted to subjugate the horse for ever as a beast of burden, transportation, and even for fighting future wars.

The *aetiological* substratum of the story is clear: the *origins* of the domestication of the formerly wild and untamable horse are explained. However, there seems to be also a moral aspect to the story: the horse had placed too much trust in the man and, by not using forethought, had lost its freedom and become his servant. Having a common

enemy and - temporarily - a common cause does not ensure mutual loyalty between parties.

In the story *Cock Becomes a Domestic Bird*, the hyena and the rest of the animals were duped by the cock into believing that its comb had the power to ignite when touched. The hyena, who was then close to the cock as its servant, gathered some courage to test the cock's comb, by attempting to touch it surreptitiously, as can be read in the following extract:

> *Now one day the hyena came home late from a hunt. The cock and his family were already asleep, but the hyena's wife and children, feeling hungry, were still awake, hoping that he would bring them some meat. They did not wait in vain, for the hyena came home with a succulent piece of antelope, which the lions had left lying about. His wife hurried to the kitchen to make a fire and cook the meat; but to her dismay she found that the embers were already dead. As she could think of nowhere to get fire from, she mentioned the problem to her husband. He did not know what to do either – until his eye fell on the cock, who sat soundly asleep on a stone.*
>
> *Perhaps it was disrespectful, but hunger makes one forget such things; and so, taking a bit of tinder, he tiptoed up to the cock to light it from his comb. To his surprise no fire appeared. He tried a second and third time, always taking care not to wake the bird. But on each occasion the result was the same. Doubt had now been sown in his heart and he decided that in the morning he would find out the truth.*

And this time around, the hyena, in its quest for truth, persuades the cock to allow it to brush its plumage. The hyena's intention, of course, is to get closer to the cock's comb:

[The Hyena] said, "Pardon me for mentioning it, Sir, but perhaps I could brush your plumage, too?" Moved by this token of respect, the cock graciously agreed and the hyena now set about brushing the cock's feathers. But suddenly, pretending to lose balance, he touched the cock's comb. Again no fire appeared and the hyena now knew the truth. "You wicked impostor", he cried. "You cheat! How could you ever allow us to bow to you and work for you, as if it were really important? Today you are going to pay for your deceit!"

Now, this last declaration of the hyena alludes to all that is to happen not only to the particular culprit, the cock, but also to all chicken-folk everywhere; that is, cocks would be caught and torn to pieces and hens forced to run to man for protection. Thus, the same fate is to be applied to all cocks, hens and chickens, wherever they might be found:

The cock, knowing that his situation was hopeless, tried to escape, but the hyena grabbed him and tore him to pieces. The hyena's children then went after the hens, who had always basked in their husband's glory, but who were now made to share his lamentable fate. As word of the hyena's feat spread, this scene repeated itself everywhere. And no cock or hen would have remained alive, had not a number of them managed to escape to the villages of man. Here they were given shelter and protection, on condition that they worked for their keep, the hens by laying eggs and the cock by waking his master up in the morning.

As can be seen from the two stories, the classical and the African, both conclude with an explanation as to how non-human creatures found themselves to be associated with human beings and kept in their service: both the horse and the chicken-folk had gone to man seeking protection and shelter from their *animal* enemies. The aetiological explanation of their eventual domestication is coupled in both stories with the ethical

problems arising from the bartering of one's freedom for the security offered by a master. There is an added point of interest, of course, and some irony, in the fact that, in both stories, the animals effect a transition from the animal to the human 'camp', escaping immediate death to gain eternal servitude.

4.2.2 Comparison between *The Lernean Hydra* (Hercules' Second Labour; Classical myth) and *The Twelve-headed Monster* (African myth)

The complete stories with sources may be found in Appendix C and D respectively. Hercules was the son of Jupiter and of a mortal, Alcmena, a princess of Argos. A condition was laid down that, if Hercules were to become one of the gods and, therefore, immortal, he should complete twelve labours imposed upon him by King Eurylaos, who was his cousin. The Second Labour demanded that Hercules should destroy the Lernean Hydra, a water-monster, sporting nine heads which regenerated themselves when cut off. Similarly, a multi-headed monster is the anti-hero of the African tale, which the young hero, Mzerunkupangwa, must slay, in order to save himself, his sister and the terrorized villagers.

In both stories, the Classical and the African, we are given a vivid and almost graphic presentation of the monsters before the attack:

> *From the murky waters of the swamps near a place called Lerna, the Hydra would rise up and terrorise the countryside. A monstrous serpent with nine heads, the Hydra attacked with poisonous venom. Nor was this beast easy prey, for one of the nine heads was immortal and therefore indestructible.*

The Classical story depicts the monstrous serpent as having nine heads; whenever one head was cut, two would spring out to replace it. In the African story, the monster is similarly depicted as having multiple heads, twelve in fact, as it rears up to face the young hero, Mzerunkupangwa:

> *Finally, he saw the monster itself, its twelve heads rearing up above the treetops. These heads were all different in size, the smallest itself as big as a cow's, but the largest so enormous that a full-grown cow could easily have walked through its open jaws!*

As can be seen in both stories, mythical thinking about monstrous beings, common to different cultures, emerges in the context of a vivid visualization of the frightening features and immense power of creatures that are well outside the norms of the natural world, yet inhabit it and subjugate it.

We should note that both heroes must direct their attack at the *heads* of the respective monsters, not the bodies or tails. The fact that to thoroughly destroy such creatures requires, therefore, the severing of that specific part of their bodies, reflects a common conviction that their invincible power resides in their heads. There is to be detected, here, an unexpected assimilation of beast to human, in the sense that a sort of "thinking skill" is implicitly assumed, as the beast is deemed to possess not only overwhelming brute strength, but also a kind of calculating, if brutal, intelligence. In the African story, this semi-human aspect is reinforced by the *verbal* exchange which takes place between hero and monster, just before the battle begins.

The two stories are fundamentally very similar, except in a few factual details. The monsters in the two stories differ only in the number of heads, nine for the Lernean Hydra and twelve for the Monster in the African story (both in multiples of the number three), and the fact that the Lernean Hydra's heads could grow back when severed, whereas Mzerunkupangwa's opponent could not sprout new ones. Also, in the episode of the Lernean Hydra, Hercules had a companion, his nephew Iolaus, who helped him defeat the monster, whereas, in the African story, Ntsanyu, a sister to Mzerunkupangwa, acts as a companion, not taking part in the fight against the monster:

> *Hercules set off to hunt the nine-headed menace, but he did not go alone. His trusty nephew, Iolaus, was by his side. [….] Each time Hercules destroyed one of the Hydra's heads, Iolaus held a torch to the headless tendons of the neck. The flames prevented the growth of replacement heads, and, finally, Hercules had the better of the beast.*

Both stories also give a clear indication that the monsters used to terrorise the communities around them, before the heroes' intervention:

Lernean Hydra

> *From the murky waters of the swamps near a place called Lerna, the Hydra would rise up and terrorise the countryside.*

The Twelve-headed Monster

> *Once inside, she told them a dreadful story. It appeared that a twelve-headed monster had begun visiting the village every morning to devour a whole family - husband, wife, children, goats, chickens, and everything edible they might have besides.*

Whereas the Twelve-headed Monster fought a lone battle against Mzerunkupangwa, without external assistance, the Lernean Hydra had its own helper in the fight, a giant crab:

> *To make matters worse, the Hydra had a friend of its own: a huge crab began biting the trapped foot of Hercules.*

Hercules arouses the Hydra by ambush from its lair, while Mzerunkupangwa confronts the Twelve-headed Monster directly, as the African hero meets the Monster on its path to destruction. The remarkable aspect is that time is found for a verbal exchange, before the fight begins:

Learnean Hydra:

> *First, Hercules lured the coily creature from the safety of its den by shooting flaming arrows at it. Once the Hydra emerged, Hercules seized it.*

Twelve-headed Monster

> *Early next morning they were roused by a distant rumbling, as if from an earthquake. Mzerunkupangwa, sensing it must be the Monster on its way, took his knives, stepped outside, and started walking in the direction of the noise. As he walked, the noise grew louder until he was almost deafened by it. Finally, he saw the Monster itself, its twelve heads rearing up above the treetops. These heads were all different in size, the smallest itself as big as a cow's, but the largest so enormous that a full-grown cow could easily have walked through its open jaws!*
>
> *When the Monster finally sighted the boy, it asked in surprise, "What have you come for?"*
>
> *"To kill you," the boy answered bravely.*

"How could you ever do that?" the Monster continued, "Even the smallest of my heads is big enough to swallow you whole."

During the actual combat, in which the heroes in both stories display their prowess, it is made abundantly clear that they do not complete their tasks easily:

Lernean Hydra:

Nor was this beast easy prey, for one of the nine heads was immortal and therefore indestructible.

The Twelve-headed Monster:

And when Mzerunkupangwa looked around he noticed that the sun was already setting. Without his realizing it, the battle had lasted a whole day.

Thus, in both stories it is emphasised that the heroes do not achieve their victories easily; in other words, I would argue that one of the morals of these stories appears to be that important goals cannot be attained without struggle, endurance, patience, and courage.

At the end of the fight, in both stories the heroes slit open the corpses of the monsters after severing their heads:

Lernean Hydra:

> *Once he had removed and destroyed the eight mortal heads, Hercules cut off the ninth, immortal head. This he buried at the side of the road leading from Lerna to Elaeus, and, for good measure, he covered it with a heavy rock. As for the rest of the hapless Hydra, Hercules slit open the corpse and dipped his arrows in the venomous blood.*

Similarly, Mzerunkupangwa is asked to slit open the Monster's belly:

> *Now the one eyed woman appeared, asking him urgently to slit open the monster's belly. This he did, and to his surprise out of it came all the women and children, cows, goats, and chickens that the creature had devoured.*

In the African story, the hero Mzerunkupangwa, having freed all the people and the domestic creatures that the Twelve-headed Monster had devoured, is immediately hailed as saviour and king of the people, and he finally rests to enjoy the fruits of his labour. In the Classical story, the hero Hercules, although he has freed the community around him by killing the Hydra, is not allowed to rest, but is assigned labour after labour, until he has successfully completed the twelfth one.

For the African story, the remarkable coincidence between the number of knives (twelve) of varying sizes which the hero Mzerunkupangwa was given by his father, and the number of heads of the Monster (twelve heads of varying sizes), draws attention to a particular African custom:

> *He began to tremble with fury, and going into the house brought twelve knives, the smallest the size of a panga, the largest the size of an adult man. Then he handed these to his son saying, "You have betrayed me. Take these knives and go with your sister to some other place, so that we shall not have to set eyes on one another again."*

As it is made clear in this passage, Mzurunkupangwa accepts the knives from his father without asking what their purpose might be or questioning his father's gift, made, after all, in anger. To some extent, the hero's action in accepting something from an elder, without questioning or doubting, confirms, and is intended to foster, the deep-seated attitude of respect towards their elders, which is traditionally inculcated in young Africans. To question or doubt one's elders' behaviour might be construed to intend disrespect towards them. It is taken for granted that elders would assign or give something for a purpose, even if the nature of this purpose may remain unintelligible for a time. In this case, Mzerunkupangwa discovers the true purpose of the knives of different sizes only when he confronts the Twelve-headed Monster.

These myths may be read from both an ethical and a Freudian angle: as pointed out above, the courage and endurance which inform the heroes' behaviour speaks to the need for nurturing probity and bravery in the young, which will turn them eventually into good kings or good subjects. While the terrors inherent in the very existence of the monsters amongst human beings provide an insight into the suppressed fears that may exercise an inhibiting influence upon the positive development of virtues and skills in the young. The verbal exchange which takes place in the African story is especially interesting, as it points to an acknowledgement of inner fears by the young hero.

4.2.3 Comparison between Aesop's *Androcles and the Lion* (Classical story) and *A Hunter and his Game-Pit* (African story)

For the complete stories, see Appendix E and F respectively, with sources.

For ease of comparison, I offer brief summaries of the two stories, before giving an analysis.

A brief summary of *Androcles and the Lion*

Androcles, a slave, fled from his master owing to cruel treatment. He met a wounded lion in a cave, limping as a result of a huge thorn that had pierced its paw and become lodged in it. After having removed the thorn, the man spent some time in the cave, sharing food and shelter with the beast. The man eventually bade farewell to the lion, in order to rejoin human society, but was caught by soldiers, who identified him as a fugitive slave, and later thrown to the wild beasts in the public arena, as punishment by his own master.

A lion, which had been starved for some days, was released into the arena to devour Androcles. To the amazement of all spectators, including the Emperor, instead of speedily devouring the slave as was expected, the lion displayed affection towards him. Androcles then recognized the lion with which he had shared the cave. Moved by the incident, the Emperor decreed that the slave be given his freedom and that the lion be set free into the forest, as well.

A brief summary of *A Hunter and his Game-pit*

A hunter dug out a pit so that he could catch animals for food, but, unfortunately, when he uncovered the pit, he found a man on his first visit, a lion on his second, a leopard on his third, and a huge snake on his fourth. All these creatures pleaded to be released from the pit, but the hunter ignored their pleas, until he came on his fourth visit. The trapped man spoke for the rest and persuaded the hunter to release them all.

The animals, to show their gratitude for being released, made pledges to the hunter. The lion and the leopard pledged to bring him plenty of meat, as long as he remained with them in the jungle; the snake promised to assist the hunter in time of dire need, and the man merely thanked him and went on his way. At some point, realizing the hunter's loneliness, the lion brought him a girl for wife. One day, the man, who was once trapped and released, came upon the hunter in the forest.

Having recognized the girl who lived with the hunter as being the chief's daughter, who had been missing from the village, he revealed this to the chief, who sent out soldiers to capture the hunter. The penalty decreed was death. The snake surreptitiously slid into the room where the hunter was imprisoned and gave him the only medicine that could cure its bite. The snake bit the chief, who would have died, had it not been for the incarcerated hunter, who was able to administer the antidote. In gratitude, the chief restored freedom to the hunter and allowed him to keep his daughter as wife.

A comparison of the two stories

In both stories a lion plays a significant role. In *Androcles and the Lion*, the fierce beast has the ability to recognize man's loneliness and as such allows the man, his friend, to go back to human society:

> *A day came, however, when the slave began to long for the society of his fellow men, and he bade farewell to the lion and returned to the town.*

As for the hunter, the lion recognises the man's loneliness, and feels such pity for him that he steals the chief's daughter, to provide him with a companion:

> *But one day the lion brought him a young woman, whom he had snatched away while she was busy pounding corn. She appeared to be the chief's daughter, and the hunter, thanking the lion, took her as his wife.*

The lion in the Classical story cannot speak, but shows its feelings by means of expressive gestures and movements:

> *But, to his utter astonishment, the lion, instead of springing upon him, came and fawned upon him, at the same time whining and lifting up his paw. [….]. What was the amazement of the spectators, when the lion after one glance bounded up to him and lay down at his feet with every expression of affection and delight! It was his old friend of the cave!*

In both Classical and African stories, a contrast is clearly drawn between the lack of kindness shown by fellow human beings to each other and the ability of the lion to become a close companion to man, to the point of sharing food and shelter with him:

Classical story

> *The lion's gratitude was unbounded. He looked upon the man as his friend, and they shared the cave for some time together.*

African story

> *The hunter now went to live in the forest, having built a hut there, and the lion and the leopard brought him much meat, which made him a wealthy man, as he was able to sell it to the surrounding villages.*

In both stories, non-human creatures are shown to be capable of giving a return for kindness. In the Classical story, while in the arena, the lion does not devour Androcles the slave as the spectators expected. Instead, the lion shows affectionate feelings to the man, just as a dog would relate to his good master:

> *On the fatal day the beasts were loosed into the arena, and among the rest, a lion of huge bulk and ferocious aspect. And then the wretched slave was cast in among them. What was the amazement of the spectators, when the lion after one glance bounded up to him and lay down at his feet with every expression of affection and delight! It was his old friend of the cave!*

In the African story, though it was a different creature, the Snake played a similar role in showing gratitude and returning kindness. The serpent recognizes the need to keep the promise made to the hunter, that it would assist him in time of need:

> *The hunter was locked up to await execution. In the middle of the night, however, he felt a snake crawl over his body, and before he could cry out, it said, "Don't be afraid. I am the snake you once rescued. I have come with medicine which can cure my own bite. Should you hear that the chief has been bitten, tell him that you have medicines that can save him".*

It is only as a result of the snake's action, that the Hunter is saved from sure death.

In the Classical story, Androcles escapes from a fellow man who is a cruel master:

> *A slave ran away from his master, by whom he had been most cruelly treated, and, in order to avoid capture, betook himself into the desert.*

And similarly, in the African story, it is the man that the hunter had saved from the game-pit who later betrays him by revealing to the chief the whereabouts of his daughter:

> *It was the same man who had fallen into the game pit, but the hunter did not recognize him. Bidding him welcome, he called for his wife to bring him the water, and, when she appeared, the visitor knew at once that she was the chief's daughter, whom everybody thought had been eaten by a lion. Having drunk the water and thanked his host, the visitor hurried away to tell the chief what he had seen.*

And, finally, in both stories the slave Androcles and the Hunter receive their liberty at the end, following the assistance or return of kindness offered by the non-human creatures, the Lion and the Snake, respectively.

4.3 Concluding remarks

This chapter has presented some comparative interpretations of classical and African myths. The points of comparison of the Classical and African sets of traditional stories were given separately. The final chapter will summarise the results of the study, draw conclusions and make appropriate recommendations for teaching Classics in an African context.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introductory comments

The main purpose of this study was to offer an accessible comparative model to strengthen the foundations of Classical Mythology teaching in the African context, in order to make the learning of Classical mythology more meaningful and relevant to African students. I attempted to do this by comparing traditional folkstories dealing with the interactions between animal characters, humans and gods, in order to explore how humans are shown to relate with animals in these narratives.

In order to attain this broad goal, the study aimed to assist African Classics teachers with recommendations to apply when teaching Mythology courses by using comparative approaches. This in turn was intended to provide reasons for both Classics teachers and students to recognize the importance of using such comparative approaches, when teaching and learning Classical mythology.

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the analyses ensuing from the comparisons of the sets of traditional stories from Classical antiquity and African cultures.

5.2 Summary of the results

5.2.1 'The Horse and the Boar' compared with 'Cock Becomes a Domestic Bird'

A comparison of the two stories reveals that human beings in the past sought to explain how certain animals found in their environment had become domesticated. The stories add a further interesting dimension: they allude clearly to the fact that the animals which eventually became domesticated, did so because they initially trusted humans to protect them and shield them from their own kin and species. The step linked to the betrayal of this trust is the animals' subjection to man. This inevitable sequence of trust-betrayal-submission to humans by animals is evidenced in the following instances in the respective stories:

Equus et aper

> *Properavit igitur equus, Balbum sublevavit et portavit: virum enim non timebat*.
> Therefore the horse hastened, he placed Balbus on his back and carried him for he did not fear the man.

In the African story, *Cock Becomes a Domestic Bird*, the story exhibits almost the same logic, for the chicken-folk flee to man for protection:

> *And no cock or hen would have remained alive, had not a number of them managed to escape to the villages of man.*

Furthermore, in both stories the creatures are given specific conditions by man, which they must accept if they wish to be saved. And in that way the stories would help to

explain the exploitation of animals by man: why horses and chickens for instance, perform specific functions and fulfill specific needs for man.

In the story about the Horse and the Boar, while the horse submits willingly to man, intending it to be only a temporary arrangement, on the particular occasion when it sought assistance to defeat the Boar, Man, however, takes advantage of the situation and of the horse's trust, devising a way to keep the Horse in perpetual subjection, and thereby turning the horse into his slave:

> '*ego te habeo; porta me semper!' Frenos igitur paravit et equum servum habebat.*

Similarly, in the African story, the hens, the chickens and the cocks everywhere, having submitted themselves to man, accept to abide by conditions that subsist to the present day:

> *Here they were given shelter and protection on condition that they worked for their keep, the hens by laying eggs and the cock by waking his master up in the morning.*

At the same time, the two stories implicitly explain why the other animals are *not* domesticated but remain wild and *free*: the 'wild' animals used to terrorise those that are now domesticated, thereby forcing them to flee to man for refuge, regardless of the harsh conditions that would be imposed on them. Furthermore, the stories attempt to explain why the Boar and the Hyena became enemies of man, for the mere reason that man had taken into his protection creatures which had provoked the wrath of the now so-called wild animals, in one way or the other. As a consequence, from time immemorial, man has had to build enclosures (a fence or a kraal) to safeguard the animals under his protection from predation from wild creatures.

The question that remains to be answered is: by associating with man or going to man for protection, according to the two stories, were the animals indeed prepared for any type of exploitation from their human master?

5.2.2 'Lernean Hydra' (Classical myth) compared with the 'Twelve-headed Monster' (African myth)

The two stories, though coming from different cultures, share several thematic areas. Both stories involve animal creatures and these creatures are monsters equipped with multiple heads, nine in the Classical story and twelve in the African. The heroes have the task of fighting such monstrous creatures, extremely difficult to subdue. At the end of the fight, both heroes are victorious.

Clearly, the purpose of these stories is to emphasise the values and qualities befitting a hero. For a hero to be such, he needs to perform at least one task that is regarded to be *super-human*. At the same time, the myths might have been narrated as *exempla*, to instill into listeners the urge and courage to perform difficult deeds that would benefit their respective *communities*. As has already been noted in the analyses of the two stories above, both heroes liberate their respective communities from the terrors to which they had been subjected. The Lernean Hydra, which Hercules vanquished, used to terrorise the community around Lerna; similarly, the Monster inflicted unspeakable terror upon the villagers in the African story.

Another *moral lesson* to be learnt from the two stories is that monsters have to be destroyed, in order to establish a better order - a civilized way of life - amongst humans.

I should emphasise the point that from the stories in both cultures it would be possible to argue that human beings, as a result of misunderstanding, and, therefore, fear, of their own environment, could imagine the existence and power of mythical monsters or creatures issuing from the natural world. That could be part of a Jungian 'collective consciousness', whereby human beings, regardless of cultural and geographical differences, would be able to shape such imaginings.

5.2.3 '*Androcles and the Lion*' (Classical myth) compared with '*A Hunter and His Game-pit*' (African myth)

Both the Classical and the African story convey the idea that human beings could share life and its basic needs with non-human animals without coming to any harm. For example, in the African story, a man is entrapped in a pit together with a lion, a leopard, and a snake, yet we note that there is no mention of a struggle for survival taking place amongst these beings. And later on, the animals, upon being set free, as an expression of their gratitude, invite the hunter to stay with them in the forest, where they bring him great quantities of choice meat. The concept of '*do ut des*' is enacted quite clearly here.

Similarly, the Lion in the Classical story is able to share the same cave with Androcles as with a good friend, and neither creature comes to any harm. Such stories may have been elaborated in order to explore the nature of human and animal relationships and, thus, to attempt to understand what renders human and animal beings so different and yet so closely related.

In these stories, animals are presented as being able to converse or, at least, *communicate intelligibly with human beings*. The narratives present, therefore, the possibility of assigning the characteristically human capability of speech to non-human animals. In addition, the animals, especially the lions, exhibit, in both stories, the ability to 'feel' for man, to experience impulses of empathy and compassion: for instance, they could intuit and wish to relieve man's feelings of loneliness. In the African story, the lion goes to the extent of stealing the chief's daughter to give to the hunter as his wife - a mate and a companion. In the Classical story, the lion consented to allow the fugitive slave to go back to human society, as it understood that the man missed his fellow human beings.

Both stories, therefore, intimate that non-human animals are capable of appreciating and *returning* kindness, if they are treated in kind ways. Just by the fact that Androcles had treated the wounded lion sympathetically, the lion showed signs of appreciation for it kept Androcles in the cave and treated him as a friend. And, when the lion was expected to devour Androcles in the arena, it could not bring itself to do so, even though it had been deliberately starved for some days. In the African story, the Snake plays a similar role to that of the Lion in the Classical story. The Snake also recognizes the need to reciprocate with kind deeds those that it had received from the hunter, for it devises a way of ensuring that the hunter is set free. By providing an antidote to its own venom to the hunter, so that the hunter may offer a cure to the bitten chief, the Snake paves the way not only for freedom and happiness to be restored to the hunter, but also for honour and prestige to be bestowed upon him, through his family connection with the chief of the village.

If we think further, the two stories might give several *moral* lessons to human beings along these lines: If animals are capable of returning kindness, should humans do any less? In other words, animals are shown to be capable of applying the proverb: 'one good turn deserves another'. If non-human animals are capable of fulfilling promises or pledges made to man, should one expect less of humans themselves?

In addition, the two stories confirm the Latin proverb *homo homini lupus* ('man is a wolf to a man'): in both stories the two men (Androcles and the hunter) risk to lose their lives as a result of the wicked deeds of their fellow men. In the African story, the hunter is caught and is about to be killed because of the betrayal of the same man he had saved from the game-pit. And in the Classical story, Androcles, a slave, flees for his life from his cruel master.

5.3 Concluding remarks

From my study and discussion of these stories, I consider that the following main conclusions, which I present according to the research questions posited above, appear justified:

1. Traditional stories/myths from both cultures construct an imaginary past world, wherein human beings were able, when they chose, to live in companionship and harmony with their non-human counterparts. In this imaginary dimension, animals were capable of repaying good with good, if humans treated animals well.

2. Narratives from both cultures attribute human characteristics to animals, although the selected African stories contain more explicitly ‘speaking’ animals than do the Classical ones. In both cultures, animals are shown to be capable of tangibly expressing gratitude for kind treatment and of feeling compassion for human beings. In addition, the stories from both cultures assert the *ability* and *will* of animals to keep promises and fulfill pledges made to man. Animals, therefore, are presented as inhabiting a dimension where they are capable not only of *emotions*, but also of a sense of *justice*.

3. Certain animals are shown to have become domesticated by willingly seeking man’s protection from other animals and man is shown to have betrayed their trust and exploited their fear in order to tame and use them. Aetiologically, for both cultures, the stories could help explain the distinction between wild and domestic animals; however, the underlying disapproval of the breach of trust from man’s side forms another interesting moral strand.

4. There is not much difference between mythical thinking ways in Classical and African cultures, as revealed in these traditional stories. In short, mythical thinking for example, about monsters or extraordinary creatures, is not a preserve of any one culture, rather it is common to humankind (cf Jung’s theories), irrespective of cultural and geographical differences.

5. The purpose of including monsters in the stories and presenting them in such a striking fashion is to give expression to the unconfessed fears of ancient man (both Classical and African), as an attempt to explain what threats ancient man

thought might lurk in his environment. A psychological explanation theory would bolster this approach, relating it to a dream-world of a people, and thus to their 'collective consciousness', as argued by Carl Jung. In addition, such monsters offer suitably challenging feats, which serve to reveal the real qualities of a hero and thus make him an *exemplum* to be imitated. Such extraordinary creatures were destructive to humans, and heroes were expected to devise means of destroying them, in order to liberate their respective communities from fear - the fear of the *unknown* and of the *different*.

6. Traditional stories/myths served as *moralizing* agents for both cultures: as a medium to instill certain *values* and encourage young men to emulate heroic deeds; and also *to learn* from good deeds done by animals to man, as reflected in the stories, deeds which should induce the thought: 'if animals are capable of repaying kindness with good deeds to man, why should man himself not be capable of nobility?'. The animal stories offer attempts from both cultures to find alternative ways of explaining the unintelligible aspects of their environment, for traditional stories/myths contain *embedded meanings*. By studying animal stories we are able indeed to gain some insight into how humans treated their non-human counterparts in Classical antiquity and African cultures. As Osborne (2007:vii) maintains, 'sometimes it is more effective to resort to poetry or story-telling in order to offer a way into an alternative view-point'.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, my study advances the following recommendations:

1. In order to popularize Classics teaching in general and Classical mythology *in an African context*, in particular, there is a need for Classics teachers and students to employ a comparative approach to deal with myths or traditional stories from different cultural contexts.
2. Myths, be it from Africa or the Classical world, do serve a social-political function for the respective traditional cultures that evolved with them, and as such, they merit a deeper and more serious study.
3. Classics teachers need to work with curriculum developers to produce up-to-date and accurate methods for teaching Classics in the African /Malawian context; there is a serious need to radically revisit the Classics curricula for the African context.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

The above recommendations hint at the need for a great deal of further research into contextualising the teaching and learning of Classics generally, in the African context. A comparative study of African and Classical mythology could provide a valuable key towards achieving this. As a conclusion, I should like to add the following remarks by Josef Campbell (1991: 419-421):

> In the long view of the history of mankind, four essential functions of mythology can be discerned. The first and most distinctive - vitalizing all - is that of eliciting and supporting a sense of awe before the mystery of being… The second function of mythology is to render a

cosmology, an image of the universe that will support and be supported by this sense of awe before the mystery of the presence and the presence of a mystery… A third function of mythology is to support the current social order, to integrate the individual organically with his group… The fourth function of mythology is to initiate the individual into the order of realities of his own psyche, guiding him toward his own spiritual enrichment and realization.

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APPENDIX A

Equus et Aper (‘The Horse and the Boar’), **Classical**

While a boar was wallowing, he stirred up the stream where a horse had been accustomed to alleviate his thirst. This led to a quarrel. The horse, angry at the wild boar, asked for help from a man; bearing the man on his back, he happily returned to his enemy. After he had killed the enemy with his weapons, the knight is supposed to have spoken these words: "I am glad that I could offer help as you requested, because I have caught this boar as my prize and I have learned how useful you are." And thus he compelled the unwilling horse to suffer the reins. Then the horse sadly said: "While I foolishly sought revenge for a trifle, I have ended up a slave." This fable warns angry people that it is better to let injuries go by unpunished rather than being given over into the power of another person.
(Gibbs 2002: 46)

APPENDIX B

Cock Becomes a Domestic Bird (African: Tumbuka tribe)

Long ago a hyena befriended a cock. The hyena thought this a great honour, for cocks in those days belonged to the highest rank in the animal world, together with the lion and the elephant. As for these latter beasts, their reason for occupying this rank was clear: the elephant was by far the biggest animal and the lion had by far the strongest claws. Everyone could see this for themselves. But the cock could boast of neither exceptional size nor special strength. The reason he held his high position was that everyone believed that, if he wished, he could set the world on fire with his comb. They all treated him, therefore, with the greatest respect.

The cock himself did nothing to destroy this belief. On the contrary, whenever the occasion arose he would remind his fellow animals of his awesome power, and all would do his bidding. Small wonder, then, that the hyena thought himself privileged to become the cock's best friend and that he tried to show his appreciation by running errands for him and even hoeing his garden without payment.

Now one day the hyena came home late from a hunt. The cock and his family were already asleep, but the hyena's wife and children, feeling hungry, were still awake hoping that he would bring them some meat. They did not wait in vain, for the hyena came home with a succulent piece of antelope which the lions had left lying about. His wife hurried to the kitchen to make a fire and cook the meat; but, to her dismay, she

found that the embers were already dead. As she could think of nowhere to get fire from, she mentioned the problem to her husband. He did not know what to do either – until his eye fell on the cock, who sat soundly asleep on a stone.

Perhaps it was disrespectful, but hunger makes one forget such things; and so, taking a bit of tinder, he tiptoed up to the cock to light it from his comb. To his surprise no fire appeared. He tried a second and third time, always taking care not to wake the bird. But on each occasion the result was the same. Doubt had now been sown in his heart and he decided that in the morning he would find the truth.

Waking up, he washed his face and approached the cock to pay his customary respects, asking him humbly whether there was anything he needed doing that day. The cock, who had slept well, looked benignly on his friend and told him that there was indeed a lot to be done – he could draw water, fetch firewood and sweep the courtyard, to begin with.

Now this kind of thing the hyena had been doing as long as he had been the cock's friend. But today he was really going to surpass himself. He said, "Pardon me for mentioning it, Sir, but perhaps I could brush your coat too?" Moved by this token of respect, the cock graciously agreed and the hyena now set about brushing the cock's feathers. But suddenly, pretending to lose balance, he touched the cock's comb. Again no fire appeared and the hyena now knew the truth. "You wicked impostor", he cried. "You cheat! How could you ever allow us to bow to you and work for you, as if it were really important? Today you are going to pay for your deceit!"

The cock knowing that his situation was hopeless, tried to escape, but the hyena grabbed him and tore him to pieces. His children then went after the hens, who had always basked in their husband's glory, but who were now made to share his lamentable fate. As word of the hyena's feat spread, this scene everywhere repeated itself. And no cock or hen would have remained alive had not a number of them managed to escape to the villages of man. Here, they were given shelter and protection, on condition that they worked for their keep, the hens by laying eggs and the cock by waking his master up in the morning.

(Schoffeleers and Roscoe, 1985:226-227)

APPENDIX C

The Lernean Hydra (Classical)

The second labour of Hercules was to kill the Lernean Hydra. From the murky waters of the swamps near a place called Lerna, the Hydra would rise up and terrorise the countryside. A monstrous serpent with nine heads, the Hydra attacked with poisonous venom. Nor was this beast easy prey, for one of the nine heads was immortal and therefore indestructible.

Hercules set off to hunt the nine-headed menace, but he did not go alone. His trusty nephew, Iolaus, was by his side. Iolaus, who shared many adventures with Hercules, accompanied him on many of the twelve labours. Legend has it that Iolaus won a victory in chariot-racing at the Olympics and he is often depicted as Hercules' charioteer. So, the pair drove to Lerna and by the springs of Amymone, they discovered the lair of the loathsome Hydra.

First, Hercules lured the coily creature from the safety of its den by shooting flaming arrows at it. Once the Hydra emerged, Hercules seized it. The monster was not so easily overcome, though, for it wound one of its coils around Hercules' foot and made it impossible for the hero to escape. With his club, Hercules attacked the many heads of the Hydra, but as soon as he destroyed one head, two more would burst forth in its place! To make matters worse, the Hydra had a friend of its own: a huge crab began biting the trapped foot of Hercules. Quickly disposing of this nuisance, most likely with

a swift blow of his club, Hercules called on Iolaus to help him out of this tricky situation.

Each time Hercules bashed one of the Hydra's heads, Iolaus held a torch to the headless tendons of the neck. The flames prevented the growth of replacement heads, and finally, Hercules had the better of the beast. Once he had removed and destroyed the eight mortal heads, Hercules chopped off the ninth, immortal head. This he buried at the side of the road leading from Lerna to Elaeus, and for good measure, he covered it with a heavy rock. As for the rest of the hapless Hydra, Hercules slit open the corpse and dipped his arrows in the venomous blood.

(Healey, 1955: 43)

APPENDIX: D

The Twelve-headed Monster (African: Chewa tribe)

Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife. They had no children because the woman had borne only girls, who were immediately killed by the husband because he wanted no daughters. In due time however, a son was born, who eventually grew into a handsome young man. Wondering why he was an only child, he used to ask his mother about it, but she always evaded the question. In the end, however, she could conceal the truth no longer. The boy, whose name was Mzerunkupangwa, then made his mother promise that if ever she had another baby girl, she would give it to him to hide from his father.

It so happened that, when the woman next found she was pregnant, her husband had left for a distant village to go and settle a family dispute. He was, therefore, not at home when yet another baby girl was born. True to her promise, the woman gave the child to her son, who went to hide it in a cave. When the father returned, he was told the child had died soon after birth but that he need not feel sorry, since once again it had been a girl.

Due to the tender care of her mother and brother, the baby in the cave grew into a maiden, whose beauty was beyond compare. But, wondering why she had to live alone in a cave, she began questioning her brother, who in the end had to tell her that she was not wanted by her father. Nabanda , as her name was, then told him that she would

rather face her father than tolerate this solitude any longer. Try as he would, Mzerunkupangwa could not make her change her mind. And so one day the two of them set out for the house of their parents, where they found that their father was absent, being busy in his millet patch.

Coming home at sunset, and seeing his son in the company of a ravishing maiden, the father first thought that she was his girlfriend and that he had brought her along to meet her future parents-in-law. But before he could congratulate his son, he was firmly told that the girl he was looking at was his own daughter. He began to tremble with fury, and going into the house brought twelve knives, the smallest the size of a panga, the largest the size of an adult man. Then he handed these to his son saying, “You have betrayed me. Take these knives and go with your sister to some other place, so that we shall not have to set eyes on one another again.”

Mzerunkupangwa and Nabanda thereupon left their parents’ home, traveling through forests and crossing many rivers until they came to a village which appeared to be completely deserted, where not even a chicken or goat could be seen. Yet everywhere were signs that its inhabitants, wherever they might be, had been here only a short time before. Making their way through this mysterious place, they saw smoke curling through the grass roof of the very last hut. They approached its door and clapped hands, calling, “Odi!” to see if there was anyone within. At first nothing happened. But when they repeated their call a second and even third time, the reed door slowly opened and an old woman appeared, bent double with age and leaning on a stick. The visitors recoiled at the sight of her, for she was not just ugly in the way some elderly people are: she had also lost an eye, an ear, an arm, and even a leg, which was why she could only

stand with the help of a stick. Their first thought was to run, but the old woman beckoned them inside and, feeling hungry and forlorn, they followed her into the hut.

Once inside, she told them a dreadful story. It appeared that a twelve-headed monster had began visiting the village every morning to devour a whole family – husband, wife, children, goats, chickens, and everything edible they might have besides. It was difficult to escape because the monster guarded every path: it let people in, but nobody could go out. And thus, in the course of one month, the monster had eaten every living being in the village, the last, in fact, the day the two travellers had arrived. If it had not been for them, it would now have nothing to eat on its next visit.

Mzerunkupangwa and Nabanda listened to this tale of horror, shaken to their bones. “But why,” they asked, “have you been spared?” “That,” the woman replied, “is because he considers me his wife, and whenever he has eaten his fill, he comes to visit me.” This seemed to make matters worse; but, at that very moment, the boy thought of the knives his father had given him: he decided to challenge the monster on the next visit.

Early the next morning they were roused by a distant rumbling, as if from an earthquake. Mzerunkupangwa, sensing it must be the monster on its way, took his knives, stepped outside, and started walking in the direction of the noise. As he walked, the noise grew louder, until he was almost deafened by it. Finally, he saw the monster itself, its twelve heads rearing up above the treetops. These heads were all different in size, the smallest itself as big as a cow’s, but the largest so enormous that a full-grown cow could easily have walked through its open jaws!

When the monster finally sighted the boy, it asked in surprise, “What have you come for?” “To kill you,” the boy answered bravely. “How could you ever do that?” the monster continued. “Even the smallest of my heads is big enough to swallow you whole.” And as if to prove the point, its smallest head swooped down on Mzerunkupangwa. Bu, to meet it, the boy quickly drew the smallest of his knives and with a well-aimed blow sent the ugly head rolling among the nearby bushes. The monster, mad with pain, now tried its second head, which met the same fate; and then its third; and so on, until only the largest was left. Now the fatal moment had come. Hissing loudly through its nostrils, its cavernous mouth gaping, it made for Mzerunkupangwa, who stood ready with his largest knife, larger, in fact, than his whole person. And just before its jaws snapped shut on him, he severed the head from the monster’s body with a single mighty stroke.

Silence fell. All was still. And, when Mzerunkupangwa looked around, he noticed that the sun was already setting. Without his realizing it, the battle had lasted a whole day. Now the one eyed woman appeared, asking him urgently to slit open the monster’s belly. This he did, and to his surprise out of it came all the women and children, cows, goats, and chickens that the creature had devoured. Mzerunkupangwa was hailed as their saviour. They made him their chief and he was given the chief’s own daughter for his wife. Nabanda married the old chief’s son, and the village prospered as never before. (Schoffeleers and Roscoe, 1985: 66-68)

APPENDIX E

Androcles and the Lion (Classical)

A slave called Androcles ran away from his master, by whom he had been most cruelly treated, and, in order to avoid capture, betook himself into the desert. As he wandered about in search of food and shelter, he came to a cave, which he entered and found to be unoccupied.

Really, however, it was a lion's den, and almost immediately, to the horror of the wretched fugitive, the lion himself appeared. The man gave himself up for lost. But, to his utter astonishment, the lion, instead of springing upon him, came and fawned upon him, at the same time whining and lifting up his paw. Observing it to be much swollen and inflamed, he examined it and found a large thorn embedded in the ball of the foot. He accordingly removed it and dressed the wound as well as he could. And, in the course of time, it healed up completely.

The lion's gratitude was unbounded. He looked upon the man as his friend, and they shared the cave for some time together. A day came, however, when the slave began to long for the society of his fellow men, and he bade farewell to the lion and returned to the town. Here he was presently recognized and carried off in chains to his former master, who resolved to make an example of him, and ordered that he should be thrown to the beasts at the next public spectacle in the theatre.

On the fatal day, the beasts were loosed into the arena, and, among the rest, a lion of huge bulk and ferocious aspect. And then the wretched slave was cast in among them.

What was the amazement of the spectators, when the lion after one glance bounded up to him and lay down at his feet with every expression of affection and delight! It was his old friend of the cave! The audience clamoured that the slave's life be spared. And the governor of the town, marvelling at such gratitude and fidelity in a beast, decreed that both should receive their liberty.

(Vernon Jones, 1912: 31)

APPENDIX F

A Hunter and his Game-Pit (African Chewa tribe)

A hunter one day dug a game-pit and then, having covered it carefully, went home. Next morning setting off to inspect his pit, he said to his mother, “Don’t start cooking yet. Today I shall come home with meat”.

But, on reaching the pit, he discovered that a man had stumbled in and was now begging to be pulled out. The hunter, however, simply covered the pit again and went home, telling his mother that it was empty.

Next day, he found that a lion had fallen in. It, too, begged for release, but once again the hunter covered the pit and went home. On the third day, he found a leopard there, and on the fourth a big snake. All four victims were still alive and kept pleading to be set free.

Finally, the man, who had been the first to fall in, said, “If four times in a row a pit yields unsuitable meat, surely the spirits must be angry”. Now the hunter took fright at this and set them all free. The man briefly thanked him and went on his way. The lion and the leopard, however, said that they would bring him plenty of suitable meat, provided he built a hut for himself in the forest, where they would deliver it. The snake, for its part, apologised for being unable to bring him meat, but promised to come to his aid, if ever he should be in trouble.

The hunter now went to live in the forest, having built a hut there, and the lion and the leopard brought him much meat, which made him a wealthy man, as he was able to sell it to the surrounding villages.

But one day the lion brought him a young woman, whom he had snatched away while she was busy pounding corn. She appeared to be the chief's daughter, and the hunter, thanking the lion, took her as his wife. Now it so happened that, on a certain day, a man came to their door asking for a drink of water. It was the same man who had fallen into the game-pit, but the hunter did not recognise him.

Bidding him welcome, he called for his wife to bring him the water, and, when she appeared, the visitor knew at once that she was the chief's daughter, whom everybody thought had been eaten by a lion. Having drunk the water and thanked his host, the visitor hurried away to tell the chief what he had seen.

That same day the chief's guards came to arrest the hunter and take the girl back to her father. The hunter was locked up to await execution. In the middle of the night, however, he felt a snake crawl over his body, and before he could cry out, it said, "Don't be afraid. I am the snake you once rescued. I have come with medicine which can cure my own bite. Should you hear that the chief has been bitten, tell him that you have medicines that can save him".

Not long after, the hunter heard a piercing cry and the sound of a great many people rushing towards the chief's house. One of the guards went to see what was happening, bringing the news that the chief had been bitten by a snake and was certainly dying. The

hunter now said that if no herbalist could be found to save the chief's life, they should call on him. The guard took the message to the chief's head-wife and she ordered him to bring the prisoner to her. She said to him, "Already many herbalists have failed to cure my husband. Is it true what I have heard? Do you have medicine that will save his life?" The hunter replied that he had. "How do I know?" the chief's wife asked.

"Only by seeing what it will do", the hunter answered.

"Since all your herbalists have failed, the chief is sure to die. As I can't possibly make him worse than he is already, kindly allow me to try".

The woman, knowing that what the hunter said was true, ordered the guards to take him to the chief's bedside, and she herself went with them.

When the hunter had applied his medicine, the fever subsided and the sick man's breathing returned to normal. The wife then ordered that the prisoner should not be executed, until her husband could speak again. In the morning, she told the chief who had cured him, and he ordered that the hunter be set free and that his daughter be restored to him as his wife. The two thereupon returned to their hut in the forest, where the lion and the leopard continued to bring them meat.

(Schoffeleers and Roscoe, 1985: 232-233)