The Father, the Son and the Ghoulish Host: A Fairy Tale in Early Sanskrit?

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> It is evident that collaboration between philology and the study of folklore is of supreme importance.
> C. W. von Sydow (1965: 241)

INTRODUCTION

The story of Naciketas was demonstrably a familiar one in early India. It is attested in four[1] versions, each at a quite distinct stage in the development of Sanskrit literature.

1.	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 3.11.8	about 800 B.C.[2]	(TB)[3]
2.	Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1	about 600 B.C.[2]	(KaU)[4]
3.	Mahābhārata 13.70	about 200 B.C.[2]	(MBh)[5]
4.	Varāha Purāṇa 193–195 ff	probably A.D.[2]	(VaP)[5]

The Naciketas story in itself is sufficiently compelling that it was made the topic of a lengthy literary treatment known as the *Nāsiketopākhyāna*.[6] This work, however, remains, on the whole, outside the scope of this study with its wholesale augmentation and complication of the plot. Interestingly, the story was not without appeal to the West, and served as the basis of a confection of Edwin Arnold, under the title *The Secret of Death: Being a Version, in Popular and Novel Form, of the Kaṭha-Upanishad from the Sanskrit*.[7]

The basic elements of the story, the functions and motifs, remain remarkably consistent over a long period of time, and, theoretically,[8] the whole of the early Brāhmaṇical-Hindu orthodox community. In the latter three of the above versions, the tale is used, in a rather common device (Winternitz 1972: 404–405), as a frame story for instruction. The homiletic content is there the main bulk of the narrative, and is a

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function of the genre of the story (See below page 241.) The variations of this material present little interest for the analysis of the tale. The identification of type, the formal analysis of the narrative, and the recognition and interpretation of patterns within the tale and among the variants are essential points. On the other hand, the story is early Indic in mood and detail, and, in fact, could be analysed on the basis of indigenous categories alone, such as, the irrascible sage, the ultra-filial son, or the unpredictable effects of the curse. All versions are in Sanskrit, a language whose role in the development of philology and, hence, the comparative method, is well known. Until now, the Naciketas tale has received almost exclusively philological treatment, although it is transparently a folktale.[9] Yet, it seems to me, that folklore methodology and philology each provides what the other lacks in the analysis of this tale to arrive at a conclusion that could have been achieved with neither exclusively.

THE NACIKETAS TALE

The content of the Naciketas tale may be outlined as follows.

1. Uśan Vājaśravasa had a son named Naciketas. (TB, KaU)
   Uddālaki[10] had a son named Naciketas. (MBh, VaP)
2. Vājaśravasa is ritually consecrated.
   In TB, KaU the sacrifice is specified as the *sarvavedas* " all-possession." In these two versions, narrative elements 1 and 2 are inverted.
3. Naciketas appears to act improperly.
   He says, " To whom do you give me " at the payment of the sacrificial fee (TB, KaU), or, sent for certain ritual articles, he says, " I don't see them." (MBh)
4. His father curses him.
   " I give you to Death." (TB, KaU) " See Yama (god of death)." (MBh, VaP)
   The retort depends on the repetition of " give " (*dā*) or " see " (*dṛś*). TB and KaU are identical verbatim to this point, save for an added verse in the latter.
5. Naciketas sets off for the realm of Death.
   TB has only " arisen " (i.e., to go, following Sayana's commentary).
   In the MBh Naciketas reverences his father and collapses.
   The VaP has the father's attempt to recall Naciketas, with Naciketas' insistence on carrying out his father's words literally.

At this point the narrative sequencing of the versions divides into two treatments. MBh and VaP proceed directly to the return of Naciketas, who then narrates the events in the realm of Death, the main content of which is revelatory, as mentioned above.[11] TB and KaU continue in temporal sequence with the third person narrative, followed here.

5a. A " voice " instructs Naciketas.[12] (TB only)
The voice repeats the father's words. (Cf. 7b)
6. Naciketas arrives at the house of Death.
Death is absent, and fails hospitality. (TB, KaU)
Death is present, and provides an appropriate guest offering. (MBh)
7. Death speaks to Naciketas.
7a. Death questions Naciketas. (TB, KaU)
He asks Naciketas, successively, what he ate on each of the three " nights" of his absence. He replies, " (your) offspring, beasts, good works,"[13] successively. (TB)
KaU is somewhat expanded (vs. 8). Death greets Naciketas, and grants him wishes. (TB, KaU)
7b. Death reasures Naciketas. (MBh only)
Death repeats the father's words (cf. 5a), and tells Naciketas he is not dead. He grants wishes.
7c. Death praises Naciketas. (VaP only)
Naciketas is merely "praised," and "released." (VaP 194.1)
8. Naciketas questions Death.
(q1) He asks for return to his father, (TB, KaU), and either:
(q2) how to attain heaven, and
(q3) what is the post-mortal state of a person (KaU), or:
(q2) how the (merit of) his positive works may be imperishable, and
(q3) how he may avoid repeated death,[14] (TB), or:
(q2) for whose enjoyment is the world of the doers of good (vs. 27), and
(q3) how others may attain this world (vs. 36). (MBh)
9. Death replies to Naciketas.
10. Naciketas returns to his father.
10a. He becomes " unaging and immortal."[15] (KaU)
10b. His father is amazed and questions him. (MBh, VaP)

Remarks Preliminary to Analysis

Before proceeding to extrinsic methods of analysis, one might inquire what this schematic representation of the tale reveals in itself. In the

first place, it is clear that the versions may not be derived from each other. Not the least reason for this observation is that such borrowing would have to ignore the homiletic material, which, as noted, forms the bulk of the narrative. In order to explain this, one may assume what might otherwise be undesirable from the standpoint of theory, namely yet another version, probably an oral version, changing over a period of time according to well-known principles, and from which each of the versions is derived in turn. This appears to confirm the initial assumption of this study to treat the story of Naciketas as such a tale.

Only the TB version in its propinquity to the KaU suggests derivation from one of the given versions. That it is indeed derived is clear from q2 and q3 in 8, where the same answer is given to each question.[16] I am reluctant to dismiss such influence on the basis of a received chronology, that is, that Brāhmaṇas are older than Upaniṣads. In this case, the point touches on *punarmṛtyu* " repeated death " (see n. 17), precisely where the direction of influence is most, I think, in doubt. Rather, it seems that the magical feature of the voice, and the brevity and simplicity of the TB version are a sounder basis on which to assert its independence from the influence of the other versions, and, indeed, its priority.

One may notice certain narrative features that appear to be crucial to the movement of the plot, and that vary in a way that is striking because of certain regularities. One of these is the repetition of the father's words, in TB by the " voice," and in MBh by Yama. A far more important point, one which may be termed a motif, as an " element in a tale having the power to persist in tradition,"[17] is the incorporation of the verb in 3, said by Naciketas to his father, into 4, the father's curse. The repetition persists, moreover, at a deep or motifemic level, while the appearance in the tale varies between " give " and " see." This motif, together with the form of the hero's name, *viz.*, *naciketas* or *nāciketa*, and the syntax (form) of the narrative (see step 5), give evidence for a division of the versions into two categories, TB with KaU, and MBh with VaP, which may be designated E, ' earlier,' and L, ' later,' respectively.

Another such feature at the motifemic level is the infernal guest-offering. It is present in L, but plays a greater role through its non-performance or delay in E. This, together with analysis of the name of the hero are discussed below.

Perhaps the most interesting element subject to change in the versions is the reaction of the son to the father's curse, that is, the relationship of steps 4 and 5 in the narrative. The background against which this must be seen is more specific than the familiar father-son

relationship. In the first place, this involves extreme sentiment. Although somewhat anachronistic, I think it not inappropriate to recall that the summit of Indian literature by popular consent is the depiction not of a battle scene, nor the founding of a city, but a scene of filial leave-taking, namely *Śakuntalā*, act 4. Secondly, in the Upaniṣads (cf. BU 1.5.14 ff. and KauU 2.15 ff.) the transmission of the dying father's essence to the son seems to be necessary for post-mortal success.[18] Thirdly, Vājaśravasa, by cursing his son, and Naciketas, by performing his words, are assuring a wretched condition for the father as a soul without the *śraddhā*, the ancestral offering.

I do not wish to speculate on the motives for this,[19] but simply to draw attention to a striking variation in the relationship of step 5 to step 4 in the versions of the narrative. In set E (TB, KaU), Naciketas simply responds obediently to his father. The TB version describes a trick whereby the deleterious effects of the curse may be overcome. What is left unexpressed in the earlier versions is articulated in the MBh, when Yama declares the father's words unfalsifiable (vs. 17).[20] In the VaP, it is the hero himself who says that he will not act contrary to his father's word.

Thus, we see at first merely that an action occurs, then that it occurs and is explained by a god, then that the hero himself gives its reason. This is probably not unrelated to the evolution of world view in the culture as a whole. Man rises vis-à-vis the gods in the Buddhist period, for example. Yet this is insufficient to explain the stages of development of this narrative feature.[21] One might just as well claim that it was the narrators themselves who were becoming more conscious of, that is, articulating their own motives.

This gradual change has a remarkable parallel in the development of the hero in the tale itself, when this is put in terms of analytical psychology. At the beginning the hero is faced with an antinomy. The father, a life-giver, is attempting to kill him. " The conscious is trying to express certain facts for which there are no conceptual categories in the conscious mind " (Jung 1984: 82). The hero, acting in accord with good Jungian method, looks no farther than the problem itself for the key to its solution—he obeys his father. This leads to the unveiling of contents of an unexpectedly positive nature. He confronts the unknown,[22] the " unconscious," with a series of articulate questions and is requited almost as if his articulateness were its own reward. " The driving force, so far as it is possible to grasp it, seems to be in essence only an urge toward self-realization."[23] Thus, the hero develops diachronically in the versions as he does synchronically in the tale itself. Interestingly, in the version in which he best expresses his reaction to his

father (VaP), the feature of his questions to Death is most attenuated.

SYNTAX IN THE TALE

The narrative order of events may be considered, independently of the specific, though not the categorical characters who fulfill them. The result of this is what has been called the syntactic structure[24] of the narrative. Such an analysis of the present very early tale highlights its relationship to the morphology of later folktales, and, perhaps, even contributes to the understanding of this analytic technique. In addition, one may compare the syntactic structure with that derived by other methods. (See below page 244).

The following gives those of the thirty-one functions according to Propp (1968: 25–45) which may be correlated with events in the Naciketas tale. Minor variations in earlier and later sets are ignored.

1. One of the family absents himself from home.
   Vājaśravasa is a consecrated sacrifier, thus separated from the daily round. Naciketas apparently accompanies him.
2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero.
   In the TB and KaU this is implied by the next step. MBh has Propps's II.2.
3. The interdiction is violated.
8. The villain causes harm to a member of the family.
   This function is present only potentially. The apparent villainy belongs to the father, but the presence of Death as an actor allows the element of villainy to be divided, with Death as the ultimate adversary, threatening life and post-mortal bliss. Nor is Death finally the simple villain of Propp's tales, but as a divine revelator exhibits a certain dimorphism which is discussed below as a feature characteristic of this tale.
9. The hero is approached with a request or command. He is allowed to go or he is dispatched.
10. The seeker agrees or decides on counteraction.
    Propp's categories predict this event only for heros who are " seekers," not for those " banished, bewitched, etc.," or, as in this case, a hero under a curse. Naciketas thus seems to fall into two categories, like Yama. Ambivalence is discussed as a general feature from page 244 below.
11. The hero leaves home.
14. The hero acquires the use of a magical agent.
    The voice instructs Naciketas (TB).
    It is typical of this tale that the magical agent is knowledge.
16. The hero and the villain join in direct combat.

Naciketas questions Death. The element of combat is vestigal. Nevertheless, the theological question is a recognized challenge in the well-known form *brahmodya* " theological debate " (see Kuiper 1960). A form of the riddle contest occurs in MBh 3.296–298 where Yudhiṣṭhira is questioned, reversing the roles of the present case, by Dharma, that is, Yama in his role as judge. (See below from page 235.)

17. The hero is branded.

This function is included only provisionally, and under the form J^2 " the hero receives a ring " (Propp 1968: 52).

It may be the best explanation for the obscure *hapax legomenon sṛṅkā*, which I translate suggestively as " trinket." This concurs, in general, with " necklace " in the commentary (Renou 1943: 7).[24A]

18. The villain is defeated.

Naciketas retains his life and gains knowledge.

20. The hero returns.

Our tale does not fit Propp's scheme without some adjustment.[25] However, that the method was constructed with no reference to the present material appears to enhance its value in this case. Resemblances between structures so widely separated in time and space must approach the fundamental.

As mentioned above, the narrative falls into two parts, the events in Death's realm, and all else. These two parts may be taken as " moves."[26] Of interest for formal analysis is that the moves may be joined in two ways:

(A(B)) and (A)(B),

corresponding to the two sets of versions. This appears akin to syntactic structures of complex sentences, the hypotactic, or, embedded, and the paratactic.

The process by which one becomes the other appears to involve permutation. But this is not admitted by the strict Proppian scheme, in which sequence is invariant (Propp 1968: 22–23). In fact, permutation is present in Propp's citations of " irregularities," such as the " inverted sequence."[27] The process observed here does not alter the meaning of the story, a criterion which seems to qualify it as a genuine transformation, on the generative model. This analysis may indicate that greater generalization is to be achieved by the admission of such processes. What seems required is the formulation of a deeper level of abstraction at which constitutents may be identified.[28]

THE TAXONOMY OF THE TALE

A further strategy in the investigation of appropriate perspectives on the the Naciketas story is found in tale taxonomy. This is a rather broad area, including the classification not only of tale elements, but the tale itself, as well as taking into account the classification of similar types of non-tales. This is simply to say that a story may belong to more than one genre. As in the previous section, comparison is a useful test of existing categories, generally formulated without regard to the present material, and may be expected to illuminate features of the Naciketas tale.

The central motif of this tale is one of very wide occurrence, that of the journey to another world (F 80 ff.). This is an extremely broad category in which, on the whole, one must consider not only the journeys of mortals to supernatural realms, but intercourse of the reverse order.[29] Naciketas' journey may also be regarded as a quest to the otherworld (H 1280 ff.), specifically a quest for knowledge. Here the investigation is detained slightly by what seems to be a small irregularity in systematicity in the Thompson motif index. A small sample will make the point. H 1278 " Quest to Devil for Answer to Riddle Question," H 1376.8 " Quest for Wisdom," and H 1388 " Quest: Answer to Certain Question," and at least fifteen other entries[30] may be generalized as quests for knowledge.

The area of investigation, however, is clear, and it is through the Motif-Index that at least two tale types[31] relevent to the Naciketas story may be discovered, Mt 461 " Three Hairs from the Devil's Beard " (Thompson 1961: 156–158), the title of Grimm no. 29, actually a quest to obtain the answers to questions, and Mt 326 " The Youth who Wanted to Learn What Fear Is " (Thompson 1961: 114–116). The lack of any reference to the tale of Naciketas in these sources, and even in those specific to India,[32] is a mark of the cogency of the motto to this study.

The material for Mt 461, as studied by Bolte (Bolte and Polívka 1913–1932, vol. 1: 282–283) reveals a clear and widely distributed subtype of Grimm no. 29 lacking the preliminary episodes, Bolte's A^1-A^2, the so-called Urias Briefe episode, in reality a separate tale, as Aarne has shown.[33] An example, cited by Bolte in full, is outlined here.

1. A woodchopper and princess fall in love.
2. The king (future father-in-law) sends the woodchopper to get three golden hairs from the devil's head. He intends to send him to his death.
3. The woodchopper is " untroubled " and assents.

4. On the way the woodchopper is asked four times " what he knows." Each time he replies, " I know all." A question is then asked which he proposes to answer later.

The question concerning his knowledge seems anomalous, and his answer inappropriate.

5. He reaches the devil's house in his absence.
6. The devil's wife says the devil will eat him.
7. He is unafraid, so the wife offers to help him.
8. The wife obtains the hairs and answers.
9. The woodchopper returns with these and becomes rich and powerful.
10. The woodchopper and princess are married.

Grimm no. 4 (Mt 326) may be outlined for the present study as follows.

1. A man has a young son who is stupid.
2. The son proposes to " learn to shudder."
3. At the father's request, the sexton tries to frighten him, and is injured.
4. The father sends the boy away, admonishing him " Tell no one from whence you came, and who is your father."
5. Later, when asked " Who are you? " he replies " I don't know."
6. The boy enters a King's haunted castle. On three successive nights he meets and defeats:
   i. savage cats who propose a card game; other animal spirits; a self-propelled bed.
   ii. a hideous man; other men who propose a game with nine dead men's legs and two skulls.
   iii. a corpse that attempts to strangle him; an old man who proposes an anvil-striking contest.
7. He wins gold.
8. He marries the princess.
9. The princess throws a bucket of cold water and minnows on him as he sleeps, and he shudders at last.[34]

THEMES AND MOTIFS

The tales are obviously different, not only in content, but in tone as well. The latter tale, for one thing, is by and large humorous. It is considered by Scherf to be a possible derivative from the type represented

by Grimm no. 33, " The Three Languages " (Mt 671).[35] In seeing the humorous treatment as secondary, he is in agreement with Propp's general rules for direction of change (Propp 1984: 88). Considering the proximity of the heroic and humorous in general in the folktale, which, as Max Lüthi expresses it, " is inclined toward the *Schwank*,"[36] it is perhaps possible to see both as present from the outset. The one, it would appear, is latent in, and easily converted to the other, like much else in the folktale.

The central figure of this genre exhibits this feature. To take an example, Lüthi finds that the hero of Rapunzel illustrates " a recurrent characteristic of the folktale. The blind man stumbles across whatever he is searching for " (Lüthi 1982: 53, 64–65). This is not far from Clouston's characterization of the fool, whose " blunders . . . sometimes lead him to unexpected good fortune," (Clouston 1888: xi) or Jung's description of the trickster, who " manages to achieve through his stupidity what others fail to accomplish with their best efforts " (Jung 1959: 135). The folktale hero is a bivalent (at least) figure. The coincidence of opposites, a hallmark of the mythic, is found in Naciketas, who in the VaP version is characterized quite pointedly as both *durmati* " stupid " (193.13) and *buddhimant* " wise " (193.14).

The tale-types also diverge in the feature which seems to best distinguish them, namely, the questions of 461 and the spook encounters of 326. In fact, this is a highly variable feature in each, and is typically expandable. In the Jātaka (257) version (in Cowell 1895–1907, vol. 2: 207–215) of the questioning episode there appear no less than fourteen questions. Scherf regards versions of 326 as structurally weak,[37] apparently on the basis of the humorous twist, and the " arbitrary " addition of ghost episodes (Scherf 1982: 268). But, by setting the tale-types side by side a principal seems to emerge for the multiplication of episodes of the same type at a specific point in the narrative. Such a principal, similar, for example, to the addition of adverbial phrases to a sentence, is clearly one of narrative syntax. In this case it allows one to observe a similarity in tale-types not superficially apparent.[38]

The aim of these episodes has to do with the central motif of the story, the journey to the other world. For the ogre's house in Mt 461 and the enchanted castle in Mt 326 cannot be seen as materially different in this respect. The purpose of the journey in both cases is to gain knowledge. In 461 the hero succeeds, while in 326 he essentially fails. This is dependent upon the nature of the sought-for knowledge, which in 461 is not found in the ordinary world, and in 326 apparently is. But, it is clear from an examination of the material given in Bolte-Polívka that the knowledge sought by the hero of 326 is at least as eso-

teric as that in 461. There exist a number of tales of type 326 in which the desired knowledge is not of fear, but of death.[39] This is precisely what Naciketas asks in his third question in the KaU version. In fact, the post-mortal condition of man, that is, the real nature of death, is the point of all the questions in all the versions.

It would be well not to forget that the hero of Mt 461 not only seeks knowledge, but is charged with the quest by a father figure who wishes him to find, not the expressed token, but his own death (Aarne 1916: 126 and 127). Thus, in the one tale-type he seeks voluntarily, " foolishly," what in the other he is sent for. As we have seen, the Naciketas tale seems to combine both aspects, a state of affairs which may have its source in what Lüthi proposes as the hero's lack of intention, and the sublimation of folklore material (Lüthi 1982: 53, 64–65).

Even in variants of Mt 326 where the quest is expressly for fear, the frightening figures are, on the whole, death-related. This is scarcely necessary unless death is the underlying notion. Furthermore, these figures, far from being " arbitrary " (Scherf 1982: 268), coincide to a remarkable degree with at least two of the three " messengers of death," familiar in Buddhist sources,[40] namely, the corpse and the old man. A third figure in Grimm no. 4 (Mt 326), that of the bisected man, does not seem to fit this pattern. It is, however, identified as " early Indic " by Scherf (1982: 268) and is found in Jātaka 489 (Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 36).

An interesting question with respect to the ambiguity of the hero's intention mentioned above is that of his courage. The woodchopper in 461 is untroubled and unafraid (steps 3 and 7), just as Naciketas in the VaP (193.22) says " I am not afraid." If Lüthi is correct regarding the psychological vacuity of the tale (Lüthi 1982: 12, 14, 16, 19 and *passim*), then the Naciketas of the earlier versions is closer to the general type. But, as we have seen, Naciketas' statement in the VaP and Yama's assurances in the MBh are simply a development of aspects latent in the earlier material. The emptied and sublimated figure of the hero can be neither unafraid nor afraid. Though one would not expect development in the direction of the latter it seems possible, at least. Mt 326, however, focusses attention on precisely this issue of ambiguity in the hero. He is neither afraid nor unafraid, but in a sense prepsychological, for fear is not yet a concept for him. In this sense, incidently, although it may be appropriate to speak of the *Entleerung* ' emptying ' of an item absorbed by the tale from another source, it certainly seems that the tale returns this item as a plenipotential figure (Lüthi 1982: 94–96).

In these tales the hero encounters an otherworldly figure who is to be either the source or the instrument of his knowledge. In 461, this is a single figure who, in the variants of this taletype, appears as a king

(as judge), god, devil, the sun, a magician, bird,[41] or, as is evident from the above example, an ogre. Aarne identifies " God or Luck " as the original, and the Devil as late (Aarne 1916: 131). But some convergence can be seen in the first three figures, at least, in an underworld power or king who acts as a judge. This is clearly the type represented without differentiation by Yama, the figure encountered by Naciketas. Yama is a golden-age king in early Iranian sources, and king and judge of the dead on the Indic side, also known as Death and Dharma. The relation of Yama to the subsequent tale-figures given above is less clear, though there seems to be evidence linking him with the sun,[42] which, however this may be, does play a role in the post-mortal condition of man.

The least apparent connection appears to subsist between Yama and the figure of the ogre. Notwithstanding, there is a striking parallel in the arrival of the hero in the absence of both from their respective dwellings. His success depends on this. By so entering, the hero represents a threat to the owner's property by, on the one hand, not partaking of his hospitality, and, on the other, partaking too liberally.

But what threat do both Yama and the ogre offer the hero? The ogre is well-known for his anthropophagous quality, and this is precisely what is expressed of Yama in these Brāhmaṇical sources.

> eṣa vai mṛtyur yad yamo 'tsyann eva nāma
> " This is Death, Yama, the one about to eat, by name." (JB 1.28)

> áthordhvám evá mṛtyúm prajā́bhyo 'ttā́ram asṛjata
> "And over the (mortal) creatures, he created Death, as an eater." (ŚB 10.1.3.1)

Yama, then, like the ogre, represents a counter-threat to the hero. Specifically, he might eat him, a state of affairs familiar from numerous tales of ogres, giants, Cyclopes[43] and the like. The stage is thus set for a struggle, but the form it takes is somewhat unexpected.

Before proceeding with this story, let us pause to reflect on a certain aspect of the interaction of hero and adversary which exhibits a particularly interesting variation. In the KaU and MBh versions of the Naciketas tale a point is made of the prompt presentation of the guest offering. One may suppose that, *au fond*, this has to do with not only good manners, essential though these may be, but also the familiar prohibition against eating in the underworld (C 211). The principle in this widespread motif would seem to be to prevent the host from successfully fulfilling the hospitality rite. In the KaU the offering is at least delayed, and in the TB version the reason for the anxiety is made plain. Naciketas

here is said to eat Yama's beasts, offspring, and good (sacred) works. In human terms, he has destroyed Yama by eating. Essentially, he has eaten Yama. The blow is decisive, but not, of course, fatal to the immortal. For his part, Yama, the eater of man, on the contrary, does not eat Naciketas. It seems that in tales of this type, with respect to the interaction of the hero and his adversary, a number of motifs appear that seem to express a single underlying theme,[44] that of eating. The hero may eat, or not eat in the underworld; the adversary may eat (he does in some versions (Aarne 1916: 124)), or not eat the hero; the hero may eat or not eat the adversary. Here a surface polymorphy fits into a pattern based on the presence or absence of specific features.

In Mt 326 the hero does not face a single adversary, but, as shown above, a series of frightful figures which, by and large, have to do with death.[45] An important aspect of the hero's struggle with these is the introduction of a game, such as cards or skittles.[46] Propp maintained that the game is a later form of the combat of hero and adversary (Propp 1984: 88). Given the archaic nature of gaming and its early appearance in ritual, this seems difficult to defend.

What evidence does the Naciketas tale provide on this issue? At first sight, one may see in that narrative the simple relationship of the authoritative teacher and the young student. KaU 1.15 tends in this direction. A closer look, however, reveals a number of anomalies. Naciketas has not approached Death as a teacher, that is, with formal reverence,[47] but has won the right to question him by cleverness. This is strongly reminescent of the situation in ŚB 11.6.2.5–10 in which Janaka wins the right question Yajñavalkya through a prior display of cleverness. The contest here is the theological contest, the *brahmodya*, and the significance of the outcome is that a figure of lower status, a *kṣatriya*, has excelled over a higher one, a *brāhmaṇa*. Most versions of the Naciketas story emphasize his youth (cf. especially TB vs. 3), and hence, one may infer, the impropriety of his engaging in a pointed verbal exchange with a superior. One may compare:

> aidôs d' aû néon ándra geraíteron exeréesthai
> ' Moreover, a young man may well be abashed to question an elder.' (Od. 3.24)

If this may be seen as a reversal of the social model, there seems to be a similar reversal of the theological norm. For in the postmortal world it is normally the late arrival who is questioned.

> ko ' si ' Who are you? ' (KauU 1.2)[48]

On what model, then, is the questioning of Yama by Naciketas based? Yama's activity in the interaction is described with the verb *vac* 'speak' and Naciketas' part is *pṛś* 'question.' Thus, we have *vaktā . . . tvādṛg* (Yama) *tvādṛṅ . . . praṣṭā* (Naciketas), 'a speaker like you' (KaU 1.22) and 'a questioner like you' (KaU 2.9). Precisely the same verbs are used by Zarathushtra to appeal to Ahura Mazda.

taṭ θwā pərəsā ərəš mōi vaocā ahurā
'I ask you this; tell me truly, 0 Ahura.' (Y 44.1 ff.)

Combination with *θwāvant* 'like you' (Ahura Mazda) and *mavant* 'like me' (Zarathushtra) allows one to observe here the vocabulary of a form of at least Indo-Iranian provenience, in which a mortal questions a god. Kuiper observes, apropos of Yt 13.16, that "[*pṛšti-*], the dispute in which only one's quick wit can lead to victory, may be compared to Ved. *pṛṣṭhā* " Rätselfragen " RS. IV.2.11, X.89.3 and to *prāś-* " (assertion in) a dispute."[49]

Given the context of the *brahmodya* adduced above, one is strongly reminded of the riddle contest. A fine example of this is found in MBh 3.296–298, in which the Paṇḍavas are struck down, one by one, by a crane who refuses to let them drink from a lake before answering his " questions " (*praśnān pṛcchataḥ* 3.297.11). Yudhiṣṭhira arrives last at the scene, sees his dead brothers, and, when he receives the same challenge, he first responds,

pṛcchāmi ko bhavān
'I ask, who are you?' (MBh 3.297.13 (cf. vs. 17))

At first the crane identifies itself as a *yakṣa* 'spirit.' Yudhiṣṭhira then successfully answers the riddle questions (*praśna*) of the crane. He receives boons, including the revival of his brothers.[50] Yudhiṣṭhira once again asks the crane who he is, and is finally told that his adversary is Dharma, his " father," (MBh 3.298.6 and 24) who, as mentioned above is none other than Yama. The questioning here is thus the inverse of that of Yama by Naciketas.

In this section a number of features of tale-types 461 and 326 have been found to present similar underlying aspects and in these to be closely allied with the tale of Naciketas. There is a syntactic similarity in the multiplication of episodes of a similar type. But the more important relationship is found in the seeming elaboration in varied ways of features latent in an earlier type, although precise historical development has not been considered here. Not the least interesting relation-

ship discovered in these tales is that of inversion, for example, of comic and heroic, or of the questioning of the otherworld figure and the hero. If these tales are in fact related, one may inquire after the motivation for these alternations. Ultimately, this probably has to do with the meaning of the tale. Before turning to this, I will consider in greater detail the figure of the hero, in whom some inverse aspects are most pronounced.

The Sanskrit Name *Naciketas*

Consideration of the hero in the previous section resulted in the picture of a figure embodying a number of contradictory aspects with regard, for example, to his comic or heroic nature, volition or compulsion, courage or fear. Now I shall turn to another aspect of this figure, the one that seems to be most central to the story. This is the question of the innate widsom or intelligence of the hero, who undertakes a quest for knowledge. This feature is nowhere more clearly present than in the name " Naciketas," which is derived from *cit* ' know.' The problem of the interpretation of *naciketas* is a philological one. But the hypothesis is drawn from well-known data of folklore research.

In the above tale of the woodchopper (Mt 461), the hero, before being charged with the questions he will ask his adversary, is asked what he himself knows. He replies, " I know all." This is certainly a perplexing statement of one who will then have to risk his life to gain the required knowledge. In a related tale, in which the Griffin is the otherworld figure, it is said of the latter that " he knows everything " (Grimm no. 65. Cf. Lüthi 1982: 44 and 45 n. 18). The statement here seems quite reasonable. Is the claim of the woodchopper then derived from that which may be imputed to the Griffin? Or, to put it another way, do we explain a statement which does not make sense by locating a context in which it does?[51] Solution by this method would gain little in any case, since one would still have to explain what motivated the transfer of the trait from the original to the subsequent context.

If the hero of Mt 461 " knows everything," things are expressed quite differently by the hero who sets out to learn fear in Grimm no. 4. His father sends him forth with the admonition to " tell no one whence you came, nor who is your father." Later, when asked " Who are you," he replies, " I don't know." The ambiguity here is patent. On the one hand, he doesn't even know his name; on the other, he gives his name as " I don't know." The latter is a familiar motif, even forming the basis of a separate tale type.[52] A usage is found in the Afanas'ev collection expressed in terms essentially identical to those in Grimm no. 4. The hero of the Russian tale, despite his sobriquet, shows signs of

subtle insight.[53]

To complete the evidence on the knowledge or claim to knowledge of the hero, we now turn to the consideration of the etymology of the name *naciketas*. It is noteworthy that it occurs once (KaU 6.18) without the final-*s*, giving the alternation *naciketas-*, *naciketa-*. The thematic vowel stem is not a Prakṛtism as Weller (1953: 20 n. 3) suggested, but is good Vedic, where a compound in-*a* may develop final *-s*, as *viśvá-bharasam* (*agnim*) RV 4.1.19b (Wackernagel-Debrunner, III, sec. 149 b). The *vṛddhi* derivative *nāciketa* is thus quite regularly derived from *naciketa*. Renou (1943, note to KaU 1.1) suggested derivation with an "archaic preverb" **na*. He, correctly, I believe, compares *návedas* 'knowing.' *Na* from **ana*, (Mayrhofer 1956–1976, s.v. *návedas*) not Renou's *anu*, is possible, given *(a)pinadh* and similar (Wackernagel-Debrunner, II, 1 sec. 29 b). This might be acceptable, were it not for the weight of evidence from the analogues of the Naciketas tale. Whitney suggested derivation from *na ciketa* "I do not (or: he does not) know."[54] But, as far as I know, he was never followed, perhaps because he labeled this "irregular and odd." He did not elaborate, and was perhaps referring to forms of the type *napuṃsaka* for expected **apuṃsaka* (P. 6.3.75). In fact, "Komposita aus Sätzen [compounds from sentences],"[55] though not regular, are not rare. See, for example, *māṃ-paśya*, the name of a plant used by women as a love charm, from *māṃ paśyet* "May he look at me' or *kiṃ-kara* 'servant' from *kiṃ karavāṇi* 'What should I do?' Such formations are frequently made with thematicized tense stems, as *ko-jāgara* a certain festive full-moon night when Lakṣmi calls *ko jāgarti* 'Who is awake?' *Naciketa* thus follows this paradigm. A final link between *náveda(s)* and *naciketa(s)* may be found in the usage of the former. Three of seven occurrences (RV 4.23.4 (cf. 2); 5.12.3; 1.165.13), well above a chance ratio, occur in the context of questioning.[55A]

How is it that a hero who comes to possess a vision of the post-mortal nature of man is identified with a name meaning "I don't know"? Both *naciketa(s)* and *náveda(s)* occur in the context of the questioning of a god by a mortal, the latter epithet being applied to either god or man. Furthermore, we know that either god or man may initiate a testing of the knowledge of the other. Hence, it might be more accurate to assign to these terms the general sense of "seeking knowledge." The one who is *náveda(s)* or *naciketa(s)* does not at present know, but is in precisely the correct frame of mind to become knowledgeable. While "I don't know" may not seem to characterize Naciketas after receiving a divine revelation, it arguably applies beforehand.

But we need not make the ancient's excuse for him. It is always better to let the texts speak for themselves. Fortunately, they are not

silent in this point, for in the Upanisadic milieu of Naciketas, the claim to knowledge is specifically stated as evidence of ignorance.

> avijñātaṃ vijānatāṃ vijñātam avijānatāṃ
> ' It is unknown by those who (think they) know. It is known by those who do not (think they) know.' (KeU 2.3cd)[56]

The very statement to " know all " is ambivalent. In a sense, it really implies its opposite, a self-contradictory statement, as in the familar liar paradox. It is not surprising, then, to find ambivalence in the name and character of Naciketas, who thus embraces in one figure the heroes of tale types 461 and 326, that is, to know all, and to not know at all. The statements of these heroes are, of course, themselves ambivalent. It would appear that these are simply realizations of the same underlying theme, that of knowledge (see note 44). The tradition did not preserve Naciketas ' name, however. Even by the time of the MBh version, this had become *nāciketa*,[57] in which the correct etymology was no longer apparent.

With a name meaning " I don't know," Naciketas falls into a category of heroes with misleading names (K 602), that is, essentially anonymous or pseudonymous figures. The latter is also a feature of the apocalyptic genre, as Collins has found.[58] There the feature is well illustrated by the figure Allogenes ' Stranger,' who receives his revelation in the Gnostic text of the same name.[59] The results of studies such as that of Collins are particularly valuable to the generic aspect of the Naciketas tale, since it does not refer to Indic materials. One may thus see this tale standing at the intersection of two genres, the Märchen and the apocalypse, with a clear development from the former to the latter in the earlier to later versions of the tale.[60] In view of the thesis of this study, that Mt 461 and Mt 326 are related to the Naciketas tale, it is interesting to note that the denouement of some variants of 326 involve an infernal vision (Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 35).

Anonymity may be a feature of the otherworld journeys not only of men, but those of gods as well. In MBh 1.92.2, Śantanu's father instructs him that a beautiful woman will aproach him, and he must not ask " who or whose she is." The woman is actually Gaṅgā descended to the mortal plane, a *descensus incognitus* analogous to that of Naciketas. In the VaP version, he is said to be " praised " (194.1) before his return, giving thus an *ascensus gloriosus*, or precisely the pattern found by Kroll in a wide-ranging comparative study centered on Christian and Gnostic evidence in Late Antiquity.[61] In fact, if Kroll is correct in his hypothesis of the " demonization of the cosmos," that is, the homologization of

the mortal world to the underworld, the Naciketas tale is material for the study of the Christ legend itself.

MEANING IN THE TALE

Finally, one may approach the tale of Naciketas, and its analogues at the level of meaning. I have examined the narrative structure, that is, the pattern of actions, as well as the features of the characters, that is, the pattern of the actors. By examining the combinations of these, at a somewhat more abstract level, one may seek to find a pattern of meanings.

After the above discussion, even the most superficial glance at the Naciketas tale cannot fail to reveal what appears to be a truly Heraclitan *palíntonos harmoníē* (Kirk and Raven 1971: 193), the harmony ('joining') produced under the tension of opposites. The characters do not act as expected. The usual never happens. The story appears to proceed by a series of inversions of the normal.

A father, who in early Indian thought is said to give birth to his son,[62] here is the agent of his death.[63] The son, however, far from simply dying, becomes immortal, or at least acquires the secret of post-mortal existence. Yama, who may usually be expected to bring about one's death, returns Naciketas to life, that is, gives birth to him, becoming a sort of father (Cf. Manu 2.148). Naciketas, as the stranger, should receive the guest-offering, but he eats nothing. Yama is the devourer of men, but it is Naciketas who can claim to have eaten Yama's substance (see above). It is expected that Naciketas will be questioned in the post-mortal world (see above), but it is he who questions. Naciketas is he who "doesn't know," but he knows specifically what men do not (KaU 1.20). His father is apparently his teacher, but it is Yama who really instructs him.

The picture that this story presents is starkly bipolar: the world of life and the world of death, whose primary representatives are the father and Yama, respectively. Naciketas travels or alternates between them. Hence, he is what in Lévi-Strauss' model is a mediating figure.[64] The antithetical nature of the two worlds he mediates is reflected in the contradictions in Naciketas' character, and reflected in the heroes discussed above. One cannot speak here of cause and effect. Nor is it apparent the contradictions are "overcome."[65] Nor would I wish to characterize the type of thought presented in this tale "by the assertion that contradictory relationships are identical inasmuch as they are both self-contradictory in a similar way."[66] It may safely be said that here we are presented with a series of coincidences of opposites, or, perhaps, one grand such coincidence.[67] If a reason is sought for such a construct, one may reflect, with Jung, that here is an attempt of the

human mind to depict itself (Jung 1959: 149). After all, in that effort antithetical categories, subject and object, are inverted.

Remarks for Further Discussion

There is certainly a great deal more that one might wish to investigate in the Naciketas tale. The overt lack of the feminine is striking. In fact, without the final wedding, Naciketas does not fit into the fairy tale category (Mt 300–749). But, the versions here have been presumed to be literary adaptations of an oral tale. Did the original contain a female figure? Is a female figure necessary to the category, given such tales as Naciketas? In a study of Norse material, Ellis noted that " the winning of a bride in stories of the supernatural world need not necessarily be something separate from the pursuit of wisdom."[68] Is wisdom, then, the equivalent of the bride? The Reeses reach a like conclusion that " ' Wooings ' are thus a variant of the quest for the ' treasure hard to obtain ' " (Rees and Rees 1961: 271). The relationship of ' difficult tasks ' to marriage tests was noted by Meletinsky, who went farther in stating " numerous folktale motifs . . . reflect more or less reconstituted *umgedichtete*, current or past marriage and wedding customs " (Meletinsky 1974: 61). Yet Propp himself noted that the wonder tale may end with " monetary reward or some other form of compensation in place of the princess ' hand " (Propp 1968: 64, his function 31.6). It seems that there are distinct final rewards in the tales, namely, a spouse, wealth, or knowledge, while these may sometimes be associated, for example, in the use of riddles as a marriage test (Sternbach 1975: 31–33).

Given the theme of wisdom, the relations of father and teacher, so prominent in the tale, are also worthy of further thought. Both Vājaśravasa and Yama are Naciketas' teachers, and both, in a sense are his fathers. What's the difference between them? Yama is also a host, and a ghoulish one (a ghost) at that, who may benefit one, if he doesn't eat him. Ogres, moreover, are famously stupid (G 501). On the part of the father, one may ask if the VaP version, for example, over-protests or speaks ironically in pointing out his learning (193.11). It is presumably the father who gives Naciketas his name, and calls him " stupid " (VaP 193.13). He himself is, then, if Naciketas is not. The ambiguous name of the son seems to reflect a feature of both the father and the host.

Although comparison is used, the approach of the present study is not, of course, the comparative method. The material is too scanty to confirm broad patterns. But there are comparative implications, in seeking the ultimate relation of established taletypes. The discussion has been limited to Mt 326 and 461, but could have included others (See

note 43 and Mt 812, 851, 927, etc.). Moreover, results of standard comparative studies may be affected by the adduction of any new data. Thus, Aarne's finding of the religious-moral questions in the Southeast and East European group of Mt 461 as secondary (Aarne 1916: 152, 146, 150) should be reconsidered in view of the eschatological content of Naciketas' questions.

But this study is centered, after all, in a very small item—the etymology of Naciketas' name. Standard philological inquiry is based on the test of " making sense " of the term under investigation in context. But, names and epithets are notoriously insensitive to context. This study has attempted to take account of a context other than the simply discursive. If Naciketas is a folktale hero, the sense his name makes must be that of the folktale. Hence folktale methodology, or rather, methodologies combine with philology in a joint result. This result would be interesting if only for the less than felicitous relations of these disciplines in the past.

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
AU	Aitareya Upaniṣad
AV	Atharva Veda
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
Il	Iliad
JUB	Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa
KaU	Kaṭha Upaniṣad
KauU	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
KeU	Kena Upaniṣad
Manu	Mānavadharmaśāstra
MBh	Mahābhārata
Mt	Tale-type
Od	Odyssey
P	Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhāyī
RV	Ṛg Veda
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
TB	Taittrīya Brāhmaṇa
VaP	Varāha (Vārāha) Purāṇa
Y	Yasna
Yt	Yašt

NOTES

1. The commentarial tradition admits the possibility that RV 10.135 may contain material for the Naciketas story. See Sāyaṇa *ad* RV 10.135.1. This cannot be dismissed as an " anachronism " with Geldner 1951, *ad loc.* On the other hand, the

imaginative procrusteanism of Velankar 1968 is hardly acceptable. The question of whether or not, or to what extent the RV material falls within the Naciketas cycle must be based on an analytical understanding of the latter, the aim of this study.

2. The dates are far from exact, and are given so that an impression may be formed. The relative chronology is more certain. On dating texts of the latter type, see van Buitenen 1973: xxiii–xxv and Winternitz 1972: 520–521 and especially Rocher 1986: 100–103.

3. Godabole 1898: 1379–1384 and Mitra 1890: 262–264. The text occurs in a section of the Brāhmaṇa devoted to explication of the Nāciketa altar.

4. The main elements are contained in the first *vallī*, with the conclusion given briefly at 6.18. The translations of Renou 1943 and Geldner 1928 are particularly valuable. A bibliography of translations is contained in Rocher 1972: 12–14. See also Faddegon 1923, Whitney 1889 and Gonda 1977. An extensive analysis of the text is given by Weller 1953.

5. The texts are in Dandekar 1963: 386–394 and Gautam 1974: 432–444.

6. See Belloni-Filippi 1902–1904 for text, translation and commentary.

7. 1885, London: Trübner, viii, 406 pages. Mentioned by Scherman (1892: 10 n. 1). Like Scherman, I have not seen this work.

8. The texts are intended for classes that broaden in the order given to finally include women and lower classes. Such prescription may represent an ideal, but is interesting in view of distinct changes in the tale from version to version.

9. This is taken as an axiom of this study, since the fact that the story submits readily to folktale categories and analysis is, of course, insufficient to demonstrate that it was a folktale. The results are thus pragmatic. This study comes about a century after Whitney presented his work on the KaU to an 1886 meeting of the American Oriental Society, in which he declared the Upaniṣad " stands on something the same plane as, for example, the *Volksmärchen* of Grimm " (Whitney 1889: cv). Keith may have had this in mind when he said the story of Naciketas was " in the true spirit of the fairy tale " (1925: 440). Whitney, however, apparently did not take this insight seriously, for he went on to say that the story was " originally " one " fabricated . . . merely to explain some sacrificial act or name."

10. In KaU 1.11 Vājaśravasa is identified by the patronymic Auddālaki ' Scion of Uddālaka.' Gonda (1977: 60–61) notes that this may apply to Naciketas as well.

11. It is perhaps noteworthy that this is the form of the Pahlavī story of Ardā Wīrāz. See Belardi 1979 for text and translation of chapters 1–2.

12. Following Sāyaṇa, against Whitney 1890: 90.

13. " Good works " in this context refers to sacred rites. For " offspring and beasts " as an expression of personal worth, cf. ŚB 2.1.3.8, 12.5.1.14–16 (appropos VS 23.20), AB 7.17.7 (var. ŚŚS 195.2), RV 5.41.17, 3.54.18, 10.35.12, AV 9.4.20, and numerous others.

14. *Punarmṛtyu* ' death again ' is a technical term of Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads.

15. The inclusion of this expression may be regarded as an extremely archaic trait. Cf. Homeric *agḗrō t'athanátō te* (I1 17.444), *athánatos kaì agḗrōs* (Od 5.218), Avestan *azarəšəmtəm amərəšəntəm* (Yt 19.11), as well as *ajarāmara* in the MBh, *ajarāmaravat* ' as if unaging and deathless ' in the Hitopadeśa, and Pāli *jarāmaraṇa*, a positive expression of the formula as the final member of the " dependent origination " series. As may be seen from this list, the presence of such a feature is useless for dating.

16. Already noted by Deussen (*in* Belloni-Filippi 1902–1904: 44 n. 3) to support

" non esser questa la versione originaria del racconto." Deussen (*in* Keith 1925: 440), however, seems to have considered the TB version to have descended from the KaU version, rather than both from an oral source.

17. Thompson 1977: 415. The motif is still common. As Whitney (1889: cv) notes " one can easily imagine the equivalent answer of an impatient father of the present day." Is this a case of persistence, or polygenesis?

18. This may be the basis for the sixth *gāthā* of the story of Śunaḥśepa (AB 7.13–18), which implies that the father is reborn *as* his son.

19. One may wish to have recourse to psychoanalytic statements to elucidate the father-son relationship here. The latter is complicated by the fact that Naciketas also appears to be his father's student. In fact, teacher and father are not mutually exclusive categories, the term *guru* ' elder ' serving for both. Cf. BU 6.2. Note also the well-known *guru-talpa* ' teacher's bed ' penance, in which adultery with the teacher's wife is expiated by self-castration (Manu 11.105). If one may apply the principle that the severity of the punishment is inversely proportional to the propensity for the act, the situation must have had great potential. In the present case, however, this speculation, interesting though it may be is unnecessary to the study. For a discussion of related material, with differing conclusions, see Ramanujan 1983 and Goldman 1978.

20. Note that the MBh version also includes a rationalization of the father's curse on the basis that he was irritable through " hunger and thirst " (vs. 6a). It should be mentioned briefly that these may also refer to spirtual categories, exemplary of the mortal condition. See Insler (1975: 216) on Y 33.8.

21. Velankar (1968: 767) correctly compares the ultra-filial adherence of Rāma to his father. The question of influence is left open here. Even were one to " explain " Naciketas on the basis of Rāma, it would only postpone the real explanation of the action.

22. This is one of the basic themes of the story. See below, page 241.

23. From " The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious " in Campbell 1971: 134.

24. Alan Dundes, introduction to Propp 1968: xi.

24A. In the most recent consideration of this term, H. W. Bodewitz 1985 attempts to positively identify the object as the *rukma*, or gold disk placed within the altar in the Agnicayana rite.

25. The task of applying the structure to other material was anticipated by Propp 1968: 99–100.

26. Propp's *xod* ' move (as in chess), movement ' (Propp 1968: 92).

27. Propp 1968: 107. Cf. also p. 94, where that " which is usually placed in the middle of the tale, is placed before the main complication," and pp. 88–89, where the " transposition of forms " is introduced. The notion of assimilation (pp. 66–70), defining apparently similar events in terms of their " consequences," that is, the position in the hypothetically invariant structure, appears to beg the question somewhat, and to be particularly susceptible to re-analysis as permutation.

28. Cf. Anatoly Liberman's introduction to Propp 1984: xxxii, " . . . to save Propp's idea, we need a much deeper theory of narrative decoding . . . "

29. For an analysis that makes the one depend on the other, see J. Kroll, *Gott und Hölle, Der Mythos vom Descensuskampfe*, in Culianu 1983: 22–23.

30. H 1276, 1282–5, 1292, 1376.1–1376.8, 1382.1–1382.2.1, 1388–1388.1, 1393. Inconsistency may be inevitable in a work of this scope, but the aim of taxonomy is lost, it seems, if generality is lacking.

31. Actually, the search is not quite this straightforward. Under H 1278 is cited Grimm n. 29, and under H 1284, in which Bolte-Polívka Vol. 1: 292 is cited, which occurs in the discussion of Grimm no. 29, one finds reference to Mt 461 (as well as under H 1292). H 1376.1 and 1376.2 include a similar problem.

32. See Thompson and Balys 1958 and Thompson and Roberts 1960. Note the limitations given in Thompson 1961: 7.

33. Thompson 1961, tale-types 461 and 930. The combination is considered in detail by Aarne 1916.

34. On both tales see Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 276–293 and 22–37; Scherf 1982: 369–375 and 267–271. An analysis of twenty-three Low German versions with information on informants was made by Wisser 1924. Wisser's analysis and additional versions may be found in Ranke 1955.

35. Scherf 1982: 267. Grimm no. 33, in fact, contains an additional move, the main and final development. Therefore, it seems an unlikely source, on formal grounds. This tale does, however, combine the heroic and comic in a very piquant manner. Note that the comic conclusion may be lacking in variants of Mt 326 (Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 24), while some versions of 461 are humorous (Aarne 1916: 127).

36. Lüthi 1982: 96. Cf. also p. 114. Lüthi does not go this far. But much of what he says throughout this inspired work regarding the sublimation and *Entleerung* (p. 73) of folktale elements, his cautions against the analytical, " conscious, one-sided interpretations " (p. 96), and the union in the folktale of " decisive poles of existence," points in this direction.

37. Scherf 1982: 267. But on p. 271, he concedes a " firmer structure," to the ghost episodes through their absorption into the tale. Scherf's implied association of structural weakness with humor seems unjustified.

38. It would not be contradictory to state that there may be an optimum or preferred number of formal repetitions. The preference for three may be such an optimum. Literary applications seem less subject to this constraint, and the process accounts for the multiplication of questions in the Jātaka, and also, for example, the multiplication of infernal visions in the Purāṇa, or similar apocalypses, for that matter. See Aarne 1916: 175.

39. Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 29, n. 1. Cf. motifs H 1376.1 Quest: learning what death is; H 1376.2 Quest: learning what fear is; H 1376.2.1 Quest: learning what fear of death is.

40. Warren 1977: 255–259. Cf. Mt 335 Death's Messengers. Three messengers to the hero, the first a priest " der krumm und bucklig war," the final one being the king himself, are retained explicitly in a variant of Mt 326 (Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 27).

41. Aarne 1916: 116 (king) (note Jātaka 257 for king as judge); 122, 124 (god); 122, 126–127 (devil); 122, 125 (sun); 118, 123 (magician); 123 (bird).

42. See Oldenberg 1977: 532 and 282 n. 4 *contra*. But see Sāyaṇa on AV 20.25.5c. The association of the sun with death is quite certain later. See, for example, ŚB 2.3.3.7–9. Cf. also KauU 1.4 for encounter with the sun after death. The sun is closely associated with Agni ' Fire ' in early Indic thought, and the bird figure may be noted in Agni in avian form as psychopomp (ŚB 10.5.5.5 and 6.1.2.36). On the bird as an ominous creature, note also the resolutions of Mt 326 involving birds (Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 32 and 34; Scherf 1982: 269).

43. Note the parallels with the Cyclops episode (Mt 1137): setting in a strange land, arrival in adversary's absence, eating his possessions in his absence, questioning by adversary, use of equivocal name, adversary is man-eater, all male characters.

44. " Je comprends par le mot thème l'idée fondamentale exprimée par un motif ou un assemblage de motifs " (Christensen 1925: 8). With this term I propose to hold to the letter of Christensen's statement, though not, I think, his intention in this early proposal for motif-indexing. Christensen was speaking of the theme of a tale, which he said, may have one or no theme (p. 8). He did not make his idea clearer when he opposed it to the highly subjective notion of " interest " (p. 9). Here I wish to restrict the term to the idea underlying a motif or motifs. The theme of knowledge, for example, underlies the motifs of the wise helper or the fool. The theme of eating is expressed by numerous motifs. Themes are probably expressable by a word. But, given the phenomona of synonymy, antonymy, paraphrase and nuance, all of which should be embraced by the theme, it is inadvisable to frame this so positivistically as Edgerton's "An idea is a word or a phrase " (Edgerton 1942: 151). Since what is intended here seems to be a deeper structure than the " motifeme," and to distinguish it from other usages of the term " theme," one may think of this notion as the motif-theme, which is, after all, an " emic " category.

45. So also Rölleke 1979: 201 (n. 38). Rölleke (p. 200) insightfully notes that comparison with Mt 326 allows one to see Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* not merely as a simpleton, but, more precisely, as a simple youth who does not know the fear of death. However, when Rölleke points to Parzival's lack of the experience of love in his encounter with Jeschute, he may be anticipating his view of other sources (see pp. 201–202). Comparison with Naciketas permits one to refine the definition of Parzival's character a step further. Both are ingenuous figures who adhere to the letter of their instructions—literal fools (J 2450–2499). The Jeschute episode has nothing to do with love or its lack. Parzival " simply " follows his mother's instructions (*Parzival* 131.29 and 132.24). He also follows instructions (171.17) literally in his failure to ask crucial questions in the Grail castle (239.10 and 247.27–30), presenting, at first, the inverse of Naciketas' questioning.

46. Grimm no. 4 in the first edition was " Gut Kegel- und Kartenspiel." Cf. Bolte-Polívka, vol. 1: 29, 32, 34, 36 and Scherf 1982: 270, also Wisser's elements d and e.

47. See BU 6.2.4 or KauU 1.1 for examples.

48. Cf. mḗ tis Phaiḗkōn . . . exeréoith' hótis eíē

' Lest one of the Phaeacians . . . demand who you are.' (od 7.16–17)

The reception in the post-mortal world based to a significant extent on the hospitality rite. Note also the Cyclops' first words to Odysseus:

Ô̂ xéinoi, tínes esté

' O strangers, who are you? ' (Od 9.252)

49. Kuiper 1960: 248. Kuiper notes the relationship to the *brahmodya* (p. 248 n. 50). As Thieme (1938: 66) noted *pṛṣṭha* ' riddle question ', is found especially with *vi-ci*, which is, hence, ' solve.' It is not surprising, then, to find a hero posing similar questions whose name is transparently a derivative of *ci(t)-* ' think.' See below from page 241.

50. MBh 3.297.65, 74; 298.10, 15, 20. The boons, as numbered by the story itself, amount to three. One might also compare the appearance here of hunger and thirst (298.1) with the same in Naciketas MBh version vs. 6, and the withholding of water from a stranger with its provision in KaU 1.7. See note 20.

51. This would appear to follow from one of (namely " c ") Propp's exact criteria for distinguishing the basic form of a wondertale element from a derived form, specifically that " a form used logically is older than a form used nonsensically " (Propp

1984: 88). However, this does not seem to take into account the fact that the former could be a rationalized form of the latter, a principal implied by Propp's first criterion (a).

52. Mt 1700. This interesting group of tales must be distinguished, on the whole, from those under discussion here. Cf. also Mt 532.

53. Afanas'ev 1984, no. 296. In the French Romance *Lancelot du Lac*, Genieure (Guinevere) says " . . . vouldroye scauoir qui vous estes . . . " And of Lancelot it is said, " Et celuy dit que il ne scait." (Skeat, 1870, xlvi).

54. Whitney 1890, 91. A very close comparison is found in Russian *Neznajko* from *ne znaju* ' I don't know ' (Afanas'ev 1984, no. 295). A further possibility in the present case is that " Naciketa(s) " is a humorous variant, or joke etymology on " Śvetaketu," the name of a youth prominent in the Upaniṣads who often must assert his ignorance (KaU 1.1, BU 6.2.4). The latter's father is variously named as Āruṇi, Gautama, or Uddālaka.

55. Wackernagel-Debrunner, II, 1, sec. 123.

55A. Schindler 1985 has found *návedas* to be the result of recutting, that is, shift in the perception of word boundary in **bhutana vedasaḥ* ' be aware,' used with the " Genetiv der Sache " (p. 351). Probably this syntax is not only original but underlying in all cases, syntactically similar to *śru* ' hear ' with genitive of person, where the genitive of ' speech, word ' is understood. In this case *návedas* and *naciketas* would have different origins, the former providing analogical support for the latter.

56. On the usage of *vi-jñā* ' discern, know ' with reference to the solution of riddles, see Thieme 1938: 66. The similar statement of Socrates (*Apology*, e.g., 21 D-E) is well known. I have observed in popular sources a joking statement to the effect that adolescents (n.b., with reference to Naciketas) should undertake certain feats " while they still know everything."

57. *Nāciketa* is a term denoting a particular fire-altar in the context of whose explication the TB version of the Naciketas tale occurs. Cf. KaU 1.16–18. Further development of the name insured the complete obscurity of its original significance, for it was eventually to become *Nāsiketu*, an obvious folk etymology. This was then rationalized as the story of one who was born from his mother's nose, after impregnation through sniffing a flower. The unusual conception and birth are, however, a mark of the traditional hero, and cannot be rejected for the original oral version. See Dundes 1980: 232. For a synopsis of this story see Eggling 1896: 1253. This development may explain the apparent loss of the Naciketas tale from the oral tradition.

58. See Collins 1979. A number of features of the apocalyptic genre as described by Collins are relevant to the tale of Naciketas. These are, after Collins: 1.2.2 Dialogue " often in the form of question and answer," 1.3 Otherworld journey, 3. Human recipient, 3.1 Pseudonymity, 8.3 Otherworldly beings, 9.2 Personal salvation, 10. Otherworldly elements, 13. Narrative conclusion. A further classification is found in Culianu 1983: 5–7. Culianu adds a category to take account of the fact that the otherworld journey may take place *in corpore* or *in spiritu*. Note that the earlier versions of Naciketas do not differentiate this aspect, whereas the MBh version, like the Ardā Wīrāz story is clearly the latter.

59. Robinson 1978: 443–452. The figure of a stranger or foreigner once again appears reminiscent of the eschatological guest-host relationship. See note 48.

60. For a discussion of Indian apocalypses see Scherman 1892.

61. See Culianu 1983: 22. Culianu also gives the scheme *descensus absconditus/ ascensus gloriosus* (p. 8). The apocalyptic model cannot, of course, be applied to

Gaṅgā. But it is interesting to anticipate how this and similar tales of the fairy lover may be represented in like categories. We can certainly speak of the *ascensus absconditus* of Gaṅgā when the condition, inevitably, is violated.

62. pitur evāgre 'dhi jāyate ' He is first born from his father.' (JUB 3.8.9) Cf. AU 4.1. AU 4.4 identifies death as the individual's third birth.

63. The inverse of this is seen in the MBh riddle episode of Yama and Yudhiṣṭhira in which the former is identified as Yudiṣṭhira's *janaka*, from *jan-* ' give birth, beget.'

64. One may note the " structures of contradiction " in views of other scholars of Lévi-Strauss' method. Thus Kirk (1970: 407) sees his approach as " Platonist," while Pace (1983: 249) asserts that it is "Aristotelian."

65. Lévi-Strauss himself notes that this is " an impossible achievement " (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 229).

66. Lévi-Strauss 1963: 216. Cf. his " structures of contradiction " in Lévi-Strauss 1966: 95.

67. See Dundes 1976: 84–86 for oppositional structure in folklore. Axel Olrik's " Gesetz des Gegensatzes " refers to characterization. " The Law of Contrast works from the Protagonist of the *Sage* out to the other individuals " (Olrik 1965: 135). This does not appear to envision such figures as the wise fool, " a veritable walking oxymoron," in Dundes' words (85).

68. Ellis 1943: 184. In this connection, it may be noted that some versions contain elements, *śraddhā* ' faith ' (TB, KaU) and *vāk* ' speech ' that are feminine in grammatical gender. The latter seems especially significant in view of the scheme of *vac*: *pṛś* which is central to the situation of the tale.

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