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MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

SUN AND MOON

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No. 4

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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SUN AND MOON

6 **Fields of Force** by Martha Heyneman.
Sleeping and waking in the solar system.

14 **Journey of the Night Sun** by Martin Lev and Carol Ring.
The struggle for rebirth in ancient Egypt.

20 **Traditional Cosmology and Modern Science.**
An interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

32 **ARCS: Whispering Moon / Hollering Sun.**

42 **Between Sun and Moon** by Paul Jordan-Smith.
Notes on the lawful separation of the two natures of man.

50 **Re-storying the Adult** by P.L. Travers.
A beginning place.

54 **She Who Has No Light of Her Own** by Jonathan Omer-Man. *The teachings of the celestial spheres in the Jewish tradition.*

59 **EPICYCLES**

Sun Dreaming / Australian

Betrayal / Fang

The Coming of the Light / Cherokee

Measuring Moons / Chukchi

Born for the Sun / Navajo

68 **A Trip to the Moon** by Edward H. Schafer.
Touring space with the Taoist astronauts.

2 **FOCUS**

4 **FULL CIRCLE**

82 **CURRENTS & COMMENTS**

84 **TANGENTS**

The Calendar of Chaco Canyon by Mary Jane Lenz.
Anna Sofaer's Sun Dagger.

Doors of Vision by Frederick Franck.
Sacred art at San Zeno.

Family Virtues by Lawrence Russ.
Ingmar Bergman's Fanny and Alexander

96 **BOOK REVIEWS**

127 **CREDITS**

128 **PROFILES**

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Cover: Total solar eclipse of March 1970. Courtesy of NASA.

Inside cover: The great Sun Buddha. Japan, thirteenth century. Nara National Museum, Japan.

FOCUS

Sun and moon—what could be more familiar? In the early planning stages of this issue, we didn't anticipate any real difficulties. Modern science, after all, has learned a fair amount about the physics of the sun, and astronauts have landed on the moon. Even though their distance from us makes them appear much smaller than they are—something like a nickel and a quarter—we know the great importance of these celestial bodies in our daily round. Somehow, we know that we wouldn't have a daily round without them.

Compared to those who lived before us, however, and to traditional cultures that survive into our day, our view of the sun and moon seems impoverished. Hot gas; dusty, dead rock. Yet what if the moon sailed from our side, and the sun dimmed to darkness? There seems to be something essential lacking in our perceptions. Perhaps thinking we know so much about the sun and moon prevents us from seeing them directly, from experiencing their force and their living relationship to the earth. We hoped that by looking at myths of the sun and moon, and by examining the enormous role these bodies play in the various traditions, we might enrich our view and restore a dimension we can recognize but no longer experience.

We asked Martha Heyneman to look at

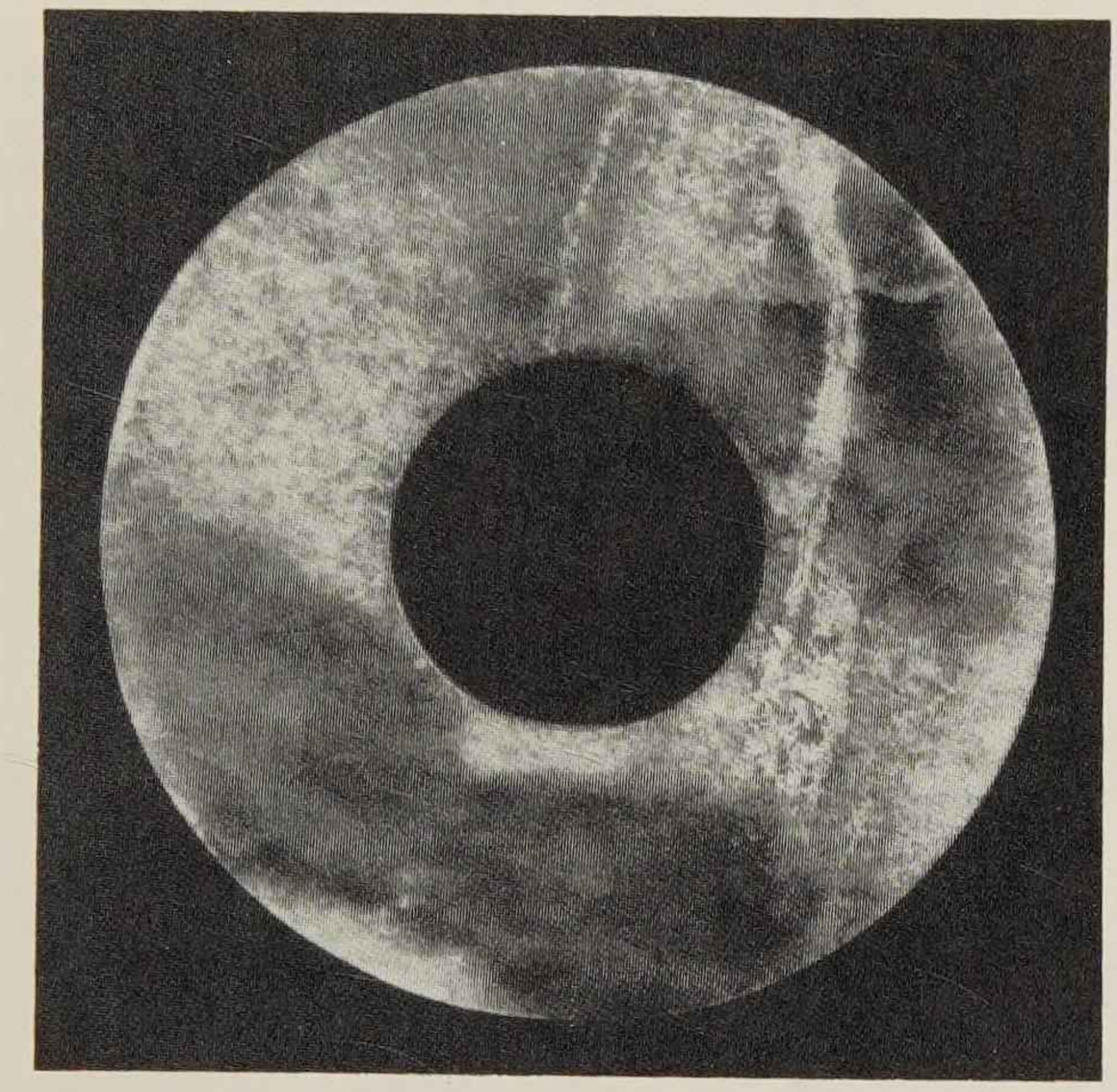
the sun, moon, earth, and earthly life from what is known about them, in the way that it is familiar to us to know something—from evidence available to our senses, amplified by scientific instruments and information limited to the intellect. Ms. Heyneman did much more than this; but simply to be reminded that energy from the sun streams out in all directions, filling the whole of the solar system—that, in fact, only one four-billionths of the sun's energy reaches the earth—brings a bracing sense of scale to human life. That there passes through the moon a delicate shiver, at its nearest approach to earth, makes our judgments about its lifelessness seem as limited as those of a flea who lands on the rough back of an elephant.

Until quite recently, the sun, moon, stars, and fire were our only apparent sources of light. In one way or another, they still are. While it is clear that the availability of artificial light is one factor that dulls our awareness of this fact, it alone cannot explain our current indifference. A hymn of praise and adoration to the sun or moon feels false on our tongues, for reasons deeper than we suspect. In our interview with him in this issue, Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr points out that in traditional cosmologies we enter a universe in which "there is no absolute distinction between what we call physical light and the divine light. They are grades of the same reality, which goes from the physical to the psychological to the spiritual to the divine." From this perspective, the light of the sun and moon and human consciousness derives from the same source. Our faculties for apprehending these correspondences have atrophied, but, Dr. Nasr says, even now it is this perception which sustains the celestial world as the symbol for the spiritual.

It is from this perspective, of levels of light from the divine source through the sun, reflected by the moon and sparking human consciousness, that we can prepare ourselves to encounter solar and lunar gods and goddesses and the myths and symbols connected with them. It is from this perspective that Martin Lev and Carol Ring write, in their article about the journey of the night sun in ancient Egypt, that the sun that sinks beyond the horizon sinks not only beyond our sight but beyond our vision and understanding. And it is from this point of view that we can ask with them, "What is Ra, who like an eye of vision descends into his own body, illuminating the darkness of his own being, and bringing to it the light necessary for a new birth?"

—Lorraine Kisly

FULL CIRCLE / A Readers' Forum



We encourage readers to use this space to share their thoughts and questions, either in response to a particular article or in order to raise matters of general interest. We are looking for letters which will help to open new ideas, and we will offer a free back issue for every contribution we publish.

Since you ask (in PARABOLA's Spring, 1983 issue, Vol. VIII, No. 2), may I suggest a subject for some future issue: *Hands*, or if you prefer, *The Gesture*? As an artist, sculptor, potter, and sometime poet, as well as armchair psychologist, I am constantly reminded that *every* use of hands is a language in itself, independent of or amplifying the verbal one, and often eloquently explicating inward meaning, indeed accurately if unwittingly sketching a telling self-portrait.

The subject presents a rich field for exploration, enough to fill more than one quarterly issue of PARABOLA. The constellation of aspects I see includes:

Contact: the healing (or King's) touch; the friendly handshake; the grip of violence; weapon-shaking and its converse, the salute, which was originally the knight's up-visor, open-handed signal of peaceful intention. (Anent the handshake, remember George MacDonald's Curdie, who was given the power to divine by a handclasp a person's inner creature?)

Explication: sign language; amplification of speech in gesture; signification of "right-brain" processes: art works, writing (including the psychic manifestations of planchette and automatic writing), music, mime, the symbology of the Balinese dancer's hand movements.

The agency of tools, as extensions of the hand: creative tools; destructive tools (weapons—although these have become increasingly left-brained, impersonal, genocidal).

Portraiture: not only the works of art themselves, but have you ever noticed how often in paintings and photographs of artists and writers the hands (with or without the tool of choice) are prominently displayed in close proximity to the face? It is as if the sitter is saying, "The image of who I am is incomplete without an indication of the instrumentality by which I project myself." Then, of course, before portraits but not before artists, there were the hand prints on cave walls.

Rhythms of Life gestures: that of the primitive sower of seeds—the exquisite, flowing abandon of generosity, giving as from the core of being itself. The cosmic movement of the potter's hands, throwing a pot—the growing-from-the-earth heliotropic spiral dance awakening to life. The reductive slash of the reaper, as opposed to the welcoming, parent-to-child gathering-up of the harvester. The supportive and unifying clasp of the lover. The centering juxtaposition of fingers of the worshiper or meditator in any religion.

The list could go on and on, but I'm

sure you will find your own galaxy of aspects.

Best wishes for a *Hands*-on issue of PARABOLA; and thank you for all the richly evocative issues already on hand!

Elizabeth Gilson
Danville, Vermont

I was much taken by your statement in "Full Circle" in your Spring 1983 issue (Vol. VIII, No. 2): "It is our view that human beings of spiritual attainment always have and always will respect and recognize each other." You also say that you do not doubt that men like Rabbi Steinsaltz and the Dalai Lama "are most effective when sharing insights derived from a deep-rooted relationship with their own particular tradition."

I agree with both these statements, which I read in Cheng-du, China, an ancient Taoist center, just before setting out on an early morning walk along the bank of the Brocade River.

On my walk I came upon a slender, handsome, white-haired, and goateed gentleman in rumpled China blue, deep in a magnificent ritual dance of Tai Chi. Unceasingly, softly, he moved, his own center in perfect alignment and accord with the forces of the earth.

His grace, balance, and flowing beauty gave visual proof of that great body/mind understanding which evolved through the Chinese millennia; and evidence, too, of an inner human harmony which could, surely, serve well a world today struggling to survive.

The masses in China appear to be progressing steadily at last. There are no longer starving bodies, and there are more freedoms. I think a time will come when young people will look again for spiritual nourishment, as young people in our own country are looking for it. I think the time will come when the best of the old religions will once more feed and satisfy. Taoism, a rich and great tradition, should be saved.

My sage on the river bank ceased his lonely ritual abruptly, quietly. He relaxed and smiled and became at once the center of a bubbling, questioning group of watchers, who had stood as I had, spellbound amongst a crowd of others who passed so close as to bump the old man, yet did not see.

I had left my camera behind and was not able to take the picture which I would give much to have. Still, my mind's eye will not lose the glimpse it had that morning in Cheng-du of one man's attainment of ethereal softness and spiritual understanding, attained through a "deep-seated relationship" with a particular tradition.

Ann Mactier
Omaha, Nebraska

Fields of Force

MARTHA HEYNEMAN

Et le soleil n'est point nommé, mais sa puissance est parmi nous . . .

St.-John Perse,
Anabasis

The moon hangs over me as I sleep: eighty-one million million million tons above my head. And the earth, upon whose surface I lie like a speck of dust, hangs on to the moon as they swing around each other, reflecting each other's reflected light, on their annual trip together around the sun. No other planet except Pluto has to support a satellite so large in proportion to its own size. The moon pulls the earth now toward the inside, now toward the outside of the smooth elliptical path traced by their common center of gravity, which lies some one thousand miles within the earth—three thousand miles moonward from our planet's true center—veering around inside earth's body as she makes her almost twenty-eight day-and-night spins within a single month-long circle of the moon. Spinning has made earth thick around the middle. Sun, moon, and planets tug at the bulge on her equator as if trying to bring it into the plane of her orbit, but she holds her angle, so that the rhythmic seasons continue to sweep over her, and her axis only wobbles in a slow circle, always 23.5 degrees from the vertical, her north pole pointing to one star after another, the equinoxes sliding slowly backward around the zodiac, coming full circle in twenty-six thousand years. Asleep and too small, I feel none of these pulls and tugs upon the earth. Only four times the diameter of the moon (but eighty-one times heavier), earth continues on her weaving, spinning, wobbling way, held on course by the sun's great gravity.

Through the moon, when it approaches closest to the earth, there passes a delicate shiver, always the same. No one was aware of this until the astronauts left supersensitive seismometers on the moon's surface. Something inside her moves. She is not as dead as we thought. On her surface, however, except for an occasional soundless pock and puff of dust as a meteorite strikes her, nothing whatever happens. The astronauts' footprints are still there in the moondust, and will be there in a million years.

As I sleep, the moon is tugging at everything on her side of the surface of the earth. She sucks on the very rocks. As she passes overhead the earth's crust rises a few inches beneath her and is elsewhere compressed, kneaded as a cat kneads your stomach. The water level in wells far inland rises and falls in opposite phase to the tides of the sea. Moon and sun raise tide waves sometimes three miles high in the ionosphere. As the streams of conductive ions move through earth's magnetic field, electric currents are induced, and attendant tides of magnetism, which for all I know are ebbing and flowing through my motionless body on the bed.

As I sleep, the solar wind is streaming out of the sun. The earth holds her magnetosphere before her like a shield. It streams out behind her like the garments of a mother in a hurricane. Except for a few hours at the full, when it passes through the earth's magnetotail, the moon stands naked in the full blast, recording the sun's history in her rocks, trailing behind

her a cone of absence which may be the most nearly perfect vacuum in the solar system.

As I sleep, sun and moon—working together or at cross-purposes—are dragging on all the oceans of the earth, to their seamed and jagged depths, moving billions and billions of tons of water, creating the conditions for the world between the tides: that world that so possessed us through the long summer days, as we stood gazing out to sea, following the exhalation of the ebbing tide; or squatted over pools in the rock, looking down at the display of earth's inexhaustible imagination: starfish, hermit crab, sea urchin, sponge, the delicate perilous tentacles of the sea anemone; or, suddenly noticing furtive fingers of sandy water coming and going under our feet, stood up and ran before the grumbling, rock-leaping mass of the tide's return.

Tidal friction is slowing the earth down. The night grows longer. As she slows earth down, the moon, like a growing child, moves farther away.

I stir in my sleep. A tide of awakening, its advance edge bordered with birdsong, is moving over the continent. The sun, our only savior from entropy, slowly infuses its musical energy into everything on this side of the earth. Suddenly I feel like getting up, like going to work, like lifting up out of the mess of chaos some measure of order and beauty. If the weight of my body and the aimless drift of my psyche are overcome, it is a triumph of the sun. I sit up. I sing no hymn. I dress and go down to breakfast.

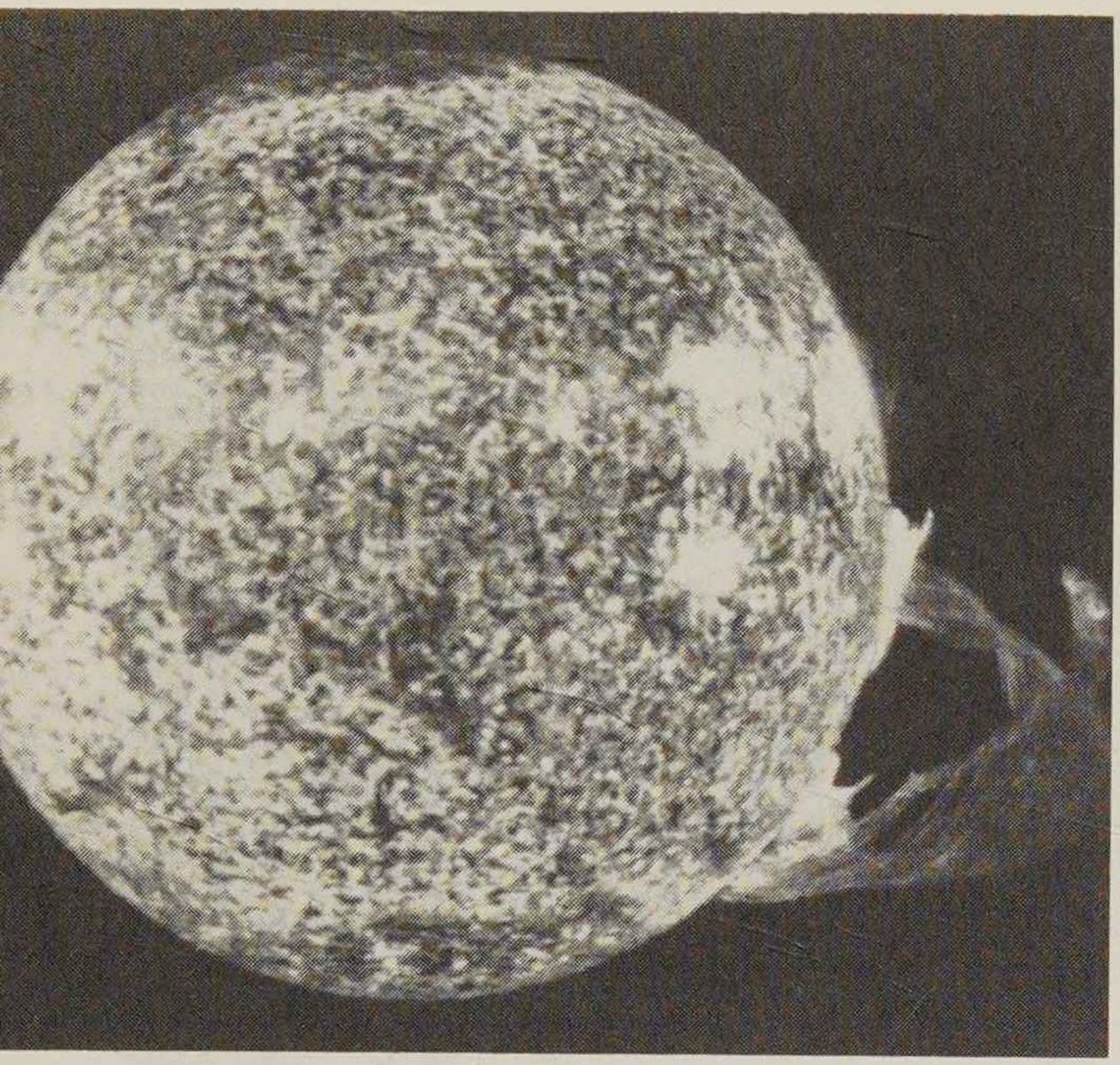
As I sit down, a photon of light, having wandered fifty million years finding its way from the sun's hot heart to its photosphere, has sped in eight minutes from there to the earth and arrived at the gentle surface of a leaf. A molecule of chlorophyll is delicately enticing it into the dance of photosynthesis. I say no grace. I eat the sun with my toast. I breathe the labor of the leaves exhaled in oxygen.

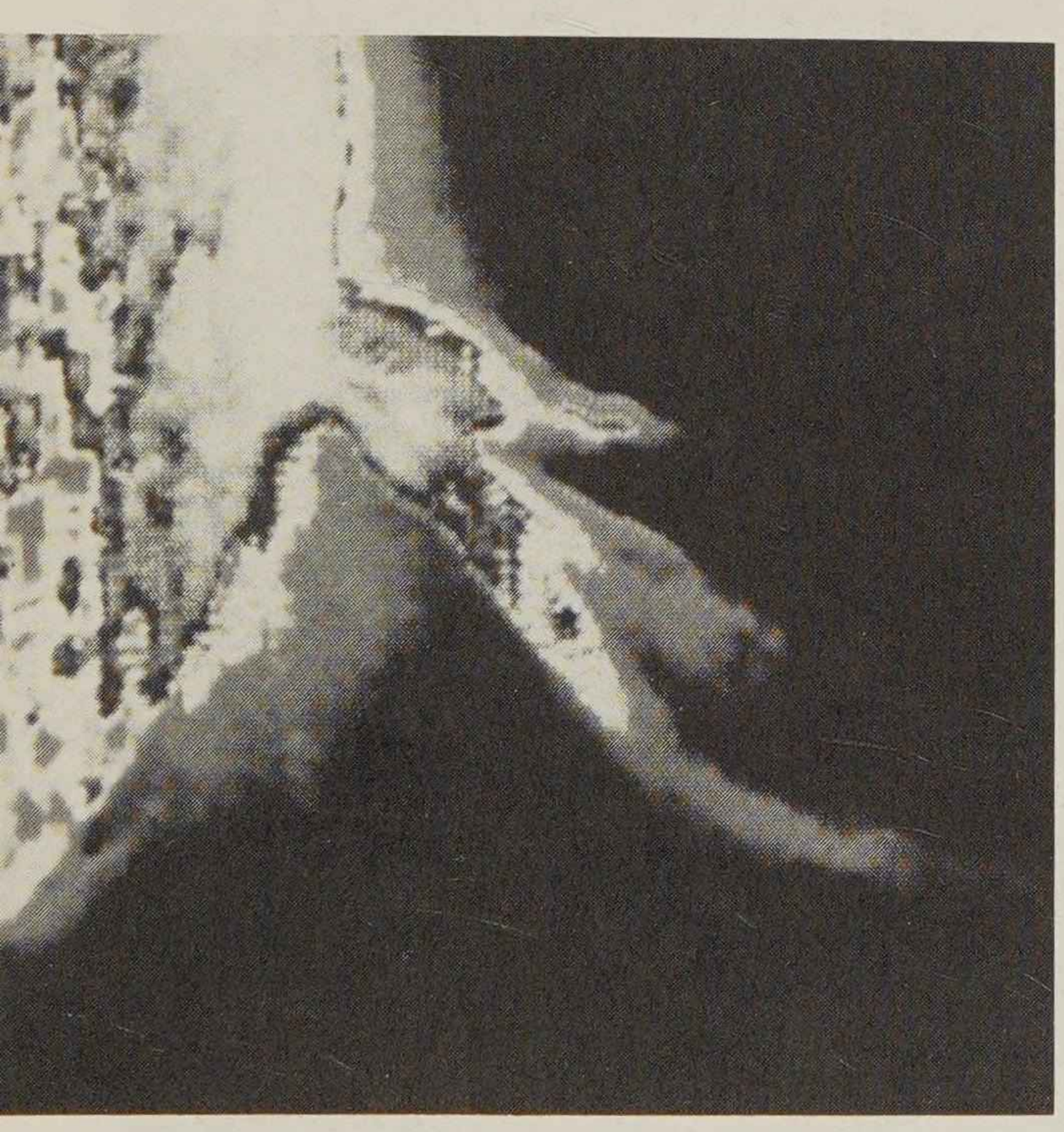
As I lift my coffee cup, the sun lifts tons of water from the oceans into the sky. Air warmed at the equator rises and moves toward the poles, is cooled, moves down and under. Spinning within her envelope of air, the earth deflects the currents, sending the clouds in great white swirls across her face. As I swallow, curtains of rain are somewhere sweeping the earth. Parched soil, like a woman at last encountering love, is relaxing, absorbing, softening, beginning to feed the myriad seeds within her. I eat the earth with my egg. The white has the taste of the sea. I do not notice.

When I go to my study, the sun has arrived there before me. Summer sunlight rests quietly on the desk. Books about the solar system are scattered over it. I pull one toward me and open it to the photograph of the earth as seen from the moon. No wonder the moon circles around her, keeping its smooth side, sculptured by meteorites, always towards her, hiding its thick, rough back. The earth is beautiful—alive. Everything on her face is moving and changing in the delicacy, complexity, intelligence of her response to the sun. She is like Scheherazade telling endlessly diverting tales to the king (so that he will not kill her), while her little sister, the moon, with her expressionless face, sits by silently. The earth intercedes for us with the source of our life so that he will not kill us. Most of the time, I do not think about the earth.

She is wary with the sun, keeping her distance, neither too near nor too far, fending off his killing corpuscular radiation (the solar wind) with her magnetic field, filtering the blaze of his light through her atmosphere, selecting, storing, and releasing just those kinds and amounts of energy that will maintain our lives, keeping out lethal ultraviolet rays with a thin veil of ozone, incinerating like fleas the millions of meteorites that each day come hurtling in our direction. Protected by the earth, we live inside the sun: the solar wind—hot, ionized gas and its attendant magnetic fields, streaming radially out of the sun, thrown into a spiral by the sun's rotation, traveling at an average speed of two hundred and fifty miles per second almost

Composite of Apollo photos shows earth and moon to scale





Above: solar flare spanning more than 367,000 miles

Below: spectroheliograph of a solar eruption

irrespective of distance from the sun (but subject to surges when faster streams, shot out by solar flares, overtake slower ones), filling interplanetary space to the outermost reaches of the solar system—is an attenuated extension of the sun's corona, where, although the temperature is two million degrees Kelvin, the gas is so rarefied that you would freeze to death if you could go there with some shield to protect you from the direct light of the sun.

Sunlight rests upon my arm. A faint warmth penetrates my skin. A breeze from the window stirs the hairs on my arm. I cannot conceive of the sun. It is too bright, too great, maybe too intensely alive for me to encompass and comprehend, even in the elastic vessel of imagination. If I try to take it into that space behind the solar plexus where we can feel and sense the life of a thing and not just take facts about it into our heads, it annihilates me. It flashes out in all directions beyond the bounds of my body.

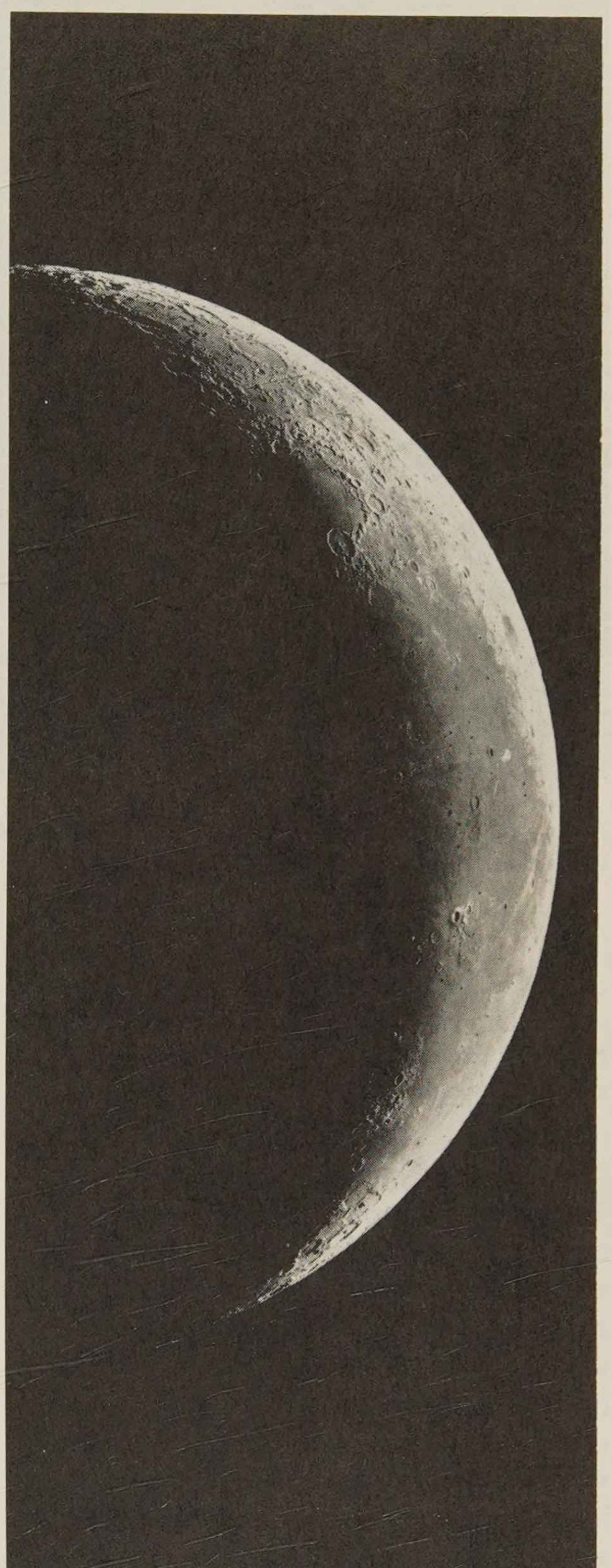
I turn again to the photograph of the earth. You and I are in this picture. We were on the earth that day. Yet we cannot see ourselves, any more than I can see the bacteria on my arm—who, for all I know, may now be waking up, feeling the warmth of the sun, hearing something like the ripple of wind through a forest or a great field of wheat. To the earth, you and I are microorganisms. To the sun, we are viruses on a tick—or maybe even less: electrons or quarks.

I read the facts about the sun: if the earth were the size of an ordinary marble, the sun would be the size of a weather balloon large enough for a man to turn around inside with arms outstretched. The sun radiates some hundred thousand tons of light per second. Its total energy output is 3.83×10^{26} watts, of which the earth intercepts 2×10^{17} watts, about half of which (that is, approximately one four-billionth of the energy streaming out of the sun) gets through the atmosphere. According to current theory, the source of this energy is nuclear fusion in the sun's core: four protons (hydrogen nuclei) combine in a

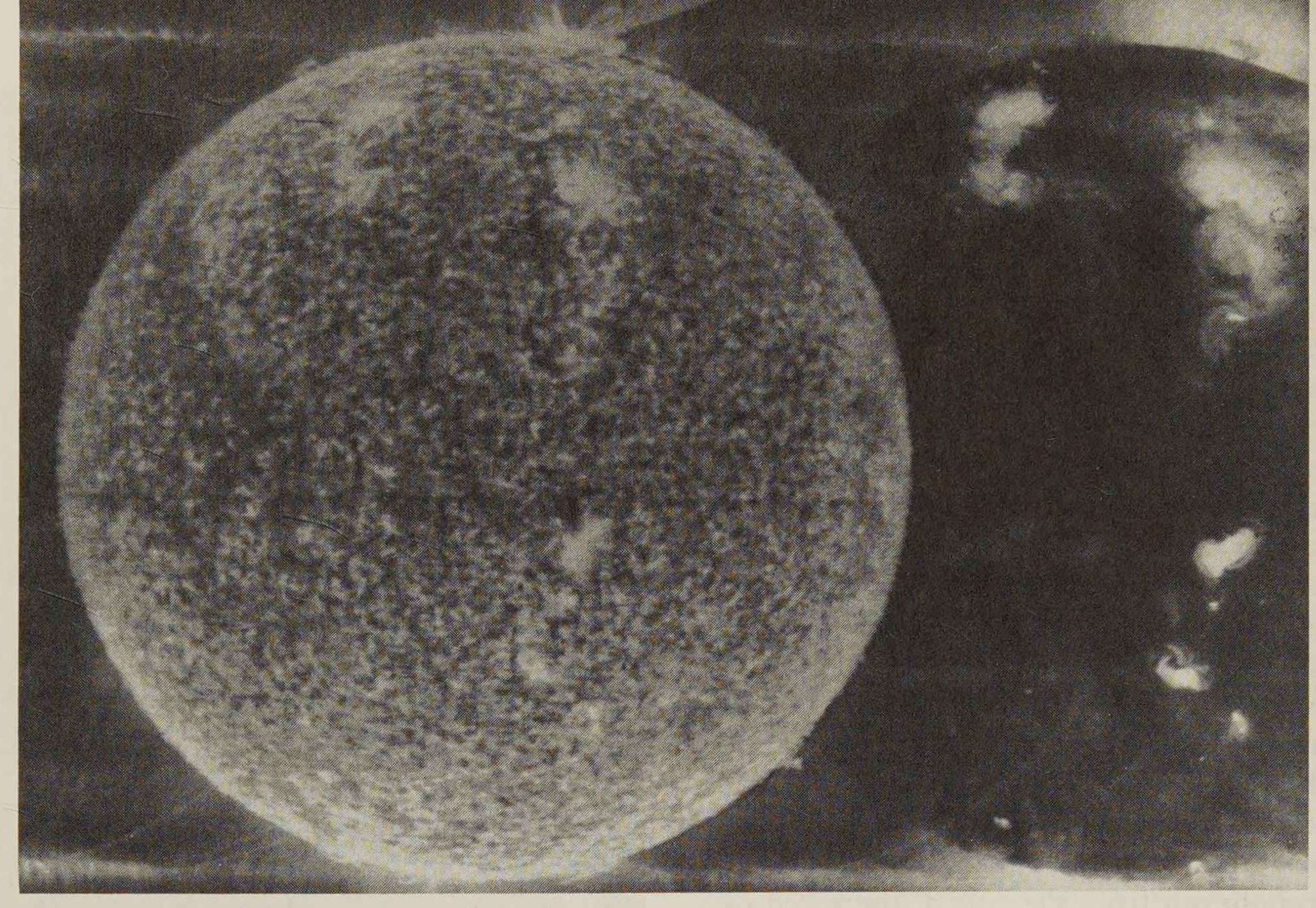
series of steps to make one atom of helium, with a loss of 0.7 per cent of the proton mass, which is converted to energy in accordance with Einstein's equation, $E = MC^2$. If mass could be converted to energy with one hundred per cent efficiency (which it can't), one gram of matter would be energetically equivalent to thirty million kilowatt hours, enough electric energy to keep an average home going for ten thousand years at the present annual rate of consumption. For every fusion of a new helium nucleus, two neutrinos (among other things) are released, for a total of 2×10^{38} neutrinos per second. Having no electrical charge and negligible mass, neutrinos interact with hardly anything and so, unlike the photons of electromagnetic energy, which take millions of years to get out of the sun, they zip straight out from the core at the speed of light. Billions of them are passing through your body at this moment and straight on through the earth underneath you. (At the time of the writing of these books, however, attempts to detect the presence of the predicted numbers of neutrinos had been unsuccessful.) The sun has maintained essentially the same energy flow for about five billion years.

These enormous numbers zip through my head like neutrinos. In order to get some feeling for the sun I have to turn to Lewis Thomas:

Morowitz has presented the case, in thermodynamic terms, for the hypothesis that a steady flow of energy from the inexhaustible source of the sun to the unfillable sink of outer space, by way of the earth, is mathematically destined to cause the organization of matter into an increasingly ordered state. The resulting balancing act involves a higher and higher complexity, and the emergence of cycles for the storage and release of energy. In a nonequilibrium steady state, which is postulated, the solar energy would not just flow to the earth and radiate away; it is thermodynamically inevitable that it must rearrange matter into symmetry, away from probability, against entropy, lifting it, so to speak, into a constantly changing condition of rearrangement and molecular ornamentation. In such a system, the outcome is



Moon



Solar eruption in spectroheliograph; image on left produced by 304 angstrom ultraviolet light and one on right by 285 angstrom

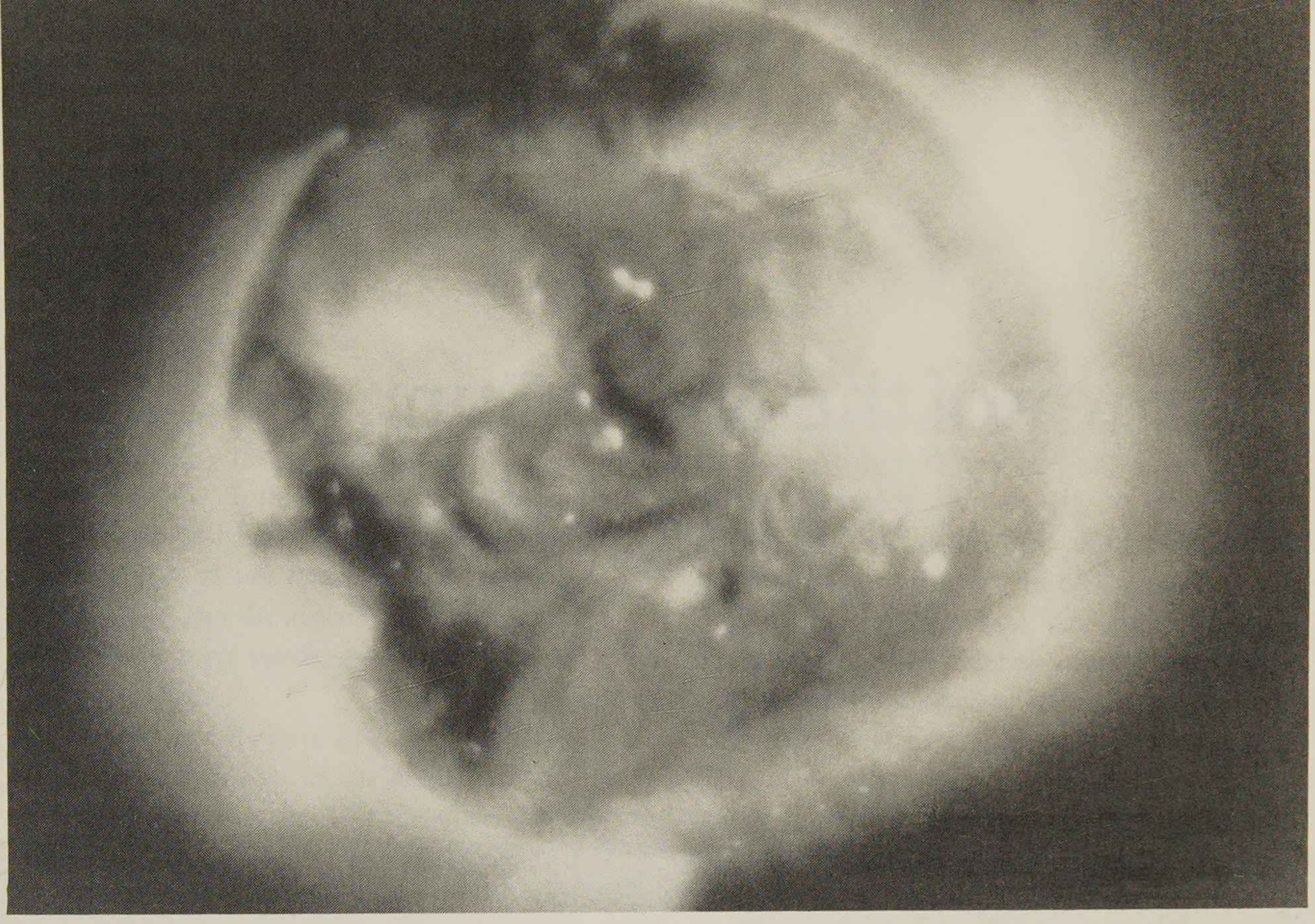
a chancy kind of order, always on the verge of descending into chaos, held taut against probability by the unremitting, constant surge of energy from the sun.

I look up. The book is now in shadow. The earth has moved. Afternoon sunlight now enters the southern windows and slants across the floor. Sunlight, slanting across a windowsill like this, or resting upon a wall, has sometimes rescued me (when I noticed it) from despair. Does the sun know what it's doing? Could that which has lifted us up out of chaos be less intelligent, less conscious than we are? Is all this towering largesse—even prodigality—only a manifestation of automatic processes? Or do we suffer from a kind of chauvinism of scale, which blinds us to the presence of awareness in any creature much greater or smaller, much longer- or shorter-lived than ourselves?

We owe our lives to the sun. Nothing in the facts of science contradicts this assertion. How is it, then, that we feel no gratitude?

I know this is a naive question. We hardly send a thank-you note to a ball of burning gas or a nuclear furnace. It is not only its greatness but also the prevailing world view that prevents me giving thanks (at least in public) to the sun. When I was a child, I looked at the stars, and the stars were looking back. That was the way I saw them. After I had been to school, I no longer saw them that way. They no longer seemed worth looking at. I forgot all about them.

Now, long out of school, I examine the roots of the world view I so docilely and unconsciously absorbed with my education until it seems to have altered the very molecular structure of my retina. (Our concepts determine our percepts.) I reflect: In the battery of human faculties employed in doing science, that one by which we are able to detect the presence of a "thou" is not included. The "thouness" of a thing is not even a "secondary quality." There can be, therefore, no "thous" included in the world view arrived at by this method. (And the holographic paradigm is no improvement in this respect.) But since doing science is not my aim, do I have to be



X-ray of the sun revealing the corona

confined by this world view?

At the same time, I do not want to kid myself. I want (at least at this moment in the sun) to arrive at the most complete picture of reality possible to me with all my faculties (such as they are) working in concert, none despised or repressed.

I do sometimes come face to face with a "thou" in the world, at least in a creature of my own approximate size and nature, though it seems to be more and more difficult for me to wake up to its presence. I have to make a conscious effort even under my own roof, even with a member of my own family, to feel that he, too, thinks, feels, suffers, aspires, longs for he knows not what in the context of our desolate world view. With the person sitting next to me on the subway I don't even try. The power to perceive a "thou," long since fallen from respect as an instrument for arriving at useful knowledge, has atrophied for lack of exercise.

The person in the heart is the same as the person in the sun—so the Upanishads tell us. Since we no longer conceive of the latter, the former seems to be fading out in direct proportion—an unexpected side effect. If we could revive the former, would we start to see the latter?

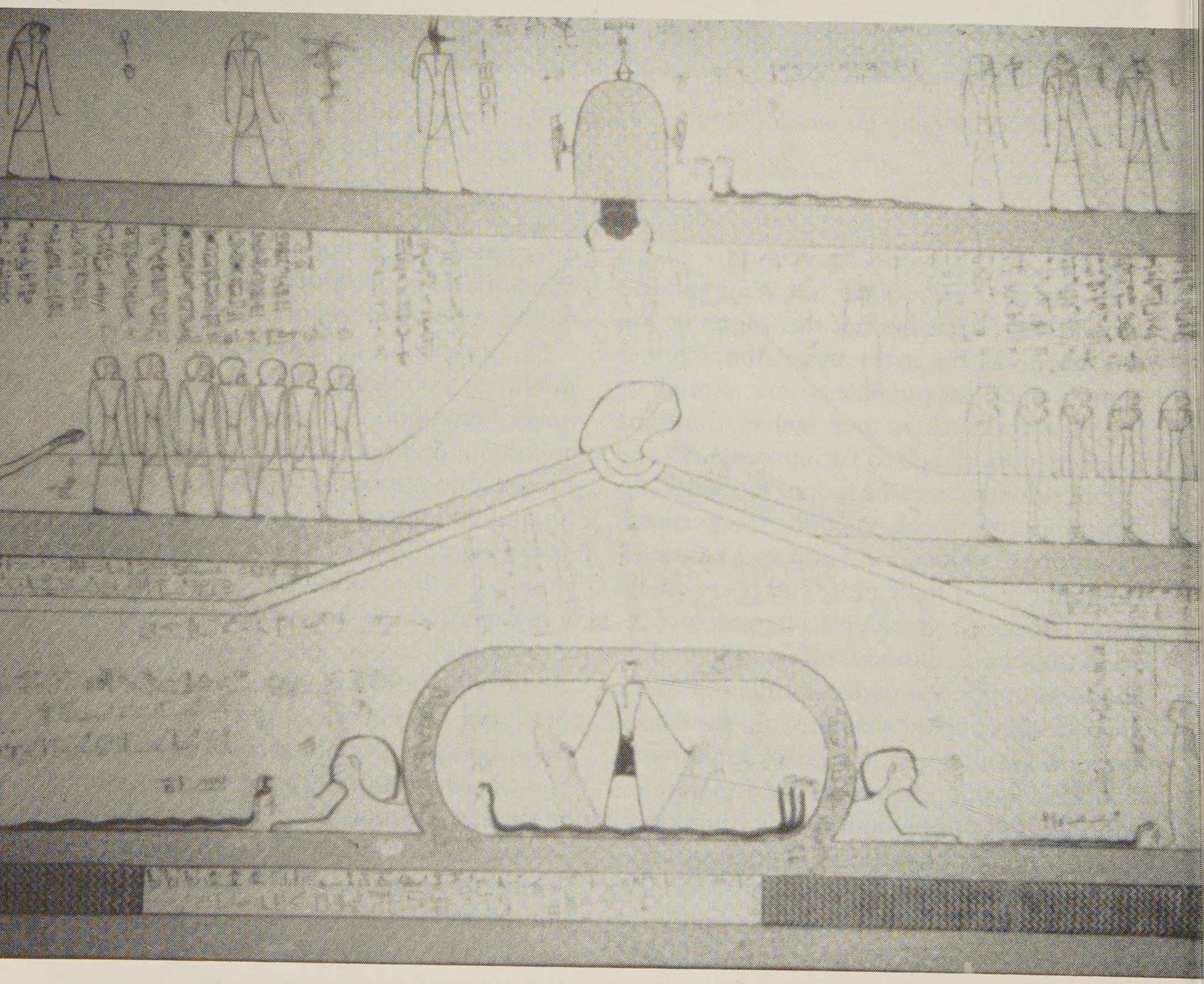
St. Francis saw a person in the sun—and in almost everything else, though I have never heard him accused of primitive animism. William Blake saw not just one person, but a multitude of the heavenly host singing Holy, Holy, Holy; and I myself, as a child, assumed that the sun, although I was not allowed to look at it, had a big smile on its beaming face, as in the storybooks. I could plainly see for myself that the moon looked down benignly, like St. Anne in Leonardo's painting, which hung in sepia reproduction over my bed. If we began to feel the presence of a person in the sun, there would be no need to look for life in outer space. The facts of science would compel us to be wholly occupied in adoration.

If I told you now that I saw a person in the sun, you might question my judgment. Don't worry. I am unable. Standing up to go down and make dinner, I forget all about the sun.

But his power is among us. ■

Journey of the Night Sun

MARTIN LEV AND CAROL RING



The fifth division of the Duat from the tomb of Thutmoses III

In the beginning there were the waters. In these waters lay the body of Atum, the Complete One. To Atum the waters seemed a vast primeval abyss of ocean stretching endlessly in all directions. Atum had come into being in these waters. But for an endless time he floated passively in their vastness—alone, relaxed, silent.

Atum formed a space in the midst of the waters, a tiny bubble in the endless ocean, a momentary pushing back of the never-ending night and formlessness of the abyss. In this space Atum created the world as we know it. And into this space he emerged in his manifestation as Ra, the sun.

Each day Ra, the visible energy of life, sailed through his daily course in the sky, a course called Millions of Years. Each day the bark of the sun was attacked by a serpent-fiend who tried to upset this course and to drag Ra back into the darkness from which he had come. Each day the serpent was repelled, his legs hacked off, his arms bound in chains, made impotent before Ra, the lord of eternity and everlastingness, the self-created one, whose daily conscious effort and struggle maintained all that is.

Mythological analogies in the Egyptian tradition concerning the cycle of the sun reveal a wide comprehension of actual, visible cosmic phenomena. They also betray a profound understanding of the hidden, secret parts of the never-ending cycle of birth, life, death, and rebirth in all that exists, in all we know, everywhere and in everything. The seed which becomes a plant and dies giving seed which will grow into a plant again; the man who is born, lives, brings forth new life, and dies; the sun which rises, then sinks into darkness only to rise again; all participate in a grand movement for which there is no beginning and no end. Light and darkness, life and death, creation and dissolution emerge one from the other. They are born in each other. They are two halves of the same cycle. But only one part of this cycle is visible to man: the world of day and of life.

Ancient Egypt was a very narrow strip of fertile valley bordered abruptly by desert and mountains. Every morning the newborn sun rose out of the mountains of the east, out of the abyss of darkness. He was called Khephri, "becoming." He was the scarabaeus beetle, symbol of transformation. At noon he was transformed into Ra as he rose to the full strength of manhood. In the evening he sank into old age as Tem. Yet all were Ra, the sun.

At night the sun sank beyond the horizon into the mountains of the west, to continue his transformations in the darkness, hidden from the sight of man. Man sees only to his horizon. The sun that sinks beyond it sinks not only beyond man's sight but beyond his vision, beyond his understanding. The journey of the sun into darkness, death, and miraculous rebirth is a journey beyond man's horizon. It is thus a call to every man who seeks the sun that can illuminate the darkness of his hidden, inner world.

In ancient Egypt the journey into the realm of darkness, the netherworld, the kingdom of the dead, was not a final journey. It was a journey through an intermediate world. It was the night between sunset and sunrise; death between dying and rebirth. It was a world of becoming and potential, in which the mysterious renewal of life took place. The Egyptians called this world the Duat.

The Duat was the secret, mysterious place or time, the knowledge of which was very important. The journey of the sun at night through the Duat, and the illumination of the darkness, was carefully and clearly recorded in words and pictures

in many royal tombs of the New Kingdom. Yet the essence of these drawings and texts eludes us. The true meaning of this journey remains hidden from our eyes; we must find through our own questions help to understand, if only a little, the great mystery that took place in its depths.

In most representations the Duat is divided into twelve parts, caverns, realms, or chambers, representing the twelve hours of the night. The Duat lies in complete darkness except for one hour which the sun spends in each part during his journey. In that hour Ra brings to those who live in the nether world light, food, air, and knowledge. There await the gods and the souls of the dead, who welcome him with joy, and who wail when he has passed on.

The journey made by the bark of the sun is a dangerous one, for the Duat is filled with the enemies of Ra as well as with those who rejoice in his coming. But Ra, joined in his bark by Mind, Magic, and Will, and towed relentlessly onward by gods, snakes, and symbols of power, utterly destroys those who oppose the passage of light and condemns them to eternal darkness and oblivion.

The Duat is the living model of the body of Ra. It is Ra himself who tells us that the Duat is made of the beings who are his names, his forms, his images, the members of his own body. He calls them to himself, asking them to open a way for him, and they respond with joy. The journey of Ra in the darkness is the slow unfolding of knowledge of the essence of his own parts. He who knows the essence of his parts and sees the unity of all is the master of all.

In the Egyptian tradition the sun is represented by the eye, the eye of Ra. What kind of eye is this that travels through the Duat and can see where others see only darkness? What is an eye of "vision" which like the sun has its own source of light and illumination? What is Ra, who like an eye of vision descends into his own body, illuminating the darkness of his own being and bringing to it the light necessary for rebirth?

The cycle of the sun cannot continue independently. At a certain point a new impulse is needed for its return. What permits rebirth in the Duat? What enables the sun, and all life with it, to be renewed? There is a place in the Duat where the cycle of the sun meets another cycle, that of the moon, the power in the darkness. In the middle hours of the night, at the lowest point of the sun's descent into the Duat, and in the darkest of chambers, these two cycles interlock and nourish each other. It is the meeting of Ra and the god Osiris, the king of the dead.

Osiris personifies the process of emergent life, the potential for life that is waiting in the darkness. He is pure form, the Lord of Forms, the mummy, the cocoon waiting for the energy of Ra to activate him with light and consciousness. He is the moon, the past direct descendant of Ra, but cut off from his light and longing to meet him again.

Osiris is a god whose type appears in many traditions. He is the god who is killed and is reborn. He was a great king, the first Pharaoh of a mythological golden age of Egypt, in a time when gods manifested themselves visibly upon earth, continuing the process of creation begun by Atum-Ra. And it was through Osiris that there flowed into the world the light and creative life of his ancestor Ra.

The first division in Atum-Ra's unity was his manifestation as the twins Shu (air) and Tefnut (moisture). These two produced a second pair, Geb (earth) and Nut (sky, heavens). They in turn produced four children: Osiris, Isis, Set, and Nephthys. This generation, between heaven and earth, was already much closer to life on our own level than its predecessors were, and it brought into play the forces which are the concern of mankind and nature.

Osiris was the first-born and was the inheritor of Earth, his father. He ruled for

Osiris depicted in a noble's tomb

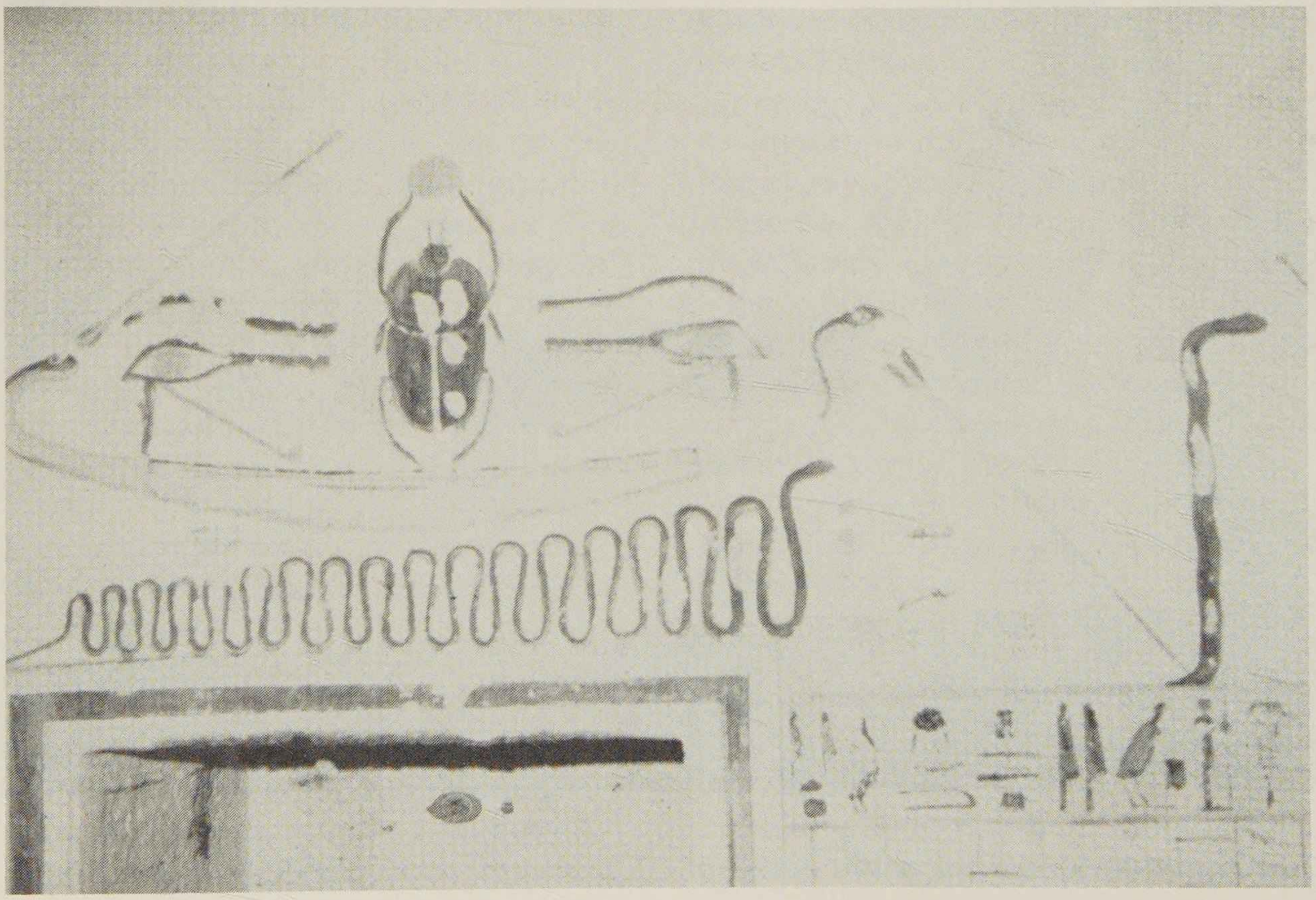
twenty-eight years and while he lived the Nile overflowed its banks with life-giving silt. Law and kingship were established, the arts of civilization and agriculture were taught, and magic and healing blessed the earth and all mankind. This idyllic order was destroyed by Set, who was jealous of his brother Osiris. When Set is triumphant the Nile falls, vegetation dries up, the barren desert closes in, land and law are in disorder.

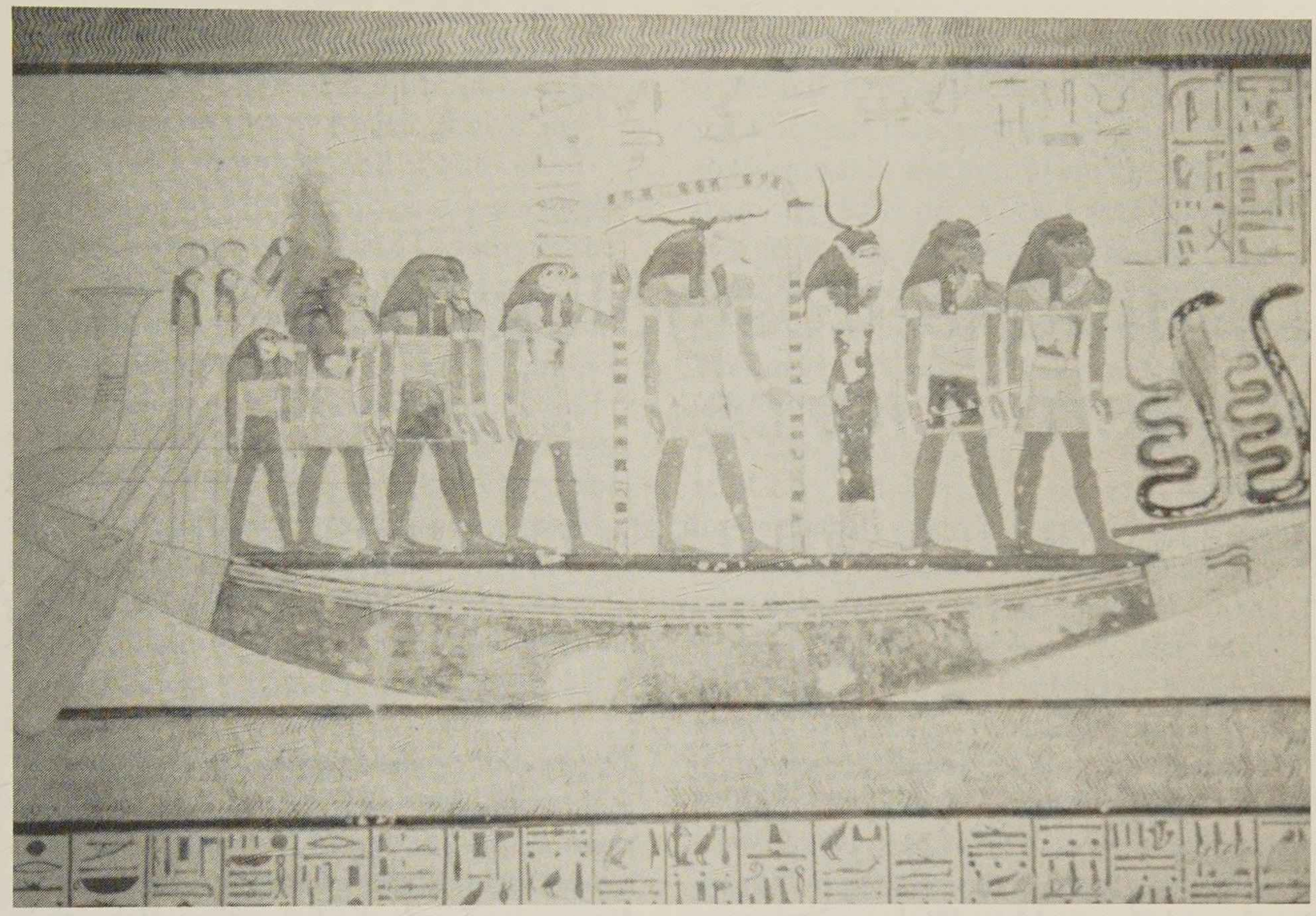
Ignorant of the force of evil, Osiris is tricked into entering a beautiful coffin which Set has made exactly to his dimensions. When Osiris lies down in it, Set quickly seals the lid and throws the coffin into the Nile. Isis, the wife and sister of Osiris, searches for the coffin and finds it. But Set discovers the body of Osiris, and this time he cuts it into fourteen pieces and scatters the pieces throughout the land of Egypt. In this state—dismembered, dispersed, the unity of his being destroyed—Osiris vividly represents the lowest point of man's condition. Secretly, Isis gathers the scattered members of her husband. Using her divine magic she joins the pieces together, then wraps the body in fine linen and places it in the darkness and safety of the Duat.

Osiris is in the Duat. He has been dismembered, his unity destroyed. The parts of his body have been collected and reassembled. But something is missing, something that can bring him life. Helpless and alone in the darkness, separated from the light, he cries out to Ra, the source of life.

Osiris himself can do nothing to change his state. In this dangerous twilight between death and life Osiris lies completely inert. It is the sun who must enter into the Duat, who must come to Osiris, illuminate his darkness, and bring him life. The need of Osiris to be reunited with the light is equaled only by the need of Ra to be reunited with his child who has become separated from him, and who is alone and helpless in the darkness. And thus in the

Kephri pushing the newborn sun into the heavens





The bark of Ra in the netherworld from the Tomb of Ramses IX

blackest hour of the night, at the lowest descent of his cycle, the sun comes to rest in the darkest and most mysterious chamber of the netherworld, the chamber in which lives the body of the god Osiris.

With this meeting in the Duat, life begins again. The life of the sun that shines upon the face of Osiris awakens him and once more flows through him into the world. The rivers rise, the fields bloom, and life returns to the dry, dying earth. The sun, which descended into darkness so that man and nature might live, once again is joined to what had become separated and lost in the darkness. It is made whole.

Thus Ra sails through the night transforming himself, making himself young. When Ra reaches the eleventh section of the Duat, the scarabaeus beetle, the master of transformations, enters his bark. At the twelfth and original cavern the door opens in the mountains of the east, and the scarabaeus pushes the bark of the newborn sun once again into the waters of the heavens.

The cycle begins again. ■

Traditional Cosmology and Modern Science

AN INTERVIEW WITH SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

In recent years, the traditional sciences have begun to reclaim their rightful role as inclusive symbolic descriptions of the cosmos. No scholar has contributed more to this restoration than Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr. His lectures, essays, and authoritative books on Islamic science and metaphysics have alerted many to the rich possibilities of a perspective in which, as he writes in Islamic Life and Thought, *"nature and its grand phenomena such as the shining of the sun and the moon, the seasonal cycles, the mountains and the streams, are . . . means for the contemplation of the spiritual realities."*

Born in Teheran in 1933, Dr. Nasr studied mathematics and physics at M.I.T. before receiving his doctorate in the history of science and philosophy from Harvard University in 1958. For twenty-one years, he was a professor of Islamic philosophy and the history of science at Teheran University. In 1974, Dr. Nasr founded and served as the first president of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy, a position he held until 1979. In 1981, he became the first Muslim invited to deliver the prestigious Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh. His books include Man and Nature, Science and Civilization in Islam, Islamic Sciences: An Illustrated Study, *and most recently,* Knowledge and the Sacred *(Crossroad Publishing Co.), the basic text of his Gifford Lectures.*

Neither sun nor moon was visible on an overcast day in early August when we arrived at Dr. Nasr's home in the low hills of suburban Boston. But our host rapidly replaced the gifts of these absent celestial spheres with his own warm hospitality (tea, a platter of Persian sweets) and a stream of intellectual radiance. He answered each of our questions at length, talking quietly, without verbal embroidery. His responses, drawn from an astonishing store of knowledge, effortlessly embraced centuries and civilizations, linking together al-Bīrūnī's metaphysics, Christian cathedrals, and the sleight of hand of modern quantum physics.

—Philip and Carol Zaleski

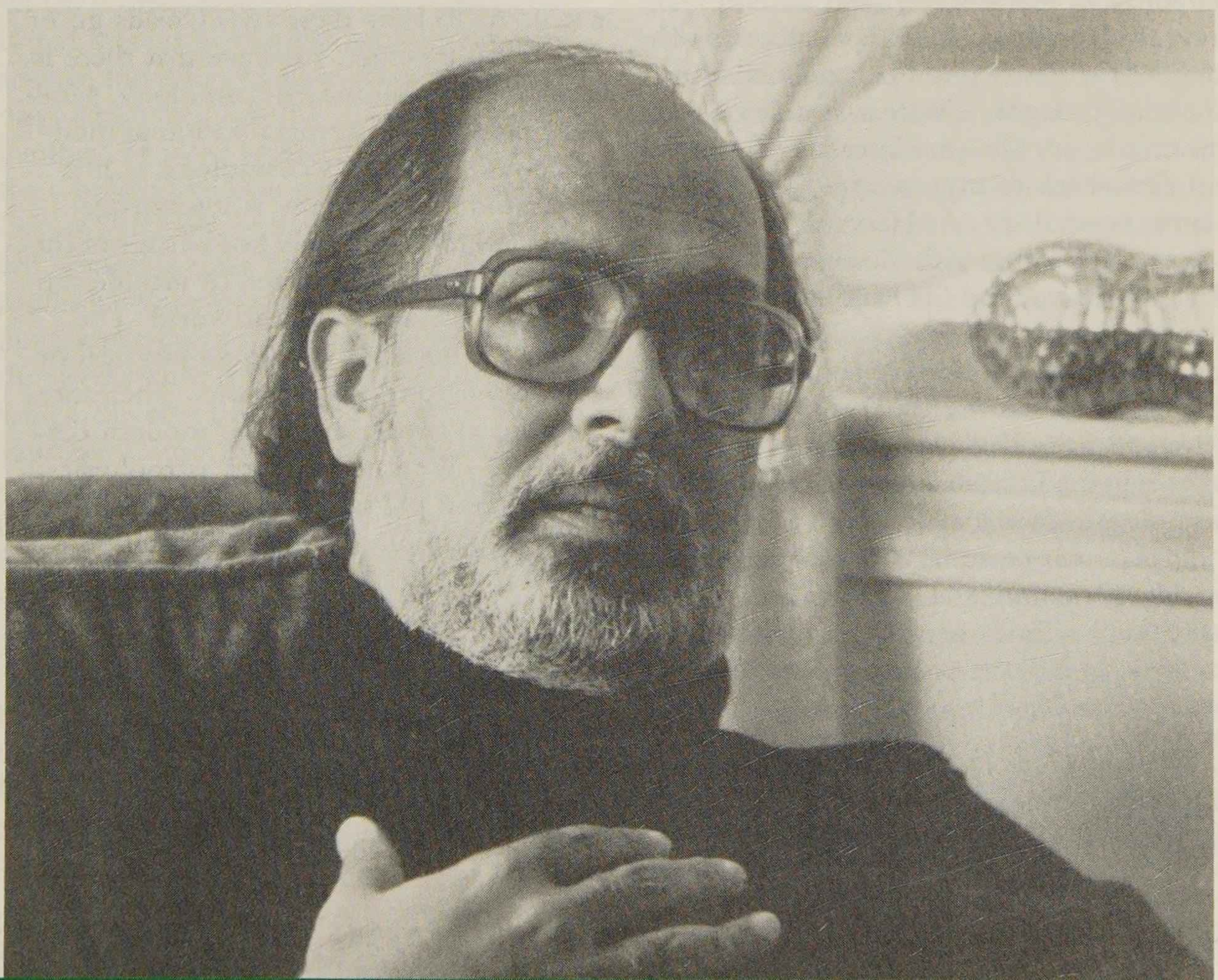
PARABOLA You have a deep knowledge of both contemporary and traditional sciences. Could you tell us what led you into studying each of these areas?

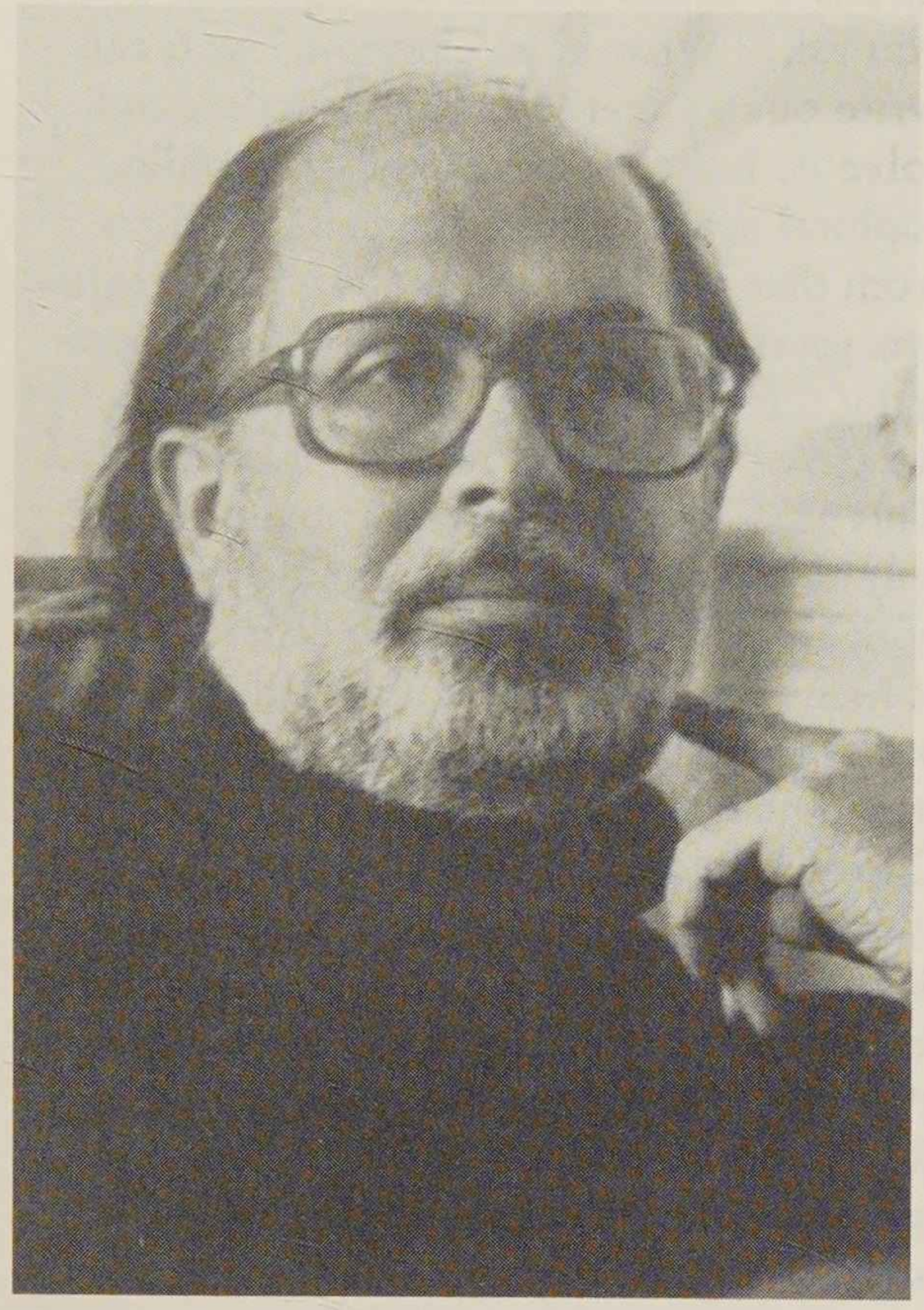
Seyyed Hossein Nasr I have been interested in science ever since I was a young boy. I thought that through science I would discover the nature of things; that was really what was at the back of my mind. At the same time I had, both as a child and later as an adolescent, a great deal of contact with my own traditional culture, which not only was religious in the usual sense—dealing with acts of worship, morality, and so forth—but also dealt with the science of the nature of things. Traditional culture, especially as it exists in Islam, to which I belong, as well as in

the other great traditions of Asia, and of course Christianity, not only concerns itself with acts, but also with knowledge. And therefore that was also part of my background, training, and world view.

I went to M.I.T. to pursue my scientific studies; I thought that there I could get the best scientific education. While I was a sophomore, as a result of contact with leading physicists, with the late Giorgio De Santillana, the great philosopher and historian of science, and through hearing lectures by such famous people as Bertrand Russell about the nature of modern science, I became aware that the most important proponents of the scientific world view believed that, in fact, it was not the role of modern science to reach the nature of reality at all.

I felt that somehow this was not what I was looking for, that I was not going to understand the why of things, which was outside of the domain of modern science, or even the how of things. In modern science, things are presented in terms of parameters without really dealing with the essence of those parameters except by means of mathematical descriptions. If you ask, "What is an electron," you can write out its mathematical function and solve it, but the "whatness" in a philosophical sense is circumvented. And so from that time on, when I was only eighteen years old, I became interested in seeing if there were other ways to study the nature of things and the world of nature. This urge, which was really metaphysical, led me very far afield. I began to study with De Santillana and a few other people at M.I.T. and later on at Harvard, benefiting especially from the great library of traditional sciences of the late Ananda Coomaraswamy. I also began to study various Oriental doctrines. At that time Suzuki was here in Cambridge, and I attended some of his classes. Gradually my interest shifted from the study of modern Western science—which I nevertheless wanted to know in depth, so that if I wanted to go beyond or criticize it at least I would know what it was—to other possibilities of studying reality. I became interested in metaphysics. It was at this point that the writings of certain people who





"To say that there is no conflict between modern science and religion would reduce religion to faith alone and thus destroy the element of knowledge in religion."

were trying to resuscitate Oriental metaphysics—metaphysics in its real sense—in the West, such as René Guénon, Fritjof Schuon, Coomaraswamy, and others drew my attention. After several years of study of Far Eastern, Indian, and medieval Christian thought—Dante was a key at this time in my life—my interests centered and came back to my own tradition, to Islamic cosmology. At Harvard, where I was then studying with George Sarton, Harry Wolfson, and Sir Hamilton Gibb, who were great scholars, philosophers, and Islamicists, I decided to concentrate on this subject. I did my Ph.D. thesis in this field, and from that grew the first book written in the English language on Islamic cosmology.

So my own personal contact with the worlds of traditional and modern science came from a fundamental question within myself—what is the nature of reality? That is what I was seeking.

P. Do you think that it is possible for modern and traditional sciences, cosmology in particular, to work together, or must they conflict? What is the value in the modern world of studying traditional science?

S.H.N. As to how these two worlds go or do not go together, I believe that there is no such thing as modern cosmology. Modern cosmology is a generalization of modern physics, whereas cosmology as it is understood traditionally is knowledge of the cosmos—not only knowledge of the material world generalized to include the whole of the astronomical world. The cosmos is not reducible to its physical or even psychophysical elements. Therefore, I do not even use the term "modern cosmology." We have modern astrophysics, and modern physics, but what we call modern cosmology is a generalization based upon the study of the physical parts of the cosmos. It certainly cannot constitute the whole of the cosmos. And that is why, when it tries to become cosmology, it always vacillates from one view to another. When you consider the question of the origin of the cosmos, you have a kind of fashion that changes more quickly than

that of dress; one year it's the Big Bang theory, one year it's a slow accretion of gases, and so on. It's not based upon a scientific foundation, even if you accept the modern definition of science. Modern cosmology is not like modern chemistry or thermodynamics; it doesn't have the same basis.

Traditional cosmology starts from the other end. It is the application of metaphysical principles to the cosmos. That is, you first have knowledge which deals with the Supreme Principle, which is metacosmic, above the cosmos. In Christian terms, God, the Divinity, or the Godhead. And cosmic reality, which is created or manifested and sustained and finally reabsorbed into that Principle, is studied in the light of the knowledge of that Principle. That is why you have many cosmologies, even within a single tradition; there are many ways of studying the cosmic reality. Modern science claims to be the only way of studying nature, whereas traditional cosmology—look at Chinese or Indian cosmology—may have several cosmologies which are not inwardly contradictory.

I want to avoid two extremes, one of which is often held by certain people. One is that there is no conflict between modern science and religion, or traditional cosmology. There is a conflict, a very profound conflict. Modern science wants to study the whole of creation while abstracting the Divine Principle from it. Of course, modern science is now breaking up, and we might have another paradigm in the future, but the paradigm that has dominated from the seventeenth century until now is one in which the effect is studied without the supreme Cause. No matter how much you study the cosmos you never run into the supreme Cause because it is excluded by definition from the modern scientific view. Science defines itself in such a way as to be not interested in, and not related to, metaphysics. But what it discovers, to the extent that it corresponds to an aspect of reality, has a metaphysical significance. But that significance cannot be discovered through science itself. It can only be discovered by a person who knows those metaphysical principles. To say that there is no conflict between modern science and religion would reduce religion to faith alone and thus destroy the element of knowledge in religion. You end up with the secularization of knowledge, which leads to the catastrophes which humanity is faced with today.

The other pole is to say that there is complete conflict between science and religion. That also I do not accept. It's theoretically possible to rediscover a metaphysical point of view into which you can absorb all that is positive in the attainments of modern Western science without doing injustice to that science. For example, you can be a perfectly good biologist and yet reject Darwin and evolution. In fact, there are many good biologists who do that and have a completely different metaphysical background to explain the multiplicity of life forms and their relationships, without going against the given data. That is a possibility. During the last two or three decades there has been a great deal of discussion by people who try to relate the most recent developments of modern physics to Oriental doctrines. A whole literature has been created, the most famous book of which is the *Tao of Physics* by Fritjof Capra. Although much of this literature is a little shallow and a bit of a fad, there are profound possibilities in this. Many leading physicists believe that the paradigm that makes possible the practice of physics in the Western sense has to change. A good example of this is David Bohm, who in *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* says you have to have another philosophy of nature, another cosmology, to make it possible to do physics. Now, I'm not precluding this kind of possibility; in fact in my *Knowledge and the Sacred* I've alluded to that. These writers are very different from the flabby, wishy-washy synthesis of pseudo-yogis and bhikkus and Zen masters who say that meditation is just like modern physics, and that the space that you meditate upon is just like that of modern science. It's neither this, nor is it that total opposition which would exist if

you refuse to go beyond the world view of modern science.

P. You are carving out a middle position between these two extremes, and you talk about the possibility of absorbing the modern scientific point of view within a much wider and more comprehensive metaphysics. I wonder if you can see ways in which scientific discoveries might contribute to and might change a traditional cosmology. For instance, many discoveries about the sun have been made through scientific observation. To what extent can we find religious significance in that, and to what extent might that change a traditional view of solar symbolism?

S.H.N. Traditional cosmology will never be changed by any empirical observation or any form of knowledge based on the empirical. However, traditional civilizations studied nature with a different end in view from that of modern science. They left many things undone. It isn't that they were less intelligent, but their interests were not in those sectors of investigation with which modern man has been concerned. In the last three or four hundred years, many important discoveries from an empirical point of view have been made. This nobody can doubt. But these discoveries will never change traditional cosmologies, because traditional cosmologies are symbolic understandings of nature. Whenever medieval or ancient man tried to do quantitative science—say, Eratosthenes or al-Bīrūnī measuring the size of the earth—now you would get a closer measurement. You have all kinds of cases like that. But that is not cosmology, that is quantitative science, which was of some concern to medieval and ancient man, but not of essential concern. Yet the knowledge which they had of nature was much greater than many people think. For example, the knowledge of zoology possessed by the American Indians was very scientific in many ways; their understanding of the habits of living creatures was immense. And it was always integrated into their world view, which would not be changed if they developed another kind of zoology or learned more about the glands which bring about changes in, say, the habits of the eagle. The symbolism of the eagle, as a solar bird who symbolizes the sun and therefore the Divine Intellect in the cosmos, does not change. Therefore there is no doubt that no matter what modern science does, it cannot by itself change metaphysics or traditional cosmologies, which are based on certain symbols sanctified within each tradition.

However, if there *are* new discoveries about the nature of the sun, what significance can they have? If a science of nature has no significance beyond itself, it cannot correspond to reality from the metaphysical point of view. If it corresponds to some aspect of reality, by virtue of that it also possesses significance beyond the merely physical. Take, for instance, solar storms, which were not known to Mayans or Zoroastrians, for whom the sun was the central symbol of religion. What does this mean? If it corresponds to some aspect of reality, then you can understand its symbolic significance by virtue of possessing knowledge of the metaphysical order. Without that, no matter how much physical discovery you make, you're not going to make a jump from this empirical, sensory, external knowledge to metaphysical knowledge simply by virtue of a progressive accumulation of empirical knowledge. That is the mistake that is often made. You're in two different dimensions.

P. You've made the general principle clear, but if asked to state what the symbolic meaning of solar storms might be, I'd be at a loss. Perhaps you could indicate the specific symbolic significance of these storms, and of the sun and the moon in general.

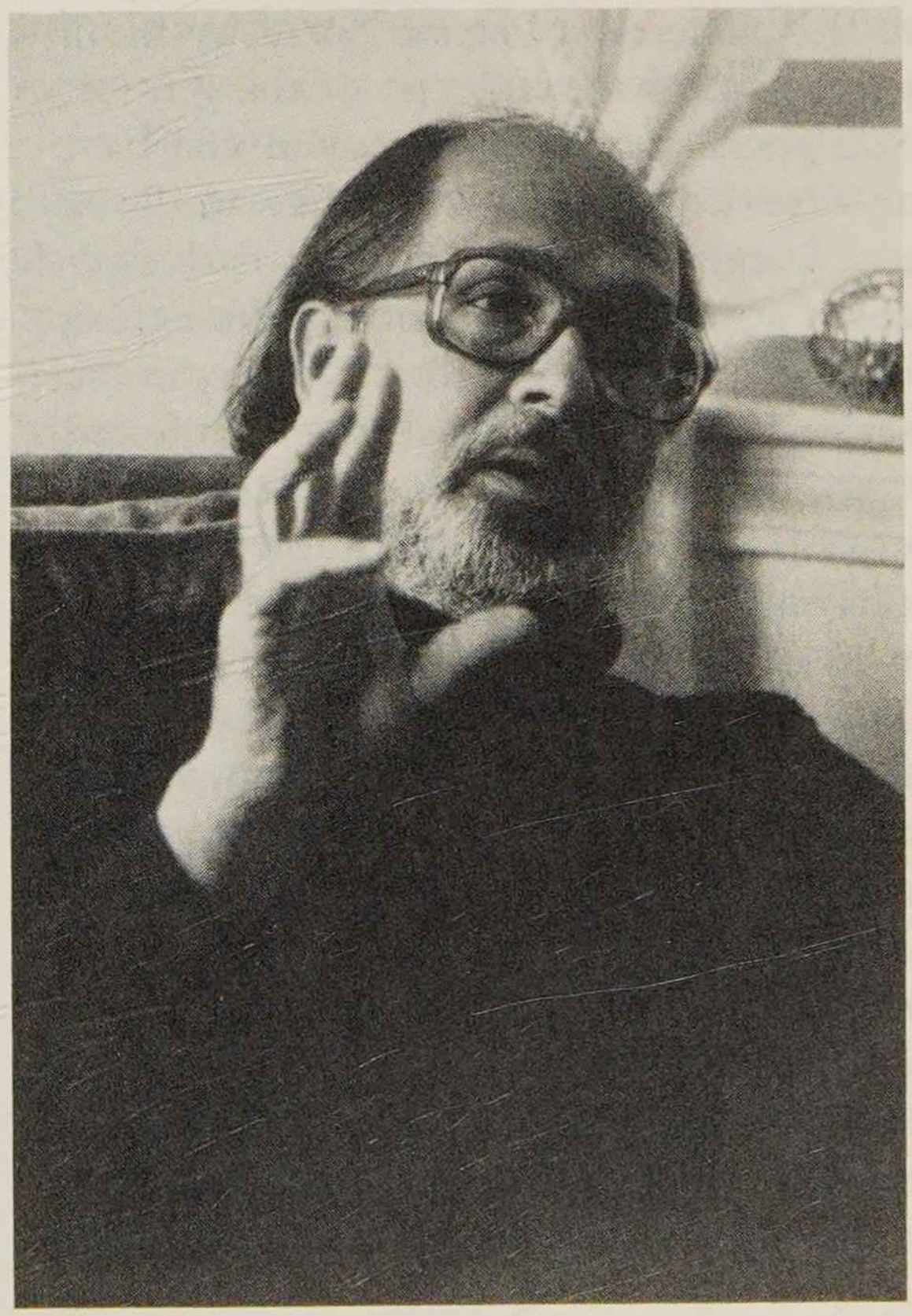
S.H.N. What do solar storms mean? They mean that although the sun *is* the supernal sun, it is not the supernal sun in all its aspects. The symbol *is* the symbolized—but through an identity of essence or inner meaning, not through an identity of material substance. I refer to a verse of the Koran in which Abraham looks upon the stars and thinks, that is the Divinity. But

then he sees the stars set and says, "I shall not worship that which sets." When he sees the moon, he says, "Ah, that must be the Divinity." And the moon sets, and he says, "I do not love that which sets." Then he sees the sun, and he says, "Ah, but surely that must be the Divinity." Finally that also sets. And Abraham concludes that the Divinity must be transcendent and above all in the universe which symbolizes it. The usual meaning given to this story is that it shows the transcendence of God. But why does it concern the stars, the moon, and the sun? Why is it that Abraham did not look at some creature in the field? Because the celestial, no matter how much we reduce it to intergalactic gas and so forth, is a symbol of the spiritual world. Celestial bodies, which are studied by modern astronomy and physics as an extension of terrestrial physics, are not only that. They possess a relationship as a symbol of the spiritual world. However, this story wants to show that this symbol is not to be mistaken for the symbolized, which was a danger, especially to the Semitic people, both Jews and Arabs. Special care is taken in Judaism and Islam not to create any icons, idols, or symbols of a plastic nature which would be mistaken for the symbolized. And therefore you find this belittling of the sun, you might say, in order to avoid the idolatry of sun worship.

As far as the sun and moon are concerned, in all traditional cosmologies these two play a very important role. Usually the sun represents the divine intellect, because it is the source of light for the world and also its source of life. It is also the source of the measurement of space and time. So the fundamental parameters of our existence are defined by the sun.

As for the moon, usually it represents the feminine aspect, the aspect of receptivity, because it receives its light from the sun. Here I mean femininity on the highest level, in its metaphysical significance. But femininity and masculinity have to manifest themselves on the phenomenal level as two visible bodies in the heavens. Do you ever wonder why we don't have three of these bodies, and how different human existence would have been if we did?

"Traditional cosmology will never be changed by any empirical observation or any form of knowledge based on the empirical."



P. We're the only planet with one moon, isn't that so?

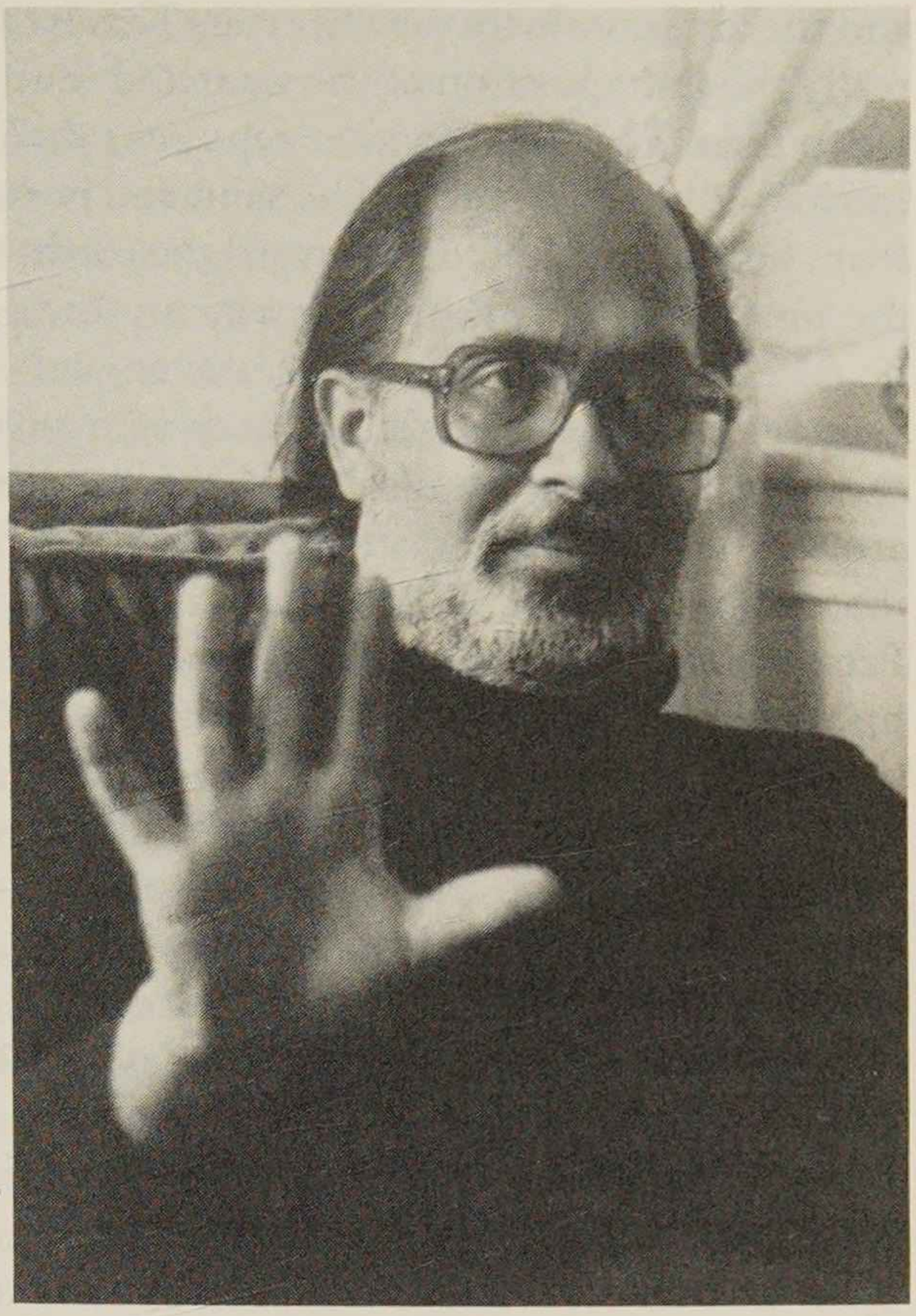
S.H.N. Yes. So the polarization of the human state, of the androgynic reality in the male and female, has a profound significance which is not only biological, not only social, but also intellectual and spiritual. It goes all the way to the Divine Presence itself. It's metacosmic. On the cosmic level, it's symbolized by the presence of these two bodies which complement each other rhythmically. They complement each other from a temporal point of view. One corresponds to a time when everything is light, the other to a time when everything is dark. They correspond to the two major cycles of the alchemical rhythm of existence, expansion and contraction, which defines life. Our breath expands and contracts, and that's how we keep alive. That is the *solve et coagula* of classical Western alchemy. The day is the period of expansion, the night is the period of contraction. And the sun and the moon also represent the complementarity of activity and passivity, of giving and receiving, the two of which create together the whole, the totality.

There's an even more profound aspect to this. There's a Persian poem by the great poet Shabistarī, one of the greatest Sufi poets, that says that when you have an experience of God, it is like an illuminated night in the middle of a dark day. I could spend the whole of my life explaining the symbolism of that. The day in that sense is also the external, the manifested, the profane; the night is the eternal, the inward, the sacred. This is also one of the symbolisms of the male and the female which is very much emphasized in Islam. The male symbolizes external activity; the female is seen as the perfect embodiment of this interiority, inwardness, and sacredness which the night symbolizes. Of course, man and woman combine both elements within themselves, but in each, one element predominates. In a civilization like that of Islam, the spiritual quality of each sex is seen as a perfection of its particular genius and not as a kind of least common denominator. And so this poem by Shabistarī means that the realization of God corresponds to the illumination of a night which is otherwise dark for the blind man. Once it is illuminated, it is the real illumination in comparison with the day, which seems adequately illuminated, but which in fact is the period of scattering, externalization, forgetfulness, and dissipation of our energies and thoughts, and therefore marks a loss of center, a loss of the sacred. If you look at it like that, you have a kind of yin-yang between the sun and the moon, a complementarity in which you have something of one element in the other. There is something of the solar cycle in the lunar cycle, and something of the lunar cycle in the solar cycle.

So you find a universal complementarity between the sun and the moon in all traditions by the nature of these two celestial bodies and their symbolism. In addition to that, these bodies have a special significance in each religious tradition, because there are two types of symbols, those which are natural to things and those which are sanctified by a particular tradition. For example, the symbol of wine as that which inebriates and is therefore a knowledge which delivers and frees, is universal. Even in Islam, where wine is banned, it is used in Sufi poetry. But the symbol of wine as the blood of the founder of a religion is particular to Christianity. It's the coming of Christ which sanctified that symbol in that particular way. A Moslem or a Jew does not take Mass and drink wine in the name of the blood of Christ. So there are two types of symbols.

In Islam, as I said, there is in the Koran a kind of belittling of the sun as the central symbol of the Divinity. Natural phenomena, the grand promenade of nature as theophanies, as manifestations by which God takes witness, appear in the Koran very often. But at the same time great care is taken not to open the possibility of idolatry. However, precisely because of the innate symbolism of the sun, in the Islamic tradition the name of Shams, which is the Arabic word for the sun, comes up again and again. The name Shams al-Dīn,

". . . the great poet Shabistarī, one of the greatest Sufi poets . . . says that when you have an experience of God, it is like an illuminated night in the middle of a dark day . . . . I could spend the whole of my life explaining the symbolism of that."



Photos by Alice van Buren

the sun of religion, is a very common name. Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, who represents, more than any of the companions of the Prophet, the inner, esoteric teachings of Islam, was often compared to the sun. And also to the lion, which is a solar animal. The sun and the lion go together; the classical Persian flag has the sun and the lion, and many other Muslim emblems combine the two. It's an astrological combination, of course, but it also has cosmological significance. You have a wonderful example in the incomparable Sufi poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, whose very mysterious spiritual teacher was named Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī. Now, Shams al-Dīn is a common name, like John or Peter in English. But Rūmī uses it in two ways, both as the name of the mysterious figure who called forth this tidal wave of poetry from him, and at the same time as the sun of religion, God himself in the esoteric understanding of the divine reality.

So the sun, despite this limitation put upon it by the Koran, nevertheless is in Islam a symbol of life and illumination. There is a whole school of illumination, *Ishrāq*, in Persia and other eastern lands of Islam, which integrates the ancient Persian cult of the sun—the Mazdean religion, which saw the sun as a center of light and a direct symbol of the divinity—into Islamic esoteric and metaphysical teachings.

As for the moon, it plays a much more important role in Islam than in many other traditions. Think of the crescent which appears on so many Muslim flags. In fact, whenever Western people think of the Islamic world they think of the crescent. Now the crescent, which is the moon, has a belly which receives and two tips which symbolize activity. Like the horn of the bull, which is also crescent-shaped, it is the symbol of the perfection of activity and passivity together. It is essentially another symbol of the archetype of the Seal of Solomon, which has two triangles, one upward and one downwards, one with the base toward heaven and the other with the base toward earth. In one case you have the receptive pole toward heaven and the active pole toward earth, and in the other case, the receptive pole toward earth

and the active pole toward heaven. This is really the juxtaposition of the saint and the fallen man. The two together represent the totality of human nature. The saint receives from heaven and is active toward the earth; the profane man is the other way around, he rebels and is active against heaven and passive toward the earth; he receives from the lower nature of himself and the world around him. The crescent is a symbol of the origin of Islam, in the sense that the Prophet of Islam embodies the universal man, the perfection of the active and passive states.

But there's another reason for the importance of the moon, and for the many *hadiths* (sayings) of the Prophet in reference to the moon. If you look at it astronomically, of course, the moon is the last planet. But if you look at traditional cosmologies, the moon is seen not only as the moon of the earth—because people knew the moon went around the earth—but, with a stationary earth, it is the first of the planets.

P. So it's the lowest level in the cosmic hierarchy.

S.H.N. Exactly. It is the boundary between the heavens and the world of generation and corruption, to use the Aristotelian subdivision of the cosmos.

The moon, by virtue of that, in a sense receives all of the higher levels of influence. Therefore, it is the recapitulation of all the cosmic forces as well as being the cosmic memory. Each planet symbolizes one of the heavenly worlds; God himself is beyond the cosmos, beyond the cosmic level. All influences that come through to the earth are summarized, recapitulated, and synthesized on the level of the moon. And the Prophet of Islam, as the last prophet in the prophetic cycle, synthesizes and recapitulates the whole prophetic message. In that sense he corresponds to the moon. The word for moon, and especially the word for the full moon, is very important in Arabic and Persian poetry. The beauty of the full moon is often compared to the beauty of the face of the Prophet of Islam. He was often in fact called Badr al-Dīn, the moon of religion. Ali was called Shams al-Dīn, the sun of religion. Their relationships are reversed in a very interesting way; the moon receives its light from the sun, but Ali receives all that he has from the Prophet. Nevertheless, because of the complex symbolism that I mentioned, the roles in this case are reversed. It is also interesting to note here that in Arabic the word for the sun is feminine and for the moon masculine, referring to the same symbolism.

P. Would it be correct, then, to think of the moon not just as a symbolic recapitulation of everything above it but also as a transmitter to that which lies below it?

S.H.N. Yes, definitely. It both synthesizes and transmits to the earth.

P. If the human being is a microcosm, is it correct in any sense to think that we have a sun or a moon within us which corresponds in some way to the external sun and moon? Is there a connection between these internal and external suns? Is that a legitimate idea in traditional thought?

S.H.N. The first part is certainly legitimate. As far as the connection is concerned, there are certain astrological texts which have alluded to that, but it's a lot more problematic. Traditional cosmologies are not only concerned with the cosmos. There's also a microcosmology—a cosmology of the microcosm—which is anthropology, in the traditional sense of the word. I think the word "anthropology" has to be resuscitated in English, as a science of man dealing not only with measurements of the cranium and the feet, but with the micro-

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"There is within man a reality which itself is the archetype of the cosmos. In every tradition which has preserved its inner, esoteric teachings there is an allusion to this."

cosm. Otherwise, you have no word in English for the science of man. I use the word "anthropology" as the science of the *anthropos*, as *anthropos* is understood in classical Greek. Traditionally, anthropology and cosmology complement each other. Always, in all traditions. Look at the sacrifice of Puruṣa in Hinduism, the doctrine of the universal man in Islam and Taoism, and so on. There is within man a reality which itself is the archetype of the cosmos. In every tradition which has preserved its inner, esoteric teachings, there is an allusion to this. In Islam, for example, there are several *hadiths* of the Prophet in which God speaks in the first person to the Prophet; these are called the sacred, prophetic sayings. And in one of them, God says to the Prophet of Islam, "If thou were not, I would not have created the heavens." That is a direct reference to the causal relationship between that "thou," which means the universal man, that is, the archetypal man, the primordial *anthropos*, and the heavens, which are created on the model of that archetypal reality—which in turn is our primal and fundamental reality. So obviously the sun, the moon, the solar system, and the traditional cosmology identified with them must have some kind of correspondence with the inner state of man. Now, some traditions have expanded this and others have not. For example, in the Western tradition it's only in Kabbalistic sources that we get some references to this, but in another light. There the Sephiroths played the role of both the principles of the cosmos and the principles of the microcosm. But in both Islam and Hinduism there's a very elaborate literature in which the human microcosm is seen not only as body and soul—which is a modern usurpation, and in fact a deviation from the norm—and not only as the more simple traditional tripartite division into body, soul, and spirit, but as comprised of seven inner bodies. You find this in Tantric Buddhism, and also in Tantrism within Hinduism.

P. And this corresponds to the seven planets.

S.H.N. And to the seven chakras, which are well known now after the work of Arthur Avalon and others. This idea was developed very elaborately in the so-called Central Asiatic school of Sufism; it was developed by the Persian Sufi, Simnānī, whose teachings spread to Kashmir and from there to India and present-day Pakistan. Simnānī said that within thy being not only is there thy known, everyday consciousness, but there are seven prophets of thy being. Each human being has the Moses of his being, the Christ of his being, the Muhammad of his being, the David of his being, and so on. These figures, in traditional cosmology, are related to the seven planets, going back to the *mi'raj*, the nocturnal ascent of the Prophet. When the Prophet ascended all the scales of being—and the *mi'raj* is the prototype of all spiritual wayfaring in Islam, and also obviously of all posthumous experiences of the higher cosmic states—he encounteed, according to traditional sources, one of the great prophets on each of the planets. A whole cosmology in Islam developed from this, which is related to prophetology. That is, each planet corresponds to one of the prophets. This is very interesting for comparative religion; as I said, the Prophet himself corresponds to the moon, but who corresponds to the sun? It is Christ. This is because in the Abrahamic tradition, Christ is the one who gave out the inner meaning; it is he who rent the veil asunder. He thus corresponds to the direct shining of the sun. Within Islam, Ali plays the same role. That is why in the Islamic tradition Ali is called the Shams of religion, but within the Abrahamic family it is Christ who occupies the level of the sun.

As man journeys inwardly, according to the Sufis, it is like the *mi'raj*. Man has seven subtle bodies through which he journeys until he gets to the heart, where the Divinity resides. This is the very center of the microcosm, which according to the Koran is the seat of God; the Koran says that the heart of the faithful is the seat of the Divine Mercy, and God *is* the Merciful. So as man journeys inwardly, in a sense he is also journeying cosmologically out-

"When the Brethren of Purity say that the Divine Intellect is the life of the sun and the moon, they're speaking from within a universe in which there is no absolute division between what we call physical light and the divine light."

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wardly. There is a correspondence between the two, and at each level there is an encounter with one of the prophets who rules over a particular planetary orbit, symbolically speaking of course, which corresponds to one of the levels of existence. There is a very elaborate cosmology in Islam. It is not a necessary development for every tradition. As I said, in traditional civilizations, cosmologies are keys to open doors. They are not necessary for every person, but they have to be there because a tradition has to integrate different types of mentalities and psyches and provide for different needs.

As far as the relationship between the two journeys is concerned, that is, as I said, a bit more problematic. The idea that the outer sun directly influences the inner orbit of the sun exists in certain astrological treatises. But in the Abrahamic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, this idea is too astrological, in the sense of cutting off the hands of God from what goes on within the soul of man. So usually the vertical ascent toward the Divine and the ascent toward the Divine by penetrating to the center of one's being are emphasized without one causing the other.

P. Perhaps that's why in Christianity and Judaism there's a suppression of cosmological expressions. There's this fear that it would cut off the sense of direct relationship to God.

S.H.N. It's a cutting off only on the juridical and theological levels. Cosmology can only be integrated on a metaphysical level. That is why all Islamic cosmology is developed either by Sufis or by Islamic philosophers who are closely related to Sufism, despite all the Western scholars who say that Islamic philosophy is just Aristotelian rationalism that Muslims took over and then gave back to the West. That is not the case at all. Look at Avicennan cosmology, with which I've dealt so extensively, and see how close it is in fact to Islamic metaphysics.

In the West you see something similar in the cosmologies of such figures as Nicholas of Cusa or Dante. Dante is incredible. You can't say there's no such thing as traditional Christian cosmology. If there were no Christian cosmology, there would be no Christian cathedrals. There is no sacred architecture without sacred cosmology. That's why you can't create sacred architecture today; the best you can do is to emulate. If an architect tries to create a cathedral on his own, he cannot do so, because there's no correspondence with the higher states of being. You might say he doesn't have a map of the cosmos. The fact that you have Chartres Cathedral means you have Christian cosmology. But neither Chartres Cathedral nor the *Divine Comedy* issue from the juridical or the usually understood theological dimensions of religion.

P. So within some traditions there's ambivalence toward cosmology.

S.H.N. There are different dimensions to a tradition. Judaism is close to Islam in the sense that the dimensions are very specific and clearly marked. In Christianity there's more of bringing the two together, and therefore more ambivalence; you don't know who belongs exactly where. That is one of the reasons why, after the Middle Ages, this type of thought caused so much difficulty.

P. In *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Thought*, you write about the Ikhwān al-Ṣa'fā, the Brethren of Purity, and you mention their belief that "the intellect gives life to the sun and the moon." That raises

the question of whether human consciousness is somehow essential to the activity of these higher spheres. Do they only work on us, or do we also have an effect on them?

S.H.N. The Divine Intellect has an effect on both. If you try to answer this question à la Cartesian dualism, which is the background of all modern thought unless you consciously get out of it, you have a world out there and a subject here which has consciousness. Somehow this subject comes to know the world out there. We don't know how; ever since Descartes posited his dualism, nobody has known how this takes place, and so you find many forms of materialism and idealism, which are two sides of the same coin. This is one of the interesting points in contemporary physics. Physicists say now that there is no physics without consciousness. Consciousness is part of the structure of physical reality. With that in mind, if we can get rid of this three-hundred-year heritage of Cartesian dualism, we can answer your question in a much more profound way. When the Brethren of Purity say that the Divine Intellect is the life of the sun and the moon, they're speaking from within a universe in which there is no absolute division between what we call physical light and the divine light. They are grades of the same reality, which goes from the physical to the psychological to the spiritual to the divine. Since these two bodies reflect light upon the world, they must receive their light from the Divine Intellect, the source of all light according to the tradition of Islamic cosmology.

According to this perspective, our consciousness is also derived from the same light. Human consciousness is an incredible thing, and the most direct proof of the non-physical nature of our existence. We don't need any other proof for the existence of God than to understand human subjectivity. Our consciousness also comes from that Divine Intellect; if there were no Divine Consciousness, there would be no human consciousness. Seen in this light, if our consciousness did not exist, the Divine Consciousness would still exist, but the polarization of reality into the microcosm and the macrocosm would not. The metacosmic reality is refracted and polarized in the world of creation into the macrocosm and the microcosm, so they are in a sense the complements of each other. It is impossible to understand, in terms of modern science, that there would be no universe if there were no man. This sounds absurd. We are talking about a little speck of dust in cosmic space which is called the earth, itself just an accident, and on that earth there are even smaller specks which are called human beings. That it is these very small specks who are saying these things is forgotten, as well as the fact that these "specks" can hold the knowledge of these galaxies.

P. Consciousness seems to be the essential glue.

S.H.N. Exactly. There is no knowledge without adequation. There must be a correspondence between the knower and the known in order for the knower to know the known. If we can know the whole of the vast galactic space, that means that something in our consciousness corresponds to that reality to make that knowledge possible. You cannot have one half of a syzygy, something which is comprised of two complementary parts, and remove one part without the other part being removed. It's like holding something before a mirror and having a mirror image on the other side; once you remove the object, the image is also gone. If you really understand that, you can say that if there were no human consciousness, there would be no sun and moon. ■

Whispering Moon / Hollering Sun

"When the Sun rises, do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat 'like a Guinea?'"

O no, no, I see an innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty."[1]

—William Blake

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you. Don't go back to sleep!
You must ask for what you really want. Don't go back to sleep!
People are going back and forth across the doorsill where
the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open. Don't go back to sleep![2]

—Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

My brother the star, my mother the earth,
My father the sun, my sister the moon,
to my life give beauty, to my body give strength,
to my corn give goodness, to my house give peace,
to my spirit give truth, to my elders give wisdom.

We must pray for strength.
We must pray to come together,
Pray to the weeping earth,
pray to the trembling waters
and to the wandering rain.
We must pray to the whispering moon,
pray to the tip-toeing stars
and to the hollering sun.[3]

—Taos Pueblo

The Sun, dispeller of darkness,
whose eye contemplates all things,
is borne onward by seven shining mares.

His mighty steeds advance
inexorably, like a spider's web,
rendering the night's dark robe.
The rays of the Sun, quivering,
push down beneath the waters
the darkness, like a heavy hide.
How strange the Sun! Untethered,
unsupported, he hangs in space.
Why does he never fall?

What inner power propels him?
Who can observe it? He guards
heaven's vault, the sky's pillar.[4]

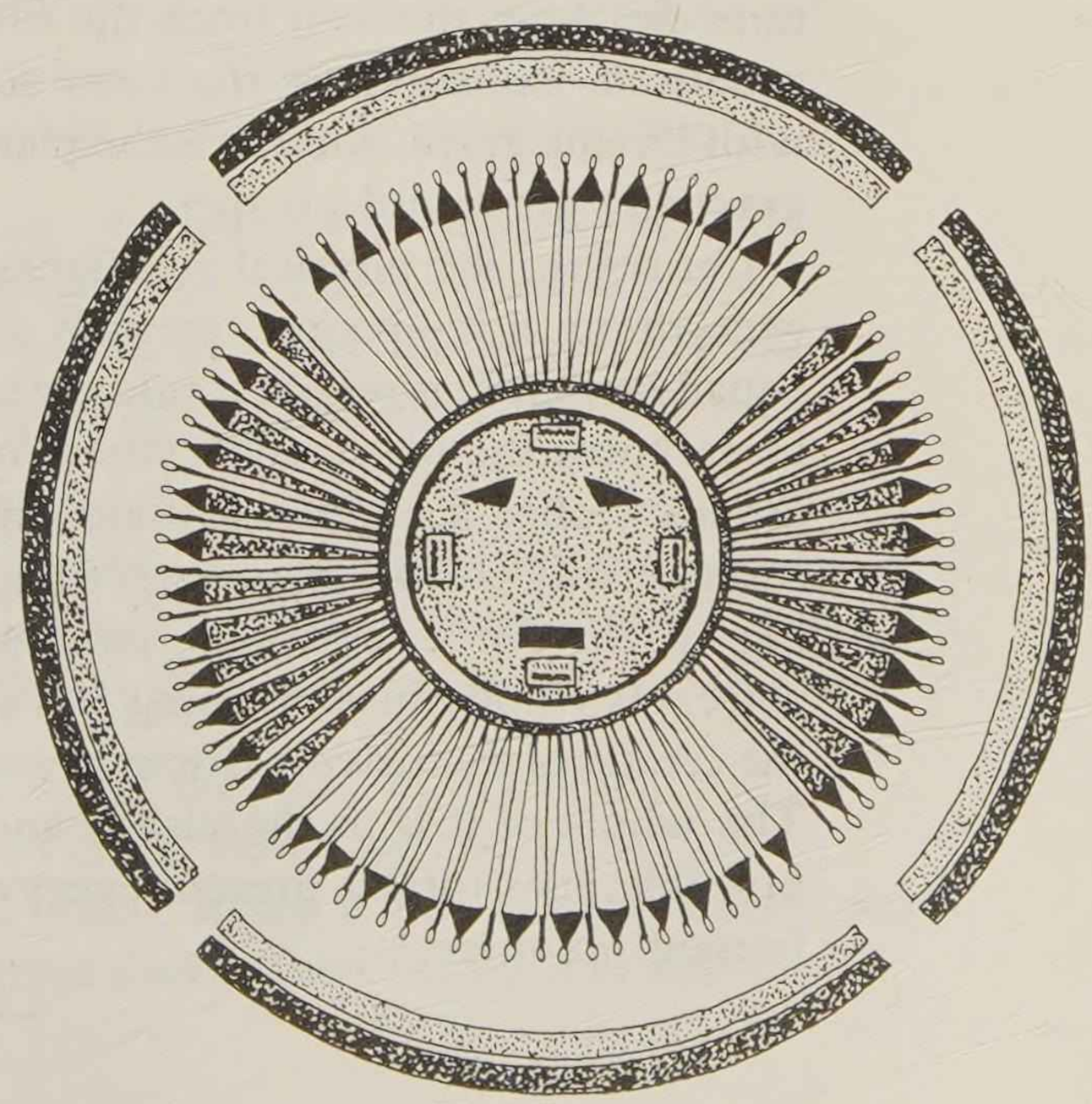
—*Ṛg Veda*

The traditional distinction of intelligible from sensible, invisible from visible "suns" is essential to any adequate understanding of "solar mythologies" and "solar cults."[5]

—*Ananda Coomaraswamy*

He who, dwelling in the sun, yet is other than the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body the sun is, who controls the sun from within—He is your Self, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.[6]

—*Bṛihad-Âraṇyaka Upanishad, III: VII: 9*



The physical sun is seen but does not see; the sun of the intellect is seen by the worthy and itself sees everyone, especially those who look upon it. The physical sun does not speak and endows no one with the gift and power of speech, but the sun of the intellect both speaks to its friends and endows everyone with the gift and power of speech. The physical sun, illumining the physical garden, merely dries the moisture of the soil by the warmth of its rays, but does not fertilize the soil or feed the seeds and plants. The sun of the intellect, when it shines in the soil, does both these things: it dries the moisture of passions, at the same time cleansing the soul from the filth and stench they have produced, and fertilizes the inner soil of the soul (making it rich) with Divine grace, and feeds the plants of the virtues so that they gradually grow and prosper.

On rising, the physical sun lights up the physical world and everything in it—people, animals and the rest—pouring its light equally over all; it reigns at midday and then hides again, leaving in darkness the places over which it shone. But the sun of the intellect, once it begins to shine, shines always, totally and immaterially contained in everything and at the same time remaining apart from its creatures, inseparably separated from them, since it is wholly in everything and at the same time is in none of the creatures exclusively (for at the same time it is elsewhere also). The whole of it is in the visible and the whole of it is in the invisible; it is totally present everywhere and yet exclusively present nowhere.[7]

—*St. Simeon the New Theologian*

The sun is the only real God of the world of visible objects.[8]

—*Lewis Thompson*

Thy dawn, O Ra, opens the new horizon,
And every realm that thou hast made to live
Is conquered by thy love, as joyous Day
Follows thy footsteps in delightful peace.

And when thou settest, all the world is bleak;
Houses are tombs where blind men lie in death;
Only the lion and the serpent move
Through the black oven of the sightless night.

Dawn in the East again! The lands awake,
And men leap from their slumber with a song;
They bathe their bodies, clothe them with fresh garments,
And lift their hands in happy adoration.

The cattle roam again across the fields;
Birds flutter in the marsh, and lift their wings
Also in adoration, and the flocks
Run with delight through all the pleasant meadows.

Both north and south along the dazzling river
Ships raise their sails and take their course before thee;
And in the ocean, all the deep-sea fish
Swim to the surface to drink in thy light.

For thou art all that lives, the seed of men,
The son within his mother's womb who knows
The comfort of thy presence near, the babe
To whom thou givest words and growing wisdom.

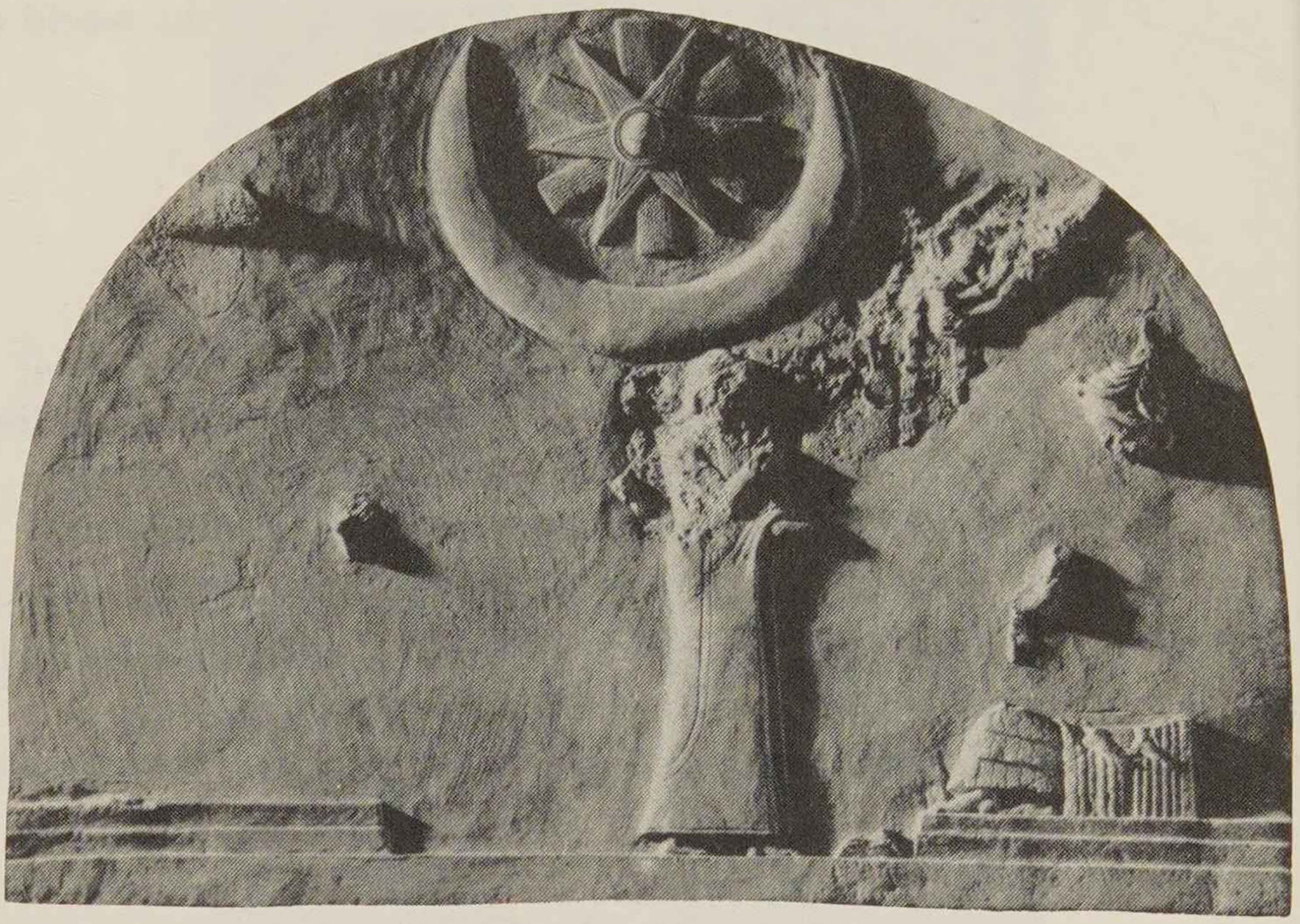
The chick within the egg, whose breath is thine,
Who runneth from its shell, chirping its joy,
And dancing on its small, unsteady legs
To greet the splendor of the rising sun.

Thy heart created all, this teeming earth,
Its people, herds, creatures that go afoot,
Creatures that fly in air, both land and sea,
Thou didst create them all within thy heart.

Men and their fates are thine, in all their stations,
Their many languages, their many colors,
All thine, and we who from the midst of peoples
Thou madest different, Master of the Choice.

And lo, I find thee also in my heart,
I, Khu en Aten, find thee and adore.
O thou, whose dawn is life, whose setting, death,
In the great dawn, then lift up me, thy son.[9]

—*Akhenaten*



Little Nasredin was listening to his teacher reading a passage from the Koran: "God gave brilliance to the sun and radiance to the moon."

"Which is the more useful, the sun or the moon?" asked the teacher.

"The moon," replied Nasredin without a moment's hesitation.

"And why is that?"

"Because the sun only comes out when it's daylight. But the moon lights up the world when it's dark."

The old teacher sighed and deemed it wiser to return to the rules of grammar.

—*Anonymous*

The Jewish Midrash relates that at the beginning of creation the sun and moon were of equal size, but the moon, because it committed a sin, was made smaller, and the sun became the ruling star of the universe. However, God's promise to the moon foretells the reestablishment of the original situation:

At that time thou wilt again be large as the sun;
And the moon's light will be like the sun's light. [10]

—*Erich Neumann*

Love everything in the universe, because the Sun and Moon and Earth are all one body.[11]

—*Chinese*

Those who, verily, depart from this world—to the moon, in truth, they all go. During the earlier half it thrives on their breathing spirits (*prāna*); with the latter half it causes them to be reproduced. This, verily, is the door of the heavenly world—that is, the moon. Whoever answers it, him it lets go further. But whoever answers it not, him, having become rain, it rains down here. Either as a worm, or as a wild boar, or as a snake, or as a tiger, or as a person, or as some other in this or that condition, he is born again here according to his deeds (*karman*), according to his knowledge.

When he comes thither it asks him: "Who are you—"

He should reply:

From the far-shining, O ye seasons, has semen been gathered,
From the fifteenfold produced, from the realm of the fathers.
As such send ye me in a man as an agent.
With a man as an agent in a mother infuse me.

"So am I born, being born forth as the twelfth or thirteenth succeeding month, by means of a twelve- or thirteen-fold father. For the knowledge of this was I—for the knowledge of the opposite of this. So bring ye my seasons on to immortality, By this truth, by this austerity I am a season, I am connected with the seasons. Who am I? I am you."

It lets him go further.[12]

—*Kaushītaki Upanishad*

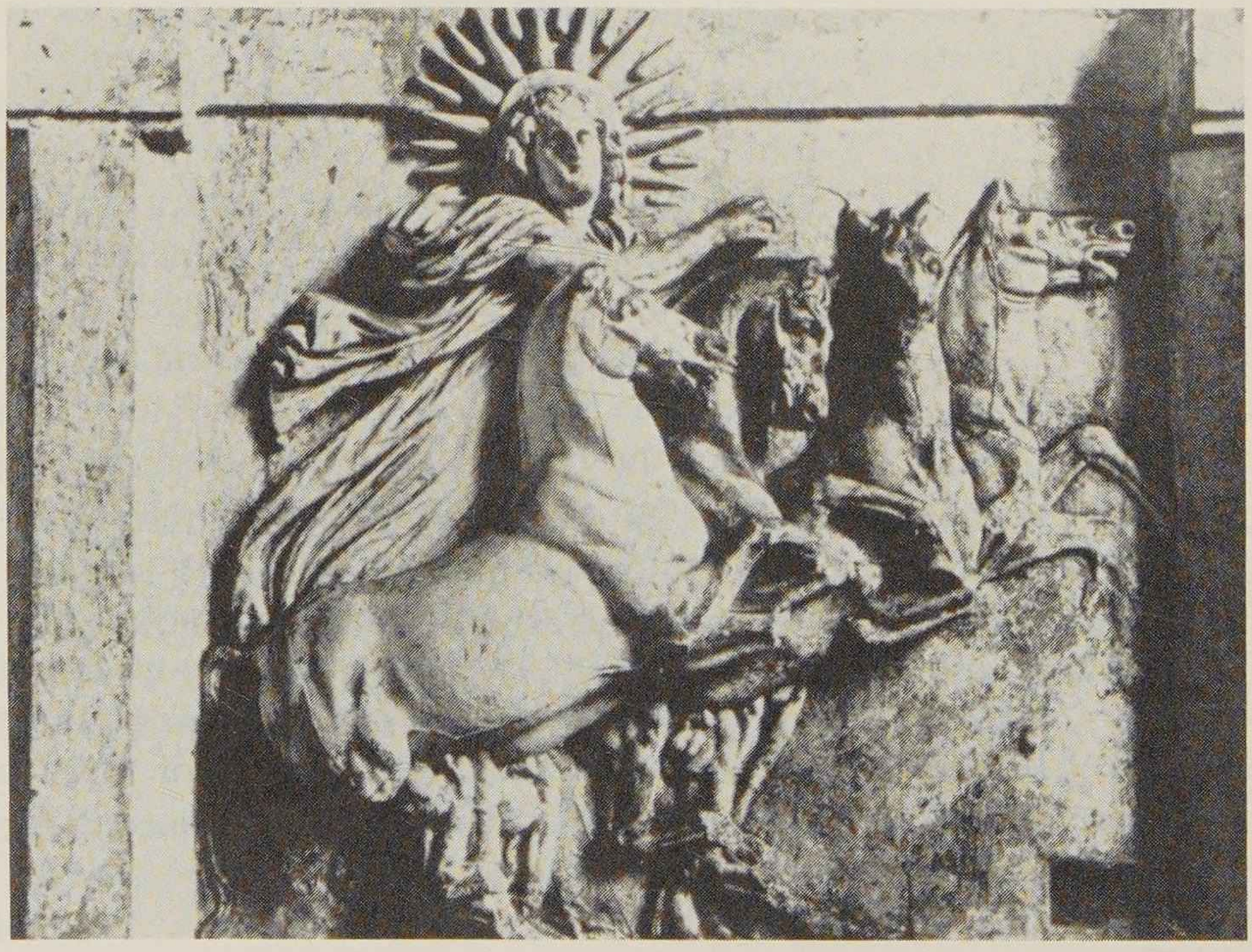
When the living Father perceived that the soul was in tribulation in the body, He sent down his own Son for its salvation. Then He came and prepared the work which was to effect the salvation of the souls, and with that object prepared an instrument with twelve urns, which is made to revolve with the sphere, and draws up with it the souls of the dying. And the greater luminary receives those souls, and purifies them with its rays, and then passes them over to the moon, and in this manner the moon's disc, as it is designated by us, is filled up. For he (Manes) says that these two luminaries are ships or passage boats. Then, if the moon becomes full, it ferries its passengers across towards the East wind, and thereby effects its own waning in getting itself delivered of its freight. And in this manner it goes on making the passage across, and again discharging its freight of souls drawn up by the urns, until it saves its own proper portion of the souls.[13]

—*Disputation of Archelaus*

In a treatise on "the hieratic art of the Greeks," Proclus, that lofty figure of late Neoplatonism whom scholars have so unjustly neglected, writes the following:

> . . . What other reason can we give for the fact that the heliotrope follows in its movement the movement of the sun and the selenotrope the movement of the moon, forming a procession within the limits of their power, behind the torches of the universe? For, in truth, each thing prays according to the rank it occupies in nature, and sings the praise of the leader of the divine series to which it belongs, a spiritual or rational or physical or sensuous praise; for the heliotrope moves to the extent that it is free to move, and in its rotation, if we could hear the sound of the air buffeted by its movement, we should be aware that it is a hymn to its king, such as it is within the power of a plant to sing.[14]

—Henry Corbin

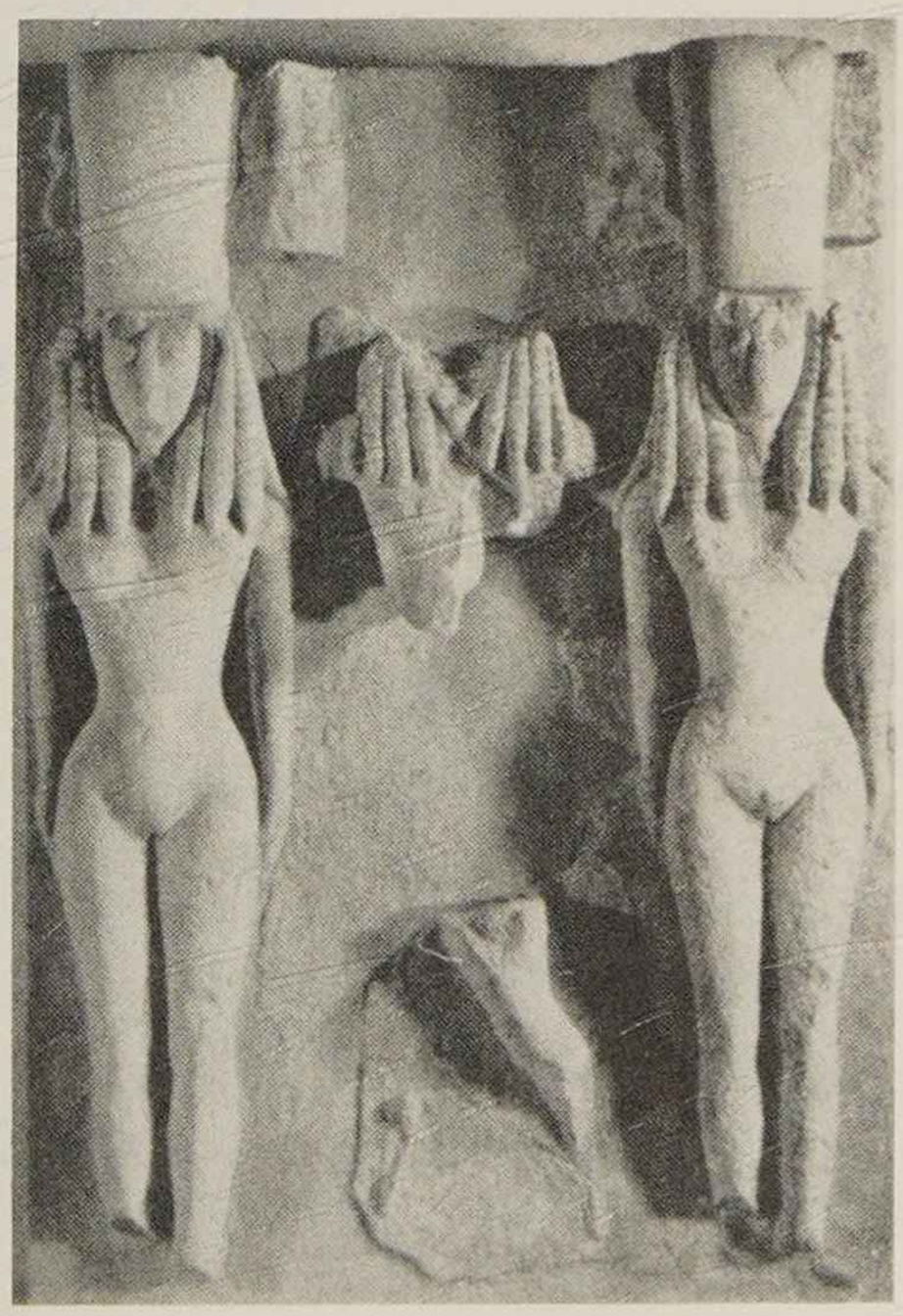


When the great Zen Master Ma reached the end of his life and was lying very sick in his room, the warden of the monastery visited him and asked reverently: "How has the Venerable One's state of health been recently?" Ma replied, "Buddha with the sun visage, Buddha with the moon visage." As Wilhelm Gundert explains, these words hint at a passage in the Third Sutra of the Name of Buddha, where it is explained that the life-span of the Buddha with the moon visage is only one day and one night. The life-span of the Buddha with the sun visage is one thousand eight hundred years. Both Buddhas, however, are only facets of the Great One. After one day and one night Ma died. His mortal part (his moon visage) lasted only that long, but another, more archetypal, part of himself was to last much longer; and beyond it there would be an eternal kernel; but of this Ma did not speak, because it is ineffable.[15]

—Marie-Louise von Franz

"Becoming" is the lunar order of things. Whether it is taken as the playing-out of a dream (the birth, fullness and disappearance of the moon), or given the sense of a "division" or "enumeration," or intuitively seen as the "hempen rope" of which the threads of fate are woven, depends, of course, on the myth-making and theorizing powers of individual tribes, and their level of culture. But the formulae used to express that "becoming" are heterogeneous on the surface only. The moon "divides," "spins," and "measures"; or feeds, makes fruitful, and blesses; or receives the souls of the dead, initiates and purifies—because it is living, and therefore in a perpetual state of rhythmic becoming. This rhythm always enters into lunar rituals.[16]

—Mircea Eliade



It is not under the burning rays of the sun but in the cool reflected light of the moon, when the darkness of unconsciousness is at the full, that the creative process fulfills itself; the night, not the day, is the time of procreation. It wants darkness and quiet, secrecy, muteness, and hiddenness. Therefore, the moon is lord of life and growth, in opposition to the lethal, devouring sun. The moist nighttime is the time of sleep but also of healing and recovery. For this reason, the moon-god, Sin, is a physician and it is said in a cuneiform inscription of this healing plant that "after the sun goes down and with a veiled head, it must be encircled with a magic ring of flour, and cut before the sun rises." Here we see, associated with the magic circle and with flour, the mystery symbol of "veiling" which belongs to the moon and the secretness of the night. The realms of healing and healer, healing plant and recuperative growth, meet in this configuration. It is the regenerating power of the unconscious that in nocturnal darkness or by the light of the moon performs its task, a *mysterium* in a *mysterium*, from out of itself, out of nature, with no aid from the head-ego. This is why healing pills and herbs are ascribed to the moon, and their secrets guarded by women, or better by womanliness, which belongs to the moon.[17]

—Erich Neumann

This is the very error of the moon;
She comes more nearer the earth than she was wont
And makes men mad.[18]

—William Shakespeare

Slowly the west reaches for clothes of new colors
which it passes to a row of ancient trees.
You look, and soon these two worlds both leave you,
one part climbs toward heaven, one sinks to earth,

leaving you, not really belonging to either,
not so hopelessly dark as that house that is silent,
not so unswervingly given to the eternal as that thing
that turns to a star each night and climbs—

leaving you (it is impossible to untangle the threads)
your own life, timid and standing high and growing,
so that, sometimes blocked in, sometimes reaching out,
one moment your life is a stone in you, and the next, a star.[19]

—*Rainer Maria Rilke*

NOTES

1. William Blake, *Blake: Complete Writings,* ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).
2. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Night and Sleep*, trans. Coleman Barks and Robert Bly (Brighton, Mass.: Yellow Moon Press).
3. Nancy Wood, *Hollering Sun* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972). Reprinted by permission of the author .
4. Raimundo Pannikar, *The Vedic Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
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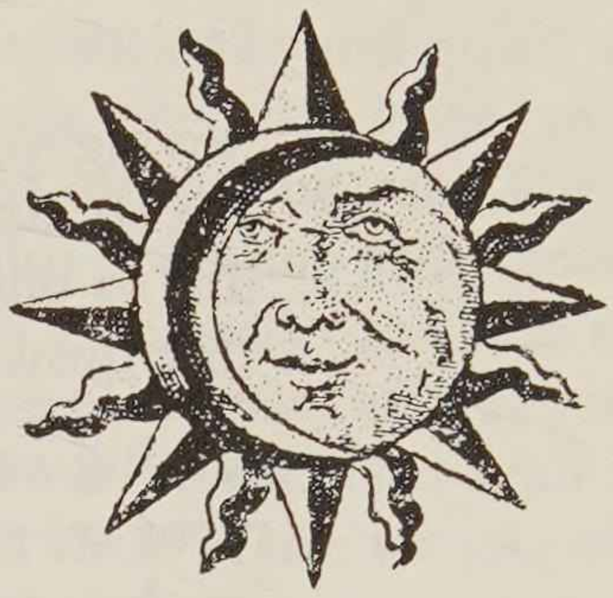
Between Sun and Moon

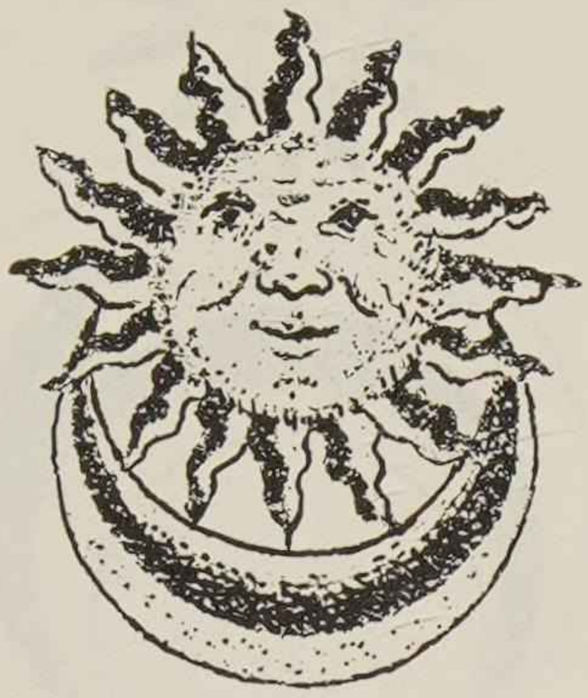
PAUL JORDAN-SMITH

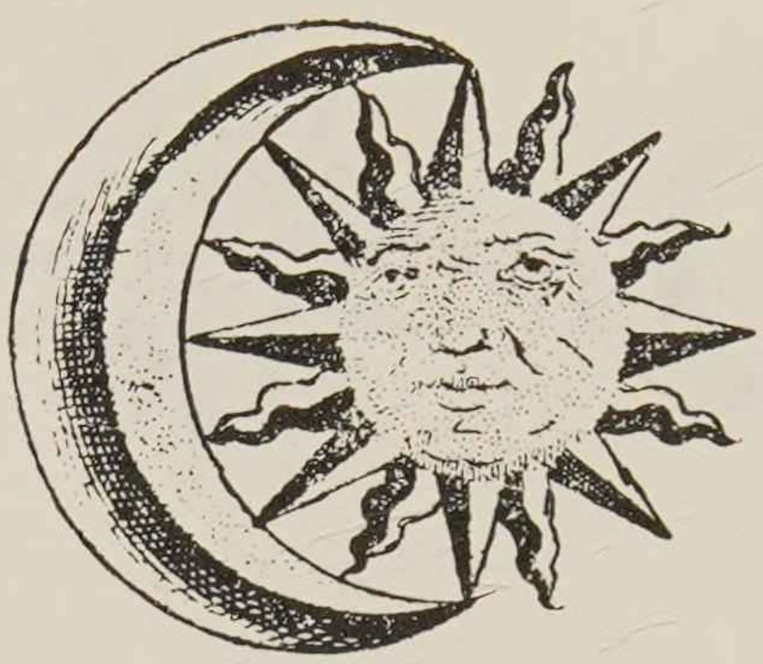


Side by side with perennial questions about the nature of creation are those about human nature. Indeed, they are asked, as it were, in the same breath, as if they were the same question. The "answers," or at least the mythological approaches, tend to coalesce these two questions, so that cosmological myths implicate the ontological and vice versa. Is it too much to speculate that they are indeed the same questions, put from slightly different perspectives?

Speaking of man in the generic sense, what do we mean when we speak of male and female *natures* as opposed to *genders*? We use the terms male and female as analogous to certain hard-to-define qualities which seem to characterize the genders. Yet when a man speaks of his "female" nature (as opposed to his primarily "male" nature) or when a woman speaks of the "masculine" side of herself, we appear to understand, however vaguely, what is meant. In this respect and many others, everyone seems to sense that this *something* which is called *myself* is not the whole: there is "something else" which is also myself, but which does not appear. Part of me is missing; but not always. Sometimes, it (whatever it is) is here, and another part is missing. That this sense is not unique to a handful of neurotic solipsists but is at large in the general social activity of man is evidenced by the great number of "binary oppositions" (to borrow a phrase from Levi-Strauss) used to describe an apparent duality of the self: "mind" vs. "body"; "essence" vs. "personality"; "material" vs. "spiritual"; "organic" vs. "psychic." All these binomial expressions are invoked purportedly to describe, or even define, the way one experiences oneself as a twofold being.

"As soon as the self becomes self-conscious," writes Walker Percy in *Lost in the Cosmos*, "—that is, aware of its own unique unformulability in its world of signs—from that moment forward, it cannot escape the predicament of its placement in the world."[1] A point that Percy makes throughout the book is that man is forever trying to define himself as *this*, usually as opposed to *that*, being momentarily elated with the "discovery," and then unaccountably depressed by this "new knowledge" about the self. There appears to be no cure for this cycle of elation and depression—or rather, there are many cures, each demanding renunciation of the search for identity and self-definition, which, if such renunciation were possible, would certainly lead to a "happy" creature which would probably (in Percy's estimation) immediately commit suicide. If happiness (or fulfillment, or any of the other names this unachievable state goes by) is to be gained only at the expense of the death of one of my natures, what will become of the other? Will it necessarily thrive, now that its companion is no longer competing for attention, or will it, too, simply give up the ghost? If we are uneasy about the price of such dubious happiness, it may signify





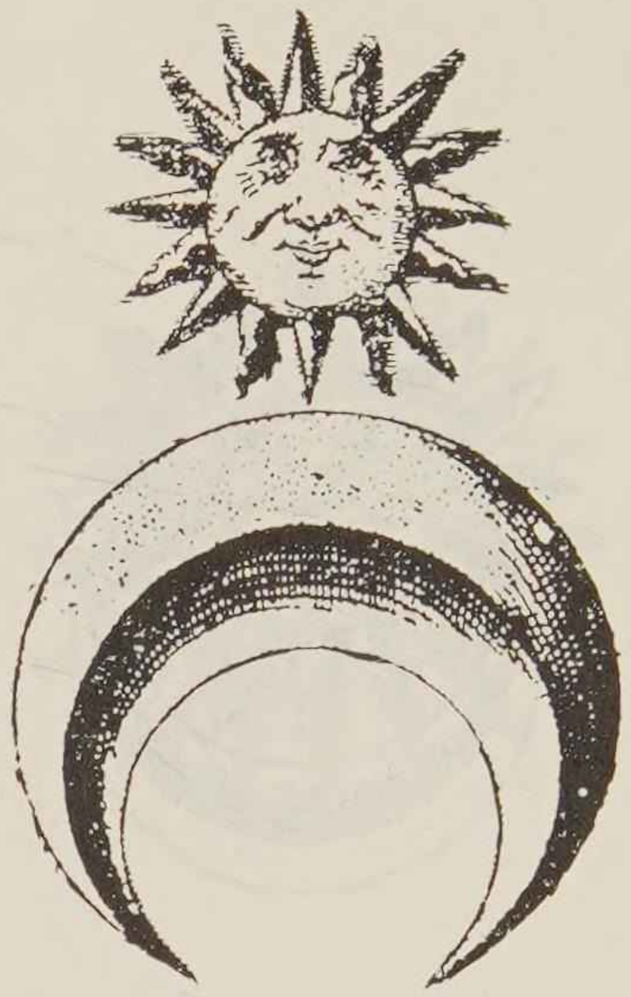
the necessity of both natures. It is in any case questionable whether a true renunciation of this kind is possible. Two-natured we are, and likely to remain so. Yet there lingers the question of why there seems to be such a gulf between these natures, even a struggle, with no sign of reconciliation.

My purpose here is to examine how, in various mythologies, it was once understood that the two natures of man were rightly and properly separated from each other, and what meaning this might have for a creature forever engaged in trying to force a reconciliation.

After Wi, the sun, and his companion Han-Wi, the moon, had been tricked by Iktomi, came the judgment of Skan, the beginning of the third time, and the promise of the fourth time. The Lakota tell it this way. Iktomi beguiled Ite, the wife of Tate and beautiful daughter of Wa and Kan, with the idea of her own beauty. She should, the trickster suggested, be sitting in the circle of the spirits. In particular, she should be sitting beside Wi, so that he could see how beautiful she was. Ite was easily beguiled, and so it came about that she went early to the feast of the gods and took her place beside Wi. Meanwhile, Iktomi persuaded Han-Wi to appear in the circle dressed plainly, for her beauty, he told her, needed no enhancement. So she returned to her lodge and simplified her appearance. All the while, Ite sat beside Wi in the circle of the spirits, and he was delighted by her beauty. When Han-Wi finally appeared and saw what had happened, she covered her face in shame and sorrow. Wi came and stood beside her, but he could not comfort her, and the spirits all laughed at them. Then Wi darkened his face and plunged the world into darkness.

Then came the judgment of Skan: "Wi, because you let the beauty of a woman make you forget your companion, Han-Wi, she shall abide with you no more. From now and forever, you and she shall journey far apart. When she is nearest to you, she shall hide her face from you, and only uncover it when she is farthest from you. You will continue to govern the two times, the day and the night; but she shall also govern a time, and it shall be longer than either the day or the night. It shall be from when she is nearest to you until she goes farthest from you and returns again near you. That all may know it is her time, it shall be called a moon."[2]

So the Sun and Moon were separated from one another for all time. Yet it is not a complete separation. The spirits Wi and Han-Wi remain married, but it is a changed relation. It appears to us as a punishment, as retribution for past misdeeds; but it is first and foremost a judgment in the sense of an assessment of conditions that have changed, for good or ill, and a decision about what is now needed. Wi needs not to forget, in the words of Skan. The sun may be busy, but it must

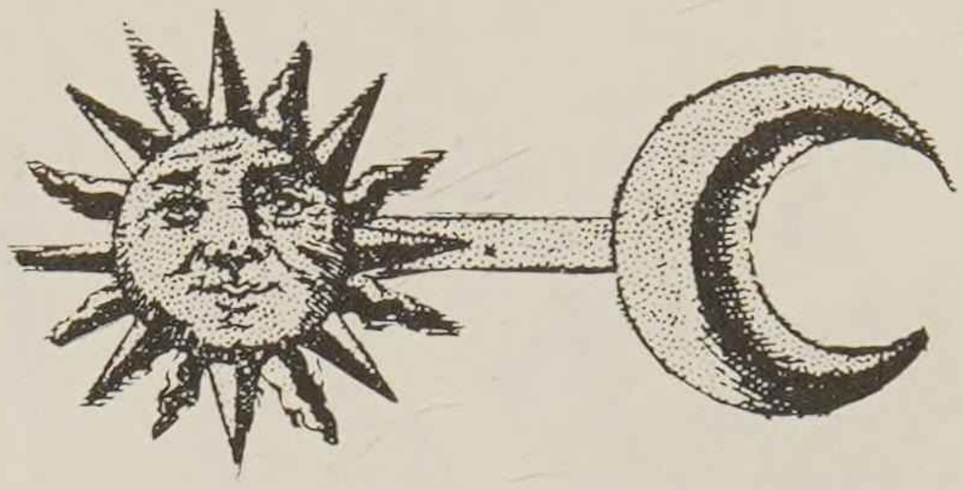


never be unruly: the Sun *is* Rule, the rule of time in its aspect of continuity and perpetuity.

Han-Wi also receives the judgment of Skan, and if we are too concerned with the notion of punishment, her condition may seem terribly unjust. In the parallel story, that of Tate and Ite, the judgments are similar. Ite is given a second face (the Lakota word *ite* means "face") as hideous as her first is beautiful, and she becomes Anog-Ite, the Two-Faced Woman, who will attract with one face and repel with the other. Tate, her husband, is as blameless as Han-Wi, and yet he must suffer separation as well. If we were to leave the story at this point, we must come away with the uneasy feeling that a cosmic injustice has been done. But the story does not end there: these spirits and almost-spirits (such as Ite) have responsibilities in the framework of the cosmos, and the change of relationship brought about by Iktomi underscores the trickster's necessary role as gadfly to the gods. With this change, responsiblities are defined anew, and to Han-Wi is given rule not only over the night, but dominion of the month as well, the third time, while to Tate (the wind, and counterpart of Ecatl) is given the task of raising four sons, the Tatuyetopa, who will establish the fourth time, the year.

Little is said in the corpus of Lakota myth available today about the character of Han-Wi, beyond her shame and her charge of the third time. But many are the stories about the moon and its apparently inconstant, certainly mutable nature. Changeable she is (and the moon is often *she*, but not always by any means), but her mutability is nevertheless constant, and so she too measures time. Her cycle of twenty-eight days, so admirably divisible by the sacred numbers four and seven, provides the sublunary world with a measure of linear solar time, and also serves to define cyclical time more immediately and completely than the solar year. The dependability of solar time, both in its diurnal and annual aspects, is that of constant being. Lunar time, in its nocturnal but more especially its monthly aspects, is dependable in the regularity of change: Han-Wi approaches Wi, and as she does, she hides her face from him, so that in the three days she is nearest, she cannot be seen at all. Then, as she retreats, she uncovers herself again, so that at her farthest distance from her husband, the full beauty of that face which Ite sought to rival can be seen by the worlds of spirits and men.

The myths of separation repeat themselves, variations on a cosmic theme. In Egypt, Ra (the sun) commanded Thoth (the moon) to take his place in the sky, while Ra gives light to the blessed in the underworld. In later theology, Ra is the right eye, Thoth the left, of the eternally renewing Horus. In Slavonic mythology, the Sun (Dazhbog) marries the Moon (Myesyats) at the beginning of summer, abandons her in winter, and returns to her



in spring. Mitra, in ancient Hindu cosmology, is the sun, maintaining the perennial round; Varuna, the moon, is the guardian of man and time. Together, they maintain the cosmic order.

In Siberia, the Sun is often female, the Moon male, and they are usually sister and brother or husband and wife. Though usually complementary, their natures are markedly different, the Sun representing the unchanging, the Moon the passage of time. Among the Eskimos, the tale is told of the Moon-god who rapes his sister, the Sun-goddess. He fled into the sky, she following him and scratching his face, marking his shame forever. Similar stories are told among Native American mythologies throughout the Western Hemisphere. Among the Indians of Guiana, Sun and Moon are twins, Tuminikar and Duid. Duid, the Moon, is the elder and is frequently depicted either as stupid or an idler, or as a trickster. In one myth, the twins seek their father and must pass between Clashing Rocks. Another myth describes the Sun as restoring the fragmented or shriveled Moon.

Among the Bushmen "the sun actually pierces the moon with his knife, and that is why it decays."[3] All, that is, except the backbone, left to light the children who threw grandfather sun into the sky. Among the Akamba, the Moon avoids the Sun, while among the Hottentot there is a direct relationship between the moon and mortality. It is said that the original message of the moon to humanity was, "As I die, and dying live; so you shall also die, and dying live." These words were given to an insect to bring to men. The insect started, and on the way was overtaken by the hare, to whom the insect told the message. The story continues:

The hare said, "As you are an awkward runner, let me go." With these words he ran off, and when he reached men, he said, "I am sent by the Moon to tell you, 'As I die and dying perish, in the same manner you also shall die and come wholly to an end.'"

The hare them returned to the Moon and told her what he had said to men. The Moon reproached him angrily, saying, "Do you dare tell the people a thing which I have not said?"

With these words the moon took up a piece of wood and struck the hare on the nose. Since that day the hare's nose has been slit, but men believe what Hare had told them.[4]

There are, in solar and lunar periodicity, two notions of time. Lunar time is that which measures life, which waxes towards fullness and wanes to a death. Solar time, in its diurnal aspect, has a faster vibration (twenty-eight times that of the moon) and represents a certain degree of continuity, though both lunar and solar time share periodicity and continuity. Solar time is to a certain extent "linear," and lunar time "cyclic." We experience both kinds of time, and thus time puzzles us and exacerbates the problem of our two natures. To be between these two is to be in life as we

experience it in our outer world: that life we measure, because by degrees it is going from us, and that diminution terrifies us.

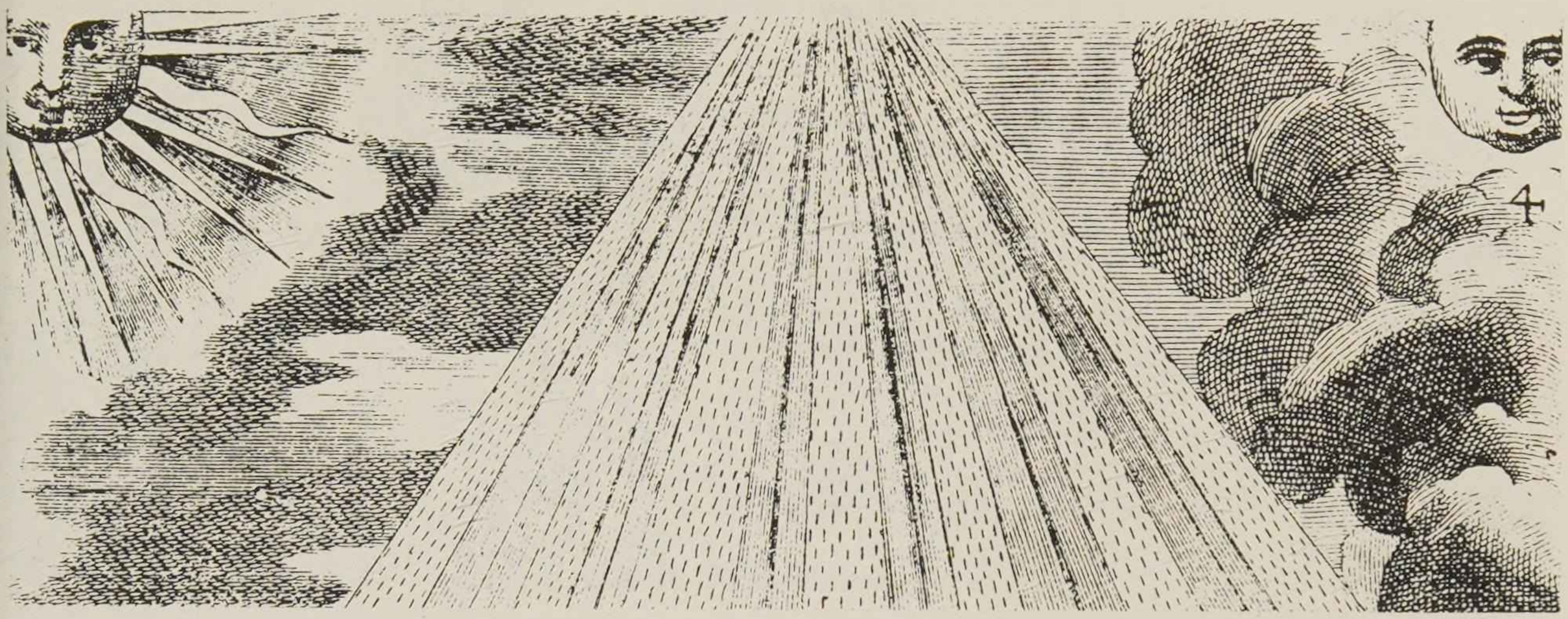
There is no truly linear time, of course, if sun and moon are taken as the measures. Solar time has its morning, noon, evening, and night, just as the moon has its phases. As the death of the moon and its rebirth signal the promise of rebirth, whether in terms of reincarnation or in terms of a spiritual regeneration within one's lifetime, so the solar journey in the underworld and the reemergence at dawn signify the steadfastness of the hero through the "dark night of the soul."

Just as there is no truly linear time, so also there is cyclic but not circular time. There is no true repetition: in the separation and coming together of sun and moon there is growth and change; not simply renewal, but something truly new. The hero's quest expands as he passes through the trials of the way; he began seeking life everlasting and now seeks as well life ever renewed. Traces of this expansion may be found in the earliest legends and myths, such as the epic of Gilgamesh and, to an even greater extent, the story of Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld.

Gilgamesh is a prototypic solar hero, passing on his quest through the gates of Mount Mashu, whence the sun itself, guided by Shamash, emerges at Dawn. After his underworld journey, Gilgamesh arrives at the garden of the gods, the dwelling-place of Shamash, his tutelary deity, with whom he speaks face-to-face. His Night-Sea Journey across the Ocean of Death recapitulates that earlier passage, while at the same time leading him behind the portals of the sun to Dilmun, where there is no time, no death. His journey back to Uruk of the sun-baked walls, back into the quotidian world of time and mortality, where he is to write on a tablet the whole story, strengthens the solar image: as there is no resolution to the quest, Gilgamesh must, like the sun, repeat his journey forever.

Not so Inanna, the lunar heroine, who suffers a real death at the hands of her sister Ereshkigal, Queen of the Netherworld. One by one, Inanna is stripped of her diadems and powers as she passes through the Seven Gates of the Great Below, so that she enters naked into the presence of the Queen. Then, with the sixty miseries heaped upon her, she is put to death, and left to hang on a hook for three days, the grisly trophy of the apparently absolute victory of death. But Inanna must not die. The food and water of life are sent to revive her. As she arises into the Great Above, the gatekeeper returns to her all her celestial vestments, and she ascends in full glory.

Among the extant myths of the Sumerians is a curious, fragmentary narrative in which Gilgamesh is importuned by Inanna to cut down a certain tree which she



wishes to fashion into a throne and royal bed. It is an interesting tree, this *huluppu*-tree as it is called. As with the World Ash *Yggdrasil*, a serpent has entwined itself inextricably in the roots of the tree (in Norse myth, this is the Midgard Serpent, which binds the world together), while in the topmost branches there nests the *Anzu*-bird, like the eagle of the Norse. Gilgamesh comes to Inanna's aid, uprooting the tree and driving off its inhabitants.

From the trunk of the tree he carved a throne
for his holy sister.
From the trunk of the tree Gilgamesh carved a
bed for Inanna.
From the roots of the tree she fashioned a *pukku*
for her brother.
From the crown of the tree Inanna fashioned a
mikku for Gilgamesh, the hero of Uruk.[5]

The serpent and the eagle, emblems of moon and sun, at opposite ends of the tree, define a cosmic polarity. In between, in every sense of the word, is Lilith and her demonic brood, consecrated to a mediation which, like that of the trickster squirrel Ratatosk, who runs up and down the World Ash, serves not to reconcile, but to maintain a lawful separation. In the Sumerian story, Gilgamesh cuts down the tree, the *Anzu*-bird flies off to the mountains, the serpent descends into the earth, and Lilith takes to the waste-land with all her attendant spirits. With the cutting-down of the tree, a new order is established. Gilgamesh returns to Uruk of the sun-baked walls, there, like the sun, to establish a ruthless dominion of labor for his people. Inanna has her throne and bed, and is ready now to assume her place as Queen of Heaven, and to accept her lover Dumuzi. As Diane Wolkstein observes, "The tree, which was born from the confrontation of life's opposing forces, is now shared between Inanna and Gilgamesh; woman and man, goddess and mortal."[6] The tree itself is transformed, and like all sacred artifacts, points toward the human dimension and its possibilities. There is a work here to be performed, the making of the emblems of authority and dominion out of the inchoate and aboriginal substance of Creation. But the dominions of heaven and earth remain separate, and their lord and lady must travel their separate ways.

The Sun must daily light the world, and by night console the shadows of the dead, not dying or suffering corruption. The Moon must die and, as in the African fable, "dying, live." These are, then, two modes of life of which we partake as human creatures. In Hindu mythology, this twofold nature is sometimes symbolized by the wild gander, at home in two worlds, of water and air.

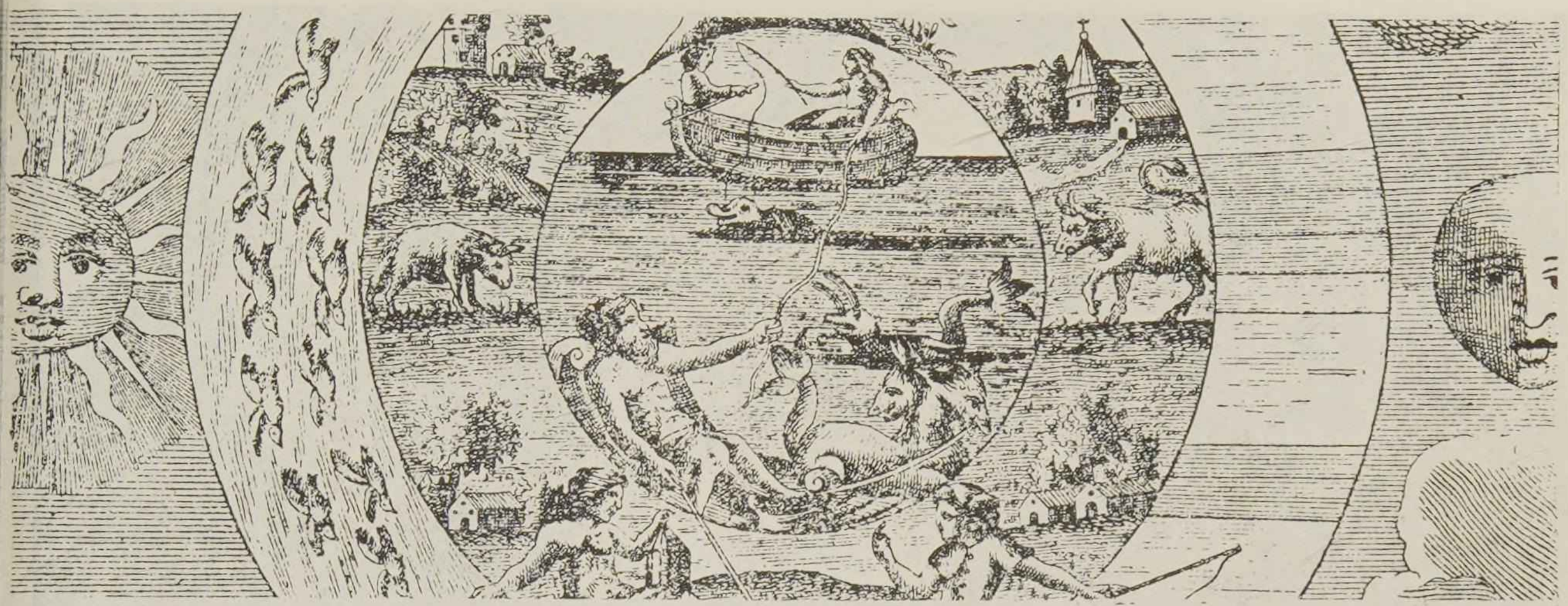
On the one hand earth-bound, limited in life-strength, in virtues and in consciousness, but on the other hand a manifestation of the divine essence, which is unlimited, immortal, virtually

omniscient and all-powerful, we, like the wild goose, are citizens of the two spheres. We are mortal individuals bearing within ourselves an immortal, supra-individual nucleus. Shrouded by the limiting, individualizing stratifications of the tangible gross frame of our physical nature, and by the subtle sheaths of our animating psyche, is the Self (*atman*), fundamentally unaffected by the processes and activities of the conditioning layers, isolated and steeped in beatitude. Without knowing it, we are immaterial, divine, exalted, though also changing, subject to experience, joys and griefs, decay and rebirth.[7]

The Sun and Moon are maintainers of the cosmic order, not its creatures; for that reason, they seem to be closer to us, to reflect more clearly our condition in the celestial realm than the remote creator and matrix of the cosmos. They are like cosmic guardians, both in the sense of caring for and maintaining their charge, and as protectors of the sacred passage between the two worlds of life and death. But they also represent two natures of Time, that dimension uniquely meaningful to humankind, signifying, perhaps, that the two natures of human beings unfold in different tempos, and that we are quickened alike by both. Neither nature must stand still: the solar, lest all creation be shriveled by the heat; the lunar, that the cycle of regeneration, and hence of growth, might unfold. In their separation and conjunction they are like cosmic Symplegades, pillars as it were of the celestial door, and between them, in the brief moment of separation, our life must pass. If the tales of the Clashing Rocks be true, the way between is a dangerous passage, not to be navigated carelessly. It is a heroic task, one demanding courage as well as sacrifice: the Argo lost her rudder, indispensable on this side of the threshold, but superfluous on the Other Side; even, perhaps, a liability. But are we heroes of our lives in sufficient measure to risk the passage? The myths and legends tell us that heroes are fated to be, but not that they are born so. What then is the task of the proto-hero, but to prepare for the birth of the heroic?

There are indications in these myths that our task is to maintain relationship in separation, rather than to bring about an ultimate unification of our two diverse and partly autonomous natures. The consistent violence which brings about the separation serves, it would seem, to underscore the lawfulness of the rift, since afterwards sun and moon approach, but never unite. As Coomaraswamy points out, a world without oppositions would be a world without change, "logically inconceivable and of which experience would be impossible."[8] Yet how are we to live with such a rift, and more importantly, how is transformation possible when the two natures seem always to be at odds with each other?

The Sun and Moon are at odds with each other, yet they also yearn for each other, and their conjunction, if not their union, is as indispensable as their separation. In their



coming together is conceived a new creation, a *tertium quid*, and in their parting it has its generation and its being. This *tertium quid* is nothing else than man himself; more specifically, it is the hero, for whose coming the way was prepared and whose birth, between the Symplegades of sun and moon, has required acts of courage and sacrifice. The relationship between sun and moon is characterized by friction and reciprocity; the hero is the one who can make the right use of these two forces to accomplish the hero-deeds of which the world is in sore need.

It is our task, as human beings maintaining an inner cosmos, to insure that our natures periodically come together, that from their conjunction may be engendered a *tertium quid* in ourselves; yet also that they remain disjunct, each retaining autonomy and balance, each moving in its lawful tempo. For the Sun, given the opportunity, will wither the new creation, and the Moon will freeze it. Between the antipodes of the self must stand a third force, the purpose of which is both to sustain the two natures, and maintain their opposition. G.I. Gurdjieff likens these natures to a wolf and a sheep, with man himself as their guardian:

> Only he will deserve the name of man and can count upon anything prepared for him from Above, who has already acquired corresponding data for being able to preserve intact both the wolf and the sheep confided to his care.[9]

Human beings were born with two natures; but the "corresponding data" must be acquired. This is the task of the one who stands between Sun and Moon. ■

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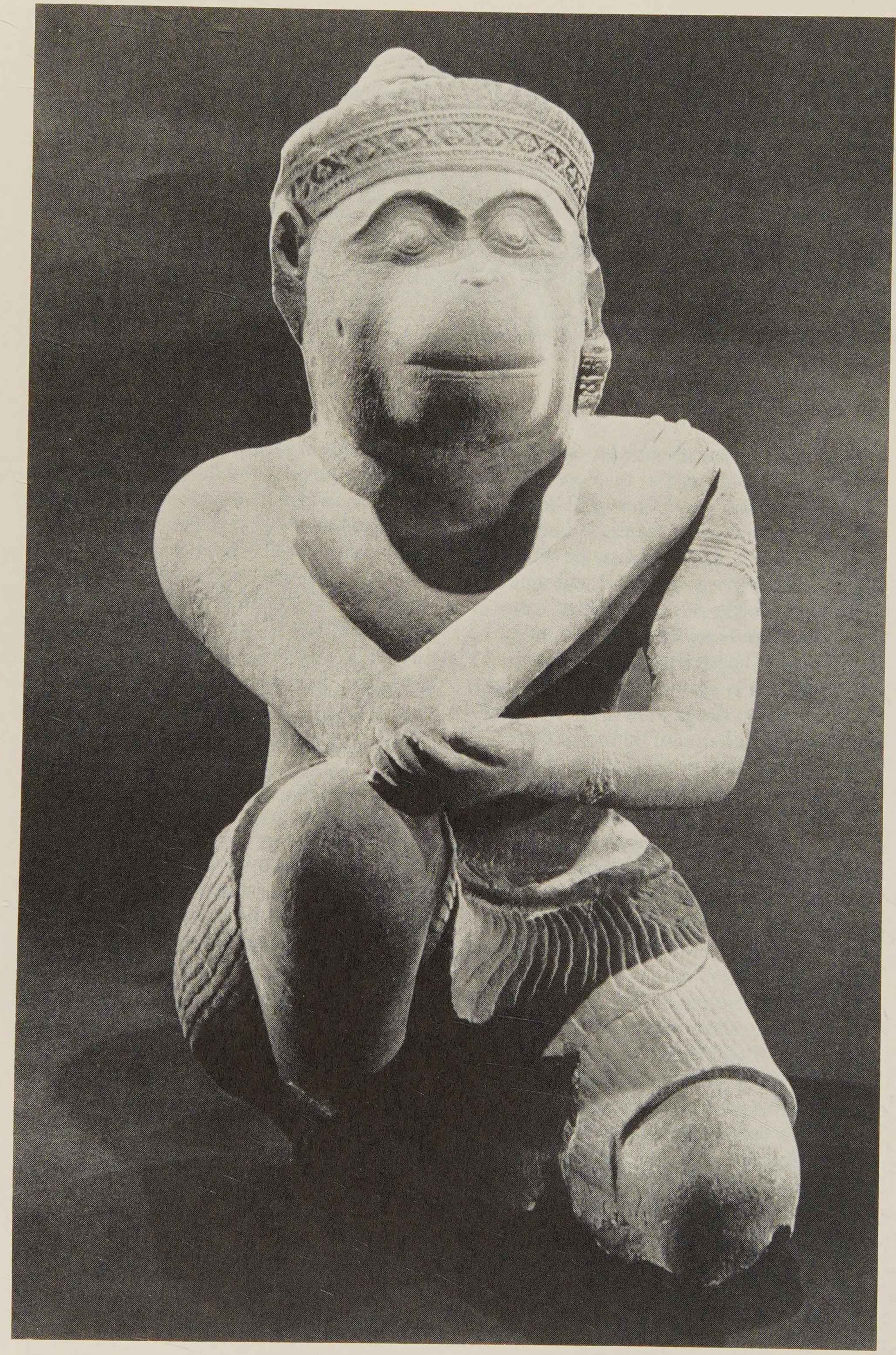


Re-storying the Adult

P.L. TRAVERS

The analytical psychologist, James Hillman, has written of the importance of "re-storying the adult." Is not this the prime business of PARABOLA? There are, indeed, books that purport to be written for children that, in fact, do exactly this for the grown-up. Not to mention the fairy tales, which are at all times available to him and which were never, in the first instance, written for children. It is they, the wise ones, who have purloined them.

"We love only what is our own," said AE, the Irish sage, "and what is our own we cannot lose." But as we grow older what is our own is not so easily perceived. It becomes silted over with what is not the true story, like a penny lost in a puddle. For the adult to re-story himself a certain process has to be set in motion, a process in which he himself must relive intentionally what once was organically lived by the blood. He must take an active and enquiring part; no one can do it for him. To set him loose in a library full of myths and legends would do no good whatever. He would merely go on reading, reading, silting over still further that bright instructive penny. No. He needs to let go all his knowing, be as ready for Hell as for Heaven and bare his heart until, if need be, it is capable of breaking. Maybe, even, he will need a guide. He will certainly need to listen. The ear is ever more subtle than the eye.

"Shall I hold your hand?" asked a child of five whose father was about to read us "Fitcher's Bird" from Grimms'. She had no fear, knowing the story, but clearly doubted my ability to cope with all the bloodiness that precedes the happy ending. I accepted with gratitude, realizing that since I myself at the same age had cheerfully encountered all those chopped-up bodies in the basin, much silting over had happened within me, many tables had been turned.

If I had the job of re-storying someone, I would go first to the great world epics, those reservoirs from which all the smaller stories have been fished—the *Mabinogion*, the *Eddas*, the Irish *Tain*, the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the *Popol Vuh*, the Old and New Testaments, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Ramayana*.

Of the last, Coomaraswamy has observed that "one might go so far as to say that no one unfamiliar with the story of Rama and Sita can be a true citizen of the world."

If you, stranger, wishing to be such a one, were to take my hand while I recited this mighty saga, we would be together for days and weeks. But at least we can speak here of Hanuman who, in a sense, is the deus ex machina of the story.

"It may be questioned"—again I quote Coomaraswamy—"whether there is in the whole of literature such another apotheosis of loyalty and self-surrender as Hanuman . . . the perfect servant who finds full

realization of manhood in faithfulness and obedience, the subordinate whose glory is in his own inferiority."

He must have been already ancient and come from afar—a character, perhaps, in search of a story—when Valmiki, writing early in our Christian era, lifted him from the unwritten annals of the folk. True, the *Ramayana* is full of other monkeys; Surgriva and Vali are powerful and princely apes whose subplot thrusts the action forward. But Hanuman stands apart from these, sole of his kind, seeking nothing for himself and, in serving Rama—who, it is ultimately disclosed, is an incarnation of Vishnu—becomes the meeting-point of an earlier system of nature-worship with the burgeoning order of gods and devas which was to influence the whole future of religion. So, let us speak here to the *Ramayana* solely in terms of that meeting-point, finding the oak tree, as it were, in the acorn.

Briefly, Rama, ousted from his position as heir apparent to the throne of Ayodhya, sets off with his newly wedded wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshman, to dwell in the forest as hermits. But the forest, if full of hermits, is also inhabited by rakshasas (demons) whose King, Ravana, by devious means, discovers the trio and becomes enamored of Sita.

Choosing a time when the brothers are away hunting, he appears before her as a wandering yogi and as such is treated courteously. However, he quickly shows himself in his true colors—ten-faced and twenty-armed—and carries her off in his chariot, but not before Sita, perceiving five great monkeys sitting together on the top of a mountain, casts down to them her veil and a handful of jewels. Rama, distraught, comes upon the monkeys and swears friendship with their king, Surgriva, who summons his hosts from far and near, chief among whom is Hanuman. It is to him that Rama gives his signet ring, immediately divining that if Sita is to be found at all it will be by this humble monkey.

So, Surgriva's people range the world and learn at last from an aged vulture that Sita has been carried away by Ravana, a hundred leagues across the sea to Lanka. But who can cross those hundred leagues? Who but Hanuman, the son of the Wind, who, as a child, had seen the sun in the sky and, thinking it to be a fruit, had leapt three thousand leagues to pluck it.

He leaps. Mind, heart, and body steadied on the task, he disdains, in his impatience, to rest for a moment on a mountain thrust up by the kindly ocean, and alights upon the shores of Lanka, neither weary nor breathless. Like a cat he creeps through the sleeping city and comes at last to where Ravana lies among his resplendent queens. But his instinct tells him that Sita could not, indeed would not, be among them.

"Better I die than not find her," he thinks. So he proceeds to meditate, making his mind one-pointed, ranges through the surrounding woods in his imagination and in his imagination comes upon her. Guarded by rakshasas, like a deer among hounds, she lies grieving beneath an asoka tree. Hanuman climbs silently into the branches and softly, so as not to startle her, recites the deeds and virtues of Rama, till at last, certain that he has her ear, stands before her with joined palms and offers the signet ring. Modestly, ever the servant, he suggests that he carry her on his back across the sea. But, no. For all her joy at the signet ring, she will not willingly touch anyone but Rama, and the glory of her rescue must be her husband's. She gives him a jewel from her hair and begs him to return and tell Rama where to find her.

So, go he must but, monkey-like, he will not leave till he has left his mark—breaking the branches of the wood, despoiling the elegant pavilions. Inevitably, he is caught and brought before Ravana, whose one thought is to kill and eat him. But demons, too, have their chivalry; one may not eat an envoy. There is nothing, however, against setting fire to an envoy's tail. So Hanuman becomes a flaming brand till the Wind, beholding his son's plight, blows cold between the tail and the body while the son reduces half the city to ashes and slaughters a host of rakshasas. Then,

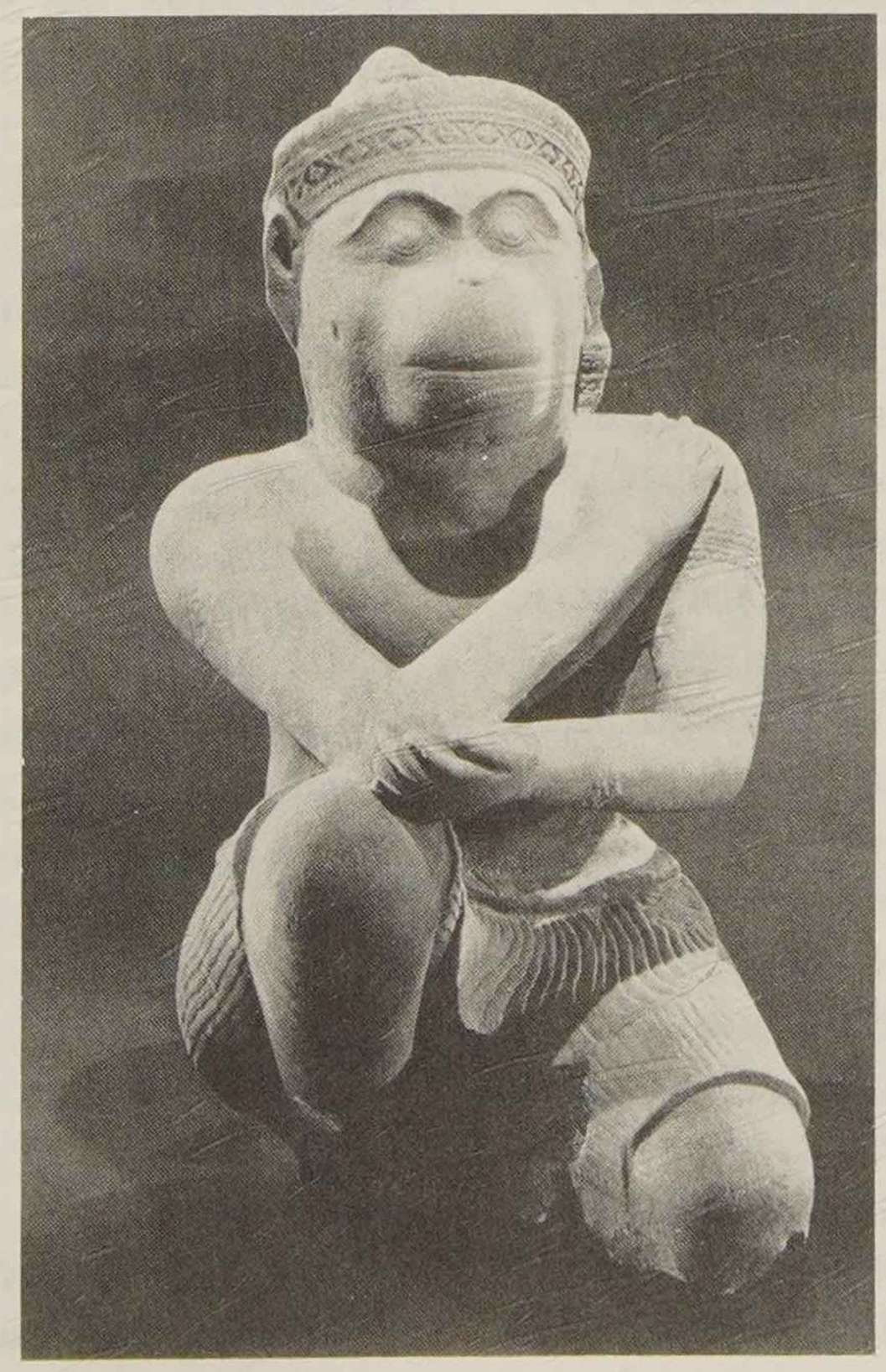
quenching his tail at the edge of the ocean, he makes another great leap across it and lays Sita's jewel at Rama's feet.

Thus, with Sita found, the struggle for her rescue begins. Ocean, by its nature fathomless, suffers Rama and the monkey hordes to build a bridge of stones and trees and vows to hold it up. So, to and fro the battle surges, Hanuman, ever-excessive in the midst, breaking off hilltops to hurl at rakshasas; even, with Lakshman wounded and in need of healing herbs, leaping to the Himalayas and, too impatient with love to pluck them, carrying southward a whole mountain and replacing it when the wound is healed.

At long last—for the battle takes up almost half the story—Ravana is slain by Rama with a Brahma weapon, and it is Hanuman whom he sends to Sita to apprise her of all that has happened. The reunion of the pair and Rama's two heart-broken renunciations of his bride—in the name of custom and tradition—is another story. That of Hanuman ends with the departure of the helpful monkeys laden with goodly gifts. But he himself has no need of a gift, his passion is to serve. All he asks is that he may live on earth as long as the story of Rama is told. The boon is granted. It is, in fact, the gift of eternal life. For if, by mischance, the *Ramayana* should ever cease to be known, Hanuman could not but live on. Whatever it is or whoever it is that unwinds the myths of the world would make sure that he didn't disappear but moved from one cycle of stories to another. Inevitably, I think, he would find his way into the Jataka tales as an incipient Boddhisattva, not to be lost till all men are lost, nor to step into Heaven till he is sure that all men, absolved, are at his heels.

So, stranger, I give you an acorn. If you will re-story yourself its tree will become as high as the sky. Or, better still, remembering Blake—one of the great re-storyers—

I give you the end of a golden string
Only wind it into a ball,
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall. ■



She Who Has No Light of Her Own

JONATHAN OMER-MAN

And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun.

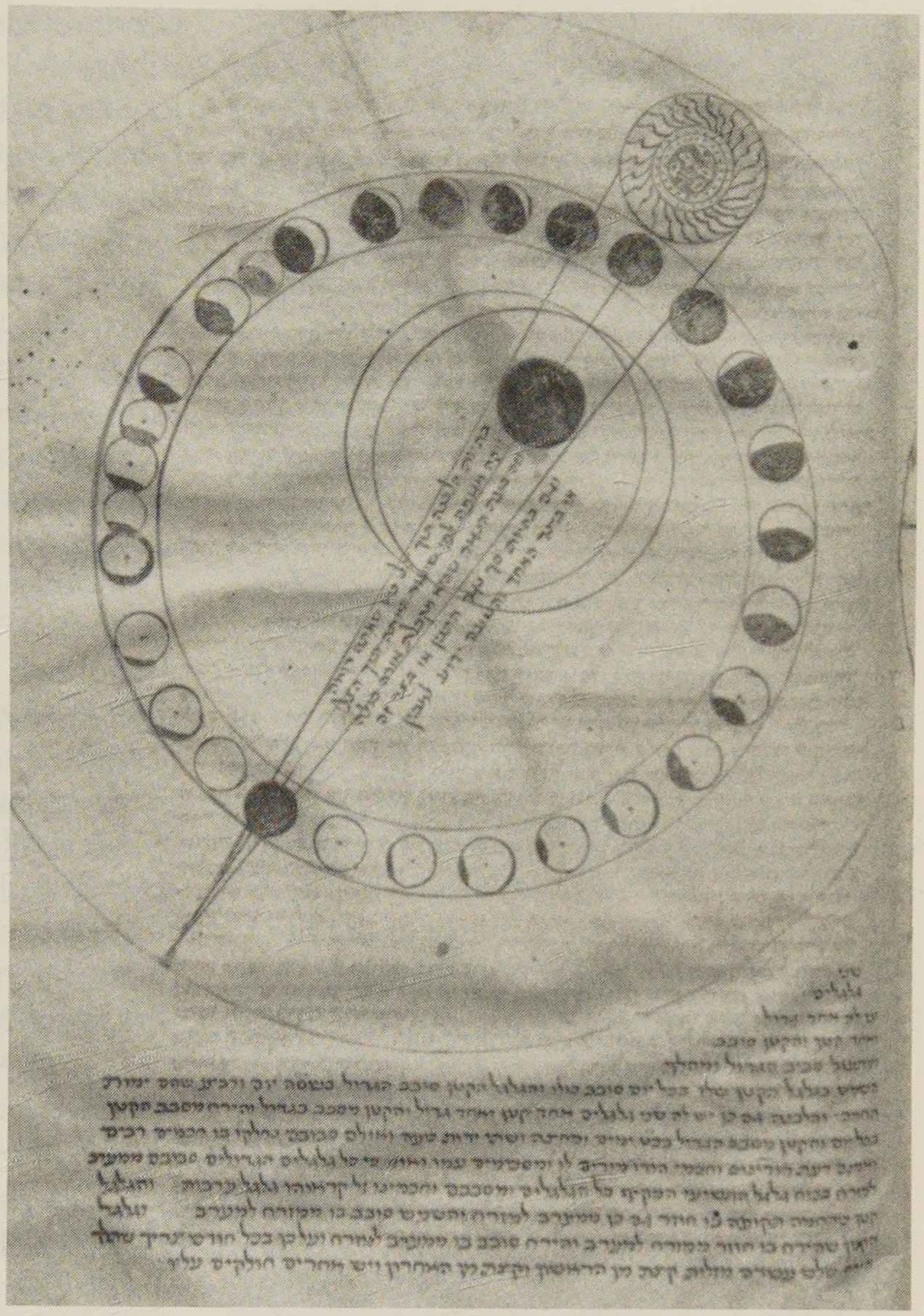
—Isaiah 30:26

Certain sounds, our teachers tell us, permeate all of creation. They reach from one end of the universe to the other, but no human ear can hear them. There are various descriptions of these sounds. One rabbinic authority offers a list that includes the cry of a fruit tree that is being chopped down, of a snake shedding its skin, and of the soul leaving the body at the moment of death. Other sources refer to the unheard sounds of the celestial bodies in their orbits, but they differ in what they describe. Thus we read in the Midrash: "Rabbi Yehudah said: 'You think that it [the firmament] glides silently, but in fact its sound is as raucous as the sawing of wood.'" On the other hand, the Zohar, which leans to Pythagoras, holds that the sounds are harmonious. Furthermore, this mystic text teaches us, in all history there were but two people who could hear the song of the sun as it moved through the stages of its orbit: Moses and Joshua. When, however, Joshua required a certain service (several additional hours of daylight) of the sun in order to prevail in the battle at Gibeon, he found its music intolerable and commanded it to be silent (an interpretation that is based on a linguistically variant reading of Joshua 10:12).

Two interlocked themes underlie these myths: our intrinsic inability, and our acquired unwillingness, to perceive certain aspects of the world around us. Man is a limited creature, and, furthermore, has always tended to fall into automatic, habitual modes of perception. From earliest times religion has provided the means to awaken us, to enable us to see more clearly that which can be seen, and to guide us to an awareness of that which cannot be seen. Our formal tools in this latter task are ritual and myth.

Most of us will never be able to hear the world's silent sounds, any more than we will be able to see our own souls. Nevertheless, we can chart them. In the Jewish system, however, first one must learn the law, the measurable, and only then the mystery. One must learn the laws restricting and permitting the felling of fruit trees before entering into the forest of wandering souls. Similarly, by first observing the sun and the moon, and by celebrating that which we do perceive, we can proceed to learn the truths of the cosmic harmonies and of the mystery of our place and our role within them. The study of the sun and moon leads on the one hand to the science of astronomy and on the other to gnostic wisdom and to knowledge of self. And as it is in the life of the individual, so it was in the history of the people.

In late antiquity the study of the sun and moon was fraught with difficulties.



Astronomical drawing from Shesh Kenafayim, *13th-14th century*

One concerned the calculation of the calendar. The Hebrew festivals are fixed according to their date in the lunar month, but their significance is often related to the solar seasons. Thus the spring festival of Passover begins on the fifteenth day of the month of Nissan. The problem was that there is no apparent rational relationship between the length of the solar year, which is 365.24 days, and any multiple of the lunar month, which is about 29 days. Were the calendar year to be twelve lunar months long, it would be shorter than the solar year, festivals would repeat themselves every 354 days, and what was originally a spring celebration would gradually crawl into winter, and then into autumn, and so on. Similarly, a thirteen-month calendar year would be longer than the solar year, and festivals would occur later and later in the year.

When the Jews lived as a religious community in their land, there was an easy solution to the problem: the calendar year was considered to be twelve lunar months, but additional months were introduced on a purely pragmatic basis. Whenever certain phenomena associated with the spring, like the greening of corn, did not appear on time, a leap year was declared: a supernumerary month was added, and the dissonance was abolished. This process of calendar correction was always a carefully guarded (and occasionally disputed) hieratic function, even though it was based on empirical data. With the exile, however,

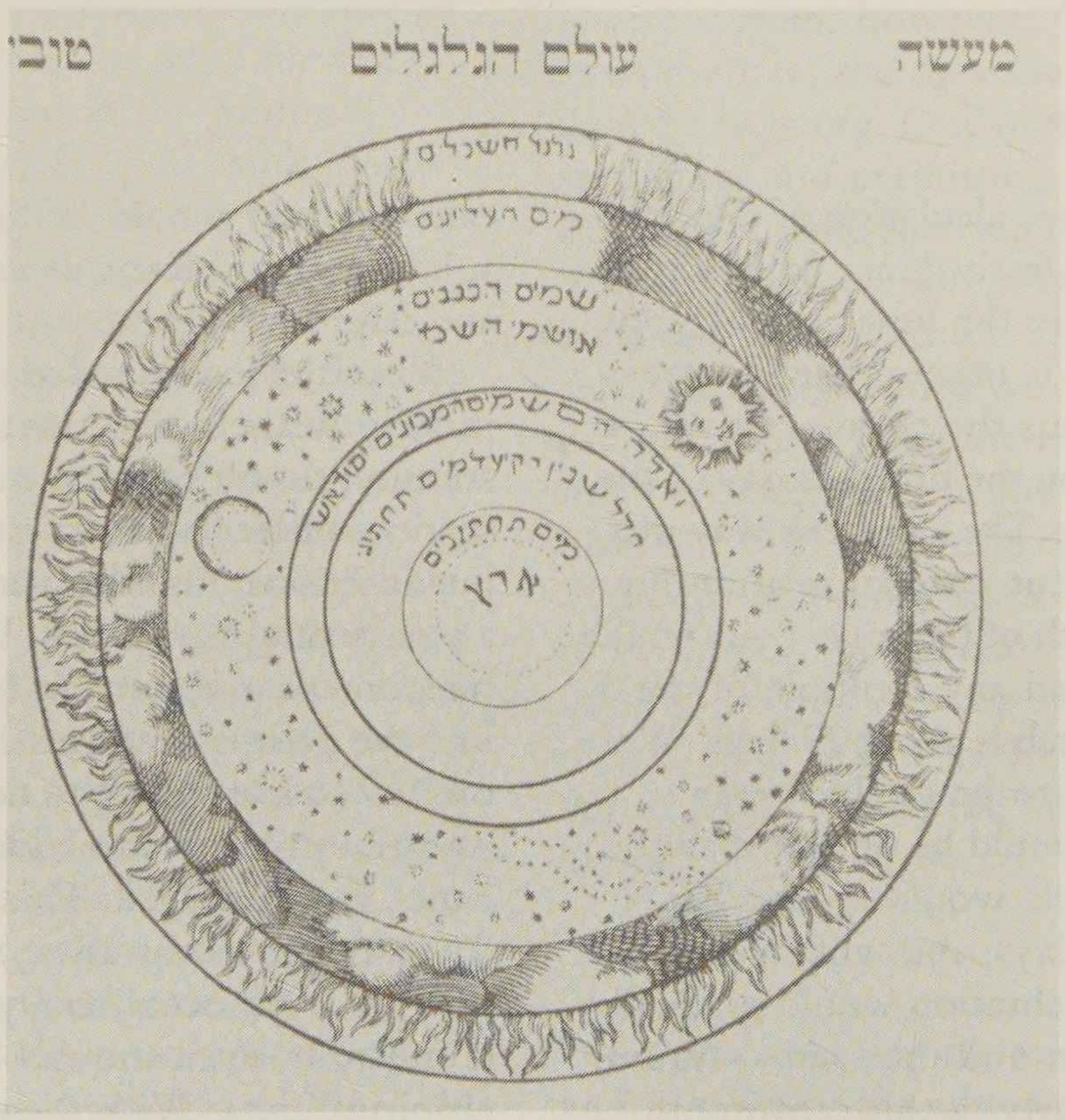
the pragmatical determination of leap years was no longer possible, and astronomy became an esoteric, rabbinic science. Through a process of minute measurement over centuries, a perfect lunisolar calendar was developed: within a cycle of nineteen years, there were to be seven leap years, each with thirteen months, and minor adjustments were made by adding a thirtieth day to certain months. As we have noted, the performance of Jewish work requires precision; rituals can now be performed at their ordained times.

However, the study of the sun and the moon gave rise to difficulties of another category, the solutions for which lay more in the realm of myth than measurement. These difficulties often implied the existence of a reality and a causality beyond either sense or senses and certainly not amenable to slide rule and sextant. One problem concerned the stability of the sun as opposed to the apparently erratic behavior of the moon. There seemed to be a contradiction between the meaning of the Biblical text and what was revealed by looking at the heavens. The Book of Genesis states clearly that the greater light (the sun) was to rule the day, and the lesser light (the moon) was to rule the night. Now, the sun keeps rigorously within its prescribed limits, dropping behind the western horizon at dusk and rising in the east at dawn. The moon, on the other hand, is a trespasser. Sometimes it shines in the daytime, and it is often delinquently absent for much of the night.

Another example of such troubling dissonance was the waxing and waning of the moon: had it not been created in order to rule? And this being the case, how was it permitted to diminish and to disappear every month?

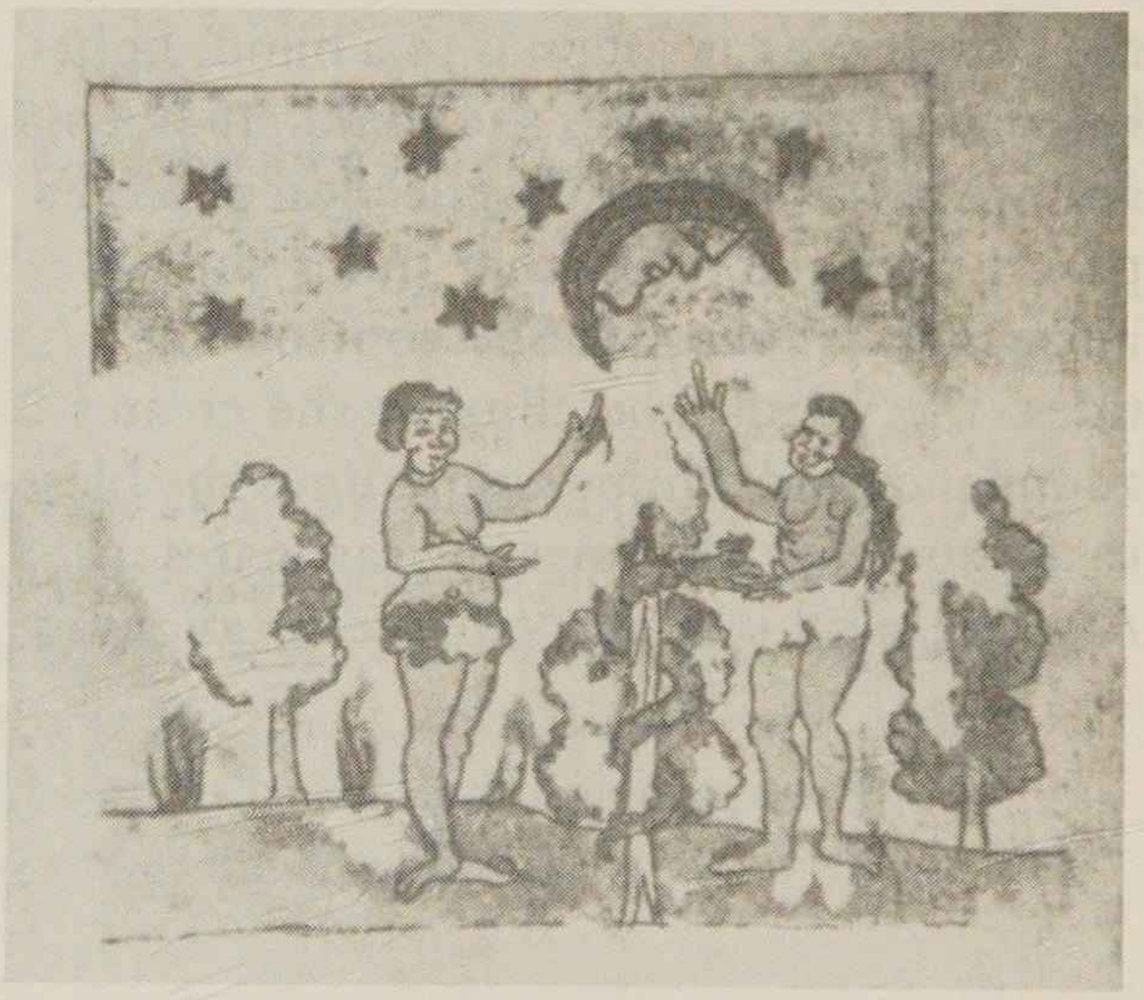
The explanations were to be found in the realm of myth. But here we must introduce a caveat, a dogma of Abrahamic monotheism: though it is acknowledged that there are loci of divine power in the

Wheel of the universe, with earth surrounded by spheres of heavens, holy waters, and divine intellect



world, and that these may appear to possess independent wills (only the spiritually blind cannot see them), they are all ultimately manifestations or derivations of the One (and only the heathen will deny this). With this reservation, it is possible to understand how the strange world of rabbinic myth depicts interlocking levels of visible and invisible reality, finding deep truths in the allegorical links between the worlds. Let us now look at three such myths concerning the sun and the moon. They are from different periods and derive from divers teachings.

The first is from the Midrash: In the Beginning, it is said, sun and moon were created equal, but jealousy and dispute erupted between them. God decided to reduce the size of one of them, and so He diminished the moon; the sources differ as to whether the moon's trespassing into the sun's domain was the cause or the consequence of this divine decision. A later, theologically remarkable statement is based on a reading of Numbers 28:15-16: " . . . this is the burnt offering of every new moon throughout the months of the year. And one he-goat for a sin-offering unto the Lord." By interpreting the word "unto" as meaning "for," it is implied that God Himself asks that a sacrifice be offered on His behalf for having engendered this situation. Now it is possible to understand these myths as ancient superstitions (and some modern exponents of Judaism do so), but, in fact, a recognition of universal truths seems to underlie them. Conflict and jealousy between siblings did not begin with Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, or Jacob and Esau; inequality and a basic lack of justice are somehow imprinted into the very structure of the world. The implication is present (but rarely made explicit) that God created a flawed universe. This is the world into which we are born. Only by studying all aspects of its nature will we be able to do our work. The process of realigning the world, of completing the task of creation, is shared by God and man. Human beings may learn enough



Above: manuscript illustration in Seder Berakot *showing the blessing of the new moon, 18th century*

Below: manuscript illustration in Sefer Ibronoth, *a book of the Jewish calendar, 16th century*

Photos by Barbara Goldschmidt

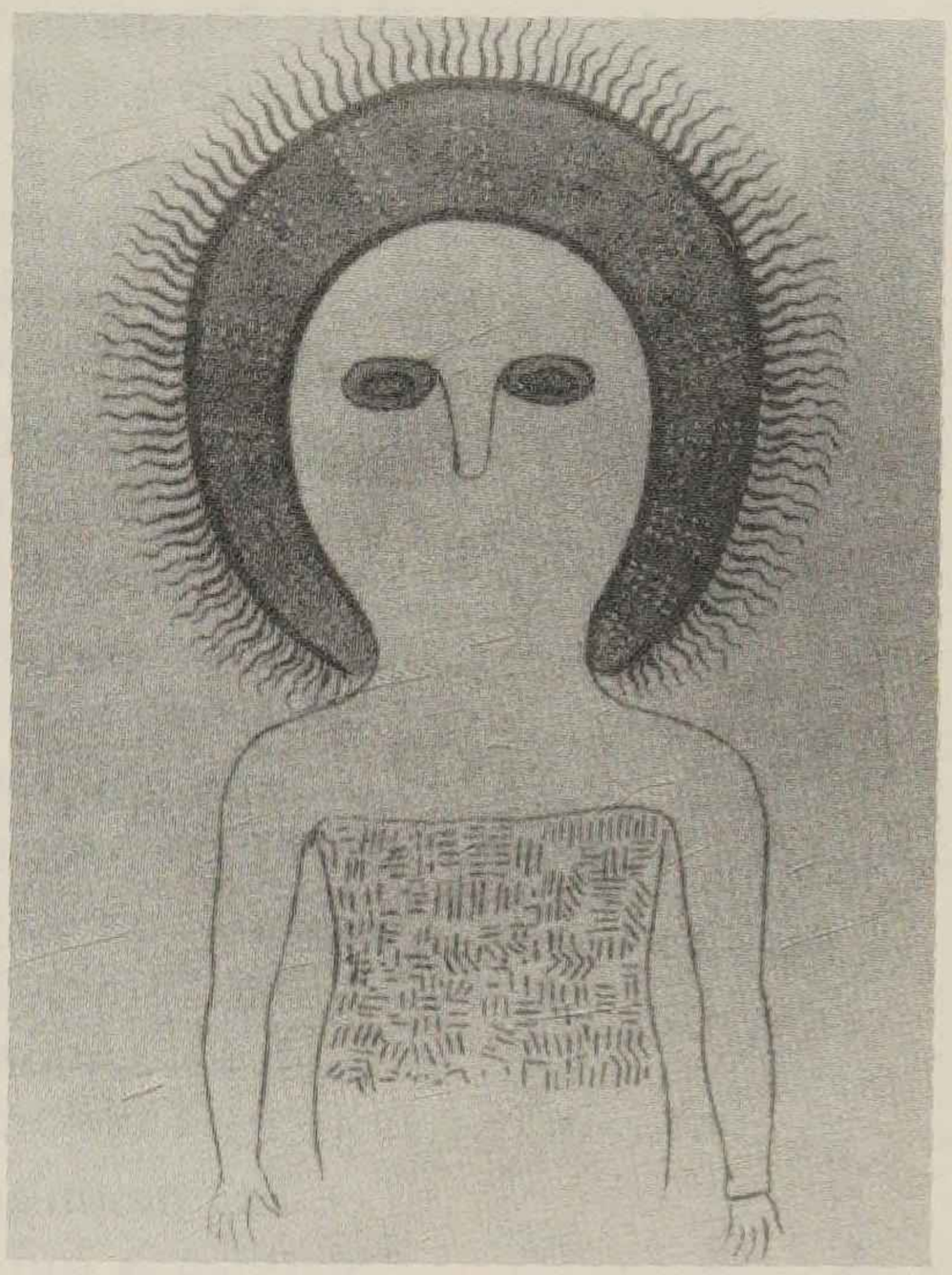
about themselves individually and collectively to reduce and even to resolve certain conflicts, but the restoration of the status of the moon, the elimination of conflict on the cosmic level, belongs to another realm of being.

The second myth is part of the Jewish mystical tradition known as Kabbalah. It too is derived from observation of a celestial paradox. The moon is one of the rulers and sustainers of the earth, but it is not in itself a primary source of light. It merely reflects the light of the sun. Furthermore, it is not constant in this function, on occasion providing much light and at other times giving less or none. Now, the moon is symbolic of the Shekhinah, the manifest presence of God in the world. In the Zohar, one of the Shekhinah's many epithets is "She who has no light of her own." Generally, we have no direct access to the sun, the ultimate divine source, and the closest we can attain is to a blind, lightless planet. Sometimes she shines upon us, and we perceive the full reflection of God's power and glory; at other times she is inexplicably eclipsed. She controls the tides, the winds, the climate; she creates abundance and famine; sometimes she blesses us, and at other times she castigates us. And we plod on with our work, aligning the lesser with the greater, drawing more light.

The third and last myth is of hasidic provenance. Using the same imagery, it translates the kabbalistic account of the relationship between the sun and moon into a different level, that of the transmission of wisdom between master and disciple. Like the moon, the student has no light of his own. If his "face" is clear and shining, he is capable of absorbing the light of the sun, the master's "face." If, however, the student's face is covered by clouds of impurity, he will remain unenlightened. Moreover, the relationship is characterized by a certain powerful though asymmetrical mutuality. When the student's face is clear, it is smooth and shines like a mirror, and the master can perceive his own reflection within it. The disciple learns what he can become, whereas the master remembers who he was and rediscovers who he is.

These, then, are some of the teachings of sun and moon. We learn to observe the world with patience and precision; to distinguish between that which we can correct and that which we cannot; to align ourselves to higher levels of being and thereby to become part of them; and to enter into the true line of tradition. ■

EPICYCLES



Sun Dreaming / Australian

When the world was new, the Sun woman made a little baby girl. She was not like other babies, because all her body was shining with light. As she grew older, away in the west in the land beneath the ground, she was still the same. When some other women tried to touch her, her body burned their fingers like fire.

"Why does your daughter carry fire like this?" they asked the Sun woman.

"We are Sun Dreaming, both of us," the girl's mother told them.

"When all the land is dark, my daughter will bring you light. But I, myself, can't come up above the ground. I'm too strong. If I came up and looked at you, up there, I would burn you to ashes."

Still the girl lived with her mother. At first there was darkness everywhere, but when the girl came up into the sky she lit up all the country. "It's true," people said, looking up at her. "She brings light to us all." They were happy to see her there above them.

Every day, she does just the same. When the first birds start to talk, she comes up into the sky and stands there alone to give us light. Then she begins to think of her mother, lonely and waiting for her, and she moves down in the west on her way home. Down she goes, under the ground, to be with her mother, and darkness covers the land. They sleep there together until it is time for the birds to waken again. Then the Sun woman sends her back to us.

"You must go now," she says. "Go and light all the men and women and children, all our relatives up there. It's all right for you to go, but my light is too strong. If I came, I would kill them."

So she takes her daughter on her shoulders, and they hurry across to the east. There she lifts her daughter up until she touches the sky.

"It's all right now, mother," says the girl. "I'm here. You go back and wait for me." So away she goes under the ground, back to the west.

In the beginning the Sun was a woman like us, but today she is different. Her body looks just like the Rainbow Snake, all bright and shining; and the Sun girl has light and fire all over her body.

They made themselves Dreaming for us, so that we would have light every day to move about, and hunt for our food. If we had no sun and there was night all the time, we couldn't find our way and we couldn't see any animals or plants. We would starve to death.

The moon and the stars give us only a weak light, and the Sun woman is too dangerous for us to see. But the Sun's daughter always looks after us; and every day she makes the country bright, to keep us alive.

Australian

Reprinted with permission from *Land of the Rainbow Snake*, arranged and translated by Catherine H. Berndt, Collins, 1979.

Betrayal / Fang

The tribe listens silently. Only one man speaks.

In the beginning sun and moon were man and wife. The moon bore the sun many children and they were called the stars. This family did not eat food of the kind we eat, it nourished itself on fire, and so the whole family shone and gave light to us on earth. In the beginning sun and moon were man and wife. The stars were their children.

And then one day there came to the village a young man so handsome that the moon's heart was instantly enflamed by love. She gave him a token and said, wait for me at the bend in the road and I will fly away with you forever.

Where is she? the sun asked his children the stars when he noticed the moon's absence. They did not know. Where is she?—I ask you. But now he shone so angrily the stars ran away from him. You must have helped her flee, he said and began to hunt

them down. Every time he caught a star he devoured it, and that star shone no more. But the rest were too scattered and numerous for him to catch and eat them all.

And so each day still the sun chases moon and stars across the sky. Sometimes he eats another of the stars; the moon, good mother that she is, tries to protect her children, warning them of the sun's rising and taking them with her to her hiding place.

This chase will last a long time. But it must come to an end some day. And that day will be brought about by us, us men. It is for us to uphold the rule of good on earth. If we do not then evil will reign instead. And on the day that evil reigns the sun will capture his wife at last, but this time he will not devour her. The sun will lock the moon in a deep ditch at the center of the earth and he will never let her rise again. As for the stars, her children; their father, the sun, will soon catch and eat them, every one.

"And what will be our fate?" asks the tribe.

The speaker sighs. "Who knows? Who knows? I do not know, my brothers."

Fang
(West African)

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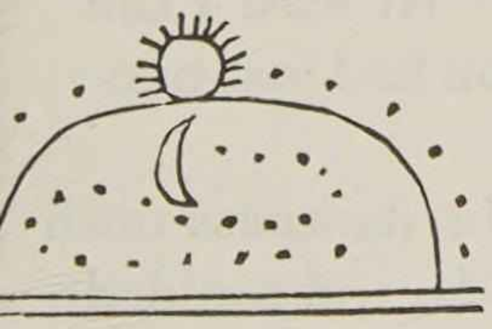
The Coming of the Light / Cherokee



There was no light anywhere, and the animal people stumbled around in the darkness. Whenever one bumped into another, he would say, "What we need in the world is light." And the other would reply, "Yes, indeed, light is what we badly need."

At last, the animals called a meeting, and gathered together as well as they could in the dark. The red-headed woodpecker said, "I have heard that over on the other side of the world there are people who have light."

"Good, good!" said everyone.

"Perhaps if we go over there, they will give us some light," the woodpecker suggested.

"If they have all the light there is," the fox said, "they must be greedy people, who would not want to give any of it up. Maybe we should just go over there and take the light from them."

"Who shall go?" cried everyone, and the animals all began talking at once, arguing about who was strongest and ran fastest, who was best able to go and get the light.

Finally the 'possum said, "I can try. I have a fine big bushy tail, and I can hide the light inside my fur."

"Good! Good!" said all the others, and the 'possum set out.

As he traveled eastward, the light began to grow and grow, until it dazzled his eyes, and the 'possum screwed up his eyes to keep out the bright light. Even today, if you notice, you will see that the 'possum's eyes are almost shut, and that he comes out of his house only at night.

All the same, the 'possum kept going, clear to the other side of the world, and there he found the sun. He snatched a little piece of it and hid it in the fur of his fine bushy tail, but the sun was so hot it burned off all the fur, and by the time the 'possum got home his tail was as bare as it is today.

"Oh dear!" everyone said. "Our brother has lost his fine bushy tail, and still we have no light."

"I'll go," said the buzzard. "I have better sense than to put the sun on my tail. I'll put it on my head."

So the buzzard traveled eastward til he came to the place where the sun was. And because the buzzard flies so high, the sun-keeping people did not see him, although now they were watching out for thieves. The buzzard dived straight down out of the sky, the way he does today, and caught a piece of the sun in his claws. He set the sun on his head and started for home, but the sun was so hot that it burned off all his head feathers, and that is why the buzzard's head is bald today.

Now the people were in despair. "What shall we do? What shall we do?" they cried. "Our brothers have tried hard; they have done their best, everything a man can do. What else shall we do so we can have light?"

"They have done the best man can do," said a little voice from the grass, "but perhaps this is something a woman can do better than a man."

"Who are you?" everyone asked. "Who is that speaking in a tiny voice and hidden in the grass?"

"I am your Grandmother Spider," she replied. "Perhaps I was put in the world to bring you light. Who knows? At least I can try, and if I am burned up it will still not be as if you had lost one of your great warriors."

Then Grandmother Spider felt around her in the darkness until she found some damp clay. She rolled it in her hands, and molded a little clay bowl. She started eastward, carrying her bowl and spinning a thread behind her so she could find her way back.

When Grandmother Spider came to the place of the sun people, she was so little and so quiet no one noticed her. She reached out gently, gently, and took a tiny bit of the sun, and placed it in her clay bowl. Then she went back along the thread that she had spun, with the sun's light growing and spreading before her, as she moved from east to west. And if you will notice, even today a spider's web is shaped like the sun's disk and its rays, and the

spider will always spin her web in the morning, very early, before the sun is fully up.

"Thank you, Grandmother," the people said when she returned. "We will always honor you and we will always remember you."

And from then on pottery making became woman's work, and all pottery must be dried slowly in the shade before it is put in the heat of the firing oven, just as Grandmother Spider's bowl dried in her hand, slowly, in the darkness, as she traveled toward the land of the sun.

Cherokee

Reprinted from "Eastern Cherokee Folktales" by Jack Frederick Kilpatrick and Anna Gritts Kilpatrick, in *Bureau of American Ethnology, Anthropological Papers 75-80, Bulletin 196*, Government Printing Office, 1966.

Measuring Moons / Chukchi

There was a reindeer breeder who had one daughter. She had a big reindeer bull in harness. Every summer the herd went out far away, and every winter even farther, and she watched over the herd summer and winter.

One night the reindeer bull said to her: "Watch out, watch out! The moon wants to carry you off."

She looked up. Down came the moon, with two reindeer.

"What shall I do? He will take me away."

"Wait," said the reindeer, "I'll think of a way to protect you."

He dug in the snow with his hoof. "Sit down here," he said. She sat. He banked up the snow, cast a spell, and it turned into a little hill.

The moon came, looked for the girl, walked around, didn't find her. "Very strange. Where did she get to? I'd better go. I'll come back after a while."

No sooner had he gone when the reindeer dug away the snow and the girl came out. "We had better go home," she said, "he will come again!" She sat down on the sleigh, the reindeer ran at full speed, soon they were home.

"Well, what shall I turn you into? Quick, before he gets here! A block of stone?"

"He'd find me."

"A hammer."

"He'd find me."

"A hair on the bed curtain."

"He'd find me, he'd find me."

"Ah, I know. I'll turn you into a lamp!"

"Good, good. Quickly!"

"Now, sit on the fire." She sat on the fire, turned into a lamp.

She had just sat down when the moon hurried to the house, tethered his reindeer, went in through the curtains. He walked around and around, but couldn't find her. He searched every hair on the hides, every knot in the bed boards, every grain of dirt in the corners of the tent—but he could not go to the lamp. He could not set fire against fire, for when the two fires meet, they burn each other up.

The moon said, "Strange, where is she then? Maybe I should go on home?"

He went out, untied his reindeer.

Just as he was ready to drive away, the girl jumped off the fire, leaned out of the tent curtains. "Here I am, here I am!"

The moon left the reindeer, went back through the tent curtains. The girl went back to the fire, became a lamp. The moon looked among the kindling sticks and among the leaves and among the strands of wool—she was nowhere. "How strange, where can she be? I had better go."

He had just gone out, untied his reindeer. She leaned out of the tent curtains. "Here I am!"

He began to look again. He could not find her.

He grew weary, he shriveled, his bone marrow withered. Then she leaned out of the tent, grabbed him, threw him on his back, bound his legs. "Ah," said the moon, "she will kill me!"

Then he said, "If you want to kill me, kill me, but before I die, bring me inside the tent curtains so I will not freeze."

"How can you freeze? You are always out in the open, so stay outside now. What do you care for tents?"

"If I am always in the open, if I am always outside, let me go now. I shall light up the sky for your people. Let me go. I shall mark off the months. Let me go. I shall turn night into day. I shall measure the whole year. First I will be the Moon of the Old Bucks, then the Moon of the Cold Udders, then the Full Udder Moon, then the Moon of the Calves, the Moon of the Waters, the Moon of the New Leaves; then the Warm Moon, the Moon of the Rubbing of Antlers, the Moon of the Light Frost; then the Autumn Moon, the Moon of the Back, and at last the Moon of the Shrinking Days of Winter."

"All right," said the girl. "But if I set you free, and you rest again, and the marrow in your bones grows fat and strong again, won't you come after me?"

"Oh no, I will never! I have had enough. You have too much

spirit for me. I will never leave my upper path again! Let me go, and I will light up for you."

She let him go, and he lit up the whole sky.

Chukchi
(Arctic Eskimo)

—Retold by Anne Twitty

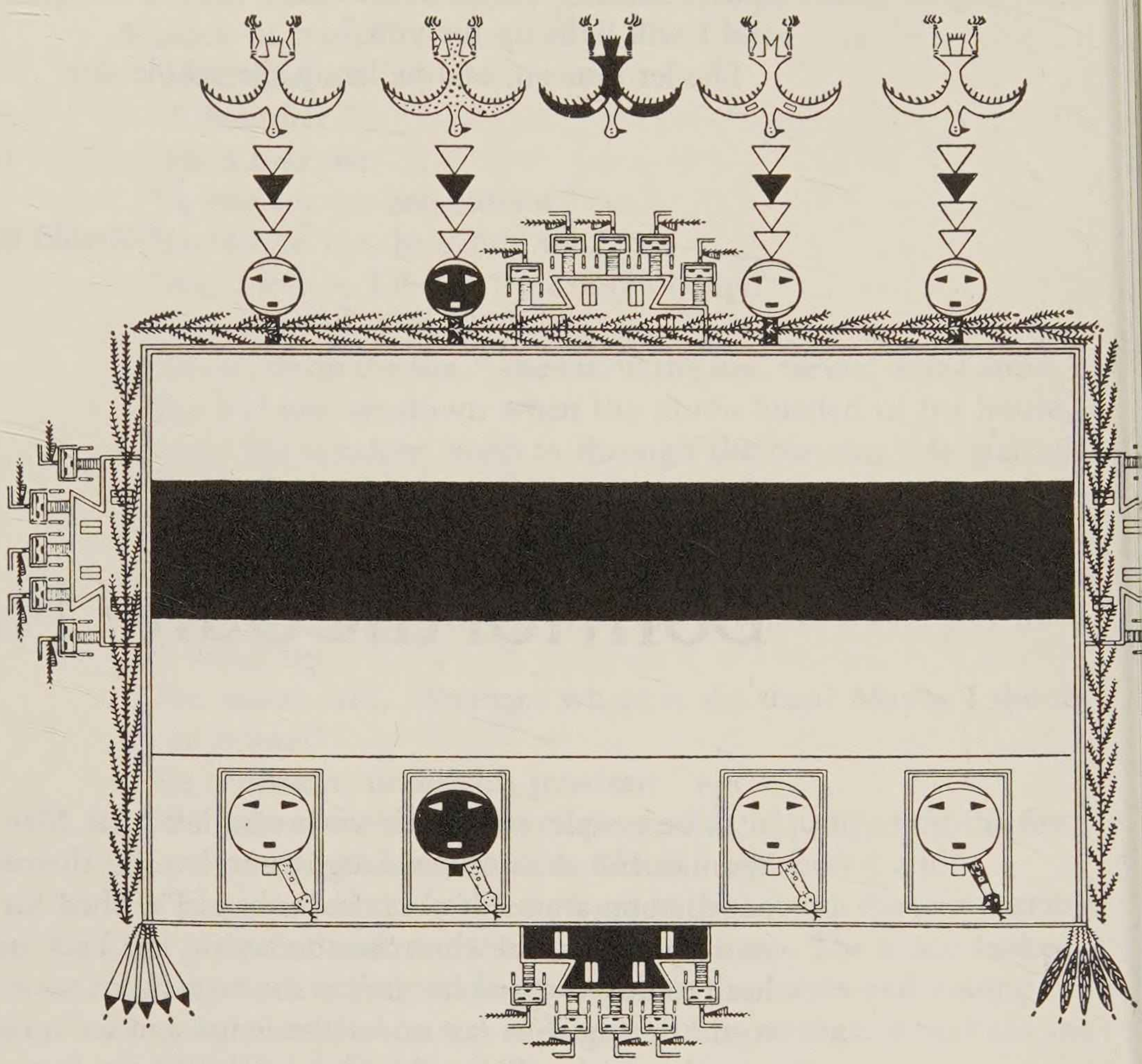
Born for the Sun / Navajo

The people went their ways and left First Man and First Woman and their foster daughter to live by themselves. It happened soon after this that this holy girl wished for a mate. Every morning when the sun rose she lay on her back until noon, her head to the west and her feet to the east. From noon on, she went to the spring. She lay under the ledge and let spring water drip over her body. This took place each day for four days.

First Man said upon coming home one day: "Over to the east, at the foot of the mesa, there are two different kinds of grass. Their ripening seeds are plentiful." So First Woman and the girl went down to gather the seeds. But when they got there they began to think of the monsters who roamed about the country, and became frightened. Looking about them carefully, they hurriedly gathered only one kind of seed before they ran back to their home. When they reached their hogan the girl said, "Mother, I want to go back and collect the seeds from the other grass." First Woman said, "No, daughter, you cannot go there alone. Some monster might catch you." But the girl insisted. She promised to be careful and to look out for herself. After the request was made four times the old woman let her go, warning her to have great care.

The maiden went down the mesa as fast as she could and was soon busy gathering seeds from the grass. All of a sudden she heard something behind her. Looking around, she saw a great white horse with black eyes. He had a long white mane, and he pranced above the ground, not on the earth itself. She saw that the bridle was white too, and that the saddle was white. And there was a young man sitting on the horse. The young man's moccasins and leggings and clothing were all white. All was as for a bride.

The holy rider spoke: "You lay towards me each morning until noon. I am he whom you faced. When I am half over the center



of the earth, you go to the spring. Your wish could not have two meanings." He continued:

"Go home and tell your father to build a brush hogan to the south of your home. Make ready a meal out of the seeds of the grasses that you have gathered. Put this meal into a white bead basket. Have the pollen from a pair of blue birds and use this pollen to draw a line from east to west across the basket on top of the meal. Turn the hand and make a line from north to south, and a line must be drawn around the outer edge of the basket. Set the basket inside the brush hogan. You and your father must sit there late into the night. He will go home to his wife and you must stay there alone."

When the White Bead Girl returned home she told her mother of all that she had seen and all that she had heard. That night when First Man came home, his wife told him what the girl had related. First Man said, "I do not believe this thing. We are very poor. Why should we be visited by a Holy Being? I cannot believe what you tell me."

Now when the girl told her mother about her experiences, First Woman asked if she had acted according to this Holy One's directions each day. The maiden had said, "Yes." So the woman told her husband that indeed it was all true, and that he must go and prepare the brush shelter and not argue. When all was ready,

First Man took the white bead basket filled with meal, and he and his foster daughter went into the brush shelter and sat there.

They sat late into the night, then First Man went home to his wife and left the maiden there alone. The White Bead Girl returned early in the morning, and First Man asked her at once, "Who came last night?" The girl said, "No one came." First Man turned to his wife. "Did I not tell you that it is all a lie?" he said. But the girl said, "Wait, I thought that I heard someone, and this morning I found just one track, and some of the meal, that towards the east, had been taken." So First Man went with his daughter to the brush hogan and he saw the one track and also that the meal towards the east in the basket was gone.

That night they prepared another basket of meal, and again First Man took his daughter to the brush shelter, and again they sat there late into the night. He left the maiden there alone. In the morning the girl returned to the home and said, "There are two tracks of a man there now. The meal in the south of the basket is gone."

On the third night the same thing happened. In the morning when the maiden returned, First Man asked, "Who came?" And the girl said, "No one came." Then First Man became angry. "I told you that this thing is all a lie," he said. But the maiden answered, "But Father, there are three tracks, and the meal towards the west is gone. And I thought that someone touched me last night."

The fourth night they went to the brush shelter as before, taking with them fresh meal in a basket. They sat late into the night, then First Man returned to his wife. When the girl entered the home in the early morning, her father asked, "Who came?" And the girl answered, "No one." First Man was very angry and insisted that it was all a lie. "But, Father," said the White Bead Maiden, "the meal towards the north is gone and there are four tracks. I thought that I was moved by someone, and I was all wet when I awakened."

Now after the maiden was visited the fourth time by the Holy Being, she lived with her foster parents for four days as they had always lived. But at the end of the fourth day the young woman said, "Mother, something moves within me." First Woman answered, "Daughter, that must be your baby moving." And it is at the end of the fourth month that a woman feels life. After five more days had passed, twin boys were born to the White Bead Woman. It is so that a woman bears a child in the ninth month.

Navajo

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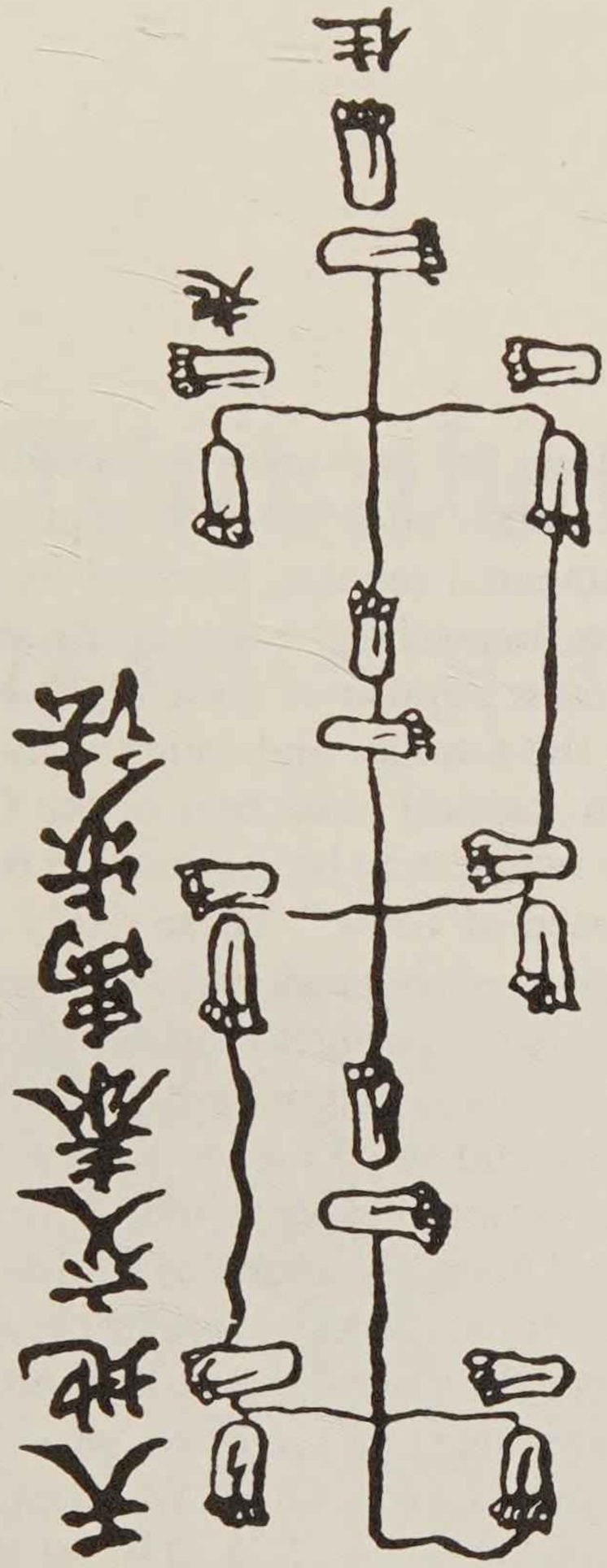
A Trip to the Moon

EDWARD H. SCHAFER

Goddess carried away on a Phoenix on a night of the full moon, 11th-12th century

The real problem of investigating travel in outer space during the T'ang dynasty is to determine what or where outer space was. The Taoists, especially the masters and adepts of the celebrated school of Mao-shan, dominated large areas of thought and even of public life during this period, and for them outer space was indistinguishable from inner space. To put it another way, they made no significant distinction between interstellar and intercellular space. The chambers within the human body were inhabited by powerful spirits which were identical with the deities who display themselves to our eyes in the forms of stars and planets. In a properly conducted meditation the initiate could either summon one of the spirits of the Great Dipper to lodge within his cranium, where he would become both visible and audible to his spiritual faculties, or, conversely, the adept might elevate himself to the realm of the circumpolar asterisms and there see the Jade Princess in her coat of feathers and draw directly on her arcane wisdom and power. Both procedures were, in the final analysis, the same. Imagine that your skull is a kind of organic planetarium which projects the stars—the outward aspects of the gods, as in Dante's *Paradiso* they are angels made visible—against the black vault of the celestial dome for the refreshing contemplation of our physical eyes . . . and you're ready for blast-off. My remarks will take this basic "truth" (but what is truth?) about the most successful astronauts of medieval China into account, but I propose also to consider certain alternative methods of space travel, and finally to provide a kind of simple travelogue to assist any who may wish to employ one of these time-tested techniques for a holiday beyond the stratosphere—specifically, for a trip to the moon.

Tours of space were a commonplace of ancient China. For persons who lacked the resources to make such journeys in person, fully documented reports, dictated by the cosmonauts themselves, were readily available. The most popular of these flight-logs survive in the familiar and much commented-on classical collection of the *Ch'u tz'u*, a title which may be rendered as the "Word Hoard of Ch'u." These richly and elegantly phrased rhapsodies, based on the god-seeking soul voyages of the Chinese shamans, despite differences in plot and style, setting and stage business, have much in common—an important difference of detail being the mode or vehicle of flight. Sometimes the sky-traveler projects his soul over the rainbow and beyond the clouds—sometimes he seems to go in the flesh, like John Carter on his notorious trip to Mars, or as we *all* shall do at the sound of the last trumpet. But often it is not easy to be sure which vehicle the poet intends, or if he intends to be precise on this crude point at all. Sometimes the protagonist flies off on the back of a beast powered by some undescribed metaphysical fuel—the dragon being a prime favorite. Or he may even glide aloft in a chariot, drawn by a divine animal, or else invisibly—propelled by some primitive antigravitational device. In either case, he skims the housetops of the star-gods as easily as Santa Claus, hobnobs with the porter at Heaven's gate—but his ultimate goal is always the City of God, the pure and holy center of the universe, where all antinomies are resolved and all anxieties evaporate. These evolved shamans and refined medicine men were very familiar with the stars, and their familiarity is no mere nodding acquaintance—they treat them in an offhand, neighborly way, and even exploit them, much diminished it would seem to us, for trivial purposes. The reader is sometimes reminded of Hol-



"The Pace of Yü around and through the Dipper" from the Tao tsang

lywood cartoons—Bugs Bunny shuffling about purposefully in the moon dust. Our ghostly heroes of Ch'u wield comets as falchions—or as pennants; they drink perfumed wine from the Dipper—or twist off its handle to use as a magic wand.

Such visions as these were crystallized—probably about the beginning of the Christian era—along with other elements of folk belief and religious practice, into the system we call "Taoism." Today we can still see super-beings astride winged dragons, as if they were horses, in the tomb reliefs of that period, and, in the same era, other media of transport, for instance the magical Manchurian crane, began their long careers of development as indispensable attributes of the immortals.

It was also possible for Taoist initiates to gain mastery over the stars and their inhabitants either by soul projection or by feats of imitative magic. Allusions to these arts can be found even in pre-Taoist literature; an example from the old songs of Ch'u tells of "treading the array of stars to the limits of light."

While still earthbound, the Taoist initiate, following the precedent of his ancient shamanistic predecessors, could walk among symbolic stars—or, in some sense, actual stars—tracing out their formations in order to achieve mastery over them or draw power from them, as a sorcerer can enchant a person by reciting the syllables of his name or manipulating his image in a manner approved by wizardry. Since as far back as the Chinese records show, an instant injection of supernatural energy was the portion of the adept who danced the step of Yü, the archaic divine king—sometimes called "the shaman's step." This halting but potent dance is thought by some to have originated in the shambling of a bear, impersonated in an archaic animal cult, and by others to represent the hemiplegic gait of Yü himself—the demigod who sacrificed part of his physical powers to gain heavenly ones. It is still performed by female shamans in south China. But its most sophisticated and dramatic development was in the esoteric practices of the Taoists, who followed the sequence of stars in the most powerful asterisms, especially that of the great Northern Dipper. The most exalted class of Taoist initiates could summon the high polar deity named "Grand Unity"—he is also known by more elaborate titles—by "pacing the road of the Nine Stars." These are the nine stars of the *true* dipper—the dipper of the Taoist cabala. The identity of the two stars other than the familiar seven is somewhat ambiguous. Medieval Taoist texts call one of these two ancillary stars "Sustainer" (*fu*) and the other "Straightener" (*pi*). The former is our little Alcor, close to the great star Mizar; the latter is said to be attached to topaz-yellow Phecda—but in fact Straightener is an invisible star, and one of its names is "Void." It is an anti-star, a "black hole."

One T'ang work on Taoist practices advocates an internal approach to the Dip-

per: the walk involves a simultaneous vision of the star Alcor seen as a spark behind the closed eyelids. So, in the end, it is within the bony planetarium of the skull that the divine asterisms are spread—identical, through a kind of supernatural topology, with the constellations we think we see above our heads. Travel by trance is easily the best method, far superior to a Fokker Crane or a Sopwith Dragon.

In the T'ang dynasty there were still poets to testify to the power of the shaman's shuffles over the domain of the night sky. Yüan Chen, relaxing in a Taoist friary, where many such great traditions were still observed, wrote about Taoist adepts and their magic swords:

For binding oaths—their golden sabres are weighty;
For beheading trolls—their precious swords are keen.
When they pace like Yü the Starry Stays are moved,
When they burn their spells the furnace spirit does homage
[The "furnace spirit" is the deity who presides over the alchemist's fire and hermetic egg.]

But the most sublime instances of poetic space flight are provided by the verses of Wu Yün, whose name is associated with the Taoist court of Hsüan Tsung. A mountain recluse early in life, his reputation for sanctity earned him an invitation to the palace, where he was installed in the Forest of Quills among the most successful writers of the realm. Somehow he could not live permanently under these worldly circumstances. Whatever the causes, he returned to the life of a hermit in the middle of the eighth century. His poems abound in astral flights. Above all, he is concerned with paraphrasing clichés that suggest passage into the Infinite. The emphasis is not so much on providing such conventional metaphors as "farflight" in place of "alienation," "departure," and "escape," as did many of his materialistic contemporaries, but on suggesting, however imperfectly, the ecstatic bliss of empyreal being. He yearns for the ultimate but featureless sublimity—which becomes a kind of white glare in some of his poems—of the state where even the stars are grimy particles far below the feet. In the end, he aims to transcend what is already transcendental. All of these longings are expressed in radiant language, spangled with the very distinctions which he hopes to negate. To suggest the ultimate transition he rings the changes on all conceivable phrases for otherworldly travel. These are displayed at their most typical in a series of ten poems collectively styled "Treading the Void," an old song title also favored by other T'ang poets. In these he points the way through the "myriad heavens"; he spirals upward, "footloose and fancy-free" above the Grand Aurora; he is irradiated by the silvery brilliance of Venus; finally he achieves the passage of the "Grand Emptiness." Here is a prosaic version of one of Wu Yün's more sparkling journeys:

Gently, easily, away from man's domain,
Leaving, quitting, drawing near the town of God,
Up far beyond the strands of starry chronograms,
Looking down on the lights of sun and moon
Swiftly now, past the Great Tenuity:
The shine of a sky dwelling—gleaming, glittering!

The eager collector of golden streets and pearly gates will have a happy time with Wu Yün but will have to temper his enthusiasm for jeweled imagery with a due appreciation of abyssal plunges and cruises through black or blinding gulfs.

Fortunately the heritors of the mystic sky-journeys of Wu Yün multiplied. One of the most eminent was Lü Yen, who failed the great examinations during the second half of the ninth century and thereafter haunted the bistros of Ch'ang-an until he discovered his own Tao. Then he vanished, later to achieve apotheosis in the popular company of "Eight Immortals." He left for us a long series of untitled poems in seven-syllable lines on alchemical and transcendental themes. Sometimes he does not disdain the plain, familiar imagery that Po Chü-i made so popular, but intermingled with it there are usually phrases of cosmic and philosophic import conveying an entirely different flavor: in these

poems we find that we have left the world of romantic fiction and endless love for the world of *metaphysical* devotions and the lure of invisible, almost inconceivable universes:

Girding the lightning, coursing the clouds, I fly
  to sun and moon;
Goading the Dragon, urging the Tiger, I pass
  beyond both Potent and Latent

or again:

Without image, without contour, flying
  beyond the Formed Mutations:
There is a gate, there is a door, placed in both
  Potent and Latent

The created, phenomenal world counts for nothing here—the search is for the road that leads beyond such illusory distinctions as the world we know provides. Outer space has become inner space.

Despite the many available modes of transport, the cosmos is infinite. For our first trip we must aim low. Let us consider, then, what we must expect of our first landing field, the shimmering skin of Dante's "eterna margarita," the "massy pearl of the night."

The ancient opuscule "Questions of Heaven" (*T'ien wen*) posed, among other difficult questions, the following:

To what are sun and moon attached,
And how is the array of stars laid forth?

And specifically of the moon:

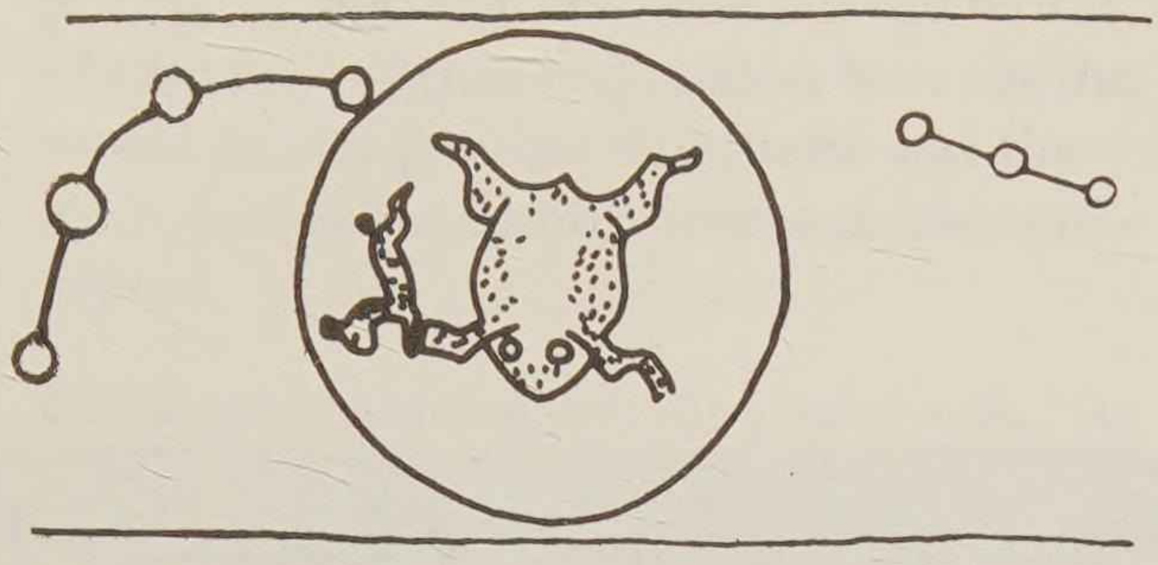
What is the virtue of the light of night
That when it dies it is bred once more,
And what is gained by a hare in its belly?

The answer is not simple. We know at least that the moon is anti-sun. As the sun is concentrated *yang*, made visible to the human senses, so the moon is the sensible aspect of the Grand Yin. The noumenal entity underlying the shining disc presented to our eyes was, then, quintessential *yin*—an energetic storage battery (as it were) which is the necessary complement to that powerful generator the sun. But *yin* is, in all of its aspects, no mere passive entity, as has sometimes been suggested by hasty interpreters of the verbal symbols of the *yin-yang* school. It is not merely derivative, secondary, and recessive. Its cold nature is primary, and it is not so much passive as actively receptive. Too much has been inferred by analogy from the supposed social status of women in early China: quiescent, unoriginal, obedient, and placid as they were supposed to be, it was easy to project these qualities about the glittering, dazzling globe in the sky.

Similarly it was and is easy to imagine that if *yang* is somehow "spiritual," *yin* must therefore be "material" like the subordinate human female. By no means. For us of the twentieth century the moon is a solid, non-luminous body, despite its remarkable albedo—a dead mass of cooled lavas, conglomerates, and other end-products of ancient magmas, all overlaid with dust, like an untended mausoleum. No crusted dowager, the Chinese moon was more truly feminine than our telescopes display. Its energy, however, was potential rather than kinetic—its true brightness was latent, and in this sense it was dependent on the light of the sun which, like an ultraviolet lamp, irradiated all or part of its surface to stimulate the characteristic moonglow, as the ultraviolet "black light" evokes the "cold light" in a luminescent object, such as a cluster of fluorite crystals. It is not an accident that the phosphorescence of the oceans was called *yin huo*, "*yin*-fire"—for the "feminine" principle has its own kind of cool flame—and that the modern Chinese word for "fluorescence" is "firefly light" (*ying kuang*)—that is, the kind of light shed by naturally luminescent creatures.

A Taoist text extant in early T'ang times gives a picture of this inner phosphorescence emanating from the mineral components of the moon: "The moon," it says, "is 1,900 *li* horizontally and vertically. The moon's nimbus is 7,840 *li* in circumference. White silver, veluriyam and water crystal illuminate its interior. The light of flames shines brightly on its exterior.

Drinking in the moonlight



Toad and hare in the moon

Within it are city walls, fortifications and human beings. There is a bathing pool of Seven Jewels, and the Forest of Waning grows in its interior."

This demonstrates plainly that the moon is illuminated from within and that its relationship with the sun is purely a matter of cosmological balance, not of dependence, as we have noted elsewhere. (Perhaps it is also worth remarking that simple calculation from the figures provided by this text shows that the nimbus extends approximately one hundred miles above the moon's surface.)

One of the Goliard poets expressed the medieval idea of the relation between sun and moon very well:

Dum Dianae vitrea
sero lampas oritur,
et a fratris rosea
luce dum succenditur

I venture to render this as follows: "When the glassy lamp of Diana rises late, then it is kindled by the rosy light of her brother." These lines reveal the late rising of the full moon in the east, just after the sun has sunk below the western horizon. Phoebus's fire, potent from a vast distance, lights Diana's crystalline lamp—the latter not a bad image from the Chinese point of view. T'ang poetry abounds in lunar metaphors of a similar cast—"silver candle," "crystal dish," and so on. To sum up, I propose to confute the wrong-headed notion that *yin* symbolizes dark, shaded things, where the *yang* rays do not reach, and that therefore the light of the moon is merely the reflection to our eyes of the lordly sunlight, as from a mirror to our eyes (but in fact the Chinese did sometimes figure the moon as a mirror—but a magic mirror).

I am quite persuaded of the truth of Milton's vision. The great poet, faced with the difficulty of revealing the damned towers of Hell, a place plunged in preternatural darkness, not only to our eyes but to the burning eyes of Lucifer and his host, displays it lit by flames—not by earthly flames, but by a species which shed "no light, but rather darkness visible." Similarly, moonlight is a unique product of the moon, incited perhaps, invoked perhaps, yet of its own, *sui generis*, and self-generated.

The moon was also water—or rather made up of water most refined, most subtle, most perfect, superior to, but akin to, all earthly waters. This followed from its *yin* nature, which was the polar opposite of the fire-essence of *yang*. Its unique perfection among *yin* creatures lay in its purity, its homogeneity. It was unmixed, it was not contingent: unlike camels, marshes, and women, which embodied or exemplified *yin* only in larger degree than most beings, the moon was *yin* uncontaminated—a fact which removed it from the realm of natural objects altogether. But it shared more with natural waters than with anything else in the mortal world.

To take the watery nature of the moon as a fact of natural history rather than as an ontological truth was fatal to some old but persistent myths, such as the belief that among the denizens of the moon were a rabbit and a toad. In the first century of our era, Wang Ch'ung—otherwise a sensible fellow—used this oversimplified interpretation of the traditional belief to confound the "Confucian" pedagogues of Han, who could not reject even the most fantastic tradition if it appeared sufficiently sanctified by age, or had been blessed by one of the sages of the past. If the moon is water, wrote Wang Ch'ung, the unhappy hare and toad, aliens in such an environment, would long since have drowned. (Toad and hare and other moon creatures, although they were always a source of

uneasiness to the literal-minded, gave no difficulty to the metaphysicians and the poets, whose moon creatures were inorganic. Or if they had veins, they carried ice water rather than blood.)

To sum up, leaving the problems of charting the moon's journeys and the computation of its perigees and apogees to the historians of science, and focusing our attention on its nature, we have our surest guides in folk belief and literature. T'ang poetry leads us to a vision of the moon as simultaneously crystalline and aqueous; sometimes as a lovely but frigid entity—to be personified as a snow queen or an icy maiden. Without personification, we are compelled to see it as a crystalline mass, cognate to rock crystal which, as all the world knew, was petrified ice, eons old, altered to transparent quartz.

In his poem "Moon" the tenth-century poet Hsü Yin attributes the crystalline charm of the moon—fashioned, it seems, from glittering icy dendrites—to the special intervention of the abstract and universal entity which (or *who*) stamps concrete and specific objects and events out of mere Potentiality:

In a cyan abyss who can detect the authority of
the Fashioner of Mutations—
Which condensed the frost and congealed the
snow to create her unique allure?

Although we are persuaded by our television screens that, despite appearances, the moon is stony, and even dusty—something of a disappointment in short—the Chinese version (since we need remote and incredible comparisons) reminds us readily of the great outer planets of the solar system with their cores of metallic hydrogen and their crusts of frozen methane and ammonia. Or we may wish to compare it to the nucleus of a comet, which has been characterized as "a dirty snowball." The climate of the ancient Chinese moon appears to us as wintry and bleak as the climate of Cocytus, the lowest of Dante's layers of Hell, whose cold is truly preternatural.

As was well known to the Chinese , the moon is furnished with a cinnamon tree, and a man who is perpetually engaged in the futile effort to chop it down. The story of the tree, which has affinities with a host of sacred trees, world trees, jewel trees, and fairy trees in all nations, has been told in many books. I have only a few words to say about its lunar version, chiefly as a means of introducing the reader to the lunar landscape. Here are the words of Tuan Ch'eng-shih, that indefatigable collector of curiosa in the ninth century:

From of old it has been said that there are a cinnamon and a toad in the moon, and it is said in books of curiosa that the moon cinnamon is five thousand feet tall. Below there is a man who chops at it constantly, but the gash in the tree always closes up. The man is surnamed Wu and named Yang. He was a person of Hsi-ho who studied trancendentalism but went astray. He was ostracized and commanded to hew at the tree. In the Shakya (i.e., Buddhist) books it is said that there is a jambu tree on the south face of Mount Sumeru. As the moon passes, the shadow of the tree enters into the moon. Some say that the toad and the cinnamon in the moon are shadows of the earth, while the empty places are the shadows of water. This assertion is quite close [to the truth].

This précis of lunar information needs expansion and point by point examination. There was general agreement about the cinnamon tree. But opinion varied about the other shadows, reflections, images, or entities there. A familiar book surviving from the Chin period had the authority of age, and was therefore not to be dismissed lightly:

As to the vulgar tradition about transcendent people and a cinnamon tree in the moon: look at it now when it is first born and you will see that the foot of a transcendent being has gradually been taking shape. The cinnamon tree appears there as a later growth.

It is not altogether clear whether we have to do with an actual foot, or with a footprint in some lunar debris. It is at least thinkable, however, that the moon is no globe of subtle *yin*-foam buoyant in the ether, but is solid enough to support living

creatures on its surface (in some accounts, however, it seems to be penetrable, like a ball of water held together by its own gravity). This in turn allows the possibility that the surface may be landscaped, somewhat like the surface of the earth. A close study may lead to the suspicion that some of the shadowy shapes on the moon are mountains, as Wu Jung fancied in this poem, "Staying in a High Building—an Autumn Evening":

Inside the moon the blue hills are faint—as if so painted,
Within the dewdrops the yellow leaves are filemot-sere—just so for autumn.
I lean outward from the steep railing—in no way inclined to sleep,
Wondering only if the Starry Ho may find a way into this high house.

Observe that the pale blue hills are unambiguously *inside* the moon—so that we can be confident that Wu Jung was not seeing a surface feature. Similarly, and carefully so patterned in the quatrain, the falling yellow leaves are reflected in the round dewdrops—miniature moons. The moon is penetrated by hills, as moss agate by arboreal landscapes, and crystal by spicules of rutile. So also, with luck, the poet's lofty room may be penetrated by the flow of the star river on this brilliant night.

But more prosaic minds could still imagine a solid moon. The tale was told (or at least it reached Tuan Ch'eng-shih somehow) that two men once lost their way on Mount Sung. There they encountered a stranger dressed in pure white (it does not take a quick imagination to recognize him for a moon man). In answer to their inquiries, he informs them: "Are you aware, milords, that the moon is in fact composed of Seven Jewels? Or that the moon is contoured like a bullet? The images on it are the sunshine on its convexities. Ordinarily there are 82,000 households caring for it. I myself once counted them." (Whereupon he gave the travelers a bit of magical jade medicine—undoubtedly moon dust—to ward off illness, and pointed out the way to the public road, which would obviously be familiar to an all-seeing night-traveler like the moon.) This well-tended mosaic moon would appear to be solid enough—but—its gemmy substance is crystalline, and crystals have an ambiguous place in the Chinese imagination. They are allied to water, and in a profound sense permeable.

Now, by way of contrast, consider the moon as pitted and honeycombed, like a volcanic rabbit warren. From Han times at least we hear of "moon dens" or "moon burrows"—phrases used ambiguously from very early times. In one sense they refer to the dank and gloomy hiding place of the moon at the western extremity of the world—the counterpart of the solar Fu-sang tree in the extreme east. It naturally follows that they also symbolize the cold and remote lands of the western barbarians, the homeland of the ancient Kushans, whose name, in its Chinese version, even contained the element "moon," and was extended in T'ang times to include the benighted Turks and Iranians beyond the Pamirs. Moreover, whether near the Oxus and Jaxartes Rivers, or penetrating the moist substance of the moon, the caves are not only dark, they are wet. The dampness does not suggest that these lunar holes made pleasant habitations, but the darkness at least afforded security for some creatures. It will come as no surprise then, to learn that the moon dens housed not only felt-hatted Tajiks who, doubtless, deserved no better, but a certain familiar leporine resident of the great sky lantern. His burrow was dark, and so was he. It follows naturally that lunar boltholes provided convenient double images and bivalent allusions, in which it was easy to suggest a connection between earth and sky, mundane and divine. Li Po, a fairly moon-obsessed man, wrote the following about a celebrated hero of ancient times who made his reputation among the nomads beyond the frontier:

Thirsty—he ate ice from the dens of the moon;
Hungry—he dined on snow from high in the sky.

In short, while enduring privations, the warrior was still heaven-nourished—and indeed it is hardly possible to overlook his proximity to the Mountains of Heaven that stretch across Central Asia and, in T'ang times, separated the partly sinicized Iranian oases from the wild horsemen of the steppes.

In all of this there is a *mythological* strain, even if it is sometimes rather tenuous. The hare's den is a microcosm of the moon's womb—and beyond this universal symbol lie the images of the germinal "sky grottoes" and the underworld to which souls pass, and from which they emerge for new beginnings. For instance, to make a meal of the lunar ice from the ice-pits in the sky (which had their earthly analogues) is to be born again, spiritually and figuratively. The interested reader may trace this thread to wherever it may lead . . .

The lunar fauna is generally treated by sinologists as if it were negligible, except as nuggets of lore for the earnest researcher in comparative folklore or for the indefatigable explorer of the endless trails followed by migratory Grand Myths. But in itself the hare in the moon remains only faintly amusing—certainly not to be taken seriously. Or so we imagine. It is enough, we think, to remember the standard tale about his elevation to that chilly planetoid, and to notice with mild interest his repeated appearance as a motif in decorative art, usually grinding away at his mortar like a good tireless beast. That is enough, and by that token he becomes—though we hardly dare admit it publicly—a tiresome beast. I conceive it to be my mission to rescue him from his patient alchemical chores, and put him on center stage, hopefully to introduce to you facts of his personality that have escaped the attention of the most earthly observers—as they did *not* escape the poets of T'ang. For although many of them saw him as a trivial stock figure, like a moral-monger out of Aesop or a children's cliché from the received Mother Goose, many others saw him as a complex person—by no means as simple-minded and unenterprising as we, in our deluded folly, imagine him to be. Certainly

Moon mirror

he is no mere paper cutout—he is a numinous hare, a hare of power. And even more, he is a mysterious and sometimes unpredictable hare.

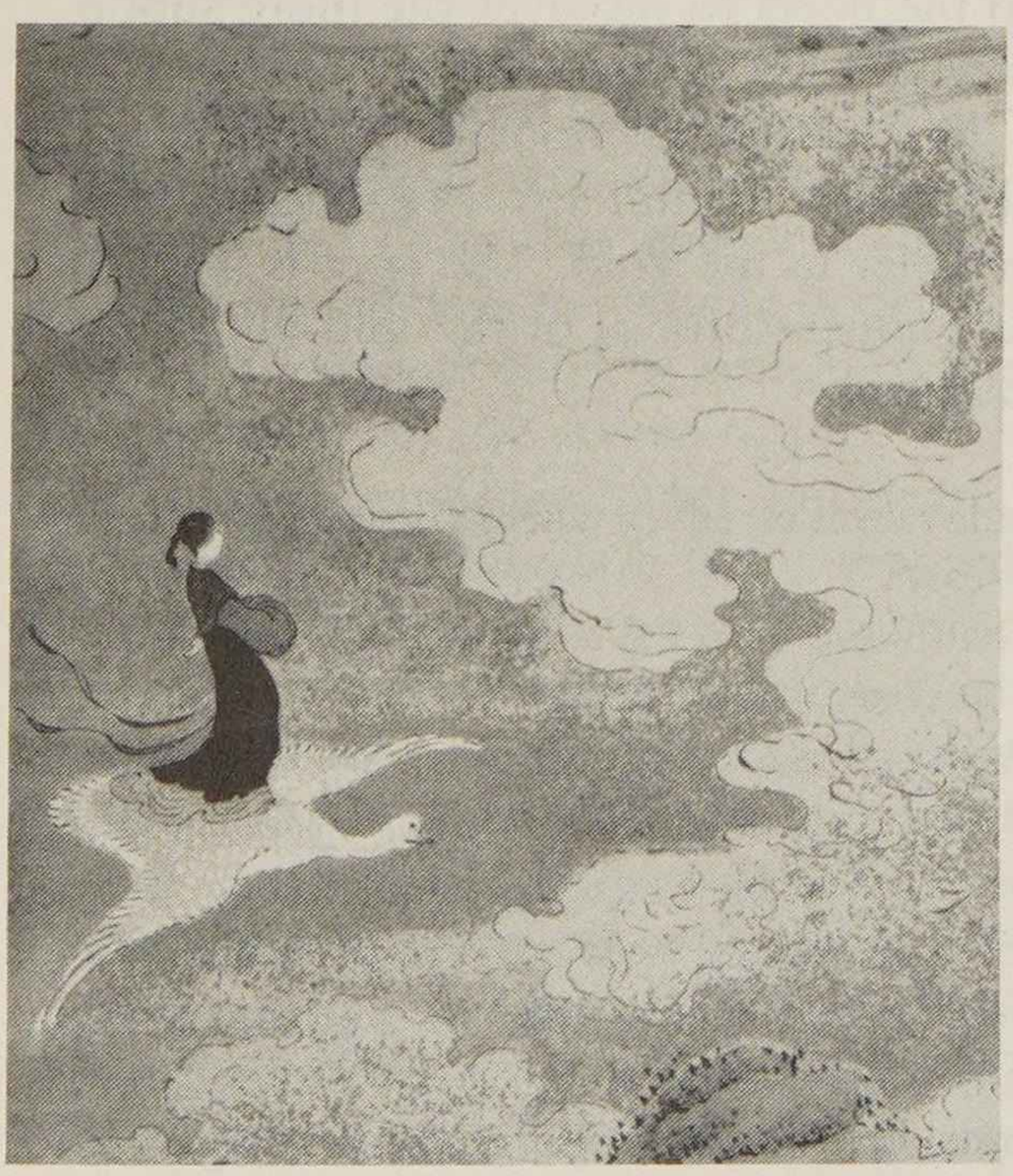
Metaphysically, the hare was an alien element in the cold, impassive moon. The true lunar essence—the *yin* component in the symbolic symbiosis—was the toad, whose damp emanation was neutralized in part by the presence of his rabbity associate, "the *yang* within the *yin*." Such, then, was the hare as a cosmic force—but even this philosophical eminence is not his most significant attribute. We must turn to the poets to discover the more subtle facets of his nature.

For some, the moon hare could be sheer fun. See him now as a rebel—a free-wheeler in the void. The poet is Yao Ho, an eminent official of the mid-ninth century:

Jade rabbit on silver wheel drifting towards the east.
Gemlike and crystal clear—and the third watch, just right for roving!
A slip of black cloud rises—from somewhere:
Its inky net cages back a ball of water germ!

Here we have to do with a delinquent rabbit, not in the guise of a grim grinder-out of seasonal decay, a determined time-marker, but a wanderer, a rebel against

clocks. "Silver" and "jade" are commonplace images of whiteness, always appropriate to the moon and its inhabitants. They put the spotlight on the vagrant hare and his silver-penny unicycle. Why vagrant? you ask. It is there, in the first line of the poem, I answer. He is pedaling irresponsibly towards the *east*, when he has been *programmed* to glide placidly toward the west, where he should descend (gracefully but tiresomely) into the evening sky. He will not. The moon—the vehicular hare, that is—is at its most gemlike and crystalline when high in the midnight sky: the third watch. The roads of heaven are nicely lit, and off he goes on his ramble. But the dark hand of ineluctable fate, in the form of a streak of black cloud, reaches up to seize him, seemingly out of nowhere. (The physical counterpart of this censorious arrest is the illusion of an eastbound moon created by the actual contrary westward movement of clouds across the sky—an illusion any connoisseur of moon hares may verify for himself.) Caged in a celestial Black Maria, the illusory culprit, now plainly revealed in his noumenal form as a crystal ball ("water germ" is rock crystal, is the planets, is the Milky Way, is the moon!), is jerked back to his proper path, aimed at the western horizon.



The magic of poetry could also transmute the moon hare into a figure of fright and inevitable doom, a scythe-bearer, akin to a grinning death's-head. This is how he is presented now by poet Szu-k'ung T'u, who himself saw the fall of T'ang:

Fly-y-y . . . crow . . . fly-y-y!
Hop, hare, hop! (or, "bound, bunny, bound"!)
Make mornings come and evenings go: spur on the seasons' sections!
Kua Woman knew only how to patch the blue sky—
She did not know how to boil a glue that would stick sun and moon [to it].

These verses have the superficial simplicity of a nursery rhyme, beginning with the smooth, easy flight of the sun crow across the sky, followed by the leaping leporid who represents the variable but irreversible passage of the moon. It ends with the figure of the creatrix Nū Kua, shown frustrated, holding a useless paste pot—is it the same one she used to patch the damaged vault of heaven? She is lost in moody speculation about how to devise an adhesive that might arrest the onward progress of sun and moon, and with it seasonal change —in the end, victory over night and death. The verbal images themselves are light in tone—but they tell a message of pessimism and despair: mutability is the only law of nature, and even the gods cannot arrest time in its flight.

That Faustus may repent and save his soul,
O lente, lente currite noctis equi!
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike . . .

Our frost-furred friend is a deadly timekeeper with a staccato thump.

But now to the famous moon maid. Ch'ang-o (as we now call her) may well have been an ancient deity, but her modern name does not appear to be particularly old, and the legend of how she fled to the moon with the elixir of immortality ap-

pears to have been artificially attached to her. We need not linger on these difficult matters, which still need serious attention by the philologists. Suffice it to say here that by T'ang times she was a standardized figure in popular mythology, and, despite the importance of the moon in official religion and astrology, she was not—under that name at any rate—a great deity. But her role in the poetic imagination was immense.

The moon goddess, understandably, provided the poets with a natural disguise for bewitching entertainers of men. She had the legendary jade-white complexion, which her mundane counterparts could and did approximate with white lead; she was simultaneously charming and aloof, in the grand tradition of fertility goddesses in the guise of mortal women. Many writers of inferior talent found it easy to devalue the goddess in order to make her image detectable in the figure of a Ch'ang-an courtesan. Others, pehaps of no greater ability, were able to elevate the courtesan into the realm of traditional fantasy, where she could, like a Dresden china shepherdess, serve transiently as an attractive piece of heavenly clockwork, marking the passage of the months, the fading of beloved images—in short, a symbol of all the depressing residue of separation. Some poets, more than others, were prone to lend her silver mask to the silk-garbed hunters of palace halls. Li Shang-yin was one of these secularizers who—whatever their great gift for words—managed to divest the goddess of much of her charm and mystery. But we must not hurry to discover white-painted courtesan or white-gowned queen in every ninth-century poem about the moon and its shining spirit.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon.

So she appeared to Shelley, and so she appears to us. So too she appeared to the *best* T'ang poets, as has already been intimated in our more impersonal discussion of the noumenal and phenomenal qualities of the lively sky lamp. The goddess could easily assume the physical attributes of the moon—silver train or white fire or crystalline glitter—but it was also possible to make a trace of maidenly panic, or other fugitive signs of mortal frailty in her. Let us now see her in some of her more equivocal—perhaps really unfathomable—epiphanies, where we cannot say for certain whether she is all mist and mystery, or suffers spiritual uncertainties and even carnal perplexities—whether, in short, her cold flame reddens with latent heat.

A poem by Tu Fu titled "Moon" is set in the chilly post-midnight hours, towards the end of the last month of autumn, with the moon waning towards its final crescent. It is the first new moon of winter. (All of this is apparent in the imagery of the poem, which is also well supplied with fine conceits.) Tu Fu's tone is jovial, even jocular. Evidently he was in no mood to sympathize with a lovely but lonely nymph—"give her a drink!" says he:

Fourth watch—the hills spit out the moon.
Shrinking night—the water lights the tall house
A dusty casket starts to disclose a mirror.
A windy curtain lets a hook free to rise.
[Or: frees a hook to rise]
The hare must suspect its locks are a crane's
The toad for its part loves its sable cape.

Ladle out a draft for widowed Heng-O:
In the sky's cold she must bear the Autumn
Ninth.

Perhaps this is obscure enough to deserve a minimal commentary: the east-facing crescent appears and is reflected from the dewy pavement in front of the house—dewdrops are almost always little moons. The lunar disc seems to be a shining mirror whose edge is shown as above a newly opened make-up case (the dust refers to the dusty hills where the moon has been hiding); it is a curtain hook of rock crystal, set free to sail up into the air. Cranes are baldheaded , and the moon hare wonders if he is not too old and hairless for such bitter cold; the shining toad is largely concealed—but happy—in its black comforting furs. The poor goddess, with no husband to warm her, could profit from a beaker of good wine. ("Autumn Ninth" is the ninth month of the year—the last of autumn.)

Meng Chiao, the great moon-fancier, took an entirely different tack in a poem that begins with a listing of the ways in which certain beautiful things in nature are shown at their best:

Flowers are most charming when afloat in a
springtime font;
Bamboo is most charming when encaging
dawn-glow and haze;
Courtesans are most charming when not over-
doing artifice;
The moon is most charming in her natural
appeal;
At the midpoint of night Ch'ang-o attends the
levee of the Grand Monad:
Naturally no one among men is her peer in
charisma.
The officers of Han got such royal favor only
on a few occasions;
Both flying Swallow and the Duchess are jealous—how they envy her!

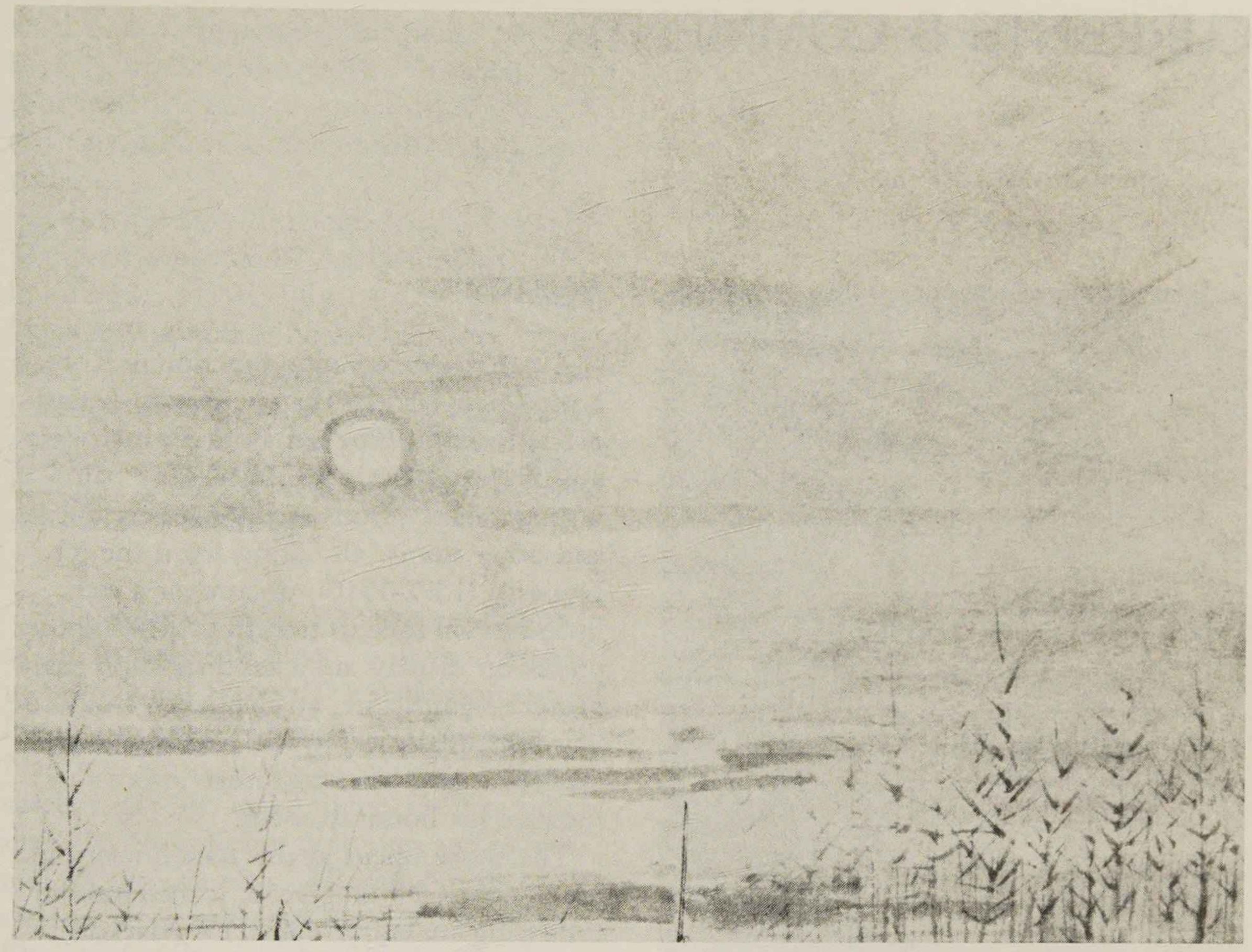
Here what begins as a connoisseur's pocket-list is suddenly transformed into a paean of praise for the unique loveliness of the moon goddess: what the great beauties of Han could not achieve she achieved—and more: a midnight rendezvous with the emperor in the sky! Here, unlike so many other Ch'ang-o rhapsodies, there is no question of flattering a mortal beauty—she will always outshine them all.

The theme of jealousy was a natural one, and one which was well exploited by the poets. Another example, in a rather different tone—that of a trained Taoist with a sense of humor—appears in one of the long sequence of poems on "Saunters to Sylphdom" written by Ts'ao T'ang. I have rendered the vignette in rather insipid prose:

They quite forgot to tell someone to lock the
Rear Palace:
Now the reconstituted Cinnabar is all lost—the
jade cup empty.
If Ch'ang-o had not stolen the numinous
medicine,
There would be a struggle for long life to be
achieved within the moon.

What has happened is this: the "rear palace" (women's quarters) of some divine king has been left unattended; the girls have escaped and appropriated the elixir of immortality ("reconstituted Cinnabar") that the god kept in a goblet of jade. These pretty cats, with portions of the supernatural cream at their disposal, wish with all their hearts that Ch'ang-o, their prototype and inspirer, had not gotten to the glorious moon ahead of them with her elixir, to reign forever as unique and immortal queen of the night.

But there are other ways of treating the goddess. For instance, she can be reduced to a painted image in the sky constantly in need of restoration. In the poem which follows we discover an at first unidentifiable white cloud image. This turns out in the end to be a divine being, serving a far greater entity than himself. As the perpetually employed agent of the "Primal Harmony," the great balancing and harmonizing power in nature, it is his responsibility to restore the face of Ch'ang-o monthly with celestial white lead, for the satisfaction of mankind. The poem is by Mao Wen-hsi, who wrote in Szechwan in the tenth century. It is set to the tune, "A Single Wisp of Cloud at Shamanka Mountain":



A semblance covers the colors of Shamanka
Mountain:
It has just crossed these waves that have washed
polychrome damask.
Who is it that takes up a brush, ascends the
Silver Ho,
And limns Ch'ang-o inside the moon?

Thin-spread she applies the lead powder;
Full-blown she hangs her white-damask net.
The dreaming soul of the servant of the sweet-
flag flowers is prolific—
Years and eons in the employ of the Primal
Harmony!

Commentary:

1. A cloudy shape bleaches the colors of Shamanka Mountain.

2. She passes above the Yangtze which, above at Ch'eng-tu, is the river in which the Szechwanese rinse their fine damasks, and so is there called Chin Chiang.

3. She slides up the Milky Way with her makeup kit.

4. She renews the crystalline moon-stuff as she paints her face.

5. She uses the traditional foundation—snowy ceruse.

6. She drapes herself in fine white damask (contrast the earthly polychrome).

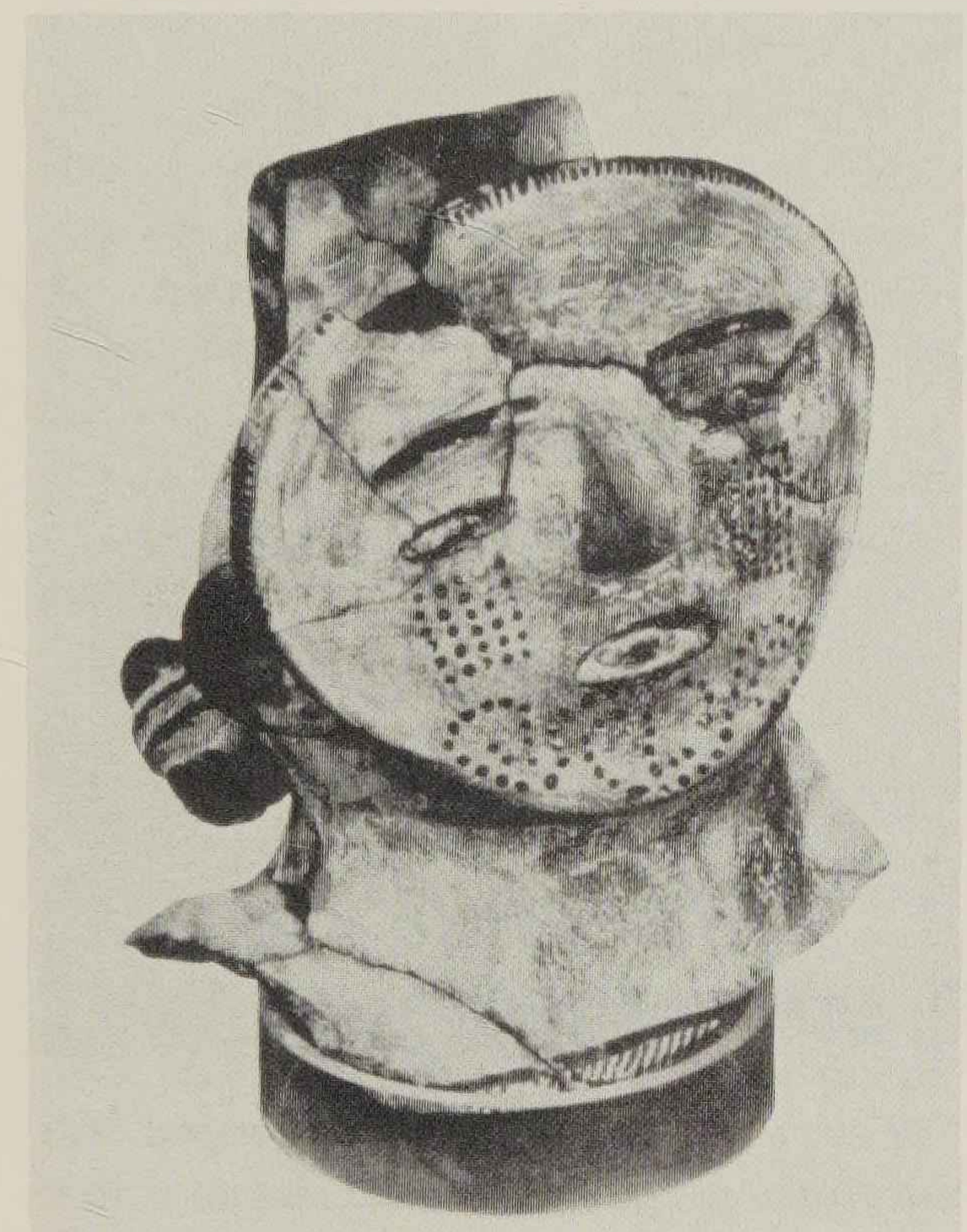
7. So she realizes the illusionist dreams of the nocturnal king of *Lieh tzu*.

8. She has brought *yin* to its climax in the eternal cycle of *yin-yang* phases.

Here, and perhaps it is suitable that "here" should mean "finally," we leave the moon lady—an illusion, a figment, almost a philosophical instance. But perhaps the moon itself is no more. Tonight it is two nights short of full. Let us hope that the Great Scene-painter in the Sky is restoring the make-up! You have been briefed. Be ready at zero hour! ■

This article originally appeared in the Journal of the American Oriental Society *96 (1976), pp. 27-37. Reprinted by permission.*

CURRENTS & COMMENTS



MUSIC

The Society for the Study of Asian Music is sponsoring two performances of traditional music and dance rarely seen in the United States. On December 11, dancer **Sunayana** will perform the lively Kathak dance from North India. On January 15, 1984, a concert entitled **Music and Dance of Central Asia** will bring together folk and classical music and dance of the Jewish, Tadzhik, Uzbek, and Pamir peoples. Both programs will be held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Uris Center at 2:30 P.M. Tickets are $3.00 for members, senior citizens, and students, and $6.00 for all others. For further information write or telephone the Society for the Study of Asian Music, 50 Washington Sq. South, New York, N.Y. 10012, (212) 897-7037.

MUSEUMS

Art that served a vital function in Korean homes of every class can be seen in **Auspicious Spirits: Korean Folk Paintings and Related Objects**. In all, 117 paintings, screens, scrolls, sculpture, ceramics, and other items, all dating from the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), document a rich, little-known folk art tradition. Among the pieces on display are a mythical lion that protects against fire, an elephant's trunk to ward off smallpox, and a "wedding duck" carried by a groom to future in-laws to indicate his honorableness.

The show opens at the Asia Society in New York City on Dec. 8. It then has the following itinerary: Feb. 11 - Mar. 25, 1984, New Orleans Museum of Art; Apr. 14 - May 27, Honolulu Academy of Arts; June 15 - July 29, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco; Aug. 18 - Oct. 14, Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa; Nov. 8 - Jan.6, 1985, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The rise and fall of an ancient, complex culture is documented in **The Chaco Phenomenon**, a new exhibit at the University of New Mexico's Maxwell Museum of Anthropology. Established one thousand years ago by Anasazi ancestors of modern Pueblo Indians in northwestern New Mexico, Chaco Canyon society knit together a population of six thousand Indians spread over twenty-six thousand square miles. The community was linked by two hundred and fifty miles of straight, well-engineered roads, a signaling network, and a vigorous exchange of food and other goods. After two centuries the culture collapsed, perhaps because of ecological depletion and other population-related problems.

The show features more than two hundred artifacts from Chaco, including

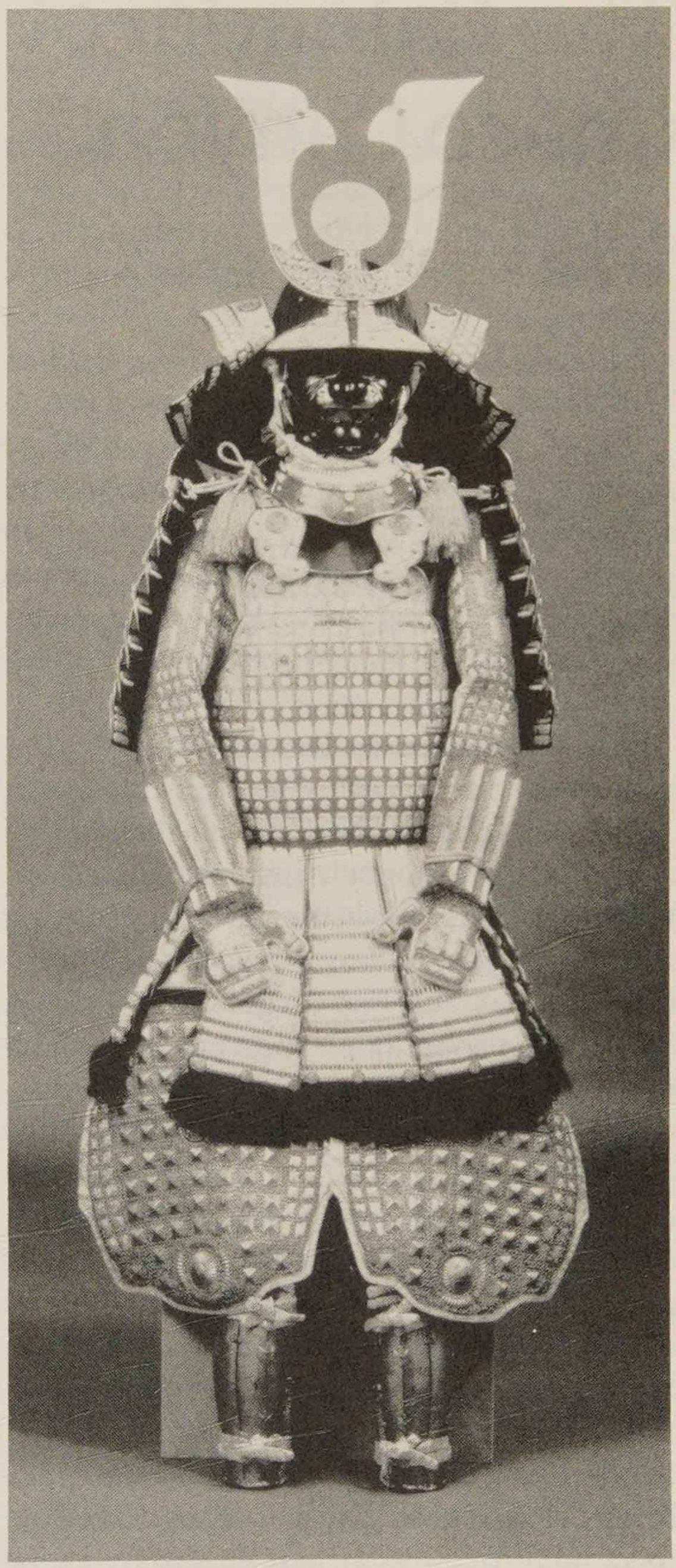
black and white pottery, turquoise-covered baskets, and ritual objects. Fiberglass reproductions of architectural details from the canyon's ruins recreate Chaco building styles.

Tour itinerary: through May 27, 1984, Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, Albuquerque, N.M.; July 1 - Oct. 31, 1984, Denver Museum of Natural History; May 1 - Aug. 30, 1985, American Museum of Natural History, N.Y.; Oct. 1 - Jan. 30, 1986, Ft. Worth Museum of Science and History; Aug. 1 - Nov. 30, 1986, Boston Museum of Science.

The **Shogun Age**, a major exhibition of art from feudal Japan, will soon arrive in the United States. The collection, on loan from the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya, Japan, includes swords, armor, screens, scrolls, calligraphy, tea ceremony utensils, Noh theater costumes and masks, and incense burners. All items in the exhibit were collected by the Tokugawa Shogun family, which unified and ruled Japan for almost 260 years during the Edo period (1614-1867). During this time much of the cultural heritage of modern Japan, from annual festivals to literary conventions, was established.

Tour itinerary: Dec. 20 - Feb. 26, 1984, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Mar. 17 - May 26, Dallas Museum of Art.

The sun and the stars are brought to earth in a new, permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum. The **Stars Gallery** focuses on astronomical investigation of the universe from ancient times to the present. Visitors will be able to walk through a sixteen-foot model of the exposed core of the sun, stand outside the Milky Way in simulated intergalactic space, and examine at close hand a nearly full-scale replica of an arch from Stonehenge. The gallery is open seven days a week from 10:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. at the National Air and Space Museum, Sixth Street and Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. Admission is free.



Above: set of armor, silver lacquer on iron plates, from "The Shogun Age"

Facing page: sculpture from "The Chaco Phenomenon"

TANGENTS

The Calendar of Chaco Canyon

MARY JANE LENZ

"Dagger" of sunlight on Chaco Canyon

The Sun Dagger
A film by Anna Sofaer. Narrated by Robert Redford. Produced by the Solstice Project, 1983. 59 minutes. Distributed by Bullfrog Films Inc., Oley, Pennsylvania 19547.

Archaeoastronomy has become a hot topic in scientific circles in recent years. To be sure, our fascination with the question of just how much ancient peoples knew about the movements of the sun, moon, and planets was present even before the discovery that the megaliths at Stonehenge function as a giant calendar to mark the summer solstice. Several international conferences, a number of books and articles, and at least one major museum exhibit have been devoted to the subject, and there is increasing evidence that early peoples were not only quite aware of seasonal changes in the sky, but indeed regulated their lives by them. Now an interesting new film chronicling a discovery by an amateur, an artist named Anna Sofaer, brings us to Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, to show us that the ancient Pueblo dwellers also appear to have understood the rhythms of the heavens.

This should hardly surprise us. For the people of a thousand years ago, who had no calendars or clocks as we know them, the need to know how the world worked was not an intellectual exercise but a matter of life and death. In the arid Southwest there was no cushion for error in the time of planting and harvest. Today the Pueblo people still attend keenly to the cycles of the sun and moon in order to carry out their complex ceremonial cycle. The role of the sun priest is of critical importance, and his responsibilities are heavy, for the life of the people is thought to rest in his hands.

Chaco Canyon, replete with ruins today, was populated a thousand years ago by farmers, the ancestors of some of today's Pueblo people. We call them the Anasazi, a Navajo word meaning "the Old Ones," although the Hopi word for these people who were their ancestors is "Hi-sat-si-nom." The Chacoans lived in huge, multi-storied adobe apartment houses, some containing hundreds of rooms, and they carried out ceremonies in round subterranean chambers known today as kivas. Traces of irrigation systems and ancient roads suggest a society organized for cooperation and stability, and the objects they have left, including magnificent pottery, basketry, and textiles, indicate high artistic and technical abilities.

At the south entrance to Chaco Canyon stands Fajada Butte, a natural formation rising over four hundred feet from the valley floor. Near the summit, located on

a narrow ledge and the cliff face abutting it, stands what is said to be one of the most remarkably complex and subtle astronomical observatories in the ancient world—a creation constructed by people whom Sofaer refers to as "Chacoan Einsteins." Her film, *The Sun Dagger*, recounts the discovery of the observatory and considers its implications for the study of early peoples and for the burgeoning field of archaeoastronomy.

The film leads us step by step along the path Sofaer followed, beginning with spectacular views of Chaco Canyon from the air, gradually approaching the isolated ledge itself. We learn that Sofaer, as an artist, was originally interested in two spiral-shaped petroglyphs carved on the cliff face of Fajada Butte. Petroglyphs (literally "stone writing"), or rock art as they are also called, are found all over the world, and although known to be ancient are almost impossible to date. Some petroglyphs depict people and animals in hunting or shamanistic configurations while others, such as the ones here, are circles, lines, or spirals. Sofaer had spotted the spirals here on an earlier trip, a large one on the right and a smaller one higher and to the left of the first. They were half-hidden on a cliff wall in the shade behind three enormous sandstone slabs propped upright, side by side, in a seemingly random placement.

The circumstances of the discovery of the sun dagger are worthy of an Indiana Jones. As chance would have it, Sofaer made her climb to the bare and windy ledge on June 29, 1977, about a week after the summer solstice and near noon. While she was examining the spirals, the shadowy surface was pierced by what she describes as "an arrow of light." The noon sun sent a pointed shaft of light between the rock slabs, and as she watched and took note of the time, the dagger shape moved slowly downward "as if it were alive," slicing neatly through the center of the larger spiral. The "sun dagger" descended slowly, gradually becoming shorter until it finally disappeared at the bottom of the spiral, eighteen minutes after its first appearance.

Sofaer was convinced that the arrow of light was more than a coincidence—that the slabs, which she subsequently discovered originated in an adjoining area of the cliff wall, had been moved into position, and that the upper edges had been tooled in order to create the light dagger at the time of the summer solstice. She returned at monthly intervals to Fajada Butte, and with the aid of two colleagues, a physicist and an architect, plotted out the changes in light and shadow throughout the cycle of a year. She found that during the spring and fall equinoxes one arrow of light slices through a side of the large spiral, while the smaller spiral on the left is neatly bisected by a second light-arrow. She also found that at winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, the large spiral is framed by two sun daggers while the center remains, as she phrases it, "empty of light."

All of this is nicely re-created in *The Sun Dagger* as Sofaer, accompanied by a professional climber and a camera crew, makes her way to the top of Fajada Butte. The climb is shown in great—almost excessive—detail, but it does become clear as we watch that a visit to the ledge on Fajada Butte is no casual thing. It is accompanied by numerous perils, including sliding rocks underfoot and prairie rattlers hidden in crevices. The sandstone slabs which seem so tiny in our first distant view of them appear enormous as we approach, and it seems clear that if they were in fact moved into their present positions the physical effort must have been considerable.

Scenes of the climb are interspersed with charts and diagrams of the north-south movement of the sun's yearly path, so that we are prepared for what we are going to see and what it means. By the time we actually see the sun dagger, we are caught up in the excitement of discovery. It makes us wish that there had been a film crew accompanying Stephens and Catherwood as they hacked their way through the Central American jungle to arrive at the ruins

of Copan, or that we had been able to look with Howard Carter through the peephole into Tutankhamen's tomb to see the "wonderful things."

We hear of Sofaer's attempts to convince scientists of the importance of her discovery. When she presented an account of the sun dagger at an international symposium, she was able to persuade some people that the interplay of light on the petroglyphs did indeed mark the solar year. She also presented convincing evidence of the uniqueness of Fajada Butte in that, instead of using the position of the sun on the horizon as a marker, it uses the position of the sun at midday, and is thus a self-contained observatory.

The question of whether or not the stone slabs had been deliberately placed as they now stand has not yet been resolved, although I feel that Sofaer marshals her evidence carefully. She touches on another discovery she made at Fajada Butte, one which is still conjectural and highly provocative. This is her contention that the sun dagger configuration functions not only as a solar observatory but also as a calendar to mark the cycles of the moon, including lunar eclipses. The lunar cycle is approximately nineteen years—that is, while the moon is following its monthly cycle of waxings and wanings, it also rises and sets over the horizon in a pattern which is repeated once every nineteen years, a pattern in which lunar eclipses are predictable. Sofaer's speculations about the fact that the larger spiral has nineteen rings are intriguing, and we can look forward with interest to her future work.

Many people appear in this film, among them Joseph Campbell and Dr. Alfonso Ortiz, who is not only an anthropologist but a Tewa, a member of San Juan Pueblo. Robert Redford narrates *The Sun Dagger*, and his well-known concern for environmental issues gives impact to his statement that rock art is fragile and endangered by pollution and vandalism. The message is an important one and unintentionally ironic; I was made uncomfortable by the way Sofaer rubs her fingers along the spiral grooves of the petroglyphs as she is talking about them. It is not the best scientific practice.

The conversations with Campbell, Ortiz, and several present-day Hopi people help us glimpse the magic and mystery of places such as Fajada Butte—the sense that even today it is considered a holy place, that it speaks of death and rebirth, and that it shows, as Redford says, "a spiritual celebration of light." Mircea Eliade has coined the word "hierophany" (literally "the showing of the sacred") to describe places where sacred beliefs are made visible. The "sun dagger" configuration at Fajada Butte would appear to be such a place, where cosmological notions of an ordered universe and an unchanging pattern of the earth and the heavenly bodies are expressed by a seemingly random placement of stone, in a place difficult of access and private in meaning. This film conveys to us some of the intelligence, sophistication, and wisdom of the early inhabitants of Chaco Canyon.

The Sun Dagger certainly has flaws—some of the dialogue is a little hokey, some of the anthropological conclusions sound simplistic and naive, some explanations drag on too long and would benefit by cutting. Nevertheless I was captivated. The sun dagger speaks for itself as a marvelous creation of the human mind and provides an unforgettable metaphor for the sun as the bringer of life.

The film also gives us a gratifying example of the fact that serendipity is the handmaiden of science. Certainly the tools and techniques of the study of early peoples—Carbon 14, tree-ring dating, analysis of ancient bones to learn about diet—have helped archaeologists penetrate the past and learn more about those who came before us. But sometimes—as in this case—it takes a chance discovery by an amateur to shock us into seeing prehistoric people as having both scientific brilliance and poetic imagination; we get a clear sense that humankind, in all places and through all times, is one. ■

Mary Jane Lenz is an Assistant Curator at the Museum of the American Indian in New York City.

Doors of Vision

FREDERICK FRANCK

Il segno e il tempo
By Francesco Butturini. Photographs by Pietro Chasseur. © 1982 by G.C. Sansoni Editore Nuova S.P.A.—Fireze, su licenza del Centro per la Formazione Professionale Grafica San Zeno, Verona.

Each time I visit my beloved Venice I try anew: I stand in front of the Tintorettos at the Suola San Rocco, and I feel nothing, I fail to make any contact whatever. The stupendous *Crucifixion*, apotheosis of Tintoretto's work—John Ruskin found it "beyond analysis and praise"—moves me as little as Titian's equally celebrated *Assumption of the Virgin* at the Frari.

The Venetians who came after Bellini, masterful as they were in their craft, staged a pantomime of devotion, a display of emotions without feeling, that makes it impossible for me to believe in the agony of their martyrs, the catatonic rapture of their wry-necked saints, eyes rolled ceilingward. I suspect them of playing to the gallery. These masterpieces are pseudo-icons to me, in which a full-blooded joie de vivre had to come to terms with the demands of a religion which had become all too exoterically triumphant, too symbiotic with the naked power of *condotieri* and a self-created nobility of big *richissimi* merchants.

As religious art I find it impossible: Veronese's women are irresistible, but hardly saints. Tiepolo, whose airborne goddesses on all those gilded, coffered ceilings are a delight, paints maudlin Grand Guignol as soon as he touches a religious subject, for which he is as unfitted as a Mathias Grünewald would be as a decorator of boudoirs.

I have asked myself whether my discomfiture with the Venetians' choreography and iconography might be the result of cultural incompatibility. For I grew up in and was nourished by the culture of the Lowlands and its tradition which, beginning with the Flemish painters of the Middle Ages, remained an art stilled in inwardness. Whether the subject matter is religious, or as secular as the seventeenth-century landscapes of Van Goyen and Seghers or Hobbema and Vermeer's contemplative interiors, these works are epiphanies, transcendencies of light. All histrionics are banished in these contemplatives' icons of meaning. Rembrandt's *Christ at Emmaus* is archetypal; an inward event, almost transhistorical.

Still, the matter must be more complex than cultural conditioning; it must go to the heart of the matter. This I realized when I stood once more before the bronze main doors of the Basilica of San Zeno in Verona, a few train stops from Venice. I had seen these doors some twenty years ago and could never forget them. San Zeno rivals San Clemente in Rome as the purest, most important Romanesque church in Italy. Strangely, there is a plethora of books and reproductions available on the Romanesque art of France, while the Italian Romanesque seems to have been neglected.

Even in Verona itself, until 1982 there was not a single book available with adequate photographs of San Zeno and its bronzes.

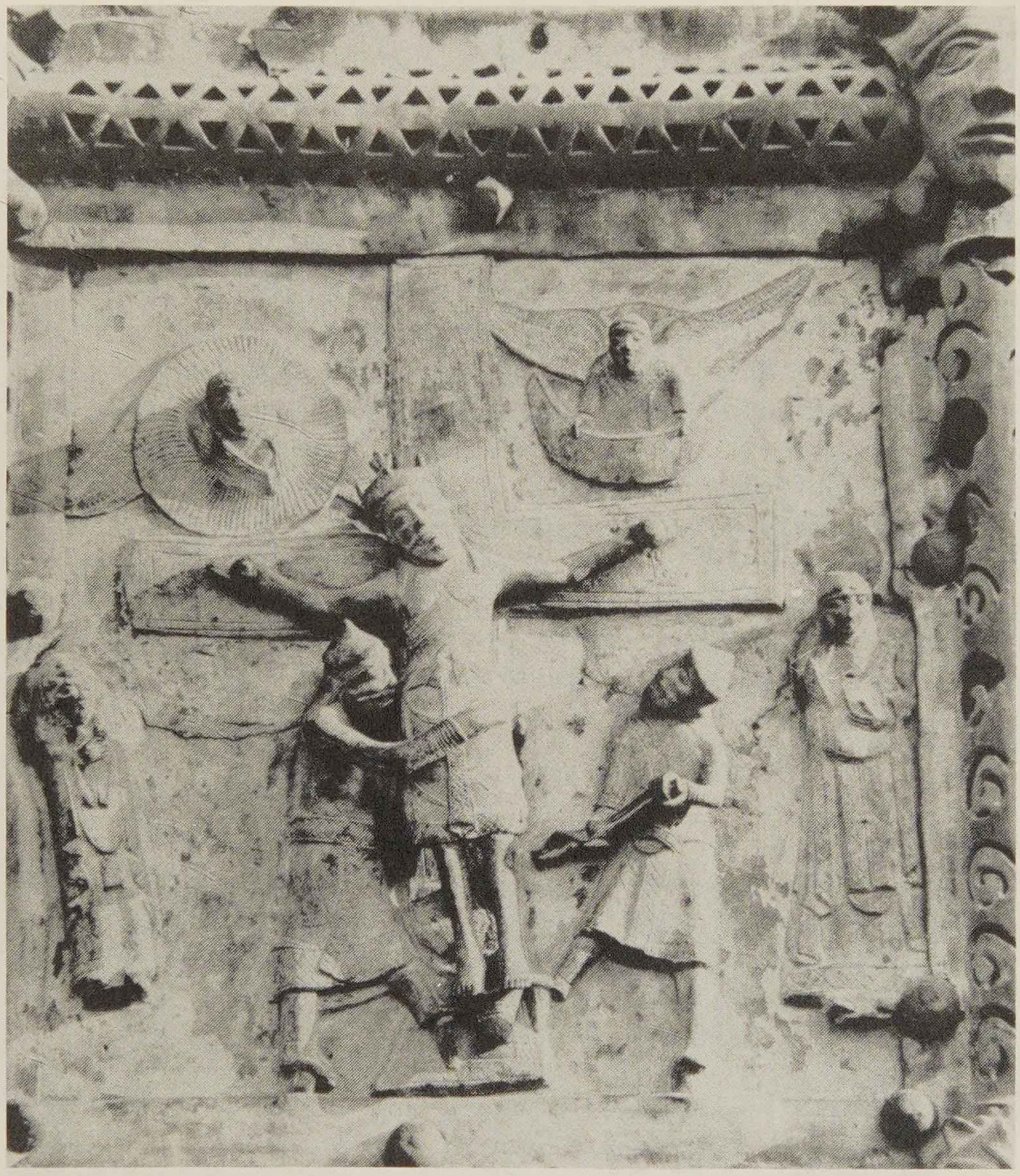
If asked which works of art I revere as being most essentially, most profoundly "religious," I would not hesitate to include San Zeno on a list encompassing the Ajanta Caves, the smiling angel of Reims Cathedral, the constellations of immense Buddhas of the Gal Vihara at Polonaruwa, the tympanum of Autun, Sesshu's *Winter-landscape*, the Vairocana Buddha of Nara, the crucifix of Perpignan, and the *Art of the Fugue*.

These modest doors, some fifteen feet high, are not even solid bronze castings. They are an assemblage of bronze panels in bas relief nailed to doors of ancient planks, blackish brown, deeply grooved by time as if they were driftwood. The plaques, roughly twenty inches square, are held by a framework of ornamental crossbars with small round masks at the intersections. Two bronze masks, impressive as those of Ise, once held large rings to open and close the doors. Some miniature plaques with fine figures are oddly grouped as if to fill in gaps. San Zeno's main entrance is protected by a stone baldaquin supported on slender pillars, carried by two lions of red marble which time and weather have eroded into monstrous, fabled creatures, worthy guardians of the miraculous doors.

It is, of course, quite impossible and useless to describe this unprecedented work of art, but perhaps these photographs from *Il segno e il tempo* may give an inkling of these bronzes, whose patina through the centuries has become a sym-

phony of emerald green, turquoise, smoky black, jade, and milky umber, with here and there golden luminosities where for a millennium untold hands have touched and caressed the bronze. The panels are placed rather haphazardly in eight rows. Theft, vandalism, perhaps also enlargement of the doors have played havoc with the original arrangement, but on first sight it is impossible to miss the radically different style of the panels on the left door from the majority of those on the right.

It is this left door, and the four lower tablets on the right, that are obviously from the hand of the eleventh-century master whose work does not seem to be influenced by any preceding art. He is sui generis, an artist whose works derive directly from life, from a totally independent vision and contemplation. It is as if he were there when Adam and Eve were chased out of paradise and saw Adam look back ruefully; it is as if he watched the crucifixion and the deposition from the cross, saw it in awe as a cosmic event taking place under sun and moon. Every one of his Biblical scenes condenses cosmic grandeur into its small format. The depth of the picture plane varies: figures loom up out of the immensity of emptiness with only a sketchy arcade, the shape of a table, suggesting an interior, or a tiny tower or tree placing it outdoors. The Resurrection panel with the wide-eyed Christ, Judge of the World, is to me the most compelling work of religious art anywhere. Here too



the master was present, he did not have to believe in the Resurrection, he had seen it with his own eyes, he was there, an eyewitness. These are signs of the sacred, witnessed in the everyday world, but in which the sacred and the profane have fused: samsara and nirvana have become one.

The difference between the works of the eleventh-century master and those of the twelfth-century artist who modeled and cast the panels of the right door is immense. The older master is radically nonclassical. It has been suggested that he was inspired by a Spanish illuminated manuscript, but how could this have resulted in the idiosyncratic three-dimensionality of his bronzes?

The artist was not influenced by either Roman, Longobard, Byzantine, or Gothic art. We are here at the roots of art as such, rooted in the life process itself, in all that glorifies life and all that desecrates and spoils it. It is the world as it was on the day of creation and as it is now in 1983, seen directly and beyond all formal conventions. In his utter simplicity he models faces that express every mood with miraculous poignancy; the shepherds of the nativity, their eyes wide with awe, their hair standing on end, are touched by the Spirit as by a whirlwind. The maids who must fetch John the Baptist's severed head are the embodiment of anguish, and Herod's face shows horror at his offspring's snakelike dance. At the flagellation, the Christ seems less horrified by pain than astonished at such human cruelty. The great staring eyes of the Resurrected One, the Christ in Glory, stay

with one forever. The immense stupidity of soldiers, judges, high priests is that of our own contemporaries, of all the hirelings who carry out ignoble orders with self-satisfaction and glee.

The twelfth-century master of the right door panels obviously was well versed in the art that preceded him. His faces are psychologically particularized. The elegant folds of the robes cover bodies that are anatomically correct. In his high Romanesque scenes of the life of Saint Zeno he achieves classical charm and elegance; but these panels do not speak of the human condition, of timeless destiny, do not evoke the mystery of being, do not compel us to see Creation take place before our eyes.

It is astonishing to realize that the bronzes of San Zeno have been "discovered" only quite recently; as late as the 1920s, Venturi would derogate them as "barbaric" and speak of a "kingdom of monkeys." Other experts found them of a "formlessness that could not claim serious evaluation as works of art." But then, in this same period similar views were expressed on Rembrandt and his heart-rending *Carcass of an Ox* in the Louvre. Probably we had not yet suffered sufficiently our own century's horrors.

The Venetians may be highly recommended to lovers of the operatic, the Zeno bronzes to those committed to realizing their place in the structure of Reality. ■

Frederick Franck, artist and author, is a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA.

Family Virtues

LAWRENCE RUSS

Fanny and Alexander
A film by Ingmar Bergman. Produced by Cinematograph for the Swedish Film Institute, Gaumont, Personafilm, Tobis. An Embassy Pictures release.

With *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*, Ingmar Bergman showed that profound and complex work dealing with myth, dream, and fantasy could appeal to a wide audience. He proved that film could be as high an art and as effective a guide in the search for metaphysical meaning as any medium. Critics were quick to see in Antonius Blok (the central figure in *The Seventh Seal*) a fictional representative of his artistic creator. Like Blok—a medieval knight disillusioned by the world's strife and chaos, who challenges Death to a game of chess for his life—Bergman was clearly using his own "borrowed time" in a quest to discover religious truths, to perform an act of redeeming value.

And now we have the culmination and summation of that quest in *Fanny and Alexander*, the film which Bergman has announced is his last. On the simplest level, *Fanny and Alexander* depicts a series of events in the life of an upper-class Swedish family at the turn of the century. The film's story, which begins on Christmas Eve, especially concerns Alexander Ekdahl, a ten-year-old boy whose experiences and predilections greatly resemble those of the young Ingmar Bergman.

Bergman's own comments and his many films have made clear that almost all of his film characters embody some aspect of himself. The characters' attractions, conflicts, and estrangements reflect the relationships of elements within Bergman's own self, and, by extension, within the viewer's self. In light of this, the array of characters to whom Bergman is able to bring life and comprehension in *Fanny and Alexander* is both an indication of the film's richness and of the success of the artist's lifelong search.

In this film we meet an alcoholic and buffoonish academic, an androgynous psychic, a genially lecherous businessman, a flinty and ruthless minister, a loving and compassionate *grande dame*, and a myriad of marvelous others. It is not, however, as though we had never seen their like before in Bergman's pictures. It's the quality of their relations with each other and with the audience that makes this film a rarity in the Bergman repertory.

Within the wide circle of the Ekdahl family, no one is truly estranged, no one is humiliated by another. Everyone receives indulgence, devotion, love. Even when Alma slaps the nursery maid, Maj, with whom Alma's husband is carrying on, it is a straightforward and momentary expression of anger, without contempt or cruelty. Grandma Ekdahl may deny her debt-ridden, ne'er-do-well son Carl a further loan, but she doesn't scorn or insult him, and she speaks about him to her friends with affection and concern.

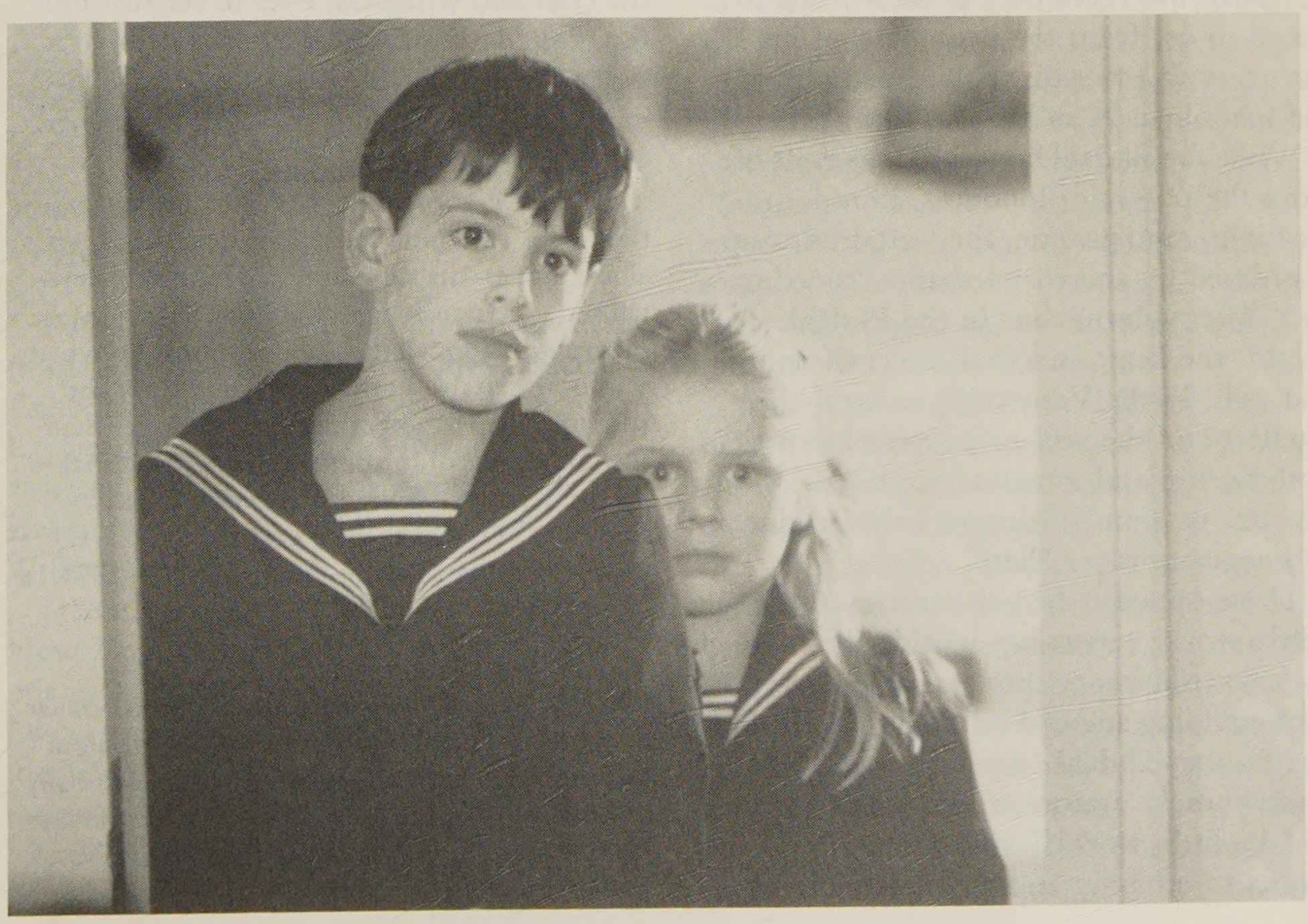
The film is a tribute to love in its numerous incarnations: familial love, the brotherly love of fellow-artists, the love of artists for their art, grief-stricken love, playfully erotic love, love between close friends, and love between man and God. In *Fanny and Alexander* we dwell not only in a harmony of affections, but also in a unity of being. Vision, dream, invention, and waking reality flow into one another, particularly for the embryonic artist, Alexander. A statue moves her arms in front of him; a painting comes to life; his dead father, Oscar, appears to him at crucial moments. The puppet-master tells Alexander:

> Uncle Isak says we are surrounded by realities, one outside the other. He says that there are swarms of ghosts, spirits, phantoms, souls, poltergeists, angels, and devils. He says that even the smallest pebble has a life of its own.

All of the vibrancy and harmony of this film were won from years of difficult struggles and dark explorations. In picture after picture, Bergman focused on the painful points of disjuncture in our lives, looking so closely at the apparent cracks in ourselves and our realities that we could begin to discern the underlying connections—between body and spirit, in *Persona*; between conscious and unconscious, in *Hour of the Wolf*; between private degradation and public violence, in *Shame*.

Indeed, part of the richness of *Fanny and Alexander* comes from the fact that we have seen many of its themes and motifs in other forms in earlier Bergman films. Recognizing the reflections of old dialogue, names, and compositions will give nostalgic pleasure to long-standing Bergman fans, but the countless references to past films also do more: they allow Bergman to create a many-leveled work and a singularly fertile and concise film language. For instance, the second or two in which Blenda Vergérus flashes by the camera with her sardonic grin, advising the children that "there's nothing to be afraid of," summons up similar shots from *Hour of the Wolf*, and thereby underscores the demonic, destructive nature of Bishop

Pernilla Allwin and Bertil Guve as Fanny and Alexander



Vergérus's household. It is, in fact, the clash between the Vergérus house of orthodox horrors and the "heretics" of the Ekdahl and Jacobi households that forms the central conflict in *Fanny and Alexander*.

The clash is between soul and soullessness. Bergman has said: " . . . ever since my childhood I have pictured the inside of the soul . . . in shades of red." Significantly, *Fanny and Alexander* begins and ends in a soulful and sensuous splendor of reds, with crimson, pink, or wine-colored holiday trappings, stained glass windows, flames, rich food, gowns, and upholsteries.

But when Alexander's father, the beloved manager of the local theater, takes to his deathbed, the color scheme changes abruptly to chilly blues and grays, stark blacks and whites. The thermometer drops even more precipitously when Alexander's mother decides to marry the steely hearted Bishop Vergérus. Like other Vergéruses before him in the Bergman canon—the positivistic doctor in *The Magician*, the nihilistic architect of *A Passion*—the Bishop invokes moral and rationalistic principles in order to bully his fellows. The Bishop's household is a microcosm of the sphere of human brutality and contention which Bergman has repeatedly been at pains to reveal to us, from the beginning of his career, with the sadistic machinations of the schoolmaster in his first film, *Frenzy*.

While the Ekdahl household takes its life from the power of kindness, humor, creativity, and passion, the Vergérus camp is ordered by scorn and shame, coercion and abject submission. In the Ekdahl world, the heart and soul direct the mind and will. In the Vergérus province, the intellect and the will-to-power obstruct both feeling and imagination; to the Bishop, passion is "sloppy," the products of imagination are "lies."

These opposed zeitgeists relate to the "little world versus big world" theme of the two celebratory speeches made toward the beginning and end of the film by Oscar and Gustav Ekdahl respectively. Each of these homely orators espouses the values of "the little world," which the movie works to embody and champion: the values of "orderliness, routine, conscientiousness, and love," of being "kind, generous, affectionate, and good." (We may recall that certain of Bergman's earlier thespian representatives of "the little world," Jof and Maria and their infant son in *The Seventh Seal*, were unmistakably meant to suggest the family of that other emissary of the soul whose birth is honored by the Ekdahl family at the start of *Fanny and Alexander*.)

Each Ekdahl brother poses the questions of whether or not "the little world" of art and the soul can "succeed for a moment in reflecting the big world, so that we understand it better," or can help to save us from the "harsh world . . . of horror and confusion" and its unleashed Ragnaröks. In this cinematic farewell, Bergman-Prospero answers such questions with an impassioned yes. The heart and spirit win here, even in the big world's terms. Through an act of communion and imagination, the brutalized Alexander beats down the tyrant who oppresses him and those he most loves.

It is imagination, love, and wonder that hold sway in *Fanny and Alexander*. And for those who have had ears to hear beneath the cries and whispers, eyes to see through the often dark glass of Bergman's films, it will be clear that these qualities have always been the guiding spirits of his labors:

> . . . there is something wonderful: that for thousands and thousands of years, all our fears, all our hopes, the sighs and longings have crystallized a certain religious feeling inside, an eternal gift from all those generations. So when you hear certain works of art, suddenly the roof opens up to something that is bigger than the limitations of the human being. That makes me very happy. That is a treasure we carry within us. To make a film is to try to open the roof—so we can breathe. [*Life*, Oct. 15, 1971.] ■

Lawrence Russ has been the Alfred P. Sloan Scholar for the Humanities at the University of Michigan and an Honorary Writing Fellow at the University of Massachusetts. His poem, "Prayers at the Broken Gate," appeared in PARABOLA *Vol. VIII, No. 3, Spring, 1983.*

BOOK REVIEWS

Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer
By Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer. Art compiled by Elizabeth Williams-Forte. New York: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp. *xx* + 227. $16.95. Paper $7.95.

Reviewed by Marta Weigle

The first known author in world literature is Enheduanna, daughter of Sargon the Great of Akkad (c. 2300-2230 B.C.) and high priestess of the moon god Nanna at the Sumerian city of Ur. Several texts attributed to her survive, among them a hymnal prayer in adoration of Inanna, one of the oldest known goddesses in Western civilization. Enheduanna concludes her hymn:

> My queen, I have extolled you, who alone are exalted . . . .
> What I have recited to you in the deep night,
> The *gala*-singer will repeat for you in midday.
> [Samuel Noah Kramer, trans., "Hymnal Prayer of Enheduanna: The Adoration of Inanna in Ur," in James D. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, 3rd ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.]

Some four thousand or more years later, in our twentieth-century midday, what Enheduanna and others recited to Inanna has been sung by Diane Wolkstein, instructed and inscribed by Samuel Noah Kramer, and portrayed by Elizabeth Williams-Forte.

Diane Wolkstein, a teacher, writer, and New York City's Official Storyteller, set out in 1979 to research the moon goddess Diana as a personal namesake and "an identifying symbol for women." She found the Sumerians' Inanna (the Semites' Ishtar), Queen of Heaven and Earth, whose story "as I began to perceive it followed the same pattern as the archetypal Moon Goddess . . . Here was the goddess in *all* her aspects; here was my story."

Wolkstein's story was originally prepared for telling aloud. First in prose, then in verse, she reworked the texts in response to her audiences' listening difficulties. Her own difficulties she brought to her primary collaborator, noted cuneiformist and Sumerologist Samuel Noah Kramer.

Although in his brief preface Kramer calls the book "a graphic example of an effective cooperation between two specialists working in contrasting, yet complementary, areas of humanistic research," the narrative of their collaboration remains oblique. Kramer apparently brought up-to-date his lifetime's translations, then turned them over to Wolkstein, whom he advised during subsequent visits. He directed her to his own, his students', and Thorkild Jacobsen's work, and the results of this direction are summarized in the final notes on the sources used, the textual editing, and the selected bibliography. Kramer also contributed two short, incisive pieces to the commentaries sections: "Sumerian History, Culture and Literature" and "The Discovery and Decipherment of 'The Descent of Inanna,'" the latter referring to one of the most fascinating texts in ancient literature.

Art historian Elizabeth Williams-Forte helped Wolkstein choose artifacts from ancient Mesopotamia of the late fourth through early second millennium B.C. The fifty-eight objects photographed, primarily cylinder seals, are well described in Williams-Forte's "Annotations of the Art" and provide an enlightening narrative in themselves. The illustrations were chosen because they "seemed best to express the stories' moods and meanings"—tales ultimately Wolkstein's in their poetic rendering and interpretation.

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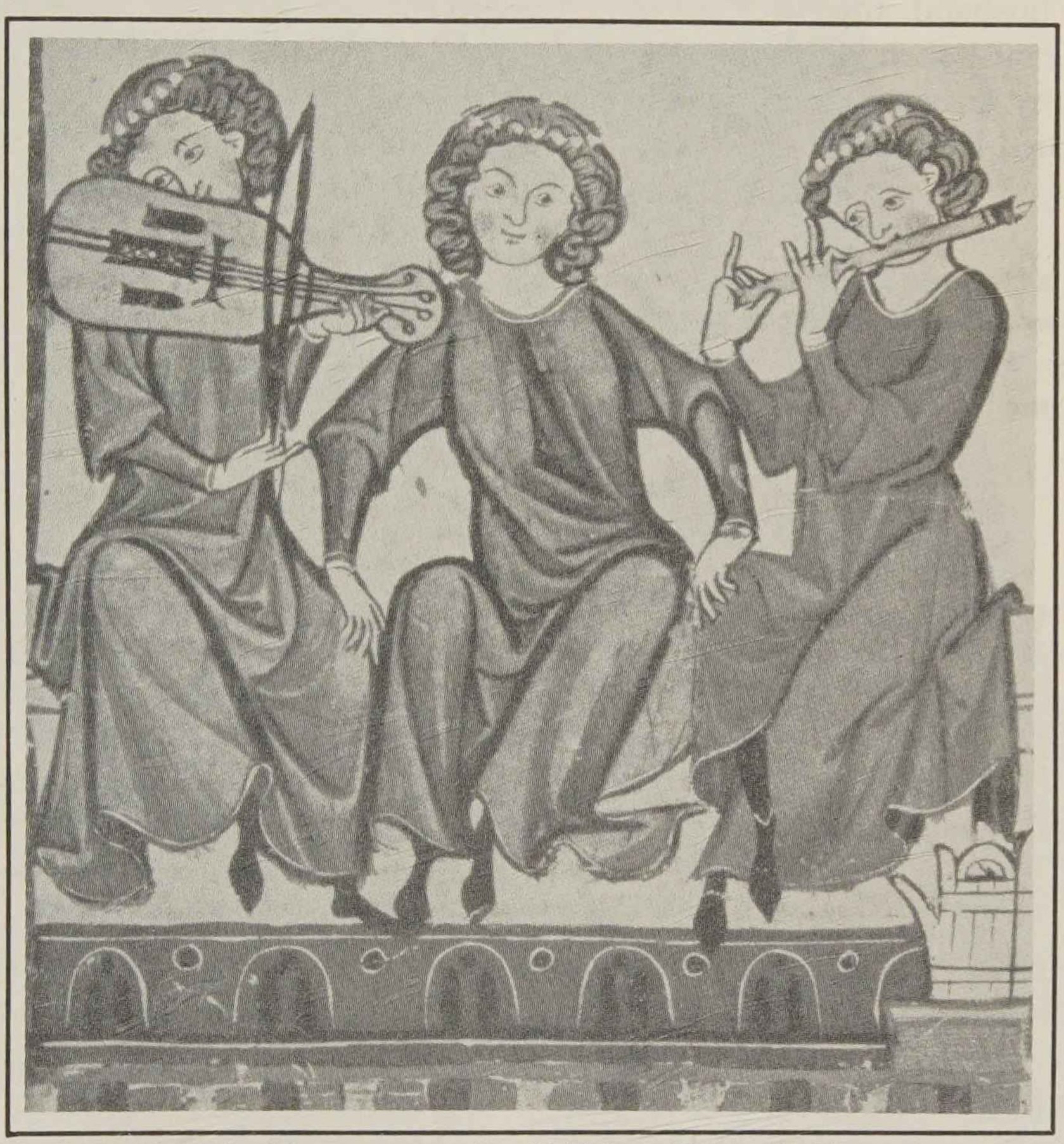
Inanna's stories are presented as a woman's life cycle: an adolescent in "The *Huluppu*-Tree," a ripe young woman who wrests the valuable *me* from Enki in "Inanna and the God of Wisdom," a mature woman who knows all aspects of marriage in "The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi," and finally She who descends and returns from the underworld of her sister Ereshkigal in "The Descent of Inanna." Seven hymns to Inanna express worship of her. Wolkstein's texts, their ordering, and her interpretations respond to what she (like others) perceived as "the absence of the great heroine in ancient history." By presenting Inanna this way, Wolkstein has created a powerful *presence*—a strong female counterpart to the goddess's earthly brother Gilgamesh, famed Sumerian and Babylonian epic hero. She has provided the means for us to feel and explore this ancient myth of a woman's quest and transformation, what she calls in her introduction "a 'grand' story of a woman."

In the end, though, is this the "sacred story that has the intention of bringing its audience to a new spiritual place" as also promised by the storyteller? Has Enheduanna, if not the Sumerian Goddess of Heaven and Earth, been well served in midday? For the most part: yes.

The book's collaborators, editors, and designer are to be congratulated for making esoteric and too often expensive sources accessible and attractive. The design of "Inanna's Stories and Hymns," the central section of poetry and pictures, is appealing and provocative in suggesting the Mesopotamian artistic vision while presenting a vivid contemporary poetic rendering. However, the front matter and back commentaries are not imaginatively integrated and in effect tacked on—as if the Sumerian, archeological, academic, and artistic contexts were almost incidental to this presentation. A good guide to the book's contents and suggestions for reading it—whether cover to cover, text by text with appropriate commentaries, picture by picture, randomly—would help resolve a persistent frustration: are we to appreciate Inanna's story as contemporary literature? As ancient Sumerian literature? As a feminist statement? As primarily Wolkstein's voice, a dialogue between her and Kramer, or a kind of conversation among all who have sung and sought Inanna?

Still, these *gala*-singers have heartened our midday. The Goddess has been brought before us through superbly compelling texts. We can know her as never before. Now it is for us to re-create and continue the song. Will Inanna and Ninshuber's saga, like Gilgamesh and Enkidu's, enrich our sense of friendship, comradeship, relationship? Will Inanna's triumph over Enki rival Gilgamesh's doomed quest for immortality? Will the goddess's complex fertility equal or even eclipse the conquering glory of her sun god brother Utu, of her partly mortal

A SPIRITED GIFT



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warrior-wanderer brother Gilgamesh? And what of her husband, the shepherd king Dumuzi? We raise such questions and pursue their many answers along the various avenues opened by this very welcome book.

Marta Weigle, a folklorist, is Professor of Anthropology, English, and American Studies at the University of New Mexico. Her books include Spiders & Spinsters: Women and Mythology.

The Name of the Rose
By Umberto Eco. Translated by William Weaver. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Pp. 502. $15.95.

Reviewed by Janwillem van de Wetering

What do we have here? Something out of the way, indeed. A tome, 502 pages of scholarly wit that's also a thriller, a who-done-it (ingenious, very), a historical study, a philosophical treatise. The year of the tale is 1327 and the contemporary author, the learned necromancer who turns back the Akashic Record for us, is, we are told on the jacket, a world-famous specialist in semiotics.

The Akashic Record is the human memory that reaches through all our times, imprinted on the astral light, available to the advanced.

Semiotics is the study of signs and language.

The author, Umberto Eco, teaches at the University of Bologna, Italy, and loves James Joyce. Eco certainly loves language, and this work is well translated (by William Weaver), for the English version flows smoothly, invokes clear images, penetrates subtly, plunges deeply into the subconscious when it doesn't transport us to the peaks of enlightenment.

No average tale, this saga of wicked monks.

The Middle Ages in Europe were a confused time of doom, that much we vaguely know. Christianity ebbed low. We've seen in our museums the faces of our medieval forefathers, drawn sharply by Brueghel and Bosch; conceited and cruel personages who burned their brothers at the stake, after much torture, because they believed themselves to be right and all the others wrong. The inquisition practiced black magic and burned witches; its corrupted power abused the weak—the Church ruled harshly, cajoling heaven and invoking hell. God was nowhere, and on both sides.

Low times they were, and the cradle of much of our present thought, but their dim past is almost forgotten now. Eco wants to teach us the medieval lesson, and provides us with his video-taped reminder that we can insert into our brain. His pictures are sharply outlined, shaded in many colors.

Here is William of Baskerville, a very British Franciscan, an earlier day Sherlock Holmes. His mind is much ahead of the environment's darkness. William's guide is Roger Bacon, another Franciscan, an intellectual saint whose insight soared while he fed the birds with the insight gained from true spiritual poverty. Brother William uses spectacles to read, a novelty and source of wonder amongst the learned brethren who no longer see small print and are jealous of William's miraculous powers. They envy their colleague's capacity to analyze problems faultlessly, to visualize hypotheses and even theorems and subsequently test these weird enchantments, his gift for following up facts relentlessly, his detachment from trendy thought, and his freedom from pride.

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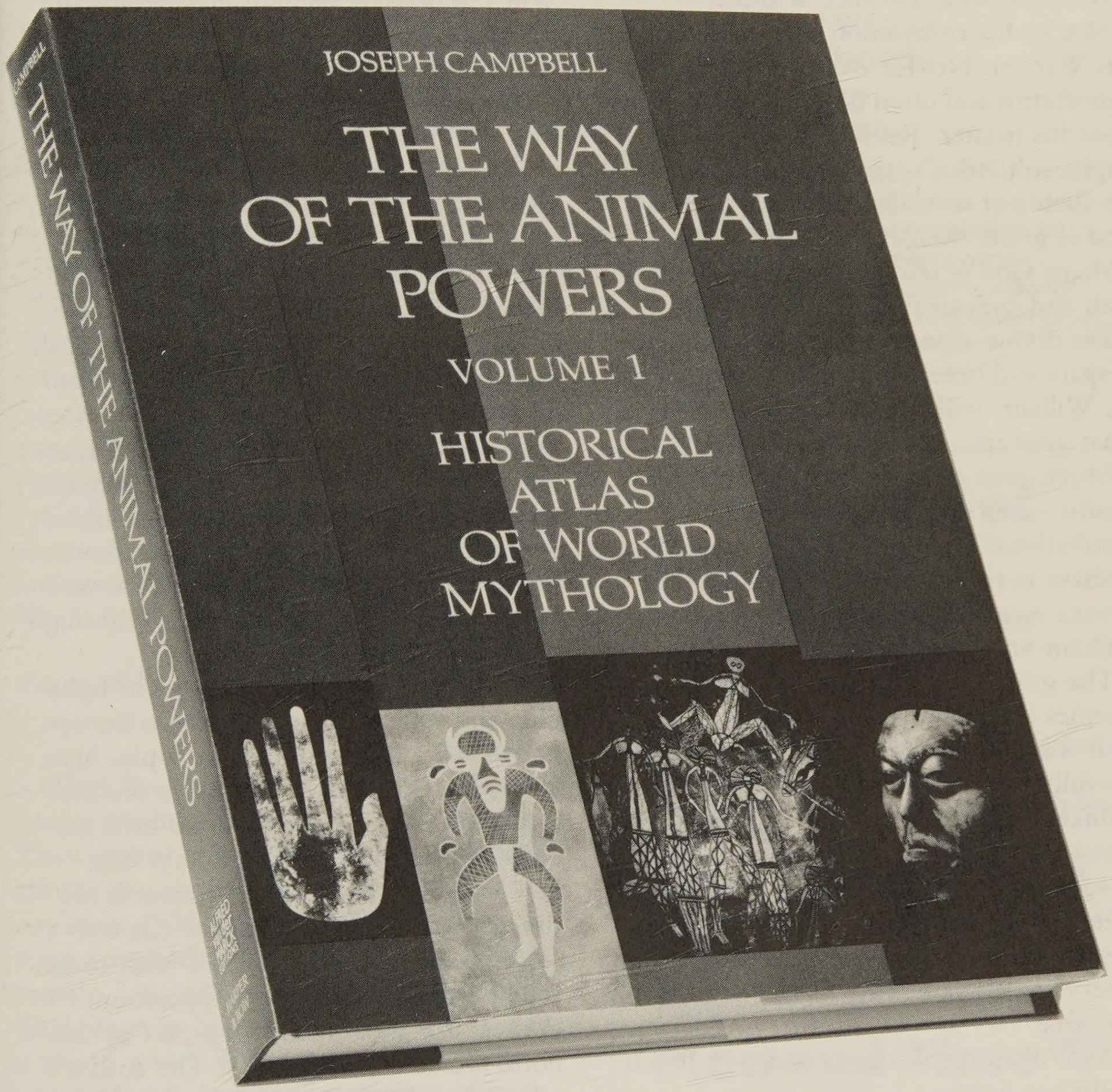

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A cool cookie, Brother William.

Not so his companion, the archetype of Dr. Watson. Novice Adso is a devout Benedictine and often finds reason to differ from his master. Reason? Perhaps not. Logic isn't Adso's strong suit. Adso is of the faith and unwilling to delve deeply. God is good. William is not so sure. Perhaps God is also evil, perhaps He is both and conceivably willing to show either divine aspect within the limitations of space and time, but whatever God may be, William will study Him by observing what goes on.

Much goes on. Our two monkish sleuths visit a grand monastery with mixed motivations. Pope and King are at war and William is requested to intermediate. Monks meanwhile murder monks, and William volunteers to catch the killers.

The game is tricky, and William's enemies are powerful. The investigator who wants to restore order has to move carefully; any false step leads to the stake. William's clear mind prods painfully in many a prelate's pride: wouldn't it be fun to squeeze this freethinker's private parts with red-hot tongs? Hang him upside down and jangle him into a confession of heresy? Is William truly free? No man is ever free.

As William knows quite well—he treads softly but firmly.

One monk is pushed off a high wall, another drowned in a vat filled with blood, a third poisoned; there are seven dead bodies in all; each day produces a fresh corpse while William watches.

And thinks aloud, often in Latin. William reads as well, in Greek and Arabic, for the monastery houses a magnificent library, or rather hides its superb collection of rare books containing wisdom (much of it perverted) in a maze of secret rooms where even William may not venture. When he does he loses his glasses, and the innocent Adso loses his virtue. William makes Adso lose his guilt.

The murderer absolves himself, for he acts in God's glory.

How the monks manage to hold forth against the common good and their own, how they destroy each other and themselves, and always for the glory of God! How fearful the holy men are, how secretive as they sneak around conscience, calling each other Your Magnificence, Your Blessedness; How unctuous are their utterings. One monk has created his own language, a composite of many, and he lies in all of them. William never lies for all his statements have open ends, he knows he can never be sure but intends to be as sure as sure can be, and never gives in, although he fails for the killing goes on.

The Name of the Rose is a bolt of lightning and sold millions of copies in Europe. It will sell a large number of copies here. The book is an instant classic, a faultless artifact, a composite of myriad brilliant details bundled into a single ray. The heroes and villains are Everyman in his timeless struggle; we're in the tale ourselves, although we wouldn't wish to be.

The author denies this supposition. Perhaps the most interesting part of the book is Eco's introduction. The author tells us how he found his material and lost it again, while parting hurriedly from a lovely lady. Then the inspiration returned but it wasn't the same; Eco kept finding odd long lost pages that would finally fit together. He tells us he wrote his final version as "an act of love"; certainly not as a commitment to the present. For has not "the waking of reason dispelled all the monsters that its sleep has generated"? Do we not have our "uncertainties" now?

Eco allowed himself to be photographed, and we see him on the jacket.

The professor's eyebrows are raised, and he looks somewhat apprehensive, as his readers will be, once they have shared his reflections.

Janwillem van de Wetering has written two books about Zen Buddhism, A Glimpse of Nothingness *and* The Empty Mirror, *as well as a series of well-known mystery novels, most recently* The Streetbird *(Putnam).*

Tibet: The Sacred Realm. Photographs 1880–1950
Chronicle by Lobsang P. Lhalungpa.
Introduction by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, Inc., 1983. Pp. 180.
$30.00.

Reviewed by Edward Rice

What lies behind these enigmatic faces, hardly smiling, but not quite impassive? They mirror a world which perhaps has almost disappeared under the Chinese occupation. "Of more than 3,000 monasteries, nunneries and temples only twelve remain," says the refugee Lobsang P. Lhalungpa in his introduction. But it was a world which Westerners did not quite comprehend, despite the writings of such exotic foreigners as Alexandra David-Neel, some of whose photographs are among the 140 in *Tibet: The Sacred Realm.* The photographers, with but one exception (a westernized Tibetan in the service of the English), are white, Christian, or from a Christian background. How much of the "real" Tibet did they understand? They are a cross section of the type that visited so many "primitive" and colonized lands in the past—a few adventurers, some missionaries, a few scholars,

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some British colonial officials doing their job, and one or two souls seeking spiritual enlightenment. But, laments Lhalungpa, when he was forced to find refuge in India after the Chinese invasion of 1950, "to my great dismay I discovered that the existing literature on Tibet, written mostly by Europeans, abounded with inaccuracies and exaggerations." The image was distorted, but many of these voyagers are still "considered authentic sources of research and information." (Even the famous "yak-butter" tea was reported incorrectly; the *yak* is the male of the species, the female the *dri*.) Still, these photographs, to which the word enigma so easily applies, show us fragments of a culture that has been within three decades forcibly removed from its nurturing homeland, to be reestablished in India, Scotland, and the United States.

Tibet itself, judging from the photographs, is a beautiful but sparse land. Hardly a tree exists in these pictures: some magnificent, towering, but almost naked pines are seen in the frontispiece, later some rhododendrons and a few thickets of shrubs in what looks like a jungle grove on the side of a mountain to the south; but usually the wide and desolate vista portrays space, space beyond belief, barren of vegetation, where even the presence of a pair of monks or a few nomadic traders seems to fill it to overflowing. Such vast solitude, bareness, emptiness, such mysterious horizons on the edge of infinity, can hardly be imagined. Here, in one typical picture, on earth that seems to be packed rock-hard, stand two lamas a good distance from the camera; in the background are the jagged peaks of some rocky hills; above is the empty sky, devoid even of the smile of Lord Buddha. And the interiors are as barren. Some women of the Tsarong family—"one of the wealthiest families in Tibet"—are seen at a table with chairs in the Western style, "probably the only dwelling in Tibet" so decorated. In other photographs everyone sits on the floor, sometimes on cushions. Though their robes appear to be works of art, other possessions are few: some tea cups, a low chest-like table, statues of the Buddha, a scraggly plant or two. But in fact, nothing is needed. The mind too has been stripped down. "In its true state, mind is naked, immaculate, not made of anything, being of the Voidness, clear, vacuous, without duality, transparent, timeless, uncompounded, unimpeded, colorless . . . ," and so on, according to a passage based on the teachings of Padma Sambhava, the eighth-century tantric sage who is credited as the founder of lamaism.

But this was not a puritanical, negative society. There are photographs of festivals, of dancers, acrobats, traveling comedians. (But what was Tibetan humor like? What jokes were told? We would like to be enlightened.) And a certain very human warmth is apparent. In a beautiful, enchanting photograph by Albert L. Shelton, an American missionary who was killed by bandits in 1922, we see the Jö Lama and his wife, both young, aristocratic, handsome, well-cared-for. They are sitting on the floor (the Lama seems to be on a cushion), at which level they have been photographed. The Jö Lama has his hand on top of his wife's, a most unexpected loving gesture which crosses the great gulf of time and place, of the Void.

Still, there is always a Void of some kind here. The Tibetans kept outsiders away, especially Europeans. Was it because they believed the West would contaminate them spiritually, as the lamas liked to suggest, or because the West would introduce ideas of freedom, of equality, of justice, as the Chinese claimed, and many

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foreign visitors believed, after 1950? That the Tibetans had some reasons to fear the malign influences of Europeans appears perhaps unintentionally in the biographical notes on one of the photographers, Major George Sherriff, who had spent the years 1928-1949 in Chinese Turkestan, southern Tibet, and Bhutan. In collaboration with the headmaster of the first British school in Gyatse, Frank Ludlow, Sherriff "obtained several thousand bird skins, often making [the] kills secretly by catapult in areas where the taking of life in any form was banned by the Tibetans, in keeping with the tenets of their Buddhist faith." Surely both men had to be aware of the terrible crimes they were committing against the very soul-force of their host country.

The Void is unbridgeable. "You [the West] admire the man . . . who pushes his way to the top in any walk of life, while we [the Tibetans] admire the man who renounces the world . . . ." The Tibetan does not struggle for worldly success. "You are born a living Buddha or you are not . . . . Self-effacement [is] the quality we think the mark of a good man, priest, or layman . . . ." So Rinchen Lhamo.

One might quarrel with the publisher's treatment of the photographs. (Perhaps we are lucky that any survived the rigors of time and distance.) The book, like many of Aperture's, is designed in the style of albums of a past age. The pictures are small, perhaps the same size as the originals (that is not stated), with much white space around them. But one longs for a full enlargement that ignores margins, and above all, for a detail, perhaps a face taken from the larger photographs and magnified so that we see it clearly. They are mostly interesting faces, lamas and other religious figures, lay officials, the thirteenth Dalai Lama, nomads and peasants. The faces are lively, intelligent, inquisitive. Possibly many of the negatives still exist; enlargements of some details, even as a kind of appendix, would be informative.

These are mostly photographs of some depth, of a kind of arcane, hierarchical form that in the case of the frontal views of people reminds one of ikons. Perhaps the heavy, unwieldy, slow cameras of the period in which most of the photographs were taken inevitably impose such a formality on subjects. In any case, they are a bridge into the ineffable Void.

Edward Rice has traveled extensively in Asia and the Middle East as a writer and photographer. He is now completing a biography of Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton based on previously overlooked material.

Lost in the Cosmos: The Last Self-Help Book
By Walker Percy. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1983. Pp. 262. $14.95.

Reviewed by William J. Welch

The yearning for transcendence, according to Professor Roy Finch, is turning for its necessary emotional fueling in the post-Christian era to a newly rediscovered secular reverence. From this point of view, Nature is supernatural enough for all transcendental purposes. God may be dead, but the icy strictures of the logical positivists have not succeeded in stilling man's wonder at the infinite. Nor have they dulled his perennial aspiration to become a conscious servant of Nature's intentions or, better still, a cooperating son, rather than to spin out his days a numb, unknowing, and baffled slave.

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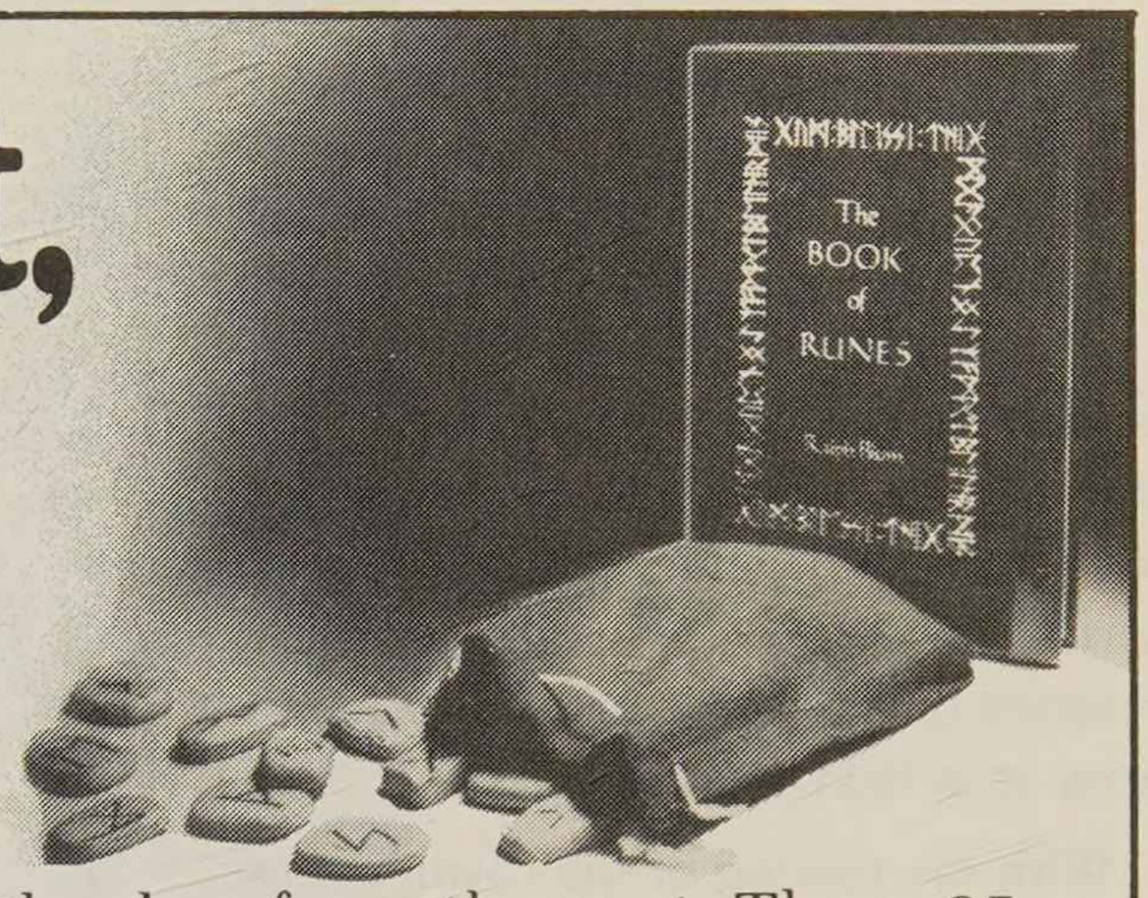

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So, if Finch is right, it may no longer be necessary to join a cult or follow a guru in order to entertain notions of transformation. All that is required is to take a long look at the stars, weigh the implications of Planck's quanta, or just come to realize that particle accelerators are hardly more than the dolled-up laboratory hardware of born-again alchemists. At the same time, everyone is agreed that no matter how you go about it, the odds against getting anywhere in this enterprise are formidable.

In *Lost in the Cosmos: the Last Self-Help Book*, by Walker Percy, physician, novelist, and now philosophical gadfly, the panoramic range of how to transcend the human condition includes not only the pursuit of the archetypal Zen-style satori but also the wooing of the muses of the several arts, seeking the secrets of the universe as a scientist (that "secular saint," Einstein, is said to have taken up science because he couldn't stand the dreariness of everyday life), and the familiar triad of techniques of the common man, brought up to date, i.e., the temporary nirvana of alcohol (now buttressed by drugs and mind benders), getting lost in crowds (see the world of street demonstration and the increasing enthusiasm for mobocracy), and the ultimate transports of sexual congress, raised to the florid heights of what the late Heywood Broun called the filigreed perversions of love, only now made sinister with violence.

Leavening his serious intent with a jocular, semi-Socratic twenty-question approach, Dr. Percy, whose family tree is said to include that Percy known as Hotspur, lays on the ways in which contemporary man undertakes to deal with the inescapable fact—whether acknowledged or not—of the almost total mystery that he is to himself.

Question number six in Dr. Percy's opening litany reviews the different kinds of selves with which we identify in order to explain ourselves to ourselves, e.g., the

cosmological self, the Brahmin-Buddhist self, the Christian (Judaic, Islamic) self, the totalitarian self, etc., but he takes off most seriously at the "lost self," which is the essence of his view of how we are and how it is that we are in trouble:

> With the passing of the cosmological myths and the fading of Christianity as a guarantor of the identity of the self, the self becomes dislocated, Jefferson or no Jefferson, is both cut loose and imprisoned by its own freedom, by a paradoxical bondage, a Chinese handcuff, so that the very attempts to free itself, e.g., by the ever more refined techniques for the pursuit of happiness, only tighten the bondage and distance the self further from the very world it wishes to inhabit as its homeland. The rational Jeffersonian pursuit of happiness embarked upon in the American revolution translates into the flaky euphoria of the late twentieth century. Every advance in objective understanding of the Cosmos and in its technical control further distances the self from the Cosmos precisely in the degree of the advance. In the end the self becomes a space-bound ghost, which roams the very Cosmos it understands perfectly.

Although the ground Dr. Percy assumes as his terrain is not new, his approach is fresh and fearless. Half-rollicking, half-savage, his wickedly satirical probes dissect and shoot down the psychologically absurd character of our various selves: promiscuous, fearful, impoverished (item: "to Mother Teresa of Calcutta . . . affluent Westerners . . . including Americans, Europeans, Capitalists, Marxists . . . all seemed to her poorer even than the Calcutta poor"), depressed, misplaced, and bored. Man, by the way, is the only creature in the Cosmos that gets bored. Within scenarios of imaginary television talk-shows, pretentious archetypes of pop art and pop psychology labor over solemn, new-speak delineations of various hand-to-mouth diversions masquerading as sexual preferences.

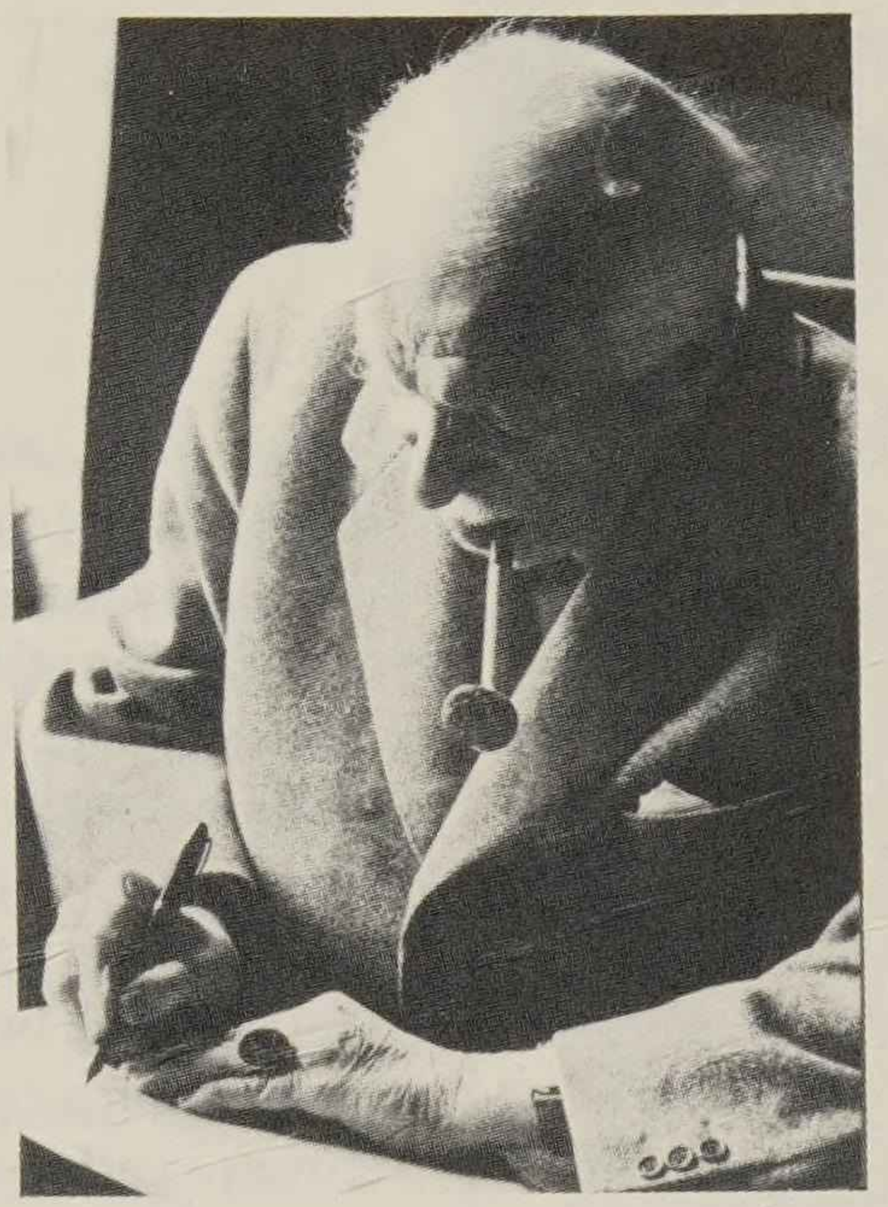
"There appeared for the first time some fifteen billion years ago (as far as we know)—a creature which is ashamed of itself and which seeks cover in myriad disguises . . . the only organism which tells lies." This latter observation comes in the course of developing "a short history of the cosmos," following which Percy outlines a semiotic theory of the self "which explains why it is that man is the only alien creature—as far as we know—in the cosmos."

Semiotics, in Percy's version, asserts that language revolutionizes simple, bipolar *stimulus-response* interactions between two organisms because, for the first time in the history of life, it introduces conceptual understanding and the catastrophic idea of Thou and I.

This special transaction then, designated as triadic, constitutes the uniquely radical impact of language, which brings into existence new properties and relationships not known to exist elsewhere in the Cosmos, nor to have occurred in other species. Man alone of all creatures is compelled to question, to yearn, and to suffer for his inability to understand. The result is at the root of man's alienation: "His exile from Eden is semiotically the banishment of the self-conscious self from its own world of signs."

There seems to be no escape from original sin, although Dr. Percy stresses boredom, confusion, and the pain of alienation as primary in firing man's concern for transcendence. He gives short shrift to the beckoning insistence of the beatific vision, although like it or not, that yen to be perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect, continues to beckon for many.

Dr. Percy is a serious man, happily not a solemn one, and if you are interested in how you got lost in the Cosmos—and who isn't—his "medicine" may well give



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By Stephan Hoeller

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William J. Welch is a New York physician and former President of the New York Heart Association. He is the author of What Happened in Between *(New York: George Braziller, 1972).*

The Oxford Book of Aphorisms
Chosen by John Gross. London: Oxford University Press, 1983. Pp. 383. $15.95.

The Oxford Book of Death
Chosen and Edited by D.J. Enright. London: Oxford University Press, 1983. Pp. 351. $19.95.

The Notebooks of Joseph Joubert
Edited and translated by Paul Auster. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983. Pp. 181. $12.50.

Reviewed by Philip Zaleski

Good aphorisms, like good medicine, are swift, specific, and tonic. Given these therapeutic qualities, it's no surprise that the term first appears in Western literature as the title of a collection of sayings by Hippocrates; his inaugural specimen serves in its insight, ingenuity, and skeletal clarity as a model for the millions that would follow: "Life is short, art is long, opportunity fleeting, experimenting dangerous, reasoning difficult."

The Oxford Book of Aphorisms, edited with panache by John Gross, offers some of the best work of Hippocrates's literary descendants. After a useful introduction explaining, among other things, the distinction between aphorisms and their siblings, maxims and proverbs, the book divides into fifty-eight somewhat arbitrary sections such as "Good & Evil" and "True & False"—the ubiquitous ampersand being, I suppose, a nod to the ideal aphorism's startling brevity. The shortest entry in the book could scarcely be shorter (assuming a one-word exclamation doesn't count, and that two words provide by their juxtaposition the necessary elements of tension and surprise): Joseph Roux's "Maximiste, Pessimiste"—a phrase which says a great deal about the skeptical outlook of most aphorists.

Gross's selection feels sturdy, on the whole. No argument can be found with his principal vocalists: Dr. Johnson (eighty-eight appearances), Nietzsche (fifty-five), the little-known but lustrous Marquis Vauvenargues (fifty-two). Pascal, Goethe, Emerson, and Chesterton also speak up vigorously and almost always hit the mark. But why does Gross not include a single word by, say, Plato or Lao-Tzu? Not through prejudice against the East (with six selections from the *Dhammapada*) or the classical West (Marcus Aurelius clears his throat twenty-two times). Among the moderns, his choices also baffle on occasion, with dozens of quotes from tendentious Elias Canetti and arch Michael Frayn, while an epigrammatist as original as Borges is left in the lurch. Especially unnourishing are the apothegms of extraliterary provenance; John Ford's "It is easier to get an actor to be a cowboy than to get a cowboy to be an actor" is representatively flat and trivial.

Much in Gross's enterprise is revealed by his first and last sections, identically entitled "Aphorists & Aphorisms." He opens with Andre Gide's "Everything has

been said before, but since nobody listens we have to keep going back and beginning all over again," splendidly echoed in a remark by Thoreau that closes the volume: "What the first philosopher taught the last will have to repeat." Aphorisms, as these examples suggest, are perennial, both in their appearance in every culture and in their penchant for recycling the *prima materia* of the intellect, those ideas that erupt in every age. How fascinating, for instance, to find the same concept variously expressed by Jew, Protestant, and Catholic of different epochs, the Talmud's blunt "God wants the heart" and Pascal's more spacious "It is the heart which perceives God, and not the reason" sandwiching Luther's unforgettable "Faith is under the left nipple"—the last with its conjunction of concrete and abstract elements providing the volatile mix that so often makes an aphorism come to life.

Yet even more often, two warring ideas each will be expressed with power. When aphorists discuss aphorisms, for instance, some will sing the merits of their work: "Good things, when short, are twice as good" (Gracián), while others will doubt their craft: "There are things which don't deserve to be said briefly" (Rostand). Both viewpoints seem valid. All aphorisms hold allegiance, however distantly, to that ancient dream of a single word or sentence that will explain the world. Yet this dream will never be realized, for no aphorism can contain all others. Unable to pin reality with a phrase, the relativity of human thought flourishes; men—as this volume demonstrates—will believe anything, cherish anything, attack anything. Read from cover to cover, *The Oxford Book of Aphorisms* becomes a huge, pan-historical, cacophonous choir. If the individual choristers sometimes sound too shrill or off-key, at best their words become events in our

"Essential for serious enthusiasts."
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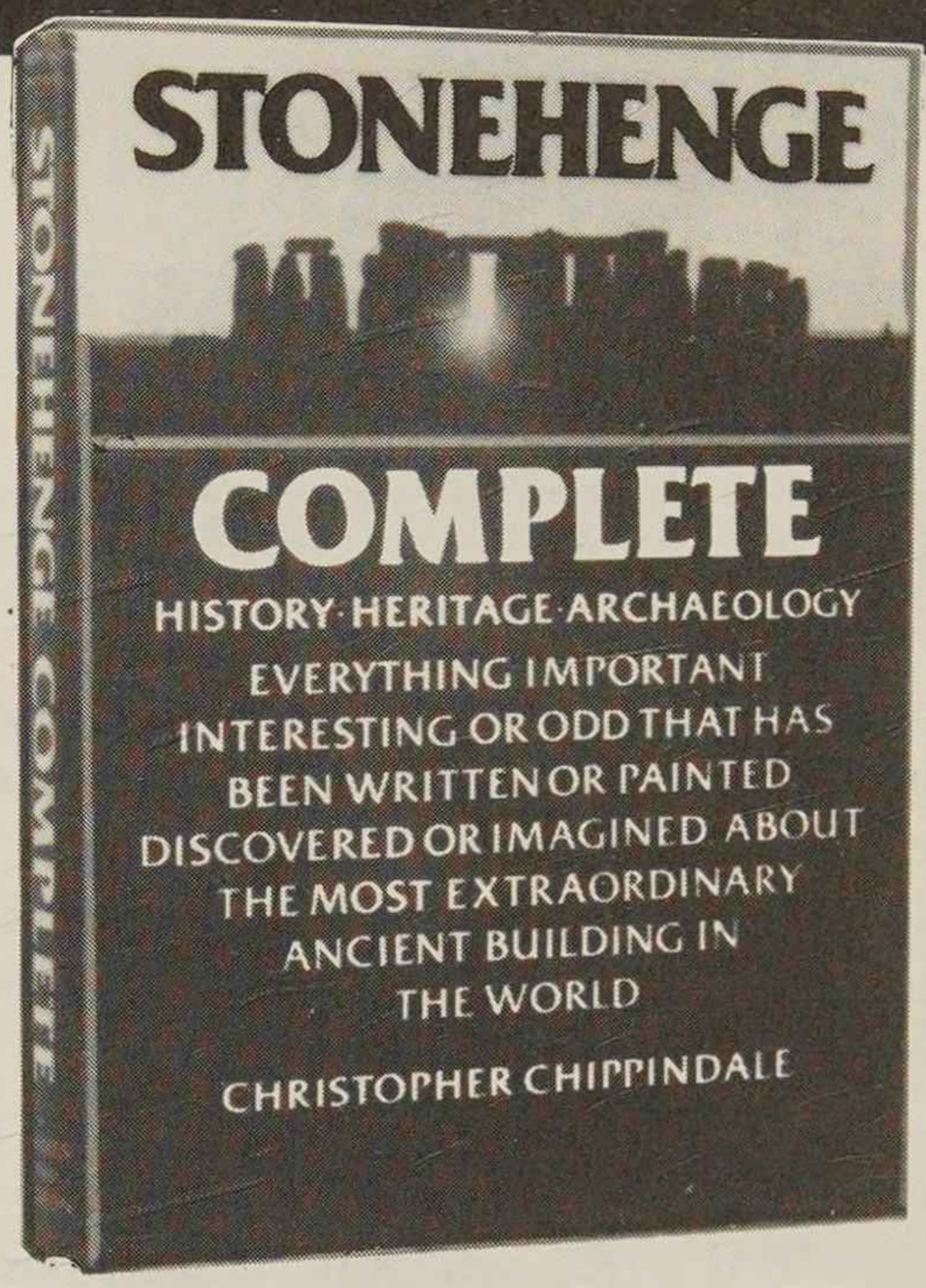

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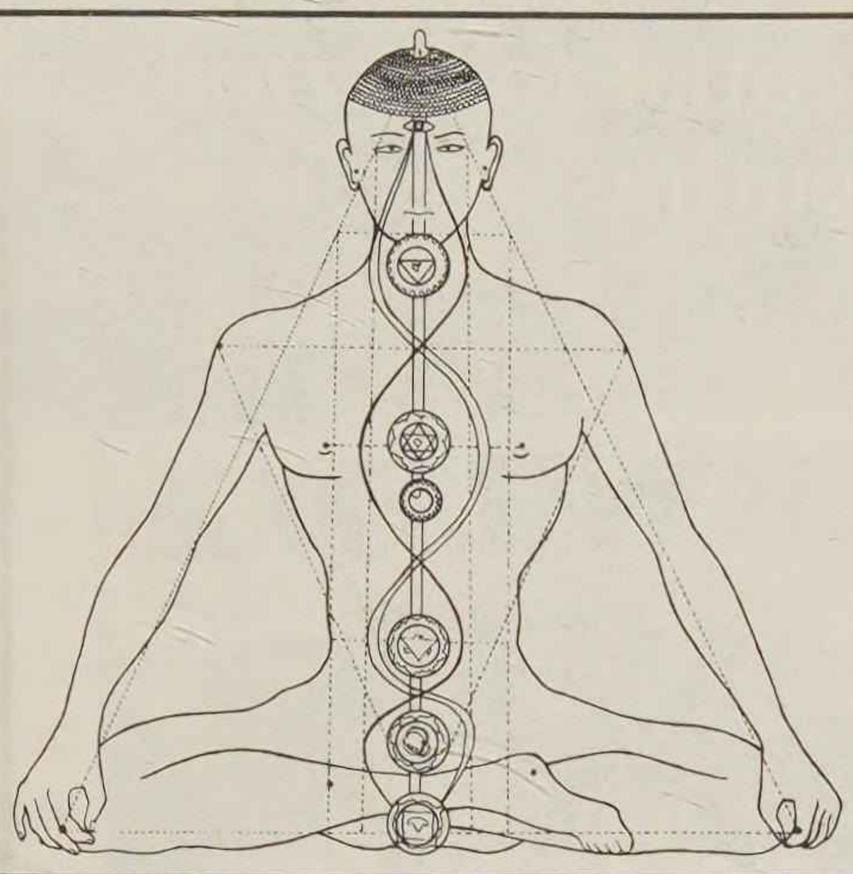

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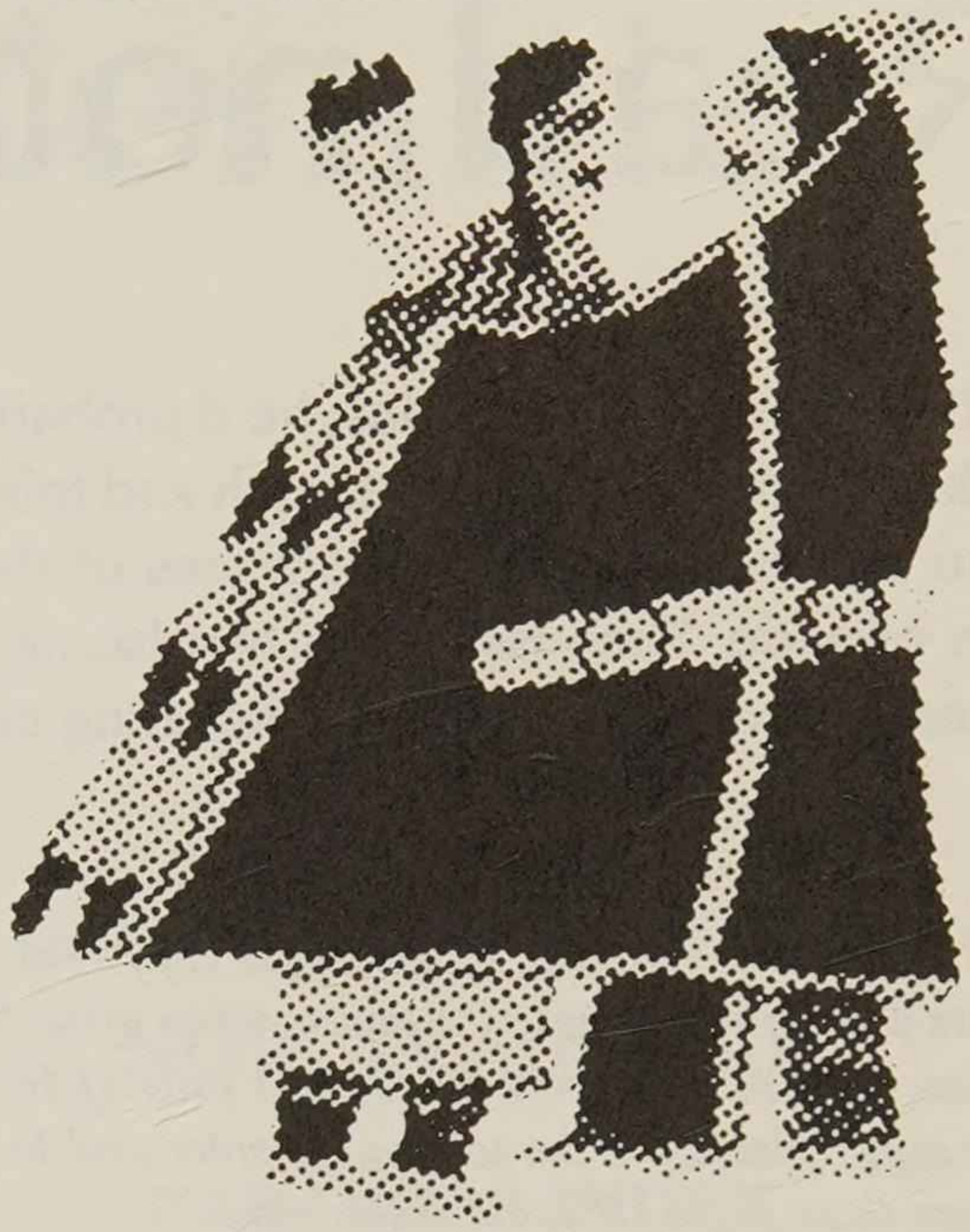
lives, to be remembered and repeated, one maxim fitted to one occasion, its opposite to the next. Context is all, and this is as it should be. As Melville puts it in the midst of this book: "Faith and philosophy are air; but events are brass."

The Oxford Book of Death is an anomaly in the Oxford series, which heretofore has restricted itself to the concreteness of creatures (there are volumes on vertebrates, wild flowers, ferns, etc.) and literary craft (Welsh verse, narrative verse, ballads). Suddenly we shift to a book about a state of being (or non-being). Now, any such volume runs the risk of violating Melville's dictum and falling into vaporous abstraction—a risk exacerbated in this case because, of course, none of the authors can write about death at first-hand. The paucity of our knowledge about death, and an ensuing looseness in discussing it, is pervasive; witness the circular definitions in the OED: "Death: the act or fact of dying, the end of life . . . ." Flip to "dying," and one finds "to lose life, cease to live, suffer death . . . ." A look at "life" yields "the condition or attribute of living or being alive; animate existence. Opposed to death." Editor D.J. Enright (whose anagram, J. Endright, seems too apposite to be believed), despite a Herculean effort of compilation, couldn't find his way off this definitional Moebius strip. Granted, he draws on journals, poems, novels, epitaphs, last words, children's rhymes, autobiographies, and more, to produce as industrious a selection as can be imagined. Granted, he covers topics as diverse as revenants, suicide, the hour of death, and the afterlife, and provides great fun for the reader who turns from Harold Owen's encounter in the Cameroons with the ghost of his deceased brother, Wilfred, to Philip Aries's description of a premature burial, to the last words of the last dodo, "Now I'm extinct." Yet no coherent view of death emerges, no message at all except that humans have always pondered this imponderable.

The selections nonetheless impress with their range and profundity. Everyone from Homer to Huxley chimes in, with enthusiasm and style. Death gives rise to paradox ("One short sleep past, we wake eternally, and death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die"—John Donne), riddle ("Why do dying people never shed tears"—Max Frisch), advice ("One should part from life as Ulysses parted from Nausicaa—blessing it rather than in love with it"—Nietzsche), flippancy ("I'm not afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens"—Woody Allen), truism (" . . . it is our knowledge that we have to die which makes us human"—Adam Smith), a range of emotions from morbidity ("At this grief my heart was utterly darkened; and whatever I beheld was death"—Augustine) to gratitude ("O death, we thank you for the light you cast on our ignorance"—Bossuet), and acute pathos, in the long excerpts from novels by Lampedusa, Mann, and others. It

Lakota Myth

By James R. Walker
Edited by Elaine A. Jahner



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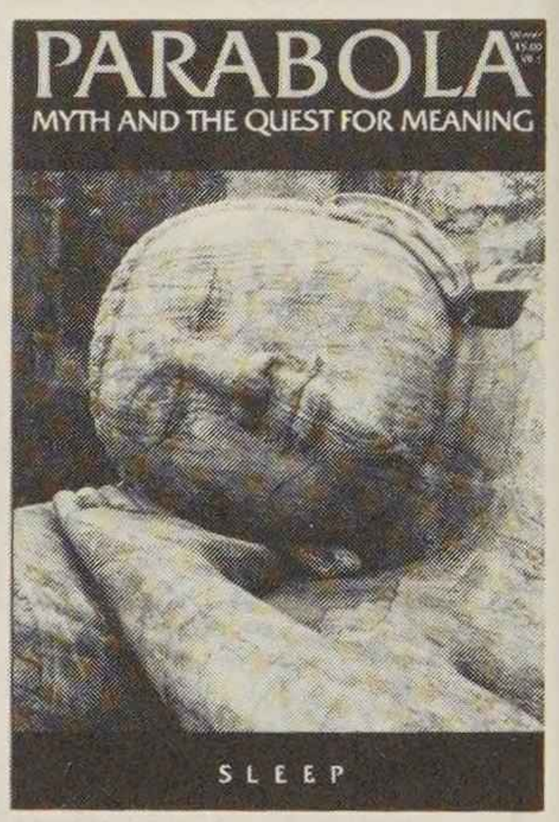

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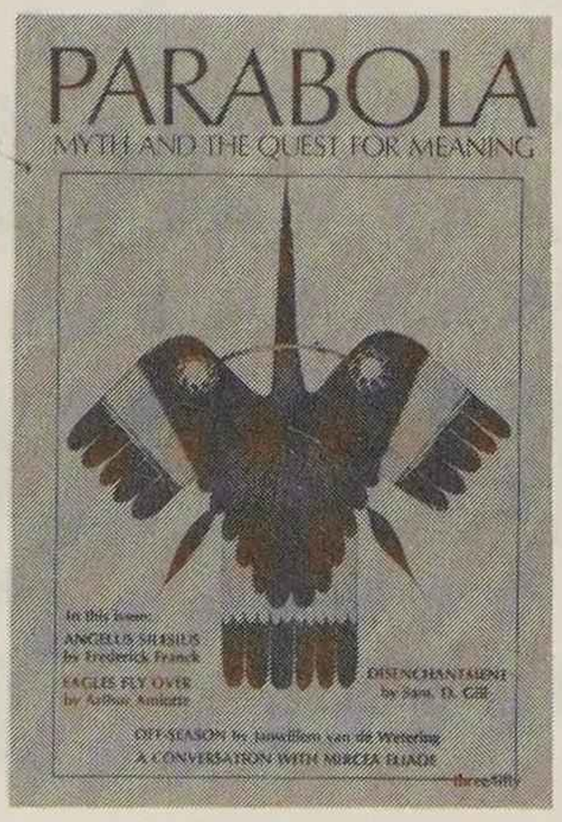

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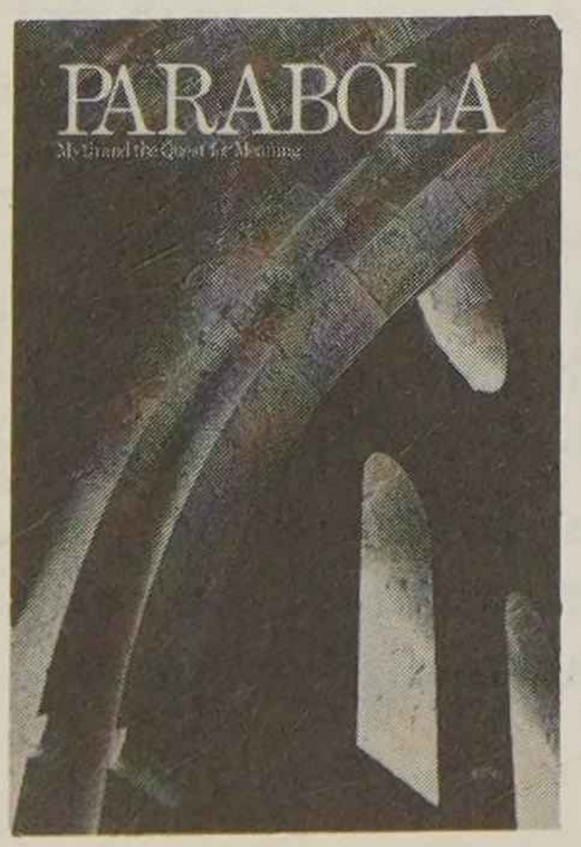

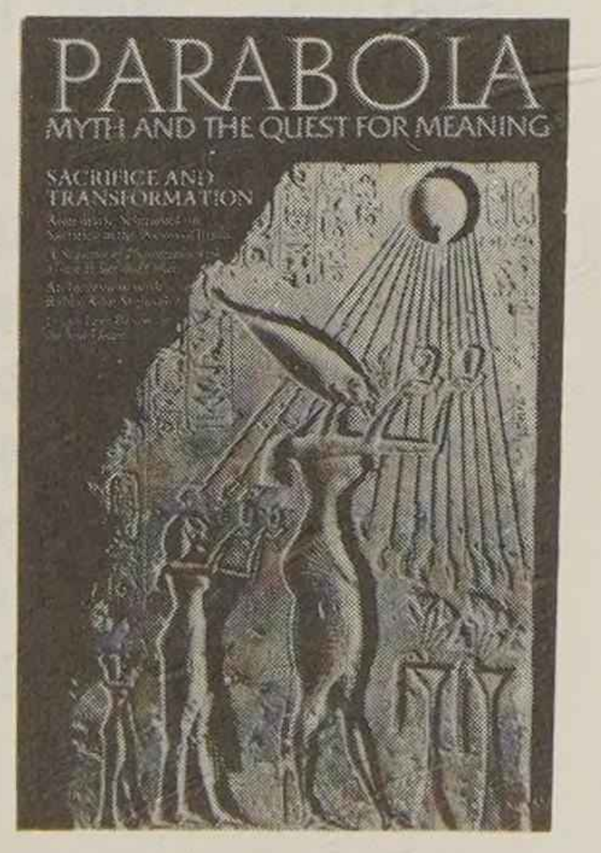

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seems, paradoxically, that men confronting death are spurred to greater life and creativity. Without intending it, Enright has proved to be as much an anthropologist as a literary compiler; one learns from this anthology far more of our responses to death than of death itself. Yet for all its eclecticism this volume carries with it a special flavor of truth, for it deals as best it can with an event whose claims on all of us are mysterious and binding.

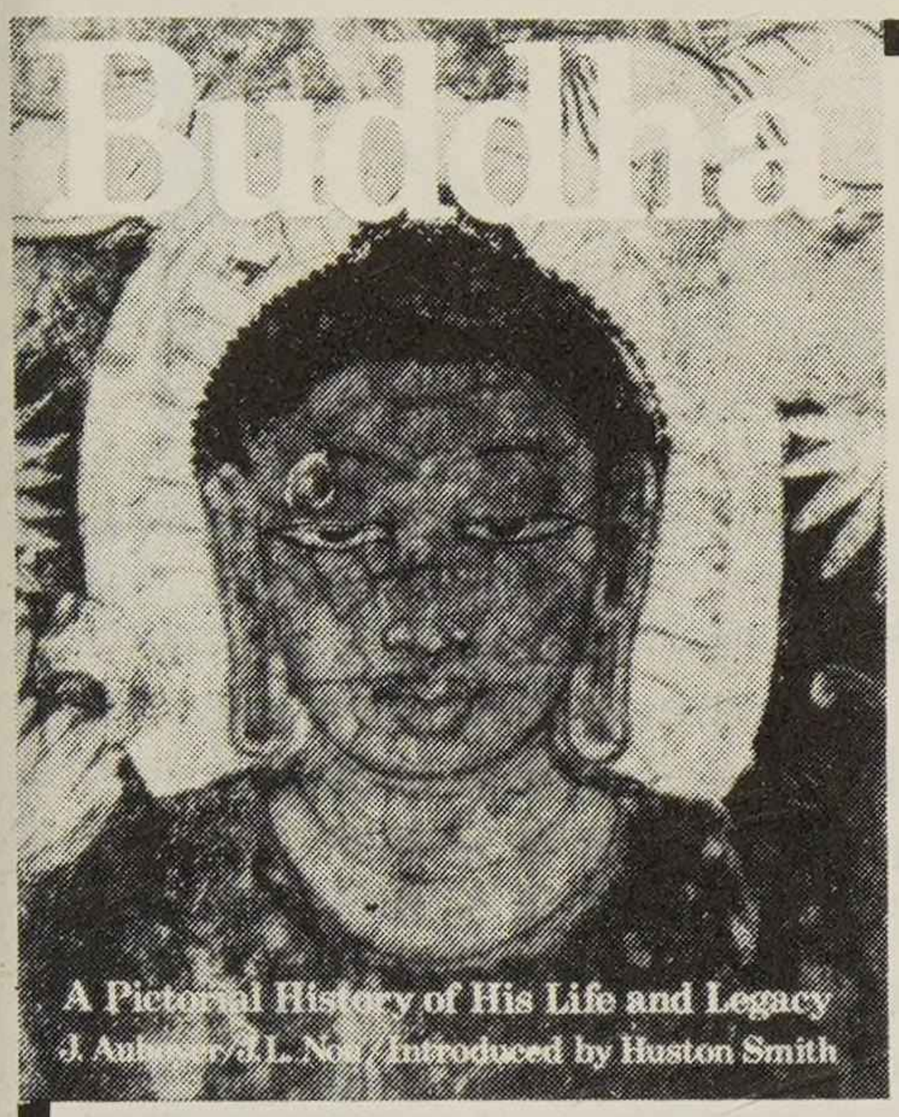
Joseph Joubert, an eighteenth-century French aristocrat who appears eighteen times in *The Oxford Book of Aphorisms*, receives a book of his own in *The Notebooks of Joseph Joubert*. He deserves it. These notebooks—actually but a tenth of Joubert's output—were written as *pensées* toward a series of works that were never completed. This reminds us of Pascal, but in Joubert's case it wasn't death that intervened, leaving behind the half-carved blocks of an uncompleted cathedral. As translator and editor Paul Auster points out, the notebooks themselves in time became Joubert's life work; this most unusual hanger-on in the salons of Parisian belles-lettres society assigned for himself the no less daunting task of pitching pup-tents on the unexplored sands of mystery.

The *Notebooks* disclose a man ill at ease with the reigning doctrines of the Enlightenment, a man born three hundred years too early or too late. Throughout his life, Joubert's major concern was the search for a harmonious life:

> In order to write perfectly, one must write and think in the same way a perfect man would write and think at the moment when all the faculties of his being were in perfect harmony. This situation would be possible in some state of soul in which all the passions were developed in all their force and to their full extent and combined in perfect equilibrium.

Joubert understood well the obstacles that the rationalists of his age had placed in the path of such a balanced life. His alienation from his colleagues was complete: "All these philosophers are no more than surgeons." He disposes of Locke, Newton, and Descartes in five paragraphs from an entry made in 1802, at about the same time that Blake was lambasting these thinkers from his studio across the Channel. Indeed, Joubert at times sounds uncannily like Blake: "In a grain of sand there is fire, water, air, and dust"—this predating by ten years Blake's "to see eternity in a grain of sand . . . ." However, Joubert's neo-Platonism appears absolute: "Numbers exist — for they exist in our mind,—and it exists"; "Truth exists in having the same idea about something that God has."

His understanding of science sounds remarkably modern. At one point, he seems to anticipate quantum physics: "Everything seems full to us; everything is empty; or, to be more exact, everything is hollow.—Everything is hollow; and the elements themselves are hollow. God alone is full." Yet unlike most contemporary scientists, Joubert finds in God the infrastructure of the cosmos. All comes from Him: "God's light goes to the stars and from the stars to us." Without God, science falters: "With the telescope, with the microscope, we have seen a great number of phenomena: and that is all." Knowledge without understanding is flour without yeast: "Plato. He is an author whose ideas cannot be understood until they have become our own." Only when the entire being is engaged does the search for truth become serious: "Everything is a game except what makes the soul better or



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worse." One wonders what contact Joubert had with esoteric or occult circles of his day; an occasional phrase ("the air itself is only the body of another, far more subtle air") hints at such a connection, but nothing beyond this very circumstantial evidence exists. It seems more likely that his notebooks are a measure of what can (and cannot) be achieved by one man, working alone within a hostile environment while keeping his eyes on heaven.

Paul Auster's outstanding translations catch perfectly Joubert's warm, liquid, trustworthy voice. The book's only flaw is a gaseous afterword by Maurice Blanchot, written in that peculiar French Academy style that says absolutely nothing at extraordinary length. Blanchot attempts to inflate (and by doing so, demotes) Joubert into a precursor of Mallarmé. One suspects that Joubert would have hated this epilogue, although he might not have admitted it. He had, apparently, a genius for friendship, although even here he kept his intellectual distance (of his companion Chateaubriand, who after Joubert's death published the first posthumous collection of his jottings, he notes: "We inhabit the same regions but we do not bring back the same curiosities"). A portrait of him on the book jacket shows a wide-open face, a long, honest nose, dreamy eyes, an enigmatic smile—a man bemused by his role in society and his time in history, a man who always kept part of himself in reserve. His notebooks were his autobiography, yet even there we meet not a particular man, but a universal mind filled with light. The purpose of autobiography has always been to disclose the truth or to disguise it forever. Joubert, in his mask as an Enlightenment moralist, did both: he disguised himself and disclosed the world.

Philip Zaleski is Executive Editor of PARABOLA.

Exploring India's Sacred Art: Selected Writings of Stella Kramrisch
Edited and with a biographical essay by Barbara Stoler Miller. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. Pp. *xviii* + 356. $37.50. Paper $14.50.

Reviewed by David M. Knipe

According to Stella Kramrisch, the process of Indian art is ultimately rooted in a unique concept of time, one that is almost spatial in expression,

> a notion of time that does not take its straight course from the past to the future, but seems to oscillate between two points . . . . Its movement proceeds on a stage . . . built up by imagination and reality. There it goes on without ever coming to a dead stop, exchanging and connecting one extreme with the other, a sort of pendulum, whose mechanism swings according to the ever varying impetus of life.

This was an early insight (1929), and her career since then has been that of skillful narrator to us of much that took place on that bipolar stage over the last three to five millennia. *Exploring India's Sacred Art* takes us virtually to every corner of the Indian subcontinent and from works of the third-millennium B.C. Indus Valley to rural arts of the twentieth century. Included in this selection are sixteen articles published between 1921 and 1968, covering almost a half-century but by no means inclusive of Kramrisch's full creative span (*The Presence of Śiva, Manifestations of Shiva*, and a reprint of *Indian Sculpture* were all published in 1981).

For me this was a chance to reread classic essays on classic sites such as Ajanta, Elephanta, Mathura, Sarnath, and Khajuraho, to be pleased by Barbara Miller's selection and arrangement of familiar pieces on the Vedic god Pūṣan, the marks of the universal Buddha, and the tribal and village ritual arts of "unknown India," and to appreciate essays I had overlooked, such as those on traditions of the craftsman, and the Viṣṇudharmottara section on painting. Rather than follow a chronological schedule, the essays are parceled under five rubrics: patron and practice, unknown India, the subtle body, image and temple, and theory and practice of painting. The net effect of reading them through is to locate Kramrisch's strong and homogeneous vision.

Claude Lévi-Strauss once noted that the primitive mind allows no separation of art and reality, whereas the West accords its art the status of a national park. No park ranger is Kramrisch, who, although museum curator and builder of personal and private collections for much of her life, steadfastly refuses to allow Indian art to be fenced or glassed in and thus interpreted apart from Indian life: "Indian art is a part of nature itself and is nothing else but man's ratification of his own thankful reality, as a part of nature." Objects are there, surely, to be catalogued, photographed, and described: the great temple complexes floating on sultry plains, sculptural miracles in stone and bronze, paintings on the walls of deeply hewn caves, patchwork textiles stitched from rags, floor paintings of rice powder meant to be walked on, horses of terracotta left to crumble beneath trees, masks of deities in glowing brass. What distinguishes every essay, however, beyond the wealth of scholarly insight and descriptive detail, is the quest, equally scholarly, to attain that vastly more difficult depiction of the unseen, of the spirit in matter, of the religious experience that infuses with life this limitless display of objects.

Always at the core of her exposition is a sensitivity for the essential mystery, the interplay between manifestation and nonmanifestation, the seen and the unseen,

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inner and outer experience; here is the key to Indian thought, performance, art. For example, no one has so brilliantly interpreted the complex integrity of Hindu temple architecture and symbolism. Rather than permit us to be swamped by historical and architectonic detail, Kramrisch constructs a basic raft for us of descriptions, textual references, plans, and photographs, then breathes wind on the sail with a simple yet necessary observation, so that we are moved:

> Such a buttress [to a temple c. 600 A.D] is technically called a ratha, which also means "chariot." Like a chariot, the wall comes outward from its own midst, and it carries in a niche like a rider in a chariot, an image of the deity . . . [The] niche is ghanadvāra, or solid-mass door; that is, a door which is no door. No one can enter through it, but the deity inside the temple has become manifest on the wall through it.

Her language is vivid and provocative, even when relating well-known themes:

> An unhewn stone marks the presence of deity. It is daubed with red color, which holds the memory of blood sacrifices. The stone is permanent. It outlasts the perishable, ever renewed offerings made by art. The stone is outside the temporality of man-shaped things.

Connections made across the millennia are invariably arresting:

> In the Ṛg Veda and the Upaniṣads . . . the cosmos, the ordered universe, is one continuous fabric . . . Whether as cover for the body or as ground for a painting, the uncut fabric is a symbol of totality and integrity . . . . Inversely, rags are offered to the gods . . . . The rags are given a new wholeness. They clothe holiness.

At times the pace of these connections is vertiginous, when we sail from first-millennium A.D. south India to third-millennium B.C. Indus Valley to first-millennium B.C. north India in a sweeping evocation of a single theme and its unity of vision. But above all, Kramrisch is a storyteller in the

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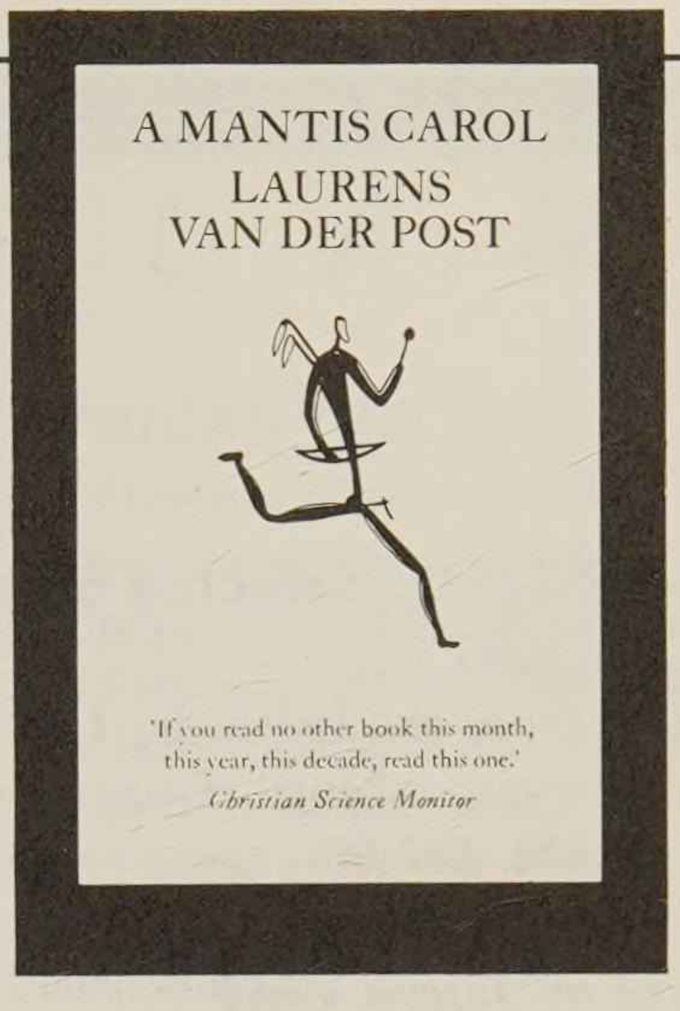

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The book is enhanced by Barbara Miller's warmly instructive biographical essay, sprinkled with quotes from additional Kramrischiana, and a bibliography compiled by Joseph M. Dye III. Ten of the sixteen articles include plates and figures, with a total of 183 illustrations placed, to the delight of the reader, precisely in context.

Readers of the essay, "Emblems of the Universal Being," which discusses four of the non-anthropomorphic signs of the Buddha image, may lament here the absence of plates. But foremost of these marks is the uṣṇīṣa, the threshold on top of the skull, "an emblem [that] refers to the super-sensible. It has no prototype in nature. Even on the image: 'it is not visible to the eyes of ordinary beings,' and though its shape is apprehended, its meaning may not be seen." Thus a photograph would not enable us to see the invisible object, the symbol sans symbolism. As observed by Norman O. Brown in *Love's Body*, "freedom in the use of symbolism is the capacity to experience loss," object-loss. "Blessed are they that mourn." And blessed are the recitants, Stella Kramrisch first of all.

David M. Knipe is Professor of South Asian Studies and Religious Studies at the University of Washington.

Restless Nights: Selected Stories of Dino Buzzati
Translated from the Italian by Lawrence Venuti. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983. Pp. *xv* + 122. $12.00.

Reviewed by Joseph Cary

Readers of PARABOLA over the past two years will be familiar with the name of Dino Buzzati since stories of his have been deemed pertinent in issues devoted to demons, the dream of progress, and animals. Certainly "the Quest for Meaning" is as fair a phrase as any to designate his obsessive story line, or myth. For his protagonists, though not for his readers, the quest is seldom a rewarding one.

Restless Nights is a chronologically arranged selection of twenty-three stories published in Italy between 1942 and 1971 (Buzzati died in 1972 at the age of sixty-five), skillfully translated by Lawrence Venuti, who also contributes a helpful introduction. The Eliotesque rendering—"restless nights in one-night cheap hotels"—of the Italian *Le notti difficili* conjures the proper atmospheric mix of bad dream and insomnia out of which these imaginings take wing, although their harsh lucidity and sardonic humor, properties too of troubled nightlife, are also brought safely over to our side of the language barrier. The single howler I have found occurs in the last paragraph of the last story ("The Bogeyman," first published in English in this magazine), where the narrator grieves for the gradual extinction of the fabulous from our lives: "Hurry, fly away, superstitious fantasies. The civil world, eager to exterminate you, follows in hot pursuit. It will never let you rest." But *superstite* is an adjective meaning "surviving," not "superstitious"; the fantasies addressed are those which have somehow managed to stay alive, furtively, beyond the pale, in what Buzzati considers our clinical and positivistic times. The superstitious ones, alas, are ourselves, who believe we are more real.

Fantasy, in any case, is a key term for any consideration of Buzzati's work. "Things that do not exist, imagined by man for poetic ends" is his own broad formulation of his imaginative terrain, and here is a partial listing of such things drawn from the book at hand: an interminable exploration of a borderless kingdom, an apocalypse of the earth's last hours, how the devil tricked Einstein into inventing the nuclear age, a Martian response to Genesis and the New Testament, entry problems at a walled city that may or may not be the home of happiness, fate as an innocently ironical and pursuing monster ("The Colomber," published in PARABOLA, Vol. VIII, No. 2), a husband's embarrassment over a wife with wings, how to kill the bogeyman.

Buzzati has variously defined his inspiration as "a precise idea," "a *quid* that enters my head," and "a little flame that flares in me." Some of these tales seem prompted by aspects of linguistic perception—as in taking a metaphor literally (life is a fall, love is a storm; Dante also used this last in the fifth canto of *Inferno*) or in registering the actual sound of syllables—the name of the pursuant colomber, for instance, was apparently suggested by an American's mispronunciation of "kilometer." But whatever the provenance of his ideas, Buzzati's transformation of them into stories is remarkably, dependably precise and circumstantial. The look of Doomsday, the logistics of Babel, the gradual fledging of wings on a woman's shoulder blades, are made real through the choice of significant detail and the economy and concreteness

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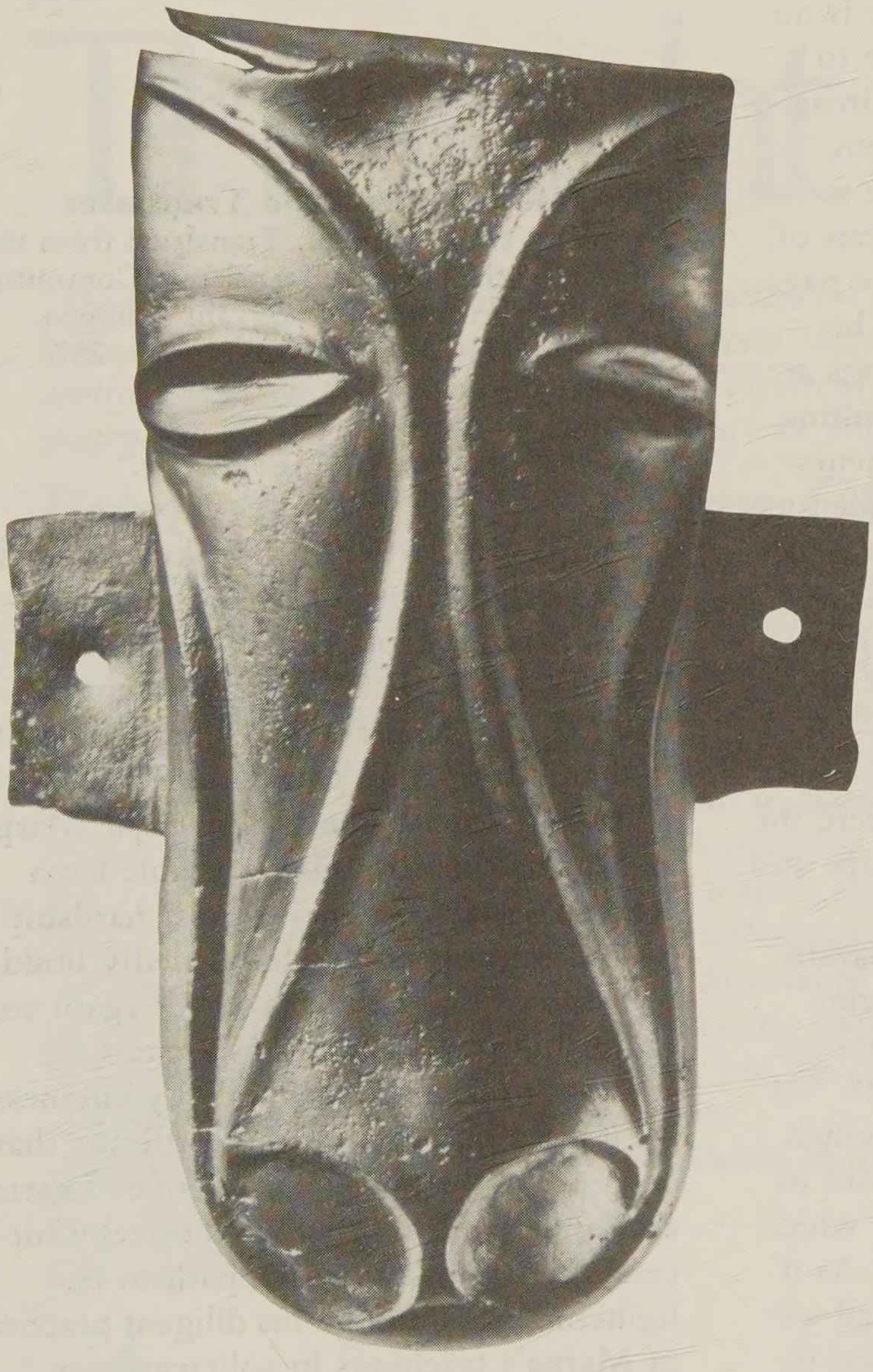

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(ably reflected in his translator's English) of his language. Venuti believes that Buzzati's long career as editor and correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera* of Milan may at least partially account for such gifts. It may be so. Certainly there is no doubt that he was consistently able to create what Marianne Moore calls "imaginary gardens with real toads in them."

His main limitation seems to me to be connected with the spatial restrictions of the *terza pagina*, the third or culture page, of an Italian daily, where many of his stories first appeared. For his endings are sometimes mechanical or slick, resulting in what used to be called the O. Henry effect, where a powerfully posed dilemma is polished off with a punch line or a facile irony. (The denouement of "The Colomber" is an instance of the latter.) My own feeling is that Buzzati's talents are most fully exhibited in his novels—*The Tartar Steppe* and *A Love Affair* are the best and have both been translated—where the story is allowed to find its own shape and tempo.

In a short essay of the 1950s, Buzzatti wrote of a rare sort of individual who, while leading an outwardly conventional existence, inwardly lives *come se*, as if. "As if there were a war, for example, which there isn't. As if great news were about to arrive . . . As if the storm outside, which no one mentions, were worsening. As if one of those present had to leave, shall we say? for the moon, though discussion is taboo and it is never alluded to. As if love were here." The imagination of Buzzati gives off something of this kind of tension, expectation, and anguish. It is attentive to the reality of the contingent, of the *come se*.

Restless Nights is published by the North Point Press of San Francisco, and is as elegantly produced as one would expect from that source. An oil painting, looking like an early De Chirico but actually an early Buzzati, is reproduced on the cover.

Joseph Cary is an Italophile who teaches English at the University of Connecticut.

The Life of Marpa the Translator
By Tsang Nyön Heruka. Translated from the Tibetan by the Nālandā Translation Committee under the direction of Chögyam Trungpa. Boulder: Prajna Press, 1982. Pp. *i* + 267. $10.00.

Reviewed by Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

Marpa (1012-1097) is best known in the West as the teacher of Milarepa, the national hero of Tibet. In Evan-Wentz's *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, Lhalungpa's *The Life of Milarepa* (a better translation of the same text), and Garma Chang's *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, Marpa appears as the ostensibly irascible lama who subjects Milarepa to great hardship by causing him to single-handedly build, tear down, and rebuild a tower again and again. Ultimately, Marpa's actions are revealed to be motivated only by kindness, for it is through undergoing suffering that Milarepa is able to rid himself of evil karma accumulated in his youth and thereby successfully follow the quick path to enlightenment. Through his diligent practice of Marpa's teachings in solitary caves throughout Tibet, Milarepa eventually achieves the inconceivable state of Buddhahood in one lifetime.

The Life of Marpa the Translator is a translation from Tibetan of a spiritual biography (*rnam thar*) of Marpa written by Tsang Nyön Heruka (1452-1507). This is the first complete translation of the text into a Western language; the task has been

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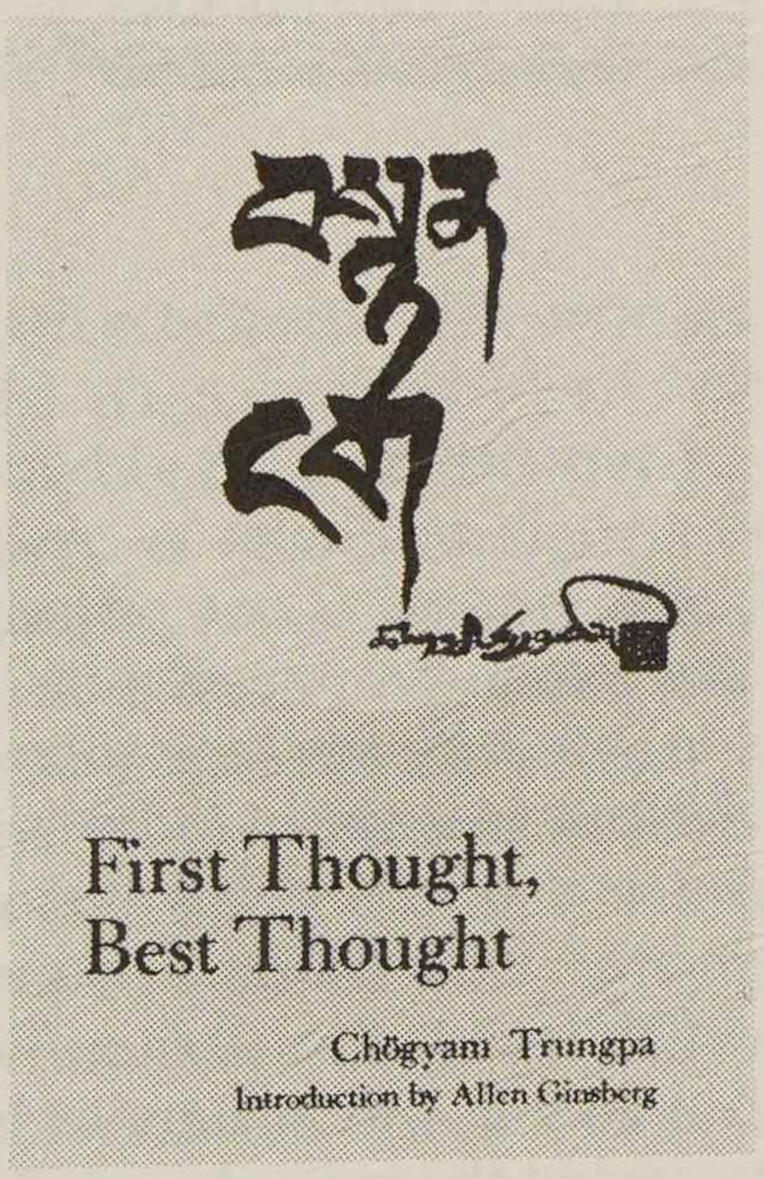

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undertaken by the Nālandā Translation Committee, a group of twenty Tibetans and Americans under the direction of Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche. Trungpa has revived the tradition of the royal translation academies of ancient Tibet, where Indian and Tibetan scholars would collaborate in the translation of Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan. The committee approach, cumbersome as it may seem, has worked well in the case of this rendering of Tibetan into English, for *The Life of Marpa the Translator* is a careful, accurate, and readable translation of a sometimes difficult text. In addition to the translation of the biography, the volume includes a useful introduction which summarizes the events of Marpa's life and provides an overview of the Vajrayāna tradition of which he was an exponent. The translators have opted not to translate a large number of Sanskrit technical terms (too many, I feel). They do, however, provide a glossary notable both for its length and the number of entries. There is also a list of texts translated by Marpa.

Marpa is renowned in Tibet as both a scholar and a yogin and holds an exalted place in Tibetan history as one of the key figures in the second propagation of Buddhism. At an early age he resolved to make the difficult journey to India to retrieve scriptures and receive instruction from the great tantric masters. His biography tells of his study of Sanskrit in Tibet, his three-year stay in Kathmandu to become acclimated to the Indian heat (a luxury the Tibetans did not enjoy in 1959), and his arduous travels through the mountains and plains, deserts and jungles in search of his teacher Nāropa. In all, Marpa made three trips to India over the course of his life, spending a total of twenty-one years there. He brought back many texts and oral transmissions which have been of essential importance to Tibetan Buddhism in general and his own Kagyü order in particular.

RESTLESS NIGHTS

Selected Stories of Dino Buzzati

Translated by Lawrence Venuti

"... whimsical, parabolic, allegorical, marvelous pieces ... Buzzati has been called Kafkaesque and existential. But above all he is a great storyteller, mostly of tall tales and fairy tales, at home in the world of fantasy."—Library Journal

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Two elements in the biography may vex the Western reader. The first is Marpa's obsession with acquiring large quantities of gold before each of his trips to India. He says, "Without offerings, it is impossible to fill one's mind completely with the dharma." The reader's suspicion of a mercenary character in the Indian gurus (at least of that age!) is assuaged, however, by an incident during the third visit when, after a long and difficult search to see his teacher one last time, Marpa finally meets him and insists that he accept a mandala of gold:

As Marpa insisted again and again, Nāropa said, "In that case, may this be an offering to the guru and the three jewels," and he threw all the gold into the forest. Although joyful at meeting the guru, Marpa recalled with what hardship he had gathered the gold in Tibet and felt great loss. Nāropa beckoned with his hands, joined his palms, and then opened them and returned the gold—complete and unspoiled—saying, "If you feel a loss, here it is again. I don't need gold. If I needed it, all this land is gold." He struck his foot on the earth and the ground turned to gold.

A second difficulty for the reader unfamiliar with the Tibetan style is that Marpa seems constantly to be bursting into song. The song (*doha*) was a common form of teaching in Indian Vajrayāna Buddhism, and the tradition was carried by Marpa to Tibet, where it became an important genre of Kagyü literature. The song is a spontaneous expression of the spiritual experience of the teacher and as such has a potent capacity to communicate the nature of reality to the listener or reader. A principal purpose of the spiritual biography in the Tibetan tradition is to present the teachings of the master as well as to recount the events of his life. Thus, that Marpa sings again and again of the fundamentally pure nature of the mind suggests that this is something that he perceived himself, and which he deemed

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worthy of repeated expression to others.

The Life of Marpa the Translator is perhaps most important for the way in which it illustrates the principles of Vajrayāna Buddhism in the life of one man. A vajra is a diamond, the indestructible jewel. The Vajra Vehicle is thus the path of the immutable union of method and wisdom, of bliss and emptiness. It is the vehicle which brings all activities to the path, the vehicle of the integration and transformation of all experiences into expressions of ultimate reality. Thus, although Marpa says that knowledge of reality is beyond words, "like a dream dreamt by a mute," still he sings the songs of realization. Although he learned early that the mind naturally rests in a state of purity, he made great efforts to return to India for further teachings, to translate texts, and to teach his students. Despite the ultimately nondual and simple nature of reality, Marpa's life illustrates repeatedly the importance of initiation, of the bond between teacher and student, of ritual, of visualization, and of offering feasts of celebration. Although one reality pervades all phenomena, Marpa did not content himself with merely learning one way of coming to know that reality, but sought initiations and oral instructions for many tantras from many teachers.

Marpa was a man who embodied the Tibetan proverb, "Transform your mind but keep your appearance ordinary." He lived as a layman with a wife and family and prospered in business and farming. He recognized the dreamlike nature of the world but still could grieve at the death of his favorite son and then go on to use the occasion to teach his wife about impermanence and karma:

> In general, it is characteristic of all composite things
> That ultimately they are never permanent.
> In particular, the connection and relationship
> Between ourselves and Tarma Dode have ended.
> This is our karma about which nothing can be done.
> O Dagmema, do not grieve.
> O Dagmema, clear away your grief for your son.

At a time when many Americans are engaged in the vast enterprise of transmitting Buddhism to the West through translation, study, and practice, the publication of *The Life of Marpa the Translator* is an auspicious event—for this is the story of the great hardship, effort, perseverance, and eventual success of one who sought to bring Buddhism to his own country, the snowy land of Tibet.

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CREDITS

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