PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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DEC 2 1 1976

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A Conversation with William Irwin Thompson
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FOCUS

With this, our fourth issue, *Parabola* completes its first volume and the cycle of its first year. Perhaps a glance backward now will help to verify the steps we seem to see ahead, in pursuit of the way on which we set out last January. Then, when our first FOCUS appeared, we stated our belief that our chief human responsibility, to whatever purpose it was that placed us on earth, is to solve the mystery of what we are. So we dedicated our first issue to the Hero, who is Everyman's potential, and his quest—whether we call its aim Paradise, salvation, immortality, or the discovery of his own innermost being. We invoked superhuman help to guide this search: the "instrument of knowledge" that is symbolism, and the myths' teaching of "the imitation of the gods" which Eliade tells us is our only possibility of becoming men. This "magic" was the subject of our spring issue, and in the summer we looked at the special magic of initiation, both as rite and as mode of training, which ends one stage of the process and opens the possibility of another. From there we have been led to think about all those magical doors which we call ritual and rites of passage, and how, when they are approached open-eyed by the seeking hero, they become the paradigm of mythological action.

It is significant that the word *rite* comes from the same root as *art* and *order*. Like all real art, like the movements of sacred dances, ritual provides order, a pattern, a channel through which the energy of an event or a series of events can flow in an evolutionary process toward a larger meaning, or a new stage or level of life. It offers us ways in which our transitions may be illuminated, helped to move up to consciousness instead of falling into accident and chaos: made to *make sense*. It is a ladder or a bridge, like that of the Noh theater's stage, marking the slow and exact steps of a passage from one world to another, between our ordinary daily lives and another dimension of meaning which surrounds us and yet is a "mystery" because our "eyes are closed" to it (*mystery* < *muein*, to close the eyes or mouth.)

But the bridge itself is not a mystery and the eyes must not be closed. This passage has strict requirements. What combination of long discipline and inspiration, what marriage of service and grace, produces the Noh actor, or indeed any real artist? The hero may be you or me, but only at the highest reaches of our most impossible possibility. The Symplegades were never traversed by accident or in a dream, but only in the most active instant of a perfect and present attention. The rite of passage demands our total participation.

What happens, then, when there is no such participation? For it is not that we can choose to approach myth and ritual consciously or not at all; we have no choice, we cannot escape them. We live in them, as P.L. Travers said in our first issue, as an egg yolk in its albumen. If we are not related to them consciously and intentionally, then perforce our involvement is unconscious and accidental. And as myth and ritual are "magic" of a very high potency, accidental involvement is as dangerous as wandering absent-mindedly between the Clashing Rocks.

Paul Jordan-Smith has pointed out in this issue that when we misuse myths we turn their force against us, and they "degenerate into stories which support the culture against the individual rather than nurture the soul in its quest for Paradise." The same can be said about the enactment of myth which is ritual. Like all living processes, if it does not help us up it will pull us down.

What have we done to our rites, and what are they doing to us? How rarely, among us, is a man's death that Rite of Pas-

sage charted in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, and which we celebrate here in the photographic sequence dedicated to Minor White by two of those who were fortunate enough to share with him the majesty of his final days. How much more commonly do we agree to participate in the terrible clinical ritual of tubes, drugs and needles, followed by the lugubrious ceremonies of the "funeral parlor." Unrecognized rituals, James Wolfe shows us, molding our political life, push its processes further and further from our real needs and bring out, instead of considered judgement, all our tribal atavisms. Even the recognized rituals of our religious and civil celebrations have become at best "superstitions," for nothing "stands out" or remains of their real meaning but the outer forms. The Easter bunny has replaced the risen Christ; Christmas, extraordinary symbol of the birth of a possibility, has become first and foremost a frantic shopping spree, and Thanksgiving a day of over-indulgence rather than of gratitude and re-evaluation.

We end our first year more clearly convinced than when we began that all that can save us is to return to the underlying meaning, to turn to myth and symbol in the spirit of quest: like don Juan's warrior, "looking, looking, breathlessly," trying only to *see*, knowing ourselves on the brink of doom but not doubting our character of potential hero: "wide awake, with fear, with respect and with absolute confidence."

A great Lakota medicine man told us recently: "There is a place where the impossible becomes possible. But one must see and fully trust." And this means facing oneself as mercilessly as Quetzalcoatl and taking a risk as great as Jason's.

D. M. Dooling

Publisher: **D. M. Dooling**

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PARABOLA is published quarterly by Tamarack Press: Fall, Winter, Spri Summer. This is Volume I, Issue 4 for Fa 1976.

Single Issue: $3.50. By subscription: $12 ye $22 for 2 years, $32 for 3. Postage for out territorial U.S.: add $2.50 for surface rates, $ for air; please specify when ordering.

Correspondence regarding manuscripts, ar proposals, and permissions should be addre to the Editors. Two copies of each manusc accompanied by return postage, are to be Upon request, the Editors will furnish aut with editorial guidelines.

Address all correspondence to: PARABOLA East 61 Street, New York, N.Y. 10021 for ch of address notices, subscriptions, and all business.

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Cover by Frederick Franck

Fall 19

The drawing of Noh on the cover, as well as the ones accompanying article on the classical drama of Japan are not "illustrations." They are fact the nucleus around which the words crystallized; for drawi is my way of seeing, and my eye fell in love with Noh at first These drawings were all done during performances in the Noh theatr of Kyoto and the one that is part of the Comoto (Shinto) sanctuar Kamtoka. frederick franck

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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FULL CIRCLE:
A READERS' FORUM

I would like to respond to Joris Heise's letter in the last issue of *Parabola*, if only to point out a contradiction in it: while he praises comic books because they reflect ancient mythic themes, in the same breath he denies the relevance of the very myths which give the comics their supposed value. It seems to me that if even our comic books—like our films and novels—draw from mythological sources or reveal parallels to ancient myths, that is all the more indication of the profound relevance of these myths to us today. It remains for us to try and find out how and why that is so, what it is that remains alive enough and true enough to reappear again and again throughout history and despite cultural differences.

It is also true that while myths survive in contemporary culture, what we have today in the West, as Eliade points out, are "degraded and perverted" vestiges of myths. The myths survive in popular art and entertainment, and they cannot be eradicated. But that is more a sign of the hardiness, the universality of myth—indeed, a sign of its rootedness in truth—than a testimony to the glory of pop-culture.

Anne Wilson
Syracuse, N.Y.

The exchange between Joris Heise and Anne Wilson, as well as some of the discussion in this issue between William Irwin Thompson and P.L. Travers, seems to open up a fruitful line of questioning. Do new myths really emerge in history, or are all genuine myths variations on primordial themes? How does one differentiate between myths and fictions? What conditions would have to obtain for a new mythology to appear? Can individuals or groups really create myths? It would be good to hear from Parabola *readers on these issues.–Editor.*

I would like to offer some alternative reflections on the Judaeo-Christian myth and recent events in the Roman Catholic Church to those offered by Joseph Campbell in the Spring 1976 issue.

During the decades since Professor Campbe ceased to be a participating member of the Church, I believe we have, as a community, u dergone an experience very like that describ by Thomas Moore in his article on Narcissus Primarily through the researches of biblical a liturgical scholars, the Church has acquired new self-knowledge. We have seen a new se image; we recognize it as our own, and yet kn that we are separated from it. Consequently, have been, and are still, undergoing the dyi through which alone we can hope to gain uni with that image.

The liturgy that Professor Campbell recalls "beautiful, powerful ritual" characterized b "clean lines" was in fact encumbered by ce turies of accretions, accumulated from passi cultures with little or no understanding of t original myth. In our efforts to reappropriate myth and make our ritual an enactment of it, have indeed frequently lost hold of our ritua sense and become unduly rational (explanato I wish to call this situation to the attention of y readers not, I hope, out of parochial defensi ness, but because I believe the struggle of th Christian churches today provides an illustrat of a contemporary community seeking to di cover in its ritual the heartland of its myth.

I believe Professor Campbell is correct th Judaeo-Christianity (I have not the knowledg speak of Islam) is a religion of relationship. I such because it values the individual. I hav heard Professor Campbell say in lecture tha the coincidence of opposites, one does not s mit to the other, but to the relationship. Fo Judaeo-Christianity, God is always Other. But relationship in question is not simply of the in vidual to God, but of a community of person one another. That is why the myth is grounde historical event: not out of religious naiveté out of its primary meaning. Judaeo-Christia seeks not simply the transformation of the i vidual but the transformation of society, of relationships of persons one to another. Th kingdom of God is within, but more specific for Judaeo-Christianity, it is *among* you, in midst of the assembly, between you, neighb

neighbor. In other words, God is love.

And so in current efforts at liturgical reform, emphasis is being given to rites of initiation. The new rite of penance focuses on reconciliation within the community, with God, with world. And in our primary rite, the liturgy of the eucharist, the priest faces the people and (as reform progresses) shares a single loaf and a single cup among all, whose only status there is brother and sister. Christianity does provide a "Thou art That" experience, but primarily to the community: "This is my Body" and "Thou art That."

I have long been an admirer of Joseph Campbell and continue to be one. He always provides stimulus, and for that I thank him.

Melissa K. Wood
Editor, *Liturgy*
Washington, D.C.

The third issue is a good one as a whole. I find the publisher's FOCUS forceful and clear, but it will raise opposition—perhaps I should say "and" rather than "but." The over-confidence in power and the forward thrust are propelled to a very high point by hidden anguish and fear. Who knows if a balance will be reached from which something new could proceed?

Amiotte's article, or direct rendering, is as extraordinary as his doubt: "I do not fully understand. . ." There are races that can keep silent for centuries; that is really a shock, as is the simplicity.

My article about Sechin I hope will raise some questions. The main photos are excellent, and plates 4, 5, and 6 make an impressive balance. The impression is transmitted of a rude, neolithic but deeply intelligent art.

"She blooms because she blooms, /the rose. . . /Does not ask why, /nor does she preen herself /to catch my eye" reminds me of Vallejo: "El agua corre para correr, no para hacernos lindos." It is strange that Silesius is not much read; his thought is so limpid.

Best wishes for soaring *Parabola*–where did you get that beautiful cover image of the eagle?

Fernando Llosa Porras
Lima, Peru

The cover is Carole Kowalchuk's rendering of a traditional Kiowa design.

The meat of Estess' essay on Heller's *Something Happened*, in the Spring issue, is his comment: "We cannot but feel at the end of this lengthy recital of Bob Slocum's miseries that he, even if given that second chance he longs for, would live it all over again in much the same way." The tacit condition being, of course, that he would go back to the beginning knowing what he knows *now*. Since we're being magical anyhow, that would be only fair.

Such a hypothetical crystal ball is no free pass to wisdom. It is, in fact, an impediment. What is more, it need not be hypothetical. In P.D. Ouspensky's singular novel, written a few decades ago, *The Strange Life of Ivan Osokin*, the reader is asked to examine under a magnifying glass that important corollary condition, "if I knew then what I know now." Ouspensky gives some surprising reasons why we would indeed do everything exactly the same all over again —even if we knew what the outcome was going to be. Eurydice and Lot's wife were lost precisely because they looked back, for the weird truth is that, even were it possible to "go back," it could not be done without losing the present self and falling at once into the dead, no-longer-real, past. To have eyes in the underworld is to be blind in this one.

Well, Slocum recognizes that the problem is implicit in the culture, say Heller and Estess. Yet if it is true that 99% of our misery can be traced to the intrinsic emptiness of Western civilization on the one hand and its boa-like constriction on the other, we have to confess to that tiny rot we each contribute all on our own to cause "something to happen" and to make us end up as the very people we dislike the most, in the very place we desire not to be. We cannot slough it all off onto Western civilization, because we are after all parts of that whole gangrene.

Confession, of course, is not the answer. It delivers us from guilt, but it can never transform behavior. Mythlessness is indeed, as Estess suggests, what gets us into all these blind alleys. "I never became what I wanted to be" is just the problem of culture. We have got it backwards. The lament should be: "I never did what I wanted to do." We can't *be* other than what we are. There is no transmogrification of the soul. Nothing is going to transform us into Saint, Solomon, or Superman.

All we can do is do. Yet we tell ourselves we can do nothing—because we have become a people whose will is paralysed. We are whipped non-believers, trained cynics, reluctant and wistful defeatists. That too, however, is a myth —Sisyphus, the bound Prometheus, Tantalus —or might it even be something newer and more deadly?

In the same issue, it just may be that Thomas Moore's "Narcissus" suggests one of the places to which we might go to create a better myth —one that will drive us once again to leap rather than to look so much beforehand, or "behindhand" for that matter.

Edward Rehmus
San Francisco, Ca.

archer, Sanjusangendo

The Liturgy of Noh
by
Frederick Franck

Life Will End,
But Noh Will Never Die.
Zeami

Is this Japan at last, this newer, gaudier New York, a New York that still seems to work? No potholes. . . no muggers. . . The Ginza: a smorgasbord of Hofbraus, Chez Maxims, super-Gimbels, fake Eiffel towers and MacDonalds. From the subways emerge dense swarms in navy-blue business suits and white shirts. Clean and gleaming they are, as are the subway stations, where all signs are insoluble riddles and spotless trains glide one away in clean comfort, except during rush hours, when suddenly—incredibly compressed—one is reduced to an awkward atom colliding with better programmed human atoms. How amazingly conditioned they are; totally resigned, unaggressive, in principle even indifferently courteous . . . and how safe these subways are, even the empty ones at midnight, at Shimbashi station, surrounded by ominous looking alleys—bar next to bar next to noodleshop next to whorehouse—where the clusters of drunks, happy and smiling in their beatitude, would not dream of challenging one another, even less of molesting the sober foreigner.

But is this the Japan one flew 5000 miles to discover? Is Tokyo perhaps not Japan, but just a nice place to visit?

The vaunted bullet train is to leave at noon. At 11:48 it pulls in. Passengers stream out. Thirty charwomen with brooms and vacuum cleaners stand at the ready. Quietly.

At 11:57 it is like new. Aluminum and spotless royal blue velvet Precisely at noon we slither bumplessly out of Tokyo Station, through the metropolitan desert, then, for three hours, through a countryside not worth a second look. The landscape? That between Hoboken and Newark, only infinitely extended. Here and there patches of dirty green survive between the concrete-and-steel webbing. . . glimpses of coast. . . Fuji invisible under clouds of grey pollution. . . (It *does* exist, but it took six sorties to hit it once: standing, as advertised, snowy-white and black, etched on blue.)

At first sight Kyoto seemed only little better. Ah, yes, the temples from the travel posters do exist! Processed through the meditative rock-and-sand garden of Ryoan-ji, the Golden Pavilion, Daitoku-ji, claustrophobic in dense hordes of shutter-happy Japanese tourists, each busload sheepishly following its own tailored, bandy-legged stewardess, holding up her yellow, blue, or red little flag—I'm ready to go home.

Then I discovered Noh. And Noh revealed the country to me: in the traditionalistic-futuristic schizophrenia of Japan the strength of a timeless spirit, still intact. Through the catalyst Noh, Japan crawled under my skin.

Hardly back in America, something like an addiction made me find both pretexts and money to return. Each time again, arriving in Kyoto, spent by the sixteen hour ordeal of bus-plane-bus-train-taxi, I had to throw down my bags on the hotel bed and start to walk, through the narrow back streets to the open market at Kawaramachi-Imadegawa. Munching rice crackers, inedible beanpaste sweets and chalky candy faintly flavored with shrimp, it was as if I were recapturing here the childhood I often failed to retrieve on visits to my home town on the Belgian border. . . where I feel like a ghost in the wrong haunt.

Was I perhaps born in Kyoto at least once? Not that I take reincarnation very literally . . . yet, where else could one feel so possessive of territory? Where else resent every old house being torn down to make place for a new high-rise and bristle with indignation? I walk deep into the night.

One does not "understand" Noh. Few Japanese do, for those who are familiar with its archaic Japanese are as rare as American theater-goers who wallow in medieval English. Understanding the words is moreover made extremely difficult by the ritualistic diction, which physiologically must issue from somewhere in the back of the throat, but sounds as if it came reverberating from the belly, if not from the very roots of human existence. And so Noh, instead of being grasped by the intellect, has to be experienced through the belly also, through the roots of one's own existence.

I fell in love with Noh at first sight. Perhaps partly because it has an instant cure for the claustrophobia induced by modern Japan. But since seeing, and letting the hand move a pen in response to the eye's image happens to be my way of coping with the visible world, I started to draw Noh at once and found myself in intimate touch with what happened on stage: experiencing it from the belly.

This first revelation of Noh, which made me into an instant addict, happened in the Kanze Kaikan, Kyoto's largest, newest Noh theater. Kanze is a very old name in Noh, if not the oldest. It is the name of one of the five-century-old dynasties of Noh actors of which Kanami (1333–1384) was the founder, and to which his son Zeami (1363–1443), Noh's greatest playwright, choreographer, producer, director and theoretician, gave a supremacy and prestige which has never been challenged. His direct descendant, Motomase Kanze, is the present head of the Kanze School.

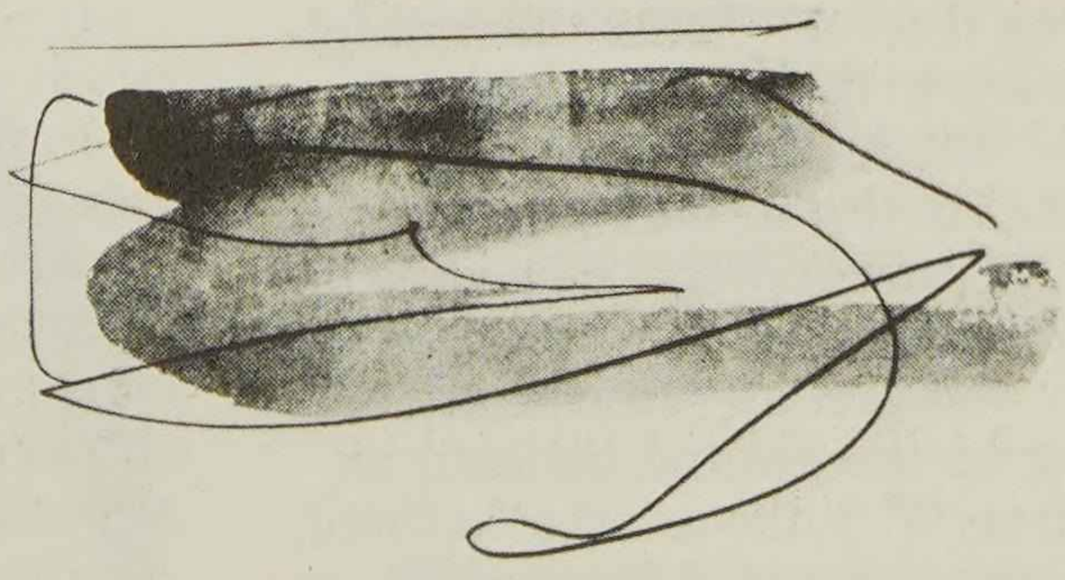
The revelation came at 10:30 a.m. sharp. With an eerie sound from behind stage right, the long chilling note of a bamboo flute accompanied by sharp whacks and the thuds on drums, the unearthly music of Noh, was unlike any music I had heard before. The theater was still almost empty, for apparently only the most fanatic Noh afficionados seem able to absorb the full, day-long program. The Kanze is a large, square boxlike theater, a bit like a moviehouse, except that the stage juts out, pretending to be a temple in a garden: a 36-square-yard platform of pine polished to mirror smoothness

with its own curved, thatched roof that rests on four square pillars. Each one of these supports has its specific function in the performance. Velvet seats are arranged as in an amphitheater, facing stage-front and stage-right with a section in between from which the view is obscured by the corner-support of the roof. This post is called the "Gazing Pillar" or "Focus Pillar," as it is the beacon by which the principal actor, the *Shite*, through the narrow eye-slits of his mask, navigates on stage. A bridge-like structure some eighteen feet long, six feet wide, runs from back stage-right at a slight angle to a damask curtain from where musicians and actors will appear. Bridge as well as stage are separated from the audience by a yard-wide strip of gravel. Along the bridge three live pine trees rise from the gravel at regular intervals. The backdrop never changes, it is a stylized, huge, gnarled pine tree, painted on the polished wooden back wall. This is the traditional image of the *Yogo* pine in Nara's Katsuga shrine, under which Noh originated more than six centuries ago. Here there was no human audience. The play was performed for a divine audience of *Kami* (gods, divine presences), inhabitants of the sacred pine tree, *Kaimi* , to be pleased, charmed, placated.

This stage design is an intrinsic part of Noh, which makes it almost impossible to see properly performed outside of Japan.*

The original Noh stage was a separate structure, set apart from the building where the Shogun watched the performance, surrounded by his nobles and samurai. Today's Noh stage holds to the original design, hence the roof over the stage and the strip of gravel separating it from the audience. Because the stage design is an integral part of

* *Noh's real roots may lie in pre-historic, mythic time, eons before the* Yogo *Pine, namely in that primeval entertainment played in heaven, when the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, angered by the cruel pranks of her brother Susanno, the storm god, hid herself in a cave, plunging the cosmos into darkness. The assembled gods and goddesses failed to persuade Amaterasu to leave her cave and thus to bring back the light. Then one of them had an inspiration. She jumped onto an empty tub, bared her breasts, threw her skirts over her head and performed an obscene and hilarious dance that made the divine assembly roar with such mirth that Amaterasu's curiosity got the better of her. She pushed away the rock that blocked her cave ever so little, and took a peep at what was happening. And there the light streamed out! The first ray of the Sun's divine light made the faces of the gods look white. . . .* omoshiroi (*"face becoming white") . . . still the apt symbol of sudden enlightenment.*



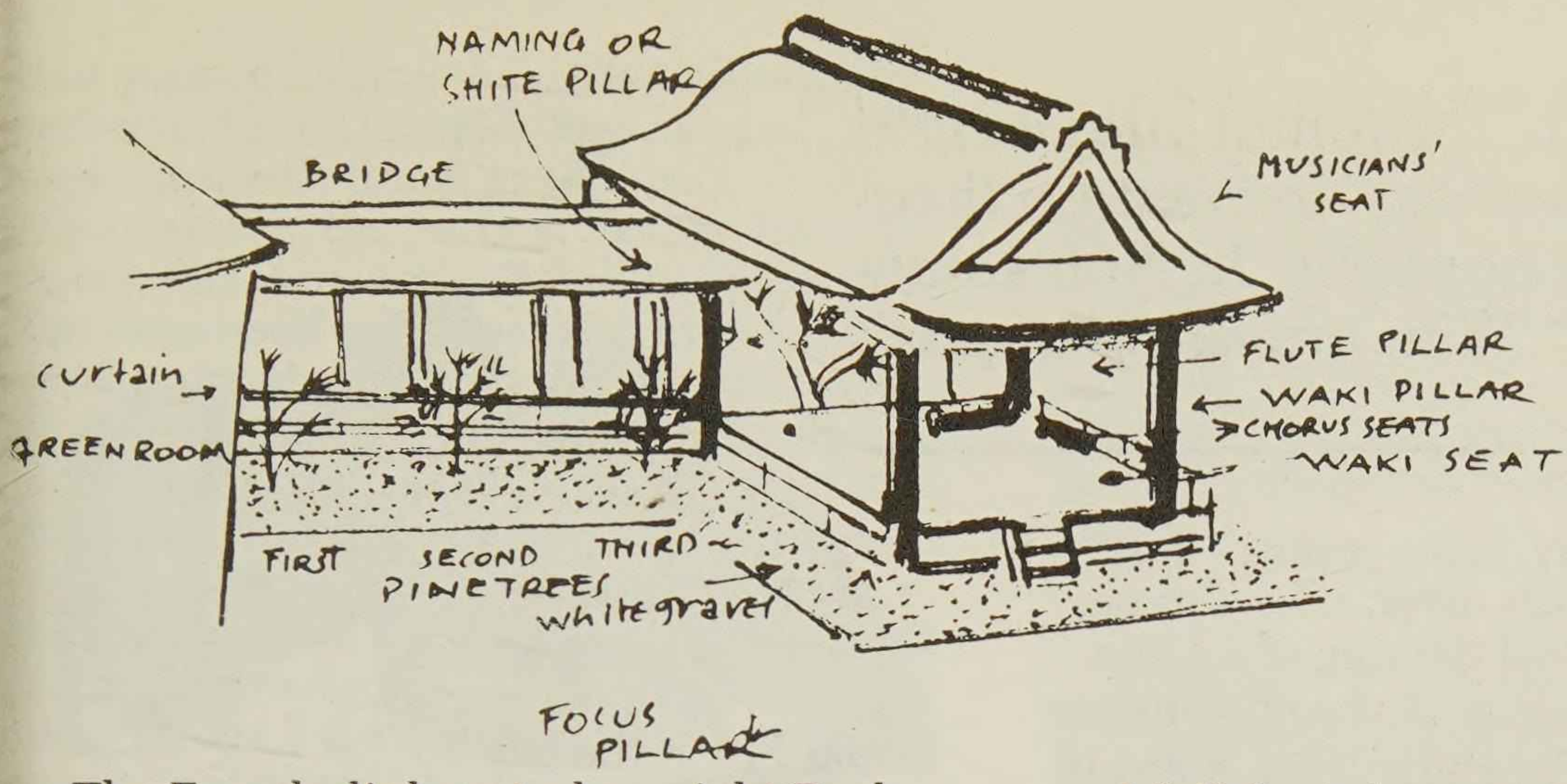
"Aio no Ue": Lady Rokuju putting spell on Princess Genji

Noh, the drama is simply mutilated by transfer to a proscenium type of stage. A few of these original separate stages still exist and in one of them, the famous seashore Noh theater of Miyajima, actors and audience at high tide are not separated by a mere few yards of gravel, but by ocean.

There is a long silence after the invocation by flute and drums. Then the curtain is pushed aside and three musicians in black kimonos and starched, silvery, shirtlike *hakama,* file in. Solemnly, as in a procession. The *hayashi* keep close to the rear wall, so as not to desecrate with their unworthy touch the bridge, soon to be trodden by gods and heroes. The flutist kneels —Japanese style—at the "Flute-Pillar," on stage-left. The drummers, both men in their seventies, sit down laboriously on low, black lacquered folding stools, holding their diabolo-shaped drums. The large *o-tzusumi* rests on the drummer's left knee and produces sharp whacks and clacks when hit with sheathed fingers. The *ko-tsuzumi* is held against the left shoulder, and gives duller, softer thuds and thumps. A tangle of vermillion ropes serves for both the holding and tuning of the drums.

From a tiny sliding door on stage left, low as that of a tea-room—a door meant to counsel humility—eight men emerge, dressed in the formal black kimonos and steel-grey *hakamas:* the chorus. Noiselessly kneeling, Japanese style, along the left edge of the stage in a double row, they place their fans in front of their knees and sit motionless, hands hidden under their *hakamas.* Absolute silence. The eleven faces on stage are eleven staring masks. Then the vertically striped damask curtain at the bridge's end is slowly raised on invisible bamboo poles. The *Waki,* the "secondary actor," in the ancient garb of a Shinto priest, shod in white *tabis,* appears on the bridge and with the slow, characteristic sliding step of Noh (heels touching first, the flat of the foot following) proceeds to the "Naming Pillar" or "*Shite* Pillar," where stage and bridge are joined. He turns to the audience for the declamation of his introductory story: how he traveled in springtime on a pilgrimage to Takasago Bay and met an old couple, who were cleaning up the ground beneath an ancient pine tree. Why, the priest asks them, are this pine and the one at Sumiyoshi, so many miles away, spoken of as the "double pines" (twin). "Ah," he is told, "though separated by a thousand leagues, man an wife's hearts are ever one." And the old couple goes on quoting poetry about the pine, evergreen symbol of peace and lon life.

The voice of the *Waki* rises above the heads of the audience, as if he were addressing some unseen Presence. It is an otherwordly voice one literally sees arisin from a pulsating throat. The *Waki's* face, hi eyes, stay expressionless. At the end of hi recitative he silently crosses the stage to th *Waki*-Pillar, the left front support of the curved roof, and assumes the formal Japanese sitting position. It is the place where he usually will remain seated, almo motionless, until the end of the play, at mo turning silently at moments towards the main actor, the *Shite.* The *Waki* is the *Shite's* foil. He introduces and justifies hi appearance, he sets the play's ambiance, then remains to watch it as a silent witnes as a confessor. The *Waki* is the mediator between a world of gods and ghosts and th of men. Once more the curtain is raised ar the *Shite,* the protagonist, appears, wearin the mask of a very old man and carrying thin bamboo stick. He is followed by his wife, played by his subsidiary actor in th "old-woman's-mask." He starts his lines the "Naming Pillar," which is also the pla to which he will return constantly durin the play, his home-base, and where he w end it with a final double stamping of th foot.



The French diplomat-playwright Paul Claudel wrote: "In Western theater something happens, in Noh someone appears." Who are these apparitions in *Takasago*, Zeami's most famous "god-play?"

The old man and his wife reveal that they are the very spirits, the *Kami*, the divine essences, of the "double pine," then they sail away together across Takasago Bay all the way to Sumiyoshi. The priest follows them and once arrived at the sacred spot, sees the old man reveal himself as the *Kami* of Sumiyoshi, dancing in full panoply while bestowing blessings, announcing prosperity and eternal life for all mankind.

Takasago is a Noh of the first category. To this first group belong the so-called "god plays," veritable theophanies, with which the day-long program traditionally begins. The second group is that of "hero plays": man as hero, most often a warrior, ruminating his defeat suffered centuries ago, caught in the inexorable grip of his unredeemed karma and at the climax of the play sometimes reaching liberation, enlightenment. The third category is about the obsessive single-mindedness of women in love. The subject matter of the fourth is miscellaneous, but generally it deals with human beings in conflict, maddening pain, crisis. The plays in this group do not span generations and incarnations. They take place in the "present," the present of a single life cycle. In the fifth and last group apparitions of the supernatural, of gods, demons, Buddhas, ghosts, manifest themselves.

But regardless of category, all two hundred Noh plays which after four or five centuries still remain on the repertory, are meditations on the eternal riddles of human life and destiny.

A full, formal program of Noh starts in the morning and ideally a play from each one of the groups alternates with intermezzi of *kyogen*—comic theater, reminiscent of medieval farce—and presentations of *shimai*, Noh-dance, performed by members of the chorus. It ends at supper time. Nowadays the number of plays is usually reduced to three or four.

In the Kanze Theater with its Western style seats, there is a coffee shop that makes you miss some of the *shimai* and *kyogen*. In Kyoto's other Noh theaters, Kongo and Kawamura, one sits on *tatami* and sips tea, eats cold noodles and rice from plastic boxes, legs fast asleep, mind wide awake, watching, watching. . .

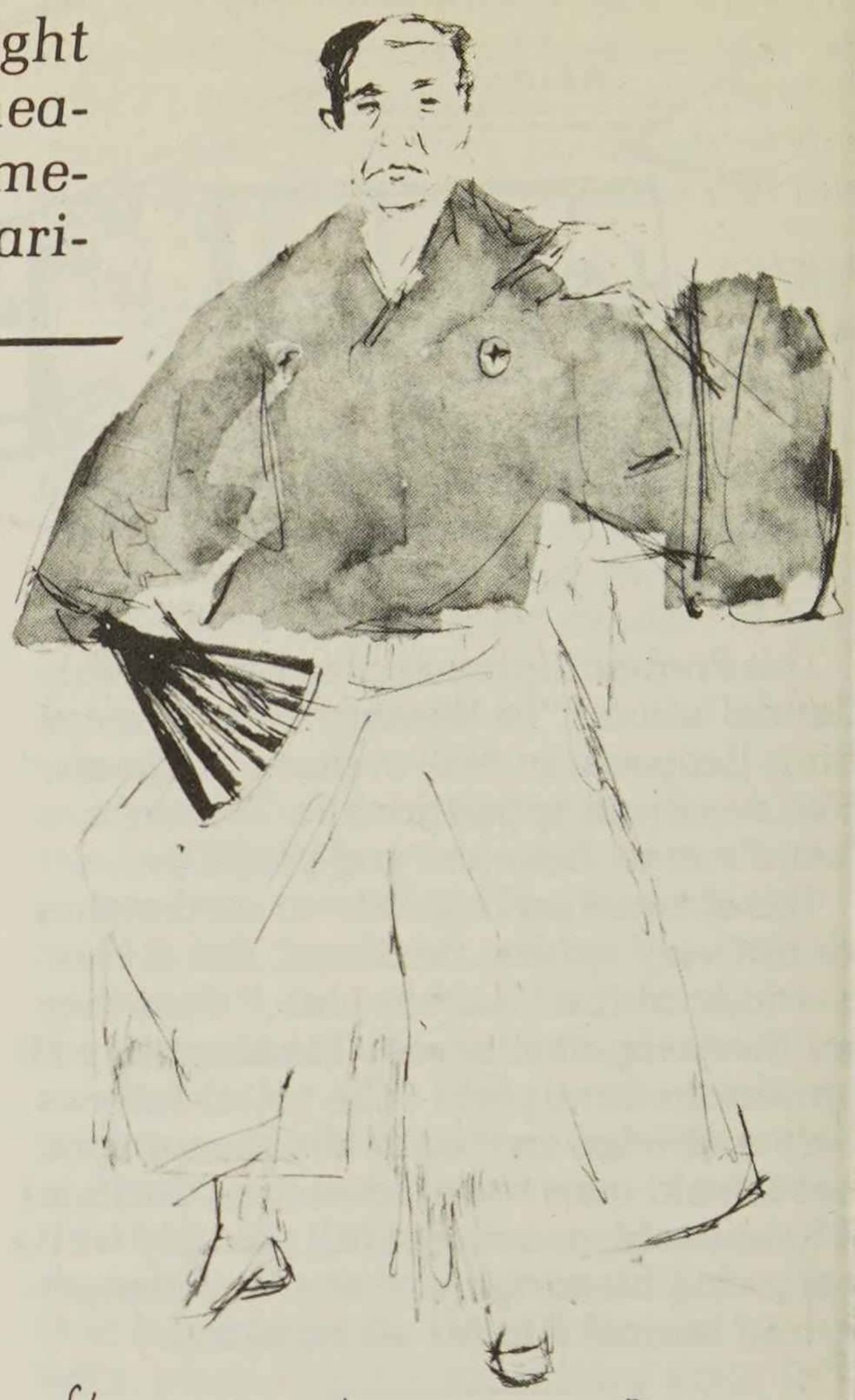
Noh plays are not only classified according to content, they are also graded according to their *kurai*, their distinction or "dignity." The "dignity" of the plays is in inverse ratio to their dramatic tension, their "plot." Plays of the highest dignity are those in which the least is "happening," the most "appearing". . . Actors would not attempt a play of the highest "dignity," such as *Sekudera Komachi*, until they have reached the apex of their artistry and maturity. Masks are also graded as to their sacredness, distinction and dignity. Actors have been known to cancel the use of a particularly venerable mask at the last moment, cowed by feeling unworthy of its extreme *kurai*, Some of these are "national treasures," masterpieces of woodcarving and painting of great antiquity.

Masks are worn only by the *Shite*, the principal actor, who alone carries the action

The French diplomat-playwright Paul Claudel wrote: "In Western theater something happens, in Noh someone appears." Who are these apparitions?

of the play (literally, *Shite* means "doer"), and by his subsidiary actor, who also has gone through the full training of a *Shite*.

Noh masks are mysterious embodiments of archetypes, poetic and mythic works of art to which a great actor lends extreme polarities of expression and abundant life. Raising his head, he "makes the face shine" in happiness, bending it, turning ("shading the mask"), he makes it express fierce agression, hostility, despair. The mask, whether a young or old woman's, a hero's, a god's, a demon's, must become one with the actors' body-soul. It is never mere disguise; even less does it substitute for naturalistic make-up. Tied in front of the actor's face, it leaves his throat and even part of his chin bare, so that from below the smooth face of a beautiful young girl, a man's middle-aged jowls may be seen drooping. But it does not matter, for Noh is a theater not of imitation, but of invocation and evocation. Behind the Mirror Room's curtain the actor contemplates the mask, until he feels he can fill it with his entire being, can "enter into the mask." Once more he contemplates the image in the large mirror, and when at last he whispers: "Curtain" and appears, he is an apparition, a man transformed and in trance. This man does not merely *play*, but has *become* the god, the young girl, the hero, who, after a thousand years, is still attached to the world. Far from being a disguise, the Noh-mask is the sacred, awesome tool of transformation, the atavistic survivor from primeval rituals, when a mask was not merely the "symbol" of a god, but the god's very dwelling place. For in the archaic, neolithic world that survives in Noh, the split between symbol and that which is symbolized has not yet occurred. Neither is the sacred mirror in the Shinto shrine a mere "symbol" of the Sun Goddess: it constitutes her divine Presence. And it is surely a similar conflict in attitude towards the Symbol which has caused the disputes about transubstantiation in the Eucharist: is the Bread mere symbol in a modern, attenuated sense, or is the Bread symbol in the ancient sense



Shimai dance by a member of the Chorus

in which the Bread is the locus of the Christ's Presence here and now. . .? In plays, especially of the first and fifth group the mask is indeed an implement of transformation, a tool of transubstantiation. Through it the actor becomes hierophant

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The Green Room, or Mirror Room, in which the actors prepare themselves for th stage is therefore more than a set of back stage dressing rooms. It is a sacred space residence of gods and ghosts, demons an heroes; a dwelling place of archetypes; a abyss of the dim past from which ghosts emerge. Originally the Noh stage was an integral part of a sanctuary, the place whe gods are enshrined. Only in the *Oomoto* sect, for which Noh still has full religiou significance, does a full Noh stage survi as part of its principal sanctuary.

The function which the Green Room o the Noh theater fulfills is to substitute fo this locus of enshrinement. From it sour those first notes of the flute announcing th beginning of the play, at the same time in timating part of the ceremonial preparatio

that goes on behind the curtain. The Swiss writer on Noh, Thomas Imoos, interestingly sees the Green Room as the realm of the Unconscious, the "bridge" as the link between this Unconscious and the stage, with the stage itself as the realm of what is rising or has already risen into consciousness. In the shamanistic techniques of ecstasy which take place in the Green Room, he sees the establishment of contact with the archetypes in which the *Shite* becomes a being possessed by the archetypes emerging from his own depth. Indeed, when he enters the "bridge," the true Noh actor appears as truly "possessed" by the god, weighed down by the unresolved karma of a warrior or by the love attachments of a courtesan lady who died a millennium ago. The bare, empty, clearly-lighted stage also becomes a symbol of *Sunyata*, becomes "Form as Emptiness" to be filled with human apparitions who are "Emptiness as Form." The "bridge" becomes the passage between heaven and hell—as states of awareness, not of topography—and this earth.

The most "sacred" of all Noh plays is *Okina* [The Old Man]. It precedes the five categories of Noh, and dates back at least to the tenth century. It is still performed on special occasions each year. I saw it in Nara, this hauntingly mysterious rite, plotless and actually consisting of nothing but a series of three Noh dances of which the religious poignancy is overwhelming.

Okina bestows the blessings that will bring peace and well-being all over the land, tranquillity and abundant harvest. It probably evolved from ancient agricultural rites to become, during the Middle Ages, one of the great rituals of esoteric Buddhism. Before performing it, the actors participate in ceremonial purifications, preparing themselves by fasting, ablutions and prayer, and rehearsing in the presence of the *Okina* mask exhibited on the altar. They share sacred *sake* and rice with the god in an act of unification and identification. When the actor enters the stage, he is still a mere human being. Then the mask in its black lacquered box is offered to him in a solemn processional, and only from the moment that the humorous, yet awesome, "Old Man's" mask has been fastened does the actor, now transfigured into the god, start his cosmic dance to bring blessings on the land and its inhabitants.

The use of the word "dance" to describe Noh's choreography is quite confusing, for *shimai* has very little in common with the dance techniques of the West. It is restrained, ritualistically codified, courtly, yet highly expressive inward motion. It is contemplation exteriorized as movement. . .

If I know of an art more moving than Noh, it is *shimai*, the "dances" performed in the interludes between Noh plays by members of the chorus, each one in turn. For hours on end these anonymous men in their uniform kimonos and starched *hakamas* have been sitting motionless on their heels on the hard wooden floor, chanting their solemn recitations. Then, during the interlude, astonishingly, each one of these faceless men reveals himself to be a consummate master of the Noh-dance: a poem is chanted by his colleagues, he kneels in front of the singers, opens his fan (it may symbolize sword, moon, flower. . .) and starts his dance. Instantly he has become unrecognizable. His face has become a mask, but a mask entirely different from the one he showed as a member of the chorus. It is the maskless mask that reveals the dancer in his full human dignity: the full dignity and nobility of the human being. Every motion of his body is under absolute iron-hard control and yet it expresses utmost tenderness, softness, and inwardness as grippingly as black anger and violence. The movement of a seventy-year-old *shimai* performer may be slower, less athletic, than that of the thirty-years-younger man who preceded him, but this makes it even more compellingly touching in its transmutation. Stripped of all that is superficially individual, accidental or idiosyncratic, the *shimai* dancer becomes awesomely, timelessly himself, becomes the incarnation of his most central humanness. *Shimai* is stillness in motion. It is the dance of the Buddha nature.

The obsessive chant of the chorus penetrates to the marrow, as does Gregorian chant and the *Art of the Fugue*, although the musical accompaniment by the *hayashi* has nothing in common with any of our musical conventions. Its task is set to a mood, to invoke gods and ghosts, to create the trance

needed by the actor and to whip up the spectator's perceptions to their utmost intensity. It makes the spectator a participant in a religious-aesthetic experience that transcends all cultural demarcation lines. The shrill flute, the clacks, whacks, and thuds of the drums (ancient, shamanistic instruments—derived from thighbone and skull), the primeval rhythmic howls of "ya. .! ha. .! yaaaah!!. . ." ejaculated by the drummers, create the shamanistic, magic ambiance in which transubstantiations and transformations become utterly plausible. The naturalness of the supernatural, the supernatural aspect in all that is natural, are revealed to the most ancient layers of one's human consciousness. Karmic situations light-years away from ours—this banal life in high-rises, taxis and planes—suddenly have become our own. A direct perception of timeless reality, some mysterious wisdom—even compassion—is awakened. A faith seems recaptured here which consists in nothing more than the realization of that faculty of apprehending, of self-validating knowing, of both our creaturely *avidya* and our specifically human potentiality for overcoming all our folly, greed, and cruelty and thus fulfilling our human destiny. As Thoreau says: "Knowledge does not come to me by details, but in flashes of light from heaven."

Noh consists of such flashes from heaven.

"I haven't seen Noh, but I have seen Kabuki," he said. "So what's the difference, a bit more boring, right?"

"Oh, just a slight difference! Like that between a Rembrandt nude and a *Playboy* centerfold. . . or between the B-Minor Mass and *The Merry Widow*. . ."

To those, Western or Japanese, addicted to the wild race towards oblivion, to the uninterrupted futility of electronic chatter and din and thereby incapacitated to respond to Noh's inner tension, it must indeed be excruciatingly boring. . .

The deceptive sleepwalking tempo of Noh hides a maximum of wakefulness at every split-moment. It is the utter wakefulness of the sword fighter whose slightest relaxation of concentration invites the lethal thrust. In former times a single error in motion or declamation by a *Shite* might mean lifelong banishment from the stage.

Noh, far from being entertainment, is hig art: it stands in direct confrontation with lif and death.

There is precise timing in Noh, but neither hurry nor time. The fourth dimen sion is made visible, coalesces with it, for o stage, time touches timelessness. Noh seems to crawl along, to speed up a little, and then, quite suddenly, in its final danc (this final dance is sometimes regarded a the climax for which the whole play was mere pretext) and the final stamps of the *Shite's* foot. . . it is all over, and forever. *Shite* and *Waki* silently, slowly, fade dow the bridge behind the curtain. One feels mourning. How could one have missed so much! One feels a loss never to be retrieved. . .

The musicians slink away, the chorus vanishes through its diminutive door. Th queer applause, dry and formal, is totally ignored. The stage has already emptied i self, has become fully lit Emptiness. Not trace is left of love's tragedy, of hero's de feat, of successive life-times of unrequite love, not even of final Enlightenment. A seed has germinated, the leaves have unfurled, the buds flowered, we have witnessed its wilting: all in less than an hour What seemed so slow, so endless . . . hov could it pass so quickly, so inexorably?

The master clowns of Kyogen in their ye low *tabi* are already filling the Emptines with brilliant farce.

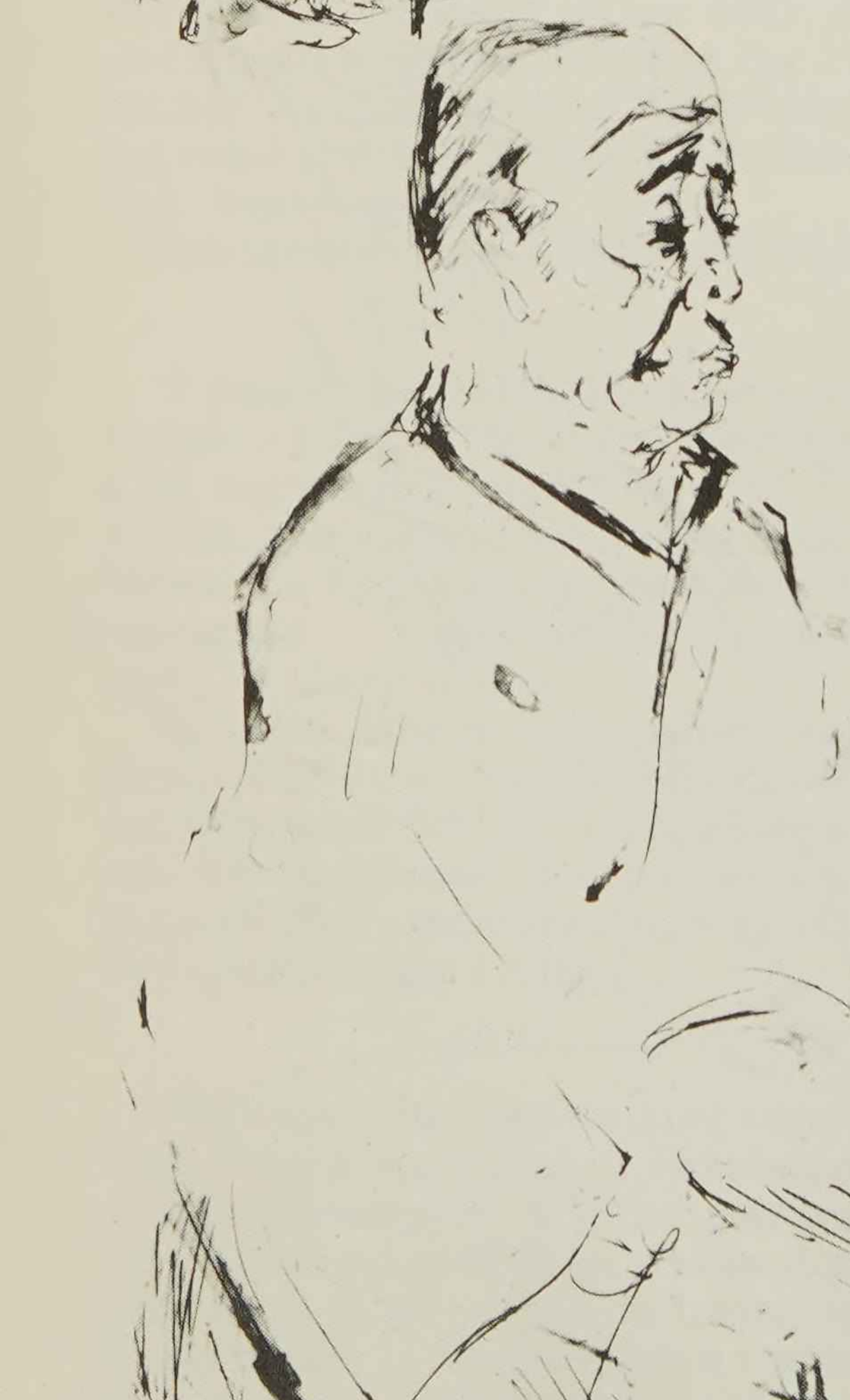
Noh developed as a folk theater, *Sarugaku*, in the Middle Ages. It include dance, acrobatics, mime and music. Even i Kanami's time it was still a popular theat for the entertainment of the common peop during temple festivals. Its tempo was twic as fast, its style realistic and free. Only aft Kanami's son, Zeami, at age eleven, becam the beloved protégé of the Shogun Ashika Yosimitsu and grew up to become Noh's greatest actor, playwright, and disciplinarian, did Noh begin to assume its pr sent form. Until that time the status of N actors was not much higher than that of beggars and jugglers. With Zeami, Noh found itself suddenly raised to the dignity a court ceremonial and its actors to posi tions of quasi-equality with samurai and high aristocracy. Noh quite naturally adopted the value-systems and the codes

manners and of honor belonging to its patrons. It became an aristocratic art. In conforming with the samurai's contempt for the display of raw feeling, it developed the extreme stylization of emotional expression, which governs its diction and its choreography. Every movement, the simplest action—walking, sitting down, getting up—became ritualized. Naturalistic gesturing and posturing were scorned. Nevertheless, Noh escaped becoming *théatre mécanique*. On the contrary, the extreme interiorization demanded utter exertion of all the forces of the actor's body and soul, so that ideas and feelings might shine through the imposed restraints by distilling and purifying themselves to most concentrated essences. There is no place in Noh for deviations, for an actor's idiosyncrasies. Attempts at "originality" are not tolerated. In Noh, if anywhere, the artist is clearly compelled to make the choice between his self-indulgent "originality" and the authenticity of his Self. The *Shite*, the bearer of the action, as well as the *Waki*, who is his foil, his witness, must empty themselves of all thoughts and feelings, becoming one with the personage enacted. Yet, paradoxically, a

a gallery of Noh

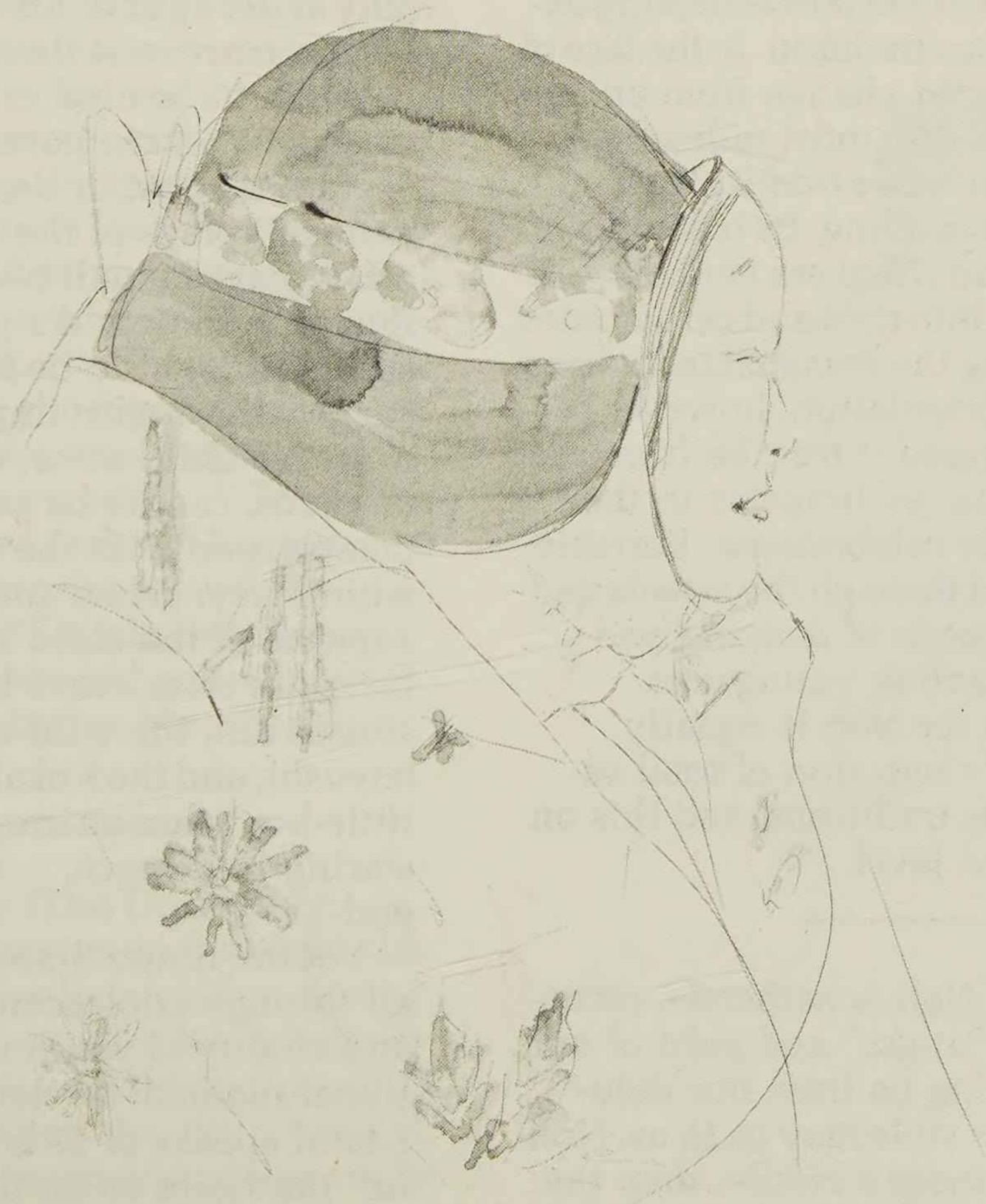
traveling priest

Izwo Kongo: on stage



the orchestre of the Noh p

Final dance, from "Arms"



great Noh actor, while making visible the uniqueness, the authenticity at the core of every human life, reveals himself supremely as Person.

Zeami's article of faith that life will end, but that Noh will last—*ars longa, vita brevis*—is very much justified by what has happened in our era of mutations which completely transformed the face of Japan in a few generations. Noh not only survives, it is flourishing. Thousands of amateurs —Japanese amateurs do not expect miracles in five easy lessons—subject themselves to Noh's demanding disciplines, studying *shimai* and *utai* (Noh-chant) with professionals who are glad to supplement their modest incomes as performers. Accountants, housewives, druggists and taxidrivers now practice for preparation of an amateur performance: Noh theaters are booked long in advance.

The traditional dynasties nevertheless are having difficulties in keeping their ranks filled, for many of their sons are tempted by the allurements of the consumer society. On the other hand, the schools have abandoned their former isolation, mutual envy and rivalry and are studying the heritage they share, instead of concentrating exclusively on their own tradition. In the face of the massive and rapid change from an agricultural society to the most radically industrialized one, Japanese fidelity to its cultural heritage is astounding. Its treasures of dance and chant and ritual are kept alive in folk festivals, in Shinto rites and ceremonies for the dead. During the seasonal festivities, almost the whole population, however secularized and estranged it may be from the traditional religions, participates in their essentially folkloric celebrations. Portable shrines are paraded through the streets and tossed above the heads of dancing and drumming and chanting youngsters.

The enthusiasm for Noh is equally symbolic of Japan's rejection of total estrangement from its traditions, and this on the highest cultural level.

The function of Noh is catharsis, reconciliation with the "angst" and pain of our existence, awakening us from our delusions. Strange as its style may be to us, Noh is no stranger, no more a riddle, than the human heart itself. In this theater so deeply intertwined with Zen attitudes to life, it indeed transmission from heart to heart tha is intended and achieved, transforming th spectator into the concelebrant in this so very Japanese and yet so very universal liturgy of human authenticity.

Maybe we have arrived at a point, nov that so many are once more in search of meaning and human values, at which we can absorb the lessons of the Noh-experience. Eugene Ionesco seems to hav had this prophetic insight when, in 1964, h declared: "Noh is the *avant*-garde theater of the present."

The word Noh implies "being able". I demands the training of the whole person attain this ability, and his life-long effor Training starts in early childhood. An act of one of the five families of Noh (they ar called "schools": *Kanze, Komparu, Gosh Kongo* and *Kita*, each with its own traditio and style) may well start the initiation of h two-year old son in the tradition which h himself inherited, giving him his first tra ing towards the "ability" that is Noh, a tra ing that demands absolute conformity. A individual "creativity" is allowed the act only at the apex of his career and even th within narrowest limits.

When he is nine or ten, the future *Sh* may play *kokata* parts, roles of a child —often the lost or dead child in the "m woman" plays of the fourth category. In other plays he will be given the role of t Emperor: the child's purity and innocen are considered to be the ideal attributes suggest the august imperial presence. Ho ever, the child actor, even in the role of emperor, cannot be considered to be in competition with the *Shite's* absolute st supremacy. When suddenly the metalli soprano of the child in his splendid brocades rises above the dark virility of chorus and the wild crescendo of the *hayashi*, and the Kokata starts his dance, little-boy's face an immobile mask with e staring into space. . . one's hair stands end. . .

Yet the future *Shite's* training contin all through adolescence, when the beau and vitality of youth may give him a pr sional moment of charm (that "flower" Zeami speaks of as being "merely a pr ise") and goes on until he reaches his ma ity as an actor in his middle thirties

—provided, that is, that he has the needed gifts and practices with all his might. He may be fifty before attempting the plays of the highest dignity, the greatest depth.

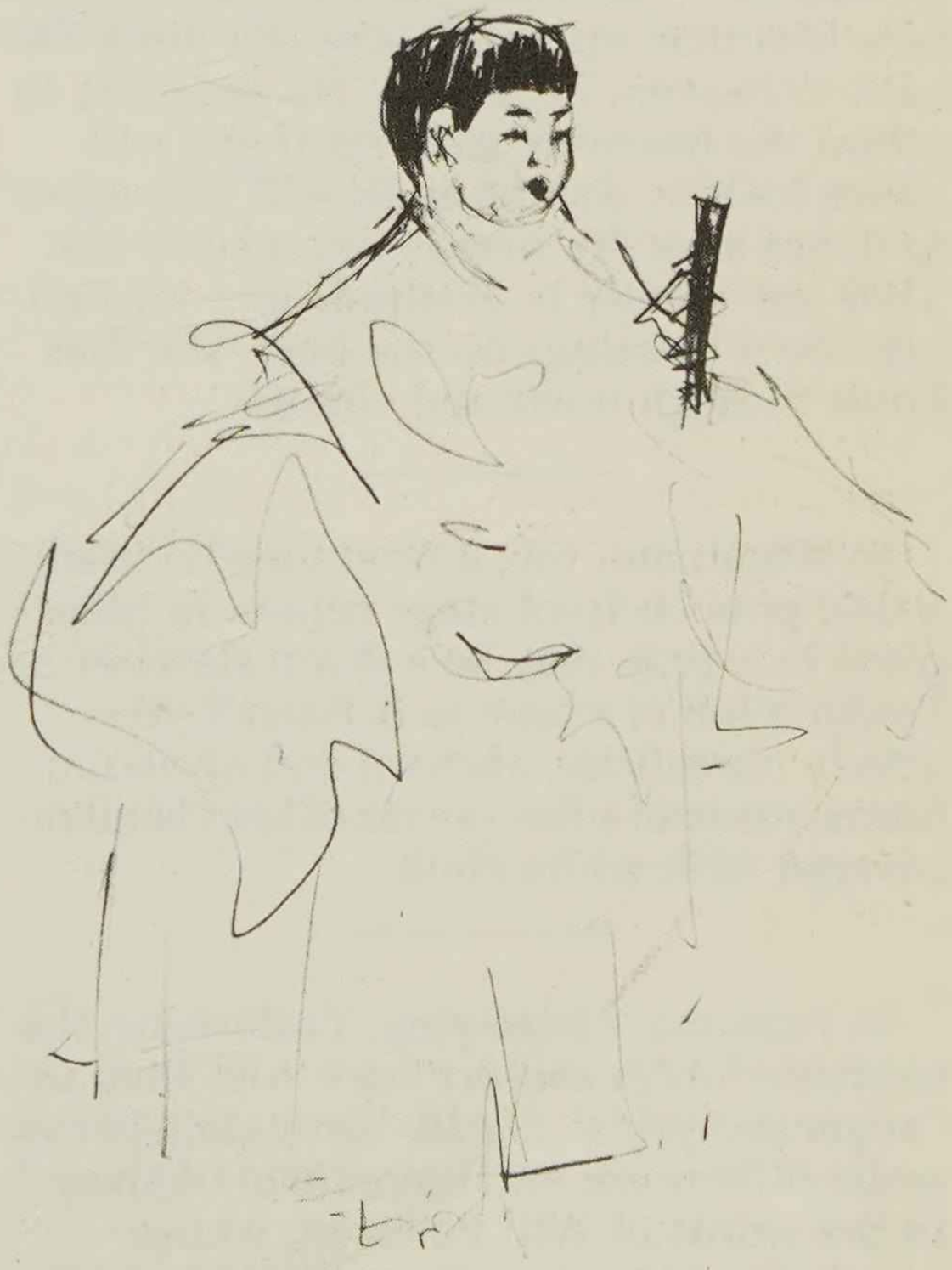
As I was drawing the ghost of the poetess Komachi in *Kaiyo Komachi* I noticed by the texture of the actor's throat, visible below the *Shite's* young-girl's mask, that he was probably beyond middle age. Later I was told that he was Japan's oldest Noh actor, who had recently celebrated his seventy-fifth year on stage! I saw him later as a spectator at torchlight-Noh in Nara, a wizened octagenarian, bleary-eyed and without eyelashes. . .

For three quarters of a century, at the dawn of each new day this man had practiced Noh's inexhaustible repertoire in confrontation with his ancestors and his own heart. This is what Noh demands from the artist who is driven to discover all the facets, the deepest secrets of his art.

Just to give an idea of the atmosphere and content of these almost plotless plays, let me try to epitomize a few random samples from the huge repertoire of Noh: In *Kinuta*, a loving wife is tortured by longing for her long-absent husband. He sends a messenger to promise his return by the end of the year. Later a second messenger arrives to announce further delay. Suspecting the waning of her husband's love, the wife dies of a broken heart. When the husband returns, he is overcome with grief and summons up his wife's spirit. Seeking revenge for her suffering, the ghost covers him with reproaches: "From the world of life and longing I cannot free myself.. . ." The Lotus Sutra is recited for the peace of her tortured soul, and at the verse where the Sutra proclaims: "Ghosts too will attain Buddhahood" her obsession leaves her. In her final *shimai* the wife's spirit celebrates her liberation, her enlightenment.

In the play *Tenko* [The Drum from Heaven], a woman dreams on the night she conceives that a marvelous golden drum falls from heaven. A son, Tenko, is born to her and indeed one day a golden drum falls from the heavens. When the child beats it, the drum produces sounds of such heavenly beauty that the emperor, told about this miraculous drum, covets it and orders it to be brought to the palace. But Tenko flees with his treasure into the mountains. The emperor has him pursued, captured and drowned. In the imperial hands, however, the drum does not give a sound. At last the emperor sends for the dead boy's father. He only has to touch the drum to let it sound with its celestial music. The emperor, now contrite, orders a memorial service for Tenko on a clear autumn night, and Tenko's ghost appears to play his drum and to perform his ecstatic dance of liberation and gratitude under the stars. . .

In another great masterpiece, *Aoi no Ue*, Prince Genji's wife is struck down by a mysterious illness that does not respond to any treatment. A soothsayer is summoned to find the cause of her illness and through the mouth of the soothsayer the spirit of Lady Rokūjo, Genji's former mistress, reveals itself as the one who has taken possession of the sick woman. The hatred and jealousy of this still-living woman have become hypostatized into a horrifying demonic form of their own. In Noh's fascinating stage technique the sick princess never appears on stage: she is merely symbolized by a prop: a folded kimono, placed on stage front center, and it is this kimono which Lady Rokūjo attacks with her fan. An exorcist is called



Kokata, child actor

As Thoreau says: "Knowledge does not come to me by details, but in flashes of light from heaven."

Noh consists of such flashes from heaven.

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who defeats the frightful demon in a violent battle, liberating at the same time the bewitched princess from her illness, and Lady Rokūjo from her demonic obsession. . .

Kakitsubata [The Iris], is a play without any plot at all: it is purely a poetic situation: a wandering priest comes to Yatsuhachi, where centuries ago the poet Narihira, moved by the beauty of the blooming irises, wrote a famous poem. The priest is given lodging by an old woman. In his dream, he sees her as a lovely girl, who reveals that she is the Spirit of the Iris, immortalized by Narihira's poem.

In *Hagoromo*, a fisherman finds a glorious feather robe hanging from a pine tree on the beach. He is about to take it home, when an angel appears and begs him to return to her the lost robe from Heaven. The fisherman refuses, but when the angel weeps and tells him that without it, she can never fly back to heaven, he relents. He promises to return the heavenly garment if she will dance for him. But the angel will only agree to dance after the robe is returned to her. Then she dances in gratitude and joy.Calling down blessings on the land, she flies home through mists and clouds.

In *Hagoromo,* too, a prop may be used: a tiny pine on front stage center. In other plays this prop may be a drum stand as in *Tenko*, a hut or a boat, as in *Funa Benkei*. . . utterly unrealistic, abstract and symbolic forms, made of a few pieces of bent bamboo covered with white cloth.

In *Yashima*, a hero-play, Yoshitsune, the celebrated 12th century hero who died in "anger and pride" is still "struggling in the realm of Samsara, still ignorant of Dharma." In the words of Will Petersen, whose translation-reconstruction of *Yashima* I regard as a masterpiece: "Zeami sees Yoshitsune reliving his conflict throughout eternity. . . no longer of this world, but too arrogant to break his attachment."

Demon, from Iwafu

There are three significant expressions, often repeated in Zeami's writings, to stress indispensable ingredients of true Noh acting. One of these is *yūgen,* without which Noh is doomed to remain mediocre. In his earlier works, Zeami uses the word to mean "grace" of "elegance," but later it came to imply more: a profound mystery, a style of acting which stimulates free association and awakens intuitions that go far deeper than the verbal. *Yūgen* is expressed in attitude, in word and in dance. Even in the representation of the demonic it must not be absent. Zeami says: "If the heart works at ten, the body works at seven," indicating that inward intensity must far transcend all external manifestations. Another word Zeami often uses is *monomane,* which denotes a realism, a plausibility that must pierce all stylizations, so that the symbolic content of the role becomes believable, acceptable and convincing, however remote Noh expression may be from literal imitation.

And a last term to be mentioned is *jo-ha-kyu*, which, Zeami says, "is found in every natural phenomenon and in every kind of art." It is the rhythmic pattern of prelude development coda, of a slow beginning, then a gradual picking up of speed, to end in an intense climax. This is not only the pa

tern of the order of the plays in a properly composed Noh program, it is also the rhythmic pattern of each individual play and. . . of our lives.

These seemingly technical terms. . . how indicative they are of the grasp the old masters had of the depths of that human heart —of which and to which they wanted to speak—of its dividedness and integration!

The style that in Noh is distilled through so many centuries, allowing the inexpressible to be expressed and the invisible to be made visible through *gesture*, are stylized and choreographed to the extreme. Unspeakable grief is expressed by a hand slowly raised, thumb folded in, to a barely inclined masked head. An outburst of shattering despair, anxiety, rage, becomes a single piercing sob. The voyage from one country to the next, from one life to another is compellingly visualized in one gliding step of the white *tabi*-shod foot. Every single step has enormous specific weight. The heel touches the mirror-like stage first, the toes are lifted to touch the ground again as if to confirm the body's awareness of having touched earth. Even while running forward or backward each fleeting step is composed of these two motions. Not a single movement is casual, each gesture is saturated with meaning. For Noh is mythic liturgy, a liturgy that has defied vulgarization and in which the transcendent meaning still penetrates us through our senses. And yet it is more than liturgy: a baffling combination of expressive elements, welded into a deceptively simple continuum of perceptions which makes the ear see, the eye hear and the spirit soar to its original home.

For Noh is also opera, epic tale, mime, music and choreography, which together validate and vivify the ancient scenarios and texts and make them as powerfully moving to contemporary audiences as they ever were.

In contrast to the theatrical masterworks of Western literature, they do not yield their full meaning when read. Their texts remain literary quilts of classical and pre-classical poetry until they spring to life in performance. The overwhelming splendor, the magnificent brocades of the costumes in their rare orchestrations of color, pattern and form, the impact of the mask, the use of the voice as a musical instrument, the full investment of their total physical and spiritual resources by both actors and singers, form the overpowering unity that culminates in the *Shite's* final dance, in the tense stillness of his *shimai:* zazen, zen contemplation, translated into pure motion.

Epicycle I

Quetzalcoatl

This is the story of Quetzalcoatl, Lord of Tollan, how he came
die and to make the long journey eastward to the House of the
Dawn. From the sacred city he went out, his body wrapped in
bright plumes, his face hidden behind the turquoise mask. To
Tlillan Tlapallan Tlatlayan he went, bowed low in remorse. O
bones he gathered in the Land of the Dead, and made them alive b
the drops of his blood. He brought knowledge and craft to the citi
of men before his betrayal, but the precious work of his hands sti
lies buried. This is the tale of the fall of Tollan; this is the tale of th
fall of the King.

In Tollan was Quetzalcoatl the King of the Toltecs. In the yea
One Reed he was born of his mother Chimalma, who conceive
when she swallowed an emerald. Then came the years of his yout
Two Flint, Three House, Four Rabbit. It was in Nine Reed when
asked for his father, longing to see his face. He was told, "He
dead. Go see! He is buried yonder, your father." Quetzalcoatl we
to the place and opened the earth. He gathered his father's bon
and built a shrine for them. At Quilatzli he built the shrine an
placed the bones of his father there. Then came more years: T
Flint, Eleven House, Twelve Rabbit, Thirteen Reed, One Flint.
Ten House Huactli died, the king whose people were homeles
and the next year his wife, the lady Xiuhtlacuilolxochitzin came
the throne. Quetzalcoatl was then twenty-four years of age. It wa
in Five House, when he was thirty-one, that the Toltecs made hi
their priest and their king. His life was blameless and pure. He d
penance in Tollan, he suffered and prayed for his people. In Tv
Reed he built his house of penance, fourfold he made it: the hou
of turquoise, the house of redshell, the house of whiteshell, and th
house of plumes. There did he worship, sending up supplicatio
beyond the Ninth Heaven to the Lord and Lady of Sustenance

In his time he brought forth many discoveries: jade and tur
quoise, silver and gold, redshell and whiteshell, and all the mo
precious feathers: quetzal, cotinga, trogon and heron. The greate
of artisans, he taught his people all the crafts that we take for
granted, the making of earthenware, the weaving of robes. He
taught planting of crops and building of homes: in the time o
Huactli, men did not know these things, they were homeless, th

ate their food raw. All that we know that is good was brought by the prince, the high priest Quetzalcoatl.

In those times, the king lived in secret, revealing never himself to his people, but only the joyous work of his hands. In secret he lived and fasted and did penance to discover the things that men needed. It is said that many times sorcerers came to tempt him and shame him into sacrificing humans, but he would never consent. His offerings were always and only birds, snakes, butterflies. His life, as they say, was blameless.

Then the sorcerers deliberated among themselves, how to dethrone the prince, how to bring him down. The chief among them was Tezcatlipoca, Lord of the Smoking Mirror, and Ihuimecatl and Toltecatl were his allies. They were determined to bring Quetzalcoatl out from Tollan, so they might live there themselves.

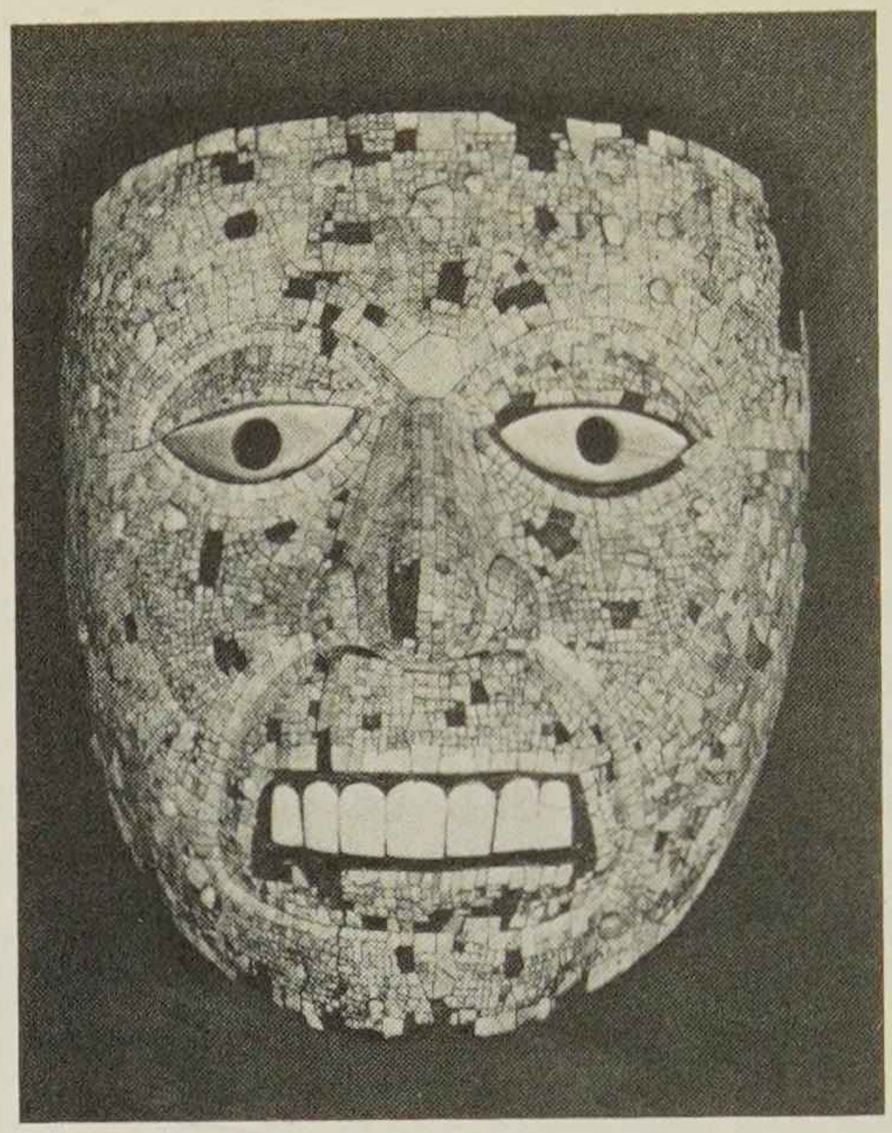
"I say we must show him his own body!" said Tezcatlipoca, and the others consented. Who can say how and in what manner they conspired? He, the Lord of the Smoking Mirror, went forth, in his hand a broad folded cloth concealing a mirror the size of an outstretched palm. He came to Tollan, at the prince's own palace he inquired. To the pages who guarded Quetzalcoatl he spoke, "Go to the priest and tell him, 'Lord, a servant has come to show your own body to you!' " At first, Quetzalcoatl would not consent to the meeting, saying, "What body of mine does he bring? Examine it for yourself, and only then bring it to me." But Tezcatlipoca kept the mirror hidden, and told them, "Only I myself will show it to the priest." Then Quetzalcoatl allowed the Lord of the Smoking Mirror to come.

He bowed low before the priest, Tezcatlipoca bowed low. "My son, lord and high priest, I have come from afar to show you your body." Quetzalcoatl answered, "A blessing upon your journey, grandfather! Where is this body of mine, what is it made of? Show it to me that I might see it!" Thereupon, Tezcatlipoca unwrapped the mirror he had brought and gave it to the king, saying, "Here, my lord! Behold your own body!"

Then Quetzalcoatl was filled with fear, the moment he saw his body. From the mirror his swollen eyes stared back at him from deeply sunken sockets, and his face was distended and bilious. He started back in horror, declaring, "Never shall my subjects look upon me! I shall stay here alone and in secret!" Then he retired to his fourfold house of penance, while Tezcatlipoca departed and joined the other sorcerers.

Next the sorcerers sent to Quetzalcoatl the artist Coyotlinahual, he who worked well in feathers and plumes. He went to Quetzalcoatl and said, "My lord, let your subjects see you! I shall dress you in plumes, I shall dress you in turquoise so that all your people may look upon you." Quetzalcoatl consented, and the artist proceeded to make a robe of fine plumes, and a mask to cover the face of the king. Of turquoise he made the mask, making the lips red and tracing a latticework of yellow across the forehead. Serpent teeth and a beard of cotinga plumes completed the mask, and Quetzalcoatl was pleased. He abandoned his refuge, greatly admiring his new appearance. He went forth among his people.

Now Coyotlinahual went back to the sorcerers and told them, "I have brought Quetzalcoatl out of his refuge. Go quickly now and complete your work." So the three went forth and lodged with the harvestman Maxtla, and there they took potherbs and peppers, young corn and beans and made a stew for him to eat. They also took maguey and honey and made pulque for him to drink. Then



they went to Tollan and came to the palace of Quetzalcoatl to beg audience with the king. Thrice were they turned away before h would see them, but finally he gave his permission, and they entered the palace. They presented the stew, and Quetzalcoatl ate of it. Thus his thirst was aroused by the spiciness of the stew, bu when they offered the pulque to quench his thirst, he refused i saying, "No, I abstain. Is it not harmful? Does it not take away the senses?" The sorcerers answered, "Only taste it with the tip of your finger. It is strong, newly made. You will find it good." So the king tasted it and found it indeed delicious. "I will drink more this," he declared. "Pour out a draught for me." "We will pour out draught," said the sorcerers. "Indeed, four draughts we will pou for you." And when he had drunk the four, they poured a fifth saying, "Drink this, my lord, as your sacrament."

Then the sorcerers gave all the pages pulque, five draughts eac did they give, and they all made themselves utterly drunk. Then Quetzalcoatl cried joyously, "Bring forth my elder sister, Quetzal petlatl, that we may be drunk together!" And the pages went to the place where she was and brought her to her brother. They gave her the pulque to drink, then, four draughts, even a fifth, until she to was made drunk. Then they sang,

Where now is your home,
My sister, my Quetzalpetlatl?
Oh, it's here, where you tipple!
Ayn ya, ynya yn, ye an!

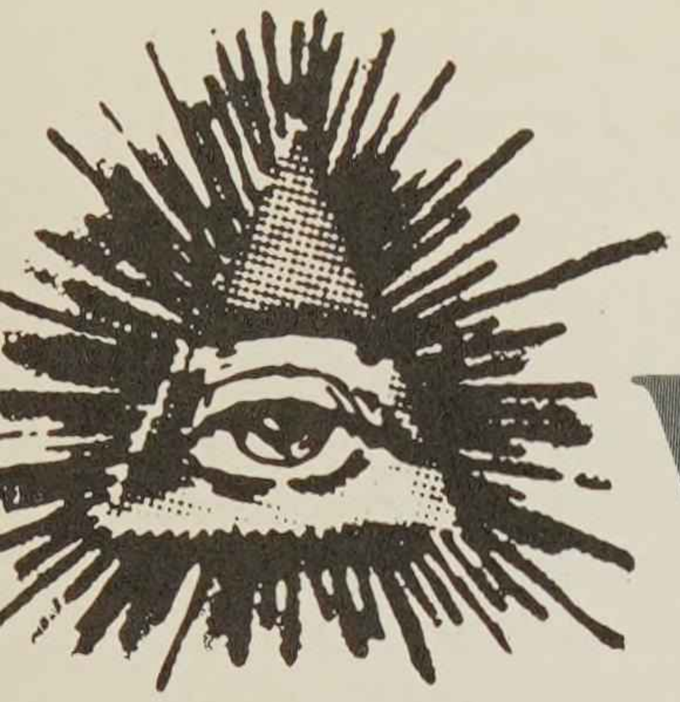
No more did they go to the house of penance, they did not go t the place of refuge and prayer. They lay down together, Quetzal coatl and his sister, both utterly drunk, thus was the night spen And at dawn, they were filled with remorse, their spirits were heavy with shame.

Quetzalcoatl arose from the bed of his betrayal and wept, he raised a lament to herald his departure. Then he called for his pag and commanded that a great funeral urn be made, and when the u was carved and completed, he lay down in it. Then, when four da had passed, he arose and spoke. "Enough, grandfather page!" h said. "It is time for our departure. But first, everything must b buried, everything must be concealed which we have created—th

beauty, the joy, the wealth. Take it all to the Edge of the Water and hide it so none may find it." The pages did as he bid them. All the beautiful things he had brought his people were buried, the four-fold house of penance was dismantled and the treasures of the palace were hidden in the mountains. Then the king went to the shores of the western sea, seeking Tlillan, the Black Land. Widely he travelled seeking the land of darkness, until he found it. Then he sought Tlapallan, the Red Land, and he came there to the shores of the celestial sea. In the year One Reed, Quetzalcoatl came to Tlillan Tlapallan. He put on his turquoise mask and his robe of precious feathers, and when he was dressed, he built a pyre and seated himself upon it, and set it afire. He sat there by the shores of the sea and was engulfed in the flames. Thereafter has that place been called Tlatlayan, the Land of Fire, the place of his burning.

It is said that as he burned, his ashes flew upward and then all the precious birds appeared, rising into the sky: cotinga and trogon, herons, parrots and macaws were all seen, as well as all the other precious birds. And when at last his body was consumed, his heart arose and the people knew he had gone into the sky. The old ones say that his heart became the morning star, and thus is he called the Lord of the House of Dawn.

For four days did Quetzalcoatl dwell in Mictlan, the Land of the Dead, accompanied always by his double Xolotl, who had chosen to take the form of a dog. He came with Xolotl before the Lord and Lady of the Dead, he stood before them and they asked him why he had come. Quetzalcoatl answered, saying, "Behold why I have come. The gods are troubled, for who shall inhabit the earth after the fall of Tollan? I have come to recover the bones of those who have died, the precious bones you are concealing." Then the Lord of Mictlan said, "It is well. Bring the bones here." But when the bones were brought, he said secretly to his vassals, the dead, "Do not let Quetzalcoatl take the bones up from Mictlan." And when Quetzalcoatl tried to bring the bones up, he could not, for the vassals of the Lord of Mictlan held him back. Then Xolotl, his double, said, "I shall bring up the bones. Go now by yourself away from Mictlan." So Quetzalcoatl arose from the Kingdom of the Dead and later Xolotl rejoined him, bringing the bones of a man and a woman. Together, they dug a hole and put the bones into the earth. Then Quetzalcoatl opened his veins and sprinkled the bones with his blood. Thus were men born anew, from the bones of old which the vassals of Mictlan had gnawed, and the blood of the Lord of the House of Dawn. Thus men are all mortal, for our bones were gnawed in the Land of the Dead; and thus men are immortal, for our blood is the blood of Quetzalcoatl.



Voting on Faith

Myth and Ritual in Pres

by James Wolfe

Selection of a President has to be an act of faith. This fait isn't achieved by reason; it's achieved by charisma, by feeling of trust that can't be argued or reasoned. The trad tional "issues" type debates center on the role of the head government, but I'm convinced that people vote more for chief of state—and this is primarily an emotional identific tion, embracing both a man himself and a particular vision the nation's ideals and its destiny. People identify with President in a way they do with no other public figur Potential presidents are measured against an ideal that's combination of leading man, God, father, hero, pope, kin They want him to be larger than life, a living legend, and y quintessentially human, a man who embodies the nation ideal, its aspirations, its dreams, a man whose image th people want in their homes as a source of inspiration, an whose voice they want as the representative of their natio in the councils of the world, and of their generation in th pages of history.

—Ray Pri

Americans are, no doubt, surprised to discover the symbolic side of the presi- dency, to which this campaign memo by Nixon speech writer testifies. We have bee taught that the United States is a secular republic with no established religion. W know what church religion is, and we ca see when it "intrudes" into politics. When Southern Baptist of strong conviction whose sister is an evangelist is belatedly

tial Politics

challenged by a Roman Catholic ex-seminarian for the Democratic nomination, only to be pitted against the victor of the Republican contest between a pious president whose son is a seminarian and a staunch Presbyterian ex-actor, we well may exclaim, "Heavens, there was a great deal of (church) religion making its way into the 1976 presidential campaign." But there is another kind of religion, a "civil religion," which belongs to the public realm and which, though less recognized, is politically more potent than church religion, even determining what political significance church religion will have. It is my contention that this civil religion is not, like the current vogue of church religion in politics, of an ephemeral or quadrennial or even a bicentennial but of a quite perennial sort, a fundamental ingredient in American politics as in the politics of all times and places.

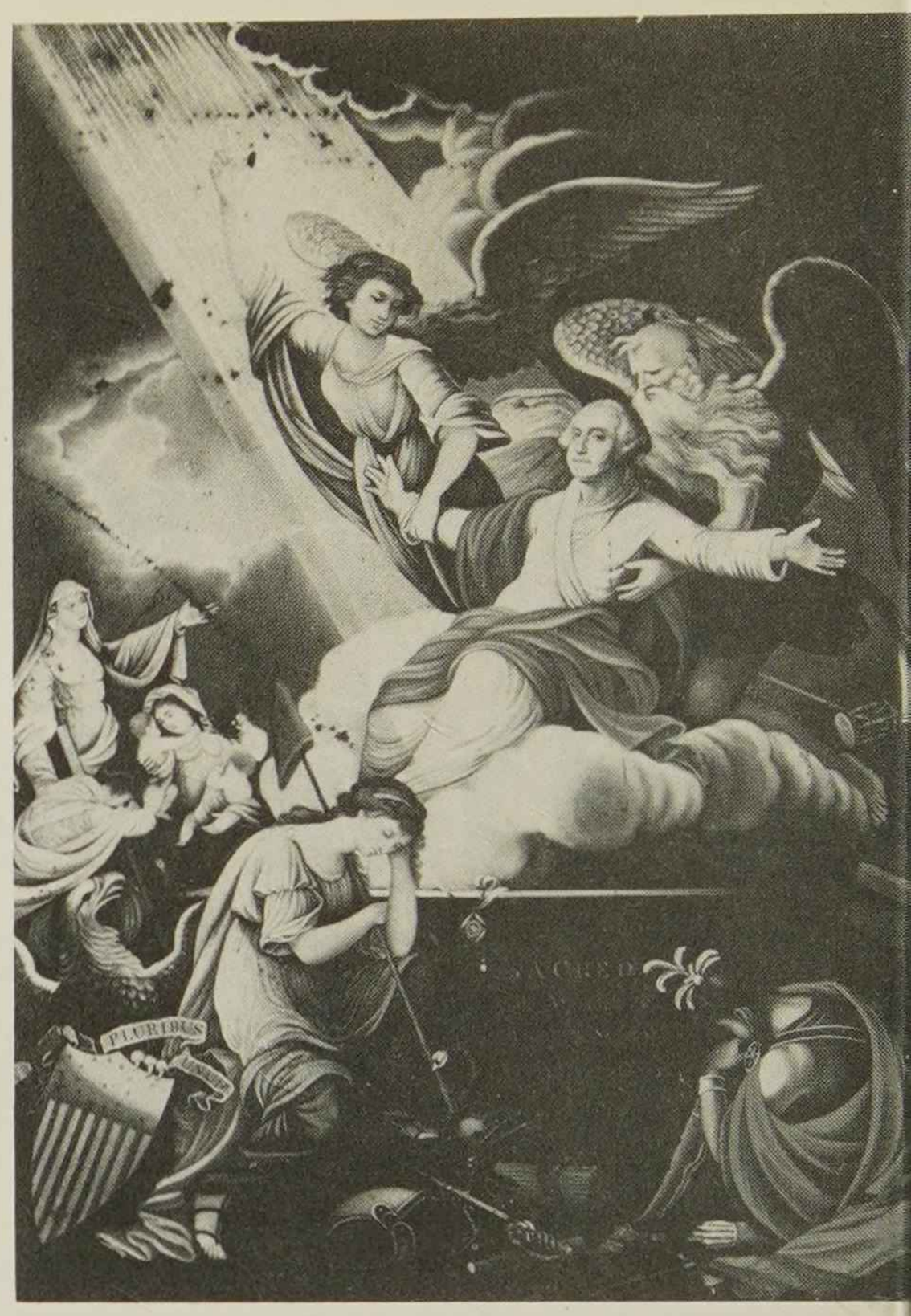
We know what civil religion is from history. We are acquainted with Pharoah being identified with the sun god and ruling Egypt by divine right, with Moses leading his people to freedom according to the promise of Yahweh, with Gideon rising up under divine inspiration to battle the Midianites, with King David established on the throne forever by God, with Caesar Augustus being worshiped in a ritual to which some Christians objected, with Charlemagne crowning himself Holy Roman Emperor in the Pope's presence, with Louis XIV claiming an absolute divine right of kings, with the French Revolution exalting the goddess of reason, with the United States as God's new Israel asserting its God-given independence against old-world tyrannies, with Hitler invoking the mythology of blood and soil, with Stalin's appeal to the iron law of history. But somehow we had come to believe that modern America had outgrown any need for such myth and ritual. In founding a new nation, our puritan and republican forebears, while disagreeing about the role of church religion in politics, were united in seeking to strip governmental institutions of all religious pretensions, and our age, so the conventional wisdom tells us, is far less pious than theirs. And yet, as I shall seek to show in this essay, civil religion remains alive and well in today's America, colors our image of the presidency as illuminated in the Kennedy myth, and has played a prominent part in Jimmy Carter's candidacy.

Though it may be (and should be) refined, civil religion cannot be simply dismissed. The legitimation of political authority is a religious function. Except for the exercise of raw power in short-lived tyrannies, government cannot exist without people investing some allegiance in it. And this allegiance is bound to be iconized in myth and enacted in ritual, for man is not only a political animal, as Aristotle asserts, but even in being such he is also a teller of tales and a producer of pageants.

I

The myths and rituals, emblems and observances, which constitute American civil religion are often so commonplace, so taken for granted, that they are overlooked. We do not seem to pay much attention to the meanings of such things as flags and presidents and holidays. Yet these meanings shape our sense of time and our conceptualization of space, mark our money and our wars, infiltrate the stances of our churches and the tenor of our schools.

The most basic American civil religious ritual is the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Let me remind you of the movement and the words. Hand on heart, standing erect, facing the flag, one says, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Far as it may be in form from the intense periodic festivals of the Australian aborigines which Durkheim analyzed, it serves the same function of reaffirming al-



legiance to the values of the society. The pledge of allegiance is essentially a civil religious creed and, as it happens, one that was recited daily, accompanied by the martial strains of "The Star-Spangled Banner" on the public address system in the public school when I was growing up. Prayer and Bible readings were also once part of that daily ritual but were eliminated in the 1960s as a violation of the First Amendment stricture against the establishment of religion. But the dropping of prayer and Bible readings from public school ritual as too sectarian hardly spelled the end of the established American civil religion. The nation kept its motto, "In God We Trust," stamped, significantly, on its coins, linking God and Mammon in an expanded pantheon, and it venerated its most illustrious presidents, as the Romans divinized their departed emperors, by placing their heads on coins (and bills). It kept the prayers at the opening of sessions of the Congress and of the Supreme Court and at the President's inauguration. It kept the calendar of national holidays and the military chaplaincy. And the God who was "driven out of the schoolhouse" with the elimination of prayers there had already been reinstated through the insertion of the phrase "under God" into the pledge of allegiance in the 1950s (making this traditional civil religious dogma explicit much as the proclamation of the Assumption of the Virgin did in Roman Catholicism during the same period). "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being," asserted the Supreme Court in 1952.

However, not only such a God, but even the nation itself is too remote to receive unmediated devotion. Like a being extrapolated to be supreme beyond all beings, a Country extended beyond one's familiar countryside to stretch "from sea to shining sea" runs the danger of evaporating into nebulousness. Concrete symbols must intervene between a people and a nation in order to facilitate devotion to it. Like the mythic ancestors and tangible totems which serve as collective representations of society in aboriginal religion, intense identification as an American is bolstered by the sagas of past heroes who have made America great and by American flags fluttering over public buildings, emblazoned on lapel pins, saluted in countless schoolrooms and military posts. Without a traditional monarch to symbolize the realm to his subjects, Americans have thus been led to rely for this function on the flag and on a series of glorious presidents, symbolized by the incumbent.

Of the flag, historian Whitney Smith writes:

> *Our nation lacks both a royal dynasty and a single dominant religion. Hence, searching for an encompassing symbol the majority have traditionally rallied around the flag. We invented–the first people to do so–an annual Flag Day. Our children pledge allegiance to the flag. . . Unquestioning loyalty to the flag has been considered a fundamental American principle.*

Likewise, the presidency has been held in great esteem as, in President Taft's words, "the one-man distillation of the American people, the personal embodiment and representative of their dignity and majesty." Summarizing (pre-Watergate) research on attitudes toward the presidency, Fred Greenstein found the president to be: 1) the nation's best known political figure; 2) the first public official to come to the attention of children, who regard him as important and benign; 3) an unconscious father figure for many people; 4) respected in his status as president even by those cynical to politicians; and 5) approved in his performance by most adults, who rally to support the president, particularly when he acts at a time of international crisis.[1]

Theoretically, flag and president are penultimate symbols. In the flag salute, one pledges allegiance not so much to the flag itself as to the republic, under God, for which it stands. And maturing awareness discloses that presidents are limited and fallible. Nevertheless, research indicates that early undiscriminating childhood reverence for flag and president and identification of God and country may never be fully outgrown. In actual practice, allegiance to the nation as divine tends to outstrip commitment to the transcendent God above the nations which church religion espouses. In *Political Ideology*, Robert Lane writes:

> *In many ways, belief in a powerful state is a psychological substitute for belief in a powerful God. A positive faith in one's political system, like a positive faith in religion, reassures a person that he is properly connected to the powers that be. . . . He has been 'good,' and, like a good child, deserves well of the authorities.*

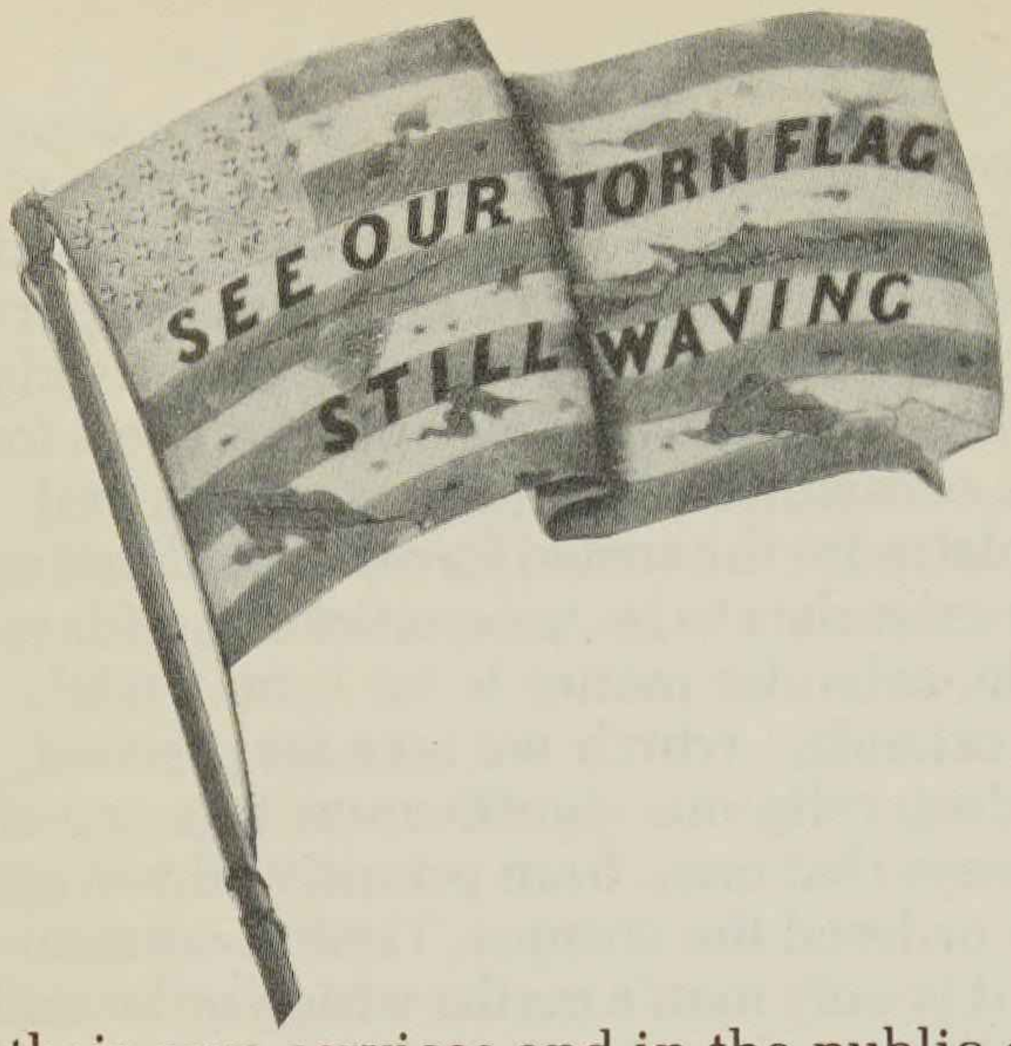
Adds Sidney Verba:

> *Many of the functions that religion and religious symbolism perform elsewhere are performed in the United States by the central political symbols. . . . In a secular society where (church) religious commitment is weak, the activities of the state may be the nearest one comes to activities of ultimate importance, activities that fundamentally determine matters of life and death and of the quality of life. . . . The awe inspired by the ultimate power of the church in more pious times may be akin to the awe inspired in modern secular societies by the ultimate power of the state.*[2]

How do the churches respond to the civil religion which may be displacing their kind of religion? By and large, churches support the civil religion without sensing possible conflict, providing, as we noted, prayers for civic occasions and public meetings and chaplains for the armed forces and adjusting their calendars to include national holidays.

The calendar matter is far from trivial. The calendar, which we take for granted, has deep religious significance; it is one of the ways that men, from primitive times on, have ordered the cosmos. Time is continuous; it is only man's myths which order and periodize it, for instance, through the seven-day week based on the myth of God's creation of the universe. The leaders of the French Revolution realized this and tried to institute a new calendar based on the events of the Revolution as they mythologized them. In America, on the other hand, the church and civil calendars are harmonized. The years are still Anno Domini (though presidential proclamations are dated by the year of the independence of the United States as well as A.D.) and room is left in the civil calendar for Christmas and Easter, but by far the greatest accommodation has been made by the church, which has taken Thanksgiving, Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays, Mothers' Day and Labor Day and Memorial Day into its calendar, usually itself giving them special emphasis on the Sunday before each holiday (the word itself a corruption of "holy day"). Thanksgiving and Memorial Day play a much more prominent role in the life of most Protestant churches than does the almost forgotten day of Pentecost, the third great celebration of the traditional church year.

It is customary to regard these national holidays as patriotic rather than religious. But Shils and Young ask, "What are the essential differences between Christians celebrating principal dates in the life of Christ . . . and a reunion of citizens commemorating . . . some great events in national life?" In *The Family of God*, Lloyd Warner sees Memorial Day ceremonies, in particular, as "ritual comprising a sacred symbol system which functions periodically to integrate the whole community with its conflicting symbols and its opposing, autonomous churches," thus providing a kind of super-religion in which all Americans and churches can participate. His documentation of the way that churches and church leaders are involved both in



their own services and in the public ceremonies is thorough and striking. Warner describes how the city of the dead, the cemetery, the spatial link between the living and the dead, comes alive on Memorial Day. The veterans of America's wars, back to the Civil War, again stalk the land. In tune with Lincoln's famous cemetery dedication speech at Gettysburg, there is no attempt to consecrate the grave-yard, which these brave men have "hallowed far beyond our poor power to add or to detract," but only to gain consecration from it. Not only are those who have recently made their passage to the city of the dead entered onto the roll of the blessed, but also the living gain new meaning by resolving that the dead did not die in vain and by rededicating themselves to the cause for which they gave "their last full measure of devotion." Thus both the ordinary dead and the ordinary living are sanctified by drinking the blood of the war dead on Memorial Day. The meaning of the once individually-mourned departed souls and the commitment to country of the living are enhanced and transmuted by incorporating them into the spirit of sacrifice of the especially sacred dead who died in war. In language reminiscent of Durkheim, Warner finds "the feeling of triumph over death by collective action made possible in the Memorial Day parade by recreating the feeling of euphoria and the sense of group strength and individual strength in the group power which is felt so intensely in time of war." Yet this revived war psychology, as Weber points out, by creating an unconditionally devoted and sacrificial community, by breaking down all given barriers to association, by giving death in battle an unquestioned meaning, provides a strong rival to Christianity with its sharply contrasting sense of communion, sacrifice, and brotherliness. Especially since the religious significance of dying for one's country "ultimately lies at the base of all endeavors to support the autonomous dignit of the state resting on force,"[3] it is this sentiment—more than all the myths, ritual mottoes, flags, heroes, and holidays, whic it colors—which is the crux of American civil religion, at least of its most nationali tic variety. The sense that a nation can clai the very lives of its citizens is the ultimat test of loyalty to it. Ironically, the wartim periods when such civil religion has bee most acutely evident have also been the times when civil liberties have been mos endangered. It seems that the "liberty an justice for all" to which we pledge our a legiance becomes most expendable when we are defending them *in extremis*, the fla most sullied in substance when most ex alted as an empty symbol by the flag-wavers.

II

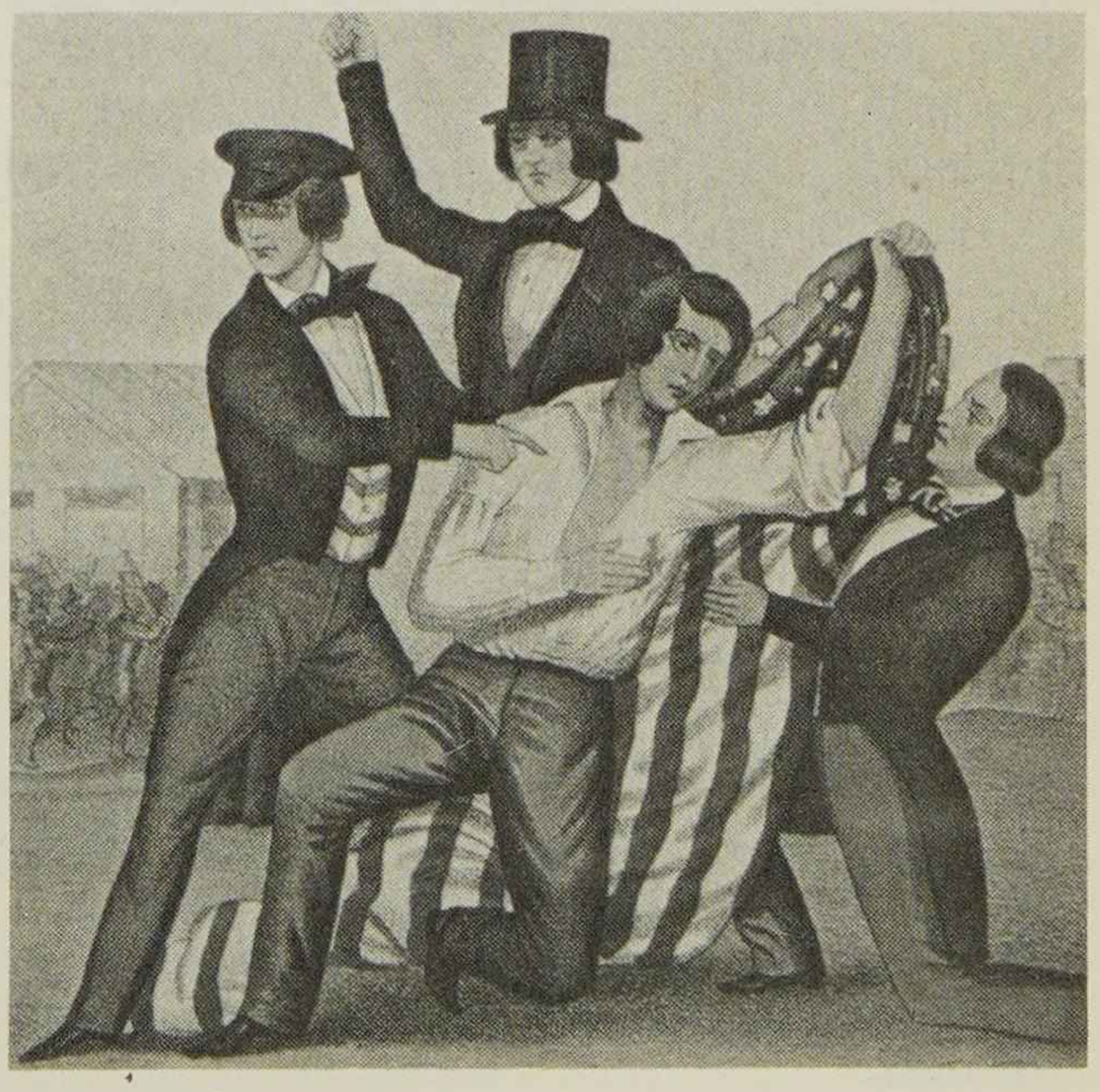
As we have noted, much of the Amer can civil religious myth and ritual cente around the presidency, and, given the power of war to generate devotion to cou try, it is not surprising that most of thos presidents who are deemed the greatest were war presidents. George Washingto who boasts a lofty monument in the capit city named for him as well as having hi head on quarters and one-dollar bills, le America's troops to victory (over an ine British foe) in the Revolutionary War an went on to preside over the nation's found ing, winning his place as "first in war, fir in peace, first in the hearts of his countr men." Thomas Jefferson, who also has a memorial in Washington and who has re cently resurfaced on bicentennial two-dollar bills, penned the immortal words which sought to justify the united states resort to revolution in their Declaration Independence. Abraham Lincoln, whose statuesque presence is the most inspiring the capital's memorials and whose visag graces pennies and five-dollar bills, earn a specially hallowed place in the America pantheon through his association with Negro emancipation, through his speeches—especially the Gettysburg Ad dress, which added the themes of sacrifi and rebirth to the scriptures of America civil religion—and through his merciful superintending a bloody war crowned b his own death in office. Theodore Roosevel whose head is beside those of Washingto

Jefferson, and Lincoln on Mount Rushmore, was a pugnacious president who had himself earlier led a charge up San Juan Hill in the Cuban theater of the Spanish-American War. Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose bad reputation with conservatives for his New Deal "extravagances" could not get him beyond heads on a dime, served the most terms as president, presided over American involvement in World War II, and also died in office. The catalogue of presidential heroes, each adding lustre to the next, could easily be expanded. But in our own day, it was John F. Kennedy, with an eternal flame at his grave in Arlington National Cemetery and his head on fifty-cent pieces, who has added the most to presidential glory. A brief account of the civil religious myth involved in his campaign, inauguration, presidency, assassination, and memorialization may serve to illuminate some aspects of the presidency in general at its most symbolic intensity. And from the heights to which we elevated the presidency through Kennedy, we can see how far it has fallen at the hands of his successors and assess how Jimmy Carter has sought to restore the civil religious status of the presidency.

As in the recent campaign, a "religious issue" arose in John Kennedy's presidential campaign of 1960. Unlike the present situation, the question did not concern Kennedy's personal religion, which was minimal, but only his denominational affiliation, which by birth and upbringing was Roman Catholic—with his opponents accenting the "Roman." In reality, it was not so much a "religious" as a "representative" issue, a question not about what Kennedy's Catholicism meant to him or even what effect, if any, it would have on policy, but a question of whether a Catholic could symbolically represent all Americans in the office of president.

Civics texts give the impression that choosing a president is a matter of assessing political issues—to which religious affiliation would be irrelevant. But, in practice, selecting the nation's highest representative is hardly the result of a dispassionate analysis of candidate qualifications conducted at arm's length by an enlightened citizenry. "The election of a president is almost a religious task," Michael Novak tells us in *Choosing Our King*. "It intimately affects the life of the spirit, our identity. Who the man is determines in a real measure who we are." If a president is going to be themselves writ large, the personification of their national self, their own *persona*, then the American people have to try him out and try him on. The presidential campaign is the means by which they test a candidate's "grace under pressure," the "High Noon" that reveals his true colors, the moment of truth that demonstrates his capacity to turn them on and revive their spirits and, reciprocally, his own. "The president of the United States is one of the great symbolic powers known to human history," writes Novak. "His actions seep irrepressibly into our hearts. That is why we wrestle against him . . . or feel proud, as though his achievements were ours, his wit unleashing powers of our own. Hands are stretched toward him over wire fences at airports like hands extended toward medieval sovereigns or ancient prophets," suggesting mystic participation, a witness from another world, some form of cure or heightened life arousing waves of power, being, and superior reality. Already in candidacy, presidential contenders are tested for their capacity for psychic regeneration. Novak writes:

> *The psychic power inherent in the president's office derives directly from the people. The president is obliged to make ritual pilgrimages among them–to touch them, to "press the flesh" as Lyndon Johnson put it–to complete the electric circuit of his symbolic connection with them. At least every four years, the campaign pilgrimage reopens this fundamental symbolism. The people get to "know" their president, and he them. . . . A campaign is a symbolic "long march,"* a rite de passage, *symbolically indis-*



pensable. If the people cannot see the president's personality torn and tested, how can they trust their lives, fortune, and honor to his decisions? A presidential campaign is an agon. *How do the candidates bear up under its tortures? It is a blood rite. The candidate suffers* for the people's sake. *They select which candidate has most united himself to them.*

Having put Kennedy through this kind of ordeal, the American people, by giving him a scant majority in the election of 1960, indicated that, despite the nation's Protestant heritage, they had reached a degree of pluralism and sophistication which could open the White House to a Catholic, at least of a lukewarm sort, thus burying this so-called "religious issue."

Yet the real religious issue was hardly thereby faced or resolved. Kennedy had asserted, in effect, that his American civil religion was so strong that it would exclude ecclesiastical religion not only from interfering with, but even from influencing, his conduct of the presidency. As astute observers in the religious press noted at the time, Kennedy declared—and quite sincerely as it turned out—that his religion was irrelevant to politics, taking a position so determined by opposition to the "establishment of religion" that it left little room for the "free exercise thereof" by a public official in his decision-making processes. Although Kennedy was not able to drown the religious issue in the West Virginia primary by trumpeting his war record and patriotism, such a strategy was ultimately successful. Despite Vatican objections to Kennedy's position of complete disjunction between church and state, Kennedy's brand of "America first" was sufficiently inspiring to American Catholics, who had long overcompensated for their allegedly alien religion by being superpatriotic, and to American Protestants, who decided that he was such a good American that they would not count his Catholicism against him, that Kennedy won the election. Religion, then, was after all indeed at the heart of Kennedy's campaign, an unrivaled nationalistic American civil religion, expressed in "getting the country moving again," in heating up the Cold War, in championing the "preservation of civilization" as the issue at stake in the election—themes which received their classic formulation in Kennedy's Inaugural Address.

Like every president through inauguration Kennedy was invested with the charisma of office, which includes the symbolic roles of high priest, representative father, and imperator.

The Kennedy inauguration was, as Kennedy had put it in an earlier draft of his Inaugural Address, a veritable "sacrament of democracy," combining flag and president, national anthem and praying clergy, Bible and Constitution, with even a touch of Roman myth as poet Robert Frost extolled "the next Augustan age, a Golden Age of poetry and power." The spare ceremony was rounded out with an inaugural concert and gala beforehand and inaugural balls afterward, which helped to set off the whole event as a festive, sacred time of transition between regimes, a passing of the torch from a grandfatherly president to a "new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war," and ready to conquer new frontiers as they braced themselves for militant exertion and unlimited sacrifice. At the center of this whole rite of passage stands the Inaugural Address, in which the president, as newly ordained high priest reaffirms the nation's sacred traditions and defines its outlook for the next four years.

Although Kennedy frames his address with traditional civil religious language about swearing his oath before the people and God and making God's work truly his own—and even advocates a long twilight struggle against tyranny, poverty, disease and war—the heart of the message is a reaffirmation of the religion of war. In order to defend human rights—which are seen as in jeopardy abroad, not at home—Kennedy pledges to "pay any price" to secure not only the survival but also the success of liberty. Inspired by the holiness of dead soldiers, whose graves surround the world, Kennedy calls Americans to an unqualified devotion to country from which they are to ask nothing and give everything in a spirit of self-sacrifice. With messianic-patriotic zeal reminiscent of America's historic self-image as light of the world intensified no

into a nationalist manifest destiny, Kennedy proclaims that the energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to the endeavor of defending American-style "freedom" in its hour of maximum danger "will light our country and all who serve it, and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."

Like every president, through inauguration Kennedy was invested with the charisma of office, which includes the symbolic roles of high priest, representative, father, and imperator. As high priest, he would continue to extol the nation's heritage and destiny in further speeches and holiday proclamations. As representative, he would continue to embody American dreams and aspirations, which he had begun to personify in the campaign. As father, he would now begin, firmly and benignly, to steer the ship of state on an even keel through whatever storms were in the offing. As imperator, he would wield the awesome military and political powers of the world's most mighty office. In addition to these perennial symbolic roles of the president, which we find Jimmy Carter also seeking to assume, Kennedy added some mythic touches of his own—despite his disparagement of myth. His court was seen as Camelot and his White House as the *axis mundi*, the world's capital not only in politics but also in fashion, culture, and brain power. Kennedy took on the role of "Contemporer," who (like Christ) promises to bring in the new era, full of adventure and hope. He also played the role of Cosmocrator, the hero who rallies and leads the forces of order against the dragon of chaos wherever it might rear its ugly head, whether in Berlin or Cuba, in steel price hikes or race riots, in atmospheric nuclear testing or in Vietnam.

In the end, however, chaos prevailed as the vigorous John Kennedy, "a healthy, happy symbol of the might and invulnerability of his nation," was struck down by an assassin's bullet before, it seems, he had a chance to make good on his promises. The foundations of the earth were shaken and the heavens recoiled in horror as, with a consternation similar to that of archaic peoples over the loss of a sacred king, Americans witnessed the crushing of a symbol of invincible power, the destruction by a nonentity of the most potent representative of American values. Before a loss of such magnitude, it was necessary for a magnificent ritual to restore a sense of equilibrium and for a magnified myth to express, formulate, and preserve the meaning of Kennedy for the ages.

Television, which focused exclusively on Kennedy throughout the entire assassination weekend, provided the major vehicle for ritual, including not only the funeral proper but all the preparation for it. Martha Wolfenstein writes:

> *A new social ritual was improvised, which we might call the television wake. Mourners across the nation were helped to work through their distress by having images of the man they mourned repeatedly re-evoked, the circumstances of his death presented over and over until disbelief gradually gave way to acceptance of painful reality, and by having their feelings released and relieved by participating at a distance in protracted funeral rites.*[4]

Adds Wilbur Schramm:

> *Being shown symbols and events–the flag-draped casket, the young widow and the children, the terrible slow drumbeat of the funeral march–gave them an opportunity to experience a real catharsis of grief, . . . a purging of impure and ex-*

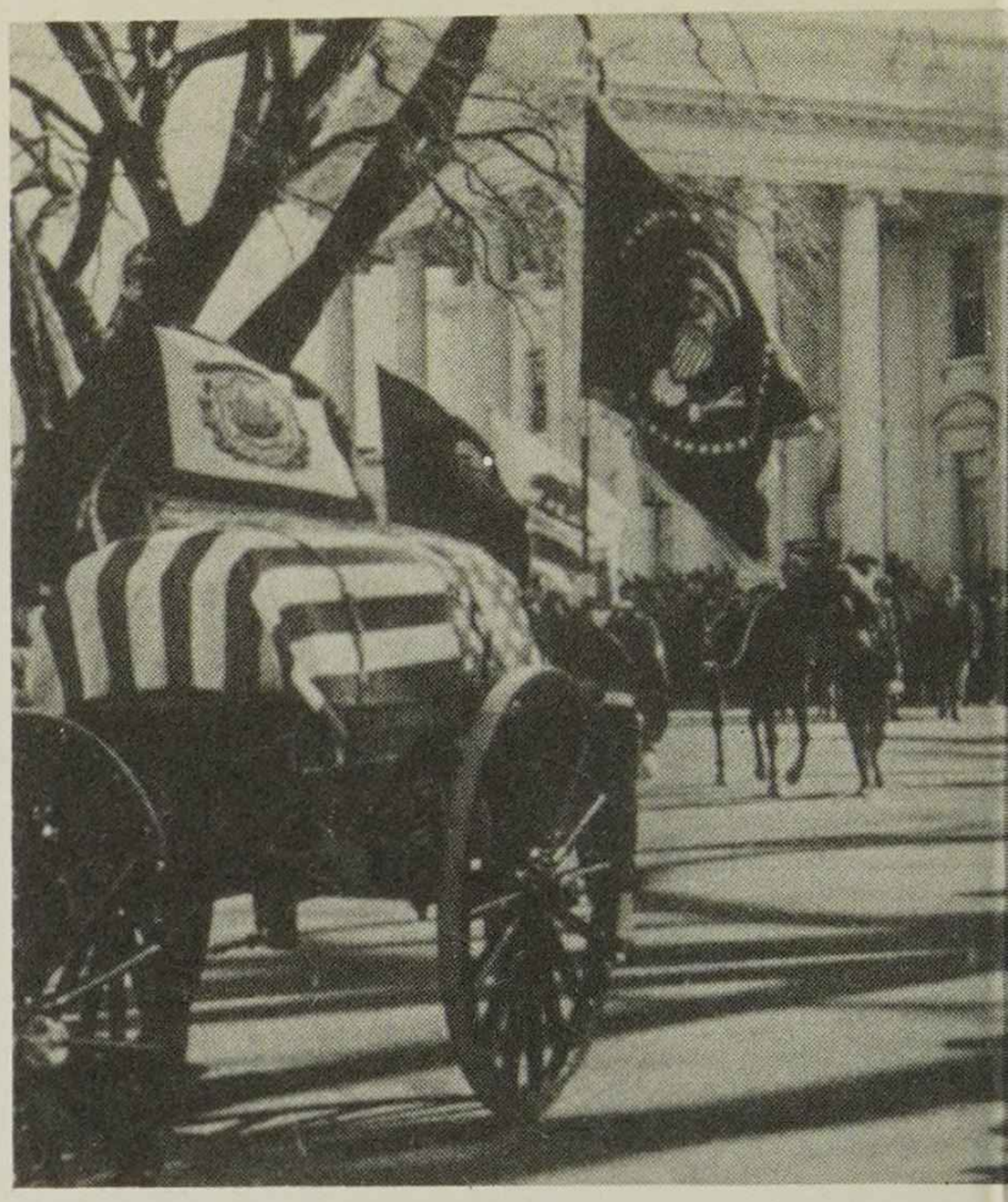
cessive emotions. . . . The viewers were purging themselves of their burden of grief and anger by going through acts of mourning, much as they might have done for a family bereavement.[5]

In keeping with this mood of common grief touched by a certain kinship as in war, the churches did what they could to offer solace through regular and special services. Differences were buried and separation of church and state forgotten as the churches tended the national altar, as on Memorial Day, in a common devotion to God and country, complying wholeheartedly with President Johnson's proclamation, which set Monday aside as a day of mourning.

The final ceremony was, as Manchester put it in *The Death of a President,* "a strange incongruous blend of old world mysticism and American tradition." Uniting what Max Weber distinguishes as the religion of war and the religion of brotherliness, the event was both military and ecclesial. The basic frame was a military state funeral, moving in procession from the nation's Capitol to the graveyard of its war heroes—reversing the path of the Inaugural procession—with a Catholic funeral and grave-side ceremony integrated into it.

While Robert Kennedy had wanted to see the reading of the *Beatitudes* included in the proceedings as testimony to his brother's work for peace, he was overruled, and, in addition to all the military pomp in the procession, even many of the passages chosen from Kennedy's Inaugural Address, with which the funeral was concluded, had a militaristic ring. Manchester comments:

> *It was ironic that John Kennedy, whom the world knew as a man of peace, should be buried as a warrior, but there really was no other way. If he must go in glory, and clearly he must, the troops were in-*



dispensable. There were no splendid traditions, no magnificent farewells for hero of peace.

It has always been thus in America—a sta funeral is a military and militaristic affa Armies march. Military bands play military-religious hymns, such as the Na Hymn, and militant church hymns, such "Onward Christian Soldiers." Cannons fi and jets streak over and taps are played an the flag, symbol of the nation but pre-eminently of the nation at war (e.g., as t national anthem celebrates it), is handed the widow. As a final touch, the Kenned lit an eternal flame, looking, at least in Theodore White's imagination, like ancie Celts seeking to retard the passage of the tribal chief from this world to the next.

Out of the experience of Kennedy's dea and the ritual which ennobled it, the Ke nedy myth was born in its complete form The assassination weekend stuck in people's minds, imprinting its unforgett ble episodes, preserved in memory and the plethora of *churinga*-like memorial books and magazines, coins and picture songs and films that followed in its wake had been an extraordinary time, like the "everywhen" of aboriginal Australian re ligious festivals, a time when the bounda between the present and the past was broken, the graves of the dead were opene and ancestral archetypes again stalked t land. "Almost legendary in life," Kenne became fully legendary, an archetypal fi ure cut on an eternal pattern, a "paradigm

tic event," a folk hero clothed in romance and invested with magic, making him more compelling than he had been in "real life." "Death swept away both affection and enmity," wrote Manchester. "It had been replaced by idolatry."

First to be transformed through myth was the assassination itself. As the assassination was transformed into an eruption of chaotic forces (sea, wilderness, darkness), Kennedy was transfigured into a champion of light; as the assassin was castigated as a villain (beast, Judas, Satanic conspirator), Kennedy was elevated as a hero and prince. No longer seen as a politician who had gone to Texas to campaign and whose death under those circumstances would be questionable, Kennedy was seen as a warrior king whose death in battle needed no justification. "President Kennedy died like a soldier," said General de Gaulle, "under fire, in the line of duty, and in the service of his country." Kennedy was repeatedly called not only a "hero" but also a "martyr," almost as a matter of course, despite his dissimilarity to the historic martyrs who gave witness unto death for their Christian faith. Preachers spoke of Kennedy's making "the supreme sacrifice of dying for others" and "laying down his life for his friends," and analogies to Christ were not uncommon. A Canadian medal showed an American flag draped over a cross with the inscription "he died for the sake of freedom." Juxtaposing passages from the New Testament and from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* with prose and poems about Kennedy's death in his play, *The Death of J. K.*, W. Nicholas Knight identifies Kennedy with both Christ and Caesar, once rivals in the era of the early church, but now combined in the American president whose sacred kingship rests on both pillars, the lord of heaven and earth, whose death marks the transition from temporal might to spiritual ascendancy.

Kennedy's death was pre-figured by Lincoln's. His funeral was based on Lincoln's and bore the same mood. Medals portrayed Kennedy and Lincoln together as emancipator presidents. "Hero" and "martyr" had been defined for American usage by the Lincoln experience. And the myth of Lincoln, the "martyred Christ of democracy's passion play" and one of her strongest rulers, had already interwoven the images of Christ and Caesar as the permanent heritage of the American presidency. When Kennedy's funeral procession passed the Lincoln Memorial, the bands fell silent, and only the drums were heard. Looking up at the brooding face of stone, many sensed Lincoln's sharing the nation's grief over the death of his compatriot. In his poem "In Arlington Cemetery," Stanley Koehler wrote:

> *The carriage circles a green park*
> *with its temple, the dark*
> *porch where the Form in his chair*
> *sheds a marble tear*
> *for what is fated like him.*

Then Kennedy himself was buried in Arlington Cemetery—on the "hill that watches Lincoln"—with an eternal flame on his grave. A month later, a thousand people, with one candle lighting the next, carried fire from the eternal flame at dusk to the Lincoln Memorial, bringing light back to its source.

III

Not only Kennedy but every president, as Rossiter reminds us, "walks in Lincoln's shoes," sleeps in his bed, inherits his office and prestige. Yet the identification is not equally complete in every case. With the martyred Kennedy so Lincolnesque and with his commanding a following from beyond the grave—achieving only in death the great majority for which he had hoped in life—Kennedy's presidency was bound to be a hard act to follow. Although it would have been tactless and obsequious to have said so, there was some truth in the line which Sorensen wrote into President Johnson's first major speech: "I who cannot fill his shoes must sit at his desk." How could a living Chief Executive—especially one distinguished from Kennedy by his age and his religion, his Texas background and wheeler-dealer image, his vulgarity and pettiness in the eyes of his critics—possibly measure up to a mythic hero?

Lyndon Johnson's impulse and strategy in this situation was to wrap himself in the mantle of Kennedy, to capitalize on his inheriting the presidency from Kennedy as grounds for claiming to be Kennedy's legitimate successor, and to make use of the posthumous obedience to Kennedy, which the American people and Congress were quite willing to render, as a source of support for the stalled Kennedy legislative program, which he adopted as his own and pushed through Congress. Johnson might well have succeeded as surrogate for the

mythic Kennedy had not his involvement in Vietnam incurred the opposition of Robert Kennedy, who had his own mythic claims to being John Kennedy's personal successor. As it was, Johnson met his abysmal end as he had reached his glory haunted by the spectre of Kennedy, murdered in Dallas, resurrected in Bobby, and murdered again.

Richard Nixon repudiated rather than extolled the Kennedy image, to which Johnson could never quite measure up, by promising to end the nightmare of the turbulent '60s and to restore to America the "inspiration of a driving dream" of an earlier vintage. In his first Inaugural Address, he reversed Kennedy's dictum by encouraging people to ask neither what they could do for government nor what government could do for them but what they could do for themselves. In the end, as we all know too well, Nixon showed us what he could do for himself through obstruction of justice and abuse of power, became more isolated from the people—and even from Congress and Cabinet—than Johnson had been, and was repudiated by the American people and government for what Theodore White regards as the one unforgivable sin against them, the "breach of faith" involved in a presidential High Priest breaking his word to them. Nixon's ritual fault not only brought disgrace to the presidency but also, when compounded with the revelation of CIA misdeeds and congressional sex scandals, tainted Washington politicians in general with the result that all the Washington politicians except Ford were knocked out of the 1976 presidential race leaving it to a contest between an inglorious president and several state governors, the most successful of whom was Jimmy Carter.

One key aspect of Carter's appeal was his promise to restore honesty and greatness to the White House. He accepted the Democratic nomination, in Kennedy's words, "with a full and grateful heart—and only one obligation—to devote every effort of body, mind, and spirit to lead our party back to victory and our nation back to greatness." Characterizing Kennedy in his litany of great Democratic presidents as "a brave young president who called the young at heart of whatever age to seek a new frontier of national greatness," Carter reminded his audience that they could again have a president who "governs with vigor and vision and aggressive leadership." Answering the people's call for new voices, ideas, and

With the martyred Kennedy so Lincolnesque and with his commanding a following from beyond the grave—achieving only in death the great majority for which he had hoped in life—Kennedy's presidency was bound to be a hard act to follow.

leaders after years of war, scandals, and broken promises, Carter presented himself as just the kind of bold and refreshing leader who could assume and replenish the mythical presidential roles of representative, high priest, imperator, and father.

It is a curious paradox that Americans want the president as their symbolic representative to be both the same and different from themselves. For instance, Kennedy's wealth, coupled with his humble ethnic ancestry, was hardly typical, but it enabled him to serve well as the model American whose excellences his fellow countrymen could aspire as the American dream come true and in whom they could achieve vicarious satisfaction through identification with him. He was, in Norman Mailer's phrase, "Superman come to the supermarket," the glorious one is in our midst and accessible to us. "You were and are ourselves," wrote Lewis Turco in a posthumous poem, "an emblem of who we are and what we strive to be." "The craving of the American people to be governed by men who are both Everyman and better than Everyman could hardly have been better satisfied," concludes Henry Fairlie in *The Kennedy Promise*. Likewise, Carter's intense and genuine religiosity set him apart from many Americans and especially from most prominent non-Southern politicians. Yet it represented the aspirations of many of his countrymen and promised to produce a unusual honesty and commitment in high places with which they could readily identify after more sophisticated leaders had betrayed them. Moreover, Carter's meteoric rise from obscurity and his just-folks style (which was also Ford's chief drawing card) offset the *hubris* involved in his asking, "Why not the best?" a stance which, if unadulterated, many would find unacceptable in a "democratic leader," who must not

stand too high above the common herd.

The populism and problematic candor of this peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, undermined disparagement of Carter's "differentness" and suspicions of his harboring a "holier-than-thou" attitude. Carter made it quite clear in his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention that he would not trump up his own virtues but intended to identify with the average American and trust his wisdom as an adequate, indeed superior, basis for governmental decision. In contrast to current leaders—who, according to Carter, are isolated from the people, lack faith in the people and the confidence of the people, empower an economic and political elite to make decisions while others bear the consequences, and perpetrate an unholy alliance of money and politics which keeps the average American at arm's length—Carter promised to give the government of this country back to the people. If we had not turned to the Kennedy-Johnson brain trust or the Nixon cabal or to clandestine operatives but had instead openly relied upon the "sound judgement, good common sense, and high moral character of the American people," we could have avoided the taint of Vietnam-Cambodia, Watergate, and the CIA revelations, Carter avers. Gone is any distinction between people and government or between people and president in this populist myth. The identification is complete. The people are not an unruly collection of discordant voices motivated by various interests and characterized by different degrees of moral worth—are not in Lincoln's fine phrase, God's "almost chosen people"—but are wholly united and wholly good, and the president should be nothing but their representative, not leading them but merely mirroring their views and drinking their blood as he becomes them. Recognizing limitations neither in the people nor in the president, Carter asserts, "We can have an American government as decent and as competent as our people, and an American president who feels your pain and shares your dreams, and takes his strength and wisdom and courage from you."

Although Carter's vision is still of a *pax americana* imposing our ideals rather than a genuine world peace, there is at least a degree of moving away from the most militaristic forms of civil religion, e.g., from the religion of war, and from the myth of America as the world's saviour on which it is based. And when it comes to keeping the peace at home as a protective father, Carter again promised to be less strident and more compassionate than his predecessors. Wags who could get away with reading Hitler's speeches on law and order, only to have the unsuspecting guess they were Nixon's, probably could not catch Carter in the same ruse. For him, order is prerequisite to education and harmony and liberty but is not a stifling end in itself, and the religion of national security, by which dissenters have been repressed as heretics, is, for him, inoperative. We need to protect victims from criminals and criminals from lack of justice, Carter tells us, by enforcing the law through swift arrest and trial and fair and uniform punishment, meted out to "big shot crooks"—including government officials who disrespect the law—as well as poor ones. Taking on the mythic role of father, he says, "the poor, the weak, the aged, the afflicted must be treated with respect and compassion and with love," and then with a Niebuhrian touch, he adds, "and love must be aggressively translated into simple justice." In contrast, Roosevelt once said, "Lincoln was a sad man because he could not do everything he wanted to. No president can."

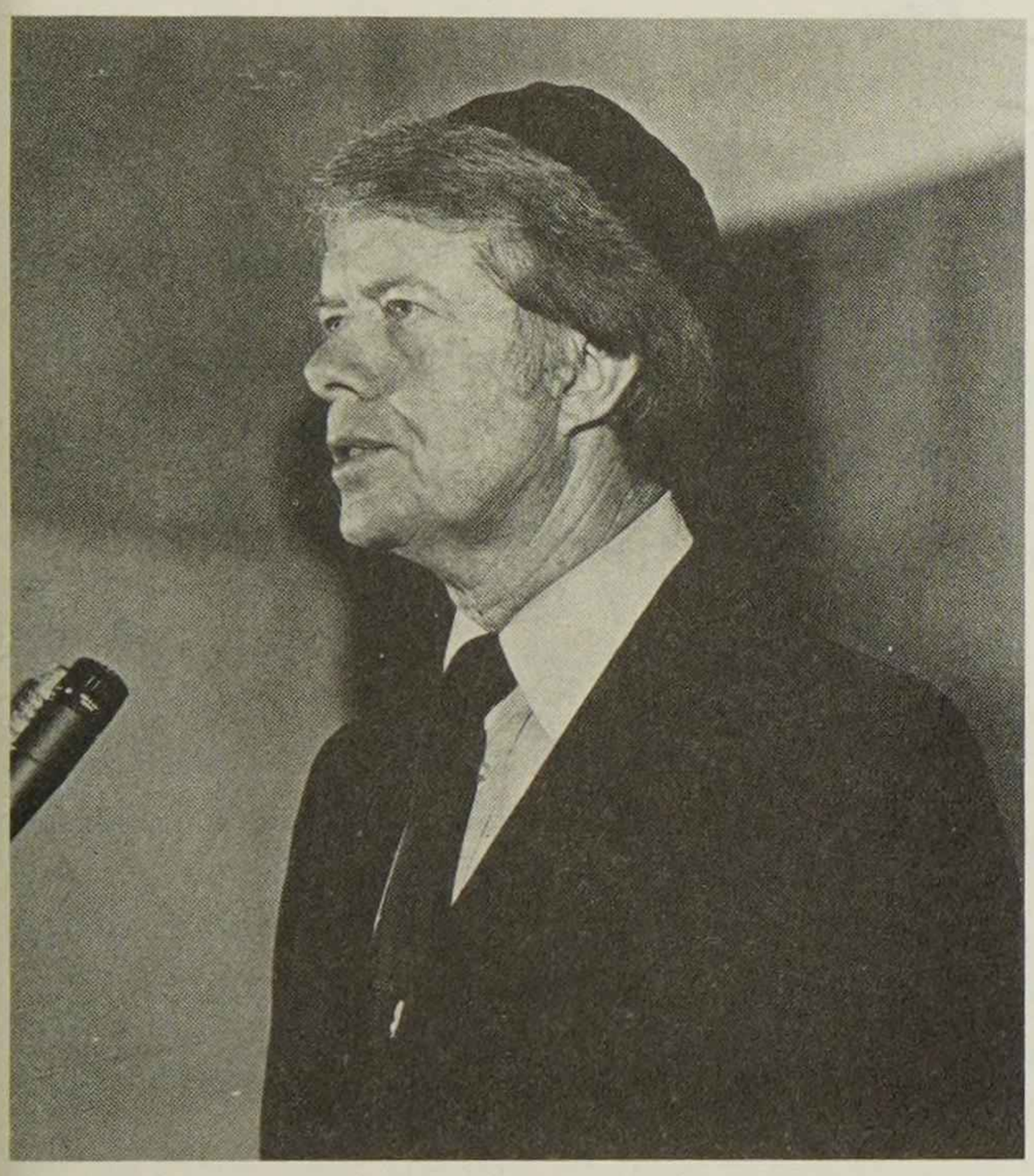
Jimmy Carter still believes in the myth of America and in the mythic qualities of the presidency, which he regards with reverence and awe even after realizing that its incumbents are human and sometimes all too human.

But Carter recognized no limitations as he aspired to meet the mythic longing of the American people for a presidential father who would take care of them all completely.

Jimmy Carter still believes in the myth of America and in the mythic qualities of the presidency, which he regards with reverence and awe even after realizing that its incumbents are human and sometimes all too human. Having an ambition—which, like Lincoln's, is "a little engine that knows no rest"—slightly mitigated by a Christian humility, Carter was primarily asking us to find him worthy to protect, lead, inspire, and embody our nation in the mythic roles of father, imperator, high priest, and representative. In all the speeches and ritual pilgrimages through which he presented himself to us, he was, like his opponent, asking us to put our faith in him.

And it would be a mistake to think that Gerald Ford has not played a similar game. Widely perceived as a decent but mediocre fellow, more qualified to be mayor of Grand Rapids than a president from there, he made virtue of adversity by projecting an image of a plain, decent, honest, non-extravagant middle American who could get the job done. For many it has been easier to see this friendly, unpretentious ex-football star as the typical American than it has been to cast the southern-accented, intense, and in many ways rather unusual Carter in that role. Ford restored faith at least that this president would not deceive the country the way his predecessor had and that here was a no-nonsense guy who could keep "the best and the brightest" from getting us into such hot water again and hold the free-spenders in check. Like Carter, he presented himself as another Truman (to capitalize on a wave of Truman-mania)—not as the man who could drop the bomb, but the "plain speaker" who could make tough decisions

and give the pols hell. His back-slapping style and congenial, if bumbling, demean suggested to some that here at least is a common man, a true man of the people. B it seems that what helped Gerald Ford mo was the challenge of Ronald Reagan. As George Will observed, "Ford's principal handicap has been a faint aura of illegiti macy. He came to power easily. But cam paigning across the continent has been a legitimizing ordeal." Thus Ford emerge from the Republican convention with th strongest image he had had since the Mayagüez incident (whose fallout was n unambiguously positive), and faced the electorate with a forceful demand for a vot of confidence in his "steady-handed" gu dance of the ship of state, a formal legitim



tion of his accidental presidency.

In the recent election, I am sure that a few people voted on the basis of political issues, but—in a nation as steeped in civil religion as America is, with a presidency as rich in symbolic dimensions as ours has become, and after a campaign as geared to the restoration of trust as this one was—I am even more sure that a great many of us found ourselves, primarily, voting on faith.

Footnotes

[1]Fred I. Greenstein, "Popular Images of the President," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, CXXII (November 1965), pp. 523–529.

[2]Sidney Verba, "The Kennedy Assassination and the Nature of Political Commitment," in *The Kennedy Assassination and the American Public*, edited by Bradley S. Greenburg and Edwin B. Parker (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 352.

[3]Max Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions," in *From Max Weber*, edited by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 335.

[4]Martha Wolfenstein, *Children and the Death of a President* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. xx.

[5]Wilbur Schramm, "Communication in Crisis," in *The Kennedy Assassination and the American Public*, p. 7

Epicycle II

The Elk Skull

One day, as Trickster was wandering around in the world, he came to a valley where he heard someone beating a drum. Along with the drumming, he heard many war whoops: so loud was the noise it seemed to reach the skies.

"What is all this drumming?" said Trickster to himself. "Someone is having a lot of fun. I wonder what he is up to? I guess I will go and see for myself: I haven't had any fun in a long time. If there is going to be dancing, I shall surely join in, for I was a fine dancer in my day."

Thus spoke Trickster to himself, and he hurried across the valley to get to where the drumming was. With every step the drumming and the war whoops got louder and louder, so he knew he was getting nearer. Everyone was shouting for joy. What a glorious noise there was! It was just the sort of thing that Trickster longed for. Now the drumming was so loud, it seemed the heavens would burst. The shouting was so close that Trickster felt sure that the people who were making it must be somewhere in sight. Yet wherever he looked, he could see no one, and still louder he heard the drumming and the shouting.

"Now," thought Trickster, "I must be right in the midst of that war-party." He looked and looked, yet he could see no one. There were, however, a lot of bones lying about, the bones of an animal, and a little further on, he saw an elk skull, with many-branched horns. The drumming and shouting seemed to be coming from the vicinity of the skull, so Trickster sat down and began to watch it very carefully, looking all about him from time to time to see if he could catch a glimpse of the drummer and the dancers. Presently he became aware that all the noise was coming from the skull itself, so he got up to take a closer look. Sure enough, the celebration was taking place inside the elk skull! The head was filled with thousands of flies. The skull echoed with the sound of their wings, and as they rushed in and out of the openings, they all shouted for joy. Trickster sat down and watched them. He was very envious of all the fun they were having.

"Well," said Trickster after a while, "I see you are all having a lot of fun. You are all doing exactly what I have been wanting to do for a long time now. Little brothers, this is a very important thing you are doing. I would very much like to be doing this thing with you. How can I do it? Please show me so I can join you and be one of you."

"There is no difficulty," the flies answered Trickster. "If you want to be like one of us, all you have to do is enter through the neck

just as you have seen us do." So Trickster picked himself up and tried to enter through the neck, but of course the opening was too small and he failed. Time and again he tried to put his head through the neck opening, but he was too big. Then the flies said to him, "Listen. If you really want to come in, say 'Neck, become large!' and when the opening is big enough, put your head in. That is the way we do it."

So Trickster sat down and said solemnly to the elk skull, "Neck, become large!" and sure enough, the hole grew big enough for him to put his head through. Ah, he was delighted! He put his head in and entered the skull, all the way up to his neck. But then all the flies flew away, and the opening he had put his head into became small again, and he was held fast. He pulled and pulled with all his power, but to no avail. He could do absolutely nothing.

When he realized that he was caught, Trickster went down to the river. He looked in the water and saw that his head now had long branching horns. What was he to do? He walked along the river's edge and thought. Finally, he had an idea. This is what he did. All night long, he sat by the river. When morning came, he stretched himself out and covered himself with his racoon-skin blanket. Augh! What a terrifying thing he was to look at now! From the neck down, he was covered with fur, and from the neck up he had a long white face with many-forked antlers.

Soon the women came down to the river for water. They saw this strange figure and were terrified. They began to run away, but Trickster held up his hand. "Stop!" he said to one of the women. "Turn back. I have come to bless you!" The woman was nearly frightened out of her wits, but she stopped when she heard the voice from the elk skull. Now the voice said to her, "Go home. Get an axe and bring it here. Bring all the appropriate offerings too, while you are at it—your relations will tell you what to bring. When you have come and presented the offerings, strike the top of my head with the axe. Whatever you find inside you will be able to use as medicine and get whatever you wish. I am an elk spirit and have come from the waters of this river to bless your village."

The woman immediately went home and told her relations what had happened. "There is a great elk water-spirit by the river, and he has come to bless our village," she said. "He has a medicine box and he said that if we brought the right offerings and struck him on the head with an axe, we could use whatever we found inside for making various medicines." So the people of the village prepared all the offerings appropriate for elk water-spirits—red feathers, white deer skin, and red yarn-belts—and went to the river.

When they had presented all the offerings, they chose a man to wield the axe. Cautiously, the man came up and struck the elk skull and behold there was Trickster, laughing at them uproariously! "Such a fine head-dress I was wearing, and now you have spoiled it," he said between fits of laughter. "Now what will I wear?" When the people saw that it was Trickster and that they had been fooled, they were ashamed. However, Trickster spoke to them and said, "Inasmuch as you have made these offerings, they will not be lost. I have made a promise, and I will not go back on it. You split the elk skull and found me inside; however you wish to use me, therefore, your purpose will be accomplished."

That was how the great medicines came to those people —Trickster taught them everything he knew, and all that he taught them was efficacious. When Trickster had given the people all the medicines they needed, he left them and continued his wandering.

MYTH AND ARCHETYPE IN SCIENCE FICTION

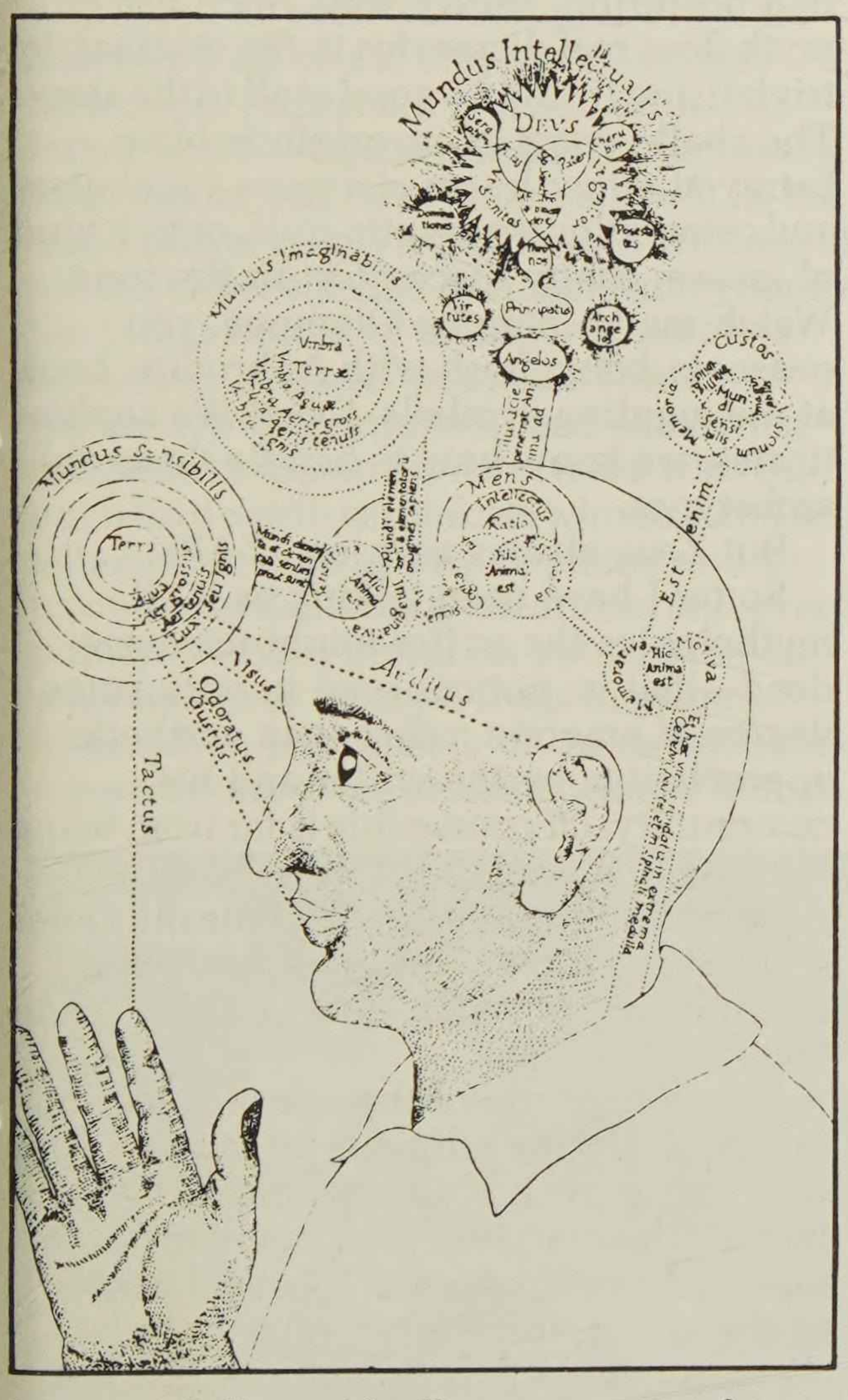
Ursula K. LeGuin

"Science fiction is the mythology of the modern world." It's a good slogan, and a useful one when you're faced with people ignorant and contemptuous of science fiction, for it makes them stop and think. But like all slogans it's a half-truth, and when used carelessly, as a whole truth, can cause all kinds of confusion.

Where care must be taken is with that complex word, "mythology." What is a myth?

"Myth is an attempt to explain, in rational terms, facts not yet rationally understood." That is the definition provided by the reductive, scientistic mentality of the first half of the twentieth century, and still accepted by many. According to this definition, the god Apollo "is merely" an inadequate effort made by primitive minds to explain and systematise the nature and behavior of the Sun. As soon as the Sun is rationally understood to be a ball of fire much larger than the Earth, and its behavior has been described by a system of scientific laws, the old mythological pseudo-explanation is left empty. The fiery horses and the golden chariot vanish, the god is dethroned, and his exploits remain only a pretty tale for children. According to this view, the advance of science is a progressive draining dry of the content of mythology.* And, in so far as the content of myth is rational and the function of myth is explanatory, this definition is suitable. However, the rational and explanatory is only one function of the myth. Myth is an expression of one of the several ways the human being, body /psyche, perceives, understands, and relates to the world. Like science, it is a product of a basic human mode of apprehension. To pretend that it can be replaced by abstract or quantitative cognition is to assert that the human being

*This schema is reproduced in Freudian psychology, where the myth or symbol is considered to be a disguise, and the raising into consciousness of unconscious contents leads to progressive emptying or draining dry of the unconscious: in contrast to the schema followed by Jung and others, where the emphasis is on the irreducibility of symbol, and the compensatory mutually creative relationship between the conscious and the unconscious.



is, potentially or ideally, a creature of pure reason, a disembodied Mind. It might, indeed, be nice if we were all little bubbles of pure reason floating on the stream of time; but we aren't. We are rational beings, but we are also sensual, emotional, appetitive, ethical beings, driven by needs and reaching out for satisfactions which the intellect alone cannot provide. Where these other modes of being and doing are inadequate, the intellect should prevail. Where the intellect fails, and must always fail, unless we become disembodied bubbles, then one of the other modes must take over. The myth, mythological insight, is one of these. Supremely effective in its area of function, it needs no replacement. Only the schizoid arrogance of modern scientism pretends that it ought to be replaced, and that pretension is pretty easily deflated. For example, does our scientific understanding of the nature and behavior of the Sun explain (let alone explain away) Apollo's remarkable sex life, or his role as the god of music and of the divine harmony? No, it has nothing whatever to do with all that; it has nothing to do with sex, or music, or harmony, or divinity; nor, *as science*, did it ever pretend to—only scientism made the claim. Apollo is not the Sun, and never was. The Sun, in fact, "is merely" one of the names of Apollo.

Reductionism cuts both ways, after all.

So long, then, as we don't claim either that the science in science fiction replaces the "old, false" mythologies, or that the fiction in science fiction is a mere attempt to explain what science hasn't yet got around to explaining, we can use the slogan. Science fiction is the mythology of the modern world—or one of its mythologies—even though it is a highly intellectual form of art, and mythology is a non-intellectual mode of apprehension. For science fiction does use the mythmaking faculty to apprehend the world we live in, a world profoundly shaped and changed by science and technology; and its originality is that it uses the mythmaking faculty on new material.

But there's another catch to look out for. The presence of mythic material in a story does not mean that the mythmaking faculty is being used.

Here is a science fiction story: its plot is modelled directly upon that of an ancient myth, or there are characters in it modelled

upon certain gods or heroes of legend. Is it, therefore, a myth? Not necessarily; in fact, probably not. No mythmaking is involved: just theft.

Theft is an integral function of a healthy literature. It's much easier to steal a good plot from some old book than to invent one. Anyhow, after you've sweated to invent an original plot, it very often turns out to be a perfect parallel to one of the old stories (more on this curious fact later). And since there are beautiful and powerful stories all through world legendry, and since stories need retelling from generation to generation, why not steal them? I'm certainly not the one to condemn the practice; parts of my first novel were lifted wholesale from the Norse mythos (Brisingamen, Freya's necklace, and episodes in the life of Odin). My version isn't a patch on the original, of course, but I think I did the gods of Asgard no harm, and they did my book some good. This sort of pilfering goes on all the time, and produces many pleasant works of art, though it does not lead to any truly new creations or cognitions.

There is a more self-conscious form of thievery which is both more destructive and more self-destructive. In many college English courses the words "myth" and "symbol" are given a tremendous charge of significance. You just ain't no good unless you can see a symbol hiding, like a scared gerbil, under every page. And in many creative writing courses the little beasts multiply, the place swarms with them. What does this Mean? What does that Symbolise? What is the Underlying Mythos? Kids come lurching out of such courses with a brain full of gerbils. And they sit down and write a lot of empty pomposity, under the impression that that's how Melville did it.

Even when they begin to realise that art is not something produced for critics, but for other human beings, some of them retain the over-intellectualising bent. They still do not realise that a symbol is not a sign of something known, but an indicator of something not known and not expressible otherwise than symbolically. They mistake symbol (living meaning) for allegory (dead equivalence). So they use mythology in an arrogant fashion, rationalising it, condescending to it. They take plots and characters from it, not in the healthily furtive fashion of the literary sneakthief, but in a posturing, showy way. Such use of myth does real disservice to the original, by trivialising it, and no good at all to the story. The shallowness of its origin is often betrayed either by an elaborate vocabulary and ostentatiously cryptic style, or by a kind of jocose, chatty discomfort in the tone. Watch me up here on Olympus, you peasants, being fresh with Aphrodite. Look at me juggling symbols, folks! We sophisticates, we know how to handle these old archetypes.

But Zeus always gets 'em. ZAP!

So far I have been talking as if all mythologies the writer might use were dead—that is, not believed in with some degree of emotion, other than aesthetic appreciation, by the writer and his community. Of course this is far from being the case. It's easy to get fresh with Aphrodite. Who believes in some old Greek goddess, anyhow? But there are living mythologies, after all. Consider the Virgin Mary; or the State.

For an example of the use of science fiction of a living religious mythos one may turn to the work of Cordwainer Smith, whose Christian beliefs are evident, I think, all through his work, in such motifs as the savior, the martyr, rebirth, the "underpeople." Whether or not one is a Christian, one may admire wholeheartedly the strength and passion given the works by the author's living belief. In general, however, I think the critics' search for Christian themes in science fiction is sterile and misleading. For the majority of science-fiction writers, the themes of Christianity are dead signs, not living symbols, and those who use them do so all too often in order to get an easy emotional charge without working for it. They take a free ride on the crucifix, just as many now cash in cynically on the current occultism

fad. The difference between this sort of thing and the genuine, naive mysticism of an Arthur Clarke, struggling to express his own, living symbol of rebirth, is all the difference in the world.

Beyond and beneath the great living mythologies of religion and power there is another region into which science fiction enters. I would call it the area of the Submyth: by which I mean those images, figures, and motifs which have no religious or moral resonance and no intellectual or aesthetic value, but which are vigorously alive and powerful, so that they cannot be dismissed as mere stereotypes. They are shared by all of us; they are genuinely collective. Superman is a submyth. His father was Nietzsche and his mother was a funnybook, and he is alive and well in the mind of every ten-year-old—and millions of others. Other science-fictional submyths are the blond heroes of sword and sorcery, with their unusual weapons; insane or self-deifying computers; mad scientists; benevolent dictators; detectives who find out who done it; capitalists who buy and sell galaxies; brave starship captains and /or troopers; evil aliens; good aliens; and every pointy-breasted brainless young woman who was ever rescued from monsters, lectured to, patronised, or, in recent years, raped, by one of the aforementioned heroes.

It hurts to call these creatures mythological. It is a noble word, and they are so grotty. But they are alive, in books, magazines, pictures, movies, advertising, and our own minds. Their roots are the roots of myth, are in our unconscious—that vast dim region of the psyche and perhaps beyond the psyche, which Jung called "collective" because it is similar in all of us, just as our bodies are basically similar. Their vigor comes from there, and so they cannot be dismissed as unimportant. Not when they can help motivate a world movement such as Fascism!—But neither can they furnish materials useful to art. They have the vitality of the collective unconscious, but nothing else, no ethical, aesthetic, or intellectual value. They have no element of the true myth except its emotive, irrational "thereness." The artist who deliberately submits his work to them has forfeited the right to call his work science fiction; he's just a pop-cultist cashing in.

True myth may serve for thousands of years as an inexhaustible source of intellectual speculation, religious joy, ethical inquiry, and artistic renewal. The real mystery is not destroyed by reason. The fake one is. You look at it and it vanishes. You look at the Blond Hero—really look—and he turns into a gerbil. But you look at Apollo, and he looks back at you.

The poet Rilke looked at a statue of Apollo about fifty years ago, and Apollo spoke to him. "You must change your life," he said.

When the genuine myth rises into consciousness, that is always its message. You must change your life.

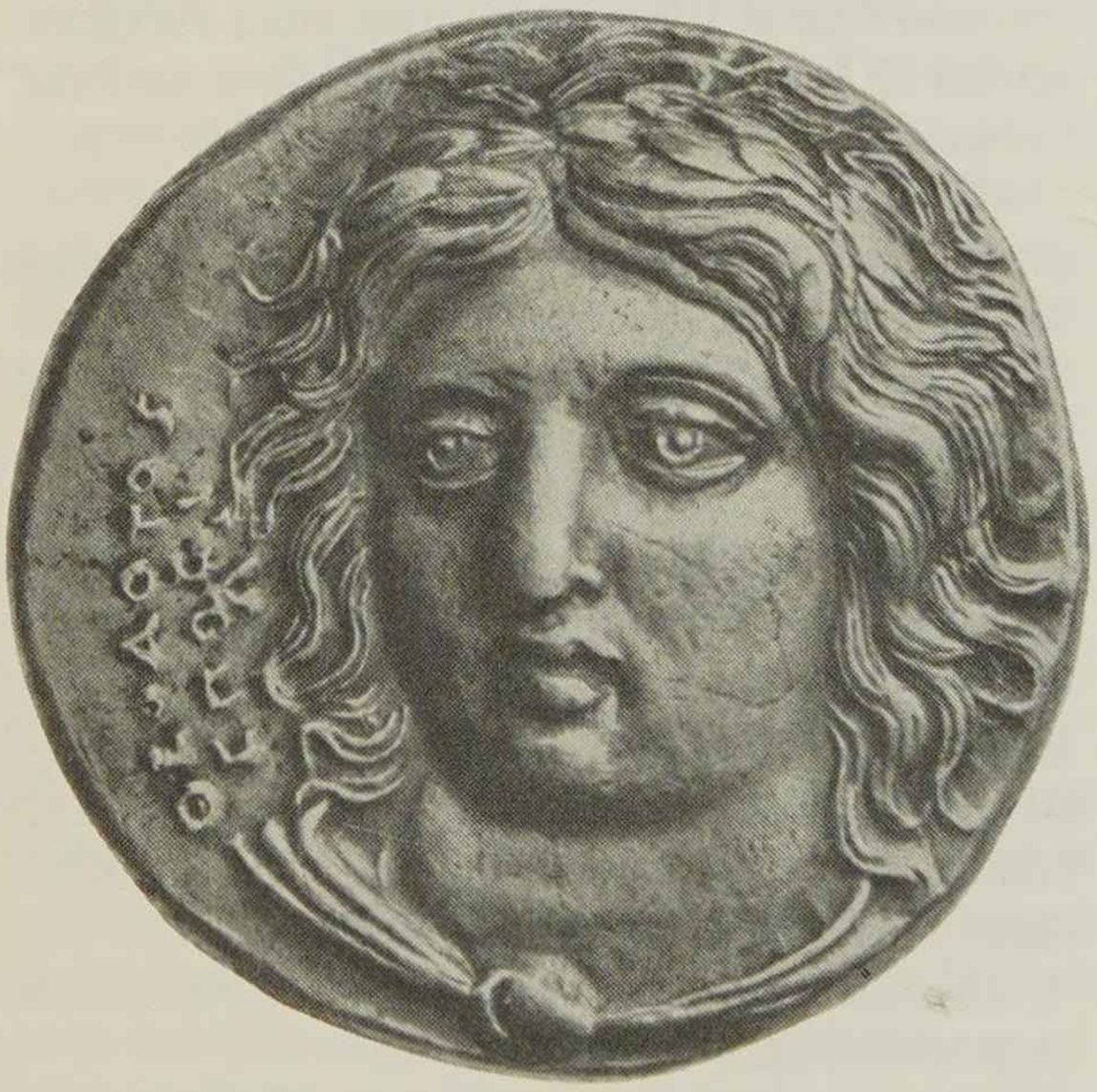
The way of art, after all, is neither to cut adrift from the emotions, the senses, the body, etc., and sail off into the void of pure meaning, nor to blind the mind's eye and wallow in irrational, amoral meaninglessness—but to keep open the tenuous, difficult, essential connections between the two extremes. To connect. To connect idea with value, sensation with intuition, cortex with cerebellum. . . .

The true myth is precisely one of these connections.

Like any artist, the science fiction writer is trying to make and use such a connection or bridge between the conscious and the unconscious—so that his readers can make the journey too. If the only tool he uses is the intellect, he will produce only lifeless copies or parodies of the archetypes that live in his own deeper mind and in the great works of art and mythology. If he abandons intellect, he's likely to submerge his own personality and talent in a stew of mindless submyths, themselves coarse, feeble parodies of their archetypal origins. The only way to the truly collective, to the image that is alive and meaningful in all of us, seems to be through the truly personal. Not the impersonality of pure reason; not the impersonality of "the masses;" but the

irreducibly personal—the self. To reach the others, the artist goes into himself. Using reason, he deliberately enters the irrational. The farther he goes into himself, the closer he comes to the other.

If this seems a paradox it is only because our culture overvalues abstraction and extraversion. Pain, for instance, can work the same way. Nothing is more personal, more unshareable, than pain; the worst thing about suffering is that you suffer alone. Yet those who have not suffered, or will not admit that they suffer, are those who are cut off in cold isolation from their fellow men. Pain, the loneliest experience, gives rise to sympathy, to love: the bridge between self and other, the means of communion. So with art. The artist who goes into himself most deeply—and it is a painful journey—is the the artist who touches us most closely, speaks to us most clearly.



Of all the great psychologists, Jung best explains this process, by stressing the existence, not of an isolated "id," but a "collective unconscious." He reminds us that the region of the mind /body that lies beyond the narrow, brightly lit domain of consciousness is very much the same in all of us. This does not imply a devaluing of consciousness or of reason. The achievement of individual consciousness, which Jung calls "differentiation," is to him a great achievement, civilisation's highest achievement, the hope of our future. But the tree grows only from deep roots.

So it would seem that true myth arises only in the process of connecting the conscious and the unconscious realms.

I won't find a living archetype in my bookcase or my television set. I will find it only in myself: in that core of individuality lying in the heart of the common darkness. Only the individual can get up and go to the window of his house, and draw back the curtains, and look out into the dark.

Sometimes it takes considerable courage to do that. When you open the curtains you don't know what may be out there in the night. Maybe starlight; maybe dragons; maybe the secret police. Maybe the grace of God; maybe the horror of death. They're all there. For all of us.

The writer who draws not upon the work and thoughts of others, but upon his own thoughts and his own deep being, will inevitably hit upon common material. The more original his work, the more imperiously *recognisable* it will be. "Yes, of course!" says the reader, recognising himself, his dreams, his nightmares. The characters, figures, images, motifs, plots, events of the story may be obvious parallels, even seemingly reproductions, of the material of myth and legend. There will be—openly in fantasy, covertly in naturalism—dragons, heroes, quests, objects of power, voyages at night and under sea, and so forth. In narrative, as in painting, certain familiar patterns will become visible.

This again is no paradox, if Jung is right and we all have the same kind of dragons in our psyche, just as we all have the same kind of heart and lungs in our body. It does imply that nobody can invent an archetype by taking thought, any more than he can invent a new organ in his body. But this is no loss: rather a gain. It means that we can communicate, that alienation isn't the final human condition, since there is a vast common ground on which we can meet, not only rationally, but aesthetically,

intuitively, emotionally.

A dragon, not a dragon cleverly copied or massproduced, but a creature of evil who crawls up, threatening and inexplicable, out of the artist's own unconscious, is alive: terribly alive. It frightens little children, and the artist, and the rest of us. It frightens us because it is part of us, and the artist forces us to admit it. We have met the enemy, as Pogo remarked, and he is us.

"What do you mean? There aren't any dragons in my living room, dragons are extinct, dragons aren't real. . . . "

"Look out of the window. . . . Look into the mirror. . . . "

The artist who works from the center of his own being will find archetypal images and release them into consciousness. The first science fiction writer to do so was Mary Shelley. She let Frankenstein's monster loose. Nobody has been able to shut him out again, either. There he is, sitting in the corner of our lovely modern glass and plastic living room, right on the tubular steel contour chair, big as life and twice as ugly. Edgar Rice Burroughs did it, though with infinitely less power and originality—Tarzan is a true myth-figure, though not a particularly relevant one to modern ethical /emotional dilemmas, as Frankenstein's monster is. Čapek did it, largely by *naming* something (a very important aspect of archetypizing): "Robots," he called them. They have walked among us ever since. Tolkien did it; he found a ring, a ring which we keep trying to lose. . . .

Scholars can have great fun, and can strengthen the effect of such figures, by showing their relationship to other manifestations of the archetype in myth, legend, dogma, and art.* These linkages can be highly illuminating. Frankenstein's monster is related to the Golem; to Jesus; to Prometheus. Tarzan is a direct descendant of the Wolfchild /Noble Savage on one side, and every child's fantasy of the Orphan-of-High-Estate on the other. The robot may be seen as the modern ego's fear of the body, after the crippling division of "mind" and "body," "ghost" and "machine," enforced by post-Renaissance mechanistic thought. In "The Time Machine" there is one of the great visions of the End, an archetype of eschatology comparable to any religious vision of the day of judgment. In "Nightfall" there is the fundamental opposition of dark and light, playing on the fear of darkness that we share with our cousins the great apes. Through Philip K. Dick's work one can follow an exploration of the ancient themes of identity and alienation, and the sense of the fragmentation of the ego. In Stanislaw Lem's works there seems to be a similarly complex and subtle exploration of the archetypal Other, the alien.

Such myths, symbols, images do not disappear under the scrutiny of the intellect, nor does an ethical, or aesthetic, or even religious examination of them make them shrink and vanish. On the contrary: the more you look, the more there they are. And the more you think, the more they mean.

On this level, science fiction deserves the title of a modern mythology.

Most science fiction doesn't, of course, and never will. There are never very many artists around. No doubt we'll continue most of the time to get rewarmed leftovers from Babylon and Northrop Frye served up by earnest snobs, and hordes of brawny Gerbilmen ground out by hacks. But there will be mythmakers, too. Even now—who knows?—the next Mary Shelley may be lying quietly in her tower-top room, just waiting for a thunderstorm.

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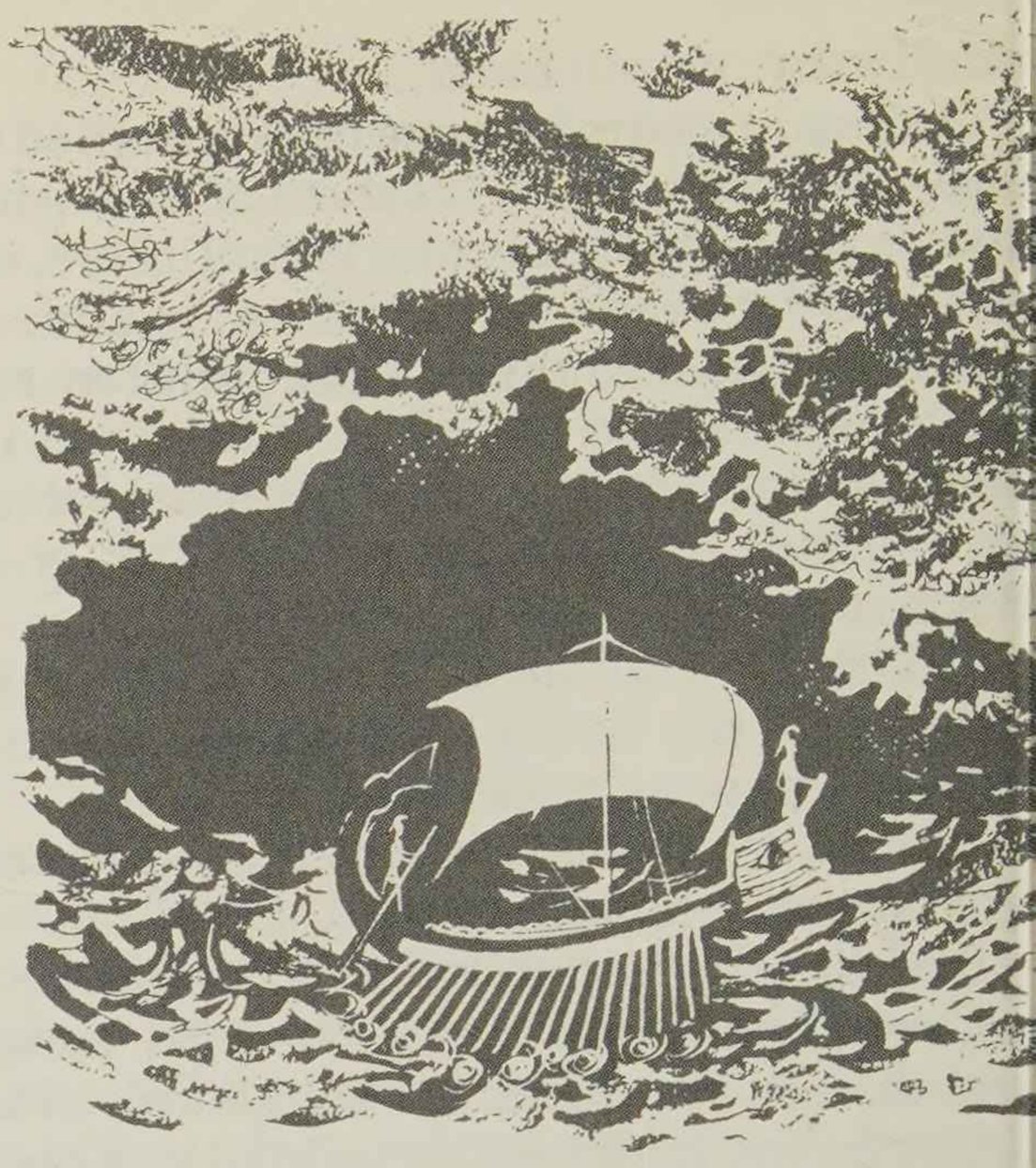
*Note that a manifestation is all we ever get; the archetype itself is beyond the reach of reason, art, or even madness. It is not a thing, an object, but is rather, Jung guessed, a psychic modality, a function, comparable to a function/limitation such as the visual range of the human eye, which, by limiting our perception of electromagnetic vibrations to a certain range, enables us to see. The archetypes "do not in any sense represent things as they are in themselves, but rather the forms in which things can be perceived and conceived." They are "a priori structural forms of the stuff of consciousness." (Jung: Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 347.)

Epicycle III



The Voyage of the Argo

All that the soothsayer told them came true, though foreknowl
edge did not blunt the edge of peril on their way. While the sons o
Boreas pursued the Harpies, those hounds of Zeus, the blind an
withered Phineus led the Argonauts with his words through th
dangers to come: the Symplegades and the many tribes of Bithynia
that lay between the *Argo* where she now lay moored and the
golden fleece at Colchis, the serpent whose unblinking eyes
watched over the Arean grove where the fleece was spread, and th
cruelties of Aeetes, King of the warlike Colchians.

Long was the silence that followed Phineus' tale, till Jason him
self gave voice to the dismay that hung over the Minyan voyagers.
"Reverend sir," he said, "you have told us the terrors awaiting us
and have blessed our ears with clues for our survival. For all this w
are thankful, and I trust that the sons of Boreas will repay our deb
by vanquishing the monsters that plunder your table. Yet even
supposing that we survive all that you foresee, how are we to retur
again to the Iolcan shores? Must we twice endure the hardships o
the way to Colchis?"

Phineus replied, "Once past the Clashing Rocks, my son, the
Argo need fear no new dangers on her way. It may be that som
Power shall lead you homeward by a different route—I cannot sa
more, lest I once again offend the high god Zeus by revealing all hi
plan. I may say only that your prayers to Aphrodite will never g
unheard. Take courage, then, and following my advice, press on t
the Symplegades and the seas that lie beyond."

It was at this moment that Zetes and Calais returned from the
swift pursuit of the Harpies, to report that Phineus' days of
punishment were at an end, and that Iris herself had promised h
protection from where she stood upon the rainbow lying ever
beneath her feet. All rejoiced then, and so commenced the feas
denied so long to Phineus' lips. And when at last the meal wa
finished, the Argonauts assembled on the shore, their hearts an
hopes lifted up by the fair omens that the soothsayer had promise
Now as one they strained at the hawsers that held the *Argo* safe
Wise Tiphys stood at the helm, guiding their efforts until the shi

glided into the sea. Then they climbed aboard and put their hands to the mighty oars at once. Nor did they forget the dove which Phineus in his vision of the days to come had recommended to their care.

Onward they sailed, each back straining at the oars to pull the *Argo* forward through the Bosporus more swiftly than the wind would carry her. Thus they labored until they reached the narrowest part of the straits. Here there was no wind, for the high and rugged cliffs walled them in on either side. The surf thundered all around them, and the *Argo* felt an undercurrent swirling and tugging at her, now this way, now that, as she struggled forward. Quickly, Euphemus rushed to the prow, the dove in his hands, as the oarsmen renewed their efforts under Tiphys' guidance, hoping to pass the Clashing Rocks by their own strength. Then it was that the *Argo* rounded a bend and all eyes beheld what has never since been seen: the Symplegades, the Clashing Rocks themselves, as they moved apart to reveal the passage in between.

Their hearts sank as the awesome sight was revealed. Dark and forbidding were the swells that billowed between,while the surf boiled and foamed around the rocks themselves. Now Euphemus released the dove, and all eyes were raised as her wings lifted her into the air. Once more the rocks began to move, now to meet face to face with a resounding crash, flinging the spume in a great cloud into the air. At the force of the blow, the *Argo* was spun completely around, yet as one man, the Argonauts watched the dove pass through. She made the passage safely, save only for the tips of her tail-feathers, which were snatched from her by the Rocks. A tremendous shout arose from the decks of the *Argo* at the passage of the dove, and all hands bent to the oars as the Rocks began to move apart once more. The Rocks themselves seemed to beckon the *Argo* forward, sending a backwash which lifted her into the breach between. Now even the strongest heart felt panic, for the terror of the Rocks hung over their heads, while before them a billow arched up and threatened to engulf the ship and all who labored there. But just in time, wise Tiphys checked their course, and the wave, instead of breaking over them, slid underneath the ship, propelling her forward and lifting the stern high into the air. Again the Minyan sailors urged the *Argo* on, as the Rocks on either side now loomed massively above them and began to come once more together.

Whether it was the skill of Tiphys and the might of the crew that moved them now, or the hand of blessed Athene, who watched over the *Argo* and all aboard, cannot be said. At one moment, peril closed in from every side, and in the next, the ship was safely through, just as the Rocks came crashing together again for the last time. But not all of the ship came through: just as she passed between, the rudder was clipped by the Rocks and the tip of it was sheared away. But all aboard were safe now in the calm waters that lay beyond, and when they turned to bid farewell to the terror of that passage, they found that the Symplegades were no more. Firmly rooted in one place they stood, in fulfillment of an ancient law that decreed their fate once a mortal man had seen them and passed through. Thus do they stand to this day, guarding no more the coast of Bithynia, which the *Argo* now sought so that her happy crew might rest before pressing on to Colchis.

THE DANGEROUS PASSAGE

BY D.M.DOOLING

Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew VII, 14

"Symbolism," wrote the Italian engraver Cristoforo Giarda in 1626, "is the form of revelation that God in his mercy created to make the Ideas that dwell in His mind known to man." If a symbol is in fact, as Eliade also says, a revelation of reality, a message that speaks of passage from one world of meaning to another, in a sense it is in itself a "rite of passage." With what care, then, must we speak of symbols, in order not to translate horizontally and on the same plane what is being transmitted vertically, from one to another level! And how to speak of symbols of passage, or symbols of symbol itself? The bridge, the door, the ladder; the clashing rocks of the Symplegades; the crossing, the maze, the quest, the return —all these and more, in myriads of myths, legends and fairy tales—communicate with us about communication, show us transmission and transformation, awaking echoes in us of a "nostalgia for Paradise," of a time before the Fall and before Babel, when heaven and earth and all their languages were one.

When we study them we begin to see how interconnected these symbols are and how they merge and blend with one another —how in fact they are all keys to different entrances to the labyrinth whose center is always one and the same. The puzzle has only one solution, however many the approaches. We seem to know that, without admitting it; for the varied patterns of our thinking are pervaded by one idea and one longing, whatever form it takes: a return t unity, a bridging of the division between inner and outer.

"The two worlds represented by two rive banks," writes René Guénon, "are heaven and earth, which in the beginning were united, but were separated by the very fa of manifestation, whose entire domain is then assimilated to a river or a sea which stretches between them. One of the two banks is the realm of death, where all is subject to change, and the other is the realm of immortality."[1]

And from the *Prose Edda:*

"Then said Gangleri: 'What is the way t heaven from earth?' And Harr answered, laughing aloud: 'That is not wisely asked have you not been told that the gods made bridge from earth to heaven, called Bifrost You have seen it, but maybe you called it rainbow. It has three colors and great strength, and is made with more cunning and art of magic than any other work of craftsmanship; yet it must be broken, when the sons of Muspell shall go forth harrying and ride it.' "

The connection is strong yet breakable the route is perilous, yet the only one to safety. The rainbow image is one of many representations of the crossing, of the way change; perhaps by its very evanescence, it shifting colors reflected in changing and blending shades of meaning and association, it can help us in the difficult task o approaching the symbolism of passage. W

need such help in order not to fall into the temptation of trying to pin down and kill the butterfly of meaning; for we crystallize by defining, we choose one aspect out of many, and thereby escape the two- or many-headed dragon of paradox which guards reality. By attaching an equals-sign which reduces meaning to the horizontal, we prevent it from leading us into the vertical and up to another dimension—where, to be sure, it will leave us behind to drop back to earth again, but with a new vision, having been in a place never yet visited and having seen what we had not seen before.

It is just this leading up—and down again—that the rainbow has suggested in a thousand ways to people everywhere and in all times. Today as it must have ten thousand years ago, it appears and vanishes, sometimes a vivid blaze, sometimes a complete double arc, sometimes a fragment so faint it seems almost imaginary. It has been seen arching up to the sky and back, and so connecting earth and heaven, in Australia and Scandinavia, among the Chinese and the Hebrews and the Navajo, the Mongols and the Babylonians, hinting at a communication, a possible relationship between the worlds, between the apparent opposites of above and below. It was seen as the sign of the covenant between Yahweh and man, as the rainbow road of the Navajo gods, as the Bifrost Bridge of Norse mythology, as the serpent that carries master and pupil to the heights of mystical experience in Australian initiation rites, as the drum whose vibration transports the shaman to heaven; and at the same time, as a threat: a dragon, dangerous to approach; "bad luck"; a support so fragile that even the hero will fall through it unless the gods help him, by hardening it with their breath.[2] Here is the paradox of danger and opportunity, of darkness and light like the rain and sunlight from which it appears. The rainbow bridge in one of its aspects represents the "dangerous passage" to safety, or "salvation":

"The bridge across a river is certainly the link between one bank and the other," says Guénon, "but besides this general sort of observation, there is something else much more precise that is implied in this expression. The bridge must be represented as originally made of lines. . . or of a cord. . . As the two banks represent symbolically two different states of being, it is evident that the cord is here the same as the 'thread' which joins these states to one another. . . ; the nature of such a link, at once tenuous and resistant, is also an adequate picture of its spiritual nature; and this is why the bridge, which is also assimilated to a ray of light, is often traditionally described as being as narrow as the edge of a sword blade, or again, if it is made of wood, as formed of a single beam or a single tree trunk. [In relation to this, we may remember the double sense of the English word *beam* which designates both a piece of wood and a ray of light. . .] This narrowness also shows the 'perilous' character of the way to which it refers, which is on the other hand the only one possible, and which in fact very few can traverse without help and by their own means, for there is always a certain danger in the passage from one state to the other."

But what, really, is the danger? How, in terms of ourselves and our lives, can we understand the message of this symbolism? The word "danger" resonates in us; we feel deeply that it is true; we are afraid. We are unsure of what it is we fear, but we know that the "heaven" or "Paradise" of myth and our dreams also means to us a haven of safety. Nevertheless it is unclear; we do not understand, and the fear remains, and remains vague. If we listened sensitively, patiently, to the symbol-code of the mythic messages, could they in fact change us by changing the way we look at our lives and ourselves, by changing the angle, the position in which we "stand under" them?

Coomaraswamy, in his remarkable essay "Symplegades,"[3] quotes the *Kaushitaki Brahmana:*

"Night and Day are the Sea that carries all away, and the two Twilights are its ford-

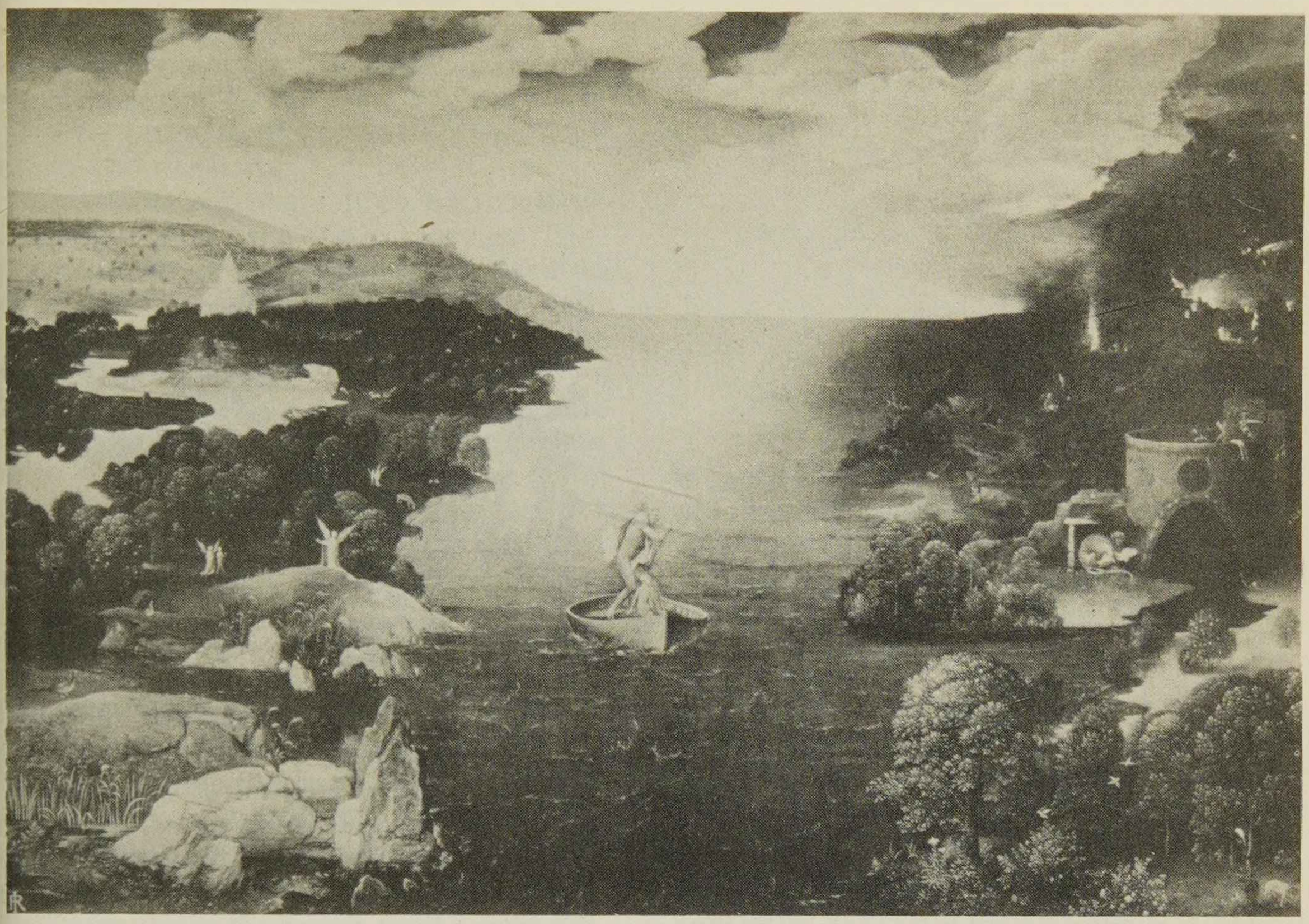
able crossings, so he sacrifices at twilight. . . Night and Day, again, are the encircling arms of Death; and just as a man about to grasp you with both arms can be escaped through the opening between them, so he sacrifices at twilight. . . This is the sign of the Way-of-the-Gods, which he takes hold of, and safely reaches Heaven."

What does this mean? What is this danger and how is safety to be won? Our nature is dual; we have "really" an inside and an outside: an inner life, and a life of manifestation. How can we escape *between* them? And indeed we are caught between these two, pinched, sometimes even crushed, between their contradictions, as between two arms, or the two leaves of a closing door. Is not this the very hopelessness of our human situation, inescapable under the laws of this world and so the root of our longing for an existence, even an imaginary one, outside of this whole system of things?

"Thus the way 'to break out of the universe,'" Coomaraswamy goes on to say, "into that other order of the Divine Darkness that Dionysius describes as 'blinding by excess of light' and where the Darkness and the Light 'stand not distant from one another, but together in one another' is the single track and 'strait way' that penetrates the cardinal 'point' on which the contraries turn; their unity is only to be reached by entering in where they actually coincide. And that is, in the last analysis, not any where or when, but within you; 'World's End is not to be found *by walking*, but it is within this very fathom-long body that the pilgrimage must be made.' 'Our soul is, as it were, the day, and our body the night; we, in the middle, are the dawn between our day and night.' . . . Day and Night, Light and Darkness, are archetypal contraries, divided in the beginning 'lest they should be always clashing.'. . . The two leaves or jambs of the Active Door. . . stand for the 'pairs of opposites' or 'Contraries' of whatever sort, between which the Hero must pass in the quest of Life, without hope or fear, haste or delay, but rather with an equanimity superior to any alternative."

"Equanimity" indeed appears to be the exact word; for without a perfect balance of mind and heart, there will never be the freedom to accept one's contradictions, to hold out both arms equally to all, to let go of the strange human compulsion to judge, to take sides, to choose. Our way through the world of manifestation and diversity is a continual movement between alternatives that threaten to crush us: good and bad, yes and no, do I like it or not? Can I or can't I? The symbolism of the Symplegades of the Argonauts, the "Rocks that Clap Together," found in varying forms everywhere and all times. The Scylla and Charybdis of the *Odyssey* are an example from one side of the world, and from another come the Clashing Rocks, Cutting Reeds, Tearing Cactuses, etc. in the Navajo myth of the Slayers of the Enemy Gods. It is everywhere because it is the human situation: it is we who are menaced, we who are turned back from our intention by the evident impossibility of the "pairs of opposites."

"In an Eskimo myth," Coomaraswamy tells us, "the hero Giviok on his way to the Otherworld, in which he finds his dead soul living, is confronted by 'two clashing icebergs,' with only a narrow passage between them, alternatively opened and closed. He cannot circumnavigate them because when he tries to do so, *they always keep ahead of him. . .*" Yet he does succeed in passing between them, though they close behind him so quickly that the stern of his kayak is broken. There is always, according to the myths, a way through, although only the "hero" or the "god"—or man's highe



part—can find it, and only at a certain moment, "suddenly." This moment, says Coomaraswamy, "corresponds to the 'single moment of full-awakening' which in Mahayana Buddhism is the last step of the Via Affirmativa and is an awakening to nonduality, i.e., from the illusion of duality, followed immediately by the attainment of Buddhahood." Without haste, but instantly, "in a moment, in the twinking of an eye"[4]: "The passage must be made so 'suddenly' (because) it is from the world of time (i.e., past and future) to an eternal Now, and between these two worlds, temporal and timeless, there can be no possible contact but in the 'moment without duration' that for us divides the past from the future, but for the Immortals includes all times" (Coomaraswamy). Only at this moment can the point be found where the passage can be made, a point that is not in space as the moment is not in time; through holes in time, such as the two Twilights, appears the "cleft between heaven and earth," the space at the ends of the earth described in the Upanishad as narrow as a razor's edge. We are reminded of the need for this leap into timelessness and spacelessness, of which something in us may find itself capable, by the otherworldliness of the rainbow: this apparition of no duration, incorporeal, occupying no space. Perhaps its quality of visible nonexistence may also show us that differentiation and multiplicity are no more than a way of seeing; the color spectrum is only a refraction of the unity of the white ray.

The meaning of the rainbow shimmers like its manifestation, as multicolored and as elusive. "No one sees the same rainbow," for my eyes form a part of the angle which allows it to appear before them. It moves as I move, and like Giviok's icebergs, I can never catch up with it. It may drop its iridescent veil between me and the house I live in, so that I see the familiar walls transfigured with color, and look at the scene of my daily living as through a window of stained glass; yet if I walk toward my door, I shall not pass through that curtain of colored light, for it will always recede. Made of "Yin, Yang, wind, rain, darkness and brightness,"[5] imaging the pairs of opposites, it manifests itself in all the colors that exist between light and dark; and in the outer bow of the full double rainbow, the colors appear in a reversed order, reminding us that what is seen and called "real" is at most a reflection, a mirror-image of another plane: our vision of reality is upside down.

Two-headed *Chimu* dragon, Pe

A Chinese writer says that in the times of the ancient kings "men began to be sent to sea to search for the three holy mountains which are said to be not far away from men; unfortunately, when one has almost reached them, the boat is carried backward by the wind and driven off course. Formerly, it is said, people were able to get there; there dwell the Blessed, and there is kept the drug of immortality; there, all beings, birds and quadrupeds are white, and the palaces are made of gold and silver. Before arriving, people saw them from afar like clouds; when they got there, the three holy mountains were found upside down under the water. . . In a word, no one has been able to reach them; though there has never been a great man who has not desired to go there."[6]

In the symbolism of quest and passage, the clashing pairs of opposites are one form of what has been called the "Active Door"; and a recurrent feature is that through this "strait gate" even the hero may not always pass unscathed. Some kind of toll is exacted, some appendage cut off. This may be the stern of the boat, the tail feathers of a bird, the hero's spurs, his dog or the hind legs of his horse, or many other things. We are reminded also of the stripping of Inanna at the Seven Gates of the Underworld, although the symbolism of the journey here is quite different; still, for every transition, payment is required.

The Active Door is also sometimes the moving wheel of the Sun itself: "The Sun is the door of the world," says the Chandogya Upanishad, "by which those who know walk in, those who do not know are shut out" (VIII:6,5). In other words, it appears as a contradiction: depending upon who approaches it, it is a barrier or an opening. The Sun Door is dazzling with many-hued, sharp and flashing rays which also conceal it, so that, again, only a hero's sight may find the way through it. Black Elk tells us that in his vision "there was a heaped up cloud ahead that changed into a tepee, and a rainbow was the open door of it. . . As I rode through the rainbow door, there were chee ing voices from all over the universe and saw the Six Grandfathers sitting in a row with their arms held toward me, and the hands, palms out; and behind them in the cloud were faces thronging, without number, of the people yet to be. 'He has triumphed!' cried the Six together."[7] The sun also is "seven-rayed" like the rainbo and the "Seventh Ray" refers to that mo ment out of time, that spaceless point whi is the interstice, the crack between earth a heaven, the "fordable point" or "strait gat through which alone the entrance may effected.

"What the formula states literally," sa Coomaraswamy, "is that whoever would transfer from this to the other world, or turn, must do so through the undimensioned and timeless 'interval' that divid related but contrary forces, between whic if one is to pass at all, it must be 'instantly The passage is, of course, that which is al called the 'strait gate' and the 'needle's ey What are these contraries, of which the eration is 'automatic'?. . . . The antithes may be of Fear and Hope, or North and South, or Night and Day. These are but p ticular cases of the polarity that necessar characterizes any 'conditioned' world. . is precisely from these 'pairs' that liberati must be won, from their *conflict* that w

must escape, if we are to be freed from our mortality and to be as and when we will. . . Here, 'every being in the emanated-world' moves *deluded by the mirage of the contrary-pairs*, of which the origin is in our liking and disliking."

The italics above are mine, for this is an important key to the coded message. The prison in which we find ourselves hopeless of escaping is of our own making. Its walls are that outline of the ego-self drawn by the advancing and retreating lines of our own attractions and repulsions; the impregnability of those walls is created by our absolute faith in their inevitable rightness. It is not the "pairs" themselves that constitute our danger, it is seeing them as pairs and so as opposites, mutually exclusive and contradictory; the delusion, the "mirage" that they are "contrary-pairs" is created in our own minds. Manifestation in its multiple aspects is the condition of our life on earth, the condition of the rhythmic process of involution and evolution by which man participates in a continuing creation. Out of unity, like the rainbow out of the white ray, comes the beauty, the color—and the danger—of diversity. The beauty and the color are not delusions; our error is not in what we see as differences, but in our failure to see how all the differences are related, within as well as without. The "enemy" is in our heads, in our divisive and limiting reason.

"The 'moment' has come," Coomaraswamy continues, "to understand the poignant words of Nicolas of Cusa in the *De visione Dei:* 'The wall of the Paradise in which Thou, Lord, dwellest, is built of contradictories, nor is there any way to enter but for one who has overcome the highest Spirit of Reason who guards its gate,' and to recall the promise, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' In this doctrine and assurance are reaffirmed what has always been the dogmatic significance of the Symplegades and of the Hero's Quest—'I am the Door,' and 'No man cometh to the Father but by Me.' "

This "I," this "Me," is that singleness we lack but seem to remember as if it had been our primordial state. In that homecoming everything is there: nothing, after all, has been lost or left out, nothing has to be denied. The enemy has disappeared. For "when the 'I' is single, the whole body is full of light."

Endnotes

[1]René Guénon, "Le Symbolisme du Pont," *Etudes Traditionelles,* January-February 1947; reprinted in *Symboles Fondamenteaux de la Science Sacrée* (Paris: Etudes Traditionelles, 1962). English translation courtesy of Linda P. Alexander. The subsequent quotation from Guénon is also from this text.

[2]Washington Matthews, *Navaho Legends,* Memoirs of the American Folklore Society, Vol. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1897), note 86, p. 228.

[3]A.K. Coomaraswamy, "Symplegades," from *Studies and Essays in the History of Science and Learning, in Honor of George Sarton,* edited by Ashley Montagu (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1946). To be reprinted in Coomaraswamy's *Collected Papers,* edited by Roger Lipsey, Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977). All subsequent quotations from Coomaraswamy are taken from the same essay and used by permission of the original editor and of Mr. Lipsey and Princeton University Press.

[4]I *Corinthians* 15, 51-52: "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (KJV).

[5]From the *Tso-Chuan,* circa 400 B.C., quoted by Joseph Needham in *Science and Civilization in China,* Vol. 4 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

[6]Sseuma Ts'ien, quoted by Max Kaltenmark in *Lao Tseu et le Taoisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965) p. 149.

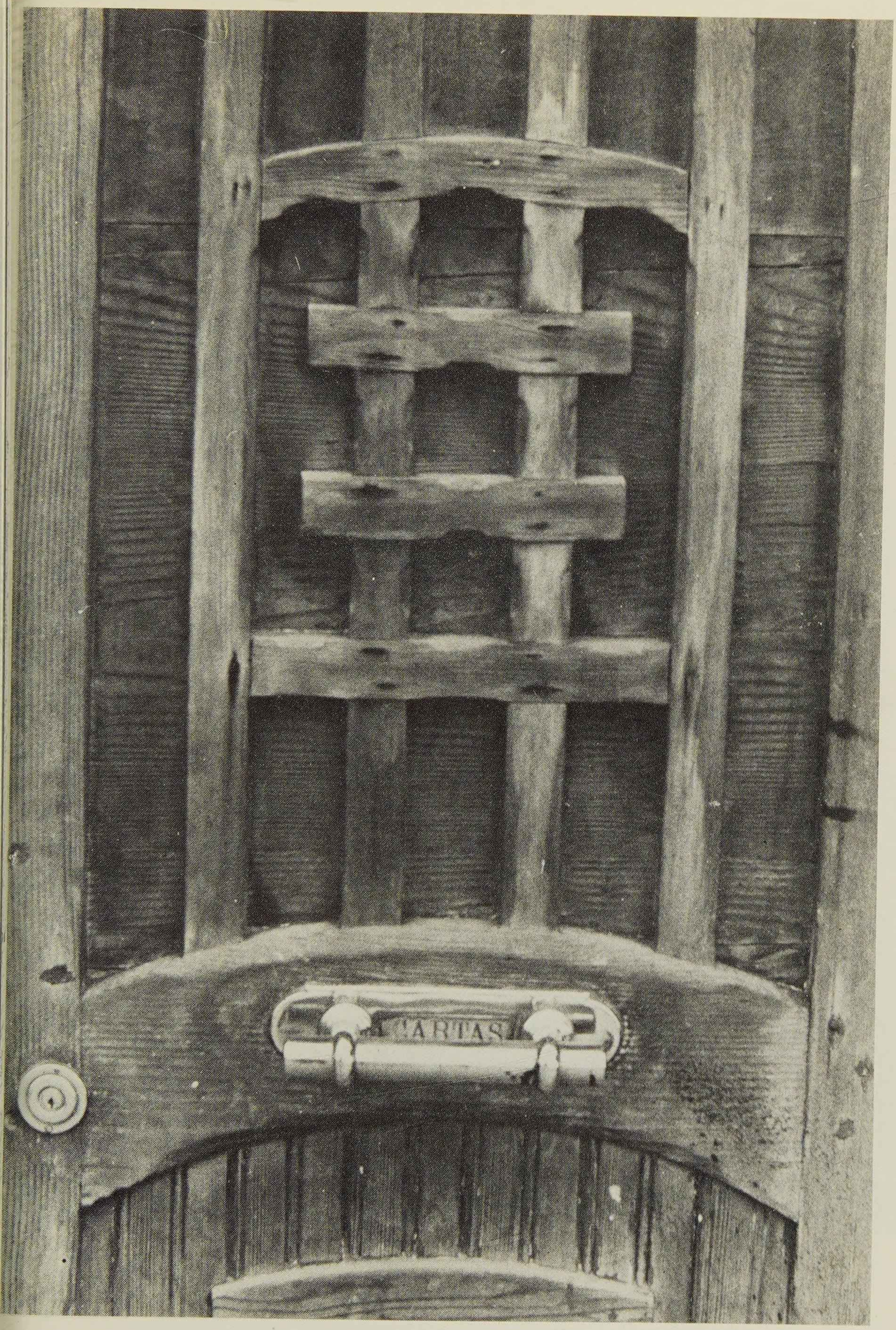
[7]John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks,* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), pp. 21, 37.

Rite of Passage

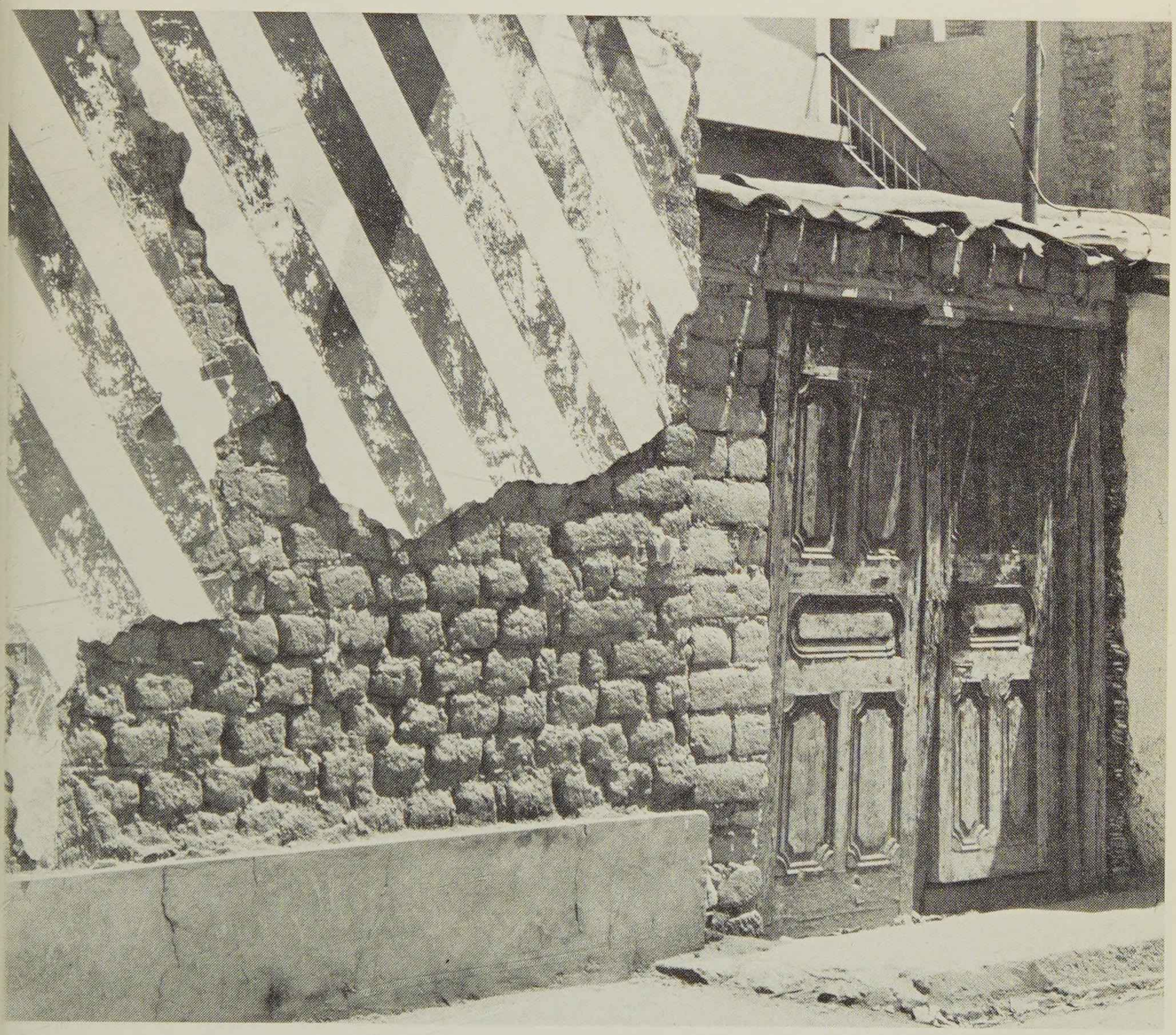
For Minor White
June 21-24, 1976

A man stands at his innermost portal
Compelled . . . seeking entry into the passage ground

Stone face
Prayer stone
Infused, active, seeing,
"Dark to the mind,
Radiant to the heart."


CARTAS

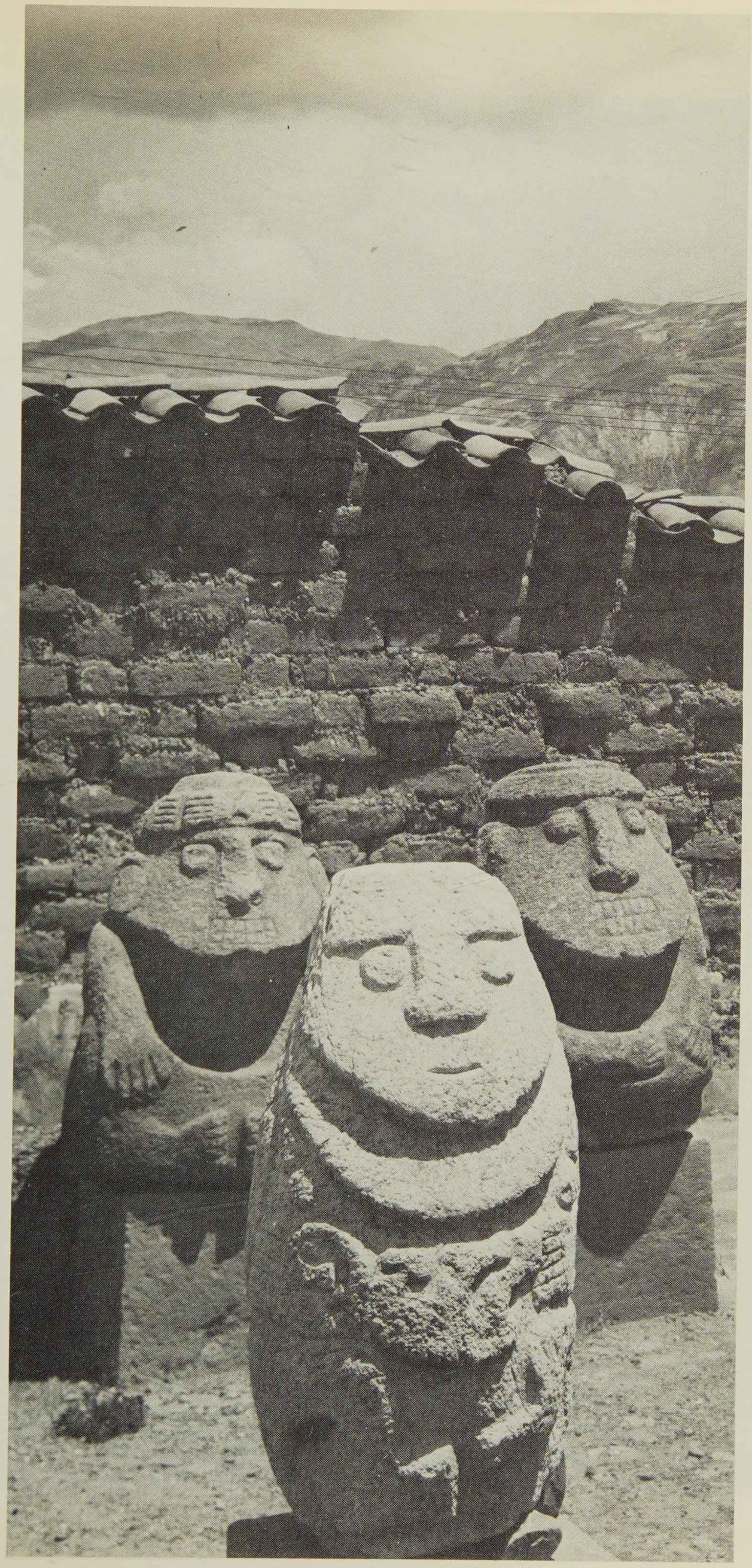
Old walls, outer facades block the way.
Patchwork of stones and dust,
Cracked plaster and walls mended,
Bathed in the noonday sun.
Old rubble and stones.



Another portal . . . another weariness . . . fatigue.

And yet the strength of outer crystallization
Flows inward through unknowing
As the outer dissolves, muted into dust.

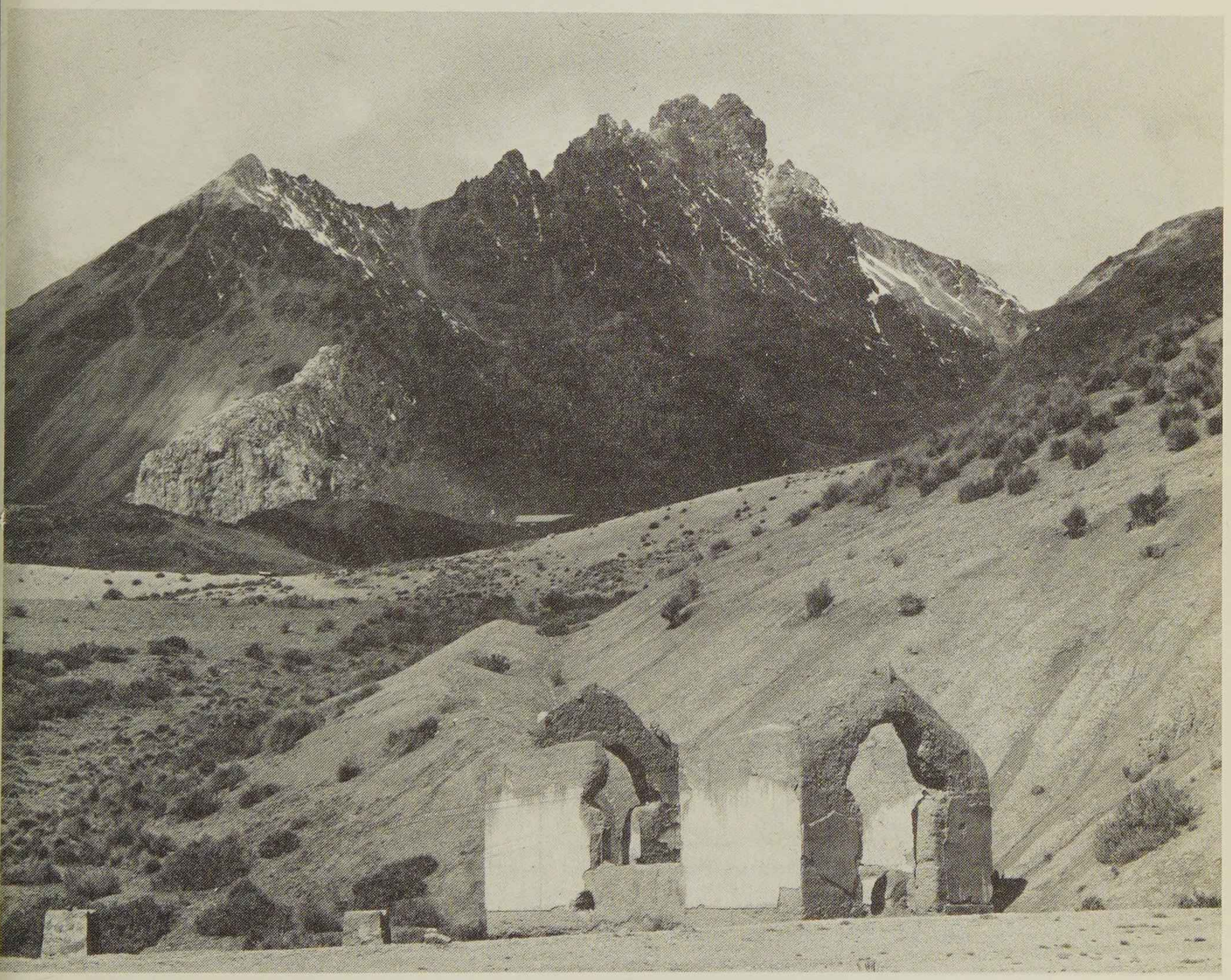
Witnesses ring the passage ground
Seeking . . . listening to an unknown movement
Toward an inner courtyard.



Emergence . . .
An awakening in the dying breast,
A transformation, radiant, dancing,
A lightness bathes tombs of darkness and monuments
of desire, with meaning.
A warrior is present who knows his time.

At the very edge of deepest comprehension
Witnesses and warrior stand related.

Stages of transformation move into openness
With an inner force and presence freed, leaving only traces.
Humble mountain chapel-home settles into Earth's embrace
In the face of a new formation—
A new mountain range, a magnificent desert.



Connected are the living and the dying,
Witnesses of event, partakers of passage, ponderers of meaning—
Posing a question of living and dying,
Knowing the obligatory force of both.

A point of departure
A point of entry
An event, a passage.

Reflections on Ancient Friendship

Robert E. Meagher

"Human beings bound in fellowsh
first weep and lament
but afterwards
they laugh."

I Ching

Unless this essay should fall into the hands of classicis
and other professed lovers of old things and into no othe
hands at all, I should offer some brief defense of my reflec
ing upon "ancient" friendship. For I am not firstly or sec
ondly, or in any urgent sense, an historian. My concern
this essay is centered wholeheartedly upon friendship
rather than upon antiquity; and this does indeed force th
question of why we need reflect upon ancient friendshi
Why should we not, instead, consult our own experience
friends and friendly feelings straight on and say what the
experiences would have us say of them? Why tell old
stories when we have our own? In response, quite
shamelessly, I am going to invoke an ancient story in d
fense of my appeal to ancient stories; for my argument is,
fact, circular and there is no honestly disguising that,
Besides, I wish to be found out.

There is no finer nor fuller place within which to describe our circle of friendly reflections than the world of the *Odyssey*. This world is severed into the land of wonders, the land of Odysseus' wanderings, and home, where walls, doors, and fleecy covers preserve and protect what is small and private. The story is, as everyone knows, one of homecoming. The homecoming is Odysseus', longed for by him, and tearfully awaited by his son Telemachos and his wife Penelope for nineteen years. The scale of Odysseus' deeds and sufferings during those nineteen years is quite literally epic, the stuff of which great, unforgettable stories are crafted: waves of brilliantly crested warriors, each one worthy of mention, gods and goddesses entering the contest on behalf of their mortal favorites and for a moment tipping the scales of Zeus who watches, legendary Troy in flames, the old man of the sea, the thunderings of earth-shaking Poseidon, flesh-devouring monsters, enchantresses, Sirens, ship-smashing cliffs. In the land of Troy and in the wonderland of their wanderings, Odysseus and his fellows knew fear and feasting, dread and love and struggle beyond the ken, beyond even the fantasies, of those who remained home and waited. When Nestor, returned from Troyland, suggests to young Telemachos that he too might hope for the intercession of Athene, Telemachos responds with a disbelief and inexperience scaled to a world too small to contain Nestor's words:

> *Old sir, I think that what you have said will not be accomplished. What you mean is too big. It bewilders me. That which I hope for could never happen to me. . .*

So too, when Telemachos, who remained within the small sheltered sameness of his household, meets his father, Odysseus, he finds his father's stories too wondrous to embrace. "What you have spoken of," he says to Odysseus, "is too big; I am awed." This same awe hardens the heart of Penelope who, for a time, cannot embrace the wonder of her husband's return. The reader of the *Odyssey* knows well the awesomeness of Odysseus' adventures but even more the insatiable longing of Odysseus, nineteen years' longing, to come home. The reader has seen Odysseus in the arms of Kalypso, wrapt in love and promised the deathless satisfactions of a god. The heart of Odysseus, schooled in wonders, wants nothing so much as his homecoming. He sleeps in the arms of a goddess at night and weeps for home in the afternoon sun. This simple longing burns brighter and hotter than even Poseidon's wrath and the reader's curiosity grows with respect to its object. What does it mean to come home? What is this homeliness which excites and sustains a love and a song greater than all the battles of Troy and all the adventures of wonderland?

When Odysseus comes home and seeks recognition, Penelope explains to her son how she and her husband will know each other again:

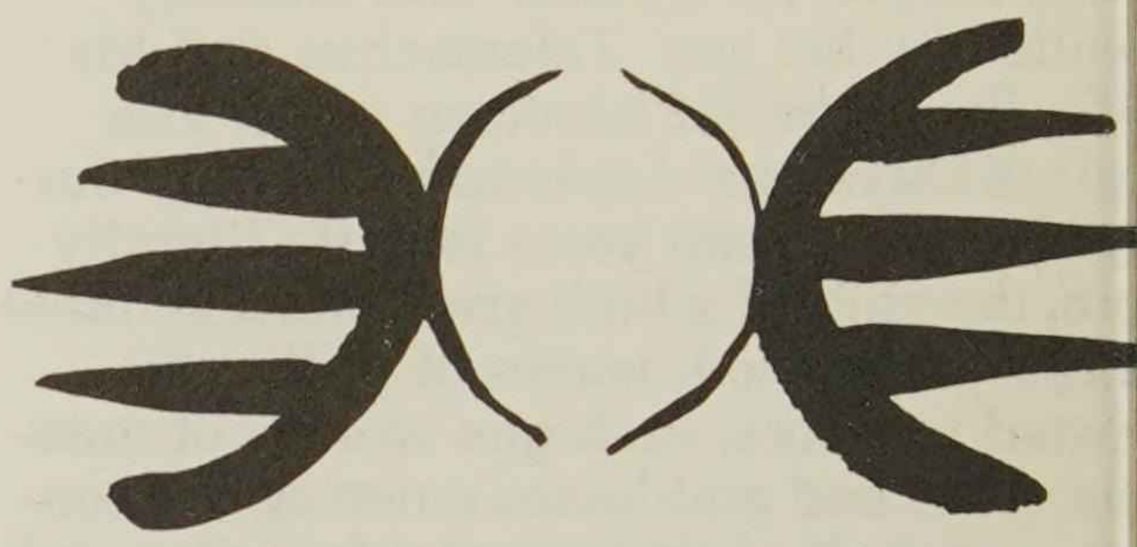
> *If he is truly Odysseus, and he has come home, then we shall find other ways, and better, to recognize each other, for we have signs that we know of between the two of us only, but they are secret from others.*

And, finally, they know reunion, a reunion of which almost nothing is said; for its wonder and beauty requires secrecy, even from the reader who has been so intimate with Odysseus' grander moments. All that is said of that moment for which this husband and this wife longed for nineteen years is that "They then gladly went together to bed, and their old ritual."

The understatement of this account is thunderous. The homecoming itself is not epic or stately; rather, it is dwarfed against the high seas or the high walls of Troy. And yet this homecoming, with its secret signs and old rituals, is unmistakably wondrous. Could it be that this home, the longing for which drove Odysseus for so many years, has no more to commend itself to Odysseus, to Homer, and to us than its sheer privacy

and familiarity? Could it be that Odysseus found an old ritual more irresistible than an immortal affair with an ageless goddess? To these questions it seems that we must answer yes; and in saying this we come to glimpse the true wonder of the familiar, the private, the secret, ritualized intimacy of home, a wonder which would never have shone so brilliantly, so irresistibly, without its loss, without the pain and hollowness of separation. Perhaps only the wanderer, who has been estranged from all that is dear and familiar and who finds all else strange, however wondrous, perhaps only such a one is thereby enabled to discover and to disclose to us how big and awesome are the smallest, simplest spaces in our lives.
It is upon our returns—even when our great-souled journeys and contests are imaginative—that we discern again or at long last how monstrous our shortcomings, and how precious our stories. We may recall how, after their lovemaking, Odysseus and Penelope told their stories to each other. And Homer tells us that neither slept nor let their sleepiness be seen until the last story had been told. When we too come home from our study of old or distant stories, it is indeed our own stories, our own old rituals and secret signs, which become newly precious and lovely.

Even so brief and selective a commentary on Odysseus' homecoming may suggest many things to us; but, for now, in offering these comments, I have only one quite simple suggestion in mind. I wish to suggest that when we listen to accounts of ancient friendship or to ancient accounts of friendship, for example when we listen to Sophocles, Plato, or Aristotle write of *philia*, friendly love, then we are most likely to respond to them as did Telemachos to old Nestor and to his own father Odysseus: "What you mean is too big. It bewilders me." Like Telemachos we cherish hopes too grand to locate within the scale of our everyday doings and sufferings, hopes which do somehow appear to correspond, at the very least in their remoteness, to the sublime suggestions of ancient writings; and, like Telemachos we are each convinced that "that which I hope for could never happen to me." The fact is that, regardless of our age, we are admittedly quite inexperienced beyond a certain cynicism. I will speak for myself here, if for no one else. It is commonly the case that we remain spiritually close to our homes, almost un-



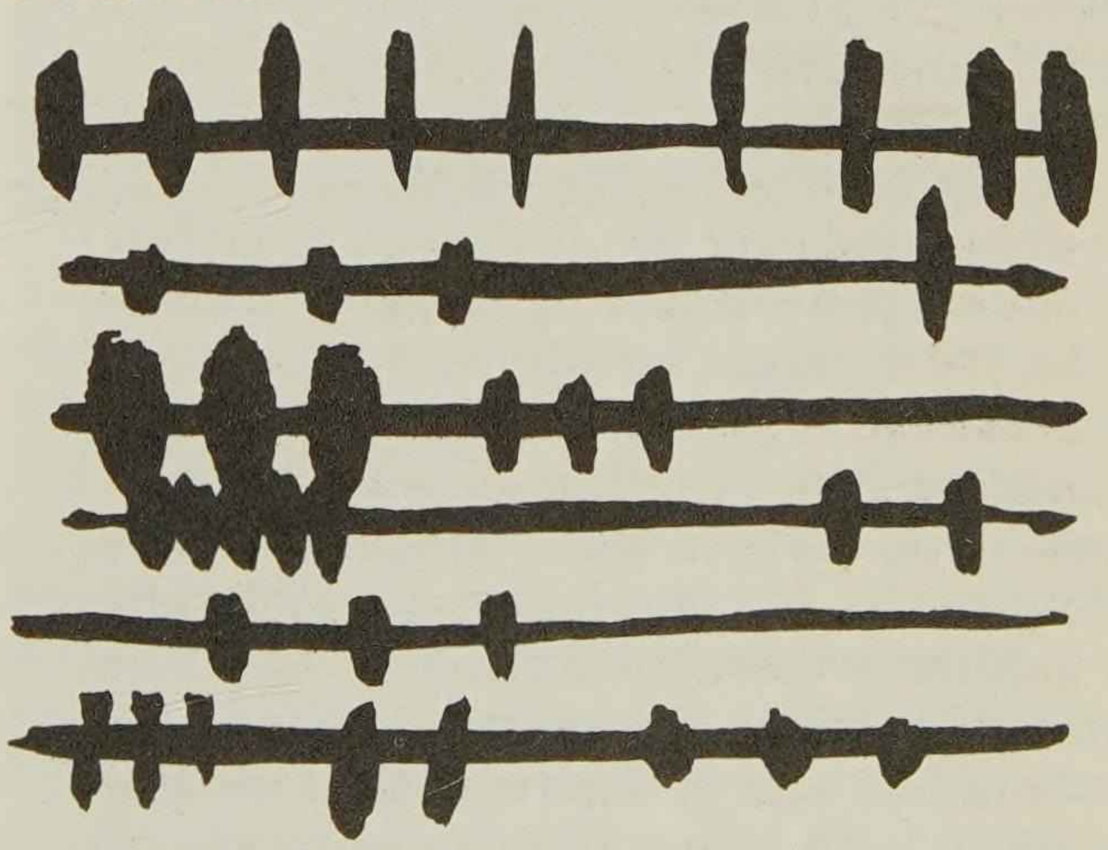
travelled beyond our most fundamental a
sumptions. We may have long ago doubte
or denied what once we held so certain an
sacred; but even these deepest negations
reach only as far as what was once affirme
We dream of what we have never known a
Telemachos dreamt of his father; but we a
no more prepared to embrace our dream
should they return to us with a life of the
own, than was Telemachos prepared to a
cept at once his father's return and all tha
would demand of him. We mostly live wi
what is all too familiar, commonplace and
slight stature. And whether we are conte
or discontent with our familiar lot, when w
are told of radical, even wondrous, pos-
sibilities we are inclined to dismiss them
and say to their teller: "What you have sai
will not be accomplished." If such thing
ever were, they could never be again.

Our home and what is most familiar to
lie within the circle of what we call *societ*
Admittedly we are seldom precise in ou
use of this word which is, after all, a quit
specific, even technical, term. We speak
one's "social" life or of the "social" cons
quences of one's actions, spanning in thes
two uses two traditionally distinct realm
the private realm and the public realm. I
fact, *society* is neither public nor private b
represents their confusion in a realm qui
distinctly modern. If we are to glimpse he
the character of this modern situation calle
society, this homeland of ours, we must ris
the boldest, broadest lines in our sketch.
Society is, of many, one image, theory, o
possibility of human togetherness, one po
sible response to the question: What does
mean that human being is many and not o
or, quite simply, what does it mean to sa

"we are"? The *social* response to this question (which provides the foundation for liberalism of every sort) requires our critically attending to it for two reasons—for one, because it is utterly foundational; and for another, because it is utterly perverse.

Human plurality is itself a mere abstract fact. To say that there are many, even countless, human beings in the world is to say nothing yet about what it *means* that there are many, even countless human beings in the world. Similarly, draw one line on a piece of paper; wait, and then draw another line. At once we find we must respond not only first to this line and then to that line but also to their co-presence, their interrelationship. Quite simply, we must ask not only how it is that they are two but also how it is that they are one. Strike one note, then another, then a third; and it is the same matter. We find the tones mingling to please us or to offend us or to allure us or to place us at rest. Human being is many and not radically one; and yet to know only this is to know almost nothing about human being. The question remains: How are we (whatever "we" means) related, one to the other; how are we bonded, linked, gathered? The ancient Greek understanding of the bond between each human being and every other human being as well as between the many and the one (the many "I's" and the one "we") is gathered in the one word *politeia* (which is the title of Plato's most famous dialogue). *Politeia*, most often translated *Republic*, may well be translated *Community* and stands at clear, radical odds to the modern understanding of the fundamental bond of the we, the bond of what we call *Society*.

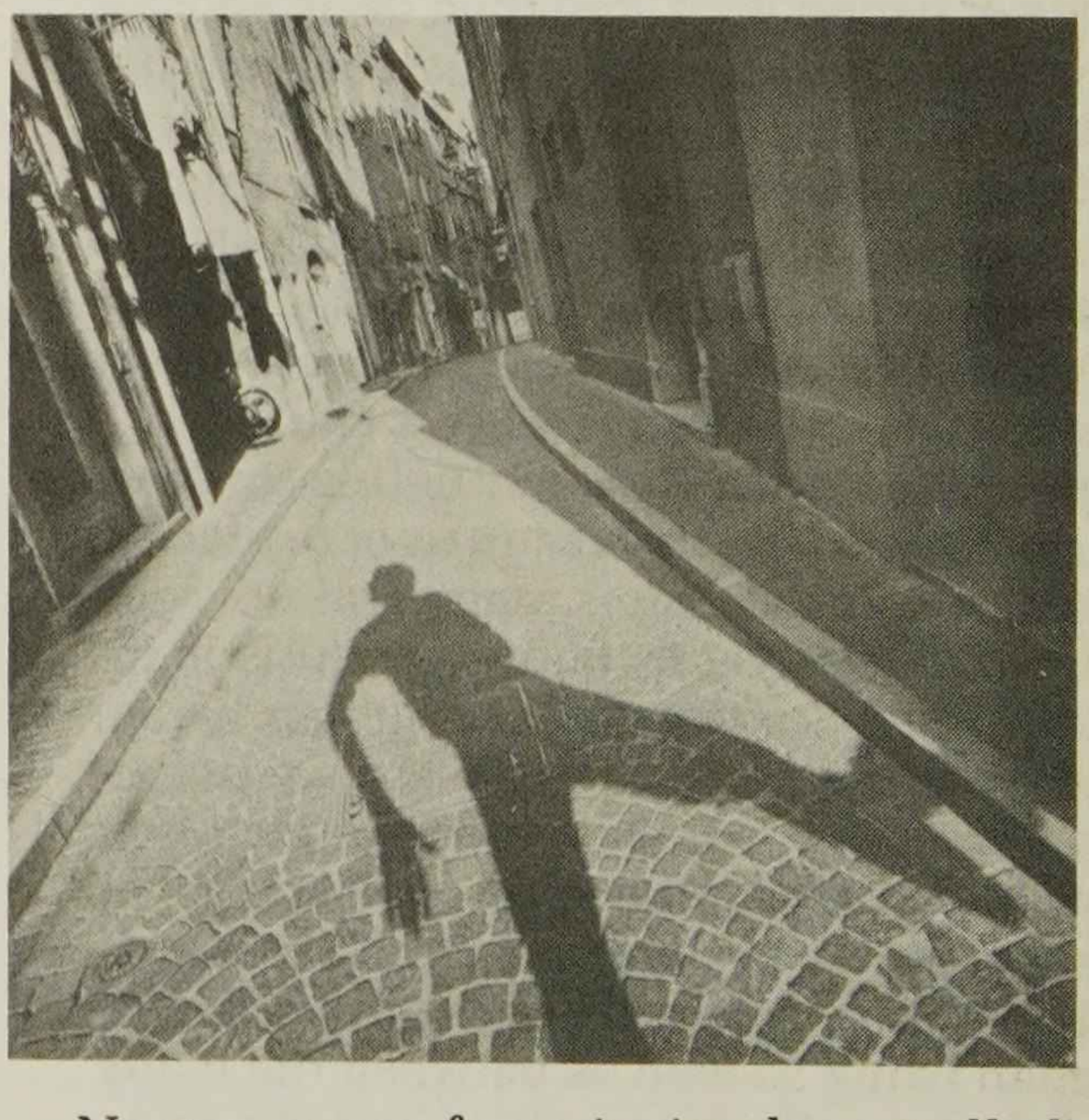
Society, according to the modern *social* tradition, is decidedly artificial. The natural movement of individual human beings is, we are told and by now are mostly convinced, towards irreconcilable wilfulness. Human beings are naturally creative, bent upon seeing their own designs realized in and upon the world. Each human being is called to assume the posture of the world-creator in Genesis, speaking over a void, calling forth a world perfectly correspondent to his sweetest willings. The fact that the world already has a certain, even if provisional, shape, together with the fact that there are countless human beings and thus countless prospective creators, describes the essential frustration of each individual human being. Each human being represents a direct threat to the full human development of every other human being. Human becoming could lead to human being only if human being were singular, in every sense one and in no sense many. Human desire, human passion, is at the root the desire to be God, unique and all-powerful. Because we are many, we are impossible; because we are many, no one of us may have either the first or the last word, neither the word of creation nor the word of judgment. Human being is distinguished by its capacity for speech and speech is firstly and essentially the capacity to command arbitrarily; yet the fundamental human capacity to command is cast into confusion by the wild cacophony of wilful tongues without any corresponding inclination to listen or to obey. There are as many distinct creations as there are would-be creators and as many distinct languages as there are those who would speak. Each human being is blocked, checked, undermined by the sheer existence of fellow human beings. The mood of this state is that of unqualified hostility. How could it be otherwise?



Human desire sets human being at odds with itself. The natural collective unfolding of human being leads to the war of all against all. This dread prospect, the clear

implication of our being-together at full human strength, is unbearably fearsome, the modern surrogate for the very face of God. We cannot look upon it and live. So, in fear and prudence, we turn away; and, in turning away from the threat which others pose to us and we to others, we turn away from ourselves. We modify our human, our wholly dysfunctional, vocation to omnipotence and tyranny. We agree to agree. We consent to a truce which represents not a meeting of hearts but a balance of power. This truce brings no end to the roots or state of human conflict; rather, it brings an end only to overt hostilities. Here is a breaking of wills rather than a meeting of wills; and this breaking requires power. The pursuit of the illusion of peace, the taming of chaotic human wilfulness, becomes one with the pursuit of an over-awing power which will guarantee this contractual bond once formed, that is, guarantee its relentless enforcement. Each human being yields to this central collective power the strength of arm and the cunning of wit which is the source of human equality, the equal capacity which each person possesses, in sheer desperation, to threaten the life of any other human being. In conceding this power, the power of life and death, to the state, we transfer to the state our fear, suspicion, and jealousy, which would otherwise define every personal encounter. And a new space is thereby opened to us for confronting and dealing with one another, free of the most radical fears and aggressions. This space we call the *social* realm or *society;* within *society.,* human beings are enabled and expected to act *sociably,* one to the other, which is to enact in their common lives *society's* rituals of evasion, compromise, cynical collaboration, and pretended intimacy. What this *social*-ability essentially comes to is this: The dread war over life and death is muted and tamed. Instead of struggling for fullness of life, we struggle for increase of livelihood. Instead of pursuing the good, whether to discover it or to define it, we pursue goods, to be divided and consumed. There is no promise of completion or fulfilment; but neither is there the terrible prospect of utter despoilment. We are spared the excesses of fear and of desire, spared the full encounter with either life or death. We collaborate, each consulting his or her exclusive self-interest, in the engineering of a vast illusion, a cosmic cover-up. We become our own artifacts, our own mutants. And, for a moment, it feels better. We don't have any friends; but, from day to day, we don't need any. And it is from day to day that we learn to live.

Human being, as imaged in this simply prevailing *social* theory, passes from the state of nature to the artificial state of *society* when mutual fear is *socially* transformed into fear of the law. The resulting *society,* it must be recognized, is an intricate machine, the individual human machine writ large. The individual human being becomes operational when the opposing forces of desire and fear are balanced productively; and the collective human machine becomes similarly operational when the passions of each human being, neither absolutely affirmed nor absolutely denied, are prudently and productively gathered and channeled into a common force. An accurate and rather helpful image here is that of a pattern of force vectors. Each individual human being agrees to pull against a common center and to accept the resulting movement of that center. Each such human being may be seen as one line of force.



Photographs by Arthur Tress, from his

No one, no one force, is simply cancelled; yet all are compromised. This model of consensus is purely mechanical and thus fully amenable to quantitative analysis. The common force is arrived at by mere calculation; and thus "common" comes to mean the lowest common denominator, a calculated mean. If we think again of wills or of desires instead of forces, or if we consider the assertion of private will as the exertion of an individual force, we see that the common will is not only not willed by everyone but that it is, in fact, willed by no one. Indi-

vidual wills or opinions are not considered in arriving at the common will but merely counted. In a "just" regime each will or opinion counts for one point or for one vote. Either to be persuaded by one opinion or to disregard it would be not to give to that opinion its due. Socrates once said that every reasonable person agrees to at least this: that some opinions are more respectable than others. Admittedly, modern social contract theory is not grounded in reason but in passion, on the one hand, and in modern algebra, on the other, neither of which are able to articulate a clear relationship to what we or they would call the external world. Classical political theory and modern social theory concur in this: that the distinguishing human capacity is that of speech and that the discovery or creation of a common language is the essential foundation for any common human life. What marks modern *social* theory or imagination is that the common language underlying its would-be common life is the humanly neutral, quantitative language of simple counting without any thoughtful consideration of the meaning of unity. It is a language well-suited to machines, a language which a machine might learn and use. It is a language which is able to measure desire and fear but which cannot comprehend love; for it cannot approach the beautiful, the good, or the true. Neither can the collective life, which such a language calls forth, appreciate or sustain friendship; for there can be no love, and thus no friendship, without what is simply beautiful, simply good, and simply true. The ancient city knew that its center was finally not civic; whereas *society*, itself a civic creation, has no center. The ancient city, rooted in the bestial and reaching toward the divine, was bound in fellowship with the earth below and the sky above. Its own bond of friendship represented the human share of a friendship binding together the whole of reality. Society, alien to all that lies beneath it and above it, is condemned to live an inner alienation which knows no exit.

In reflecting upon our home, our common household, I have spoken of friendship only in its absence and not in its presence. And there is a truth in this. *We* live in *society;* and *society* does not admit of friendly being any more than it admits of political being.

The genius of *society* is to assure each member a secure sphere of petty, illusory tyranny from which perspective it appears that all the world is designed to do one's fondest biddings. Each individual is counselled to consult only his or her immediate self-interest with a view towards being clearly counted, that is, with a view towards having one's would-be sovereign will accurately taken into account. The sovereignty of each individual will is indeed guaranteed to the extent of not being directly challenged (nor, of course, ever directly hearkened to). We are so many doomed gods,

despoiled of all but the airs of effective imagination and consoled by the fact that no one can claim more. It was a commonplace of ancient Greek understanding that all friendship resides in *koinonia,* common-being, and that friends have all things in common. In society there can be no *koinonia;* and, insofar as we live a *social* existence, we can have nothing in common. Clearly each of us steals a portion of ourselves for the occasional, wondrous gift of friendship which we glimpse once or twice or several times, briefly. Always it is the exception, always it is extra-curricular, rootless, homeless. Most often it is fleeting; and when it leaves us we are at a loss for its recovery. Friendship is always in spite of *society,* in spite of sociability, seeded, cultivated, and nourished in the smallest, most secure and private spaces of our lives. We keep it in a tiny, locked box wherein are kept our secret treasures—shells, smooth stones, ageless coins—anachronisms, cameos, souvenirs, which we alone, singly, or in twos, seem to appreciate. Friendship is no longer an institution as it once was. Institutions are the given contours and the enduring structures of our personal life-scapes; they mostly precede and survive our comings and our goings. When we spread wide our official maps we look out upon our institutions as the hard and fast geography to be confronted. Quite simply, institutions are what we find already "instituted" —foundations laid, walls raised, connections described. spaces long inhabited, laws and customs deep-engraved. And who would claim that friendship is among our institutions?

"We have mislaid all the instincts," writes Nietzsche, "from which institutions grow." And among these mislaid instincts is the assurance that our lives are enabled, enhanced, blessed by the presence of other human beings, rather than undermined, threatened, and blocked. This simple instinct, to cherish the company of others, th simple, eager, hopeful predisposition in favor of companionship, is what we have lost or ripped up from the darkest, riches soil of our souls. In ancient Greece, to ceas to exist before others in the public realm the *polis,* to be deprived of the many and various engagements with the words and deeds and lives of others in the city was t cease to exist as a human being. Human being, writes Aristotle, is political being. Human beings require the presence, the work, the involvement with others, not fo their amusement or merely for their livel hood but for the very unfolding of their es sential being. Only in cities, only in clos caring fellowship, is human becoming pos sible; and our becoming human together i the only adequate reason for our caring an our living as we do, or should, for one another. No one, says Aristotle, whatever else life might afford, would want to live, i life was to be without friends.

In the opening sections of the oldest poem of friendship, the story of Gilgamesh we read these lines:

Gilgamesh was called a god and a man
Enkidu was an animal and man
It is the story
Of their becoming human together

Gilgamesh was a man who lived as if he were a god; and Enkidu was a man who lived as if he were an animal. Human being is a hybrid of the bestial and the divine, of the will-less and the will-ful. Animals need never act, initiate activity, imagine what is not yet and bring it to be; they are utterly without responsibility beyond behavior. Gods act however they wish; and because they never die, they never suffer the consequences of their actions. They are, in the ancient eye, utterly irresponsible. Human beings must act and speak and must concern themselves with the rightness of their deeds and the truthfulness of their words, without the corresponding hope of ever being simply good or simply wise. Rather, in speaking and in acting, we must ever strive for that face, that glimmer, of the good and the true which our present condition turns toward us. There is nothing more luring and deceptive than the wish to *be* good and wise; for this is what we cannot *be*. We may recall the saying of Jesus that the left hand must be kept from knowing what the right hand is

doing as well as the Talmudic story of the thirty-six righteous men for the sake of whom God spares the world. No one knows who they are, least of all themselves. In this straining to act and to speak with a view towards what we never reach or possess we must be turned away from reflecting upon ourselves and be turned always towards the common wondrous object of our striving. We must trust the tale and not the teller. And for this peculiarly unself-conscious striving we require one another. We simply cannot escape the illusion of divinity and the illusion of animality, the illusions of tyranny and innocence, without our confronting and being confronted, without our engaging and our being engaged. We become human together or not at all. And this is the work of friends.

In the modern *social* vision of human togetherness it is the over-awing death-dealing power of the state, which diverts our mutual hostility and enables us to pass from hot war to cold war, from hate to indifference, from deadly conflict to healthy competition. What corresponds to this movement in the ancient Greek vision of human togetherness is the passage from sleep to wakefulness, from dream to reason, described with surprising clarity by the obscure Herakleitos in these fragments:

It is therefore necessary to follow the common,
But while reason is common, the majority live as
though they had a private insight of their own.

We must not act and speak like sleepers. . .
The waking have one common world, but the sleeping
turn aside each into a world of his own.

The "common world" of the Greeks is indeed a wonderland as we journey through it in study and reflection, an odyssey which we cannot pretend to consider in reflections as brief and cursory as these. We read of friendship as the bond of the city, of friendship with the gods and with the trees and rocks and beasts. The very fabric of reality is friendly because it is good and because its goodness is not diminished as it is shared. The world of the Greeks is the world of the eye whose objects are common disclosures rather than private creations and possessions. It is a world to be communed in. We rest our arms from their own strong projects and simply gaze at the world which, we discover, no longer sets us at odds with each other; for our enjoyment of it is enhanced rather than diminished by our sharing it together. Soon we raise our arms not to grasp, not to strike or to ward off a blow, but to embrace each other in mutual recognition and celebration. And this embracing of the human in each other crosses over all barriers of hostility and hate as we learn in watching the old and broken Priam embrace Achilles, the savage murderer of his own dearest son. Again and again in Greek literature, the record of Greek life and imagination, we are reminded that the world is to be communed in, that we humans somehow minister its beauties and mysteries to one another, and that in times of festival we are in the proper order of things; "for I think," says Odysseus, "there is no occasion that is more pleasant than when festivity holds sway among all the people."

The ancient world of friendship is boundless. Its scale and depth contemns the tentative crack in our lives which we preserve for such possibilities. And yet our journey of thought always describes a homecoming and we find ourselves fond of what is familiar, however perverse. I am tempted to recall here the circles of Dante's inferno where every soul, whatever his or her torments may be, however extreme, finds its place fitting. And I shudder to recall that the lowest, coldest circle of Dante's hell is reserved for those who have betrayed their friends. Perhaps we are called upon to leave our homes, to wander, and to wait, as did the blind Oedipus, cursed and confused in his most fundamental human relationships, until in the last moments of his life he is called to rest, called home, by the thunderous voice of the god who, wonder of wonders, is impatient that he should come to him or her. These words, of course, are too big.

But honesty pursues us further and has us recognize that words of friendship have always been too big. Like moths, drawn to a flame, we turn back or fall short, consumed. Our capacity for friendship seems no greater than our capacity for comets. Our eyes catch a fleeting glimpse. Our hands, which would reach out and grasp, remain still, hopeless. And yet, like all hopeless quests, the quest for friendship has its own ritual rehearsals, its own rites of endless passage. Big words are not words which may never be said but are, rather, words which may never be said

once, twice, or ever, for all. Big words require to be repeated wholeheartedly, without ceasing. The invitation and acceptance of friendship must be the refrain of our common life, exorcising our words and deeds of cynicism, suspicion, and distance. We must rear one another constantly into our fullest possibilities, reminding one another before it is too late not to look back as we quit *society*.

Surely Sophocles is among our friendliest reminders. His plays, in particular his two last plays, *Philoctetes* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, are works obsessed and inspired with the vision of friendship. Here the rites of passage are dramatically clear and mysterious, at once. In *Philoctetes*, a quite young boy (Neoptolemus), the son of Achilles, and a very old man (Philoctetes) meet and compete with enemies within and without for the wondrous prize of friendship. Philoctetes stands on the far side of friendship, marooned by his fellows, long since *monos* (alone, solitary), *eremos* (diminished, desolate, wasted), and *aphilos* (neither befriended nor befriending). Severed from human fellowship, Philoctetes has discovered the web of instinct and need, the interplay of predator and prey, the easy uncomplicated politics of the sub-human. The foul, festering wound which is the pretext for his banishment is no more than his divulged humanity. Like the hand which Lear would wipe first before offering, Philoctetes' foot smells of mortality. He is wounded, first by being human and then by having that humanity denied. He has despaired of friendship and his heart has hardened fast in that despair. Once he knew the friendship of the gods as well as the friendship of mortals; but now he uses the magic bow of friendship for its most menial conceivable uses, to prop himself up and to shoot down his meals. He survives, marginally. And he is to us familiar in this effort.

Neoptolemus stands on the near side of friendship, innocent and inexperienced. He is a mere boy, accustomed to being ordered about and kept within the household, where the lines of command and affection are clearly established. He has no sense of the stakes, the honor and the dishonor, the promise and the pain of the public realm of life on a large human scale with others. More or less unwittingly he enters that realm with an act of clear betrayal. He makes a false promise of friendship to Philoctetes, reviving the old man's human trust, only to reveal that it was not friendship but fresh deceit which he brought to this island of isolation. "For one brief shameless portion of a day" Neoptolemus sells his humanity to the "shabby slit-eyed soul" of his crafty, manipulative guardian and sends Philoctetes back to his friendless cave for a second time, finally confirmed that all human fellowship is without honor—a contest of lies and immoral muscle.

Neoptolemus and Philoctetes, young and old, stand outside of friendship, guilty and wounded. Neoptolemus has lost the power to offer friendship and Philoctetes has lost the power to receive it. The Greek audience and the modern readers of this play stand at both sides at once, in need of passing over to a place where they might meet and embrace. The play describes the struggle of this passage, the hapless struggle to meet in trust, care, and compassion. Philoctetes cries out to Neoptolemus not to deceive or to toy with him, not to begin again the process of human distancing which, he knows, ends in utter isolation. And, at another moment, Neoptolemus begs Philoctetes to come out of his cave, his now self-imposed ostracism, and to embrace again the possibility of human communion. Their mutual entreaties, their wooings of one another's finest powers and passions, are big words ritual gestures and sayings made in the hope of "something new."

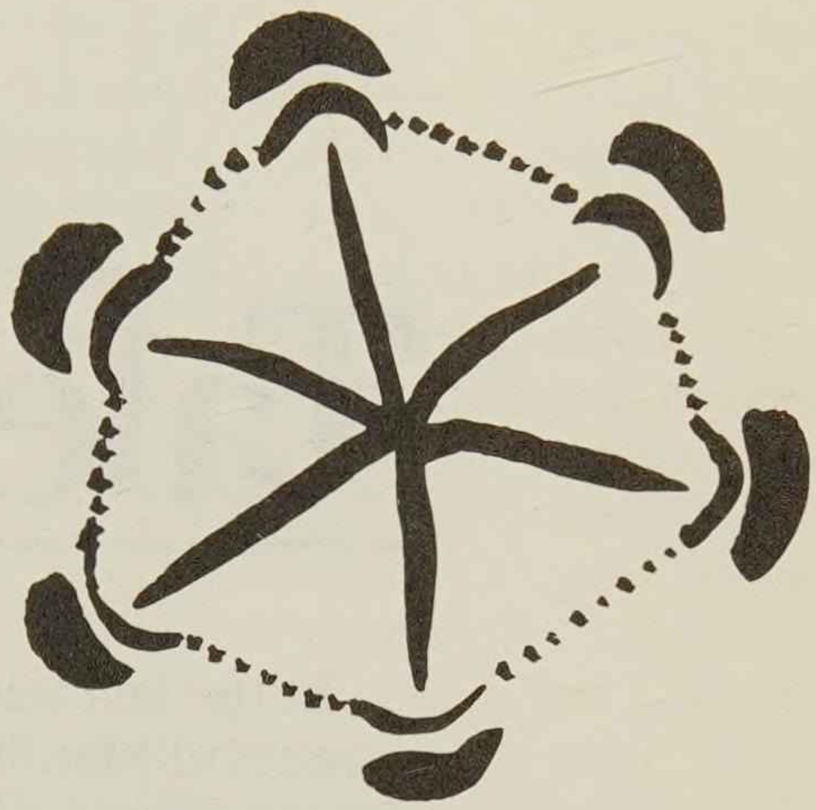
We are mostly experienced in compromise and oppression, however cosmetically urbane and civil our dealings may be, and to think of true friendship is, in Philoctetes' words, to "look for something new." And, of course, this something new is some

thing very old, lost, forgotten, mislaid. It is, simply, our nature, which in *society* we effectively renounce. "All is disgust," says Neoptolemus, "when one leaves one's own nature and does things which misfit it." This disgust is what we know too well, while the face of friendship is strange to us. The passage we must make is a long one, not to be rushed. It takes time to give back what one has taken away and to accept what one has refused. Since my sinnings and repentings, my falls and conversions, are only rarely in sequence with yours, and yours with mine, we may miss one another forever. Neoptolemus' question endures: Is there no place, then, for repentance, for the giving back and the receiving of the sacred bow of friendship, the gift of the gods on which our humanity props itself?

I would like to conclude these reflections on friendship with a rather more modern tale of the struggle for "something new." I have in mind *The Winter's Tale* of Shakespeare. In it a miracle occurs; and I suspect that our search may lead to something in the order of miracles. It is a tale, firstly, of oppression and delusion. A king (Leontes), blind with groundless jealousy, brings his wife to trial for treasonous infidelity. In her own defense, futile in the face of her husband's blind oppressive love now turned to blind oppressive hate, the queen (Hermione) says:

> Sir,
> *You speak a language that I understand not.*
> *My life stands in the level of your dreams,*
> *Which I'll lay down.*

Hermione had never been granted her own human reality but had been reduced, instead, to a gratuitous fantasy in Leontes' mind. Her existence had been a favor granted. Only her woman friend, Paulina, knew and loved her, faithful to her reality. And, when Leontes repents of his sin, it is Paulina who brings Hermione back to life for one moment, long enough for Leontes and Hermione to meet, to care, to offer and receive human recognition, to give and to take together the gift of friendship for the first and last time. It was Paulina who, in her love for the dead Hermione, commissioned a statue to be carved of her lost friend, whose love she cherishes and keeps alive. For Leontes, Hermione was first a fleshly fantasy and then a lifeless carving. Paulina, the woman friend, works the miracle and brings



the stone image to life. The penance of Leontes opens his eyes and heart but is otherwise powerless. His words describe what he witnesses but in no way has wrought:

> *Oh, she's warm!*
> *If this be magic, let it be an art*
> *Lawful as eating.*

We need not limit our reflections to antiquity in our endeavor to discern something new and perhaps wondrous; our prospects for friendship lie always nearby. Indeed, in our own most recent times and places we are presented with clear, new images and possibilities for living our lives together. Society, with its shabby filtered violence, is called to question. Now, in years too near for any to overlook, it is women in their friendships with one another who are bringing this sharp challenge and working this wonder of renewal. In truth, this is no work of magic; rather it is a human art, the lost art of human friendship, an art lawful, and necessary, as eating. And perhaps we might say of this art, an art of healing, what Hippocrates once said of the art of medicine: "Life is short, the art is long, opportunity fleeting, experiment dangerous, and judgement difficult."

Epicycle IV

Tales of a Demon is adapted from the *Vetalapanchavimshati,* or *Twenty-five Tales of a Vetala,* a cycle of stories embedded in the eleventh-century Indian epic known as *The Ocean of Stories,* by Somadeva. The "Tales of a Demon," twenty-four in number, are all riddle stories which were used for religious instruction by the Buddhists and others; their antiquity antedates the *Ocean of Stories* by several centuries. Subsequent issues of *Parabola* will each carry a Tale together with King Trivikramasena's answer to the previous riddle. Readers are invited to try their wits at an answer and to send in proposed solutions.

Tales of a Demon

In the last tale, the Vetala told the story of the high-born and beautiful Mandaravati, whose father was unable to choose between three Brahman suitors. One day, the maiden contracted a burning fever and died. When her body had been burnt on a pyre, each of the suitors chose a course of action and pursued it. The first suitor built a hut over the ashes of his sweetheart and lived there as an ascetic; the second bathed her bones in the Holy Ganges; and the third became a wandering hermit. Now this third suitor one day chanced upon a couple who were able, by means of spells, to restore their child to life after his body had been consumed by fire. Stealing the charm, the third suitor returned to the burial place of his beloved and there performed the rite necessary to bring Mandaravati to life.

At the end of the tale, the Vetala posed this question to King Triple-Victory: which of the three suitors deserves the hand of the maiden in marriage—the one who became an ascetic and sat by her ashes, the one who bathed her bones in the Holy Ganges, or the one who, by magical means, restored her to life?

The fear of the Vetala's curse spoke in one of the ears of the noble King Triple-Victory, while his wish to complete the task of carrying the corpse back to the mendicant Kshantisila spoke in the other. It was less fear than the desire to complete his task —which he could not do if he was dead—which prompted him to speak at last.

"I am surprised at the simplicity of this riddle," said the King. "For of course the fair Mandaravati belongs to the ascetic Brahman and to no other."

"How can this be, most royal one?" said the Vetala. "Are the waters of the Holy Ganges to be considered ineffectual? Are the mystical incantations of hermits to be disregarded? How can it be that he who did nothing to revive his beloved should now take her to wife?"

King Triple-Victory sighed at the contentiousness of demons. "The one who brought her the charm—he is not Mandaravati's husband, despite the hardships he endured. He performed the

office of a father by bringing her to life, and must thereafter assume that responsibility. The one who carried her bones to the Holy Ganges—that is her son, for it is the duty of a son to perform this rite. But as for the one who embraced even her ashes—he alone is her lover, and who would deny the lover the embraces of his beloved?"

More wearisome than the burden he had been carrying was the task that now lay before King Triple-Victory, as he turned his steps back to the simsapa-tree to which the Vetala had transported the corpse. Patient are the noble! For as soon as he had climbed the tree and cut down the corpse, that monarch once again hefted it onto his shoulders and set off down the road.

"Such fortitude deserves good cheer, at least," said the Vetala when they had gone a few paces. "Allow me, therefore, to tell you a little tale to make the going easier."

The Lost Science

What a wonderful city is Ujjayini, what bliss is to be found there! In that city, firmness is seen only in the bosoms of the women, curvature only in their eyebrows, and fickleness only in their eyes; darkness is found only at night, crookedness only in the ambiguity of poets, madness only in elephants, and coldness only in danger, sandalwood juice, and the moon.

There lived in that city a Brahman by the name of Master-of-Heaven, a man of wealth and great piety, who had a son named Moon-lord.

Now once it happened that Moon-lord found himself in a great gambling hall. The demons of calamity, whose eyes are like tumbling dice, roamed freely in that place, muttering to themselves with glee, "Whom shall we seize next?" Even the great hall itself took up the cry, "Whose wealth can I not take away?" And when these demons saw Moon-lord, his fate was sealed. Soon he had lost not only all his money, but his fine clothes as well, and borrowed money on top of that, which he could not repay. When he reached this state, the keeper of the hall had him seized and beaten with sticks. Thereupon Moon-lord made himself quite still, motionless as a stone, and by all appearances dead. Thus he remained, with great diligence, for several days. At last, the keeper of the hall said to the other gamblers, "This fellow is just playing 'the corpse game.' Take him out and throw him in a well—I will make good your winnings from him."

When they heard this, the other gamblers gladly took up Moon-lord and carried him to a distant forest, where they began to look for a well. But one old gambler said, "Why should we trouble ourselves further? This one is nearly dead already. Let us just leave him here to die, and say that we threw him in a well." So they left Moon-lord in the forest and returned to Ujjayini.

Now when Moon-lord was certain that he was alone, he rose up and stretched himself, and walking a short distance into the woods came to an empty temple of Shiva. There he pondered his miserable state and how he was to get food, while the sun abandoned his celestial robe and went to the mountain of setting. Just then, there came to that temple a Pashupata ascetic, a

thin old man whose body was smeared with ashes, whose hair was matted and tangled, and who carried the trident of Shiva. "And who may this be?" he asked of Moon-lord, who bowed low and told him his story and asked a blessing by way of reply.

"You have come to my hermitage an unexpected guest. Rise up, therefore, and bathe, and share with me a portion of the food I have obtained by begging."

"Reverend sir," said Moon-lord, "I am a Brahman. It is not possible for me to eat a part of your alms."

When the hermit, who possessed magical charms, heard this, he entered his hut and summoned up that genius which produces whatever one desires. "How may I be of service?" said the genie, when it had appeared before the hermit. "Provide entertainment for my guest," replied the hermit, and the spirit answered, "I will," and left the hut. Then there appeared to Moon-lord a city more beautiful than Ujjayini, being of pure gold, with a garden full of female attendants who beckoned to him and bade him eat and rest and forget his troubles. Then they took him inside and bathed him and anointed him and put splendid garments on him, and brought him before their queen. Ah, such a one as she seldom descends to this earth! She seemed to have been made by the Creator of All out of curiosity to see how fine his skills really were. And there beside her throne Moon-lord partook of the heavenly fruit of that palace all the night long.

The next morning when he woke up, however, Moon-lord beheld only the temple of Shiva and the rude hut of the hermit. No sign was there of the city or the garden, or of the fair queen whose hospitality he had enjoyed the night before. When the hermit came out, Moon-lord stood there still in amazement. "Well, my friend," said the hermit. "How did you spend the night? Restfully and happily I hope."

"Happily enough indeed, reverend sir," replied Moon-lord. "But alas, my life will depart now, for without that heavenly lady I can live no more."

Then the hermit laughed and said, "Remain here then, and tonight you shall have exactly the same experiences." And there in the temple of Shiva did Moon-lord stay for days on end, knowing only the temple and the hut by day, but delighting in the gold city and her queen by night. At last he began to understand that everything had been produced by magic, and one day, impelled by destiny, he begged the hermit to take pity and bestow on him the magical science.

"You cannot attain this knowledge so simply," replied the hermit. "It can only be attained under the water, and while the

aspirant is chanting the necessary spells, the genie creates delusions to bewilder and distract him. He sees himself born again, and living through his childhood and youth, he marries and supposes himself to have a son. He is falsely beguiled, thinking that one person is a friend, another an enemy. He forgets entirely *this* birth and his purpose. If, however, upon reaching the apparent age of twenty-four, he is recalled to consciousness by the wisdom of his instructor, and is then firm of soul and remembers his real life and knows that all he has hitherto experienced is illusion; if then, though under the influence of that illusion still, he enters the fire which he will see, he will attain true knowledge and, rising from the water, will return to his real life. If he fails to acquire the science, however, it is lost not only to him but to his teacher as well, who attempted to bestow it on one who was unfit. But come, why should you desire all this? You can obtain the results you desire by my possession of this power. Remember that if you try but fail, the science is lost to me—and your enjoyment of it as well."

Though he listened reverently to all that the hermit said, Moon-lord was still determined to acquire magical power for himself. "Please," he begged the holy man, "aid me in my quest. I shall surely be able to do all that is necessary." What will good men not do for the sake of those that implore their aid? So it was that the Pashupata ascetic took Moon-lord down to the banks of the river, and there taught him the incantations which he was to repeat under the water. Then the ascetic said to him, "My son, when you repeat this charm, you will behold all the illusions of which I have spoken. When I recall you to consciousness, you must enter the fire which you will see in your illusion. I shall remain all the time on the bank of the river to help you."

Then Moon-lord purified himself and rinsed his mouth with the holy waters, and bowing low before his teacher, descended boldly into the river. All took place exactly as the ascetic had told him. He was overwhelmed and bewildered with the illusions that sprang up before him as he repeated the incantations. He imagined himself born in another town, and in his vision, year by year, he grew up. At the proper age, he was invested with the Brahmanical thread, and he completed the proper studies. He married, so he supposed, and suffered the joys of that state until, in the course of time, he became enslaved to a newborn son.

In the midst of this dream-life, the hermit, his true teacher, employed the magic science to rouse his disciple at the proper moment. Then Moon-lord awoke from his reverie and remem-

bered his true self and his master. He became aware that all he saw before him was illusion, and he became eager now to enter the fire in order to complete his purpose. He was surrounded by his friends and relatives, however, who tried to prevent him from leaving. They used all manner of argument, declared him to be mad, and tried to convince him that his real life was illusory. Still desirous of heavenly enjoyment, and eager to acquire the knowledge of magic, Moon-lord closed his ears to their entreaties and made his way to the banks of a river which he saw in his dreams, by the side of which a huge pyre had been prepared. There he saw his children, and his wife and his aged parents, all grief-stricken, and he hesitated, saying to himself, "Alas! If I enter the fire, they will all die! I do not know if my teacher's promise is true or not. Shall I enter the fire? Or shall I not enter it? But after all, how can that promise not be true, when all that has taken place has happened exactly according to my teacher's words? Therefore, I will enter the fire." When he had completed his reflections, Moon-lord stepped forward and entered the fire.

To his astonishment, the fire was as cool to him as snow. Not a bit did it burn him. The delusion having come to an end, he rose from the water of the river and went to sit at the feet of his master. Then the hermit asked him to relate all that had transpired, and Moon-lord did so, remarking that the fire he entered at last was as cool as snow.

"My son," said the hermit, "you must have made some mistake. For how otherwise could the fire have appeared cool to you? This never happens in the process of acquiring this knowledge." Moon-lord replied, "My lord and reverend sir, I am certain that I made no mistake, but repeated all the incantations exactly as you told them to me, and performed all the necessary actions according to your instructions."

So the hermit then summoned up his genius in order to know for certain, but to their dismay, it did not appear. It was lost to them forever.

"Tell me, great King," said the Vetala when he had finished his tale, "upon the peril I have mentioned before, why the science was lost to both of them, though the incantation was performed exactly in the prescribed way? Remember that if you know and do not tell, your head will burst asunder."

Spiralling into the Future

an interview with

William Irwin Thompson

This past spring, consulting editor P.L. Travers happened o
William Irwin Thompson at a symposium at St. John the Divine c
the future of New York City. The prospect as he saw it was blea
near term, but rosier for the long run: he spoke provocatively bu
enigmatically about the virtues of the city's death–its passing int
"supernova" like a dying star, emitting intense light in its demis
and kindling with its scattered embers New Age centers of pos
civilization. Mrs. Travers and Dr. Thompson soon fell into spirite
conversation about matters great and small in the world of myt
and religion, an element natural to them both–if perhaps in diffe
ent senses. Mrs. Travers, animated by the encounter and take
with the prospect of opening their conversation to a wider aud
ence, suggested that their talk continue for the benefit of Parabola
readership. And so it did.

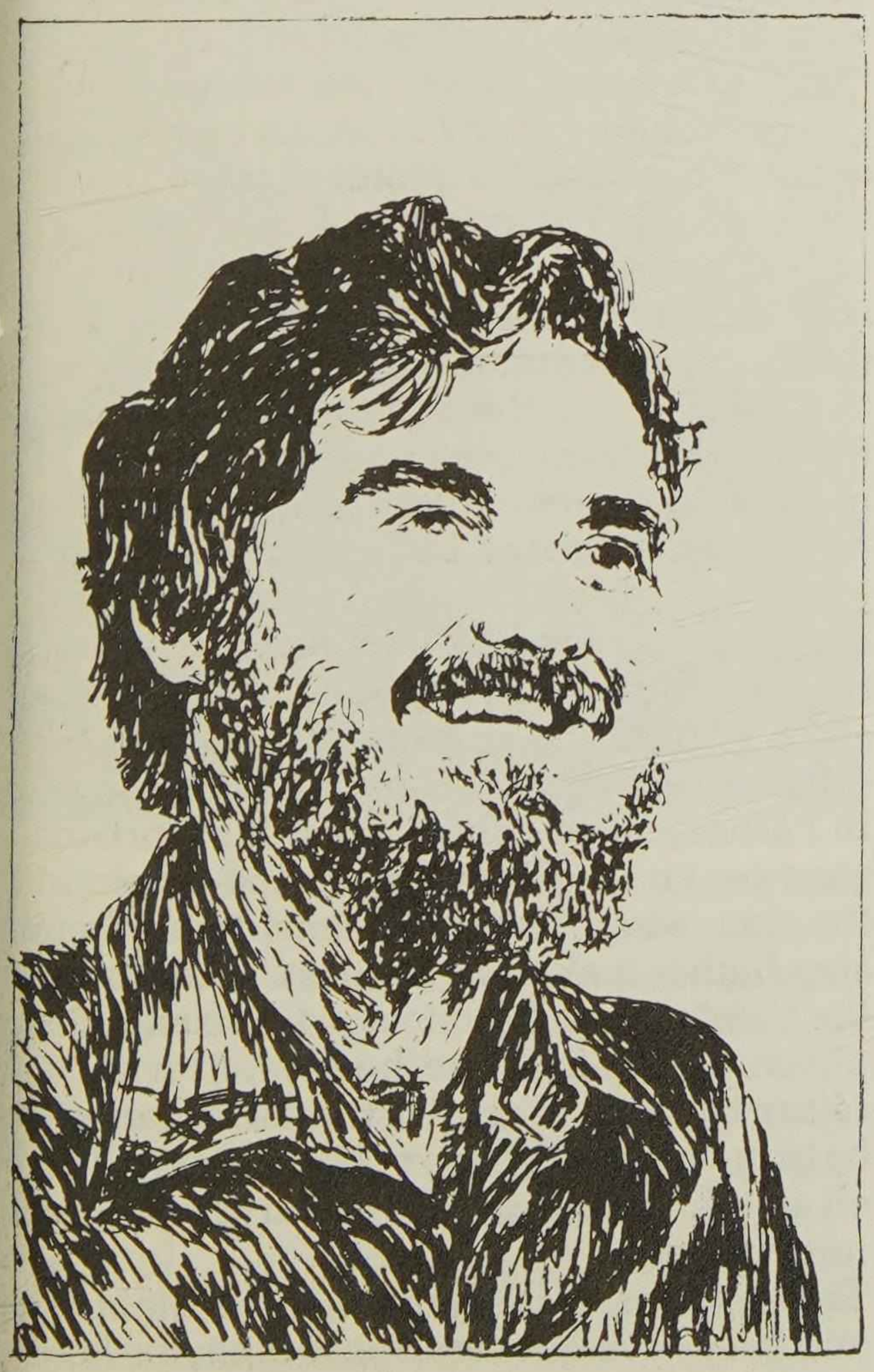
It's not hard to divine grounds for Mrs. Travers' enchantmen
William Irwin Thompson is a spellbinding talker who makes th
cliché "a lively mind" seem faint praise indeed. His is a rovin
restless intelligence, making lightning-quick connections an
coming-up with startling syntheses with the dazzling ease of a
intellectual Doug Henning. One can almost hear the 10,000 r.p.
whirring of brain cells as he tackles a question and issues a
immediate answer with rapid-fire fluency and almost unnervin
self-assurance. He seems not only to have read everything in
short time, but to have made a strong, often novel, assessment
how each piece fits.

Thompson has published four books, most recently a collectio
of essays called Evil and World Order, *a volume in Ruth Nanc*
Anshen's "World Perspectives" series. The major works, At th
Edge of History *and* Passages About Earth, *taken together, chron*
cle in essay-form his search for a viable contemporary sacred wo
and his intellectual odyssey around the world from Esalen
Lindisfarne, the spiritual think-tank and prototype community o
Long Island he now heads, with way stations en route at M.I.T. an
Toronto's York University. A protean speculator, he can find
world of meaning in a compost heap, and where others see ragt
bands of dreamy idealists he can see a new world aborning and
New Age advanced guard ushering it in. Whether this be real visi

or brainy projecting is for each individual, and time, ultimately to decide.

Meanwhile, opinions of Thompson naturally vary widely. Some regard him as erratically bright, a glib, eclectic spiritual frontiersman. Others find him remarkably attuned to the traditions' central meaning and boldly prophetic in his concrete attempts to bring the distilled wisdom of myth and religion into faithful currency. Perhaps the enigma and fascination of the man are that both views may be true at once. Whatever the final estimate – and Thompson is not yet forty– he is rarely if ever dull, and even disagreeing with him promises fruitful adventure. One suspects that Thompson, his small Irish eyes twinkling out of his red-bearded face, can easily delight in any controversy he might stir up that raises critical questions about human purposes and the world's future. Certainly few among his critics could best him in a face-to-face joust.

I left the interview exhilarated but dazed, like a kid climbing down from a rousing roller coaster ride. If, as Hegel avers, truth is a bacchanalian revel in which none is sober, then Thompson had perhaps given me a taste of it. As my head cleared, contrary opinions continued to race: had I seen the future (or the present, or the past) or just had a beguiling vision painted on the windows of my mind? Is there a way here–small, New Age communities; the universal religions made into a curriculum for the future–or just another siding? But since then, I've been startled to find how much of my recent thinking has been seeded by Thompson's ideas. And it may be that he like other thinkers he admires so much–McLuhan, Yeats, Teilhard, Bateson–is an adventurous prospector whose finds on the frontier may not be pure gold, but hold real nuggets in the dross.



John Loudon: As you know, Mrs. Travers has suggested that the theme of setting out and coming home is somehow central to myth, ritual, and religion and that we should make it a theme of our conversation. So I had it in mind in reading through your books, and there seem to be a couple of favorite quotes that recur in your work that relate directly to this theme. One is from T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding":

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time . . .

And the other is the Zen saying: "First there is a mountain. Then there is no mountain. Then there is." So, for openers, I'd like to ask if the great traditions of myth and religion have a common home, a home from which we set out and to which we continually spiral back?

William Irwin Thompson: I would think so. If you look at the myths from a structural point of view—and I'm not suggesting that I'm a structuralist—but if you line them up, you can see a common theme of what you could call "the Fall." The most recent example of this is the movie *The Man Who*

Fell to Earth that my son and I saw yesterday. In it there is a man who comes from another planet in a different kind of body, takes on the flesh of this planet to talk to people, and then goes through a process of increasing corruption until finally he's locked into this planet and can't go back whence he came. Here is the dominant motif of the daimon, or the soul, or the higher self, which exists at the higher *lokas* or planes, descending and taking on the grossness of a body and a physical incarnation. Then in adopting the physical incarnation, it begins to adopt the whole modality of the lower realm so that eventually the ego forgets that the soul exists at all. You can imagine it as watching a television program and becoming so caught up in it that you project into the characters and forget you're still in the chair watching the television program. You become an incarnation of that program. And the trick of all the world's religions, all the various forms of meditation, is to dislocate your consciousness from that identification with the television character and to remember that you're still this other self or higher soul sitting in the chair watching the program and that the projection was for very limited and specific purposes. So the whole process of the remembering is remembering back to the higher self. Sometimes—to touch on the truth of the koan—some universal traditions, like the gnostic, are so intense about the Fall that they tend to regard all matter as corrupt and evil. "The soul must withdraw from the senses," as Plotinus said, meaning that the soul must deny the body and withdraw to the higher mind. The Christian tradition and Aurobindo's teaching represent variations on the counter-theme of the universal religions, that we incarnated for a purpose, that the ego does have a purpose, however limited, and that when that purpose is fully seen from the vantage of the higher self then that incarnation is sacred too. You are as much in the eternal now as you are when you are in some imagined heaven later on. That is a profoundly different orientation to time from the traditional gnostic one, and one that I find a little more congenial.

But I think if you look at all the stories—whether at fairy tales or children's stories of stockbrokers who become so caught up in a limited way of life that the higher self has to come rushing in like an anima figure and just destroy their life to open them up to new capacities, which is of course what Mrs. Travers has written about—there is a common dominant theme that relates to the whole notion of incarnation and time. Time and space form as we take on a body.

P.L. Travers: Well, in a way the incarnatio is the Fall.

Thompson: Right. The shock of incarnatio is very much the shock of taking on the corruptible flesh.

Loudon: What about the idea that setting ou is necessary? Why must the self set out and go like the hero in quest of itself?

Thompson: Well, that's the big question which presumably the ego can't answer: "Why existence?" There are several levels to it presumably. And I think the hieroglyph of those two favorite quotes of mine would be the spiral. You come back to where you started but really not on the same plane. And in life there is a continual series of returnings to structurally similar positions the age of seven, the dawn of adolescence, the mid-life transformation, the wisdom of old age—consummating a whole lifetime o turning and turning in an ever-widening gyre, to use Yeats' image. As you look at all of those, you see that they're never just a return to the same thing. But if one asks why all this spiralling anyway, there are many different answers. The one that Milton gives in *Paradise Lost* comes when the Christos emerges and separates from God—right at the time when Lucifer is considering "one step higher makes me highest"—and takes the sceptre to go forth to create the manifes physical universe, and he says, "I will return to you at the end of time and men wil be in me and I will be in you and you will be all in all." Again another kind of spiral o implicitness.

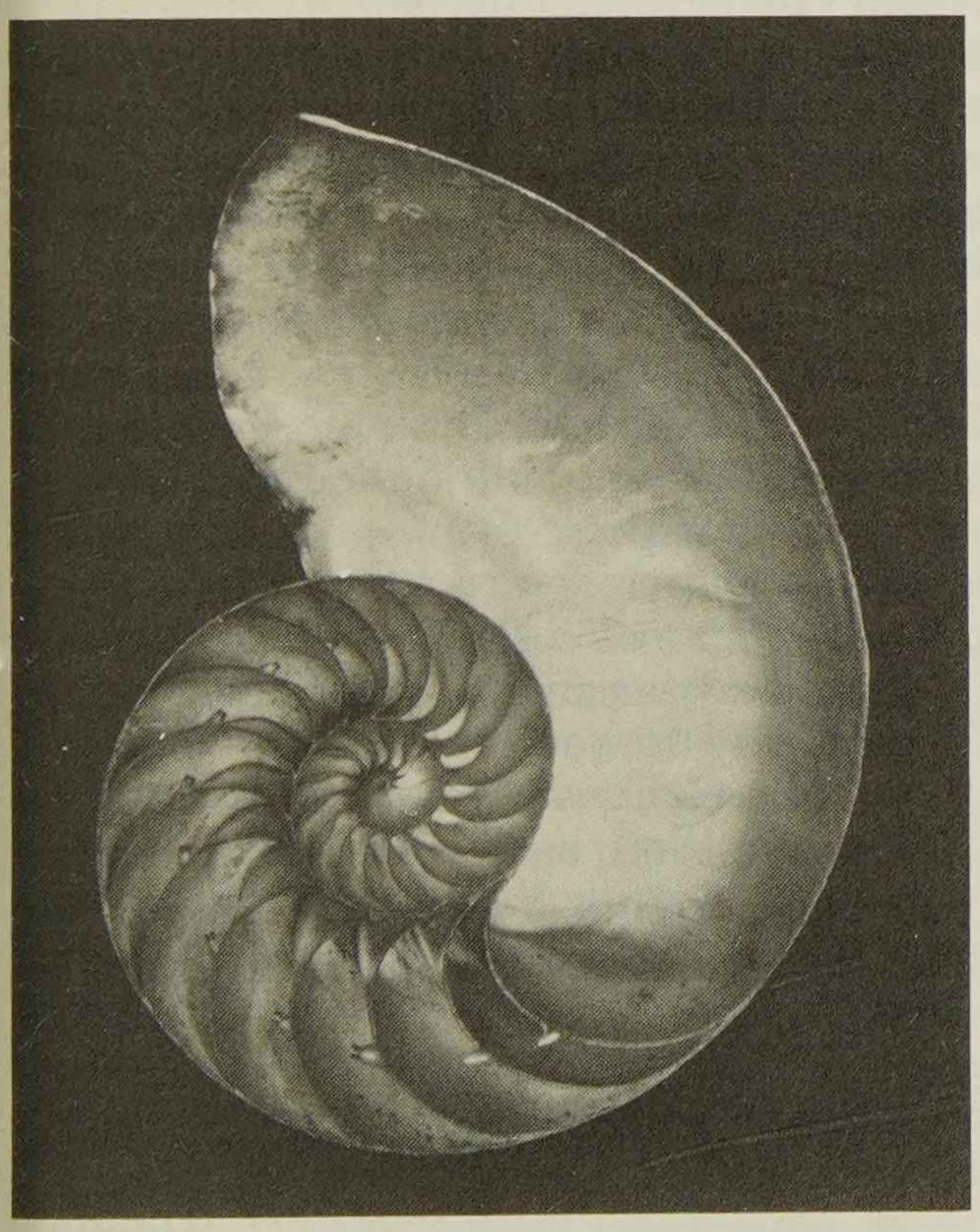
Travers: Yes, this happens in all the myt and fairy tales. In every one of them the hero

necessarily sets out from the nest, from all his known materials and his conditions, and he has to move up and perhaps then come back. After all, we had it all in the parable of the prodigal son. It's our whole story.

Loudon: Is the hero a hero before he sets out?

Travers: Ah, that is the question! He has to become the hero; he has to become the hero in his own story.

Thompson: Is there more to God after the process of manifestation, as in the unfolding outward of the universe and its coming to Christ-consciousness and then the in-folding back in Brahman's sleep? Is there more to the universe at the end of the story than at the beginning? Well, in a sense that's talking about stories *in* time, when stories are *about* time. Presumably the purpose of the ego's incarnation or the hero's setting forth is to gain experience and bring it back to the daimon, to the higher self. And presumably the higher self has use for it. But it's pretty hard for the ego to figure it out.



Travers: Yes, but back to the prodigal son. We have also to think of the son that didn't leave. I always used to think of that son as a pretty mean chap who complained that he wasn't given a fatted calf like the son who returned. But the father said to him, "Son, thou art with me always. This is my son that was lost and is found." In effect, we are being told that there is a part of us that has never left the father. That is what the brother represents. And the story is that we are making our way back home to that part of ourselves.

Thompson: I think that's true. I hadn't thought of that. I'd always thought of the other myth of the angels who were jealous at the creation of man. They refused to bow down and acknowledge man and therefore created a revolution in heaven. This because man somehow created a disequilibrium, destroyed the steady state of the previous Angelic kind of evolutionary stream so that with man matter appeared, then words and language and time and all these other things that seemed so gross and dense. And the angels didn't want to acknowledge that this was sacred or real, and they broke away. And so there was jealousy over the emergence of man, and I see echoes of that in the prodigal son. But I think your interpretation is equally valid. One of the interesting qualities of mythic thought is that it enables you to think hieroglyphically, to realize that things can exist on four levels at once, like a musical score. So if you read the myth correctly you're reading it like music. An ordinary description, a scientific description, is outside the thing it is describing, but a mythic description is not a description but a performance of the very reality it seeks to describe. In that sense it's much more analogous to music than it is to single language or propositional language or logical thought.

Loudon: Another more global instance of setting out from home and eventual return might be what goes on in relationship to the religious traditions that people grow up in: a pattern of naive acceptance, then critical alienation, and then possibly a kind of mature, eyes-open recovery. For instance, a lot of people, these days, grew up in the Christian tradition, became alienated from that, got involved in all sorts of other things but then found their way back home through alien experiences or through other traditions. What about this idea that you can find out what is in your own backyard only by leaving home and coming back after an odyssey through alien territory?

Thompson: Well, I think that's quite true, and it's been literally true in my own life. I started out in the cultural background of an Irish Catholic and then left the Church quite early because it was rationally ridiculous to me. And then in a kind of pattern of ontology recapitulating phylogeny, I went through the Renaissance and broke away

from Medievalism, and then went through the Enlightenment, and then Romanticism and then a short flirt with Existentialism, and then into the romance with the East in the 50s when I was growing up in California. And I became very much interested in Taoism and Yoga, but especially Yoga. But I didn't have the money to go to India, so it had to wait a long time. And then when I finally made the passage around the earth and went looking for alive mystical traditions, and made the journey to India, it was a very moving experience and I enjoyed the reality of it. But what I was looking for I did not find in India or Japan. I found it in Iona, an island in the Hebrides that has been revered as a sacred "power point" even before Celtic times, into the darkness of time of lost mythologies. For me Iona was a place of interface: it's just a mile from Scotland, but it's a very perilous crossing—the sea is very choppy—and as you stand on Iona looking at its green earth and back at the brown earth of Scotland, you can see that this is Ireland because it has the same color as the rocks of Connemara marble in the west of Ireland and that back there is Scotland. And at the interface between Scottish rationalism and Irish ecstatic mysticism was the place of transformation. For me this was a literal acting out of the archetypes of my own parents, since my father was a very rational, intellectual Scot and my mother was much more the devotional, religious, emotional kind of Irish Catholic. And the reality of the esoteric tradition, mysticism in the Celtic church, and the subterranean, syncretic Egyptian traditions that flowed into the early Irish church—all these things became much more real for me in Ireland and Scotland than they had been in Egypt or India or Japan, as much as I revere the traditions there. However, I couldn't have appreciated the mysticism of Iona without having done, in a very intense way, eight years of yoga. So that I went through a whole period of being a student of yoga and of being involved in kriya yoga and intense practice for several hours a day. That put me in a position to come back to the cultural traditions of my own heritage and know them for the first time. If I had approached them through the Roman Catholic Church, by just going to Mass on Sunday, there's no way that I could have really appreciated the esoteric intensity of Iona.

Loudon: But at another place in your book *Passages About Earth* you talk about the esoteric traditions of Christianity being dead, whereas you said you were searching for living mystical traditions.

Thompson: They're dead in the Church.

Loudon: So does that mean that they're onl alive through one's personal recovery of them?

Thompson: Well, I think that's very true. And it's hard to institutionalize the esoteric, because the esoteric is a very perilous, shamanistic, mystic voyage on your own, and Fr. Murphy can't hold your hand and take you through. So they're dead institutionally, but there have been individual attempts to reachieve the esoteric.

Loudon: Getting back for a moment to the theme of leaving home and coming back, you say at one point that "secularization is merely a temporary and very necessary process to give new energies to the sacred, to release it from the prison of the old forms." Why do we need a release from the old forms, and how does secularity do this?

Thompson: Well, again think of the spiral You have a period of growth and you're at the center; you begin to expand and then th circle becomes filled up and the only way to expand again is to break the circle and to launch out into a new space, which creates a lot of creative disequilibrium. Gregory Bateson has a very interesting way of talkin about this: he says that you need "noise"—in the sense that information theory understands that—to create music because if you don't have uncommitted potential that is not yet solidified into form then you can't have innovation, you can't have freedom, you can't have new expressiveness. So when you reach the lim of something—whether it's the limits to growth of the industrial society or the limit to faith in the growth of medieval

Christendom—there has to be a sudden assertion of a newly incarnating ego, leaving home, breaking away from holy mother Church, and going out to sense new possibilities. And then finally, when you try to run away from something, you go as far as you can in the opposite direction and then you realize somehow by the vector of constraints you're really travelling in a spiral and you return to where you started, but at another plane. For example, we left holy mother Church in Christendom and the concentric quality of the medieval universe, and we went as far as we could in the Renaissance and the affirmation of separate nations and the individual. And now at the limits of destroying the planet through consumerism and the enhancing of the ego through the satisfactions of greed, we're beginning to emerge into a new concentricity. Planetary culture is concentric culture. It's the sense of "the whole earth" and a rediscovery of the feminine principle and of things that were more articulated in the medieval synthesis. But it's not going to be just a simple return to the Middle Ages; it's going to be a wholly novel culture, but structurally the two periods will be isomorphic. This is why neo-medieval thinkers like Ivan Illich or Paolo Soleri or Marshall McLuhan have a lot to say to old voices of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.

Loudon: It's curious that all those new medieval thinkers you refer to happen to be Catholics. Is that circumstance wholly gratuitous? Does Catholicism perhaps give them a stronger sense of a home that's been left and that they can spiral back to, newly expanded?

Thompson: The Catholic vision, I think, never wholly dies. There are two things going on here. Catholic cultures have never been at home with the industrial revolution. The cultures of Ireland, Spain, or Portugal are not industrial in the way that, say, the Netherlands is industrial, or Sweden, or England. When the immigrants from Catholic countries came to America, which was the main celebration of industrialization, they just simply made their Church a version of Protestantism. So that when apostate Catholics left that Church—the American Catholicism of the Kennedy variety is a myth of immigrants making it—they went looking for spiritual visions, and in various directions. Because I grew up in California, I looked toward India and Japan. Ivan Illich is a European, and so he was much more concerned with looking in other directions in terms of social science, which for me is not a terribly attractive kind of synthesis. McLuhan is a convert, so that he represents a movement away from Protestant technology and the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, which predominates in Ontario where he lives, and into the electronic vision of a harmonious universe with electronic means of communications reachieving concentricity and ending the isolation of the self. So he was looking back to Dante and people like that. I think that all of these things are not at all accidental.

Loudon: You talk in your writings about the *Urkultur* (primordial tradition?) at the root of Sumerian, Greek, Hopi, Maya, etc. symbolism—and not just in the psychological sense that we have a similar sort of psychophysical makeup so that in encountering fundamentally comparable experiences the same symbols emerge, but in the sense of a real source-wisdom, a source-teaching. What is the relationship between this source-teaching and the new mythology you see emerging in planetary culture? The "new mythologies," as you call them, that Lindisfarne has been created to give space to, to nurture?

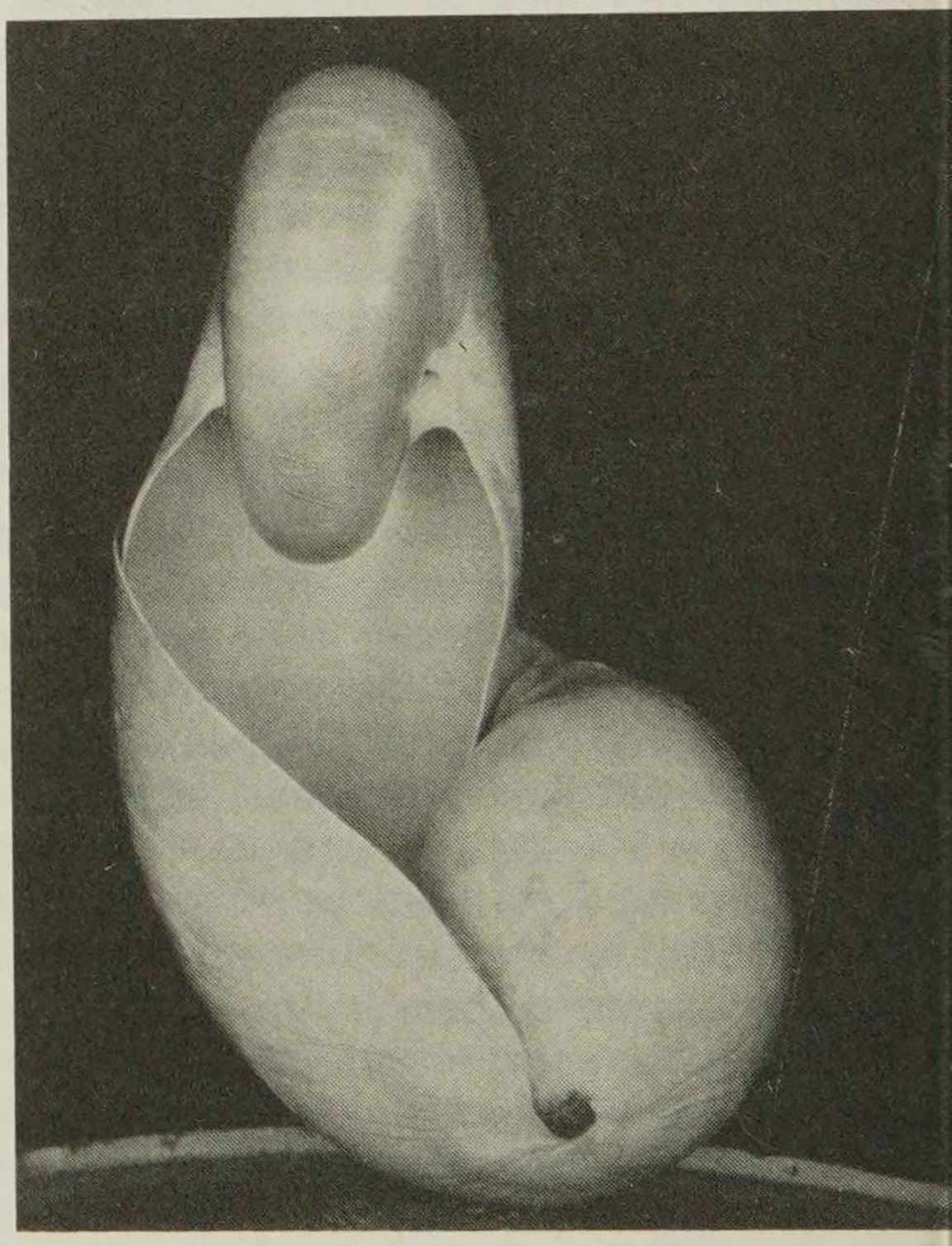
Travers: I wonder if there is such a thing as the "new myth." I want to know what you think about it, because viscerally I believe that there are not new myths. Rather, we constantly restate the myths. For instance, they're being restated in America continually. Look at women's lib. What is that but the rising of the Great Mother? You yourself have written about Tiamat being cut to pieces by the gods who overcame her because of her static condition. And again and again you'll find the Goddess, who's had men's feet on her neck, rising. She's

rising everywhere now, but probably in the very wrongest way. Is there, therefore, anything new in myth but the old vital essence of man being restated? This is a very deep theme. You can see this in Patty Hearst too, did you ever think of that? There is the daughter, the child abducted and taken into the underground world, where she eats the pomegranate. She loves the underground. And her mother goes searching for her everywhere. What myth is it? Persephone, of course. And we still don't know how it will work out, whether she will be allowed to come out for six months into the world and see her mother. Must she return to her dark lord? We don't know the end of it, but it's a clear variant, don't you think?

Thompson: I think that this is one of those situations where the truth is not in one position or another, but at the simultaneous interface between them. For instance, I believe that history repeats itself structurally, but never repeats the same pattern in the same way. So it's analogous again to music, and I would agree with the physicists who say that the universe is not made up of matter but of music, that it's all harmony and pattern, Pythagorean form. So that a myth that I see returning in women's lib is, as you pointed out, the Tiamat-and-Marduk myth, but also the reconciliation with Lilith, because Eve is in some sense the domestication of the feminine principle—she's a good housewife.

Travers: Oh, absolutely.

Thompson: But the first wife was much more a primordial, in the literal sense of the word, creature, who would not be dominated by Adam. He tried to rape her and keep her down under him, and she said "Why should I be underneath?" and then recited the sacred name of God and went off in the air to live in ruins and cohabit with demons. Well, I think that contains Semitic slanders of a very male chauvinist culture. And the part that talks of Lilith living in ruins means that she is an embodiment of the entropic principle, that she liberates us from form by showing that all forms are moving toward entropy. So the return of Lilith means that man has to readjust his culture with his instinctive nature and to generate a new technology that is an instinctive technology. You can see this happening in architecture. If you shift from industrial architecture, where you have a steel or concrete wall between culture and nature, to creating a permeable membrane, then you're really readjusting the relationship between *techné* and man's instinctive nature. So I think that what men have to learn is that Lilith is not the savage bitch that we took her to be and that once we let go of our heroic ego and of the attempt to dominate nature, then we rediscover that the feminine principle is much more liberating and creative and that this savage bitch that we think is going to emasculate us is really here to deliver us from the limitations we have imposed upon ourselves. But the way this myth is going to



be played out in contemporary culture, I think, is going to be wholly novel. The exciting thing about myth is that it's never boring, it's never the same, and it plays out new possibilities.

Loudon: But if it is just the same old thing in new dress, then it is boring. You say, "Oh well, it's just the same old story." If you see things simply as the same old story, mythology's not interesting, creative, liberating at all.

Thompson: Also, it means that if we're beginning to have a science of myth and science of human culture, we are at the limits of a stage of myth and human culture and we're going through an evolution of consciousness in which these things are enabling us to be conscious enough to move to another level. So here I would refer back to Aurobindo again and

say that we are at an evolutionary quantum leap, in which consciousness is going into a radical mode of thought. Now, it may be that it is very similar to what went on in ancient times, as Rudolf Steiner says; but even Steiner says that we're not going back to some Atlantean sensibility but that we're going to carry into the recovery of astral sensitivities the whole journey of ratio and logos and consciousness and man as the measure of all things. This is one reason that I think the esoteric paths, to get back to your question, have come back. In the early culture, all the esoteric paths are really radiation from a common center—Sufism and Yoga and Zen Buddhism.

Loudon: An actual historical center or from some prehistorical source?

Thompson: Well, you can use several metaphors. You can say that there's an original *Urkultur* in Atlantis or Lemuria, or that there is a *shambhala* on the higher *lokas* and that the Masters and great prophets radiate out of this ethereal plane to come down to take on incarnation. It's certainly true that the sixth century B.C. is the century of religious genius, with all the prophets coming at the same time. Where did they come from? How did they come? You can invoke any model of consciousness you want, and that's fine with me. But I think that what's happening now is the end of the age of religion. In the period of civilization, when you've got elites at the center and provincial hicks out at the periphery, the religions come to restore the unity of the tribe. And the way the spirit of humanity expresses itself in the period of civilization, which is now ending, is through the great universal religions. Now what I think is happening is another new age of prophecy, very analogous to sixth century B.C. It is the end of the age of religion and a rise of a new sacred existence where culture itself becomes the *Tao* or the sacred way of life.

Travers: It's the idea of sacrifice we have to recover. *Sacra-ficium*—making sacred—an idea we've entirely lost. That's what this new world you're envisaging presupposes.

Thompson: As we shift from the old culture, in which we institutionalized the sacred, to the new culture, we will have to sacrifice a lot of consumerism and exploitation of nature. We're going to have to give up that heroic industrial ego that dominates nature. I think, in Jung's terms, that "a victory for the self is a defeat for the ego." As the daimon touches the ego, the ego has to sacrifice and give up, literally, to the higher self, and that means surrender. So I think that what we're seeing is in a sense the surrender of the West. We've surrendered in spirit to the East already, but what's going to come out of that is not that the future's with India or China, but that the union of all the great world religions is going to occur here in North America. We're the alchemical alembic. And so the new sacred way of life, whatever you want to call it, I see emerging most dramatically on this continent.

Loudon: Yeats says something about life being a preparation for something that never happens. I'm wondering, then, how you would respond to the suggestion that all your powerful speculations about what's happening are merely mental or spiritual preparations for something that never happens.

Thompson: Well, there are two ways of looking at time: from the point of view of the daimon, to use very Yeatsian language, or from that of the ego. From the viewpoint of the ego, you have a very messianic drive—"I want the Messiah now, surely he'll come quickly, I want the Kingdom now."

Everything I'm talking about and thinking about I want to see in my ego's lifetime. That's a kind of materialism in an intellectual form. A lot of the things I'm talking about I see as parameters from the past and the future constraining upon this moment of time, but I don't expect all of them to appear in my own lifetime. This is why Lindisfarne is called Lindisfarne. Lindisfarne provided the seeds for Oxford, Cambridge, Canterbury, and British civilization, but not one of those monks lived to see them. But they wouldn't have been, if it hadn't been for Lindisfarne. I'm quite sure that Aidan and Cuthbert weren't so impatient and were perfectly willing to die without seeing it all come in physical time.

Travers: They weren't looking just for solutions. The solution is the great enemy, especially in this country, the assumption that there's an answer for everything.

Thompson: The quick fix.

Travers: And the only way to live, it seems to me, is to live under a mystery, to live under Unknowing—and I don't mean ignorance.

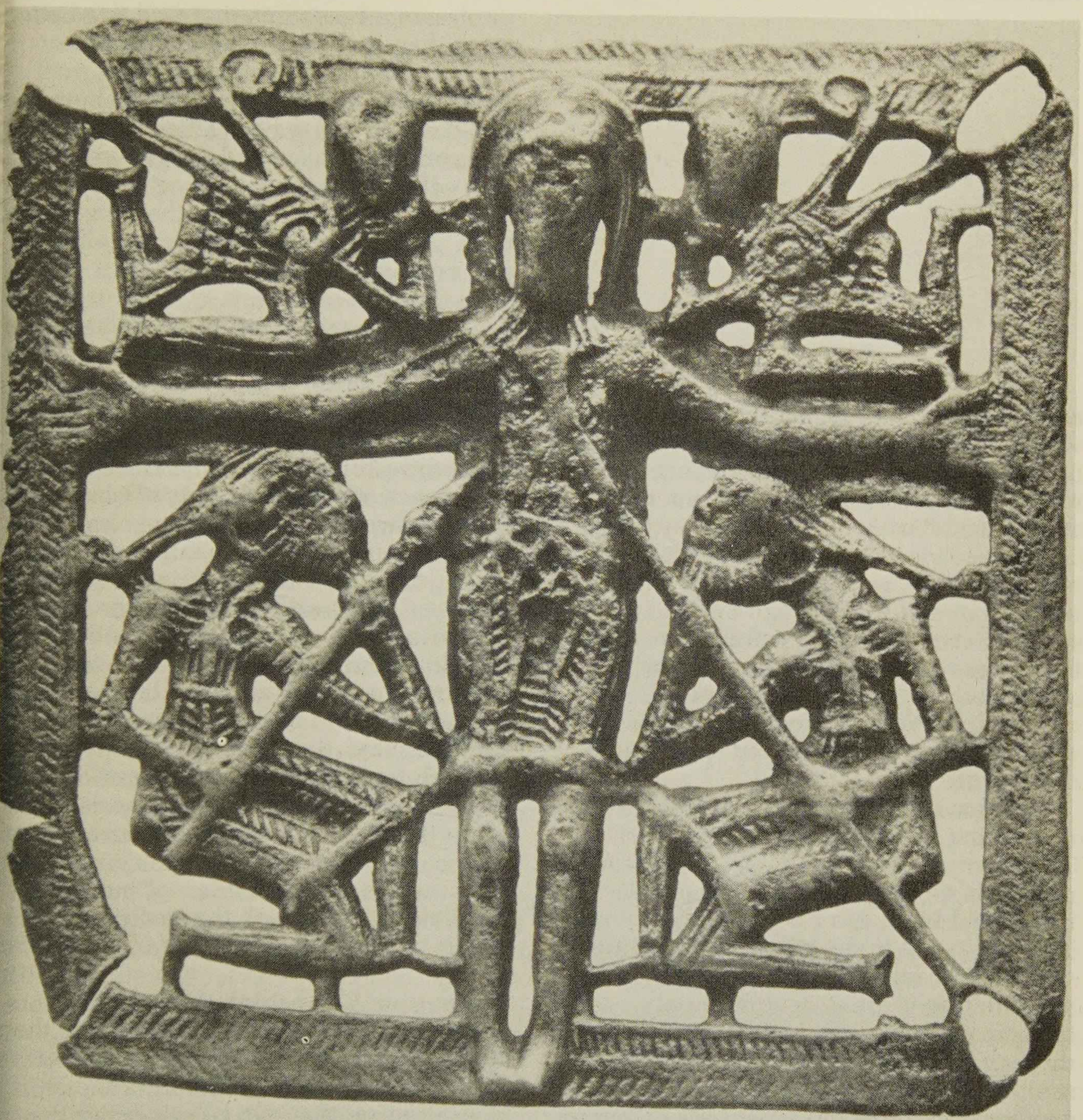
Thompson: I think we are living in the overture, and that's an exciting time to be alive because all the possibilities are starting to be played out and you can hear it all. But it's going to take maybe 2,000 years, it'll take a Platonic *magnus annus*, to manifest it and to have it all come out in clock time.

Loudon: It seems to me that the personal, almost the hero's, struggle at the present time, if you're conscious of some of this and are making grand connections between the future and the past, is figuring out how to live right here in the middle. To live a life that's whole and not schizophrenic—half mundanely pragmatic and half dreamily visionary. You have to involve yourself in modern society, you know, you have to make a living and somehow find meaning in the concrete here and now.

Thompson: Well yes, Lindisfarne is in New York too. It's at the center and at the edge. We play out the paradoxes of both. Let me go back to your Yeats thing about waiting for the event that never happens. Yeats at his death bed said that man cannot know the truth, the truth can only be embodied in him. Which is man at his death letting go of the ego and seeing the daimon and realizing that the incarnation as William Butler Yeats was to play out very limited truths, but that he could never know the truth. But embodied through William Butler Yeats was a higher kind of truth. And there again it's the daimon and the higher self. The trick is to realize that everything that you're waiting for is here now, and literally in the eternal now. That doesn't mean an eternally enduring moment, because that would be to think of now as duration, which is the wrong way to look at time. If you look at the eternal now as a timeless moment, and in the literal sense of meditation in which you stop your heart and in the interval between the heartbeats you have the space that opens up to infinity or a kind of space that is non-extended and non-duration, then you begin to see that it's all right here. And you see that the incarnation of the ego is sacred and that this whole sense that I'm not sacred but waiting to be made sacred or go to heaven or whatever, all this kind of stuff is fictions of the ego.

Loudon: You talk about a recovery of Pythagorean science. What do you mean by it and how is its contemporary form going to differ from its ancient form?

Thompson: Well, this gets right back to Mr Travers' idea of homecoming, because the origins of western civilization and western science lie in Pythagorean science. Even earlier than Plato's academy is Pythagoras



academy at Crotona, and Plato is working literally in the Pythagorean tradition. So the whole notion of music and physics and mathematics upon which our quantum theory is based derives from Pythagoras. So Russell and Whitehead and Heisenberg invoke the archetype of Pythagoras as the scientific imagination. But there are always two brothers—whether it's Christ and Lucifer or some other pair—and so there are two scientific traditions, and one of ours has tended to be dominant. And that's the Archimedean mentality. But the mystical Pythagorean tradition in science is very strong, and it's been with us in every single century, back to alchemy and beyond. So just as I am concerned to go back to Celtic Christianity to rediscover the contemplative in our own western tradition, a homecoming, I also want to go back to the Pythagorean academy in Crotona to rediscover mystical science, another kind of homecoming, and then work to recreate them in this culture in ways that are not just a mechanical reduplication of them. So Pythagorean science is an integration of science, religion, and art. Archimedean science seeks through predictions made from laboratory experiments to control nature. The purpose of a prediction is to exercise control over the system, and it thinks in terms of systems. Pythagorean science thinks in terms of forms of contemplation which enhance your

existence and your relationship with the whole. So that Pythagorean science again is not a description, it's a performance of reality. It approaches the condition of music. Here I'm taking issue with my fellow California kids who grew up in the'50s and talk only of going to the East and getting blissed out and just sitting in a kind of *samadhi* state, and I'm insisting instead that there's going to be new science, new architecture, new philosophy, new thought, new writing. And they come out of the ashes of the old technology, the old engineering, the old art.

So it doesn't mean just getting blissed out and saying I don't have to do the work. That's why I violently disagree with ego reduction techniques in mysticism. We've incarnated in an ego for a sacred purpose. The role is not to destroy the ego but to dance it out, knowing that it's limited. But in limitation is art. A sculpture only occupies one space, it isn't spread out through all infinity, and that's what makes it sculpture.

Loudon: The ego's limitations are necessary for the adventure. Otherwise you just stay in place, at home.

Thompson: Right.

Loudon: To get back to the idea of *Urkultur*. At one point you say "there is only one universal esoteric knowledge for the transformation of consciousness." But then you also say that we have to look back to the old religious traditions and then move beyond them to a new religious revolution, without *a* guru, without *a* teaching. Well, if there's a single esoteric knowledge, why can't there be *a* teaching and *a* teacher?

Thompson: Why can't there be one flower in a garden? If you had a garden of just one kind of flower, in a kind of monocrop where you see all of Iowa covered with corn, it would be monotonous and aesthetically unpleasing. I presume that God is a better artist than that. There are many truths played out in different ways. Can't you listen to Bach, Beethoven and Brahms and like them all? So we can affirm Sufism and Yoga and Buddhism and the great esoteric past without in any way trying to turn them into an ideology and saying that Yoga is *the* truth. And some yogis will even go further and say my yoga is *the* truth, I'm a better guru than the other guy.

Loudon: The real discrimination has to be between paths that are true and paths that are false, then?

Thompson: Yes, there are always shadow images. If there is a Christ, there will always be an anti-Christ. If there is, as I feel now, the emergence of a mystical body of Christ and Christ-consciousness in the species—I see the whole planet as the Grail and the evolution of the race creating the mystical body of Christ—and if you have the kind of divine integration in which each individual is unique *and* universal, it has to have a shadow image in which you have the unique compressed into uniformity and clumped into the mass. So political collectivization through terror and divine integration through love are absolutely opposite and one is the shadow of the other. And both are going on in the twentieth century, and that, of course, is the great crisis of our time.

Loudon: Do you think the traditions have a sort of grace or power that is intrinsic to them?

Thompson: Yes, I think there's a radiance. It's like the light filtering down from the higher planes. As it comes down it creates a spectrum from infra-red to ultra-violet. It doesn't mean that one color's better than another. And if you go up to certain levels you begin to see a convergence where the Buddha and the Christ are not antithetical. Or you begin to see that Taoism is not necessarily antithetical to some of the ideas the prophet Amos had in attacking cities and pharaonic luxury in Israel at his time. So I think there are definitely great souls who lead us on, like the prophets or the avatars or the saints, but I think that what is going on in this age is a kind of growing up where we have to realize that we can't project and externalize into a guru and let the guru live it out for us. In all the great teachings, the true masters know that there comes a time when you have to let go. But you can't let go unless you've held on to something.

Loudon: It seems, to speak very approximately, that a religious way requires at least some sort of spiritual practice—prayer, meditation—some sort of community, and some sort of transformative ritual. Do you see these as a part of the dawning religious consciousness you talk about?

Thompson: I think the ritual just has to be love of the past, without necessarily being attached to the past. If you really love someone, you have to give them freedom. So this means that you can't control them. And so if you love the past, it doesn't mean that you have a mechanical pattern of controlling it and of trying, say, to make Lindisfarne an authentic sixth-century A.D. monastery. We're associated in spirit and myth and metaphor and symbol, but we're as different as we possibly could be. But we've tried to respond in a new living way to some of the same impulses that impelled the people of that time to do what they were doing—to rediscover the sacred in a period of danger and disintegration.

Now meditation is important because it enables the ego to discover the daimon. It's a way of dislocating the ego, of rearranging the figure-ground relationship between the higher self and the ego, and it's one of the best ways to do it. This is why many different religions, coming at it from different cultures, have ended adopting similar techniques. If you're going to discover the eternal now, then you have to sit still, stop your mind and your heart and watch your breath, and let your breath disappear. And you can do it in a Taoist fashion or in a Buddhist fashion, or even Wordsworth—who certainly was no yogi—says, "The breath of this body almost suspended /We are laid asleep in body to become a living soul." And that's a perfect description of meditation. But there isn't one meditation. And it doesn't have to be meditation. It can be dervish whirling or sacred dance or singing or some other practice.

Loudon: To pursue this democratic idea a little further. In the present climate of widespread and pretty indiscriminate eclecticism, it becomes difficult for some to distinguish readily between a freak and a mystic, between a true teacher and, say, that Texas couple who are going to take people away in a flying saucer. So how do you discern, perhaps in the spirit of St. Ignatius' idea of the discernment of spirits, a true teaching? Why include Sufism and not scientology?

Thompson: "By their fruits you shall know them": that's the way Jesus said to discern a teaching. You know he said that many prophets would come in his name, and at that time great numbers of the elect—not the dumb clucks, but the smart guys—would be deceived. And so I think there's no College Board tests for gurus, there's no technique, there's no system. You just have to become very quiet and very passive and allow the music of the teacher or the teaching to play upon you, and then you just listen to your intuition, trying to attune your ego to your daimon, and listen if it tells you this person is genuine. You judge it the same way you would a work of art or anything like that.

Loudon: Or tuning musical instruments?

Thompson: And then after you feel the full music of the teacher or the teaching, then you just see what fruits it bears.

TANGENTS: BOOKS IN REVIEW

STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY, VOL. II
By Claude Lévi-Strauss. New York: Basic Books, 1976. Pp. xv + 383. $17.50.

How Myths Die

Paul Jordan-Smith

As I write, the shelf in front of me is entirely occupied by two sets of books. In green cloth is Mathers' translation of Mardrus' translation of the *Thousand and One Nights;* beside it, in black, are the ten volumes of Taweey and Penzer's translation of the *Ocean of Story*. I mention them in a review of a new collection of essays by Claude Lévi-Strauss, because in a subtle and sometimes distressing way books of stories and myths—fixed in print, oddly mute unless a reader makes them speak—are intimately caught up in a central question for him and for us: how do myths die?

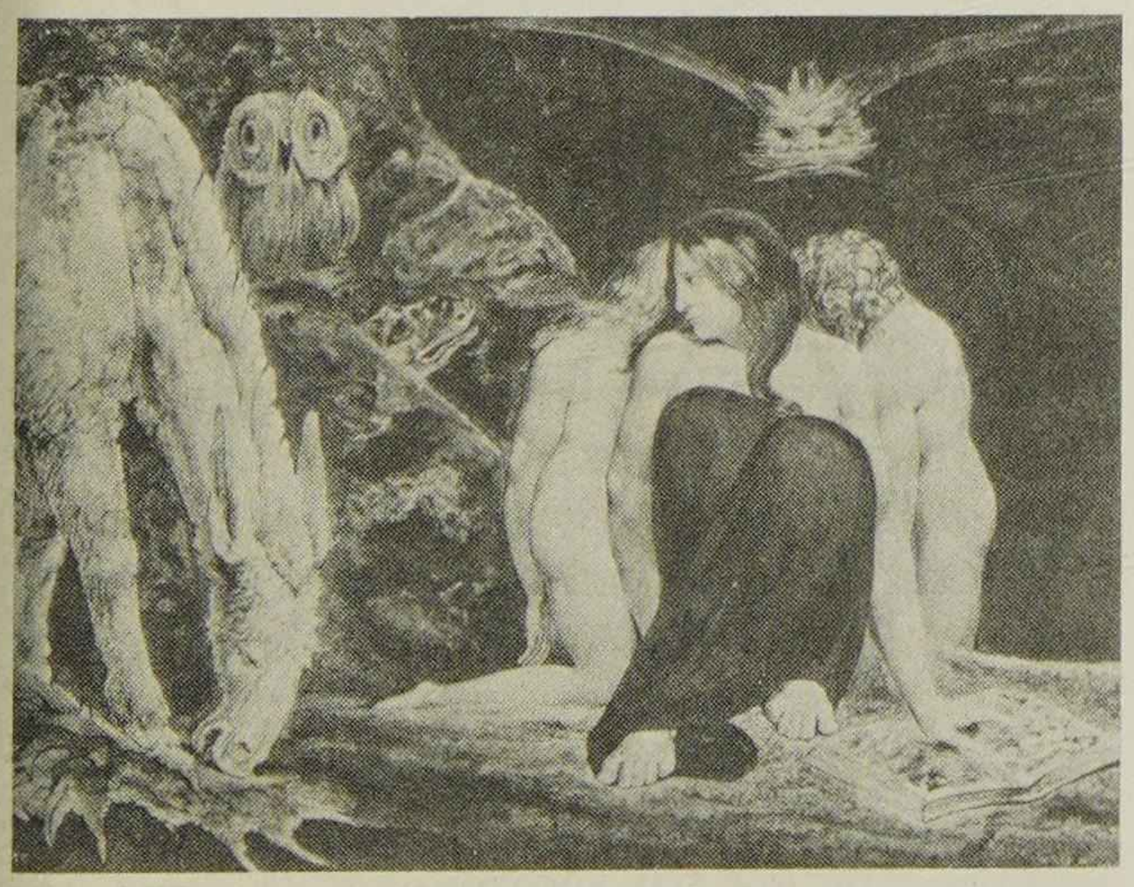
"How Myths Die," in fact, is the title of one of the more thought-provoking essays in this collection. In it, Lévi-Strauss examines the transformation that myths undergo, with a view to understanding why a myth "degenerates or evolves, as you will, beyond the stage where the distinctive characteristics of the myth are still recognizable and where the myth retains what a musician might call its 'lilt.'" Using a single myth, widespread among the Pacific Northwest Indians but found also in Brazil and Peru, he explores the variants among contiguous tribal groups—the Thompson River Indians, the Suswap, Chilcotin, Tsimishian, Kutenai, Bella Coola, Coeur d'Alene, and Cree. As the various thresholds are crossed between these groups, the myth takes on new attributes —assimilations, elaborations, abbreviations—distinctive of each people. More important, however, from the structuralist viewpoint, is the alteration that takes place in the underlying structure of the myth as the different boundaries —geographic, economic, sociological, and cosmological—that demarcate the various cultural territories are crossed. Thus, the ogreish owl that kidnaps the crying boy in the Salish version becomes a wise and benevolent tutor among the Chilcotin, who belong to a different linguistic group. The distributive justice by which the opposition of the protagonists is resolved (Salish and Chilcotin versions) is reduced to a romantic plot evolving into tragedy among the Carrier. The Tsimshian add etiological embellishments concerning the owl, which purport to establish certain clan privileges. Finally the Cree incorporate the advent of the white man and their wooden houses into the myth and thus offer a historical explanation of the amicable relations between themselves and the whites.

To speak more generally, the initial structure of a bipolar opposition of forces—the hero versus the monster, with their struggle leading to the hero's transfiguration—goes through a succession of stages that ultimately lead to the complete elimination o

polarity: the monster becomes a tutelary spirit, an ally whose guidance effects the transformation. Regarding this process, Levi-Strauss notes that "one often observes . . . that mythological systems, after passing through a minimal expression, recover their original fullness on the other side of the threshold. But their reflection is inverted, a bit like a bundle of light rays entering into a *camera obscura* through a pin-point opening and forced by this obstacle to cross over each other. The same image, seen rightside-up outside is reflected upside-down in the camera." The forces —perhaps *laws* would be a better word —which bring about such changes are investigated in two other essays in this volume:"Relations of Symmetry Between Rituals and Myths of Neighboring Peoples" and "The Story of Asdiwal." And of course his monumental four-volume study *Mythologiques* (published in English as *Introduction to a Study of Mythology)* is devoted entirely to investigating the structure of myth and the forces that shape its expressions.

Out of such discussion emerges a further critical question: what happens to myths when they pass beyond all their native homelands and enter into our own culture? Must we create a new mythology for our time, as people like William Irwin Thompson seem to suggest, or are all the old myths still valid and usable? Or are there unwritten myths inherent in our thoughts and deeds, some of which are perhaps original and others inverted, according to the process which Lévi-Strauss describes?

At this point, it might be well to venture a definition of myth—not to prescribe a meaning for all times and places, but simply to indicate how the word is being used in this review. Clearly I am not talking about such phenomena as "the myth of male chauvinism," whatever that may be, or about the so-called mythical proportions of popular characters in comic books and novels. Rather I am using the term in an old-fashioned, non-colloquial way. As Elizabeth Cook puts it, in *The Ordinary and the Fabulous* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), "myths are about gods, legends are about heroes, and fairy tales are about woodcutters and princesses." She goes on, "A rather more respectable definition might run: Myths are about the creation of all things, the origin of evil, and the salvation of man's soul; legends and sagas are about the doings of kings and peoples in the period before records were kept; fairy tales, folktales and fables are about human behavior in a world of magic, and often become incorporated into legends."



William Blake

Myths, like legends and folktales (and unlike novels, films, and comic books), are anonymous and spontaneous oral expressions which spring from a culture at the time of its most coherent understanding of the dilemma of man—the dilemma of his two natures, the angel and the beast, of his place between the two domains of the sacred and the profane. Myths come from "the folk": their emergence and elaboration occur in the oral traditions of a culture; they do not come from the deliberations and speculations of the individual. Literature —that is, written or visually-oriented expression—is too individual, too deliberative, and (perhaps more important of all) too *permanent* to be anything more than a very crude tool for the archeological preservation of myths. The written word, fixed and the same for all, cannot take into account the circumstances, inner and outer, of its recipients. It is the oral aspect of living myth which gives it the potency of flexibility. But it can be as dangerous to its preservation as it is indispensible for its perpetual regeneration: the wages of vitality is the risk of distortion. Essentially, to compress Cook's definition once more, myths speak to us of *above* and *below.* In *The Sacred and the Profane,* Eliade says that myth "is always the recital of a creation," that it "describes the various and sometimes dramatic irruptions of the sacred into the world." Myths speak of sacred history, whereas legends are about secular history. The fundamental bipolarity underlying all myth is precisely

the opposition—and apposition—of these two realms. Myth, one might say, is about structure *per se*: the structure of the universe, the structure of the culture, the structure of man, each level being the reflection of the one above it. "The point to be emphasized," says Eliade, "is that, from the beginning, religious man sets the model he is to attain on the trans-human plane, the plane revealed by the myths. *One becomes truly a man only by conforming to the teaching of the myths, that is, by imitating the gods.*"

What happens, then, to myth when it crosses the threshold between two cosmologies, between the domains of quite contrary gods (or of no gods at all)? Between two cultures differing fundamentally in their ideas of kinship or of geography, one finds changes in meaning determined by such factors as matrilineal versus patrilineal inheritance or coastal versus inland economy. Between differing cosmologies, therefore, one might expect transformations of mythical narrative appropriate to different conceptualizations of the process of creation. The view of the relationship between solar and lunar cycles will affect the way a myth about the sun and the moon is assimilated by one culture from another, just as one would expect fundamentally different myths about winter from tropical Africa and the steppes of central Asia. The fact that there are few, if any, simple and unambiguous thresholds between cultures makes it extremely difficult to determine the various laws governing such transformations.

But there are significant oppositions at the level of basic world view that can be discussed more readily than the many constituent factors—environment, economy, location, etc.—that concretely distinguish one culture from another and make for changes in the rendering of myths. At least

this seems especially true in trying to understand the death of myth in our own culture. For what seems involved is a clash between contrary cosmologies: on the one side is a traditional world which regards itself as having sacred origins and on the other side there is an anti-traditional world which regards questions of origin as purely secular and empirical. What happens to myth in a climate so antithetical to religious awe—the fear of God which, it is said, is the beginning of wisdom—that virtually *all* religiosity is regarded with suspicion, expressed or implicit? What happens to the tales of the gods when they pass into a culture that regards them at best as guidelines for investigating the psychosexuality of its more neurotic citizens (who, it seems, are about the only ones with any sense—however superficial and distorted—of myth's inherent power) and at worst as nursery tales of dubious worth, to be bowdlerized when the current "morality" is found to be in conflict with the thread that holds the myth together? Does it even make sense to speak of "need for new myths" when the attitude necessary for the renewal of old myths—a sense of the sacred—exists only in the fonder dreams of an alienated few? The need, it seems, is not for "new myths," if that phrase (and idea) is not in itself a contradiction in terms, but for a recovered sensibility that could genuinely feel what the perennial myths are saying.

What happens instead is that myths fall into the hands of scholars and businessmen. They become archeological specimens under glass, dead witnesses to a lost past; or sources for ad campaigns, best sellers, comic books, and TV serials. As scholarly specimens—that is, in their seemingly pure unadulterated form—myths fall victim to a form of expression that deems diction and syntax more important than nuance and inflection. They become as crusty and proper and empty as Victorian manners. They become imprisoned—mummified—in a particular set of words whose true meaning can come alive only in oral, adaptive expression. Oral expression, speech, is temporal, *timely;* written language is spatial, architectonic. As Guénon was fond of pointing out, speech is nomadic in nature but literature belongs to the city and its architects. Literature is what men manufacture; myths are the expression of their nature, their situation.

As natural, as basic, myths are al-

ways sources for new expressions. But as such they are exposed to the excesses of adaptation: the destruction of meaning through attempts at immediate "relevancy," secularization, the gradual adulteration with alien elements added in the mistaken belief that embellishment is always enrichment. My bookshelf testifies directly to the danger of making myths into archeological artifacts, and indirectly to that of exploiting them for commercial purposes (for commerce works on human nature, and modern hucksters—consciously or not—know that the myths address that nature extremely effectively).

Oddly enough, E. Powys Mathers' translation of a translation provided the English-speaking world with a more readable and accurate version of the Arabian *Nights* than Burton's "literal" but completely untrustworthy translation from the Arabic. (I leave to the scholars the question of whether the *Nights* was originally Arabian at all.) Next to this set stand the *Ocean of Story*, its appendices larded with comparative versions, scholarly notes, and explanations of linguistic subtleties. Here are tales of gods and genies, demons and viziers, kings and enchanted beasts, all originating in cultures completely alien to our own, or at least so it would seem—all incapable, on their own, of evoking in us that *feeling*, crucial to the life of myth, that we live in a world that is only half—the lower half—of the universe, that we are what we are and can become what we can become because we are subject to the same laws of world-creation and world-maintenance that give shape to the universe and which shaped man in the law-giver's image.

But are they so alien after all, these tales? Perhaps myths die only because we do not respect their life, because we cannot hear

"As above, so below . . ."

their message, because we are indifferent to their capacity to show us that "as above, so below." When we forget this, when we try to make myths prove the untrue inversion, "as below, so above," myths die as myths and degenerate into stories which support the culture against the individual rather than nurture the soul in its quest for paradise. Between the two dangers—mummifying myth and adaptively exploiting it—I will choose the former every time I tell a bedtime story to my son. For even if I can't be sure that I have acquired the myth exactly in all its details, and even if I forget myself and embellish here and there without true understanding, what happens when a myth —and not its artificial adaptation—takes on the vibrative energy of speech may work a miracle: the resurrection of the old story and its essential, forsaken ambience—awe before the sacred door to the dreamtime.

It is this sense of mystery that needs to be recovered before the myths can live for us. At times one senses a trace of it in this writer or that as he writes about myth. Few, I am sure, would ascribe such feelings to Lévi-Strauss: the extremely intellectual and formal character of his investigations seems to preclude feeling and to suggest that here

for sure is a scholar for whom the myths are truly laboratory specimens. And yet I cannot forget a passage in *Tristes Tropiques* in which he fleetingly exhibits precisely that sensibility that allows the myths to become living speech about what finally matters:

> *Just as the individual is not alone in the group, nor any one society alone among the others, so man is not alone in the universe. When the spectrum or rainbow of human cultures has finally sunk into the void created by our frenzy; as long as we continue to exist and there is a world, that tenuous arch linking us to the inaccessible will still remain, to show us the opposite course to that leading to enslavement; man may be unable to follow it, but its contemplation affords him the only privilege of which he can make himself worthy; that of arresting the process, of controlling the impulse which forces him to block up the cracks in the wall of necessity one by one and to complete his work at the same time as he shuts himself up within his prison; this is a privilege coveted by every society, whatever its beliefs, its political system or its level of civilization; a privilege to which it attaches its leisure, its pleasure, its peace of mind and its freedom; the possibility, vital for life, of unhitching, which consists—Oh! fond farewell to savages and explorations!—in grasping, during the brief intervals in which our species can bring itself to interrupt its hive-like activity, the essence of what it was and continues to be, below the threshold of thought and over and above society: in the contemplation of a mineral more beautiful than all our creations; in the scent that can be smelt at the heart of a lily and is more imbued with learning than all our books; or in the brief glance, heavy with patience, serenity and mutu forgiveness, that, through some involu tary understanding, one can sometime exchange with a cat.*

Paul Jordan-Smith is Parabola's story edit *and an accomplished teller of tales, com mitted especially to the authentic oral re dition of traditional myths, legends, an folktales.*

THE TAO OF PHYSICS. By Fritjof Capra. Berkeley: Shambhala, 1975. Pp. 330. $10.00; paper $5.95.

Western Science/Eastern Wisdom

Kenneth Phillips

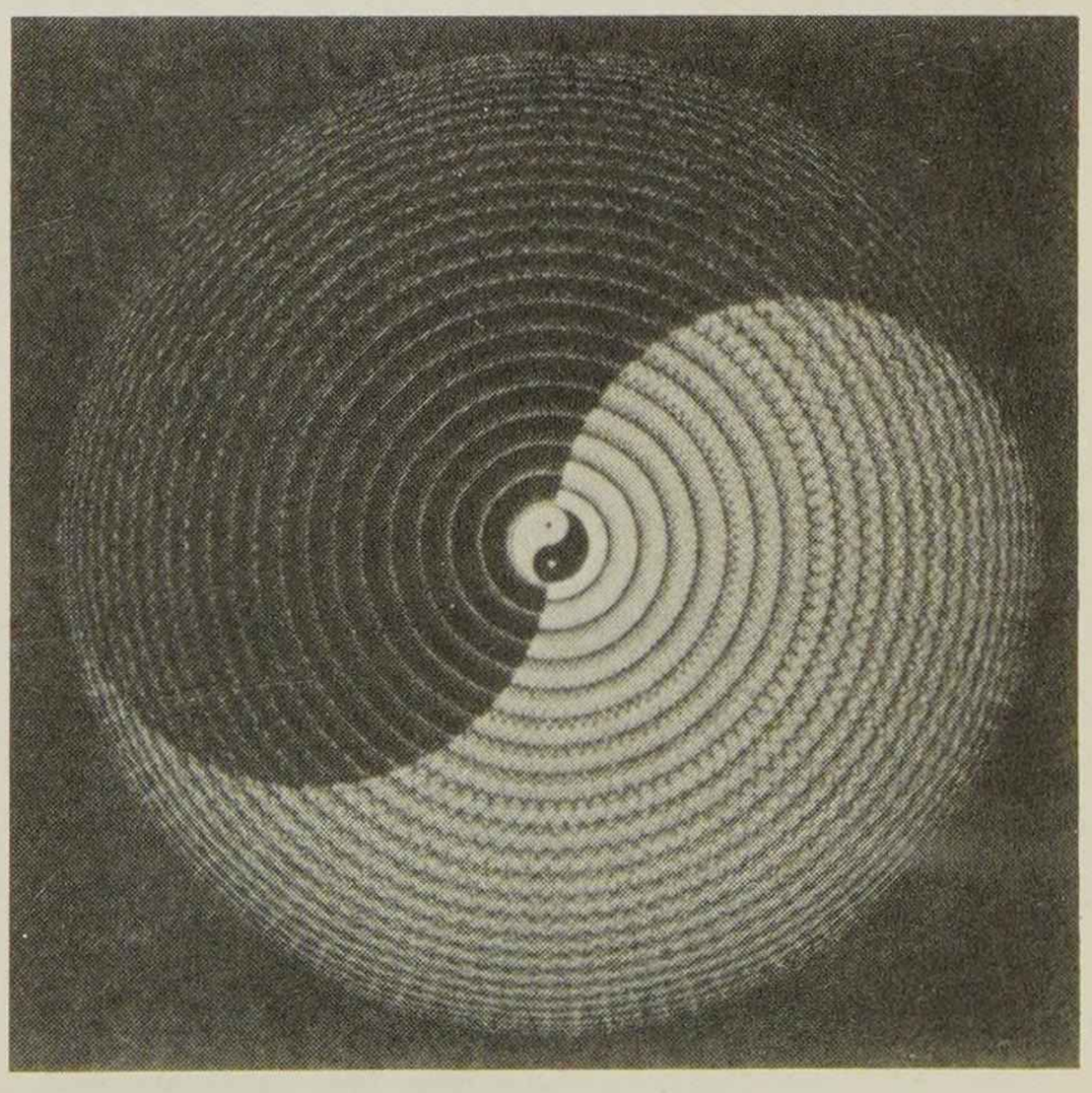
Everything changes. Regardless of appearances, everything is "alive" in the sense of undergoing continual transformations according to universal laws. The discovery, understanding, and harmonizing of these laws constitute the Way of the Taoist.

The origins of this conception of the universe are firmly rooted in Chinese mythology, dating back at least to the time of Fu Hsi, the legendary ruler of China (approximately 3000 B.C.). According to legend, a dragon horse emerged from the Yellow River, and on his back was inscribed the *Ho T'u*, or River Map (Fig. 1). Fu Hsi, who is also credited with authorship of much of the knowledge upon which the *I Ching* was based, sought to develop a dynamic model of the universe. In the process, he devised the eight trigrams (Fig. 2) based on the germinal concept of yin and yang: the two most basic expressions of the one energy behind all change. Yin and yang are not separate entities, discrete principles, but two correlative expressions of the one universal reality, represented by the Tai Chi.

If this fundamental Taoist concept is valid, then it makes perfect sense to expect that much can be learned about the Tao through the study of physics, and vice versa. Both are concerned with energy, time, space, and change, and the interrelationships between them, though they employ different methodologies of discovery.

In *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra traces the evolution of mainstream physics from its early Greek sources, and draws parallels all along the way not only to Taoism, but to the unfolding of Eastern thought in many of its religious and philosophical forms.

The first "Western Taoist" was the mystical pre-Socratic, Heraclitus of Ephesus, who conceived of all opposites as unities, or more precisely, as units of a higher unity: Logos. For him, everything was in a process of "Becoming." His major philosophical adversary was Parmenides, who posited the existence of an indivisible Divine Principle, and explained away the constant changes that Heraclitus affirmed by arguing that what seemed to be changes were actually a matter of perceptual alterations alone, not of



STRING MANDALA BY JOHN EICHINGER, 1976.

shifting realities.

The concept of the atom grew out of attempts during the Fifth Century B.C. to resolve the basic contradiction between the unchanging "Being" of Parmenides and the ever-changing "Becoming" of Heraclitus. Atoms were viewed as unitary, invariable substances; their mixtures and separations were responsible for all changes in the universe. So being was composed of primary, invariant units, and in that sense changeless in its core constituents; but these units were in a constant flux of combinations and divisions. The Atomists never addressed the question of what energy source caused atoms to move, separate, and reorganize. The atom was considered inherently inanimate; the source of movement and change was assumed to be spiritual, distinct from matter, which it somehow manipulated. From this view there evolved the fundamental perspective of Western philosophy: the dualism between mind and matter, body and soul.

Given this dualism, investigations of matter took a backseat to inquiries into soul, ethers, spiritual concerns. Sufficient evidence of this is the suprisingly long predominance of the Aristotelian model of th universe. Its adoption by Christianity was largely responsible for the lack of interes and progress in scientific research, until Galileo fused mathematics and empirical process and launched the sort of science w know today.

Interestingly though, the return to the in vestigation of matter by no means put to res the mind /body, spirit /matter dualism which underlay the hegemony of Aristotelian thought, but rather the opposite. Descartes' celebrated *"Cogito ergo sum,"* and its implications, caused Western man t identify with his mind even more definitively, rather than with his entire being. Th effects of this attitude remain with us still for instance, in a medical science which fo cuses more on specific symptoms and organs than holistically on the patient's entir state-of-being. The fragmented view of th self has led to a fragmented view of socie

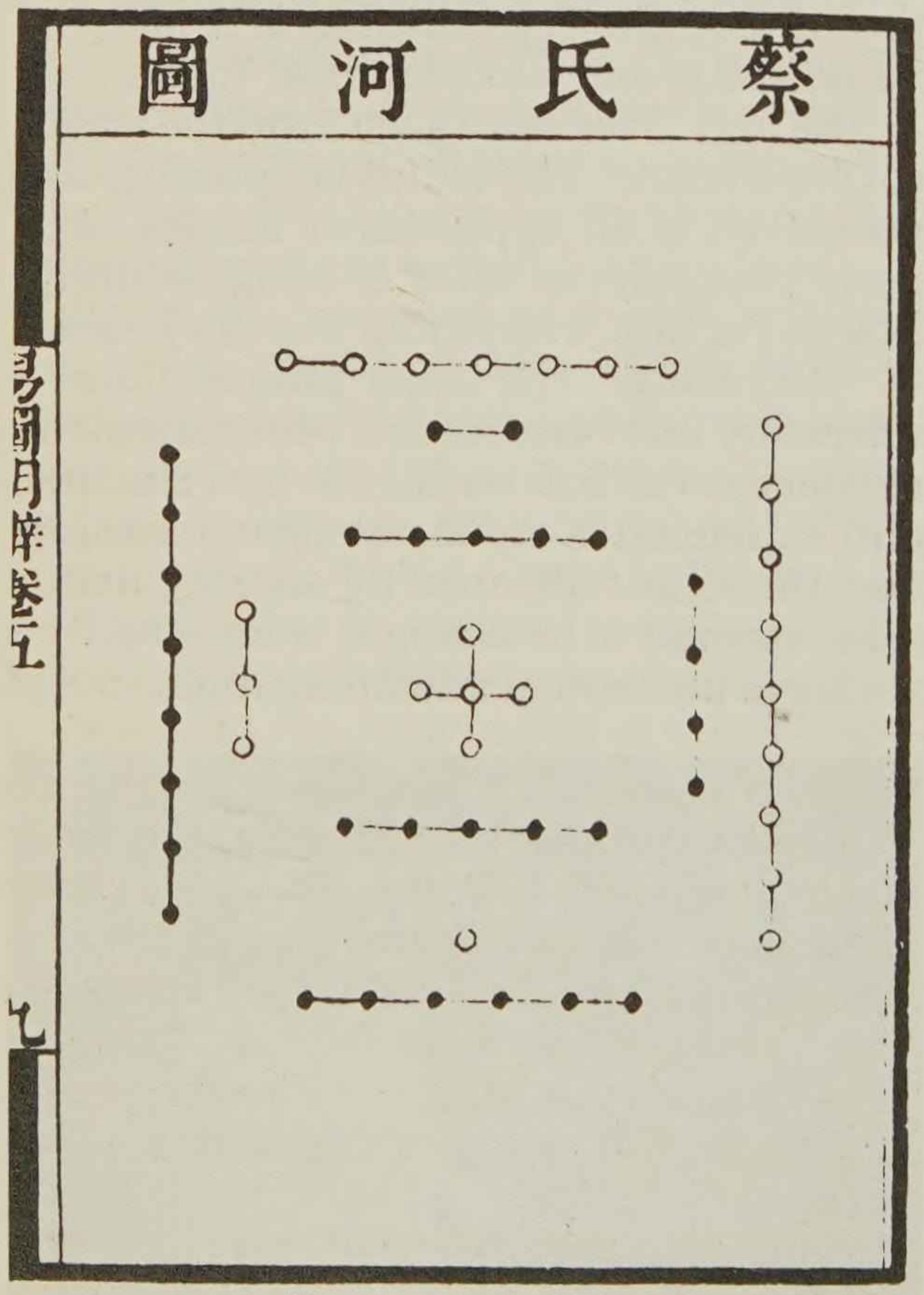


Figure 1.

"The Ho-t'u" or "Yellow River Map" inspired by the appearance of a tortoise on the bank of the Yellow River, eventually led to the arrangement of the trigrams or "kua" by King Wen, as indicated in Figure 1b., below.

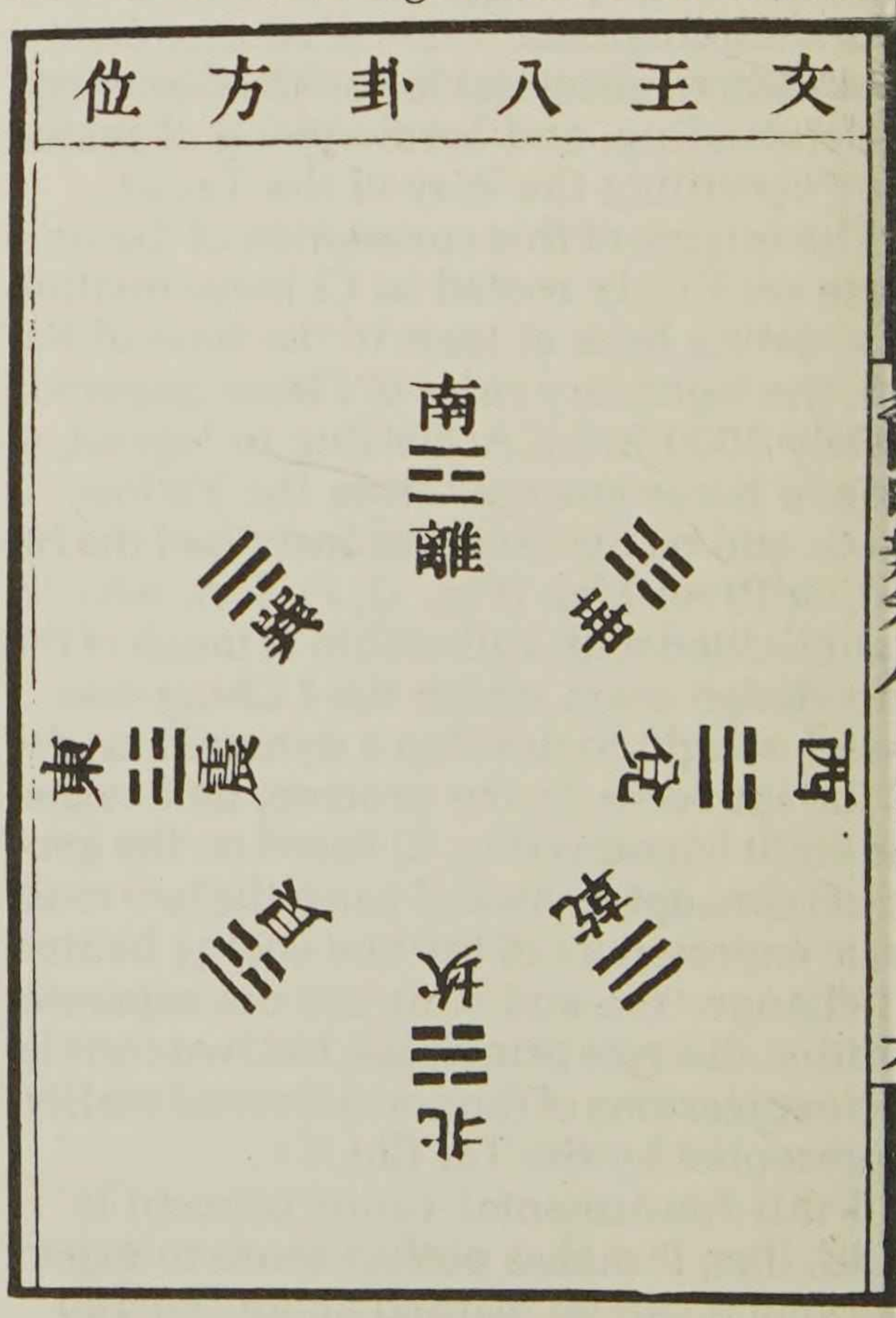


Figure 2

The King Wen arrangement of the trigrams, with 'li,' representing the South and the sun, at top.

which, it has been forcefully argued, is largely responsible for many of our contemporary political, social, and psychological crises.

The Eastern mystical view is diametrically opposed to the Cartesian split of mind and body, spirit and matter, time and space, etc. It views all experiences and changes as part of a greater process. The view of ourselves as isolated egos swimming in the pool of external experiences is regarded as the product of a dangerous ignorance, what Buddhism calls *avidya*. All three major Eastern traditions—Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist—share a unified "field theory," an awareness of the mutuality and interdependence of all things.

But with the emergence of modern physics and its new model of the universe, a *rapprochement* with Eastern traditions has become possible. A major problem, however, stands in the way: language. Not only do many of the Eastern terms not have direct correlates in Western language, but as Capra says, "the study of the world of atoms has forced physicists to realize that our common language is not only inaccurate, but totally inadequate to describe atomic, and subatomic reality." Both Quantum and Relativity theory have shown that reality has little to do with classical logic, the deep structure of Western language. As Heisenberg said, "here we at first have no simple guide for correlating the mathematical symbols with concepts of ordinary language. . . our common concepts cannot be applied to the structure of atoms."

Both the Eastern mystic and the Western physicist have a common task: to communicate a knowledge which necessarily must appear paradoxical and replete with logical contradictions when expressed in everyday language. In physics, for instance, the nature of light can be taken and thus expressed in two quite different ways, ways that can be resolved only at the level of an abstract mathematical equation. From one particular vantage, light exhibits the properties of *waves;* from another, light seems composed of discrete *particles*. How can light be both at once? Obviously recourse to the simple alternatives of classical logic avails little in such a situation.

Eastern thought has long recognized the necessity of abandoning linear cause-and-effect logical reasoning when probing profound questions about the nature of reality. The most important Taoist work, the *Tao Te Ching*, is written in a puzzling, contradictory style. Zen Buddhism passes on its knowledge via the *koans*. The aim of both teachings is to derail the mind from its usual mode of thought and to bring about a new awareness in the student more in harmony with the process or Tao. But, whereas encounters with paradox have been essential to Eastern mysticism for centuries, they are relatively new to Western science and have emerged most tellingly in the rejection of Newtonian mechanics.

Within the Euclidean framework of three-dimensional space, all change was a matter of strict "cause and effect," occurring parallel to a separate dimension, time, which was totally independent of the material world. Newton posited a mechanics in which indivisible particles were the basic constituents of matter, rather like the Greek atomistic view, but he held in addition that gravity was responsible for motion and interaction. As Newton put it in his *Optiks:*

> *It seems to me that God, in the beginning formed matter in solid, massey, hard, impenetrable, movable particles, of such sizes, and figures, and with such other properties, and in such proportion to space, as most conducted to the end for which he formed them;. . . no ordinary power being able to divide them God himself made one in the first creation.*

Such was the basic view that dominated physics until this century, when the Newtonian world was shattered by the development of Relativity theory and of Quantum (sub-atomic) physics.

Through his Special Theory of Relativity, Einstein brought physics out of the readily intelligible world of Newtonian mechanics into a strange universe which literally could not be imagined. In it, time is not a separate dimension but an integral part of all dynamic processes; the universe exists in a four-dimensional continuum, a "space-time" framework. Mass is no longer seen as inanimate, but as a constant source of energy.

According to Einstein's theory, gravity has the effect of "curving" space and time. Three-dimensional space is curved by the gravitational pull of bodies having a great mass. And the greater the mass, the more the situation departs from the trim, linear world of Euclidean geometry.

The effect of Quantum theory on previous views of atomic structure was as dramatic

as the effects of relativity on Newtonian mechanics. The contradiction cited earlier—between the particle and wave conceptions of light—is now solved in a completely novel way which calls into question not only the mechanistic approach but, says Capra, the very "concept of reality of matter." "On the subatomic level, matter does not exist with certainty at different places, but rather shows 'tendencies' to exist, while events show 'tendencies' to occur." In the workings of Quantum theory, these tendencies are expressed as abstract quantities exhibiting the behavioral properties of waves; they describe the probability of finding a particle or event at a specific point, at a specific time.

Such modern scientific theorizing has significant parallels in Eastern mysticism. The most apparent of these is the idea of the "total unity of all things," a view usually based upon a mystical experience, though the specific experience occurs independently of the mystic's cultural or religious background. The essential oneness of everything only appears to be a wholly mystical idea to Westerners because of the tendency of our culture to separate mind and body, events and objects. But the work of the late Werner Heisenberg made a major contribution toward fostering a less dualistic idea of how reality is actually constituted. For example, he noted that the very preparation of something for scientific observation can alter it to some degree, and thus scientific experimentation can never be a pure case of simply observing how things "really are."

Similarly in Eastern traditions, one is always seen to be a participator. Chuang Tzu writes:

> *My connection with the body is dissolved.*
> *My perceptive organs are discarded.*
> *Thus, leaving my material form and bidding farewell to my knowledge, I become one with the Great Pervader. This I call forgetting all things.*

The connecting patterns between Eastern mysticism and Western science extend beyond physics, and parallels can be found in both the biological and social sciences. And although *The Tao of Physics* emphasizes the similaries in methodologies, there are specific structural parallels as well between the architecture of the universe described by physics and the make-up of the human psyche discerned by Eastern religion and Western psychology.

A very simple example of this involve
the meaning of the quantity seven. If one
fragments natural light with a prism, or
water, the "rainbow effect" results and a
spectrum of seven colors is exhibited. To
speak more technically, color is the vibra
tion of light particles, photons, at differin
rates. Within the operating range of the
human eye, color falls into seven basic
groups of frequencies. This pattern of
"seven-ness" for particles in motion hol
as well for much lower frequency-relatec
particles, such as in sound. The musical
scale is divided into seven full divisions
"steps." In Eastern thought, just to mentio
one major instance, there are seven chakra
or energy centers, in the body, each respo
sible for a different level and form of energ

A final parallel is worth mentioning b
cause of its constitutive role in the forma
tion of life itself. As a longtime student
the *I Ching*, I have come to see that the stru
ture of the *I Ching* is comparable to the
process by which genetic information is
passed on from a living cell to a new cell i
formation. The architecture of the *I Chin*
with its sixty-four hexagrams is identical
structure to the genetic code of DNA, whic
consists of sixty-four different arrange-
ments of bases, which later direct the form
tion of basic proteins and determine whi
types of cells develop. And the *I Ching*,
"Book of Changes," provides the develc
mental code for all the changes that are co
tinually happening in the universe, from t
level of molecules to that of social grou
Western science should expect, then, to
able to discover further universal codes
beyond genetics.

In this Quest, *The Tao of Physics* shou
serve as an eloquent stimulus to many ca
ful cross-disciplinary investigations of
common patterns. One pioneer in this effo
was C. G. Jung, with his concept of the "co
lective unconscious" which contains th
"archetypes" which pattern human mea
ing and behavior and the dynamics of a
changes. For his part, Dr. Capra has pro
vided creatively devised explanations c
principal developments in modern phys
and linked them with Eastern concepts i
way that will appeal especially to those w
minimal knowledge in either area.

---

*Kenneth L. Phillips, who has done gradu
work in both psychology and physics,
tures regularly throughout the U.S. and
Canada on the* I Ching *and matters rela
to the psychology of C. G. Jung.*

REVIEWS

Yoga and the Hindu Tradition

By Jean Varenne. Translated from the French by Derek Coltman. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976. Pp. x+253. $12.50.

By R. Ravindra

Jean Varenne's intention in this book is to help his readers realize that it is dishonest to reduce yoga to some sort of physical fitness program, or to an occult doctrine requiring initiation through intimate theosophical gatherings. He wishes to rehabilitate yoga to what it is: a world view, a *Weltanschauung* comprehending reality in its totality, providing both metaphysics and practice.

Varenne's presentation of yoga is based on sources traditionally considered authoritative, among them chiefly Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras, The Bhagavad Gita, The Yoga Upanishads* and *Shiva-Samhita*. His reading of these texts and commentaries is thorough and sympathetic, with a healthy Western skepticism concerning the miraculous powers achieved by the yoga practitioner. His account is usefully supplemented by some direct observations of a few yogis and ashrams.

Starting with his general observation that yoga is an integral part of the Indian tradition with an unbroken continuity for nearly five thousand years, Varenne gives a brief outline of the major metaphysical ideas relevant to yoga: the immutable cosmic order (dharma) and its reflection in social structures, the laws of karma and transmigration, and the essential necessity of freedom from the wheel of existence (samsara).

In the second section he discusses the means (yogas) of deliverance of the migratory bird of atman from the bondage of samsara. Chief among these means is knowledge. Ignorance is the cause of bondage and suffering, knowledge alone leads to liberation. Among other means are devotion and worship, disinterested action and sacred chanting. But all these various yogas are not mutually exclusive; each one of them lends a specific coloration to the fundamental method. Varenne therefore follows a strand in the Hindu tradition in asserting that there is only one yoga. This classical yoga is what he then proceeds to describe following the authoritative tests mentioned earlier.

The third section contains the description of the classical yoga, the aim of which was succinctly expressed by Patanjali to be the restriction of the fluctuations of the mind-stuff. The various stages of the ethical restraint and spiritual discipline, taming of the body and breath, withdrawal of the senses and mental concentration, meditation and the ultimate goal of samadhi are then described. The fourth section contains material taken largely from the Tantric tradition and deals with the subtle body with various channels for the flow of breath and the various centers through which the coiled serpent of energy (kundalini) rises in the development of consciousness of the yogi.

There is a concluding chapter and an appendix containing the translation of the *Yoga Darshana Upanishad*, one of the most important and characteristic of the *Yoga Upanishads*, with a brief introduction.

The book is very well written; it is scholarly without being pedantic. The author shows respect for his material and a quiet sense of humor. It is a readable and a good introduction to the metaphysical and cultural background of yoga. The book gives only a description of the classical yoga and its philosophical setting, but does not undertake any critical evaluation of its methods and claims. In general, Varenne has retained the common Sanskrit words with appropriate explanations, or has found suitable translations. At a few places, "atman" is rendered erroneously as "soul," giving it quite unwarranted connotations. Similarly, his use of the word "salvation" in the context of yoga seems a little out of place.

There is, however, a more serious flaw in the book. Varenne's conception of yoga is too austere and narrow, in contrast to the rich and profuse, sometimes contradictory, views of it in India. He concentrates exclusively on the monastic line of the classical yoga of Patanjali. He says, for example, in

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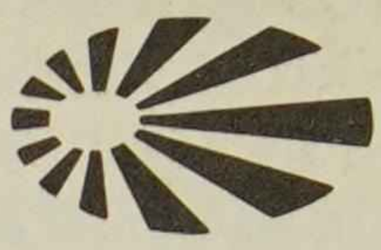
the Preface, ". . . yoga is something that can be undertaken only after a long probationary period, a novitiate culminating in a specific ceremony during which the accepted aspirant solemnly renounces the world (in the most concrete way, too—by donating his entire worldly possessions to the community into which he is received; hence the incredible wealth of the best-known ashrams)." This is simply not true of yoga as a whole, as is amply illustrated by the *Bhagavad Gita*. Not that the author is unfamiliar with the *Bhagavad Gita*, but he seems too eager to have logical clarity in the midst of fecund complexity.

It may be the same attitude that leads him to imagine serious antagonism, rather than a creative tension, between yoga aspirants and orthodox Hindus. Varenne does not seem to realize that perhaps the greatest strength of the Hindu society has been an institutionalized respect and tolerance for those asocial elements which are continually testing or challenging the tradition, reforming it in the process. Yoga is not contradictory to Vedic ideology, as Varenne seems to think. Is the description in the *Rig Veda* of Indra killing the king of serpents Vritra to release the seven streams of lifegiving waters very different from some Tantric texts on yoga? Nevertheless, it is true that a rainbow is not made out of a single color; what is dharma for some is not dharma for all.

Varenne writes, like most scholars, as an outsider—not only to yoga, but to any teaching whatever. Perhaps it is largely a matter of emphasis or a different understanding of what it means to know something, but it seems to me to be worth asking: What are the limitations of the knowledge acquired by a bystander about a path along which the traveller's being, questions and knowledge are all supposed to be continuously transformed?

In spite of these reservations, Varenne's book is warmly welcome. It describes classical yoga with lucidity, dignity and sympathy, recognizing that it is a complete and perfectly structured world view. He deserves our gratitude.

R. Ravindra is an associate professor of Physics and of Religion at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Among his publications are Theory of Seismic Head Waves *and* From the Village to the Mountain: Spiritual Search—East and West.



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Mister God, This is Anna: A True Story

By Fynn. Illustrated by Papas. Introduction by William Collins. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975. Pp. vi +186. $6.95; New York, Ballantine, 1976. $1.75.

By P.L. Travers

In spite of its childish and perhaps sentimental title, this is not a childish story. It is a grown-up book about a child whose maturity forces one to question whether childishness is necessarily an attribute of childhood or something foisted upon it by adults. Socrates, awaiting the hemlock, declared that the soul before its embodiment knows all that is to be known and that everything later learned is not knowledge but recollection. Anyone who has the courage — or the lunacy—to live with children in their own as yet untainted cosmos can watch these recollections rising. And to remain open to this process and let the child become the teacher is to be, in some sort, blessed.

"When I was in the first world," said a child to me, beginning a story. "Is there a second?" I cautiously asked, fearing to tread where angels dared not. "Of course," he replied, "there are three of them. That one, this and another."

Anna had spent four of her total of seven years in this second world when she was discovered, dirty, hungry and alone in the East End of London. Fynn, a young man of nineteen, having fed her on hot dogs and lemonade, offered to take her home. But Anna had her own ideas, as he was later to find. She told him she had "runned away," that her parents were "a cow and a sod," that she was "not going to no bleeding cop shop," she was going to live with him. So he, disregarding all obvious measures—the Foundling Hospital, Doctor Barnado's—took her to his Irish mother who bathed her skinny battered body and without apparent recourse to law, adopted her into the family. Where she came from they never discovered. With the awesome secrecy of childhood she carried, as few grown-ups can, the weight of her story within her. Someone had evidently taught her to pray for it was clear from the beginning that, bereft though her earthly condition was, her recollections had already told her that she had a friend in heaven. All children have an inner conviction that there are other dimensions than the one they live in, a Something or a Someone else and either they christen it themselves or the grown-ups give it a label. Many balk at the name of God. It is too short, too intimate, too familiarly used by adults. I myself disliked it intensely. Here was a Person so much greater than I that he must at least be the Duke of Somewhere; at the same time, inexplicably, he seemed to be my close relation. A father? No, I already had one. So I kept a certain distance between us by thinking of him as Uncle. Anna settled for Mister. In her story, the hero is Mister God. According to her biographer, she had the ability to remove herself from the center of things—a rare gesture at any age—and establish God there, plumb in the middle. She was his sponsor, his personal theologian and mystic. Her mind—and I do not mean her associations; this was a child capable of thought, of linking one concept with another, of pondering, distilling—revolved about the idea of God as the earth goes around the sun. If Eckhart and Duns Scotus are in heaven, they are probably now communing with Anna on matters of mutual interest—the "emptiness of God," for instance, that is "full of everything"; or, again, the proper size of God ("Sunday-school teacher doesn't make God bigger, she just makes people littler"); the fact that we put God into boxes ("We've got to let Mister God be free. That's what love is, Fynn."); the difference between the Light of Jesus ("Mister God's boy") and Lucifer's light; the question of the face of God—has he, or hasn't he, got one?

It is also possible that she and Einstein —for Anna was also a physicist—pore over together, among the lilies, the relative speeds of light and shadow which of course would lead them back to God, for didn't he make them both? According to the chronicle, there is no question that this illuminated child, brimming up with exorbitant recollections, did not, somehow, illumine.

But Anna is not the whole story. It has another element, which gives the book its meaning. Miraculous children, if we allowed it—or could believe it possible—would blossom from every bush. But one rarely finds a young man, just emerging from adolescence and facing the pressures of

grown-up life, putting himself to school to a child. Anna's biographer did just that. He followed her on what, for him, was a soul journey, letting himself be the mirror that reflected her back to herself. At nineteen he was near enough to his own childhood to know what a child needed—her own unfallen mythology free of grown-up interpretations. Without ever attempting to teach her, he let her extract from him scraps of knowledge and watched her transmute them into wisdom. Continually confronted with questions—on life, theology, human nature—he set himself to dredge up answers that Anna, knowing them already, wanted him to arrive at. When she wept, as children and grown-ups alike weep, for something far beyond self, and quenchless, he knew instinctively that the cup of sorrow is always full, whether it be flagon or thimble, and deliberately restrained himself from offering easy comfort. "It's for me and Mister God," she told him, so he let them suffer it together. On the other hand, being himself vulnerable and at times dissolved in his own question, he could, by grace, let her comfort him. The true teacher succors as well as teaches and Fynn was clearly a responsive pupil. Before she died his diminutive sybil had led him to the precarious point of saying, with Mister God, "I am!" And then she fell out of a tree and God, who had stood so well with them both, became for Fynn a "cretin, a moron." "He could have saved Anna, but he didn't. Cut off and not yet eight!" It was not until after service in the war that he was able to withdraw the accusation. He had so grown that standing by her grave he could admit that far from being cut short, Anna's life had been completely fulfilled. And with this book, written anonymously thirty years later, he has paid—for her, and perhaps for himself—a cock to Aesculapius.

P.L. Travers, consulting editor, has recently returned to England to take up residence as, among other things, Parabola's first foreign correspondent.

Occultism, Witchcraft and Cultural Fashions

By Mircea Eliade. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976. Pp. ii + 148. $8.95.

By Conrad Hyers

The name of Mircea Eliade has becom nearly synonymous with comparative mythology and the history of religions. Ver few religious traditions—from ancient to modern, East to West, tribal to world—hav not been examined by Eliade in one or another of his many books and essays. Bu coming, as this volume does, after more than a half century of research and publica tion, there is a touch of pathos in the appea ance of these essays. The collection is pre faced with the note that "at a certain mo ment in his old age, a prolific author is bound to discover that many of his most cherished projected books remain unwri ten."

Most of the essays in *Occultism, Witch craft and Cultural Fashions* are programm tic sketches of these unfinished works. While this may not suggest a promising in troduction, or fitting culmination, to a bri liant career, the book is characteristic of Eliade's comprehensive range of interest and the universality of his vision and method. And one has the nostalgic sense o being witness to the passing of an era of encyclopedic scholarship that spans the century from Sir James G. Frazer to Mirce Eliade. There is real danger, in fact, that i an age of increasing specialization the kin of globalism which Eliade has champione will be lost to a new form of religious tribalism: the parochial enclave of the academic expert who has been persuaded remain within the secure and manageabl boundaries of a single culture or period.

Because the book is a collection of mate ials, there is no central theme or directio There are essays dealing with such diver subjects as the symbolism of "Spirit, Ligh and Seed" and "Some Observations on European Witchcraft." One essay—"The World, the City, the House"—is a return certain motifs that have been fundament

to Eliade's analyses throughout his writings: sacred space, the world center, the cosmogonic model. A basic concern of *homo religiosus* is to live at the center of the world, and hence in a sacralized space. Accordingly he situates and constructs his village, city or capitol, temple or house, so as to correspond to this world center and sacred space. Thus he orients himself within the cosmos and integrates his life with the ultimate sources of power, being, truth, meaning and value.

There are other religious movements, of course, which *interiorize* this symbolism. In certain forms of yoga, for example, the spinal column is seen as the "world axis"; regions of the body correspond to regions of the cosmos; and by moving consciousness along this center one is firmly linked with true reality. There are also religious counter-movements which attempt to *transcend* the distinction between sacred and profane, so that the totality of existence may be sacrilized. In Zen, for example, all acts, from zazen and sutra-chanting to eating and cleaning are "homogeneous," meaningful and holy. While Eliade has developed the first of these qualifications at length in other writings, the second still needs further clarification. And it may well offer the most helpful bridge to what Eliade sees as "profane" modern existence.

The most important chapters in terms of method are "Cultural Fashions and the History of Religions" and "The Occult in the Modern World." Academic workshops and marketplaces prefer not to see themselves as party to cultural and intellectual vogues. Vogues are what *other* people are caught up in! Yet, as Eliade documents, the past century of religious scholarship has pursued quite an array of fashions, fads and foibles. There is both humor and instruction in the examples cited: the popularity of earth mothers and corn goddesses in the early 1900's; the "frantic hypotheses" that came out of the Oedipal craze, commencing with Freud's *Totem and Taboo;* the recently revived fascination with various forms of the occult; or the current vogue of structuralism (Claude Lévi-Strauss). Though it is probably impossible to avoid cultural fashions—or to admit them—completely, such an awareness of past fashions might help us to detect present ones and place them in better perspective. On the other hand, as Eliade notes, fads and fashions are usually symptomatic of regions of experience that have been ig-

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1976 260 pp. paper $5.00

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nored or suppressed. To some extent they are needed.

One of the more important exploratory chapters is "Mythologies of Death," a topic that has also enjoyed its modern vogues, following upon such diverse leads as Heidegger's "being-unto-death," the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying*. The archaic myths surveyed by Eliade show, above all, how difficult it has been in most cultures to accept death as a *natural* phenomenon, and one that will occur to *me*. Death is generally regarded as an absurd intrusion, mythically accounted for in one of several ways: an adversary of the Creator, a sin, a stupid choice, a mistake or an accident. In this way death is rendered "natural" in a secondary sense, and thus more rationally acceptable because some cause has been identified. But even then, in any specific instance of death, death is rarely credited to *natural* causes. It is credited, again, to some demonic power, witchcraft, sin, or broken taboo.

To this ambiguity of death-as-universal / death-as-unnatural, Eliade calls attention to another basic ambiguity. There is a common association of the "true" person, and therefore of an after-life, with spirit or soul only; while there is also the common belief in some sort of bodily character to an after-life. Thus there are those who have seen death as an emancipation of the spirit /soul from its bodily and earthly moorings, and those who insist on the essential oneness of spirit-and-body. Hence, on the latter view, there is either no after-life at all, or a *resurrection* of the total person, as in Zoroastrian, Judaeo-Christian and Muslim belief. Though Eliade sheds little light upon how we might understand these ambiguities, he does insist that we need to recover a meaningful initiatory ritual of death and dying as a mode of humanly, and with dignity, moving toward and through that last earthly adventure that awaits us all.

Conrad Hyers teaches comparative mythology and the history of religions at Beloit College. Author of Zen and the Comic Spirit, *he is completing a new book on the mythology of comedy.*

Russian Fairy Tales

Translated by Norbert Guterman from the collections of Aleksandr Afanas'ev. Illustrated by Alexander Alexeieff. Commentary by Roman Jakobson. New York: Pantheon 1945, 1973. $12.95; paper, 1976. $5.95.

By Michael Patrick Hearn

The title of this collection is somewhat misleading. These stories have little in common with the polished conceits of the *contes de fées* of the seventeenth-century French court. These are *skazki*, Russian folk tales, that embrace animal fables, warning tales, anecdotes, stories of magic and mystery. Here are presented the Armless Maiden, the celebrated Seven Semyons, Bukhtan Bukhtanovich who lay in cockroach milk up to his elbows, Vasilisa the priest's daughter who wore men's clothes, Foma Berennikov the one-eyed, Baba Yaga the Bony-legged. No fluttering fairy godmothers here.

The serious concern for preserving these oral tales came relatively late in literary history. There are of course Straparola's *Piacevolle notti* (1550-53) and Basile's *Pentamerone* (1634-36), but these Italian collections were rarities of the neo-classical age. During the battle between the Ancients and Moderns, Perrault and his sister writers revived an interest in old wives' tales at Versailles; they however refined the traditional material in their art fairy tales for their own theoretical purposes. The final fall of Rome's dominance over continental literature during the Napoleonic era was replaced (particularly in Germany) by a literary pride in conserving national folk literature. The Grimm Brothers with their *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812-14) were but two of many scholars then writing down for the first time the tales and ballads of the local storytellers. Aleksandr Nikolayevich Afanas'ev (1826-1871) is not comparable to these German philologists. His achievement through his collections of Russian folk tales (1855-64) is similar to that of Andrew Lang through his red, blue, and other color fairy books of the turn of the century. Both anthologists depended on secondary sources on collections being gathered by other scholars from the storytellers themselves. What

Lang and Afanas'ev succeeded in doing was to present this rich material to the public in an accessible form.

This translation is a delight to dip into. One so often feels the actual presence of the original storyteller. For example, an arbitrary prologue about an owl's flying back and forth to a tree distracts from the body of "The Crane and the Heron," but when the speaker feels he has just about bored his audience, he breaks in with "But that's the flourish, just for fun; the real has not begun," and he goes into the narration of his fable. These versions seem to be directly from the lips of the *skomorokhi*, the Russian minstrels. Unlike in Grimm, these stories have not been infiltrated by the literary fairy tale. Arguably those versions of Sleeping Beauty and Little Red Riding Hood in *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* are German folk adaptions of Perrault. A Russian tale such as "The Frog Princess" may have a counterpart in another earlier collection (here in Grimm), but likely such a story is common to both cultures and not a local adaption of a published variation.

These tales have long provided inspiration to Russia's finest illustrators. Ivan Bilibin established a distinguished career through his interpretations of "The Tale of Prince Ivan, the Firebird and the Gray Wolf" (1901), "Vasilisa the Most Fair" (1902) and other examples from this collection; and his disciple Georgii Narbut similarly embellished such tales as "The Crane and the Heron" and "The Bear" (1907) with many of his finest designs. Vladimir Lebedev, the greatest of the constructivist Soviet illustrators, found time from such assignments as *Ice* (1925) and *Baggage* (1926) to also illustrate *The Bear* (1923). Alexander Aleixeieff is hardly in the same class as these other Russian artists, but his odd decorations with their wooden, archaic motifs rarely fail to fascinate.

Michael Patrick Hearn is a contributing editor of Cricket: the magazine for children.

Made Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate

By The Murphy Research Center for Liturgical Research. Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1976. Pp. viii + 191. $9.95.

Christian Initiation

By Hugh M. Riley. Studies in Christian Antiquity, Vol. 17. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic Univ. of America Press/ Consortium Press, 1974. Pp. xxxii + 481. $21.00.

By Tad Guzie, S.J.

Made Not Born is a collection of essays by distinguished liturgical scholars on the Christian rites of initiation. These rites include various stages of examining candidates, culminating in water baptism, the anointing with oil and laying on of hands which came to be known as confirmation, and finally a eucharistic meal of bread and wine. Several of the essays discuss the history of the rites, which were originally celebrated together as a single, integral sacrament, rather than as discrete sacramental events. These historical essays provide excellent surveys.

Other studies focus on the new Roman Catholic "Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults." It calls for restoration of the "catechumenate," a period of years during which candidates for initiation are gradually introduced to the Christian faith by experiencing life in a community of believers. When the integral sacrament of initiation is finally celebrated, ideally at Easter, it is the culmination of a lived experience and a thorough process of inner preparation.

The rite itself recovers many of the richest symbols of initiation in the early Christian church. And Riley's large work, *Christian Initiation*, indicates in great detail what that symbolic heritage involved. For it is an unusually thorough comparative study of the symbolic actions of the initiation rite as celebrated in various communities in the fourth and fifth centuries. Riley's study of

early Christian preaching on the meaning of initiation thus provides valuable historical background for the contemporary recovery of its central place in Christian development.

Renewed interest in sacramental initiation owes much to the Second Vatican Council, which called for a thorough reform of all Catholic rites in accord with the most authentic traditions of Christian faith. Let me suggest two basic ideas which have emerged in the current revival.

First, good ritual needs to express a lived experience. At present it is clear that many Christians participate in the sacraments without having been genuinely transformed by the message of the gospel. The new direction is to urge that sacramental initiation be celebrated only as the culmination and authentication of genuine experience, that it truly mean what it signifies. The Christian sacraments are a celebration of something that has happened, or has begun to happen, in the community and in the individual.

This principle applies even in the case of infant baptism. There is a new Catholic rite for the baptism of infants which is theologically consonant with the rite for the initiation of adults. It is addressed not to the infant, but to the parents and the community of faith. The element of personal commitment is provided by the local community of faith, which ritually attests to its responsibility to the child. The Christian rite of initiation is thus the symbolic proclamation of a *communal* responsibility, not simply something that "happens to" the person, adult or infant.

Secondly, the symbolism of the new Roman rite runs counter to the symbolism of baptism that has prevailed for some 1500 years. Now the symbolism of descent and ascent, of death and rebirth are paramount, whereas baptism for centuries has been conceived primarily as a rite that "washes away an inherited stain." The new rite makes no reference to "original sin" or the need for forgiveness from inherited guilt. Rather, the initiatic process is pictured as "going down into the tomb with Christ Jesus," the dark recesses where the Self is finally encountered. Where the Self is met the real Christ is present, and the encounter is life-giving. Life comes out of death, the death of the ego that is experienced whenever the Self is met, which for Christians means meeting Christ, the realized image of the Self. So the Christian rite of initiation celebrates entry into this process of transformation, the path of individuation which Christian tradition calls the "beginning of life in Christ," the Easter life that comes out of the death of the ego.

This is one way—Jungian, but Pauline too—of putting the original tradition of Christian initiation. Other language can be found in Riley's work and in *Made Not Born*. But the current changes are profound and even revolutionary, in the root sense of the word. For Christians are being "turned back" to their own richer traditions and to the more archetypal meanings of sacramental initiation.

Tad Guzie, S.J., is a sacramental theologian currently working at St. Joseph Educational Center in Des Moines.

Rhythms of Vision: The Changing Patterns of Belief

By Lawrence Blair. New York: Schocken, 1976. Pp. 244. $8.95.

By José A. Argüelles

Rhythms of Vision is yet another book heralding the coming of the New Age. As such, it belongs to a genre whose dramatic sometimes sensational, history reaches back to the writings of Mme. Blavatsky and her Circle, includes the visionary studies of Dane Rudhyar in the 1920s, and has recently been marked by Theodore Roszak's transitional book, *The Making of a Counter-Culture* (1968). Prophets announcing the New Age include utopian community leaders like William Irwin Thompson of the Lindisfarne Association and David Spangler, recently of Findhorne and now with a new community in California. At the same time, a spate of journals purveys its mystique and describes the latest breakthrough on the "Aquarian Frontier," to use Roszak's apt term.

There seems little doubt that a cultural transformation—cultural *metanoia*, Blair

calls it—of seemingly unpredented global magnitude is now taking place. In all of the celebratory fireworks accompanying such a momentous occasion, it is only proper that there should be some critical, sober, and scholarly attempts to assess more precisely the nature of New Age thought and science. Lawrence Blair's book, written with ease and personal warmth, and certainly not lacking in conviction, is one of such attempts to put the current cultural revolution on a more solid footing.

As a record of "the changing patterns of belief," it appropriately begins with the personal experience which introduced the author to the cult of Subud. Led to an "opening"—submission to divine force —through the group's practices, Blair is able to describe the book's purpose:

> *It was thus quite suddenly that I recognised amongst the confusing array of esoteric groups (and scientific theories) an extraordinary thread of significance, one which traces the indistinct outlines of a continent of new meaning. Each group, despite the apparent lunacy of its symbols and exercises, contributes in some part to an emergent map. The esoteric revival on the one hand, together with the higher abstractions of science on the other, could suddenly be seen as a field of symbolism flowering through the aridity of technocracy; responding to a rhythm which utterly changes the view which most of us hold of ourselves and our environment.*

This idea could have provided the basis for a very interesting study, but its promise remains mostly unfulfilled. While offering an array of intriguing information, *Rhythms of Vision* suffers from two basic flaws. Primarily there is a lack of organization which tends to obscure the point and thrust of the book. Thus the information which is so enthusiastically presented becomes indigestible. We are told that New Age science will include a juxtaposition or combination of Pythagorean geometry, *I Ching*, radionics, and chakra theory, and a generally more psychic and spiritualist approach to reality. But one has to wonder if such changes will really affect our basic nature or if they will merely shift the ways in which we continue to avoid ourselves by offering new and, at least for the moment, more glamorous ways of playing with and diverting our energy. This is not to say that the similar patterns of

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thought underlying Pythagorean number symbolism and the *I Ching* should not be examined. But at the same time we must remain alert to the fact that unless a real change takes place in our nature the forms and styles of our sciences will only generate greater artificialities. Cultural *metanoia* may well prove to be nothing if it is not the fruit of a genuine spiritual *metanoia*, a turning in the depths of consciousness, accompanied by moral conversion and insight.

Along with a tendency to traffic in the spiritual black market, the author manifests a certain gullibility, which is certain to discredit any kind of science—New Age, archaic, or plain old Cartesian. New Age science does not benefit from such undocumented statements as the following: "Evidence from the early American calendar stones, as well as from Himalayan scrolls which predate Hinduism, point to an ancient knowledge of the existence of the planets Pluto and Uranus." This is all too typical of the kind of wishful thinking which has characterized much of the counter-cultural thought since the mid'60s. While it may prove interesting in what it tells us about the religious nostalgia of the present generation, in a presumably scholarly context it amounts to simply a misrepresentation of the facts.

As the author suggests, there is undoubtedly something to be learned from archaic science, and certainly the attitude of archaic science as well as its special insights must be integrated into our present knowledge if we are to survive. This much seems true if the New Age is to become a reality and not merely a luxuriant counter-cultural fantasy. But the premises and mythic context of archaic thought and science, and any future science, must be presented with greater respect, dignity, and understanding than they have been in *Rhythms of Vision*.

José Argüelles is the author of Mandala *and* The Transformative Vision *and teaches at San Francisco State University.*

The Transmission of the Mind Outside the Teaching

Translated and edited by Charles Luk. New York: Grove Press, 1975. Pp. 191. $2.95.

By Ronald B. Epstein

The title is provocative but somewhat misleading, since the book contains selections from a relatively obscure Ch'an (Zen) history of the thirteenth century. Its traditional hagiographies recount the lives of great masters who are representatives of the flourishing of Ch'an from the seventh to the tenth centuries. Meagre biographical data, transmission stories, and other dialogues (most available elsewhere) are presented for six masters.

The contents belong to the "recorded sayings" genre of Ch'an literature, which reveals the great masters' rejection of overly conceptual preoccupation with the sacred scriptures and their emphasis on personal practice under the direct guidance of a competent master. The genre probably represents a new scripturization and, therefore, decay of and turning away from the very tradition it attempts to chronicle.

It is presumptuous and foolish to think one could encapsulate the heart of the Ch'an tradition expressed in these writings, since it stresses that understanding must come from deep personal realization and lies beyond the intellect. Nonetheless, we might roughly cognize the intent thus: everything is created from the Mind (the big one, not the little one); nothing should be treated as having any independent reality apart from Mind. Mind is revealed in just that way—by not grasping or rejecting perceptions, emotions, or ideas, even if they are labelled "Truth." Yet as the book relates:

> *One day a monk asked Ma Tsu, 'Why do you say that mind is Buddha?'*
> *Ma Tsu replied, 'To stop a child from crying.'*

Most of the interchanges, which are called *kung-an* in Chinese and *koan* in Japanese (meaning a legal case precedent), can hardly be edifying for interested

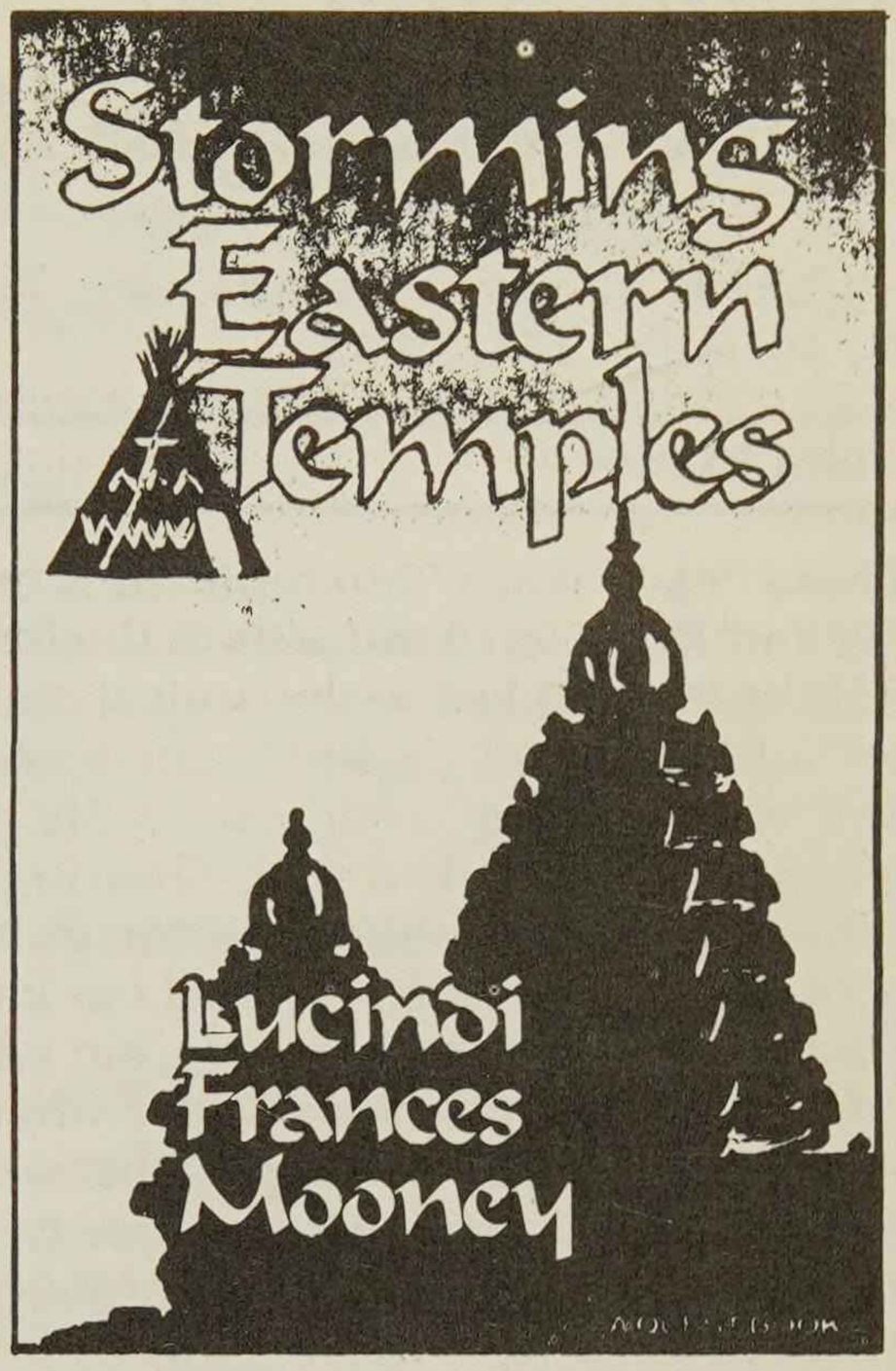
Westerners, even though they may provide amusement for party conversation. The meanings cannot really be understood by generalizing the situations, since they were specific to the attachment of the individual disciples involved; nor can they be apprehended without great familiarity with the principles of the scriptural teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Later tradition used portions of the dialogues (*kung-an*) as non-cognitive meditational devices, a context even farther removed from most potential readers' proper understanding. In other words this work is probably not the best place to start learning about Zen teaching.

The translator, Charles Luk, is a great pioneer, who through his work of the past twenty years has brought to Western attention many of the great classics of Buddhism in China. He is adept at producing readable translations, though occasionally at the expense of accuracy. Unfortunately, however, he continually portrays himself as a personally realized Transmitter of the Teaching, implying that his authority flows from his master, the great Chinese Ch'an Patriarch Hsü-yün, with whom Luk never personally studied. This regrettable tendency is evident both in the book's footnotes, which cite only works by Luk himself, and in its long, rambling preface, in which he certifies the meditational experiences of some of his Western "disciples" as genuine enlightenments.

Nevertheless, if Luk continues translating the series of which this is to be the first volume, he should present valuable information about later masters who are virtually unknown in the West.

Ronald B. Epstein is a lecturer in religious studies at the University of California at Davis.

jung-Yogis and Shamans



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Cave Notes: First Reflections on Sense and Spirit

By Robert E. Meagher. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975. Pp. 171. $9.50.

By John Dunne

These "cave notes" are reflections on sense and spirit, on how each way of the human spirit is linked with a way of seeing, how "a life of free insight" for instance is linked with "seeing" and how "a life of obedient love" is linked with "hearing."

When we trust our sight we can go the way of seeing, and when we trust our hearing we can go the way of hearing, but when we doubt them, when we wonder whether we are seeing a mirage or suspect that we are "hearing things," we have recourse to touch. Meagher sees the Hebraic tradition arising out of a trust in hearing, the Hellenic out of a trust in seeing, the modern out of a doubting. The Roman tradition too, intermediate between the two more ancient ones and the modern, he sees as arising out of the implicit doubt involved in a reliance on touch. The trust in hearing takes the form of listening to the word, ultimately of listening to the word of God and living "a life of obedient love." The trust in seeing takes the form of "a life of free insight," a life of seeing, or more often a dramatic mode of existence, a public life, a life of being seen.

Meagher regards the traditions as irreconcilable, even those of seeing and hearing, and thus comes to no one solution himself other than that of "remembering," of bringing them to mind and living with them in mind.

"It seemed to me," Michael Polanyi said in *The Tacit Dimension*, "that our whole civilization was pervaded by the dissonance of an extreme critical lucidity and an intense moral conscience, and that this combination had generated both our tight-lipped modern revolutions and the tormented self-doubt of modern man outside revolutionary movements. So I resolved to inquire into the roots of this condition." Meagher's *Cave Notes* are a similar inquiry.

Where Polanyi looks to the tacit knowing that underlies our explicit knowing to get beyond the "extreme critical lucidity" and the "intense moral conscience," Meagher looks to the link between spirit and sense.

As a further step, beyond his solution of "remembering" the different traditions, one thinks of the possibility of purifying sense and spirit. The terms "sense" and "spirit" call to mind the "dark night of the senses" and the "dark night of the spirit" in the spiritual tradition of Christianty. One thinks of a spiritual journey like that described by St. John of the Cross in his *Dark Night of the Soul* where sense and spirit go through a purification that leads to an illumining of the mind and a union of the heart with God. Here perhaps in what St. John describes as a "happy night" is the missing center where the traditions of seeing and hearing and touching are one. The darkness of the "dark night" is that of faith, akin to that of trust in the traditions of seeing and hearing and yet also to that of doubt in the tradition of touching. The happiness of the "happy night" is that of the centering, the illumining of the mind and the kindling of the heart.

What is really enlightening in Meagher's reflections is the link he sees between sense and spirit. It suggests a way of approaching every spiritual tradition. That link exists also in the further step I am proposing, the purification of sense and spirit that lead one into the heart of Christianity. There is a seeing, a hearing, and a touching with purified senses that go with knowing and loving with a purified spirit, and there is a remembering too—"Our message concerns that Word, who is life; what he was from the first, what we have heard about him, what our own eyes have seen of him; what it was that met our gaze, and the touch of our hands." (I John 1:1; Knox tr.).

John Dunne, author of The Way of All the Earth *and* Time and Myth, *is currently giving a series of lectures at Oxford which will form the basis of a forthcoming book,* The Reasons of the Heart.

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Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology.

By Mary Douglas. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975. Pp. xxi + 325. $23.50.

By Lorna McDougall

These collected essays of some twenty years by the well-known British anthropologist represent a subtle but tenacious pursuit of a set of ideas about relations between the individual and society. They are founded on the notion, first elaborated by Durkheim, that society is God. This may at first disconcert many readers, especially Americans, who live in a fragmented social system and therefore are more accustomed to seek truth within and in the privacy of subgroups than in society as a cohesive whole.

In some ways the theme of this volume recalls the darkest hour of existentialism, an echo of a world without exit, the antithesis of the infinite world of "consciousness" where the personal goal can be summed up as quest. Yet Douglas' work can be stimulating, and she has a unique ability to categorize effectively different "kinds of universe": i.e., to integrate the narrow vision of a single society or religion with others so as to yield a typological framework that shows us something new about the possibilities for social evolution.

In Douglas' view, the study of society and the study of religion are complementary opposites. Both religious and social systems are explanatory, and "authentic social science" is regarded as the explanation of explanations. Social systems themselves impress upon individuals ideas of how the world is constituted; their information is carried in verbal and non-verbal categories and reflected in behavior. But, Douglas argues, the impressions conveyed are more projections than realities, and she holds the same to be true of religious dispositions. Even science, she avers, views nature more as an extension of the social sphere than as a neutral object of study. This is why, for instance, scientists disagree so markedly in their prognostications regarding our natural resources: as social beings they necessarily have axes to grind.

While the cognitive system—the way we come to perceive and know things—is rooted, then, in the social system, social relations themselves are founded on exchange. And social categories determine the kinds of exchanges which we, as members of groups and classes, engage in (however willingly or unwillingly). Absent here is any notion of human communication as a meeting of persons in spiritual interchange and communion; it becomes simply a way of accepting and transmitting messages about the social code itself. Thus, to study these exchanges is simply to see how individuals employ categories to establish their place in the world.

American readers will, I think, find easiest access to Douglas' thought through the chapter, "Deciphering a Meal." It examines the eating code as an example of the general tendency of societies to give formal relations priority over intimate ones. In offering food to visitors and friends, and even within the family, the categories of meals and foods shared reflect aspects of social relations: a quick drink expresses a different relationship from a long dinner in both "primitive" and contemporary societies. We are not normally explicitly conscious of such messages, and it is to such mute communication that Douglas is referring when she talks about meanings being "implicit." And the conventions are prescriptive so that we are either gauche or liable to be outcasts if we breach them. Categories are coercive, the meanings of exchanges prescribed beforehand, no matter how "free" the individual may seem to be.

Categories are thus the means by which we internalize the prescriptions of the group. They are the social factors that rule our actions. Furthermore, they are protected by an aura of sacredness. For Douglas, the sacred is simply the "ultimate authority recognized by the individual," and it is violated primarily by committing actions considered taboo. To be properly socialized is to esteem the "rule of purity" and to do this effortlessly, by "gut reaction"—which is why, for instance, Americans are instinctively appalled at the idea of serving horse or dog meat or certain organ meats, some of which are quite nutritious and readily consumed by people in other cultures.

If the sacred is, in Douglas' view, our internalized reaction to breaches of moral law and custom, what does she see in myth? It

becomes a mediating element, straddling the gap created by classes and categories, a mystifying factor sitting "above and athwart the exigencies of social life." Myth represents "thought in relatively free play" and "pliant to the observer's whim," which is why it is so difficult to analyze from a social-scientific viewpoint. Even the analyses of the structural anthropologists Leach and Lévi-Strauss have, in her opinion, only extracted a "different and lesser" meaning from the mythic material. A satisfactory analysis which will link myth's imaginative elements with its social underpinnings remains to be worked out.

Douglas' analyses pose interesting problems and questions. For she is a brilliant analyst of the factors at work in social systems, but there are inconsistencies in some of her comprehensive theoretical notions. Perhaps the most prominent of these inconsistencies is her denial that science is a dispassionate, objective system of explanation, while at the same she sees social scientific accounts to be the only valid way of understanding the laws that shape human lives. In fact, the scientific principles of aesthetic economy and rigorous objectivity underlie the theoretical "finite patternings of reality" which enable Douglas to specify distinct "types" of universe. If we follow the problem out, it becomes a case of infinite regression: all we can ever see in the looking glass of infinity is ourselves, encapsulated in our social skins and surrounded by monsters, benign or threatening, whose alien shapes differ from our own.

Perhaps, however, Douglas does bring us face to face with some of the implicit but constitutive factors in our multi-racial and complex social system. As exchanges multiply, the need for constant redefinition of boundaries escalates. The result is that taboos and customs become upsettingly fluid, and many people become lost, angry, even destructive in the shuffle. *Implicit Meanings* invites us to reflect on the categories that implicitly shape our lives. In complex systems like those most of us live in, several of these categories are in conflict and cannot mesh well or even at all; this, I believe, is one reason why we have been forced out of monolithic religious structures and into more personal pursuits of the sacred.

Lorna McDougall teaches anthropology at Pitzer College and at Claremont Graduate School.

THE STORY-SHAPED WORLD: FICTION AND METAPHYSICS

Brian Wicker. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975. Pp. x + 230. $12.95.

By John R. May

Can the modern world recover a concept of "unseen presences within Nature"? "Is it to be found anywhere within our ravaged planet? I do not think," Brian Wicker responds, "that modern fiction in its present state has any coherent answer to give to that question: and yet the modern world that is shaped by its stories awaits one with increasing impatience." This, he says, is the dilemma of our story-shaped world. Regardless how one may feel about the needs of the modern world or relate to the possibility of "unseen presences" (the metaphor is D.H. Lawrence's), *The Story-Shaped World* is a work about metaphor *and* world that anyone interested in story must take careful note of.

Norman Mailer and Alain Robbe-Grillet, oddly enough, set the stage for Wicker's probing investigation of the metaphysical reaches of language. Robbe-Grillet, Wicker notes, insists that the task of the modern novelist is to rid his language of all metaphors inasmuch as they illicitly attribute meaning to mere objects and necessarily transmit a bourgeois "humanist" ideology as ultimate and unchallengeable. Mailer, on the other hand, makes a plea for the return to the older metaphorical way in order to liberate modern man from the desiccating effect of technology. Both agree that to adopt a metaphorical style is to adopt a metaphysical world view; their diametrically opposed impulses, Wicker observes, ironically spring from the same desire: the search for freedom.

The Story-Shaped World is both theoretical and critical. Its first half explores in detail two ideas: that metaphor is endemic to all communication simply because, as un-

derstood by linguists, it is one of the two poles of language itself (its complement is *analogy*); and that metaphor is never an "innocent figure" but always implies a hidden metaphysic ("nature," "causality," and even "God"). The second, and critical, part attempts to show how these ideas, pressed to their limit, help to illuminate the work of three pairs of modern fiction writers —Lawrence and Joyce, Waugh and Beckett, Robbe-Grillet and Mailer.

Wicker proceeds from the assumption that the study of the "rhetoric" of fiction has been a truly valuable development in the field of literary criticism. Thus, to find a new way of telling a story is always to find a new story to tell. Moreover, to raise the question of religious belief is, Wicker believes, to pose the question of the possibility of metaphysics. Finally, he insists, religious belief is founded on stories; the development of this thesis reveals the substance of his interpretation of Judaeo-Christian myth.

In a central chapter entitled "Metaphor and 'God,'" Wicker turns his attention to the curious presence of Yahweh as a quasi-human character in the earliest mythic strands of Genesis. Is this mutable, even fickle, figure the Most High God, who from other Biblical texts is clearly beyond change? (Yahweh, as the name of a character in a story, is a piece of metaphorical language; metaphor in theology takes it for granted that it is possible to affirm certain human characteristics of God.) Yahweh is not only a character in the story but also, at the same time, a person who exists, who stands behind the story as its implied teller. "The structure of the story in which this character appears," says Wicker, "is projected on to the real world to give *it* a structure which otherwise it would not have." These primitive Judaeo-Christian myths have God as their implied teller, because only he can claim to tell us what the character Yahweh thinks and says. So, every tale implies a *teller*, though not every tale implies an author. The stories *about* Yahweh are thus the foundation of the tribal faith, professed by Abraham, that "Yahweh *is* God." Without the story there would be no shape to reality. Wicker is referring throughout, of course, to the original orally-transmitted sacred stories, and not necessarily to the written versions we now have.

The genuine excitement of Wicker's probing analysis of metaphor and narrative lies in the theoretical portion of the work, and there is literally no way of synopsizing his proposed synthesis of medieval philosophy and modern linguistics that could do justice to its provocative detail. His command of the sources alone is impressive—literary, philosophical, and religious; classical and modern. Typical of his modesty, is his concluding hope that, *if* his argument is "in any sense right," one of its most useful byproducts would be a wedding of the metaphysics of Aquinas with the world of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss.

John R. May, author of The Pruning Word: The Parables of Flannery O'Connor, *is associate editor of* HORIZONS for religion and culture.

African Religions: Symbol, Ritual and Community

By Benjamin Ray. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976. Pp. 254. $8.95; paper $4.95.

By Evan M. Zuesse

African religions are exceedingly difficult to survey at the present time, because we know too much about them, and altogether too little. We know too much to be satisfied any longer with the essentially Christian theological tabulating of randomly collected facts, which characterizes so many older studies. But we know too little to write the definitive analysis pinpointing precisely the regional and local variations, the historical, religious, and social reasons for these variations and their inner dynamics. The unevenness of the specialized research into the 750 or so cultural groupings in Africa also stymies the investigator; most religions go unreported and often even the best studies are from a narrow methodological or theoretical perspective.

Benjamin Ray has made the best of this difficult situation, in choosing to discuss in depth a few societies where the field research has been outstanding and employing a "polymethodological" perspective making use of various theories to understand the complex reality of "religion." Thi

A Note To Our Readers

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permits him to draw widely on the best work of "Africanists," although the dangers of a certain incoherence are not totally avoided.The traditional cultures that are chosen for discussion are dealt with in eight chapters, divided up according to particular topics (e.g., concepts of divinities; types of religious leaders; myths; attitudes to the soul, ancestors and ethics, and so on). Although the cultures chosen for each chapter vary, we meet the Yoruba of Nigeria and the pastoral Dinka of Sudan frequently (as well as the Dogon of Mali and the Lugbara of Uganda). Reflecting the general tenor of anthropological research into African cultures, there is a noticeable bias toward social anthropology and sociological theories, but, for example, there is an acute discussion of psychological aspects of possession trance, and of theological implications of various relationships to the Supreme Being. Some omissions are inevitable in a work of this scope (structuralist approaches, and the analyses of ritual symbolism by Victor Turner, T. O. Beidelman, and Luc de Heusch, among others, are ignored, and the concern with cognitive factors that Robin Horton has discussed could have been developed more), but the reader is provided a rich diet nevertheless. The style is direct, clear and matter-of-fact; Ray possesses the enviable ability to reproduce lucidly and succinctly complex arguments from the original sources. His good sense, learning, and perceptivity are evident throughout.

The chief emphasis is on description, however, not theory; the reader learns about African "rites of passage," for example, by studying Bambara initiations, the installation of Buganda kings, the bacchanalian Ashanti New Year, and Gogo purification rituals. The movement from description to description occasionally lacks adequate larger interpretative links or further development of ideas, but this is not true of all chapters; particularly innovative are the discussions of "Divinity and Man" and the last three chapters on new religious movements. The reader will probably find the last three chapters the most exciting of all those in this stimulating book. Ray shows very persuasively the religious overtones of many of the so-called "political" upheavals of the colonial (and, we might add, post-colonial) period, in the course of discussing the Maji Maji revolt (Tanzania, 1905-07), the Nyasaland uprising (1915), and the Mau Mau rebellion (Kenya, 1950's). Unlike most previous treatments, too, the diversity and creativity of African Islam is made clear in the excellent discussion of this complex topic, with attention being given to messianic and reform movements, and to Muslim education and practice. Extended case studies vivify this subject as they do the final chapter on independent Christian movements. The reader will put down the book with a deep sense of the vitality of African religions. The excellent selected bibliography and list of films (another innovation) provides ample help in directing the reader further into deeper study of African cults. Read together with the symposium of descriptive essays, *African Worlds: Studies in the Cosmological Ideas and Social Values of African Peoples* edited by Daryll Forde, Benjamin Ray's study is probably the best way currently available of getting into this fascinating and important subject.

Evan M. Zuesse teaches the history of religions at Case Western Reserve University and specializes in African religions.

NOTICES

Mythology

By David Leeming. Pictorial Narrative by Edwin Bayrd. World of Culture Series. New York: Newsweek Books, 1976. Pp. 192. $10.00.

Mythology is the final volume in Newsweek Books' "World of Culture Series." The volume is basically divided into three distinct but complementary sections: (1) a six-chapter text by David Leeming, professor of literature and mythology at the University of Connecticut; (2) five picture portfolios which are interspersed between the chapters of Leeming's text and which have relatively extensive commentaries written by Edwin Bayrd; and (3) a special concluding section, "In the Beginning," which presents excerpts from a variety of creation myths (Hebrew, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Hindu, Japanese, Scandinavian, Finnish, and Mayan). The book also contains a selected bibliography.

Leeming defines myth functionally as the

expression of man's sense of what he is in relation to the cosmos. He distinguishes between the external forms of man's myths—which have changed over the centuries—and the inner or universal structure of those myths which have remained essentially the same. Acknowledging that a subject as complex as myth must be explored not from one but from several different viewpoints which will provide a comprehensive, composite portrait, Leeming devotes six separate chapters to a brief historical survey of the cultural evolution of several of the more important ethnic mythologies; the relation of myth to natural phenomena and obscure historical events; the psychological meaning and interpretation of myth; the central role of the hero in all mythic traditions; the process of myth-making and its relation to art (especially poetry); and the function of myth in modern society.

The picture portfolios focus upon several of the world's best known mythic traditions: the Egyptian, the Graeco-Roman, the Celtic, and the American Indian. A separate portfolio is devoted to mythic elements which have gathered around the historical founders of three of the major world religions, namely, Gautama the Buddha, Jesus of Nazareth, and Mohammed.

Although the organization of the material obstructs the continuity of the text, the various sections of the volume supplement each other with very little repetition and make it possible for the authors to cover an amazing amount of ground in an admirably simple, concise way. A few minor reservations aside, this book is successful in providing a short, popular, yet provocative, textual and pictorial introduction to mythology.

Lee W. Gibbs

Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination

By Amos Niven Wilder. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976. Pp. vi + 106. $4.95

Having reached his eighties, Amos Wilder has by now published poetry, pioneered the sub-field of "religion and literature" studies, and pursued a distinguished career at Chicago and Harvard as a New Testament scholar. In *Theopoetic*, he does deftly and disarmingly what we are not accustomed to a Christian thinker doing at all: he makes a case for the contemporary meaningfulness of myth.

Against those theological interpreters who propose a de-mythologizing of scripture, he sides with the poets who are able through their work to "dream the myth onward" in our secular present. He thus begins by countering an over-logicized *theo-logos* with an imaginative *theo-poesis*, and moves toward a concluding chapter in which he declares that "one cannot plead for a theopoetic without also defending a mythopoetic."

By mounting such a defense, Wilder deserves the attention even of presumptive post-Christians and anti-theologians. While applauding his determination that "the Christian imagination must go halfway to meet the new dreams, mystiques, and mythologies that are gestating in our time," we should also be willing to go halfway ourselves by listening to his substantive Christian critique of today's "alternative" religious experiences and expressions. It is on the basis of the biblical *mythos* rather than from any rigidly dogmatic or rationalistic stance that Wilder constantly chides the *incompleteness* of contemporary mythic visions, arguing that they simply do not tell the whole story of our human potentials.

The structure of the book, stitched together as it is from several revised lectures and papers, makes for a certain repetitiousness, but both Wilder's endorsements of the mythopoetic *mode* in all ages and his caveats against the *content* of its most recent surfacings are worth reiterating. Readers of *Parabola* who are serious about their engagement with myth cannot afford to evade the issues raised here from within the oft-maligned Christian mainstream. Many myths and dreams tell us of wise old men. *Theopoetic* was written by one.

Daniel C. Noe

A Celtic Quest: Sexuality and Soul in Individuation

By John Layard. Revised and edited by Anne S. Bosch. Zurich: Spring Publications, 1975. Pp. 254. $7.00.

In *The Lord of the Flies* an enigmatic, contemplative Simon stares at the slaughtered sow's head and finds himself held by an "ancient inescapable recognition." What are these pigs which appear in our stories, our religions, and our dreams—the pigs of Demeter and Kore, the Erymanthian boar of Herakles, the young boar slain by the prince in the tale of Snow White? What aspect of self do they mirror in these often terrifying stories?

With remarkable psychological imagination as well as with the skill of the anthropologist and folklorist, John Layard offers an interpretation of the symbol of the pigs as he comments on the broad themes and the minute details of a Welsh story of the boar hunt. The tale is called *Culhwch and Olwen* and is part of the earliest written collection of Celtic bardic literature known as *The Mabinogion*. Culhwch's name means "born of a sow," and one of the major tasks of his heroic quest is the killing of Twrch Trwyth, a king who had been changed into a boar. Layard reads the story as a psychodrama: the ego enlisting the aid of elements of the deeper self, overcoming the enticing but devouring feminine forces of nature, and finally winning the interiorizing anima, the moon-maiden Olwen.

Since Layard's hermeneutic moves at many levels simultaneously, his book offers a variety of information and insights. Above all, it is an important contribution to psychological literature on the hero's quest and the process of individuation. Secondarily, Layard frequently connects passages of the story to the relationship between a psychotherapist and patient, itself a model and metaphor for any authentic relationship. The book is also a compendium of natural symbols, useful to anyone looking for suggestions for understanding the images of myth and dream. Finally, in several appendices Layard extends his psychological commentary to include themes in Greek mythology related to the Celtic story.

Just as the rather mundane image of the pig unfolds into an exploration of fundamental factors in the hero's quest, so does Layard's treatment of a quaint story serves as a window to the "big" questions of existence—a window worth looking into.

Thomas W. Moore

Time Before Morning: Art and Myth of the Australian Aborigines

By Louis Allen. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975. Pp. ix + 304. $18.95.

This attractive volume on Aboriginal Australian mythology and art is most appropriate for the general reader, though the scholar of mythology or Aboriginal culture may also find it refreshing and enjoyable.

The author is a lay student of Aboriginal culture, deeply committed to making Aboriginal mythology and art comprehensible, relevant, and appealing to the non-specialist while avoiding serious distortion of Aboriginal thought. He has succeeded quite well at both tasks.

Mr. Allen retells many myths from northern Australia with great poetic skill, conveying a sense of human relationships and of the natural environment that makes his retellings both evocative of Aboriginal thought and appealing to the contemporary reader. Each myth is illustrated with Aboriginal artwork, and end notes on both text and artwork add clarifying details without breaking the flow of the stories. Some of the myths in this volume have been told many times in books on Aboriginal religion, though seldom as beautifully as in this volume. Others are not readily available in other sources. The same is true of the art. Both myths and artwork are introduced by simple, concise explanations of meanings and origins.

The author does not intend this volume to be a technical scholarly treatise and it should not be used for scholarly purposes without checking standard scholarly sources for corroboration. The author aids the scholar of Aboriginal culture by stating clearly that he is retelling the myths and by pointing out what changes occur in his ver-

sion of the myths.

In sum, this book will be most appreciated by the reader who already has some knowledge of and sympathy for mythology and Aboriginal culture, and who is receptive to a poetic, illustrated retelling of the myths. The book does not seek to explain mythic thinking to the uninitiated, nor does it seek to generate footnotes in monographs; the book is too evocative and not literal enough for that. But for accurate and beautiful insights into Aboriginal thinking, this book provides the most appealing collection of myth and art that I have seen.

Rita M. Gross

The Moon Ribbon and and Other Tales

By Jane Yolen. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976. Pp. 54. $6.95.

Elegantly wrought, this collection of six original tales by Jane Yolen has a lyric timelessness. The stories' details are symbolic and evocative, rather than personal and idiosyncratic, and this gives them a cool sheen. Like the folk tales they imitate, their aesthetic quality derives primarily from a perfection of form. But unlike the folk tale, whose point is often a shrewd and biting commentary on human foible, these tales take place in an atmosphere of shadow, and the narrator's voice seems an echo.

The subject matter which unites them is the theme of death-in-life. The girl of the title story lives a real life of unrelieved dreariness. She discovers the jewel of love in a fantasy journey beyond her mother's grave. Exalted in death, the mother counsels the child that she possesses within herself the power to give or withold her own heart. Thus armed, the girl when she grows up goes on to repeat with her own child the pattern of suffering symbolized by the moon ribbon. The protagonist of "Moonchild" is also a scapegoated, misunderstood girl who retreats into a dark inhuman netherworld to live out her years in "an ever-changing dream."

Ms. Yolen's male heroes fare no better. "Sans Soleil" is a male sun-god who is destroyed by the earthy passion of a female lover. In "Honey-Stick Boy" a Christ-like child of fantasy, who acts in the real world to save his father's life, is literally dissolved as a result of his action and transformed into a tree. "Rosechild" depicts the failure of food, water, and traditional religion in the nurturing process and suggests that a touch on the cheek is the magical gesture which alone encourages life.

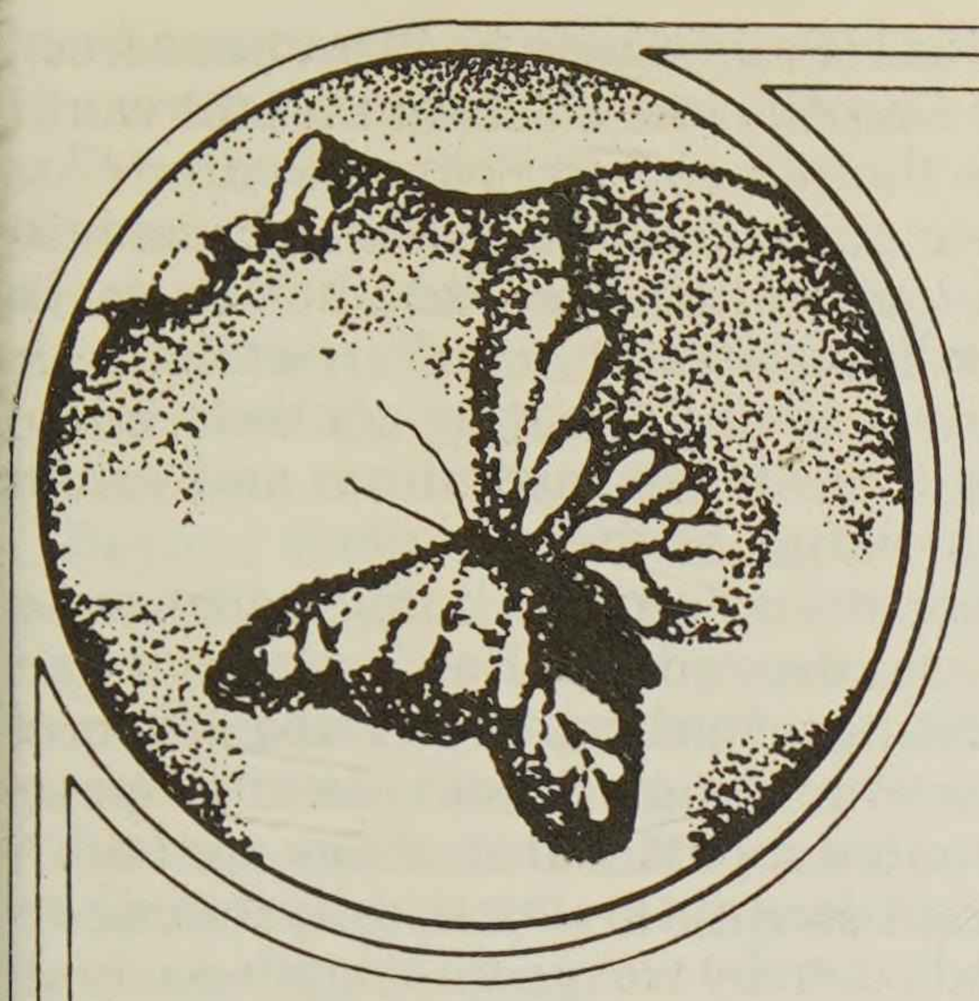
These stories seem to suggest that the compensatory fantasy of renunciation and passivity is the only real value in existence. What life they have is all *yin*. Although infinitely more sophisticated, they recall those Victorian stories in which an early unblemished death is the ultimate good end of childhood. Even when it is rendered with great skill, fragile suffering becomes, in time, cloying. Like the diet of a character in these stories—bread sopped in milk and honey—there isn't a lot in it to chew.

Feenie Zine

THE ORDINARY AND THE FABULOUS

An introduction to Myths, Legends and Fairy Tales. By Elizabeth Cook. Second Edition. Cambridge University Press, 1976. Pp. xx+ 182. $15.00; paper $5.95.

This excellent guide to mythological literature for children was written, Elizabeth Cook tells us, "for teachers, for students who intend to be teachers or librarians, and for parents, cousins, aunts and all other storytellers." It is indeed written—and well written, by the way—for this audience, but not in their capacity as story*tellers*. As purveyors of literature to children, yes, and as readers-aloud to a young audience—but not as tellers of tales. The distinction between reading and telling a story is not made sufficiently clear, and never was the expression "there is a world of difference" more true than between these two worlds. How often have parents and other interested parties asked me, "How do you choose what you read to children?" I almost never *read* stories to children—only when Kipling or Tolkien are specifically asked for will I read aloud. I do not abjure the practice at all; my



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interest is simply in telling, not reading.

If one has decided to physically interpose a book between oneself and one's audience, however, Cook's notes on how to select a good version of a myth are undoubtedly valuable. Her chapter on "Language and Temper" in (literary) storytelling gives seven sets of comparative readings among several authors, each set dealing with a crucial mythological episode. Her comments on each quoted passage are perceptive and quite enlightening. The opening chapter very capably defines the genres of the realm of the fabulous, and the following chapter discusses the choosing of myths from classical sources—Greek, Norse, the Arthurian body, Celtic—and fairy tales.

The weakest part of the book is the bibliography, but this is almost always the weakest part of any book. One's list is never complete and invariably reflects one's own prejudices. I, for instance, would never include anything by Mary Renault, because she does such serious damage to myths with her popularizations. Andrew Lang's twelve volumes of fairy tales are suspect because he meddled with his sources and had a very questionable set of criteria for selection. Why are Howard Pyle's King Arthur books omitted from the section on Arthurian Romances? They are still about the best available. Among foreign books, Cook omits Afanas'ev's collection (just as important for Russian tales as Grimm is for German), the *Kalevala* (which children love), and worst of all, the *Arabian Nights*! The section of "Presentation and Creation in the Classroom" includes Ruth Sawyer's *The Way of the Storyteller*, but not Marie Shedlock's *The Art of the Storyteller*, which is much more useful.

Paul Jordan-Smith

Beyond Culture

By Edward T. Hall. Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976. Pp. 256. $7.95.

The author of *The Silent Language* and *The Hidden Dimension* offers in *Beyond Culture* further reflections on the unconscious dimensions of culture, the recognition and acceptance of which he thinks will determine our collective future. In a loosely organized, casual style, which is almost as autobiographical as it is analytical, Hall calls on us to transcend our culture-boundness. Although he never claims that we can go "beyond culture" altogether, we can and ought to become at least bicultural people. This, he argues, is especially important in culture-contact situations, in child-rearing contexts, and during times when institutions and values are crumbling, as they are now.

Overcoming "monocultural" narrowness (my term) depends, in Hall's view, on penetrating to the latent, nonverbal layers of culture where axioms about identity, space, time, action, body, and memory are laid bare. Hall does not systematically describe a method whereby we can do a depth-analysis of culture, except to insist that one does it by actual observation rather than by philosophizing, so his book is methodologically eclectic and his analyses sometimes rather *ad hoc*. Nevertheless, he does develop several concepts which identify crucial points of entry to culture's hidden dimension. For example, he suggests that by differentiating high context from low context cultures we can become attuned to the way context modifies cultural messages:

> *"A high-context (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. Twins who have grown up together can and do communicate more economically (HC) than two lawyers in a courtroom during a trial (LC) . . . "*

The primary value of Hall's book lies in suggestive but explicit definitions and concepts like these and in his facility for illustrating them concretely.

Among other examples of Hall's effort to jolt us into awareness of the unconscious dimensions of our culture are his discussions of "basic archetypal situations (BAS)" and action chains (AC); the former includes birth, death, play, teaching, learning, communication, and hierarchical, aggressive, and territorial behaviors.

Hall is convinced that culture, like the unconscious, is basically irrational, so he provides us with a sketch of the kinds of

irrationality: bureaucratic, neurotic, situational, contextual, and cultural. He says he does not trust logic, yet his effort to find deeply rooted patterns in culture, his equation of culture with mind, and classificatory schemes such as this one presuppose that culture does have a systematic, if not rule-like, structure.

Beyond Culture is written in a popular, personable style which reflects Professor Hall's interactions with his students, his own psychoanalysis, and his field work and travel. It is very much the effort of an American professor working hard to empathize with people of other cultures and the dissatisfied young.

Ronald L. Grimes

Journal of a Fast

By Frederick W. Smith, New York: Schocken, 1976. Pp. 216. $7.96.

Fasting is a lost spiritual discipline. In a book which advances compelling reasons for fasting Frederick Smith, a blue collar worker, shares his experience of consuming nothing but water for thirty days. Smith's goal was "to attempt to see more deeply into myself, to see more deeply, if possible, into the significance of things happening around us on a worldwide historical scale, and especially to see more deeply into the meaning of the physical phenomena that surround us." In a world of four billion people, only an estimated 500 million live above the United States Government poverty line. And in such a world every kind of political, economic, and spiritual oppression relates in complex ways to food. We, the well-fed, can help little by dispersing our private property to benefit but a few of the hungry. But voluntary experience of hunger could change our vision of a hungry world, and perhaps open up as well dimensions that fasting as a discipline has traditionally disclosed in various religions.

Smith devotes half the book to describing his bodily experience of fasting. Interspersed in the text are favorite ideas from Jacob Boehme, Gandhi, Berdyaev, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jesus, Lao Tzu, and other religious sources, Eastern and Western. He also shares general reflections on the SST, Vietnam atrocities, pollution, death, technology, etc.

Most importantly, Smith learned the importance of spiritual nourishment, the only kind upon which he relied during his fast. He was able to "eliminate obstacles to (his) spiritual progress," and in meditation he found that he could more easily bridge the gulf between the "phenomenal" and the "beyond phenomenal" worlds. He learned to be more tolerant of others and managed to achieve "a very intimate perception of the world as illusion."

Smith's fast taught him how much perceptions of bodily existence and of the world vary with the use of food. And in that discovery there may be a clue to the subtle reciprocity of body and spirit and to how adjustments in one could open up unexplored regions in the other.

Richard E. Keady

The Sword and the Flute: Kali and Krsna—Dark Visions of the Terrible and the Sublime in Hindu Mythology

By David Kinsley. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975. Pp. vii + 168. $12.00.

This fascinating book explores two of the most popular Hindu deities, Krsna and Kali. Krsna is the more familiar to western readers: "a surpassingly beautiful god who intoxicates and delights all those who see him or hear his flute." The discussion of him is informative and profound. However, since Kali is less well known and less easily un-

derstood, the author's exploration of her significance is more important. Kinsley argues that even if Kali is of non-Aryan origins, she has gained such prominence in the Hindu pantheon that she must be considered an authentic manifestation of "the Hindu vision of things." While Krsna reveals a "world of transcendent joy and bliss," Kali "calls man's attention to the realities of pain, suffering, and death."

This book is an admirable one in that it displays the rigors of careful scholarship and yet is accessible to the general reader. Kinsley's method is a fusion of historical and anthropological studies with a phenomenological approach that "seeks to bracket the phenomena under study in an attempt to apprehend a vision of reality that persists throughout the history of the two deities." Kinsley does not ignore historical, cultural, economic materials; still, he insists that "religious phenomena can best be understood on their own frame of reference." Krsna and Kali open us "to an 'other' dimension of reality" that religious man needs "*in order to be human.*" The book is a masterful study based on these premises.

Richard Comstock

The Year of the Waterbearer

By Marguerite Dorian. New York: Macmillan, 1976. Pp. 170. $7.95.

The love-hates of the generations before us bear heavily on our shoulders. We carry our familial mythologies like the Old Man of the Sea: their weight can kill. And so we must come to terms with the burdens we inherit. Occasionally, an artist can show us how that personal weight can be transformed into something beautiful. This is what Marguerite Dorian has done in her lyric and insightful novel.

Taking the story of her great-grandmother and great-grandfather, a tale evidently handed down by a succession of family women, poet Dorian has recreated a nineteenth-century Moldavian village with its archetypal Jews and gentiles, living side by side in mutual antipathy and distrust. She has breathed life into the long dead, lending the plot a lushness of detail, a kaleidoscope of East European color and sound. Her prose is mesmerizing: paragraphs threaten to sink under the burden of similes and observations. Yet they do not; instead, they stay afloat, tantalizing mind and heart with their riches.

What better description, for example, of a peasant than this: "Always alone on deserted roads or in the fields, intimate with the horizon, with the flocks of cranes sailing silverdusted against the sun, with the seasons, he had unlearned speech"?

The story is of love lost, regained for an instant, and lost again. Marguerite Dorian's great-grandmother, married and barren, still longs for the one-legged boy she had loved in her youth. Behind the veil of allusion, she finds him for an instant and loves him with the tacit permission of her gentle, scholarly older husband. The child that may be the result of that one brief encounter is Dorian's grandmother. The story is gentle, elliptical, persuasive, and it reminds us of Aristotle's observation that "anything might happen in that great backward of time."

Yet if the story is the pattern that stands out on the lush tapestry Dorian weaves, the warp on which it is worked is the folklore of the Moldavian countryside. Jewish tales, gentile tales, stories from Talmud and Bible blend with peasant wisdom. At once tender and ironic, passionate and bemused, erotic and stately, this unique interplaying of family and folk lore has produced a beautiful tale.

Jane Yolen

Books for Inner Development: The YES! Guide

By Cris Popenoe. Washington, D.C.: YES! Bookshop, 1976. Pp. 383. Paper $5.95. Distributed by Random House.

The YES! Bookshop in Washington, D.C. has become, since its start in 1972, a unique source of nourishment for anyone maintaining an interest in the vast range of books published over the years under the rubric of

'inner development.' Cris and Oliver Popenoe, the shop's managers, have simply collected more books in the field than anyone else (save perhaps Weiser's in New York), and the benevolent atmosphere they provide in their shop has made it a central and rewarding stop for both general readers and seasoned seekers.

A reflection of the comprehensive care they have taken with their shop, their 'bookmanship', *The YES! Guide* catalogues 8,000 titles, along with descriptive paragraphs on each. Such a large catalogue would be extremely useful to *any* truth-seeker; there has never been a listing of such scope before, nor of such truly catholic interest. However, the expertise of the editors, the choice of short critical essays that accompany the major subject areas, as well as the longer critical sections, make the *YES! Guide* invaluable.

The sheer weight of the number of items listed has forced the editors to abandon the more leisurely format of other comparable compendiums, such as *The Whole Earth Catalogue*. The crabbed 8-point type may cause some difficulty for readers, but the actual layout is tidy and logical, relieving some of the strain caused by the type size. Optometrists need not celebrate this publication; the *Guide*, though dense, will not cause any noticeable swelling of their incomes.

Cris Popenoe has also made an effort to separate the wheat from the chaff—UFO testimonials, "miracle" cures, blatant self-help commercializations and other dubious modern additions to the body of traditional wisdom are thankfully lacking. Finally, one can only say Bravo! to the efforts of the *YES!* editors. Anybody who cares enough for the subject to be holding a copy of *Parabola* at the moment would do well to look through *The YES! Guide*.

James C. Odell

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VOLUME I, ISSUE 4
FALL 1976

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Page 95 William Blake, Courtesy of Tate Gallery, London

Page 97 *The Child-Buddha*, Daihohon-ji, Kyoto.

Page 99 String Mandala by John Eichinger, 1976.

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Pages 70-74 Photographs by Arthur Tress. from *Shadow;* New York: 1975, Arbor. Paper: $4.95/. With especial thanks to Mr. Tress for makings these photographs available.

Page 75 Drawing by Page Allen

PROFILES

Frederick Franck, author of *The Zen of Seeing* and *Pilgrimage t Now/Here,* has become a consulting editor of *Parabola.* An avi student of Japanese traditions, he has also written a small book o Oomoto, the sect which continues to use Noh as part of its religiou ritual.

Ursula Le Guin is among the best contemporary science fictio writers. An elegant stylist and enchanting storyteller, she is pa ticularly celebrated for her ability to create complete imaginar civilizations and to raise central human questions through them Perhaps best known for *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Th Dispossessed*—both winners of the Nebula Award for Bes Novel—she has just published *Orsinian Tales,* a collection of sho stories more in the tradition of mainstream fiction.

Robert Meagher teaches humanities and religion at Hampshir College, and he is particularly interested in drawing out the re sources for authentic living that lie in the traditions of an en Greece and of Christianity. His books include *Beckonings* an *Following the Rich Young Man,* and his latest—*Cave Notes*—i reviewed in this issue.

James Wolfe, who has worked as a minister and a civil right advocate, teaches political science at the University of Britis Columbia. He did his doctoral work on civil religion under Rober Bellah at Berkeley, and has recently published an essay in *The New Religious Consciousness,* edited by Bellah and Charles Glock.

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