

PARABOLA

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THE MAGAZINE OF MYTH AND TRADITION



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PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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PARABOLA (ISSN: 0362-1596) is published quarterly by the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition, Inc., a nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax-deductible.

Single issue: \$5.50. By subscription: \$18.00 yearly, \$32.00 for two years, \$46.00 for three years. Postage for outside territorial U.S.: add \$6.00 for surface rates, \$20.00 for air, per year.

Address all correspondence regarding editorial, subscriptions, and advertising to PARABOLA, 656 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. Tel.: 212-924-0004.

Postmaster: Send address changes to PARABOLA, 656 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and additional offices.

Distributed in the United States and Canada by Eastern News, 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

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VOLUME XI, NUMBER 2, MAY, 1986.

Cover: Winter Stream, 1978. Photograph by David Heald.

FOCUS

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

FULL CIRCLE

A Readers' Forum

I want to thank you for publishing such a unique and outstanding periodical, and for being willing to draw on Western as well as Eastern religious sources, which are so often neglected in such secular journals. I have noticed that when you quote the Bible you use the King James Version. My hope is that you will consider using a more contemporary one in the future (e.g. Jerusalem, New English, or Revised Standard Version). We have so much more knowledge of early manuscripts now than was available when the King James Version was written. Your readers deserve both more accurate translations and more understandable English.

—(The Rev. Dr.) Tilden H. Edwards, Jr.
Washington, D.C.

We have had discussions on this subject over the years but have never been seriously tempted to abandon the King James for any other version. There are myriad examples we could cite justifying our insistence on the King James—but let's consider just one. It demonstrates why our conviction is so strong on this point. As you know, in any translation of any text, there are often several "correct" translations of a word—it is our feeling

that those who worked on the King James stayed closer to the spirit and the meaning than any others so far. The example we have in mind is Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you" (King James Version). It is a critical statement at the core of the point of view of myth and all traditional thought. In an article in Studies in Comparative Religion, Winter 1967, Frithjof Schuon comments on this verse: "In saying that 'the kingdom of God is within you,' Jesus Christ means, not that heaven, or God, is of a psychological order, but simply that the access to spiritual and divine realities is to be found at the center of our being . . ." It is an essential and critical idea. Now here is the same verse in the translations you suggest:

"The kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Revised Standard Version)

"The Kingdom of God is among you." (Jerusalem, New English)

All three are "correct" translations, but we think you will see why we feel the King James Version is superior.

—The Editors

In the last issue the editors asked for suggestions for future themes, and I want to pass along the following:

Wealth—both spiritual and material. What does it mean, and what does it do to the soul? This is perhaps a more chal-



lenging subject than "Poverty" because it seems antithetical to spirituality, but then PARABOLA took on the theme of "Hierarchy" and did it very effectively. Also, in some of its spiritual meanings, wealth is understood as an abundance of the virtues of poverty, or the spiritual reward for a life of poverty. Just the difference between the words "wealth" and "abundance" suggests how the idea itself moves from the hedonistic to the spiritual.

George Keithly
Chico, California

I've long been enchanted by your work. It seems to me that if trees must die for paper, seeds must be planted in words. And when you look around at most publications you see a vast sulphuric wasteland. Your efforts are life-giving, though. Without myths, human beings are dead—and when you look around at people, you see a lot of charred and cracked branches reaching toward the sky in vain.

Since you invited me and the 40,000 to comment, I'm taking the liberty. Here is an item I had about additional material for the magazine: How does mythology manifest itself in modern art, music, and literature? What do the art-

ists have to reveal to us in this context? This might make for an interesting column. Also, it would give us the sense that these things are happening now. What cradled the heart of hearts of the ancients pulls at us today.

Stuart Matranga
Cedarhurst, New York

Over the years I have been deeply enriched by the tales, reflections, and teachings published in this special magazine. As a rabbi in the Jewish tradition, however, I miss not seeing more from my own tradition . . . seldom are Jewish teachers and thinkers called upon to share the rich 5000-year-old midrashic (legendary) oral and written traditions.

Though I have read Jonathan Omer-Man, Elie Wiesel, and Adin Steinsaltz in the pages of PARABOLA, I have yet to read a Jewish woman author, poet, or rabbi . . . and I feel deprived by your unintended neglect of this area.

I hope you will respond to my queries and requests to broaden your outreach into the Jewish spiritual path.

Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb
Albuquerque, New Mexico



The Praying Masters of My Soul

JONATHAN OMER-MAN

On certain occasions my teacher used to repeat to me the story of the proud parent, who, on returning from witnessing a grand and magnificent military parade, reported to his friends: "There were thousands upon thousands of soldiers, and all of them were out of step, except my son!"

The solitary soldier, of course, is every one of us. For me, the story was then, and still remains, a powerful teaching, with many dimensions of meaning. It is about self-centeredness,

and about blindness to others. It is about remembering who one is, and one's place in the world. It is about the unredeemed state of humanity. It is about sleep and awakening. It is even about that most dangerous of spiritual sins, self-pity. And it is about learning to get in step.

According to one Jewish tradition, everything exists in its proper place in the world, everything is in step, except human beings. Every mountain, every pebble, every crystal is as it should be by

its very nature, unless it has been dislocated by man: every animal, every bird, every forest and every tree, each moves, each comes into life, grows, decays, and dies, as it should, properly. The sun and moon glide smoothly in their orbits; even the angels fulfill their functions perfectly and unselfconsciously. It is as if the entire cosmos was lying within a great magnetic field, and every created being is like a particle that moves only along its particular line of force. In this ordered cosmos, the human being is unique. Because he alone is out of place, he alone can change his place. He can decide who he is. Among all created beings only he has the power to direct the course, to determine the rhythm, to alter the flow of his life. A human being is actively involved in the evolution of his being. A caterpillar cannot choose if and when it will become a chrysalis and a butterfly; the planets cannot alter their orbits. A human being, on the other hand, can decide whether or not to seek wholeness and redemption; whether or not to align himself with the Divine will. Nevertheless, though all humans are blessed with this faculty of choice, very few manage to use it to good effect. The truth of the matter is, getting in step is a very difficult task.

In my teacher's parable the solitary soldier can get in step with his colleagues very simply. If he looks at them carefully, and then he observes himself, he discovers that something is wrong. They become a kind of mirror for him; but they reflect not what he is doing, or who he appears to be at that moment, but rather that which exists within him

in potential, who he can become. When he can look within himself and see the world, in this case, the parade (as opposed to projecting himself onto the world—a sure recipe for distorted vision), he can make the necessary correction to his marching. By skipping twice on the same foot, he can move into harmony with his colleagues.

Teaching stories are so powerful because they isolate a single element and focus all attention on it, making the moral very simple to grasp. But to learn from them we have to translate them into the complex reality of our lives. So for us, getting in step is much more difficult than it is for the soldier in the allegory. First of all, unlike the soldier, we perform not just one function, marching, but many. It is as if we were not one, but ten different soldiers, ten different selves, and when we start to look at them, we discover that they are in disarray, each marching in his own time, and pulling in a different direction. Before we (that is, the whole of us, all ten soldiers) can get in step with the rest of the world, the various parts have to be brought into inner alliance. The mind must work with the heart, not against it; speech must echo thought; the hand must follow the eye; and the divine soul must master the animal soul. Secondly, we march not in one parade, but in many, and we must get in step with all of them. It is like playing many games of chess simultaneously, except that there is a different set of rules on each board. Thus we work in our immediate environments, with our families, our colleagues, our friends, and our



jobs. But we are also active in larger settings, within our traditions and our cultures. We live in different cycles of time, each of which has its own structure and content—the hours of the day and the days of the week, the seasons of the year and the seasons of our life, the periods of history and the epochs of the unfolding of the Divine plan; and we exist in all realms of reality, from the highest spheres to inanimate dust. Ultimately, we must learn to integrate all aspects of our being into all levels of physical and celestial realities. In order to do this, we must be able to “see” these realities, so that they become mir-

rors of our souls. In the process, we acquire, or develop, new organs of perception, of knowing.

We start our work with schooling and by using our five senses, our “native” observation of what is around us. We study with teachers, and then we probably change schools and teachers. We look at our immediate environment, at the phenomenal world. We examine it carefully, objectively, compassionately. For example, I look at the sparrows on my lawn, and when I

know them, I make them my teachers: I note their hopping and their pecking, the effortless economy of their being, the way that their actions flow through them without turbulence. They are who they are. Similarly, there is a cactus standing by a pathway in last summer's desert. I learn from it about the existence with seemingly inadequate resources, and about the simplicity with which spines can repel unwanted intruders. When I know these teachers, I can look within myself and discover some of the potential of my own soul. In the depths of their being they are in step, and from them I too can learn to be in step. However, their teaching is limited, or rather my lesson is: I am not a bird or a cactus, and I cannot learn from them how to eat, how to love, or how to pray as a human being.

So we need new human teachers, and we need old teachings. In this latter respect, the Jewish regimen of the *mitzvot*, the commandments, provides a trustworthy guide. These detailed prescriptions for precise action demand of us that we sharpen our powers of observation and discrimination and self-knowledge. Furthermore, by setting our actions within a larger framework, they provide us with the means to transcend the relationship between subject and object. Let us look for example at the dietary laws. As a religious Jew I am not permitted to eat a piece of meat without verifying that it is indeed part of my particular food chain (chicken and beef are, pork and lobster are not). Furthermore, I must ascertain that the animal it came from was slaughtered and prepared

in a proper fashion. By complying with these (and other, far more detailed) ritual laws, I learn in the first instance about the animal, its origins, and about the nature of my own actions. But I am also led into examining the significance of the respective lives of the predator and the prey, and the relationship between them. My enquiry extends beyond the "ecological" context, and the rippling



consequences of my act reach the highest levels of being. Ultimately, by eating a morsel of food, I could be performing a sacrament that is as complex and as simple and as holy as the offering of sacrifices in the Temple of old.

Were I an enlightened human being, I, that is, all aspects of my being, would be able to get in step with the totality of the cosmos by eating a single meal with perfect intentionality. But I am not, and my work is unending. I must seek further teachers and true mirrors of my soul and instruction from the Torah in all my tasks, in all my actions, eating, working, talking, loving, learning, teaching, praying.

The day is late. Very shortly the sun will set, and it is almost time for the afternoon prayers. Will I be able to pray with all my being? Will I be in step, and with whom? Where, and who, are my mirrors? Where are the praying teachers of my soul? At one level it is clear that I need a human teacher, a perfected master of prayer, and that I should be part of a perfect devoted community. I found these in the past, but I have set sail from the holy city and now I live in the land of sensual music. The sages of God's holy fire made me who now I am, but they cannot help me to pray this afternoon. I am out of step again. Nor can I learn from my friends the birds; they know nothing of exile from Eden. I need other mirrors for my soul.

At one level we pray with our physicality. The words are formed in our nervous systems and are uttered by our mouths. Prayers are articulated by the physical organs of speech, and that is entirely proper, for we worship with the totality of our being. Furthermore, the skills of corporeal prayer are acquired and perfected like other physical activities, with practice and discipline. But the words, the movements, the emotions, the hopes and the petitions that are the external characteristics of prayer are not its content—they are the vehicle in which it is borne. The essence of prayer is an extremely subtle yet powerful energy by means of which an individual relates to the Divine that is beyond. The source of prayer, that aspect of our being from which it flows, is within the soul itself. Without the vehicles, without the outer forms of prayer, the essence tends to remain chaotic, incoherent; it is like the scattered light that fills a room, and not like a beam of light that traverses space and can pierce the gloom. But the soul is separate from the body, and its energy does not move naturally into the vehicles, and so we have been given a special organ that coordinates the outpouring of prayer and the formation of the vehicles. This organ, the prayer center of our being, must also learn from without. It too needs mirrors, of two kinds: the first in order to discover and to recognize itself, to know its source and its power; and the second, in order that it can be aligned externally, that it may be in step with beings whose essence is praying perfectly. These mirrors are, in





the first case, the souls of every living and inanimate being, and in the second, the seraphs, the angels, and the holy creatures, which exist in the second and third realms of emanation.

We are dealing here with very subtle, almost invisible entities. Souls are veiled. It is said that were they to be revealed, the light would be so intense that we would no longer be able to see the phenomenal, the "real" world. They are, perhaps, that of which it is said, "No man can look upon My face and live." Paradoxically, then, our task involves seeing that which is either invisible, or is so bright that it would blind or kill us. How is this to be done? An answer has been given to us. Though we cannot look upon these entities, the souls of all beings, in the sense of apprehending them, knowing them, we can gain a glimpse of them by relating to

them through the modality of the commandments. We do not see them unveiled, but, rather, through the veil. Their light is partially revealed to us, and it illuminates and becomes a mirror of our own souls. And then, for an instant, we see the entire creation as a myriad shimmering mirrors of God. He is in His heaven, and the world is filled with His glory. The world is His glory. Then we must pray with the angels.

The central element of all Jewish prayer—that which in the legal texts is called simply “The Prayer”—is an ancient compilation of blessings, praises, and thanksgivings. Its verses are a perfect vehicle for the essence of prayer. They have served as such for thousands of years, and in their content they summon up and balance all parts of a person’s being: furthermore, they direct us so clearly and consciously toward the Most High.

In morning and afternoon services, when The Prayer is said publicly, it is read twice: first silently, by all participants, and then aloud, by the prayer-leader. And during this second reading there is an inclusion, a section that is regarded as the highest point of Jewish worship. In this section, called the “Sanctification,” humans join higher beings—whom we cannot see, whom we cannot hear—in a marvelous contrapuntal song of praise to the Most High.

Although there are different versions of the Sanctification, in its most common, formal structure, it is an antiphonal chant. It consists of an introduction and invocations that are chanted by the prayer leader, and three biblical

verses, derived from prophetic visions of angels, that are sung by the congregation.

The leader prompts and the participants echo the angels.

Leader:

We sanctify Your Name in the world even as they sanctify it in the highest heavens, as it is written by Your prophet: And they said to one another:

Congregation:

*Holy Holy Holy is the Lord of Hosts;
The whole earth is filled with His Glory!* (Isaiah 6:3)

Leader:

Those opposite them say
“Blessed”—

Congregation:

*Blessed be the Glory of the Lord from
His abode* (Ezekiel 3:12)

Leader:

And in Your Holy Scriptures it is written—

Congregation:

*The Lord reigns forever
Your God, O Zion, in all generations
Hallelu-yah* (Psalm 146:10)

The world shimmered with God’s glory this afternoon, and during the Sanctification I did pray with the angels. I did not see them, I could not hear them, but I joined them in singing the music of the spheres. They sang perfectly, and I, as usual, was out of tune. This is the cosmic symphony. I am still out of step, but I am part of the parade. ■

The Interior Image

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

The Indian *Śukranītisāra* praises the making of divine images in accordance with canonical prescription, and condemns the portrayal of human likenesses as “not heaven-ward leading.” The well-known Cambodian and Javanese practice of erecting statues of deified ancestors in the likeness of divine images is in perfect agreement with this pronouncement. There are numerous Indian votive bronze statuettes, which are specifically “portraits” of such and such a donor, and yet cannot be distinguished, or scarcely distinguished, from divine images; as well as others in which the intention to represent a human being is evident, but the facial expression is altogether that of a type, without individual peculiarities. On the other hand, in the dramatic literature, there is an abundance of detailed references to a secular art of portraiture in which a real likeness to the living subject was essential to the social, and largely erotic, purpose of the work.

It is quite evident, then, that in India we have to take account of two quite different kinds of portraiture, re-

spectively posthumous, hieratic, and ideal on the one hand, and taken from life, profane, and sentimental on the other. We shall find that there existed in Europe also a corresponding tradition of ideal portraiture, of which full account must be taken if we are to understand the underlying significance of facial expression in medieval Christian art. Before going on to the European sources, however, we shall refer to two other Indian texts in which a distinction is drawn between the appearance of the man on the one hand, and on the other the interior image of the very man invisible to the physical eye but accessible to the eye of contemplation. The relation between the outward appearance and the interior image is analogous to that between the aesthetic surfaces of an actual painting and “the picture that is not in colors” (*Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*).

A distinction between the looking-glass image and the veritable spiritual-essence of the man is sharply drawn in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, where the question is posed of the nature of the spiritual-essence, or very Self (*ātman*), in a



Two portraits of the Maori chieftain, Tupa Kupa: above, by an English artist; below, by himself.



dialogue between the Progenitor, the Angel Indra and the Titan Virocana. The Progenitor asks the two latter to adorn themselves as best they can, and to consider their reflection in a bowl of water. "What do you see?" "We see



ourselves just as we are, with all our adornments," they reply. "That is the spiritual-essence (*ātman*), that is the immortal, that is God," he tells them, meaning that what they see is a form in the image and likeness of the deity. Indra and Virocana, however, understand that the outward aspect and the spiritual essence of the man are one and the same thing, and they go away satisfied with this nothing-more-ish (*nāstika*) conclusion. The Progenitor watches them as they go, and remarks, "They have gone away without understanding, without having known the very Self. Whoever has such an understanding as theirs, whether Angel or Titan, must perish." Indra, however, is not finally satisfied, and returns for further instruction; he finally learns that this body (i.e., body with sensitive consciousness, or "soul")

is mortal and in the power of death, but that it is the "standing-ground" of the immortal spiritual-essence (*ātman*), the veritable knowing subject. It is, in fact, the whole burden of the Upaniṣads and Bhagavad Gītā to distinguish in this way



the Spirit from the body-and-soul, the Knower of the Field from the field itself; just as also in Christianity, "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, extending even unto the sundering of soul from spirit" (Heb. 4:12).

In the *Uttaratantra* of Maitreya, there is a Parable of the Painters, illustrating what is meant by the realization of the whole transcendent person of the Buddha (the whole painting) by means of a transformative constitution of all its parts (the various members of the painted representation): it is, then, a question of ideal portraiture and the likeness of a "mystical body." There can be little doubt, indeed, that the reference is to the occasion on which Rudrāyana desires a portrait of the Buddha, and summons his court painters, who, however, are

unable to "grasp" the Buddha's likeness; and the Buddha then projects his "outline" or "shadow" on the canvas, instructing the painters to fill it in with colors. We cite now the *Uttaratantra* passage from Obermiller's version in *Acta Orientalia*:

Suppose there were some painters,
Skillful in painting various parts of the body,
And each of them, knowing his own special
member,
Would not be able to paint the rest.

Suppose then a mighty king would bid to
them—
On this cloth ye all must draw my
portrait—
And hand the cloth to them with this
commandment.
And the painters having heard his word,
Would start their work of painting.

Suppose again, of these painters engaged in
the work,
One should go abroad and, owing to his
absence,
Their number being incomplete, the portrait
Could not be accomplished in all its parts.

The painters who are meant here
Are Charity, Morals, Patience, and the rest,
And that which is the highest point of
excellence,
The essence of all relative entities—this is the
picture.

"The picture that is not in colors," to
repeat our citation from the *Lankavatāra*
Sūtra.

We are now in a position to consider the European parallels. The fundamental distinction between the outward appearance and inward reality of the enlightened, and in this case specifically initiated Hermes (who is really no more than the Buddha or Christ in the last analysis merely this or that man but the Universal Man and *forma humanitatis*) is made in the *Corpus Hermeticum* in a dialogue between Hermes and his son Asclepius, who is himself about to be, but has not yet been, "born again." Hermes denies that Asclepius, who is actually looking at his father, can really see him. He says:

I see that by God's mercy there has come to be in me a form which is not fashioned out of matter. . . . I am not now the man I was; I have been born again in Mind, and the bodily shape which was mine before has been put away from me. I am no longer an object colored and tangible; a thing of spatial dimensions; I am now alien to all this, and to all that you perceive when you gaze with bodily eyesight. To such eyes as yours, my son, I am not now visible.

The whole point of view is similar to that of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* cited above, where in the same way a sharp distinction is made between the spiritually essential *person* and the empirical *ego*: and it is significant that the as yet unregenerated Asclepius fails to recognize his own father in this spiritual image of which he speaks.

Porphyry tells us that Plotinus refused to allow his portrait to be made, objecting: "Is it not enough to carry about this image in which nature has enclosed us? Do you really think I must also consent to leave, as a desirable spectacle to posterity, an image of the image?"

When now in John 14:9 Christ says, "He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father," it is very evident that in the same way "Me" does not mean the outward and physically visible and tangible man Jesus whom all men could see with their bodily eyes, but rather that spiritual essence of which he speaks when he also says, "I and my Father are one."

We come next to a long but very significant passage in the Apocryphal *Acts of John*. Here Lycomedes, who has just been raised from the dead by the mediation of John, summons his friend, a skillful painter, that he may "possess him (John) in a portrait." Unknown to John, the painter makes an outline, and on the next day filling it with colors, presents the portrait to Lycomedes, who "set it up in his own bedchamber and hung it with garlands," and spent much time with it. John now, who has never seen himself in a mirror, goes into the chamber and sees there "the portrait of an old man crowned with garlands, and lamps and altars set before it." He asks what all this means: "Can it be one of thy gods that is painted here? for I see that thou art still living in heathen fashion." Lycomedes answers, "My only

God is he who raised me up from death with my wife: but if, next to that God, it is right that men who have benefited us should be called gods—it is thou, father, whom I have had painted in that portrait, whom I crown and love and reverence as having become my good guide." Then Lycomedes brings him a mirror:

And when he had seen himself in the mirror and looked earnestly at the portrait, he said: As the Lord Jesus Christ liveth, the portrait is like me: yet not like me, child, but like my fleshly image; for if this painter, who hath imitated this my face, desireth to draw the very me in a portrait, he will be at a loss needing more than the colors that are now given to thee, and boards and plaster and glue and the position of my shape, and old age and youth and all things that are seen with the eye.

But do thou become for me a good painter, Lycomedes. Thou hast colors, which he giveth thee through me, who painteth all of us for himself, even Jesus, who knoweth the shapes and appearances and postures and dispositions and types of our souls. And the colors wherewith I bid thee paint are these: faith in God, knowledge, godly fear, friendship, communion, meekness, kindness, brotherly love, purity, simplicity, tranquillity, fearlessness, grieflessness, sobriety, and the whole band of colors that painteth the likeness of thy soul, and even now raiseth up thy members that were cast down, and levelleth them that were lifted up, and tendeth thy bruises, and healeth thy wounds, and ordereth thine hair that was disarranged, and washeth thy face, and chasteneth thine eyes, and purgeth thy bow-

els, and emptieth thy belly, and cutteth off that which is beneath it; and in a word, when the whole company and mingling of such colors is come together, into thy soul, it shall present it to our Lord Jesus Christ undaunted, whole, and firm of shape. But this that thou has now done is childish and imperfect: thou hast drawn a dead likeness of the dead.



It is unmistakably the same point of view that we find again in Eckhart, who remarks that “Any face thrown on a mirror is, willy-nilly, imaged therein. But its nature does not appear in the looking-glass image: only the mouth, nose and eyes, just the features, are seen in the mirror,” and again, “My looks are not my nature, they are the accidents of nature.”; “According to philosophers, to make a portrait of a man one must not copy Conrad nor yet Henry. For if it be like Conrad or like Henry it will not recall the man, but will remind one of Conrad or Henry . . . given the knowledge and the art, one could do Conrad to the life, the very image of him. Now God both will and can: he made thee like unto himself, the very image of himself”: “If I paint my likeness on the wall, he who sees the like-

ness is not seeing me; but anyone who sees *me* sees my likeness and not my likeness merely but my child”; for “the more and the more clearly God’s image shows in man the more evidently God is born in him. And by God’s eternal birth in him we understand that his image stands fully revealed.” Nor is this mere-



ly a matter of human representation: “The most trivial thing perceived in God, a flower for example as espied in God, would be a thing more perfect than the universe”: “any flea as it is in God is nobler than the highest of the angels in himself.” And finally, “Creatures all come into my mind and are rational in me. I alone prepare all creatures to return to God . . . I alone take all creatures out of their sense and make them one in me”—that is to say in that human nature that has nothing to do with time. ■

Adapted from “The Traditional Conception of Ideal Portraiture,” *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy. (New York: Dover Publications, 1957.)

Jeremy

JACQUES LUSSEYRAN

Translated by Noelle Oxenhandler



The first man on my path is an old man. And you cannot imagine how happy this makes me.

I do not know if there is a greater blessing than to encounter a true old person, that is, one who is joyous. It is a blessing which is rarely given to us, because for most, alas, age is nothing but the blank and degrading addition of physical years. But when an old person is joyful, he is so strong that he no longer needs to speak: he comes and he heals. The one who fills my memory is like this. His name is Jeremy Regard.

It is not I who give him this name. It was his. How many novelists would like to have invented it?

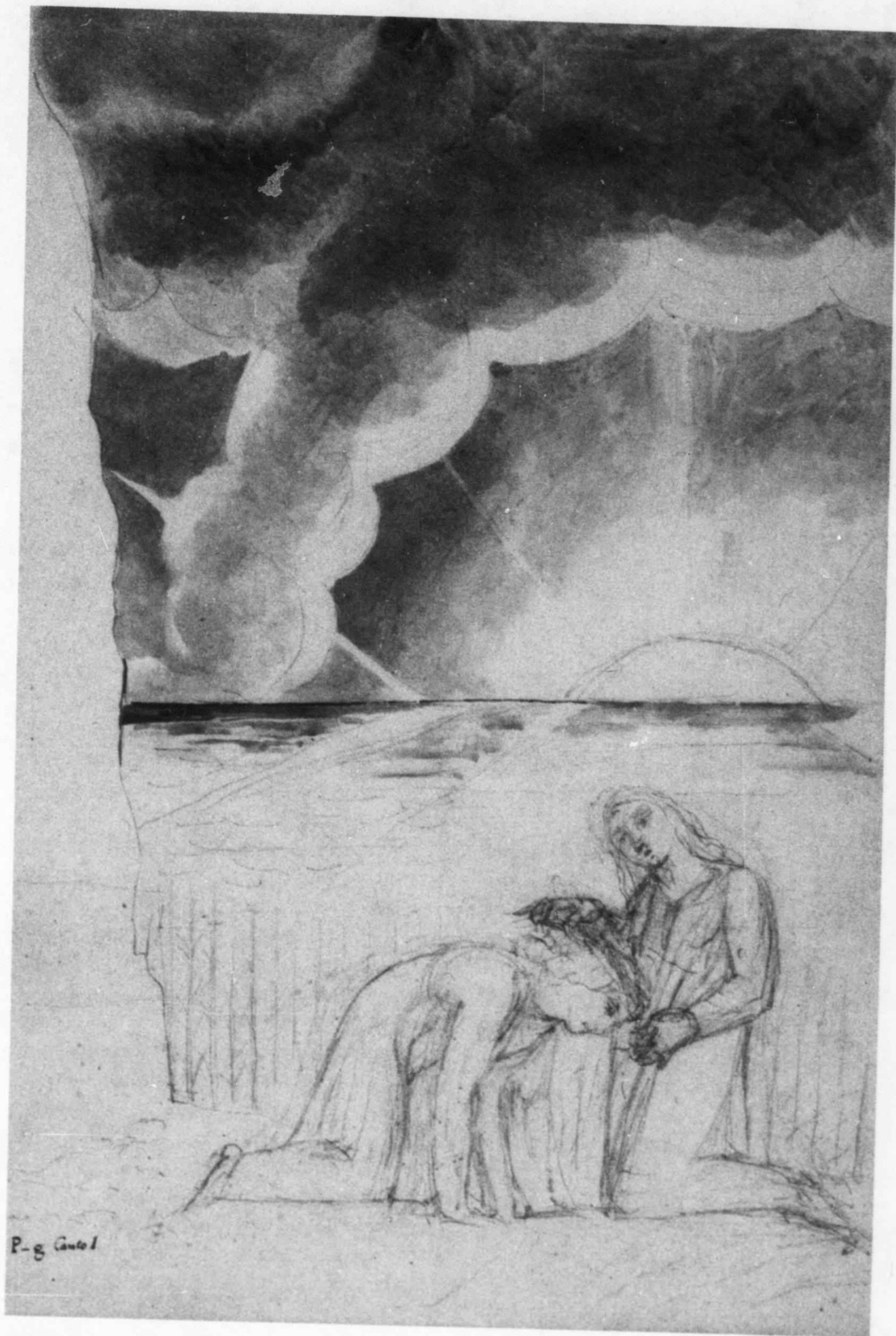
I would like to be very modest, you know, in describing him, because he was so great and yet seemed it so little. He made such a brief passage through

my life—only a few weeks—that I can no longer remember his body. I vaguely perceive a man who is vigorous, straight, thickset. Yes, a small man, according to physical measurements. As for his face, I can't see it. I think that I never asked myself any questions about his face, even then. I saw another which was much more real.*

I met him in January 1944, in the midst of the war, in Germany, when I was in a concentration camp at age nineteen. He was one of the six thousand French who arrived in Buchenwald between the 22nd and 26th of January. But he was unlike any other.

Here I must stop for a moment, because I have written the word "Buch-

*Jacques Lusseyran was blinded in a school accident at the age of eight.—Ed.



Dante and Virgil Again Beholding the Sun as They Issue from Hell. William Blake.

enwald." I will often be writing of it. But do not expect a picture of the horrors of the deportation. These horrors were real, and they are not pleasant to talk about. To have the right to speak about them, it would be necessary to be a healer—and not just of the body. I will content myself then with the indispensable, the basic scenario.

Sometimes I will even speak of the deportation in a manner which is scandalous for some, I mean paradoxical: I will say in what it was good, I will show what riches it contained.

If I come back to it sometimes, it is because it stands at the very entrance of my life, an attic bursting with pains and joys, with questions and answers.

Jeremy did not speak of the concentration camps either, even when he was there. He did not have his gaze nailed to the smoke from the crematorium, nor on the twelve hundred terrified prisoners of Block 57. He was looking through.

At first I didn't know who he was—people spoke to me of "Socrates."

My neighbors, who were very numerous, pronounced this name which was utterly unexpected in the swarming fear and cold in which we tossed. "Socrates said . . .," "Socrates laughed. . . ." Socrates was over there, a little further, on the other side of this crowd of closely shaven men. I did not understand why all these people called one person out of everyone Socrates. But I wished to meet him.

Finally one day I saw him—that is, I must have seen him, for to tell the truth, I have no memory of the first meeting.

I know only that I was expecting an eloquent reasoner, a clever metaphysician, some sort of triumphant moral philosopher. That is not at all what I found.

He was a simple welder from a small village at the foot of the Jura mountains. He had come to Buchenwald for reasons which had so little to do

with the essential that I never knew them or asked about them.

His name was not Socrates, as you already know, but Jeremy, and I didn't understand why this name wasn't enough for his companions.

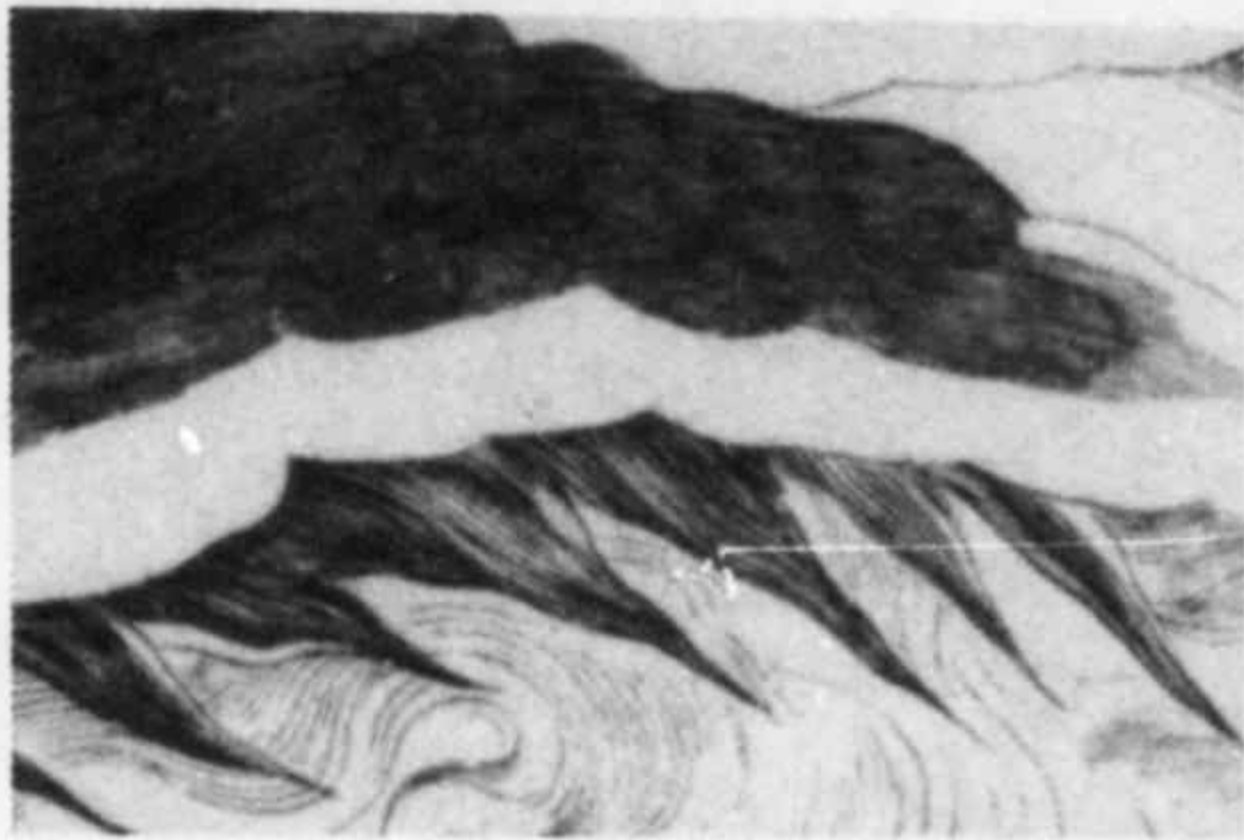
Jeremy's tale was that of a welder from a particular part of the world, a village in France. He loved to tell it with broad smiles. He told it very simply, as any tradesman talks about his trade. And here and there one could just barely glimpse a second forge standing there, a forge of the spirit.

Yes, I said "spiritual." However, the word has been spoiled by overuse. But this time it is true and full.

I heard Jeremy speak of men who did not come to his shop just for their horses and their wagons but for themselves. They came so as to go home all steeled and new, to take home a little of the life they were lacking and which they found overflowing, shining and gentle at the forge of father Jeremy.

At this time I was a student. I had hardly ever experienced such men, they do not fill the universities. I thought that when a man possessed wisdom, he immediately said it, and said how and why and according to which affiliation of thought. Especially, I thought that in order to be wise, it was necessary to think, and to think rigorously.

I stood with my mouth open before Jeremy because he didn't think. He told stories, almost always the same, he shook your shoulders, he seemed to be addressing invisible beings through you. He always had his nose smack in the obvious, the close-at-hand. If he spoke about the happiness of a neighbor upon leaving his shop, it was as if he spoke about a wart, a bump, which had just been removed. He observed things of the spirit with his eyes, as doctors observe microbes through their microscopes. He made no distinction. And the more I saw him do this, the more the weight of the air diminished for me.



I have encountered startling beings, beings whose gestures and words so dazzled that in their presence one had to lower one's eyes. Jeremy was not startling. Not a bit! He wasn't there to stir us up.

It was not curiosity which impelled me toward him. I needed him as a man who is dying of thirst needs water. Like all important things, this was elemental.

I see Jeremy walking through our barracks. A space formed itself among us. He stopped somewhere and, all at once, men pressed in tighter, yet still leaving him a little place in their midst. This was a completely instinctive movement which one cannot explain simply by respect. We drew back rather as one steps back to leave a place for one who is working.

You must picture that we were more than a thousand men in this barracks, a thousand where four hundred would have been uncomfortable. Imagine that we were all afraid, profoundly and immediately. Do not think of us as individuals, but as a protoplasmic mass. In fact, we were glued to one another. The only movements we made were pushing, clutching, pulling apart, twisting. Now you will better understand the marvel (so as not to say "miracle") of this small distance, this circle of

space with which Jeremy remained surrounded.

He was not frightening, he was not austere, he was not even eloquent. But he was there, and that was tangible. You felt it as you feel a hand on the shoulder, a hand which summons, which brings you back to yourself when you were about to disappear.

Each time he appeared, the air became breathable: I got a breath of life smack in the face. This was perhaps not a miracle, but it was at least a very great act, and one of which he alone was capable. Jeremy's walk across the quad was that: a breathing. In my memory I can follow distinctly the path of light and clarity which he made through the crowd.

I didn't understand then who he was, but certainly I saw him. And this image began to work inside me until the moment it lit up like a torch. I didn't know who he was because he didn't say.

He had a story which he came back to often: it belonged, he belonged, to the Christian Scientist sect. He had even been to America once to meet his fellow Christian Scientists. This adventure, quite out of the ordinary for a welder from the Jura, intrigued but did not enlighten me. It gave another layer of mystery to his character. That was all. Jeremy, without stories, mattered.

Is it necessary to apologize for using so many images which are linked to simple acts: to eating, to breathing? If I were tempted to do so, Jeremy would prohibit me. He knew too well that one does not live on ideas.

He was a truly manual man. He knew that at Buchenwald we would not live on the ideas which we had of Buchenwald. He said this; he even said that many of us would die from them. Alas, he was not mistaken.

I knew there were men who died because people had killed them. For them there was nothing left to do but to pray. But I also knew many who died

very quickly, like flies, because they thought they were in hell. It was of such matters that Jeremy spoke.

It was necessary for there to be a man as simple, as clear, who had gone to the depths of reality, in order to see the fire and beyond the fire. More than hope was needed.

It was necessary to see.

The good man Jeremy saw. There was a spectacle before his eyes, but it was not the one we saw. It was not our Buchenwald, that of the victims. It was not a prison, that is to say, a place of hunger, blows, death, protest, where other men, the evil ones, had committed the crime of putting us. For him, there were not us, the innocents, and the oth-

beings, as there existed in him, a rightness and wholeness so perfect that their way of seeing communicates itself, is given to you, for at least an instant. And the silence then is truer, more exact, than any words.

When Jeremy came to us across Block 57, in the midst of his little halo of space, it was clarity which he gave to us. It was an overflowing of vision, a new vision. And that is why we all made way for him.

Above all, do not imagine that Jeremy consoled us. At the point we had reached, any consolation would have been mere romance, a taunting nursery story. We were not in the land of Cockaigne, and if we had been crazy enough



The Pit of Disease: The Falsifiers

er, the big anonymous Other with the tormenting voice and the whip—"The brute."

How did I know? You have the right to ask: after all, Jeremy said almost nothing about such things. Well, without a doubt, there exist in certain

to think so for one second, waking up afterward would have been bitter indeed. Jeremy spoke hard. But he did so gently.

There was no trace of glibness about him. He had a mellow voice, precise and deliberate gestures, but this was the hab-

it of his craft, a natural tranquillity. He was a good fellow, I'm telling you, not a prophet.

Jeremy was so little a prophet, he created so little uproar, that I don't know how many, among the dozen men who survived those days of Winter 1944 in Barrack 57, remember him today. I would so much like not to be the only one.

One didn't notice anything special about Jeremy, no sign. He carried the banner of no faith, except from time to time that of Christian Science. But at this time, for me, and for the other Frenchmen around me, this word had only a bizarre resonance.

One went to Jeremy as toward a spring. One didn't ask oneself why. One didn't think about it. In this ocean of rage and suffering there was this island: a man who didn't shout, who asked no one for help, who was sufficient unto himself.

A man who did not dream: that was more important than anything. The rest of us were dreamers: we dreamed of women, of children, of houses, often of the very miseries of other times which we had the weakness to call "liberty." We weren't at Buchenwald. We didn't want anything to do with Buchenwald. And each time we came back it was there just the same, and it hurt.



Jeremy was not disappointed. Why would he have dreamed? When we saw

him coming with his immense serenity, we felt like shouting, "Close your eyes! What one sees here burns!" But the shout remained in our throats because, from all evidence, his eyes were solidly fixed on all our miseries and did not blink. Even more, he did not seem like someone who takes a great burden upon himself, the air of a hero. He was not afraid, and that just as naturally as we were afraid.

"For one who knows how to see, things are just as they always are," he said. At first I did not understand. I even felt something quite close to indignation. What? Buchenwald like ordinary life? Impossible. All of these crazed, hideous men, the howling menace of death, these enemies everywhere, among the S.S., among the prisoners themselves, this wedge of hell pushed up against the sky, thick with smoke, with its seven circles, and over there across the forest, the electric fences, all of this was just as usual! I remember that I could not accept this. It had to be worse—or if not—then more beautiful. Until finally Jeremy enabled me to see.

It was not a revelation, a flashing discovery of the truth. I don't think there was even an exchange of words. But one day it became obvious, palpable to me in the flesh, that Jeremy, the welder, had lent me his eyes.

With those eyes, I saw that Buchenwald was not unique, not even privileged to be one of the places of greatest human suffering. I also saw that our camp was not in Germany, as we thought, in the heart of the Thuringe, dominating the plain of Iena, in this precise place and in no other. Jeremy taught me, with his eyes, that Buchenwald was in each one of us, baked and rebaked, tended incessantly, nurtured in a horrible way. And that consequently we could vanquish it, if we desired to with enough force.

"As always," Jeremy explained to himself sometimes. He had always seen



The Blasphemers

people living in fear and in the most invincible of all fears: that which has no object. He had seen them all desire secretly and above all else one thing: to do harm to themselves. It was always, it was here, the same spectacle. Simply, the conditions had finally been completely fulfilled. The war, Nazism, the political and national follies had created a masterpiece, a perfect sickness and misery: a concentration camp.

For us, of course, this was the first time. Jeremy had no use for our surprise. He said that it was not honest and that it did us harm.

He said that in ordinary life, with good eyes, we would have seen the same horrors. We had managed to be happy before. Well! The Nazis had given us a terrible microscope: the camp. This was not a reason to stop living.

Jeremy was an example: he found joy in the midst of Block 57. He found it during moments of the day where we found only fear. And he found it in such

great abundance that when he was present we felt it rise in us. Inexplicable sensation, incredible even, there where we were: joy was going to fill us.

Imagine this gift which Jeremy gave us! We did not understand, but we thanked him, time and again.

What joy? Here are explanations, but they are feeble: the joy of being alive in this moment, in the next, each time we became aware of it. The joy of feeling the lives of others, of some others at least, against us, in the dark of night. What do I know? Isn't that enough for you?

It was much more than enough for us. It was a pardon, a reprieve, there, all of a sudden, just a few feet from hell. I knew this state through Jeremy. Others knew it also, I am sure.

The joy of discovering that joy exists, that it is in us, just exactly as life is, without conditions and which no condition, even the worst, can kill.

All of this, you will say, came from

Jeremy because he was lucid. I didn't say that he was lucid—this quality belongs to intelligence and, in the world of intelligence, Jeremy was not at home. I said that he saw. I have spoken of him as a living prayer.

Subtle people will pretend that the faith of Jeremy was without nuances. Who cares! For him, and for us through him, the world was saved in each second. This benediction had no end. And, when it ceased, it was that we had ceased wanting it, that we—and not it—had ceased being joyful.



These are not great words. And if nonetheless you have that impression, then it is that I am clumsy. Jeremy was an ordinary man. Ordinary and supernatural, that's it.

One could very well live next to him for weeks and not see him, and speak only of "an old guy not like the others." He was not a spectacle in the manner of heroes or street hawkers.

What was supernatural in him, from all evidence, didn't belong to him; it was meant to be shared. The spectacle, if it existed, was for us to find and

to find within ourselves. I have the clearest memory of finding it. I perceived, one day like the others, a little place where I did not shiver, where I had no shame, where the death-dealers were only phantoms, where life no longer depended on the presence of the camp or on its absence. I owed it to Jeremy.

I have carried this man in my memories as one carries an image with one because it has been blessed.

And now, how has he disappeared? I hardly know. Without a sound, in any case, just as he came.

One day, someone told me that he had died. This must have been several weeks after our arrival in the camp.

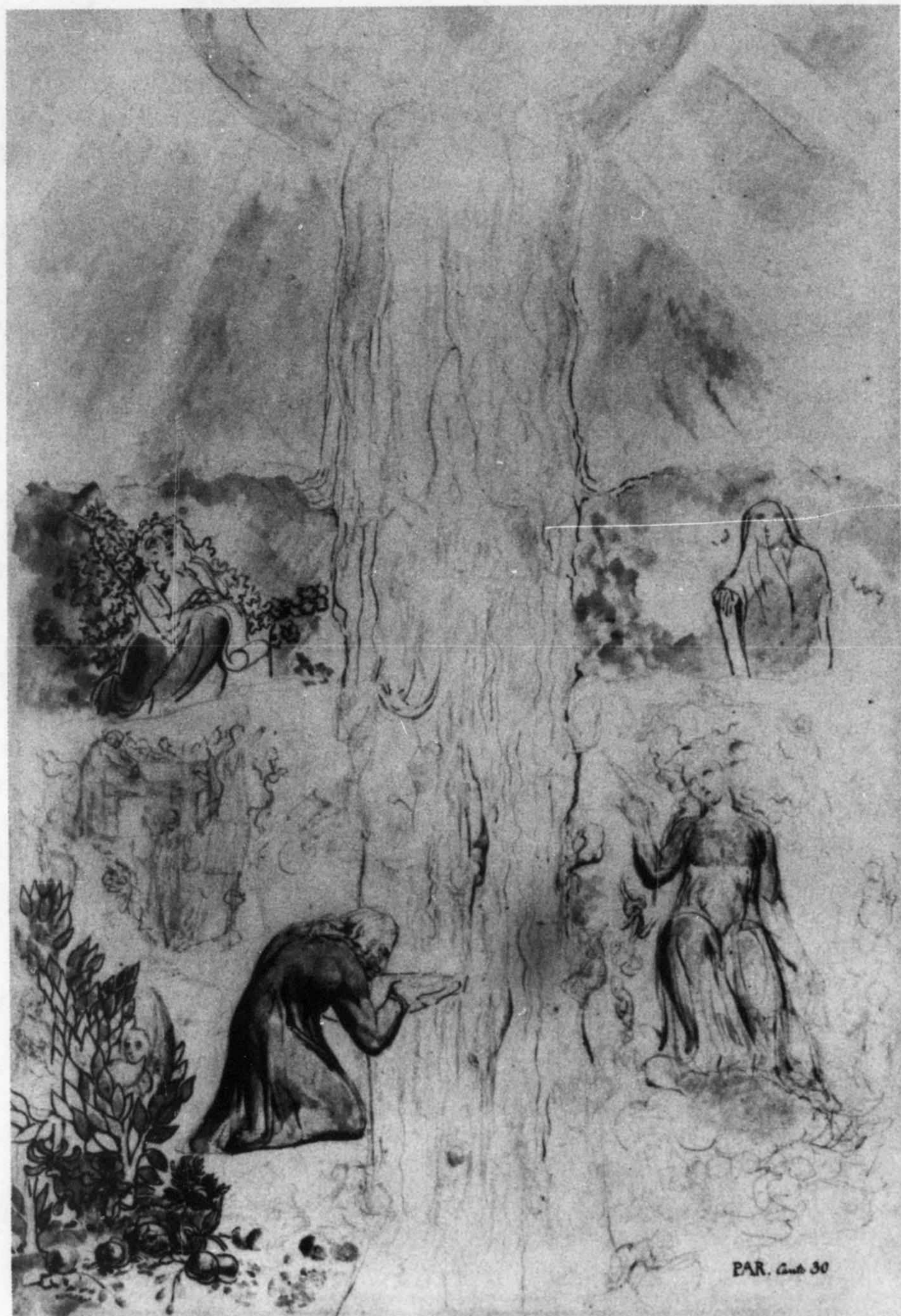
Men went like this there. One almost never knew how. They disappeared in too great numbers all at once: no one had either the time or the inclination to look into the details, the "how" of their death. We let them melt into the mass. There was a solid ground of death in which we all participated more or less, we who were alive. The death of others was so much our own affair that we didn't have the courage to look it in the face.

I do not know the "how" of Jeremy's departure. I remember only that he came to see me, several days earlier, and told me that it was the last time. Not at all in the way one announced an unhappy event, not so solemnly. Simply—this was the last time, and since it was thus he had come to tell me.

I don't think this caused me pain. It must not have been painful. Indeed it was not, because it was real and known.

He had been of service. He had the right to leave this world which he had completely lived.

I am well aware that people will say to me, "What do you see of the supernatural in your welder? He gave you an example of serenity, at a time when serenity was very difficult to attain. That's good, but that's all. This peace



Dante in the Empyrean, Drinking at the River of Light

of Jeremy was the result of courage and a strong constitution.”

Well, no! We will not have done with Jeremy for that price.

What I call the supernatural in him was the break with habits which he had completely realized. Those habits of judgment which make us call any adversity “unhappiness” or “evil,” those of

greed which make us hate, desire vengeance, or simply complain—a minor but incontestable form of hatred—those of our dizzying egocentricity which make us think that we are innocent each time we suffer. He had escaped from the network of compulsive reflexes, and it was this necessary movement which neither good health—or even perfect health, if

such exists—can explain.

He had touched the very depth of himself and liberated the supernatural or, if this word bothers you, the essential, that which does not depend on any circumstance, which can exist in all places and in any time, in pain, as in pleasure. He had encountered the very source of life. If I have used the word "supernatural," it is because the act of Jeremy sums up to me the religious act itself: the discovery that God is there, in each person, to the same degree, completely in each moment, and that a return can be made toward Him.

This was the good news which Jeremy told, in his turn, and in his very humble manner.

We would all gain a lot by putting memory in quarantine.

The petty memory, at least, the stingy, encumbering memory which makes us believe in this unreality, this myth: the past.

It is this which suddenly brings back—without a shadow of reason—a person, or the shred of an event which then installs itself in us. The image throws itself on the screen of consciousness; it swells, soon there is nothing else but it. The mind's circulation stops. The present disperses. The moments which follow no longer have the force to carry us. They no longer have any flavor. In short, this memory secretes melancholy, regret, all manner of inner complication.

Fortunately, there is the other memory. For me, it is the one to which Jeremy belongs.

This man haunts me, I confess. But he does not haunt me in the manner of a memory. Simply, he has entered into my flesh, he nourishes me, he works to make me live. I spend very little time thinking about him: one could say it is he who thinks of me.

To speak to you of him, I have had to allude to Buchenwald. But do not be misled: Jeremy was never "at Buchen-

wald." I encountered him there in flesh and blood. He wore a registration number. Others beside myself knew him. But he was not there in the particular, exclusive, individual manner in which we hear the phrase "to have been at Buchenwald."

This adventure of the camp was for him only an adventure: it did not concern him in a fundamental way.

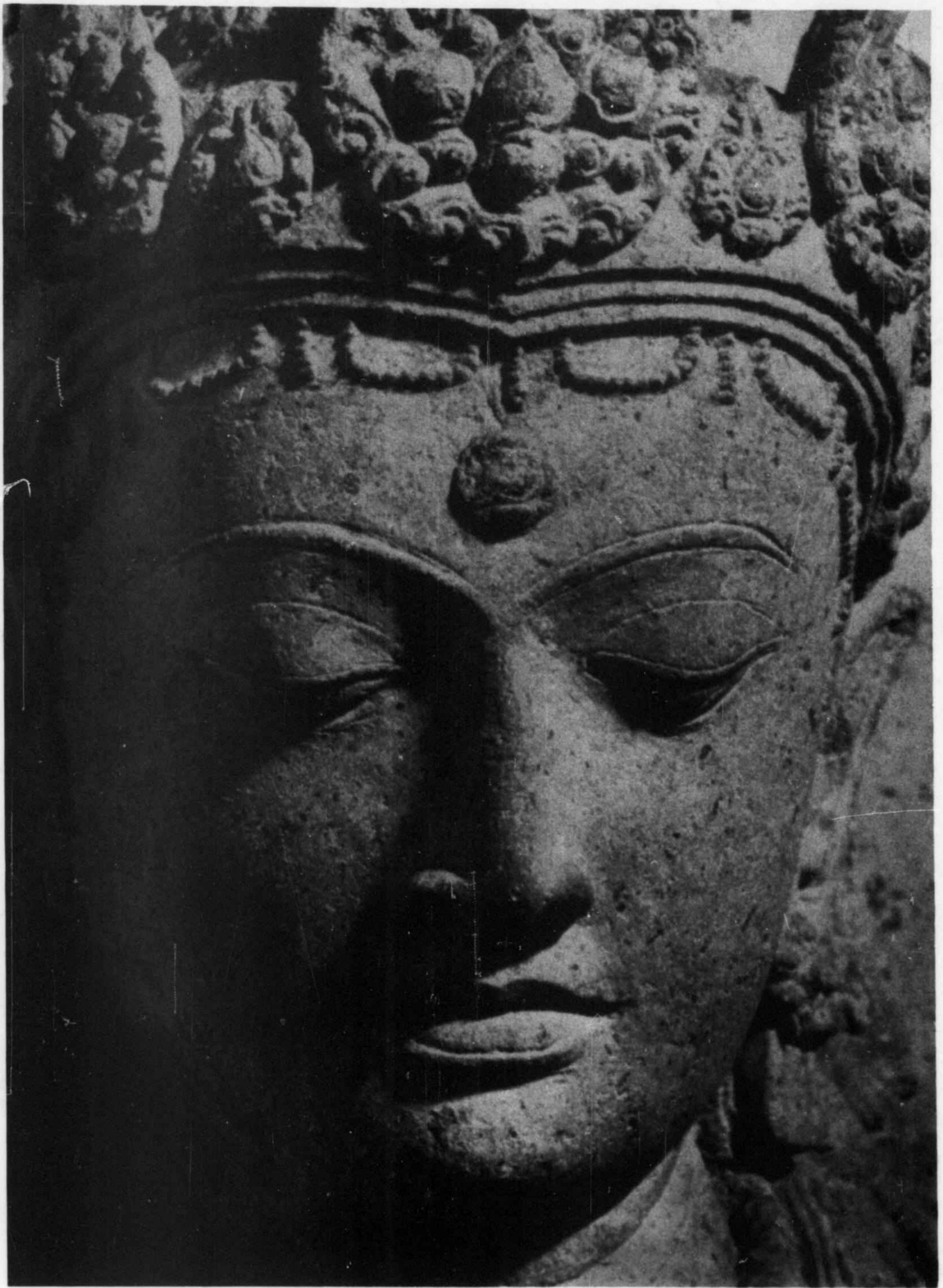
There are people whom I remember only in letting the "little memory" function in me. These people, if I encountered them there, remain there. Jeremy, when he speaks to me, does not do so from out of my past, but from the depths of my present, there, right in the center. I cannot move him.

They are all this way, the people who have taught us something. Because this something, this knowledge, this increase of *presence* in life, they give to us only because they clearly know that they are not the owners. Imagine Jeremy happy as it happens to others to be happy: for personal reasons, due to a history different from that of others, precious and subtle. Do you think that he would still be in my life?

He would have rejoined those picturesque characters, passing figures. But Jeremy was not happy: he was joyous. The good which he enjoyed was not his. Or rather, it was—but by participation. It was just as much ours.

This is the mystery and power of those beings who serve something other than their own provisional personalities: one cannot escape them. ■

Translated from *Le monde commence aujourd'hui* by Jacques Lusseyran. © Éditions de la Table Ronde, Paris, 1959.



Nirvana Is Samsara

P.L. TRAVERS

Did you look back, O Prajnaparamita, as the strand
Sloped to its foamy edge to greet you
And your foot felt for its sandy landfall—
Did you look back and know, hand hard at your lip,
The journey needless;
That from there, looking back across the laboring
waters—
Arrival mirroring the setting-forth—
This is the Other Shore?

Reflection

Marie-Louise von Franz

The “momentary flashes of consciousness” we recall when we look back on our childhood have usually grown together in adults into a more or less continuous field of ego-consciousness. But still earlier, before these momentary flashes were consciously recognized as inner experience, they existed as preconscious components of human existence and expressed themselves mainly in unconscious action. Jung surmised that the unconscious impulses to ritual actions, in comparison with the teachings and theories formulated in myths or in religious systems, were practiced at an earlier date and were the precursors of the latter. He observed, for example, that the African natives on Mount Elgon spit on their hands at sunrise and held them out to the sun without “knowing” that this action has a

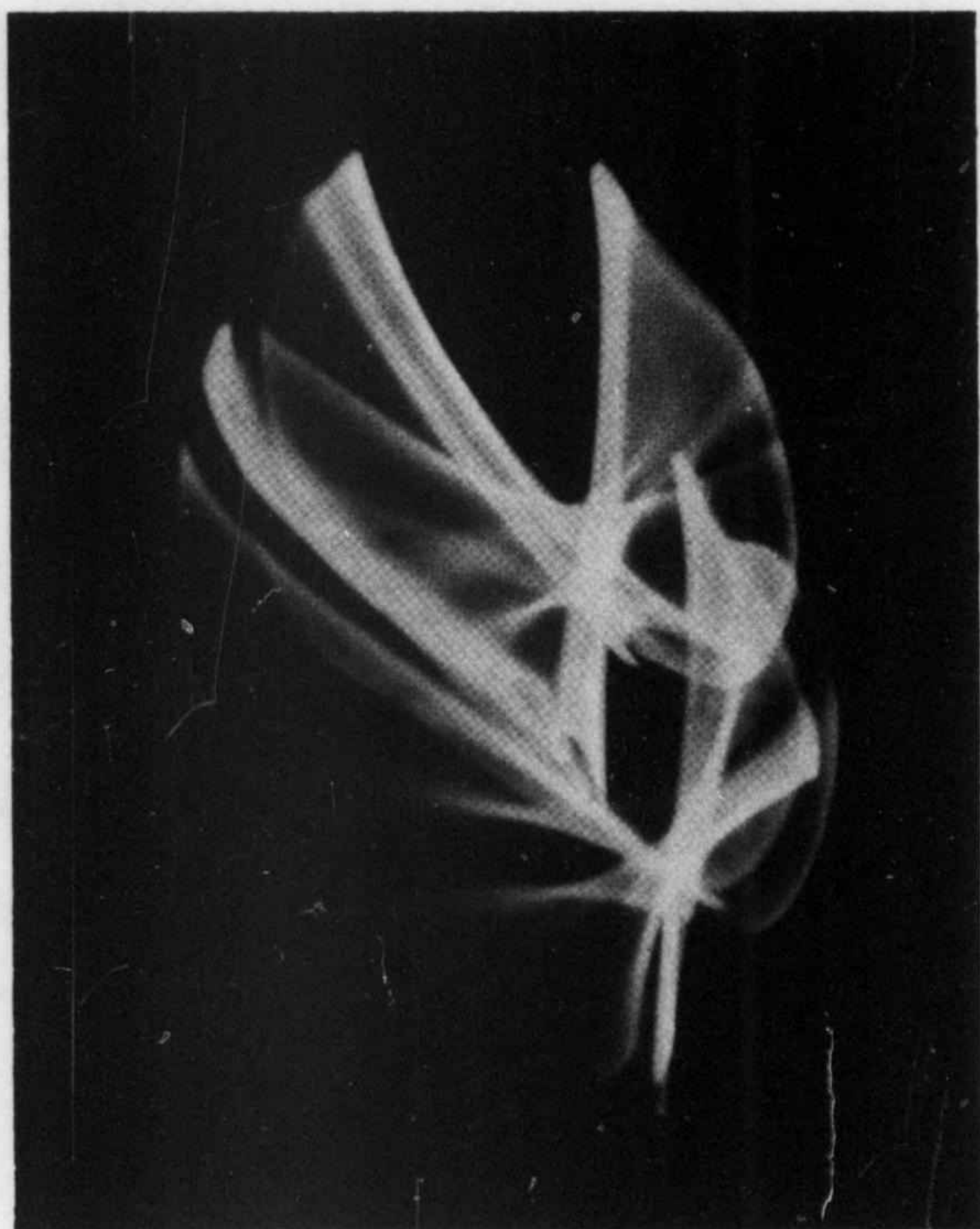


meaning. "They had always done this." Seen in the light of today's psychological knowledge of symbols this gesture means: "Oh, God, I offer up my soul to Thee"—but, as we have just said, the deed precedes the word by a considerable period of time.

The same law prevails in respect to the "momentary flashes of consciousness." They, too, were originally represented in symbolic form and given a ritual application in the shape of glittering small stones or other shiny, mirror-like objects to which were ascribed the power to drive away spirits. Whoever remembers these "momentary flashes of consciousness" from his own early childhood will know that they are always connected with strongly emotional states. This emotion is at its peak at the moment of the "flash" and usually sub-

sides at the same time. It is as if the brief light of consciousness broke up the stifling obsessive emotion. Objects that "reflect" can therefore drive away spirits; the reflection calms the affect or the excited state. That is why when Perseus killed Medusa, the sight of whom turned people into stone, he did not look directly at her but instead took his aim with the help of a mirror. He could thereby protect himself from being overcome by emotion; rigidity is caused by an excess of strong emotion, as is shown in the catatonia of schizophrenics.

Perhaps it is worthwhile in this connection to take a look at the concept of reflection in physics. All light, as we know, is produced by the motion of electrons, either spontaneously, as when an electron changes its energy level in the atom, or when it is set in motion through the impact of a photon. In the second case reflection and transmission result. Neither of these events can take place, however, unless the electron has a certain freedom of motion and is not too firmly held in its atom. Normally, when light hits the electrons held at a certain energy level in a single atom, the energy of the light can be absorbed by the energy of the electron. If, however, the atoms are held tightly together in a kind of crystalline lattice-structure, it can happen that electrons are able to move about freely inside the lattice and are no longer bound to *one* atom. In this situation the electron does not absorb the light energy but radiates it back. Viewed as a physical phenomenon, therefore, reflection depends on the presence of certain atomic lattice-structures. The fact of the matter is that although the larger groupings, the atoms, are mathematically held together more tightly and with more force than usual, certain electrons have precisely for this reason more freedom of motion. Miraculously, as it would seem, the possibility of reflection in the unconscious area of the psyche is connected with an unknown factor that



reveals itself on the threshold of consciousness, in dreams and in spontaneous fantasies, as a crystalline mathematical structure, namely, the symbol of the mandala. That psychic center which is represented by the mandala itself and which, as we know, Jung has called the Self is, when it represents *reflected* wholeness, very often symbolized by mathematical structures mostly of quaternary subdivisions and is often illustrated by the symbol of the crystal.

For primordial man the phenomenon of mirrors and mirroring had the quality of a miracle; for him the mirrored image was a reality in its own right. *Spiegel*, the German word for "mirror," is cognate with the Latin word *speculum* and goes back to the Old High German *scukar*, "shadow-holder," from *skuwo*, "shadow," and *kar*, "vessel." In Old Indian, a mirror was thought of as a "self-seer" or as "seer of Doppelgängers." The mirrored image was regarded as shadow or as Doppelgänger, that is, as an image of the soul, and the mirror therefore possessed great magical significance; it was an instru-

ment for becoming objectively conscious of one's soul by means of reflection, in the literal sense of the word.

Mircea Eliade has collected abundant documentation on the part played by shiny or glittering objects as protection against psychic dissolution by evil spirits. In his book on shamanism, wherein he discusses the initiation rites of shamans and medicine men of innumerable peoples, he describes a ritual in which the novice's entrails are symbolically extracted, cleaned, and replaced by small shiny stones and glittering chips that give him magic power over the spirits. Crystals themselves often have the same function of subservient spirits; they mirror events on earth or reveal what is going on in the soul of a sick person.

In many places mirrors are used as a defense against the evil eye of both human beings and of spirits, because it was thought that mirrors throw the harmful "rays" back upon their source. In Spain, in Tripoli, and generally in China, mirrors are used for this purpose. A similar purpose is served by "fear masks," that is, revoltingly evil-looking distorted

faces that show the demon in his own image, from which he flees in terror.

Reflecting objects have thus had, from time immemorial, a numinous significance for human beings. The oldest experience of a reflecting object may well have been that of the surface of water. In what follows I am relying principally on the excellent book by Martin Ninck, *Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten*.

Ninck shows that in the world of antiquity water was always thought of as chthonic, as having sprung from the earth, and that it was always associated with what he calls "night conditions" or "night-states" of the soul: intoxication, dream, trance, unconsciousness, and death. These states were all connected with the mystery of watery depths.

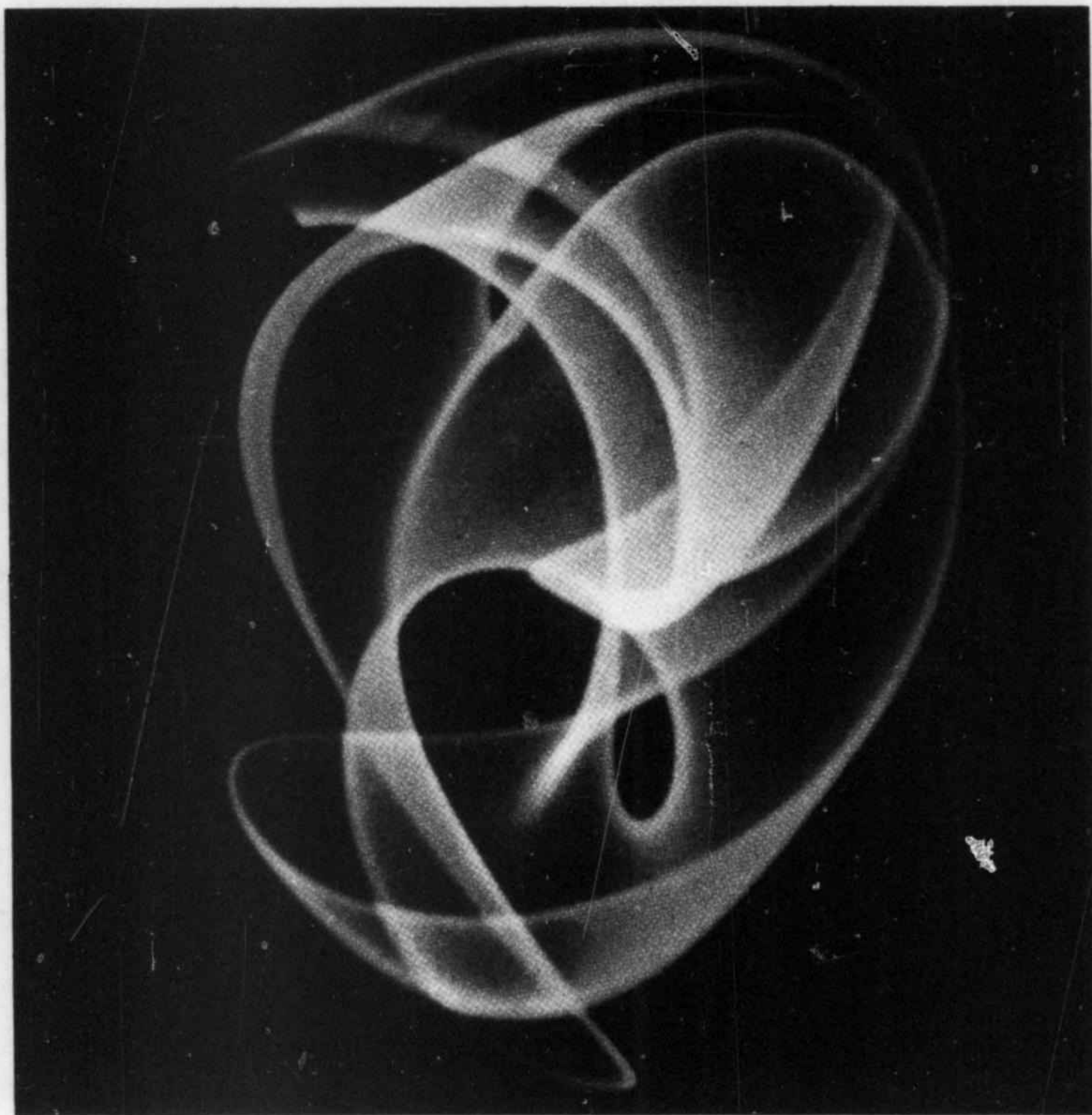
Psychologically, water is one of the most frequent symbols of the unconscious, and hence the depths of the water were thought of in many places as the source of all prophecy and of use in seeing phenomena from the "Beyond." The great gods with knowledge of the future—Nereus, Proteus, Thetis, and, in the Germanic tradition, Mimir—are all water divinities. In the water one can see one's own shadow, one's Doppelgänger, one's soul-image, separate and objective, and also the disembodied outlines of the dead and of gods. The custom of obtaining secret information by staring into a vessel of water, the so-called *hydromantia*, is therefore practiced throughout the world. In the Middle Ages, in our own cultural tradition, burning candles were placed around a circular vessel filled with water and the demon was evoked; the spirit answered with images on the water's surface (*imagines aquae impressae*). In ancient Patras (Greece) a form of magic was practiced that combined both mirror and reflecting water. A mirror attached to a thread was lowered into a well to the

water's surface and its reflection indicated whether a sick person would recover or die; in Lycian Kyenai, on the other hand, the same thing was seen directly in the reflecting surface of the water of the well. In European folk magic the use of an "earth-mirror" was widespread. A box was filled with earth, a glass disc was laid on it, and this disc reflected what was sought. In some places the magic power was imparted to the mirror by leaving the disc for three days and three nights on the face of the buried corpse of a woman who had died in childbirth. The association of earth and death with the prophetic powers of water and mirror is especially important in this connection. In Virgil, Aeneas receives the final prophecies just as he is about to descend through the lake of Avernus into the kingdom of the dead.

Closely related to the water-mirror is the dream oracle, which is also often sent by water divinities. The unceasing transformation of the dream images is like a subterranean current, whose gods can likewise change without cease.

The symbolization of the unconscious by water with its mirrorlike surface is of course based in the final analysis on a projection. Nevertheless, the analogies are astonishingly meaningful. Just as we cannot "see" into the depths of the waters, so the deeper areas of the unconscious are also invisible to us; we can draw only indirect conclusions about them. But on the surface, on the threshold area between consciousness and the unconscious, dream images appear spontaneously, not only seeming to give us information about the depths but also *mirroring* our conscious personality, although not in identical form, but rather in a more or less altered form. The mirroring is always by way of the symbolic *image* that has a place in both worlds.

The "mirroring" surface of the unconscious, manifested in dream images,



shows us another, often compensatory image of ourselves that seems to have been perceived by another kind of sight or by another person.

What strikes us as strange or curious, however, is that the phenomenon of *consciousness*, which is to us almost completely mysterious, *likewise possesses a kind of mirroring quality*; one need only recall the theories and explanations of modern scientists on the nature of "material" phenomena in the external world. In the last analysis they are nothing but mirrorings, or imaginative, mental, ordered reconstructions of the external world in another medium, namely, the human mind. The roots and the basic structure of these imaginative ideas that reconstruct the external world indeed lie in the unconscious, but they are distilled, purified, altered, and given the form in which they are presented at any given moment by the observations, reflections, and formulations of the researcher's ego-consciousness. Even when we attempt, through indirect conclusions, to know not the external world but the nature of the objective psyche,

that is, of the unconscious, we mirror it in our ego-consciousness. And, finally, a certain mirror-image relation seems to exist between the unconscious and matter, and this relation is today still filled with riddles.

In the case of these mirrorings there is no longer any question of a disturbance of adaptation to inner or outer realities. This question is contained only by implication, insofar as the suspicion exists that every psychic model-image we make of inner or outer facts or sets of facts *could* turn out, in the course of evolution, to be inadequate and merely "subjective," even though at first it serves as an adequate instrument in the attempt to grasp "objective" reality. For *this* aspect of projection, therefore, I use the term *mirroring*, which Jung also often used, for the sake of clarity.

We must therefore look more closely at *four* mirror relations: the mirroring of the ego by the Self, the mirroring of the Self by the ego, the mirroring of matter by the collective unconscious, and the possible mirroring of the latter in matter.

The mirroring of the ego by the Self, the center of the unconscious and of the whole psyche, has already been mentioned. We can discover in every dream how our conscious behavior is "objectively" mirrored and how a glimpse of the Self is thus mediated from an Archimedean point outside ego-consciousness, a glimpse that we could not otherwise have obtained. *What we see in the mirror held up to us by the Self is hence the only source of genuine self-knowledge; everything else is only narcissistic rumination of the ego about itself.*

Not only is the ego of the empirical human being mirrored in the act of self-knowledge, but also the Self is then first brought from its state of potentiality into realization by virtue of the fact that it is mirrored in the ego, that is, it is recognized. It is only from the standpoint of the Self that the ego can be seen as object and, vice versa, that the ego can obtain in every dream, for example, a clearer notion of the nature and existence of what it is looking at. Therefore when the ego follows the signals given in dreams, it is helping the Self attain realization in time and space. It is then "mirroring" the Self by lifting it out of its unconscious, merely potential existence into the clarity of ego-consciousness. So, in a certain sense, we can say that even the Self can become aware of itself only with the help of the ego, only in ego-consciousness, which is the mirror.

Paradoxically, the Self is the "other" in one's own inner world and yet again it is also only the ego. The following dream of a pastor's son was an anxiety dream that had been recurrent for many years until the man's late forties. He dreamed that he was walking through a vast wasteland. He heard steps behind him. Anxiously he walked faster, but the steps too became more rapid. He began to run, the terror still behind him. Then he came to the edge of a deep abyss and had to stand still. He

looked down: deep, deep down, thousands of miles below he saw hell-fire burning. He looked around him and saw—or rather sensed in the dark—a demonic face. Later on, the dream recurred exactly as before, except that instead of a demon the dreamer saw the face of God. And when he was almost fifty years old he had the same dream for the last time. But this time panicky fear drove him and he jumped over the edge of the abyss into the depths below. As he fell, thousands of little square white cards floated downward with him from above. On each card, in black and white, a different mandala had been drawn. The cards floated together into a kind of floor, so that he did not fall into hell but found a firm landing about half-way down. Then he looked back, upward to the edge of the abyss; there he saw—*his own face!* The pursuer in the dream is the Self, which appears first as "the uncanny," then as God, then as the dreamer himself. In the final dream, which evidently brought with it the solution, since it did not recur, the similarity of ego and Self, one the mirror-image of the other, is underscored.

In Zen Buddhist meditation the master tries to teach his pupil how he can forever keep the inner mirror free of dust. To the extent that he lives in complete accord with the rhythm of psychic energy and with its regulator, the Self, he looks at reality without illusion. He lives in the creative current or stream of the Self and has himself, indeed, become part of this stream. ■

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From *The Annotated Alice*

MARTIN GARDNER



"Now, if you'll only attend, Kitty, and not talk so much, I'll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass—that's just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way."⁴

4. The looking-glass theme seems to have been a late addition to the story. We have the word of Alice Liddell that a good part of the book was based on chess tales that Carroll told the Liddell girls at a time when they were learning excitedly how to play the game. It was not until 1868 that another Alice, Carroll's distant cousin Alice Raikes, played a role in suggesting the mirror motif. This is how she told the story in the *London Times*, January 22, 1932:

As children, we lived in Onslow Square and used to play in the garden behind the

houses. Charles Dodgson used to stay with an old uncle there, and walk up and down, his hands behind him, on the strip of lawn. One day, hearing my name, he called me to him saying, "So you are another Alice. I'm very fond of Alices. Would you like to come and see something which is rather puzzling?" We followed him into his house which opened, as ours did, upon the garden, into a room full of furniture with a tall mirror standing across one corner.

"Now," he said, giving me an orange, "first tell me which hand you have got that in." "The right," I said. "Now," he said, "go and stand before that glass, and tell me which hand the little girl you see there has got it in." After some perplexed contemplation, I said, "The left hand." "Exactly," he said, "and how do you explain that?" I couldn't explain it, but seeing that some solution was expected, I ventured, "If I was on the *other* side of the glass, wouldn't the orange still be in my right hand?" I can remember his laugh. "Well done, little Alice," he said. "The best answer I've had yet."

I heard no more then, but in after years was told that he said that had given him his first idea for *Through the Looking-Glass*, a copy of which, together with each of his other books, he regularly sent me.

In a mirror all asymmetrical objects (objects not superposable on their mirror images) "go the other way." There are many references in the book to such left-right reversals. Tweedledee and Tweedledum are mirror-image twins; the White Knight sings of squeezing a right foot into a left shoe; and it may not be accidental that there are several references to corkscrews, for the helix is an asymmetric structure with distinct right and left forms. If we extend the mirror-reflection theme to include the reversal

of any asymmetric relation, we hit upon a note which dominates the entire story.

It would take too much space to list here all the instances, but the following examples make the point. To approach the Red Queen, Alice walks backward; in the railway carriage the Guard tells her she is traveling the wrong way; the King has two messengers, "one to come, and one to go." The White Queen explains the advantages of living backward in time; the looking-glass cake is handed around first, then sliced. Odd and even numbers, the combinatorial equivalent of left and right, are worked into the story at several points (e.g., the White Queen requests jam every other day). In a sense, nonsense itself is a sanity-insanity inversion. The ordinary world is turned upside down and backward; it becomes a world in which things go every way except the way they are supposed to.

Inversion themes occur, of course, throughout all of Carroll's nonsense writing. In the first *Alice* book Alice wonders if cats eat bats or bats eat cats, and she is told that to say what she means is not the same as meaning what she says. When she eats the left side of the mushroom, she grows large; the right side has the reverse effect. These changes in size, which take place so often in the first book, are in themselves reversals (e.g., instead of a large girl and a small puppy we have a large puppy and a small girl). In *Sylvie and Bruno* we learn about "imponderal," an anti-gravity wool that can be stuffed into parcel-post packages to make them weigh less than nothing; a watch that reverses time; black light; Fortunatus's purse, a projective plane with outside inside and inside outside. We learn that E-V-I-L is simply L-I-V-E backward.

In real life also Carroll milked the notion of inversion as much as he could

to amuse his child-friends. One of his letters speaks of a doll whose right hand becomes "left" when the left hand drops off; another letter tells how he sometimes goes to bed so soon after getting up that he finds himself back in bed *before* he gets up. He wrote letters in mirror writing that had to be held to a mirror to be read. He wrote letters that had to be read by starting at the last word and reading to the first. He had a collection of music boxes and one of his favorite stunts was to play them backward. He drew funny pictures that changed to different pictures when you turned them upside down.

Even in serious moments Carroll's mind, like that of the White Knight, seemed to function best when he was seeing things upside down. He invented a new method of multiplication in which the multiplier is written backward and *above* the multiplicand. *The Hunting of the Snark*, he tells us, was actually composed backward. The final line, "For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see," came into his head as a sudden inspiration, then he fashioned a stanza to fit the line and finally a poem to fit the stanza.

Closely related to Carroll's inversion humor is his humor of logical contradiction. The Red Queen knows of a hill so large that, compared to it, this hill is a valley; dry biscuits are eaten to quench thirst; a messenger whispers by shouting; Alice runs as fast as she can to stay in the same place. It is not surprising to learn that Carroll was fond of the Irish bull, of which logical contradiction is the essence. He once wrote to his sister: "Please analyze logically the following piece of reasoning: *Little Girl*: 'I'm so glad I don't like asparagus.' *Friend*: 'Why, my dear?' *Little Girl*: 'Because if I *did* like it, I should have to eat it—and I can't bear it!'" One of Carroll's acquaintances recalled hearing him speak about a friend he knew whose feet were



so big that he had to put his trousers on over his head.

Treating a "null class" (a set with no members) as though it were an existing thing is another rich source of Carrollian logical nonsense. The March Hare offers Alice some nonexistent wine; Alice wonders where the flame of a candle is when the candle is not burning; the map in *The Hunting of the Snark* is "a perfect and absolute blank"; the King of Hearts thinks it unusual to write letters to nobody, and the White King compliments Alice on having keen enough eyesight to see nobody at a great distance down the road.

Why was Carroll's humor so interwoven with logical twists of these sorts? We shall not enter here into the question of whether Carroll's interest in logic and mathematics is a sufficient explanation, or whether there were unconscious compulsions that made it necessary for him to be forever warping and stretching, compressing and inverting, reversing and distorting the familiar world. Surely the thesis advanced by Florence Becker Lennon in her other-

wise admirable biography *Victoria Through the Looking Glass* is hardly adequate. She argues that Carroll was born left-handed but forced to use his right hand, and that "he took revenge by doing a little reversing himself." Unfortunately there is only the flimsiest, most unconvincing evidence that Carroll was born left-handed. Even if true, it seems a woefully inadequate explanation for the origin of Carrollian nonsense.

"How would you like to live in Looking-glass House, Kitty? I wonder if they'd give you milk in there? Perhaps Looking-glass milk isn't good to drink."⁵

5. Alice's speculation about looking-glass milk has a significance greater than Carroll suspected. It was not until several years after the publication of *Through the Looking-Glass* that stereochemistry found positive evidence that organic substances had an asymmetric arrangement of atoms. Isomers are substances that have



molecules composed of exactly the same atoms, but with these atoms linked together in structures that are topologically quite different. Stereoisomers are isomers that are identical even in topological structure, but, owing to the asymmetric nature of this structure, they come in mirror-image pairs. Most substances that occur in living organisms are stereoisomeric. Sugar is a common example: in right-handed form it is called dextrose, in left-handed form, levulose. Because the intake of food involves complicated chemical reactions between asymmetric food and asymmetric substances in the body, there often are marked differences in the taste, smell, and digestibility of left- and right-handed forms of the same organic substance. No laboratory or cow has yet produced reversed milk, but if the asymmetric structure of ordinary milk were to be reflected, it is a safe bet that this looking-glass milk would *not* be good to drink.

In this judgment on looking-glass milk only a reversal of the structure by which the milk's atoms are linked to each other is considered. Of course a true

mirror reflection of milk would also reverse the structure of the elementary particles themselves. In 1957 two Chinese-American physicists, Tsung Dao Lee and Chen Ning Yang, received the Nobel Prize for theoretical work that led to the "gay and wonderful discovery" (in Robert Oppenheimer's happy phrase) that some elementary particles are asymmetric. It now appears likely that particles and their antiparticles (that is, identical particles with opposite charges) are, like stereoisomers, nothing more than mirror-image forms of the same structure. If this is true, then looking-glass milk would be composed of "anti-matter," which would not even be drinkable by Alice; both milk and Alice would explode as soon as they came in contact. Of course an anti-Alice, on the other side of the looking-glass, would find anti-milk as tasty and nourishing as usual. ■

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Through a Glass Darkly

D.M. DOOLING

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him," declares the first chapter of the first book of our scriptures, and for ages past the saints and the philosophers have pondered this concept. Plato taught that the world is a reflection of the ideas in the mind of God; St. Bonaventure called the human spirit a "sullied mirror" in which the divine can shine.

How can this be understood? Mankind seems far from the likeness of any god we would wish to worship, and our life in the world hardly reflects divinity. If there is a relation, let alone a resemblance, between us and the consciousness that created us, we tend to disclaim it and to draw a hard line between that divinity and our humanity, justifying the weaknesses common to us all as "human nature" and therefore excusable if not positively praiseworthy. But if mankind was made in God's image, the very essence of humanity must reflect, in some way, deity; and again we come to the question: how can we look at this?

The first mirror must have been still water. Let us suppose that the Creator, moving over the face of the waters in the newly begotten light, saw His image and loved it, and the love brought to life a being to reflect it. But a wind, which

He also made, sprang up and ruffled the surface of the water, and a sea creature—again, of His own creation—rose up from the depths below and broke it up into separating waves. Certainly the face of the mirror in which humanity reflects its maker is more than "sullied," as St. Bonaventure calls it; it would seem to be shattered, or so distorted that the image is not recognizable. Yet it was there; and if stillness and clarity could be restored to the mirror's surface, the human being might be able to recognize itself for what it is.

What is human nature really made of? What is it that rules our impulses? We consider these impulses as parts of our nature itself, instead of its results, and rarely think of them specifically as either weaknesses or virtues, because they seem simply to be there and are common to us all. They have unquestioned power over us, and we can't blame them on each other or ourselves; they are a part of our make-up as humans. Perhaps it is the *direction* of their force that we could question: where do they take us, and what in us do they serve? If these impulses are of divine origin, why should they make us weaker and more miserable, instead of strengthening us in a return to the divine, unless

some kind of dislocation has taken place, a deflection of a holy energy rather than a reflection of it?

We fall in love, for instance. This

certainly is a common human experience, and one that arouses many emotions and sensations, among them a feeling that is undeniably keen, fine, and powerful. We come to know that it will not last long: inevitably, the lover comes



Photograph by Helen Butfield



Photograph by Helen Butfield

to the realization that the glowing image of the loved one bears small resemblance to the real person. However fine and truly lovable, it is not the same person with whom one fell in love, and the

feeling of the relationship is entirely changed—if not into dislike or indifference, to quite another sort of affection. The original feeling disappears; but we cannot deny that it contained something

true and something of value. If the glass had not been distorted, what could this feeling have reflected? We can't define it; but there are certain moments, even in some dreams, when we know a feeling of comparable purity and intensity, which is mysteriously not directed toward another person. There is no "loved one," and yet there is a beloved, and this beloved is unknown, different and yet indistinguishable from myself. I am *in love*, part of it, contained in it—for a split, but unforgettable, second.

What of the strong impulse in human nature which is the desire, I would even say the need, to have a function, a place, a usefulness in the scheme of things? This seems wholly reasonable and right, a social virtue in fact, and if it is lacking in someone we consider that person deficient, irresponsible at best, perhaps even a good-for-nothing. And as social beings, we may be quite right in that judgment. But however worthy this desire may be, it does in fact make for depression and despair in the physically incapacitated, and increases the suicide rate in those who have "outlived their usefulness," as we put it, or who have through any circumstances lost their footing in the world of action. But reflected without distortion, the desire to be useful is the recognition of relationship, of being a part of Indra's net; it may even illumine a more inward potential relation and the central responsibility of serving it. In any case it has little to do (or here again only as another "reflection") with the world of action, or with "place" and "function" as outer situations. This relationship is the whole reason for being of the inner life, and is not dependent on age or physical

competence, but on a quality of thinking and feeling that is relatively free from outer concerns, that is intimately and essentially *oneself*, and that calls in its turn for a quality of attention and awareness that can open a passageway for a true exchange with other people. The deflecting mirror throws all attempts at exchange outward; ordinary human relationships are based on external actions and placings, and reactions to their twisted images. From this angle it is impossible for people to understand each other.

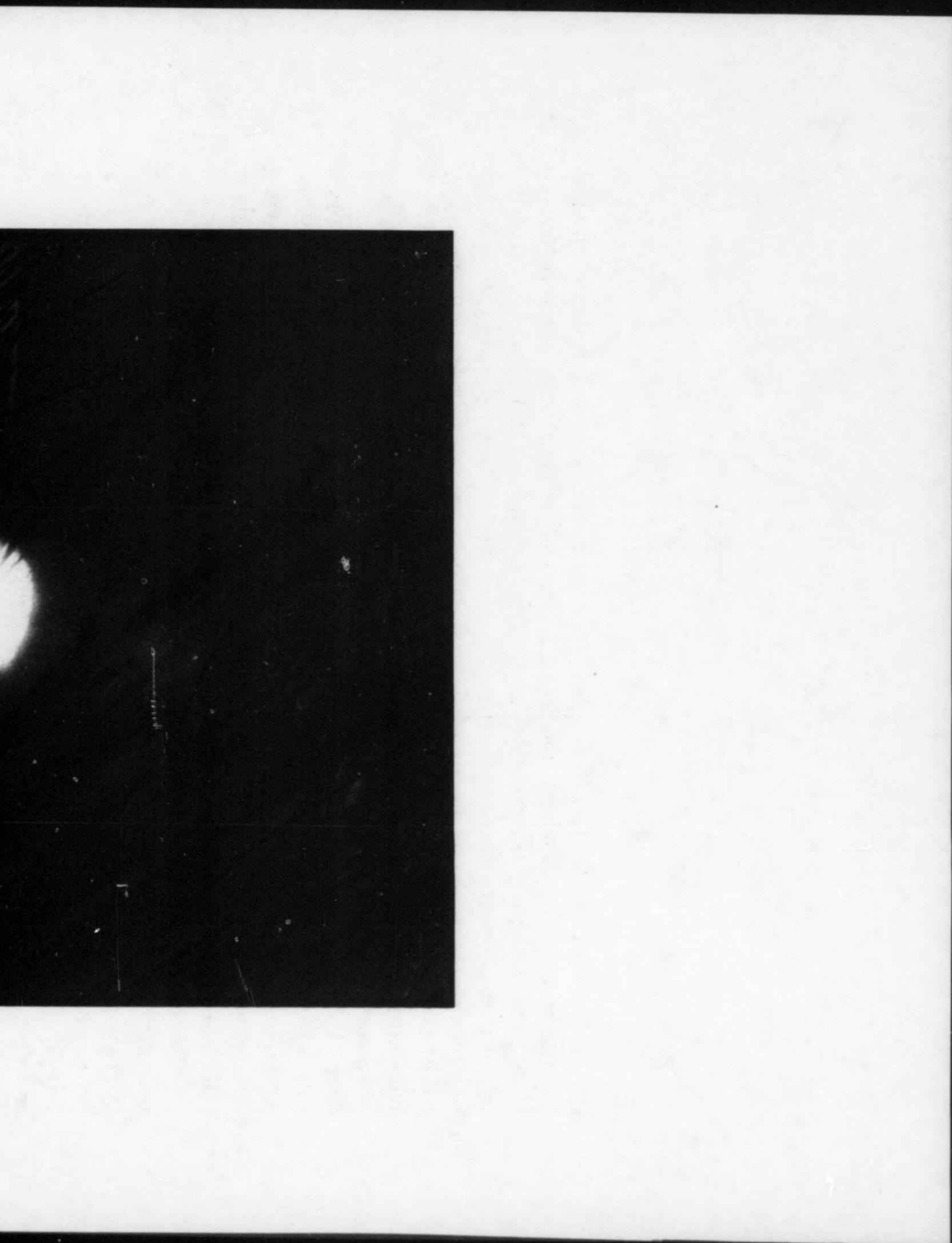
There is evidently a flaw in the glass causing the deflection which sends the image out instead of directly back to its source; and this "flaw" is not far to seek. It can be seen very clearly in the example of falling in love. In this experience, the first discovery of the ideal brings a feeling—briefly—of the fullness of joy. For a few moments, it is enough to feel this, enough to love; this is plenitude; my cup runneth over. But very soon, it is no longer enough; I must feel that *I* am discovered, that the other finds me the fulfillment of *his* dreams also (even if I am guiltily aware that I am no such thing); and even if this demand is apparently satisfied, the joy is no longer pure. Other demands arise, and I have already lost the rapture and the vision, whether I am aware of it or not, because the distorting ego has entered and brought down to its own level a totally real perception of divinity which the other person, for an instant, was able to reflect. For a moment I saw the image of God, but I mistook the face in the mirror for reality, the point-

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Photograph by Helen Buttfield



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ing finger for the moon—as we do in all the glimpses that our “human nature” gives us of the great image it reflects. We are deluded by the pictures of our own fears into fears of the pictures themselves. But there is a real fear, a holy fear which the externalizing images too often prevent us (and protect us) from feeling; the fear of the certain loss, not of physical life and possessions, but of the real life of the inner, unrealized Self. There is reality behind all our images; our longings have a legitimate origin whose reflection has somehow become warped. It is true that we need, and are needed; there’s a real center where we belong, behind our childish clinging to hearth and home; and surely, a real guilt that is only obscured by what we call the guilt feelings of our fancied subjection to other humans, which our therapists have to work so hard to rid us of.

We may call this distortion the ego, or that which claims the external, the body, and the physical world, as the *I* and *mine*, and puts its values, as well as its responsibilities and blames, outside itself, on the shoulders of others—like the giant in the fairy tale who wears his life in an amulet around his neck instead of inside his own body. Every ray of light is reflected through this ego-ripple in the surface of the pond of human consciousness, and every more or less clear reflection is shattered by the emergence of the creature from the depths.

Yet the Lord God made them all: the human being seeking itself, the wind-driven ripples, and the animals of

the deep. Are they all, then, also in His image?

The Iroquois tell a story of how the Peace-Bringer, when he came to convert the people from war, climbed on the roof of a house where The-Man-Who-Eats-People lived, and looked down the smoke-hole. The-Man-Who-Eats-People had a pot boiling on the fire, making soup out of the cut-up body of one of his victims, and the face of the Peace-Bringer was reflected in its surface. The-Man-Who-Eats-People saw it as his own reflection, and he was astonished by the nobility he saw in it. “That is my face,” he said to himself, “and it is not the face of a man who kills others and eats their flesh,” and he took the pot of cooking meat and emptied it outside. Then the Peace-Bringer came and met him and The-Man-Who-Eats-People became Hiawatha the hero, and from that moment onward he and the Peace-Bringer worked together as one.

On a less heroic scale, I also once had an experience of seeing my “own” face. In a moment of total self-disgust, in a situation of great personal stress, I looked in the mirror with anger and scorn, as if to accuse the culprit. I also was surprised by what I saw. It was not the face of a wretch or a fool that looked back at me; it was simply someone looking in a mirror—like me, a reflection. What we were both looking at, at that moment—what perhaps we almost saw—was the mirror itself. ■

ARCS

A Wondrous Affinity

What a strange thing a mirror is! and what a wondrous affinity exists between it and a man's imagination! For this room of mine, as I beheld it in the glass, is the same, and yet not the same. It is not the mere representation of the room I live in, but it looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I like. All its commonness has disappeared. The mirror has lifted it out of the region of fact into the realm of art; and the very representing of it to me has clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome . . . I should like to live in *that* room if I could only get into it.¹

George MacDonald

There is glass in the window and in the mirror, but in the mirror the glass is covered with a little silver; now lo and behold, no sooner is a little silver added than you cease to see others and see only yourself.²

S. Ansky

Hamlet: Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.³

William Shakespeare



Every Roman was surrounded by slaves. The slave and his psychology flooded ancient Italy, and every Roman became inwardly, and of course unwittingly, a slave. Because living constantly in the atmosphere of slaves, he became infected through the unconscious with their psychology. No one can shield himself from such an influence.⁴

C.G. Jung

If a man loves Brahman with an exclusive and steadfast devotion, he becomes Brahman. By thinking of nothing but the wasp, the cockroach is turned into a wasp.⁵

Sankaracharya

The mirror presented by the external world
is of little or no value
unless the mirror of our soul
has been cleaned and polished.

Therefore, man of God,
first exercise yourself in remorse of conscience
before you raise your eyes
to the rays of Wisdom reflected in its mirrors,
lest perhaps from gazing upon these rays
you fall into a deeper pit of darkness.⁶

St. Bonaventure

Prayer takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest, and enables us to see the world in the mirror of the holy. For when we betake ourselves to the extreme opposite of the ego, we can behold a situation from the aspect of God.⁷

Abraham Joshua Heschel

I peered
 into the mirror
 of my beloved
gave witness as myself
 about the self
 to my self.
I looked closer:
 was there someone
 reflected
in my eye?
I was alone.
I saw myself in me.⁸

Awḥaduddīn Kirmānī

Their idols are silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
They have mouths, but they speak not:
Eyes have they, but they see not:
They have ears, but they hear not:
Noses have they, but they smell not:
They have hands, but they handle not:
Feet have they, but they walk not:
Neither speak they through their throat.
They that make them are like unto them;
So is everyone that trusteth in them.

From the 115th Psalm



Rabbi Yose the Galilean says: Whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, created in the world, He created in man. A parable: to what may this be likened? If one takes a wooden tablet and tries to draw many forms, he is hard put to it because he has no room to make the drawings; but he who draws on the earth can go on drawing many forms and spread them out.

But the Holy One, blessed be He—may His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity!—in His wisdom and understanding created the whole world, created the heavens and the earth, the beings on high and those down below, and formed in man whatever He created in His world:

He created forests in the world and He created forests in man: to wit, man's hair.

He created evil beasts in the world and He created evil beasts in man: to wit, the vermin in man;

He created channels in the world and He created channels in man: to wit, man's ears;

He created a wind in the world and He created a wind in man: to wit, man's breath;

A sun in the world and a sun in man: to wit, man's forehead;

Salt water in the world and salt water in man: to wit, man's tears;

Streams in the world and streams in man: to wit, man's urine;

Kings in the world and a king in man: to wit, man's heart;

Trees in the world and trees in man: to wit, man's bones;

Hills in the world and hills in man: to wit, man's buttocks;

Horses in the world and horses in man; to wit, man's legs;

Mountains and valleys in the world and mountains and valleys in man: erect, he is like a mountain; recumbent, he is like a valley.

Thus thou dost learn that whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world, He created in man.⁹

The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan

Then the Chamberlain, having tested them, opened the door; and as he drew aside a hundred curtains, one after the other, a new world beyond the veil was revealed. Now was the light of lights manifested, and all of them sat down on the masnad, the seat of the Majesty and Glory. They were given a writing which they were told to read through; and reading this, and pondering, they were able to understand their state. When they were completely at peace and detached from all things they became aware that the Simurgh was there with them, and a new life began for them in the Simurgh. All that they had done previously was washed away. The sun of majesty sent forth his rays, and in the reflection of each other's faces these thirty birds (si-murgh) of the outer world, contemplated the face of the Simurgh of the inner world. This so astonished them that they did not know if they were still themselves or if they had become the Simurgh. At last, in a state of contemplation, they realized that they were the Simurgh and that the Simurgh was the thirty birds. When they gazed at the Simurgh they saw that it was truly the Simurgh who was there, and when they turned their eyes towards themselves they saw that they themselves were the Simurgh. And perceiving both at once, themselves and Him, they realized that they and the Simurgh were one and the same being. No one in the world has ever heard of anything to equal it.

Then they gave themselves up to meditation, and after a little they asked the Simurgh, without the use of tongues, to reveal to them the secret of the mystery of the unity and plurality of beings. The Simurgh, also without speaking, made this reply: "The sun of my majesty is a mirror. He who sees himself therein sees his soul and his body, and sees them completely. Since you have come as thirty birds, si-murgh, you will see thirty birds in this mirror. If forty or fifty were to come, it would be the same. Although you are not completely changed you see yourselves as you were before."¹⁰

Attar



Given the creation by God of a complete universe, it is a basic assumption that everything is interconnected. One can see something like that by looking at drops of water; one sees reflections, smaller ones and bigger ones, like in a house of mirrors; the same thing, the same nature, reflected in different ways. It follows that if I would know perfectly, completely, entirely, one part, then I would know the whole.¹¹

Adin Steinsaltz

The hierarchy of being is ranged in a series of universes, all of which end finally in our terrestrial Earth, this Earth which is like the "tomb" to which they have been entrusted; it is from this tomb that they must emerge and be resurrected. But this resurrection is conceivable only if the "descent" of the eternal Forms onto this Earth is understood in its true sense. Just as the astralness of the Sun does not "descend" from its Heaven, so there is no question of an inherence or an "infusion" nor of a material incarnation, an idea which an "Oriental" philosophy definitely rejects. On the contrary, the idea of *epiphany* dominates its mode of perception and that is why the comparison with a "mirror" is always suggested to us. Human souls, being eternal, do not themselves mix "in person," so to speak, with the world of material and accidental things, which are temporal. It is their silhouette, their Image, their shadow, which is projected onto it. Each of them has its own particular activity and perfection, which are an effect and an influx of the universal and absolute activity of the Soul of the World.¹²

Henry Corbin



For at times the royal garment of silk shone before mine eyes,
And with its voice and its guidance it also encouraged me to speed,
and with love leading me and drawing me onward,
I passed by Labyrinthus, and I left Babylon upon my left hand,
and I came unto Meson the great,
that lieth on the shore of the sea,
and my bright robe which I had taken off, and the mantle wherewith I had
been clad . . .

But I remembered not the brightness of it; for I was yet a child and very
young when I had left it in the palace of my Father.

But suddenly, I saw the garment made like unto me, as it had been in a
mirror.

And I beheld upon it all myself and I knew and saw myself through it,
that we were divided asunder, being of one, and again were in one shape.

Yea, the treasurers also which brought me the garment I beheld, that they
were two, yet one shape was upon both, one royal sign was set upon both of
them.

And I stretched forth and received it, and adorned myself with the beauty of
the colors thereof,

And in my royal robe excelling in beauty I arrayed myself wholly.

And when I had put it on, I was lifted up into the place of peace and
homage.¹³

From "The Hymn of the Soul"

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The Only Freedom

AN INTERVIEW WITH HELEN M. LUKE

*Long-time readers of PARABOLA will be familiar with Helen Luke—she has contributed a number of articles over the years, and our first interview with her appeared in our 10th anniversary issue on “Wholeness.” Founder of the Apple Farm Community, she is a Jungian counselor and writer. Her most recent book, *The Voice Within*, was published by Crossroad. Her latest work is an essay entitled *Old Age: The Odyssey, The Tempest, Little Gidding*, which can be obtained from Apple Farm Community, Three Rivers, Michigan 49093.*

Our conversation in this issue again took place in her cottage at the Farm. The range of her knowledge and the depth of her understanding were evident again, as were her warmth, her keen interest, and her impeccable courtesy.

—Lorraine Kisly

Lorraine Kisly There seem to be many ways of looking at the question of mirrors.

Helen Luke The first thing that strikes me is the word reflection—that’s what a mirror is. It reflects back to you. Reflection comes from an instinct within us and it is the only instinct that is solely human. It is that which creates consciousness. C.G. Jung says that “Consciousness is part of the divine life process. In other words, God becomes manifest in the human act of reflection.” And now I begin to remember various stories about mirrors.

All of our behavior, everything that happens to us is a reflection, is a mirror image, so to speak, of what is going on within. And reflection means a bending

back. So that when that human art of reflection upon what you see begins, the ego begins to separate from the Self. In other words, with the primitives, everything was divine. They were at one with it because the split had hardly begun. But then once the split widens and the ego begins to grow, the danger is that the ego sees nothing but itself and something alien out there.

L.K. What you say opens up four or five questions at once. I am wondering, for example, how can we speak of truth or of meaning, if what we perceive is what we project?

H.L. It’s the only way that we can become aware of it.

L.K. The whole world mirrors back to us what we project.

H.L. Yes, but let’s be clear about projection. We don’t do it. Everything that is unconscious is projected. You can’t help it—we live in the dimension of causality, and we have to see it out there before we can come back to experiencing the oneness of the primitive or the child—but come back, through reflection—consciously. Charles Williams has a wonderful phrase. He says, “Flesh knows, but spirit knows it knows.” And what it knows is the same thing, but in order to be conscious you have to know that you know. And so it seems to me that we start looking in the mirror and then possibly turn into a Narcissus who sees nothing but his own ego and who becomes identified with it. You know the story of Narcissus, that the reason he fell in love with the image of himself was that he would not re-



spond to any of the nymphs who were longing to have him make love to them. Not only Echo, but all the others, too. So he was stuck with falling in love with his own image, and he saw nothing but that. But there are also stories of people who see truth in mirrors—even the mirror of the stepmother in “Snow White.” She saw the truth, that she wasn’t as beautiful as her stepdaughter.

L.K. Yes, exactly.

H.L. She was at least able to see and recognize that. But not Narcissus. So he just shriveled away and died.

L.K. So there are two kinds of mirrors.

H.L. The mirror is the same, but it’s the attitude which differs. You see, if you look at the image without reflection of any kind, then all you see is your ego. That’s why it’s so vital to start with seeing your shadow. Because if you don’t see that, all you see is your superficial ego and you go through life identified with totally impulsive behavior. But

if you reflect upon what you see, you begin to be objective—just begin, at first about your own darkness, and then about other individual people and so on, instead of seeing darkness everywhere else.

L.K. Is the shadow a kind of mirror?

H.L. Oh, very much so. It is the mirror of the opposite within you.

L.K. Is it the mirror of the ego?

H.L. The shadow, yes, is the dark side of the ego. But it’s been repressed. And you see, when a thing is repressed it becomes very powerful, and is always projected out there, on somebody else or something else or circumstances or whatever it may be. But reflection is not an act of thought, only. It’s an attitude. It’s an attitude which makes a beginning of objectivity possible.

L.K. Reflection is a mysterious activity. It’s not just rational analysis. It has to

... when we can become objective about our ego, when we can relate to our ego as objectively as to anything or anybody else, that's when the next step comes to those who get that far.

be activated—something has to be active inside in order for us to have this capacity.

H.L. Well, we all have the capacity. That is man's capacity. No animal reflects. It is a wondrous instinct. The moment we are no longer whole, in order to go on that long journey of Return, after the Fall into the knowledge of good and evil, we have to continue to reflect upon everything that happens to us or that we do or that we feel. And when we can become objective about our ego, when we can relate to our ego as objectively as to anything or anybody else, that's when the next step, the final thing, comes to those who get that far. For most of us, it will be just moments, when the subject and the object are one.

Reflection is the conscious balancing of the opposites. It's a refusal to repress one in order to live in the other whichever it may be—the dark or the light. And that is the only thing that breaks through the fog of the emotions, when an emotion takes one over. It stops being impulsive, and it becomes spontaneous—the spirit knowing it's spontaneous—not regressing to the child who is simply natural and unknowing, but becoming in full awareness “as a little child.”

L.K. I wonder if there is a more unnatural act than welcoming contradiction. It seems so difficult.

H.L. An extremely difficult act. But it is the essential one.

L.K. It's the last thing one wishes to

undergo, the experience of internal contradiction.

H.L. Unless we live all our lives in the torment of the contradictions, as C.G. Jung insists, then we're not human. We can't become whole. If you're stuck, and you don't know what to do, stuck between two opposites, and you allow them each to live *within* you, then a small transformation of the ego takes place. It becomes related to the Self instead of identifying with it.

L.K. It seems that this is perhaps one of the paths towards the almost impossible idea that one could relate to the ego objectively. The bearing of contradiction is a kind of tool which pries apart the identification with the ego.

H.L. Yes, indeed, it is so.

L.K. An indirect method, but it seems to have that effect.

H.L. Jung says—as I've quoted already—“God becomes manifest in the human act of reflection.” That's to say, our God images are what we see in our mirrors. Narcissus' God image was his own ego. But the Zen mirror, which they say must be utterly free of dust, reveals the experience of the whole. That's the whole point of Zen, isn't it? All the contradictions—you can't put it into words at all. It's a sudden breakthrough.

L.K. They use contradiction as a tool, also.

H.L. Very much so. All their koans are contradictions unsolvable by reason. As I was going on to say, you have a conflict, you reflect, you simply bear it, and suddenly you glimpse the truth which unites the opposites; it breaks through. You are then released to act. And then you must not stop. That's what we get

into all the time, isn't it? We think we've had a breakthrough, and now everything is going to be lovely and we're going to feel good. But on the contrary, you must then start again on the next conflict, quite soon. And then there's another. So that one has to learn to rejoice in the conflict. Which doesn't mean be happy!

L.K. It would require an understanding of the situation that you're in to go on in this way—an understanding that this is something you undertake or undergo voluntarily for the sake of something higher.

H.L. Yes. Somebody once wrote, "Free will is simply to do gladly that which one must do." I always liked that. It can be the last thing you feel in your personal emotions—but then, emotion has always something unconscious in it. Not that we mustn't have emotions, we must. That's the mirror, we've got to look into it. There is always paradox, isn't there, in any inner truth?

There is an instance in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* with Galadriel's mirror. In Lothlórien when Sam and Frodo pause there before the great journey, Galadriel takes them to look into her mirror, which is a bowl of water, because she feels they're pure enough in heart. Of course, a mirror is always symbolically the water of the unconscious. It's looking into the unconscious. And Sam sees the future. He sees what's going to happen at home, all the awful things that are going to happen. He's in a terrible state and he says, "I must go home at once." And she says, in effect, "What you see there are things that may or may not happen in that way, in the future. But if you turn aside from your present task and try to put something right that you see predicted, then most certainly you will only increase the danger." One simply has to stick to the next thing that one must

do. And then of course in the end when the Hobbits return they find that situation and set it right. That little bit about the mirror has always stuck in my mind since I read it. It's a cure for many fears.

Unless we live all our lives in the torment of the contradictions we're not human.

L.K. I suppose it's obvious, but it struck me when Jung said that most people think of consciousness as consciousness of the ego-personality.

H.L. Yes, of course it's not really consciousness, because it excludes the Self, it excludes the unconscious as a reality.

L.K. What is consciousness? We use the word self-consciousness, and mean by it what we know about ourselves in our egos.

H.L. Yes, and in a way it's true. It's what the ego can express in his or her way of life—it is the Self becoming conscious in every individual, but when used in *that* way it is distorted to mean the identification of the self with rational thinking, which is not really consciousness at all.

L.K. So consciousness resides in the ego?

H.L. Yes. But this is very interesting because it seems to me I have seen so often that people go through a long period of a kind of ego research into their motives. This is the analytic stage. But the time comes when you have to stop and that can be very, very difficult, because one of the most difficult things is to give up one's neurosis. As long as you have a neurosis you can repress things, and you can find excuses. But

when comes the time when you *could* give it up, this is when many people break down. They won't. They can't. It's a prop. A whole different attitude can arise when you accept that neurosis itself as part of your destiny in life. And then it won't be neurosis anymore.

You see, reflection takes you *contra natura*—against nature—but there must come a time when nature and the work of the spirit are not split apart. You *know* that you know.

And what are the consequences if it's not fed at all?

H.L. You can see one consequence in the enormous numbers of young people who commit suicide. It's just that they cannot stand the awful weight of the collective darkness. And there's only one answer—that each one of us recognizes the responsibility of carrying our little bit of darkness—not to try to carry the whole thing personally. And that can



L.K. There's this capacity—to see, to observe. You were saying before that it's instinctive, or in any case that the capacity seems to be born with the human.

H.L. I think Marie-Louise von Franz said in one of her fairy tale books that in her view, the religious instinct in a baby—religious used in the real sense—is stronger even than hunger. That is something, isn't it?

L.K. Yes, when you think about the lack of nourishment for that instinct.

save somebody a thousand miles away, as the Chinese say—not because we try to save the world, but because we live out our life stories with the utmost devotion to that which is not the ego but includes it.

L.K. How have we gotten to this state where we're only in the ego and totally denying the shadow? Is it a new state for humanity?

H.L. Oh, no. It began with Cain and Abel.

L.K. It seems more dangerous now than ever.

H.L. Perhaps it isn't. Perhaps it's no more dangerous fundamentally than it ever has been. The trouble nowadays I think is that we know everything that's going on in every corner of the world almost as soon as it's happened. It's created a much greater threat of mass thinking. And that's the monster. Then the individual is totally lost in the mass. But there are signs of a great many individuals appearing now in a true search for meaning. The world of subatomic physics is a new exciting mirror as it approaches the world of the spirit, and the awareness of the unity of matter and spirit is dawning in many.

L.K. I'm still thinking about this faculty which can tolerate the dark side, as if there's something which is caught now—caught in the ego, caught in projections, caught in the unconscious. What is that faculty which needs to be freed?

H.L. Well, it is the sense of God. One's central motive in life is really one's God, isn't it? . . . "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

L.K. The ego is a mirror. It's not "I." But it's something through which "I" can become conscious, eventually.

H.L. Become a unique individual.

L.K. It's also the ego which can become aware of the unconscious.

H.L. Oh, yes, it's only the ego. That's the importance of it. What has to be sacrificed is not the ego itself, but the ego's demand to be first, to be the Self. And you know there are those who are inflated and identified with the Self, as though the ego were the Self—but there

are also those who identify with the negative side, and who are forever really playing God by saying how terrible and awful they are. Instead of recognizing that yes, indeed, of course I have awful things in me, but that too is not me. The "good" and the "bad" are neither of them you and yet they are both a reality in your life and a mirror for the Self. When you recognize this you no longer are impelled to act without reflection on every impulse. Which doesn't mean that you get rid of your impulses, which are the stuff of life, but that having reflected even for two seconds on them, they don't possess you. Your choice of action remains.

L.K. That's a kind of a freedom.

H.L. The only freedom.

A sudden recognition can be another sort of mirror—and recognition means to know again. I remember, when I was first learning of Jung's work, I got hold of about the most difficult book at that time. *The Psychology of the Unconscious*, it was called. That's the only time of my life I've sat up all night long reading. And I just had the feeling that this was something I had always known. I didn't understand a word, but I thought it was something that was going to change my life because I'd always known it. That is a sort of seeing, isn't it, like seeing in the mirror, "in a glass darkly." It is true of all of us, that we all know these things, and then somebody speaks in a new kind of language that says just what you've been longing for, and you recognize it.

L.K. The mirror which tells the truth about you.

H.L. And then it takes the rest of one's life to begin to know what it's all about.

L.K. I'm thinking of the messengers from above—Christ, Buddha—as a kind

of mirror, also. A kind of perfect mirror.

H.L. The mirror free of dust. Because they are one in themselves, God, the incarnate unity. They are also images of what a human being could be.

L.K. If you know the ego-personality of someone very, very well, can you construct their shadow? Will you know what will show up? Is it a kind of reverse mirror?

H.L. If you heard a few dreams, you'd know the kind of thing, of course. You mean could one intuit what kind of darkness would be there? Oh, yes. Surely you could too. If you meet someone who's very, very sweet and never will risk hurting anybody's feelings, wouldn't you know that underneath there must be a venomous kind of thing?

L.K. Perhaps.

H.L. If someone is working with you, then it becomes clear quickly. It's one's business to listen but never to go ahead of what they're able to take. It's a very slow business. There are people who are carrying dark things that don't belong to them at all. To go back to what we were saying before about young people's suicide, it kind of dropped into my mind that they are almost like the Holy Innocents slaughtered by the Herod in our culture. They're often the most sensitive and beautiful children, who simply can't take the collective darkness. We can think of it as a kind of sacrificial thing whereby something is saved, as the Christ child was saved.

L.K. How does one begin to admit one's own darkness, and separate what is one's own from what one has taken on? They're both dark, they're both unconscious.

H.L. How you know the difference? It's very difficult, I think.

If we can stick with just tiny instances of how we behaved to somebody or how we've reacted emotionally to something or other, we can see where the shadow has an open door. And then in comes the collective element and one feels swamped. And this of course is what happens in schizophrenia. There's no protection at all. There's no definition of where the ego begins and ends. I knew a girl once who every time she read about a murder in New York—she lived in California—she was sure she was responsible—because she'd had an evil thought. Now there is a sense in which this is true. We are all responsible for the state of the world, of the unconscious, but not in the personal sense. And we have to recognize that all we can do is take care of our minute share. It's the same when you've been very badly treated by someone. All right, that's their business. But there is always, even if it's only very small, one's own part in it. And we can attend to that. You can find it again and again through the mirror of your behavior, or the mirror of your emotions. That is reflection again, an active reflection of your emotional reactions can turn into response instead of reaction. That means a conscious response rather than an automatic reaction.

L.K. There are examples in relationships with people when you get a reaction from someone else, which shows you something about yourself which you've not been able to see.

H.L. Yes. But what a temptation to say, "Well that's just him or her."

The real guilt is if you refuse to see what the mirror is telling you. If you are sincere, you may go stumbling on and make the mistake several times over, but in the end it will come back at you and come back at you. You will be



meeting it everywhere until you do get the right thing.

L.K. I think everyone has experienced a situation which repeats and repeats, as though one attracts the same situation over and over again.

H.L. The unconscious is trying to tell you it has a message for you.

L.K. A mirror doubles the impressions and it seems that if you are able to reflect upon what's happening in a moment, the impressions there are doubled as well. It isn't just happening, but you're aware of it happening and somehow the whole picture has another dimension.

H.L. Literally another dimension. And that's the whole thing. And finally the fourth dimension which completes the one world, which is outside time.

L.K. It's clear that an analyst might function as a mirror. In what sense?

H.L. The situation in analysis is contained. You see, it's almost like the mirror is, it's like pouring water into a bowl, a container. And a person can look into it. Simone Weil said the only purpose of any education should be to train attention. I like that. We're still learning it.

L.K. That is the material of reflection: attention. Isn't it? And that is a very mysterious element.

H.L. Yes, mysterious to our minds because it is not a rational thinking effort. It is living in the moment: past and future become one. The basic meaning of the word *attend* is to be present. It is not equivalent to the being present of nature—there is a specifically human content. Attention involves seeing, listening, caring, and courtesy, which arise from the inclusion of the human act of intention and concentration beyond thought. Thus, the subject and the object are one. In those moments, the mirror is clear. ■



The Mirrors of Mahayana

FREDERICK FRANCK

When the Fifth Patriarch of Chinese Zen, Hung-jen, felt that the time had come to look for a successor, he asked his disciples to compose a poem by which to judge who would be fit to become his Dharma heir. After strenuous reflection and preparation, his chief monk Shen-hsiu wrote on the temple wall:

The body is the Bodhi tree (tree of enlightenment)
The mind is like a mirror bright

Take heed to keep it always clean
Let no speck of dust alight!

Hung-jen praised this *gatha* but remarked that as proof of full enlightenment it was wanting. Unexpectedly the battle was joined and won by an illiterate young monk, Hui Neng, recently accepted by the patriarch and put to work as a rice-pounder in the kitchen. This uncultivated youngster, after listening to the verse being read, dictated his response to a fellow monk, who wrote it on the wall:



Originally no Bodhi tree
Nor any mirror bright
Since all is Emptiness
Where could dust alight?

“From the first not a thing is.” This crucial proclamation by Hui Neng was to revolutionize Zen. Fun-Yu-lan, the great Chinese historian, sees Shen-hsiu’s first two lines as qualifying the First Principle, ascribing attributes to that which transcends all attributes. Hui Neng not only contradicts this, but affirms radically its inexpressible character, and in the two final lines denies that realization can be attained by “doing” something, by dust wiping, by the cultivation of particular virtues.

Hung-jen at once, although secretly, entrusted his succession to Hui Neng,

who became the Sixth Patriarch and founder of the Southern School of Sudden Enlightenment which flourished and survives to this day, while Shen-hsiu’s Northern School of Gradual Enlightenment declined and disappeared.

The simile of the mirror is also rooted in the Taoist past. Chuang Tzu, in the third or fourth century B.C., wrote, “The perfect man uses his mind as a mirror,” and Lao Tze in Chapter 10 of the *Tao Te Ching* compared the mind with a mirror. According to D.T. Suzuki, Shen-hsiu’s dust-wiping operation (in which dust stands for passions, thoughts, and imagery) is apt to reduce meditation to tranquilization, to mere temporary suspension of consciousness and at most to self-absorbed ecstatic states.



For Hui Neng, enlightenment demands the radical breakthrough of all rational, dualistic, and discursive thinking to attain that “nonthinking” in which what he calls the “Unconscious” may be grasped, which is synonymous with *prajna* as the intuitive penetration into one’s own nature and thereby into Reality-Truth. Interestingly, Thomas Merton is in full agreement with the Master of the Great Mirror, in whose “Unconscious,” *prajna*, “nonthinking,” he recognizes the Ultimate Mind as the openness to God’s own light, to St. John’s “Light that lighteth every man come into the world.”

Hui Neng’s “sudden enlightenment” is therefore for Merton a “comprehensive experience of Being.” He fully understands Hui Neng’s declaration that it is useless to wipe the Mirror of Great Wisdom, and that the external objects reflected in it must not be repressed.

Sokei-an Sasaki, one of the first two Zen masters (and perhaps the most

impressive one ever) to settle in America—he founded the First American Zen Institute—goes even further: “By meditating on the mirror one becomes oneself a mirror . . . Keep your eyes and ears open! Don’t discriminate between outer and inner, so as not to remain locked up in your own mind!” It is as if one heard echoes of Hui Neng’s “The truth is not seen into by quietistic sitting. . . .” “The Meaning of life is to See. . . .” “One enlightened thought and you are a Buddha, one unenlightened one and you are a common fellow again!” or Huang Po propounding: “The original Mind is to be recognized along with the workings of the senses; only it does not belong to them nor is it independent of them.”

Huang Po was the disciple of the great master Mat-su, about whom there is a charming mirror-wiping story. Young Mat-su, who had been studying with one of the Fifth Patriarch’s followers, was somewhat of a zazen fanatic. Hui Neng’s disciple Huai-jang asked him one day what on earth he hoped to attain by this compulsive cross-legged



sitting. "Buddhahood," said Mat-su. Thereupon Huai-jang sat down, took a brick and started to polish it assiduously. Mat-su looked at him nonplused and asked what he was doing. "Oh," said Huai-jang, "I am making a mirror out of my brick." "You can polish it till doomsday," scoffed Mat-su, "you'll never make a mirror out of a brick!" "Aha!" smiled Huai-jang. "Maybe you are beginning to understand that you can sit until doomsday, it won't make you into a Buddha."

In another mirror story ascribed to Master Shen-hui (not to be confused with chief monk Shen-hsiu), a great mirror is set up in which the Ten Thousand Things are reflected "wonderfully" according to his monks. But the Master says: "Nothing wonderful! The Ten Thousand Things may be illuminated by the mirror, they are not reflected as being Ten Thousand Things, for the Buddha Mind reflects them all with nondiscriminating *prajna*, not by the relative, discursive understanding of your everyday perception, your analytical acumen: 'From the first not a thing is.' "

The simile of the looking glass is not limited to the Far East, but is universal. Henri Corbin mentions how in Islamic mysticism the mirror is the "place of theophany" and how certain spiritual disciplines may open the heart into being "a perfect mirror." In the Gnostic "Acts of Saint Andrew" the blessed "have heard the prophecies through which, as in a looking glass, they behold the secret of their own nature for which all things were created." Looking into this mirror we see not only ourselves "but also the Lord, the Spirit, the god who reflects the suffering of man who must suffer as long as he is not fully initiated and remains narrowly human."

In the "Acts of Saint John" (third century), "the resurrection which the believer experiences in the ritual is his mystical resurrection," and in the round dance, which may well be an initiation rite, it is the Christ who sings: "A torch I am to thee who perceives Me, Amen . . . A mirror I am to thee who discerns Me, Amen." ■

Or So the Story Goes

PETER BROOK

God, seeing how desperately bored everyone was on the seventh day of creation, racked his overstretched imagination to find something more to add to the completeness he had just conceived. Suddenly his inspiration burst even beyond its own limitless bounds and he saw a further aspect of reality which was its possibility to imitate itself. So he invented theater.

He called his angels together and announced this in the following terms, which are still contained in an ancient Sanskrit document. "The theater will be the field in which men can learn to understand the sacred mysteries of the universe. And at the same time," he added with deceptive casualness, "it will be a comfort to the drunkard and to the lonely man."

The angels were very excited and could hardly wait for there to be enough men on earth to put this into practice. The men responded with equal enthusiasm, and very rapidly there were many groups all trying to imitate reality in their different ways. And yet the results were very disappointing. What had sounded so amazing, so generous, and so all-embracing seemed to turn to dust in their hands. In particular, the actors, writers, directors, painters, and musicians could not agree amongst themselves as to who was the most important and so they spent much of their time quarreling while their work satisfied them less and less.

One day, they realized they were getting nowhere and they asked an angel to go back to God to ask for help.

God pondered for a long time. Then he took a piece of paper, scribbled on it, put it into a box and gave it to the angel saying, "Everything is here. This is my first and last word."

The return of the angel to the theater critics was an immense event and the whole profession crowded round him as the box was opened. He took out the



paper, unfolded it. It contained one word. Some read it over his shoulder, as he announced it to the others. "The word is *interest*."

"Interest?" "Interest!" "Is that all?" "Is that all!"

There was a deep rumble of disappointment.

"Who does he take us for?"

"It's childish." "As if we didn't know . . ." The meeting broke up angrily, the angel left under a cloud and the word, though never referred to again, became one of the many reasons

for the loss of face that God suffered in the eyes of his creatures.

However, a few thousand years later, a very young student of Sanskrit found a reference to this incident in an old text. As he also worked part-time as a cleaner in the theater he told the theater company of his discovery. This time, there was no laughter, no scorn.

There was a long, grave silence. Then someone spoke.

"Interest. To interest. I must interest. I must interest another. I can't interest another unless I'm interested myself. We need a common interest."

Then another voice: "To share a common interest, we must exchange elements of interest in a way that's interesting . . ." ". . . to both of us . . ." "To all of us . . ." "In the right rhythm." "Rhythm?"

"Yes, like making love. If one's too fast and one's too slow, it's not interesting . . ." Then they began to discuss, seriously and very respectfully to one another, what is interesting—or rather, as one of them put it, what is really interesting.

And here they disagreed. For some, the divine message was clear—"interest" meant only those aspects of living that were directly related to the essential questions of being and becoming, of God and the Divine laws.



For some, interest was the common interest of all men to understand more clearly what is just and unjust for mankind. For others, the very ordinariness of the word *interest* was a clear signal from the divine not to waste a moment on profundity and solemnity but just to get on with it and entertain.

At this moment, the student of Sanskrit quoted to them the full text about why God created theater—to reflect the sacred universal mysteries, and also to comfort the drunkard and the lonely man. "It has to be all those things at the same time," he said. After which, the silence could have been cut with a knife.

They then began to discuss the other side of the coin, the appeal of the "uninteresting" and the strange motivations, social and psychological, that make so many people in the theater applaud so often and so vigorously what actually is of no interest to them whatsoever. "If only we could really understand this word," said one. "What did God mean by it?" "If we knew," said another in a hushed tone, "with this one word we would go very far . . ." ■

Looking through the Mirror of Life

CLAIRE R. FARRER and BERNARD SECOND

The Mescalero Apache, who currently number somewhat more than 2400 people, have a reservation in the mountains of south-central New Mexico. They have been in the southern and eastern portions of the American Southwest since before their first contact with Europeans—which occurred in 1540, when they met Coronado's expedition on the Llano Estacado (the vast plains of eastern New Mexico, western Texas, and the Kansas and Colorado area). Their traditions, however, supported by archaeological and linguistic evidence, tell of a long trek from the north. It was there, in the Land of Ever Winter (according to one version of the Creation story), that they were formed as a people, and it was there, by the shores of a big lake across which one could not see, that they first dwelled.

The keepers of the traditions of the Mescalero Apache are known as Singers. The Singer, who also serves as a conductor of contemporary ceremonies, stores in his memo-

ry accounts of his people's history, travels, and prophecies, as well as a vast body of knowledge related to crafts, medicine, and other practical affairs.

In 1974, as a fledgling anthropologist and folklorist, I went to work at Mescalero and began to do research on the reservation. Within a few days of my arrival, I was told that Bernard Second, a Mescalero Singer of Ceremonies, would be able to answer my myriad questions concerning language, customs, history, and practice. He proved elusive, but when he finally did allow a meeting, we began an association that has strengthened in the intervening years. In accordance with his wishes, our discussions are nondirective. Usually I have a question in mind, a practice, event, word, or tradition I do not understand. We begin there and range over whatever topics he considers appropriate. In the following, I indicate his actual statements in italics. The balance of the text has been synthesized from the countless conversa-



Photograph by Michael Barnes (detail)

tions (many of which were tape-recorded) we have had over the course of the eleven years we have worked together.

—*Claire R. Farrer*

As I told you before, we live in the Shadow World. Theirs is the real world.

—*Bernard Second*

The Real World belongs to Power, to the Spirits, and especially to Bik²egudindé, According to Whom There is Life—the One called Creator. Our shadow existence seems real to us, for unless we are newly born or walking hand in hand with Death, we usually have no memory or insight into the Real World; babies and the very old are close to the doorway leading behind the mirror. Some, they say, can see through the mirror because they have just come

through the doorway; others, because they are ready to go through it again.

Most of us cannot grasp the enormousness of the Real World, where all potentialities are copresent, where space, time, existence, and incorporeal substance are joined. It is all around us, yet we are not quite in it. Those in the Real World dwell on the back side of the mirror: they can see and hear us, but we can see only our reflection in our Land of Shadows.

Claire R. Farrer: Where is the Land of Shadows?

B.S.: Between Life and what you call Heaven, what we call the Land of Ever Summer . . . it [is] all around. Spirit People can come through the barrier and help us. You can get through the barrier at night, when there's no noise, when you're all alone. You can talk to



Photograph by Claire R. Farrer

*those who you love and God and tell them,
"Help me." Dreams can guide you there.*

Some few pass through the mirror at will; Medicine People and Singers regularly make the journey. Some pass through simply by the quality of their being rather than by their action. In each generation there are those who carry the burdens of Ndé, The People, the Mescalero Apache; sometimes they appear to us as cripples and sometimes as fools. One never knows precisely who they are, but their mission is an important one—even the words of fools can contain wisdom from the Real World.

The vessels chosen by those in the Real World do not have to make sense to those of us living in the Shadow World.

Singers and Medicine People can traverse the Worlds at will through the power of their medicine, vision, ritual, or dream. But such travel comes at a heavy price; it is not easy to live in the Shadow World as a Singer or Medicine Person. It is not easy to bear the burden of knowledge and its associated power.

Singers carry the theology, cosmology, ritual, and everyday practices of the people as a whole. Sometimes they are judge and jury. At other times they name children, diagnose illness, and

serve as priest and psychologist, mediator, and advisor. They may have special medicine entrusted to them as well and, thus, serve as physician too. Each specialty increases the likelihood of treading the dangerous ground between Shadow and Real, between Now and Was, between Now and To Become. Living with one foot in the Shadow and one in the Real—on both sides of the mirror simultaneously—is living a powerful, and often very lonely, existence. While there is power in seeing and knowing both sides of the mirror, there is also alienation from each side. The seductiveness of this position is not one of Power, however; it is the much more powerful seduction of wisdom.

The middle is the point of understanding.
—B.S.

Sometimes everyday people pass to the other side of the mirror quite by accident. The crystalline reality they experience is often frightening and inexplicable in everyday terms; they usually do not seek to return, to repeat their journey to the Real World—that is best left to those whose business it is to make the dangerous trip. The intensity and truth of the Real World are sometimes better hidden behind the back of the mirror.

This happened in 1965; there was this man, just at daybreak. It was still dark and the moon was still out; he said, "All of a sudden—I don't know why—my eyes were just drawn up there," he said. His eyes were drawn up there. On top of that crescent moon he saw a woman in full buckskin dress. And he said, "The Powers: this feeling just kept washing over me and I know that I'm gonna die." But he did not understand it, why he saw it that way.

What happened was, that was telling him that he was going to go with a woman, with a girl. Several days later, they got into a car accident—this girl that had just had her Ceremony—and him; they died instantly in

that wreck. And he did not understand; he just knew he was going to die, but he didn't understand why he saw that. But that was telling him that was the way he's going to go—with a girl that had just had her Ceremony.

He told his wife and then he told his mother. His mother was an old woman, still alive, and she knew automatically; but she knew there's no way that she can counteract it.
—B.S.

Glimpsing behind the mirror can be frightening, can portend what none wants to know. But there is no escape from what one sees. Perhaps it is better not to understand; being able to see, but not to prevent, causes anguish.

Truly, it takes a very powerful person to tread the margins separated by the mirror dividing this world from that one, separating the shadows from the light, separating our Shadow World from the Real World of Power.

Kuchi-i shijaáe najialdał: where your things are, you will return to.
—B.S.

One goes unencumbered behind the mirror, behind the reflection, and into the Real World. It is especially prudent to leave behind that which you most cherish, so that it will draw you back to your own proper place. There is danger in attempting to be in the Real World when one's place is still in the Shadow World; but those whom one loves and that which one cherishes can call one back. When death has occurred, however, it is necessary to send one's belongings behind the mirror; there should be no reflection of a person in this Shadow World once the crossing to the Real World is completed.

Shadows and reality, mirrors that reflect, mirrors that are transparent, opacity and clarity: all are part of life's living circle.

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EPICYCLES



The Courtesan's Fee/Jataka

Once a wise man, Prajnavanta (Buddha in a previous birth), while strolling in the marketplace, saw a merchant's son arguing violently with a leading courtesan in the midst of a large crowd. The day before, the youth had offered the courtesan 100,000 pieces to sleep with him. She said that she was unable to accommodate him that night because she had already been hired by another, but would entertain him the next evening. She entertained the other man that night.

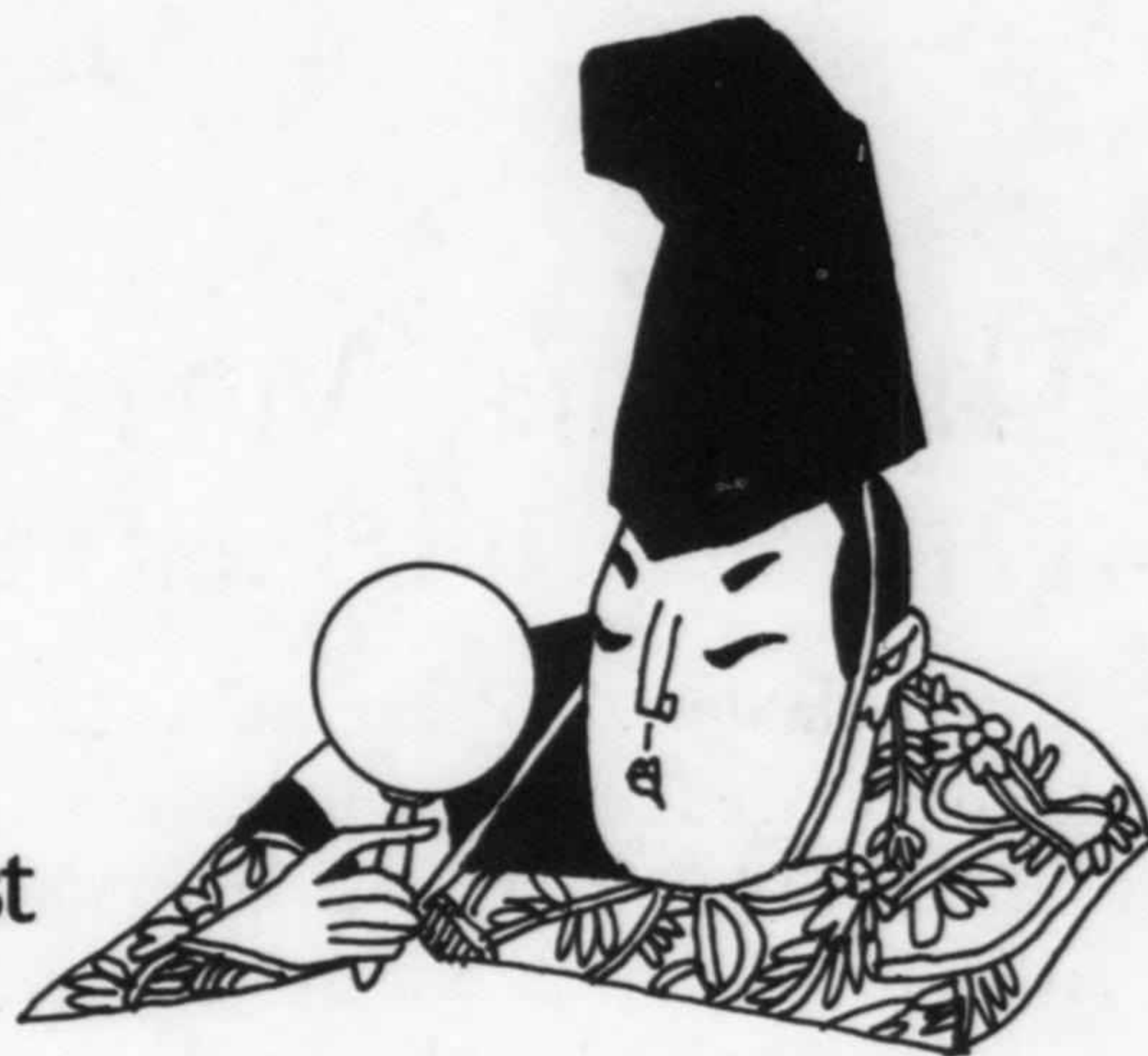
That same night the merchant's son had a most erotic dream. He diverted, enjoyed, and amused himself with the courtesan the whole night to his heart's content. She, in turn, after diverting, enjoying, and amusing herself with the other man all night long, approached the merchant's son in the morning saying, "Here I am come to entertain you, sir." The merchant's son replied, "I diverted, enjoyed, and amused myself with you in my dream to my heart's content, the whole night long. Go away, I don't want you." She said, "If, sir, you diverted, enjoyed, and amused yourself with me in your dream to your heart's content the whole night long, you should give me the 100,000 pieces." The merchant's son said, "Seeing that you lay with another man the whole night, why should I give you 100,000 pieces?" The courtesan insisted otherwise, and so the dispute arose between them. A great crowd had gathered but no one was able to settle the argument.

The townspeople, seeing Prajnavanta, appealed to him saying, "What seems to you the proper thing? Should the courtesan be given the 100,000 pieces by the merchant's son or not?" He replied, "The fee should be paid by the merchant's son to the leading courtesan in just the same fashion as he consorted with her." They asked how this could be done, whereupon Prajnavanta ordered that a large mirror and 100,000 pieces should be brought. He told the merchant's son, "Take the box containing the 100,000 pieces and set it in front

of the mirror." Then he said, "Come, lady, take this reflection of the box containing the 100,000 pieces which is in the mirror. That is your fee." The crowd roared their approval of the solution found by Prajnavanta. The reflection in a mirror, being as unreal as a dream, can serve to pay in full for a dream.

Retold by Benjamin Goldberg in The Mirror and Man (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1985). Reprinted by permission.

The Quarrel/Buddhist



In a certain place there was a young man who loved his parents very much. He married and shortly afterwards his father died, so that he was very sad.

One time he had to go up to Edo on business, and there he saw a mirror shop. Wondering what sort of unusual things were sold there, he looked into one of the mirrors. He saw his own reflection, which looked exactly like his own father. He was very surprised and said, "I didn't know that my father would be here!" He bought one of the mirrors and took it home. After he got home, he put it up in the *butsudan* [household Buddhist shrine] and prayed before it every day.

One day his wife said to herself, "What is my husband doing, looking into the *butsudan* all day?" She went to look for herself. She found that there was a woman's face in the mirror. She became very angry and said to her husband, "Old man, nobody but you would do a thing like this. You bring a concubine home and put her inside this gold frame!"

"What are you saying! That is my dead father," and the two of them began quarreling back and forth.

Just then a nun came by. After she found out what they were arguing about, she said, "Please let me take a look." And when she looked in the mirror, she saw a nun there. "Oh, the woman has repented and become a nun, so you can pardon her," she said.

And so that was the end of the argument.

From Keigo Seki, Folktales of Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). Reprinted by permission.



The Dark Mirror/Rūmī

A child in the desert said to his mother, "On dark nights a horrible black demon appears to me, and I am terribly afraid."

"Don't be afraid," said his mother. "The next time you see that form, attack it bravely. Then it will become clear that it is nothing but a fantasy."

"But mother," said the child, "what if the black demon's mother has given him similar advice? What shall I do, if she has counseled him, saying, 'Don't say a word, so that you won't be exposed'? How shall I recognize him then?"

"Keep silent and yield to him, and wait with patience," his mother answered. "It may be that some word may leap from his mouth. Or if it does not leap, it may be that from your tongue some word may leap involuntarily, or in your thoughts some words or some idea may spring up, so that out of that idea or those words you will know him for what he is. For then you will have been affected by him; that is the reflection of him and his feelings that has sprung up inside of you."



The Bright Mirror/Rūmī

Shaikh Sar-razī, God's mercy be upon him, was seated one day amongst his disciples.

One of the disciples had a longing for some roasted sheep's head. The Shaikh signaled, saying, "You must bring him some roasted sheep's head."

"How did you know that he wanted some roasted sheep's head?" the disciples asked.

"Because it is now thirty years that no desire has remained in me," the Shaikh answered. "I have cleansed and purified myself of all desires and have become clear as an unscratched mirror. When the thought of roasted sheep's head entered my mind and whetted my appetite and became a desire, I knew that that belonged to our friend yonder. For the mirror is without any image of itself; if an image shows in the mirror, it is the image of another."

The Gorgon's Head/Greek

Medusa and her two sisters, Stheino and Euryale, were beautiful nymphs, daughters of the Earth Goddess. Even their names were beautiful—Medusa the Queen, Stheino the Strong, and Euryale, She Who Roams Far and Wide. But one night Medusa and the sea-god, Poseidon, lay together in one of Athena's temples by the shore. The virgin goddess was outraged. Athena changed Medusa and her two sisters into Gorgons. She made them into monsters, terrible to look upon. She gave them faces of fear: glaring eyes, huge, bared tusks, protruding tongues; she gave them brass claws and golden wings; and she, Athena, herself a goddess often companied by snakes, gave them in place of hair a mass of writhing serpents.

When the transformation was complete, the once beautiful nymphs were so hideous that anyone who looked at them was not only paralyzed with horror, but forever turned to stone. Even the wild beasts who came to their cave turned to stone at a single glance. After a time, when tales had been told of the stony shapes that had once been filled with life, no one dared to approach the Gorgons' cave.

It was then that Polydectes, king of the island of Seriphos, sent Perseus to bring him Medusa's head. Perseus, born of Danaë after Zeus had descended to her in a shower of gold, had floated with his mother to Seriphos in a wooden chest. Now, Perseus was a young man. He had defended Danaë when Polydectes tried to force her into marriage, and Polydectes, who desired Danaë, wished her son dead. He tricked Perseus by pretending to take another bride; in his relief, Perseus offered to bring anything on earth as a wedding gift—"Even," he cried, "a Gorgon's head!" Polydectes gladly accepted his offer, sending Perseus off on the impossible quest.

But Perseus was not alone. Athena herself guided him on his way. She showed him images of the Gorgon sisters, and she warned him never to look full at Medusa's face. Giving him a shield, she told him that when the time came he must turn away his head and watch Medusa's image mirrored on the brightly polished surface.



Hermes the Messenger also came to Perseus, giving him an adamantine sickle sharp and strong enough to sever the Gorgon's head. Yet, for such a quest, Perseus had need of even more. The Stygian nymphs possessed the three objects that would give him victory: a pair of winged sandals, Hades' helmet of invisibility, and a magic carrying sack. Perseus knew the water nymphs possessed these things, but he did not know where to find the nymphs.

He went to the wise sisters, the Graeae—sisters to the Gorgons—whose thrones were at the foot of Mount Atlas. Fair and swan-like as they were, they had been born with gray hair, and with only a single eye and a single tooth between them. Perseus waited, and as they passed the tooth from one to another, he snatched it. When one passed along the single eye, saying, "Sister, can you see who has taken our tooth?" he snatched the eye as well. Without their eye, they could see nothing, and they lamented, grieving for it. But Perseus would not return the eye, or the tooth, until they told him their secret, until they told him where to find the Stygian nymphs.

Then Perseus made his way to the home of the water nymphs. He received from them the pair of winged sandals, so that he could fly. So that he could reach the Gorgons and escape without detection, they gave him Hades' dark helmet of invisibility, and they gave him a magic carrying sack in which to carry home Medusa's head.

Wearing the winged sandals, he flew westward beyond the farthest sea until he reached the Gorgons' cave. There Medusa and her sisters lay asleep. Perseus saw around them the stone shapes of animals and men. Staring into the polished surface of the shield Athena had given him, he grasped his sickle. Athena herself was beside him. She guided his hand, and with one stroke cut off Medusa's head.

The Gorgon was dead. But from her lifeless body sprang two wondrous beings—the children Poseidon had fathered in Athena's temple. The winged horse Pegasus sprang from her body, and the golden warrior, Chrysaor. In death, she gave birth to these. It is further said that after her death Asclepius came to gather Medusa's blood. While the blood that dripped from her left side was a mortal poison, the blood from her right side was a balm that would heal



any wound. This blood Asclepius carefully collected and kept; ever after, he was able to kill with the poison or to heal with the balm.

Medusa's sisters, Stheino and Euryale, angrily pursued the murderer, but Perseus, wearing the helmet of invisibility, eluded them. Carrying the head with him in the magic sack, he escaped to travel back to Seriphos. On the way, he stopped by the palace of the Titan Atlas and, showing him Medusa's head, turned him to a mountain of stone. He passed by the seacoast where Andromeda fearfully awaited the sea monster, and rescued her. At last he reached Seriphos, to find that his mother Danaë had taken refuge in a temple. Polydectes and his companions were feasting together. Perseus entered the hall, announced that he had brought the promised love-gift, and turning away his own head, drew Medusa's head forth from its carrying sack. Instantly, Polydectes and all his companions were turned to stone.

When the Gorgon's head had served his purposes, Perseus returned it to Athena, who had first created it. Athena fixed it on her headdress, and there it remains—the Gorgoneion, guardian of Athena's mysteries.

Retold by Anne Twitty

Wooing the Ducks/caribbean

Jonah Henry the duck tamer, his wife was in a fever bed, it was sad I tell you. In a sweat she was. The Obeah-witch was called in against Jonah Henry's liking, and her witch-advice was for Jonah Henry not to touch any ducks for a long time. She said to him, "Don't touch any for days," knowing he made a living peddling tame ducks. She knew this!

Well, right then Jonah Henry went out in his wood boat to woo the ducks. He took a bad mood out with him for he didn't trust the Obeah-witch. She shook the confidence out of him. But it was out of confidence he was out there wooing the ducks, against that Obeah-witch. He tried to woo them close to toss a net over them, by singing. He wanted it to be a joyous song but it came out grim because of his bad mood. He slapped his hand in the water to the beat of the song to try to cheer it up. His friend Leon watched from shore as always, where he would try and glimpse sea ducks, talking out to Jonah Henry, singing along with him. But then, quick, a bad mood of jellyfish floated up—it must



have been the harking of that bad mood song! The ducks swam away. Leon, on shore, saw the jellyfish come up from behind the boat and called out, "Whole bad mood of jellyfish stinging toward you, stop singing I plead!"

Jonah Henry saw them, and rowed shore. He said to Leon, "I failed, my friend."

"Yes, the sea is matching your mood," Leon said.

Then Jonah Henry went home to mop his wife's brow, leaving Leon behind to wait. He was mopping her brow, thinking of what Leon said. When she went asleep, Jonah Henry went back to row out again. He looked out of his boat and saw the weave of jellyfish had floated far away. He looked out farther and saw the Obeah-witch rowing away, from out of the ducks. Then he knew his mistrust of her was clear-headed, good sense. Leon called out from shore, "She was dealing with them for certain, plotting with those ducks!"

Jonah Henry used another song bait, this was a better mood song for all his confidence had returned. Obeah-witch was no longer making rude in his heart. So it was soon after that Leon was watching ducks come up again alongside the wood boat. He called out, "Jonah Henry, tell me what those ducks feel like, I always wondered!" And Jonah Henry now had confidence that touching the ducks was helping his wife recover all this time, mopping that fever out of their hut.

From The Woe Shirt: Caribbean Folk Tales, by Paulé Barton. (Port Townsend, Washington: Graywolf Press, 1980.) Reprinted by permission.

Urashima Taro/shinto

Long ago a man named Urashima Taro lived at Kitamae Oshima. He lived with his mother, who was nearly eighty years old. He was a fisherman and was still unmarried. One day his mother said to him, "Urashima, Urashima, while I still have my health, won't you please take a bride."

"I am as yet unable to earn a living. Even if I took a bride, I could not support her; while you are still living, I shall continue fishing and go on living like this," he said.

The days and months passed, and the mother became eighty years old. Urashima was forty. It was autumn, and the north wind blew day after day so that it was impossible to go out to fish. Since he could catch no fish, he could make no money, and it began to appear that he would be unable even to get food for his mother. "Ah, if we could only have good weather tomorrow," he thought, as he lay around with nothing to do.

Suddenly the sky began to clear. Urashima Taro jumped up, climbed onto his raft, and set out to fish. He fished until it began to get light in the east, but he could not catch a single fish. He was greatly troubled, but as the sun rose higher in the sky, a large fish finally struck the hook. Quickly he hauled in the line and found that he had caught a turtle. The turtle clung to the edge of the raft and made no move to go away.

"I thought maybe you were a sea bream, but you are only a turtle. Since you're here, no other fish will take the hook. Here, I'll take you off the hook; now please go away somewhere," said Urashima, throwing the turtle back into the sea.

Urashima lighted his pipe and smoked as he continued fishing, but he caught nothing. He was greatly troubled, but just before noon it again felt as if a large fish had struck the hook. He hauled it in, and it was the turtle again. "No matter how much I ask him to go away, the turtle keeps coming back and the fish won't bite. I'm having very bad luck," he said and again chased the turtle away. Since he could not return home with nothing at all, he patiently kept fishing until mid-afternoon, when again something struck the hook. Thinking that surely this time it must be a fish, he hauled in the line and saw that it was the turtle again; so again he chased it away. It kept on like this until the sun began to set, and he had not caught a single fish. Soon the sun sank from sight, and he started home, wondering what to say to his mother.

He was paddling the raft along when he noticed a seagoing ship in the distance. For some reason or other it was coming toward him. Urashima steered his boat to starboard, and the ship did the same; he steered to port, and the seagoing ship also steered to port. Finally the ship came alongside Urashima's boat. The captain called out, "Urashima, please come on board this ship; we have come to you from the princess of Ryugu [the dragon kingdom at the bottom of the sea]."

"If I went to the dragon kingdom, my mother would be all alone, so I cannot go."

"We will see that your mother is well taken care of; please come on board our ship," urged the captain, and so Urashima, without further thought, boarded the ship.

As soon as Urashima was on board, the ship sank into the water and went to the world at the bottom of the sea. When Urashima arrived, he saw that there was a beautiful palace there; the princess came and, saying that he surely must be hungry, gave him a feast. "Please stay two or three days and enjoy yourself," she said. "Then you can return home."

Urashima saw that the princess and many other beautiful young girls were there; he was given new kimonos, and in this way days and months passed without his noticing, until three years had gone by. Urashima felt that he must return home. When he asked the princess if he might go, she gave him a three-

tiered jewel box. "In case of necessity, you may open the box," she said. Then Urashima was put on board the seagoing ship, and they landed at a place similar to this one here, which looks like a mountain's nose.

Urashima went to his village and looked around, but even the face of the mountain had changed; the trees on the hills had died or disappeared. "How could all this have happened in only three years?" he thought to himself as he went to where his house was. There in a thatched house was an old man working with straw. Urashima entered the house, greeted the old man, and inquired about himself, asking, "Do you know a man by the name of Urashima?"

The old man replied, "There was a story that in my grandfather's time a man named Urashima went to the dragon kingdom at the bottom of the sea, but no matter how long his relatives waited, he never returned."

"What became of that man's mother?" asked Urashima and was told that she had died long, long ago.

Urashima went to see the remains of his own house. Only the stone wash basin and the garden steppingstones remained; other than that, there was nothing. Lost in reverie, he opened the lid of the box; in the first box was a



crane's feather. He opened the next box, and a puff of white smoke came from it; at this Urashima was turned into an old man. In the third box there was a mirror. He looked in the mirror and saw to his surprise that he had become an old man.

While he was looking in the mirror, the crane's feather from the first box attached itself to his back. He flew up into the sky and circled around his mother's grave. When he did this, the princess from the sea, who had turned herself into a turtle, came up on the beach to see him.

It is said that this is the origin of the Crane and Turtle Dance at Ise.

From Keigo Seki, Folktales of Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). Reprinted by permission.

CURRENTS & COMMENTS



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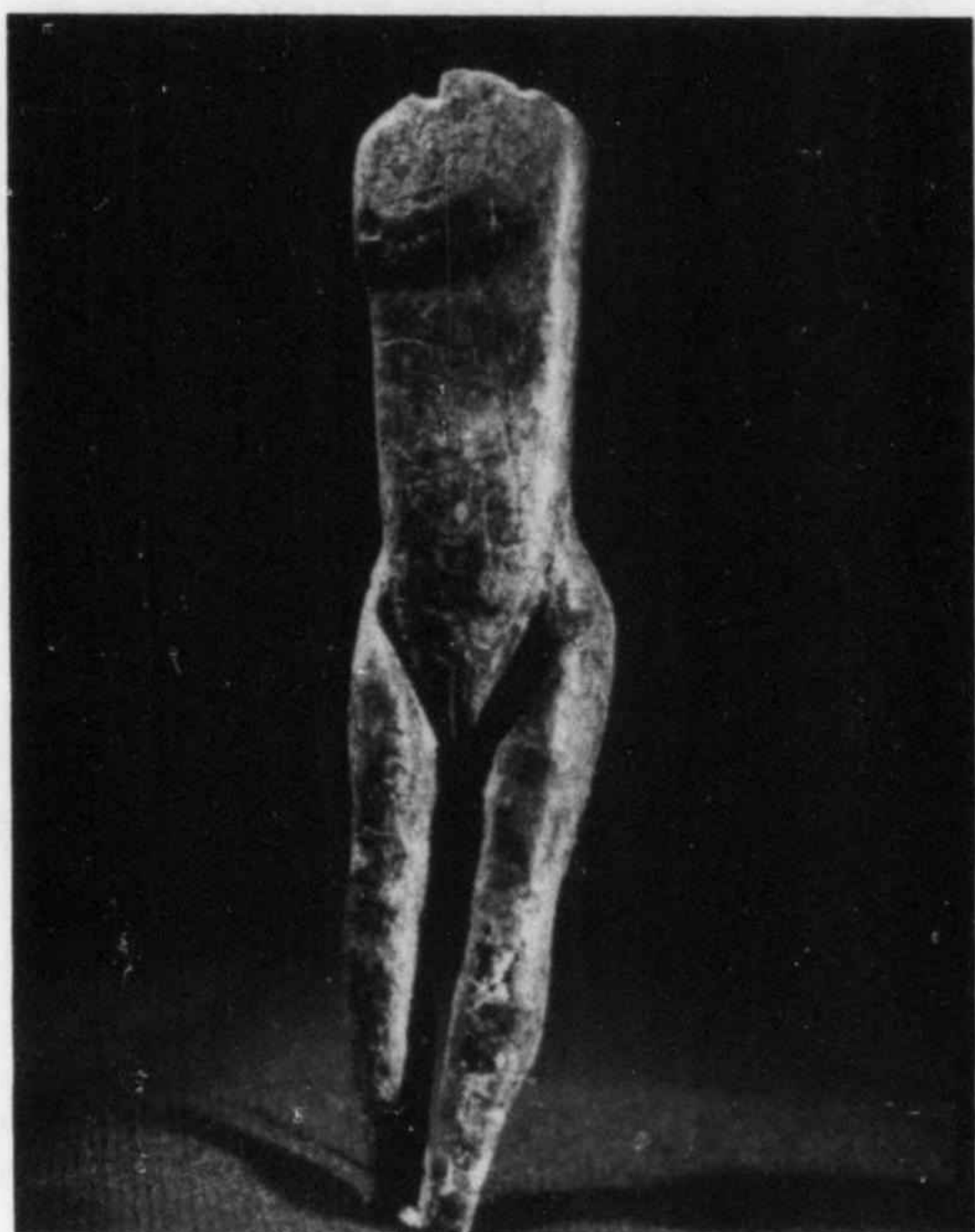
MUSEUMS

The recent return visit of Halley's comet calls to mind the long-standing fascination of both artists and scientists with the cosmos. It has also inspired the Freer Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution to open *Wonders of Creation, Oddities of Existence: An Exhibition in Celebration of Halley's Comet*. Although none of the objects in this display of Islamic art of the 13th through the 18th centuries refers specifically to Halley's comet, each of the 21 paintings, 2 pieces of metalwork, and the ceramic bowl is connected to the cosmos in its own way. The name of the exhibition is actually the English translation of an encyclopedic cosmology by al-Kazwini (1203–1283). The exhibition, which will run through October 1, includes 20 miniatures from a 14th-century copy of al-Kazwini's text featuring painted illustrations of signs of the zodiac and distinctive interpretations of the planets and constellations. For further information telephone (202) 357-2700.

Modern culture has its roots in the hunting and gathering societies of the Upper Paleolithic period. Evidence has been discovered at prehistoric cave and open-air sites that shows that the humans of that time had developed art forms, complex symbolic rituals, and systems of regional exchange that are recognizably unique to the human species. The American Museum of Natural History in New York City is preparing a special exhibition, *Dark Caves, Bright Visions*, that will bring together the widest array of original Paleolithic artifacts ever assembled. According to American Museum Director Thomas D. Nicholson, "This unprecedented gathering of Paleolithic artifacts will present the original physical evidence of the evolution of the



Musée de l'Homme, L. Oster



Musée de l'Homme, L. Oster

human spirit." The exhibition, which is scheduled to run from October 1986 through January 1987, will also include a dwelling modeled after a 15,000-year-old hunting structure, artistic portrayals of late Ice Age fauna and flora, and a walk-through cave. For further information telephone (212) 873-1300.



Walking, living, working, performing, reflecting, and playing are among the themes of *Tokyo: Form and Spirit*, which will run through July 20 at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. The show, which was organized by the Walker Art Center in association with the Japan House Gallery (New York City), examines the inventiveness of Japanese design from the Edo period (1603-1868) to the present, and it is organized around the themes of daily life in the context of the culture of Tokyo and its

people. Important examples of Edo period design, such as painted screens, ceramics, lacquerware, costumes, and prints, are displayed amidst dramatic, visionary environments created by a distinguished group of leading Japanese designers and architects. The exhibition will also be on display at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (August 30-October 26), the IBM Gallery of Science and Art in New York, (December 7, 1986-February 8, 1987), and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (March 15-May 10, 1987). For further information telephone (612) 375-6700.

TOUR

Tibet, which has been mostly closed to foreigners since 1959, will be the site of a pioneering venture—the Trans-Tibetan Bicycling Expedition. Two members of the expedition, John Powers and Robert Clark (a direct descendant of William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition) are doctoral students at the University of Virginia specializing in Tibetan and Chinese studies. Keith Brown, the third member of the expedition, lives and works in China. Their 110-day journey begins in May 1986 in Urumqi, Xinjiang province, proceeds southeast to the eastern border of Tibet, follows the border until it meets the Brahmaputra River, and then follows the ancient Silk Route to Lhasa. After Lhasa, the journey proceeds northeast toward Chengdu in Sichuan. The expedition will provide a unique opportunity to study the religious and cultural condition of this troubled country. Those who wish to obtain more information or who wish to help defray the costs (estimated at \$40,000) of the expedition should contact John Powers, Trans-Tibetan Bicycling Expedition, Department of Religious Studies, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia 22901.

TANGENTS

A Gift of Metaphor

ROB BAKER

Out of Africa

A film by Sydney Pollack. Starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford. Universal Pictures, 1985.

Isak Dinesen's Africa: Images of the Wild Continent from the Writer's Life and Words

Introduction by Judith Thurman. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985. Pp. xvii + 142. \$35.00.

Isak Dinesen: The Life of a Storyteller

By Judith Thurman. St. Martin's Press, 1982. Pp. x + 511. Paper. \$4.95.

Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass

By Isak Dinesen. New York: Vintage Books, 1985. Pp. 512. Paper. \$4.95.



Karen Blixen at her coffee factory

The Danish writer Karen Blixen spent seventeen years in Kenya in West Africa, from 1913 to 1930, running a coffee plantation and weaving a series of intricate, highly metaphoric stories, the first of which she published, under the name Isak Dinesen, in 1933, as *Seven*

Gothic Tales. Her own account of her years in Africa followed four years later, and, like *Seven Gothic Tales*, was a critical and popular success. But *Out of Africa* was in no way mere autobiography or travelogue; it was, like all of Dinesen's writing, something more—a visionary flight of fancy in which almost everything is more than it seems.

"During my first months after my return to Africa," Dinesen wrote some twenty-five years later, a short while before her death in 1962, in a sequel to *Out of Africa* called *Shadows on the Grass*, "I had great trouble seeing anything as reality." This proved a blessing, for with the distancing of time and place, Dinesen was able to see resonances in her African experience that went far beyond the factual or the mundane, described in language so vibrant and alive that it cuts to the bone. Speaking later of a moment of truth high on the mountain plains of Africa, she confides, "I knew then . . . that I was up at a great height on the roof of the world. . . . I did not know that I was at the height and upon the roof of my own life."

Dinesen became one of the great storytellers of twentieth-century literature, and whether those rich tapestries could have existed without her African experience is hard to determine. What is certain, though, is that Africa itself became her best story, her richest metaphor. One night she dreams of a bell around the neck of a pet antelope allowed to wander back into the African wild, wondering if, in turn, the animal ever dreamed of the same bell that had been the touchstone of their relationship:

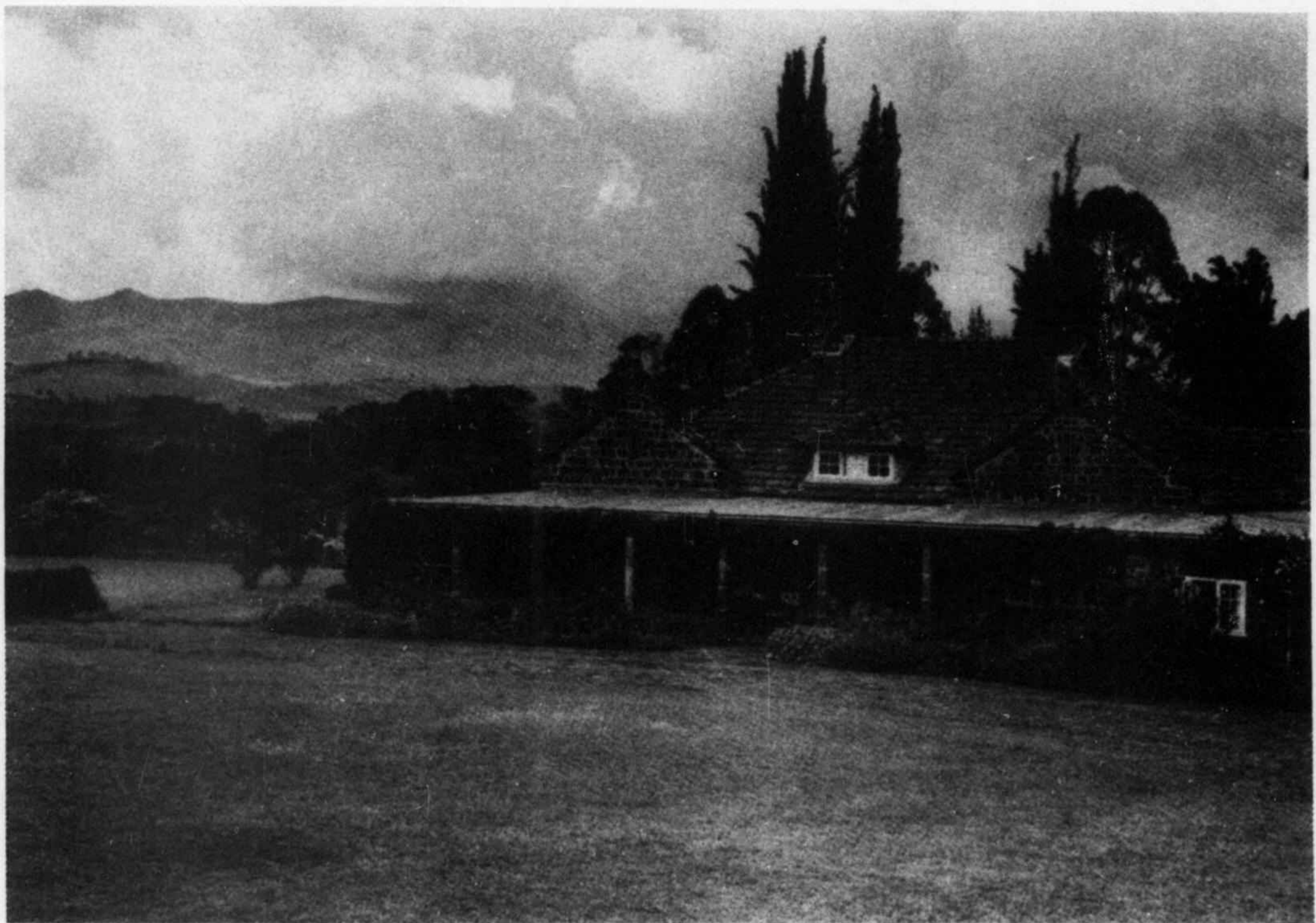
If I know a song of Africa—I thought—of the Giraffe, and the African new moon lying on her back, of the ploughs in the fields and the sweaty faces of the coffee-pickers, does Africa know a song of me? Would the air over the plain quiver with a color that I had had on, or the children invent a game in

which my name was, or the full moon throw a shadow over the gravel of the drive that was like me, or would the eagles of Ngong look out for me?

According to her biographer, Judith Thurman, Dinesen altered and re-arranged the actual facts of her years in Africa, so that *Out of Africa* was shaped to fit the purpose of the storyteller. Sydney Pollack's film version, based on the book, the biography, and other sources such as Dinesen's letters, takes even more liberties with things as they actually were—sometimes jumbling them rather startlingly, presumably in the interest of dramatic impact. But if Dinesen can make Africa her tale, Pollack can make the tale his film, flying free but remaining true to the essence of the vision, as Dinesen herself did.

Pollack has indeed made a stunning and impressive film, one as seemingly out-of-its-time as Dinesen's own tales, but one which has succeeded in moving audiences deeply, bringing a whole new generation back to the riches of Dinesen's prose. For more than anything, the film captures the art of storytelling and the importance it had in Dinesen's life, partly through the way it tells its own tale, but equally through the rich cadences of Dinesen's own phrasing, which screenwriter Kurt Luedke has preserved with tremendous respect.

Pollack has also managed to find a visual equivalent of Dinesen's deceptively casual, episodic style, managing what would have seemed impossible: bringing descriptions of such power and precision to life on the screen with no loss of impact. Few films ever, with the possible exception of some of the works of David Lean or Peter Brook's *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, have captured such a sense of majesty and place. *Out of*



Mbogoni House

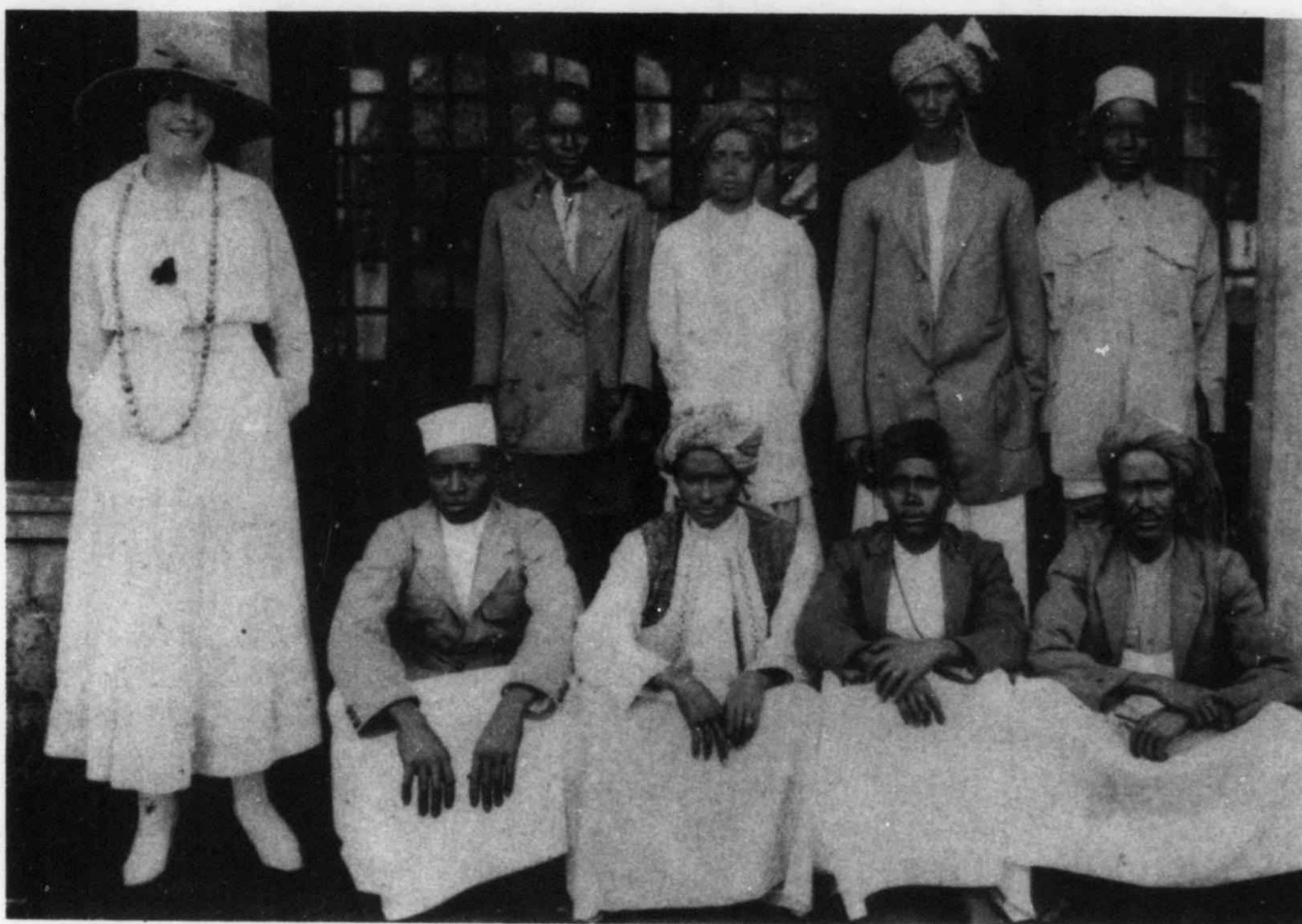
Africa is a film which should never be allowed on cable TV or videotape: the scope and scale of its vision absolutely defies that. It should be seen on as large a canvas as possible, with the best quadrophonic sound, never trapped in a cage, repackaged for the mass-market zoo, like the two giraffes Dinesen saw captive in wooden crates on the dock at Mombasa just before leaving Africa.

Dinesen has been described by a friend who knew her as "a true aristocrat," and her attitude towards life, and Africa, in her work reflects this. If there is anything lacking in Meryl Streep's otherwise richly textured portrait of Dinesen in the film (so convincing on other counts), it is this quality of refinement and gentility: regal, proud, daring, and brave, truly "the Lioness Blixen," as one of her old servants always addressed her when writing letters to her after she left.

Thurman has written that Dinesen "did not conceal her dislike for democra-

cy," adding, "It was not so much that the common people were unworthy to rule but that the system encouraged mediocrity, 'blurred distinctions,' renounced 'all ideals that are higher than those that can be reached.'" Late in life, she told a young poet who considered her his mentor that he "must not write for any single human being, or on behalf of any movement or cultural party, but because he owed God an answer."

Like the best of aristocrats, Dinesen had no real haughtiness or condescension in her dealings with people, as attested to by her sympathetic portraits of loners and outcasts in both the tales and the memoirs. Thurman speaks of the somewhat odd assortment of dreamers, sexual misfits, failed artists, and lapsed believers who people the tales as "fragile anachronisms"; she could as easily have been speaking of some of the major or minor players in *Out of Africa*: the slightly mad cook Kamante, the somber major domo Farah, cranky Old Knudson, the urbane



Courtesy of the Rungstedlund Foundation

Karen Blixen with some of her African staff

Berkeley Cole or even the great love of Dinesen's life, the British adventurer Denys Finch Hatton, whom the storyteller herself describes as a man who "did cut a figure in his own age, but it did not quite fit in anywhere." Elizabethans would have loved Finch Hatton, she says, "because to them he would have suggested that Antiquity, the Athens, of which they dreamed and wrote."

It is Finch Hatton who encouraged her to tell her stories aloud to him, and to write them down, if we are to trust the film and the book, but Dinesen had been collecting plots for her stories since her Danish girlhood, jotting down fragments and polishing them in her notebooks. She spoke of herself at times, only half in jest, as Scheherazade, whose life depended on keeping the thread of the tales going through 1001 nights, so that the Sultan never lost interest.

Thurman maintains Dinesen saw herself as clearly belonging to the oral tradition of literature, feeling her tales had "an almost physical or instinctual source, like the dance" and an "incantatory aspect." The biographer also quotes an observation by writer Nancy Wilson Ross after seeing Dinesen "perform" one of her tales: "In her eyes I saw a concentration so total as to be almost frightening: the abstracted, trancelike stare of a soothsayer, who is living wholly in another space and time"; and at another point Thurman compares Dinesen's storytelling to Kamante's clear consommé:

Perhaps the making of this soup taught Karen Blixen something about telling stories. The recipe calls for you to keep the spirit but to discard the substance of your rough ingredients: eggshells and raw bones, root vegetables and red meat. You then submit them, like a storyteller, to "fire and patience." And the clarity comes at the end, a magic trick.



Above, Baron Bror Blixen in his study, 1917; right, Karen Blixen and her deerhounds.

Though Dinesen's tales brim with literary sophistication, with references from classical mythology, the Bible, Shakespeare, grand opera, and philosophy, they also proceed with a precision and clarity more akin to ballads or folk tales, lulling the listener with their casualness, then surprising him in the end with the power and depth of their vision.

Like all great storytellers, Dinesen had a gift of metaphor, and it was a gift, or *baksheesh*, as the Swahili she knew in Africa would call it, that comes as an



Courtesy of the Rungstedlund Foundation.

unexpected surprise to the listener and is thereby all the more precious for the shock of awareness it brings. She writes with exceptional strength and vibrancy, in an English so crisp and clean that it (as she once said of the African landscape at 6,000 feet) has "no fat on it, no luxuriance anywhere." Her imagery startles not only because it is so meticulously crafted but because it has such audacity of vision, capitalizing frequently on what metaphysical poet Richard Crashaw dubbed "a commerce of contrary powers," with as much emphasis on power and contrariness as on the surprising combination of contrasting images or ideas.

Dinesen's tales are filled with such symbolic contrasts, between past and present, morality and passion, master and servant, male and female, tame and wild, Christian and pagan, Catholic and Protestant, innocence and experience, gentleness and strength, conscience and imagination, reason and madness, duty and freedom.

But the greatest metaphor remained Africa itself, an Africa that she immediately felt attuned to and at home in:

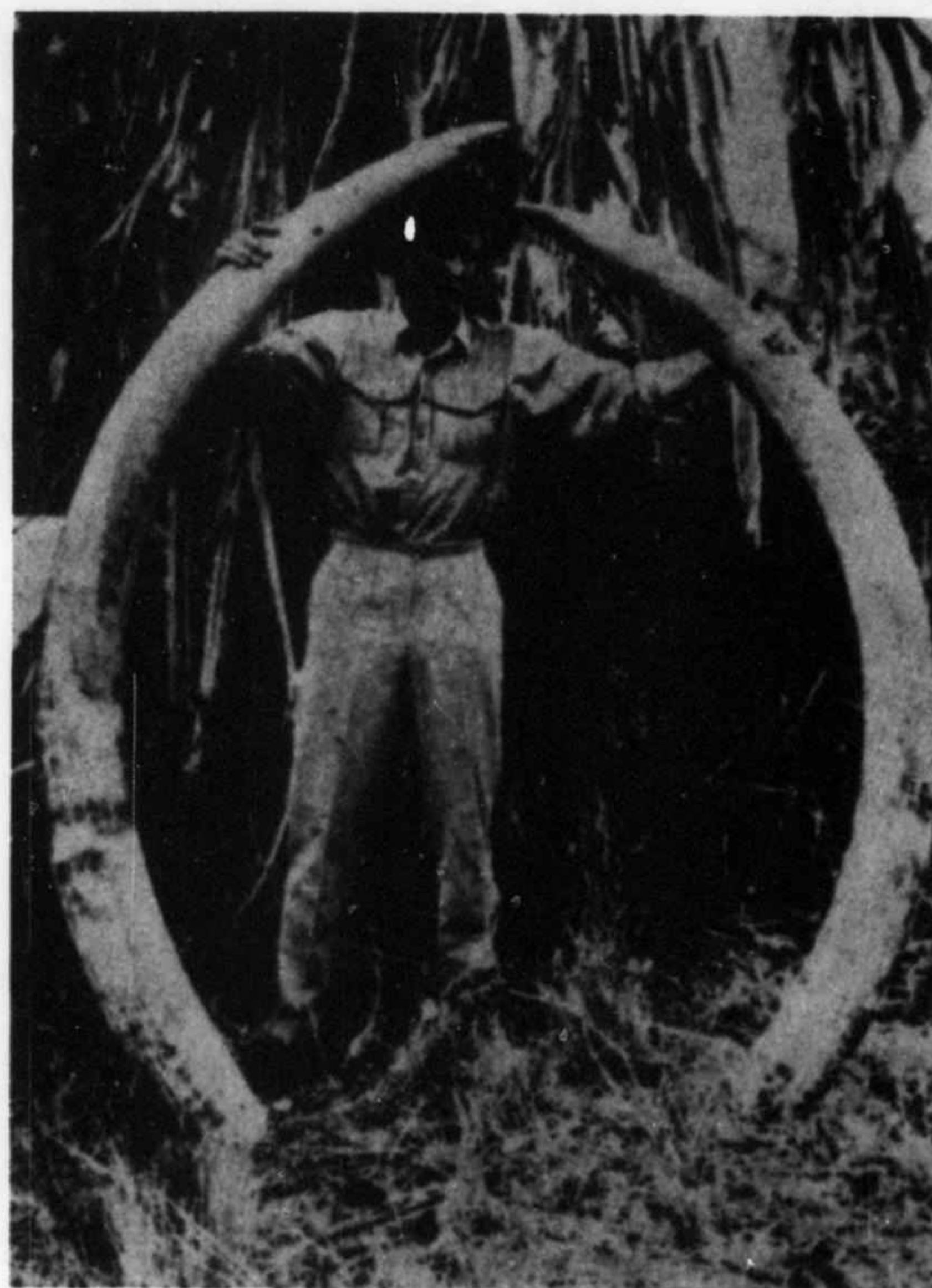
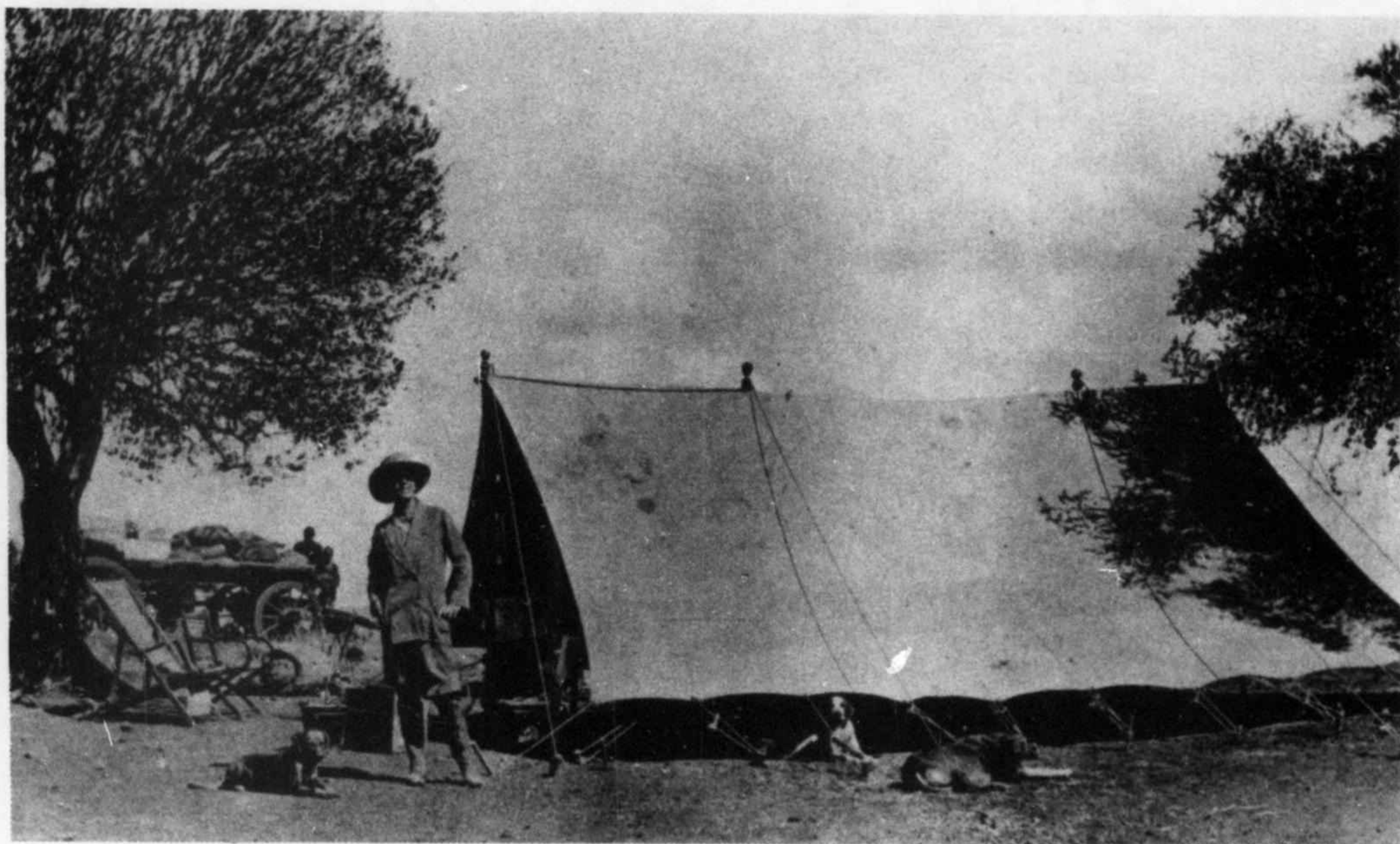
In the middle of the day the air was alive over the land, like a flame burning; it scintillated, waved and shone like running water, mirrored and doubled all objects, and created great Fata Morgana. Up in this high air you breathed easily, drawing in a vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the highlands you woke up in the morning and thought: Here I am, where I ought to be.

But an Africa that was, even then, enigmatic and fleeting, already compromised and changing, its roots withering and betrayed. While still in Kenya, Karen Blixen, not yet having adopted the pseudonym of Isak Dinesen, published one

poem, entitled in Latin, "Ex Africa"—literally, "from Africa," of course, but already implying an Africa that was no longer in happy union, a divorced partner, an "ex." Seven years after leaving Kenya Dinesen used the same phrase in English as the title of her ode to the continent—a phrase with similar layers of meaning about covenants made and betrayed, about inspiration and divorce. The change that Africa had made in Blixen was profound, as she realized quickly back in Denmark: "Now, looking back on my life in Africa, I feel that it might altogether be described as the existence of a person who had come from a rushed and noisy world, into a still country." Her love for Finch Hatton, and her grief at his death in a small plane crash just a month before she left Africa forever, became almost indistinguishable in time with the metaphor of Africa itself. Describing the funeral, she insists that "after a while, the hills themselves took charge of the ceremony" and concludes:

Denys had watched and followed all the ways of the African Highlands, and better than any other white man, he had known their soil and seasons, the vegetation and the wild animals, the wind and smells. . . . He had taken in the country, and in his eyes and his mind it had been changed, marked by his own individuality, and made part of him. Now Africa received him, and would change him, and make him one with herself.

Africa's own inhabitants, the natives, deeply affected Dinesen as well. "The introduction into my life of another race, essentially different from mine," she says in *Shadows on the Grass*, ". . . became to me a mysterious expansion of my world. My own voice and song in life there had a second set to it and grew fuller and richer in the duet." In *Out of Africa*, she had confided, "Because of their gift for myths, the Natives can also do things to you against which you can-



Above, Karen Blixen outside the safari tent; right, Denys Finch Hatton

Courtesy of the Rungstedlund Foundation

not guard yourself and from which you cannot escape. They can turn you into a symbol." And again, "White people, who for a long time live alone with the Natives, get into the habit of saying what they mean, because they have no reason or opportunity for dissimulation, and when they meet again their conver-

sation keeps the Native tone."

On leaving Africa, Dinesen lamented what civilization was doing to a noble culture: "It is more than their land that you take away from the people, whose Native land you take. It is their past as well, their roots and their identity." Years later she would add, "We

had deliberately deprived our picture of them of a dimension, thus allowing it to become distorted to our eyes and blurred in its Native harmony and dignity, and our error of vision had caused deep and sad misunderstandings between them and us." Similarly, "They had had our civilization presented to them piecemeal. . . . We had been transforming, to them, Rite into Routine. What by now most of all they feared from our hands was boredom."

Though Thurman questions whether Dinesen's relationship with the native Africans was not somewhat feudal and superficial, the book and the film beg otherwise, showing a rather astonishing sense of kinship and respect. Similarly, her remarks about Islam, in a discussion of the life of her servant Farah, show considerable openness and insight.

What is surprising about the film is how many of these themes and metaphors it manages to encompass. There is much that is left out—Lulu the antelope, the *ngoma* dance ceremonies, the saga of Old Knudson, and the visits to the farm of Karen's mother and brother (also curiously absent from the book itself)—but perhaps that is as it should be, if the film indeed serves a greater purpose and guides viewers back to Dinesen's own writings (including her letters, now available in paperback from University of Chicago Press).

Other changes in the film are harder to fathom: the blowing out of proportion of a fire on the farm, or of a trip by Blixen to bring army supplies to her husband's troops during the First World War, or of the British influence on Nairobi society—even the gratuitous introduction of a young woman named Felicity into the plot line. Dinesen's relationship with Finch Hatton also gets the heavy romantic treatment, compromising the real significance of the twelve-year-long interlude in Dinesen's

life (which Thurman maintains was primarily an intellectual or spiritual attachment). Love scenes, for better or worse, still sell movies.

But Pollack manages to bring all the characters vibrantly to life, perhaps more so than Dinesen permitted herself to do. Farah (played by Malick Bowen) especially stands out, as do Streep's Dinesen and Robert Redford's Finch Hatton (which has been unfairly attacked in some quarters for not being properly British enough when, indeed, being "proper" or highly "British" seems to be practically the last quality the free-spirited Finch Hatton possessed).

A lot of little white lies slip in—somewhat surprisingly, considering that Thurman was a consultant on the film—like Finch Hatton's telling Dinesen he had just learned to fly the day before he takes her up in his plane, or having her ex-husband Bror bring Dinesen the news of Finch Hatton's death. But with a scene like the small plane's flight over a field of pink flamingos—or Finch Hatton's offscreen death, announced to the film's audience via a song by African natives that suddenly stops midnote, with an ominous echo hanging poignantly in the air—all is easily forgiven.

On the other hand, the Sierra Club photo book is curiously unsatisfying, as if the pages are too small to contain the Africa being described in Dinesen's own well-chosen words. Especially positioned next to the metaphors, which soar and sing, the pictures look flat and strangely silent, just there on the page, nothing more than themselves. ■

Rob Baker is a former editor of PARABOLA and is now editing a magazine on computer technology, in addition to continuing with his film and theater criticism.

BOOK REVIEWS

Masks of the Universe

By Edward Harrison. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1985. Pp. 306. \$18.95.

While most professors dwell in ivory towers, Edward Harrison inhabits a house of cards: "The thoughts expressed in this book are . . . ephemeral, factually superficial, and idealistically perishable," he warns us at the outset. A modest man, one presumes. But Harrison, who teaches astronomy and physics at the University of Massachusetts, deflates everyone else's thoughts with equal zeal. Given his thesis, he really has no choice. For he argues in this important, eloquent book that every belief-system or world-view that human beings have championed is nothing more than a mask—often of exquisite beauty and profound insight—clamped over the true face of the Universe; the Universe itself remains a mysterious, unknown *something*—or, rather, *everything* beyond comprehension or reduction.

Harrison calls these world-views "universes"; note the lower case. To those who live within them, each universe is *the* Universe; humankind's knack for mistaking the part for the whole stands as its most glaring birthmark. A universe lives in a symbiotic relationship with the society that constructs it (universes are never private affairs), and topples when invasion by a

foreign culture or new discoveries from within give birth to ideologies that burst its boundaries.

Harrison distinguishes seven major universes, listed here in the order of their appearance on our planet:

Magic. A universe which Harrison ascribes to Neanderthal and other pre-*homo sapiens sapiens*. In this conjectured cosmos (there are no extant examples), everything that exists is alive and imbued with spirits. To our surprise, the magic universe is the "most rational and lucid" of all universes, internally consistent and instantly responsive to human demands: if a rock trips a child, the mother scolds the rock and it will cease its mischievous behavior.

Magicomythic. The totemic universe still observable among some preliterate cultures—Australian aborigine, for instance—in which godlike or superhuman spirits array themselves in a hierarchical order and regulate the world.

Mythic. The mythic universe marks the withdrawal of life from nature—fire is no longer alive, trees no longer feel pain—and the advent of the gods; Homeric Greece is a prime example.

Geometric. The geometric universe is the world of the Ionians, Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle, in which the two fundamental questions—how and why—acquire the organized dress of science and philosophy.

Medieval. Harrison considers the medieval universe, with its Great Chain of

Myth, Cosmos, and Society

Indo-European Themes of
Creation and Destruction

Bruce Lincoln

This is a major study of how myth and society reinforce each other by one of America's leading specialists in the history of religions. Lincoln explores a large number of texts from dif-

ferent cultures, and concludes that the individual, society, and cosmos are linked in a single mythic system. To understand these mythic themes is to understand the dynamics of society, for myths function ultimately as the invisible organization of society.

\$22.50

Harvard University Press
Cambridge, MA 02138

Being, universities, and technological abundance (clocks, paper, spectacles) to be the last and greatest of the mythic universes.

Infinite. With the infinite universe of Copernicus, Bruno, and Brahe, humankind begins to shrug off the mantle of Christian dogma, although we are still in the heart of Christendom.

Mechanistic. Harrison's historical blueprint ends with the Mechanistic universe of Newton, Kant, Spenser, and Darwin, a universe of deism and rigid laws.

All this is prelude to the modern universe, to which Harrison devotes the heart of his book. He doesn't ascribe a name to this universe, although he seems to consider it a subset of the me-

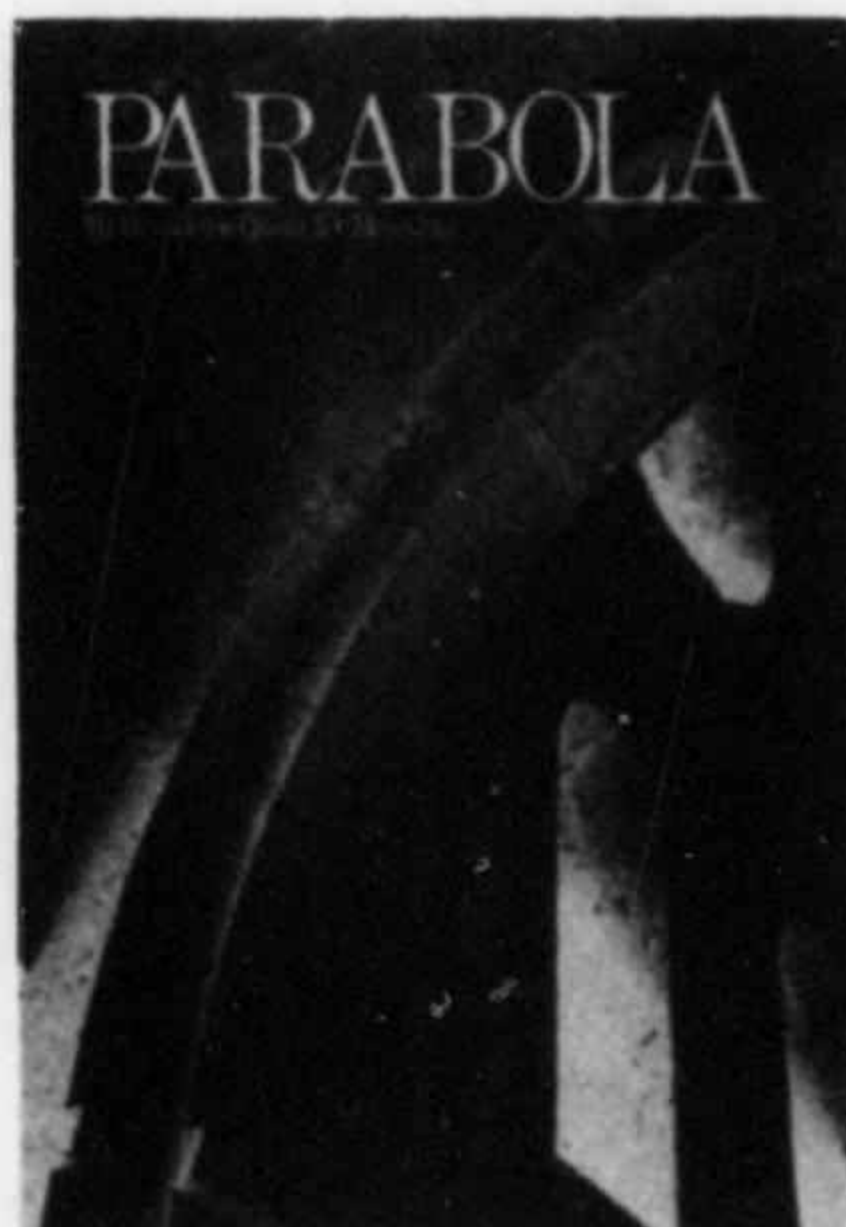
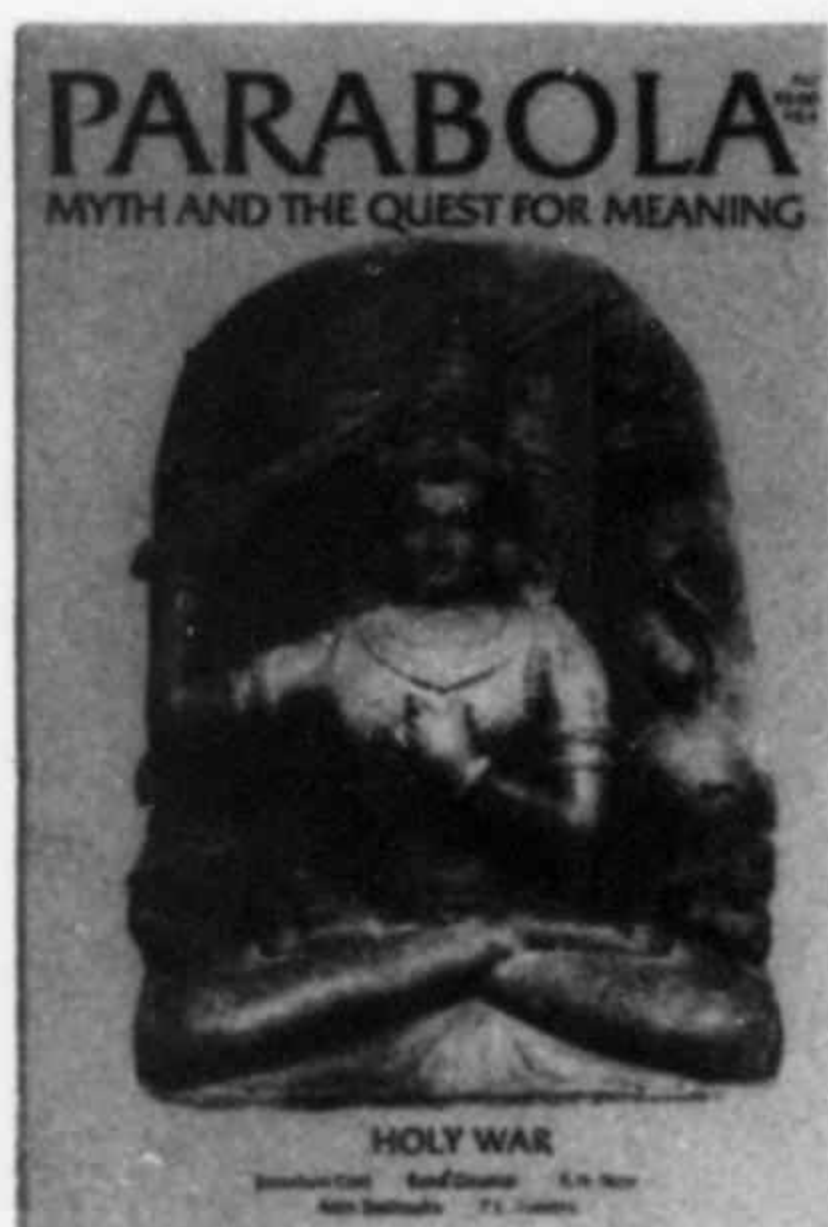
chanistic cosmos, a contention which many people will dispute. In any case, Harrison summarizes with exceptional clarity the physics of the contemporary cosmos, covering hadrons and quarks, black holes, the early minutes following the Big Bang, and all the other exotic flora and fauna of micro- and macro-physics.

These, then, are the universes which humankind has constructed and inhabited. It's apparent that Harrison, perhaps more hobbled by the mechanistic worldview than he realizes, tends to describe a universe in terms of its science. He also overlooks the universes of the Far East. But putting the question of authorial limits to the side, an obvious question arises: which universe most accurately

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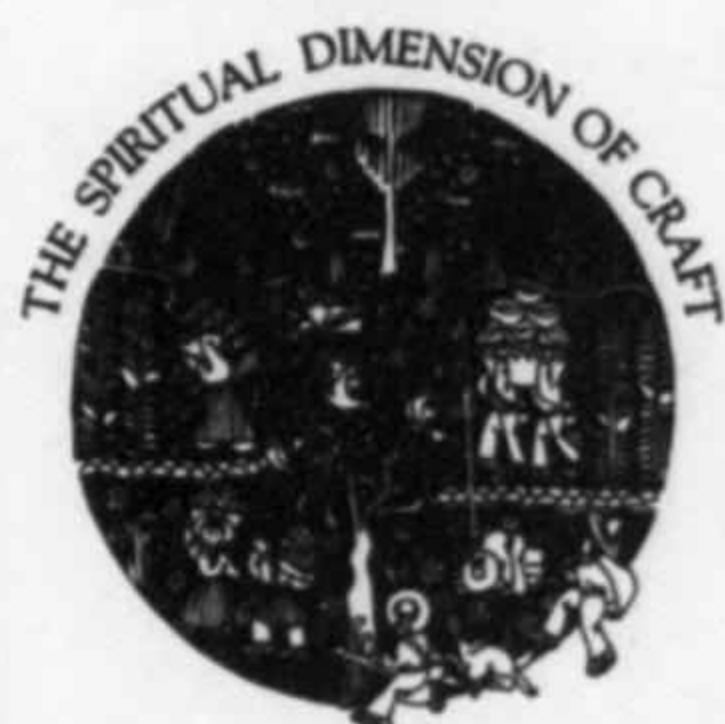
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describes things as they are? Which is closest to reality? A laboratory drone might say the mechanistic universe; a Catholic monk, the medieval universe; a Tasaday, the magicomythic. To Harrison, this leads to two momentous observations: that we perceive the universe we live in as completely real and superseding all previous universes; and that we are unable to judge the men and minds of other universes by the criteria of our own.

Now, all this has a bracing and blocking effect. It braces because no one can claim to possess absolute knowledge; all beliefs are provisional and subject to revision; knowledge is a living system that periodically transforms itself as radically as seed into flower or caterpillar into butterfly, rather than a pile of inert facts to be accumulated and squirreled away. On the other hand, Harrison's view can lead to despair: if all knowledge is provisional, probably wrong, and certain to be overthrown, why bother learning anything? Harrison's response, which provides scant consolation to those grasping for bedrock in this cosmological quicksand, is that every universe, however distorted, is a warped aspect of the whole.

In any case, a more serious objection

to his schema is that he approaches each universe on a literal level, oblivious to the symbolic and psychological truths inherent in, for instance, mythology. His treatment of orthodox religion feels equally thin; in his view (which he half-jokingly describes as "sophomoric") religion consists only of emotions and ideas; religious ideas vary from place to place and time to time, but religious feelings everywhere remain more or less the same. This model ignores a multitude of elements—grace and revelation, to name just two—that can be found in religions around the globe, as well as rarer ideas such as the possibility of subtler levels of thought and emotion, or the concept of a way of knowledge that harmonizes feeling and thought. Yet Harrison holds religion dear. He plumps for a religion without mythology, one "evoked by contemporary modes of thought"—a pleasant enough ambition but rather improbable (since demythologizing usually leads to skepticism), unless he means the watery broth of Einstein or Bucke, in which religion consists of a *frisson* of wonder at the universe. The problem seems to be that Harrison equates religion, even on its most sublime level, with worship of "ideas of divinity." But what Eckhart or Rumi experienced was,

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Michael P. Carroll

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at least judging by their own testimony, not a bloodless concept but a living presence. Harrison's sloppiness in dealing with religion extends to his discussion of some major religious figures, especially Augustine. He draws a stark opposition between Pelagius and Augustine, insisting more than once that the Bishop of Hippo—the author of *On the Free Choice of the Will* . . . !—was a strict determinist who taught “a rational universe . . . in which human beings lack free will and behave as robotic creatures.” Perhaps Harrison confuses predestination and determinism.

Nor, although Harrison acknowledges the debt each universe pays to its predecessors (“much of science, I dare to say, consists of magic disciplined by a calculus of mythic laws”) does he acknowledge how nimbly people these days can shuttle from one universe to another, passing in half an hour from, say, a sense of meaninglessness (mechanistic universe) to prayer (medieval) to a belief in bad luck (magic?), depending on the demands of the moment. Something has changed in the last one hundred years: the universes are beginning to melt and overlap; the relativity of knowledge has become a cornerstone of the modern world-view, and priests and positivists shop in the same supermarket. No earlier universe would be capable of publishing a book like this. Harrison also needs to confront the logical impasses embedded in his speculations: if our contemporary universe comes no closer than any other to describing the Universe as it really is, then our belief in multiple valid universes may itself one day be uncloaked as wild surmise.

Despite these criticisms, the core of

Harrison's argument—that “the mysteries are vastly more profound and the mind vastly more potent than we commonly imagine”—cannot be overvalued. It takes courage for a physicist and astronomer to challenge the prevailing (sometimes compulsory) belief that the scientific world-view supersedes all others and holds high the crown of Truth. And it's cause for celebration when this challenge is issued with such eloquence. Harrison's graceful prose, his ability to enter alien points of view, and his belief in the provisional nature of truth all lead one to suspect that he would make a splendid novelist. Indeed, novelists report that a time comes when their characters take on a life of their own and begin to behave in unpredictable, even unimaginable ways; so, too, Harrison teaches that the quest for knowledge will always be uncertain, unexpected, unresolved.

Philip Zaleski

Philip Zaleski is a freelance writer and a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

Islam and the Destiny of Man

By *Charles Le Gai Eaton*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985. Pp. 242. \$36.50. Paper \$11.95.

This is a beautifully written book. It offers a taste of theology, of history, of aesthetics and of eschatology, blended in such a way as to provide a whole and



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balanced image, a vision of life that is both comprehensive and thoroughly Islamic.

The author is a believer, a man of faith, who speaks from within the tradition yet with the firsthand knowledge of what it means to see things through Western eyes. The greatest service the book offers is to present the Islamic understanding of God, the world, the flow of history, and the essence of humanity in terms that are not only comprehensible to the non-Muslim reader but which actively lift him or her outside a parochial Western orientation. You must understand, says the author, that the Muslim simply looks at things in a manner which is often very different from the way you in the West view them. His approach is both refreshing and persuasive. The combination of rhetoric and logic sweeps one along in the flow of the book. The reader discovers that those elements in the religion of Islam that seem so difficult to understand—and so easy therefore to reject—have a logic of their own and an integrity that is indisputable when seen in context.

The work is clearly a piece of apologetic in which Islam and its manifold components are presented in the most favorable light possible. I find this endeavor very welcome. For years in the West we have had a steady flow of works attempting to “explain” Islam from a Western perspective, written either from the now-objectionable orientalist approach or from the point of view of the sympathetic outsider trying to present Islam appreciatively. And in the past few decades we have seen much Islamic apologetic literature that is so unimaginative and literal as often to set back the very cause it hopes to advance.

In Eaton's work we have something different. Cast in much the same mood as the writing of Frithjof Schuon and Martin Lings, it nonetheless avoids a suggestion of movement toward the transcendental unity of religion. In a manner similar to the work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, editor of the series in which this book appears, it offers a range of interpretation of Islamic realities, engagingly suggesting the richness of the tradition in ways that should be compelling to Western audiences.

The great themes of divine revelation and human history are intertwined in this book with glimpses into the most personal and intimate experiences of the lives of the members of the early community. Hear this brief passage, for example, describing the reactions of A'isha to the death of her beloved husband, Muhammad the Prophet: “His head grew heavy on the girl's breast, and when she was sure he had gone, she laid him gently down and rose to express her sorrow and the people's sorrow in the accustomed ways, breaking death's silence with the cries which expose all human grief to the earth and the sky and the four corners of the world. . . .” The book itself illustrates the sense of balance that is so integral to the Muslim understanding of the world. It moves from a section on the essentials of the faith to one on the historical development of Islam as a religion and a community (a most enjoyable set of chapters) and back to the relation of the elements of the first section to the law, the world of nature, aesthetics, and eschatology. Rather than giving the usual introductory presentation of topical chapters, Eaton very artfully draws his themes through the material, weaving

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them into an integrated whole. Always he stresses the balance between the individual and the community, the literal and the symbolic, the immediate and the eternal.

All this is not to say that one could not find points to criticize in the book. What Eaton presents as the historical development of early Islam is scarcely "hard" history. But clearly his intent is to blend together those facts that historians have taken to be reliable with the traditions and stories that the faithful themselves have accepted as reliable by other standards. The result is enriching. Starting with the title, feminists could object to Eaton's choice of "male-oriented" language and exemplars. Such an

objection, however, seems a bit trivial in light of the rich bidimensional imagery of nature upon which he draws in illuminating his points. Or one might regret his use of such categorical terminology as orthodoxy and heresy. And so forth. But to dwell on such concerns, I feel, is to do the book and oneself an unnecessary disservice. For what this presentation is not, I am ready to forgive it. And for what it is—a sensitive, creative, and artistically crafted explication of the meaning of being Muslim—I am very grateful. The book should be read and felt by persons inside and outside the tradition. Those for whom Islam has been a lifetime study will find it delightfully refreshing, and those as yet uninitiated can begin with

the clear vision of a faith that is both challenging and nurturing.

Jane I. Smith

Jane I. Smith is Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Lecturer in Islamics at Harvard Divinity School. She is the author of works on Islamic eschatology, Qur'an exegesis and Muslim women.

Holy Days: The World of a Hasidic Family

By Lis Harris. New York: Summit Books, 1985. Pp. 267. \$18.95.

Midway through the book *Holy Days*, Lis Harris defines the paradigmatic Jewish religious experience as a private encounter with the ultimate. Moses and the burning bush, Jacob wrestling with the angel, Abraham binding Isaac. She fails to mention the climactic event in Jewish history, the revelation before two million souls at Mount Sinai. Yet her archetype holds true. In that theophanic moment an entire people, as one man, turned away from the world to look inward together toward the vision of God. Jewish history has existed in tension ever since; whether to carry the

Divine message among the nations as priest and teacher—and face possible resentment and dispersion—or to maintain their inward purity in a monastic isolation. For the Hasidim of today, the choice has clearly been the second.

Lis Harris, a staff writer for the *New Yorker* and a secularized Jew, has written an insightful book that opens a window into the lives and values of the Hasidic community. *Holy Days* is an account of her insights and experiences over several years with a Lubavitch Hasidic family in their Crown Heights, Brooklyn, community. The author is inspired to begin her journey by an old photograph of a Hasid, an “anomaly” in her family tree, and goes on to find that the man’s fierce gaze was once the norm among Jews, and still burns among the Hasidim. Under the guidance of a Hasidic housewife she participates in their major life events: birth, death, and marriage, as well as the powerful Jewish festival cycle of Sabbaths and Holy Days. She comes carrying her suitcase of rumors and prejudices and with each chapter unloads and discards another major misconception about the Hasidim. What she finds is a thriving community of men and women committed to maintaining a utopian ideal of worship and sacrifice according to the complex ethical and mystical mandate of the Torah.

Private revelation is a major theme in *Holy Days*. As a woman, Ms. Harris has access to the secrets of the Hasidic home, the focus of the spiritual community. “The synagogue is not the center of Jewish life. The home is,” her hostess tells her. “The rituals I perform and the prayers I say as I go about my daily life

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. . . force me to think about the sanctity of the ordinary facts of my existence. . . . A lot of what we [women] do is done in private, but in our lives 'private' does not mean inferior." The home is the interface between the individual and the community. It is where personal spiritual experience is developed and refined and then extends outward to find its parallels in many communal religious gestures. The Sabbath rest and its required withdrawal from worldly distractions, the modest dress codes of men and women, the closely censored education are only a few examples. Ms. Harris's first visit to a *mikvah*, a ritual bath where married women must go after their monthly period, is one of the most precise and touching chapters on this theme. Here she must clean every part of herself before immersion in the purifying waters—they are called the waters of Eden—a symbol of the womb, from which one emerges spiritually renewed. This episode is followed immediately by a chapter on Passover and the exhaustive cleaning out of every speck of leavened substance from the home. (Leaven is symbolic of man's selfish inclination, and Jews are forbidden to either eat or possess it during the holiday.) This is in

preparation for the Passover Seder and its re-enactment of the exodus from Egypt, the movement from slavery to Divine encounter.

The second pervasive theme in *Holy Days* reflects a major concept in Jewish mystical theology—the presence of an overflowing abundance in a world of limitation. "Be fruitful and multiply" seems the catchword in every aspect of Hasidic life. It is here that Ms. Harris's precise eye for the particular and her clear writing style are most effective. She has a biblical penchant for lists, noting with awe and humor the immensity of detail with which the Hasidim are concerned.

The sense clearly conveyed here is that in the intersection of Transcendent Divinity and finite creation, life's smallest details convey revelatory potential. Because their world is governed by the complex laws of the Torah, overabundance does not tend toward chaos but rather seems ready to spring open at any moment to reveal the existence of a unitive substratum. Ms. Harris's hostess sums it up this way: "To see the beauty and holiness in everyday things. To try to elevate ordinary life. The key is in the Torah and the way to get there has been

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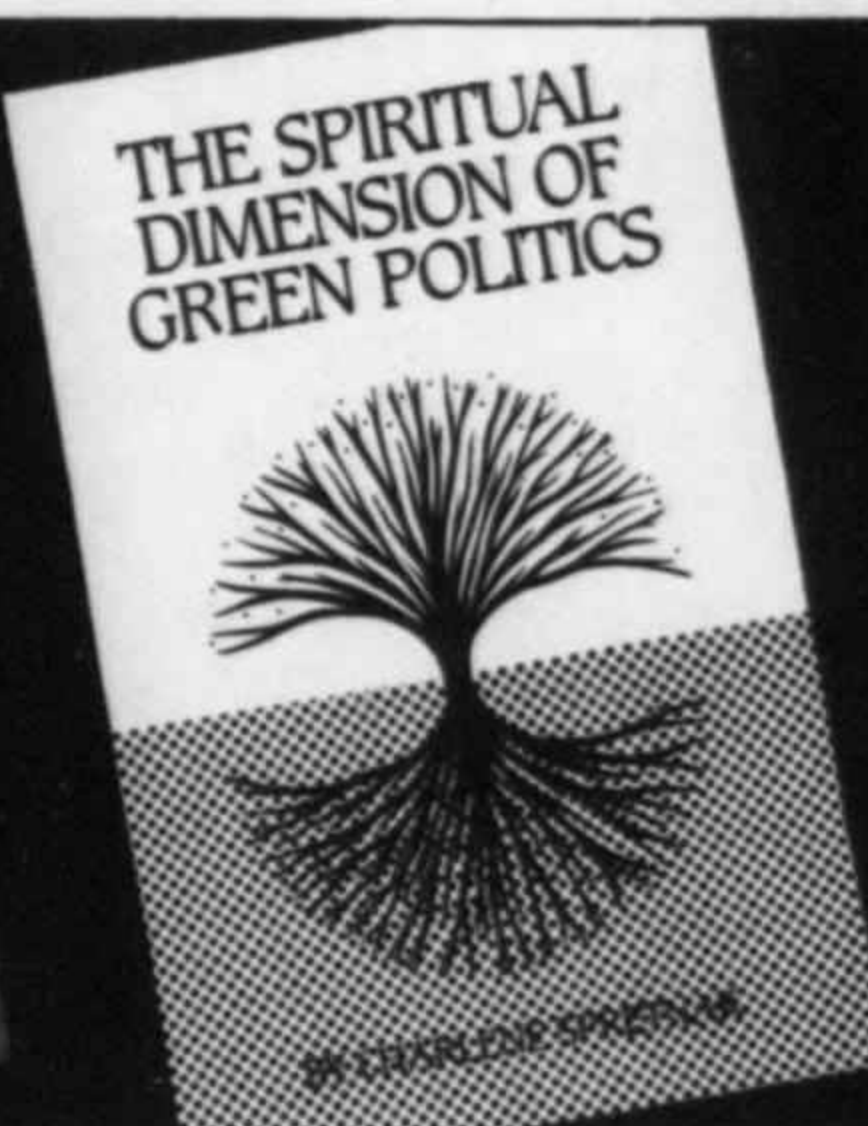
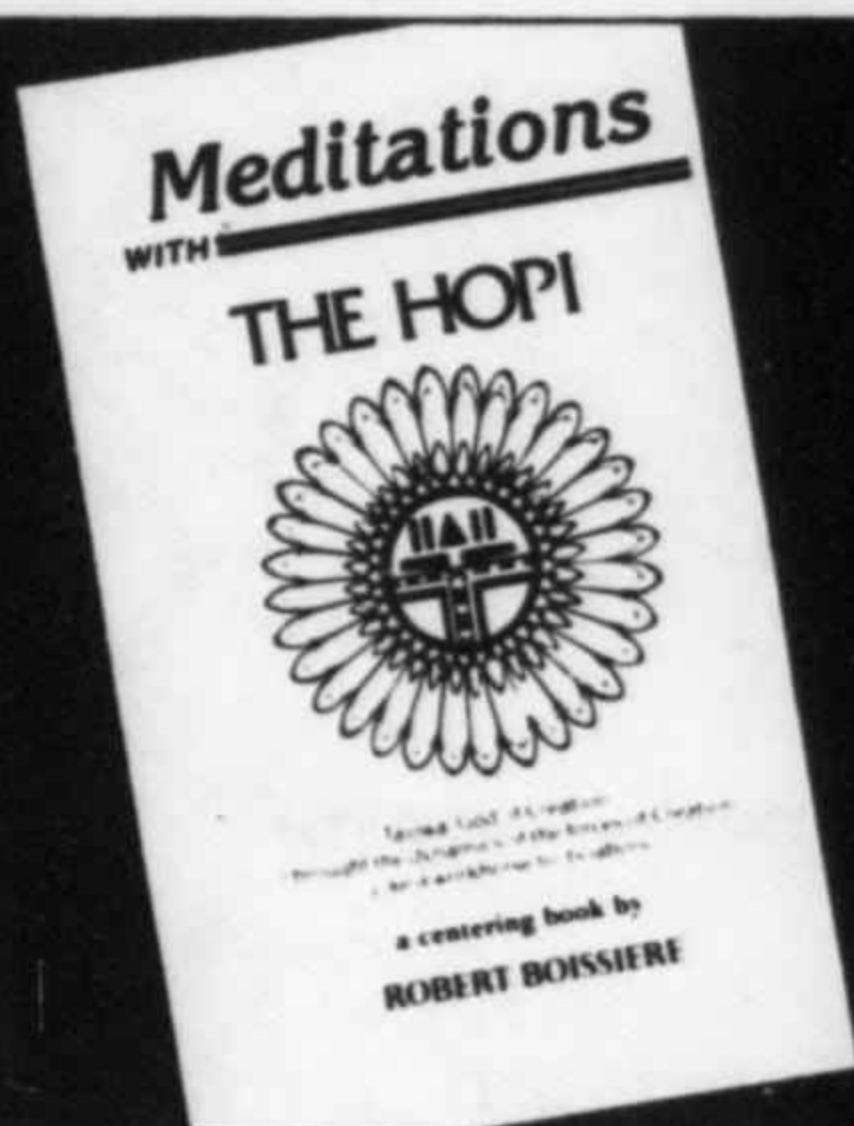
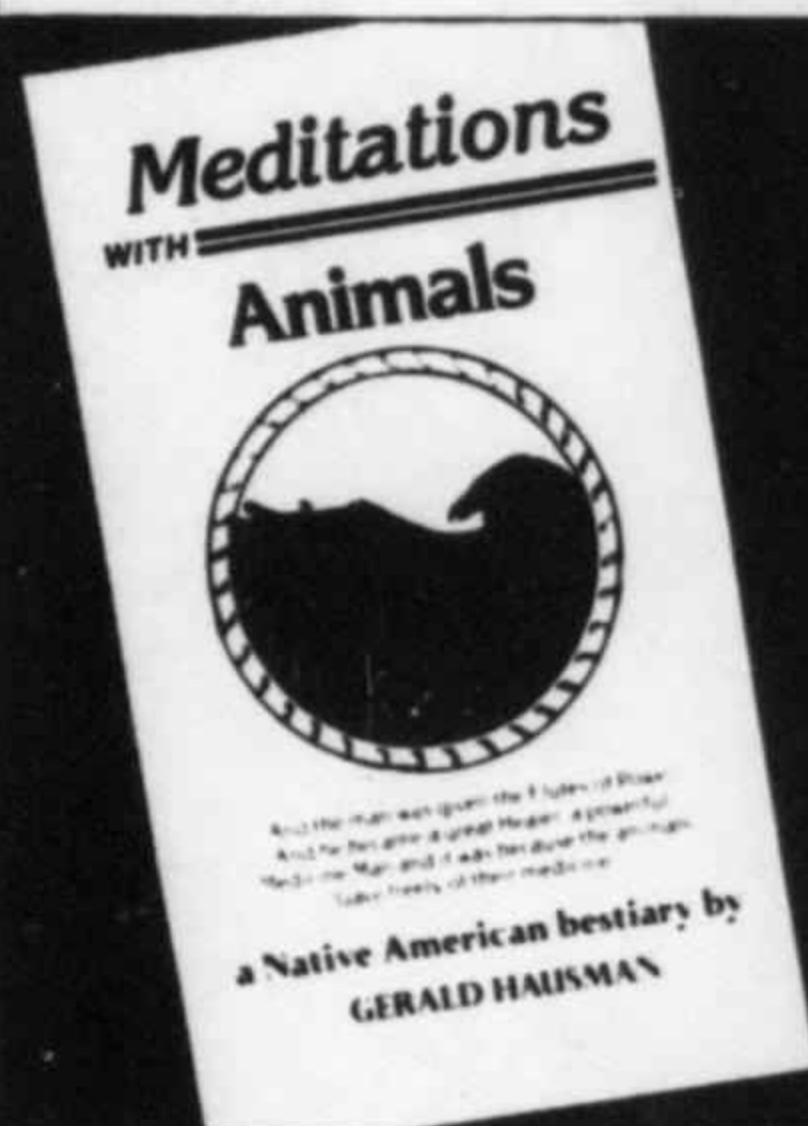
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shown us in a practical way by the *mitzvot* [commandments]."

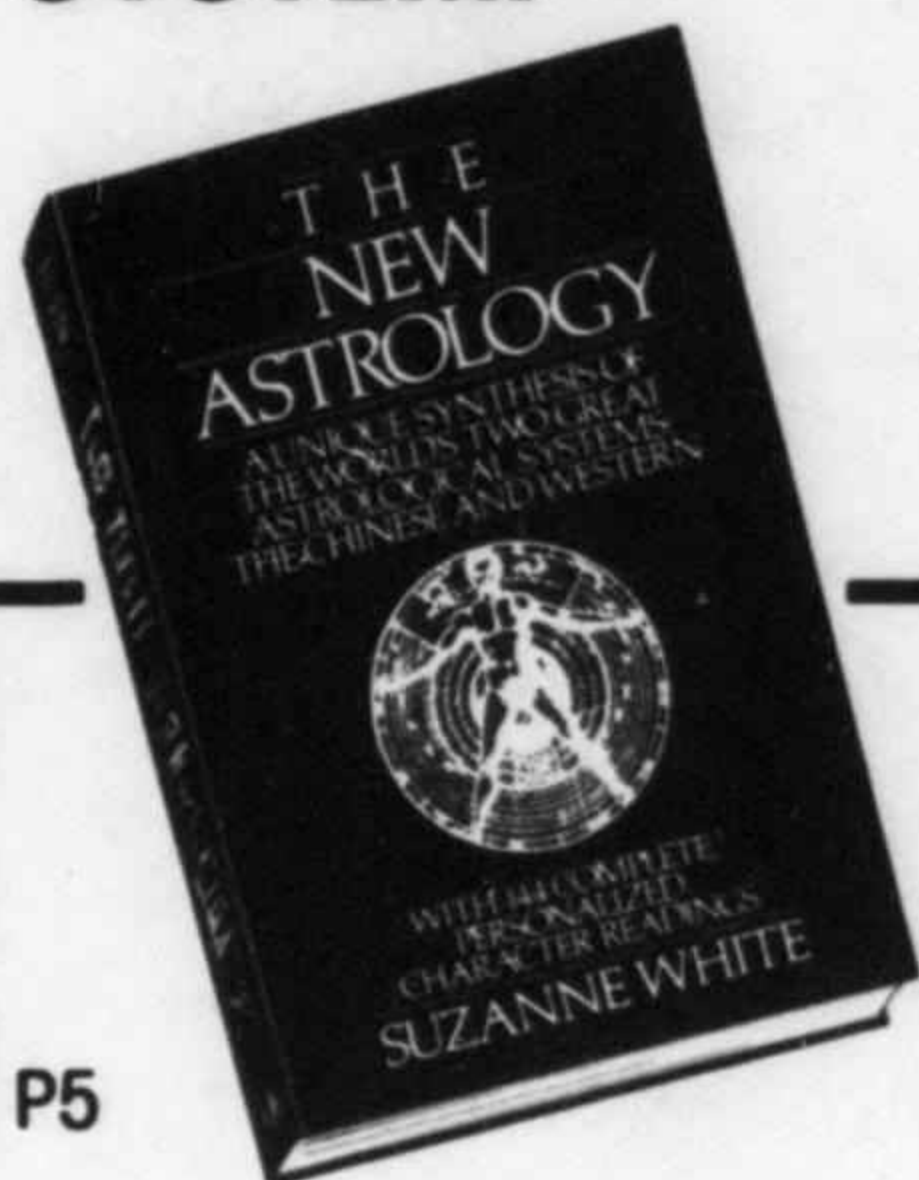
What the book clearly reveals, through the interplay of these themes, is that to the Hasidim, revelation of the Divine in the communal frame is through conformity to the moral legislation of the Torah. Only through ethical behavior, refined in the home and social arena, can man reflect a just and compassionate God. Thus the Hasidim do not shun modernity, as is mistakenly assumed, as long as it can be embraced in the moral fabric. Only those things that turn its members away from community, to involvement with the false god of the self, must be excised as destructive.

Despite the detailed narrative, Ms. Harris tells us remarkably little about herself, taking example perhaps from

those great Jewish mystics whose personalities were totally obscured by the enthusiasm of their quest. However, I found the chapter on "Dissidents" particularly personal and touching. Here Ms. Harris charts the lives of several "fallen" Hasidim who left their community for the wider options of the modern world. They share a remorse, the memory of a world of ideals and commitment they could not embrace. Through them we recognize our own dilemma: the gap between our personal visions and our ability to sacrifice for them. This chapter orients our world to that of the Hasidim and establishes a link, albeit distant, between our vision and their realization. *Holy Days* is paced very well.

The author intersperses her narrative

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with historical sketches, psychological and sociological studies, and short religious-philosophical discourses. Her continual sense of wonder does not prevent her from asking important questions about hidden imperfections in the seemingly unblemished fabric of the community. Only one area could have been expanded further. At times Ms. Harris's hosts seem shallow in their own understanding of their practice. Ms. Harris describes many of the mitzvot that constitute the daily observance of the Orthodox with the same offhanded manner that the Hasidim themselves speak of them, proceeding from a three-millennium familiarity. This is a deceptive casualness. The cohesive force behind the Hasidic community is not merely its tradition but a constant intellectual and

spiritual probing into the reasons and nature of their responsibility to God and His Torah. Perhaps Ms. Harris's admitted inability to gain access to the male side of the community (unmarried men and women remain strictly separate) is at fault here. For the men, intellectually integrating ancient teachings into personal and contemporary relevance is as important as the role of the women, who must practically integrate twentieth-century influences into the sanctuary of the home.

But *Holy Days* is not a religious discourse. It is a sensitive and accurate portrait of the morals and daily concerns of a community whose ancient values are becoming increasingly estranged from the surrounding twentieth-century environment, but whose vision of commit-

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ment and sacrifice is becoming all the more necessary and relevant for world survival. In *Holy Days* Lis Harris is fulfilling, in a small way, the role discarded by the Hasidim, that of bringing the image of God into our lives.

Eliezer Shore

Eliezer Shore is a writer on topics of Jewish interest and philosophy. He lives among the Hasidim in Boro Park, Brooklyn.

The Mirror and Man

By Benjamin Goldberg. Charlottesville, Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1985. Pp. xii + 260. \$20.00.

That a parabola has a focus was first recognized by the Chinese, who as

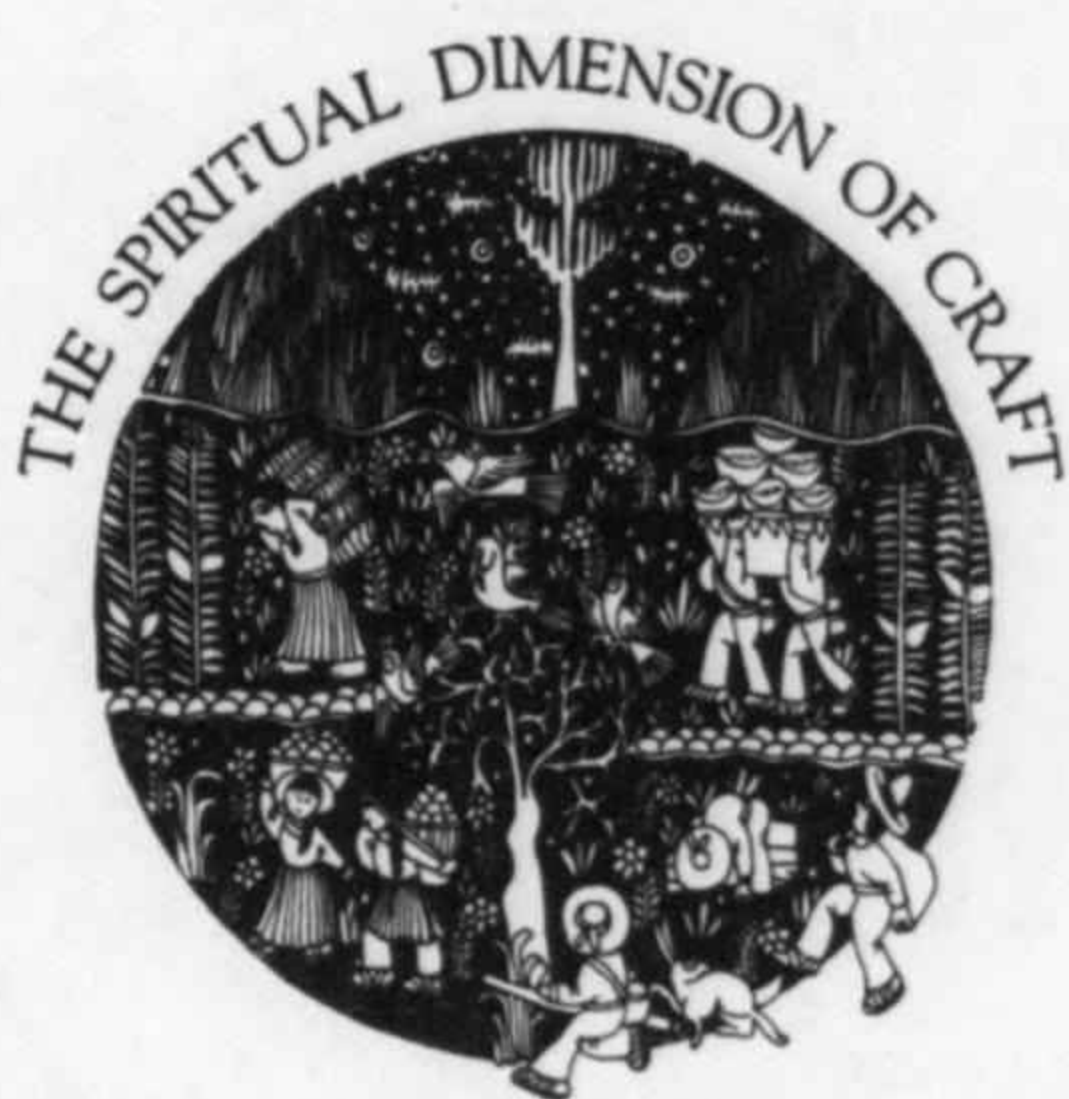
early as 1000 B.C. employed parabolic mirrors to start fires by collecting and then concentrating sunlight on flammable material. According to Benjamin Goldberg in his thorough and thoroughly entertaining *The Mirror and Man*, farmers and hunters of the era carried on the left side of their girdles a small convex (parabolic) metal mirror called a *yang-sui*, or sun-igniter, to set camp and cooking fires on cloudless days. Similarly, Goldberg's study of the impact of the mirror on society gathers up and offers—although without the parabola's sharp focus—an abundance of fascinating mirror lore with the potential to set the imagination on fire.

Goldberg, who is the retired Director of the Night Vision Laboratory at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, divides *The Mirror and Man* into two parts. The first deals primarily with humanity's emotional and spiritual response to the mirror as it evolved from its most primitive form—presumably a pool of water—into the distortion-free and elegantly packaged looking glasses of Thomas Chippendale and George Hepplewhite. The second section covers technological applications of the mirror, from the reflecting telescope (which, like the sun-igniter of the ancient Chinese, uses a parabolic mirror) to Hermann Oberth's proposed orbiting space mirror which would cover 27,000 square miles and which would, among its myriad applications, illuminate energy-poor cities and melt errant icebergs.

The author's basically chronological approach works well, reflecting the gradual ascendancy of the external and scientific over the internal and metaphys-

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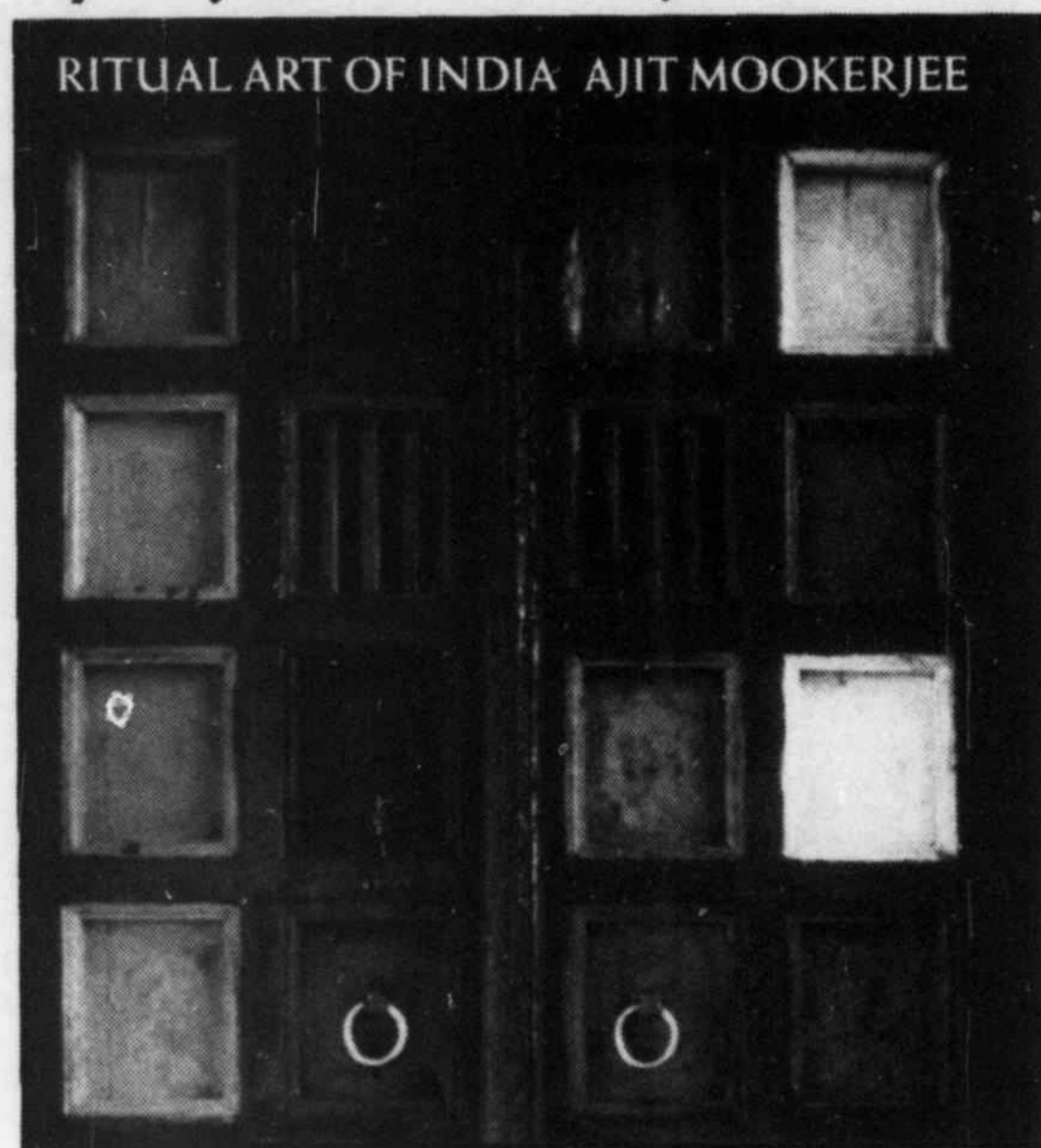
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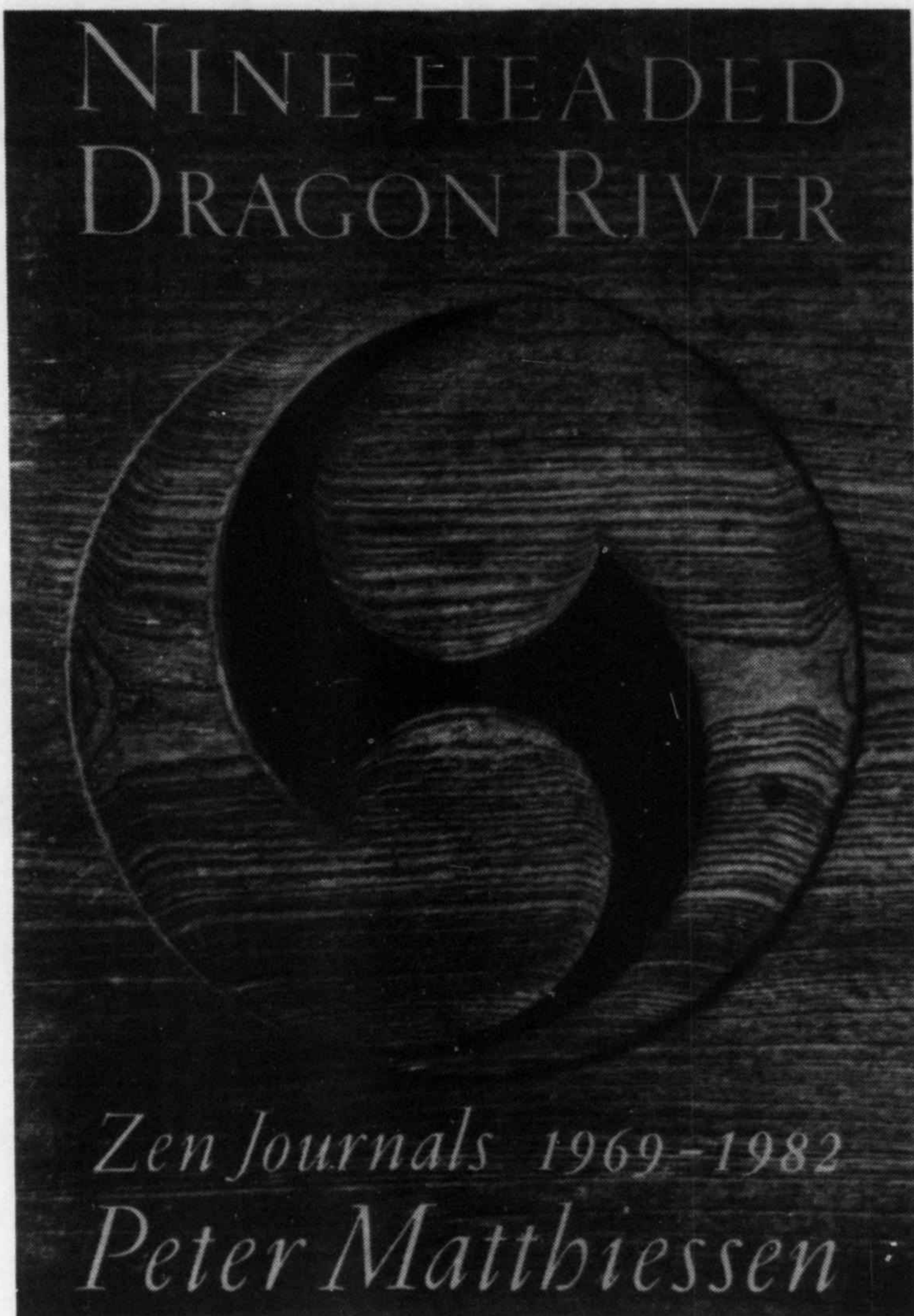
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ical in human affairs. In fact, reading Goldberg's work confirms the commonsense: that humanity's attitude toward the mirror always has corresponded to—and indeed been a barometer of—the prevailing world view: like an individual mirror, necessarily filled by what is put in front of it, humanity's theoretical and practical understanding and use of the mirror in each age have reflected the psychic tenor of that age. Through Goldberg's spirited instruction we learn that in magical societies the mirror's prime function was as a tool of divination (divination by way of reflecting surfaces has its own word, *scrying*, of which the most imaginative form must be *onychomancy*, the practice of viewing the future in the oil-covered

fingernails of virgin youths); in medieval times, when the Christian ethos reigned, physical mirrors lost favor but Augustine, St. Bonaventure, and others often used the mirror as a metaphor for humanity's relationship with God; during the Renaissance, when science and technology were feeling their oats, the mirror functioned as a tool for the exploration of external truths (it played a pivotal role in Filippo Brunelleschi's discovery of linear perspective); and so on.

Mysterious objects, mirrors, useless by themselves and of value only in relation to what and who is in front of them. Like an excellent mirror, Benjamin Goldberg's *The Mirror and Man* has no particular point of view and gives



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A Way of Working: The Spiritual Dimension of Craft

Edited by D.M. Dooling. New York: Parabola Books, 1986. Pp. xvi + 127. Paper. \$8.95.

Human activity, says A.K. Coomaraswamy, "consists in either a making or a doing. Both of these aspects of the active life depend for their correction on the contemplative life." It was a wisely chosen quote to begin this small but significant volume which is both a making and a doing, a work of craft in itself as it weaves together sections by no less than eight different writers. *A Way of Working* has as its stated purpose the consideration of craft as a bridge between the physical and the spiritual—both within a person and in that person's relationship to something "above." That bridge is just as important as contemplation or prayer and, in a way, may be seen as equivalent to both. This book makes that bridge an easier one for us to visualize and, perhaps, to cross.

In her introduction, D.M. Dooling, the book's editor, makes several clear and useful distinctions. "Craft," as this book defines it, is not just "work," certainly not drudgery or labor one is forced to do. It is, instead, "the making of beautiful things for use," and directly related to art. "Craft," Dooling continues, "cannot be separated from art any more than usefulness can be separated from beauty." Art, which "comes from an Indo-European root meaning *to fit together*, from which also comes *order*, which began as a word meaning a row of threads on a loom" and craft, which

back precisely what is invested into it—for better or worse. As an erudite and engaging guidebook to humanity's Hall of Mirrors, it is first-rate.

Jeff Zaleski

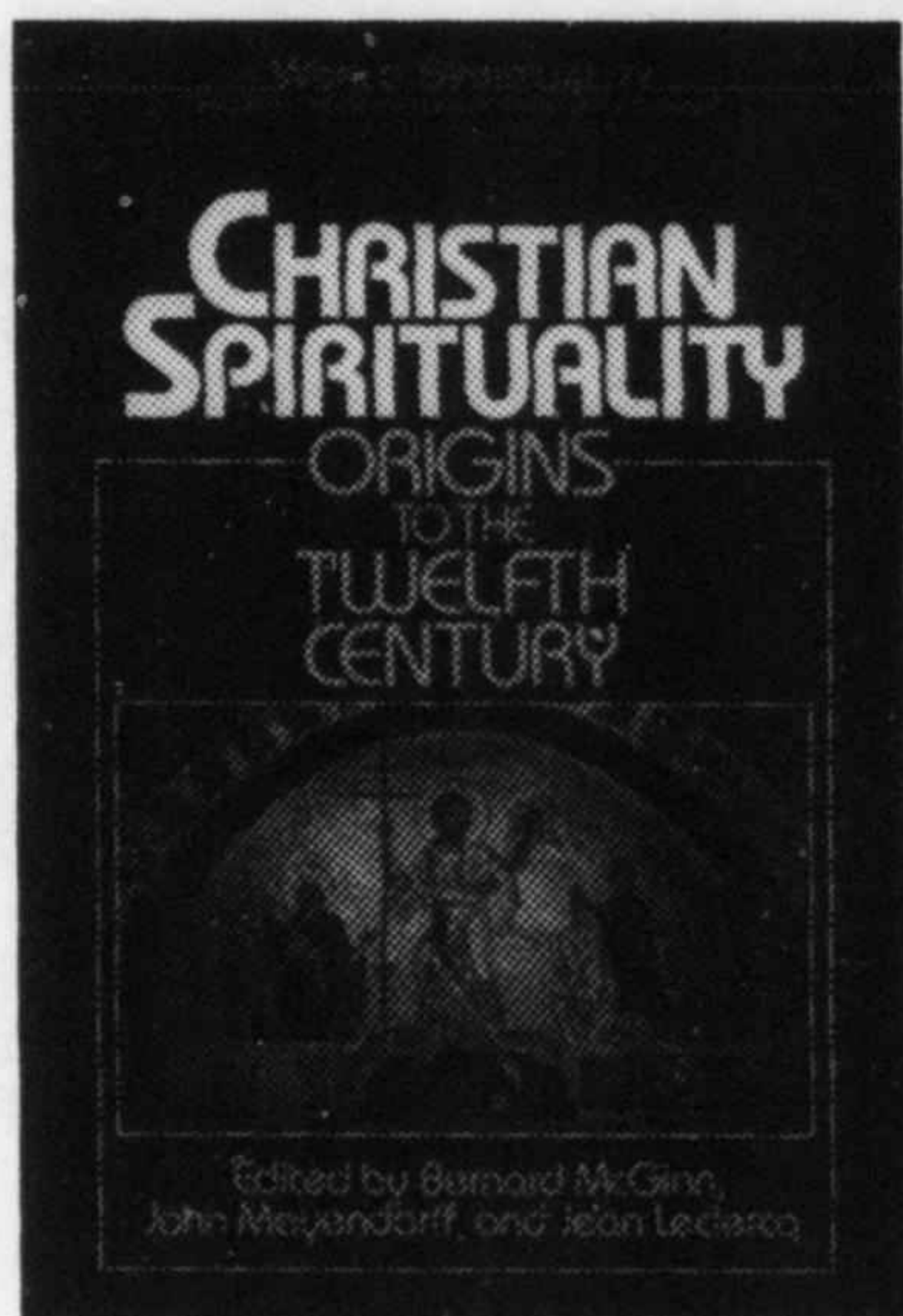
Jeff Zaleski is a freelance writer and editorial consultant.

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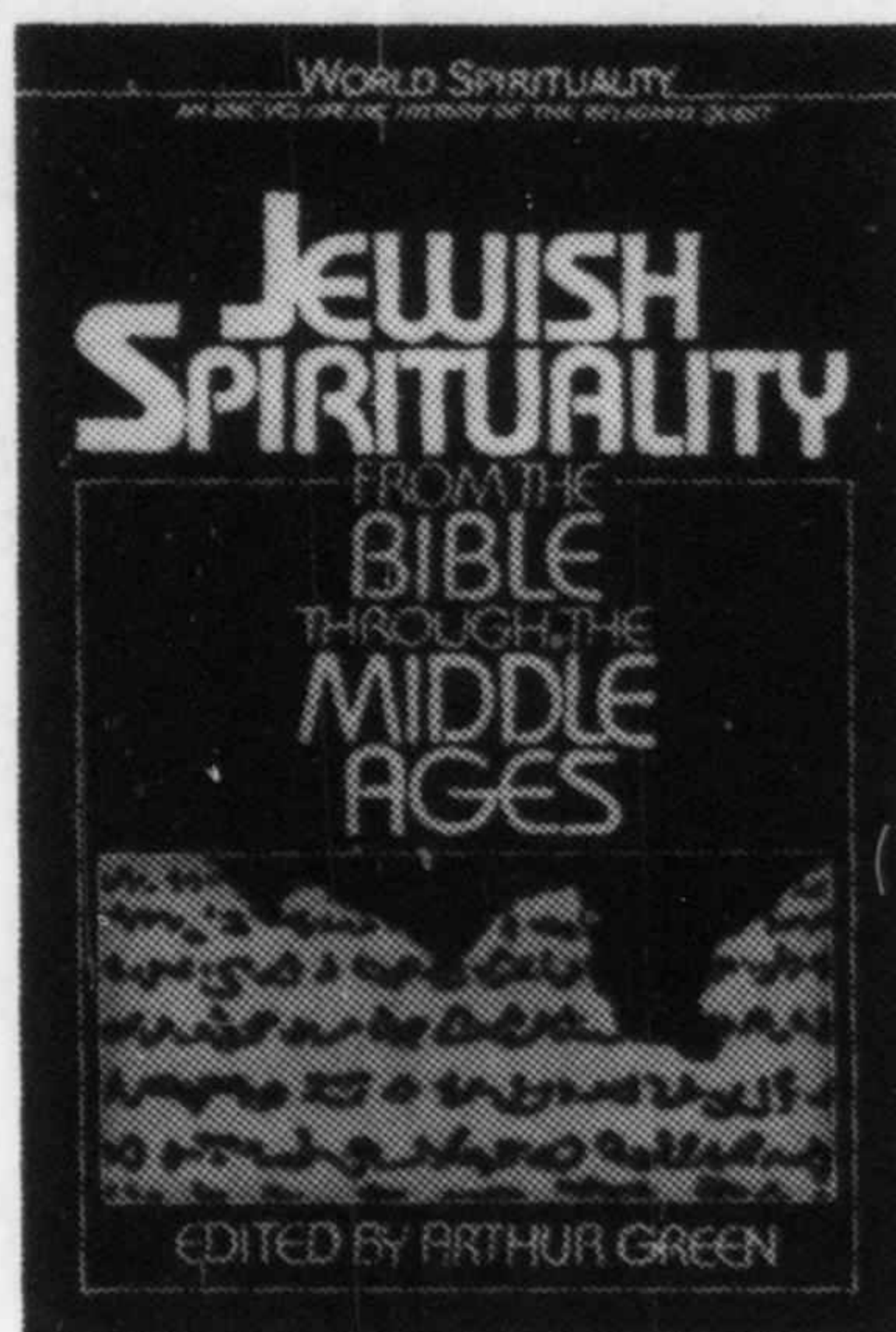


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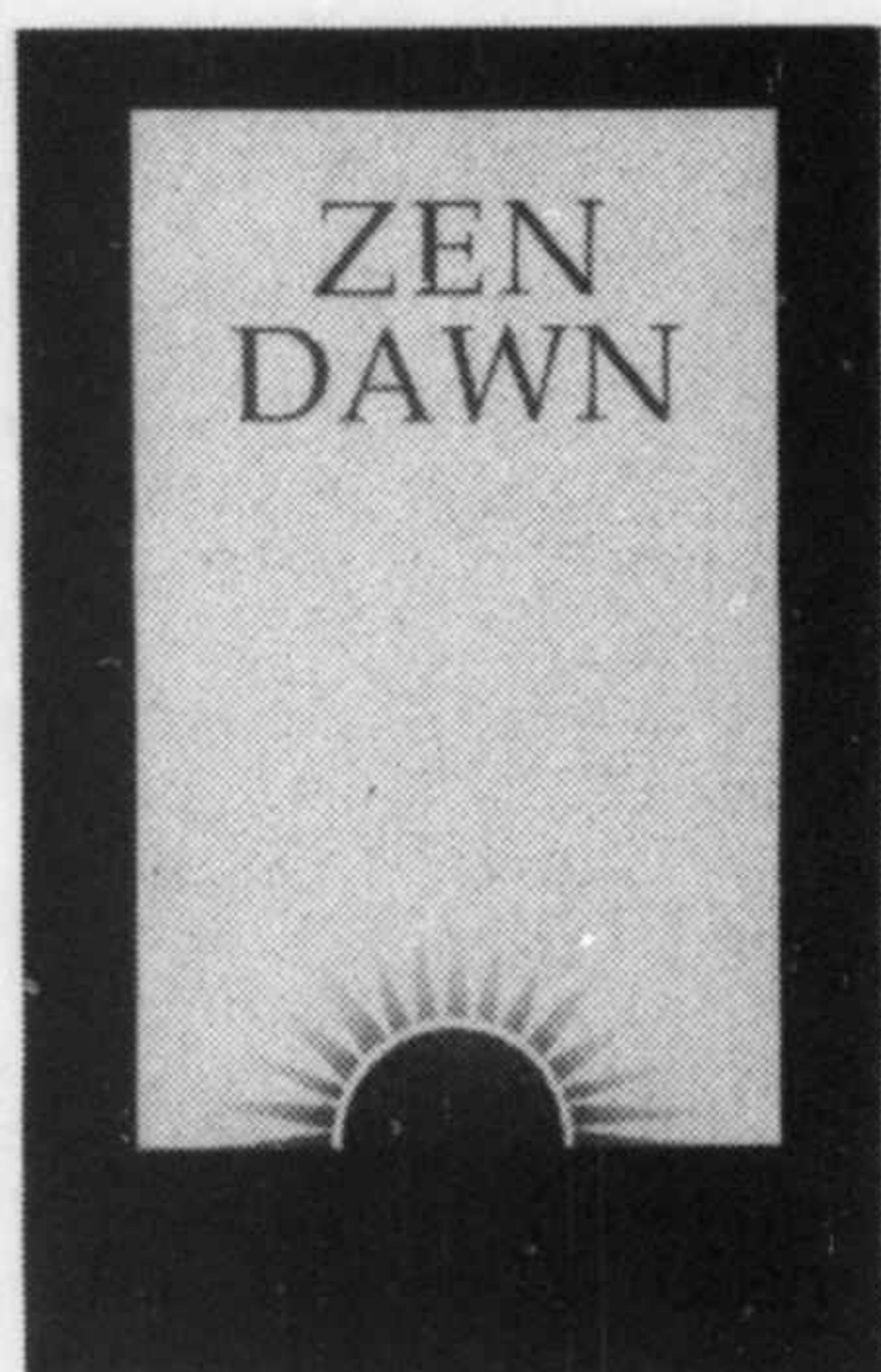
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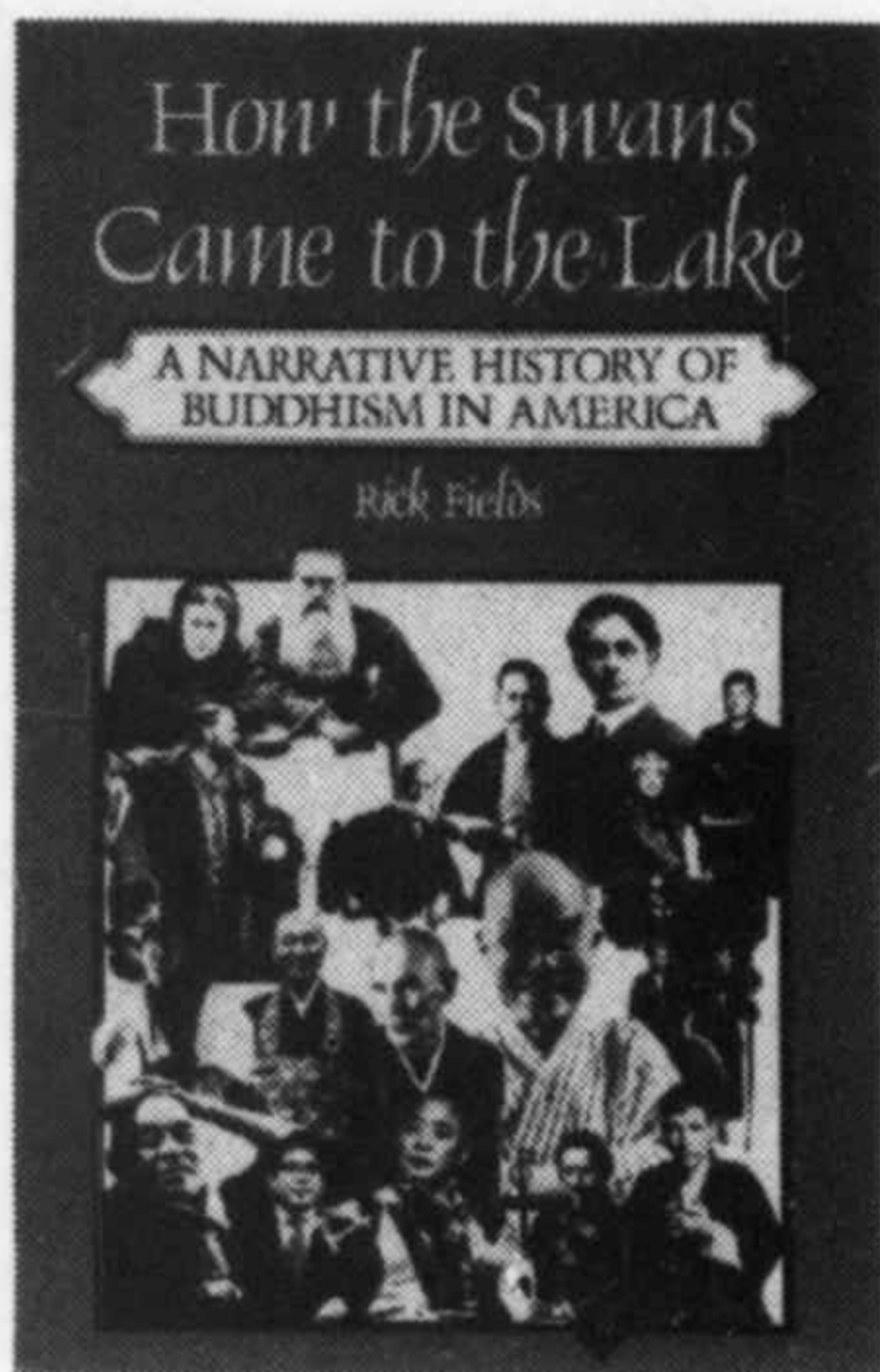
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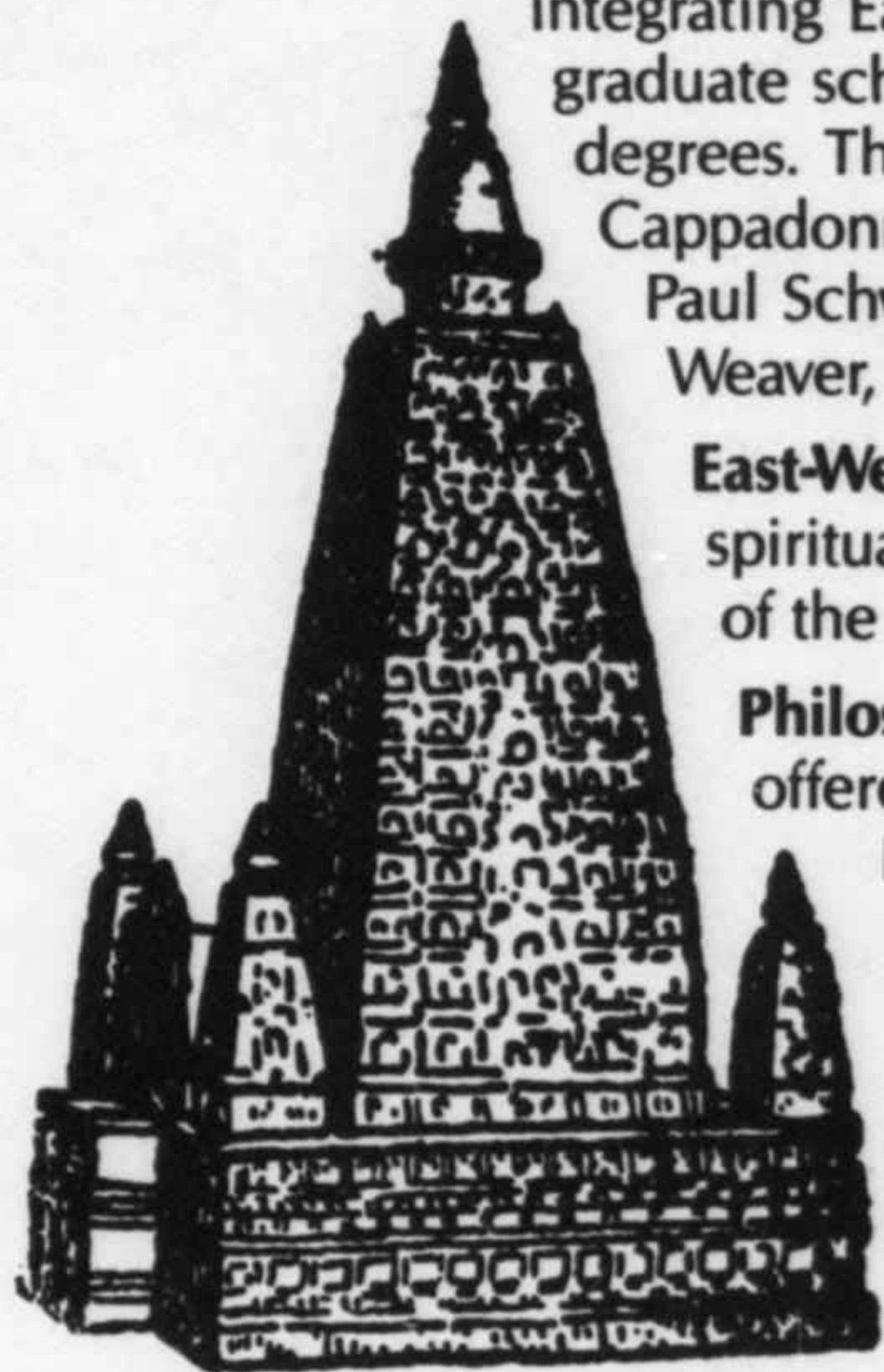
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"originally meant *strength, skill, device,*" are placed in their proper relationship by her definitions. In a sense, her introduction builds the loom on which the book is woven. Moreover, at the end of that introductory chapter a story is told which is the warp on that loom, the yarn which extends lengthwise across it. The story, Chuang Tzu's parable about the master craftsman who is asked by the King to explain the secrets of his art, is deceptively simple. The eleven chapters which follow are each prefaced by a section from that parable of a master craftsman and by a drawing made from one or two uncomplicated motions of a pen. As Chuang Tzu's story is retold (and I will not tell it again here, but will leave that pleasure to you when you read *A Way of Working*), the juxtaposition of each section with a chapter which builds the motif may lead you (as it did me) to feel that the wooden table of that tale was being constructed before your own eyes—or across your own inner vision.

Each of the chapters is close to being a self-contained essay or meditation which could stand on its own. Each of the authors brings his or her own special interests and experience to their contributions and the spiritual traditions which are woven together include (among others) Christian, Hasidic, Norse, Egyptian, and Chinese threads. The Epilogue, "The Footfall of a Cat," by P.L. Travers, is both an afterword and a miniature anthology of folk stories

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from a number of cultures which comment on the themes of the book.

A Way of Working is a book which I think all people involved in craft would enjoy. It does not matter if it is the craft of working in wood or constructing well-made lines of poetry. In Nigeria there is a festival which takes place each year among the Yoruba people. It is called *Mbari*. In that festival all of the people of the village, especially those who are not known as artisans or craftspeople, construct works of art, including a special building decorated with carvings and figures of clay made by the people. When the festival is over the building is abandoned and allowed to return to the earth, as the job of making works of art is again relinquished to ac-

knowledged craftspeople. But that time reminds the people that the making, the careful crafting, of works of beauty is something which all human beings can take part in and understand. For me, one of the triumphs of *A Way of Working* is that it deepens our understanding and appreciation of craft in a similar way.

Joseph Bruchac

Joseph Bruchac is founding editor of The Greenfield Review and is the author of many books of poetry, fiction, and Native American folktales, including Ancestry, The Road to Black Mountain, and Turkey Brothers and Other Iroquois Folk Stories.

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The Sacred Paw: The Bear in Nature, Myth, and Literature

By Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, with an afterword by Gary Snyder. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1985. Pp. xix + 244. \$17.95.

Already, in the '50s, Phoenix was a big city with big-city problems and casehardened administrators, so when the report came in that a mutilated body had been discovered at the city dump, investigators from the homicide squad were routinely dispatched. But what they found was an unholy mess: the body had been decapitated and skinned, hands and feet had been removed, and the genitalia were scarcely recognizable. By any standards, this crime was grotesque. Identification would be difficult—or impossible. Who could have done such a thing? And why?

Several hours later the mystery was solved. Who did it? A hunter. Why? Simply because the victim was an American black bear. A skinned bear carcass can so closely resemble a human body that in this case a forensic specialist was required to make the distinction. So, no

murder, no mystery, case officially closed.

"But," insisted the wife of Bob Hernbrode (manager of the Oracle Wildlife Refuge, who recently related this incident), "there *was* a murder after all, wasn't there?" Bob and I were silent. Artis shook her head. "To treat a living being like that is murder, even if it is a bear. Especially if."

The Sacred Paw, by Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders, doesn't address the question of murder as such, but it does go deeply and fascinatingly into a variety of bear sacrifice rituals through the last several millennia; it goes even more rigorously into the abiding questions of the mysteries which have surrounded the figure of the bear since man and bear first met, when bear was the apparent master, man his willing apprentice in the first business of all—the business of staying alive.

Shepard and Sanders amass and refine reams of biological, cultural, anthropological, philological, and psychological evidence pertaining to the long-lived influence of the bear upon human development, concluding, persuasively, that if contemporary humankind is understood to stand upon the shoul-

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ders of past giants, perhaps the greatest giant of all was not Cro-Magnon or Neanderthal *homo sapiens*, but Bear. Their method is not procrustean, nor is their work dismissible as an exercise in primitive romanticism. And the authors are careful to include a note that this book “is but a sample of the enormous literature in many languages relating to the impact of the bear on human consciousness.”

The Sacred Paw begins humbly, with a discussion of ursine qualities including the primary traits, habits, and features of the eight surviving species of bears: the brown, American black, polar, Himala-

yan, sloth, sun, and the spectacled species. And, of course, the giant panda, whom some have argued, belongs to the raccoon family or to a species entirely its own. For Shepard and Sanders, the results of a highly sophisticated, but rather simple, seriological study of the panda's blood proteins, specifically transferrins, demonstrate convincingly that the panda is of the ursine family, even though its chromosome number (42) is identical with that of raccoons. The discussions of bear biology are state of the art, but easily understood. For every false notion of which we are disabused (that the grizzly swats fish out of streams, for

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instance), we are given facts even more intriguing (the grizzly commonly bites off the tail of its catch before tossing it ashore, so it can't escape). The prose style until this point is rather dry, but very soon, beginning with the "Celebrations of the Slain Bear" chapter, the style of the prose rises to the occasion of its extraordinary content.

Probably because of its capacity to hibernate, the bear is the most universally significant legendary creature, beginning well before recorded history. It is prevalent among the earliest archaeological digs, inscribed on shards of vessels, on stones clearly involved in rituals, on the walls of caves entirely circling the globe from Finland and Lapland across to Siberia and Japan, across the Bering

Strait, across Indian North America to Labrador and Newfoundland, from Neolithic times through Classical Greece to our present.

Just as archaeologists explore the subsurface of the earth for clues to earlier ways of living, so philologists explore beneath the surface of language for clues to the earlier, more fundamental ways of thinking about our existence. Among the hundreds of words which blossom from the earliest stem words for "bear" are these: beer, berth, barley, arctic, bereave, berate, birth, bear (the verb), burden, bairn, boar, feral, ferocious, archaic, archbishop, brown, bury, bright, burnish, barn, bier, metaphor, and . . . archaeology. Names that derive from "bear" stems include Robert, Gilbert, Herbert, Bertha, Bernard, Bjorn, and the cities of Berlin, Bern, Bergen. The suffix "berg" is a bear stem. Behind the text of human language (not just English or Indo-European, but all languages) is the suggestion of an "ur-text" of bear imagery so pervasive as to suggest that while language was being formed, the bear may have provided one of the single "most compelling" examples around which concepts in human thought were shaped, literally and figuratively, from "birth" to "burial." It is a staggering notion.

More staggering yet are the implications gathering as the authors detail the earliest bear myths and rituals slowly evolving into forms with which we may have believed (also a "bear" stem word) we were familiar, until we see those forms as points on a cultural trajectory starting from Neolithic sources and heading into a future yet to occur.

Here, for instance, are examples from familiar Christian dogma: the mi-



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raculous birth, the "missing years" of Christ's youth, his forty days and nights in the wilderness, his crucifixion, his burial in a cave, his descent into the underworld, his resurrection—all of these events are prefigured clearly in early bear worship rituals.

Examples from Greek myth: the Eleusinian mysteries, Demeter (whose name means "the grain of the bear mother"), Artemis (whose name means "bear"), Callisto, Iphigenia, Sisyphus, Odysseus, Zeus, both Orpheus and Eurydice, on and on. The *Odyssey* itself, which writers from Virgil to James Joyce have taken as their model, may well be based upon the earlier Bear Son legend, which, in turn, may be based upon the even earlier circumpolar bear

ceremonial. Bear (and the elements into which bear is resolved) also turns up as a central figure in the rituals and lore of the Norse, Anglo-Saxon, and Celtic cultures and is still an active element among certain Siberian tribes.

The most provocative issue arising from these studies is the well-known shift from prehistoric Great Mother cultures to the male-dominant cultures of our time. What we have lost and with what we have replaced it gradually comes into focus as the authors explore this shift, over eons; from the original Bear Mother-centered cultures (dominated by female, as life-giver) to Bear Son-centered shamanic cultures (dominated by the male, who is half sacred spirit and half human) to the Hero-cen-

tered cultures (male as warrior, dominant over bear and woman but no longer cognizant of his great debt to either).

In Greek legend, when Arcas sets out to kill the bear whom he fails to recognize is Callisto, his own mother, Zeus, his father, prevents that tragedy by flinging them both into the sky, where Callisto becomes the Great Bear constellation. No longer do we have Zeus to intervene.

What the officials in Phoenix solved in their official manner, by stamping a form "Case Closed," Paul Shepard and Barry Sanders succeed in reinvesting with its burden of authentic mystery in *The Sacred Paw*. Together, they have filled a vacant darkness with bright stars of racial memory and constellations freshly radiant with ancient significance—an Olympian task. Perhaps Zeus would be pleased. Certainly we can be grateful. In his afterword to *The Sacred Paw*, Gary Snyder reminds us that "Man will be the most precious of all things when he comes to realize the previousness of all things," a sly way of refiguring superiority so that it comes out as equivalence.

The Sacred Paw is a fine addition to that ancient tribe of books which serve us best by reminding us of what we best may serve.

William Pitt Root

William Pitt Root's new poems, Faultdancing, have just been published by the University of Pittsburgh Press. His Selected Poems are forthcoming in Sweden and Scotland.

**The Marriage of Heaven and Earth:
The Philosophy of Astrology**

By Gregory Szanto. Boston: Arkana (an imprint of Routledge & Kegan Paul, Inc.), 1985. Pp. xi + 191. Paper. \$8.95.

Scholars only rarely occupy themselves with the study of astrology in either its ancient or more recent forms. When they do so, it is often, as for example in the case of Franz Cumont, with an ideological bias, if not the prejudice of a posture of superior enlightened reason. It is not to be wondered at, then, if astrologers, finding the object of their interest neglected or rejected as illegitimate, are given to indulging in the equally prejudiced uncritical discourse of the defensive and zealous believer. Gregory Szanto's book is marked by such indulgence.

The essence of what Szanto refers to as the philosophy of astrology is a mystical view of the world which in itself has validity. It is a world view which does not lack a long and variegated tradition of its own, quite separate from that of astrology, in, for example, Philo of Alexandria, the Neoplatonic schools, and the Church Fathers. The evocation of a way of understanding reality that sees unity in difference by recognizing all things to be symbols constitutes, for

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Szanto, the essence of astrology. Here lies a fundamental confusion in Szanto's position. For while a mystical world view can incorporate astrology, and while astrology can adapt itself to the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, Plato, Homer, or Hesiod, it is not altogether so certain that astrology cannot function perfectly well without any such grounding in mysticism. What Szanto assumes and would have us believe is that astrology is a mystical philosophy. Astrology can be easily incorporated into a system of thought, but it does not in itself constitute an independent system of thought. It is, rather, a highly adaptable structure which makes it possible to combine an infinite number of cultural codes.

Szanto's confusion between astrolo-

gy per se and the mysticism that during certain historical periods has incorporated it is further compounded by the notion that underlying a mystical world view is the unity of all philosophies and modes of knowing and representing reality. Thus he devotes much of the book to the discussion of subatomic physics, Kabbalah, Tarot, numerology, magic, and Jungian psychology. While I am not competent to evaluate his presentation of the theories of Heisenberg, Einstein, and de Broglie, I admit to being skeptical about the equation of the archetypes of the unconscious, the astral plane, and the quantum wave theory as identical. The correlation between Tarot and Kabbalah mentioned early in the book is in any case not adequately developed.

Szanto's eclecticism is greatly under-

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mined by sloppiness in detail. Unacceptable, for example, is the reference to the birth of Jesus under the "first great conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Pisces." It is thanks to Virgil's prophecy about this "great conjunction" that it is traditionally associated with Jesus' birth, a prophecy considered so remarkable that Dante permitted the pagan poet to dwell in Purgatory. The actual historical year of Jesus' birth is a matter of considerable debate and could be as far back as 30 B.C. Even less excusable is the author's mistranslation of the Greek *kairos* as "eternity." *Kairos* means "opportune moment," and has nothing to do with eternity. Although *kairos* as opportune moment plays an important role in both ancient and modern philosophy, Szanto bases his entire discussion of the nature of time on the opposition of *Kronos*/time and *Kairos*/eternity.

Szanto's brief, two-page discussion of the history of astrology exemplifies the kind of programmatic and schematic oversimplification that characterizes much of the book. In his view, ancient (which is implicitly equated with primitive) man represents an original state of unity of consciousness. Ancient man was able to see the meaning of a particular moment in time because for him "inner and outer were identical." This primeval blessed state occurred, according to Szanto, before the Zodiac was conceived; yet he mentions Mesopotamian divination and Babylonians in the same connection. After the Babylonians, he says, the Greeks began the process of separating the physical planets and signs of the Zodiac from the cosmological forces they were thought to represent, and allowing these forces to crystallize in the gods and their myths, thus lead-

ing to the modern split between inner and outer realities. Szanto offers his book as an attempt to present a spiritual path of enlightenment which will avert the impending doom and deliver humanity into the new Aquarian Golden Age.

This history plays on the nostalgia and longing, fear and hope we all have. It is a familiar sort of story; but it is nevertheless poor history. That the Babylonians were by no means prehistoric or prerational, and that they in all probability "invented" the Zodiac, seems to be unknown to Szanto. Furthermore, astrology began with gods who were stars, and with their myths; one cannot blame astrology for the development of myths and gods! Nor is it at all clear how gods and myths are responsible for the divorce of astronomy and astrology, let alone for the split between spiritual and material realities.

Some of the more interesting moments in the *Marriage of Heaven and Earth* occur when Szanto refers to specific questions of astrological interpretation: for example, whether a particular planetary configuration refers to a type of event that may befall an individual, or whether it refers to psychological forces within; whether these forces are unconscious and thereby attract certain events, or are consciously recognized and expressed without the mediation of events. Szanto does not answer the questions he raises about astrological interpretation. He shows good astrological judgment here. A precise meaning cannot be given to an astrological configuration. To attempt to do so would be to violate astrology's structure and mode of functioning. It is this fact about astrology that gives it its ill repute as a science and causes astrologers to seek to legiti-

mate their practice by resorting to various desperate tactics. Szanto's own attempt to claim quantum physics, that giant of modern scientific thought, as astrology's ally, is one such reckless effort to legitimate astrology.

While this claim cannot be taken seriously, the strategy itself is valid and appropriate as far as astrology is concerned. For, just as no exact meaning can be given any particular configuration, so can any systematic conception of an aspect of reality, whether it is botany, gastronomy, or quantum physics, be subsumed within astrology as one code among a network of interrelated codes. Such adaptability itself precludes the possibility of resting at one precise meaning for any astrological element, since each element unlocks the entire network of codes. Thus, in spite of the factual errors, the fundamental confusion, and the oversimplification, there is something about Szanto's discourse that draws attention to the unique and specific nature of astrology. His text is somewhat like the reading of a horoscope. It is an endless hunt along any of an unlimited number of possibilities embedded in a rich cultural discourse, a hunt that stretches from one code to another and from one level of meaning within a specific code to another. It is thus the discourse of a quest, the fictional narrative arising from the desire for meaning which the sign in general, and therefore astrology as a system of signs, promises but never yields in its entirety.

Anne Doueïhi

Anne Doueïhi is a doctoral candidate in the Religion Department at Syracuse University, and specializes in the history of astrology.



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PROFILES

Peter Brook is internationally known for his work in the theater and cinema. His recent stage production, *Mahabharata*, was discussed in Volume X, Number 4, of PARABOLA.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) was a cardinal figure in twentieth-century art history and in the cultural confrontation between East and West. Among his best-known writings are *The Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*, *Transformation of Nature in Art*, and *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*.

D.M. Dooling is Founding Editor and Publisher of PARABOLA.

Claire R. Farrer teaches anthropology at California State University, Chico.

Frederick Franck, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA, is the author of a number of books, including *Art as a Way* (Crossroad) and *The Awakened Eye* (Knopf).

Marie-Louise von Franz received a doctorate in Classical Languages from the University of Zurich in 1940 and for thirty-one years worked directly with Carl Jung. She is the author of *Number and Time*, *The Grail Legend* (in collaboration with Emma Jung), *C.G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time*, and *Time, Rhythm, and Repose*.

Martin Gardner is the author of many books on mathematics and mathematical puzzles. His column on recreational mathematics appears monthly in *Scientific American*.

Jacques Lusseyran was a leader of the French resistance during World War II and was incarcerated at Buchenwald from January 1944 until April 1945. Following the war, he taught in France and later in the United States, writing a number of books and articles. He died in an automobile accident on July 21, 1971.

Jonathan Omer-Man is currently engaged in religious outreach work in Los Angeles. He writes about Jewish mysticism, teaches privately the lesser-known paths within Judaism, and serves as a religious counselor.

Bernard Second lives and sings at Mescalero.

P.L. Travers, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA since the magazine began, is the author of the Mary Poppins books, as well as of *Friend Monkey*, *The Fox in the Manger*, *About Sleeping Beauty*, and *Two Pairs of Shoes*.



Man was made for Joy & Woe

—William Blake

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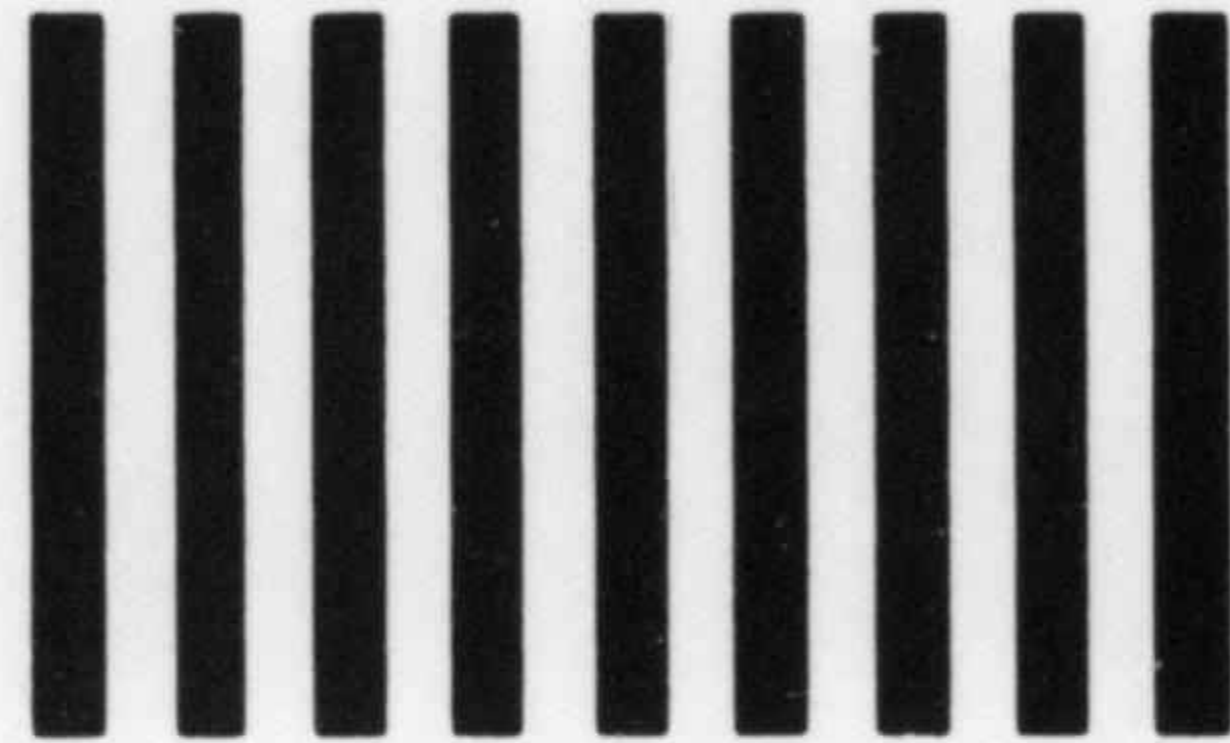
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