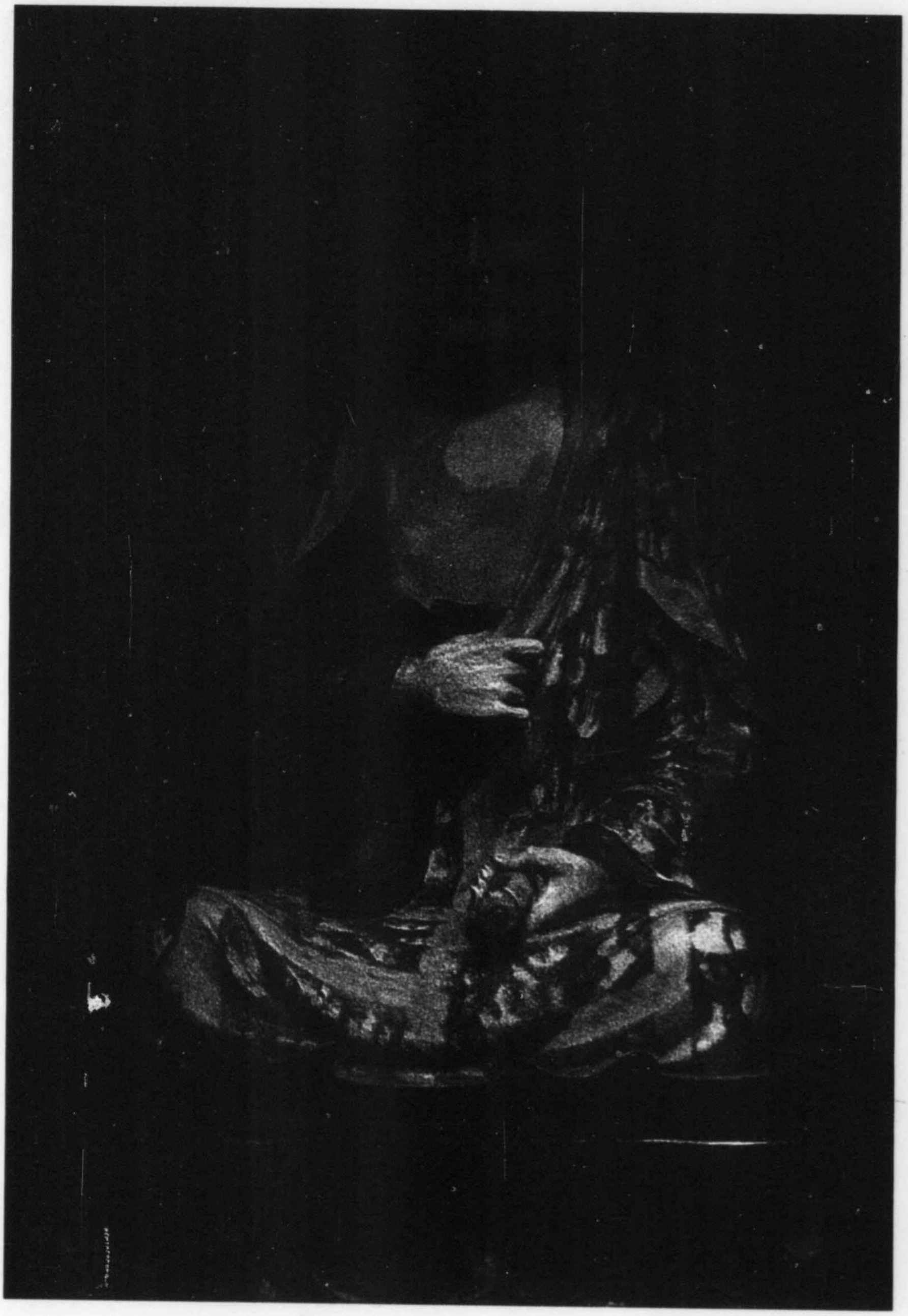
PARABOLA

Fall
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THE MAGAZINE OF MYTH AND TRADITION



SADNESS

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

SADNESS

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PARABOLA (ISSN: 0362-1596) is published quarterly by the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition, Inc., a not-for-profit organization. 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 matters, subscriptions, and advertising to PARABOLA, 656 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012-2317. Tel: (212) 505–6200.

Postmaster: Send address changes to PARABOLA, 656 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012-2317. 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. Other foreign distribution is handled by Feffer & Simons, Inc., 100 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

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VOLUME XI, NUMBER 3, AUGUST, 1986.

Cover: "Lohan." Photograph by Sheila Metzner. 1982.

IN MEMORIAM

Mircea Eliade, scholar, historian of religions, novelist, and playwright, author of more than fifty books, international authority on myth and symbol, and one of the great figures on PARABOLA's horizon, died on April 22nd in Chicago. A native of Rumania and a citizen of the world (he spoke six languages and wrote easily in three of them), he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago thirty years ago and until his retirement last year, headed their renowned Department of Religion. Since 1962 he held the post of Sewell Avery Distinguished Service Professor in the Divinity School, and there is now a chair named for him in the department of the history of religions.

When PARABOLA began to exist, but still only as an idea, it was natural to seek out a man so famous and so honored in the field we were proposing to enter, and to ask for his blessing. The warmth and kindness with which he gave it touch us again each time we turn, as we so often do, to one of his books. He will long be remembered by many, not only for his scholarship but for his spiritual and human gifts.

FOCUS

When a theme is suggested for PARABOLA, we find ourselves willy-nilly in front of the question of the meaning of even such a simple and familiar word as sadness. And the meaning is always too big for us. We can never hope to do more, in one issue of a magazine, than point to some aspects of an idea, and perhaps to discover one or two that are not so obvious and bring a new angle of vision.

So, do we really know what sadness is? Many words and definitions spring to mind. But however closely they may be related, can we say that it is the *same* as grief, or despondency, or pain, or anguish, or sorrow, or depression? To call it un-happiness begs the question, for there are as many kinds of happiness as there are of sadness, and as many names for their different shades. It is not exactly the same to be joyful, elated, pleased, cheerful, fortunate, glad, or satisfied. Oddly enough, "satisfied" is one of the root meanings of the word "sad," which we think of as the antithesis of satisfaction or happiness. In Old English, *saed* means "sated"; Latin *satis* means "enough." So the original meaning of sadness is to have enough, or to have too much; yet the feeling of sadness in our human experience is connected with loss or lack. Has the content of the word changed so much that it has become its own opposite? Can words contradict themselves?

Here there is something to put the questioner of meaning on the alert. For though the emphasis changes with the passing of time, words, like people, can never lose altogether any part of their past. "Obsolete" meanings are not quite obsolete; they have just gone underground, and continue to exert an obscure influence. It is interesting, and not at all irrelevant to the study of the total meaning of "sadness," that among its ancient definitions are such concepts as "seriousness" and "importance" and "firmness." In Shropshire today, the expression "in good sadness" means "firmly, seriously, indeed and in fact." And in fourteenth-century England, to sleep or to drink sadly did not mean to do so dolefully, but with commendable thoroughness.

In twentieth-century America, however, "sadness" is not at all commendable. One has only to be in a reflective mood, or in some way occupied with serious thought, to elicit from friend or stranger the protest, "Why are you so *sad*?"—as if one were committing some kind of social sin. Is it really wrong to be serious? Could there be any pity, sympathy, mercy, or compassion in the world without a certain sadness, a taste of the suffering of others? It can even be said, as Peter Lamborn Wilson states in "The Bleak Garden," that no true joy is possible without it, either.

The more we examine words as the

symbols of ideas, the clearer it becomes that there are no synonyms. The study of their derivations and usages shows a range of related meanings widening to some whole we can never reach with words, but which words—if we respect them enough in their differences and their relationships, and try to deal honestly with both—can powerfully help us to approach.

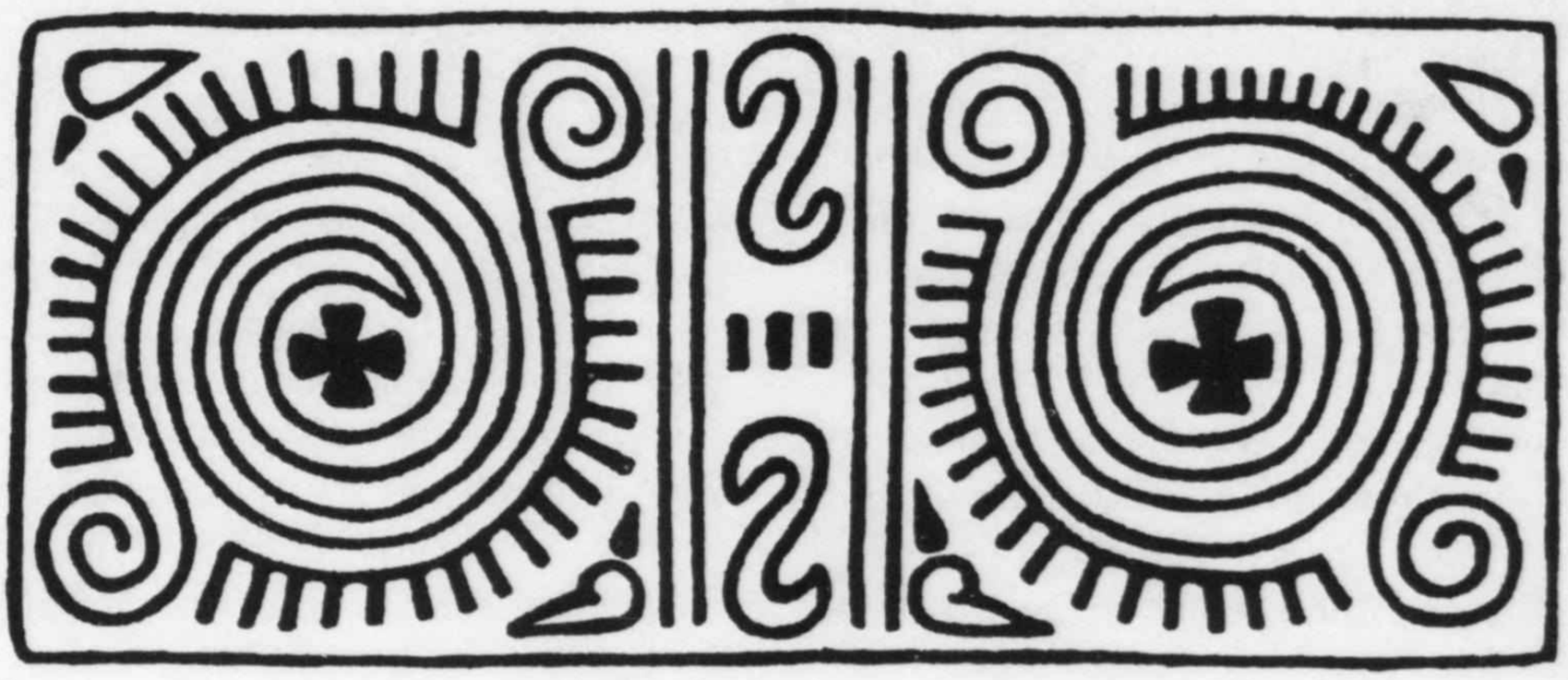
But if aspects of the same thing cannot contradict each other, how can we understand that sadness can mean both having too much and not having enough? This question seems to lead us to the heart of our experience, and reveals that aspect of sadness which we have found the least obvious and the most interesting. It has to do, perhaps, with the "cosmic suffering," and the only escape from it, of which Tara Tulku spoke in our interview with him. For it refers to the *different levels* of our outer and inner worlds. We have, indeed, too much of what is not enough; and the sadness of our "not enough" is not on the same plane as the sadness of our "too much." Maybe the lack we are most aware of (and what we seem to suffer from the most) is of this world's goods or good fortune; but our suffering from such deprivation, whether imaginary or terribly real, is something other than true sadness. It is when we begin to feel that the problems and values of this world take up *too much* room, carry *too much* weight in relation to other more inner wishes; when we become aware of both our worlds at once, and know that we are overfilled, overwhelmed, overcome on this level of daily life, and in the inner life there is a great lack, a great hunger; when we experience this, our inevitable human situation, this, I think, is sadness.

In PARABOLA's issue on "The Seven Deadly Sins," Thomas Buckley wrote that anger (with God, with life, and with oneself) must change to *sadness:* this state of seeing and acknowledging what is seen; accepting, but not with the sense of "resignation." What, then, must sadness turn into, in the process of a developing understanding? This state of seeing truly how things are, with us and with the world, is like a landing on a stairway, from which we can go either up or down. We can go very easily from sadness to depression, despondency, self-pity, despair, and all the blackest, most useless, most destructive forms of negativity. Or the vision of *how things are* can come as the bearer of light, and be essentially useful for continuing a search for understanding. Out of this sadness of seeing—and perhaps not from any other source—can come a need, and a reaching up for that possible relationship between our two worlds that, in giving sense to the one and reality to the other, could reveal to us a new world and our place in it as truly human beings.

D.M. Dooling

FULL CIRCLE

A Readers' Forum



And behold the editors of PARABOLA have heard the voices of his servants

Even those of His servants crying from out the depths as well as from the mountain tops

And they have sternly rebuked the complaints of crickets chirping in the wilderness

About the glories of modern improvements

The meek and humble rejoice and are glad singing paeans of praise and jubilation

And greet the rising of the sun, the heat of midday, and slumberous twilight of the coming night

In the assurance that the Kingdom of God is within each and every one not merely in their midst and among them

Thus echoing forth from the glowing hills of Faith and sparkling on the waters of Belief

Saint Paul's splendid promise that no thing can separate us from the love of God

No matter what credentials, computers, word processors with limited vocabularies are cited in contradiction.

John Wilkie Beal
Newburgh, New York

You are certainly right in sticking to the King James Version of the Bible (Full Circle, Vol. XI, No. 2). Although key words in the English language of 1610 are quite different from their meanings today, this very fact gives an aura to the text which makes it special. When it matters, students can easily find the difference: e.g. "vanity" in King James time meant "change." "All is vanity" meant "nothing stays the same."

To your example, "the kingdom of god is within you," I'd like to add an additional note. The problem is, as you note, complicated especially with prepositions. A Greek lexicon often gives a number of prepositions as possible according to case and context. The preposition *humōn* in Luke 17:21 is clearly genitive plural. In the nominative or ac-

cusative cases it usually means "within"; but the preferred translation for genitive plural is "around." Thus, I prefer the translation, "The kingdom of God is around you" because it rhymes with so many other passages such as "See the lilies of the field . . . "

Not only that, it reflects two thousand years of Neoplatonic thought and elements continually found in the occult and mystic traditions, such as the phrase of Plotinus: "The body is in the soul." To be complete we really need a preposition which means "within and around." Everything exists in the light of the divine spirit which penetrates to the heart of all matter: elephant sticklefish and virus have evolved through an equal length of time.

Carroll F. Terrell
Orono, Maine

I have been a faithful subscriber to PARABOLA since the first issue and hardly an issue has gone by without my finding something there to raise the spirit. When "Wholeness" (Vol. X, No. 1) appeared I meant to write; then "The Body" (Vol. X, No. 3), which stirred me again, and now "Mirrors" (Vol. XI, No. 2).

There are two particular things I want to share with you. One is a quote from *A Dry White Season* (by André Brink, the South African dissident novelist) that seems so relevant to the question of the body and of the word being made flesh:

"What about Jesus?" . . .

"Misunderstood," he said. "*Et verbum caro facta est*. We're running after the *verbum*, forgetting about the flesh. 'Our *bodies* which *us* to *us*, at first convey'd . . . ' Those Metaphysicals really had it by the short hairs. One's got to keep one's feet or hands on the ground, preferably all four of them . . .

" . . . this sickness of the great Abstraction. We've got to come back to the physical, to the flesh and bone and earth. Truth didn't fall from Heaven in the shape of a word: it goes about bare-arsed. Or if we've got to talk in terms of words, then it's the word of the bloody stammerer like Moses. Each one of us stuttering and stammering his bit of truth . . .

" . . . one thing I discover as I grow older is the more one gets involved with philosophy and stuff, in transcendental things, the more surely you're forced back to earth. We'll all go back to the old chthonic gods yet. That's the problem of people running after abstractions. Started with Plato. Mind you, he's misunderstood in a shocking way. Still, give me Socrates any time. We're all living in the spell of the abstract. Hitler, Apartheid, the Great American Dream, the lot. *Et verbum caro facta est* . . . "

I find this very astute and striking. The word on its own is nothing. The struggle is to *incorporate* what is heard and taught. As I am a writer and almost addicted to "the word," I sense what a difficult task it is.

Secondly, Jacques Lusseyran:

Thirty years ago I was a student at the Sorbonne. One day a small dark blind man was led onto the podium in the huge Salle Richelieu, or rather Amphithéatre Richelieu and he began to speak, to "lecture" on nineteenth-century French literature. I have still got the verbatim notes I took, but, far more important, I was riveted by some quality in that small blind man—I knew not what. I never forgot the impression he made, so I was astonished and delighted when I read the first piece of his you published, but the piece in "Mirrors" is so important and so moving I will say no more, only to wish every human being I know, love, or watch uselessly

suffering could read it, or could have seen the modest witness of Lusseyran's humanity. Of course at the time I heard him speak I had absolutely no idea what his life had been.

Once again, thank you for PARABOLA.

Jenny Koralek
London, England

Victor Danner's article (Vol. XI, No. 1) highlights different levels of "Witnessing" as reflecting gradations of being and consciousness. He emphasizes the limitations of exoteric and verbal "Witnessing" in Islam as compared with the spiritual experience of Sufism.

Yet it is precisely on the outer plane that the believer is required by his relation to testify by word and action to the unity of God and to other doctrines. The inner practitioner bases his "experiential knowledge" on the same relation that proclaims its only requirement as external faith.

This is not just a questioning of "deepening" the tolerance of the outer for the inner. Historic conflicts between exoteric and esoteric would seem to proclaim this as a basic dichotomy of religion. Yet they always seem to feed on one another, in life as in death.

I wonder whether Mr. Danner would care to comment on this relationship in the current world situation.

Irving Friedman
Bronx, New York

Jonathan Omer-Man (Vol. XI, No. 2) is concerned about keeping in step with contemporary society and suggests in your summer issue that through self observation and awareness we can find ourselves in relation to the outside world. It is true that we must be of our own time, and accept conditions as they are before affecting meaningful change.

The twentieth century is distinguished by an advanced technology whose utmost sophistication is exemplified by nuclear power. An understanding of nuclear energy requires an ability to look into the very heart of the smallest of things, the atom, and conceptualize energy in abstract mathematical terms. The great minds of our society have turned away from this knowledge on the basis of a judgment that it is unethical or immoral. Because nuclear energy has been abused it is about to be discarded.

To be in step with the modern world, must we model ourselves and our values after leaders and gurus? Isn't it possible to find a way of truth and authenticity drawing upon inner knowledge alone regardless of history and without being subject to external influences? After all you yourself have pointed out that the Kingdom of God is not among or in the midst of us; it is within.

Tom Ansart
Olalla, Washington

I enjoyed your Summer issue, "Mirrors," and was especially moved by Jacques Lusseyran's remembrance of "Jeremy." The editors' choice of illustrations by William Blake contributed to making it as complete a vignette of the inner life as I've had the pleasure of reading.

In "Through a Glass Darkly," D.M. Dooling writes, " . . . reflected without distortion, the desire to be useful is the recognition of relationship, of being a part of Indra's net." Christ says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Continued on page 122

Modes of Meaning and Experience: *viraha* and *viḷaiyāṭal*

DAVID DEAN SHULMAN

The vision of life articulated in medieval South Indian literature clearly included a dimension of feeling that we need not hesitate to call "tragic." The point is not, of course, to project an Aristotelian terminology upon an exotic set of ideas; rather, we need to analyze an intuition that achieved a unique cultural expression in the particular contex of a given time and place. India, from earliest times, has shown a remarkable sensitivity—some would say, a hypersensitivity—to the pain and sorrow inherent in existence. Life, we are told, is a sacrifice—a violent process of cleavage within the unity of being, a process inevitably entailing suffering and sadness in various forms. But the medieval Tamil perception of the world develops this general Indian sensitivity in certain new directions, which are closely linked to other basic notions prevalent in the culture—notions about the divine in its relation to men and women, about the function of symbols in our awareness, about the nature and limits of human love, and so on. Together, these ideas, worked out in varying contexts of song, commentary, and story, present a coherent picture of the inner world of the Tamil court poet during the Chola centuries (ninth to thirteenth centuries).

Two concepts in particular may help us to enter into this world—*viraha*, "separation," and *viḷaiyāṭal*, "play," "amusement." If, in the eyes of the Tamilians, everyday life is in some sense "tragic," the reason lies in its being suffused by the experience of *viraha* (Tamil *pirivu*). As Friedhelm Hardy has shown, *viraha* is for the Tamil devotees of Viṣṇu (especially Nammāḻvār) perhaps the predominant mode of experiencing the divine:

> They opened themselves to the beauty of the temple images and rituals and to the eros of the myths and tried to communicate them in turn through their sensual poetry. But the more they took in from this sense- and emotion-filling nature of Krishna, the closer they thereby came to him and the more they thus fulfilled themselves as human beings—the more they suffered. This peculiar experience of suffering in one way could only be explained as due to Krishna's very presence in their hearts, and in another way they saw this as the reflection of human



Union and Separation of Krishna and a Gopi.
Page from a Gita Govinda Series, mid 18th century.

incapability to contain or encompass the transcendental.[1]

This conceptualization is not, I would argue, by any means limited to the Tamil Vaiṣṇava poets—among the Śaivas, the *Tevāram* poets present similar notions—nor, for that matter, to the realm of religious feeling. Life itself, in its ordered, normative aspect, is conceived as an arena of separation, which may be experienced on various levels—the metaphysical separation of man from his divine source; the more generalized sense of limitation and partiality inherent in mundane reality; and the emotional torment involved in separation from those whom one loves. This latter category has, in itself, several distinct levels: there

is the everyday experience of loss (through absence, temporary or permanent, and above all in death); the ill-defined longings which arise so mysteriously in the course of our normal lives and which may have no conscious object;[2] and—here we find what appears to be the most profound development of the theory of separation in South India—that amazing sense of separation, loneliness, and loss that accompanies the *possession* of the object of one's love. This is the feeling described by Hardy in the passage quoted above: the very presence of the deity, his revelation before our eyes, evokes in us the unbearable sense of his absence—of our finitude, our inability to hold the god here, our frustration at the awareness of his total transcendence. But the same emotion is present in any kind of loving, even, the medieval Tamils would argue, in the moment of ecstatic union with the beloved. The closer we approach the other, the more clearly do we realize the ultimate unknowability of another person and our inability to cross, once and for all, the border which divides us. Love, in its different aspects, is as much a form of separation as of merging.

This metaphysic of paradoxical separation-in-union apparently first developed self-consciously in Tamil Nadu in the *bhakti* traditions of the early medieval period. Its roots may lie in the much earlier Caṅkam love poetry, which shows a pronounced fondness for tragic images of love: of the five main phases of the conventional lovers'-drama, correlated, respectively, to five external landscapes (*tiṇai*), four contain explicit situations of separation. Thus *mullai*, the forest region, is the setting of the beloved's patient waiting for the lover's return; *neytal*, the seashore, is connected with anxious waiting; *pālai*, the desert wasteland, is the landscape of separation par excellence; *marutam*, the alluvial plains, the landscape proper to married union, is the scene of quarrels and infidelity—here we often encounter the wife whiling away the night in loneliness, as her husband is away with the courtesans. Even the fifth landscape, *kuṟiñci*, the mountainous setting of the joyous premarital union (*kaḷavu*) of the lovers, contains the seed of suffering—for *kaḷavu*, as its very name indicates, is at best a stolen pleasure, fleeting and laden with anxiety. The medieval poets, starting with this rich legacy, have expanded upon its hidden premises: separation now becomes not only a common, concrete reality in the lives of nearly all lovers, who are forced into a physical or, more painfully, an emotional distance from one another; rather, it is seen more and more as the outstanding characteristic of love even in—or especially in—its fulfilment in union.

Beyond this, separation serves as a many-faceted metaphor for man's normal state of being in the world, a state characterized by actual or potential loss and by ever-present fragmentation and limitation. Herein lies, it would seem, much of the affective power of Kampaṉ's Tamil version of the *Rāmāyana*, the *Irāmāvatāram*, large portions of which are devoted to expressing the trauma of separation that the heroes, Rāma and Sītā, must undergo. Many of Kampaṉ's most powerful passages explore what he perceived as this most basic human experience. Thus when Rāma first returns to his hut in the forest and finds it empty—for Sītā has just been kidnapped by Rāvaṇa—he is overwhelmed by confusion and bitterness: the poet compares him to "a life which has left its containing body and returned to seek it—but in vain" (3.8.158); or to

a man whose life depends upon his only treasure, which he has hidden in a box buried in the earth—only to discover that thieves have made off with it (159). Rāma's loss calls up in him a cry of existential protest, in a moment of total antagonism and outrage at the world:

That great one trembled—
was he raging against *dharma*?
or against mercy (*arul*)?

or against the gods, or the sages, or the
prowess of the evil?
How would it all end?
Was he raging against the Veda itself?
(3.8.161)

Note how the overwhelming reality of separation induces in the hero a general hostility to a world in which such experiences are possible, even usual. But this is only Rāma's first reaction to his loss; from this point until almost the very end of the long poem, *viraha* is his predominant mode of feeling. At times, as at the start of the *Kiṭkintākāṇṭam*, Rāma comes close to losing his reason because of the unendurable suffering that he is forced to know. Sītā, for her part, has very similar experiences: indeed, she is described at one point, in her captivity, as "a woman fashioned from sorrow (*piṉiyāḷ*)—as if the grief of separation (*pirivu*) which afflicts lovers, full of desire for one another, in the world, had taken on tangible form" (5.3.7). Kampaṉ's poem may be seen as in large part a lyrical and dramatic exposition of *viraha* in all its pain, its pervasive and unavoidable familiarity, and—we must not forget—its uniquely attractive beauty.

For *viraha*, however suffused by suffering, need by no means be seen in a wholly negative light. Quite the contrary is true of the Tamil *bhakti* poets: they extol the pangs of separation, which are also evidence of real love. Such suffering is, in their eyes, quite literally divine—a reflection of the god's need and longing for the lowly creatures who are, for their part, obsessed with their own yearnings for him. *Viraha*, as the hallmark of the everyday, is the inevitable concomitant of *saṃsāra*, the phenomenal world—and the *bhakti* poets, far from wishing to be released from this scene of suffering, ask rather to be reborn again and again so as to taste each time anew the wonder and joy of loving the absent deity.[3] The god may torture his devotee by his apparent indifference or, for that matter, by actively afflicting him with misery; but these sorrows are apprehended as signs of the living relation between the two parties, hence of the rapturous connection which only separation makes possible:

kaṣṭā te sṛṣṭiceṣṭā
bahutarabhavakhedāvahā jīvabhājām
ity evaṃ pūrvam ālocitam ajita mayā naivam
adyābhijāne/
no cej jīvāḥ kathaṃ vā madhurataram idaṃ
tvadvapuś cidrasārdraṃ
netraiḥ śrotraiś ca pītvā
paramarasasudhāmbhodhipūre rameran//

"Cruel is your creative act,
bringing innumerable sorrows
to all who are endowed with life."

So I had always thought,
Invincible One,
but now I reason:

how else could living beings
delight in drinking in,
with eyes and ears,
this form of yours,
supernally sweet
and liquid with awareness
in the flooding ocean filled
with the nectar of truth?[4]



The Sorrow of Radha. *Kangra painting of the Gita Govinda.*

This verse, by a brilliant sixteenth-century poet from Kerala, points to the normative, ordered aspect of the *viraha* mode: god is in his temple (embodied in the image accessible to his devotees), and all is wrong—painfully, wonderfully, passionately wrong—with the world.

For the delights of *viraha* hardly serve to alleviate the tragic character of human life. The tragedy inheres in the pain—and yet this remains an essentially life-affirming stance. We sense here a deep engagement in the life of the world, even, it could be argued, a basic acceptance of life, for all its horrors. The Tamil *bhakti* poet sings in his sadness, or in anger in his struggle with, and with-

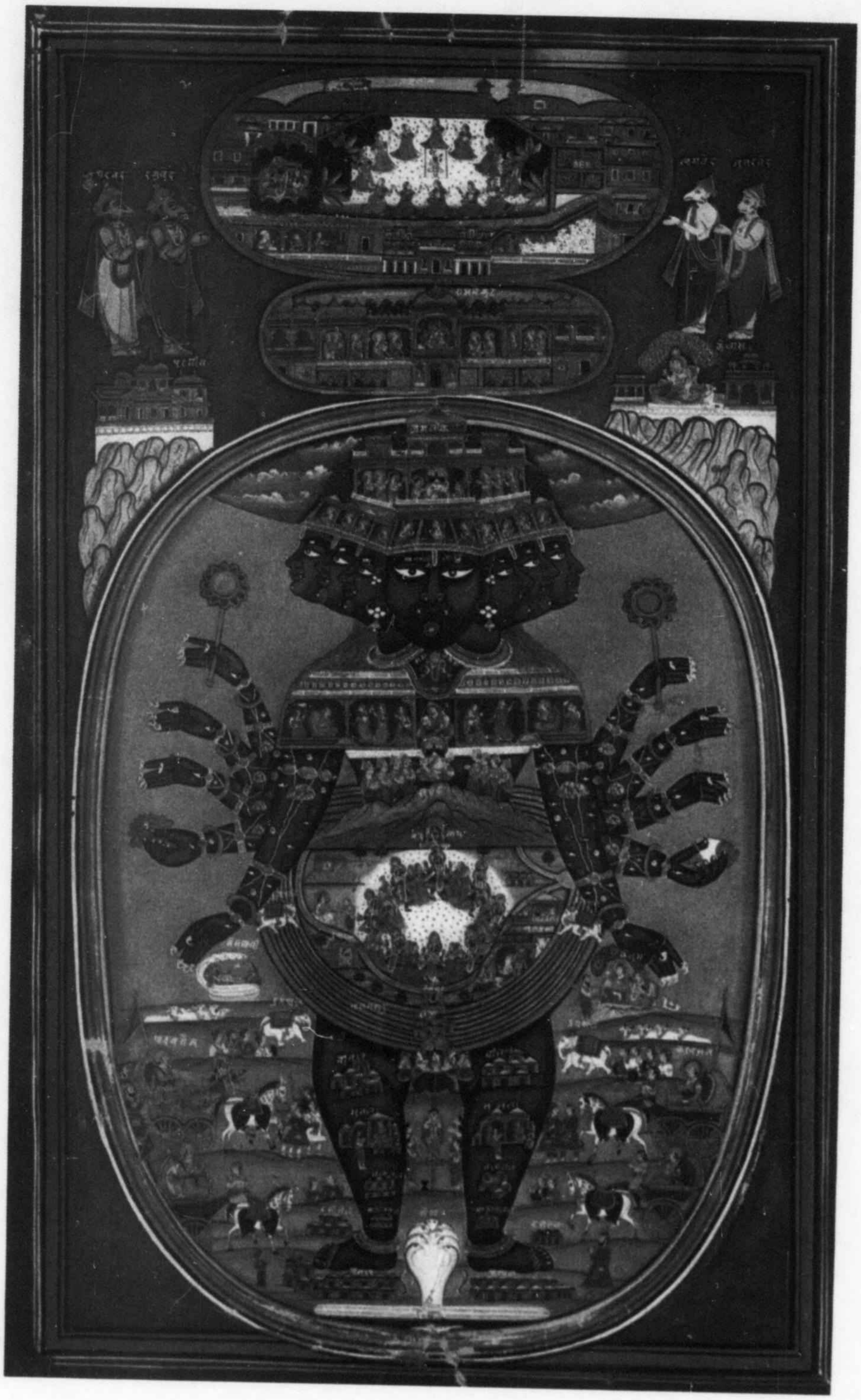


The Sorrow of Krishna. *Kangra painting of the Gita Govinda.*

in, the frustrating conditions that determine his fate. Underlying this inner struggle is a profound sense of delimitation: the terms of *saṃsāra* are such that any revelation can be, at best, but partial and paradoxical; the transcendent god can never be contained by our reality. More generally, we might say that the tragic vision depends upon just such a delimitation, a closing off of semantic space. The tragic world is bounded, fragmented, and full of meaning.

Several of the medieval Tamil poets were undoubtedly aware of this, and indeed, at times, deliberately undermined their own tragic perspective. The same boundaries that appear so precious, so in need of defense against all outer attacks—the boundaries of the conventional order, with its hierarchical claims, its

Krishna displaying his cosmic form. Rajasthan, 18th century.



pressures for a balanced and stable definition of roles, and its ever-increasing, painful sense of its own imperfections and limitations—are also subject to a constant assault from within. The delicious distress of *viraha*, so real to us, is conceivably less so to the god. Harsh as it may seem, harsh as it really is, our torments are his amusements—*līlā*, or in Tamil, *viḷaiyāṭal*. At this point another mode of experience opens up before us: *viḷaiyāṭal*, the deity's favored mode of relating to the scattered parts of himself and to his world, is by nature chaotic—unpredictable, uncontainable, undefinable in terms of everyday perceptions. It eludes meaning: creation itself, seen as the god's play, is a teleological mystery. The point, if there is one, could only lie it its pointlessness, and in the emotions that this quality engenders.[5] This is not to deny the everyday experience of suffering, *viraha* in all its tragic reality and centrality tc our emotional life; on the contrary, this experience is also basic to the *viḷaiyāṭal* mode of perception, which is infused with the knowledge of evil. *Viraha*, in a sense, *is* the god's *viḷaiyāṭal*. Nevertheless, there is a transformation of perspective: the closed boundaries have been invaded by a new, heretical spirit. In a sense, *viḷaiyāṭal* encompasses and transcends the human vision of *viraha*, in much the same way that a clown encompasses, from the outside, the bounded reality that he wishes to illuminate. It is a question of where one stands—wholly inside, hermetically enclosed by the sensation of pain, loss, and protest; wholly outside, if that were possible, hence impassive, remote, detached; or, like the god, the clown, or the magician, on the slippery and invisible border where the outer reaches in. ■

NOTES

1. Friedhelm E. Hardy, "Some Reflections on Indian Spirituality, III: Commuting within One World," *King's Theological Review* 4:1 (1981), p. 9.

2. Here we may mention, as a special subcategory, the longings described by Kālidāsa in a famous verse (Abhijñānaśākuntala V, 2)—that is, those arising from beholding a lovely sight, or hearing sweet sounds. Kālidāsa connects these feelings to lost memories of former lives.

3. See, for example, *Pĕriya purāṇam* of Cekkiḻār, verse 143. The older, Caṅkam poet Kapilar expressed a similar viewpoint, in a "secular" context, in *Kuṟuntŏkai* 288:

He is dear to me, that man,
far away in his mountains

where the pepper-vine grows thick
and monkeys feed upon the tender leaves.

And now I wonder:
is the sorrow caused by those we love
not sweeter than the sweet joys
they say are found in heaven?

4. *Nārāyaṇiya* of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa, 1.7

5. Here the Śaiva Siddhānta school would take issue, offering instead a rational teleology. See D. Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths* (Princeton, 1980), p. 281.

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Out from Eden

P.L. Travers



I am sad.
He is sad.
You are sad.
So small a word to lie so heavy on the heart! So small, yet packed with a significance that nobody can define, not even the poets who use it with such familiarity.

Antonio, in the first lines of *The Merchant of Venice*, shows us a man bowed down under the enigma:

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me, you say it wearies you,
But how I caught it, found it or came by it,
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born
I am to learn.
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me
That I have much to do to know myself . . .

Perhaps we would all know ourselves better if we could construe that word.

It is not depression, nor despondency, least of all is it self-pity, that coarsest of the emotions—greedy, sterile, all darkness, the ego prone upon its bed wrapped in a pall of selfhood.

Grief and sorrow, on the other hand, though still not sadness, are life-giving and pulse with meaning; capable of receiving light, able even to engender it and thereby, through suffering, to transmute themselves into heart's ease and refreshment.

But if one were to mix and filter the whole gamut of emotions, the last, the quintessential drop would be sadness, which, being essence, has neither antonym nor synonym and can not be analyzed.

Blake, if you transpose the couplet, came near to it with:

Under every peak and pine
Runs a joy with silken twine.

and Keats, who wrote of "Joy whose hand is ever at his lips, bidding Adieu" knew well what that Adieu was.

Isaak Walton spoke of angling as a "diverter of sadness" and Longfellow struggled manfully with it when he wrote in "The Day Is Done":

A feeling of sadness and longing
That is not akin to pain
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.

Nevertheless, definable or not, the very infant knows it. The first cry is one of lamentation: "Alas, why am I here?"

And the young child, for no apparent reason, will pause for a moment in its play, touched by something keenly sensed for which it has no name.

But not the child only. We all experience it. Sadness lies at the very core of being. Lay the heart bare of every other feeling and inevitably you will come upon sadness, ready, like the quickened seed, to put forth its green leaf.

Lovers in all their bliss know it and the tincture it leaves on their embracings and, unaware that it is part of love, turn to each other again and again hoping, but always failing, to efface the intrinsic stain.

A man may wish for his heart's desire and be made sad at not receiving it. But give it to him in all its richness and he will be sad at the having of it, at the very lack of lack.

Another, gazing at the beauty of sunset, will be saddened at the burden of being; and a third, in the midst of rejoicing will feel in himself an emptiness. We are so made that we can bear neither perfection nor imperfection.

It was not so, I think, in Eden when the lion and the lamb were together and we danced, purely for the sake of dancing, to the melodies piped to us by the wind as it moved through the Paradisal trees.

But once the angel had waved his sword, with a new thing working in our breasts, we moved to a different tune.

Wordsworth, looking down on Tintern, knew well what it was—"The still, sad music of humanity."

That is the measure we must dance to now.

O stranger, take my hand! ■

In the Company of Laughter

PEGGY V. BECK

The figure of the fool has appeared from the beginning of time: jester, idiot, outlaw, picaro, sacred clown, trickster, and madman. In whatever guise, the fool is a symbol of the contrasts that make up our life.

Most of us disguise our folly and hide our hurts and failures, but fools, deceptively carefree, bear the burden of their fate, sacrificing their sorrows so that we may laugh at our own.

The crude image of the clown laughing on the outside and crying on the inside hides a complex ironic character. In order to mock folly the fool must act out the tragic face of sadness before making the graceful turn which transforms sadness into laughter. This is the secret which the fool carries in his heart; and hiding nothing, he wears his heart on his sleeve.

When we accompany the fool on his peregrinations we begin to realize that in different contexts fools deal with the burden of their fate in different ways. The Western image of the fool, the mythological trickster, and the sacred clown in preindustrial societies spring from the same seed, and yet the distinct roles each of them plays reflect our capacity to laugh at ourselves and to play away the sadness at the edge of life.



The Lonely Fool

The moon's my constant mistress;
And the lovely owl my marrow;
The flaming drake,
And the night-crow, make
Me music to my sorrow.[1]

The image of the fool in Western literary tradition is that of a wandering "child of god," "natural," minstrel, or jester with no home to go to; an androgynous individual who cannot tolerate conventional relationships and whose perceived asexuality is read as spiritual transcendence.

This fool is seen throughout the centuries sparring with various demons, mocking pity, laughing in the face of tragedy, and often barely escaping the king's wrath with his asses ears and bells.

One must stand outside whatever it is one wants to understand. The fool, because he *sees*, has always been depicted as an outsider, different, eccentric, unconventional, even mad. In the Western tradition of fools this irony is etched clearly.

The Western fool was not an integral part of the religious institutions which were to overwhelm and finally dominate the indigenous sacred cosmologies which valued fools. Consequently, the literature of fools became one where the fool was alone, embittered, a tragic figure: the fool of the Tarot cards walking to the edge of a cliff with a dog biting at his heels. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries fools were put on ships and sent out to sea by city authorities who feared their difference. Oscar, a wise fool from an island in the Caribbean offers his explanation:

> That is their formula to judge a madman—if he walks, I am mad. If I'm in, he is sane. That is their test tube in madness. If you walk, you are mad; if you are in, you are sane. They call me a madman, but I am proud of this, for there is method in madness and this is my discoveries.
>
> This people is not foolish, they are cunning and wicked. You see that madness brings us on par: if there were no madness there would by no comparison.[2]



There are many tragic fools in Western culture who become entrapped by their uncompromising message of detachment and lose that which they love, sometimes even their capacity to laugh. Bobi, the fool in Jean Giono's novel, *Que Ma Joie Demeure (Joy of Man's Desiring)* preaches a kind of transcendent love based on the instinctive sexuality of animals and the mute progression of stars and planets across the sky. One spring he opens a young woman to love, but because he is afraid or doesn't know how to love in a human way, he drives the woman to her suicide.

Pierrot in the film *Les Enfants du Paradis* beguiles a woman with an innocence which disguises his passion. Because he speaks to her gently, taking care not to touch her, she grows bored and leaves him for the less detached Arlequino who takes her away, leaving Pierrot mute again and grieving under the moon.

The picaresque novel of the 16th and 17th centuries focuses on the escapades of a rogue who both satirizes conventional bourgeois society and whose inner life is intimated between the lines. This same picaro survives today in Northern New Mexico where each village claims such an individual as a sort of spiritual mentor, a philosopher who preaches against the superficiality of modern society from a pulpit in the local bar. Unlike most people who can live with extended families, picaros are loners. They feel kinship with the coyotes who howl on the periphery of town at night. The folk in the bar lend them change and listen to their stories. Picaros say they need to drink because they see too much. Gonito is a picaro from a small village where, as an orphan, he spent his early years herding sheep in the mountains. Gonito has several nicknames, among them "innocencio." Like the innocent medieval "fools of God" people say he is wise because he is without deceit. Gonito is also called "Santa Agonia" because what he sees makes him suffer.

The New Mexican poet Leo Romero writes about another picaro,

I am afraid sometimes
Celso says
as he licks the wine off his lips
. . .
the problem is
that I fear life
as much as I fear death
. . .
You are lucky
You are a woman
Celso gazes longingly
at the moon

When you are afraid, you cry
Tears come easily to you

Celso takes a long drink
trying to get his heart so drunk
that it will let go
of a few miserable tears.[3]

And like all fools who are destined to yearn for something out of reach, Celso too is hopelessly in love with the moon.





Fideligna, I fear
that if I could grab
hold of this love
it would turn to ice
And that there is nothing
nothing that could ever
fill this emptiness
that displaced my heart.[4]

The Trickster

With a heart of furious fancies,
Whereof I am commander:
With a burning spear,
And a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander.[5]

The fool is said to be mad because he relinquishes himself to his fate. He takes on the task of being everybody's shadow while hardly managing to tether his own to his side.

Kokopelli, the hunch-backed player of prehistoric American mythologies, shunned because of his deformity, becomes transformed into a traveling Pied Piper, carrying seeds, fertility, and cures to villages throughout the Southwest. His flute music, the melody heard from afar as he tramps through the mountains and into the valleys, changes the peoples' world because along with the music comes seeds, trade goods, and medicines. Kokopelli is described as transforming illness, infertility, and isolation into collective forms for life-giving and life-maintaining ritual.

If yearning is the well of sadness it is also what makes the world go around.

The trickster narratives of Native North American tribes classically describe a wandering fool/creator deity, part human, part animal, a creature who cannot sit still, who must walk even in his dreams.

Trickster stayed at that village for a long time and raised many children. One day he said, "Well, this is about as long as I will stay here. I have been here a long time. Now I am going to go around the earth again and visit different people for my children are all grown up. I was not created for what I am doing here."[6]

Trickster's desire feeds his imagination. In a Winnebago trickster tale, *Wakdjunkaga*, "the tricky one," sees the reflection of ripe plums in a pond and dives into the water to get them. Finding only stones he dives again and knocks himself unconscious. His body floats to the surface and he comes to. As he opens his eyes he sees the plums in a tree on the bank. Realizing what he has done he chastises himself for causing himself "a great deal of pain."

Another time *Wakdjunkaga* sings so that the ducks will dance around a fire he has made. Of course he tells them that they must dance with their eyes closed. As they dance he strangles them one by one until a duck opens its eyes, sees what is happening, and warns the rest to fly away. Trickster roasts the ducks he has killed in the coals of the fire and decides to go to sleep while they cook. He lies down with his back to the fire. While he is sleeping some foxes come and eat the roasted ducks. When Trickster awakens and reaches for his first piece of succulent duck he finds only bones under the ashes. He is angry and blames his anus, accusing it of eating the ducks. Picking up a charred log he decides to punish his anus and burns it, crying out in pain. That is why our intestines are folded and wrinkled.

Trickster's desires maim him and do violence to his soul. And yet Trickster stories tell us that his desires also create the world and all the creatures in it. Trickster names everything he sees, gives colors to the animals, birds, rocks, and sky, and endows each with some purpose. Trickster stories are told around a fire on winter nights. Everyone laughs at Trickster's foolishness but they also cry out with him in his pain. Don't touch the fire, it's hot, the children learn. But for children, like tricksters, the whole world is wondrously aflame, a skirmish of colors, blurred outlines, fantastic shapes to explore. Tricksters and fools always fly toward flames, flames of moonlight dancing on the wind-blown surface of a lake . . .

One time I wished myself
into a moose deer.
I was lying down and sleeping
with my own shadow
and then you came along
saying the sun was in your mouth,
saying you were thirsty!
I wished you to where you drank tears.
It was a lake
everyone cried into,
full of people's tears.
At night
Some of the tears left
to look for sad faces
to fall down
Then the whole lake cried.
Some said it was the loons.[7]

The contradictions and ambiguities in Trickster tales are at the core of life. Trickster is a shared being, he brings people together in the dead of winter to listen to tales of his sorrow and his triumphs. When tears come easily laughter comes easily, and in the company of laughter sadness falls away.

The Sacred Clown

With a knight of ghosts and shadows,
I summoned am to Tourney:
Ten leagues beyond



the wide world's end:
Methinks it is no journey.[8]

Turning tragedy into grace is the greatest gift of the fool. The fool may teach detachment but it is detachment rooted in passion and love, detachment which watches the folly of humankind cascade in a saturnalian dance, fate and fortune swirling together like the foam on tidal breakers, crows in a March wind. When we recognize ourselves in the fool and are no longer afraid of the implications of his antics, our destiny and his become one. Tribal mythologies in many preindustrial societies imply that the peoples' survival, indeed their collective soul, depends on the omnipresence of a sacred clown.

The Jemez people, who now occupy a pueblo near the Rio Grande river in Northern New Mexico, emerged onto the Earth from four worlds beneath this one. They came into a cold, wintry country and decided to migrate to a warmer place they envisioned existing to the south. They wandered for years but did not reach this "land of sunshine." One by one they died of hunger and cold. The survivors became increasingly depressed until finally they all wanted to die. Then the Mother God, the Moon, prayed to her husband, the Sun, to help the people. He responded by choosing one of The People whom he painted with black and white stripes which ran across his body; he decorated his hair with corn husks and put feathers behind each ear. As soon as this man was painted he began to dance, grimace, and "act funny." The People became so interested in his performance that they forgot their hardships and proceeded on their journey, ultimately reaching the Rio Grande area where they now live.

In all of the Southwestern Pueblos, as well as in other tribes throughout North America and Africa, clowns continue to perform to the delight of com-

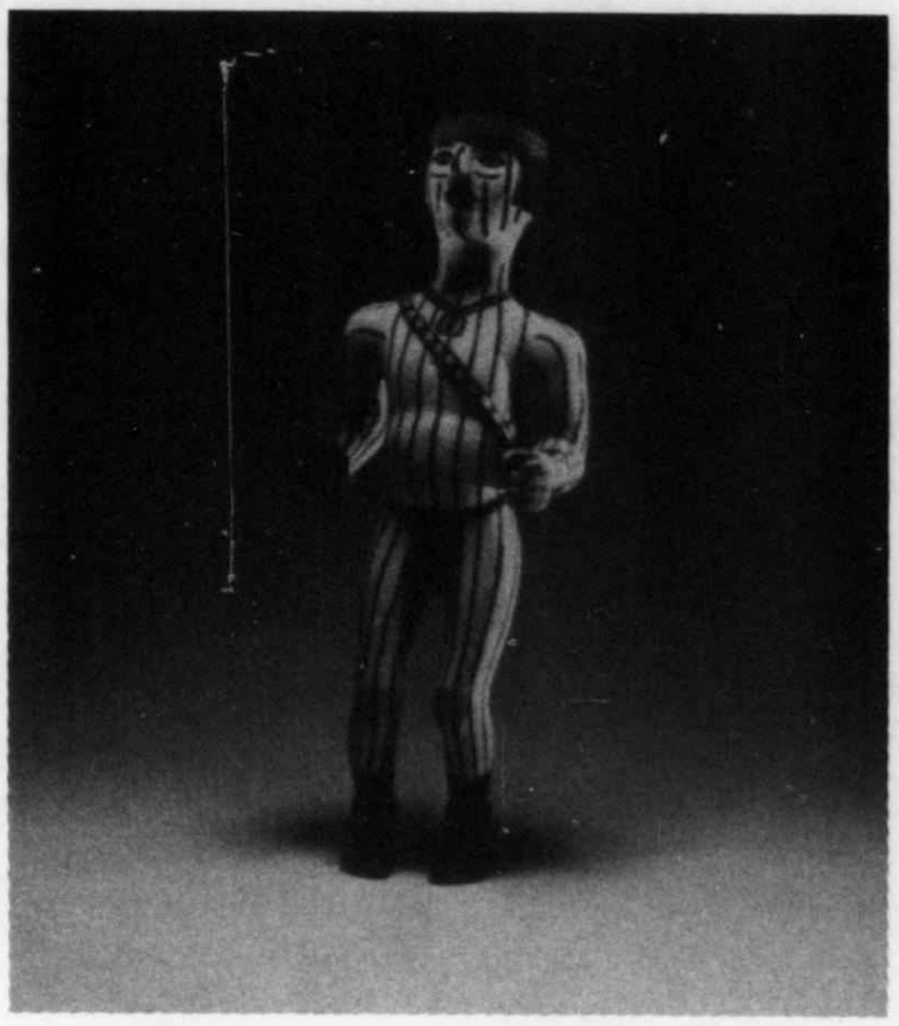
munity. These clowns paint themselves as someone who is in between, reflecting their comic/tragic approach to life.

At Taos Pueblo the "black-eye" clowns are painted with white clay and charcoal in alternate stripes across their bodies, their raccoon eyes of black peer out from a chalk-white face. Masked dancers who perform among the Bakuba people of Zaire are also painted with black and white stripes and wear tufts of straw on their heads reminiscent of the corn husks worn by Pueblo clowns.

Sacred clowns are key figures in initiation ceremonies, planting and harvest dances, and curing rites. Ritual clowns always appear during periods of collective revitalization and reaffirmation. By fooling around as well as battling selfishness and greed the clowns serve to remind the people of their purpose on earth—to "seek life," as the people of San Juan Pueblo say.

"This place must be paradise," the Hopi clowns seem to be saying as they madly wave their arms and point from the kiva roof down to the plaza below where the masked *kachinas* dance. Our world *could* be paradise if there were no sickness, no heartbreak, no selfishness, no envy. Paradise implies that ecological balances exist between human beings and the natural world, but we know that imbalances threaten the world with extinction. The Hopi *kachinas* dancing in their straight lines, singing in one voice, are as perfect as the Holy Beings they represent on this earth. The clowns who dance out of step, mocking the dancers, are only acting human—foolish mortals who never seem to learn. They testify to the fact that paradise always gives way to forms of life more playful and capricious than we might desire.





Being human and living in the human community has its pain and sorrows as well as its loving and laughter. Ritual clowns are simply an extravagant version of human beings making their way along the Road of Life. In their dramas ritual clowns create imaginary adversaries who are mirrors of the ultimate catastrophe. Against these adversaries they affect a reversal by first playing into the hands of the adversary, and then by some mad reasoning or grotesque action, squeeze themselves out from the precarious position they have backed into. During the pole climbing ceremony on San Geronimo day at Taos Pueblo for instance, the crowd gasps as one clown finally struggles to the top of a tall, slippery spruce which has been ritually cut and placed in the center of the plaza. He stands up high above the crowd and crows and crows before untying the sheepskin filled with candy and tossing it down to the audience. Circus clowns do the same thing when they juggle preposterous combinations of things while on a tightrope, making simple tasks difficult and difficult feats seem easy, and all the while teasing death.

Like fools and tricksters ritual clowns cannot turn back. They are chosen for their work by some combination of fate and destiny, tilting at windmills being a gift no one else is willing or able to take up. The difference between a clown's life and the lonely fool's is that the clown is in demand, necessary, loved. The waves of laughter from the audience, the delight the moment the clown appears, is what carries the sacred clown and keeps him dancing. Sadness is leavened when the clown and the crowd recognize that they are in the same boat, the same ship of fools. ■

NOTES

1. From "The Ballad of Tom O' Bedlam", *anonymous*. Bedlam was the name given to the "insane asylum," Bethlehem Hospital, in England. Edgar in *King Lear*, disguised himself as the inmate, Mad Tom O' Bedlam.
2. *Oscar: An Inquiry into the Nature of Sanity*, Peter J. Wilson, New York: Random House, 1974, pp. 94–95.
3. "Celso Talking to the Moon," in *Celso*, Leo Romero. Houston: Arte Publico Press, 1985, p. 78.
4. "Celso Moonstruck," in *ibid.*, pp. 34–35.
5. *The Ballad of Tom O' Bedlam*.
6. *The Winnebago Trickster*, Paul Radin, New York: Schocken Books, 1979, p. 52.
7. *The Wishing Bone Cycle: Narrative Poems from the Swampy Cree Indians*, Howard A. Norman, Santa Barbara: Ross-Erickson Publishing, 1982, p. 7.
8. *The Ballad of Tom O' Bedlam*.

Healing Power and Gesture

KARLFRIED, GRAF VON DÜRCKHEIM

During the process of man's growth from child to adult, he acquires the kind of consciousness—with its corresponding attitudes—that in effect cut him off from participation in Divine Being. He develops an ego capable of the kind of logical thinking that enables him to confront and rationally master the world. The world-ego, as this "I" is called, views life solely as a matter of establishing and sustaining certain fixed positions. It follows that when man is orientated theoretically, practically and ethically solely towards established facts, essential being is lost. Life, being a moving process, does not tolerate anything static. The loss of contact with Greater Life becomes evident in man's relationship to the world, wherein he lopsidedly develops only those of his abilities which help him rationally to understand and dominate his surroundings. Such obstruction of essential being culminates in the delusion that he is himself autonomous, able to control life and give it meaning solely through his own powers. This delusion creates a barrier which separates man from Divine Being and plunges him into a specifically human suffering. Yet it should not be forgotten that this same suffering, which is the result of estrangement from Divine Being, can itself become the means whereby Divine Being may at some time shine out against the background of our misconceptions. For, when the suffering caused by estrangement has grown so great that man is overwhelmed by despair and by the fear of being cut off from his roots, he may, at that moment, find himself ready to open to Divine Being which is all the time striving to deflect him from his lopsided concern with the world, and turn him towards itself.

The conditions necessary to make possible this reversal in a life that has been orientated solely to the world, are: that the reality of Divine Being present within a man's being should ceaselessly strive to become manifest in and through him; that this man with his rationally orientated mind should have become estranged from and be in conflict with his essential being. Without this tension, this tug of war, man would be as little able as a flower to become aware of the Divine Ground of his being; also, that in breaking through the barriers of what is inevitably a limited awareness, he opens himself to Greater Being and thereby awakens to the realization that the barrier has its origin solely in his rational ego; and, finally, that he is prepared to allow the Divine Will which summons him from within, to become his own will, and to *decide* to follow the Way to which essential being calls him. This reversal of direction—arising as it does from his suffering at being estranged from essential being and his joy at rediscovering it, signifies his setting out upon the Way.

We may be moved by Greater Being in many ways and in different degrees. A yearning, of which we are al-



most unaware, may perhaps stir in our hearts. It is not only the great experiences of "breaking through" that completely transform our relationship to life. The smallest incident may equally achieve it. The primary aim of all practice on the Way is to prepare man for such experiences of Being, and by making him receptive to genuine contact with it, open for him the Way of Transformation. The purpose of correct practice is not to bring man to a state of tranquility but to keep him in a condition of constant watchfulness and prevent him from coming to a standstill on the Way.

In man the process of ripening and maturing, in contrast to the natural ripening of a fruit, is not accomplished automatically. It requires conscious collaboration. In the realm of instinctive drives, it is nature that thrusts us towards the fulfilment of our desires and it is only necessary for us to yield to this irresistible force for such fulfilment to follow. The same does not hold good in the realm of the spirit. Spiritual progress inevitably brings about transformation. To this end it is necessary that a part of the former attitude to life be relinquished—some habit or requirement, some attitude or hard-won place on the ladder. In the long run it becomes indispensable for us to give up the prevailing convictions, apparently so natural, held by our world-ego. It is difficult for us to relinquish anything with which we have been habitually, though unconsciously, identified. Spiritual transformation, for this reason, needs a great deal of hard work. It not only entails inner practice, but also the practice of our manner of being physically present. This requires a long and patient practice of the body, of gesture, movement and posture. One such basic practice whose purpose is transformation is that of meditation.

All genuine meditation consists of two stages. It begins with concentration, by means of which a man collects himself with the help of his will and directs the power of his ego on to whatever may be the theme and purpose of the practice of transformation. Meditation, however, does not truly begin until that which the ego had seized upon in turn seizes the ego and by this movement changes rational analysis into synthesis. By this means the quality of consciousness is transformed from the masculine, active state which is, as it were, a sword, into the feminine, passive condition of the open chalice that is capable of being filled, as from an inner well-spring, without the active help of the ego. Thus action is transformed into "passion," and doing into being.

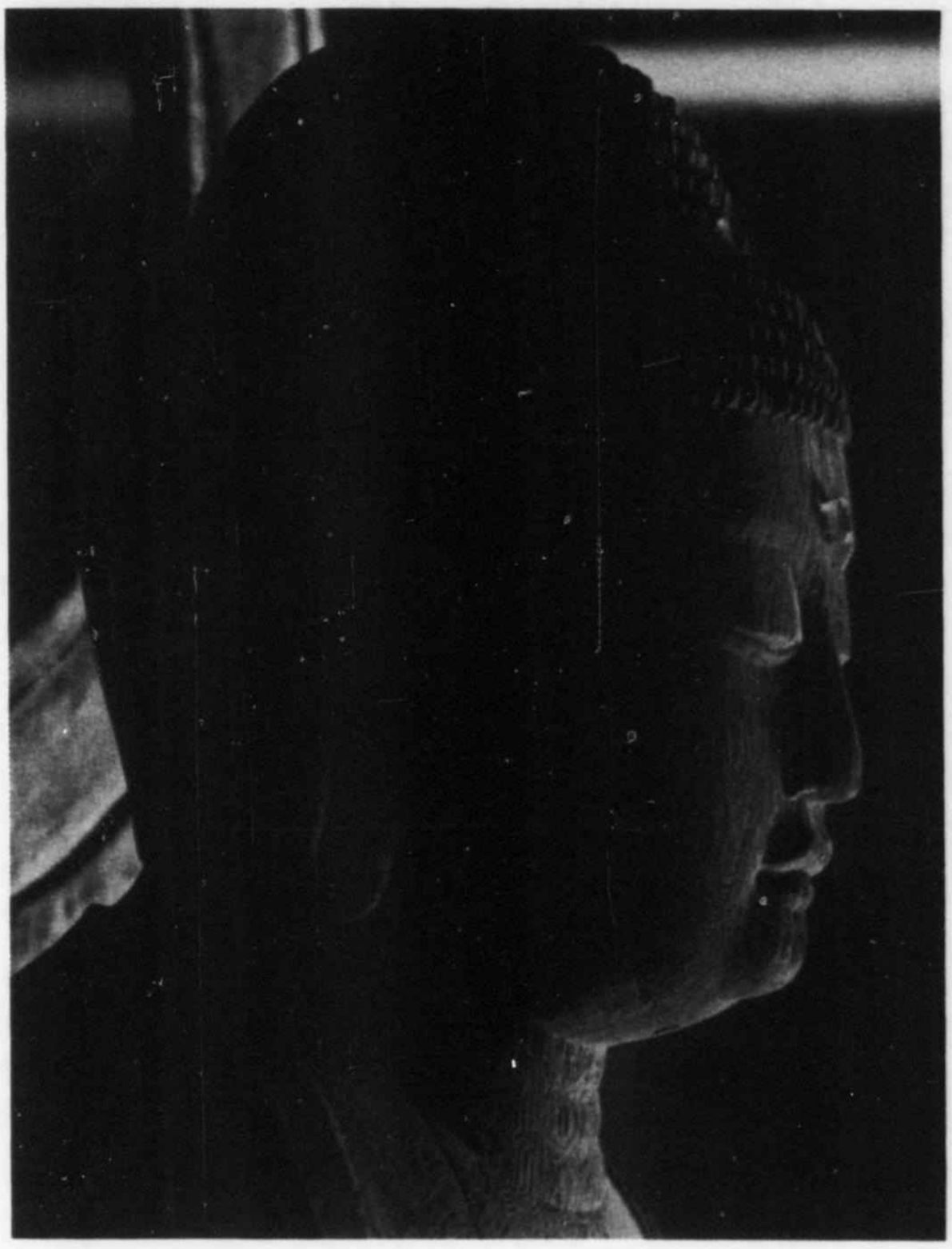
The word "meditation" comes from "meditari," which is a passive form of the verb meaning—"being moved to the center," rather than the active which is—"moving to the center." But this center is not a fixed point on which a man concentrates as he would on an object. Rather, the contrary can be said—that it *itself* concentrates a man by drawing him inward and collecting him there. This center is, after all, man's own essence—his transcendental core. Eventually, with practice, the center is experienced as a particular state in which the antithesis of subject and object is gradually dissolved. When this occurs the meditator has the sensation of being centered. And so, step by step, essential being awakes and becomes an inward knowing that experiences itself as a personal life center anchored in Greater Life. This forms the basis of a new consciousness of the world in which man senses himself as being reborn.

There is a story that tells of Master Eckhart's meeting with a poor man: ''You may be holy," says Eckhart, "but what made you holy, brother?" And the answer comes: "My sitting still, my elevated thoughts and my union with God." It is useful for our present theme to note that the practice of sitting still is given pride of place.

In the middle ages people were well aware of the inexhaustible power that arises simply from sitting still. After that time, knowledge of the purifying power of stillness and its practice was, in the West, largely lost. The tradition of preparing man for the breakthrough of transcendence by means of inner quiet and motionless sitting has been preserved in the East to the present day. Even in cases where practice is apparently directed not to immobility but towards activity—as in archery, sword fighting, wrestling, painting, flower arrangement—it is always the inner attitude of quiet and not the successful performance of the ways which is regarded as of fundamental importance.

The inner quiet which arises when the body is motionless and in its best possible form can become the source of transcendental experience. By emptying ourselves of all those matters that normally occupy us we become receptive to Greater Being. As evidence here is a story of Dogen Zenshi.

The Zen practice of Dogen, founder of the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, consisted in simply sitting still, without meditating on any theme or object. Esai Zenshi, the founder of Rinzai-Zen, on the other hand, mainly practiced the "Koan"—the solving of an insoluble mental problem. When asked for his opinion of the Rinzai method, Dogen replied: "It is very good." "But," protested the enquirer, "They practice the Koan!" "Well," said Master Dogen, "some people may be able to sit still only when they have something to think about. But if this brings them enlightenment, it is not due to their thinking but



solely to their sitting still."

To what extent the habit of sitting still can impress and change us becomes clear only when we have taken pains to practice it. After a short time we find ourselves asking: how is it possible that such a simple exercise can have such far-reaching effects on body and soul? Sitting still, we begin to realize, is not what we had imagined physical or spiritual practice to be. We are faced, therefore, with the question: "What is it we are really practicing if, although both are affected, it is neither body nor spirit?" The answer to this is that the person who practices, is himself *being practiced*. The one who is worked upon is the Person in his original totality, who is present beneath and beyond all possible differentiation into the many and various physical, spiritual and mental aspects. In so far as we regard and value ourselves as incarnate persons, certain manifestations in our life move from their accustomed shadow into the light of understanding. Thus our moods and postures take on new meaning. So long as we think of body and soul as two separate entities, we regard moods simply as "feelings," and look upon bodily attitudes and breathing as merely physical manifestations. When, however, the whole person is recognized as a "thou," it is no longer possible to separate the body from the soul. Once it becomes a question of transformation, our basic inner moods, together with all the gestures and postures that express them, acquire new significance. They are the means through which we grow aware of, manifest ourselves, and become physically present in the world.

A man's state of mind at any given moment becomes apparent in his way of being present, his behavior and his gestures. Whatever posture he may adopt in the world, it will always be expressive of his total attitude. Man reveals himself through his gestures, but the same means that manifest him to the world can also lead him to find self-realization as a person. His gestures and general demeanor ring true when they rise freely and directly from essential being without having to pass through the barrier of habitual and conditioned inhibitions. To the extent that our gestures have been liberated from the prison of our world-ego, the greater the quality of purity they reveal. The greater the purity of the gesture, the more we are helped to healing and wholeness. For this reason it is possible to speak of the healing power which lies in the pure gesture.

The so-called "peace" of the world-ego, illustrated by the bourgeois aim of a "quiet life," comes about when all inner movement and growth have stopped. Of quite a different quality is the peace of inner being and the life which strives to manifest itself through it. This kind of peace can only prevail where nothing further interrupts the movement towards becoming. To achieve such an attitude to life is the aim of all practice and meditation; it can never represent a state of "having arrived" but is always a process of "being on the way." Such practice, therefore, is by no means acceptable to all. There are many who throng to the so-called prophets who promise a cheap kind of peace to troubled mankind. But such "masters" simply betray man by hiding from him the real cause of his anxiety, which lies in the desire for transformation inherent in his inmost being.

How can we recognize the correct state of mind? What are the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving it? Strangely enough, the very manner in which a man develops his I-world awareness is one of the chief obstructions. This is a form of consciousness in which the ego, intent on asserting itself, consolidates its rational view of and position in the world. Thus we see that

the danger with which such an ego threatens the maturing man lies not only in the well-known threefold sin of seeking possessions, assuming importance and striving for power! The real cause lies rather in the fatal human tendency to remain static. The so-called natural ego is ruled by its inclination towards and capacity for holding fast to fixed positions that seem to promise security. Thought and energy are turned toward facts that have been rationally established, whether their purpose be to safeguard possessions in the world, to defend a system of thought, or to cling to fixed values. Whenever the idea of holding fast dominates the mind, life itself is in danger. But where life is, nothing is fixed, all is in motion and engaged in the eternal process of crystallization and dissolution, growth and maturity, death and rebirth. If life is present, then even that which appears to be completed is open to further change, and that which may have finished growing still remains transparent and ready for new becoming. So it is with the man who has awakened to life. Even those attitudes which have been established in him by the rational mind are permeated by the constant movement and transforming power that come from essential being.

To change our attitude by means of the practice that accords with essential being requires, above all, that the world-ego be dislodged from its central position. Once we have realized this, it necessarily follows that in all those areas of life and experience which cannot be subjugated by the grasping, fixing ego, our interest is enlarged. Two realms of experience now acquire particular significance—that of sense and that of inner bodily responses. It is a truism that man, even when enmeshed in his rational activities, is continually renewed by his contact with nature—country air, forests, the sea shore. Practicing the perception of the qualities of smell, taste, sight, hearing and inner bodily movement can have a wonderfully refreshing and curative effect so long as we are able to experience them purely. By "purely" we mean free from the ego's habitual process of labeling and naming all things according to their specific properties. There is a form of meditation in which, by sharpening our senses, we unlock the transcendental content that resides in them and thereby assist transformation. Even more important, however, than this freeing of the senses, is our need to experience our bodies—always provided that the body is not regarded merely as a thing, but as the means by which a man manifests himself in the world as a Person.

Whether it be in repose or in motion, the human body is intended to carry, transmit and bear witness to essential life which is designed to assume a particular form in the world in accordance with its inner image. In this way, the body bears witness to that Being which is ever striving within it towards manifestation. The word "body" here is not to be thought of in static terms: it implies rather the unity inherent in the changing pattern of posture, attitude and gesture by means of which an individual person lives out his life. This body, however, since it is subject to the distorting conditions of the world, can never become the perfect expression of Being, nor the complete realization of that inherent image which is unconditioned by time and space. Whatever its momentary form may be, it will always mirror the imperfections that the world has wrought in it. A man's physical state and the gestures that reveal it can give, on the one hand, clear indications of the measure and manner of his accord



with essential being and the extent to which he has become himself; or, on the other, it can provide indubitable evidence of how far he has failed himself.

A man's correct attitude is never static; it is not something that is achieved once and for all. Rather, it is a living, moving and changing process within which he can remain receptive towards his essence, in spite of the fact that the bodily form he may have at any given moment is bound by conditions of space and time. This enables him to obey the striving of his inner being to become manifest, to remain always in a state of transformation and to become ever more permeable to Divine Being.

By the purity of his gesture we are enabled to see that a man is present in the right way. This means that he is permeable to his individual essence as it strives towards the revelation of plenitude, innate form and unity of Divine Being. When a man is present in the purity of his gestures, his chief characteristics are a simple, unaffected trustfulness, a natural harmony, and an attitude of friendliness which can only exist when there is genuine contact with essential being. In a like sense, the pure gesture also liberates the healing spirit of which it is an expression. It is both the manifestation and the ever-living source of an attitude which enables man to respond appropriately to all situations of life. Each new circumstance stimulates the cycle of transformation afresh. Thus we see that the pure gesture is an expression of the law of movement which is constant renewal. By means of pure gesture, man as an individual "form in time" (*Zeitgestalt*) is enabled to relate in his own way to the primal movement of life, wherein the forms which have crystallized in him under world conditions are repeatedly dissolved and remade in accordance with essential being. This is a process of continuous transformation.

The pure gesture is evidence of the fact that man has found a vital way of life, a way which enables him to face the world fearlessly because he is living directly from essential being. Thus, the more unequivocally a man lives from essential being and without regard to his world-ego, the more freely and without prejudice will he meet all that may, from moment to moment, confront him. This means that he is really open to life which, as we know, never repeats itself. Now he perceives even familiar things as if for the first time; no longer taking up fixed positions, he is able to give his whole self, just as he is, to every passing moment.

The practice of pure gesture requires first that a man have a continuous awareness of his usual behavior, his prejudices, habits, and processes of self-protection; and secondly that he should awake in himself a determination to retract and dissolve all these attitudes with which he deceives himself as to what is the truth of life. ■

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Being Is More Than Life

MEISTER ECKHART

In Occisione Gladii Mortui Sunt.
(Hebrews II:37)

We read of the holy martyrs, whom we are to remember today, that "they were slain with the sword." Our Lord said to his disciples: "Blessed are ye. . . when ye shall suffer. . . for my name's sake." According to the Scripture, the martyrs suffered death for Christ's sake, being put to the sword.

We learn three things of them. The first is that they are dead. Whatever one may suffer in this world, there is an end to it. St. Augustine says: "All the pain and trouble of this world have an end but God's reward for it is eternal." Moreover, we ought to keep in mind that since this life is mortal, we need not fear all the pain and trouble that could come, because it is going to have an end. In the third place [we learn that] we should be so dead to the world that nothing will affect us, whether we like it or not.

One authority says: "Nothing can affect heaven," and by this he means the heavenly person who is moved by nothing that happens. Another asks: "If creatures amount to so little, how does it happen that they so easily turn a person from God—when the soul at its worst is better than creatures and heaven to boot?" He says that this comes of paying too little attention to God. If a man paid as much attention to God as he should, it would be well-nigh

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impossible for him to fall. This is good doctrine. In this world, people should behave as though they were dead. As St. Gregory says: "No one can have as much of God as he who is dead to this world."

But the fourth lesson is best. It says that they are dead but that death gives them Being. An authority says that nature never destroys anything without putting something better in its place. When air turns to fire, that is something better, but when air turns to water, there is destruction, something gone wrong. If, then, nature does so well, how much better may God do! He never destroys without giving something better in return. The martyrs are dead. They have lost their lives but they have received Being. There is an authority who teaches that "Being, life, and knowledge rank highest but knowledge is higher than life and Being, because whoever has knowledge necessarily has both the others." According to that, life would rank ahead of Being as, for example, a tree has life, while a stone has only Being. However, if we reach down into Being pure and simple, as it really is, we should find that Being ranks higher than life or knowledge.

I shall say that they have lost a natural life and received Being. One authority says that God is like nothing so much as Being; to the extent anything has Being it is like God. Another says that Being is so high and pure that God cannot be more than Being. God sees nothing else, knows nothing else, for Being is his arena. He loves nothing else, thinks of nothing else than his Being. Now I should say that creatures as a whole have only one Being. However, one authority says that "Certain creatures are so near to God and so instinct with divine light that they give Being to others." That is not true, because Being is so superior in rank and purity and so much God's own that no one can give it but he—as he gives himself. Being is the property of God.

One authority says that one creature might well given another life but that whatever really is exists in Being. Being is a name above all names. To be defective is to show a decline in Being. All our lives should reveal Being and therefore, to the extent that life is Being, it is of God. As far as it is included in Being, it is related to God. Let a man's life be ever so mean, if he takes it as

Being, it will rank higher than anything else life might be. I am very sure that, if a soul knew the least of what Being is, its attention would never be diverted from it even for an instant. The least one knows of God as, for example, to see a flower get its Being from him, is more perfect knowledge than any other. To know the least of creatures as one of God's Beings, is better than knowing an angel.

❧

When an angel turns its attention to creatures, night falls. St. Augustine says that when angels attend to creatures apart from God, then it is twilight. So it is with the soul. If the soul knows God in creatures, night falls. If it sees how they have their being in God, morning breaks. But if it sees the Being that is in God himself alone, it is high noon! See! This is what one ought to desire with mad fervor—that all his life should become Being.

There is nothing so mean that to some degree it does not long for Being. Even caterpillars, when they fall off a tree, go at once to climb a wall, to regain their Being. Thus we say that it is good to die in God so that he may give us instead that Being which is better than life, a being in which our life subsists even now. One ought to be glad to give up to dying and death, so that better Being may be his portion.

I once said that wood is better than gold, which is a fantastic thing to say, and yet a stone, to the extent it has Being, would be better than even God and Godhead without Being. (Supposing that God could be abstracted from Being.) That must be a strong life in which lifeless things are made to live, in which even death is changed to life. There is no death in God, for in him everything is made alive. "They are dead," says the Scripture of the martyrs, "and are transformed to life eternal," that is, to a life in which life is Being.

We are to be so dead that neither good nor evil affect us. What we know must be known to its roots, for we shall never know anything until we know its causes. There can be no knowledge until knowing reaches the hidden reasons. Thus, too, life cannot be perfected until it has returned to its secret source, where life is Being, a life the soul receives when it dies even down to its roots, so that we may live that life yonder which itself is Being. One scholar

points out what it is that hinders us from that: We are hindered by cleaving to time. Whatever cleaves to time is mortal.

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An authority says: "The course of heaven is eternal, and yet it may well be that time comes from heaven by reason of a defection." Heaven itself is eternal in its course and knows nothing about time. That means that the soul, too, consists of pure Being—but then, too, there are opposites in the soul. What are opposites? Good and evil, white and black are such opposites, which, however, are not part of Being.

One authority says that the soul is put in the body to be purified. If it is separated from the body, it has neither intelligence nor will. It is then One and cannot send forth agents through which it might turn to God. Nevertheless, the agents are present [in germ] in the soul's core, which is to say, in its roots rather than its activities. The soul is purified in the body through its function in gathering together [all the body's] disparate elements. When [the forces] expressed through the five senses are gathered again into the soul, then the soul is one agent by means of which everything is unified.

In the second place, the soul is purified in the practice of virtures by which we climb to a life of unity. That is the way the soul is made pure—by being purged of much divided life and by entering upon a life that is [focused to] unity. The whole scattered world of lower things is gathered up to oneness when the soul climbs up to that life in which there are no opposites. Entering the life of reason, opposites are forgotten, but where this light does not fall, things fall away to death and destruction.

In the third place, the purity of the soul consists in never turning aside to anything [at which it does not ultimately aim]. To turn aside is to die and finally not to be.

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Let us pray our dear Lord God that he help us to mount from a life divided to a life unified. Amen. ■

High Resolve:

AN INTERVIEW WITH TARA TULKU, RINPOCHE

The first noble truth enunciated by the Buddha over 2500 years ago was the pervasiveness of suffering (dukkha). *With this in mind,* PARABOLA *arranged a conversation about suffering and the sadness it engenders with the Venerable Tara Tulku, Rinpoche, a remarkable Tibetan Buddhist monk already familiar to readers of* PARABOLA *(see Vol. IX, No. 3, "Pilgrimage"). Born in 1927 in eastern Tibet, Tara Tulku studied for nearly three decades in the monasteries of Sendru and Drepung, making him one of the last of his countrymen to receive a comprehensive monastic training on his native soil. During the great Tibetan diaspora of 1959, he fled to India where he became abbot and then abbot emeritus of Gyüto Tantric Monastery. Among his many duties, he currently teaches the Dharma to Westerners in Bodhgaya (where the Buddha achieved enlightenment) and occasionally in America.*

Our talk with Tara Tulku took place in the Office of Tibet in New York City. Robert A.F. Thurman, professor of religion at Amherst College, kindly agreed to translate for us, as he has many times in the past. Throughout the conversation, Rinpoche responded to our questions with the same great patience and enthusiasm he offered during our last conversation. His bright crimson robes and orange prayer beads served to remind us of just how far he had traveled, geographically and culturally, to bring his Vajrayana tradition to the attention of the West.

— Philip Zaleski

PARABOLA We understand sadness to be an attitude toward suffering, an attitude that can go in two directions: in a positive way toward compassion, or in a negative way toward self-pity and other destructive emotions. Does this accord with Rinpoche's understanding?

Tara Tulku I think this is how it is. According to the Buddha's teaching, when one feels strong sorrow, the superior method for dealing with it is to examine its causes. One always finds two major classes of cause: one, the inner, evolutionary forces coming from one's previous actions in this and former lives, and two, external circumstances, things that happen outside oneself. By the meeting of these two streams of causality, suffering will invariably be produced.

If someone makes the mistake—as I think it often is made—of thinking that the major cause of suffering is outer circumstances, then it is very difficult to



Photograph by Philip Zaleski

develop a method to free oneself of sorrow. But if one takes on the responsibility of realizing that the major cause will always be one's internal stream of causality, coming from one's past evolutionary actions and relating to the state of one's own mind, then it will not be too difficult to remove sorrow from one's mind. Our trouble is that when someone causes us distress, we usually don't feel that we have brought this sorrow upon ourselves. Rather, we simply focus on the external forces involved. We say "that person or that thing really makes me unhappy." This makes our sorrow grow more powerful. On the other hand, if we say "it is *my* responsibility that this happened to me, it is my own evolutionary action, if I can't see what I did then I did it at some other time that I'm unaware of," then whatever else may happen, our sorrow will automatically become smaller and loosen its hold over us.

To be concise, the intensity of sorrow will vary in direct proportion to the intensity of our feeling that "I am important."

P. How then should one be in front of the suffering of another person?

T.T. To begin with, one should not differentiate between oneself and others who are suffering. One should take upon oneself the burden of their suffer-

The Buddha began his whole teaching from the fact of suffering. That is why it is called the holy fact of suffering.

ing, thinking "maybe I don't feel this suffering right now, but I have felt it so many times in the past and I will so many times in the future, so really this suffering is my suffering." This would be the beginning.

Furthermore, in our normal habit there are at least three ways in which we react to the suffering of others. If the one who suffers is beloved by us, then even without trying we identify with their suffering. With those whom we dislike intensely, we not only do not identify with their suffering, we even enjoy it. Then there is the great majority to whom we have no special connection either positive or negative; we are more or less disconnected from the suffering of these people. This shows that our normal way of reacting depends very much on how we are thinking about the suffering of others. These three—the enemy, the beloved, the neutral—are suffering more or less the same. *We* make the difference in our reactions.

The Buddha said that the source of our reaction to these three relates to the three major poisons of the mind—desire, anger, and delusion. In the case of someone we love, desire creates a strong sense of identification with their suffering. In the case of someone we dislike, anger creates a strong sense of disassociation with their suffering, or even enjoyment of it. And with the one we don't care about, our delusion makes us fail to appreciate that they are suffering. Therefore we are controlled not by any objectivity of our own perception, but by the force of these three mental poisons. If one realizes this and can guard oneself against being carried away by one or another of these three negative emotions, then perceiving the suffering of others, even identifying with it and in a sense taking it upon oneself—that is, feeling responsibility for it and trying to do something about it—will not cause one harm or discouragement, but will give one a more powerful incentive to act benevolently toward the sufferer.

The Buddha began his whole teaching from the fact of suffering. That is why this is called the holy fact of suffering.

P. It sounds as if Rinpoche were saying that suffering, properly understood, is a prelude to compassion, even a necessary road to compassion.

T.T. Oh, yes. The root of the attainment of liberation and freedom is the acknowledgment and full understanding of the fact of suffering. Similarly, the best way to experience viscerally the erroneousness of one's attitudes and the distortion of one's perception is to observe oneself while in the process of confronting suffering. By knowing how one's attitudes are distorted, and under what kind of delusions one is driven in one's wrong interactions with the world, the goodness of one's mind can be cultivated, and compassion, love, and wisdom can all be generated. But we never think that it has to do with our own attitudes, responses, and perceptions. We don't understand our own responsibility for what has happened. If we were really to understand how the mind works, and how to bring out its goodness and correct its distortions, then no matter what happened outside, nothing could make us sorrowful.

There's a beautiful example of this, a very ancient illustration. If you're in a country where there are many thorns,



Buddha Preaching. *Opaque watercolor on cloth. 1649.*

and you set out to destroy the thorns, thinking that the problem of the thorns *is* the thorns, you will never be finished. But if you put on a good strong pair of boots and chaps, you can go where you like and the thorns will not harm you. As Shantideva said in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, it is really quite a bit easier to put on a pair of shoes than to cover the earth in shoe leather. If you get people to understand this, then you will have accomplished a great deal.

P. But the thorns don't go away.

T.T. The universe is full of thorns. It's not a matter of how many thorns there are, but that one's own mind is right at hand, and one can work with that. Of course, the thorns are only an example. The entire environment, every aspect of our body, all of our experiences and enjoyments and possessions, all are capable of causing us suffering. And they commonly do. Look at America, where in the quest for the removal of suffering tremendous material progress has taken place—yet we have not yet heard it announced that suffering here has come to an end. In fact, we see suffering get greater and greater, in more and more subtle forms. Among people who traditionally are considered to be more free of suffering—namely, those who are young, strong, healthy, and smart—we see in America the greatest kind of suffering, anxiety, misery, self-destructive behavior. The main problem is that their approach is to try to remove the suffering in the world and not to put on a good pair of boots and chaps.

. . . in the quest for the removal of suffering tremendous material progress has taken place—yet we have not yet heard it announced that suffering here has come to an end.

P. But isn't there something further here? Beyond protecting oneself by wearing boots, can't one make use of the thorns or understand them in a constructive sort of way?

T.T. These are not two different things. The making of the shoes is not just an example of simply avoiding the thorns; it has to do with one's own subjectivity. It shows how, by understanding what the thorns are, and what the source of the pain is, one is enabled to fashion the shoes. Once one has fashioned the shoes of tolerance, enlightenment, and patience, then one can even go in those shoes to rescue others and to help them make their own shoes. But if instead one just rushes out into the thorns to save other people, one would end up being shot full of thorns, paralyzed, ruined oneself and unable to benefit anybody else.

P. Then the question is really how to make the shoes.

T.T. That's right. The beginning, of course, is the thorns. It is stepping on the thorns that gives us the wish to make a really strong pair of shoes. Without that pain, we would not have any desire to develop a method to make shoes. Therefore the Lord Buddha, when he turned the Wheel of Dharma for the first time, in Sarnath, near Benares, said "this is the holy fact of suffering."

P. In the beginning, Rinpoche said that when I see the suffering of another I should not identify with it—I free myself so I can help free others—and then he said that we should identify. If some-



one is suffering and I identify with their suffering, doesn't it cause more suffering?

T.T. The first process is not a question of not identifying with suffering, but rather of understanding its danger. The Bodhisattva would be multiplying suffering if he tried to run among the thorns without first having good shoes. Although from the beginning the Bodhisattva identifies with the suffering of others and wants to remove this suffering, nevertheless he realizes the necessity of developing an understanding of the nature of suffering, of its emptiness, before being able to benefit others.

Once the Bodhisattva has understood emptiness, he develops compassion. Compassion is a very strange thing. Looking upon the suffering of others, compassion wants to take that suffering upon itself, but it keeps failing. Instead of gathering more suffering, it gets happier. Compassion removes the suffering of others, and somehow that makes the Bodhisattva happier. Somehow, suffering disappears when it comes into the field of the understanding of emptiness. Rather than doubling the suf-

fering, the Bodhisattva's action destroys the suffering.

P. The Dalai Lama said something about that in the interview we published in the *Wholeness* issue.

T.T. When many people are starving, it won't help to want to save them if you are too weak to move. You must get a bite to eat before gaining strength to get up and feed others.

P. Must I always look after feeding myself first, or can it be done at the same time as helping others?

T.T. They are done simultaneously in the sense of motivation. If you are just grabbing food because you are hungry, of course you are not satisfying the need of others as well as your own. But if in the process of eating you are simultaneously aware that only by doing so will you be able to gain the strength to feed others, you will actually have more power in getting that food, and greater motivation for helping others.

P. And the source of the motivation is correct understanding.

T.T. Yes, of course, it is the right knowledge of the nature of the reality of the situation, of the real facts of life, of relativity and emptiness. It is from this true knowledge of the situation that the motivation arises.

P. Compassion isn't a feeling. What is it? What is the real relation of compassion to suffering?

T.T. Compassion is a desire, a desire that others be free of suffering. Compassion not combined with wisdom is ineffectual in relieving suffering. In order to become effectual, compassion must be made indivisible with wisdom, which realizes the ultimate nonexistence of the other, of the desire, of the self, of the suffering, which sees the pure relativity of all these things and the emptiness of their intrinsic reality. This is defined as the great compassion which, perceiving living beings, wishes them to be free of suffering.

P. The acceptance of the suffering of oneself and others seems to be the key. In this acceptance, a force seems to grow.

T.T. It's a very strange thing about acceptance. Yes, the Bodhisattva accepts the suffering of himself and others, and the inexorable nature of relativity. But if that was all, the Bodhisattva would become like one completely overwhelmed by thorns. There is a moment in the Bodhisattva's career, just before generating the new spirit of enlightenment, when he has something called high resolve. This is a feeling of total acceptance of suffering and of his responsibility for eliminating it. It's a kind of madness, because how can anyone possibly do that? It's an endless job, and it's only you that are doing it. At that point, there must be a recognition that this is indivisible from wisdom. Then it is a curious fact that to the degree that wisdom does not accept any suffering of self or others —to the degree that wisdom sees that on the absolute level suffering is empty of intrinsic reality—to that degree the Bodhisattva becomes more and more capable of accepting the suffering of a wider and wider circle of human beings. So simultaneously there is a total acceptance of suffering, and a total refusal of suffering by seeing its emptiness. This is nonacceptance at the absolute level generating acceptance on the relative level.

P. Could Rinpoche share with us an example from his life of how he confronted suffering?

T.T. On March 12, 1959, I was in Drepung Monastery, teaching some new monks and studying with my own teachers. I was enjoying life there. On the tenth of March, as you know, there was a massacre in Lhasa. We all felt great sorrow and anxiety over this. We didn't know that His Holiness had escaped from the Palace; we were afraid that he was being harmed. In the morning I got up and went to the abbot, with whom I was very close. When he said that His Holiness had left the other night and had not been harmed, I became a bit more cheery. But still there was terrible suffering in Lhasa; many people were killed. The next day my disciples came early in the morning and urged me to leave right away, warning me that the Chinese planned to shell the monastery and that I might be killed. So I went with them. I was in the process of studying *The Essence of Eloquence* and wanted to continue with this, so I took a copy with me. But I took no clothes, no suitcase or backpack, no lunch. Some of the students brought a few blankets, a bag of barley flour, and a few other things.

As we were waiting up in the hills, it became dark. So, drawn by the fact that His Holiness had gone all the way to India, we decided to follow him. It was a very arduous and difficult journey, but we really weren't all that miserable. At no time did I think "the Chinese are awful, what they've done is dreadful." All I thought was "now we're wandering here, now we're going there." We thought all this was happening because of something we had done, and so we all prayed. We were praying all the time. This way we were expiating some negative, illusionary thing that was with us. And by the time we had reached India, we were actually in a better state of mind than when we had started out! For a long time, we were filled with all kinds of virtuous thoughts, we had our very best mental attention, we were taking our teachings more deeply than we ever had. We thought more deeply about the holy fact of suffering, we looked at our texts more carefully, we meditated more intently than we might have otherwise. We derived great benefit from it. We were not able to feel great hatred or worry about the Chinese, although we knew on some level how awful they had been.

It is from that experience that I now presume to say that I am an expert in suffering!

Compassion not combined with wisdom is ineffectual in relieving suffering.

P. It is as though you were already prepared for this catastrophe. You knew that allowing yourself to go in the direction of anger would be harmful to yourself and others. The Dharma was a great protection.

T.T. Yes, that's right. The Dharma is the greatest protection for the mind. I had thoroughly studied the various mind practices of the Dharma.

P. What advice would you give to those of us who aren't studying actively in the Buddhist tradition?

T.T. It's not a matter of Buddhist or not Buddhist, when one confronts, for instance, the fact that the idea of a rigid difference between self and other is a distortion of reality. My advice is to

The Bodhisattva Maitreya. *Nepal, 9th century.*



think as much as possible about the fact of the existence of suffering, without worrying about labels. If one can be just a little less concerned about oneself, and become a little more concerned about others—this is my main advice.

In this regard, a very good theme to reflect upon is the way in which others are of benefit to oneself. Whatever happiness one has depends upon the kindness of others. Clothes, shoes, food—all this comes from the labor of others; it is by their kindness that one has these things. If you fill your mind with such thoughts, then your mind will definitely improve. Of course, we have to know how to think. If we have something we like—a tape recorder, for example—we have to begin to analyze the origins of that tape recorder: why it was made, how, by whom, and so on. We begin to realize how that tape recorder is an aggregate of the beneficial intentions and actions of many other beings.

When we get up in the morning and drink a cup of tea, how does this depend on the kindness of others? But rather than thinking about the person who picked the tea leaves, the person who packed them, the person who supplied the water, and the plumbing for the water, and the gas that cooked it, our own inferior way of going about it is to think "I made this cup of tea." This is the way we really think. To think back, when we are in a restaurant, on the causality of the tea—this is the supreme advice I have to give. To give another example, if a person has great wealth, they tend to think "It is my great fortune and karma, I don't depend on anyone else." But that wealth really depends on the kindness of others in a very complicated way. To develop a continuous thinking about that sort of thing is the best advice I know.

P. Could you explain more about what you mean by "the holy fact of suffering"?

T.T. It is not a fact for us ordinary people. We think a lot of things are fun or nice; we don't think they are suffering. But to a holy person, what we consider to be fun is really suffering. That is why this is called the "holy" fact of suffering. It is said that a holy person is like an eye, and we are like the palm of a hand. The tiniest speck of dust or hair is very unpleasant when in the eye—and the sensitivity and awareness of a holy person is like that. They are aware of the real suffering nature of something that to other people is fun. Others experience a piece of dust as if it were on the palm of the hand; they think nothing of it.

P. When it is said that all is suffering, it means that our pleasures and enjoyments are also suffering.

T.T. Exactly, all that we think of as happiness is called "the suffering of change." Only a holy person really knows that. It is factual for a holy person; it is not factual for other persons.

According to one analysis, the holy fact of suffering consists of three kinds of suffering. There is the suffering of change, the suffering of suffering, and cosmic suffering or the suffering of creation. The suffering of suffering is what we ordinarily recognize as suffering. Most of what makes us angry and irritable in our lives is really our confronting the suffering of suffering and failing to recognize it as such. The suffering of change is what we call ordinary pleasure, pleasure contaminated by egotism. If we don't recognize pleasure as the suffering of change, we generate desire for it. The third kind is cosmic suffering. By not recognizing it, we get steeped in delusion and ignorance. But if one knows well the nature of these three kinds of suffering, then one's anger, desire, and delusion will become less.

Meditation on the holy fact of suffering means to think upon one's experience: When I have become angry, what made me angry? When I became desirous, what made me desirous? When I became confused and deluded, what made me confused and deluded?

P. Would Rinpoche say something about cosmic suffering?

T.T. Cosmic suffering is existence itself. The aggregates themselves—of ideas, of consciousnesses, of sensations, of emotions, of forms—the very structure of the whole system is cosmic suffering. For example, my body now does not have contaminated happiness, nor does it have the suffering of suffering. My arm is not feeling pleasurable due to the suffering of change, nor miserable through the suffering of suffering. However, it has the nature of suffering; it has all the causes of suffering contained in it. A bit of heat applied to it will make it hurt. Or take a piece of clothing. Clothing is neither suffering nor pleasure. But if someone rips it, or it becomes frayed, or you spill tea or coffee on it, then it becomes a cause of suffering. Everything has this causal propensity to generate suffering. It is in the very fabric of reality. Wherever one dwells, there is suffering. We dwell in the universe, where there is cosmic suffering.

P. But if suffering is in the nature of everything, how can we get rid of it?

T.T. We must live in a different place, another world. Our friends, our house, our body, our food, our possessions, all are cosmic suffering. We need a whole new situation. In general, in Mahayana Buddhism, the creation of the Pure Land or Buddha Land by the Bodhisattva means the making of a new world. What is so notable about Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism is the ultimate elaboration or technology of the creation of a new world. ■

Sadness in Art

HARRY REMDE

I speak only from my observations and my experience. Sadness is separate from sorrow. Sorrow is brief and ending; sadness is part of a continuing line. But how, "continuing"? How will sadness be discovered? This is the whole question. The sadness in art is like a shadow repeatedly cast. The light that casts it we call hope. Sadness and hope are paired in a perfect oppositeness. They are necessary to each other. The two together, moment by moment, produce the continuing line.

The "sadness of art" is equally a "hope in art," but they must be seen from different directions.

What we call the continuing line is the path of a single movement in art. It is the way we move in whatever we do. No movement can be rejected; each working has its art. The line may be of a leg dancing, or a hand scribing, or a voice alone. The line is a movement—as if, each moment, the movement would write a trace of itself.

We speak about real sadness, real hope—not "hoping for" or "sadness because." Real hope and sadness belong to the Nature we call Mother—in which is also our own real nature. From this nature, so seldom explored, comes all of the possibility of art.

This hope and sadness have little to do with the common meaning of these words. Real sadness is free of the past because in it there is no exact measure of what could have been done. Real hope knows nothing of the future; it carries no clue of what will become. The two together govern completely. They are the source of movement in art.

Hope in art is the strength that produces the line. It is the renewing, the continuing "fact" of the line. Hope adds length to the line each moment. The length of the line is the duration of the movement.

Sadness in art is our inability to see and to accept what is shown to us. Our seeing and our acceptance are always partial. Or we do not see at all. Each moment of hope brings the new possibility, but enactment of the possibility depends on our acceptance of it. The

truth of our moving—in whatever we do—depends on this. It is a strenuous work. When we do not accept, the movement loses life. We "think" the line. With each new moment we try again. But we can never attain to all that is shown because this needs a skill beyond our ability. Hope renews, the sadness grows. The moments pass furiously. The line stops, and it starts again. This alternation of hope and sadness—of possibilities shown and partly lost—runs throughout our work.

Even as I write this I see an art. Something is shown. My fingers reach and grab. The showing dims, and I know a sadness.

We speak of the domain of no extent which sometimes can appear in us and which is the source of whatever we can do. But what appears I can never reach for. I must learn to accept in a different way.

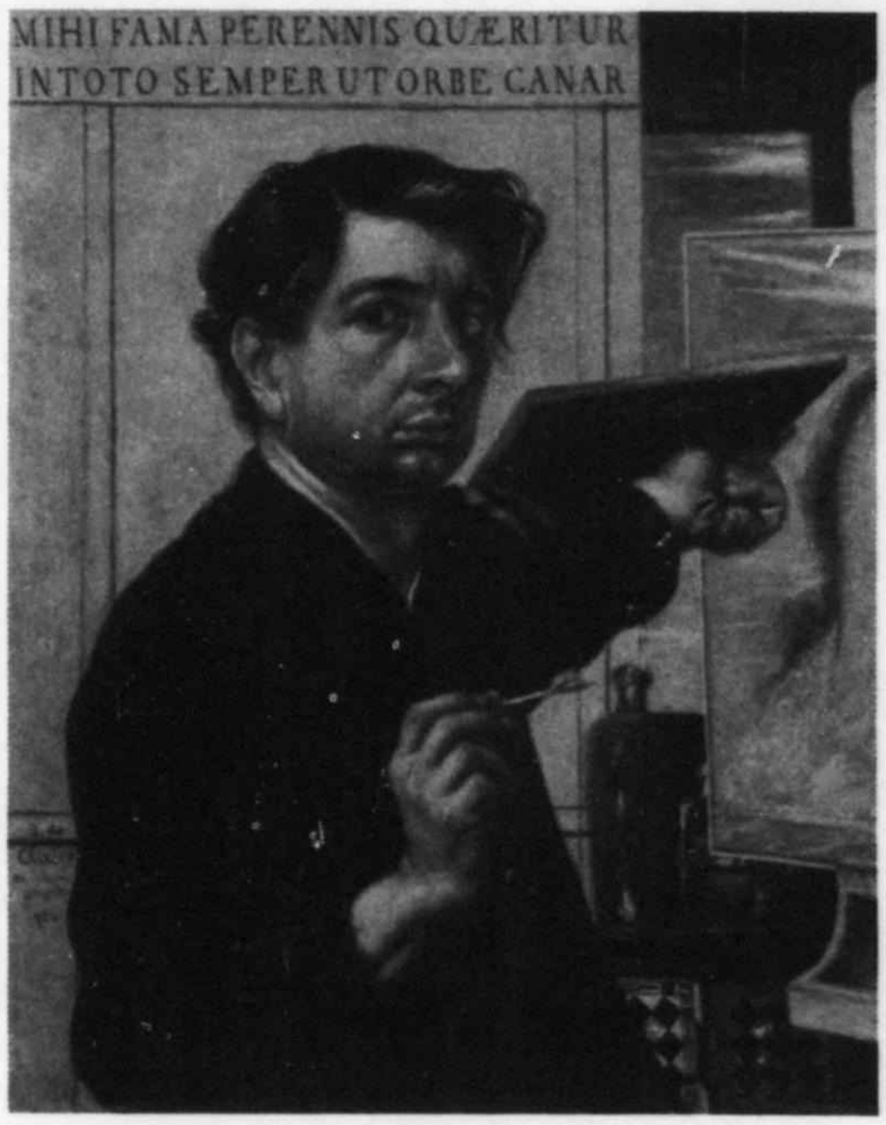
Real hope and sadness come from the body. They are the body's gift to the art. Sadness is embedded in the movement. It provides a steadying, a restraining force. Hope renews the line each moment. It is the advancing pulse of the line.

That sadness and hope belong to the physical body may at first seem strange. But sadness of the emotion ("sadness because") plays no part in what is art. The sadness of the body, however, is vital—it is a kind of friction. One might call it the friction of the world. Hope alone has the strength to overcome it. The two are balanced by their natures. Movement causes a friction which is overcome by strength.

Thus sadness is both a creation and the creator of hope. The one promulgates the other. At every instant, the lengthening line is in balance. A moment of art is a moment of observing this continuity.

In what can be called art, hope is without tomorrow, sadness is without yesterday. The two are apart by an immeasurably short distance, by an unknowably short time. Such art comes from our nature.

Two other forces must be mentioned, but they will not be discussed. The first of these is the gift of the head, called faith. Faith gives direction to the line. The other is the voice of the heart, called love. Love shields the line from what is unnecessary. Hope and sadness produce a line whose direction is faith, whose sound is love. In the instant of making its mark, the line knows what to say.



Self-Portrait with Palette, *1924. Giorgio de Chirico.*

Where does the line begin? There is only one answer to this question. When I try to be quiet within myself, when thought and feeling and the sensation of my body are not banished but seen as mine, yet are also seen as separate from me, then I am near the line. The line I follow will never be the same as another person's because it comes from my nature. It is the repertoire of my way of



Metaphysical Self-Portrait, *1922. Giorgio de Chirico.*

working. It is in my arms and my fingers, in my head and my eyes. Whatever is done at that moment will be called art.

The line can begin on the point of a pencil, on the tip of a brush, at the edge of a chisel, in a cup of tea. My nature has many resources. In the world there are many natures. This is quite a notion! Legs running, arms swinging, heads tilting, voices sounding—all of these will be art when they come from our real nature.

Therefore, how do I know the continuity? I know it by seeing the movement as it takes place. I watch the "moving" as it moves. In this way my body reestablishes itself. What has been dead returns to life. Hope and sadness fill every part. I know the strength and the friction. My body cannot move without them.

The line is a series of small completions. They give a rhythm to the work. The rhythm is fine and very fast—like a vibration. The moments go by like birds in their quickness.

In the course of a movement, hope and sadness rise and fall. The line starts and falters. My body knows this very well. In almost everything we do in life we are first one thing and then another. So this is not such a strange idea! In an ordinary day we can observe many such alternations in ourselves.

The art we speak about belongs to no school, no period, no exhibition. It is spontaneous but never random. The forces are in strict control. The line obeys perfectly.

There is no more deliberation when I work this way than there is when I drink a glass of water. But I try to watch the movement—and that is the difference. My watching is part of the process. It seems to permit the process. I do not create, but "it is created." My working is like a path I walk on, where what is passed is visible to my senses. Not wholly, perhaps, but enough to remember. The line of art is inexhaustible, but finding it is the hardest work.

The answer to our question will come from the moment itself. Then we must accept it. The moment is so complete, so filled with knowing, that the work is reborn. Quite simply, I know what to do, and I do it. Perhaps this moment is the atom of art—a world as true as the atom of the physicists.

The moment is the same at all magnifications—even the world on my bench.

I am a woodworker. Through my working I can know something about another person's art. Unlike many arts, mine often produces a loud noise. When the saw or the jointer or the shaper is cutting, I wear ear plugs. But these noisy machines have a real advantage. When they stop, the quiet seems quieter. Then I carry the wood to the bench, the pieces are trimmed and fitted, tools are used and put away; a sort of discreteness is everywhere. Sometimes I stop to see what I've finished, or to look out the window at branches. The continuity in my woodshop is not the continuity of the pencil or brush. But it is, I believe, equal to those others—when it is seen through some accounting, some measure or weighing inside me. My woodshop has yet another advantage. Because the steps of the work are so spread out, the memory of my working accumulates in me. The "moving ahead" comes in chunks of progress, the tangible parts of which are pieces of wood. Both hope and sadness are ever-present—a pushing forward and the realization by me that something will not be fully accomplished.

So much comes together here. The line is fragile and wants to disappear, but the ending of it is made new each moment. Here is real hope, real sadness. The line advances; at the vanishing end of it, creation takes place. ■

The Bleak Garden

PETER LAMBORN WILSON

With translations and commentaries by the author and Nasrollah Pourjavady

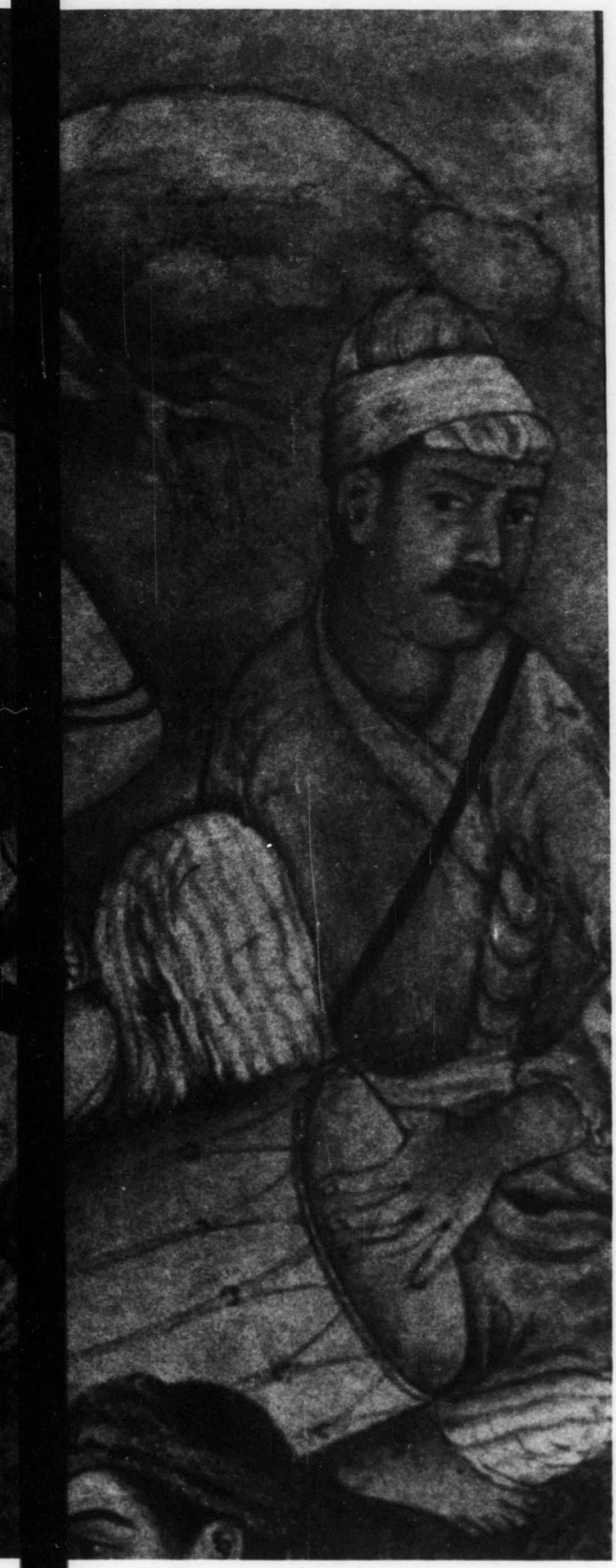


Every year for seven years on the birthday of Ali ibn Abi Talib (the first Shi'ite Imam and the founder of sufism) I used to attend a celebration at the hospice of the Nematollahi sufis in downtown Tehran.

Presided over by their Master, Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh, the dervishes fed hot meals to about 2000 guests—who were also treated to a concert of sufi music and poetry.

Ordinary Shi'ites "celebrate" their holidays by weeping or even flailing themselves with chains and whips. But the Persian sufis insist that religion should be joyful, even aesthetically beautiful. Hence the platters of pilau, pots of lamb, cauldrons of tea, baskets of sweets—and the music.

Out of respect for the Order a great many of Iran's finest musicians used to attend these events to perform and improvise, including a group of Qadiri dervishes from Kurdestan. (Ordinarily these wild men preferred to eat glass and razor



blades, slash and pierce themselves with swords, and handle snakes and scorpions—always without permanent damage to themselves. But such behavior was against the "house rules" in Tehran, so they limited themselves to drumming, chanting, and dancing.)

Other singers and musicians at the Celebration were on loan from the Ahl-e Haqq or "People of Truth," another Kurdish sect with a strong penchant for *sama'* or "the spiritual concert." One such devotee, Dr. Dariush Safvat, had founded a Center for the Preservation and Propagation of Persian Classical Music, which attracted scores of talented young performers and maintained the strictest "high art" standards of traditional purity and spiritual intent.

During one of their performances at the *khaneqah*, a dervish friend of mine leaned over and whispered in my ear, "They have *dard*!"

"They have *pain*?" I asked, thinking I might have misunderstood. And yet I knew at once what he meant. The melancholic intensity, the ululating throbbing tones, the sense of aching nostalgia which permeates Persian music—all this might well be summed up in the word "pain."

"Pain" will serve as a technical aesthetic term; in sufism the equivalent or related terms would be "sadness" and "separation." In this sense pain is not the cause of sadness but rather its expression, its outflowing as art. *Sadness* is the *hal* (spiritual state) which must be mirrored in the music and its lyrics. The pain will be felt sympathetically (*hamdardi*) by the listener, who will thus be drawn into the spiritual state of the artist.

Separation lies deeper than pain and sadness, and perhaps might be called their origin. All consciousness which is not *of the One* is separative consciousness. In a sense, all of creation constitutes a separation from consciousness of the undifferentiated unity of being.

Sufism, however, considers this primal separation the source of all joy as well as sadness—for if no separate consciousness had ever arisen, there could exist no *knower* of being, no gnostic (*'aref*), nor could there be such things as love, lover, and beloved. In this sense, Sohrawardi al-Maqtul says in his *Treatise on Love* that the universe is founded on the ternary of principles: beauty, love, and sadness.

Thus some sufis have claimed to prefer separation to union, or even sadness to joy, since they are loath to deny (in the words of the Koran) any of their Lord's blessings—the multiplicity of creation, the dance of opposites-in-conflict which Heraclitus called "war."

On the microcosmic level of individual awareness however, the fact that "separation is the Will of the Beloved" may fail to erase the pain and sorrow of our human state. Sadness may be a noble emotion, leading on to spiritual unfoldings and unveilings. But it may also prove an unbearable burden, a cause of sheer suffering and failure. What is necessary is somehow to transmute the tragic dross of life and consciousness into some sort of elixir. The art of sufism, the art of sufi music, is the art of alchemy.

Sadness possesses both an expansive and a contractive aspect. The first reflects a deep nostalgia for oneness-of-being, a longing or intense yearning which in itself may become a kind of ecstasy. The latter chills and shrinks the soul, shuts it off from positive action and may finally become a deathtrap. But even such contraction has its spiritual uses; the sufi may agree that "what fails to kill me makes me stronger."

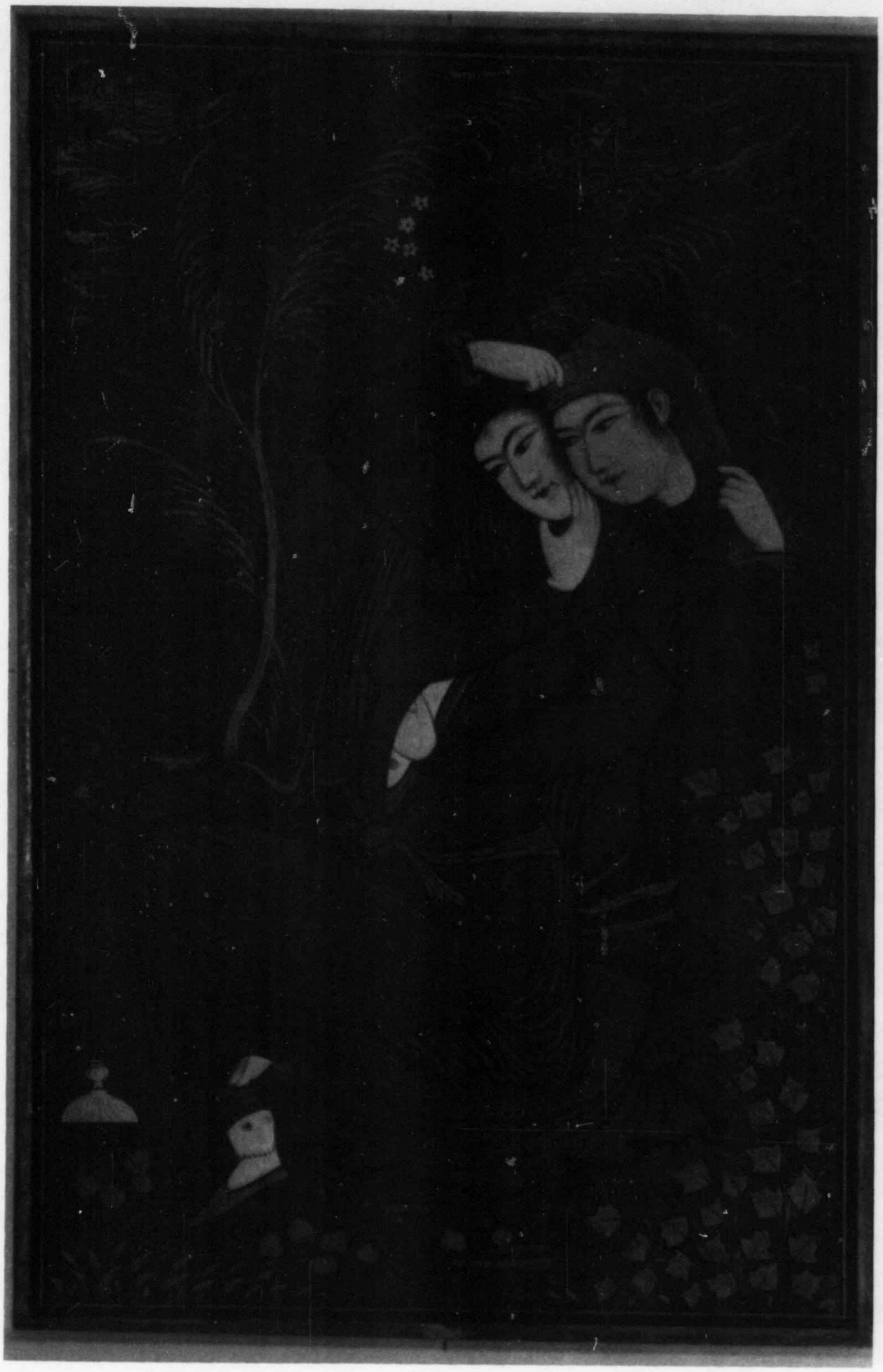
As with all sufi terminology, these words also apply to romantic and sexual love. Sufi poetry may appear as a kind of allegorical code in which mystical doctrines or techniques are masked in the story of a love affair, in which the Beloved equals God and sadness equals the frustrated desire to do His Will. Other poets used these sufistic conventions to disguise "real-life" love affairs, to give their erotica a ritual tinge and sneak it past the censors. Still others believed in the spiritual meaning of human love and experienced their "fleshly desires" as theophanies of divine love, as living symbols of realization. With these poets "human beloved" and "Divine Beloved" become utterly indistinguishable. "Love," as Ibn 'Arabi put it, "is the highest religion."

On a psychological level it may be claimed that sufism created "romantic love" (incidentally passing it on to the Crusaders and Troubadors and thence to Europe in general) out of the tension set up by Islamic Law between the sensual and the ideal. Sufism used the language of love in order to by-pass a moral code without subverting it. Some of the erotic melancholy of Persian poetry may stem from self-enforced chastity, or from a painstakingly precise obedience to moral restrictions, which some sufis believed possessed yogic virtues. And yet in the best poetry this grief has undergone true alchemical sublimation rather than only psychological repression. The goal is not constriction or self-denial but rather expansion and pleasure. The poets do not cling to their sadness—but they do not refuse to feel it. It flows into their verse like chiaroscuro.

You sleep,
  you forget yourself
and forgetfulness
  brings no fruit but regret.
Your friends have gone ahead,
  you too are on the way.
Why do you not contemplate
  life's illusion?

Sarmad

The first kind of sadness rises from the hidden despair of "ordinary conscious-





ness," or rather its debased image in the world of lies. Buddha founded his religion on the human fact of suffering. Islam gives the basic situation in which we find ourselves a slightly different interpretation: man in his ordinary state of awareness is literally asleep ("and when he dies he wakes," as Mohammad said). He lives in a dream, whether of enjoyment or suffering—a phenomenal, illusory existence. Whether he feels so or not, he is miserable.

But potentially the situation can be changed, for ultimately man is not identical with his lower or illusory self. (The Prince of Balkh, Ibrahim Adham, lost in the desert while hunting, chased a magic stag, which turned on him and asked, "Were you born for this?") Man's authentic existence is in the Divine; he has a higher Self, which is true; he can attain felicity, even before death ("Die before you die," said the Prophet). The call comes: to flight, migration, a journey beyond the limitations of world and self, of illusion and sadness.

Do not boast when the wheel of fortune
    swings you aloft:
another twirl will land you on the bottom
    mark.
The sun reaches the zenith and begins to
    descend:
so also falls the fool who follows it.
The human case is sealed in a talisman chest;
who has not been seared and blackened by
    this pain?
Bound and trapped he utters no word except
    in misery:
WA! wound from crown to feet in loops of
    chain.
Who—like the green narcissus—has eyes to
    see the world's way
shrivels and fades to escape being plucked for
    the vase.
Narcissus with eyes of wisdom stoops low in
    fear of death
while Cypress, free and tall, stands proud in
    forgetfulness.
Fragile bloom with a necklace of thorns, life-
    span less than a week, why do you for-
    get your death and deck yourself in
    gold?
Something has fallen like snow on the world
    of your face;
rise from your bed of stupor and sadness: the
    caravan departs.
. . . Rend the veil from the face of your
    existence, flee calamity.
Drink the poison of death's hour, win the
    sweet juice of the cup.
The medicine for heart's pain is the death of
    your tarnished soul—only this:
the homeopathic cure: a bit of poison.

'Attar

Faridoddin 'Attar here presents in condensed imagery the whole basic sufi view of man: limited to his "carnal soul" (*nafs-e ammarah*), he is the toy of fortune, here seen as a cosmic malevolence that calls to mind the Buddha's teaching on suffering. In his true self (his "soul at peace," *nafs-e motma'nnah*), however, he is the axis of Creation, the shadow of God on earth. The poet, therefore, attempts to awaken his reader's "blaming soul" (*nafs-e lawwamah*), the faculty by which one may discriminate the unreal from the Real and seek to advance toward what (in potentiality) one *already is*. The second sort of sadness has little to do with the disgusts and self-recriminations and ego-failures of "ordinary life." It is experienced by those who are already on the Path. Like a lover who is spurned by his beloved, the seeker now finds himself wandering in a strange desert, exiled forever from his former comfortable (or uncomfortable) state of ignorance, but seemingly banished as well from the presence he so desires. By the very "taste" of his love, he has already attained a measure of certainty: he *knows* the beloved exists—he may even have caught a glimpse of her (or him). But . . . what next?

Letter to the Shaykh of Jaam

Sufi, approach and see the clarity of this jew-
    eled vintage
in the burnished looking-glass of the cup.

Beg the secret from those profligates behind
the curtain:
not the puritan, but only he of high station
attains this State.
Fold up your nets and go! No one hunts the
Phoenix!
The trap's hand holds nothing but empty
wind.
At the banquet of the Age take on cup, two
cups . . .
and go. No more than this. No perpetual
Union.
My heart, youth drains away and you've not
plucked one rose:
Don't be an old laughingstock! It's not too
late to start now!
Carpe diem—for when the fountainhead dried
up
even Adam fled the garden, the Abode of
Peace.
As for us here at your threshold, at your
command
my master, look with pity on your servants.
(signed) Hafez, disciple of Jamshid's Cup.

Now, vagrant breeze, go and take
these signs of servitude to the Shaykh of
Jaam.

In this "spiritual letter" to a long-dead shaykh and poet, Ahmad-e Jaam of Khoresan, Hafez of Shiraz complains that God in His Essence cannot be contemplated—but when He manifests Himself of takes the form of the Beloved, then the seeker, the lover, sees His Face in the mirror of the heart and becomes intoxicated by this unveiling. As long as he retains his individual identity as a lover (even though this is in itself a high station), this state of intoxication is the most he can hope to attain. Some sufis have said—though they are not always consistent in this—that no one *in this life* can go higher. In any case, if the seeker desires perpetual Union he must lose all identity in the One and cease, in a sense, to be even a lover. This is the ontological level of the Essence, which is symbolized by Hafez (and other poets, such as 'Attar) by the *Simorgh*, a fabulous bird here (rather inadequately) translated as "Phoenix." If—or since—this goal cannot be attained in this life, the sufi should still value the state of contemplation of the Beloved, for even though it does not last, even though it is attended with sadness, it remains the only worthwhile end in life.

If in their weakness my legs
do not run after you, never think
it's because my heart is not caught
in your love:
  it's not the case
that I hold back because
I'm not your customer
  —only
my eye is forbidden
the Harem
of your Vision.
'Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani

In my dream all of me
is with her: lip upon lip,
breast to breast.

I whisper: "My heart,
would this night might last
forever . . . "

and then
I wake and find myself
like a door knocker . . .
hanging outside!
'Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani

In the next two poems, by the late and little-known poet Helali (an exponent of the rather baroque "Hindustani" style of Persian poetry), the sadness of separation is expressed with a perfect masking of erotic imagery:

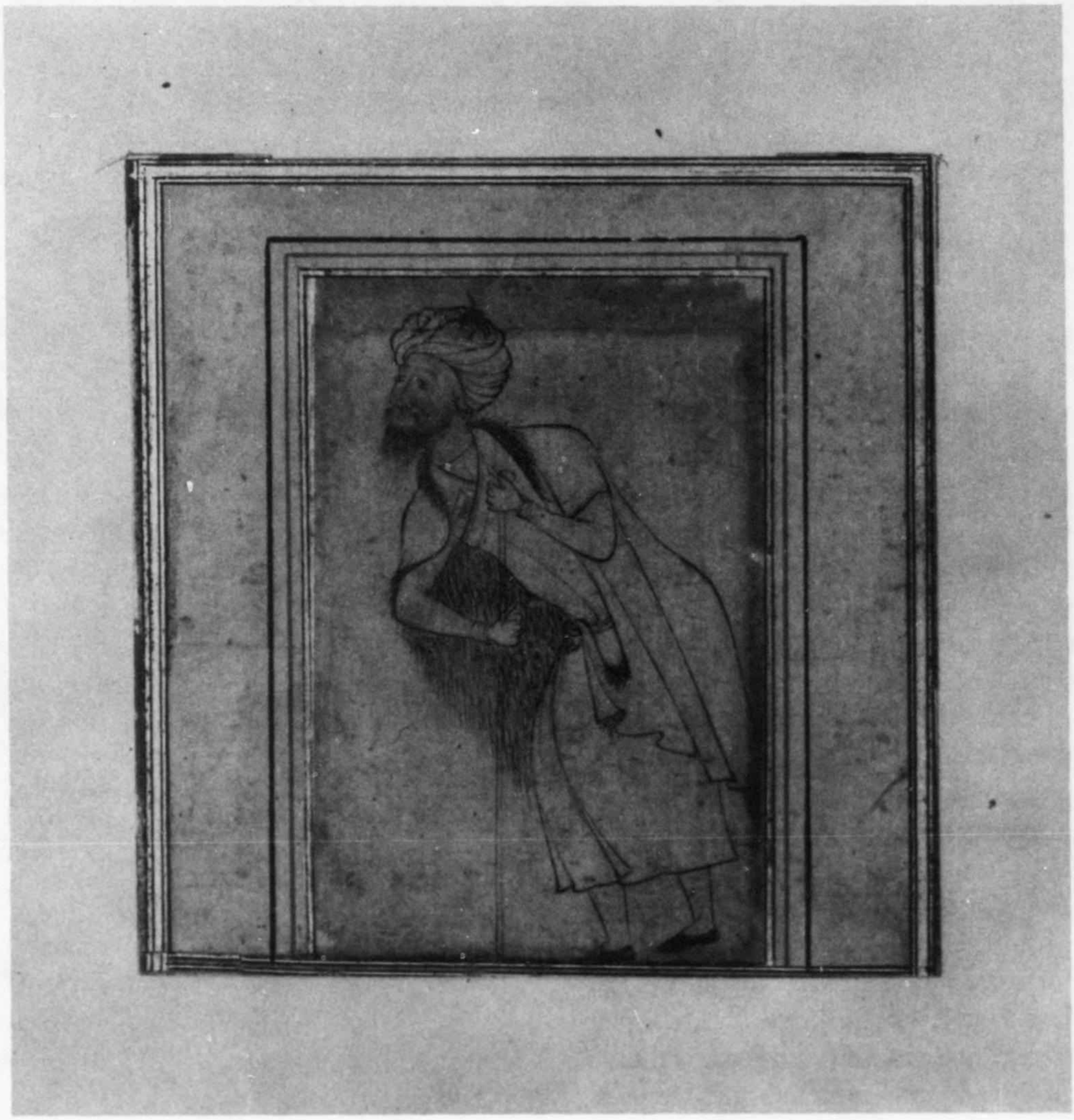
Heartless ones have no sorrow
  but a worldly malaise
while I—in the grief of love—
  have "lost touch with
  world events."
Why knead Adam's clay
  if not for love?
Those who have not become dust
  in Love's Way
  are less than human.
Now they are whispering
  of my madness

and your beauty. The tale
could sell as well
as *Layla & Majnun*!*
You branded me and the doctor
with a "tsk tsk" tries
to pour salve on the wound—
I refuse! What flows from the sore
is the medicine I seek.
A bilious melancholic neurosis
makes me forget myself
and lose interest in the "outside world"
—or whatever it was
I once cared about.
Today your "life-giving breath"
has killed me at last.
What do I want with the
"healing breath of Jesus"**
when I have such a death?
Well, don't expect any vulgar blooming
buds
from the dust of Helali.
In his bleak garden
no room remains
for a cheerful heart.

Dawn:
you rise from your chair
and the rays from your face
embroider the universe.

*"*Layla & Majnun* is the archetypal love-story of Islamic literature.

**"The healing breath of Jesus" refers to the Islamic belief that Christ, as the embodied Spirit [or "Breath"] of God, could breathe life into inanimate objects, such as clay birds, and revive the dead.



More graceful than the cypress
or the rose—my God!
what is the subtlety,
this finesse?

Whatever you command,
death or sorrow . . .
whatever you say,
whatever you want . . .

Are you a soul
that comes and goes so quickly?
Are you a life, that leaves
and does not return?

You sleep,
curled into yourself . . . How I want
your petal'd eyes this morning
to fall first on me!

My heart
in separation, in loneliness
(what a fine affliction!) cries
for justice . . .

Helali
scans the horizon every night
waiting for you like a crescent moon
to rise above the roofs.

The Absolute, in manifesting itself, is like the sun which with its rays seems to bring all things into being from night's nonexistence. The world becomes the locus of manifestation of the Absolute. The Beloved (or God in the "creative Imagination" of the worshiper) is but the mirror image, the icon of that origi nal supraformal Reality. Only man, in his loneliness, can observe this image with true understanding. In the night of separation he waits for this image, the Moon, to appear. (*Helal* means "crescent Moon"; the author plays with his pen-name.) This desire is both joy and sadness—a "fine affliction"—and here again we find the notion that the cure for sadness is sadness itself. This means not only that the second kind of sadness cancels out the first, but also that sadness itself constitutes an inescapable step on the way to joy; also, that this second sadness *in itself* already contains the whole flowering of the Path.

Long as I live I'll eat and drink
the sorrow of loving you
  nor will I surrender it, this sorrow,
  to anyone when I am dead.
Tomorrow
when Resurrection comes
  I'll walk forth with this raging thirst
  still in my head.

Here in this quatrain by 'Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani we find at last the actual purpose and utility of sadness considered as a "station" on the road of sufism. This raging thirst, this unappeasable nostalgia for perfection, makes up—in a sense—the entirety of the self. It fuels our desperate journey, but we must prize it on its own merits as well. The goal is joy, of course. But without pain and separation, the goal would have no existence. This sadness, in fact, is our treasure. ■

NOTES ON THE POETS

Sarmad
Sarmad was said to have been a Jewish merchant of Sabzewar in Iran who, like 'Iraqi, fell in love with a dervish boy and followed him to India. Having converted to Islam, he became a "naked fakir" and scandalized the exoteric authorities of Delhi. He was executed by the Emperor Aurengzeb in 1070/1659–60. According to a gentleman I met at Sarmad's tomb outside the Friday Mosque in Old Delhi (an unlikely place to bury a heretic?), Sarmad's last words were:

Beautiful Beloved or black executioner: in
whatever form you chose, come, come!

But the same couplet is attributed to other sufis as well. As far as I know, Sarmad's little collection of rubaiyyat (lithographed in Delhi) in his only work.

'Attar
Faridoddin 'Attar, the pharmacist of Nisphapur, was a spiritual descendent of Najmoddin Kobra. His dates are very uncertain; the year of his death varies from source to source by as much as forty years, but he probably died around 628/1230 (which would make it impossible for him to have met Rumi's family fleeing from Balkh or for him to have been killed in battle during the Mongol attack on Nishapur). He is said to have written as many books as there are chapters in the Koran. His most famous are *Manteq at-tayr* (*The Conference of the Birds,* translated by C.S. Nott [London, 1974]); the *Ilahi-nama* (translated by J.A. Boyle [Manchester, 1978]); the *Tazkirat al-awlia* (*Moslem Saints and Mystics*, translated by A.J. Arberry [London, 1973]); and a *diwan*, of which unfortunately very little has been translated.

Hafez
Shamsoddin Mohammad Hafez was without doubt the greatest lyricist of Persian literature. There are scholars who, misunderstanding his praise of wine, women, and song, have denied that he was a Sufi; one wonders if they can have really read the poems with an open mind. Certainly the Sufis themselves have never doubted he was one of them; they chant his poems in their meetings even today. "Hafez" means one who has memorized the entire Koran. A busy life as a religious scholar and courtier prevented Hafez from compiling his poems into a *diwan*, or from accepting any of the many invitations to attend courts as far away from his beloved Shiraz as India. He died in 791/1389, and his garden shrine in Shiraz is a popular pilgrimage. For the best translations of his poems see Wilberforce Clarke's very literal versions (London, 1974). Gertrude Bell's poetic versions (London, 1928), and the free-verse renditions of J. Heath-Stubbs and Peter Avery (London, 1952).

'Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani
'Abdollah ibn Mohammad 'Ayn al-Qozat Hamadani, the great philosopher and mystic, was born in Hamadan in 492/1098 and executed thirty-three years later in 525/1131 in Baghdad on a charge of heresy. He studied the works of the famous Abu Hamed Ghazali and became a disciple of his brother Ahmad, with whom he carried on an interesting correspondence. His most important work is the *Tamhidat* (Tehran, 1341 S.), but the only book by him to have been translated is his apologia, the *Shakwa'l-gharib*, written in jail shortly before his death. (See *A Sufi Martyr*, by A.J. Arberry [London, 1969]).

Helali
Nuroddin (or Badroddin) Helali Estarabadi, born and raised in Estarabad toward the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, later moved to Herat. There, in 939/1532–1533, he was executed by the ruler 'Obayd Khan Uzbek on a charge of Shi'ism and for having circulated a poem insulting 'Obayd Khan. He wrote three famous *mathnawis*: *Sefat al-'asheq'in*, *Layla wa Majnum*, and *Shah wa dervish* (translated into German by H. Ethé [Leipzig, 1870]).

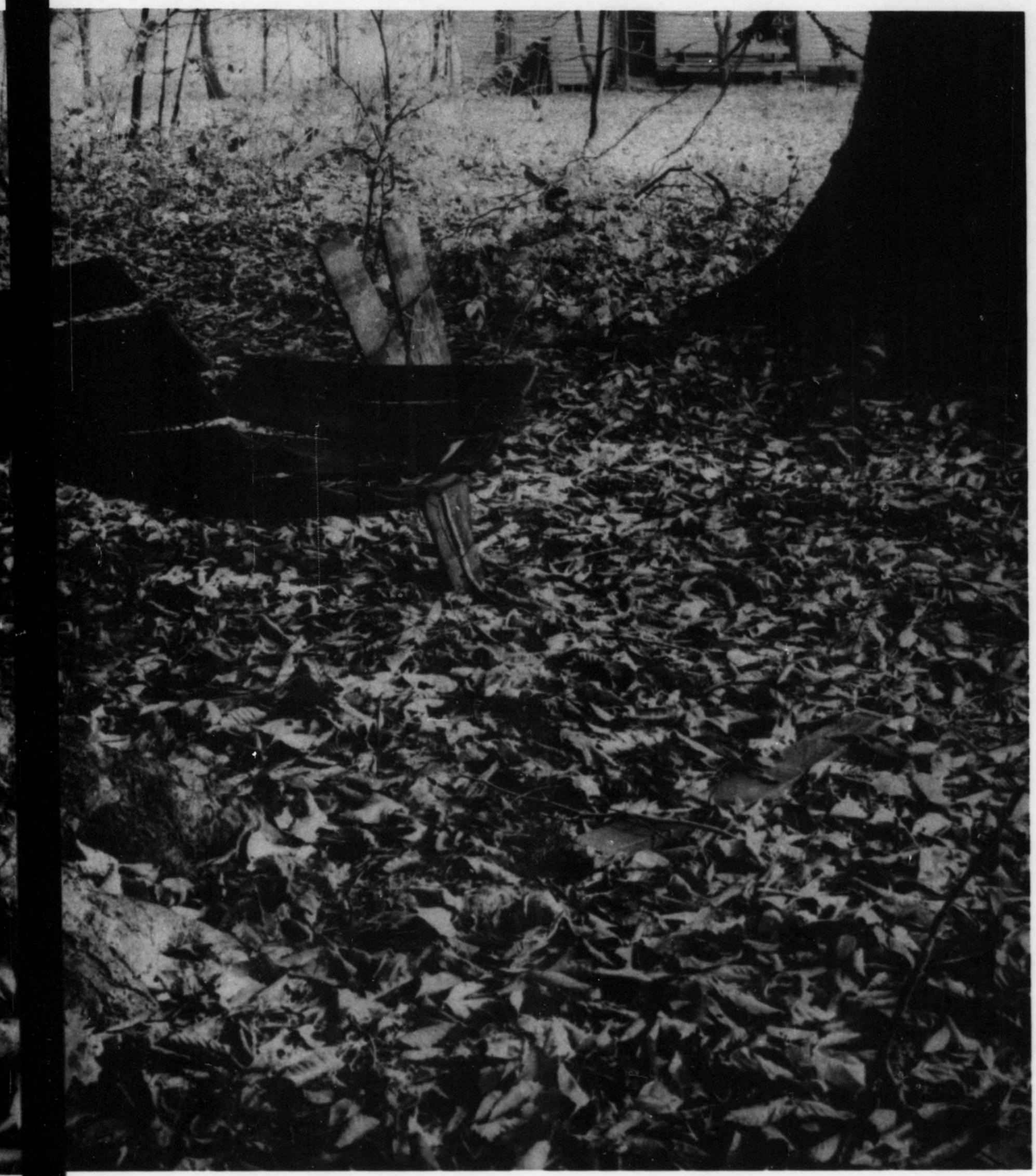
Among the Sounds of Night

JAMES AGEE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY WRIGHT MORRIS

On the rough wet grass of the back yard my father and mother have spread quilts. We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there. First we were sitting up, then one of us lay down, and then we all lay down, on our stomachs, on our sides, or on our backs, and they have kept on talking.



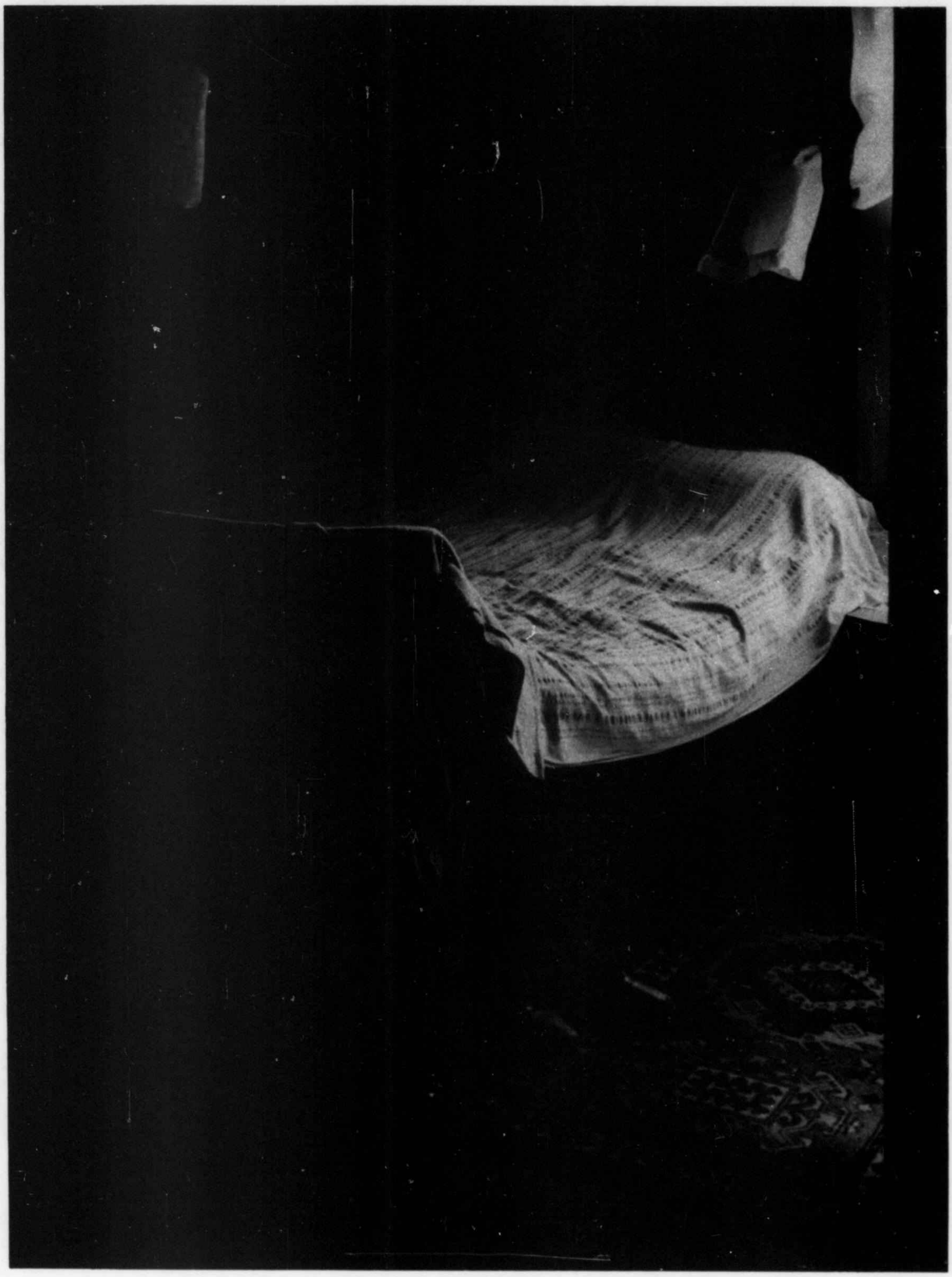
They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet, of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all. The stars are wide and alive, they seem



each like a smile of great sweetness, and they seem very near. All my people are larger bodies than mine, quiet, with voices gentle and meaningless like the voices of sleeping birds. One is an artist, he is living at home. One is a musician, she is living at home. One is my mother who is good to me. One is my father who is good to me. By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on



quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of night. May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away.



After a little I am taken in and put to bed. Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her: and those receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar and well-beloved in that home: but will not, oh, will not, not now, not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

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ARCS

An Imperial Affliction



There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are—

None may teach it—Any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air—

When it comes, the Landscape listens—
Shadows—hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—[1]

Emily Dickinson

I am dead because I lack desire;
I lack desire because I think I possess;
I think I possess because I do not try to give.
In trying to give, you see that you have nothing;
Seeing you have nothing, you try to give of yourself;
Trying to give of yourself, you see that you are nothing;
Seeing you are nothing, you desire to become;
In desiring to become, you begin to live.[2]

René Daumal

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
  A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
  Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
    In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo'd
  All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
  And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!
  My genial spirits fail;
  And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
  It were a vain endeavour,
  Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.[3]

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The attacks of melancholia, with which I was to struggle for many years to come, has started. It required a great effort of will for me to resist the first outbreaks of sadness. They would come upon me unexpectedly, toward sunset. At first I didn't know what was wrong; I thought it must be fatigue brought on by lack of sleep. But in vain did I try to rest, or even to go to bed; I could not fall asleep. I was not exhausted; I did not feel tired. There was only that terrible sensation of the irremediable—the feeling that I had lost something essential and irreplaceable. I felt there was no purpose in my life, that there was no reason for me to spend my time reading or writing. In fact, nothing held any meaning for me now: neither music nor camping trips, nor walks nor parties with my friends. I was trying desperately to identify what it was that I had "lost," and sometimes it seemed to me that it pertained to my childhood, the years at Rîmnicu-Sărat and Cernavodă, the first years in Bucharest, which now seemed fraught with beatitude and miracle. It was enough for me to recall an episode from childhood: a Christmas tree, the carriage we had a Cernavodă, one of Mother's dresses, Father's parade uniform—and my eyes would fill with tears. I detested crying, and I would never have forgiven myself had I begun to weep. I tried all sorts of things to defend myself from this humiliating experience, such as burying my head in a washbasin of cold water, or rushing downstairs and taking a walk on the streets, or trying to talk to myself out loud, making fun of my condition.

Soon, however, I discovered that my inexplicable sadness sprang from numerous other, unsuspected sources: for instance, the feeling of "the past," that simple fact that there have been things that *are* no more, that have "passed," such as my childhood or my father's youth; the thought that there were opportunities we missed and now it is too late, the chance is gone forever. Sometimes I regretted that I had not been reared in the country, that I did not know as a child the village life that seemed to me to be the only true kind, and that now I was severed irrevocably from that idyllic world.

It was so hard for me to defend myself against these moods because the springs of my sadness were many and hidden. Sometimes I found myself enveloped in melancholy just when I least was expecting it. For years I had gloried in my exaggerated sense of singularity, in the fact that ever since my childhood I had felt isolated, unusual, "unique." For a long time my "peculiarity" had protected me like an inner armor from all sorts of failures and humiliations. And at the same time my singularity, which seemed predestined, weighed on me like a tombstone. I would have tried anything to have broken free of it, to have been able to get close to someone who could "understand" me.

I poured out my complaints about all this in my journal. The melancholy moods came upon me at dusk and held me prisoner as though in a gigantic net, from which I struggled desperately to escape until long after midnight. Then I would come to my senses feeling drained, exhausted, and yet resigned, almost reconciled, and I would dutifully take up my work again.[4]

Mircea Eliade



She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die:
  And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
  Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
  Veiled Melancholy has her sovereign shrine
    Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
  His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
    And be among her cloudy trophies hung.[5]

John Keats

Tenderness contains an element of sadness. It is not the sadness of feeling sorry for yourself or feeling deprived, but it is a natural situation of fullness. You feel so full and rich, as if you were about to shed tears. Your eyes are full of tears, and the moment you blink, the tears will spill out of your eyes and roll down your cheeks. In order to be a good warrior, one has to feel this sad and tender heart. If a person does not feel alone and sad, he cannot be a warrior at all.[6]

Chögyam Trungpa

Hail thou, Goddess, sage and holy,
Hail, divinest Melancholy,
Whose saintly visage is too bright
To hit the sense of human sight;
And therefore to our weaker view
O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue . . .
But, O sad virgin, that thy power
Might raise Musaeus from his bower
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek.[7]

John Milton



Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast—
    Not for these I raise
    The song of thanks and praise;
  But for those obstinate questionings
  Of sense and outward things,
  Fallings from us, vanishings;
  Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
    But for those first affections,
    Those shadowy recollections,
  Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence . . . [8]

William Wordsworth

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes: and whence came they?
And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.
For the lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Revelation 7:13–17

But, thank God, I live on; have even finished the task I set myself; and in spite of fits and moods of depression, distaste, and weariness, have been happy in it. Even when most contemptuous and ashamed of myself, I have still found comfort in the belief that truth is a wholesome medicine, though in essence it be humanly unattainable. And my work has taught me this too—not to fret so foolishly as once I did, at being small and insignificant in body; to fear a great deal more remaining pygmy-minded, and pygmy-spirited. We *cannot* see ourselves as others see us, but that is no excuse for not wearing spectacles; and I must beware of a mind swept and garnished. Moreover my hour must come again.

That being so, of this I am certain; that it will be impossible to free myself, to escape from this world, unless in peace and amity I can take every shred of it, every friend and every enemy, all that these eyes have seen, these senses discovered, with me.[9]

Walter de la Mare

NOTES

1. Thomas H. Johnson, ed., The Poems of Emily Dickinson. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, copyright 1951, © 1955, 1979, 1983 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.) Reprinted by permission.
2. René Daumal, *Mount Analogue*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960.)
3. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, from "Dejection: An Ode."
4. Mircea Eliade, *Autobiography*, vol. 1. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.)
5. John Keats, from "Ode on Melancholy."
6. Chögyam Trungpa, *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*. (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala, 1984.)
7. William Wordsworth, from "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood."
8. John Milton, from "Il Penseroso."
9. Walter de la Mare, *Memoirs of a Midget*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922.)

The Besetting One/African

She was an old woman of a family with a long genealogy. Leza Shikakunamo—"The Besetting One"—had stretched out his hand against her family. He slew her mother and her father while she was yet a child; and in the course of the years all connected with her perished. She said to herself, "Surely, I shall keep those who sit on my thighs"—but no, even they, the children of her children, were taken from her. She became withered with age, and it seemed to her that she herself was at last to be taken. But no, a change came over her: she grew younger. Then came into her heart a desperate resolution to find God and ask the meaning of it all. Somewhere up there in the sky must be His dwelling: if only she could reach it!

She began to cut down trees, immense, tall trees, joining them together, and so planning a structure that would reach to heaven. It grew and grew, but

as it was getting to be as she wanted it, the lowest timbers rotted and it fell. She fell with it, but without being killed or breaking a bone. She set to work again and rebuilt the structure, but once again the foundations rotted and it fell. She gave it up in despair, but not her intention of finding Leza. Somewhere on earth there must be another way to heaven!

So she began to travel, going through country after country, nation after nation, always with the thought in her mind: "I shall come to where the earth ends, and there, where the earth and sky touch, I shall find a road to God, and I shall ask him, 'What have I done to Thee that Thou afflictest me in this manner?'"

The old woman never found where the earth ends, but, though disappointed, she did not give up her search. As she passed through the different countries the people asked her, "What have you come for, old woman?"

And her answer would be, "I am seeking Leza."

"Seeking Leza! For what?"

"My brothers, you ask me! Here in the nations is there one who suffers as I have suffered?"

And they would ask again, "How have you suffered?"

"In this way. I am alone. As you see me, a solitary old woman: that is how I am!"

And they answered again, "Yes, we see. That is how you are! Bereaved of friends and kindred? In what do you differ from others? Leza Shikakunamo, The Besetting One, sits on the back of every one of us, and we cannot shake him off!"

She never obtained the desire: she died of a broken heart.



From African Folktales and Sculpture, *ed. Paul Radin and James Johnson Sweeney, Bollingen Series XXXII. Copyright 1952, © 1964, 1980 renewed by Princeton University Press. Reprinted with permission of Princeton University Press.*



Ring of Wisdom/Sufi

There was a king whose kingdom stretched from east to west, from the sea below to the moon above. You would have thought that he had everything he could possibly want. But no—his wishes and desires had no end to them.

One day, troubled by a melancholy mood, he conceived a new desire. He ordered his wise men to assemble before him. They came to hear the king's command. "You must make for me," he told them, "a ring of pure gold. And its power must be so great that whenever I look at it, my sorrow will change to joy, or my joy to sorrow."

The wise men were perplexed. They might lose their lives if they could not fulfill the king's command. Yet, though they knew of rings that could summon djinns and rings that could give their owners the power of flight, none of them knew of rings that could at a glance change sorrow to joy or joy to sorrow.

At last, they agreed on a plan. They told the jewelers and the goldsmiths, who joined together to work the metal and engrave it. The work was long and tedious, but at last the ring was ready.

When the appointed day came, they again assembled before the king and ceremoniously presented him with the wonder-working ring. It was of pure gold, and on it the inscription: *In time, this too shall pass away*.

Retold by Anne Twitty



The Single Heart/Sufi

All her life, Rabia had a great love for God. She always carried God in her heart, and yet she sighed and longed for him. She often fasted and prayed.

Once she had fasted for a whole week, never resting, and always praying. When she was weak and exhausted from hunger, a neighbor woman happened to bring her a bowl of food.

Rabia went to get a lamp so that she could have light to eat by. But when she came back with the lamp, she found that a cat had knocked the bowl to the ground, and the food had spilled from it.

This time, Rabia went to get a pitcher of water, thinking, "If I cannot have food, I will at least have water."

But as she was returning with the pitcher, it fell from her hand and broke, and the water spilled from it.

Sad and bewildered, Rabia sighed such a sigh that it could have set the world on fire. She cried, "O God, what do you want of me? I am a poor and helpless creature. How long will you let me suffer like this?"

Then came a voice, saying, "Rabia, you know that even at this moment I could give you the whole world, all that lies between the Fish under the earth and the Moon above it. But, in the moment that I did so, you would find that I was no longer in your heart. All your life you have grieved and longed for me. Now, if you begin to care for the things of this world, your love for me will vanish. Think on this: Not in a hundred years will longing for me and longing for the things of this world meet together in a single heart.

"If you wish to suffer for me, you must forsake the world forever. If you wish to suffer for me, you must pay the price."

Retold by Anne Twitty



The Light Princess/A Tale

Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess, who had the misfortune, through no fault of her own, to be cursed at her christening by a jealous witch, who decreed that she should be light of body and of spirit. That does not sound so dreadful; but it meant that the little princess was *deprived of gravity*. She grew up weighing nothing at all, and as a consequence, she was always floating up into the air, and only with the greatest difficulty could she remain on the ground. Frequently she disappeared altogether, and her nurses could find her only by following the sound of her laughter, for everything amused her. She laughed constantly, and never shed a tear, and never smiled. As she grew older, she became more and more beautiful, and her loveliness and gaiety made her fascinating; yet it was hard really to love her, for she laughed at everything, and seemed to care for no one. There was only one thing that really mattered to her, and that was water.

The royal palace was built on the shore of a beautiful lake, and the princess loved the lake. Strangely enough, in the water she recovered her gravity and could swim and dive in it like a dolphin. She had learned how to put herself into the water, but she could not jump or dive into it from above, much as she longed to do so.

It was one day when she was playing happily in the water, laughing as usual, that the prince found her; for where there is a princess, there must always be a prince, and this prince had just come from a far country, drawn by the fame of the lovely Light Princess. He also was a fine swimmer, and not only could he dive into the lake from a high rock—as she could not, for she would fly up into the air instead—but when he held her in his arms and dove with her, she could share the delight of entering her beloved lake with a great rushing splash.

So enjoyable was their first encounter in the lake that the prince began at once to fall in love with her, and in order to continue to see her in this

delightfully informal way, he didn't reveal his royal identity at her father's palace, but got work there instead as a bootblack. Every afternoon, in his free time, he and the Light Princess played and swam in the waves of the lake.

But this happy course of events was soon interrupted by the old witch, who couldn't bear to see people happy. Using her magic arts, she caused the lake to drain slowly away and disappear, and a great drought to fall on the land. This affected the princess so strongly that as the lake dwindled, so did she, until all she could do was lie on her bed and sip the few drops of water from her dear lake that could be preserved for her.

The king was beside himself with grief and fear. He knew the drought was being caused by the witch, but all he could learn from her was that the only means of restoring the lake would be to find the hole through which the water was disappearing and to stop it with the body of a living man, who must give himself up to be drowned of his own free will.

But there were no volunteers for such a dreadful task, until the matter came to the prince's ears. When he heard that his princess was fading away with the lake, he offered himself to be the lake's victim—on the condition that the princess should stay with him until the waters covered him, for he felt that if she were beside him he could maintain his resolve, and die happily for her sake.

The princess was delighted to hear that her lake would be saved; she began to regain her strength, and thought it very kind of the prince to offer his life for her.

A triangular hole was found at the bottom of the muddy basin where the lake had been; a little boat was placed beside it for the princess to sit in, and the prince climbed bravely into the hole. He found he could put both legs into it, and cover the open point of the triangle with his hands; and a little trickle of water began to flow over his knees. The princess sat and tried to watch and to chat with him; she was a little bored and sleepy, but she felt kindly toward the prince with whom she had had so much fun swimming and diving. The sun went down, and the moon rose, and gush after gush, the waters rose up the prince's body. As the water rose, the princess became more interested and more wide awake. From time to time she gave him a sip of wine and a biscuit to nibble, for he couldn't move his hands away from the hole. At last the water reached his mouth; he could no longer talk, and the princess couldn't feed him any more, and she began to feel strange. The water reached his nose—she felt stranger and stranger—it covered his face, and when the bubbles of his last breath came up through the water, the princess shrieked and sprang into the lake.

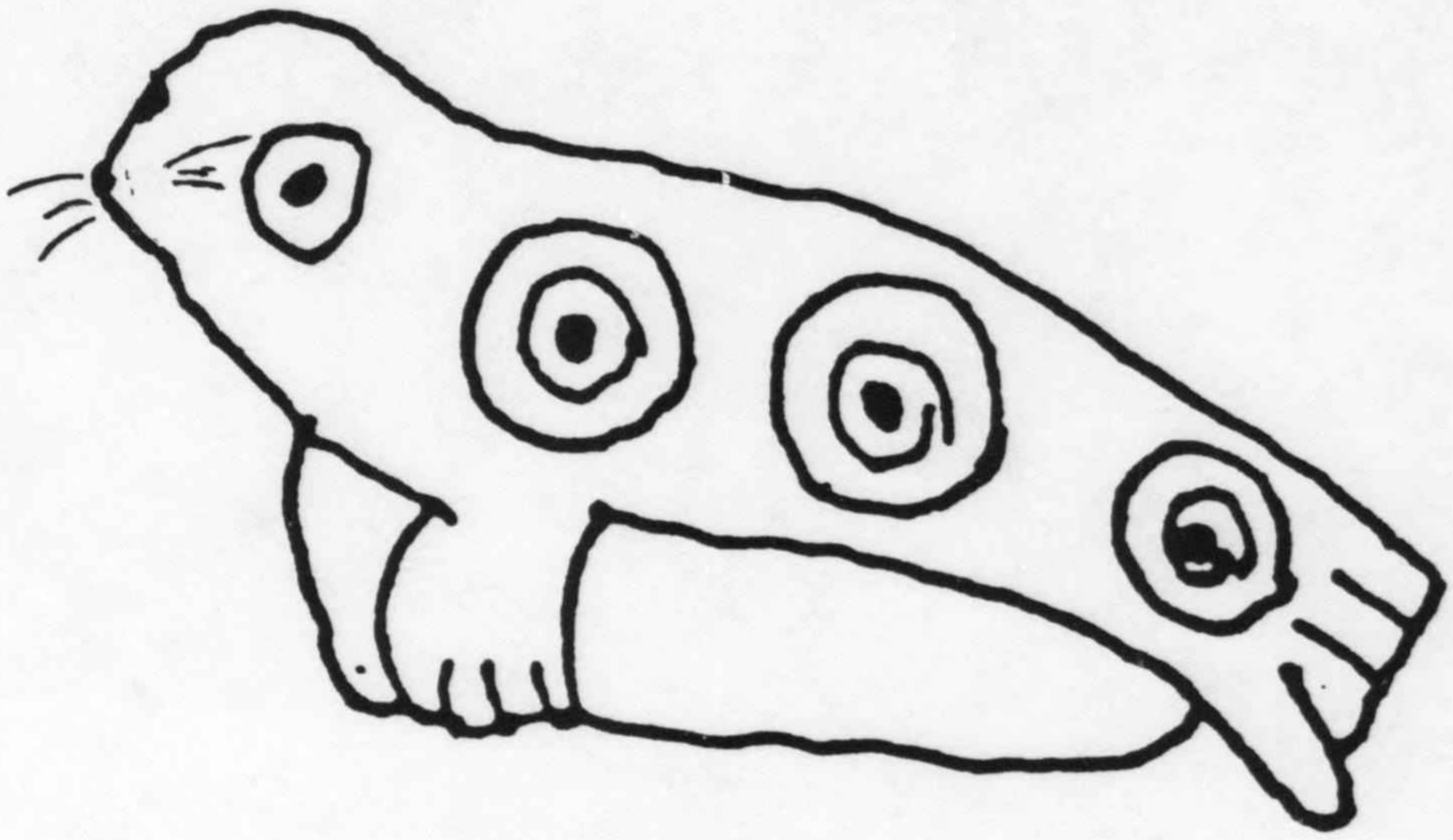
In the water again, and flooded from within by a feeling she had never known, she had the strength of ten. She tugged and tugged at his legs until she pulled them out of the hole; then she tried to hold his head out of the water, but he was past breathing. Somehow she got him into the boat with her and rowed to the shore as fast as she could go. The palace folk had heard her scream and were waiting anxiously. She had the prince carried to her own room, and



she and her old nurse did everything they could think of to bring him back to life. Finally, just as the sun rose, the prince opened his eyes; and when he did so, the princess, who had never wept before, burst into tears; and though she had never fallen down in her life, she fell down on the floor and cried for an hour. As she wept, it began to rain, such a rain as had never been seen in that country. The sun shone all the time, and the great drops, which fell straight to the earth, shone likewise. The palace was in the heart of a rainbow. It was a rain of rubies, and sapphires, and emeralds, and topazes; and the lake was full from shore to shore.

So the princess recovered her gravity; and though she still sometimes laughed, she also sometimes cried, and sometimes smiled; and she and the prince were married, and lived long and happily, and had many children who never lost their gravity, but who could all, whenever they wanted, jump into the air, or dive into the water, or keep their feet firmly on the ground.

Abridged and retold by D.M. Dooling from The Light Princess, *by George MacDonald.*



The First Tears/Eskimo

One day First Man went out seal hunting along the seashore. He saw many seals. He chose a seal, and carefully crept up behind it, but with a splash, it tumbled into the water. He looked around and found another seal and crept toward it even more carefully, but just as he was about to reach it, it too splashed into the water.

This went on and on. At last, there was only one seal left on the rocks. Man thought that this time he would be so quiet that the seal would notice nothing, but as soon as he began to move toward it, it slid off the rocks and swam away.

Then Man stood up, and in his chest he felt a strange feeling. The strange feeling seemed to fill all the space in his chest. Suddenly, water began to run from his eyes. The drops of water ran from his eyes and down his face. When he felt them, he put up his hand and caught some of the drops. He looked at them. They really were water. Then, without knowing what he was going to do or even wanting to do it, he felt loud cries breaking from him. As he headed for home, the loud cries continued, and the water went on running down his face.

When Man's son saw him coming, he called to his wife and to his mother. "Look!" he said, "Here comes Man making such a strange noise!" When Man came closer they were all surprised to see the water running down his face. But after he told them the story of the seals they were all stricken with the same strange sickness, and they began to wail along with him. And this is the way people first learned how to cry.

Retold by Anne Twitty



Lao Tzu's Wake/Chinese

Lao Tan lay dead
Chin Shih attended the wake.
He let out three yells
And went home.

One of the disciples said:
Were you not the Master's friend?
"Certainly," he replied.

"Is it then sufficient for you
To mourn no better than you have just done?"

"In the beginning," said Chin Shih, "I thought
He was the greatest of men.
No longer! When I came to mourn
I found old men lamenting him as their son,
Young men sobbing as though for their mother.
How did he bind them to himself so tight, if not
By words he should never have said
And tears he should never have wept?

"He weakened his true being,
He laid on load upon
Load of emotion, increased
The enormous reckoning:
He forgot the gift God had entrusted to him:
This the ancients called 'punishment
For neglecting the True Self.'

"The Master came at his right time
Into the world. When his time was up,
He left it again.
He who awaits his time, who submits
When his work is done,
In his life there is no room
For sorrow or for rejoicing.
Here is how the ancients said all this
In four words:
'God cuts the thread.'

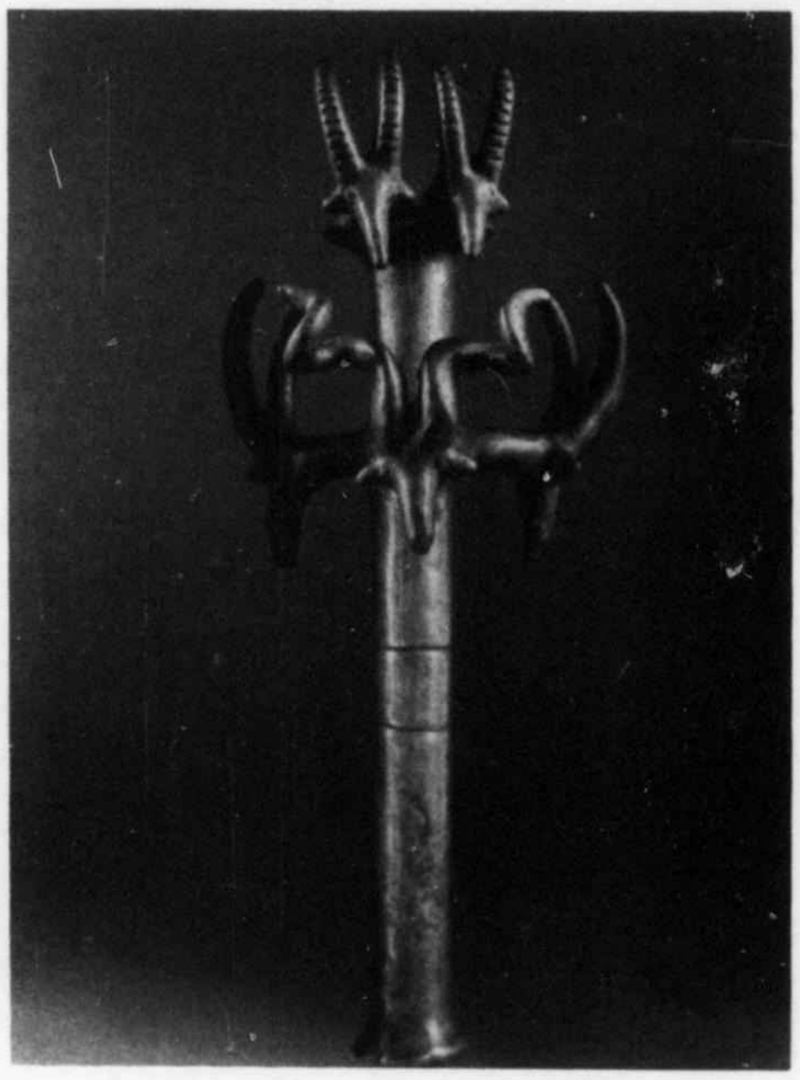
We have seen a fire of sticks
Burn out. The fire now
Burns in some other place. Where?
Who knows? These brands
Are burnt out."

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CURRENTS & COMMENTS

MUSEUMS

The Habbakuk Commentary, one of the first Dead Sea Scrolls to be found (and the best preserved), will be one of the highlights of a major exhibition entitled **Treasures of the Holy Land: Ancient Art from the Israel Museum,** which will open at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on September 25, 1986. The exhibition will comprise nearly 200 objects covering all the major archaeological periods, from the eleventh century B.C. to the end of the Byzantine period in the seventh century A.D. The antiquities were chosen from among the finest objects so far discovered in Israel; most of them come from excavations of famous biblical sites conducted during this century. The exhibition will close on January 4, 1987, after which it will be displayed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (April 9 to July 5, 1987) and then at The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (October 30, 1987 to January 17, 1988). For further information, telephone (212) 879–5500.

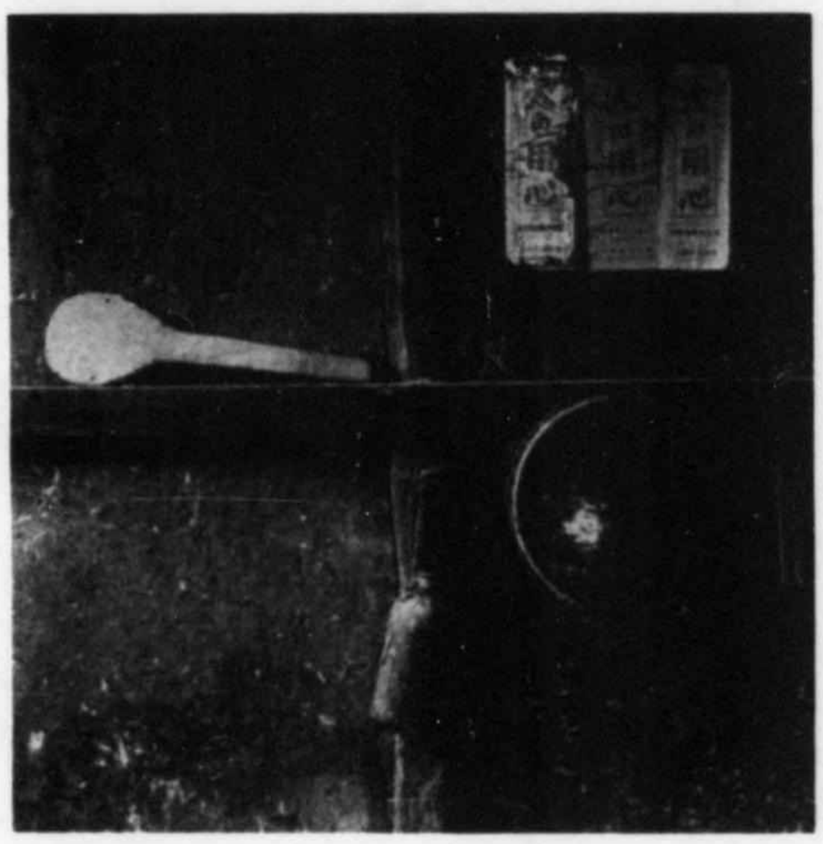




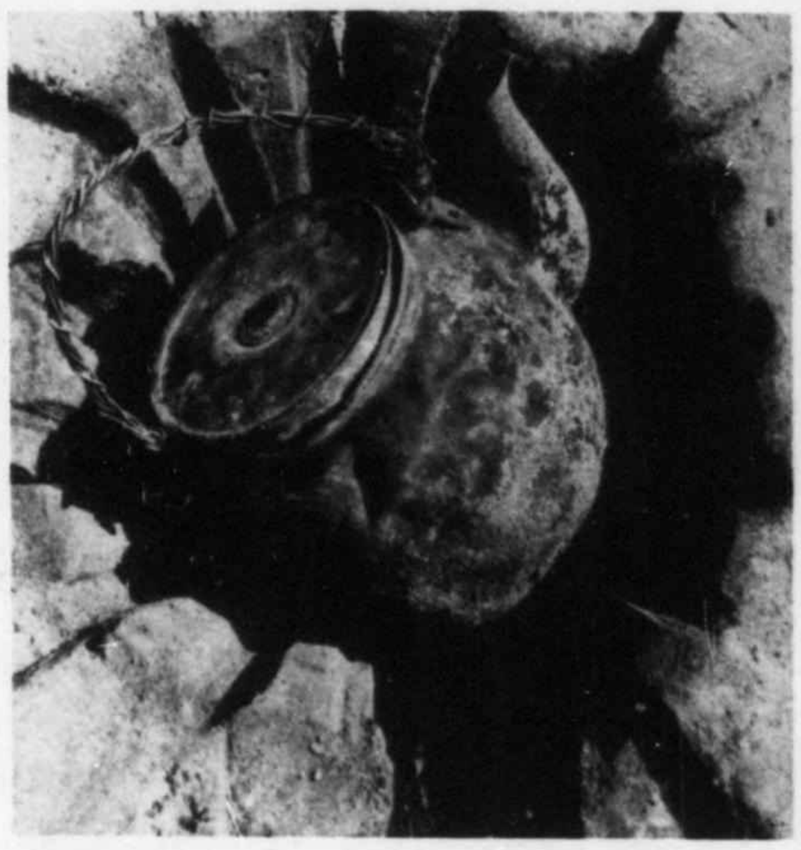
The story of Anasazi, the prehistoric people of the American Southwest, is the subject of the traveling exhibition **Anasazi World**, which was organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service. More than 100 large-format color photographs, graphics and texts from 100 centuries of Native American cultural history are included. The exhibition, which will travel for two years, is currently on display at the Putnam Museum, Davenport, Iowa, where it will remain until September 14. The exhibition will then move to the Museum of Natural History, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where it will remain from October 4 to November 2. It will then continue to travel to various museums until March 6, 1988.

The art of the Bamana people, the largest group in the Republic of Mali, is the subject of **Bamana: Sculpture from West Africa**, an exhibition that was organized by, and originally shown at, the National Museum of African Art, Washington, D.C. This collection of more than 40 sculptures will be on display in the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art from August 19, 1986, through March 1, 1987. Some of the sculptures included are among the most monumental (in both dimension and style) in African art; at least half of the works are over 4 feet in height. The exhibition focuses attention for the first time on the human image in Bamana art and includes sculptures which represent the mother and child, the hunter, the initiate, and other powerful members of Bamana society. For further information, telephone (212) 879–5500.





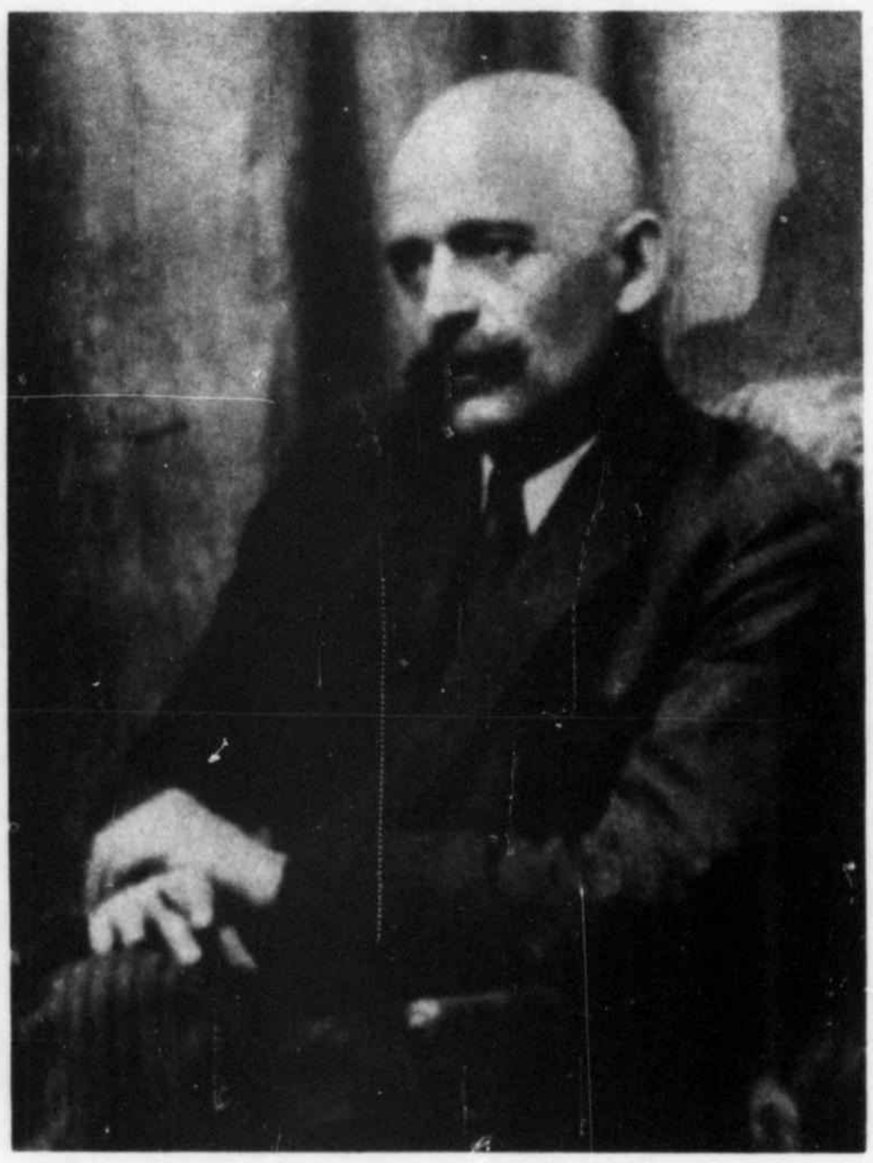
The work of four of Japan's most important contemporary photographers have been brought together for the first time in **Black Sun: The Eyes of Four**, which will remain on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art until October 26, after which it will travel to other museums around the United States. The exhibition includes 160 photographs by Eikoh Hosoe, Shomei Tomatsu, Masahisa Fukase, and Daido Moriyama, who derive their forms and symbols from Japanese myth and literature, modern Japanese *Buto* dancing, traditional calligraphic



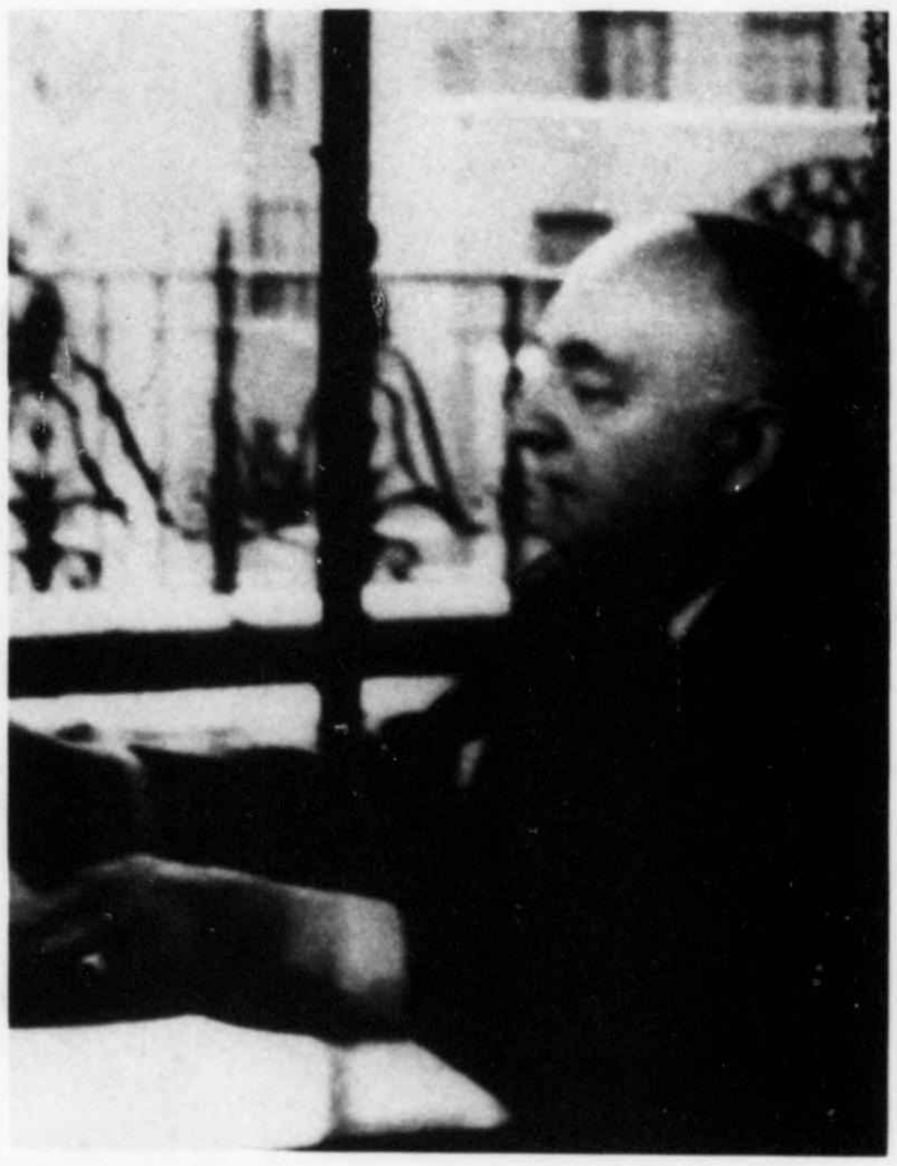
writing and narrative modes of scroll and screen paintings, as well as the visual complexity of modern Japanese cities. Their work reflects the course of postwar Japanese culture from defeat and nuclear disaster through the American Occupation and assimilation of Western styles to the present national economic prosperity. The exhibition was organized by the Alfred Stieglitz Center of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in cooperation with The Arts Council of Great Britain and supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. For further information, telephone (215) 787–5431.

The Sound of Gurdjieff

LAURENCE ROSENTHAL



G.I. Gurdjieff



Thomas de Hartmann

The Music of Gurdjieff/ de Hartmann
A Four-Record Album
Triangle Editions, Inc., 1985

Although in the past few years various recordings of the music of G.I. Gurdjieff have been issued and are generally available, it may still surprise many who are aware of the Armenian-Greek teacher to learn that he was, in fact, the composer of an impressive number of musical works, mainly for the piano.

Gurdjieff's master-pupil relationship with the Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann has been affectionately chronicled by de Hartmann and his wife, Olga, but the unusual and surely unique musical collaboration between the two men still remains an uncanny phenomenon, producing a result which would

have been patently impossible for either one of them alone.

The sheer volume of work that emerged from this joining of forces attests to the importance which Gurdjieff seems to have attached to music as an element in his teaching, perhaps even as a repository of precise knowledge. His cosmological ideas make extensive use of the language of musical structure and function.

While the earliest and crucially important phase of their collaboration was involved with music for the sacred dances—or Movements, a vital component of Gurdjieff's method—the compositions included in a recently released four-record album, performed by de Hartmann himself, are not related to the Movements, but are pieces of absolute music, albeit with richly evocative titles. These recordings, made in the 1950s under somewhat casual conditions and with amateur tape equipment, sometimes even without de Hartmann's knowledge, have now been reengineered with the most advanced techniques. Considering the modesty of the original effort, the results are remarkably good. What we have is a clean, quiet recording of performances which, without a doubt, set the standard for the interpretation of these deceptively simple pieces. As a pianist, de Hartmann was not only a superb technician, but played with great depth of understanding and poetic sensibility; and then, of course, it was his own music. Unlike, therefore, any other recording of these works, this one gives the sense of the pianist-composer going to the very heart of each phrase. The music emerges in all clarity and integrity; the pianist and his personality disappear entirely from the scene. One cannot ask more from any musical rendering.

The greater part of these works was composed in the years from 1924 through 1926 at Gurdjieff's institute in Fontainebleau, near Paris. Many of the compositions bear specific dates which indicate periods of a literally daily musical output and suggest the great intensity of the collaborative-creative process, often for weeks at a stretch.

The compositions which comprise the present album have been well chosen, offering a broad view of various aspects of the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann work. There are hymns of a solemn or contemplative nature, quite unlike our usual idea of that form, often drawing from the idiom of the Russian Orthodox liturgy, or else echoing music Gurdjieff remembered hearing in remote Asian temples and monasteries. At the other end of the spectrum are the ingenuous, dancelike evocations of simple, ethnic folk melodies. And in between are suggestions of the Near-Eastern improvization known as the *taksim*; subjective songs of intimate, personal expression in the music of the sayyids, proverbial descendants of Mohammed; melodies of great warmth and humanity rather more in the Western harmonic style, such as the *Bokharian Dervish*, and *Rejoice, Beelzebub*, and also excerpts from the score of Gurdjieff's unproduced ballet, *The Struggle of the Magicians*.

Describing the external forms and styles of this music does not, however,

help to illuminate its inner essence, which remains strangely enigmatic.

What is the source of its compelling force, its ineffable atmosphere, its capacity to cast a spell on the listener while bringing him more intensely into contact with himself?

To begin with, the genesis of these pieces, the method of their composition, is singular, to say the least. De Hartmann has engagingly adumbrated the process, in which Gurdjieff, who could improvise movingly on the harmonium but was in no way a trained composer, would whistle or pick out with one finger on the piano some characteristically Near-Eastern phrase. This and other melodic fragments were somehow assembled and shaped by de Hartmann under Gurdjieff's watchful eye. Harmonies would attach themselves, rhythmic patterns would add momentum, gradually a form would appear. Yet despite de Hartmann's schooled and polished compositional mastery, the influence of Gurdjieff on this "fleshing-out" process seems unquestionable. De Hartmann's own personal style in his numerous orchestral, chamber, and operatic works reflects the transition from an elegant and charming Russian-French neoromanticism into an early 20th-century modernism, peculiarly related to the contemporary cubist and expressionist schools of painting, with an almost naive use of dissonant tone-clusters, a tendency toward mechanistic rhythms, a taste for ironic or sarcastic harmonic configurations.

With very rare exceptions, none of this appears in the music de Hartmann created with Gurdjieff. Occasional dissonances are transformed into something subtle and mysterious; the entire musical stance is a different one. These works seem, in fact, almost devoid of any device designed for effect. They are characterized rather by a directness of feeling and simplicity of structure, even when the ultimate "meaning" is more recondite. The melodies are often oriental in idiom, occasionally even verging on the trite. The harmonic underpinning (a Western adaptation, nonexistent in Eastern music) is mostly triadic or made of fourths and fifths, or else uses the familiar organ-point or drone. When the harmony is on occasion more complex (de Hartmann's touch, to be sure) it is rarely with intent to weave elaborate chordal progressions, but rather to make more emphatic, pungent, or poignant, some melodic movement. The rhythms are almost primitively straightforward. One might say this music, whether it is being lyrically introspective, dancelike, or prayerful, always feels stripped down, its bones showing. Textures are of minimal interest, embellishments only for the intensification of expression.

On the other hand, in rare instances, the music may seem, for a moment, awkward, ungainly, taking an incomprehensible turn for no apparent reason, as though some subtle intention is eluding us. What feels at first like a mistake leaves us later not so sure. Has de Hartmann deliberately allowed a touch of Gurdjieff's amateurism to remain "uncorrected"? Or, finally, is it absurd to apply here the ordinary aca-

demic principles of musical procedure? Is Gurdjieff eschewing also, as he did with the "literary," the "bon ton *musical* language"?

But leaving aside these relatively subtle points, one might guess that the trained listener will very possibly, on first hearing, instantly dismiss this music as typically folkloristic, indigenous to the ethnic and religious crossroads where Gurdjieff was born and spent his early years, and as a characteristic example of the incorporation of such source material into concert works, so common among Russian composers of this period, for whom this style seemed attractively exotic.

But a deeper contact with the Gurdjieff music will quickly show the error in likening it either to traditional folk or religious music itself or to any trivial popularization of it. The similarity is principally one of vocabulary, all on the surface. Gurdjieff obviously used it because it was quite simply the language he knew, and, as it happens, a language rich in a kind of natural, universal, human expression. But his purpose in music went much deeper.

In Gurdjieff's view, most art we know is subjective, both in its creation and its reception. He saw objective art—much rarer—as having a specific relationship to the properties of feeling, as emanating precise vibrations which influence the feelings directly, organically, predictably. Objective art, he said, affects all people in the same way.

Unavoidably we are drawn to ask: Is Gurdjieff's music an example of objective art? Of course, it is impossible to say. His various works are clearly on different levels. And yet one may well wonder, for example, when hearing the last composition in this series of records, entitled "Remembrance." Here is the archetype of the essential Gurdjieffian "sound." Anything that could evoke sentiment, nostalgia, charm, or sadness, is nowhere to be found. The music is naked, unadorned, and yet not stark or severe. Instead, a profound, searching tone follows the questioning single line, an angular, unpredictable melody that seems to find no resting place, hesitating, feeling its way from moment to moment, supported by a three-voiced harmonic base, likewise elusive, curiously unwilling to resolve itself. And all haunted by a deep, indescribable feeling, as though gazing intently inward, without comment. Objective.

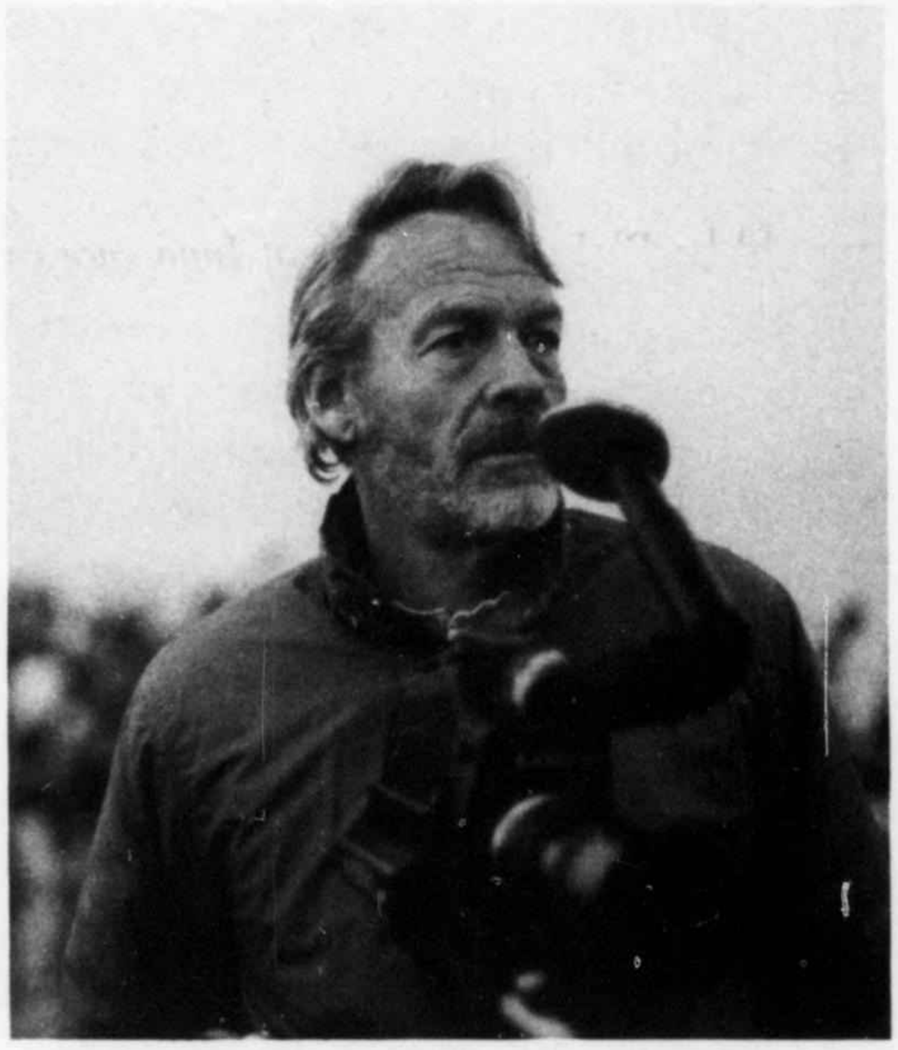
To compare this music with other, more familiar, kinds of music, classic or otherwise, is pointless. Although its materials are utterly simple, recognizable, even conventional, it defies classification. It seems to have been created with a special aim, a special intent. It is, finally *sui generis*. It makes statements and asks questions not to be found elsewhere. ■

Laurence Rosenthal is a composer and pianist. His symphonic works have been performed by such orchestras as the New York Philharmonic and under conductors such as Leonard Bernstein and Erich Leinsdorf. He adopted the Gurdjieff/de Hartmann music to the film Meetings with Remarkable Men *and has composed the scores for two recent television miniseries,* Mussolini *and* Peter the Great.

Images of Death

MARVIN BARRETT

Forest of Bliss
A film produced, directed, filmed, and edited by Robert Gardner. Film Study Center, Harvard University.



Death is a cardinal, validating fact of life. It stands sentinel at the end of every corridor imagination or experience opens to us, preventing our escape, turning us back on ourselves. Indifference to death makes mankind's monsters; proper attention to it, its saints. Death revealed with its adjuncts, sickness and old age, launched a lovable young sybarite on the most remarkable spiritual adventure in history. Death gave the world Christianity. If there were no death it would be necessary for God to invent it for our survival and salvation.

How, then, do you make a ninety-minute film on death? In *Forest of Bliss* Robert Gardner, director of the Film Study Center at Harvard University and one of our leading ethnographic filmmakers presents one answer. It is difficult to imagine a more effective one. Although Gardner set out on purpose to do just such a film and chose as his formidable epigraph a quotation from the Upanishads adapted by W.B Yeats—"Everything in the world is eater or eaten, the seed is food and the fire is eater"—his work is miraculously free from all pretention and portentousness.

His setting is Benares, India, the holiest city in the world's most spiritual nation, and one that has always had an explicit connection with death.

The film might be described as an album, a collection of clips with no definable pattern or rationale, that arrange themselves around and derive their resonance from a dominating image. That central image is quite simply the human corpse, dressed and bound to a litter and

carried through Benares's narrow streets to the Manikarnika Ghat, where it is burnt or slipped beneath the broad majestically moving surface of the Ganges. Not one corpse, a whole series, similar but different, bound in different cloth, garlanded with different flowers, carried on different shoulders.

There is no continuity to this film. It neither tells a particular story nor focuses on a particular person.

It is not a travelogue, although the sense of "colorful" place cannot be avoided. It is not a sermon, although there is a message in every image, nor an aesthetic exercise, although frame by frame the beauty is breathtaking.

Perhaps the closest artistic analogues would be Blake's *Auguries of Innocence* or Bosch's great triptychs, where the individual passages are startling and often profoundly disturbing, but the whole exhilarates rather than oppresses.

Gardner explains the film as "a ninety-minute expansion on a split second of the panic dread I felt on turning an unfamiliar corner onto Manikarnika Ghat." Whatever his own dread, it is not conveyed in the film.

One wonders, if one paid this kind of limpid attention to life in a great American city would people, objects, precincts take on a new meaning? Would they become strange and more beautiful under such a steady gaze? Would the dread go out of our own mean streets and serenity replace it? It is the quality of attention that seems to make the difference.

Gardner's camera is unblinking—unhurrying—nerveless. It never fusses nor intrudes although it is present at the most intensely private moments. Its direction seems almost accidental, and yet it always hits its mark: a cow patiently eating a garland of marigolds intended for the image of a god; a corpse floating face down on the river; a child flying a kite; a solitary little girl chalking boxes on the broad steps and then hopping into them; the sacred fire being passed from hand to naked hand. There are no jokes, ever, but by the same token there are no tricks. The result is that one sees life (and death) with a steadiness and concentration that nervousness and cleverness could never offer.



What, we ask ourselves, is that half-naked artisan doing turning bamboo poles into ladders? Who is to climb where? and are they really strong enough to hold him? Then we realize they are not ladders but litters for the dead. One of them is for that old wom-





an the priest has just blessed and who, wrapped in white, is even now being bound to the slats and covered over with a shining pink shroud and draped with flowers that some time in the past or future we see being picked in a blossom-filled field, heaped into baskets, bicycled—did they have bicycles is Asoka's day?—from a serene whitewashed village into the honking teeming city. The fat, sleepy, country puppy, awash in marigolds, turns into the starving city pariah dog who dies as he climbs the steps away from the broad river.

All through are scattered scenes of worship, sacramental acts, ritual, so that it is impossible finally to extract the significant from the insignificant, distinguish the sacred from the profane.

The soundtrack is a surf of background noise from which emerges a chant, the repetition of a holy word, the blowing of a conch, the whining of an oarlock.

Although its origins and credentials are academic, this is not an "educational" film. No information is transferred, retained; no words exchanged; no explanations given.

Why are those men dipping their hands in yellow paint and making palm prints around the gunwale of that boat? Where is the boat heading? Who will be its passengers? In the final image of the film, is it that boat that is being rowed through limbo, the river's surface, the sky obliterated in a grey mist, with its five shrouded, nameless, faceless passengers—oarlocks creaking?

We will never know. Even the title is unexplained. You are left to seek out your own text. Perhaps another passage from the Upanisads will serve.

Out of this oblation a person comes to be. He lives as long as his life lasts. When he dies they carry him to the funeral fire . . . Those who know this and those also who in the forest realize that faith is truth, they pass into the flame, from the flame into the day, from the day into the bright fortnight, from the bright fortnight into the six months when the sun goes northward, from these months into the sun, from the sun into lightning. When they have reached the region of lightning, a spiritual person leads them into the worlds of Brahman. In these worlds of Brahman they dwell in the highest of the highest. For them there is no return.

But those who win the worlds by means of sacrifice, gifts, and austerity, they pass into smoke, from smoke into the night, from night into the dark fortnight, from the dark fortnight into the six months when the sun goes southward, from these months into the world of the Fathers, from the world of the Fathers into the moon. When they have reached the moon, they become food. There the Gods, in the same way as they say to King Soma, "Increase, decrease!" and partake of him, so also do they consume them. When that has taken place, they enter into this space, from space into the wind, from wind into rain, from rain into the earth. Having reached the earth, they become food; again they are offered into the fire of a man, whence they are born in the fire of a woman, and arising in the worlds, again move in the circle. But those who do not know these two paths, they become crawling and flying and biting beasts.

Such a text could justify not only a *Forest of Bliss*, but a lifetime, several lifetimes, of equally compelling films. ■

Marvin Barrett, formerly a member of the faculty at the Columbia University School of Journalism, is completing a book on old age and spirituality.

BOOK REVIEWS

A History of Religious Ideas
Volume 3: From Muhammad to the Age of Reforms
By Mircea Eliade. Translated from the French by Alf Hiltebeitel and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. Pp. *xii* + 360. $27.50

As most readers of PARABOLA will know, Mircea Eliade died this past spring, and we are privileged to have this unmatchable legacy of his lifelong learning. I have my own special debt of gratitude. To the extent that I am literate in world religions, it is because of reading Eliade's work. Although I never met him, he was a crucial, if cautious and distant, early supporter of PARABOLA and continued to recommend subscribing to PARABOLA as a first step to any student who wanted to learn about mythology and comparative religions. He spoke little of his own personal religious beliefs and practices, despite the fact that many people wanted very much to know what a man who knew everything there was to know about human religious experience actually had chosen to believe himself. But when we interviewed him, he revealed himself as a committed Orthodox Christian, in keeping with his Romanian origins, but a Christian with unique tolerance for the full variety of religious expression and a Jung-like appreciation for the hidden unity behind that variety. If the heart of Christianity is the spending of oneself for the good of others, Eliade's contributions mark him as a Christian par excellence.

His last book was the third volume of his history of religious ideas. I reviewed the first two volumes in these pages a few years ago (Vol. VII, No. 4); since then, because of deteriorating health and the demands of the material, his intention of covering the remaining dimensions of the history of religions and the effects of the reductionistic and secularizing tendencies of modernity, could not be fulfilled. Nor will the projected last book that would have presented the essentials of the series in a single, more accessible volume be forthcoming. Rather this third volume is devoted to Western religious traditions, from the religions of ancient Eurasia to the Catholic Reformation, although it does have a chapter on Tibetan Religions; the projected fourth volume, which will now have to be completed (if at all) by "colleagues, selected from among my former students," would presumably bring the entire history up to the present and cover such subjects as the expansion of Hinduism, medieval China and Japanese religions.

This study comprises a series of eight sections on relatively discrete subjects, such as "The Christian Churches up to the Iconoclastic Crisis," "Judaism from the Bar Kokhba Revolt to Hasidism," and "Religion, Magic, and Hermetic Traditions before and after the Reformation." Each section/chapter in turn contains about ten independent excurses on topics germane to the overall period or area under discussion. They range from "Rites, myths, and beliefs of the Old Slavs" and "Esotericism and literary creations: Troubadours, Fideli

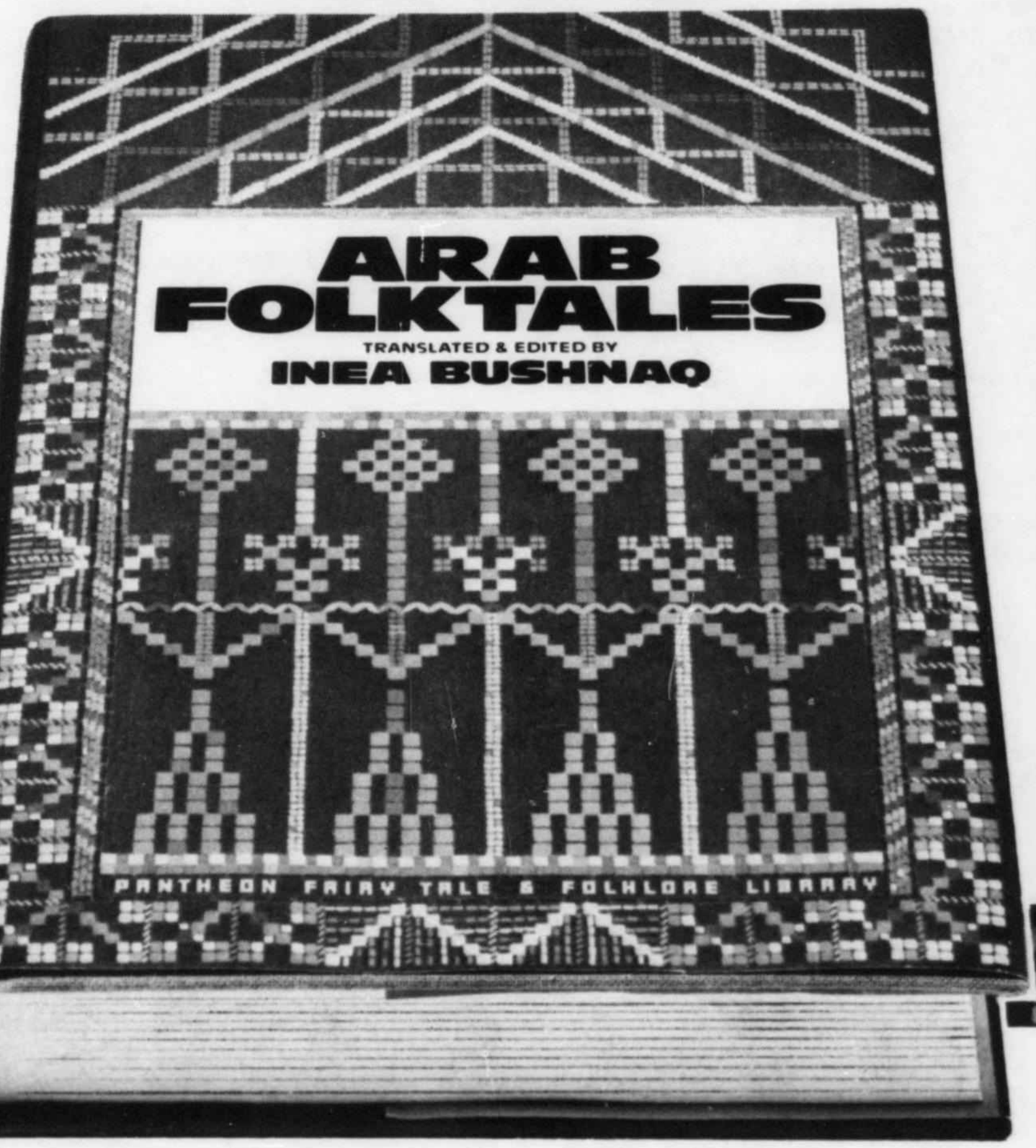
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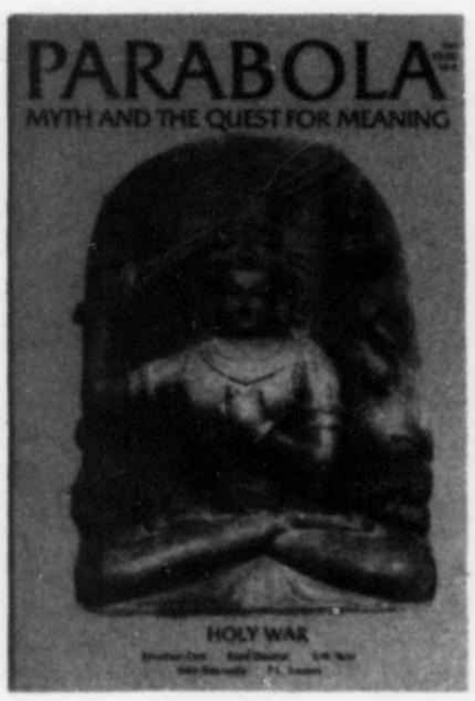
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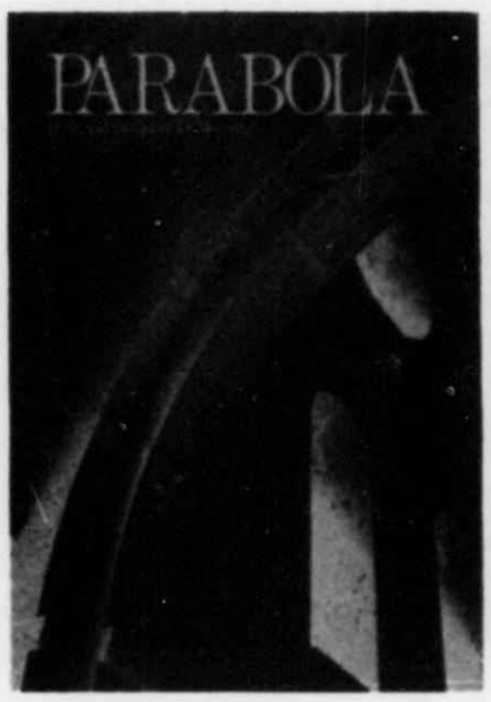
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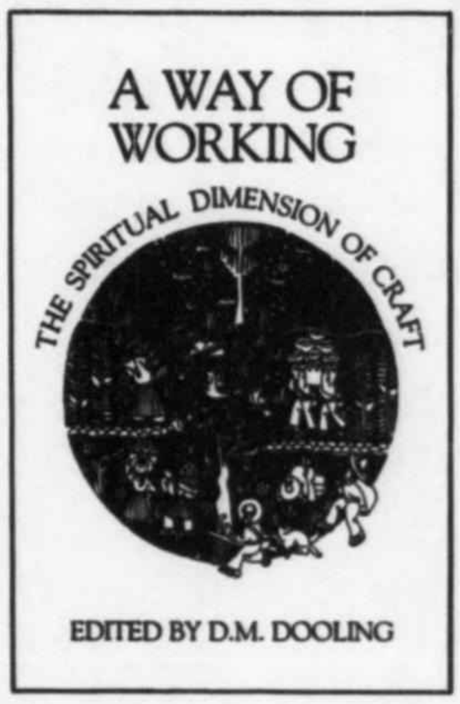
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d'Amore, and the Grail cycle" to "Isaac Luria and the new Kabbalah" and "New Valorizations of Alchemy: From Paracelsus to Newton." Each opens a window on an immense and intriguing area of religious experience: Eliade presents essential information; provides a fresh interpretive frame; identifies recurrent patterns, themes, symbols, motifs; regularly drops remarkable insights, observations, analogies along the way; and directs the student to a brief bibliographical essay that presents the present state of the scholarly discussion and the best literature on the topic. It is a demanding course. Technical terms ("homology," "autochthonous," "anthropogonic," and so on) and untranslated foreign phrases abound. The level of discussion presumes a broadly based knowledge of the scholarly study of the history of religions. And the concision and leaps that such economic presentation of a vast subject requires are most challenging. Not a history in any conventional sense, it is more the distillation of Eliade's encyclopedic knowledge of the history of religions. As such, outside of classroom and personal programs of study, the volumes will be used as an indispensable reference and resource book.

Still, the rewards of reading through the volumes are many. One gains a concrete sense of the incredibly rich varieties of religious expression and of the universal elements that keep recurring. Amid the welter of information, there are delightful oases of insights, encounters with incredible characters. At one point, Eliade pauses for a moment to remark, "for five centuries the Western Church alternately experiences periods of reform and decadence, triumph and humiliation, creativity and sclerosis, openness and intolerance"; at another, he observes, "the mythology of knighthood has had a cultural influence that is more important than its history"; and "the Jewish religious genius is characterized at once by its fidelity to the biblical tradition and by its capacity to submit to numerous exterior 'influences' without allowing itself to be dominated by them." And we meet such outsize figures as Sabbatai Zwi who allowed himself to be taken by thousands of pious Jews as the long-awaited Messiah and ended up converting to Islam; he left behind a sect of crazed followers who became the Henry Millers of mysticism, holding that true holiness could be attained only through immersion in sin and perversion. Then there's the Sufi mystic who declared, "God considered every consciousness in the Universe, and He saw that they were all empty of Him, except for my own, where He saw himself in plenitude." It is delightful too to experience Eliade's realignment of the whole landscape of religious history; for he shows that cultures and traditions that have long been forgotten were indeed interesting and important, and he displays a winning predilection for the esoteric

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John Loudon

John Loudon, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA, *is Senior Partner of CoVenture Associates, a book development company in Berkeley, California.*

With Open Eyes: Conversations with Matthieu Galey
By Marguerite Yourcenar. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984. Pp. *xix* + 271. $10.95, paper.

Marguerite Yourcenar, the Belgian-born French author who now makes her home on Mount Desert Island off the coast of Maine, may be one of the best-kept secrets of twentieth-century literature. In an era of subjective, journalistic ramblings through the commonplace, the transitory, and the mediocre, Mme. Yourcenar's writings seem meticulously chiseled in granite, mining the myths and traditions of the past in order to make them vibrate anew for contemporary readers.

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scious, Yourcenar has had a long but quiet career. "The writer must soak up the subject completely, as a plant soaks up water, until the ideas are ready to sprout," Yourcenar explains in these collected conversations with French literary critic, Matthieu Galey. And at the end, when Galey wonders if she does not see herself less as a novelist and more as a kind of medium or intermediary, she readily concurs:

> Absolutely. And that's why, basically, I have at most a limited interest in myself. I feel that I am an instrument through which currents, vibrations, have passed. That is true of all my books and I would even say of all my life. Perhaps of all life. The best of us, perhaps, are mere crystal vessels. . . . Everything began before us and will continue after we are gone. Everything surpasses us, in other words, and we feel humble and amazed when we serve as instruments in this greater scheme.

Best known for her two historical novels, *Memoirs of Hadrian* and *The Abyss*, Yourcenar has also published poetry and prose poems, a handful of plays, a series of trenchant essays, translations (of Virginia Woolf, Cavafy, the classical Greek poets, and American Negro spirituals), and the first two volumes of a three-part autobiography, entitled in French *Le labyrinthe du monde* and about as unconventional and non-egocentric a biography as has ever been attempted, its focus being, as its title indicates, the journey through the labyrinth, not the coincidental journeyer (who, at the end of the second volume, has only reached the age of six weeks).

Yourcenar is a craftsman like few others writing today, weighing each word and each idea carefully. One can almost see her eyes twinkle as she tells Galey how, "on the third or fourth draft, pencil in hand, I reread my text . . . and eliminate whatever can be eliminated, whatever seems useless. Each deletion is a triumph. At the bottom of the page I write, 'crossed out seven words,' 'crossed out ten words,' as the case may be."

Writing is like making bread, says this woman who always bakes her own: "There comes a point when you feel that it is time to stop kneading. At that point you experience a feeling of amazement . . . a feeling of satisfaction and astonishment that the job is done, that you've made it through, come to the end."

Though she insists that had she not been a writer she could have just as easily been something else or "nothing at all," having taken on the chore, Yourcenar has pursued it, since early childhood, almost as if it were a sacred vow. "All things considered, the writer is his

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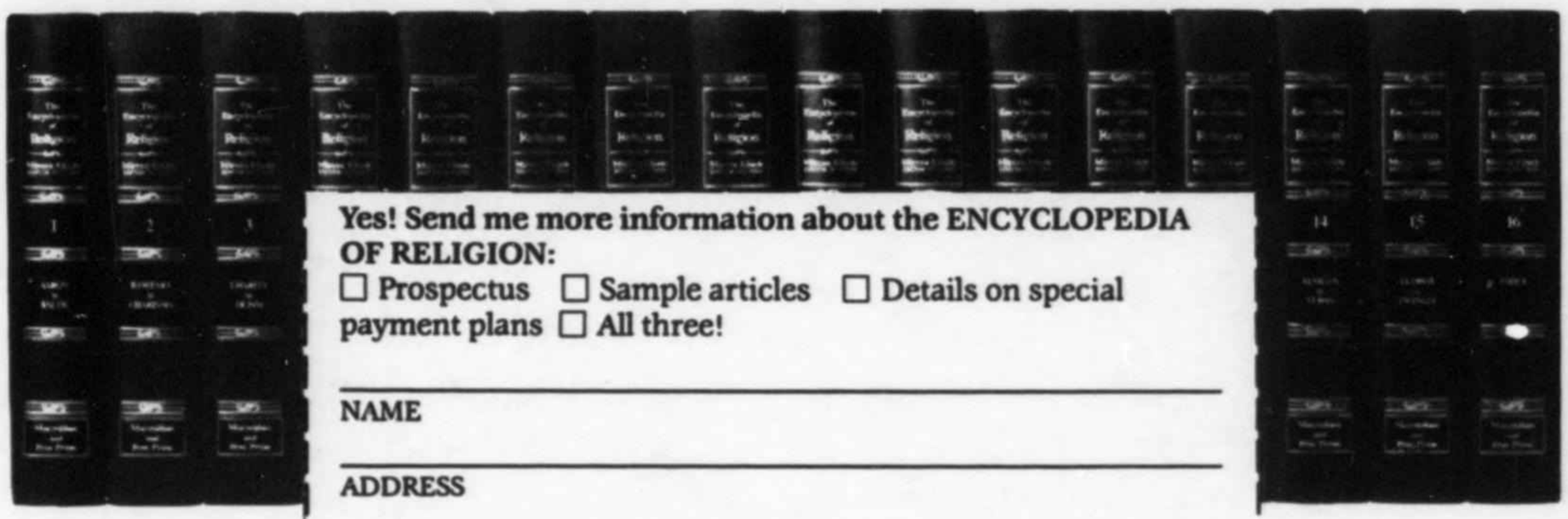
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own amanuensis," she says of that responsibility. "When I write I am carrying out a task, writing under my own dictation, as it were. I am performing the difficult and exhausting labor of putting my own thought in order, straightening out my own dictation."

The ideas for *Hadrian* and *The Abyss* germinated for over 30 years before the books were finished ("When it comes to making a book, you've got to know how to wait"), and many drafts were consigned to ashes before the final versions emerged. Unlike many of us, who keep every jot and tittle of our scribbled thoughts in trunks or cardboard boxes in the closet, thinking we may someday be able to glean more meaning out of them than is probably there, Yourcenar burns most early versions of her works. "The safest way to get rid of something that isn't good is still to destroy it," she tells Galey.

Throughout the conversations, Yourcenar speaks of the ability of fire to destroy or to temper, both necessary steps in the crucible of creation. The French title of *The Abyss* is taken from medieval alchemy—*L'oeuvre au noir*—the initial "black" phase of the process, that of "dissolution . . . renunciation and destruction . . . when everything begins to lose its shape," without which the white and red phases of the eventual spiritual transformation cannot take place. (Interestingly, Yourcenar points out to Galey that the dangerous phase is not the black but the red, "the appearance of supreme powers in the operator—'Beware of allowing the red to appear too quickly,' the alchemists constantly reiterate.")

At another point she tells Galey, "Life has many things in common with a brazier: heat (that heat that distinguishes the living from the dead), instability, the mixture of dazzling light and dark smoke, and the fact that like fire it feeds on destruction: life is devastating. I've often said that every person is a volcano, which is another way of saying the same thing."

Yourcenar describes to Galey in detail how she came to "know" her characters and their thoughts and feelings by immersing herself as completely as possible in the ideas, histories, and literatures of their eras—ancient Rome for the story of the real emperor Hadrian, and the Middle Ages for the world of the fictional Zeno in *The Abyss*: "You've got to work to hear, you've got to create a silence within yourself in order to hear what Hadrian or Zeno would say in a particular situation."

Her identification with Hadrian became so complete, in fact, that she at times went into a kind of trance state to study him—an act which has been rather misinterpreted by some of Yourcenar's detractors and which she tries to clarify here:

> In referring to a "trance," I'm speaking of what it looks like to someone observing from the outside. . . . Such a way of proceeding is so contrary to the way we usually live, write, and converse in France, where people like to embroider endlessly on their ideas. . . . In a trance of the sort I'm describing, one doesn't embroider at all. It's the same as in certain oriental methods of contemplation, where the object is to empty the mind completely in order to achieve a level of serenity in which objects are reflected as in the surface of a calm sea. Generally speaking, one must try against considerable difficulty to achieve what Hindu sages describe as a state of "attentiveness," in which you get rid of three-quarters or nine-tenths of what you seem to think but really don't. Ordinarily, a person merely assembles bits and pieces of preexisting ideas. All of these must be eliminated and one's thought focused on nothing; the effect is quite salutary.

Such disciplined meditation should not be confused with dreaming, Yourcenar insists, although she does speak with Galey about the clarity and visionary aspects of her own dream state, which she has recorded in an early work, recently revised, entitled *Les songes et les sorts* (of which *Dreams and*

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Demons, in the broader sense of the latter term, might not be a bad translation of "sorts," which is literally "destinies, spells, charms"), a section of which was translated in these pages ("Dreams & Seeing," Vol. VIII, No. 2).

Galey tells us in his introduction that these conversations with Yourcenar took place over a number of years. Other than organizing and no doubt editing the talks so that they fall into chapters that make some categorical or historical sense, Galey stays pretty well in the background, letting Yourcenar speak for herself rather than trying to interpret for her or, worse yet (as with so many interviewers), trying to insert his own "clever" observations into the conversation.

There are times, nonetheless, when he tries to box Yourcenar in, to make her ideas fit neatly into certain preconceived political, theological, or sexual-political categories, but Yourcenar steadfastly refuses to be tied down, either gently correcting Galey or sidestepping some of his more obtuse contentions completely.

The portrait achieved is exceptionally clear and lucid, not unlike Yourcenar's own richly textured, precise prose. Where clarity is possible, Yourcenar believes in cutting to the bone and explains why: " . . . the most detailed possible knowledge of everything that exists is our point of contact with, our gateway to, things that transcend reality. As soon as we lose touch with certain very basic realities, we begin to concoct fables and degenerate into rhetoric or sterile intellectualism."

But there are areas where the mind alone cannot go, and Yourcenar writes always from sensations and feelings, from the heart and the body, as well as from the head. "There are certain areas, such as religion and poetry, that must remain obscure. Or dazzling, which comes to the same thing."

She voices opinions on a host of contemporary concerns, always avoiding what she refers to as "particularism," the serving of special interests that always leads to narrow-mindedness and repression (a discrimination which, in turn, breeds "a kind of psychosis" in the minds of the oppressed—one of the more daring ideas in the book). War she sees as abhorrent, but directly linked to overpopulation ("When the beetles in the sack grow too many, they eat one another"), an obvious truth that other clear thinkers of recent times have voiced but which virtually no current world leaders seem to realize.

Myth and ritual have been touchstones in her life, beginning with her own Roman Catholic girlhood and an early fascination with ancient Greece and extending more and more in later years to religion in the East. Lamenting the saying of the Mass in English in Roman Catholicism today, she comments:

> I think that the old words, which had been fixed for a very long time and which had served thousands upon thousands of human beings, carried a very high emotional charge, which has now been lost. They were in a sense mantras, and as soon as you replace them with ordinary everyday words it becomes difficult to root them in the human soul, in the human mind and sensibility.

Now in her 80s, Yourcenar lives alone on her island ("each island is a world unto itself, a universe in miniature"), in the house where she has lived for 40 years, close to the nature and the "plain folk" of the island, whom she cherishes and always welcomes ("My house . . . is always open. I can be writing the death of Zeno, and the gardener or the carpenter will come knock at the door. . . . Eventually the visitor will leave and I can get back to the death of Zeno—which has been continuing all the while").

The third part of *Le labyrinthe du monde*, called *Quoi? L'éternité* (literally, "What? Eternity") should be out soon, in French, the language Yourcenar still



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writes in even after over four decades in the United States.

It is by no means conventional, this account of an unconventional life. Decrying the "French obsession with the cult of personality" (which is perhaps quite American as well), Yourcenar warns that "Readers who look for personal confessions in a writer's work are readers who don't know how to read."

The book is far from a systematic recounting of her childhood, she tells Galey: "Everything comes from much farther back than that, I think. All humanity and all of life course through our veins, and if their ceaseless flow happens to have chosen the path of a particular family and society, the one in which one happens to have grown up, that is just one accident among many that shape one's life."

Yourcenar says she has many projects she would still like to attempt, if time permits, including one she mentions to Galey, entitled *Landscape with Animals*, in which "Humans will appear . . . only as they relate to or use animals." When pressed, she explained, "To put it more abstractly, if you'd rather, I think it is important to have some notion of what life is like when encased in a form different from our own."

Yourcenar hopes to face death, as did her characters Hadrian and Zeno, "with open eyes." If illness comes, she says emphatically, she wants to feel the pain: "I would like to die fully conscious that I am dying, of an illness whose progress would be slow enough to allow death to insinuate itself into my body and fully unfold."

Shocked at her statement, Galey asks why. "So as not to miss the ultimate experience, the passage," Yourcenar answers, presumably without missing a beat.

Rob Baker

Rob Baker is a former editor of PARABOLA *and has written frequently about film, theater, and the arts.*

Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape
By Barry Lopez. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986. Pp. *xxix* + 464. $22.95.

Earlier this year five men and one woman attained the North Pole by foot and sled alone, the first to do so since Robert Peary at the beginning of our century. These modern adventurers battled savage winds, treacherous pack ice, and temperatures of 70 degrees below zero (wind chill of 120 degrees below) for fifty-five brutal days to reach a spot they could have helicoptered to in a matter of hours. Of this extraordinary effort expedition leader Will Steger said, "I do these things for self-growth. It's an exercise not just of the physical but of the growth of finer powers."

Barry Lopez's impressive new book, *Arctic Dreams*, was published a bit too soon to tell the story of Steger and his companions, but Lopez, an occasional contributor to these pages and author of the best-selling *Of Wolves and Men*, devotes about half his book to chronicling tales of those who preceded Steger across the Arctic ice in search of a fuller, more harmonious existence. For according to Lopez the Arctic is a domain par excellence for one to take one's measure and, if one takes care and is fortunate, to find a fertile ground in which to seed his finer self and root his well-being.

> . . . by coming to know a place where the common elements of life are understood differently one has the advantage of an altered perspective. With that shift, it is possible to imagine afresh the way to a lasting security of the soul and heart, and toward an accommodation in the flow of time we call history, ours and the world's.

In other words, travel broadens the horizons. And indeed it does, if we can judge by the delicate understandings and questions—albeit sometimes barely discernible beneath an avalanche of prose—Barry Lopez has carried back from the North to place on these pages. Like T.E. Lawrence, Richard Byrd, or Henry Thoreau before him, Lopez explores his relationship with a beloved wilderness to know better his relationship to his own life, and generously shares his findings. "To inquire into the intricacies of a distant landscape . . . is to provoke thoughts about one's own interior landscape, and the familiar landscapes of memory. The land urges us to come around to an understanding of ourselves."

Arctic Dreams is a hefty book, a series of long, loosely interlocked essays on the land, air, water, animals, and men of the northern wilderness. We learn up front that the Arctic scarcely knows the imprint of man, a newcomer to this youngest and most harsh of ecosystems. A tyranny of light and ice rules here, and what life hangs on in this crystalline world finds its major enemy not in the bitter cold, as one might expect, but in the paucity of light. The darkness which smothers the land for up to six months a year extinguishes all but a handful of species: of the world's 3200 species of mammals, only a paltry twenty-three live north of the tree line. Those few who do are precious and receive Lopez's careful attention.

Lopez devotes the first third of *Arctic Dreams* to these beasts, three in

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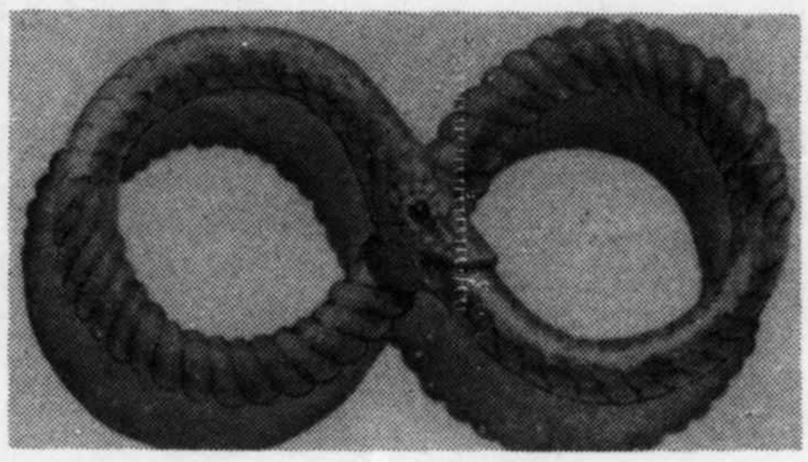


THE CREATION OF MYTHOLOGY
Marcel Detienne
Translated by **Margaret Cook**

At what moment and for what reasons did myth become problematic for the Greeks themselves? Detienne reflects on this question to challenge simplistic critiques of myth as irrational or believers in myth as primitive. He argues that to apply these distinctions to the ancient Greeks reflects a misunderstanding of the role that myth played in the lives of the Greeks.

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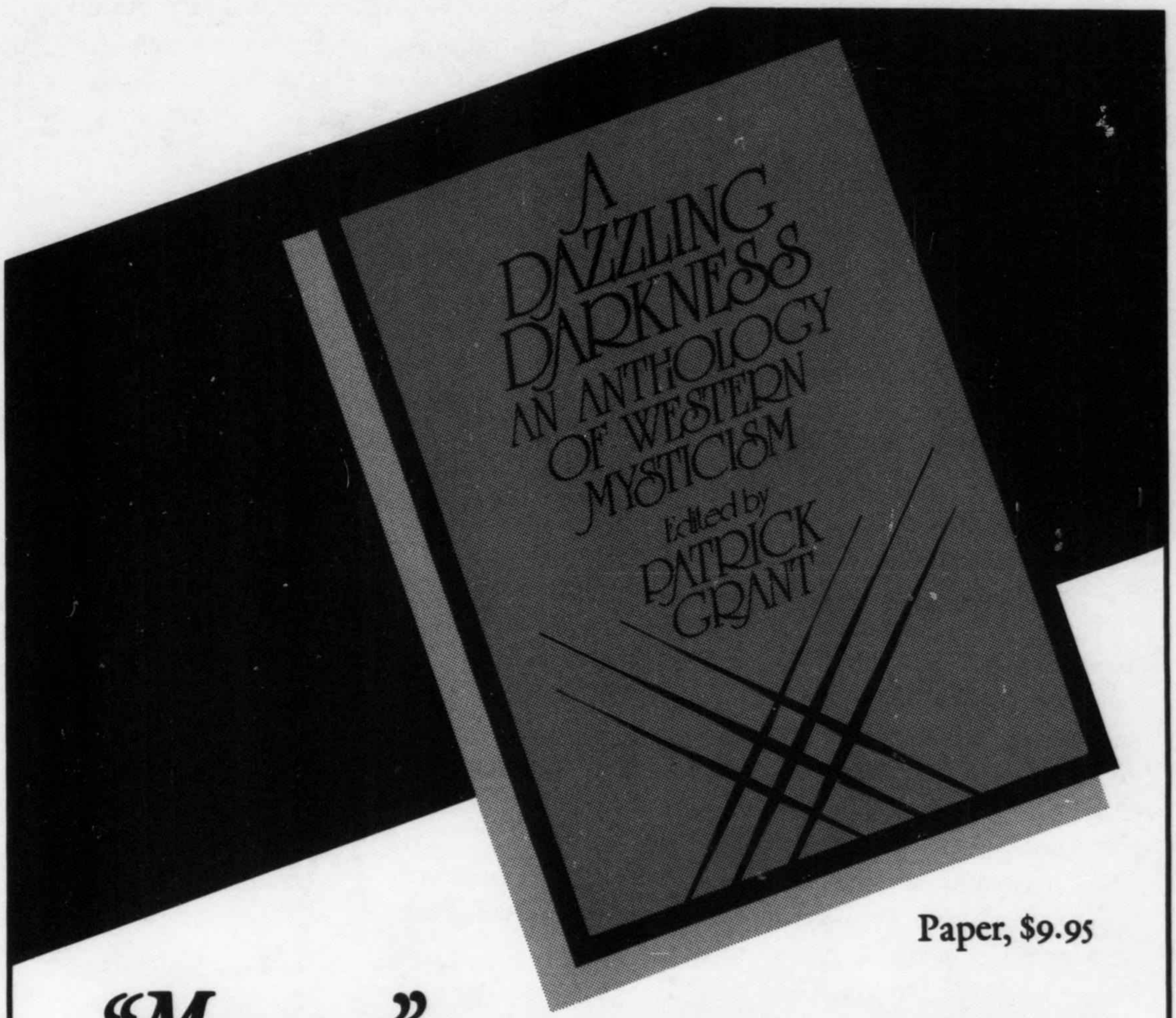
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particular: *Ovibos moschatus*, the musk ox; *Ursus maritimus*, the polar bear, and *Monodon monceros*, the narwhal. What stands out in his fascinating accounts of these creatures is their thrilling adaptations to the ice, the cold, and the dark. The hollow fur of the polar bear, for instance, insulates so well that these animals fail to register on infrared film, while the narwahl, whose slender, spiraled horn inspired the legend of the unicorn, absorbs a scant nine percent of each breath into its lungs as compared to thirty-five percent for humans), retaining the rest in its muscles for use during its long bivouacs underwater.

Elegant, elegiac essays on light and ice follow. Lopez treats these natural elements with the same respect he accords living beings, writing of them with an attention to the detail that matters.

The predominant colors of the aurora are a pale green and a soft rose. I turned over a weathered antler once on the tundra and found these same two colors staining its white surface. Such correspondence, like that between a surfacing guillemot and an Eskimo man rolling upright in his kayak, hold a landscape together.

Lopez devotes the latter half of the book to humanity's Arctic adventure, begun about five thousand years ago when the first Paleo-Eskimo hiked across a frozen Bering Strait from Asia into this northern world of animal, ice, and light. By accepting the land and its indifferent laws, the Eskimos, Lopez argues, adapted well and were able to make a home of this implacable terrain—but certainly not as primitive innocents, as we learn through the author's refreshing candor: "It is wrong to think of hunting cultures like the Eskimo's as living in perfect harmony or balance with nature. . . . They faced na-



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"MYSTICISM," writes Patrick Grant in his Introduction to this book, "is an experience of God's presence beyond the boundaries of culture and language, which the mystic nonetheless undertakes to communicate for humanity at large." In this anthology, Grant has collected more than 900 brief excerpts from the works of nearly 90 Western mystics and arranged them topically to show clearly the link between mystical expression and the human condition. Grant's brief commentary introducing each section outlines his approach—which, he stresses is just one approach—to the mystical way.

Included here are selections from the writings of Francis of Assisi, Bernard of Clairvaux, Julian of Norwich, Thomas à Kempis, John of the Cross, Evelyn Underhill, Martin Buber, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Charles Williams, Simone Weil, Thomas Merton, and many others. A valuable resource for those acquainted with Western mysticism, *A Dazzling Darkness* will also serve to introduce new readers to mysticism and familiarize them with a wide range of the best in that tradition.

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ture with fear, with *ilira* (nervous awe), and *kappia* (apprehension). . . . There is murder and warfare and tribal vendetta in their history. . . . [but] in spite of these things, one feels the constant presence of a people who know something about surviving. They have a quality of *nuannaarpoq*, of taking extravagant pleasure in being alive; and they delight in finding it in other people. Facing as we do our various Armageddons, they are a good people to know."

The Caucasian experience, Lopez reports, has not fared so well. Although some explorers, missionaries, hunters, and even industrialists have approached the Arctic with awe, wishing to tread lightly upon its vast white skin, for the most part the legacy of the European and American intrusion has been one of waste and self-destruction. It is fair to say that almost all of those who have traveled north went, like Will Steger, to find something new and more alive, to discover external wealth or internal resources; yet Lopez's roll call of those who simply dug themselves an early grave or who found only their own disillusionment is appallingly large. And this tragedy continues: the majority of the contemporary labor force in the north treats the land like a whore—"Woman and machinery and the land are all spoken of in the same way—seduction, domestication, domination, control"—and suffers accordingly: "In the most distant camps, to my sensibilities at least, were some of the saddest lives I have ever known."

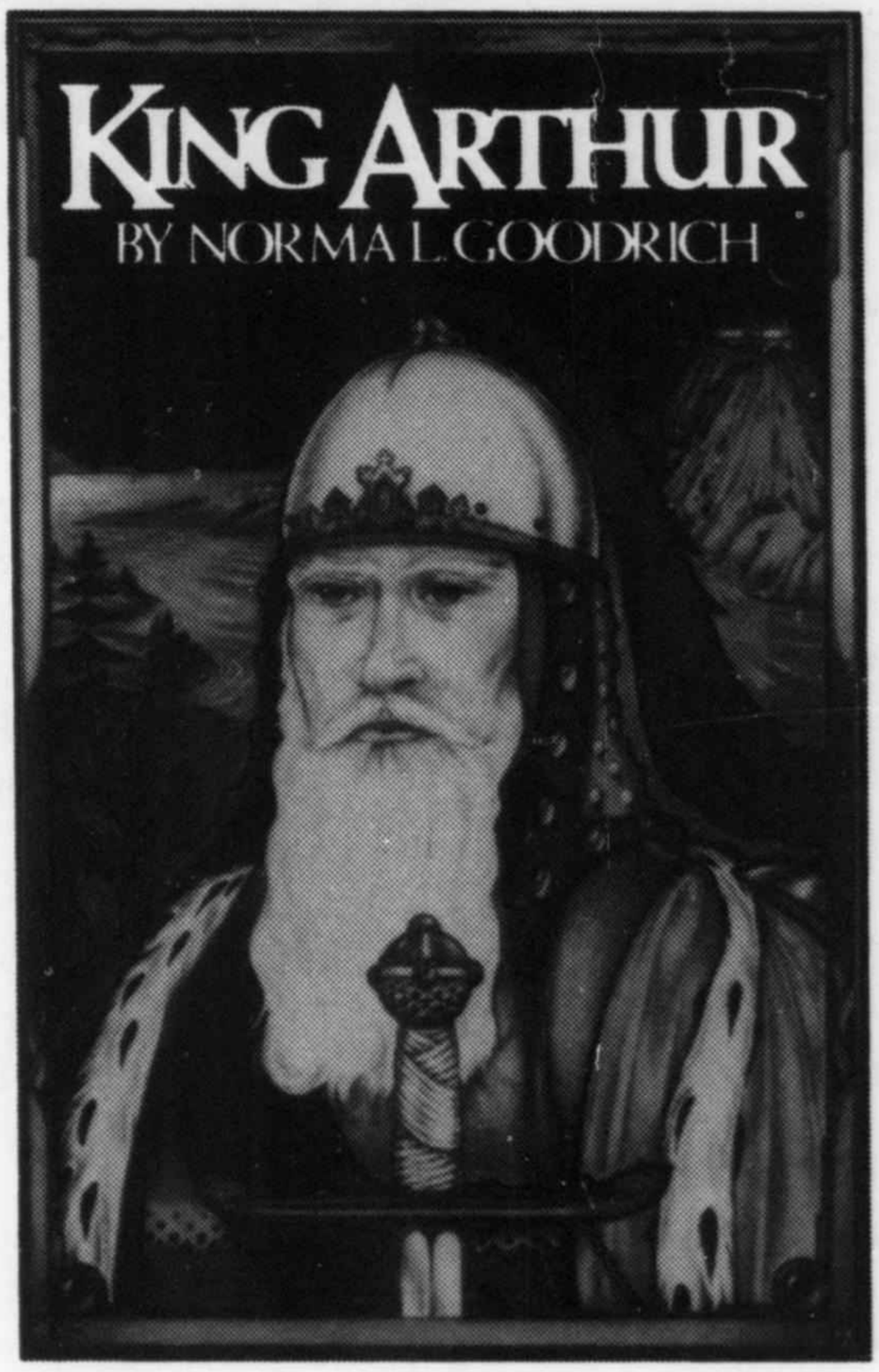
Although in time the immense Arctic could fall irreparable victim to the callousness of industrial exploitation, for now it is large enough and tough enough to absorb the blows. But we, Lopez points out, are not. To live wisely, he says, it is necessary to stand on the land wisely, with caring. "In approaching the land with an attitude of obligation, willing to observe courtesies difficult to articulate . . . one establishes a regard from which dignity can emerge. From that dignified relationship with the land, it is possible to imagine an extension of dignified relationships throughout one's life . . . I wish the order of my life to be arranged in the same way I find the light, the slight movement of the wind, the voice of a bird, the heading of a seed pod I see before me. This impeccable and indisputable integrity I want in myself."

Arctic Dreams is a valuable book through its call to heed this order in nature and potential growth of order in ourselves. It is a finely wrought, exciting book as well. If from time to time Lopez indulges in literary loitering, (using ten words when one would suffice, tossing up obscure words like a squirrel frolicking with a special chestnut), this excess seems to be only a byproduct of his exuberant love for the northern land, a love he successfully shares: "The beauty here is a beauty you feel in your flesh." This is a wise and extravagant book by a man who has traveled north with excellence.

Jeff Zaleski

Jeff Zaleski, a former Executive Editor of PARABOLA, *is now a freelance writer living in New York City.*

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Evolution: A Theory in Crisis

By Michael Denton. Bethesda, Maryland: Adler & Adler, 1986. Pp. 368. $19.95.

Few topics give birth to more questions—and more controversy—than the theory of evolution. Are we really linked by an unbroken parental-sibling chain to snorting beasts that tromped an ancient earth? Did Darwin and his descendants correctly surmise that primeval life burst forth from the random interplay of proteinoid matter in a methane bubble bath? These queries gnaw at our sense of self worth, our religious convictions, or, conversely, our faith in the truths uncovered by science. The theory of evolution, then, is a powerful litmus paper for exposing our image of our world—and the extent of our faith in science and religion. Despite such anomalies as the pseudo-scientific Institute for Creation Research (a fundamentalist group based in California) and its weightier mirror-image, the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, anyone who hangs around scientists knows that most of them are doctrinaire skeptics when it comes to spiritual matters, and anyone who spends time with people who care about religion knows that the bulk of them—even when they fancy themselves to be friends of science—don't really accept the major implications of Darwinian theory: that life is accidental, random, and purposeless. It's no surprise, then, that attacks on religion (or any kind of hierarchical cosmos) spring most often from scientists (Stephen Jay Gould and Carl Sagan being well-known examples), while blasts against evolution tend to come from preachers who believe with Archbishop Ussher that the earth and its inhabitants were created in one fell swoop, like some fabulous Easter egg dropped by an astonished hen, less than 6,000 years old.

All this explains the sense of refreshment that comes from reading *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Michael Denton is a scientist—a doctor and microbiologist, currently doing biological research in Sydney, Australia. His criticism of Darwin is grounded in science, not scripture. He begins his book as if addressing a classroom of fresh-scrubbed biology majors, by placing the bearded British patriarch in historical perspective: despite foreshadowings of evolutionary theory in pre-Socratic thought, most scientists until 1850 or so believed in the immutability of species. Darwin's voyage to the Galapagos changed all that; by the 1880's, due in part to Victorian worship of the idea of Progress, and in part to the lack of a viable scientific alternative, the theory of evolution became dogma. But Denton declares, Darwinism is not the "self-evident axiom" most biologists—and all high school textbooks, by the way—believe it to be.

In marshaling his evidence against Darwin, Denton steers a cautious course. Unlike the creationists, he doesn't spurn all aspects of evolutionary theory. He believes that species do indeed branch and blossom into new species (a process known as microevolution) through the mechanism of geological isolation leading to pressures and "unique adaptive changes." According to Denton, the evidence for speciation—for example, the existence of "intergrading forms" between two species of sea gull in northern Europe—overwhelms any counterargument. However, he rejects the Darwinian concept of macro-

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evolution, which states that broader groups—whales, cats, spiders, clams—also evolved from another, or from a common ancestor. Here Denton draws a useful parallel with physics, where Newtonian theory works on an intermediate scale (that covering the physics of a pistol shot) but not on a subatomic or cosmological scale. So, too, Darwinian evolutionary theory, while accurate in describing speciation, cannot explain the emergence of kingdoms, phyla, classes, orders, families, or genera. As Denton says, "no bird is any less a bird than any other bird." There is a stunning absence of intermediate stage between birds and bees. Why, he wonders, have we found no trace of "missing links" between the modern whale and its land-based ancestor, when according to Darwinism not one or two but literally *thousands* of such links should be observed? Examples from embryology, paleontology, and other disciplines back his contention that the existence of major biological types is a scientific (or metaphysical?) riddle of the first order.

A lot of Denton's evidence is circumstantial, but gripping: he points out it's impossible to explain the symbiotic relationship between a spider and a spider-hunting wasp, or the process of insect metamorphosis, through a series of sequential mutations—what's needed is a

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huge number of simultaneous, coordinated mutations, which violates Darwinian theory. This argument also applies to the elegant and complex human eye; Darwin himself recognized the problem, writing that "the eye to this day gives me a cold shudder." Denton also disposes of the notion that a prebiotic soup gave rise to life. He points out that there isn't a shred of paleontological evidence to support this theory, and that rather than finding a continuity between organic and inorganic life that might indicate one came from the other, we find that "between a living cell and the most highly ordered non-biological system, such as a crystal or a snowflake, there is a chasm as vast and absolute as it is possible to conceive."

But what does all this have to do with spirit, tradition, the quest for meaning? For one thing, Denton believes that a primary argument against Darwin is based on a feeling rather than a thought: our "intuitive sense" that blind chance could not have created the human form. Moreover, rationality tells us that "it is the sheer universality of perfection, the fact that everywhere we look, to whatever depth we look, we find an elegance and ingenuity of an absolutely transcending quality, which so militates against the idea of chance." Thought and feeling, working in har-

mony, demand a scientific theory which acknowledges the existence of meaning, beauty, grace. (It should be noted here that Darwinism, being a description of a unique event and therefore not subject to falsification, is not "scientific" in the generally accepted definition put forth by Sir Karl Popper.) Denton may be wrong in his details, but in his rejection of blind chance as the mechanism behind the creation of life, be it protoplasmic or human, he strikes a chord of hope heard also in the teachings of the great traditions. Science, it seems, can still speak in a tongue that the heart can understand.

Philip Zaleski

Philip Zaleski is a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

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In the World of Sumer: An Autobiography

By Samuel Noah Kramer. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986. Pp. 255. $37.50.

It is owing mainly to Samuel Noah Kramer that Sumerian myth—with its goddess Inanna, its cunning trickster Enki, heroes like Gilgamesh—is known to anyone outside the small band of highly specialized scholars who work in cuneiform studies. Kramer was born in 1897 in a ghetto *shtedtel* in the Ukraine and is still hard at work, now with a fresh cache of recently recovered Sumerian texts. Since the late 1920s he has been poring over clay tablets—and he is in no mood to quit now. Eight of his thirty-some books and about fifty of almost two hundred articles have appeared since his retirement in 1968 from the University of Pennsylvania. He is proud of his scientific specialization and cheered that he has not deviated over the nearly sixty years of work from his single-minded pursuit of Sumerian literature.

It is a difficult job to dramatize a lifetime of patient work in museum and home offices—and Kramer has not succeeded in this memoir. Rarely do the

people Kramer describes come alive on the page. We see them only as scholars engaged in research. Kramer is too courteous to more than hint at personal rivalries, conflicts, intrigues behind the scene. (Even the awful anti-Semitism Kramer experienced at Chicago is moderated and explained almost out of existence in Kramer's retrospective.)

Nor is this a spiritual odyssey. The book is an oddity in the long history of autobiographies that stretches back at least to Augustine. It is an autobiography with a peculiarly modernist view of life: it denies the self—sixty years of humanistic research devoted solely to scientific objectivity.

It is perhaps best not to read too much into this controlled account of Kramer's life. It was envisioned as the story of his career, the work over the years of a genius in a field little known to outsiders. People who have no great part in the actual work are seldom mentioned. His wife of more than fifty years, Milly, rarely appears in his account. (In the one place he quotes her, he invents a pseudo-Brooklynese accent for her.) Their children, Daniel and Judith, figure only in a snapshot taken in Salonika, with the youngsters posed in a Radio Special wagon.

Kramer protects his closest feelings and says little about those for whom he has, no doubt, warm regards. The one exception is his father, Benjamin, a *Gemoorah-rebbi*, a teacher of the Talmud, whose memory is treated with reverence. (His brother and sister have no part in the story; his mother's death is recounted in an aside.) His father, who brought the family to Philadelphia, absorbed almost nothing of the English language or American culture. He lived in the world of traditional Jewish literature—in particular he prized the Song of Songs. But despite the warmth of Kramer's feelings for his father, there is little doubt that Kramer rejected the way of life that his father taught. Nevertheless, it was the Song of Songs which was later to become the chief biblical remnant of the Sacred Marriage rite that Kramer found so pervasive in the Mesopotamian world. It became a measure of his commitment to the god of the sacred marriage rite, Inanna, and his increasing skepticism. The great untold story in his life is his loss of faith.

Kramer's scholarship is imbued with the hard rationality he gained in studying the legal analyses of the Talmud. With it came a disdain for anything fanciful, mysterious, or mystical. Still, he has not hesitated to incorporate anthropological and psychological approaches into his analyses of Sumerian myth—approaches his colleagues might find risky. He had no problem finding an "inferiority complex" in the psyche of his favorite Enki, for example. The pages are studded with references to his "luck," the Sumerian *lama*, guiding him through the moments of crisis in his career. Certainly no one is likely to read much into this amusing angelology.

But in the most dramatic moment in the autobiography, Kramer acknowledges the help of his true guardian angel, the great Inanna of the Sacred Marriage and of a Resurrection myth—"The Descent of Inanna to the Nether World"—and one almost sees the hard-nosed skeptic tricked out of his reluctance. For much of his early career Kramer survived on grants and was without a secure academic position. In 1941, when he was well into his forties, Kramer read a twenty-minute paper before the American Philosophical Society that, to hear Kramer tell it, transformed his life. The enthusiastic response to the Sumerian story he told—of Inanna's descent into the world of the dead and her resurrection after three days and nights—led to high praise from his colleagues, two columns in the *New York Times*, and his appointment as curator of the tablet collection *and* as Clark Research Professor of Assyriology at Penn. "At last I was in a relatively secure academic post, upgraded from my basement

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workshop in the museum's lower depths to a window-lit office alongside fellow curators" (p. 69).

Is it not curious that the patterns of thought he strove so hard to banish from the world of reason should appear in this account of his first great, public triumph?

Kramer's autobiography is a strangely intriguing read for anyone wanting to know about the world's earliest recorded mythology.

John Maier

John Maier, who is Professor of English at State University of New York College at Brockport, translated Gilgamesh with John Gardner.

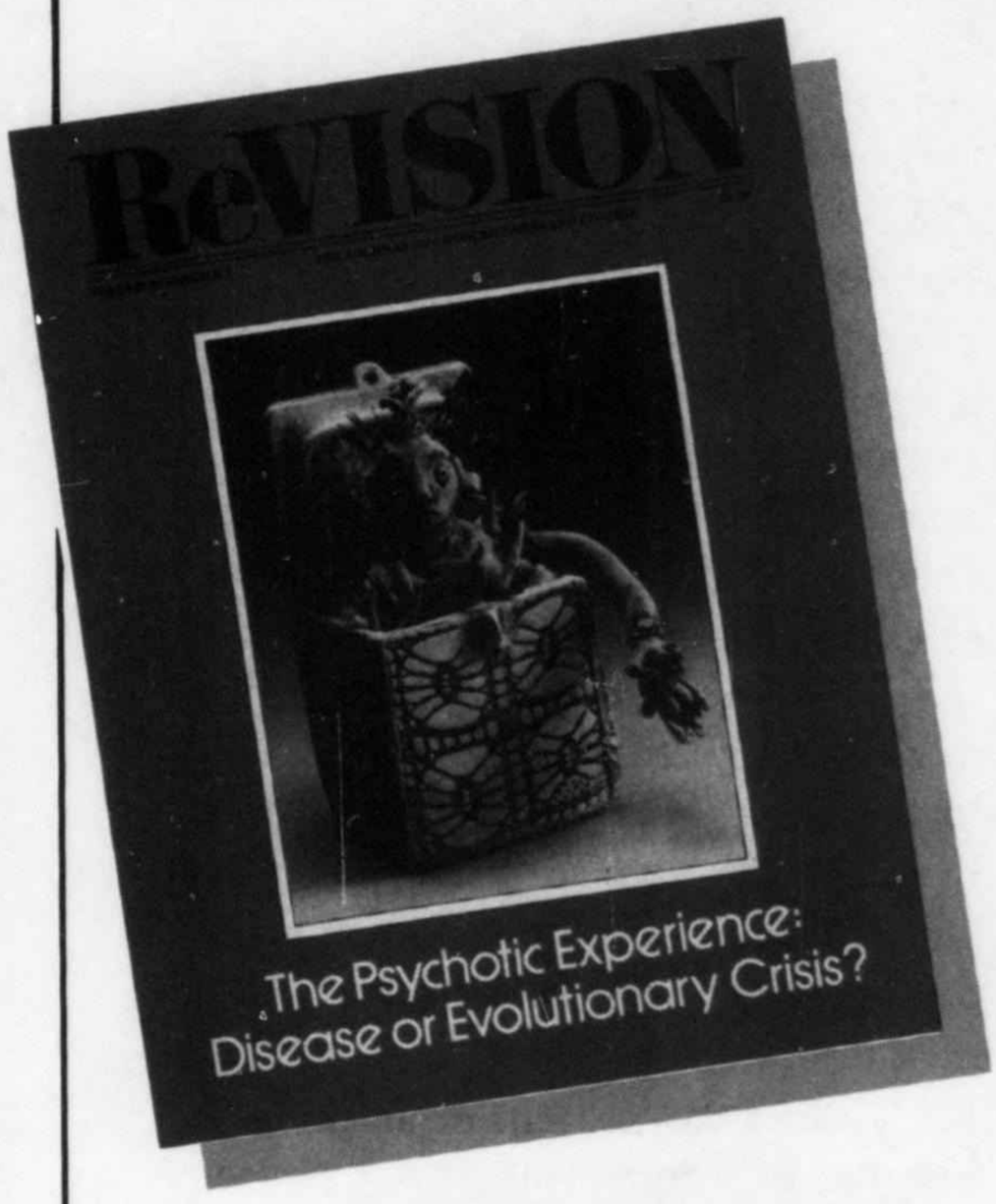
Selected Works of the Dalai Lama VII: Songs of Spiritual Change
Translated by Glenn H. Mullin. 2nd ed. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1985. Pp. *xii* + 205. $10.95.

A Cultural History of Tibet
By David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986. Pp. 307. $12.95.

Snow Lion Publications has begun a series that will eventually include volumes of selected writings of each of the fourteen Dalai Lamas. The present volume, originally published in 1982 as *Songs of Spiritual Change* has been reprinted as part of that series. Its translator is Glenn H. Mullin, a long-time student of Tibetan Buddhism at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India, where the current Dalai Lama resides in exile.

The seventh Dalai Lama, bsKal-bzang rGya-mtsho (1708–1757), was installed as temporal and spiritual ruler of Tibet in 1720, during a period of intense political power struggles for control of Tibet between the Dzungar Mongols and the Manchus. The Dalai Lama displayed little interest in political affairs during his life, preferring to devote his efforts to the practice of Buddhism. He can be judged today as one of the greatest Dalai Lamas, along with the first, second, third, fifth, and thirteenth, as well as the current (fourteenth), Dalai Lama.

The present volume contains some forty short works, almost all in verse, ranging in length from one to seven pages. Most are reflections on the classical topics of the "mind training" (*blo sbyong*) genre of Tibetan literature that is traced back to the Indian master Atiśa, who came to Tibet in 1042. These topics include the awareness of death and impermanence, the precious opportunity afforded by human birth, the importance of compassion, devotion to the lama, and the nature of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). There are also songs dealing with the practice of tantra. The works included fall into two broad categories, didactic poems and poems of realization. The former, which comprise the bulk of the volume, were often written at the request of a prominent lama of the day, who is identified in the colophon. In these colophons, the seventh Dalai Lama evinces a self-deprecating modesty, sometimes describing himself as a Buddhist monk expert in eating, sleeping, and defecating. The poems of realization have a more spontaneous tone. For example, in "Autumn Day" he writes:



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I thought to blend my mind with it;
The center of fresh, hanging clouds,
I thought to touch their softness.

Mullin's translations read well, and he was provided a helpful introduction and glossary. The publication of these songs, reminiscent in many ways of those of Milarepa, provide a useful view of some of the concerns of Tibetan Buddhism in the eighteenth century. They reveal a side of dGe-lugs-pa that so far has been little known in the West, perhaps helping to put an end to the stereotype of that order of Tibetan Buddhism as one merely concerned with pedantry and scholasticism.

Since the publication of *A Cultural History of Tibet* in 1968, Snellgrove and Richardson's study has served as the standard work on the rich cultural history of Tibet. Although other works have since appeared which complement their history, nothing has superseded it. It remains one of four works that should form the core of any library on Tibet, the others being R.A. Stein's *Tibetan Civilization*, Tsepon Shakabpa's *Tibet: A Political History*, and John Avedon's *In Exile from the Land of Snows*. It is the work of Hugh Richardson, a career diplomat who served as Officer in Charge of the British mission in Lhasa from 1936 to 1940 and again from 1946 to 1950, and David Snellgrove, the eminent Buddhologist of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, perhaps best known for his two-volume translation and study of the *Hevajra Tantra*.

Their history begins with the period of the early kings of Tibet in the seventh century, dealing especially with the reign of Srong-bstan-sgam-po, who introduced Buddhism to Tibet, perhaps inadvertently, by marrying a Chinese princess and a Nepalese princess. Both of his consorts were Buddhists and are said to have converted their husband to the new faith. During this period, Tibet was a major military power in Asia, conquering the Chinese capital at Ch'ang-an in 763. Buddhism continued to thrive until the persecution by the last of the Tibetan kings gLang-dar-ma in 836. Snellgrove and Richardson describe the reestablishment of Buddhism through the efforts of Indian scholars, such as Atiśa, who came to Tibet in 1042, and Tibetan translators, such as Mar-pa, who made harrowing journeys to India to retrieve scriptures and study with the great tantric yogis of eleventh-century Bengal. The authors go on to describe the foundation of Buddhist monasticism in Tibet and the rise of the major orders of Tibetan Buddhism. These orders were often rivals for the political patronage of the dominant powers of the day, with the dGe-lugs-pas finally gaining temporal control over Tibet through the support they gained from the Mongols as a result of the efforts of the fifth Dalai Lama in the seventeenth century. Snellgrove and Richardson are especially strong on the interconnections of religion and politics in Tibetan history during the Mongol and Manchu dynasties. The history ends in 1950 with the first Chinese incursions into eastern Tibet.

Besides providing a clear and engaging account of the rise of Tibetan culture, the work offers a wealth of information on Tibetan art, architecture, literature, and religious practice. Worth the price of the book are the over one



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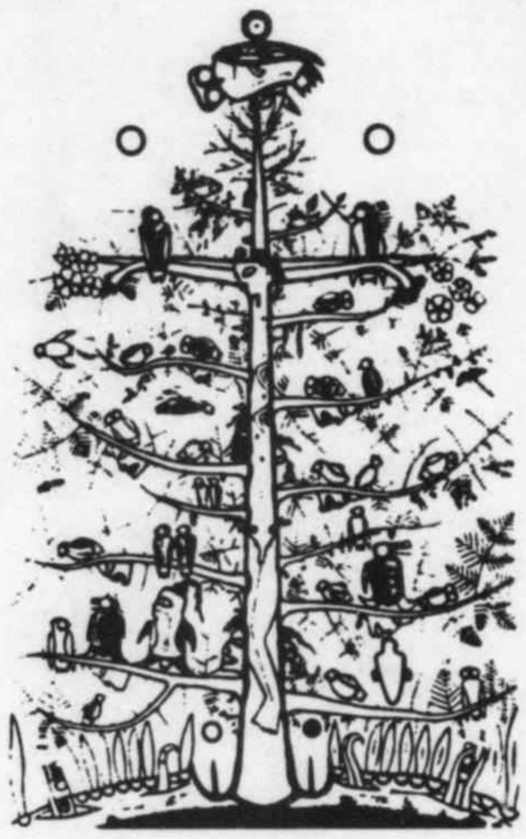
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Donald S. Lopez, Jr., is Associate Professor of Religion at Middlebury College in Vermont.

Continued from page 7.

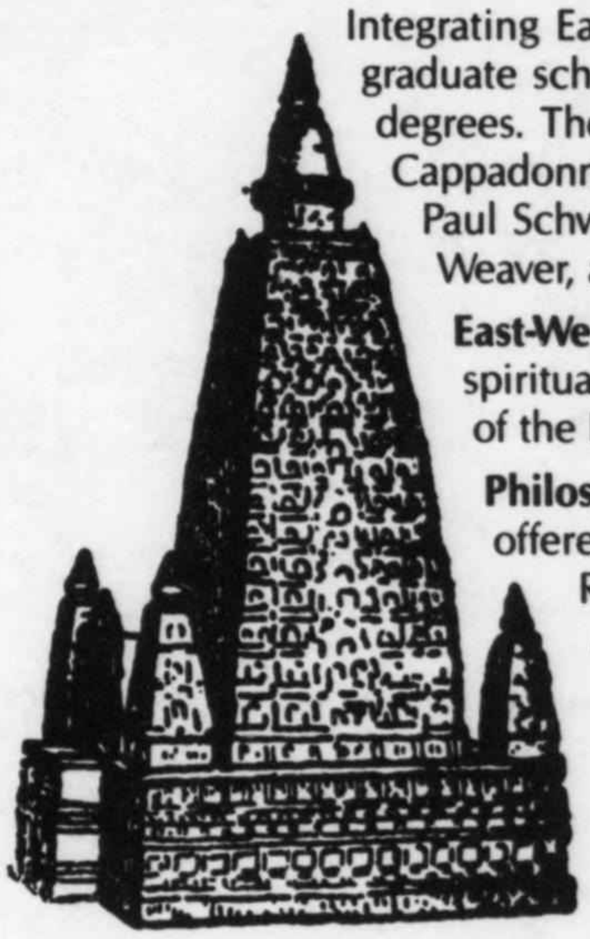
Unfolding a true personal vision is actually inseparable from sharing in an impersonal determination to serve the advancement of all into greater self-realization and freedom-in-being. There is a beautiful, two-part responsive reading in the Passover Haggadah which speaks directly to this issue.

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Yet, each age uncovers a formerly unrecognized servitude,
Requiring new liberation to set man's soul free.

Assembled:
In every age, the concept of freedom grows broader,
Widening the horizons for finer and nobler living.

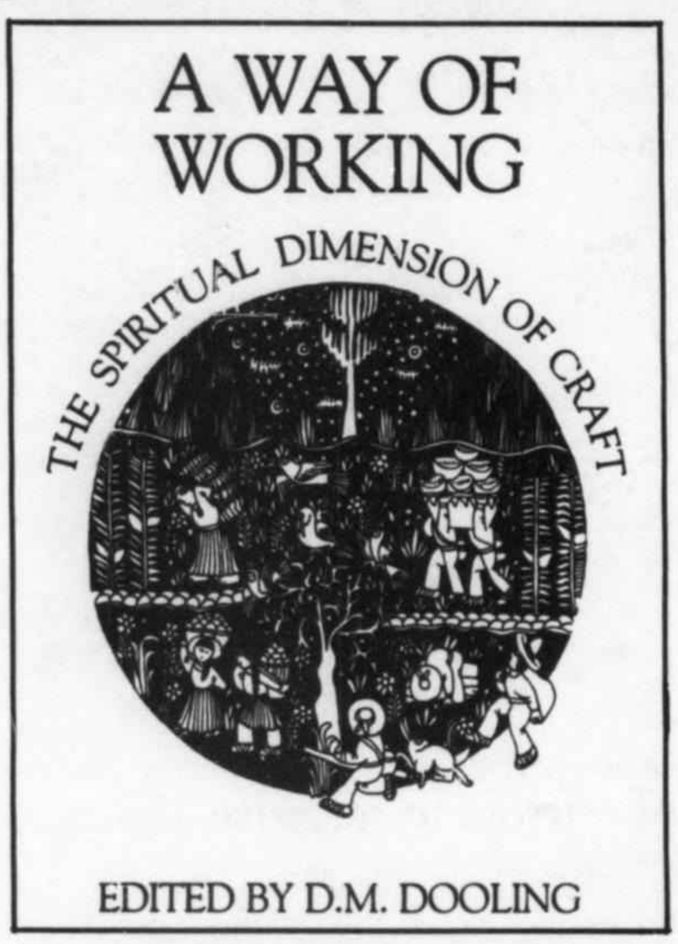
Leader:
Each generation is duty-bound to contribute to this growth,
Else mankind's ideals become stagnant and stationary.

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Tim Onucki
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The Spring 1986 issue on "The Witness" would have been stronger had it been more clearly realized that "wit-

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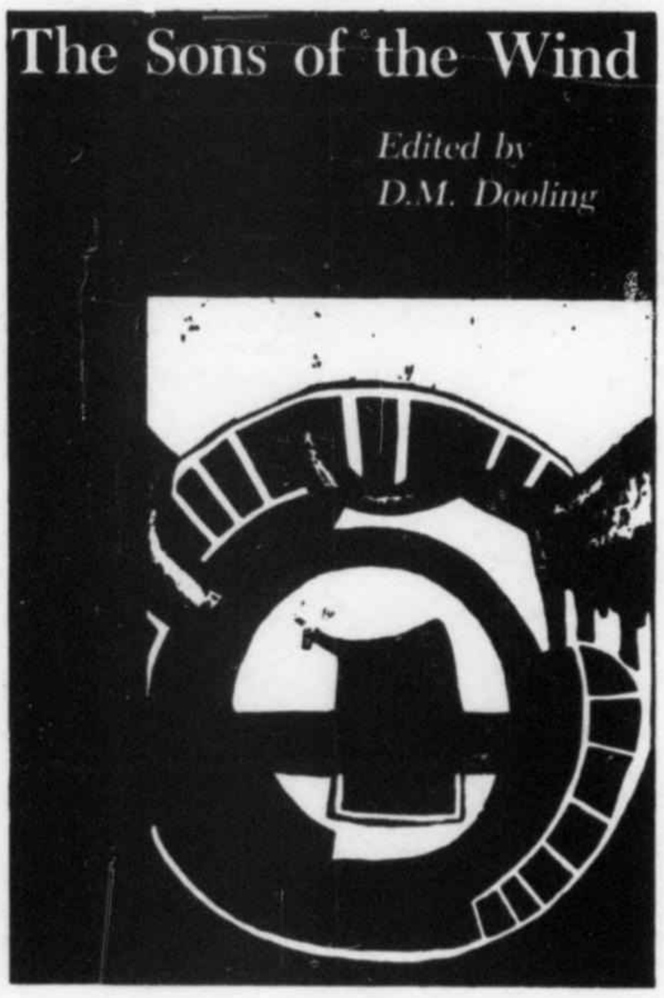


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ness" is not a culturally neutral term. In lieu of a general cross-cultural survey (which I am not equipped to do), I wish to illustrate this point by comparing European and Middle Eastern concepts. Let the other stories remind us of the possibility of additional alternatives.

As D.M. Dooling observes, the European concept of a witness is a window which allows us to see through what would otherwise be a wall. Given this start, any person, and indeed anything, can be a witness. Our only problem is to make sure there is no distorting glass in the window. Hence the receptivity to circumstantial evidence. Indeed, circumstantial evidence is better than human testimony as there is no mind to observe and distort.

All three European stories support this position. The essence of the Andersen story is the superiority of the child as witness compared with the adults not in spite of his childishness (= lack of calculation) but because of it. Is Lady Mary a witness or a dreamer? The hand and ring prove she is a witness. Sir Launcelot himself does not know if he saw reality or dream until he beholds his horse. Child, hand, and horse are the true witnesses.

The Jewish and Islamic view of a witness is quite different. The witness is the representative of the community. He transforms the private event into the public matter. "The hidden are to Yahweh our God and the open are to us and our children" (Deut. 30:28). We may speak of a Heisenbergian rather than a Newtonian, a Berkeleyan rather than a Lockean mode of perception. What is of maximal importance is that the witness be a fit member of the community. "These are invalid (as witnesses): the dice-player, the lender on interest, the pigeon-racer, and the seller of seventh-year produce" (M. Sanhedrin 3.3). Those outside full membership in the community (aliens, children, women) do not testify or testify only under restricted circumstances. Accordingly, circumstantial evidence is not admissible. Clifford Geertz has written on the continuing importance of this in Moroccan society.

This theme can be found in the Middle Eastern stories. It does not occur to Daniel to see what kind of tree was in the field. What is decisive is the degree to which the two witnesses agree with each other (thus establishing a reality) or disagree, showing that they lie. For in this tradition, the check on a witness can only be another witness. Hence the need for two (or in certain Islamic law cases four) witnesses. Again, the Persian Sufis do not try to construct a series of mirrors to see what is beyond the wall, although this is well within their technological capabilities.

The bewilderment of Read's laity also arises from this distinction. Christianity began as a Jewish sect. Its theological concept of "witness" is the Judeo-Islamic one. The witness saw the event and by seeing it made it exist. Without this testimony, the event could not be real. Once the first generation is past, such witness may be the result of the witness standing in the tradition of a line of such witnessing back to the event or a mystic illumination which is public because more than one is thus illuminated. But whether he take the road of the ulema or the road of the sufis, the reliability of a witness rests on his entire lifestyle. For the learning, the illumination, and even the direct empirical observation of the improper person cannot be evidence.

Stephen Oren
Chicago, Illinois

CREDITS

Page 9 Gift of John D. MacDonald. Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
Pages 12 and 13 From *Kangra Paintings of the Gita Govinda,* Randhawa, Mohindar Singh. Intr. by W.G. Archer. New Delhi: National Museum, © 1963.
Page 14 Rajasthan, 18th century. Gouache on cloth, 21 × 14 in. Ajit Mookerjee, New Delhi. Photograph by John Webb (Brompton Studios).
Page 16 Illustration by Daniella Dooling after a Sinhalese painting Ceylon. c. 278 A.D.
Page 18 Paiyakyamu Hano Clown, H: 22.2 cm. Collected 1920s–1930s. Museum of New Mexico Collections, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Page 19 H.S. Beham, Red Chalk drawing. Erlangen University Library.
Page 20 Türklopfer. Französisch, 16. Jhdt. erste Hälfte. Wien, Kollektion Figdor.
Page 21 Koshare Hano Clown, First Mesa, Neil David, Sr., Carver, 1973. Cottonwood root, paint, particle board, leather, sand. H: 26 cm. California Academy of Sciences, Owings Collection.
Page 23 Awa Tsireh (San Ildefonso). Koshare Kachina, c. 1930. 28.2 × 18.2 cm. Ink on paper. 22/7874 from *Native American Painting.* Selections from the Museum of the American Indian, David M. Fawcett and Lee A. Callander. Photography by Carmelo Guadagno.
Page 24 Koyemsi Mudhead Clown Kachina. Carved ca. 1956. Third Mesa, Hotevilla. Wood, paint, golden eagle feathers. School of American Research Collections in the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Page 25 Tasavu Navajo Clown Kachina. Cottonwood root, paint. H: 25.5 cm. California Academy of Sciences, Owings Collection.
Pages 18, 21, 24, 25 From *Hopi Kachina: Spirit of Life.* Edited by Dorothy K. Washburn. Dedicated to the Hopi Tricentennial, 1680–1980. Published by the California Academy of Sciences, in conjunction with the exhibition "Hopi Kachina: Spirit of Life." Distributed by the University of Washington Press, Seattle and London.
Page 27 Detail of Buddha figure, Yakushi-ji Temple, Japan.
Page 29 Profile of a wood statue of the Buddha Amitabha. Twelfth century A.D. Fukidera, Prefecture of Oita.
Page 32 Portrait of the Indian Buddhist monk Asanga. Painted wood. 1208 A.D. Kofukuji, Nara.
Page 41 Buddha Preaching. Opaque watercolor on cloth. Dated 1649. H. 43¼ in., w. 32½ in. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art; purchase from the J.H. Wade Fund by exchange.
Page 43 Bodhisattva Mañjuśri, fifteenth century. Gilt bronze inlaid with semiprecious stones. Courtesy of the Cleveland Museum of Art; purchase, Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Bequest.
Page 46 The Bodhisattva Maitreya. Nepal, 9th c. Gilt copper with paint. H. 26 in. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Museum of Art.
Page 49 Courtesy of the Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland.
Page 50 Drawing. 9 1/16 × 7 5/16 in. Collection Dora Mucci, Rome.
Pages 52 and 53 Prince Dara Shikoh and companions resting. Leaf from an album. Enlarged detail. Early XVII, Mughal. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Alexander Smith Cochran, 1913.
Page 55 Two Lovers. Colors and gold on paper. Signed by Riza-I-Abbasi; dated Tuesday, Shawwal 8, 1039. Iranian. Safavid Period. 17th c. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Francis M. Weld Fund, 1950.
Page 56 Humay and Hymayun in a Garden. Rashid ad Din Fadl Allah. Leaf from Jami at Tawarikh. Colors and gilt on paper. Iranian. Early Timurid Period. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and other art objects. Bequest of Cara Timken Burnett, 1957.
Page 59 A Dervish. Brush drawing, tinted color. H. 3¼, w. 2 1/8 in. Iranian. 16th c. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of George D. Pratt, 1945.
Pages 62–66 Photographs by Wright Morris. *God's Country and My People.* University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln and London. © 1968.
Page 84 Left column: Petroglyphs, Gulisteo Basin, New Mexico. From the exhibition Anasazi World. Photo credit: DeWitt Jones.
Right Column: "The Ibex Scepter," Copper scepter, Nahal Mishmar. 4th Millenium B.C. H. 30 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Lent by the Department of Antiquities, Israel Ministry of Education.
Page 85 Left column, top: *Crow,* Masahisa Fukase Japanese, b. 1934): Gelatin silver print. 1976. Lent by the artist.
Left column, bottom: *Farmhouse*, Shomei Tomatsu (Japanese, b. 1930). Gelatin silver print. 1959. Lent by the artist.
Right column. *Farmhouse,* Shomei Tomatsa. Gelatin silver print. 1959.
Page 90 Photograph by Ned Johnston.

CORRECTION:
PARABOLA regrets that the title of Basarab Nicolescu's article in Vol. XI, No. 1 was misnamed "Science and Tradition." The correct title is "Science as Witness."

PROFILES

Peggy V. Beck holds a Ph.D. from the University of California at Santa Cruz and is coauthor of *The Sacred: Ways of Knowledge, Sources of Life*. She is currently working on a book on the Fool and is writing a Trickster cycle. She is also planning to document hispanic midwinter masquerades in the villages of northern New Mexico this fall.

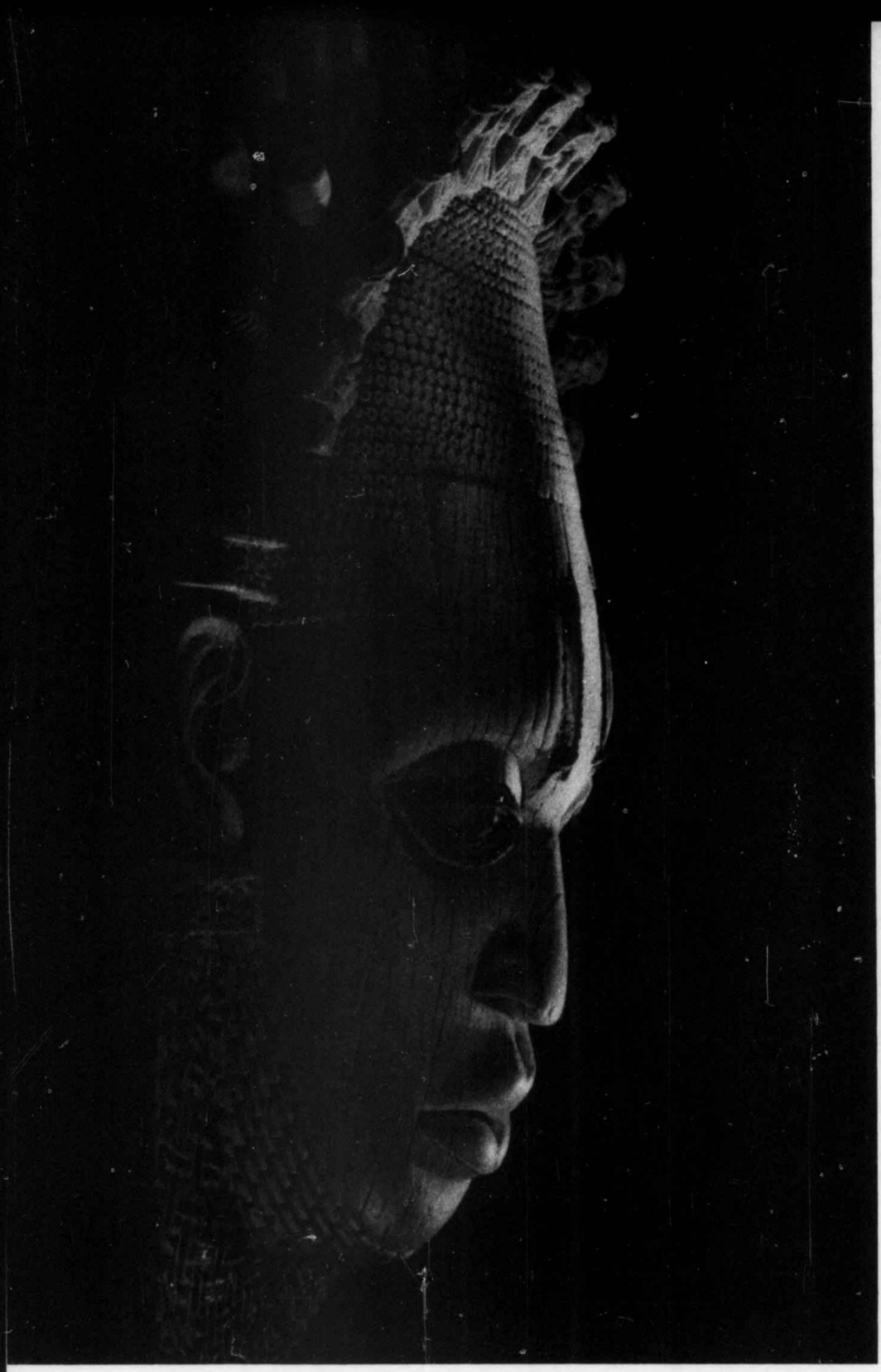
Karlfried, Graf von Dürckheim, a former professor of psychology and philosophy at Kiel, is the author of numerous books, including *Hara, the Vital Centre of Man* and *The Japanese Cult of Tranquility*.

Harry Remde, a former physicist, is a woodworker and the author of *The Art in a Craft*.

David Dean Shulman is Associate Professor of Indian Studies and Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He is the author of *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition* (Princeton) and coeditor of *Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Dissent in India* (Mouton).

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*.

Peter Lamborn Wilson is the author of *Angels* and the forthcoming *Scandal: Essays in Islamic Heresy* (Autonomedia Press) and is cotranslator of several works on sufism and of Persian poetry. He has also written widely on Persian art and poetry and edited the publication *Sophia Perennis* from 1974 to 1977.



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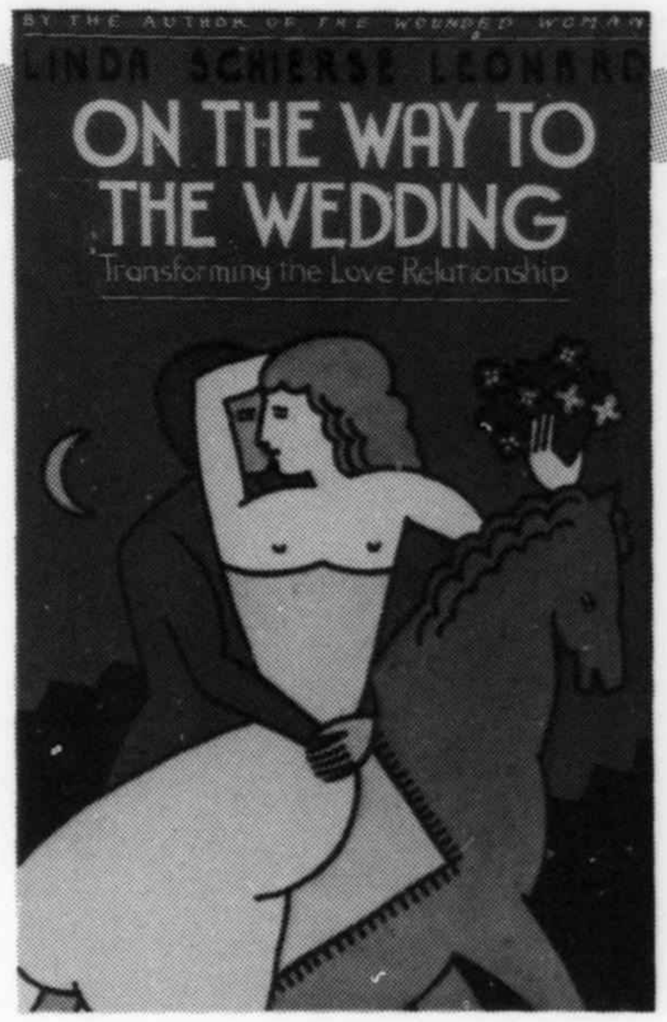
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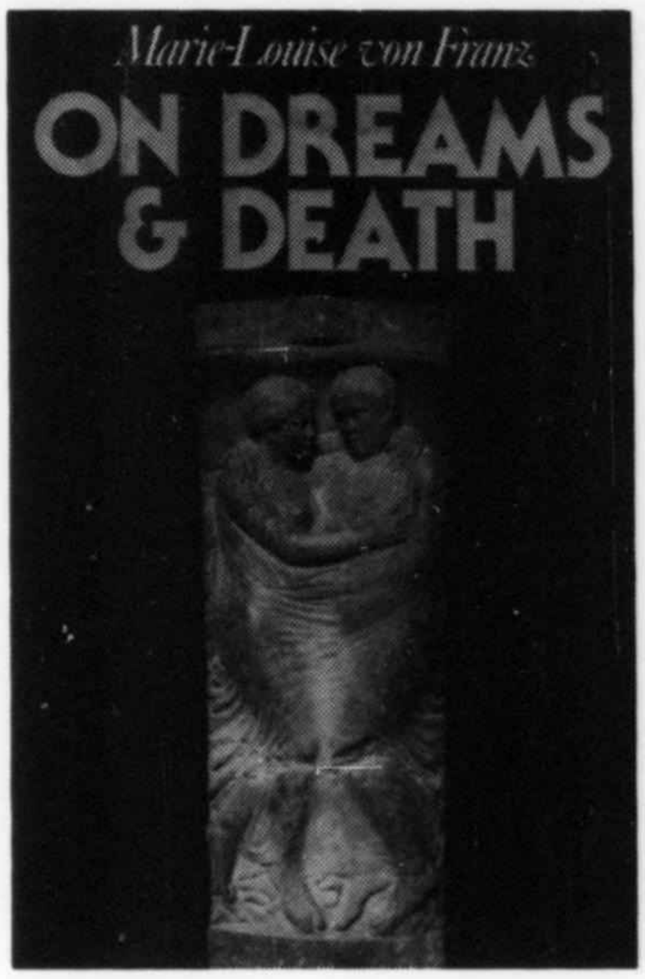
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