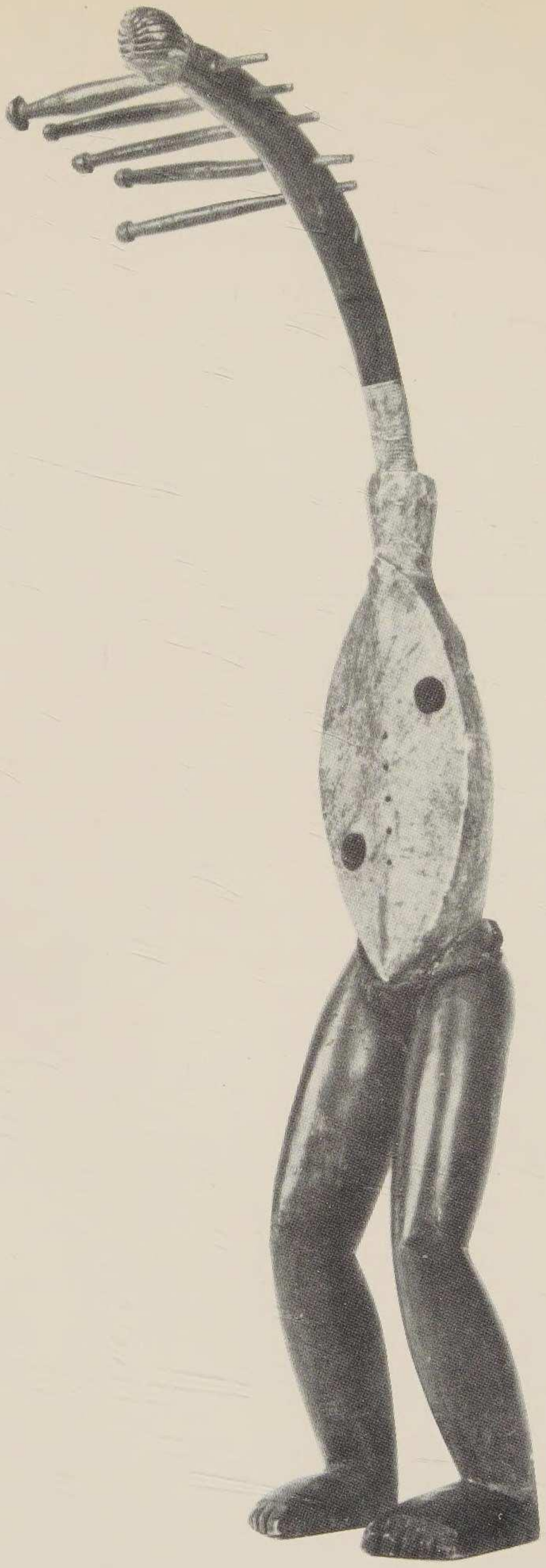
PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

MUSIC SOUND SILENCE

Music, the Way of Return by Herbert Whone • Dreaming Nothing by David L. Lavery • The Temple of Music by Tom Moore • Coyote's Song by David P. McAllester • The Resounding Cosmos and the Myth of Desire by Robert Lawlor

A Conversation with Steve Reich



VOLUME V, NO. 2

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PARABOLA (ISSN: 0362-1596) is published quarterly by the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition (formerly Tamarack Press, Inc.).

Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and additional offices.

Single Issue: $4.00. By subscription: $14.00 yearly, $26.00 for two years. Postage for outside territorial U.S.: add $3.50 for surface rates, $10.00 for air per year. Please specify when ordering.

Correspondence regarding manuscripts, articles, proposals, and permissions should be addressed to the Editors. Two copies of each manuscript, typed and double-spaced, accompanied by return postage, should be sent. Upon request, the Editors will furnish authors with editorial guidelines.

Address all correspondence regarding editorial and advertising to PARABOLA, 150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. Tel.: 212-924-0004.

For subscriptions and change of address notices: PARABOLA, *G.P.O. Box 165, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202. Subscription inquiry, Tel.: 212-834-0550.*

Postmaster: Send forms 3579 to PARABOLA, *G.P.O. Box 165, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11202.*

VOLUME V, NUMBER 2, May 1980

Cover: Buddhist disciple playing with cymbals. Painting on a pippala leaf, China, 19th c. From the book *Zen* by Anne Bancroft, with the permission of Thames and Hudson.

Inside Cover: Harp, Zaire, Ngbaka, wood and skin from *African Art in Motion* by Robert Farris Thompson, University of California Press, 1974, reissued 1979.

FOCUS

In PARABOLA's five-year history of biting off more than can be chewed, we have never taken on a bigger mouthful than with this issue. What is sound, we have asked ourselves and all our friends, and is silence only its absence? What is the relation between music and sound and noise? What does music include, or exclude? What does it do, what is it *for*?

Our questions are not answered; although we have had replies, some of them charming like the child's "Music is the house sound lives in"—but is it really more than a child's definition? Are any of our answers more than children's definitions?

We went back, as we always do, to the myths, which never define and always throw light; and we were struck by the fact that over and over again, stories of the world's beginning ascribe it to a sound, a creative vibration, a breath, a word, or a song. "In the beginning was the Word"; and the Kathapada Upanishad says that "everything the gods do, it is by chanting that it is done." Here is the account of the creation in the Popol Vuh: "There was

nothing brought together, nothing which could make a noise, nor anything which might move, or tremble...Nothing existed. There was only immobility and silence in the darkness, in the night...Then came the word...'Earth!' they said, and instantly it was made."

The notion of music, seen from the concept of sound as the life force, becomes huge; but somehow we assent to it. It "strikes a chord," and the very expression witnesses its truth; as P.L. Travers would say, it is in our bloodstream. Our questions are too small, it seems, to be answered; music is indefinable because it is a movement toward something larger than our vision—creation itself, a structure of universal order whose top vanishes in the clouds. Steve Reich, the searching composer whom we have interviewed in this issue, has written elsewhere that "listening to an extremely gradual musical process opens my ears to *it*, and *it* always extends farther than I can hear."

I think it was Aldous Huxley (or was he quoting someone?) who said, "There is only one noun; and all the verbs are ways of reaching it." I think music has to be taken as a verb—an action, a movement-towards: continually changing, searching, reaching, sometimes unquestionably touching some enormous paradigm and striking a bell that sets all our inner tuning-forks to ringing. When this happens, is something ordered in the hearer, is a connection made with another energy which for a moment at least makes us whole? "Music helps keep us in touch with the whole vibrating world," Menuhin writes in *The Music of Man*, "and thereby centers us in our own being."

So the nearest we have come to a definition is no definition at all, but the vague sense that music has to do with an inner relation. Great music puts us in order; it makes things make sense. Listening, we feel a kind of relief: ah yes! that is it! We recognize another world, and we are here contained in this one, and know our place between the two. It is the loss of this relation that makes our lives senseless, for if there is no level higher than ours, no will or consciousness beyond the human, no "heaven"

above us, then there is no earth beneath us either. This is just where we find (or lose) ourselves today, having refused both sonship and stewardship; having renounced our vital dependence on the sacred, we have of course lost all sense of responsibility toward the earth and the forms of life that depend on us. But what the laws of music and vibration reveal is precisely this structure in which we can find our roots and our reason for being, all the more convincingly because the vision is reflected in all other aspects of existence as in an infinite series of mirrors. The vibrant sound which is the life force is also movement and heat and color. The law of the octave echoes through the light spectrum and through the cycles of every human life.

If music, as we have been told, is organized sound, is it indeed the musician, the ordinary human being, who organizes it? Or does he discover, if he is very lucky as well as very disciplined, the laws to which it miraculously corresponds? If this issue of PARABOLA does not answer the questions we began with, at least it may begin to point to whichever of these is the truer alternative.

—D.M. Dooling

FULL CIRCLE/A Reader's Forum

PARABOLA *is interested in an exchange of ideas and points of view through the active participation of its readers. We welcome your letters and comments on the issues raised in our pages. Please address all correspondence to:*

The Editor, PARABOLA, *150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011*

As a novelist, poet, and screenwriter, I have long been aware that the arts are becoming increasingly dispassionate while the sciences—physics and biology in particular—have grown surprisingly passionate and, in many respects, theistic. We live in an exciting era in which those false barriers are being eaten away that once purported to separate the arts and religion from science —true science, that is; not almighty technology which, regrettably, is popularly equated with science. Intuition and the informed imagination are being resurrected at long last as essential tools in the search for truth and the quest for meaning, and this is what thrills me.

PARABOLA is helping to speed this process along and I, for one, look forward to every issue for the kind of intellectual and spiritual stimulation that it provides. I would like to thank you for the marvelous job that you're doing in making accessible and exploring those realms of mythic and intuitive inquiry where all human search for truth and meaning must ultimately lead.

—Al Young
Palo Alto, CA

Regarding the review of John West's book, *Serpent in the Sky*, by Lipsey and Weld, (Vol. IV, No. 2): I am disappointed that the authors failed to make sufficiently clear the great importance of West's exposition of the intense and controversial work of R.A.Schwaller de Lubicz. West's main service is his discussion throughout the book concerning the symbolist approach to the study of Egyptian language, astronomy, mathematics, the calendar, medicine, architecture, and art. Schwaller de Lubicz rejected the linear, literal approach of most scholars' conclusions about Egypt as a result of fifteen years of field study at Luxor and elsewhere in Egypt. Out of this experience grew his understanding and interpretation of every aspect of Egyptian life and culture. As West puts it, "every aspect of Egyptian knowledge seems to have been complete at the very beginning." If this, and much else that West discloses of Schwaller de Lubicz's thought and findings, is accepted as more apparent than not, then we must indeed relook and rethink our appraisal of Egypt.

In West's explanation of the "Anthropocosm," a term used by Schwaller de Lubicz for Egyptian philosophy, the meaning of the symbolist approach is epitomized. While this term is as difficult to grasp as is the philosophy it names, West uses careful examples and analogies to help elucidate its meaning. "Anthropocosm, the Man Cosmos...Man is not a 'product' of the universe, nor a 'scale model' of it; he is to be regarded as an embodiment, its 'essence' incarnated in physical form...The Temple of Luxor is not a scale model of creation... Rather it is a symbolic model which conforms to scale." This is getting at the very heart of Schwaller de Lubicz's thought, admittedly a difficult task, but one which Lipsey and Weld never attempt, being too concerned with emphasizing real or pedantic shortcomings in West's approach and thought. I feel they have done a disservice to Schwaller de Lubicz, who after all is the reason for West's book, and whom West

approaches with considerable study and creative insight. As West himself says, "Schwaller de Lubicz's work is in effect unreadable: it is meant to be studied. This book [West's] is meant to be read."

—Eleanor Ott
Plainfield, VT

If you can begin to sense through the words of an old North American Indian ("Twins Twisted Into One," by Don Talayesva, Vol. IV, No. 3), the unity of everything in the world, how can you *thank* others for that?

I don't read much—I am a jobbing builder by trade: but I continue to subscribe to your magazine because up till now every issue has contained at least one piece of insight or truth which is so compelling that I say to myself: That alone was worth the money.

It is clear to me that a few people pay and have paid a great deal to bring their continuing search into print. It should be acknowledged.

—G.M. Barker
London, England

What is it in "Strung Memories" (Vol. IV, No. 4) that has the power it has? What reached my heart and made me cry? Why all of a sudden did I know I had to change and live somehow closer to what I was then experiencing?...

Was it because I, my family and I together, didn't live that way? My parents lived a "good" life as far as they were able. My mother would put insecticide into the ground, when I would say not to, but it was the only way to kill the bugs that ate the grass. And then she planted forty small trees that today are higher than our house. I never planted a tree.

My father would not take money from the nuns when they came by the busload—all summer long—and stopped at his diner. Neither did he smirk, like I did, when some took twice their original purchase, just because it was free.

Somehow, weren't they, too, "saints"?..

She forces us from the experience of her wonderful truth back to our own. How? Was it just because she *experienced* her own?

—Eleanor Bauza
Bronx, NY

PARABOLA offers the following suggestions, rather than solutions, for the chorus of "Green Grow the Rushes O" (Full Circle, Vol. V, No. 1).
1, 2, 3 Besides their overt meanings, perhaps references to aspects of the Trinity.
4 The four Evangelists.
5 Symbols at your Door: the pentacle, or five-pointed star. (Could there also be a connection with the Passover, Exodus 12:7?)
6 Proud Walkers: there is a story that only six of the Apostles were sent out to preach.
7 Seven Stars: the seven Pleiades, or the seven stars of the Big Dipper. (See also Revelations, various references to the seven stars.)
8 April Rainers—very obscure: "Able Reigners" has been offered, but does not help a great deal!
9 Bright Shiners—the nine orders of angels: angels, archangels, principalities, powers, virtues, dominions, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim.
10 The Ten Commandments.
11 The Eleven Who Went Up to Heaven: the Twelve Apostles less Judas.
12 The Twelve Apostles.

(Continued on page 125)

MUSIC, THE WAY OF RETURN

by Herbert Whone

There is only one myth, one simple story. Decorate it or disguise it as we may, man's story is only one. It begins—"One-ce upon a time." Now confined upon a small ball called earth in an infinitely great space—then an infinitely powerful spiritual being, traversing space at will: the absurd from the sublime. Man, One, of single will, became men, many; he was denuded of power, numbed by number. The story is how this came about and how he may regain his original power.

In the vast realm of metaphysics lies the simple, awesome first division—the beginning of the story. (The word division is "di-vision"; seeing two). In the heart of that Absolute Power, that balanced energy field, arose the capacity for self-mobilization, thus making an imbalance; a "two-ness"—an actor and an acted upon. Thus we find the oldest concept of God as Father-Mother; and from the Father-Mother, their emanation, the Son, that which was born of the original division and of the ensuing play-relationship set up between the Poles. Father-Mother-Son is the original trinity. As to which aspect is most worthy of veneration, man has been ambivalent. Should he worship the Mother, the Prima Materia, who acknowledges the seed placed in her, and is the means of all subsequent development in galaxy and atom alike; or should he worship the Father whose initiative wills it into existence? Without one another Mother and Father are valueless, and to take away one from the other is to lose polarization and deny original Oneness. Should man worship then, the Son, the conceived world in which all is ideally related in love? He has done all these things.

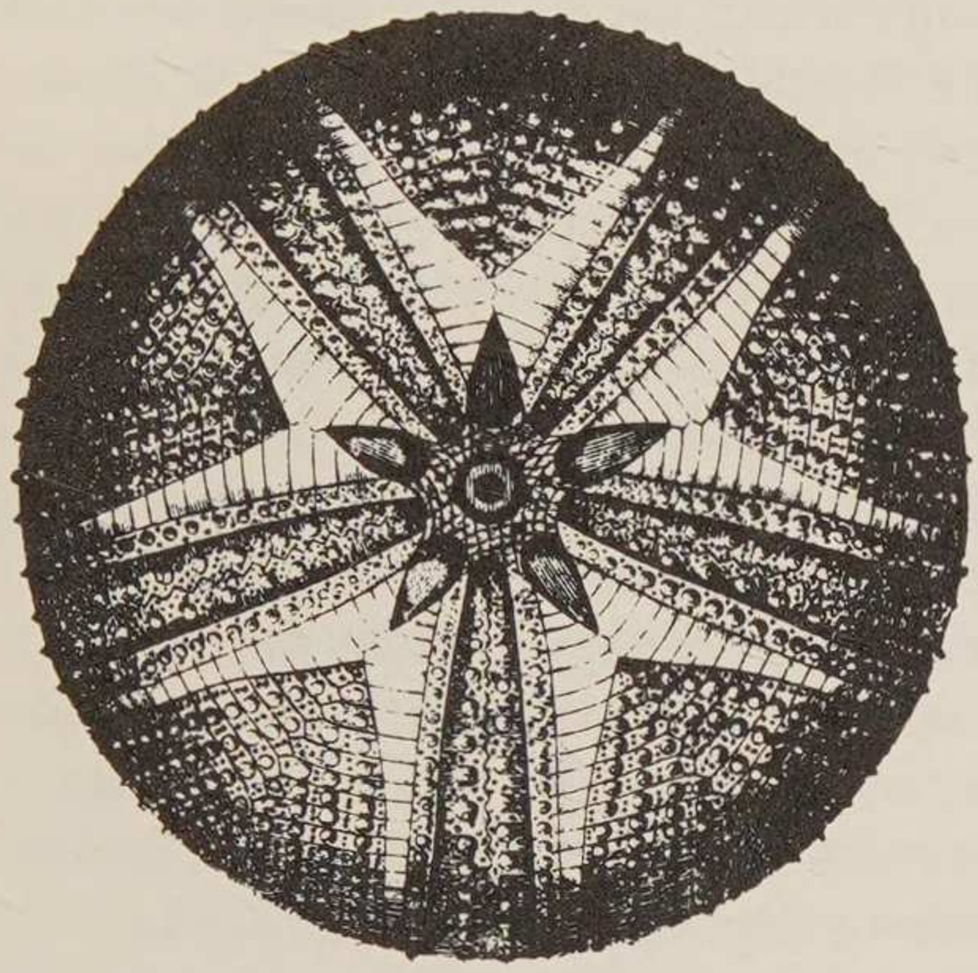
What has this to do with music? A great deal, for the Son is our first clue in our quest for its meaning. "Son," Latin "sonare," Italian "suonare," French "son," English "son" as projection of physical father, even "swan" with its swan-song myth, and finally, our familiar "sun," are all the same: for life, all that is born, is vibration; and fundamentally, on all planes, vibration is sound. The Father-Creator, through the agency of the Mother, sounds out the Son, that is, the resources of his imaginative power. So it is that in mythology, many gods are musicians or bringers of musical instruments. Shiva was said to be the inventor of the vina, and of the goddess Saraswati, it is said her larynx was her vina. Krishna, as incarnation of Vishnu, plays his flute, whilst in Greece, Apollo and Orpheus were bringers of music through the lyre; and so on. But what has to be seen, through all these stories, is that creation is an ordering and a locking process—that what was once free power has become progressively reduced in its passage through the planes, until it reaches its final lock in the physical level; and that this "Sound" or "Music" of the Absolute is that very ordering force involving mathematical ratio and patterned relationships, world within world, octave within octave. That is the highest Music. And so it is with the Biblical "Word." That Word or Logos is the ordering aspect of Absolute Power, wherein lies total integration of all parts. Both Music and Word are essentially synonymous with the Son or Sound of God.

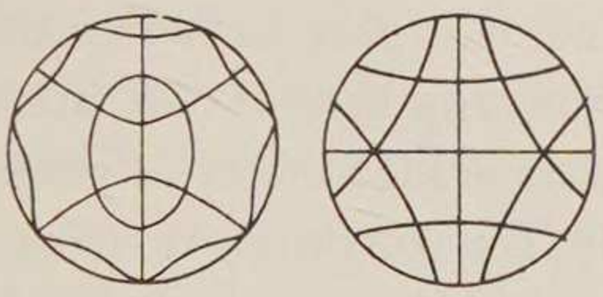
This essentiality of Sound, the fact that it lies behind and works through all planes, is clearly expressed in the Upanishads. Here, it is said that the Great Breath (the Father initiative aspect of power) acts upon *prakriti* (the Mother aspect) causing, on the outbreath, an involution of power, through the agency of five vibratory motions or *tatwas*. The first and most important of these has the name "Akasa," whose property is sound, and which manifests as our sense of hearing. The others are "vayu" (sense of touch), "taijas" (sense of light), "apas" (sense of taste), and "prithivi"

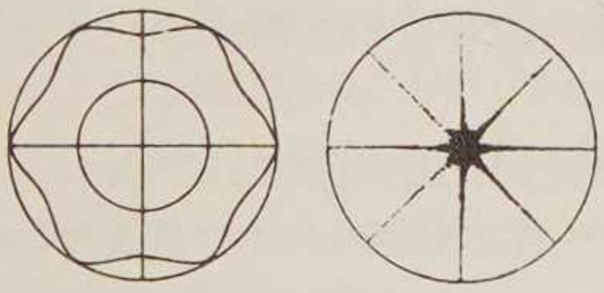
(sense of smell). These last four relate to the four elements, which are (in reverse order) earth, water, fire, and air, with the quintessence related to "akasa," embracing all. What is interesting is the affirmation that "akasa" is the quality underlying the other *tatwas*— that sound lies in them all. It is like saying that when once vibratory life has been imparted, the formulating Spirit is a Master Musician, directing all subsidiary activities. There are many ways in which this basic connection between music and creation is expressed in myth. But we will learn much from simplification. Let us take a closer look at four familiar words, investing them with Capital letters to signify their divinity, thus relating them to their small terrestrial counterparts. The four words are Breath, Music, Word, and Son. We have, of course, touched on all of them already.

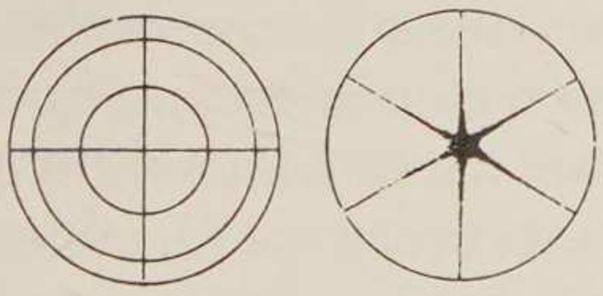
The Breath, or the "Great Breath" of the Upanishads, consists of one outbreath and one inbreath, which, in the spiritual sense, are the "involutionary" and the "evolutionary" phases of man's destined history, extending over unimaginable stretches of time. It is also seen, in that tradition, as "Swara," the great self-knowing Power that breathes its imprint upon *prakriti*—(*prakriti* is Universal Substance—that is sub-stance, or what "under-stands" all). Or we find the term "Hansa," a name for God, where the constituents of the word are "ha" and "sa"; thus the meaning of "Hansa" as the motion between the *ha* and the *sa*, the out and in of the Breath, which permeates all life. At the nadir of that great out-breathing, in the Iron Age, as humanity now is, great danger and hope live side by side. It is the point of the feeding with the swine, and of the potential return to the Father. Life, so to speak, hangs in the balance. Analogous with that is the breathing of the human being, where life and death are enacted thousands of times over, and through which his physical prison is related to the limitless space in the cosmos. Obviously enough, the human being "inspires" (takes in inspiration, that is the spirit) and "de-spairs" (loses hope, that is, his spirit). Also, as everyone knows, it is only when he is disturbed by egotism and emotions on a personal level that the breathing becomes rhythmically uneven. But however he may be trapped in his maze of vibration, the breathing is, in fact, a way back, an escape route. It is by conscious awareness of the breathing process and by breathing rhythms that a man may be granted the experience of something of the nature of the primal Great Breath. And not only that: it is this play between the out and the in of breathing that constitutes the most important single factor in the performing of music. Here, the musician re-enacts life in his phrasing, holding an audience in suspense in the very form of that original "Out-In."

It is difficult to separate the Great Breath from the vibratory differentiation which has acquired the name of "Music." Without the outward impetus, Music has no vehicle upon which to become born. Music, like the Muses (from which the word derives), suggests every conceivable aspect of the play of Creative Imagination. The word "muse" itself derives from a root "to think." Whether we use muse or music, we are talking of the conceiving of the created universe; of all worlds from the galaxy to the atom, for all is, as we have said, vibratory motion. Such vibratory motion, passing through all the planes, comes to the physical plane where it reaches the term of the locking process; the result is that at this level, everything vibrates at its own frequency. But at this point there occurs a strange and powerful phenomenon: man is provided with a way back out of the vibratory maze—he is given a key. If he were to know the exact frequency of a given mate-









Vibration patterns on Chladni Plates—metal plates covered with fine sand, resonated at modal points and producing geometric patterns; seen against a sea-urchin

rial form, and could sound that frequency from without, he could either preserve its vibrations, giving it health, or he could over-resonate it and destroy it. This may be seen clearly in the familiar experiment with the wineglass shattered by an amplified voice or instrument. What this experiment really implies is that it is only the deficiency of his own knowledge that holds him bound to the material world: if he were to know and could re-sound all frequencies at will, he would be master over his substance—a magician indeed.

Moreover, in this vibratory maze, man discovers that his sense of beauty is dependent upon simplicity in the mathematical ratio of frequencies. He can heal or disturb other human beings, at any level of their being, by means of concord and discord. It is not for nothing that in musical notation, the key words "key" and "clef" denote the capacity to both lock and unlock.

The principle applies equally as we now consider the Word, with its obvious connection with Music. Analogically, in man, speech is only possible on the outbreath, as is the song that arises naturally from speech. This is why in the Vedas it is said there is no breath without music or sound, and no sound without breath: they are seen as one. More mysteriously, the Word has its counterpart in the small "word," in which deceptively minute vibrations are sent out from an instrument called the voice, one of man's greatest gifts—the instrument of instruments. Every word, every vowel sound, every syllable, every resonance from the various cavities in the head, has an effect somewhere in the different levels of his being; and in this sense, a poet, following the Greek derivation of the word is truly a "user of power." All power is, of course, two-edged: words may be formulated through, and directed by, the acquisitive and negative ego level. But words of truth are able to cut back to the Creative Word. They are truly a way of return. This is, of course, the basis of the now familiar mantra systems of the East, and of words of power in Christian tradition.

We have already spoken of the connection between Son and Sound. In the word Son, we have an image of a man as a poten-

tial Son of God. In time and space, he is a biological son of his father; but he may be more than that. The sounds he accepts in his substance, and that he projects from it, are his choice: what sounds will he allow to take root in his being from outside, and what sounds will he send out affecting the souls of his fellow men? Again, we affirm, it is his own vibrations that may translate him back to his true Sonship where all error will have been re-attuned or atoned. And at this level he will hear the inner sound of things, the hearing of the heart, not only what is discernible through scientific instruments, however sophisticated. Such a state is as yet far removed from being the property of mankind, but it may come to be as his spiritual evolution progresses.

All this has been to say that in our small breath, our small music, our small word, and our small son, we are only at the other end of the pole—separated, we might say, from the Divine Capitals. But there is a direct link between the two levels; and that link is only possible through the gift of every individual to make his own sound, his own music. Human beings are blind to the immensity of such a concept. A strange spectacle they must present to the extra-terrestrial viewer, seeing cycle after cycle of hate and violence, national, ideological, and personal, potentially redeemed by the yearning and aspiration in their hearts and voices, and by the harmony in the sound of the instruments they play. A strange thing, this Music that locks us into a prison, and then offers a key out of it.

Something of this locking and unlocking may be seen in the mythological figures of Dionysus and Apollo. They are figures that represent, respectively, untamed primal energy and the slow ordering and involving of those energies—the eternal conflict between the two that lives perpetually in man. In all order and formalization there is an inherent danger: Apollonian forces are two-faced. On the one hand Apollo is connected with the Sun, the life force of the earth, and on the other hand with order and restraint. In this sense creation is its own enemy; all that lives can be judged to be evil—but only in so far as there is no way of return. We speak now of the master-dialectic of the universe. Creation is so spell-binding, and we are so enchanted, that it seems we will never find our way back from what is really a disciplinary frame of reference. But the "di-spelling" of the spell is in the spelling, in the word we use; and the freeing from the enchantment is in the chant, the singing. Equally, the lyre of Apollo, seven-stringed to represent the seven-fold structuring of the manifest world, is itself the escape. The legendary power of the lyre of Orpheus taming wild beasts shows that music has the capacity of redeemer. There is a purpose then in the confinement to the so-called devilish forces: it is the rediscovery of our common Source through the attuning of our vibrations, of our words and sound to the divine Word and through the agency of harmony and healing in our music. Thus it is said, "music is the handmaid of religion."

This idea is even more transparent in the nature and symbolism of the seven-tone scale, and the Western harmonic system. Man's existence on earth is not simply for *his* benefit, but for the purpose of being an agent in the Divine plan for Self-Realization—an idea that runs through all ancient teachings. That is, in serving himself, man serves God: he is God's instrument. This will be seen more clearly if we understand the word "instrument," from the same root as Latin "instruere," means to build or create order. Now the archetypal seven-fold structuring, the expression of Absolute Power, is seen as a descending octave. Such an octave, consisting of a cosmic hierarchy, is disguised in the innocuous DO, SI, LA, SOL, FA, MI, RE of the so-called tonic-sol-

fa system. Originating in the monastic tradition of the twelfth century, the names are said to have arisen as a mere convenience for singers; however, their true significance, though there are other interpretations, lies in the following Latin words: DOminus (God the Father), SIdera (star systems), LActea (Milky Way—our galaxy), SOL (our sun—head of the solar system), FAta (Fate, or the planetary net), MIcrocosmos (small world, or man upon the earth), and REgina de Coeli (Queen of the Heavens, the moon). Between FA and RE, it will be noticed, stands man, blocking the way with his error, to the complete effulgence of the Ray emanating from above. So it is that the semitone point between MI and FA is the place of man's true "work"—his spiritual work.

At this important place, man creates his own ascending scale, signifying effort against the conditioning force of the planets: this is his aspiration. He has within him the "fall"—it is in his bones; but here, he initiates his own upward striving. Thus it is that in music he responds inwardly to every small rise and fall in direction. It seems too simple. Yet this is his underlying response in the whole of music: through music he is moved upwards and downwards in that contradiction in his soul, a dynamic play of opposites. Even so we have to be careful, for a thing exists by its opposite. Who can deny a quality of awesome dignity to the "fall" down the scale, since it is essentially God reaching down to his smallest particle to draw it upwards. And who can deny a little sadness in man's reaching up? For it is not he, but the God in him that effects the raising. But this takes us from our theme. This symbolism in musical notation has been mentioned briefly as a further aspect of the lock and the possibility of an unlocking.

We spoke at the beginning of the first great division in the Heart of the Absolute Power, the division which gave rise to the concept of God as Father-Mother. It is, of course, a division that cuts through all the planes, and at the physical level gives us male-female, active-passive, yang-yin, positive-negative, right-left in the human structure; and so on. It is represented in the heavens in the sun and moon, those bodies in space that are as mutually complementary as man to wife, and through the changing rotatory patterns of which man exists in the middle, as catalyst. If at one moment he responds to the eternal life force of the sun, and at another to the phasic inertias of the moon, it is because his own polarity is as yet unrealized. The fundamental division is also to be seen in the circle (or sphere) and the line, for instance in the drum and the stick, the rose window and the lancet window, and also in our system of numbers where 0 is zero and 1 is the first move on the board.

But it occurs more mysteriously, relative to our theme of music, in the form and function of the stringed instrument and the bow. The initiative, the active force, resides in the bow (held in the right hand), and the passive element is in the instrument, essentially a sphere of air resonated by the agency of the strings (held on the left side). A relationship between the two sides produces an outpouring of sound which is cut into formal patterns via the fingers of the left hand. The sound created is an analogy, on the microcosmic level, of the Universal Manifestation, that is, the Son. And so we return to our original trinity of Father-Mother-Son. But what is important is that the nature of the sound, on the human level, depends upon the quality of the initiative from the bow, and also in the degree of willingness to respond from the instrument. And this, in turn, depends wholly upon the degree of the inner polarization of the player. If the will of the player is undisciplined, and he has not yet become sensitive to his own substance (the female in him), the

11th Century ecclesiastical stone carving, Germany

sound will be crude and hard. If his substance is too passive or unwilling to respond to the male initiative, the playing will sound evasive and without warmth. And so on, through many permutations. A truly balanced affirmation of will and sensitive response from substance, is as rare an occasion in performers as it is in life. String playing, as with the voice, reveals ruthlessly what lies within; in every contact of bow against string a player inescapably reveals himself. In this sense therefore, the most basic aspect of so-called technique is that which teaches a sensitive contact between bow and instrument, and involves the sensitivity of the whole physical organism. The musician with his instrument is the finest living myth we have. Man's story is to do with his attempts to integrate the disconnected parts of his being, and in teaching a stringed instrument we can formulate a whole science of playing upon spiritual principles, which have their root (though it may be doubted) right down to ground level.

In this article, my aim has been to suggest, if nothing else, that sound and music lie at the root of our existence. There is only one story, as we said; and it is a simple one. The fundamental Tone of the universe was sounded out, and split itself into subtones or harmonics, until differentiation became so complex that an orchestra whose name was Babel was created. In this orchestra, the soloist, the individual player (the divine "Sol" in each of us) is required to tune himself so sensitively as to be able to go back through the vibratory ramifications, and to lose identity with his own particular and ludicrously unrelated harmonic. Further, he is asked to realize his dependence upon all other harmonics, who in their turn, are all related to the same One Tone. Thus, we are all musicians, whether we are bricklayers, news-vendors, scientists, or poets. For the time being, whilst the music unfolds, the cosmic performance goes on. It is the musician, down here, who vicariously presents that possibility of return, and has, in the deepest sense, one of the most important roles in human life. ◇

Orpheus

It was Apollo who gave his son Orpheus the lyre, and the nine Muses, including his mother, the fair-voiced Calliope, who taught him to play. His music was so beautiful that when he played, all Nature stopped to listen and joined him in dance. Indeed, in Thrace there is said to be a ring of stones still standing in the same pattern of the dance led by Orpheus when he passed by.

Orpheus was married to the nymph Eurydice, but one day, pursued by Aristaeus, she trod on a snake in her flight, was bitten, and died. Hermes appeared and took her to the world below. In his grief, Orpheus put aside his lyre, and song came no more from his lips, but at length, he could not bear his loss, and went in search of the entrance to Hades. When he found it, he took up his lyre once more and descended into the netherworld. Hope gave him back his songs, and, playing and singing, he walked down the dark, steep path. His voice floated down through the dark, and its magic moved the iron gates of Hades: they sprang open to let him in, and even Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog and guardian of the passages of the underworld, lay down and let him pass. The fluttering souls hushed their eternal chatter, those condemned to eternal pains ceased to groan, and their torturers, the Furies, dropped their whips and wept tears of blood.

Hades, the pitiless king of the dead, sat on his black marble throne, with his queen, Persephone, at his side. Even he was so moved by the music that tears rolled down his cold cheeks, and Persephone sobbed. Orpheus stood before them and, still striking music from his lyre,

said, "I have not come to trouble the kingdom of the dead, but to beg from you a boon. Eurydice, my wife, was bitten by a serpent and has come into your kingdom, but I cannot bear her loss. In the world above, Love is a well-known god: whether he is known here also I do not know, but I think he must be, for if the old story is true, you also were joined together by love. I pray you, therefore, to give me back Eurydice, to give back the life that was taken from her. In the end, we all shall come to you, for your kingdom is our final home, and you rule the longest over the race of men. Now I ask you to allow us to enjoy our love for a little time in the world above. If the Fates will not allow this, then you may rejoice in the death of us both."

Touched by these words, and mindful of the time she spent each year in the world above, Persephone pleaded with her husband to let Eurydice go back with Orpheus, and Hades agreed under one condition. "As you journey back to the world above," he said to Orpheus, "you must not look at Eurydice until you are both in the realm of the living. She will walk behind you, but if you look at her, she will return to the netherworld forever."

Hades brought Eurydice out and, overcome with joy, Orpheus started up the steep path. The way was long and, as Orpheus walked on and on, doubt began to creep into his mind. Had he been deceived? Were the sounds he heard behind him really Eurydice's footsteps? He had almost reached the upper world and could see a dim light ahead, but he could bear his doubt no longer. He turned then, to see if his beloved was truly there. In the gloom, he saw her face for but an instant before Hermes appeared at her side to lead her back to the world below. Orpheus heard her whisper, "Farewell," and she was lost to him forever.

—Retold by David Espinosa

Schubertiana

by Tomas Tranströmer

I

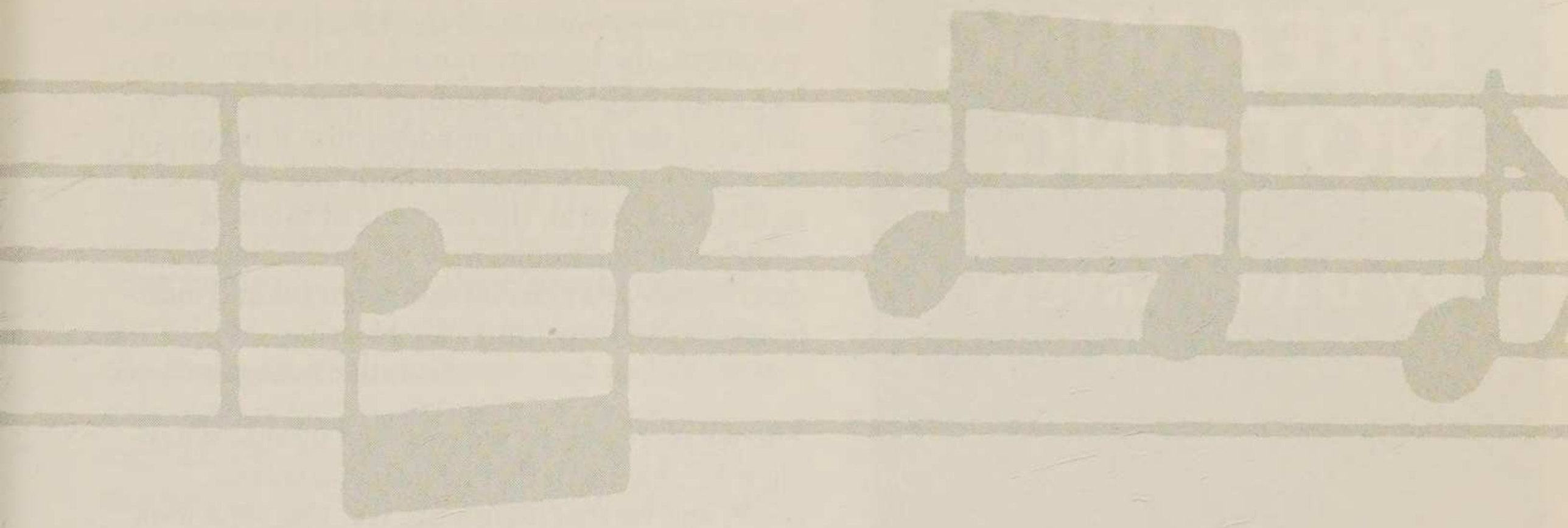
Outside New York, a high place where with one glance you take
in the houses where eight million human beings live.
The giant city over there is a long flimmery drift, a spiral galaxy
seen from the side.
Inside the galaxy, coffee cups are being pushed across the desk,
department store windows hold out a begging cup,
a whirlwind of shoes that leave no trace behind.
Firescapes climbing up, elevator doors that silently close,
behind triple-locked doors a steady swell of voices.
Slumped over bodies doze in subway cars, catacombs in motion.
I know also—statistics to the side—that at this instant
down there Schubert is being played in some room,
and for that person the notes are more real than all the rest.

II

The immense treeless plains of the human brain have gotten folded
and refolded 'til they are the size of a fist.
The swallow in April returns to its last year's nest under the eaves
in precisely the right barn in precisely the right township.
She flies from the Transvaal, passes the equator, flies for six weeks
over two continents, navigates toward precisely
this one disappearing dot in the landmass.
And the man who gathers up the signals from a whole lifetime
into a few perfectly ordinary chords for five string musicians
the one who got a river to flow through the eye of a needle
is a plump young man from Vienna, his friends called him
"The Mushroom," who slept with his glasses on
and every morning punctually stood at his high writing table.
When he did that the strange hundred-footed notes started
to move on the page.

III

The five bowers are bowing. I go home through warm woods
where the earth is springy under my feet
curl up like someone still unborn, sleep, roll on
so weightlessly into the future, suddenly understand
that plants are thinking.



IV

How much we have to take on trust every minute we live
in order not to drop through the earth!
Take on trust the snow masses clinging to rocksides
over the town.
Take on trust the unspoken promises, and the smile
of agreement, trust that the Western Union message does not
concern us, and that the sudden ax blow from inside is not coming.
Trust the axles we ride on down the thruway among the swarm
of steel bees magnified three hundred times.
But none of that stuff is really worth the trust we have.
The five string instruments say that we can take something else
on trust, and they walk with us a bit on that road.
As when the light bulb goes out on the stair, and the hand follows
trusting it—the blind banister rail that finds its way
in the dark.

V

We crowd up onto the piano stool and play four-handed
in F-minor, two drivers for the same carriage, it looks
a little ridiculous.
It looks as if the hands are moving weights made of sound
back and forth, as if we were moving lead weights
in an attempt to alter the big scale's frightening balance,
so that happiness and suffering should weigh exactly the same.
Annie said, "This music is so heroic," and she is right.
But those who glance enviously at men of action, people
who despise themselves inside for not being murderers,
do not find themselves in this music.
And the people who buy and sell others, and who believe
that everyone can be bought, don't find themselves here.
Not their music. The long melody line that remains itself
among all its variations, sometimes shiny and gentle,
sometimes rough and powerful, the snail's trace and steel wire.
The stubborn humming sound that this instant is with us
upward into
the depths.

Translated by Robert Bly

DREAMING NOTHING

by David Lavery

Even in dreams when all thinking has become quiescent, the hearing nature is still alert. It is like a mirror of enlightenment that is transcendental of the thinking mind because it is beyond the consciousness sphere of both body and mind. In this Saha world, the doctrine of intrinsic, Transcendental Sound may be spread, but sentient beings as a class remain ignorant and indifferent to their own Intrinsic Hearing.

from the *Surangama Sutra*

The weaver-god, he weaves; and by that weaving is he deafened, that he hears no mortal voice; and by that humming, we, too, who look on the loom are deafened; and only when we escape it shall we hear the thousand voices that speak through it. For even so it is in all material factories. The spoken words that are inaudible among the flying spindles; those same words are plainly heard without the walls...

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

When I was a child, between the ages of five and ten, I was terrorized by a recurrent nightmarish dream, one I never spoke about to anyone at the time—for I knew not how—and which I have only recently reclaimed from the dark cellar of repression: I dreamed of nothing. I was aware that I was dreaming, that my visual field was the screen of my unconscious mind and not the result of my open eyes, and I experienced myself as well watching over my experience of the dream, as I still do today (as a result, I am often capable of waking myself from a dream I do not wish to continue). But my mind's screen was utterly blank, dark, and abysmal. No light shone upon it from any source. Only one sensation penetrated through the nonbeing of which my dream was composed, a nothingness like that Georges Poulet has described as being the image of that "purity of which the universe and myself are only a flaw—a nonbeing, however, which, in a certain manner and by virtue of its very perfection, exists, and exists more than I."[1] A sound, a monotonous, droning hum, emanated from the very center of that void and filled me with inexplicable terror.

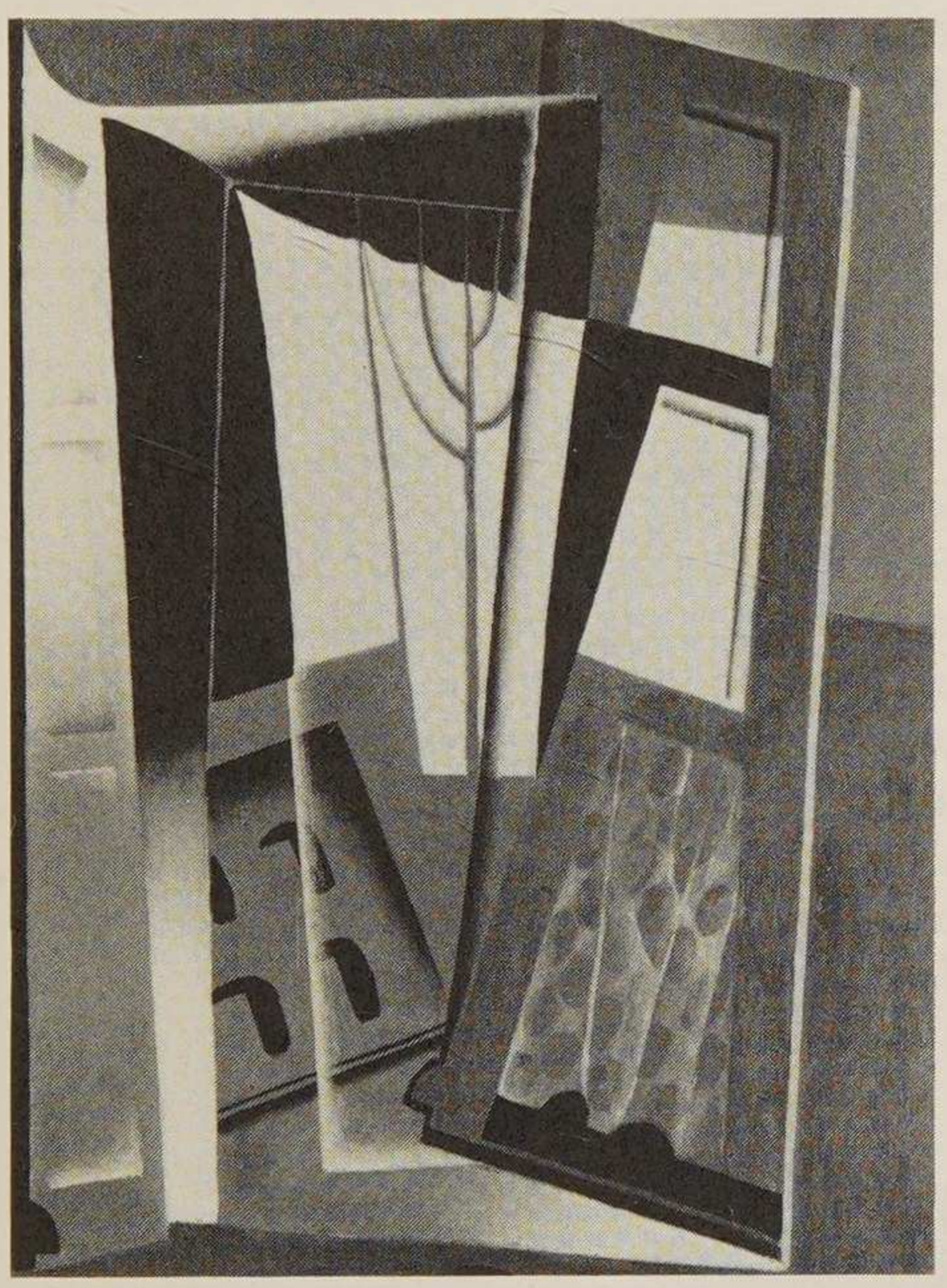
Awakening from this persistent nightmare, as I always managed to do, I never called out to my mother for her usual succor. After other nightmares (for example, the recurrent one in which a Tyrannosaurus

Rex stuck its huge jaws into my bedroom window while passing through our yard), I counted heavily on her to banish my fears and to bring light into my darkness, to arch, as Rilke so beautifully portrays it, "over those new eyes/the friendly world,/averting the one that was strange" as if she "had long known *when* the floor would behave itself thus..."[2] But there was no dispelling the darkness of that dream, and so I did not call out for her. And I did not attempt to explain my dream, for how could I explain nothing? I feared they would laugh. I waited instead for its next emanation and I waited with dread, a dread that made my bedroom floor behave itself most strangely, that brought me emotional vertigo and numbed every inch of my body in a way I have never again experienced, a dread that was only surpassed by the state in which I always found myself after the dream had again dissipated upon its next manifestation.

Many years later, my repressed memory of the dream surfaced as the result of my reading of a short story, "The Music of Erich Zann" by H. P. Lovecraft, the American writer of fantasy and horror fiction.[3] Lovecraft's tale is narrated by a "student of metaphysics" living in an old boarding house in a French city who becomes enraptured with the bizarre and haunting music created by an old German viola player named Erich Zann. Zann, who lives on the house's top floor, plays the unearthly music which first attracts the narrator only at night and only when alone, but after a time he allows the young student into his room to listen. With an audience present, however, he never plays with the same weird intensity that seems to possess him when alone at night in his room.

Zann, the student observes, appears to be lost "in some far cosmos of the imagination," and he is excessively protective of his privacy, eventually pleading with his listener to move to a lower floor in order not to hear his late night music. More significantly, he becomes incensed when the narrator innocently attempts to draw aside the curtains of Zann's window in order to obtain the panoramic view of the Rue d'Auseil outside—a view obtainable, due to the bizarre architecture of the street, only from Zann's fifth floor window. Like Hawthorne's mysterious minister with his veil, Zann will allow no one to look beyond. It is nevertheless clear to the narrator that the secret to Zann's uncanny music, its inspiration, lies beyond the always curtained window.

Zann is a mute and explains his desires to the narrator only by means of hastily scrawled notes and through his music. One night that music, having become a "chaotic babel of sound; a pandemonium which would have led me to doubt my own shaking sanity...the awful, inarticulate cry which only a mute can utter" brings the narrator hurriedly to Zann's room out of fear for the old man's well-being. Zann, in a state of near panic, asks him to be seated



while he writes out "a full account in German of all the marvels and terrors which beset him." But his discourse is soon interrupted by an "exquisitely low and infinitely distant musical note" coming from beyond the curtained window that summons Zann back to his viola and the commencement of his wildest playing.

Looking on for the first time while Zann plays his weird notes (previously he had listened only from outside the room), the narrator realizes its secret motive: "He was trying to make a noise; to ward something off or drown something out..." And he hears again a summons from without, "a shriller, steadier note that was not from the viol; a calm, deliberate, purposeful mocking note from far away in the west." At this point a harsh wind, "which had sprung up outside as if in answer to the mad playing within," breaks open the shutters of Zann's window, smashes the glass to the floor, and blows away Zann's manuscript into the void. With Zann totally lost in the "orgy" of his music, the narrator rushes to the window to look outside. But expecting to see the city spread beneath him, he finds instead "only the blackness of space illimitable; unimagined space alive with motion and music, and having not semblance of anything on earth."

It was at this point in Lovecraft's narrative that I remembered, after almost fifteen years, my own dreams of nothing. The frame of Zann's window, and of Lovecraft's imagination, I presumed had evidently opened on the same scene captured in the frame of my dream; we even shared the common element of the background noise emanating like a summons from the void. I understood intuitively his terror and envied his attempts to respond with art. I had been, in the muteness of childhood, more mute than he, and like the story's narrator, I too longed to recover those lost sheets on which he had scrawled the explanation of his music. And in a sense I did find them, after long searching, although they were widely scattered and in the possession of various other thinkers, musicians, and poets.

A few years later, for example, I heard something like the music of Erich Zann. It was a piece by the German electronic com-

poser Karlheinz Stockhausen entitled "Ylem." Based on the Oriental conception of an oscillating universe which "explodes, unfolds, and draws together again" every 80,000,000,000 years in a periodic breath called an "ylem," Stockhausen's music, best played, he explains, through "telepathic communication" between the nineteen performers and the conductor, begins with the original explosion of an "ylem"—what contemporary cosmologists would call the "big bang"—and then goes on to depict, by various intuitive and often discordant modulations of sound, the intervening 80 billion years. In the last one quarter of the piece, the next explosion of energy begins to mount with slow but gradually increasing intensity and climaxes in an overpowering crescendo, a second "big bang." In the few remaining moments, a return to normalcy is evident, and the pace slackens to a slow, methodical drone of noise, a sound like that which had haunted my dream and perhaps akin to that to which the music of Erich Zann was the answer.

When I first listened to Stockhausen's "Ylem," I was, at its close, nearly unable to move; the music seemed almost to have disintegrated my ordinary molecular structure, replacing it with its own aleatory form, and I waited a few moments before I attempted to move, as if I felt the need to reassemble my body. Yet the experience seemed to me a kind of *déjà vu*; and I soon realized that the physical sensation possessing me was almost identical to that I had felt upon awakening from my childhood dream of nothing.

In his interview with Jonathan Cott, Stockhausen seeks to explain the structure of his music, especially the relationship of one particular sound to the next—what he calls "moment form"—by an analogy. "Imagine," he suggests, "a man sitting alone in a dark prison cell who hears a door slam; then a year later another door. The first sound would last a year..."[4] And such is "moment form" in Stockhausen's music: "a moment lasts not just an instant—it can last forever if it hasn't changed." Such moment form is present in the musical space of "Ylem"; it is music made out of nothing, one of Stockhausen's most effective attempts to create a "sequence of silences."

Given its subject, the "breath" of the universe, such form for "Ylem," the strangest piece of program music ever composed, seems only fitting. As the marvelous "cosmic calendar" in Carl Sagan's *The Dragons of Eden* shows, the history of the universe is shot through and through with nothingness of an almost unmeasurable immensity, a void only challenged in magnitude by that within the atom itself in its cathedral-like interior. For if all time until the present were graphed onto a single calendar year, with the "big bang" coming on January 1 and the present moment falling in the first second of the ensuing new year, it would be necessary to wait until May 1 for the origin of the Milky Way, or one third of the estimated fifteen billion years of the universe's entire existence. After another four months of waiting, on September 9, our own solar system would appear. This means that for over two thirds of its history, the universe has been a virtual nothing, without events, at least as we understand them to be, a vast sleep of space and time. Was it not a glimpse of this nothingness which brought Paul Valéry to pen the line, "In the beginning there will be sleep"? It is this nothingness that provides the basis for Stockhausen's "moment form," thus making "Ylem" a true music of the spheres, or, more exactly, what the Indians call *Nadam*: the "orchestration of all sounds, of every electron in its orbit and every planet in its orb."[5]

The composer John Cage discovered this *Nadam* within himself a few years ago, as he explains in *Silence*. Asked to test the effectiveness of an "anechoic" chamber at Harvard, a room specially designed to block out all echoes and all sounds, Cage found that he continued to be aware of two persistent sounds, which the chief engineer informed him were his nervous system and his blood circulation in operation. "Until I die," Cage concludes, "there will be

sounds. And they will continue following my death. One need not fear about the future of music."

A few years ago a final piece of the puzzle, a final page of Zann's manuscript if you will, fell into my hands: a newspaper account of the problems some Bell Telephone engineers had had in repairing a new radio-telescope which had been returned by the observatory for which they had built it because of mechanical difficulties. The telescope, it seems, had developed, when put into use, a constant buzzing drone that could not be eliminated. After a thorough investigation, all those involved in the project concluded that the drone was no mechanical failure. It was, rather, the result of the equipment's registering of the "background radiation" still at loose in the universe from the original "big bang." A low droning sound, always present...like that outside Erich Zann's window, like that in my dream of nothing.

In his *Tuning of the World*, R. Murray Schafer, a musicologist, explains that "All the sounds we hear are imperfect. For a sound to be totally free of onset distortion, it would have to have been initiated before our lifetime." And such a sound, if "it were also continued after our death so we knew no interruption in it," we could "comprehend...as being perfect." Yet just such a sound, beginning before birth and continuing unchanging beyond our death, "would be perceived by us as ...silence." This silence, Schafer explains, the Indians have a name for: *anahata*, the "unstruck sound," silence heard. Such "silence heard" was evidently the buzz in the radio-telescope: background radiation, captured by technological means, becomes *anahata*.

Or, to put it another way, *anahata* is the *Nadam* at large made accessible in the human moment. Such poetic minds as Herman Melville, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Rainer Maria Rilke have imagined that the whole history of life on earth should perhaps be understood as nature talking to herself and that man is, as a result, in Rilke's words, merely a "pitcher" that momentarily interrupts the fountain of the earth's flow. But it requires a still broader and more profound imagination to grasp that the universe too might well be a mere conversation with herself. For such "pitchers" as the radio-telescope, or my dream, although they are more common than anyone perhaps realizes, pour forth their contents only rarely, and so the secret has been kept; the *Nadam* has gone unheard. As Melville saw in *Moby Dick*, it is "outside the material factory" that the "thousand voices" of the earth or the one voice of the *uni*-verse are most easily heard. Yet like the author of the *Surangama Sutra*, in his discourse on Intrinsic Hearing, Melville falls too easily prey to typical transcendentalist biases. Intrinsic Hearing of the *Nadam* does not necessitate the abandonment of the body. John Cage, after all, heard it within himself as part of his very metabolism, and my dream, I like now to think, was in reality a memory my body contained. Thus its terrors and its wonders were felt there and still manifest themselves in its tacit awareness. Yet the *anahata* reverberating in my dream, which once brought me dread, has been assimilated into my body's silence. It does not now cause me terror; rather, it glorifies my genealogy. Such internalization then need not be thought of, as the sutra would have us believe, as ignorance; it is, rather, evolutionary adaptation to the widest of environments and the most primordial of influences. ◇

Notes

1. Georges Poulet, Studies in Human Time, *trans. Elliott Coleman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956).*

2. Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, *trans. J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).*

3. All of the quotations from the story are from The Dunwich Horror *(New York: Lancer Books, 1963).*

4. Jonathan Cott, ed., Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer *(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).*

5. William Irwin Thompson, Passages About Earth *(New York: Harper & Row, 1974).*

EPICYCLE

Ceremony

They say that after the birth of the Fifth Sun, when the Gods had sacrificed themselves to get the Sun moving in its daily course, that their disciples walked about sadly and remorsefully, wrapped in the shawls left to them by The Gods in remembrance. They were searching for some glimpse of their Gods, wondering if They might appear.

They say that a disciple of Tezcatlipoca, carrying out his devotion, came to the seacoast where the God appeared to him in three different figures, called to him and said: "Hey you so and so, come here! Since you're a special friend of mine, I want you to go to the House of the Sun, and bring me singers and instruments for my fiesta. For your journey call to the Whale, the Siren, and the Turtle, who will help you build a bridge."

The bridge was built and Tezcatlipoca gave his disciple a song for the road. The Sun, however, overheard it, and understanding the consequences, warned his followers to pay no attention to it; for whoever listened would have to return to earth. But it so happened that some of them thought the song flowed with sweetness, and they listened to those who played the huehuetl drum and the teponaztli drum.

It is said that returning to earth they began to make fiestas and dances for their Gods. And the songs which were sung in those ceremonies were like prayers, chanted in unison to the same tune and steps, without getting off key or missing a beat. This was carried out with devotion and seriousness. And this same ceremony is still performed today.

—Translated by David Johnson
from Fray Juan de Torquemada, *Monarquía Indiana*

FIGURES OF THE MUSICIAN

I

They are caught there, arrested in silence—
The lute player, one hand just touching the string,
The other finding the fret with an angular finger,
The girls with their viols held upright
Tugging at the arched bows,
Their faces taut with singing,
The young man in elaborate garments, cheeks puffing
at the hautbois:
Five hundred years separate us, yet you almost can hear
the sound.

What sound? Thin ringing of the lute, acid sweetness
of the viols,
Reedy breathing of the hautbois?
Over this the descant of young voices searching the high rafters,
The coffered ceiling of some palace—
What do they sing now in this place,
A museum in late October light?
Where the past hangs a picture before you
Showing you the girls with their hair wreathed in crowns,
High foreheads, thin eyebrows,
Skirts of brocade sweeping the floor.
The doublets of the young men are figured with gold birds
and flowers.
This is another time: can the gold birds sing?

No sound: only its gesture.
If there is any sound it is the noise of traffic through the
windows,
Honkings and roar of exhausts, or the heel clicks of some girl
crossing the marble
To peer into the room, go on.
You are alone with these musicians of silence.
They could be playing forever.

A palace there: some festivity, a wedding:
Through the arches you can see the afternoon is waning:
Flowering trees in the garden cast long shadows:
There are the battlements of a city, a river with boats on it:
In the fields beyond the city men are still plowing.

Soon they will bring in the torches:
After the feasting and dancing the bride will stand among her
bridesmaids:
They will remove the rich garments one by one
Down to a simple shift:
They will undo her hair, let it fall about her shoulders:
She will stand there beautiful as the young moon:
They will lead her to the bed, draw the curtains about it:
The bridegroom will come eagerly.
When the curtains are drawn back in the morning eyes will look
level into eyes.

There will be sons, daughters:
There will be wars, sickness, death,
Generations coming, vanishing.
Air will still hold its space: others will occupy it.

No sound but enormous sound—silence.
It pierces you,
Music indistinct but unmistakable.
The musicians could be playing forever: perhaps they are.
There is no past: existence is always happening.

II

The musicians are hidden,
Out of darkness the invisible tones:
On the lighted stage the actors
Pursue their pantomime:
It appears to be spring, a wedding,
Winter—a child is born,
Another year—a murder is committed.
The music continues.

The falling snow colors evening
And you—do you wait in the wings
For the cue, the appointed occasion
To bring all this to the moment?
And if you step forth will you quicken
Any of this story to knowing?
What will you say to us then
Of what story and music have been?

Perhaps you will not step forth—perhaps you are not there.
This story may have no ending.
Perhaps you are already there, disguised—a walk-on part,
The beggarman asking his way,
Or the child born, or the man slain with the knives.
We do not know: knowing has become very complicated.
We know only there is music.
The musicians are hidden.

III

The argument is as you make it:
The occasion is propitious—new stars are rising.
There the woman of silence and the man of requirement:
They have met—possibly there will be a wedding.

Possibly there will be a funeral—death is history:
Under the pulse slow drums are beating.

Possibly there will be music—what is summoned out of this,
What silence and requirement so inextricably contrive.

Possibly the children will be singing it to you:
If you listen, possibly the music will tell you.

Possibly the music will be your own music, the argument,
Which is what you will make of it, playing

—Fingers evoking the infinite cadenza,
Mind evolving the impossible fugato.

At the wedding there will be dancing:
New stars revolve—who will name them?

IV

The musician arranges the tones
For a possible morning:
The delight of discovery is on him. He plays lazily—
A flute.
His fingers range over the distinguishing keys.

He sits in the corner of sunlight, idea in his fingers.
Does anyone hear? There is a bird that does.
Sometimes the bird is answering.

Sometimes the bird is not answering; it is silent or calling
about something else.
The musician hardly notices—it is the music that involves him.
Everywhere existence is an attempting
Constructing its own answer. He essays an arabesque:
The tone spirals upwards. He is a person of experiment.

An experiment in the explicitness of what is possible
And even what is not possible—the sky itself is hardly possible,
That he should include it, include any bird of it,

That it should include him, wrap him in air and caroling,
But he does and it does. He establishes the substantive bridge
Between what is existence and what is not but will be:
The music is a searching thing
And ephemeral—it vanishes as it happens.

Always it is vanishing: he is aware of that.
That is the point of it: it is a design of many vanishings.
He concludes the design with a cadence. He sets down his flute.

V

The music is a searching thing,
The design is a searching thing.

Those three figures in a landscape—
That far dot articulating the immense horizon,
The person in the middle distance looking at you,
The third, you—what your shadow establishes.

You there—what are you doing?
Listening? Looking?
If you are listening, do you hear a sky with a bird in it?
If you are looking, do you see what your shadow is signalling?

Stretching out from you, attenuated, gesticulating—
It is your own hand which summons you:
As you move your shadow moves—
Dancing?

What are you doing dancing here
In this place of intricate distances?
All of you, the three of you, dancing?
Or searching?
Searching for the invisible harmonic?

VI

A melody out of Couperin,
Motet by John Taverner:
What did these know that you do not?

World has turned many times,
Has swept its long circuits,
Sun has marched in the revolving of the galaxy—

Still the catch in the line, the expressive interval,
The precise ornament defining the shape,
The play of the polyphony telling you something—

Just what you cannot say.
If you could say it, it would be superfluous to say,
It would be superfluous to have music.

The roar of the traffic diminishes,
Crescent moon hangs in the twilight,
Above the city sky is enlarged into the impenetrable crystal.

Always you are enlarged into it,
Always world spins, sun moves, moon wanes, waxes:
You, too, are included in this—

Of the human persuasion,
What will speak to you,
What always must speak it, say it and say it again.

Across the distances, speech:
John Taverner working the high partials,
The piercing knowledge—
Audivi: I have heard.

VII

Therefore the spirit sometimes,
Interaccommodated within this vine of body,
Therefore the children singing in the sudden dusk,
Therefore the lovers loosing the crystalline knot—

See what is most definition of all this,
Hear the crystalline tones
Poised in the alertness of what is always becoming itself.

In black midnight, roar of the double-bass:
In blue daybreak, the woodwinds:
In noon, the trumpet:
Sometimes at nightfall the violin, alone as in Bach,
Proposes to world the prodigious signature.

I who am spirit and body: you who are spirit and body—

—In the evanescence encompassing one thing,
A continuity deriving itself out of many discontinuities,
What is plural, nevertheless single.

Voices of the polyphony
Intersecting, progressing, cancelling, renewing:
Always there are voices—can they tell you the equilibrium
of what is always more constant?

The spirit sometimes,
The body:
Water rippling over the shallows,
The river in its deep pools—

What he brings to her sometimes or she to him—
The prodigious signature.

VIII

The idea, the knowledge, vanishes as it happens:
It is the ephemeral of it that makes it reality:
You can depict it, you cannot hold it.
When it is completed there will be other music.

I hold this stone in my hands:
Density of it, color,
Weight dragging at my hands.
This also is reality: is it then a music?

—A stone's solid:
Pebble, a boulder,
Granite crag thrust against ocean.

You say, even this granite vanishes.
You hold a handful of sand—fine quartz, pyroxene, feldspar:
It sifts through your fingers, glitters falling:
In an hourglass once they told time by this.

We cannot tell time really,
We can tell only the vanishing:
We know processes, we do not know process.
If there be music, who is there playing it?
The process of music is the idea of the musician
And that it vanishes.

Star at morning dissolving into the immense blue:
Evening light changing upon ocean:
Faces looking at you.

Sometimes you hear it again
Echoing among the inner distances:
Its sweetness is incalculable.

—PEYTON HOUSTON

EPICYCLE

Taliesin

From the Mabinogion

T WAS SAID of old that whoever on May eve should fish from Gwyddno's weir that stood on the strand between Aberystwyth and Dyvi should draw from it the value of a hundred pounds, and good fortune to match. Now one year, Gwyddno Garanhir, sovereign of Gwaelod, on the advice of his council awarded the drawing of the weir to his own son, Elphin, the most hapless and unlucky of youths, to see if his luck would change and to give him something wherewith to make his way in the world. So it was that on the following day, which was May eve, Elphin came to the weir-ward to draw from the weir. But when he looked, there was nothing in the weir but a leather bag hanging from a pole. The weir-ward cursed Elphin for bringing bad luck: "For the virtue of the weir," he said, "which without fail did deliver up the value of a hundred pounds, is shattered." Said Elphin, "That may be, but perhaps not: let us look in the leather bag and see if therein be not the value of a hundred pounds." So they took the bag down, and opened it, and beheld therein a boy-child.

"*Tal iesin*," exclaimed the weir-ward. "Behold a radiant brow!"

"And Taliesin be he called," replied Elphin. Then he lifted the boy behind him on his horse, and rode away.

Mindful of the child, Elphin rode his horse gently, but

his heart was downcast at his misfortune. But as he rode, he heard the child singing behind him these words of consolation:

Fair Elphin, cease to lament!
Let none be displeased with his own.
Never in Gwyddno's weir was such good luck
As thou hast taken this night.
Little am I but greatly gifted, Elphin,
And in my tongue such virtue there is
That thou hast little to fear
While I continue thy protector;
Of more service in the day of thy trouble
Will I be than three hundred salmon.

So it was that when Elphin came to the court of his father, Gwyddno asked him of his haul at the weir.

"I have got that which is better than fish," said Elphin.

"What is that?" replied his father.

"A bard."

"Alas, what will he profit thee?"

"More than ever the weir hath profited thee."

Elphin gave his haul to his wife, and she nursed the child tenderly. And thereafter Elphin increased in riches and favor with the king, while Taliesin abode with him, until the child was thirteen years old.

NOW AT THIS TIME, bards were in great favor with royalty. Well-versed in lineage, arms, and the exploits of kings and princes, they could put to verse the annals of the first nobles and the most recent, and the whole history of the world. Always prepared to answer in Latin, French, English, or Welsh, they sang their verses in praise of their lord. And of the twenty-four bards of Maelgwn Gwynedd, the king, and uncle to Elphin, the greatest was Heinen Vardd. At Christmastide, the bards sang the praises of the king at Dyganwy castle: they sang of the greatness of Maelgwn, his comeliness and strength, and the powers of his soul. And of all the gifts one exceeded

all others, they sang, for Heaven had given Maelgwn Gwynedd a wife whose beauty, grace, wisdom, and modesty surpassed that of all other ladies of the kingdom.

SO THEY SANG, and Elphin waited until they had finished before he spoke. "In truth," he said, "none but a king may vie with a king; but were I a king, I would say that my wife is as virtuous as any lady in the kingdom, and that my bard is more skillful than all the king's bards."

Upon hearing the boastings of Elphin, Maelgwn ordered his nephew to be thrown into prison, until he might know truly the virtues of his wife and the wisdom of his bard. And he sent his son Rhun, a graceless braggart and seducer, to test Elphin's wife.

While Rhun hastened towards Elphin's dwelling, fully intent upon disgracing the lady, Taliesin told of Elphin's imprisonment and of Rhun's approach. At his direction, Elphin's wife changed clothes and places with one of her kitchen maids. When Rhun arrived he was greeted by Elphin's servants and brought to the chamber, where the maid rose up and welcomed him heartily. A jolly feast it was that followed, with such merrymaking and drinking (though some say it was the agency of a powder that Rhun slipped into the drink) that the maid fell asleep, so deep asleep that she felt it not when Rhun cut off her little finger, with Elphin's signet ring upon it.

Then, armed with the evidence of intemperance, Rhun hastened back to the court of Maelgwn Gwynedd, who rejoiced at the tidings, and called Elphin forth from prison to answer for his boasting.

CANNOT deny my ring," said Elphin, "for it is known of many. But this I say of a truth, that the finger that wears it was never attached to my wife's hand, and this I know for three notable reasons. The first is that, wherever my wife be at this hour, this ring was ever loose even upon her thumb: whereas it was hard to draw the ring over the second joint of this unfortunate finger. The second is that my lady regularly pared her nails before retiring, and the nail of this finger has not been pared for a month. And the third reason is this, that the hand whence this finger came has been kneading rye dough, and I can assure your grace that my wife has never kneaded rye dough since she became my wife!" At these words, the king flew into a great rage, and Elphin the hapless was flung into prison for a second time.

Taliesin, meanwhile, assured Elphin's lady wife that all would be well, and bade her be glad, for he himself would go to Maelgwn's court to free his master.

When Taliesin arrived at the court, a great feast was just then in preparation, and Maelgwn was sitting down to dine in royal state. Taliesin entered the hall and went to a quiet corner, near the door where the bards and minstrels would enter. And as they came in to cry largess and proclaim the power of the king, passing by the corner wherein he was crouching, Taliesin pouted his lips after them, and played "blerwm, blerwm" with his finger upon his lips. The bards and heralds took no notice of him, but proceeded until they came before the king, to whom they bowed, and then prepared to sing. But behold, instead of opening their mouths, they did one and all pout their lips and made mouths at the king, playing "blerwm, blerwm" upon their lips.

The sight of his bards and heralds making such fools

of themselves, and of him, caused Maelgwn to wonder whether they were drunk with many liquors, so he sent one of his lords to go and ask them to collect their wits. This the lord did gladly, but still they did not cease from their folly, nor did they when the king sent word to them a second and a third time. At last, Maelgwn sent a squire to give a blow to his own chief bard, Heinin Vardd, and the squire took a broom and struck Heinin on the head so that the bard fell back sharply into his seat. When he recovered from the blow and had his senses back, Heinin went upon his knees before the king, pleading fault not through drunkenness, but by the influence of some spirit that was in the hall, that sat in the corner yonder in the form of a child. Then the squire went to the nook where Taliesin sat, and brought him before the king, who asked what he was and whence he came. And Taliesin lifted up his voice and sang:

Primary bard to Elphin am I;
My homeland, the region of the summer stars.
In time all kings will call me Taliesin.
I have sat beside the Distributor's throne,
And know all the stars, from north to south.
I was with my Lord in the highest heaven
When Lucifer plunged to the depths of hell.
I have been in Asia, in Noah's ark,
And have seen the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah;
I was in Canaan when Absalom was slain,
And I carried a banner before Alexander.
I was in India when Rome was built,

And have come here now to the remnant of Troy.
I have been with my Lord in the manger of the ass,
And was there on the cross when He was crucified.
I tasted wisdom from the cauldron of Ceridwen:
And was pursued by her to the ends of the earth;
Then for nine months I was in the witch's womb.
Once I was Gwion: now, Taliesin.

THE KING and the nobles wondered much at this song, for never had they heard the like from a boy so young as he. Then the king bade Heinin, his first and wisest bard, to strive with Taliesin, but Heinin could only play "blerwm" upon his lips, and the twenty-three other bards as well. The king was astonished, and he asked the boy why he came to the court.

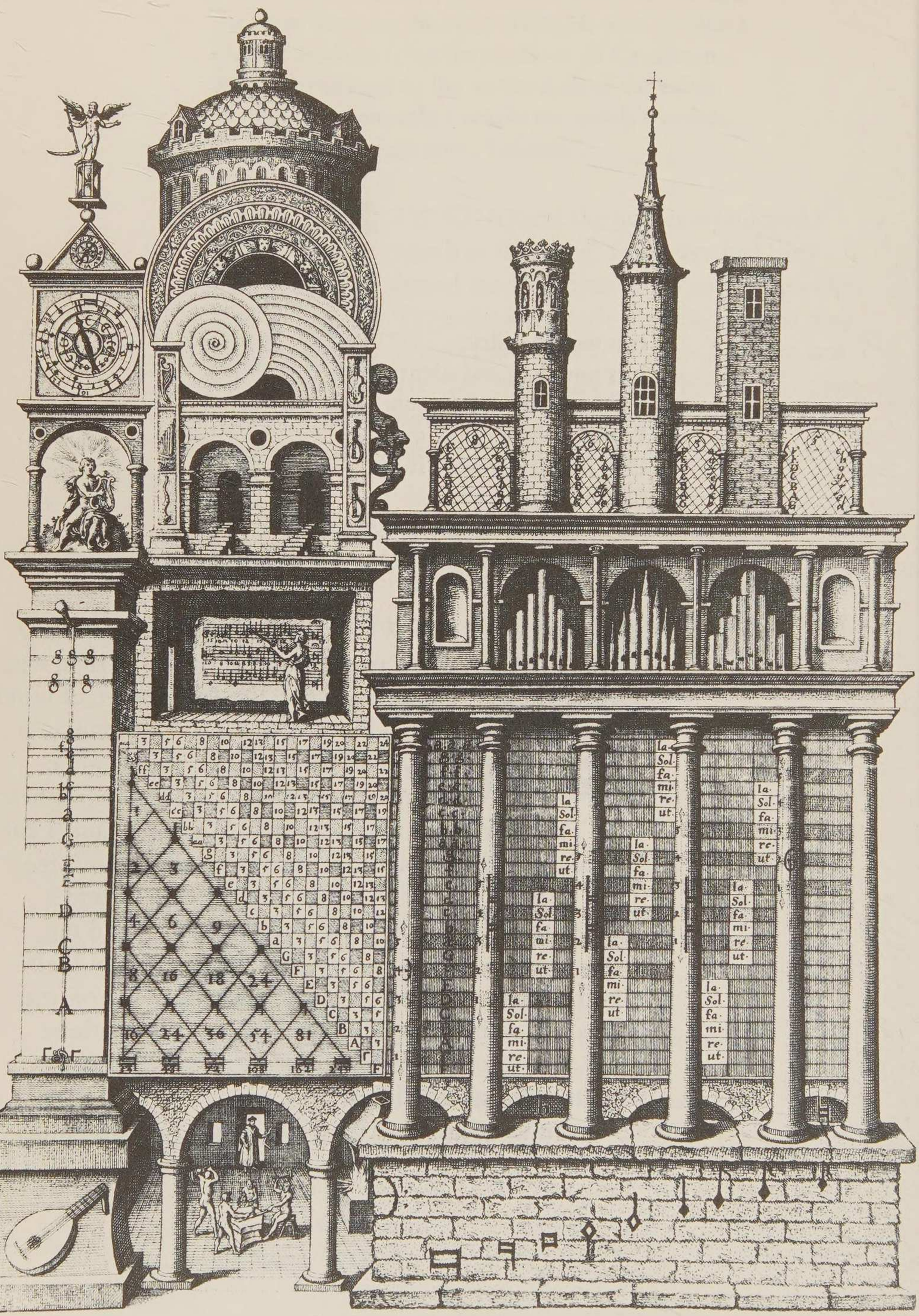
"Elphin, the son of Gwyddno, lies in the belly of this stony tower," replied Taliesin, "secured by thirteen locks, and for nothing more than the praising of his bard and his virtuous wife. Therefore I, Taliesin, chief of the bards of the west, have come to loosen Elphin out of a golden fetter. Discover if you can, Maelgwn Gwynedd, what shall be your destruction if you do not at once release my lord!" And he sang;

From the marsh of Rhianedd a creature will come,
Strong and alive from before the Flood:
Without flesh, without bone,
Without vein, without blood,
Without head, without feet,
Neither older nor younger
Than at the beginning,
Though older still than the numberless years.
How great is its force when it comes from the south!
How the sea whitens when first it appears!
Great are its mists when it strikes on the coasts,
Coming inland to cover the fields and the woods.
It comes from four quarters
But not when desired;
It is here, it is yonder;
It is mild, it is bold;

It is wet, it is dry;
It is sounding and silent.
From the heat of the sun,
From the cold of the moon,
One Being prepared it
Out of all creatures,
By its blast to wreak vengeance
On Maelgwn Gwynedd!

AND WHILE Taliesin was thus singing, there arose, softly at first, and then with gathering force, a mighty storm of wind, that so buffeted the castle of Maelgwn Gwynedd that king and nobles alike thought the walls would fall about their ears. Elphin was brought from his prison then, and Taliesin sang a song that burst the fetters about Elphin's feet. Then he brought Elphin's wife before them all and showed that she had not one finger wanting, and the bards were silenced to a man, not daring to open their mouths. Thus did Taliesin save Elphin from prison and protect the innocence of Elphin's wife, and the three came away from the castle in safety. Right glad was Elphin, right glad Taliesin!

—Retold by Anne Himler and Paul Jordan-Smith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The Temple of Music

by Tom Moore

The English poet and mythmaker, William Blake, has a deserved reputation for having been a champion of imagination at a time when reason and empirical science were tightening their hold on Western sensibility. But long before Blake, a countryman of his was taking a similar stand when mechanistic views were enjoying an equally warm reception during the promising years of their debut. Like Blake, this philosopher of imagination cut an eccentric figure so quaint that he has largely been overlooked by historians. He made his living as a Paracelsian physician, while he worked out his philosophy in the dark symbols of alchemy, astrology, Hermetic magic, geomancy, and musical esoterism. Perhaps another reason for his notorious neglect among students of philosophy and history, a fanciful reason anyway, is the dull sound of his improbable name: Robert Fludd.

Fludd's lifespan straddled the beginnings of the seventeenth century: born in 1574, he lived well into the age of science until his death in 1637. One reason why he is of particular interest is that he was passionately concerned to defend a dimension of experience often foreign and unintelligible to rationalists and empiricists. Having one foot in the sacral world of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and another in the newborn era of reason, science, and technology, Fludd is a symbol for the eternal problem of squeezing imagination into its place between naive religious belief and scientific reductionism. Fludd's loudest critics were the empiricists, Kepler and Marsenne in particular, forerunners of the white-frocked secular priesthood that manages our modern laboratories and computer terminals. But their criticisms drew some clarifications from Fludd that will help us understand the world that fascinated him, the realm of imagination.

Since Fludd wrote about matters that we usually keep in the cellars of history, such as magic and alchemy, he can easily be made into the object of occult fascination. Or, readers might be intrigued by his ingenuity and miss the real substance of his contribution. Fludd worked with unusual images, making an amalgam, for example,

of astrology, cabala, and music; but it is clear that his concern was to depict faithfully the depth and complexity of reflective experience. One of his ancestors in a line of philosophers and theologians treading the fringe of orthodoxy was Nicholas of Cusa, who had made the observation that the deepest mysteries must be expressed in "enigmatic images." Fludd's imagery is enigmatic, to be sure, but it should not be allowed merely to mystify and fascinate; it invites reflection on the nature and qualities of human consciousness.

A modern interpreter of Islam, Henry Corbin, delicately refines from his Sufi studies a notion that might elucidate the nature of Fludd's concern. Corbin speaks of a *mundus imaginalis*, an imaginal world, where images themselves matter, where in fact they are the matter one works with, complete and sufficient in themselves. James Hillman, the psychologist, follows Corbin in claiming this imaginal realm as the primary concern of a depth psychology. Fludd, of course, did not use the language of Sufism or psychology; yet his arguments with Kepler and Marsenne reveal that he was content to work with images, without the aid of lofty abstractions or empirical measurements.

A common attack against the *mundus imaginalis* complains that images are nothing more than subjective musings. In his own time, Fludd received similar criticism from Kepler who argued that Fludd's work with planets and musical harmonies was merely "a fictitious world of his own." Fludd responded with his own disavowal of the abstractions of science: "Ordinary mathematicians are concerned with quantitative shadows," he wrote, "while Chemists (alchemists) and Hermeticists grasp the true core (his word is *medulla*—marrow) of natural bodies." In other words, the intricate imagistic work of the more poetic philosophers touches the heart of nature, while the numbers of science only trace nature's surfaces.

While Kepler was not the pure scientist one might find staring at the night sky today, his primary interest was in measuring the movements of the planets accurately. In his numbers he found a "harmony," but he could not understand how Fludd could go beyond the sphere of planets and include in his diagrams of the macrocosm a sphere of angels. But it is the angels, drawn especially from cabalistic writings, that clearly place Fludd in the world of images rather than measurements. Again, as a way of understanding Fludd, we might think of some modern visionaries who have acknowledged the value of an angelic order: Wallace Stevens ("A Necessary Angel"), Rainer Maria Rilke ("The Angel...the creature in whom that transformation of the visible into the invisible we are performing already appears complete"), and James Hillman ("We need to recall the angel aspect of the word, recognizing words as independent carriers of soul between people"). If one can appreciate the role of angels, without "believing in them" or counting their number on the head of a pin, or, worst of all, tracing their origin in hallucination, then one is ready to read Fludd.

Fludd comes out of a tradition, perhaps best called Hermetic after Hermes Trismegistus its legendary founder, which favored not the evocative images of poetry but vast, complex symbol systems closely tied to nature. These seem best to reflect the complexity, inexhaustibility, and depth of the spheres of soul and spirit. Alchemy focused on the tangible materials and processes of matter, astrology on the movements of the visible planets. Fludd brought these and others of his wide-ranging studies together around a similar Pythagorean theme: the music of the macrocosm and microcosm. Like chemical reactions and predictable planetary movements, the sounds of music provide a natural base for metaphorical speculations.

The best way to get an overview of Fludd's musical philosophy is to study a few

of his charts and diagrams. He is unusual in providing his readers with elaborate engravings that summarize his views. But, as the brilliant Renaissance historian, Frances Yates, has observed, these engravings were intended to be more than illustrations. They are part of the remarkable Renaissance practice known as the Art of Memory, a mnemonic device used not simply to retain ideas, but to bring to mind archetypal patterns, reminders of the deep significance of the otherwise scattered and unreflected mass of everyday events. Fludd turned to music theory for the development of this art and his philosophy; therefore, before examining his charts a few basic facts about musical acoustics should be understood.

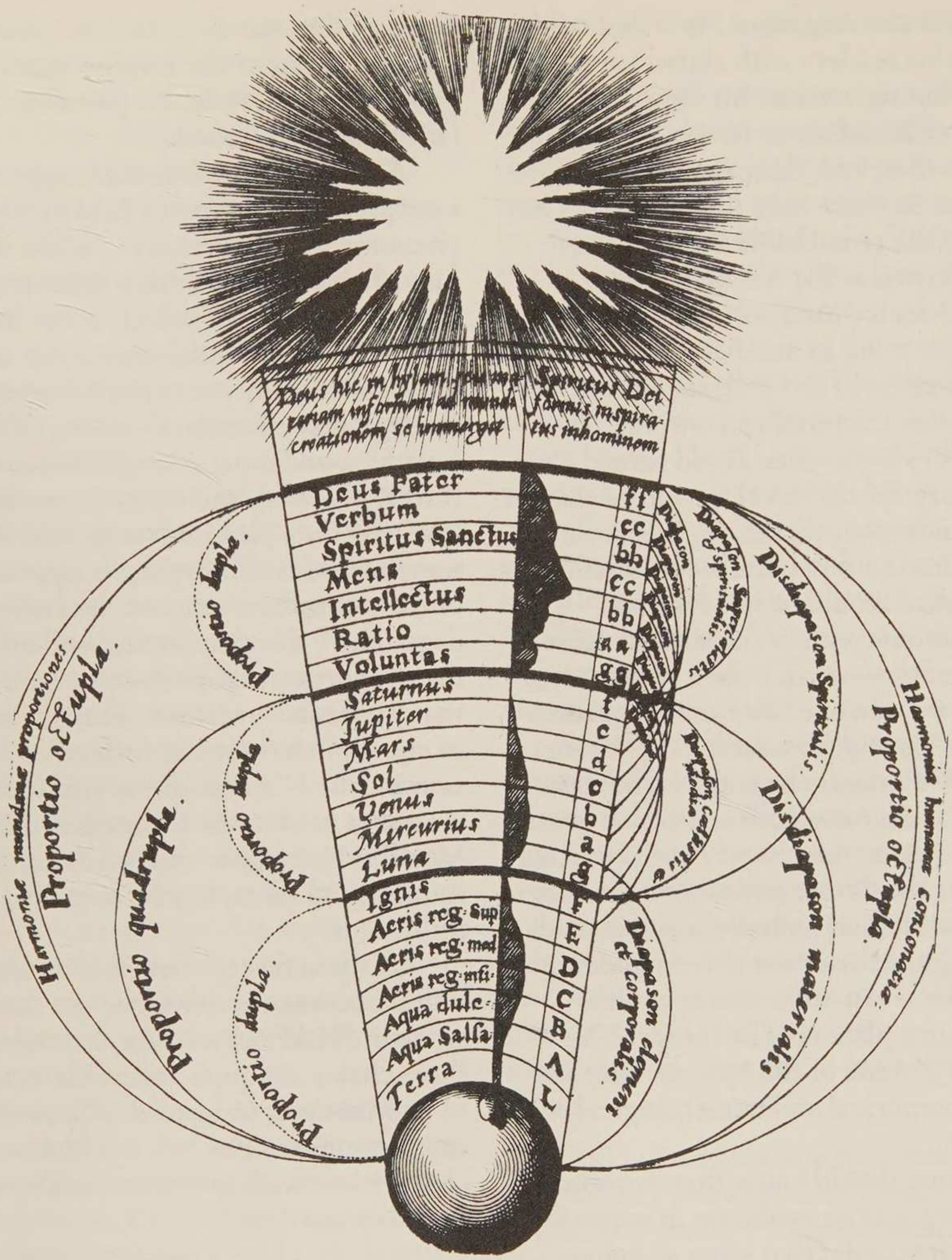
The diatonic scale is the basis of most Western music—seven tones, which when played or written one after the other form an octave. The eighth tone is a repetition of the first. We actually hear the eighth tone or octave as the same note at a higher pitch. In Fludd's charts, the lowest note is written as a "G" or the Greek *gamma*. Long before Fludd, theorists and philosophers had made ample imaginal use of the correspondence between the seven-tone octave and the seven classical planets of astrology. The celebrated "Music of the Spheres" derives from this numerical and numerological connection.

Next, one should know that in music history there was an evolution in sensitivity to musical intervals (two tones sounding together or in sequence) regarding their purity of consonance. For Fludd and his ancestors, the octave was heard as the most pure interval, the fifth was next, followed by the fourth. The third, though quite common in England long before Fludd and perfectly consonant today, was once heard as quite unstable. The diminished fifth (three whole tones—the tritone) was so unstable as to be called the "devil in music." Pythagoras is credited in legend for having discovered that the three most consonant intervals represent the simplest numerical proportions; namely, 2:1 (octave), 3:2 (fifth), and 4:3 (fourth).

A final musical fact that suggests an interpretive reading of Fludd's charts is the phenomenon of overtones. When a tone is played on a piano or other instrument, its characteristic pitch sounds as the lowest tone, called the fundamental. But at the same time, many other pitches come through more faintly. Octaves, fifths, and fourths sound most strongly, followed by thirds, sevenths, and other tones. When a low tone on a piano is free to vibrate, and someone with a flute plays a note that is one of the strong overtones of the piano's "fundamental," the piano string will vibrate in the proportion and pitch corresponding to that particular overtone. This phenomenon of equal pitches setting each other in motion is called "sympathetic vibration" and it is an idea used in the fifteenth century by Marsilio Ficino, one of Fludd's favorite sources, as a metaphor for astrological influences.

All these facets of musical acoustics might become clearer as we see them at work in Fludd's charts. Explanations of these charts are quite accessible in a number of publications; so instead of reviewing those commentaries, we can look at the charts more with interpretation in mind than explanation.

The Temple of Music. This engraving shows an imaginal building, one hardly intended for mortar and bricks. This temple of music brings together all of Fludd's basic ideas on music: the importance of time and timing—Father Time above the clock that shows the rhythmic values of notes; Apollo and his lyre; Pythagoras hearing the pure intervals ring out on anvils; various scales and modes; the Muse of music; the spiral portals of the ears; and the traditional division of music into three kinds: instrumental, cosmic, and human. A work of archetypal memory, this temple is a "reminder" that music is an aspect of the entire universe of nature and the soul. As Frances Yates has noted, musical proportions are built into architecture,



The Macrocosm and Human Being

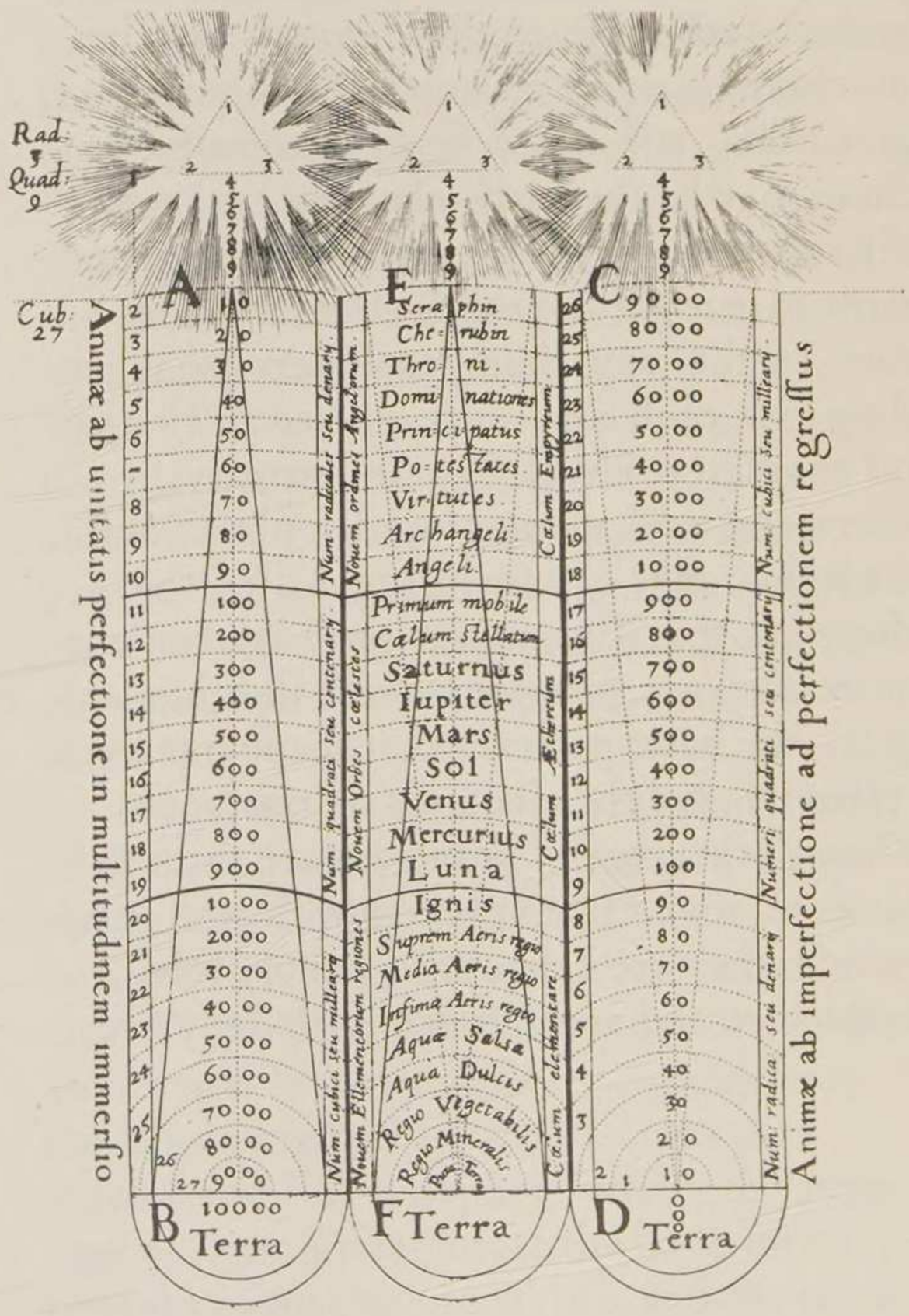
while buildings in turn mirror the cosmos. Music, then, is a way of perceiving anything and everything. When one thinks of nature and of human experience musically, certain dimensions come to mind that would otherwise go unnoticed, especially, as the Temple of Music demonstrates, timing and proportion. Those intriguing spirals near the top of the temple hint at an aural way of perceiving reality. Events come pouring into the ears, drawn deep within for reflection. We like to talk about *visionaries* and about the importance of in*sight*, but Fludd's temple directs our attention away from sight to the subtleties of hearing. The point is not that music is a part of life, but that the whole of experience can be "heard" through the perspective and metaphors of music.

The Macrocosm and Human Being. This chart shows several of Fludd's abiding interests. The musical scale, starting at the bottom with "G" (*gamma*), ascends three octaves (diapason = octave, disdiapason = two octaves). Fludd's captions at the outer spheres show his continuous attempt to connect cosmic and human values: mundane harmony on the left, human harmony on the right. What is particularly interesting is the portioning of spiritual and material reality, each seen here as a double octave. The two octaves overlap in the middle octave forming the mediating celestial octave in which are the seven tones of the planets. The corporeal octave is made up of the four classical elements divided into seven parts: earth, salt water, fresh water, low, medium, and high air, and finally fire. These are correlated to the planets and to the purely spiritual, transcelestial realm of divinity. Spanning the entire three octaves is a human profile—all the octaves resound within the human being.

Fludd had read in Ficino's most popular book, *De Vita*, that intellect and body are useless without the mediating intervention of the soul, a notion that is by no means anachronous today. The images of the soul or psyche, represented here as the planets, multiple and distinct, give elemental body to spiritual ideas, thought, and contemplations, while they also lift material, literal, and unconscious involvement in the physical world toward spiritual understanding. Imagination plays the mediating role, the *mundus imaginalis* depicted in Fludd as the astrological octave resonating in both spiritual and corporeal experience.

Three Octaves of the Soul. The same idea is developed somewhat differently in this extraordinary engraving that seems to parallel in a general way the chakras of Indian meditation. Here the elemental level of experience is portioned in the classical fourfold manner, while the third octave is given to the nine ranks of angels. Fludd notes in the outermost semicircle that the entire chart represents the three regions of the world which constitute the human soul. He also positions the body at the bottom, within the three octaves of soul, and labels it (note F) "the receptacle of all things." The chart expresses the ancient idea that everything is in soul, or ensouled. Indeed, Fludd was accused of flagrant "panpsychism." We might say today that plain corporeal life as well as ideas and spiritual intuitions need the images of soul to complete the human range of understanding. Here there is no polarity between spirit and body, but rather an ever-present mediating range between the entirely disembodied angels and the merely corporeal concrete reality. The human body lying at the base of the three octaves may be seen, in fact, as the concrete world of daily life which resonates with

Three Octaves of the Soul



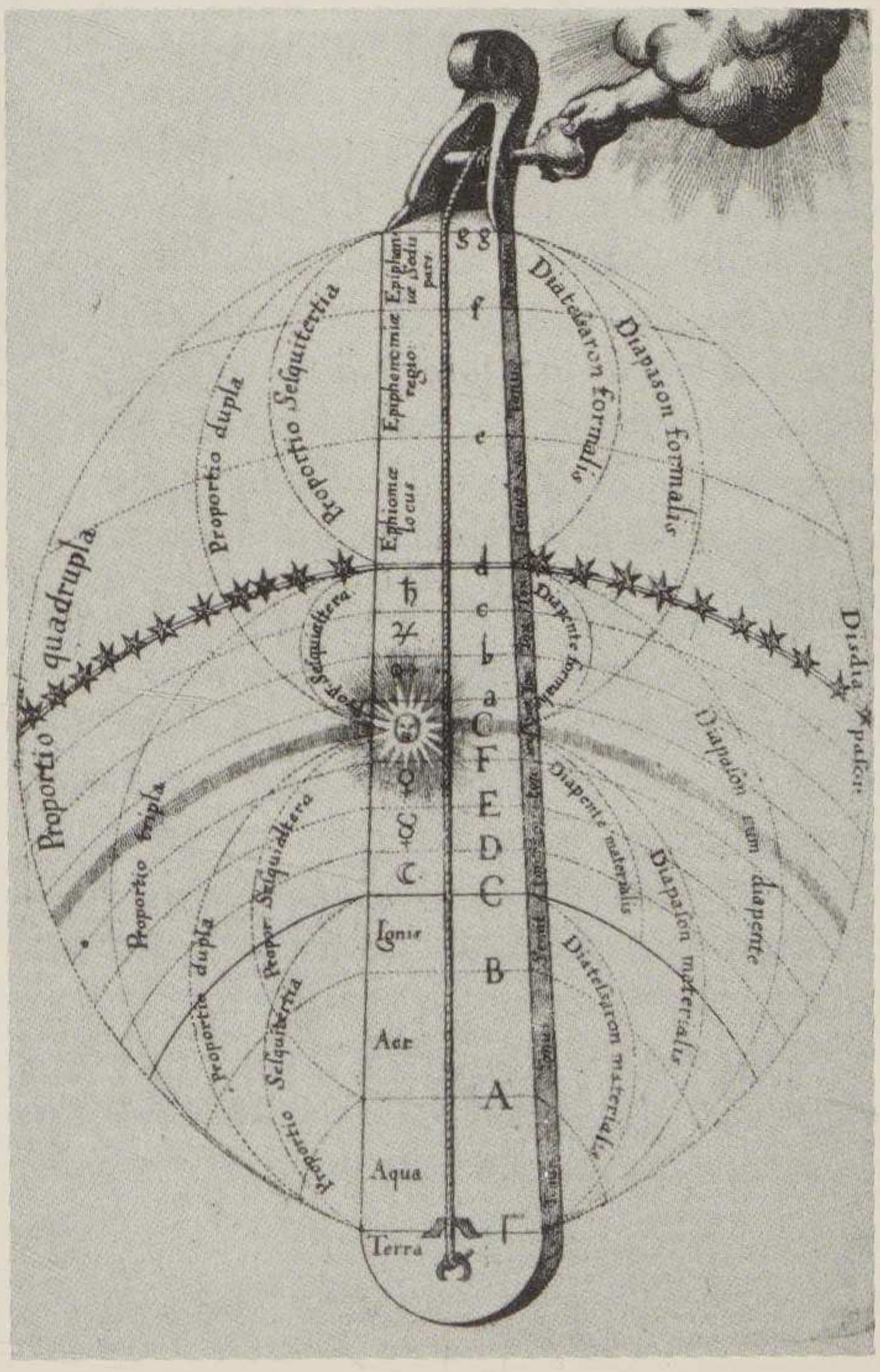
octaves of an ensouled physical, psychological, and spiritual significance. All three differentiated levels are *overtones* that can be heard within the mundane.

This chart contains a rather significant complication, indicating that all three octaves are "portions" of the soul. We have seen that elsewhere Fludd labels only the median octave "*anima.*" One way of understanding this is to recall the mediating role of the soul. As the Hermetic tradition taught, soul has something in it of the body, something of the spirit. With soulful meditation, then, even spiritual and material activities could be ensouled. Jung and Hillman have taken observations like these from older literature to mean that *anima* consciousness provides depth, reflection, imagination, valuing, and a sensitivity for the metaphoric and symbolic dimensions of all experience. For them the word "psychological" means "of the psyche or soul." In this specific sense, we might interpret Fludd to mean that psychological consciousness can infuse all material and spiritual endeavors, giving them imaginative articulation and understanding. Even the elements may be psychological: for example, earthiness, grounding, substance, footing, density—these may be the earth-characteristics of the subtle or psychological body. And the same is true for the other elements; a notion, by the way, that astrologers use when they give each sign of the zodiac an elemental character. Fludd, in a similar way, correlates each element with a planet and with the ranks of angels, suggesting that there are specific connections between our more abstract, non-verbalized insights (angels), the basic patterns that shape our lives (planets), and the elements of existence. Though the angelic intuitions are three octaves removed from plain unreflected experience, they are echoes of a deeply felt resonance and are in touch with daily life through the medium of an animating imagination.

The Monochord. Fludd provided several engravings of monochords in his books, and apparently he actually worked with the instrument. According to tradition Pythagoras developed his ideas of musical proportion through experiments on the monochord, which, as the name denotes, is a single-stringed instrument.

In this engraving we have further differentiation of Fludd's musical world. Here, besides octaves, we find fifths (*diapente*) and fourths (*diatesseron*)—two pure intervals which when joined together form an octave. The material octave is made up of the diatesseron of the four elements, plus the first three planets and half of the sun. Sol here marks the division between the material octave and the formal octave. Again, Fludd had read Ficino, author of a tract entitled *De Sole*, for whom solar consciousness was central and attributed to Apollo. The Apollonic sun, therefore, is positioned

The Divine Monochord



as a bridge of intelligence and understanding connecting matter and spirit. The sun in this diagram epitomizes the mediating octave of the other charts. Solar intelligence is the special sensibility that can connect the lower world with the upper, the lower but not unimportant experiences of emotion, fantasy, relationship, disease, and the body in general with the region of intellect and religion. When religious concern and philosophical exploration seem "up in the air," in an "ivory tower," dry and remote, perhaps they have lost Fludd's solar mediation. Apollo, it is true, is often identified with distant and remote knowledge, but Ficino wrote about him as a brother of the very physical Dionysus, and Fludd depicts him with his lyre, that instrument which, at least in its earlier forms, keeps strings in tension between two poles. Fludd's sun mediates and promotes the harmonics of overtones and rich resonance.

In some of the non-musical engravings, Fludd condenses the Neoplatonic and Hermetic idea of the soul's descent and return in the figure of two intersecting triangles or pyramids. These charts are similar to the Seal of Solomon or the six-pointed star, seen as intersecting triangles, and to the interpenetrating gyres described by W.B. Yeats in his book of lunar cycles, *The Vision*. Fludd takes this flat geometric image and transforms it through the medium of music. Just as tones echo themselves at the distance of octaves, sounding the same except at a higher pitch, so experience may be seen by the naked eye as a two-dimensional reality but heard with a practiced ear as having the resonant depth of spirit and soul.

The point where the two pyramids have equal breadth Fludd labels the "Sphere of Equality" in some charts, the "Sphere of the Soul" in others. This is but another instance of Fludd's emphasis on the traditional teaching that soul by nature is a mediating factor between the corporeal and the spiritual. It is a point that cannot be stressed enough: the chart, and experience itself, suffers a gaping hole when spirit and body are allowed to exist separately and independently. This can happen when one gets caught up in disembodied ideas and intellectual gamesmanship, or even in spiritual practices and religious fervor. How often such attention to spirit has occasioned a low estimation of the material world, daily commerce, emotional entanglements, and the general complexity of everyday life. Or, conversely, absorption in matter brings with it a passionless regard for things of the spirit: congregations going through the motions of church services or a financially successful middle class out of tune with the arts, the spiritual side of nature, and religious traditions.

Soul completes the "harmony" Fludd sketches in his engravings. "Harmony" here, by the way, does not mean utopian, tepid peacefulness and lack of conflict, but, in the Pythagorean sense, full representation of parts, good proportion. And, as Ficino had taught Fludd, there is dissonance in that harmony; or, as a young poet, Kim McDodge, once pointed out, there is "harm" in harmony. Modern depth psychologists have directed their attention to the painful dark hollows of experience, finding psychological reality in that "harm," in psychopathology and nervous disorders. People of the spirit or of body alone seem to prefer avoiding the more painful side of the soul-dimension, meditating themselves out of it or dissolving it in alcoholic spirits or in spirited, manic activity.

Fludd, however, shows that the octave of soul is astrological. It is a sphere where the planets depict the full scale of human possibilities. His own words are rather clear: "The intervals of harmony are in the archetypal world (*mundo archetypico*) from the beginning and are infused into the human soul." It is a sphere where the astrological signs differentiate the basic characteristics of psychological life, and the houses sort out the contexts in which those characteristics are lived out. These are strong

overtones, close to the heart of experience.

Peter J. Amman, one of a number of London scholars who have provided imaginative and reliable information on Renaissance occultism, makes a point about Fludd's monochord that underscores the emphasis on the mediating soul. He mentions that for Fludd the octave was the most pure interval, followed by the fifth and then the fourth. In the monochord engraving we find the material fourth (*diatesseron materialis*) identified with the four elements. But above these, forming the upper half of the material octave, is the fifth of Luna, Mercury, Venus, and part of Sol. This is the intermediate, etheric region beyond the elements but beneath the higher planets and well below the disembodied uppermost voices and epiphanies. Thus this "fifth of soul" or the psychological range proper is the quintessence—usually understood as the fifth element or essence, here as the planetary fifth. It is an imaginal refinement of the world that does not leave embodiment altogether; a range of fantasy, memory, and reflection purer than unreflective reactions of ordinary living, less pure than rarefied thought and contemplation. Fludd makes the interesting comment that just as it takes more power for the human voice to sing high notes, so it takes more power of soul to raise awareness to more enlightened levels. In alchemy a similar law prevailed: the quintessence or elixir had to be fabricated and worked out of the raw material. To say it more plainly, movement of consciousness out of literalism and unawareness requires an effort of mind and imagination. The stuff of daily life needs to be "sounded" and "played" at higher octaves, even at higher fifths, for its more subtle implications and overtones to ring out and be heard.

Fludd's musical philosophy is much more complex and suggestive than these few comments on his engravings can convey. We can look forward to translations of his works and more extensive studies. But his fascinating diagrams alone reveal several reasons why he deserves more attention: for his culminating role in the long and imaginative Hermetic tradition, for his exceptional use of musical metaphor, for his extraordinary skill at using images to convey the full gamut of human experience and understanding, and finally for his insistence on that part of his tradition that places value on the mediating function of psychologizing imagination. In Fludd we find occultism and spirituality without loss of soul and without disembodiment—a hint toward a solution to a problem that is timeless, enduring into the 1980s. Renaissance men and women of letters played punfully on the names of authors without shame or reserve. In that spirit we might say of this stimulating magus and musicus of another age that in place of stern and sparse abstractions, he offers for our self-reflection as individuals and as a culture a veritable flood of images. ◇

For further reading: Frances Yates, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, *New York: Vintage Books, 1969;* Theatre of the World, *Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969; Peter J. Amman, "The Musical Theory and Philosophy of Robert Fludd,"* Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, *Vol. 30 (1967), pp. 198-227; Joscelyn Godwin,* Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds, *Boulder: Shambhala, 1969.*

Coyote's Song

by David P. McAllester

illustrations by Jaime de Angulo

In mythic times Coyote, the Native American trickster-deity, bequeathed a number of gifts to humankind. With his quick wits and light fingers he stole fire from Black God and made it available to us. His prodigious sexuality made him the natural instructor for the first people who had not yet learned to distinguish between male and female. His flagrant miscalculations alerted the rest of the world to certain basic mistakes henceforth to be avoided in human relations. Native Americans are entertained and edified by Coyote stories today, as always. He is a delightful buffoon, risible, but not a little fearsome since he is also an embodiment of disorder and witchcraft.

Among the Navajos a legacy of songs of various kinds are among the gifts of Coyote. Some of these songs illustrate features of Native American music that have attracted the serious attention of outside scholars since the late nineteenth century. Recordings on wax cylinders found their way to the *Phonogrammarchiv* at the University of Berlin and analysts there began the comparative study of scales, melodic line, rhythmic structure, and other features by which Western musicologists describe music.

Von Hornbostel and others identified an "American Indian style," which included such elements as a melodic line that plunged from the top of the vocal range to the bottom in descending arcs, extreme vocal tension, falsetto, yodeling, sharp cries, quavers, pulsations, attacks at the beginnings of phrases so sharp that they obscured what the "actual" notes might be, and animal and bird cries that might be stylized or uncannily accurate. There seemed to be no concept of "interpretation" as it is known in European art music, through altered tempo and contrasts of soft and loud, nor were there melody instruments beyond a

few rare flutes. It was a music based almost entirely on the human voice, usually to the accompaniment of percussion such as rattles, drums, or rasps.

Here was the native woodnote wild of unspoiled *Naturvölker*. To the orderly but romantic German mind this music seemed to be the direct expression of untutored emotion, like an extended shout of joy or anguish. Often the text was made up of syllables that carried no lexical meaning. It was the primordial pathogenic cry, preserved for us on the lips of "natural man" whose culture had remained stationary, preserved in its Stone Age moment of development.

By the 1920s more information was available and this reading of European preconceptions into the material had to be modified. George Herzog, a pupil of von Hornbostel's, conducted field work in the United States and surveyed the sparse literature of those times. He pointed out that the prevailing picture of Indian music was far too simple. Large geographical areas could now be discerned where a less tense vocal technique was used and where the melody, instead of plummeting, had a rising development. By the 1930s, Herzog had published his observations of "special song types," a number of genres such as love songs, lullabies, gambling songs, and songs from stories, which were also exceptions to the primordial cry. These songs had almost none of the "extreme" features formerly taken to be universal in North America but were, instead, narrow in range and sung in relatively gentle tones. More refined stylistic descriptions by Helen Roberts, further elaborated by Bruno Nettl, showed the music of Native Americans to be almost as varied as their languages which, in the United States alone, comprise a dozen stocks as different from each other as English is from Chinese.

But a good many of those first-observed, stereotypical songs did, and still do, exist. In his last book, in the 1960s, Curt Sachs still found it useful to compare "pathogenic" (rising from the emotions) songs with "logogenic" (rising from the texts) songs, even though it was now well understood that both kinds might be found in the same Native American community. It is to the former that I would like to return here for a consideration of the meaning of animal imitations in song.

Of course animal cries are not unknown in European-American music either, but the meaning they convey differs significantly from such sounds in Native American song. In European music they are usually considered "extra-musical," more likely to be found in children's songs or folk songs than elsewhere and often comical in effect. True, Respighi uses a recorded nightingale in "Pines of Rome" with no humorous intention whatever, and Beethoven has unabashed cuckoo notes in the "Pastoral Symphony" to indicate that all is serene after the thunderstorm. Still, the range of musi-

cal meaning is usually from the comical to the merely quasi-artistic or "not-serious," and this is far different from the intentions of the Native American singer who uses animal cries in traditional songs.

Actually there is very little in Navajo life that is extra-musical. In ceremony, dance, herbal medicines, poetic texts, mythic background, body-painting, the making of prayer offerings, and the great dry-painting (sandpaintings), song is everywhere. Spruce twigs, jewels of white shell, turquoise, abalone shell, and jet, all are part of song. They originate in song, they are prepared for use with song, and are employed ceremonially with song. Traditional Navajos often get up in the morning with song, drive their sheep out to pasture with song, ride horseback or drive their trucks with song, and so on through the day. The Navajo world is inclusive: the sacred is not compartmentalized in any one time or space but is everywhere. Art is appreciated for its own sake, but also for its essential functions in exorcising malign power and invoking benign power to heal disharmony in one's relations with the cosmos. This is the ultimate function of every act in Navajo ceremonialism. The use of animal cries in song is one part of that process.

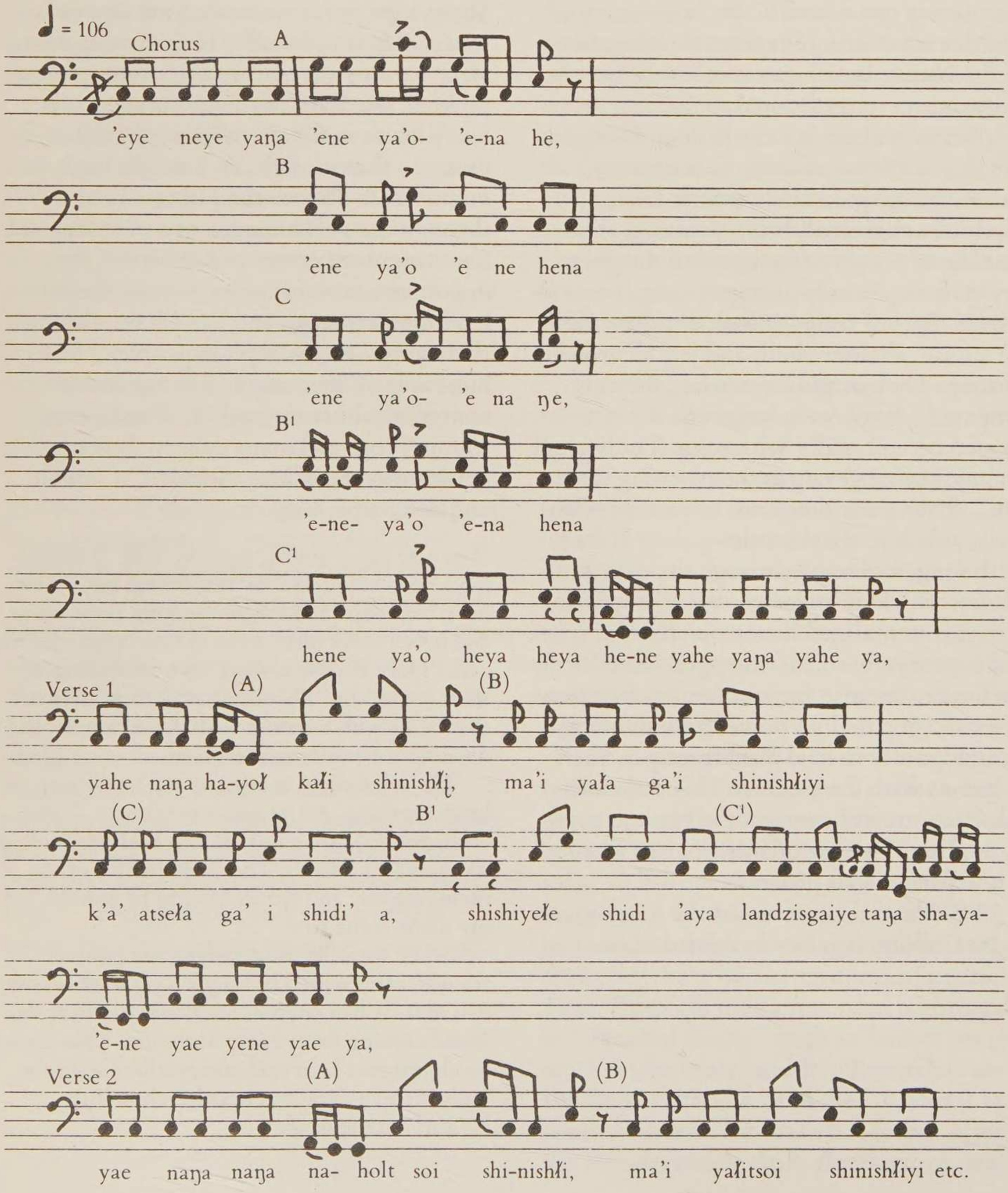
My illustration is one of the songs given us by Coyote. It is firmly rooted in its mythic source, the story of how the Navajo Shootingway ceremonial came into existence. Put very briefly, Holy Young Man, after various adventures with supernatural powers, was carried off to the sky to the Sun's house and there was taught the ceremony so that it might be brought back to humankind. The method of teaching was through the performance of a prototypical Shootingway ceremonial. Many of the major supernatural powers were there to lend their strength and hand it on, through their songs, to the Navajo people. The hundreds of Shootingway songs include contributions from Snakes, Winds, Sun, Moon, Frog, and many others. Among the deities was the divine malcontent, misfit, and demiurge, Coyote.

When he came among them he said, "I should have been here from the beginning, but I must have overslept. I heard you singing these songs and now I want mine to be in here, next. All the other Holy People always have something in their possession. Thunder has all those arrows that he kills his enemies with, for example, but I do not have anything useful."

Coyote looked at himself and he did not have anything. All he had was his ears. "Oh, well, put your song in," he was told. He said, "I have a lot of friends. There are twelve of us, including me, and we all have to be in here. Let my name come first."

So he sang the song naming the twelve friends, after which he sang a song with his own call in it. When coyotes howl you can hear the sound coming from every direction. That is why he claims that he travels everywhere with the Holy People. You can hear him howling, "Ya'ó!" in the song:

Coyote's Song



Coyote's Song

'eye neye yaŋa

'ene ya'o- 'e-na he, 'ene ya'o 'ene hena

'ene ya'o- 'ena ŋe-, 'e-ne- ya'o 'ene hena

hene ya'o heya heya he-ne
yahe yaŋa yahe ya,

Yahe naŋa, Dawn, white, that is what I am,
Coyote, white, that is what I am,
Feathers, white, rising up from me,
My own power, rising up from me,
People of the Dawn, among them I
wander about,
'e-ne yae yene yae ya,

Yae naŋa, Afterglow, yellow, that is what I am,
Coyote, yellow, that is what I am,
Feathers, yellow, rising up from me,
My own power, rising up from me,
People of the Afterglow, among them I
wander about,
'e-ne yae yene yae ya,

Yae naŋa, Afterglow, blue, that is what I am,
Coyote, blue, that is what I am,
Feathers, blue, rising up from me,
My own power, rising up from me,
People of the Afterglow, among them I
wander about,
'e-ne yae yene yae ya,

Yahe naŋa, Night, dark, that is what I am,
Coyote, dark, that is what I am,
Feathers, dark, rising up from me,
My own power, rising up from me,
People of the Darkness, among them I
wander about,
'e-ne yae yene yae ya,

'ene ya'o- 'ena e-, 'e-ne- ya'o 'e-na hena

'ene ya'o- 'enaŋe-, 'e-ne- ya'o 'e-na hena

hene ya'o heya heya he-ne
yahe yaŋa ya-m 'eya.

Though the music in notation looks mild enough, in actual performance, with the ceremonial practitioner taking the lead, supported by a dozen male assistants, the "ya'ó-!" of Coyote's cry comes out powerfully as though it were indeed a howl in the dawn, and dusk, and the dark night. It occurs ten times in the song, and it is to its musical as well as mystical import that I now turn.

To start with the former, the brief vocal imitation is actually the principal vehicle of the melody. Coyote's call provides the dynamic moment when the melody leaps up against its prevailingly downward motion. Instead of being "extra-musical," this is the section of each phrase that gives it its musical contrast and definition. As suggested by the phrase labels by letters (A, B, C, A′, B′, etc.) this melodic impetus is carried over from the chorus into the verses of the song as well. Coyote's call is the highest point in each phrase in the chorus. In a modest way Coyote's "howl" is reminiscent of Curt Sach's "tumbling strain," since it is lower in B than in A, and lower in C than in B.

In Navajo music, the ceremonial chants with their relatively restricted ranges and full texts are more "logogenic" than "pathogenic." It is the songs of the Yeibichei (Grandfathers of the gods) in Nightway and several genres of the popular Enemyway or

Squaw Dance songs that come closer to a pathogenic style, with acrobatic vocal leaps, falsetto, yodels, and the like. Coyote's song tells us that animal cries may have highly musical functions instead of being sheer emotional outbursts, and that the emotional quality may be no more drastic than mild amusement.

The rendition of Coyote's song discussed here was recorded by Ray Winnie of Lukachukai, Arizona. He pointed out that the verses identify the places where Coyote's call can be heard. The order of colors mentioned gives the axes of the cross often drawn in ceremonial dry-paintings: white-yellow, blue-black signifies east-west, south-north. Coyote's omnipresence is part boast, since nothing he says can be taken entirely at face value. But it is also truth, underscored by the sacred colors and directions.

Coyote translates his ludicrous ears into sacred feathers and names them as his very own power, as indeed they are. Nothing goes on without his hearing about it and turning up to take advantage of the situation. He reminds his listeners, and all posterity, that he is at one with the cosmic powers of Dawn, Dusk, and Night. These powers also gave, in their own right, their songs to the Shootingway ceremonial. But here the power has the dynamic of the unusual, thrown into relief, as it were, by a potent/ludicrous personage who is everywhere, sees all, and hears all. Actually Coyote hears more than he sees ever since he lost his eyes and had to get them replaced with yellow pebbles, stuck in place with pine pitch. One of his mistakes was covetousness. He insisted on learning for himself the trick of removing one's eyes, tossing them into the air, and catching them in their sockets again. Due to his own miscalculation his eyes got tangled in some trees and never came down. After he got his substitute eyes, Coyote was never able to sit near the fire for fear that the pitch would melt and his eyes fall out. At this point in the ceremony, the practitioner will ascertain that all participants are awake and have their eyes open.

But the text takes us further than the antics of a maverick deity. To the Navajos, the voice is truly divine. One may see this symbolically in the pollen blessing that takes place at sacred moments all through Navajo ceremonialism and, indeed, at many points during the daily lives of most traditional Navajos. As one reaches into a small deerskin pouch for a pinch of pollen, one utters a brief prayer, usually containing the phrase, "hózhǫ́ǫnashádoo..." (all around me will again be beautiful/blessed/harmonious). A bit of pollen is deposited on one's tongue, another bit on top of the head, and the rest is scattered out in front, or up towards the sun, blessing the place where one is. "I live" is often rendered naashá, which also means I am wandering about, or I am traveling here and there. The imagina-

tion of the Navajos, who came as nomads into the Southwest only five or six hundred years ago, is much akin to that of Coyote. "Dawn Traveler," and "Night Traveler," are among his sacred names.

The pollen on the tongue is a blessing of the breath of life and that breath made articulate in speech. In his conversations with Navajo philosophers and intellectuals, Gary Witherspoon has found that the most potent force in the Navajo universe is wind, given form in speech or song. To the Navajos the word is not the symbol of the object, but, as Plato also saw it, quite the other way around. Any given object is only one, transitory, imperfect manifestation of the world. Schopenhauer's astonishing definition (for a European) of music, "...music as a whole is the melody to which the whole world furnishes the text," would apply to the Navajo view of song and prayer, the means of bestowing sacred power on the world around us.

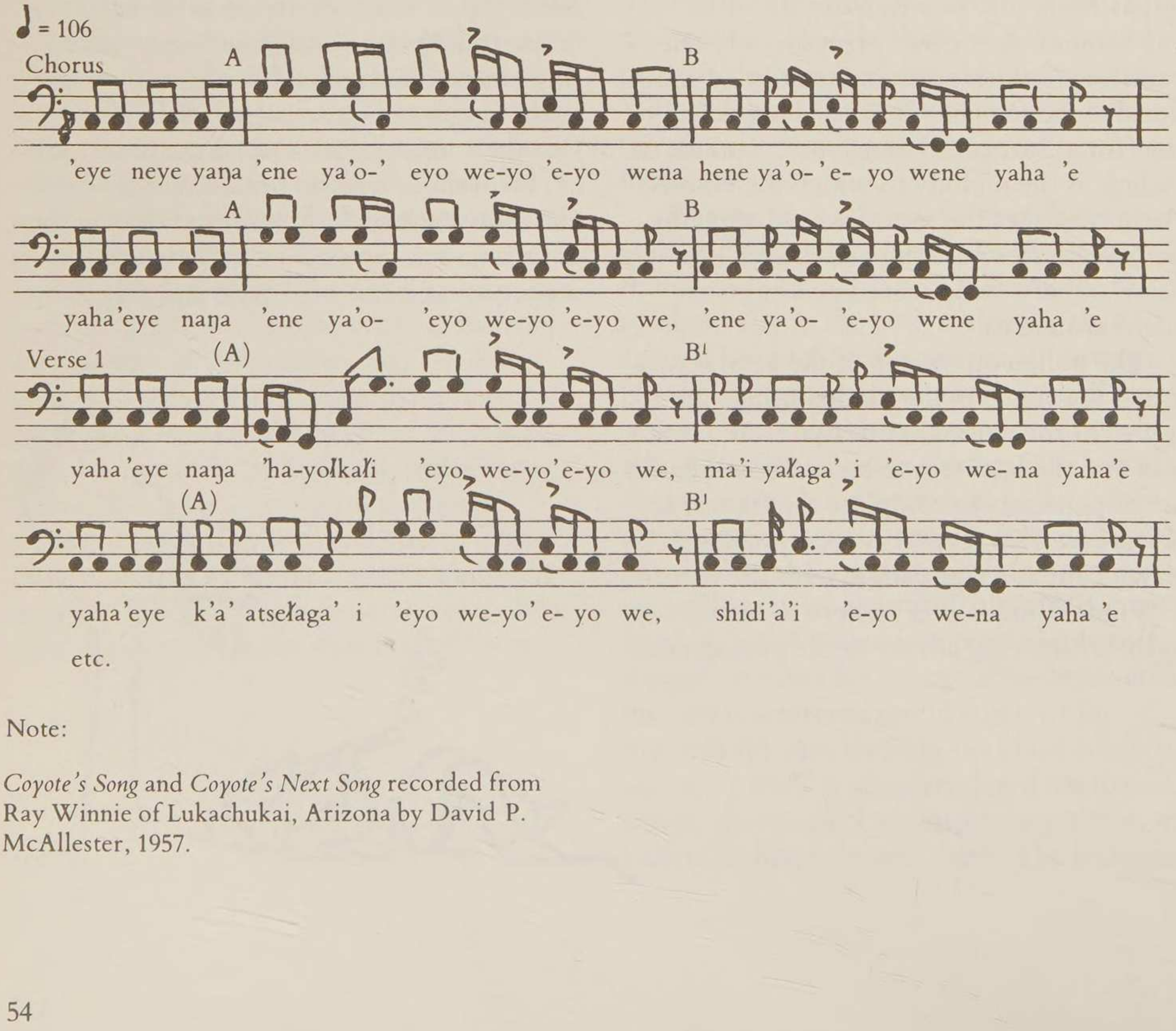
The pollen on the top of the head is to "one's feather." In the sandpaintings the figures of the deities are drawn from feet to head and the last item to be laid down in the sacred pigments to complete the figure, is its feather. This feather is nearly always drawn bent at a right angle with the force of Wind. Wind is everywhere in Navajo myth, whispering advice to the protagonists of holy adventure, giving motion to the universe. Blue Wind and Yellow Wind have their homes in the Sun's house in the sky.

Now something of the force of Coyote's call in his song can be understood. The directions of the world, the deities who live there, the powers of wind, and the articulation of wind in speech and, more powerfully yet, in the sacred phrases of ritual song, are all implied. When the singer lifts his voice in Coyote's voice the identification of humannkind with all these forces takes place. When he refers to his ears/feathers as his power, it is a deeply sacred thing as well as funny. All who are present at the singing of such a song are likely to join their voices with that of the practitioner. Even those who do not know the words can follow the melody with vocables such as "ŋa-ŋa-ŋa," until they perceive the word sequences and can anticipate and sing them.

Ray Winnie says:

In the next song it is just the refrain that is different. Instead of just "ya'ó-," it is now also "'eyo-weyo!" Coyote is getting his voice up there, now. He was kind of bashful at first, but now he is really singing out. Everybody is supposed to sit up for these songs. Nobody should be lying down. Even if you are awake you are not supposed to have your eyes closed.

Coyote's Next Song



Note:

Coyote's Song and *Coyote's Next Song* recorded from Ray Winnie of Lukachukai, Arizona by David P. McAllester, 1957.

EPICYCLE

The Oak of the Two Blossoms

Once upon a time so long ago it cannot be remembered, there came to Ireland through the high air a race of people who called themselves Tuatha de Danaan—the people of the goddess Danu. Skilled in magic, illusion, poetry, and music, they were breeders of cattle and fierce warriors as well. Chief among them was Lugh the Long-Handed and Far-shooting, known among his people as a master of all arts for the multitude of skills he brought with him when he first appeared.

Second to Lugh, but first in the eyes of his people, was the Dagda Mor—the Good Hand. The Dagda Mor's appearance was coarse and ridiculous, for his cape came only to the hollows of his elbows, his jerkin was too short in front and too long behind, his boots were of horsehide the wrong side out, and his vast belly hung well over his boarskin belt. His size was immense and he possessed an unquenchable appetite for porridge. But in spite of his appearance, he was known among his people as the man of all knowledge, and he was the chief sorcerer of the Tuatha de Danaan.

The Dagda Mor had in his keeping three fabulous objects which he brought to Ireland from the cities of the Otherworld. The first was a marvelous cauldron, the Undry, from the depths of which came unending abundance. With it, the Dagda Mor controlled the weather and the crops. No man came away hungry from the Undry, and it could never be emptied.

The second possession of the Dagda Mor was a great war club studded with eight deadly spikes. With one end of it, the Dagda Mor could kill his enemies, and with the other bring them back to life. It was mounted on wheels, for it would have taken eight men to carry it, and when dragged upon the ground it left a trail as deep as a boundary ditch and as wide. Under its blow, the bodies of the Dagda Mor's enemies fell like dead leaves from a tree.

The third possession was a wonderful harp called the Dur-da-Bla—the Oak of the Two Blossoms, sometimes called also the Coir-cethar-chuin, or Four-Angled Music. This harp had been carved from the trunk of a sacred oak by the Dagda Mor himself, and when it was made, he sealed into it a music that only he could call forth: a music of earth and air, of the four seasons as they come and go, of tears and laughter, music to dispel darkness and bring forth light. All this and more was sealed into the harp that the Dagda Mor carried always with him.

When the Tuatha de Danaan came to Ireland, they brought wisdom and light, but after a time the forces of darkness and death rose up from the depths of the sea.

The Fomor, for so the sea-people were called, were grotesque and deformed giants, and they were envious of the Tuatha de Danaan and all that had been brought to Ireland. They sought to overthrow the Tuatha de Danaan and seize Ireland for themselves, and they brought death and destruction from the green deeps of the sea.

It was before the Battle of Magh Tuireadth in the North that Lugh sent the Dagda Mor to delay the Fomor. Lugh hoped to gain time to gather the forces of the Tuatha de Danaan, and he sent the Dagda Mor to spy on the sea-people, and to make a truce. But the Fomor chieftain, Bres, knew well the reputation of the Dagda Mor as a master of illusion, and he sought to ridicule his enemies. He caused a great porridge to be made: eighty gallons of milk and meal and fat were poured into the cauldron of the Fomor chieftain, and to it were added goats, sheep, and swine. When the mess of porridge was cooked well and was ready, it was poured into a great hole in the ground. "Surely," said Bres to the Dagda Mor, "surely you would not be so rude as to refuse our hospitality. This is your portion: finish it all if you value your life." The Dagda Mor took up a huge ladle, dipped it into the hole and tasted. "If the whole tastes as well as the bits, it is a good porridge indeed," he said, and quickly consumed it all, scraping the last bits from the hole with his fingers. Then he fell asleep, and while he slept Bres stole the wonderful harp.

When he awoke, the Dagda Mor stumbled groggily back to the camp of the Tuatha de Danaan. He soon missed his wonderful harp, and his anger was so great at finding it gone that the Fomor could feel the earth shake under them. Lugh had, in the meantime, called all the warriors, magicians, and craftsmen of Ireland together and, weaving their skills together, created an invincible force. Moving on the Fomor at the plain of Magh Tuireadth, the Tuatha de Danaan overpowered the sea-people and forced them back into the sea. All the while,

and through all the battle, the Dagda Mor searched for his wonderful harp, the Oak of the Two Blossoms. Driving the Fomor from the shores of Ireland, the Dagda Mor, Lugh, and the warrior Ogma followed them into the sea. Finding their way into Bres' fortress, they saw the wonderful harp on the wall before them. Not one of the sea-people had been able to play it, for only the hands of the Dagda Mor could make it sing. When the Dagda Mor saw it, he sang to it its two secret names, and it flew from the wall into his hands, leaving nine of the sea-people dead in its wake. And then the Dagda Mor showed the Fomor what his harp could do. "Come Winter, come Spring, come Summer and Fall," he sang, and the seasons came. Around and through the pillared hall they danced, while the Dagda Mor played and sang. Then he played the Goltrai, or Weeping Song, and all the sea-people wept uncontrollably. He played the Gentrai, or Laughing Song, and they laughed as they had wept. Finally, he played the Suantri, or Sleeping Song, and his enemies to a man fell asleep around him. Then did the Dagda Mor, with Lugh and Ogma with him, leave that sleeping company and return to their own green land. Such was the Four-Angled Music that was heard in the old times, before the Tuatha de Danaan were driven into the Sidhe mounds, to be seen since only as shadows at twilight by fools and children.

—Retold by Thomas White, from classic Irish sources

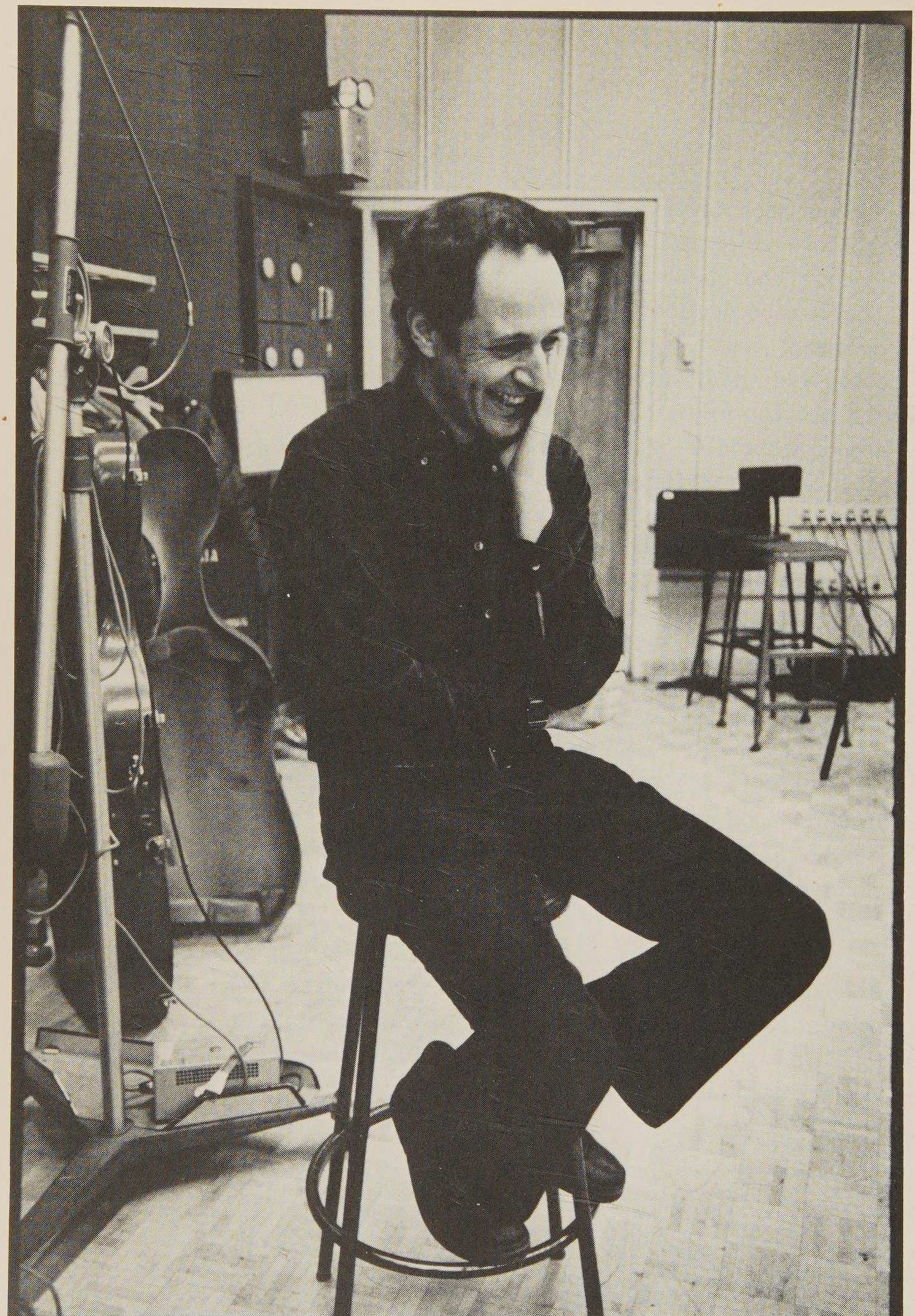
On Music

Music: the breathing of statues. Perhaps:
the silence of paintings. Language where
language ends. Time
that goes downward in the direction of hearts that wear out.

Feeling—for whom? Place where feeling is
transformed...into what? A countryside we can hear.
Music: you stranger. You feeling space, growing
away from us. The deepest thing in us, that,
rising above us, forces its way out...
a holy goodbye:
when the innermost point in us stands
outside, as amazing space, as the other
side of the air:
pure,
immense,
not for us to live in now.

—RAINER MARIA RILKE

Translated by Robert Bly



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Variations:

A Conversation with Steve Reich

Steve Reich, one of America's most gifted contemporary composers, spoke with us after a recent concert in New York of new works, "Music for a Large Ensemble," "Octet," and "Variations for Winds, Strings, and Keyboards." His loft space where we talked is that happy jumble of working and living which has become standard for many city artists. We sat in the rehearsal room filled with tape recorders, pianos, and gigantic black equipment boxes, most of them not yet unpacked after the Carnegie Hall concert.

Just back from two weeks in France and Germany, the attractive and intense composer spoke easily, very rapidly, but always thoughtfully, his conversation animated by expressive gestures and occasional bits of song.

Reich was born in New York City in 1936 and grew up there, later moving to California. He graduated with honors in Philosophy from Cornell University in 1957, then studied composition with Hall Overton. He was a student of William Bergsma and Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard School of Music and received his M.A. in Music in 1963 from Mills College where he trained with Darius Milhaud and Luciano Berio. He studied drumming at the University of Ghana in Accra and Balinese music in Seattle and Berkeley.

The weaving of these many influences creates a music that in performance evokes a broad range of colors. Melodies work their way in and out of a fabric of rhythms that are repetitive but almost imperceptibly changing. One comes away from a concert exhilarated—having recognized structures, modulations, patterns, rhythms: layer upon layer of subtlety in an endless round that grows and unfolds.

Among recordings of his compositions which are unusual in being able to convey the experience of the live performance are: "Drumming" (Deutsch Grammophon) and "Music for Eighteen Musicians" (ECM). He has just finished a recording which includes "Octet," "Music for a Large Ensemble," and "Violin Phase," again for ECM; it will be released in the fall of 1980.

Reich's unique style and the vitality of his continuing inquiry has without question become a major force in today's music. The art could not have a more gracious and articulate spokesman.

Music for Eighteen Musicians

PARABOLA *We'd like to start with your thoughts on "listening" and especially the necessity for performers to listen to each other.*

STEVE REICH There are a number of facts about my ensemble that are tied into that. Number one: the thirty musicians who played the first piece, "Music for a Large Ensemble," in our Carnegie Hall concert, played without a conductor. That's unusual in most Western situations with musicians anywhere near that number. When the piece was premiered in Holland, with Dutch musicians, there was a conductor. In Holland there were four or five rehearsals of the piece, which is a pretty realistic number for a new work of a large size, and without a conductor it would have been impossible. With my ensemble, I would say we had twelve to fifteen rehearsals, spread over about nine months. Most of the musicians involved have played my music for between five and ten years so they know and can play with each other, and there's a real understanding of what it is that I write and how we play it together. Also, since there is a steady pulse and the cues for musical changes come from the vibraphone, all a conductor can do is to cue dynamics, that is to signal to get a little bit louder or softer, which I would rather the musicians would do for themselves. They are listening to each other and playing chamber music—even though that chamber music may be of the size of thirty musicians, or in the last piece, of twenty-five. With a conductor they don't have to listen, and they take it from his or her ears.

The only other place on the planet that I'm aware of where you'll find upwards of fifteen or twenty people playing together without a conductor is in Indonesia. Because *gamelans* go up to over thirty people. They vary vastly in size. *Gamelan* is a generic term for an instrument ensemble. *Gamelan gambang* which I studied in Berkeley is basically a quartet of xylophones of a very

unusual sort and one metalophone—it's a quintet. *Gamelan gong gede* would be anything from twenty to forty musicians. When the *gamelan* from Sebatu toured this country, there were close to forty people, and there was no conductor: so, how do they do it?

The Balinese do it by having a drummer or two who literally play signals with a hand drum that tell the musicians to get ready, "we're going to get faster or slower," or it's time for a major change in pattern. He plays things that are understood because the players have rehearsed it since they were children and recognize the musical fact that's indicated. There are also dancers—and this is the case in Africa as well. The signals of a master drummer in Africa will tell the musicians and the dancers that it's time for a change. So everybody's listening to them—not only for the aesthetic beauty of the sound but for genuine information as to what's going to happen technically—the way they would watch a conductor.

In May I'm going to San Francisco to work with the San Francisco Symphony, who will perform the piece we did at Carnegie in its orchestral version. It would be better if the orchestras would do it without a conductor. But that's utopian. It won't happen. It's utopian because they would need eight or ten full rehearsals to really know the music. By knowing the music, even an orchestra, spread out as it is, can hear itself; so it's strictly a question of rehearsal time.

P. *But what about our culture, a culture where musicians are not born into the situations of following a tradition?*

S.R. A lot of musicians are sons and daughters of musicians; they're born into musical families. But you're not asking about that, you're talking about people being born into a musical tradition which they then carry forward. We do not live in that time.

One of my first teachers, when I was beginning to be a composer at about nineteen, was Hall Overton. Hall was a very, very good teacher—he steered me on the right paths in many ways. He used to say to me, "We all suffer by not living in an era of common practice." Now, "common practice" in Western musical history generally refers to the period that ended about 1750 and started maybe a hundred years before that—the period of which Bach is the end. And "common practice" means simply that there was a musical technique based primarily on harmonic structure and steady pulse whereby musicians all wrote in basically the same style, and improvised in the same style as well. They worked at what could be considered a privileged time in the West, when all musicians were in basic agreement —although they never sat together and had conferences about it—they simply grew up that way, like Topsy. Everybody was in much the same place, and it's interesting that in that particular period in Western history, you have so many composers whose work endures. If you were to ask who are Beethoven's contemporaries, you say Schubert, and you sort of grind to a halt; then you have to start dipping into very lesser-known names. But who were the great composers who were Bach's contemporaries? You've got Telemann and Handel and Scarlatti and Scarlatti's father and Vivaldi and Buxtehude...and we haven't even begun. That was a rich period.

In jazz, that time that Hall Overton was talking about was the bebop period that began between 1945 and 1960, where certain conventions between Lester Young and Charlie Parker sort of got agreed upon, so that within a certain segment of the Black musical community, people could get together and play a particular series of chord changes because they all knew them. This has vanished in jazz. Jazz is no longer a common practice music. Ornette Coleman can't play with Keith Jarrett, or wouldn't want to, or vice versa... In other words, there are many styles of jazz: harmonic ; completely non-harmonic; eclectic mixed styles of which the Art Ensemble of Chicago is one. All things are possible, and this

has certain advantages, but it also has certain disadvantages—namely that there is no living common practice.

P. *But you have what amounts to a "guild" of musicians in your ensemble. They all do other things, play other kinds of music, but...*

S.R. Well, one of the hallmarks of the people that I work with is that they've all been through a very solid Western background and then somewhere along the line, they've gotten interested in either non-Western music or some form of popular music, usually jazz.

P. *Is that useful to you? You describe in your earlier writings that the ensemble, although not "improvisatory," very often determines where things are going.*

S.R. It depends. In certain pieces, the performer's contribution is quite specific—like in "Violin Phase" let's say, or "Six Pianos" or "Drumming" or "Phase Patterns." In all those pieces there are what I call resulting patterns—like in the marimba section of "Drumming." When Jay Clayton and Pamela Fraley sing those little patterns that are imitating the marimbas, they're singing patterns which were chosen by themselves. I did the marimba section of "Drumming" on the West coast in 1973 when I was studying Balinese music in Berkeley. Elizabeth Arnold was one of the singers, and she heard different patterns, so that the score is sort of a rolling mix of what is always the same—the marimbas are always playing in the same relationships and what they produce in totality is always the same—but what the singers will take out of it, the actual patterns of singing and the order they're singing them in and whether they're duets or solos is a choice that was made by themselves or performers that preceded them.

P. *Your musicians are listening to each other very intensely. Does anything happen between them and the audience, is there any exchange there?*

S.R. Oh, yes. That is one of those things that's really hard to talk about. But it definitely does happen. For instance, we made a tour of the U.S. last year. There were different audiences, and particularly in San Francisco and Chicago we had these vibrant rooms. It's very hard to put your finger on what it is: one thing is that generally there will have been a lot of publicity and you'll have a packed house, and there's energy in the room. And you feel there's a certain pressure on, but the vibes are up. It was that way at Carnegie too. You can't predict it, but that seems to be one way my ensemble can really come through with a very "on" performance. I can't get the musicians past a certain level technically in *this* room. At a certain point they've learned as much as they're going to, and it just gets boring and we should stop. First of all, the room is small, and playing big pieces is like playing in a tin can—the acoustics aren't that good here. But more importantly we needed an audience. So before Carnegie we gave a couple of performances at a friend's loft. For one thing, an audience applies a certain pressure on the musicians. It also feeds them in some way that I can't analyze. But I know that it happens, and almost any musician you talk to is aware of that phenomenon.

P. *Does the music change as a result of the exchange?*

S.R. It doesn't change technically, but it changes in nuance. Any music that's composed is never the same. I think that during the 60s there was a kind of maligning of composed music that made it out to be some kind of mechanical reproduction. But no one has ever played two performances of Beethoven or Bach or anybody lesser-known the same way. It's just a physical impossibility. And what's more, playing any kind of composed music before a different audience in a different room will elicit a different response from a performer, even if he doesn't want it to. It simply is a fact. How it operates physically I can't spell out.

It's interesting what will go on when you're recording, because ostensibly you're playing to a bunch of machines. And you

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can play very, very well for a recording, because it's like a runner running against a stop-watch. First of all, you're playing with each other, and then everybody knows they're playing against a kind of abstract standard of excellence which they themselves will then go into a recording booth and listen to. This is a fantastic experience. That's why when I get near the first performance of a new piece—and I did this before Carnegie—I'd play every rehearsal back for the players, because there's nothing else on earth that I can do to elicit a quantum leap in performance. You get to say, "Well, here it is." And we do it very formally. We take our break and have our cookies and apple juice or whatever it is and come back inside and sit where we were sitting. We all sit down and listen to the rehearsal tape—no moving around, no talking, just listening. One of those sessions is like ten rehearsals. The strongest criticism of a musician will come from himself. If you can elicit that self-critical factor, you open up another dimension.

As far as musicians go, the kind of musician I gravitate towards, let's say in purely Western terms, would be the chamber musician as opposed to the orchestral musician. Generally speaking, and this is overstating the case and simplifying it, the chamber musician has to create his own economic reality. Many chamber musicians start their own groups and simply have to make a go of the whole thing from scratch. Many of my players do play in orchestras, but generally they choose to be substitutes. They've chosen another kind of life-style. That's generally the kind of player that I'm interested in, not a jazz musician, but someone who's chosen an independent existence on his instrument in the world of classical music and who's usually playing a wide spectrum of music.

P. *Do they often share your wish to "subjugate" yourself to the music? There's a certain humility in your performances, in your presence with the group.*

S.R. It's not so much humility, but the reality of the situation. If I had a solo piece in there, I'd play it, but I'm not really a soloist, and I don't feel comfortable writing it for others.

P. *But in your writings you discuss the fact that you don't want a single personality to emerge, that it's all for the music. And you seem to want your musicians to become involved in the process of developing* through *the music.*

S.R. Let's put it this way: I think that personalities are like bodies, they are with us all of our lives. We never stop being who we are. If you watch the players closely, you will certainly see they have very different personalities. The way each of the percussionists play is really quite different, Bob Becker or Russ Hartenberger or Glenn Velez; and I really write for them, as a matter of fact. All composed music changes depending on the personality of the players. In my music there's no soloist. I'm not interested in the concerto form which pits one player against another; this to me is basically uninteresting, at least now. I'm not a very accomplished performer, and I don't have a vast amount of technique; if I did, it would undoubtedly affect me. I would be a different person so I would write differently. So it *is* a reflection of my personality.

P. *That brings up the idea of a gradual process. I know what happens to me when I listen to your music, that it's just a constant awakening, often understanding, about what music is—how music "works"—and in a sense, some kind of illumination, a very definite effect which really brings me to this whole realm of (and I use the word reluctantly) "transcendental" experience. I'm sure you don't sit down to do this, but it is what happens to many people who listen to your music. And I don't mean this in any kind of half-baked, trendy way.*

S.R. Well, I'll ask you this: why would anybody become a composer? I became a composer because I love music; and the most important thing about my music is its emotional impact. I'm very much aware of that. When I compose, I reject a lot—I'm often a very self-critical composer. And why do I reject it? Sometimes on technical grounds; but most often because it's not very interesting. Duke Ellington said, "It don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that swing," and he was right. There are many ways of saying the same thing.

As you started to say: how do you achieve that? You don't achieve it by aiming for a piece that will be very intensely emotional. At least I don't. I wouldn't know how to begin. I only know how to begin if I think in terms of something that I can begin to work with on the piano or the marimba or electric organ—some technical matter that I can concern myself with. But the technical matter alone is of no interest: it's as if you have an engine and the engine is connected to wheels and a body which have a certain form and shape. But if there's no engine in there, that whole shape's not going to go anywhere. I would equate the form of the music and the various technical concerns to whatever vehicle you build around this engine. But the engine is the emotional power. For me what makes really great music is when you can't separate, in the final analysis, the excellence of the form—the technical concerns—from the intensity of the emotional experience; they're all one thing.

P. *Some say of your music, "this is religious music."*

S.R. I would say that in an extended sense *all* good music is religious music. But I would qualify that, because there is also clearly religious music composed and performed for religious use. That's a distinction that should not so easily be swept under the rug.

Bach and his contemporaries made a differentiation when they wrote music that was going to be used in a church as opposed to the concertos, variations, suites, and so on. Actually there isn't a huge difference between some of the organ preludes, which were ostensibly religious music, and some

of the keyboard music, like the French and English Suites. Yes, they vary in detail and in form (there are "dance" forms used in the so-called secular music). But basically you feel the same voice coming through. Nevertheless there is something important about the fact that this music was written for the church.

It's also very much a reality in the non-Western musics I've studied. There is a differentiation. For instance I went to Ghana, and I made a transcription of "Gahu" which is really a secular dance—it's really a get-drunk-and-have-a-good-time dance. Now there isn't a vast ocean of difference between that and "Fontanfram" of the Ashantis, which is for the installation of a chief, a major political and religious occasion. It interested me that the technical construction was not vastly different: you didn't have the Hammond organ in the background at the funeral parlor versus the drummer in the discotheque, a sign of a society in which those things have become un-knit. It was interesting to go at that time to see societies, which are now becoming un-knit, but which preserve or have shreds of a time when the music mirrored a life-form in which having a good time and religious experience formed part of the fabric of life. They were distinguished but not oceanically separated. Each had a place, and you didn't mix them up. People really keep a very clear view of what's going on, but they don't do it to such an extent that they have to radically alter their consciousness, or change basic techniques. All African music swings and you can dance to all of it. The basic pulse is there. But you dance different dances in different clothes at different times. And this is very much the same experience in the little bit of Balinese music I studied.

P. *This is definitely something that's not available to us.*

S.R. I think we're living in a very different time. What we're living in was being adopted very quickly in Africa when I was there, and I know that it's being adopted in Indonesia, probably even more so in Java than in Bali because of the number of people. Eventually it will probably work its way to Bali. It's called "Westernization."

Religion is generally separated out of the culture, and you move towards a totally secular culture because science becomes the final answer for most Western people. And religion is considered to be either irrelevant or is relegated to an individual choice which is not a shared choice in the community. Therefore, to do a religious work nowadays can be somewhat problematic.

I'm actually thinking of the possibility of doing something which I'm reticent to speak about, only because I haven't yet tried to do it. What I am thinking of is to transcribe the cantillation of the Book of Jonah, which is chanted in the synagogue on Yom Kippur. It is certainly not only about a *Dag Gadol* (a large fish)—although that's part of it too. I have thoughts about various ways to deal with cantillation, and actually its structure was used a little bit in "Octet" and a little bit in the "Large Ensemble" in the extension of melodic patterns. But since I am Jewish, and I'm not Balinese and I'm not African, I felt interested and in a sense *obliged* to try to deal with this more directly. I have certain beliefs about not taking something that comes from one place or tradition and then throwing it somewhere else and making your own fantasy about it. What I'm going to do first is simply just transcribe. I will probably record several cantors here in New York chanting Jonah. I was in Jerusalem in 1977, and I have recorded Jews who were born and brought up in Yemen, India, Baghdad, and Kurdistan, and they sing very much the way people from Yemen, India, Baghdad and Kurdistan would, i.e., their notes are in the cracks of the keyboard. They can't be written down in Western notation. (Just by the by, these people from Arab countries and India comprise 65% of the population of the nation of Israel. Most Israelis are Sephardic Jews from Arab countries.)

What I would like to do with the Book of Jonah is to transcribe (transcription means you're writing down something which pre-exists), and I would simply choose between various versions. The Western tradition here in New York comes out of Russia, Poland, and the Germanic countries. The prophetic books, including Jonah, are chanted in a form of Western minor scale. This music does not have a steady pulse; it fits the rhythm of the words. One thing I might try to do is have something for female voice singing the chant. Another thing I'd be interested in trying is instrumental: having the notes "sung" by solo clarinet and/or solo violin, perhaps together with voice. I'd present it, not as a composition, but as a transcription.

Cantillation is put together from various short motifs to form long melodies. The notation for them appears underneath the Hebrew in the printed text as an abbreviated form of what's called *Taamim*, hand-signs, things that you see on Greek vases when you see musicians playing, and you see some guy making funny signs. He's not conducting; he's reminding the singers and the musicians how the phrase goes. In the Hebrew the lines and diamonds and what-not are notations for the positions of the hands. I've been told that in the chanting of the Vedas the head is used as a mnemonic device, given to somebody from an oral tradition who already knows how it goes, to remind them, "don't forget—it goes like that."

In the scroll of Torah there is no such notation; it's forbidden for it to be there. You must have it in mind. These were devices that originated at the time of Ezra which is about five hundred years before Jesus. Gradually, about 1400 years after Ezra, it got written down and is still there and is still done, so that you have this notation working in various Jewish communities from India to New York City, and every one of them sings it differently. But the structure's the same.

The cantillation of the scriptures is the hard core center of all Jewish music without any question. No one who has ever concerned himself in the field has said anything different. The tradition has been to conserve this music and absolutely *not* to change it. That has beauty of its own. I think that Jewish composers who have tried to write "religious" music, like Bloch and even Schoenberg when he set the Psalms, have had a difficult time because there's no tradition like that.

In the church there is a tradition of composing liturgical music expanding on what was originally the Gregorian chant, which itself originated in synagogue chant. This was a musicological discovery made in

the twenties by a man named Abraham Iddelsohn who did some very important ethnomusicological research, very similar to what Béla Bartók did and at the same time that Bartók did it. Iddelsohn strapped an Edison cylinder phonograph on his back and traveled through the Middle East. He published a seven-volume thesaurus of cantillation in the Middle East. This established the similarity between Yemenite cantillation of the Hebrew scriptures and Gregorian psalm tone. It's not so amazing if you think about it for a few minutes: if you go to Jerusalem there's a large Christian population and the priests often look like rabbis —beards and black hats—and they're part of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Church came out of that area; part of it went to Rome; part of it didn't. And the music simply moved in the same direction —from East to West.

Greek music theory, particularly by Pythagoras, was known in the Middle Ages, but Greek music died as a living music shortly after the Romans took over Greece. The Jewish tradition continued, and it continues as an oral tradition to this day, and that's what's so very interesting about it. Here and now what's chanted in synagogues, however changed and influenced its basic structure and its basic form, is absolutely a continuation of a tradition that goes back at least 2500 years, and accurately reflects the music of our ancestors in the Middle East.

P. *I'm intrigued by your description of the hand patterns and also the whole question of making transcripts of traditional music—simply "witnessing" it, in a way. Can you say something about what influence that music had on you?*

S.R. I grew up with a Reformed Jewish background which means I could have been raised as a Unitarian as far as religious content is concerned. I didn't learn Hebrew, and I didn't learn any cantillation as a child. As a result of that I was not only uninterested in Judaism, I was rather negative towards it for upwards of the first thirty-five years of my life. I had a Bar Mitzvah, but one that drove me away. And what I see, in retrospect, that the experience lacked was information. I didn't know *any*thing. I didn't know how to read the texts; I didn't know any of the classical commentaries; I didn't know any of the traditional forms of music associated with it. All I knew was bagels and lox, and that wasn't enough. It wasn't until I was about thirty-seven that I began to look at Judaism again.

I had been interested in various non-Western religions, but I hadn't really practiced them. At the age of 37, I had an intuition that maybe what I was looking for as a practice I could find in my own back-

yard. But I would have to pull up the crabgrass, stick in the shovel, turn over the earth, and maybe somewhere I'd find something that was still alive and growing. And I think that the classical texts we discussed *are* still alive and growing via commentary and discussion.

There are several rabbis, cantors, and musicologists that I've studied with—no single teacher. Although there are, as usual in Judaism, several viewpoints, for me the Judaic tradition seems to foster one having *teachers* rather than a teacher. The Hassidic tradition is different; they definitely do have a central figure. Generally I find in Judaism a certain amount of argumentation and give and take and digging into the text with a group of people who are not all going to passively listen to what somebody says and try to get that into their heads, but who are going to want to approach it on their own under the leadership of a number of people who may also not agree exactly. There's intellectual and spiritual vitality all within a certain parameter of shared agreement, which I find amazing to be alive and flourishing.

P. *In a way you were approaching it as an outsider.*

S.R. You're right to some extent. *Except* that I'm not *really* an outsider. And I think that puts me in a different position than when I went to Africa or studied Balinese music. But certainly much of the experience of being an outsider going into something that promised to be very, very interesting, is the same. In that, you're right, I am an outsider going back.

P. *But from that point of view, listening to a lot of Western music and non-Western music, what is of value? You don't come out of those cultures—Africa and Bali. You're witnessing it as a Westerner, but you are trying to listen to it.*

S.R. I didn't study Balinese or African music as a religious pursuit. I studied it because I loved the music. And I wanted to know: how is this done? I heard African drumming first in my teens, and I knew it was intensely rhythmic and it swung, but I didn't know what the musicians were doing and nobody else did either. Balinese music I also heard in my teens while at Cornell University; I was taking a music course with professor William Austin. I was amazed at this music. But again, at that time, in the 1950s, you didn't ask the question: how is this done? There was no one around doing it.

But now we're living at a point where it's very easy to find musicians doing it. The book by Colin McPhee and the book by A.M. Jones on Balinese and African music respectively were really pivotal because they showed the music in Western notation. But if I hadn't originally *heard* that music and hadn't really been attracted to it emotionally, I wouldn't have read them. Again it starts with the emotional impetus to ferret out the information; otherwise, who cares?

And the same thing for my own Judaic background.

P. *You refer back to that period when there was a common practice, that shared experience. What replaces that now? What do we have?*

S.R. I don't think I can answer that question. I see the problem the way you do and I don't know what the answer to it is. I doubt that it's possible to have one worldwide uni-ritual for everybody. I think that's highly unlikely, because even with the travel that tends to homogenize, there still are these differences.

As we've seen very recently in the Muslim world, there's a tension that I don't think is going to be easily relieved; between mobility, technology, and at the same time, the preservation of very ancient life styles which generate a sense of religious community without which life can get really ugly. I experience it in my own life between being unable to become part of a large Jewish community and at the same time wanting to become a part of that.

My wife and I talk about the Maranos. They were the secret Jews in the Spanish inquisition; they practiced downstairs in the

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basement. I experience this tension. I don't have a solution. I'm not ready to move to Brooklyn and become a Hassid. A lot of people have done that, but I don't think that's going to be widely viable. I think that in a way this is sort of what was going on recently in Iran: a kind of Muslim version of that. "Get out of here! We want our life, the way it was!" That's very understandable, but it's just a little too simplistic; it's just a little bit too much like an ostrich. But it is very human, and it is one of the voices that's got to be heard now.

P. *It doesn't seem that there's really any way to go back.*

S.R. No, there isn't any way to go back, and there's no way to forget about history either. So (and this is a very Judaic view by the way) one has to live with certain pushes and pulls, and there is no one simple definable thing that will relieve the situation.

All I can say is that I think you're absolutely right, and we're all in this together. It's a cause for worldwide concern. I'm just trying to solve it within the limited sphere of my own influence. I don't approach it politically. I'm just really following my own nose.

P. *People listen to your music. Do you have any intention either in foresight or in hindsight of affecting people with your music, and if so, how?*

S.R. Well, two things: number one, I hope my music is a positive force for all those who hear it. I hope that it can spread some joy and some emotional strength to anybody who listens to it. But it is not something we can make a religion out of. I think that we should be very wary of making religions out of, let's say, Mark Rothko's paintings or any contemporary music that is not part of a very clearly defined, well-established, rooted, world religious tradition. Because I think that those things lead to excess, pretense, and basically some very problematical areas. I think that good music of any sort can have a very positive and beneficent effect on people. I would very much hope that that would be the case with

my music. But I don't think that it is in any way, shape, or form a substitute for religious practice in a very straightforward sense of that word, within one of the various world traditions or modification of those traditions.

P. *What about the Native American tradition?*

S.R. I've been to a Sun Dance in 1966 which made an enormous impression on me. I went to Southern Colorado near a place called Pagosa Springs. I don't know anything about American Indian music really. But I certainly was very impressed at that Sun Dance that went on for three days.

P. *But you wouldn't seek that out as a source?*

S.R. No, what I feel at the moment is that what I'm learning most from is Western music. At the moment I think I'm involved in something that's fairly widespread in the musical world which is a kind of reassessment of Western materials. I would say that this is in very different ways preoccupying a lot of composers now.

P. *It's interesting that in listening to your music it's clearly identifiable as "American" music.*

S.R. I think that's definitely the case. But America is, amongst other things, also a continuation of European civilization. During the sixties and seventies it became important for me to investigate non-Western cultures, because it had been denied me in my education. After a very long dosage of that I have the feeling of wanting to go back to things which I forgot and did not develop during the period of enthusiasm for non-Western music. Earlier as a music student with Hall Overton and later at Juilliard, I was very moved by and therefore studied Béla Bartók's music. Earlier still I listened to and played jazz. We are really Europeans; we are really American, and—well, it's a balancing act.

P. *And does jazz figure in this now?*

S.R. For me now, no. I think a lot of things come at different periods of someone's life—at least they did in mine—and when that period is over, it's over. On the other hand, it's *inside*, and doesn't go away. You are what you eat and what you think and hear, and if you think and hear and play enough, that becomes part of your organism. Jazz hit so early—I was fourteen—that there would be no way that it could leave.

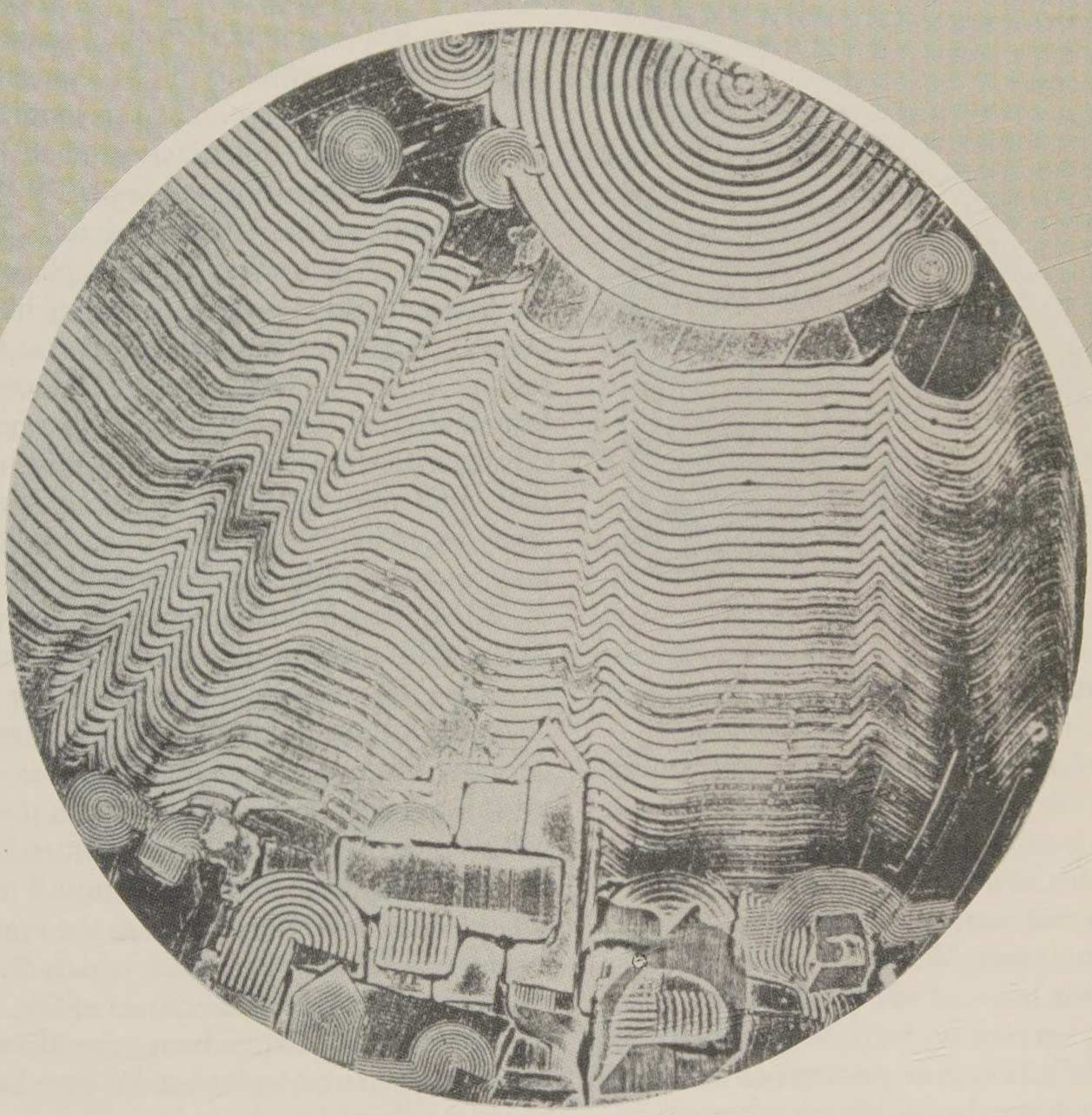
P. *In some of your writings, you indicate there might be some kind of common music, some kind of universal music...*

S.R. I said that there was a period of common practice in the West and that there are other cultures that may have maintained a *style* of music over thousands of years. But I would say, as a musical statement and also as a political statement, that I believe in pluralism. Cultures are very various, and their details should be preserved and honored. It may be possible for somebody in India to listen to my music and enjoy it, and vice versa, but we should also not try to pretend that it isn't different. It is different.

I think I would stress, at least at the moment, in terms of what's going on in the world, that each group, large and small, needs to be perceived for what it is and not smoothed over in some kind of universal cement. Certainly it is getting harder and harder for many traditions to exist without being any more than museum pieces. Tribes in Ghana are no longer structured the way they were in 1957 when local chiefs supported an ensemble, creating a basic economic structure that paid for music. Now traditional musicians who want to make a living have to join a company that tours Europe and America. Though I've never been there, I'm told Bali has not changed as much. Synagogue chant has proven to be very durable. And I gather from the things I've read and seen that Native American Indians are becoming intensely aware of the fact that they have something to maintain that is unique. I think that mutual respect is the important thing in all these cases. There are particularly technological forces in motion to make our life styles more similar, and that will in fact happen. So it's a question of *simultaneously* trying to maintain the many different, sometimes related, older traditions—related but different. And that mutual respect: that's what's important. ◇

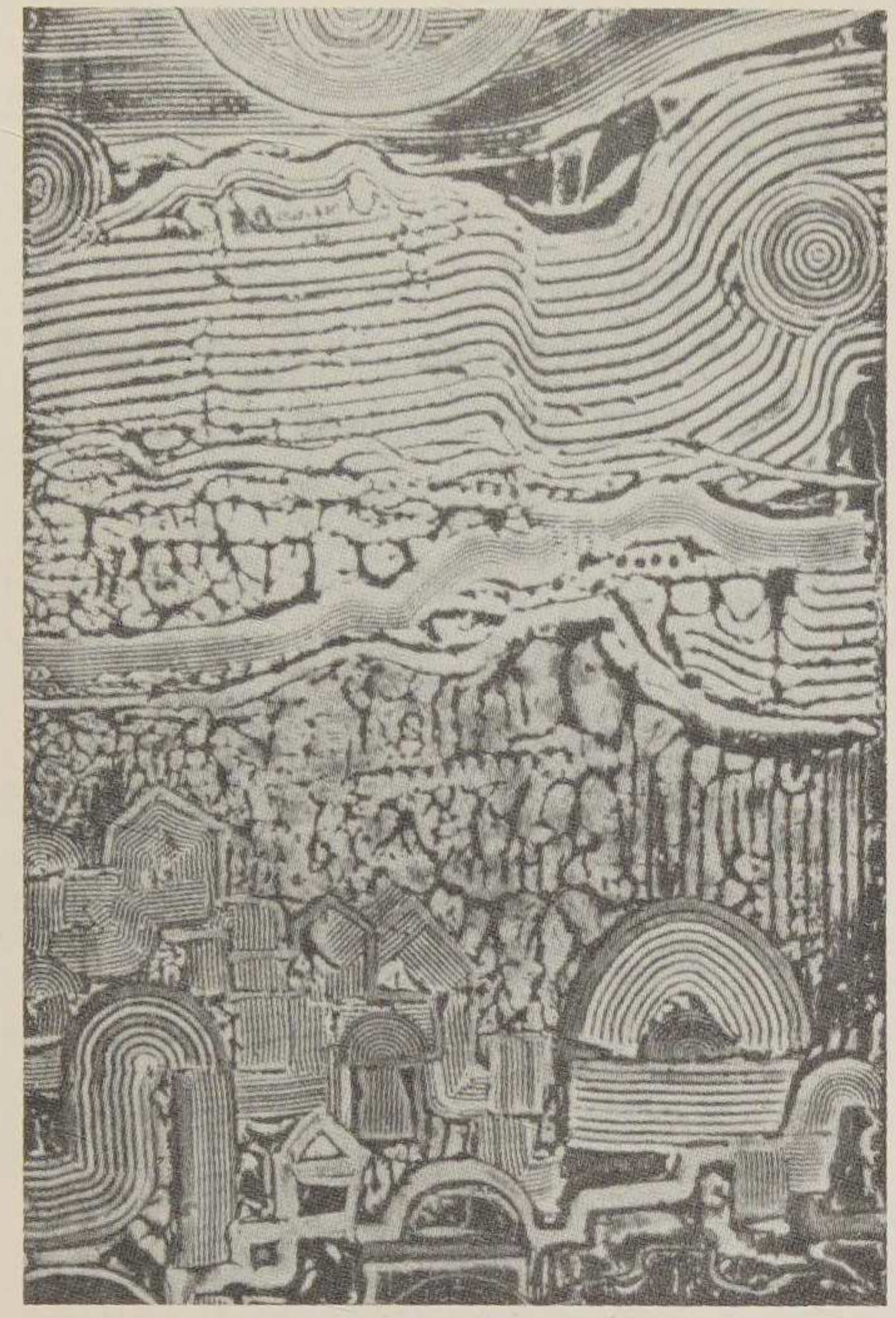
The Celestial Orchestra

by Howard Schwartz *illustrations by Yitzhak Greenfield*



Once it happened that Reb Nachman of Bratslav woke up in the middle of the night, and instead of the deep silence that usually pervaded, he heard something like a faint music. At first the sound was no more than that of an approaching wind, but soon he could make out that it was actually a kind of music. What could it be? He had no idea. But he continued to hear that music, ever so faintly, sometimes present, sometimes about to disappear. Nor did it grow any louder, so that he had to strain to listen. One thing was for certain, though: Reb Nachman felt drawn to this music, as if it were a message he was trying to receive, which was coming to him from a great distance.

Then Reb Nachman got up and went into his study and sat down by the window. And yes, from there he could hear the music slightly louder, as if he were a little closer to its source. And now it did not disappear, but it remained very faint. Nor was he able to identify it with any instrument with which he was familiar—it did not sound like a violin or a flute; not like a bass fiddle and not like a drum. Nor did it have the sound of a voice or voices. If only he were



able to hear it better, he thought, he might be able to identify its source.

Reb Nachman left the house and walked outside. He walked out into the field beyond the gate, under a sky crowded with stars. There he had no memory, except for questions that concerned the source of the mysterious music. While his eyes were fixed on the heavens, the ground remained unknown beneath his feet. And for that time he did not impose patterns on distant stars or imagine the life they might sustain. Nor did he count the gift of the stars as riches. Instead he listened for a long, long time.

At first Reb Nachman thought that what he heard was seamless, and was coming from a single instrument. But after a while he was almost able to separate the instruments that wove their music together so well. Yet this new knowledge did not satisfy his longing and curiosity; in fact, it only served to whet it. Where was this distant music coming from? Surely it was not drifting there from any orchestra in Bratslav, or from anywhere else in this world, of that Reb Nachman was certain. No, this was some kind of celestial music, music of the spheres.

Then Reb Nachman began to realize how much he wanted to follow that music and discover its source. And this longing grew so great that Reb Nachman became afraid that his heart might break. Then, while he was staring up into the stars, he saw a very large star fall from its place in the heavens and blaze across the sky like a comet. And he followed that first star to fall and shared its last journey. And somehow it seemed to Reb Nachman that he was falling with that star, and was caught up in that same motion, as if he had been swept away by an invisible current, and he closed his eyes and let himself be carried.

When Reb Nachman opened his eyes again he found himself seated inside a chariot of fire that blazed its way across the heavens. And he did not have time to wonder how this had happened, or what it meant, but only to marvel in awe as the wonders of the heavens passed before his eyes. Before him he saw two kinds of luminaries: those which ascended above were luminaries of light; and those which descended below were luminaries of fire. And the luminaries of fire did not cease flowing, like rivers of fire. And when his eyes had become adjusted to the sudden illuminations that crossed his path, Reb Nachman became aware of a presence beside him, and he began to perceive a dim body of light.

Presently the angel who drove the chariot spoke to him, and said: "Welcome, Reb Nachman. I am the angel Raziel, and I will serve as your guide in this kingdom. You should know that your calling and your prayers have not gone unheard in Heaven. This chariot has been sent to bring you to the place you long for, the source you are seeking."

And with each word that the angel Raziel spoke, the light that surrounded his

ethereal body grew brighter, until he appeared to Reb Nachman as a fully revealed being. This was the first time that Reb Nachman had ever been face to face with an angel; and yet, strange to say, he did not feel the fear he would have expected, but rather felt as if he had been reunited with a long lost companion.

It was then that Reb Nachman saw the chariot approach some kind of parting of the heavens, which resembled a line drawn across the cosmos. As they drew closer, he saw that it was actually an opening through which an ethereal light emerged. Raziel recognized the question taking form in Reb Nachman's mind, and he said: "We are approaching the place where the Upper Waters and the Lower Waters meet. This is where the Upper Worlds are separated from the Lower Worlds, and what belongs to the spheres above is divided from what belongs to the spheres below."

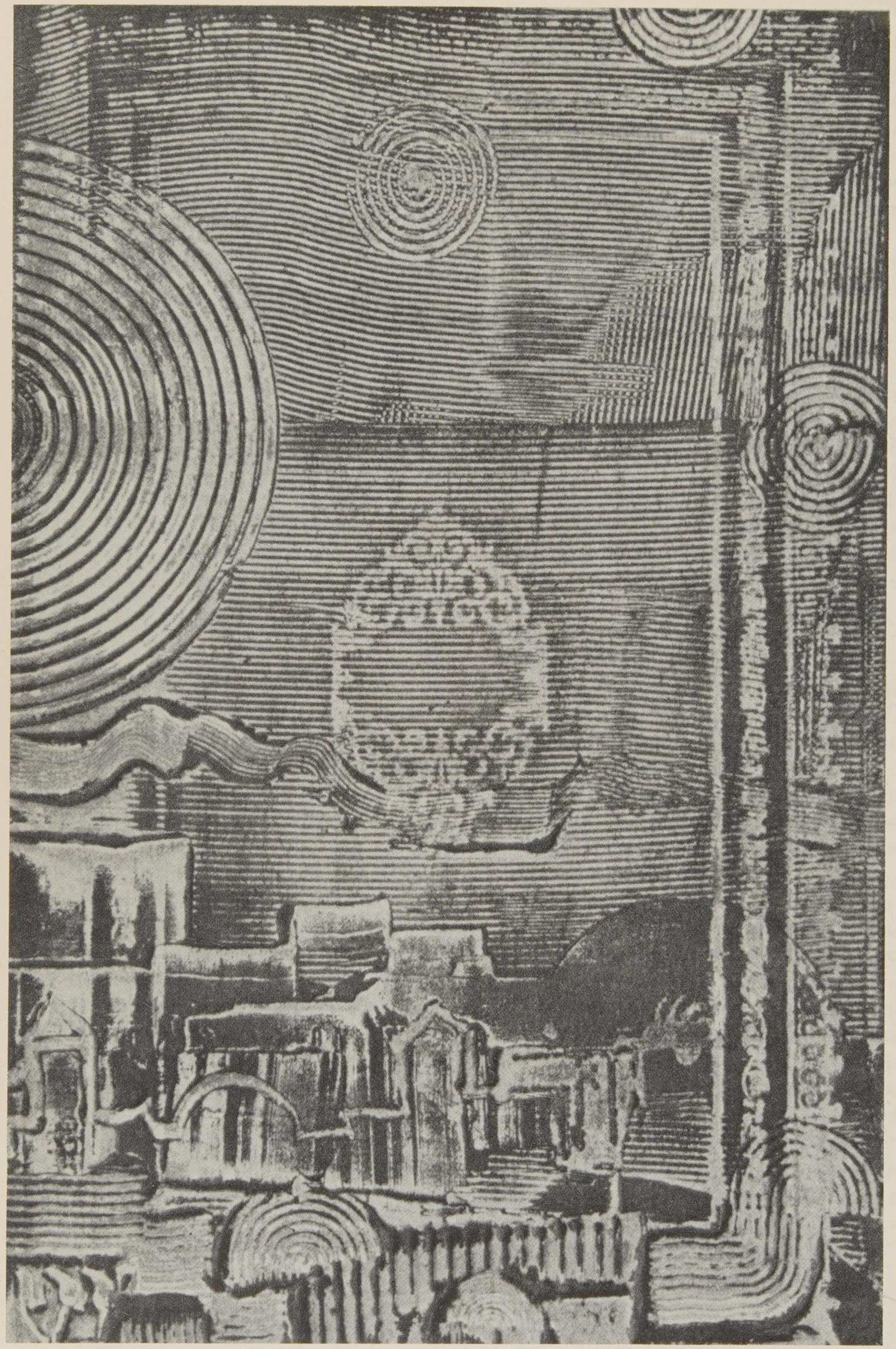
No sooner did the angel finish speaking than the chariot approached close enough to that place for Reb Nachman to catch a glimpse of what lay on the other side. And what he saw was a magnificent structure suspended in space! And from that glimpse he knew that whatever it was, no human structure could begin to compare with it. But then, before he had time to question the angel, the chariot passed through that very aperture, to the complete astonishment of Reb Nachman, for it was no higher than a hand's breadth. It was at that moment that Reb Nachman grew afraid for the first time, for he realized that he was flying through space at a great height, and he did not dare to look down. Then he said to the angel: "How is it possible that we have passed through that place which is no more than three finger-breadths?"

Raziel said: "In your world of men, Reb Nachman, it is possible to contain a garden in the world. But in this kingdom it is possible to contain the world in a garden."

Even as Raziel spoke these words Reb Nachman had already been captured by the radiant vision that loomed ahead. And again, without his having to ask, Raziel replied: "The place you are about to be taken to, Reb Nachman, is the very one you have been seeking. But since even this chariot is not permitted to approach much closer to that sacred place, you must soon depart from it and remain suspended in space, like the Sanctuary you see before you."

And without any other explanation, Reb Nachman realized that the wonderful structure he saw must be the Celestial Temple, after which the Temple in Jerusalem had been modeled, and with which it was identical in every aspect, except for the fire that surrounded the heavenly Sanctuary. For the marble pillars of this heavenly miracle were surrounded by red fire, the stones by green fire, the threshold by white fire, and the gates by a blue fire. And angels entered and departed in a steady stream, intoning an unforgettable hymn to a melody Reb Nachman heard that day for the first time, but which he recognized as if it had been familiar to him all the days of his life.

Then Reb Nachman realized that he was no longer within the chariot, but was suspended in space without hands or feet for support. And then, with his eyes fixed on that shimmering vision, he was able to distinguish for the first time the Divine Presence of the Shekhina hovering above the walls and pillars of the Temple, illuminating them, and wrapping them in a glowing light that shone across all of Heaven. It was this light that he had seen from the other side of the aperture, before the chariot of fire had crossed into the kingdom of Heaven. And so awe-struck was Reb Nachman to witness the splendor of the Shekhina, that he suddenly experienced an overwhelming impulse to hide his face, and he began to sway in that place and almost lost his balance. Had it not been for the angel Raziel speaking to him at that instant, he might have fallen from that great height. And the angel said: "Take care, Reb Nachman, and know that the Temple remains suspended by decree of the Holy One, blessed be He. And you must remember,



above all, to keep your eyes fixed on its glory, if you are not to become lost in this place. For should you turn your eyes away from the Temple for as long as a single instant, you would risk the danger of drowning under a mass of unrelenting clouds; even a mere distraction would take you to places unintended, from which you might never return. So too you should know that no living man may enter into that holy dwelling place and still descend to the world of men. For no man could survive the pure fire that burns there, through which only angels and purified souls can pass."

When he had regained his balance, Reb Nachman finally discovered the source of the celestial music that had lured him from his house in a world so far removed, and yet so close. And when he followed that music to its source in the Celestial Temple his eyes came to rest on concentric circles of angels in the Temple courtyard. Then he realized that the music he had been hearing was being played by an orchestra of angels. And when he looked still closer he saw that each of the angels played a golden vessel cast in the shape of a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And each one had a voice of its own, and one angel in the center of the circle played an instrument in the shape of the letter Bet.

And as he listened to the music, Reb Nachman realized it was that long note which served as its foundation, and sustained all of the other instruments. And Reb Nachman marveled at how long the angel was able to hold this note, drawing his breath back and forth like the Holy One Himself, who in this way brought the heavens and the earth into being. At that moment Reb Nachman was willing to believe that the world only existed so that those secret harmonies could be heard. And he turned to the angel Raziel, who had never left his side, and once more the angel knew what he wished to know, and said: "The score of this symphony is the scroll of the Torah, which commences with the long note of the letter Bet, endless and eternal, and continues with each instrument playing in turn as it appears on the page, holding its note until the next letter has been sounded, and then breathing in and out a full breath."

And when Reb Nachman listened to that music he arrived at a new understanding of the Torah, and realized that among its many mysteries there was one level on which it existed only as pure music. And he was also aware that of all the instruments in that orchestra, it was that of the letter Bet which reached out to him and pronounced his name. Then the angel Raziel turned to Reb Nachman and said: "The souls of all men draw their strength from one of the instruments in this orchestra, and thus from one of the letters of the alphabet. That letter serves as the vessel through which the soul of a man may reveal itself. And your soul, Reb Nachman, is one of the thirty-six souls that draws its strength from the vessel of the letter Bet, which serves as its Foundation Stone, and holds back the waters of the Abyss."

Then it happened that when the angel Raziel said the word "Abyss," Reb Nachman forgot all of his warnings for one instant, and glanced down at the world so far below. The next thing he knew was that he felt like a falling star. And that is when he realized that he was still standing in the field beyond the gate, following the first star that had fallen, which had now disappeared. And the celestial music, though faint once more, still echoed in his ears. ◇

The Resounding Cosmos and the Myth of Desire

by Robert Lawlor

Since very early in history the assumption persists that music and cosmology share a common substratum of structural and energetic laws. A theory of pre-established universal harmony, knowable through the mathematical sciences, moves like a wave through the history of philosophy from its mythological foundations in Egypt and India into Pythagorean Greece, then into Hebraic and Islamic worlds, and crests again in Christian Europe as an element of Gothic architecture and Renaissance art. With the emergence of field-force theories and de Broglie wave mechanics in contemporary physics, together with our rapidly growing understanding of the bioelectric basis of living systems, faith in a hidden universal harmony reaches a new peak of intensity. I would like to review these modern scientific precepts in the context of the cycle of Shiva myths, hoping to show how the Hindu deification of the dynamics of desire can be read from a tonal perspective as metaphor for the dynamism of the universe.

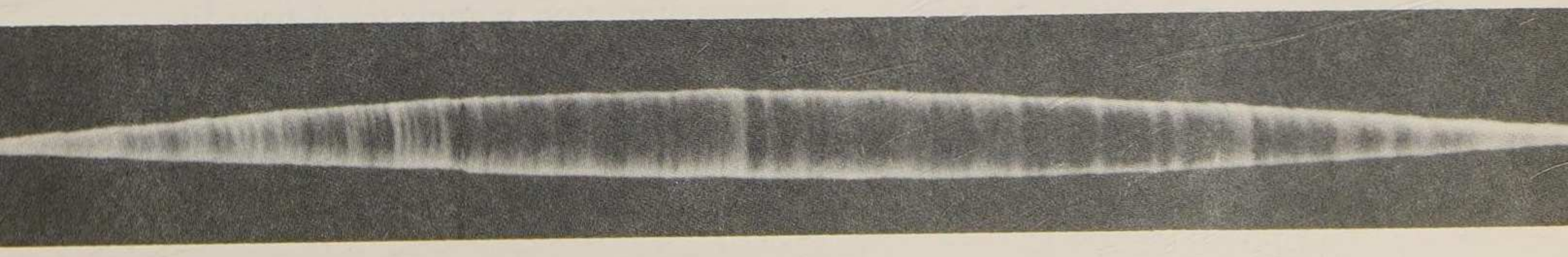
Bertrand Russell in *Analysis of Matter* wrote that what we perceive as material qualities are actually variations in periodic-

ities. From the present limit of our capacities for observation, the atomic components responsible for molecular bonding—electrons and other "particles"—must be imagined as moving fields of patterned resonance. Continuing upward in the hierarchy of matter through the level of stabilized atoms, we find atoms interlocked in different ratios to form a series of chemical compounds. This molecular level of organization expands partly through further resonances into higher level structures. Musical tones are also complex hierarchies resulting from interlocking patterns of resonant waves belonging to the fundamental frequency and to its "overtones" at integral multiples of this frequency. (The "pure" tones produced electrically in the laboratory have been anathema to musicians, and greatly complicated the construction of electronic organs.) Material and tonal stability both occur when the combined harmonic resonances can temporarily resist disintegration and rearrangement.

Resonance (re-sounding) in all physical systems is metaphor borrowed from tone, justified by analogies between sound waves, light waves, water waves, electromagnetic waves, etc. For waves to arise there must be an original disturbance in a suitable medium. For tone to appear, that disturbance—of the air in this case—must be repeated periodically, and the fundamental frequency of the vibrating mechanism determines pitch. The plucked cord has been used by almost all ancient traditions as a paradigm of the universal creative act. If we pull a taut string out of its original position of equilibrium, the amount of the displacement from that equilibrium position is proportional to the force that will arise tending to restore it. Assuming perfect elasticity and ignoring the intrusion of secondary factors, Hooke's law, "strain is proportional to stress," holds at every stage of the oscillation, and the resulting motion is what we call "harmonic." Everyone has observed a slow "harmonic motion" in the to-and-fro oscillation of a clock pendulum, and every child knows how it feels to move like a pendulum from his own experiences on a swing. Analogous harmonic motion in sound waves, light waves, etc. justifies our studying it even more closely.

When a taut string is drawn and released, the restorative elastic force accelerates it in the direction of equilibrium, snapping it back toward the still point at faster and faster velocity. As the string approaches its original position, the restorative force continually diminishes; this decrease naturally decreases the acceleration, and an inversion occurs. The momentum of the string now carries it into a displacement opposite to the former one. Instantaneously it moves again toward the still center around which the cycle continually renews itself. In so moving, the string sends an undulating shiver into the surrounding atmosphere, setting up a pattern of waves whose form has been "seeded" or coded by the characteristics inherent in the initial generative impulse. The vibrating string is thus a symbol of a self-propagating, self-regenerating process and can become a model of a creative law for an inexhaustible universe. Harmonic motion, seen in the pendulum, experienced kinetically on a swing, and heard as tone, is the abstract, universal character of all of the kinds of wave motion we are considering here.

Friction is the mortality factor of expanding wave motion. The energy of the plucked string is eventually dissipated, partly by mechanical friction in the mounting and partly by air friction, as heat. Sound wave energy in general is transformed to



heat. The slender tubes of woodwind and brass instruments, for instance, are chosen to "husband" vibrational energy in "standing waves" *within* the instrument, most of the wave energy being reflected back from the "bell" end toward the source, only very small amounts being needed to activate vibrations in the air around it. The player's energy cost is thus minimized, for he needs only replace the vibrational energy which is lost, and most of that loss is a heat loss within his own instrument. Player, instrument, the ambient air, and the listener are forcibly coupled together into one resonant system, with frictional heat losses at every stage of generation and transmission. This physical energy is spent lovingly to metaphorically "heat" the spiritual passions of the ear.

The Atharva Veda tells us that Brahma creates the universe from waves that become heat. Brahma (original movement) was alone at the beginning. He desired and yearned, "May I exist, may I reproduce myself." He exerted himself and performed *tapas* (concentration, intensification), and when he was exhausted and had heated the waters, waves were created from him, for waters (wave fields) are born from the heated (excited) Anthropocosm. The waters said, "What is to become of us?" He said, "You shall be heated." They were heated and created foam (form).[1]

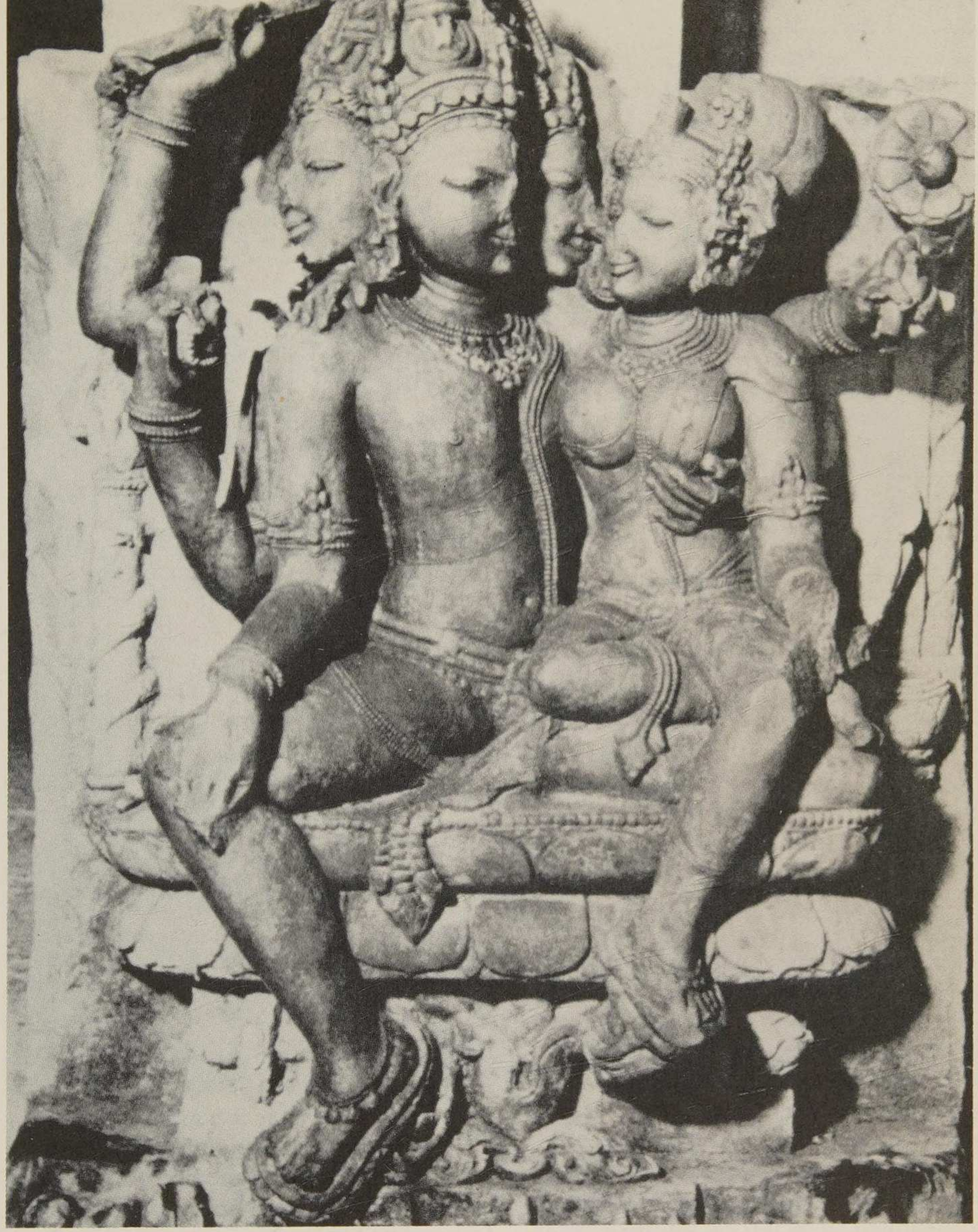
In Hindu mythology, displacement from equilibrium is the work of *Brahma*. He is the creative force who brings into manifestation all the potential forms (sounds) contained within the vast, incomprehensible Silence. The restorative force is *Vishnu*, who limits the expansive, creative energy of Brahma. Together they create the measurable cyclic impulses which reverberate through the spirit-substance of the *unspeakable*. Vishnu's perpetuity is guaranteed by the cycles which he creates, for by definition a cycle is a coincidence of beginning and end.

The point of equilibrium is *Shiva*, the still point (third eye). While annihilating the forces of his two comrades, Shiva also holds within himself the potentialities of both displacing and restorative forces. The myth depicts these extremes by showing Shiva in some stories as the master ascetic and in others as the abandoned seducer. Shiva's contrasting nature reflects the metaphysical view that opposites act as interchangeable identities. The mystery of the one that is three in Shiva is logical metaphor for the vibrating string and, by extension, for all "harmonic" wave motion.

The creative triad of Brahma (creation), Vishnu (restoration), and Shiva (destruction) is easy to find in the physics of the string, but motivation for the original act is the power of *Kama*, the Hindu deification of universal desire. The myth reveals that Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are all subject to Kama's power of Desire, for in the very beginning Brahma "desired" to manifest himself, and reproduce himself. In the Puranas, Kama is symbolized as pulling the string of a bow which sends the arrow of passion and lust into Shiva's heart:

> Kama entered Śiva's heart through his ear in the form of the humming of bees, and when Śiva heard this sweet, erotic sound he remembered Sati and his heart became impassioned. But by his power of meditation he closed his mind to this obstacle, and by will power he awakened from the emotional change that Kama had wrought. Then he expelled Kama by his power of yoga. Kama, now on the outside of Śiva, approached him and shot him with the arrow of Fascination. Śiva was pierced in the heart and became inclined to desire, even though he was as firm as a mountain, but by great effort he expelled Kama and blazed with anger.[2]

We are reading of the dynamics of desire, mythologized as an interplay between Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, and Kama, as metaphor for the reciprocal forces at work in any oscillatory system. By a further act of imagination we can extend oscillating harmonic motion to cover two other important forms of motion, namely *translation* (displacement in a straight line) and *rotation*. Translational motion (think of the inclined plane on which Galileo began the analysis of motion) is actually just a segmented



Shiva manifested in the trinity and in the dualism of Person and Nature

frame for a body moving in response to gravity. Without the resistance of friction, interruption by an obstruction, or the intrusion of other factors, any moving body would be forced to oscillate in eternal harmonic motion around the center of gravity. Rotation can be conceived as vibration subjected to the curve of space. We can actually watch this happening in the common reciprocating steam engine where the to-and-from motion of the piston is linked mechanically to the revolving flywheel. There is a much more complicated example in the heavens as the sun in its seasonal

variation slows to a halt at the solstitial turning points and then accelerates to hurry through the equinoxes at maximum velocity.

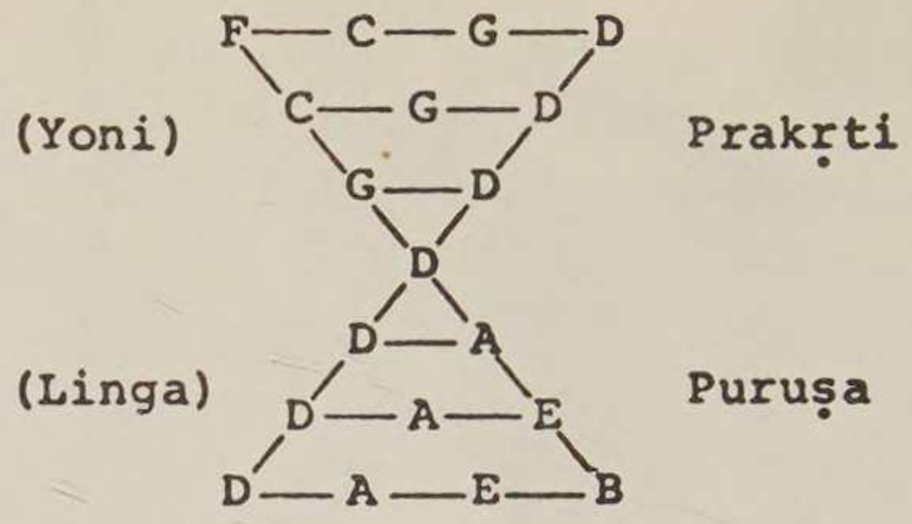
Time becomes perceptible and measurable through the *spatial* rotation of the heavens, where all things move under "harmonic" constraints. In ancient Hindu thought, Time is equated with Deity:

Time is awake when all things sleep.
Time stands straight when all things fall,
Time shuts in all and will not be shut.
"Is," "was" and "shall be" are only Time's children:
O reasoning, be witness and be stable.

Vyasa, *The Mahabharata*

In music all things are "Time's children," for coexistence would be annihilation of "was" and "shall be" and thus of the memory and anticipation which makes "is" of any interest. Different tones can coexist only when separated spatially by substantially different rates of vibration. Within the phenomenal world of sound, silence itself can be conceived not as a void but rather as the perfect symmetry of sound. Two waves can interlock symmetrically to cancel each other's effect. Two organ pipes sounding the same pitch may fall silent if their mouths are placed too close together, furious molecular activity between them becoming perfectly counterbalanced, thus transmitting nothing to the atmosphere.

Music is pervaded by the fundamental law of reciprocity. Changes in frequency and wave-length are reciprocal. Tones rise or fall as reciprocal arithmetical ratios are applied to the string length. "Major" and "minor" are reciprocal tonal patterns. As Ernest McClain points out in *The Myth of Invariance*, Plato conceived the World-Soul as constituted by reciprocal ratios identical with those which in Hindu mythology create the musical "drum of Shiva," the pulsating instrument of creation.



The Drum of Shiva

All frequencies are implicit in the "noise" of the drum. Cosmos—ordered structure—requires separation either in time (rhythm) or in space (differentiation in the periodicities of either light or sound waves). Time and space thus have no separate identities; they measure each other—by movement. The entire perceptible Universe can thus be conceived as vibration, subject to laws of harmonic motion.

Hindu mythology is not unique in dramatizing the way a solitary impulsion becomes its opposite through all of the intermediate gradations we have observed in displacements and velocities. To quote Lévi-Strauss:

> It is the nature of myth to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction. The structure of myth is a dialectic structure in which opposed logical positions are stated, the oppositions mediated by a restatement, which again, when its internal structure becomes clear, gives rise to another kind of opposition, which in its turn is mediated or resolved, and so on.[3]

This same pattern of force, energy, and movement observable in a vibrating string and described by the structure of myths in general is again seen by modern astrophysicists to be the generating pattern in the formation of galaxies and stars. Modern astronomy gives us an image of the creation of galaxies from massive bodies of celestial gases. Within these vast, amorphous, radiant fields of gas, gravitational influences are triggered which cause a warp and densification into nodal patterns. This disequilibrium and turbulence caused by the newly formed galactical mass-centers, now under the forces of contraction, release compound ripples causing violent, abrupt changes

("sonic booms") in the pressure and density of the whole cosmic plasma. In the high-speed turbulence of a galactic cloud the stars are born. This clearly restates the ancient image of universal creation through sound waves or the Word of God; science reaffirms that visible stars and galaxies are spiral blast patterns, residual imprints of standing shock waves from the thundering voice of the universe.

According to the teachings of physics, sonar turbulence, as waves of compression and rarefaction, creates heat; thus are the cosmic fires ignited. Sound, as mentioned before, always becomes heat. The myths of Shiva depict this through the story of Agni (cosmic Fire)—Agni and igneous having the same root—interrupting Shiva and Parvati in their lovemaking. (Parvati is the

Shiva, Lord of yoga, doing penance

Shiva and an aspect of his power, Parvati

feminine "mountain," daughter of the Himalayas, and copulation with Shiva can be read as tonal-arithmetical metaphor in the male and female triangles of the "drum of Shiva.") Angered by the interruption, Shiva deposits his vibrational seed into the mouth of Agni, the vast cosmic field of electromagnetic radiation. Through the mediation of Heat (Agni), the "son of Shiva"—the material world—is born.

Agni ate the seed of Shiva and returned to the gods. They all became pregnant by the seed that was in Agni's mouth...Tortured by the seed they sought help from Shiva who told them to vomit forth the seed...but in Agni alone the seed remained, burning like a comet. Shiva told Agni to release the seed into the womb of those who are heated every month...The burning seed entered into the pores of the skin of the Krittikas and they became the constellations [the Pleiades]. In their misery from the heat they released the seed upon a slope of Himalaya, where the parts came together to become Skanda [god of War], the six-headed son of Shiva [Manifestation], and at that moment Parvati's breasts began to flow with milk...[4]

and Earth, the nurturer, came into being.

To the mystical mind, the laws of thermodynamics in the external world correspond to psychological and emotional inner heats such as lust and passion, and their opposing forces of denial and restraint. Consciousness pivots between two oppositional forms of one universal heat: one heat is form-creative, the erotic expansive heat of desire and ambition (*tejas*), and the other heat is form-destructive, the heat of ascetic withdrawal and self-mastery. Shiva, the midpoint of all contrasts, embodies the two extreme forms of creative and destructive fire. He is the yogi ascetic whose icy control burns and destroys Kama (desire), and he is also the inimitable lover of Parvati,

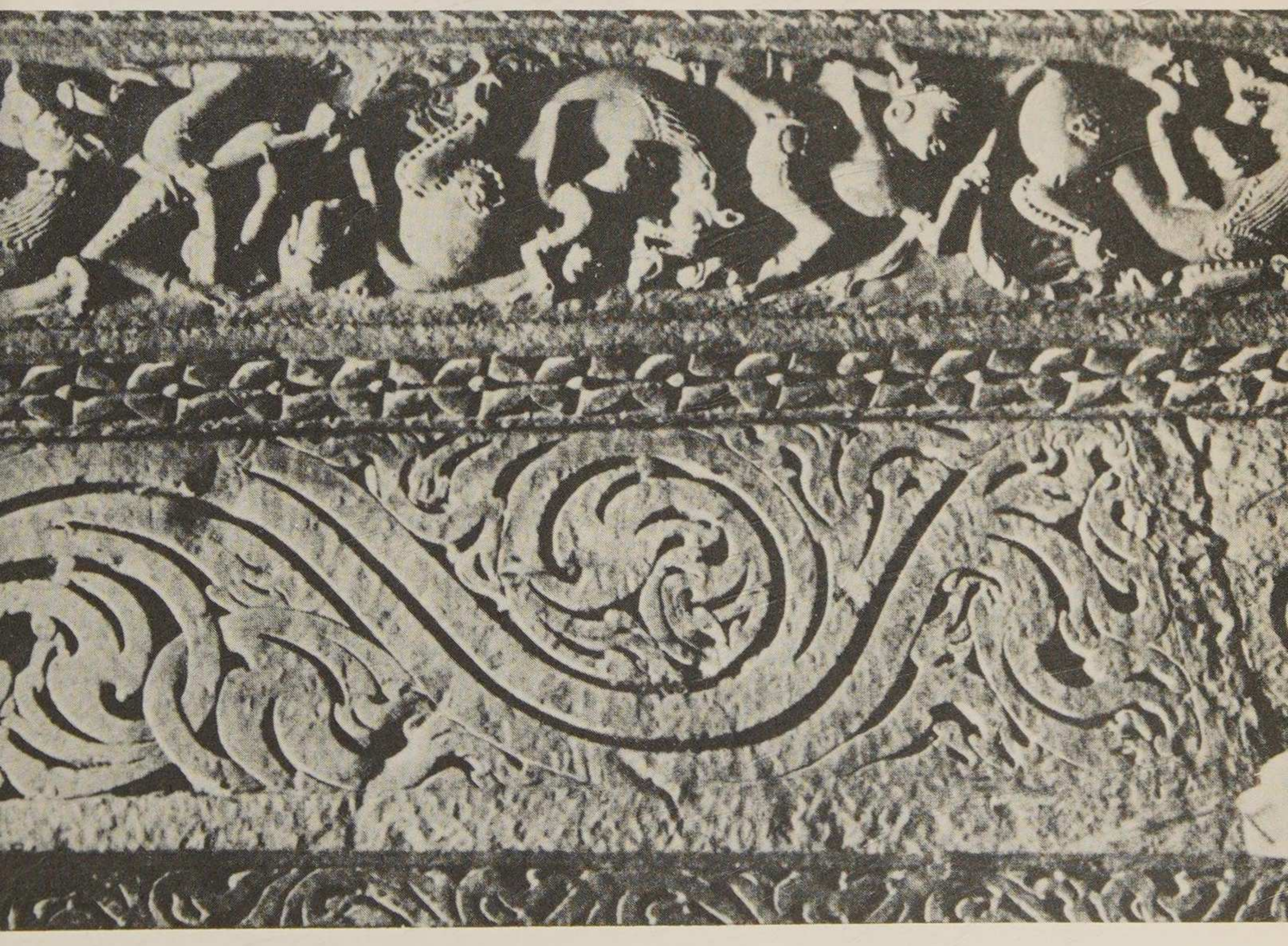
engaged in an eternal copulation which resurrects desire. Shiva verifies that the erotic and the ascetic both generate and destroy each other in a self-perpetuating rhythm. As in the realm of mind and emotion, so in the physical world: without both expansive tension and reciprocal compression and the interplay between them, nothing could exist. Chemical valence is the "desire" in matter for resonance between separate qualities. Structures endure when they are internally self-balanced.

The analysis of sound waves goes far towards making all other kinds of wave motion understandable. The external universe, seen as an interwoven configuration of undulatory wave patterns, resonates with our inner world of consciousness and perception. All forms of life are cosmic resonators. The billions of neurons in the human brain are the loci where temporal wave patterns finally orchestrate the formation of substance and the perception of value. The newest application of harmonic analysis is in the study of brain waves. We are transmitters and amplifiers of universal energies, and no absolute border between perceiver and perceived can be defined.

Ancient musical cosmology considered the perceptible world of sound and light to be an emanation from imperceptible, metaphysical reality. Nicolas of Cusa writes: "If the transcendental is accessible to us only through the media of images and symbols, let the symbols at least be as distinct and unambiguous as the mathematics will allow." Tones are as distinct and Hindu images as unambiguous as any other symbols available. They can help consciousness be born in the integrated Universal body, God's body of inaudible Music. ◇

Notes

1. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Śiva. *(Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 41.*
2. Ibid., *p. 149.*
3. As quoted by O'Flaherty, ibid., *p. 35.*
4. Ibid., *p. 99.*



The Silk Drum

In the ancient days there was a great lord who, feeling himself near to his ending, admonished his only daughter.

"The green of the plum tree has come and gone. Now is the time of blossoming. But still you have not chosen a husband. This and that suitor comes and goes but none is to your liking. Must I die and leave you unaccompanied?"

"Not so, my father," said the Lady Yumiyo. "I shall cause to be fashioned a drum of silk—of silk stretched upon a bamboo frame. He who hears the note when my fingers strike it is the man whom I shall marry."

"This is foolishness," her father said. "A silken drum will make no sound. Alas, I shall never see a grandchild."

But the drum, nevertheless, was made. And many a one came to listen, head stretched forward, urgent to hear—some because of the lady's beauty, some for the readiness of her wit, some because it was widely known that she would be well-provided. And some for all three reasons.

But not a sound did anyone hear when she struck the drum with her hand.

"I told you so," her father said.

But the Lady Yumiyo said nothing. She merely went on striking the drum as the suitors came and went.

And then, one day, in the frame of the doorway, there appeared a well-set-up young man, richly appareled, keen of glance, with the air of one who had come a long way.

He made a deep bow to the old lord and a lesser one to his daughter.

"From where do you come?" the father asked.

"From beyond the mountains and seas and valleys."

"And for what have you come, man from afar?"

"For your daugher, the Lady Yumiyo."

"She is for him who can hear the silk drum. Never

tell me that the sound has reached you, across the seas and mountains!"

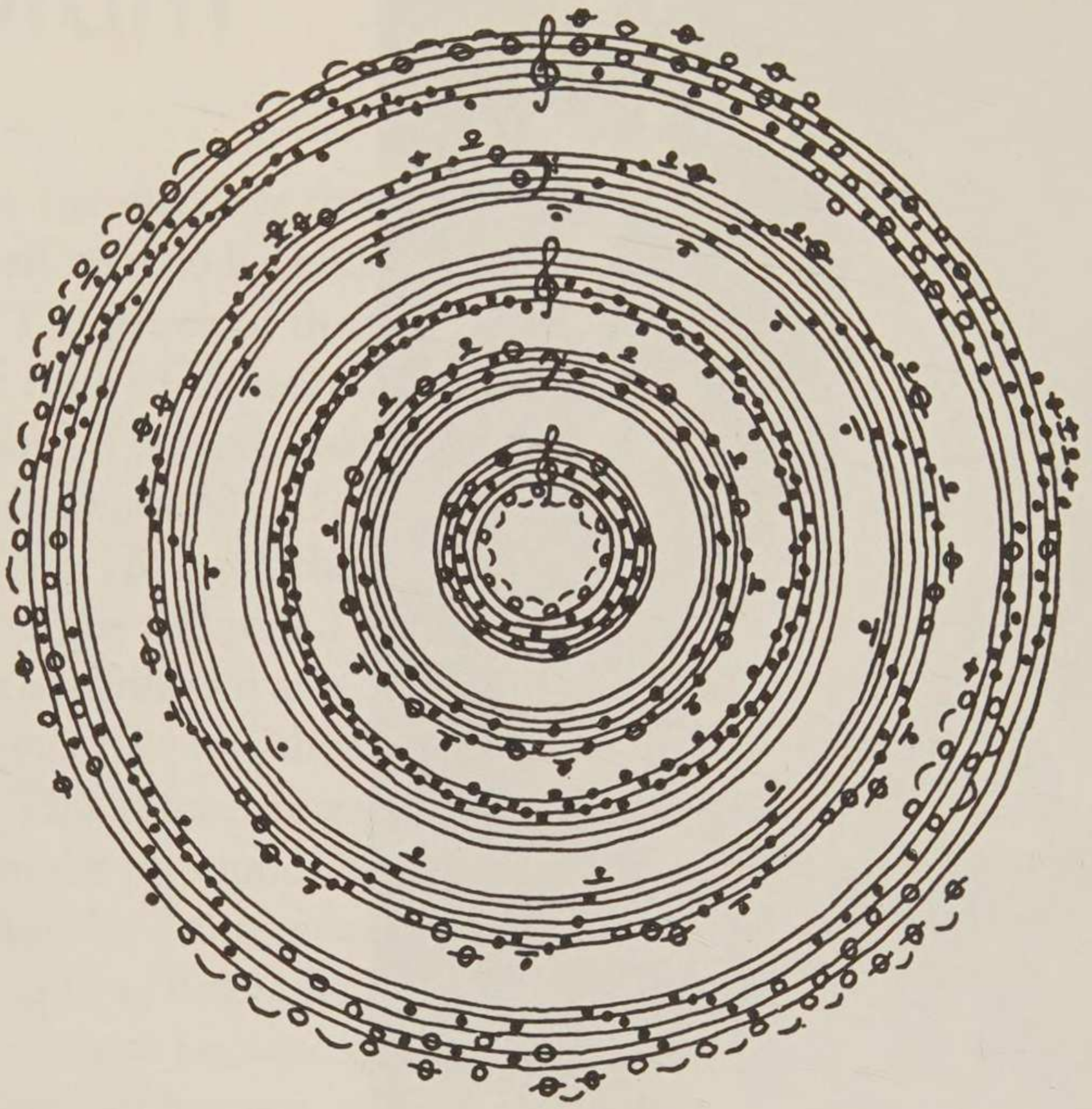
"No sound of the drum has reached me, sir."

"Then why, stranger, linger here?"

"I have heard its silence," the young man said.

The Lady Yumiyo smiled at her father and put the silken drum aside. She had no longer any need of it.

—Graft on the stock of an old Japanese phrase
by P.L. Travers



THREE FOR ARISTOTLE

by Ernest McClain

Akróasis: The Theory of World Harmonics
By Hans Kayser, translated by Robert Lilienfeld. Boston: Plowshare Press, 1970. Pp. 177. $5.95.
Through Music to the Self
By Peter Michael Hamel, translated by Peter Lemesurier. Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1979. Pp. 228. $6.95.
The Hidden Face of Music
By Herbert Whone. New York: The Garden Studio, 1978. Pp. 128. $4.95.

Aristotle was puzzled: "It is not easy to determine the nature of music, or why anyone should have a knowledge of it." Here is a triad of confident answers, one to irritate him, one to baffle, and one charming enough to make him stop trying to answer his own questions.

For Hans Kayser in *Akróasis* ["hearing"]: *A Theory of World Harmonics*, music is the essential foundation for science and religion. He aims "to build a new spiritual world" from the ancient Pythagorean materials of tone and number, "tone as psychic experience, and number as concrete symbol for the rational, measurable, and materially graspable." Kayser's considera-

ble technical work on harmonics, including *Der hörend Mensche* (1932), *Vom Klang der Welt* (1937), *Harmonia Plantarum* (1943), is untranslated and in some instances out of print. His slender *Akróasis* (1964) is intended only as a general survey of the range of harmonic thinking and as a credo for his new religion.

Harmonic thinking begins with a meditation on the monochord. The sounding string permits tonal intervals to be defined by the ratios of string length and thus provides Pythagorean philosophy with the twin tools of tone and number to harmonize inner and outer realms of experience. All things measurable by number acquire "a spiritual meaning, a psychic value" from this paradigmatic association with the monochord.

Pythagoreanism has always been mystical. Plato considered its integrated disciplines of music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy to be the most effective path toward piety, the highest virtue. Pythagorean piety is evoked by the awesome beauty of the heavens, and to appreciate it requires all the science we command. "Today we are spiritually impoverished," Kayser reminds us. "In the midst of historical disasters of world-shaking dimensions...the soul of man looks for a stronghold." Harmonics is Kayser's stronghold, his refuge from chaos and despair. He reminds us of the new meanings "tone-numbers" acquired with the modern discovery of overtones vibrating at integral multiples of the fundamental, and with the development of wave theories in several branches of modern physics, where the Fourier analysis of harmonic resonances opens new windows on the world. If an old Pythagorean soul, resting on its star while awaiting reincarnation, were returned to earth for Kayser's tour of new harmonic applications not only in music, art, and architecture but also in chemistry, crystallography, the morphology of plants (Kayser's specialty), atomic physics, and above all in cosmology—beginning with Kepler's discovery of harmonic resonances in planetary motions—that already pious soul would immediately expire again from sheer ecstasy. It would need an additional thousand years on its star to recover from astonishment at how feeble the original Pythagorean faith in tone and number now seems from our modern perspective.

The passion of Kayser's Pythagorean piety is easy to understand. There is generally more fervor in modern science than in the modern church. For Kayser, harmonics is "a sign that our life has a goal." In his own life he laid aside the demons of "Ambition, Self-assertion, and Power" to work alone, without colleagues or students, with neither institutional support nor public recognition, to bring to light the harmony he was convinced was hidden in everything around us. The harmonic attitude "demands the highest measure of self-renunciation." An ego lost in cosmic consciousness has little energy and no time for self-pity. Kayser's religion demands "personal responsibility...in the direction of the values of humanity and tolerance," but his attention is on the structure of the world, and sin, salvation, and the gods themselves cannot distract him.

Kayser generously attributes his understanding of ancient Pythagoreanism to the work of Albert von Thimus in recovering its techniques just a century ago (*Die harmonikale Symbolik des Altherthums* (1868-76). Since my own work on ancient mythology involves a systematic application of Thimus' principles, my debts to Thimus are at least as extensive as Kayser's. Perhaps the unwary reader should be warned that the "Pythagorean table" which Thimus reconstituted and which Kayser prints as an appendix to *Akróasis* is an anachronism whose virtue is not its historicity but rather its ability to help us moderns learn to read the old Nichomachean tables with their simultaneous double meanings, which classicists persist in overlooking. Thimus and Kayser are probably both wrong in introducing zero and its derivatives (1/0, 0/1, etc.) into their discussions of Pythagoreanism. Kayser tends to emphasize those elements in which Thimus is mistaken. Let me credit Thimus

here with three discoveries for which I think future Platonists at least can be eternally grateful: 1) Pythagorean dualism, its "symmetry of opposites," requires double meanings to be considered *simultaneously*. Tones both rise and fall; numbers both "wax" as integers and "wane" as reciprocal fractions. 2) This symmetry requires pebble arrays like those in the "holy tetractys" to be rotated 180° to produce an "hour-glass drum" or "drum of Shiva," or Greek *chi* (X). Thimus is the first to do this for Plato's *Timaeus* creation myth. 3) Such symmetries must be encoded in *integers*, via common denominators which allow all fractions to be cleared. Thimus did this for the chromatic scale, using the number factorial 6 (6! = 720) which has since proved to unlock the arithmetical mysteries of Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*. *(See illustration below)* Thimus' achievement is spectacular, and Kayser has done much to prevent its being lost.

"Harmonics can fertilize all fields of human knowledge at the source, in the clear streams of its theorems and value-forms," Kayser declares. The fundamental theorem of *Akróasis* is clear:

> Since all harmonic number relations are proportions, and since each proportion can be represented visually, the possibility exists of a direct transposition of the auditory into the visual. This *audition visuelle* is then the true realm of harmonic symbolism, in which the harmonic forms become spiritual.

Now this is a strange pronouncement. Harmonic forms are directly spiritualized by the ear, through the deeply affective power of tone. Eye and ear are human *complements*, not *substitutes*, as Kayser implies. The harmonic ratios made visible, for instance, in the arrays of pipes in an organ can be very beautiful indeed, but that visual beauty is incommensurable with the aural beauty of their sounds. *Audition visuelle* is a non-sensical contradiction in terms. To credit it with being "the true realm of harmonic symbolism" reveals that Kayser's commitment to music and hearing is problematical. He is actually as biased in favor of *vision* as the ancient Greeks knew themselves to be. To declare that "through *audition visuelle* and its diagrams...the meditative powers of the soul receive a concrete support, making possible the training of an akroatic ('hearing') attitude" puts the cart before the horse.

That Kayser is on the side of the angels is clear from the nobility of his intentions and from his reverence for the world. It is less clear that *Akróasis* does justice either to philosophy or to himself. Aristotle, we remember, was more than a little distressed by the Pythagorean mythology he encountered and by people who made "mathematics identical with philosophy." The numbers and diagrams of *audition visuelle* are poor substitutes for the experience of singing, playing, and listening, whose value to society Aristotle never doubted, although he wondered how to describe it. *Akróasis* is unbalanced. It is nonsense to speak today of "the obvious breakdown of a civilization based preponderantly on pure logic and

The numbers are frequency ratios for the rising scale and string length ratios for the falling scale.

360	384	400	432	450	480	540	576	600	648	675	720	
D	e♭	e	f	f#	G	A	b♭	b	c	c#	D	rising
D	c#	c	b	b♭	A	G	f#	f	e	e♭	D	falling

quantitative thought"; who would seriously claim that our civilization is based on logic? Kayser notes that a technology "not counterbalanced by psychic and ethical values, ends by running amok," but how can he associate this with "the uncontrolled madness of natural science" when that science, which he practices himself, is dedicated to the study of order, of principles, of invariances? When he writes concerning the ancients that "with them the soul, the heart, the psychic powers of imagination, threatened to overflow, and demanded limitation by reason, measure and number," he is describing not the ancients but himself, I suspect. For the Pythagoreans number represented power; it did not limit feeling and imagination but released them to work constructively. It is Kayser's world and ours in which human imagination threatens to swamp human reason. His inversion of history is important. One of the hardest lessons to learn is that we cannot learn everything, do everything, or be everything. All value is born of limitation. Kayser, like the true artist, imposes limits *on himself* in order to gain the intensity to produce something he considers worth offering to the world he loves. Aristotle might smile at the philosophy of *Akróasis*, but the vision of *Akróasis* comes close to providing a "first principle" for the organization of scientific knowledge, and the reach of modern harmonics would have made even Aristotle gasp. It reaches a little farther because of Kayser's selfless dedication, and his acceptance of limitation. His better books deserved to be translated first.

For Peter Michael Hamel in *Through Music to the Self*, music is essentially tonal magic, not a science of number, and that magic, rather than directing us outward to the cosmos, directs us inwards, awakening us to "hidden depths of experience" and healing our alienated selves.

Hamel's book grew out of his composer's distress at the stereotyped music which blankets us "on television, in the cinema, at the shops, at the office, at work, at the football stadium." "On and on the music plays, and we are no longer aware of it. It has become part of the decor, an unconscious conditioning, a mechanical background to everyday life." Hamel sets out to explore the novelty which could shock us into listening again. But he has an additional concern with the dark traumas of the modern soul and a deep empathy with the shamanistic practices of exotic religions which, through tonal magic, gain access to a healing "otherness." "The extent to which music can supply an image of such phases of ultimate crisis and serve as bearer and vehicle of a spiritual message from the 'totally other'—such is the theme of this book."

It is not clear how useful descriptions of music are to people who have never heard what is being described, but Hamel is the kind of guide who generates curiosity by communicating his own pleasure in the new and the different. His descriptions of group-improvisation, psychedelic music, spiritual jazz, periodic music, electronic music, and of tone-color as "the Vehicle of the Spiritual" are provocative. Perhaps the most interesting part of Hamel's verbal musical tour is the chapter devoted to non-European music. He writes of Indian classical music and Tibetan ritual from firsthand experience, with attention to arresting detail, and with an anecdotal richness which inspires trust. Ten pages of descriptions of his own compositions tell how he himself has set about achieving his "new musical integration." It is always Hamel's ear—not his eye—which leads him on, deeper and deeper into the endlessly magical realm of sound. He knows what it is to be arrested by sound, enthralled by sound, and catapulted to ethereal heights by sound. He pays passing respect to Pythagoras and Kayser, harmonic formants and overtone series, but he would never trade tones for numbers, or exchange music for philosophy. Hamel probably considers nothing he writes to be of any importance except as it encourages the reader to try music for himself.

Hamel closes his world-tour with a

chapter on "Exercise Methods" by which a neophyte might enter into aural experiences which are commonplace for musicians, Sufi mystics, Taoist magicians, Tibetan monks, and Hindu swamis: how to breathe, how to "find your own note," vowel improvisation, relaxation, exercises with a partner, and circle exercises with a group. If this sounds naive it is because musical magic begins at the most naive level of experience, and Hamel is concerned with helping a beginner to cross the threshold. The sickness he would heal demands surrender of the soul at the first sound, for the healing—not so paradoxically—rescues self by first immersing it in an oceanic tonal "otherness."

Hamel is far more tolerant of radical experiments in music making and of naive musical philosophizing than I know how to be, and he quotes, without criticism, a considerable amount of nonsense by people who take themselves too seriously. Hamel apparently does take seriously the notion that the exotic music of the rest of the world should now be integrated with Western music to help create "a world-society," and "world-culture." I shudder at the notion; it violates the principle that intensity of experience is born of limitation. Music of a "one-world" culture would soon blanket us in ennui as successfully as the commercial musical stereotypes which provoked Hamel's adventure in the first place, and cut off all escape. We need private spaces and some degree of cultural isolation to pursue private intuitions and preserve unique cultural heritage. The rich alternatives human imagination devises need congenial local soil. This book is not for Aristotle; he would have been mystified by "alienation," the obsession with problematic selfhood, and the emphasis on the magical, and highly intolerant of so much illogic which the author quotes with apparent approval. But Hamel knows for whom he writes, and in the world as it is, his effort is a well-considered act of love by a man who believes in music and who trusts his ear.

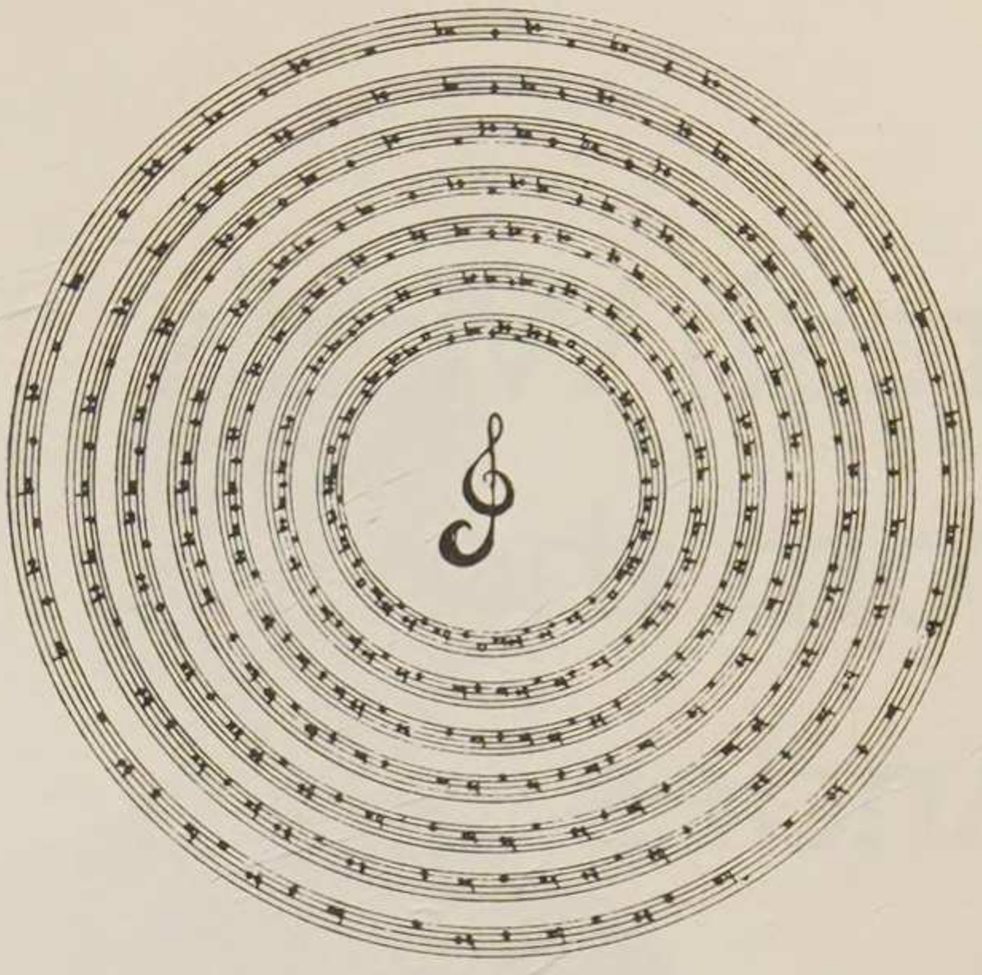
For Herbert Whone in *The Hidden Face of Music*, music is "life itself." The player, "as dynamic as the universe," transports the human being that makes up his audience to "a state of vibrant awareness...at the very threshold of the house of God." Whone's book is a series of brief essays which "attempt to lead the reader into the deeper implication of music," and it is written with such grace, such harmony of intellect and feeling, that the author—an English violinist— is obviously a reincarnated Greek kitharist.

The last gloomy thought in Whone's book is on the first page: "The human race is crucified in the external world and has to *un*cover in order to *re*cover an unfallen state." From here on we are in the company of a man who totally and successfully mythologizes the whole world from the perspective of a player in love with his art, unashamedly the child of his culture, in joyful command of his technique, and reveling in the bodily experience of making music. Whone begins with an essay on "Orpheus and His Lyre" and closes twenty short chapters later with "Man the Player," and the most captivating material in between is his description of how it feels to play the violin, breathing with the music as the arm leads the bow in its dance across the strings, and melody, harmony, counterpoint, and rhythm come alive via the player's own flesh and blood. The kind of "embodiment" the master player knows is what Whone is writing about, and his pen is as gracious as his bow. Many musicians less verbal than Whone will want to present his book to friends, saying: "If you would know how it feels to be a musician, read this."

Whone belongs to the main-stream of Western musical tradition, and conservatory-trained specialists will find it easy to identify with him. He writes almost as lovingly and knowingly of the voice and singing as he does of playing the violin. And he tries to be fair to the winds also, but what string player really could? He can't resist telling that old lie about Apollo, playing the lyre, besting the satyr, Marsyas, playing the

flute (it was really an aulos, played with a reed)—although Whone is circumspect about not mentioning that Apollo had his opponent flayed, and his hide hung on a tree. Now any clarinetist or oboist would want to remind Whone that Apollo didn't win that contest at all, that the Muses whom he invited to judge the contest actually awarded the laurel to Marsyas, and that poor man was skinned alive not for blowing ill but because Apollo was a sore loser. Intellectuals hate to lose. A careful reader might want to quibble with Whone about some other matters also, but nobody would want to spoil his fun. What is impressive is the range of intellectual curiosity and the breadth and depth of philosophical insight which this unusual fiddler developed. "Man became musician and thinker together" could have been written about himself, and with Socrates' approval. We should leave copies of Whone's book lying around where budding virtuosi on the way to their lonely practice rooms might stumble across it and discover how discipline leads to freedom, how the mastery of one's craft can lead to rapport with all else.

"Great art embodies a high sense of play," Whone writes. "The playful imagination of the artist is the creative power of God in Man, and each man is unique... The wise man plays—he is a joker; and sometimes he may choose to put his jokes on canvas or on paper." One could imagine all kinds of artists—dancer, painter, weaver, potter—expressing sentiments very similar to Whone's, if, that is, they could write half so well. Whone's playfulness extends from Mozart to Chinese philosophy, from philology to yoga, from opera to "the Devil as the reverse side of God." Nobody needs to agree with everything he writes, but we all need to harmonize our own worlds as successfully as Whone. "Western man has taken himself too seriously and he has to learn to muse again... The wise man has the buoyancy of the child. Apollonian order has



signed many a death warrant." (See, he does know about that sore loser!)

Whone is the living answer to Aristotle. Any culture which lacked his peer would be spiritually impoverished. We should arrange to lose our copies of Whone at strategic, far-off places where curious strangers can stumble onto this glimpse into Western culture at its civilized best. It is by being true to himself, to his craft, to his own culture that man is most universal. Artists and craftsmen the world over would recognize Whone as one of their own. The last line of this precious book could someday be an epitaph for its author:

"He is a living mediator in a world struggling towards balance." ◇

Ernest McClain, Professor of Music at Brooklyn College, is the author of The Myth of Invariance *and* The Pythagorean Plato, *published by Nicholas Hays, distributed by Weiser's. His* Meditations Through the Quran *is now on press. He is a clarinetist.*

Fresh Winds from the Andes

by Susan Bergholz

Tahuantinsuyo, The American Museum of Natural History, New York City, January 9, 1980

Wandering at night among the somewhat forbidding images of the art of Northwest coast Indians in the dimly lit halls of the Museum of Natural History was a startling contrast to the sounds and sights of the soaring spirit of *Tahuantinsuyo*. The trio of South American musicians presented one of their all too rare (but more and more popular) New York concert/lectures at the Museum, and in the course of the evening, they turned the concert hall into the heights of the Andes.

The group's name comes from the ancient language of the Incas, Quechua, and means "The Four Corners of the World," which included the cultures of various Andean people before the Spanish conquest and was the name by which the Incas called their Empire. The members of the group, Guillermo Guerrero from Peru, Sidulfo Irribarra from Chile, and Pepe Santana from Ecuador, are gifted musicians on a wide variety of instruments: *t'arkas, quenas, antaras,* and *sikus* (flutes), *bombos* (drums), *charangos* (guitars). But much more than this, they are devoted to their musical heritage: to finding it, recreating it, and—a most unusual aspect of their dedication—to reintroducing it to the people who have forgotten it, the people of their own countries.

Their performance is a happy mixture of some of the more accessible South American music (like Robles' "The Condor Passes," made popular by Paul Simon some years ago), virtuoso solo instrumentals, native dances in bright costumes, slides that lend a remarkable "sense of place," recreations of pre-Incan melodies, and informa-

Pepe Santana and Guillermo Guerrero

tion about the instruments and history of this musical tradition.

The slides of the Andes are often breathtaking. To see the people in their own surroundings—the inheritors of these traditions, some still living as they did in pre-Incan times—is a fine addition to the music. Together the sounds and images *Tahuantinsuyo* produces are, as they say, a fitting "homage to the Andean peoples. They are our teachers." This humility before an ancient art and the intense desire to keep that art alive reflected in performance is also conveyed in conversations we had with Guerrero and Santana.

The two sophisticated, well-spoken men came back to their "roots" interestingly enough via a very different culture from their own: that of New York City. Santana found that he had to "get out of my country to miss the sounds of the street, of the plaza. I became totally estranged when I came here; zillions of sounds hit me, interesting sounds, but I couldn't hear *my* sounds. They were there, but I was forgetting. And it was only when I was here that I realized I shouldn't forget them, and I became very interested in reviving them *within* myself. Then I met Guillermo and he had had the same experience."

Guerrero describes part of his own "reawakening": at one performance a young man who was very moved by the music approached him and spoke to him in Quechua. Guerrero didn't know the language but at that moment "I decided I *must* learn!" The young man was connected to the Museum of Natural History and brought the musicians there to see the collection of ancient South American instruments. Santana described "a huge collection

of every kind of instrument—just lying there! The curator, Dr. Craig Morris, allowed us to look at them, and that was when we really had a sense of how our music sounded."

They became acquainted with the instruments, in one sense through their cultural genes and musical knowledge, in another through what the instruments told them *they* could do. "You have to understand what the instrument is meant to do—why it is made that way. Each one has a specific range and possibility, and you have to know that first."

The relation between the men and the instruments became so successful that the Museum asked for recordings of the music for two exhibitions, "The Gold of Peru" and "The Gold of El Dorado," for which additional ancient instruments were imported.

This experience has brought them "home." Now Guerrero wants "to go back to my country and learn whatever they can teach me. And I want to try to find a way to communicate to others what they are about to lose. I don't want to take anything away. You play the music to *communicate*, not to exploit. We are interested in the people and the music they have made. I want to tell them not to forget."

Both men feel intensely and with some sadness the lack of pride in things native in their countries. Many of the old festivals are reenacted, but their meaning has been lost. "They dance and sing and play music, wear the costumes and get drunk, but they don't know the reasons; they don't know what it all is for. The people are *embarrassed* by the native culture; they want to forget tradition and be part of modern society. They are losing touch with themselves."

The earliest native instruments were probably flutes of different kinds, ocarinas, and drums, what are usually called "primitive" instruments. But these musicians reject the word, claiming that the instruments are capable of remarkably sophisticated music. In any case, they made beautiful sounds that seemed to echo how the people lived, and music was integrated into the fabric of daily life. It was an everyday affair like the sound of the wind in the mountains. The flutes, whistles, and drums reflected the sounds of nature and were "portable." Many of the people carried their flutes back and forth across the mountain peaks. One arresting slide shown at the concert pictured a young man carrying an enormous bundle of copperware perhaps four feet in height (he himself being only five feet tall), smiling, playing his wooden flute. Even today, Guerrero says, "there are places in my country where maybe no one has ever been. Maybe the natives there in the mountains have never seen other kinds of people. This strange geography determines much."

The sounds were equally determined by the environment. "There is the thin air, the snow-capped mountains, the wind, the dark, dark blue sky; that is a certain sound."

And, is this music from another time—from the Incan and pre-Incan times—still played? Santana reports it is: "You can recognize the sound. Why? Because the scales used are not tuned to the universal scale. (In fact, one of these songs was chosen by NASA to send into outer space in one of the space capsules carrying the sounds of earth. It was a wedding song.)"

But realistically, can this music survive? When, for example, people are no longer weaving for their own needs but for profit, when the instruments are no longer functioning as a companion for daily activity but for entertainment, when the music no longer serves ritual—is it, can it be, more than a memory?

Tahuantinsuyo feels that it can. "We may be idealistic, but there are ways to start. It may take years, but people will become aware. People have been forced to forget; they can be taught to remember. They don't even know now what it is they are losing."

Tahuantinsuyo can teach us all a new respect for what is our own. ◇

Susan Bergholz is Executive Editor of PARABOLA.

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PARABOLA

The Magazine of Myth and Tradition

CURRENTS

Currents *is a new department in* PARABOLA. *We will recommend books, theater, films, recordings, dance, television, exhibitions, lectures, and symposia relevant to our readers' interests. We welcome your suggestions.*

The Foundation for the Open Eye in New York City presented a weekend seminar in February with Joseph Campbell on "Arthurian Romance: Courtly Love and the Grail." The slide-illustrated lectures presented the earliest expression of a secular and individualistic mythology in the tales of de Troyes, von Eschenbach, and von Strassburg. The seminar was part of the Open Eye's ongoing series, "Realms of the Creative Spirit." In May Campbell will speak on the stages of the mystic way as seen in the symbolism of the kundalini, the *Divine Comedy*, and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

"Tongues" and "Savage/Love" by Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaikin played New York's Public Theater in November and December of 1979. This remarkable collaboration between two of America's most original artists produced what Shepard calls "environments" in which word and movement were responsive to sound and rhythm. Chaikin's eloquent understanding of silence and his economical gestures were the perfect instrument for Shepard's conception of theater. In the course of the evening, much was expressed about the nature of music, language, silence, and relationships.

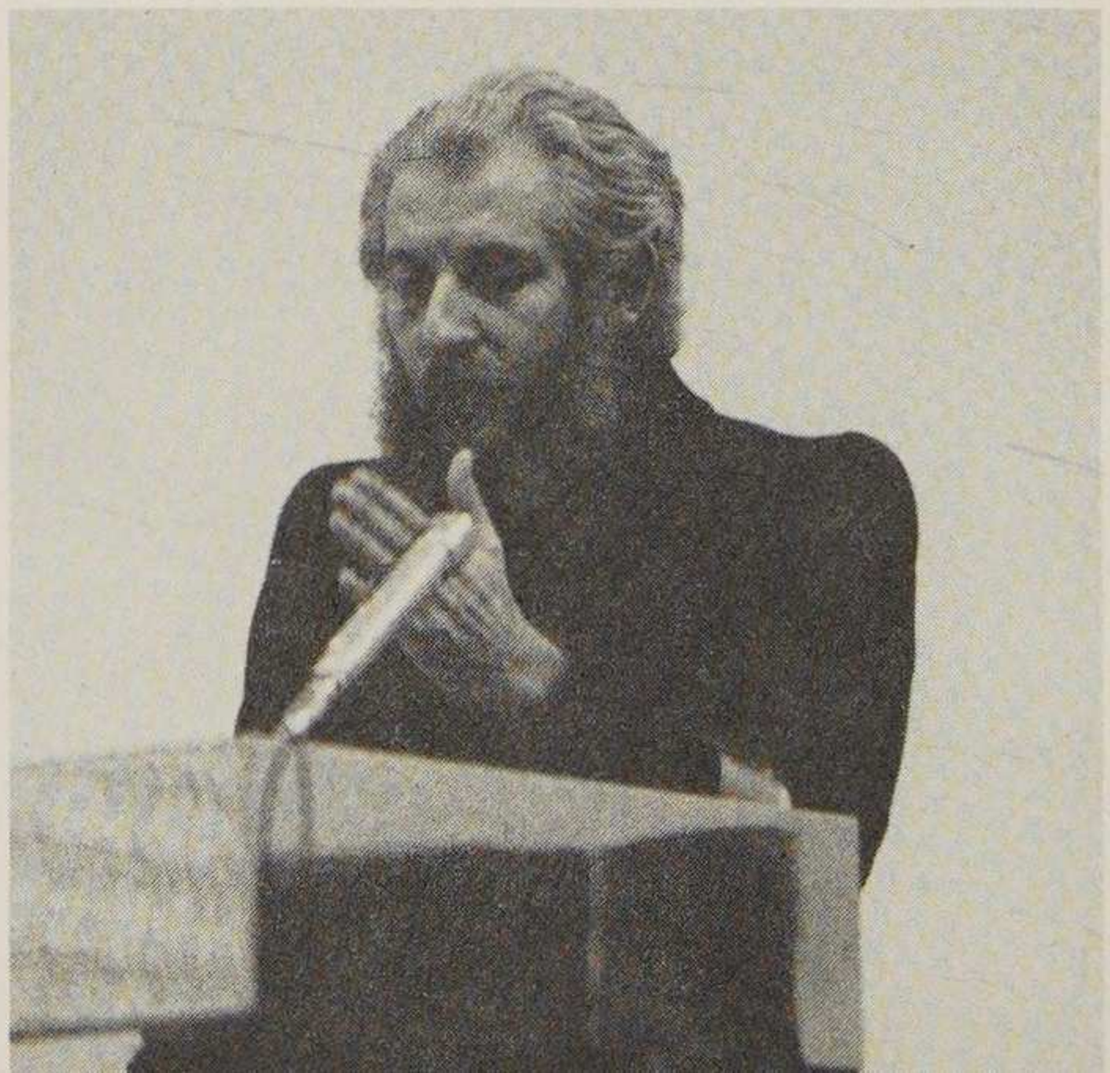
Sheik Muzaffer and The Jerrahi Dervishes of Istanbul made their first appearance this year in the Crossing of the Cathedral of St. John The Divine, New York on March 23. The performance was based on the Sufi ceremony of Dhikur, a collection of "mystical practices designed to attain spiritual unity with the Divine and the truth of all His creation." The evening included traditional music (with the *ney*—reed flute, *kemenche*—violin, *kudrum*—kettledrum, and the *bendir*—tamborine) and cantillation accompanying a series of circular movements or dances in which the audience itself joined and which at moments reached a remarkable level of intensity. This was the first performance in a tour taking the group across the United States.

On November 15th, in the Ford Foundation Auditorium, New York, the Society for the Study of Myth and Tradition presented the first of a series of programs on the Oral Tradition. This first event, following the appearance of the Storytelling issue of PARABOLA (Vol. IV, No. 4) was entitled "Stories as Teaching." Jonathan Omer-Man, editor of *Shefa Quarterly* and noted Israeli Kabbalist, gave a lecture on "The Transmission of Wisdom Through Story In Judaism." Diane Wolkstein told Hassidic stories, and Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach accompanied his story-songs on the guitar.
songs on the guitar.

The SSMT intends to follow this program with others at three-month intervals, each in connection with the theme of the immediately preceding issue of PARABOLA, and according to the viewpoint of a different tradition. On March 30th at St. Peter's Church the Native American tradition was represented in "The Grandfathers." Speakers were Sister Maria José Hobday, Chief Oren Lyons of the Onondaga, and Rosebud Yellow Robe, Lakota storyteller.

The next program will focus on Sacred Tibetan Music and will feature Huston Smith, Ernest G. McClain, and performances by Tibetan monks under the direction of Lobsang Lhalungpa on July 2, 7:00 PM at the American Museum of Natural History.

Jonathan Omer-Man



Meredith Monk has been experimenting with sounds and soundings throughout her career. Her latest theater piece "Recent Ruins" (at the LaMama Etc. Annex, New York, November-December 1979) contains her most profound musical statement to date. The play is centered around "the notion of archaeology as a way of seeing" and develops from a stunning musical "overture" through a series of arresting images on stage and on film. This is a rich and evocative work that digs deep in sound and image to find new meanings for human experience.

An overview of Music with a capital "M", *The Music of Man* by Yehudi Menuhin and Curtis W. Davis (Methuen), seems to touch on just about everything (including Busby Berkeley, David Bowie, Murray Schafer, and every native culture you could possibly think of) and still manages to be a fine and serious book. It is beautifully illustrated with new and unusual material, chatty yet full of solid information, and with a refreshing curiosity and openness about anything and everything having to do with music, which Menuhin says "will serve those who strive to live its harmonies."

John Fowles has recently turned his prodigious, almost nineteenth century, literary gifts to the natural world—first with *Islands*, a moody meandering through the British Scilly Isles, and now with *The Tree* (Little Brown and Company). Through Fowles' probing prose and Frank Horvat's perceptive lens, *The Tree* becomes a meditation, a vision, and finally a warning: "We still have this to learn: the inalienable otherness of each, human and non-human, which may seem the prison of each, but is at heart, in the deepest of those countless million metaphorical trees for which we cannot see the wood, both the justification and the redemption." This volume makes us aware through word and image that the possibility of "being, not saying" does indeed exist.

Like its model, Ouspensky's *Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (which it does not replace), *Toward Awakening* by Jean Vaysse (Harper & Row) is an efficient distillation of the *psychology* transmitted by Gurdjieff. "The study of man," says Vaysse, "is inseparable from a living study of the cosmos," but the weight here is existential and pragmatic (all "overview" and ideas to be verified through experiment and self-observation) rather than cosmological in context. In particular Vaysse's final chapter, sketching a key exercise involving bodily sensation, offers a valuable method for practical work on oneself. But nothing could be more futile, as Vaysse continually stresses, than to read such a book for the information it so lucidly purveys. Sincerity, an active willingness "to put oneself in question," are essential. Here, as everywhere else, one must have gold to make gold.

American Indian Literature, An Anthology edited by Alan R. Velie, illustrated by Danny Timmons (University of Oklahoma Press) includes tales, songs, memoirs, orations, poetry, and fiction from a broad spectrum of the Native American community, past and present. It includes the usual (Black Elk, Lame Deer, N. Scott Momaday) and the very unusual (Four Menomini Tales, Mandan and Hidatsa Songs, poetry of Carter Revard and Richard Aitson)—altogether a rich and varied selection.

African Art in Motion: Icon and Act
By Robert Farris Thompson. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974 (reissued 1979). Pp. xv + 275. Paper $14.95.
African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms
By John Miller Chernoff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979. Pp. xv + 261. $20.00.

Reviewed by Dale K. Fitzgerald

The interpatterning of music, dance, sculpture, and weaving in Africa and their systematic relationship with social forms and practical pursuits has long been documented in the literature, perhaps most fully and most beautifully through the words of the Dogon elder, Ogotemmeli, whose teachings first became available with the publication of Marcel Griaule's *Dieu d'Eau* (1948), now available from Oxford University Press as *Conversations with Ogotemmeli*. The Griaule book abounds with passages such as the following: "Cultivation being thus a form of weaving, a field is like a blanket made of eight strips, the black and white squares being represented by the alternation of the mounds made of each step and the gaps between them; a mound and its shadow represent a black square...Moreover, weaving is a form of speech, which is imparted to the fabric by the to-and-fro movement of the shuttle on the warp; and in the same way the to-and-fro movement of the peasant on his plot imparts the Word of the ancestors, that is to say, moisture, to the ground on which he works, and thus rids the earth of impurity and extends the area of cultivation round inhabited places."

In the two books under review the authors can be seen approaching the singular fact that in Africa art and music are communal institutions, indelibly infused with moral matter and implicated in issues of power, both spiritual and political. Though the methods and successes of the two authors differ considerably it will be useful to begin by considering some striking similarities in their work. It might first be noted that the two books emerge from what could be considered a single tradition in American scholarship. In this tradition Robert Farris Thompson now stands as one of the senior figures, widely recognized for his brilliant insights into the motivating aesthetics of African art forms. Chernoff's book, his first publication, cites Thompson's work on numerous occasions and notes having benefited from Thompson's reading an earlier draft of his text. The areal focus of both books is West Africa, restricted in Chernoff's case almost exclusively to Ghanaian traditions and in Thompson's, inclusive of cultures from Liberia along the Guinea Coast and its interior to Zaire. This areal focus allows both authors to more easily consider material from the West African-derived cultures of New World Blacks. The particular manner of their doing so marks, I believe, something of a development in African studies, for it used to be the norm that statements linking African and Afro-American culture traits were made—if at all—with due caution, allowing for major mediating factors. In the case of both Chernoff and Thompson, however, these references are made directly, with no special pleading for the validity of doing so. Thus Chernoff, in discussing off-beats in music, can say with aplomb: "Ask any Westerner to snap his fingers to any piece of African music, and he will mark the first and perhaps the third beats, as is the tendency in our music. But go to a jazz club, and you will notice that people snap their fingers and the drummer taps his cymbals on the second and fourth beats." Here it is simply assumed

that jazz is an African music. From the same assumption, more broadly applied, Thompson makes a comparison between an Ashanti king dancing so as to display his gold ring and the American jazz pianist who plays treble passages so as to make his diamond pinky ring flash.

Similarities aside, there are quite substantial differences in the two works. Thompson's book developed as an accompaniment to the National Gallery's exposition of Mary Coryton White's impressive collection of African art. The core of his text is devoted to the presentation of this collection and, if it has succeeded in being much more than a standard exhibit catalogue, it has nonetheless remained heavily marked by the nature of its initial purpose. The presentation is made in three chapters. In the first Thompson analytically isolates the criteria of aesthetic form in Africa and introduces historical information intended to establish the stability over time of at least some of these characteristics. The discussion of "Icon and Attitude" in Chapter 2 is organized around descriptions of six styl-ed body positions: standing, sitting, riding, kneeling, supporting, and balancing. Thompson here draws upon a rich knowledge of African cultures, combined with selections from the range of the White collection, to describe the social meaning attached to each of the separate bodily attitudes. The final chapter displays the many ways in which the icons of African art direct the attention towards arenas of activity in which their fuller meanings are realized. Here a general discussion of the relationship between artifact and event is followed by a series of detailed case studies which consider, for example, "Dan Masks and the Forces of Balance."

There is much to be learned here and, in general, one can say that the book is richly informative, representing the results of extensive work with African materials, numerous visits made over a wide range of African cultures, and the use of a variety of research methods, including video recording and texts of artistic criticism offered by indigenous commentators. Thompson's exposition is not, however, without problems.

For all the brilliance of Thompson's poetic insights there is at times a contrived quality to his interpretations, as though he were trying to match with a dance of verbal agility the grace, strength, and beauty of his subject matter. The result of this can, at times, be more numbing than riveting. In part this is an inevitable outcome of the enormous sweep of the work, where hundreds of artifacts from scores of different cultures pass in review. The means which Thompson uses to organize this mass of material may have intrinsic merit, given his purposes, but the lack of concern, on the one hand, for patterns of artistic variation as indicative of differences in socio-economic-political forms and, on the other, for significant historical factors, is to be regretted. Thompson uses historical material only in the service of establishing time depth for analytically derived features of the art. This implies a history without change. Finally, there is an absence of any critical evaluation of the collection itself as regards its origin and the social history of its formation as an individual's trove.

The situation with Chernoff's book is quite different, despite the fact that its contents follow a somewhat similar mode of presentation and are marked by some of the same shortcomings. The general plan for the body of the work runs as follows: the author first provides an understanding of what is involved in the study of music in Africa, making the essential point that music and community are inseparable in the African context in ways that must have major bearing on any attempt to understand more than the most superficial levels of the music. He then turns to a detailed consideration of the defining features of African musical structure *per se*, using a sustained comparison with Western music to establish his points. Here, too, he includes a lucid description of the relationship of drumming to language, indicating the important consequences this relationship has on African musical performance. In the final two chapters the discussion is broadened considerably as Chernoff first considers the notion of

"style" in African music, showing how this has direct bearing on attitudes toward life and morality. He then moves toward a focus on musical *events* seen as models for interpreting African social life and the values which constitute it.

The difference in the books lies in the means of acquiring knowledge. For, as Chernoff makes clear in an introductory essay entitled "Scholarship and Participation" and throughout his work, his primary access to information about African music developed in the years he spent in Ghana learning traditional forms of drumming from practitioners of the art. He became a recognized drummer of African music. The consequences of this approach pervade his entire work and establish a kind of validity which is undeniable. Thus, though Chernoff displays sound scholarly credentials, his book is not founded upon scholarship but on experience. The presentation is in fact at its best when the author remains close to this experience, especially as he lets his teachers speak. What is most crucial in his experience as a student is at the heart of what is most significant about the nature of African music: namely, that one penetrates its inner meaning through awareness of spiritual and ethical principles. The stunningly beautiful passages on this subject from the lectures of his main teacher, Alhaji Ibrahim Abdulai, are themselves worth the price of admission, and it is only to be regretted that more attention was not given to telling us more about this individual; perhaps a brief biography in an appendix would have served this purpose. It is also to be regretted that the author, who is engagingly candid about so much of his experience, does not clarify the linguistic situation which characterized his interaction with his teachers. But these are relatively minor considerations. The striking fact is that Chernoff has produced a work of unquestionable importance and considerable charm, one which significantly aids our understanding of the depths and beauty of African music. Claude Lévi-Strauss once wrote that "music itself [is] the supreme mystery of the science of man, a mystery that all the various disciplines come up against and which hold the key to their progress." In some real way Chernoff has indicated what course one might follow in contending with this mystery.

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The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age
By Frances Yates. London, Boston, and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. Pp. 217. $17.50.

Reviewed by George Quasha

In recent years a species of scholarship has developed that aims to revise mainstream views on the very touchy subject of the "occult" and its role in history. The names Henry Corbin, Gershom Scholem, and Frances Yates come quickly to mind for their connection with profound inroads into dark areas of thought. The late Henry Corbin, in the area of Islamic mysticism or Sufism, and Gershom Scholem, in the area of Jewish Cabala, have altered forever our sense of the breadth and complexity of those traditions, particularly as they are played out in history. One result of reading such works as *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* and *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* is the question that arises about connections with European esoterism. Speculations of this sort are kindled by Corbin's suggestive remarks about, for instance, the visions of Dante and Nerval in relation to specific mystical experience in Ibn 'Arabī and Avicenna. Frances Yates' most recent book, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, comes as one response to such speculations.

The arena of careful investigation here is the whole subject of "Christian Cabala" in relation, on the one hand, to the renascent tradition of Hermeticism and the movement to reform Christian doctrine on the Continent and in England, and, on the

other hand, to the development of English literature. By Renaissance "occult philosophy" she does not mean occultism in general, but the revival of Hermetic gnosis by Marsilio Ficino "to which Pico della Mirandola added a Christianized version of Jewish Cabala," together forming the ritual theology and magical practice further developed and named by Agrippa in *De occulta philosophia*. This book she calls "the indispensable handbook of Renaissance 'Magia' and 'Cabala,' combining the natural magic of Ficino with the Cabalist magic of Pico in one convenient compendium, and, as such, playing a very important part in the spread of Renaissance Neoplatonism with its magical core."

Yates' book in fact spans a period somewhat larger than the term "Elizabethan" suggests. She begins with a brief account of a medieval Christian Cabala which is not specifically Jewish in origin, in the astral "Art" of the Spanish Catholic Ramon Lull (1232-c.1316). From here she moves through several developments of the occult philosophy which does derive specifically from Jewish Cabala in the works of the Renaissance Italian Pico della Mirandola, the Reformation German Johannes Reuchlin or "Capnion," the Venetian Friar Francesco Giorgi or "Zorzi," and the famous (or undeservedly infamous) magician and evangelical reformist of Cologne, Henry Cornelius Agrippa. Following these short but intense and revealing accounts of the lives, works, and influences of major figures, she performs the first of a series of brilliant critical reinterpretations of great and familiar works in relation to Hermetic-Cabalist influences. Albrecht Dürer's *Melencholia I*, deriving from Agrippa's text, she sees as the state of inspired (*furor*) melancholy, where the magical power of genius appears akin to madness. Part I of her three-part study prepares the background for a new view of the "Elizabethan world picture" with two striking notions: first, that a Hermetic-Cabalist fusion takes place at the heart of the Renaissance, based on a supposed oral transmission from the time of Moses in which the spiritual power of name and number in Scripture reveals the true Messiah as Jesus (IESU or Tetragrammaton with medial "S," making ineffable Yahweh audible and incarnate); and, second, that this widespread European religious radicalism had a profound impact on both Protestant Reformation and the history of art. Then she shows us the terrifying anti-Neoplatonic reaction and the growing witch-craze that marred Agrippa's reputation up to recent times.

The Elizabethan world, she says, was deeply informed by this philosophy of magic. Its "characteristic philosopher," John Dee, was a great mathematician and "conjuror" who stands behind Shakespeare's Lear and Prospero. And England's greatest writer's greatest works (as the author also argues in *Shakespeare's Last Plays*, 1975) are extensively informed by Renaissance Neoplatonism. Edmund Spenser

closely resembles John Dee in his Hermetic-Cabalism, and both men fall from official favor (despite their support of the "Imperial British" view) in the heat of reaction and the witch-craze—a fire that was probably fueled by the anti-magical propaganda of Marlowe's popular *Doctor Faustus*. Yates' devastating portrait of Marlowe shows him as a crude anti-Semite in *The Jew of Malta* (in contrast to Shakespeare's subtle and complex portrait of the Jew in *The Merchant of Venice*), which may have had a terrible consequence in the accusation and eventual execution of the only well-known Jew in England, Doctor Roderigo Lopez.

This is hardly the familiar "Elizabethan world picture," yet neither is it unexpected to readers of Dame Frances Yates' quite revolutionary series of scholarly works. She has brought into question fundamental assumptions within the history of Western ideas, showing, for instance, the development of science not out of the Humanist tradition but out of the Hermetic. Her new book carries much further the history of the Hermetic-Cabalist tradition first studied in *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) and extended to the vitally important works of John Dee and Robert Fludd in *The Theatre of the World* (1969). From Lull and on through Pico, Bruno, Dee, and others, this little-understood tradition found its various articulations, of which none was so great or mysterious as that which passed from Dee to Spenser and Shakespeare and found its last name of that era in Rosicrucianism (explored very richly in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment,* 1972). For Frances Yates *The Tempest* is Shakespeare's Rosicrucian Manifesto, a late triumph of the conjuror of white magic and hero of Christian Cabala in an age when the Occult Philosophy was viewed as a black art, and its practitioners hunted down.

It takes a great scholar to renew a Spenser and a Shakespeare at this late date. To do so by altering the very ground of their evaluation, while rescuing major innovators like John Dee and Robert Fludd from obscurity and even ridicule, is already a great deal; yet the speculative and adventurous nature of this scholar's works makes us know that there is more, much more to be gained. There are self-proclaimed limitations of her work—perhaps inevitably when so many doors are opened. But she does not open *all* the doors.

While Columbus was making his belated "discovery" of the New World, the Catholic Monarchy of Ferdinand and Isabella was conquering the Moors at Granada and expelling the Jews from Spain. Frances Yates makes an important point of the effect this year of 1492 had in the wider spreading of Jewish Cabala. Spain had been the home and point of confluence for three great mystical traditions, Esoteric Christian, Cabalist, and Sufi, the last two of which dispersed. All three developed doctrines of gnosis through contemplation of name and number. If Frances Yates had read Corbin (whom she never mentions) as closely as she has read Scholem, would she now be speculating about the connections between Sufism and Lullism, between Ibn 'Arabī and Dante? We are told that Jews were barred from England and only slipped through disguised as Christians: what of mystical Islam in this history? Another question, called up by discussions here of Spenser and Shakespeare, regards the relation between (in the author's words) "'Cabalistic' types of meditation and great poetry." To raise such issues may be the next great challenge. It may be no coincidence that the "Rosicrucian Manifesto" hidden in *The Tempest* is a doctrine without a name, just as the Rosicrucian movement had no known adherents; did both belong to a state of mind opened by Names, and beyond naming? Perhaps the aesthetics of Shakespeare's detachment of mind has a deep connection with the noetics of the unnameable religion—unnameable, if for no other reason, because so many names seem momentarily to apply and, finally, won't stick.

George Quasha is a poet whose books include Somapoetics, Giving the Lily Back Her Hands, *and, forthcoming from Station Hill Press,* Traveling in the Castle. *He presently lives in Barrytown, N.Y., where he directs Open Studio, a center for innovative arts publishing.*

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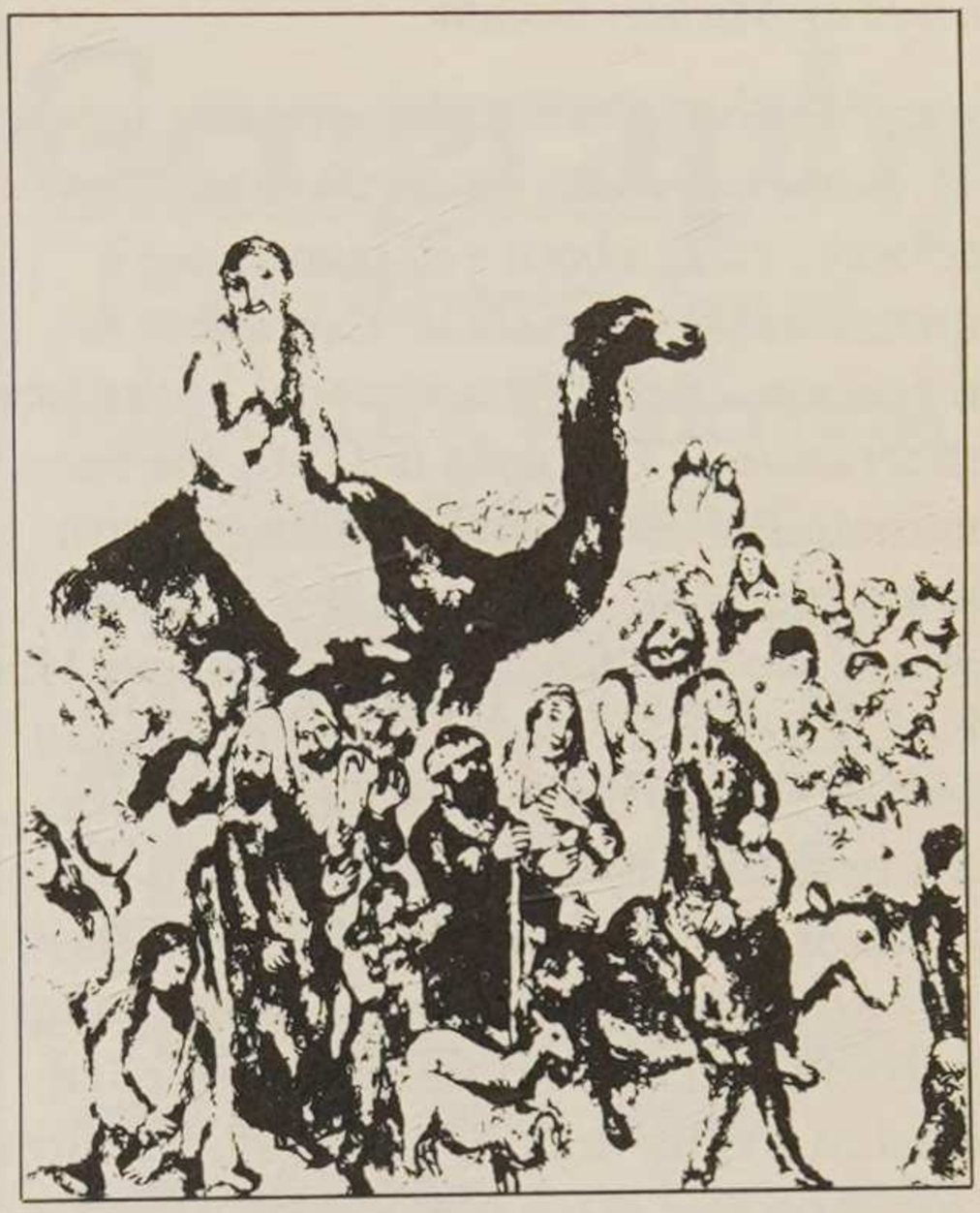

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Letters
By John Barth. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979. Pp. 772. $16.95.

Reviewed by Michael Sexson

On page 145 of John Barth's massive new novel, *Letters*, Jerome Bray, an insane cyberneticist, talks about programming a computer to produce "The Complete & Final Fiction...an abstract model of the perfect narrative." The data fed into the machine includes, among other things, Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, reference works such as *Masterplots* and *Monarch Notes*, rare treatises on the Fibonacci Series and the Pythagorean Golden Ratio "and a list of everything in the world that comes in 5s." The computer-generated title for this novel to end all novels, containing "exactly the ideal relative proportions of exposition, rising action, et cetera, the precise location and pitch of complications and climaxes..." is: *Notes*.

Notes is, of course, *Letters*, and Bray is no doubt Barth, a brilliant literary cyberneticist who, at least since the publication of *Giles Goat-Boy* in 1966, has been concerned, if not obsessed, with the idea of writing "the Complete & Final Fiction." Actually, from the retrospective vantage point of *Letters*, it is possible to see Barth's whole literary career as an attempt to evolve what Wallace Stevens called the "supreme fiction," a comprehensive and intricate fictive structure which will do for our skeptical age what the Bible and Greek stories did for earlier stages of our culture —relate us meaningfully and deeply to all dimensions of reality.

Those who have read all of Barth's books, including *Letters*, can now see that they have participated in the gradual composition of a complex mythology for a self-conscious, technological era, or, in other words, of a sacred text for a secular world.

Barth's first two novels, *The Floating Opera* and *The End of the Road*, were compelling but conventional narratives reflecting the somewhat faddish "existential" (i.e., Sartrean) themes of freedom and nausea. With *The Sot-Weed Factor*, Barth discovered myth. He insists that he was amazed to find that his characters and events seemed to resonate so closely with the standard mythological formula of the adventures of the hero as delineated by Joseph Campbell and Lord Raglan (both of whose outlines appear, by the way, word for word, in *Letters*).

With *Giles Goat-Boy*, Barth could no longer plead ignorance of mythic figures, patterns, and situations. He had read Campbell and Raglan and the *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. Now, the vastness of his literary enterprise became apparent. He was attempting, in this 710-page opus, to confect, out of a brilliantly and coldly calculated arrangement of mythic structures, the perfect narrative. If Barth's computer machinations were correct, the most perfectly plotted work in all of literature, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, would be replaced by *Giles Goat-Boy*, because (among other reasons) *Giles'* hero, George, scores 22 points on Lord Raglan's scale of 22 in the standard hero-formula whereas Oedipus scores a paltry 21. It is no accident, by the way, that *Goat-Boy* contains a full-scale parody of Sophocles' play.

The religious nature of Barth's literary ambitions also became apparent with this book. Here, it seemed, at last was a sacred text for our time, one which, through the revisionist program of self-transcendent parody, would acknowledge, celebrate, and supplant the current but moribund sacred text of Christian culture—the New Testament—just as the New Testament, through its own inimitable dialectic with tradition, acknowledged, celebrated, and supplanted the scriptures of the Hebrews. Barth subtitled his novel "The Revised New Syllabus."

Giles, however, fell short of the "perfect narrative." Of all Barth's books, it has suffered most at the hands of the critics. True, it contained all those mythic patterns and figures calculated to produce "a leap of the blood" as the reader is brought into contact with the "deep structures" of the unconscious. True, its plot was computer-programmed to create "the ideal relative

proportions of exposition, rising action, et cetera." But the book was dismissed as a weighty bore. What had gone wrong?

Trying to find out, Barth moved on to become familiar with what he called "The Literature of Exhaustion," enigmatic works of writers like Nabokov and Borges which search through deeper chaos in quest of a new beginning for the imagination, a point at which "The Literature of Replenishment" (as Barth now calls it) could start. The result was *Lost in the Funhouse*, a dazzling collection of experiments in Borges-Beckett-like fiction. At the same time he was becoming intimate with the other great sacred text of western culture—Greek mythology. Out of this intimacy came *Chimera*, a retelling of the old myths, mostly Greek, from postmodernist literary perspectives.

While he was composing these works, Barth was busy plotting *Letters*, described as a "reorchestration" of the long-dead epistolary novel popular in the eighteenth century. The book consists of letters from seven correspondents, most of whom are characters (or their descendents) from previous Barth writings. "Reorchestration" is the key word, for the book is in essence a "re-playing" of the themes, patterns, models, and figures of the author's earlier works, done, however, in such a way as to give the entire fictional corpus the coherence and complexity of a vast mythological system. Barth's method of creating such integrated circuitry is to load the novel with correspondences at once numerological, alphabetical, historical, and calendrical. The letters are configured so as to reveal, by the end of the novel, a hidden design spelling "An old-time epistolary novel by seven fictitious drolls & dreamers, each of which imagines himself actual." Such calculatedness, however, Barth now knows, after the failure of *Giles Goat-Boy*, is not enough to create "The Complete & Final Fiction." Even Lady Amherst, the marvelous original character in *Letters*, remarks, "...that's a game anyone can play...the game of Portentous Coincidences, or Arresting But Meaningless Patterns."

It is not sufficient for the supreme fiction to contain perfect circuitry. A sacred text must have more than the absolute coherence of myth. It must have magic—the means by which words become worlds, and not just worlds, but *inhabitable* worlds, places where we can dwell and feel at home. Who does not remember those moments of childhood when, while reading a book, the walls around us dropped away, the chair vanished, and we passed, as if by magic, through the looking-glass of words, into the sacred space created by the imagination? In his remarks on "The Literature of Replenishment," Barth recognizes the need for postmodern fiction to give pleasure by regaining that primal narrative power to "ravish" the reader on first encounter.

With *Letters*, Barth evolves a third requisite of a sacred text: Mystery. Turning the last page of the novel, we realize that Barth's *Letters* is not Bray's *Notes*, nor was meant to be. We learn that *there is no "Complete & Final Fiction"* but only notes, frag-

ments, letters, inching steadily *toward* its realization. One has the feeling that the perfect fiction, if ever completed, would look suspiciously like the computer gibberish of Jerome Bray.

"The imperfect is our paradise," Stevens once wrote, and our deepest pleasures, Barth apparently has discovered at this point in his movement toward a supreme fiction, come from those elements of arbitrariness and ignorance which prevent closure, which keep perfection at bay, which color existence with the hues of significant ambiguity. Ambrose Mensch, a Barth-like writer in *Letters*, after perusing a variety of hero models, decides that "our concepts, categories, and classifications are ours, not the world's, and are as finally arbitrary as they are provisionally useful." "The real treasure," Mensch says, re-playing a key line from *Chimera*, "may be the key itself: illumination, not solution, of the Scheme of Things."

If *Letters* fails, it is because Barth still Brays too much. However dazzled we may be by the intricate correspondences, the puzzles and games, we simply are *not* "ravished" on first reading. Much of the book is pointlessly tedious and inert. This, despite the "Author's" pronouncement in *Letters* that his book "will *not* be obscure, difficult, or dense in the Modernist fashion." *Letters* is obscure, difficult, and dense in the Modernist fashion.

Barth seems to be encountering the same curious dilemma as other questers after the supreme fiction: the more elaborately one intends one's work to speak to humanity in general, the more inaccessible it becomes to most people. According to Richard Ellmann, James Joyce actually believed that some little boy in Somaliland would be pleased to find the name of his local river mentioned in *Finnegans Wake*. And Wallace Stevens felt that his poetic canon, one of the most obscure, difficult, and dense in modern literature, would assist people, ordinary people, to live their lives meaningfully in this time of skepticism and disbelief. And now Barth insists that we ordinary folks will be "ravished" by a first reading of *Letters*.

The challenge confronting Barth and other postmodern writers is one of balancing technical virtuosity with the ability to weave narrative spells, that is, to bring magic into proper alignment with myth. Barth himself understands this as the central task of the postmodernist writer, citing, appropriately, Italo Calvino's *Cosmicomics* and García Márquez's exquisite *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as exemplary models.

There is no question but that *Letters* is a brilliant piece of writing, a significant addition to the mythological universe that Barth is building. But that alternate world is not yet habitable, a place where we can dwell and feel at home. It is not yet a sacred text for this secular world.

Michael Sexson teaches in the English Department at Montana State University.

The Heart of Matter
By Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, translated by René Hague. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979. Pp. 276. $8.95.

Reviewed by Lawrence S. Cunningham

In 1959, while studying theology in Rome, I read Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* with a mixture of trepidation (the book was unavailable in Rome; my copy came in plain brown wrapper from England), confusion (whatever did all of those strange Teilhardian neologisms really mean?), and exhilaration (this strange work seemed *very* new and *very* stimulating). Times change, the ancient poet said, and we change with them. A veritable avalanche of studies, monographs, and dissertations on Teilhard have explicated the neologisms, the temper of post-conciliar Catholicism has lessened the need for the plain brown wrapper, and both the weakness and promise of Teilhard's vision is a bit clearer to us.

Teilhard was a process thinker whose field of vision was nothing less than the

cosmos. Trained as a geologist and paleontologist, he felt an almost ineluctable urge to lift his gaze from the immediate objects of his research to realms far more heady than that of rock and fossil. In a grand synthetic design he envisioned a universe which would not only account for the subatomic world but also include the macroworld of the visible universe as a whole. This *Weltbild* affirmed not a tentative hypothesis that appealed to the idea of evolution but a boldly basic affirmation that evolution is *the* single principle of life which provides the key for understanding the whole meaning of the universe. We are now rather familiar with the main outlines of Teilhard's picture of the world: an increasing "complexification" of the world as it moves upward by adding successive "skins": mind (noosphere) covering the earth (geosphere) with a "still to come" stage (the Christic or Christosphere) in which mind itself will evolve and society will further complexify into a new superconsciousness. This monodirectional evolution points to, and will be organized by, Omega Point (God) who is the *Telos* of all creation.

Teilhard's view is new to the extent that he attempts to synthesize the scientific world view of his day with his own deeply felt sense of the truth of Christian revelation. It is an old view in the sense that it stands in line with all of the great Western philosophers of history who have seen the historical process as moving in one direction either to arrive at the City of God (Augustine) or the City of Man (Karl Marx). The difference between Augustine and Teilhard is that Augustine speaks of history while Teilhard speaks of the physical world.

It was the very process character of Teilhard's thought that so bedeviled and threatened most of his Jesuit colleagues as well as the Roman theologians, and their superior, the Vatican's Holy Office. The ever-evolving perfection central to Teilhard's world view seems to provide little room for evil, misery, the wound of sin, and, what is of more consequence, the need for redemption. Many of the short pieces in this volume (which provides the last major essays of Teilhard's oeuvre in English) were attempts to explain his positions for his critics or make them more understandable for his sympathetic supporters. His major statement on what he conceived his vision to be about is set forth in an essay "The Christic" which he worked on during the last decade of his life. It sums up a line of thinking that is reflected in such works as *The Divine Milieu*, his poetic meditation "Mass on the World," and "The Heart of Matter," the latter an essay which provides the title for the present work.

For those interested in Teilhard's mysticism, this volume provides many choice pieces. There is Teilhard's own autobiographical statements about his early wonder at the sheer physicality of the world; he

relates, once again, his juvenile passion for solidity and permanency as he meditated upon (at the age of seven!) an iron plowshare and, later, various minerals which he had collected. These early insights can be traced in more sophisticated ways in pieces such as "The Names of Matter" which he wrote as a young Jesuit in 1919.

Finally, since this volume is a bit of a *potpourri*, there are a few selections which reflect certain moments in his life: wedding addresses that he gave, a description of his teaching approaches made for the *Collège de France* (his superiors forbade him to stand for the chair), and various reflections on different aspects of his career as a Jesuit.

Although the final judgment is not in on the significance of Teilhard de Chardin, there is no lack of unanimity about the novelty and fertility of his mind. For that reason alone this volume is a welcome addition to the shelf. It can only be regretted that his works have been issued piecemeal and that there is no uniform edition. Still, the very piecemeal publication of Teilhard's works in this country does reflect the writings of the author: he was a traveler and an explorer. His writings were done in China, Europe, South Africa, and America. Many of the non-scientific works were unpublished in his lifetime. They were available to only a small coterie of his intimates; the consequence of that fact is that Teilhard never defended his ideas before a large critical audience. The fuzziness of some of his ideas can be justly attributed, not to the "mystical" turn of his mind, but to the ecclesiatical authorities which kept those ideas from the scholar's arena. We are happy to have his writings now more or less completely available in translation. We can only be saddened that many of them did not pass through the fire of debate and criticism during the author's mature life.

Lawrence S. Cunningham is Professor of Religion at the Florida State University, Tallahassee. His latest book The Meaning of Saints *will be published by Harper & Row in the Fall of 1980.*

The Work of Craft: An Inquiry into the Nature of Crafts and Craftsmanship
By Carla Needleman. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. Pp. 142. $7.95.
The Awakened Eye
By Frederick Franck. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. Pp. xi + 147. $10.95, paper $4.95.

Reviewed by Ragnar Naess

The real work of craft, Carla Needleman's book tells us, is intelligent, spiritual transformation of the self, of the craft worker—whose life is the raw material and whose product is the state of being while working and, potentially, in every moment of life. "A craft is not its objects; a craft is how I am when I am making them," she writes. She compares some alienated, introspective, contemporary craft-artists with her ideal worker, challenged by the responsibility for sensing a connection with the vast forces of nature, and says that the possibility of this connection lies in the potential for deliberate spiritual use of human energy. She does not insist that spiritual potential exists necessarily in craft work, but she believes that if spiritual commitment is lacking, a craftworker's life is gutted of meaning.

Needleman uses three time-worn but clear metaphors from craftwork to introduce her thoughts on the growth of personal vulnerability to higher law: clay centered, the potter is ready to begin; the woof, individual life-force of the weaver, becomes intimately engaged with the warp, the laws of the universe; the unique chunk of wood, peculiar and intransigent, challenges the carver much as does his own peculiar and intransigent human personality. The scope of the task is well stated in folk verse:

Oh that I were where I would be
Then would I be where I am not;
But where I am there I must be,
And where I would be I cannot.*

Craftwork for Needleman is the battleground where she risks pain and recognizes

* *From* Oh That I Were: *Selections for Young and Old, Middlesex, NY: Rochester Folk Art Guild.*

the detours she makes for fear of the dangers of life. Her guide: "What is real in me connects me, relates me to a larger reality."

Three levels—that of student, teacher, and universal law—divide the cosmos in this discussion. Aspects of all three are within each human and determine social roles. Laws of craft parallel laws of being human, and before these laws all humans are equal. Grounded in the search to comprehend them, teachers are legitimate and students secure in honoring those teachers. A craftworker relinquishes the atheistic notion of self as creator, becoming one channel among countless energy foci in the universe, a channel by which one disciplined human vision can bring together cosmic law and earthly material in one craft object.

Needleman describes the alienation of objects: "Objects no longer relate to man as an expression of his need to be in intimate communication with the vast world of forces outside himself." Objects with authenticity—true design—are created with reference to higher principles rather than to narrowly defined use or profit. Determining authenticity is tricky: Needleman clearly intends her readers to understand it is more than the skill of the seasoned craftworker, more than functional perfection, and more than parochial stylistic success. A dual motion is necessary: inward study to engage universal principles and outward striving to express in material form that vision so gained. A particular object is born of a moment in which a craftworker unifies universal principle with matter through a disciplined flow of energy. In this moment, dualism of worker and material, dualism of worker and ideal, and dualism of object and ideal are all obliterated.

This focused moment is the core. Materials used in craftwork provide a visible battleground for a struggle to liberate the body's perceptive capacity. The challenge is to quiet the noise of the mind. The body, not the mind, is the perceptive agent and

the locus of effort. Mind orders perception after the fact, substitutes this order for the present, recollects and anticipates it, and thus blocks perception of the present moment. A craftworker can try to diminish this block through obedient listening to the material which can orient one toward the fleeting and intermittent sense of universal law. In such a partnership worker and material transcend their initial state and find the bridge between vision and action. The "courage of sincerity" is gained in the face of failure. In accepting the results of action, one discovers a reverential "fear of God" which illuminates levels beyond the boundaries of body and mind. With this orientation as the goal, perhaps one will find a home within oneself and a sense of connection with the universe.

Needleman's wide-ranging meditation/memoir uses free association to reveal innumerable dimensions of life drawn together in craft. At times she sacrifices clarity in mixing descriptions of personal struggle with fragments of analysis and intellectual discourse; but it is a personal and engaging style which sends this reader off on tangents of his own free association, only to come back again and discover where her associations took her.

Great faith, great doubt, great perseverance, the Buddhists say. The author has done an admirable job with a mercurial subject in this book. On the days when this skeptical potter comes up short thinking "Is this all?", Needleman has suggested new horizons.

In *The Awakened Eye*, Frederick Franck communicates the compelling warmth of the true teacher without which the growth of human understanding is unimaginable. Although Franck offers his book as an expansion on his earlier *The Zen of Seeing*, and as a substitute teacher for those unable to work personally with him, it is more likely to awaken in us a hunger for the encouraging presence of the living teacher himself. It certainly will refresh his old students. Master raconteur, his uninhibited writing flows as vividly as the dots, lines, and wash with which his drawings fill the pages. A collection of childhood experiences, poetic and philosophic quotations, and practical advice; it all celebrates his joy in life and his joy in the communication possible in teaching. Deceptive in its simplicity, his advice is easy to affirm and difficult to follow:

> Seeing/drawing...a Zenless Zen...a Western Way leading to the awakening of the eye for those to whom sitting motionlessly for long periods does not come naturally.

Franck's seductive invitation is to the same, difficult fundamental Zen challenge: being now. In his work "drawing to see before I die," making contact with what is not I, he meets "the despair I know all too well...(the) infinite miracle to which your drawing never does justice." Not yet! Perhaps in the next try! While he urges us to take on this task of opening anew to each moment, his humility warns us not to be lulled by his eloquence into thinking the task is an easy one.

The book loosely follows a four-day silent seminar, "Confrontation with the Human," including Franck's own experience and the comments of students. He spells out his favorite, well-exercised admonitions: academic "artists" must choose to relinquish the training in devices and abstractions which allows them to caricature and diagram, rather than confront what is before them. His comments on nudity as thingness (camouflage for natural nakedness)—both in the obligation felt by the model to be seductive and in the "puerile sexual curiosity" of the student/observer—become an essay on ways in which we are blind. Seeing/drawing means allowing oneself to be captured by wonderment: habit, memory, technique, and competitiveness step aside. The discipline is to see what is there, what creation has been offered at this moment by life, rather than trying to be creative. The living of the student becomes ALL EYE; then, finally, uninterruptedly, becomes what is seen. "It is this flash of realization of not-two-ness that is both the center and the endpoint of our human experience."

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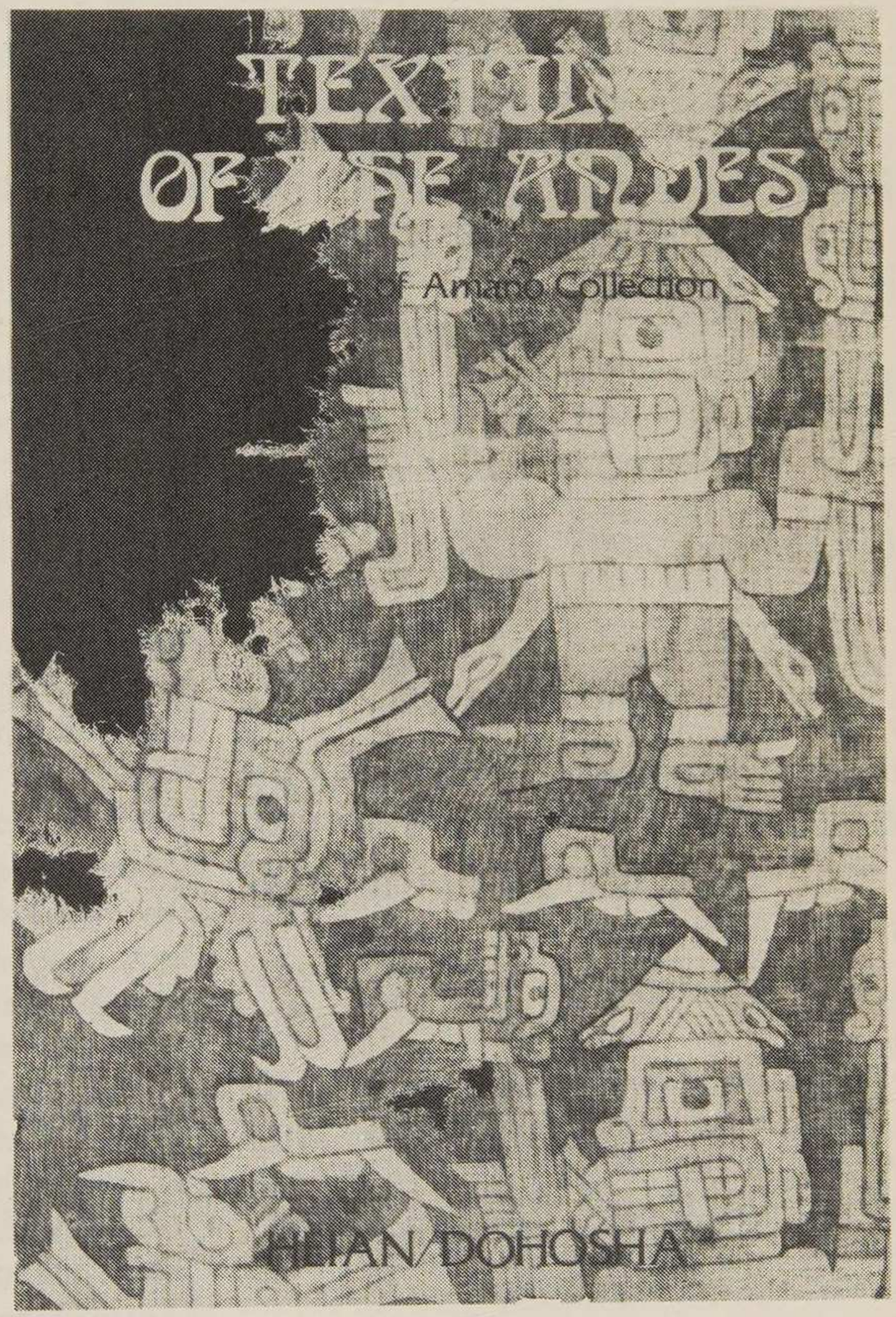

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Grandfather's stereopticon alerted young Franck to the difference between looking and seeing. Finding that at will he could vivify and focus what came to him through his eyes without the stereo viewing toy, he recognized his mind's habitual slumber. He had discovered the stereopticon within, begun the discipline which became seeing/drawing and eventually led him away from medicine to life through his eyes, drawing as an act of reverence for life. So he attends to the drawing of foot as this-here-now-foot, letting its unique essence guide his hand, challenged by what is before him. Becoming what is before him, he is able to feel profoundly rooted and at home in the play of light over the world, whether in Holland or Warwick, New York. The ten commandments with which he closes his book are sound advice for any work which is to become a "way," a broader path, for its practitioner.

Ragnar Naess makes his living as a production potter.

Time Stands Still
By Keith Critchlow, color photographs by Rod Bull. London: 1979. Pp. 191. $50.00, paper $19.95.

Reviewed by Christopher Bamford

Thou shalt find by the left of the house of Hades a spring,
And by the side thereof standing a white cypress.
To this spring approach thou not near.
But thou shalt find another, from the Lake of Memory,
Cold water flowing forth, and there are guardians before it.
Say, "I am a child of Earth and Starry Heaven;
But my race is of Heaven. This ye know yourselves.
But I am parched with thirst and I perish. Give me quickly
The cold water flowing forth from the Lake of Memory,"
And of themselves they will give thee to drink of the Holy Spring,
And thereafter among the other heroes thou shalt have Lordship.

Orphic Tablet from Petelia

A man possessed of inner freedom, memory, and a sense of fear is the blade of grass or the wood-chip that can alter the course of the swift-flowing stream.

Nadezhda Mandelstam, Hope Abandoned

It is a sign of the times that this book's virtues will obscure its value. Though profoundly intellectual, it is humble, simple, direct, and moral. It does not seek to convert nor to present any "system" but only to illuminate selected aspects of an unsystematizable whole. Finally, though this is a book about Neolithic stone monuments and artifacts, the reader feels strongly the personal labors of the author as a human soul and his presence as a good person. It was not always so that these qualities were remarkable; but they are today, and so must be noted.

The book originates in the photographic work of Rod Bull, twenty-six of whose color-plates are included. These photographs, expressing not the geometric or architectural properties of the stones but rather the mystical, aesthetic experience of "being with them" as they interact with light and their natural environment, represent a moving report from "one who was there." Keith Critchlow, seeing in the enigmatic quality of the photographed stones the same challenge that the megaliths themselves presented to our literate sensitivity, offered to create an accompanying text. His is a parallel, but not illustrative, document: an "accumulation of research work"—methodological, metaphysical, geometric, cosmological—the result of years of studying the same structures.

He starts from the beginning, with the "traditional" view, whose premises will be his own and whose philosophy, founded upon the interdependence of physical, psycho-cosmological, and spiritual factors, is the only one he feels is adequate to the subtlety and intelligence of the material at hand. Within this perspective, the source of all is one, but the realm of the divine is ontologically prior and so generates the world, which is thereby metaphysical, symbolic and grounded in gods, not literal and grounded in mechanisms.

Thus we begin with Unity, symbolizable as a circle within which all regular polygons may be inscribed as aspects. Alternatively, we may say that Unity, unspeakable in itself, enters into relationship with itself in order to be known. Relating to itself, it gives rise to numbers as qualities, as functions of itself. As shapes and patterns, these relations are polygons, setting up recurrent rhythms and circulations within the Unity of the circle. The circle thus is the paradigmatic or primordial space, hence sacred, rooted by its center as sanctuary and by its vertical axis open to the highest values. At one level, this simplest form is a reflection of the heavenly dome, without reference to which nothing may be done and in whose starry script tradition finds the most transparent link between visible and invisible realms. Mirrored in the stars, the archetypal number rhythms must be brought down to earth, stabilized, established as "heaven on earth"—wherein lies the traditional problem of "squaring the circle," the rational expression of the irrational, of fractions in whole numbers—a process Critchlow shows at work in the geometry of Moel Ty Uchaf in North Wales.

So far, all this is what Critchlow calls "consensus" wisdom; and it is his genius for simplicity that brings him to focus it upon what René Guénon has called the "quintessential" initiatic premise, that of the primordial triadic relation, Heaven-Earth-Man. These three reflections of a single Unity, which may be symbolized by three interpenetrating circles within a fourth, provide him with a flexible guide to the geometry and meaning of the megalithic circles. It is his assumption that only a transcendent Intelligence could fully account for all aspects—geometric, aesthetic, astronomical, technical—of their construction, and therefore he turns for insight to the methods and premises of an ancient Hindu manual of rites of orientation and construc-

tion. From this, the possibility emerges of a very similar process having occurred in both cultures—a possibility which, with his other "ground rules," he tests by a close analysis of four megalithic sites.

Moving into a discussion of "Significant Number," Critchlow invokes the shamanism of Northern mythology in connection with the centrality of the number nine as a cosmological indicator of the stages of manifestation; and he quotes Elémire Zolla to the effect that Unity, unfolded in nine aspects, is pre-eminently Indo-European by virtue of the necessity of the language itself. (He could equally have quoted two very different authorities, Guénon and di Santillana.) All of which indicates nothing more or less than that the builders of the megaliths are among the earliest transmitters of "Primordial Wisdom" available to us.

With this, we reach the explicit heart of the work: the question of how these metaphysical and geometric procedures might have been formulated and transmitted by an "oral" culture. Critchlow first notes the use of knotted cords in arts and games to practice, teach, and set forth geometric gestures; he recalls the use of pebbles in Pythagorean tradition for arithmetic calculations and progressions, stresses astronomical observation for the understanding of qualified space, and finally describes the use of memory in the mental computation of large figures as in the Vedic tradition. Against this background, he then examines in detail two known types of archaeological artifact.

The first of these, a set of rhombic or diamond-shaped breastplates, he shows to be a template for a ninefold division of a circle. A smaller rhomb proves capable of hexagonal, another of heptagonal, division; while within a rhomb itself figures are shown suggestive of the Magical Square numerical arrangements of other cultures. These breastplates then provide evidence both for the kind of tools employed in the creation of Neolithic stone circles and for their metaphysical basis. Equally significantly, Critchlow shows the universality of the rhomb as a symbol: in Chinese, for instance, a rhomb-shaped pictograph, *yu*, means "previous (perhaps 'archetypal') world" which, taken in context, is thought to indicate "wholeness" or "total world."

The second set of artifacts are some oddly shaped stone spheres which have eluded official classification since their discovery last century, and which Critchlow convincingly shows to be models of the Platonic solids—at least a millennium before Plato. Together with the evidence from the breastplates, these spheres demonstrate that the builders of the megaliths possessed in some form or other a metaphysics and cosmology comparable to that of the *Timaeus* and so of Platonic (that is, "perennial") philosophy.

The book closes with an analysis of the geometric and philosophical implications of a geocentric astronomy and of the patterns that the "wandering" planets trace in their cyclic and epicyclic (retrograde) courses. These patterns, arrestingly beautiful in themselves, conform in many instances to the geometries of the Stone Circles as analyzed by the author, who concludes: "Rather than suggest unexplained mysteries as the basis of the knowledge of the Neolithic sages, we suggest a knowledge based on observation, a heightened sensitivity to the environment, and a sense of wholeness: a sensibility grounded in an understanding of the role of humanity in the scheme of things and an acute empirical observation of the total environmental interdependence."

This reference to the "role of humanity in the scheme of things" touches upon the central theme of *Time Stands Still*. Elsewhere in the book, Critchlow speaks of the relationship traditionally held to exist between Anthropos and Cosmos, between archetypal humanity and the universe, and alludes to the fact that it is this that makes possible the laws of correspondence and the Platonic doctrine of recollection. He shows how the three spheres of Heaven-Earth-Man may be inscribed in the human figure and how the human figure in turn may serve as symbol of the Divine Essence, *Purusha*, inscribed in the Temple. But there is more to this. Consider the diamond shape. Coomar-

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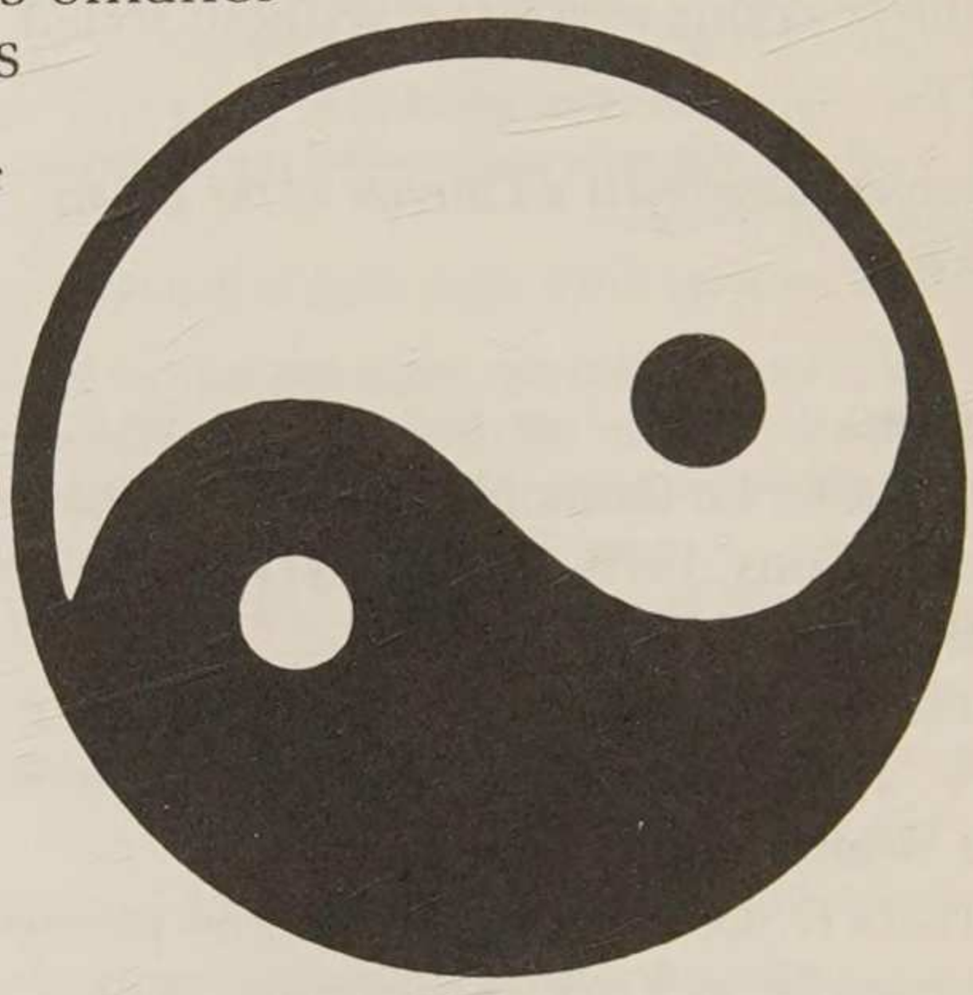

Sex in the World's Religions

GEOFFREY PARRINDER

Author of *Mysticism in the World's Religions*, *Jesus in the Qur'an*, and *Introduction to Asian Religions*.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
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aswamy, in an article on the "Eckstein" or "Cornerstone," shows that the diamond, used as a symbol of Christ in Pennsylvania German folk art, is a universal symbol for the vehicle of Unity, the unique Principle through which all parts are resolved in Unity, and as such is cognate with the whole complex of ideas relating to the axis of the universe. A Greco-Roman alchemical fragment records: "One became Two; Two became Three; and by means of the Third, the Fourth realized Unity." Somewhere herein lies "the role of humanity in the scheme of things." It is to the lasting credit of this remarkable book that it intimates such unspeakable mysteries without sound or fury.

Christopher Bamford is a Director of the Lindisfarne Press.

Malafrena
By Ursula K. Le Guin. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979. Pp. 369. $11.95.
The Beginning Place
By Ursula K. Le Guin. New York: Harper & Row, 1980. Pp. 183. $8.95.
Leese Webster
By Ursula K. Le Guin, illustrated by James Brunsman. New York: Atheneum, 1979. Pp. 26. $7.95.

Reviewed by Philip Zaleski

In a world where, overnight, the age of the universe can be sliced in half (as happened just a few months ago), the wise science fiction writer takes today's paradigms with a grain of salt. Properly skeptical, Ursula K. Le Guin is equally at home with dragons and Dyson spheres. Speculative fiction, fantasy, romance, poetry, and essays flow from her generous pen, as she weaves old myths and new science into increasingly artful shapes.

Le Guin's latest books, more fantasy than science fiction, describe the odysseys of a cash register clerk, a conspirator, and a spider. Each begins at the traditional time for initiation, the moment between childhood and adulthood when home becomes a prison. Each has an identical goal, the hero's discovery of himself.

Malafrena unfolds in nineteenth-century Orsinia, an imaginary Central European nation on the brink of revolution. Itale Sorde, heir to the estate of Val Malafrena, abandons his country home for the city to join the cause of national independence. From his shabby lodgings in the smelly river quarter of the city, Itale reads Rousseau, argues in the café Illyrica, befriends Amadey Estenskar, a doomed rebel-poet, becomes entangled with a baroness, and eventually finds himself uncomfortably famous.

"Live free or die," the motto which has lured Itale to the city, like Estenskar's "*vincam*" carved in stone, acquires new meaning after apparent defeat. In Le Guin's world freedom finally does enter, but slyly, by way of broken betrothals and prison cells. The freedom found is not the freedom sought: it is the right to be oneself, and to be at home. "The important thing," as Itale says, "is a force inside you, that belongs to you alone. It is yourself, actually, all that makes you a self, a man. Once you've found it, that force or will or need, whatever it is, then all you have to do is obey it—stay on the road it takes you."

Set in the era of Napoleon, Byron, and Metternich, *Malafrena* is explicitly romantic, a risky venture which Le Guin handles ably. The characters' gestures are sweeping, their emotions deeply colored, like microscope slides stained to highlight the essential detail. Although flamboyant, their behavior is never false. The prose is always precise, evocative, bristling with images.

Like *Malafrena*, *The Beginning Place* is the story of a quest for home and identity. The scaffolding comes from the dawn of fantasy: a world of dragons, masters, and magic existing alongside—or within—our world of supermarkets and housing developments. Into this world, known as "the ain country" (from the Scottish dialect for "own"), wander two frustrated young people looking for a better life. Hugh is a clumsy, inarticulate sort, trapped by a dead-end job and a paranoid mother whose solace is remembering her past life as a princess in Ancient Egypt. No better off then Hugh, Irene is oppressed

by squabbling roomates, a brutal stepfather, and a mother too weak to help.

Hugh and Irene meet in "the beginning place," the secret hollow just beyond the gateway between the worlds. A place of leaf, stone, and icy water, filled with the smell of mud and mint, this is Eden rediscovered—or so it seems. Everything is stilled here, like the mind before the arousal of thought. Time is slower, the light never changes. We are in sacred space.

But the beginning place opens into a world which is stricken by a mysterious blight. The town of Tembreabrezi, perched on a mountainside between the sea and the City of the King, is under a spell that prevents anyone from entering or leaving. When it falls to Hugh and Irene to release the town, the ain country becomes the arena for a frightening initiation. This is as it should be. We are in the realm of myth, where everyone is a hero and dragons wait to be slain, with effects that ripple across the gateway into the workaday world.

It is worth noting that there are no villains in these novels. *Malafrena* and *The Beginning Place* find their narrative tension in the struggle of opposites: man and woman, city and country, home and foreign land. Le Guin never really takes sides. Faithful to the Taoism so pervasive in her earlier works, she is content to tactfully delineate the yin and yang and let the reader ponder.

After the intensity of these two volumes, it is a relief to turn to *Leese Webster*, a droll adventure of an intrepid spider determined to carry her web-spinning talents into unexplored country. Not so deeply concealed in this funny tale is a lesson on the sources of creativity in experimentation and courage. The bouncy style is perfectly complemented by James Brunsman's striking black and white line drawings with orange wash. In these wonderful illustrations the spider-web motif is elaborated into designs which suggest giant snowflakes

or intricate bridal veils. The book is wrapped in a sturdy, well-sewn binding to serve your children's children.

Despite a National Book Award for her fantasy about death, *The Farthest Shore*, Le Guin's passionate support for and work within the science fiction community has excluded her from a large general readership. But with the Public Broadcasting System's adaptation of *The Lathe of Heaven*, she has suddenly been introduced to a new audience of several million viewers. Despite some awkward special effects, the production successfully enacts the struggle between George Orr (George Orwell?), whose dreams come true in unexpected ways, and Dr. Haber, an "oneirologist" who wishes to ghostwrite the new world created by George's "effective" dreams. If Le Guin's many viewers will now pick up her books, they will not be disappointed. There is magic between the covers.

Philip Zaleski is a free-lance writer living in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Kabbalah: Tradition of Hidden Knowledge
By Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi. New York: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1979. Pp. 96. $8.95.

Reviewed by Robert de Marrais

Dion Fortune, in *The Mystical Qabalah*—in my opinion the most profoundly felt and beautifully written book on this Jewish mystical tradition in English—put it like this: "The mysticism of Israel supplies the foundation of modern Western occultism. It forms the theoretical base upon which all ceremonial is developed. Its famous glyph, the Tree of Life, is the best meditation-symbol we possess because it is the most comprehensive." And as virtually every occult-oriented author on Cabala—and you can generally tell who they are because they tend to spell it, like Fortune, with a "Q"—will tell you, the twenty-two Paths of the Tree can be shown to yield the Major Arcana of the Tarot deck.

Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi, who publishes books on astrology and stage design as Warren Kenton, spells the word with a "C" or a "K": never with a "Q." And you will find no mention of Dion Fortune in his otherwise excellent bibliography. As he says in this, his sixth, work on Cabala, magic is "seen as an obstruction to spiritual development, in that a magician becomes so entangled in the World of Yezirah [or Astral Plane, as occultists refer to it] that he cannot enter the worlds above." Appearances to the contrary, though, he is hardly rigid on the matter: his own teacher was a Welsh magician, and Halevi/Kenton's earlier works have much to say about Tarot, the stars, and other allegedly "magical" subjects. (See, in particular, his study of "Kabbalistic Astrology," *The Anatomy of Fate*.) He merely has a healthy disdain for "black " magic and a very different stress from practitioners of "white" magic like Dion Fortune. Halevi is absorbed in the practical and traditional aspects of Cabala. For unlike Fortune or most magically-minded authors on the subject, Halevi is very much a Jew.

And unlike most Jews who write on the subject, Halevi doesn't aim to titillate an Orthodox in-crowd, and he doesn't hide his knowledge in a lot of cutesy hide-and-seek word games. He writes for a general audience, has only good things to say about Joshua ben Miriam (a.k.a. Jesus), and is not known to wear *pais* or phylacteries. His *Introduction to the Cabala*, while not all that thrilling from a literary point of view, is still by far the most down-to-earth introduction to the subject by anyone: in one chapter, stages of a love affair are dynamically traced through the Path and Sephirot of the Tree, which he also uses elsewhere in the book to model such disparate entities as Parliamentary government and the British pound. The descriptions in this and his later works of the synchronicities and depressions, elations and confusions that alternately confound and encourage the serious seek-

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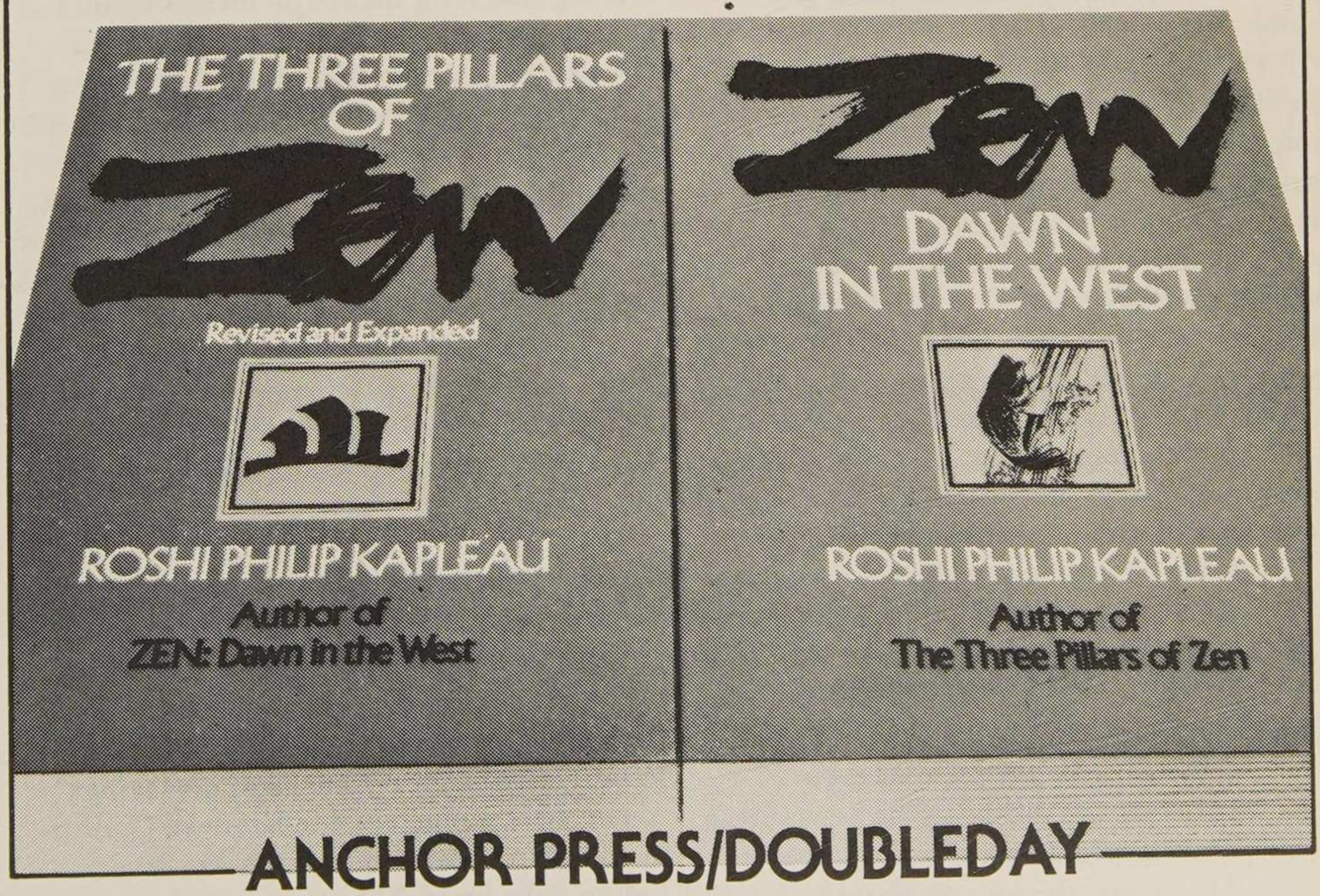

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er, are wonderfully clear—and surprisingly familiar.

Those who seek a view of the Tradition which is at once steeped in the Old Testament yet is self-renewing and open-ended, group-oriented yet stressing individuality, solid and not just flashy, are well advised to read his *Way of Kabbalah*. Too, his *Kabbalistic Universe* is one of the best introductory studies of the "Four Worlds" or "Jacob's Ladder" system that is so seminal in the Tradition—and given such short shrift in the otherwise dependable Dion Fortune. And though both it and the "triad"-oriented *Adam and the Kabbalistic Tree* are uneven, occasionally overspeculative and at times self-contradictory—especially the ambiguous discussion of the Cabalistic functions of the nervous system—nevertheless, he is infinitely more informative and far less cranked out than most of his contemporaries, such as Carlo Suarès.

In his latest opus, the two worst features of its predecessors are finally circumvented. Whereas his earlier works tend to be a bit prolix, here he never gets the chance: this is a large-paged, lushly illustrated coffee-table type of product, and there simply isn't the room to ramble in. The main body of the text is a scant thirty-one pages, and Halevi has written prose that's taut and pithy.

The second flaw of his earlier works is the lack of decent—no, of *any*—bibliographies. But finally, he indicates that Cabala is not just an oral tradition, but that some of its practitioners have *written*.

A final note: although the numerous hand-drawn glyphs of Trees and Ladders are crude and unsymmetrical to the point of being ugly, the illustrations are generally chosen with scrupulous taste and real continuity. A treasure-trove of tantalizing data is tucked away in the marginalia that accompany the pictures, especially in the "Themes" section; and, while some of the plates are left annoyingly bereft of explanation, all told they convey a sense of wonder, and a curiosity to know more, that still has a grip on this reader.

Robert de Marrais, a graduate of MIT, is completing a doctoral thesis in the history of science at Cornell and is working in New York as a freelance writer.

A Jaime de Angulo Reader
Edited by Bob Callahan. Berkeley: Turtle Island Foundation, 1979. Pp. 253. Paper $8.95.

Reviewed by Norman Weinstein

Jaime de Angulo—physician, poet, ethnographer, rancher, linguist—assumed as many different identities during his lifetime as his beloved archetype Coyote. He is best remembered as the author of *Indian Tales*, a personal synthesis of folklore gathered from a number of northern California Indian tribes presented in a prose radiant with humor and charm. *Indian Tales* is that rare text that can be read with satisfaction by a critical anthropologist as well as by a child in need of a good bedtime story. De Angulo's other writings were left unpublished until twenty-two years after his death. During that long silence he turned up in numerous works by his contemporaries, friends and enemies like Jung, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller. Several years ago poet Gary Snyder wrote an essay that brought de Angulo's work to the attention of a new generation, and Bob Callahan undertook publishing all of de Angulo's works under his Turtle Island imprint. This *Reader* is a generous culling from his work. An excellent introduction and chronology of his life is provided by Callahan to aid the reader; the chronology reads nearly like an adventure novel itself.

De Angulo was the son of an eccentric Spanish aristocrat. At an early age he broke away from Jesuit training and became interested in the physical sciences. In 1906 he migrated to America and a few years later completed his requirements for M.D. at Johns Hopkins. In 1913 he used his savings to purchase a ranch in northeastern California where the remnants of the Pit River Indian tribe lived. His contact with

members of this tribe brought about the first major metamorphosis of his life. Enthusiastically he threw himself into learning the complex Pit River language and collected a great body of mythology. In the years following he taught himself seventeen native American languages and collected a staggering quantity of folklore.

At this juncture de Angulo's biography might not appear very different from that of any number of idealistic young anthropologists at the turn of the century. What distinguished de Angulo's life and work is the manner in which he shed his psychic skin and assumed as nearly as possible the identity of the tribes he studied. If one contrasts him with someone like Carlos Castaneda, the leap that de Angulo made, both transculturally and transpsychically, becomes all the more astonishing. Castaneda is continually reminded by his Yaqui teacher of his identity as an "outsider." He is the academic scribbler, notebook always in hand, maintaining his educated "objectivity." De Angulo underwent a spiritual rite of passage while collecting his data in the field, yet he never brags about his passage or claims any special powers. He doesn't let you know that he is becoming an Indian shaman. He just listens, sees, and talks like one.

My personal favorite in this collection is "Indians in Overalls." It is a masterpiece of reportage about the last years of the Pit River natives before their assimilation into mainstream American culture. De Angulo used the full range of his personal powers in his writing. He synthesized his extremely keen and exact eye for naturalistic detail (first developed in his medical days) with his sensitive poet's and linguist's ear for the inflections of native speech.

De Angulo, the sharp-eyed anthopologist, writes:

I wandered around in the sagebrush. I was thinking about this Pit River language. I could see already that it was going to be a very difficult language to study, a very complex language, structurally complex. And yet the Pit River Indians were accounted one of the most primitive tribes among the California Indians, extremely primitive, just about at the level of the Stone Age in culture. And so I wondered ...Could it be that there was no relation between language and culture?

Yet he can shed his academic identity with the speed of a chameleon changing its color:

I followed that bunch for several weeks. I never saw such a goddam lot of improbable people. Sukmit was the only acknowledged shaman, but he wasn't a leader. He was no chief, no *weheelu*, among them. We went around the brush. We would stop anywhere, evidently by common consent. We would stop in the brush. Always there was a spring nearby. I never knew where we were going. We were going somewhere. I didn't care at all.

"I never knew where we were going....I didn't care at all"—hardly the anthem of a "respectable" anthropologist in the field. But de Angulo was keenly aware of how

his behavior appeared to the more conventional academicians. In noting the University of California's refusal to fund his request for field recordings of shaman songs he wryly comments: "Decent anthropologists don't associate with drunkards who go rolling in ditches with shamans." His difficulties in having his work accepted by the academic establishment were possibly compounded by his insistence that the scatological material in the folklore be reproduced in full. The bawdy and frank sexual humor in the Pit River mythology is hardly eyebrow raising in 1980, but I can imagine a different response in de Angulo's time.

One of the difficulties of reviewing a body of de Angulo's writing is finding a niche, a classifying label. He invented his own literary form, a mix of poetry and prose and graphics. He did not write conventional ethnography. He collected the northern California tribal mythologies with accuracy and then used that data as the base for his own storytelling. I can think of no anthropologist who has ever *toyed* with his or her data in so creative a manner. And by creatively playing with his raw data a new form emerged that has kept the northern California native mythologies alive and active in our contemporary consciousness. I think this artistic and anthropological alchemy could only have been accomplished by someone like de Angulo. He was literally dying to escape his European aristocratic past when he came into contact with a "Stone Age" people. The shamanistic ceremonies he recorded spoke directly to his personal need for an immediate metanoic transformation.

"Jaime de Angulo is the American Ovid," wrote Ezra Pound, a cryptic compliment until one remembers that Ovid's masterwork is *Metamorphosis*. Jaime de Angulo was constantly in a state of personal metamorphosis and found confirmations for his mutability in the figures of shamans and magical coyotes. The folklore he collected is replete with tales of sudden transformations: animals become men, men change into animals, trees and rocks break into human speech. It is a world where the boundaries between the natural and supernatural are forever blurred, a terrifying yet beguiling terrain.

In his novel *The Lariat* (the full text is included in this collection) de Angulo dramatized his own spiritual and artistic rite of passage with dark humor. *The Lariat* depicts the struggles of a Spanish friar on the California coast who finds himself strangely drawn toward the "pagan" religion of the natives. He eventually meets his doom as a result of his crazed attempt to break out of his Christian-European mold. It can be read, I suspect, as de Angulo's spiritual autobiography. There is more than a subtle implication that the Friar was a sexually tortured man who never found a healthy release for his sexuality. De Angulo's declining years as a transvestite in San Francisco's Chinatown come to mind. He might have sought solace in the apparent *trans*sexuality of the Pit River shamans, men who could don women's clothes without social stigma.

The Lariat opens with this caveat:

Beware, white man, of playing with magic of the primitive. It may be strong medicine. It may kill you. Ye, sons and daughters, foster children of the cities, if ye would go to the wilderness in search of your Mother, be careful & circumspect, lest she lure you into her secret place, whence ye may not come back.

Jaime de Angulo left behind in his stories and poems a road map illustrating all the dangers and ecstasies of the shaman's path. In so doing he revealed the warmth and dignity of a dying people and made that transmission accessible to a race desperately searching for spiritual direction.

Norman Weinstein is the author of two books of poems and a critical study of Gertrude Stein, Gertrude Stein and the Literature of the Modern Consciousness. *He is a free-lance writer currently residing in eastern Oregon.*

FULL CIRCLE *(Continued from page 5)*

PARABOLA regrets the following error in Vol. V, No. 1:—In "Kirittik's Circle" by Roger Lipsey, p. 92, 2nd column (sentence beginning at the bottom of the 1st column) should read:

There is enough plot in this book to prompt a reviewer to describe it no further, since that can spoil it for new readers, but nothing is spoiled by mentioning that toward the end the author-protagonist burns everything he owns right down to his clothing, through what remains of the night, until

dawn brings the light of day

flushing on the horizon, a beam of gold, a tiny burning dome slowly rising into a blinding scream.

Our sincere apologies to our Contributing Editor.
— The Editors

CREDITS

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PROFILES

Peyton Houston is a poet who is also a corporate executive in the environmental control field. His published books of poetry include *Sonnet Variations, Occasions in a World,* and *The Changes*.

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Robert Lawlor lives in Tasmania where he farms, translates, studies, and writes. He and his wife Deborah are the translators of *The Temple in Man* and *The Symbol and the Symbolic* by R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz. His book on the geometry of time in ancient architecture will be published by the Lindisfarne Association later this year.

David J. McAllester is Professor of Anthropology and Music at Wesleyan University and one of the founders of the Society for Ethnomusicology. His research is in Navajo religious arts. His latest book, *Hogans* (Wesleyan University Press), juxtaposes his translations of house songs with Susan W. McAllester's photographs of contemporary Navajo homes.

Tom Moore teaches psychology and religion at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. His writings appear in *Spring*, *Dragonflies*, and *Corona*. He is currently working on a book about the Marquis de Sade.

Howard Schwartz teaches writing and Jewish literature at the University of Missouri in St. Louis. He is the author of numerous books of poetry and short prose, the most recent being *The Captive Soul of the Messiah*, in which "The Celestial Orchestra" will appear.

Tomas Tranströmer, the Swedish poet, is the author of *Night Visions, Windows and Stones,* and *Baltics* (all available in English). Robert Bly has translated his works in the volume *Friends, You Drank Some Darkness*. A new book by Tranströmer with translations by Bly, *Truth Barriers*, will be published in fall 1980 by Sierra Club Books.

Herbert Whone graduated from Manchester University and Royal Manchester College of Music. He has been a professional violinist throughout his life, playing with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic. Besides being a full-time teacher in the Music School of the Huddersfield Polytechnic, he lectures and demonstrates his ideas to groups of musicians throughout the British Isles. He is the author of *The Hidden Face of Music* and *The Simplicity of Playing the Violin*, recently published by Gollancz in England.

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