PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANIN

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EARTH AND SPIRIT

Photographs by Paul Caponigro Peter Matthiessen on Native Earth

VOLUME VI, NO. 1

EARTH AND SPIRIT

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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Cover: Death Valley, California. Photograph by Paul Caponigro.

Inside Cover: Landscape with Figure, painting attributed to Emperor Hui-tsung, China, 12th c. Konchin-in, Kyoto. From the Book *Zen* by Anne Bancroft, with the permission of Thames and Hudson.

FOCUS

Praise to the Holy Creator, who has placed his throne upon the waters, and who has made all terrestrial creatures. To the Heavens he has given dominion and to the Earth dependence; to the Heavens he has given movement, and to the Earth uniform repose.

He raised the firmament above the earth as a tent, without pillars to uphold it. In six days he created the seven planets and with two letters he created the nine cupolas of the Heavens.

In the beginning he gilded the stars, so that at night the heavens might play tric-trac.

With diverse properties he endowed the net of the body, and he has put dust on the tail of the bird of the soul.

He made the Ocean liquid as a sign of bondage, and the mountain tops are capped with ice for fear of him.

He dried up the bed of the sea and from its stones brought forth rubies, and from its blood, musk.

To the mountains he has given peaks for a dagger, and valleys for a belt; so that they lift up their heads in pride.

Sometimes he throws bridges across the face of the waters...

Sun and Moon—one the day, the other the night, bow to the dust in adoration; and from their worship comes their movement.

It is God who has spread out the day in whiteness, it is he who has folded up the night and blackened it.

To the parrot he gave a collar of gold; and the hoopoe he made a messenger of the Way.

The firmament is like a bird beating its wings along the way God has marked out for him, striking the Door with his head as with a hammer.

God has made the firmament to revolve—night follows day and day the night.

When he breathes on clay man is created; and from a little vapour he forms the world.

Sometimes he causes the dog to go before the traveller; sometimes he uses the cat to show the Way.

Sometimes he gives the power of Solomon to a staff; sometimes he accords eloquence to the ant...

In winter he scatters the silver snow; in autumn, the gold of yellow leaves.

He lays a cover on the thorn and tinges it with the colour of blood.

To the jasmine he gives four petals and on the head of the tulip he puts a red bonnet.

He places a gold crown on the brow of the narcissus; and drops pearls of dew into her shrine.

At the idea of God the mind is baffled, reason fails; because of God the heavens turn, the earth reels.

From the back of the fish to the moon every atom is a witness to his Being.

The depths of earth and the heights of heaven render him each their particular homage.

God produced the wind, the earth, the fire, and blood, and by these he announces his secret.

He took clay and kneaded it with water, and after forty mornings placed therein the spirit which vivified the body.

God gave it intelligence so that it might have discernment of things.

When he saw that intelligence had discernment, he gave it knowledge, so that it might weigh and ponder.

But when man came in possession of his faculties he confessed his impotence, and was overcome with amazement, while his body gave itself up to exterior acts.

Friends or enemies, all bow the head under the yoke which God, in his wisdom, imposes; and, a thing astonishing, he watches over us all....

There is none but Him. But, alas, no one can see Him. The eyes are blind, even though the world be lighted by a brilliant sun. Should you catch even a glimpse of Him you would lose your wits, and if you should see Him completely you would lose your self...

When the soul was joined to the body it was part of the all: never has there been so marvellous a talisman. The soul had a share of that which is high, and the body a share of that which is low; it was formed of a mixture of heavy clay and pure spirit. By this mixing, man became the most astonishing of mysteries. We do not know nor do we understand so much as a little of our spirit. If you wish to say something about this, it would be better to keep silent. Many know the surface of this ocean, but they understand nothing of the depths; and the visible world is the talisman which protects it. But this talisman of bodily obstacles will be broken at last. You will find the treasure when the talisman disappears; the soul will manifest itself when the body is laid aside. But your soul is another talisman; it is, for this mystery, another substance. Walk then in the way I shall indicate, but do not ask for an explanation.

—Farid ud-Din Attar

From *The Conference of the Birds* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 1971), rendered into English by C.S. Nott. Reprinted by permission.

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*

Just for your entertainment I am throwing in a little poem. You are, after all, one of the main pterodactyls.

Best wishes for the continuing success of your excellent journal.

Pterodactyls soaring in a blue sky—
We create unease with our silent critical survey
Of all the very up-to-date,
And clearly in a higher state,
Homo Sapiens
Ensconced in their rapid transit,
Safe (they imagine)
From our indiscretions
(The major indiscretion being that we should
exist at all).
They are not afraid
(Protected as they are
By a superepidermis of
More or less living metal and glass)—
They are not afraid that
We will carry off their babies.
It is simply because we do not belong
That they glance accusingly at the sky.
They do not like ungainly anachronisms
Cluttering the firmament,
Disturbing their fragile peace
With the mute reminder that
Perhaps something was left behind
In the ancient primordial slime—
Some unarticulated intuition
Of a different way.

—Jim Hunter
Lincoln, ME

I liked your subscription letter: "...we pay close attention to ancient and modern traditions and the possibilities they suggest for our lives in the late twentieth century."

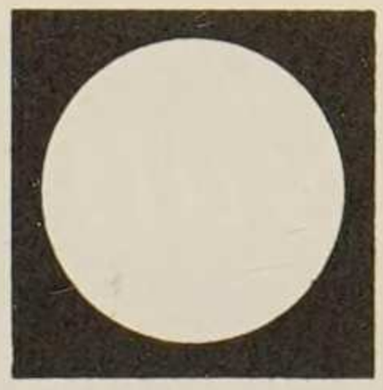
My criticism of PARABOLA has been many of the pieces are too short and not meaty enough. This may be changing, the last one I have is Vol. III, No. 1.

I am encouraged by your saying "...we're not concerned with spiritual samplings." It is important that the reader experience "the voyage" in the PARABOLA itself, rather than "the mystery" it points to, which is often inaccessible, except to the professional in the field, or the artist at work; that is, the "more organic and reciprocal" the editing is, the more the general reader is "renewed...through the pages." Anyway, so it would seem to me, at this point in "the late twentieth century."

—John Clarke
Buffalo, NY

Thank you for your call to dialogue on the value of PARABOLA. I'm a latecomer to your roll of readers and may have neither the wisdom nor enough experience of the journal to answer Marshall Massey's criticism of its format (Vol. V, No. 4). But I feel impelled to speak from my own situation, a humble one indeed, on the view from a very different side of the ant-hill.

Unlike Mr. Massey, who has been to Harvard, I am just recovering from thirty years' unschooled experience in raising a family of six relatively normal, reasonably valuable humans. My thoughts have been mainly practical, immediate, and without any great attention to the noble enigmas of life, except as they related to the nurturing of the children. Now, as the need for mothering has lessened, I'm delighted to discover a large, fertile area in my own personal terrain that is just beginning to show a sign of greening. It's greatly exciting to me, in



my fifties, to find myself in the midst of a veritable whirlwind of questions, answers, and wonders that need to be tended to. PARABOLA attends to some of those needs.

No one should require that a publication follow his own pattern of thought exclusively; Mr. Massey's meat might well be another man's poison! Perhaps a better way would be to extract from several the things that hold pertinence to one's own particular and precious existence.

I'm much too new to the whole realm of reflective thought to qualify as either a member of an "elitist in-group" or a "dabbler" in any given field. But I believe that I recognize—and appreciate—the art that points an arrow toward a truth, or tickles a fancy into an explosion of laughter or a glimpse of beauty. PARABOLA manages those feats quite often.

If the joyous interview with the Dalai Lama or McAllester's study on the song of the ambiguous Coyote (to mention only two) can be described as "erudite babble," perhaps my intellect is far too unlike Mr. Massey's to be in sympathy with his search for perfection, though I heartily wish him Godspeed. As for me, I have renewed my own subscription, and have ordered it sent as a gift to two quite special friends.

—Ruth Slickman
Kansas City, MO

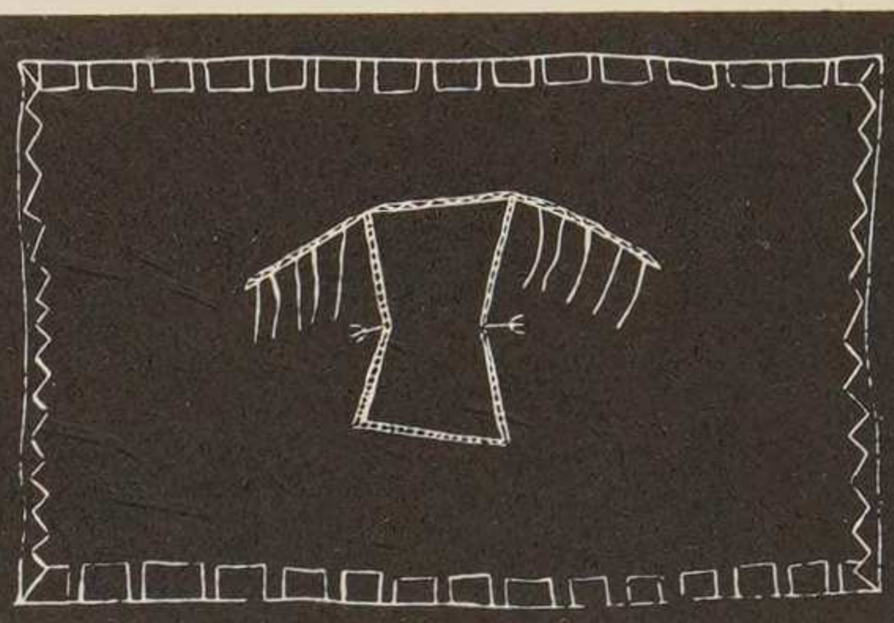
I read with interest and pleasure Norman Weinstein's review of Gary Snyder's *The Real Work: Interviews & Talks*...(Vol. V, No. 4).

Although Mr. Weinstein writes with sensitivity and empathetic insight it seems his general view passes through a filter of dualistic notion when he says, "clearly, the translation of the shaman role into the poet is an ongoing task, perhaps ultimately an impossible transformation until the entire foundation of the society shifts." To my knowledge and understanding all shamans both receive their own training through the context of an established lineage of teachers and continue their particular lineage by means of their own work, and this occurs no matter the style of the general environment or society in which they have been born and live and work. Society is not independent of ourselves and so cannot possibly be *other than* who we actually are. The actual shaman or spiritual teacher differs from us in that she or he has let go of versions of reality and experiences reality directly and exactly as it is. Mr. Snyder has chosen his lineage and although I certainly cannot say whether he *sees* Emerson and Thoreau as being members of his lineage, for Mr. Weinstein to categorize Mr. Snyder as "Nevertheless, it is easy to see Snyder's place in a long line of 'impractical' visionaries like Emerson and Thoreau, those for whom poetry contained the cipher that would forge the needed link between human nature and nature at large" clearly reveals a sensibility based on dualism, an attitude of either/or concerning the nature of reality. If this is not so, and perhaps Mr. Weinstein would care to clarify if he disagrees with the perspective I state, then how and why does he call a man impractical when that man has worked in very real way, both with his body and with his mind, and has said time and time again that if we wish to know what nature is we could practice sitting meditation and thereby see clearly what we have, first of all, to work

(Continued on page 132)

Native Earth

by Peter Matthiessen



Christopher Columbus, going ashore in the Antilles, was struck by the profound well-being of the island Arawak. He called them *indios*, not because he imagined them to be inhabitants of India (which in the fifteenth century was still called Hindustan) but because he recognized that these friendly, generous Taino people, soon to be extinct, lived in blessed harmony with their surroundings—"*una gente in Dios*," a People in God.*

Columbus's perception was shared by many Europeans, before and after, although the Vikings soon skirmished with the *skraelings*, and so did the English colonists farther south, despite the great kindness and assistance they received from the Algongkin peoples. Though the Europeans recognized the abundance of the land and waters, they were appalled by the sheer might of nature in a huge land without the mark of man, and with the departure of their ships, they felt homeless, cast away. They had not been prepared for the fierce extremes of climate, and they were dismayed by the huge dark wall of virgin forest; hiding unknown dangers from their view, it was perceived as oppressive and dangerous, even malevolent. As William Bradford wrote from the Plymouth Colony, "What could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? And what multitudes there might be of them, they knew not." Daniel Boone, breaking the so-called Wilderness Trail across the Cumberland Gap into Kentucky well over a century later, was still referring to "the horror" of this wilderness, which was everywhere met with a frenzy of land-clearing far beyond any practical need. In the nineteenth century, among intellectuals, an identity of "God" and "Nature" was perceived, but the idea made small impression on the frontier. To judge from the ruthless treatment of "the wild men" and the wasteful and destructive exploitation of the North American continent, the view of primordial nature as a "wilderness" to be tamed and dominated has persisted as part of the American sensibility to the present day.

The American Indian, of course, had no such concept. In fact, it was the Indians' lack of interest in modifying nature, their ability to live happily at one with it, that seemed to the beleaguered colonists the most savage thing about them. In 1796, an Indian told the Governor of Pennsylvania, "We love quiet. We suffer the mouse to play. When the woods are rustled by the wind, we fear not."* As far south as the cold, hard plateaus of Tierra del Fuego, where landmarks were commemorated by

*Courtesy of Russell Means

*From *Touch the Earth*, ed. T.C. McLuhan (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971).

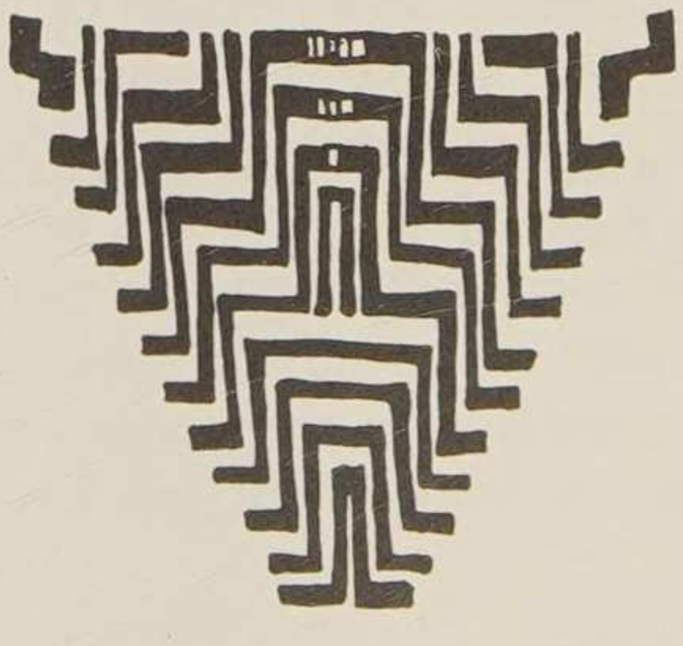
the white men with such names as "Famine" and "Desolation," the Indian understood the *rightness* of nature, in which nothing is out of place; one astonished missionary heard an Ona, gazing out across the windswept barrens, murmur rapturously, "*Yak haruin*"—my country. A northern land described by whites in recent years as "barren, uninhabited, fit only for flooding" is known to the Cree as *Kistikani*, "the Garden." In the Pacific Northwest, a chief declared, "Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people."

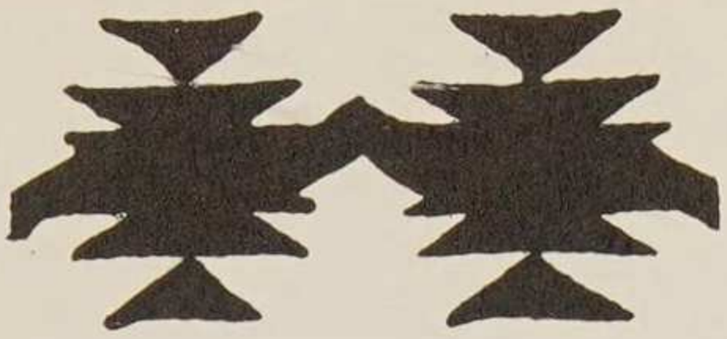
An Indian friend in California once told me how much she hated the phrase "wild Indian" in the American History books that she was given to read in school: "We were never 'wild,'" as she said. "We were just natural." Traditional people, still in harmony with the world around them, do not isolate themselves from other living things, nor consider one creature superior to another. This was also true of Europeans, before the discoveries of science made them observers, manipulators of the natural world, instead of unselfconscious participants. By seeking to dominate it, the white men set themselves in opposition to a vital, healing force of which they were a part and thereby mislaid a whole dimension of existence.

One thing we know which the white man may one day discover. Our God is the same God. You may think now that you own him as you wish to own our land. But you cannot. He is the Body of man. And his compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to him. And to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. The whites, too, shall pass—perhaps sooner than other tribes. Continue to contaminate your bed, and you will one night suffocate in your own waste. When the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses all tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires, where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. And what is it to say goodby to the swift and the hunt, the end of living and the beginning of survival?*

In such utterances as these, and many many others, there is a clarity and a quiet beauty that is stunning, and I wonder if it isn't this very suggestion of a vision of existence more universal than our own that makes the Indian way of life so fascinating to all people of the Western world. We can no longer pretend—as we did for so long—that Indians are a primitive people: no, they are a traditional people, that is, a "first" or "original" people, a primal people. And it isn't just that we admire the teachings that are implicit in their vision but that we *need* them, if we are to live our lives in a complete way as whole beings, not seeking to dominate but to live in harmony with the natural world. The Indian concept of earth and spirit has been patronizingly dismissed as simple-hearted "naturalism," or "animism," when in fact it derives from an holistic vision known to all mystics and great teachers, the most ancient and venerated religion in the world. How ironic it seems that so many Americans, alienated from the earth that gives them life, have turned to Eastern religions for a healing vision, instead of learning from a similar vision which has always existed right beside us. "There are hundreds of religions in this country, and still you white people are searching for something else. We are not

* Chief Sealth, Coastal Salish, in a letter to President Pierce, 1854.





searching—we are already there. And you don't have to join us: you are already there, too. You just have to realize it." These words of a Pueblo Indian, an uneducated man from the streets of Los Angeles, might have been used by a Zen master in regard to the enlightened state of Buddhahood: "You are already there; you just have to realize it." Or as an old holy man of the Ute Indians has said, "You are becoming what you have always been."* Yet to this day, we dismiss Indian belief as something archaic, picturesque, to be pushed aside by that lunatic insistence on "progress," on "growth," on gross national product, that is destroying the land and air and water, the countryside, small towns and small businesses and small farmers, not to speak of quality and craftsmanship, the human habitat, birdsong, quiet, harmony, the night, and the very soul of man. Recently I saw an old John Wayne movie called "Hondo"; at the end, as the Apaches are defeated, Wayne says, "It's the end of a way of life—a good way. NOW GET THOSE WAGONS MOVING!" Those wagons of Progress are still moving, riding roughshod over what is left of the beautiful American Canaan. Not only have we failed to learn from the Indians' "good way of life," we are still in the process of destroying it through acculturation, the bureaucracies, the so-called termination legislation, and land claim settlements that prepare the way for seizing and polluting the last remnants of Indian land.

Only to the white man was nature a "wilderness" and only to him was the land "infested" with "wild" animals and "savage" people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustices upon us and our families that we loved was it "wild" for us. When the very animals of the forest began fleeing from his approach, then it was that for us "the Wild West" began.*

Some rudimental understanding of Indian attitudes toward earth and spirit may be gained from such statements to the white man. However, one must keep in mind that the vast majority of Indian "sayings" were transcribed by white men, and are apt to be more literary—though no more eloquent—than the original.

The well-known words quoted above, for example, were transcribed by Chief Standing Bear's acculturated niece; Black Elk was interpreted by a white man. Much authentic material has been documented in ethnographic publications, but excepting a few early works by "educated" Indians, such as the study of the Iroquois by the Tuscarora scholar, J.N.B. Hewitt, and *The Soul of the Indian* by a Lakota, Dr. Charles Eastman, very little has been made available to the public; until recent years, when a number of gifted young Indian writers have emerged, it was very rare to hear an Indian in his own voice. Even now, the term "Indian literature" is limiting, even patronizing, carrying the suggestion that the writing is not mature enough to be called "literature" on its own merits. And the term is hollow: the images and rhythms, even the content, may be "Indian" to the degree that they provide at least an echo of the oral tradition, with its chants and dancing, but the narrative techniques will nonetheless be "Western"—that is, the techniques of the written word.

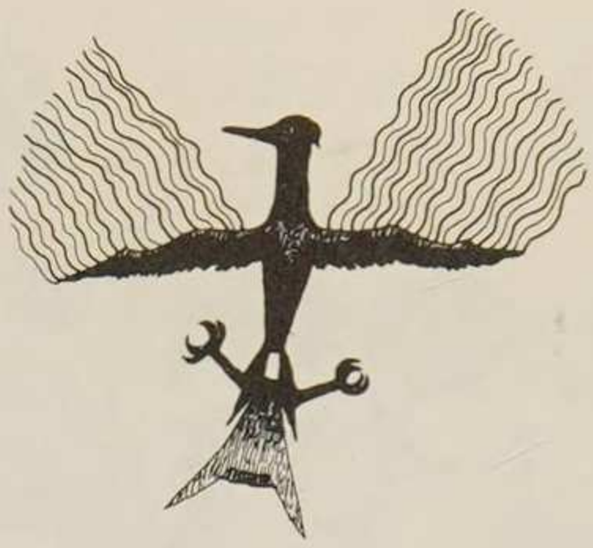
*From *Ritual of the Wind* by Jamake Highwater (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

*Chief Luther Standing Bear in *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, ed. May Montoya Jones (Warcaziwin).

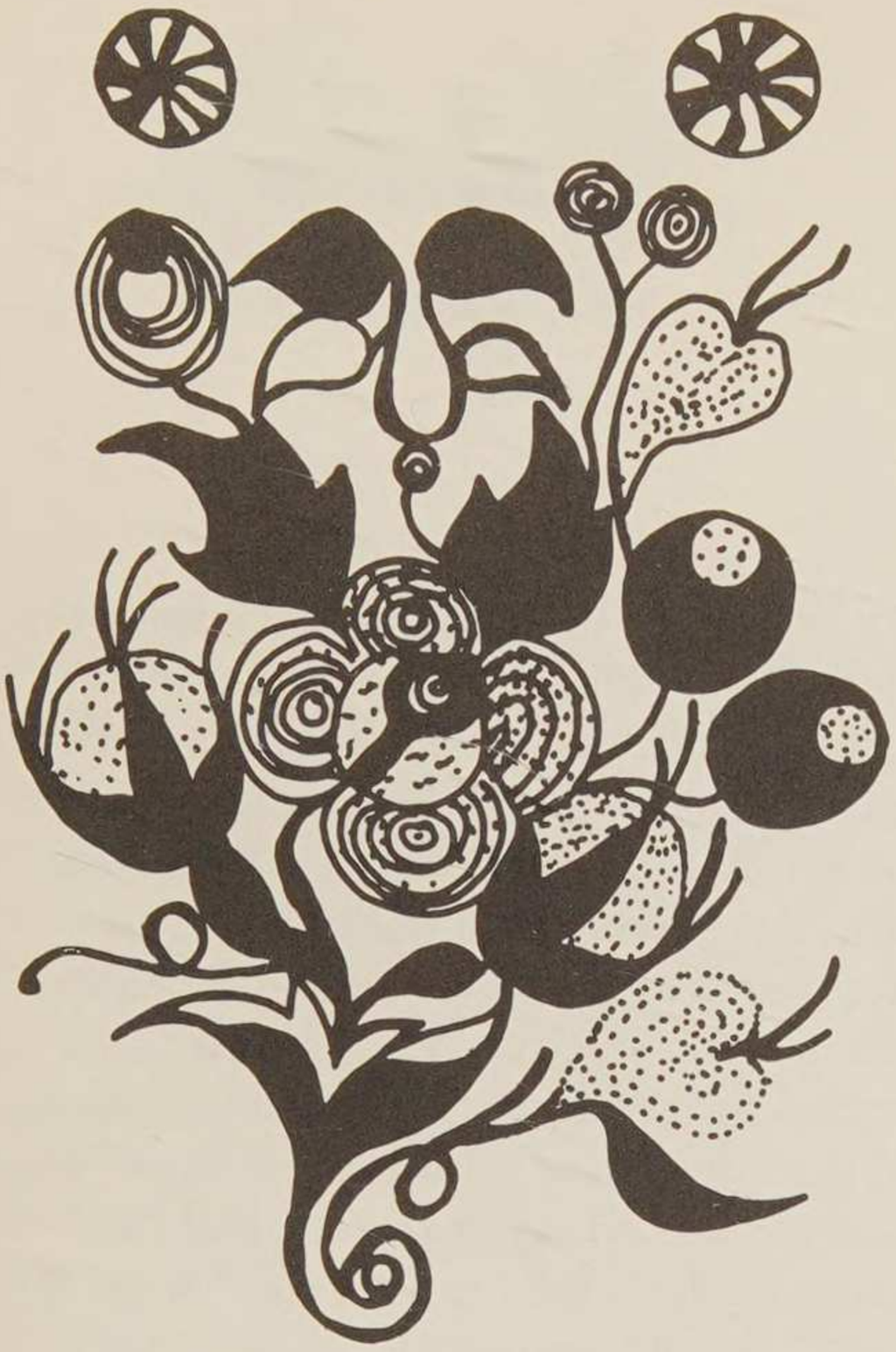
The oral tale, the ritual drama, on the other hand, are part of a poetic and dramatic tradition that goes back for centuries, beyond the earliest memory of the people. When the white man first appeared in North America, Indian lyric poetry, long epic narratives—such as the Creation Cycles of the Iroquois and Hopi—and a kind of ritual-drama (the Hako Ceremony of the Pawnee) were already well developed. Of these, the most fascinating is the controversial Wallum Olum or "Red Record," written in red ochre pictographs on bone and bark; the Wallum Olum is the immigration myth of the Lenape (the "Delaware") which may date back many thousands of years. But committed to print, these long and sustained narratives, without the ritual dance and chanting that invite the observer to suspend his thoughts and enter another world, read rather like opera might read without the music and stage business. And there are elements missing even in short poems, like these pure, spare songs of the Ojibwa:

Butterfly Song: In the coming heat of the day
(Mide Song) I stood there
Drifting snow—why do I sing?
Song of the Thunders: Sometimes I go about/in pity for myself
And all the while
A great wind is bearing me across the sky.

So much resonance in so few words, in the way of *haiku*! But are we hearing them as they were conceived? What we are reading



may be beautiful, but more often it is prettified; how "Indian" it is by the time it appears in print is a good question. Perhaps there were syllables to be sung and danced that are no longer present in the written form. Very likely—to our ear, at least—the original might have seemed repetitive, monotonous, staccato. Only rarely is the original provided, with a literal translation, and the white man's "interpretations" identified as such. Many of the original languages are lost; the "interpreter" may "improve" the old translations as he pleases. Perhaps these poems represent the spirit if not the letter of the song, but we cannot be sure. Even what has been presented as Indian thought—books such as *Black Elk Speaks* or *Land of the Spotted Eagle*, or even a more earthy and less "literary" book like *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*—represents selective interpretations by the white man, with the strong rhetorical overtones of the white man's voice. And however poetic or mystical, however true to the original spirit of what was said, these interpretations all mislead us in being presented as the creative vision of one Indian, who at best is no more than the eloquent spokesman of a distilled vision of the world that has come down through the oral tradition, century after century; it is a whole people that is speaking (or singing, or painting). Only recently, in imitation of the white man, have Indians signed their work; they would approve of Georgia O'Keeffe, who when asked, "Why don't you sign your work?" responded, "Why don't you sign your face?" Nor is it the Indian who regards these sayings or these tales or songs as literature or poetry, far less "art," but the white man or woman who compiled them, edited them, and read them, applying his Western standards all the way.



There are exceptions, of course, and one of them is a recent collection of songs and tales of the Swampy Cree called *The Wishing Bone Cycle*;* they are fresh and amazing, earthy, very funny—so much so that I suspect they come much closer to the original than the more lyrical interpretations we are accustomed to, in which too much imagination has been used to bridge the cultures. And perhaps this is because the translator was raised among the Cree, speaks several dialects, and still returns there every year to visit. There is little attempt to be "poetic;" he is content with the pure spare beauty of the event. Thus, he tells me, the single Cree word *kooko-westi-minkwe-neeshke* means "owl drifting down on a single snowflake, without noise."

Whether poem, narrative, or drama, works in the oral tradition were chanted or sung, usually to the accompaniment of a dance, and meaningless syllables were added, to conform the chanting to the rhythm. Though often poetic, these songs were rarely if ever composed for their own sake, any more than costumes or weavings or baskets were simply "decorated." They were aspects of ritual, in which the mystical reality was made visible through symbolic action, an interaction of forces out of which the mystery arises for those who are ready to see.

Among Indians, the concept of an art separate from the nature of which life is part is as unnatural as the idea of a life separated from religion. Rock painting, tent symbols, body paint, sand paintings, blankets, moccasins, belts, baskets, even jewelry, had signs that transmitted a teaching, and the most sacred signs were withheld from objects manufactured for the white man; for in a life that is not separate from religious experience, such objects may be dangerous, containing the power of a world in which there are no accidents. This power is not to be corrupted. To weave a basket is to re-enact the process of creation, and the finished basket is the image of the universe.

Since an art (or an artist) as something apart from daily existence is not recognized, "the basis for aesthetic judgment is mystical"; that is, it is rich or poor in quality according to the amount of power it can bring about. The words of songs were less important than the state of mind evoked, since these elevated states were protective and curative; in other words, these poem/songs were valued as much for the reaction in oneself as for the effect on others. All songs had a certain power, returning the singer to harmony with the life force, the Great Mystery, that permeates all of creation.

As a Blackfoot says,

> I meditated often upon the powers in the air, water and earth. They are the great mysteries. Everything is done by them....I spent hours on

**The Wishing Bone Cycle* by Howard Norman (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, revised and expanded, 1980).

the hilltop and near the waters, meditating and watching the birds, animals, and heavens.*

All nature is sacred, therefore even "nature songs" are sacred. Songs and tales that are apparently recounted to entertain also help to account for strange things seen in daily life, or to reinforce the tribal history, or illustrate it; they are apt to be instructive, cautionary, practical. A Cree says, "The best storyteller is one who lets you live if the weather is bad"—in other words, if the story is about ice-fishing, there should be some instruction in it that the hungry listener might one day put to use. Even if the story is just funny, the laughter and happiness it brings are precious gifts in the long winter night, or in time of famine; among the Big Mountain Navajo, tales are only told in winter, when they are most needed.

The songs, too, whether vengeance songs or lullabies, were dedicated to specific ceremonies or occasions in order to bring a desired influence upon the outcome. For example, a man setting out upon a hunt might have a hunting song, and a song for the first sighting of his quarry, a song to be sung by his wife for his safekeeping, and many others. In addition, many Indians had a personal song, which was used to elevate the possessor to a plane of awareness and spiritual power.

*Smoking Star, Blackfoot, in *American Indian Life* by Clark Wissler (originally published by the American Museum of Natural History, New York).

Even the love songs are practical as well as lyrical—more often than not, they are invocations to assure *success* in love—and many of the so-called love songs "are actually songs of *seeking*, the mystical quest for the Great Mystery."* This seeking manifests itself to the very end, as in the Death Song of a Yokuts man (California):

All my life
I have been seeking,
Seeking!

This is not an expression of despair, as (I suspect) the white interpreter has understood it, but on the contrary, a celebration of existence. The death song helps him to achieve a transcendent state of mind in order to face death, whether in famine or in battle or in plain old age; it was very important to the Indian to die well, for one's dying was not only a part of living but an expression of one's life, completing the circle. For traditional Indians, death is an initiation, a *becoming*, not a return into the cosmic void, and it promises the beauty of fulfillment, as in this Zuni death song:

Hi-ithia, naiho-o
It is finished
In beauty it is finished.

This is the transcendental beauty that the Yurok know as *merwer serger*—"the pure and the complete." *Nih-Zhoni-go*, or "Go in beauty," say the Navajo.

Indian existence is not separable from Indian religion, which is not separable from

*From Mary Austen's Introduction to *American Indian Poetry*, ed. George Cronyn. (New York: Liveright, 1934).

the natural world. It is not a matter of "worshiping nature," as anthropologists suggest. Nature itself is the primordial religion, and man is an aspect of nature; the word "religion" itself makes an unnecessary separation. Nature itself is "the Great Mystery," the "religion before religion," the profound intuitive apprehension of the true nature of existence attained by mystics of all ages, everywhere on earth: the whole universe is sacred, man is the whole universe, and the religious ceremony is life itself, the miraculous common acts of every day. Respect for nature is respect for oneself; to revere it is self-respecting, since man and nature, though not the same thing, are not different. Plants and animals that must be taken are thanked with ceremony and respect, and rocks are not moved carelessly from their own places. Every day, blessings are offered to the sun, air, and wind of the four directions, the water that brings life, the mother earth, and nothing is wasted. And this respectful awareness of the world around, of its warnings and its affirmations, brings a joyous humility, a *simplicity*, that is also respect for the Great Mystery, or the "Great Spirit."

"Great Mystery" is a better translation of the power of nature than "Great Spirit," which reflects an attempt of missionary origin to give the red man our own sort of externalized "God." "God" comes from the German "Gut" and means "the Good One," but at one time we did not externalize this concept. Even Christian mystics recognized "the Lord who is seen within": Meister Eckhart said, "The eye with which I see God is the eye with which God sees me." In Aramaic, the language of Jesus, the word for God is "Alaha"—to the Arabs "Allah"—which means "Essence." And this is also the meaning of "Great Mystery"—which Iroquoian peoples call *orenda*, the invisible creative power, the life essence that permeates everything from the outermost stars to the smallest stone. "It represents the unused earth force," Lame Deer says...."(Wakan Tanka) pours a great, unimaginable amount of force into all things —pebbles, ants, leaves, whirlwinds—whatever you will."

The Medicine Wheel of the Plains tribes is very similar in concept to the Asian mandala, which reflects all of existence.

This Medicine Wheel can best be understood if you think of it as a mirror in which everything is reflected....Any idea, person or object, can be a Medicine Wheel, a Mirror for Man. The tiniest flower can be such a Mirror, as can a wolf, a story, a touch, a religion, or a mountain top.*

Mitakuye Iyasin, the Lakota, says: All my Relations! meaning all one's relations with everything on earth. Indian healing ceremonies are based on the idea of restoring those relations, including the balance of a body and spirit—they are not different—that are out of harmony with the world around. For Indians know, as all traditional peoples have known, that "there is one flow, one common breathing, all things are in sympathy"—so wrote the Greek Hippocrates, four centuries before Christ—in other words, before the Western world had lost touch with the Old Ways. Listen to Dersu the Trapper, a forest Tungus tribesman of Siberia, awed by rainy mist: "Ground, hill, forest, all same Man. He sweating now. Hark." And he listened. "Hear Him breathe? All same Man!"

"The Indian," says a Cheyenne elder, "is a manifestation of the breath or energy of God. He is earth, but the earth part is only that which makes him visible; the part which is his real life...is that which we call the breath of God. Man, because he partakes of this spiritual essence, has a mind reaching beyond the conscious mind. It is that which flows into him from the deity."**

Breath is this essence or power or *orenda*, and the wind that animates the leaves is the invisible breath of God. "*N'leheleche*," the Delaware say. "I exist, I breathe." Or better, perhaps, "I am breathed." To the Mi-

*Hyemeyohsts Storm, Cheyenne
**Alfred Wilson, Cheyenne

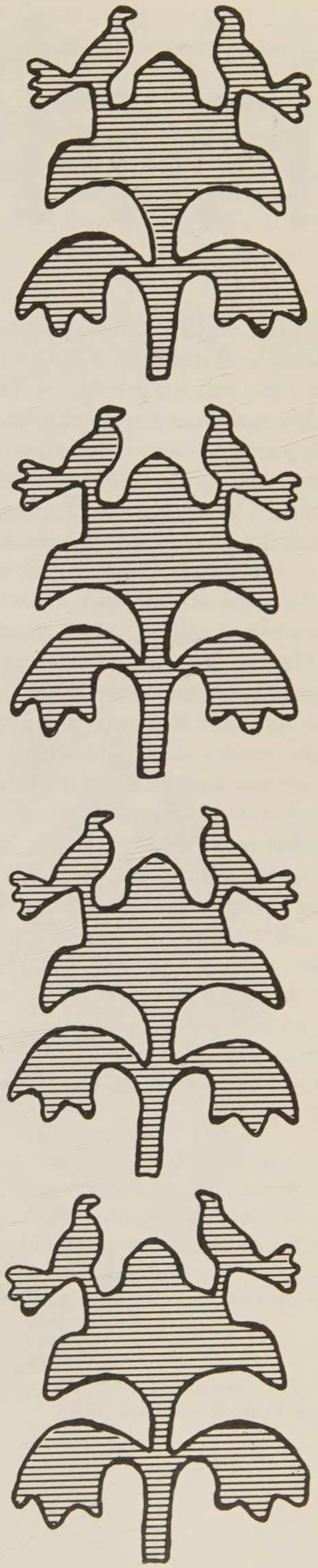
kasuki, the Creator is "the Breath-maker," and a Navajo has said:

It is the wind that comes out of our mouths now that gives us life. When this ceases to blow, we die. In the skin of our fingers we can see the trail of the wind; it shows us where the wind blew when our ancestors were created.*

The wind, the breath, relates us to all other things, which are not inferior, nor even separate from us; the humblest stone is a manifestation of life energy, and the smallest creature has something to teach us in its accommodations; this is why a turtle or a chickadee may appear during a vision quest as a spirit helper. In the Western world today, few understand natural matters that are taken for granted by traditional peoples, and few among the Indians themselves know how to listen to animals, to respect the earth; for the majority of the Indians, the traditional people say, the world is a dead thing. Like the white man, they have no home.

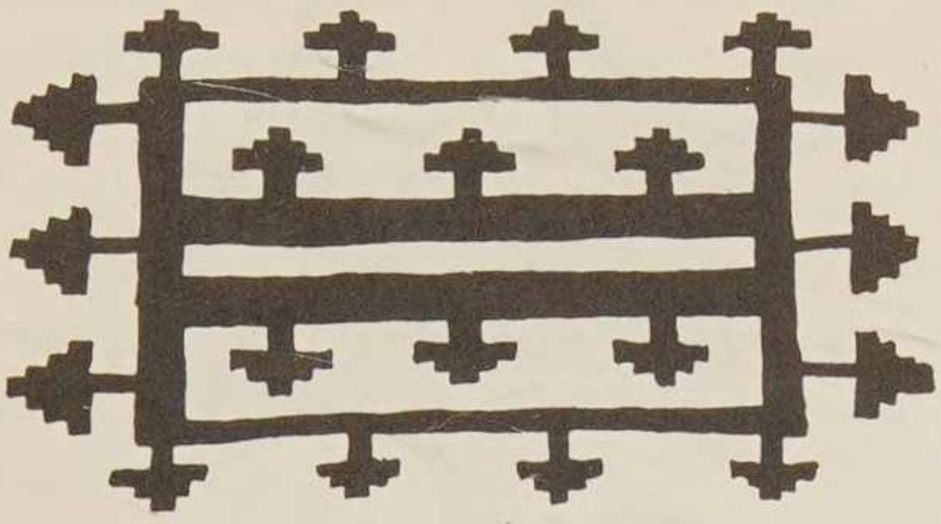
When the last red man has vanished from the earth, and the memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, these shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people, for they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. If we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it, as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land, as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your might, and with all your heart—preserve it for your children, and love it as God loves us all. One thing we know —our God is the same. This earth is precious to him. Even the white man cannot be exempt from the common destiny.**

Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce declared: "The Earth and myself are of one mind"—



*From *Navajo Legends* by Washington Matthews (Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint of 1897 edition).

**Chief Sealth, Coastal Salish, in a letter to President Pierce, 1854.



a fundamental realization of all mystics, and a widespread intuition among traditional peoples: true knowledge of the mother earth becomes true knowledge of the self. A Zen master says, "If you have truly understood a frog, you have understood everything."* Western man, having lost touch with the earth, tends to belittle such ideas as Oriental mystification, but who has not had the sense at least once in his life that the trees were watching, or the mountains waiting? In our deepest being, where we still know that we are made of the same elements, the same minerals as trees and mountains, we are all animists. Like it or not, we are manifestations of the Great Mystery, but we no longer pay attention in the way that traditional people do, and so we miss seeing the threads that bind together the temporary accumulations of energy that we call matter—seeing, that is, into the shadows of things, seeing with every sense, with a third eye. Shamans, like Zen masters, encourage disciples to drop all accumulation of mind, to see what is really there, freshly, and without preconceptions. An old Pueblo man says:

> You must learn to look at the world twice ....First you must bring your eyes together in front so you can see the smoke rising from an ant hill in the sunshine. *Nothing* should escape your notice. But you must learn to look again, with your eyes at the very edge of what is visible. Now you must see dimly if you wish to see things that are dim—visions, mist, and cloud people...animals which hurry past you in the dark. You must learn to look at the world twice if you wish to see all that there is to see.*

Today, physicists are rediscovering these threads, and their views of the *real* nature of existence seem to draw closer every year not only to ancient teachings of the Eastern sages but to the way of traditional people all around the world.

Einstein once remarked that, among all people, twelve-year-old children of the Uto-Aztecan language groups (which include the Hopi) were probably the best prepared to grasp his Theory of Relativity. The Hopi have no expression for "time," far less "past" or "future"; time is not linear but a circulating space where past, present, and future are always together. A Cheyenne elder:

> Indians do not speak of the beginning as Christians do. They know nothing of the beginning, nor will they say that there is to be an ending.

Similarly, Chief Crazy Horse did not say, "Today is a good day to die." What he said was, "Today is a good day to die, for all of the things of my life are here." Or (as Zen says), "Everything is right here now."

Indians do not make our life-killing distinctions between mind and body, between the sacred and profane. In many Indian tribes, teachings analogous to Tibetan Tantra are expressed by sacred clowns or dancers who manifest the obscene and the perverse, the upside-down aspects of existence, in order to knock down the barriers of preconceived ideas and permit the initiated, at least, to glimpse the whole flux and interpenetration of existence; thus, they are the messengers between one way of seeing and another. For example, Hopi clowns wearing huge sex organs may simulate copulation right on top of a sacred shrine, as a demonstration of non-attachment to man's preconceived forms and ideas of religion; they break down the structure, the *appearances* of things, to reveal the essence within.

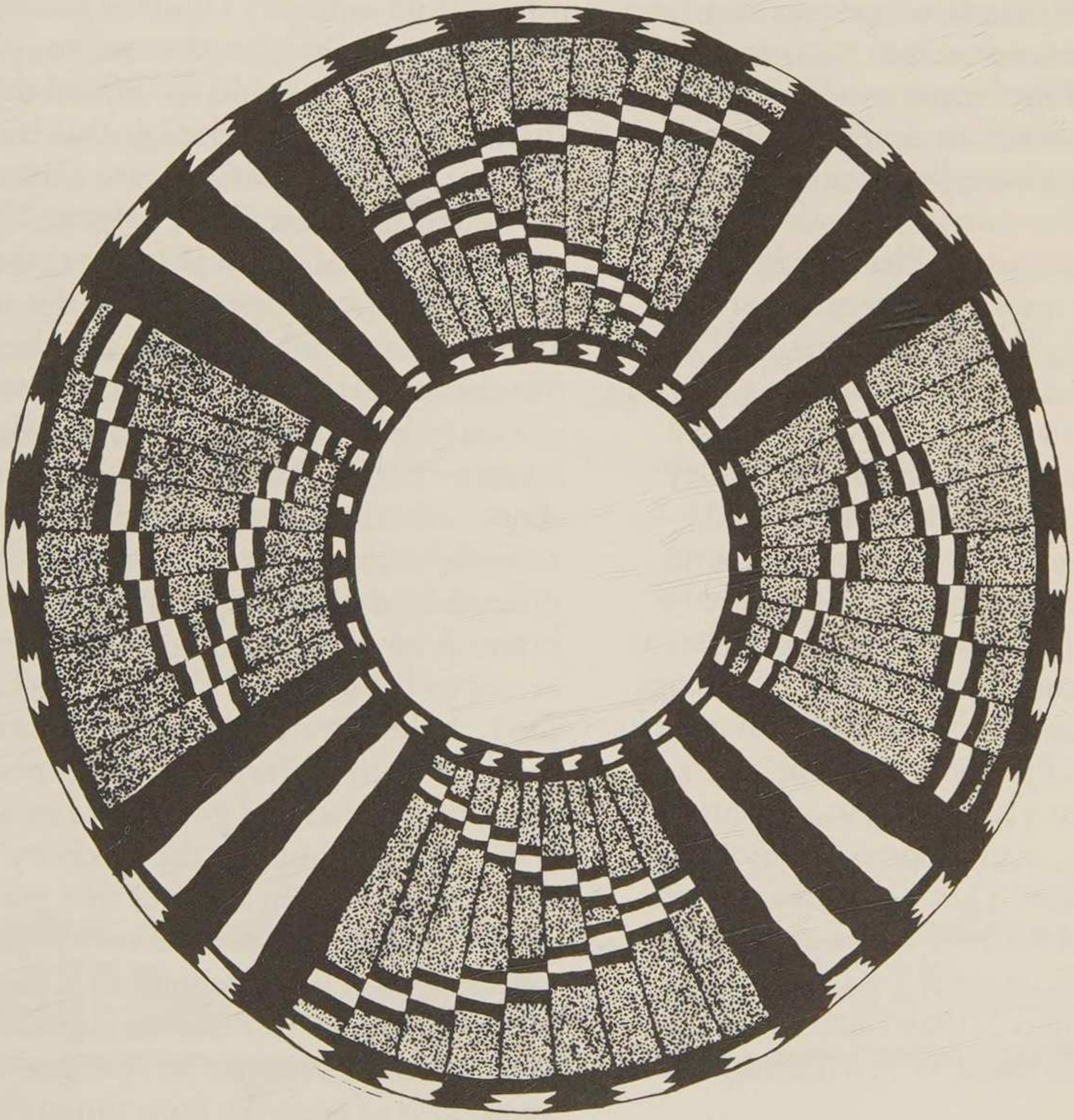
*From *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi (New York: Weatherhill, 1970).

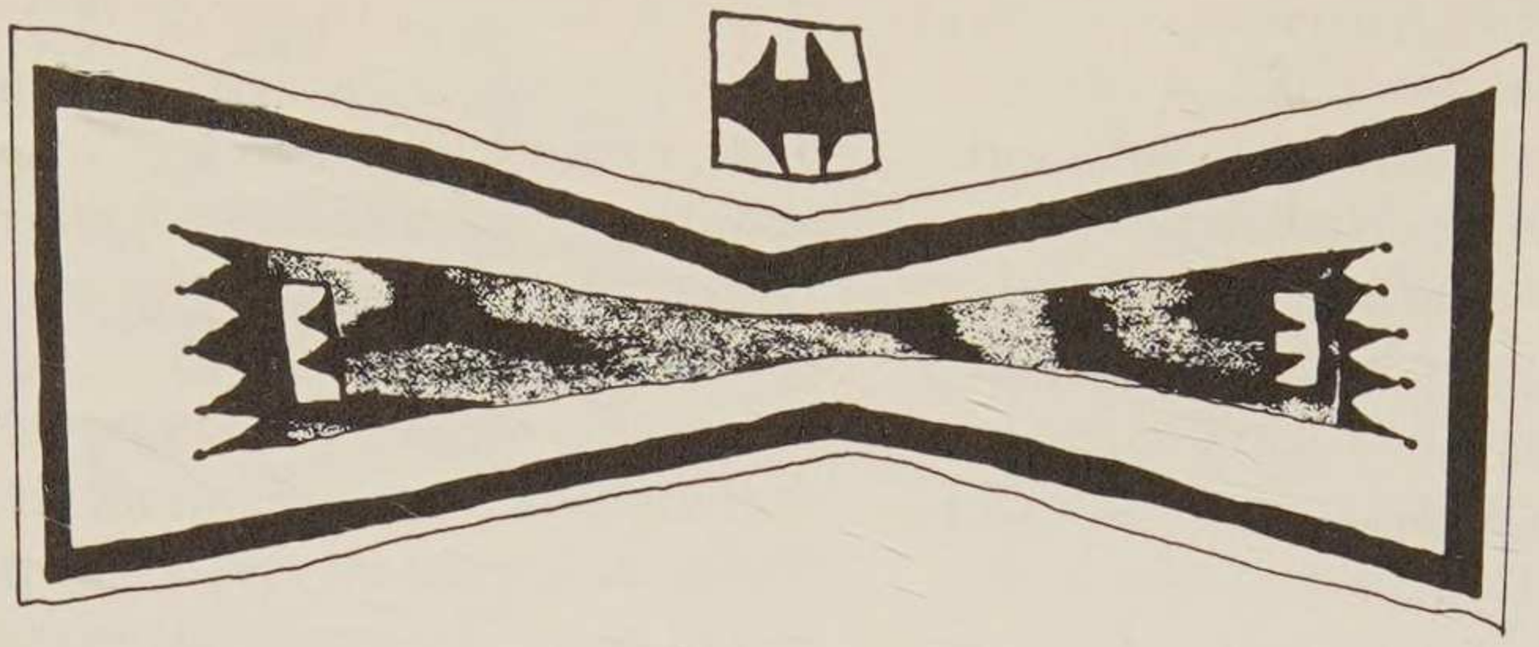
*From *Ritual of the Wind* by Jamake Highwater (New York: Viking, 1977).

To the same end, a Zen master may shout at his students, "Kill the Buddha!" And the flow of energy between linear reality and the timeless, circular reality behind it, between one way of seeing and the other, is taken for granted by the Indians, who allow that silence that is needed for receiving perceptions that logic and mere words cannot explain—that utter silence which, as Black Elk said, is "the very voice of the Great Spirit."

The Indians approve of the natural world as it is, they do not try to dominate it, far less change it, nor do they think it matters much to understand it, or not, at least, in the white-man way of analyzing and trying to break down its fleeting parts; rather, they see it, that is, *apprehend* it, by opening themselves to the *orenda* power in the natural world, to the greater reality that underlies what we think we see. A Yurok holy man says (as a Zen master might say), "To see means to see what is actually there, what actually exists; not what you want to be there, but what is *really* there. It's all *seeing*."

A Mohawk friend sometimes asks me if there isn't a conflict between my interest in Indian religion and my training in Zen. Perhaps it is my ignorance, but I find no important conflict; each teaching illumi-





nates the other. Indians place great emphasis on being attentive to the presence of the Great Mystery in every instant, and in all things; Zen, too, insists before all that we remain mindful of the present moment, the common miracles. *Pay attention! Pay attention! Pay attention!* And what excites me is the instinct that this fundamental teaching derives from the same ancient tradition as the mindfulness of the hunters and warriors of other days, who had to develop and maintain an intense awareness in order to survive.

On many occasions I have seen evidence, among traditional peoples, of what seemed to be extraordinary eyesight. Years ago in New Guinea, I was high on a cliffside with an Ndani warrior. He was gazing a mile or more across a sort of river valley and swamp, toward a dense thicket. Although it was early in the morning, with poor light and dark shadow, he suddenly said, "Enemy!" and sank into the bushes as he pointed. I could see nothing. Even with binoculars, I could not find the man until he pointed again. Finally I made out a dark naked figure in a tree shadow, absolutely still, gazing up at our hiding place. And I thought, "Damn! That's remarkable eyesight!" I could scarcely believe it.

Years later, at Lake Turkana, in the northern Frontier District of Kenya, I was going along the shore with a Molo tribesman. Ahead of us, off a small point at least a mile away, hundreds of boulders emerged from the shallow water. And this fisherman pointed at the boulders, saying, "Crocodile." All that can be seen of such a crocodile are the two nostrils, sometimes the crown—tiny lumps among hundreds of others. And suddenly I understood the miraculous eyesight of traditional peoples.

That warrior could not afford to miss that dark place in the thicket that was not a shadow. He didn't actually see a man. He saw a darkness that didn't belong. Those people belonged to a war culture; they went to war, with spears and bows and arrows, nearly once a week, and they sent out raiding parties in between. He would not survive long if he ignored details in his home territory. And the fisher on the lake shore saw no crocodile snout, he saw one rock too many in a pattern of rocks that in thousands of days had been imprinted on his brain. A bird establishing its territory memorizes its landscape; it knows where to find food, shelter, water, and how to travel it in the dark or in a hurry, and it sees everything that comes and goes; total awareness is the secret of holding the territory and even of survival. In cultures that are still close to the earth, survival may depend on noticing what is menacing or edible, and the people see better not because their visual apparatus is superior but because of an awareness of even the most minute change in their surroundings, the total awareness of a cat at a mousehole, not tense in any way, just empty of everything but readiness, so that when something changes in this field of awareness, it is noticed at once—*bang*!

That awareness born of "emptiness" is the source of a power known to shamans and sages alike: "When your mind is empty like a valley or a canyon, then you shall know the power of the Way."

We all have "power" to one degree or another, but it has withered with disuse, like our appendix, like the ability to run 100 miles in a single day. There are channels of communication, ways of seeing, for which our very limited idea of reality has no vocabulary, and there is nothing "supernatural" about these channels; they are natural attributes of mind that can be reopened through yoga or Zen meditation training, or by the Eskimo technique of carving big circles of soft stone, or by the dances of the Bushman and the Dervish and the Pueblo, which obliterate the structures of the intellect, allowing what an Indian has called "the big heart powers" to rush in. To perceive the true nature of existence was one reason for performing a vision quest: after four days of fasting alone on a high rock, in the great silence and solitude of earth, one is bound to discover that what was thought of as a separate self is not separate from the trees, the rocks, the hawk, the insect peoples, that beyond the senses lies a different plane of consciousness in which all is related, simultaneous, and one.

There are many paths or "ways" to this awareness; one need not be an Indian to arrive there. Indeed one must be careful not to romanticize Indian "powers" or spirituality, especially since most Indians have lost touch with the Old Ways. On the other hand, there seems no doubt that traditional peoples the world over have much to teach a spiritually crippled race which, as Lame Deer said, sees "only with one eye." This half-blindness has been the curse of the white people as long as the Indians have known us, but we have not always been accursed; at one time, we knew the *mysterium tremendum*. And we must feel awe again if we are to return to a harmonious existence with our own habitat, and survive.

As a first step, we might consider this Great Mystery that is all about us and in every moment; it is the music of the stars, the color of the wind, the dead stillness between tides at dead of night, birds, trees, feet, sea pearls and manure, and it is no less and no more strange or beautiful or scary than our life itself. When modern man has regained his respect for the earth, when science becomes a tool in the service of nature rather than a weapon to dominate it, then the lost Paradise, the Golden Age in the race memories of all people on earth will come again, and all men will be "in Dios," People of God. ◇

Acknowledgment: An earlier version of this paper was delivered as the first Belkin Memorial Lecture at the University of California, San Diego in the spring, 1979.

Traditional designs adapted by Dana D. Cummings

EPICYCLE

The Killing of the Smothers-Fires Witigo

The cannibal-giant, Witigo, is one of the many Beings who have wandered the Cree subarctic throughout time. The Witigo may be "inside" a person and take over that person's behavior, or it may wander in the forests as a voracious giant whose heart is made of ice.

This story is from a collection of Witigo stories, Where the Chill Came From, *to be published by North Point Press.*

Askik was sent out for quills. He was going to a gathering place of porcupines. He needed to be in their midst...to ask them for good quills for baskets.

When Askik left the warmth of his family's cooking fire, he set out into the cold. Right away he felt the cold gather on his face. So he began thinking of the fire he would make in his camp that night. He was walking toward a fire, and quills.

He shouted at the cold. "You can have my face only between fires!"

So Askik walked...a fire behind him, and one ahead. In the meantime were ptarmigans. Askik had to hunt a ptarmigan to eat at his camp that night. He saw one up ahead. Just when he was about to kill it, it fell away from itself...INTO ASHES, BLOWING AROUND!

This greatly puzzled Askik.

That ptarmigan was many ashes then. Ptarmigan ashes were swirling around. Askik hurried his walking. He was no longer hungry. He hurried toward a place he knew to make camp. But when he arrived at this place, he saw a fire had ALREADY BEEN SMOTHERED THERE! Already. Before Askik had arrived!

When Askik saw this, it made the cold gather on all of him and he shivered.

Then the wind started up and it swirled up the ashes of this fire. They blew around.

So now the ptarmigan-ashes were joined by these smothered-fire ashes swirling.

Askik shouted, "WHAT IS CAUSING THIS?" His shouting brought out the porcupines. Askik was in their midst. They told him, "The baskets can wait. A Witigo has been making birds fall

apart around here...ptarmigans, ducks, all sorts. Also, the Witigo smothers fires. ALL OVER THE WITIGO HAS SMOTHERED FIRES. So, now, there are few birds for you to eat and no fires to keep you warm! The Witigo is trying to starve you!"

Askik asked advice.

The porcupines said, "We need to help you. We need to call a weasel in to bite the Witigo's heart." The porcupines rattled. Soon a weasel arrived. The porcupines said to it, "Askik needs your help. See, over there, that's him, shivering without birds."

The weasel said, "First you need to conjure a storm to swirl the Witigo...to confuse it."

The porcupines conjured together. A great storm started up. When the Witigo arrived to eat Askik, it got swirled. The porcupines' storm confuse-swirled the Witigo. It howled out...its mouth opened. With that, the weasel went into the Witigo's throat toward its heart which is made of ice. Then the weasel chewed the Witigo's heart! INSIDE THE WITIGO, THE WEASEL CHEWED! Soon the Witigo was dead.

When the weasel returned, Askik quickly built a fire to thaw the weasel's chattering teeth.

Everyone was still shivering...porcupines, the weasel, and Askik. But a fire would stop the shivering soon.

This is how a Witigo was killed. Later, Askik received quills.

—Told by Joseph Badfoot Michael, Winisk River Region, Canada
Translated from Swampy Cree by Howard Norman

Illustrations by William Threepersons

Note: *Askik* means kettle.

THE ENCANTADOS

by David Guss

It's been just over a year now that I left Cumana and the Oriente, Marc, Spencer, Juan Carlos, the Brito, the Coronados, Franklin and his father Eliodoro, Cruz Quinal, San Lorenzo, Cumanacoa.

They're like Encantados now—those people who live through the pools and on to the other side. Encantados, spirits, species beings in their pure unmasked form. They never come down. They had a village in the headwaters of the Brito, up past its name to its source where they call it the Guarumal. Juan Carlos met them. It was when he stayed up there alone one time. He heard shots some nights. Then he slept. There was a door out there in the open and beautiful, dark-skinned boys, almost naked, hiding behind it. He said it looked funny the way they were trying to conceal themselves. He said he was afraid. He went up to the door as if he had a gun and was pointing it. He told them to come out and so they did. He asked them who they were, where they lived. He kept saying how beautiful they were. Something about their color. They said they lived up—back there—at the top of the river—that they never came out. They just stayed back there and no one ever saw them. They were Encantados. Spirit people. Maybe they were Deer People. Maybe they were Snakes. Juan Carlos knew

them too. These people came in dreams—those without disguise. I told Juan Carlos it was dangerous. Deer came and spoke to him during the day. As he sat by the river, deer women came by, crossed over and stole his eyes. He made love to snakes at night. I told him this was dangerous. One day they'll take you with them.

The place was far from any neighbors, the furthest up the river by a good two hours climb. It had been cleared and farmed by an old curandero and his daughter and son. Juan Carlos and Esteban had bought it from the son for 2,000 bolivares ($500). The son had moved to town over ten years ago and was working as a night watchman at a factory. The son needed the money and was happy to sell it. But he was sad too. He had loved the place and had tried to make a go of it for at least five years after his father died. He said there was money there in avocados. But he got lonely. It was too much for one person all alone. He needed a wife and family. That's why he moved to town.

And what about his sister? After the father died, he came back for her. Yes. He sent her stepmother, I think, and she came back and took her away. It was like the Encantados. She was visited, yes, she said, and then soon after disappeared. That's the way it happens. You're healthy and fine and then one day you just disappear. We knew there were lots of spirits around. The people on the river told us about them. They knew their entrance ways, the names of the pools and the ones who went away there. We asked if they ever came back.

"Sometimes, yes. That's the way you learn how to cure. You go off with the Encantados and you learn that way. They're the only ones that can teach you. But it's very dangerous. Most people never return. One woman, yes. She's in Cumana now. She goes all over healing and curing people. She has a lot of power. She lived with them. She went away for years. Everyone thought she was dead. Then she came back one day and started healing people.

"There was this boy too. You know that big *pozo* up there? The Pozo Negro? This boy went down there one day. He was swimming in there and just disappeared. Someone saw that and called for help. An old man came and yelled for a long, long vine. So they brought it to him and he started sticking it down in the pool. Now as he stuck it in, it floated down along the surface, but it was really going in all the time. Yes, you could see that, and so he kept sticking it in further and further. And everyone just stood there watching. Then finally there was a tug, and he started hauling it in as fast as he could. And when he came to the end, the boy was there. The boy came back up. He was holding on. They pulled him out of the water and laid him on the shore and started drying him out. They listened to his heart. They carried him home. It was a long time before he came around again. HOOOOOO...it was days.

"Later on, they asked him what had happened. What he'd seen down there.

"'I was being carried away on the back of a white horse. That's the only thing I remember.'

"That's the only thing he ever said." ◇

Parable of the Trees and the Stars

by Victor Perera

The following fragment has been adapted from Last Lords of Palenque: The Lacandon Mayas of Naha', *written in collaboration with Oklahoma linguist and Mayan ethnologist, Robert Bruce, to be published by Little, Brown, fall, 1981. This scene takes place before the mahogany trees were cut down by the Mexican Department of Forestry. We are sitting in the god-house with Chan K'in—eighty-one-year-old headman or* T'o'ohil *of the northern Lacandon group of Naha', his twenty-two-year-old son K'ayum, and Little K'in, nine years old—one of Chan K'in's sixteen living children by three living wives. K'ayum recites prayers over the fifteen god-pots in the background as he presides over a* balché *ceremony. (*Balché, *their ceremonial liquor, is made by pounding the bark of the* balché *tree in a ritual canoe, pouring water and sugar over it, and letting it ferment overnight. It is a mild emetic and diuretic which cleans out your system without leaving a hangover, even after consuming ten or more gourdsful.)*

I have chosen this particular moment from the stories of Chan K'in, who is one of the last true, living descendants of the ancient Maya, because I felt that it is central to an understanding of Lacandon cosmology.

Note:
Hachakyum (equivalent to highland Mayas' Huracan) is the Supreme Being of the northern Lacandon, who made firm the earth and created human-kind and all other creatures.
Kisin, Lord of the Underworld, envies Hachakyum's creations and seeks to destroy them.
Yum K'ax, Lord of the Forest.

Chan K'in in the god-house

Suddenly, without warning, Chan K'in begins to sing. Robert puts away his guitar and turns on the recorder. I recognize the word "*balum*" and realize he is singing "The Song of the Jaguar," which I had read in Robert's collection of Naha' songs and stories. But this is another version.

A jaguar, who is really a minor god (Chembel k'uh) in disguise, follows a mother and her small son, with the intention of devouring the child. The boy is one of the elect of the gods and the mother, who has magical powers, turns him into a sweet potato and hides him in her *milpa* (cornfield). The jaguar climbs a tree and looks over the field, trying to guess which is the sweet potato with the boy inside.

The song is an exercise in paradox and metamorphosis, and we are all transfigured watching Chan K'in describe the movements of the jaguar with his hands as his eyes range from side to side, taking in our eyes and carving out the storyteller's space in front of him. The timbre and inflection of his voice alter dramatically as he becomes each of the personages in the story: the jaguar, the mother, the boy.

At the peak of our enthrallment, as we sit high on the crest of the tree with the jaguar, looking over the field, Chan K'in stops, and turns to little K'in, who has been sitting on the edge of the circle, watching the grownups at play. "And you—" he says, fixing the boy with his eyes—"what will *you* do to get across the lake when they have cut down the trees, and there is no mahogany to make canoes from? How will you get to the *milpa*?"

Little K'in's mouth drops, and his round eyes fill with images. He will not forget that question as long as he lives. And neither will any of us. I picture Chan K'in turning to K'ayum in the middle of the creation story, and nailing him with that piercing gaze: "And *you*—what will you say to Don Felipe, the missionary, when he comes to you bearing gifts and speaking soft words, and tells you Jesus Christ is the true god? What will you answer him?"

Chan K'in finishes the song, which culminates with the little boy's deliverance and ascension to his rightful place in the upper heavens, thanks in part to the prayers of the Lacandon who alert the gods to his jeopardy. He then explains its meaning at considerable length, giving us the logic behind each of the transformations. In the end he comes back, inevitably, to the despoiling of the forest.

"What the people of the city do not realize," he says in a heavy voice, "is that the roots of all living things are interconnected. When a mighty tree is felled, a star falls from the sky. Before one chops down a mahogany, one should ask permission of the guardian of the stars. Hachakyum made the trees, and he also made the stars, and he made them from the same sand and clay,

K'ayum in the god-house

ashes and lime. When the great trees are cut down, the rain ends, and the forest turns to weed and grass. In El Real, six hours from here, which used to be forest before the trees were felled, the top soil erodes and disappears, the streams have dried up, and the corn that grows there is stunted and dry. All becomes dry, not only here but in the highland as well—not only in this heaven, but in the higher heavens above. Such is the punishment of Hachakyum. I know that soon we must all die—all of us, not only the Lacandon. There is too much cold in the world now, and it has worked its way into the hearts of all living creatures and down into the roots of the grass and the trees. But I am not afraid. What saddens me is that I must live to see the felling of the trees and the drying up of the forest, so that all the animals die, one after the other, and only the snakes live and thrive in the thickets.

"My father was born here and he died here, and so did his father, and they saw many hard things. They saw the shutting out of the sun, and the ravages of many jaguars. They saw the terrible Yum K'ax and other lords and demons of the forest who devour men. My father saw many companions die from the white man's diseases; they suffered many calamities and they saw the work of Kisin in all his malevolence. But they did not have to see the end of the forest, as I do, and the dispersal of our companions. This task has fallen to me, and it is hard, very hard..."

All of this he has spoken in a soft, halting Spanish. We sit in silence, smoking, drinking the last of the *balché*, as K'ayum goes on chanting in the rear. He has given up the *balché* offering, and now he is annointing each god-pot with the *pom* (ceremonial incense made from copal or pine resin), alternating one male with one female nodule. His voice rises to a fluted pitch as he addresses each individual god in its own voice.

"Next time you come," Chan K'in says to me, "I would like us to converse in Maya. I have told you all that I can in your language."

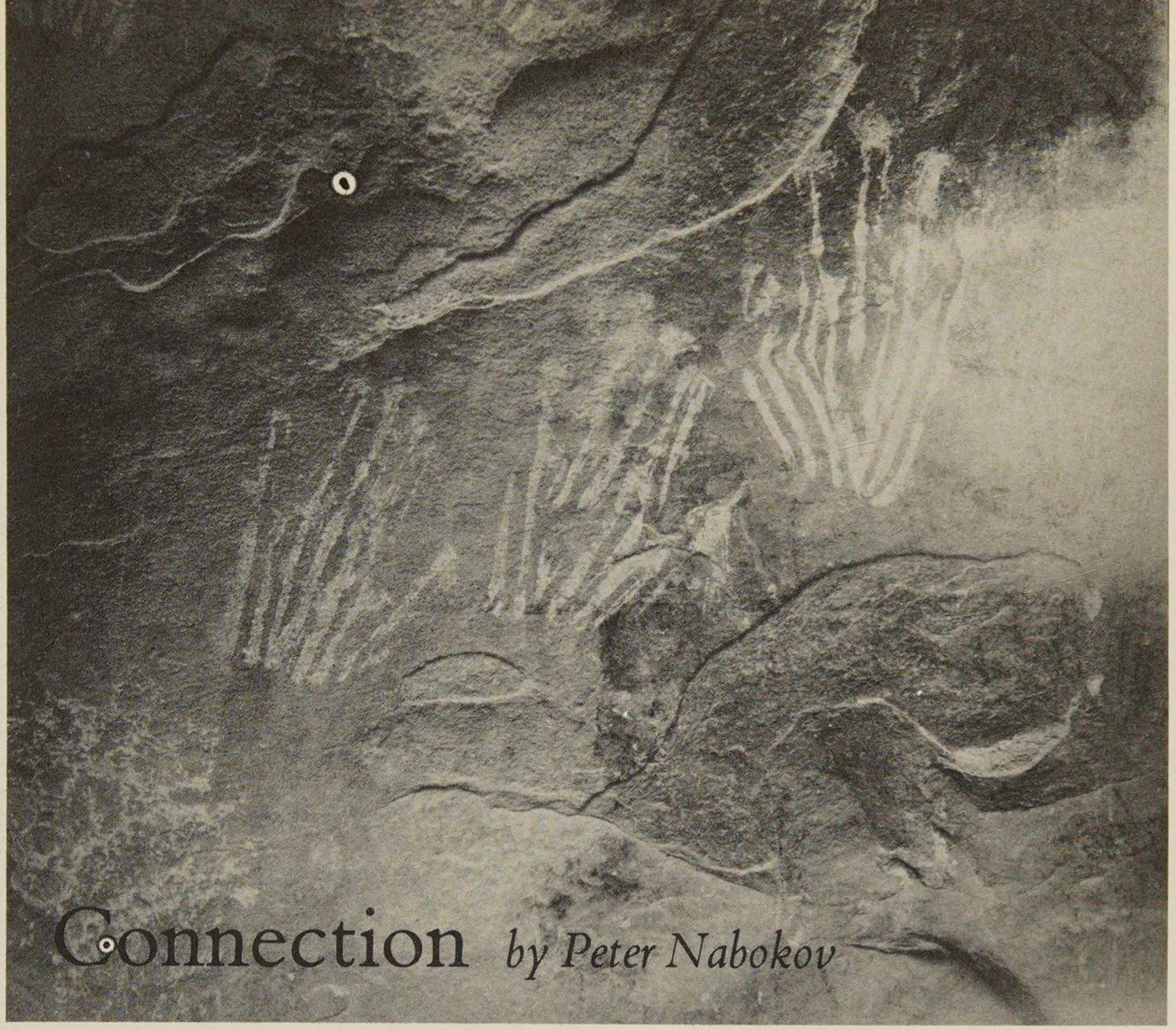
I promise that it shall be so.

"That will make me content," he says, smiling.

Most of the revelers have wandered off to their huts to sleep off the *balché*. K'ayum lights the god-pots one by one, and recites prayers over them: "I light your incensary, oh my Lord, so that you will be contented. I offer you this *pom* and this *balché* so you will be contented with us, and so you will look after my son, and so there will be no illness and we have enough to eat. These offerings are for you, oh my Lord..."

Night has fallen, and the red light flickers over K'ayum's features as he squats down before the incensaries, chanting and swaying. He is barely out of adolescence, and yet the red flames playing on his solemn face make him look ageless. ◇

Little K'in at Palenque



Connection *by Peter Nabokov*

Hands

Inside a cave in a narrow canyon near Tassajara
The vault of rock is painted with hands,
A multitude of hands in the twilight, a cloud of men's
palms, no more,
No other picture. There's no one to say
Whether the brown shy quiet people who are dead
intended
Religion or magic, or made their tracings
In the idleness of art; but over the division of years these
careful
Signs-manual are now like a sealed message
Saying: "Look: we also were human; we had hands,
not paws. All hail
You people with the cleverer hands, our supplanters
In the beautiful country; enjoy her a season, her
beauty and come down
And be supplanted; for you also are human."

—ROBINSON JEFFERS*

From my front door it is about forty-seven miles to a cave in the Santa Lucia Mountains which has been visited by Indians for over 3,000 years. It cuts fifteen feet deep and seventy-five feet long into a fault scarp of Vaqueros sandstone which rises and falls from sight in Los Padres National Forest like scaly humps on a half-submerged sea monster. Along with a series of other angled sandstone formations here, the cave holds court over a miniature canyon world. It is a place of great beauty.

In the 1960s I heard about it from drug-addled backpackers who had vague memories of disembodied hands on its walls clapping in the beams of their flashlights. I learned something else from a 1974 folk art survey, *In Praise of Hands*, edited by Octavio Paz, which included Robinson Jeffers' poem on the site, together with a photo of skeletal-looking painted hands. A veteran hiker on these Big Sur ranges and I idly talked about taking a look some day.

Three months ago I researched an article on the renaissance of Chumash Indian studies in southern California and visited what rock art aficionados term "the most spectacular piece of rock painting in North America," safely hidden on private land in southwestern Kern County. I dutifully marveled at the variety and freshness of its pigments, but the images were as miserly as a dead shaman's kit. There was the kid's thrill of being in a pristine sanctuary, and the slit cave overlooking ripe cottonwoods and hills which gathered up to splendid peaks bespoke the environmental connoisseurship of the Chumash. But its iconography left me cold—for users only. If it was not a burial of ideas but a "sealed message," as Jeffers termed the hands, it was directed at another time dimension than mine. It seemed more a cemetery than a shrine.

The Jeffers poem percolated into a new importance, the suggestion of access. What I make my living with: hands. No weird eyes in the palm, nor swirls, nor even the splotched prints I'd seen stamped by Hopi plasterers on the vigas of the kivas, for rainfall I'd been told. Those were private, sealed, or otherwise confidential communications. But the possibility of these hands ...something, something. I phoned my friend, and we set up a hike.

Jeffers probably laid eyes on them in that decade between his Carmel arrival in 1914, and 1924, before overcrowding restricted what he liked to call his "pilgrimages," weekend wanderings from Robinson Canyon to San Antonio Mission, picking up boulders for the famous Tor House which he would construct to shut out the world. In 1929 the poem appeared in his volume *Dear Judas and Other Poems*.

How does one go about pre-pilgrimaging in modern times? I reread the poem, but one man's sensibility, adrift in a sea of artistic license, wasn't stable, tested, enough. In lieu of guided prayer and fasting, trials and prefigurings administered by a master, I sought my world's nearest approximation: archives. In the Archaeological Research Facility at the University of California, Berkeley, a nervous custodian checked out my credentials, signed me in, then slapped down a bundle of quadrangle maps. In their margins were ballpoint pen numbers, keyed to site reports which broke down the data on most ancient places in the state. Along the creek I was tracing, a crowding of numbers—no names. I found the site, obtained the documents, and learned that it had first been noted in 1929, but had been "known" since the early nineteenth century.

The padres talked of painted caves in the mountains, visitors were brought into these particular caves in the 1840s, and as late as the 1880s ranchers said they noticed Indians still visiting them. Since then the land had passed through the hands of two owners. I still wanted a lead on any mission accounts and phoned around. The curator of Pacific Groves's museum believed they were Esselen Indians. A colleague directed me to a private archaeological firm in Castroville. The people there acted highly suspicious when I told them of my weekend plans. They'd clearly staked out this pro-

vince. A caretaker would toss us out if we came in unannounced. Lamely I described my purpose, mumbling something about being drawn by "something universal" about the hands. Well, they were going in, oddly enough, that Friday also; we could probably join in.

An article theme insinuated itself: my "spiritual" readiness, versus the new guardians. Once, a seeker was detained until his inner preparedness was up to par. Then, guided by steps so that outer arrival coincided with inner readiness, he was allowed to "take in" the experience, the place. By that time, it was a natural ascension. Now however data was the new plunder. These new custodians, classifiers, had the power to enforce secularization. Of the thirty-six items on the archaeological site record form I'd noticed no blank space specifically for current "use," spiritual or otherwise. Depowered, the cave reflected in the books had become artifact. I would write an anatomy of an estrangement. Good title. Keeping my smugness under wraps, now I lay in wait for the day after Thanksgiving.

Our escorts called, couldn't make it. I pleaded. They said they'd do what they could to change plans again. Then I think I began it: I told myself, let it go. They called back, we were on once more.

About twenty miles from the Pacific, the Carmel Valley road narrows and careens through the last undeveloped groves of oaks in the valley. Before it drops into the yawning, hazy Salinas Valley, we

branched south, climbing thousands of feet into the Santa Lucias before turning right again onto a private road with a locked gate, and gingerly angled down, soon descending along the southern incline of a tidy, beautiful canyon.

Autumn has a light touch in California. Among the spires of awl-thin Santa Lucia fir surfaced the rusty yellows of valley oaks and sycamores. The air was seasonably lucid, cool yet soft as fur. The sky wasn't milky, but overhead filaments of cloud sprayed in a repeated fan pattern. From a turnout we scanned the opposite slope.

A few years back the Marble Cone fire had splashed flames up and down these slopes with crazy speed and irregularity. Charred stumps of old manzanitas penciled my tan shirt. There still was little underbrush, and the foliage seemed etched against the land. The sandstone formation tipped back against the canyon wall. The archaeologists pointed out one long plate, grooved vertically by rain and weather, where the cave mouth was shrouded by a great oak. About one hundred yards to its southeast, they showed me another monolith, around a bend from the cave, jutting up—like a hand. No visitors had ever told me about it. Bedrock mortars had been counted around its base, but no archaeologists except these had noted its proximity to the paintings. No one had ever studied its four fingers, its double thumb. No one seems to have "seen" it here. But there it stood—a hundred and fifty feet of hand.

We approached the main creek, which was gurgling at 2,600 feet, and crossed through the caretaker's homestead, crunching fallen leaves as we moved upwards to the cave about a hundred yards away.

Beneath its twenty-foot high ceiling they clustered in three panels. One of the archaeologists had once counted over 250 against the smudged and sooty walls; remnants of more were suggested around those. Left and right hands, drawn with vertical white lines. They seemed a cross between dipping the palm in some mineral-and-fat mixture and stamping it, and a finer stenciling around the hand and filling in. But they were neither. Perhaps the hand was painted first, then the stamping, then finishing work to connect bone lines on backs of hands and fingers. They tipped this way and that and about them were other signs: gridirons, pelts, hatchings, and initials of visitors for the last half-century.

An eight-foot trench towards the southeastern end of the cave had yielded the deer bone and charcoal for the Carbon-14 date of 3,190 years ago. A big concave central mural seemed to hold the greatest number of jointless hands, a high wall above a steep slab which was sliced diagonally by a shallow shelf of tougher rock providing boot-holds which had slickened like soapstone with much climbing. I hugged my way up to inspect one seemingly unreachable "cloud of men's palms," all left, X-rayed, like seamed gloves. Allowing me to stare. Restraining themselves from: "What concern are we of yours?"

I seemed to float from panel to panel, something inside suspended.

Working our way along the rocks, we saw other isolated paintings beneath the shadow of bay laurel. At one great, scoured-out point, the sandstone seemed still emerging: where bullets or pockmarks had begun the action, now buoy-size bowls were being carved out, broken by convex boils where harder rock was withstanding the erosion. Water seepage from within, migrating minerals staining the rock, lichen hanging to its mottled patina, the wind cutting and cutting—the entire formation seemed alive with a kind of turbulence. We came to one more hollowed dome, like a children's playground construct, a matrix of Arp-shaped windows looking out to sky and forest.

My friend and I clambered through manzanita to the top. I hoped secretly for that great discovery, an alignment with the large hand—but it was out of sight. I felt admonished: let others make their reputations here. We shared our one Heineken, a

baggie of yesterday's turkey, and some bell peppers. We talked about our families. Across the treetops a flock of band-tail pigeons wheeled and sank. On our way down we inspected an arch shaped like a horse's jawbone, several tons of sandstone curving perhaps sixty feet. Where tooth cavities would be, a deep combing, some with telltale dark daubing of swallows' nests.

Afternoon swept in quickly, now the rock shelters were in deep shadow. After we returned to my truck the light no longer exaggerated the finger grooves of the great hand. We'd meandered around for about four hours. It felt like minutes. By the time we hit the valley road, I had to use my headlights. I felt odd: clean, happy, and calm. I seemed in the warm grip of a surprise.

The next morning the mood remained. What I had foreseen as an estrangement had with hardly a whisper turned back upon me as a connection, where something out there had pried open space within. I had come with my agenda to make some inner claim, resisting fact-finders to the right and left. This morning I felt like releasing any impulse to claim or resist.

No souvenirs. Give it up, give it all up—the hands practically chortled. Is that what Jeffers sensed after all: less what they were saying than that they could always speak—and I might listen in: "You keep only this and it is everything, a wave to the land which lives like you. We have died so many times. Behind Carmel Mission lie thousands of us, piled like cordwood. Give that up too, guilt and estrangement. Just no more insults." Not much to ask.

As we were leaving the cave, I had found myself retracing my steps, as if someone were toying with me on a movieola. I looked at the hands, and looked again. Each time they seemed more alive, happy to have me going, the place to themselves. "We don't need you," they murmured. "Just no more insults." I felt lifted of burdens, anthropology and archaeology fell into place. Study hard and go everywhere knowing you can give it up.

The days afterward I still had to beat back wellings of an unfamiliar, almost giddy warmth and sureness. After all these years, the place was there. A fact. Not much to write about or argue over. If it called for defending, of course. But for now: it was there. A place of renewal. That immense salutation: palm lifted to the earth, knuckles to the setting sun. The rest of them, hailing: "Hello. Goodbye. It's up to you. We exist. Do you?" ◇

Acknowledgment: With thanks to Gary S. Breschini and Trudy Haversat.

The Creation of the World

From Uganda

Kabezya-Mpungu, the highest god, had created the sky and the earth and two human beings, a man and a woman, endowed with Reason. However, these two human beings did not, as yet, possess Mutima, or Heart.

Kabezya-Mpungu had four children, the Sun, the Moon, Darkness, and Rain. He called them all together and said to them, "I want to withdraw now, so that Man can no longer see me. I will send down Mutima in my place, but before I take leave I want to know what you, Rain, are going to do." "Oh," replied Rain, "I think I'll pour down without cease and put everything under water." "No," answered the god, "don't do that! Look at these two," and he pointed to the man and the woman; "do you think they can live under water? You'd better take turns with the Sun. After you have sufficiently watered the earth, let the Sun go to work and dry it."

"And how are you going to conduct yourself?" the god asked the Sun. "I intend to shine hotly and burn everything under me," said his second child.

"No," replied Kabezya-Mpungu. "That cannot be. How do you expect the people whom I created to get food? When you have warmed the earth for a while, give Rain a chance to refresh it and make the fruit grow."

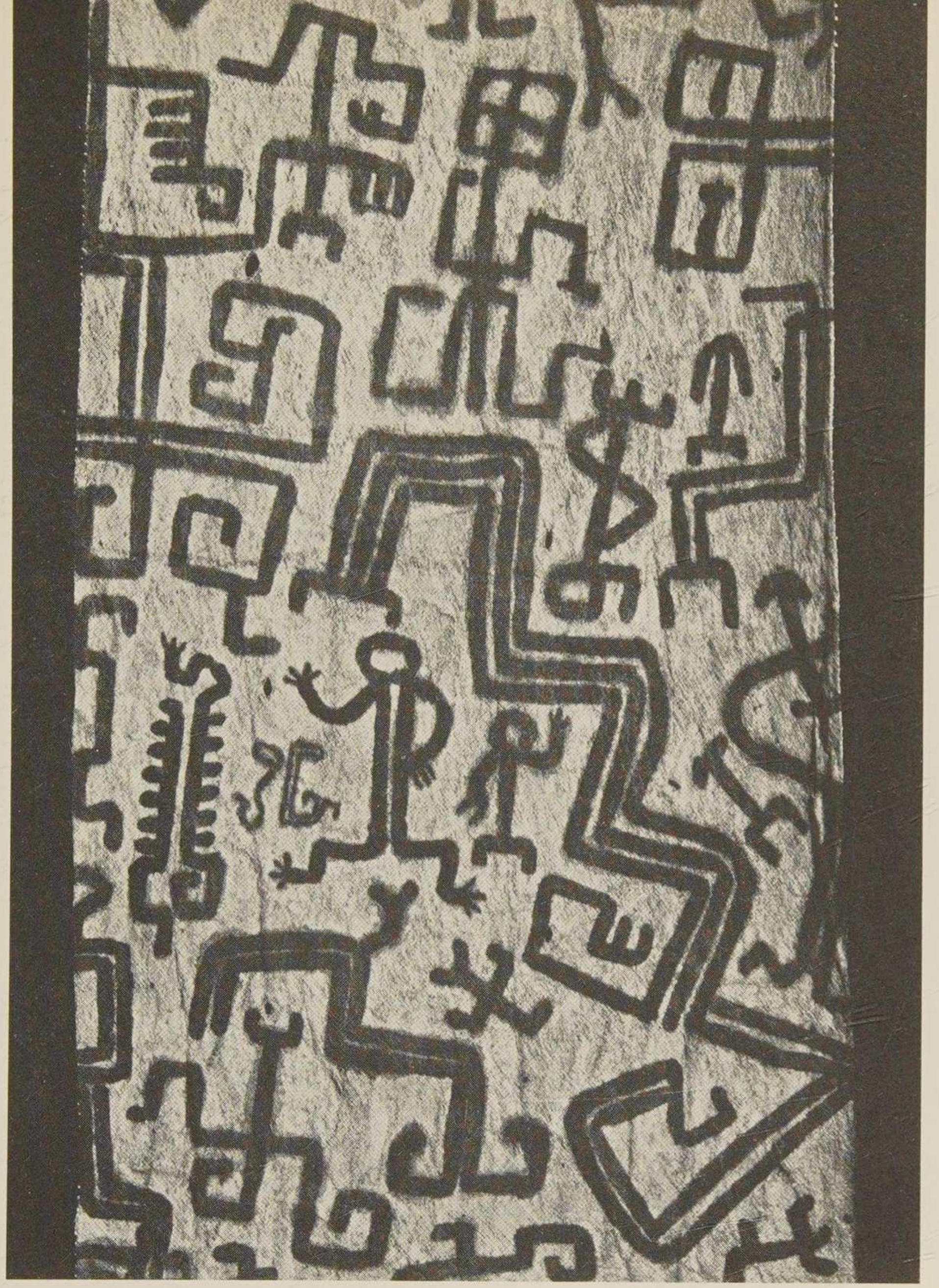
"And you, Darkness, what are your plans?"

"I intend to rule forever!" was the answer.

"Have pity," cried the god. "Do you want to condemn my creatures, the lions, the tigers, and the serpents, to see nothing of the world I made? Listen to me: give the Moon time to shine on the earth, and when you see the Moon in its last quarter, then you may again rule.

"But I have lingered too long; now I must go." And he disappeared.

Somewhat later, Mutima, Heart, came along, in a small container no bigger than a hand.



Heart was crying, and asked Sun, Moon, Darkness, and Rain, "Where is Kabezya-Mpungu, our father?"

"Father is gone," they said, "and we do not know where."

"Oh, how great is my desire," replied Heart, "to commune with him. But since I cannot find him I will enter into Man, and through him I will seek God from generation to generation."

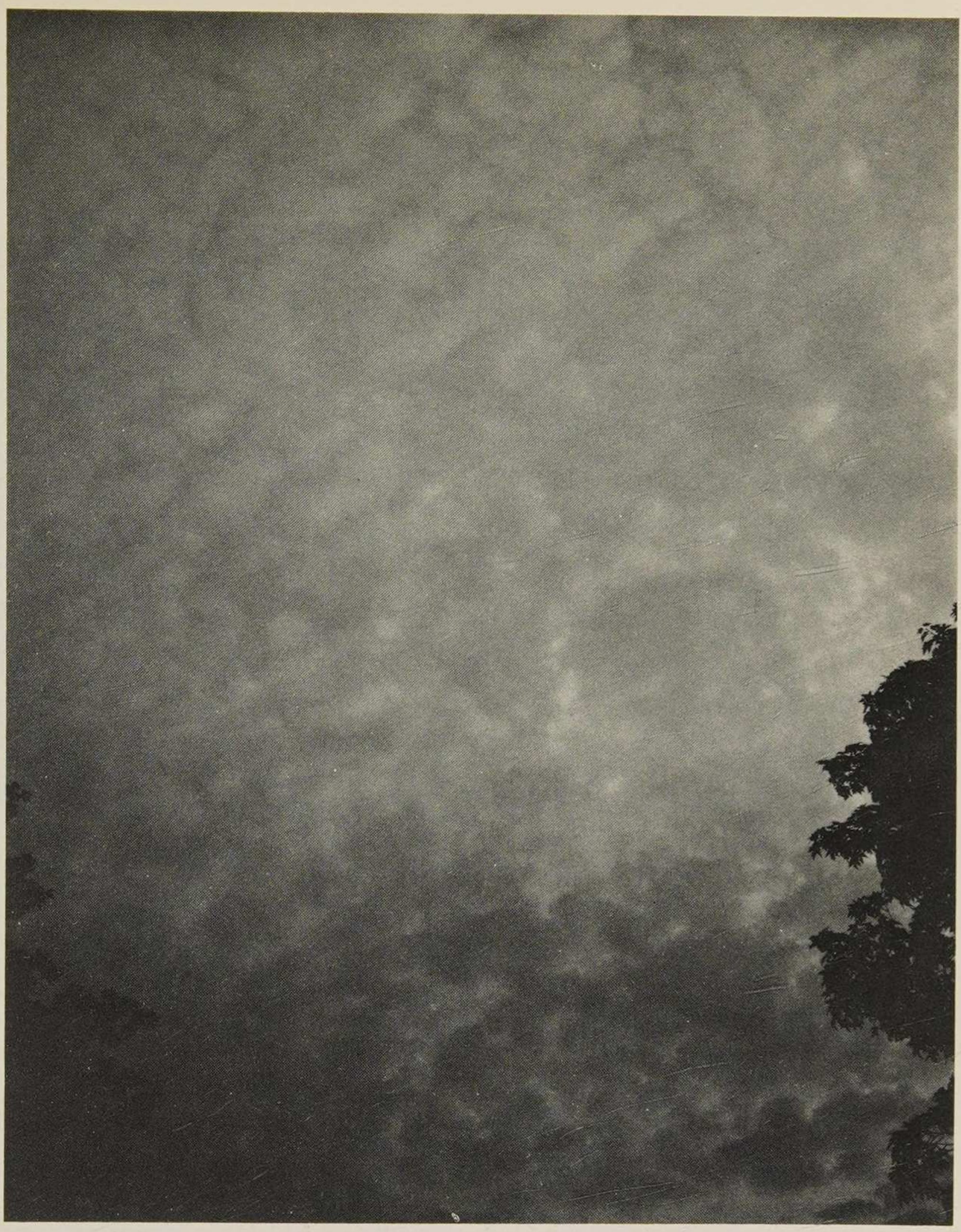
And that is what happened. Ever since, all children born of Man contain Mutima, a longing for God.

Acknowledgment: From African Folktales, *edited by Charlotte and Wolf Leslau, with decorations by Grishna Dotzenko, Peter Pauper Press, copyright 1963.*

A Ramage for Waking the Hermit

Early in the morning the hermit wakes,
hearing the roots of the fir tree stir beneath his floor.
Someone is there. That strength buried
in earth carries up the summer world.
When a man loves a woman, he nourishes her.
Dancers strew the lawn with the light of their feet.
When a woman loves the earth, she nourishes it.
Earth nourishes what no one can see.

—ROBERT BLY

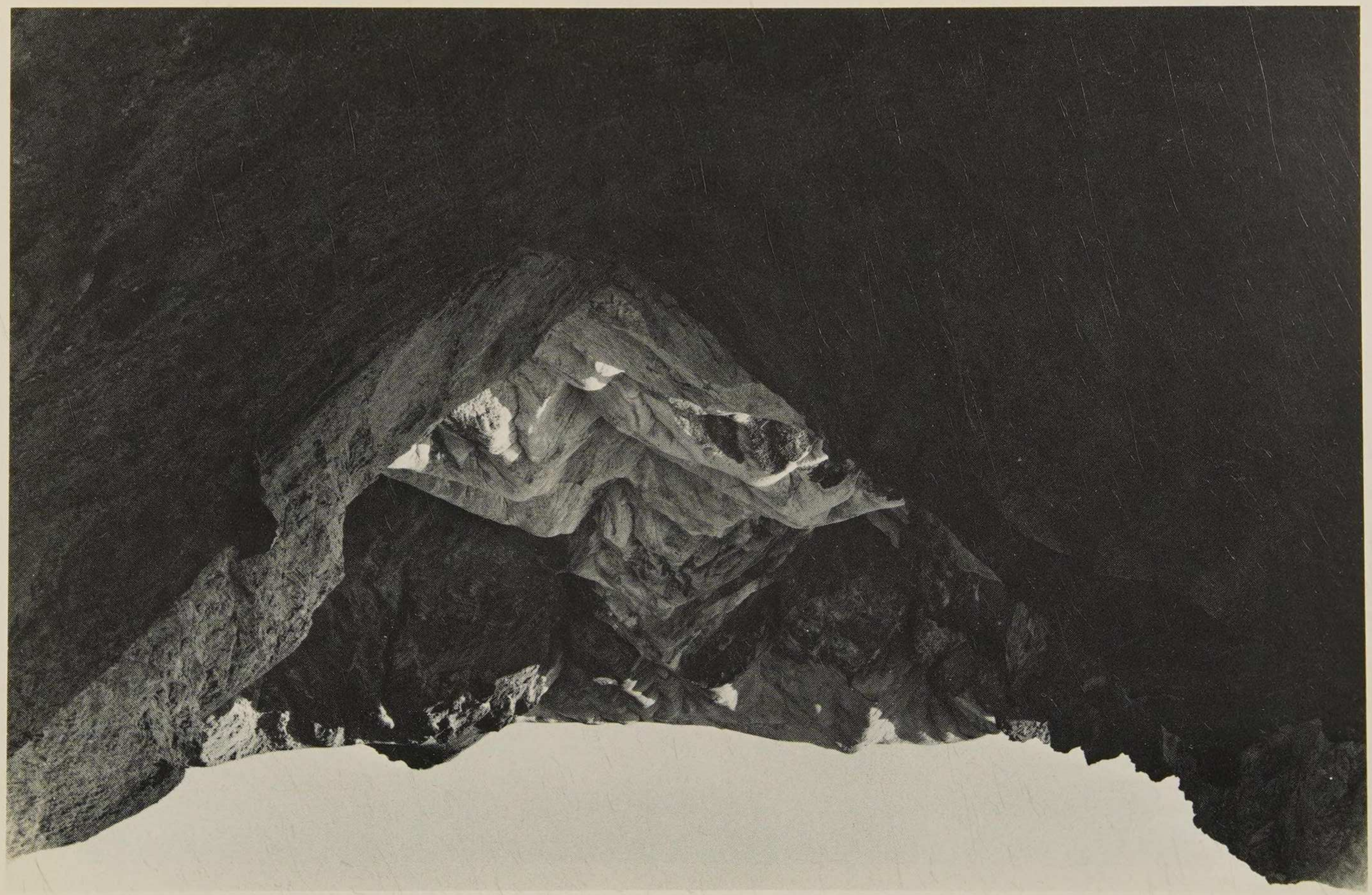


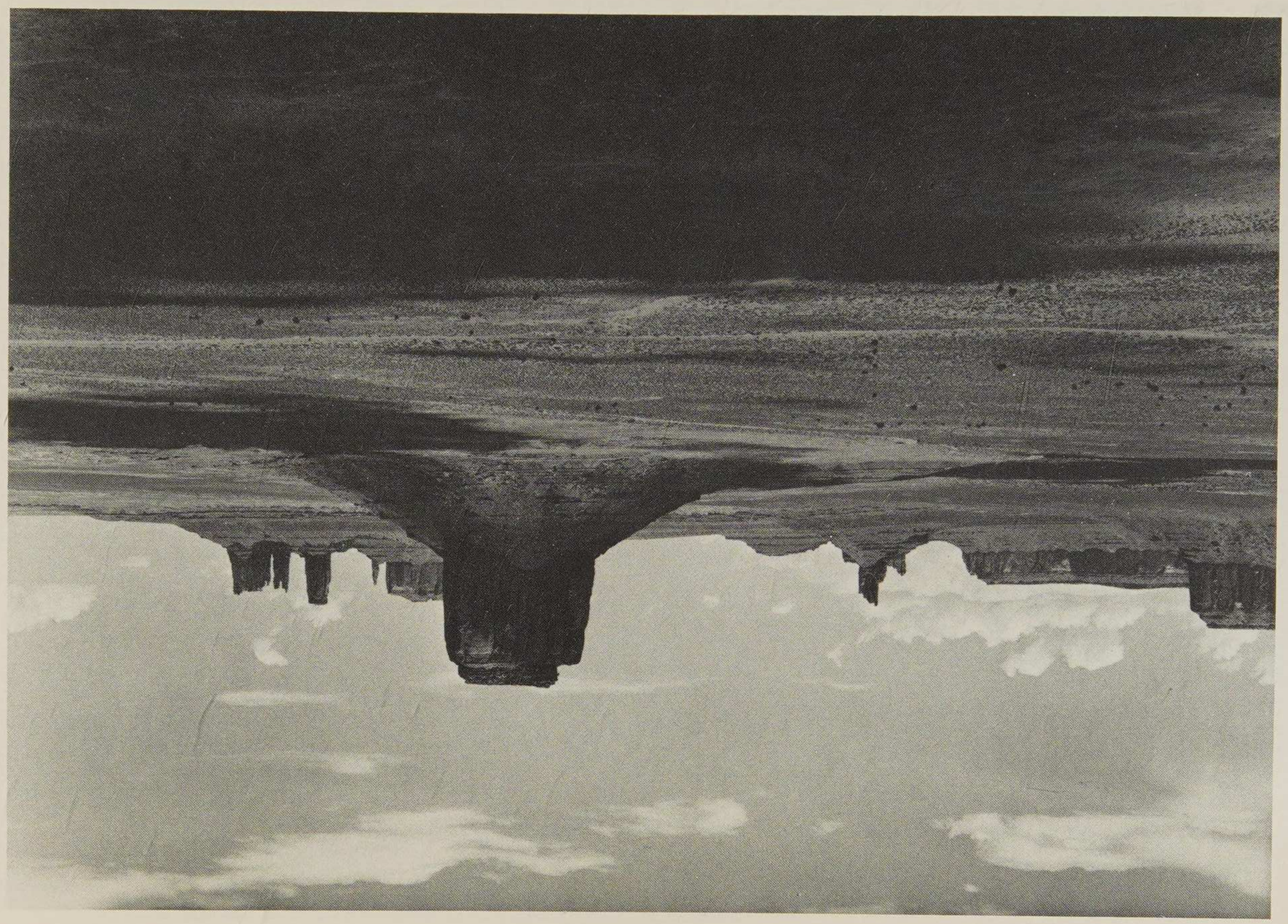
Earth and Spirit

*From the beginning, nature was for me a world of exploration and discovery, of experience and wonder, a world of both constant rhythm and ceaseless change....As I looked further...I began to catch glimpses of mysterious depths. Boundaries of separate objects lifted and opened, the land seemed charged with potent force and magic, alive and moving....To penetrate and record...that which takes place in, over, under, around, and through nature, is to feel the intangible, the somewhere inbetween, the what is and the what I am, the interaction between visible and invisible....It seemed to me that I was exploring two separate worlds, and that somehow I must unite the two. Through the use of the camera, I must try to express and make visible the forces moving in and through nature.**

—Paul Caponigro

*Adapted from *Landscape*, by Paul Caponigro (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975). Reprinted by permission of the author.





This is Wandjina

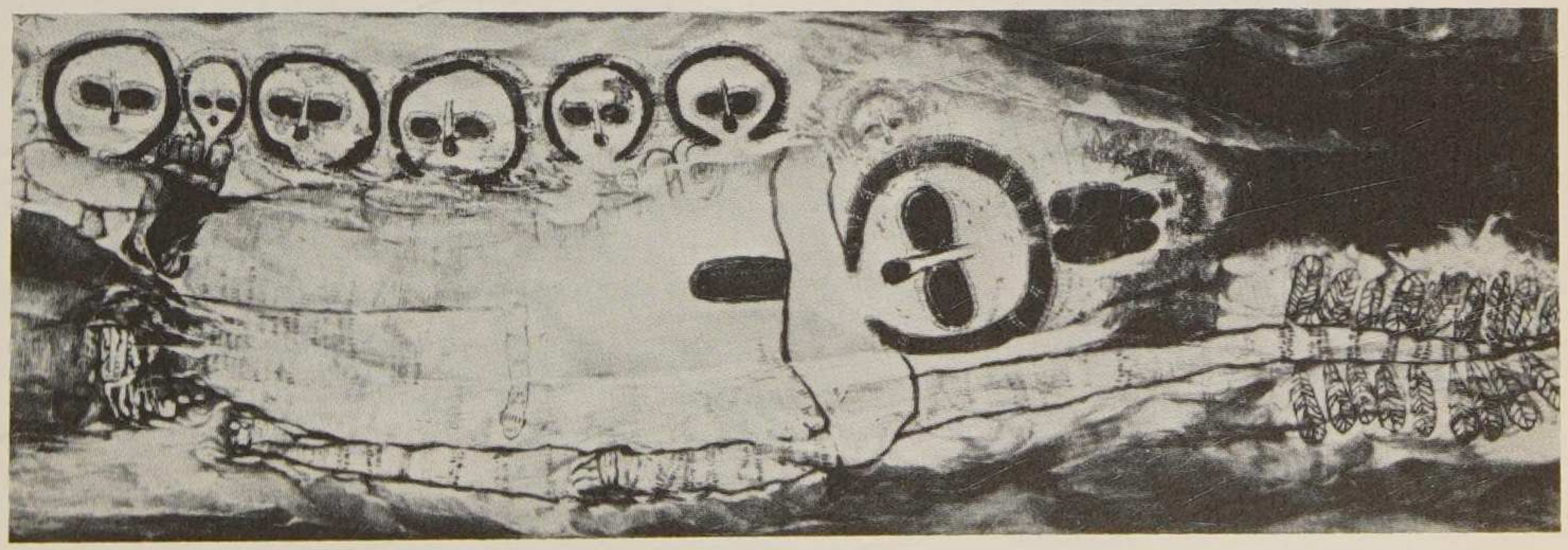
This is Wandjina. There was a time when this Earth—he made Earth and Sea and everything. This is Wandjina—he made people. Wandjina is Wandjina. He gave Man to live in this Earth, for this World, this Tribal Country. He put the Wandjina in the cave for him to remember this Wandjina, to follow his Laws, to go about the right ways.

Wandjina, he said. You must believe Wandjina. If you won't believe Wandjina, you won't live. This is because Wandjina gave us that Law to follow. And then he says, I give you this Land, and you must keep your Tribal Land. You can't touch somebody's land because it is your body, and your body is right here, and the Aborigines believe his body is his own Tribal Land.

Aborigines believe that the Wandjina give rain. Then it says that the Earth is hot and that it breathes; the Earth it breathes—it is like live Earth. When it breathes, it's a steam blow up, and it gives cloud to give rain. Rain gives fruit, and everything grows, and the trees and the grass to feed other things, kangaroos and birds and everything.

—Told by Albert Barunga, Mowanjum, northwest Australia

Acknowledgment: From Australian Dreaming: 40,000 Years of Aboriginal History, *compiled and edited by Jennifer Isaacs (Sydney: Landsdowne Press, 1980, distributed in the U.S.A. by Mereweather Press, Inc., 420 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017). Reprinted by permission.*



Diana of Ephesus

What the Bees Know

by P.L. Travers

"Myth, Symbol, and Tradition" was the phrase I originally wrote at the top of the page, for editors like large, cloudy titles. Then I looked at what I had written and, wordlessly, the words reproached me. I hope I had the grace to blush at my own presumption, and their portentousness. How could I, if I lived for a thousand years, attempt to cover more than a hectare of that enormous landscape?

So, I let out the air, in a manner of speaking, dwindled to my appropriate size and gave myself over to that process which, for lack of a more erudite term, I have coined the phrase "Thinking is linking." I thought of Kerenyi—"Mythology occupies a higher position in the *bios*, the Existence, of a people in which it is still alive than poetry, storytelling or any other art." And of Malinowski—"Myth is not merely a story told but a reality lived." And, along with these, the word "Pollen," the most pervasive substance in the world, kept knocking at my ear. Or rather, not knocking, but humming. What hums? What buzzes? What travels the world? Suddenly, I found what I sought. *"What the bees know,"* I told myself. "That is what I'm after."

But even as I patted my back, I found myself cursing, and not for the first time, the artful trickiness of words, their capriciousness, their lack of conscience. Betray them and they will betray you. Be true to them and, without compunction, they will also betray you, foxily turning all the tables, thumbing syntactical noses. For—*nota bene!*—if you speak or write about *What the Bees Know*, what the listener, or the reader,

will get—indeed, cannot help but get—is Myth, Symbol, and Tradition! You see the paradox? The words, by their very perfidy —which is also their honorable intention—have brought us to where we need to be. For, to stand in the presence of paradox, to be spiked on the horns of dilemma, between what is small and what is great, microcosm and macrocosm, or, if you like, the two ends of the stick, is the only posture we can assume in front of this ancient knowledge—one could even say everlasting knowledge.

For the Bee has at all times and places been the symbol of life—life as immortality. In the Celtic languages, the Cornish "beu," the Irish "beo," the Welsh "byw," can all be translated as "alive" or "living"; the Greek "bios" has been mentioned above and is the French "abeille" not akin to these? So, the Bee stands for—or is a manifestation of—the fundamental verb "to be." "I am, thou art, he is," it declares, as it goes humming past.

No wonder, then, that mythologically the Bee is the ritual creature of a host of lordly ones—symbol of Vishnu, Indra, and Krishna who are known in India as the "Three Nectar-Born." The bow of Kama, the Hindu god of erotic love, whose arrow is tipped with bane and honey, is strung—how aptly!—with bees. In Greek mythology, the bee hovers over the head of Artemis and its Greek name, Melissa, is a title borne by the priestesses of Demeter, Persephone, and Rhea. Among the ancient Egyptians it was believed that bees sprang from the tears of the Sun god; in Christianity it is Christ who weeps them. Gaia, the earth, the Great Goddess of the Sumerians, and the Virgin Mary are all apostrophized as the Mother Bee.

And as the myth descends into Time and becomes the tales that Old Wives tell, we hear of "The Wisdom of the Bees," and "the Secret Knowledge of the Bees," and are counseled, in Scottish Highland stories, to "ask the Wild Bee what the Druids knew."

To anyone capable of suspending for a moment the cavortings of the rational mind, of accepting myth for what it is—not lie but the very veritable truth—it needs no great inward effort to act upon such advice. It's a matter, merely, of listening.

If the Buddha could unfold his teaching to the Nagas, why would not a Druid whisper his to an attentive bee? Perhaps we are being told here that wisdom is too strong a draught for man to take, as it were, neat; that it needs to be mediated to him, the words wordlessly disclosed by creatures, bee and snake.

But this apprising of the bees, telling them, for all one knows, what they already know, is not the business merely of great ones. The bees are constantly being told. No beekeeper would fail to do it. For if they are not courteously kept informed of everything that happens, they will take umbrage, swarm, and fly away, or die of grief or resentment. In the British Isles and all over Europe, the folk continually keep the bees abreast of the news, at national as well as local level; decking the hives with crepe or ribbon, whichever fits the case. On one occasion, an ancient great-aunt of mine, hieratically assuming a headdress of feather and globules of jet, required me to accompany her to the beehives. "But you surely don't need a hat, Aunt Jane! They're only at

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Krishna is represented by blue bees on the forehead.

A bee surmounting a triangle is Siva.

A symbol of Vishnu is a bee on a lotus.

According to the inhabitants of Crete, Zeus was born in the cave of bees and was fed by them.

the end of the garden." "It is the custom," she said, grandly. "Put a scarf over your head." Arrived, she stood in silence for a moment. Then—"I have to tell you," she said, formally, "that King George the Fifth is dead. You may be sorry, but I am not. He was not an interesting man. Besides," she added—as though the bees needed the telling!—"everyone has to die."

Again, at a wedding reception in an Irish garden, I found the gardener, a family retainer, morosely surveying the scene. "All this colloguing and gallivanting, and never a word to the bees!" he grumbled. "Why not tell them yourself?" I asked him. "Is it me to be doing such a thing? It needs to be one of the kin." "Well," I told him, "the bride and the groom are my godchildren. Would I be near enough?" "Ah, you would!" he said, with a brightening eye. "Yer a bit of a bee yerself." So, puffed up with this piece of flattery, I went and told the hive and it hummed. The news would be spread abroad and doubtless commented upon.

How does one get to be a bit of a bee? I've always remembered that phrase and have come to believe that the way to it is to recognize that in spite of one's knowing—all the stuff that has been picked up, or poured in along the way—one is always in some very deep sense in front of the Unknown; and I mean the Unknown as absolute and unknowable, that which unremittingly evokes the question without ever guaranteeing the answer. I think that it is only by taking this far from comfortable stance that one becomes able to receive the intimations that the Unknown is continually sending back to us, as a river at its seamouth sends back news of the sea to its source.

These intimations are essentially bee-stuff—not, or not only, the ritual dance upon the petal, the pollen brought home on proboscis or leg, the honey generated and fermented by what the bee finds within and without—but bee-stuff, nevertheless. For we, too, have been and are always being told those things that are known to the bees—whether we hear it is another matter. There is a fund of ancient knowledge in man's very bloodstream, if he but knew it. The secrets of the runes, the megalithic stones, the mysterious process we call language—our ancient forefathers understood them—are there in the flowing blood, witnessed to, equivocally but veraciously, by such oracles as myth, symbol, tradition, parable, fairy tale, ritual, legend.

I am not talking here of what is known as the supernatural or of extra-sensory perception. For me such words are like Prospero's insubstantial pageant faded. The natural is enough. Nature, if it is nature at all, has supernature up its sleeve; sensory perception has the extra under its belt. No, I speak of the substantial bloodstream and the body that contains it, microcosm of the macrocosmic planet and all its running rivers. In every tradition, every religion, the body is the essential alchemical vessel in which everything happens. An old Tibetan scripture says "This little body holdeth all." And a verse from the Pali Canon reads—"My friend, in this very body, six feet of it with its senses, thoughts, and feelings, is the world, the origin of the world, the ceasing of the world and the way of its cessation." In Egypt it was known as "the Net," a device for catching what can be caught—herring or leviathan, the drowned wreck with its salty gold, papyrus hidden in sealed amphora, the songs the Sirens sang. Was it

by chance, I wonder, that the disciples in the Gospels were, largely, fishermen, dredging with nets for the things of the deep, for fish and more than fish? And is not all this telling us—as a bee might tell if it could speak—that nothing is truly known until it is known organically? My mind, by rote, is aware of the concept that "Full fathom five my father lies" and the words, though lovely, are merely words. But when I learn that a fathom is not merely a five foot abstraction but the wide stretch of a man's arms—that palpable, tangible, bodily gesture!—I understand with the whole of me how deep I have to dive for him; and to know that nothing of him doth fade but doth suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange.

Shakespeare, being Shakespeare, must have realized when he wrote that song that it was a shining indication of the way the bloodstream worked. It takes my father—or the primal stuff, whichever you like—deep down into its meandering fluid and, lawfully, pays it no mind. By law—again the paradox—he, or it, has to be forgotten.

Who is there who does not have the fleeting sense—here for a moment and gone again—that once, long ago, we were told a story that now forever eludes us? What was it? Who told it? Why is something known and then not known? Where shall I look for what I have lost?

There is a clue to this phenomenon in a piece of Hebrew folklore. When a child is born, it says, an angel recites the Torah to it and tells it all and everything. That done, he puts his finger on the infant lip, leaving a cleft that is there forever and says one word "Forget!"

Later, the Hasidists elaborated the legend, introducing an absent-minded angel who, to a child significantly nicknamed Green, told all, but overlooked the injunction. The result was that Green knew everything—at least in his head—and rattled off names and dates and places, driving those about him to the brink of murder. So they smuggled him away to the desert, where he could tell what he knew to the stones, and at last prevailed on another angel to touch him and say the imperative word. After that, Green was silent. Perhaps he came to realize that if a thing is to be remembered, it has first to be forgotten. His mind had to lose its knowing to the bloodstream in order that there it could be digested, simmered as in a crucible, suffer the sea-change and be given back. So, my father's bones become coral. I can wear him as a necklace.

It is by this process of distillation, a world within a grain of sand, that what the bees know is divulged to us—always unsparingly, never with punches pulled. Take, for instance, the Nursery Rhymes, those miniscule Greek dramas. From our first breath they are quick to assure us of the sorrowful fact that when the bough breaks the cradle will fall. No question of "if," you notice. There never was a bough that did not break. We are rocked to sleep, contentedly, by a story that is in no sense a bedtime story. As for king's horses and king's men, anyone who puts his faith in them is quickly disabused of his dream. Humpty Dumpty can never be put together—that is one of the facts of life. And yet—the cunning logic of the bee-stuff—unless Humpty Dumpty falls, you will never get a chicken!

"Are you sleeping?" we ask of Frère Jacques. And, no bones about it, yes he is, the monk whose monkish vow was to wake! Ding, ding, dong. The bell is rung. But does he hear it? We are never told. The bees are

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The tears of Ra, as they fell to the ground, became worker bees.

Demeter, The Great Mother, was known as the Queen Bee; her priestesses were Melissae, *the Bees.*

cagey, temperamental—mum when you want them to hum and, another time, before we have even learned to spell, imposing upon us in full-throated chorus precepts most difficult to follow. "Leave them alone and they'll come home." In other words—"Sit still. Do nothing. All will be well." If I had the courage—and it needs daring—I would take Bo-Peep as my patron saint. Nothing lost, think of it, not even their tails!

Carl Gustav Jung who, clearly, must often have hearkened to the bees, once wrote, "One could almost say that if all the world's traditions were cut off at a single blow the whole of culture and the whole history of religion would start all over again with the next generation." A marvelous statement to have "almost" made. Indeed, why not have gone the whole hog and quite made it? For it is true. And worthy to be stated along with Nietzsche's formulation. "It is not," he said, "that there is some hidden thought or theory at the bottom of myth but that myth itself is a kind of style of thinking; it imports an idea of the universe in its sequence of events, actions, and sufferings."

Inevitably, in each generation, there will be passionate spirits who listen to the bees with an attentive ear, go hunting for that which has been lost and remake what has been unmade; who know that London Bridge, forever falling down, must forever be built up. Here again we have, masquerading as a nursery game, a symbol of great antiquity, the bridge as threshold—that which at the same time separates and conjoins two worlds, a reconciler of opposites. The bridge, too, outwits the Devil—who is known to abhor whatever unites, and whose arch-enemy is running water—by providing a means for the soul's crossing from one stage to another. It is the Sword Across the Abyss of the Grail Legend: it corresponds to the Buddhist raft by which one arrives—given "Great faith, Great doubt, Great perseverance!"—at that fabled Other Shore.

They will remind us, those passionate spirits, of all the ritualistic bee-stuff that we have *un*lawfully forgotten. For instance, that Christmas, for all its rejoicing and gallimaufry, is a re-enacting of Christ's Mass—when gold was given for the king, frankincense for the high-priest, and myrrh to anoint the corpse; a reminder, not wholly festive, that with our exchanges of tinseled packets we are bringing to a child and to each other gifts of life and of death. No coin—or myth—is without its obverse.

We kiss under the mistletoe. But do we know, if the bees have not told us, that this rite, too, has one foot in the grave? The golden bough, by means of which Aeneas was able to pass through the Underworld and return unhurt to the light of day was a branch of mistletoe. Baldur the Beautiful, Apollo's Hyperborean brother, was slain by a sprig of mistletoe, the one thing in all the world that had not promised not to hurt him. So, that kiss, for all the pleasure of it, is a gesture of placation. "Carry us safely through the dark! Mistletoe, do not hurt us!"

And again, at New Year, when the twelve strokes sound and we make our resolutions—"I will be good; turn over a leaf; be unmade and made anew"—we are embodying, even if we do not know it, or perhaps being embodied by, the myth of eternal return; the periodic destruction and recreation of the cosmos, common to all religions, when world, time, and man him-

self are, after a ritual pause, ritually renewed. I happened on this primordial theme when I took down, at the bees' dictation, a story that reflects it.

"When does the old year end?" asks a child. "On the first stroke of midnight," he is told. "And the new year—when does it begin?" "On the last stroke of midnight." "Well, then, what happens in between?" The question, once asked, required an answer from those who know what the Druids knew. Long after I had written down this story, I listened in to a radio reporter who was describing the ceremonies of an African tribe at the end of their lunar—or solar?—year. At a given moment, it appeared, the chanting and the drumming ceased as the gods invisibly withdrew. For a few seconds—twelve perhaps!—absolute silence reigned. Then the drums broke out again in triumph as the gods invisibly returned with the new year in their arms. "And," the reporter added, "though I do not ask you to believe it, I can vouch for the fact that my tape recorder, for those few moments of sacred silence, without a touch of my hand, stopped spinning."

Well, a bee could believe it and so could I. Anyone used to yoga practice experiences the ritual pause between the outgoing and the indrawn breath. Between one breath-time and the next, between one lifetime and the next, something waits for a moment.

Our profane life is full of these hidden meanings, of clues that we are at pains to find but pass by, not knowing what to look for—or, more exactly, how to let meaning discover *us*. For this to happen we need to

Coin from Ephesus

become aware, as our forefathers were well aware, that by the fact of having a body, the very fact of being born, each of us has assumed a place in the cosmos and is part of all that is. But not only that.

Myth, by design, makes it clear that we are meant to be something more than our own personal history. It places us—and it is not a comfortable position—squarely between the opposing forces that keep us, and the world, in balance—the two Earth Shapers, benign and malignant, checking and disciplining each other to produce a viable whole. One has only to think of Prometheus, forethought, and Epimetheus, his unfortunate brother; of Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, the light and the dark of Zoroastrianism; of the Hindu Vishnu and Shiva, preserver and destroyer; of the Navajo Water-Child, son of the rivers, and Monster-Slayer, born of fire—the cool, flowing sap of one and the solar heat of the other; the angels and devils of Christianity.

How pleasant it would be, and easeful, to be able to choose between them; to fall to one side or the other and so escape the conflict. But the myth allows us no soft option, at any time in our lives. A child of three once said to me, "I am two boys, Goodly and Badly." Alas, too young for this! I thought, but at the same time realized

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The Celtic tradition says that bees are the secret wisdom coming from the other world.

The bee as symbol of purity and chastity, represents the Virgin Mary; Christ is symbolized by the honey.

that truth requires us to be young, no matter what our age. And then came the faltering, anxious question—"Which do you like best?" I knew the answer, and all the breadth and depth of it, but I had to appear to pay it mind. If I chose Goodly, then Badly would be in the wilderness, alone with his badliness and lost. If Badly, then Goodly would be in the same plight, alone with his goodliness. "Joy and woe are woven fine/A clothing for the soul divine." "To tell you the truth," I said gravely, "I like them both the same." The look of anxiety turned to relief and a trustful hand met mine.

A passing moment? Maybe. A lifetime is a passing moment. Rilke was in the same plight—who is not?—when he said, I suppose to a psychiatrist, "Have a care! Do not take away my devils. Without them, how shall I find my angels?" But he was a poet and harkened to bees. From them, if in no other way, he would have known of the Chinese Symbol of the Great Ultimate that Zen purloined and made its own—the two fish, black and white conjoined, white with black eye, black with white. With that before us, do we need words?

Nor do we need to be in a special state or a special place—in a temple or on top of a steeple—to approach the things the bees know. Myth, symbol, ritual, tradition, albeit in degraded forms, cry out to us from the street corners. You cannot open a newspaper without finding them crowding there with all their splendor and violence. Every comic strip acclaims them—Superman, Dick Tracy, the Incredible Hulk, all have their prototypes in myths which were

Amon, Karnak temple hieroglyph

never, at any time, pretty stories about the fairies in flowers.

Even our obsession with sport which makes people smash up trains and stab each other to the heart because some man has, or has not, done something to a ball—even this, though ghostly and desacralized, has a taste of the ancient rites, when games were played to honor the illustrious dead or to dedicate man's sweat, his life-stuff, to the rejuvenation of the earth. Not long ago I read of a baseball team whose members, after the death of one of them, wore the dead man's number on their sleeves. And whoever achieved a home run flung up his hand to the sky in salute. The mind had no part in that dedication. It was a wholly instinctive gesture and done by myth itself.

For if man does not, of intention, enact it, keep alive its rituals, preserve unbroken the chain of its being, myth will enact itself through man. It is doing this now, all over the world, with ambivalent intensity—the tidal wave of births and deaths; the devil invoked in the name of God; instant heroes and instant villains; gods masquerading—myth has its wit and irony—as Chairman,

President, or Mullah; Persephone abducted to the Underworld, eating the symbionic pomegranate and her mother searching for her child through the Californian fields; the Great Goddess rising in wrath, dressing up as female priest or terrorist; she who *is* terror as well as beauty—the Hindu Kali, the Celtic Morrigan, La Belle Dame Sans Merci—and by her very nature priestess with no need of dogcollar to proclaim it, is calling herself, not such honorifics of nobility as Gaia, Isis, Hecate, Hera, but Woman's Liberation. All these show myth in action. For good or ill? That is not the question. It is always for good *and* ill.

For, true to its multisidedness, what myth takes with one hand it will give with the other. Anyone able to sit and listen to the bees will constantly find himself reminded of the turbulent groundswell of ancient lore; of what, as St. Augustine said, "Was, is and will ever be." Ever, yes, and everywhere. The rivers of the world, the planet's bloodstream, commune with each other underground for, in fact, they are all one river—Ganges that flows out of Shiva's hair, Shenandoah and the wide Missouri, the trickle of liquid history with London on its banks—all have the same story to tell. For myth and tradition, no matter what their place of origin, if indeed they ever had an origin—"the Authors," as Blake said, "are in Eternity"—are an inseparable unity; and the symbols, differ in form though they do, act as spindles round which is wound the one essential thread. Any one of them will serve, as Robert Frost put it, "To stay our minds on and be stayed," and bring us to our center.

The Omphalos, for instance, the world navel, where the energy of eternity pours itself into time—Mount Meru, Mount Olympus, the Rock of Jerusalem, the Kaaba, Borobodur, the Kiva; the Field of Golgotha mythologically homologized to the Garden of Eden in order that, on the same spot, the Second Adam could offer up the life that came down to the First; the temple, the church, the body of man.

The world-navel stands, as it were, at the mid-point of another symbol, the cosmic axis, the pole that pierces the three worlds and has as its prototypes pillars, obelisks, minarets, spires, and ziggurats. The Milky Way is held to be a pillar. And also a path to be taken. In old British maps one finds Watling Street, still one of the thoroughfares of London, continuing all the way through Europe and ending up in the sky. No break, in fact, between Earth and Heaven. Step off a pavement in the city and you're en route for Orion. Whether you get there is another matter.

And the cosmic axis can be assimilated to the World Tree, for me the most central of all. Think of the Norse Yggdrasil, on which, having parted with his right eye in exchange for the gifts of memory and premonition, the god Odin hung suspended, making himself its fruit. "Nine days I hung on the windy tree, Offering myself to myself." With such a phrase humming within us, can we say that the Gods are dead?

In our own tradition, the Cross is par excellence the World Tree, its wood hewn, myth assures us, out of the branch from which Eve plucked the apple. One sees the two-faced logic of this and the depth of the phrase in the Latin liturgy—*O felix culpa!* O happy fault! If the apple had not first been plucked what need would there be of Redemption? For man to be ransomed, bought at a price, he has first to be made captive. To remember, one must first forget. To be

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For the followers of Mithra the bee represented the vital principle springing from the bull, the soul.

"Bees benefit fruit blossoms, practice useful things, work in the daytime, do not eat food gathered by others, dislike dirt and bad smells, and obey their ruler; they dislike the darkness of indiscretion, the clouds of doubt, the storm of revolt, the smoke of the prohibited, the water of superfluity, the fire of lust."

—Ibn al-Athir

lifted up, one must first have fallen. If honey, then also sting.

The Buddha sat under the World Tree to receive enlightenment; the tree of the Kabbala, where the vital forces move up and down, is sib to Jacob's ladder with its ascending and descending angels; and in the world of fairy tale there is Jack's miraculous Beanstalk.

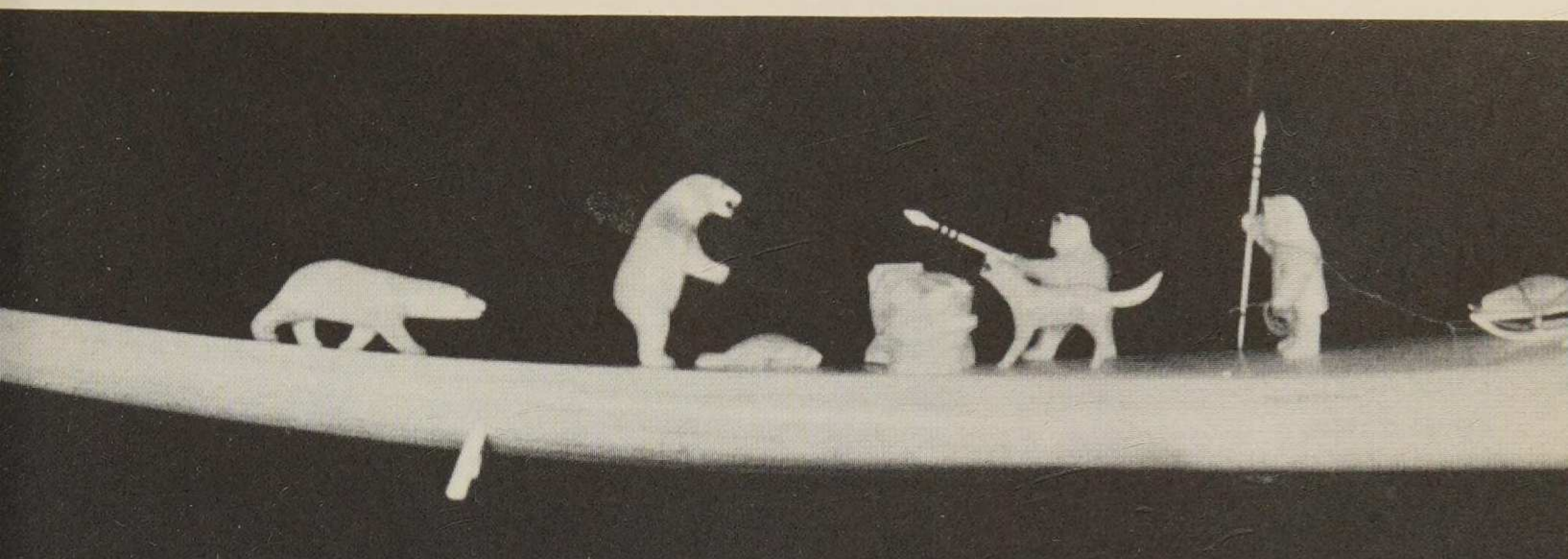
A less well-known but, for me, the most powerful aspect of the symbol is the Inverted Tree. "Hast heard," says the Scandinavian Edda, "where the tree grows whose crown is on earth and its roots in Heaven?" The Rig Veda calls it the Aswattha Tree. Plato speaks of man as "an inverted tree, of which the roots tend Heavenward and the branches down to earth." The Hanged Man of the Tarot cards is another aspect of that tree as is also Gurdjieff's Ray of Creation, rooted above in the Absolute and descending in a series of octaves through ever denser states of being from one Do to another.

Is not this symbol, in all its aspects, telling us, once again, the old, old story of the Prodigal Son? "I will arise and go to my Father," he said when he "came to himself." But could he do that, could he turn again home, unless he had first left his father? To be found you have to be lost.

So, we are left in question, which is where the myth is designed to leave us. Time, space, matter are mutable realities. The Sphinx, the Pyramids, the stone temples are, all of them, ultimately, as flimsy as London Bridge; our cities but tents set up in the cosmos. We pass. But what the bees know, the wisdom that sustains our passing life—however much we deny or ignore it—that forever remains. Begotten, not made, it is here to declare to us, in the words of the old Greek poet Aratus, that "Full of Zeus are all the ways of men." That word "full" means what it says, and therefore, with the ambiguity of myth, reminds us, too, that the sky is always falling, that the bough inevitably will break and the rain it raineth every day.

What does one do with these trifles, not unconsidered, that are snapped up from the bloodstream? Throw them back, as the fisherman does the tiddler, to let them grow and breed! So—I toss them into a tributary of that whole planetary vein, that flows just around the corner; from which, long wandering beside it, I have learned so much. And also thrown into it so much—lamentation, doubt, question, gratitude, and joy. Let it all go, river, to the sea to be made over, absolved and dissolved, suffer the sea-change and return as bee-stuff.

Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song! ◇



A FORM EMERGING

selected and introduced by John Kastan

It seems something of a paradox that among the Eskimo, who inhabit a difficult and punishing land that demands great skills for human survival, poetry is of such great importance. Yet it is to these difficult conditions of existence in the harsh North that Eskimo men and women respond with poetry. And poetry, along with the other skills of life, is essential to the Eskimo in making their home on the earth. Vividly capturing the raw, devastating, and beautiful tundra, this poetry communicates the full power of the human spirit in its tenuous, yet eternal, relationship with the forces of the earth. This seeming contradiction of tenuous and eternal is at the heart of the Eskimo ethos and is articulated in the poems. Eskimo poetry strikingly expresses this feeling of life hanging in the balance: the power of physical forces to destroy and to provide; the power of the human spirit to ebb and to flow. For it is in this delicate balance that the Eskimo, both individually and collectively, manifest their personal power in all aspects of life. Whether waiting for a poem or a prey, or pouncing on the right word or the white seal, it is just this relationship between earth and human spirit which matters. Words, like other materials and tools, help the Eskimo form the Eskimo world.

The experiences of life (domestic chores, hunting, carving, poetry, etc.) all inform and enrich each other, the spirit of one infusing the others, all reaching to the earth for support. Edmund Carpenter writes:

> No word meaning "art" occurs in Eskimo, nor does artist: there are only people. Nor is there any distinction made between utilitarian and decorative objects. The Eskimo simply say, "One should do all things properly."*

To most of us, the Arctic is a lonely and forbidding place, but to the Eskimo, who are not estranged from the Earth, it is a provident place. The Eskimo culture teaches, and the tundra demands, a lesson in existential humility from all who wish to live in harmony with the Earth. Not to change the earth nor to take from it wantonly is the meaning of the lesson for us.

*Edmund Carpenter, *Eskimo Realities* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

Invocation

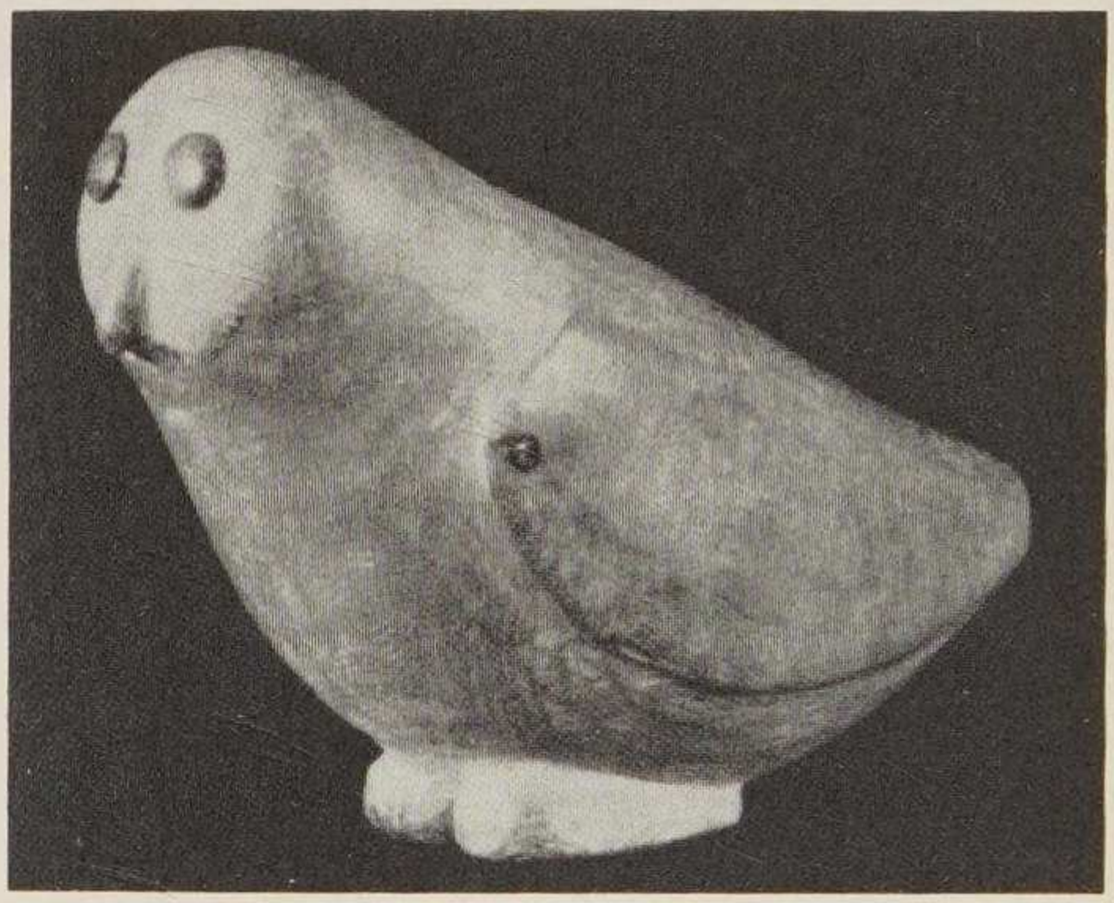
Spirit of the air,
come down,
come down!
Your shaman calls!

Spirit of the air
come down,
come down,
bite bad luck to death!

I rise,
I rise among spirits,
I see the phantoms of the dead!

Child, great child,
child-master of the air,
come down
great infant spirit!

Copper Eskimo man, Netsit



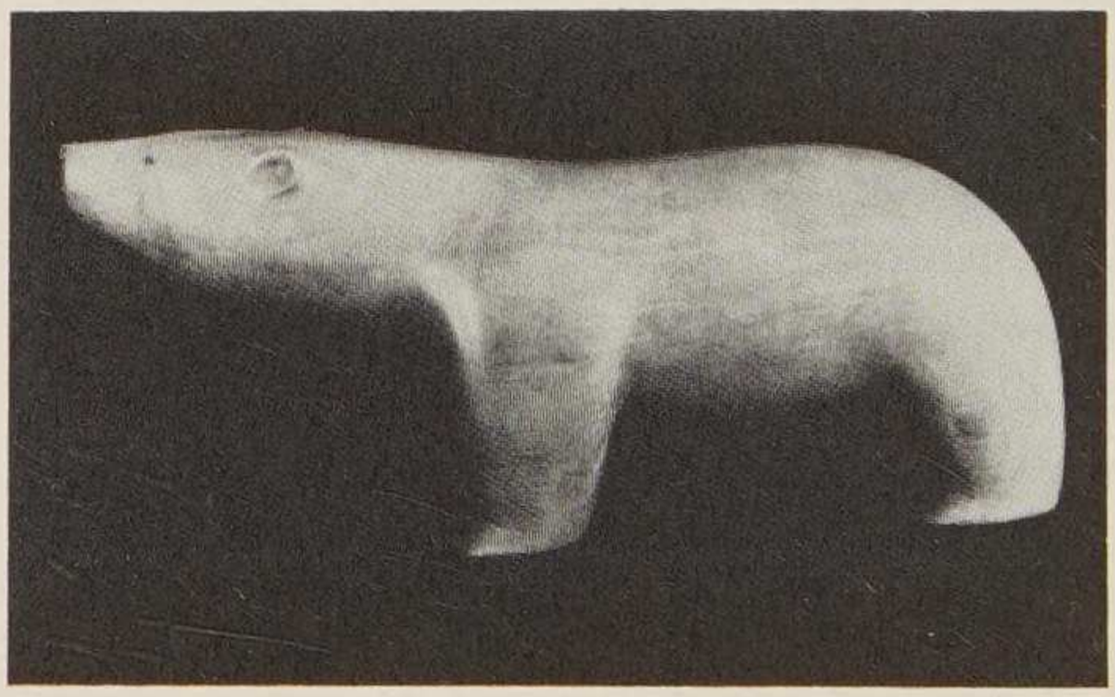
Moved

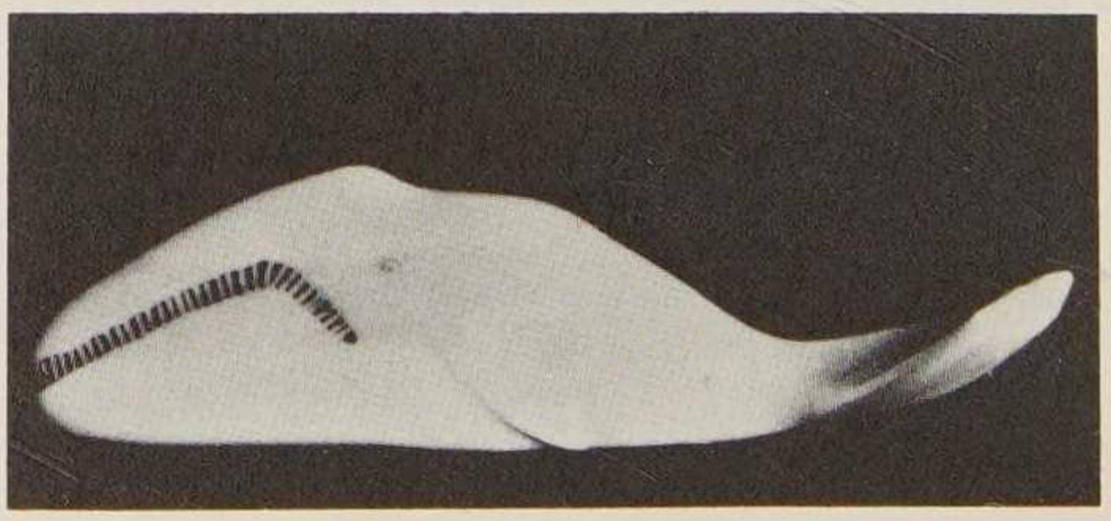
(A song that would always send the shaman Uvavnuk into a trance)

The great sea stirs me.
The great sea sets me adrift,
it sways me like the weed
on a river-stone.

The sky's height stirs me.
The strong wind blows through my mind.
It carries me with it,
so I shake with joy.

Iglulik Eskimo woman, Uvavnuk





Dead Man's Song

(Dreamt by a man still living at the time of composition)

I'm filled with joy
when the day dawns quietly
over the roof of the sky,
    aji, jai ja.

I'm filled with joy
when the sun rises slowly
over the roof of the sky,
    aji, jai ja.

But other times, I choke with fear:
a greedy swarm of maggots
eats into the hollows
of my collar-bone and eyes,
    aji, jai ja.

I lie here dreaming
how I choked with fear
when they shut me
in an ice-hut on the lake,
    aji, jai ja.

And I could not see
my soul would ever free itself
and get to the hunting-grounds
of the sky,
    aji, jai ja.

Fear grew, and grew.
Fear overwhelmed me
when the fresh-water ice
snapped in the cold,
and the booming crack of the frost
grew into the sky,
    aji, jai ja.

Life was wonderful
in winter.
But did winter make me happy?
No, I always worried
about hides for boot-soles
and for boots:
and if there'd be enough
for all of us.
Yes, I worried constantly,
    aji, jai ja.

Life was wonderful
in summer.
But did summer make me happy?
No, I always worried
about reindeer skins and rugs for the
    platform.
Yes, I worried constantly,
    aji, jai ja.

Life was wonderful
when you stood at your fishing-hole
on the ice.
But was I happy waiting at my
    fishing-hole?
No, I always worried
for my little hook,
in case it never got a bite.
Yes, I worried constantly,
    aji, jai ja.

Life was wonderful
when you danced in the feasting house.
But did this make me any happier?
No, I always worried
I'd forget my song.
Yes, I worried constantly,
    aji, jai ja.

Life was wonderful...
And I still feel joy
each time the day-break
whitens the dark sky,
each time the sun
climbs over the roof of the sky,
    aji, jai ja.

Copper Eskimo

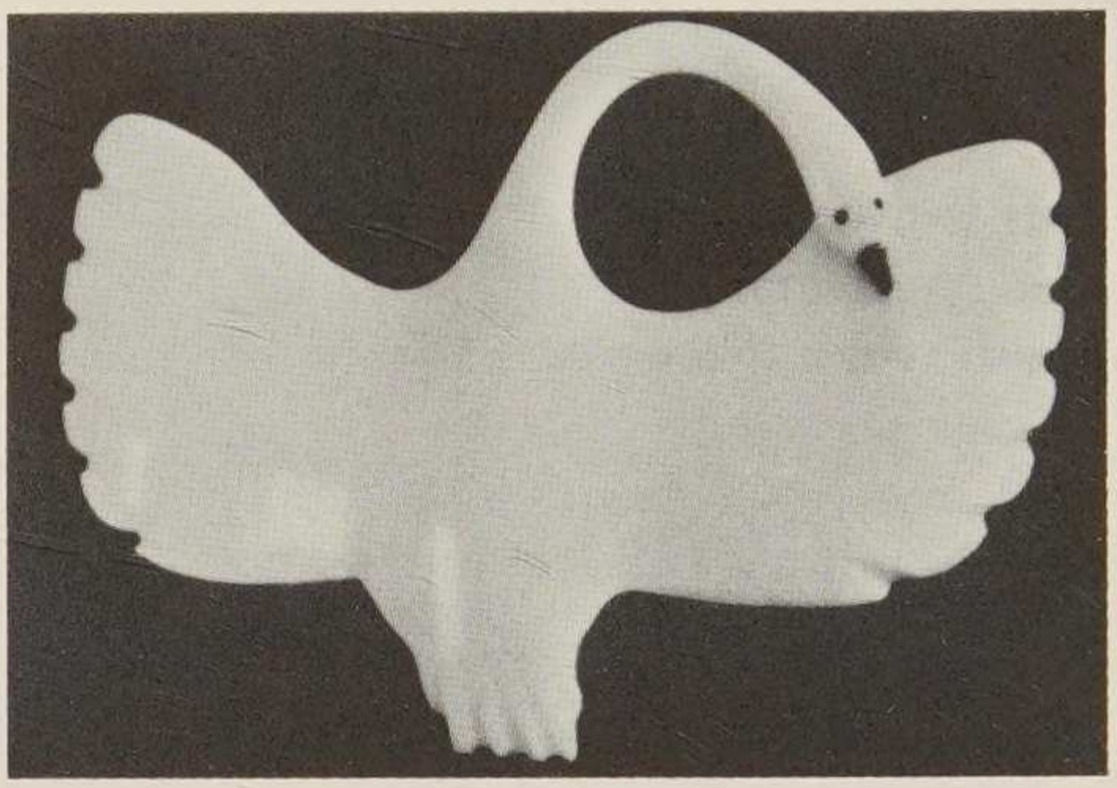
Delight in Nature

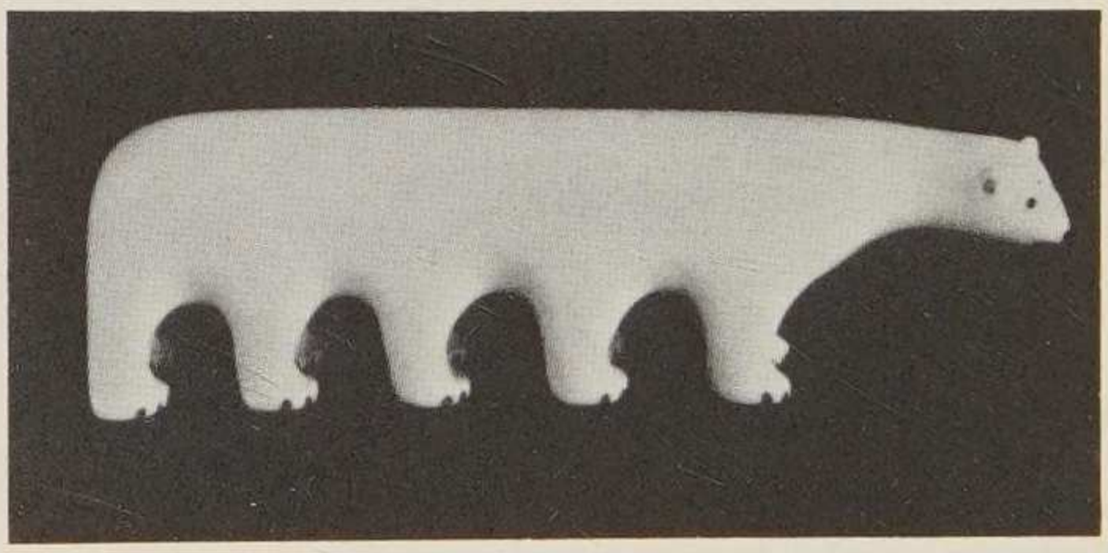
Isn't it delightful,
little river cutting through the gorge,
when you slowly approach it,
and trout hang behind stones
in the stream?
    Jajai-ija.

Isn't it delightful,
that *grassy* river bank?
Yet Willow Twig,
whom I so long to see again,
is lost to me.
So be it.
The winding of the river
through the gorge is lovely enough.
    Jajai-ija.

Isn't it delightful,
that bluish island of rocks out there,
as you slowly approach it?
So what does it matter
that the blowing spirit of the air
wanders over the rocks:
the island is so beautiful,
when, driving steadily,
you gain on it.

Copper Eskimo man, Tatilgak





Charm for Seal Blubber

Spirit of the air,
I call, I call!
I hiccup throaty sounds
which come from my inside.
Here I stand,
and shout my songs up
by my little hut.
Spirit of the air,
I call, I call!
Send me blubber
as you used to,
send me blubber
as you used to,
send me blubber!

Copper Eskimo man, Tatilgak

EPICYCLE

Why Ant Has a Small Waist

Terry Tafoya of the Taos Pueblo Tribe contributed this Epicycle. He writes: I'd like to share a legend some of my own relatives tell, which "stars" the Ant woman we call Klawisa, or that some of my other relatives call "Tlatlusid" (Tied at the Waist). I always like to tell it since it stresses the properness and intelligence of Klawisa, and shows that no matter how small and seemingly unimportant you are, you have a special place in the universe. Even though she is tiny, through doing the right religious things, she manages to defeat the Bear. The story is also used to teach respect for all living creatures, regardless of size.

This story is known in the Pacific Northwest, but I have never found it written down, except for a first-grade-level reader. The story among the Salish people stops at the point of Ant winning the contest, but among my mom's people at Warm Springs, the addition of the origin of the laughing dance is told. Thus, the story as it now is written is the Warm Springs version.

It is very difficult to write a story of this nature down, and I understand why we do it so seldom. To use ink cuts out the movements, the dances, and gestures that are so much a part of the true story. It is like describing the rainbow by only using yellow.

Long ago when the world was new, when mountains were the size of salmon eggs, all the people were animals. But they didn't look or act like the animals we have today...they were more like human people, and they spoke in one language, as we do now.

In those days there was no light, only darkness. There were some people who were always getting lost when they went hunting, unable to find their way home in the darkness. Their people would mourn them, but an even greater tragedy would be when the people would hear the pounding footsteps of a terrible monster coming closer and closer. This monster would snatch their babies, digging into their homes, swallowing their children, and then disappearing again into the dark.

There lived in those days a very wise woman, Klawisa, one of the ant people. Klawisa thought and thought about what she could do to help her relatives and friends. She thought of light. Now this was a brilliant thing to think of...she was the first one to think of light. She decided to go with some of her relatives on a great journey to the House of the Creator, and beg light from him.

And so it was she began that long journey in the company of her relatives, not knowing that the monster, Grizzly Bear, followed them. When she neared the Creator, she called out to Him, "I ask for light, so my people will always be able to see and work, be able to find their way home, and keep watch for the monster that swallows our children."

Before the Creator could speak, Bear appeared behind Ant, and in his dark voice shouted, "Don't give her what she wants! I want it always to be night, so it will be cool, and I can sleep."

The Creator said, "There will be a contest. It will be a Dance Contest, and the winner will have what he or she wishes." Now, whenever there are contests among our Indian people, there is always feasting. All different sorts of the Animal people came for the contest, and all sorts of Indian food were spread out for the feast.

Bear began to stuff himself, chewing and swallowing with great noise and pleasure. Little Ant chose not to eat, but began to fast. For many of our Indian people, fasting is a form of prayer, a way of cleansing and purifying the body. Instead of eating, she prayed for her people, begging light from the Creator.

When the dancing began, Klawisa, the Ant woman, sprang up. She pulled her belt tight. It held in her stomach so she felt no hunger. Her dance was fast. The Drum was a heart beat. She leapt to the music, her song, "I am Ant. I Dance for Light." She finished and sat down. She prayed again. She took no food.

Bear rose slowly like the moon would soon rise, crumbs still clinging to his heavy lips. "I am Bear, I Dance for Night, " and so he did, his dance slow and ponderous, each footstep matching the drum like a tired canoe paddle. He finished his dance and immediately began to eat again.

Each time Ant would jump up. She pulled her belt tighter. She danced, swift, sharp movements. Quick as close echoes. "I am Ant, I Dance for Light." She continued her fasting and prayer.

Now every time Bear would begin to dance, his movements were slower and slower, as he grew sleepy and sluggish from all the food he was eating. "I am Bear," and then he yawned, his thick body stretching like an old alder tree,"...I Dance for Night." Slower and slower were his movements, and lower and lower was his song. Then he would return to his place at the feast, stumbling to the food to eat once more.

For what we would now call seven days and seven nights they danced and sang in this fashion. Finally, Bear staggered out to dance, his enormous stomach like a huge boulder in front of him, weighing him down. The floor shook with the massiveness of his faltering dance. He yawned, his mouth creaking open like a hidden cave, smacking his lips on a discovered bit of bitterroot. He yawned, and nearly fell over. "I..(yawn)...am...(Yawn)...Bear ...(YAWN)." He stretched and slowed even more, no longer

listening for the beat of the drum. "I...I...ZZZZZZZ." Then he began to snore, falling asleep right in the middle of his dance.

The Creator told the people, "You, Ant, have won this contest, but you and the Bear are both my children, and I love you both. For that reason I will give you both what you wish. I will create both Night and Day, so the Ant and her people will have time to work and can find their way around without getting lost, and the Bear will have time for peace and quiet."

Klawisa, the little Ant woman, was pleased. She had pulled her belt so tight that that is why Ant has a small waist, even today. She danced with her cousins, like Atneewah, the wasp, and that is why they also have small waists. It is because of Ant that we have daylight, even today. Ant's relatives still keep their watch in these times, fearing the approach of giants like the bear who raid their nests for their dinner.

Now the old people say that the Ant and Bear did not dance alone. Other animal people danced for their wishes as well. Rabbit danced for spring so he would always have tender young shoots to eat. When you hear the rabbit thump his foot in the woods, you

know he practices for the next contest. These other animals had lost to Ant, and grew jealous of poor Klawisa.

With fear, tiny Ant and her cousins looked about them, into the angry black eyes of the other people. Wise Ant began to search her mind for an answer.

"There will be a new dance," she called out, "a laughing dance." She taught the people that while this laughing song was sung, everyone was to be very solemn. There should be no smiles, no signs of joy. But when the song stopped, groups of dancers were to break off from their circle dance, and run to an elder in the crowd. They would point to that person and laugh at them. It didn't have to be a regular laugh. It could be the high, light squeak of Grandmother Mouse, or the heavy, rough laughter of Bear.

When the people began to dance, they would do this, waiting for the stops in the song—then running out, pointing to elders, and laughing at the tops of their many voices. When the song would begin again, they would return to their circle dancing, trying to look solemn, but each of their faces would break into a smile. Just so, Klawisa had brought about her wishes once again.

And this is the way of it, that at the end of our dance contests, we sometimes end with the laughing song, so all will go home without jealous or angry hearts. It is the only time in our life we can make fun of old people, and even then, only in the short space between the dancing. The old people think it's the funniest of all.

—Retold by Terry Tafoya

Illustrations by the author

Bridge of Fire

An Interview with Dastur Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal
by Carol and Philip Zaleski

It is an unusual privilege to met a Zoroastrian high priest. We were fortunate to spend some time with Dastur Dr. Firoze M. Kotwal, visiting here from Bombay, where he serves the Parsi community as high priest of the Wadia Atash Bahram (the temple of the highest grade of fire). Dastur Kotwal was in America under the auspices of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard University, and we arranged to speak with him there. In the room where we sat, a dancing Shiva looked into the eyes of an Orthodox icon on the facing wall. We found Dastur Kotwal completely at ease in these spiritually eclectic surroundings, perhaps because he is so dedicated to preserving his own tradition. He was a cheerful and animated speaker, his hands in perpetual motion, sometimes pointing to the ceiling, sometimes to the table, as if to demonstrate that a link really does exist between heaven and earth.

Dastur Kotwal is himself a link in the transmission of teachings which originated over 2,500 years ago in the Central Asian steppes. Many scholars believe that the Prophet Zarathushtra (known as Zoroaster in the West) lived between 1700 and 1500 B.C., although the traditional dates are 628-551 B.C. The antiquity of his teaching is awesome by either reckoning.

According to tradition, Zoroaster received his revelation at the age of thirty, after many years of wandering in search of illumination. One morning, while gathering pure water for a spring *haoma* ritual, he saw a vision of an immense, luminous being called Vohu Manah (Good Mind), who led him before Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) and the five other Bounteous Immortals (Amesha Spentas). They shed such light that Zoroaster could not see his own shadow, and they disclosed to him the teaching of a universal struggle between the forces of light and darkness. They revealed that in the beginning two primal Spirits came forth from the sovereign Ahura Mazda. One chose *asha* (Truth) and the other chose *drug* (the Lie).

The Zoroastrian creation myth, set forth fully in the ninth-century Pahlavi *Bundahishn*, shows how the material world, and the human being who is a microcosm of the world, came to be the battleground for a cosmic struggle. It may be helpful to summarize this account:

Before finite time began, Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) lived in the realm of Infinite Light. Ahriman dwelled below him in Infinite Darkness. Between them was the Void. Ohrmazd was aware of Ahriman and foresaw the battle they would fight, but Ahriman was "ignorant and unobservant." As his instrument in the coming battle Ohrmazd created a universe without thought, movement, or touch. Ahriman, who happened to glimpse a ray of light, rushed up to destroy it.

Then Ohrmazd, in his omniscience, knew that if he did not fix a time for battle against him, then Ahriman

would do unto his creation even as he had threatened; and the struggle and the mixture would be everlasting; and Ahriman could settle in the mixed state of creation and take it to himself....And Ohrmazd said to the Destructive Spirit, "Fix a time so that by this pact we may extend the battle for nine thousand years." For he knew that by fixing a time in this wise the Destructive Spirit would be made powerless. Then the Destructive Spirit, not seeing the end, agreed to that treaty, just as two men who fight a duel fix a term (saying), "Let us on such a day do battle till night (falls)."

(Bundahishn I: 11,12)*

The next three trimillennia proceed as follows:

1. Ohrmazd utters words of power, revealing to Ahriman his end, and Ahriman falls into a 3,000-year swoon. During this time, Ohrmazd creates the six Amesha Spentas (personified attributes of Ohrmazd, who may be former Indo-Aryan deities, now subordinated to the high god). Ohrmazd creates the spiritual world, and then the material world, in the following order:

Sky, in the shape of an egg—a shiny rampart for defense (presided over by the Amesha Spenta Desirable Dominion)
Water, to "smite the lie of thirst" (presided over by Perfection)
Earth, to give solidity (presided over by Holy Devotion)
Plant (presided over by Immortality)
Primal Bull (presided over by Good Mind)
Primal Man, a spherical being (presided over by Ohrmazd)
Fire—from Infinite Light—bright, clear, white, and spherical (presided over by Best Righteousness)

When Ahriman awakens from his swoon, he proceeds to attack the new creation. He ruptures the Sky in order to break into the material world. He contaminates the Water by putting salt in the ocean. He afflicts the Earth with noxious insects and vipers, poisons the Plant, slays the Primal Bull and the Primal Man, and adds smoke and darkness to the Fire. But Immortality scatters the essence of the Plant over the earth, and the seed of Bull and Man are dispersed to bring forth generations of plants, cattle, and men which will perform collectively the same cosmic function that was performed by the primal Plant, Bull, and Man. Most important, the rupture in the Sky seals itself, trapping Ahriman in the material world to be harassed by life as much as he in turn harassed it.

2. After Ahriman's attack, a 3,000-year period begins, called the time of the mixed. The first human couple, created from a single rhubarb plant, experience a series of Falls. Their first sin is to attribute to Ahriman the creation of earth, water, and plants. Their second sin is to drink goat's milk and complain that it makes them ill (was it their sin to eat or to complain?). Their third sin is the ritual sacrifice of an animal. The demons, who see that the first couple is vulnerable to the Lie, attack them by making them lose all sexual desire for fifty years.

3. The final trimillennium is a period of decline leading to a final cataclysm and renewal of the world. Three saviors will appear, each the posthumous son of Zoroaster, whose seed, preserved in a lake, will impregnate three maidens who bathe there. Only the last savior, appearing in the final millennium, will be successful. He will raise mankind from the dead by calling them forth from the four corners of the world to which they were dispersed at death. For three days, all will pass through a river of molten metal, which will feel like warm milk to the righteous, but will burn and purge the wicked. Once purified by this ordeal, everyone will be given White *Haoma*, the drink of Immortality, prepared from the sacrifice of the cosmic Bull. The earth will be "made excellent," and lifted to the star station, where it will be met by paradise, the House of Song. Ahriman will be either immobilized or destroyed forever.

According to legend most of the written words of Zoroaster were destroyed by Alexander the Great. The seventeen myste-

*From *The Teachings of the Magi: A Compendium of Zoroastrian Beliefs*, tr. R.C. Zaehner (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1956).

rious hymns of the *Gāthās* survive, written in an ancient Avestan dialect of which they are the only example. Except for a few scholars who doubt that Zoroaster ever existed, most consider him to be the author of the *Gāthās*. Aside from this, we can assume that Zoroaster's teachings were transmitted orally and are at least partially represented in the so-called Younger Avesta and in the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) texts written from the sixth through ninth centuries.

In the *Gāthās*, Zoroaster speaks of himself as a ritual priest (*zaotar*), a composer of *manthras*, or sacred words, and as "one who knows" (*vaedemna*). The hymns of the *Gāthās* are obscure to us partly because they reflect this wider oral tradition and initiatory training about which we have very little information. But even reading the *Gāthās* in translation shows how inadequate it is to abstract a moral or religious formula from these stanzas. It is certainly not enough to characterize Zoroaster as a "reformer" of Indo-European polytheism and sacrificial practices.

Here are a few passages from the *Gāthās* in which Zoroaster describes his essential message and his role as a teacher:*

As the holy one I recognized thee, O Wise Lord,
When I saw thee at the beginning, at the birth of existence,
Appoint a recompense for deed and word;
Evil reward to the evil, good to the good,
Through thy wisdom, at the last turning-point of creation.
(Yasna 43:5)

*All quotations from the *Gāthās* are taken from *The Hymns of Zarathustra*, an English version of the translation by Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin (London: John Murray, 1952). Translations of this and other Avestan and Pahlavi texts can also be found in the *Sacred Books of the East* series edited by F. Max Müller.

As the holy one I recognized thee, O Wise Lord,
When he came to me as Good Mind.
To his question: "To whom wilt thou address thy worship?"
I made reply: "To thy fire! While I offer up my veneration to it,
I will think of the Right to the utmost of my power."

(Yasna 43:9)

I will speak of the two spirits
Of whom the holier said to the destroyer at the beginning of existence:
"Neither our thoughts nor our doctrines nor our minds' forces,
Neither our choices nor our words nor our deeds,
Neither our consciences nor our souls agree."

(Yasna 45:2)

Hear with your ears that which is the sovereign good;
With a clear mind look upon the two sides
Between which each man must choose for himself,
Watchful beforehand that the great test may be accomplished in our favour.

(Yasna 30:1, 2)

And when these two spirits came together,
In the beginning they established life and non-life,
And that at the last the worst existence should be for the wicked,
But for the righteous one the Best Mind.

(Yasna 30:4)

Each time Zoroaster speaks of choosing between righteousness and wickedness (*asha* and *drug*), he is thinking of the primal choice, made in the time before time, in which the total disagreement of the twin spirits was revealed. Zoroaster knew that his own people, peaceful, cattle-raising farmers, were the choosers of *asha*, while the nomadic marauders, who swept in from the desert to steal cattle and scatter ruin, were the followers of *drug*. The soul of the ox cries out in the *Gāthās*:

To you did the soul of the ox complain:
"For whom did you create me? Who made me?
Fury and violence oppress me, and cruelty and tyranny.
I have no shepherd other than you: then obtain good pastures for me."

(Yasna 29:1)

The choice between *asha* and *drug* is re-enacted by every element of creation and by every human being:

As was the choice of the Waters, the choice of the Plants, the choice of the beneficent Cow, the choice of Ahura Mazda, who created the Cow, who (created) the just Man, as (was) the choice of Zoroaster, the choice of Kavi (king) Vishtaspa, the choice of Frashaostra and Jamaspa... by that choice and by that doctrine am I a Mazda-worshipper.

(Fravarane)

In this dualism, life is opposed to non-life, rather than matter to spirit. Creation of the material world makes the difference between *asha* and *drug* clear: matter and spirit form an organic whole which is opposed to and ultimately vindicated against the forces of disorder and death. Despite the Zoroastrian influence on Manichaean and Gnostic systems, this is as far as it is possible to go from the idea that the earth is a prison for the spirit.

Zoroastrianism evolved under the Magi, the hereditary priest caste, who retained the ancient sacrificial rituals while incorporating some reforms demanded by Zoroaster. Worshiping outside on mountain tops, they venerated the natural elements and the spirit powers which reside in them—especially fire.

It is still the fire temples that bind together the dwindling Zoroastrian communities of India and Iran. Converts to their religion are not accepted, and faced with the threat of extinction, they carefully follow the ancient rites to purify and restore the elements from the ravages of the Hostile Spirit, and to anticipate the "Making Excellent" which will transfigure the cosmos at the end of time. Dastur Kotwal's face lit up as he described his role in these rituals. It seemed to us that he had accumulated some of that radiance, called *kwarrah*, which he described to us in the conversation that follows.

PHILIP ZALESKI: *As high priest, you are responsible for tending the sacred fire. What is the source of your reverence for fire?*

DASTUR DR. FIROZE M. KOTWAL According to our ancient Iranian history, there was a

king called Hoshang, who discovered fire. He assembled all his court and said, "This is a divine glow. A person who has wisdom would praise it." Ever since, fire has been part of our worship. When Zoroaster came, he gave it a spiritual meaning. According to us, all naturally lustrous objects are worthy of veneration. The sun, the moon, the stars, lights, all light. Now, what is God? What is Ohrmazd, or Ahura Mazda? Our religion teaches that Ahura Mazda is a stream of light. When we consider fire in the material world, we remove its earthly impurities through ceremony, and make it as pure as it is in the mansion of Ahura Mazda. After consecration, a ray of light descends upon that earthly fire and a link is established between devotee and God.

CAROL ZALESKI *So it is a bridge—*

F.K. Yes! So we do not worship fire, as has often been said, but we worship Ahura Mazda through the agency of fire. And, you see, that's why fire is called Son of Ahura Mazda.

C.Z. *Could you tell us how you purify the fire?*

F.K. The four elements of nature need to be kept pure—fire, water, air, and earth. For example, we do not spit in running water, we do not blow fire with our breath because saliva would defile it, and our way of disposing of the dead follows strict laws of purity. Anything living and growing is good, but once something is no longer a part of the living organism, it is dead matter and a source of pollution. We believe that the fire on which a corpse has been burned has been harassed much because of that dead matter. So we collect such fire with certain prayers, then we sift, we purify, and we consecrate. In that way, we gladden the spirit of fire by taking impurities from it. The highest degree of fire, which we call Atash Bahram, is composed of sixteen different kinds of fire which have been collected, sifted, purified, and consecrated in this way.

P.Z. *What about the other elements?*

F.K. Yes, you see, water also we consider a creation of God, worthy of adoration. And here, too, water that is flowing, not stagnant. And to preserve the earth we do not inter the dead. We just give over the bodies to the fowls of heaven to be devoured in a Tower of Silence. A Tower of Silence can be used for three to four hundred years, to dispose of thousands of bodies without polluting the land.

P.Z. *So the general purpose of your rituals is purification?*

F.K. That is not all. You see, there are two worlds of equal importance, the physical world of man, animals, plants, all that we can see, and the spiritual world of archangels, angels, guardian spirits, and the souls of the departed. The purpose of Zoroastrian rites is to allow man to establish contact with the spiritual world, to invite the spirit powers to earth, because they are the guardians of all things. For example, in the ritual of *yasna* every level of creation is present. Ohrmazd, the first of the seven archangels, presides over man and is represented by the priest. The second archangel, Bahman, Good Mind, is the guardian of cattle and is represented by clarified butter. Ardavahisht, Best Righteousness, is the lord of fire, which is present in all our ceremo-

nies. Fourth is Shahrevar, Desirable Dominion, who presides over metals, present in our metal utensils. Fifth is Spendārmad, Holy Devotion, ruling over earth, and of course we perform our ceremonies on earth. Then there is Hordād, Perfection, the lord of water. Water is used in the *yasna* ritual to make an infusion with the *haoma* or *hōm* twigs. Our Hindu brothers say *soma* for *hōm*. *Hōm* represents Amurdād, Immortality, who presides over vegetation. The *hōm* twigs, which were brought over with us from Iran, are the center of the *yasna* ceremony. So in this way, you see, the whole hierarchy of being is present.

C.Z. *This seems to give humans a definite place in the total order of things.*

F.K. Yes. Our human function is to fight Ahriman [the Hostile Spirit] by struggling against vices, falsehood, disorder, strife, and quarrel. And by fighting against disease. We do not value suffering. No, no, ours is a religion of optimism, courage, and dynamism. If you are suffering, try to remedy it. Go to a doctor or take recourse in our indigenous ways, by chanting the Avesta or by visiting a holy person who can cure with healing passes or holy spells. In this way, God is helped also, in his battle against evil.

C.Z. *Is this idea of the chain of being related to the practices by which you maintain a link with your ancestors?*

F.K. Yes, certainly. It is an act of merit to remember one's ancestors. And for the soul of the deceased, we do much charity. With the right work, a stream of charity is running all the time between the living and the dead.

P.Z. *I understand that your ancestors were also priests.*

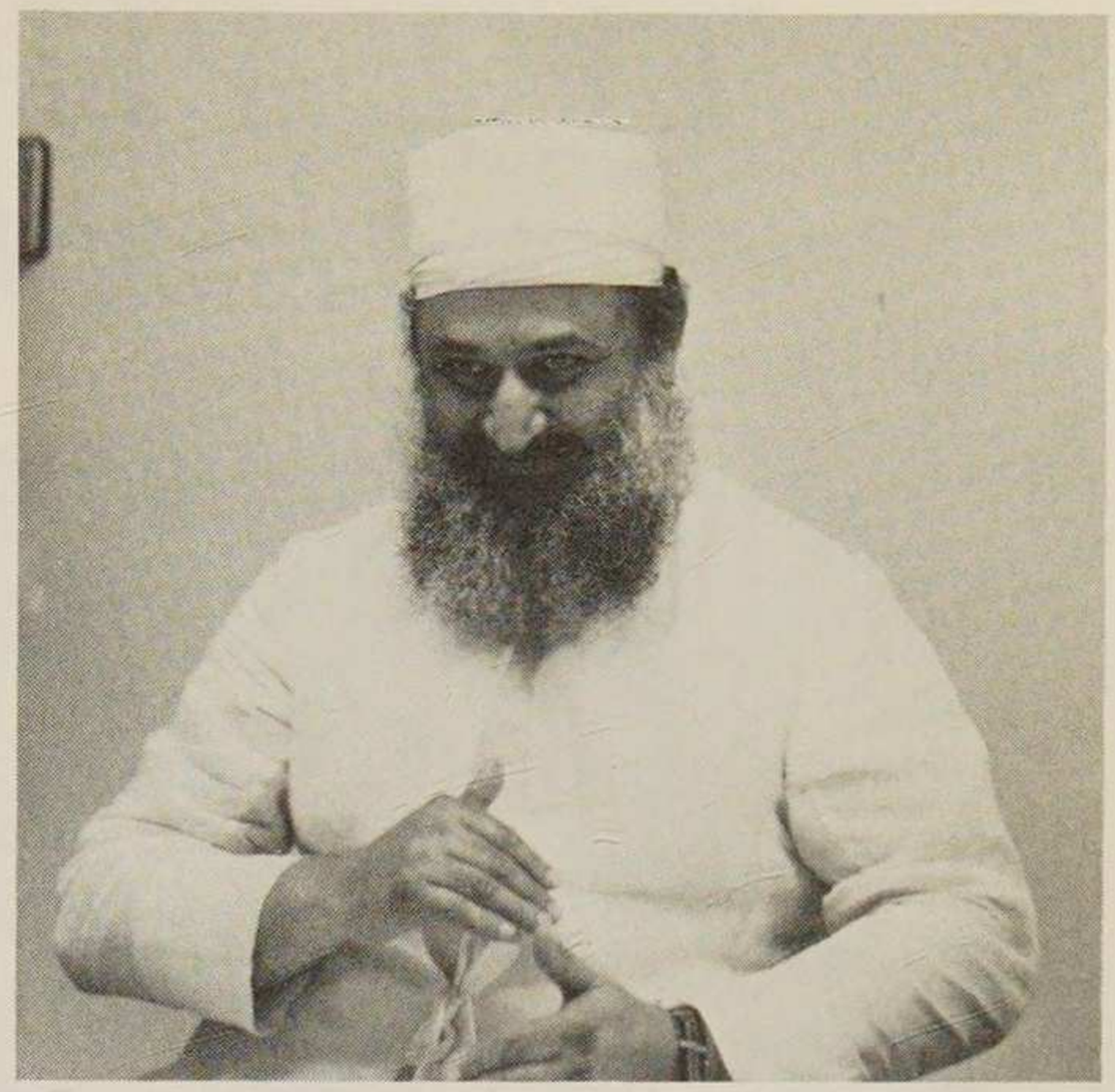
F.K. Yes. Our priesthood is hereditary. I can count back to my thirtieth ancestor. I am descended from Neryosang Dhaval, who was a great Sanskrit scholar in the twelfth century. Today many people don't know the name of their grandfathers!

C.Z. *Do you feel that you are in a way carrying on the work of your ancestors?*

F.K. Yes, yes, of course, because we always think that we must do such deeds in this world that when we go up we can show a cheerful face to our ancestors.

C.Z. *Is the training of priests connected to this family tradition, or is it mostly done in the seminary?*

F.K. We have seminaries now. But until fifty years ago, a priest would educate his own son. The pupil would get up at three in



the morning, because the hours before sunrise are best for learning by heart. We have to memorize about four or five hundred pages of the Avesta, which takes about seven years. But now everyone wants to go into a white collar profession. They see their neighbors going into the office at eleven and returning at five and they say, "Why shouldn't I do that? Why should I get up at four in the morning to do such things?" But they don't know the spiritual blessings of being a priest. We have the concept of *kwarrah*, which means glory. A priest who performs his ceremonies sincerely, in touch with the spiritual powers, acting as a servant of God, has *kwarrah*—a sort of glory or aura on his face. This comes from a serious attitude and sincere striving. Only an inner calling can give one this type of mental attitude. It is not overnight that somebody receives *kwarrah*.

C.Z. *Have you had any contact with the Zoroastrian community in America? Have they managed to preserve their heritage?*

F.K. They are sincerely interested in keeping our traditions. The most important thing is for them to marry in their own community. Parents are the best teachers, so they must pass on the tenets of Zoroastrianism to their children. That would go a long way toward preserving our lineage. Otherwise it is lost. There is hope for the time being, for this generation or the next. But after that, I am skeptical.

But, you know, at the turn of the century there were many high priests in Iran, and they preserved our religion. Now there are only four or five, and they are all in their sixties and seventies. It is because there is no spiritual guidance. Not everything is based on money and cars and bungalows, you know. There is also a paucity of priests in Bombay, where we have about fifty fire temples. If there are no priests in the future, we will have to close our fire temples. And if there are no fire temples, there will be no community. But as long as we have the will to preserve our traditions, we shall exist. We have been able to survive against so many odds. When persecutions were the order of the day, we took our fire to caves in the jungles and kept it burning, that fire which is now more than a thousand years old. Yes, we shall survive. ◇

THE PHOENIX

by D.M. Dooling

Huascarán

The fire which serves as pyre for the Phoenix, and cradle where he resumes a new life... draws its origins from the highest mountain on earth.

—Michael Maier,
16th century German alchemist

On May 31, 1970, an earthquake hit Peru that was one of the worst natural disasters in history. The number of dead was estimated at 100,000. Towns were leveled on the coast, but the most terrible damage occurred inland in the beautiful valley known as the Callejón, or passageway, of Huaylas.

The Andes are much more thickly populated than one imagines. For every single house or clump of houses in sight from the road, there are hundreds on the slopes above and below that go unseen. In the snowless parts of the mountains, the cultivated patches cover their very tops, and on barren slopes where one sees one lone shepherd with his goats or sheep or llamas, there may be a hundred families nestled in invisible huts. So it will never be known precisely how many people died in the earthquake of 1970. The department of Ancash, where most of the damage occurred, is the most heavily populated in Peru, and for all the government figures, no exact census has ever been taken.

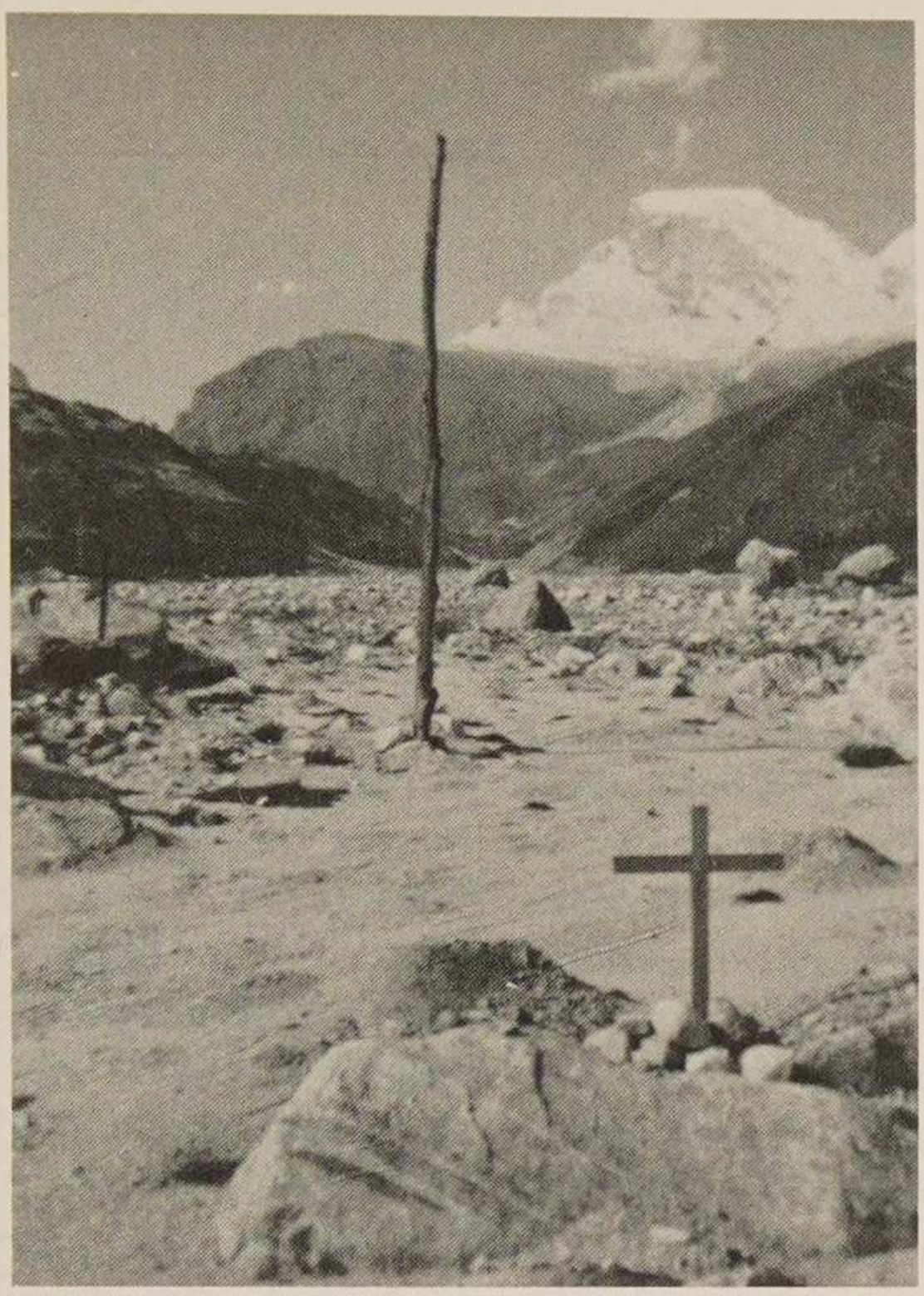
The world's response was immediate and generous. Help poured into Peru: international organizations such as Caritas and the Red Cross sent workers, money, and supplies; money came from BID, building materials from Australia, helicopters and medical supplies from Russia, shiploads and planeloads of food and medicine from more than forty countries. The beggar children in Santiago de Chile, capital of Peru's traditional enemy, sent all the alms they could collect in a day to help the children of Peru. Chileans flocked in for volunteer work. In

Yungay before the 1970 earthquake

of far more young than grown-ups, both of animals and humans. Lambs, kids, calves; five little black pigs, all of different sizes, as if they had not been born in a litter but separately, a month or so apart. The children take care of the animals and each other. A nine-year-old carries a three-year-old, and a boy of eight has a year-old baby on his back. They have dirty rose-brown faces and wide eyes, and they all wear hats, even the babies. The skirts of the little girls are as long and full and variously-colored as those of their mothers, and the mothers' faces are as round and smooth and open as the children's.

We passed through several pueblos, the car crawling through the narrow cobbled streets edged with tiny drainage ditches, between walls of adobe houses. We stopped often to wait for a truck to unload, or for people to step aside and let us pass. Finally we came to Yungay, at the edge of the canyon between Huandoy and Huascarán, an adobe town of 20,000, and climbed its steep streets to the plaza with its central garden and fountain. Tall palms grew around the square; on the eastern side rose the double towers of the church, and beyond and above, the startling dark blue sky and the tremendous white mass of Huascarán. All the streets around the square were full of people; it was Sunday and the *feria* was in full swing. People squatted in doorways and on church steps, with their goods spread out on cloths or newspapers: a hundred kinds of maize, grain and cereals, brilliant pots of dyes, straw hats, articles of cheap tin and plastic, rubber sandals made of old tires, knitted gloves and stockings, cures and tonics for every part and organ of the body. There were booths selling rainbow-colored ices, all having come from shavings of the same block of ice, brought down that morning on men's shoulders from the glaciers of Huascarán. Yungay, once the loveliest village in all Huaylas Valley.

Yungay had a narrow escape in 1961 from the wrath of Huascarán, "*el matador*—the killer," the people call him. A year after our visit, a great slab of the north face of the mountain's northern hump broke loose and came crashing down the canyon at the speed of a galloping racehorse, ripping out lakes and trees and masses of earth and rock, and wiping out three villages that were in its path to the Santa River. Many people will remember the tragic news of the disaster of Ranrahirca, the largest of the three little towns. There was only a handful of survivors. I visited the valley again a few years after, and saw close at hand what had been visible from a plane as a great gash running from Huascarán's snows to its feet in the Santa—a desolation of dried mud, boulders and uprooted trees, dotted with pathetic wooden crosses. A ridge, several hundred feet high, on the north of the landslide, turned the avalanche and saved Yungay, and its inhabitants, in gratitude, erected a big crucifix at the top of the little cone-shaped cemetery hill just below the town.



Path of the 1970 rock slide

The Peruvian seasons are difficult for the northern hemisphere to understand. Being below the equator, they are of course opposite to ours; but inside the country, they are opposite to each other. Winter is from June to November on the coast, when the clouds descend to the sea, bringing no rain—what would be for us an ordinary rain falls there once in fifty years, and a light shower is headline news in Lima. The coastal winter is an almost constant chilly fog, sometimes with a slight drizzle called the *garúa*. At this time, in the Andes the sun is hot and bright, and there it is "summer." But when the air warms on the coast and the clouds lighten, they roll back up to the mountains where "winter," the rainy season, begins with torrential daily rains, bringing new snow to the peaks to pack the glaciers deeper and to loosen more land-

slides on the slopes. Even a small slide may cause a temporary dam in a mountain lake or stream; in five minutes or an hour, the water has backed up behind it and then bursts through, carrying everything before it. We know something like this phenomenon in the flash floods of our southwest, but in these great mountains they may be multiplied a hundred times, to become such a *huaico* as that which destroyed half of Huaraz in 1941, or the whole town of Yungay twenty-nine years later. In 1970, it was the earthquake that brought down the huge mass of ice and snow that had filled Huascarán's old wound, the great gap left by the rockfall of '61. The speed of the slide, which some say, "planed" on a cushion of air, was estimated at 400 kilometers, or 240 miles, an hour. The mass was such that as it raced down towards the Santa in its old deadly track, nearly empty now of houses and people since Ranrahirca, it jumped the high ridge that had deflected it in 1961 and plunged down on Yungay.

A man we talked to said he was approaching the town when he heard the roar and saw it coming. He clung to the branch of a tree, and the edge of the torrent flew past a few yards from him; the wind of its passage swirled him up into the tree with a force that broke both his wrists. About 2,000 people, mostly visitors (May 31st was a Sunday, and Yungay was crowded for the *feria*), gained an island of safety in the cemetery hill below the town; drenched with mud, pelted with flying rocks, they huddled around the foot of the crucifix. They were glimpsed there, isolated on the

Path of the 1961 rock slide

tiny hill in the midst of a seething ocean of mud where Yungay had been, by the first planes that flew helplessly over the Callejón after the earthquake, unable to land—not only was the valley's one landing field piled with debris, but the whole region was nearly invisible under an immense dark cloud of dust. It was days before help could get in. The only two roads were blocked. There were no helicopters in South America that could fly high enough to cross the Black Cordillera—some tried, and several crashed; we saw their rusting skeletons on the western slope of the range on our way over it into the Huaylas Valley in late August, three months afterward.

So I visited Yungay again; or rather, Yungay's tomb. The *huaico* of Ranrahirca multiplied ten times, twenty times, fifty ...kilometer after kilometer of mud now dried and crumbling to dust in the hot days at the end of the dry season. The road winds and winds around the enormous tumbled boulders. And then suddenly in the long terrible slope to the river, four curiously shortened palm trees standing waist-deep in hardened mud, and far below, a little cone-shaped hill with a crucifix.

We left the car and walked down. By the palms there was a low heap of bricks, the remains of one corner of the church—the only trace of any building. Beside it someone had put up a small shelter of reed mats and branches, with a cross. Here, there, everywhere were new wooden crosses, some with four or five names, all with the date, 31st of May, 1970. And around and beyond the trees the grass was beginning to grow, and the wind soughed and rattled in the palm leaves just as it used to, just as it does in the palms in front of any luxury hotel in the tropics, the same sound —as if nothing had happened. The great white shape of Huascarán towered over the new desert at its feet as it used to tower over the little town, shining, majestic, and indifferent.

When the landslide occurred, it dammed the Santa River and made a brief lake that flooded both sides of the widening valley. When the river broke through, the torrent took out everything before it, fields, crops, and orange groves. The once-rich valley below Yungay was a desolation. The road found its way where it could, at moments regaining traces of pavement, new since I was here last, now with big stretches crevassed and yawning outwards towards its inevitable collapse when the rains would begin again. Some fifteen miles below the site of Yungay, at the entrance to the pueblo of Carás, the town cemetery had been heaved upwards and the coffins thrown up out of the ground, lying at crazy angles in the mud banks—as if in that convulsive moment the earth rejected even the remnants of humanity.

We sat a few moments on a green hillside just above the edge of Carás, where a fountain plays beneath a ruined stone cross. Below it, in the last straggling street, the people had set up the straw-mat booths of a new marketplace and were busy selling their poor wares. Everywhere in the rubble-filled streets the men were working, throwing down the broken roofs and walls, saving bits of tattered roofing and whole

Remains of the plaza at Yungay

Huaraz before the 1970 earthquake

Huaraz after the quake

adobes for the rebuilding. But how to rebuild the roofs? There was no material for that. The people make their own adobes; in front of hundreds of houses and *caserías* up and down the valley, we saw them filling the molds or turning the mud bricks to dry in the sun. But for the roofs, under the thatch or the crude tiles, corrugated sheet tin, called *calaminas*, are essential to keep out the rain; and there were no *calaminas*. For in spite of the world's response, the generous rushing of supplies to Peru, practically nothing reached the Huaylas Valley.

There were tents. Thousands of small, square Sears, Roebuck tents, blue and green, in long rows: camps labeled with the names of vanished pueblos, where the survivors gathered. But tents were strange lodgings for these people. How to have a fire in a tent, and how to live without a fire in the house? Returning up the valley after dark, we saw a sort of tepee of branches, about five feet high, and inside a woman kneeling in front of a blazing fire. The people went back to their ruined houses and put their pigs in the camps. It was probably the only place in the world where pigs slept in tents.

Everywhere one was asked the same question —by the Indians in the markets, the townspeople, the dazed, disorganized relief workers of all nations scattered in Huaraz: where is all the help, where is all the money that was sent? We have nothing, nothing has come. *"Nada, nadita,"* wailed an old woman in Huaraz.

There in Huaraz the horror and the looming danger were most evident. Just out of town is the beautiful Monterrey Hotel, which was miraculously undamaged except for cracked plaster and somewhat dislocated utilities. The hotel housed all the officials who busily and mysteriously came and went: experts, observers, specialists from Lima and Europe and the United Nations. Beside it were the neat tent rows of the German camp. Nearer the town, the Russian camp, and then that of the Peruvian army. Each flew its own flag and kept to itself. There was no central authority. The town was under martial law and full of military police, but the commanding general was in Lima. We found no committee or organization that knew to whom it could report, or from whom to expect instructions, let alone supplies. It was forbidden to rebuild or to clear the streets. Government sources in Lima explained to me that this was because there were plans under consideration for rebuilding the city in a safer place; and were the streets to be cleared of rubble, the corpses underneath would be dug up and cause not only disease but anguish and perhaps riots among the surviving inhabitants. It was thought that if six months passed, the bodies would be completely decomposed and the bones that were

left would be unrecognizable and no longer a source of sickness or distress.

To reach the hospital, one clambered through alleys where the stench of rotting flesh was stifling.

"I have never experienced such complete frustration," the doctor told us. "We are a government hospital, but there are no instructions. No one says yes or no to whatever I do. We only know that in a few weeks the whole staff will be changed. There is not so much to do now, of course; the injured have been taken care of, or died. There is not much sickness right now, but when the rains come..."

The epicenter of the earthquake was said to be in the Pacific, a few miles off the coast (though there are doubts of this; even as a great seismic phenomenon, the quake doesn't seem to have been properly studied); but help arrived promptly in the coastal towns because they were easier to reach and also, one can't help but suspect, more in the world's eye and more inhabited by so-called "whites." Chimbote, badly hit, was the relief center and was crowded with doctors and nurses. In Casma, which was leveled, trucks and bulldozers were working, and rebuilding was in progress. In the Huaylas Valley we didn't see a single tractor.

The priest was standing at the door of the cathedral in Huaraz, surrounded by the begging poor.

"Do you want to hear about the earthquake, or about what is happening now?" he asked us. "Now is the emergency. Everyone thinks it is past. But the worst is just beginning. What money the government does send is spent on *tonterías*, nonsense. Have you seen the barracks they have built over there for the people to live in? Boxes of wallboard, with thin divisions inside and nothing else. No one stays there; families cannot live in them. They are inhuman, those places—inhuman. You have heard how they put pigs in the tents? Well! We wait for decisions from Lima. There is silence. And they send little men who make lists, *empadronamientos*: a man's name, his wife, her name, age, so many children. We don't need more *empadronamientos*. We need help."

"There's a shipload of *calaminas* from Australia in Callao right now," a young Peace Corps architect told us. "It has been there for weeks. We were sent in here on a disaster program, to help give these people some shelter, and we have nothing to work with, and no money either. When I first got here, AID sent in 3,000 *calaminas*. They gave twenty to a family. That was fine; but from there on it's been downhill all the way. What burns me is that we had a good project and it has cracked up. Our people are going home every day, and the worst is they're going home bitter. They're blaming the Peace Corps or our government or the Peruvians. None of us knows what's going on or why, and everybody's looking for a scapegoat. I don't want any goddam scapegoat, I would just like to see our project go through."

The Peruvian government was probably blamed for even more than it was really guilty of. The lack of organization in Huaraz, the lack of courage, of ordinary intelligence, were international, global. There was no nation and no organization working there that was doing its job efficiently. There were, fortunately, a few individuals. One was Father Joel Melvin, the acting prior of the small American Benedictine monastery on the hill of Los Pinos above Huaraz. The former prior, Father Jamieson, was attending a children's play at the big school of Santa Elena on the day of the earthquake. The two-story auditorium collapsed in a tangle of steel girders, killing 300 people, more than 200 of them children. Father Jamieson was one of the dead; his body was found arched over two children who were still alive. His successor was also dedicated to saving children. The monastery's own school was destroyed, but Father Melvin and the other brothers began to rebuild it, and took under their care 7,500 children scattered between Huaylas and Huaraz.

Senor Martínez, let us call him, was one of Huaraz's most prosperous citizens. He owned a hotel, a movie theater, and several businesses, including a store for electric appliances. On May 31st he had left his family at home and was in Lima. He managed to get to Casma, the entrance to one of the two roads into the valley which was now impassible. He walked from Casma to Huaraz over the 13,000-foot pass, in four days. He found his family alive, but everything he had owned destroyed.

"Within twelve hours of the quake," he told us, "people had come from everywhere around and taken everything that was left. Every appliance was gone from the ruins of my store. People said there were *indios* packing refigerators on their backs, carrying them off to places in the mountains where of course there has never been electricity. They took pianos, phonographs—anything they could lay their hands on. I lost eighteen million *soles*—over four hundred thousand dollars."

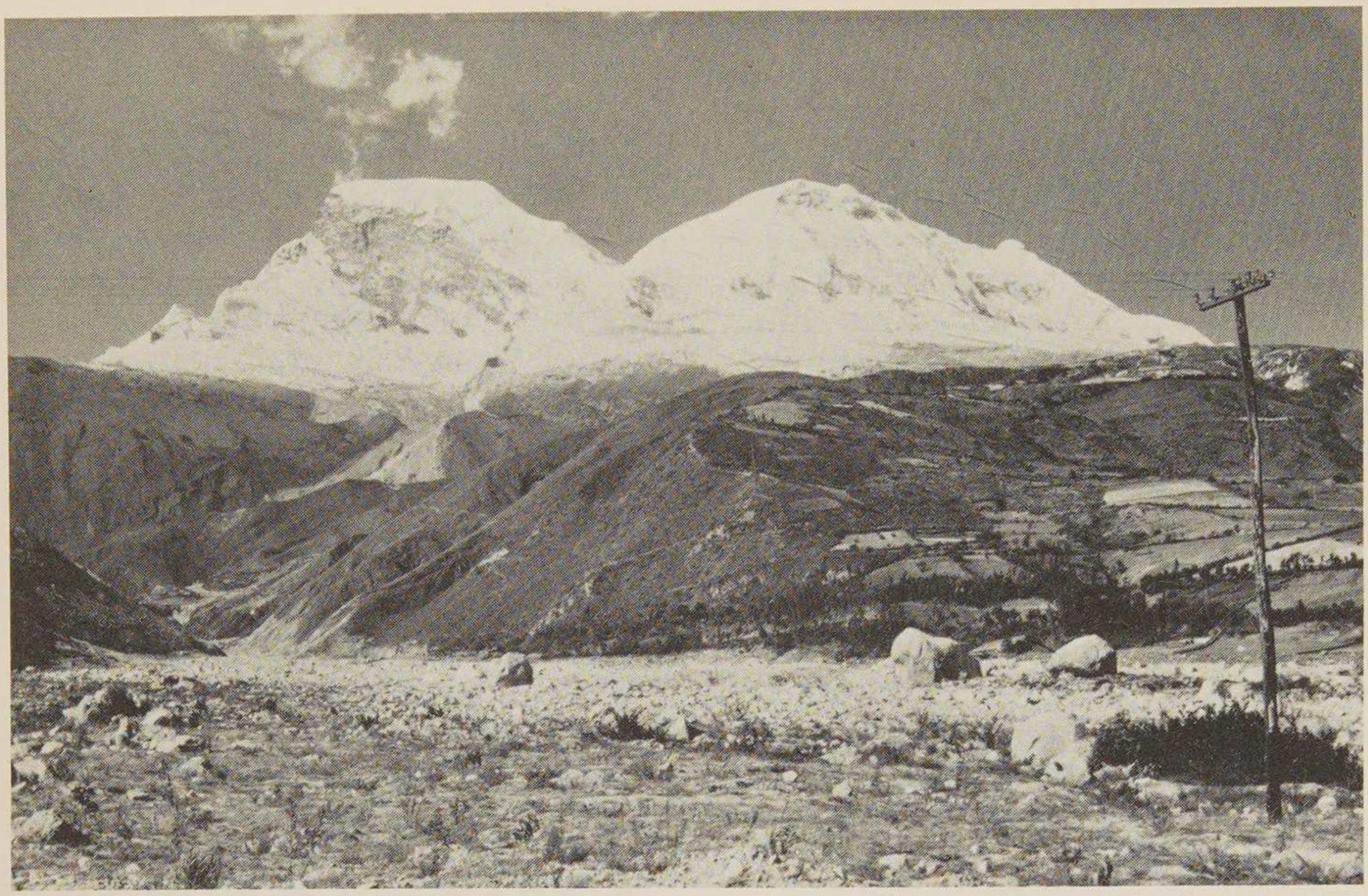
When we asked him if he was going to leave the valley, he said, "Certainly not. I am borrowing the money and I'm going to rebuild the hotel, and after that the theater."

"But if there is no town?" I asked him.

"There will be a town," he said. "It won't be rebuilt by the government, or by any organization; it will rebuild itself. It will be by the efforts of people, individuals. I believe in that absolutely. And there are others who feel as I do. This is where we live, and we care about it. What would we do in Lima? No, we are staying here. The government makes plans to rebuild Huaraz in some other place; perhaps some people will live there, if it ever gets done, which is doubtful. But we live *here*. The government does not care, but we do. You have seen the country people everywhere rebuilding their houses; they have fallen down before, they may fall again, they will build them again if they are alive. It is like that. Life goes on because it has to, not because of people's plans and notions."

And this was the strongest impression of all in that valley of death: that life goes on. There is something even terrifying in its remorselessness, its everlastingness; terrifying, because it seems to imply some sort of responsibility to it that we do not wish to take. I am here always, it seems to say, and all this death and destruction are only a part of Me; who are you, and what is your place in Me?

On the journey up the coast from Lima through the shattered houses of Huacho and Casma, we saw the strange phenomenon that sometimes, with a certain conjunction of warmth and moisture in the air, takes place on Peru's barren and arid coast. A fine mist of vivid green appears on the tops of the dry tan hills, and in every crack and fold where a little moisture seeps into the dusty sand. A living substance pushes up through the desert under the most minimal conditions—or does it drop from the sky like manna? In the Valley of Huaylas, new growth was springing out of the wounded ground, and lambs and piglets and colts and babies were being born. Was the earthquake itself a part of this enormous process? The Andes are growing, moving mountains. Was the earth shaken by its own expansion? Or was it a reaction to man's irresponsibility? France made nuclear test explosions in the South Pacific on the 15th and 22nd of May that year; they had done so also in September of 1966, and in the same month the United States had made underground nuclear tests in Nevada, preceding the October earthquake in Peru that took several hundred lives in Lima and Huacho. In a thousand other ways also we have vandalized and abused the earth and interfered with her blood supply of water and of air, remaining totally ignorant of her power to defend and maintain herself and—in spite of ourselves—us. Three months after what the Commander of the United States relief team called "a catastrophe utterly beyond belief—the world has not seen such destruction since Hiroshima," the grass was springing up over the 20,000 dead of Yungay, and children were playing in the stinking streets of Huaraz.



Huascarán

We all look, as the Peace Corps architect said, for a goddam scapegoat; nothing is harder for our times to acknowledge than that nature is bigger than we are, beyond our understanding and far beyond our control; that what is necessary is to discover our place in connection with it, and the duties of that place. Shall we curse God for what a correspondent called His "latest tantrum," or blame Huascarán as a killer? ("*Montaña bestia!*" whispered one of my friends as we stood on Yungay's grave, looking up at that great white silence.) But this is too simplistic. We see the cruelty and violence of nature and almost simultaneously its beauty and renewal; the stupidity and avarice of men, and their kindness and heroism. So the questions remain, and we cannot escape them. We are subject to a relationship that we don't accept, responsible for a function that we don't understand; and as long as we remain blind to both, our actions, whether self-serving or self-sacrificing, are at best a gallant gesture, and at worst a temporary interference with the great implacable process of renewal and transformation.

Over the altar of Huaraz's damaged cathedral hung a big Cristo with blind and staring wooden eyes, and both outstretched arms broken off at the shoulders. It struck me that this is indeed what the churches have done to Christ, and what we have done to ourselves.

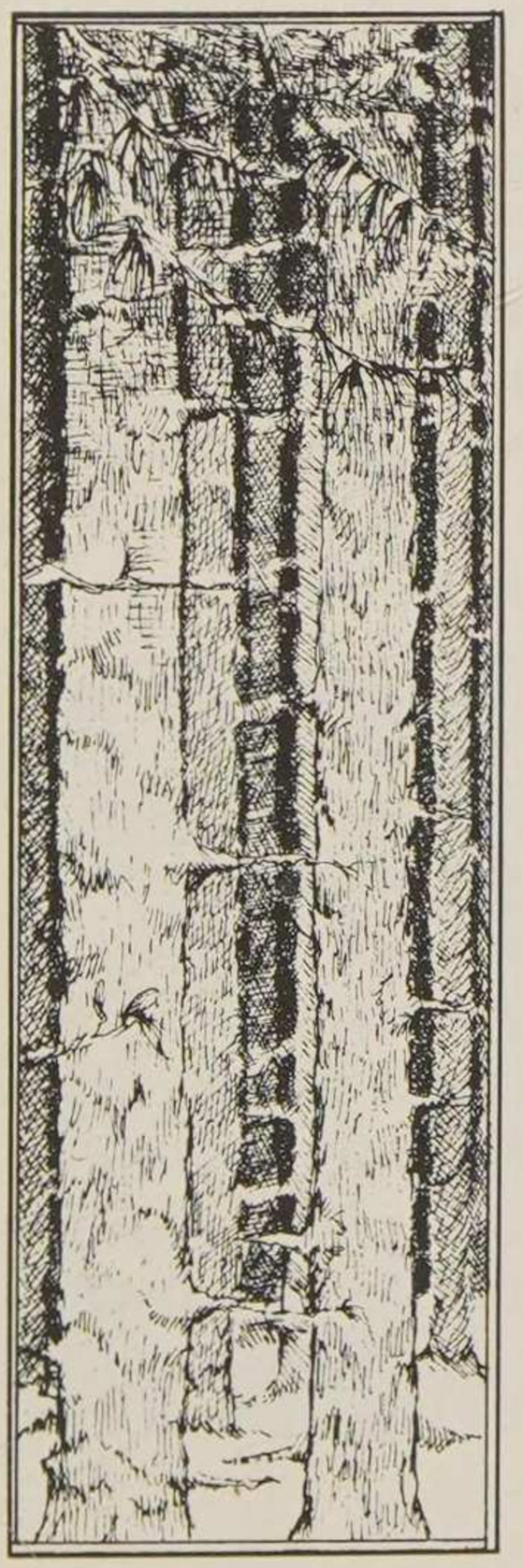
Winter came early that year in the valley of Huaylas. The weather was beginning to change on the coast in the last days of August, sooner than usual. There was more sunshine, and more warmth in the gray-white dazzle that is Lima's winter sky. When I left Peru I couldn't see the mountains as my plane flew over them; only through holes in the swirling fog, I caught an occasional glimpse of the white masses of snowfields and the wrinkled slopes of the glaciers. The clouds were gathering over the Sierra, and the rains were coming. ◇

Lemminkainen

From the Finnish epic, the Kalevala

Into the forest went Lemminkainen. As he went he chanted his Magic Song,"O Tapio, Lord of the Forest, aid me: lead me where I may take my quarry! Nyyrikki, O thou son of the Forest's Lord, red-capped one, mighty hero, make a path for me through your father's domain; clear the ground for me and keep me on the proper roadway!" Lemminkainen, the handsome, the light-stepping one, chanted Magic Songs to win the forest divinities as he went seeking the Elk of Hiisi.

Another Magic Song he chanted: "O Mielikki, Mistress of the Forest, fair-faced, bountiful lady, send the game towards me; turn it into the pathway of the hunter; open the thickets; unlock Tapio's storehouse; make wide the door of his castle in the forest! Do this during this hunting-trip of mine!" Other Magic Songs Lemminkainen chanted as he went through the forest seeking the Elk of Hiisi. "If thou wilt not trouble thyself about me, Mistress of the Forest, charge thy little serving-girls to help me! And thou, Tapio's girl, little maiden of the forest, put the flute to your mouth of honey, whistle through thy pipe so that the Lady of the Forest may rouse herself and harken to my Magic Songs!"



So he went through the forest; but the quarry he sought was not turned towards him. Through the trackless forest he went, across the marshes, over the heaths. At last he went up a mountain; he climbed a knoll; he turned his eyes to the north-west; he turned his eyes to the north; there, across the marshes, he saw Tapio's mansions with their doors and windows all golden.

Then once more the quick-moving, light-stepping Lemminkainen went onward. He dashed through all that lay across his path. Under the very windows of the mansions of the Lord of the Forest he came. Through the windows he saw those whose business it was to dispense the game to the hunters. They were resting; they were lolling; their worst wear they had on them. Under the windows Lemminkainen chanted his Magic Songs:

"Mistress of the Forest, wherefore do you sit here and do you let the others sit here in such shabbiness? You are loathsome to behold! Yet when I went through the forest I saw three castles—one a wooden one, one a bone one, one a stone one; they had six windows, all bright, all golden; they who were within had rustling, golden garments on! Re-array as before thyself and thy household! Put away now your birch-bark shoes, your old garments, your disgusting shabbiness! Put thy golden bracelets on thy wrists, thy

golden rings on thy fingers, a headdress of gold put on! Put gold coins in thy hair, gold rings in thine ears, gold beads around thy neck! Long and wearily have I wandered hereabouts; I wander for nothing; the quarry I seek is not to be seen by me!

"Greybeard with the pine-leaf hat," he chanted, "with the cloak of moss! Re-array the woods; give the aspens their greyness, give the alders a robe of beauty, clothe the pine-trees in silver, adorn the fir-trees with gold, and the birch-trees with golden blossoms. Make it as in former years when days were better, when the waste-places flowed with honey. O daughter of Tapio, Tuulikki, gracious virgin, drive the game this way! Take a switch; strike the game on their haunches; drive the game towards the one who seeks for it and waits for it! Master of Tapio's mansions, mistress of Tapio's mansions, make wide the doors, send forth the game that has been shut in!"

So Lemminkainen chanted; for a week he ranged through the forest. His Magic Songs appeased the Lord of the Forest, delighted the Mistress of the forest, and made glad the hearts of all the Forest Maidens. To where the Elk of Hiisi had his lair they went; they drove forth the Elk; they turned it in the direction of the one who waited for it.

Over the Elk Lemminkainen threw his lasso. And when he held the Elk he chanted his Magic Song once more, "Lord of the Forest, Tapio, Mistress of the Forest, Mielikki, come now and take your reward for the good you have done me! Come now and take the gold and silver I scatter on the ground of the forest!" So he chanted; then to the north, to Pohjola, he journeyed with the Elk he had captured. "I have caught the Elk of Hiisi! Come forth now, ancient one of Pohjola; give me your daughter; give me the bride I have come for!"

Louhi, the Mistress of Pohjola, came out of her dwelling, and she looked upon Lemminkainen and the Elk he had captured. "I will give you my daughter, I will give you the bride you have come for, when you capture the Steed of Hiisi, and bring it to me here."

Then Lemminkainen took a golden bridle and a halter of silver; he went through the green and open meadows; he went out upon the plains. No sign he saw of the Steed of Hiisi. He called upon Ukko, the God of the Sky, and he chanted a Magic Song:

"Open the clefts of the Heavens; cast the hail upon the back of Hiisi's Steed; fling ice-blocks upon him that he may race from where he is, that he may come to where I am!" Ukko rent the air; he scattered ice-blocks; they were smaller than a horse's head, but they were bigger than a man's head. They struck the back of Hiisi's Steed. It raced forward. Then Lemminkainen chanted, "Steed of Hiisi, stretch forth thy silver head; push it into this golden bridle! I will never drive thee harshly; with a rope's end I will never smite

thee. No, with silver cords I will lead thee, and with a piece of cloth I will drive thee!" So he chanted, and the Steed of Hiisi put forward his head; the golden bridle with the bit of silver went across his head and into his mouth.

Then to the north went Lemminkainen bringing the chestnut steed with the foam-flecked mane. He called to the Mistress of Pohjola, "I have captured the Steed of Hiisi and the Elk of Hiisi. Now give thy daughter to me, give me the bride that I have come for."

But Louhi, the Mistress of Pohjola, answered him, "I will give thee my daughter, I will give thee the bride thou hast come for when thou hast shot with an arrow, and using one arrow only, the white Swan on Tuonela's dark water." Then Lemminkainen took his bow. He went down to Manala's abysses. He went to where Tuoni's murky river flowed. He went to where the waters made a dread whirlpool.

There the cowherd Märkähattu lurked; there the blind man waited for Lemminkainen. When Lemminkainen had come first to Pohjola he had chanted his Magic Songs; he had chanted them against the swordsmen and the young heroes who were there, and he had driven them all away, banning them with his Magic Songs. One old man he had not banned—Märkähattu the cowherd who sat there, his eyes closed in blindness. Lemminkainen had scorned him. "I have not banned thee," he cried, "because thou art so wretched a creature. The worm of cowherds, thou hast destroyed thy mother's children, thou hast disgraced thy sister, thou hast crippled all the horses, thou hast wearied to death the foals." Märkähattu, greatly angered, left the place where Lemminkainen had scorned him; ever since he had waited by the whirlpool for the coming of Lemminkainen.

The white Swan was on the dark river of Tuonela. Lemminkainen drew his bow. As he did, Märkähattu grasped a water-snake; he hurled it; he pierced Lemminkainen with the serpent. Lemminkainen knew no Magic Songs to relieve himself from the wounds made by water-snakes. He sank into the murky river; he was tossed about in the worst of whirlpools; he was dashed down the cataract; the stream brought him into Tuonela.

There Tuoni's bloodstained son, drawing his sword, hewed him into pieces. He hewed him into eight pieces and he flung the pieces

into the dark river. "Be tossed about for ever with thy bow and thy arrows, thou who camest to shoot the sacred Swan upon our sacred River!"

Only through his mother could help come to Lemminkainen. She had bided at home, troubled by his long delay in returning. One day she looked up the comb and the hair-brush he had left behind: she saw blood trickling from the comb, blood dripping from the hair-brush. She knew that blood was coming from the body of her son. She gathered up her skirt and she went off to find him.

Valleys were lifted up as Lemminkainen's mother went on; hills were levelled; the high ground sank before her and the low ground was lifted up. She hastened to Pohjola. She came to the door and she questioned the Mistress of Pohjola.

"Whither hast thou sent my son, Lemminkainen?" "I know no tidings of your son. I yoked a steed for him; I fixed a sledge for him, and he started off from my dwelling; perhaps in driving over a frozen lake he sank into it." "Shameless are the lies thou tellst me. Tell me whither thou hast sent him or I will break down the doors of Pohjola." "I fed him; I gave him meat and drink, and I placed him in his boat; he went to shoot the rapids, but what has befallen him I do not know." "Shameless are the lies thou tellst. Tell me whither thou has sent him or this instant death will come to thee." "Now I will tell thee, now I will tell thee truly. Lemminkainen went to shoot the sacred bird, the Swan on Tuonela's River."

Then his mother went in quest of him; she questioned the trees, she questioned the pathway, she questioned the golden moon in the sky. But the trees, the pathway, the golden moon in the sky, all had their own troubles, and they would take no trouble for any woman's son. She questioned the sun in the heavens, and the sun told her that her son was in Tuonela's River.

Then to the smith Ilmarinen went Lemminkainen's mother. For her Ilmarinen fashioned a rake, a rake with a copper handle and with teeth of steel—a hundred fathoms was the length of the teeth, five hundred fathoms was the length of the handle. To Tuonela's River she went: there she chanted a Magic Song.

She prayed the sun to shine with such strength that the watchers in Manala would sleep and that the powers of Tuonela would be worn out. And the sun stooped upon a crooked birch-tree and shone in his strength so that the watchers of Manala were worn out—the young men slept upon their sword-hilts; the old men slept resting upon their staffs; the middle-aged men, the spearmen, slept resting upon the hafts of their spears. Then Lemminkainen's mother took her rake; she raked the river against the current; once she raked it, and she raked it again. The third time she raked the river she brought up the hat and stockings of her son Lemminkainen. She went into the river, and she waded in its deepest water. She drew up the body with her rake of iron.

Many fragments were wanting to make up the body of Lemminkainen—half of his head, a hand, many little fragments.

Life was wanting in the body. But still his mother would not cast it back into the river. Once again she raked Tuonela's deep river, first along it and then across it; his hand she found, half of his head she found, fragments of his backbone she found, and pieces of his ribs.

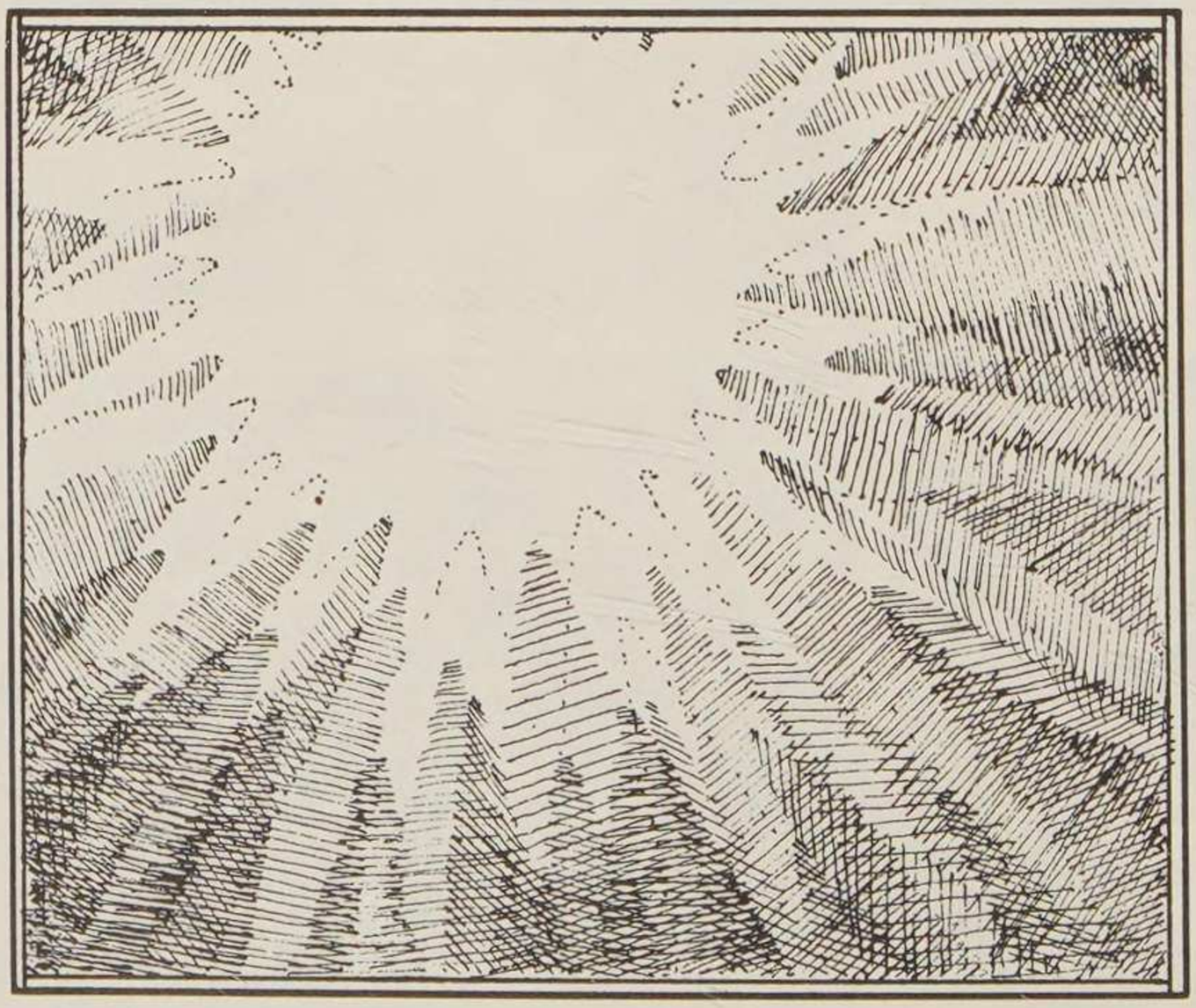
She pieced all together; the bones fitted, the joints went together. She chanted a Magic Song, praying that Suonetar would weave the veins together, and stitch with her finest needle and her most silken thread the flesh and the sinews that were broken. She sang a Magic Song, praying that Jumala would fix together the bones. Then the veins were knit together, the bones were fastened together, but still the man remained lifeless and speechless.

Then Lemminkainen's mother sang a Magic Song. She bade the bee go forth and find the honey-salve that would give final healing. The bee flew across the moon in the heavens; he flew past the borders of Orion; he flew across the Great Bear's shoulders, and into the dwelling of Jumala the Creator. In pots of silver, in golden kettles was the salve that would give final healing. The bee gathered it and brought it back to Lemminkainen's mother.

With the salve she rubbed him. She called upon her son to rise out of his slumbers, to awaken out of his dreams of evil. Up he rose; out of his dreams he wakened, and speech came back to him. Even then he would have slain the Swan so that he might win a bride in Pohjola. But his mother persuaded him, and his mother drew him back with her to his home. There the bride awaited him whom he had won in another place and on another day, Kyllikki, the Flower of Saari.

—Retold by Padraic Colum

Illustrations by Jody Wheeler



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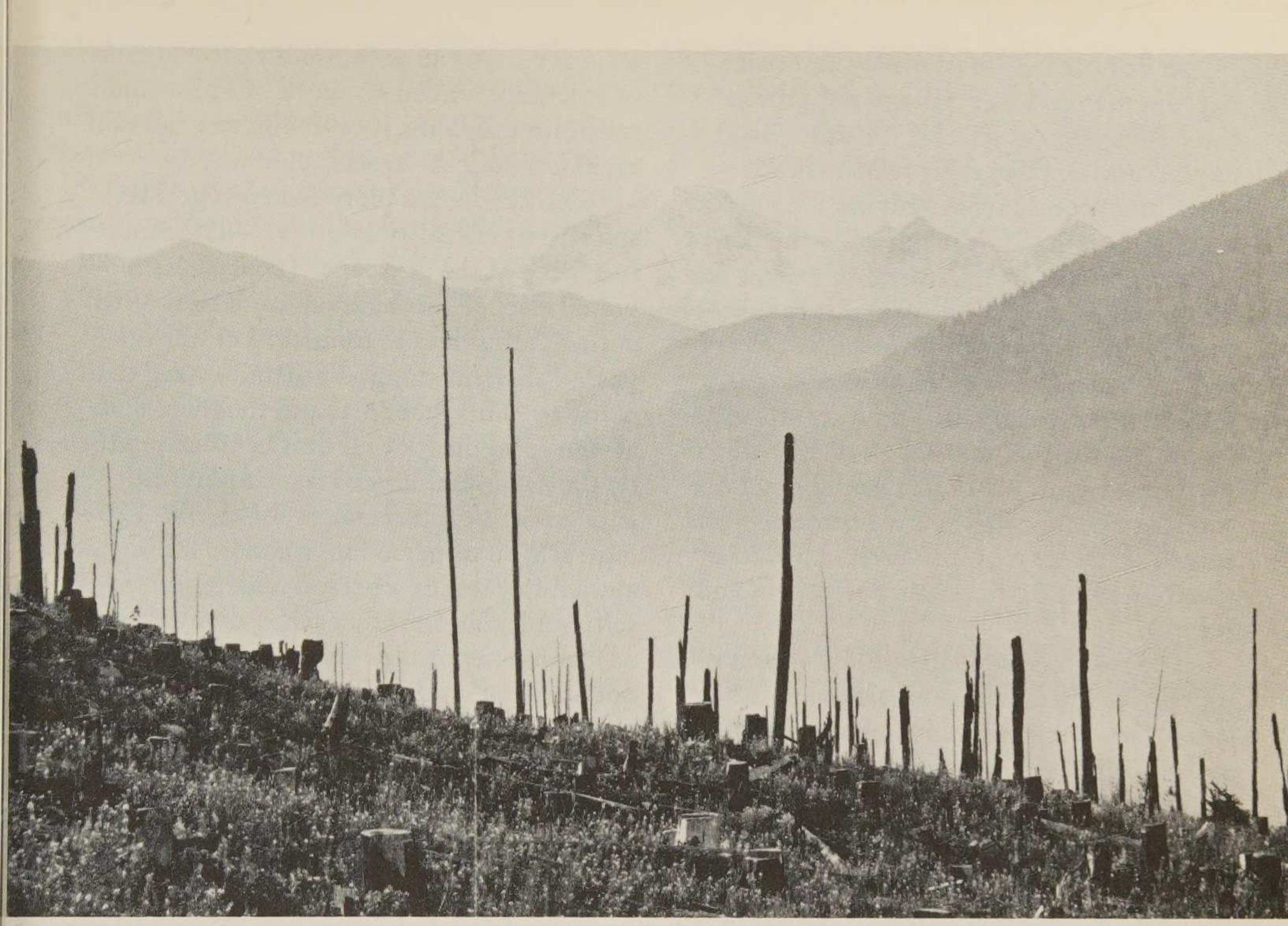


The Agony of Nature

*by Peter Heinegg photographs by Darius Kinsey**

The whole universe is endowed with the same breath, rocks, trees, grass, earth, all animals, and men.
—Hopi saying,
as recorded by Alexander Stephen

Throughout the world today, as practically everyone knows, nature is in agony. From Lake Erie to Lake Baikal, from the Amazon basin to the rain forests of Southeast Asia, the earth lies ravaged and fouled as never before. And everyone presumably knows that a large part of the earth's human population is likewise being devastated by poverty, hunger, and organized injustice. Few people, however, realize that these patterns of desolation are not merely related but homologous. Similarly, the environmental dangers or disasters now raining down on every corner of the planet and the troubles afflicting society are both recognized as terrible crises. Less widely acknowledged is the promise implicit in this joint distress: we are witnessing a moment of cosmic truth. The angry backlash of nature, from Minimata Bay to Love Canal, and the misery of the oppressed, now fiercely eloquent, now sullen and silent, have together stripped bare the vices of modern civilization—and at the same time conjured up hope for liberation from them.

**Reprinted from* Kinsey, Photographer, *A half century of negatives by Darius and Tabitha May Kinsey, edited by Dave Bohn and Rodolpho Petschek, by permission of Chronicle Books, San Francisco.*

At bottom, the reason why human beings, on the one hand, pillage and poison their environment and, on the other hand, exploit and demean their fellows is the same. It all comes from denying the existence and rights of "the other"—the collectivity of non-human forms of matter and life, of other species, the opposite sex, other races, nations, classes, and groups of every sort. The denial is both blind and wrong, a failure of the imagination and a crime of the spirit. But the fact that the "others," the victimized land, water, air, and living creatures, are protesting their mistreatment has served to create a unique *kairos*, a historic situation offering the chance to repent and reform.

The issue is essentially ethical—and religious. In *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* Reinhold Niebuhr defines evil as "the assertion of some self-interest without regard to the whole, whether the whole be conceived as the immediate community or the total community of mankind, or the total order of the world." Disregard of the "total order" (cf. Aldo Leopold's "biotic community") has brought on our present agony. It can be eased only by cultivating what might be called ecological piety, in the sense of *pietas*, filial loyalty to nature and loving care of the members of its earthly-heavenly body. There is no ethics without religion (from *religare*, the tie binding man and the divine), and so radical profaneness (the Pentagon, Glen Canyon Dam, Disneyland) leads to radical destructiveness (Wounded Knee, Vietnam, plutonium): if the universe is not, in Hopi terms, endowed with the same holy breath, it's literally up for grabs.

This may sound like sentimental pantheism, but it's nothing of the sort. The point is not that humans are any wickeder than they used to be, but that the massive deracination of modernity has left them much less sane and much more prone to lethal carelessness. Hence ecological piety, which like all real piety is an active habit growing out of a densely woven network of vision and commitment, aims at re-racinating humanity, at knitting the world together.

The key to this piety is an integral response to the reality of others—letting the full force of the "inscape" (*haeccitas* or individual essence) hit home to us, letting them define themselves to us instead of our imposing alien meanings on them, letting their being be. This is deeper, and tougher, than aesthetic admiration. It bids us tread gently on the earth, but it need not turn us into pacifists or vegetarians or monks. The ecologically pious person may end up killing an animal to eat it or a person to defend himself, but he has to respect the (always limited) autonomy of the other, seeing nature not as an enemy, an extension of his ego, or a contrivance for his private satisfaction, but a presence to be reckoned with and reverenced.

All this can be illustrated by a glance at one of the oldest and most characteristic monuments of the Western tradition, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. As N.K. Sandars, who compiled the popular Penguin edition of this work, has written, "If Gilgamesh is not the first human hero, he is the first tragic hero of whom anything is known." Contemporary readers have taken Gilgamesh to their hearts because as a kind of proto-absurdist he stuggles so passionately with ineluctable fate. But this first tragic hero displays nonetheless all the dubiousness of both those cherished institutions, tragedy and heroism. If we have good reason to feel for Gilgamesh, if we honor him along with other heroes, as the incarnation of our grandest dreams, as a dramatic instance of how far we can go, then we had better suspect him too. What follows is one view —an advisedly skeptical one—of the famous king of Uruk.

In a genetically impossible but symbolically revealing formula the poem describes Gilgamesh as two-thirds god and one-third man. This divine element in him makes the hero aspire to superhuman achievements. But the superhuman often resembles the anti-human. Thus, the epic praises Gilgamesh's wisdom and courage, but it

also shows his subjects muttering over his royal excesses: "Gilgamesh sounds the tocsin for his amusement, his arrogance has no bounds by day or night. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all; yet the king should be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble; yet this is the shepherd of the city, wise, comely, and resolute."* The pattern has now been established: tragic heroes are troublemakers and best observed from a safe distance. For all his thrilling feats, the greatest hero in Greek mythology, Heracles, was a peripatetic disaster area, murdering people right and left (including six of his own children) in fits of absent-minded rage.

Like Heracles, Gilgamesh has a hearty appetite for sex and violence. But he is not satisfied with life as a splendid aristocratic bully. The higher he towers over the unnamed serfs around him, the more he is thrown against human limits (the fatal third of his constitution). He cannot bridge the gap between his great-souled reach and his finite grasp. "Whoever is tallest among men cannot reach the heavens, and the greatest cannot encompass the earth." Above all, Gilgamesh is plagued by persistent reminders of his own mortality. "Here in the city," he complains to the sun god, Shamash, "man dies oppressed at heart, man perishes with despair in his heart. I have looked over the wall and I see the bodies floating in the river, and that will be my lot also." Gilgamesh will not drink this despair to the lees until he is crazed with grief at the loss of his companion Enkidu, but he has already had a bitter foretaste.

Gilgamesh's pain softens our judgment of him, but unlike the non-hero he will not take death lying down. In true heroic fashion he will seek undying fame—ersatz immortality. Like Achilles he frets when glory is slow in coming: "I have not established my name," he tells Shamash, "stamped in brick as destiny decreed." And so he decides to earn the notice of the ages by setting out on a hair-raising adventure beyond the capacity of ordinary mortals. He plans, in effect, to conquer nature by destroying Humbaba, the giant forest god. In a somewhat theatrical scene Gilgamesh addresses his assembled people in the market-place: "I, Gilgamesh, go to see that creature of whom such things are spoken, the rumour of whose name fills the world. I will conquer him in his cedar wood and show the strength of the sons of Uruk, all the world shall know of it. I am committed to this enterprise: to climb the mountain, to cut down the cedar, and leave behind an enduring name."

Once again, Gilgamesh speaks for *all* conquering heroes: his words convey the spirit of Homer's Achaean and Trojan princes, of Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Shakespeare's Hotspur, of Pizarro and Napoleon, of Cecil Rhodes and Evel Knievel. Gilgamesh makes an unconvincing attempt to rationalize the brutality of his scheme by labeling Humbaba "ferocious" and "evil," but he's really trying to fill up the painful void in his own soul. One thinks of Ernest Hemingway and the orgies of killing he indulged in on his many hunting trips.

In any event Gilgamesh advances to the "land where the cedar is cut" (the primordial forest, nature at its most awesome and forbidding, nature as baffling and incommensurable with human purposes), and, aided by Enkidu, begins to lay waste to it. Humbaba "blazes out" in fury, but he is no match for Gilgamesh, and he soon pleads to be spared. The king is momentarily touched by his helplessness, and in hesitation asks Enkidu, "Should not the snared bird return to its nest and the captive man return to his mother's arms?" Enkidu, the newly civilized wild man who is both Gilgamesh's dearest friend and his darker, earthly alter ego, replies that Gilgamesh *must* kill the giant, or else "he will bar the mountain road against you, and make the pathways impassable."

*All quotations are from the revised (1964) Penguin edition.

The notion that the world isn't big enough for both Gilgamesh and Humbaba and that anyway, the giant can't be trusted is the logic of imperialism—and of genocide—and it has to come from Enkidu rather than Gilgamesh because such advice is simply too ignoble for a hero to give, though not to take. (Similarly in *Antony and Cleopatra* Pompey would let Menas assassinate his rivals but is "honor bound" not to do so himself, and Racine's Phèdre has Oenone tell murderous lies in her stead.) Gilgamesh correctly predicts that "If we touch him the blaze and the glory of light will be put out in confusion," but Enkidu eggs him on, and the two men slay Humbaba.

This is a sort of primal sin, and all of nature reverberates with horror. "Now the mountains were moved, the ranges of the hills were moved, for the guardian of the cedar lay dead." But the pair pay no heed, and launch into a mindless rape. "Enkidu had struck him, and the cedar was dashed to pieces. Enkidu did it; he uncovered the secret dwellings of the Great Ones. So Gilgamesh felled the trees of the forest and Enkidu cleared their roots as far as the banks of the Euphrates." The adventure has led to an act of desecration, and someone will have to pay for it. The cards are stacked against Enkidu. And so, despite their complicity (and their partnership in butchering the Bull of Heaven) only Enkidu is punished with death.

Read this way, the whole episode sounds like an archetypal confrontation between civilization and nature (in the double sense

of wilderness and "primitive" culture).* Infatuated by heroic myths, driven on by longing for self-aggrandizement, and occasionally shaken by guilt, technological societies in general and the Western imperialist species in particular have wreaked multiple havoc on the world around them. When nature eventually revolts and Nemesis demands its due (riots in Soweto, PCBs in Michigan's dairy farms), it is the Enkidus, the "under-men," who have to suffer.

What can be done for the itch that maddens Gilgamesh—and us? One sensible cure is offered by Siduri, the goddess of wine-making, in a speech to the hero. In language later echoed by Ecclesiastes 9:7-10, she says, "Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking [i.e., everlasting life]. When the gods created man, they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day dance and be merry, feast and rejoice, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace, for this too is the lot of man." As opposed to the hero's frantic hedonism and overreaching ambition, Siduri counsels Epicurean moderation. Gilgamesh should accommodate himself to nature, take his place, fit in, and not upset the order of the world. Above all he should stop trying to be a god.

Siduri's wisdom is more pertinent now than ever. Heroic quests after the manner of Gilgamesh have gone out of style, but the heroic impulse still throbs beneath the familiar guises of nationalism, militarism, and entrepreneurial capitalism. And for the faint-hearted bourgeois there is always consumerism which, if pursued avidly enough, may take on heroic proportions. (If nothing else, the consumer can help to trigger ecological mayhem.) By contrast Siduri urges the abandonment of pseudo-divine desires. Gods put a frightful strain on the earth, they are a prodigal, high-handed lot. A world full of gods, like a world full of Americans, would exhaust itself and quickly perish.

What Gilgamesh, and his children, must practice is ecological piety. (In the epic, however, he refuses to listen to Siduri and goes off in search of Utnapishtim and the flower of eternal youth, only to lose it to the serpent and return to Uruk empty-handed: heroes are stubborn and slow to learn.) There are innumerable ways of doing this—perhaps the best summary list is found in the Eightfold Path of Buddhism* —but they all wait upon the primordial realization of otherness. We can't give our neighbor his due—whether that neighbor be a child, a stream, a bird or a boulder, an old house or a scrub-covered hillside—until we view him/her/it/them as organically linked with us and yet irreducibly distinct. In many cases the most that both piety and ethics will ask of us will be to leave the other alone. But, of course, to do that in a

*In his new book, *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light: Mythology, Sexuality, and the Origins of Culture*, St. Martin's Press, January 1981, William Irwin Thompson states:

> Here are the roots of the ecological crisis of our civilization. The furniture of civilization comes from the death of forests, not merely of trees. Men no longer ask permission of the guardian spirit to take the minimum for their needs: they march in pomp and glory and level the entire forest. Gilgamesh does not realize, though, that when he slays the spirit of the forest and cuts off the city from nature, he gives a new life to death. Before, all the processes of culture were connected with the cycles of nature; in death tribal man simply returned to the Great Mother. But when civilized man sets up walls between himself and the forest, and when he sets up his personal name against the stars, he ensures that the now-isolated ego will cry out in painful recognition of its complete alienation in the fear of death.

*The Eightfold Path:

1. Right views, or understanding.
2. Right purpose, or aspiration.
3. Right speech.
4. Right conduct.
5. Right livelihood.
6. Right effort.
7. Right kind of awareness, or mindfulness.
8. Right concentration, or meditation.

From *Buddhism: A Way of Life and Thought* by Nancy Wilson Ross (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1980).

culture as meddlesome as ours may require an act of considerable virtue.

God is the totally Other, say some theologians. In the same vein one could argue that everything in the universe is partially other (anything totally alien to us is *ipso facto* meaningless) and hence worthy of at least *some* worship. And one of the best moments for understanding this may be precisely when nature, human and nonhuman, is in agony, just as the serious illness of a friend shatters our egoistic indifference and sharpens, sometimes unbearably, our appreciation of him.

But the friend may die, and nature will not, and there the analogy stops. The universe will survive us, however much of the earth we pollute or slaughter or blow to smithereens. Which leaves us with two conclusions: the need for humility, corporate and personal, in the face of our cosmic insignificance and, on the contrary, a heightened sense of the value of everything in nature including ourselves. Actually, there is no contradiction here because one implies the other. Loving the world presupposes the will not to harm it. Seeing ourselves as part of nature—a comically convoluted, self-reflecting, exceedingly obstreperous part—precludes the insane hallucinations of the heroic effort to soar beyond it. The agony of nature is not a death rattle but a hotly contested struggle (*agon*), which means there is hope for the outcome. Such statements may be tautological, but so is every mathematical equation —and every noble truth. ◇

Myth and Prophecy

by Thomas Buckley

The lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor conceals, but gives signs.

Heraclitus

For myth and prophecy to take place, mythic and prophetic experience must be communicated. This simple matter is of vast human importance.

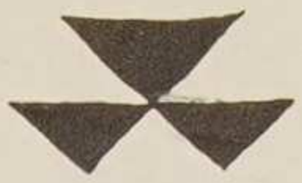
Myth time is all time, no time, time out of time. All of these and none. Myths reoriginate temporal structure itself. In order to account anew for a structure of time, myth narrates in a confusion of presumed structures, relating an experience in which present, past, and future are simultaneous—not three and not one—but in terms through which past, present, and future are reconstructed.

Best then to think of myth time as time in the center of time, knowing "center" to be also "periphery" and knowing both to be approximate ways of communicating what cannot be said; knowing myth to be one of the few possible ways of signaling unspeakable experience. Prophecy speaks likewise from the center of time, both relating and obscuring an experience of center.

There are neither false myths nor false prophecies. There are only insufficient or incomplete communications of mythic and prophetic experience.

(The last Minneconjou Ghost Dancers were killed at Wounded Knee in 1890 finally because the whites understood beyond thinking that the Dance worked then and there in the center fulfilling Wovoka's prophecy.)

Myth serves in part to bound curiosity. It says, forever, from this time in the center, this is the real; this is the way it is. Myth may function as social charter, for instance, but only because it provides, first, an ontological chart. Myth may map unconscious structures, be dreamlike, only because like dreaming it depends first on a relinquishing of presumed structures, a making room for a new, hidden sense to be revealed. Naturally, then, myth accounts for the origins of things (time among them) and of their relationships at present.



From the interrelatedness of myth and ritual—dramas devised for taking time out and bringing diverse participants to a single, generative center—to prophetic rituals, divinations, and oracular performances, is but a short step.

Prophets, speaking also from the center of time, deal also with the limiting of curiosity. Like myths, prophets gain the center through dissolution of presumed structures of meaning, often by way of sleep, trance, ecstasy, despair, madness, dope. Coherently, prophets often drop from social structures as well, as hermits, shamans, underclass members, others whose ambiguity or lack of clear place disconcerts.

From center, prophecy like myth asserts a new structuring of meanings: this is how it will be. Prophecy, as foretelling, is the reverse of myth. We move from how it was and so is, in one, to how it is and so will be, in the other. Or so it appears.

In the experience of centering, back and forward consume each other. In the signaling of experience at center they need to be created afresh.

Because center incorporates all potential directionality, the prophet creates any direction from it. The one presumed ahead appeals to curiosity because we are fearful. Our apparent past survival is often of little interest; only the question—Will we manage it tomorrow? Still, to quell anxiety, diviners seek causes of already accomplished events; and so on. Thus, the freedom of the prophetic individual to create forwards, to create backwards, hinging on centering experience.

Consider:

Thomas Merton dreams of "walking 'toward the center' without quite knowing where I was going. Suddenly I came to a dead end, but on a height, looking at a great bay, an arm of the harbor." He writes of this dream as a premonition of his death. Two years later he leaves his Kentucky hermitage and goes to Bangkok. From his high hotel window he sees and photographs that "arm of the harbor." It is among the last images on his last, incomplete film found in the camera near the body in that room.[1]

Or,

An American Indian trains with his mentor. Myths tell of a large rock in a place of ritual significance. Today there is only gravel there. The two men train for a (ritual) number of days, fast, sweat, meditate apart from others. Ready, at the place on a river where the rock is said, in myth, to be, they see, emerging slowly in shimmering mutual vision, the rock. Interestingly, the account they give accords with scientific accounts of what reorderings had occurred at that place in past, geological time.

* * *

Seeing, here, means seeing what is, really, before we condition the seen by our concepts of it. After that, we look. Prophets are seers. What is there, at the center, is all time. This is what prophets see. From the locus of myth they relate the experience of seeing in terms of certain directional potentiality—usually ahead—as myths project that experience in a certain direction, usually behind. Myth limits curiosity at one seeming pole of temporality, prophecy at what is spoken of as the opposite pole. Prophets tell myths of a future. Both myth maker and prophet disrupt presumed structures in order to see what is, before conditioning it again. Out of that sight, in both cases, arises a new structure. Myth accounts for origins, prophecy usually for ends—both, that is, for temporal peripheries. The difference between these is relevant only from a static point of view.

The world is real, the center, a fount of potential structurings of experiences, of im-

AT THE PLACE of emergence into this fourth world, the Hopi clans were given instructions and prophecies by Maasa'u, the world steward. All this was told, and four stone tablets given to the clan leaders. On these tablets the Hopi way and future as caretakers of the middle of the world was recorded in glyphs. A corner of one of the tablets was broken off and given to the True White Brother. This brother went east and the others in the many directions, instructed to reach the four ends before returning to the middle, to the land that they were to hold in sacred trust.

The prophecies divided among the clans were secret. They were to be combined and made known when, after the Hopi way had been severely challenged by another people, a gourd of ashes fell from the sky, burning the land, boiling the sea, and rendering the earth sterile. In 1947, long after the European invasion of North America and soon after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this much was completed and the teachings and prophecies were made known. The full, remaining prophecy takes long to tell, and much is foretold.

Central to it is this. This fourth world will be imbalanced by clever but ignorant people. Only those Hopi remaining true to their original trust, holding the center, can take care of it. Near the end, the True White Brother will return from the east to the middle, bringing the missing corner. The tablets and the prophecy alike will be complete and those faithful to the way given them for according with the world plan, at the emergence, those still caring for the middle of the world, the sacred earth, will surivive the inevitable violence to see the world rebalanced; to emerge into a new world.

ages. One mythic image of world/time is Uroboros, the Midgard—"Middle-world"—Serpent, a serpent "that begins at the end of its tail," says Martínez Estrada, back and forward consuming each other.[2] Nevertheless, myth accounts for this world's origins, prophecy for its ends.

The Hopi Indian prophecies are for many among the more compelling of such accountings. Not coincidentally, Hopi origin myths are also among the most powerful. These accounts are communications from center about center. In Hopi, prophecy and myth do not truly speak of a future and a past, but both of a latent ever-present. These communications are more adequate in tenseless Hopi where verbs of potentiality and of manifestation serve as our past/future and present tenses. Yet even in English, myth and prophecy both tell us within their speech that, seeing the world from the real world, not the conceived one, one sees no thing but process.

"Process," "potentiality," "becoming" are arbitrary. Many say "spirit"—just another word.

World as center is spirit, as the "center of time" is spirit. In centering, the workings of spirit come clear. Spirit generates, along with all form, all relationships among forms, all structures including those of the world and time we think we know. To speak of that within and beyond form and structure, when something must be said to express human creativity, to quell curiosity and anxiety, to satisfy human need, both myth and prophecy will do. But there is a paradox here which humanity must suffer. Thus both myths and prophecies continue to be made, prophets becoming the subjects of myths, new myths arising, often from old ones, new prophets speaking familiar visions, structure conditioning structure, history taking place: that is, being made. The driving "contradiction" here is not that between symbols, but between experience and symboling.

Myth relates that experiencing center, or spirit, is a matter of gaining release from presumed symbolic structure—of being here now, as we say; of seeing. To voice myth or prophecy is to restructure, to create again past and future, to condition process, to look. Thus, perhaps, Lao Tzu's warning, "As to foreknowledge, it is only the flower of Tao and the beginning of folly."[3] ◇

Notes

1. John Howard Griffen, A Hidden Wholeness/The Visual World of Thomas Merton *(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979).*
2. See *Jorge Luis Borges,* The Book of Imaginary Beings *(New York: E.P. Dutton, 1969).*
3. Lao Tzu, trans. John C.H. Wu, Tao Teh Ching *(New York: St. John's University Press, 1961).*

Our Mother Earth

by Oren Lyons

A thousand years ago a man came from the west. And he came across the water, and he brought a great message of peace. He came across the water, the great lake that you now call Ontario; he stopped on the shores, and he visited the various nations who were at war and who had forgotten how to live together. He came with a great message of peace; and he gathered the strongest and the fiercest of leaders in the Great Council.

And it took many years; but with the help of Hiawentah, whom you call Hiawatha, together they created the Houdenosaunee, the great league of peace—one thousand years ago. And the principles were set down, at that time, of how to conduct ourselves, of how to raise the chiefs, how to raise the clan mothers; and how to set men in council, so that they could first perform the ceremonies as the spiritual being, the center, of the nation. The ceremonies were the first obligation of the chiefs, and the faith keepers, and the clan mothers. And then they were to sit in council for the welfare of the people.

A thousand years ago we were given this message by the Creator; we were given

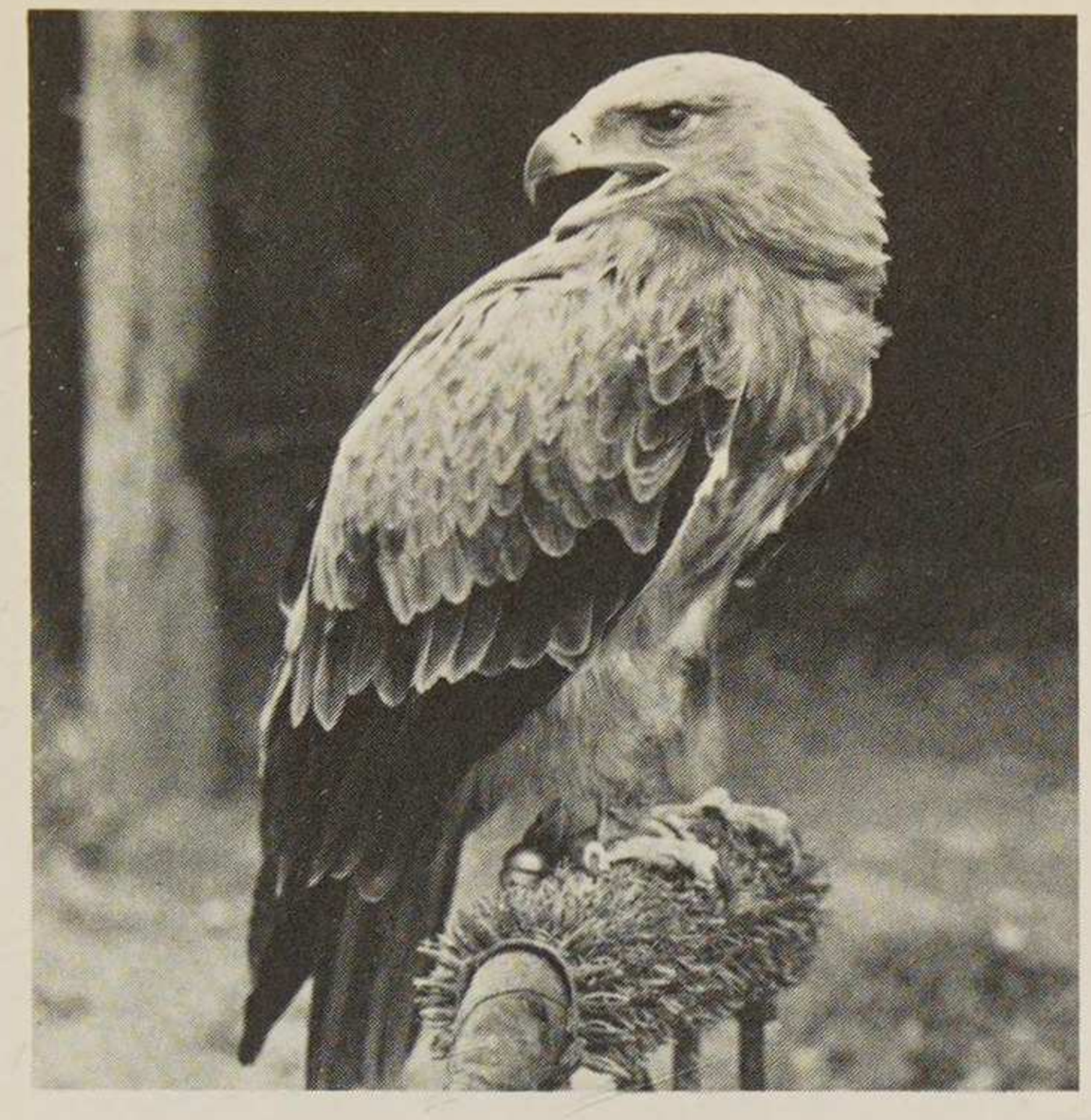
a government by the Creator. This government was not manufactured from the minds of men, it was *given* to us; and we were to cherish it. And each generation was to raise its chiefs and to look out for the welfare of the seventh generation to come. We were to understand the principles of living together; we were to protect the life that surrounds us; and we were to give what we had to the elders and to the children. The men were to provide; and the women were to care for the family, and be the center, the heart, of the home. And so our nation was built on the spiritual family, and we were given clans: the turtle—the eagle—the deer—the beaver—the wolf—the bear—the snipe—the hawk: symbols of freedom. We were given an understanding of how free people live. And we were told to protect the freedom of every individual; we were told that sovereignty began with the individual, and you protect that. And so a free nation stood, and a great peace prevailed.

Many years later there landed, on our shores to the east, our white brother. And he brought with him things that we could not contend with. We were told at an earlier time that the name Ga-nya-di-yo, whom you call Handsome Lake, would be important; and so it came to pass that in the year 1800 we were given a third and final message of how to deal with the things that were brought across the water—when our men were drunk; when our home fires were out; when the dogs walked in the ashes; and the children and the women hid in the woods because of what the whisky and the liquor did to our men. And we were given a message at that time; and this message told us about Ga-nya-di-yo; and again the Creator took pity on us, He felt sorry for us, and He gave the third message of how to deal with the whisky and with gambling, how to deal with the Bible and the missionaries. We were told at that time what would happen to this earth. And as Ga-nya-di-yo walked with the Four Beings, the Four Protectors, who had been sent by the Creator to look out for mankind, they pointed out to him, here and there, "What do you see?" "I see a woman, so fat that she can't rise, yet she continues to stuff her mouth, she continues to eat like a glutton." And they never said whether that was right or wrong; they asked him, what did he see? And so they went, and he was given this opportunity to see, and to be told that one day the water would not be fit to drink, that indeed the water would burn, that the trees would begin to die from the tops down; that the chief of all trees, the maple, would signal to us the time of the deterioration of life, when the end would be near. He told us, and pointed out the variety of events that would occur: the sickness of our children and of the elders, and of what money would do—the greatest sickness of all.

Now we are faced with these things, as leaders of our people, as people given a great responsibility; we in this generation must deal with all of these elements.

When the Creator gave His Great Law and planted the great tree of peace, He uprooted it, and He threw under it all the weapons of war. He said: You are now a nation of peace; and I will give to you *oyankgwa-oohway*, the sacred tobacco; and that will be your strength. That will be what you depend on, the spiritual power of prayer, a belief: the belief of your people. And if you have one mind, and you consider this again, it is the power that you have. So it happens when you burn the tobacco and use the sacred cornmeal that all of the animals stop and they listen; they turn, and they listen to these words.

Our brothers, the bears and the wolves and the eagles, are Indians. They are Natives, as we are. At one time we spoke their language; at one time we conversed, a long time ago. The two-leggeds have fallen from grace. Those animals and those wingeds, they live in a state of absolute grace; they can do no wrong. It is only we who have been given a choice, so clearly pointed out by the Four Beings: this is the way it is, they said, and what do you see here? They did not tell him: Do this or do that; they said,



This is the way it is: what you do will be up to you. And that is what the Creator gave to us, the choice: a great gift, the mentality that we have. And among us there are even people with other gifts—a gift of art, or a gift of speech, or a gift of a smile that can make everyone laugh. Whatever it is, each of us was born with a mission. We were born with a mission, and we must know what it is and develop it and *do* it. And that's a choice—that is *your* choice.

We went to Geneva—the Six Nations, and the great Lakota nation—as representatives of the indigenous people of the Western Hemisphere. We went to Geneva, and we spoke in the forum of the United Nations. For a short time we stood equal among the people and the nations of the world. And what was the message that we gave? There is a hue and cry for human rights—human rights, they said, for all people. And the indigenous people said: What of the rights of the natural world? Where is the seat for the buffalo or the eagle? Who is representing them here in this forum? Who is speaking for the waters of the earth? Who is speaking for the trees and the forests? Who is speaking for the fish—for the whales—for the beavers—for our children? *We* said: Given this opportunity to speak in this international forum, then it is our duty to say that we must stand for these people, and the natural world and its rights; and also for the generations to come. We would not fulfill our duty if we did not say that. It becomes important because without the water, without the trees, there is no life.

New York City—you live here; you can't get a clean drink of water here. The water you drink is filthy. You don't know what clear spring water is like, because you have to drink what comes out of the tap. And eventually it will kill you. Eventually you will not be able to clean that water, nor your children, nor your grandfather, nor your grandmother....You think about it ....When you are sick and when your children are sick, you remember what the Indian said to you about water.

We are indigenous people to this land. We are like a conscience. We are small, but we are not a minority. We are the landholders, we are the landkeepers; we are not a minority. For our brothers are all the natural world, and by that we are by far the majority. We want you to understand the opportunity now. It is no time to be afraid —there is no time for fear. It is only a time to be strong, only a time to think of the future, and to challenge the destruction of your grandchildren, and to move away from the four-year cycle of living that this country goes through, from one election to another, and think about the coming generations.

We spoke about human rights and we spoke in defense of all people and of all children. But remember that as long as we are burning tobacco, as long as the Indian nations exist, so will you. But when we are gone, you too will go.

*Dahnato.**

*Now I am finished.

Acknowledgment: The preceding was first delivered as a talk at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, New York City, May 24, 1978.

Raven and First Man

by Robin Ridington

Charles Edenshaw dish

To Native people of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia, Raven is more than a bird. Their world of sea and solid mountain is more than just a place to take for granted. Behind and within each physical appearance is an inner world of meaning. Shamans knew the passages from one world to another; great winter dances made these places of transformation apparent for all to see. Storytellers knew the unfolding of an inner world from the inchoate shambles of outward appearance. Above all, artists knew how to use the forms of nature as documents of revelation. Raven was one such form. Indeed, among many of the Northwest Coast People, and particularly among the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands, he was a primary form, a demi-god, a creator and transformer. There are nearly as many Raven stories as there are storytellers.

One interpreter of the Haida imagination was Charles Edenshaw, a thinker and storyteller, who lived at the turn of the century. One of Edenshaw's many masterpieces was a small slate dish created in 1880. This dish, now in the UBC Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, depicts Raven in an act of discovery. It shows a fringe of human faces peering from between the lips of a giant cockle. The singular face of a supernatural being spreads across the upper half of the shell.

In the mythic time of beginning, only the inner world existed. The only beings upon it were the supernaturals of sky, land, and sea. One of these was Raven. He came upon the giant shell on the sea-washed chaos of Rose Spit, the long northern beak of the Queen Charlotte Islands, and was attracted by strange noises from within, which were being made by the First Men.

Edenshaw's dish depicts their passage from one world to another. It shows Raven and the First Men in an act of mutual discovery.

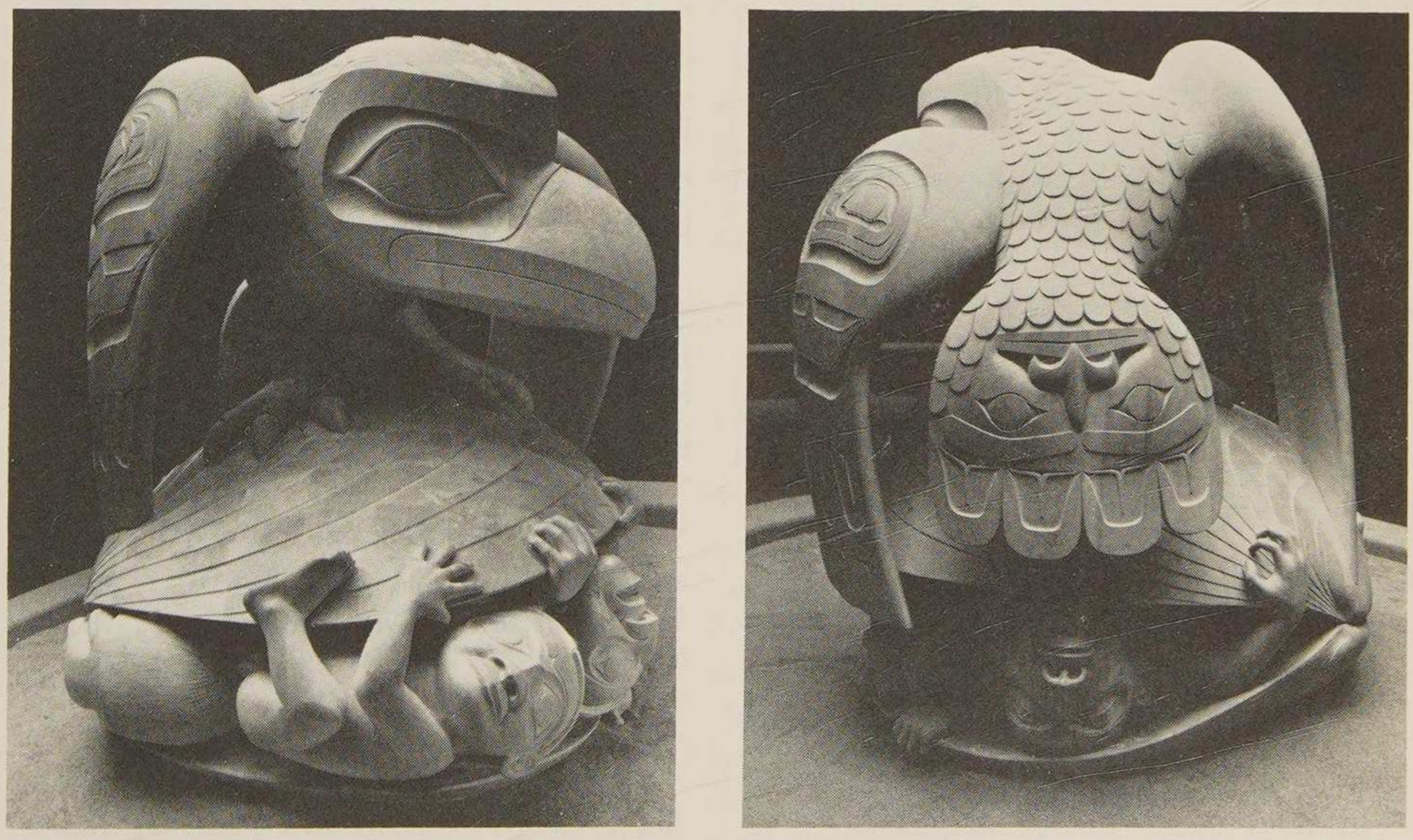
Another Haida carver, born of a Haida mother and Scottish father, is Bill Reid. Reid's new and monumental carving in yellow cedar, Raven and First Men, carries on the story begun by Edenshaw. The sculpture is both mythic and historical. It depicts the very instant that Raven discovers the First Men and anticipates by the flick of an eye the moment of their own overwhelming encounter with the supernatural. Raven is perched majestically between flights of

discovery while the squirming, unfinished, and incomplete male people clutch for an incomplete world between parting ovoid lips of shell. Like children, they have yet to learn their place in a line of succession.

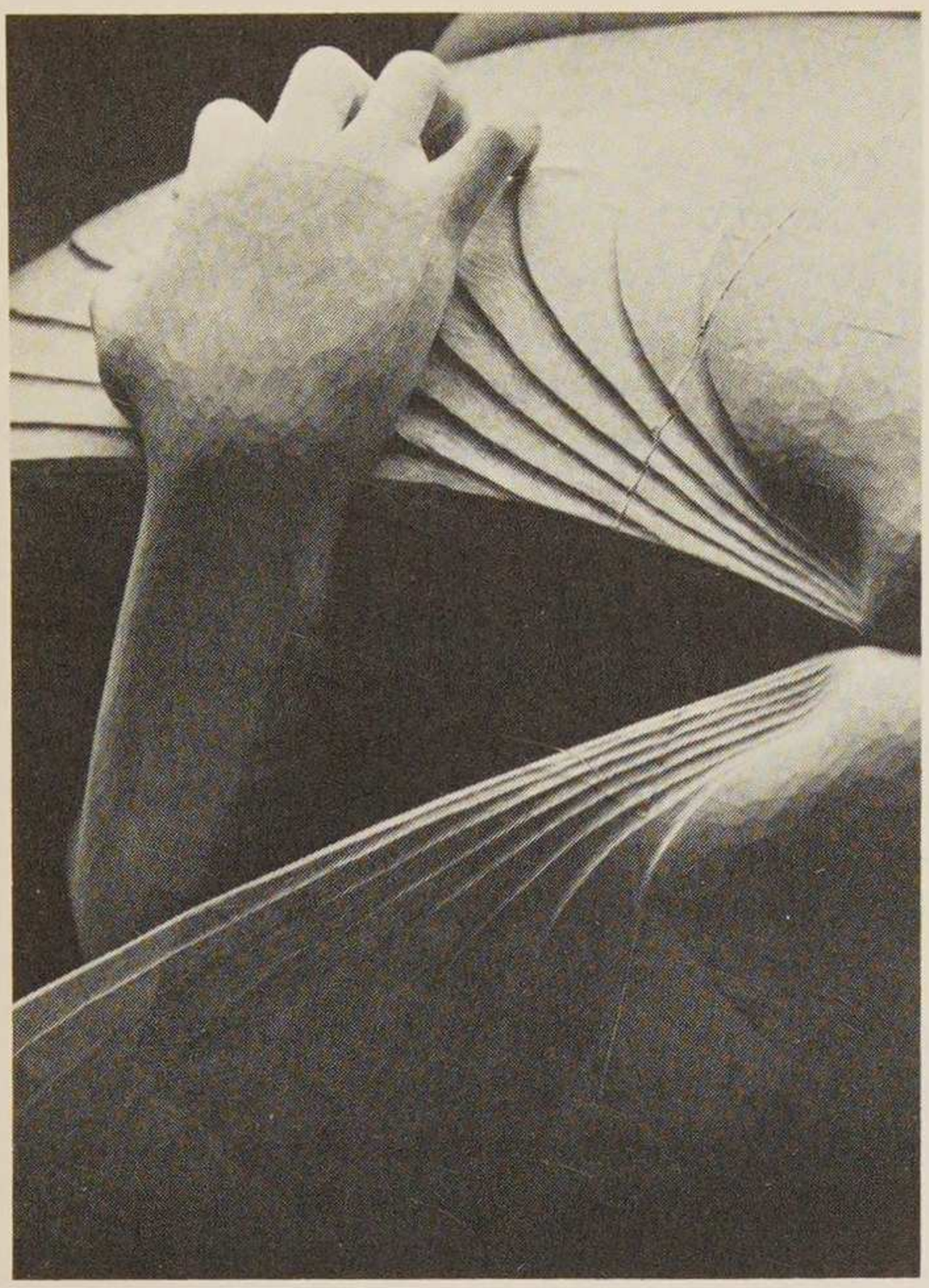
With wings of power, Raven can fly toward an inner world of meaning, penetrating into another world. Perched lightly, but with wings the span of a man's arms outstretched, he poises for return to the sky world through a skylight dome above his place of honor in the rotunda of the museum, just feet away from the Edenshaw dish. Raven listens, preparing to sing to these squirming men who lack the complement of knowledge. Their encounter with Raven will be their first discovery of something other than themselves; and encounter with the supernatural brings to mind the birth of meaning. The sculpture speaks of all as possibility. It speaks of one world turning into another, an exchanging of vision.

Some of the story is purely ancient Haida; some is modern circumstance. Early in June of 1980, Haida people came to the UBC Museum to dance and feast in celebration of Raven's return. They danced beneath their own ceremonial poles, including some from the old village of Ninstints on Anthony Island, soon to be designated a world cultural heritage site. Within the glass enclosure of this museum, the poles were raised to the music of their people for the first time in a hundred years. Raven has brought these new and unfinished Haidas together again with the physical remains of a world that is past and finished. When new people squirm out of the giant clamshell's embrace they will be struck by the vision and song of giant Raven, creator and transformer.

The moment the artist selected to realize is a moment in history; it is that precise instant just before the first men look up from their amniotic emprisonment to encounter the awesome power of the supernatural. In the sculpture, Raven is fully aware of the First Men but the men are still so preoccupied with release from physical confinement that they have not yet discovered the presence of Raven. It is the moment of transformation between myth and history; it is the moment of the birth of our awareness; it is a visionary moment



Bill Reid's Raven and First Men
(2 views)



Detail from Raven and First Men

to which we may constantly return for renewal.

At various times within the tradition of Haida art, new techniques and materials have made possible the emergence of old images in new forms. Steel tools increased the mass of linear wood sculpture we now think of as traditional. Trade stimulated work in argillite and precious metals. Now, the possibility of laminating a single solid block of wood has released the artist's imagination from the tree's linearity. Raven and First Men emerge in the round from a four-and-a-half ton block of yellow cedar. Their very size attests to the extraordinary importance of this great Haida hierophany.

At the dedication of the sculpture, Bill Reid said:

Looking back, it seems the bird emerged easily as though it were already sure of its final shape. On the other hand, the little humans had a long and quite painful birth, and are quite different from what I imagined. Although they have many characteristics of traditional Haida carving, looking at them now, it seems they could be anybody, each one an Everyman. I hope you find them appealing, as I do, as, naked and afraid or eager and adventurous, they enter their new and shiny world. As Haidas, they and their descendents spent many centuries of not inconsiderable accomplishment on their northern islands, and when they receded into the background of history, they left that world in the same pristine condition. After a brief two hundred years, could we say the same?

For traditional Haida people, the inner world of meaning and the world of nature informed one another equally. Our natural world is no longer pristine and as a consequence, the struggle for meaning is more difficult for us. The people of today may still encounter Raven's mythic presence, but we do so from the particularity of historical time. Our technology both destroys and creates the world of meaning. We destroy great forests but also reassemble the bodies of trees in new forms from which the everlasting images emerge with renewed energy. Bill Reid's Raven and First Men combines the forms of nature with modern art and technology to create a document of revelation appropriate to our present time in this world. We are incomplete as individuals in our moment of history like the First Men of the sculptures. The world we think we know as we know our own bodies is only part of a greater unknown whole.

Raven comes from an entirely different world that was well known to visionaries of the Haida tradition: our encounter with him sparks, for an instant, a vision of that greater whole. Beyond the confusion of a single moment in history, there still exists the singular world of meaning. ◇

Note: I would like to thank my colleague, Marjorie Halpin, for her insight into the difference between mythic and historical traditions in art; and Jillian Ridington for her critical and editorial assistance.

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The Infernal Method

by George Quasha

William Blake, Printmaker
By Robert N. Essick. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980. Pp. 450, 236 plates. $50.00.
Blake's Dante: The Complete Illustrations to the Divine Comedy
By Milton Klonsky. New York: Harmony Books, 1980. Pp. 172, 136 plates. $30.00.
Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry
By W.J.T. Mitchell. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. 232, 112 plates. $20.00.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

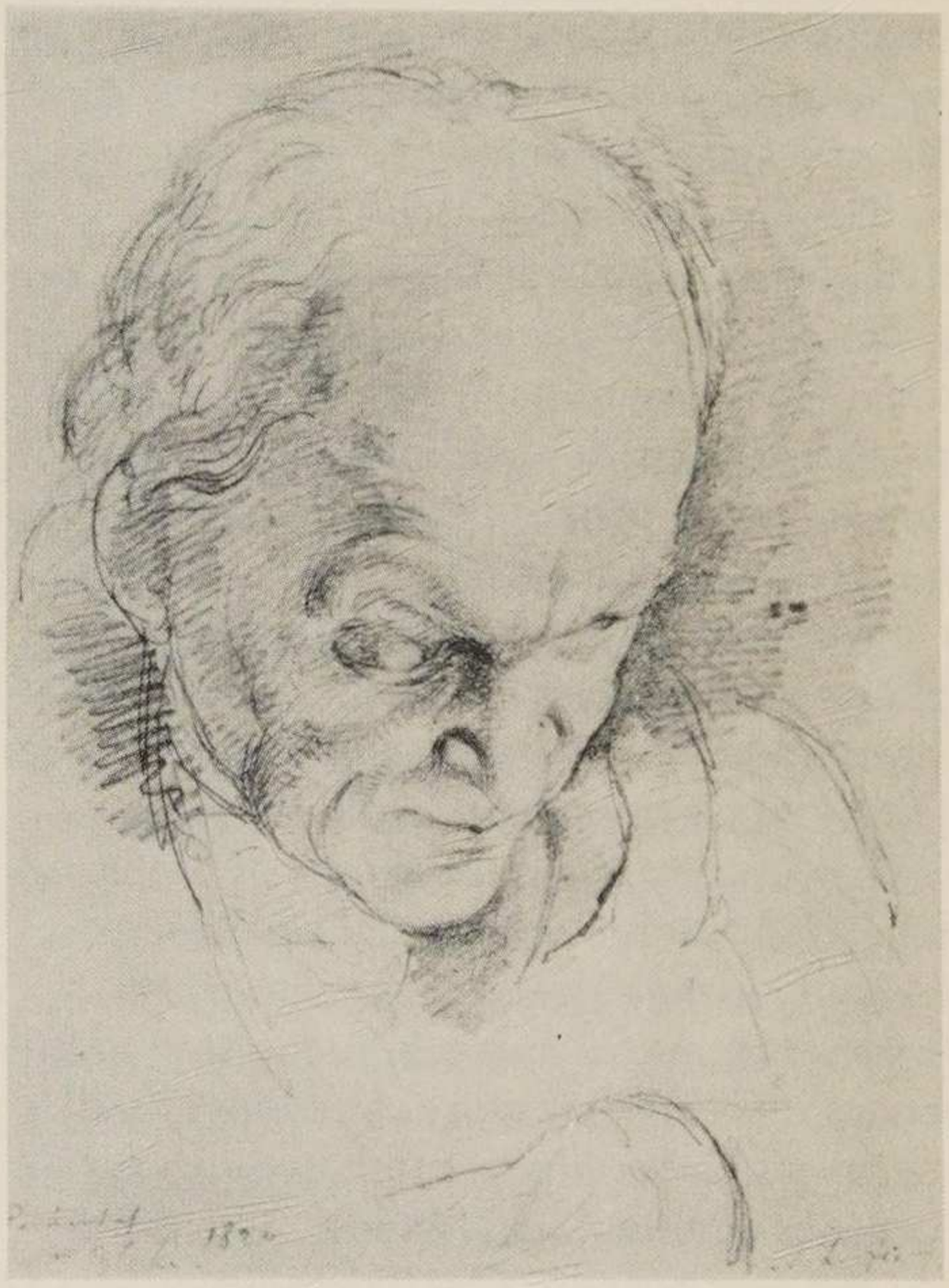
This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

(*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 14)



Portrait of Blake by John Linnell, pencil, 1820.

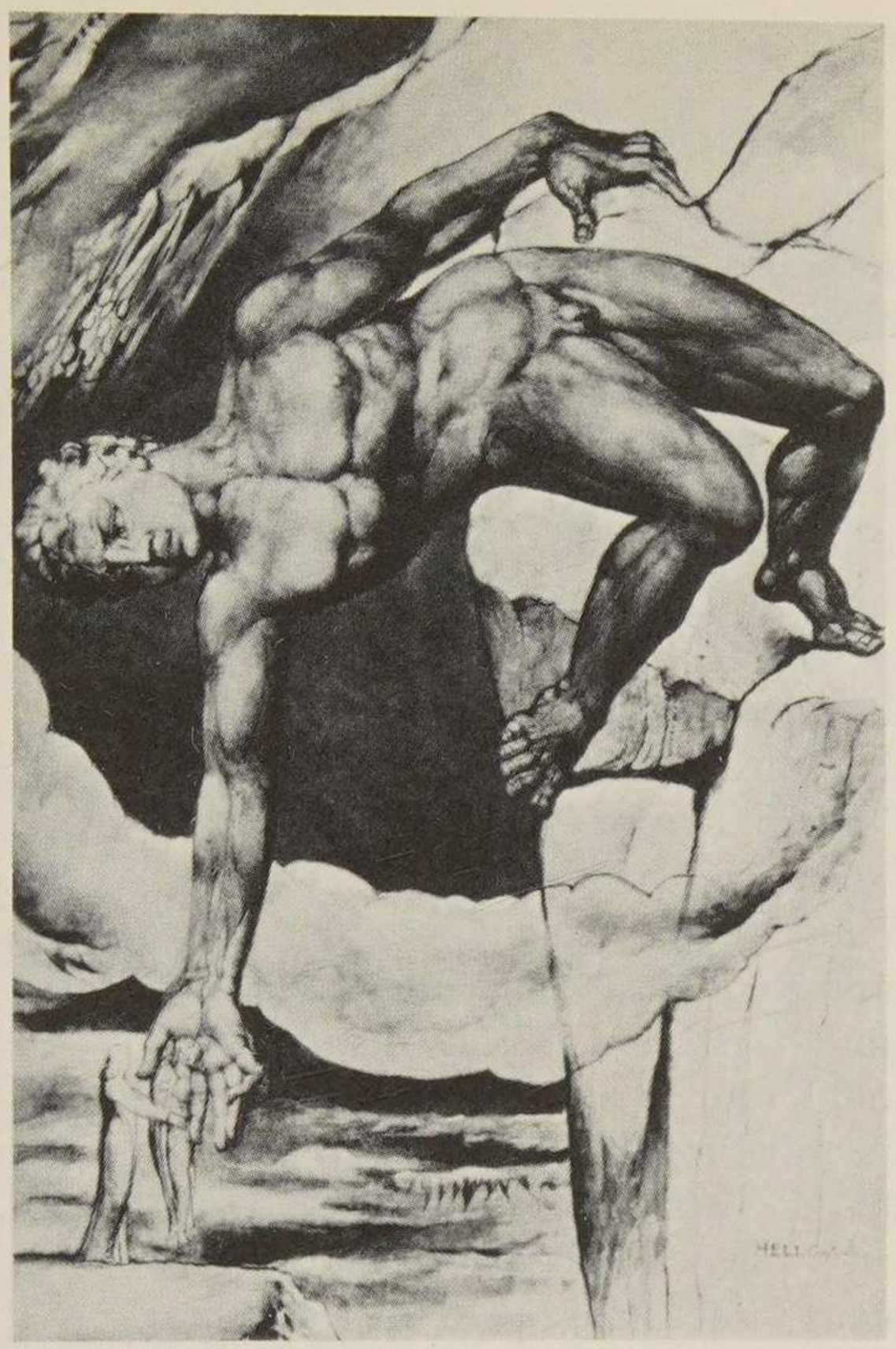
The author of this passage saw art as having a specific function, namely, to renew what he calls elsewhere the "Human Imagination Divine." Something like a faculty, it is "closed up" tight in Fallen Man. The self-limiting "single vision" of false science and religion hide from him his own many-chambered reality. And so, in this apocalyptic vision, they must be burned away by fires that, to fearful fallen consciousness, appear Infernal. Blake's analogies, salutary corrosives and opening the doors of perception, refer both to the artist's copper plate,

deeply etched with acid, and to the mind of the reader, penetratingly informed by a prophetic book. For Blake the way to a renewed life of the spirit is first through "improvement" of the senses, and it is the artist's sacred task to bring this about by way of his own conscious labors and the alchemy of his medium. The "infernal method," as he called his own alchemical approach to engraving prophetic poetry, produces the "Illuminated" book, a technically complex multimedia work that marries the poem to etching, engraving, printing, and painting. Blake claims to have spent every day of forty years physically laboring at his art, developing innovative techniques and illuminating works of his own, like *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* quoted above, as well as the works of others, like *The Book of Job* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. He seems to have believed that the more difficult and demanding the medium, the greater the opportunity to set transforming energies free from confinement by law and convention, what he called "mind-forg'd manacles." Never has the claim for art been grander—as nothing less than the way to total transformation of individual life, consciousness, and the whole of human history; and rarely has the final product so powerfully served the expectation. But it took generations for any real recognition of the magnitude of that work, and longer still for serious scholarship to catch up with the perception of a few avid readers.

In the past few decades a number of major studies and reproductions have made this complex body of work more available. Recent publications include a trade edition of Blake's last works (1825), the magnificent one hundred and two watercolors and seven engravings for Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Robert N. Essick's superb account of Blake's technical development as printmaker, setting this essential aspect of the work on an entirely new plane; and W.J.T. Mitchell's important study of Blake's "composite art," consolidating and extending our sense of how text and image work together and modify each other. The fact that Blake is unique in the history of English literature, not only in the force of his visionary philosophy (increasingly studied for its truth value by students of psychology and the "history of consciousness"), but also in his double vocation in the written and visual arts, has made him a persistent problem for literary and art historians. Both until fairly recently have tended to undervalue him. His transrational vision went far indeed beyond aesthetics, crossing over into politics, psychology, and theology, and such transgression allowed generations of critics to dismiss him as a casualty of psychic distemper. Yet studies like these by Essick and Mitchell join the now ample "higher" criticism of Blake to argue his profound importance on the aesthetic plane.

If the close study of Blake has proved anything it is that he was never willingly a mere illustrator, and he resented and attacked the commercialization of art that turned the engraver into a slavish copier. "I know my Execution is not like Any Body Else," he replied to critics who found him primitive and idiosyncratic, "I do not intend it should be so; none but Blockheads copy one another." From his early teens he was forced to accept the role of copyist and illustrator in order to survive, since his own innovative work found few buyers, but increasingly he broke away from what he called "bondage" and paid the price in poverty and obscurity. Yet, as Essick shows, the commissioned work was not without value both on its own terms and in its contribution to his technical evolution, often challenging him and, even in later life, leading him to further innovation in the art of etching and engraving.

Virtually all of Blake's major poems exist in the "illuminated" books that he painstakingly engraved and colored by a variety of methods, and recent studies have rightly emphasized the importance of viewing the texts in the intricate visual environments Blake made for them. W.J.T. Mitchell's book is an essential work in this



Antaeus Setting Down Dante and Virgil

regard, "defining and elucidating those unique texts in which the poetic and pictorial aspects of Blake's genius were wedded" —such texts as *The Songs of Innocence and Experience*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America a Prophecy*, *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, and so forth. If Blake is difficult to understand, it is not because he is incoherent but because of the special kind of dynamic "unity" in which text and image interact, amplifying each other, and yet remaining independent, sometimes apparently irreconcilably. "Without Contraries is no progression," wrote Blake, "Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence." The sometimes arduous process of reading his books requires an active engagement on the part of the reader, often awakening these contrary states in the reader's mind, and never yielding for very long to the passive pleasures and easy approvals that turn art into a commodity. Instead, Blake made of his composite art a "Chariot of Genius," a vehicle of visionary travel and travail, in which the very difficulty—the inadequacy of using one's reasoning power to the exclusion of intuition and psychological engagement—contributes to the process of spiritual renewal that he sought to inspire. This process is based on Blake's principle that true spirituality is not born of abstraction and generality but appropriate attention to "Minute Particulars." To see how it is that each element of a work is in its "fit place" is not to lock it into a comprehensive scheme or "system" (anathema to Blake) but to discover how each element, visual or verbal, enjoys in Blake's words "its own proper sphere of invention and visionary conception." Prof. Mitchell's book, like David Erdman's rich and indispensable guide before it (*The Illuminated Blake*, New York: Doubleday, 1975), is a study true to Blakean principles, offering far-reaching excursions into both theory and the details of practice. Blake becomes more readable (with the help of Erdman and Mitchell) only as the reader becomes at once better informed and more flexible, open, "negatively capable" of enduring his own doubts and confusions.

We are never allowed to forget that Blake regarded the reading/viewing of his Illuminated books as a process of spiritual and psychological re-education, a journey out of self-enclosure and "single vision." We can never *master* his texts/images, controlling their meanings by holding them fixed, because they are dynamic and dialogical, but we can learn their language well enough to converse with any of his books. The appropriate art of reading and seeing involves an "altered state" of readership which goes beyond the study of Blake. At the same time, the specifically technical development, which is the subject of Prof. Essick's study, and a major glory of Blake's career, helps to ground our reading art in the precise particulars that occupied the

artist every day. It is true that Blake attributed his technical advancement, like the "immense number of verses" composed "from immediate Dictation twelve or thirty lines at a time without Premeditation & even against my Will," to the "direction from Messangers from Heaven, Daily & Nightly," including God, Angels, Milton, and his dead brother Robert. However, there is profit, as Prof. Essick shows, in looking also at his daily technical struggle to turn the slavish craft of engraving into a higher and more comprehensively evocative art form. The graphic technique which Blake inherited from the engraving of his time was strained and limited by its bondage to representation of other mediums, trying for instance to make an engraving look like a painting or a statue, since book illustration used engraving then as it now uses photolithography. "Blake achieved his greatest triumphs as a printmaker," writes Essick, "by allowing graphic style [the pictorial effects] to evolve naturally out of graphic technique [the specific processes used to shape images], or by assuming traditional (and generally unfashionable) styles in harmony with the nature of the graphic medium." By present standards Blake can be viewed as a major experimental artist, defined as one who explores a medium on its own terms toward the creation of new aesthetic possibilities.

Thanks to Prof. Essick's extensive researches and practical work in his own etching studio, recreating Blake's procedures, we now have a detailed account of the Printmaker's slow but dramatic development. In particular the invention of relief and white line etching, reversing the common technique of intaglio etching, supplied a method for his major illuminated works—the relief technique using the acid to "eat away areas on his plates that print white, leaving the raised surfaces to receive the ink." This approach provided a texture and movement truer to Blake's love of the "bounding line" and "Gothic" rough textures, in contrast to the neo-classical love of smoothness and delicate tonal transitions fashionable at the time. The preference for the rough over the smooth belongs with Blake's visionary pursuit of the open and incomplete rather than the closed and over-refined, a suggestively dynamic surface rather than a picture of nature. The purpose of the artist was not to provide a likeness of the "natural" three-dimensionality of "single vision" but something like a score, in the musical sense, for active imagination, the "threefold vision" of art leading to the "fourfold vision" of authentic spiritual "seeing." Blake felt that art had given over to mental imprisonment in the shallow naturalism of Newtonian physics and the "notion that man has a body distinct from his soul." Only a revolutionary art could set the mind free again, "displaying the infinite that was hid." Not One Law and One God but a various and polymorphic reality of many dimensions opens up, so to speak, inside the changing surface of the copper plate. *William Blake, Printmaker* presents a complex history in a detailed and straightforward fashion (aided by 237 fine reproductions) that will satisfy layman, artist, and specialist alike. It lays to rest more than one misconception about the methods used, such as the famous theory that Blake transferred to the plate his extensive verbal text from separately scribed right-reading copy; instead, he did "mirror-writing" directly onto the plate, further unifying text and design and, we might conjecture, deepening the experience of "Contraries" and reversals that is at the heart of his vision.

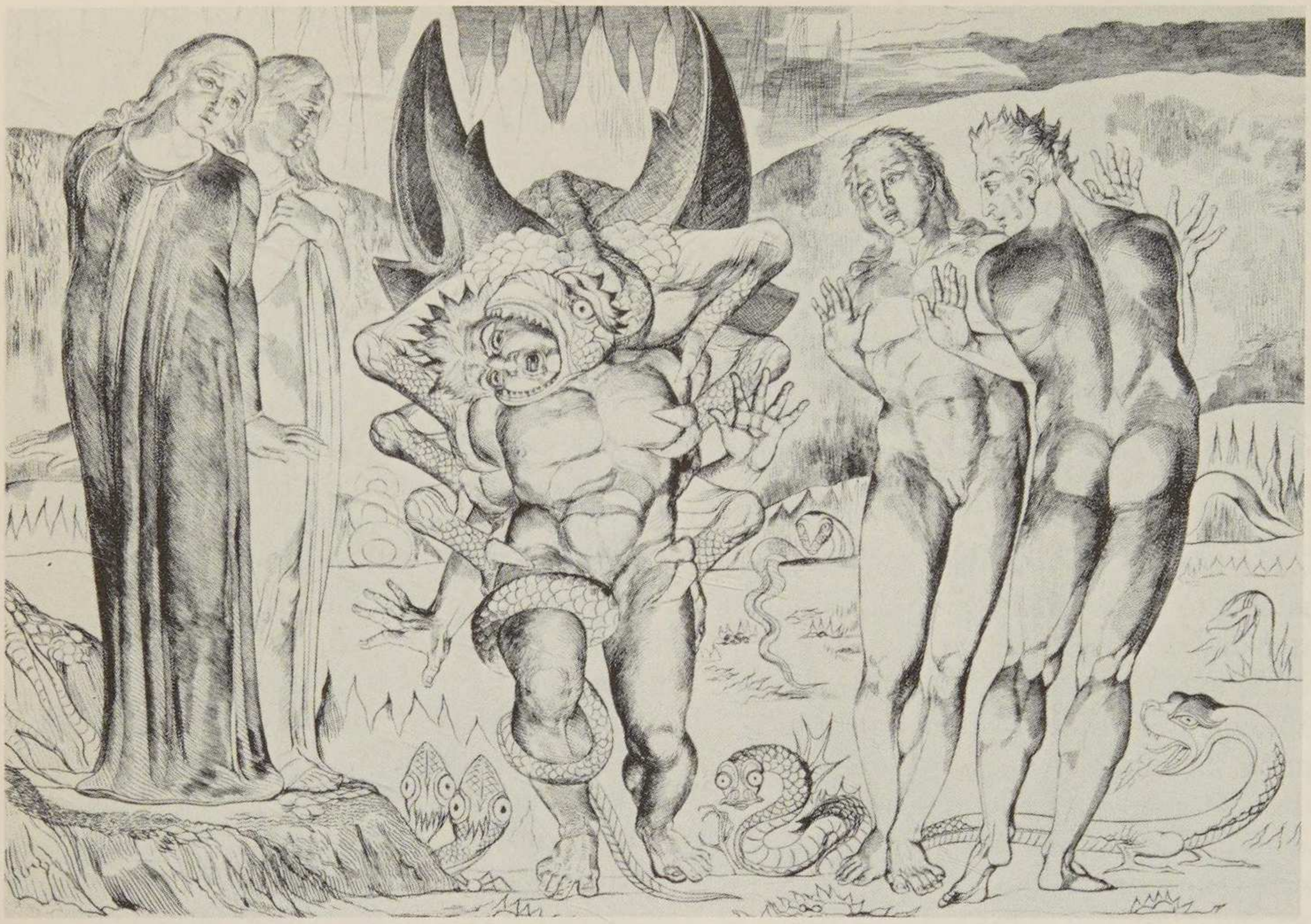
By the early nineteenth century Blake had completed his major poetic texts, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, respectively fifty and a hundred engraved and richly colored plates, and the latter would continue to occupy him for years in both black-and-white editions and the single magnificent colored edition. The work of his last twenty years was primarily that of the visual artist illuminating his own works and those of others. Most notable of the latter were the incomparable *Book of Job* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in each of which, as Essick shows, he developed new ranges of his visual meth-

Saint Peter, Saint James, Dante, Beatrice with Saint John the Evangelist

od. The last great work, the Dante, is at last available to us in a trade edition that is well edited and designed with serviceable reproduction in both color and black-and-white (although glossy stock and ink do not fully capture the subtle qualities of watercolor). Milton Klonsky's introduction and notes, like his earlier *William Blake: The Seer and His Visions* (Harmony Books, 1977), are informative and delightful to read, well serving Blake's wish to reach the uninitiated reader/viewer. (Paradoxically Blake made his works complex and difficult in order to avoid, like Brecht, easy "culinary" consumption, but he believed that all humans possessed the visionary faculty and were capable of recovering it.) The fine young artist Samuel Palmer reports that on a visit with Blake, the old but vigorous man worked on the Dante from a sickbed covered with books and materials: "He designed them (a hundred I think) during a fortnight's illness in bed." He worked not only rapidly, as though running against time, but with deepening inspiration and finely tuned technical aplomb. As Essick shows, Blake demonstrates here better than anywhere else his claim that "Engraving is drawing on copper & Nothing Else," recreating on a new level the fifteenth-century Italian style of Mantegna with its "characteristic effects of light and plasticity, dramatic tension and swirling freedom."

Inspired and possessed by the spirit of Dante—he is said to have learned Italian in three weeks in order to have the text first-hand—he was at the same time in deep disagreement with the theology of sin and retribution. His own psyche clearly suffered through the relentless chain of intolerable suffering in the *Inferno*. Just as he had "corrected" Milton's sexually prudish theological errors (Milton had asked him to do so in a vision) in a poem of that name, now he was revising Dante in the light of his own vision, only this time his language was purely visual. "Listen!" he cried out in *Jerusalem*, "Every Religion that Preaches Vengeance for Sin is the Religion of the Enemy & Avenger; and not of the Forgiver of Sin, and their God is Satan, Named by the Divine Name." He denied the existence of Hell as anything more than a distortion of fallen consciousness, knowing also the mind's ability to reify its fear-ridden beliefs in the crimes and holocausts of history. His visual critique of Dante enters directly into his own radical and heretical vision of the individual's ability to transform himself and know his own divinity directly and "Gnostically," discovering the key to Heaven in the spirit of "forgetting & forgiving."

We find a significant aesthetic paradox in Blake's rendering of "negative states," so poignant both in his own *Book of Urizen* and in the Dante visualization. Their very power on a purely visual plane is at once compellingly attractive and spiritually repulsive, seeming to undermine his own commitment to positive vision. After all, as he often said, we become what we behold. But it is in the challenge of the contrary states that we get the most intense alchemy of the Infernal Method, transmuting negativity into subtle vision. Whether in the rendering of deadly symmetry (represented by the image of Newton's golden compass in the hand of the tyrannical Urizen) or of excruciating tortures of Hell (shown in "The Six-Footed Serpent Attacking Agnolo Brunelleschi," *Dante*, Pls. 54 and 106), the terrible surface image eventually reverses in the enlightened mind of the viewer, where the antithetical energy of our own conscious labors gathers within the luminosity of the image. The function of art be-



The Six-footed Serpent Attacking Agnolo Brunelleschi

comes nothing less than spiritual transubstantiation. The function of these Infernal States is really that of the whole evolved Blakean art: namely, to provide a psychological matrix that creates a productive friction between reader/viewer and the text/image, leading ultimately to the active individualizing of the reader's own process of soul-making.

Blake's art demands a double discipline of contrary attentions, on the one hand keeping track of endless specific details requiring both understanding and intuition, and on the other hand a full surrender to the almost trancelike currents of transrational imagination. Either without the other, reason (Urizen) without energy (Orc), allows "no progression." Many magical systems, such as those described by Frances Yates in *The Art of Memory*, have provisions for such a double discipline; but Blake steps further into the Open Universe and New Age by emphasis on the Individual's own psychological process, releasing the aspirant from any mechanical or fixed system of signs and providing, instead, a composite art that no Blake dictionary can possibly account for. For Blake the artist the source of that open process was not only "Intellectual Vision" and voices from Heaven but the immense difficulties of daily labors within the chosen medium. The fourfold Vision simply does not unfold without the conscious work of every day, and this work takes place both in the psychic life of an actual person and in the stubborn otherness of what he called an "untractable" medium. ◇

George Quasha is a poet whose books include Somapoetics, Giving the Lily Back Her Hands, *and the forthcoming* Traveling in the Castle, *and is the editor of* America as Prophecy *and* Open Poetry. *His Blake criticism has been published by Princeton University Press. He is the publisher of Station Hill Press.*

CURRENTS & COMMENTS

In this issue we are turning over both CURRENTS & COMMENTS—*our recommendations of events and written material—almost completely to books, because there are so many important volumes currently available, and so few inspiring events.*

Throughout the ages ancient stones have stood as witnesses to something that endures—as transmitters of a quality of being often lacking in contemporary art. It is therefore not surprising that one of the foremost modern artists, Isamu Noguchi, the great Japanese-American sculptor, should have been so deeply affected by megalithic formations throughout his life. This is one of the many memorable aspects of the artist's life and work presented in the hourlong special, "Isamu Noguchi," aired on PBS November 17, 1980.

Behind his sculpture is a sensibility and creativity closely attuned to the ancient creation myths of his native Japan. He perceives his beloved rocks as the common denominator of the universe. He sees man to be as much a component of transforming nature as the wind and water, his works attaining a rare beauty through the passage of time—although this process, Noguchi says regretfully, is slowly becoming non-existent in the modern age. A man very much of our time, he has found sustained nourishment from influences of a timeless nature.

What we had hoped would be an intelligent and provocative use of the television media turned into yet another disappointment with the release of Carl Sagan's "Cosmos" series on PBS. This expensive ($8 million) and self-indulgent (endless soft focus shots of Sagan gazing into the heavens in wonder) series of thirteen programs had enormous potential for educating and inspiring, and although it offered some fascinating information and some crystalline explanations, it was seriously marred by the ignoring of the world of invisible facts. It is hard to believe in the face of the enormous breakthroughs in quantum physics, holography, even the latest pictures from Saturn revealing forms that defy the "laws" of physics, or the interfacing of physics and the cosmological doctrines of the great religions, that any scientist could declare that the esoteric tradition constantly "got in the way" and held up the progress of science.

How much more exciting and full of actual wonder this series might have been had we had less of the toy spaceship, less of Carl-Sagan-Superstar, and more of human insight.

There are two current films we would like to recommend: Akira Kurosawa's moving epic, *Kagemusha* and Fred Schepisi's haunting *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*.

As we are told by the editor of *Sun Tracks*, an American Indian Literary Magazine published annually by the Indian students and faculty at the University of Arizona, when the sun rises in the south on the winter solstice, an important period of story-telling begins for Native American com-

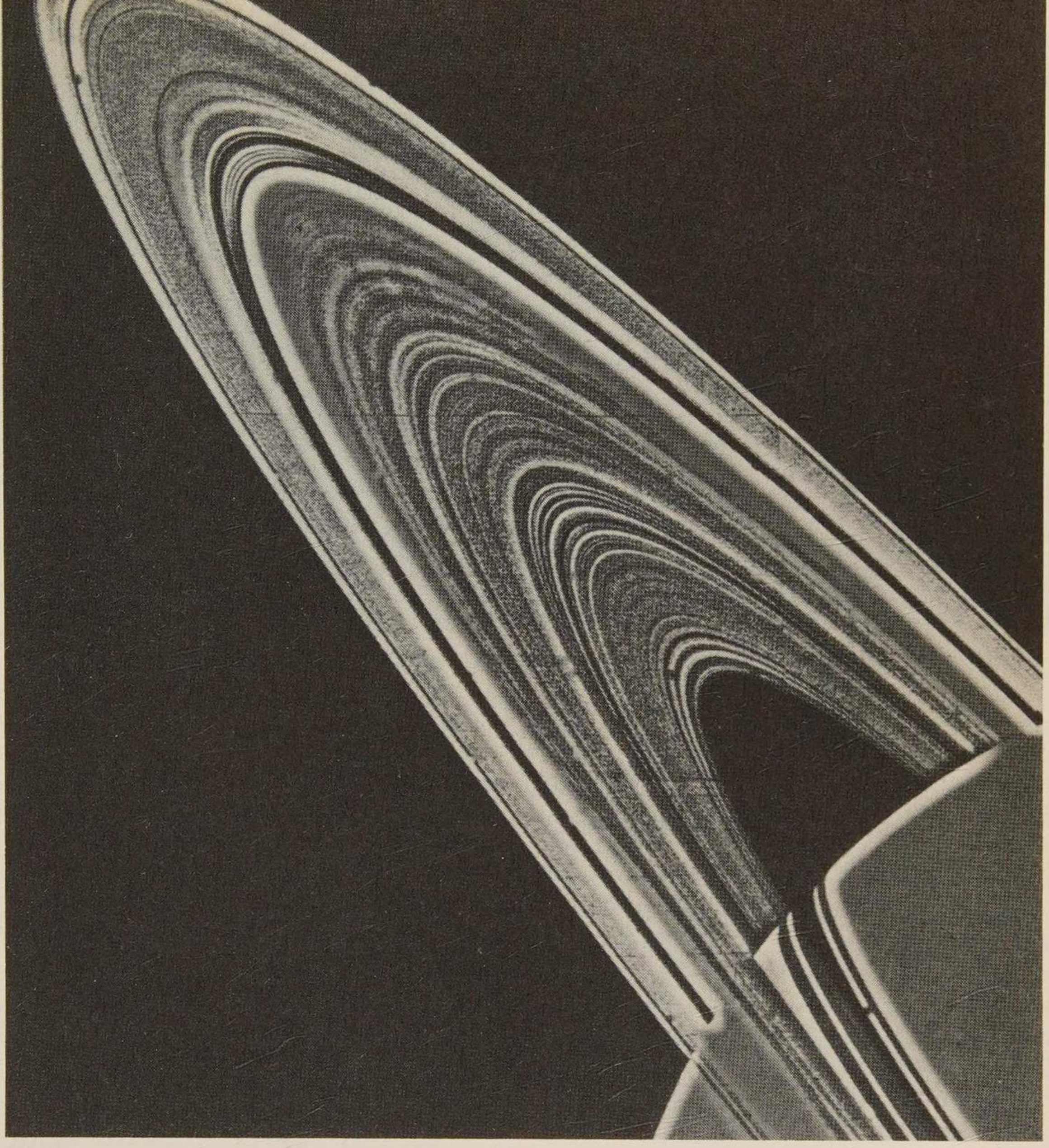
munities. The same also can be said for those who were lucky enough to discover "The South Corner of Time," the current issue, appropriately titled for that storytelling season. This issue offers stories, poems, and articles from the written and oral literature (as well as some very notable photographs) of four tribal communities: Hopi, Navajo, Papago, and Yaqui. If one believes, as *Sun Tracks* does, that "the oral tradition is a distillation of the shared experience that gives language meaning," then it is clear that collections such as this, written in native languages as well as English, are real assets to the ongoing struggle for community cohesion. *Sun Tracks* is important also in making available to non-Indian readers the ideals, wisdom, and humor that this literature expresses so well.

"*Many People Come; Looking, Looking*...taking picture. Too many people. No good ....Some people come, see. Good!" These few words spoken by a Buddhist monk in Nepal make a fitting title for this book from The Mountaineers, full of exquisite photographs and an interesting text about the people and life of the mountainous region of Pakistan, India, and Nepal. While focusing on three mountaineering expeditions and the attendant drama, author Galen Rowell also explores the effects of modern life and tourism on these exotic but vulnerable regions. Anyone publishing a book that celebrates the beauty of an untouched place ultimately faces the dilemma of starting an inundation that may, in the long run, do great damage to what inspired the book in the first place. While the photographs here are indeed seductive, Rowell feels a responsibility to do more than take pictures, and he also generates an awareness of the dangers of such an attraction.

If any book can help us in our beleaguered times to find a better way to live on this planet, it must be Stewart Brand's newly revised and amazing *The Next Whole Earth Catalogue: Access to Tools*. Published this fall by POINT, distributed by Random House, the huge paperback holds a stunning amount of information delivered in an engaging format. The catalog is a festival; it suggests "the power of individuals to conduct their own education, find their own inspiration, shape their own environment, and share the adventure with whoever is interested." This is a listing of hundreds of "tools"—publications, maps, materials—that will keep us in touch with our earth and ourselves.

A new edition of George McDonald's wonderful stories is always good news. We welcome a collection of his fantasy tales, most if not all for young readers, published by the Wm. B. Eerdmans Company in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in four small paperback volumes with black-and-white illustrations by Craig Yoe. Old favorites like *The Wise Woman (The Lost Princess)*, *The Golden Key*, and *The Light Princess* are included (regrettably, not *Phantastes*), as well as many that are less well-known. They are not, of course, all equally beautiful; but in this dark age of children's literature, parents can bank on the fact that almost anything written by George McDonald will be better than anything they are likely to find in the current crop. Rather more than less charming for their nineteenth-century flavor, the stories will still enchant readers of all ages, as they enchanted and influenced a whole generation of modern fantasy writers, including C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

From the staggering yearly deluge of volumes that lodge uncomfortably under the misleading designation of "children's books," only a very few stand out as imaginative, authentic, and full of the magic that we should expect from books that are intended as "primary" experiences whether for the child or the adult. At the top of the list: the totally original, *An Artist* by M.B. Goffstein (Harper & Row); *Beat the Story Drum, Pum-Pum*, African stories by Ashley Bryan (Atheneum); *Caretakers of Wonder*, an imaginative tale, by Cooper Edens (Green Tiger); *Ladder of Angels* by Madeleine L'Engle (Penguin), Bible stories illustrated appropriately by children; the classic, *Russian Folk Tales*, illustrated by Ivan Bilibin



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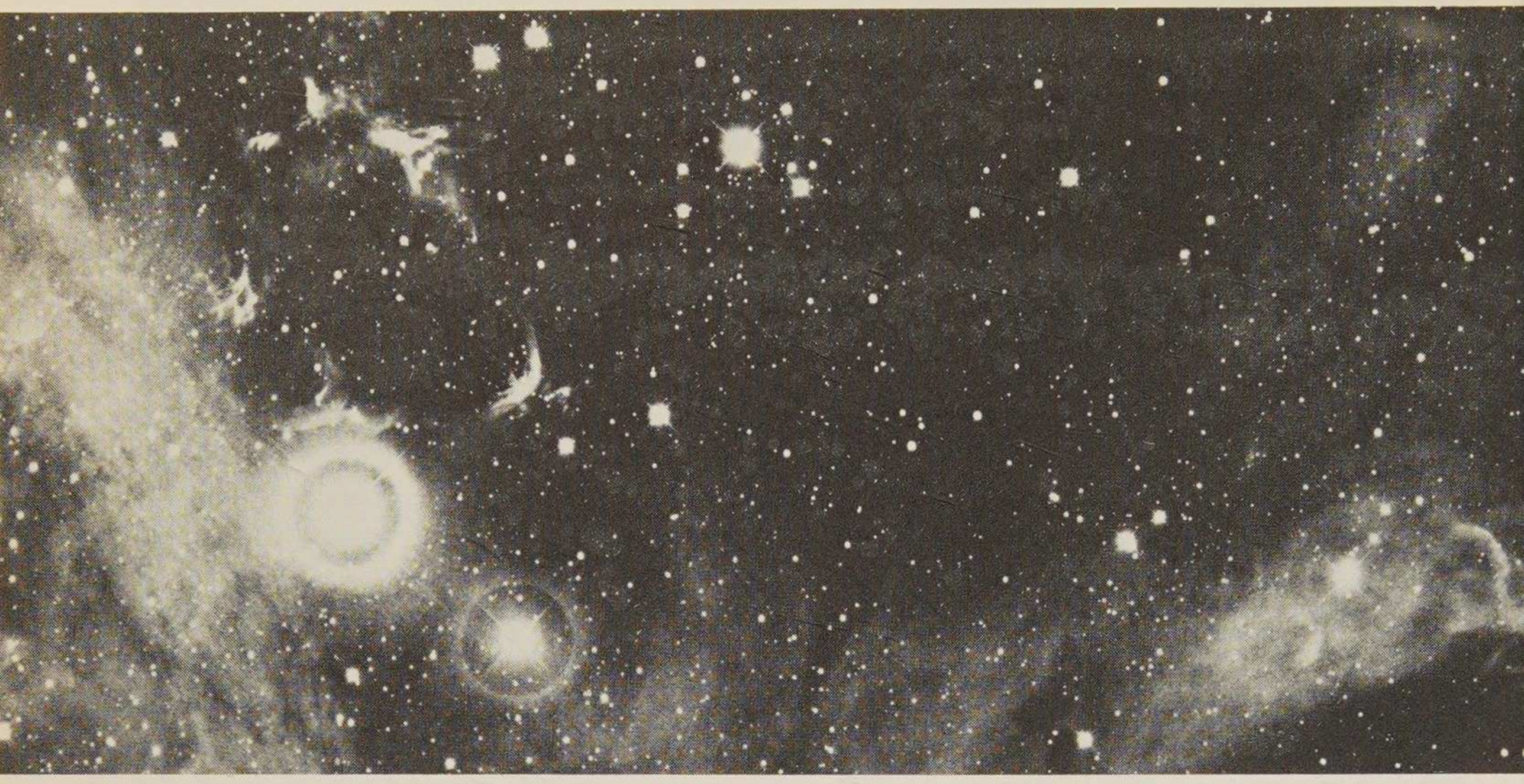
The Quarterly Magazine of Myth and Tradition



The Rosette Nebula from Galaxies

(Shambhala); a large and inviting edition of *Folktales of the Amur: Stories from the Russian Far East* by Dmitri Nagishkin, illustrated by Gennady Pavlishlin, translated by Emily Lehrman (Harry N. Abrams, Inc.)—a volume that begs you to find a child to read it to; Isaac Bashevis Singer's stories for Hanukkah, *The Power of Light* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux); Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, illustrated by Edward Ardizzone (David R. Godine); a wordless, but spirited little book, *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher*, by Molly Bang (Four Winds); and last but obviously not least, stories originally published in our pages by P.L. Travers, now in book form, *Two Pair of Shoes*, illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (Viking Press).

Galaxies by Timothy Ferris (Sierra Club Books) is so big that it is almost impossible to look at while you are sitting down and holding it on your lap. But it is worth standing up for! It's a huge, handsome excursion through the cosmos that allows the reader/viewer (the forty color and over one hundred black and white photographs can be admired on their own) to see cosmological phenomena as an on-going, natural process of which we are only a part. By giving us a sense of the vastness of the universe, in image and word, the book also allows us to see ourselves more clearly as an aspect of that enormous "environment." The language of the text is clean; the information is accessible, but it also suggests the mystery for scientist and non-scientist alike. Ferris states: "That we are part of our galaxy is literally true. To understand this is to give a voice to the silent stars. Stand under the stars and say what you like to them....The universe will not answer. But it will have spoken." Our intertwined relationship is here for all to experience.

Other notable volumes include Faber and Faber's *The Dying Gaul and other Writings*, by David Jones and *Introducing David Jones*, edited by John Matthias and *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, edited by Andrew Sherratt, a joint publication by Crown Publishers, Inc. and Cambridge University Press.

Maasai
Photographs by Carol Beckwith, text by Tepilit Ole Saitoti. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1980. Pp. 276, 240 plates in full color, 40 line drawings, 3 maps. $40.00.

Reviewed by Susan Bergholz

This "experience"—for it is much more than a book—begins with photographs of and a dedication to the Maasai children. The wish to preserve for the future the strength, exuberance, and dignity of a way of life, to give these children a legacy, inspires this entire project. One feels that project director Robert Morton, editor Margaret Donovan, and designer John S. Lynch pledged themselves to this effort with the same devotion with which photographer Carol Beckwith and author Tepilit Ole Saitoti undertook it. It is clearly a labor of love.

The book is alive with the pulse of the Maasai—not posed as artifact, frozen statues à la Leni Riefenstahl's Nuba and Kau books, *objets d'art* which statically enshrined exotic "savages." This book seems to breathe, as we see the Maasai moving through their daily lives. In spite of its large format, rich end papers, textured text pages, and stunning photographic reproduction, *Maasai* is direct, accessible, and yes, even familiar. It succeeds as a document of a people who—although disappearing and perhaps doomed—have been at home on the earth in a way we can only marvel at. The book is a treasure of custom and myth, daily life and ceremony, ritual and play—in short, an entire way of life. And because the photographs are so unpretentious yet rich, and because the text is so descriptive yet unromanticized, we feel a connection with this exotic and magnificent pastoral people with their strange blood-letting rituals and their warrior ethic. By the close of the book it is clear that the Maasai way is really only another vision of "being human." We can even begin to recognize ourselves here and there, and perhaps can understand somewhat our loss of the connection we also once may have had to the brown earth.

Maasai custom is based on an interesting belief: "what we on earth as a society accept, God above will have no choice but to accept." And the society observes and celebrates very strict rites of passage on that earth which also determine the divisions of Saitoti's text: *Inhera* (youth), *Emorata* (circumcision), *Ilmoran* (warrior), *Ilpayiani* (elderhood). In addition to the endless and illuminating stories that Saitoti relates, there are accompanying instructions by wise members of the community: a midwife introduces a baby to his new environment with, "You are now responsible for your life, as I am responsible for mine."

Until the age of seven the Maasai child is given great freedom in the belief that adult self-confidence is built in these years; the periods of circumcision and warriorhood are highly ritualized and prescribed. The pictures that illustrate these states are marvelous: the body painting with the most elegant designs, the ceremonial slaughter of the ox, the ritual of spitting honey beer on the warriors—all are caught in an almost journalistic fashion in the sense that life forces at work are being captured with immediacy. This is what allows us entry again and again into this very different world: pictures of warriors plaiting each other's hair, pictures of the warriors painting the beautiful and intricate ochre designs on their bodies, pictures of warriors flirting and playing games with girls at day's end.

And intermixed are the many dignified portraits of memorable faces.

The next stage on life's way is *Ilpayiani* (elderhood) which among the Maasai has nothing to do with age, but rather with responsibility, the first concern being marriage. It begins: "Now that you are an elder, drop your weapons and use your head and wisdom instead." The photographs in this section are wonderful illustrations of the coming together of men and women, and of the taking care of the cattle—the mainstay of Maasai culture—and of the gradual aging process. The later years are times when "as elders gather to talk in the evenings, to tell stories, to discuss issues, they are preserving Maasai legend and lore."

There are, of course, favorite images: two young girls adjusting their beautiful beadwork; a coy, smiling, ochered warrior; a spread of the land—herds of donkeys and cattle in the grassy foreground, a rough valley, and beyond that the mountains and clouds and two red-robed warriors watching over all of it; a baby with head thrown back in his mother's arms; a cattle blessing in quiet light; a noble warrior in full regalia, formal but casual; a close-up of a beaded belt on the black buttocks of a warrior; ochered fingers poised below the profile of a waiting face; a mother with baby on her back plastering her house with fresh dung; a procession of men and women, singing; an elder assisting a calf's delivery. And through them all—the colors, the reds, browns, golds, blacks, blues—the glow of the earth itself.

And throughout the intelligent, informative, sometimes poetic, text are scattered many wonderful stories.

The book ends with "A Personal Reflection" by the author. It is startling in a way: "The Maasai are a people whose time has passed." Saitoti, a Maasai warrior, who has studied and lectured in the West, is painfully realistic. "If their land goes, there will be no place to graze cattle, and the Maasai way of life will die." This is a situation that is similar for tribal peoples everywhere on the planet.

The Maasai stood by in bewilderment as white settlers parceled and sold the land; like the Native Americans, they didn't understand how land which belonged to God *could* be sold. And the various governments made no attempt to help the Maasai understand or to educate them to the changing values that were being imposed on them. Consequently, they have lost their land; their way of life. "And so, the sweetness, pride, and beauty of the life portrayed here take on an added poignancy as they vanish like the mists over the mountains of Maasailand."

But Saitoti is also positive and practical in approaching the dispossession of the Maasai from their land and their culture. He suggests that the government could help traditional people by trying to understand their ways instead of threatening them with their brute power. The dollars that are made in tourism (with the Maasai surely being one of the "attractions") could be channeled back to the Maasai people. Educated Maasai can help the others to catch up

with technological advances—something Saitoti feels is absolutely necessary.

Saitoti closes: "Our ancestors led our people beyond their farthest horizons. Their strength and might may be seen in our legends as well as in the size of our land....They played their parts well, and we are proud of them for it. If this noble race of men must now be humble and destitute because of the passage of time, we do not have to accept disgust and the disappearance of our race. We must adapt to new situations in order to survive....We must not follow the way of those races of men who have vanished from the surface of the earth. We have our culture and our governments behind us and our courage, pride, and noble truth. All we need now is determination, and jointly with all other African peoples we will not only survive, but multiply and prosper."

This book is a celebration of a way of life which will never really die. In some part that ongoing life will be sustained by this magnificent, felt document—a triumph of human spirit and a hymn to the earth.

Susan Bergholz is the Executive Editor of PARABOLA.

Merton: A Biography
By Monica Furlong. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980. Pp. xx + 342. $12.95.
The Collected Poems
By Thomas Merton. New York: New Directions, 1980. Pp. 1048. Paper $15.00.
Geography of Holiness: The Photography of Thomas Merton
Edited by Deba Prasad Patnaik. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1980.
Pp. xii + 100. $17.50.

Reviewed by Lawrence S. Cunningham

The potpourri of books listed above represents one small eddy in the stream of books and monographs by or about Thomas

Merton published over the past few years. There is no indication that these are the last to appear. A fair amount of Merton's own unpublished writings still appears at regular intervals; there is the official biography yet to come from Michael Mott, as well as several more critical studies already announced.

Why this overwhelming interest in a Trappist monk now dead over twelve years? Part of the answer is that American Roman Catholics are still nourished by a writer who seems uniquely spiritual and is also free of the parochial inhibitions that hedge in so many other Catholic writers. Merton speaks to Catholics from the deep center of traditional monasticism, but this monastic spirituality is filtered through a wide familiarity with the larger tradition of philosophy and belles-lettres. However, a further question persists: what was there about this monk which caused Henry Miller to write him fan letters or prompted Lenny Bruce to read his poetry in nightclubs or Eldridge Cleaver (in *Soul on Ice*) to quote him admiringly on the sufferings of Harlem?

The answer to that question, I suspect, lies in the essentially autobiographical character of his writing. We have in Thomas Merton a modern person who faithfully chronicled his lifelong struggle to make ultimate sense of himself and his culture in the light of a deeply religious search for ultimate meaning. It is this search that one senses beneath all of his poetry, essays, historical studies, literary criticism, and spiritual writings. Merton wrote over fifty books. Apart from his directly autobiographical writings the rest of his work seems at first glance scattered and occasional—the work of an intellectual gadfly. In fact, however, as one gets close to Merton's life—for it is his life and not any "doctrine" which counts in Merton—and the more one reads systematically in his works, the clearer it appears that everything he wrote voluntarily (he did produce a few "out of monastic obedience" hackworks) was in the attempt to better understand himself in relation to his desire for God. Saint Augustine's *Noverim me ut Noverim Te*—"I would know myself that I might know Thee"—is not an inappropriate description of Merton's labors.

To know Thomas Merton's life only through his own writings is a difficult and finally daunting task. The heavy hand of the ecclesiastical censor as well as his own reticence interferes. For that reason we are grateful for Monica Furlong's biography which sheds new light both on the young Merton growing up in France, England, and New York as well as the mature monk in Kentucky wrestling with the tumult of the sixties. We get for the first time an objective look at Merton's life and the first clues to help explain his continuing prestige. Furlong's portrait of Merton can be summed up in this fashion: Merton was a deeply serious monk who was also a quintessentially alienated modern Everyman. He fathered an illegitimate child in his youth (both mother and child died in the

London blitz), flirted in his college days with Communism, was given to bouts of petulancy and depression, saw a psychiatrist on occasion in his mature years, fell in love with a young nurse while convalescing in a Louisville hospital, and—shades of modern corporate life—had his chronic colitis exacerbated by running battles with his boss (i.e., the Abbot) over administrative matters. That Merton had this profile and was still the monastic searcher is, I suspect, of much personal interest for untold numbers of us.

Merton went to the monastery of Gethsemane in 1941 and remained there until his death in 1968 which happened on a trip he took to the Far East where he died of accidental electrocution. The journey—practically the only one he ever took out of the monastery—was a tissue of ironies: he died on the twenty-seventh anniversary to the day of his entrance to the monastery; his body was shipped back on an air force plane from Bangkok with the bodies of veterans of the Vietnamese war which he so openly and bitterly opposed.

In the nearly thirty years he lived as a monk, a river of letters, essays, poems, books, and monographs poured forth. That activity elicited a counterstream of letters and visitors—from painters (Merton regularly prayed in the presence of a black-on-black cross painted by his friend Ad Reinhardt), Vietnamese Buddhists, Zen masters, Sufi mystics, sociologists, French philosophers, literary critics, activist poets from Latin America, Mexican sociologists, and untold others with problems, spiritual schemes, and plans for moral or political revolutions. Monica Furlong chronicles all of the comings and goings with obvious approval and in crisp readable prose. Until the authorized biography appears (with its total access to the Merton papers), this book is the one to read in tandem with Merton's own biographical writings.

Merton wrote a great deal of poetry both before and after his entrance into monastic life. All of it has been gathered together in *The Collected Poems* (first published in 1977 and now in paperback), a hefty volume, as Daniel Berrigan said, which one does not read but climbs aboard. Merton had written some very fine poems, especially in his early days. Some of these, published in 1944 in the volume *Thirty Poems*, received the praise of Robert Lowell. I would single out the fine opening lines of "Song of our Lady of Cobre," which he wrote in Cuba before entering the monastery, as well as his profoundly moving "For my Brother: Reported Missing in Action, 1943," a religious poem of mourning which ranks with the best to come out of America in the Second World War. This early poetic intensity, however, did not hold up. Merton never heeded the warning of T.S. Eliot that he should "take more care and publish much less." In this massive volume there are pages and pages of quite clearly second-rate poetry. His later work became extremely experimental and in such complex long works as "Cables to the Ace" and "The Geography of Lograire" we see a poet attempting to blend wide reading and ecumenical vision into a coherent poetic whole. These book-length poems will surely provide what Gore Vidal calls the "lit crit factories" grist for their mills. The theses, in fact, are already appearing. I think *The Collected Poems* will be purchased more because of the general interest in Merton than out of profound respect for his poetic gifts.

Some years before his death Thomas Merton struck up a friendship with the polymath author, John Howard Griffin. Griffin (who died a few months ago) was named as the authorized biographer, but ill health prevented him from undertaking the task. Griffin interested Merton in photography and lent him a camera with which to work. Merton, who had an abiding interest both in painting and calligraphy, took to the instrument with zestful enthusiasm. The album, *Geography of Holiness*, is a record of some of his better efforts. Paging through this volume provides at least one striking impression: Merton, an autodidact in the use of the camera, reveals an amazing technical maturity and poetic sensitivity in his photographs of nature and architecture while his pictures of people are jejune, amateurish, and lacking either passion or sensitivity. I think no psychological theory needs to be called upon to explain this. His finely rendered tree roots or impressionistic wooden walls are rooted and fixed in place and time; one could take time to look at them (or, if you will, contemplate them). By contrast, his photos of people were done in an instant or at a given moment. Only the portrait photographer gets the chance—and it is a rare one at that—to reflect on his subject. Merton's photography (*pace* the rather breathless text of this volume), like his poetry, is a mixed bag; some very fine works mixed in with a fair amount of the pedestrian.

The disjunction I have just made above may be used as a critical shorthand to assess Merton as a writer in general. Many things to which he turned produced only momentary attention from Merton and, in return, will receive the same. On those matters, however, which touched him deeply—human fragility, the need for silence, the significance of solitude, the search for human meaning, the character of ultimate questions—he wrote convincingly, movingly, and—yes—much. The questions are not transitory; as long as they endure, the interest in Merton both as monk and man will persist.

Lawrence S. Cunningham is NEH Visiting Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Scranton for the year 1980-81. His most recent book The Meaning of Saints *(1980) has been published by Harper & Row.*

Watunna:
An Orinoco Creation Cycle

By Marc de Civrieux. Translated from the Spanish and edited by David Guss. San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981. Pp. 240. $17.50, paper $8.50.

Reviewed by John Bierhorst

Owing to Claude Lévi-Strauss's playfully brilliant critical studies, notably *The Raw and the Cooked* and *The Origin of Table Manners*, the reading of South American myth, if still an acquired taste, has gained an impressive number of devotees; and with the ongoing volumes of Johannes Wilbert's South American folk literature series, sponsored by the UCLA Latin American Center, the basic texts, originally published in a variety of European languages, are now increasingly accessible. For those who have been thus initiated, de Civrieux's *Watunna* comes as a welcome addition to the canon, ringing further changes on such typically South American themes as the release of night, the concept of animal masters, the rejuvenating sky-lake, the origin of the rainbow, and the jaguar ogre.

Although the book was published in Spanish in 1970, it received little attention, and its Venezuelan publisher allowed it to go out of print. As David Guss's edition not only rescues these stories from at least a temporary oblivion but also expands the original work, adding fresh texts and an exhaustive glossary, it is doubly welcome.

Collected among the Makiritare Indians of southern Venezuela, the twenty-seven stories have been arranged by de Civrieux in a more or less chronological order, beginning with the newborn Creator's descent to earth and the burial of his placenta, which unexpectedly gives birth to the evil spirit, Odo'sha. The sun is created. Sex, fire, and food are discovered. But the Creator's efforts to establish a permanent civilization are repeatedly compromised by Odo'sha. Eventually Odo'sha comes to be identified with the newly arrived Spanish

colonists, who proceed to crucify the Creator. Although the Creator escapes, he is disheartened and decides to abandon his people, returning to the sky world from which he had come. Before he leaves, however, he promises a millennium of peace, safe from the influence of Odo'sha.

Obviously the concluding portions of the *Watunna* are Westernized. But the material has been interestingly reshaped by the native storyteller, who regards the missionary's crucifix as a sign of evil and who speaks of St. Peter at the gate as a "Scissor Master," waiting to slice people.

The opening and middle portions of the epic are apparently free from Western thought, and it is here that we find the quintessentially South American motifs that will be recognized by the connoisseur. The visit to the jaguar's house and the theft of fire from his toad wife have particular appeal, as does the unusually poetic account of the food tree, which hangs from heaven by its roots. After the tree has been cut loose, rain begins to fall, and the earth becomes fruitful:

> The water looked for a way through the Earth. Now new paths, the rivers, were born. The Orinoco, Fhadamu, Kunukunuma, Antawari, Merewari, Metakuni, Kuntinama, and others, many others. All the rivers were born. They called them the New Water. They ran like snakes across the Earth.
>
> The earth became very soft for planting. Now the women gathered cuttings, shoots, sprouts, seeds. They gathered them in the rain to plant.
>
> Now four waterfalls came down from the top of Marahuaka, from the cliffs: Motasha, Iamo, Namanama, and Kuhuaka. They were born on the green Earth and they opened beautiful ways.
>
> In Kushamakari, three waterfalls were searching for paths, Auakosho, Iukati, and Matuhushi. They ran along pulling up stones and shooting out foam. You couldn't recognize the Earth anymore from the beginning.
>
> Now there were buds everywhere. The Earth became green. The forest bloomed....

Though it may have value as English prose-poetry, and though it undoubtedly echoes the themes of all myth, the *Watunna*—literally the "word" or the "story"—is in a sense a blueprint for Makiritare cultures. Interwoven with the basic narrative are explanatory asides, linking the various episodes with Makiritare religious and social customs. Just as we did in mythic times, the storyteller seems to be saying, so must we do today. The result is a work not only of literature but of cultural reportage—enhanced by maps and photographs and a substantial introductory essay.

It may be regretted that no information is given on the storytellers who were the ultimate sources for these narratives. According to Guss, de Civrieux pieced his material together from numerous tellings over a period of years, and "became the teller himself." Guss, in turn, claims to have avoided a "straight word for word translation." Regardless of one's predisposition to applaud or question so personal a method of folkloristic research, it must be emphasized that both Guss and de Civrieux speak with authority and that without this collection the oral literature of the Makiritare would have remained all but unknown.

John Bierhorst is the author of A Cry from the Earth, The Red Swan, *and* Four Masterworks of American Indian Literature. *He is currently preparing an English-Aztec edition of the* Cantares Mexicanos *under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

Dance of the Tiger: A Novel of the Ice Age
By Björn Kurtén. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. Pp. xxv + 225. $10.95.

Reviewed by Kenneth Irby

It has not been uncommon for scholars and scientists to turn to fiction as a means of making their theories and discoveries more accessible to a wider public. The brilliant and eccentric linguist and anthropologist Jaime de Angulo wrote a number of still little-appreciated novels and short stories based on his extensive experience of California Indians and modern abnormal psychology, and late in his life turned to chil-

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dren's stories, which he read over the radio in Berkeley on Saturday mornings, as a way of passing on the accumulated knowledge of a lifetime. Earlier, in the late nineteenth century, the archaeologist and ethnologist Adolph Bandelier, concluding that the general public could only be reached by "clothing sober facts in the garb of romance," presented his conclusions about life in northern New Mexico half a millennium ago in the form of an immensely detailed but rather sluggish novel, *The Delight Makers*. Just this year Richard K. Nelson's volume of stories of Eskimo life and culture, *Shadow of the Hunter*, was published by the University of Chicago Press.

It is also clear that the dimmer reaches of the human past have had a continuing fascination for makers of imaginative fiction. Norman Douglas' *In the Beginning* comes to mind, and certainly William Golding's remarkable "cave man" novel, *The Inheritors*. Twice in the last forty years Hollywood has given us its vision of what people were like in *1,000,000 BC* (one of which was a vehicle for Victor Mature, some indication of the quality of the vision). And there is of course the opening sequence of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, linking "paleo-fiction" with what is indeed its double-first cousin, science fiction.

In neither area, however, has a more impressive work appeared than Björn Kurtén's very deft and elegant novel of the Pleistocene, *Dance of the Tiger*. Kurtén, without question one of the world's foremost paleontologists, is the author of an imposing list of publications, including the popular (and highly recommended) introductions *Not From the Apes* and *The Ice Age*. He has the great gift of being able to present the most recent and advanced scientific thinking in a prose so effortlessly engaging and transparent that the reader is barely if at all aware of the immense weight of

scholarship and imagination that has been brought to bear. He is as well, and not incidentally, a superb storyteller.

In *Dance of the Tiger* Kurtén addresses what is arguably the single most fascinating and controversial problem of human prehistory: what happened to the Neandertal? How is it that about 35,000 years ago these shorter and stockier, lower-foreheaded and more beetle-browed (and also larger-brained) members of our species *Homo sapiens* rather suddenly just disappeared? Their place in the ecological web was taken by Cro-Magnon *Homo sapiens* of an entirely modern type, already with fully-developed racial (Caucasoid) characteristics, seemingly appearing from "out of nowhere." Did the Cro-Magnon peoples move into Europe from another part of the globe, and once there, did they simply annihilate the Neandertal? Or did the two peoples interbreed, with Cro-Magnon features proving dominant? Or was it a case of Neandertal evolving directly—and extraordinarily rapidly—into Cro-Magnon?

Kurtén's answer to this complex puzzle is woven with great subtlety into his novel. Setting the stage, he issues in the manner of the early Ellery Queen a challenge to the reader to solve the mystery of Neandertal extinction from the clues in the plot that then unfolds: A young hunter of the Cro-Magnon (they are depicted as black-haired and dark-skinned, whereas the Neandertal, from adaptation to their glacial environment, are blond and fair) is injured and left for dead when his father and tribesmen are killed by a band of marauders. Rescued by a clan of the "Whites," he lives with them, is taken as a mate by one of them (for they are matriarchal, the "Blacks" patriarchal), and eventually with their help finds and exacts his revenge on the great half-breed chieftain responsible for his kinsmen's death. Later the solution, with its bases in scientific fact, is given in an epilogue along with the explanation of a number of other items that may have puzzled the reader (such as

what a "shelk" is). As Kurtén admits, his model is not the only one that could be advanced, and is perhaps not even the one he himself believes is *most* likely (for another very different reading of the same basic facts, the interested reader is urged to look at the chapter on the Neandertal in Desmond Collins' *The Human Revolution*).

Despite the detective story trappings, this is by no means just another thriller, set in the Pleistocene instead of the Postmodern, nor is it some thinly fleshed-out, dryly didactic "thesis novel." Rather it is a very carefully, sparely, grippingly crafted work of dramatic fiction. A whole other world is created for us, this southern Sweden of 35,000 years ago, full of exactly attended and experienced and always relevant detail, made present with a vividness that could only come from someone who has known his own living environment with similar care.

In his excellent introduction, Stephen Jay Gould points out that Kurtén has managed to "insinuate" into the book every fact and theory known about the place and time, people and plants and animals. But probably what is most immediately striking is how *particular*, how imaginatively alive and moving, all these elements and individuals are, even to the least one. Scenes continue to ring true long after: the mingled terror and delight of Tiger's first lovemaking with his mate Veyde; his first sighting of the open sea; the extraordinary account of a family of mastodons stalked by a pair of saber-toothed tigers; and throughout, the exemplification of the vital role of *art* in the life of the great hunters.

Even if the explanatory enveloping commentaries were lost, the story itself would not suffer. It might even be that the total innate mystery of this other world would grip us the more intensely without preparation. But these instructive settings, and Gould's introduction, may also stimulate us to find out more, and as Charles Olson insisted, in dealing with the Pleistocene we all really have to go back to the first grade, if not to pre-school. (And so, the one objection this reviewer might raise is that the chapter epigraphs are only occasionally translated into English. French and German are one thing, Anglo-Saxon another! Original and translation of each quotation would have been welcome.)

The question remains, why a novel about all these matters? Because, as Kurtén himself says, it is only in story that we can begin to *feel* what it was like to live then, how the world must have looked to us, what we believed about it, what it was like to meet quite other, unknown peoples. It is his great accomplishment that Neandertal and Cro-Magnon come forth not as subhuman apemen and troglodytic, grunting savages, but as fully, complexly intelligent and feeling human beings. The great geographer Carl Sauer once said that "it *isn't* that man's intellectual capacity was less then than now, that *mistaken* notion, but that he had so much less to work with for so long." A book such as Kurtén's gives us strength against "disowning the past," and against dismissing others different from ourselves as either "apes," or "pigs," or "gooks"—as *unhuman*. And even further, it gives us ways, ways as close to the psychic bone as fairy tales can still be for us, to meet the *others* of our own interior landscapes—meet and make friends of them.

Kenneth Irby is a poet and editor who lives in Lawrence, Kansas. He is currently editing a collection of the poetry of Mary Butts.

Vikings
By Magnus Magnusson. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1980. Pp. 320, illustrated. $18.95.
The Viking World
By James Graham-Campbell with Sean McGrail, R.I. Page, and Christine Fell. New Haven and New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1980. Pp. 220, illustrated. $25.00.
The Norse Myths
Introduced and retold by Kevin Crossley-Holland. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. Pp. xlii + 276. $14.95.

Reviewed by David Leeming

The "Viking Age" began late in the eighth century with such raids as the famous one

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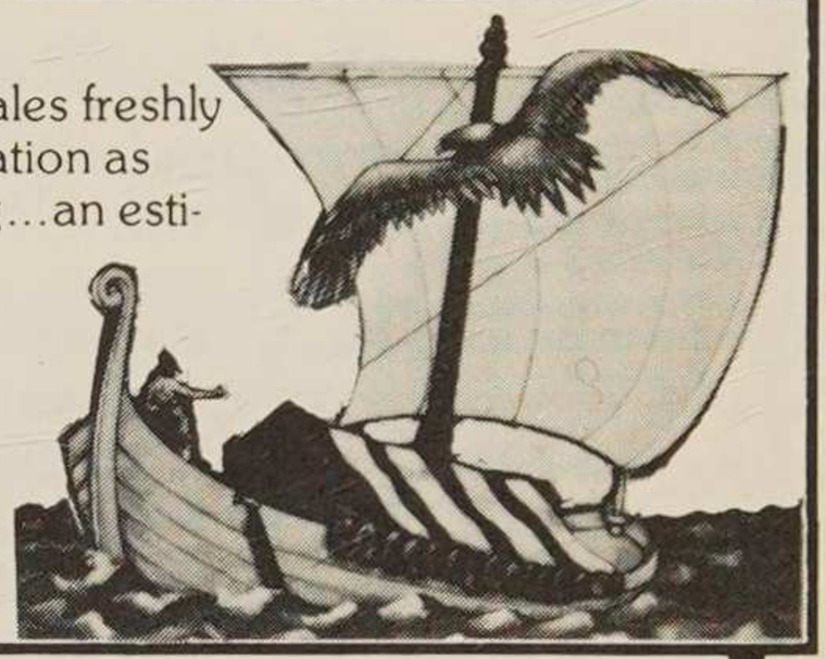

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on the holy island of Lindisfarne off the northeastern coast of England. Of this raid the scholar Alcuin wrote:

> ...never before has such terror appeared in Britain as we have now suffered from a pagan race, nor was it thought that such an inroad from the sea could be made. Behold the church of St. Cuthbert spattered with the blood of the priests of God, despoiled of all its ornaments; a place more venerable than all in Britain is given as prey to pagan peoples.

In less than one hundred years after the Lindisfarne raid the Vikings had captured York, established a kingdom, and had gained control of most of the east of England. The Anglo-Saxons expelled the Viking king of York in 954, but in 980 the raids resumed and struggles between Anglo-Saxons and men of the North continued until 1066 when King Harold defeated a force of Norwegian origin (only to be defeated himself by William the Conqueror at Hastings).

The Vikings by no means limited their attention to Britain. They plundered Paris and Hamburg in the ninth century and made their way to Spain as well as to Russia and Constantinople.

Magnus Magnusson's *Vikings* was written to accompany a BBC/PBS television series of which Magnusson is the writer/narrator, and James Graham-Campbell's *The Viking World* serves well as an introduction to the Metropolitan Museum of Art/British Museum Viking exhibition for which Graham-Campbell is a consultant and the author of the academic catalogue. Viking watchers will also take note of the recent publication of Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Norse Myths* and of a fine volume on Northern culture in general, *The Northern World*, by British Museum director David Wilson (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1980).

This activity suggests 1980 as the year of the return of the Vikings to the island kingdom they once terrorized and to the continent they are said to have "discovered" some five hundred years before Columbus. And they seem to have come back with the idea of redeeming themselves from a reputation for barbarism and marauding. Magnusson, Graham-Campbell and company, and Wilson all stress—as do the television series and the museum exhibition—the civilizing achievements of Odin's people.

It is true, of course, that people from Scandinavia were traders, settlers, and artisans as well as raiders. Mr. Magnusson reminds us early in his book that it was the "lawless" Vikings who introduced the word "law" into the English language, and we perhaps too easily forget the role of Scandinavians in the founding of the city states at Kiev and Novgorod and their success in opening trade routes to the East. We do not always remember that "Vikings" served in the emperor's guard at Constantinople. But in spite of, or perhaps

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because of, these diverse activities, one does not come away from a study of the so-called Viking phenomenon with a clear sense of unified cultural achievement or organization. What clear identity the Vikings do have seems to come from the fact that other Europeans lumped all raiders from the North under one term regardless of tribal origin. The word "viking" means "raider," and raiders are what Vikings primarily were insofar as they were a unified cultural entity at all.

The Vikings as such ceased to exist after the eleventh century, by which time their various descendants had been absorbed by presumably better established cultures or had become the national entities that still exist in Scandinavia and Iceland. While it is true that the myths, the fine boats, the sod houses, and some of the artifacts exhibited by the museums and the books in question are of beauty and interest, the dominant figure that emerges for this observer when he hears the word "Viking" is only slightly altered by the 1980 return. To be blunt, the museum exhibition and in varying degrees the new Viking books betray an attempt to get a great deal of mileage out of relatively little material. After all the beautiful photographs, all of the brooches, and even after being told that the warriors did not wear horns on their helmets, a Viking is still a Viking.

Taken out of the context of what may come to be known as the rather ineffectual Viking raid of 1980, however, the Magnusson, Graham-Campbell, and Crossley-Holland books (as well as the David Wilson book not reviewed here) have real value in themselves.

Magnus Magnusson's portrait of the Vikings is of a people who "dared everything there was to dare" and who inspired others with their daring. His image is the one contained in the great Icelandic sagas of

the thirteenth century. In the *Elder Edda* and Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* and the other sagas, the Vikings and their gods represent "an ideal of heroism and valour." Magnusson's chapter on the mythology and the literature is of great interest because it conveys with sensitivity the heroic pride tempered by fatalism that marks the people of the pre-Christian North and their religion. Magnusson takes us from religion and literature to a historical treatment of the Viking experience. We move from Norway to Denmark and then to Sweden and are introduced to such colorful figures as Harold Fine-Hair and Harold Blue-Tooth. The path to Constantinople via Russia is traced as are the raids and settlements in England, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Iceland, Greenland, and the North American continent. The final chapter concerns the defeat of the Vikings in England in 1066. As an Icelandic descendant of Vikings, Magnusson is unabashedly a Viking enthusiast and partisan, a fact that might be said by some to color his scholarly vision. But what finally emerges from his book is a successful conveying of the spirit or essence of the Viking reality. It is a vision revealed with a good deal of imagination. Magnusson writes well and throws himself into his subject with the same enthusiasm with which in the past he has translated the sagas, unearthed artifacts, and sailed replicas of the Viking ships.

James Graham-Campbell's *The Viking World* is a less personal and perhaps more specifically useful book. Like Magnusson's, only more so, it is beautifully and colorfully illustrated—a handsome book by any standard—but most of all it provides a clear, direct, and objective access to the life experience of the Northern people. The book is organized according to the aspects of that experience rather than to chronology. There are excellent chapters on trade, art, raids, and commerce by Graham-Campbell, a wonderfully illustrated and diagrammed chapter on Viking ships and sailing by Sean McGrail—something so central to Viking life deserves a whole chapter—and a chapter by R.I. Page on runes, those strange letters carved in wood and stone by the people of the North. The religious development, "from Odin to Christ," is described intelligently by Christine Fell. The Graham-Campbell book is one for people who seek what information there is about Vikings; it is a highly usable book. If somewhat drier than the Magnusson book, it will give the reader a better sense of what it was from day to day to live as a Viking.

Kevin Crossley-Holland's *The Norse Myths* is the work of a poet and translator, who tells a story with skill, taking us into the Viking world by way of religion—the pre-Christian pagan religion of Odin, Thor, and Freyr—and a strange and wonderful religion it is. We move through the book from the creation story with its frost giant Ymir, whose dead body was used by Odin, Vili, and Ve to create the world, to the war of the Aesir and Vanir, to Odin hanging on the world tree Yggdrasill, to the death of Balder and through the other familiar tales

leading to the end of the world called Ragnarok.

The Crossley-Holland book would be an ideal present for young lovers of myth (too often the Norse myths are tacked on to the back of textbooks on Greek mythology). The author's excellent notes and his perceptive introduction make *The Norse Myths* a valuable reference book for scholars as well. It may be that the myths provide the most lasting and somehow the truest insight into the Viking experience. Myths are poetry, and they make leaps that facts cannot make. The coldness, the sense of the practical, and the all-pervasive consciousness of death found in all the mythic tales—even in those of the trickster Loki—are to this reader, in spite of the gentle return of 1980, still very much at the center of a Northern phenomenon to which we attach the name Viking.

David Leeming is an associate professor of English at the University of Connecticut where he teaches in the general field of myth, religion, and literature. He is the author of Mythology, *a volume in Newsweek's "World of Culture" series, and other books in the field, and is a Contributing Editor to* PARABOLA.

The Trickster in West Africa: A Study of Mythic Irony and Sacred Delight
By Robert D. Pelton. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Pp. 312. $25.00.

Reviewed by Winifred Lambrecht

This book is an ambitious attempt at interpreting the enigmatic trickster figure, a task made more difficult by Robert Pelton's perspective on this ambiguous character as a symbol for "the whirling mass of relationships which traditional societies view as their world." Pelton's own explorations are interpretative: he hopes to discover the

"inner sense" of other peoples' creations through their stories and disclose experiences that could be pan-human. But the web of these traditional networks is only minimally explored. Pelton uses logic—the hallmark of the Christian intellectual tradition since the Renaissance—to elucidate this lawless, mythical being. The assumption is that coherence can be established through Cartesian analysis. Thus he remains locked into the assumptions of his own "school."

Apart from the Dogon material, the ethnographic information he uses as evidence is reported through the writing of Western investigators who have distilled and categorized the words of their informants. The book extensively explores trickster portraits, but it does not impart the personal experiences or thoughts of the African women and men whose oral art shapes the trickster. We don't learn how the Ashanti, the Fon, the Yoruba, or the Dogon incorporated the notion of ambiguity into their philosophy and their metaphysical quests. By neglecting the integration of the trickster within its cultural matrix, Pelton's endeavor is reminiscent of the early days of anthropology when evidence gathered by travelers and missionaries served to formulate hypotheses about human history and the human condition. Enormous research went into this volume, and although ethnographic information is not lacking, it is pre-interpreted data; the very existence of those who incorporate the trickster into their lives is denied; hermeneutic formulations serve as mirror images of the analyst's own world.

Pelton stretches the definition of the trickster figure beyond its orthodox acceptance: the trickster image is not simply a neat category; it is a multifarious ever-moving figure of irony and extravagance. Ananse (Ashanti), in his multiformity, becomes the focus for a discussion on liminality. Legba's (Fon) trickiness is treated as a concomitant to divination "for in divination Legba spells out the innermost of Fon life by transforming its cosmic complexities into the ordinary workings of daily life." The Yoruba trickster Eshu is connected to divinatory practices as well since he participated in their very creation. Oyo-Yurugu (Dogon) "hardly seems a trickster at all," yet his role in the creation was one of theft and disorder; his rebellious nature combined with his centrality in Dogon mythology provides us with a vision of "man's radical aloneness." This existential isolation is certainly *an attribute* of the trickster. But Pelton has expanded the notion of the trickster figure beyond its orthodox acceptance: the trickster image is not simply a human condition.

It is not surprising that Pelton should conclude by extending the essence of the trickster not only to his own experience but to other cosmological systems as well: "The Buddha's smile, Zen masters' pranks, Heidegger's ponderous somersaults, and especially Jesus' Cross—all in various ways proclaim that no-thingness (sic) will never have the last word because it is the last

laugh..." Jesus, too, is seen as a trickster: he represents "the constant possibility of transformation and thus of life itself." It is an unusual, sometimes limited, often provocative approach. Pelton has appropriated the insights of many cultures to illuminate his own.

Winifred Lambrecht is an anthropologist involved in alternative media and is a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

Prehistoric Architecture in the Eastern United States
By William N. Morgan. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980. Pp. xxxix + 197. $25.00.

Reviewed by T.W. Timreck and Will Goetzmann

There has long been a need for a book which makes the magnificent prehistoric earthworks of America generally available to the public. In *Prehistoric Architecture in the Eastern United States*, William Morgan successfully illustrates the complexity and diversity of these ancient Indian ceremonial centers. The plans and diagrams for eighty-two sites, reconstructed by Morgan with the help of architects William Ebert and Thomas A. McCrary, depict the mounds in a manner which is easily accessible to those unfamiliar with archaeological site plans and technical terminology. The author has thoughtfully rendered all of the structures at a consistent scale and in a section entitled "methodology" has included very handy conceptual models for visualizing the enormous spatial proportions of these earthworks.

The book represents a new combination of forces in the study and communication of prehistoric America. Its author is not an archaeologist but an architect, and he began his research from this perspective; the National Endowment for the Arts, continuing its visionary mandate, supported the artist in his research and also encouraged the results to be conveyed to a wide audience; the MIT Press has turned out a beautiful book which reflects the high quality of the artistic endeavor. The cooperative approach to American antiquities is a promising one; first, because it furnishes a perspective which complements scientific archaeology and secondly, because new ideas and conclusions may arise when research is funded by new or different institutions within the culture.

For instance, the giant ceremonial centers of the Adena-Hopewell culture, stretching along the wandering banks of the Ohio river system, are indecipherable mazes of fluid causeways, walls, and embankments connecting precise octagons and circles which are as much as 300 meters across. An architectural analysis of these complex spatial relationships would enable us to understand them as public gathering spaces. They could be analyzed as architectural "flow patterns," and looked at both functionally and symbolically. These elaborate sacred patterns might then describe some fundamental element of the Adena-Hopewell mythology. In glancing through the illustrations of this book, one is confronted again and again with questions about what these sacred spaces meant to those who built them. Why do certain forms such as the square and the circle ap-

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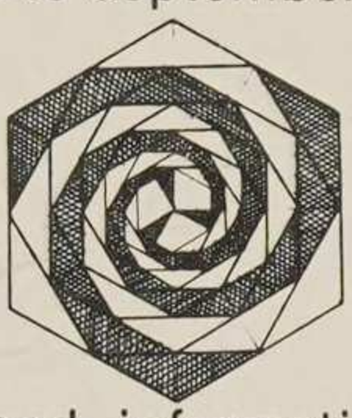

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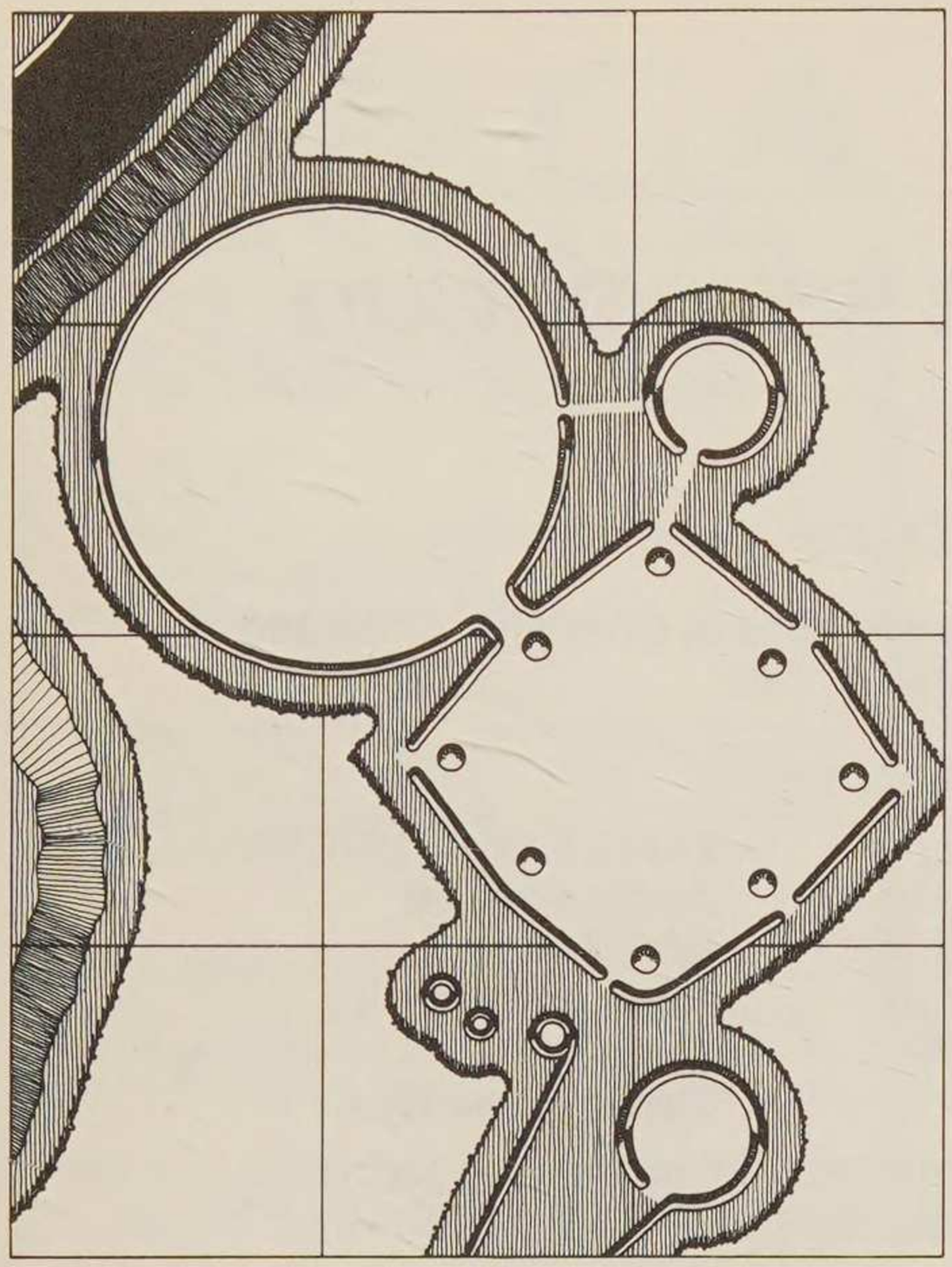

pear together so often? What logic governs the angles and the curves of the great ceremonial causeways, and why does there seem to be a consistent association of the mound sites with springs, streams, rivers, manmade canals, and ponds?

As an architect, Morgan rightly felt that his opinion would enhance our understanding of these vast monuments. Yet his text appears to be more of an anthropological analysis than a formal, spatial one. The descriptions accompanying each illustration are highly informative and reflect the work of the most eminent anthropological sources. But an architectural perspective of the mounds in terms of the way their makers used them, and in terms of their larger relationship to the landscape, would be welcome. Morgan has limited his book to the mounds of the southeastern and midwestern United States and does not include other tantalizing sites which may also have been precursors of the mound tradition. Archaeologists have found carefully sited burial mounds in the far north, along the coast of Newfoundland-Labrador which are dated as early as 7,000 years ago, suggesting multiple and very ancient roots to the ceremonial mound tradition.

Although the title of the book includes the term "architecture," Morgan's concentration on the earthworks prevents him from considering other interesting prehistoric structures which are architectural and may have a bearing on the mound tradition. These include elements ranging from rectangular domestic dwellings within "planned" village sites such as the Lamoka Lake site excavated by William Ritchie in New York, to the curious spiral-shaped lodges situated over rich ceremonial burials excavated by Maurice Robbins at the Wapanucket site in Massachussetts. There are also large- and small-scale stone constructions in the Eastern United States which should be included in an architectural survey. Mention of these archaic and woodland Indian structures would add to the readers' understanding of the variety and complexity of American prehistoric architecture. But the organization of the book is both simple and brilliant, for it allows the reader to see the evolution of mound architecture in terms of a developmental sequence which seems to begin over 2,000 years ago with heaped up shell rings on islands off the Georgia and South Carolina coasts.

The design of Morgan's research also sheds light on some of the classic questions concerning the mounds. Recent research has demonstrated that the Native Americans of the Adena-Hopewell period had already developed a sophisticated geometry which they transferred onto the earth in terms of large, standard proportions which can be found at different locations. To suggest this, Morgan cites the work of another non-archaeologist, James A. Marshall, who has begun to analyze the mathematical significance of the complex mound patterns. The reader is struck by an abrupt change in the architectural and perhaps ceremonial patterns between the Adena-Hopewell phase and the later tradition with plazas, courts, and pyramids reminiscent of Mesoamerica. The plans in the book clearly show how these "Mississippian" peoples adapted

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the existing Adena-Hopewell earthworks to their own very different symbolic needs, and the author demonstrates how these different types of pattern frequently blend in the same sacred site.

Since 1848, when the Smithsonian Institution published the first major atlas of the mounds by Squier and Davis (due to public pressure on Congress to finance the research), Americans have longed to know more about the ancient tradition that created these unique monuments. This book is extremely valuable because it offers an opportunity to compare a substantial number of these sites. It presents to the public some of the greatest achievements of prehistoric America.

Morgan indicates a basic concept in his preface: "It is remarkable that three millennia of architectural experience in the Eastern United States have thus far gone largely unnoticed, particularly in light of our present-day concerns for environmental preservation, conservation of natural resources, and pollution control (including visual pollution)." There is an emerging American awareness that these sacred constructions represent a different ideological relationship to the environment from the one we presently hold. How are we to understand and perhaps benefit from this relationship to the landscape, however, is never really approached by architect Morgan. It can be hoped it will find concrete articulation through other works which continue to examine the Native American landscape tradition.

T. W. Timreck and Will Goetzmann are currently completing a documentary film for the Public Television System on the ancient peoples of the Northeast, which will also consider the evolution of Native American sacred space.

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FULL CIRCLE *(Continued from page 5)*

with, which is the nature of our own minds, our most basic situation.

Postscript: if Mr. Weinstein should like to investigate a possible answer to how awareness helps he might read the Venerable Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche's *Myth of Freedom.*

—Barbara Moraff
Strafford, VT

Norman Weinstein responds:

Ms. Moraff's reading of my review of Gary Snyder's new book seems limited by a set of philosophical assumptions I don't share. The notion of Society as something "not independent of ourselves and so cannot possibly be other than *who we actually are" is anathema to my way of thinking. Both Ms. Moraff and I live in a Society that, if sheer numbers mean anything, finds its spiritual leadership in Moral Majority and its Imperial power in Ronald Reagan. How did this condition come about if I and my society are one and the same? The whole issue of the relationship between poet and shaman should be viewed within the context of our present societal morass. It is one matter to analyze the shaman's role within the context of fourteenth-century Tibet; another to consider the authenticity of a twentieth-century American poet finding shamanism an imaginative wellspring for his art and life.*

I am willing to admit that I still view the world through what Ms. Moraff would identify as "dualistic filters." Fortunately book reviewers need not attain satori *to practice their craft. What is relevant to this discussion of Snyder is the fact that he, also, operates within the terms of a dualistic society. He earns part of his livelihood by giving poetry readings within academic settings. He writes for publications that are financially controlled by petrochemical companies. He exists in a context of beautiful contradictions: the Reed College graduate who can work on a freighter, the spokesman/shaman for the preservation of the wilderness riding jumbo jets to speak at metropolitan conferences on the future of the earth.*

I deeply appreciate Snyder's life style as well as art because of his passionate engagement with reconciling artistic/spiritual activity with living in a corrupt and decaying social nexus. The comparison to Thoreau was altogether sympathetic. Thoreau was the man who constructed an alternative life in the midst of conventional society AND was also the man who left Walden Pond for good after a year. Look out for those who remember only Thoreau the solitary saint. They might want to turn him into a New England savior or shaman. Whatever kind of man Thoreau was, I suspect he was "impractical"—my quotes suggest irony. Practicality in this society is often measured by one's capacity to adapt to the conventional societal norms. The label itself seems suspect to me. A ruthlessly profit-motivated society will always see poets like Snyder as impossibly "impractical." How can his idealism be marketed?

As for Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's book: my reading of it left me unenlightened regarding the shaman/poet question. Perhaps within the rare atmosphere of Trungpa's Naropa, *poets can call themselves shamans without suffering the pangs of conscience that occur when one tries to actualize that role within the society at large.*

This issue of PARABOLA (Vol. V, No. 4) is of intense interest for me because of my strong belief in the dichotomy of humanity. Being a man, I have always felt that a woman is the means of my fulfillment and understanding of life. The problem with many men and women is their attitude of being complete in their individuality without need for any interrelationship with another person.

The editorial "FOCUS" dealt with this problem in the introduction of this issue of PARABOLA. The dissertation by Helen M. Luke, "The Perennial Feminine," represented an analysis and presentation of the feminine personality that I had sensed, but had not seen before. However, although Heinrich Zimmer is very well informed on Hindu literature, I am stirred to make my own interpretation and observations about

the Srī-Yantra, not because he did not faithfully present the traditional interpretation...but [because] a wider application is possible...

Within the symbolism of the Sri-Yantra, the *sakti* concept is not really central to the motif. The basic center is the dot for the circle of unity. "Energy is held to be the essence of the world,"—*not śakti*. And that "energy" is in three forms, of which *śakti* is the feminine form, *vahni* is the masculine form, and *tejas* is the neuter form...in the sense that it can be either masculine or feminine.

The outermost form [of the Srī-Yantra] is a cross, upon which are the four angles of a square. Within the square are the four outer circles divided or separated from the inner circles by the sixteen "eternal figures" connected as triads with the eight internal figures between the two inner circles. As for the triangulations, they are basically a concatenation that form concentric lozenges, with three triangles on each side of the outermost one, for a total of twelve, besides the uppermost triangle and the lowermost one.

Now the basic characteristic of a triangle is that of unity, in the same sense that a circle is a unity. However, the existence of a triangle is in three points that are joined by two lines each to the others...The concept of the trinity of persons for Deity is perfectly represented in the triangle, with a person at each point and interrelated directly with the other persons. This Trinity of Deity is also the pattern for the Trinity of Humanity, represented in three persons of: 1) a father, 2) a mother, and 3) a child. Total humanity is thus not represented in an individual person but in the interrelationship of three persons...

The reason [for inserting a central triangle within the Srī-Yantra] was that the adepts who devoted themselves to the discipline of drawing the Srī-Yantra and meditating on its significance were expected to be *only* men—*not* women! The focus [was] on the central anima of their own being, and renounced the actual feminine in mother, wife, and daughter. It is thus likely to be misleading to represent Tantric metaphysics as proposing that the ultimate Deity is feminine...

Masculinity and femininity are...ineffectual until fulfilled through the third representation of energy (God) in *tejas*, "The eternal Neuter" that may be either masculine or feminine (son or daughter).

The *śakti* and *vahni* forms of energy are not represented in the position of the triangles, but in the points of the triangles. The position of the triangles represent Humanity as it were looking through a mirror to see the pattern and prototype of what they are to find in God. As the Apostle Paul wrote: "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face," when at last we come into perfect union with God.

—Tom Hersey
Moravia, IA

As an avid reader of PARABOLA beginning with Vol. I, No. 1, I have often wanted to write to tell you how special your journal is. Each issue seems to trigger waves of inspiration, communion, and wholeness through its images and central theme. The selections are always carefully and thoughtfully chosen for balance and range, as well as superiority of vision and expression. Perhaps what PARABOLA excels in most is the creation of a special awareness: that myth and the quest for meaning are not esoteric bodies of knowledge and activity, but part of the texture and content of everyday experience.

—Roberta Rubenstein
Washington, DC

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Lee B. Ewing, Managing Editor. September 30, 1980.

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Robert Bly is the author of *The Light Around the Body*, *Sleepers Joining Hands*, and *This Tree Will be Here For a Thousand Years*, volumes of poetry. Well-known for his readings and translations, he has recently edited an anthology of nature poetry for Sierra Club, *News of the Universe*. His translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Selected Poems* will be available from Harper & Row in the near future. Bly lives in Moose Lake, Minnesota.

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Paul Caponigro, one of America's foremost photographers, has devoted considerable time to teaching and to conducting private workshops since 1960. For the past thirteen years he has been photographing the prehistoric stones of the megalithic cultures of Western Europe, and these pictures will be published by Aperture in the near future. *The Stonehenge Portfolio*, available in an edition of sixty sets of twelve images signed and numbered by Caponigro, may be obtained by writing to the photographer at Route 3, Box 96D, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501.

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David Guss is a poet, translator, and editor presently living in Venice, California. His translation of *Watunna: An Orinoco Creation Cycle* has just been published by North Point Press and his *Selected Poems of Vicente Huidobro* is due from New Directions in the fall, 1981. He is presently at work on an anthology concerning interspecies communication which will be entitled *Voice of Blood: An Interspecies Dialogue* and published by Panjandrum Press.

Peter Heinegg teaches Comparative Literature at Union College, Schenectady. He is a senior contributor to *Kirkus Reviews* and an editorial board member of *Cross Currents*, and has published widely on nature, religion and the humanities. His translations, all published by Doubleday & Company, include *Israelis, Jews, and Jesus*; *The Last Christian*; and *How the Pope Became Infallible*.

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Oren Lyons, a chief of the Onondaga Nation's Turtle Clan, who are the firekeepers of the Houdenosaunee, is working in the national and international arenas in the area of human rights for Native Americans and indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere. His work with the Elders' Circle is an attempt to bring better understanding between all men, and his primary concern is the welfare of his nation and of the Houdenosaunee.

Peter Matthiessen, fisherman, charterboat captain, diver, naturalist, and explorer, is the author of many books. His novels include *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* and *Far Tortuga*; among his non-fiction works are *Wildlife in America*, *The Cloud Forest*, *The Tree Where Man Was Born*, and *The Snow Leopard* which won the American Book Award in 1978. Interested for many years in Native Americans and their rights, he is now at work on the case of Leonard Peltier and is completing a book on the violation of sacred grounds by the coalition of government and industry.

Peter Nabokov is a research associate of the Museum of the American Indian, New York. After receiving degrees from Columbia University and Goddard College, he lived and worked on various Indian reservations. The author of two books, *Two Leggings: The Making of a Crow Warrior* and *Tijerina and the Courthouse Raid*, he is also the editor of *Native American Testimony*. He is at present teaching the first course ever offered on Native American architecture for the Department of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley and is working on a book on the cosmological significance of Native American architecture to be published by Oxford University Press.

Victor Perera has collaborated on *Last Lords of Palenque* over the last three years. His articles appear in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *Harper's*, and *Atlantic* among others, and he is the author of *Loch Ness Monster Watchers* (Capra Press) and *The Conversion* (Little, Brown). He is teaching in the newly formed Journalism Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz and is at work on two books, *The Invisible Jews* and a memoir on growing up in Guatemala.

P.L. Travers, treasured Consulting Editor to PARABOLA, is the author of the Mary Poppins books, *Friend Monkey*, *The Fox in the Manger*, *About the Sleeping Beauty*, and most recently, *Two Pair of Shoes*. She describes herself as a "dowser of myth," and in the course of that activity writes and lectures about her lifetime study of the subject. She has received many honors, the O.B.E. and an honorary doctorate from Chatham College among them. A new book of original work is scheduled to be published in the summer of 1981.

Carol Zaleski is Assistant Head Tutor and a Teaching Fellow in The Study of Religion at Harvard University. She is currently writing her dissertation on the literature of visionary journeys to the other world.

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