

Roman and European Mythologies

COMPILED BY
YVES BONNEFOY



TRANSLATED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF
WENDY DONIGER



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Compiled by

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Translated under the direction of

WENDY DONIGER

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Preface to the Paperback Edition

This is one of four paperback volumes drawn from the full, clothbound, two-volume English-language edition of Yves Bonnefoy's *Mythologies*. These paperbacks are not an afterthought, but were part of the publication plan from the very beginning. Indeed, one of the reasons why we restructured the original French edition as we did was in order ultimately to make these separate volumes available. For though there is of course a sweep and majesty in the full editions, both French and English, a breathtaking scope that is the true *raison d'être* of the work as a whole, there is also, in the English version, a pattern that allows readers to focus on one culture at a time. And it is with such readers in mind that the University of Chicago Press is issuing these paperbacks, which will include (in addition to the present volume) *Greek and Egyptian Mythologies*, *Asian Mythologies*, and *African and American Mythologies*. Each book draws from the full work not only the culturally specific material but also the two prefaces and the general introductory essays, which deal with methodological issues pertaining to all the cultures discussed.

Since each culture poses different problems, and each section of essays embodies the work of a different group of French scholars, each has its own methodological flavor and its own contribution to make to the more culturally specific study of mythology. The present volume begins with Roman mythologies and goes on to trace the ways in which Greek and Roman myths (known primarily in their Roman form) continued to inform and animate early Christian and later European literature. The particular innovation in these essays lies, I think, in the ways in which they apply the methods of mythologists to works that have previously been treated primarily by theologians and literary critics. This approach brings into focus an entirely new line of development in the great literary classics of the West and encourages us to take a fresh look at the problems of cultural and historical diffusion.

For example, there is one theme that several of the authors chose to select out of thousands of possibilities—the theme of the ways in which other cultures saw the links between their myths and those of others, and in particular the ways in which the dominant culture of the West, European Christianity, looked at the mythologies of the world. Thus, in the essay entitled “Christian Judgments on the Analogies between Christianity and Pagan Mythology,” the author explains how the early Christian fathers came to terms with the striking resemblances between their own religion and the pagan myths of the dying and rising god. My favorite argument is this one:

In [Justin's] eyes, demons find a choice ground for their manipulations in particular pages of the Scriptures: in the Messianic prophecies, inspired visionaries mysteriously described the Savior long before his coming. So the demons, in order to deceive and mislead the human race, took the offensive and suggested to the poets who created myths that they give Zeus many sons and attribute monstrous adventures to them, in the hope that this would make the story of Christ appear to be a fable of the same sort, when it came.

From these humble beginnings, European theologians continued to lock horns with Roman deities, even as European peasants continued, blissfully unaware of these theological battles raging over their heads, to incorporate ancient myths into their living folk traditions. And, on a rather different track, European poets continued to draw upon, and reinterpret, the great Greek and Roman myths to express their individual geniuses. We should hardly be astonished to find that French folklore and literature hold a central place in these essays, but almost equal time is given to the great English Romantic traditions up to the present. And the volume concludes with an argument for the relevance of these myths in our own lives and thoughts today.

Wendy Doniger

Preface to the English Edition of the Complete Work

Yves Bonnefoy in his preface (which follows this preface) explains why he organized his book—and after all, this is his book—as he did. He had good reasons, and he is eloquent in their defense. But it remains for me to explain the ways in which the English edition differs from the French in more than the language in which it is expressed, since some of what M. Bonnefoy will say does not in fact apply to this edition at all, particularly in what concerns the arrangement of the articles.

M. Bonnefoy graciously if reluctantly allowed me to restructure his work. As he put it, “Of course I will miss the formula of the dictionary, for the reasons that I indicate in my preface (the rupture with all the apriority of classification, the possibility of surprising juxtapositions, in short, the irony), *but I absolutely do not oppose* your choice, which is in response to very good reasons, and which is better adapted to the English-speaking world in which your edition will appear. I therefore give you *carte blanche*, with the understanding that you will publish my preface as is. For it is a good idea to point out that the book was originally what I indicate in that preface—this will bring in a supplementary point for reflection.”¹ On another occasion,² he remarked that there was another consideration (one that, I must confess, had not occurred to me) that had persuaded him to organize his original version of the book in what he termed “the random way,” while we might be able to rearrange our version in “the more organized way”: French students, he pointed out, have only limited access to open stacks in the French libraries (since there is not enough room to accommodate them) and few of the bookstores are quiet enough to read in. French students therefore have apparently not formed the habit of browsing—except in a dictionary.

Without denying the validity of his arguments, let me state my reasons for the reorganization. And in order to justify the changes, I shall first state my conception of the strengths and weaknesses of the French work itself.

The Strengths and Weaknesses of the French Edition

To begin with, even in its French form, with all the articles arranged alphabetically, it is not a dictionary, nor even an encyclopedia, nor a dispassionate fact-book even for those topics that it covers (and many major items are omitted). It is

a quirky and idiosyncratic set of essays, long and short, by a particular group of mythologists, most of whom are French and all of whom participate in the French school of mythology in its broadest sense. The patent omissions and biases have prompted a certain amount of criticism leveled at the French edition,³ criticism of imbalances, of inconsistencies (in the selection of topics, in the manner of their treatment, in the style, in the methodologies, etc.), and of the choice of illustrations, as well as more substantive criticisms of the interpretations.

Some of these criticisms are just; some are not. The arguments about what *is* there (what is said about the mythologies that are discussed) are interesting; the arguments about what is *not* there are, I think, beside the point. Many of the scholars involved in the project chose not to write about what other people (including certain reviewers) regarded as “central” or “basic” themes of the mythologies they treated; they wrote long essays on the subjects they cared about personally, and gave short shrift to subjects to which other scholars might have given pride of place. The reader who continues perversely to look for ways in which the glass is half empty rather than half full will notice immediately, for instance, that there is almost nothing about Islam or Judaism in the book. This is primarily because Yves Bonnefoy had originally intended to save this material for another volume, on the mythologies of monotheistic religions—a volume that has not yet materialized. It might be argued that this justification is disingenuous, for some of the very best material in the extant volume is on Christianity, which is by most standards monotheistic. But on closer inspection it is quite clear that while the book does treat the appropriation of classical mythology by Christianity, and the incorporation of “pagan mythologies” into what might be called “rural Catholicism,” it rightly does not treat mainstream, monotheistic Christianity as a mythology. Moreover, to have dealt with the central traditions of Islam and Judaism in this way would certainly have been tantamount to a betrayal of what the adherents of those religions regard as their basic tenets. Yet this Jewish and Islamic silence is also in part accounted for by the simple fact that the authors who were assembled to prepare this book did not choose to write articles on these subjects. Similarly, the African articles deal almost exclusively (though hardly surprisingly) with Franco-

phone Africa; yet these articles constitute superb paradigms for the study of other African mythologies. So, too, there are only two articles on Buddhism *per se*, and there is virtually nothing about Buddhism (or Islam, for that matter) in Southeast Asia (though there is a great deal of wonderful material about indigenous Southeast Asian religions, and those two articles on Buddhism are fascinating). On the other hand, there is extensive coverage of the Turks and Mongols, whose mythologies are relatively unknown to Western readers. This sort of imbalance might be regarded as a kind of mythological affirmative action.

This is, therefore, certainly not an encyclopedia. In a famous painting by the surrealist René Magritte, a caption in his neat script, under a painting of what is clearly a pipe, declares, "This is not a pipe." I would have liked to write on the cover of this book, "This is not a dictionary of mythologies." Rather like the ugly duckling that turned out to be a terrific swan, as a dictionary this book leaves much to be desired, but as a book of mythologies it is superb, indeed peerless. If it is not a dictionary, what is it, then? It is a most exciting (far more exciting than an encyclopedia ought to be) collection of essays on *some* aspects of *some* mythologies, written by a group of brilliant and philosophically complex French scholars. It is highly opinionated and original, and should inspire hot, not cold, reactions. Like all multiauthored works, it is a mixed bag; there is some jargon, some wild theorizing, some boring surveys, some overclever interpretation, and some of what I would regard as simple errors of fact, but there is also an overwhelming proportion of very sound and/or brilliant articles about mythology in general and about a number of mythologies in particular. This is not primarily a book, for instance, to consult for all the stories about Apollo; one has Robert Graves for that (though this is a far better book with which to begin to formulate some ideas about the meaning of Apollo). It is, however, a book in which to discover the delightful and useful fact that in the ritual celebration of the Brazilian god Omolu, who is of Yoruba origin but came to be syncretized with Saint Lazarus, people dance to a beat called "he kills someone and eats him." I was thrilled to come upon a hauntingly sad and beautiful Inuit myth about the cycle of transmigration of a mistreated woman, a myth that agrees, in astonishing detail, with certain complex myths of transmigration that I know from medieval Sanskrit philosophical texts. Other readers will undoubtedly stumble upon strange stories that are curiously familiar to them—stumble upon them quite by chance, just as Yves Bonnefoy intended them to do.

But if the selection is not as complete as a dictionary should ideally be, neither is it as arbitrary as a nondictionary can be. Most of the great mythological traditions are covered, and within those areas most of the important myths are treated. But this is not the point. What is treated very thoroughly indeed is the problem of *how to understand a mythology*, what questions to ask, what patterns to look for. More precisely, this is a book that demonstrates what happens when a combination of two particular methodologies, those of Georges Dumézil and Claude Lévi-Strauss, is applied to *any* mythology. It is, as its title claims (in English as in French), not so much a book about myths (sacred narratives) as a book about mythologies (whole systems of myths, or even systems of ideas about myths). It is that rare and wonderful fusion, a book about methodology that simultaneously puts the methodology to work and shows you just what it can and cannot do. It is a methodology.

Many of these articles tell the reader how to study mythology in general and, more important, how to study each

particular body of mythology, how to solve (or, more often, to approach) the particular problems that each mythology presents. Some tell the reader why it is not possible to write an article about that particular mythology at all (a consideration that does not, however, prevent the author from writing the article in which this assertion is made). The most hilarious example of this (I will leave the reader to decide which article it is) is almost an unconscious satire on the pusillanimity of scholars in certain fields; in it, the author goes on for pages and pages (it is one of the longest articles in the book) telling us, over and over, why there are insufficient data, why the data that we have are skewed, why the extant interpretations of the data are skewed, why all hypotheses and generalizations about the data are worthless, why in fact it is impossible to make any valid statement about the mythology at all. This is in its way a masterpiece, a kind of Zen nonarticle on a nonsubject, a surreal piece of nonscholarship worthy of Samuel Beckett. And yet even this article has its value here as a striking example of one particular methodology, one approach to the subject, that argues in great detail, and rightly, the obstacles that oppose any truly responsible survey of the subject.

But this is the exception, not the rule. The book teems with marvelous primary material, both myths and rituals (with which many myths are inextricably linked), using the materials and the methodological considerations to animate one another, the soul of data within the body of theory, and the soul of theory within the body of data. Sometimes the methodology is in the foreground, sometimes the data; usually they are in a fine balance. In the Greek and European sections, for instance, there are startling reinterpretations of well-known stories, or new emphases on previously overlooked details in well-known stories; many of the articles on the Greeks demonstrate the cutting edge of French structuralism. As Arthur Adkins has remarked, "The dictionary in its French version is a truly remarkable work. The Greek section in particular is quite unlike any other dictionary known to me. [It] for the most part presents the views of the Paris school, and the writers come out fighting. The Paris school is undoubtedly producing the most interesting work in the field at present. . . . [The work] represents more of a *parti pris* than the title 'Dictionary' may suggest."⁴ The Vietnamese section, by contrast, abundantly documents a fascinating mythology that is virtually unknown to the English-speaking world, and presents it, moreover, in the context of an enlightened political awareness that is almost unprecedented in scholarly treatments of mythology anywhere (but that is also a notable virtue of the articles in this volume that deal with the Americas and Oceania).

If this is a book as much about method as it is about myths, what is the method? It is a masterpiece of what might be called trifunctional structuralism, a joint festschrift for Claude Lévi-Strauss and Georges Dumézil, a vision of the world of mythology seen through their eyes, *la vie en* Lévi-Strauss and Dumézil. To combine the methodologies of these two scholars is in itself a most extraordinary and fruitful achievement. If I may oversimplify both approaches for a moment, Lévi-Strauss's basic method, a variant of Hegelian dialectic, is to seek the intellectual or logical framework of the myth in binary oppositions that are mediated by a third term; the Dumézilian approach is to gloss the main figures of a myth in terms of three functions that have social referents: religion and government, defense, and material production. These two theories are in no way contradictory, especially if one resolves the potential conflict between Dumézilian tripartition and Lévi-Straussian bipolarization by

taking into account the mediating third term and thus making Lévi-Strauss, too, tripartite. In this sense, both of them operate with triads, though very different triads. Furthermore, they complement rather than contradict one another because they focus on different levels (Lévi-Strauss on abstract intellectual concepts, Dumézil on social functions). Combined as they are in this volume, they are startlingly innovative.

Indeed, the beauty of the book is that it is not doctrinaire in its application of the theories of these two great scholars, but rather creative and imaginative. Dumézil's trifunctional analysis of Indo-European mythology is applied, quite loosely to be sure, even beyond the bounds of the Indo-European world (where it is, properly speaking, no longer trifunctional but tripartite), and a general way of thinking in terms of oppositions and inversions forms the armature of many analyses in which the name of Lévi-Strauss is not actually invoked. The search for tripartitions of both sorts is the driving force behind many of the analyses in this book.

The book is so very French that I thought seriously of putting the word "French" in the title of the English edition: *Mythologies According to the Contemporary French School*, or *The View from France*, or *Essays in the French Style*, *A French Collection*, *A Paris Collection*, *The French Connection*, and so forth. Yves Bonnefoy's remarks, in his preface, explaining why he chose primarily French scholars are delightfully, if unconsciously, Francophile. He has maintained elsewhere that the preponderance of French scholars was simply a natural outcome of choosing to organize the scholarship from the geographical center of the project, Paris, rather than to range over the world at random. But as anyone who has ever had the privilege of working at the Sorbonne will immediately realize, most French scholars think that the only people who know anything are other French scholars. In this instance, at least, they would be right: such is the hegemony of French scholarship in the field of mythology right now that a well-read American or British mythologist would probably draw on precisely these same "French" approaches.

This is one of the great values of the book: it represents, as few other works in any field do, the achievements of the *crème de la crème* of an entire generation of French scholarship in a large and important field. Yves Bonnefoy himself has remarked that he loves the book because it freezes a moment in time, in history, and in space; it is the embodiment of the beauty of the *Ecole Pratique*.

But in a way, the guiding spirit of the book is not just that of the twin gods, Dumézil and Lévi-Strauss. It is the spirit of Yves Bonnefoy himself. This is, after all, a book put together by a poet, not by a philologist. The editor of this nondictionary is also, let me hasten to say, a scholar of the first rank, but he is at heart a poet. The reader who keeps this in mind is more likely to get from the book what it has to give than the reader who picks it up hoping that it will be a kind of mythological Guinness book of records.

The Restructuring of the English Edition

We decided to restructure the book in order to minimize its weaknesses, emphasize its sometimes hidden strengths, and make it useful to the English-speaking reader in new ways. Its primary weakness is, as I have admitted, that it is not a true encyclopedia. If the English edition were arranged alphabetically, as the French edition is, readers might look for things and not find them and get mad, as some of the French reviewers did; and, on the other hand, readers might

overlook a lot of strange and beautiful essays that no one would ever dream of looking up on purpose at all.

Bonnefoy in his preface explains why he wanted to use a dictionary format: to avoid all prearranged categories, to let the reader find things by chance, to allow accidental juxtapositions to give rise to unexpected ideas. But to some extent this argues for a false naïveté on the part of the reader and even, perhaps, on the part of the editor, for both of them *are looking for something*. In choosing the arbitrariness of alphabetical order, Bonnefoy is indeed shuffling the deck; but he does still have a deck, which, like all decks, is highly structured. The alphabetical shuffle conceals the true order but does not destroy it. Thus, for instance, all the articles on a certain subject are written by a single author, an expert on that subject. Clearly the articles were originally commissioned in this way, and they are still listed this way in the front of the French edition. And each author does have his methodological presuppositions, which the reader encounters every time he or she wanders (arbitrarily, accidentally) into that territory. Bonnefoy chose to conceal the patterns that he saw in the material in order to let readers discover them by chance; I have chosen to set out in the open the patterns that I see, and to let readers decide whether or not they want to follow those patterns. The difference lies in what sort of browsing is encouraged, cross-cultural (through the French edition's physical juxtaposition of the major articles on creation or on sacrifice) or intracultural (through the English edition's grouping of all the Siberian or Celtic articles).

Several of the translators, the Honigsblums in particular, arranged the work according to geographic areas or cultures, which made it easier to check the consistent use of technical terms. Gradually it occurred to us that this arrangement would also be useful to readers. Bonnefoy chose to mix the cultures together to encourage cross-cultural *aperçus*; I chose to separate out each culture to encourage consecutive reading in each tradition. (Another, related advantage of the present arrangement lies in the fact that this arrangement will make it possible in the future to publish sections of the work as individual books, making them available to specialists in particular cultural fields.) For the overall structure I decided to use a kind of geographical swing: beginning with Africa, then traveling up through the Near East, the ancient Mediterranean, the Indo-European world; remaining in place geographically but moving forward in time to later European culture, then back in time to South Asia; on in both space and time to Southeast Asia, East Asia, Inner Asia; across the Bering Strait to North America, South America; and finishing the journey paradisiacally in the South Pacific. Within each category of culture (Greek, Celtic, etc.), I have put the long, meditative, general essays first, and the shorter, more straightforward dictionary entries second. Several pathbreaking essays that are not tied to a particular culture, and that immediately establish the Dumézilian and structuralist stance of the book, form an introductory sequence.

Of course, since both the French and the English editions have detailed indexes, and the French edition has an outline listing the articles according to cultures, it comes down to a matter of emphasis, for in either edition the reader can find materials that are arranged alphabetically (both in the index and in the body of the work in the French edition, and in the index in the English edition) as well as materials that are grouped according to the culture (in the outline of the French edition, and in the body of the work in the English edition). In the restructured English edition, the reader can still use the index as Bonnefoy suggests the French index might be

used, to find his or her favorite Naiad or Norse god, and also to find all the articles on, say, creation, or sacrifice, which cut across methodological lines. This is, after all, the same book, and can ultimately be used in all the same ways.

New problems arise out of this rearrangement, however, for some cultures don't really fit into any of the large categories—Turks and Mongols, Armenians and Albanians, Ossets and Georgians, Siberians, Malagasy, Maghreb—and so I had to settle for putting them where they seemed least out of place. Another disadvantage of my rearrangement is the fact that it exposes repetitions, necessary in an encyclopedia (where the author of any one article, who cannot assume that the reader will have read any other article, may therefore have to resupply a certain amount of basic material), but rather jarring in a book such as this (where the reader may well find it annoying to read the same story, or the same theory, almost verbatim in consecutive articles). A good example of this recycling is provided by the very first part, on West Africa, with its recurrent motifs of twinning and sexual mutilation; another occurs in the South Asian section, which pivots around the sacrificial pole and the avatar.

I decided not to cut any of these repetitions, however, for several reasons. First of all, I decided not to abridge or revise (a decision I will attempt to justify below). Second, some readers may only pick up isolated articles and will therefore need the basic information that also appears in other articles. And, finally, these repetitions demonstrate how certain scholars always think in terms of a limited number of particular myths, dragging them into whatever other subject they are supposed to be discussing. For scholars, like their native informants, do just what Lévi-Strauss says they do: they continually rework the same themes in a kind of academic bricolage, and no two variants are ever *quite* alike.

For the most part, I think the rearrangement is a positive move. For one thing, it makes it possible to *read* the book, instead of merely browsing in it or looking things up in it (though, as I have said, readers can still engage in both of these activities in the English edition). For another, it may prove more useful in this form not only to mythophiles and area specialists, but to people interested in French anthropology and philosophy.

The book is therefore *restructured*, because of course it was originally highly structured, ideologically if not organizationally. Its English title, *Mythologies*, to me echoes the wonderful books by Roland Barthes and William Butler Yeats, both with the same title, and further resonates with the French title of the great Lévi-Strauss trilogy, *Mythologiques* (treacherously translated in one English edition as *A Science of Mythology*). *Mythologies* has, finally, the advantage of being simultaneously an English and a French word, a last attempt at bilinguality before the Fall into the English version.

The English Translation

This edition was prepared “under my direction” in not nearly so important a sense as the original was “sous la direction de Yves Bonnefoy.” Certain parallel procedures probably exacerbated rather than minimized the inevitable slip twixt French cup and English lip, and one of these was the employment of a team of English scholars to translate the text that was originally composed by a team of French scholars.

Gerald Honigsblum translated the entire second volume of the French edition, with the editorial assistance of Bonnie Birtwistle Honigsblum. The first volume was translated by a

group of professional translators (Danielle Beauvais, Teresa Lavender Fagan, Louise Guiney, Louise Root, Michael Sells) and another group consisting of some of my students in the history of religions (Dorothy Figueira, Barry Friedman, Daniel Gold, John Leavitt, and David White). Their initials follow those of the original authors of the French articles. Bruce Sullivan did the bibliographies.

The translated articles were then checked for accuracy (in the transliteration of names, technical terms, and so forth) by specialists in each of the particular fields. Arthur Adkins did by far the most difficult task, working painstakingly and courageously through the enormous and often very tricky articles on the Greeks and Romans. Lawrence Sullivan vetted Africa and the Americas for us; Robert Ritner, Egypt; Walter Farber, Mesopotamia; Dennis Pardee, Semites; Richard Beal, Hittites; Laurie Patton, Celts; Ann Hoffman, Norse; Zbigniew Golab, Slavs; Frank Paul Bowman, Richard Luman, and David Tracy, early Christianity; Anthony Grafton, medieval and renaissance Europe; Françoise Meltzer, modern Europe; Charles Keyes, Southeast Asia; Anthony Yu and Jane Geaney, China; Gary Ebersole, Japan; Bruce Cummings, Korea; Matthew Kapstein and Per Kvaerne, Tibet; Robert Dankoff, Turks and Mongols. I did the South Asian and Indo-Iranian sections.

There are thus several levels at which inconsistencies—in style, in format (citations of texts, abbreviations), in transliteration, in ways of dealing with specific untranslatable concepts—could have slipped in: differences between the technical languages (not to say jargons) and the methodologies employed by the various academic guilds that regard themselves as the proprietors of each culture (anthropologists in Africa, Sanskritists in India, archaeologists in Sumer, and so forth); differences between the approaches of individual French authors, between our several translators, between our experts; and, over the long haul, differences in my own decisions at particular stages of the final supervision, and in the decisions of our copyeditors at the Press. We have tried to minimize the inconsistencies, but we know that many remain.

We left the bibliographies basically in their original form, with the following exceptions: in some cases we have substituted English editions for French editions, or extended the dates of continuing series, and in several cases we have added supplementary bibliographies (clearly designated as such and distinguished from the original French text). But many bibliographies and articles still cite the French editions of texts that have subsequently appeared in English.

We did not follow the usual practice of citing standard English translations of Greek or Latin or Sanskrit works that the French, naturally enough, cited in French. Instead, we translated the French translation of the classical text into English. At first glance this procedure may seem unwise, but we found it necessary because the French version of the classical text (and the subsequent analysis, which depended upon that version) often differed so dramatically from any extant English translation that the sense of the discussion would be totally obscured by the introduction of such a translation. We made an occasional exception, using a standard English translation where there were long quotations not directly analyzed in the French text, or where the available English translation was very close to what the French author had made of the original. (We were also, unfortunately, forced to translate back into English a few citations from English primary and secondary sources that time and other constraints prevented us from obtaining in the original form, and to retranslate several entire French

articles that we know were originally written in English, because the English originals were for one reason or another no longer available to us.)

We decided to give Greek and Roman names, wherever possible, in the form used by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, which unfortunately is inherently inconsistent. The *OCD* has the advantage of avoiding pedantry by spelling most names in the way that people in English-speaking countries are used to seeing them. This means Latinizing most of the familiar Greek names (not, of course, substituting Roman names: thus we have Heracles, not Herakles, for the Greek god, but Hercules only for the Roman god), but not Latinizing the unfamiliar Greek names, and not Romanizing any of the Greek words when they are not names. All words, including proper names, that are printed in the Greek alphabet in the French edition have here been transliterated. No accents are indicated, and macrons are used not to distinguish long and short *a*, *i*, and *u*, but only on *e* and *o*, to distinguish epsilon from eta and omicron from omega.⁵

We also sought to standardize the transliteration of non-Greek names and terms, such as Gilgameš (vs. Gilgamesh) and Śiva (vs. Shiva), and we used the Pinyin system for most Chinese names.⁶ But this general policy was sometimes overruled by the demands of a particular article. We strove for consistency within each article—using English titles for Greek works where the meaning was needed and traditional Latinized titles where it was not, full citations or abbreviations as appropriate, and so forth. Assuming, perhaps snobbishly, that anyone who couldn't read French couldn't read Greek or Latin, I have translated many titles and quotations that my sanguine French colleague, Yves Bonnefoy, had left in their classical splendor. Except for the titles of certain works generally known to English speakers in their original form, and terms that either are familiar to readers or have no English equivalent, I have translated everything, even terms like *polis* (for the most part), and *savoir faire*, and, sometimes, *par excellence*. I fear that this may insult some readers, but I suspect that it will be a welcome (and in any case probably invisible) crutch to *hoi polloi*.

Despite everything, the book remains idiosyncratic, but the idiosyncrasies are in large part a true reflection of the original French edition. In general, we have not corrected the original text at all, since, as I noted above, the work is valuable not only for the information and ideas that it contains but for being *what it is*, a moment frozen in time, a fly in amber, an incarnation of the École Pratique as it was in 1981, warts and all. The warts include matters of style and politics, such as sexist and occasionally racist language in the original text. These problems were sometimes ameliorated and sometimes exacerbated by the transition from French to English. Thus, to ameliorate, we often chose to translate *homme* as "human" rather than "man"; but the English "savage" (often more apt than "wild" or "primitive") exacerbates the negative connotations of *sauvage*, which the French often use in a positive sense.

Our respect for the integrity of the French text made us resist the temptation to correct what we regarded as errors in that text. (Of course, we made our own errors, and unfortunately the reader who does not have the French edition will not know, if he or she finds a mistake, which side of the

Atlantic it originated on.) We certainly made no attempt to correct such major problems as wrongheaded (in my opinion) opinions, nor to decipher the impenetrable semioticisms in one or two articles or to excise the unreadable lists in others. At the other end of the spectrum, however, we did correct typographic errors and a few outright howlers (such as a reference to the *Iliad* when the *Odyssey* was clearly intended). It was trickier to decide what to do about the middle ground: infelicities of expression, repetitions, and so forth. Of course we tried to clarify unclear thoughts, though we certainly did not always succeed. But for the most part, we respected our French colleagues' right to live with their own sins.

At first we made no attempt to smooth out the English, striving only to make the French thought accessible in English, leaving it awkward when it was awkward. We did try, however, to say well in English what was well said in French. In the end, however, our collective gorge rising again and again in response to such massive proportions of *translatorese* and the fatal attraction of the *cliché juste*, we did try to relax the translation a bit.

By and large, I opted for fidelity over beauty. This is rather a shame, for the original French text is, on the whole, very beautiful. Not for the first time I take comfort in Claude Lévi-Strauss's famous dictum that, whereas poetry may be lost in translation, "the mythical value of myth remains preserved through the worst translation."⁷ I fear that we have lost much of Yves Bonnefoy's poetry; I can only hope that we have found, for the English reader, most of Yves Bonnefoy's mythology.

Wendy Doniger

NOTES

1. YVES BONNEFOY, personal communication, 28 June 1984.
2. Notes on a meeting with Yves Bonnefoy, 6 June 1988.
3. As, for example, by ROBERT TURCAN, in "Mythologies et religions: Notes Critiques, à propos du *Dictionnaire des Mythologies* . . .," in *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 200, no. 2 (April–June 1983): 189–98.
4. ARTHUR ADKINS, personal communication, 2 March 1988.
5. Our attempt to follow, consistently, the above rule resulted in the following apparent inconsistencies. A distinction is made between the treatment of two forms of the same word when it is used both as a name and as a noun: thus we have Eros (the god) and *erōs* (the emotion), Cyclops (plural: Cyclopes) for the individual and *kuklops* for the class of creature. Exceptions to the general Latinization occur in certain familiar spellings particularly with regard to *clk* (Clytemnestra, following the regular policy, but Kronos, following general usage); to *-osl-us* (Pontus, following the rule, but Helios, following general usage); and to certain plurals (Kronides, but Oceanids and Atreidae; Melissae, but Moirai). In general, upsilon is transliterated as *y* in Latinized names, such as Polyphemos, but as *u* in nouns, such as *polumētis*. And so forth.
6. For the Yoruba names, we chose to follow the French edition in using a simplified transliteration, for the system that is technically, and politically, correct is extremely cumbersome and incompatible with the methods used in other parts of the work.
7. CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS, *Structural Anthropology* (New York 1963), 210.

Preface to the French Edition of the Complete Work

I

A few words of introduction, not in justification of the enterprise, but in order to clarify certain of its intentions and various points of method.

One of our primary convictions was of the need to adopt the dictionary format. Encyclopedias, invariably too lengthy to be read in a single sitting, are usually approached through the index, thereby functioning like dictionaries but with certain disadvantages that dictionaries do not have. For one thing, readers of encyclopedias are deprived of those sudden juxtapositions that alphabetical order can effect between two topics that may have something in common but occur in different contexts: chance encounters from which fresh insights can emerge. And for another thing, an encyclopedia, no matter how rationally intended the order of its contents, cannot but reflect the preconceptions of the time when it was written; it thus rapidly becomes dated and, even, from the very moment of its conception, imposes certain constraints on its readers. We have only to think of the treatises of the not very distant past and their way of drawing distinctions between the Mediterranean world and what is loosely referred to as the Orient, as if western Europeans lived at the center of the world! Progress has been made in this respect, but potentially dangerous prejudices are undeniably still at work in our thinking today. "Any classification of religions . . . will always in some way be factitious or one-sided; none is susceptible to proof," wrote Henri-Charles Puech.¹ Only alphabetical order, arbitrary by definition, can eliminate hidden dogmatism or prevent the consolidation of an error as yet unperceived as such.

Furthermore, and as a corollary to its primary task of rational organization, an encyclopedia also tends toward a kind of unity—if not homogeneity—of discourse; and because any work of this kind attempts to say the most in the least possible number of pages, there will be—in order to achieve coherent exposition of the most important material—an attenuation of what, in a monograph, would remain undiminished or would even be enhanced: diversity of viewpoint, the clash of ideas and methods, to say nothing of the irreconcilability of different scholars' feelings, aspirations, and temperaments. Even when there is consensus on some point, we cannot believe that this disparity, the nutri-

ent on which all scholarship thrives, will have lost its seminal value. The advantage of a dictionary, which allows free rein to a greater number of authors, and which facilitates the juxtaposition of both detailed analysis and broad synthesis, is that it can more comfortably, or more immediately, accommodate a living science whose very contradictions and even lapses into confusion serve as a lesson that can inspire, and on which we can reflect. We might say that a dictionary can aspire to a totalization which, because it is still only potential, is less subject to the perils of dogmatic deviation. Within a dictionary's open-ended structure, every aspect of scientific research—classification or comparison, hypothesis or explanation, discovery of a law or conjecture as to its significance—will be allowed to reveal its specificity and find its own level. We may, therefore, regard the dictionary format as the most adequate expression of today's scholarship, which is suspicious of all systems, instinctively realizing the complexity and pluralities inherent in its objects of study as well as the interaction between these objects and its own methods.

There is, in short, a kind of spirit or "genius" in what might simply appear to be the way the subject matter is arranged; and in direct consequence of this conception came the following decision: that in making the choices rendered necessary by the limited space, preference would be given to the process of discovery rather than to what has already been discovered; to new challenges, new departures, and new divergences rather than to the syntheses of the past, even those still found acceptable today. In deciding what to include in the dictionary, our preference has been, in other words, for new problems rather than old (and hence overfamiliar) solutions, even major ones. *Research*, the only endeavor, today, to which we habitually apply the word "pure," has been our true objective. In this book the reader will find what are at this very moment the pivotal points being debated in regard to this or that myth or religious festival, and not a mere enumeration—the comprehensiveness of which would in any case be difficult to establish—of points already settled in the past. And let us remark in passing that, by so doing, we are merely making public, for the sake of a more general reflection, a practice that has already proved itself in certain scientific circles, but only to a privileged few. The introduction to the *Annuaire* of the École des Hautes Études (section V, religions), states that the

teaching dispensed by the professors of this institution is a science "in process" and that "those responsible for teaching others will find no better way to exercise their function as the initiating and motivating force behind their students' research than by sharing . . . the results of their own, even if this means admitting to failures." In this dictionary we have not always been quite so radical as these admirable words advise, but we, too, have attempted not to "transmit what is already known, but to demonstrate as concretely as possible how knowledge is acquired, and how it grows."²

It should therefore come as no surprise to the reader that some of the assignments normally charged to works on mythology were eliminated from our project at the outset, notably those detailed accounts of demigods, nymphs, demons, genies, and heroes that occupy the forefront of less recent or more conventional studies. Insofar as these figures do not appear prominently among those chosen by contemporary scholars for reevaluation, merely to have listed them and added a few perfunctory remarks about each one—which, as there are thousands of them, is the best we could have done—would have been once again, and once too often, to present only the chaff instead of getting at the grain deep within, to rethrust the oversimplifications of yesteryear with an outward show of scientific objectivity. Apart from a few minor protagonists of Greek myth—retained because of their artistic or literary importance, through centuries of survival or revival or nostalgia for the gods of antiquity—we have chosen to deal, rather, with the innumerable minor characters in the drama of creation and the cosmos within the context of broader-based articles concerned primarily with *structures*: creation, cosmos, sacrifice, the divinity of the waters, divine animals or ancestors, etc.—the structures that modern science has taught us better to discern beneath the apparent disorder of myths. For only through these more active concepts, these more all-encompassing frameworks, can we realize the ultimate meaning of something that has always been only an element in the symbolic totality arising from man's desire to know; only in this way will we be able to perceive the differences, similarities, resonances, and, what is more, the perhaps hidden truth, the quality of mystery, even the power to terrify, that underlies figures who became, in the mirror of classical paintings or in the *Mythologies* of our grandparents, elegant Marsyas or lovable Flora. The reader will, however, be able to find the information that our articles do dispense about many of these tiny sparks from the larger fire, by referring to the index, where many names that he may have regretted not finding more prominently displayed in the columns of the text have been assembled.

We have, on the other hand, been generous in allotting space—and sometimes a great deal of space—to what at first glance might appear to be an excessively specific or technical development on a minor point in a remote religion, or an almost unknown tribe. We have done so because some important aspect of the most recent research in the field is thereby revealed, is therein at work, and the essay is therefore being offered, indirectly, as a concrete example of today's practical methods. In a situation of overwhelming possibility, the guiding principle presiding over the choices we did in fact make was consistently to prefer the illuminating example over the supposedly exhaustive enumeration; except on those occasions when a truly extensive, minutely scrupulous coverage of a field narrow enough to be included in the book in its entirety could also be made to serve as one of our major exemplary cases. This dictionary is in large measure a *network of examples*, each with some bearing on a particular level or category of religious experience or scien-

tific method; if we have included a study of sacrifice in a religion in which sacrifice is especially important, we have deliberately omitted an article on sacrifice for another region of the world in which, by the same token, animals or the presence of the dead have been selected from a mythic narrative in which they are felt to be essential. The advantage of this principle is that it allows us to plumb the depths, which is one way to achieve universality and thus to speak of everything, despite the occasional appearance of superficiality. The reader will note that our articles are seldom very short; allowing for the stylistic terseness characteristic of dictionaries, we strove for an average length that would permit us to publish what are actually brief monographs; I am pleased to note that the present enterprise has served as the occasion for much research, some of it completely new, either in subject matter or in approach. The reader will thus be a witness to the creative process in action.

And if he should be annoyed because he cannot find in our table of contents or even our index some name or subject to which several lines have been devoted in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* or the *Real-Encyclopädie*, he should also bear in mind the intellectual character of our endeavor, and should listen in the depths of our pages for the stirrings of research in process, that catalyst through which, from the womb of needs as yet unsatisfied, hypotheses as yet unproved, oppositions and even conflicts, are born the research projects, innovations, and ideas that tomorrow will provide the material for new articles in the still open dictionary and, later, for a whole new volume. Any dictionary worthy of the name must affirm, with real fervor, that it will continue thus; that is, that it will turn into a serial appearing twelve times a century, an institution whose past becomes future, a rallying ground that will help keep a discipline alive.

II

What is this discipline, exactly, in our own case? And how did we define or, rather, how were we able to recognize the subjects appropriate to our dictionary?

It is entitled *Dictionary of Mythologies and Religions in Traditional Societies and in the Ancient World*—thus, apparently, introducing two distinct subjects. What really is the subject, and what, in terms of specific content, will the reader find in the book?

Let us state at the outset that what our French publisher wanted was a "Dictionary of Mythologies," explanation enough in itself, because it refers to a specific area and one abundantly rich in problems of great scientific interest today. To quote again from section V of the *Annuaire*: the current tendency for the science of religion to assume a central place in anthropological studies is due to "the increasing importance being accorded to 'myth' for the interpretation and comprehension of the human phenomenon. On this point, the most diametrically opposed schools of contemporary thought are undivided. Religious myths have attained highest priority as objects of study by the most disparate scientific disciplines and schools of philosophy, whether they are regarded as images or projections of a system of communications among men; as manifestations of archetypes of the psyche; or as the special objects of a phenomenology of human consciousness . . ."³ Certainly we no longer believe, as did the Socrates of Plato's *Phaedrus*, that there is no need to study myth because the important thing is to know ourselves—rather the reverse. Mythology appears to us ever more clearly as one of the great aspects of our relationship with ourselves, as well as being a conception of the world

and the terrestrial environment that has been undoubtedly useful; we therefore ought to draw up a balance sheet—however provisional—of the discoveries made by the present century in the various chapters of man's reflection on myth. That there is still not complete agreement among scholars as to how myth should be defined matters little; that the problem of definition may even be premature also matters little, precisely because the plurality inherent in the enterprise of a dictionary as defined above actually makes the juxtaposition of contradictory propositions seem natural and allows them to be compared with one another. Neither in this introduction nor in the body of the book, where the actual choices have been made, will the reader find a definition of myth decreed as law, as if the die were cast. Our only methodological limitation, one that in our view safeguards the rights both of the study of myths as archetypes and of the methods appropriate to myths approached as systems of communication, is to apprehend myth on the level of collective representations, where, as one of our contributors writes, myth is "the form in which the essential truths of a particular society are articulated and communicated." Despite what may be the apparent freedom of the narrative, our task must be to seek within it a body of collective knowledge in contradistinction to the ephemeral creations of the individual consciousness, no matter how impressive these may be in great novels or poems. Apart from a few fleeting insights, included solely that we might better understand and recognize the limitations we have set for ourselves, there are in our dictionary none of the "personal myths" that come from art and the free play of imagination and that perhaps belong to a dialectic entirely different from those that unite human beings under the sign of their communications in the real world, of their confrontation with real necessities, and that are accompanied and made possible by rituals and beliefs. We have similarly omitted from the book what are sometimes referred to as "modern myths," representations that are circulated by popular literature or the media, myths that do indeed touch many spirits but that differ from the great majority of mythic narratives in that they are not so much the expressions of a society as they are the expressions of a yearning for a different society, or of the fear of forces that the structures of our societies have not integrated. In our view, the place for the study of these is, rather, in a dictionary devoted to the basic categories of religious experience as such, in particular, transcendence, eschatology, and salvation.

In short, the myths in this book have been culled only from the mouths of societies or groups. This does not indicate a refusal to study the connection between myth and the deep structures of the human psyche; it merely delimits, in order to avoid any confusion, an object of thought that could then be connected with others, or analyzed in other ways than has been done here. The one form of individual creativity we did consider appropriate to include, at least through a few major examples, is the reflection of those who, although they may have relied on highly subjective spiritual or philosophical preconceptions, nevertheless attempted—as did Plato, for example, or Cicero—to understand myths as society produces them or assumes them. Objective as contemporary scholarship aspires to be, there are a few preconceptions similar to theirs still at work today, perhaps; so who can tell if in these ancient interpretations of myth there is not some lesson that could be of use to future investigations either of myth as the expression of social relationships, or of mythological figures as spearheads cutting through local custom and belief toward more universal spiritual forms?

But assuming nothing about the essence or function of myth except its relationship to a society does not necessarily mean that erecting the boundaries for a dictionary of mythologies presents no further problems. For no myth exists in isolation; none is a narrative drawing only on itself for its terms and its conventions. We still had to decide what, precisely, from a given society or culture, and from among all its conscious or unconscious communal acts, ought to be included in the book so that none of the discussion or information would be elliptical or too allusive. In other words, what complementary studies must be integrated into a dictionary of mythologies to ensure that the overall statement that it makes will not be hobbled, giving only an impoverished and therefore dangerous idea of the field?

Here is where we can justify the ambiguous precision of our title, in which the word "religion" appears next to the word "mythology." Proceeding empirically, at no great philosophical risk, we may hold as evident that in every human society mythical narrative and religious practice are closely related; and thus, that everywhere, or almost everywhere, it is the historian or analyst of religions who also studies mythologies. As a corollary to this, surely we can affirm that it makes little sense to classify and analyze myths without reference to those aspects of religion that have determined them and will certainly clarify them. And, further, if we do so, in order to make room for this additional material we should also be prepared to sacrifice some of the data about myths properly speaking: what is lost in comprehensiveness will largely be regained in the comprehension of the place and the meaning of myth. This book deals with religions as well as with myths; or, rather, it stands at the intersection where the two roads meet—always with the proviso, however, that each of our contributors has been left free to decide for himself how to apportion the two concerns in practice, taking account of the vastly different forms that the same scientific goal can assume in areas as diverse as Indonesia, for example—that huge complex of societies, languages, and religious influences, where current research is still at the stage of amassing data that must subsequently be put in order—or Vedic India, or Greece, which we know plenty about.

We do not mean that all things religious are therefore in a relationship of complicity, or even of continuity, with the production of myths and the sometimes evanescent, sometimes enduring, figures of myth; there is a dividing point at which one must take sides; the consequences are bound to be great and it is important to justify them. It may come as a surprise to the reader that the religions of Sumeria, Egypt, and Persia are included in the book, while Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are not; that the divinities—if that is the right word—of Buddhism are included, but that no reference is made to the spiritual essence of this major religious experience as it occurs in China, Japan, or elsewhere. It may also cause surprise that, more specifically, the studies of the religions which have been included do not mention what has often made them forms of transcendental experience, mysteries, quests for the Absolute, arenas of soteriological ambition for the yearnings or the nostalgia of individuals or of sects. This is because, during such phases in a religion's development, the religious principle—in its essence, perhaps, a contradictory one—turns against the mythic narrative by which it is at other times nourished. When this happens, the spirit is no longer content to rest at the level of the gods but aspires to a transcendence that it senses as amounting to something more than the representations of it provided by myth; it rejects myth or creates in place of it a

gnostic system to uncover its secret meaning. And the effort thus made by the religious spirit to reach the divine within mythical manifestations that it regards as paradoxical or imperfect consequently determines that this aspect of the religious experience has no place in a dictionary of myth and of the rituals and beliefs associated with myth. We have not taken into consideration here the aspect of religion that fights the gods, the mediating powers, that holds them to be paganisms; this aspect in itself is so complex and so rich that it would take another book at least the size of this one to do it justice. The reader will therefore not find among the religions introduced in this volume those whose essential vocation is—let us try to be succinct—the direct experience of transcendent divinity; nor those which tend to have a universal message, addressed to all people everywhere, no matter what their culture or where they live; not even those religions whose moorings in the history of a specific society or a specific people have enabled them, through a founder, a theophany, a prophet, or their reform of a previous paganism, to attach to themselves legends or histories closely resembling myths. In practice, we have excluded from this book the great religions of a Word, a Promise; and especially the mystery religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Gnosticism, Taoism, and the legacies of the Buddha. The one exception to this rule consists of certain incursions justified by the “pagan” nature of some of their minor aspects, such as the cult of the saints in our own churches or the gods and demons of Buddhism.

Let us hope that these religions will one day form the subject of another dictionary, one dealing, as it were, with divinity, as opposed to gods; with universal theologies and experiences of unity, in contrast to the rivulets of myths, rituals, and holy places. Upon further reflection, we ought also to reserve for another volume certain problems of boundaries, such as the way in which past and present evangelistic missionaries have regarded the myths of societies they set out to convert, not without repercussions on Christian doctrine; or—to come closer to home—the way in which at certain moments Christianity itself has played the role of a myth: a myth of truth, or progress, even at the price of relinquishing a good part of its aptitude for genuine communion. As one of our authors writes, myths are never recognized for what they are except when they belong to others; it is therefore our duty to apply to our own behavior as people of the Western world the same methods that our science reserved only yesterday for so-called primitive societies. But a great religious experience must first be described before we can go beyond it and begin the task of distinguishing its ambiguities.

And yet certain religions which might be said to represent a quest for the Absolute as obvious as any other—those of India, for instance, and perhaps also of Egypt—have been included; but this is because in their search for unity they involve myth in a very intimate, almost ultimate, manner, if only in an initial stage and as one more form of illusion. We have not used the word “polytheism” to designate the religions whose myths are dealt with in this dictionary, despite its apparent reference to the differentiation, the polymorphy, of the divine. For although there are resolutely polytheistic religions, such as those of ancient Greece or Rome, in other cultures and other lands there are religions based on more complex intuitions, in which the multiplicity of representations at once clear-cut and diffuse exist in a sort of breathing of the spirit that seems to refute our own exaggerated distinctions between entity and nonentity, between the one and the many. Might we not, perhaps, call

these religions “poetic” or “figurative,” since an artist knows well the imaginary nature of the figures that, nevertheless, alone can express, in the artist’s vision, the essential reality? In any case, such religions belong in this dictionary by virtue of their massive and continuing recourse to the logic of myth.

III

And now for a few words of clarification concerning the geographical and historical area covered by our enterprise. Or rather—since this dictionary by definition covers all terrestrial space and every era of terrestrial history—concerning the relative proportions we decided upon for the various parts of our inquiry.

First, one remark that may be useful: if we have designated and defined myth in the context of an inquiry that by rights extends to the farthestmost regions of the globe, this in no way means that we wish to affirm, by emphasizing the most powerful of these mythologies—whose links with the languages in which they are expressed are obviously close—that there is any uniformity on earth in this mode of consciousness. As has frequently been pointed out, the word *myth* itself comes from the Greek, and the concept that we project into this word, although adjusted to accommodate overlappings and overflowings, also has a logic, a coherence, and still bears the mark of its origin; there is therefore no foundation for believing that what some other ethnic group has experienced under the forms that we call myth corresponds to the same laws with which we are familiar. Perhaps there are societies that do not tend to integrate their myths into some meaningful whole but leave them as fragments that flare up and then are extinguished without, in passing, casting any light on what we ourselves are tempted to look for or to find everywhere: the outline, if only a rough one, of the vault of a universe. If in these cases we can often see nothing but an incoherent babble opening the way to higher forms of consciousness, might it not also be possible for us to sense in them an entirely different mode of consciousness, one in which the discontinuous, the partial, the forever incomplete would themselves be perceived as the very being of human meaning? Could we not see them as an ontology of the superficiality of our inscription on the world—an ontology that the planet’s recent history would tend rather to confirm than to deny—somewhere beyond the ruin of our own aspirations? The representation of the divine can obey laws as diverse as those of artistic representation, which extends from the controlled irrationality of a Poussin, who was, in fact, an heir to the Greeks, to the fugitive traces on the gray wall of some works of art of our time.

This should remind us if need be that a dictionary like ours, if it is to fulfill its task of describing the variety of mythologies, must supplement its descriptions of the religious data with additional material on the cultures, mental structures, languages, and functionings of the social collectivity. To the extent that myth is one of the forms of asking questions about mystery, it represents a relationship between the human consciousness—in its cognitive functions, its praxis, its historical memory, or its exploration of the outside environment—and the culture as a whole. Recent research has clearly demonstrated that myth’s manifest complexity makes it one of the most useful tools for an archaeology of the imagination, of philosophy, or of science. It was therefore essential to the present undertaking that myth appear not only as an act of speech about the divine, but as a text in which the divine is infinitely embedded in signifiers; and it is the task of the ethnologist, the sociologist, and the

linguist to decipher and analyze these signifiers. A background in the social sciences is much more than an imperative for this book; it is its natural and inevitable locus, and one from which many of our contributors, either explicitly or implicitly, have strayed but little. But this consideration even further restricts the space available for the purely mythological material within the finite number of pages at our disposal. When the whole world demands to be heard, the time for each part to speak must be allotted sparingly.

How to mitigate this disadvantage? It would have been tempting to reverse ethnocentric custom and to eliminate at a stroke every trace of exclusiveness, every hierarchy; to relinquish forever the specious charm of the old Greco-Roman monopoly, and its belated acceptance of Egypt and the Near East; and thus to have offered to each separate part of the world an equal number of pages. But rational and fair as this was in principle, we knew that in practice it could never be other than a utopian ideal, at least for the foreseeable future. The first and major reason is that the analysis of myths that is most familiar to us is the work of scholars who write or read in French, English, Italian, German, and more rarely in other languages, still mostly Western ones. With all of its virtues and all of its limitations, this linguistic given constitutes an intangible fact that we must first examine before our own consciousness can be raised, before it can be made to apprehend from within how to circumscribe its own difference so as to be more receptive to categories other than its own. If the mythology of Africa or of ancient Japan is an object of study for our language, the myths and divinities of Greece and Rome, not to mention those of the Celtic and Germanic worlds, survive through hidden symbolisms, overt conditionings, artistic or philosophical references, even—and above all—through concepts, in the most intimate being of mythology, that operate on the very level on which our language apprehends and analyzes the object. And these components, all too familiar but never sufficiently explored, never sufficiently distanced, therefore demand an almost excessive attention if we in the West are ever to achieve a valid understanding of the other civilizations of the world.

This invaluable opportunity to psychoanalyze our methods, we felt, should not be sacrificed by unduly abbreviating that portion of the book dealing with our own origins; so, an important place, even though in a most attenuated manner, should once again be given to the cults and mythologies of more or less classical antiquity and to their later effects on the religious, artistic, and intellectual life of Europe, of which we, of course, are a product. And because for other parts of the world we have also had to take into account the very variable degree of progress in the field, so that it would have been unfortunate to weigh each contribution equally, we have resigned ourselves without compunction to being biased in our allocation of space, believing that to define where we stand does not—or at least so we may hope—imply a valorization of what lies nearest to us or any dogmatism. We have reserved almost half the work for the Mediterranean world, the Near and Far East, and for the historical relations between their mythologies and the European consciousness, as demonstrated by such phenomena as the survival of the classical gods or the fascination with Egypt after the Italian Renaissance. The other half of the book is for the rest of the world, here again, however, taking into account the actual importance that one region or another may have today assumed in a field that naturally is not static and that will have fresh insights to contribute to future supplements to the present volume. It is unfortunately only too true that the vast

societies of Africa and Asia have in our columns once again been given less space than the tiny population of Greece. But a particular problem concerning a particular, vanishing society in Vietnam has, on the other hand, merited more of our attention than many perhaps expected aspects of our classical world. We can only hope that the reader will not find our distribution of the materials too misinformed.

IV

Here now is some practical information to help the reader find his way through the labyrinth of the dictionary. [The rearrangement of articles in the English-language edition obviates the problems discussed in this paragraph, which we have therefore abridged.] Certain religions or cultures to which, regretfully, we could only allot a few pages are represented by a single article that can easily be found under the name of the country or geographical area, thus, *Albania* or *Crete*. Generally speaking, however, our contributors had more space at their disposal and were able to address various questions that they considered not only basic but exemplary, in articles spread throughout the book. A list of the names of all the authors, in alphabetical order of their initials, allows the reader to go from the initials at the end of each article to the complete name of the author.

This same list also indicates the academic affiliations of the hundred or so scholars who were willing to contribute to the dictionary; it will be noted that most of them teach at the Collège de France, the École Pratique des Hautes Études, or in French universities. Why this preference for the French, in a century when intellectual exchange is so abundant, between some countries at least, and in which we see so many publications—of, for example, papers delivered at colloquia—that mix together in their abstracts the names of professors from Tübingen or Yale with those from Tokyo or Nairobi? It may at once be pointed out that contributions to this type of publication are usually printed in the language in which the original paper was delivered, obviously requiring of the reader that he be made aware of the linguistic and conceptual apparatus presiding at their conception. French scholars know that, in dealing with ideas originally conceived in German, or in English, they must undertake the task of recognizing schools of thought, cultural or religious conditionings or customs, the influence exerted by the words themselves—since every language has its own semantic nodes, as complex as they are uncompromising; and they also know this task may take a long time, demanding further reading or travel abroad. They further understand that it is only in connection with these vast extratextual areas that they will be able to identify and appreciate the meaning of the text itself. It is of course always possible to translate, and to read a translation. But we must not forget that it takes more than a mere rendering of sentences into a new language for these backgrounds to be revealed and for the underlying meaning to be made clear.

This is precisely the risk that prevails when an enterprise such as ours is opened to authors who think and write in different languages—which would have to be many in number for all the major trends in international scholarship to be represented as they deserve. We believed that scholars who thus had to express themselves through translation would find their work deprived of a part of its significance at the very moment when we would seem to be listening to it. Moreover, the converse is also true: problems can best be differentiated, and even antagonistic methods best be revealed, through the widest possible deployment of the unity and diversity—the cluster of potentialities simultaneously

contiguous and concurrent—that is embodied in a single language at a precise moment in its history. We therefore deemed it preferable to call primarily on French scholars and, since those responding to our call number among the most eminent and the most representative, thus to offer to the reader, as an adjunct to our panorama of mythologies and religions, a matching panorama of the contemporary French schools of history, sociology, and religious studies, all of which are of the first rank and deserve to be known as such. To sum up: while a few of the original contributions to the *Dictionary of Mythologies* were translated from languages other than French, for the most part the material can be viewed as a whole, produced by a single society—an ever evolving one, to be sure, and one not inattentive to other cultures—at a crucial juncture in the development of a scientific discipline that is still young. This dictionary is French, the expression of a group of scholars all working within reach of one another, as sensitive to their areas of disagreement as they are gratified by their points of convergence. It is our hope that, if it should be translated, the translator will find it vast enough to allow for the emergence, here and there within its mass, of the unstated concept of implied bias not readily discernible in briefer texts; and that these underlying elements will be revealed in a translation offering the reader, and serving as the basis for future debate, an intellectual effort seen whole: not just the visible tip of the iceberg, but its hidden, submerged bulk as well.

V

Such were the guiding principles determining how our work should be organized. It is only proper to add, however, that despite the great trust which it was the present editor's pleasure to encounter in his authors—who sometimes produced material for him equivalent in volume to a small book—the above principles are primarily the expression of his own concept of what scholarship is, and what it is that scholars are attempting to do. Only he can be held directly responsible for them.

I have just used the word "trust." Going back to the source from which all trust springs, however, I should rather have said "generosity," because this word, glossing "trust," better characterizes both the reception that I as editor was given by specialists in their fields who could so easily have refused to credit any but one of their own, and the quality of their contributions, which to me seems patent. I see this now that the enterprise has been achieved. Most of these scholars, all of them with many tasks competing for their time, have been with our project from the beginning, when, responding to my appeal, they consented to represent their respective disciplines in a dictionary that was still just an idea—an idea to which they themselves had to give meaning. Most of them also agreed to oversee the illustration of their articles, thereby enriching the text with a variety of often rare, sometimes previously unpublished, documents directly rel-

evant to the text. Whenever minor vicissitudes befell the project thereafter, decisions were always made in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. I am extremely grateful to all the authors of this book, and to those eminent individuals who were kind enough to advise me when initial decisions had to be made. Indeed, my only great regret is that I am unable to express this gratitude today to two men who are no longer with us, two men who possessed consummate wisdom, foresight, and discipline, and whose example will stand as an enduring one. Historian Eugène Vinaver's masterly command of Arthurian Romance, a borderline topic standing between myth and literature, is well known. So, too, is Pierre Clastres's intense involvement with the Indian civilizations of South America; the articles by him that we are publishing here were the last pages he ever wrote.

I now have the pleasure of thanking Henri Flammarion and Charles-Henri Flammarion, who wanted this dictionary to exist, and who showed such keen interest in the questions with which it deals. My thanks also to those who transformed typescripts, photographs, and graphics into the reality of the present book. First on the list of these is Francis Bouvet, a man attached to the project from the moment of its inception and now, regrettably, only a memory, but a cherished one. My thanks to Adam Biro, who took over the same functions and brought to them the same understanding and the same invaluable support. Thanks to Claire Lagarde, who from start to finish, and with intuitive devotion and unfailing good humor, sent out requests, acknowledged receipts, sent out requests again, read, filed, saved, and expedited contracts, typescripts, documents, and proofs, even at times when her other duties were pressing. And, finally, thanks to Pierre Deligny, who, simply because he was asked, since we had no legitimate claim to his assistance, unhesitatingly accepted in his own name as well as in that of Denise Deligny and Danielle Bornazzini the crushing responsibility for correcting three successive sets of proofs, with their intricate web of unfamiliar names, cross-references, rearrangements, accent marks, and emendations, and who brought the job to a successful conclusion, with Mesdames Deligny and Bornazzini specifically undertaking responsibility for compiling the index. Yes, to these other authors of the *Dictionary of Mythologies*, many thanks, in the name of the authors of the text.

Yves Bonnefoy/l.g.

NOTES

1. Preface, *Histoire des religions*, vol. 1 (Paris 1970) (Encyclopédie de la Pléiade).
2. *Annuaire* of the École des Hautes Études, Paris, vol. 83, no. 1 (1975-76), p. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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P A R T

1

Introduction: The Interpretation of Mythology



TOWARD A DEFINITION OF MYTH

From Plato and Fontenelle to Schelling and Bultmann, philosophers and theologians have proposed numerous definitions of myth. But all the definitions have one thing in common: they are based on Greek mythology. For a historian of religions, this choice is not the happiest one. It is true that myth, in Greece, inspired epic poetry and theater as well as the plastic arts; yet it was only in Greek culture that myth was subjected to prolonged and penetrating analysis, from which it emerged radically "demythologized." If the word "myth," in all European languages, denotes "fiction," it is because the Greeks declared it to be so twenty-five centuries ago.

An even more serious mistake in the eyes of the historian of religions is that the mythology that Homer, Hesiod, and the tragic poets tell us about is the result of a selective process and represents an interpretation of an archaic subject which has at times become unintelligible. Our best chance of understanding the structure of mythical thought is to study cultures in which myth is a "living thing," constituting the very support of religious life—cultures in which myth, far from portraying *fiction*, expresses the *supreme truth*, since it speaks only of realities.

This is how anthropologists have proceeded for more than half a century, concentrating on "primitive" societies. Reacting, however, against an improper comparative analysis, most authors have neglected to complement their anthropological research with a rigorous study of other mythologies, notably those of the ancient Near East, primarily Mesopotamia and Egypt; those of the Indo-Europeans, especially the grandiose and exuberant mythology of ancient and medieval India; and finally that of the Turco-Mongols, the Tibetans, and the Hinduized or Buddhist peoples of Southeast Asia. In limiting research to primitive mythologies, one risks giving the impression that there is a gap between archaic thought and that of peoples considered "of history." This gap doesn't exist; indeed, by restricting investigation to primitive societies, one is deprived of the means of measuring the role of myth in complex religions, such as those of the ancient Near East or of India. For example, it is impossible to understand the religion and, more generally, the style of Mesopotamian

culture if one ignores the cosmogonic myths and the myths of origin that are preserved in the *Enūma Eliš* or in the epic of Gilgameš. Indeed, at the beginning of each new year, the fabulous events recounted in the *Enūma Eliš* were ritually reenacted; at each new year the world had to be re-created—and this requirement reveals to us a profound dimension of Mesopotamian thought. The myth of the origin of man explains, at least in part, the characteristic vision and pessimism of Mesopotamian culture: Marduk drew man out of the earth, that is, out of the flesh of the primordial monster Tiamat, and out of the blood of the archdemon Kingu. And the text specifies that man was created by Marduk in order to work the land and to ensure the sustenance of the gods. The epic of Gilgameš presents an equally pessimistic vision by explaining why man does not (and must not) have access to immortality.

Historians of religions therefore prefer to work on *all categories* of mythological creations, both those of the "primitives" and those of historic peoples. Nor do the divergences that result from too narrow a documentation constitute the only obstacle to the dialogue between historians of religions and their colleagues in other disciplines. It is the approach itself that separates them from, for example, anthropologists and psychologists. Historians of religions are too conscious of the axiological differences in their documents to put them all on the same level. Attentive to nuances and distinctions, they cannot be unaware that there are important myths and myths of lesser importance, myths that dominate and characterize a religion, and secondary, repetitive, or parasitic myths. The *Enūma Eliš*, for example, could not be placed on the same level as the mythology of the female demon Lamashtu; the Polynesian cosmogonic myth has a completely different weight from the myth of the origin of a plant, since it precedes it and serves as its model. Such differences in value do not necessarily command the attention of the anthropologist or the psychologist. Thus, a sociological study of the nineteenth-century French novel or a psychology of the literary imagination can make equal use of Balzac and Eugène Sue, Stendhal and Jules Sandeau. But for the historian of the French novel or for the literary critic, such mixing is unthinkable, for it destroys their own hermeneutic principles.

In the next generation or two, perhaps earlier, when we have historians of religions born of Australian or Melanesian

tribal societies, I have no doubt that they, among other critics, will reproach Western scholars for their indifference to the scales of *indigenous* values. Let us imagine a history of Greek culture in which Homer, the tragic poets, and Plato were passed over in silence, while the *Interpretation of Dreams* by Artemidorus of Ephesus and the novel by Heliodorus of Emesa were laboriously analyzed under the pretext that they better clarified the specific characteristics of the Greek spirit, or helped us understand its destiny. To return to our subject, I do not believe it possible to understand the structure and function of mythic thought in a society in which myth still serves as a foundation without taking into account both the *body of mythology* of that culture and the *scale of values* that it implies or declares.

Indeed, wherever we have access to a still living tradition that is neither strongly acculturated nor in danger of disappearing, one thing immediately strikes us: not only does mythology constitute a kind of "sacred history" of the tribe in question, not only does it explain the totality of reality and justify its contradictions, but it also reveals a hierarchy in the sequence of the fabulous events it relates. Every myth tells how something came into existence—the world, man, an animal species, a social institution, etc. Because the creation of the world precedes all others, cosmogony enjoys particular prestige. As I have tried to show elsewhere (see, for example, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, New York, 1954; *Aspects du mythe*, Paris 1963), the cosmogonic myth serves as a model for all myths of origin. The creation of animals, plants, or man presupposes the existence of a world.

Of course, the myth of the origin of the world is not always cosmogonic in the technical application of the term, like Indian and Polynesian myths, or the myth told in the *Enūma Eliš*. In a large part of Australia, for example, the cosmogonic myth in a strict sense is unknown. But there is still a central myth which tells of the beginnings of the world, of what happened before the world became as it is today. Thus one always finds a *primordial history*, and this history has a *beginning*—the cosmogonic myth properly so called, or a myth that introduces the first, larval, or germinal state of the world. This beginning is always implicit in the series of myths that tell of fabulous events that took place after the creation or the appearance of the world, myths of the origin of plants, animals, and man, or of death, marriage, and the family. Together these myths of origin form a coherent history, for they reveal how the world has been transformed, how man became what he is today—mortal, sexual, and obliged to work to sustain himself. They also reveal what the Supernatural Beings, the enculturating Heroes, the mythical Ancestors, did and how and why they moved away from the Earth, or disappeared. All the mythology that is accessible to us in a sufficient state of conservation contains not only a beginning but also an end, bounded by the final manifestations of the Supernatural Beings, the Heroes or the Ancestors.

So this primordial sacred history, formed by the body of significant myths, is fundamental, for it explains and justifies at the same time the existence of the world, of man, and of society. This is why myth is considered both a *true story*—because it tells how real things have come to be—and the exemplary model of and justification for the activities of man. One understands what one is—mortal and sexual—and one assumes this condition because myths tell how death and sexuality made their appearance in the world. One engages in a certain type of hunting or agriculture because myths tell how the enculturating Heroes revealed these techniques to one's ancestors.

When the ethnologist Strehlow asked the Australian

Arunta why they celebrated certain ceremonies, they invariably replied: "Because the [mythical] Ancestors prescribed it." The Kai of New Guinea refused to modify their way of living and working and explained themselves thus: "This is how the Nemu [the mythical Ancestors] did it, and we do it the same way." Questioned about the reason for a certain ritual detail, a Navajo shaman replied: "Because the Sacred People did it this way the first time." We find exactly the same justification in the prayer that accompanies an ancient Tibetan ritual: "As has been passed down since the beginning of the creation of the earth, thus we must sacrifice. . . . As our ancestors did in ancient times, so we do today" (cf. *Aspects du mythe*, pp 16ff.). This is also the justification invoked by Hindu ritualists: "We must do what the gods did in the beginning" (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 8.2.1.4). "Thus did the gods; thus do men" (*Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.5.9.4). In sum, the governing function of myth is to reveal exemplary models for all rites and all meaningful human activities: no less for food production and marriage than for work, education, art, or wisdom.

In societies where myth is still living, the natives carefully distinguish myths—"true stories"—from fables or tales, which they call "false stories." This is why myths cannot be told indiscriminately; they are not told in front of women or children, that is, before the uninitiated. Whereas "false stories" may be told anytime and anywhere, myths must be told only *during a span of sacred time* (generally during autumn or winter, and only at night).

The distinction made between "true stories" and "false stories" is significant. For all that is told in myths *concerns the listeners directly*, whereas tales and fables refer to events which, even when they have caused changes in the world (for example, anatomical or physiological peculiarities in certain animals), have not modified the human condition as such. Indeed, myths relate not only the origin of the world and that of animals, plants, and humans, but also all the primordial events that have resulted in humans becoming what they are today, i.e., mortal, sexual, and societal beings, obliged to work for a living, and working according to certain rules. To recall only one example: humans are mortal because something happened in the beginning; if this event hadn't occurred, humans wouldn't be mortal, they could have existed indefinitely, like rocks, or could have changed their skin periodically, like snakes, and consequently would have been able to renew their life, that is, begin it again. But the myth of the origin of death tells what happened *in illo tempore*, and in recounting this incident it explains *why* humans are mortal.

In archaic societies, the knowledge of myths has an existential function. Not only because myths offer people an explanation of the world and of their own way of existing in the world, but above all because in remembering myths, in reenacting them, humans are able to repeat what the Gods, the Heroes, or the Ancestors did *ab origine*. To know myths is to learn not only how things have come into existence, but also where to find them and how to make them reappear when they disappear. One manages to capture certain beasts because one knows the secret of their creation. One is able to hold a red-hot iron in one's hand, or to pick up venomous snakes, provided one knows the origin of fire and of snakes. In Timor, when a rice field is growing, someone goes to the field at night and recites the myth of the origin of rice. This ritual recitation forces the rice to grow beautiful, vigorous, and dense, just as it was when it *appeared for the first time*. It is *magically forced to return to its origins*, to repeat its exemplary creation. Knowing the myth of origin is often not enough; it

must be recited; knowledge of it is proclaimed, it is *shown*. By reciting myths, one reintegrates the fabulous time of origins, becomes in a certain way "contemporary" with the events that are evoked, shares in the presence of the Gods or Heroes.

In general one may say:

- that myth, such as it is lived by archaic societies, constitutes the story of the deeds of Supernatural Beings;
- that the story is considered absolutely *true* (because it refers to realities) and *sacred* (because it is the work of Supernatural Beings);
- that myth always concerns a "creation"; it tells how something has come into existence, or how a way of behaving, an institution, a way of working, were established; this is why myths constitute paradigms for every meaningful human act;
- that in knowing the myth one knows the "origin" of things and is thus able to master things and manipulate them at will; this is not an "external," "abstract" knowledge, but a knowledge that one "lives" ritually, either by reciting the myth ceremonially, or by carrying out the ritual for which it serves as justification;
- that in one way or another one "lives" the myth, gripped by the sacred, exalting power of the events one is rememorizing and reactualizing.

To "live" myths thus implies a truly "religious" experience, for it is distinct from the ordinary experience of daily life. This experience is "religious" because it is a reenactment of fabulous, exalting, meaningful events; one is present once again at the creative works of the Supernatural Beings. Mythical events are not commemorated; they are repeated, reiterated. The characters in myth are brought forth and made present; one becomes their contemporary. One no longer lives in chronological time but in primordial Time, the Time when the event *took place for the first time*. This is why we can speak of the "strong time" of myth: it is the prodigious, "sacred" Time, when something *new*, something *strong*, and something *meaningful* was made fully manifest. To relive that time, to reintegrate it as often as possible, to be present once again at the spectacle of divine works, to rediscover the Supernatural Beings and relearn their lesson of creation—such is the desire that can be read implicitly in all ritual repetitions of myths. In sum, myths reveal that the world, man, and life have a supernatural origin and history, and that this history is meaningful, precious, and exemplary.

M.El./t.l.f.

THE INTERPRETATION OF MYTHS: NINETEENTH- AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEORIES

If we fail to trace its outline clearly at the outset, the subject we discuss here risks either being merely a collection of rather curious interpretations accepted in their own periods, or else getting lost in the underbrush of the most varied hermeneutic enterprises. There are two indispensable points of reference. We must, first of all, distinguish interpretation from exegesis. We will define the latter as a culture's incessant but immediate commentary on its own symbolism and practices, its most familiar stories. There is no living tradition without the accompanying murmur of its exegesis of itself. Interpretation, on the other hand, begins when there is some distance and perspective on the discourse of a tradition

based on memory. Its starting point is probably, as Todorov suggests, the inadequacy of the immediate meaning, but there is also the discrepancy between one text and another, from which the strangeness of the first can become evident. For, in the work of interpretation, it is the prefix *inter* of the Latin word *interpretatio* that designates the space of deployment of hermeneutic activity. In the Western tradition, from the Greeks to ourselves by way of the Romans and the Renaissance, the first hermeneutics appears in the gap opened up by what a new form of thought decided to call *muthos*, thus inaugurating a new form of otherness which makes one text the mythologist of the next. But this interpretive path required one more marker to give it its definitive orientation. From Xenophanes and Theagenes in the sixth century B.C. to Philo and Augustine, hermeneutics took as its privileged object the body of histories that a society entrusts to its memory, what today we call a mythology. But the play of allegory often based itself on nothing more than a name, a word, or a fragment of a text, on which it could graft the burgeoning symbolism whose discourse became all the more triumphant when, with the affirmation of Christian doctrine, the certainty of possessing the truth unleashed the audacities of a hermeneutics like that of the *City of God*. It is only with Spinoza—as Todorov has recently stated—that a theory of interpretation takes shape on which our modern readings still largely depend. It was he who formulated rules whose mere application was enough to uncover the truth of a meaning, inside the text and within the bounds of a work. But before it could become philology in the nineteenth century, this theory of interpretation, which Spinoza applied to Scripture, still needed the presence of a cultural object with a clearly defined shape—mythology—understood as a discourse that is other, with its own distinctive traits.

Within these limits and for both of these reasons, an archaeology of theories of the interpretation of myth can restrict itself to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Travel accounts since Jean de Léry have traced an axis of otherness whose two poles are the savage and the civilized, between which the Greeks serve as mediator. It is the exemplary values of Greece that are evoked, in good Renaissance style, and Lafitau (1724)—while orienting it toward a deciphering of the present by the past—was merely to systematize the path already beaten, throughout the seventeenth century, by Yves d'Évreux, Du Tertre, Lescarbot, and Brébeuf. One of the best understood differences—the importance of which has been shown by Michel de Certeau—is that between nakedness and clothing. The detour via the Greeks allows the naked body, which a purely and simply Christian education leads one to reject as belonging to paganism and noncivilization, to be made an object of pleasure, and it may also allow the surprise of a return to oneself. Savages are so handsome that they can only be virtuous. And men's stature, the proportion of their limbs, their nakedness in the midst of the forests, in the beauty of a nature not yet offended by civilization, remind most of these voyagers of the lineaments of Greek statues and the natural privilege which distinguished, in their eyes, the heroes of Homer and Plutarch. As a Jesuit father wrote in 1694, "We see in savages the beautiful remains of a human nature that is completely corrupted in civilized peoples." Nothing could be more like an American savage than a Greek of Homeric times. But this splendid animal, whose development has known no obstacles, whose body is not deformed by labor, evokes the citizen of Sparta or the contemporary of the Trojan war only on the moral and physical level. There is no meeting on an intellectual level; all that the travelers of

the seventeenth century expected from savages was that they bear witness to a natural religion of which they were the last trustees. Never, it seems, is the mythology of Homer or Plutarch compared with the stories of these first peoples of nature. One reason is probably that classical mythology, thoroughly moralized, had by then been integrated into a culture dominated by belles lettres. Myths would remain masked as long as they were not assigned their own space.

The nineteenth century saw the discovery of language as the object of a comparative grammar and a renewed philology. In this linguistic space, which is to the highest degree that of the sounds of language, mythical discourse suddenly appeared. It did so in the modality of scandal, which would feed the passionate discussions and theories of two rival schools of the second half of the nineteenth century: the school of comparative mythology, and the anthropological school. As the Sanskritist and comparative grammarian Max Müller wrote, "The Greeks attribute to their gods things that would make the most savage of the Redskins shudder." Comparison defines the nature of the scandal. It is as if it were suddenly discovered that the mythology of Homer and Plutarch was full of adultery, incest, murder, cruelty, and even cannibalism. The violence of these stories, which seemed to reveal themselves brutally as "savage and absurd," appeared all the more unbearable since they were being read at the same time as the stories of distant lands, lands that colonial ethnography was both inventorying and beginning to exploit. The scandal was not that the people of nature told savage stories, but rather that the Greeks could have spoken this same savage language. For in the nineteenth century all that was Greek was privileged. The romantics and then Hegel affirmed this enthusiastically: It was in Greece, they said, that Man began to be himself; it was Greek thought that opened up the path leading from natural consciousness to philosophical consciousness; the Greek people were believed to have been the first to have attained "the uttermost limits of civilization," in the words of a contemporary of Max Müller, the anthropologist Andrew Lang. From the moment that the mythology of Greece could resemble the language spoken by "a mind struck temporarily insane" (Lang), neither our reason nor our thought is definitively safe from an unforeseeable return of the irrational element which, the voice of the savages teaches us, is buried at the very heart of those stories that once seemed so familiar.

The mythology that is subjected to the trial of interpretation is, primarily, nothing but an absurd, crazy form of speech which must be gotten rid of as quickly as possible by assigning it an origin or finding an explanation to justify its oddness. On this point, Max Müller and Andrew Lang are in full agreement. Their divergence appears from the time when the presence of those insane statements at the heart of language and in mythic discourse has to be justified. For Max Müller, a contemporary of the discovery of comparative grammar, the only possible explanation was a linguistic one. And his *Science of Language* argues that a stratigraphy of human speech reveals a mythopoeic phase in the history of language. Since 1816, when Franz Bopp published the first comparative grammar, language had been understood as a set of sounds independent of the letters that allow them to be transcribed; a system of sonorities, animated with its own life, endowed with continual activity and traversed by the dynamism of *inflection*. In the history of language, after what is called a thematic stage, in which terms expressing the most necessary ideas are forged, and what is called a dialectal stage, in which grammar definitively receives its specific

traits, an age begins that Max Müller designates as mythopoeic, in which myths make their appearance in very specific circumstances.

At the beginning of its history, humanity possessed the faculty of uttering words directly expressing part of the substance of objects perceived by the senses. In other words, things awakened sounds in humans which became roots and engendered phonetic types. Humans "resonated" at the world, and thus had the privilege of "giving articulated expression to the conceptions of reason." As soon as the individual lost the privilege of emitting sounds at the spectacle of the world, a strange disease fell upon language: words like "night, day, morning, evening" produced strange illusions to which the human mind immediately fell victim. For as long as humans remain sensitive to the meanings of words, these first sonic beings are conceived of as powers, endowed with will, and marked by sexual traits, though the physical character of the natural phenomena designated by the words is not forgotten. As soon as the double meaning becomes confused, the names of the forces of nature break free: they become proper names, and from a spontaneous expression like "the sky rains," a myth abruptly emerges based on "Zeus makes the rain fall." There is an excess of meaning at the source of mythopoeic creation, an uncontrolled surplus of signification, which tricks the speaker, prey to the illusions of a language within which the play of these "substantive verbs" produces, in a burgeoning of images, the strange and often scandalous discourse of myths.

To this theory, which based the metaphors of language on natural phenomena and declared that a good mythologist should possess a "deep feeling for nature," without which linguistic knowledge is futile, the anthropological school immediately objected that comparative grammarians seemed to have forgotten somewhere along the way that "the Redskins, the Australians, and the lower races of South America" continued even today, in the forests and savannas, to tell the same savage tales, which can hardly be explained as the unwonted result of a few misunderstood phrases. The road the anthropological school would follow led in the opposite direction from that of the grammarians. It was no longer the past or origins that were to explain the present, but rather the mythology of contemporary savages that could account for the "savage" stories of the past. And Lang attempted to show that what shocks us in the mythology of civilized peoples is the residue of a state of thought once prevailing in all humanity. In contemporary primitives we can see the power of this state of thought as well as its coherence. At the same time, anthropologists began to investigate these gross products of the primitive human mind and to discover that things which to our eyes seem monstrous and irrational were accepted as ordinary events in everyday life. They soon came to the conclusion that whatever seems irrational in civilized mythologies (the Greco-Roman world, or India) forms part of an order of things that is accepted and considered rational by contemporary savages.

This position led to two orientations, which anthropology attempted to explore in parallel. For the first, which leads from Frazer to Lévy-Bruhl, mythology remains the discourse of madness or mental deficiency. In 1909, before he published the thousands of pages of *The Golden Bough*, the prolegomena to a history of the tragic errors of a humanity led astray by magic, James George Frazer wrote a small book (*Psyche's Task*) in which he asked how folly could turn to wisdom, how a false opinion could lead to "good conduct." And at the center of his reflection Frazer places a paradox:

primitive superstitions were the foundation of what now seems desirable to us in society: order, property, family, respect for life. Prejudice and superstition in fact served to strengthen respect for authority and thus contributed to the rule of order, the condition of all social progress. Frazer had given hundreds of examples in his already published works, and in this slim volume he is no less enthusiastic an admirer of the conduct of the son-in-law in a primitive society who avoids speaking to or being alone with his mother-in-law, surrounding her with taboos, as if these people, not yet capable of elaborating a thought-out set of laws, still had a sense that an intimate conversation between these two people could easily degenerate into something worse, and that the best way to prevent this from happening was to raise a solid wall of etiquette between them. Without knowing it, and almost reluctantly, primitive thought, even in its most obstinate errors, prepared the way for the triumphs of morality and civilization.

For Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who published *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* in 1910, primitive societies differed from ours in their mental organization: their thought, constituted differently from our own, is mystical in nature; it is ruled by a "law of participation" that makes it indifferent to the logic of noncontradiction on which our own system of thought is based. Lévy-Bruhl finds the characteristics of primitive thought, which surrenders itself to affectivity and to what he calls "mysticism," among both schizophrenics and children, who also think in an affective way and establish commonalities between things and beings whose mutual distinctiveness is obvious to the intelligence of a civilized adult. Lévy-Bruhl would increasingly identify this "prelogical" stage with "mystic experience," and Van der Leeuw, who extended his analysis, would try to show that primitive thought survives in every human mind, that it is a component of all forms of reason, an indispensable element whose symbolic load and image-making power help to balance the conceptual development of our thought. In the *Notebooks*, which were published after his death, Lévy-Bruhl found it necessary to revise his position on the mental and intellectual gap between ourselves and "savages." But his work, in profound accord with that of Frazer, seems to us today to be part of a fencing in of savage thought (*la pensée sauvage*), confining it in the prelogical and thus avoiding any contamination which might threaten our own reason.

At the very moment when these armchair anthropologists were interning primitive thought, others were setting out on voyages of discovery to Africa and Oceania, and so were discovering, alive and functioning, the rationality of a form of thought that operates through and in myth—a rationality different from our own, but no less impressive for that. The great living mythologies of the Pacific or the Sudan fulfill an indispensable function in these simpler cultures. Revealing a distinctive reality, guaranteeing the effectiveness of worship, myths codify the beliefs, found the moral rules, and determine every practice of daily life. When Marcel Griaule brought back the Dogon cosmology, with its astonishing architectures of symbolic correspondences, there could no longer be any doubt that mythology was indeed the keystone of archaic societies, the indispensable horizon of all cultural phenomena and of the whole pattern in which society is organized. Myths not only constitute the spiritual armature of human lives; they are bearers of a real "theoretical metaphysics." For the first time, then, myths came to be studied in their entirety, a study in which every detail, even the most insignificant, found its place in a holistic interpretation, an interpretation so rich, so exhaustive, that the

ethnographer, once introduced into this polysymbolic world, is in serious danger of "having nothing more to say about Dogon society than the Dogon say themselves" (Pierre Smith, 1973).

In 1903, before Frazer and Lévy-Bruhl had begun their investigations, Marcel Mauss, following the French sociological school, set forth in a few pages a program of which Georges Dumézil would one day prove to be the master craftsman. Three points seem essential. 1. To determine the mechanism of the formation of myths means to seek some of the laws of the mental activity of man in society. 2. Mythology can be reduced to a small number of myths, and each type is made up of a certain number of combinations. 3. The apparent illogicality of a mythic narrative is itself the sign of its distinctive logic. For Mauss, Durkheim's nephew and collaborator, myths are social institutions, that is, ways of acting and thinking which individuals find already established and, as it were, ready to hand; they form a fully organized pattern of ideas and behaviors which imposes itself more or less forcefully on the individuals inscribed in a society. Myth is above all *obligatory* in nature; it does not exist unless there is a sort of necessity to reach agreement on the themes that are its raw material and on the way these themes are patterned. But the constraint comes solely from the group itself, which tells the myth because it finds its own total expression in it.

A symbol through which society thinks itself, mythology informs experience, orders ritual and the economy, and gives archaic societies their categories and classificatory frameworks. For the Durkheimian school, myths—which, incidentally, are hardly mentioned in the *Année sociologique*—are of the same order as language, "a property of which the proprietor is unconscious"; and, inseparable from this, just as a language continues to bear centuries-old vocabulary and syntax, mythology implies a certain traditional way of perceiving, analyzing, coordinating. The analogy is even more precise: like language, mythology is tradition itself, it is the symbolic system that permits communication beyond words; it is the historical unconscious of the society. In this perspective, the importance of myths derives from the common nature that links them to the most archaic element of language, in that domain where sociology hoped to discover some of the fundamental laws of the mind's activity in society.

It was Mauss once again who, against Lévy-Bruhl, in 1923 defended the thesis that considerable parts of our own mentality are still identical to those of a large number of societies called primitive. But it was first Marcel Granet, then Louis Gernet, who developed a sociological analysis of religion with its legends and myths. For the Sinologist Granet, attempting to proceed from language to the fundamental frames of thought, the mythology of the Chinese provided material in which the emotions characteristic of ancient festivals were recorded. Behind the legendary and mythic tales were ritual dances and dramas from which imaginative schemas emerged that imposed themselves on the mind and on action. Farther along, social contexts and great technical feats that crystallize the productions of the imaginary order could be glimpsed. For the Hellenist Gernet, in a break with the established positivist history that was content to note the gratuitous play of the imaginary, myths reveal a social unconscious. Just as semantic analysis gives access to the great social fact of language, the study of legends and of certain mythic themes allows one to go back to transparent or explicit social practices. The mythic image thus offers the most convenient means of access, not to a

timeless memory, but to archaic behaviors and social actions and—going far beyond the social data that have, as Gernet puts it, “a direct relation to myth”—to fundamental phenomena of mental life, those that determine the most general forms of thought.

The specificity of the Greeks pointed Gernet in yet another direction. Myths, in their fragments, shining splinters, offer not only the prehistoric behaviors that were their reason for being; they are at the same time part of a global way of thinking, whose categories, classifications, preconceptual models exert a major influence on positive thought and its various advances. Thus Gernet, starting from a series of traditions about types of precious objects, attempts to show how money and the economy emerge from a set of behaviors linked to the mythical notion of value—a notion that involves domains which, though separate nowadays, used to overlap or merge together: the religious, the political, the aesthetic, the juridical. Mythology is thus part of a global religious system that is symbolic in character, with a web of multicorrespondences from which law, philosophy, history, and political thought will emerge and become progressively distinct. But since Gernet thought of myths as raw material for the thought that arose with and in the Greek city, in the space of the polis, he examined the mythic element only in terms of what was beyond it, in a break with its own nature and its functioning. By failing to separate mythology either from language or from the institutional system, the sociological model of myth culminated in the paradox of sometimes losing sight of the very object that seemed finally to have been recognized and legitimated.

More serious, certainly, was the misunderstanding between Freudian psychoanalysis and the anthropological problematic, which seems to give access to a form of the unconscious inscribed in myth. In his self-analysis, as recounted in his letter to Fliess of October 15, 1897, Freud discovers that his libido awoke between the ages of two and two and a half, and turned toward *matrem* (confessors' Latin for the name of the mother). Freud refers this desire for the mother to a Greek tragedy, *Oedipus the King*, a reference both cultural and paradigmatic. The first thing that Sophocles' Oedipus gives Freud is a better understanding of himself—but the choice of a Greek paradigm already announces the universal character of Freud's discovery of the heart of the matter. The early hypothesis, that little Sigmund is like Oedipus, shifts toward the Freudian thesis that Oedipus marrying his mother *must have been the same as ourselves*. While Freud's enterprise, by showing that there is no essential difference between the mentally ill person and the healthy person, seems to invert the separation marked by Lévy-Bruhl, it does assume, from the beginning, a segregation of Greek myths from those of other peoples. For Freud, *Oedipus the King* still excites us and exerts a profound effect on us because every man, always and everywhere, feels love for his mother and jealousy of his father; and from the day Freud first adopted this view, the Greek myth was invested with a new privilege: that of translating better than any other “an instinctual attraction which everyone recognizes because everyone has experienced it.”

It was to Greek mythology that Freud would continue to turn in his quest for successive proofs of the reality of the unconscious, comparing the discourse of dreams and fantasies with the legends of Olympus, which his successors, stubbornly but not without fidelity, were to proclaim as the language in which we can most easily read the drives and works of desire. In asking for an admission of guilt within the Oedipal configuration, psychoanalysis indeed marks a

return to myth and the religious; but in seeing both of these as merely the visible tip of the iceberg of the “Unconscious,” forgetting that analytical space is that of free association, it has condemned mythology to being nothing but the symbolic and obsessive repetition of a few unconscious representations centered on sexuality.

It was in the direction opened up by Maussian sociology that theoretical work on myth became involved in the first structural analyses. Resuming the project of comparative mythology that had been wrecked by the excesses of Max Müller and his disciples, Georges Dumézil, thanks to a decisive discovery, founded the comparative study of Indo-European religions by ceasing to rely on purely linguistic concordances between divine names and adopting instead the more solid base of articulated sets of concepts. A factual discovery—in Rome, the three *flamines maiores* corresponding to the Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus triad; in Iran, the tripartition of social classes—opened the way to structural analysis of the Indo-European world: the tripartite schema was an essential structure in the thought of the Indo-Europeans. Every organized society is based on the collaboration of three distinct but complementary functions: sovereignty, martial power, fecundity. Parallel to this, the gods form a functionally weighted triad, within which the Sovereign, the Warrior, and the group of divinities who preside over fecundity mutually define one another. Since there was never any question of reproducing a definitely Indo-European myth or ritual, Dumézil had to use precise and systematic correspondences to trace a ground plan of the chosen myth or ritual, indicating its articulations, its intentions, its logical significations, and then, on the basis of this schematic figure, projected into prehistory, to try to characterize the divergent evolutions which have led to analogous and diverse results in different places: Indian myth, Roman myth, Scandinavian myth, or Vedic ritual in relation to the Latin rite. For Dumézil, religions are whole patterns in which concepts, images, and actions are articulated and whose interconnections make a sort of net in which, by rights, the entire material of human experience should find its distribution.

By focusing his examination on the concept and on organized patterns, Dumézil radically parts company with a history of religions that thought in terms of genesis and affectivity. For historians like H. J. Rose and H. Wagenvoort, all religion is rooted in the sense of the “numinous” that the human race experiences spontaneously when confronting the phenomena of nature: there is no divine power who was not first one of these *numina*, in which magico-religious force, diffused in the natural world, is concentrated. For Dumézil, by contrast, the observer never reaches isolated facts, and religion is not a form of thought soaked in emotionality. It is in their mutual relations that the various elements can be apprehended, and there always remains, virtually or in action, a representation of the world or of human action that functions on different levels, under a particular type on each level. The religious system of a human group is expressed “first of all in a more or less explicit conceptual structure, which is always present, if sometimes almost unconscious, providing the field of forces upon which everything else comes to be arranged and oriented; then in myths, which represent and dramatize these fundamental intellectual relationships; and then, in turn, in rituals, which actualize, mobilize, and use the same relations.” Independently of these gains in the Indo-European domain, Dumézil's method affirmed the virtues of the concept that can equally inform a myth or underlie a ritual. From this point on, “the surest definition of a god is

differential, classificatory," and the object of analysis becomes the articulations, the balances, the types of oppositions that the god represents. Against the historians of genesis, Dumézil affirms the primacy of structure: the essential problem is not to determine the precise origin of the various elements that have been fitted together but to accept the *fact* of the structure. The important thing, Dumézil declares, is to bring the structure itself to light, with its signification. It would seem to follow that structures are there, that it is enough to be attentive to them, to avoid forcing them, and to show a little skill in disengaging them. Thus it is not necessary to construct structures as one would elaborate a model of the set of properties accounting for a group of objects. In a sense, structuralism is still in the age of hunting and gathering. Myths, for Dumézil, are the privileged theater that makes visible fundamental conceptual relations. But in the spirit of Mauss's sociology, to which he owes a curiosity for "total social facts" that causes him to explore simultaneously all the works produced by the human mind, myths cannot be deciphered until they have been put back into the totality of the religious, social, and philosophical life of the peoples who have practiced them. The mythology posited by the earlier comparativism of Frazerian inspiration as separate from language, as a more or less autonomous object, endowed with permanence and chosen to locate the common themes elaborated by the Indo-Europeans, was referred back to the language of which it formed a part and, through this language, to the ideology that grounds it and runs through it.

The structural analysis developed by Lévi-Strauss was established under the same kind of conditions as the comparative and philological analysis of the nineteenth century. The gratuitous and insane character of mythic discourse was again the point of departure. For Max Müller this was shocking; for Lévi-Strauss it was a challenge. He took up the challenge after he had shown that kinship relations, in appearance contingent and incoherent, can be reduced to a small number of significant propositions. If mythology is the domain in which the mind seems to have the most freedom to abandon itself to its own creative spontaneity, then, says Lévi-Strauss, to prove that, on the contrary, in mythology the mind is fixed and determined in all of its operations is to prove that it must be so everywhere. The structural analysis of myths thus finds its place in a wider project, which aims at an inventory of mental constraints and postulates a structural analysis between various orders of social facts and language.

This whole approach to myth applies to a new domain the methods of analysis and principles of division developed for linguistic materials in the methods theorized by the Prague school and more particularly by Roman Jakobson. But while myth is assimilated to a language from the outset, it is not identical either to the words of a text or to the sentence of communicative discourse. Mythology is a use of language in the second degree; it is not only a narrative with an ordinary linguistic meaning; myth is in language and at the same time beyond natural language. In the first stage of an ongoing investigation ("The Structural Study of Myth," 1955), Lévi-Strauss tries to define the constituent units of myth in relation to those of structural linguistics. Mythemes are both in the sentence and beyond it. In this perspective, the constituent unit is a very short sentence, which summarizes the essential part of a sequence and denotes a relation: "a predicate assigned to a subject." But this sentence is not part of the explicit narrative; it is already on the order of interpretation, the product of an analytical technique. These

sentence relations, then, are distributed on two axes: one horizontal, following the thread of the narrative, the other vertical, in columns, grouping together relations belonging to the same "bundle." It is on the level of these bundles of relations that the real mythemes are located. At the same time, structural analysis poses two principles as essential to its practice: there is no authentic version of a myth in relation to others that are false; correlatively, every myth must be defined by the whole set of its versions. There thus takes shape the project of ordering all the known variants of a myth in a series forming a group of permutations.

The next stage of his investigation ("The Story of Asdiwal," 1958) led Lévi-Strauss to propose that myth makes full use of discourse, but at the same time situates its own meaningful oppositions at a higher degree of complexity than that required by natural language. In other words, myth is a metalanguage and, more precisely, a linked sequence of concepts. Attention will be turned, therefore, to registering the various levels on which myth can be distributed. The cutting up of the mythic narrative which in the first phase (1955) seemed to be entrusted to the whim or ingenuity of the model-builder, is now subject to testing—indispensable to all formal analysis—in terms of the *referent*: "the ethnographic context," which the later transformational orientation of the *Mythologiques* would cease to pursue. The surveying of pertinent oppositions in a mythic sequence thus finds the fundamental guarantee of its legitimacy in previous knowledge of an organized semantic context, without which the myth is in principle incomprehensible. Ritual practices, religious beliefs, kinship structures: the whole of social life and social thought is called upon to define the logical relations functioning within a myth, and at the same time to establish the different types of liaison between two or more myths. In the four-volume *Mythologiques* (1964–1971), the progressive analysis continues to show relations between myths, the social life of those who tell them, and the geographical and technological infrastructure, but it does not restrict itself to this back-and-forth between levels of signification and an ethnographic context that reveals the philosophy of a society. The meaning of a myth is no longer inscribed in its structures' reference to a social infrastructure; rather, the position the myth occupies in relation to other myths within a transformation group is henceforth the vector of an analysis that reveals the autonomy of a mythic thought in which every narrative refers back in the first instance to another, picking up and organizing its elements in a different way. Just as each term, itself without intrinsic signification, has no meaning other than a positional one in the context in which it appears to us, in the same way each myth acquires a signifying function through the combinations in which it is called upon both to figure and to be transformed. It is these transformations which, in the last analysis, define the nature of mythic thought.

It has been objected that this practice of mythological analysis makes a choice for syntax against semantics; and, likewise, that while it has been possible to apply the practice successfully to the mythologies of so-called totemic societies, since these are rich in classificatory structures, it excludes Semitic, Hellenic, and Indo-European societies from its field of interest, societies whose mythological thought is marked by renewals of meaning and by a semantic richness that exceeds the powers of structural analysis. One can reply, on the one hand, that for this type of analysis, which gets at the meanings of myths by multiplying the formal operations that allow us to uncover the logical framework of several narratives, the semantics of myths is necessarily enriched through

the inventorying of the syntax. On the other hand, the practice of structural analysis is hardly alien to our familiar mythologies, such as that of the Greeks; one may, indeed, be surprised at the remarkable similarities between the way the Greeks themselves thought their mythology and the method used by ethnologists in approaching myths told by nonliterate peoples. More pertinent objections have come from anthropologists such as Dan Sperber, who denounces the semiological illusion of structuralism as well as the distance between the linguistic models invoked and an intuitive practice whose specific procedures, unlimited in number and nature, offer knowledge of the intellectual operations from which the stories we call "myths" are woven.

M.D./j.l.

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MYTH AND WRITING: THE MYTHOGRAPHERS

The word *mytho-logy* is but one instance of many in which the proximity of myth and writing inevitably results in a kind of violence, its victim an original word, sacred in nature and condemned to fixity by a profane order. Beyond the words which by their very texture bear witness to this phenomenon (such as *mythography*), Greek privilege has held fast. When strange and unforgettable stories, which sounded very independent and yet bore obvious resemblances to the mythology of antiquity, were brought to us from all continents, early anthropologists turned instinctively to Greece, where a few centuries earlier great minds from Xenophanes to Aristotle had faced the problem of limiting the dominion of myths and had resolved it within their own intellectual activity by drawing a boundary at which mythical thought fades away before the rationality of scientists and philosophers. The split between the land of myth and the kingdom of *logos* served as a precedent for the decision made by Tylor and his disciples to impose a historical limit on the reign of mythology over the human mind. This opposition between two forms of thought and two stages of human intelligence, the latter canceling the former, took the form of a sharp contrast between reason, which used all the resources of the written, and a mythological activity tuned to the fantasy of an incessant babbling.

Henceforth, never the twain shall meet. For those practicing historians who tend to favor written traces, oral discourse has become so totally inaudible that it is quite illegible whenever it manifests itself as writing—a contrived writing, which masks the incoherence of traditions sustained through memory by imposing a factitious order of mythographical classifications. For others, the Greeks so thoroughly ensured the triumph of reason and *logos* that they ruined their former

system of thought for good, allowing only frail remains to survive as witnesses of a lost state to which only two possible roads of access still remain: one is the discovery, by an ancient traveler in a forgotten village, of a tale saved from the contamination of writing thanks to a few natives unaware of the progress of culture; the other is the less hazardous road of historical and geographical investigation through which one gains access to a long-deferred vision of a landscape that authenticates the narrative or the myths of which it is the guarantor, the recovered witness.

Within this framework, the truth of the myth is enclosed in a speechlike nature, which writing more or less obliterates, at times by shackling the freedom of a self-expressive memory with the constraints of an interpretation subject to foreign rules; and at other times, more often than not, by reducing the myth's own speech to silence in order to speak on its behalf and to condemn it to an absolute otherness. In an attempt to rectify this division, structural analysis introduced a summary separation between cold and warm societies, the former deprived of a temporal dimension, the latter open to history and to the continual renewals of meaning that writing facilitates. The border thus drawn appeared all the more definite as it seemed to reiterate the distinction between oral and written literature, a distinction reinforced, if not justified, by the decision made by this type of analysis to look for the essential of the "myth" not in the narration but in the story transmitted by memory, a story whose narrative form was left to the discretion and talent of each narrator.

Yet another issue arises, for which the Greek model inspires a formulation that suggests the progressive emergence of writing in a traditional society. Since the time E. A. Havelock first published his studies, the Homeric epic, which Milman Parry had recognized as belonging to oral practice, can no longer be considered an enclave of a living tradition that made room for a culture of the written. The introduction of an alphabetical writing technique caused no

immediate changes, nor did it produce any profound upheaval. Greece experienced not a revolution of writing but, rather, a slow movement with uneven advances depending on the areas of activity; by the turn of the fourth century, writing prevailed mentally and socially. Until the end of the fifth century, Greek culture had been essentially of the oral type. It entrusted to its memory all traditional information and knowledge, as do all societies unacquainted with written archives. And it is here that we must revise the notion of *mythology*, with which the Greeks encumbered us as a consequence of their entanglement with *logos*. For the unified concept "myth," which nowhere seems to be defined as a discrete literary genre, must fade away in favor of a set of intellectual operations fundamental to the memorizing of narratives that together make up a tradition. Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests the term *mythism* for the process by which a story, initially personal and entrusted to the oral tradition, becomes adopted by the collective mode, which will distinguish between the crystal clear parts of the narrative—that is, the levels that are structured and stable because they rest on common foundations—and the conjectural parts—details or episodes amplified or neglected at each telling, before being doomed to oblivion and falling outside the bounds of memory. Every traditional society develops, with varying success, a widely shared creative memory, which is neither the memory of specialists nor that of technicians. The narratives we agree to call myths are the products of an intellectual activity that invents what is memorable.

When writing appears, it neither banishes traditional memory to a state of decay nor sustains an oral practice in imminent danger of becoming extinct. Writing occurs at different levels and in different orders, but always at the encounter between an act of remembering and the works that memory creates. Writing was to introduce a new memory, word-for-word memory, which comes with the book and with education through the study of written texts. Competing ever so slowly with the former kind of memory, mechanical memory alone is capable of engendering the idea, familiar to us, of the *correct* version, a version which must be copied or learned exactly, word for word. In Greece between the sixth and fifth centuries, the first historians, those whom the Greeks call "logographers," selected writing as the instrument of a new kind of memory that would become an integral part of thought and political action. This new way of remembering was constructed on the boundary between a type of oral tradition with its remembrances, spoken narratives, and stories circulating by word of mouth, and, on the other side, the dominant obsession of the new investigators, who respected as knowledge only what had been seen, and who would ultimately condemn, without appeal, those who accepted traditions of the past that were transmitted without precise terminology or rigorous proof. This was the battleground, the wide open space of writing, for the confrontation between variants that became different versions of the same myth, usually examined from within the confines of a city in quest of self-image or political identity.

Elsewhere, other routes were taken that linked writing to the production of myths whose successive variations were inseparable from the hermeneutic activity of scribes and interpreters devoted to textual exegesis. From the moment the traditional narratives of the Bible, the Book of the Hebrew world, were committed to writing, they were swept away by the inner workings of a system of writing which, though initially consonantal, in its hollows called for a vocalic complement to bear its meaning, since one cannot read a consonantal text unless one understands it, that is, unless

one attributes to it a meaning set apart from other possible meanings. In the continuity of interpretation thus opened up, the hermeneutics that was focused on the mythical accounts of Israel claimed a privileged place, which made it more sensitive to the permanence of fundamental themes endlessly revived and reevaluated, but also forced it to be the infinite exegesis, forever interned within its own symbolic wealth.

M.D./g.h.

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PREHISTORIC RELIGION

To speak of "prehistoric religion" without specifying time and place is tantamount to assimilating under modern thought facts and contexts that came to light at very different times and places, tantamount to creating a kind of average image that can only be validated by the judgment of our own way of thinking projected onto some arbitrarily chosen facts. Prehistoric religion no longer occasions a debate in which either pro- or anticlerical convictions are at stake. The science of prehistory has been enriched by much new data and major changes in methodological approaches. Rather than arguing about whether the atheist brute evolved first into the magician and then into the priest, scientists have given priority to inquiries that bring out the deep connections among play, aesthetics, social behavior, economic realities, and practices that rest on a metaphysical framework. The proofs that can be proliferated from a so-called religious approach are largely derived from the realm of the unprecedented, from the presence of peculiar facts found in a context where they are least expected, such as the discovery, on a Mousterian site inhabited by Neanderthal man, of fossil shells, which he collected and brought back to his dwelling place, or the discovery that he gathered red ocher or buried his dead. These diverse elements do not fit in with our vision of Neanderthal man. Yet how could there not be a striking

contrast between this primal brute with his bulky brow ridges and the subtle quality of a religiosity polished by two millennia of Christianity and all of ancient philosophy? Neanderthal man was not, in the final analysis, as short of gray matter as was long believed, though the metaphysical level of his cultic activities was certainly very different from ours (at least, as we imagine ours to be).

What matters is the existence of practices within a psychological realm not directly tied to techniques of acquisition, manufacture, or consumption, even if these practices do flow back into material life. Man acquired religious behavior when he developed the whole system of symbolic thought, which cannot be separated from language and gesture as it works out a network of symbols that present a counterimage of the outside world. That Neanderthals had already developed this network of symbols is beyond doubt, but whether one can go on to distinguish evidence of a primordial religion or an extremely diffuse symbolic complex remains questionable. The gathering of magical shells and ocher supports the view that the pump had been primed for the simultaneous evolution of the fields of art, play, and religion, three fields which to this day cannot be separated.

Homo sapiens picked up where Neanderthal man left off, with regard to the gathering of "curios" (shells, fossils, crystals, iron pyrites, stalactite fragments, etc.) sometimes found together in the same pile. Ocher became much more plentiful. The first use of manganese dioxide, a black dye, coincided with the production of a greater number of drawings engraved on bone or stone surfaces. By the Aurignacian period, these drawings took the form of rhythmic incisions and figurative tracings. By 30,000 B.C., figurative art had developed to the point at which subjects could be divided into the following groups: female sexual symbols (sometimes also male), figures of animals, and regularly spaced incisions or punctuations. These themes predominated throughout the development of Paleolithic art, a subject to which we shall return.

Burial Grounds and the Cult of Bone Remains

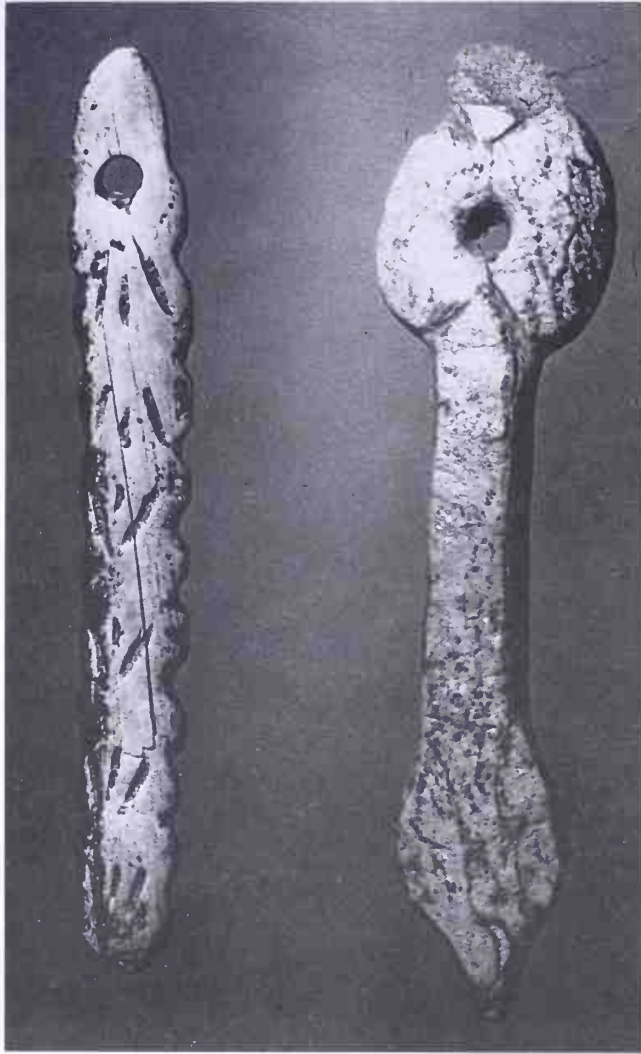
Neanderthals buried their dead. The practice of inhumation is attested by several obvious tombs and, statistically, by the numerous finds of skeleton fragments. Shanidar in Iraq is the site of the only discovery of a Neanderthal laid out on a bed of flowers, from which a great number of fossilized pollens were found. In Monte Circeo (Italy), in a similarly convincing find, a skull was placed in the center of a cave chamber. In the face of such striking testimony, it is difficult not to ascribe to the immediate predecessors of humankind as we know it today sentiments analogous to our own regarding the afterlife in a parallel universe, a universe which may have been as inexplicit as that of the average subject of any of today's major religions. Difficult as it may be, given the available evidence, to describe Neanderthal man's attitude toward the supernatural, it is even more difficult to demonstrate the meaning of what falls into the category of the "cult of bone remains." Because bone is the only physical element (human or animal) that survives decomposition, any bones found as evidence in an unusual situation could have played a part in a cult. Whether with respect to Neanderthal man or to *Homo sapiens*, we have some evidence that can be explained in terms that are not at variance with an interpretation based on the supernatural. Separated by several scores of millennia, the skulls of Monte Circeo (Mousterian) and the skull from Mas-d'Azil (Magdalenian) attest the special character of the head (the whole head

or merely the skull). Although the idea of "graves" of animals has been advanced repeatedly, it seems that natural phenomena were more often at issue than man himself, especially in the case of the remains of cave bears.

The burial graves of fossil *Homo sapiens* are rare, and hardly a single grave dating from the Upper Paleolithic Age (30,000–9000) has been excavated either with care or with all the technical means that would have assured its documentary value. We do, however, have a certain number of facts at our disposal (graves; bodies, either curled up or stretched out; a head protected by a stone; ocher dusting; and funereal household objects, including, at the least, clothing and ornaments worn by the dead person). In addition, the double children's tomb at Sungir, north of Moscow, where hundreds of ornamental elements adorn the bodies and large spears made of mammoth ivory were found in the grave, bears witness to the development of the concern to equip the dead, a development that occurred at a remote phase of the Upper Paleolithic Age. Obviously, graves do not all reflect identical religious intentions, nor can we be certain what kind of sentiments led to these emotional displays. Mortuary furniture is ordinarily less sumptuous. In several cases we might even speculate that the presence of certain vestiges was connected with accidental conditions surrounding the filling of the grave. But a rather constant factor is the presence of ocher, which varied according to the population's wealth in dyes. Ocher gave the soil and the skeleton that it covered a reddish coloration. This practice, common during the Upper Paleolithic Age, is the indisputable sign of acts whose meaning goes beyond a simple natural emotion. If the use of ocher supports various interpretations according to habitat, the sheer fact of its being brought into a grave where a body had been laid constitutes the most distinct feature of the belief in an afterlife, since the dead person was considered still capable of using what he was offered.

Personal Adornments

Jewelry appeared in the West around 35,000 B.C. Its prior origin is unknown. Throughout Europe, its appearance coincided with the first manifestations of the Upper Paleolithic Age. During the Châtelperronian epoch (35,000–30,000), it appears already quite diversified: at that same time we find annular pendants carved out of bone, as well as teeth from various animal species (fox, wolf, marmot, aurochs, etc.), made so that they could be hung by means of a perforation of the root or a slit. Fossil shells were treated in the same way. It may seem far-fetched to regard ornamental pendants as anything other than purely aesthetic objects, and, in fact, some may have had exclusively decorative functions. However, among the hundreds of pendants acquired from European sites, the majority reveal a preoccupation with magic at one level or another. Those that unambiguously represent male and female sexual organs must surely have had some sort of symbolic value (fig. 1). The cylindrical fragments of stalactite and points of belemnites designed to hang may have a meaning of the same order. This symbolic function of sexual images may have been extended to include fragments of shattered assegai spears that were perforated but otherwise untreated (see the symbolism of the assegai below). The role of teeth designed to hang must have been rather complex, at least in the early stages, for the teeth of some animals, the marmot for example, do not seem to have the characteristics of a trophy or a talisman. This is not true of the atrophied canines of reindeer, which even today are symbols of masculinity and



Pendants with genital designs. Left: series of female symbols; right: phallic symbol. 7.5 cm. Isturitz (Pyrénées district). (Fig. 1)

were imitated in bone or soft stone when pendants first appeared.

The same applies to shells. For the most part they seem to have a purely aesthetic function, but the rather frequent discovery of porcelain (*Cyprea*), universally attested in prehistoric and historic times as a protective female symbol, makes it highly probable that the collection of shells served as talismans. In short, having gone beyond a strictly decorative function, long and oval pendants encompassed both the aesthetic and the religious realms, and probably the social realm as well, although we still have too little data to clarify the matter.

The Occurrence of Wall Painting

The development of personal adornments does not diminish the importance of the collections of natural curiosities; rather, it was an added feature that prevailed until the end of the Upper Paleolithic Age, ca. 9000. Adornments evolved throughout this period. But in the Aurignacian and the Perigordian Ages, the main event was the spread of pictorial

works. Between 30,000 and 20,000, certain forms began to appear in engravings. These first forms were executed on blocks and probably on the walls of rock shelters as well. Despite their crudeness, they shed light on the concerns of their creators. The repertoire of these works is very limited; representation of the female genitalia, highly stylized, is the most widespread. A few representations of the male genitalia can be found, but they were apparently replaced quite early by abstract symbolic figures: dotted lines or bar lines that seem to accompany explicitly female figures. There are also highly geometrical figures of animals, parallel to one another and often juxtaposed or superimposed on one another. The Aurignacian-Gravettian bestiary includes the horse, the bison, the ibex, and other imprecise figures indicating that from the very beginning art made use of two clearly defined registers: human figures symbolically rendered, starting with the representation of the entire body and progressing, by way of genital figures and animals, to geometric figures. During the ensuing 20,000 years, the details may have varied but the basic figures, human and animal, remained in the same relationships. These relationships cannot easily be established on the basis of the engraved blocks alone; displacement in the course of time and, especially, following excavations has destroyed the spatial ties that might have guided us to their meaning. But something happened, perhaps by the Gravettian Age but certainly around 15,000: penetration deep into caves and the execution of paintings or engravings, sometimes more than a kilometer from the opening. This boldness on the part of Paleolithic men is of immediate interest to us because the works produced at such locations preserved their positions with respect to one another and with respect to the wall itself. We can therefore raise questions about the possible religious ideology of the creators of these figures. What motives could have inspired the Magdalenians of Niaux or Pech-Merle to their speleological adventure? It is hard to believe that it was just a matter of curiosity, and one is inclined to think that in their eyes the cave must have seemed a mysterious amalgam of female forms. Direct evidence is furnished by the numerous oval cavities or cleft lips painted on the inside in red ochre (Gargas, Font-de-Gaume, Niaux). The execution of numerous genital symbols in deep side passages indirectly reinforces the hypothesis of the woman-cave. To date, explicit male symbols are rare but one may find, on Aurignacian blocks, for instance, signs made up of series of dots or rods accompanying oval or triangular figures depicted with different degrees of realism. All stages of development come together, with regional nuances, from the whole female figure to the pubic triangle rendered as an empty rectangle. This tendency of male and female signs to conceal themselves behind abstract graphics may well have been a response to taboos of a socioreligious character. This hypothesis becomes all the more plausible as other figurative anomalies give evidence of the same meaning. Not only is there no known instance of human or animal mating anywhere in Paleolithic art, but sexual organs are explicitly represented on relatively few figures. At Lascaux (where, however, the bulls have obvious sexual characteristics), two figures appear (fig. 6): the "jumping cow" in the Axial Diverticulum and an engraved horse in the Passage, both of which have their hooves turned in such a way that the underbelly on both animals is visible and completely empty. This strange mannerism in figure drawing is not easily explained, but it does show the complexity of Paleolithic thought. Curiously, secondary sexual characteristics (the antlers of the cervidae, the thick withers of the bovidae, and



Middle part of the first great panel of the Cave of Pindal (Asturias). Animals A and B (horse and bison) are reduced to the minimal identifiable size: dorsal line and horns for the bison, which also bears a scar from a wound in the shape of an inverted V; central portion of the head and the neck and withers for the horse. Above the bison and the horse, S^2 line of the so-called claviform type (see fig. 5). The photograph includes only the right side of a series of red and black paintings. Between group A-B and the doe (C), there are several groups of S^1 and S^3 signs. The doe is 85 cm long. (Fig. 2)

the horns of the ibex) are rendered very exactly; and, moreover, the animals are frequently depicted in couples, the female in front and the male behind. It is certain that the figures basically connote what might be thought of as a "fertility cult," a generally banal statement that takes on a subtlety in the present instance by virtue of the apparent contradiction of the representation.

Animals

Paleolithic materials yield other peculiar data. The hundreds of figures that cover the walls of caves seem at first glance to defy any kind of order. Even though the idea of a coherent whole emerges from the way the figures are arranged, few prehistorians have used this possible organization to delve further into the ideology of the artists. One rather surprising fact stands out: the fauna that are represented display variations that seem to reflect the environment. In some caves the bison, together with the horse, is the principal subject (Font-de-Gaume, Niaux, Altamira), whereas in others the aurochs plays the main role (Lascaux, Ebbon). But in all the cases cited above, the complementary bovid (bison or aurochs depending on the site) is represented by one or more figures separated from the rest. Another point should also be mentioned: the reindeer that figure in

great numbers among the food wastes of the hunters at the time of these works occupy little space in the iconography of certain grottoes such as Lascaux, Niaux, or Altamira. At Lascaux, rather paradoxically, though the bony remains of reindeer make up almost all the animal wastes, only one figure can be attributed to the reindeer, and even that is somewhat doubtful. Thus the fauna depicted do not always correspond to what Paleolithic man hunted. This fact is important because, if it were confirmed, it would lead us to conclude that at least some of the animals represented played a role unconnected with the food that people then lived on. The number of sites for which it was possible to draw up a list of the animals depicted and a parallel list of the animals consumed as meat is unfortunately too limited to verify this hypothesis.

Groupings

We referred above to groupings of animal figures and signs, starting with the Aurignacian Age (30,000). The most frequent, almost exclusive animal grouping is of horses (100%) and of bison (56%) (or of aurochs, 39%, in other words, 95% for bovidae). This initial dyad, moreover, occupies the center of all surfaces used, and may be repeated

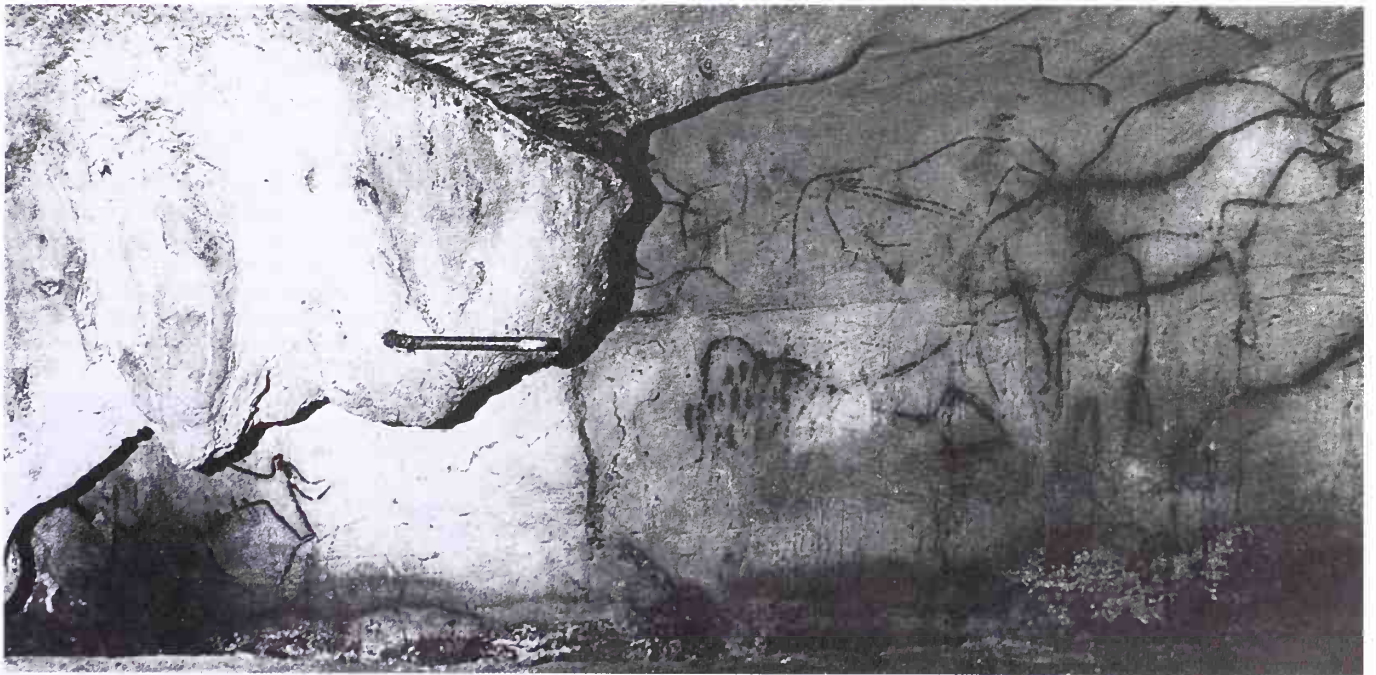
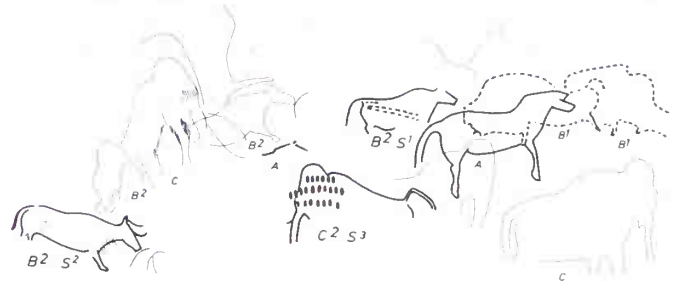
several times in the same cave. The groupings in wall paintings have a complexity that derives from the diversity of the caves in which the decorations appear. So, too, geographical location and chronological evolution are reflected in various applications of the initial figurative formula and in the more or less pronounced use of natural forms. In any case, it is likely that the cave or the surface of the shelter wall was the object of a deliberate choice, and that the figures were not piled one on top of another haphazardly.

The horse(A)-bovid(B) twosome appears at all sites (fig. 7.1). Although we must allow for the possibility of caves or shelters that might not fit the basic AB formula, practically speaking the AB group is always present and dominates the groupings both numerically and topographically. But rarely does the AB group appear alone. Another category of animals intervenes, namely, group C (stag, mammoth, and occasionally chamois and reindeer). Among the wall painting groups, the ibex is most often the accompanying animal, but the stag, hind, mammoth, and reindeer also play the same role, most often on the sidelines, on the outer perimeter of the central panel groupings, or in the intermediary sections. The most frequent formula is thus AB + C, making up a triad with one interchangeable element: the ibex at Niaux, the mammoth at Rouffignac, the stag at Las Chime-neas. In the same cave, we can also see "moving" animals, or the following: at Niaux, the stag marks the deepest part of

the large painted surface, the rather numerous ibexes framing the AB figures; at Lascaux, the situation is similar—ibexes appear three or four times immediately to the side of a group of animals, stags being equal in number but farther to the side. In a cave like the Combarelles, in which the figures number into the hundreds, the "third animal" is represented by the reindeer, the ibex, and the mammoth, which are concentrated in the general area of the side panel of each decorated gallery.

Finally, there is also a D category to which fierce animals belong: the rhinoceros, the bear, and the big cats. The bear is a relatively rare animal in Paleolithic iconography and has no clearly defined place, but the rhinoceros and the big cats are marginal animals, most often situated in the deepest or most peripheral parts of the figured group. At Lascaux, Font-de-Gaume, the Combarelles, to cite only a few, the big cats are in this position. In these three places, the rhinoceros occupies an analogous position: at Lascaux, at the bottom of the Well; at Font-de-Gaume, at the end of the main gallery next to the big cat; and at the Combarelles, superimposed over the "lioness" from the end of the second gallery. The complete formula for the grouping is C + AB + C (+ D) in the case of a cave with a single composition, one that forms part of a series. In extreme cases, as in Lascaux or Combarelles, one may encounter a series of groupings with the basic formula repeated time and again.

Cave of Pech-Merle (Lot). Middle and left of the great frieze painted in black. Two groups of animals can be seen: the group on the left and the group on the right each include a horse (A) and two bison on the right, two aurochs on the left. The mammoths present in both groupings make up group C. Between the two groupings, there are also three animals marked by signs: (1) a bull (B²) bearing a sign (S¹) with a male connotation on his side (see fig. 5); (2) a cow (B²) marked by wounds (S²); (3) diagonally across from both animals, a mammoth bearing three rows of thick red dashes. The figures are between 60 and 120 cm long. (Fig. 3)



Signs

Signs seem to follow the same general patterns as animal figures. They fall into three categories (fig. 5). The first is made up of male symbols (S^1) ranging from the human body depicted in its entirety to a simple little stick. In between are sometimes very abstract transitions (lines branching out with two extensions at the base, as in Lascaux). The signs of the second group (S^2) correspond to female symbols. Like the signs of the first group, they range from a complete female representation to an empty or partitioned rectangle. The third group (S^3), in comparison with the other two, is homologous to the animals of group C or CD. It is made up of aligned dots or a series of little sticks aligned or clustered. In several cases, the S^3 signs are repeated at the beginning and the end of the figurative series. This phenomenon is quite evident at Lascaux, where the aligned dots are found at the entrance and at the far end of the Axial Diverticulum, between the Passage and the Nave, at the bottom of the Well, and at the end of the Diverticulum of the Big Cats. The signs of the third group, therefore, occupy a position rather set back, most often in the background, as at Font-de-Gaume, Pech-Merle, and El Castillo.

The relationship between signs and animals corresponds to the following broad lines: the S^1S^2 group is found juxtaposed with the animals of groups A and B (fig. 2), as in the case of the Diverticulum of the Big Cats at Lascaux (fig. 6), in which the S^1S^2 signs are in the central panel, right across from an AB group (horse-bison). But the signs may be independent of the animal figures, grouped in a separate diverticulum. Good examples can be found at Niaux (Black Room), at El Castillo, at La Pasiega, and, notably, at Cougnac. The relationship between animals and signs may thus be defined by the following formula:

$$\begin{array}{c} C + AB + C + D \\ S^3 + S^1S^2 + S^3 \\ \text{or} \\ C + AB + C + D/S^1S^2, \\ S^3 \quad S^3 \end{array}$$

Both formulas can even be found in the same cave (La Pasiega).

This complex arrangement must have encompassed an ideology whose elaborate character may be perceived through the arrangement. The situation is further complicated, however, by the role played by the cave itself. Natural caves have many accidental features that evoked, for Paleolithic man, sexual forms, generally female. These natural structures, fissures or stalagmitic formations, sometimes underscored in red (Gargas, Niaux), are also frequently completed with an S^1 sign (little sticks or dots: Gargas, Combel de Pech-Merle, Niaux), proving that the natural phenomenon was considered equivalent to S^2 . This is particularly clear in Niaux, where two fissures in the inner gallery were marked at the entrance by a sign of male connotation (branching sign) accompanied in one of the two cases by a horse with its head extended in the direction of the fissure.

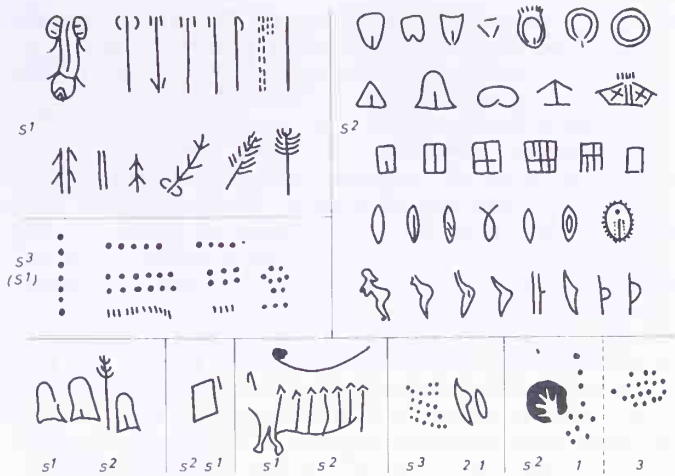
In the course of millennia and in a territory as vast as that of Paleolithic cave art, figurative traditions must have undergone numerous variations, and it is remarkable that we should come across an ideographic system that is so well constructed. Yet two rather important questions, concerning the role of wounds on animals and the role of hands, remain largely unresolved.



Cave of Gargas (Hautes-Pyrénées). Panel showing "negative" hands with "mutilated" fingers. Most such hands, colored red or black, are grouped in twos by subject, and appear to have been executed by folding in the fingers or by applying a stencil. (Fig. 4)

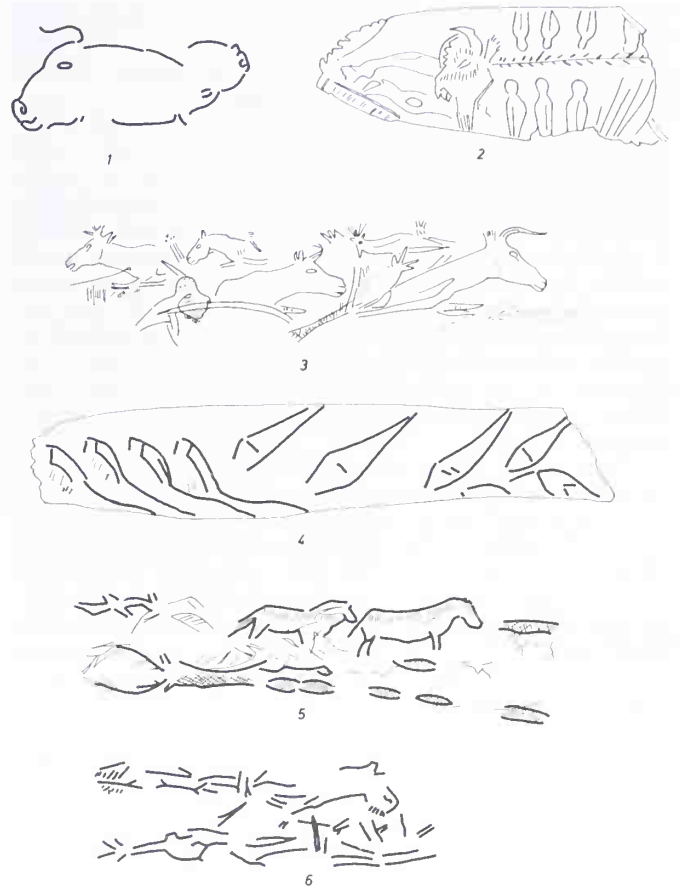
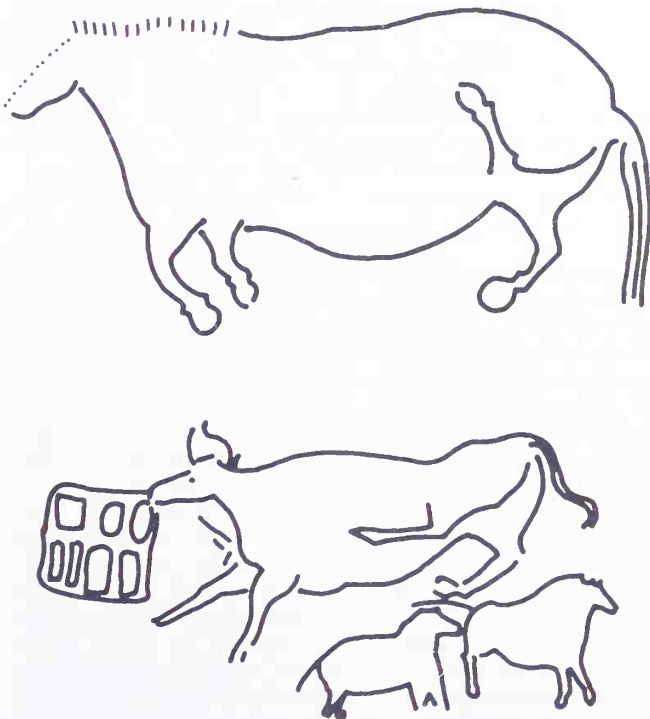
Wounds

In art objects as well as mural art, we find animals with wounds. Ever since research on prehistoric religion began, this detail has been thought to reveal the practice of magic spells. This explanation is not altogether impossible, but certain elements lead us to believe that it does not resolve the problem entirely. In fact, 96% of the animal figures on file (between 2,500 and 3,000) show no wounds. We might ask ourselves if the two series, animal and sign, really belong to the same symbolic system, or if two lines of symbols might have existed without any organic ties between them. Signs do seem to have played their role at the same times and in the same places as animals. What is more, both evolved synchronically, and both underwent parallel stylistic transformations. It is very unlikely that signs were slipped in among animals, with no connection to them, in the course of various rituals; too many signs are connected to animals by their position for the relationship not to be a close one, as the Pech-Merle paintings show (fig. 3). This does not preclude the claim that signs are sometimes independent, as at Altamira, where the signs and the animals of the Great Ceiling make up two distinct clusters; or as at El Castillo or La Pasiega, where, for one important portion, the painted



Geometrization of male and female symbols. S¹: phallic derivatives. S²: principal series of vulvar derivatives. S³: rows of punctuation (dotted lines) and barred lines. Below, from left to right: S¹-S² groupings. El Castillo (Santander): triangle derivatives and branching sign. Lascaux (Dordogne): maximal geometrization and abstractions (empty rectangle and bar). Lascaux: crooked bar (S¹) and seven aligned wounds (S²). S¹, S², S³ groupings. Niaux (Ariège): bar (S¹), claviform (see same S² figure), cloud of dots (S³). Pech-Merle (Lot): at the entrance of a deep side passage, three figures that appear to correspond in value to S¹: dotted line with four lateral dots (see same S³ figure). The negative hand probably corresponds to S², and the cloud of dots, farther into the passage, probably corresponds to S³. (Fig. 5).

Lascaux (Dordogne): (1) Engraved horse with rump turned such that the perineal region is exposed but devoid of primary sexual characteristics. 60 cm. (2) Paintings from the axial gallery, central part of the righthand wall. Aurochs in the same posture as the horse in front. Secondary sexual characteristics (general profile) are attributable to a cow, but primary characteristics, notably the udder, are invisible. This figure is included in the grouping formula A-B S¹-S² (horse-aurochs, bars, gridlike sign; see fig. 5). 1.70 m. (Fig. 6)



Gourdan (Haute-Garonne). The principle of association of animals A and B may also be applied to portable objects. This engraving on bone plaque represents the aurochs-horse twosome with the heads of both animals assembled like the faces on playing cards. About 6 cm from nose to nose. (2) Raymondon (Dordogne). Partial pendant (or fish spatula). A scene of a religious nature seems to be unfolding: six or seven persons (perhaps more) are lined up on either side of a line resembling barbed wire at the end of which is the severed head of a bison and two paws with ill-defined hooves. Near the knee, one of these legs bears a "chestnut," a horny growth that is the vestige of the multifingered hoof of the ancestors of the *equidae*. It may indeed be a horse leg, and this grouping with its sacrificial look may refer to the A-B model. (3) Torre (Guipuzcoa). Roll of fine engravings around a bone tube. From left to right: stag, man, horse, chamois, two small ibex with frontal horns, and aurochs. This series of animals referring to A-B model + C is of more than purely artistic interest: between the subjects are abstract tracings (parallel or crossed strokes, beginnings of spherical figures, clouds made of fine dots, etc.) which must have ensured that Magdalenians could "read" this mythogram. (4) Mas-d'Azil (Ariège). Bone plaque engraved with horses and fish, already strongly geometrized. Mythographic theme born out by several examples. (5) El Valle (Santander). Bone tube with engraved bird. Subject related to preceding one: two horses, one behind the other, a stag facing forward, numerous features with no apparent meaning, perhaps a snake, and some oval figures, probably fish. (6) El Pendo (Santander). Bone tube engravings, like the preceding ones, but virtually uninterpretable. There remains a part of the head and neck of a horse and a herbivore with visible horns (or antlers) and ears borne by a very long neck. Note that these two figures occupy the same situation as those of the El Valle tube. (Fig. 7)

signs are collected in a side passage; or at Cougnac (Lot), where S^1 and S^2 signs are located in a side alcove away from the animal figures, while the S^3 series occurs in the figured panels.

Whether these are two series of symbols executed simultaneously and experienced as forming the frame of a single ideological block, or whether they are two separate series with elements that were to enter one another on synchronic but distinct levels—either case presupposes a highly complex intellectual content, intimately tied to an elaborate social system. Could they be symbols of the propagation of humans and animals, a cosmogony that calls into play the complementary forces of male and female? It is difficult to reach a conclusion without going beyond the available data, but certainly we are in the presence of something quite different from what was long imagined about “the Paleolithic savages.”

Of the 4% of animals showing wounds in the thoracic or the neighboring abdominal areas, if we do a percentage count by species, the greatest number goes to the bison (8%), then to the horse (2.5%), with zero or less than 1% for all other species. There is yet another striking fact. Although wounded animals are encountered throughout the Franco-Cantabrian region, most cases occur in the Ariège sector of the Pyrenees, with the greatest number represented at Niaux (25% of figured animals). The value of the wound as a testimony to magic spells for game might be merely an accessory phenomenon, but the hunting symbolism to which it refers is certain. The fact that wounds appear essentially only on the bodies of the basic twosome is perhaps connected with the $AB = S^1S^2$ equation, the wounds being the equivalent of S^2 , that is, the female connotation. Three pieces of evidence may be invoked to support this contention: a horse at Lascaux bearing seven wounds on its body and an S^2 sign (fig. 5) on its neck and withers; a bison at Bernifal whose shoulder has an oval wound flanked by two little sticks; and a bison at Niaux engraved on clay, which has three wounds and two little sticks on its side. These parallel sticks belong to the highly varied portion of masculine symbols. One of the best examples of the relationship between signs and animals is that of the great panel of Pech-Merle (fig. 3) made up of two groupings that share the same C animal (C^2 mammoth). One is the aurochs-horse (AB^2), and the other the horse-bison (AB^1). Between the two groupings of figures are three animals: a bull, a cow, and a mammoth. Each bears different signs. The bull bears a double line of dashes with lateral extensions (S^1 , of male character). The cow is riddled with wounds that seem to play the role of S^2 signs. The mammoth is covered with red spots aligned to form the equivalent of the S^3 sign. From this evidence we can hypothesize that “wounds” have the value of a female symbol. Establishing this symbolism would open a vast realm of possibilities for the symbolic system of Paleolithic art, one that involves the alternation of symbols of life and death.

Hands

While the problem of wounds allows us to do no more than hint at some kind of metaphysical solution, *positive* hand imprints (in which a hand is smeared with color and pressed flat against the wall) and *negative* hand imprints (in which a hand is laid flat against the wall and outlined in color) raise questions equally resistant to clear answers. Positive hands are substantially rarer than negative hands and show up infrequently in groupings, but the Bayol cave in the Ardèche region has a good example. It shows six positive

hands in a grouping that includes an aurochs, two horses, and one big cat, all treated in a very particular style.

There are several types of negative hands, probably corresponding to several different traditions. The first category is made up of hands integrated in a grouping that includes, notably, dottings; this is the case in Pech-Merle, where in six instances hands are associated with dotted lines in close proximity to the two crisscrossed horses and once with eleven dotted lines above the opening of a very low side passage (fig. 5). The same arrangement of animal figures and dottings is found in El Castillo. In the Périgord, negative hands appear in isolation (one at Font-de-Gaume, one at Combarelles, several grouped at Bernifal, etc.). At Roucadour (Lot), the hands are superposed over the animals, and they have long pointed fingers incised on a black background. The Pech-Merle hands give the impression of being inserted in an arrangement where they play an important role, surely as important as the S^2 signs with their female connotation.

The hands in the cave of Gargas (Hautes-Pyrénées), like those in the neighboring grotto at Tibiran, are very different in nature (fig. 4). Repeated scores of times in different panels and hollows of the cave, they have the special feature of cut-off or, more likely, bent-in fingers. The various combinations of fingers might have been part of a kind of symbolic code of the animals most commonly represented in figurative art (horse, bison, ibex, etc.). The same digital formula appears again in side-by-side hands repeated twice and alternating between red and black (fig. 4). Examples can also be found at the openings of niches or fissures, in the position normally occupied by animals or signs of CD and S^1 groups. As strange as it may seem, the “mutilated hands” of Gargas, which include many children’s hands, are not missing all five fingers. They seem to correspond to a fairly rational application of signals involving variably bent fingers, gestures that can still be observed today among certain groups of hunters, notably the Bushmen. Aside from the monumental aspect of the connections between the groups of hands and their natural support, the ideographic aspect is extremely impressive.

Animal and human figures make up the ground on which our tentative explanation of wall painting rests. This explanation calls on data which, in the way they are assembled, suggest a complex ideological construct. To what extent can objects that are found not on walls but on sites of living quarters corroborate this claim?

Objects

Caves contain particularly precious data, if only because the images have preserved their location on walls. A no less precious source of information, however, may be found on the surfaces of Paleolithic floors strewn with objects that bear human and animal figures. Some of these objects are fairly soft fragments of stone or fragments of bone on which figures have been incised or sculpted. No practical function can be attributed to them, and we are struck by their resemblance to the figures on walls. Given their iconographic content, we ask whether they could have played the same role in living quarters as the figures played in the cave, and whether they were used to reproduce the same combinations. These questions are difficult to answer decisively, for the possibilities of iconographic combinations are extremely varied. The figures (statuettes, plaquettes or blocks, weapons or tools, personal adornments) may have been assembled in a meaningful way (according to the C-A-B-C + D model), a configuration that may presuppose, for example, either several plaquettes each bearing one figure, or several

plaquettes each bearing several animal figures. Unfortunately rare are the cases where portable objects are found in their functional places, and even rarer are sites where the excavators took the trouble to record the exact position of the relics. Yet we can begin by assuming that, since caves existed only in a limited number of areas while vast territories lent themselves only to open-air settlements, the plaquettes of stone, ivory, or bone or the statuettes which sometimes abound at such sites fulfilled the role that otherwise devolved upon cave walls.

We may also assume that the other decorated objects reflect, in whole or in part, the same ideological scheme that is displayed by the grouping of the figures on the walls.

Statuettes

Statuettes of animals are relatively rare in the Paleolithic art of western Europe. The cave of Isturitz (Basses-Pyrénées) stands out as an exception with its numerous animals (bison, horses, bears) incised in soft rock. The true domain of animal figures in round relief is central and eastern Europe. The pictorial repertory of Europe east of the Rhine is mostly made up of statuettes molded in clay mixed with powdered bone (Moravia), incised in bone or in mammoth ivory; and figurines of mammoth, horse, bison, and big cats. The functions of these statuettes are as yet unclear, but since they must have assumed the same role as that played by the engravings and paintings in the caves, they must have the same symbolic ranges.

One category of figures is made up of female statuettes, inaccurately called "Venus" figures, that appear in various forms depending on the stages of the Paleolithic epoch and the regions in which they were executed. The items discovered at Kostienki (on the Don River), on Ukrainian sites, at Predmost in Moravia, Willendorf in Austria, and at Brassempouy and Lespugue in southwestern France show in the details of their execution that they belong to the same pictorial traditions. Were the religious traditions that they were supposed to illustrate of the same nature? That is hard to answer, for the good reason that female statuettes can only symbolize a limited number of functions, generally relating to fertility. Based on what we know today, it would be difficult to say any more about them, except perhaps that the statuettes discovered in living quarters may have played an identical role to that of the signs in the groupings of figures on the walls. Male figures by their very scarcity seem to have occupied a much more modest place.

In brief, plaquettes, which are far more numerous in the West than statuettes, and statuettes, which are more numerous than plaquettes in central and eastern Europe, seem to have had the same functions. Given the resemblances between portable art (on plaquettes and statuettes) and mural art, we can ascribe identical functions to them and assimilate them to the same religious process. Unfortunately, this does not entirely clarify the details of the process that we know to have borrowed the same basic symbols throughout all of Europe for twenty thousand years. The formula A-B, C, D + S¹, S², S³ did not necessarily have the same ideological implications in the Urals as it did on the banks of the Vézère. The hundreds of plaquettes of engraved schist from Gönnersdorf (dating from the Magdalenian epoch ca. 10,000) left lying on the ground may not have had the same function as the heavy engraved blocks of the Aurignacian epoch around 30,000.

It seems possible nevertheless to discern in the groupings of art objects and mural art alike the systematic presence of

two animals A-B, often associated with one or two animals from group C. Human figures and male and female symbols are also present, as they are in wall paintings. The specialized use of certain objects may have influenced the choice of the figures that were drawn on them. There were relatively few decorated objects during the first millennia; realistic figures, at least, were rare. It is not until the middle and late Magdalenian Age, from 12,000 to 9000, that objects made of reindeer horn and bone begin to be covered with figures. Propelling devices—hooked pieces probably designed to hurl assegais at game—most often depict a single animal, close to the hook. On objects in this category the most eclectic assortment can be found: horse, bison, mammoth, ibex, reindeer, big cat, fish, bird. The propelling devices (their real use is still unknown) thus fall in the same iconographic category as plaquettes and statuettes.

Perforated Sticks

Perforated sticks are a different story. A kind of lever made of reindeer horns, the stick consists of a cylindrical handle with a bifurcation at one end in which a hole three centimeters in diameter has been pierced at the thickest point. Its real use was to straighten out, while hot or cold, the long assegai spears that had kept the curvature of the horns from which they had been made. The class of perforated sticks includes a large number of carefully decorated objects. In a significant proportion of them, the handle is sculpted in the shape of a phallus. Sometimes both extensions of the head of the object have this decoration. There are also many perforated sticks that bear the A-B grouping (horse-bison) or the third animal, in the form of a stag, a reindeer, or an ibex. A whole series of perforated sticks are decorated on their lateral extensions with two heads of bison, highly geometrized and often reduced to two sets of parallel bars. This decorative element can be found from the Asturias to Switzerland. Some perforated sticks feature realistic scenes, such as the one at Dordogne in Laugerie-Basse, which on one side shows a man knocked over by a bison and on the other side a horse; or the one in La Madeleine, which has a man, a snake, and two horses on one side, and two bison on the other. Certainly these animals were not grouped in a fortuitous manner: the H-B + A formula (Human-bison + horse) is the same formula as in the famous scene on the Well at Lascaux (a man knocked over by a bison, with a horse on the opposite wall). The second scene, however, must refer to another mythic content, for its formula, H-A + B (+ S) (Human-horse + bison [and snake]), has no known equivalent, but it does highlight the imperative character of the representation of the complementary animal: in the first case, the horse; in the second, the bison. We should also note that, as at Lascaux, the second animal is on the side opposite to the one with the scene.

Assegais

Assegais make up a category of particularly expressive decorated items. The ornamentation on these spears appears relatively early, around 20,000, and consists of geometric patterns, sometimes of a highly simplified animal figure. These markings may correspond to different hunters in the same group. But as time went by, the animal figures multiplied on some of these assegais. During the late Magdalenian era, some were covered with rows of horses on a raised field, which suggests that they served as instruments for parades

or rituals rather than as effective weapons. The ends of assegaïs are often perforated to make them into pendants. Such pieces may have been part of a particular assegaï that was lucky in its hunting and thereby served as a "talisman." The numerous pendants found in the Upper Paleolithic Age are largely inspired by sexual symbolism (cowrie shell, oval pendants, stag canines, etc.). It is thus likely that the assegaï played a dual symbolic role. A few indices seem to support this contention, namely, the probable assimilation in mural art of male symbols with the assegaï and female symbols with the wound. Many details from the natural relief of walls, such as oval niches painted red and the wounds on certain animals, support such a hypothesis. But it is difficult to consolidate the ideological aspects of this symbolic frame of reference.

Other decorated objects that might shed light on the religious thought of Paleolithic man require an even more sensitive interpretation. Harpoon points with realistic decoration are extremely rare. Conversely, we do have a considerable number of spatulas in the shape of fish, often highly geometrized. They may bear symbolic meaning, but at what level? The scale of values may range from a representation of a primarily aesthetic character to an instrument indispensable for the execution of a ritual. The same may be said of the rings of bone, three or four centimeters in diameter, with a very eclectic range of animal engravings on both sides. The fish spatula with its inevitable iconographic base (usually a species of *Salmonidae*), and the rings of bone on which all species are represented (including the human species) provide us only with a basic assumption and certainly not with evidence for an entire superstructure of beliefs. It is therefore by reference to the figures on walls and plaquettes that the iconography of portable objects can be analyzed. We may also want to view in the same spirit the so-called silhouette outlines, small pendants carved out of a hyoid bone, of which there are many known examples showing heads of horses as well as a group of eighteen ibex heads and one bison head, which may remind us of the triad horse-bison-ibex, the model of wall depiction.

One last category of materials is made up of groupings of figures engraved mostly on cylindrical objects (tubes of bird bone, assegaï shafts, etc.), similar to the perforated sticks referred to above. Some of these objects bear explicit figures, like the bone tube of Torre (Spain), which in the space of fifteen centimeters depicts a series of busts including a stag, man, horse, chamois, ibex, and aurochs (fig. 7.1). This grouping, which may also incorporate signs in parallel or converging lines cross-hatched inside with ladders, is not far removed from certain wall groupings, such as the diver of Portel (Ariège), whose middle part is occupied by a horse, a bison, and male and female signs, while the periphery is occupied by the third sign (S^3), an ibex, and a stag. It would be hard not to regard these various assembled animals as the protagonists of a mythical story, a mythogram rather than a catalogue of the presumed victims of a spell of hunting magic. But whatever the figures may designate precisely, we cannot yet afford to go outside the realm of fact to venture an explanation. Thus we have a whole series of groupings on cylinders or plaquettes, graphically explicit but just as mysterious as ever, such as the strange object found in Les Eyzies on which eight hunters carrying assegaïs on their shoulders

seem to be parading in front of a bison, or another item from Chancelade (fig. 7.2) on which seven human silhouettes appear to surround a bison's head and severed front hooves. These two examples, probably variants of the same theme, show how the discovery of new versions might help us to decipher an increasingly important part of the Paleolithic message.

A significant number of specimens (figs. 7.4, 7.5, 7.6) bear an ornamentation that is very difficult to identify: a row of curves and ovoid figures including a recognizable horse here and there or a highly simplified stag, or sometimes a fish. Given the constancy with which geometric motifs replace explicit figures, we could almost speak of ideograms, though we need not see in these semigeometric figures the elements of "writing." We can assume that the geometrized symbols preserved their meaning, so that a grouping like "chevrons-broken lines" could be equivalent to, for instance, "horse-snake," chevrons being the tail end of a row of horses, and the broken line being the geometrization of the snake's body: both cases exist in an explicit form.

It might seem surprising to hear so little said about "prehistoric religion." As far as practices are concerned, our knowledge consists mainly of gaps. We may imagine that the caves were shrines in which highly elaborate rituals took place, but all we have is wall decorations. The fact that the dead were buried with ochre and, at least in some cases, with funerary personal effects, leads us to ascribe to Upper Paleolithic man some notion of an afterlife, but we know nothing about its modalities in any detail. The tablets or engraved blocks tell us about iconographic activities that must have had a religious purpose, but we are far from being able to assert what kind of purpose it was. The same applies to decorated objects (perforated sticks, propelling devices, spatulas, etc.) of which we cannot even claim to know the exact usage. Nevertheless, the wealth of the iconography and the constancy of certain relationships between figures and between figures and the surfaces on which they appear make it possible for us to sketch the bare outlines of a system of religious thought, though its background is still very murky. The complexity and quality of these groupings express feelings (with nuances tied to places and times) that reflect simultaneously the aesthetic and religious life of Paleolithic man.

A.L.-G./g.h.

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"NOMADIC THOUGHT" AND RELIGIOUS ACTION

When the rainy season comes, the mendicant monk stops wandering and heads back to his monastery.¹

For some years now, nomadic societies have awakened strong and renewed interest among ethnologists. On an intuitive level, these societies scattered over the globe seem to be mutually comparable, and attempts have been made to construct models of such societies, that is, to go beyond the empirical diversity that science seeks to overcome. These attempts at synthesis, notably the collective work published under the direction of Lee and De Vore² on hunter-gatherers, and the works of B. Spooner³ on pastoral nomads, are evidence of the special position that nomadic societies occupy today in ethnology.

The term "nomadism" covers quite diverse phenomena: hunter-gatherers and pastoral nomads move over greater or lesser distances, more or less frequently; hunter-gatherers make use of wild objects, and pastoral nomads domestic objects, to mediate their relation with the natural environment. Although nomadic societies differ among themselves in their type of economy and in the breadth and frequency of their movements, as a group they contrast with societies that do not move, settled societies, and it is in this light that we shall consider them for the purposes of this study, setting aside the ways in which the group could be subdivided. Dissimilar in many ways, both social and economic, these societies share not only itinerant behavior but also certain characteristics, which we will examine in order to determine whether they are reflected at the level of thought and worldview. Starting with a limited amount of work done on this subject, we can but suggest a direction of study and posit some hypotheses for research. To find pantheons common to nomads, if such a thing were possible, would require far more concerted and exhaustive studies. But it may already be possible to isolate from its various contexts an attitude to the supernatural world and religion that is common to nomads, and to define a framework within which we might study their mythology.

"Free, individualistic, subject to no state nor to any tyranny," such is the "traditional stereotype" of the pastoral nomad.⁴ But it is also an objective piece of information to the extent that it is derived from the image that the nomad has of himself. When this self-image comes into close contact with settled societies, it may even be more pronounced, thus affirming in a deliberate way the difference between nomadic and settled ideologies. Pastoral nomads have a realistic vision of the world and a rather meager ceremonial life. They practice a great deal of divination but little witchcraft. Religion is centered on the individual rather than on the group; indeed, a pantheon comprising a great number of divine figures seems to be more common among farmers. If nomads show little interest in religion, and if they refer to manifestations of the supernatural in "stoic terms," this does not mean that they are any more "secular"⁵ than any other group. The cosmology of pastoral nomads in the Middle East, for example, tends to be expressed in Islamic terms. Through this filter, as Spooner points out, it should be possible to see those elements of cosmology that antedate Islam or are not integral to it. When these are compared with other cosmologies from nomadic populations in regions lacking such a culturally dominant ideology, it may be possible to isolate the elements that derive from the nomadic adaptation.⁶

The mythology of hunter-gatherer societies presents notable similarities. The myths that retrace the origins of a society are apparently universal and come out of the same mold. In these myths, the culture hero creates mankind and its customs; he domesticates fire, teaches arts and crafts, and shapes the landscape and animals. In the cosmology, spirits are not gods: culture heroes or creator spirits no longer intervene in the affairs of men, and that is why they are not worshiped. They have to do with existential ideology and not with normative ideology. Just as the accent is placed on the person in nomadic society, so the world of spirits is strongly individualized; egalitarianism within the group is reflected in the absence of any hierarchy among the spirits. The individual deals directly with the world of the supernatural. Except for the shaman/doctor, there is no reliable mediation by specialized individuals.⁷ The culture hero who offers the world to humans after he has created them is not totally absent from nomadic societies; but probably more characteristic of such societies is the strongly existential aspect of the ideology as well as egalitarianism. The absence of authoritarian chiefs and of a certain type of power excludes certain types of divine figures. Moreover, nomadic hunters pay little attention to what does not involve them directly. Accordingly, the Mbuti are more concerned with the present than with the past or the future. They are practical people. They eschew all speculation about the future or the hereafter on the grounds that not having been there they do not know what it is like and not knowing what it is like they cannot predict what their behavior will be. They say that to try to look into the future is to "walk blindly."⁸ Knowledge is considered a way of living rather than a rule. And it is precisely in their behavior in the face of—rather than by the content of—myth or the supernatural that the clear outlines of a way of thinking peculiar to nomads begin to emerge. We see in hunter-gatherers certain features already observed in the pastoral nomads, and profoundly different from the religious attitudes of settled societies. Before we describe nomadic societies as nonreligious or hardly religious, we might first ask whether ethnologists hold too narrow a conception of ritual and symbolic behavior, and whether their analytic tools may be too closely tied to the categories of settled societies, which would hamper their perception of religious phenomena among nomads.

Among the Basseri, pastoral nomads of Iran, the paucity of ritual activity is striking;⁹ they are indifferent to metaphysical problems and to religion. But is this really a lack, or are the descriptive categories that are being used incapable of describing the reality of the situation? The central rite of the society is migration itself. For the Basseri, migration is laden with meaning, though not expressed by means of technically unnecessary symbolic acts or exotic paraphernalia. The Basseri respond not to the utilitarian aspects of activities but to movement and its dramatic forms, to the meanings implicit in the sequence of their activities.¹⁰ Is it not rather ethnocentric to assume that an activity that is important from an economic point of view cannot also be important from a ritualistic or symbolic point of view? The migrations of nomads are more than mere business trips; they are also ritually motivated and determined, and our difficulties in observation seem to be due to our conflation of these two domains.

In this discussion of the relationship between religious attitude (taken in a rather broad sense) and nomadism, societies with seasonal variations are both exceptional and typical because they are alternately nomadic and settled. The gathered habitat of the winter season contrasts with the

scattered habitat of the summer season, with its mobility and the splintering of the group into families in the narrowest sense of the word. There are two ways of occupying land, but there are also two ways of thinking: "This contrast between life in winter and life in summer is reflected not only in rituals, festivals, and religious ceremonies of all sorts. It also profoundly affects ideas, collective representations, in a word, the whole mentality of the group."¹¹ . . . In summer, life is somewhat secularized."¹² The ecological constraints to which the group is subject make nomadism necessary, and the group's requirements come to restrict religious thought and practice. But just as we must consider the role of adaptation to the environment, we must also refine our categories of analysis, and when appearances evoke secularization, we must understand that the foundation has yet to be deciphered. The mobility that characterizes nomadic societies is indeed the central feature of their organization, but it is also the main obstacle to our understanding.

"We must beware of any tendency to treat fixed and permanent ties linking together aggregates of people as normal, and loose, impermanent bonds as abnormal and requiring special explanation."¹³ The migrations of hunters or pastoral nomads by far exceed those that would be required by the demands of the natural environment and of access to natural resources. The fluidity and the constant coming and going, both of groups and of individuals within the groups, have a political function: they make it possible to ensure order, the resolution of conflicts, and, paradoxically, cohesion, because the lines of fusion and fission of groups and individuals do not necessarily follow the lines of kinship. Among nomads, social relations become activated through changes of place: proximity or distance are not relevant, and space is in a sense negated. Finally—and, in our view, this is an essential point—the changes of place have a religious function: they are highly valued, so highly that Barth sees them as the central rite among the Basseri. It is movement that leads nomads "into closer recognition of the one constant in their lives, the environment and its life-giving qualities. Under such conditions of flux where band and even family relations are often brittle and fragmentary, the environment in general, and one's own hunting territory in particular, become for each individual the one reliable and rewarding focus of his attention, his loyalty, and his devotion."¹⁴ In other words, the nomad "does not have the impression of inhabiting a man-made world. . . . He is controlled by objects, not persons. . . . There is not an anthropomorphic cosmos. Hence there is no call for articulate forms of social intercourse with nonhuman beings and no need for a set of symbols with which to send and receive special communication."¹⁵ The nomad does not seek to improve the environment in which he lives. In this sense, he

is controlled by objects and a world that are *wild*, and he is in direct touch with nature. The domestic animals through whose intervention he exploits the wild objects, if he is pastoral, serve only to mediate this relationship with nature. Whether he is a hunter-gatherer or a shepherd, he does not impose his Culture on Nature as do settled peoples. Mobility and fluidity of groups and within groups; decentralized societies, or rather societies with multiple centers; egalitarianism; direct contact with nature—such are the poles that may affect the ideology of nomads and that may be reflected in collective representations and in rituals.

With a few examples, we have sought to come to terms with nomadism and its underlying ideology as a "certain type of behavior,"¹⁶ rather than as a mode of economic production or as a variable determined by environment. This particular attitude, in the face of the supernatural and the symbolic world, is governed by what we might call a nomadic way of thinking that participates in the "primitive/wild/*sauvage*" way of thinking but preserves its own characteristics within it. The analysis of the content of the myths of various nomadic societies may indeed highlight the lines of force around which "nomadic thought" is organized, and will finally allow us to spell out the specificity of a way of thinking in which what is normal is not what is fixed, and the fluid and the moving are order and not chaos.

F.-R.P./g.h.

NOTES

1. M. MAUSS, "Étude de morphologie sociale," in *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris 1966), 472.
2. R.-B. LEE and I. DEVORE, eds., *Man the Hunter* (Chicago 1968).
3. B. SPOONER, "Towards a Generative Model of Nomadism," *Anthropological Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (1971): 198–210; "The Cultural Ecology of Pastoral Nomads," in *Addison-Wesley Module in Anthropology*, no. 45 (Reading, MA, 1973).
4. B. SPOONER, "Cultural Ecology of Pastoral Nomads," 35.
5. *Ibid.*, 39.
6. *Ibid.*
7. E. R. SERVICE, *The Hunters* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1966).
8. C. M. TURNBULL, *Wayward Servants* (Garden City, NY, 1965), 247.
9. F. BARTH, *Nomads of South Persia* (Boston 1961), 135.
10. *Ibid.*
11. M. MAUSS, "Étude de morphologie sociale," 447–48.
12. *Ibid.*, 444.
13. J. WOODBURN, "Stability and Flexibility in Hadza Residential Groupings," in *Man the Hunter*, Lee and DeVore, eds., 107.
14. C. M. TURNBULL, "The Importance of Flux in Two Hunting Societies," in *Man the Hunter*, Lee and DeVore, eds., 137.
15. M. DOUGLAS, *Natural Symbols* (London 1970), 60–61; cited in Spooner, "Cultural Ecology of Pastoral Nomads," 40.
16. CL. LÉVI-STRAUSS, "Hunting and Human Evolution: Discussion," in *Man the Hunter*, Lee and DeVore, eds., 344.

P A R T

2

Rome



ITALY

It is impossible to speak of a "religion of ancient Italy" in the same way that one might speak of "the Greek religion." In the traditional framework of the classical world, built on the two great civilizations of Greece and Rome, Italy does not represent a united and continuous historical reality as Greece does. Initially, during the first millennium B.C., Italy's territory was divided into zones inhabited by diverse peoples, each having their own beliefs and customs—zones to which were added the band of Greek colonies along the southern coasts of the peninsula and in Sicily. Later, beginning at the time of the Roman conquest and continuing to the end of antiquity, the religion of ancient Italy became identified with Roman religion. Therefore several articles should be consulted on this topic: the following article on pre-Roman Italy, along with the articles to which it refers, and those articles that deal with Roman religion.

M.P./d.b.

RELIGION IN PRE-ROMAN ITALY: THE HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Pre-Roman Italy occupies a special place in the general development of the religious conceptions of the Mediterranean peoples of antiquity, even if its role was much less important than that of the Greek world, by which it was greatly influenced. The term "pre-Roman" usually designates the period from the beginning of historical times around the eighth century B.C. to the political, linguistic, and cultural unification of Italy under Roman domination between the third and first centuries B.C. (obviously we must not forget the existence of Rome, then at the very beginning of its development—which took place in parallel with that of the other centers of culture of the Italic world).

The absence of unity and coherent progress is the essential characteristic of pre-Roman Italy, and one that clearly differ-

entiates it from Greece at the same period. Italy can be seen as a mosaic of people distinct in origin, language, and culture, and of social groups at different stages of development. We know the historical names of the main ethnic groups which existed at the beginning of the Roman conquest (Latini, Campani, Apuli, Calabri, Lucani, Bruttii, Samniti, Sabini, Piceni, Umbri, Etrusci, Liguri, Veneti, Histri, Galli); these names reappear in the names of the regions of unified Italy at the time of the emperor Augustus (I. Latium and Campania; II. Apulia and Calabria; III. Lucania and Bruttii; IV. Sabini and Samnium; V. Picenum; VI. Umbria; VII. Etruria; VIII. [Gallia] Cispadana, then Aemilia; IX. Liguria; X. Venetia and Histria; XI. [Gallia] Transpadana), and some of these, sometimes with some alterations and displacements, survive to this day. But we must keep in mind that this subdivision only partly corresponds to the original ethnographic and historical conditions as these are revealed to us by linguistics and archaeology. In fact, except for some minor and heterogeneous groups hard to classify (such as the Liguri and the Alpine populations), we can list the following formations on Italian territory: (a) the Etruscans, with their own language, which is not Indo-European; (b) the Italic peoples who spoke Indo-European languages, but different ones from the Latins, the Apulians, the Umbro-Sabellians, and the Veneti; (c) the Greek colonies along the coasts of southern Italy (Magna Graeca) and Sicily. Toward the end of the archaic period, the double role of cohesion and diffusion that the cities played is superimposed on ethnic factors, particularly in the zones of the Greek colonies and in Tyrrhenian Italy (Etruria, Latium, Campania). In the fifth and sixth centuries B.C., the face of pre-Roman Italy would be profoundly changed by the expansion of the Sabellian-Umbrian peoples (that is, the Sabines, the Samnites, the Campanians or Osci, the Lucani, the Bruttii, the Piceni, the Umbrians, etc.) over a large part of the peninsula, and by the penetration of the Celts (Gauls) via the Alps into northern and central Italy.

It was necessary to pause for these historical preliminaries in order to understand the complexity and variety of religious experience in such a composite world. It is evident that each of the principal cultures should be the object of a separate study, suited to its own specific character: thus we



Pre-Roman Italy.

should deal with Hellenic Italy in terms of Greek religion, and with Rome from its origins in terms of Roman religion; for Etruria and the various Italic populations, we must refer to the most characteristic aspects that can be glimpsed behind what is known of their religions, and for the Gauls, to Celtic religion. At the same time, we must not neglect the insular territories (Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica), which, while not part of Italy in the ancient sense of the word, that of continental Italy, had close historical and cultural relations with the mainland, while at the same time local cultures spread and Phoenician and Carthaginian colonies were established.

Yet from a more general, historical point of view, we must get the religions of all of Pre-Roman Italy into perspective in order to attempt to determine their place, functions, and consequences.

If we set aside the Roman sources, what is known on this subject is relatively restricted, fragmentary, and heterogeneous. The absence of an indigenous literature among the Italic peoples, or its loss (where it did exist, as it certainly did in Etruria) following the disappearance of the local languages and their replacement by Latin, constitutes a fundamental negative factor in comparison with other ancient civilizations. The data recorded by classical Greek and Latin writers are indirect, fortuitous, and often uncertain, especially when the sources are relatively late. Even for the Greek colonies, the literary accounts are full of gaps due to the loss of a large part of the works of local authors. Outside the Greek colonies, the few remaining documents, mainly epigraphs written in Etruscan, Umbrian, Oscan, Messapian, and Venetian, give us some useful data on beliefs and cults. But for the rest we only have the evidence of archaeological monuments

and records—the remains of sanctuaries and necropolises, images and pictorial scenes, coins, furnishings, etc.

The most important general facts can be summarized as follows:

1. *The persistence of prehistoric traditions and primitive conceptions.* The transition to the historical period is not clearly marked. The innovations that characterize this transition (the formation and definition of the main ethnocultural units at the beginning of Greek colonization, the opening to the forms and ideas of the great civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean, evolution to urban structures, development of political and religious institutions, the adoption of writing, etc.) are gradual. At first they are limited—outside the Greek colonies, of course—to the Tyrrhenian coast and particularly to Etruria and the Etruscan sphere of influence; in most of the rest of Italy, that is, in the interior of the peninsula, on the Adriatic slope, and in the north, their penetration was very slow and remained marginal. These latter territories preserved, almost until the time of the Roman conquest, certain essential aspects of the way of life and organization characteristic of Iron Age cultures, as well as survivals of prehistoric ritual customs such as the celebration of cults in grottoes or rock sanctuaries, and the practice of pictorial engravings (characteristic of the Alpine valleys), anthropomorphic stelae, the proximity of houses and tombs, etc. But even in the more advanced cultural centers, except for the Greek colonies, traces survived of primitive conceptions and practices so distant from the rationality of the classical world that they sometimes provoked the astonishment and incomprehension of writers in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Most striking are the suggestions of an animistic conception of the supernatural; the omnipresent importance of divine signs and divination; the high social and religious status of women (in Etruria and even in early Rome), which have been interpreted as survivals of matriarchy; and the tenacious belief in the material survival of the dead in their place of burial, and all the rites implied in such a belief (house-shaped urns and tombs, portrait images, rich funerary apparatus, funeral games, etc.).

2. *External influences, especially from Greece.* In addition to the conditions that it inherited from prehistory and protohistory, Italic religiosity was profoundly interwoven with Oriental and Greek themes that, in certain respects, marked it decisively. During the "Orientalizing" period between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C., along with a great number of objects and pictorial themes imported from the Aegean world and the Near East (Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, Urartu, Anatolia) via the great currents of Phoenician and Greek maritime traffic, probably echoes of the beliefs of the ancient Oriental civilizations and archaic Greece at the beginning of its development penetrated widely in Italy. Evidence of this is provided by certain divine or monstrous beings and their iconography ("mistress of animals," sphinx, griffin, centaurs, etc.), the legendary traditions that integrate the elements of the newly emerging Greek mythology, and symbolism in general. Certain characteristic phenomena, which were not manifested clearly until later, seem directly linked to the Asiatic world—for instance, Etruscan haruspicy used little models of animal livers, as in Mesopotamia and Anatolia. As for the influence of the Semitic religions, aside from their diffusion in the Phoenician and Carthaginian colonial domain of Sicily and Sardinia (discussed above), we can cite the unusual case of the consecration of a *sacellum* to the goddess Astarte, assimilated to the Etruscan goddess Uni, in the sanctuary of Pyrgi on the Tyrrhenian coast. But it was mostly Greek religion, directly transplanted to the

colonies of southern Italy and Sicily beginning in the eighth century B.C., that gave the Italic centers its divine models with their respective attributes (the local pantheon thus came to be identified with the Greek pantheon—the Etruscan god Tinia and the Latino-Italic [D]iove, for example, were assimilated to Zeus; the Etruscan and Latin goddess Uni [Juno] to Hera; the god Mars, recognized by all the Italic peoples, to Ares; and so forth), its myths, and the specific traits of its cult (forms of altars and temples, sacrificial rites, votive offerings). It is very interesting, finally, to see the development of an impressive store of legendary narratives and mythographic constructions linking the heroic world of the Greeks with local Italian traditions, either by mixing them or by linking them.

3. *Definitions of the different cultural environments.* The diversity of populations and cultures in pre-Roman Italy constitutes the fundamental historical perspective; it is manifested especially in the domain of the sacred, which by its very nature participates in the deepest heritage of every people and every community. Real and profound differences separate the religion of the Etruscans from that of the Latins and of primitive Rome, as well as from that of the colonial Greeks; the same is true for the religions of the other Italic peoples such as the Sabines, the Samnites, the Umbrians—indeed, each of these deserves to be treated separately, as noted above. The differences can be explained not only by the diversity of origins of all the religions, but also by the precise historical circumstances that emphasized the specific

Hercules and Mlacuch. Mirror from Atri. London, British Museum.



character and tendencies of each of them. In the Etruscan world, for example, the early rise of a dominant social class that drew its extraordinary economic power largely from the exploitation of considerable mineral resources, that emphasized the prestige of its noble origins, and that blended protohistoric funerary traditions with Oriental influences certainly favored the ideological and ritual development of a cult of the dead, the equal of which is not to be found, making all allowances, except in Egypt and, outside the Mediterranean world, in China. Later in Etruria, after both Etruscan decline and Roman supremacy became evident, the dominant oligarchies, having lost all economic and political initiative, shifted their interests to the ritual and speculative tradition of their priestly class, thus creating particularly favorable conditions for the elaboration and codification of the set of doctrines and norms called the *disciplina*, which for the ancients and for us represents the most peculiar expression of Etruscan religiosity. The Osco-Umbrian-speaking Italic populations probably inherited some of the essential traits of their religious conceptions and customs from prehistory and from the pastoral and warlike nomadism of their ancestors: thus there are traces of a tribal totemism and the rite, which is also a myth, of the *ver sacrum*, the "sacred springtime," that is, the migration of young men of the age to bear arms—a rite that was substituted for a primitive sacrifice of all living beings born in a certain year. But it is also clear that the great expansion of these peoples during the historical period and their increasingly frequent employment as mercenaries contributed to the warlike character of their religion, and notably to the cult of the god Mars or Mamers, from whom the military state of the Mamertini, founded by Campanian mercenaries in Sicily in the third century B.C., drew its name directly. Finally, there was the well-known connection between the political history of Rome and the predominance of juridical and public values in Roman religion.

4. *Common aspects and unitary tendencies.* However different they may be, the religions of pre-Roman Italy have points in common. And if these resemblances do not define a distinctive global character that would allow us to oppose the Italic world as a whole to other culture areas, they nevertheless deserve to be examined carefully, especially since they ultimately converge toward the Roman religion. An elementary geographical reason, the contiguity of the lands lying between the seas and the Alps, made Italy necessarily a place of contacts and exchanges. In the course of prehistory and protohistory—and particularly at the time of the "Proto-Villanovian" culture, that is, between the twelve and ninth centuries B.C., at the end of the Bronze Age—Italy presents, from an archaeological point of view, a uniformity that suggests an underlying unity, even on the level of sociocultural structures, ideas, and customs. For example, the funerary equipment in the various cultures of the Iron Age has common aspects, whether cremation predominates (as in the north of Italy and in the central part on the Tyrrhenian side) or burial (as in the south of Italy and in the central part on the Adriatic side). The Oriental and Greek influences, which have already been discussed, constitute another source of inspiration that was more or less widely diffused beyond the limits of each ethnic group or culture: we can cite as examples in the domain of myths the voyages of Odysseus and Diomedes, and the propagation of the cult of Heracles, Pythagorean doctrines, Dionysian rites, etc. But Etruscan civilization at the time of its supremacy and expansion—even if it was secondary to Greece—also spread its ideas, images, and ceremonies over vast territories in peninsular and north-



The monster Volta emerging from a well. Urn. Volterra. Guarnacci Museum. Museum photo.



Hercules suckled by Uni. Florence, Archaeological Museum.

ern Italy. Archaeological data, literary sources, and epigraphic documents reveal the existence of bilateral and multilateral exchanges among the major cultural centers of the Italic world. Among the most significant examples: the Etrusco-Latin cultural *koine* of the sixth century B.C., whose presence in the religious domain is shown not only by the form and decoration of sacred buildings, but also by certain cults, legends, and miracles; the system of giving dual names to the gods, as well as to persons, a system that is shared by the Umbrian and Etruscan pantheons (Mars Grabovius, in the Iguvine Tables; or Fufluns Pachies in Etruria) and that is also found in Latium and Campania; the close resemblances between augural doctrines and practices in Umbria and Rome; and the fusion of Greek and Italic beliefs, notably in southern Italy. Campania, especially, is the meeting place and the melting pot in which the Greek, Etruscan, Samnite, and Latin traditions combine. Between the fourth and second centuries B.C., broad areas of integration and unification of religious ideas and practices existed throughout the peninsula (which explains the vulgarization of the cults of Mars and of Heracles-Hercules, the diffusion of terra-cotta and small bronze votives, certain types of temples, etc.). In the course of this process, the hegemony of Rome certainly also plays an important role in the acceleration and catalyzing of this process, which preceded the general assimilation of the Italic religions by Roman religion.

Etruscans and Italians: The Poverty of Mythic Narratives

The extraordinary development of mythological imagination and erudition among the Greeks seems to contrast with an extreme paucity of stories about gods and heroes among the peoples of ancient Italy. Naturally when we express a judgment—or, perhaps, an impression—of this kind, we must take into account the limits imposed on our knowledge by the loss of any original literatures, with the exception of Latin literature. We have only a few fragments of the Etruscan and Italic traditions, occasionally collected or summarized much later by classical and Byzantine authors, often with obvious alterations. A large proportion of these narratives suggest a legendary world already open to the influence of the Greek myths, if not thoroughly elaborated by the Greeks in terms of their interpretation of the origins of the Italic peoples, cities, and cults. In such a context it is difficult to isolate the local elements, and especially to evaluate their authenticity and age. The same problem exists for the interpretation of Etruscan artistic representations, in particular for the scenes engraved on mirrors and the reliefs on small cinerary urns and sarcophagi, sometimes with more or less obscure episodes from local legends, or, rather, elements of these legends inserted into Greek compositions. It is certainly always possible that orally transmitted sagas were at the origin of these scenes, but of these no evidence

remains. We may, however, still find some echo of them in the enigmatic representations sculpted or engraved on funerary stelae of the Adriatic regions (those of Daunian in Apulia) and the necropolises of Novilara on the frontier Marches), with their scenes of battles, ceremonies, navigation, monstrous beings, etc.; and on a few archaic narrative vessels and bronzes. But these traditions, even though they existed, must be considered isolated phenomena, specific to each ethnic group at the beginning of its historical development. The early diffusion of Greek mythology, with its gods and heroes, must have smothered any attempt to elaborate the indigenous legends into organized cycles, especially in the Tyrrhenian area (Etruria, Latium, and Campania), which, while more advanced, also came under Greek influence earlier. On the other hand, certain predispositions based on general ways of thinking and religious conceptions—like Etruscan ideas about the mysterious nature of the divine—caused a weak development of mythology, and especially of narratives that record the actions of the gods; this is clearly different from the extraordinary imagination that the Greeks demonstrated in this domain.

But modern researchers have focused their attention on a few pieces of pictorial or literary data, which allow us to locate, if not to reconstruct, certain Etruscan or Etrusco-Italic legends that can be grouped around divine, daemonic, or heroic figures. All, or almost all, of these seem to have been developed late, integrating Greek elements and also perhaps more or less altered memories of historical facts. The most significant are (1) Heracle (Heracles), "son of Uni (Juno)," who was nursed by the goddess; (2) Maris (Mars), who was presented in a multitude of infantile or juvenile forms that his different epithets allow us to distinguish (Maris Halna, Maris Husrmana, Maris Ismithians); he was believed to be the son of Heracle; he was subjected by Minerva to a rite which was supposed to ensure his immortality—an episode that is probably connected to the stories of the longevity and the triple death and resurrection of the centaur Mares, the ancestor of the Ausones (Aelianus, *Varia Historia* 9.16); (3) Epiur and Tages, children who had the appearance and wisdom of old age; this same Tages was said to have been the inventor and master of the haruspium, which came out of a furrow in the earth, and to have had connections with Tarchon, the eponymous hero of Tarquinia; (4) the probably parallel stories about the teaching of the nymph Vegoia (Lasa Vecu or Vecuvia) and her relations with a certain Arruns Veltymnus, probably from Chiusi; (5) the legend of Cacus, a singer whose songs were perhaps transcribed by a young man named Artile; both were threatened by the warriors Aule and Caille Vipinas (who themselves belonged to a cycle of historical events dating from the sixth century B.C. which were transformed into semilegendary tales); elsewhere Cacus is cited as Tarchon's ambassador to King Marsyas, the eponym of the Italic people of the Marsi (Sabinus, *Collectanea* 1.8), and by Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.184ff.) as a cruel shepherd turned bandit who was finally killed by Hercules; (6) the monster (V)olta, who appeared in the Volsinian area and was killed by King Porsenna (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 2.140), is undoubtedly the character whom we see springing out of a well in the reliefs on some urns, with the head or pelt of a wolf, and confronting men who are armed or performing rites of exorcism. Some of these mythic schemata are found beyond the specifically Etruscan domain, which implies relations with the Italic world. But we must assume that the connections and fusions between the traditions of different ethnic areas were realized only during an erudite and re-

flexive period, and that they remained subordinate to the process of Greco-Italic mythic elaboration that was mentioned at the beginning of this article. In the mythic aspects of the traditions of the "sacred springtime" we can sometimes find a relatively autonomous vein of legends proper to the Sabellians.

The Divinities

1. Ancient Italy in General

A student of the ancient Italian gods must never lose sight of the religious unity of classical civilization, that is, the fundamental unity of the Greek and Roman religions. Beyond the traits that, on the level of imagination, mentality, and behavior, differentiate the relations that Greece, Etruria, the Italic populations, and Rome maintained with the sacred, it is evident that their ideas of the personalities, functions, looks, and attributes of the main divinities are essentially the same. This cannot be explained solely within the perspective of comparative studies of Indo-European and Mediterranean divinities (the supreme god of light or of heaven, for example, or the mother goddess, etc.); it is necessary to take full account of concrete historical relationships. The fact that these divine figures are described anthropomorphically puts them within the domain of culture (that is, of mythographic imagination and erudition, of the creations and traditions of iconography) rather than of religious thought. By facilitating their diffusion, this characteristic allows an osmosis between areas that, while different in their initial religious conceptions, participated in the same civilization, as was precisely the case of Greece and Italy throughout antiquity. Of course Greek inspiration was initially and constantly determinant; but this did not go so far as to suppress certain local characteristics that were preserved in the Greek divinities who were assimilated. Although the names of the gods were different, both names often—but not always—conveyed the same reality (the Etruscan name Tin[ia], for instance, can be seen as a simple "translation" of the Greek Zeus, the Latin name Venus of the Greek Aphrodite, etc.). The degree of identification varies depending on the case, the place, and the period. But certain Greek gods, notably Apollo, kept their names when they were introduced into Italy: perceived as foreigners at first (the cult of Apollo was introduced in Rome only in the fifth century B.C.), they were finally more or less completely integrated into the Italic pantheon. Among these gods, the most popular was Heracles (in Oscan his name became *Herekle*, in Etruscan, *Heracle*, and in Latin, *Hercules*). This type of influence must be connected with the massive importation of Greek myths into Italy, which is attested on Etruscan monuments beginning in the archaic period.

The Greco-Italic theological koine, as a general phenomenon, was born of a process that began at the dawn of historic times, at least with the first Greek attempts to colonize southern Italy and Sicily, and culminated in the Hellenistic period with the Roman conquest of Greece. But it ran up against the persistence of certain local cults that totally or partly escaped Greek adaptations and transformations. This happened especially in out-of-the-way and peripheral zones, but also in some great religious centers in which very important divinities survived—divinities whose characters and traditions would not, and will not, allow them to be identified with Greek models. This is the case, for example, of Veltune-Voltumna, *deus Etruriae princeps* (Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 5.46), at Volsinii in Etruria, and of the goddess Vesona

in the Umbro-Sabellian world. There was a definite indigenous influence on certain particular conceptions of the divine, for example on the mysterious and anonymous collegial divinities (*di involuti, opertanei*) in Etruria, and on the *indigitamenta* in Rome. But there was also the importance of triads (which Greek and other ancient religions also had), such as the very famous Roman triad of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, or in Umbria the gods called "Grabovii," that is, Jupiter, Mars, and Vofiono. And finally there was the proliferation of minor divinities and daemons.

Double names constitute the most important characteristic of the divinities of the Italic world; in certain aspects this was connected with the normal usage, common also in Greece, of adding an attribute or *epiklesis* to the proper and current name of the god or goddess. But in Italy (i.e., in Umbria, in the Oscan-speaking areas, in Etruria, and even in Rome), this particularity appears with the frequency and especially the coherence of a system comparable to that of the onomastics of persons bearing double names (personal name and family name), a system found exclusively in the societies of ancient Italy, i.e., precisely among the Etruscans, the Latins, and the Umbro-Sabellians. It is, in fact, very likely that it was used to harmonize the relatively institutional character of the gods (as well as of demigods and daemons) with the model of human society and institutions, as is seen in other cases (for example, in the grouping of certain divinities into "colleges," and in the people's conception of the demigods, who could be clients, helpers, or servants). The first name, which corresponds to the individual or personal name in human onomastics, is naturally the god's principal name; but it can also be a name common to members of a certain category of demigods (in Etruria, for instance, the names *Lasa* or *Charu[n]* are sometimes followed by a second, more specific, designation), or a "concept" (as in the Umbrian ritual of the Iguvine Tablets: *Ahtu Marti* = "Oracle [of] Mars"), or simply the generic name indicating the divinity (of the type *Des Fortuna*; cf. the Etruscan *Flere Nethuns* = the god Neptune or the divinity of Neptune). As in noble names, the god's second name generally has an objective meaning; it can refer to a place (*Juno Populon[i]a*); to a family line—which suggests a family cult (for example, *Culsi Leprna* = *Culsi* "of the Leprna family" in the funeral elegy of the Tarquinian priest Laris Pulenas); to a function (*Keri Arentikai* = Ceres the Avenger, in an Oscan curse [*tabella defixionis*] from Capua, and the parallel *Mars Ulltor*); or to another divinity, whether by assimilation (as in *Fuflunsul Pachies*, in which the Etruscan name *Fufluns* is attached as an attribute to the name of the god Bacchus, who corresponds to *Fufluns*) or simply by association (*Deus Fidius*, *Janus Junonius*, etc.). To this last type of formation belongs the extraordinary interweaving of divine names that characterizes the Umbrian pantheon in the Iguvine Tablets (see below).

II. Etruria

Our knowledge of the Etruscan gods is based primarily on pictorial representations (chiefly engraved mirrors, but also funerary paintings, vases, statuettes, etc.), especially when these are accompanied by explanatory inscriptions; on other Etruscan texts, such as rituals, votive dedications, the miniature model of a liver from Piacenza, etc.; and on the comparison of information preserved in classical literary sources.

The great celestial divinities have characteristics and attributes analogous to those of the Greek divinities to whom they were assimilated. They were believed to inhabit all of the sixteen regions of heaven, particularly the first four

regions located in the northeast, and they could hurl bolts of lightning. First was Tin or Tinia, the supreme god corresponding to Zeus (and to the Latino-Italic Jupiter); he threw three thunderbolts, one on his own, the second on the advice of the three Consentes, and the third, most terrible one, at the order of the enigmatic Superior and Obscure gods, *di Superiores et Involuti* (Seneca, *Quaestiones Naturales* 2.41). Next came Uni, the consort of Tin(ia) and homologue of the Greek goddess Hera and the Latin Juno—she was highly venerated in all the main Etruscan cities, in different forms, but especially as the goddess of maternity (in the sanctuary of Pyrgi she was equivalent to Ilithyia or Leucothea and was assimilated to the Phoenician goddess Astarte); Menerva, the homologue of Minerva and Athena; Maris, the homologue of Mars and Ares, whose epithets and manifestations were the most varied of all; Sethlans, the homologue of Vulcan (the name *Velch[an?]* is also attested) and Hephaestus. These two last-named divinities also appear in other celestial zones. In the northwest regions was another hurler of thunderbolts: Satres, the homologue of the Latin Saturnus and the Greek Ouranos. Other major divinities were Turan (literally "the Mistress"), the homologue of Aphrodite and Venus; Nethuns, the homologue of Neptune and Poseidon; Turms, the homologue of Hermes (the name *Herme-* is also attested) and Mercury. Finally there were some divinities who were borrowed directly from Greece: Hercle (that is, Heracles), Arimti or Artums (Artemis), and Ap(u)lu (Apollo).

The divinities of nature (celestial and terrestrial) and of natural products seem to be located mainly in the southern regions of the celestial vault: there were the solar gods Ca(u)tha and Usil, and probably the moon Tiv(r) and the dawn Thesan, Selvans (= Sylvanus), and Fuflun(s), the homologue of Dionysus and Bacchus. Among the divinities of fate, death, and the netherworld who usually lived in the inauspicious western regions are Cilen(s), Letha(m), Calu, Vetis (who may be Veive, i.e., Veiovis, the Jupiter of the netherworld), and also the goddess Vanth, the god Mantus and his consort Mania, and, borrowed directly from Greece, Aita or Eita (Hades) and his consort Phersipnai (Persephone, Proserpina). But in this domain it is hard to make a clear distinction between the gods strictly speaking and certain infernal daemons. Finally we must note separately the two divinities of Volsinii, Voltumna (*Veltuna* or *Veltha* in Etruscan—as we said above, this divinity became the most important god of Etruria from the time the representatives of the Etruscan states began to meet periodically in his sanctuary) and Nortia, probably the goddess of destiny: a nail was driven into her temple each year (Livy, 7.3.7).

Alongside these divine figures who were defined and represented anthropomorphically under the influence of the Greek pantheon, some indigenous supernatural entities survived, often grouped in colleges of obscure and mysterious divinities, whose number, sex, and name are not known (Varro, in *Arnobius Adversus Nationes* 3.40). These included the *Involuti et Superiores* gods, and the *Favores Opertanei* (i.e., "hidden"). The writers of antiquity mention other "colleges" or categories of divinities; these were generally referred to in Etruscan by the word *aiser* or *eiser* (= "gods"); the expression *eiser ši-c šeu-c*, found in the ritual of the Zagreb Mummy, could refer either to all of these or to a specific cult. There may be a parallel in the *Consentes* or *Complices* (in Etruscan perhaps *Aiser Thufltha*), counselors of Tinia-Jupiter, who were twelve in number; but there were also the Penates, who were divided into four classes of divinities, of the sky, the water, the earth, and human souls (Nigidius Figulus, in *Arnobius* 3.38); the Lares; and the Manes, that is, the spirits

of the dead. The relations among all these groups are not clear: the *Consentes* may have been pairs of major divinities, but they are also sometimes identified with the Penates—who may represent, in another form, all Etruscan divinities.

III. The Italic Populations

Outside Etruria, the archaeological evidence provided by pictorial representations is very rare. We must therefore rely almost entirely on epigraphic documents, with the occasional help of information found in literary sources. In addition to the scarcity of data, another problem is the multiplicity and dispersion of ethnic groups speaking Indo-European languages and of their ritual centers. As a result, it is difficult to propose a synthesis of the data on the Italic divinities, not only for the marginal zones of the Adriatic and southern Italy, but also for the territories of the Umbro-Sabellian peoples, whose religious experience, that is, cultural experience in general, appears to have been very different. Undoubtedly there were fairly close relations between these peoples and the ancient Latin and Roman world, due to common underlying characteristics and to very early contacts between the Sabines and the inhabitants of

Latium (a large number of Roman cults were supposed to be of Sabine origin, starting with that of the god Quirinus), but also to later influences—and notably that of the Roman religion in the frontier territories of the interior peninsula, especially after the territories began to fall under the political domination of Rome. But the Greek and Etruscan cults also exercised their influence.

Probably many of the basic figures of the common pantheon of Greece and Italy were adapted to the traditions and rituals of the Italic sanctuaries, beginning with Jupiter, who, under the name of (*D*)*i*ove-, (*D*)*i*uve-, but also *Iupater*, accompanied by multiple epithets, is widely attested in the Umbro-Sabellian area. Even though we have no epigraphic document clearly proving the existence of a goddess corresponding to Juno, we cannot exclude the hypothesis that the goddess Hera, whose worship was extremely widespread in Italy, influenced the cults of the mother goddess, such as those practiced in the famous sanctuary of Capua—but unfortunately we still do not know the name of the divinity to whom this sanctuary was consecrated. Yet we find references to Ceres (*Kere*), at Capua, Agnone, and Rossano di Vaglio; and to Diana in the sanctuary of Diana

Right: Votive statue of a woman with a child. Fifth century. Capua, Museo Campano. Museum photo.

Votive statue of a woman with a child. Fifth to sixth century. Capua, Museo Campano. Museum photo.



Tifatina near Capua. In Campania and in the territory of the Pelignians, Aphrodite-Venus appears under the name *Harentas*, that is, "the goddess of desire." The cult of Heracles (*Herekle*) is also well known. But the preeminent Italic god, present everywhere and attested by both epigraphic and literary sources, seems to have been Mars (in the Oscan form *Mamers*), the god of war and migrations and the patron of mercenaries. The discovery of a very large number of small statues representing Mars and Heracles in the votive deposits of sanctuaries all over the peninsula is evidence of deep popular veneration for these divinities. There are other specifically Italic divinities who do not really have homologues in the Greco-Roman world, such as the goddess Mefitis, a great divine figure of the Sabellian peoples, known especially in Irpinia; it is certainly she who, with Jupiter (*Diove*), formed the couple that may have been named "the Sovereigns" (*rego*) in the dedications of Rossano di Vaglio. She seems to have been partly assimilated to Ceres and Venus. Ceres Jovia is also called "Queen" in the inscription of the Tablet of Rapino, near Chieti. Among the Umbrians (at Prestino) and the Picenians, the worship of another female divinity, Cupra, was widespread; a famous sanctuary was dedicated to her on the Adriatic (today's Cupra Maritima).

But the richest and most complete documentation on the Italic divinities worshiped in a particular place, in this case the Umbrian city of Gubbio, is provided by the Iguvine Tablets. The Tablets mention a large number of divine figures or entities, only some of whom are known, such as Jupiter, Mars, Pomono, Vesona, Cerfo, Fisovio, Holo, Hondo, Tefro, Trebo, Vofiono, etc. What seems most significant today is that each of these names, rarely used by itself, generally forms the first part of a double name, the second part being an adjective formed from the name of another divinity (for example, Cerfo Martio, Prestota Cerfia, Torsa Cerfia, Torsa Jovia, Fisovio Sancio, etc.). All of this makes up an extraordinary interweaving of reciprocal relations, a kind of genealogical tree. At the top of this tree is the triad of Jupiter Grabovio, Mars Grabovio, and Vofiono Grabovio, all of whom can be connected to a first entity, Grabo-, whose origin, according to G. Devoto, is as the personification of rocks or oak trees, and who is also found in the Etruscan divine name *flere in crapsti* (= god of the *grab-*, or in the *grab-*). This is evidently a system born of a complex theological elaboration, complicated all the more by the fact that some of these divine entities seem to be personifications of concepts or actions (*Vofiono-*, for instance, is "the shaker," *Trebo-* "the dwelling," etc.).

Nothing, or very little, can be said about the other Italic populations, more isolated and less known. On the indigenous divinities of the Apulians, there is no information at all; the names of the Greek goddesses Demeter and Aphrodite, which appear in the Messapian inscriptions, could be translations of one or several local female divinities, particularly since Demeter recalls the cult of Ceres, which was widespread among the Sabellians. On the other hand, Jupiter Menzana could be an ancient local god of horses. Once again, it is a female divinity who seems to prevail in these areas. We could also cite the Reitia of the Veneti, of whom we have a few representations, for example, in the reliefs on the bronze disks from Montebelluna, where she is portrayed as a *potnia theron*, with a large key. Among the epithets of Reitia attested in Venetian dedicatory inscriptions is *Tora*, probably one of the most ancient names of the goddess. In any case, the existence of a sanctuary of Argive Hera, like that of Juno at Padua, confirms that the Venetian cults were essentially connected with female divinities.

M.P./j.l.

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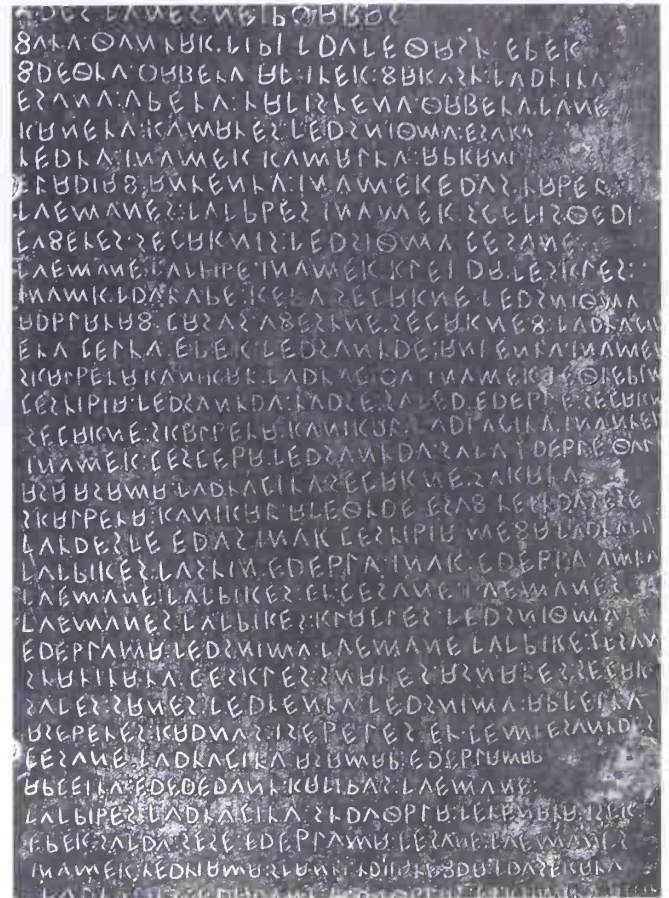
SACRIFICIAL CULTS AND RITES IN PRE-ROMAN ITALY

Our knowledge about the cultic forms, especially the sacrificial forms, that were practiced by the populations of pre-Roman Italy comes to us from a few original documents of great importance. Among them, the most important document is the Umbrian text of the Iguvine Tables, the longest pre-Latin inscription ever discovered in Italy. Next in importance are the Etruscan text inscribed on the wrappings of an Egyptian mummy now in Zagreb and the clay tablet from Capua that also bears an Etruscan inscription. Finally, there are other documents, both Etruscan (the golden plates of Pyrgi, the lead disk of Magliano, etc.) and Oscan (the *iuvilas* inscriptions from Capua and the *Tabula Agnonensis*). It should be emphasized that the richest and deepest information that the epigraphic sources give us about the ancient cultures of the Italic world is information about ritual practices. The value of these epigraphic data surpasses that of archaeological data (the remains of shrines, temples and their decorations, scenes depicting sacred ceremonies, and so forth) and the fragmentary and indirect information supplied by classical literary sources.

Italic sacrificial rites are described in minute detail in the seven bronze tablets from Gubbio. Although their dates have been set at the second and first century B.C. and although they were written partly in the Umbrian alphabet and partly in the Latin alphabet, certain elements of their redaction go back to much earlier times. They consist in a set of sacred regulations that belong to the city-state of Gubbio (Iguvium). Mentioned among them are the city's acropolis (the Fisia acropolis), and the place set aside for the observation of auguries (a *templum*) and its roads and gates. Its institutions and its priests are named, notably the college of the Atiedii Brethren. The ritual prescriptions are connected with various kinds of ceremonies: a great sacrifice of expiation and purification of the city and the acropolis, a lustration of the people followed by the exile of foreigners, sacrifices to ward off ill fortune, the sacrifice of a dog, rites of assembly, and the rites of the festivals celebrated every two months. The liturgy took place in three phases: (1) the prayer ratifying the pact with the deity (*persklom*); (2) the observation of the flight of birds to determine auguries (*avie*); and (3) the sacrifice itself, or the offering (*esono*). Different ceremonies were invoked to gain the favor of different deities. The deities were quite numerous; some were well-known and common to all Italic religions (like Jupiter and Mars), while others, more obscure, personified sacred concepts. But almost all of them were characterized by a second name indicating the relationships of kinship or affiliation that united them. The victims of blood sacrifices could be oxen, calves, heifers, pigs, sheep, or dogs, all carefully selected for their age, sex, and color, and according to their breeding, which could be either sacred or profane. The bloodless offerings consisted of liquids, notably the "sacred beverage" and wine, which were used as an accompaniment to the sacrifice or poured as simple libations; finally, there were offerings of grain, cakes, fat, and so forth. The officiating priest, in addition to the augur, was the *arsfektor*, who corresponds to the Latin *flamen*. The supreme religious authority was vested in the *uhtur* (*auctor*, "maker").

This extraordinary heritage of knowledge (basically clear, even though there are still some problems in the interpretation of the texts) opens the way to a whole spectrum of comparisons with Greek and Roman sacrificial rites, to which the Umbrian rites seem to be closely tied by profound analogies. These analogies certainly go back partly to the origins, but they may also have come about through the progressive assimilation of ritual customs within the environment of Hellenistic civilization and through the immediate influence of Rome. Moreover, according to the method of "parallel texts" that K. Olzscha has applied in this area, the Iguvine Tables constitute the point of departure for any understanding of Etruscan ritual texts, primarily those of the Zagreb Mummy and the clay tablet from Capua. Indeed, there are close correspondences between the Umbrian document and the Etruscan text of Zagreb. The same entire formulas appear in both; indeed, in certain cases we can juxtapose them as if they were "bilingual." This demonstrates a basic unity in the mentality and sacred language that also applies to the Roman literary and epigraphic documents that deal with ritual prescriptions (for example, Cato's *De Re Rustica*, the *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*, the proceedings of the secular games, and so forth).

The ritual that one can read on the wrapping (*liber linteus*) of the Zagreb Mummy describes a series of ceremonies that took place in a particular religious center, the shrine of Cilth (*śacni cilth-*), in a chronological order that was fixed by a calendar of religious festivals. The most important part of the text is made up of three long, almost identical liturgical



Fragment from the Iguvine Table. Gubbio, Palazzo dei Consoli. Photo Garivati.

sequences, the first dedicated to a college of deities (*aisēr*, that is, "the gods," *śi-c śeuc-*), the second to a god designated by the expression *flere in crapsti* (which may correspond to Jupiter Grabovius of Gubbio), and the third to Neptune (*flere nethuns*). These three sequences seem to be intended for the purification of the sanctuary, the city, and the people. There are also references to ceremonies in honor of the gods Culsu and Veive (and therefore probably funerary ceremonies) and rites of lustration. There is also a reference to a "royal palace" and to a temple of the goddess Uni. Sacrificial rites were designated by the term *ais(u)na* (= *res divina*), which is connected with the form *esono* found on the Iguvine Tables; these rites included dedications and offerings, with or without the shedding of blood. Given our uncertain knowledge of Etruscan vocabulary, it is difficult to state the exact nature of the victims (who are thought to be similar to the victims of the Iguvian ritual) or of the offerings. We can simply say that the offerings of liquids, notably wine (*vinum*), seem to have been very important. The Zagreb text is more or less contemporary with the Iguvine Tables and must therefore go back to the late phase of Etruscan civilization and to the time of the Roman Republic. On the other hand, the ritual prescriptions of the Capuan tile belong to a much earlier period (fifth century B.C.). These mention sacrifices and offerings to ancestors and to infernal deities. Both of these great documents of Etruscan ritual mention various officiating priests. The principal term designating a priest is *cepen*

(in Capua, the archaic form *cipen*), often followed by an exact term indicating functions. Thus, a *cepen thaurch* was responsible for funerary tasks. Other terms indicating priestly functions appear on tomb inscriptions. The highest sacred office was apparently held by the *maru* (that is, the Maro, who in Umbria carried out civil functions—it was also Virgil's family name).

M.P./g.h.

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CONCEPTIONS OF THE AFTERLIFE AMONG THE PEOPLES OF PRE-ROMAN ITALY

I. Italian Protohistory

With the exception of the Etruscans, whom we will discuss further on, ancient sources tell us nothing directly about the beliefs of the peoples of pre-Roman Italy concerning the fate of human beings in the next world. All that one can vaguely deduce from the funeral customs and the tombs, that is, through archaeology alone, belongs to the general category of Mediterranean and European protohistories of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, including those of primitive Greece. The data tend to demonstrate the persistence and the pre-eminence of a fundamental conception, common to the earliest stages of development in all human cultures: that of a direct relationship between the spirit of the dead—always understood as the survival in some way or another of their individuality—and their mortal remains in their resting place, that is, in the tomb. The tomb must therefore be a secure shelter, and, to the extent possible, garments, food, and objects of daily use will be placed near the body or the ashes of the deceased for use in the future life. Until the most recent periods, that is, approximately the Hellenistic period—and when Rome, after unifying Italy, imposed her civilization on it—the Italic necropolises almost without exception preserved this ritual custom. In fact, it continued until the time of the migrations among the European peoples who lived on the margin of the classical world, while in Greece it disappeared much earlier.

The simultaneous use of funerary practices as different as burial and cremation is also found in other civilizations of the antique world (including Greece and Rome), but it is so characteristic of pre-Roman Italy that it makes it possible to distinguish the different territories, ethnic milieus, cultural horizons, and chronological periods. From the perspective of a genuine historical reconstruction, it is not easy to describe

the alternation of the two rites. We can say, nevertheless, that, essentially, the burial of bodies in a folded or straight position is the heritage of prehistoric customs that were widespread in Italy even during the Neolithic and the Bronze Age and survived in a large area of the Adriatic, interior, and southern zones of the peninsula; while the practice of cremation, linked to the great movement of European "fields of urns," became widespread at the end of the Bronze Age, and continued afterward, during the Iron Age and the historical period, to be the exclusive or preeminent patrimony of the inhabitants of northern and Tyrrhenian Italy. The phase of greatest expansion of the rite, in which it took over even southern Italy and Sicily (probably diffused from the north by land and from the Balkans and the Aegean world by sea), coincides in the final Bronze Age with the culture called "Proto-Villanovian," which is found in remarkable uniformity throughout Italy (eleventh to ninth century B.C.). At the beginning of the Iron Age (ninth to eighth century B.C.), we see that the zones where cremation predominates already correspond rather precisely to the territories of the Liguri (the culture of Golasecca), the Veneti (the culture of Este), the Etruscans (Villanovian culture), and in part to those of the Latins and the Umbrians. On the other hand, burial seems to characterize the Sabellian-Umbrian peoples (including the Piceni of the Adriatic), the Apulians, and the natives of Magna Graecia and Sicily. But the practice of burial gains ground throughout the Tyrrhenian slope beginning in the seventh century, in Latium and in Etruria, with the characteristic dugout tombs. Later, grave monuments, chambered tombs carved into the rock and imitating the interior of homes, and finally veritable mausoleums were superimposed upon, or rather, in many places, substituted for, the dugout tombs. In Etruria there was, in the end, a fairly clear boundary between the southern cities where burial predominated (Caere, Tarquinii, Vulci), and the northern cities where cremation predominated (Volaterrae, Clusium, and Perugia). It is known that in Rome in the historical period, the two rites coexisted and were linked to different familial traditions. It is probable that it was the same in other cities; for it is possible that the practice of one rite or the other depended upon the social status of the deceased.

The main ideological significance of cremation is still a matter of dispute; in any case, this does not concern the practice and the diffusion of the rite in Italy during the more recent historical periods. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there is some connection with the idea of a generative or regenerative power in fire, which might also suggest a relationship between the cinerary vase in the form of a cabin-urn—widespread in prehistoric Latium and in Etruria—the domestic hearth, and the cult of Vesta (Müller-Karpe). The form of the individual tombs would evidently differ according to whether one buried or cremated the body; but neither the rules about the nature and extension of the cemeteries nor the funerary furnishings seem to have differed in any other way—which leads one to think that there was a profound similarity between the conceptions of the next world. Noteworthy is the general tendency to make the urns or tombs look like a house (from the first cabin-urns to the little urns in stone, the sarcophagi, the tomb facades and *hypogaea* carved into the rock), in order to offer the dead the continuation of their milieu, that is to say a *domus aeterna*, following the definition that the Romans would later give to the tomb. More significant still is the intention to reproduce the image of the deceased—probably in order to preserve a corporeal support for the spirit, in conformity with the Mediterranean tradition that went back to ancient Egypt.

This practice is manifest not only in the presence of figurines in the proto-Latin cremation tombs, and later in the Etruscan tombs, but especially in the fact that they tended to give human forms to the cinerary urns (such as the "canopic vases" of Clusium). The "portraits" of Etruscan funerary painting and sculpture, and the *imagines maiorum*, that is, the masks and busts of ancestors, of the Roman funerary custom (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 35.6) are evidently related to this tradition—even though, with time, what had originally borne the mark of magic or religion became a simple commemoration or proud aristocratic exhibition.

The separation, because of the "impurity" of the dead, between the locales of interment and the locales of habitation—a separation that characterizes all the major cultures but, generally speaking, seems alien to the world of prehistory—is already in operation in Italy between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. However, it seems that in the beginning this separation was not rigorously demarcated: in many cases (for example, in Rome, in Villanovian Tarquinii and Bologna, in Este), groups of tombs are placed around centers of habitation. It was only when the movement of urbanization began to take hold, in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., that this custom took the form of a ritual rule, confirmed by the Roman law of the Twelve Tables ("It is forbidden to bury or cremate a body in the city"), later to become a general and continuous tradition. The necropolises thus developed outside of the urban centers, along the major routes, and attained dimensions comparable to those of the cities, which they imitated in spacial planning and in the arrangement of the monuments (an exemplary case is that of Caere in Etruria, though one can cite precedents, admittedly embryonic, in protohistorical Latium, as well as the evidence of the recent discoveries at Decima, near Rome). The indigenous cities of Apulia constitute a singular exception, still unique in all of ancient Italy: the prehistoric heritage seems here to have crystallized into a system in which homes and tombs were mixed indiscriminately.

II. The Etruscans

A significant amount of information about Etruscan notions of the hereafter is furnished by archaeology, that is, by the tombs and their decoration; by the study of epigraphic documents; and finally by the echoes of their beliefs in the literary sources of the Roman and Christian periods. The tombs are among the most significant expressions, if not the most significant, of the culture of the ancient Etruscans. Contrary to other peoples of ancient Italy, they seem to have paid particular attention and devoted great economic resources to the care of their dead and to the furnishings of the sepulchers—for which no equivalents in monumentality and richness are found outside of certain cultures of the Near East. This concern should correspond logically to special psychological and ideological orientations.

The faith in the survival of the deceased in his tomb, common to all the religion of pre-Roman Italy—and to the preclassical cultures in general, as we have already seen—is indeed manifest in Etruria, especially in the archaic period, with remarkable clarity and intensity: the grandiose tumulus sepulchers of the Orientalizing period with their sumptuous furnishings (such as the famous tomb of the Regolini-Galassi of Caere, the contents of which are conserved in the Vatican museum), and the chamber tombs, filled with all kinds of riches (including an incalculable number of Greek vases), the immense necropolises at Caere (Cerveteri), Tarquinii, Vulci, Clusium, and, in particular, because of the importance of

their decoration, the painted tombs, especially those of Tarquinii. This sudden and incomparable blossoming stands out clearly from the common base of the protohistorical funerary customs of the Iron Age customs which Etruria still knew in the Villanovian period (ninth to eighth century B.C.). The economic and political development of the Etruscan world must have played a predominant role in this process: the seventh and sixth centuries, its greatest period of expansion, witnessed the formation of a dominant class that controlled the wealth and wanted to glorify itself even in the realm of funerary rites. As for the concern that these barbarian potentates showed for their dead, it is probable that they were inspired in this by models and memories of the East. The funerary paintings of Tarquinii represent funerary ceremonies, games, hunting scenes, dances, and feasts in which the dead play a role, surrounded by their close friends and relatives and their servants: there are so many subjects borrowed from the visible reality that there are almost no allusions to the supernatural world or the hereafter. Evidently interest is entirely focused upon an immanent continuity of which the images themselves, in perpetuating the effectiveness of the funeral rites, offered a guarantee.

But between the fifth and fourth centuries, the atmosphere changes. Fantastic creatures begin to appear in the tombs, most often winged, and certainly belonging to a different world. In painting (at Orvieto) and in sculpture (the stelae of Bologna), the theme of a "voyage" of the deceased to another place emerges. The difference between the realm of the living and that of the dead also materializes. It is clear that traditional Greek beliefs about the underworld, and probably Orphic and Pythagorean influences as well, played a predominant role in this transformation. The realm of the hereafter was represented as a city lined with towers, whose door is guarded by demons. The dead arrive there by chariot or on horseback, also led by demons. Borrowing, in part, the iconography of archaic banquets, they would sometimes represent the stay of the dead in the underworld as a banquet. The rulers of the next world, Aita (Hades) and Phersipnai (Persephone), preside over the feast, while other demons play the role of servants and musicians. The influence of Greece is evident in the large scene of the *Nekyia* (the Homeric world of the dead) on the tomb of Orco II at Tarquinii, with Tiresias and other famous heroes of Hellenic mythology; it was inspired by an iconographic tradition that may go back to the tableau of Polygnos of Thasos that was found in the *Lesche* of the Cnidians at Delphi (Pausanias 10.28.7). On the other hand, the menacing demons belong to the Etruscan imagination: Vanth and other beings armed with torches who resemble the *Erinyes*; the terrifying and omnipresent Charun, with his hammer; and the most monstrous of all, Tuchulcha, with his serpents.

The fact that the dead are submerged in a menacing atmosphere may indicate a pessimistic conception of the destiny of man in the next world. Nevertheless—in the representations of illustrious people (from the most noble families of Tarquinii or Orvieto), serenely lying down or sitting down for a banquet; or in the scenes where corteges of magistrates, with their retinue, march toward the beyond—the accent placed upon the human dignity of the dead seems to contrast with the basic desolation and theatrical horror, thus creating an ambiguity that is difficult to explain. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to seek an analogy with certain macabre conceptions in the funerary art of the European baroque (Pfiffig). In fact, we know from several literary sources that it was possible, by means of the appropriate blood sacrifices, to raise the souls of the dead to the condition



Canopic jar from Dolciano. Chiusi, Museo civico. Museum photo.

of "divine souls"; this is what is taught in the *libri acherontici* (Ateius Labeo is here cited by Servius in his Commentary on the *Aeneid*, 3.168; Arnobius *Adversus Gentes* 2.62). If the ritual text of the Etruscan inscription of the Capuan tile indeed refers, as we think it does, to the ceremonies performed in honor of the infernal gods, then one has, as early as the fifth century, evidence of ritual practices intended to facilitate the survival of the dead in the next world. On the one hand, such a document may illuminate the importance of the funerary rites known since the archaic period, of which we find a singular representation in the tomb of the funeral bed, in Tarquinii: people are depicted making offerings next to a majestic catafalque bed surmounted by two headdresses that symbolize the presence of a divine couple (who may perhaps be identified with the deceased themselves?). On the other hand, the document may proclaim all those beliefs and practices concerning the deification of the dead, which the *disciplina Etrusca* would later codify. However, as far as these last are concerned, one should probably consider the influence of the Greek mysteries and the Orphic, Pythagorean, and Dionysian doctrines, which, coming directly from Greece, or through the intermediary of Magna Graecia, had penetrated into Etruria.

Comparing the facts furnished by the Greek and Latin sources with the results of a careful analysis of the sacred and funerary texts of the Etruscans allows us to widen and make more precise our understanding of their eschatology. Thus, we can lengthen the list of all the deities and demons of destiny, of death, and of the hereafter that inhabit the deadly western regions of the sky, with the names of the gods Calu, Celi, Letha(m), Larun (or Laran), of the goddess Sur(i), of the goddess or god Culsu (or Culsan), of the demon Leinth (which might possibly mean "He who causes to die"), whose sex is undetermined, and of the female demon Nathum (or Natinusna)—and recalling the names of the infernal Jupiter, Veive or Vetis (Veiovis), and the divine couple Mantus and Mania, who were certainly associated with Manes. These last, whom the Etruscans also called *mau(iu)*, are the dead themselves, but considered as spirits, demons, or even as gods. They are also recognized under the name *apher*, corresponding to the Latin *Parentes* (*Parentes* gods); this name denotes the ancestors who are the object of a cult in the inscription of the Capuan tile. The concept of soul or spirit is expressed in Etruscan by the term *hinthial* (for example: *hinthial Patruclēs*, "the soul of Patrocles"). It was thought that the Etruscan name for the next world was Achrum, derived from the name of the river of the underworld among the Greeks, the Acheron—which would explain the title of the *Libri Acherontici* or *Acheruntici*.

M.P./m.s.

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ETRUSCAN RELIGION

I. Historical Premises

The historian Livy (5.1.6) evokes the Etruscans as "a nation that was devoted beyond all others to religious practices, and all the more because it excelled at them." According to a false etymology, their name of Tusci was derived from the Greek *thuaskooi*, "experts in sacrifices" (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 1.30.3). This reputation is almost a commonplace in ancient literature. The Christian writer Arnobius (*Adversus gentes*, 7.26) called Etruria "the creator and mother of superstitions." It is clear that the Greeks and Romans were impressed by Etruscan religion, not so much by its intensity as by a particular characteristic which must have appeared quite strange to them. This was the Etruscans' obsessive search for contact with the supernatural world through the interpretation and scrupulous

performance of the divine will—a search which, especially in the final phase of Etruscan civilization, became a technique for experts alone.

Literary sources of the Roman period, which report with sufficient breadth and which sometimes paraphrase and summarize data lost from the written tradition of the Etruscans, reveal the existence of doctrines that were claimed to have been handed down from an original teaching by superior beings, and that discuss the concept of the sacred, the relationships between the heavenly and terrestrial worlds, the gods, the destiny of men in time and after death, and the forms and rules of divination and worship. We do not know to what degree these concepts, which were arranged and codified much later, correspond to the earliest practices and beliefs of Etruscan religion, our direct knowledge of which is based on archaeological evidence and sometimes epigraphical documents. Insofar as our limited knowledge of the Etruscan language allows us to understand them, the most important extant Etruscan texts—dedicatory and ritual texts such as the Pyrgian tablets, the Capuan tile, the lead disk of Magliano, and especially the long manuscript written on the cloth of the Zagreb Mummy from Egypt (the sole example of a sacred *liber linteus* preserved from antiquity)—offer information that not only confirms what we have been able to learn from classical sources, but also adds further data, especially important because of their undeniable and immediate authenticity. What is more important, they demonstrate a continuity in the forms of worship and in the sacred language that goes back at least to the end of the archaic period, as is the case with the documents from Pyrgi. Nevertheless, if one hopes to undertake a “historical” reconstruction of Etruscan beliefs and their development, it remains difficult to distinguish between reality and erudite speculation.

In any case, the religion is indisputably the best known aspect of the civilization of ancient Etruria. Considered in a general perspective, it is one of the most interesting and original of ancient religions, with many characteristics that distinguish it from other Mediterranean religions. There has always been a wish to explain these peculiarities by a theory that the Etruscans came from the Orient. This theory, founded on the modern interpretation of an account in Herodotus (1.94) and other ancient sources, is buttressed by the fact that in Etruscan religion there was no dearth of elements having more or less direct ties with Oriental concepts (such as demonology, haruspicy, and funerary customs). Some scholars, most notably A. Piganiol, have supported this point of view. But in the past few years, following new archaeological discoveries and linguistic studies of greater depth, the problem of the origins of the Etruscans has opened onto ever broader, more complex and subtle perspectives. In spite of the distant ties that the Etruscans might have had with the Aegean world and Asia Minor, these new insights make it even more improbable that there ever was, at the dawn of historical times, a massive immigration of an already unified people from the eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, all evidence indicates that the Etruscan ethnic group had already taken form in Italy at the end of the Bronze Age at the latest. As for resemblances to Oriental religions, these are of so heterogeneous a nature (we find such elements at diverse periods and in relation to civilizations as distinct as those of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt) as to make the idea of a common hereditary tradition unlikely; the resemblances are better explained one by one through cultural contacts.

It is better to refer to historical reality, that is, to characteristics and events in the life of the Etruscans, than it is to ask vague questions about their origins. We know that their civilization knew a sudden and early burgeoning between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C., bringing with it the formation of great urban centers and an expansion of political and economic power, especially in the maritime sphere—the celebrated Etruscan thalassocracy—which was very important around the Mediterranean. But its development ended as early as the fifth century, at the end of the archaic age, before Greece at her apogee imposed and affirmed the universal values of classicism that would come to be identified with the progress of the ancient world and with the very foundations of Western civilization. It is thus understandable that the essential and deepest characteristics of the spiritual world of the Etruscans remained fixed at the level of preclassical cultures, tied to prehistoric traditions and primitive ideas, and variously affected by Oriental and archaic Greek motifs. This explains why so many aspects of Etruscan beliefs would later appear distant, foreign, and obscure to Hellenist-Roman religious and philosophical thought.

The massive penetration of influences from Greek civilization in Etruria had noticeable repercussions in the realm of their gods and iconography and allowed for a diffusion of myths as well as of certain images of the afterlife. All of their art, not only temple art but also the art of funerary monuments and decorative objects (vases, engraved mirrors, jewelry, etc.), is dominated by Greek mythological subjects. But it must be asked to what extent Hellenization was a decisive and determining factor in the development of Etruscan religion, and whether this was not more of an external veneer—a “cultural” phenomenon rather than an ideological essence.

The reality underlying these pictorial representations was revealed with incontestable clarity in the complex of notions and precepts collected in Roman literature. We must therefore trace the elaboration of this complex to the time when Etruria, after losing its capacity for maritime activity, was reduced to the limits of the Tyrrhenian territory, between the Tiber and the Arno. Caught there between the expansion of the Gauls and the Italic peoples of the interior of the peninsula, reduced to an essentially local economy, and finally subjected to the domination of Rome between the fourth and first centuries B.C., the Etruscans would in the end enclose themselves in the conservatism of their priestly oligarchies and in the cult of their traditions, before definitively bequeathing these vestiges and memories to Roman religion.

II. General Characteristics of Etruscan Religion

Given the present state of our knowledge—and taking account of the fragmentary and generally indirect character of our sources—it is difficult to form an overall idea of the religious ideas of the Etruscans and even more difficult to define them with simplistic formulas. Such elements as signs of the constant influence of supernatural forces in the world and on human actions, intense relationships between the living and the spirits of the dead, and apotropaic precautions and magical practices of evocation or disguise lead one to think of a persistence of animism. A fetishist theory, proposed by such authors as C. Clemen, appears more uncertain, as the venerated objects, such as weapons or worked rocks (somewhat analogous to the Semitic sacred stones and

prehistoric menhirs), could also have been symbols or attributes of divinities or the dead. Although cults of water, trees, lightning flashes and the places struck by them, as well as cults of the gods of the sky, sun, moon, and sea are often cited, one cannot really call Etruscan religion a religion of nature or of heavenly bodies. It seems, however, that one might easily mark out a cosmological system founded on the material definition and the division of celestial space according to astronomical orientation and, in an analogous and recurrent manner, of terrestrial space, or better, of particular terrestrial spaces that may be identified with portions of territory or with the areas of cities and sacred places—i.e., the *templum*, which may be reduced to the microcosm of the viscera of sacrificed animals. The attributes, the localization, and the hierarchies of the major and minor divinities are inserted into such a system, and the favorable and unfavorable powers and presages (to the east and west, respectively, i.e., to the left and right of a subject looking toward the southerly sun) are distributed among them, thus concretely establishing the procedures of divinatory practices.

As far as the realm of the divine is concerned, one may simply define Etruscan religion as a polytheism similar to that of the other great religions of the ancient world—including the Greek and Roman religions—with personal divinities largely assimilated to the major gods of the Greek and Italico-Roman pantheon, but also to obscure divinities who are sometimes multiple and named collectively, and sometimes anonymous and enveloped in mystery. Furthermore, it is clearly possible to speak of an accentuated polydaemonism, understood in the sense of the belief in an incalculable number of supernatural beings who have affinities with the daemons and demigods of the Greek world, but regarding whom it is difficult to establish how far they partake of a truly divine nature (or whether these are individually minor gods). They have often been seen in the roles of attendants or servants of major divinities. Depending on whether they belong to groups of female, infant, or warrior genies, of daemons or of monsters of the hereafter, they present different characteristics, as much from the viewpoint of their appearance as of their localization.

In the way in which all of these superior beings are conceived, there are probable signs of primitive survivals, especially in the indeterminate and fleeting character of certain aspects of the divine. This may also explain the apparent weak development of a mythology in the sense of a narration linking together the actions of gods and demigods. Several transmitted accounts or episodes from local legend that may be inferred from artistic representations (on engraved mirrors, for example) seem to have developed under the influence of Greek myths or result from a late and scholarly fusion of Greek and local elements. But the deepest and most original import of Etruscan religion appears in the overwhelming importance of supernatural forces and in the nature of the relationship between men and gods. Every event and phenomenon, rather than being explained rationally, is thought to result from the direct intervention of a divinity. The following statement made by Seneca is particularly significant: "Between the Etruscans, the most skilled of men in the art of interpreting lightning, and ourselves [that is, the Hellenistic-Roman world] there are differences. We think that lightning is emitted because clouds collide; they hold that clouds collide in order that lightning may be emitted. They refer everything to the divinity: therefore they are convinced not that lightning flashes give an indication of the future because they are produced, but that they are



Lead disk from Magliano. Florence, Museo archeologico. Photo Sopr. Arch.-Firenze.

produced because they have something to indicate" (Seneca, *Quaestiones naturales*, 2.32.2).

People are incessantly preoccupied with observing, recognizing, and understanding the signs of the divine will in order to derive auguries and prescriptions from them, and then with conforming to this will in the most scrupulous way possible by avoiding every fault, even one that is involuntary. If they nevertheless commit such a fault, they strive to apply a remedy to it as quickly as possible; all of this they do by means of extremely precise rituals of great formal rigor. Not only worship, but also every private or public form of conduct becomes concentrated and exhausted from this fearful dependence on the supernatural, in the face of which man is apparently bereft of both autonomous consciousness and a sphere of activity that is proper to his own will—and this is the basis for the ethical and juridical concepts that are inherent in the religion (it is in this that Etruscan religion is most clearly differentiated from Greek and Roman religion).

III. The Teachings of the Sacred Books

In order to apprehend divine injunctions with certainty and to conform to them, people needed precise instructions, instructions that were gathered together into the collection of teachings and norms defined by the Latin expression *disciplina Etrusca*, and that were collected and expounded in the numerous writings which constituted Etruscan sacred literature. The origin of the *disciplina Etrusca* and of the books relating to each of its parts was generally attributed to persons of a semidivine nature, such as the infant genius Tages for haruspicy or the nymph Vegoia for the doctrine of

lightning flashes and certain other teachings. In this sense the Etruscan religion may be considered a revealed religion.

As for the study and interpretation of divine signs as a theory and technique entrusted to specialists, Etruria is especially distinguished in haruspicy and hepatoscopy (i.e., the reading of viscera—especially the liver—of sacrificed animals) and in the observation of lightning flashes, two arts that are expounded in the *libri haruspici* and in the *libri fulgurales*, respectively. In addition, attention was given to all unusual events and marvels (monstrosities, inexplicable sounds, apparitions, etc.), which are described and explained in the collections known as *ostentaria*. At the same time, one must note the limited importance given to observing the flight of birds, which was, by contrast, highly developed in Rome and in Umbria and constituted the foundation for Roman augury. The essential aspect of divinatory practices—the aspect elsewhere connected with the values of the orientation of celestial and terrestrial space—is found in the study of auspicious or inauspicious omens, since these indicate the satisfaction or the wrath of the superior beings and thus are warnings about all future action.

The other aspect of the *disciplina Etrusca* is its general and ritual normativity. It encompasses every cultic performance, regardless of its origin or specialization. In more precise terms, we know that the *libri rituales* included precepts about the founding of cities, the establishment of sacred edifices, and even the political and military statutes of the state; this was, in other words, a code that was not only religious but also politico-institutional (a nondistinction that confirms the fundamental subordination of the human world to the divine world). The concept of “the law of the land of Etruria” and the sacred and intangible character of the boundaries of agrarian properties, which were defined by the supreme divinity, seem to have arisen in this context; the same is true for consecrated objects and places (sanctuaries, but also cities and tombs). Finally there was a whole collection of doctrines for the time, fate, and duration of the lives of men and of the nation (counted in “centuries”), which were to be found in the *libri fatales*. As for one’s fate in the hereafter, this was treated in the *libri acherontici*: the normative portions of these writings indicate the rites necessary for the prolongation of life and the divinization of the dead.

Their forms of worship, at least according to what is known from the tradition of original Etruscan texts and from the monuments, do not seem to differ essentially from those of the Greeks and Romans. Sacred enclosures, altars, and temples, understood to be the dwellings of the divinity, are conceived and constructed in an analogous fashion, although with some typological peculiarities. Among the rituals, prayers, offerings without bloodletting, sacrifices of animals, and votive offerings are found everywhere; by contrast, consultation of the viscera of sacrificed animals is typically Etruscan. Certain kinds of ceremonies seem to be of particular importance, such as ceremonies of foundation, of consecration, and for the expiation of private and public sins, which were also most especially connected with the fundamental themes and imperatives of Etruscan religion. There were also calendars of festivals and celebrations, as is indicated in the series of prescriptions that are distributed according to the month and the day in the ritual text of the Zagreb Mummy. Cultic activities were performed by priests, and the different categories of priests are listed in Etruscan texts (documents of sacred content or funerary inscriptions containing biographies of the deceased). It is difficult, how-

ever, to specify their functions and specializations (a *cepen thaurch* mentioned in the Zagreb text is certainly a funerary priest), just as it is impossible to know with certainty to what degree “official” priests were distinguished from divinatory experts, especially the haruspices. The priesthood must often have received public support; the existence of priestly colleges is widely attested.

IV. The Problem of the Hereafter

The last sector that remains to be considered is the hereafter. But it would be wrong to separate this from the rest of Etruscan religion, since so many of the essential aspects of the afterlife are situated within the more general ideas of the religion. Among these aspects are the conformity of the chthonic or subterranean world with the cosmological system of correspondences between heaven and earth; the assimilation of the dead to certain divine entities, with resulting analogies in the sphere of worship; the definition of the tomb as a sacred place (*sacni*); and so on. The belief, inherited from prehistory and the great preclassical civilizations (or from civilizations foreign to the classical world), in the survival of the personalities of the dead along with the material remains of their bodies and in the places in which these were deposited, constitutes a fundamental ideological premise and implies the need to protect, feed, and honor the dead, according to their social rank. The continuity of life is to be insured by images that substituted for (and thus did not merely commemorate) effigies of the dead, by urns and tombs recalling the familiar household environment, and by the richest possible decoration of tombs with clothing, jewelry, weapons, instruments, and furniture, in addition to food and drink. These characteristics, as archaeology most suggestively indicates, are manifest especially in the earliest periods (independent of differences in funerary practices: from the beginning of historical times inhumation has tended to prevail over cremation), but the important fact, and the one that reveals a tenacious conservatism, is that these practices continued until the end of Etruscan civilization. The profoundly different idea of an afterlife conceived as a place of destination and reunion of the deceased diffused out of Greece and was to have notable repercussions on the Etruscan imagination, especially after the fifth century B.C. Images on funerary monuments show the development and refinement—more or less parallel with old customs and traditions—of the definition of an eschatological space based upon the concepts of the descent to the underworld and the kingdom (or city) of the dead. The description of the kingdom combines elements of Greek inspiration (the sovereignty of the gods Hades and Persephone and the presence of mythical characters) and purely local elements (monstrous demons, enormous banquets, the increased importance always given to the personality of the deceased in portraits and inscriptions). The atmosphere of sadness and fear in these Etruscan images of the hereafter is in the last analysis nothing but an interpretation that draws on the Greek idea of Hades. But at the same time the older forms of ritual obligation toward the dead, in tombs, continue to be refined and concretized in a cult of ancestors assimilated to divinities—a cult that implies, perhaps also under the influence of the mystery religions, ceremonies specifically destined to transform the human souls of the deceased into “divine souls.”

M.P./d.w.

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ETRUSCAN DAEMONOLOGY

Etruscan demonology (more properly, daemonology) may be looked upon as one of the most interesting chapters of the history of religions of the Mediterranean world, provided, however, that it can be rid of certain simplistic and even naive interpretations—such as the all-too-obvious comparisons with demonologies of the Orient that aim to prove the Oriental origin of the Etruscans—and that it can be properly situated within the reasonable perspective of a comparison with the Greek world. In this essay it has been judged expedient to assemble all that has reference to the infradivine, that is, to those entities that might be defined in the Greek and Latin sense as "demigods": not forgetting, however, that in many cases it is difficult to specify whether a particular being is to be classed in the upper sphere, the sphere of divinities, or in the lower sphere, more populous and less definable, in which there are daemons. No cult, properly speaking, is connected with these daemons, except in a very limited fashion, for their principal characteristic is that they accompany the gods and serve as intermediaries between them and men. From this point of view one might say that the imagination of the Etruscans was given free rein, certainly more free than among the Greeks, as if it used images to enrich and render more comprehensible and fascinating the world of the supernatural. For in other respects, that world seemed distant and obscure to them—more distant and obscure, incidentally, than the Greek gods appeared to the Greeks, since myth had brought the gods nearer to men and nearly reduced them to the size of men—from which arose the Etruscans' obsession with understanding and interpreting the divine will through divinatory practices. The possibility cannot be entirely ruled out, however, that Etruscan "polydaemonism" may also have been the expression of primitive tendencies, more specifically a heritage or revival of ideas and creations characteristic of preclassical civilizations, such as those of the Near East or the Minoan and Mycenaean Aegean, which the Greeks had gone beyond sooner than the others, without, however, dispersing them entirely.

Most of our knowledge on this subject comes from mythological and funerary depictions and from written materials that identify individuals. By far the richest documentation is provided by scenes engraved on the backs of bronze mirrors, with the most variegated supernatural beings, posing or in action, mingled with images of gods and with episodes from Greek myth. Analogous compositions or isolated figures of demigods and daemons are found, though less systematically, in the representations on vases, reliefs, engraved

stones, jewelry, etc. For the study of daemons of the world beyond the grave, one must take note of the frescoes of the sepulchers, but also the sculptures of sarcophagi and urns. The written sources, less numerous and less explicit, must be interpreted with care and have no value except to confirm archaeological data. They interest us in particular for their evidence about the semidivine beings who taught the Etruscan discipline, that is, Tages and Vegoia, or such other legendary matters as, for example, the figure of Cacus, the monster Volta, and other beings of this kind. One must also bear in mind the vast literary and epigraphical documentation (Latin) on the concept of the "genius," who is essentially the divinity who represents and guards the vital principle of men, institutions, and the gods themselves, but who may also be placed in an intermediate position between men and divinities: "son of the gods and father of men," notes Festus, who also calls him the son of Jupiter and the father of Tages! (Festus, 359, 452 L). These characteristics of the "genius" justify the traditional use of the word "genie" to designate the beings who are found on the level of the demigods and daemons.

A discussion of Etruscan daemonology must begin with a few observations about monsters and other fantastic figures of Oriental or Greek origin. These invade sculpture, painting, and the decoration of objects (bronzes, vases, jewels, etc.) in very large numbers, as if they were a favorite, obsessive object, beginning in the Orientalizing period, in the seventh century B.C.: quadrupeds winged or with a human head, sphinxes, centaurs, sirens, griffins, and particularly sea monsters. They continued to be present in diverse contexts until the latest periods of Etruscan art. But their link with particular figures specific to Greek myth, such as the Gorgon, the Chimera, the Sirens, Cerberus, etc., indicates that there is something there that is foreign to properly Etruscan conceptions. It is difficult to believe that all these images, generally used for decoration, corresponded to actual daemonic beliefs. But distortions in monstrous forms, the mixture of elements characteristic of diverse creatures, and the mixture of natural beings with artificial forms (like the forms of vases, in the objects called "canopic jars," otherwise called the anthropomorphic cinerary urns of Clusium) seem to be a specific trait of the mentality and artistic imagination of the Etruscans. An example of this is the winged monster with the head of a cock which recently appeared as a roof ornament of a religious edifice in the sanctuary of Pyrgi. The adding of wings is a favorite motif in the representation of human beings and gods, and of horses too, chiefly in archaic art. But that leads us back to the world of daemons that are properly Etruscan.

From a general point of view, which excludes the more specific analysis of particular cases, we can discern several



Infernal daemon with one of the deceased. Private collection. Manfredonia. Photo Pr Ferri.

categories of types and functions: and that leads us to the female, infant, martial, Dionysian, marine, and infernal daemons (or genies). The first class is extremely diversified and includes the figures of young women, clothed or nude, sometimes winged, wearing necklaces, and stamped by an ideal of beauty and elegance—an idea of the desirable. Their attitudes, their attributes (toilet articles), and their association with Turan often make them appear to be the companions and servants (to dress her, for example) of the goddess of love; this may be the meaning of the inscription *Suenath Turus*, “female assistant (?) of Turan.” In some respects, these figures recall individuals from scenes of the women’s chambers depicted on Greek vases. But we also encounter them in connection with other divinities, or crowning heroes (Heraclides, Paris), or variously employed in quite diverse compositions, without notable coherence. In several cases, proper names accompany these figures, typically Etruscan names about which nothing else is known, such as Alpan, Evan, Zipna, Zirna, Zinthrepus, Mean, Mlacuch, Munthuch, Purich, Rescial, and Talitha. Some bear the name of Lasa, which also often appears as the first part of a double name, according to the system which is widely prevalent in systems of divine names: particularly Lasa Achununa, Lasa Vecu (or Vecuvia), Lasa Thimrae, Lasa Racuneta, and Lasa Sitmica. It might be possible someday to establish some kind of correspondence between Lasa and the Greek concept of nymph. One cannot, however, extend the term “lasa,” as a generic designation, to all the female figures of the type being discussed, let alone to the female funerary spirits to be discussed farther on. Lasa Vecu or Vecuvia can easily be identified with the nymph Vegoia, whom the tradition con-

tinued to regard as the mistress and even author of a part of the *disciplina Etrusca*. This is an important argument in favor of the thesis that the female figures of these scenes, in addition to representing the collective and the secondary, sometimes correspond to well-known and well-defined individualities; this is also suggested by their presence in other depictions in which their nature is unfortunately no less indecipherable. Some of these figures are even probably, by virtue of their position of special dignity and their clothing, true divinities: this would be the case for Thalna, Ethausva, Thana or Thanr, and Malavis(ch).

Less frequent and clear is the evidence for other classes of demigods or demons, such as the masculine figures of the Apollonian type, or those who look like Silenus, or the warriors, or the small infant genies, who appear on mirrors, with more or less obscure Etruscan names. Among the infant or juvenile figures, the figure of Epiur, associated with Hercle (Heracles) and with Tinia (Jupiter), is especially interesting. In connection with this last divinity, one may recall the tradition concerning Tages, the nephew of Jupiter, a child or young man whose appearance and knowledge were those of an old man; born from the earth, he was supposed to have taught haruspicy to the Etruscans. Tages and Vegoia—Tages is represented on a mirror under the name Papa (or Pava) Tarchies, with the features of a young haruspex—exercised the characteristic function of “intermediaries” between the gods and men. Because of that they are fully contained in the category of Etruscan daemons (or genies): more particularly, those who reveal the divine will. One might add to them a young singer, perhaps a seer as well, who appears on another mirror and some urns; he is called Cacū, but he is clearly different from Cacus, the ferocious brigand of the Roman legend transmitted by Virgil.

The possibility that the daemons may have been conceived in other than anthropomorphic fashion, that is, as shadows without substance or in the aspect of a symbol, arises from some allusions to their connections with procreation and sexuality. A peculiar tradition reported by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry visualized Etruscan daemons as tenuous bodies living in the light of day, but doomed to be eclipsed at night, with the possibility, however, of being reborn in the scattering of their seed (Proclus, in his commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus*, 142, D; Psellus *De oper. daemon.* 8). These are, of course, the later speculations of the learned, but they must preserve the memory of ancient beliefs about the existence of obscure forces of fecundity ultimately connected with the concept of Genius. One may recall the account, certainly of Etruscan origin, of the birth of the king of Rome Servius Tullius, who was born from the union of a slave with a *phallos* that appeared in the hearth of Queen Tanaquil, famous for her knowledge of the Etruscan discipline (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.2; Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 36.204). The same ancient authors explained this prodigious event as the fertilizing intervention of a god or daemon who could conceive his own materialization in the form of a simple sexual symbol. The mysterious connection between the shades and sexual power may well be associated with the scene of emaciated “animulae,” hovering around a tree, that Tiresias evokes in the painting from the *Nekuia* of the tomb of Orco II of Tarquinii, and that are explicitly ithyphallic (Weinstock). The restorative fecundity of the daemons may also have been extended to the souls of the deceased, as a part of the beliefs that determined the complex rites whose function was to guarantee them immortality and to deify them.

This brings us to the hereafter, on which the daemonological imagination of the Etruscans seems to have lingered with

particular pleasure. Even in this domain, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between divine figures (that is, Aita-Hades and Phersipnai-Persephone, "sovereigns" of the world of the dead, and, in other connections, Mantus and Mania, or Veive-Veiovis, etc.) and figures who are below the rank of gods. It is probable that Vanth was a goddess of fate, who recorded the fates of human beings. But the extraordinary frequency of her representations in tomb paintings and sculptures, in the costume of the Greek Erinyes (short tunic, fillets crossed over the bosom, buskins, and the attribute of a flaming torch) and often in the company of the daemon Charun, suggests that she belongs in the first rank, among the female daemons of the world beyond the grave, in exact correspondence with the Erinyes or Furies, on whom moderns have occasionally and mistakenly conferred the name "Iasa." The same thing may be said of Culsu. It is probable that these Etruscan Erinyes, generally placed as guardians at the entrances to the infernal world, were also clearly individualized. The predominant role among the male daemons belonged to Charun, the preeminent personification of death, who is represented with a grey or greenish skin, a hooked nose, sometimes wings, and hair like serpents, and who is always armed with a heavy mallet. He certainly derives from the Greek Charon, whose name he bears. But he deviates from Charon in his appearance and functions. He can also appear in various other guises, differentiated by a second name, as can be seen at Tarquinii, in the Tomb of the Charons. The other clearly characterized daemon is Tuchulcha, who has the beak and feet of a bird of prey, long pointed ears, hair in the form of a nest of serpents, great wings, and enormous serpents for arms: a kind of

monstrous humanoid griffin. A variety of beings with ape-like faces, more or less individualized, are also encountered, as are kinds of infernal servants or small orchestras of musicians of purely human appearance, except that they sometimes have wings. Finally recall the prevalence of infernal beings that look like animals, characterized by chthonic symbolism, from Cerberus and Scylla to dragons, and especially serpents. The intentionally terrifying appearance of many of these daemonic images, whose role is to frighten the deceased and also to torment them, has been connected with what is known of the somber and even desperate conception of the world beyond the grave among the Etruscans in the final period of their history, between the fourth and first century B.C. But infernal daemons of equally monstrous appearance had already been imagined in classical Greece in the fifth century, as is proven by the description of Eurynomos in the *Nekuia* of Polygnos of Thasos (probably the distant prototype of the *Nekuia* on the tomb of Orco at Tarquinii), in the *Lesche* of the Cnidians at Delphi (Pausanias *Graeciae descr.* 10.28.7). As was stated at the beginning, this leads to the qualification of certain exaggerated hypotheses about the originality of Etruscan daemonology. It is also possible that certain Orphic and Pythagorean influences were transmitted by the Italic environments of the Greek colonies of southern Italy. This last subject remains rather obscure, however, awaiting the future research that is so clearly desirable.

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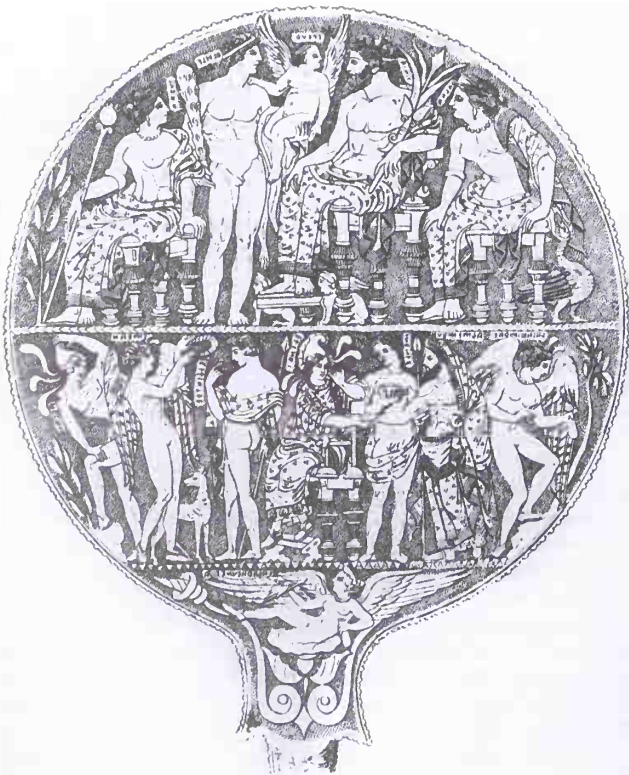
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ETRUSCAN AND ITALIC DIVINATION

The mantic world of the Etruscans, and more generally of the Italic peoples, was fundamentally similar to that of the Greeks, at least as far as practices were concerned: these, like so many matters of religious life, enter into the general framework of classical antiquity. But certain aspects of them are distinguished characteristically—and were also seen by the ancients as being different—especially the consequences of certain essential ideas about the sacred and the relationship between men and gods on the level of their origins and their history. It is especially necessary to point out two phenomena that, in a way, epitomize the originality of divinatory practices in ancient Italy. The first is a desire to understand the obscure wishes of the gods through every possible sign—a desire that became so obsessive that it dominated all of Etruscan religious ideas and finally almost became identified with religion itself, justifying the existence of genuine technicians of divination, such as the haruspices and the interpreters of lightning flashes. The second was the

Mirror showing Tinia and Epiur. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale.



development, through the observation of the flight of birds (*auspicium*), of the augural doctrine that becomes the fundamental doctrine of the sacred in Italico-Roman religion.

The first of these phenomena constitutes the essence of what was defined by the expression *disciplina Etrusca*; this was first taught by semidivine beings (Tages and Vegoia) and was transcribed into a series of books whose contents are more or less known to us. These deal with the observation of the viscera of animals (*haruspicina*), lightning flashes (*ars*

fulguratoria), and portents (*ostenta*), and with their interpretation.

With respect to divination based upon auspices, it should be noted that the Umbrians practiced it at the same time as the Romans, as is witnessed by the ritual texts of the Iguvine Tablets; auspices served especially as introductions for sacrificial ceremonies.

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THE DOCTRINE AND SACRED BOOKS OF THE *DISCIPLINA ETRUSCA*

The Latin expression *disciplina Etrusca* is here meant to cover the whole complex of Etruscan doctrines and norms, in particular those concerning divination, but also, more generally, the ritual practices of the religion and the rules governing the civil life of the Etruscans. All of these elements are to be found in a series of sacred texts. This is a phenomenon that is wholly characteristic of Etruria but unique in the classical world. Their uniqueness may explain the extraordinary interest which the Etruscan treatises aroused among the Romans, who translated or summarized them and adopted some of their teachings. In certain cases, one may speak of a religious conception and a practice founded upon principles fixed by revealed and written traditions, as with the Hebraic religion. However, apart from the historical improbability of such an analogy, we do not know to what extent it is possible to trace back to the earliest stages of Etruscan religion the "system" of the *disciplinarum scripturae* (Vitruvius, 1.7.1) that appears to have been established later. But the *disciplina Etrusca* contains in itself motifs that may be viewed as belonging either to "science" or to "law," motifs that seem to encompass the sacred and profane aspects of one another in an inextricable fashion. It is probable, at least beginning from a certain time, that every human action was performed—or should have been performed—"in accordance with the *disciplina Etrusca*" (Servius, *Aen.*, 4.166). We may nevertheless conjecture, though only with great caution, that the original expression now lost, which was translated or paraphrased into Latin as *disciplina Etrusca*, corresponded to the Etruscan words *tesnś teiś raśneś* and *tesne raśne cei* (*raśna* = Etruscan, Etruria), which introduce and accompany the clauses of a land contract made between two families in the inscription of the Cippus of Perugia CIE 4538 (Mazzarino). It appears that the conclusion of the celebrated "prophecy of Vegoia"—which will be discussed later—makes a direct allusion to a rule of conduct, if not to a moral principle, in the phrase, "In this avoid all falsehood and duplicity: carry the discipline in your heart" (*Agrimensores*, Lachmann, 1, p. 350ff.).

Those writings on the *disciplina Etrusca* that were known to the Romans can be divided into three large groups: (1) the *libri haruspici*, (2) the *libri fulgurales*, and (3) the *libri rituales* (Cicero, *On divination*, 1.72).

1. The first books deal with divination by observing and interpreting the viscera—particularly the liver—of sacrificed animals (*extispicium*). This practice was specifically attributed to the Etruscans and won them a particular renown. The priests who performed this divination were called the harus-

pices. The consultation of haruspices entered into Roman religion and continued to be practiced up to the end of pagan times, though its Etruscan origins were never forgotten. From artistic representations we know the characteristic dress of the haruspices, with a mantle hooked together at the chest and a hat with a cylindrical end. The origin of haruspicy was traced back to the teachings of Tages, a being of divine birth who was believed to be the son of Genius and the nephew of Jupiter; having arisen out of a furrow in the earth, he appeared to men as a young man with white hair. He is said to have taught his precepts to Tarchon, the hero from whom Tarquinii got its name, or to the twelve Etruscan kings and to the Etrurian people as a whole, so that he was regarded as the author of those writings which also go by the name of *Tagefici* or *Tagefinici*. A scene engraved on a Tuscan mirror that is conserved in the archaeological museum of Florence depicts him under the name of Papa or Pava Tarchies, wearing the dress of a haruspex, holding a liver in his hand, and teaching the discipline to Tarchon (*Azle Tarchunus*). The casuistry used in the examination of viscera for divine signs was particularly complicated, as evidenced by various ancient texts meticulously assembled and studied by C. O. Thulin. Readings were made with the help of patterns that can be seen in depictions of haruspices, but also and especially by means of the famous bronze lamb liver found near Piacenza. The surface of the liver is divided into squares in which the names of gods are found; it was believed that each divinity manifested itself in its own particular space. Around the edges there are sixteen squares corresponding to the sixteen zones of heavenly space and to their respective divinities. The interpreters' skill was thus exercised upon the microcosm of the liver as if upon a very small mirror of the celestial *templum*. The importance of the order of the haruspices—the famous college of Tarquinii counted sixty of them—was such that their authority apparently extended to every branch of Etruscan divination, and "haruspex" became the generic term designating the interpreter of the will of the gods. We are certain that the Etruscan equivalent of this name was *netśvis* (whereas the Latin expression *liber haruspicianus* reproduces and translates the Etruscan words *zich nethśrac* from the funerary inscription of the Tarquinian priest Laris Puleas CIE 5430).

2. The *libri fulgurales* or *de fulguratura* contained the doctrine of lightning bolts and of their interpretation, which constituted the other great specific sector of Etruscan divination. This science was founded on the definition of the celestial expanse—which was called *templum*—in its orientation and its parts. The *templum* was thought to be divided into sixteen regions, each of which was the seat of one or several gods (Cicero, *Divin.*, 2.42; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, 2.143; Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Mercuri et Philologiae*, 1.43ff.). The eastern sector was judged to be favorable (*pars familiaris*)



Bronze liver. Plaisance, Museo Civico.

and the western sector unfavorable (*pars hostilis*): the same concept applies to the small model of the liver found at Piacenza, where the favorable sector is indicated (on the convex side) by the word *usils* (= of the sun), i.e., the portion of the day, while the unfavorable sector is indicated by the word *tivs* (= of the moon), or the portion of the night. Yet this does not prove that the astral element would have had any particular importance. By collating the names of the divinities cited by Martianus Capella with those engraved in the squares on the liver of Piacenza, we may deduce that the supreme gods such as Tinia-Jupiter, Uni-Juno, Minerva, and Mars occupied the eastern sector and in particular the northeastern quarter of the celestial vault. Some of them were explicitly designated as throwers of the lightning bolt (*manubiae*): the god Tinia-Jupiter could throw three lightning bolts from three different celestial regions (and his name is repeated in three of the border squares on the liver of Piacenza). It was the nature gods in particular, such as Nethuns-Neptune, Catha (the sun), Fufiluns-Bacchus, Selvans-Silvanus, who were found in the southern sectors. In the western sector, the *pars hostilis*, were the infernal divinities or the gods of fate, such as Letham, Cel, Culsu, Fortuna, the Manes, and Vetis-Veiovis. Naturally, the zone from which the lightning came indicated the divinity for which it was the sign. The interpretation was based on the intensity, form, and color of the lightning bolt, the noise that accompanied it, the place where it struck, and its effects. The casuistry was very complicated. Distinctions were made between good and bad and private and public lightning bolts, between those that gave advice or orders, commutable or fixed sentences, etc. Particular rites of purification were performed at the place where the lightning had struck and where it was thought to remain under the surface in the form of a small stone: this sacred place was called *bidental* in Latin. In his *Quaestiones naturales* II, Seneca left an ample and methodical summary of all of these doctrines, which ancient tradition dated back to the writings of the nymph Begoe or Vegoia (from which the name of the *libri Vegoici* also comes). The observation and interpretation of lightning bolts was left to a special priest called the *fulgurator*, from which it seems possible to deduce the Etruscan name (*trutnvt frontac*) from the bilingual Etrusco-Latin inscription of the priest L. Cafatius, which is preserved in the Pesaro Museum.

3. The contents of the *libri rituales* were much more varied and complicated. We know (especially from Festus, 285) that they contained a series of prescriptions for the rites of

foundation of cities and the consecration of altars and temples, as well as for the civil and military organizations of the state. Among all of these precepts, there is one that seems to have been of particular importance to the social and economic structures of Etruria: according to ritual norms partly corresponding to those concerning the definition of the heavenly space, the earth was to be divided in order to permit its profitable use, following an ordered system of the division of property. It is clear that land surveying as a system is one of the fundamental factors in the technical and economic advances introduced by Greek colonization in Italy (as the most recent archaeological investigations, notably those undertaken in Metapontum and at Megara Hyblaea in Sicily, have shown), and one that was to play a fundamental role in the life of the Roman world. But in Etruria, the division and delimitation of land, insofar as these depended on the will of the gods, had a significance that was clearly religious, as shown by the prophecy of Vergoia cited above, which, within a teaching to a certain Arruns Veltumnus, predicted for the last years of the Etruscan "eighth century" (i.e., the beginning of the first century B.C.) a series of disasters resulting from violations of the boundaries and passages of properties. This probably reflects the conservative tendencies of the Etruscan oligarchies in the face of the agrarian reforms promulgated at Rome by the Greeks and taken up later by M. Livius Drusus.

Among the ritual books, a more specific category of writings was established, which was called *libri fatales* and which was devoted to doctrines of time and of fate, i.e., to the durations of the lives of men, cities, and states. These books also treated of the concept of "centuries," understood as cycles that were not only natural but also religious, that brought renewal and were punctuated by portents, rendering obligatory the performance of particular rites of purification. Other writings, called *libri acherontici* (from the name of the river of hell, the Acheron), seem to refer more particularly to one's destiny after death; we know that they contained instructions for ceremonies by which men could gain immortality, i.e., transform themselves into "divine souls" or into "gods of the soul": *di animales* (Servius, *Aen.*, 3.168; Arnobius, *Adversus gentes*, 2.62). Then follows a very large section of the *disciplina Etrusca* that, if we go by what is written in it, should also enter into the category of *libri fatales*, i.e., the theory, classification, observation, and explanation of odd or portentous events: of *ostenta*. This is probably an occasional practice which, in unforeseeable cases, left everything to the interpreter's experience and verbal responses. Nevertheless, there were also written documents called *ostentaria* (a late collection or transcription, attributed at least in part to the Etruscan haruspex Tarquitius—the name comes from *libri Tarquitiani*) of which a few fragments remain, recorded in Latin literature, and which seem to have all the characteristics of a summary, as may be seen in the following example: "A ewe or a ram, if it is draped with purple or with gold, brings an increase of abundance to the head of the state or country, multiplies the progeny of the country, and makes it happier" (extract from the book of Tarquitius, cited by Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 3.7.2). Signs may be of very different kinds; unusual celestial apparitions, rains of blood or of stones (and logically lightning bolts should be classified under this same heading, since they elsewhere constitute, as we have seen, a peculiar but essential chapter in Etruscan divination), earthquakes, the falling of statues, plants with unusual shapes or aberrant growth, animals that behave strangely or that have exceptional characteristics, monstrous beings, and so on. Obviously, under this heading were also



Mirror from Tuscany. Florence, Archaeological Museum.

classified the signs of the flight of birds, which otherwise does not seem to have been the object of a technically developed divinatory art in Etruria, nor to have had a primordial role in worship, as it did in the Roman and Umbrian religions. Portents announce the future, but in many cases they are the frightening manifestation of some private or public impurity or fault, which requires purification by special and extremely meticulous rites. Finally, we must stress the exceptional importance that Roman religion placed on the Etruscan traditions of the observation of the *ostenta* and the expiatory rites that they required. By contrast, the divination by oracles that was so typical of the Greek world seems to have been wholly foreign to the *disciplina Etrusca*.

We said at the beginning that there is no way of knowing when all that has been described so far became, even in substance, the heritage of Etruscan religion and culture. It is very probable—and this is the general opinion of researchers on the subject—that the *disciplina Etrusca*, as a written “corpus,” was systematized mainly during the last part of the history of Etruria and thus resulted from the reflection and traditionalism of priestly circles that were already in contact with Hellenistic and Hellenistic-Roman scholarship. In the same way, accounts of primordial events, such as the “preachings” of Tages, are for the most part artificial reconstructions of a mythical or etiological type. Nevertheless, we cannot imagine that such a heritage of beliefs, practices, and speculations, some of which are analogically tied to ritual forms from distant times and places—such as the bronze model of the liver at Piacenza which evokes small terra-cotta

models of livers used for haruspicy in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor—could have resulted solely from scholarly inventions from before the high point of Etruscan civilization, i.e., the archaic period. Numerous traditions whose origins can be traced back precisely to the archaic period (portents, prophesies, and especially the testimony of the “books” attributed to the Sibyl of Cumae—the *libri Sibyllini*—which are connected with King Tarquinius Superbus and also with the *libri fatales*: Livy, 22.9) and the fact that the existence of the fundamental elements of haruspicy from the fourth century onwards can be established on the basis of artistic representations suggest that the essential elements of the ideas, norms, and practices that became known to the Romans under the name of *disciplina* belong to the earliest stages of Etruscan religion; and we should attribute to the late periods little more than a better organization of the sacred laws, along with a general literary definition of the sacred.

The first ideas were probably transmitted orally and in the form of songs (Lucretius, 6.381; Censorinus, *De die natali*, 4.13). The attribution of these teachings to demigods such as Tages and the nymph Begoe or Vegoia probably goes back to fairly early local traditions. The attribution to Tages must be related to the city of Tarquinii because of its relationship with Tarchon, and the attribution to Begoe or Vegoia (whose Etruscan name is *Lasa Vecu* or *Vecuvia*) to the city of Clusium or a Vecu family—which might suggest that these cults and myths have noble origins. But these two cases, as well as other indications, seem to throw into relief the tendency of the Etruscan religion to seek the “sources” of doctrines and religious precepts in the authority of supernatural beings, which to some extent gives it the character of a “revealed” religion. It is likely that in the beginning these two teachings were not clearly distinguishable from one another. Not only haruspicy but also the ritual discipline was traced back to Tages, in particular all that concerned the *jus terrae Etruriae* and the *libri acherontici* (Servius, *Aen.*, 8.398). Vegoia is cited with regard not only to the doctrine of lightning bolts, but also to warnings about the intangibility of boundaries, as we have already seen. The idea that the books that circulated under the names of Tages (*Tagetici*) and Vegoia (*Vegonici*) were generally collections of their oral teachings emerges quite clearly from the body of citations found in literary sources. The legendary and semilegendary characters who collected and spread them, such as Tarchon or Arruns Veltymnus, must have been very important. In any case, the canonical attributions and divisions are undoubtedly fictive and late, especially since there are references to unknown authors, such as the Marcii, or authors completely foreign to the *disciplina Etrusca*, such as the Carthaginian Mago, all of whom are anachronistically associated with Vegoia (Servius, *Aen.*, 6.72; Agrimensores, Lachmann, p. 348). With these authors, we come to those historians who collect, develop, summarize, and translate (from Etruscan into Latin) traditional doctrines, first L. Tarquinius (Priscus), the author of the previously cited *libri Tarquintiani*, and then A. Caecina, Aquila, Nigidius Figulus, Umbricius Melior, Capito, Labeo, and several others into the late imperial period.

M.P./d.w.

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THE RELIGION OF THE SABELLIANS AND UMBRIANS, ITALICS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN ITALY

I. Historical and Linguistic Background

The people who lived in the heart of the Italian peninsula, who belonged to a single linguistic stock of Indo-European origin (but different from Latin), and whom modern scholars designate by the general name of Sabellian-Umbrians or Osco-Umbrians, Eastern Italics, or simply “Italics,” made up a fundamental element of the population and thereby of the history and the culture of pre-Roman, ancient Italy. Originally these people may all have had a common national name connected with the root *sabli-*, from which are derived the historical names of Sabines, Sabellians, and Samnium (*Safinim* in its indigenous form), whence comes the name of the Saunites or Samnites. Legends evoke very ancient kinship relations among them, as well as similarities in the area of their religious traditions. Yet from the dawn of historical times, this ethnic group appears to have been fragmented into many different populations and tribes, each having its own name and characteristic dialect, behavior, and history. Their contacts with the Tyrrhenian centers of Etruria, Latium, and Campania, and with the Greek colonial world, coupled with their expansion within the peninsula southward and toward the Tyrrhenian Sea, determined this vast process of cultural integration. As a result of this integration, the Eastern Italics benefited more and more from the imports from great urban civilizations, despite their own fundamental ties to pastoral and agrarian community structures and to primitive customs. This influence could not fail to have repercussions in the area of religion.

The people in question can be identified and classified more precisely in linguistic, historic, and geographic terms. Although they have a common origin, the Italic languages are divided into two main groups: the so-called Oscan language (named after the Oscans in Campania), widespread in southern Italy and documented by a significant number of inscriptions that use indigenous alphabets, Greek and Latin; and the Umbrian language, known almost exclusively through the texts of the Iguvine Tables of Gubbio, which use Umbrian and Latin alphabets. The first language is the heritage of those people whom we call Sabellians (Sabelli) in the broadest sense of the Latin term—people who included at the time of the Roman conquest small groups settled in what now is called Abruzzi (the Marsi, Paeligni, Praetuttii, Vestini, and Marrucini)—and farther south, the Samnites, and then the Frentoni, the Campani or Osci, the Hirpini, the Lucani, and the Bruttii, all the way to the Mamertini in Sicily. It is likely that the Sabines (Sabini) of central Italy and their neighbors the Aequi, the Hercini, etc., who were scattered around Latium since prehistory, as well as the Picenti or Piceni along the Adriatic slope, belonged to older strata of

populations who spoke dialects of the Oscan type during a less-differentiated archaic phase. The Umbrians (Umbri), who made their way northward along the valley of the Tiber and beyond the Apennines to the outer limits of the Paduan plain, constituted a distinctly separate branch with their own innovations; but there were also some similar groups to the south, such as the Volsci in Latium.

If we consider this dispersion and the variety of geographical and historical conditions, we cannot speak of an Italic religion as a defined reality, understood as a unitary concept. Moreover, such an idea was totally alien to the ancients' way of thinking. Rather we must distinguish and evaluate the facts about the peoples and places of the cultures that are best known historically and that are most fully documented. We can thus realistically study the religion of the Sabines (which we know from Roman tradition) and the religion of the Sabellians of Abruzzi, Samnium, Campania, Irpinia, Lucania, etc. Our knowledge of the Sabellians is based essentially on local epigraphic evidence in the Oscan language, such as the Tabula Agnonensis, and the inscriptions of Capua, the Cippus of Abella, the collection of texts from Rossano di Vaglio; and inscriptions on the archaeological remains from shrines. We can also study Umbrian religion, or more exactly Iguvine religion, since we know it exclusively through the Iguvine Tables, from Iguvium, the ancient name for Gubbio. But for each of them, with the exception of the Umbrian religion, the fragments that we have are not sufficient to give a clear idea of their true character. This is partly due to the paucity of information provided by classical authors and scholars (in contrast with the great interest that the ancients took in Etruscan religion). As a result, a synthesis of all the data seems to be called for.

II. The Myth of the Animal Guide or Ancestor

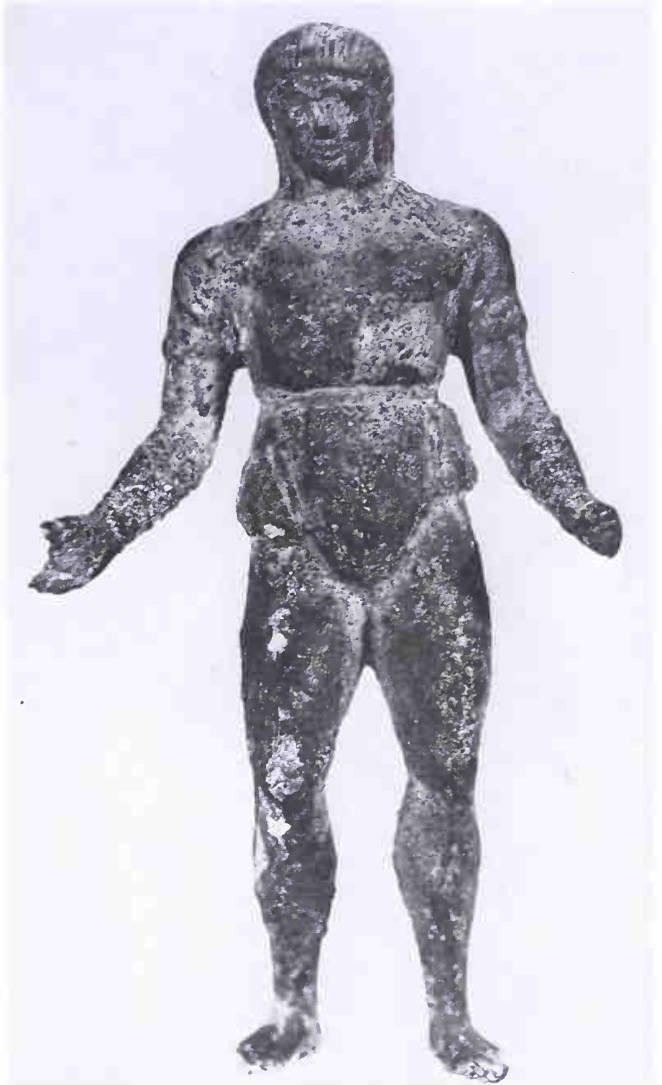
At the oldest, undoubtedly communal, level there are traditions about the migrations of groups under the guidance or advice of a sacred animal that may also give its name to the ethnic group that claims it. For example, the Sabellians were guided by a bull; the Piceni, by a woodpecker (*picus*, from which they got their name); the Hirpini and the Lucani, by a wolf (*hirpus* in Italic, and *lukos* in Greek). The same relationship may have existed for other minor populations and tribes: thus the Frentani and the hart (whose Indo-European name *bhrento-* is attested particularly in neighboring Apulia), and the Ursentini and the bear. The ritual basis for these migrations was something called *ver sacrum* (the sacred springtime), that is, the propitiatory or expiatory offering to the god of all those beings who were born during a given period of time. Humans, however, were not sacrificed but were compelled to leave their original group to go and settle elsewhere and to find new means of subsistence, which in turn triggered the formation of new groups (see the article “Ver Sacrum,” below). Clearly these are concepts peculiar to primitive societies of a pastoral-nomadic type. The theriomorphic element was important not only among these people but also in more advanced societies of the Eurasian world, as A. Alföldi has recently shown. There is some reason to believe, although hesitantly, that these are survivals of totemism.

The myth of the animal guide, or ancestor, feeder, and protector, was quite widespread in prehistoric Italy; it remained especially linked to pastoralism and transhumance; clear archaeological evidence supports the validity of this relationship in the culture of the so-called Apennine Bronze Age. We even find it in the oldest Latin and Roman legends.



Etruscan *Tabula Agnonensis*. London, British Museum. Museum photo.

Right: Ex-voto. Avellino, Museo Irpino. Museum photo.



In the oldest Latin legends we may recall the sow who led Aeneas and his companions from Lavinium to Alba Longa, or the she-wolf of Rome. The traditions and rites of the Luperci may also be recalled. Even in prehistory these concepts must have clashed with the substantially different beliefs and rites of agrarian societies. They were probably permanently obliterated in the wake of the religious ideas that spread within the zones of proto-urban and urban cultures of coastal Italy, notably in the south and along the Tyrrhenian coast, under Greek and Etruscan influence. Even in the historical period, these ancient concepts seem to have characterized the people of inland Italy, who were still tied, at least in their place of origin, to pre-urban structures, to an essentially pastoral economy, and to a mobility that involved aggressive and warlike tendencies. This fits the description of the Sabellian-Umbrians exactly. What is most interesting is that the *ver sacrum* was an enduring rite that continued to be performed in later periods, as well as an etiological myth of the origins of the Italic people, a myth that later became part of the scholarly reconstruction of the legendary ethnography of Italy in the heroic era. Their very ancient relation with the

god Mars (in the Oscan form Mamers) stressed this warlike feature, which must be connected with the increasing use of mercenaries. The sources explicitly attest that animal guides, particularly the bull and the woodpecker, were consecrated to this god. We may therefore assume that the original figures or the theriomorphic divine forces were gradually transformed into simple attributes or symbols. This secondary character is obvious, for instance, in the representations of the Italic bull (*vitellus*), which overcomes the Roman she-wolf on the coins of the federated Sabellians who rose up against Rome during the Social War (90–87 B.C.). That was the last attempt by these people to assert a “national” consciousness.

III. Personal Deities

Belief in more or less anthropomorphic, personal deities seems to have been the ancestral patrimony of the Sabellian-Umbrians, but it spread, becoming solidified and complicated as contacts developed with the Greek and Tyrrhenian (i.e., Etruscan, Latin, and Campanian) religious worlds.



Ex-voto. Avellino, Museo Irpino. Museum photo.

Many of the most ancient centers and cult sites in southern Italy were subject to Italic occupation. Thus came into being a vast network of correspondences, identifications, and reciprocal influences, of common experiences and developments, which must have resulted in the diffusion of the cults of the supreme celestial deity (D)iove-Jupiter, of Mars-Mamers, of Herekle-Herakles, and of Kere-Ceres. But there were also specifically Italic deities, or deities peculiar to each



Ex-voto. Avellino, Museo Irpino. Museum photo.

Italic environment, such as the goddess Mefitis in the Sabelian area (Irpinia and Lucania), the goddess Cupra in Umbria and in the Picenum, and the god Cerfo in Gubbio. Our knowledge of the Umbrian pantheon is especially rich because of the Iguvine Tablets. This pantheon presents the characteristic system of double names for gods, in which the second element plays the role of a qualifying adjective (as in personal names) and is often derived from the name of

another god, for example, Tefre Jovic (Tefro "of Jupiter"), Serfe Martie (Çerfo "of Mars"), Prestota Serfia (Prestota "of Çerfo"). This crisscrossing of direct or collateral kinship lines gives it the appearance of a large family of gods. This does not necessarily signify, however, a true mythological theology such as existed among the Greeks and in other ancient religions. The abstract character of certain primary names, such as Saçi ("pact of sacred allegiance") in the expression *Iupater Saçe* (Jupiter "of Saçi"), suggests rather that this network of relationships was the fruit of a conceptual elaboration peculiar to the Iguvine religion. This does not alter the fact that the double name for gods is widely attested, though in a less typical and coherent way, outside Umbria, not only in all of the Sabellian country but also in Latium and Etruria.

IV. Forms of Worship

The frameworks within which people understood their connections with the gods, and therefore the forms of their worship, did not differ in essence from what we know about the religion of Rome and, more generally, of the Greco-Italic world. These forms include the observation of the signs of divine will; objects or living creatures dedicated and consecrated to the gods (*devotio*); private and public rites of propitiation and expiation, with prayers, offerings without bloodshed or sacrifices; votive gifts; places of worship, notably with open-air altars; later, temples built on Greek and Etruscan models. But in this general overview, we should note characteristics peculiar to each of the religious centers that we mentioned earlier. In Campania, for instance, at Capua, an important collection of Oscan epigraphs attests that sacred buildings called *iuvilas* (probably altars or small shrines) were the sites of ceremonies celebrated on certain days of fixed festivals, sometimes even with public magistrates officiating. Also in Capua, the imposing shrine of Fondo Patturelli with its strange stone statues depicting mothers seated with children in their arms, and with all its terra-cotta votive objects, is evidence of a cult devoted to the goddess of fertility. The inscription on the Tabula Agnonensis in Sannio describes a processional rite with stations in front of the numerous altars inside a sacred enclosure that were dedicated to Ceres, Flora, and other minor deities; in certain years a holocaust was celebrated. The shrine of the goddess Mefitis in the Anſanto Valley near Mirabella Eclano in the heart of Irpinia attests what was probably a chthonic cult. The shrine was rich in votive objects and may have been connected with the toxic emanations from this wild site, hence the more general meaning of the word *mephitis*, "foul-smelling." Also dedicated to Mefitis (who is identified with Venus and Ceres) is another shrine, possibly connected with an original cult of the waters and discovered at Rossano di Vaglio in Lucania. This shrine is interesting especially for its Oscan inscriptions in the Greek alphabet, which M. Lejeune has studied, as well as for the architectonic structures that surround a large altar. The general feature of these Italic religious centers was the form of the sacred enclosure with its altars and votive monuments. True temples in the Greek and Etruscan-Latin style appeared late and in isolated places, for instance, in Paestum or in Pietrabbondante.

The Iguvine Tablets, the longest pre-Latin inscription yet discovered in Italy, bring us in themselves a profound and

detailed knowledge of the rites of Umbrian religion. Each ceremony began with the observation of the flight of birds in an appropriate and precisely oriented part of the sky that corresponded to a part of the earth, recalling the Etruscan and Latin conception of the *templum*. As in Rome but not in Etruria, augury represents the sole form of divination, or at least its principal form. An expiatory purification preceded the sacred act. Real sacrifices were performed with animal victims obtained from sacred breeding farms (*sakri*) or profane ones (*perakni*), the animals differing according to the deities (oxen, lambs, pigs, etc.). There were also frequent bloodless offerings, i.e., offerings of food and drink. The rite was accompanied by vows and prayers invoking the protection of the gods for the city and the shrine. The curse placed on foreigners (Etruscans, Iapuzcus, Naharkus) was notable. The Tablets also provide information on the various priestly functions, particularly those of the college of priests known as the Atiedii Brethren.

Within the general framework of the conservatism of the Italic people, the cult of the dead and funerary practices were closely related to traditions widespread all over Italy in the course of protohistory, with a clear predominance of the rite of inhumation in ditch graves. In the Adriatic region of Picenum, and occasionally in burials of chiefs in lower Italy, the funerary furnishings have a particular opulence. Through contact with the Greco-Tyrrhenian world, a type of tomb appeared and spread later among the Campanians of Capua and the Lucanians of Paestum; the tombs had the shape of cases and were decorated with paintings featuring mostly martial subjects but also had references to the afterlife and conceivably echoes of Pythagorean doctrines. It does not appear, however, that the problem of death inspired a preoccupation and doctrinal reflection among the Sabellians and the Umbrians comparable to those found in Etruria.

M.P./g.h.

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THE BELIEFS AND RITES OF THE APULIANS, AN INDIGENEOUS PEOPLE OF SOUTHEASTERN ITALY

The Latin form *Apuli* is derived from, or at least related to, the term "Iapyges" used by the Greeks to designate the indigenous populations of southeastern Italy, i.e., ancient and modern Apulia, including the three groups of the Daunians, the Peucetians, and the Messapians (settled from north to south, respectively, in the present-day provinces of Foggia and Bari and in the Salentine peninsula). For the territory of the Messapians, names of other ethnic groups are also cited, such as the Salentines and the Calabrians—the source of the geographic term Calabria (which, beginning in the Middle Ages, spread to the southwestern extremity of Italy and took on its contemporary meaning); in the Roman period, the region was divided into Apulia in the north and Calabria in the south. All of these peoples, by their ethnolinguistic character, their traditions, and their cultural productions, constitute a well-defined group in the populations and cultures of ancient Italy. The language, today called Messapian and documented by a number of inscriptions discovered especially in the southern part of the country, is certainly Indo-European, but, unlike those of the other Italic peoples, it has important connections with the other side of the Adriatic, which in a way confirm the ancient traditions of an Illyrian origin of the Iapyges. On the other hand, their name is related, if not identical, to that of the Iapuzcus (or Iabusques) cited in the Umbrian inscription of the Iguvine Tablets, that is, people inhabiting central Italy and probably the Adriatic coast; it is also connected to the name of the Iapodes or Iapydes of northern Dalmatia—which confirms the original existence of important ethnic relationships between the two coasts of the Adriatic.

The culture and particularly the religion of the pre-Roman Apulians present, insofar as they can be known, a peculiar mixture of indigenous elements, chiefly connected with prehistoric and protohistoric traditions, and Greek elements

Achilles, seated, playing a lyre; on the right, Priam; and on the left Andromache and Hecuba. Stela from Daunia. Photo pr. Silvio Ferri, Pisa.



Priam surrounded by Trojan men and women. Stela from Daunia. Photo pr. Silvio Ferri, Pisa.

from the colonies established on the margins of this territory by the eighth century B.C. but preceded by precolonial incursions going back to the Mycenaean age (the role of Taranto seems to have been important). Classical sources transmit the memory of a web of legends elaborated by the Greeks about the colonization of Apulia by the Arcadians, Cretans, Illyrians, etc., and about the eponymous heroes Iapyx, Messapus, Peucetius, and Daunus. Daunus was known not as a foreigner but as an indigenous king and must certainly be connected with a Paleo-Italic mythic source, as is proved by the etymological identity of his name with the Latin name Faunus. There are also legends about the Adriatic enterprises of Diomedes and his death in Daunia while he was returning from Troy, and about the founding of cities and sanctuaries, among which those of Athena Ilias at Luceria and of Calchas and Podalirius on Mount Gargano are especially famous. These tales preserve traces of local traditions, for example, of the curative powers of the waters of the *heroon* of Podalirius and the oracles granted during the sleep of anyone who slept wrapped in the skin of a sacrificed ewe. Behind the worship of Greek goddesses such as Demeter and Aphrodite, whose names are mentioned along with their special attributes in the Messapian inscriptions, we glimpse indigenous divine figures; to one god, Menzana, identified with Jupiter, these same Messapians, who were reputed as breeders of horses, sacrificed living horses.

The funerary domain is known exclusively through ar-

chaeology, which provides very abundant and diverse data. The principal rite is that of burial in stone tumuli (called "specchie") in pits or stone containers, and only later in room-shaped tombs that imitated houses, with rich funerary furnishings which attest to the traditional belief in the survival of the dead as long as their sepulcher lasts. The beautiful anthropomorphic stelae of Daunia, decorated with geometric designs, with customary or ritual scenes, and with representations of mythical episodes and monstrous animals, are connected with forms diffused in European prehistory and protohistory. Another remarkable expression of conservatism is the custom of burying the dead in inhabited zones—a custom which, even in the historical period, contrasts with the advanced character of the great urban centers girded with imposing defensive walls.

M.P./j.l.

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MYTHS AND CULTS OF THE ANCIENT VENETI, AN INDO-EUROPEAN PEOPLE OF NORTHERN ITALY

Among the peoples and cultures of ancient Italy, the Veneti constituted a unit well defined by the territory they occupied (between the Alps and the Adriatic, a territory that still bears their name); by the Indo-European language they spoke, which was quite close to Latin; and by their particular culture, which developed coherently from the end of the Bronze Age to the dawn of the Roman conquest (i.e., from the tenth to the third or second centuries B.C.), all the while preserving a basic protohistorical stamp. Consequently, the Paleo-Venetian world on the one hand had close natural ties to the central European domains of Hallstatt and Slovenia, as is understandable, and on the other hand remained open to all of the cultural influences of neighboring northern Etruria, particularly the Etrurian alphabet. But there were few influences from Greek culture. Venetian organization still continued to be tied to pre-urban and proto-urban structures. The major centers, which we know best, were Ateste (modern Este) and Patavium (modern Padua), which along with Vicentia (modern Vicenza) and Verona became "real" cities only considerably later. The port of Adria, near the mouths of the Po and the Adige, was the principal point of contact with Etruscans and Greeks. To the north, Venetian culture reached into the Alpine valleys, where it exerted its influence on the territories inhabited by the Rhaetians, who spoke another language. To the east, it encountered the local cultures of the Carni and the Istrians, with whom the Veneti mixed freely. Celtic expansion into the Alps and northern Italy did not reach the center of the Venetian cultural domain, but merely touched its margins.

The Veneti, like other ancient peoples of Italy, had their place in the legendary cycles of origins elaborated by Greek



Deity of the Veneti. Bronze plaque. Este, Museo nazionale atestino. Photo Soprintendenza.

ethnography and mythology in contact with the Italic world. The Veneti were said to have originated in Asia Minor, which they left under the leadership of Antenor. Their legends account for the presence and cult of Diomedes, the preeminent Adriatic hero and the founder of Adria; they are full of elements revealing knowledge of local facts, such as the fame of the Veneti for horse breeding. At the mouth of the Timavo River, white horses were sacrificed to Diomedes, who was supposedly responsible for the origin of the shrines of Argive Hera and Aetolian Artemis; both of the shrines consisted of wooded enclosures that shut in wild animals. Livy (10.2) reports that the main temple in Padua in the fourth century was consecrated to Juno. All signs suggest that this was a

classical phenomenon of the transposition or interpretation of a native goddess, probably the most important deity of the Veneti: she protected fertility, tamed passions, and healed men. Her name, Reitia, is known principally through dedicatory inscriptions on a shrine in Este and is, moreover, followed by different epithets that are separately attested, such as Sainati. Note the analogy between her name and that of the Rhaetian people. In other places (in the Cadore) and in a different way, the goddess also appeared as Loudera (i.e., Libera). There was yet another deity with three forms, masculine (identified with Apollo) or feminine.

The cult took place in outdoor shrines adorned with votive gifts (statuettes, bronze plates that are illustrated or that bear inscriptions and alphabetical signs, vases, objects for women's use, etc.), in which libations and holocausts were carried out. Most of the evidence is archaeological. We know of various places of worship in Este, others in Padua, Vincenza, Lagole di Calalzo, in the Rhaetian territory in Magré, and in Sanzeno in the Valle di Non. There was a cult of sulfur water

in Abano, connected with the god Aponus. As there are no extant literary sources, we can say little about the religion with respect to the dead or ideas of the afterlife. The funerary customs fit into the general framework of protohistoric traditions, with more or less elaborate funerary trappings, but generally with a close adherence to the rite of cremation.

M.P./g.h.

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VER SACRUM: THE ITALIC RITE OF THE "SACRED SPRINGTIME"

The Latin expression *ver sacrum* (sacred springtime) was used by Roman authors in a precise technical sense to designate an Italic rite that was attested several times by sources dealing with the origins and history of peoples classified today in the Sabellian-Umbrian linguistic branch. As far back as the time of the very first settlements by people known as the Aborigines (i.e., the Sabines) in central Italy in the Rieti basin and the time of their southward expansion toward Latium, there was a custom of consecrating to a god the entire generation born in a given year after wars, famines, or even overpopulation. Young men old enough to bear arms were compelled to leave their country and found "colonies" in new lands (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.16; Varro, quoted by Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 3.109). The Sabines, who had reached the site of Rome, were accordingly called Sacrani "because they were born of a sacred springtime" (Festus, pp. 424–25 L.; Servius *Aen.* 7.796). Yet another event is connected with the legendary diaspora of the Sabines, one that showed all the essential features of the *ver sacrum*: during a long war against the Umbrians, a vow was made to sacrifice all the living creatures born during one year. Once victory was won, the vow was fulfilled in a different way: the children of men were exempt. When a famine struck, it was thought necessary to include humans, too, in the vow. They were consecrated to Mars, and on reaching adulthood were sent off, guided by a bull, to found a colony. When they arrived in the Oscan country (Campania), the bull suddenly curled up on the ground as if he had found his place. The newcomers stopped, chased the local inhabitants away, settled, and sacrificed the bull to the god Mars. Thus were born the Samnite people (Strabo 5.4.12). Similarly, the Sabines, guided by a green woodpecker (*picus*), who was also consecrated to Mars, emigrated to Picenum where they founded the Piceni (Festus, p. 235 L.; Pliny the Elder, *HN* 3.110).

There are probably many other stories of a mythical character similar to these, stories that deal with the origins of various Italic people and explain the migration of the Hirpini,

Lucani, Ursentini, etc., and why their names evoke the names of animals. Associated with these stories is one that focuses on events of a later period in history but that also presents legendary features and is built on the same foundation as the earlier stories. In this story, a "princeps" of the Samnites named Sthennius Mettius is said to have consecrated to Apollo the *ver sacrum* of all those who would be born in the following year, in an attempt to avert a plague. But the plague raged again twenty years later; the oracle made it clear that no human sacrifice had taken place and therefore imposed emigration on all the young men born that year. The expatriates clustered in Sila (in modern Calabria), which they subsequently left to come to the aid of Messina. There they were welcomed and finally settled. They received their name, *Mamertini*, from the god Mamers (Mars) (Festus, p. 150 L.) according to the historian Alfius who had written an account of the Punic wars. This is surely an idealized version of the settlement in Sicily of Campanian mercenaries who founded the Mamertine state in the third century. Significantly, under Greek influence Apollo took the place of Mars as the god who received the vows. Mars, however, remained the eponymous god and guardian of the Mamertines, and his image appeared on all their coins. At this time, as a result of the diffusion of the martial traditions of the Sabellians, the idea of the *ver sacrum* as the ultimate remedy for public calamities must have become generalized. Even Rome, threatened by Hannibal, resorted to the rite in 217 B.C. after the battle of Lake Trasimene: a vow was made to Jupiter that involved only animals. But when it came to actually carrying out the vow in the years 195 and 194 B.C., because of various quibbles and restrictions they sacrificed only some of the animals (Livy 22.9, 23.44, 24.44). We can further speculate logically that the tradition must have stayed alive particularly among the Sabellians, as attested by the *ver sacrum* vowed by the Italic insurgents at the time of the Social War, which broke out early in the first century B.C. (Sisenna frag. 99, 102 P.).

In the history of this strange manifestation of Italic religiosity, we have to distinguish three aspects or "moments": first, the possible existence of a primitive ritual institution; second, its formal establishment and its legendary definition as an etiological saga of origins; and third, its perennial nature or its recurrence in the course of historical time. On the first point, it is difficult to say anything beyond forming



Poussin, *Spring*. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Giraudon.

hypotheses. The basic themes of the legend, i.e., the migration of armed men, the proliferation of ethnic groups, the expiatory and purificatory character of the vow, the consecration only of living creatures, resulting in blood sacrifices (with exile substituting for slaughter in the case of humans), and the presence and the ambiguously divine meaning of an animal guide who also played an eponymous role for the new group—all of these themes together seem to correspond to the living conditions and mentality of a primitive society of herdsmen characterized by great mobility and aggressiveness and by theriomorphic conceptions of the divine that recalled totemism. This type of society has numerous elements that can be compared with those of other cultures. There are, moreover, definite signs of a spread of the pastoral economy to the more interior populations of the Italian peninsula during the Bronze Age. Conceivably the movements of the populations of the high Apennine valleys brought with them a wide range of beliefs and specific rites based partly on the idea of a necessity or a sacred vocation for migration, and in part on the attraction of more abundant grazing lands for the animals. For the continued growth of these populations forced them to look for new resources in order to survive, and during their greatest expansion, the Sabellian-Umbrian people occupied increasingly larger and richer areas.

But it is evident that the traditions tended to crystallize into myths in the course of the Italic diaspora, probably in cultural environments that had come under Greek influence. (In Campania the Samnites came into contact with the Greeks by the fifth century B.C.) The structure of the myth has characteristic and constant features, with three basic

elements: (1) the consecration to the deity (notably to Mars, the god of the Sabellians) of all that was produced in a given year (in spring, during the month of Mars—March), because of a vow of purification or expiation after a scourge such as a war or a plague; (2) a migration for colonization, by young men old enough to bear arms; (3) the role of an animal guide (usually consecrated to Mars). Once established, the pattern was imposed retrospectively on legendary tales about origins, which were nourished by many additional facts remembered about real events. At the same time, the myth became the religious norm for rites performed later, in historically documented times. We may conclude that this is one of the most important examples of a dialectic relationship uniting ritual and myth.

The violent political and military events that shook Italy during the fourth and third centuries B.C. (the enormous spread of the conquering Sabellians as far as Apulia and Sicily; the invasions of the Gauls in the north; the enterprises of Greek chiefs from Alexander of Epirus to Pyrrhus; and the progressive assertion of the hegemony of Rome and the struggles against Carthage, which culminated dramatically with Hannibal's Italian expedition) undoubtedly provided many occasions to resort to this extreme and venerable remedy, the Italic rite of the *ver sacrum*. The evidence, as we have noted, lies in the semilegendary episode of the Mamertini and in the attenuated, peculiar version of the same rite that the Romans adopted after the shock of Hannibal's bold advances. But the substitution of Apollo (in the first instance) and Jupiter (in the second) for Mars, and the partial nature of the sacrifice in the *ver sacrum* celebrated in Rome, amply



Mars from Todi. Museo etrusco gregoriano. Rome, Vatican Museum. Museum photo.

demonstrates that the requirements of a particular time could impose a significant deviation from the model of the myth. Evidently, since times and circumstances had changed, it had become something of an anachronism to express in concrete terms a rite so ancient and so shrouded in legend—assuming that it had ever actually existed.

M.P./g.h.

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THE LATINS AND THE ORIGINS OF ROMAN RELIGION

The Latins (*Latini*) were the inhabitants of a territory which once stretched to the south of the lower course of the Tiber up to the Pontine plain (*Pomptinus ager*: Livy 6.5.2). The *Latium antiquum* or *vetus* was bounded on the northwest by the Tiber and by the land of the Etruscans; on the northeast it was contiguous with the Sabine territory. It formed a vast expanse bordered on the east by the Alban range, from mounts Palombara, Tivoli (Tibur), Palestrina (Praeneste), and Cori (Cora), to Terracina (Anxur) and Circeo (Circeii); and was bordered on the west by the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. At the heart of this region are the hills that served as habitats, such as Alba Longa, which tradition places in the middle of the *populi Latini*, or Monte Cavo (*Mons Albanus*), which was the seat of a federal cult of Jupiter Latiaris.

To this *Latium vetus*, which took form in protohistory by the beginning of the first millennium B.C. (during the transition between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age), was later added a *Latium Adjectum* or *novum* made up of the territory conquered by the Romans in the historic period (starting in the sixth century B.C.), which included the Volscian, Aequi, Hernican, and Auruncan territories (see Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 3.68–70).

These Latins, whom the tradition refers to as the *populi Latini* ("Latin nation") or by the collective name of *nomen Latinum*, settled on the hills in autonomous groups more or less tied to one another, *vicatim* ("by villages"). These territorial associations were basically founded on religious grounds, creating a feeling of community that was manifested later (in the historical epoch) by the existence of federations. These united the majority of the Latins around common cults, for instance, around the shrine of *Juppiter Latiaris* on Mons Albanus, or around the shrine of *Diana Aricia* in the *Nemus Dianae* ("the sacred grove of Diana"). Other federal cults played an important role in history. Most notable is the recently excavated city of Lavinium. Its necropolis dates back to the tenth century B.C., with remains of sixth-century ramparts, a federal cult which in historic times is attested by the discovery of thirteen archaic altars and of a *heroon* in memory of Aeneas, located near a tomb from the seventh century B.C.¹

According to the latest archaeological discoveries, the oldest inhabitants of Latium devoted themselves principally to raising livestock and additionally to exploiting natural resources (salt, fruit, and game). The more the woodlands were cleared and the marshlands dried up, the more the Latins took to farming and to the making of pottery and iron tools.

Did these Latins, whose language belonged to the Indo-European family, drive back or subdue "autochthonous" populations? Recently it was common to contrast the Indo-European invaders, who practiced the ritual of cremation, to the natives, who were accustomed to the ritual of inhumation.² This schema is not consistent with the facts. Contrary to the hypotheses of the previous theory, archaeology has at least shown that the ritual of cremation (at the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age) has almost always preceded the ritual of inhumation (in the late Iron Age: eighth through seventh centuries), though these practices did not necessarily take on any ethnic significance.³

The advances made by the community of the Latins can be

verified by the growing wealth and number of their centers, which multiplied throughout the eighth and seventh centuries: Satricum, Antium (Anzio), Ardea, Lavinium (Pratica di Mare), Politorium (possibly Decima), Ficana, Praeneste (Palestrina), and of course Rome. The first document in the Latin language is the inscription on the golden fibula of Praeneste (end of the seventh century): *manios med fhefhaked numasioi* (in classical Latin: *Manius me fecit Numerio*, "Marius made me [or "had me made"] for Numerius").⁴

Tradition commonly ascribes an increasingly dominant role to Rome. Starting with the "reigns" of Romulus and Numa, the Roman community extended its influence farther with the victory over Alba (under Tullus Hostilius) and the conquest of the coastal regions as far as Ostia at the mouth of the Tiber. This conquest brought about the elimination of the centers of Politorium, Tellenae, and Ficana.

Recent digs at Castel di Decima (which corresponds to Politorium) have confirmed the tradition of this community. The necropolis that was discovered includes tombs dating from the eighth century to the close of the seventh century B.C., a terminus corresponding to the destruction of Politorium by Ancus Marcius, according to Livy 1.33.3.⁵

Rome, which became the ruler of Latium, itself submitted to the domination of the Etruscans, as was reflected in the tradition of the last three kings, Tarquinius the Elder, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus, all allegedly of Etruscan origin. After the expulsion of the Etruscans in 509 B.C., Roman dominance was consolidated following the battle of Lake Regillus in 496 or 499. The battle ended with the defeat of the Latins by the Romans and the signing of an alliance of "eternal peace" between the two partners in 493, the *foedus Cassianum*.⁶ The founding of the federal Temple of Diana on the Aventine also took place in this context. One last uprising by the Latins who took up arms against Rome during the First War of the Samnites (343–341 B.C.) brought about the final defeat of the Latins. The Latin league was dissolved in 338 B.C. and incorporated into the Roman community.

R.S./g.h.

NOTES

1. Cf. Castagnoli, *Lavinium 1: Topografia generale, fonti e storia delle ricerche* (Rome 1972); *Lavinium 2: Le tredici are* (Rome 1975); with collaborators. P. Sommella, "La necropoli protostorica rinvenuta a Pratica di Mare," *Rendic. Pontif. Accad. Rom. Archeol.* 46 (1973–74): 34–48; "Heroon di Enea a Lavinium, Recenti scavi a Pratica di Mare," *ibid.* 44 (1971–72): 47–74.

2. Such are the conclusions of the work of A. Piganiol, *Essai sur les origines de Rome* (Paris 1916).

3. See, finally, M. Pallottino, in *Civiltà del Lazio primitivo* (Rome 1976), p. 45. It is thus that at Lavinium the oldest incineration tombs (10th century) predate the inhumation tombs: cf. P. Sommella, *ibid.*, pp. 292–93.

4. On this document, cf. G. Colonna, *ibid.*, pp. 372–73, and A. E. Gordon, *The Inscribed Fibula Praesnestina: Problems of Authenticity* (Berkeley 1975). Most recently M. Guarducci, *Memorie della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei*, ser. 8, vol. 24, fasc. 4 (Rome 1980), 415–574, pl. I–XI, has reopened the discussion with an essay *La cosiddetta Fibula Prenestina*, attempting to demonstrate that it is a forgery. Perhaps we should conclude with a paraphrase of a verse by Virgil (*Aeneid*, 7, 412): *Et nunc magnum manet Fibula nomen / sed fortuna fuit* ("Of this Fibula, only a great name remains, but his good fortune is gone").

5. Cf. F. Zevi, *ibid.*, pp. 252–56.

6. Cf. Livy (2, 33, 34) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (6, 95).

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GRECO-ITALIC TRADITIONS AND LEGENDS, FROM THE BRONZE AGE TO VIRGIL

The initial deep penetration and diffusion of Greek cults and myths in Italy and the contacts that bound them to local traditions in a tangle of religious conceptions and legendary constructions that we can define by the expression "Greco-Italic"—all of this constitutes a particularly interesting aspect of the classical world, one that merits separate treatment. The Greek colonization of southern Italy and Sicily beginning in the eighth century B.C. certainly played a dominant part in this process. But we can suppose that the process began in the Bronze Age under the influence of Mycenaean civilization. On the other hand, the phenomenon spread well beyond the domain of Greek colonies, including all of the peninsula and part of northern Italy (besides the islands)—where populations lived who, without being Greek, were bound in some manner, more or less directly, to Greek culture.

I. Greek Evidence of the Lands of the West

It is natural that navigators of Aegean origin brought back from the oceans of the West and from mysterious lands encountered during their voyages around them marvelous impressions, which were spread little by little in the narratives that were gathered and poetically elaborated in the *Odyssey*. One can cite the episodes of the Cyclops, of Aeolus, of the Laestrygonians, of Circe, of the Land of the Dead, of the Sirens, of Scylla and Charybdis, and of the island of the Trident (as V. Bérard translates it) with the Cattle of the Sun. The entire subsequent classical tradition set these episodes in the framework of Italy and the neighboring islands and, more specifically, certain places that remained famous under these names during all of antiquity, like the Aeolian Islands, Mount Circe, the Lake of Avernus, and Cumae—which was the site for calling up the netherworld—the sanctuary of the Sirens at the tip of the peninsula of Sorrento, and the menacing Scylla and Charybdis in the Straits of Messina. The Homeric narrative of the adventures of Odysseus should be considered the point of departure and the almost unique source of all the identifications, interpretations, erudite speculations, and legendary constructions of antiquity about these places, with the characters, events, and cults that are connected with them. Nevertheless, without taking into account the traditions suggested by the ancients, modern criticism sought a geographic and historic verification of the particulars of the *Odyssey*; yet it arrived at conclusions which, hypothetical as some of them might seem because of the very excess of their details—as is the case for the grandiose reconstruction of Victor Bérard—confirm on the whole the

veracity of the epic testimony concerning the knowledge that the Greeks of the Mycenaean Age had of the Italic world.

Independent of the Homeric narratives, however, the Greek legendary inheritance gives us other evidence of the most ancient contacts between the proto-Hellenic world and Italy, even though this evidence is profoundly transformed by myth. We are thinking of the insistence with which the enterprises of the Argonauts, the wanderings of Heracles, the colonizations of the Arcadians, and the migrations of the Pelasgi were connected with or extended to Italy. But the documents which seem to us to be the most significant for their more detailed geographic and chronological character—for their superior historical importance—are, on the one hand, narratives about the presence of Cretans, notably of King Minos and of the artist Daedalus, in Apulia and Sicily (that is, in the regions where relations with the Mycenaean were the most frequent; but there are echoes of the activity of Daedalus in both Campania and Sardinia); and, on the other hand, the cycle of legends about the "Italian" adventures of the heroes of the Trojan cycle. These latter are Achaean heroes returned from the Trojan War (their return journeys, the *nostoi*, were sung by different Greek poets, among whom was Stesichorus of Himera, who lived in Sicily in the archaic period): there are references to Diomedes in Apulia, but also in other Adriatic regions and in Latium; Menestheus and his Athenians in the zone of the Straits of Messina; Epeus, the builder of the Trojan Horse, and Philoctetes, who inherited the weapons of Heracles, on the Ionian coast between Metapontum and Croton; Idomeneus and his Cretans at the same place as his predecessor, Minos, in Apulia; and Odysseus, who is the most illustrious of all. The Trojan heroes fleeing their sacked city joined the Achaean heroes: first Aeneas, who, after emigrating to Latium, was to acquire extraordinary renown in myth and poetry as the founder of the future greatness of Rome; then Antenor, who with his Veneti settled in northern Italy; there are also references to the Trojans who settled on the shores of the Ionian Sea at Siris, and in Sicily, where they were regarded as the ancestors of the nation of the Elymians. It should be noted that all of these stories, despite the diverse origins of their protagonists, are constructed according to several relatively uniform schemata (which argues against the system of analogies used in erudite elaborations), namely, the arrival by sea of a foreign hero with his companions, the encounter and the battle with an indigenous king whose daughter the hero eventually marries and whose kingdom he inherits, the founding of sanctuaries and of city-states according to the model of the colonial Greek *ktisis*, the death of the hero in his new country, and the cult at his tomb. These are the well-known cases of Aeneas, Diomedes, and Antenor.

But having reached this point, we are confronted with references—presented more or less explicitly in the Greek mythic narratives—to indigenous places, populations, and characters. Legend tends to assume an etiological character, that is, it tends to accept, describe, and interpret local situations and events. The latter are, moreover, better and better understood, beginning with the eighth century B.C., thanks to colonization, commercial exchanges (one thinks of the Greek settlement recently discovered at Gravisca, the port of Tarquinii), the stability of the great currents of commerce, and the presence of Greek entrepreneurs and artists in the Italic centers. Starting from the names of the peoples and city-states, complicated narratives are elaborated, eponymous heroes are invented who enter in turn into the legendary patrimony side by side with the heroes of the Greek myths, and even the Greek heroes are linked to the

new heroes by genealogical bonds. Thus, in the *Theogony* of Hesiod (5.1014), Latinus, the eponym of the Latins, who appears in a different light in the saga of Aeneas, is mentioned with his brother Agrius as a son of Odysseus and Circe and king of the Tyrrhenians. And of Odysseus and Circe, Auson is born, the eponym of the Ausones; he in turn is the father of Liparus, the eponym and king of Lipara in the Aeolian Islands. Liparus was succeeded by Aeolus, who came from the peninsula and married Liparus's daughter (Diodorus Siculus 5.7–8). The eponyms of different peoples of southern Italy, such as Sicilus, Italus, Morges, Oenotrus, Peucetius, and Iapyx, seem to be interrelated and related to the Arcadians and the Pelasgi (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.11–13); but it is also said of Iapyx that he was Cretan and the son of Daedalus. Particularly complicated are the problems involving the name and origins of the Achaean city-state of Metapontum on the Ionian Sea. It was said that Metapontum was created by the hero named Metabus (who was also thought to be king of the Volsci, according to the *Aeneid*, 11.532ff.) or by Metapontus, according to the Thessalo-Boeotian legends about Arne, Melanippus, and Aeolus; or by Nestor, according to the Pylians (Diodorus of Sicily 4.67.3–6; Strabo, *Geog.*, 6.1.15). One might also mention the bonds that connect Tyrrhenus, the eponym of the Tyrrhenians (that is, the Etruscans), with the Lydian dynasty (in the classical narrative of Herodotus 1.94), with Telephus, the king of Mysia, and with the Pelasgi of the islands of Lemnos and Imbros (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.29ff.; Strabo 5.2.4).

II. The Indigenous Traditions and the Elaboration of a Common Patrimony

In the elaboration of this entire corpus of legends, important roles must have been played not only by the knowledge and imagination of the Greeks but also by the indigenous traditions and even, in a more or less active way, by the cultural environment of Italy, especially the sanctuaries. Bringing with them the cults of the motherland, Greek navigators and colonizers found in Italy sacred places, local beliefs, and customs of very ancient origin. It is probable that the new arrivals tried to understand and illuminate the indigenous elements in terms of their own conceptions, and that at the same time, in the centers that remained foreign to Hellenism, people wanted to ennoble the traditional patrimony of rites and relics by assimilating it to the prestigious models of Greek religion and mythology. The cults of Hera and in particular of Argive Hera were disseminated along all the coasts of Italy in the colonial and extracolony zones (at Metapontum, at Croton, at the mouth of the Silarus near Posidonia in Latium, and in Etruria and Venetia). The spread of the cults of Hera and of other female divinities, such as Leucothea, Artemis, and especially Athena of Ilium (at Siris, at Lucera in Apulia, at Lavinium, and at Rome), whose origin is very ancient and is sometimes attributed to the founding action of a hero, harmonized with the diffusion of female cults, notably that of the mother goddess, among the indigenous populations of Italy. The goddess of the "Pelasgian" sanctuary of Pyrgi in Etruria, whom the Greeks referred to under the names of Ilythia or Leucothea, is today attested by Etruscan inscriptions under the name of Uni, that is, Juno or Hera. This lengthens the list of manifestations of this divinity on the Italian coast.

The long process of joining the local divinities with those of the Greek pantheon and assimilating them (Jupiter-(D)iove = Zeus = Tin(ia) in Etruscan, just as Venus =



Poussin, *Inspiration of the Poet*, detail. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Flammarion.

Aphrodite = Turan in Etruscan, and others) must have developed and attained its completion in the archaic period, at least as far as the Tyrrhenian domain of the Etruscans, Latins, and Campanians is concerned. The same can be said for the penetration into Italy of typically Hellenic cults which had no local correspondences, such as those of Apollo, Artemis, or the Dioscuri (attested by the archaic epigraphy at Lavinium in Latium under the name of *qurois*, and at Tarquinii in Etruria under the name of *Tinascliniaras* = *Dioskoroisin*), as well as the principal cycles and characters of Greek mythology, whose names were adapted into indigenous languages. Judging from the linguistic data, it seems to be a Doric cultural current, probably Corinthian (De Simone), which introduced these names into Etruria. One can site in this connection the famous narrative of the arrival at Tarquinii, toward the middle of the seventh century B.C., of the Corinthian Demaratus, who brought literature and the arts with him (Livy 1.34 and 4.3; Pliny, *HN*, 35.43; Tacitus, *Annales*, 11.14, etc.).

In establishing a common patrimony of Greco-Italic legends in the sanctuaries, one must not overlook the supposed tombs of the heroes and the cults that were established in their honor. Recall the funeral ceremonies in honor of the Nelides at Metapontum (Strabo 6.1.15), which made possible the diffusion of narratives and of songs about the foundation of the city by the Pylians; or the sacrifices to Antenor at the mouth of the Timavo (Strabo 5.1.9); similarly, the many narratives about the deeds of Diomedes must have flourished, when he had been deified, in places where he was

assumed to have rested or disappeared—this is the case notably for the sanctuary tomb of the Tremiti in Apulia, as certain ancient authors attest. But the most significant example is the sepulcher of Aeneas at Lavinium, identified in a *heroon* recently discovered near this city, which can be ascribed to the fourth century B.C. and was constructed above a princely tomb in the Oriental style, dating from the seventh century B.C. This indicates that the Latin saga of Aeneas must have spread and developed between the sixth and fifth centuries B.C., probably around the sanctuaries of Lavinium (and concomitant with the first Greek versions of the coming of Aeneas to Italy: Hellanicus, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.48).

III. The Role of Writers

The literary circles of Asiatic Ionia and the Greek and Hellenizing centers of Italy came into contact with popular gossip and communication between the political and sacerdotal milieus of the various city-states of the Tyrrhenian world and the Greek colonial domain. Together, they must have contributed, from the earliest period, to the diffusion and collation of knowledge about Greek and indigenous cults and about the stories transmitted in sanctuaries. Between the fifth and third centuries B.C., Italian writers (that is, Greeks in Italy), and in particular Siciliots (Greeks in Sicily) played a very important role in the reconstruction, enrichment, and systemization of the Greco-Italic legends; these writers include Hippias and Lycus of Rhegium, Antiochus,

Philistus of Syracuse, and Timaeus of Tauromenium (Taormina), whose works were in large part lost but still survive in abundant extracts and expansions in subsequent literature. But of the historians, geographers, and essayists of the Greek mother country, like Thucydides, Ephorus, the Pseudo-Scylax, and Aristotle, we also have important documents that bear witness to their interest in the Italic world; and beginning in the Hellenistic period, poets, mythographers, historiographers, Greek and Latin men of letters, and compilers (from Lycophron to Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Strabo, Livy, Virgil, Pliny, Justin, and later the scholiasts such as Servius and Tzetzes) collected and elaborated this material in an essentially reflexive and erudite spirit, so well that their work resulted in a complete amalgam of opinions, versions, and interpretations.

The richest and most coherent picture of heroic Greco-Italic mythology that we have is found in the introduction to the *Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and in the *Aeneid* of Virgil. These are two profoundly different works, even if they are almost contemporaneous. The first is the patient and abundant work of a historiographer who presents his subject diachronically, in the perspective of a historical reconstruction; he assembles and recomposes the very different traditions of earlier writers, especially emphasizing the thesis of the Greek origin of the Italic peoples—among whom and through whom the city “that dominates all the earth and all the sea” was to come into being. Virgil’s poem, by contrast, is a mirror that synchronically reflects the image of the peoples and legendary characters of Italy in the heroic period, as well as the adventures of Aeneas. This is a tableau almost comparable to that of the heroic Greek world

in the *Iliad*. But beyond all erudite research on origins, all of this is transfigured poetically in an evocation which, according to the prophecy of Anchises at Cumae, connects the past to the present, that is, to the glory of Rome. In both testimonies there is a consciousness of the religious and cultural unity of the Greek and Italo-Roman worlds, that is, of classical civilization, whose first manifestations go back to the beginning of historical time.

M.P./d.f.

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ROMAN RELIGION

Though the importance of religion in the ancient world seems self-evident to us today, this view is relatively recent. The seventeenth century was largely content to mobilize Greek and Roman deities on gala occasions at court without distinguishing between the two. When Montesquieu wrote his *Considerations on the Causes of the Grandeur of the Romans and of Their Decadence* (1734), he was thinking primarily of politics and morals. Not until the nineteenth century did Fustel de Coulanges give religion its true place at the very heart of ancient society. This scholar devoted his course at the University of Strasbourg to the notion of “the history of a belief” (1862–63), and in the following year he published a work which became a classic, *The Ancient City* (1864). For the first time, the study of religion was unequivocally acknowledged to be indispensable to the understanding of the institutions of the ancients. But this line of inquiry sometimes had to grope its way, and in their haste to propose overarching explanations, several theoreticians felt compelled to expound elaborate systems that subjected religious studies to intellectual fashions. For example, in Max Müller’s system, deities were nothing but names (*Nomina numina*) given to various impressions aroused by the light of the sun. Then there was Wilhelm Mannhardt, who expounded his naturist theory in a book bearing the evocative title of *The Cult of the Tree among Germanic Peoples* (1875). Today we are more skeptical of systematic explanations; we prefer more matter-of-fact studies of the evidence.

Sociology unquestionably gave this method new currency toward the end of the last century by introducing the principle of comparison of ancient societies with modern-day “primitive” societies. Emile Durkheim’s *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912) is a comparative study with the stated objective of defining religion in general. He wisely suggested that “only the comparison of facts of the same nature can have the value of proof.” This advice has not always been heeded. The tendency was to drift imperceptibly toward a “universal” comparativism that all too often confused what is archaic with what is primitive (in the sense of inferior). Can one say that the remarkable work of James Frazer is immune to such a reproach? Through his vast erudition, this scholar rendered great service to the history of religions, and to Roman religion in particular, in his monumental commentary on Ovid’s *Fasti*. He did, however, set forth a perilous principle when he said that “human nature is much the same throughout the world and at all times.” This inspired some dangerous comparisons, drawn from that arsenal of sociological examples that is vast enough to produce apparent likenesses for almost anything: if the Hottentots will not do, the Zulus will!

By this kind of improper assimilation, a basically “primitivist” picture was projected onto the origins of early Roman society. Polynesian mana was used to explain a religion in the Indo-European tradition; gods and goddesses would suddenly rise out of a vague cloud in the name of progressive evolution.

Reactions were not long in coming. Georg Wissowa in his *Religion and Cult of the Romans* (1902; 2d ed. 1912) firmly established the importance of respecting homologous areas

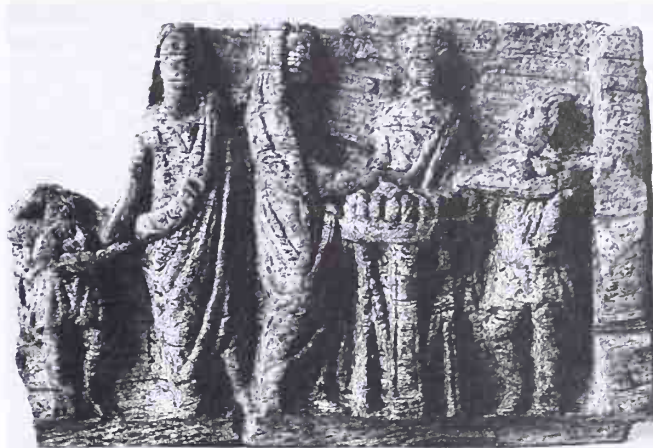
in the religious realm, and he painstakingly constructed a clear and precise catalog of the data. Nevertheless, description alone, however faithful, was not sufficient to make these data intelligible. Very early on, historians noted the benefit they could derive from the comparison of analogous religious structures, for instance, by noting resemblances between the Latin triad Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus of Rome and the Umbrian triad Jupiter-Mars-Vofionus of Iguvium (all three known as Grabovio, "of the oak tree"). But comparativism was destined to bear its fruits on an even grander scale as a result of the illuminating works of Georges Dumézil, who based his efforts on the existence of the original community of the ancient Indians and the ancient Italians (the probable equivalence of the Sanskrit term *Brahman* and the Latin term *flamen* to designate the priest is one sign among many to that effect). As a result of Dumézil's research, the Indo-European heritage could no longer be denied to ancient Rome. Contrary to the claims of evolutionists, it would seem that personal gods, classified according to a functional hierarchy that recalls an analogous distribution of functions in India, had existed in Rome since its origins. Contrary to the teachings of the "primitivists," Dumézil revealed that the Romans had inherited a millennial ideology that they had indeed subjected to a kind of metamorphosis: history was substituted for myth so that the same character could appear in a divine form in a mythology of Indo-European inspiration and in a human form in Roman history. An eloquent example is furnished by a double pair of "homologues": the Roman heroes Horatius Cocles, the One-Eyed, and Mucius Scaevola, the One-Handed, correspond to the Scandinavian duo of Óðinn, the one-eyed magician-god, and Týr, the jurist-god who sacrificed one hand. The results of this vast research were recorded by Georges Dumézil in his work *Archaic Roman Religion* (1966; English trans. 1970; 2d ed. 1974; hereafter ARR).

The comparativist insight could not, however, divert us from the main objective of the historian of Roman religion, namely, to define the originality of this religion as precisely as possible. Not all the facts can be explained, despite great scholarly effort, but the research that has been conducted for some hundred years helps us to formulate the problem with greater accuracy.

To what extent can we speak of the originality of Roman religion? Georg Wissowa tried to define it using chronological criteria. He thought that the Romans had succeeded in protecting their institutions from foreign influences until about the third century B.C., after which syncretism must have had a destabilizing effect. That the facts did not bear out this distinction is just as well. It would have been surprising to discover that Rome could have lived in isolation when in the sixth century B.C. she still constituted nothing but a modest cell compared with her rich neighbors, the Etruscans (who contributed to her urbanization under the dynasty of the last three kings of Rome, who are traditionally said to have come from Etruria) and the colonists of Magna Graecia (who had founded wealthy settlements in the southern part of Italy).

F. Altheim believed that he could oppose Wissowa on these grounds: he dismissed the idea of any Latin originality, on the premise that foreign influence, most particularly Greek influence, had been a factor since the beginning. In a sense, his treatise, *Greek Gods in Ancient Rome* (1930), is a polemic rather than a summation of individual studies.

Of course, this extreme position was open to criticism. It is risky even to attempt to reduce the Roman pantheon to a sort of carbon copy of the Hellenic pantheon, whether we admit



Representation of an offering. Bone bas-relief. Rome, City Museums. Photo Oscar Savio.

the direct influence of Magna Graecia or indirect influence through the Etruscans. If Hellenic deities such as Apollo or the Dioscuri were familiar in Rome by the sixth century, they had been incorporated into the Latin pantheon under particular circumstances, conforming to the hospitable attitude of the polytheism of the ancients. Such admissions would not challenge the autochthonous traditions.

I. The Notion of *Religio* and Cult

We should first acknowledge that the term *religio*, which passed into most modern Western languages, is a Latin creation. It is a specific word that has no Greek counterpart; the "analogous" expressions that are invoked, including to *sebas* (respect for the gods), *hē proskunēsis* (adoration), *hē eulabeia* (reverential fear), and *hē thrēskeia* (cult or worship), only underscore the bankruptcy of a genuine translation for *religio* in that language.

This assertion is all the more remarkable because the Romans took great pride in being the most religious people in the world: "If we compare ourselves with foreign nations," wrote Cicero (*De natura deorum* 2.3), "we may appear to be equal or even inferior in various realms, except in religion, by which I mean the worship of the gods, in which we are by far preeminent" (*religione id est cultu deorum, multo superiores*). He states the same thing elsewhere (Cicero *De haruspicum responsis* 19) in a more concise form: *pietate ac religione omnes gentes superavimus* ("in piety and in religion we head the list of nations").

This claim may still have had some value at the end of the first century B.C., when it occasionally appeared as an expression of praise for individuals. Thus the author of a *Laudatio* of a Roman matron known by the name of Turia (end of the first century B.C.) mentions among this woman's qualities "her religious spirit free of superstition (*religionis sine superstitione*)."

What are we to understand by this term that the Romans coined in order to define a situation in which they proudly claimed to excel, a term that we inherited from the Latins and that made its way into every language of the Western world? Philologists agree that *religio* comes from a verbal root (like *legio* or *regio*), but they do not agree about which verb it comes from. Some derive the word from *relegere* and ascribe

to the prefix an intensive value that gives the expression the meaning of "scrupulous observance." Others prefer to derive it from *religare*, with the meaning of "to bind oneself to the gods." Texts are quoted to support either hypothesis. The supporters of *relegere* invoke the ancient verse cited by Nigidius Figulus (Aulus Gellius 4.9.11): *religentem esse oportet, religiosus ne fuas* ("it is fitting to be religious but not excessively scrupulous"). The *religare* supporters recall the ritualistic use of sacred ribbons (*vittae*), as well as the numerous references to the idea of religious bonds, for example, Lucretius 1.931: *Religionum nodis animum exsolvere* ("Deliver the soul from religious bonds"); Livy 5.23.10: *Se domumque religione exsolvere* ("To free oneself and one's own from a religious obligation").

It would seem difficult to settle upon one or the other etymological explanation, especially in view of the fact that each represents a complementary aspect of the meaning of the expression. For it is indeed true that the *religio* of the Latins implies at the same time both a concern for scrupulous observance in worship and the idea of bonds that unite the gods and men.

We could say that the conviction of an inescapable interdependence between heaven and earth was the basis for Roman piety, the purpose of which was to assure the *pax veniaque deum*. Without the friendship and grace of the gods, a Roman felt crippled. He therefore took pains to maintain this "state of grace" through a meticulous cult, so meticulous that it has often seemed formalistic. He would be attentive to signs sent from heaven, and if unluckily the gods should vent their anger—*lanque irae patuere deum* ("the wrath of the gods has already been revealed"; Lucan 2.1)—he would not rest until he had reestablished harmony. In Rome one would not think of rebelling against the gods; this theme was the privilege of the Greeks, particularly in the myth of the Titan

Prometheus. Not until Lucretius do we see the first blasphemous overtones in Latin literature, and even then, when the Epicurean poet raises the flag of rebellion against religion and denounces the crimes committed in its name—*tantum religio potuit suadere malorum* (Lucretius 1.101)—he borrows his example from Hellenic religion by denouncing the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

Although the reverential fear of the gods was the basis of Roman piety, the concern for efficacy explains many features of the cult. First of all, there was that rather cautious tone in prayers when a Roman was unable to identify exactly which deity he was supposed to appease; accordingly, in the case of an earthquake the supplicant makes use of the following prudent formula: *si deo, si deae* (whether you be god or goddess; Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 2.28.2–3). When he gets into a fight with a deity, he does so with a precise stipulation, of which the *carmina* conveyed to us by Cato the Elder give us a good idea. This contractual propensity has often been interpreted in a pejorative sense, but in fact it can only be understood as a concern to establish an irrevocable covenant between men and the gods. Piety is justice toward the gods, says Cicero (*est enim pietas iustitia adversum deos*; *Nat. D.* 1.41), and in the prayer addressed by Cato's peasant to an unidentified woodland deity, we find this important formula: *uti tibi jus est* ("in keeping with your right"; *De agr.* 139).

This preoccupation is often translated with an insistence that is excessive for our taste. Cato's peasant is not afraid of repeating ponderously the exact clauses within whose bounds he means to fight the deity. Perhaps we should even attribute to certain apparently descriptive adjectives a more practical meaning. Thus, adding the qualifier *inferum* to *vinum* is supposed to prevent the consecration of all the wine in the cellar, since the prayer concerns only wine as offering (this according to Trebatius, as cited by Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 7.31). As a result, some have denounced the legalistic harshness of Roman piety that was supposed to be embodied by the motto "I shall give when you have given" (*dabo cum dederis*). Thus the gods are informed of the conditions that the Roman state required if it was to carry out its vow to consecrate, within a predetermined limit of time, all the firstfruits of the season—the *ver sacrum* (Livy 22.10).

The Romans certainly had a taste for precision, especially when it came to drawing up contracts, and the same legalistic mind can be seen in their prayers. But we should not disregard the other side of Roman piety, which is expressed by an unconditional appeal for divine kindness. When a Roman general "sacrifices" his own person along with the enemy army in the midst of battle, according to the act of *devotio*, he addresses an urgent prayer to the gods—*vos precor veneror, veniam peto feroque* (Livy 8.9)—and he puts himself entirely in their hands, without bothering with restrictive clauses.¹ This type of unconditional *votum* can often be found in Roman history, for example, when promises are made to build a temple. The *votum* is certainly not disinterested, but except for the quietist, what worshiper is ever disinterested in his devotion? The *votum* implies the hope of fulfillment, *do ut des* ("I give so that you may give"). Marcel Mauss argued that "the gift is the archaic form of exchange"; implicitly it provokes the recipient to restitution and, in the case of the gods, to an increased level of restitution. The Romans never stopped practicing this unconditional form of piety, which also appears to be its most ancient form. They expected some benefit from it in return in the name of the reciprocity of the "good offices" that were the basis of *pietas*.

Dioscuri. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.



II. Indo-European Tradition and Historical Evolution

Roman religion undoubtedly experienced various vicissitudes from the birth of Rome till the coming of the empire. The early stages of the development of the primitive city are reflected even in the liturgy; for the characteristics of certain festivals allow us to draw some conclusions about the relative extension of the physical area of Rome.

In this regard, the following three festivals represent three successive stages. The first, the Lupercalia, a public festival that fell every year on 15 February, reveals its archaic character in its ceremonial (see the article "Faunus" below) and in the role of its priests (*luperci*, wolfmen of sorts, clad in loincloths). The ceremony consisted primarily of a race run by these *luperci*, who carried goatskin thongs with which they struck passersby. This flagellation was said to guarantee fertility to women. Now this precautionary race was strictly confined to the Palatine, taking place on the outer limit of the ancient *oppidum Palatinum* that was the cradle of the *Urbs*. This feature alone might suggest that it was one of the oldest festivals of the Roman calendar, not to mention other characteristics that can be explained only by the pastoral customs of an older time.

The festival of the Septimontium that falls on 11 December is a ceremony that concerns only the inhabitants of the *montes* (*feriae non populi, sed montanorum mode*, as Varro says in *De lingua Latina* 6.24). Fortunately, ancient scholars preserved the list of these seven *montes* (which must not be confused with the seven hills of the future Rome). It consists of the heights of the Palatium, the Germinal, the Velia (which later formed the Palatine), the Fagutaline, the Oppian, the Cispan (which would later be absorbed into the Esquiline), and the Caelian.² It is evident that this new topographical definition corresponds to a later stage, to a step intermediate between the isolated villages and the definitive organization of the city. It is interesting to note the use of the term *mons* to designate these hillocks, rather than the word *collis*, which was later applied to the northern hills.

The ceremony of the Argives brings us to the last phase. This festival, celebrated in two stages (on 16 and 17 March and on 14 May), began with a procession that was supposed to carry the *Argei*, or dolls made of rushes (Ovid *Fasti* 5.621), into the twenty-seven chapels prepared for that purpose. On 14 May they were fetched from these *sacraria* and thrown into the Tiber from the top of the Pons Sublicius. The meaning of the ceremony has been much discussed. Wissowa saw it as a ritual of substitution in which effigies replaced humans; whereas Latte instead compared these dolls made of rushes to the *oscilla*, figurines that were suspended from trees, for the purpose of absorbing all the city's impurities.

In any case, the festival included elements relevant to our discussion. The reference to the Pons Sublicius, the oldest bridge in Rome, built on piles as its name implies, may provide a starting date: tradition attributes it to King Ancus Marcius (Livy 1.33.6). But it is the route of the procession through the twenty-seven chapels, as reported by Varro (*Ling.* 5.45–54), that supplies the most precise information. The procession moved through the heights of the Caelian, the Esquiline, the Viminal, the Quirinal, and the Palatine, circling around the Forum, which was henceforth part of the city. This topographical description thus corresponds to the incorporation of the Forum into the city at the decisive phase of urban transformation, the Rome of *quattuor regiones*.

We have thus seen the circle grow larger from lustration to lustration. It first encompassed the *Roma Quadrata*³ of the

Palatine, then the seven hillocks, and finally the *Urbs* centered on the Forum. The conservatism of the Roman liturgy allows us to observe this progression step by step as the city developed. During the last phase, the Forum became the religious heart of the city with the shrine of Vesta and the dwelling place of the Vestal Virgins. The hill situated to the far west later formed the high point of this new unit, for it was on the Capitol that the most important public temple dedicated to the triad of Jupiter-Juno-Minerva arose. This building, which according to tradition goes back to the Tarquin kings, shows incontestable Etruscan influences.⁴ This brings us to the end of the sixth century B.C.

Do these religious traditions go back only to the birth of Rome? Must we begin with this date as an absolute starting point? A certain primitivist school of thought not long ago supported this contention, which the comparativist work of Georges Dumézil has since rendered untenable. Ample evidence suggests that the origins of Rome had an Indo-European legacy, which explains many features of the legend. Thus political and religious initiatives were divided between the first two kings: the founding of the city was attributed to Romulus, and the religious organization to his successor Numa.

This stylization, as comparativist teaching tells us, is a mark of the Indo-European concept of sovereignty with its double face: on the one hand, we have the warlike and *ferox* side of Romulus, and on the other hand, we have the juridical and peace-loving side of Numa.

There is no doubt that this Indo-European heritage left its traces within institutions, both in the survival of rites that appear aberrant if we refuse to clarify them through the Indo-European ideology, and in the existence of hierarchical structures that can be explained only in terms of the same ideology.

By comparing several Latin goddesses with certain Vedic myths,⁵ Georges Dumézil was able to develop the most suggestive results of his investigation. These goddesses, who once seemed to provide no hold for any satisfactory explanation, were the object of considerable controversy among scholars. Thus, Mater Matuta finally lost her meaning as a dawn goddess and became a mother goddess or a Good Mother; she was honored with two unusual rites on the day of the festival of the Matralia on 11 June. During the ceremony the Roman matrons bore in their arms and fondled, not their own children, but the children of their sisters; they would have a slave woman go into the temple of Mater Matuta and would beat her with sticks before expelling her. These rites certainly seem peculiar. But the dawn goddess is "one of the most striking feminine figures in the *Rgveda*," in which she appears nursing and suckling the child who is either "the common child of Dawn and her sister Night" (India, as we know, is not bothered by contradictory conceptions), or "the child of Night alone."

All the evidence suggests that the most logical form of the theology—"Dawn fondling the child of her sister Night"—had reached as far as Rome, but here the myth vanished and only the rite survived, prescribing for matrons the behavior of the deity. Thus mothers do with their sisters' children what Dawn, the sister of Night, does with the Sun, the child of Night.

The ritual of expelling the slave woman can also be explained by the Vedic parallel. "Dawn the goddess marches, driving back by her light all the shadows, the dangers." The Vedic hymns "thus portray the natural phenomenon of the break of day as the violent driving back of

the shadows, of the 'shadow,' assimilated to the enemy, to the barbarous, to the demoniac, to the 'formless,' to danger, etc.—by Dawn or the band of Dawns—noble goddesses, 'women of the *arya*,' . . . This is what the *bonae matres*, the *univirae* women, also act out in the Matralia, against a slave woman who must represent, in contrast with them, the wicked and baseborn element."⁶

The Matralia offer a telling example of the preservation of the rite independently of the myth. Indeed, Ovid, who knew nothing of this Indo-European theology, did not hesitate later to tack onto the archaic Roman liturgy an explanation borrowed from Hellenic fable. The syncretist interpretation had assimilated Mater Matuta to the Greek Ino-Leucothea. The poet managed to find in the tangled and contradictory web of fables about Ino-Leucothea a homologous situation that could justify the ritual schema of the Roman cult.

Ino-Leucothea may appear to be a kindly nurse for her nephew Bacchus, but she turns out to be an evil mother to her own children. Ovid justifies the liturgy of the Matralia with the following etiology, in which he addresses an exhortation to the mothers of Latium: "May mothers piously invoke the goddess not on behalf of their own offspring, for as a mother she herself has hardly brought good luck. May they commend unto her, rather, the children of others, for she has been more useful to her nephew Bacchus than to her own sons" (Ovid *Fasti* 6.559–62).⁷

By resorting to the same method that is the basis of the analysis of structural correspondences, the comparativist scholar succeeded in illuminating the meaning of Diva Angerona, "who saves the sun from the crisis of the winter solstice by the power of silence"; of Fortuna Primigenia, a primal goddess, simultaneously "mother and daughter of Jupiter"; and of Lua Mater, "the goddess Dissolution in the service of Roman order."

These rites had become unintelligible in Rome only because they had been detached from their mythological context. In rediscovering the symbolic meaning of these rites by confronting them with the Indo-European data, comparativism by the same stroke supplied a brilliant proof of its own legitimacy.

These are, moreover, marginal divinities that were increasingly regarded as relics in historic times. The Indo-European heritage in Rome is even more forcefully manifest in the fundamental structures. A tripartite ideology inspires the political system of the earliest times, as well as the hierarchy of the three principal gods, Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus.

Tradition kept alive the memory of the three tribes that were thought to have provided the framework of the original society: the Ramnes, the Luceres, and the Titienses or Quirites. This division took on an ethnic value: the Ramnes were regarded as the companions of Romulus, the Luceres as the Etruscan allies led by Lucumon, and the Titienses as the Sabines of Tatius. Cicero characterized this tripartition precisely: "Romulus had divided the people into three tribes . . . by giving them his own name, the name of Tatius, and the name of Lucumon, who, serving as Romulus's ally, perished in the battle against the Sabines" (Cicero *De republica* 2.8).

The memory of this tripartition has never vanished. Its existence was acknowledged by the great scholar Varro (cited in Servius Danielis *ad Aen.* 5.560) and reiterated in the form of an aphorism of the abridger Florus (2.5.6): "The Roman people are made up of a mixture of Etruscans, Latins, and Sabines."

But this triple division can hardly be the result of a fortuitous addition. What is the explanation for the ethnic components? If the tripartition were valid, one would be

surprised by its narrow limits; for other peoples, such as the Umbrians, who stand out among the Italics, or even the Greeks of Magna Graecia could have aspired (perhaps with a stronger claim) to the honor of supplying "valences" for Roman society.

In fact, the ethnic coloration of this threefold grouping barely conceals its functional scope. It is quite remarkable that the Ramnes correspond so precisely to the companions of the priest-king, the Luceres to the paradigmatic soldiers, and the Titienses to those who are herdsmen/farmers by traditional vocation. This reflection led Georges Dumézil to recall the existence of equivalent structures in Vedic India, with the difference that in India this distinction was frozen into hereditary classes: each Arya belongs by birth to one of the three groups, Brahmins, warriors, and herdsmen/farmers. The difference may be explained by the fact that India remained a royal society of the feudal type, whereas Rome, in the course of its history, never stopped evolving toward a democracy of citizens.

This functional tripartition can also be found in the hierarchy of the three principal gods, which preceded the Capitoline triad in Rome. Indeed, it is visible just below the surface in the ancient *ordo sacerdotum*, recorded by Festus (pp. 299–300 L²), who saw the following hierarchical order: the king, the Flamen Dialis, the Flamen Martialis, the Flamen Quirinalis, the Pontifex Maximus. The three flamens, flanked by the king and the great pontiff, were assigned to the service of Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus, respectively. Once a year these three flamens proceeded in an open chariot to a chapel of Fides, the goddess of good faith, who presided over the harmonious relationships among these three representatives. This divine triad can be explained only by the conceptual structure that Georges Dumézil called "the ideology of the three functions," which can be found over and over again in most of the ancient Indo-European societies, with variants and alterations peculiar to each society.

The same triad appears in the religious institutions of the archaic period. Thus the *Regia*,⁸ the former "dwelling place of the king," which during the Republic became the seat of the Pontifex Maximus, housed three types of cults (besides the cults of Janus and Juno, who were honored as those who ushered in the new year and the new month). The first concerned Jupiter as principal god; the second, Mars, in the *sacrum Martis*; and the third, in another *sacrum*, concerned Ops Consiva, who belonged to a group of deities who are represented by Quirinus on the canonical list of the trilogy. Because the authority of Quirinus, the patron god of the community of the Quirites (who were responsible for productive tasks in time of peace, as opposed to the *milites* who were subject to Mars), could extend to all areas within his jurisdiction, his flamen could intervene whenever a specialized priest was not available. In this regard, Ovid (*Fasti* 4.910) remarks that the Flamen Quirinalis officiates during the ceremonies of Robigus (or Robigo), a deity invoked to prevent wheat blight.

The same association joins together—after Janus, the god of beginnings, and before the particular deities invoked on special occasions—Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus in the old *carmen* of the *devotio*, a solemn prayer by which the Roman commander-in-chief "devoted" to the Manes gods his own person as well as that of the enemy (Livy 8.9.6). It also inspired the old rule of *spolia opima* recorded by Festus (p. 302 L²), which provides for the *prima spolia* to be offered to Jupiter, the *secunda* to Mars, and the *tertia* to "Janus Quirinus." The tripartite scheme prevails, whatever interpretation one adopts for *prima*, *secunda*, and *tertia*, and whatever



Temple of Vesta, Rome. Photo Alinari.

meaning one gives to the expression "Janus Quirinus" (which I have tried to clarify in *M.E.F.R.*, 1960, p. 116ff. = *R.C.D.R.*, *Janus dieu introducteur*. . .). The association can also be found in the triple patronage of the college of the Salii, who were under the protection of the three deities, *in tutela Jovis Martis Quirini* (Servius Danielis *ad Aen.* 8.663).

Finally, these Roman facts are confirmed remarkably by the parallelism in the Umbrian pantheon. In Iguvium as in Rome, a triad brought together three gods: *Iov-*, *Mart-*, and *Vofiono-*, who were given the common modifier *Grabovio-* (in this list, *Vofiono-* has been interpreted by linguists as the etymological equivalent of *Quirinus*: see Georges Dumézil, *ARR*, p. 149, no. 3).

The memory of a tripartite ideology that reflects old Indo-European conceptions seems beyond dispute as far as the origins of Rome are concerned. It assumes that a society cannot function harmoniously unless it is structured by three hierarchical functions, namely, sovereignty (magical and juridical), force (physical and military), and fertility and prosperity (along with their pastoral and agrarian variants). But it seems that this scheme was in a constant state of decline from the time when the Latins settled on the Italic peninsula. By ending their itinerant status in order to become settled, they moved from prehistory to history.

This history was then marked by the tension of internal rivalries and by the pressure of outside influences. Tradition would have us believe that three monarchs of Etruscan origin were the last on the list of kings—Tarquinius the Elder, Servius Tullius, and Tarquinius Superbus—so that Etruscan influence dominated at the dawn of Roman history. In fact, Etruria, which gave its women a more important social role than Indo-European society did, was certainly familiar with the substitution of two goddesses, Juno and Minerva, for the masculine consorts of Jupiter. As early as the end of the sixth century B.C., the new association of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, to which a temple was dedicated on top of the Capitol, finally replaced the former triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus.

In a sense, this change was made in a spirit of continuity. The keystone has remained, even though Jupiter took on the features of Tinia, thanks to the Etruscan artist Vulca of Veii

(see Pliny [the Elder] *Naturalis Historia* 35.157). Juno, the protecting goddess of the *juniores*, particularly of the young men of military age, succeeded Mars, the god of war; and Minerva, the guardian of artisans, took over for Quirinus, the patron of economic activities.

III. The Principal Stages of Religious History

We will not attempt to cover all the meanderings of the religious history of Rome. We can, however, review the principal stages that stake out its development. The expulsion of the kings in 509 B.C. is an important event because it marks the collapse of the keystone that ensured the cohesion of the old system. Of course, in a manner of speaking the king survived on the religious level, in the role of *Rex Sacrorum* or *Rex Sacrificulus*, who inherited the liturgical functions of the former king. In this indirect way, the Romans thought they could escape the legitimate wrath of the gods—*ira deum*—who would not have accepted the complete overthrow of the religious traditions. However, this fossilized individual would no longer play any role in the life of the city. In the absence of a supreme arbiter, two classes, the patricians and the plebeians, initiated a rivalry that was to last for centuries. Their confrontation was expressed essentially in terms of an economic, social, and political struggle that can be explained by the opposition of their respective interests, but it was also manifest on the religious level. From the beginning, patricians and plebeians were far from enjoying religious equality. Patricians alone were entitled to enter traditional priestly orders such as the pontificate and the augurate. Not until 300 B.C. was the Ogulnia law passed, which guaranteed religious equality between the two classes by reserving for plebeians a good half of the seats recruited in each college. Even so, the archaic priesthoods, such as the *Rex Sacrorum*, the *Flamines Maiores*, and the *Salii*, remained reserved for patricians.

This religion, so thoroughly structured in its origins, was quickly exposed to two perils that became increasingly menacing as time went by: the wave of syncretism and the monopolization of certain cults by the great conquerors of the first century B.C.

What is meant by syncretism? Stig Wikander¹² clarified the origin of the word, which dates back to Plutarch (*De fratrum amore* 19 = *Moralia* 3.271), where it has a different meaning, since *synkretismos*, meaning "union, federation," was applied to Cretans who had the custom of forming a sacred union when outside enemies approached. Through several incarnations (syncretism designated "sometimes the attempts made to reconcile protestors, sometimes the attempt to reconcile the various philosophies of antiquity, especially those of Plato and Aristotle"), a new usage that claimed to justify itself through a false etymology deriving the word from *synkresis* or "mixture" used the term to denote "the mixture of myths and religions." In the realm of Roman religion in particular, it designated the contamination of autochthonous traditions and figures by elements of Greek or Eastern origin.

This phenomenon can be verified in the Roman liturgy of the lectisternia, which more or less assimilated Roman deities to Greek deities to a more or less pronounced degree. In all instances it presupposed a common denominator; thus, the concept of "spell," which at first in Rome had a religious essence (*venere* < "venes-or 'I cast a persuasive spell [on such a deity]"),¹³ drew together the Roman Venus and the Greek Aphrodite despite the fact that it had a more profane color in Greece.



Temple of Venus. Rome. Photo Anderson.

Syncretic action could have diametrically opposed effects. Thus, through the Trojan legend, the goddess Venus exerted a widespread influence that merely deployed all the implications of her primordial function. She gradually "became" what she fundamentally "was" all along, namely, the mediating power between the Romans and the gods.

Conversely, the Latin Diana, who was the deity of the light of night (close to Jupiter, by her semantic origin), experienced the vicissitudes of her political misfortunes. Her Latin identity became so evanescent¹² that in the time of Augustus she was regarded as no more than "Apollo's sister." As such, she appears next to "her mother" Latona in the Palatine temple that Augustus erected in honor of "her brother" Apollo (see Propertius 2.31.15–16).

Yet another peril threatened the Roman pantheon, a peril particularly noticeable during the last century of the Republic: the illegal solicitation of fashionable deities by anyone who aspired to power. Deep trouble prevailed internally and externally; social unrest (90–88 B.C.) and civil wars (88–86 B.C.) had shaken up Roman society. These troubles had been followed by the bloody proscriptions of Sulla (83–82 B.C.), which anticipated the prohibitions of the triumvirate of 43 B.C. In 73 B.C., the slaves rose in rebellion at the instigation of Spartacus.

In this climate of disarray, "saviors" appeared who, each in his turn, placed their ambition under the protection of a well-disposed deity within the scope of their family traditions and their level of culture, or lack of it.

The earliest and least cultured—Marius—offered the spectacle of utter incoherence.¹³ He showed evidence both of a certain respect for tradition (after the victory over the Cimbri

at Vercellae in 101 B.C., he dedicated a temple in honor of *Honos*, "Honor," and *Virtus*, "Courage") and a propensity for strange deviations: after the victory over the Teutons at Aix in 102 and over the Cimbri in 101, he let the Romans offer libations "both to the gods and to Marius" (Plutarch *Marius* 27.8). Long under the influence of a woman named Martha, a Syrian priestess, he turned his attention for a while toward the Magna Mater, the goddess Cybele; but his religion, which was steeped in superstition, never reached the level of a personal cult.

Sulla was altogether different.¹⁴ He took the Trojan legend and turned it to his personal advantage, after rather eclectically soliciting the good graces of the Cappadocian goddess Ma as well as those of Hercules. He understood the benefit of Trojan patronage so clearly that he had himself surnamed Epaphroditos. This translation of the Latin cognomen Felix showed clearly that he intended to pass for the protégé of Venus Felix, the goddess who brings luck. Sulla was the one who was actually responsible for inaugurating the tradition of personal devotion to those in power.

Pompey tried to follow this example,¹⁵ but the uncertainty of his character was reflected in his religious hesitations. He too tried to benefit from the Trojan mystique after his victory over Mithridates in 66 B.C. Upon his return to Rome, he raised above his theater—the first stone theater in Rome, built in 55 B.C.—a temple dedicated to Venus Victrix. Pompey's misfortune may have stemmed from having had Julius Caesar as his adversary. During the decisive battle of Pharsalus (48 B.C.), he first chose the watchword *Venus Victrix*, but had to abandon it to his adversary Caesar and instead use *Hercules Invictus*.

Julius Caesar was able to reclaim the tutelary patronage of Venus with the greatest "legitimacy,"¹⁶ since he traced his lineage directly to Venus by way of Julius Ascanius, the son of Aeneas and grandson of Venus. But Caesar did not stop at founding a personal cult by erecting a magnificent temple to Venus Genetrix in his new Forum. His stroke of genius was to create a close association between the Roman nation and the Julian dynasty: Venus Genetrix may have been the mother of all the Romans, who were the descendants of Aeneas, but she was particularly the mother of those descendants of Aeneas known as the Julii, Caesar's descendants.

This "divine ancestry" made all the more feasible an innovation that would later be institutionalized during the empire: the deification of the deceased emperor (except in the cases of deposed emperors).

In 44 B.C., the Roman senators took the initiative and proclaimed Caesar's deification: "And finally they proclaimed him Jupiter Julius directly and ordered that a temple be dedicated to him as well as to the Clementia Caesaris by naming Anthony their priest, following the example of the flamen Dialis."¹⁷ This initiative brings to mind a precedent: Aeneas had already been assimilated to Jupiter Indiges (Livy 1.2.6). But here the Senate had bestowed upon the living Caesar a privilege that the Latins had acknowledged in the founder of the nation only after he had vanished from the earth.

In any case, the cult of *divus Julius* was instituted after Caesar's death. The heavenly promotion benefited from a coincidence of exceptional circumstances: the appearance of a comet during the games in honor of Venus Genetrix, which was generally interpreted as the happy portent of Caesar's apotheosis.¹⁸ We know that this title became official, since the adopted son of Caesar, Octavian, would later take the name of Divi Filius ("son of the deified").

Caesar's heir followed the customs of his times. He too practiced a cult of choice—his personal devotion to Apollo. But he was called upon by the fates to assume a more important task, namely, to reconcile the respect for the Julian heritage with the spirit of openness to necessary innovations.¹⁹ The empire had been founded.

IV. Religion during the Imperial Era

By a quirk of fate, the last emperor of the Roman Empire of the West took the name of Romulus Augustulus (dethroned by Odoacer in A.D. 476), as though this double name were destined to call to mind one last time the first king of Rome and, with an ironic twist (recalling Graeculus against Graecus), the founder of the Roman Empire. The following is an attempt to isolate the essential characteristics that have marked the fundamentally religious fabric of this five-century period.

First, Roman polytheism was enriched by every new host as the frontiers of the empire were extended. By definition, this openness conformed to one of the fundamental tendencies of polytheism. This tendency had been encouraged by the syncretism that had enabled foreign deities to enter Rome. They came at first principally from Etruria and Magna Graecia, later from the Near East, and finally from Egypt. What was the Roman attitude toward this profusion of new deities?

Sometimes foreign deities were Romanized by virtue of the *interpretatio Romana* (a kind of renaming by equivalence), and at other times they kept their original names. This phenomenon can be verified throughout the empire.²⁰ Historians of religion therefore often encounter subtle cases of contamina-

tion. To what extent, for example, does the African Saturn bring to mind, through the affinities of the two gods, the Carthaginian Baal?²¹ And to what extent was Caesar right in identifying the great god of Gaul with Mercury (*Gallic War* 6.17)?²²

Another characteristic of the Imperial Era was the impact of various philosophical currents upon religion, a circumstance that has only recently been acknowledged. This philosophical ascendancy was applied selectively. It chose deities whose personalities inclined them to this process: from the first century, the Roman Hercules had attracted the attention of the Stoics and the Cynics.²³ In this case the philosophical exegesis was not corrosive; to the contrary, to the extent that it exalted Hercules's mission of salvation throughout the world and his triumph over human passions, it had the opportunity to introduce into the religious vision the dimensions that it had lacked in ancient Roman religion, namely, the ethical and eschatological dimensions.

But the very diversity of the philosophical schools (for instance, Marcus Aurelius had four chairs reserved at the University of Athens for followers of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoa, and Epicurus, respectively) generally brought about a very different result. It triggered a high level of skepticism among "enlightened minds," whereas all forms of superstition from astrology to magic exerted a seductive spell on the souls of the "simple-minded."²⁴ After that, the intelligentsia did not hesitate to adopt an altogether pragmatic attitude. Theoretical agnosticism coexisted with deference toward the establishment.

As early as the first century A.D., Pliny the Elder offers evidence in sharp contrast to the deism that was still professed by Cicero.²⁵ Not content to censure the "human frailty" (*imbecillitatis humanae*) that seeks "a representation and a form of god," he did not hesitate to propose a definition that reduced god to social service: *Deus est mortali juvare mortalem et haec ad aeternam gloriam via* ("To man, god means helping man and therein lies the way to eternal glory").²⁶ The same Pliny who derided "the even greater stupidity" which consisted in believing in innumerable gods found it altogether natural to approach the emperor "with religious respect" (*religiose*).²⁷

This feature is significant. Whereas polytheism was running the double risk of discrediting itself through both incessant proliferation and the growing skepticism of the intellectuals, the most solid infrastructure of Roman religion appeared to be the imperial cult.

Augustus²⁸ saw to it that a close link was maintained in the provinces between the imperial cult and the cult of Rome. The cult of Rome reached its apogee under the Emperor Hadrian, who tied it to the Julian cult of Venus in the double temple with apses back-to-back. This temple had been erected in honor of Roma Aeterna and Venus Genetrix in A.D. 121.²⁹ This does not alter the fact that "the Antonine dynasty intensified and diversified the religious exaltation of the emperor and his family. In response to their wishes, the cult of the *divi* (emperors deified after their deaths) took up an increasingly larger segment of the liturgical calendar, and official propaganda proclaimed with increasing intensity the supernatural 'virtues' of the princes."³⁰

The imperial mystique was nurtured inside certain priestly colleges, particularly within the close ranks of the Arval Brethren.³¹ Such had been the intention of Augustus, who spearheaded a renewal of this archaic cult. The Arval Brethren saw to it that in the sacred grove of *Dea Dia*, sacrifices were also offered to the *divi*,³² who were progressively added to the list of deities inscribed in their liturgy.

The Arval Brethren never missed a chance to show their loyalty to the princely house. At the start of every year, they uttered the *vota*, solemn prayers for the reigning prince. The following is an example, a *carmen* recited on 3 January of the year 91 on behalf of Domitian: "Jupiter, very kind, very great, if the Emperor Caesar, the son of the deified Vespasian, Domitian, Augustus, Germanicus, Great Pontiff, holder of tribunitian power, perpetual censor, father of the country, and Domitia Augusta, his wife whom I name expressly, if all these stay alive, grant that their house remain safe and sound on the third of January of the year about to close and for the next year, this for the Roman people and the Roman state, and grant that you watch over this day and their persons so as to keep them from whatever perils may exist or come about before that day, and grant them the joy of success, as I expressly state, by watching over their persons so that they may be kept in their current situation or else in an even better situation; if you will kindly grant this request, we hereby solemnly promise in the name of the college of the Arval Brethren that we will offer you an ox with golden horns."³³

The development of this imperial mystique was to provoke conflict between Christians and pagans.³⁴ Whereas Roman tradition was founded on tolerance toward all forms of worship, the mandatory requirement of the imperial cult, which was interpreted by the Roman authorities as a proof of citizenship, met with refusal on the part of the Christians, who saw in it nothing but an act of idolatry. The famous exchange of letters (ca. A.D. 111–12) between Pliny the Younger, then governor of Bithynia, and the emperor Trajan³⁵ sheds some light on this historical misunderstanding. The governor had confessed his difficulty to the emperor. He had ordered the execution of Christians obstinate in their vows; he had ordered the release of those who had been "denounced by anonymous libels," and who had recanted "in front of the image of the emperor and the statues of the gods" and who had "blasphemed Christ." But since after investigating he had been unable to find anything other than "an unreasonable and inordinate superstition, he had suspended the hearing pending the advice of Trajan."

The emperor replied: "There is no need to investigate [the Christians]. If they are exposed and convicted, they must be punished, but with the following restriction: whosoever shall deny being a Christian and give concrete proof of his avowal, by which I mean offering sacrifice to our gods, even if he had been suspect in the past, he shall be granted a pardon in exchange for his repentance. As for the anonymous denunciations, they must not be entered as evidence in any proceedings involving accusation. This is a hateful example of behavior that is not becoming to our times."³⁶ Through the spread of the imperial cult, the religious policies of the Antonine dynasty tended to create a powerful link between Rome and the people of the empire, and it did so by exhibiting a wisdom of the kind that can be witnessed in Trajan's decisions. This policy left its mark throughout the empire. It is interesting to note that in the easternmost part of the Mediterranean basin, it was the imperial cult that left the strongest imprint. In fact, in Roman Palestine, out of the whole of "paganism" it was the imperial cult that attracted the greatest attention in the rabbinical commentaries, as has been demonstrated in a recent study.³⁷ The Jews may have obtained from the Roman emperors a dispensation from all cultic activity, but this "applied only to dead gods and not to the living gods who were the deified monarchs."³⁸ At the very least, the Jews were sworn to loyalty and to participating in the official festivals.

One important case cited with admiration by rabbinical sources—an exceptional case³⁹—speaks of the "holy man" who through all his life had refused to look at the effigy of a Roman coin, in order to respect the prohibition against the imperial cult. This anecdote provides a striking contrast with the account in the Gospel of Matthew (22, 20, and 21), which tells of Christ's famous intervention with respect to the coin with the effigy of Caesar. It reveals the existence of a new climate. After the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem (in A.D. 70), the hostility against Rome found additional nourishment in the extension of the imperial cult (Revelation, chapters 13 and 15, refers to the threat of death that hung over "all who would not worship the image of the Beast").

Thus, the policy that had consisted in compounding the civic allegiance with the imperial cult had run up against serious difficulties. In any event, it left such an emptiness of spirit that a reaction spread more and more widely, on both the theological and the ethical levels. Moving in opposition to the traditional polytheism and its *national* gods, various initiatives asserted the primacy of a single *universal* deity. It was no accident that these initiatives revolved around deities of Oriental origin. Thus, the figure of Hercules, who from the first century had attracted philosophers, took on even greater visibility in the theology of Julian "the Apostate," who tried to make him into a pagan answer to Christ.⁴⁰ Similarly, the appeal of the Egyptian Isis took on a universalist character, as is attested in book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, a kind of mystical document of Pan-Isiasism.⁴¹ In it Isis is invoked as "the mother of all nature, the sovereign of all the elements, the primordial origin of the centuries, the supreme deity" (Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.5.1).

Finally, in the third century, the emperor Aurelian⁴² tried to make the cult of the sun preeminent by erecting on the Field of Mars a splendid temple to Sol Invictus (the invincible sun), in A.D. 274.⁴³ The sun, which was already considered by the emperor to be his personal protector (Conservator Augusti), was hailed as "the sovereign god of the Roman

Mithra sacrificing a bull. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Giraudon.



Empire" (Dominus Imperi Romani). Its festival (Natalis Solis) was set on 25 December, "the date on which the star resumes its ascending path for another year."⁴⁴

This was certainly the last and the most impressive attempt by a Roman emperor to create a *universal* cult: pansolarism would later provide the foundation of the theology professed by Macrobius at the beginning of the fifth century A.D.⁴⁵ It also offers proof that the tendency toward henotheism had taken hold at the expense of polytheism. Moreover, the preeminence of a *single* deity of universal appeal must have appeared as the only chance paganism had from then on in the face of the success enjoyed by the mystery religions.

Indeed, these religions had gained popularity especially among the throng of disinherited people, because of their ethical prescriptions and eschatological promises, all dimensions alien to traditional Roman religion. The cult of Mithra had been spread by soldiers and had thrived particularly in the frontier provinces of the empire; the initiates who had entered into the "militia of goodness" by passing through seven degrees of mysteries were guaranteed eternal bliss.⁴⁶ As for Christianity, it had progressed in spite of—or perhaps because of—the persecutions.⁴⁷ More open than Mithraism, which was reserved for initiates, it offered an asceticism that was supposed to ensure to "all men of goodwill" salvation in the hereafter. The Roman world was heading for profound metamorphoses.

R.S./g.h.

NOTES

The brief references are to the bibliographic lists. Abbreviations that are not defined in the list below conform to the rules of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

1. "I ask you and venerate you, I beg and even now I obtain your favor." The editors have had a tendency to replace the manuscript reading *feroque* by *oroque*. Georges Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque* (Archaic Roman Religion; ARR), 2d ed., p. 109, was right to reestablish it and provides an excellent commentary.

2. See in particular Festus, p. 458 L., who in affirming the number seven adds Subura to this list. See also Servius *ad Aen.* 6.783.

3. *Roma quadrata* (square Rome) designates, according to Festus, pp. 310–12 L., "the placement of the Palatine, situated in front of the temple of Apollo, where are found the objects that are customarily deposited to obtain good fortune at the time of the foundation of a town." The expression *Roma quadrata* figures in the *Annales* of Ennius (vol. 123, p. 42, of the Warminster edition).

4. Cf. the article "Roman Gods," below.

5. See Georges Dumézil, *Déeses latines et mythes védiques* (Latin goddesses and Vedic myths) (Brussels 1956), and more recently, *Archaic Roman Religion* (2d ed., Paris 1974), 66–68.

6. Cf. Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, pp. 51–52.

7. The demonstration has been developed in my article "Ovide interprète de la religion romaine," *R.E.L.* 46 (1969): 230–34 (= *R.C.D.R.*, same title).

8. The monument is the site of recent excavations: see F. E. Brown, *La protostoria della Regia, Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di archeologia, Rendiconti* 47 (1976): 15–36.

9. On the cultic statue in terra-cotta from the Capitoline temple of Jupiter, see, most recently, O. W. von Vacano, "Vulca, Rom und die Wölfin, Untersuchungen zur Kunst des frühen Rom," *Festschrift Vogt* (= *A.N.R.W.*) 1, 4, pp. 523–83.

10. Stig Wikander, *Les "ismes" dans la terminologie historico-religieuse, in Les Syncrétismes dans les religions grecque et romaine* (Paris 1973), 9–14.

11. Cf. the semantic analysis developed in my book *R.R.V.*, 33ff.

12. The assimilation of Diana to Artemis, in particular to Artemis Locheia, has led to a confusion between Diana *lucifera* ("she who

brings light") and Juno *lucina* ("she who brings to light"), the protectress of those who give birth: cf. Catullus 34.13–14.

13. On the religious attitude of Marius, see my book *R.R.V.*, 268ff., as well as J.-C. Richard, "La Victoire de Marius," *M.E.F.R.* 77 (1965): 69–85.

14. Regarding the religious innovations of Sulla, see my book *R.R.V.*, 273ff. In a general way, cf. J. Carcopino, *Sylla ou la monarchie manquée* (Paris 1931). P. Jal, "Les Dieux et les guerres civiles," *R.E.L.* 40 (1962): 170–200.

15. See my book *R.R.V.*, 296ff.

16. On the religious attitude of Julius Caesar, see my book *R.R.V.*, 301ff. In general, cf., most recently, Stefan Weinstock, *Divus Julius* (Oxford 1971).

17. Dio Cassius 44.6.4. For commentary on this passage, see G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 541.

18. On the apotheosis of Caesar, see the texts presented and the commentary in my book *R.R.V.*, 316–23.

19. Cf. the article "The Religious Policies of Augustus" below.

20. J. Toutain has devoted a series of works to "Cultes païens dans l'empire romain" (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études); in particular, vol. 3, fasc. 1: *Les cultes africains: Les cultes ibériques* (Paris 1917); vol. 3, fasc. 2: *Les cultes de la Gaule romaine* (Paris 1920).

21. Cf. M. Leglay, *Saturne Africain, Histoire* (Paris 1966); *Saturne Africain, Monuments* (Paris 1966). In general, cf. Gilbert Charles-Picard, *Les religions de l'Afrique antique* (Paris 1954).

22. Cf. P. M. Duval, *Les Dieux de la Gaule* (Paris 1957).

23. See my article "L'Hercule Romain et la réforme religieuse d'Auguste," *R.Ph.*, 1942, 31–57 (= *R.C.D.R.*, same title). In general, see M. Simon, *Hercule et le christianisme* (Strasbourg 1955). See also J. Bayet, *Hercule funéraire*, *M.E.F.R.*, 1921–22, 219–66,, and 1923, 19–102.

24. Cf. J. Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès trismégiste I: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes* (Paris 1944).

25. See the article "Cicero as Theologian" below.

26. Pliny the Elder, *N.H.* 2.14 and 18.

27. *Ibid.*, 2.14: *Innumeros quidem . . . maiorem ad socordiam accedit. Ibid., Praef.* 11: "You (= Vespasianus) are approached only with religious respect, even by those who come to offer homage, I know."

28. Cf. the article "The Religious Policies of Augustus" below.

29. Cf. Wissowa, *Ruk*², 340–41. The anniversary of the temple, dedicated 21 April, coincides with the date of the birth of Rome.

30. J. Beaujeu, *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'empire* (Paris 1955), 1:426.

31. Cf. J. Scheid, *Les Frères Arvales, Recrutement et origine sociale sous les empereurs Julio-Claudiens* (Paris 1975), 340–42.

32. Cf. G. Henzen, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (Berlin 1874), 148–49.

33. *CIL*, 6, 2068, lines 1–9: "Juppiter optime maxime, si imperator Caesar divi Vespasiani filius Domitianus Augustus Germanicus pontifex maximus tribunicia potestate censor perpetuus pater patriae et Domitia Augusta conjunx eius, quos me sentio dicere, vivent domusque eorum incolumis erit ante diem III Nonas Januarias quae proximae populo Romano Quiritibus, rei publicae populi Romani Quiritium erunt, et eum diem eosque salvos servaveris ex periculis si qua sunt eruntue ante eum diem eventumque bonum ita uti me sentio dicere, dederis, eosque in eo statu qui nunc est aut eo meliore servaveris, astu ea ita faxis [sic], tunc tibi nomine collegi Fratrum Arvalium bovem auratum vovemus esse futurum." This *votum* written in the solemn style of the Imperial Chancellery is not presented in an *unconditional* fashion (like the prayer of the *devotio* of Decius who surrenders himself to the gods in total confidence): it is encumbered with clauses wherein prudence contends with guile (thus, even as it asks Jupiter to preserve the present situation—"eo statu qui nunc est"—it does not refuse the eventual improvement of a better situation—"aut eo meliore"). As in all good contracts, a date of expiration is fixed—3 January of the following year—for the contracting parties: the safeguarding of the imperial couple then would be "repaid" by the ritual sacrifice of the ox with gilded horns.

34. Cf. J. Moreau, *La persécution du christianisme dans l'empire romain* (Paris 1956), 40ff.

35. Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 10:96–97. The epistolary exchange between the governor and the emperor is cited and commented upon in J. Moreau, *La persécution*, 41–45.

36. Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* 10:97 (trans. J. Moreau, except for

some corrections). We reproduce the last Latin phrase, which has the force of a lapidary formula: "Nam et pessimi exempli nec nostri saeculi est."

37. Cf. Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Le paganisme dans la Palestine romaine d'après les sources rabbiniques*. Mémoire inédit de l'École des Hautes Études, section 5, 1976.

38. J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'empire romain* (Paris 1914; reprinted 1969), 2:338.

39. Cf. M. Hadas-Lebel, *Le paganisme*, 96–97.

40. Cf. M. Simon, *Hercule et le christianisme* (Strasbourg 1955), 145ff.

41. Cf. R. Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin 1962). For the abundant bibliography on Isis, see J. Leclant, *Inventaire bibliographique des Isia* (Leiden 1972: A–D; 1974: E–K).

42. Of Illyrian origin and of modest extraction (he was born 9 September 214 or 215), Aurelian bore the official name of Imperator Caesar L. Domitius Aurelianus. We do not know under what conditions he had acquired Roman citizenship as well as the name L. Domitius. The cognomen Aurelianus is explained by the fact that his father was the tenant of a senator named Aurelius (cf. Groag, *R.E.*, s.v. Domitius no. 36, c. 1351–52). Aurelian is therefore foreign to the ancient Roman lineage called Aurelia, a lineage "that came from the Sabine and took its name from the Sun" (*Aureliam familiam ex Sabinis oriundam a Sole dictam putant*: Paulus-Festus, p. 22, 5 L.).

43. On the origin and extension of the solar cult created by Aurelian, see Groag, *R.E.*, s.v. Domitius no. 36, c. 1398–1400.

44. J. Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (2d ed. 1969), 227.

45. Macrobius *Saturnales* 1.17ff.

46. On Mithraism, see E. Cumont, *Textes et monuments figurés relatifs aux mystères de Mithra*, 2 vols. (Brussels 1896 and 1899). St. Wikander, *Étude sur les mystères de Mithra*, vol. 1 (Lund 1951). We recall the celebrated phrase of E. Renan (*Histoire des origines du christianisme* 7: Marc Aurèle et la fin du monde antique [17th ed., Paris], p. 579): "If Christianity had been impeded in its growth by some mortal malady, the world would be Mithraist." The modern critic is far from ratifying this judgment: cf. M. Simon, *Mithra rival du Christ? Actes du second congrès international d'études mithraïques* (Tehran 1975).

47. See P. de Labriolle, *La réaction païenne: Étude sur la polémique antichrétienne du I^{er} au V^e siècle* (Paris 1934). J. Moreau, *La persécution, passim*.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.N.R.W. = *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin).

CIL = *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1863–). D.A. = DAREMBERG-SAGLIO, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* (Paris).

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ROMAN GODS

The word *deus* has undergone considerable phonetic change but has nonetheless been preserved by the various Romance languages to mean deity. Its origin is Indo-European and it designates a celestial being. *Deus* came phonetically from the old form of *deivos*; similarly, *dea* came from *deiva*. The ancients were aware of the derivation: thus, Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 3.2) contrasts the usual form *deos* with the "old" version

divos. By virtue of this etymology, *deus* and *dea* are for the Latins superior powers connected with the luminous heaven (*divum*).

In this sense, the Latin word differs from its Greek homologue, *theos*, which has a different etymology, *theos*, which goes back to a prototype **thesos* ("having to do with the realm of the sacred"), an ill-defined term that leads in another direction. This difference in vocabulary between the Latin and the Greek words designating deity does not exist at the level of the supreme god, *Juppiter* (**Diou-pater*) and *Zeus* (**dyeus*), which correspond to the same Indo-European theme.

The semantic value of *deus* leaves little doubt that the Latins sought to represent the deity in the form of a personal and individual being. And yet this linguistic truth was challenged for a certain period in favor of an animistic conception according to which a "pre-deist" phase supposedly preceded the notion of a personal god. By virtue of "evolution," individualized deities were supposed to have disentangled themselves from the murky nebula of the origins. This tendency was represented in particular by H. J. Rose, who thought he had found support in the Latin word *numen*, which apparently corresponded to the Melanesian term *mana*. This latter term had gained currency in 1891 in *The Melanesians* by Bishop Codrington, who had defined it as "a supernatural power or influence . . . a force that produces everything that is beyond the ordinary power of men, outside of the common rules of nature."¹

The alleged equivalence of *mana* and *numen* was later supported by H. Wagenvoort in his book *Roman Dynamism*,² whose title alone suggests the idea of a "diffuse force" which might have preceded the world of the gods. We need not enter into this debate, which appears to be closed. Georges Dumézil³ has shown definitively that the Latin word *numen*, meaning "power" or "manifestation," was always used with the genitive of the deity in question during the Imperial Era. Thus it could not be "abstracted" from the god, without whom there would be no *numen*.⁴ A further ironic point: in his last attempt to attribute to the word *numen* the meaning of "impersonal power" (*eine unpersönliche Kraft*),⁵ in 1972, H. Wagenvoort cited as the "most ancient" proof of the use of the word a text by Accius: *Alia hic sanctitudo est, aliud nomen et numen Jovis* ("Here holiness is other, and other are the name and power of Jupiter").⁶ Somehow he did not notice that he was proving Dumézil's point.

The etymological meaning of *deus* may indeed refer to a "luminous being," but the term itself was also applied by extension to divine powers that were not "celestial." Such is the case of the *di Manes*, a term that designated the infernal gods in the formula of the *devotio*, the prayer of consecration to the gods,⁷ before it was replaced, toward the end of the first century B.C., by the expression *divi parentum* or *divi parentes*, which was reserved for the deceased in a family. These *di Manes*, for whom the meaning "Good Gods" most likely corresponds to a propitiatory euphemism, are by definition alien to the world of heavenly light. In the first case they evoked the spirits dwelling underground; in the second case they evoked the community of the dead.⁸

Moreover, we should note that if the word *deus* remained attached to the god "who is thought of as having existed forever," the form *divus*, which represents the old form of the term, was later reserved to designate the "deified" being, in this case the emperor who was given the honors of apotheosis.

Thus, the category of the *divi* (deified emperors) is distinguished from the world of the *dei* of the traditional pantheon.

Other factors intervened in the use of the two terms: the influence of the Hellenistic cult explains, for instance, what Virgil may have had in mind far in advance of the "deification" of Octavian in the preamble of book 1 of the *Georgics*.⁹ The specific use of *divus* that is theoretically reserved for an emperor deified after apotheosis is occasionally refuted: thus, an adulator of Nero proposed to the Senate that a temple be erected to *divo Neroni* (the divine Nero), who was still alive,¹⁰ a case of anticipation later refuted by the course of events.

I. The Roman Pantheon

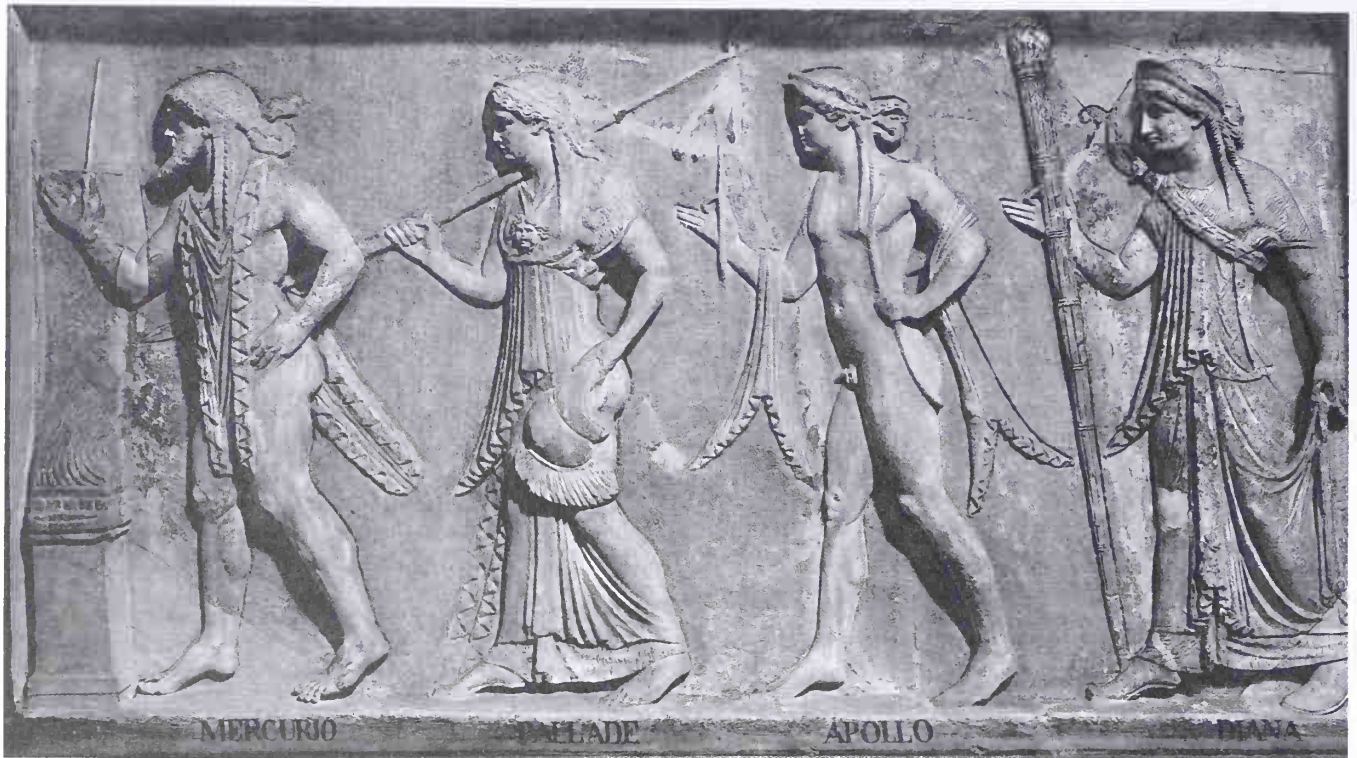
Let us return to the *dei* of the Roman pantheon and examine their characteristics. We should be on guard against a certain romanticism that had already developed in antiquity according to which the Roman deities corresponded merely to rough outlines of themselves before Etruria and Greece filled out their personalities. Thus, Pliny the Elder, who enjoyed the favor of the emperor Vespasian, evoked the following sylvan dream: "The forests were once the temples of the gods, and following the ancient rite, the countryside in its simplicity continues today to dedicate its most beautiful tree to a god. The statues in which gold and ivory shine do not inspire in us any more veneration than do the sacred groves and their very silence."¹¹

This nostalgia for simplicity calls to mind a reflection by Varro, who also took delight in evoking the cult of yesteryear. "For more than one hundred and seventy years," he said, "the Romans worshiped their gods without statues. Had this practice prevailed, the gods would be honored in a purer way" (*quod si adhuc mansisset, castius di observarentur*).¹²

What is evident in both of these statements is the distinct belief of the Romans that their basically native deities had been different "in times past." The *castitas* praised by Varro was aimed directly at the Hellenic anthropomorphism that attributed human passions and vices to the gods, as in Homer's *Iliad* or in Hesiod's *Theogony*. A Roman deity is defined by a specific competence and is unfettered by the embellishments of a mythology more or less laden with the vicissitudes of life. In its origins it is therefore a stranger to the kind of anthropomorphism¹³ that characterizes the Greek and Etruscan pantheons, a remarkable fact when one considers the cultural pressure exerted by the Greco-Etruscan environment.

This fact may be verified especially by the existence of a number of deified abstractions, such as Ceres or Fides, and also by the persistence of this tendency in historical times. I refer to the appearance of gods such as Aius Locutius or Rediculus. The voice that announced that the Gauls were coming ever closer to Rome was heard only once;¹⁴ yet that was sufficient reason to raise an altar to the god called Aius Locutius ("he who speaks, he who says"). Similarly, a *fanum* was dedicated to Rediculus just outside the Capena Gate because Hannibal, who had almost reached the walls of Rome, "had turned away when he got to this place" (*ex loco redierit*).¹⁵ These borderline cases nevertheless show clearly that in order to "exist" the deity merely had to manifest itself.

In addition to these exceptional examples, such a manifestation was translated into a permanent function. Those deities whose festivals are inscribed in the liturgical calendar all have a speciality, which is often indicated by the transparent meaning of their names. Thus, Ceres, for whom the Cerialia were observed on 19 April, is in charge of growth, in particular the growth of cereals; Consus, the god who



Mercury, Pallas, Apollo, and Diana. Rome, Villa Albani. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

presides over the gathering of wheat, is celebrated during the Consualia of 21 August and during the Opiconsiva of 25 August, in association with Ops, the goddess who watches over abundance.

These deities were either masculine or feminine, at the beginning, Rome had no hierogamy. Any examples given to the contrary are mere fantasies. Consequently, Faunus,¹⁶ the "wild" god who is involved in what may be the oldest ceremony in Rome, the Lupercalia of 15 February, had no feminine consort. Fauna certainly looks like an artificial construction of scholarly casuistics. Even the name is not certain, confused as it was sometimes with Fatua, sometimes with Bona Dea, a name which in turn refers to a Damia, originally from Tarentum.¹⁷ Similarly, Pales, whose festival, the Parilia, fell on 21 April, a day that would later coincide with the anniversary of the birth of Rome, had no male consort. Virgil¹⁸ only knew of the goddess: *Tē quoque magna Pales (canemus)*. (However, on 7 July two Pales goddesses were celebrated.)¹⁹ The god Pales that Varro mentions²⁰ belonged to the Etruscan pantheon and had no liturgical existence in Rome.

What are we then to make of a formula such as *sive deus sive dea*, which reappears in several prayers?²¹ It expresses not an uncertainty about the sex of an indeterminate deity, but merely an uncertainty about the identity of the deity to whom the invocation is addressed. Anxious to have his prayers answered, a Roman did not wish to mistake one deity for another, and when unsure of whom to address, he considered both possibilities and thus invokes either a god or a goddess.²²

The same spirit of caution is evident in a formulaic prayer cited by Servius Danielis (*ad Aeneid* 2.351): *Et pontifices ita precabantur: Iuppiter Optime Maxime, sive quo alionomine te*

appellari volueris ("And the pontiffs said the following prayer: Jupiter most kind and great, or whatever be the name by which you prefer to be called"). For whatever reason, the pontiffs wanted to anticipate the case when Jupiter might opt for another appellation, although he was clearly identified by his Capitoline attributes.²³

Roman polytheism by definition constituted an open pantheon made up of deities that in some cases go back to time immemorial and in other cases had been received at various dates, often following crises or epidemics. In this sense, Roman religion resembled a *Janus biceps* gazing simultaneously into the past and the future. The college of pontiffs, presided over by the Pontifex Maximus, looked after the traditional cults, while the college of *virī sacris faciundis* (who numbered successively two, ten, and fifteen, and whose general title "in charge of conducting ceremonies" did not reflect its special mission) were in charge of introducing foreign deities, often after consulting the Sibylline Books.

The status of deities differed depending on their origins. Their shrines were inside the *pomerium* (the sacred limits of the city) if they belonged to the native soil; conversely, their cults were relegated to the outside of the pomerial zone (the Aventine or the Field of Mars), if they came from outside. Vesta was the preeminent native goddess, protectress of the sacred fire in the heart of the city, while Juno Regina, a native of Veii, was a foreigner welcomed to Rome in 392 B.C. in a temple on the Aventine.²⁴

Does this difference in origin and status correspond to the distinction between the *Di Indigetes* and the *Di Novensiles*? In the formula of the *devotio*, the expression appears in the reverse order without making things any clearer. The meaning is still disputed,²⁵ but there is agreement on the fact that the ancients and indeed several moderns (among them

Wissowa) made a semantic slip. They interpreted *indigetes* as *indigenae* and took *novensiles* (-sides) to be a compound of *novus* and *insidere*, thus contrasting the "native gods" and the "newly imported gods." This interpretation may be suspect literally, but it did nonetheless express an apparently real contrast.²⁶ In any case, the Romans were fully aware of the ancient or recent origin of their gods. I would be inclined to compare the term *Indigetes* to *Indigitamenta*, meaning a collection of litanies, and to *indigitare* (to invoke ritualistically), which would give it the sense of "one who has (always) been invoked." If the epithet admits of this nuance, namely, the recollection of a sustained fervor, its presence could then be explained in the Virgilian expression *Di patrii Indigetes*, in which, far from having a double meaning with *patrii*, it carries the meaning of persuasive insistence.²⁷

It would be surprising if these gods, so closely tied to the ancient city, did not bear the political or social mark of its vicissitudes.²⁸ First of all, the Romans who had become masters over Italy had taken up federal cults that presupposed ritual equality among the participants, at least at the time of the old federation. Accordingly, every year the Roman consuls went up to the top of Mount Alban on the site of the former Alba Longa to celebrate the cult of Jupiter Latiaris. Locating the festival (*feriae Latinae*), which in historical time was a movable feast (*feriae conceptivae*), on the site of Alba Longa suggests that in former times it had not been under the jurisdiction of Rome. This federal cult of the Latins, presided over at that time by the Alban city, which was later destroyed, was originally celebrated in a sacred grove (Livy 1.31.3). Only later, probably during the rule of the last dynasty of the Roman kings, was a shrine built and dedicated to Jupiter Latiaris.

Forum. Temples to Castor and Pollux. Rome. Photo J. Roubier.



The substitution of Rome for Alba in the operation of this cult is instructive. The consuls, accompanied by the representatives of the state, had to proceed to the federal shrine a short time after taking office (and in any case, before their departure on a military campaign). They presided over the ceremony that was attended by delegates from every city. The essential act was the sacrifice of a white bull.²⁹ The *exta* (the consecrated entrails) were first offered to the god, and the *viscera* (the profane meat) were shared among all the representatives of the cities. This was a solemn celebration that tied together the Latin cities of the confederation with sacred bonds through their participation in a common sacrifice. For the duration of the ceremonies, all armed conflicts were suspended.³⁰ Rome thus respected a festival that sealed the bonds among the cities of Latium; she was content simply to claim the right to preside over it.

The Roman attitude toward the federal cult of Diana was altogether different. Tradition localized this cult in Aricia, near Lake Nemi, which was called the *speculum Dianae* (Diana's mirror).³¹ At Aricia, as in the case of Jupiter Latiaris of Mount Alban, a sacred grove³² preceded the shrine dedicated to Diana. This was the center of a federation of Latin cities that may have banded together after the dissolution of Alba Longa and that reunited around the federal altar that was dedicated at that time by the Latin dictator Egerius Laevius,³³ a native of Tusculum, when he was president of the Latin League. When the confederation shifted over to Roman control, the cult was transferred to Rome and set up on the Aventine Hill. At first it consisted of a simple altar,³⁴ and later of a temple that kept its federal character, according to Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 5.43), who refers to it as *commune Latiorum templum* (a temple common to the Latins).

But this cult continued to be federal only in appearance. Never is any gathering mentioned of Latin cities on the Aventine any more than in Aricia. The anniversary festival of its temple, which fell on the ides of August, bore the name of *dies servorum* (day of the slaves). Whatever interpretation³⁵ we may want to give to this designation, the Aventine cult reveals a gradual effacement of the Latin goddess. Diana became so evanescent that she was ripe for absorption by her Greek counterpart, Artemis.³⁶ In Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, composed in 17 B.C. for the secular games held under Augustus, she is merely Apollo's sister. This shows how sharp a contrast there was between the fate reserved for the old tutelary deity of the Latins and the honors that the Romans bestowed on Jupiter Latiaris.

Yet another mark was made by the effects of social tensions. As long as there was no religious equality between plebeians and patricians (before the Lex Ogulnia of 300 B.C.), there was a serious rivalry between the two classes that explains certain ritual innovations.

Thus, at the beginning of the fifth century B.C., a kind of compensatory balance could be established. Two temples were founded, the first in honor of the triad of Ceres-Liber-Libera (493 B.C.), near the Circus Maximus, and the second only a few years later, in honor of Castor, in the middle of the Forum (484 B.C.). The promise (*votum*) to build these temples came from the same person, A. Postumius, the hero of the famous battle of Lake Regillus that the Romans won over the Latins in 499 B.C.

This battle became famous in the annals. It had a critical phase that was overcome only when the Roman cavalry was called in. While ordering his cavalry to enter the fray, the dictator Postumius at the same time made a vow to erect a temple to Castor (Livy 2.20.12), the reason being that Castor, originally a Greek god (whose presence in Lavinium, outside

the ancient city, was verified by the recent finding of an archaic inscription associating him with Pollux), was, more specifically, the patron of horsemen, according to the Hellenic tradition that was itself based on the Indo-European tradition. A. Postumius had thus combined "human and divine" means, to quote Livy's expression, by addressing a *votum* to Castor while calling on his *equites*. Starting with the "historical" event of Lake Regillus, the god of the patrician class of horsemen became a national Roman god.

Before undertaking this military campaign, the same dictator also made another religious innovation to satisfy the common people. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Antiquitates Romanae* 6.17) reports that Postumius, preoccupied with the difficulties of getting fresh supplies, vowed to erect a temple to the triad of Demeter-Dionysus-Kore. This temple was consecrated by Postumius immediately after his victory, so that he could show his gratitude for the exceptionally abundant harvest (the Temple of Castor was to be dedicated nine years later by his son). Knowing that the management of the new cult of Ceres-Liber-Libera was entrusted to the plebs and that the temple also served as a meeting place for the councillors of the plebs,³⁷ one can no longer question Postumius's intentions: by balancing this plebeian cult with a patrician cult, the dictator wanted to guarantee an even mixture that would satisfy both classes, even while it marked the hierarchical order. The temple of Ceres and of her consorts was built outside the *pomerium* near the Circus Maximus; the sanctuary of Castor was then to be built inside the *pomerium*, in the very heart of the Forum.³⁸

II. Foreign Influences

Along with internal factors, outside influences made their mark on the development of Roman religion. This process may be explained by the fact that Rome had direct connections with the Greek and Etruscan worlds. And we must not forget that Magna Graecia bordered on Roman territory just as the Etruscan confederation did. These connections would later be extended still further with the conquest of Greece and Asia Minor. Greek and Etruscan influences certainly enhanced the more anthropomorphic character of the cult. Tradition has it that the first terra-cotta statue of Jupiter in the Capitoline Temple was the work of an Etruscan sculptor, Vulca of Veii (Pliny [the Elder] *Naturalis Historia* 35.157), and that the bronze Ceres as well as the decoration of the plebeian temple were executed by Greek artists, Damophiles and Gorgasus (ibid. 34.15). Once the deity took on human form, it was logical for it also to obtain a home. Thus the *fanum*, the holy place that was often a sacred grove (*lucus*), was replaced by the *aedes* (shrine), which was meant to be the dwelling place of the deity. Ordinarily the shrine would appear later on the site formerly consecrated to the god. Thus Livy 3.63.7 indicates that the shrine of Apollo (*aedes Apollonis*) was built in 431 B.C. in the Prata Flaminia on a spot that already bore the name "Apollo's enclosure" (*Apollinare*).

New deities were not simply brought in capriciously. It required a serious event that could challenge the Romans' confidence in their national pantheon, or at least make them seek additional help from some new deity. The way in which the Greek Apollo was introduced is highly instructive. It was not the god of the Muses, nor the sun god, that attracted the Romans' attention, nor was it the prophet-god who would later watch over the Sibylline Books (these titles were to be solemnly evoked in Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* in the time of Augustus). It was, rather (probably right after an epidemic), the healing god.³⁹ Thus, the oldest invocation recorded in



Juno Sospita. Rome, Vatican Museum. Photo Anderson-Giraudon.

the prayers of the vestals was addressed to the "physician," "Apollo Medice, Apollo Paeon" (Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.17.15). The circumstances surrounding the building of his first temple in the Prata Flaminia explain why he was brought in: a serious epidemic inspired the dedication of the shrine *pro valetudine populi* in honor of the god who bore the official name of Apollo Medicus (Livy 4.25.3; 40.51.6).

Of no less interest are the circumstances surrounding the arrival in Rome of the Etruscan deity Juno of Veii, at the beginning of the fourth century. This event merits a retrospective look. The war that the Romans waged on Veii lasted longer than anyone expected and gave rise to alarming rumors. (Like the siege of Troy, the siege of Veii was supposed to have lasted six years [Livy 5.22.8].) After certain miracles ("Lake Alba had risen to an incredibly high level with no rain or any other explanation": Livy 5.15.2), the Romans named Marcus Furius Camillus dictator. The new chief, whom the Latin historian calls *fatalis dux* (for the ruin of the Etruscan city), did not merely take measures of military reorganization; he made a decision by directly addressing the tutelary goddess in the following prayer: "Queen Juno, now residing in Veii, I beg you to follow me

after our victory into our city that soon will be your own. There you shall receive a temple worthy of your majesty" (Livy 5.21.3). An anecdote told by the Latin historian underscores the kind disposition of the goddess: To the question, "Will you go to Rome, Juno?" asked by a young Roman, the goddess is said to have agreed with alacrity (Livy 5.22.5). Thus Rome became the seat of two Queen Junos. One sat on her throne in the Capitoline temple next to Jupiter as a national deity; the other was placed on the Aventine Hill as a deity of foreign origin.

We should also mention the entry into Rome of Cybele, the Oriental goddess, at the end of the third century B.C. This example not only proves that the Romans cast their sights beyond the Greek and Etruscan worlds, but also reveals a certain constancy in their ways of doing this. Following the dramatic vicissitudes of the Second Punic War, the Romans saw only toward 204 B.C. the hope of putting an end to more than fourteen years of military campaigns. The historian Livy notes the series of wondrous events that stimulated the religious consciousness: "Two suns had been seen; intermittent lights had flashed through the night; a track of fire was seen stretching from sunrise to sunset. Lightning had struck a door at Terracina, a door at Anagnia, and walls in many places; in the shrine of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium a terrible din could be heard" (Livy 29.14.3). Hope had been born as much as a year before, from the proclamation of an oracle taken from the Sibylline Books. It spelled out the conditions of reorganization: "On the day when a foreign enemy wages war in the land of Italy, it will be possible to defeat him and drive him out of Italy, if the Idaean Mother is brought from Pessinus to Rome" (Livy 29.10.5).

This innovation, which led the Romans to turn finally to an Asiatic deity of a primitive nature (with the black stone that was supposed to embody the deity and the Galli, the eunuch-priests who attended her cult), may really be explained by the Trojan clarification that transformed the savage Magna Mater of Mount Ida into a "grandmother of the Roman people." Ovid stressed this when he attributed to the goddess a miraculous intervention that overcame the reluctant Attalus, king of Phrygia: "It is I who wanted to be sought out; do not delay but send me forth, I beg you; Rome deserves to have all deities go there." Frightened by this terrifying voice, the king cries out: "Leave, and you shall always remain one of ours; Rome can be traced back to Phrygian ancestors" (Ovid *Fasti* 4.269–72).

The installation of Cybele in the temple of Victory on top of the Palatine in 204 (while she awaited the construction of her own temple in 191) came eleven years after Venus Erycina was established in a temple built on the Capitoline. The introduction of the two cults had been triggered by the military reversals suffered by the Romans at the hand of the Carthaginian enemy. Both cults referred back to the same Trojan legend. The order in which they were introduced can be explained quite naturally. The Romans had in fact already encountered Venus, the mother of their legendary forefather, Aeneas, during the First Punic War. The consul Lucius Junius did not hesitate to "recognize" her in the person of Aphrodite of Mount Eryx; he had successfully occupied Mount Eryx in 248 in a definitive move that led to final victory. Consequently, during the Second Punic War, the Romans first had recourse to Erycina, who could have appeared to them to be a sure guarantee of victory, in the face of the same enemy. Later, still on the same "Trojan" track, to increase their chances, they thought of welcoming among them the "Great Goddess" who enjoyed enormous prestige in the land of their "ancestors."⁴⁰

These innovations at the end of the third century B.C. prove that Roman religion, so foreign to Greek mythology in its origins, submitted to the influence of syncretism. The Trojan legend was undoubtedly present in Etruria from the end of the sixth century B.C. (statuettes of Aeneas carrying Anchises were found in Veii) and penetrated the religion from then on, to the point of providing it with an ideological framework that was able to justify the importing of new cults.⁴¹ It was not just any legend; it was to become a kind of national dogma with Julius Caesar, who claimed to be a descendant of Julius Ascanius, the son of Aeneas. According to this myth, the Romans descended from Aeneas were the privileged beneficiaries of a propitiatory Venus who intervened on their behalf so that they might receive the gods' grace, *pacem Veniamque deum*. All of Virgil's *Aeneid* is based on this theology, which promises the Romans descended from Aeneas divine blessings in all of their enterprises, provided they keep the *pietas* of their illustrious ancestor.

The success of the legend of Troy also proves that the Romans, who were far from giving in to any sort of syncretist fascination, knew how to be selective. It seems that they welcomed suggestions from abroad . . . *ad maiorem gloriam populi Romani*. What is most significant about this is the way in which Augustus was able to exploit the Greek idea of the couple Ares-Aphrodite to serve Roman purposes. The emperor did indeed set aside a place of honor for this divine couple not only in the Pantheon (built in 25 B.C.) but also in the pediment of the Temple of Mars the Avenger (built in 2 B.C.). But he had no intention of retaining the Hellenistic symbolism (Aphrodite, the principle of Love, pacifying the principle of Discord). To the contrary, he wanted to "link the father of the founder of Rome" with "the mother of the nation of the descendants of Aeneas" in the service of a dynastic mission. Mars thus took on a "Julian" character as an *ultor parentis patriae* ("Avenger of Caesar, the father of the country"), while Venus, still remaining Aeneadum Genetrix, took on a more military character in order to draw closer to Mars. Thus, it was no longer the Hellenistic myth of their love but rather their common commitment to serve Rome and her emperors that gave Mars and Venus their raison d'être as a couple. This metamorphosis tells us a great deal about the Roman reaction to foreign influences.

III. The Groupings of Divinities in the Course of Roman History

It might be useful to recapitulate the different groupings of deities who have marked the course of the religious history of Rome. This panoramic view across time will be instructive for more than one reason. First, the archaic triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus was replaced by the Capitoline triad of Jupiter-Juno-Minerva, which had its seat in the Capitoline temple that was built under the Tarquin kings and dedicated, according to tradition, by the consul M. Horatius in 509 B.C.⁴²

As time passed, Greek influence gave rise to different associations of deities in the official liturgy. Such was the case for the triad of Ceres-Liber-Libera, whose temple was located outside the *pomerium* on the slopes of the Aventine.⁴³ Greek influence was especially manifested in the institution of the lectisternium, which consisted of offering a meal to the statues of deities that were exhibited on display beds. This presentation of the deities on *pulvinaria* (couches) that could be approached made way for a more emotional form of devotion, the supplication.

A persistent and deeply disturbing epidemic⁴⁴ resulted in the call for the celebration of the first lectisternium in 399 B.C.,



Jupiter and Juno. Pompeii. Naples. Photo Alinari.

after a consultation of the Sibylline Books by the *duum viri sacris faciundis*. It grouped Apollo and Latona (his mother), Hercules and Diana, and Mercury and Neptune into heterogeneous pairs.

Even more dramatic circumstances, the disasters suffered at the hands of Hannibal, provoked the celebration of the second lectisternium in 217 B.C. For the first time in their history, the Romans offered sacrificial meals to a dozen deities, six gods and six goddesses, grouped into couples according to the Hellenic pattern, in the following order:⁴⁵ Jupiter and Juno; Neptune and Minerva; Mars and Venus; Apollo and Diana; Vulcan and Vesta; Mercury and Ceres.

Though this ceremony was celebrated in Rome⁴⁶ only once, it was the source of the idea of constituting an official circle of twelve principal deities. These *di consentes*⁴⁷ eventually had their own statues made of gilded bronze; these were placed, each in its own niche, inside the Portico that was built at the far western end of the Forum at the foot of the Capitol.⁴⁸

What can these different groupings tell us?⁴⁹ If we consider the two oldest triads, we are struck by two facts. First, Jupiter remained the keystone of both the archaic and the Capitoline triad. He was hardly touched by the wave of assimilation, except to the extent that his associate during the second lectisternium was Juno, who was already one of his Capitoline consorts. Second, only one god bore a Latin name that did not yield to any syncretist operation: Quirinus (which is connected with *Quirites*, "citizens"). He has an Umbrian homologue but no Greek equivalent.⁵⁰

On the list of the first lectisternium, half the names are of purely Greek origin (Apollo, Latona, Hercules), and the

other half are Latin names that mask Hellenic deities: Diana (Artemis), Mercury (Hermes), and Neptune (Poseidon). Apollo is at the head of the list: a healing god, he was the first to be invoked during this period of epidemic.

As for the second lectisternium, it gives evidence of a concern for hierarchical groupings (which was alien to the first) in that it separated out twelve principal deities from the pantheon. The best proof of this is that Jupiter, who was absent from the first lectisternium, could not fail to be present in the second, where he occupied the expected place: the first. It is likely that the dignity of her role as Capitoline consort counted in favor of Minerva, who occupied the second rank in association with Neptune. Conversely, Latona was eliminated, her single claim to fame as "the mother of Apollo" being insufficient to win her a place in the Roman cult. Apollo may have lost "his mother," but he did regain "his sister," namely, Artemis, whose Latin counterpart was Diana.

The Greek inspiration of this list that pairs off gods and goddesses into couples is obvious. Thus one could see behind the first four couples Zeus-Hera, Poseidon-Athena, Ares-Aphrodite, and Apollo-Artemis. In the case of the final two couples, in the absence of any cultic or mythological link they can justify their presence in Rome as well as in Greece, as Georges Dumézil points out,⁵¹ one by virtue of a common denominator (fire: Vulcan and Vesta, or Hephaestus and Hestia), and the other by virtue of related activities (commerce and grain: Mercury and Ceres, or Hermes and Demeter).

A word is in order about what is meant by "a couple." Although the Greek model may at first glance suggest marital bonds for Jupiter and Juno, and erotic bonds for Mars and Venus, no such thing could possibly apply to the other paired deities. The pairing of Neptune (Poseidon) and Minerva (Athena) evokes their rivalry in the naming of Athens (Servius Danielis *ad Georg.* 1.12); the association of Apollo and Diana (Artemis) is based on the genealogical ties that link brother and sister.

The pattern of mythological coupling was used in Rome to acclimatize the idea of association. This statement is valid not only for the divine pairs who are unknown to the plots of Greek mythology (Vulcan and Vesta; Mercury and Ceres); it also applies to the cases that at first glance seem to be the most thoroughly marked by Hellenism. It seems that the liturgical presentation of the lectisternium of the twelve gods made it possible to shed new light on an old truth. Jupiter and Juno had been king and queen of the city since they took their places side by side in the Capitoline temple, toward the end of the sixth century B.C.

As for Mars and Venus, in Rome they did not form a couple in the strict sense of the term. Mars was the old warrior god who presided over Roman arms, while Venus appeared more and more as the tutelary power of the nation of the descendants of Aeneas. The Greek precedent seems simply to have suggested to the Romans the idea of associating the two essential characters in their history: Aeneas, the founder of the nation, and Romulus, the founder of the city.⁵²

Another problem concerns the selective list of the dozen deities of the second lectisternium. What about those who are missing? First there is Hercules, who had been one of the six deities worshiped during the first lectisternium. With great insight, Georges Dumézil has recalled the case of deities who had been "demoted" after military catastrophes: "except for the three great Capitoline divinities, the ceremonies after Trasimeno do not honor by name any of the divinities invoked after Trebbia; the new disaster has low-

ered them in rank, as if they had demonstrated their indifference or their inadequacy. An appeal is now made to other divinities, to Mens rather than to Fortuna, to Mars rather than to Genius, to Venus rather than to Juventas. Hercules' elimination itself is perhaps an expression of this same movement, not so much a demotion as a certified report of his incapacity to adjust to the circumstances."⁵³

Besides limiting the selection to the twelve privileged gods, the lectisternium had even greater significance. All the chosen deities henceforth had a right to the city in the Greek world as in the Latin world. They were worthy to be honored with the zeal appropriate to the *ritus graecus*. They were important to all the people, men and women, in all their temples, who prayed to the gods to deliver them from their afflictions. Livy (26.9.7) describes the dramatic supplication that took place in 211 B.C. when Rome was at the mercy of Hannibal: "The wailing of women was heard not only in private houses, but everywhere matrons came to lie down across public ways; they ran around the shrines, swept the altars with their loosened hair, fell to their knees, raised their hands (*supinas manus*) to the god of heaven, and prayed to them to wrest the city of Rome from the hands of the enemy and to save the Roman mothers and their little children from violence."

Latona and Apollo under the palm tree of Delos. Amphora. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Giraudon.



One other consequence resulted. These innovations indirectly stamped as archaic the deities who were resistant to syncretist assimilations. They did not disappear from the liturgy, thanks to Roman conservatism. But many were soon to become "fossilized," following the example of the Rex Sacrorum ("the king of the sacrifices"), who when political kingship collapsed had been perpetuated for no reason other than to avoid doing a disservice to the gods.⁵⁴

First was Quirinus, whom the economic and social evolution of the city had already eliminated at the time of the Capitoline triad. Another was Janus, the god of beginnings, the god of transitions, who played a specific role in the Roman liturgy. Another was Genius, who enjoyed a revival only because of the initiative taken by Augustus. Another was Silvanus, the sylvan god who was related to Faunus. Another was Anna Perenna, who survived because of the festival that marked the passage from the old year to the new year. Finally there were the Penates, the gods who watched over supplies, and the Lares, the gods who protected cultivated land and who were particularly worshiped at the hearth of the Roman family.

Each of these gods corresponds to an original aspect of the divine representation of the Romans. They belong to the category of gods that are "difficult to pronounce in Greek," to borrow an expression from Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.50.3). Witness the term "Lares," which for lack of an appropriate term was improperly translated by the Greeks as *hērōes* (for example, in Dion. Hal. 4.14.3), whereas Rome, recognizing only gods and men, was unaware of the intermediate being, the hero.⁵⁵

Consequently, what had been challenged by the innovations of the end of the third century B.C. was the irreducible originality of the Roman pantheon. Some deities were relegated to the shadows. Others lost their onomastic privilege and were henceforth translatable into a "foreign" language. If their range of influence stood to gain by it, their identity was, on the other hand, exposed to syncretist overlays. One merely has to read Ovid's *Fasti* to get a measure of the ground covered in the first century A.D.⁵⁶ In this sense, the end of the third century B.C. corresponds to a decisive turning point in the religious history of Rome.

The following is a summary of the different groupings of deities in Rome. The groupings of a ritual nature are in roman type; the groupings of literary fabrication are in italics. I. The archaic triad: Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus. II. The Capitoline triad: Jupiter-Juno-Minerva (see Livy 1.38.7; 1.55.1-6). III. The triad Ceres-Liber-Libera (in 493 B.C.; see Dion. Hal. 6.17.2). IV. The first lectisternium of 399 B.C.: Apollo-Latona, Hercules-Diana, Mercury-Neptune (see Livy 5.13.4). V. The lectisternium of the twelve great gods of 217 B.C.: Jupiter-Juno, Neptune-Minerva, Mars-Venus, Apollo-Diana, Vulcan-Vesta, Mercury-Ceres (see Livy 22.10.9). VI. The list of twelve agricultural deities: Juppiter-Tellus, Sol-Luna, Ceres-Liber, Robigus-Flora, Minerva-Venus, Lympha-Bonus Eventus (see Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.1.4-7). VII. The list of twelve deities as arranged by Virgil (*Georgics* 1.5-25), Caesar being proposed as a thirteenth: Sol-Luna (= *clarissima mundi lumina*), Liber-Ceres, Fauni-Dryads, Neptune, Aristaeus (= *cultor nemorum*), Pausanias, Triptolemus (= *unci puer monstrator aratri*), Silvanus, and at verse 25: Caesar. VIII. The list of twenty *Di Selecti* of Varro (cf. Augustine *De civitate Dei* 7.2): Janus, Juppiter, Saturn, Genius, Mercury, Apollo, Mars, Vulcan, Neptune, Sol, Orcus, Liber pater, Tellus, Ceres, Juno, Luna, Diana, Minerva, Venus, Vesta.

R.S./t.l.f.

NOTES

The abridged references refer to bibliographic collections. See the articles "Roman Religion" above, and "The Religion of the Roman Republic" below.

1. Text cited by G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque* (2d ed., 1974), 36.

2. The book *Roman Dynamism* (1947) by H. Wagenvoort is the translation by H. J. Rose of the book published originally in the Netherlands under the title *Imperium: Studien over het manabegrip in zede en taal der Romeinen* (1941). Note that the Dutch title makes explicit reference to the idea of *mana*.

3. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., pp. 36–48.

4. It was only from the Augustan Age that the poets had occasionally used—by metonymy—*numina* in place of *dei*; but the older usage was not lost, as is attested by the Virgilian expression *quo numine laeso* (*Aeneid* 1, 8), which means "which will (of Juno) having been violated": cf. the exegesis of Th. Birt, *Zu Vergil Aeneis* 1, 8: *quo numine laeso*, *B PhilW*, 38 (1918): cols. 212–16 (*ibid.*, 46–47).

5. H. Wagenvoort, *Wesenszüge altrömischer Religion*, in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, 1, 2, pp. 352ff.

6. L. Accii *tragoediarum fragmenta*, ed. Q. Franchella (Bologna 1968), § 596 (= 2d ed. Ribbeck, *Scaenicae Romanorum poesis fragmenta*, § 646 = H. Warmington, ed., *Remains of Old Latin*, 2:546, § 650).

7. Cf. Livy, 8.9.6.

8. The formula *D(is) M(anibus)* became usual on the epitaphs. It is followed by either the genitive or the dative of the form designating the deceased.

9. On this problem, see *Le culte des souverains dans l'Empire romain . . . Entretiens préparés et présidés par W. den Boer* (Geneva 1973), as well as the review by J. Béranger, *Gnomon* 48 (1976): 379–84. What are we to think of the *deus* of the first *Bucolic* of Virgil—a title which a shepherd gives to his benefactor Octavian? The shepherd promises to worship his god. The religious aspect is thus revealed here more than in the fervent eulogy of literary inspiration which is addressed by Lucretius (5.8) to Epicurus: "deus ille fuit, deus, inclute Memmi."

10. Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.74.3 (example cited by J. Béranger, *l.l.*, 383).

11. Pliny, *Natural History* (N.H.) 12.3: *Haec (sc. arbores et silvae) fuere numinum templa priscoque ritu simplicia rura etiam nunc deo praecellentem arborem dicant. Nec magis auro fulgentia atque ebore simulacra quam lucos et in iis silentia adoramus.*

12. Varro cited by Augustine, *City of God* (C.D.) 4.31.

13. Some have wanted to explain the absence of anthropomorphism by a "technical incapacity" of the Romans. This hypothesis does not stand up well to recent conclusions of archeology which have found figurines in the oldest tombs of Latium (these testify at least to the ability to represent the human figure); cf. E. Gjerstad, *Early Rome*, 4, 2 (Lund 1966), 579–81. See the observations of P. Boyance, *REA*, 57 (1955): 66–67, and of G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., pp. 44ff.

14. Cf. Livy 5.32.6.

15. Cf. Festus, p. 354, 28 L.

16. The ancient etymology which had explained the name "Faunus" by *favere* (Servius *ad Georg.* 1.10) has been contested by the moderns, but perhaps we may return to it: cf. Latte, *R.R.G.*, 83, n. 3. In that case, one must understand the expression "Faunus" ("the propitious god") in the same way as "Di Manes," as a euphemism of propitiatory value.

17. Cf. G. Wissowa, *Ruk*², 216 (with indications of ancient sources); G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 355.

18. Virgil *Georgics* 3.1 and 294.

19. Cf. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., pp. 385–87: The Pales of the *Parilia* is concerned with small livestock, while the two Pales of 7 July are concerned with sheep and cows.

20. Varro, cited by Servius *ad Georg.* 3.1.

21. Wissowa (*Ruk*², 38, n. 1) has commented on the principal passages: *Actes des Arvales* (CIL, 6, 2099 2, 1, 3; 2104, 2; 2107, 9); *Cato De agricultura* 139, etc.

22. As G. Dumézil notes (*La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 59, n. 2), the case of Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.9.7, is different: *Si deus, si dea est cui populus civitasque Carthaginensis est in tutela* (in the formula of the *evocatio*) corresponds to a known Latinism: "every one of the

gods and goddesses who protect the people and the city of Carthage

23. The reference on the inscription of the shield of the Capitol, noted also by Servius (*ad Aen.* 2.351: *Genio Romae, sive mas sive femina*), calls on an analogous commentary. To the extent to which "Genius" can only be a masculine, the *sive mas sive femina* cannot apply to the divinized Rome. God or goddess? In ignorance, the formula allows either hypothesis.

24. This is the classic example—and, moreover, unique in the annals—of the transfer of a cult of foreign origin to Rome. Toward the end of the siege of the Etruscan city of Veii (in 396 B.C.), the Roman dictator M. Furius Camillus ensured the good graces of the tutelary goddess by the *evocatio*—a prayer in which he asked Juno Regina to abandon her city in exchange for a "temple worthy of her grandeur" in Rome. Cf. above, this article. As we know, the *pomerium* is the sacred frontier that delimits the zone of urban auspices in opposition to the *ager effatus* (= the adjacent ground made available for other auspices); the pomerial line was indicated by a series of cippus columns: cf. Aulus Gellius 13.14.1; Varro *L.L.* 5.143.

25. Cf. the argument made against Latte, *R.R.G.*, pp. 43 and 45, n. 1, by G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., pp. 108–10, an argument that bears on not only the meaning but also the antiquity of the formula.

26. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 110, n. 1, has noted a text of Ovid (*Metamorphosis* 15.861–70) in which the same typology appears, recalling the conjoint formula *Indigetes* and *Novensiles*.

27. Virgil *G.* 1.498. We note also the cult of Jupiter Indiges at Lavinium (Livy 1.2.6); the cult of Sol Indiges, which, very important at the origin, is entered in the calendar on the date of 11 December (for documentation, cf. Latte, *R.R.G.*, pp. 44 and 73). Pliny's reference to a *locus Solis Indigetis* near the Numicus at Lavinium (*N.H.* 3.56; for this reading of the manuscripts instead of the correction of Barbarus *lucus Jovis Ind.*, see Castagnoli, *Lavinium*, 1, p. 93, n. 10), as well as the comments of Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.55.2), confirm the antiquity of the cult.

28. J. Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (2d ed., Paris 1969), has rightly insisted on this aspect.

29. This detail of the bull "white as snow" offered to Jupiter Latiaris is due to Arnobius *Adversus nationes* 2.68 (*In Albano antiquitus monte nullos alios licebat quam nivei tauros immolare candoris*). The same author indicates that later a senatorial decision also authorized animals with red (*rufulos*) hair. If the account of Arnobius is correct, the sacrifice on Mount Alban departed from the ritual pattern that required castrated animals for Jupiter: cf. Ateius Labeo, cited by Macrobius (*S.* 3.10.4). It is true that according to Virgil (*G.* 2.146–48) and Servius (*ad locum*) the bull was also sacrificed to Capitoline Jupiter by the winners on the day of the ceremony of triumph.

30. The suspension of all war during the *feriae Latinae*, as well as the *communio sacrorum*, has suggested to Latte (*R.R.G.*, p. 145) the idea of a possible influence of the Greek amphictyony, which might have been transmitted by an Etruscan intermediary: the Etruscan confederation of the "twelve cities," which met near the sanctuary of Voltumna, located near the Volsinii (Livy 4.23.5; 4.25.7, etc.).

31. Servius *ad Aen.* 7.515.

32. In an inscription (CIL, 1, 2², 2444), Diana of Aricia is called *Diana af louco* ("Diana of the sacred forest").

33. Cato, *Orig. frag.*, *H.R.F.*, 58, P. Cf. Festus, p. 128, 15 L; Manius Egerius *lucum Nemorensis Dianae consecravit* ("Manius Egerius consecrated to Diana the sacred forest of Nemi").

34. The statute of the cult, which served for those that followed as a model for other foundations, made an allusion to an altar: *lex arae Dianae in Aventino* ("regulation of the altar of Diana on the Aventine": CIL, 3, 1933).

35. Different interpretations have been proposed by G. Wissowa (*Ruk*², 250–51), L. Latte (*R.R.G.*, 173), and G. Dumézil (*La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., 412–13).

36. Regarding the cult of Diana and the effacement of the Latin goddess under Roman hegemony, cf. R. Schilling, "Une victime des vicissitudes politiques: La Diane latine," *Coll. Latomus*, 70 (= *Homages à Jean Bayet*), 1964, 650–67; reprinted with the same title in *R.C.D.R.*

37. Cf. H. Le Bonniec, *Le culte de Cérès à Rome des origines à la fin de la république* (Paris 1958), 277–311. For an opposing view, see A. Alföldi, *Il Santuario federale latino di Diana sull'Aventino e il tempio di Ceres*, *S.M.S.R.*, 32 (1961): 21–39. (This scholar moves the date of the foundation of the temple and of its political role after the reform of the Decemvirs back to the second half of the fifth century B.C.)

38. Cf. R. Schilling, *Les Castores romains à la lumière des traditions indo-européennes*, Collection Latomus (= Hommages à Georges Dumézil) (Brussels 1960); reprinted with the same title in *R.C.D.R.*

39. Cf. J. Gagé, *Apollon romain* (Paris 1955), 158ff.; 167.

40. Cf. Robert Schilling, *La religion romaine de Vénus* (Paris 1954), 242–66.

41. Regarding the statuettes of Aeneas and Anchises from Veii, the proposed date varies from the sixth to the fourth century B.C. It seems reasonable to accept at the latest the beginning of the fifth century. See, in particular, A. Alföldi, *Die trojanischen Uraltmen der Römer* (Basel 1957). See, most recently, W. Fuchs, *Die Bildgeschichte der Flucht des Aeneas*, *A.N.R.W.*, 1, 4 (1973), 615–32.

42. With regard to the line of continuity that exists between the two triads, see the article "Roman Religion," above.

43. Cf. above, this article. The cult of Ceres is classed by Festus (p. 268, 31 L.) among the *sacra peregrina* ("foreign cults"). Although Indo-European in its structure, the triad here seems influenced by a Greek model. For a discussion, see H. Le Bonniec, *Le culte de Cérès à Rome*, 277–311; for an opposing view, see A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins*, 95–100.

44. Cf. Livy 5.13.4–6. This Hellenic rite, which came from the Etruscan town of Caere, was repeated four times consecutively in the course of the following years: cf. Wissowa, *Ruk*², p. 422 and n. 7.

45. An undifferentiated list is furnished by Ennius, *Annales*, 60–61 (ed. Warmington): *Juno Vesta Minerva Ceres Diana Venus Mars Mercurius Jovis Neptunus Vulcanus Apollo*. The hierarchical order is indicated by Livy (22.10.9; cf. also 22.9.10).

46. We know that the lectisternium of the twelve divinities must have inspired in Octavian one day the idea of organizing a joyous masquerade—the *cena dodekathleos*—in the course of which the twelve guests were disguised as gods and goddesses (Suetonius *Aug.* 70).

47. The twelve *di consentes* of the Forum are cited by Varro (*R.R.* 1.1.4). The expression is unique: the term *consentes* ("who are together") was assimilated by the Latins to *consentientes* ("who decide in accord").

48. Cf. G. Lugli, *Roma antica: Il centro monumentale* (Rome 1946), 114–15.

49. We have retained here only the divine groupings that have a ritual existence. However, the number twelve influenced the group of twelve "agricultural divinities" imagined by Varro (*De re rustica* 1.1.4–6), as well as the semireligious, semimythological list of Virgil (*G.* 1.5–20). Elsewhere, Varro, cited by Augustine (*C.D.* 7.2), had drawn up a list of twenty principal divinities (*deos selectos*).

50. Regarding the equivalence of the Latin *Quirinus* and the Umbrian *Vofiono-*, see G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 161 and n. 3.

51. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 475.

52. These phrases reproduce a part of the commentary of my book *R.R.V.*, 207–8.

53. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 475.

54. Cf. Festus, p. 422 L.: "He who performs the ceremonies that the kings used to perform is named *Sacrificulus Rex* (or *Rex Sacrorum*)."

55. The word *heros*, copied from the Greek, appears only later, in the language of the poets, for example, in Virgil.

56. Cf. R. Schilling, "Ovide interprète de la religion romaine," *R.E.L.* 46 (1969): 222–35; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*, same title.

ROMAN SACRIFICE

In its intrinsic meaning, the term sacrifice (*sacrificium*) indicates that something is voluntarily taken away by man from the profane world to be offered to the gods (*sacrum facere*). To what end? Probably, in accordance with the worldview at the origin, the purpose was to comfort the gods, who in the Roman conception were allies of mankind. The Romans were tied to the gods by bonds of reciprocity defined by the notion of *pietas*, by virtue of which men had to honor (*colere*) the gods who in turn owed men protection.

Nothing illuminates the means and ends of sacrifice better than the accompanying prayer that a Roman peasant addressed to a particular god. In this case, Cato's formulation (*De Agricultura* 134) lists the arrangements that should be made to offer a propitiatory sacrifice to Ceres, the goddess of growth, before the harvest. First, the sacrifice could not be limited to Ceres alone. According to the rules of this polytheistic hierarchy, one must first address Janus, the god of beginnings, and then the sovereign god, Jupiter (the text also mentions Juno, a rather suspect addition). Once these preliminaries have been attended to, the offering to Ceres consists of the entrails of a sow and a libation of wine. This is already a Roman innovation, namely, that the part set aside for the god when a blood sacrifice is performed should be the *exta*, or entrails, of the animal, including the heart (*cor*), lungs (*pulmones*), liver (*jecur*), and gallbladder (*fel*).¹

The wording of the prayer to Jupiter contains all the characteristic elements that recur in the other formulas:

Juppiter, te hoc ferto obmovendo bonas preces precor, uti sies volens propitius mihi liberisque meis domo familiaeque meae mactus hoc ferto (Jupiter, in making this offering to you, I pray with good prayers that you watch over me and be gracious unto me, my children, my house, and all my household; may this offering be a comfort to you). This utterance is as clear as it is precise. He names the intended god, the offering (the *fertum* is a kind of cake), the legitimacy of the request (*bonas preces*), and the purpose of the sacrifice. Among all the specific terms in this text, so florid with its archaic language,² we should remark on *mactus*, which the ancients interpreted in the sense of *magis auctus*;³ it seems to reflect the old concept that divine power had to be "comforted" with the sacrifice.

Thus, the sacrifice in the beginning seems to have consisted essentially in "sustaining" the god. This idea is confirmed by the epithet *dapalis* that is applied to Jupiter when he becomes the recipient of a meal (*daps*) that consisted of a "jug" of wine (*urna vini*) and an offering of sacred flour with the value of one *as* (a Roman coin or weight), *assara pecunia*.⁴ The celebrant and the participants did not remain strangers to the ceremony, since a part of the food that was not consecrated was distributed for the use of laymen and consumed by the participants.⁵

Although the *daps* represents a sacrifice at the family level, the *epulum* corresponds to a more solemn meal organized and subsidized by the state. The *epulum Jovis* was offered to Jupiter every year on 13 November, on the Capitoline, starting at the end of the third century B.C. According to the description provided by Valerius Maximus (2.1.2), "The god was invited to take his place on a couch, Juno and Minerva on chairs." This *epulum* thus dealt with the Capitoline triad,



Sacrificial scene (relief). In the background: facade of the temple of the Capitoline Jupiter and wall topped with statues of men and animals fighting. In the foreground: Emperor Marcus Aurelius, *capite velato*, assisted by the *flamen Dialis* wearing his *apex* cap; he pours a libation on the flame of the tripod altar. Behind him, a bearded man wearing a toga and a crown of laurels, probably representing the senate. In front of him, a *camillus* holding a casket of incense (*acerra*) and a pipe player; the head of the victim hovers over them. To the right, sacrificers, one holding an ax, the other a jar (*situla*). Rome, Museo dei Conservatori. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

and gods and goddesses conformed to the prevailing customs of the men and women of the times. The word *epulo* was hardly ever used as an epithet of Jupiter, which would have resulted in an expression symmetrical to *Juppiter Dapalis*, but it did serve to designate the priests specially charged with the responsibility to celebrate official sacrifices in order to relieve the pontifex; this college of priests was known as the *septemviri epulones*.

What kinds of food could one offer the gods? Particular preferences aside, the following list was drawn up by Verrius Flaccus, a great scholar in the time of Augustus, and preserved in a summary by Festus:⁶ "commodities that can be offered in sacrifice: grain, pearl barley, wine, leavened bread, dried figs, pork, lamb, cheese, mutton, bran, sesame and oil, fish with scales except angelfish (a saltwater fish also known as monkfish)."

In addition to these foods, the firstfruits of the harvest were offered to the appropriate protective deities, for instance, the first must (*sacrima*) was offered to Liber Pater. We

should also point out that the list drawn up by Festus is not complete. It mentions cheese, but it omits milk, for example, which was an older offering than wine: lukewarm milk was a favorite of one of the oldest deities, Pales, the goddess of shepherds and their flocks, whose festival, the *Parilia* (21 April), coincided with the anniversary of the founding of Rome.⁷

Alongside these bloodless sacrifices are blood sacrifices that can be traced back to equally ancient times.⁸ The usual victims are animals belonging to the pig, sheep, or cow families. Perhaps we should distinguish between what are called *hostia*⁹ (expiatory victims to appease the wrath of the gods) and *victima* (victims offered as signs of gratitude). But these fine distinctions seem to have disappeared in historical times.

On the other hand, the Roman liturgy seems to have been subject to precise general rules. The animal has to be of a certain age that varies depending on the circumstances. Thus, we can distinguish among victims that still suckle (*lactentes*), two-year-olds (*bidentes*), and adult victims (*hostiae majores*). Normally a god demands a male victim and a goddess, a female.¹⁰ By the same principle of analogy, a sky god requires a light animal, and a netherworld god a dark one. But exceptions to these rules do occur.

There are particular sets of rules for certain deities. Jupiter is to receive a castrated animal,¹¹ whereas Apollo, Neptune, and Mars demand an intact male, such as a bull.¹² Mars has the honor of being the recipient of a triple offering that groups the representatives of the three animal species: boar, ram, and bull, designated by the term *suovetaurilia*.¹³

How does the sacrifice actually proceed? First it presupposes certain conditions on the part of the celebrant, who must be in a state of ritual purity. For example, he cannot perform his duties if a member of his family has just died, making the family *funesta* (in mourning).¹⁴ Wearing a toga that is rolled up into a *cinctus Gabinus* (freeing the arms), the celebrant washes his hands in a bowl (*malluvium*) and dries them with a towel (*manete*). So as not to be disturbed during the ceremony, he covers his head with a tail of his toga. He thus appears *capite velato*, which to the ancients was a peculiarly Roman attitude, in contrast with the uncovered head, *capite aperto*, of the Greek ritual.¹⁵

Among the sacrifices, some are performed within the family circle, for instance, the *Lemuria* which the paterfamilias celebrates according to an archaic liturgy that aims at expelling the *Lemures*, evil spirits, from the house.¹⁶ Others are celebrated within the social group as constituted by the curia, among them the *Fornacalia* celebrated in honor of *Fornax*, the goddess of ovens, during the roasting of grain;¹⁷ or the *Fordicidia*, the sacrifice of a pregnant cow (*forda*) to the goddess Earth, who is supposed to be full of seed on that day (15 April).¹⁸ The most solemn sacrifices are the *publica sacra* "which are offered for the people at the expense of the state."¹⁹

These sacrifices require a ceremonial regulated by an ordering of several phases. First of all, the *probatio*, a kind of admission test—the chosen animal must be beyond reproach: it must be appropriate to the deity and have no physical defect; it must conform to precise norms. Thus, as Pliny the Elder reminds us, "a calf is admitted only if its tail reaches the knucklebone; if it is any shorter, the sacrifice will not please the gods."²⁰

The victim is adorned with boughs (*verbenae*), and its head is decorated with white or scarlet headbands (*infulae*). Often if it is a cow or an ox, its horns are gilded (*taurus auratus et bos femina aurata*, in the liturgy of the Arval Brethren, designates

a bull or heifer with golden horns);²¹ cattle or pigs wear a kind of cover (*dorsuale*) on their backs, but not sheep, which are offered with their thick fleece (*altilanei*), which has never been sheared.²²

Thus adorned, the victim is led near the altar (*ara*), in front of the temple; next to the altar is placed a movable hearth (*foculus*), often garnished with turf (*caespit*)²³ and intended to receive the preliminary libations of wine and incense.²⁴

An order goes out calling for silence (*Favete linguis!*)²⁵ while a flutist (*tibicen*) "is heard trying to cover up all other sounds." The celebrant then proceeds to the *immolatio*: The victim's head is dusted with *mola salsa* (loose flour mixed with salt, prepared by the vestals),²⁶ an operation that is completed with a libation of wine.²⁷ The victim is then stripped of all its trappings, the *dorsuale* and the *infulae*. The celebrant passes his knife along the animal's backbone from head to tail. This symbolic gesture of possession completes the act of the *consecratio*.

Then the celebrant recites the formulaic prayer that an assistant reads to him "to avoid any omission or inversion."²⁸ The moment of death has arrived. It is achieved most often through the mediation of the celebrant's assistants. One assistant sacrificer (*victimarius* or *papa*) asks, *Agone?* ("Shall I go ahead?" meaning "Shall I perform the sacrifice?") He then strikes the forehead of the victim with a hammer or an ax, probably to daze it. Another assistant, the *cultrarius*, stabs the jugular vein with a knife (*culter*). The gushing blood is collected and spread over the altar. If the animal ever resists in the course of these operations, or worse yet, escapes (*hostia effugia*), it portends bad luck.

If the proceeding goes according to plan, the body of the animal is opened up to allow an inspection of its internal organs (*inspicere exta*). This examination is only to make certain that the organs are in good condition to ensure the approval of the gods (*litatio*). Thus, we find in the minutes of the Arval Brethren the elliptic expression: *hostiae litationem inspexerunt* ("they examine the victim for the purpose of *litatio*").²⁹ This procedure conforms to the prescriptions of the Roman liturgy and is therefore alien to the divinatory character of the consultation of the *exta*, which was introduced into Rome through Etruscan haruspicy.

If the results of the examination are good, the celebrant

records the *litatio*, or the approval given by the gods for his sacrifice. If they are not good (if, for example, the heart or part of the liver is missing),³⁰ the sacrifice has to begin again, substituting a new victim (*hostia succidanea*) for the first animal. Roman tenacity is evident in a decision by the senate (in 176 B.C.) that enjoined the consuls who had failed to get a *litatio* (inspection had revealed a liver in a state of total decomposition) "to start sacrificing again with adult victims until they obtained the god's approval" (*usque ad litationem*).³¹

Once the *litatio* is obtained, the next phase can proceed. The *exta* are removed from the victim; they are then dusted with *mola salsa*; a few additional pieces are thrown in, *augmenta* or *magmenta*.³² These supplements must represent the rest of the victim. Both *exta* and *augmenta* are then cooked in a pot (*olla extaris*). This is the way they are ordinarily cooked in the historical period, but tradition also mentions broiling the *exta* on a skewer.³³

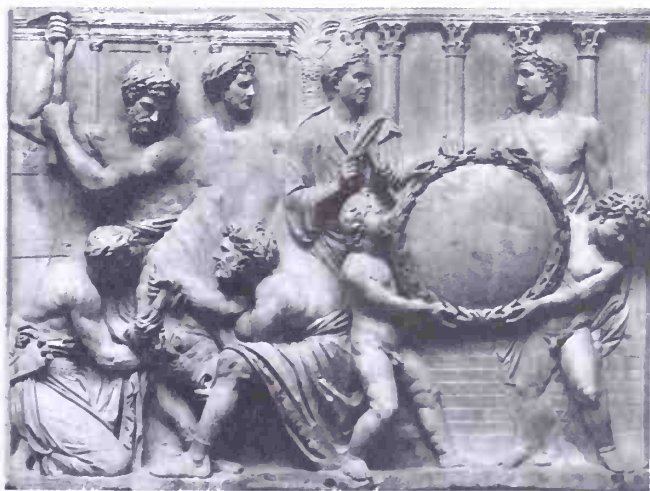
The *exta* are then cut up (except in sacrifices of lustration offered by the censors).³⁴ These *prosecta*, or *proscicies*, can now be offered to the god. The whole offering is then burned on top of the altar that has already been sprinkled with the blood. *Exta porricere*, or *dare*, is the name of this operation. The ritual of the Arval Brethren uses a more suggestive expression, namely, *exta reddere*: in fact it is a matter of "rendering unto" the deity the consecrated part that is due that deity.³⁵ The celebrant and his assistants are entitled to consume the *viscera*, or "meat,"³⁶ which is set aside for profane use.

Roman liturgy thus clearly distinguishes the sacred part from the profane part. It understands the blood and the entrails to be the parts reserved for the gods, because these organs are reputed to be the seats of life itself, according to the principle defined by Trebatius: *sola anima deo sacratur* ("the soul alone is consecrated to the god").³⁷ Roman sacrifice differs fundamentally from Greek sacrifice, which calls for an *undifferentiated* distribution of all parts of the victim between the god and the worshipers,³⁸ not to mention the trick of Prometheus, who, to make matters even worse, sought to deceive the gods.³⁹

But Rome also witnessed the *ritus graecus*, the Greek liturgy that was used notably for the cult of Hercules at the Ara Maxima,⁴⁰ where participants in the sacrificial offering were also permitted to consume the *exta*. On the other hand, the god could receive "all kinds of food and drink" (*Herculi autem omnia esculenta posculenta*).⁴¹ The distinction was thus no longer made between the *exta*, reserved for the god (*deo dicata*), and the *viscera profana*, the profane meat left for consumption by the assistants. The vocabulary used in the liturgy at the Ara Maxima was specific: to Hercules of the Ara Maxima went an offering of the *decuma*, a tithe of grain that the god was supposed to have obtained for his followers; *pollucere*, "to offer," could apply both to the god and to men. In Plautus,⁴² *polluctum* designates a lavish festival that delights both the god and the happy guests.

It is only by chance that we know of another form of sacrifice in Rome, namely, the holocaust, which consisted of burning the victim whole. In the *Aeneid*,⁴³ Aeneas offers to Pluto, "the king of the Styx," bulls burned whole. The practice of the holocaust is mentioned only in the minutes of the secular games. During the games celebrated by Augustus in 17 B.C., nine ewe lambs were apparently sacrificed to the Parcae (*deis Moeris*),⁴⁴ according to the Greek ritual (*Achivo ritu*), and similarly at the secular games of Septimius Severus in A.D. 204, a sow was sacrificed whole to the goddess Earth (*Terrae Matri*).⁴⁵

Marcus Aurelius offering a sacrifice. Bas-relief. Rome, Palazzo dei Conservatori. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.



These sacrificial forms of foreign origin highlight even more the originality of the Roman liturgy, which was never, however, completely free of contamination. Quite early, Etruscan haruspices practiced side by side with the Roman celebrant, when simply reporting the *litatio* was not felt to be sufficient, but curiosity to know the future demanded the practice of the divinatory consultation of the *exta*.

Cato's formularies and the minutes of the Arval Brethren preserved the original ritual of the Roman sacrifice most faithfully. In the final analysis, what is striking in this liturgy is its concern for efficacy, its temperance, and its precision. In order not to fail in its purpose, the liturgy multiplied its prescriptions for the dress, gestures, and utterances of the celebrant. For the same reasons, it strove to preserve the serenity of the ceremony through a propitiatory silence and the ritual sound of the flute.

The sacrifice was invariably accompanied by a prayer that addressed the deity by name, detailing the terms of the request. Frozen ritualism, one might claim. Certainly such a cautious framework had a rigidity about it. This is especially true when we think of the *supplicationes* surrounding the lectisternia, which gave free expression to a more passionate and tumultuous devotion. Livy several times evokes the spectacle of "Romans rushing into every shrine, women prostrated everywhere, sweeping the temples with their hair."⁴⁶ The senate itself encouraged this kind of devotion . . . in times of crisis.

But the official liturgy guarded its rights. If there was indeed ritualism,⁴⁷ this ritualism can be explained, in the last analysis, by a deep concern for *pietas*, the piety that Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* 1.116) defined as *justitia erga deos* ("justice toward the gods"). Unlike Prometheus, who did not hesitate to deceive Zeus in the sacrificial distribution, the Roman was imbued with a scrupulous respect for what was the gods' due. *Votum solvit libens merito* ("he carries out his vow wholeheartedly and deservedly") was the ritual formula.

This spirit of fairness also explains the innovation of one Scipio Aemilianus, who had a public prayer emended in a restrictive sense, the prayer being the one said during the closing ceremony of the census. Instead of asking the gods for "the betterment and growth of the Roman Republic," he said, "The Republic is strong enough and big enough; I therefore simply pray that the gods maintain it in good condition forevermore."⁴⁸

R.S. g.h.

NOTES

1. Cf. Lucan, 1. 621. Sometime later the peritoneum (*omentum*) is added. It has been suggested that *exta* is from *ex-secta*: (organs) set apart (from the victim): cf. Ernout-Meillet, *D.E.*⁴, s.v. *exta*. This is only a hypothesis.

2. Note the specific words: *fertum* (which the ancients had connected with *fero*), which may alternate with *strues*, designating also a sacrificial cake; *obmovere*, which is employed for solid offerings, in contrast with *inferre* (*vinum*). The order of precedence of the beneficiaries reflects the mentality of the ancient paterfamilias. What is the place of the wife? I believe that she is included in the final group of the *familia*.

3. This etymology has been taken up again by certain moderns who would like to derive the participle from a verb **magere* (cf. Walde-Hofmann, *L.E.W.*³, s.v. *mactus*). Note that the corresponding verb, *mactare*, which in the historical period means "to honor by a sacrifice, to sacrifice," is well attested.

4. Cf. Cato, *De Agricultura* 132. On the interpretation of the text, see my "Sacrum et profanum," *Latomus*, 1971, pp. 960-61, reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*

5. Cf. my commentary on the text of Cato 50.2: *Ubi daps profanata comestaque erit* . . . *ibid.*, pp. 961-62.

6. Festus, p. 298 L.: "Pollucere merces . . . liceat: sunt tar, polenta, vinum, panis fermentatus, ficus passa, suilla, agnina, casei, ovilla, alica, sesama et oleum, pisces quibus est squama, praeter squatum . . ." The enumeration is obviously in disorder. (It ends by noting that all the provisions [*esculentia*] and all the beverages [*poscumenta*] are permitted by Hercules.)

7. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.746.

8. Archeology has recovered, for the period of the Iron Age—the "preurban period"—sacrificial remains (no doubt from ceremonies for the dead) of sheep, pigs, and cows: cf. E. Gherstad, *Early Rome* (Lund 1966), 4, 1, p. 64.

9. Cf. Ernout-Meillet, *D.E.*⁴, s.v. *hostia*.

10. Cf. Arnobius 7.19.

11. Cf. Macrobius 3.10.3.

12. Cf. *ibid.* 3.10.4.

13. Cf., for example, Cato 141, where Mars is gratified by a suovitaurilium of suckling beasts—*suovitaurilibus lactentibus*.

14. Cf. the anecdote related by Livy (2.8.7-8). At the moment when the consul Horatius went to the consecration of the temple of Capitoline Jupiter, his adversaries released the news that his son was dead. But Horatius sought to excuse this attempt at obstruction.

15. So, too, in the *ritus Graecus* of Hercules at the Great Altar, the officiant had his head uncovered (cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 3.407). In fact, the prescription of the "covered head" is not applied to two Roman divinities, either: Saturn (cf. Festus, p. 432 L., and Servius, *l.l.*) and Honos (cf. Plutarch *Quaestiones Romanae* 266).

16. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 5.421ff. The ceremony took place every year, at midnight, thrice repeated, 9, 11, and 13 May.

17. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 2.527. Though Ovid assigns this festival to the Curia, Festus (p. 298 L.) ranks it among the *popularia sacra*, "*quae omnes civis faciunt*"—which is not contradictory, to the extent that the *popularia sacra* are not to be confused with the *publica sacra* (see note 19).

18. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.629-34.

19. Cf. Festus, p. 284 L.

20. Pliny *N.H.* 8.183. In the preceding context, Pliny had remarked that of all the animals that have long tails, the cow is the only one whose tail continues to grow.

21. Cf. G. Henzen, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (Berlin 1874), 122.

22. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 144, for examples.

23. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 23.

24. On the significance of this *foculus*, cf. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., pp. 321 and 549.

25. The Latin formula translates the meaning of the omen as "Be propitious in holding your tongue!" For all the information on the course of the sacrificial ceremonial, see Pliny *N.H.* 28.11.

26. Cf. Paulus-Festus, p. 97 L.: *Immolare est mola, id est farre molito et sale, hostiam perspersam sacrare* ("To immolate is to consecrate the victim in the *mola* mixture, i.e., in wheat flour and salt").

27. Latte, *R.R.G.*, p. 387, interprets these preparations as a "Verstärkung der Segenskraft des Opfertieres" (a reinforcement of the beneficial potential of the victim).

28. Cf. Pliny *N.H.* 28.11.

29. Henzen, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*, p. 26.

30. Paulus-Festus, p. 287 L.

31. Cf. Livy 41.15.1-4.

32. Cf. Varro *L.L.* 5.112.

33. Cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 2.362.

34. Cf. Servius Danielis *ad Aen.* 8.183. We note this exception to show the minutiae in the precision of Roman liturgy.

35. Cf. Henzen, *Acta F.A.*, p. 23.

36. *Viscera* means "all that is found between the skin and bone" (Servius *ad Aen.* 6.253). It is appropriate, however, to note two exceptions that pose a problem. (1) The reference in the proceedings of the Arval Brethren of a.d. 240, 29 May: *et de sanguiculo porcelliarum vesciti sicut* ("and they consumed the blood of young female pigs")—a tasting that follows the sacrifice of *porcellae* in the sacred wood of *dea Dia* (cf. *Notizie degli scavi*, 1914, fasc. 12, p. 464ff.). (2) The reference to *sanguinem gustare antea frequenter solebant*, in an indeterminate fragment of the calendar of Praeneste (cf. *Notizie d.s.*, 1921, p. 277ff.): O. Marucchi comments on the two texts, *Not. d.s.*, 1921, p. 277ff.

37. Trebatius, the author of a treatise *De religionibus*, is cited by Macrobius (S. 3.5.1). A. Magdelain (*Essai sur les origines de la Sponsio* [Paris 1943], pp. 35–41) had the merit of isolating the information of Trebatius and of arranging the texts on this problem.

38. Concerning these differences, see my *Sacrum et profanum*, pp. 963–64, reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*

39. Cf. Hesiod, *Theogony*, 535ff.

40. See Jean Bayet, *Les origines de l'Hercule romain* (Paris 1926), passim. On the particular point of the *ritus graecus*, see my "Sacrum et profanum," cited in note 38.

41. Cf. Festus, p. 298 L.

42. Cf., for example, Plautus, *Rudens*, 1419.

43. Virgil *Aeneid* 6.253: *Et solida imponit taurorum viscera flammis*.

44. Cf. *CHL.*, 6, 32323 = Pighi, *De ludis saecularibus* (2d ed., Amsterdam 1965), 113–14, lines 90–91: *Nocte insequenti, in Campo, ad Tiberim deis Moeris imp. Caesar Augustus immolavit agnas feminas IX prodigivas Achivo ritu . . .* "The following night, the emperor Caesar Augustus sacrificed, on the Field (of Mars), by the Tiber, nine whole lambs, according to the Greek rite . . ." Note the extension of the meaning of the verb *immolare*, "to sacrifice." For the meaning of *prodigivas*, cf. Festus, p. 296 L.: *prodiguae hostiae vocantur . . . quae consumuntur*. "One gives the name of *prodigivae*, 'victims,' to those who are destroyed by fire." See Latte, *R.R.G.*, p. 392.

45. *CHL.*, 6, 32329 a, line 49 = Pighi, *De ludis saecularibus*, p. 162: *Geta Caesar immolavit Terrae matri suam plenam Graeco Achivo ritu prodigivam . . .* "Geta Caesar (one of the sons of Septimius Severus) sacrificed to the goddess Earth a whole sow in the fire according to the Greek rite."

46. Livy 3.7.8. It was a matter of averting an epidemic in 463 B.C.

Cf. *ibid.* 26.9.7 (in 211 B.C.): *undique matronae in publicum effusae circa deum delubra discurrunt crinibus passis aras verrentes, nisiae genibus, supinas manus ad caelum ac deos tendentes . . .* "Most of the mothers of families rushed together in public; they gathered around the sanctuaries of the gods, sweeping the altars with their disheveled hair; prostrated on their knees, they turned their palms toward heaven and toward the gods . . ." (The panic was due to Hannibal's approach to Rome.)

47. The precision of ritualism was pushed to the point of anticipating a *profane* time (*fas* in liturgical terms) between the killing of the victim and the presentation of the internal organs (*inter hostiam caesam et exta porrecta*).

48. Cf. Valerius Maximus 4.1.10. The text adds: "And the censors of the following census adhered to this more modest formula."

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THE RELIGION OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC: A REVIEW OF RECENT STUDIES

The twenty-five-year period between 1950 and 1975 was a fertile time for scholarship, as is indicated by the sheer size of the appended bibliography,¹ for it produced important editions of texts about the religions of Rome and many works of a broad scope. The quarrying of primary sources remains the basis for speculation in religious studies, a decision that bodes well for the strengthening of the groundwork and also demonstrates the interest generated by these studies among a wider and wider public. The many books and articles dealing with diverse subjects offer a further confirmation of the vitality of the field. We shall first focus on the year 1950 and then identify the themes and tendencies that emerge in the light of these works (noting some of their differences). We will then discuss the problems that have received the most attention.

We need only compare the titles of classical reference works from the nineteenth century with those of our own time to note the difference in perspective. The word "mythology" figures in the titles of L. Preller's work *Römische Mythologie* (Berlin 1858) and of W. H. Roscher's encyclopedia, *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (Leipzig 1884). Georg Wissowa introduced the word "religion" only when he published the famous reference work *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (Munich 1902; 2d ed. 1912) on his own authority.²

"Religion" versus "mythology": the change is significant for modern exegesis because it corresponds to a decisive turning point. Instead of viewing Roman religion as a more or less faithful copy of Greek mythology—such was the implicit premise of the scholarship of the nineteenth

century—we are now trying to establish the original legacy of Rome, which is manifest essentially in Roman cults and rites. Of course substituting "religion" for "mythology" does not in and of itself constitute a magic password, nor does it preclude basic and significant divergences. Kurt Latte, who succeeded Wissowa in the same series (*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*), did not hesitate to take his own stance vis-à-vis his predecessor. In 1957 he wrote in a letter: "What I looked for in Rome were first of all new inscriptions and archaeological facts. . . . A modern treatment of the subject can no longer begin with the gods, a concession already made by Wissowa"—a conception "that dates back to the century of Louis XIV."³ Latte's own position also triggered vigorous reactions. This is a fundamental issue, to which we will return, one that often surprises the layman: why is it that the most important contemporary scholars have frequently been inclined to criticize one another or to "ignore" one another with a disapproving silence? Does the personal coefficient affect research in religion so strongly that the research cannot find a ground of common concern in the midst of the facts?

Yet to the extent that they are perceptible and intelligible, facts are what matter. Latte was certainly right: archaeology and epigraphy have enriched our knowledge in this field. However one may judge the excavations of Einar Gjerstad, this scholar had the merit of opening up fruitful discussions on the dating of the religious events in the area of the Roman Forum. Carefully targeted research has yielded suggestive results. Thus, A. Bartoli was able to show in his report, *I pozzi dell'area sacra di Vesta* (c. 13ff.) that the material found in the "archaic well," primarily pots (*olle*), dates back to a time "between the seventh century and the beginning of the sixth." To take another example, P. Romanelli was able to settle a question about the cult of Cybele in Rome that had previously divided scholars. His publication *Lo scavo al tempio*



The Palatine. View from the Campanile of S. Francesca Romana. Rome. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

della Magna Mater sul Palatino e nelle sue adiacenze (c. 281ff.) shows that the discovery of numerous statuettes of Attis from the first century B.C. left no room to doubt the presence of this consort god side by side with the Magna Mater.

No less interesting have been the epigraphic findings in Pratica di mare, a zone that corresponds to the ancient Lavinium. Prior to these discoveries, three inscriptions engraved on cippi that came from Tor Tignosa had already attracted attention to this region:

Parca Maurtia dono
Neuna dono
Neuna Fata

Dated in the third century and first published by M. Guarducci,⁴ they were the object of commentaries by St. Weinstock⁵ and L. L. Tels-de-Jong,⁶ among others. Shortly after this discovery, M. Guarducci published research concerning another inscription engraved on a bronze plaque found in the same region and also dating from the third century.⁷

CERERE AULIQUOQUIBUS VESPERNAM PORO

Almost every word of this inscription has been read and interpreted in conflicting ways by various scholars.⁸ CERERE is sometimes read as an accusative (with an *M* missing) and sometimes as a dative; VESPERNAM is sometimes taken to be a nominalized adjective or an adjective suggesting an implicit CENAM (which would designate an evening offering) and is sometimes taken to be a proper noun, VESPERNA, which would

correspond to a goddess of food associated with Ceres; PORO to one scholar is an adverb (POR(R)O meaning "henceforth"); to another it is a verb (an altered form which should be corrected to read POR[RICIT]O); to still others, it is a noun—POR(R)O, "leeks," in the ablative singular with a collective sense. Only the term AULIQUOQUIBUS met with unanimity, as a result of a commentary by Paulus-Festus (*Glossaria Latina* p. 22 L) which helped identify these *aulicocia exta* as the sacrificial viscera boiled in a pot. After so many diverse attempts, it might seem foolhardy for us to propose the interpretation that seems most plausible.⁹

In 1958, Lavinium had already emerged as a likely place for archaeological exploration. In the same domain, Tor Tignosa—where the archaic inscriptions *Parca Maurtia*, *Neuna*, and *Neuna Fata* were discovered—was also the site of another inscription dating from the third century: LARE AINEIA.¹⁰ The exceptional importance of this discovery was obvious: for the first time, on this site that was considered to be the cradle of the Trojan legend, an epigraph mentioning Aeneas appeared. He was no longer a simple hero whose praises were sung by poets, but a god honored by a cult. He is referred to by the term *Lar*, which dates back to the archaic vocabulary of Rome (e.g., the *Lases* of the *Carmen Arvale* and the *Lar familiaris*), though we should not jump to the conclusion that *Lar* was merely a synonym for "hero" (interpreted in the Greek manner).

In the same area in the same year (1958), at a place called Madonnetta, F. Castagnoli and L. Cozza unearthed a bronze plaque that dated from the sixth or fifth century and that bore the dedication *Castorei Podlouqueique quois*.¹¹ The early date of

this inscription, its association with the divine twins, and their designation by the expression *quiroi* provided ample material for the reflection of scholars.¹² For it was known that originally Castor alone was admitted inside the *pomerium* in Rome: as the patron god of horsemen, he received the gratitude of the Roman authorities after the famous victory of Lake Regillus, which was won by A. Postumius, who enlisted the help of the Roman cavalry, at the beginning of the fifth century.¹³ Henceforth, it was simple to prove that Rome had not needed to go very far to become familiar with the Dioscuri; their cult was celebrated near Lavinium, where it had come from Magna Graecia and not, as had been thought, from Etruria. The Roman attitude is even more interesting: Castor had been "chosen" because of his specialty as a "horseman" and because of a particular historical circumstance.

The epigraphic find on the site of Lavinium may presage further discoveries. At least that was what it suggested to the scholar who devoted himself to this task. F. Castagnoli wrote that the current investigations focus "on a part of the outer walls of the east side. These are walls in *opus quadratum* with remains of a gate and a street. Several phases can be identified, the oldest one going back to the sixth century."¹⁴

The new inscriptions were put together in a collection that is easy to consult, and was published through the efforts of A. Degrassi: *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae*, vol. 1 (Florence 1957) and vol. 2 (Florence 1963). This excellent publication makes accessible for study the most important epigraphic texts with an updated bibliography. With a similar purpose, A. Pasoli reworked an edition of the *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (Bologna 1950) by going back to the *Acta* published by G. Henzen (Berlin 1874) and completing them with inscriptions discovered since that date. We should note, however, that in this case the annotations are sparse; Henzen's commentary remains indispensable.

Following Th. Mommsen's publication (*CIL*, I²), a new edition of the Roman calendar was needed, especially since the discovery of the pre-Julian calendar of Antium (*N.S.* 1921, pp. 73ff.) had provided a document invaluable for a new inclusive study. This considerable work was completed with admirable care by A. Degrassi. It constitutes section 2 of volume 13 of the *Inscriptiones Italiae* devoted to *Fasti et Elogia* (Rome 1963) under the title *Fasti anni Numani et Juliani* (section 1 appeared in 1947 and included *Fasti consulares et triumphales*). In separate publications, the author presented all the epigraphic fragments, often reproduced in color facsimiles, before offering a general commentary that takes into account the principal works on the subject.

With regard to the calendar, we should mention A. Kirsopp-Michels, *Calendar of the Roman Republic* (Princeton 1967), which tried to settle the often intricate problems of calendrical practice during the Republic. Unlike her predecessors, Kirsopp-Michels suggests (pp. 160ff.) that the *mensis Intercalaris* or *Mercedonius* of the pre-Julian calendar always had twenty-seven days, as is shown by the epigraphic document of Antium (*Fasti Antiaties majores*). The insertion of this month, which intervened every other year, would have been done sometimes after 23 February (Terminalia) and sometimes after 24 February (then considered an ordinary day and not the Regifugium). In this way, the author seeks to reconcile the Antium document with the remarks of Censorinus (*De die natali* 20.6) and Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 1.13.12), who mention an insertion (following the February Terminalia) which was sometimes twenty-two and sometimes twenty-three days long and which concluded each time with the last five days of February (hence the traditional hypoth-

esis of an intercalary month that supposedly had twenty-seven or twenty-eight days alternatively). A. Kirsopp-Michels's new hypothesis is ingenious and more economical than the previous explanation, which faltered before the Antium document which features only one *intercalaris* of twenty-seven days. (The reader should refer to the work in question for a more detailed discussion.)

The hope of having in one collection the illustrated documents that concern Roman religion has not proved in vain. I. Scott Ryberg illustrated his book *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art* (*MAAR* 22, 1955) with numerous photographs that make it possible to understand the concrete realities and sacrificial celebration in Roman religion far more precisely than is possible with mere lengthy descriptions.

In this overview of scholarship, it is appropriate to mention two recent editions of texts of religious interest. To the classic works of R. von Panta (*Grammatik der Oskisch-umbrischen Dialekten*, vol. 2, Strasbourg 1897), R. S. Conway (*The Italic Dialects*, Cambridge 1897), and G. Devoto (*Tabulae Iguvinae*) we must add the more recent publication of J. Wilson Poultney's *The Bronze Tablets of Iguvium* (*Mon. Am. Ph. Ass.* 17, 1959).

Finally, by far the most important commentary on Ovid's *Fasti* since Sir James George Frazer published *The Fasti of Ovid* (London 1920) is the work of F. Boemer¹⁵ (*P. Ovidius Naso, Die Fasten, I, Einleitung, Text und Übersetzung*, Heidelberg 1957). This publication corresponds to the return to favor of Ovid as a "religious exegete." It seems to have been established long ago that the poet of the *Amores* should not be taken too seriously in matters of religion; I have attempted to show that this attitude lacked subtlety and seriousness.¹⁶

Works of general interest that have appeared during the two decades since 1955 and that establish certain basic positions within the field include, among others, G. Radke's book, *Die Götter Altitaliens* (Münster 1965), which takes the form of a dictionary that lists the different deities in alphabetical order. Each of the entries raises particular points which bear simultaneously on the work as a whole and on the interpretation of the particular elements. While we might discuss both the overall presentation of the work and its interpretation of the facts, we shall instead merely point out the author's principal idea. He claims (p. 8) to have wanted to return to Varro's objective, but under conditions improved by progress in linguistics, since Varro was noted for his "etymological investigations." Radke reasons that, "All too often antiquity left us nothing but a name."¹⁷ While this method may seem altogether too restrictive in general, it may "pay" in difficult or hopeless cases. Take, for example, the two cases that seem to respond best, a priori, to the spirit of this method of inquiry: Falacer and Dea Dia. Indeed, we have almost no information about these two except for their names.¹⁸

The paradox of Falacer is that he is provided with a flamen even though no one knows anything about the significance of the god. We know no more after reading the paragraph devoted to him. And for Dea Dia the inadequacy of a method based solely on onomastics is also clear. Radke adopts—justifiably—Altheim's proposal of comparison with the root **diu-*, but he redirects this scholar's line of thought in a less fortunate direction, by assimilating the goddess to the moon. Then he has recourse to the altogether gratuitous "reconstruction" of a *Doppelnamen*, *Dia Luna*. Yet the opposite approach would seem to be demanded here, to avoid the excesses of a purely etymological exercise in the name of liturgy. In fact, Dea Dia enters into the principal liturgy of the Arval Brethren as the deity invoked in the season that is

decisive for harvesting (the month of May), in order to dispense good light, in other words, good weather. Far from being confused with Diana, she is differentiated from the goddess of the night precisely because she is responsible for diffusing the daylight.¹⁹

An attempt in the opposite direction can be seen in Jean Bayet's *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (Paris ed. 1957; 2d ed. 1969), to the extent that the author in the course of his investigations attempts to deal with religious phenomena in the context of Indo-European traditions, the political institutions of the city, and the events of history, without neglecting the topographical features of the Roman site. Since I have already devoted a special review to this book,²⁰ I shall limit myself to recalling the broad outline. Nothing was more alien to Jean Bayet than complacency in pure abstraction; precisely because in Rome many deities have names with transparent meanings, such as Ceres or Fides, just to mention the oldest, he felt the need to "incarnate" them into the process by which they became real gods.

Hence he paid attention to history in the full sense of the term, to Roman religion from the migrations of the Italians and the settling of primitive Rome to the final stages. This "stratigraphic" preoccupation, borrowed from archaeology, works well throughout Bayet's book. It has the advantage of heightening the contrast between such archaic rites as the Lupercalia and later religious forms. It is counterbalanced by

an awareness of the constants not only within the "religious mentality of the Romans" but also within the frameworks and institutions of public worship.

Not all of the proposed analyses have received the same high approval. Since the first edition in 1957, two points in particular deserve to be reexamined: the origin of the Dioscuri in Rome and the Ara Maxima cult of Hercules. On the first point, I indicated in my review²¹ "that it is not certain that the Dioscuri had been 'evoked' from Tusculum." The discovery of the archaic dedicatory inscription to Castor and Pollux on the site of ancient Lavinium contributed substantially to this subject. The "evocation" itself seems improbable, for reasons stated in my article on the Dioscuri. On the second point, a new explanation was proposed by D. van Berchem, who dates the founding of the Great Altar to between the ninth and eighth centuries and attributes it to Phoenicians who came up the Tiber.²² The author took care to explain several rites and taboos of this cult, as well as the name Potitii, which he interprets to mean "the possessed" by arguing that a *gens Potitia* did not exist.²³ It is, however, impossible to prove such an initiative on the part of Phoenicians that early.²⁴ Only later (in the sixth or early fifth century, according to scholars) is there evidence, in the golden plaques of Pyrgi discovered by M. Pallottino's archaeological team.²⁵ This provided both a document in the Phoenician language and two texts in Etruscan that the



Bearers of Lares. Rome, Vatican Museum. Museum photo.

specialists attribute to Punic colonists rather than to Phoenicians. This last discovery would have delighted K. Latte, who was always on the lookout for epigraphic novelties. Such documents are a great aid to research,²⁶ though we need not "leave the gods" in the name of a new sociological historicism.

We shall now turn to other syntheses that have appeared in the last twenty years, beginning with the published works of F. Altheim (works that precede this period, but there have been new editions of his *Römische Religionsgeschichte*).²⁷ Altheim's thesis is well known. It is most vividly expressed in his book, *Griechische Götter im alten Rom* (Greek gods in ancient Rome [Giessen 1930]), the title of which is in and of itself so telling. No one has ever doubted the usefulness of this reaction against the concept that dates back to Wissowa (*Religion und Kultus der Römer* [Munich 1902; 2d ed. 1912]), which tended to exaggerate the isolation of the Latin world from its neighbors, at least until the third century B.C. But often in such cases reaction goes to extremes. It seems less and less true that Rome did nothing but passively accept Greek or Etruscan concepts.²⁸ This exclusivity in orientation may have led K. Latte to write that a discussion with Altheim was hopeless, "aussichtslos."²⁹

No one has criticized the principles affirmed by Latte at the time when he composed his own handbook, principles that recognized the value of epigraphy and archaeology. But this very tendency may have developed in an unwarranted manner in his hands. This state of mind had made Latte seemingly impervious to any notion of system. This latter-day doubting Thomas of the history of religions had an insatiable need for concrete proofs. Nothing is more revealing than his affected ignorance of the idea of an Indo-European substratum. He thus dismisses a priori the very enterprise of Dumézil, *weil die Pfeiler . . . auf denen sie [die Erneuerung dieser Versuche] ihr Gebäude errichtet, bei philologischer Kritik des Materials wegbrechen* (because the pillars on which it [the renewal of this attempt] built its structures falls apart at the philological criticism of the material).³⁰

We have now reached the heart of the problem. What is the "right" method according to Latte? In the chapter dealing with sources,³¹ he mentions the calendar, inscriptions, and literary sources. One can immediately see the drastic character of this limited list. Latte rejects comparativism by challenging the validity of the comparative method and by citing abuses committed by the nominalism of the nineteenth century (which had tried hard to identify deities through affinities suggested more or less by etymology).³²

This line of thought led him to ignore the structures of religious organization, which make up one of the most original dimensions of Roman religion. For instance, he does not mention the archaic triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus, nor does he mention the hierarchy of the three major flamens who each correspond to one of these three gods. In his estimation, these are *Ortsgöttheiten* who, far from having been arranged in a complementary hierarchy, had been more or less attracted according to the vagaries of historical accident and were subjected to the counterblows of an internal rivalry. Thus we learn that Quirinus, *Göttheit vom Quirinal*, had been eclipsed by Mars in the minds of his worshipers.³³

What is more, the very personalities of the deities become so malleable that they seem to be patterned from the vicissitudes of history. Nothing is more revealing than a sentence such as this one: *Dieselben Göttergestalten nehmen verschiedene Aspekte an, je nachdem sie aus den Nöten des bäuerlichen oder kriegerischen Lebens angerufen werden* (The same divine forms take on various aspects each time that they are called forth

from the needs of peasant or martial life).³⁴ The result is that Mars represented for the peasant the wildness (*der Wilde*) that the peasant tries to keep away from his fields, while for the warrior Mars represented an accredited protector who would "later" become the god of war.³⁵

This method confuses two different ideas: the identity of the deity and the realm of his competence. In Rome, there is no god with a variable definition in the way that, in our time, there are airplanes with a variable geometry. Gods were invariably identified. To go back to the example of Mars, Latte should have been alerted by an archaic document—the *Carmen Arvale*,³⁶ in which Mars is characterized as *ferus*. This episode, however, does not warrant referring to him as an *Exponent der unheimlichen, unvertrauten Welt draussen* (an exponent of the uncanny, unreliable world outside).³⁷ The best proof of this lies in the fact that Mars is summoned to the defense of the *ager Romanus* in a reference that leaves no doubt as to its meaning: *limen salii* (leap to the frontier).³⁸ Mars is invoked in this prayer, along with the Lases and the Semones, but in accordance with the definition of his own office. His task is to ensure the defense of borders, just as the task of the Lases is to protect the tilled land, and the task of the Semones is to promote the growth of seeds.

Ferus, therefore, does not mean "the savage against whom one wants to protect one's fields,"³⁹ but the god of strength, who is capable of unleashing his *furor* against a potential foe; thus, *ferus*, which is linguistically related to *ferox*,⁴⁰ characterizes the warlike nature of the god.

But we should take Latte to task not for the sources he advocates but for the ones he omits. In the case of literary sources, Latte is justified when he cautions scholars⁴¹ to guard against the distortions of archaic documents by the Neoplatonic or Stoic schools. Yet it is surprising that in the table of contents one finds the names only of Nigidius Figulus, Varro, Lucretius, and Cicero, all of whom caught Latte's attention only because they represented the philosophical opinions or religious beliefs of their times.

Certainly Plautus is cited several times with reference to certain expressions formulated in religious language, and Livy with reference to certain institutions, such as the ritual of the *fetiales* or the *inauguratio*. But the treatises of Cicero, such as *De natura deorum*, *De divinatione*, and *De legibus*, deserve more consideration despite their author's tendency to rationalize. It is to Cicero that we owe the survival of precious fragments from the earliest times, precisely because he preserved them in quotations in his treatises. For example, Cicero cites a fragment from a tragedy by Ennius⁴² that refers to a dialogue during which Cassandra speaks as follows:

*Missa sum superstitionis hariolationibus;
Namque Apollo fatis fandis dementem invitam ciet.*⁴³

This text is remarkable for its use of the expressions *superstitionis hariolationibus*, which do not carry here the pejorative connotation that they would later have, and for the etymological figure *fatis fandis*, which can be invoked in the argument about the etymology of *fatum*.⁴⁴

Equally surprising is the meager share allotted to Virgil and Horace, two poets whose vocabulary and allusions to cultic institutions constitute a mine of information for the historian of Roman religion. Finally, Latte's judgment of Ovid, the author of *Fasti*, must also be adjusted, indeed revised, particularly when it comes to such a statement as: *Altrömische Religiosität lag diesem modernsten unter den römischen Dichtern recht fern* ("Ancient Roman religious feeling remained far away from this most modern of Roman

poets").⁴⁵ Elsewhere I have tried to show why and how Ovid can be of use to modern research. To counter Latte's condemnation of the *Fasti* one need only recall the impressive account that Ovid gives of the nocturnal ceremony of the *Lemuria*. He evokes an atmosphere of archaic times that is at once magical and religious, without yielding to literary embellishments or Greek fables.⁴⁶

We should add that the poet gives clues that can be valuable in filling in the lacunae in our knowledge. Thus 1 January on the pre-Julian calendar lacks the name of a deity. Should one supply *co[ns]o*, as Mancini would have it, or *co[r]o(nidi)*, as Degraasi suggests? Ovid's testimony allows us to resolve the question and opt for the second hypothesis.⁴⁷

I have greatly criticized Latte's work, because the enterprise originally inspired equally great hope. It may still have significant value for research in the field. Latte put together a great mass of documents that make it possible to begin to establish files for problems yet to be solved. His principal concern was to be the first to offer to the scholarly world a fresh harvest of epigraphic and archaeological novelties that could fertilize research in the history of religions. In this he succeeded. He may not have supplanted the work of his predecessor Wissowa, but he did fill in a gap of fifty years' worth of information. His judgments may not have been infallible, but he did produce in his text and in his notes a number of relevant and suggestive thoughts. He is a scholar whose works, far from leaving the reader indifferent, make him think. He therefore deserves our thanks.

An altogether different spirit characterizes the works of Georges Dumézil. Not that this scholar disregarded archaeological or epigraphic documentation. On the contrary, he used it brilliantly when, for instance, he proposed an intelligible decipherment of the fragments of the archaic inscriptions of the truncated stela of the Forum.⁴⁸ But his main concern has always been to discern the structures that characterize a given religious situation or social organization. Since *La religion romaine archaïque, avec un appendice sur la religion des Étrusques* (Paris 1966),⁴⁹ Dumézil has published in succession *Idées romaines* (Paris 1969); *Mythe et Épopée*, vol. 1 (Paris 1968), vol. 2 (Paris 1971), vol. 3 (Paris 1973); and *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne* (Paris 1975); and he has revised and updated *La religion romaine archaïque* (2d ed. Paris 1974).⁵⁰

This work is by far the most striking of those of these last twenty-five years, because of both its breadth and its originality. The last publications are the full harvest of over thirty years of fruitful labor and reflection. They represent a kind of balance sheet that this author has tried to draw up. The elements that were the object of the individual studies became integrated into the whole, so that the whole benefited from individual analyses, and conversely, comprehensive views often shed light on particular issues.⁵¹

For the first time the reader has access to an interpretation of Roman religion in the light of the comparative Indo-European tradition. This was the intended plan behind the whole enterprise. An important introduction that bears the modest title of *Primary Remarks* opens the discussion and gives the author a chance to define his line of inquiry. This section alone (151 pages) could have been a book. After that, the material is arranged into four parts. The first part introduces "The Great Gods of the Archaic Triad." The second part ushers us into Roman history—the end of the monarchy and the beginnings of the Republic—by discussing various aspects of "Ancient Theology," among them the Capitoline triad, the public cult of Vesta, and the forces and elements that characterize the "third, second, and first functions." (The notion of function has, of course, a partic-

ular character in Dumézil's language. On the basis that the archaic Roman triad Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus, which can also be found among the Umbrians at Iguvium, can only be explained by historical, topographical, and ethnic considerations, the author demonstrates the necessity of recognizing a three-level religious conception, a theological structure.) The third part is devoted to "Extensions and Mutations" of Roman religion. The fourth and last part deals with the cult (ceremonies, priests, *signa*, and *portenta*), with a chapter devoted to private cults. An appendix concerns the religion of the Etruscans.

The "Preliminary Remarks" give the reader a clear understanding of the author's method. The reader learns how comparativism was able to lift up the heavy hypothetical structure that seemed to weigh irretrievably on the archaic period of Roman history, ever since the eighteenth century, when Louis de Beaufort wrote his famous *Dissertation sur l'incertitude des cinq premiers siècles de Rome* (1738).

Beyond the hypercritical wave of the nineteenth century that was one of the logical consequences of this method of doubt, Dumézil opened up a new way, following a systematic investigation that revealed corresponding structures in the respective areas of the Indo-European realm, for instance, the comparable antitheses Romulus-Numa in Rome and Varuna-Mitra in Vedic India, and the parallel conjunctions of Cocles-Scaevola (or "the Cyclops and the Lefty") in Rome and Óðinn-Týr ("the one-eyed god and the one-armed god") in Scandinavian mythology.

The history of Rome need no longer be considered a doubtful fabrication coming out of the headquarters of fanciful annalists. It is actually a stylized history that exhibits—on the banks of the Tiber in a historical form—an ideology that is elsewhere mythical. Now, although there is an "Indo-European heritage" in Rome, it is no longer possible to reduce the divine, in the origins of the early Rome of Romulus, to an embryonic world of diffuse forces out of which, by virtue of a process of evolution, "numinal" deities emerged who were endowed with a numen not unlike the Melanesian mana.

Consequently the triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus, which existed in both Rome and Iguvium (predating the Capitoline association of Jupiter-Juno-Minerva), can only be an accidental and late grouping. Wissowa had already recognized this archaic "Dreiverrein" (Trinity), which Latte would later challenge. This may be a case of hairsplitting, but hairsplitting can lead to blindness: one cannot see the forest for the trees.

This threefold hierarchy can also be found in the priestly structures and the ritual institutions. The triple *flamonium* is in itself a veiled reference to the divine triad. The three priests who in the hierarchy of precedence come immediately after the Rex (turned Rex Sacrorum or Rex Sacrificulus during the Republic) are, in their respective order, the Flamen Dialis assigned to Jupiter, the Flamen Martialis assigned to Mars, and the Flamen Quirinalis assigned to serve Quirinus. These three flamens proceeded together once a year in an open chariot to a chapel of Fides, or Good Faith, who was necessary for harmonious relationships among people in all walks of life.

Dumézil also shows this threefold grouping⁵² in the archaic forms of the cult. Thus, the Regia, the former "house of the king," which during the Republic became the seat of the Pontifex Maximus, accommodates three types of cult. The first concerns Jupiter (in addition to the cults of Janus and Juno, who were honored as those who usher in the new year and the new month); the second, Mars, in the *sacrarium Martis*; the third, in another *sacrarium*, Ops Consiva, who



Ara pietatis. Temple relief. Rome, Museo dei Conservatori. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

belongs to the group of deities represented by Quirinus in the canonical list of the *flamines maiores*.

The same grouping includes—after Janus, the god of beginnings, and before the specific deities invoked in special circumstances—Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus in the ancient *carmen* of the *devotio* (Livy 8.9.6). It also inspires the old theory of *spolia opima* recorded by Festus (p. 302 L.²), who tells that the *prima spolia* are offered to Jupiter, the *secunda spolia* to Mars, and the *tertia* to “Janus Quirinus.” The threefold scheme persists, no matter what interpretation we adopt for *prima*, *secunda*, *tertia*, whether it is based on time or rank. The choice is open. We should note that on this point⁵³ Latte agrees with Dumézil by accepting this evidence about the triad: Latte suggests an interpretation of the *prima*, *secunda*, *tertia* as a function of worth and not of time, which is consistent with the trifunctional explanation of the triad proposed by Dumézil.⁵⁴ Finally, the same scheme can be found in the triple patronage of the college of the *Salii* who are in *tutela Jovis Martis Quirini*.⁵⁵

But does this tripartition correspond to anything that would not quickly dissolve through historical erosion, as the Capitoline triad replaced the old Indo-European triad as early as the sixth century B.C.? Dumézil’s own definition of the “ideology of the three functions” applies here. “It can be

observed,” he states, “with the special peculiarities of each of the societies, among the Indians and Iranians as well as among the ancient Scandinavians and, with more pronounced alterations, among the Celts. To judge from some survivals which are to be found despite the early reorganization of the three traditions, it was also known to several waves of Greek invaders, the Achaeans and the Ionians. . . . The principal elements and the machinery of the world and of society are here divided into three harmoniously adjusted domains. These are, in descending order of dignity, sovereignty, with its magical and juridical aspects and a kind of maximal expression of the sacred; physical power and bravery, the most obvious manifestation of which is victory in war; and fertility and prosperity with all kinds of conditions and consequences, which are almost always meticulously analyzed and represented by a great number of related but different divinities, among whom now one, now the other, typifies the whole in formulaic enumerations of gods. The ‘Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus’ grouping, with the nuances appropriate to Rome, corresponds to the lists found in Scandinavia and in Vedic and pre-Vedic India: Óðinn, Thor, Freyr; Mitra-Varuna, Indra, Nāsatya.”⁵⁶

Therein lies the very heart of a proof that in the course of its development took great pains to answer exhaustively all the criticisms raised against it. The reader is urged to refer to it. It is important to add that Dumézil also demonstrated the fertility of his comparativist method in the area of marginal cults. Their archaic rites had been incomprehensible to Romans of the classical era for most of the time. One example will suffice, namely, the festival of the *Matralia* on 11 June—a strange liturgy in which Roman ladies introduce a slave woman into the temple of *Mater Matula* (itself an exceptional act) and then drive her out, hitting her with sticks. During this rite the ladies hold in their arms not their own children but those of their sisters. These rites seem incomprehensible when viewed solely in a Roman context. But when compared with Vedic mythology, they become clear, because *Mater Matula* represents Dawn.⁵⁷

It is greatly to his credit that Dumézil was able to shed light on the function of a whole series of deities whose liturgy had become unintelligible because of the “lost mythology,” and thus to give them their true identity. They were studied in the book appropriately entitled *Déeses latines et mythes védiques* (Brussels 1956), which was followed by studies on *Carna* (1960) and on the two *Pales* (1962). The reader who takes the trouble to follow these demonstrations will become aware of the “archaic dimension” of Roman religion, as well as the constants that emerge here and there in the religious mentality, despite great gaps in time.

Dumézil willingly took risks by the very method that he adopted. Because he exposed his thought step by step as it progressed, he was reproached for excessive fluidity and by some people for fickleness. “His latest state of mind,” one such disparaging observer maliciously called it. Of course, a publication that proceeds by successive alterations and corrections is liable to be a problem. But to each his own rhythm. Dumézil has enjoyed inspiring critical reaction in an area in which he has often been a pioneer. Thus, his study of the inscription of the *lapis niger* benefited from suggestions and corrections of detail proposed by other scholars. The thrust of his argument, which revealed the augural prescription for the *juges auspiciis*, was not diminished by it. We owe the fine collection *Idées Romaines* (Paris 1969) to this maturation of thinking. (In it, the author made every effort to use his entire experience as a scholar in formulating his fundamental ideas about Roman civilization. He also added several



Funeral procession. Aquila, Museo nazionale d'Abruzzo. Museum photo.

studies on the ideology of the three functions and some analyses outlining deities [Venus, Carna, Pales, Consus, and Ops].)

The preceding observations allow us at least to recognize certain broad outlines of research in the field of Roman religion. They are not so much contradictory as complementary. They emphasize approaches that attempt to solve problems in various ways. The bibliographies that follow allow the reader to take into account a wide variety of studies. It is not my intention to cast my lot for one work rather than another, but simply to offer a few final reflections.

First we must come to terms with the fact that many points in this vast field of investigation still remain obscure. Such ceremonies as the Lupercalia and the Argei may never be really explained. Of course some aspects of them have given rise to plausible or probable explanations, but the enduring mystery gives us some idea of the level of our ignorance. We may dream of an ideal colloquium of scholars concerned with the same problem: they would leave their egos aside and gather about a round table instead of working in isolation *pro virili parte* and subsequently making exclusive, rather polemical, pronouncements.⁵⁸

But aside from the problems that remain unsolved, these two decades have undoubtedly been among the most fertile in the history of research on Roman religion, thanks to archaeological finds and the sustained efforts of many people. Unquestionably the problem of origins has benefited from a renewal of effort on a level unknown until now, through archaeological digs, philological inquiry, and the comparativists' contributions to the field.

Furthermore, the originality of Rome emerged far more clearly after the extreme swings of the pendulum represented by Wissowa and Altheim. Monographs that appeared in France and elsewhere during this period played a significant role in this respect. Not only have they contributed to the settling of specific issues but they have also often cast a new light on general problems through a kind of inverse reaction.

Luckily for researchers, many questions remain open. First is the problem of syncretism, which affects all societies that are not isolated from the rest of the world. This was true of Rome as much in the archaic period as in the classical and postclassical periods. Syncretism cannot be defined as a passive assimilation. The study of homologous deities in Greece, Etruria, and Rome shows clearly how the true question to understand is not so much the origin of the borrowing as the process by which the borrowing took place.⁵⁹

The Augustan Age is particularly fascinating, though this is not always suspected. In the *Fasti*, Ovid confronted the awesome problem of reconciling the national tradition with an ideology of Greek inspiration. Although Ovid succeeded unevenly in this task, his modern critics have often failed to appreciate its inherent difficulties. The Imperial Age left some interesting liturgical documents, the *Acta* of the Arval Brethren. Nothing could be more revealing than the names of the dignitaries of the city who considered it an honor to be, along with the emperor, part of a college originally designed to promote an agrarian cult.⁶⁰ Nothing could be more instructive than sorting out archaic traits that demonstrate the great age of rites and invocations that were introduced later.⁶¹

Another question focuses on the connection between magic and religion. How is it possible that these two mentalities, which contradict each other in certain respects, managed to coexist within certain calendrical festivals?⁶² How does one go about interpreting certain rites that clearly come under the rubric of magic, such as releasing foxes "with torches tied to their burning backs" during the festival of the Cerialia?⁶³ Are we to see in it "a magical/religious process to promote fertility"?⁶⁴ Or, on the contrary, are we to consider these foxes "the symbolic representatives of the solar heat which must be kept in check"?⁶⁵

In general, it is not always easy to distinguish the boundaries between these two mentalities; sometimes they overlap, as in the formula of the *carmen* in the *devotio* of Decius, as reported by Livy (8.9.6), which partakes simultaneously of a

religious supplication and a compelling magic: *vos precor veneror veniam peto feroque* ("I pray to you and I honor you, I ask for and I obtain your acceptance, your favor").⁶⁶

Another of the questions Latte raised was, To what extent can one still speak of a living faith in historical times?⁶⁷ This formulation may perhaps reflect too modern a point of view. The Romans of the first century, for the most part (except Lucretius), seem to reconcile respect for traditions with great philosophical freedom. Their situation in the face of national religious institutions is thus not entirely comparable to that of the modern believer who separates himself clearly from the "unbeliever" by virtue of his belief.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, we might ask the question in different terms. What religious ideals pervaded minds in the various periods? On the official level, Rome's ideological choice was manifested in particular by two remarkable initiatives. At a time when it was fully exposed to the syncretist movement of its neighbors Etruria and Magna Graecia, Rome adopted the Trojan legend. This was a choice with an enormous impact, which would later allow the city to use a myth of Greek origin *ad maiorem gloriam populi Romani*. We know today how this myth, already present in Italy in the sixth century, inspired the Roman bards of the third century before it provided an official doctrine for the poets of the Augustan Age and for the regime that would later claim Julius Caesar as its authority.

Moreover, thanks to the teachings of the Etruscans, Rome was familiar with the doctrine according to which the *saecula* had to be pursued until they reached the end of a series of ten, which was supposed to fill out a great period. Rome was not indifferent to this doctrine, since the institution of the secular games, which materialized in the third century by the command of the *Sibylline Books*, had a sequel (especially the solemn celebration of 17 B.C.), which a reference to the "great series of centuries" in the fourth *Bucolics* places on the same level. But another theme was to eclipse the first: the theme of *Roma aeterna* that Virgil advanced as an official dogma in the *Aeneid* by having Jupiter utter the following verses for the benefit of the Romans, who traced their descent from Aeneas:

*Hic ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono:
Imperium sine fine dedi*
"I fix no limits for them in time or in space:
I give them an empire without end."⁶⁹

Here again the choice is significant and gives material for thought. One question often leads to another. It should not surprise us that several scholars go beyond their particular analyses to ponder this fundamental problem: what constitutes the basic innovation of the religious patrimony of Rome? This matter should not be dealt with by classifying types of explanations but rather by providing the bibliographic repertory. In any case, the answer cannot be easy nor can it exhaust the fascination of the historian of religions for a heritage of traditions several millennia old.

R.S./g.h.

NOTES

1. Among the reviews bearing upon the period before 1950, we emphasize N. Turchi, "Studi sulla religione Romana," 1940–50, *StudRom* 2 (1954): 570–77; A. Brelich, "Storia delle religioni: Religione Romana," 1939–48, *Doxa* 2 (1949): 136–66; H. J. Rose, "Roman Religion," 1910–60, *JRS* 50 (1960): 161–72. It is sufficient to mention for the rest the collections published from time to time in the journal

Studi Romani: N. Turchi, "Recenti studi sulla religione Romana," *StudRom* 6 (1958): 591–94; U. Bianchi, *ibid.* 9 (1961): 301–7; *ibid.* 11 (1963): 581–89; *ibid.* 15 (1967): 70–78.

2. We must not forget that, collaborating on the *Handbuch der römischen Altertümer* of J. Marquardt and Th. Mommsen, Wissowa had edited the third volume (2d ed., Leipzig 1885) under the generic title *Römische Staatsverwaltung*, which included the subtitle *Das Sacralwesen*.

3. Extract of a personal letter from K. Latte to me in French, dated 27 October 1957.

4. M. Guarducci, *BCAR* 72 (1946–48): 2ff. Cf. A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae* (= *I.L.L.R.*), nos. 10–12.

5. St. Weinstock, *Festschrift*, A. Rumpf (Cologne 1952), 151ff.

6. L. L. Tels-de-Jong, *Sur quelques divinités de la naissance et de la prophétie* (Delft 1959), *passim*. Cf. my review of this work in *Guomoni* 32 (1960): 650–53.

7. M. Guarducci, *Arch. Class* 3 (1951): 99ff., and "Ancora sulla legge sacra di Lavinio," *ibid.* 11 (1959): 204ff. (cf. A. Degrassi, *I.L.L.R.*, no. 509).

8. We refer to St. Weinstock, *JRS* 42 (1952): 34ff., and *RE*, 8, 2 (1958): cc, 1712–13 s. v. *Vesperna*; R. Bloch, *CRAI*, 1954, 203ff.; H. Le Bonniec, *Le culte de Cérès à Rome* (Paris 1958), 463ff.; Ae. Peruzzi, *Un problema etimologico latino*, *Maia* 11 (1959): 212ff.; K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Munich 1960), 70, n. 1.

9. In spite of the efforts of Weinstock (who cites elsewhere the passage of Festus, p. 505 L: *Vesperna apud Plautum* [fr. inc. 45] *ceua intellegitur*), the divinity of *Vesperna* seems suspect to me. I will understand it as a matter of a *lex sacra*, until proof to the contrary (in particular, an irrefutable attestation of this supposed divinity): "presents to Ceres, in an evening offering, viscera boiled in the pot."

10. Published by M. Guarducci, *BCAR* 76 (1956–58), appendix pp. 3ff.; it is cited by A. Degrassi, *I.L.L.R.*, no. 1271, with an important bibliography from which it is advisable to single out A. Alföldi, *Die trojanischen Urahnen der Römer* (Basel 1957); *Early Rome and the Latins* (Ann Arbor 1963), 255ff.

11. F. Castagnoli, *SMSR* 30 (1959): 109ff.

12. Cf. A. Degrassi, *I.L.L.R.*, no. 1271a, with bibliographic references.

13. Cf. A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins*, 268ff., and my article "Hommages à Georges Dumézil," *Coll. Latomus*, 45 (1960), 177ff. (= *R.C.D.R.*, *Les Castores romains* . . .).

14. In a letter of 15 March 1971, F. Castagnoli courteously informed me of the then impending publication of the results of the excavations at Lavinium, with cited details: "Nei due ultimi anni gli scavi hanno riguardato un tratto delle mura sul lato orientale: sono mura in opera quadrata con resti di una porta e una strada. Presentano più fasi, la più antica databile al VI secolo."

15. The same author is publishing a commentary on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of which the first volume, *Kommentar*, books 1–3 (Heidelberg 1969), has appeared. An edition "for the educated public" of *Fastes*, by H. Le Bonniec (text, translation, notes), 2 vols. (Catana 1969), has appeared.

16. Let me cite my two articles on Ovid, reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*

17. Radke, *op. cit.*, p. 8: "Und doch bietet sich uns in immer wiederkehrenden Fällen kaum etwas Anderes als der Name."

18. It is by design that I have not included Venus, which would have given the discussion a very personal turn. Always appreciating the moral of the fable of La Fontaine, *The Miller, His Son, and the Donkey*, I will not here oppose Radke's denial of the public agreement accorded to me by Hans Herter, Kurt Latte, Jean Bayet, and Georges Dumézil.

19. Cf. the argument developed in my article on Dea Dia, *Coll. Latomus*, 102 (1969), 2: 675–79 (= *R.C.D.R.*, *Dea Dia* . . .).

20. Cf. *R.E.L.* 35 (1957): 424–31.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 428–29. The idea of making the cult of Castor come from Tusculum was a common enough opinion (cf. Latte, *R.R.G.*, p. 23) before the discovery of the archaic dedication on the ancient site of Lavinium.

22. D. van Berchem, *Hercule Melquart à l'Ara Maxima*, *RPAA* 32 (1960): 61–68.

23. J. Carcopino (*Aspects mystiques de la Rome païenne* [Paris 1941]) sees in the Pontitii a function of Pythagorean origin, coming from Taranto after 370. In the second edition of his book ([1969], p. 289),

J. Bayet remarks with good reason that Hercules already appears in the first Roman lectisternium of 399.

24. "But what might attract them (the Phoenicians) into this poor region?" asks J. Bayet (*ibid.* [1969], 289).

25. Cf. M. Pallottino, *Scavi nel santuario di Pyrgi*, Arch. Class. 16 (1964): 58–63; 76–104; 104–17.

26. Cf. the observations of R. Bloch (*Un mode d'interprétation à deux degrés: De l'uni de Pyrgi à Ilithyie et Leucothée*, Arch. Class. 21 [1969]: 64–65) on the presence of Thesan on a bronze lamella discovered by M. Pallottino at Pyrgi and published by him: *Un'altra laminetta di bronzo con iscrizione etrusca recuperata dal materiale di Pyrgi*, Arch. Class. 19 (1967): 336–41. R. Bloch wrote: "Thesan is nothing but the dawn known in Rome under the characteristics of Mater Matuta and subsequently assimilated to the marine goddess Leucothea." This identification is all the more interesting because Mater Matuta—to whom G. Dumézil restored her true identity, transcending all the confused discussions (*La religion romaine archaïque* [2d ed., Paris 1974], 66ff.), at the same time that he explicated the rites of the Matralia of 11 June—had a temple not only at Rome and Satricum-Conca, as R. Bloch called it, but also a cult, precisely at Caere (to which Pyrgi served as port), as I have observed in *R.E.L.* 43 (1965): 74; cf. Ovid *F.* 6 475ff.

27. F. Altheim, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (Baden-Baden 1951–53; 2d ed., Berlin 1956). It is advisable not to rely on a French work published by the same author, *La religion romaine antique* (Paris 1955). I have observed, in *RHR* 159 (1961): 242–45, that it is less a translation than an adaptation, presented in language often incorrect.

28. I refer, for example, to the work of H. Le Bonniec, for Ceres (1958); to my work for Venus (1954); and to my articles on the Castors (1960) and Diana (1964), reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*

29. K. Latte, *R.R.G.*, 15, no. 1.

30. *Ibid.*, 9 and n. 3.

31. *Ibid.*, 1ff.: Quellen.

32. *Ibid.*, 9.

33. *Ibid.*, 114: "Der Gott, der Quirinus im Bewusstsein seiner Verehrer zurückgedrängt hat, war Mars."

34. *Ibid.*, 18: "The same divine figures appear under different aspects according to whether the invocation expresses the needs of agriculture or of military life."

35. *Ibid.*, 18: "Mars, der Gott der Welt jenseits der Siedlung, ist für den Bauern der Wilde, von dem er wünscht, dass er seine Fluren verschonen möge, für die Krieger, die die Grenzen der eigenen Siedlung überschreiten, ist er der gegebene Schirmherr und wird so zum Kriegsgott."

36. Cf. Degrassi, *I.L.R.R.*, n. 4, with notes and bibliographic references.

37. Cf. Latte, *R.R.G.*, 114.

38. The complete verse *Satur fu, fere Mars; limen sali, sta berber* can be translated "Be satisfied, ferocious Mars; leap to the frontier and mount guard." Cf. the explicit explanation of G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., 239ff. It is possible that "be satisfied" should be understood with the implicit idea of "by our offerings," as H. J. Rose has suggested.

39. According to the terms of Latte, *R.R.G.*, 114: "Das Arvallied wünscht, der Wilde möge satt sein, und wenn man ihm beim Flurumgang opfert, so möchte man seine Felder gegen ihn schützen."

40. Cf. A. Ernout and A. M. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine* (4th ed., Paris 1959), 230, s. v. *ferus*.

41. Latte, *R.R.G.*, 1.

42. Cicero *De divinatione* 1.66. The passage from Ennius is attributed to a tragedy by Ennius, "Alexander"; cf. the edition by A. S. Pease (Darmstadt 1963), 211.

43. "I had been sent to make prophetic predictions; Apollo impels me in spite of myself in my delirium to reveal fate."

44. A brief reference to this passage (Ennius, scen. 57 V²) is made, among other texts, in a note by Latte (*R.R.G.*, 268, n. 1). For the meaning of *superstitiosus*, see, most recently, E. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris 1969): 2:274ff.; for the etymology of *fas*, *fatum*, cf. *ibid.*, 133ff. (the author refuses the derivation from the theme *dhēs-* in favor of the link with *fari*).

45. Latte, *R.R.G.*, ("This poet, one of the most modern among his

contemporaries, was quite a stranger to the spirit of old Roman religion").

46. Ovid *F.* 5.429–44.

47. Cf. A. Degrassi, *Inscriptiones Italiae*, 13, 2 (1963): 388, with reference to my article "Un passage lacunaire du calendrier préjulien d'Antium éclairé par le commentaire d'Ovide" (*F.* 1.289–94), Coll. Latomus, 44 (1960): 694–97; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.* In the *editio minor* of the *Inscriptiones Latinae liberae rei publicae* (Florence 1957), 1:23, Degrassi has again put a question mark after his restoration.

48. Cf., most recently, G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., 99–103.

49. Cf. my article *REA* 70 (1968): 83–91.

50. An English translation, *Archaic Roman Religion* (Chicago 1970), is based on the first French edition.

51. I return here to certain developments presented in my review (*RHR* 172 [1967]: 217–20) and in my article (*REA* 70 [1968]: 83–91). However, all the references on this subject are to the second edition, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., and to the English translation. Kohlhammer at first expected to publish this work in German. But "the delays required by translation into German were prolonged," so it is the French edition which represents the latest state of the author's thought, and he has kept the book up-to-date.

52. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., 183–86.

53. K. Latte, *R.R.G.*, 204–5.

54. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., 178–80.

55. Cf. Servius, *ad Aen.* 8.663.

56. G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 161.

57. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 51 and 337–39.

58. An experiment of this type has been carried out for the gold lamellae of Pyrgi: see "Tavola rotonda: Le lamina di Pyrgi" (Rome 1970).

59. In France, in the line of monographs devoted to divinities, Jean-Louis Girard, a former student of the E.N.S., intends to write a thesis on Minerva.

60. *Les Frères Arvales, recrutement et origine sociale* . . . (Paris 1975).

61. I have tried to cover some problems in the *Annuaire de l'École des Hautes Études* (Paris 1969–70), 256–57.

62. In the article on this question (*Annuaire de l'École des Hautes Études* [Paris 1967–68], 31–55 = *R.C.D.R.*, *Religion et magie à Rome*), I have examined in particular the festival of the Robigalia.

63. Cf. Ovid *F.* 4.681–82. F. Bömer (*Die Fasten*, 2, ad loc.) has denied the reality of this rite, which most commentaries take into consideration.

64. This is the idea of J. Bayet (*RBPh* 29 [1951]: 5–32), whom H. Le Bonniec follows on this point (*Le culte de Cérés à Rome* [Paris 1958], 122).

65. This is the suggestion of K. Latte (*R.R.G.*, 19).

66. Cf. G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 94, for the commentary on this *carmen*. It is advisable, this scholar demonstrates, to respect the reading *feroque*, for which most editors have arbitrarily substituted the conjecture *oroque*.

67. Latte, *R.R.G.*, 15: "Es gilt zu ermitteln, was in historischen Zeiten noch lebendiger Glaube war."

68. With respect to "respect for traditions," a supposed "remark" about an augur who could not look at another augur without laughing is often attributed to Cicero, who was himself an augur. In fact, Cato's remark, reported by Cicero, applies, not to the Roman augur, but to the diviner who in that era was still considered a priest of Etruscan allegiance. See the texts: Cicero *De divinatione* 2.51: "Vetus autem illud Catonis admodum scitum est, qui mirari se aiebat quod non rideret haruspex haruspitem cum vidisset"; *De natura deorum* 1.71: "mirabile videtur quod non rideat haruspex cum haruspitem viderit."

69. Virgil *Aen.* 1.278–79: "I have not fixed limits for them in time or in space: I have given them an empire without end."

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A. DEGRASSI, *Inscriptiones Italiae*, 13, *Fasti et Elogia*, fasc. 2, *Fasti anni*

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ROMAN FESTIVALS

The very word for festival is a Latin term that derives from *festā*—a neuter plural that corresponds to the classical expression *festus* (*dies*). This leads us back to the root **dhē-*, which serves to form the stem **dhēs-*. This stem is the base both for the Latin noun *fanum* (with the root in its weak form) and the words *fesiae*—which renders *feriae*—and *festus* (*dies*) (with the root in its strong form). It is certainly difficult to define the stem **dhēs-*, which according to Benveniste¹ “designates some religious object or rite whose meaning we can no longer ascertain; in any case, it is related to the sacred sphere.”

The lack of precision of this definition indicates the degree of present-day ignorance and induces us to learn about ancient beliefs on the subject. The following are the statements of Macrobius,² which go back to the origin of the institution of the calendar: “Numa, having divided the year into months, went on to divide each month into days, all of which were known as *dies festos* (festivals) or *profestos* (working days) or *intercisos* (“interruptions” or “intermittents”: morning and evening are festivals, while the interval between them is a period for work). The festival days are dedicated to the gods, on working days men may transact their private and public business, and the ‘interruptions’ are days shared between gods and men.”

This distinction remained in effect both for the calendar of the republican epoch, which is supposed to have been instituted by King Numa (and which is characterized by the periodic insertion, every two years, of an intercalary month, *mensis intercalaris* or *mercedonius*, to compensate for the deficit of the lunar year—355 days—in relation to the solar year of 365¼ days),³ and for the Julian calendar, which was reformed in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar and which, except for a correction made by Pope Gregory XIII in the sixteenth century, is still in use in societies of Latin tradition.

Nevertheless, the distribution of the days as presented by Macrobius does not appear in a direct reading of the distinctive marks of the calendar. As this document was edited for the use of men, the days bear a sign which indicates whether or not they are suitable for profane use: *F* designates the *dies fasti*, in which it is *fas*, “religiously legitimate,”⁴ to attend to the concerns of everyday life: in particular, the praetor could pronounce the three sacramental words, *tria verba sollemnia*, “do, dico, addico”⁵ which permitted the exercise of the *legis actio*, legal procedure. The letter *C* signifies comitial days (*dies comitiales*) on which the holding of *comitia* (assemblies) was also authorized.⁶

By contrast, the letter *N* marked the days (*dies nefastos*) on which *non licebat lege agere*,⁷ because such days were reserved “for the will of the gods,” *deorum causa*, to use Varro’s expression.⁸ The term *nefastus* thus does not have the pejorative sense that it took on later,⁹ but simply indicates that the praetor was forbidden to pronounce the three sacramen-

tal words and the magistrate was forbidden to hold assemblies. These days had religious overtones only to the extent that if the praetor were to transgress the rule by mistake (*imprudens*), he would have to perform an expiatory sacrifice (*piaculari hostia*). And if, on the contrary, he violated the prohibition knowingly—*prudens*—he would be struck with *impietas*, an inexpressible wrong.¹⁰ Otherwise these *dies nefasti* did not impede the holding of assemblies in the senate, the meetings of the *contiones*, or the activities of the markets.¹¹

The true festival days—*dies fasti*—which carry proper names in capital letters on the calendar, generally¹² have the sign *NP*: these two ligatured letters have given rise to a series of debates which have never come to any certain conclusions.¹³ But these are undoubtedly *feriae publicae* set aside for the gods, *dies deorum causa instituti* according to Varro’s definition.¹⁴ They are characterized by sacrifices to the gods as well as by ceremonies and rejoicing.¹⁵ They imply an obligation to rest: these are *dies quieti*, declares Cicero (*De legibus* 2.55), days “exempted from all litigation,” on which it is proper to celebrate “completed tasks, in the midst of one’s servants.”¹⁶ Freemen are to renounce their lawsuits and quarrels, and slaves are to benefit from the right to rest from their labors and their troubles.¹⁷ This prescription for rest was combined with a precise set of rules, if we are to believe Macrobius:¹⁸ “The priests used to maintain that the celebration of the festival was desecrated if, after it had been officially proclaimed, anyone worked.” In practice, exceptions were provided, for example for certain agricultural work,¹⁹ and the lawmakers elaborated a kind of casuistry to this end. When asked what one was permitted to do on the day of a religious festival, Scaevola replied: “That which if omitted would do harm to someone.”²⁰ Macrobius, who cites this response, immediately gives two concrete examples: “If an ox fell into a pit and the head of the household pulled it out with the aid of his laborers, he would not be thought to have desecrated the festival; nor a man who, seeing that the main beam of his roof was broken, propped it up to avoid its imminent collapse.”²¹

It is nevertheless interesting to note that this prescription retained an absolute character vis-à-vis the high priestly dignitaries, the king of the sacrifices and the flamens (among whom the *flamen Dialis* was *quotidie feriatus*, “every day in a ‘festive’ state”). Macrobius in fact specifies that “the king of the sacrifices and the flamens did not have the right to see anyone working on festival days; they also had a public crier proclaim that all were to abstain from work; whoever neglected this prescription was fined. Besides the fine, the code provided that if a person did any work on these days through carelessness, he was to sacrifice a pig in expiation; on the other hand, if he had acted knowingly, there was no expiation for him, according to the opinion of Scaevola the pontiff.”²² Yet Macrobius mitigates this opinion of Scaevola with a corrective:²³ “There is no profanation, if the work concerned the gods or the cult, or if an urgent situation of vital interest presented itself.”

Among the *feriae*, private festivals, *feriae privatae* (such as the *Lemuria* of 9, 11, and 13 May, which were celebrated by the head of the household to drive the *Lemures* from the house—or the *Denicales*, whose aim was to purify a family that had been in mourning),²⁴ are to be distinguished from public festivals, *feriae publicae*.

The latter, which were officially celebrated in the general interest, *pro populo*, were subdivided into fixed and movable feasts—*feriae conceptivae*, which were announced each year at a variable date but within the same season (these are especially agricultural festivals, such as, for example, the *Sementivae*)—and *feriae imperitivae*, ordained by the civil or

religious authorities under exceptional circumstances (for example, upon the appearance of a prodigy or to celebrate a victory). Only fixed festivals, *feriae publicae stativae*, normally appeared on calendars (which were used by the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*).

It is appropriate at this point to examine the distribution of the various festivals over the course of the year. Their arrangement on the calendar, as well as their respective meanings, furnishes valuable information: the calendar constitutes an accurate mirror of the religious mentality of the Romans. Historians of Roman religion also have a document that is unique of its kind: the poet Ovid's liturgical commentary on the *Fasti*. In spite of its syncretist inspiration, which mixes Roman religion with Greek mythology, Ovid's poem constitutes a useful and valuable source by virtue of its internal stratification. This is because Ovid's method generally consists in presenting religious data on three levels: he describes rites, he situates their institutionalization in history, and he attempts to explain their meaning through a myth.

The question then arises as to whether the relationships between these three levels are arbitrary or whether, rather, they correspond to a complementary clarification of the religious reality. A general response is not possible. There are as many species as there are particular phenomena.²⁵ What must be emphasized is that as a born observer, Ovid is an incomparable witness to liturgy: in this respect he often helps us to elucidate the meaning of archaic ceremonies beyond his own interpretation, precisely because he did not hesitate to describe faithfully rites that appeared strange to his contemporaries.

The recognition of an Indo-European heritage at Rome, which in France has been the work of Georges Dumézil, has made it possible to decipher archaic rites whose mythological key had long been lost. I am thinking, for example, of the 11 June *Matralia* in which mothers of households, by fondling in their arms their sister's child rather than their own, carried out a ceremony whose meaning they did not know, but one that corresponds to a procedure of sympathetic magic in Vedic India: the goddess Dawn takes care of the Sun, who is the son of Night, her sister.²⁶

These are nevertheless extreme cases; the majority of religious festivals clearly remained intelligible to Romans of the classical age.²⁷ It is sufficient to take a look at the calendar to realize that two groups emerge from the whole: the festivals of martial import in the month of March inaugurate military campaigns in the spring (14 March: *Equirria*; 17 March: *Agonium Martiale*; 19 March: *Quinquatrus*; 23 March: *Tubilustrium*), and the pastoral or agricultural festivals take place in the month of April (15 April: *Fordicidia*; 19 April: *Cerialia*; 21 April: *Parilia*; 25 April: *Robigalia*).

Corresponding to the festivals that celebrate the opening of the military year are the festivals that close it at the end of military operations: the purificatory ceremony of the *Tigillum Sororium* of 1 October, the sacrifice of the winning horse of the 15 October race, and the *Armilustrium* of 19 October.

As for agricultural or pastoral festivals, these take place during two further periods of liturgical intensity, in summer and winter. In the months of July and August they successively celebrated the *Lucaria* (19 and 21 July), the *Neptunalia* (23 July), the *Furrinalia* (25 July), the *Portunalia* (17 August), the *Consualia* (21 August), the *Volcanalia* (23 August), the *Opiconsivia* (25 August) and the *Volturnalia* (27 August). All of these summer festivals are intended to promote the harmonious arrival of the products of the land or the prosperity of the livestock. Then follows a liturgical recess: the months of September and October are absolutely "empty." The last

agricultural festivals take place in December to ensure good preservation of the winter harvest: these are the *Consualia* of 15 December and the *Opalia* of 19 December.

Thus it is evident that in Roman society the liturgical year was modulated according to significant rhythms: for festivals pertaining to war, it was punctuated by two periods that corresponded to the opening and closing of the military campaigns. As for festivals of a pastoral or vegetable nature, the calendar was divided into three periods which corresponded to the three seasons of greatest importance to plants and animals: spring, summer, and winter.

While it may be that these two groups of festivals are concerned with the two great preoccupations of ancient society—defense and subsistence—they do not complete the religious tapestry. It would be especially interesting to study the greatest festival: the *Vinalia* addressed to Jupiter. This festival is exceptional in several ways—in its double articulation in the calendar (19 August and 23 April), in the quality of the god (he is the supreme god) and of the priest (the *flamen Dialis* is the chief priest in the city), and by its object, the annual renewal of the alliance between the sovereign god and the Roman people.²⁸

One final aspect must be considered. Archaic festivals often lent themselves to a certain rejuvenation in the course of time. So it is that the liturgy of the *Consualia*, which included a horse race, set the style for the *ludi*, those chariot races that would animate the Great Circus. Thus the *ritus graecus*, with its lectisternia and its *supplicationes* of matrons invading the temples in times of panic, modified the hieratic appearance of the Roman ceremonies. But the basic end remained the same: *ferias observare*²⁹ always consisted of offering to the gods a time set aside from the profane tapestry in order to obtain, to use the oft-repeated words of Livy, *pacem veniamque deum*, "the favor and grace of the gods."

R.S./d.w.

NOTES

1. E. Benveniste, *V.I.L.*, 2:133.

2. Macrobius S., 1.16.2: Numa, ut in menses annum, ita in dies mensem quemque distribuit diesque omnes aut festos aut profestos aut intercisos vocavit. Festi dis dicati sunt, profesti hominibus ob administrandam rem privatam publicamque concessi, intercisus deorum hominumque communes sunt. The *dies intercisus* are eight in number (cf. Varro *De Lingua Latina* 6.31). It is also necessary to mention the three *dies fissos* (24 March and 25 May, designated by the initials Q[uando] R[ex] C[omitavit] F[as], and 15 June, designated by the initials Q[uando] St[ercus] D[elatum] F[as]), which are subdivided into a first, sacred, part and a second, profane, part: cf. Servius *ad Aen.* 6.37.

3. The economy of this pre-Julian calendar is well known because of the discovery of the *Fasti Antiatres veteres*, a document found at Antium and published for the first time in the *N.S.*, 1921.

4. The etymology of *fas* is contested. E. Benveniste, *V.I.L.*, 2:133, following the suggestion of the ancients, brings together *fas* and *fari*, derived from the root *bhā-: *fas* designates "divine speech," the divine law. On the other hand, G. Dumézil (*La religion romaine archaïque*, 2d ed., p. 144) prefers to connect *fas* with the root *dhē- (zero grade: dhās-), which is the base of *fanum* and *feriae*, in giving it the meaning "mystic basis," "which underlies all the arrangements and visible connections defined by the *ius*."

5. *Do* (iudicem), *dico* (ius), *addico* (litem): cf. Macrobius S. 1.16.14. See A. Giffard, *Études de droit romain* (Paris 1972), 19.

6. Cf. Macrobius S. 1.16.14.

7. The expression is from Gaius *Institutiones* 4.29. Cf. Varro *L.L.* 6.53.

8. Varro *L.L.* 6.12.

9. By the second century A.D. Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 5.17) indicates the evolution of meaning that has given *nefastus* the pejorative value of "inauspicious," which the modern language has conserved and which was expressed in the classical period by the adjective *ater* (or *religiosus*). See also Nonius Marcellus, p. 103 L.: *atri dies dicuntur quos nunc nefastos aut posteros vocant*.

10. Cf. Varro L.L. 6.30.

11. A. Kirsopp Michels (*The Calendar of the Roman Republic*, p. 68) has rightly stressed this aspect, in reaction against the interpretation of the classical manuals. For example, Wissowa (*Ruk*², p. 435) presents the following table: making a deduction of 11 special days (8 *intercisi* days and 3 *fissi* days), 344 days remain in the pre-Julian year; 235 belong to men (192 *dies comitiales*, 43 *dies fasti*), 109 to the gods (all the ides, half of the calends—February, March, June, July, October, December—a third of the nones—February, April, June, July)—and the 45 days that bear a particular name and correspond to the *feriae publicae*.

12. With the exception of some nine festivals: A. Kirsopp Michels (op. cit., pp. 76–77) tries to explain the initial N by the *Regifugium* (24 February), the three *Lemuria* (9, 11, 13 May), the *Vestalia* (9 June), and the *Matralia* (11 June), and the initial F by the *Feralia* (21 February). As for the *Vinalia* of 23 April marked by the letter F and the *Vinalia* of 19 August which bears the initials FP, the author reserves judgment. I have offered an explanation in my book *R.R.V.*, pp. 129–30, proposing, following a suggestion by Wissowa, to transcribe FP in *Feriae publicae* (I wrote *Feria publica*, but the plural *Feriae publicae* alone is used in the classical period); in this hypothesis, the stonecutter has omitted by error the P at least for the *Vinalia* of 19 August.

13. After Wissowa, who has proposed (*Ruk*², p. 438) the transcription *nefas (feriae) publicae*, A. Kirsopp Michels (op. cit., p. 76) suggests the reading (*dies nefasti publici*).

14. Varro L.L. 6.12ff.

15. Cf. Macrobius S. 1.16.4.

16. Cf. Cicero *De legibus* 2.19: *Feriis iurgia amovendo, easque in farulis, operibus patris, habento* . . .

17. Ibid. 2.29: *cum est feriarum festorumque dierum ratio, in liberis requietem habet litium et iugiorum, in servis operum et laborum*.

18. Macrobius S. 1.16.9: *affirmabant autem sacerdotes pollui ferias, si indictis conceptisque opus aliquod fieret*.

19. Cf. Cato, *De agric.* 138; Pliny *Naturalis historia* 18.40.

20. Macrobius S. 1.16.11: *Scaevola denique consultus quid feriis agi liceret, respondit quod praetermissum noceret*.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. 1.16.9–10.

23. Ibid. This corrective is attributed to someone named *umbro*, who is otherwise unknown.

24. On the *Lemuria*, cf. Ovid *Fasti* 5.421–44. On the *Denicales*, cf. Festus, p. 61; 282, 16 L.

25. Cf. my study *Ovide, interprète de la religion romaine*, R.E.L., 46, 1969, p. 222ff. Reprinted in R.C.D.R.

26. Cf. Ovid *F.* 6.475ff., for the description of Roman rites; G. Dumézil, R.R.A.², 66ff.

27. On the details of these festivals, see in addition to the classic work of G. Wissowa (*Ruk*²), the R.R.A.² of Georges Dumézil and his *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne*.

28. Cf. Robert Schilling, R.R.V., p. 71ff., especially 124–55.

29. Cf. Macrobius S. 1.16.4.

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ROMAN DIVINATION

1. Divination or Auspices: Roman and Italic Traditions

In Rome the expression *divinatio* is of rather recent date; it does not appear until Cicero, who defines it in the following manner: "According to an ancient belief that goes back to heroic times and that is confirmed by the general agreement of the Roman people and of all nations, there exists among men a certain form of *divinatio*, which the Greeks call *mantikē* (prophecy); that is, a faculty for knowing the future ahead of time—*praesensionem et scientiam rerum futurarum*" (*On Divination*, 1.1; *On Laws*, 2.32).¹

The word is a substantive derived from *divinus*, which is itself connected with *divus* (= the ancient *deivos*, which, through the laws of phonetics, ends up as *deus*), "divinity." The meaning of *divinatio* may be explained by the semantic drift that took place in the case of *divinus*: this term, which originally meant "of divine nature," also took on the sense "inspired by the divinity."

It is in the writings of Cicero that the word *divinus* is first used in the sense of "diviner" (see, for example, *On Divination*, 2.9, 10, 11). The new meaning arises from the first, the diviner essentially passing for one of divine nature who is inspired. This relationship is strong enough for Cicero to commit the same semantic slippage on the level of the

substantive: thus he uses *divinitas* in the place of *divinatio* (for example, *On Divination*, 2.80). It is true that the choice of the term in this context might have been influenced by a concern for stylistic symmetry: in this passage, the expression "experts in divination" (*divinitatis auctores*) designates men who are accused of being ignorant, "strangers to humanity" (*humanitatis expertes*). But ordinarily the idea of divinatory practices is rendered by the new word *divinatio*.

If the semantic extension of the word *divinus* (= diviner) and the creation of the substantive *divinatio* are recent, how are we to explain the discrepancy which seems to exist in Rome between this new vocabulary and a reputedly ancient set of practices? Did not Rome have a venerable institution that answered to this sort of preoccupation—the college of augurs?

In fact, the Romans of the first century B.C. did not agree on the significance of this augural institution. Did these "official interpreters of Jupiter" (*On Laws*, 2.20) simply have the task of revealing, through the elucidation of the auspices, Jupiter's approval or disapproval of any given human initiative? Or did they also have the charismatic virtue of being able to predict the future? This is the basic problem that beset the members of the college in the time of Cicero. And thanks to Cicero's allusions in his treatise *On Divination*, this debate remains accessible to us.

As the debate is presented to us, the augur App. Claudius Pulcher had no doubts at all about his divinatory powers when in 63 B.C. he announced to the consul Cicero "the

imminence of a civil war that would be sinister and disturbing" (*On Divination*, 1.105): this prediction that foresees the Catiline conspiracy was based upon "incertitudes connected with the augury of prosperity"—*addubitato salutis augurio* (from Dio Cassius, 37.24.2, we know that this involved a kind of request addressed to the gods to find out if it was opportune to ask for prosperity for the people). He was ridiculed by his colleagues, who called him a charlatan augur (in the terms of the time: an "augur of Pisidia," "augur of Sora"). "He alone, over the past several years, has carried on an art that consisted not only in reciting an augural formula, but also in practicing divination"—*solus enim, multorum annorum memoria, non decantandi augurii, sed divinandi tenuit disciplinam*. Such is at least the version of Quintus, the brother of Cicero, who highly approved of this conception of the augural art.

By contrast, another augur, C. Claudius Marcellus, also a colleague of Cicero, professed quite a different opinion (*On Divination*, 2.75), which Cicero shared: "the right to augur—in which a divinatory power would have originally been acknowledged—has been subsequently maintained and preserved only in the interest of the state." Cicero attempts to justify this positivist conception, and in this sense he shows a critical liberty in *On Divination* that contrasts with the nuanced declarations of *On Laws*: "by the evolution and progress of learning." "Romulus, who founded the city after taking the auspices, was capable of thinking that the auguring science consisted of prediction (the ancients were mistaken on several points)" (*On Divination*, 2.70).

And to demonstrate the illusory character of the auspices, Cicero analyzes the procedure employed in the consultation of the sacred chickens who, when little pellets of food fell from their beaks—but how could they not fall?—were expected to furnish the consultant with the favorable auspices of the *tripudium solistimum* (*On Div.*, 2.71). He denounces the mechanical nature of the questions and answers exchanged between the magistrate-consultant and the augur and waxes ironic about the automatic results of these "auspices obtained through constraint."

It is true that this "auspicial simulation" (Cicero's own expression) had already been denounced in equally categorical terms by Quintus (*On Div.*, 1.28). But Cicero's brother had explained this decadence in augural practices as being the result of ignorance and the negligent laxity of those in charge at the college. Cicero, by contrast, goes much further in his criticism, by denying the existence of any divinatory value in the augural institution: "I am not one of those augurs who presumes himself capable of telling the future by observing birds and other signs" (*On Div.*, 2.70).

The time has now come to ask whether the argument that arose in the first century B.C. in the heart of the college of augurs and that is reflected in Cicero's treatise did not originate from a certain confusion, the same confusion that caused several very different modes of divine consultation to be classified under one and the same heading. It is a fact that the title of Cicero's treatise covers some quite varied divining techniques. When he introduces the different *divinandi genera* (*On Div.*, 1.12), Cicero finds it quite natural to group the augurs together with the *haruspices* (specialists in the examination of victims' viscera as well as of portents and lightning flashes), the interpreters of the *Sibylline Books*, the astrologers, and the interpreters of oracles and dreams: a heterogeneous list, if ever there was one.

From this the question arises of the possible existence here of a kind of improper contamination that wrongly classified the official Roman augurs among those specialists reputed to

possess prophetic powers. Certainly, a kind of golden legend exalted the role of certain augurs. So it is that tradition kept alive the memory of the augur Attus Navius, who lived during the reign of Tarquinius the Elder (*On Div.*, 1.31–32) and who became famous for his exceptional gifts. "In order to test his knowledge, the king had asked him if what he was thinking could come to pass. After taking the augury, Attus responded that such was possible. Tarquinius then told him that he had thought that a piece of flint could be sliced in half with a razor, and ordered Attus to perform the experiment. Thus, a piece of flint was brought to the meeting place of the Comitium, and before the eyes of the king and the people, it was cut by the razor. Following this, Tarquinius made Attus Navius his augur and the people began to consult him about their affairs. As for the flint and the razor, they were buried in the Comitium and covered with a *puteal* [a sacred enclosure], according to tradition."

What is striking in this account is that the reputation of Attus was created by means of an incident that owes its renown less to the practice of the augural art than to the "miracle" of the flint cut by the razor. Undoubtedly Attus had consulted the auspices ahead of time, but his success owes more to the "marvelous" fracturing of the flint by the razor than to the confirmation of his augural performance.

Quite a different impression is made by the account of an auspicial consultation, as it appears, for example, in the narration by the poet Ennius of what took place under the conditions that preceded the founding of Rome. The passage was cited by Cicero (*On Div.*, 1.107–8) and merits an attentive reading. It depicts Romulus and Remus who, as augurs, ask for a decision from the gods: "Then, with great care, the aspirants for the ruling power apply themselves at the same time to solicit the auspices and the sacred investiture (*dant operam simul auspicio augurioque*) . . . On the hill (not specified further), Remus consecrates himself to the auspices and sees only one favorable bird. As for the fortunate Romulus (*at Romulus pulcher*), he waits on the summit of the Aventine and sees the winged brood on its heights. The city will be called Roma or Remora: this is what is at stake. Everyone is concerned to know which of the two will be the master . . . In the meantime, the white sun (*sol albus*) has hidden itself in the depths of the night. Then, surging forth in the brilliance of its rays, the light appears. And at the same time as a beneficent bird (*pulcherrima avis*), winging swiftly away from the distant heights, veers to the left, the golden sun appears. From the sky three times four birds descend, sacred messengers, who direct themselves toward the place blessed by the omens (*praepetibus sese pulchrisque locis dant*). Romulus then perceives (*conspicit*) that he is the one who has been accorded, with the guarantee of the auspices, a seat and land to rule over." (We know that in the language of augury *pulcher* means either "beneficent," in the active sense, or "beneficiary of the auspices," in the passive sense).

There is nothing in this account that allows us to interpret the Roman augur as a diviner who foretells the future. For what did "the two augurs" who were candidates for the Roman throne ask? To be chosen for the sacral investiture (*augurium*), which each of them solicited by observing the birds (*auspicium*). The appearance of the *greater number* of birds (such appears to be the version adopted by Ennius), on the *left side* (which is, according to augural techniques, the favorable side), manifested the divine decision in favor of Romulus.

Thus, the only goal of taking auspices is to obtain from Jupiter the indication of his will: if the auspices are favorable, the sovereign god is expected to approve the request and

confer the investiture. (The same goes for the inauguration of King Numa, as described by Livy, 1.18.6–10.) If, on the contrary, the auspices are absent or unfavorable, it is better to suspend the process that is under way.

Thus our impression is verified: the institutional augur, as he conforms to the portrait drawn by Ennius and Livy, makes no pretensions about being able to predict the future but limits himself to announcing the will of Jupiter by making use of a consultation based upon a rigorous technique. To him might well be applied the definition that Cicero claims for himself (*On Div.*, 2.70): "I am not among those augurs who pretend to be able to foretell the future." These did in fact exist, but they do not belong to the official college: they are designated by the scornful term "Marsian augurs," and they are found in the list enumerated by Quintus (*On Div.*, 1.132), along with village haruspices, traveling astrologers, worshipers of Isis who tell the future, interpreters of dreams; that is, "the imposter clairvoyants" (*impudentes harioli*), according to Ennius's expression. A rigorous technique? Actually, a great concern for sobriety in the practice of the augural function is revealed by the numerous precautions taken in the rules. There seems to have been a desire to forewarn against any manifestation that might be too personal, or against any tendency toward a "mystic" *furor*.

First of all, the augur never acts alone, on his own initiative. He must be in liaison with a magistrate who himself has the right to take the auspices, while the augur has only the right to collect and announce them (in the case of Romulus evoked by Ennius, there was the unusual combination of the two functions in the same person).

Next the augur must lay out an enclosed and oriented area—the *templum*—within which he claims to make his observations, according to specific conditions.

Note, finally, that all operations may be protected from contrary or unforeseen circumstances. In other words, it is possible to arm oneself in advance against unfavorable auspices. Pliny the Elder speaks of this (*Natural History*, 28.17): "In the augural tradition, it is a rule that neither imprecations nor auspices of any sort can affect those who, before an undertaking, declare their refusal to take account of them: there exists no greater sign of the goodness of the gods." The behavior of the augur M. Marcellus (third century B.C.) is revealing: "When he wished to undertake something, he would travel in an enclosed palanquin so as not to be hindered by the auspices" (*On Div.*, 2.77).

It would thus seem wise to limit ourselves to the historical period and not to reconstruct, after the manner of Cicero, "the augur of the origins," who would have had "a power to see into the future" (*On Div.*, 2.77). Nothing seems less certain than this. Everything points, on the contrary, to the fact that public augury in Roman religion had always contented itself, according to the official definition, with being the "interpreter of the very great and very good Jupiter." After this, what is left of Cicero's criticism? First of all, the denunciation of certain deviations which had, for example, transformed the consultation of the sacred chickens into a "simulation of the auspices."

Next let us consider the remark that the conventions of augury appear to be rather arbitrary. "Why," observes Cicero (*On Div.*, 2.82), "is there disagreement about the favorable side, which is situated on the left for the Romans and on the right for the Greeks?" And he cites a verse from Ennius: *Tum tonuit laevum bene tempestate serena* ("Then it thundered on the left side when the weather was clear: a happy omen") and a verse from Homer, translated into Latin (*Prospera Iuppiter his*

dextris fulgoribus edit ("Favorable omens: Jupiter throws his lightning bolts to the right").

Moreover, there is even a disparity within the Roman discipline of augury. "Why," Cicero asks again (*On Div.*, 2.80), "do certain birds have the privilege of furnishing a favorable auspice when they fly to the left, while for others, it is when they fly to the right?" This sort of opposition, which may seem strange, is recorded in the tradition. In the "Comedy of the Asses" (*Asinaria*, 259–61) of Plautus, the slave Libanus tries to find a solution to his financial problems; using the language of augury, he cries:

"Impetritum, inauguratumst; quovis admittunt aves.

Picus et cornix ab laeva, corvus, parra ab dextera

Consuadent; certum herclest vestram consequi sententiam."

("Omens asked for, auguries taken. Good: every direction is allowed for by the birds. Green woodpecker and crow to the left, raven and nightjar to the right agree. It's decided; by Jove, I'll take your advice.")

That the disagreement between the Greeks and the Romans over the favorable side was common knowledge seems normal. But the fact that the most subtle knowledge about a division of birds into favorable and unfavorable categories according to their species had spread beyond the milieu of the specialist shows to what extent the public mentality was sensitive to this sort of preoccupation (Horace offers us an analogous example at the beginning of Ode 27 of book 3).

It is not the task of modern scholars to respond to the criticisms raised by the augur Cicero. Nevertheless, it is perhaps possible to glimpse certain elements of a response. It may be that the contradiction between the Greeks and the Romans regarding the favorable side is only an apparent one. Varro (cited by Festus, p. 454 L) gives the following commentary: "When one looks, from the home of the gods, toward the south, the eastern part of the world is found on the left and the western part on the right; it thus follows, in my opinion, that the auspices of the left were judged to be better than the auspices of the right." Thus, all is clear for Varro: the Romans located the abode of the gods to the north; in the performance of his functions (see Varro, *On the Latin Language*, 7.7) the augur ordinarily faced south and thus placed the east, the region of the rising sun, of birth and of life, to his left.

Now the situation is reversed for the Hellene. He "turns towards the gods to question them" (Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, 4, p. 23, Paris 1882). Thus the Hellene oriented himself toward the north and from this perspective placed the east to his right. Here again the favorable direction corresponds to the direction of the rising sun, toward which the doors of the temples opened. But in relation to the observer, the orientation is reversed. These notions of left and right thus appear to be quite relative, because with reference to the basic orientation both of them designate the same eastern direction, the source of favorable omens.

But what about birds that give contradictory signs according to whether they appear to the left or the right? The example from the *Asinaria* shows clearly that, in order to be favorable, the green woodpecker and the crow should be to the left, and the raven and the nightjar to the right. It must be admitted that this harmonious conjunction of opposites is more surprising. We might surmise that the general Roman rule remains in force for the green woodpecker and the crow (we should remember that the green woodpecker is the preeminent bird of auguries: the "bird of Mars"; to cite

Ovid's definition [in *F.*, 3.37], according to legend he helped to feed Silvia's twins when they were abandoned in the wilderness), while the raven and the nightjar were the exception—an exception that can be explained by the intrinsic nature of these birds.

It is hardly possible to develop such hypotheses here. Would the raven, who passes for the official messenger of Apollo (see Aelianus, *On the Nature of Animals*, 1.48), thus conform for this reason to the Greek perspective? As for the *parra* (which we hesitantly identify here as the nightjar), it is often considered by Latin authors to be a bird of evil omen, by its very nature (see Horace, *Odes*, 3.27.1, and Varro, *On Agriculture*, 3.5.18). Are we to imagine, then, that by passing from the left to the right it changes its sign so that the unfavorable becomes favorable?

It is evident that these questions cannot be resolved in the absence of the *libri augurales*. Nothing remains but the very minutiae of every prescription to prove the extent to which the augural institution was "protected" by a network of rigorous rules. In the end, it was the augurs alone who were responsible for the interpretation of the auspices: it fell to them to know whether the city would enjoy the *pax veniaque deum*: in other words, whether or not it would have the blessing of the gods. We can thus understand why their function, far from being abandoned to the improvisations of prophets, was tightly regulated.

In the end, the function of the official augur of Roman religion does not include a divinatory role in the prophetic sense of the word: the priest is charged only with transmitting to the city the signs that manifest the agreement or disagreement of the gods (and principally of Jupiter) with a particular human initiative or undertaking. The native Roman tradition thus presents a great contrast with the Greek institution of oracular consultation. The Delphic Pythia was not content merely to make Apollo's opinion known by prescribing purifications or dictating moral maxims; she also gave oracles, which contributed the most to her prestige, "and one must suppose that the god of Delphi would not have enjoyed the reputation he had if he had never given authentic answers."²

Does this tradition that is so marked by sobriety and rigor characterize Rome alone in ancient Italy? Actually, it is found elsewhere in Italy. Is it necessary to cite the "Marsian augurs"? But these are mentioned by Cicero (*On Div.*, 1.132; 2.70) only as charlatans who do not deserve to be taken seriously. They claim to be the descendants of the son of the sorceress Circe³ and chiefly have a reputation as healers and snake charmers.

History has also preserved the name of a confraternity which, according to Tacitus,⁴ was created by King Titus Tatius to maintain the Sabine rites: these are the Sodales Titii, who "derive their name from the birds of Titus (*ab avibus Titiis*), which they customarily observe according to prescribed augural procedures."⁵ But these *sodales* hardly offer a foothold for further investigation, and if the "birds of Titus" prove the existence of an augural consultation, it is one which remains full of mystery.

At Iguvium, the Umbrian city that corresponds to the modern Gubbio, it is quite another story. In 1444 seven bronze tablets were found there, designated the Tabulae Iguvinae ("Iguvine Tablets"; *Eugubio* is a synonym for *Gubbio*). These contain, in the Umbrian language, precise prescriptions for the Iguvium rite, concerning the various ceremonies of lustration and sacrifice.⁶ These ceremonies are placed under the authority of the confraternity of the twelve

Atiedii Brethren, who name an *arferetur* (the equivalent of the Latin *flamen*) to preside over them.

The interest that these documents (in particular, tablets 6a and b) hold for our purposes is that they provide us with the terms of the formulas for taking auspices (6a.1–7), for determining the *templum* (6a.8–11), and for setting the limits of the *pomerium* (6a.12–16). Even if there are divergences on details, the analogy of homologous terms and ritual situations is striking enough to make the Tabulae Iguvinae a precious document that provides, at another point in the Italic domain, an instructive parallel to the tradition of auspices and the institution of augurs that developed in Rome.⁷ In Iguvium as in Rome, there was a ritual observation of birds (*aveis aseriatu*, 6a.1, corresponding to the Latin *avibus observatis*) before anyone began a ceremony or an important undertaking.

2. Divination: Sibyl, Haruspicy, Sortes

The sibyl, haruspicy, and *sortes* are techniques that came from foreign lands and introduced extensive divination into Rome as a means of predicting the future. In this regard, two civilizations exerted a preponderant influence from a very early period: the Hellenic and the Etruscan. They gave Rome the benefit of their respective gifts of the *Sibylline Books* and haruspicy.

In a striking formula, Pliny the Elder defines the unique gifts of the Sibyl: *divinites et quaedam caelitum societas nobilissima* (*N.H.*, 7.119), "a power of divination and a kind of glorious communication with the celestial world." According to an often-cited legend, the Sibyl of Cumae offered her books for sale to King Tarquinius Superbus. The king bought three, which he had deposited in the temple of Capitoline Jupiter. It was there that the *libri Sibyllini* could later be consulted, on order of the Senate, by priests specially appointed for that office, the *viri sacris faciundis*.⁸ They were especially consulted in case of serious crises or panic brought about by military disaster or by an epidemic: so it was in 217 B.C., when Rome, battered by the defeat at Lake Trasimene, feared "Hannibal at the walls of the city."⁹ The consultation of the Sibyls ordinarily involved expiatory sacrifices and sometimes the introduction of new cults with a potential for remedying the situation: for example, in 217 B.C., the report of the *viri sacris faciundis* recommended that the Senate, among other things, erect a temple to Venus Erycina and another to Mens. The allusion is obvious: Venus from Mount Eryx in Sicily, who had "patronized" the Roman victory in the First Punic War, was entreated to intercede once again in favor of her protégés, the Romans, who were now fighting against Hannibal, the son of Hamilcar who was defeated in the first war. As for Mens, the goddess of lucidity, the Romans appealed to her in this time of disarray in conformity with the old instinct that led them to invoke the functional divinity that appeared to be the most appropriate to a given situation.

This example shows that the use of these "prophetic books" entailed no risk for the Roman state. Contrary to the oracle of Apollo, which sometimes gave out ambiguous declarations,¹⁰ the response of the Sibyl was always "filtered" and submitted to verification and censorship by the Senate. The measures prescribed following the consultation of the books are always precise and reassuring. Cicero (*On Div.*, 2.112) credits this to the wisdom of the ancients and the role played by the Senate. He adds this significant observation: "Let us thus leave the Sibyl well protected in her retreat



Relief from the forum of Trajan. The scene on the left represents an *extispicium* (examination of the vital organs) carried out by a victimary under the supervision of the *haruspex*. On the right, carved onto the facade of the Capitoline Temple of Jupiter, a group of figures wearing togas (and, in the background, a figure wearing a cap with apex, designating the *flamen Dialis*) surround a figure facing forward—probably the emperor Trajan. This group awaits the result of the divination before departing on a military campaign. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Giraudon.

(*Quamobrem Sibyllam quidem sepositam et conditam habeamus*) . . . and, conforming to the example of our ancestors, let us use the *Sibylline Books* to calm religious fears rather than to incite them."

Along with the *Sibylline Books*, Rome also knew of other "prophetic" books, at least episodically, in the *Carmina Marciana*. Livy (25.12.1) attributes these versified predictions to a Marcius who was said to have been an "illustrious diviner" (*vates illustris*). In fact, his identity is imprecise: although Livy, in agreement with Festus (p. 438 L) and Pliny the Elder (*N.H.*, 7.119), cites a single Marcius, another tradition, represented by Cicero (*On Div.*, 1.89; 2.113), mentions "brothers by the name of Marcius" (*Marcios quosdam fratres*), except in one passage (*ibid.*, 1.115) where he uses the singular.

Whatever may have been their source of inspiration, these *Carmina Marciana* were collected in 213 B.C. among the superstitious works seized by order of the Senate during that time, when Rome lived in terror of the approach of Hannibal. But Livy states (1.1), "of two predictions, the confirmation given to the one which had been published after the event (i.e., the disaster at Cannes in 216) conferred a certain authority upon the other (i.e., the promised defeat of Hannibal), whose time had not yet come." In the second prediction, an injunction was made to the Romans to celebrate games in honor of Apollo, games which were to be renewed each year; and the *decemviri sacris faciundis* were commanded to perform sacrifices according to the Greek rite. This last prescription brought the intervention of the Senate, which asked the *decemviri* to consult the *Sibylline Books*: so the annual games in honor of Apollo, the *ludi Apollinares*, were introduced in 212 B.C.

The allusion in the *Carmina Marciana* to priests specially appointed for the consultation of the *Sibylline Books* gives rise to the suspicion that the "Marcian prophecy," far from being of native stock as Pliny the Elder claimed, was born in a Hellenic milieu.¹¹ It is thus possible that this prophetic manifestation played a part in the inspiration of the *Sibylline Books*.¹²

The other divinatory technique is of Etruscan origin and has the name *haruspicinae disciplina*, "the teaching of haruspicy." According to a legend told most fully by Cicero, a man ploughing his fields at Tarquinii one day saw "a certain Tages" arise out of the earth from under the blade of his plow and speak to him: his instructions were to constitute the source of haruspicy.¹³ In broad terms, this art is divided into three spheres: the examination of *exta* (i.e., the viscera of sacrificed animals) or *extispicy*;¹⁴ the observation of lightning flashes (*fulgura*); and the interpretation of portents (*prodigia* or *portenta*).¹⁵ We also know of the *libri haruspicini*, the *libri fulgurales*, and the *libri rituales*.¹⁶ These works are indicative of the great effort exerted by the Etruscans to divine the future by scrutinizing every available "sign" in the world.

For this was their major concern. To this end, the Etruscans distinguished between these omens that were solicited (*impetrata*) and the signs offered by the gods (*oblata*), particularly those portents that were the object of special treatises, *ostentaria* (one of these was translated into Latin by someone named Tarquitius).¹⁷

Nothing reveals the Etruscans' mentality more than their attitude toward the observation of birds. Where the Roman augur contented himself with recording Jupiter's agreement or disagreement according to the flight of birds (*alites*) or the

sound of their cries (*oscines*), the Etruscan saw a basis for prediction. Such was the case with Tanaquila of Tarquinia, the wife of the Lucumon who would become the first Etruscan king of the Romans under the name of Tarquinius the Elder. She had succeeded in persuading her husband to leave Tarquinia to try his luck in Rome. "We had nearly arrived at Janiculus, when Lucumon, seated with his wife on his chariot, saw an eagle glide slowly downward, take off his headgear, swoop upward above the chariot crying loudly, and, as if invested with a divine mission, adroitly replace the headgear on his head; then the eagle flew away across the sky. Tanaquila, it is said, greeted this omen (*id augurium*) with joy, being a woman who was expert, as the Etruscans generally are, in celestial portents. Kissing her husband, she exhorted him to expect a high and noble destiny: 'This bird, coming from that region of the sky on this day, has brought a message; the auspice which it has given concerns the highest part of the person: he took off an ornament placed on a human head and put it back by divine order.'"¹⁸

This is far from the simple Roman style of taking auspices. All of the elements in this scene lend themselves to a symbolic interpretation: the localization of Janiculus designates the place of election; the eagle, consecrated to Jupiter, authenticates the message of the sovereign god; the choice of the head of Lucumon, which is successively bared and covered by the bird, augurs a future coronation. Whatever the case, this new manner of taking auspices opens much richer and more precise perspectives on the knowledge of the future.

It is quite understandable from this that the Romans would have hoped to benefit from these *genera divinandis*. Cicero admits this at the beginning of his treatise on divination:¹⁹ "As the teachings of the haruspices seemed to be quite valuable for the solicitation and observation of presages (*in impetriendis consulendisque rebus*) and for the interpretation and conjuration of portents (*in monstis interpretandis ac procurandis*), the Romans used all of this knowledge originating from Etruria so as not to appear to have neglected any divinatory procedure."

Thus, the Roman state became accustomed to relying occasionally upon the help of the Etruscan haruspices. When they appealed to their good offices, it was generally for extispicy. It is true that this latter had something seductive about it. According to its basic postulate, everything in the world was joined together by virtue of a fundamental harmony (*sumpatheia*); in particular, the liver of a victim offered to the gods constituted a microcosm which was divisible into different zones corresponding to as many homologous zones in the macrocosm of the world.²⁰ An attentive consultation of the state of the liver was thus expected to lead to conclusions about the situation in the corresponding regions of the world. This use of extispicy was not without certain consequences for the Roman ritual of sacrifice, which included an important stage in its order of different operations: the examination of the *exta*, which had to be flawless, or the sacrifice would be null and void. The simple inspection-report of the *exta*, which was the task of the sacrificer, seems to have had superimposed upon it, in the course of time, a consultation of a divinatory nature. This contamination may be verified in the description of sacrificial ceremonies in Livy. Thus, before going into the decisive battle with the Latins at Vesperis, on the foot of Mount Vesuvius, in 340 B.C., the Roman consuls offered a sacrifice. A haruspex was there who announced to one of the consuls, Decius, "that, in the part of the liver that concerned him, there was a lesion at one end"

(*Decio caput jocineris a familiari parte caesum haruspex dicitur ostendisse*).²¹

This was the prediction of an unhappy event. In fact, in the course of the engagement, the left wing commanded by the consul Decius collapsed and its leader had recourse to the most extreme solution for such a case: in order to save his Roman legions he "devoted himself" by the official procedure of the *devotio*, by linking his own death to the destruction of the enemy army.²² Thanks to this self-sacrifice, "he turned against his own person all the dangers and all the threats of the gods of heaven and of hell."²³

By contrast, the haruspex had given Manlius, Decius's colleague, the assurance that his sacrifice had been wholly successful (*Manlium egregie litasse*).²⁴

This account is highly instructive. It allows us to understand why the use of haruspicy could have seemed useful. According to Roman liturgical rules, the sacrifice would have had to be declared null and void because of the defective state of the victim's liver. The officiant would have been reduced to declaring: *non litatum est* ("the gods have not given their agreement"). And the consuls would have been barred from doing the sacrifice again: at any rate, they would not have been authorized to go into battle on the same day.

The intervention of the haruspex set a much more subtle and nuanced procedure in motion, which allowed for the possibility of success in spite of the announcement of dangers. According to this exegesis, the sacrifice was far from being a total failure: although Decius was threatened, Manlius was "wholly successful." It was up to Decius to be cautious. And in fact Decius was able to avert this danger, to remedy it with a *procuratio*. At the critical moment of the battle he saved the general situation by turning upon himself alone (and upon his enemies) the dangers that the diviner had announced.

Such a flexible and subtle procedure captivated the spirit of the time. Of course feelings must have been mixed: to what extent was this "foreign" technique credible? Cicero's reflections are revealing: "How were the haruspices able to decide that a certain part of the liver belonged to the enemy and another to the consultant; that a certain lesion presaged a danger and another an advantage?"²⁵ There are other allusions in the same vein. Even if people wanted to use the haruspices, they would still always be "foreign and barbarian."²⁶ Who does not know the famous saying of Cato, twice cited by Cicero: "It is amazing that one haruspex can keep from laughing when he sees another haruspex?"²⁷

Cicero was so free with his language here only because he found himself within a circle of friends that were open to argument (*Soli sumus: licet verum inquirere . . .*: "We are alone, ourselves, free to seek the truth . . .").²⁸ And it would be anachronistic to attribute the same critical spirit to the Romans of the third and second centuries B.C. History shows that the Senate became accustomed to consulting the haruspices more than once.

It must nevertheless be noted that the Senate addressed itself at the same time to haruspices and to the interpreters of the *Sibylline Books*, as if, impelled by an instinctive distrust, it wanted to verify the accuracy of one procedure by checking it against the other. One of these double consultations enters into the period of tension that preceded the war against Perseus, the king of Macedonia. This was provoked in 172 B.C. by a portent: the fall of a rostral column that stood upon the Capitol (which preserved in its *rostra*—made of the prows of captured ships—the memory of a naval victory).

Immediately, "the Senate gave the order to the haruspices

to give a report and to the *decemviri* to consult the *Sibylline Books*.²⁹ It is interesting to note the differences between the two "answers." The Sibylline interpreters limited themselves to proposing measures of purification and religious devotion.³⁰ The haruspices did not hesitate to predict the future: "this portent would be for the better; it predicted an extension of the frontiers and the extermination of enemies; for the *rostra*, which the storm had blown over, were spoils of the enemy that would be taken in the future."³¹ By resolutely adopting different perspectives, these two most representative divinatory procedures ran little risk of conflicting with one another.

Were there other divinatory perspectives in Italy which might have enjoyed some authority in the eyes of the Roman Senate? It seems that there were not, even though Italy knew important cults of the goddess Fortuna, whose oldest and most renowned sanctuaries were situated in Praeneste and in Antium.³² There certainly was, especially in Praeneste, a means to consult Fortuna by using tablets called *sortes*. Cicero recalls the legend that was connected with the origin of their discovery.³³ A Praenestian of noble family, Numerius Suffestius, had a dream in which he was commanded to carve a notch in a rock whose location was told to him. From the crack, "wooden tablets (*sortes*) covered with ancient lettering poured out." Following a consultation by the haruspices, the *sortes* were enclosed in a box made of olive wood. When a consultant received a warning from Fortuna, they drew lots: a child mixed up the tablets with his hand and drew them out of the box.

Cicero hastens to add the following: "The beauty of the sanctuary and the antiquity of the tablets of Praeneste continue to be renowned to the present day—at least by the masses. What sort of person is in fact their administrator, what sort of prominent man consults them? Everywhere else the *sortes* have fallen into disuse."³⁴

The official discrediting was not peculiar to Cicero's time. The inscriptions found at Praeneste at the time of the archaeological excavations of the temple, which had been sumptuously restored by Sulla, reveal only the devotion of lesser people at the place of the goddess.³⁵ In a general way, Lattus is correct in summarizing his evaluation in the following fashion: "It is not the interests of the state, but the questions of people worried about being tricked or preoccupied with the outcome of some undertaking that receive an answer here."³⁶

What was the real role of these *sortes*, which some have seen as "Italic oracles"? Perhaps it is best first to indicate the centers that may be considered authentic repositories of prophetic tablets.

Nothing indicates that we should include Antium, which was the seat of a cult of two Fortunas whom Martial would later name "the truthful sisters."³⁷ In fact, we know very little about how they were consulted, except for a late piece of information from Macrobius, who mentions a procession of statues for divinatory purposes.³⁸

Neither does it seem that Padua should enter into this category, even taking into account the fact that Tiberius drew lots with tablets there.³⁹ Apart from Praeneste, the only cities that are explicitly mentioned in connection with *sortes* are Caere and Falerii. But in neither case is there any consultation of tablets. The tablets are mentioned by Livy each time in the context of a group of portents that manifested themselves during the Second Punic War, by which it was learned that Hannibal would inflict heavy defeats upon the Roman armies.

During the winter of 218 B.C., the Romans were alarmed by a series of events that were at once disparate and extraordi-

nary. Among signs as diverse as "In the Picenum, a rain of stones fell" and "In Gaul, a wolf carried off the sword of a sentinel by pulling it out of its scabbard," the following account appeared: "At Caere, the divinatory tablets have shrunk"—*Caere sortes extenuatas*.⁴⁰ The following year, in the spring of 217, the scene painted by Livy is even darker. (The consul Flaminius, who had gone out on a military campaign without regularly taking the auspices, had been killed in the course of the disaster at Lake Trasimene.) The portents increased everywhere. In particular, "at Falerii, the sky split open as if torn, and from this opening a great light surged forth; the divinatory tablets shrank spontaneously, and one, bearing the inscription 'Mars shakes his lance,' fell."⁴¹

This is a portent which repeats itself in two different cities a year later. Neither in Caere nor in Falerii are the tablets connected with a cult of Fortuna. Even if we could assume that the *sortes* should ordinarily have been consulted there in the same way as in Praeneste, there is no question of a divinatory consultation here. It is only the miraculous character of the shrinking of the tablets that is emphasized, along with, at Falerii, the aggravating circumstance of the fall of a tablet bearing the announcement that Mars has been set in motion. The best proof of this is that in both cases the Senate ordered a consultation of the *Sibylline Books* in order to provide for the *procuratio* of all of these manifestations of the anger of the gods.

For—and we must make no mistake on this subject—the attitude of the official authorities about the *sortes* reveals deep tendencies that would only develop in the future. The *sortes* might well have been devalued as far as their prophetic function was concerned—their discredit would be complete by Cicero's time—but they still retained some importance as warning signs. Thus, the shrinking of the *sortes* of Caere and Falerii no longer involves their divinatory credibility: it enters directly into the category of portents.

3. Divination: Portents and Omens

Approaching the first century B.C., we come to a turning point. In appearance, the procedures are still the same: the apparatus of the state goes into action when the destiny of Rome seems to be in question. Portents are reported from everywhere in Italy (they were scrupulously gathered by the annalists), and the alert is given to the city leaders. These are addressed to the haruspices or the *decemviri* (and sometimes to both priestly bodies). The consultation of specialists resulted in diverse prescriptions: sometimes the offering of expiatory sacrifices and sometimes the introduction of new cults. The whole scenario is founded upon one basic postulate: through portents, the city was warned that it had incurred the wrath of the gods; it should now place itself once more in the favor, peace, and blessing of the gods—*pacem veniamque deum*.

So it was that once again the events of 169 B.C. unfolded. It is the eve of the war that will be fought against Perseus, the king of Macedonia. Livy gives a complete picture of the portents: "At Anagnia, two portents were announced this year: a torch appeared in the sky, and a cow spoke—she is now being kept at the expense of the city. Also at Minturnae, the sky was illuminated for several days with a brilliant light. At Reate, it rained stones. At Cumae, the statue of Apollo in the citadel wept for three days and three nights. At Rome, temple guards gave reports: one, that a crested serpent had been seen by several persons in the sanctuary of Fortuna, and another, that two portents were seen in the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia on the hill (of the Quirinal): a palm tree

had grown there, and in the middle of the day it had a rained blood."⁴² (A consultation of the *Sibylline Books* was made which prescribed that sacrifices be offered and that a solemn *supplicatio* be made.)

But this time Livy prefaced his report with a confidence that was out of character for him: "I am not unaware of the fact that, because of the indifference that makes people generally disbelieve in the portents given by the gods, portents are no longer publicly announced nor are they entered any more into the annals. As for myself, as I am treating of an ancient subject, I have taken on an antique mentality; a kind of religious scruple keeps me from rejecting as unworthy of putting in my annals those events which our ancestors, in their great wisdom, judged worthy of being officially recorded."⁴³

What are we to understand by this diagnosis by Livy, who lived in the reign of Augustus (he wrote from 27 B.C. until his death in A.D. 17)? There is no reason to doubt the growing skepticism that he denounces. But the skepticism is mostly about the procedures and processes that claim to reveal the future. The basic elements used in their elaborate literary works would continue to impress people. As we can see, religious indifference curiously allied itself with an increase in superstitious attention to portents.

People laughed at the haruspices and greeted the recommendations of the *Sibylline Books* with circumspection, but they still paid attention to phenomena that were out of the ordinary, to *prodigia* or *ostenta*. People were still sensitive to omens: this was a constant of the Roman mentality.

What are we to understand by the word omen? A recent etymological essay suggested that it should be given the meaning of "truthful presage."⁴⁴ A famous example of an omen was cited by Cicero.⁴⁵ When Crassus was embarking his army at Brindisi (for the expedition against the Parthians which would end miserably with the disaster of Carrhae in 53 B.C.), he heard a merchant praising his figs from Caunus (a city in Caria), crying, "Cauneas!" ("figs of Caunus"). If he had grasped the omen, Crassus would have understood: *Cave ne eas* ("Take care not to go there").

Remember that Cicero, who permits himself to criticize such matters openly among his friends in *On Divination*, cannot keep from adding this commentary: "Once we take this path, a stubbed toe, a broken bridle strap, and a sneeze all become omens." But Cicero may have been alone in his desire to draw the line clearly between superstition and religion.⁴⁶ His theoretical protests did not correspond to general practice.

Omens invade all aspects of everyday life: they are accepted independent of any religious attachments and are thought to have a certain internal necessity.⁴⁷ Significant in this regard is Suetonius's presentation of the omens that announced the murder of Julius Caesar.⁴⁸ First, there was the discovery made by the colonists who were established at Capua under Julian law (regarding the division of lands into lots): they found the tomb of the founder of Capua, Capys, which contained a bronze tablet bearing the Greek inscription: "When the bones of Capys see the light of day, a descendant of Julius (i.e., Ascanius) shall perish under the blows of close relatives, and following this, his vengeance shall give rise to great disasters in Italy."

Next there was the announcement made to Caesar: the horses that he had previously consecrated to the river Rubicon obstinately refused all food and wept copiously. Then it was the warning given by the haruspex Spurinna during his sacrifice: "Caesar should watch for a peril that will come no later than the ides of March." And then: "On the

eve of the ides, a wren carrying a laurel branch flew up toward the curia of Pompey (i.e., the Senate), where it was pursued by birds of every species, who had come out of a nearby grove; and in the curia itself the bird was torn to pieces." Finally, "the night before the day of the murder, Caesar saw himself in a dream sometimes flying above the clouds, sometimes shaking the hand of Jupiter; as for his wife Calpurnia, she dreamed that the peak of the roof had caved in and that her husband was pierced through by the debris as he lay in her arms. Then, suddenly, the door of the bedroom opened by itself."

This list enumerates some very different kinds of omens: to the *omina*—in the prophetic sense of the word—are added the haruspex's prediction, the decisive omen of the wren torn apart by members of its own species, and finally the premonitory dreams of Caesar and Calpurnia, interrupted by the sudden opening of the door.⁴⁹

What was Caesar's reaction? In a sense, whether or not he believed in all of these "signs" is of little importance. (At one point, Suetonius notes that Caesar "pondered for a long time whether he should go to the Senate, because of these omens and because of his poor state of health." But later on he stresses, on the contrary, Caesar's indifference to the ritual failure of his own sacrifices—*cum litare non posset*—as well as his mockery of the haruspex Spurinna.) In this fatalistic perspective, the omens had to come true in any case. There is no longer any question of claiming the privilege of the institutional augur that Pliny the Elder recalled—the right to protect oneself in advance against unfavorable signs.⁵⁰

In fact, even the most powerful men of the period succumbed to the obsession for omens. Although Caesar manifested, more than once, an aloof skepticism that sometimes bordered on insolence, his successor Augustus could hardly be classified among the "strong-willed."⁵¹ From the very beginning, Suetonius indicates to what degree Augustus was attentive to signs and omens—*auspicia et omina*.⁵² The same Cicero who railed against the mania that consisted in taking as an omen every incident of everyday life (every time we "stub our toes") did not doubt for a moment that the founder of the Roman Empire was subject to this very weakness.⁵³ In fact the first example that Augustus's biographer gives to justify his point is the following: "In the morning, if he (i.e., Augustus) unthinkingly put his left shoe on his right foot, he saw this as a menacing omen."⁵⁴

The evidence about the life of Augustus shows to what extent he was subject to all sorts of superstitions. He was more receptive to *omina* than Crassus was; thus "he never undertook anything serious on the day of the nones, because of the evil omen inherent in the word" (*Nonis* = *non is*, i.e., "Don't you go there").⁵⁵ The omen could be favorable: the future Augustus had the joy of encountering an ass and his master before the battle of Actium. The animal's name was Nikon and his master's was Eutyclus.⁵⁶ Another omen led him to understand that he was nearing the end of his life. "When in the midst of a great popular competition he closed the lustration ceremonies on the Field of Mars, an eagle described several circles above him and then flew toward the next sanctuary and alighted above the first letter of the name of Agrippa": Augustus immediately charged his colleague (who held the position of censor) to take his place in the reading of the vows that would normally have been read for the following lustrum.⁵⁷

As for the *prodigia*, they studded the whole of Augustus's life, even from before he was born. Was it not reported that "some months before his birth, a prodigy was produced before the eyes of all announcing that Nature was to give

birth to a king for the Roman people"?⁵⁸ In the same vein, the following story circulated: Atia came by night to a ceremony in honor of Apollo. She had her palanquin placed in the temple and "knew" a serpent while she slept. On the following day, she had a spot in the shape of a serpent on her body, which proved to be indelible: "Thus Augustus, born nine months later, was considered to be the son of Apollo."⁵⁹

And a series of portents accompanies his entire infancy and adolescence: when he was still a little baby, he disappeared one day from his cradle and was found again at dawn, "stretched out on the top of a tower, facing the rising sun."⁶⁰ He hardly knew how to talk when he ordered the frogs that were disturbing his family's country house to be silent: "after that day, it is said, the frogs never croaked again."⁶¹

Other portents indicated that his rise to glory was near. At the moment when he first put on his toga of manhood, the laticlave became unsewn on both sides and fell to his feet—"which clearly signified that the Senate, which was distinguished by this dress, would one day submit to him."⁶²

The biographer reminds us of another similar prodigy: when Julius Caesar, in order to set up his camp close to Munda, had several trees cut down, he spared a palm tree, as an omen of victory—*ut omen victoriae*; this plant immediately put forth a shoot that in a few days outgrew its mother stock and attracted a flock of doves that nested in it; this *ostentum*, it is said, was Caesar's main motive for designating his grandnephew as his successor."⁶³

After the murder of Caesar, Octavian returned to Apollonia (in Illyria) to come to Rome; he "suddenly saw, at a time of clear and peaceful weather, a kind of rainbow that ringed the solar disk."⁶⁴

In the list of portents that tradition has transmitted, lightning and thunder appear more than once. In his native city of Velitrae, it was remembered "that the lightning once struck a point on the ramparts: it was prophesied that one of its citizens would one day attain the supreme power."⁶⁵

Apparently Augustus had a pathological terror of thunder and lightning.⁶⁶ He erected a temple to Thundering Jupiter to thank him for having spared him when lightning had brushed his palanquin during an expedition and killed the slave carrying the torch in front of him.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, he knew how to get information from such manifestations—often by relying on the arts of the haruspices.

Lightning had struck the tomb of Julia, the daughter of Julius Caesar, several times on the same day that Octavian had seen the sun crowned by a rainbow on his way back to Apollonia.⁶⁸ It had struck a part of his own house, on the Palatine: following the advice of the haruspices, Augustus had a temple erected to Apollo in the same place.⁶⁹ At about the same time as the eagle had described its ominous circles above him, lightning had struck his statue and erased the first letter of his name, Caesar: according to the haruspices, the letter C foretold "that he had no more than a hundred (*centum*) days to live, but that he would join the ranks of the gods, because *aesar*, formed by the rest of the letters of his name Caesar, meant 'god' in the Etruscan language."⁷⁰

These wholly classical manifestations of *prodigia* and *signa* did not constitute the only elements that made up the golden legend of Augustus. His life set the stage for other divinatory testimonies, above all for predictions drawn from astrology—which was foreign to the old Roman tradition.

While attending a meeting of the Senate in 63 B.C., the Pythagorean P. Nigidius learned of the birth of the future Augustus from his father Octavius, and "as soon as he knew the hour of the childbirth, he announced that a master

of the universe had been born."⁷¹ Later, during his stay in Apollonia, Octavian accompanied Agrippa to the observatory of the astrologer Theogenes. As Theogenes had made marvelous predictions about his companion, Octavian refused to give information about his own birth. He ended up consenting: "Then Theogenes leapt from his seat to adore him."⁷² Augustus must have drawn great confidence from his horoscope, as he "later had his astrological chart published" and struck silver coins bearing the image of Capricorn.⁷³

Other divinatory forms appear in the course of Augustus's exceptional life. These enter into a different category, according to Cicero, who separates those interpretations based on a technique (*ars*) from those made under the impetus of a natural force (*natura*).⁷⁴ The latter designated oracles and dreams.

In fact oracular consultations almost never occurred. Suetonius cites only one example, and this originates in an initiative taken not by Augustus but by his father Octavius. While the latter led his army across the wastes of Thrace, he had a consultation on the subject of his son, participating in a "barbarian ceremony" (*barbara caerimonia*) in a forest consecrated to Bacchus. The libation of wine caused a flame to shoot up so high that it went beyond the roof of the temple—an omen of sovereignty (the priests assured him) that until then only Alexander the Great had received.⁷⁵

As for *somnia*, prophetic dreams, they are abundant in this "edifying" literature. First it is Atia "who, before going into childbirth, saw in a dream her entrails rising up to the heavenly bodies and spreading out over the perimeter of all of the earth and sky." Octavius "himself dreamed that the light of the sun was coming out from the womb of his wife."⁷⁶ Later, during the night that followed his visit to the oracle of Bacchus in Thrace, Octavius had another dream: "He saw his son, clothed in a superhuman majesty, carrying the thunderbolt, the scepter, and the attributes of the very great and good Jupiter, as well as a radiating crown, on a chariot decorated with laurels and drawn by twelve horses of a brilliant whiteness."⁷⁷

Outside of the narrow family circle, other people are mentioned as having been witnesses in this review of premonitory dreams. In 63 B.C., Q. Catulus, who had just dedicated the new Capitoline temple (the old one had been burned in 83 during the civil war), dreamed two nights in a row. The first time he saw Jupiter choose from among children who were dressed in praetexta (magisterial togas) and were playing around his altar, to present an image of the state to one of them; the second time, he saw the same child on the lap of Capitoline Jupiter, and when he tried to take him down, Jupiter held him back, explaining that he was bringing this child up for the salvation of the state. "The next day, Catulus happened to meet the future Augustus, whom he did not know; greatly astonished, he contemplated him and proclaimed his perfect resemblance to the child of his dreams."⁷⁸

Even Cicero is cited among the witnesses. According to Suetonius, Cicero confided the following dream to Julius Caesar: he had seen a child with very distinguished features, who had come down out of the sky by means of a long gold chain, stopped before the door of the Capitol, and received a whip from the hands of Jupiter.⁷⁹ When he later saw Octavian, who was still unknown to most people, in Caesar's entourage, he immediately identified him with the figure in his dream.

Augustus himself benefited from a premonitory dream that saved his life in the battle of Philippi, undertaken in 42

B.C. against the murderers of Julius Caesar. Once when he had decided to stay in his camp because of the state of his health, he was dissuaded from this by one of his friends who had had a dream. He did well to take his advice: the enemy pillaged his camp, threw itself upon the palanquin where he normally would have been resting, and completely tore it apart.⁸⁰

Such was the vast array of *divinandi genera* that flourished at the advent and during the reign of Augustus. To all appearances, the picture is quite varied. Yet on closer inspection, the traditional forms of divination had not been submerged, in spite of the invasion of oneiromancy and the (more timid) incursion of astrology. Anything else would have been astonishing during the reign of an emperor who looked to maintain balanced quantities of the traditional and the innovative in his religious policies. When his biographer writes that he was particularly sensitive to *ostenta*, it must not be forgotten that in order to interpret them, he almost always turned, following the old custom that had been adapted to Roman ways, to qualified experts, the haruspices, for the interpretation of lightning flashes as well as of the *exta* (the victim's viscera) and the *auspicia* (the observation of birds).⁸¹

For most of the portents provoked by lightning that have been enumerated, the haruspices were consulted both to interpret the event and to stave off its unpleasant consequences.

The same specialists allowed Augustus to benefit from their competence in extispicinary consultations. Thus, in the course of a sacrifice that Octavian offered during his first consulate, "the haruspices unanimously interpreted as an omen of prosperity and grandeur the fact that the livers of all of the victims were folded inward."⁸² In the same way, they interceded near Perugia in the course of a sacrificial celebration—and here the way that they acted shows with what rapidity they could adapt themselves to circumstances. Augustus, who had not been able to obtain the *litatio* (the gods' approval of his sacrifice), had given the order to increase the number of victims, when suddenly the enemy rushed in and carried off all the sacred preparations. The reaction of the haruspices: "All the perils and evils foretold to the sacrificer would fall upon those who held the *exta* (the viscera of the victims), and so it came to pass."⁸³

The observation of birds also allowed for exegeses "in the Etruscan style," i.e., for symbolic interpretations that went beyond the functions of the Roman augur. On several occasions the appearance of an eagle is noted in the course of Augustus's career.

The first time is particularly significant. "While Octavian was having his lunch in a forest close to the fourth milestone on the way to Campania, an eagle suddenly stole the bread from his hand; it flew high into the sky and then suddenly descended slowly (*leniter*) and returned the bread to him."⁸⁴ This "miracle," which bore the promise of a heavenly consecration, recalls the analogous portent of the eagle that took away and returned Lucumon's headgear on the road to Rome.⁸⁵

Another omen carries an equally transparent symbolism. The triumvirate had just been established (in 43 B.C.) between Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian, when the troops of the three were witness to the following sight at Bologna: "An eagle, perched on the tent of Octavian, struck down and killed two crows that had been harassing it from either side; the entire army noted that one day there would be discord—as had been shown—between the three colleagues, and foretold the outcome."⁸⁶

Recall the ominous eagle of the ceremonies of the lustrum, when Jupiter's bird sent three omens that corresponded to as

many crucial events in the life of Augustus: his supernatural consecration (for he would become Augustus), his victory over his rivals (for he would triumph definitively at Actium in 31 B.C.), and his end, which was not far off (for his fate would be sealed in A.D. 14).⁸⁷

But in the end, this is a distortion of the ancient meaning of the auspices. Certainly the allegorical interpretation of the behavior of birds is foreign to the strict rules of augury. Yet this practice, favored by the activities of the haruspices, did not obliterate the respect for ancestral practices. Augury lost none of its official importance.

The best proof of this is the following testimony: "During his taking of the auspices, at the time of his [Octavian's] first consulate, twelve vultures appeared to Octavian as they had to Romulus in the past."⁸⁸

The exceptional character of these auspices, which were reserved for only two personages in Roman history, was stressed by Augustan propaganda. The connection between Romulus and Augustus, beneficiaries of the same heavenly favor, held a clear meaning for the contemporaries of the latter: at a distance of several centuries, the founder of the empire had raised himself up to the glorious rank of the founder of the city.

Furthermore, Augustus would never have dreamed of disdaining the dignity of augury. Not only did he himself hold this office—which would appear to have been the earliest of his priestly positions⁸⁹—but he also scrupulously respected the Julian tradition which included giving major power to the augural office.⁹⁰ And when he would later erect a sanctuary to his deified father, he would take care not to forget the attribute of the augur: on a gold denarius that represented the cultic statue of the emperor standing beneath the portico of his temple, Caesar appears with the *lituus*.⁹¹

4. Divination and Syncretism

Although the reign of Augustus reveals a kind of equilibrium between the ancient traditions and new forms of divination, it must be added that this equilibrium was precarious. It would not take long to accomplish an evolution that would make the old opposition disappear. We have already shown the fundamental difference between Roman augury and Etruscan haruspicy.

Roman augury was not divinatory in the strict sense of the word: its task was to guard the good relations between gods and men. The highest magistrate alone (who was clothed in the *imperium*) was invested with the right to take auspices: he relied on the technical assistance of the augur to ascertain the agreement or disagreement of heaven with an enterprise. The initiative taken by the king-augur Romulus retained an exemplary value over the centuries: it is not by chance that Augustus insisted on enjoying the same celestial privilege.

Haruspicy, by contrast, manifested divinatory pretensions from the very start. To this end, it used three principal procedures: the examination of the *exta*, essentially of the liver; the interpretation of portents; and the observation and conjuration of lightning. In contrast with the sobriety of the augural art, haruspicy profited from the prestige of a technique that was more perfected and richer in promises: it could predict the future!

As such, it aroused both the mistrust and the curiosity of the Romans. Being realists, the Romans did not intend to be deprived of the services of haruspicy any more than of the "predictions" offered by the *Sibylline Books*, which, even though they were of Hellenic origin, had come to them,

according to tradition, through the interposition of an Etruscan king, Tarquinius Superbus. But they subjected the requests made to the haruspices, as well as the consultations of the interpreters of the *Sibylline Books*, to strict control by the Senate—who always could make decisions, as a last resort.

Thus, throughout all of the Roman Republic, the priestly body of augurs was placed in a kind of rivalry with the "foreign" priests. Our sources indicate that there was a certain tension between the native priests and the foreign "diviners." The anecdote about the haruspex reported by Cicero is symptomatic of this. Cicero, who had been an augur and who was not a man who would make fun of a Roman priest, recounted with great delectation the saying attributed to Cato, that "one haruspex cannot look at another haruspex without laughing."⁹² This shows how wrong some modern scholars can be when they interchange augur and haruspex.

The trench between the indigenous and migratory priestly bodies would soon be filled up, however. Cicero had drawn a clear line between Roman priests and augurs on the one hand and Sibylline interpreters and haruspices on the other.⁹³ This boundary would become blurred after the reign of Augustus. In the syncretist climate that came to characterize the empire more and more, the poets sometimes anticipated institutional reforms.

So it was that Tibullus, on the occasion of the election of his friend Valerius Messalla as *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, appealed to Apollo as the god who would thenceforth be thought to concentrate all of the divinatory powers in himself.⁹⁴ The poet does not even hesitate, in pushing the spirit of "contamination" to the extreme, to place the Roman augur under the obedience of the god: "Phoebus, be propitious: a new priest enters into your sanctuary . . . You, you see far into the future; it is to you that the augur who knows the fate announced by the prophetic bird consecrates himself; you govern the oracles; by your grace, the haruspex can see into the future, when the still throbbing viscera carry the stamp of the god; it is through your inspiration that the Romans have never been misguided by the Sibyl who announces hidden destinies in six-footed verses."⁹⁵ Thus he brought to heel the Roman augur who, although he was not long before "the interpreter of Jupiter," now enters into the service of a god of foreign origins; in addition, he incorporated all divinatory forms exclusively under Apollo.

It fell to the emperor Claudius to proceed with the institutional reorganization. He gave a speech to the Senate reminding them of the merits of the college of the haruspices, and after a *senatus consultum*, he obtained their incorporation into the official priestly order.⁹⁶ It is characteristic that, in his arguments for haruspicy, Claudius placed this "most ancient knowledge in Italy" in opposition to "foreign superstitions."

But this reinforcement and consolidation of the Italic priestly body did not impede the development of another phenomenon which was to grow more and more powerful: the "savage" superstition that would win over at every level. Cicero's brother, who admitted the legitimacy of the official means of divination, at the end of his report denounced the charlatans of the profession: "drawers of lots, diviners greedy for profit, calling up souls [psychomancy]." He rejected equally "Marsian augurs, village haruspices, circus astrologers, prophet-votaries of Isis, and interpreters of dreams"—all of whose prophecies were based on nothing but imposture.⁹⁷

When Claudius alluded to the *externae superstitiones*, he was probably thinking in particular of the diviners of Isis and

possibly of the Jews.⁹⁸ After various changes in fortune, between the years A.D. 36 and 39 the Egyptian Isis had finally obtained an official temple in Rome, which was situated on the Field of Mars.⁹⁹ This was quite an exceptional rise, since this cult was still being persecuted under Tiberius (in A.D. 19, after a scandal, this emperor had a chapel to Isis destroyed and its cultic image thrown into the Tiber). This was only a beginning, considering the expansion that it must have known in the second century, during which there flourished a mysticism of Isis to which book 11 of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius is a literary witness.

In a general sense, the structures of the official religion could not hold out against the seductions of Oriental currents of thought. In a reversal of the program that Cicero had previously sanctioned, religion gave way to superstition.¹⁰⁰

A form of superstition whose hold over the mind became stronger and stronger was astrology. While it had held the attention of Augustus only episodically (by the chance visit to Theogenes' observatory),¹⁰¹ it played a greater role in the life of Tiberius, who admitted the astrologer Thrasyllus into his circle of intimate friends.¹⁰² Suetonius's remark about Tiberius is quite illuminating:¹⁰³ "Unconcerned with gods and cults, since he was a fervent believer in astrology (*quippe addictus mathematicae*) and was entirely persuaded that all was ruled by fate (*fato*), he nevertheless had an excessive fear of thunder; when the sky was stormy, he never failed to place a laurel crown on his head because that foliage, it is said, cannot be touched by lightning." In the same way, Caligula relied on the good offices of the astrologer Sulla.¹⁰⁴

It is nevertheless true that the Julian emperors did not reject the legacy of the Augustan traditions. Thus, Claudius remained loyal to the memory of the founder of the dynasty to the point of considering the vow in the name of Augustus the most sacred.¹⁰⁵ It was in the same spirit that he interceded in his role of supreme pontiff in ordering propitiatory prayers when a bird of evil omen was reported at the Capitol.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, the wave from the East would finally submerge everything by progressively undermining the official organs of divination (which continued to be regimented) in favor of a savage and uncontrolled form of prophecy. Soon Juvenal would write the famous verses:¹⁰⁷ "I cannot, citizens, tolerate a Greek Rome; and yet, what is the proportion of the Achaean element in these dregs? It has been a long time now that the river of Syria, the Orontes, has been pouring into the Tiber." For Juvenal, a Greek is capable of practicing any kind of trade; to be, among other things, "masseur, augur, doctor, magician."¹⁰⁸ And the poet adds a sarcastic confession: "What would I do with Rome? I cannot tell a lie . . . I do not wish to nor could I promise a son the death of his father. I have never examined the viscera of frogs."¹⁰⁹ Whatever excesses of language we allow a satirical poet, he stigmatizes a divination that had been degraded into all sorts of deviant forms—a phenomenon that was all too real.

R.S./d.w.

NOTES

1. The word "auspice" used in the title of this section and later in the text is to be understood in the etymological sense: "observation of birds" (*auspicium* from *avis* and *specio*).

2. J. Defradas, *La divination en Grèce*, in *La divination* (Paris 1968), 1:194.

3. Pliny, *N.H.*, 7.15.

4. Tacitus, *Ann.*, 1.54.

5. Varro, *L.L.*, 5.85. Cf. the note by J. Collart in his edition of book 5 of Varro (Paris 1954), 198, n. 5.

6. The most important editions of the Iguvine Tablets are: G. Devoto, *Tabulae Iguvinae* (2d ed., Rome 1940); *Le tavole di Gubbio* (Florence 1948); J. W. Poultney, *The Bronze Tablets of Iguvium* (Baltimore and Oxford 1959); see also the linguistic commentary by E. Vetter, *Handbuch der italischen Dialekte*, 1 (Heidelberg 1953). The text has been elucidated, except for certain specific points.

7. For example, the observation of omens of the Iguvine Tablets (6a, 1–7) includes the following distribution of birds: in one category the *parra* (Umbrian *parfa*) and *cornix* (Umbrian *curnase*); in the other, the *picus* (Umbrian *peiqu*) and *pica* (Umbrian *peica*). On the other hand, the text of Plautus (*Asinaria*, 259–61) arranges in the same category the green woodpecker (*picus*) and the crow (*cornix*) and in another category the nightjar (*parra*) and the raven (*corvus*). Thus, two differences appear from the beginning between these two divinatory formulae: (1) the magpie (*pica*) of the Umbrian text takes the place of the raven (*corvus*) of the Latin text, the two birds otherwise belonging to the same family of Corvidae; (2) a reversal is observed in the distribution: contrary to the Latin text, which groups *cornix* and *picus*, the Umbrian text associates *cornix* and *parra*; corresponding symmetrically to the Latin group *corvus* and *parra* is the Umbrian pair *pica* and *picus*. With regard to the respective orientations of these pairs of birds, the obscurity of certain Umbrian words makes it impossible to resolve the problem: thus the dispute over the meaning of *dersua* continues between G. Devoto (*Tab. Iguvinae*, 1940, p. 142), who favors the Latin translation *dextra*, and E. Vetter (*Handb. der ital. Dial.*, 1953, 1:229–31), who opts for the Latin translation *prospira*, excluding the meaning of “right.”

8. Cf. Pliny, *N.H.*, 13.88; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 4.62; Aulus Gellius, *N.A.*, 1.19. The Sibyl had first proposed nine books to Tarquin the Proud. When the king found the price too high, she burned three and offered the six others at the same price. Refused again by the king, she destroyed another three books. Impressed, the king decided to buy the three remaining books at the price set for the set of nine. The *Sibylline Books* deposited in the temple of Capitoline Jupiter were lost when this monument burned in 83 B.C. More or less reconstructed, they were subject to a selection under Augustus and were transferred to the Palatine, where they were placed “under the statue of Palatine Apollo” (Suetonius, *Aug.*, 31.1). They remained there until the time of Honorius: then the regent of that emperor, Stilicho, burned the “Sibylline oracles,” which in the eyes of Roman traditionalists were regarded as “pledges of the Empire’s eternity given by Fate”—*aeterni fatalia pignora regni* (Rutilius Namatianus, *De Reditu Suo*, 2.52–55). The *viros sacris faciundis* successively increased in number from two to ten, and finally to fifteen.

9. Cf. Livy, 22.9.7–8. On this subject see my book *La religion romaine de Vénus* (Paris 1954), 96ff., 228–29.

10. Cicero (*De divin.*, 2.116) gives as precedent a verse by Ennius (*Ann.*, 174–76, ed. Warmington), a Latin transposition of Apollo’s response to King Pyrrhus: *Aio te, Aeacida, Romanos vincere posse*. The meaning may be either “I affirm, O descendant of Aeacus, that you can vanquish the Romans,” or “I affirm . . . that the Romans can vanquish you.”

11. Pliny the Elder, *N.H.*, 7.119. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la divination dans l’Antiquité*, 4:129–30, has expressed, with good reason, the hypothesis of a Hellenic influence. With respect to the plural *Marcios quosdam fratres* (Cicero, *De divin.*, 1.89), which competes with the singular *Marcus* (of the tradition represented by the majority of authors), it seems arbitrary to reduce it to duality. Contrary to the statement of Bouché-Leclercq (*Histoire de la divination*: “Cicero attributes the prophecies to the collaboration of two brothers of that name”), Cicero has sometimes used an indeterminate plural (*ibid.*, 1.89; 2.113), sometimes the singular (*ibid.*, 1.115).

12. This is the suggestion made by G. Wissowa (*Encycl. of Relig. and Ethics*, 4:821 [1912]), who proposed a Latin verse transposition drawn from the *Sibylline Books*.

13. *De divin.*, 2.50. Servius cites (*ad Aen.*, 6.72) a nymph Begoë *quae artem scripserat fulguritarum [sic] apud Tuscos*.

14. In France there is a tradition of translating *exta* by *entrailles* (entrails). This word seems wrong to me, however, because it merely designates “l’ensemble des organes enfermés dans l’abdomen”

(“the group of organs enclosed in the abdomen”) (Dict. Robert). I prefer the translation *fressure* (viscera), which has the advantage of designating a set of visceral organs including the heart, liver, lungs, and spleen. Except for the spleen, which the ancients replaced by the gall bladder (*fel*)—but in ancient medicine “the spleen was thought to secrete the bile”—these are exactly the organs that the Romans understood (adding sometimes the peritoneum, *omentum*) under the name *exta*: *cor*, *jecur*, *pulmones*.

15. Cf. Cicero, *De divin.*, 1.12 and 35.

16. Cf. *ibid.*, 1.72.

17. Cf. Macrobius, *S.*, 3.7.2.

18. Livy, 1.34.8–9.

19. Cicero, *De divin.*, 1.3.

20. Cf. the report by Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.34.

21. Livy, 8.9.1.

22. On the process and the finality of the *devotio*, cf. G. Dumézil, *La religion romaine archaïque* (2d ed., Paris 1974), 108–10; R. Schilling, *Religion et magie à Rome, Annuaire de l’École des Hautes Études, Sciences religieuses* (1967–68), 39–40; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*

23. Cf. Livy, 8.10.8.

24. *Ibid.*, 8.9.1.

25. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.28.

26. *An vos Tusci ac barbari auspicio populi Romani jus tenetis?* (“Do you, Etruscans and barbarians, possess the right of divination of the Roman people?”), wrote the father of the Gracchi, Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (consul in 177 B.C.), in his address to the diviners who came to report to the Senate the illegality which he had committed in the course of presiding over the meetings. It is a cry from the heart, inspired by anger (*Tum Gracchus . . . incensus ira . . .*). The scene is reported by Cicero (*N.D.*, 2.11).

27. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.51. In the treatise *N.D.*, 1.71, Cicero cites the “saying” without referring to Cato. This citation has been remembered incorrectly by moderns, who have substituted the augur for the diviner. This is a contradiction that violates the “spirit” more than the “letter” of the text of Cicero.

28. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.28. In the preceding context, Cicero had wanted to give reassurance in advance, by declaring “that it is necessary to respect the diviner out of regard for the interests of the state and the communal religious practices.”

29. Livy, 42.20.

30. *Ibid.*, 42.20.3: The *decemviri* made the following recommendations: “It is necessary to proceed to a lustration of the city, to organize supplications and solemn prayers, to sacrifice victims of great size on the Capitoline in Rome and at the Promontory of Minerva in Campania; the games should be celebrated for ten days as soon as possible in honor of Jupiter, the good and great.” (On the Promontory of Minerva, facing the Isle of Capri, is a temple of Minerva.)

31. *Ibid.*, 42.20.4.

32. For the two cults of Praeneste and Antium, see the recent restatement with the essential bibliography of K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, 176ff. On the interpretation of *Fortuna Primigenia*, cf. G. Dumézil, *Dieux latins et mythes védiques* (Brussels 1956), 71–98.

33. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.85.

34. *Ibid.*, 86–87.

35. These investigations have been published by F. Fasolo and G. Gullini, *Il santuario della Fortuna Primigenia a Palestrina* (Rome 1953).

36. K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, p. 177: “Nicht Sorgen des Staats, sondern Fragen von Leuten, die Angst haben, getäuscht zu werden, oder um den Ausgang einer Unternehmung besorgt sind, werden hier beantwortet.” Latte then wonders, “Vielleicht war es in alter Zeit anders.” I do not think that it was different long ago: with his customary conscience, Livy would not have omitted to mention an official consultation of the *sortes*. But he does not cite this in the outline of a set of marvels: see the documentation cited below.

37. Martial, 5.1.3: *Tua responsa veridicae discunt sorores*. Since the *tua responsa* refers to Domitian, these “sisters” contented themselves with repeating “the truth” of the emperor.

38. Suetonius (*Caligula*, 57.6) limits himself to noting that Caligula was warned by the Fortunes of Antium to take precautions against Cassius (*Momuerunt et Fortunae Antiatinae ut a Cassio caveret*). As for

Macrobius (1.23.13), he says that at Antium they take the statues of the Fortunes out on procession "to get answers," and he makes the connection with the statue of the god of Heliopolis, carried on a litter by the notables who advance "not according to their whim, but under the influence of the god who guides them as he wills."

39. Patavium (Padua) was the seat of an oracle of Geryon. Tiberius went to consult him: "He drew out a tablet which invited him to throw golden dice into the source of the Aponus; it happened that the dice he threw indicated the highest figure" (Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 14.4). It was a good omen for his future reign.

40. Livy, 21.62.5. Further on, § 8, Livy takes up the expression again with a variant: *Caere, ubi sortes adtenuatae erant*. With regard to the miracle of the shrinking of the *sortes*, Pliny the Elder (*N.H.*, 34.137) cites an analogous case: the family of the *Servillii* possessed a *triens* (one-third of an *as*) that had the property of increasing and decreasing.

41. Livy, 22.1.11: *Et Faleris caelum findi velut magno hiatu visum, quaque patuerit, ingens lumen effulsisse; sortes sua sponte adtenuatas unamque excidisse ita inscriptam: Mavors telum suum concutit*.

42. Livy, 43.13.3–6. With respect to the two sanctuaries of Fortuna in Rome, it is probable that the first is designated the sanctuary of the *Forum boarium*. Cf. J. Lugli, *Roma antica, Il centro monumentale* (Rome 1946), 554. With respect to the second, *Fortuna Primigenia*, which is situated on the hill (of Quirinal), cf. J. Lugli, *Fontes ad topographiam veteris urbis Romae pertinentes* (Rome 1957), 4:207, nos. 39, 40.

43. Livy, *ibid.*, 43.13.1–2.

44. E. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris 1969), 2:256: "the Latin radical *ō* (of *omen*) may be directly compared with the Hittite verbal theme *hā* 'to believe; to hold as true'; consequently, *omen* is interpreted as 'declaration of truth.' A fortuitous word, pronounced in a decisive circumstance, may be accepted as an omen, as a true presage, as a sign of destiny." In the same chapter the author analyzes "the series of words with precise meaning: *miraculum*, *monstrum*, *ostentum*, *portentum*, *prodigium*. The curious reader who is eager to grasp the semantic nuances that distinguish these different terms should consult this book. The relative abundance of similar terms in Latin, in the face of the unique Greek word *teras*, is a fact symptomatic of the state of mind that we are describing; E. Benveniste has restored the contrast on the linguistic level.

45. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.84.

46. Cf. the text of *De divin.*, 2.148, discussed in the article "Cicero as Theologian" below.

47. J. Bayet, in the chapter "Présages figuratifs déterminants dans l'antiquité gréco-latine," in *Croyances et rites dans la Rome antique* (Paris 1971), 60 and 63, rightly emphasized this aspect.

48. Suetonius, *Julius*, 81.

49. Incontestably a more menacing omen. Recall that in time of war the doors of the temple of Janus are also open.

50. Cf. the text of Pliny, *N.H.*, 28.17, cited above in § 1, "Divination or Auspices?"

51. Cf. Suetonius, *Julius*, 77.2: "He (Caesar) had the insolence to say one day when the haruspex announced a bad omen after examining organs in which the heart was lacking: the omen could have been favorable if it had pleased him; it was not necessary to interpret as a wonder the fact that the beast had no heart."

52. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 92.1: *Auspicia et omina quaedam pro certissimis observabat* ("He considered certain signs and omens to be absolutely true").

53. Cf. the text of Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.84, cited above.

54. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 92.1: *si mane sibi calceus perperam ac sinister pro dextro induceretur, ut dirum (observabat)*.

55. *Ibid.*, 93.5. The nones correspond to the fifth day of the month, except in March, May, July, and October, in which they fall on the seventh day. But they are always on the ninth day (hence their name) before the ides of the month (i.e., the thirteenth or fifteenth).

56. *Ibid.*, 96.5. In Greek *Nikon* means "victor," and *Eutychus*, "fortunate, happy." The battle of Actium (31 B.C.), by eliminating Antony, the ally of Cleopatra, confirmed the supremacy of Octavian, the future Augustus. The biographer adds that later, Augustus had

a bronze statue of the ass and ass driver made (in the temple that he built) at the site of his camp.

57. *Ibid.*, 97.2. The "adjacent sanctuary" must be the Pantheon, whose frieze door (even today) bears the inscription of the founder in large capitals: M. AGRIPPA L(ucii) F(ilius) COS. TERTIUM FECIT. By alighting above the letter A, the eagle, the messenger of Jupiter, designates Augustus, who is believed to have been "called" by heaven.

58. *Ibid.*, 94.3. Suetonius invokes the testimony of Julius Marathus for this *prodigium*.

59. *Ibid.*, 94.4. Recall that, through his mother Atia—the daughter of Julia, who was the sister of Julius Caesar—the future Augustus was the grandnephew of Julius Caesar before becoming his adopted son.

60. *Ibid.*, 94.9.

61. *Ibid.*, 94.10.

62. *Ibid.*, 94.15. The *laticlavus* was a tunic with two large bands of purple that was reserved for senators. The anecdote is explained by the fact that the children of senators also had the right to wear the *laticlavus* (cf. *ibid.*, 38.2).

63. *Ibid.*, 94.16. The battle of Munda (45 B.C.) won over the sons of Pompey and assured the definitive victory of Caesar. Later Augustus transplanted to the interior of his home, near the Penates and the opening of the *compluvium*, a palm that had grown in front of his house (*ibid.*, 92.3).

64. *Ibid.*, 95.1. This marvel implied an omen of victory (the crowned sun) by playing on the same symbolism many times: Octavian, who was considered a son of *Apollo* (see the text of Suetonius cited in note 59), returns to *Apollonia* and sees a solar phenomenon.

65. *Ibid.*, 94.2. The biographer adds that on the strength of this promise, the inhabitants of Velitrae fought a series of unfortunate wars against the Romans. "It was only later that events revealed that the omen (of the thunderclap) had announced the power of Augustus."

66. *Ibid.*, 90.1. "To remedy it, he always carried with him a bit of sealskin."

67. *Ibid.*, 29.5.

68. *Ibid.*, 95.1.

69. *Ibid.*, 29.4.

70. *Ibid.*, 97.3. Recall that after his adoption by Julius Caesar, he bore the name C. *Julius*, C(ai) *filius* Caesar. His contemporaries (and after them the moderns) named him *Octavianus*, although he had never borne this cognomen that named his family of origin. After 27 B.C. his official name had been *Imperator Caesar Augustus*.

71. *Ibid.*, 94.6.

72. *Ibid.*, 94.17 . . . *exiit Theogenes adoravitque eum*.

73. *Ibid.*, 94.18. The sign of Capricorn still appears on the side of the emperor's head on the large cameo of Vienna; it also served as the emblem of the legions created by Augustus: cf. F. Cumont, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines*, s.v. "zodiacus," p. 1054a. The interpretation of this sign seems to have led to confusion. Suetonius (*ibid.*, 94.18) wrote: "He coined pieces of silver in the effigy of Capricorn, under which he was born" (*nota sideris Capricorni, quo natus est* . . .). F. Cumont (*Dictionnaire*) has observed with good reason that the sign of Capricorn, which corresponds to January, can only designate the month of his conception and not that of his birth (23 September of the year 63).

74. Cicero, *De divin.*, 1.11–12: *Duo sunt enim divinandi genera, quorum alterum artis est, alterum naturae*. In the first category he classes haruspicy (subdivided into the examination of the viscera, the interpretation of marvels and omens, and lightning), augury, astrology, and the interpretation of the *sortes*; in the second, oneiromancy and predictions from dreams (*somniorum aut vaticinationum praedictio*). See further *ibid.*, 1.34.

75. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94.7.

76. *Ibid.*, 94.5. The same dreams are recorded by Dio Cassius, 45.1.3.

77. *Ibid.*, 94.8. The "transfiguration" of Augustus recalls the ritual aspect of the conqueror during the victory ceremonies, even while it suggests "by the air of superhuman majesty" (*mortali specie ampliore*) a very marked assimilation to Jupiter.

78. Ibid., 94.12. The report of the first dream of Catulus includes variants: cf. *ibid.*, 94.13, and Plutarch, *Cic.*, 44.
79. Ibid., 94.14. The same dream is reported, with some variations of detail, by Dio Cassius, 45.2.2.
80. Ibid., 91.1. Cf. the similar accounts of Velleius Paterculus, 2.70, and of Valerius Maximus, 1.7.1.
81. Ibid., 92.2: *Sed et ostentis praecipue movebatur.*
82. Ibid., 95.2. Cf. the version (which gives a variant reading) of Dio Cassius, 46.35.
83. Ibid., 96.3.
84. Ibid., 94.11. Cf. Dio Cassius, 45.2.1.
85. Cf. above, § 2, for the commentary on the text of Livy, 1.34.8–9.
86. Suetonius, *ibid.*, 96.1. Cf. Dio Cassius, 47.1.3.
87. Cf. above.
88. Cf. Suetonius, *ibid.*, 95.2. With regard to Romulus, see above, § 1.
89. Octavian had been *augur* in 37 B.C. at the latest; *quindecimvir sacris faciundis*, between 37 and 34; *septemvir epulonum*, in 16; *Pontifex maximus*, in 12 B.C. Cf. R. Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine* (Paris 1914), 177.
90. On the exceptional character that Julius Caesar, like Sulla, attributed to the law of auspices, see my book *La religion romaine de Vénus*, p. 304.
91. The type of this *aureus* is described in the passage cited in the preceding note.
92. Cf. above, § 2, especially note 7.
93. Cicero, *N.D.*, 3.5: "Roman religion is divided into celebrations and auspices; a third part has been added to it that consists of warnings of a divinatory nature made by the oracles of the Sibyl or the diviners, after marvels and omens."
94. M. Valerius Messalla Messallinus appeared as *Quindecimvir* of the secular games of 17 B.C.: cf. Pigli, *De ludis saecularibus* (2d ed., Amsterdam 1965), 236, n. 35. On his personality, see D. von Lunzer, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, s.v. Valerius Messalla Messallinus, (sic), no. 264, cols. 159–62.
95. Tibullus, 2.5.1 and 11–16. According to this text Valerius Messalla also had to be an "interpreter of the Sibyl." The sanctuary to which verse 1 alludes is called the temple of Palatine Apollo, where Augustus had deposited the rest of the *Sibylline Books*.
96. Cf. Tacitus, *Annales*, 11.15.

97. Cicero, *De divin.*, 1.132. The last phrase paraphrases the expression of Ennius, cited by Quintus, the brother of Cicero: *impudentesque harioli*.
98. Cf. Suetonius, *Claud.*, 25.11: "As the Jews were agitated continually at the instigation of someone named Chrestos (*impulsore Chresto*), he expelled them from Rome." Orosius (*Adversus paganos*, 7.6.15) has cited and commented on this passage, substituting *Christo* for the reading *Chresto* of Suetonius. When Tacitus (*Annales*, 15.44.5) speaks of Christ, he uses the form *Christus*. Egyptian and Jewish cults are associated in the repression ordered by Tiberius: see Suetonius, *Tib.*, 36.1.
99. Cf. the sources indicated by G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (2d ed., 1912), 352–55.
100. Cicero, *De divin.*, 2.148: "it is necessary to spread religion at the same time as the study of nature, as much as it is necessary to extirpate all the roots of superstition."
101. Cf. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94.17. Text cited in § 3 above, "Divination," especially note 72.
102. Cf. Suetonius, *Tib.*, 14.6. Cf. *ibid.*, 14.3: a promise had been made to Livia by the astrologer Scribonius that one day Tiberius would rule.
103. Ibid., 69.
104. Suetonius, *Calig.*, 57.5.
105. Suetonius, *Claud.*, 11.3.
106. Ibid., 22.2.
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ROMAN RELIGION AND GREEK PHILOSOPHY

The Romans have never been noted for their "philosophical brains." This commonplace, though it has some basis of truth, should be tempered. Pliny the Elder (in *Naturalis Historia* 7.112) tells a famous anecdote about the reaction of Cato the Elder to the first Greek philosophers who were heard in Rome. There were three of them, who had come on a mission in 155 B.C. to plead the cause of the city of Athens, which at the time was in conflict with the Attic city of Oropus. They represented three philosophical tendencies: Carneades, the Academy; Diogenes, Stoicism; and Critolaus, the Peripatetic school. After listening to Carneades, Cato the censor cried out, "The ambassadors have to be sent back immediately, for the dialectic of such a man (*illo viro argumentante*) makes it impossible to discern the truth." (Pliny cannot help adding that the censor's great grandson, Cato Uticensis, brought two Greek philosophers back with him at the end of his missions abroad. *Quanta morum commutatio!* comments the natural scientist.)

In another testimony dating from a time close to this mission of the Greek philosophers, the Greek historian

Polybius, who happened to be staying in Rome and was a friend of P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, pronounced an admiring judgment on the Roman institutions that seemed to him to represent a happy balance among elements that were monarchical (the Consuls), aristocratic (the Senate), and democratic (the Roman people assisted by the tribunes of the Plebeians). What did he regard as the secret of the Roman success? Certainly he gave it no philosophical basis; no code such as that of Athens inspired by the "wise" Solon was to be found anywhere here. Polybius (6.56) did not hesitate to say: "One of the greatest advantages of the Roman constitution stems from its conception of divinity. The strength of Roman domination comes from a thing that is considered a flaw among other men, and by that I mean the *deisidaimonian*." (The Greek term is ambiguous; it can mean both "reverential fear" and "superstitious fear" of the gods.)

Let us turn to the Roman sources. In the second century B.C., the Latin adaptations of the poet Ennius (239–169), *Epicharmus* and *Euhemerus sive Sacra Historia*, helped to spread the philosophical ideas of Epicharmus, a philosopher-poet from Cos (540–450), and of Euhemerus, a rationalist theoretician (born ca. 340 B.C., and of uncertain origin). For both, the gods were nothing but former mortals worshiped by mankind as a result of their good deeds. Flagrantly

contradicting the Roman traditions which must have impressed Polybius with their force, these ideas probably did not overstep the limits of the circles of "initiates," such as "the circle of the Scipios" (see P. Grimal, *Le Siècle des Scipions* [2d ed., Paris 1975]). Paradoxically, it is in the work of this "enlightened" author that attempts have been made to find a formula that would "explain" the mentality of the average Roman. Someone named Neoptolemus cries out in a tragedy of Ennius (*Tragoediae* § 400, ed. E. H. Warmington [1967], vol. 1, p. 368): *philosophari mihi necesse, paucis, nam omnino haud placet* (I must philosophize—sometimes; but I cannot keep doing it always and in everything). This remark of a character with a Greek name, which is taken from a fragment of a lost tragedy, tells us nothing specific about the state of the Roman mind, any more than another remark gleaned from the same author enlightens us about the motives behind the poetic inspiration of Ennius: *numquam poëtor, nisi si podager* (I never indulge in poetry unless I am suffering from gout: *Saturae* § 21, *ibid.* 1, p. 390). Neoptolemus's observation was later to give Cicero (*Tusculanae Disputationes* 2.1–2) the opportunity to oppose this assertion (which he explained in terms of class: Neoptolemus "was a military man absorbed in his career") and to proclaim the benefits of the permanent practice of philosophy.

The contrasts revealed in the second century B.C. (the reaction of Cato the Elder to Ennius, who was open to Hellenism) show at least that ancient Rome, at last victorious over the most formidable enemy in its history (the victory of Scipio Africanus over Hannibal at the battle of Zama in 202 B.C. was to be capped by the total defeat and solemn destruction of Carthage in 146), the Rome which had until that date lived on strong ancestral traditions (*Moribus antiquis res stat Romana virisque*, "Thanks to the customs and to the men of the past, the Roman state stands firm"—another verse of Ennius [*Annals* § 467, ed. W., vol. 1, p. 174])—that very Rome would face outside influences, especially the influence of Greek schools of philosophy, after the conquest and surrender of Greece in 146 B.C. following the destruction of Corinth.

Although the second century B.C. showed evidence of barely perceptible stirrings only in educated circles—and this ideological current could not have disturbed the *mos maiorum*, on the evidence of Polybius—such was no longer the case in the first century, and for a number of reasons. First, the contacts between Rome and Greece and the Near East became more frequent following the military campaigns of Sulla and Pompey in Greece and in Asia Minor. Pliny the Elder (*Naturalis Historia* 7.112) tells a revealing anecdote that shows how a great Roman war chief was not impervious to the charm of Greek wisdom. When Pompey returned from the war against Mithridates, he stopped to visit the Stoic Posidonius (who lived on the island of Rhodes), paid him his respects, and "made his troops bow before the gate of wisdom."

Moreover, a practice had become established, of completing the education of a young Roman who had begun his studies with a *litterator* (who taught him reading and writing) and a *grammaticus* (who started him in the interpretation of "classical" texts, Greek as well as Latin) by sending him to spend some time in Greece to receive training in philosophy. Cicero is a good example of this.

Cicero applied himself to the task of transmitting the heritage of Greek thought to his Roman contemporaries. The choice that he made is instructive, especially because the whole Ciceronian enterprise belongs chronologically after

the Epicurean poem of Lucretius, the *De rerum natura* (before 55 B.C.). When *De natura deorum*, written by Cicero in 45 B.C., insists in its preamble on the opportunity, indeed the necessity, for theological reflection, it rapidly circumscribes the debate between three major tendencies: Epicureanism (represented by C. Velleius), Stoicism (by Q. Lucilius Balbus), and the new Academy (by C. Aurelius Cotta). Above all, the discussion pits the Epicurean teaching against the Stoic doctrine, while the representative of the new Academy assumes the role of a moderator who claims to be free of all dogmatic prejudice.

In the course of this discussion, the fundamental contrast between Epicureanism and Stoicism in minds steeped in Roman traditions is revealed in a sudden burst. The more the religious posture of Epicureanism seemed alien to them, even deviant, the more Stoicism seemed close to certain essential aspects of Roman theology. First of all, there was the conception of the gods. Epicureanism is known to have localized them in the *intermundia*, the spaces between the worlds. They are supposed to have a human appearance, but without any function corresponding to the organs; above all, they are bereft of any activity and are reputed to enjoy eternal happiness.

Nothing could have shocked a Roman more, accustomed as he was to conceive of a deity with a function. Thus the spokesman for the new Academy did not hesitate to mock these gods "deprived of any reality" (Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.75), "without solidity or three-dimensional features" (*ibid.* 1.105–6), who cannot even be happy, since they have permanent instability (by definition, their existence depends on a precarious balance based on the incessant flow of atoms, compensated for by the perpetual emission of "images" from their own being: *ibid.* 1.114).

Then there was the notion of piety. This was not overlooked by Epicurus, who devoted a treatise to it, *Peri Hosiotētos*, which the academician Cotta mentions (*ibid.* 1.115). Epicurus advised the wise to hold "pious opinions about the gods" (*Letter to Menoeceus* 133). According to him, "The impious person is not the one who destroys the mob's belief in the gods, but the one who attributes to the gods the characteristics bestowed on them by the mob's opinions" (*ibid.* 123). Epicurean piety consists in the wise man's modeling of himself on divine beatitude: "You shall thus never experience trouble, either dreaming or waking, but you shall live like a god among men" (*ibid.* 134).

Cotta's reaction to this teaching was a function more of his role as the Roman pontifex than of his position as an exponent of the new Academy. "How can you expect," he cries to Velleius, "that men will honor gods who not only do not treat men with honor, but have no concern for them whatever and do nothing?" In Latin the formulation is more forceful because it underscores the reciprocity of the relationship (which necessarily exists between men and gods in Roman religion) through the *univocal* use of the word *colere*, "to honor" applied to both gods and men: *Quid est enim cur deos ab hominibus "colendos" dicas, cum di non modo homines non "colant," sed omnino nihil curent, nihil agant?* (Cic. *Nat. D.* 1.115).

After that, the solipsistic indifference of the Epicurean gods could only scandalize a Roman's mind. Although it is true that piety for him manifests a reverential and equitable gratitude toward the kindly gods (*est enim pietas iustitia adversum deos*: *ibid.* 1.116), Epicureanism appears to be merely harmful and destructive. Therefore Cotta, who had at first granted the sincerity of Epicurus's belief in the gods

(ibid. 1.86), finally concludes by rallying behind the Stoic Posidonius (ibid. 1.123), for whom Epicurus was only an atheist in disguise who professed faith in the immortal gods only in order to avoid becoming odious: *invidiae detestandae gratia*. After that any reconciliation becomes impossible. Cotta seems to be raising his voice in the name of all of Roman tradition when he launches this final judgment: "Epicurus completely eradicated religion from men's hearts when he deprived the immortal gods of the possibility of granting them help and grace" (ibid. 1.121).

Stoic theology is presented quite differently. At first it does not seem any closer to Roman tradition. On the contrary, its cosmic conception deifies the world and the stars, relegating the traditional deities to the rank of mendacious inventions of fable: *ad commenticios et fictos deos*, to quote the expression of Balbus, the spokesman for Stoicism (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.70). But by affirming the divine oneness which he defines as "an artful and creative fire that penetrates the world methodically" (*ignem artificiosum ad gignendum progredientem via*: ibid. 2.57), Stoicism proves to be highly flexible in the face of polytheistic pluralism. In fact, although divine power is primarily revealed "in the admirable order and the incredible regularity of the heavenly bodies" (ibid. 2.56), it is also manifest in other ways. All one has to do is set aside the fables to rediscover philosophic truth. One can then know the god who penetrates all reality in the world (*deus pertinens per naturam cuiusque rei*), no matter what name custom may have dressed him up in (*quoque eos nomine consuetudo nuncupaverit*): "Ceres for the lands, Neptune for the seas, or whatever other name for whatever other realm" (ibid. 2.71).

In this way, the traditional gods and the Stoic conception of divinity are reconciled: all these names correspond to various aspects of the same divine breath of life that goes through the world, *pneuma noeron kai purōdes ouk echon morphē*: "a fiery and intelligent breath, free of any form" (identified with the heavenly ether). For a Roman, this definition had the great merit of going beyond Hellenic anthropomorphism to join an ancestral idea. Varro (cited by Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 4.31) reminds us "that for more than 170 years the ancient Romans worshiped gods without statues. If this practice had prevailed until the present day," he added, "the cult of the gods would be purer" (*quod si adhuc mansisset, castius dii observarentur*).

In this perspective, the cult of deified abstractions in Roman religion becomes entirely justified (Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.79): *Mens* (intelligence), *Fides* (loyalty), *Virtus* (active virtue), *Concordia* (harmony). These refer to virtues inherent in the divine power. Stoicism did not intentionally limit itself to these special cases. It meant to demonstrate its ability to explain everything at the heart of a world penetrated by the divinity. Balbus does not fail to show that the subtle exegeses of a Zeno, a Cleanthes, and a Chrysippus went so far as to discover the deep meaning of a sometimes scabrous mythology (*phusica ratio non inelegans inclusa est in impiis fabulis*: ibid. 2.64). He cites the myth of Caelus (= Ouranos), who is mutilated by his own son Jupiter (= Zeus); this narrative symbolizes the fact that "the ether, that is, the fire of the highest region, capable of engendering all things by itself, does without that part of the body that requires union with the opposite sex to procreate."

By this method, Stoicism finally subsumed the entire traditional heritage. It cleverly managed to find the right equations between religious names and physical or philosophical concepts. Thus Jupiter corresponds to the ether, and Juno represents the air between the sea and the sky (ibid.

2.66). Finally, Cicero viewed the entire world as a city common to both gods and men (ibid. 2.78), in which all the elements—earth, water, air, and fire—are maintained in perfect cohesion because of the divine spirit that penetrates everything.

The idea of a world wholly controlled by divine providence (*omnia regi divina mente atque providentia*: ibid. 2.80) is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Epicureanism that postulates indifferent gods in an infinity of worlds. It is very close to the traditional religious vision and therefore is not in danger of running up against the Roman *pietas*, which was based on the notion of mutual exchange. On the contrary, it calls for a more refined form of piety for the believer, one that allows him to distinguish between religious attitudes and acts of superstition (ibid. 2.71).

It recommends an inner piety in addition to the mere formal purity of time past. The old way is illustrated by an anecdote that Livy (1.45.6) tells about the Roman who reminds the Sabine of his obligation to wash his hands before offering his marvelous heifer in sacrifice, a stratagem which allows the Roman to benefit, by way of substitution, from the prediction of prosperity tied to this sacrifice. Thus, "the cult of the gods will be stamped with a greater purity and a more perfect piety, if our worship is expressed through prayers that reveal an irreproachable state of mind" (ibid. 2.71).

Furthermore, Stoicism went beyond the traditional religions, which had exposed themselves to criticism. In the name of divine prediction and providence, it rehabilitated the legendary accounts of the interventions of the gods in human affairs, for example, the appearance of Castor and Pollux "who in the course of the Battle of Lake Regillus (in 496 B.C.), were seen lending a hand to the Roman troops" (ibid. 2.6). Similarly, it credited the predictions of divination in its various forms. Thus, the augur Attus Navius was said to merit the prestige that tradition bestows on him, since the revelation of the future may be granted by the gods to certain men (ibid. 2.9). The existence of augurs even gives Balbus the chance to propose a new proof of the existence of the gods, in the form of this curious syllogism (ibid. 2.12): "If someone has interpreters, he must himself exist. Now, the gods have interpreters. Let us therefore recognize that the gods exist." (In fact, this "proof" is gratuitous, since "the existence of the gods is a notion innate to all men, in some way carved into the soul": *omnibus enim innatum est et in animo quasi insculptum, esse deos*.)

Of course, Epicureanism and Stoicism were not the only philosophies to thrive in Rome, but they certainly elicited much stronger reactions than all the other movements (for example, the Euhemerism that is present in the works of Ennius or the Pythagoreanism that supposedly influenced Nigidius Figulus). Nevertheless, they had quite different audiences among the Romans. Because of the relative chronology (the dialogue of the protagonists in *De natura deorum* is believed to have taken place between 77 and 75 B.C.), neither Velleius, nor Balbus, nor Cotta, makes any reference to the poem by Lucretius. How interesting it would have been to record their feelings about the magnificent profession of Epicurean faith in the *De rerum natura*.

In any case, the poem by Lucretius appears to be an isolated flash of lightning in the literary sky. For reasons mentioned earlier, the Roman mind in the end remained stubbornly resistant to Epicureanism. On the other hand, in more than one instance, Stoicism struck sympathetic chords deep in the Roman soul. By its tone, it attracted Cicero, for one (*Nat. D.* 3.95), who became its advocate despite his

attachment to the probabilism of the new Academy. It fertilized the entire philosophical and dramatic production of Seneca, to cite only one famous example.

Instead of rejecting the Roman pantheon outright, as Epicureanism did, Stoicism was able to subsume all the gods of the tradition by interpreting them as just so many manifestations of the same divine power. That is how it succeeded in reconciling the philosophical requirement that postulated the oneness of the divinity with the practices of traditional

polytheism. Above all, by developing the notion of providence, Stoicism reinforced the basis of Roman piety, which could only conceive of beneficent gods. One revealing fact among others: as Cicero (*Nat. D.* 2.64) points out, popular interpretation had always mocked the etymology proposed by scholars, who saw in the supreme god *Juppiter a Juvans pater*, a "helpful Father."

R.S./g.h.

THE DECLINE AND SURVIVAL OF ROMAN RELIGION

It is a well-known fact that the Roman Empire was progressively invaded by Eastern religions, among them Christianity, which was to triumph in the fourth century. But it may be well to present some of the nuances connected with this fact. On the eve of its victory, Christianity was inclined to aim its polemic less against traditional Roman religion than against the scandalous fictions of Greek mythology and the extravagances of the mystery religions. At least that is the impression left by an anonymous pamphlet drafted a few years after 394, the *Carmen Contra Paganos*,¹ which discharges its most virulent shafts against the cults of Isis, Mithra, and the Magna Mater, all of which were merely foreign cults, *sacra peregrina*, in ancient Rome (except for the Magna Mater, who was also of Roman "kinship" through her role in the Trojan legend).

In any case, the death agony of Roman religion was prolonged throughout the entire fourth century, beginning when Constantine proclaimed himself the protector of Christianity in 313 with the Edict of Milan, though he did not abolish paganism. Various episodes marked the confrontation between the new religion and the ancient institution. The case of the statue of Victory, which matched Symmachus, the pagan prefect of Rome, against Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, is perhaps the most important symbolically. The statue of Victory was finally removed from the altar of the Senate. Others attacked the old religion with even more force. In A.D. 375, the Emperor Gratian renounced the title of Pontifex Maximus and in A.D. 382 he withdrew the subsidies of the pagan temples and the salaries of their priests.

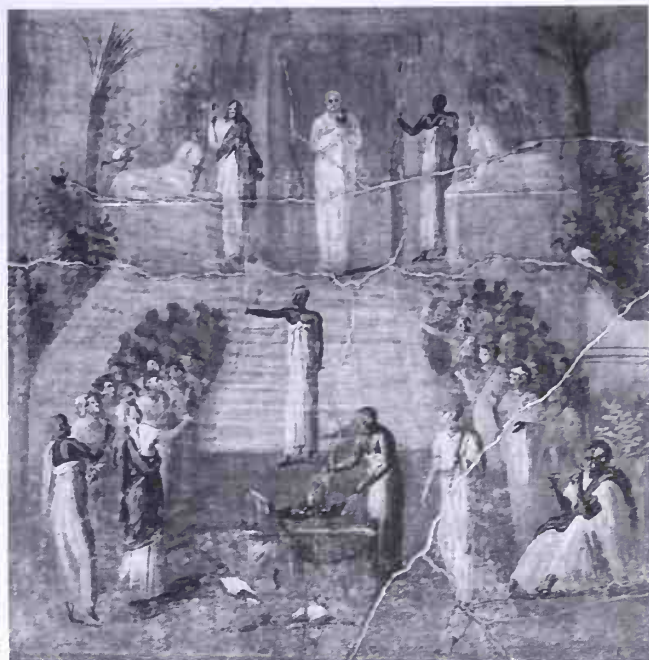
The emperor Theodosius delivered the decisive blows. He had already decreed the closing of the temples, forbidden the celebration of public sacrifices, and ordered an end to the domestic cults of the Lares, Genii, and Penates; his victory over Eugenius in 394 assured the triumph of Christianity once and for all. Toward the year 400, Saint Jerome was able to write that "the gold of the Capitol is peeling, soot and cobwebs cover all the temples of Rome" (*Epistolae* 107.1). Around the same time, Stilicho, the minister of the emperor Honorius, whom the poet Rutilius Namatianus (*De reditu suo* 2.41 and 52) calls the *dirus Stilicho* (sinister Stilicho), had the prophetic books of ancient Rome, the *Sibylline Books*, burned.

From that point on, is it correct to speak of the survival of a religion that had begun to wane some fifteen hundred years before? The slow pace of its demise, however, speaks for the strength of its deep entrenchment. Indeed, surprising resurgences prove that the death warrant issued by Theodosius at the end of the fourth century was not the last word. Thus, the calendar of Polemius Silvius, dated A.D. 449, still

refers to "pagan" festivals, despite the author's Christian faith. It refers, for example, to the Carmentalia in January and the Lupercalia in February (see A. Degraffi, *Inscriptiones Italiae*, vol. 13, 2, pp. 264–65). At the end of the fifth century, a pope was compelled to protest against the celebration of the Lupercalia in Rome.² And even in the sixth century, when Belisarius, Justinian's general, held out in Rome against a difficult siege by the Goths, Romans remembered the archaic rite that prescribed opening the gates of the sanctuary of Janus Quirinus in time of war, and in order to conform to the ancient prescription they secretly undertook to force open the gates of the temple, which had been closed since the abolition of paganism.³

Christianity thus found itself in close combat with pagan vestiges alive enough to provide it with useful substitutions. The mutations provide, in their way, evidence of the old institutions. Thus, a whole school of research was born in the wake of *Antike und Christentum* by E. J. Dölger. For example, the idea of purification that inspired the festival of the Lupercalia was taken up again in the festival of the Purification of the Virgin. The Ambarvalia, which were meant to ensure the lustration of the fields, were transposed into the processions on Rogation Days. Even the cult of the dead preserved the ancient piety; there was no longer a taste for libations (which Monica, the mother of Augustine, still practiced), but people used flowers—Ovid (*Fasti* 4.539) recommends violets. And the cult of the saints is known often to have taken over the cult of the local deity.

Another legacy of Roman religion remains in the sacred vocabulary. Beginning with the second century, when Latin replaced Greek in the liturgy of the Western church, the wealth of the Latin language became available to Christians. The transfer was not made directly, of course. (There are no rules without exceptions: the invocation *Regina caeli* addressed to Isis by Apuleius was taken up again in the paschal anthem in honor of the Virgin Mary.) Often the adopted word no longer carried its exact original meaning but took on a new range of colors, as a bronze is colored by a patina through the passage of time. Thus, in the classical language, the word *religiosus* evokes the idea of taboo or scruples, and therefore can be applied to an inanimate object (a *locus religiosus* is inviolable) or to a personal subject (a *religiosus* man is exceedingly scrupulous). But in the language of Apuleius, the term seems to have lost this altogether negative value. The author of *Metamorphoses* (11.13.6) delights in contrasting the common people (*populi*) or the impious (*inreligiosi*) with the *religiosi*, who are the faithful worshipers of the divinity of Isis. This "positive" meaning remained associated with the word after Christianity adopted it. Saint Jerome (*Epistolae* 107.2) certainly meant to compliment his correspondent when he said he regarded her as *religiosissima in Christo filia*.



Scene from the Isiac ritual. Painting from Herculaneum. Naples, National Museum. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

Another term worth noting is *sacramentum*. Again Apuleius, a magician in the art of stretching vocabulary, seems to have played the role of intermediary. Speaking of the holy *militia* of Isis into which his hero is to enlist the next day, he calls the enlistment a *sacramentum* (Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 11.15.5). Used in this way, the word still retained a link with the military meaning appropriate to its classical usage, while revealing its religious vocation through its context. *Sacramentum* in the mystical sense then became possible for the Christian language.

This example also shows that when it was necessary, Christians knew how to transpose onto the sacred register words that were originally profane. The method of "recycling" appears as frequently in vocabulary as it does in paleo-Christian architecture and sculpture. An investigation into the Leonine sacramentary yields much insight.⁴ We discover the *vota* that the Lord is asked to receive with favor, and the *hostia* that ceases to be bloody and becomes *salutaris* or *spiritualis* and designates Christ.⁵ Even the most sacred vocabulary of Rome appears with specific words like *venerari* and *venia*, along with the ritual practice of associating prayer and sacrifice: "Ecclesiae tuae, quaesumus, Domine, *preces* et *hostias* apostolica commendat oratio ut quod pro illorum gloria celebramus prosit ad *veniam*."⁶

But Rome did not limit itself to a lexicographical legacy whose most prestigious term was *religio*. The Roman spirit strongly marked the style of Christianity, a style that is visible in the structure of the prayers that preserved the qualities of sobriety and clarity that had distinguished the *carmina* of older times, avoiding all dull sentimentality and establishing relationships based on a clear confidence between men and heaven. According to one formula of Augustine (*De Doctrina Christiana* 3.11), Christianity was able to



Coin with likeness of Theodosius. Photo Arthaud/Martin.

carry away the "gold and silver vases" of its adversaries and use them in its own way. The style is perhaps even more striking (it shows up, if not at the beginning, at least at the time of the turmoils and heresies) in its sense of order and in its spirit of organization. One fact seems to take on a profoundly symbolic value. It is well known that the first popes simply bore the title of bishop (*episkopos*); but it is not just an accident that the tradition later revived the title of Pontifex Maximus and gave it to the ruler of Christendom. Consciously or unconsciously, it was a way of paying magnificent homage to the traditions of ancient Rome.

R.S./g.h.

NOTES

1. *Carmen contra paganos* is a satirical poem directed against Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, *praefectus Italiae, Illyrici et Africae*, who had exercised his functions first under Theodosius, in A.D. 390–91, and then in the reign of the usurper Eugenius in 393–94. The author of *Carmen* attacks, without naming him, the *praefectus* who had restored the pagan rites at Rome and made war "on the true God," before "dying a miserable death" (Flavianus committed suicide during the battle of the river Frigidus, 5–6 September A.D. 394). The identification proposed by Mommsen and the date (a little after 394) have since been confirmed: see A. Chastagnol, *Hommages à Marcel Renard*, 2:143, and J. F. Matthews, "The Historical Setting of the *Carmen contra Paganos*," *Historia*, 1970, 464–79. See the edition of the poem (with Italian trans. and notes) by G. Manganaro, in *Nuovo Didaskaleion* 11 (1961): 23–45 (but the author wishes to propose—wrongly—too late a date).

2. Usually the treatise on the Lupercalia is attributed to Pope Gelasius. Recent criticism has tended to attribute the authorship to Pope Felix III: cf. P. Nautin, *Dict. d'hist. et de géogr. eccl.*, no. 32, Felix III, col. 894.

3. Cf. Procopius, *De Bello Gothico* 1.25, ed. Comparetti (Rome 1895), 1:184–85.

4. We have kept the name “Leonine sacramentary,” which is the one most widely used to designate the collection that contains the most ancient prayers of the Latin church. It is under this title (which attributes it to Pope Leo the Great) that it has been published, notably in volume 55 of Migne’s *Patrologiae Cursus Latina*. One edition, more recent and more learned, has been produced by L. C. Mohlberg under the title *Sacramentarium Veronense*, in the collection *Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta*, where it constitutes volume 1 of the *Fontes* (2d ed., Rome 1966). This new title refers to the source, a manuscript from Verona (no. 85 of the Capitulary Library) which, written in uncial script, dates from the first half of the

seventh century and originates from Italy—no doubt from Verona.

5. Cf. *Sacramentarium Veronense*, ed. Mohlberg (2d ed., Rome 1966), p. 33, 1.10ff. (= Migne, *P.L.*, 55, c. 46): “Remotis obumbrationibus carnalium victimarum, spiritali tibi, summe Pater, hostiam supplicii servitute deferimus . . .” (Abandoning the gloomy sacrifices of bloody victims, we offer, O sovereign God, as humble supplicants, a spiritual sacrifice . . .).

6. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 43, 1.9ff. (= Migne, *P.L.*, 55, c. 53–54): “O Lord, may the intercession of the apostles commend the prayers and sacrifices of thy Church, in order that the festival that we celebrate in your honor may serve to gain us thy favor.” See the index to the words *venerari* and *venia* in Mohlberg’s work, pp. 430–31.

ANNA PERENNA

The double name of this Roman goddess is clarified by a commentary from Macrobius (*Saturnalia*, 1.12.6): *Eodem quoque mense (= Martio) et publice et privatim ad Annam Perennam sacrificatum itur ut annare perennareque commode liceat*. “It is also in the same month (of March) that both in public and in private sacrifices are offered to the wood of Anna Perenna in order to live happily through the entire year.” (The sacred wood, *nemus*, of Anna Perenna is mentioned by Martial, 4.64.17.) If *Anna* is the personification of the new year, *Perenna* (**perennus*, doublet of *perennis*) must allude to the whole year (by reference to the verb *perennare* or *perannare*), but may also by extension designate a period of time without end (for this meaning, see Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.721).

The “joyous festival” of Anna Perenna (cf. Ovid, *F.*, 3.523) was celebrated on 15 March in a *nemus* situated at the first milestone of Rome, near the banks of the Tiber. It was a *festum geniale* of the ancient and official type, vividly described by Ovid (*F.*, 3.525–42):

The crowd arrives, and scattered here and there over the green grass they drink, every lad reclining beside his lass. Some camp under the open sky; a few pitch tents; some make a hut of boughs and leaves. Others set up reeds in the guise of rigid pillars and stretch out their togas on the reeds. But they grow warm with sun and wine, and they pray for as many years as they take cups, and they count the cups they drink. There you will find men who drink as many cups as the years of Nestor, and women who would live to be as old as Sibylls, by the number of cups they drink. There they also sing all the songs that they learned

in the theater, beating time to the words with their hands. A man sets a bowl down on the ground and begins a few clumsy steps, while his sweetheart, all dressed up, dances around with streaming hair. They stagger home, a public spectacle: “How happy you are!” cries the crowd as they meet them. I met a procession lately, worth mentioning: a drunk old woman dragging a drunk old man.

This joyous festival, animated by general carousing and spiced with obscene words (*obsce-na*: Ovid, *F.*, 3.695) surely of apotropaic significance, inaugurated the new year on a date that was notable on the ancient calendar: the ides of March, the brightest day of the first month of the ancient year. It was consecutive (according to the calendar of Philocalus) or concomitant (according to Lydus, *De Mensibus*, 4.49) with another popular, if not official, ceremony: the Mamuralia, a festival that consisted of the expulsion of Mamurius Veturius. This double name (which appears in the song of the Salians: cf. Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 6.49) is interpreted to mean the “old Mars”; that is, the “old year” (cf. A. Degrassi, *Ist. Ist.*, 13.2, pp. 422–23). Thus the articulation of the two ceremonies takes on a transparent meaning.

As for the character of Anna Perenna, ancient etiology connects her with several different legendary or historical figures. Ovid (*F.*, 3.449ff.) lists diverse attempts at identification: the goddess was assimilated to the sister of Dido, the Anna who became “the Nymph of Numicius” at Lavinium (*F.*, 3.557–656)—or to Anna of Bouillae, an old woman from an area near Rome, who fed the common people with “rustic cakes” during her retreat on the Sacred Mountain (*ibid.*, 3.661–74), as well as other associations that the poet barely touches upon (*Luna, Themis, Io, Atlantis*: *ibid.*, 3.657–60).

R.S./d.b.

APOLLO IN ROME

Apollo is the barely Latinized transcription for the Greek god *Apollōn*. He was introduced to Rome as a healer. *Apollo Medicus* was his official title in the temple dedicated to him in 433 and consecrated in 431 B.C. during a serious epidemic (Livy, 4.25.3; 40.51.6). The location of the temple, in the Flamen Fields to the southwest of the Capitol (and thus outside the pomerial zone), was already called the *Apollinare*

(Livy, 3.63.7): it is impossible, however, to say whether this “Apollonian enclosure” indicated an official or a private cult.

In the prayers of their litany (*Indigitamenta*), the vestal virgins referred to Apollo as *Apollo Medice, Apollo Paeon* (Macrobius, *S.*, 1.17.15). The second invocation corresponds to the invocation *ιὲ Παῖδῶν*, addressed to the god of healing of the Greek cult (cf. von Blumenthal, *R.E.*, s.v. Paian, ca. 2341). He again appears in the capacity of healer, in the first place, accompanied by his mother Latona, in the first lectisternium of 399 B.C. (Livy, 5.13.4).

In 217 B.C., during the celebration of the lectisternium of

the twelve divinities, which was ordered, among other religious measures, after the disaster of Trasimenus, Apollo was honored in the company of Diana. At that date the god was no longer confined solely to the domain of medicine. In 212 B.C., at the instigation of the "diviner" Marcius, and with the approval of the *Sibylline Books* (Livy, 25.12.15), the games were celebrated for the first time in honor of the god, *ludi Apollinares*, "to attain victory" (the Latin historian specifies: *victoriae, non valetudinis ergo*).

The cult of Apollo was most widespread during the reign of Augustus. In 23 B.C., Octavian, who would in the next year take the title Augustus, had a magnificent temple to Apollo built on the Palatine, near his own palace: at that date he had the *Sibylline Books* transferred there from their previ-

ous place in the temple of Capitoline Jupiter (Suetonius, *Aug.*, 31.1)—a symbolic gesture through which the emperor, in restoring the "inspired books" to the god, officially recognized his prophetic nature.

In 17 B.C., Apollo (with Diana-Artemis) was at the center of the celebration of the Secular Games; in addition to written accounts of this festival (cf. J. B. Pighi, *De ludis saecularibus*, 2d ed., Amsterdam, 1965, pp. 107-30), we have the official hymn composed by Horace: the *Carmen saeculare*. (For the Roman Apollo in general, consult J. Gagé, *Apollon romain: Essai sur le culte d'Apollon et le développement du "ritus graecus" à Rome, des origines à Auguste*, Paris 1955.)

R.S.d.b.

THE ARVAL BRETHERN

The title "Fratres Arvales" (*arva* = field) designates the priests whose domain is the fields, or rather the priests charged with assuring the mystical protection of the fields. The peculiarity of this brotherhood, which consists of twelve members, lies in its return to the archaic period in certain characteristics of its cult, although its effective functioning dates from a restoration by the emperor Augustus.

The cult of the Arvals is particularly well known to us from the *Acta fratrum Arvalium*, official records that were engraved in stone and that extend in layers from the Augustan Age (the first inscription appears to date from 20 B.C.) to the middle of the third century A.D. (there is an epigraphic text from A.D. 304 that mentions the name of the president in charge of the college). The prestige of the brotherhood is measured by the quality of its recruitment: besides the emperor, who was a kind of honorary member, it included men of the best society and of senatorial rank. It is paradoxical that these urban people should have preserved a cult dedicated to the prosperity of the fields and the harvests: in this way, the rites of the Arvals perpetuated the old cult of the Ambarvalia, which consisted in leading around the fields those animals that were to be sacrificed to Mars. Traditionally, these animals formed in groups of three, called *suovetaurilia*—boar, ram, bull—as we know from the famous prayer addressed to Mars by the peasant, which Cato recorded in chapter 14 of his treatise *De Agricultura*.

But the cult of the Arvals differs from this ancient rite not only in the character of its ceremonies but also in its orientation: the central place was no longer occupied by Mars but by a divinity invoked under the name of *dea Dia*. This goddess, whose predominance among other divinities is attested by numerous official acts, does not appear in the official hymn, the *carmen Arvale*, which the Brethren sing at the end of the principal ceremony. This is an interesting discordance which indicates that the *carmen Arvale* merits closer examination.

Although the twelve Arval Brethren incontestably owe their organization or their resurrection to an initiative of Augustus, legend carries their institution back to the "time of Romulus." According to Masurius Sabinus (quoted in Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 7.7.8), they were originally twelve brothers born of Acca Larentia; since one among them was dead, Romulus was substituted for him in the role of an

adopted son. A more convincing proof of the archaism of the institution lies in certain cultic prescriptions and allusions. The college is presided over by a *magister*, assisted by a priest, a *flamen*; the presidency, *magisterium*, of one year's duration, does not coincide with the civil year, but extends from one Saturnalian Festival (17 December) to another (*ex Saturnaliis primis ad Saturnalia secunda*)—a festival that the Romans celebrated after the harvest, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (3.32.4); this time lag could be explained by old agrarian traditions.

Other indications point in the same direction: the cult excludes the use of iron, and any introduction of this metal—for example the chisel used to engrave the report—regularly necessitated expiatory sacrifices, *ob ferrum illatum*. Similarly, in their ceremonies the Brethren used earthen pots made by a rudimentary technique—*illae*—several of which have been found in the sacred woods of the Arvals. All of these characteristics, in conjunction with the chant of the archaic hymn, *carmen Arvale*, suggest great antiquity.

Nevertheless, this brotherhood carries the imperial stamp. Conforming to his general plan, Augustus wanted to restore a cult that could claim a venerable antiquity, for this corresponded to one of his major plans: to restore agriculture to a place of honor after the great impoverishment of the fields provoked by the civil wars. One only has to bear in mind the general ambiance that favored the production of Virgil's *Georgics* to understand the honors and privileges accorded to the Arval Brethren: these high-ranking people, who counted the emperor one of their own, benefited from official subventions (in the form of *sportulae*) and had the official documents of their liturgy engraved in stone each year.

Imperial intervention is revealed first in the organization of the cult around the principal goddess, *dea Dia*, who appears there for the first time. She was a divinity of the "clear sky" (*Dia* is a reference to the ritual prescription to announce in January the May ceremonies *sub divo culmine*, "under the celestial vault"), of the "good weather" necessary for the ripening of the harvests. In time, imperial intervention led to the introduction of divinities of recent origin. Thus, in the documents of A.D. 224, Mars is invoked in the expression *Mars pater Ulitor*, in his aspect of an avenging god—a cult instituted by Augustus; similarly, the emperors deified after their death (the *divi*) are regularly mentioned after the other gods. The Arvals developed the habit of inserting official prayers, *rota publica*, in their January liturgy to safeguard the imperial house; and they manifested their loyalty fervently

on other occasions, such as births of princes or the departures and returns of the emperors.

The fundamental object of the cult was clearly defined by Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 5.85): *fratres Arvales dicti, qui sacra publica faciunt propterea ut fruges ferant arva* . . . "The Arval Brethren are so named because they celebrate public sacrifices so that the fields bear their harvests." This definition always corresponds to reality, despite innovations of recent date. The ritual no longer involves, as did the older Ambarvalia, a circumambulation of the Roman territory—*ager Romanus*—by the sacrificial animals. Conforming to the etymology of the term, the Ambarvalia assured the lustration of the domain (the *lustratio agri* recorded by Cato represents a kind of minor ritual on a personal scale) by a peripheral promenade of representative animals—boar, ram, bull—who would afterwards be sacrificed. The Arvals celebrate their principal liturgy only at a specific place in Roman territory, "at the fifth milestone of the Via Campana," where the sacred woods and the sanctuary of *dea Dia* are located.

The date of the ceremonies is fixed by the president, *magister*, in January, during the first month of his term: like the festival of sowing (*Sementivae*), these are movable feasts (*feriae conceptivae*) that last for three days. The records show that since Vespasian, the dates coincide alternatively with 17, 19, and 20 May or else with 27, 29, and 30 May. (There is thus a regular interval of one day between the first and second day of the festival, conforming to Roman usage: the second day is reserved for the official ceremony, in the *lucus* of *dea Dia*, while the first begins the opening ceremonies at Rome, and the third, designated by an even number, marks its completion at Rome. A parallel is offered by the *Feralia* of 21 February, the public festival of the dead, followed on 22 February by the *Caristia*, private family gatherings.)

Let us return to the essential rites. On the first day, beginning at dawn, the Brethren offer incense and wine to *dea Dia*; then they consecrate by their touch "dry, green ears of grain" (*fruges aridas et virides contingerunt*). In the afternoon they gather for a banquet, followed by a distribution of perfumes and crowns. These ceremonies usually take place in the Roman home of the president. On the second day several sacrifices are made in the woods consecrated to *dea Dia*. First come expiatory sacrifices of young sows (*porciliae piacularae*)—to bring about the successful completion of diverse works, in particular the pruning of the woods—together with the honorary offering of a cow. Then the Brethren, clothed in the *toga praetexta*, their heads veiled and garlanded with ears of grain, proceed to the woods to carry out the solemn sacrifice of a fattened ewe (*agnam opimam*) in honor of *dea Dia*. Afterwards, two of them go to look for the ears of grain that were consecrated on the preceding evening: these ears of grain are going to be passed from hand to hand, from right to left, before being handed over to attendant slaves. Then, the Brethren enter the sanctuary to fulfill different holy obligations, occasionally mysterious. (What is, for example, the precise significance of the prayers to pots [*ollas precati sunt*] and of the throwing of these pots through the doors of the sanctuary?) Finally the temple is closed to all except the Brethren, who, little books in hand, their *toga praetexta* tucked up, then begin to entone the traditional hymn, dancing to a three-beat rhythm (*carmen descendentes tripodaverunt*). The rest of the day is devoted to the reappointment of the president and the flamen for the following year, the celebration of games, and a banquet on the return to Rome. On the third day the ceremonies are completed in Rome, in the president's house. After an

offering of incense and wine, the ears of grain are presented to *dea Dia*.

In a general way, the symbolism of these ceremonies is transparent: these "dry and green" ears of grain, which are successively consecrated, passed from hand to hand, and offered to *dea Dia*, express the preoccupations of the officiants: the ear of grain of the past should respond in some way to the ear of grain of the future. To this end, the propitiatory sacrifice is offered to none but *dea Dia*.

What is the role of *dea Dia*? She could not double for Ceres, the goddess of growth, or Tellus, the goddess Earth. But she collaborates with them as "divinity of the clear sky": is it by chance that she is given prayers and sacrifices in May, the crucial season for future harvests? It is certain that she does not figure in the official hymn, the *carmen Arvale*. We have the extraordinary good fortune—because of a record from A.D. 218—of knowing the text of this hymn, which appears to date from the end of the sixth century B.C. It is the only archaic Latin text that has come to us in a form that is at all intelligible, despite difficulties in the text—or in the transmission. It runs as follows:

E nos, Lases, iuvate, [e]nos, Lases, iuvate e nos lases iuvate. Neve lue[], rue, Marma, sins incurrere in pleoris, neve lue, rue, Marmar, [si]ns incurrere in pleoris.

Satur fu, [f]ere Mars; limen [sal]ji, sta berber.

Satur fu, fere Mars; limen sali, sta berber.

Satur fu, fere Mars; limen sa[l]ji, s[t]ja berber

[Sem]unis alternei advocapit conctos, Semunis alternei advocapit conctos, Simunis altern[ei] advocapit [conct]os.

E nos, Marmor, iuvato, e nos, Marmor, iuvato, e nos, Ma[r]mor, iuvato

Triumpe, triumpe, triumpe, trium[pe], tr]iump[pe].

An approximate translation would be:

Help us, O Lares, help us, O Lares, help us O Lares! Mars, O Mars, don't let Dissolution, Destruction pounce upon the people (?). Mars, O Mars, don't let Dissolution, Destruction pounce upon the people (?). Mars, O Mars, don't let Dissolution, Destruction pounce upon the people (?).

Be surfeited, savage Mars; leap to the frontier, take your position;

Be surfeited, savage Mars; leap to the frontier, take your position;

Be surfeited, savage Mars; leap to the frontier, take your position.

You will invoke the Semones one by one, all together, you will invoke the Semones, one by one, all together, you will invoke the Semones, one by one, all together.

Help us Mars, O Mars, help us, Mars, O Mars, help us, Mars, O Mars.

Victory, victory, victory, victory, victory!

It would not be possible to point out here all the problems which merit discussion (see the bibliography). But it is striking that the hymn, although it invokes the *Lares*, protective gods of the soil, and the *Semones*, gods of the seed (*semina*), is addressed chiefly to Mars in his role of defender: the god is begged to take up a position at the frontier of the Roman domain, to preserve it from visible and invisible

enemies. Thus a remarkable contrast is revealed between the archaic period and the imperial age. Mars the Protector hardly appears any longer in the imperial liturgy of the Arvals, except in an episodic fashion (Mars the Avenger) and in the exceptional sacrifices of the *suovetaurilia* offered to conjure up marvels: he has ceded his place of honor to *dea Dia*, doubtless because minds were more preoccupied with prosperity than with defense in a time in which there was apparently no longer need to fear an invasion of the Roman *arva*.

R.S./d.f.

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AUGURS AND AUGURY

Augur is a masculine derivative of an old neuter root **augus*, which also provided the noun *augurium* and the adjective *augustus*. The masculine term *augur*, *-ris* is obviously connected with the neuter noun *augurium*. The *augur* is the priest who is permitted to perform *auguria*. The two words cannot be explained unless we go back to the old neuter root **augus* (of the type of *genus* or **venus*), which seems to have referred to what was "full of mystic force" (Georges Dumézil). If the *augurium* represents the sign of supernatural manifestation, the *augur* is the priest who confirmed the presence or absence of this mystic force, at least during the historic era (it is not possible to say whether his function originally had more to do with operation than with confirmation). As for the adjective *augustus*, it could be applied to a thing or person that is imbued with mystic plenitude (the adjective was at first used only for objects: Octavian, upon becoming emperor, was the first person to bear the surname Augustus, following a vote of the Roman Senate in 27 B.C.).

Thus it can be demonstrated that the French noun *augure* has an equivocal meaning, in that it can refer to either the priest or the sign. Another kind of ambiguity stems from the related word *auspicium*, which is not irrelevant to the art of the *augur*, even though its semantic origins differ. *Auspicium* refers to the observation (*specere*) of birds (*aves*), which allowed the *augur* to know the will of the gods. Everyone knows that Rome was founded after an *auspicium*: Romulus, after having a vision of twelve vultures, was chosen by the gods as king and founder of the city. Thus, he was the first *augur* in Roman tradition.

The institution of the College of Augurs was, however, attributed to his successor, King Numa (Livy, 4.4.2). The number of its members was successively three, six, nine (in 300, during the advent of the plebians), fifteen (under Sulla), and finally sixteen (after Julius Caesar's reform). Their official definition has a clear meaning: *Interpretes Jovis Optimi Max-*

imi, publici augures (Cicero, *Laws*, 2.20), or: "The augurs of the state are the interpreters of all-powerful Jupiter."

Their work consisted essentially only in interpreting the signs that were sent by Jupiter; the right to conduct the auspices was reserved for the magistrate. This fundamental distinction is particularly clear in a text of Cicero, who was himself an *augur*: "We [augurs] only have the right to announce the auspices (*nuntiationem*), while the consuls and other magistrates have in addition the right to conduct them (*spectionem*)" (*Second Phillipic*, 81). Thus, during the entire period of the Republic, the public auspices (*auspicia populi Romani*) were entirely monopolized by the magistrates: the ritual formula *auspicium imperiumque* shows how much their power of command was based on the so-called guarantee of the auspices.

What actual role has fallen to the augurs since that time? "To carry out the office of augury" can be said in different ways: *augurium agere* (Varro, *Ling.* 6.42), *augurare*, and *inaugurare*. But we have only incomplete information on the *disciplina augurum*, first because the science of augury was supposed to be kept secret, known only to its initiates, and also because most of the ancient works on this subject have been lost. The following activities can be distinguished, however. First, the augurs were charged with performing certain archaic rituals, the goal of which, at least, can be determined. Thus the *auguria vernisera* (Festus, p. 520 L.) and the *augurium canarium* (Pliny, *Natural History*, 18.14) both concerned the outcome of the harvest. Another ceremony, called the *augurium salutis* (Dio Cassius, 37.24.1), was celebrated annually if the Roman army was not on campaign: should this be connected with another rite mentioned by Varro (*Ling.*, 5.47) in which the augurs, starting from the Capitoline citadel, go down the Via Sacra and perform their office?

There is more complete information about the inauguration of people and places. Livy (1.18.6–10) has supplied us with an account of the inauguration of King Numa, whom the Fathers had just proclaimed king. "Then he was led by the *augur* into the citadel and sat on a stone, facing the south. The *augur*, with his head veiled, took a place on his left, holding in his right hand a bent stick without knots, called a *lituus*. Then after he had looked over both city and fields, he prayed to the gods and pointed out the directions from east to west, declaring the region on the right to be the south, the region on the left to be the north; in front of him, as far as he could see, he mentally marked a spot. Then he passed the *lituus* to his left hand and placed his right hand on Numa's head, saying the following prayer:

O revered Jupiter (*Juppiter pater*), if it is mystically right (*si est fas*) that Numa Pompilius, whose head I touch, be king of Rome, send us clear and certain signs (*uti tu signa nobis certa adclarassis*) within the boundaries that I have marked.

Then he stated distinctly (*peregīt verbis*) the auspices (*auspicia*) that he wanted to be sent. When they had been sent, Numa was proclaimed king and he descended from the place of augury (*templum*)."

In this account, the *augur* appears in ritual dress (his head is veiled and he holds the bent *lituus*). Facing east, he defines the *templum*, which is a quadrangular space from whose interior he intends to look out. (This orientation of the *augur* toward the east is not obligatory, as we learn in Varro, *Ling.*, 7.7; here the *augur* turns toward the south and the four parts of the *templum* are referred to as follows: "the region to the left [*sinistra*] is the east; the region to the right [*dextra*] is the



Altar from the second century A.D. from the Sandals Quarter (*vicus sandaliarius*) in Rome. Decorated with a victory on one face and two lares on the other. Shown here is the back face, which depicts a youthful augur (perhaps the young Lucius Caesar) holding a *lituus*, flanked by Augustus and Livia (the only known commemoration of a dynastic event). Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

west; the region in front [*antica*] is the south; the region behind [*postica*] is the north.") Also note the precautions and prudence used in this consultation with Jupiter. Not only does the augur precisely define the field of observation, but he lists restrictively the auspices that he wants to get (see Pliny, *Natural History*, 28.17)—this was a known procedure, called the *legum dictio* (the statement of conditions).

The ancients distinguished between signs that were solicited under precise conditions within the *templum* (*auspicia impetrativa* or *impetrata*) and signs that occurred on their own (*auspicia oblativa*). With respect to the origins of these *signa* or *auspicia*, they were divided into five categories (see Festus, p. 316 L.): celestial signs, *ex caelo* (particularly lightning and thunder); signs provided by birds, *ex avibus* (in certain birds, *alites*, the flight was observed, in others, *oscines*, the song); signs given by the hopping of sacred chickens, *ex tripudiis*

(this form of consultation degenerated very early because of abusive practices); signs from the behavior of animals, *ex quadrupedibus*; and finally, threatening portents, *ex diris*.

Another function of the augurs was to inaugurate places. During the historical era, the Capitoline citadel where Livy placed the inauguration of Numa bore the name of *auguraculum*—this place of augury was itself a *templum*. The exact definition of this word is given in Varro (*Ling.*, 7.8): "On earth a place is called a *templum* when it is defined by a precise formulation for the duties of augury or the taking of auspices (*augurii aut auspicii causa*)"—the first activity concerns augurs and the second, magistrates. Through augury the place would become "exorcized and available"—*locus liberatus et effatus*.

These *templa* included not only most divine sanctuaries (the round *aedes* of Vesta was not inaugurated, however), but also secular structures, such as the Curia and the Comitium. In a larger sense, the city of Rome itself formed an immense *templum* which was reserved for urban auspices (*auspicia urbana*). The augurs ranked the territories in five categories (according to Varro, *Ling.*, 5.33): the territory of Rome, the territory of Gabii, foreign territory, hostile territory, unknown territory. These boundaries had great importance in conducting auspices. As for Rome itself, the urban area was considered to be separated from the rest of the territory (*ager Romanus*) by a boundary called the *pomerium*. This explains why each addition to the city had to be sanctioned by the inauguration of a new *pomerium*.

The College of Augurs came right after the Pontifical College. Despite its noble titles, its decadence in the last century of the Republic was very advanced: this was due both to the increasing ignorance of the augurs in practice and to the abuse caused by political interventions. Note, for example, this reproach by Cicero (*Second Phillipic*, 81) directed at the augur Antony: "See his insolence. Many months before, he (Antony) declared in the Senate that he would use the *auspices* to block the election of Dolabella . . ." The college did gain a certain respite through the reforms of Augustus: the last augurs cited date from the end of the fourth century A.D.

R.S./d.b.

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THE RELIGIOUS POLICIES OF AUGUSTUS

To President Léopold Sédar Senghor

A subject as vast as the religious policies of Augustus might lend itself to a bibliographic review of the various judgments made by historians of antiquity; such a review would be in danger of swelling to indefinite proportions. Such is not the intention of this discussion. The most I will

say about this subject is that the pendulum of opinion appears to be swinging, in that the position of Ronald Syme (*The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939; 2d ed., 1952), which was very critical of Augustus, has recently been contested by Hans Erich Stier (*Augustusfriede und römische Klassik*, A.N.R.-W., 2, 2, pp. 49ff. [1975]).¹

Beyond such bibliographic methods, I will base my discussion essentially on ancient sources, in order to isolate the major lines of the religious work of Augustus and thus to facilitate a critical and objective consideration of the issue. What are the principal documents at our disposal? Along with

the precious *Index rerum a se gestarum*, attributed to Suetonius²—or the *Res gestae divi Augusti*³—we also have the information furnished by historians⁴ and the numerous allusions made by the poets of the Augustan era, particularly Virgil, Horace, and Propertius.

We will first try to summarize the various stages in the career of this heir of Julius Caesar, then to study his religious work in general, and finally to examine his essential character.

In 44 B.C., when Octavian, the adopted son of Caesar—*Divi filius*—appears on the political scene, he shows no signs of his destiny as the future Augustus. The strong contender appears to be Antony: in this sense, Shakespeare was not mistaken, in his play *Julius Caesar*, in giving the principal role to Mark Antony; his “historical accuracy” agrees with the events.

It is, however, Octavian’s political ascension that will allow the religious initiative to progress. Three different periods can be distinguished:

(a) From 44 to 31 B.C., Octavian behaves as Caesar’s loyal heir. It is in this role, in 44 B.C., that he spends his own money to celebrate the festivals in honor of the dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix, to make up for the insolvency of the magistrates normally responsible for this duty.⁵ Then, after the world is divided between the three triumvirs, he soon finds himself facing Antony alone: Lepidus, who had received Africa, was eliminated in 36 (after the victory over Sextus Pompey at Naulocus). Octavian, who rules the West, keeps his distance from Antony, who has the East. As Antony becomes more and more Orientalized, to the point of marrying Cleopatra (after repudiating Octavia, the sister of his rival), Octavian presents himself as the champion of the West. We know the result of the conflict which ended in 31 B.C., during the battle of Actium, which would be placed by Octavian’s eulogists under the sign of Venus and Caesar.⁶

(b) From 31 to 12 B.C., Octavian’s religious policies become more personal. It is then that the head of the Roman state accords an official place to Apollo, to whom he attributes most of the credit for the victory of Actium: he builds a sanctuary of Apollo on the Palatine Hill (in 28 B.C.). In 27 B.C., he acquires unprecedented religious prestige when he is given the name *Augustus* by Senate decision.⁷ And in 17 B.C., he celebrates, as *magister das decemviri sacris faciundis*, the secular games, which are essentially under the auspices of Apollo and Diana.

(c) In 12 B.C., Augustus finally becomes *Pontifex maximus*, at the death of Lepidus, whom he did not wish to strip of this dignity during his lifetime—out of respect not for the man but for the supreme priesthood. At this date, Augustus has all the titles that he lists in the *Res Gestae*:⁸ *Pontifex maximus*, *augur*, *quindecimvirum sacris faciundis*, *septemvirum epulonum*, *frater Arvalis*, *sodalis Titius*, *fetialis fui*.

I. The Religious Work

Let us now look at the work he did. At first this consisted of basic reconstruction, following all the devastation of the civil and foreign wars. First, material reconstruction: Augustus himself declares⁹ that he reconstructed eighty-two religious buildings that had been damaged or destroyed. Restoration of cultic practices followed, such as the *augurium salutis* and the ceremony of the Lupercalia.¹⁰ Various institutions were restored to honor. He increased the prestige of the vestal virgins, and noting that a vacancy caused by the death of one of the members was not being filled and that the citizens were slow to suggest their daughters as replacements, he swore that “if one of his granddaughters were old enough, he would have proposed her.”¹¹ He ended the

scandalous vacancy—lasting seventy-five years—of the *flamonium Dialis*, a position last held in 87 B.C. by L. Cornelius Merula, who took refuge in the sanctuary of Jupiter to escape his enemies and left his priestly insignia there before committing suicide.¹²

In the same spirit, Augustus took care to reestablish the normal functioning of the great colleges of pontiffs, augurs, the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, the *septemviri epulones*, and the sodalities. While restoring them, he was careful to update the institutions in keeping with changed circumstances.

A recent study¹³ has revealed the intentions of Augustus in restoring the college of the Arval Brethren. He made this reform at a time when people wanted to “give honor to the plow,” as Virgil indicates:¹⁴ *O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint, agricolas*.¹⁵ The Arval Brethren were charged, both by name (*arva*) and by office, with insuring the mystical protection of the fields. But they were also responsible for praying to the gods for the prosperity and salvation of Caesar and the Roman Empire, particularly at the beginning of each year, in the month of January. Augustus succeeded in making this college as representative as possible of Roman society, through a wise measure of social recruitment: patricians from old families, noble Republicans, old partisans of Pompey and Antony, and loyal subjects of Augustus were “fraternally” put in service to the same cause, *ad maiorem gloriam populi Romani*. According to Augustus’s plan, the title of *Brother* would emphasize the relationship that would, like the ties of a family, hereafter unite this new nobility to the person of the *princeps*.¹⁶

This example shows how wisely Augustus reconciled the spirit of reform with a respect for tradition. Roman religion always had this double allegiance: although it was anchored in traditions that could be traced back to Indo-European origins, the logic of polytheism allowed it to incorporate new cults as well: take, for example, the introduction of Aphrodite of Mount Eryx on the Capitoline in 215 through the assimilation of this goddess with the Roman Venus, or the establishment of Cybele on the Palatine Hill in 204 through her connection with the Trojan legend. It was all a matter of degree, especially since more than one conqueror—from Sulla to Antony—had more or less succumbed to Oriental seductions. At a time when Rome, which had just succeeded in extending the boundaries of its empire, might have yielded to the easy terms of the *interpretatio Romana*, Augustus showed a remarkable concern for balance between traditional and innovative tendencies. The same impression can be drawn from an examination of most of his initiatives.

For this reason, and to appeal to a people tired of wars, he reinstated the ancient rite that closed the sanctuary of Janus in times of peace. With pride he proclaimed in his will:¹⁷ “The temple of Janus Quirinus, which according to the will of our ancestors is to be closed when victorious peace reigns over all of the Roman Empire, both on land and at sea, in the memory of man has been closed only twice before my birth: under my principate, the Senate has closed it three times.”

When in 12 B.C. Augustus assumed the office of *Pontifex Maximus*, he resolved the resulting conflict of interests elegantly: since as head of state he could not live in the Regia, the official residence of the supreme pontiff, he had a chapel consecrated to Vesta built in his palace on the Palatine: henceforth the goddess, represented by the sacred flame that was never extinguished, a symbolic token of the eternity of Rome, appeared even closer to the prince and more closely involved in the fate of the Empire.

Augustus was also cleverly able to combine certain Hellenic features with Roman traditions. In 28 B.C. he had a

temple to Apollo erected on the Palatine Hill; upon becoming supreme pontiff in 12 B.C., he transferred there the *Sibylline Books*, which had previously been in the care of Jupiter in the cellars of the temple of Capitoline Jupiter; Augustus had the prophetic books placed under the statue of Apollo, after subjecting them to a rigorous selection process.¹⁸ Thus he maintained the old Roman tradition that allowed him, by order of the Senate, to consult the *Sibylline Books*; at the same time he made an innovation by reestablishing the logical connection between the inspired books and their source of inspiration.

The same preoccupation with balance appears in the organization of the secular games in 17 B.C.: the games were under the exclusive authority of the master of the *quindecimviri s.f.* (Augustus was not yet supreme pontiff at that date). In this way Augustus restored an ancient rite that until then had been addressed to *Dis Pater* or Pluto and that had a funereal quality. Augustus gave it a double meaning. First, he retained the nocturnal aspect (the invocation of the *Parcae*, divinities that presided over fate; of the *Eileithyiae*, who presided over births; and of *Tellus*, who presided over prosperity); then he added a diurnal aspect: the invocation of the gods who were the protectors of Rome, Jupiter and Juno, in particular, but especially Apollo and Diana, who were called upon to provide Rome with "a new century of still greater happiness."¹⁹

Perhaps the best example of this renovation of ancient cults is the new light which Augustus wanted to shed on the association between Mars and Venus. Mars had been worshiped originally as the "fiery god" (*fere Mars* is one of the invocations of the *carmen Arvale*) and as the father of the founder of the *Urbs*, Romulus. Venus had been honored for centuries, in connection with the Trojan legend, as the mother of the nation of the Romans descended from Aeneas. Certainly the two divinities had already been associated during the lectisternium of 217 B.C., *græco ritu*, based on the model of Ares and Aphrodite. Instead of borrowing from the Hellenic pattern, Augustus proposed a new formula. Mars, the father of the founder of the City, became its dynastic protector as well, *Mars Ultor*, the god who would be the avenger of the assassination of Caesar and the honor of Rome. As for Venus, she stopped begging for peace at any price, as in the preamble to Lucretius's poem, and was mobilized into the service of the Romans descended from Aeneas. Thus the two gods appeared in the prophetic vision that Virgil attributed to Vulcan, when he forged and embossed the shield of Aeneas at the request of Venus: both gods were engaged in the battle of Actium at the sides of Octavian "against the monstrous gods of the Nile and the barking Anubis."²⁰

This explains why Mars and Venus often appeared together in official art. When M. Vipsanius Agrippa built the Pantheon, dedicated to all the gods and goddesses (in 25 B.C.), their statues appeared side by side.²¹ Later, in 2 B.C., when the great temple of Mars Ultor was dedicated in the forum of Augustus, Venus was shown at the side of Mars on the facade: *stat Venus Ultori juncta*.²²

After this, it is not surprising that Augustus had the statue of Venus in the Pantheon decorated with two huge pearls that had belonged to the queen of Egypt:²³ it was a way of consecrating the "best spoils" taken from the "enemy" to the Roman Venus. What a contrast, however, to the action of Julius Caesar, who had placed a "beautiful statue of Cleopatra" (Appian) in the temple of *Venus Genetrix*, an act which represented an incontestable homage to the queen of Egypt.²⁴



Augustus and a Vicomagister. Altar from the Belvedere. Rome, Vatican Museum. Museum photo.

II. The Personality of Augustus and the Spirit of Reform

Perhaps the moment has come to devote some attention to the personality of the emperor himself. Many anecdotes about his behavior are reported by his biographers: they reveal, besides goodwill and humor, a certain simplicity and a sense of moderation. Not only did Augustus disdain all flattery, he resisted the seductions of a propaganda meant to provide him with a halo of legend. At least three examples are conclusive.

One legend reported that his mother Atia conceived the future emperor from Apollo when he had metamorphosed into a serpent.²⁵ Octavian put so little stake in his reputation as *Apollinis filius* that, unlike Julius Caesar, who claimed at an early age to be *Veneris nepos*, he did not hesitate to compromise it during the masquerade of the *cena dōdekatheos* ("the dinner of the twelve gods"): during this sacrilegious feast, he disguised himself as Apollo, "regaling his friends, also dressed as gods and goddesses, with new adulteries of the gods."²⁶ Of course this youthful episode was later erased by his devotion to Apollo at Actium: his devotion then retained nothing of the old legend.

Another episode is also significant. On the day of the birth of the future Augustus (in 63 B.C.) the Pythagorean P. Nigidius Figulus hurried to proclaim: *dominum terrarum orbis natum* ("a master of the universe is born").²⁷ Far from exploiting this theme "of public notoriety," Augustus later forbade by special edict the use of the word *dominus* to refer to him—following a public demonstration that reflected this

theme: when an actor cried, during a play: *O dominum aequum et bonum!* the public rose to its feet in an ovation to the emperor.²⁸

The last example is cited by Suetonius:²⁹ "During his first consulate, Augustus was taking the auguries, when twelve vultures appeared to him, as had once happened to Romulus." Again, he refused to take advantage of the omen. In 27 B.C., during the famous session of the Senate when some people wished to honor him with the title of *Romulus* or *novus conditor*, he refused them in favor of the name Augustus.³⁰

These facts help us to understand the spirit that inspired the most personal initiatives of Augustus. As a Roman who would not allow his image to be inflated, despite the obvious opportunities to do so, he must have often remembered the phrase that the slave repeated to his conqueror during the triumphal procession: "*memento te hominem esse.*" From this came a sort of wisdom of the soil, doubled by an instinctive mistrust of foreign influences, particularly Oriental influences. Of course he respected cults that had been sanctified by time: he was initiated into the mysteries of the Athenian Demeter in Athens, for example.³¹ On the other hand, he refused Isis access to Rome (in 28 B.C.), even though some years earlier (in 43 B.C.) the triumvirs had authorized the erection of a temple consecrated to Isis and Serapis in Rome. Similarly, when traveling across Egypt he refused to make the slightest "detour to go to see the ox Apis."³²

Regarding the Jews, the following facts easily demonstrate his attitude to them. He congratulated his grandson Gaius for having crossed Judea without offering a sacrifice in Jerusalem.³³ And when he learned that among the children under two years old who were massacred in Syria on the order of Herod, King of the Jews, was Herod's own son, he cried: "I would rather be Herod's pig than his son" (*mallem Herodis porcus esse quam filius*).³⁴

His caution toward accepting honors offered him by foreigners is also significant. His reaction to the extraordinary veneration shown by the sailors of Alexandria whom he happened to meet on the coast of Puteoli is revealing: Augustus was *admodum exhilaratus*—"charmed and amused"—according to his biographer,³⁵ and he had pieces of gold distributed to his companions so that they could buy Alexandrian wares.

Of course the cities of Asia Minor conferred divine honors upon him, in accordance with Hellenistic tradition: he was called *sōtēr* in a decree of the confederation of Greek cities of Asia Minor (in 9 B.C.), as well as in an inscription from Halicarnassus (in 2 B.C.). Augustus, however, "accepted no temple in the provinces that did not associate the name of Rome with his own, and obstinately refused this honor in Rome itself."³⁶ Thus the altar of Rome and Augustus was erected in Lyon in 12 B.C., and an altar of Rome and Augustus was built in Cologne (*civitas Ubiorum*), in the first century A.D.

This sense of moderation was linked with an deep understanding of the Roman spirit. With a sure instinct, Augustus gave new life to the cult of deified abstractions like *Fides* or *Ceres*, which were characteristic of ancient Roman religion. *Fortuna Augusta*, *Clementia Augusta*, *Iustitia Augusta*, *Pietas Augusta*, *Salus Augusta* all reappeared, now marked with an epithet showing their imperial connection.

Pax Augusta stands out in this list of divinities. The *ara Pacis Augustae* still exists today beside the Tiber, near the Mausoleum of Augustus which was once crowned with a statue of the emperor. Its majestic simplicity is striking, particularly in contrast with the tortuous art on the altar of Pergamum.³⁷ The Augustan altar offers a faithful image of the art and religion of the Augustan Age. Here it shows the processions

of the Vestals, of the victims accompanied by the sacrificial priests; there it shows the cortege of the household of Augustus, the priests, the magistrates, the prince himself, *capite velato*, surrounded by three major flamens; then follow the senators and some of the Roman people.

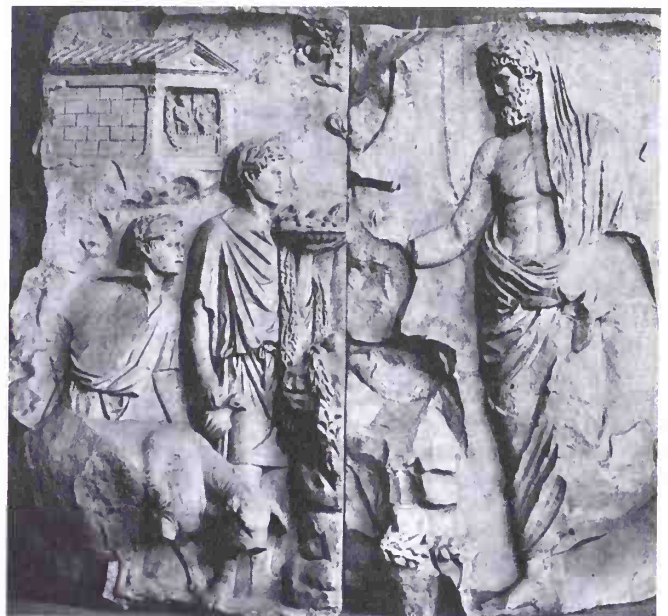
Elsewhere, images of the rising Rome appear: the Lupercal cave, and Aeneas sacrificing to the Penates, the household gods. Still elsewhere are the goddess Roma, and Tellus, who holds two children in her arms and is accompanied by two Horae. Everything celebrated the majesty of Rome, as interpreted by Romanized Greek art: all of Roman society was present, from the founder Aeneas to the representative of the Julian dynasty, with Augustus attracting all the attention as the auspicious guarantor of prosperity. It was to Peace, the Augustan Peace won after so many civil and foreign wars, that the Romans owed their happiness. And it was to Augustus that they expressed their gratitude, as did the poet who at almost the same time addressed the prince in these terms: *Lucem redde tuae, dux bone, patriae*.³⁸

III. The Beginnings of the Imperial Cult

Augustus knew how to direct popular fervor progressively into an official form without upsetting Roman customs. He had undoubtedly reflected on the precedent of Julius Caesar who, when he was still very young, at the funeral oration of his aunt Julia, had claimed "a royal lineage on his mother's side; a divine lineage on his father's side."³⁹ The career savagely broken on the ides of March in 44 B.C., of the *Venerere prognatus*, gave food for thought.

With a sure instinct, Augustus was inspired by an old Italic custom that honored the Genius of the father of the family in every household. The one whom Horace had just hailed as the *dux bonus*, and who several years later (in 2 B.C.) was to receive the official title of *Pater Patriae*, made it possible for the people to venerate their Genius surrounded by *Lares compitales*. A coincidence worthy of note: the poet's dream

Sacrifice offered by Aeneas. Rome, Altar of Peace (*ara Pacis*). Photo Anderson-Giraudon.



had preceded the institution of the cult, which dates from 12 B.C. Indeed, in an ode (written between 16 and 13 B.C.),⁴⁰ Horace had evoked the devotion of the Roman citizen in the following terms: "By offering you in profusion their prayers and their libations of wine so pure, everyone venerates your divine spirit at the same time as the Lares." A reform of 7 B.C. would create 265 *collegia compitalicia* who would be responsible for maintaining this cult. From then on, the Roman populace could see at all cross-roads the two Lares surrounding the figurine of the *Genius Augusti* and exposed to its fervor. It is thus, through a slow process, that the concept of deifying the imperial personage became more familiar.

Because the stroke of genius consisted in instilling this concept into a way of life, rather than imposing it in the name of a right. By virtue of his Julian lineage, the *Divi filius* could have demanded deification: he would not want to fully accept it . . . until the hour of apotheosis. Augustus had understood that if a divine law could constitute a powerful bond of dynastic allegiance, it was still necessary that the law be recognized by the majority of the people.

We also see a politico-theological mystique being established, according to which the reigning prince was Jupiter's representative on Earth. In this capacity he was expected to see that justice reigned—different behavior from that of an *autokrator* or an omnipotent *dominus*. For if there is a conviction anchored in the Roman mentality, it is that all power ultimately depends on the gods: *Dis te minorem quod geris imperas* ("It is because you submit to the gods that you rule"), Horace proclaimed in his address to the Roman.⁴¹

The prince who concentrated in his person the true power and the auspices, so as to leave to the generals only the technical command (*ductus*) of war, appeared to all to be the appointed intermediary between the gods and the Roman people. It is of this hierarchy that Horace is thinking in his prayer to Jupiter:⁴² "Father and protector of the human race, son of Saturn, the fates have entrusted great Caesar to your care: may you reign with Caesar as your second in command!" And further on he recommends Augustus to Jupiter in more detail:⁴³ "He will submit to you and will govern the vast world with justice."

This is how the essential traits of the religious work of Augustus appear to us. It is characterized by a strong effort to fuse Hellenism and Romanism more firmly together: it is true that the former was often used in the service of the latter. The religious work is also characterized—this time in contrast to the initiatives of Julius Caesar—by a more noticeable reserve toward Oriental influences: Egyptian gods in particular are ostracized, which can be explained by the aftermath of the victory of Actium.

This policy reveals Augustus to be above all a profound realist. Although open to philosophy,⁴⁴ the emperor was as superstitious as any good Roman.⁴⁵ He was certainly not a mystic. But he understood the Roman mentality so well that he succeeded where Julius Caesar had failed: he knew how to make the minds of his time accept an imperial mystique. By encouraging the upsurge of Augustan deities, that is, the launching of deified ancient abstractions, he created a new religious dynamism.

Above all, he founded this theology on an ethic: placed under the direct authority of Jupiter, the emperor was subject to the rule of equity and was destined for apotheosis, but only insofar as he respected the duties of his office (the bad emperor, on the other hand, would be struck down by the *damnatio memoriae*).

It is certainly difficult to judge this work without running the risk of falling into anachronism. In his reflections,⁴⁶ Jean



Senatorial procession. The senators are preceded by two lictors wearing togas and crowned with laurel wreaths. The figure with his head covered and carrying a small box serves to emphasize the religious element. Rome, Altar of Peace. Photo Anderson-Giraudon.



Imperial procession. Augustus as high priest (the central figure, with his head covered) is preceded by lictors and flamines, each wearing the priestly cap (*galerus*) with apex. Augustus is followed by members of the imperial family—perhaps the young Caius Caesar, Livia (wearing a *stola*), and Agrippa (crowned with a laurel wreath). Rome, Altar of Peace. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

Bayet reproaches Augustus for having disregarded the resources of philosophy, the appeal of his time to aspirations of greater universalism. But after so much trouble and confusion, could Augustus have done any better? It seems to me that such work should be judged not from an "intellectual" point of view but by taking into account the weight of history and the social organization of the time.

Certainly the imperial religion comprised rites, such as the offering of incense and libations of wine,⁴⁷ which were to create a great obstacle for Christians. But could Augustus have anticipated the emergence of an exclusive monotheism?

In any event, at the beginning of the fifth century A.D., Orosius insisted on testifying for Augustus and proposed two arguments in his defense:⁴⁸ (1) By a providential arrangement, the emperor had established a durable and true peace which served the coming of Christ; (2) although he was at the summit of power, Augustus had refused the title of *dominus hominum* just at the time when the true *dominus* of mankind was to be born. It should be stressed that the

refusal to be an absolute *dominus* was contrary to the entire Hellenistic and Oriental tradition.

The judgment of the Christian Orosius deserves to be taken into account by modern historians.

R.S./d.b.

NOTES

1. For a partial bibliography for recent years, see also B. Haller, *Augustus und seine Politik, Ausgewählte Bibliographie*, A.N.R.W., 2:55–74 (= *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*).
2. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 101, 5. The will was entrusted to the protection of the vestals in A.D. 13, one year before the death of Augustus.
3. J. Gagé, ed., *Res Gestae divi Augusti* (Paris 1935), 9.
4. In particular, Nicolas of Damascus, who is probably biased (see Jacoby, *Fr. Hist. Graec.*, n. 90); Tacitus, *Annales*, passim; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia*, 7, 147–50 (very critical of Augustus); Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*; Appian; Dio Cassius.
5. See Dio Cassius, 45, 6, 4, and Suetonius, *Aug.*, 10, 2. See my book *La religion romaine de Vénus* (Paris 1954), 313 and 325; = *R.R.V.*
6. See Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8, 679–81, in particular: *patriumque aperitur vertice sidus* ("the paternal star revealed itself above the head" [of Augustus] [at the zenith of heaven]). See Propertius, 4, 6, 59: *At pater Idalio miratur Caesar ab astro: sum deus: est nostri sanguinis ista fides* ("and his father Caesar contemplated the scene of the height of the Idalian star [i.e., Venus]: I am God; behold the proof of my [divine] lineage").
7. On *Augustus*, see my article "L'originalité du vocabulaire religieux latin," *Rev. belge de phil. et d'hist.* 49 (1971): 48–49; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*
8. *Res Gestae*, ed. J. Gagé, § 7.
9. *Ibid.*, § 20, 4.
10. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 31, 4–5.
11. *Ibid.*
12. See Velleius Paterculus, 2, 22, 2.
13. J. Scheid, *Les Frères Arvales: Recrutement et origine sociale sous les empereurs julio-claudiens* (Paris 1975).
14. See Virgil, *Georgics*, 2, 458–59.
15. *Ibid.*, 1, 506.
16. M. J. Scheid has cleverly remarked that the Greek translation of *Frater Arualis* that figures in the *Testament* of Augustus is revealing: the Latin expression (*Res Gestae*, 7, 3) is translated by *adelphos arualis* (which affirms fraternity by blood, while the subsequent tradition chose the words *phratēr arualis*), which in Greek merely designates belonging to a single community (the phratry).
17. *Res Gestae*, 13.
18. See Suetonius, *Aug.*, 31, 1.
19. See Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, 66–68.
20. See Virgil, *Ae.*, 8, 698–702.
21. See Dio Cassius, 53, 27, 2.
22. Ovid, *Tristia*, 2, 296.
23. Pliny, *N.H.*, 9, 121.

24. On this subject see my book *R.R.V.*, 328, n. 1. See Appian, *Bella Civilia*, 2, 102.
25. See Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94, 4.
26. *Ibid.*, 70, 1. This dinner is dated 39–38 or 38–37 B.C. See J. Gagé, *Apollon romain*, 487.
27. See Suetonius, *Aug.*, 94, 6.
28. *Ibid.*, 53, 1.
29. *Ibid.*, 95, 2.
30. *Ibid.* Of course Octavius knew that the names of Romulus and Remus had been disparaged in the polemic of the recent civil wars (see Horace, *Epodi*, 7, which deplores the fact that a kind of "original sin" had weighed upon the destiny of Rome since the fratricide of Remus by Romulus).
31. See Suetonius, *Aug.*, 93, 1.
32. *Ibid.*, 93, 2.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 2, 4, 11.
35. Suetonius, *Aug.*, 98, 2.
36. *Ibid.*, 52, 1.
37. This is the reflection of H. E. Stier (*A.N.R.W.*, 2, 2:49). The Pergamum altar dates from the second century B.C. On the *ara Pacis*, see the articles of Pietrangeli and Bianchi-Bandinelli, *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica*, 523–28, *ara Pacis Augustae*. The altar was built in 13 B.C. and dedicated in 9 B.C.
38. Horace, *Carmina*, 4, 5, 5 (the date of the ode is between 16 and 13 B.C.).
39. See Suetonius, *Div. Iul.*, 6, 2.
40. Horace, *C.*, 4, 5, 33–34: *Te multa prece, te prosequitur mero / defuso pateris et Laribus tuum / miscet numen . . .*
41. Horace, *C.*, 3, 6, 5.
42. Horace, *C.*, 1, 12, 49–52: *Gentis humanae pater atque custos, / orte Saturno, tibi cura magni / Caesaris fatis data; tu secundo / Caesare regnes!*
43. *Ibid.*, 1, 12, 57: *Te minor latum reget aequus orbem.*
44. See Suetonius, *Aug.*, 89, 2. Augustus had a wide and varied culture thanks to the philosopher Areus and his sons Dionysius and Nicanor.
45. *Ibid.*, 90–92.
46. J. Bayet, *Histoire politique et psychologique de la religion romaine* (2d ed., Paris 1969), 191.
47. Augustus was certainly not indifferent to this type of rite: the proof is that he ordered the senators "to burn incense and pour wine before the altar of the god in the temple at which the meeting of the Senate took place," in order to induce them to discharge their duty *religiosius*, "with more religious conscience." See Suetonius, *Aug.*, 35, 4.
48. Orosius, *Adversus paganos*, 6, 22, 5 (the author recalls that in the course of a demonstration, Augustus had refused the title of *dominus* that an enthusiastic public wanted to give him: see Suetonius, *Aug.*, 53, 1: "Igitur eo tempore, id est eo anno quo firmissimam verissimamque pacem ordinatione Dei Caesar composuit, natus est Christus, cuius adventui pax ista famulata est, in cuius orto audientibus hominibus exultantes angeli cecinerunt 'Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.' Eodemque tempore hic (= Augustus) ad quem rerum omnium summa concesserat, dominum se hominum appellari non passus est, immo non ausus, quo verus dominus totius generis humani inter homines natus est."

CERES

The word *ceres* is formed from the root **ker-*, "growth." The notion became personified and deified; the goddess Ceres "presides over growth," especially the growth of cereal grains. M. Valerius Probus, a grammarian of the first century A.D., already gives this definition (*ad. Verg. G.* 1.7): *Cererem a creando dictam* ("Ceres comes from to cause to grow").

There is a masculine form, *Cerus* (cf. Degraffi, *Inscr. Latin.*, no. 63, *Keri pocolom*, "cup of Cerus"). The expression *Cerus manus*, which is used in the song of the Salians, is interpreted by the ancients as *creator bonus* (Festus, p. 109 L.). But this rare and archaic masculine form was never a "competitor" of the goddess.

The goddess is also said to be worshiped by the Oscans (cf. Vetter, *H.I.D.*, no. 147) and by the Faliscans (*ibid.*, no. 241). In spite of this Italic occurrence and this ancient origin, Ceres underwent an intensive Hellenization very early. It may be



Ceres. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.



Ceres. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.

possible to indicate the ancient elements of her cult, but it is more difficult to detect exactly how they were distorted. The study of Jean Bayet, "The Cerialia: The Alteration of a Latin Cult through a Greek Myth" (*R.B.Ph.H.*, 1951, pp. 5–32, 341–66; reprinted in *Croyances et rites dans la Rome antique*, Paris 1971, pp. 89–129), is very suggestive in this connection.

The great age of the goddess is beyond doubt. Her name enters into the category of deified abstractions, characteristic of the religious spirit of Rome. She has a flamen, and her festival, the Cerialia, which falls on 19 April, is included in the ancient cycle of the liturgical calendar. Another archaic trait may be that Ceres carries out her functions with the help of lesser specialists whom her priest invokes when he sacrifices to Tellus ("the Earth") and to Ceres, according to Fabius Pictor (cited by Servius Danielis, *ad. Georg.*, 1.21). The lesser specialists are Veruactor (for plowing fallow land), Reparator (for the renewal of cultivation), Imporcitor (for marking the furrows), Insitor (for sowing), Obarator (for surface plowing), Occator (for harrowing), Sarritor (for clearing and weeding), Subruncinator (for hoeing), Messor (for the harvest), Convactor (for hauling the harvest), Conditor (for bringing in the harvest), Promitor (for taking the harvest out of storage).

Ceres fulfills her mission throughout the whole vegetative cycle. She acts sometimes alone and sometimes in conjunction with Tellus. In January the Ferae Sementivae were celebrated after sowing, a movable feast (cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 1.657ff.) in honor of Ceres and Tellus, respectively. On 19 April was the festival inscribed in the archaic cycle as the Cerialia (which follows the Fordicidia of 15 April, consecrated to Tellus), which were paired with the games, the Ludi Cerialia (cf. Ovid, *Fasti*, 4.679–82). These included a strange rite with magical significance: the release of foxes with flaming torches on their backs. Ceres was also present at the Ambarvalia, the lustration of the fields (cf. Tibullus, 2.1; Virgil, *Georgics*, 1.338). Before the harvest the *porca praecidanea* was sacrificed to Ceres and Tellus (Cato, *De Agricultura*, 134; Varro, cited by Nonius, p. 240 L.). It was to Ceres that the first harvested ear of grain, the *praemetium* (Festus, p. 423 L.), was offered.

Taking root in the native religion in this way did not save the goddess from an early contamination by Hellenism. In the public cult she was associated with two other divinities to

form the triad Ceres-Liber-Libera. According to tradition (cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6.17.2–3), a temple comprising three *cellae* was erected in honor of this triad in accordance with the injunction of the *Sibylline Books*. Promised in a vow by the dictator A. Postumius in 496 B.C., it was dedicated in 493 by the consul Sp. Cassius. Interpretations diverge on the meaning and the date of this cult (cf. H. LeBonniec, *Le culte de Cérès à Rome des origines à la fin de la république*, Paris 1958, p. 277–311. For an opposing view, see A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins* [1964], p. 92ff.). But there can be no doubt about the influence of the Hellenic model of Demeter-Dionysus-Kore, by whatever roads these divinities may have entered Rome.

From a political point of view, the sanctuary was of great importance, since it served as a depository for the plebeian archives and as a center of administration, the *cura annonae*. It is from this *aedes* that the plebeian magistrates, the *aediles*, took their name.

As for the cult of Ceres itself, which held first rank in the triad ("temple of Ceres" was sufficient to designate the triadic temple), its Hellenization only increased with the passage of time. In 217 B.C., the goddess was associated with Mercury-Hermes at the lectisternium of the twelve great divinities. In 191 B.C., a "fast in the honor of Ceres," *jejunium Cereris*, was decreed by the *Sibylline Books* in order to conjure the appearance of marvels (Livy, 36.37.4). In 174 B.C., "supplications" at the temple of Ceres were prescribed by the *Sibylline Books* (Livy, 41.28.2), "at the news that a great earthquake had occurred in the land of the Sabines."

Other events point to the same tendency: the annual celebration of a lectisternium in honor of Ceres on 13 December (Arnobius, 7.32); a single sacrifice to both Hercules and Ceres on 21 December according to the *graeus ritus* (Macrobius, *S.*, 3.11.10).

An even more revealing sign is that Demeter was purely and simply substituted for Ceres in certain ceremonies. Thus, the *sacrum anniversarium Cereris*, celebrated by married women in the month of August, commemorated the kidnapping and return of Persephone (cf. Festus, p. 86 L.). It is significant that the only "mysteries" into which Cicero permits the admission of women in his treatise *The Laws* (2.21) are the mysteries of Ceres.

Thus, a general question arises about interferences between Demeter and Ceres. The Hellenization of Ceres might explain why a ceremony that should logically concern Tellus ("the Earth") was credited to Ceres, to a Ceres-Demeter. For example, the sacrifice of the *porca praesentanea* (Festus, pp. 296–98 L.), when a family is in mourning for one of its members; or the opening of the *mundus Cereris*, on certain

days of the year (24 August, 3 October, 8 November: Festus, p. 126 L.). Wissowa (*Ruk*² p. 194) had already rightly noted that it was not Ceres but Tellus who was in contact with the divine Manes and the subterranean world (Livy, 10.28.13: *Telluri ac dis Manibus*).

R.S./d.w.

CICERO AS THEOLOGIAN

Who is not inclined to be surprised on seeing the word "theologian" applied to Cicero? Nevertheless, the illustrious orator, "who won the greatest laurels for eloquence," according to the ringing praise that Pliny the Elder bestowed on him over a century after his death (*Natural History* 7.117), is perhaps most representative of the period insofar as religious thought is concerned.

First of all, he has left us the most important works of that period on this theme, works that have become even more important to present-day readers because of the loss of so many works of famous philosophers (to cite only examples of opposing schools, the treatise of Epicurus on *Piety* is lost, as well as the work in five books on *The Gods* by the Stoic Posidonius).

These works were composed during the same expanse of time and form a kind of trilogy: *De Natura Deorum* ("On the Nature of the Gods" = *Nat. D.*) in the year 45 B.C., *De Divinatione* ("On Divination") in 44 B.C., and *De Fato* ("On Fate") also in 44 B.C.

Moreover, Cicero did not limit himself to composing mere compilations as the product of his reading of Greek authors. Perhaps it is not useless to go into detail on this point, in the light of what Cicero himself has confided here and there. "From my earliest youth," he writes in response to those who were surprised at "the sudden outburst of philosophical reflection on my part, I have been devoted to the study of philosophy" (*Nat. D.* 1.6), and he cites the teachers who contributed to his education, in the following order: the Stoic Diodotus (who lived in Cicero's own house until his death, in 59), the follower of the new Academy; Philo, the partisan of the old Academy; Antiochus; and the Stoic Posidonius of Rhodes (whom Cicero heard in 77 during his sojourn on that island). This list proves that Cicero sought every opportunity to perfect his knowledge by profiting from the irreplaceable exchanges of oral teaching.

Cicero's list omits certain others, the representatives of the Epicurean school that he had also frequented since his adolescence: Phaedrus, author of a treatise on the gods, whom he knew first in the year 90 and found again in 79 in Athens. At this time he had spent six months in the Athenian city and had the further opportunity to hear Zeno of Sidon, who was the head of the Epicurean school, as well as his disciple Philodemus, who struck up a friendship with the Roman guest.

Because of the variety of these philosophical associations, some scholars have come to hasty conclusions: to them, Cicero is a mere eclectic spirit, a kind of aesthete of thought. He is supposed to have chosen the academic trend because it was the only one that allowed him to reserve judgment, even perhaps to contradict himself.

Indeed, the academic school said that the wise man should limit himself to *probable* opinions, since he cannot distinguish the true from the false (*Nat. D.* 1.12). Cicero insists, however, that this does not consist in denying the existence of truth, but only in avoiding any precipitous judgment. But the problem of the nature of the gods is extremely arduous and full of mystery (*perdifficilis . . . et perobscura quaestio est de natura deorum*: *Nat. D.* 1.1).

If one reads attentively the preamble of the treatise *Nat. D.*, in which there is a discussion between three interlocutors (who are supposed to be holding their conversation between the years 77 and 75 B.C.)—a preamble that constitutes the only personal intervention of Cicero, aside from the final reflections of the last book—the author is far from giving any impression of an amiable skepticism that is content to attend jousts of contradictions. On the contrary, he shows that this is a debate that can leave no one indifferent, and although he wants the controversy to develop freely, he cannot refrain from warning of the risks. Thus, grappling with the Epicurean position, he declares: "If it is true that the gods exercise no control whatsoever over human affairs, what will become of piety, reverence, and religion?" (*Nat. D.* 1.9).

This is a cry from the heart that betrays the ambiguity of Cicero's position. On the one hand he is passionately attached to the pursuit of the one truth—*ad veri investigandi cupiditatem*—and refers to the freedom of examination of the Socratic method (*Nat. D.* 1.11: he goes back expressly to Socrates in enumerating the links of the chain: Arcesilas in the third century, Carneades in the second; in the first century, Philo of Larissa was the representative of this trend). On the other hand, he is so indebted to Roman categories of thought that he is alarmed in advance at the upheaval (*perturbatio vitae . . . et magna confusio*: *Nat. D.* 1.3–4) that would be caused by a discussion which would end by establishing that "the gods cannot or do not wish to concern themselves with men."

This is far from a gratuitous aestheticism. What then are the motives that caused the orator of old to devote himself to an inquiry that threatened to be so thorny? Chronology offers a first answer. Cicero's entire "work of philosophical reflection" comes between the years 46 and 43: *The Paradoxes of the Stoics* (*Paradoxa Stoicorum*) in 46; *The Academics* (*Academica*) in 45; *Definitions of Good and Evil* (*De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*) in 45; *Tusculan Disputations* (*Tusculanae Disputationes*) in 45; *Cato the Elder, or On Old Age* (*Cato Maior, De Senectute*) in 44; *Laelius, or On Friendship* (*Laelius, De Amicitia*) in 44; *On Duties* (*De Officiis*) in 43. In this flowering, which does not take into account the lost treatises (such as the *De Gloria* or the *De Virtutibus*), is found the trilogy of theological books cited above.

In a fairly short expanse of time, Cicero thus produced an impressive number of books of a philosophical character. The dating is explained by circumstances. Cicero was kept at a distance from political affairs from the time of the establish-

ment of the dictatorship of Julius Caesar in 46; he had leisure time at his disposal, which had not been available until then to the orator and statesman; at the same time, he wondered whether his studious retreat would not be interrupted suddenly by new events (the ides of March, 44, are near . . .). This was an additional reason to hurry and transmit to his fellow citizens the lessons of Greek wisdom in Latin (*Tusc.* 1.1) and to give his country a new jewel, philosophy (*ibid.* 1.5).

So far we have only discussed general reasons, which can explain why the "amateur" who is open to ideas (*ipse et magnus quidem sum opinator, non enim sum sapiens*, he writes in *Lucullus* 20, which constitutes the second book of the first *Academica*) has resolved to make his great plan come true. But there was a more personal reason: in February of 45 a cruel bereavement struck Cicero: the death of his daughter Tullia whom he cherished above all else (*Tulliola, deliciolae nostrae*, he wrote, in one of the Letters to Atticus [1.8.3]). More than any other motive, this immense sorrow must have prompted Cicero to ask questions about final ends and to meditate about problems of the immortality of the soul and the nature of the gods (*Nat. D.* was probably written in August of 45).

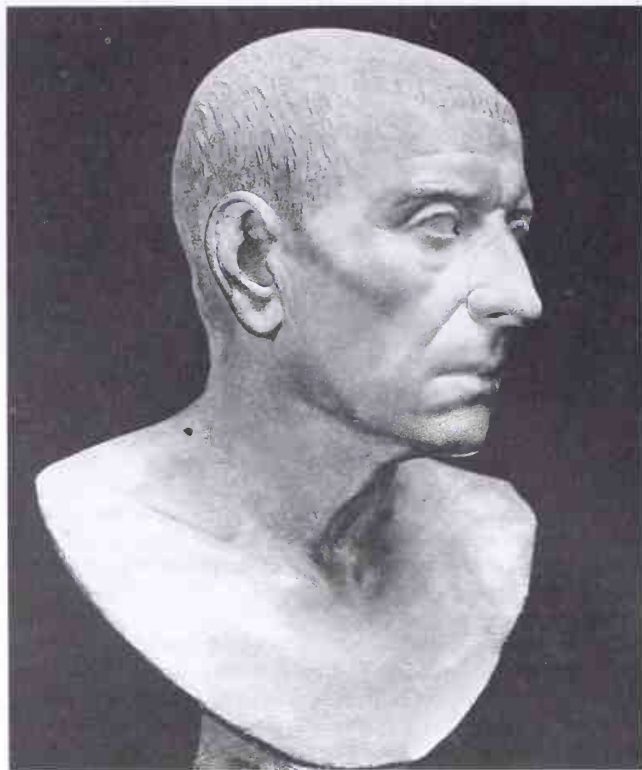
We would know more about the state of his soul were it not for the loss of the treatise *On Consolation* that he wrote under the sway of grief. But allusions made to this treatise by Cicero himself in his other works should be sufficient to warn us against coming to premature conclusions about the "skeptical tendencies" which are supposedly systematic in Cicero.

Perhaps we have failed to take a necessary precaution: when speaking of Cicero, it is important to separate his critical spirit, so avid for theoretical discussion conducted with a demand for total liberty, from the personal quest of a man who is attempting to arrive at the most reasonable form of belief, in the midst of all the contradictions of the philosophers.

From this perspective, it is indeed possible to resolve several contradictions that are only apparent.

Thus at one level—at which, moreover, only the practice of augury is concerned—some people have thought it possible to oppose "Cicero the augur" to "Cicero the philosopher." In the treatise *On Laws* (2.32), the augur recognizes the solid foundation of divination, which would be justified in a world governed by gods who are careful to warn men by signs. In the treatise *On Divination* (2.70 and 148), by contrast, Cicero makes an incisive criticism and denies any prophetic value to the signs of the auspices. A careful reading shows, however, that in both passages the positions which seem to be contradictory are accompanied by a commentary of identical meaning: in the first passage, the author points to the changes and negligence which had distorted the art of augury from the time of Romulus (*On Laws* 2.33); in the second, he confines himself to disputing the power of prediction which some people wanted to grant, in his time, to the office of the augur, which should not be questioned as an official institution (*On Divination* 2.70; see the article "Roman Divination," above).

Now we come to the crucial questions. Is there really a wavering on the doctrine of the soul? Cicero dealt with the question especially in the first book of the *Tusculan Disputations*. The author is confronted with two contradictory positions and tries to show that in either position death cannot be considered an evil. If the soul is immortal, it is assured of happiness in the heavenly life (*Tusc.* 1.74–75). Or if it is mortal (as is conceded by the Epicureans and even the Stoic Panaetius, who differs in this from Plato), then, deprived of all sensation, it would not be able to experience suffering



Cicero. Florence, Uffizi. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

(*ibid.* 1.82ff.). In fact, Cicero merely takes up two academic exercises in philosophizing which he examines and then comes to the conclusion that in either case death is not to be feared.

This objective and methodical approach to the discussion does not keep him from revealing his own opinion, for there is no uncertainty as far as he is concerned. Conscious of the importance of his own testimony, he cites a passage from his *Consolation* which still remains his credo: "The soul has an essence that is heavenly and divine and consequently eternal."

The question of the destiny of the soul is connected with the problem of the gods. Here again there is a contrast that leads to reflection. In the *Nature of the Gods*, Cicero freely adopted an attitude of discretion, situating the debate in a fairly remote period (between 77 and 75 B.C.). Since he was an *adulescens* at that time, he shows self-effacement before the champions of the two great schools, Velleius for the Epicureans and Balbus for the Stoics; they hold their discussion under the critical arbitration of the academician Cotta. But—and what a surprise—at the end of this long debate, in which Greek philosophy and Roman religion sometimes confront each other directly, Cicero forgets his connections with the academic school and finds the conclusions of the Stoic Balbus "closer to the truth," *ad veritatis similitudinem*.

What has happened then? We can already see the beginnings of a solution in the last exchange of arguments. Cotta has just finished a critical examination of Balbus's thesis, and has emphasized how "obscure and laborious" the problem of the nature of the gods still remains (*Nat. D.* 3.93). It is then that these words of correction make Balbus leap to the defense. This time he reacts more as a Roman pontifex than

as a Stoic philosopher and says with some emotion to his adversary: "You should give me another day to answer. For this debate involves our altars and our hearths, the temples and shrines of the gods, and the walls of our city: and do you pontiffs declare that these are sacred and that their protection depends more upon their religious character than their value as enclosing fortifications?" (*Nat. D.* 3.94: *Dabis diem nobis aliquem, ut contra ista dicamus. Est enim mihi tecum pro aris et focus certamen et pro deorum templis atque delubris proque urbis muris, quos vos, pontifices, sanctos esse dicitis diligentiusque urbem religione quam ipsis moenibus cingitis*). Is it surprising that after this Cicero shares in this profession of faith?

An even more decisive answer is given by Cicero himself. In the passage from the *Tusculan Disputations* cited above (1.66), he follows his profession of faith from the *Consolation* with this explicit declaration: "And indeed the divinity itself, as we conceive it, can be understood in no other way than as a mind autonomous and free, separated from all perishable matter, conscious of all and moving all, and having perpetual motion."

This declaration, delivered in a tone of pure deism, does not keep Cicero from remaining faithful to Roman traditions any more than his adherence to Stoicism keeps Balbus from reacting as a responsible pontifex when the skepticism of his

adversary Cotta risks undermining the foundations of the Roman patrimony and of sowing a *perturbatio vitae et magna confusio*, to quote Cicero's own terms (*Nat. D.* 1.3). It is true that Cicero, who maintains a lively curiosity for new ideas, remains profoundly convinced of the superiority of the ancestral tradition. In the preamble of the *Tusculan Disputations* (1.1), he wrote: "... it has always been my conviction that our ancestors made wiser discoveries than the Greeks, and although our ancestors borrowed some of their material from the Greeks, they improved it until they judged it worthy of their efforts."

Another piece of evidence is given at the end of the discussion on divination. This time, Cicero assumes the role of critic in opposition to his brother Quintus in the debate about the prophetic pretensions of the art of divination. He has rejected all forms of this art (*On Divination* 2.148), only to affirm immediately and forcefully that by suppressing this superstition, he intends to preserve religion all the better: *nec vero—id enim diligenter intelligi volo—superstitione tollenda religio tollitur*. "And also," he adds, "just as it is a duty to weed out every root of superstition, so it is a duty to spread the influence of religion, in harmony with the knowledge of nature."

R.S./l.r.

DIANA

The etymology of Diana's name is transparent: it is formed on the adjective *dius* ("luminous"); the neuter *dium* designates "the luminous sky." *Diana* means "the luminous one" and therefore comes from the same root *diu-* as Jupiter: she dispenses nocturnal light, alternating with Jupiter, the god of day. Cicero (*De Natura Deorum*, 2.27.69) gave a precise definition of her name: "Diana is associated, it is thought, with the moon . . . she is called Diana because at night she makes the day (*diem*)."

The identity of the goddess is confirmed by her cult: throughout Italy (Statius, *Silvae*, 3.1.59–60), the anniversary of her cult falls on 13 August, the *ides*, which formerly coincided with the day of midsummer. It is therefore no accident that the *ides* designated both the anniversary of the temple of Diana on the Aventine (13 August) and the anniversary of the temple of Jupiter on the Capitol (13 September). There is also the rite: even in Ovid's time (*Fasti*, 3.270) women carried torches from Rome to Aricia, "carrying the light" (Propertius, 2.32.9–10) to the goddess, as if to stimulate her essential function through sympathetic magic.

Diana was originally worshiped in the sacred woods of this Latin city situated at the foot of the Alban Hills. After various changes in fortune (see R. Schilling, *Une victime des vicissitudes politiques: La Diana latine*, in *R.C.D.R.*), her cult was moved to the Aventine in Rome. Tradition dates this transfer at the time of Servius Tullius, but it is more likely that it took place during the fifth century B.C., after the Roman victory over the Latins near Lake Regillus (496 B.C.).

Diana was exposed to Hellenic influence very early (probably because of the circumstances of her introduction, she became especially the protectress of slaves: the anniversary of her temple on the Aventine is called *dies servorum*, "the day of the slaves"; see Festus, p. 460 L.). Her personality

became so evanescent that she was ready to be remodeled to her Greek homologue, Artemis.

Diana was associated with Hercules during the first *lectisternium* of 399 B.C., which attempted to ward off an epidemic (Livy, 5.13.6). The association may perhaps be explained by reference to the homologous Greek divinities: Artemis *Locheia* was originally not a lunar goddess but essentially the

Altar of Diana. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.





Diana. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.



Diana Nemorensis (Diana-Hecate-Selene). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

protectress of feminine life; Heracles had the evocative surname of Alexicacus ("he who repels evils"), as the Latins knew (see Varro, *De Lingua Latina*, 7.82). At the lectisternium of 217 B.C., Diana-Artemis returned to her natural mythological family and was coupled with "her brother" Apollo.

The influence of Artemis *Locheia* explains, in our opinion, certain artifacts that were foreign to the virginal nature of Diana (ex-votos in the form of vulvas or phalluses, found at Aricia), as well as the presence, in the Arician woods, of Virbius, who was nothing but Hippolytus in disguise (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 774–77).

During the time of Augustus, Diana's absorption by Ar-

temis was almost total. But in striking contrast, the old custom of *rex Nemorensis* continued in the Arician woods, where Diana's priest performed this office (most often a fugitive slave) until a more vigorous claimant came to murder him in order to take his place. Various explanations attempt to make sense of this barbarous custom (see A. Alföldi, "Diana Nemorensis," *AJA* 64, 1960, pp. 137–44; G. Dumézil, *R.R.A.*², 410). It still existed at the height of the Imperial Era (see Suetonius, *Caligula*, 35.6) as evidence of a prehistory that had ended.

R.S./d.b.

FAUNUS

The name *Faunus* is the subject of considerable discussion. The ancient authors (Cornelius Labeo, cited by Macrobius, in *Saturnalia*, 1.12.21; Servius, *ad G.*, 1.10) explain it by the verb *favere* ("to favor")—an etymology that appeared "popular" to modern authors. The attempt by von Blumenthal (*Hesychstud.*, 1930, p. 38) to interpret the name by reference to *thaunon-thērion*, thus giving it the meaning "wolf," was taken up by other scholars (F. Bömer, *Fasti, Kommentar*, p. 100) who drew upon the meaning of the root **dhau-*, "strangle": Faunus would thus be "the strangler." But this interpretation ran into other objections (since this meaning of the term is attested only in the Phrygian domain: cf. K. Latte, *R.R.G.*, p. 83, n. 3)—so the ancient meaning has once again come into favor, except for the debate as to whether the true meaning

of Faunus is to be taken as a positive qualifier or a euphemistic expression.

Uncertainty also arises from the fact that the association of Faunus with the cult of the Lupercalia, undoubtedly the most archaic of Roman cults, is relatively recent. (It is thus irrelevant to argue from the meaning of *lupercus* to explain the nature of Faunus.) In fact, the name of this festival bears only a semantic correspondence to Lupercal, which designates the cave of the she-wolf (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.342), and the Luperci, the officials of this "truly savage brotherhood" (*fera quaedam sodalitas*: Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, 26) who, on 15 February, ran around the Palatine as if to trace all around it a circle of magic protection; this was a purifying rite, which logically fell during the month of purification (*februa*), which is the month of Februarius.

What does *Lupercus* mean? Undoubtedly "wolf-man" (according to a formation analogous to *noverca*, "new" [mother], through the connection with *nova*). Furthermore, these Lu-

perci are nearly naked (Ovid, *Fasti*, 2.287), wearing only a loincloth (ibid., 5.101). Clearly, these Luperci, since they are divided into two groups, the Quinctiales (who are connected with Romulus) and the Fabiani (who are connected with Remus), are situated at a stage before civilization.

In this whole ceremony there is nothing that refers to a god Lupercus. It is noteworthy that when Virgil (*Aeneid*, 8.344) and Ovid (*F.*, 2.271) want to put the festival under the patronage of a divinity, they suggest a Greek god, Pan of Arcadia. Faunus Bicornis was indeed regarded as the Latin homologue of Pan in this period. But the equation does not go back much earlier. In the third century B.C., the Latin interpretation of Pan was not Faunus, but Silvanus (as in Plautus, *Aulularia*, 674, 766; cf. F. Bömer, *Ovid, Fasti, Kommentar*, p. 101). It was not until the time of Ovid that the syncretic translation of Pan took precedence over Faunus in the Latin accounts: on his arrival in Arcadia on the site of the future Rome, Evander is said to "have taught about many cults, the first being that of the two-horned Faunus" (*Fasti*, 5.99). In this vein, Ovid does not hesitate to explain the word *Lupercus* through the Arcadian Mount Lycaeus: "in Arcadia, Faunus of Mount Lycaeus has his temple" (ibid., 2.423–24).

Furthermore, the Latin name should deceive no one. Faunus is merely a Latin disguise for Pan. His identity as a foreigner would not fool anyone. Ovid gives us proof of this in the following testimony (ibid., 2.194): "On the ides of February, smoke rises from the altar of Faunus on the Tiberine island." In fact, in 194 B.C. a temple had been erected to Faunus on this island through fines levied upon the

pecuarii ("owners of herds": cf. Livy, 33.42.10). The date of the celebration (which did not coincide with the Lupercalia), as well as the location of the temple outside the *pomerium*, point to the fact that Pan-Faunus had once been foreign to the primitive ceremony of the Lupercalia.

However, because of the later syncretism, he came to be regarded as the patron of the Luperci (Ovid, *F.*, 5.101). His reputation as a lecherous god (ibid., 2.346) qualified him to patronize the procedure that had been advocated in advance "by the voice of Juno" (ibid., 2.441): *Italidas matres sacer hircus inito* ("Let a sacred goat penetrate the Italian mothers!"). The god also bears the evocative surname of *Inuus* (Livy 1.5.2), which should throw light on the rite of the Luperci, who strike the backs of passersby (Ovid, *F.*, 2.445) with thongs made from the hide of the sacrificed goat (ibid., 2.446). According to Festus (p. 75 L.), these thongs are made from the hide of a she-goat; and the she-goat is immolated for Faunus (Ovid, *F.*, 2.362). Thus the "recommendation of Juno," as explicated by an "Etruscan augur," could be put into practice.

Faunus also has magical powers (ibid., 3.323). In a general sense, he is the *agrestis* god who eludes the "culture" of the cities. Following the model of the Panes of Hellas, the Fauni multiplied in the works of the Latin poets; they form joyous corteges with the Nymphs and Satyrs (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.193). But here we are no longer in the territory of ritual but in the domain of mythological fantasy.

R.S./d.w.

GENIUS

Genius is an authentically Roman notion: it has no Greek equivalent. Ancients and moderns have differed on its exact meaning. It comes from the verb *genere*, a rarer form than the reduplicating verb *gignere*. Censorinus (*De Die Natali* 3.1) proposed three explanations: Genius is responsible for our birth (*ut genamur curat*), or it is born at the same time as we are (*una genitur nobiscum*), or it welcomes us and protects us after our birth (*nos genitos suscipit ac tutatur*). Modern scholars have in general been drawn to the first orientation; most (for example, Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus d. Römer*, 2d ed., p. 175) have given an active meaning to *genius* and have interpreted it as the deification of genetic power. G. Dumézil (*Religion romaine archaïque*, p. 364) has observed, on the other hand, that "the compound *ingenium*, which is of a more current type but was undoubtedly ancient as well, has only a passive sense: property, innate quality, *quod ingenuum est*. Genius in the animate genre is exactly that, personalized and divinized."

Two arguments militate in favor of this last interpretation. First, the parallelism with other semantic formations: the *Venus-venia-venerare* (-ri) series (to which can be associated, analogically, *Fides*-[*Dius*] *Fidius-fidere*) is similar to the *genus-Genius-generare* series. In all of these series, the derivatives in -io- come from a religious vocabulary, having to do with deified notions (*Genius*, *Fidius*) or with a sacred word (*venia*). *Venia* indicates the favor acquired from the gods by the *venerans*. *Fidius* designates the god who guards and

guarantees Good Faith. Similarly, Genius must designate the deification of the personality with its innate qualities.

There is also another reason: a text by Servius (*ad Aen.* 3.607) that Otto (*R.E.*, s.v. Genius, ca. 1158) had the merit of bringing out of obscurity points out that "the forehead is consecrated to Genius; let us also touch our forehead to venerate the god" (*venerantes deum tangimus frontem*). Rather than personifying sexual activity, Genius incarnates the personality of each human being. Genius is common to men and women (cf. Censorinus, ibid. 3.3). The parallelism Genius-Juno is merely a later construction, found for the first time in Tibullus (3.12.1) in the form of a Juno Natalis that is the mirror image of the Natalis identified with Genius (3.6.48). In the theater of Plautus, no allusion to Genius is of a sexual nature: it is the vital principle that is strengthened by good living.

A purely Latin notion, Genius was nevertheless subject to Greek influence, which is already discernible in Lucilius (cited by Censorinus, ibid. 3.3). Varro (cited by Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 7.13) sees in Genius a principle more rational than fundamental. Horace (*Epistulae* 2.2.187ff.) proposes a more ethical conception, by distinguishing a variable *Genius* (*mutabilis*), sometimes white (*albus*, which inclines us toward good), sometimes black (*ater*, which incites us to do evil). This Genius is presented chiefly as a companion (*comes*) who directs our destiny (*natale astrum*).

Next to the private Genius there exists a Genius Publicus that is first mentioned in 218 B.C. (Livy 21.62.9). Later a Genius Populi Romani is indicated, around which Sulla is said to have hoped to reunite Roman citizens during the



Household shrine, with a depiction of two lares on either side of the genius. Pompeii, the Vetti house. Photo Anderson-Giraudon.

Social War. The Genius Publicus is presented as a symbol of prosperity and success: on 9 October he is honored along with Fausta Felicitas and Venus Victrix in Capitolio.

The Genius Augusti appears as a double legacy: Augustus understood the benefit that he could derive from a cult both deeply rooted in Latin mentality and capable of an official status. He hoped to associate the cult of his own Genius with that of the Lares in all the crossroads of Rome (Ovid, *Fasti* 5.145–46).

With an extension of meaning that is at first sight surprising, the Genius Loci has been borrowed for many special uses. The notion was also extended to collectivities, for example, Genius Coloniae or Genius Municipii. At the time of the Empire, there was a Genius Senatus that constituted a kind of mirror image of the Genius Populi Romani.

R.S. d.b.

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HERCULES

The Latin name Hercules is a derivation from the Greek, *hēraklēs*: **Herkles*, then **Hercoles* (the dative *Hercolei* is attested several times), then *Hercules*. The name is found in various forms all over Italy—in the Etruscan domain: *Hercle* (M. Pallottino, *Testimonia linguae etruscae*, no. 399); in the Oscan dialect: *herekleis* (= *Herculis*; E. Vetter, *H.I.D.*, no. 1, B); in the

Vestinian dialect: *herclo* (= *Herculi*, *ibid.*, no. 220); in the Praenestine dialect: *hercle* (= *Hercules*; cf. *ibid.*, no. 367b), *hercles* (= *Hercules*; *ibid.*, no. 367c), and *hercele* (= *Hercules*; *ibid.*, no. 366d).

The ubiquity of his name is in keeping with the legend of the Greek voyager. His acclimatization to Rome as a god gave rise to a thorough study by Jean Bayet (*Les origines de l'Hercule Romain*, Paris 1926) that remains the definitive work on the subject.

The legend that was imposed in Rome in the classical era is a version of the victorious battle of a hero/benefactor against maleficent "Evil." This is how Livy (1.6.4ff.), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.31–40), Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.193ff.), and Ovid (*Fasti* 1.541ff.) have presented the arrival of the "hero, carrier of the club," on the banks of the Tiber: after coming from the fabulous island of Erytheia, near Spain, with a herd of cattle taken from the giant Geryon, he is the victim of the theft of several head of cattle by a certain Cacus, who appears to be a shepherd (Livy), a bandit (Dionysius of Halicarnassus), or a "horrible" monster (Virgil and Ovid).

Hercules kills Cacus (which popular etymology interprets as *kakos*, "the evil one") and wins the general sympathy of the inhabitants of the region. In particular, Evander, the king of the Arcadians in Pallantium, the future site of Rome, shows his gratitude by building an altar to Hercules (Livy; Dionysius of Halicarnassus)—the Ara Maxima, located at the Forum Boarium. According to other versions (Virgil, *Aen.* 8.271; Ovid, *Fasti* 1.581), Hercules himself established the altar and the cult of the Ara Maxima.

Such is the general theme of the legend, if one disregards "aberrant" variants (thus, according to Diodorus [4.21], Hercules is received by two hospitable characters, Pinarius and . . . Cacus; he establishes his own cult at the "Great Altar" by instituting the practice of offering the "tithe": there is no mention of a monstrous Cacus). The legend tells us nothing about the historical antiquity of the cult.

The cult was made up of two groups in the classical era, in the north and the south of the Forum Boarium, which was both a cattle market and a commercial center. To the north, more precisely at the northwest corner of the Circus Maximus, was the Ara Maxima, which had been built later from a round temple devoted to Hercules Victor, whose annual celebration fell on 12 August. The epithet Victor appears in the pre-Julian calendar of Antium; in other calendars and literary sources there is a vacillation between Victor and Invictus; cf. A. Degraffi (*Ins. Ital.*, 13.2, p. 494). Tacitus (*Annales* 12.24) thinks that the Ara Maxima was included within the pomerium of the Romulan city.

In the south, between the banks of the Tiber and the Aventine hill, is another temple of Hercules Victor or Invictus, situated near the Porta Trigemina (Varro, cited by Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 3.6.10). This temple, placed outside the pomerium, had its annual celebration on 13 August; it had the status of a foreign cult, *sacra peregrina* (Festus p. 268 L.).

The essential difference between the two locations of the cult was as follows: that of the Ara Maxima was from the beginning private and overseen by two gentes, the Potitii and, in a subordinate position, the Pinarii; that of the Porta Trigemina was an establishment of Greek merchants, who honored one of their gods who was believed to be the distributor of health and prosperity.

In 312 B.C. the cult of the Ara Maxima underwent a radical change; it became nationalized at the instigation of the censor Appius Claudius, and the Potitii abandoned their *familiaire sacerdotium* to the state, at a cost of 50,000 *as*—a transaction that must not have pleased the god, if one



Hercules and the Nemean lion. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

believes the tradition: the twelve Potitii of that period died within thirty days (Festus, p. 270 L.), and Appius Claudius became blind and passed to posterity with the cognomen Caecus (cf. Livy 9.29.9–11).

Before this date Hercules had already participated in an official ceremony in Rome. In 399 B.C. he had appeared at the first lectisternium in the company of Diana-Artemis. After 312 B.C. he was a "Romanized" god, after the Roman state took over the cult of the Great Altar, resorting to public slaves who were put under the authority of the urban praetor. Nevertheless, the rite practiced there differed from the Roman liturgy: the *ritus Graecus* (cf. my article, "*Sacrum et profanum*," *Latomus* 1971, pp. 963–68; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*). It included a practice which met with great success: the offering made to the god, the *polluctum*, was followed by a

lavish feast, the *polluctura*, which was open to all participants.

Other innovations of the cult attest to the influence of Hercules: in 218 B.C. (Livy 21.62.9), a *supplicatio* was addressed to him (at the same time as a lectisternium to Juventas—Hebe, who in mythology is believed to be his wife: Ovid, *Fasti* 6.65). But the disaster of Trasimenus, which occurred shortly thereafter, must have provoked a certain disenchantment: Hercules no longer appears at the big lectisternium of the twelve gods in 217 B.C.

It was not long before he came back into favor: the epithets that epigraphy has recorded (Wissowa, *Ruk*², p. 282, and J. Bayet, *op. cit.*, p. 487)—*Defensor*, *Conservator*, *Salutaris* (*Alexicacus*, "he who drives away evil," is cited by Varro, *De Lingua Latina* 7.82) demonstrate the confidence in the god's aid and protection. Nevertheless, it was the dispenser of success and prosperity who received the greatest devotion. Moreover, the establishment of the tithe at the Ara Maxima was preferred by merchants and soldiers: by promising the god a tenth of their profit or of their spoils of war, they supported the prestige of Hercules Victor. In this context we may cite the ostentatious gesture of a former flautist who had become a merchant, M. Octavius Herrenus, who offered a tithe and a feast in honor of Hercules (Marius Sabinus of the first century B.C., cited by Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.6.11). There was also the innovation of a general, M. Fulvius Nobilior, who in 189 B.C., when he returned from a victorious campaign in Aetolia, had the temple of Hercules Musarum constructed near the Circus Flaminius (the general had brought back from the capture of Ambracia nine statues of the Muses, which he wanted to entrust to Hercules Musagetes, "leader of the Muses"; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 35.66).

The popularity of Hercules was eclipsed toward the end of the first century B.C., after the founding of the empire by Augustus: the god was in disgrace for "supporting" the unfortunate rival of the conqueror, Anthony (see my article "L'Hercule Romain en face de la réforme religieuse d'Auguste," *R.Ph.*, 1942, p. 39; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*). But it was not long before Hercules emerged from the shadows where political circumstances had put him (*ibid.*, p. 52ff.). One day, at the time of the dispute between paganism and Christianity, he even became a rival of Christ (M. Simon, *Hercule et le christianisme*, Belles Lettres, Paris, n.d.).

R.S./t.l.f

JANUS

The name Janus has an etymology that is accepted by most linguists: it comes from the root *iā-*, which is an enlargement of the Indo-European root *ei-* ("to go"), and which appears as an abstract term corresponding to the notion of "transition."

As for its form, *janus* is a stem originally in *-u-* that has shifted to a stem in *-o-*: this explains the form of the ancient derivatives *Januarius* ("January"), *janu-al* ("cake reserved for Janus"), *janua* ("door"), as well as the more recent derivatives *jani-tor* ("doorkeeper"), *Jani-culum* ("the Janiculum hill"), *Jani-gena* ("daughter of Janus").

This etymology corresponds to the thinking of the ancients, which was clearly formulated by Cicero (*De Natura*

Deorum 2.27.67): "the name (of Janus) comes from the verb 'to go' (*ab eundo*); this is why passages that open to the street are called *jani*, and the doors of profane buildings are called *januae*."

If this definition sins by the letter, still it faithfully expresses the spirit of the word. It is preceded by an important specification: the characteristic trait of "transition" that Janus incarnates is that of being initial. Cicero evokes Janus's special trait of being "the first" (*De Natura Deorum* 2.27.67) in sacrificial ceremonies. But this quality applies generally as well, as is attested in Varro's formula (cited by Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 7.9): *penes Janum sunt prima, penes Jovem summa* ("Janus presides over all that begins, Jupiter over all that culminates").

Although the Indo-European origin of Janus "remains the most likely" (E. Benveniste, personal communication), his



Janus. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.

Latin origin is no less certain. Greece has no homologous figure (this was already noticed by Ovid, *Fasti* 1.90; the possible influence of the "Double Hermes" on the sculptured representation of *Janus Bifrons* does not affect his definition), and the Etruscan *ani* portrayed on the liver of Piacenza is a borrowing (from the Latin word: cf. Skutsch, *R.E.*, s.v. Etrusker, c. 767; or from another Italic language: cf. G. Dumézil, *A.R.R.*,² p. 338).

The functional definition of the god explains his role in both legend and liturgy (I repeat here the central points of my article "Janus le dieu introducteur, le dieu des passages," in *M.E.F.R.*, 1960, pp. 89–131; reprinted in *RCDR*). In his legend, which in Rome must be fairly late, Janus assumes all the "initial" roles. This is clear from the first canto of Ovid's *Fasti*, where he is said to have been identical to Chaos "in olden days" (*Fasti* 1.103ff.). Similarly, he is supposed to have been the "first ruler" of the banks of the Tiber: the *Janiculum*, which bears his name and lies on the edge of archaic

Rome, perpetuates the memory of his ancient citadel (*Fasti* 1.245–46). And it is Janus once again who offers generous hospitality to Saturn so that he can "hide" in Latium after his expulsion from the heavenly realm (*Fasti* 1.235ff.).

While these fantasies only have the merit of fitting the description of the god, the evidence from his cult is of greater weight. Janus has no flamen of his own, but the *rex sacrificulus* ("king of sacrifices") offers him a sacrifice in certain circumstances (at the beginning of each month, for instance: cf. Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1.15.10, and Wissowa's commentary, *Ruk*,² p. 103). This royal intervention recalls that Janus is the initiator of time. It is for him that the public sacrifice first celebrated in the first month of the year is performed: the Agonium of 9 January. And it is he who, in association with Juno (whence his surname *Junonius*), is the patron of the calends of all the months of the year.

Under the name of Janus Curvatus, the god also presides over a rite of passage which, within the curiae, involved young men of arms-bearing age. But because of its archaism and the lack of information about it, it is extremely difficult to define this cult clearly.

Such is not the case for Janus Quirinus, who is cited from the time of the "royal laws" (Festus, p. 204 L.) and whose worship Augustus attempted to revitalize. It was at the temple of Janus, founded, according to tradition, by Numa (cf. Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.165; Livy 1.19.2), that a symbolic rite was carried out. This temple, which was both a sanctuary with an altar (*ara . . . parvo conjuncta sacello*: Ovid *Fasti* 1.275) and a door (*porta Janualis*: Varro *Ling.* 5.165), was the visible sign of the state of peace or war, *index pacis bellique* (Livy 1.19.2), depending on whether the doors were closed or open. (In the absence of archaeological data, it is impossible to specify the workings of this *sacellum-porta* complex.) Here Janus was called Geminus (his statue is *biceps*, two-faced) or Quirinus. It is the latter name, the older one since it goes back to a "royal law," that was preferred under Augustus. The emperor boasted (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 13) that he had closed the temple of Janus Quirinus three times. In this way the association Janus-Quirinus served to exalt the "peaceful" values that Quirinus embodied. Here Janus assured the "transition" from war to peace. At least this is suggested by two pieces of evidence from Horace. The poet wanted to stress the "quirinal" side of Janus when he coined the expressive variant *Janum Quirini* (*Carmina* 4.15.9), an idea that he took up again (*Epistulae* 2.1.255) in the more prosaic form *custodem pacis . . . Janum* ("Janus, guardian of peace").

R.S./J.I.

JUNO

The name *Juno* "supports only one etymology: it is a derivation in -on- from *jun-*, a syncopated form of *juven-* which is also found in *junix*, 'heifer' . . . and in the comparative *junior*" (G. Dumézil, *R.R.A.*,² p. 299).

Juno is active at the birth of human beings and of the moon. One of the most important festivals on the calendar, which takes place on 1 March, the Matronalia, concerns Juno Lucina, "she who gives birth": the goddess is invoked under this name by pregnant women (as described in Plautus, *Aulularia* 692, and in Terence, *Adelphoe* 487). In association

with Janus, under the name of Juno Covella (see my article "Janus, le dieu introducteur, le dieu des passages," in *M.E.F.R.*, 1960, pp. 102–8; reprinted in *R.C.D.R.*), she patronizes the calends of every month: this patronage should probably be explained as a function of an ancient ritual that stipulated resorting to the goddess of "youth," of "vital strength," in order to encourage the "work" of the young moon, from the calends to nones.

Other ancient cults of Juno fall on the first of their respective months: February (Juno Sospita), June (Juno Moneta), September (Juno Regina, on the Aventine), and October (Juno Sororia). All of these dates correspond to archaic and autonomous cults of Juno. The only exceptions to this generalization result from a loss of autonomy in worship:



Juno Sospita, a crow on her shoulder, crowning Cornificius. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

JUPITER

Jupiter is the supreme god. His name, which is of Indo-European origin, signals his quality as a celestial god, the god of light. The Latin *Juppiter* is really a vocative form that, through its frequent use in this way, served as a nominative. (Indeed, there is a rarer form of the nominative, *Diespiter*, for example, in Plautus, *Poenulus* 739). The name comes from *jou-pater* (with expressive gemination of the first consonant of the second element and apophony of the interior vowel); *jou* comes from **dyeu* (the same root is at the base of *dies*, "day"). *Juppiter* thus has a semantic relationship with the Greek Zeus, since the nominative *Zeus* is based on **dyeus*. This name is also found in all Italic dialects, particularly in Umbrian and Oscan.

In Rome, Jupiter is the principal divinity of the archaic triad (which associates Mars and Quirinus with him) and of the Capitoline triad (which assigns Juno and Minerva to him as consorts). He is also named first (with Juno) in the lectisternium of 217 B.C. His cult was maintained from its beginnings by the first priest of the sacerdotal body, the *flamen Dialis*. On the ides of each month (which fall on the 13th of most months, but on the 15th of March, May, July, and October), a lamb is sacrificed to him (Festus, p. 93 L.). In the historical era, the principal festivals in his honor were the Vinalia, which were celebrated on 19 August (the consecration of grapes) and on 23 April (the offering of wine). At that time he was honored as the ruling god, the protector of the Romans descended from Aeneas, according to the "Trojan" interpretation that claimed to explain the liturgy (see my book *R.R.V.*, p. 131–48). The *ludi Romani*, celebrated in his

Juno Caprotina is honored on 7 July, on the nones, because this festival is dependent on the cult in honor of Jupiter on 5 July, at the Poplifugia (on this ceremony, see G. Dumézil, "Les nones Caprotines," in *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne* Paris 1975, p. 271–83); Juno Regina of the Capitol is celebrated on 13 September, on the ides, because here she is subordinate to Jupiter, whose temple is honored annually on this day.

Juno plays a role in legendary history: in 390 B.C., the Capitol had been saved from a surprise attack by the Gauls (Livy 5.47.3–4) by the cries of geese, birds consecrated to Juno. Was it because of the intervention of Juno Moneta, "the Warner"? She is mentioned under this title by Cicero (*De divinatione* 1.101). A temple was erected to her in 345 B.C. by the dictator L. Furius Camillus on the Capitoline citadel (Livy 7.28.4; later, the installation next to this sanctuary, *ad Monetæ*, of a monetary workshop, gave *moneta* the meaning "money").

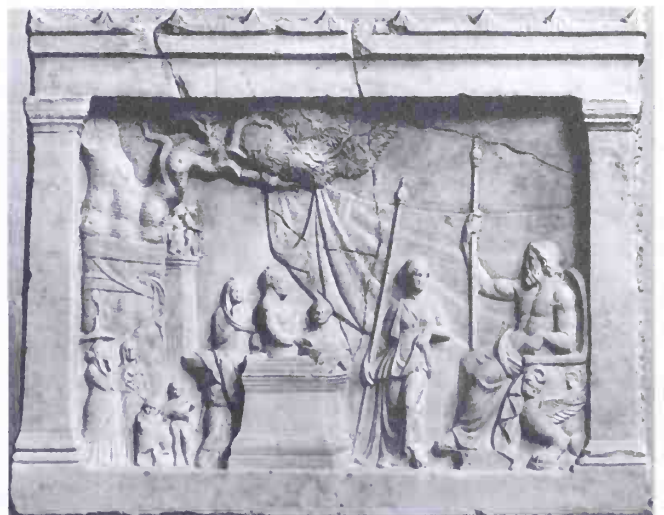
During the historical period Juno is closely associated with Jupiter: in the Capitoline triad, Juno Regina sits at the side of the ruling god in the *cella* to the left (Livy 7.3.5); in the lectisternium of 217 B.C. she forms a couple with Jupiter, in the manner of Hera and Zeus. Rome knew of a second Juno Regina, the ancient Uni, protectress of the Etruscan city of Veii: in 396 B.C. she had been transferred to Rome, to the Aventine hill, following an *evocatio* of the dictator L. Furius Camillus, after the siege of the city (Livy 5.21.3 and 22.4–6).

R.S./t.l.f.

honor (from 15 to 18 September), follow the anniversary of the temple (on the ides of September and after the interval of the 14th). These games are accompanied by an *epulum Jovis*, a solemn meal offered to the god.

Jupiter is given several qualifiers depending on which of his aspects is to be highlighted. Thus the celestial and meteorological aspect is expressed by Jupiter Tonans or Jupiter Fulgur; the aspect of magical intervention, by the epithet Stator ("he who immobilizes": see Livy 1.12.4–6) or

Votive relief. Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek. Photo Koppermann.





Capitoline triad (Jupiter-Juno-Minerva) represented on an oil lamp. Rome, City Museum. Photo Oscar Savio.

Jupiter Feretrius (Livy 1.24.7–8; the Roman fetial who concluded a treaty with the Alban people invokes Jupiter Feretrius, he who must strike, *ferire*, the first one who backs away; see Festus, p. 81 L.). He is qualified as Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitolium (on the ethical meaning of these adjectives, see G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 200).

It is at the temple of the Capitol that his role as the protector god of the city is exercised fully. It is there, on the calends of January, that the new consuls go, accompanied by senators, magistrates, priests, and the populace. It is there that the consul designated for a military campaign pronounces the *vota*, the prayers and solemn promises made for a successful outcome. It is there that, when he returns, the victorious and triumphant general pays his debt of gratitude to the ruling god.

R.S./t.l.f.

THE LARES

The name Lar has no clear etymology. In the singular, but more often in the plural, Lares, it designates the deities who protect a piece of land. This basic feature was rightly underscored by Wissowa (*Ruk*², p. 169): "The primary importance of the Lares is as deities attached to a locality."

This definition, supported by ritual evidence, was ob-

scured by the speculations of ancient and modern scholars who tended to confuse the Lares with the "infernal spirits" (Festus, p. 273 L., repeated by Ernout-Meillet, *D.E.*⁴, s.v. Lares). The issue was further obscured by a later mythological interpretation that resulted in the invention of a "Mother of the Lares," who was called Mania in Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 9.61) and in Macrobius (*Saturnalia* 1.7.35), Lara in Ovid (*Fasti* 2.615), Mater Larum in the liturgy of the imperial period of the Arval Brethren (Henzen, *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*, p. 145). Her antiquity must be challenged, since early Roman religion does not recognize genealogical ties.

In the archaic *Carmen* of the Arval Brethren, the Lares are referred to (in the form Lases, without the rhotacism of the internal s) as protectors of the *ager Romanus* (plowed fields of Rome). In the singular, the Lar Familiaris is the protector of the family estate, whom the paterfamilias greets first when he arrives in his country home (see Cato *De Agricultura* 2.1). He protects all the *familia*, freemen and slaves alike. The master of the house also offers a crown to the Lar Familiaris so that "this home may be for us a source of wealth, blessing, happiness, and good fortune" (see Plautus *Trinummus* 40–41).

In the country, the cult of the Lares was practiced at crossroads (*compita*), special meeting places. These Lares Compitales were worshiped in particular at the beginning of the month of January in a movable feast, the Compitalia.

In Rome itself, the Lares were honored on 1 May as Lares Praestites ("tutelary Lares"); Ovid (*Fasti* 5.129–36) recalls their office as protectors and defenders of the ramparts. The popularity of their cult (at crossroads, they were represented as two young men accompanied by a dog) was so great that Augustus seized the opportunity to place a statue of his own Genius among them. Thus, to borrow Ovid's expression (*Fasti* 5.146), "each quarter honored three deities."

To this list a new cult should be added, attested by a recent

Lares. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.





Representation of two snakes at the base of a lararium. Photo Boudot-Lamotte.

discovery, an archaic inscription on a cippus (a low column) of the fourth century B.C. found in the vicinity of Lavinium: *Lare Aenia d[ono]*, "offering to the Lar Aeneas"; see *Roma medio republicana* (Rome 1973, p. 321, no. 472). For the first time the singular word *Lar* is apparently followed by a proper noun; and for the first time epigraphy seems to provide proof

of a cult of Aeneas, specifically in the area of Lavinium where a *heroon* was discovered which tradition attributes to Aeneas (see P. Sommella, "Heron di Enea a Lavinium, Recenti Scavi a Pratica di Mare," *Rendic. Pontif. Accad. Archeol.* 44 [1971–72]: 47–74).

R.S./g.h

THE MANES

The word *Manes* has given rise to various exegeses. We must reject the popular etymology *manare*, cited by Festus (p. 146 L.): "The name *Manes* (*di*) may be explained by the fact that these gods were thought to spread (*manare*) throughout the aerial and earthly elements"; we must also reject the arbitrary connection with the Phrygian word *mēn* made by Kurt Latte (*Römische Religionsgeschichte*, p. 99, n. 3). We should probably accept the explanation based on the euphemism, *manis* (or *manus*), "good," "kindly," as opposed to *immanis*. The expression is said to have been applied to the infernal gods (*di inferi*) in order to gain their favor. This explanation, accepted by most modern scholars, was proposed by Aelius Stilo (cited by Festus, p. 132 L.): "The infernal gods were called *Manes* with the meaning "kindly" (*boni*) by people who venerated them in a suppliant tone, for fear of death."

The use of the expression is ancient. It appears in the ritualistic formula of the *devotio*, which the consul Decius pronounced in 340 B.C. He consecrated himself, at the same time as the enemy army, "to the *Manes* gods and to the Earth goddess" (*Deis Manibus Tellurique*: Livy 8.9.8). It was also to the "Manes gods" that M. Curtius devoted himself in 361 B.C., when he plunged on horseback into a chasm which had

opened in the Forum following an earthquake (Livy 7.6.4). Cicero evokes the "laws of the *Manes*" in his treatise on laws (Cicero *De legibus* 2.22 and 2.45).

But the expression *di Manes* does not appear to have been widely used in ancient times to designate the deceased of the family. These were named *di* or *divi parentum* in a passage from the "royal laws" (Festus, p. 260 L.). Similarly, the funeral ceremonies around the family tombs that lasted for nine days (*dies parentales*), starting on 13 February and ending on 21 February with a public holiday, the *Feralia*, were called *Parentalia*; the substantive *parentatio* and the verb *parentare* were the specific words for the cult of dead ancestors.

Only toward the end of the first century B.C. was the custom established of using the inscription *D(is) M(anibus)* for the dead of the family. Dedications to the *Manes* gods were made on tombstones (see R. Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*, Paris 1914, pp. 280–81: before this, epitaphs were "very brief"; "the names of the deceased, first in the nominative, then in the genitive case, made up the entire inscription; not a word or a formula could be found that recalled death, even indirectly"). The dedications were followed by the names of the deceased in the nominative, genitive, or dative case.

Nevertheless, the phrase *di Manes* took on other meanings through metonymy. Thus, it can designate the home of the dead (Virgil *Aeneid* 4.387), or simply corpses (Livy 31.30.5).

The Virgilian formula, *quisque suos patimur Manes* (Virg. *Aen.* 6.743: We each suffer our own Manes), has inspired a number of interpretations. The ancient commentator on Virgil, Servius (schol. ad Virg. *Aen.* 7.643), understood it to mean "the judgment" that awaits us during the visit of the Manes, and by way of justification, he advanced the following philosophic view: At our birth two genies welcome us;

one incites us to good, the other to evil; after our death, they are the witnesses of our fate—of our freedom or our reincarnation. It is hard to see how such a Neoplatonic concept harmonizes with Virgil's thought. It is, in any case, alien to Roman traditions.

R.S./g.h.

MARS

The name of the god Mars has no Indo-European etymology. Mars is the Latin form that comes from *Mavors*, an ancient form sometimes used by poets (an intermediate form, *Maurs*, is also attested: *CIL*, I², 49). In the official *Carmen* of the Arval Brethren, Mars is still invoked by the names *Marmar* (from *Marmart-s*) and *Marmor* (a foreign form). In the Oscan dialect, the god has a related name, *Mamers* (see A. G. Ramat, *Studi intorno ai nomi del dio Marte*, *Arch. Glottol. Ital.*, 47, 1962, p. 112ff.).

The antiquity of Mars, the god of war, is attested by the fact that he belongs to the archaic triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus, and by the cult office of the *flamen Martialis*. His character as a warrior god is apparent in the liturgy. The *Salii*, a brotherhood of priests consecrated to him, opened and closed the military calendar year with martial dances. Among the ancients, this calendar would begin in the spring (the festivals of the Equirria of 27 February and 14 March, consisting of horse races on the Field of Mars; the Agonium Martiale on 17 March; the lustration of arms during the Quinquatrus on 19 March; and the lustration of war bugles

during the Tubilustrium on 23 March) and would finish in the autumn (the ritual of purification during the Tigillum Sororium on 1 October; the sacrifice of the war horse, the October Equus, on 15 October; and the lustration of arms, Armilustrium, on 19 October). Mars had his places of worship outside the city's pomerium, which was under the jurisdiction of the *imperium militiae* (see Vitruvius 1.7.1). Accordingly, on the Field of Mars an ancient altar, *ara Martis*, was raised, near which D. Junius Brutus Callaicus built a temple in 138 B.C. South of the city wall near the Appian Way was the most important sanctuary, the *templum Martis extra portam Capenam*, which was dedicated on 1 June 338 B.C. This was the point of departure for the annual parade known as the *transvectio equitum*, a cavalry procession (see Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6.13.4).

Within the city walls, on the other hand, the talismans of Mars were kept in a chapel inside the Regia (the *sacrarium Martis*). These objects were the twelve shields, the *ancilia* (one was reputed to have fallen from heaven, and the remaining eleven were said to be indistinguishable reproductions: see Ovid *Fasti* 3.369ff.), and also the spears, the *hastae Martis* (the spears were able by their "spontaneous" movement to provide omens—*Mars suum telum concutit*, "Mars shakes his spear": see Livy 22.1.11). Before setting out for

Representation of a *suovetaurilia* sacrifice combining the boar (*sus*), the ram (*ovis*), and the bull (*taurus*). Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Giraudon.





Mars bearing a lance and a shield. Pompeii fresco. Photo Boudot-Lamotte.

war, the commander-in-chief would come to touch these sacred objects while shouting: *Mars vigila* (Mars be vigilant!).

If the military character of the god is well established, why have certain modern scholars (see G. Hermansen, *Studien über den italischen und römischen Mars*, Copenhagen 1940) tried to establish the existence of an "agrarian Mars"? The ambiguity resulted from an incorrect interpretation of certain

activities of Mars outside the strictly military domain; it led to long discussions, of which G. Dumézil has given a balanced account (*Archaic Roman Religion*, pp. 224–45). We shall only cite two particularly revealing examples. Mars is invoked in the *carmen Arvale*, which tries to assure mystical protection of the fields. The Arval Brethren, who also address themselves to the Lases (= the Lares, guardians of the farm) and to the Semones (the gods in charge of the growth of seeds, *semina*), ask the "savage Mars" (*fere Mars*) only for a service that corresponds to his definition as a defender (cf. *limen sali*, "leap to the frontier!"): the service of protecting the *ager Romanus* against all enemies.

Similarly, the peasant who comes to the lustration of his field in Cato (*De Agricultura* 141) walks the animals of the *suovetaurilia* (boar, ram, and bull)—a sacrifice that belongs to Mars—while begging the god to stop, repel, and ward off (*prohibebis, defendas averruncesque*) visible and invisible ailments (*morbos visos invisosque*), dearth and desolation (*viduaretatem vastitudinemque*), calamities (the destruction of stalks of grain, *calami* taken in the sense of *culmi*), and inclement weather (*calamitates intemperiasque*). Here again Mars is asked to act in keeping with his function: this action will make possible the growth of harvests and the prosperity of the herds and people.

During the lectisternium of 217 B.C., Mars was associated with Venus on the Greek model of Ares-Aphrodite, and this Hellenic couple played a rather catalytic role in the service of the Roman cause (the reasons can be seen in my article "Roman Gods," above). Therefore Mars came under little influence from the Greek god of war.

The religious policies of Augustus only confirmed this process by proclaiming Mars Ultor, "the avenger." The god earned this name for two reasons: as the avenger of the assassination of Julius Caesar (the victory at Philippi in 42 B.C.) and as the avenger of the disaster suffered by the Romans at Carrhae in 53 B.C. (a negotiation with the Parthians, followed by a surrender of the Roman flag, had been presented as a victory). As a result, the emperor ordered that a round temple be raised on the Capitol in honor of Mars Ultor (in 20 B.C.: Dio Cassius 54.8.3) and then had the great temple installed in the middle of his own Forum (in 2 B.C.: Dio Cassius 60.5.3). Mars enjoyed a new glory. The "father" of Romulus, the founder of Rome, he was associated with Venus, the "Mother" of the Romans descended from Aeneas. He was no longer simply a god of war, camping on the outskirts of the city; he had solemnly entered the interior of his city to receive the honors given him on top of the Capitol and in the heart of the new Forum.

R.S./g.h.

MERCURY

The name of the god Mercury cannot be disassociated from the word *merx*, which means merchandise. Such was the sentiment of the ancients (Festus, p. 111 L.: *Mercurius a mercibus est dictus*). The word *Mercurius* is based on a *u* stem. In addition to the consonantal stem of the Latin word *merx*, the *u*- stem is attested in an Oscan dedication from Capua (*Mirikui = Mercurio*, Vetter, *H.I.D.*, n. 136) and in several Faliscan inscriptions (e.g., *tito mercui efile = Tito Mercu*

aediles, Vetter, *ibid.*, n. 264; this is a dedicatory inscription of merchants; the first name placed before the name of the god seems foreign).

Mercury, the patron of merchants, was introduced to Rome at least by the early fifth century B.C. A temple dedicated to him was built in 495 B.C. (Livy 2.27.5) outside the pomerium, near the Circus Maximus on the slope of the Aventine. His anniversary fell on the ides of May (Livy 2.21.7).

Mercury entered Rome in the midst of social upheavals caused by the debts incurred by the plebeians and by problems of food storage (Livy 2.27.5). The consecration of

the temple was therefore associated with the creation of a brotherhood of merchants, the *mercatorum collegium*.

It is likely that the temple was dedicated at the behest of the *Sibylline Books*, given its extramural location and the circumstances. The year before, similar circumstances had, at the prompting of the *Sibylline Books*, called upon the dictator A. Postumius to dedicate a temple to the triad of Ceres-Liber-Libera. Later Mercury was associated with Neptune in the first lectisternium of 399. Mercury-Hermes represented trade, which benefited from the maritime help of Neptune-Poseidon. This commercial vocation was again affirmed in the lectisternium of 217, which this time linked Mercury and Ceres in an even more striking economic association.

When he is presented in the preamble of Plautus's *Aulularia*, the god stresses his commercial function, even while he alludes to another aspect of his Greek model, one that is required by the plot of the play, namely the role of messen-



Right: Mercury. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

Below: A group consisting of Mercury, Attis, and the Sibyl on an oil lamp. Rome, City Museum. Photo Oscar Savio.



ger: "I preside over messages and profits" (Plautus *Aulularia* 12). In a scene from Ovid (*Fasti* 5.681–90), a merchant addresses a prayer to the god of commerce, who does not trouble himself with scruples. The prayer ends on the following casual note: "Grant me only that I can earn a lot; grant that I may enjoy my gains! Grant me the pleasure of tricking the buyer with fine words!"

During the Augustan Age Mercury extended his field of action under the influence of his Greek counterpart, among the poets. He "became," following the example of Hermes, "the son of Zeus and Maia" (*Homeric Hymn to Mercury* 1); this same Maia, the daughter of Atlas, is merely a homonym of Maia, the entity associated with Volcanus (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 13.23.2). In Virgil (*Aeneid* 4.239), he puts on his golden heel-wings to transmit Jupiter's messages; he also acts as the psychopomp—the conductor of souls into the netherworld (ibid. 4.242). Horace (*Carmena* 1.10) celebrates the god as the inventor of the lyre and the conductor of souls into the next world. On one occasion he happens to greet Mercury as an avatar of Augustus (ibid. 2.41). There is a striking contrast between the poet Ovid (*Fasti* 5.665–70), sensitive to the civilizing qualities of Hermes, and the merchant that he so carefully depicts, who asks Mercury only to assuage his appetite for profit.

Still another role awaited Mercury in the Roman world. He was to take up again his mission of traveler, no longer as a messenger of Zeus, but as an "interpreter" of deities who appeared too mysterious to the Romans. For example, Caesar (*Galic War* 6.17.1) gave the name of Mercury to the principal god of the Gauls, as Tacitus (*Germania* 9.1) did to the Germanic god Óðinn.

R.S./g.h.

MINERVA

The name of the goddess Minerva (*Menerva* is the oldest epigraphical form, and *Minerva* is the classical Latin form) can be traced back to an Indo-European root **men-*, which indicates the activities of the mind (see J. L. Girard, "Étude onomastique: Le nom de Minerve en Italie," *Annuaire de l'E.P.H.E.*, section 5, vols. 80–81, fasc. 2 [1971–73], pp. 64–65). It has no Indo-European parallels outside of the Italic languages.

Minerva was originally a native of southern Etruria (Wissowa, *Ruk*², p. 253, thought it might have been Falerii, a city of Italic origin, conquered very early by the Etruscans). In fact, one of her most ancient temples, whose anniversary fell on 19 March (the year is uncertain), is on the Aventine, which stood outside the pomerium (compare the *Fasti Praenestini*, on 19 March). Another shrine on the Caelian Hill was a chapel containing the statue of Minerva of Falerii that was captured when the city was taken by the Romans in 241 B.C. It bore the name *sacellum Minervae captae* (see Ovid *Fasti* 3.843ff.). Unlike Juno of Veii, who had been "invited" after an *evocatio* to "surrender" to Rome, the Minerva of Falerii was treated simply as a prisoner.

In the Capitoline triad, Minerva, like Juno, is the consort of Jupiter and sits at the supreme god's right hand (see Livy 7.3.5). At the lectisternium of 217 B.C., she was associated



Minerva. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.

with Neptune—an obvious reference to the confrontation between Athena and Poseidon.

Her principal festival falls on 19 March, the day of the Quinquatrus (the fifth day after the ides; see Festus, p. 304 L.), which is also the anniversary of her temple. In the calendar of Praeneste, this day is called *artificum dies*, "the day of craftsmen." It is celebrated by artisans, artists, and schoolmasters (see Ovid *Fasti* 3.809–34). In this aspect, the Latin Minerva was akin to Athena Ergane.

Perhaps another aspect of her personality may also be explained by a Hellenic influence transmitted by the Etruscans. On a basket from Praeneste, Minerva appears in a mysterious scene involving Mars (see G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, pp. 243–44). In light of this, the coincidence of the feast of Minerva with the Quinquatrus of March, which was originally dedicated to the lustration of arms (see the calendar of Praeneste), cannot be considered fortuitous. In any event, the Latin Minerva seems to be strongly marked by Etruscan and Hellenic influence. (Research is in progress: J. L. Girard, *R.E.L.* 48 [1970], pp. 469–72.)

R.S./g.h.

NEPTUNE

Neptune is an ancient god. The Neptunalia were registered on 23 July in the cycle of festivals of the old liturgical calendar. The etymology of Neptune's name is controversial. Certain philologists (P. Kretschmer, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der griechischen Sprache*, Göttingen 1896, p. 133) have explained the word as a derivative from the stem **neptu-*,



Neptune. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

"moist substance." But the word **neptu* "is not attested in any other Indo-European language"; "the root **nep-*, which barely survives in Vedic and Avestan, is unknown in Latin" (Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée*, vol. 3, p. 41).

The comparative approach would explain it by way of "the important Indo-Iranian religious figure of the Vedic *apām napāt*, Avestan *apam napā*, descendant of the waters" (Ernout-Meillet, *D.E.*⁴, s.v. "Neptunus"). By comparing the mythical depiction of the god common to the Indo-Iranian *Apām Napāt* and the Irish god Nechtan with the historicized legend about Neptune, Dumézil (*ibid.*, p. 87) proposed to derive the three nouns from the Indo-European root **nepot-* (**nept-*), "descendant, sister's son."

The Latin god must have been the patron of *all* the waters before he presided essentially over the open seas, under the influence of the Greek god Poseidon. Though it is not possible to form a clear notion of his functions, in the absence of a flamen or of any commentary in Ovid's *Fasti*, Dumézil has gathered enough evidence to suggest Neptune's role by constructing a converging series of "lines of

fact" (*ibid.*, pp. 21–89). The Neptunalia took place on 23 July, that is, at the beginning of the summer heat, when the earth, vegetation, and human beings were most in need of water. On that day, in order to have protection from the heat of the sun, it was customary to put up huts made of foliage (*casae frondeae*), which were called *umbrae* (shades: Festus, p. 519 L.). In the exercise of his functions, Neptune is assisted by two abstract entities (which are in a way his personified potentialities), Salacia (see Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 13.23) and Venilia (see Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.72). Salacia evokes gushing water (the verb *salire*); Venilia, still or flowing water.

This supports the idea that Neptune first ruled over fresh water, an idea that is further buttressed by the fact that the Neptunalia were preceded and followed by two festivals that had similar concerns, the Lucaria on 21 July and the Furrinalia on 25 July. The first deals with the condition of the *luci*, woods subject to drought; the second involves the action of Furrina, who was probably the goddess of deep waters (for the elucidation of these two festivals, see Dumézil, *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne*, pp. 32–37 and 42–52).

Nevertheless, Neptune was exposed to the Greek influence of Poseidon quite early. He was associated with Mercury, the god of commerce, in the first lectisternium of 399 B.C., an alliance that shows that Mercury, the god of the sea (*mare*), was henceforth supposed to extend his dominion to fresh water, in the manner of Poseidon. Hellenization was even more marked at the lectisternium of 217 B.C. This time the couple Neptune-Minerva barely concealed the Hellenic model of Poseidon-Athena.

All of this explains a noteworthy contrast. While ancient historiographers seem to have been preoccupied with the marvel of water primarily with regard to *fresh* water (the overflowing of Albanus Lacus [now called the Lago di Albano] toward the end of the Roman war against the Veii: see Livy 5.15.12 and G. Dumézil, *M.E.*, vol. 3, pp. 40–62), Neptune later followed Poseidon in being dragged into the open sea. Classical authors were therefore accustomed to consider Neptune essentially as the god of the sea. Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 5.72) gives the following explanation of the names of Neptune: "By virtue of the fact that the sea veils (*obnubit*) the land as clouds (*nubes*) veil the sky, Neptune derives his name from *nuptu*, the ancient word for *opertio* (veiling)." The only merit of this "explanation" is to reveal the link between Neptune and the sea that after that appeared natural. Virgil (*Georgics* 1.29) refers to the god only with one significant periphrasis: *deus immensi maris*, "the god of the boundless sea" (see the commentary of Servius Danielis, ad loc.).

R.S./g.h.

THE PENATES

The *di Penates* are the "gods of the indoors" (*penates* formed like *Arpinales*). This etymology seems the most likely, even though Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* 2.68) hesitates between this explanation (*penitus insident, ex quo etiam penetrales a poetis vocantur*: "they dwell inside [houses], from which also comes their designation of *penetrales* by the poets") and another explanation that would derive the word from *penus* in the sense of "provisions" (in his time, *penus* or *penum* had only

this meaning). In fact, the older meaning of *penus* is attested in a commentary by Festus (p. 296 L.): *penus vocatur locus intimus in aede Vestae tegetibus saeptus* ("penus designates the most secret place in the shrine of Vesta, which is closed off by curtains").

Precisely because of this semantic shift of the word *penus*, these gods were thought to watch over the welfare of the family. The hearth was considered their altar (Servius Danielis on *Aeneid* 11.211), and they shared in the family meal: one part was reserved and thrown into the fire; total silence would prevail until a slave announced, *deos propitios* ("the gods are propitious") (*ibid.* 1.730).

The Penates gods were also closely associated with Vesta, the goddess of the hearth (Cicero *Nat. D.* 2.68; Servius Danielis on *Aen.* 2.296), and with the *Lars Familiares*. In the *Mercator* (834) of Plautus, when Charinus goes into exile, he bids farewell both to the Penates gods of his parents and to the family *Lar*.

Corresponding to this private cult was a cult of public Penates, who were thought to have been brought by Aeneas to Lavinium (Ovid *Fasti* 3.615; Servius Danielis on *Aen.* 2.296). Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 5.144) recalls that "Lavinium is the first city of Roman stock founded in Latium. This is where our Penates gods are" (*nam ibi Penates nostri*). Therefore, "when they leave office, Roman magistrates go to Lavinium to sacrifice to the Penates and Vesta" (Servius Danielis l.l.).

In Rome near the Palatine, on the slopes of the Velia, there was also a shrine of the Penates gods (Varro *Ling.* 5.54; Livy 45.16.5). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.68.1–2) tells of seeing "the statues of Trojan gods, which are visible to all and which an inscription identifies with the Penates: they are two seated young men holding a lance, the work of ancient craftsmanship."

We might be tempted to conclude that these statues were transferred from Lavinium to Rome. But it is more likely that these were relics, as is implied in the account of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who states that he has "seen many other statues of these gods, in the same military attitude, in ancient temples" (*ibid.*).

In any event, a relief of the Ara Pacis represents a shrine that fits the description of Dionysius of Halicarnassus: "Inside a small temple were two sitting gods, half naked, with lance in hand" (see I. Scott Ryberg, "Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art," *American Academy in Rome* [1955], pp. 40–41 and plate 10, fig. 21). Resolutely adopting the Roman viewpoint, Dionysius of Halicarnassus called the official Penates "Trojan gods." As a Greek witness he did not



Penates. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

succumb to the temptation to confuse these two young "soldiers" with the Dioscuri. On the contrary, he proposed a series of Greek synonyms to translate for his compatriots "these gods that the Romans call Penates" (*ibid.* 1.67.3: *tous de theous toutous Rōmaioi men Penatas kalousin*).

R.S./g.h.

PRIAPUS: THE LAST OF THE GODS

The Romans knew Priapus as the god of gardens where they could see him in the pose of *anasurma* ("exposing oneself"), rolling up his robe filled with fruit in order to expose his huge phallus. From the time when he first appeared at the dawn of the Hellenistic era until well into the Christian Middle Ages, Priapus was able to encompass very different realities. From the great retinue of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (Athenaeus 5.201c), in which Priapus held a mythico-political position, to the epigrams of the *Anthologia Palatina*, in which he is the god of fishermen, or even in the kitchen gardens of Alexandria and Rome, where Priapus was made into an obscene scarecrow (*Anthologia Planudea* 236; Horace *Satirae* 1.8), this god did not rate a place among the theological definitions advanced by the ancients. Apparently they did not see fit to assign him his own space in their pantheon, even though Priapus could be part of the Dionysian *thiasos*, and tradition often referred to him as the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite or a nymph. Consequently, when Diodorus Siculus (4.6.4) and Strabo (13.1.12) attempt to describe Priapus, they can do so only by mentioning his "resemblance" to such Attic gods as Ithyphallus, Orphanes, Conisalus, and

Tychon, all ithyphallic deities of whom we know virtually nothing except for the Priapic "resemblance" that characterizes them.

Even though the ancients (and the moderns) often confused Priapus alternately with Pan, with Dionysus, with a Satyr, or even with Hermaphroditus, the ancient sources make it possible to discern a specific figure for this *divus minor* (*Corpus Priapeorum* 53), whose iconography reveals at the very least a radical difference: unlike his phallic companions, Pan and Satyr, Priapus is completely human. He does not have horns, animal feet, or a tail. In fact, his only anomaly, his only defect, is the outrageous phallus that defines him, from his birth, as *amorphus*, or deformed, and that prompted his mother, Aphrodite, to disown this monstrous child who was born to her on the banks of the Hellespont at Lampsacus (schol. on Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.932; schol. on Pseudo-Nonnus 147.29, ed. S. Brock). Indeed, his huge penis, described in Latin texts as *terribilis* (Columella *De Re Rustica* 10.33), makes it possible to recognize Priapus in pictures and to identify him in writings by giving him the physical shape essential to one of his major functions, namely, that of a god who protects small farms against thieves or the evil eye by threatening sexual violence against anyone who came close to the property that he guarded (*Anthologia Planudea* 241; *Corp. Priap.* 11.28, 44, 59,



Priapus. Bronze statuette. Augsburg, Römisches Museum. Museum photo.

and 71). Thus the stage was set for the cult of a Priapus who was a guardian of the fields and whose exercise of phallic authority was a subject of derision in the *Priapea* (*Anth. Pl.* 86; *Corp. Priap.* 10). In these Greek and Latin epigrams, the ithyphallic effigy of the god, often crudely carved out of cheap fig tree wood and carelessly daubed with red, assumes a voice to utter obscene threats.

But Priapus is all talk and no action. Unlike other deities who intervene in agricultural matters by conceiving of an instrument that mediates between man and his environment, Priapus himself never makes anything. He participates in the everyday world of silent practices, in which the god becomes a functional object for personal use, an amulet. Thus, when the statue of Priapus was stationed in a small orchard or a modest kitchen garden, the ancients acknowledged his double function, prophylactic and apotropaic. First, Priapus must sympathetically infuse the soil with the hyperfertility conveyed by his excessive sexuality; the ithyphallic figure of the god is then required to protect the

fenced-in garden against intruders, through a kind of antise-duction coupled with threats that always remain verbal but nonetheless constitute a program of graphic sexual violence and corporal punishment, the instrument of which is always his aggressive phallus. Priapus is a god whose obscene sign assures magical efficacy, a god who belongs to that realm of concrete sexual representations that, although it seldom aroused the interest of ancient theology and historiography and was not often registered, even less often changed, assured for itself in this way a long existence. Thus, we find this same deity in one of his ancient functions, keeping evil at bay, in the *Chronicle of Lanercost* (1268), where a "lay Cistercian brother" erects a statue of Priapus (*simulacrum Priapi statuere*) to put an end to an epidemic that is destroying cattle.

The reading of ancient texts reveals, alongside this apotropaic Priapus, another feature of the god that conveys the *Priapic corpus* as a whole. Inside the gardens of Priapus, nothing, or almost nothing, grows. Whether there are a few meager vegetables (*Anth. Pl.* 236) or some withered vines (*Anth. Pl.* 238), this god, as Virgil (*Eclogues* 7.34) recalls, is the guardian of a poor garden. Moreover, Priapus, in keeping with his sorry environment, is usually poorly fashioned in cheap wood by a clumsy peasant (*Anth. Pal.* 9.437; *Corp. Priap.* 10). The descriptions of this rustic deity that the poets provide in their *Priapea* are verified and confirmed by Columella (*De Re Rustica* 10.32), when he advises horticulturists to revere Priapus in the "trunk of an old tree hacked down at random" (*forte*). Finally, it may even happen that Priapus serves no purpose at all, and if he is still placed in gardens, it is merely by force of habit and simple convention (*nomou charin: Anth. Pl.* 238).

The offerings made to Priapus are generally as mediocre as his effigy or the crops he is supposed to be watching: figs with shriveled skins (*Anth. Pal.* 6.102) and an occasional fruit or two (*Corp. Priap.* 53); or else the unlucky god is pitied and receives as a sacrifice, instead of fruits, verses of poets (*Corp. Priap.* 60). As for offerings from fishermen, they are no more abundant than those of the gardeners: old refuse from a catch (*Anth. Pal.* 6.192), the shell of a turtle or crayfish, in exchange for which the god is asked for very little (*me polla*), just enough to abate the supplicant's hunger (*Anth. Pal.* 6.89), enough to warm his weary bones (*Anth. Pal.* 6.193). Priapus is also offered fruit made of wax and is asked to be content with the mere image of fruit (*At tu sacrati contentus imagine pomi: Corp. Priap.* 42). Yet the supplicant expects real fruit in return.

But the troubles of Priapus reached their peak when he expressed his anxiety about castration and his fear that he, Priapus, whose essential attribute is the phallus, might end up as Gallus (*Corp. Priap.* 55); or worse yet, when Priapus had to beg the thief to come and steal from his garden, so that by fulfilling his mission as an aggressive guard, he might relieve himself (*Corp. Priap.* 17.77). But would he ever be able to do it?

The gardens of Priapus are thus located at the opposite pole from the fertile groves of Aphrodite in which Dionysus yearned to be the gardener (Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 42.274ff.). Whereas Dionysus rightfully claims the title of Eukarpus ("the god of good fruits"; *Anth. Pal.* 6.31), Priapus, who is known for his ugliness and small size, is not Eukarpus but congenitally *amorphus*, ugly and deformed. We can better understand this aspect of Priapus, who is said to be the last of the gods (*Corp. Priap.* 63), when we appreciate his close connections with the fig tree and the ass throughout the stories in which he appears.

During both the Hellenistic and the Roman eras (*Anth. Pal.* 9.437; Horace *Satirae* 1.8), the wood of the fig tree was reserved for carving statues of Priapus. While "protecting" the fruits of this tree, the god makes numerous puns on the word *figus*, "fig," which also means "hemorrhoid" or "anus" (*Anth. Pl.* 240–41; Martial *Epigrammaton libri* 6.49). The semantic field of the fig throughout all of antiquity, and even well beyond, conveyed numerous sexual and obscene images with which Priapus is closely associated. Thus, Aristophanes (*The Peace* 1348) uses the verb *sukologeîn*, "to pick figs," to mean "copulate," and Ovid (*Fasti* 5.433) recalls the apotropaic function of the *fica*, a gesture to ward off the evil eye, which one makes by placing the tip of the thumb between the index finger and the middle finger. The multiple scatological and obscene connotations of the fig form a meaningful network surrounding Priapus. The wood of the fig tree (of which statues of the god were made) was

The birth of Priapus and Aphrodite's rejection. Sideview of an altar. Aquileia, Museum. Photo Vermaseren.



considered a second-rate material (*inutile lignum*: Horace *Satirae* 1.8), good to burn for heat for the poor; and its fruit, the fig, was the daily food of the poorest people. Such facts show even more clearly what meager crops this god was supposed to protect.

Simultaneously participating in this realm of the hypersexual and reflecting the drudgery of everyday life, the ass, the poor man's horse, was, like Priapus, part of the Dionysian *thiasos* and as such paraded, like Priapus, in the great retinue of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Both Priapus and the ass are represented as ithyphallic, and the ass, considered lustful (*salax asellus*: *Corp. Priap.* 52), sometimes even assumed the god's place and his functions by performing violent sexual acts on a poor thief. In confirmation of this close relationship, a myth tells how the two had a contest to see which of them, Priapus or the ass, had the biggest penis. Priapus turned out to be a poor loser and killed the ass (*Lactantius Divinae Institutiones* 1.21.28). Since then, an ass has been sacrificed to Priapus at Lampsacus (*Ovid Fasti* 1.440).

But the identification of Priapus with the ass reaches its zenith when a Latin poet of the second century B.C., Afranius, makes Priapus say: "Contrary to popular belief, I was not born of an ass" (*Macrobius Saturnalia* 6.5.6). That Priapus might have been the son of an ass and denies it only reinforces the known affinities between the god and the animal. These affinities are further emphasized when people mock the ass just as they mock Priapus (*Aesop Fables* 274), and when the clumsy animal, totally devoid of cunning, wants to do something and fails. Recall that it was the ass who caused humanity to lose its eternal youth by misplacing the precious *pharmakon* with which Zeus had entrusted him (*Aelianus De natura animalium* 6.51). In *Lucian (Dialogi Meretricii* 14.4), "the ass who plays the lyre" becomes the symbol of an aged, toothless, and inept lover. We recognize the same clumsiness in Priapus when he tries to seduce the beautiful Lotis, or in another version of the same myth, when Vesta escapes his embrace like a shadow, and the god suffers a crushing disappointment. He comes away empty-handed, his penis exposed, impotent, the object of everyone's laughter (*Ovid Fasti* 1.391–440 and 6.319–48).

To this file of correspondences among Priapus, the fig tree, and the ass, we must add certain important facts that are supported by ethnography. Aristotle points out that "the bodies of asses are all but sterile" and that their semen is by nature cold (*Aristotle De Generatione Animalium* 748a–b). The same author, speaking of animals with large penises, says that they are "less fertile than those that have average-sized penises, because cold sperm is not fertile and it grows cold covering too great a distance" (*ibid.* 718a). Furthermore, Aristotle reasons that nature has endowed the male organ with the capacity to be or not to be erect and that "if this organ were always in the same state, it would constitute a real inconvenience" (*Aristotle De Partibus Animalium* 689a). But such is precisely the case with Priapus, who is always ithyphallic and never experiences the slightest seminal discharge, let alone any sexual relief (*Corp. Priap.* 23).

That Priapus's erection was considered pathological by the ancients is confirmed by their writings about disease. The physicians of antiquity named a terrible disease after Priapus: *priapismus*, which starts with an inflamed, relentless, and painful erection that eventually causes sterility and death for the patient, whose organ remains forever erect (*Alexander of Tralles* 11.8). Galen (7.728, 10.967, and 13.318, ed. C. G. Kühn), who also describes this disease, classifies it among the *emphysēmata* and compares it to a disease that the "ancients" called *saturiasis*. But Galen also establishes an



Ithyphallic Priapus in a small temple. Cameo. Berlin, Staatliche Museen. Museum photo.

important distinction between the two diseases. While priapism is an incurable ailment precluding even the slightest relief, satyriasis can produce a seminal discharge accompanied by pleasure (ibid. 19.426). Just as Galen (8.439) points out that *priapismus* was named after Priapus, we may surmise that the term *satyriasis* comes from Satyr. It would seem then

that an erection of a satyrian nature, even though it is excessive, does not preclude desire or pleasure (*hēdonē*), whereas priapism, always involuntary, can only end in death.

The difference between the ithyphallicism of Priapus and that of the Satyr might also correspond to another division, which ranks Satyrs among the daemons of nature, hybrid creatures that mix human and animal elements, whereas Priapus is always integrally anthropomorphic and is ranked among humans. We might be tempted to read here a double lesson that would illuminate many points about the numerous misfortunes that Priapus experiences from his birth: first, the impossibility of excessive sexuality for a human (Priapus), the impossibility of that single-minded sexuality which, Aristotle tells us, goes against nature; second, that unending sex might be viable for animals or semihumans, but it would only lead men to impotence, to the kind of painful and joyless erection that is the sign of priapism.

But perhaps Priapus, whom the ancient doctors semantically struck with priapism, instructs us about one last failure, that of a god who in the final analysis integrates himself poorly into the Dionysian space where, next to the Satyrs and the Pans whose ithyphallicism seems obvious, Priapus alone suffers from a pathological erection. Similarly, we might argue that the unbridled sexuality of Priapus, far from being intentionally subversive, calls rather for a return to the established norms. Thus the obscenity of this god becomes almost institutional and generative of the conservative power that is conveyed by the world of fertility, a world in which Priapus, in his own way, has long participated.

M.O./g.h.

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PSYCHE

There once lived a king and a queen who had three daughters of great beauty, but Soul, or Psyche, the youngest, was so beautiful that men were at a loss for words to describe her perfections. To look at her was like contemplating Venus herself, a Venus fresh from the sea foam and in the flower of her virginity; people flocked from far and wide to admire her.

But the real Venus, angered to see her altars abandoned in favor of a mortal, instructed her son Amor to avenge her by inspiring in her rival a burning passion for the most miserable of men. The very excess of Psyche's beauty daunted all her suitors; her sisters had already married successfully, leaving Psyche, the forsaken virgin, weeping in her solitude. Fearing some curse, the king consulted the oracle of Apollo.

"On a sheer cliff, O King, abandon your daughter, sumptuously dressed for the wedding with death. Wait not for a son-in-law born of mortal blood, but a fierce monster that flies in the air." In tears, they all prepared for the girl's marriage with death. A funeral procession escorted her to the cliff and left her there. But as she waited, trembling, for the approach of the monster, a gentle breeze embraced her, inflated her robe, carried her to the bottom of the rocky wall, and gently set her down on the grass, where she fell asleep. When she awoke, an enchanted palace opened before her; a disembodied voice invited her in; and tables appeared, magically filled with wines and delicious foods. Psyche fell asleep. In the dark of night the mysterious husband came; he made Psyche his wife but left hastily before dawn. Days and nights passed in this way. Although she was quite fulfilled, Psyche yearned for the sight of humans. She persuaded her husband to let her sisters (who were looking for her) come to



Sixteenth-century stained glass window from the Château de Chantilly (Oise), a very faithful rendering of the story of Psyche according to Apuleius. Musée Condée. Photo Monuments historiques.

visit her, but on one condition: she must never try to find out what he looked like. Such curiosity would be sacrilege, a temptation to which she must never yield, even if her sisters gave her wicked advice: "If you see my face even once," he said, "you will never see it again." Furthermore, she must neither listen to nor reply to her sisters' questions.

The sisters arrived, carried by the same zephyr. First they marveled and admired, but soon, mad with envy, they persuaded the naive Psyche to penetrate the mystery of this strange husband. Perhaps he was a devouring monster or a horrible snake hiding in the dark. Armed with a lamp and a sharp razor, she was to cut his throat while he slept. The wicked sisters went away, leaving Psyche disturbed and irresolute, for she both "hated the monster and loved the husband." Nevertheless, in the still of the night, she did

what could never be undone. Bringing her lamp close, she gazed in astonishment and rapture upon the sweetest and most lovable monster, Cupid himself. Suddenly a drop of scalding oil fell from the lamp onto the god's shoulder; he flew away in a rage while Psyche, clinging to him, tried in vain to accompany him, lost her grip, and fell back to earth in despair. When she tried to drown herself in a river, compassionate Pan consoled and calmed her. She thanked him and worshiped him. Then began Psyche's long wandering in search of Amor.

While Psyche traveled over the surface of the earth, Amor lay in bed in his mother's room, nursing the painful wound inflicted by the burning lamp. A gull revealed to Venus the disobedience of her son, the cause of his ailment, and the name of his beloved. Full of rage, the goddess heaped reproaches on her son and set out in search of the fleeing Psyche to seek her own vengeance.

Meanwhile the wretched girl found refuge in a temple of Ceres full of tools in disorder, which she tidied up with care. Ceres appeared and congratulated her but refused to conceal her despite Psyche's entreaties. Psyche then prayed to Juno in her temple, but to no avail. In despair, pursued over the world like a fugitive slave, Psyche decided to hand herself over voluntarily to the implacable goddess. Venus had her tortured and whipped by her servants, Worry and Melancholy, and then gave her four impossible tasks to carry out. First, she had to sort out a huge mound of cereal grains, a task she completed with the help of a colony of ants. Then she had to approach a herd of sheep with golden fleece and steal a tuft of their precious wool, even though they were known to attack humans. As she was about to give up and throw herself into a river, a talking reed dissuaded her and advised her to approach the sheep, not at high noon when they were dangerous, but when the evening had quieted them. Psyche brought the golden fleece to Venus. Then the goddess demanded that she fetch water that gushed from the top of a mountain and emptied into the Styx, water that talked, uttered threats, and was guarded by dragons. But an eagle, a friend of Cupid, completed this third task for her.

The last test was the hardest. She had to descend into Hades and ask Proserpina to put "a bit of beauty" into a small box for Venus. When Psyche once again attempted to escape by throwing herself from the top of a tower, the tower gave her sound advice on how to descend into Hades: hold a cake in each hand; keep two coins in your mouth; do not give or say anything to the lame donkey driver; do not come to the aid of the putrified old man swimming in the river; do not help the old women weaving linen; sit only on the floor next to Proserpina; refuse fine foods; eat only coarse bread; above all, do not open the box—do not yield to curiosity. Thus counseled, Psyche subdued Cerberus with the cakes on her arrival and departure; similarly, she paid the boatman of Hades and accomplished all the tasks. But as she reentered the light of day, she succumbed to her reckless curiosity and opened the little box. Inside was no beauty but a deadly sleep which overcame her.

Meanwhile Cupid, who had recovered, rushed to her aid. He put the slumber back in its box and prayed to Jupiter. Before the assembled gods, the master of the universe pronounced Cupid and Psyche united by the bonds of a legitimate matrimony. He appeased Venus and offered ambrosia to Psyche; the mortal woman henceforth became a goddess.

This is a tale of miracles. Its folk motifs are clearly revealed, and, without major distortion, we can analyze it in the manner of Propp (M. Bossard, *Les Cahiers de Fontenay* [1978],

9–10), rightly emphasizing the close ties between certain “services rendered” by Psyche and the “help” she received in her impossible tasks. Thus, the ants helped her to sort the grain, as she set the temple of Ceres in order. She honored Pan, the god of herds and god of the reed flute; accordingly, a reed helped her to collect the wool from the sheep. A closer analysis would reveal a connection between the eagle and Cupid, and perhaps between the tower and Juno.

But beyond this inquiry into the structure of the narrative, we should examine the meaning. The tale of Psyche forms the center part (4.28–6.24) of another “episodic” story, the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, a Platonic philosopher of the second century A.D. Although no other versions are extant, it surely must have been a widely popular story, for Plotinus knew it through several pictures and several tales (*muthois*), and we have various pictorial representations of the union of Eros and Psyche (usually with wings). But although Apuleius did not actually invent the story of Psyche out of whole cloth, he chose to include it in a much broader account, and we must begin by interpreting this choice.

The *Metamorphoses*, a work of eleven books, tells the story of Lucius, the victim of his own curiosity, whom a sorceress transformed into an ass. After lengthy wanderings and numerous ordeals, he was restored to human form, initiated, and saved by the grace of the kindly goddess Isis.

Now the itinerary of Psyche recalls on several points and in a way retraces the itinerary of Lucius. Both of them sin through *curiositas*, have to submit to terrible trials, face death, wander in search—one in search of his true form, the other in search of her husband—and serve a goddess. At the end of the road, both rise to a higher status: he is saved, and she becomes a goddess.

The *Metamorphoses* culminate in book 11 with the initiation of Lucius into the mysteries of Isis. R. Merkelbach (*Amor and Psyche*, p. 392ff.) has rightly pointed out that there are close ties between the story of Psyche and the initiatory ritual that takes place at the end of the work. Thus the wedding with death promised to Psyche refers back to the widespread concept of initiation as death, rebirth, and a whole mystical marriage. An oracle orders Psyche, and a dream sends Lucius to his initiation, for, as the priest of Isis asserts, no one can be initiated who has not been called by the deity. The leap into the void also belongs to the ritual of mysteries. Thrice happy those who enter Cupid’s palace; thrice happy he whom Isis has called (11.6). The union with Amor refers to an attested rite: the initiates of Isis are united with Horus, her priest. The silence that is repeatedly urged on Psyche when her sisters visit her in Hades, the refusal to communicate with the ungodly (the donkey driver, the weavers, and the old man)—each has a counterpart in the mysteries; and Lucius insists that he will tell only what can be revealed to the uninitiated without sacrilege (11.23). Like Lucius, Psyche is warned against sacrilegious *curiositas*. The revelation of Eros, radiant with light as Psyche looks on, has as its counterpart Lucius’s vision of Horus, a brilliant sun shining in the dark of night. We need not multiply such comparisons; it has been done. The background of mystery is undeniable, making the story of Psyche, among other things, an initiatory tale, a symbolic figure of initiation into the mysteries of Isis.

But the initiatory ritual itself is on the one hand a reproduction, a representation of a myth, the myth of Isis as we know it from Plutarch (*De Iside et Osiride*); and on the other hand, in terms of the process, the initiate is not only saved, but has become Isis; he identifies himself with the goddess. It should therefore come as no surprise that a close analysis

establishes a definite parallelism between the myth of Isis and the tale of Psyche. Like Psyche, Isis confronts a violent and angry adversary, Typhon; she leaves in search of her husband; offers to be a servant of the Syrian Venus, Astarte; overcomes obstacles; finds her husband again; and sees her child legitimized. Psyche thus appears in book 4 as a symbol or a coded sign that is a precursor of Isis, who will reveal herself in all her radiance in book 11.

Finally, in the *Metamorphoses*, the story of Psyche is addressed to a young woman, Charity, who was kidnapped from her husband by robbers on the morning of her wedding day; who is ready, like Psyche, to surrender to death; and who is saved, like Psyche, by her husband. It is clear that the *Metamorphoses* weave very subtle but close ties between parallel itineraries: Charity and Psyche, each first a mortal woman and then a goddess; Lucius, man then ass, then man again, and finally an initiate into the mysteries of Isis; and last of all, Isis herself. All of them complete a journey that involves loss, wandering and quest, rediscoveries, and the achievement of a better status.

We can push our interpretation further: the name of the heroine, “Soul,” is not simply a name when uttered by a Platonist, who would call his interpretation allegorical. Such is the interpretation advanced by Plotinus (6.9) when (I do not go into the details of the narrative) he identifies Psyche with the human soul, which, separated from God, descended to earth and experienced the “fall,” the “exile,” and the “loss of wings.” But having come from God, the soul necessarily loves God and seeks him, and even here on earth it can find him and be united with him if it purifies itself and detaches itself from all that is earthly. One is then “filled with the light of knowledge, or rather one is pure light, weightless, buoyant, become god, or rather still being god, all aglow . . . but if once again one grows heavy, it is as if one goes out like a light.” This is the itinerary not of a mystery but of a mysticism in which the language and the symbolism of the mysteries is merely the least ineffective symbol available to speak what is unspeakable about the union with God.

Thus the story of Psyche, through or beyond its connections with Isiac initiation, remains open to other past, present, or future interpretations, foreseen or unforeseen by Apuleius.

J.C./g.h.

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QUIRINUS

The form Quirinus appears as an adjective used as a noun. Its kinship with Quirites (citizens) had already been recognized by the ancients (see Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.73: *Quirinus a Quiritibus*). Modern philology plausibly explains how it was formed: Quirinus (**Couiri-no-*) is the adjective that qualifies the god who patronizes the community of the citizens (see G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 246).

Quirinus ranked third in the archaic triad of Jupiter-Mars-Quirinus, and like his two divine associates, he had his own priest, the *flamen Quirinalis*. Significantly, the situation of Quirinus within the Roman triad recurred in the Umbrian triad in which Vofionus, his counterpart, holds the same rank. In fact, the semantic equivalence of the two names has been convincingly demonstrated (see G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 149, no. 2), so well that the two series (Roman and Iguvine), both of which also include Jupiter and Mars, are entirely parallel. The god had been honored since early antiquity on the hill that bears his name, in a *sacellum* located near the Porta Quirinalis (Festus, p. 303 L.). This *sacellum* gave way to a temple built in 293 B.C. by L. Papirius Cursor. The Quirinalia, the festival that bears the name of the god in it, fell on 17 February in the cycle of the oldest festivals in the liturgical calendar. It coincided with the last day of the Fornacalia that were devoted to the roasting of the grain (this day was called *dies stultorum* because it gave the *stulti*, or "scatterbrains," who had missed their curia's scheduled day of roasting, a chance to recover the loss). This brings into sharper focus the vocation of a god whose duty was to watch over supplies and the material well-being of the community.

However, this god, whose functional profile seems fairly clear as far as very early times are concerned, was open to many ambiguities in historical times. First of all, he is classed among the "Sabine" deities whom Titus Tatius is supposed to have introduced into Rome (see Varro *Ling.* 5.74). A "historical" presentation stamped with ethnic coloration has tended to turn Quirinus into a Sabine symmetrical with Mars. Thus, ancient historiography attributed the first twelve Salii, the Salii Palatini, to Mars Gradivus (Livy 1.20.4) and the other twelve, the Salii Collini, to Quirinus (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.70.1 and 3.32.4).

The outcome was a second ambiguity, of a functional kind. Once "syncretism had been brought about after the reconciliation of the Romans and the Sabines," it was necessary to define and distribute the respective tasks of each god. Hence the formulas written down by Servius: "When Mars rages uncontrolled (*saevit*), he is called Gradivus; when he is calm (*tranquillus*), he is called Quirinus" (Servius Danielis on *Aeneid* 1.292). Later in his text, the same commentator accentuates the contrast even more explicitly: "Quirinus is the Mars who presides over peace and is worshiped inside the city, for the Mars of war (*belli Mars*) has his temple outside the city" (Servius Danielis on *Aen.* 6.859).

But this distribution was probably too subtle to be understood clearly. The proof is that when the Greeks tried to "translate" Quirinus, all they could come up with was a surname of Ares: Enyalios, "the bellicose," is the Greek name which serves as the *interpretatio graeca* of Quirinus from Polybius (3.25.6) to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (2.48, 9.60).

One last ambiguity stems from the assimilation of Romulus to Quirinus. When was the founder-king of the city promoted to god? Historians have disagreed on the date. G. Dumézil (*ARR*, p. 249) argues that it was at the beginning of the third century B.C. It may be true that the Romulus-Quirinus assimilation was still presented by Cicero (*De Natura Deorum* 2.62) as a special tradition: *Romulum quem quidam eundem esse Quirinum putant* ("Romulus who, according to some, is identical with Quirinus"). By the time of Augustus, however, it was no longer an issue. Thus, Virgil refers to it in the *Aeneid* (1.292). (In the *Georgics* 3.27, the poet applied



Quirinus. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

the expression *victor Quirinus* to Octavius, who was not yet Augustus; this fact may be connected with the initiative taken around the same time by certain senators who proposed the surname "Romulus" for the *Divi filius* [see Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 7.4].) In any event, the assimilation of Romulus to Quirinus is the result of the same process that earned Aeneas the privilege of being identified with Jupiter Indiges after his disappearance from the face of the earth (Livy 1.2.6).

These ambiguities of Quirinus blur rather oddly in the light of comparative analysis, which assigns to Quirinus the role of the "third function." If the god is the patron of prosperity and fertility, we can understand how he may be said to be of "Sabine origin," since the Sabines were regarded as specialists in this area. We can understand how his priest, the *flamen Quirinalis*, could intervene in the various cults of this domain (Larentia: see Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 7.7.7; Robigo, the deity of the "blight of grain": see Ovid *Fasti* 4.910ff.; Consus, the god of "harvesting": see Tertullian *De Spectaculis* 5). Finally, we may begin to see both the opposition and the complementarity of Mars and Quirinus, of the *milites* and the *Quirites*. Following Jean Bayet, G. Dumézil (*ARR*, p. 260) draws our attention to a telling passage from the *Commentarii Consulares*, copied by Varro (*Ling.* 6.88). This document shows that the contrast between *Quirites* (citizens) and *exercitus* (army) must be of long standing and that it has legal and political implications (for example, the contrast between the *comitia curiata* of a civil nature and the *comitia centuriata* of a military nature).

R.S./g.h.

SILVANUS

The name of Silvanus is derived from *silva*, "forest," and appears to be a nominalized adjective. This seemingly obvious form has awakened doubts among exegetes. Some reject it outright, among them Deecke (*Etrusk. Forsch.*, vol. 4, p. 54), who proposed that Silvanus is derived from the Etruscan Selvans. Others contend that this "adjective" must have been the epithet of another god. Thus, following Ursinus, philologists have taken Mars Silvanus as it appears in Cato's text (*De Agricultura* 83) to be a unitary expression. Wissowa (*Ruk*², p. 213) considered Silvanus a qualifier of the Silvicola Faunus.

We need not accept all of these hypotheses, nor need we discuss here the Etruscan Selvans, which may well be borrowed from the Latin (see Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 616). And H. Keil proved decisively that the two names in Mars Silvanus were grouped in an asyndeton for "Mars and Silvanus" (*Commentarius in Catonis . . . librum*, Leipzig 1894, p. 110). Cato pointed out that offerings meant for both gods could be placed in the same receptacle, *in unam vas*. So to make Silvanus a qualifier for Faunus seems rather gratuitous. Virgil (*Aeneid* 10.551) specifically wrote "Silvicola Faunus" and not "Silvanus Faunus."

Despite a common bond with the forest, the two gods differ in more ways than one. Silvanus, and not Faunus, was chosen by Plautus (*Aulularia* 674, 676, 766) and by Accius (cited in Cicero *De natura deorum* 2.89) to serve as the Latin counterpart of the Greek god Pan. Faunus has a reputation for acts of gallantry, whereas Silvanus is characterized by a clear allergy to women. No women are allowed to be present at his ceremonies, though a freeman or a slave may celebrate them (Cato loc. cit.). Silvanus was so frightening to young women in childbirth that "three guardian gods were placed on duty, represented by three men who made the rounds of the house at night, so that the god Silvanus would not come

in to torment them during the night" (Varro cited by Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 6.9.2).

The forest was Silvanus's domain. That is why the ceremony celebrated in his honor in daylight took place *in silva* (Cato loc. cit.). It was in the forest of Arsia, *ex silva Arsia*, that the voice of Silvanus was heard by the Romans in 503 B.C. heralding their victory over the Etruscans (Livy 2.7.2). Plautus (*Aulularia* 674) refers to a "forest of Silvanus (*Silvani lucus*) outside the walls at a distance, all overgrown by a willow grove." Even if the allusion in the original Greek is to one of "Pan's caves," the information given by Plautus retains its value. In describing the grove near Caere "girded like a small valley by a belt of black fir trees," Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.600) indicates that "it was consecrated by the old Pelasgians to Silvanus, the god of the fields and the herd."

This last definition (*arvorum pecorisque deus*) might come as something of a surprise unless we remember that Italic forestlands included clearings suitable for grazing and cultivation. This further explains the association of Mars and Silvanus in Cato's *votum* (loc. cit.; on the respective roles of the two gods, see Dumézil, *ARR*, pp. 235–36). To the extent that Silvanus is the patron god of the sylvan pasture, he is the protector of cattle; as the guardian of the family estate, he extends his protection to the fields and their outer reaches (cf. *Silvanus domesticus*: examples cited by Wissowa, *Ruk*², p. 214; *Silvanus tutor finium*: Horace *Epodi* 2.22). But at the height of the Augustan Age, he also remained the "shaggy god of the thickets" (*horridi dumeta Silvani*: Horace *Carmina* 3.29.22–23).

Thus, Silvanus presents an original profile. He enjoyed no public cult. He had neither temple, nor festival, nor official priest. He was honored on a strictly private basis. It was the syncretist wave that blurred his otherwise strong personality; the poets multiplied the Silvani following the example of the Fauni so that they too might take part in the joyful procession of nymphs and satyrs (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1.193).

R.S./g.h.

VENUS

Venus may well be the most original creation of the Roman pantheon. Originally the term was merely a neuter noun, like *genus* and *opus*. The word is part of a remarkable semantic series *venus-venia-venerari* (sometimes *venerare* in Plautus) which is comparable to the series *genus-genius-generare* (see the article "Genius," above). The use of the verb derived from this neuter **venus, venerari* (<**venes-ari*) in Plautus and the authors of the Republican era shows that it is exclusively reserved for the religious realm. What does it signify? It does not lend itself to a direct and exhaustive translation. The way Plautus uses *veneror ut* (which is not retained in classical usage) suggests the following transposition: "I exert [on some deity] a spell [to obtain something] so that . . ."

In this sense, the verb conveys an attitude of seduction toward the gods, an attitude of unconditional confidence that distinguishes this type of prayer from the contractual type, based on the legal postulate *dabo cum dederis* ("I shall give when you have given"). The persuasive charm that the

venerans uses on the gods corresponds to the correlative *venia* that has the meaning "grace" or "favor" (this word comes from "the technical vocabulary of the pontiffs," according to Schol. Dan. *Aen.* 1.519).

The neuter **venus*, which was set in the preeminent religious verb, *venerari*, was personified, in keeping with the Roman genius for deifying abstractions. This metamorphosis, which must have taken place in Lavinium (see the author's book *La religion romaine de Vénus*, pp. 75–83), came about with a shift from neuter to feminine. The Greek Aphrodite and the Etruscan Turan had certainly not been strangers to this process of deification. But the process remains unique in that nowhere else has the root **ven-*, which is attested in Oscan, Venetian, and Hittite references (see *La famille sémantique des mots apparentés à Vénus* in R.C.D.R.), resulted in a deity (the Oscan counterpart to the Latin *Venus* is *Herentas*, formed from a different root, **her-*, "to wish").

The promotion to divine status (from the neuter **venus* to the goddess Venus) was enhanced by the goddess's encounter with the Trojan legend, which exalted the *Aeneadum Genetrix*, the "mother of the descendants of Aeneas," into the role of tutelary mother. The myth corresponded faithfully



Venus on the sea shell. Pompeian fresco. Photo Boudot-Lamotte.

(one time does not establish a pattern) to the rite: it made explicit in discursive language the toll levied by the *venia deum*, "the favor of the gods," that the *venerans* Roman imposed and collected. It suggested that the Roman citizen was privileged in this respect, since the specialist in the *captatio veniae* mediated between the Romans descended from Aeneas and the gods. That is what lies behind the famous declarations of the Romans in which they claim the title of "the most religious people in the world" (Cicero *De natura deorum* 2.3.8; *De haruspicum responsis* 9.19). These professions of *pietas* and *veneratio* implied the hope of obtaining *pacem veniamque deum*, "the favor and grace of the gods," as Livy frequently put it.

The tutelary role of Venus is verified in the official religion. She is associated with the cult of Jupiter in the Vinalia, which are supposed to have been instituted by Aeneas. The first temple founded in her honor (at the beginning of the third century B.C.) is dedicated to Venus Obsequens (Venus the propitious). It had been promised by Q. Fabius Gurgus in the heat of battle in 295 B.C., in the hope of obtaining victory over the Samnites.

The role of Venus as an intercessor crystallized dramatically in the third century at the time of the first two Punic wars. During the first, the Romans lost no time in withdrawing the goddess of Eryx from the control of the Punic adversary and placing themselves under her protection; to do this, they capitalized on the Trojan legend that was very much alive among the Elymians and on their victorious resistance at the summit of Mount Eryx.

Indeed, syncretism served the Roman cause well. It furthered the victorious mystique in Sicily by assimilating Aphrodite Erycina to Venus. The Romans also had recourse to the *same* goddess during the second war against the *same* enemy. And in this same context the association between Venus and Mars took hold during the lectisternium of 217

B.C.



Mars and Venus. Pompeian fresco. Naples, National Museum. Photo Giraudon.

The "Trojan" interpretation of the goddess of Mount Eryx explains that the cult of Venus Erycina involved a double religious status in Rome. On the Capitol, inside the pomerium, Venus Erycina was venerated as a Roman goddess; outside the pomerium, near the Porta Collina, she called to mind her foreign origin.

The lesson was not lost in later times. Venus came to follow Latin lines in her propitiatory role, while yielding to extensions of Mediterranean syncretism. Thus, Sulla pretended to recognize Aphrodite of Aphrodisias as an ally of the Romans. He even succeeded in having the oracle of Delphi validate the religious claims of the Romans descended from Aeneas.

By the first century B.C., the only novelty was that political adventurers rose to power and sought to turn the situation to personal advantage. Venus Felix (Sulla), Venus Victrix (Pompey), Venus Genetrix (Caesar)—each attempted to reconcile himself with the goddess by giving her an epithet that marked her with an original label. Caesar, who claimed a direct descent, was the best placed to exploit the Trojan mystique for his own profit. Through the cult of Venus Genetrix, he gave definitive form to the national *credo* that proclaimed Venus to be Mother of the Romans and Mother of the Caesars. The improvements that Augustus, Caesar's adoptive son, made on his father's canvas do not lack respect for the essential dogma. By then, the theological work was complete.

R.S./g.h.

VESTA

The name of the goddess appears to be a derivative of the root **ṛeu-*, "to burn," with the archaic suffix *-ta*. It supplied two stems (E. Benveniste, quoted by G. Dumézil, *Rituels indo-européens à Rome* from the collection "Études et Commentaires" [Paris 1954], vol. 19, pp. 33–34). Stem 1 of this root (**ṛeu-s*) is found in the Greek *εὔω*, the Latin *uro*, "I burn"; stem 2, **ṛeu-es*, is found in the Latin *Vesta* and probably in the Greek *Hestia*.

Cicero (*De natura deorum* 2.27.67) asserts the semantic kinship of the two goddesses, but he believed that Vesta had been borrowed from the Greeks. In contrast with the "devouring" Volcanus, Vesta exercised a salutary action on "altars and hearths" (*ad aras et focos pertinet*: *ibid.* 2.27.67).

The shrine of Vesta was a round building "similar to a globe; thus the goddess was identified with the earth" (Festus, p. 321 L.; see Ovid *Fasti* 6.267). This shape distinguished it from the temple, which was quadrangular and oriented to the four cardinal points. The comparative method sheds much light on this contrast. Vedic religion distinguished the "fire of the master of the house," which is "this world" and "as such is round" (G. Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, pp. 312–13), from the "fire of the offerings . . . whose smoke bears the gifts of men to the gods . . . it is oriented to the cardinal points, and consequently is quadrangular" (*ibid.* p. 313).

Vesta, who bears the official name *Vesta publica populi Romani*, constitutes *quasi focum urbis* (the hearth of the city: Cicero *De legibus* 2.29). She is the eternal flame rekindled only once a year, on 1 March, i.e., at the beginning of the

ancient calendar year (Ovid *Fasti* 3.143–44). If by misfortune the fire entrusted to the care of the vestals were allowed to go out, "the virgins were whipped by the pontifex, and were required by custom to rekindle it by the friction of 'fertile' wood (*felicitis materiae*) until one of them was able to carry the resulting fire into the sanctuary in a bronze sieve" (Festus, p. 94 L.).

This "eternal flame" therefore had a symbolic value that was reinforced by the presence of sacred talismans (see Livy 26.27.14; Ovid *Fasti* 6.445). Among the talismans was the Palladium, a statue of Pallas that was thought to have come from Troy (see Cicero *Pro Scauro* 48). In the "eternal flames of Vesta" (*aeternis Vestae ignibus*) and in the Palladium that was considered the preeminent talisman among the *pignora fatalia* (Ovid *loc. cit.*), Rome saw the proof of its power (see Livy 5.52.7).

Maintaining the "primordial" fire was primarily the responsibility of the six vestal virgins, the priestesses who were sworn to absolute chastity for the entire duration of their service (Ovid *Fasti* 6.283ff.). They also kept watch over the talismans, or *pignora*, which were kept in the *penus Vestae* (Festus, p. 296 L.), the most secret part of the sanctuary. In the front of the sanctuary, the *penus exterior* (Festus, p. 152 L.), the vestals kept a reserve supply of the various ingredients that they prepared for the celebration of sacrifices: *muries* (Festus, p. 152 L.), or brine used for salting, and *mola*, the sacred flour. We know that the heads of sacrificial animals were sprinkled (*immolare*) with *mola salsa* before the sacrifice.

In general, Vesta took part in all sacrifices. Cicero (*De natura deorum* 2.27.67) points out that she was invoked last of all in "all prayers and sacrifices," just as Janus was, by contrast, first on the list of divinities. It is interesting to note that this liturgical rule is the exact opposite of the Greek custom which counseled "starting with Hestia," *aph Hestias archesthai*. Curiously, Ovid (*Fasti* 6.303–4) treats Vesta in the Greek manner.

The festival of the goddess, the Vestalia, took place on 9 June according to the ancient cycle of the liturgical calendar. From 7 to 15 June, the sanctuary of Vesta was open exclusively to women, who were allowed to enter barefoot. On the last day, the sanctuary was ritually swept. The end of this operation was marked on the calendar by the letters *Q(uando) ST(ercus) D(elatum) F(as)*, meaning "Once the dung is carried away the sacred day is over." This ancient note, which seems out of place in the then urbanized setting, must reflect a time "when an encamped pastoral society had to clean the *stercus* of its herds from the location of its sacred fire" (Georges Dumézil, *Archaic Roman Religion*, p. 318).

This goddess, who went back to the very origins of the city, had long escaped the widespread anthropomorphism of the Etruscans and the Greeks. Ovid (*Fasti* 6.295–98) points out that even in his time the *ignis Vestae* (the expression comes from Festus, 94 L.), being self-sufficient, had no ritual statue. Cicero (*Nat. D.* 3.80) mentions a statue of Vesta in front of which the Pontifex Maximus Q. Mucius Scaevola had been massacred, but it must have been an honorary statue placed in the vestibule or in front of the sanctuary.

Through syncretism, however, Vesta was considered the counterpart of the Greek goddess Hestia. In this capacity, she formed a couple with Vulcan-Hephaestus during the lectisternium of 217 B.C. In this association the "beneficent fire" and the "devouring fire" were united for the greater good of the city.

R.S./g.h.



Banquet of the Vestals. Altar of the Pietà. Rome. Palazzo dei Conservatori. Photo Barbara Malter.



Temple of Vesta. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles. Photo BN.

VIRGIL'S RELIGIOUS VISION

Every true reader of Virgil dreams of forgetting for a moment the vast literature that has been written about the poet over so many centuries and of getting at the secret of his fascinating presence. This need seems even more compelling when his religious vision is at issue. This vision paradoxically seems to survive the dead gods, as if it had managed to preserve for posterity the essential component of a spiritu-

ality that went far beyond the structures of the ancient city, and as if it had managed to escape the rather negative prejudice of many toward Roman religion, which is often said to be dry and formalistic.

To what can we attribute Virgil's privilege? It cannot be explained simplistically by resorting to the three-tiered classification devised by Varro,¹ which distinguished the gods of poets, the gods of philosophers, and the gods of the city. Nor does it demonstrate any system—far from it—since the poet developed from the little poems of the *Catalepton* to the overwhelming fresco of the depiction of the underworld in book 4 of the *Aeneid*: the disciple of the Epicurean Siro became a bard with a Stoic accent.

We will have to distinguish between the circumstantial element, through which Virgil was marked by his own time and place, and the eternal element, through which he transcended the bondage of his historical slot. To that end, it may prove useful to follow the poet on the three different levels of the religious customs of his time, his own religious sensibility, and his philosophical and eschatological speculations.

I. Virgil and Roman Tradition

Virgil (71–19 B.C.) lived in an unusual period that witnessed the end of the civil wars and the establishment of the Roman Empire, when Octavian, victorious at Actium in 31 B.C., was proclaimed Augustus by the Senate in 27 B.C. Henceforth Rome assumed the entire Greek heritage. Religion was dominated by a syncretism that not only equated the principal Roman deities with their Hellenic counterparts, but went on to give the deities of Rome a dimension of mythological storytelling borrowed from those counterparts.

It is therefore not surprising to find Virgil, true to the custom of his time, indiscriminately mixing old Italic deities with Greek gods: Silvanus is flanked by Pan and the nymphs (Virgil *Georgics* 2.494), and Pales the goddess of herdsmen and their flocks is associated with Apollo and Pan (ibid. 3.1–2).

Greek mythology made it possible for Virgil to give the gods profiles and legends that made them available for poetic creation. Thus, Neptune, who was only the governing god of the waters within the framework of the Roman liturgy,² travels on the high seas in a wheeled chariot in Virgil's epic (Virgil *Aeneid* 1.147–55). When he notices that the sea has been stirred up on the orders of Aeolus, "He gazes forth on the deep with a pacific mien" (ibid. 1.127; trans. C. Day Lewis, *The Aeneid of Virgil* [Garden City, New York, 1952], throughout this article), and he rebukes the winds, saying, "Do you really dare, you Winds, without my divine assent to confound earth and sky, and raise this riot of water?" (ibid. 133–34). The allusion is a discrete recollection of the Hesiodic legend that makes the Winds the sons of the Titan Astraeus, who rebelled against Zeus. It also invokes the hierarchical principle by virtue of which the realm of the sea belongs to Neptune and not to "Aeolus, the king of the Winds."

Consequently, while he still used the mythological storytelling that somehow assimilates Neptune to Poseidon, Virgil was able to keep a certain distance. Neptune intervenes on behalf of Aeneas, the victim of the storm, whereas Poseidon *enosichthōn*, "the shaker of the depths," displays a constant hostility toward Odysseus in Homer. He intervenes in the sarcastic tone of a superior officer of the Roman army when he reminds Aeolus of the limits of his competence: "His domain is the mountain rock. . . . Let Aeolus be king of that

castle and let him keep the winds locked up in its dungeon" (ibid. 140–41).

Mythology supplied the poet with those elements of the supernatural epic that are indispensable for the literary story line. Often this mythology had only a decorative value that the poet uses with a dash of nonchalance. Thus, Venus, who elsewhere plays an essential role in religious ideology, benefited from all the Mediterranean heritage that belonged to Aphrodite. She is the sovereign ruler of the island of Cythera and of the shrines of Amathus, Idalia, and Paphos on Cyprus (ibid. 10.51). According to the interlocutor, she is regarded as "the daughter of the deep" (ibid. 5.800–881, where she is summoned by Neptune), or "the daughter of Jupiter" (ibid. 1.256; 10.30, where she has to deal with Jupiter).

We must not forget that Virgil was unable to finish the *Aeneid* (in his will he had ordered it destroyed because it was incomplete). Although it is possible that in the final analysis he would have adopted a single genealogical linkage, the initial choices (the Hesiodic or the Homeric legend) are obviously inspired by an aesthetic of correspondences whereby the god of the sea faces the daughter of the waves, and the sovereign god faces his "beloved daughter" (*Nata*, ibid. 1.256, highlights the nuance of emotion; *Tua progenies*, 10.30, highlights the nuance of a claim).

This selective aesthetic promoted the blending of mythological elements per se with precise allusions to Roman ritual. These allusions abound to the point where the Roman reader could not feel cut off from familiar territory when he confronted the behavior of Aeneas and his entourage. The hero was idealized by virtue of the backward leap in time, and he was given a sort of halo by a golden legend. But he acted according to the reflexes and religious habits of a contemporary of Virgil. One example: the attention given to the auspices and the prodigies. The traitor Sinon explains to the Trojans that the reason why the Greeks intend to go back to their own country of Argos (ibid. 2.178) is to take the auspices in response to the warnings of the soothsayer Calchas. He is sure of being believed by the Trojans (who are supposed to have a Roman mentality), so common was the practice in the Roman liturgy of taking the auspices again (*auspicia repetere*) in case of failure. Similarly, Venus disguised as a huntress points out to Aeneas "those twelve swans flying in jubilant formation," and tells him of the good omen: it is a sign that his twelve ships, saved from the storm, have reached safe harbor (ibid. 1.393–400).

The same goes for the prodigies. More than in Livy's account, they seem "natural" in a narrative in which the supernatural is part of daily reality. The Trojans no longer hesitate to allow the fatal horse inside their city when they see their priest Laocoön (who had been opposed to it) and his two children choked by two serpents, which then glide away toward the shrine of Athena (ibid. 2.219–27).

A prodigy prevents Aeneas from throwing himself into a hopeless battle: a feathery tongue of flame appears above the head of Ascanius (in Livy 1.39.1, an analogous prodigy designates the child Servius Tullius as heir to the throne). Anchises asks Jupiter to confirm an omen: "From our left hand came a sudden crash of thunder, and a shooting star slid down the sky's dark face, drawing a trail of light behind it" (Virgil *Aen.* 681–94). This accumulation of prodigies (in augury, the left side or *laevum* is favorable) was needed to prevent Aeneas from rushing into a senseless death and to convince his father Anchises to leave Troy. There are many more examples attesting Virgil's knowledge of liturgy, which inspired the admiration of the participants in the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius.

What about theology? How was Virgil to adapt himself to the institutions of the state while avoiding the trap set by the Trojan legend? The triad of Jupiter-Juno-Minerva formed the core of Roman religion, just as the temple of the Capitoline triad occupied the place of honor in every Roman city. Beyond that, the outline of the legend was based on the abandonment of the city of Troy by the gods, particularly by the tutelary divinity Athena-Minerva (the ominous sign was the serpents who murdered Laocoön and took refuge in her shrine), and the declared hostility of Juno toward the Trojans.

Here time has been Virgil's accomplice. Once Jupiter had decreed the destiny of the Trojans—the *fata* that promised that they would found a new Troy—the "reconciliation" of the two goddesses with the Roman descendants of Aeneas was bound to come about in the course of events. Such a turnabout by hostile deities had been anticipated within the regulations of the Roman pontiffs: the procedure of the *evocatio* (the invitation to abandon the city in exchange for a temple in Rome) hastened the fall of the enemy city by depriving it of its protecting deity. Virgil explicitly refers to this when Troy falls (ibid. 2.351–52).

As for Minerva, she wasted no time in leaving the Greeks after their victory. Was she angry because of the theft of her cultic statue, the Palladium (which later became one of the talismans of Rome), which was stolen by Diomedes and Odysseus (ibid. 2.163)? According to the traitor Sinon, this sacrilege was precisely what led the Greeks to offer the horse to the goddess as a replacement (ibid. 2.183–84). This version, involving a trick, leaves the issue unresolved. But in any case, Minerva did not forgive the Greek Ajax for having abducted Cassandra from her sanctuary, where Cassandra had put herself under Minerva's protection during the sack of Troy (ibid. 2.403–15). So Minerva smashed the Greek fleet to pieces as it was returning home (ibid. 1.39–41).

After this, it is not surprising that she should then resume her former role of tutelary goddess of the descendants of Aeneas. With Neptune, Venus, and Mars, she belongs to the group of Roman gods who battled against the "grotesque deities of the Nile" in the scene that depicts the battle of Actium on the shield wrought by Vulcan (ibid. 8.698–700). Thus, the Minerva of the legend has joined the Capitoline goddess of Roman religion.

The change of heart of the *aspera Juno* (ibid. 1.279) is strewn with many more obstacles, even though Jupiter announces immediately (ibid.) his intention to rally behind the cause of Rome in the future. Of course, like other deities, she had a shrine in Troy (ibid. 2.761). But throughout the action of the epic, she is depicted as the relentless enemy of the Trojans.

Why? Because she is the special protectress of Carthage, the city which she prefers to any other dwelling place (ibid. 1.11ff.), and she knows it will be threatened by a future race of Trojan blood. Needless to say, Virgil embellishes the legend with a historical account of the Punic wars. Juno knows in advance (ibid. 1.39) that she will have to bow to fate, but she multiplies the setbacks for the Trojans, starting with the storm that she "ordered" from the king of the winds, Aeolus. The tenacity of the goddess reminds the reader of the three long wars that the Romans and Carthaginians waged with one another for control of the Mediterranean.

The principal examples of the goddess's interventions start with Aeneas's initial contact with King Latinus, who is ready to welcome the Trojans to Italian soil. Minerva inspires Turnus, the king of the Rutulians, to raise the flag of war (ibid. 7.406ff.) and she herself opens the doors of the

sanctuary of Janus (ibid. 7.601ff.), a ritual act that openly announces the hostilities (in his testament, Augustus is known to have recalled with pride that he succeeded in closing the doors of Janus on three occasions). Yet Aeneas, aware of this animosity, tries to appease the goddess. In accordance with the prophetic announcement, he sacrifices to her the wild sow and the young wild boars that he finds in the forest of Hesperia.

But all for naught. After the unhappy episode of the sojourn of Aeneas in Carthage, in the course of which the goddess tries to cheat fate by making Aeneas marry Queen Dido (ibid. 4.90ff.), she is more than ever determined to postpone the day of reckoning. She intervenes vehemently in favor of Turnus at the assembly of the gods (ibid. 10.63ff.) and does not hesitate to shield him from the dangers of combat (ibid. 10.606ff.).

Minerva makes a final attempt by calling Turnus's sister, Juturna, to come to her brother's rescue (ibid. 12.134ff.), before she obeys Jupiter's command not to do anything more (ibid. 10.804–6). She then obtains Jupiter's promise that by uniting with the Trojans, the Ausonians will keep their language and customs. "All will be Latins . . . No other nation will pay such reverence to Juno. The goddess bowed and agreed, glad now to change her own policy" (ibid. 12.834–41). Thus the goddess rejoined the Roman cause and the poet recovered the orthodoxy of the official religion.

II. The Originality of Virgil

We cannot overlook the constraints that weighed on the poet: Virgil was subject to the conventions of the epic form that went back to Homer. The ancients had already acknowledged that on the literary level, the *Aeneid* corresponded to both the *Odyssey* (the wanderings of Aeneas in the first six books) and the *Iliad* (the struggles on Italian soil in the last six books). In particular, Virgil had relied on the anthropomorphic polytheism that Varro had repudiated. But although it may not be obvious, he was able to go beyond these contingent frameworks to express his own religious sensibility.

First of all, Virgil's polytheism is not the same as Homer's. Two deities in particular—Jupiter and Venus—break out of the conventional mold, because Virgil reinterpreted them in the light of a new theology. Although the sovereign god, too, inherits the full panoply of Homeric titles,³ he nonetheless differs from his Greek counterpart in several ways. Though he is a figure of majesty, he is not described in the image of Zeus with his "black brows and ambrosial locks" (Homer *Iliad* 1.538). He has more mystery: a mere sign from him is enough to cause all of Olympus to tremble (Virgil *Aen.* 9.106).

Above all, whereas in Homer Zeus is subordinate to Fate—to the *heimarmenē*—Jupiter exercises real sovereignty: the *fata* become intermingled with his own decrees. There is nothing more instructive than the answer given by Jupiter to Venus when she worries about the fate of her Trojans, victims of the terrible storm: "Fear no more, Cytherea. Take comfort, for your people's destiny is unaltered. . . . I have not changed my mind" (ibid. 1.257–60). The Latin text is even more explicit. The expression *tuorum fata* is later taken up again by the verb *fabor* (by which Jupiter is to reveal the secret of this fate), in visible semantic correspondence to the substantive *fata*. These *fata* consist of the announcement of the reign of Aeneas in Lavinium for three years, the reign of Ascanius in Alba for thirty years, the reign of the kings of Alba for three hundred years, and finally the promise of an

eternal reign given to the Romans as "successors to the Trojan nation": *imperium sine fine dedi* ("I gave them an empire without end").⁴

As for the Virgilian Venus, her character is even more marked by this theological metamorphosis. She probably borrowed her smile from Aphrodite when she annexed her Mediterranean sanctuaries. But here we have no scandalous adventures (in Homer, Aphrodite is caught in a blatant act of adultery with Ares); nor do we have any concession to Hellenistic affectation (in Apollonius of Rhodes, Cypris admires herself in a mirror). Venus appears with the dignity appropriate for the mother of the descendants of Aeneas and the future Caesars.⁵

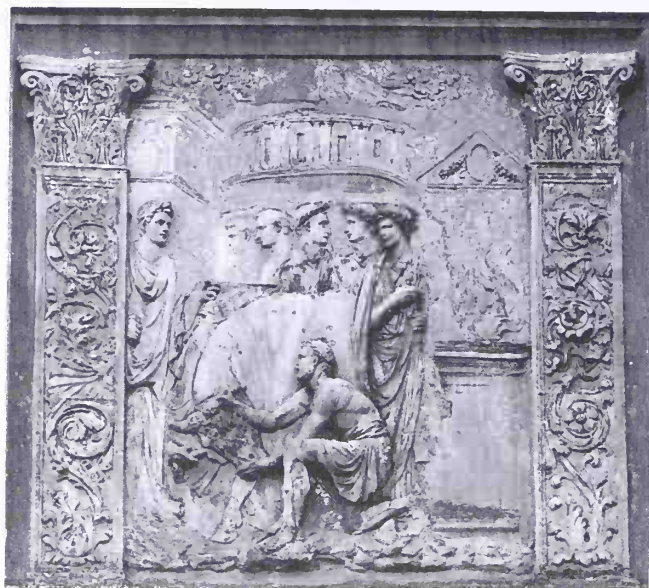
Venus first assumes a maternal role, watching over Aeneas and Ascanius: *mea maxima cura* ("my dearest care": ibid. 1.677). She also assumes the role of a guide; from the time of the departure from Troy, the star of Venus shows Aeneas the way: *matre dea monstrante viam*, Aeneas says to Dido (ibid. 1.382).⁶ She assumes the role of intercessor; in books 2 and 10 she pleads the cause of the Trojans before Jupiter or before the assembled gods. This role of intercessor is more than a literary fiction, since it corresponds to certain cultic institutions. By the beginning of the third century B.C., Fabius Gurgus had shown his gratitude to Venus Obsequens (the propitious), and in the first century, the cult of Venus Genetrix founded by Julius Caesar illustrated brilliantly the maternal role of the goddess who mediated between the gods and the Romans.⁷

So it is not surprising that Virgil gives Venus a properly theological role, for despite all the syncretism, she always embodied the effective enchantment that is expressed by the preeminent religious verb *venerari*.⁸ It is she who obtains from Jupiter the right of the Trojans to come to the end of their trials *in the name of their piety*: *hic pietatis honos*? ("Is this the reward for being true?" ibid. 1.253). She invokes the piety that is based on an equitable exchange between men and gods, an equity richly deserved by the *pious Aeneas*.⁹

It is Venus who explains to Aeneas the supernatural reasons for the fall of Troy: in the name of *pietas*-equity, Troy had to succumb, for the city was remiss in *pietas* when King Laomedon deprived the gods (Poseidon-Neptune, in particular) of their promised rewards. The "revelation" that Venus makes to Aeneas is explicit: "It is not the beauty of hated Helen, it is not Paris, though you hold him to blame—the gods, the gods, I tell you, are hostile (*divum inclementia, divum*), it's they who have undermined Troy's power and sent it tumbling" (ibid. 2.601–3). When Venus takes the veil of fog from Aeneas's eyes, the hero sees a supernatural vision beyond Neptune, Juno, and Pallas: the vision of Jupiter himself ardently participating in the destruction of Troy.¹⁰

In this way, Virgil entirely transformed the epic that until that time had been purely narrative (the travels of Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, the episodes of the Trojan War in the *Iliad*) into a spiritual adventure. Jupiter may have condemned ancient Troy, but he was also the guarantor of the resurrection of a new Troy. Virgil creates a striking symbol: whereas Anchises, his limbs paralyzed, represents the misfortune that struck ancient Troy ("For years now I have been lingering, obnoxious to heaven," he cries out)¹¹ and must die in Sicily rather than entering the promised land, the pious Aeneas, invested with the favor of the gods, is charged with the responsibility of founding the new city. Aeneas is entrusted with a mission.

This is where Virgil expressed a preoccupation crucial to the Roman mentality: since men are necessarily dependent



Rome: relief of the altar of the Pietà representing a scene of sacrifice. The head of the victim is held up by a kneeling assistant. Behind the victim are two lictors; on the right is a flute player. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

on heaven, it is paramount that they not lose the benevolence and grace of the gods, *pacem veniamque deum*, an expression that recurs frequently in Livy. Evoking the relentlessness of the battle of Troy, Aeneas cries out: "Ah well, there's no trusting the gods for anything, once they're against you!"¹²

Any error committed against the gods triggers their resentment, *ira*, and demands expiation. That is why the length of the civil wars of the first century B.C. finally brought about a religious anguish: could Rome have been struck by a divine curse? One had to wonder whether a kind of original sin were not weighing heavily on the destiny of Rome. In book 1 of the *Georgics* (written around 36 B.C.), after a fervent prayer—"Gods of our homeland, invoked from the beginning, and you Romulus and venerable Vesta"¹³—Virgil implores the protecting deities of Rome to allow the young Octavian to devote himself to the common welfare. He justifies his prayer by adding: "We have long atoned for the perjury of Laomedon's Troy with our blood."¹⁴

Horace does not refer to the Trojan fault when he expresses the same anguish. He places "the original sin" at the origins of Rome, in the fratricide of Remus by Romulus: "A cruel fate has been awaiting Romans since the sacrilegious murder of the brother."¹⁵ Whatever reference is adopted, the idea of the necessity for an expiation weighed on the minds of everyone.

But there is a counterbalance: the assurance that piety gives of receiving the favor of the gods. It was not without reason that from among all the possible epithets, Virgil chose *pious* to describe Aeneas. This virtue of the Trojan chief was the key to his success. The poet again captured a fundamental belief of the Romans. Recall the verse that Horace addresses to the Roman: "Because you submit to the gods, you command."¹⁶ Cicero has his spokesman Cotta pronounce an even more explicit speech: "Rome would never have been able to reach such grandeur if it had not enjoyed

the extreme indulgence of the immortal gods."¹⁷ Elsewhere, Cicero claimed on behalf of the Roman people the title of the "most religious people in the world."¹⁸

Consequently we can appreciate the magnificent song of hope which, with time, was enlarged upon in Virgil's work. The fourth *Bucolic* (written ca. 40 B.C.) heralded the coming of a new golden age with the imminent birth of a messianic child.¹⁹ But this hope was still fragile, fettered by "the persistent traces of the crime."²⁰ In book 6 of the *Aeneid*, the ghost of Anchises makes the following triumphant revelation to Aeneas (Augustus has been ruling for many years): "Caesar is there and all Ascanius's posterity, who shall pass beneath the arch of day. And here, here is the man, the promised one you know of—Caesar Augustus, son of a god, destined to rule where Saturn ruled of old in Latium, and there bring back the age of gold."²¹ Henceforth, hope did not rest on a *nascenti puero*; rather it became incarnate with the coming of a prince, Augustus, who considered himself the representative of Jupiter on earth.²² All the vows had thus been kept and Anchises was able to formulate the celebrated program: "But, Roman, never forget that government is your medium! Be this your art: to practice men in the habit of peace, generosity to the conquered, and firmness against aggressors."²³

III. The Universality of Virgil

A question now arises. Virgil has appeared to us to be profoundly imbued with "Romanness" both in the choice of his themes and in the expression of his feeling. But where is the universality which made him go beyond the narrow limits of the ancient framework?

Virgil's polytheism has shown itself different from Homer's Olympus. The fact that Jupiter acquired his full sovereignty by determining the *fata* instead of submitting to them is not insignificant. His prestige is no longer challenged by the other gods (as Zeus battled with his rivals). Thus, the polytheism is shifting, if not toward monotheism, at least toward the henotheism that asserts the supremacy of one god among several.

The poet lets slip some expressions that may provide an illustration: *Dabit deus his quoque finem* ("The god will end these sorrows too": Virgil *Aen.* 1.199), Aeneas cries out at the height of the storm. This invocation could be translated without revision into the form of a modern prayer: "God will also end our trials."

Although this god reminds us of the Jupiter Optimus Maximus of the official religion, he embodies above all the idea of providence. This is the meaning of Jupiter's action in the *Georgics*. Apparently the god whom Virgil designates here solely by the name of Pater²⁴ made the human condition more painful, since, when he became successor to Saturn, he replaced the Golden Age with the Iron Age. But he sought in this way to rescue the intelligence of mortals from a passive torpor (*gravi veterno*), and to inspire it instead with a desire to live "so that necessity would gradually bring about, thanks to experience, variety in the arts and crafts."²⁵

This is far from the fatality of a hostile nature which leaves man helpless, as in Lucretius. "God helps those who help themselves" is the new message. At the same time, it is far from a nostalgic dream of the Golden Age, an age in which man has nothing to do, as "the earth produces everything liberally,"²⁶ while "the hardwood oak trees ooze with honey dew."²⁷ And although Virgil later evokes a new Golden Age in the *Aeneid*, that Golden Age differs from the

mythical one by the direct connection of man—although a “providential” man—with the work of Providence.

From this point of view, the *Aeneid* constitutes a hymn to the glory of Providence that leads the chosen people through all sorts of trials and then, at the end of their wanderings, to the promised land. Faith in Providence presupposes the acceptance of trials on the part of the faithful. Are these trials not the ransom of expiation for the “Trojan error”?

In this context, the extraordinary resignation of the Virgilian heroes can be understood. When the best sons of Troy fall at the hands of the Greeks, the poet sometimes seems to delight in emphasizing the scandalous character of their death. “Then Rhipeus fell, he who of all the Trojans was most fair-minded, the one who was most regardful of justice: the god’s ways are inscrutable . . . And Panthus—not all his goodness, nor the headband he wore as Apollo’s priest saved him from death.”²⁸

When King Priam sees his son Polites slaughtered before his very eyes, he cannot help but appeal to heaven: *si qua est caelo pietas* (“If there is any justice in heaven”).²⁹ This is a cry of human distress, but it is in vain, because the decree is ruthless: whatever may be their *personal* piety, the Trojans cannot escape the *collective* punishment of the condemned city. Priam’s appeal has a tragically derisory tone, since the penalty inflicted upon Troy by heaven results precisely from the violation of *pietas* by the ancestor. The fallen king’s fate is therefore of little importance. However, Providence is attending, since the essential is saved: Aeneas receives promises for the future. Thus Virgil invites the reader to a meditation that goes beyond the bounds of an era. Is the world governed by a benevolent Providence, or is it subject to blind chance? To what extent is the individual responsible for collective transgressions?

In his inquiry into fate, the poet was led to ask questions that Roman religion was not accustomed to raise: What is death? What is the meaning of the world?

The liturgical calendar did not forget the ceremonies in honor of the dead. It even had two kinds of celebrations: one was the Feralia, held on 21 February, which called for offerings and libations on the tombs of the deceased; the other was the Lemuria, which was repeated on three separate days—9, 11, and 13 May—and which was intended to expel deadly ghosts (Lemures) that could haunt a home.³⁰ But whether it was a liturgy of veneration or a rite of exorcism, none of these ceremonies provided any insight into the world of the beyond.

Faced with this silence, Virgil was forced to sketch an eschatology that took into account philosophical ideas from Greece but was not altogether alien to Italic traditions. He proposed to resort to the offices of the Sibyl in order to guide Aeneas to the netherworld. By this choice, he not only left behind the modest Homeric model³¹ but he also gave new life and strength to a venerable figure: the Sibyl was supposed to have inspired the *Sibylline Books* which were consulted ritually by the Roman authorities on the order of the Senate.

First, the Sibyl demands that Aeneas make a preparatory sacrifice and also that he acquire a mysterious object, the golden bough. Then he can descend into Pluto’s kingdom of Shades by entering the cave of Avernus. Here commentators have scrutinized, and will continue to scrutinize, the possible influences on the poet.³² But Virgil guarded himself from all rigid dogmatism. He describes a vision of hell; he offers a description to his reader, who will be gradually initiated into a new teaching.

The novelty is the idea of a distributive justice in the kingdom of the Shades. Until Virgil, the only distinction familiar to Romans was the separation of the dead into the *Di parentes*, who from the first century are called the *Di Manes*—the spirits of the ancestors considered benevolent—and the Lemures or Larvae, evil spirits. This distinction is alien to any idea of merit or demerit.

Aeneas, guided by the Sibyl, first discovers the *Campi lugentes* (fields of wailing), the abode of the dead who have not fulfilled their destiny (Virgil *Aen.* 6.418–547). He then manages to avoid visiting Tartarus, but the Sibyl describes it to him as the place of torture reserved for the criminals of mythology and history (ibid. 6.548–625).³³ The two of them then arrive at the palace of Pluto, where Aeneas sees the golden bough. A little further on they discover “a happy place, the green and genial glades where the fortunate live, the home of the blessed spirits,” the Elysian fields (ibid. 6.635–65).

There Aeneas meets Anchises, who reveals to his son the secrets of the universe. Virgil was visibly inspired here by various influences. The world presented as “sustained by a spirit within” (ibid. 6.725–28) conforms to the teachings of the Stoics. The souls who drink the water of Lethe and forget their past lives recall Plato. The souls who “for a thousand years” undergo successive reincarnations until their final purification recall the Orphics and the metempsychosis of Pythagoras.

Does this mean that Virgil was content to juxtapose miscellaneous elements like the multicolored pieces of a mosaic? Aside from the finishing touches that he might have made to his unfinished poem, the general impression is altogether different. Virgil suggests and proposes. His role is to be a guide for the reader, as the Sibyl is for Aeneas. The fiction of the kingdom of the Shades has a symbolic value: everything remains wrapped in mystery.

It is precisely because Virgil knew how to respect the mystery of things that he maintained a power of incantation. He owes this first of all to a gift of expression commensurate with his genius. It is impossible to exaggerate the allusive power of Virgilian verse, which cannot be conveyed in translation.

But above all he bequeathed to posterity the themes that survived the ruin of the ancient city. Some of these themes reappeared in Christian teachings: the idea of an original sin that affects a community; the idea of reward for one’s merits after death; the nostalgia for a lost Golden Age; the reconciliation of humanity with a Providence-God; mankind’s hope of reaching a new Golden Age or paradise.

None of these themes had a greater impact than the one that would be provoked during the Middle Ages by the messianism of the fourth *Bucolic*. Thanks to the magic of the Virgilian word, expressions wrought for the Roman context were again ready for use, as if their thin shell had burst open under the delayed effect of a time bomb. *Iam redit et Virgo* (“Lo the Virgin has returned”: B. 4.6);³⁴ *Iam nova progenis caelo demittitur alto* (“Lo an exceptional child comes down from on high”: B. 4.7);³⁵ *Si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri* (“If traces of our crime remain”: B. 4.13);³⁶ *Ille deum vitam accipiet* (“He shall attain divine life”: B. 4.15).³⁷ For new generations, all these expressions seemed charged with a Christmas message, to the glory of “the child to be born” (*nascenti puero*: B. 4.8).³⁸

Thus Virgil enjoyed a new prestige: he took his place among the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ. In fact, this stirring mirage can be explained both by the

fascination of the words and by the breadth of Virgil's vision, for the authentic poet belongs to his time even while he transcends it.

By the fifth century A.D., the African-born author Fulgentius³⁹ undertook a strictly allegorical reading of Virgil that neglected the subject matter of the narrative in favor of its symbolic meaning. Thus he gave three words of the first verse of the *Aeneid*—*arma, virum, and primus*—the meaning "to have," "to govern," and "to adorn," these three words referring to "nature," "science," and "happiness." The fashion was set.

Though we cannot here follow the successive commentators on Virgil, it would be fitting to reserve a special place for Dante, who saluted Virgil as "his master and his inspirer."⁴⁰ The poet from Mantua became the guide to the poet from Florence in the *Divine Comedy*. When he was plunged in anguish on Good Friday of the year 1300, Dante saw himself "in the middle of a dark wood," whereupon Beatrice sent to his aid the ghost of his brilliant predecessor. Virgil carried out his mission by guiding Dante through the netherworld and purgatory; and then, with great delicacy,⁴¹ he entrusted this mission to Beatrice at the gates of paradise. Nothing proves the universality of Virgil's vision better than this consecration, across the ages, by Dante. We are among those who believe that in the long chain of admirers, Dante was not the last.⁴²

R.S./g.h.

NOTES

1. Varro, cited by Augustine, *C.D.*, 6, 5.
2. The festival of the Neptunalia was on 23 July. See the convincing exegesis of G. DUMEZIL, *Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne* (Paris 1975), 25–31.
3. Among the following expressions, some are close to the Homeric model (not to mention *regnator Olympi*), while others are more novel: *divum pater atque hominum rex* ("father of the gods and king of men": *Aen.* 1.65; 2.648; 10.2, etc.); *hominum rerumque aeterna potestas* ("eternal power that reigns over men and the world": *ibid.* 10.18); *pater omnipotens, rerum cui prima potestas* ("all-powerful father, sovereign power of the world": *ibid.* 10.100); *hominum rerumque repertor* ("creator of men and the world": *ibid.* 12.829).
4. This text is not invalidated by the role of arbiter that Jupiter takes in book 10 of the *Aeneid*. Grappling with the recriminations of Juno, he proclaims his neutrality (verse 112) . . . knowing that "the Fates will find an ending"—*fata viam invenient* (verse 113).
5. Thence the *virginal* aspect under which she appears to Aeneas (*Aen.* 1.315); the dignity of her clothing ("the folds of her robe flowed down to her feet": *ibid.* 1.404); she evokes not a nude Aphrodite of Praxiteles but the draped Venus of Arcesilaus that Caesar placed in the temple of Venus Genetrix.
6. See *Aen.* 2.801. In the commentary on this passage, Servius Danielis notes that, according to Varro, "the star of Venus was always visible to Aeneas until he arrived at the country of the Laurentes; after he arrived, it was no longer visible: thus he knew that he had arrived."
7. Regarding these two cults, see my book *La religion romaine de Vénus* (Paris 1954), *passim*.
8. On the semantic relationship *Venus-venerari*, see *ibid.*, 30–42.
9. In different circumstances, Priam (*Aen.* 2.536) and Dido (*Aen.* 4.382) would appeal to this *pietas* on the basis of equity.
10. Cf. *Aen.* 2.604–18. The presence of Jupiter sanctions the legitimacy of the "punishment" of Troy, which is inflicted in particular by Neptune (the divinity frustrated by Laomedon), by Juno (the sworn enemy), and by Pallas-Minerva (the divinity that was formerly the protectress).

11. *Iam pridem invisus divis* (*Aen.* 2.647).
12. *Heu nihil invitis fas quemquam fidere divis!* (*Aen.* 2.402).
13. *Di patrii, Indigetes, et Romule Vestaque mater* (G. 1.498). For *Indigetes*, which is not to be confused with *indigenae*, I understand the word in connection with *Indigitamenta* ("litanies" or "lists of invoked gods").
14. *Satis iampridem sanguine nostro / Laomedontae luimus perjurium Troiae* (G. 1.501–2).
15. Horace, *Epod.* 7.17.
16. *Dis te minorem quod geris, imperas* (Horace C., 3.6.5).
17. Cicero *N.D.* 3.2. (The last words of my translation are a transposition of the idiomatic expression *sine summa placatione deorum immortalium*.)
18. Cicero *ibid.* 2.3.8. In comparison with other peoples, the Romans are *religione, id est cultu deorum, multo superiores*.
19. There have been innumerable efforts to identify this child since the book by J. CARCOPINO, *Virgile et la IV^e Bucolique* (Paris 1930).
20. Virgil B. 4.13: *Si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri* . . .
21. Virgil *Aen.* 6.789–94. *Divi genus*, son of a god, recalls that Augustus is the adopted son of Julius Caesar, who was deified after his death. A mythical Golden Age (in the reign of Saturn) was succeeded by a real Golden Age (in the reign of Augustus): the joy of the style is explained by the end of the civil wars which had marked the last century of the Republic.
22. See the article "The Religious Policies of Augustus," above.
23. Virgil *Aen.* 6.851–53: *Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento; / haec tibi erunt artes: pacisque imponere morem, / parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*.
24. Virgil G. 1.121.
25. *Ibid.* 1.133: *Ult varias usus meditando extunderet artes paulatim* . . .
26. *Ibid.* 1.128.
27. Cf. Virgil B. 4.30: *Et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella*.
28. Cf. Virgil *Aen.* 2.426–30: . . . *cadit et Rhipeus, justissimus unus / qui fuit in Teucris et servantissimus aequi / (dis aliter visum) . . . nec te tua plurima, Panthu, / labentem pietas nec Apollinis infula texit*.
29. *Ibid.* 2.536. Note the use of *pietas* applied to the gods, conforming to the idea of reciprocity included in the Latin word. We know that Laomedon, father of Priam, hence grandfather of Polites, had aroused the anger of the gods by neglecting his obligations to them.
30. For the dates in question, see Ovid's commentary, *Fasti*, on books 2 and 5, respectively.
31. In the *Odyssey* 11.206ff., Odysseus calls up the dead in order to consult the prophet Tiresias: he is content to dig a ditch, which makes it possible for him to perform the magic rites.
32. The most important commentary on the descent to hell remains the work of E. NORDEN, *P. Vergilius Maro, Aeneis, Buch VI* (3d ed., Leipzig 1927).
33. In *Aen.* 8.666–70, Catilina appears also in Tartarus, on the representation of the shield forged by Vulcan. Note that to cross the stagnant waters of the Cocytus to the spirits that crowd the shore of Acheron, the boatman Charon required only the burial of their bodies. Unburied, these spirits had to wander "for a hundred years" (*Aen.* 6.325–30): the idea that the lack of burial deprived the dead of rest conforms to an old Italic tradition.
34. Our translation of these different texts voluntarily shows an inflection with a Christian meaning, to emphasize the new interpretation that one may give them; *Virgo*—interpreted as the Virgin Mary—designates in Virgil's text *Astraea*, the daughter of Zeus and Themis, who rose to heaven at the advent of the Iron Age; her return announces the return of the Golden Age (*redeunt Saturnia regna*).
35. In keeping with the set purpose announced in the preceding note, I have translated *nova progenies* by "an exceptional child" (= Christ)—a possible translation, although the context of the *Bucolic* suggests rather "a new generation"—(by allusion to the generation of the Golden Age which was thought to have descended from heaven with the aid of a rope; Lucretius [2.1153] scoffs at this myth).
36. The allusion, interpreted as a reference to the original sin of Adam and Eve, concerned, in the passage of the *Bucolic*, the aftereffects of the civil wars (in 40 B.C., the fleet of Sextus Pompey, who was only defeated in 36 B.C., was still capable of starving Italy by preventing the arrival of grain from Africa).

37. In the Christian perspective: Christ made human will return to heaven. A more literal fidelity would require the translation: "he will attain the life of the gods"—men leading the same life as the gods in the Golden Age.

38. The *nascens puer* was applied to the Infant Jesus. Many attempts have been made to remove the mystery of the 4th *Bucolic*. Finally, an intriguing identification—M. Claudius Marcellus, posthumous son of C. Claudius Marcellus and Octavia—has been proposed by J. PERRET, *Virgile* (Paris 1965), 45–48.

39. Fulgentius, *Expositio Virgilianae continentiae*.

40. Dante, *Inferno* 1.85: "Tu se' lo mio maestro e'l mio autore."

41. Of course, this delicacy belongs to Dante, who found the elegant solution that avoids denying Virgil access to the Christian paradise.

42. Virgil has always been appreciated in England, France, and Italy. In Germany, the renewal of Virgilian studies is more recent; this is in part due to the work of TH. HAECKER with the meaningful title *Virgil Vater des Abendlandes* (7th ed., Munich 1952).

VULCAN

Vulcan is the god of fire. The etymology of the name is difficult to determine. G. Dumézil (*Fêtes romaines d'été et d'automne* [Paris 1925], pp. 72–76) reviews all the principal attempts to elucidate it and shows how precarious they are. They include a comparison with the Cretan *welchanos*; an explanation by way of the Ossetic noun (*Kurd-alae*)-*waergon*; and an Etruscan hypothesis based on the abbreviation *Vel* from the Piacenza liver, which is arbitrarily completed to yield *Vel(chans)*, whereas the Etruscan homologue of Hephaestus is *Sethlans*. Dumézil prefers a derivation from the Vedic *vārcas* ("brightness," or "flash," one of the properties of Agni, the god of fire), but as a good comparativist, he hastens to point out the difficulty: "no verbal or nominal derivative of this version of the root exists in Latin" (*ibid.*, p. 74).

Vulcan had a flamen and a festival, the Volcanalia, on 23 August (i.e., at the end of the dog days of summer, which begin with the Neptunalia of 23 July), that was inscribed in the ancient cycle of the liturgical calendar. The site of the cult, which consisted of an altar and was designated by the expression *Volcanal* or *area Vulcani*, was southeast of the Capitol and thus outside the pomerium of the old city. Later a temple to Vulcan was built that predates the reference to the temple by Livy (24.10.9) in 214 B.C. It too was outside the new pomerial boundaries, near the Circus Flaminius. Its anniversary fell on 23 August, the festival of the Volcanalia.

All signs indicate that Vulcan, the very opposite of Vesta, embodied the *destructive* fire, which is why his cult was "outside the walls" (Vitruvius 1.7.1). He was attended by two entities: Maia (Gellius 13.23.2) and Stata Mater (Festus, p. 146 L). Maia (probably derived from **mag-ia*) suggests extension, whereas Stata Mater (cf. the epithet *Sator* for Jupiter) suggests immobilization or cessation. These two notions thus express symmetrically two opposite faculties: fire may spread or go out.

There are specific references to this devouring nature of fire: Vulcan helped to destroy the enemy's arms (Livy 1.37.5; 23.46.5; 30.6.9; 41.12.6). Another custom is less clear; every year "on the other side of the Tiber in the month of June" (according to Festus, p. 274 L.) or "during the festival of the Volcanalia" (according to Varro *De Lingua Latina* 6.20) small live fish (*genus pisciculorum vivorum*) were tossed into the fire in honor of Vulcan "instead of human souls" (*pro animis humanis*: Festus) or "in order to redeem themselves" (*pro se*: Varro). What could have been the significance of combining the idea of redemption (see Ovid *Fasti* 5.438: the Lemuria)

and the demand for living beings (see Ovid *Fasti* 3.342: Jupiter demands a life; Numa offers a fish)?

Vulcan was presented in the company of Vesta at the lectisternium of 217 B.C. Although the meaning of this association is transparent, it also proves that toward the end of the third century B.C., even Roman deities as ancient as Vulcan and Vesta did not escape the Hellenization that compared them with Hephaistos and Hestia. This process was to be confirmed later: in 64 B.C., after the great fire of Rome, a *supplicatio* in accordance with the *ritus graecus* was called for on the orders of the *Sibylline Books*, on behalf of Vulcan, Ceres, and Proserpina (Tacitus *Annales* 15.44.2).

Hellenization had other repercussions of a mythological nature. Vulcan was regarded as the father of Caeculus, the founder of Praeneste (Virgil *Aeneid* 7.678–79; schol. Servius ad loc.), and according to a version collected by Ovid (*Fasti* 6.627), the father of the Roman king Servius Tullius.

For the poets, Vulcan is merely the Latin name for Hephaestus. The epithet *Mulciber*, the smelter (which Festus [p. 219 L.] explained through the act of "making iron

Vulcan. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.



malleable," *a molliendo ferro*), refers to the smith, the patron of the Cyclops. That is how Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.724) designates him when Vulcan, at the request of his "wife" Venus, consents to forge the armor of Aeneas. The entire scene is inspired by Greek mythology, which had united Hephaestus with Aphrodite (for Mulciber see again Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* 2.23: the adjective is applied to Hephaestus in the Latin translation of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Unbound*).

Despite this pervasive syncretism, the ritual definition was not lost. To commemorate the burning of Rome under Nero at the end of the first century A.D., the emperor Domitian ordered altars built "to prevent future fires" (*incendiorum arcendorum causa*). Each year, on the day of the Volcanalia, a reddish-brown calf and a boar were to be sacrificed there (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6.826).

R.S./g.h.

3

Western Civilization in the Christian Era



THE SURVIVAL OF MYTHS IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The Old Testament

I. Hellenistic Judaism

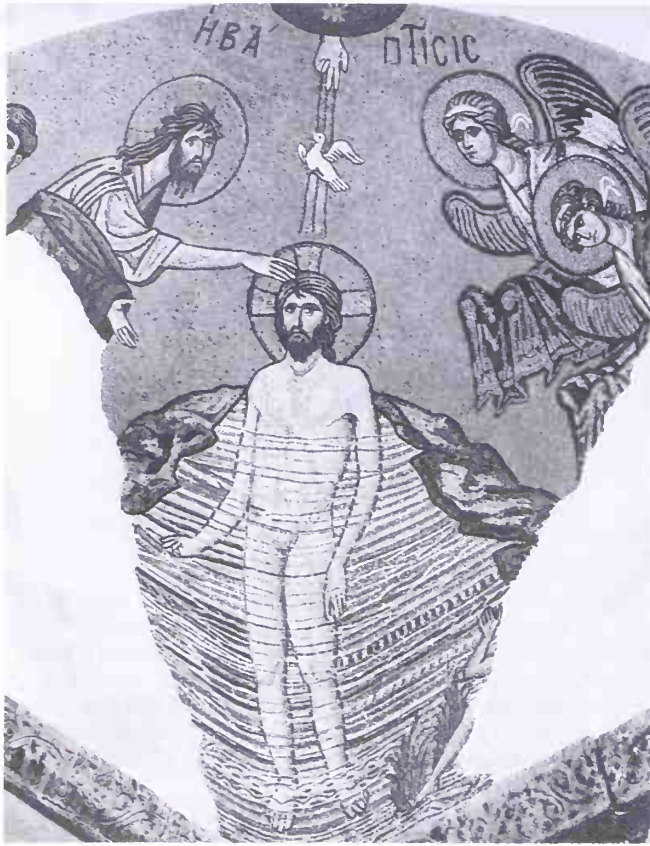
The Old Testament is no less important to Christianity than it is to Judaism, although each does a different reading of it. It follows that any inquiry into the mythical foundation that may have persisted in early Christianity must take into account early Christianity's view of the Law and the Prophets. When it comes to biblical hermeneutics, we know that the Church Fathers were often influenced by the Hellenized Jews who lived just before the Christian era. This is what makes the testimony of the most prominent of these Hellenized Jews, Philo of Alexandria, so interesting.

Philo evokes a contemporary trend which he himself condemns—that of reducing certain biblical episodes to the level of Greek myths that were deemed comparable. The identity of these comparativists is not certain, but it is hard to know who they could have been if not those free-thinking Jews, a few examples of whom are known to us. At all events, Philo has them say to the pious Jews: "The Books that you claim to be sacred also contain those myths that you are accustomed to laugh at when you hear others tell them." By way of proof, they offered the Homeric myth of the Aloadae piling up mountains to reach the sky (Homer, *Odyssey* 11.305–20), "in place of which Moses introduces" the construction of the tower of Babel, although the biblical episode of the confusion of languages (Gen. 11.1–9) may have been "similar to the [pagan] myth" of the original community of language among all living beings (*De confusione linguarum* 2.2–4, 9). Shortly before the Christian era, therefore, some exegetes were convinced of the mythical quality of at least a few pages of the Old Testament. Philo reports concurrent examples that probably illustrate the same orientation: when Moses speaks of giants (Gen. 6.4), he is alluding to myths by poets on the same subject (*De gigantibus* 13.58); systematic detractors minimize the sacrifice of Isaac and Abraham's consent to it (Gen. 22.1–19) by comparing it to the practice among Greeks, private citizens or even kings (here one can discern a reference to Iphigenia sacrificed by Agamemnon), of sacrificing their children in the

hope of gaining military success (*De Abrahamo* 33.178–34, 183); Philo finally points to certain demented slanderers of the Scriptures who claim that the story of the various animals cut in half by Abraham (Gen. 15.9–17) actually describes an act of divination, with a sacrificial victim and the inspection of its entrails (*Quaestiones in Genesin* 3.3). Such information was recognized as historically significant by H. A. Wolfson¹ and J. Daniélou.²

The adjectives and other qualifiers that Philo uses show that he does not support this tendency. But he does admit that a number of passages from the Bible are mythical, provided, he insists, that they are taken literally—a restriction which, though his adversaries had no use for it, greatly changes the perspective. He gives examples of biblical texts of this type: the planting of paradise by God (Gen. 2.8), imagined as the work of a careful gardener arranging a place in which to relax, is a "mythopoeisis" which would not occur to anyone (*Legum allegoriae* 1.14.43); the creation of Eve out of a rib taken from the sleeping Adam (Gen. 2.21–22), taken literally, "resembles a myth" (*Legum allegoriae* 2.7.19–20); if one stops to think about them, the anthropomorphisms that Moses applied to God in his pedagogic endeavor (such as Gen. 6.7: God regrets having created man and thinks of destroying him; Deut. 8.5: like a man, God educates his son) become absurd in themselves and in their consequences, for they are the "mythopoeses" of impious men (*Quod deus sit immutabilis* 12.59).

This last text suggests that there were literalists among the exegetes who, probably unintentionally, went so far as to call certain pages of the Bible myths, thereby objectively joining the cause of the aforementioned comparativists, although their intentions and methods were quite different. To avoid the risk of seeing the Bible concede part of its territory to myth, one merely had to renounce extreme literalism: by the miracle of allegory, mythical appearance dissolves and makes way for a more respectable theoretical meaning. Such is the rejoinder with which Philo responds to the threat of the mythicization of Scripture. Take, for instance, the two biblical serpents, the serpent in paradise, who speaks and seduces the woman (Gen. 3.1–5), and the bronze serpent, who procures the welfare of anyone who merely looks at him (Num. 21.9). On the face of it, "They look like wonders and monsters, . . . but if one explains them by allegory, the resemblance to myth vanishes, and the truth reveals itself



The baptism of Christ. Mosaic in the nave of the church of Daphni, ca. 1100. Photo Hans Hinz—Skira.

with all clarity": the mortal knots of the first serpent are the knots of pleasure; the bronze of the second serpent is the strength of the soul that nothing can attack (*De agricultura* 22.96–97). So the myth that one might on occasion be tempted to suspect in the Bible is just an illusion that vanishes in the light of allegory. The *De opificio mundi* (56.157) repeats this idea with an example close to the preceding one: the passage of Genesis that refers to the planting of paradise with two trees, the enticing serpent, the fall, the punishment—despite all appearances (Gen. 2.7–3, 24), these "are not the mythical fictions dear to the race of poets and Sophists, but rather examples of figures that invite one to allegory, in accordance with implied meanings." These are some of the ideas about myth in Philo's hermeneutics that have been discussed by G. Dellings,³ and by me in a previous work.⁴

II. Patristic Christianity

As P. Heinisch⁵ has pointed out (along with many other scholars), Philo had an enormous influence on the exegesis of the Church Fathers. Among the teachings that were handed down in this way are his views that although certain biblical texts appear to be mythical, such an appearance is shattered by the allegorical interpretation, which virtually exercises a demythologizing function, as J. Daniélou has wisely observed.⁶ Another way of formulating this principle is to say that without allegorical exegesis, one remains unarmed before all the appearances of myth. That is how Gregory of Nyssa dealt with the verses from Genesis (2.16–

17) concerning the tree of knowledge; without actually naming the allegory, he designated it in no uncertain terms: "If one does not contemplate the truth in the narrative by means of philosophy, the unsuspecting reader will find the narrative inconsistent and similar to myth" (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*, prologue, ed. Langerbeck, pp. 11, 5–7).

Origen had previously given yet another presentation of the same concept. He claimed that the Old Testament was both myth and truth (or, following the classical dichotomy, *mythos* and *logos*) depending on the quality of its readers: it was myth for the Jews, who perceived only its surface, but it became truth for Christians who through allegory penetrated to its deep meaning. The following are two texts taken from Origen that typify this way of seeing things. First from *Contra Celsum* 2.4 and 5.42: Christians "bestow greater honor on the Books of the Law by showing what depths of wise and mysterious teachings are enclosed in these texts, whereas their meaning has escaped the Jews, whose contact with them is too superficial and mythical." "To Jews, children with the intelligence of children, the truth was still proclaimed in the form of myth; but now, for the Christians who seek instruction and wish to make progress, what were formerly myths, to call them by their name, are now metamorphosed into those truths that were hidden in the myths." (The Bible read by Jewish eyes is still described as "myth" and "mythology" in 2.5–6, and 52 of the same treatise.) We can see how these various authors solved the problem of myth in the Bible by subjectifying it: myth that was nothing but myth could not be found in the Holy Scriptures, which is why the comparativists' illusion was false; Scripture merely contains apparent and provisional myths destined to wither away under the effect of the allegorical reading. This is precisely the ideology that was held in common by many Hellenized Jews and by the Church Fathers. Origen took a step forward where Philo obviously could not follow him when he made the appearances of myth the lot of the Jews and profound truth the privilege of Christians.

III. The History of Religions

The tendency toward comparativism that Philo denounced nevertheless continued, in a slightly different form. For it is not Greek myths that today provide us with counterparts to the Old Testament (although there are plenty of examples of those); rather, we turn to more ancient cultures, Babylonia and Phoenicia, where we pick up striking parallels, notably between biblical narratives of the creation and the flood, and the Babylonian poem of the *Enūma eliš* and the epic of Gilgamesh. It used to be accepted without argument that this coincidence could be explained by an influence exerted on Israel; this view was championed by H. Gunkel⁷ among others. Since then, scholars have become more circumspect; see, for example, the works of A. Heidel⁸ and E. O. James.⁹ People still resort to analogies that indicate the presence of considerable mythical segments in the Old Testament. But these episodes are marked by a particular coloration because of the monotheism basic to the Jewish tradition.

We shall not attempt to give an inventory here of all the episodes with mythical dimensions in the Bible, but rather limit ourselves to a typical example, myths of water, referring the reader for more details to the work of P. Reymond.¹⁰ Hebrew cosmology rests essentially on the myth (not exclusively Jewish) of a primordial ocean that surrounds the dry earth boundlessly, threatens its existence, and gives birth to all the waters on earth, below (rivers and springs) and above (rain). The origin of time is marked by Yahweh's struggle with this hostile element, often personified by the sea monsters Rahab

(Job 26.12) and Leviathan (Isa. 27.1; Ps. 74.13–14, etc.). The primordial struggle of God against the forces of the sea also develops against the Nile and its incarnation the Pharaoh, himself assimilated to the crocodile of Egypt. This amalgam is admirably depicted in Ezekiel 29.3–4: “These are the words of the Lord God: I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, you great monster, lurking in the streams of the Nile. You have said, ‘My Nile is my own; it was I who made it. I will put hooks in your jaws,’” etc.

The mythical ocean of the Bible is not only liquid; it is also dark. This dual quality excellently describes the formlessness of original chaos. Yahweh’s creative action consists in his victory over the dark ocean; this victory is marked at the beginning of Genesis (1.2, 6–7) by two important features of domination: the spirit of God prevails over the waters by hovering over them (or is it perhaps that he watches anxiously over the nascent world which the waters still threaten?), and God divides the waters in two by interposing the firmament. The sea is henceforth “held back with two doors” (Job 38.8). The mythical water is domesticated by God, who uses it to punish men (the flood, Gen. 6–9) or to serve them (the water that springs forth from the cleft rock during the exodus from Egypt, Ps. 78.15–16, 105.40, etc.). Numerous analogies to this sequence of grandiose depictions occur outside of Israel: Yahweh’s victorious struggle with the ocean evokes Marduk’s struggle against Tiamat in the *Enūma eliš*; the sea monster Leviathan also appears in the Canaanite legend of Ba’al and Anat known through texts excavated at Ras Shamra-Ugarit. But, as before, we should not hasten to infer an influence on biblical authors; rather, we should think of parallel roots going down into a common mythical background.

The New Testament

1. Keeping Myth at Bay

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths (*sesophismenois muthois*) when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Such is the profession of faith by which the Second Epistle of Peter (1.16) defines the antimythical position of the New Covenant. Nothing could be clearer, even if the word “myth” does not have there exactly the same meaning that we have seen until now. The designation “eyewitnesses” (*epoptēs*) applied to the beneficiaries of a revelation is in the context all the more peculiar since it comes from the technical language of the Greek mysteries. Saint Paul’s hostility toward myth is equally well known: his precept to Timothy is to “have nothing to do with those godless myths, fit only for old women” (1 Tim. 4.7), to warn the Ephesians “to give up . . . studying those interminable myths . . . which issue in mere speculation and cannot make known God’s plan for us, which works through faith” (1 Tim. 1.3–4), for the time will unfortunately come when “they will stop their ears to the truth and turn to mythology” (2 Tim. 4.4). He asks his other disciple Titus to insist that the Christians of Jewish origin in Crete not “lend their ears to Jewish myths and commandments of merely human origins, the work of men who turn their backs upon the truth” (Titus 1.14). These are the only five passages in which the New Testament refers to myth by that name. They consistently define a wholly negative attitude. In particular, the last two Pauline texts cited pose myth and truth as opposites, such that any belief in one constitutes a denial of the other.

The theologian’s reflection on Christian specificity moves in the direction of these biases. The Greek philosophers who lived during the period of Christian expansion defined myth by its ability to give a temporal appearance to the timeless. Plotinus thus said that “myths, in order to be truly myths, must parcel out their content over time and separate from one another many beings who are together and can only be distinguished by virtue of their rank or their powers” (*Enneades* 3.5 [50] 9.24–6). A similar view may be found in the philosopher Sallust, a friend of the emperor Julian, when he interprets the myth of Cybele and Attis. A strikingly different approach is taken by Christianity, which, particularly in the first few centuries, placed at the very heart of faith the reality of time and newness in historical progress. No one has more accurately described the contrast between these two mentalities than H.-Ch. Puech (in a lecture¹¹ that I unfortunately did not know about when I wrote my own study of this subject).¹²

Because the content of myth is indifferent to temporality, myth presents itself as a model capable of indefinite repetition. By contrast, the redemptive incarnation and passion constitute a single and nonrepeatable fact. The Jewish high priest who once a year entered into the most secret sanctuary of the Temple or the Holy of Holies foreshadowed the sacrificed Christ. Christ in turn accomplished what the high priest had only begun, offering himself up, not once a year, but once and for all in the totality of history. This is the lesson of chapter 9 of the Epistle to the Hebrews (see also 1 Peter 3.18), where there is a recurrence of the adverbs *hapax*, *ephapax*, (Latin *semel*), marking the absolute singleness of the sacrifice. It must be added that this conviction surely rested in large measure on the eschatological perspective of a nascent Christianity: since the end of time was expected in the near future (Paul thought he would be a witness to this event; we shall return to this below), there was no room for an eventual repetition of the passion.

One might object that Christianity itself provides the setting for a certain repetition of previous situations, and to this extent it is allied to the world of myth. For instance, the liturgical cycle annually reproduces the principal events in the life of Jesus (his conception, his birth, various episodes of his public life, his passion and death, his resurrection, and his ascension). Furthermore, the ritual celebration of the sacraments often recalls either the episodes of sacred history that prefigure them—what Saint Paul called its “types” (thus the flood and the crossing of the Red Sea are recalled in memory by the ceremony of baptism)—or the scenes from the life of Jesus during which they were instituted (the celebration of the Eucharist somehow reactualizes the Last Supper). One may therefore discern, notably in the conception of sacramental practice as a reactivation of the founding elements, a phenomenon not without analogy in the mysteries of the Hellenistic East, in which the ritual reenactment of original myths allowed the initiate to relive, through participation, the destiny of the deity. Baptism, for instance, is conceived by Saint Paul as a burial with Christ, an assimilation into his death and resurrection, the privilege of putting on Christ as a garment (Rom. 6.3–5; Gal. 3.27), whereas Johannine theology sees as the effect of the Eucharist the mutual dwelling of the faithful in Jesus and of Jesus in the faithful (John 6.56). But we should not lose sight of the fact that, unlike myths, biblical “types” and scenes of institution are regarded by Christianity as historical events. Moreover, anyone who hesitates to admit to the necessarily temporal nature of this religion and, hence, its nonmythical character has at his disposal some evidence to the contrary,

which H.-Ch. Puech has brilliantly demonstrated, namely, the confrontation with Christian Gnosticism, which conceived time as essentially bad and salvation as deliverance from time: by thus severing Christianity from any temporal and historical perspective, Gnosticism, unlike the Church, fully embraced myth.

II. New Testament Mythology and Demythologization

This is not to say that early Christianity is free of any mythical factor, however steeped in history it is supposed to be. There is convincing evidence to that effect in the New Testament itself, despite the denials we have mentioned. For the sake of continuity, let us return to the example given above with respect to the Old Testament. There is little doubt that myths of water lie in the background of the Gospels. Thus, the scene described in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 4.35–41, etc.) when Jesus quells the storm on Lake Genesareth must be viewed as yet another episode of the struggle between God and the primordial ocean, which persists in rebelling despite its defeat. In the fourth Gospel, the most level-headed exegetes, such as A. Jaubert,¹³ detect several fairly well developed references to the original mythical water. The same would apply to the water flowing from Jesus' side on the Cross (John 19.34), and especially to the idea of "living water" mentioned in the dialogue with the Samaritan woman (John 4.6–15) and in Christ's comparing the gift of the Holy Spirit to the streams of living water flowing out from within him (John 7.37–39).

In the 1950s the surviving mythical elements in the New Testament were brought to light by the brilliant exegete Rudolph Bultmann in a series of remarkable scholarly works.¹⁴ Bultmann discovered many mythological elements (he preferred "mythological" to "mythical") in the teaching of Christ. Among them is the conception of the "Kingdom of God" as an eschatological reality about to come. "There are some of those standing here who will not taste death before they have seen the Kingdom of God already come in power," said Jesus (Mark 9.1), and Saint Paul was convinced he was among those whom the coming of the Lord would find still living (1 Cor. 15.51–52; 1 Thess. 4.15–17). Other similar depictions include the splitting up of the universe into three storeys (which explains Christ's descent into hell and his ascension into heaven; see Acts 1.9–11, Eph. 4.9–10), the belief in miracles and in the intervention of supernatural forces, the idea that Satan and the demons rule the world and men's souls, and so forth. All these conceptions are thought to be mythological insofar as they differ from scientific conceptions.

No less mythological, in Bultmann's eyes, is the picture that the early Christian community had of its founder. At issue are not miracles like virgin birth but two major images applied to Jesus. First, he is proclaimed the "Son of Man" who at the end of time is supposed to come back on the clouds of heaven to judge the world in a thunderous cosmic blaze (see for instance Matt. 25.31–32; Thess. 4.16–17; 2 Pet. 3.10–12). But this is a title, usage, and setting that are usual in late Jewish apocalyptic, as is seen, for example, in the Book of Daniel (7.13–14). Second, Jesus is presented as the preexisting Son of God who abandons the divine *pleroma*, becomes man, descends on earth by breaking down the dividing wall, accomplishes his mission of reconciliation and salvation, and finally reascends into heaven. Those are the categories of Pauline christology (for example, Eph. 2.13–16; Col. 1.13–22 and 2.9–15) and Johannine christology (John 1.1–18). But they are also the categories of the Gnostic myth of the primordial man who is a savior; from him too, as from

Jesus, flows the living water that revives the universe, according to the Naassenes, the Gnostics described by Hippolytus (*Refutatio omnium Haeresium* 5.9, 19). This double kinship of the christology of the New Testament with apocalyptic and Gnosis seems to Bultmann to be the very signature of its mythological nature.

Such cosmological and religious representations belong to their own time; we cannot expect today's believer to hold them to be true; even if he wished to do so, he would not willingly choose a defunct image of the world. Similarly, the truth of Christian preaching is to be found not in these mythologies but in the fact that it is fundamentally a *kerygma*, a personal message to the human conscience, a universalist challenge which cannot be compromised by the necessarily contingent and now outgrown cultural context in which it was heard. This is the definition of *kerygma* that Bultmann finds formulated precisely in Paul's statement to the Corinthians: "Only by declaring the truth openly do we recommend ourselves, and then it is to the common conscience of our fellow men and in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4.2). We must not, however, deny that mythological statements have any function, for they do contain a meaning, which they also hide, that is deeper than they are themselves. To discover this meaning, we must accomplish the work for which Bultmann coined a word that has since then come into general usage: "demythologization" (*Entmythologisierung*).

The appropriate function of mythology in general is to bring divine reality down to the human level, and to endow transcendent subjectivity with "worldly" objectivity. According to Bultmann's famous definition, "the mode of representation in which the nonworldly, the divine, appears worldly and human, the beyond as the here below, is mythological."¹⁵ Furthermore, this misconstruction through mythology is more or less the lot of all religion, which, in its attempt to express the divine, can only resort to a language and categories that are incapable of expressing it. J. Spina Weiland¹⁶ rightly believes that Bultmann is reiterating in his own way the rationalist criticism which, in the early stages of Greek thought, denounced the anthropomorphic theology of the poets. The task of demythologization must therefore be to identify behind the screen of an outdated cosmology the religious intention from which it emerged. For science, it is absurd to speak of a top and a bottom of the universe; but if the biblical assertion that God resides in heaven is devoid of immediate meaning, it does endeavor to translate divine transcendence indirectly. Similarly, to situate hell under the earth is a way of depicting the terrifying character of evil, and so forth. If the image of "heaven" thus serves as the spatial expression of God's transcendence, then the idea of the "end of the world" is its temporal expression. Behind the apparent content of eschatological preaching can be heard an exhortation to the availability by which human beings open themselves up to the future of God. New Testament mythology also speaks to human beings about themselves. As we have seen, the function of the cosmological myth is not to define an objective image of the universe but to shed light on the divine nature; its function is also to reveal the way in which people experience their condition in the world—in other words, to express a certain understanding of human existence. This is an existential interpretation, and Bultmann does not attempt to conceal the fact that he has borrowed it from Heidegger.

These theses of Bultmann on demythologization and its premises have awakened considerable interest and won many disciples. It matters little that some of them, like R. A. Johnson,¹⁷ have tempered the originality of his positions by

demonstrating the philosophical roots and historical anticipations of *Entmythologisierung*. But Bultmann's arguments have also met with much resistance. More recently, the *religionsgeschichtliche* perspective adopted by Bultmann—that the preexisting Son of God was a category predating Pauline christology, which then borrowed it—has been strongly and cogently criticized by M. Hengel.¹⁸ But it was not the assertion of the presence of mythical elements in the New Testament that upset exegetical scholars. H. Schlier,¹⁹ who is not a Bultmann exponent, has no difficulty in recognizing the double influence of Jewish apocalyptic and the Gnostic primordial man, to which he even adds the influence of Hellenistic mysteries; but this triple concession is clearly equivalent to abandoning to myth a considerable portion of the Gospels and the Epistles. No, what is really disturbing is that Bultmann does not contain mythology within any limits, however broad, but rather absorbs into it everything in the New Testament that is not specifically kerygmatic. Thus O. Cullmann, in an important book,²⁰ first endorses the way Bultmann applies demythologization to the entire history of salvation and not just to its extremities. But later he begins to fear that this history, in which we can see the essence of early Christianity, may be totally dissolved in the process.²¹ We should add to this major objection our own sense of the importance of the notion of an irreversible unfolding of time in the definition of Christian reality. The same challenge is expressed, sometimes colored by confessional preoccupations, by L. Malevez²² and R. Marlé,²³ the latter with the additional interest of having prompted a response from Bultmann himself.²⁴ The controversy is probably not over, but Bultmann's contribution thus far has been to draw attention, more than anyone else before him, to the reality of a mythical component in the New Testament. We can and must discuss the dimensions of this component; we can no longer deny its existence.

The good shepherd. Rome, catacombs.



Liturgy

I. Myths of Water in Baptism

It is widely recognized that the mythical function of consciousness operates even more freely in liturgical practice than in literature or in the realm of speculation. G. P. Zacharias²⁵ has shown that Christian liturgy is an excellent testing ground for Jung's analyses of the workings of the psyche. Mythical elements could probably be detected behind many liturgical gestures or formulas of early Christianity. To avoid spreading ourselves too thin, we shall focus on two fairly representative examples, the first one connected to the Jewish myth (mentioned earlier) of the primordial ocean as the enemy of god.

Baptism, as it is practiced in the New Testament (for example, Matt. 3.13–16: the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River; Acts 8.38–39: the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch), involves descending into water and rising out of it. Pauline theology (Rom. 6.3–9) sees baptism as a double assimilation, first to the death and burial of Christ, then to his resurrection and his victory over death. The two pairs of acts can be perceived as parallel: the baptismal candidate both immerses himself in, and escapes from, a mythical water, a sea of death.

Two observations support this contention. First, in the earliest form of Christianity there is a connection between baptism and Christ's descent into hell immediately after his death. According to the Jewish cosmology that was still powerful at that time, to go underground among the dead leads to the realm of the original Ocean. Second, the theology and liturgy of the first centuries A.D. claimed to discern figurative interpretations or "types" of baptism in episodes in the Old Testament. Among these, the three principal ones were the flood (Gen. 6–8), the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites in the flight from Egypt (Exod. 14.15–31), and the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land (Josh. 3.9–17). We can see that all three of these accounts illustrate the confrontation between the primordial ocean and Yahweh, and the latter's victory over the former. We are led to conclude that baptism too, in the unfolding of its ritual, is regarded as the last skirmish in this mythical struggle, which is as old as history. In the liturgical and doctrinal texts of the patristic era, numerous indices can be found of this conjunction of baptism with the *descensus ad inferos* and the three episodes in the Old Testament; they have been admirably collected by P. Lundberg.²⁶ But we must also realize that the New Testament bears witness to the same phenomenon. The first Epistle to the Corinthians (10.1–2) is a clear example: "Our ancestors were all under the pillar of cloud, and all of them passed through the Red Sea; and so they all received baptism into the fellowship of Moses in cloud and sea." The first Epistle of Peter (3.19–21) is more obscure; but in these few lines we can recognize the descent into hell, the flood, and baptism: "In the spirit he [Christ] went and made his proclamation to the imprisoned spirits. They had refused obedience long ago, while God waited patiently in the days of Noah and the building of the ark, and in the ark a few persons, eight in all, were brought to safety through the water. It is the 'antitype' of this water, baptism, that now will save you too."

II. Orientation and Solar Myths

Early Christians prayed facing east, where the sun rises. This differs from the custom of the Jews, who pray facing Jerusalem, as Daniel does in the biblical book that bears his name (6.11); so important is this difference that Elkesai, the



Orpheus Christ, Sabbartha alabaster. Tripoli Museum. Photo Baudot-Lamotte.

founder of a Judeo-Christian sect, dissociated himself from Christianity by prescribing that his followers face Jerusalem and forbidding them to face east. The Scriptures contain many details confirming each in its own way the special position of the east: the earthly paradise was planted "to the east" (Gen. 2.8); it is believed that Christ's ascension took an eastward course, for the Latin version of Psalm 68 (67), verse 34, applies to the Lord the phrase *qui ascendit super caelum caeli ad orientem* ("who ascended above heaven, to the east of heaven"), and his return is also expected to come from the east; the angel in the Revelation of John (7.2) rises out of the east, and so forth.

These coincidences result not from mere chance but from the early assimilation of Christ to the sun, in particular the rising sun. The classical work on this subject remains that of F. J. Dölger.²⁷ Already in the hymn of Zachariah (Luke 1.78-79), Jesus is called "the morning sun from heaven [who] will rise upon us, to shine on those who live in darkness, under the cloud of death." This has the ring of a prophetic naming of Christ as the "sun of righteousness" referred to in Malachi (4.2); Tertullian summarizes an entire past and future tradition when he writes (*Adversus Valentinianos* 3.1): *orientem, Christi figuram* ("the east, the figure of Christ"). The metaphor was already well implanted when, at

the end of the third century, it became even more firmly rooted and was used to thwart the cult of *Sol invictus* imposed by the Emperor Aurelian. Thus, the pagan festival of the *dies natalis Solis invicti* ("the day of the birth of the unvanquished Sun"), celebrated on 25 December when the exhausted sun is reborn, made way for the nativity of the solar Christ.

One can understand how such grandiose imagery could not work its way into early Christianity without bringing in with it a fringe of mythical cosmology. Here again, it may be in certain details of the liturgy and worship that the contamination can most easily be identified. For example, in the ritual of baptism, between the renunciation of the devil and the profession of faith in Christ, the catechumen would suddenly turn around, pivoting from west to east; for the west was taken to be the realm of darkness ruled by the Prince of Darkness, and so the baptismal candidate looked in that direction to repudiate Satan, but he turned to face east at the moment he joined Christ. This ceremonial detail, commented upon by several ancient authors and also studied by F. J. Dölger,²⁸ may certainly be regarded as a vehicle of the mythical mentality. On the other hand, as J. A. Jungmann²⁹ has demonstrated, the depiction of the solar Christ required an eastward orientation not only for prayer but, consequently, for church building and even for the layout of cemeteries; Greek and Roman temples also faced east. It was finally concluded that this orientation of the church, when added to that of the Christians inside, made it difficult both for the congregation and for the celebrant to position themselves. As a result, starting in the fourth century, church builders turned the apse rather than the facade of the church toward the east, probably without awareness of the ancient images that prompted these architectural concerns from afar.

J.P.g.h.

NOTES

1. H. A. WOLFSON, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 1948), 1:82-84 and 124.
2. J. DANIELOU, *Philon d'Alexandrie, Les Temps et les Destins* (Paris 1958), 107-10.
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CHRISTIAN JUDGMENTS ON THE ANALOGIES BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND PAGAN MYTHOLOGY

I. The Problem

1. *Insertions and dissimilarities.* When nascent Christianity had to define itself in the face of Greek culture, especially of pagan theology, it hesitated between two contrary responses. As A. J. Festugière has demonstrated,¹ both responses were offered by the apostle Paul. In his Athenian discourse, of which the Acts of the Apostles (17.16–34) describes the setting and preserves the outline, Paul manipulated the language and ideas of the philosophers of the time, who were his listeners, and showed how the new religion had come to fulfill their expectations: the place that paganism held vacant for the "unknown god" was claimed for the Christians' God, whom Paul introduced by leaning heavily on Stoic stereotypes. But this attempt at harmonization ended in almost total failure; so when Paul left Athens for Corinth, he chose a quite different method, which is echoed in the beginning of the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1.17–25; 2.1–5). No longer is there any attempt to fit the new religion into a continuity with pagan theology; instead, pagan earthly wisdom and pagan logical and rhetorical knowledge are brutally confronted with the scandal of the Gospel and the folly of the Cross.

It can be claimed, without exaggeration, that this two-sided approach in Pauline preaching gave rise to two opposing currents which run through the whole of Christian history. These are recognizable from the time of the Church Fathers; certain authors strive to present their belief as the realization of what was best in pagan theology, while others, by contrast, accentuate the antagonism between the two.

This cleavage is no doubt due to several circumstances: the diversity of temperaments, which is the first thing one thinks of, was not all-determining; one should also take into consideration the historical situation as well as political and social conditions. Minds tended in different directions as persecution became rife, or as tolerance reigned, or as the Christian empire triumphed. For whatever reasons, this duality of attitudes is undeniable, though some defend one or the other position while many hesitate between the two or temper the one with the other.

In the pages which follow we shall apply this schema to a particular problem—the existence and import of characteristics common to Christianity and to preceding theologies. The intransigent attitude would be to deny, in the name of Christian transcendence, the very fact of such analogies; Tertullian, for example, is content to contrast the purity associated with the virgin birth of the Son of God to the squalor in which the sons of Jupiter were born: "The Son of God was not born in such a way that he had to blush at the name of son or at his paternal lineage; he did not have to submit to the affront, through incest with a sister or the debauching of a daughter or of another man's wife, of having a divine father covered with scales, horned or feathered, or changed into a shower of gold like the lover of Danaë. The human infamies that you commit are Jupiter's infamies! But the Son of God does not have a mother as the result of unchastity; and even the mother that you see him to have was not married" (*Apologeticus* 21.7–9).

Contrary to what one might expect, however, such a flat refusal is not the prevailing attitude among the Fathers. More often, they admit that certain intersections are possible between the gods and heroes of paganism (including their myths and ceremonies) on the one hand, and the figures and events of biblical history (including Christian beliefs and life) on the other. They are led to make such a concession for

varied reasons: for one, their pagan adversaries, as we shall see more than once in this context, had drawn their attention to many of these similarities, and it was safer to admit to them in order to defuse them than to close one's eyes to them. Indeed, the uses to which the Christians put these intersections with paganism, the explanations they give for them, and the importance they accord to them vary greatly, ranging from a simple figure of speech to the Christianization of a pagan element. We must attempt to distinguish between these different styles of comparative thought, starting from the most superficial, which are of no consequence, and progressing toward those which bring into play an entire view of history. Here, then, is the bottom rung of the ladder.

2. *Comparisons without theological intent.* An example of such comparisons is the one that the earliest Christian apologists made between the Noah of Genesis (5.29–9.29) and the Deucalion of classical mythology (cf. among others Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.313–415). It is, in fact, less a comparison of these two figures than the reduction of the latter to the former. Theophilus of Antioch rejects the legend of Deucalion and Pyrrha surviving the flood and throwing stones behind them, which turn into men; but he retains the name of Deucalion as one that the pagans, by means of a bizarre etymology, gave to Noah (*Ad Autolyicum* 3.18–19; see also 2.30, and the earlier Justin Martyr, *Second Apology* 7.2). This amounted to an admission of a certain homogeneity between the two cultures. It would be two centuries before Christian specialists in chronology, Eusebius of Caesarea and his translator Jerome, would distinguish between the localized flood of Deucalion and the older, universal flood of Noah, which was completely unknown to pagan history. This new outlook is described and adopted in Augustine's *City of God* (18.8, 10).

On other occasions, in the case of Christian authors raised on Greek culture, a biblical episode spontaneously evokes a mythic episode, or vice versa. In an attempt to stir the hardened hearts of the idolaters, Clement of Alexandria compares them to Niobe (turned into a rock, cf. *Iliad* 24.602–17), then catches himself and, "in order to speak more in the language of our mystery," replaces Niobe by Lot's wife (who became a pillar of salt, Genesis 9.26) (*Protrepticus* 10.103–4). The pagan Platonist Celsus wanted to keep only the blame-worthy traits in the story of Joseph, and forgot that this person preferred prison to the burning passion his master's wife had for him (Genesis 39.7–20); the Christian Origen reproaches Celsus for his omission, while the virtue of Joseph reminds him of the quite analogous, yet to his eyes inferior, virtue ascribed to Bellerophon (who rejected, at the peril of his life, the advances of Anteia, wife of his protector King Proetus, cf. *Iliad* 6.155–70) (*Contra Celsum* 4.46). Such parallels, which today continue to strike us with their pertinence, came automatically to the minds of the Christians of Alexandria, though hardly above the level of free association.

A comparison of the same order, destined to endure for a long time, was established by Eusebius between Heracles and the Samson of the Book of Judges (13.24–16.31); he claimed he collected it from the Jewish tradition. The comparison is naturally based on the physical strength common to both individuals, who were, Eusebius adds, almost contemporaries, close to the time of the fall of Troy (*Chronica*, preface, in the translation by Saint Jerome; and again in *Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.9.7). The art and literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance would popularize the analogy, retaining in particular the episode of Heracles

slaying the Nemean lion, since this has a homology in the biography of Samson (Judges 14.5–6). Medieval sculpture would similarly metamorphose Heracles into Saint Christopher and Heracles slaying Geryon into Saint George slaying the dragon. On the medieval Christianization of Heracles, which remains superficial throughout, we may refer to a study by M. Simon,² and, with respect to pictorial representations of Heracles, a book by J. Adhémar.³ This concern to provide a biblical figure corresponding to the Greek hero continues down to Dante: David's combat with Goliath (1 Samuel 17.4–51) finds its replica in that of Heracles with Antaeus (cf. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.183–84; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 4.597–660) (Dante, *De Monarchia* 2.9.11; cf. 2.7.10, and *Convivio* 3.3.7–8).

II. Rhetorical Uses

1. *The language of the mysteries.* The preceding parallels may be imputed to mere reminiscences, natural to authors at the crossroads of two cultural traditions. Others are more premeditated, responding to the need felt by certain Christian apologists to address themselves to pagan listeners in the religious language of pagans.

Such a design is perhaps nowhere better expressed than at the end of the *Protrepticus* (12.119.1), when Clement of Alexandria announces to his pagan interlocutor: "Come . . . and I shall show you the Word and the mysteries of the Word by transposing your own imagery (*kata tēn sēn diēgoumenos eikona*)."⁴ Following this resolution, which Hugo Rahner⁴ rightly considers an exemplary statement, Clement presents the essence of Christianity in the technical language of the Dionysian mysteries: baptism and eucharist thus lend themselves to a description in which the *dadouchoi* (torch bearers), the *epoptia* (supreme revelation), the initiation, the hierophant (in this context the Lord), the *muste* (initiate), the seal, the lighting, etc., all play a part (12.120.1–2). Christian authors, from Saint Paul to Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor (sixth and seventh centuries), indulge freely in these borrowings from the vocabulary and notions of the Greek mysteries; the reader may consult E. Hatch's classic work and a more recent work by Arthur Darby Nock.⁵

There is yet another way of speaking to pagans in the language of their own religion. It consists in extracting some of the more popular episodes from the mythical biographies of pagan gods or heroes, and transposing their meaning in such a way as to render more accessible a given aspect of the Christian mystery. This procedure assumes a recognition on the part of the Christian authors of parallels between their own religion and classical mythology. Such parallels remain quite superficial, and their manipulation does not essentially differ from the point-for-point comparisons treated above. The procedure may, however, be extended into a rhetorical orchestration, in which different episodes from the mythological account take on a meaning determined by the principal theme. This assertion may be verified in a famous example.

2. *The Christian Odysseus.* As A. Wifstrand⁶ has noted, the New Testament is still quite restrained in its use of *exempla* borrowed from Greek culture; second-century Christian apologists use a few of these, but most often with hostile intentions. A much more hospitable attitude appears in the third century with Clement of Alexandria—perhaps because the Gnostics had, in the meantime, taken the Christian amalgam with Greek mythology as far as it could go. We could go on citing forever the rhetorical uses of paganism

made by Clement and his successors in order to formulate Christian ideas; rather, we shall take a particular case—to wit, the legend of Odysseus and the Sirens—and follow it through part of the tradition. This too has been masterfully studied by Hugo Rahner,⁷ as well as by P. Courcelle⁸ and Jérôme Carcopino.⁹

Shortly before the passage we just examined on the reemployment of the language of the mysteries, Clement of Alexandria evokes the famous episode of Odysseus's encounter with the Sirens and with Charybdis (*Odyssey* 12.39–123, 154–259). In his eyes, the Sirens symbolize the misdeeds of habit and the appeals of pleasure, and Odysseus, when he thwarts them by tying himself to his mast, is the image of the Christian who triumphs over perdition by embracing the wood of the Cross (*Protrepticus* 12.118.1–4). A little later than Clement, Hippolytus of Rome draws attention to a detail, neglected by his predecessor, in the same account and endows it with meaning: before having himself tied up to the mast, Odysseus plugs his companions' ears with wax; here we are to understand that faithful Christians are to remain deaf to the insidious propaganda of heretics, and become one in body with the wood of the Cross so as to conquer agitation and remain firm (*Refutatio omnium Haeresium* 7.13). Toward the end of the third century, Bishop Methodius of Olympus was nourished on Homer, as V. Buchheit has shown;¹⁰ his principal work, *The Symposium*, not only imitates that of Plato but, starting in the prologue (§ 4), refers to the banquet of the Olympians in the *Iliad* (4.1–4). In another work, a *Treatise on Free Will* (1.1–3), the same author contrasts the fatal song of the Sirens to the salutary chorus of the Prophets and Apostles, in the presence of whom one need not plug one's companions' ears with wax nor gird oneself with ropes. Methodius nevertheless abstains, unlike his two predecessors, from comparing the mast of Odysseus with the tree of the Cross. A century later, however, Saint Ambrose renews these ties with tradition: for him, the sea is the deceitful world, the Sirens the sensuality that enthralls the soul, the rocky shore the body; far from blocking one's ears, one should open them to the voice of the Christ; one should attach oneself, not like Odysseus to a mast with material bonds, but to the wood of the Cross with spiritual bonds. Ambrose is not loath to innovate on several points: among the circumstances that delay the voyage of Odysseus he cites, apart from the Sirens, the sweet fruits of the Lotus Eaters and the gardens of Alcinoüs (*Odyssey* 7.112–32; 9.82–104). As is natural for a Latin author, he mixes his Homeric memories together with certain recollections of the voyage of Aeneas according to Virgil (*Aeneid* 1.536; 2.23). Especially important for the viewpoint under consideration here is the fact that Ambrose himself notes traffic between Greek mythology and the Bible when he observes that the Bible speaks of Giants and the Valley of the Titans (Genesis 6.4; 2 Samuel 5.22; 23.13), and that the prophet Isaiah (13.21) names the Sirens. (This whole passage from Saint Ambrose is found in his *Exposition of the Gospel According to Saint Luke* 4.2–3.)

The last important representative of this tradition was the fifth-century bishop Maximus of Turin, who probably took his inspiration from the passage from Ambrose just cited. The term-for-term correspondence between the episode in the *Odyssey* and its Christian application is now carried to its extreme: the sea is a representation of the hostile world, the pleasures of which are represented by the Sirens; Ithaca is the celestial land where the true life will be lived; the means to enter it is the Church, whose image has traditionally been the boat; here, as in Neoplatonist allegory, Odysseus incarnates the human condition; secured to his mast, which

symbolizes the Cross, he naturally stands for the Crucified, but also for every Christian, and even all of humanity; his companions evoke the more distant adepts who nevertheless are within the shadow of the Cross, such as the penitent thief: finally, even the wax stuck into their ears is given a meaning—it is the Scriptures. In this detailed paralleling, Maximus capitalizes on nearly all of the contributions of his predecessors; his personal appetite for rhetoric makes him the ideal representative of this mode of using myths. Unlike the writing of Clement, Hippolytus, Methodius, and Ambrose, his text has never been translated into French. For these varied reasons, he is worth presenting in translation here, in spite (or because) of his inflated and prolix style. He begins with an account of the danger threatening Odysseus and of the hero's expedients for protecting himself against it:

The pagan fables relate the story of the famous Odysseus who, tempest-tossed upon a wayward course over the sea for ten years, could not reach his homeland; his navigation had brought him to a place in which there arose, in its cruel sweetness, the suave song of the Sirens; they charmed those who came there with a melody so seductive that instead of taking in this sensual delight, they threw away their lives in shipwreck; such was the seduction of this song that hearing the sound of their voices was enough to make a man a prisoner to their magic charm: he would stop steering toward his desired port and rush into undesired ruin. Odysseus, it is said, having come to the brink of this exquisite shipwreck and wishing to escape from the perils of its sweetness, filled the ears of his companions with wax and then tied himself to the mast of his ship; thus his men would be deaf to the fatal charm, and he would deliver himself from the danger of changing his ship's course.

Then follows the Christian application:

If, then, this fable relates that for this man Odysseus to tie himself to the mast was to be delivered from peril, how much more necessary it is to proclaim what truly came to pass; to wit, that today it is the whole of the human species that has been wrested from the threat of death by the tree of the Cross! Indeed, from the moment Christ the Lord was nailed to the Cross, from that very moment, we have been able to traverse with closed ears, so to speak, those critical points at which the world unfolds its seductions; for we do not stop to listen to the fatal messages of this world, nor do we deviate from our path toward a better life and fall astray upon the reefs of pleasure. For not only does the tree of the Cross allow the man who is nailed to it to see his homeland once again, but it also protects, by the shadow of its might, his companions who are grouped around him. That the Cross returns us to our homeland after much wandering is proclaimed by our Lord when he says to the crucified thief: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23.43). This thief, who had for so long been wandering and shipwrecked, certainly could not have returned to the homeland of paradise, which the first man had left, other than tied to the mast. For the mast on the ship is, in a sense, the Cross in the Church, which alone keeps itself safe and sound amid the seductive and mortal shipwrecks which shake the world from one end to the other. Thus anyone who, in this ship, attaches himself to the tree of the Cross or whose ears have been closed by means of the Holy Scriptures does not fear the sweet tempest of lust. For the comely features of the Sirens may be said to be the

cowardly cupidity of the pleasures, a cupidity which by its pernicious seductions softens the firmness of the spirit that has become its prisoner.

The beginning of the next paragraph is important from a methodological standpoint: in his Christian preaching, the author does not refrain from drawing on the imagery of myths in the same way that he draws on the *exempla* of the Old Testament; but he takes care to contrast the pure fiction of myths to the historical context of the biblical accounts: "Thus Christ the Lord was hung on the Cross to free the entire human race from the shipwreck toward which the world is heading. But let us forget the fable of Odysseus, which is an invention without reality; let us see if we can find in the Holy Scriptures some similar example, which Our Lord, before accomplishing it himself, first initiated through his prophets!" (These passages from Maximus of Turin may be found in his *Sermon* 37.1–3, in vol. 23, pp. 145–46, of the Mutzenbecher edition in the *Corpus christianorum*; and in *Homily* 49 in vol. 57, col. 339B–340B of the *Latin Patrology* of Migne.) The last sentence cited offers a remarkable definition of the relationship between the person of Jesus and the figures who announce him in the Old Testament: this is the typological perspective, which is clearly distinguished from the allegorical exegesis of myth. When it comes to substituting a biblical "type" for the fable of Odysseus, whose rhetorical use he has exhausted, Maximus cites the bronze serpent: affixed by Moses on the top of a pole (Numbers 21.6–9), this apotropaic object was seen, from New Testament times onward (John 3.14), as an image of the salvation procured by the Crucified. Here it is contrasted, in an equally traditional way, to another biblical serpent—that of Paradise, who is also wound around a tree.

III. The Chronological Quarrel

1. *Newness and oldness.* It is according to these categories, need it be said, that the New Testament defines itself with regard to the Old. This antithesis is not absent from the Gospels (the old skins and the new wine of Matthew 9.17, etc.); but it is with Paul that it takes on its true dimension: the Christian is invited to take off the "old man" to put on the "new man" (Colossians 3.9–10; Ephesians 4.22–24); he shall serve in the newness of the spirit and no longer in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7.6); he shall be a new creature in Christ, for whom *vetera transierunt, ecce facta sunt omnia nova* ("the old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"; 2 Corinthians 5.17. Taking its cue from this Pauline theme, one of the earliest documents of noncanonical Christian literature, the *Epistle of Barnabas* (5.7; 7.5), twice calls Christians "the new people" (*ho laos ho kainos*).

Saint Paul defined Christian newness with regard to Judaism. Next came the tendency to cast Hellenism together with Judaism as two parallel expressions of oldness. This is what we find in a second century apocryphal text, the *Kerygma Petri*: "It is in a new way that you worship God through the Christ. . . . The Lord has laid down a new covenant for us; for the ways of the Greeks and Jews are old, but we Christians worship him in a new way in a third generation." Clement of Alexandria, citing this text, accentuates this ternary aspect immediately afterward: "(Peter), it seems to me, clearly showed that the one and only God is known by the Greeks in pagan fashion, by the Jews in Jewish fashion, but by us in a new and spiritual fashion" (*Stromateis* 6.5.41.4–7). In the *Protrepticus*, which is addressed to the Greeks, Clement retains only the Greeks and omits the Jews: "Today,

even your myths seem to have aged. . . . But where is Zeus himself? He has aged, like his wings," and lost the ardor and cleverness which marked his amorous exploits (*Protrepticus* 2.37.1–3). Paganism, Clement says further, has fallen into superstition in its old age: it may find youth, and even innocent childhood, if it comes to worship the true God (*Protrepticus* 10.108.3).

This glorification of Christian newness must have grated on many followers of traditional paganism. Some of them said so themselves: the Platonist Celsus, cited by his adversary Origen (*Contra Celsum* 7.53), lets slip, in an address to the Christians, a "you who are so taken with innovation"; earlier, the historian Suetonius had identified Christianity as a *superstitio nova* ("new superstition"; *Nero* 16.3). Judgments of the same sort may be inferred through the retorts of the Christian apologists; the latter defended themselves against being considered as "newcomers," *hesterni*, as may be seen in A. Casamassa's classic article.¹¹ The unknown Christian author of the *Letter to Diognetes* asserts that people would ask such questions as: "Why do [the Christians] not accept the gods recognized by the Greeks, nor keep the religious observances of the Jews? . . . And why has this new race of men (*kainon genos*), this new way of life, come into the world only now and not earlier?" (1.1). The arguments exchanged between Christians and pagans on this theme have recently been studied once again in N. Zeegers-Vander Vorst's work.¹²

Perhaps it was to silence this objection that the Christians, without tempering their claims to newness, also attempted to connect themselves with ancestors of indisputable antiquity, who were none other than the Jews. This connection was difficult to make, not only because the Christians professed themselves to be the "new people," but also because the Gospels and especially the Pauline writings strove to dissociate them from a Judaism that was judged to be outdated. A passage from Tertullian, himself somewhat of an anti-Semite, conveys this ambiguity: "But since we have stated that our religion is founded upon the documents of the Jews, which are so old, though it is generally known (and we ourselves agree) that our religion is itself comparatively new, belonging as it does to the time of Tiberius, perhaps one might on this ground discuss its nature and say that, under the cover of a religion that is very illustrious and certainly authorized by law, our religion conceals certain new ideas that are its own, for aside from the question of age we do not agree with the Jews about abstaining from certain foods, or about the sanctity of festival days, or about their distinctive bodily mark, or sharing their name, which would of course be our duty if we were the servants of the same God" (*Apologeticus* 21.1–2). Nor did the false situation in which the Christians found themselves escape their adversaries; this is the reproach put in the mouth of the Jew in Celsus's *True Discourse*: "How can you trace your beginnings back to our sacred texts and yet, in doing so, scorn them, while you have no other origin to claim for your doctrine than our Law?" (in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 2.4).

2. *Antiquity and truth.* Given that the Christians could validly claim their antiquity through Judaism, just as a young grafted branch acquires the age of the old stock of the wild olive (a metaphor that Tertullian, in *De Testimonio Animae* 5.6, takes up, not without alterations, from Saint Paul in Romans 11.17–24), the Church Fathers increased their efforts to prove that Jewish prophecy was older than Greek culture. They concentrated on the person of Moses, who was regarded as the most outstanding figure of early Judaism: they

had to show that he, more than all others, preceded the earliest representatives of pagan tradition. As for the pagans, the dominant tendency was to take Homer as exemplary, so that the chronological debate often took the form of a man-to-man combat between these two individuals; I have attempted to show this in another work.¹³ It was for this reason, among others, that Christian authors became so closely interested in the Greek poet, as may be verified in the works of Jean Daniélou¹⁴ and G. Glockmann.¹⁵

In fact, the way had been opened by late Judaism itself, at least among those of its representatives who were the most influenced by Hellenism—for example, the historian Josephus at the end of the first century (*Contra Apionem* 2.2.14). Among Christians themselves, this theme appears briefly in Justin (*First Apology* 59.1). Even more concerned with it was his disciple Tatian, who inaugurated a demonstrative schema that was to become classic: in the opinion even of historians who adhered neither to Judaism nor to Christianity, Moses was the contemporary of the Argive king Inachus, who preceded the Trojan War by four centuries (*Oratio ad Graecos* 31.35–36, 38–41). The same argumentation may be found in the long chapter (*Stromateis* 1.21, especially §§ 101–2) which Clement of Alexandria, in acknowledging his debt to Tatian on the point, devotes to a comparative chronology of the Hebrew people and the neighboring civilizations. His conclusion is peremptory: “Moses was at the height of his powers even before the date at which the Greeks place the creation of man”; or, “It is thus proved that Moses preceded not only the Greek sages and poets, but also the majority of their gods” (ibid. §§ 106.2 and 107.6). At about the same time, Tatian’s schema makes its appearance in the Latin world with Tertullian (*Apologeticus* 19.1*–2* and 3; the whole of chapter 19 wrestles with the problem). In the first half of the fourth century the historian Eusebius, a specialist in chronology, places so much value in the debate that he puts together an entire dossier with the texts we have just seen in Tatian, Clement, Josephus, and others (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 10.9.12–13.13). Eusebius adopts the now classic demonstration of Tatian and inserts complementary elements derived from other sources: Moses was earlier than the Phoenician historian Sanchuniathon of Beirut, who was himself a contemporary of Queen Semiramis and, like her, much earlier than the Trojan war (ibid., 10.9.13–17).

What was it that motivated the Christians to forget temporarily the prerogatives of their newness and to link themselves, at whatever cost, to the early age of Judaism? What made their adversaries determined to deny Judaism this anteriority with regard to their own history? Surely it was the conviction, which reigned everywhere at the time, that the antiquity of a doctrine guaranteed its truth. It is striking that, in the space of a few pages, Theophilus of Antioch associates these two notions four times in the same terms: our Scriptures and our beliefs, he repeats, are “older and truer” (*archaiotera kai alēthēstera*) than those of every other people (*Ad Autolycum* 2.30; 3.16, 26, 29). The Latin Fathers had their own formula to lend authority to that which is connected with antiquity: *auctoritas vetustatis* (Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 20.2; Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 2.6.7; Ambrose, *Exameron* 1.1.3; etc.)—a formula that Tertullian, better than anyone else, developed when speaking of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures: “The authority of these documents is assured them first of all by their extreme antiquity. Among you also the credibility of something is proved by its antiquity, which is as respectable as religion. Authority is given to the Scriptures by their extreme antiquity” (*Apologeticus* 19.1 and 1*).

By claiming, to their advantage, the chronological priority of the Jews over the Greeks, the Christian authors also conformed to the spirit of the time in another respect. There was a belief, maintained by Plato and Aristotle, that became more and more deeply engrained in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, as many works have shown:¹⁶ that barbarian wisdom preceded and inspired Greek culture. Tatian (*Oratio ad Graecos* 35) and Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 1.15.71.3; 1.29.180.5) shared this outlook of the period; but they put it to a use that was quite uncommon (outside of Christian and, naturally, Jewish circles): they held that the prophets of Israel themselves were to be counted among those barbarian sages, of whom they were the earliest and most eminent. Tatian thus calls Moses “the initiator of the whole of barbarian wisdom” (ibid., 31), while Clement, after enumerating the prophets of Egypt, the Assyrian Chaldeans, the Gallic Druids, the Persian Magi, the Indian Gymnosophists, and various others, notes that the Jewish people are by far the oldest of all (ibid., 1.15.71.4–72.4). Furthermore, the two authors are not afraid to treat Christianity as a “barbarian philosophy,” nor to speak of themselves as “we Barbarians” (Tatian, ibid. 42; Clement, ibid. 1.29.180.3, etc.). The famous article by J. H. Waszink should be consulted on these various points.¹⁷

IV. The Explanation by “Theft”

1. *Borrowing, theft, adulteration.* We have dwelled on the confrontation of comparative chronology since it seems to have weighed heavily on the Christians’ evaluation of the features they shared with classical paganism. From the moment they thought that, by virtue of their connection to the Jewish people, they preceded Greek history, they were able to consider resemblances to their adversaries only as cases of plagiarism committed against them by the latter. The direction of influence seemed beyond all doubt; as Justin unambiguously puts it, “It is not we who think like the others, but all of them who imitate us in what they say” (*First Apology* 60.10). Tertullian would recall the determining role played by chronology: “That which first existed is necessarily the origin of what followed. And this is why you have things in common with us or things that resemble ours”; so it is, he continues, that our Wisdom (*sophia*) gave you your philosophy, and our prophecy your poetic divination (*Apologeticus* 19.1.5*–6*). This slide from posteriority to dependence, in Judaism as well as in Christianity, has been studied by K. Thraede.¹⁸

Such an overview is susceptible to subtle variations, according to the polemical temperament. When this becomes heated, the pen is moved to write the word “theft” (*klopē*). Thus Theophilus of Antioch: “These tortures were predicted by the prophets, but later poets and philosophers stole them from the Holy Scriptures in order to make their own teaching seem trustworthy” (*Ad Autolycum* 1.14; 2.37, trans. Robert M. Grant, Oxford 1970). But the true theoretician of this sort of explanation—as A. Méhat¹⁹ and R. Mortley²⁰ have suggested—was Clement of Alexandria. Here is one of his programmatic texts on this point, in which he attempts (in rather unconvincing fashion) to found the accusation of “theft” upon a verse from John (10.8) and asserts that the plagiarism committed by paganism extended beyond the miracle accounts to a large part of their theology and ethics:

Let us now see, since the Scriptures treat the Greeks as “thieves” who stole barbarian philosophy, how we may briefly prove that they were indeed thieves. Not only shall we establish that it was by copying the miracles of our

history that they described their own, but we shall also convict them of digging up and falsifying the most important of our dogmas—our Scriptures are older than theirs and we have shown this—concerning faith, wisdom, gnosis, and knowledge, hope and charity, repentance, continence, and in particular the fear of God. (*Stromateis* 2.1.1.1)

This page introduces, with one word, another important notion: that the supposed theft perpetrated by the Greeks is at the same time a falsification. Clement had already observed that they had not understood all of the Hebraic doctrines which they had purloined and coopted as being their own: some of these they altered, while they applied an indiscreet and incompetent sophistry to others (*Stromateis* 1.17.87.2). In the same period, the same accusations of unwarranted appropriation, of curiosity, of incomprehension, and of adulteration are leveled against the same "men of glory" by Tertullian (*Apologeticus* 19.1.6*; 47.3). The resemblance between the two authors undoubtedly derives from the fact that both were dependent upon Tatian, who explains the formation of Greek mythology as follows:

With much indiscretion, the sophists of Greece applied themselves to altering all that they borrowed from Moses . . . , first in order to appear as if they were making a personal statement, and, second, in order that, in camouflaging by I know not what false rhetoric all that they had not understood, they might bring truth down to the level of mythology. (*Oratio ad Graecos* 40)

Justin had also expressed the same idea in a more summary fashion, and saw the fact that the pagans contradicted each other as proof that each had, in his own way, misunderstood Moses (*First Apology* 44.10).

2. *Greek and Latin examples.* The Fathers furnished these general views with a plethora of illustrations, often taken by one author from another, so that it is difficult to select samples. According to Justin (*First Apology* 69.3,6), the darkness of Genesis (1.1) is the source of the Erebus of the poets (Hesiod, *Theogony* 123). The creation account recorded by Moses is, in the eyes of the Christians, one of the Jewish texts most impudently pirated by the Greeks: the notion of the seventh day; the falling out between Ocean and Tethys; the Greeks reduced by Menelaus to the water and earth from which they were made; the cosmic ornamentation of the shield of Achilles—all that these scattered disparate traits of epic poetry have in common, according to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 5.14.99.4–107.4), is that they came from a distorted reading of the beginning of Genesis. We have seen the same author challenge the originality of the Greeks not only on points of doctrine, but also in the accounts of miracles: Clement holds that the famous prayer of the pious Ajax, which brought rain during a catastrophic drought (Apollodorus *Mythographus*, *Bibliotheca* 3.12.6, 9–10), merely plagiarizes a prayer (of very different inspiration, it must be said) of Samuel (1 Samuel 12.17–18) (*Stromateis* 6.3.28.1–29.3).

In the same line of thought, Origen saw the episode of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1–9) as the source of the Homeric narrative of the scaling of heaven by the Aloidae, who threatened the gods (*Iliad* 5.385–91 and *Odyssey* 11.305–20), and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19.1–29) as the starting point of the legend of Phaethon (Euripides, *Hippolytus* 735–41, etc.) (*Contra Celsum* 4.21). It is undoubtedly the same Alexandrian milieu that produced, about the same time, an *Exhortation to the Pagans*, spuriously attributed

to Justin. In this unknown author, we again encounter several examples of the sort we have seen in Clement and Origen and in others as well—thus the wonderful garden of Alcinoüs (*Odyssey* 7.114–26) manifestly imitates the Paradise of Genesis (2.8–9), while the fall of Lucifer in Isaiah 14.12 gave rise to the punishment of Ate, who was thrown down from Olympus in *Iliad* 19.126–31 (§ 28).

Further removed from Greek culture, Latin patristics takes less pleasure in accumulating illustrations of this sort; yet these are not rare. Serapis, the Hellenized Egyptian god whose head is crowned with a modius, is really the Jew Joseph, the judicious counselor to the Pharaoh on matters concerning wheat (Genesis 41.25–57) and the object of a cult inspired by gratitude for this advice; but Joseph was the great grandson of Sarah, Abraham's wife, from which his name of "child of Sarah," *Sarras pais* in Greek, became Serapis. The reduction of a Greco-Egyptian divinity to a biblical personage, with the aid of etymology in the finest tradition, is found in the fourth century in the works of the Christian apologist Firmicus Maternus (*De errore profanarum religionum* 13.2). It had begun earlier with Tertullian, who undoubtedly drew on a Jewish source (*Ad nationes* 2.8.9–19). We saw at the beginning of this article that Samson, the hero of the Book of Judges, evoked, in the eyes of certain Fathers, the figure of Heracles; at that time Heracles was certainly not seen as a true copy of Samson. By the end of the fourth century, with the heresiologist Filaster of Brescia, it was a foregone conclusion that by drawing on the figure of Samson the pagans had come to call valiant men "Heracles" (*Liber de Haeresibus* 8.2).

3. *A widespread accusation.* The thesis of theft appears less extraordinary if it is recalled that late Judaism had pointed early Christianity in this direction. In the second century B.C. the Jewish historian Artapanos makes Moses the inspiration for Orpheus (Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.27.4); his contemporary and coreligionist Aristobulus had preceded Clement of Alexandria in postulating that the celebration of the seventh day in Homer and Hesiod had been taken from the Scriptures (Eusebius, *ibid.* 13.12.13). N. Walter argues strongly for this view.²¹ An influence so stubbornly asserted was bound in the end to convince a few Greek philosophers; such a conviction was undoubtedly behind the well-known statement by the Neophythagorean Numenius of Apamea, who regarded Plato as none other than "a Moses speaking Greek" (cited by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.22.150.4).

On the other hand, it must be realized that the Christian apologists, in alleging such seemingly incongruous examples of "theft," were often just replying to their adversaries, who proffered the same examples—naturally in support of the reverse lineage. Thus, the pagan Celsus saw the Tower of Babel and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah as mere caricatures of the Greek legends of the sons of Aloeus and of Phaethon, and Origen (*Contra Celsum* 4.21) merely reverses the argument. As I have attempted to show elsewhere,²² Celsus similarly held that Christian views regarding the devil are nothing but counterfeits of various Greek myths. But we know from the works of C. Andresen²³ that the positions taken by Celsus had the opportunity to reply to Justin's *Apology*; so a great polemic arose between successive generations, who did not dispute the proposed analogies but drew their arguments from them in opposing fashions.

Furthermore, wholly analogous controversies are to be found even within Greek culture. For example, Herodotus (*History* 2.53) echoes a debate on the question of whether or

not Homer and Hesiod had preceded, i.e., informed, the ancient poet-theologians. Elsewhere, certain philosophers were accused of plagiarizing poets who were their compatriots, as the biblical authors would be accused by Celsus; "Epicurus is caught red-handed in the act of stealing; he has taken his most solid theories from the poets"; such is the grievance formulated by Sextus Empiricus (*Adversus Grammaticos* 273).

V. The Thesis of Demonic Imitation

1. *The intercession of demons.* Clement of Alexandria presents an important variant of the theory of theft: the theft was committed not directly by the Greeks but by a disobedient angel for their benefit. Here is a very clear text: "Philosophy . . . comes to us stolen or given to us by a thief. Some Power, some Angel, learned a shred of truth, without himself remaining faithful to the truth, and he breathed this knowledge to men, teaching them the fruit of his theft" (*Stromateis* 1.17.81.4).

Tertullian also implicates demons in this theft, calling them "spirits of error," but he attributes much subtler intentions to them: by falsifying the true doctrine, demons established fables similar to it and offered these to poets and philosophers; since they would not be believed by the public, these fables would discredit the Christian faith, which was similar to them—but when doubt would thus have destroyed the faith, there would be a return to the poets' and philosophers' fables, which are the alternative to faith. This truly diabolical calculation is made clearer through the examples which follow: if there is general mirth when Christians predict the judgment of God, Gehenna for the punishment of souls and paradise for their recompense, it is because people are laughing about the pagan replicas—the tribunal of hell, the Pyriphlegethon, and the Elysian Fields. But Tertullian is able to throw back these arguments and defuse their malice: "Where, I pray you, did the poets and philosophers get these things that are so like ours? Only from our mysteries. Now, if they got them from our mysteries because these are more ancient, then our mysteries are more reliable and more to be believed, for even what is nothing but a copy of them finds credence." As for supposing that they might have been taken from their own soil, how then could our mysteries, which preceded them, be a copy of them (*Apologeticus* 47.11–14)?

2. *The counterfeiting of Christian prophecies.* Demons held an important place in the theology of the apologist Justin. In agreement with a thesis that was current in the first centuries of the common era, he holds the false gods of paganism to be demons: it was these demons who committed the horrors which poets and mythologists ignorantly assign to the king of the gods and to his brothers Pluto and Poseidon (*Second Apology* 5.3–5).

Another misdeed on the part of the demons was, according to Justin, to travesty the Scriptures so as to supply mythology with traits that have perceptible parallels with the Christian and Jewish faiths. For example, the reason people place the image of Kore, the daughter of Zeus, over springs is that demons imitated the verse from Moses (Genesis 1.2) about the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters. The demons, furthermore, knew that God had conceived in his thought the world that was to be created; from this primordial thought, with equal perversity, they had Athena, another daughter of Zeus, born without sexual intercourse. Justin formulates an unexpected grievance against this supposed perversion: he holds that it is ridiculous for thought to

be represented by a female form. He seems to ignore the fact that, starting with the Presocratics, Athena had never ceased to be regarded as an image of thought, and even of divine thought, as F. Buffière has demonstrated.²⁴ In any case, Justin has no difficulty in showing that the behavior of Zeus's other children can be explained in the same way (*First Apology* 64.1–6).

Justin had used such an explanation not long before for some of these gods. In his eyes, demons find a choice ground for their manipulations in particular pages of the Scriptures: in the messianic prophecies, inspired visionaries mysteriously described the Savior long before his coming. So the demons, in order to deceive and mislead the human race, took the offensive and suggested to the poets who created myths that they give Zeus many sons and attribute monstrous adventures to them, in the hope that this would make the story of Christ appear to be a fable of the same sort, when it came. We recognize in this strategy imputed to the demons the very strategy Tertullian had imputed to them, no doubt in following Justin's analyses. The only problem, continues Justin, is that the demons did not exactly understand these prophecies, which they wished to realize in their own way—and the imitations they made of them are filled with errors, as Justin undertakes to show with some highly interesting examples (*First Apology* 54.1–4).

Moses (Genesis 49.10–11) relates a prophecy of Jacob that the Messiah would bind his foal to a vine and wash his garments in wine. The demons made two imitations of this: on the one hand, Dionysus, the son of Zeus and Semele, the inventor of the vine, who was cut into pieces and resuscitated and then ascended into the sky, and whose mysteries involve an ass; on the other, Bellerophon, the son of a man, who ascended into the sky on the horse Pegasus. This duality alone demonstrates for Justin that the demons had not entirely understood the prophecy, which did not specify whether the Messiah would be the son of God or of a man, nor whether he would ascend on the foal of an ass or of a horse. They did know from Isaiah (7.14; 52.13) that he would be born of a virgin and would ascend into heaven by his own power; they then inspired the story of Perseus, born of the virgin Danaë, and of Zeus, who had transformed himself into a rain of gold. When it is said that Heracles, the son of Zeus and of Alcmena, valiantly traveled over the world and ascended into the sky after his death, how is it not possible to see this as an imitation of the Christian prophecy of Psalm 19, (verse 5): "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race"? Finally, having learned from the same source (Isaiah 35.5–6) that the Messiah would heal the sick and raise the dead, the demons staged the story of Asclepius (*First Apology* 54.5–10; a parallel and sometimes more complete development of this is found in Justin's other work, the *Dialogue with Trypho* 67.1–2; 69.1–5; 70.5, in which the demons give way to the devil, called the "serpent of error"; on Heracles, see M. Simon's²⁵ excellent commentary).

There is nevertheless in the prophecies, Justin continues, an episode that the demon imitators never credited to a single son of Zeus because it was announced in a purely symbolic fashion, which made it unthinkable for them: it is the crucifixion (*First Apology* 55.1). All the same, the evil-doing of the demons was not limited to inventing sons of Zeus before the coming of the Christ; when he had come, they recognized him as the prophesied Messiah, and set magicians against him (*ibid.* 56.1).

No other Christian author would take up in such breadth this sort of explanation for the resemblances which come to light between the person of Christ and certain mythological

figures. But there are various resurgences of such argumentation. In the fourth century, Firmicus Maternus announced his intention to "review successively all the formulas of pagan religion, to prove that the worst enemy of the human race borrowed them from the holy and venerable predictions of the prophets to serve his filthy crimes" (*De errore profanarum religionum* 21.1). These "formulas," which Firmicus calls *symbola*, are those of the mysteries, of which he gives a few examples. He also considers some pagan rites, which he denounces as misleading imitations of prophecies; contrary to Justin, according to whom the demons had in no way penetrated the prophets' allusions to the Cross, Firmicus holds that it was in order to counterfeit the material of the Cross that the devil had wished to make wood the instrument of rites of renewal (citing the pine in the cult of Cybele and Osiris, the tree trunk in that of Proserpine, etc.) (*ibid.* 27.1–2).

3. *Mithra and Jesus*. Among the formulas of profane worship, Firmicus Maternus cites the following: "the god born of stone," which, as we know from other sources, designates Mithra. In his eyes, this stone evokes another stone—that by which God promises to strengthen the foundations of the future Jerusalem (according to Isaiah 28.16), and which prophetically designates the Christ. In the perspective that we have just seen, the first of these elements could only have come from the second by theft, fraudulent transfer, adulteration of the faith—and this is, indeed, the author's judgment (*De errore profanarum religionum* 20.1).

Justin had preceded him on this precise point: the initiators into the mysteries of Mithra speak of the god "born of a stone" and call the place of initiation a "cave" because, under the influence of devils, they are imitating the prophecies of Daniel (2.34: the stone that was hewn from the mountain in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar) and of Isaiah (33.16: the righteous one in a cave of solid rock). Justin counters this satanic counterfeiting of Isaiah's prophecy by pointing out the true symbolic import of the verse, which, he contends, refers to the cave of the Nativity at Bethlehem (*Dialogue with Trypho* 70.1–3; 78.5–6).

According to the same verse from Isaiah, the righteous one will receive an inexhaustible supply of bread and water in his cave, which is, Justin continues, a clear prophecy of the eucharist in its two forms (*ibid.* 70.4); but initiation into the mysteries of Mithra also entails the presentation of bread and a cup of water, accompanied by certain formulas. This coincidence too comes from an imitation imputable to perverse demons (with the difference that here the object of their counterfeiting is no longer prophecy but the actual Gospel accounts of the institution of the eucharist) (*First Apology* 66.4). The same resemblance would be recorded, and explained in identical fashion, by Tertullian: the office of the devil is to pervert the truth and imitate the divine sacraments in the mysteries of idols. The devil too has his baptism, through which he promises the expiation of misdeeds, and Mithra marks the foreheads of his soldiers, celebrates the oblation of bread, gives an idea of the resurrection, crowns his martyrs, etc. (*De praescriptione haereticorum* 40.2–4).

VI. An Apologetic Starting Point

1. *Homogeneity constituted as an argument*. In the writings of Tertullian (*Apologeticus* 47.11–14), we have encountered the idea that paganism had manufactured myths similar to Christian doctrines in order that the obvious falsity of the former should cast doubt, by reason of their similitude, on

the latter. The African priest skillfully defused this calculation without relinquishing the presupposition: if the pagan myths inspired belief, how much more should our mysteries, of which theirs are copies, do so! These two arguments, which run in opposite directions, both rely on certain analogies between the two beliefs. More than once, Christian apologists used the same assumption for the same advantage, in various ways. Tertullian himself, in treating of the incarnation and the virgin birth, requires that the pagans first accept them simply because of their resemblance to the myths which they themselves had forged out of the corresponding prophecies: "For the time being accept this 'fable,' which is like your own, until I show you how he is proved to be Christ and who they are among you who have previously circulated fables of this genre, to destroy this truth" (*Apologeticus* 21.14); shortly thereafter (*ibid.*, 21.23), the same author would have them admit that the Christian ascension is "much truer" than (which implies "comparable to") those of Romulus and other Romans.

But this sort of argument goes back farther than Tertullian, for Tatian, wishing to substantiate the incarnation, evokes certain mythic metamorphoses (of Athena as Deiphobus [*Iliad* 22.226–27], of Apollo as the cowherd of Admetus, of Hera as an old woman in the presence of Semele), and authorizes himself, on the basis of this parallel, to take the Greeks to task: "You who insult us, compare your myths to our accounts. . . . Considering your own legends, accept our teachings, if only on the basis of their being myths similar to your own" (*Oratorio ad Graecos* 21). Furthermore, the last passage cited from Tatian turns out to be based, almost word for word, on Justin. Justin has just cited a mass of practices, events, authors, and texts, all borrowed from Greek tradition, which imply a belief that souls remain sentient after death. He refers, for example, to necromancy, the conjuring of the dead, possession, the great oracles of Dodona and of Delphi, philosophers favorable toward the idea of reincarnation, Homer's trench and Odysseus's descent to the underworld (*Odyssey* 11.24ff.), and so forth. After enumerating these pagan testimonies to a belief also held by Christians, Justin demands an at least equal adherence to the Christian version: "If only on the basis of its resemblance to this teaching, accept ours" (*First Apology* 18.3–6).

A comparable attitude appears in Origen, although with a slightly different application. His adversary Celsus refused to accord any meaning other than the literal one to the biblical pages on the creation of woman from the rib of the sleeping Adam (Genesis 2.21–22) and on the garden of different trees planted by God, with its serpent who rebels against the divine commands (*ibid.*, 2.8–9; 3.1–5). In both accounts, Origen opportunely cites as parallels the Hesiodic myth of Pandora (*Works and Days* 53–98, most of which he cites); the first woman, given by Zeus to men as "an evil thing and the price paid for fire" (the comparison with Eve, who alone has a historical reality, had already been instituted by Tertullian, *De corona militum* 7.3); and the Platonic myth (*Symposium* 203b–204c, also cited in great part) of the birth of Eros, who was conceived in the garden of Zeus (the importance of this last text to the Platonist tradition, both pagan and Christian, was revealed by J. M. Rist).²⁶ Confident of this convergence, Origen feels justified in demanding that the two biblical accounts and the two Greek myths be read in the same light. If, as one would be correct in doing, one recognized a doctrinal import hidden in the depths of the Greek myths, it would be unreasonable to deny such an import to the biblical accounts and merely to retain their surface meaning (*Contra Celsum* 4.38–39). We recognize here

the procedure of using analogies with paganism as an authorization to demand at least the same treatment for Christian beliefs. The reality of this argument stands out even more in the two examples that we are about to look at.

2. *The Christ and the sons of Zeus.* We have recalled how the Christians of the first generations insisted that the “newness” of their religion be recognized. A passage from Justin that speaks of the most miraculous aspects of the person and life of Jesus is therefore surprising: “We offer nothing new with respect to those among you who are considered the sons of Zeus.” What follows shows that this declaration is to be taken literally: if Jesus is the Word of God, it must be known that this is something he holds in common with Hermes, the Word of Zeus; if he was born of a virgin, so was Perseus; if he healed the sick and raised the dead, it must be admitted that Asclepius did the same; if he was crucified, the sons of Zeus too had their passions (Asclepius struck by lightning, Dionysus dismembered, Heracles throwing himself into fire); and finally, if he ascended into heaven, such was also the case with Asclepius, the Dioscuri, Perseus, Bellerophon on the back of Pegasus, and Ariadne who was placed among the stars—to say nothing of the deceased emperors (*First Apology* 21.1–3; 22.2–6).

Further pages in the *Apology* as well as the *Dialogue with Trypho* again take up many of these episodes pertaining to the sons of Zeus, as we have seen; but in these instances their purpose is to illustrate the fraud perpetrated by the demons who travestied the messianic prophecies because they misunderstood them. Justin’s purpose here is quite different and even more surprising: he appears to be overcome by a comparativist frenzy at which even the most reductionist historians of religions would balk. He sets himself to taking the edge off the most salient points of Christology in order to dissolve them in their assimilation to the mythological biographies. No doubt his strategy is an apologetic one: by maximizing the parallels between Christ and the Greek gods, he may legitimately claim the same welcome among the pagans for Christ as for the Greek gods. A little later, Justin clearly declares his aspirations—and his chagrin at failing to see them realized—when he says: “While we say the same things as the Greeks, we alone are hated!” (ibid., 24.1). Naturally, this desire to gain a foothold, even at little cost, among the pagan masses, can only represent an initial and minimal phase in the apologetic enterprise. As Justin himself notes, Christ has arguments other than this in his favor: “All of our teachings received from Christ . . . are alone true . . . , and if we judge them worthy of being welcomed by you, it is not because of these resemblances but because we speak the truth.” As for explaining the analogies in question, the chapter ends with the thesis dear to this author: “Before the Word became man among men, some took the initiative under the influence of evil demons and, through the intermediary of the poets, presented as reality the myths they had invented” (ibid., 23.1, 3).

3. *Heracles and Jonah.* A short branch of the tradition concerning Heracles, first represented in the third century B.C. by the Alexandrian poet Lycophron (as noted by M. Simon),²⁷ credits the hero with having spent three days in the belly of a fish with no harm done except for the loss of his hair. Apart from this last detail, the parallelism with the prophet Jonah is striking; several Christian commentators on the Book of Jonah (2.1–11) referred to it, and used it in the service of an argument which closely follows those we have just seen. Here, in the first half of the fifth century, is the

conclusion of Cyril of Alexandria: “It is out of the question for us to give credence to divine prodigies on the basis of the Greek fables, but we retain them to our benefit, to convince the incredulous that the scope of their own legends does not allow them to reject such elements in our accounts” (*Commentary on Jonah* 11; *Patrologia Graeca* 71.616C–617A). In other words, coincidences such as those between Heracles and Jonah, which are unimportant for Christians in their own practice, are useful for making an impression on the incredulity of the Greeks. In the eleventh century the same conclusion is reached through the same comparison by the Byzantine exegete Theophylact, archbishop of Achrida: the story of Jonah is apparently incredible, especially to minds steeped in Greek errors, but the parallel from Heracles creates a dilemma for them: “Either they will also accept our miracles, or they will also reject their own. But we must not use the decay of their myths to reinforce the solidity of our own truth” (*Exposition on the Prophet Jonas* 2.1; *Patrologia Graeca* 126.932 BC).

VII. A Propaedeutic to Christianity

1. *Providential Greek culture.* At the beginning of this study, we saw various Church Fathers refer to certain mythological situations which were more or less comparable to Christian truths, in order, they thought, to speak to their pagan interlocutors in their own language; they were taking advantage of these parallels on a merely rhetorical level, without dealing with underlying questions. But to base an apologetic procedure on such parallels, even at the level we have just described, was to imply recognition of a certain reality in them. There is, however, a third Christian view of the analogies with paganism, which invests them with eminent value since it gives them a foundation that is nothing less than a design of Providence. This perspective must at least be noted in conclusion; it is part of a far broader view, that of the function of Greek culture in the economics of Christian salvation.

This function might be said to be propaedeutic—the word used by Clement of Alexandria, the principal representative of this theology of history. Saint Paul, he says, gives the “rudiments of the world” (Epistle to the Colossians 2.8) as a symbol of Greek philosophy because that philosophy is, so to speak, “elementary,” and because it is a “propaedeutic” (*propaideia*) of the truth (*Stromateis* 6.8.62.1). But the function that fell to Greek philosophy is to be understood in two very different ways, neatly distinguished by Clement in an earlier passage: in a more banal sense, philosophy is today a “propaedeutic” (*propaideia*) in the direction of the true piety for minds desirous of reaching faith through demonstration; in a more profound and fundamental sense, it was given to the Greeks in the beginning, before the Lord extended his call to them, “because it was, itself, the educator of Hellenism, just as the Law was that of the Jews, for moving toward the Christ” (*Stromateis* 1.5.28.1, 3).

Several pages of the *Sixth Stromatis* are devoted to this vision of history. In discussing the consciousness of Christian newness we cited a sentence on the three modes—Greek, Jewish, and Christian—of the knowledge of God. Clement accentuates the strict parallelism between the two kinds of “evangelical preparation”: on the one hand, the Law and the Prophets were given in their time to the barbarians (i.e., the Jews); and, on the other, philosophy was given to the Greeks, in order to habituate the ears of both to the Good News (6.6.44.1). Here, “philosophy” takes on a broader meaning than it has today, extending to the whole of culture.

Clement is bold enough to conceive of a Greek prophetism corresponding to the Jewish: "Just as God, wanting to save the Jews, gave them prophets, he also inspired among the Greeks the most prominent personalities to be their own prophets in their language, according as they were capable of receiving the gift of God, and he distinguished them from ordinary people" (6.5.42.3). Concurrent texts by the same author have been cited by J. Daniélou.²⁸ It is easy to understand, within this very particular perspective, how any intersection, however approximate or superficial, between the Greek religious corpus on the one hand and Jewish or Christian beliefs on the other would stand out and assume meaning in a way quite unlike those we have previously seen.

2. *Heiliger Homer* ("holy Homer"). The proof that Clement includes both poetry and mythology in his understanding of "Greek philosophy" is to be found first of all in the fact that he considers Homer primarily a Greek prophet. In his *Paedagogus*, in which he gives a commentary on the numerous scriptural texts in which milk is introduced as a symbol of spiritual nourishment, Clement first thinks of the beginning of book 13 of the *Iliad* (lines 5–6) in which the righteous (in fact, the noble Scythian tribes) are called "milk eaters" (*galactophagoi*), and he infers from this that Homer "prophecies involuntarily" (ibid. 1.6.36.1). There also appears to be a distinction, in the *Odyssey* (9.275, 410–11), between a "Zeus with the aegis," about whom the Cyclops hardly concern themselves, and a "great Zeus," whom they dread. In this god, of whom there are apparently two persons, Clement sees an allusion to the Christian duality of the Father and the Son, and he again concludes that Homer "was favored with an authentic gift of prophecy" (*Stromateis* 5.14.116.1; this feature was pointed out by F. Buffière).²⁹

It seems as if, parallel to the Hebraic tradition, which of course remains the privileged channel, part of the Revelation had flowed into Greek culture; it is to the reality of this double current arising from a single source that we must relate—both in their indices and in their consequences—the coincidences that leave the present-day reader skeptical, though they impressed Clement. Homer, the principal prop for this demonstration, emerges from it as sacralized as the Jewish prophets—a canonization that H. Rahner³⁰ characterized so well with the formula he borrowed from Goethe: *Heiliger Homer!* It should also be noted how, under different guises, comparing Homer with the Holy Scriptures was a favorite pastime of certain humanists and scholars of the modern era; the works of N. Hepp³¹ are persuasive on this point.

To return to the first centuries A.D., it would appear that this Christian Homer was more attractive to marginal currents of thought than to the orthodox tradition. The Gnostic Naassene sect is said to have founded itself upon a harmonization between the Homeric poems and the Jewish Scriptures, a harmonization made possible in both cases through the application of a highly inventive allegorical exegesis. This is what Hippolytus had to say in their regard: "Following the new method of interpretation of literary works which they have invented, they attribute to Homer, their prophet, the glory of having first, in a mysterious way, revealed these truths, at the same time as they mock those who have not been initiated into the Holy Scriptures, in pressing such ideas upon them" (*Refutatio omnium haeresium* 5.8.1). Among the many examples of this amalgamation, here is another, which long held the attention of H. Leisegang³² and, later, J. Carcopino:³³ at the beginning of the last book of the *Odyssey* (24.1ff.), we see the souls of the dead suitors of Penelope

being conducted to the Mead of Asphodel by the golden wand of Cyllenian Hermes. Now, the Naassenes not only identify this god with the Logos, which is unremarkable, but they identify him precisely with the Christian Word; his golden wand is none other than the iron rod of Psalm 2 (verse 9); it awakens the drowsing souls, conforming to the role reserved for the Christ in the Epistle to the Ephesians (5.14); as for the suitors, they are really men who, awakened from sleep, recall the bliss from which they have fallen and hope for their redemption, according to the Christian perspective (Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* 5.7.29–33).

3. *The Sibyl and Virgil*. The *Sibylline Oracles*, to which our attention has been drawn anew by V. Nikiprowetzky,³⁴ are today regarded as a highly composite work, in which elements that are very diverse in both date and source are found side by side. A basic corpus of pagan oracles was augmented between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D.—in imitation of primitive literary patterns, for purposes of propaganda to paganism—by a Jewish contribution (not without Christian interpolations) and then by a fully Christian contribution. But the Fathers of the second and third centuries, who often cite this collection (sometimes associating the Sibyl with the name of Hystaspis, the Iranian pseudo-magus, as do, for example, Justin, *First Apology* 20.1, 44.12, and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 6.5.43.1), conceived of it quite differently. For them it was an exclusively pagan work in which they admirably discovered a mass of Jewish and even Christian parallels, whence their conviction that here once again they were dealing with a manifestation of the Revelation, and their habit of paralleling its testimony with Jewish prophecy. On this line of thought, which continued to perpetuate itself in the Middle Ages in the first strophe of *Dies irae: Teste David cum Sibylla*, see the works of K. Prümmer.³⁵

Their very title suggests that the *Sibylline Oracles* should not be considered without recalling the celebrated Virgilian *Fourth Eclogue*, for Virgil there makes reference to a prophecy by the Sibyl of Cumae, and the two texts are, in the eyes of many other Christians, to be placed in a somewhat comparable situation. The content of this short poem is well known; the salient points are as follows: the Virgin returns, a new generation descends from heaven, a child is born who will receive the divine life and will govern the globe pacified by his father, the golden age begins in spite of the fact that there remains in the hearts of men something of the ancient malice, etc. As J. Carcopino³⁶ has shown, this is a work adapted to circumstances, in which all of these traits are fully explicable through reference to the historical situation; that is, to local history.

But, especially if one believes that these verses date from 40 B.C., such a concentration of details charged with evocation for the Christian consciousness could only lead to reading it as a non-Christian but true prophecy. In fact, as has been shown by P. Courcelle's scholarly investigation,³⁷ a number of authors—often, it must be admitted, second-rate ones—identified the Virgilian child with the Infant Jesus, the new generation with the Christian people or with the incarnated Word, and so forth. Some nevertheless hesitated to bestow the title of prophet upon Virgil because it was totally without understanding it that he conveyed the annunciation of the Christ, which he received from the Sibyl, herself a true prophetess. Virgil, the unconscious prophet: this, roughly, is how Saint Augustine and the grammarian Philargyrius thought of the author of the eclogue, just as Clement of Alexandria saw Homer as an "involuntary prophet."

In spite of their appeal, these harmonizing interpretations

met with resistance among the Christians themselves. The most famous, and most severe, was that of Jerome: "These are puerilities, like charlatans' tricks, teaching what one does not know; even worse—to use an unpleasant expression—than not even to know what one does not know" (*Letter* 53, to Paulinus, 7). The partisans nevertheless remained more numerous than the adversaries, and would continue to be so down to the Middle Ages, when Abelard and then Dante were the most celebrated defenders of the messianism of the eclogue. Both of these writers, in line with Augustine's thought, also see Virgil as having announced the incarnation without realizing it, and therefore without believing it himself. Abelard compares him in this regard to Caiaphas; Dante, as I showed in another study,³⁸ expresses the same conviction by the compelling image of a man walking while holding behind his back a torch that sheds light upon those who follow him but leaves the man himself in darkness (*Purgatorio* 22.67–69). It matters little whether these authors made Virgil a conscious or merely an "objective" prophet, since, in the latter case, the prophetic function in the full sense of the word belonged to the Sibyl. What is significant is that the existence of analogies such as those we have discussed—some of them real, but most of them superficial or even illusory—fueled the conviction that classical paganism, from Homer to Virgil, never ceased to lead toward Christianity.

J.P./d.w.

NOTES

1. A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, "Saint Paul à Athènes et la I^{re} Épître aux Corinthiens," *L'enfant d'Agrigente* (Paris 1941), 88–101; on the Athens discourse, see the classic thesis by B. GARTNER, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Uppsala 1955).
2. M. SIMON, *Hercule et le christianisme* (Paris 1955), 170–73.
3. J. ADHEMAR, *Influences antiques dans l'art du Moyen Age français: Recherches sur les sources et les thèmes d'inspiration* (diss., Paris; London 1937; 2d ed., 1975), notably 221–22 and pl. XXIII 72. For pagan survivals in primitive Christian art, see also W. ROTHES, "Heidnisches in altchristlicher Kunst und Symbolik," in *Festschrift A. Ehrhard* (Bonn and Leipzig 1922), 381–406.
4. H. RAHNER, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung* (Zurich 1945; 2d ed., 1957), p. 21, etc.
5. E. HATCH, *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*; 2d ed. by F. C. Grant (New York and Evanston 1957), 283–309; A. D. NOCK, *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background* (New York 1964), 116–45.
6. A. WIFSTRAND, *L'église ancienne et la culture grecque*, trans. from Swedish (Paris 1962), 107–34.
7. RAHNER, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung*, 414–86. See also the well-documented articles that the same author published in the *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* from 1941 through 1964 under the general title of "Antenna crucis"; these studies have been conveniently reassembled in H. RAHNER, *Symbole der Kirche: Die Ekklesiologie der Väter* (Salzburg 1964), 237–564; titles include: "Odysseus am Mastbaum," "Das Meer der Welt," "Das Schiff aus Holz," "Das Kreuz als Mastbaum und Antenne," "Das Mystische Tau," "Der Schiffbruch und die Planke des Heils," "Das Schifflein des Petrus: Zur Symbolgeschichte des römischen Primats," "Die Arche Noe als Schiff des Heils," and "Die Ankunft im Hafen."
8. P. COURCELLE, "Quelques symboles funéraires du néoplatonisme latin: Le vol de Dédale; Ulysse et les Sirènes," *Revue des études anciennes* 46 (1944): 65–93; "L'interprétation evhémériste des Sirènes-courtisanes jusqu'au XII^e siècle," in *Mélanges L. Wallach* (Stuttgart 1975), 33–48.
9. J. CARCOPINO, *De Pythagore aux Apôtres: Études sur la conversion du monde romain* (Paris 1956), 192–221. It is now known that one of the Gnostic Copt writings discovered at Nag Hammadi, *L'Exégèse de l'âme*, also exploits the legend of Odysseus, in concurrence with biblical texts; cf. M. SCOPELLO, "Les citations d'Homère dans le traité de *L'Exégèse de l'âme*," in M. Krause, ed., *Gnosis and Gnosticism* (Leiden 1977), 3–12.
10. V. BUCHHEIT, "Homer bei Methodios von Olympos," *Rheinisches Museum* 99 (1956): 19–36.
11. A. CASAMASSA, "L'accusa di 'Hesterni' e gli scrittori cristiani del II secolo," *Angelicum* 20 (1943): 184–94.
12. N. ZEEGERS-VANDER VORST, *Les citations des poètes grecs chez les apologistes chrétiens du II^e siècle* (Louvain 1972), 184–86 and 272. For Christian attitudes in the first three centuries toward the part of pagan authors, see more generally W. KRAUSE, *Die Stellung der frühchristlichen Autoren zur heidnischen Literatur* (Vienna 1958).
13. J. PÉPIN, "Le 'challenge' Homère-Moïse aux premiers siècles chrétiens," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 29 (1955): 105–22.
14. J. DANIELOU, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée, 2: Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux II^e et III^e siècles* (Tournai 1961), book 1, pp. 73–101, "Homère chez les Pères de l'Église."
15. G. GLOCKMANN, "Das Homerbild der altchristlichen Literatur in der Forschung der Gegenwart," *Klio* 43–45 (1965): 270–81; by the same author, *Homer in der frühchristlichen Literatur bis Justinus* (Berlin 1968).
16. For example, A. J. FESTUGIÈRE, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, 1: L'astrologie et les sciences occultes* (Paris 1944), 19–44; H. DORRIE, "Die Wertung der Barbaren im Urteil der Griechen: Knechtsnaturen? Oder Bewahrer und Kunder heilbringender Weisheit?" in *Antike und Universalgeschichte, Festschrift H. E. Stier* (Münster 1972), 146–75.
17. J. H. WASZINK, "Some Observations on the Appreciation of 'The Philosophy of the Barbarians' in Early Christian Literature," in *Mélanges C. Mohrmann* (Utrecht and Antwerp 1963), 41–56.
18. K. THRAEDE, "Erfinder," part 2, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (1962), cols. 1242–61.
19. A. MÉHAT, *Étude sur les "Stromates" de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris 1966), 356–61.
20. R. MORTLEY, *Connaissance religieuse et herméneutique chez Clément d'Alexandrie* (Leiden 1973), 162–66.
21. N. WALTER, *Der Thorausleger Aristobulos: Untersuchungen zu seinen Fragmenten und zu pseudepigraphischen Resten der jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur* (Berlin 1964), 44–51 and 150–71.
22. J. PÉPIN, *Mythe et allégorie: Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes* (2d ed., Paris 1976), 448–52.
23. C. ANDRESEN, *Logos und Nomos: Die Polemik des Kelsos wider das Christentum* (Berlin 1955), 352–55.
24. F. BUFFIERE, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque* (Paris 1956), 279–89.
25. SIMON, *Hercule et le christianisme*, 111.
26. J. M. RIST, *Eros and Psyche: Studies in Plato, Plotinus and Origen, "Phoenix," supplement vol. 6* (Toronto 1964).
27. SIMON, *Hercule et le christianisme*, 174–75.
28. DANIELOU, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée, 2: Message évangélique et culture hellénistique aux II^e et III^e siècles*, book 1, pp. 53–55.
29. BUFFIERE, *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*, 361 and note 86.
30. RAHNER, *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung*, 357.
31. N. HEPP, "Les interprétations religieuses d'Homère au XVII^e siècle," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 31 (1957): 34–50; *Homère en France au XVII^e siècle* (Paris 1968).
32. H. LEISEGANG, *La gnose*, trans. from German (Paris 1951), 89–90.
33. CARCOPINO, *De Pythagore aux Apôtres*, 180–81.
34. V. NIKIPROWETZKY, *La troisième Sibylle* (Paris and The Hague 1970).
35. K. PRUMM, "Das Prophetenamt der Sibyllen in kirchlicher Literatur mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Deutung der VI. Ekloge Virgils," *Scholastik* 4 (1929): 54–77, 221–46, and 498–533.
36. J. CARCOPINO, *Virgile et le mystère de la VI^e Églogue* (2d ed., Paris 1943).
37. P. COURCELLE, "Les exégèses chrétiennes de la quatrième Églogue," *Revue des études anciennes* 59 (1957): 294–319.
38. J. PÉPIN, *Dante et la tradition de l'allégorie* (Montreal and Paris 1970), 103–5.

THE EUHEMERISM OF THE CHRISTIAN AUTHORS

I. Euhemerus and His Doctrine

We have very little precise information about Euhemerus, a Greek known only from a small number of testimonies which often disagree with one another (these may be found in the collections of G. Némethy¹ and G. Vallauri²). He is most often said to be a native of Messene in Peloponnesos, or Messina in Sicily, but he is also said to come from Agrigento, or Tegea, or Chios. According to Diodorus the historian, it was King Cassandra of Macedonia (316–297) who sent Euhemerus on an expedition to the Red Sea; on the other hand, Euhemerus seems to be cited by the poet Callimachus in works that must date from 275–270. It can thus roughly be estimated that Euhemerus went on his travels as early as 300–298, and wrote about them around 280. On these data, see Jacoby's 1907 article, which is still valuable.³

In Euhemerus, the author is always identified with the voyager. Returned from his exploration, he draws from it a geographical novel in which real memories rub shoulders with affabulation; this combination is given free reign in the description of Panchaia, an imaginary island off the coast of Arabia. Euhemerus would have it that he found there "a temple of Zeus Triphylian, in which a golden column stood whose inscription indicated that it had been erected by Zeus himself; on this column, the god had inscribed the details of his greatest deeds, in order that posterity be informed of them" (fgt 23 Némethy = *testim* 4 Vallauri = Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 1.11.33). It is this testimony by the gods about their own exploits that Euhemerus comments on in a *Sacred Record* (*Hiera Anagraphē*), a clever title that reminds one that what is being treated is mainly an "inscription." Nothing remains of this work, but some Greek authors mention it, especially Diodorus of Sicily. The Roman poet Ennius translated (or adapted) it into Latin, and the Christian Lactantius preserved fragments of that translation, whose title was probably *Sacra Historia*.

This is enough to yield a rough idea of the theology of Euhemerus. The central idea is connected to the inscription in the temple of Zeus: it is that the gods of mythology were at first men, who were divinized *post mortem* in recognition of eminent services that they had rendered to humanity. As Lactantius also says (*De ira dei* 2.7.8 = *testim* 15N = *testim* 5mV), "It is beyond doubt that all those who receive worship as gods were men, and that the first and the greatest among them were kings; but that by virtue of the courage with which they had served the human race, they were gratified with divine honors after their death; or else following the good deeds and inventions with which they had embellished the life of humankind, they ensured for themselves an imperishable memorial. Who does not know this? . . . Those who hold to this teaching are primarily Euhemerus and our Ennius." But the popular pantheon also included gods of lesser morality who were, according to the preceding principle, difficult to identify with public benefactors; they too, however, could be explained by the same principle, provided that violence and deceit were substituted for good deeds and gratitude. On this subject, Sextus Empiricus (*Adversus Mathematicos* 9.17 = fgt 1N = *testim* 5c5) seems to have preserved the express formulations of the *Sacred Record*: "Euhemerus, known as 'the Atheist,' says this: 'When men lived in disorder, those whose superiority in strength and intelligence permitted them to make everyone carry out their

orders, wishing to receive more admiration and respect, falsely attributed to themselves a superhuman and divine power, which caused the masses to regard them as gods.'"

In reducing the shimmering of mythology to the more prosaic realities of history, Euhemerus joined the current of rationalist criticism applied to popular religion, a current that has been studied by P. Decharme⁴ and A. B. Drachmann;⁵ this is why he was known as "the Atheist." He was an innovator; the Sophists, especially Prodicus, are sometimes considered his predecessors. But Prodicus, although he explained divinization in terms of utility, was thinking mainly of the benefits offered by the great natural realities—the sun, rivers, springs, fruits of the earth, etc.—which men turned into gods; it was only at a later point that he extended this principle to the inventors of beneficial crafts themselves, and this thesis was not as well documented as the first. On the other hand, as G. Vallauri has shown,⁶ Euhemerus was not a sniper. His great idea incontestably corresponds to the spirit of his age; it is clearly related (and we shall see that the Christians were not mistaken about this) to the cult of sovereigns which was instituted in the Hellenistic period. Several authors or currents more or less contemporaneous with Euhemerus (the uncertainty of our chronology does not permit us to say whether he influenced them or was indebted to them) offered, as he did, a theory of the gods as former great servants of humanity. We do not know the exact moment at which ancient Stoicism adopted this explanation for certain gods—or, more accurately, for certain heroes, such as Heracles, Castor and Pollux, Asclepius, Dionysus. It is in any case a foregone conclusion with Zeno's student Persaeus of Citium (certainly posterior to Euhemerus by a few years), whose thesis was formulated by Cicero (*De natura deorum* 1.15.38) as follows: "Those who had devised something of great usefulness were honored as gods." There was another author, Hecataeus of Abdera (or of Teos), probably slightly earlier than Euhemerus, who proposed altogether analogous views on the origins of the Egyptian gods, if in fact he was, as is generally asserted (but see the counterargument of W. Spoerri),⁷ the source, in the Egyptian domain, of the historian Diodorus of Sicily.

Euhemerus, therefore, was certainly not the only person of his time to defend the thesis we have just described. But it was his name that remained coupled to it for posterity, notably for the Christian writers of the first centuries. For these writers broadly explored the possibilities Euhemerism offered, and we shall see why and how they did so. Works on this subject are rare, but we should at least point out the articles by F. Zucker⁸ and K. Thraede,⁹ and the dissertation by J. W. Schippers,¹⁰ to which we might add my own earlier studies;¹¹ we should also add that the works of J. D. Cooke¹² and of P. Alphandéry¹³ on the medieval developments of Euhemerism, and by J. Seznec¹⁴ on survivals of ancient theologies down to the Renaissance, contain much data on their use in the patristic age.

II. Christian Formulations

1. *Defense and illustration of Euhemerus.* The pagan gods are false gods; but what are they really? Christian theologians could not evade a response to this question. This response often takes the form, as with Saint Augustine, of describing the gods of the nations as "foul demons who wish to pass as gods": *deos gentium esse immundissimos daemones* . . . *deos se putari cupientes* (*City of God* 7.33). Euhemerism, however, offered an alternative, which Christians hurried to adopt. In spite of the atheism attached in classical tradition to the name

of Euhemerus, Theophilus of Antioch (*Ad Autolyicum* 3.7 = *testim* 19–20N = *testim* 5IV) was perhaps the only Christian who noted his impiety. Many Church Fathers, on the other hand, absolve him along with other supposed “atheists,” and compliment him on his clairvoyance. The African Arnobius of Sicca (late third to early fourth century) illustrates this outlook: “We surely cannot show here that all those whom you introduce under the name of gods were men: it suffices to open Euhemerus of Agrigento—whose books Ennius translated into an Italic language that everyone understands—or else Nicagoras of Cyprus, or Leo of Pella, or Theodore of Cyrene, or Hippo and Diagoras, both of Melos, or a thousand other authors who, attentive to scrupulous accuracy and as the free men that they were, brought to the light of day facts that had been left in shadow” (*Adversus nationes* 4.29 = *testim* 14N = *testim* 5IV). Elsewhere, Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* 2.24.2 = *testim* 13N = *testim* 5hV) makes a very similar comment, which may have been Arnobius’s model. At the beginning of the third century, Minucius Felix (*Octavius* 21.1 = *testim* 9N = *testim* 5fV) counts Euhemerus among historians and sages; Saint Augustine (*City of God* 7.27 = fgt 20N = *testim* 5n2V), calling history to the aid of poetry, associates his name with that of Virgil, who is also taken as a witness to the fact that Saturn was a mere dethroned king (*Aeneid* 8.319ff.). This last text shows that the Christian author was at pains to find Euhemerism in texts other than those of its founder; he would see another of his partisans in the person of the Egyptian Hermes Trismegistus, who, he says, “testifies that the gods of the Egyptians are men who have died” (*City of God* 8.26, using as an illustration the Hermetic *Asclepius* § 24).

The haste with which Christian authors adopted the theses of Euhemerus may be explained in part by the fact that they found similar theses in some of their scriptures. Such is the case with the Wisdom of Solomon, to which attention has been drawn by J. D. Cooke (see note 12); here are the terms in which the genesis of idolatry is traced in it: “For a father, consumed with grief at an untimely bereavement, made an image of his child, who had suddenly been taken from him; and now he honored as a god what was once a dead human being, and handed on to his dependents secret rites and initiations. Then the ungodly custom, grown strong with time, was kept as a law . . . and the multitude, attracted by the charm of his work, now regarded as an object of worship the one whom shortly before they had honored as a man” (*New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Wisdom of Solomon 14.15–20). This development (undoubtedly from the first century B.C.) on the origin of the gods is incontestably linked to Euhemerism, from which it probably takes its inspiration. Eight centuries later, Isidore of Seville would recall it, perhaps in order to describe the same kind of retrogression: after the death of certain great men, their friends represented them by means of an effigy simply as a means of consoling themselves and honoring their memory; it was only the following generations which, with the help of demonic influences, fell into the error of making gods of these men (*Etymologiae* 8.11.4).

In their portrayal of Euhemerism, the Christians accentuated particular aspects of it. The original humanity of the gods is less striking to them than the death through which they have passed, which continues to cling to them; more than divinized men, they are “corpses”: “we, who are alive, do not sacrifice to corpses who are gods, and we do not worship them,” is what we read in the Second Epistle (3.1), attributed (wrongly) to Saint Clement, one of the first bishops of Rome; “You have ended up as corpses yourselves, for

having put your trust in corpses,” is the warning given to the pagans by Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* 3.45.5); “They never manufacture gods except from corpses,” writes the historian Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica* 3.3.17), echoing the same idea. They fear beings that are twice dead, “more dead than the dead”: such is already the statement attributed to the Apostle Peter in the *Clementine Homilies* (10.9).

In explaining by what error men came to worship those who had previously been their peers, Clement stresses the aura of prestige with which the distant past is so easily endowed, while the present remains ignored for its banality. The historian Thucydides (*Peloponnesian Wars* 1.21.1) had earlier observed that “with the passing of time, most historic facts pass into the region of myths that no one can believe.” Clement again takes up this idea of the complicity of time and myth: “Those whom you worship were once men, who afterwards died. But myth and time have loaded them with honors . . . For the past, being cut off from immediate control by the obscurity which time brings, is invested with a fictitious honor . . . That is how the dead men of old, made venerable by the authority that time concedes to error, are believed to be gods by those who come after” (*Protrepticus* 4.55.2–3). It was, moreover, a Jewish explanation before it became Christian; we find it on the lips of another Clement, a cultivated Greek converted to Judaism and the protagonist of the *Clementine Homilies* (6.22); these homilies themselves belong to a Jewish apologetic tradition which may go back as far as the beginning of the second century. It takes time to forget that the gods were once men; but too much time results in a weakening of the legend. As Clement of Alexandria says (*Protrepticus* 2.37.1–3), the myths and gods of paganism “have aged” today, and Zeus himself is no longer the intrepid lover he once was (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 21, already spoke in a like fashion: “Why does Hera no longer bear children? Has she grown old, or does she lack someone who might announce it to you?”). But it is the discovery of Euhemerus that consummates this decadence, described by Clement by means of a metaphor familiar to ancient theories of myth, that of “laying bare” (the verb *gumnoun*)—the truth “lays bare” the mass of gods by tearing away their masks (*Protrepticus* 2.27.5); the myth of Zeus is “laid bare” before the eyes of the pagans (2.37.3)—which is all another way of saying that the Euhemerist explanation strips the Greek pantheon of its finery and reduces it to its mere human expression.

Thus Christian thought tried to accredit Euhemerus’s hypothesis by analyzing the process of divinization. Other authors offer equally enlightening examples. Lactantius, the principal witness to the Latin adaptation of Euhemerus, reduces the classical pranks of Jupiter to purely human dimensions: the golden rain with which the god showered Danaë’s breast was nothing more, in a concrete sense—if one subtracts from it all the poetic amplification—than the wages of a common courtesan, just as “rain of iron” is used for a volley of arrows; the eagle of Ganymede was originally simply the insignia of the legion sent out to kidnap the young shepherd; as for the bull of Europa and the heifer into which Io metamorphosed herself, we are to understand these ruminants, in a more prosaic way, as figureheads on the prows of the ships used to transport the two maidens (*Divinae Institutiones* 1.11.17–22; in the same vein, *Epitome divin. instit.* 11; certain of these explanations are taken up again by Augustine, *City of God* 18.13).

2. *The divinization of emperors and pharaohs.* We have seen that the appearance of Euhemerism was probably not uncon-

nected with the cult of the Hellenistic sovereigns. This *Sitz im Leben* could not escape the Christian authors, who associated the theses of Euhemerus with the apotheoses of princes which were taking place before their eyes or had occurred recently. This is what Athanasius of Alexandria does, for example, in a *Discourse against the Pagans*. His Euhemerist convictions are well established: the gods are very ancient leaders, upon the loss of whom (along with their relatives) there was lamentation—such was the case with Zeus, Hermes, Osiris, etc. (*Contra Gentes* 10, *Patrologia Graeca* 25.24A). Thus was constituted the antique pantheon, its principal author being Theseus, the legendary king of Attica (10.21BC). Athanasius clearly refuses to take such divinities seriously; as he says in a well-turned phrase, "Their mythology is not a theology" (19.40C). For him, the process of divinization unveiled by Euhemerus evokes the apotheosis bestowed upon emperors and claimed by some of them for third parties (as by Hadrian for his favorite Antinous) (9.20CD). Against such pretensions, Athanasius simply observes that, since the worker should be superior to his work, mortal men are incapable of making gods (9.21A; an analogous argument had previously been more amply developed by Tertullian, *Apologeticus* 11.1–3).

The passages from Athanasius are undoubtedly the most synthetic, but they are not the only ones to be found in patristic literature on the subject. The author of the *Clementine Homilies* (6.23) bases his arguments on Euhemerism, recalling that down through the Ptolemaic period the Egyptians had made gods of their pharaohs even while they were still alive. As for Saint Augustine, he would note that Euhemerus's explanation is rendered probable by the spectacle of different episodes in Roman history: "What then is surprising in the fact that the earliest men did for Jupiter, Saturn, and the rest the very thing that the Romans did for Romulus and wanted to do, in a more recent time, for Caesar himself?" (*De consensu evangelist.* 1.23.32).

This pretension to legal apotheosis on the part of great individuals naturally rankles the Christians, who are sometimes presented as adversaries of Euhemerism; we have seen that such is not the case, except to the extent that Euhemerus might have appeared to them as being partial to aspirations to divinization on the part of sovereigns. Whatever the case, it must be said that, in their rejection of apotheosis, the Christian authors, as often happened, followed in the footsteps of certain Greek philosophers. We saw above that the Stoic Persaeus of Citium, regarding the phenomenon of heroization, held a doctrine related to, and probably dependent upon, that of Euhemerus. And Cicero, describing the thesis of Persaeus in his dialogue *De natura deorum* (1.15.38), puts his account in the mouth of an Epicurian philosopher named Velleius, who no sooner formulates the doctrine than he condemns it with great verve: "What could be more absurd than . . . to raise men to gods once death has destroyed them?"

3. The "letter of Alexander to Olympias." Even though Euhemerus never, properly speaking, founded a school, his theses were exhibited in works other than his own. Among the latter, a text should be noted here for the echo it finds among Christian listeners; that is, a so-called letter from Alexander of Macedonia to his mother Olympias, discussed in an article by F. Pfister.¹⁵ Various Christian apologists (Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Cyprian, Augustine) believe that the author really was Alexander, to whom the Euhemerist theory was thought to have been revealed in Egypt. Here, for example, is how Athenagoras, the earliest among them,

associates the Macedonian king with the historian Herodotus, who precedes him by a century: "Herodotus and Alexander, the son of Philip, in his letter to his mother, say that they have learned from the priests that these gods were once men. Each of them is said to have had conversations with the priests in Heliopolis, Memphis, and Thebes" (Athenagoras, *Supplication to Marcus Aurelius* 28).

Other Fathers of the Church (Tatian, Tertullian again, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Arnobius), commenting on the same subject, evoke a certain Leo. That all of these writers had the same text in mind is demonstrated by the fact that Augustine (*City of God* 8.5, 27; *De consensu evangelist.* 1.23.33) makes Leo the Egyptian priest from whom Alexander received the revelation of the original humanity of the gods. Such divergencies lead one to believe that this was a document of which the Christians had only heard tell, and that its author was neither Alexander nor Leo but an unknown individual whose ideas and lifetime were close to those of Hecataeus of Abdera and of Euhemerus; he was probably later than they and influenced by them. Of all of the Christian writers, only Arnobius, in a passage cited above, speaks of Leo of Pella; this geographical detail might lead one to believe that he was a real individual; but this does not accord with the testimony of Augustine, who sees Leo as a *sacerdos Aegyptius*. The situation being so confused, especially if one remembers that Pella was the capital of the kingdom of Macedonia and the birthplace of Alexander, one is tempted to subscribe to F. Pfister's hypothesis, that Arnobius's "Pellaeus Leon" was merely a metaphor designating Alexander, the "lion of Pella!"

III. The Arguments Set Forth

1. The "synonymy" of the gods. Accepting Euhemerism, the Christian authors muster various arguments in favor of this doctrine; some were their own, but most had been formulated before them. So it is that Clement of Alexandria, in order to "refute the imaginations" that presided over the constitution of the pagan pantheon, invokes what he calls the "synonymies" (*Protrepticus* 2.27.5), and what today we would call homonymy: the fact that the names of the greatest gods refer to several distinct divinities. By way of illustration, he recalls that there were three Zeuses, five Athenas, six Apollos, and many an Asclepius, Hermes, Hephaestus, and Ares (2.28.1–29.2). Many other Christian authors made sport of the fact that several would-be gods could bear the same name, especially that of Zeus (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 12.10; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 22.6; Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 4.14, etc.); but none could exploit these circumstances to the advantage of the Euhemerist thesis as well as Clement did. The way had nevertheless been opened by the pagan philosophers themselves; Cicero, for example, in the third book of his dialogue *De natura deorum*, borrows from Cotta, the spokesman for skepticism in the New Academy, a long elaboration on the plurality, not only of Jupiters, but also of Vulcans, Mercuries, Apollos, etc. (*Nat. D.* 3.21.53–23.60). This fact had already been interpreted there as an argument in favor of the human origin of these gods, as the first sentence of his declamatory passage shows: "We ought also to fight those who argue that these beings who came from the human race and were transported to heaven are not really, but only by convention, the gods whom we all honor with our most devout veneration" (3.21.53).

2. The traces left by the gods. It could have been predicted that the bodily peculiarities of the gods would be seen as

indices of their human origin. In his treatise *On Isis and Osiris* (chap. 23), Plutarch shows himself to be personally hostile to Euhemerism; he nevertheless notes (chap. 22) that, according to the Egyptians, Hermes had short arms, Typho was red-headed, Horus blond, Osiris brunette; and he gives voice to the following conclusion: "This is because, by nature, they were men." The Christian Eusebius makes no mistake; in searching in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (3.3.15–16) for confirmations for his Euhemerist convictions, he sees how he can make good use of Plutarch's text on the bodily characteristics of the gods. He cites that text as "witness to the fact that they were mortal men." The details of their physical appearance are just part of the picture, and Clement of Alexandria invokes other concrete data that point in the same direction: "May the lands they dwelled in, the arts they practiced, the record of their lives, yes, and even their tombs, convince you that they were only men" (*Protrepticus* 2.29.1).

In drawing out this argument, Clement and Eusebius followed Euhemerus's lead directly, as several sources show: "Euhemerus and our Ennius show the birth, marriage, progeniture, power, exploits, death, and tomb of all the gods" (*testim.* 15N = *testim.* 5mV = Lactantius, *De ira dei* 2.7.8; cf. on the same *testim.* 9N = *testim.* 5fV = Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 21). The last element mentioned, the tomb as an attestation of death, is the most important of all; it is the only one retained by Cicero (*Nat. D.* 1.42.119 = *testim.* 2N = *testim.* 5dV): *ab Euhemero autem et mortes et sepulturae demonstrantur deorum* ("Moreover, both the deaths and the tombs of the gods are demonstrated by Euhemerus"). Euhemerus was especially concerned with Zeus, narrating his death in Crete, the funerary rites performed by his sons the Curetes, and the placing of the body in the sepulcher in Cnossos (fgt 29N = fgt 24V = Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 1.11.46). Thus the poet Callimachus, wishing to dismantle nascent Euhemerism, would choose to refute it on this ground (*Hymn to Zeus* 8–9 = *testim.* 1bV): "The Cretans are always liars; for the Cretans even built your tomb, O king, but you did not die, for you exist forever."

The Christian authors take care not to side with Callimachus; several of them expressly rebuke him and say that the Cretans are right rather than he, as shown in the texts brought together by N. Zeegers-Vander Vorst.¹⁶ Tatian (*Oratio ad Graecos* 27) and Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* 2.37.4) took this line. The interpellation of Athanagoras, which comes at the end of three chapters on the human origin of the gods, merits a citation; it points out the contradiction of the poet, who denies that the god is dead but recognizes that he was born, without realizing that he who is born must die: "You believe, Callimachus, in the birth of Zeus but you do not believe in his tomb. And thinking to conceal the truth, you proclaim his death, even to men who are unaware of it; if you see the cave you recall Rhea's giving birth, but if you see the funerary urn you throw darkness over the death of the god, not knowing that the only eternal being is the God without a beginning" (*Supplication* 30). Origen took up the same argument—that death necessarily follows birth—but his text is notable in that he gives the floor to his adversary, the pagan Celsus, who says to the Christians: "You mock those who worship Zeus, giving as a reason the fact that his tomb is displayed in Crete, and yet you honor Him who came out from the tomb, without knowing how and under what authority the Cretans act in this way" (*Contra Celsum* 3.43). It is a sentence exceptionally rich in information: this Platonist of the second century knew the Christian argument derived from the tomb of Zeus; he found little coherence between it and faith in a resurrected

God; and he knew (unfortunately without making it known) an allegorical justification of the myth of the sepulcher of Zeus. Whatever the case, Origen maintains the historicity of the tomb of Zeus while alleging that the learned Callimachus was ignorant of any allegory of this kind.

Aside from the reference to Callimachus's *Hymn to Zeus*, which seems to be limited to the four authors we have just seen, there is no end to the list of Christians who advance the argument of the tomb. The *Clementine Homilies* nevertheless are worth singling out for the fact that they do not merely turn the tomb of Zeus in Crete to their account, but feel that their Euhemerist convictions will be more widely shared if they add the tombs of Kronos in the Caucasus, Ares in Thrace, Hermes in Egypt, Aphrodite in Cyprus, Dionysus at Thebes, Asclepius in Epidaurus, etc. (5.23 and 6.21; the theses are proposed by the Jewish or Judeo-Christian Clement). A passage taken from Tertullian is of interest because it adds to these sepulchers the consideration of other "monuments of antiquity" from which we learn about the gods, the cities in which they were born, the lands in which they left traces of their activities: Tertullian hopes that the pagans will succumb in the face of such proofs and recognize that all their gods were formerly men (*Apologeticus* 10.3–4). This conclusion leads to Euhemerism, which Tertullian next develops (10.6–11) by using Saturn and Jupiter as illustration. After much hesitation over which one of the two contemporaneous authors influenced the other, it is generally thought today that it was Tertullian who served as model for Minucius Felix. In fact, the latter offers an elaboration on Saturn and Jupiter very similar to the one we have just seen (*Octavius* 23.9–13). With admirable clarity he mobilizes Jupiter—to whose tomb he adds, as we have seen Athenagoras do, the cave of Ida—to the cause of Euhemerism: "Even today people visit the grotto of Jupiter and show his tomb, and the very sites that he consecrated prove his human nature (*ipsis sacris suis humanitatis arguitur*)" (23.13; M. Pellegrino's edition of *Octavius* is valuable for its copious annotation, especially on the chapter in question).¹⁷

3. *The existence of rites.* Many historians of religions today conceive of the relationship between myth and ritual in such a way that myth appears to justify ritual a posteriori. An example of these etiological myths is provided by M. Eliade: "Preconjugal ceremonial unions preceded the appearance of the myth of the preconjugal relations between Hera and Zeus, the myth which served to justify them."¹⁸ This is a point on which the Fathers of the Church were not very "modern." For they believed in general that the cultic activities of paganism bore witness to the historical reality of myths, in other words, to the human origin of the gods.

The argument begins with Tertullian, who parallels the names of the gods, which are an element of their civil status as mortals, with their histories, which are confirmed by rites: "With regard then to your gods, I see only the names of certain dead men of the past, about whom I hear tales, and I identify their sacred rites from the tales (*sacra de fabulis recognosco*)" (*Apologeticus* 12.1; we have just encountered the word *sacra*, "sacred rites," in the work of Minucius Felix—*ipsis sacris suis*—who invokes the cave and tomb of Jupiter while thinking of the rites that were performed there). The same reasoning would soon become more explicit with Arnobius, as we see in this passage: "How then, do we prove that all these stories are records of actual events? From the solemn rites, of course, and the mysteries of initiation, either those which take place at stated times and days or those which the people hand down in secret, preserving the

perpetuity of their special customs. For it must not be believed that these practices are without their origins, that they take place without rhyme or reason, that they do not submit to motives that link them with primitive institutions." Here Arnobius offers examples of the way in which today's sacred liturgies are rooted in yesterday's human episodes, thus rendering them incontestable: the pine introduced in procession in the sanctuary of Cybele is the image of the one under which Attis emasculated himself; the annual phallophoria reflect the castrating mission of Liber; the secret ceremonies of Eleusis contain the memory of the wanderings of Ceres in search of Proserpina and some of her stopping places. Whether or not they are correct, Arnobius continues, these examples leave no loopholes: "If these mysteries have another cause, that is nothing to us, so long as they are produced by some cause. For it defies belief that these practices were all undertaken without antecedent causes; or we must judge the people of Attica to be crazy for having forged a religious rite that has no motive. And if our conclusion is clearly established, if the causes and origins of the mysteries derive from actual events (*e rebis actis mysteriorum causae atque origines effluunt*) . . ." (*Adversus Nationes* 5.39; cf. 5.5–7 for the development of his examples; on this passage, as well as for the whole of Arnobius's apologetic treatise in general, see the commentary by George E. McCracken).¹⁹

4. *The dilemma of Xenophanes.* While they are the principal index of the original humanity of the gods, the tombs also become the favored place for their worship. In a text of Jewish apologetics from the end of the second century or the beginning of the first century B.C., introduced into the Greek Bible under the title of the *Letter of Jeremiah*, we read that the offerings presented to the pagan gods are assimilated to those placed on tombs (verse 26).

A saying that gained great currency in the first Christian centuries was that the temples of false gods were tombs, their own tombs. Athenagoras (*Supplication* 28) attributes this saying to the Euhemerist theologians of Egypt, and also to a Greek grammarian of the second century B.C., Apollodorus, the author of the treatise *On the Gods*, which was known, perhaps directly but more likely indirectly, to several Christian authors (on this last point, see the works of Zucker²⁰ and Geffcken²¹). "They despise the temples as if they were tombs" (*templa ut busta despiciunt*), says Cecilius, the pagan interlocutor in Minucius Felix's dialogue (*Octavius* 8.4), of the Christians; in the fourth century, Firmicus Maternus, another apologist, found these words to his taste and put them to his own use: *Busta sunt haec, sacratissimi imperatores, appellanda, non templa* ("These should be called tombs, most sacred emperors, not temples"; *De errore profanarum religionum* 16.3). It was primarily Clement of Alexandria who gave credence to this theme: "These temples . . . are euphemistically called temples, but they are really tombs . . . Be ashamed to honor these tombs" (*Protrepticus* 3.44.4); and later, with regard to the temple of Antinous, which was consecrated by the emperor Hadrian: "Just like temples, so also tombs, pyramids, mausoleums, and labyrinths seem to be objects of reverence; they are temples of the dead, just as temples are tombs of the gods" (4.49.3).

This parallel was not pushed any farther. But it has an important corollary: if it is true that the temples are nothing but tombs, then it follows that the mourning connected with tombs should invade and alter the worship offered in temples. This critique had been formulated by Greek philosophy itself; we find it in Cicero's *De natura deorum* in the mouth of

the spokesman for Epicureanism, Velleius, who addresses it to the Stoic Persaeus, having just described the latter's theory on divinization, which is close to Euhemerism: by thus introducing deceased men among the gods, "the whole cult of the gods becomes an expression of mourning" (*quorum omnis cultus esset futurus in luctu*, 1.15.38; here, as elsewhere, we may read this Ciceronian dialogue, a fundamental document in the religious philosophy of antiquity, in A. S. Pease's edition,²² which is irreplaceable, especially for its fabulous wealth of notes).

This incompatibility, strengthened by the similarity in sound of the Latin words *cultus* and *luctus*, led Christian authors to argue in the form of a dilemma. Once again, they do not reject Euhemerism; they continue to be indebted to it for having shown them the human origin of the pagan gods; but, like Velleius, they clearly spurn the idea that gods so conceived could be anything but false gods. It is in this sense that they exploit the principle whereby an authentic cult could not be exclusively funerary: if your gods are gods, do not mourn for them; if you mourn for them, admit that they are men.

This schema is first established by Athenagoras, when he writes of the gods of Egypt: "If they are gods, they are immortal; but if they are wounded and if their sufferings constitute their mysteries, they are men" (*Supplication* 28; the dilemma is veiled by the fact that the author passes from the notion of mortality to that of suffering, which the mysteries perpetuate). Earlier (14), Athenagoras had similarly referred to the incoherence of the cults celebrated in Egyptian temples, in which everyone beats his breast in unison as if at a funeral, and everyone offers sacrifices such as are made to gods. The same reasoning attains its greatest limpidity in Clement of Alexandria: "If you believe they are gods, do not lament them, nor beat your breast; but if you mourn for them, stop thinking that they are gods" (*Protrepticus* 2.24.3). Among Latin authors, the memory of the Ciceronian antithesis between *cultus* and *luctus* persists. After recalling the demonstration of grief which colors the legend of Isis and governs her annual mysteries, Minucius Felix asks: "Is it not ridiculous to mourn what one worships or to worship what one mourns?" (*vel lugere quod colas vel colore quod lugeas*) (*Octavius* 22.1). In the fourth century, this dilemma takes a plainly scholastic turn with Firmicus Maternus: "If they are gods whom you worship (*colitis*), why do you mourn them (*lugitis*)? Why do you celebrate annual ceremonies of mourning for them? If they deserve tears, why do you heap divine honors on their heads? Do either one thing or the other: either do not weep for them if they are gods, or, if you think they deserve grief and tears, do not call them gods any longer, lest your lamentations and tears should defile the majesty of the divine name." (*De errore profanarum religionum* 8.4; on this apologetic treatise, the author of which is a converted pagan, see the commentaries of the editor A. Pastorino,²³ as well as that of the French translator G. Heuten²⁴.)

This consensus of the Christian apologists on the incompatibility of worship and mourning may be surprising, coming as it does from the followers of a religion in which the central figure of the cult is precisely that of a man-God who has been put to death. The explanation may derive from the fact that these authors could not themselves define the dilemma in question, but had merely borrowed it unsuspectingly from a Greek philosophical tradition. Clement of Alexandria makes no mystery of this source; for he does not offer the formula we have just seen as his own, but cites it as a warning addressed to the Egyptians by someone he does not

name. He does imply that it is one of those philosophers reputed to be "atheists" because of the insight with which they brought to light the errors concerning the gods; to this end he cites some names, including that of Euhemerus (*Protrepticus* 2.24.2, as indicated at the beginning of this study).

In fact, the author of this dilemma is the pre-Socratic Xenophanes of Colophon, well known for his biting critique of the theology of Homer, a critique that the Christians would also use to their advantage. It was an apothegm to which the earliest witness was Aristotle, who saw it as an illustration of a certain rhetorical procedure: "To the people of Eleus who asked whether or not they should offer a sacrifice to Leucothea and mourn her death, Xenophanes counseled that if they thought her a goddess, they should not mourn her, but, if they thought her a woman, they should not sacrifice to her." We are certainly in the presence of the antithesis between divinity and humanity and, in parallel fashion, between a religious cult and mourning; lacking, however, are two elements which are characteristic of the text cited by Clement—i.e., that there the remark is addressed to the Egyptians, and that there the dilemma is altered by a form of chiasmus. But these differences disappear in another tradition of the sayings of Xenophanes, attested by Plutarch: "Xenophanes of Colophon was thus right to judge that the Egyptians, if they believed in the gods, should not mourn their death, but that if they did mourn them, they should not believe them to be gods" (the texts of Aristotle and Plutarch—and two other analogous texts, also by Plutarch—may be found in H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6th ed. [Berlin, 1951], vol. 1, p. 115; see also p. 180, in which the same apothegm is attributed by an ancient author, aberrantly, to Heraclitus). So it was in the version known to Plutarch that the saying of the pre-Socratic reached Clement of Alexandria and his successors. This episode illustrates the skill with which the Christian apologists often use the Greek philosophers themselves to refute the theology of paganism: they hasten to Euhemerus for demonstration that the gods are deceased men, in other words, they think, false gods. And if anyone should be tempted to take this kind of divinization seriously and to believe that those lamented dead have become real gods (it is improbable but not impossible that such was the personal opinion of Euhemerus), then the apologists call on Xenophanes to support their assertion that one cannot mourn a dead man and worship a god in the same person.

J.P./d.w.

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CHRISTIANITY AND MYTHOLOGY IN THE GREEK CHURCH

NOTES

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By the year 313, when the Edict of Milan marked a decisive rapprochement between the Roman Empire and the Church, the Church already had behind it two centuries of existence at the heart of a Hellenism which had itself been drawn into the flow of history during that time. To be sure, that ancient religious system was still in place, under the benevolent aegis of the reigning power and elites and in the collective conservation of tradition. The place and times of rites persisted, with their developments, their mythic justifications punctuated by major or minor names from the classical pantheon. This picture, however, needs some important retouchings. The first is the increasing attraction of sources of wisdom attributed to the East. These initiate one into paths to a happy personal and stellar immortality, founded on terrestrial asceticism, and are placed under the patronage



Saint George killing the dragon. Sculpture on two panels of pine. Nicosia, Cyprus Folk Art Museum. Museum photo.

of long adopted exotic gods and goddesses such as Isis, or, at least, gods renewed by exoticism such as the Egyptian Thoth-Hermes. Next, there is the flowering, on various levels, of symbolic speculations fueled by the Greek myths, portrayals of episodes invested with new hope (such as the labors of Hercules on sarcophagi, or the flight of the Dioscuri on the subterranean vault of the Porta Maggiore in Rome), as well as the extensive philosophical constructions of a Plotinus in the third century. In such a perspective, one is confronted less by the continuity of ancient mythology than by the fabrication of a contemporary mythology in the second and third centuries, produced by imperial Hellenism in response to the questions of the time. The ancient traditions and their symbolic interpretations are combined with borrowings of varying antiquity from cultures bearing little or none of the stamp of Hellenism from the Roman or Persian East. Among these cultures is Judaism in its diverse currents, which at that time was elaborating its theory of angels and defining the figure of Satan, itself undergoing influences from Persia. This was also the time when an obsession with demons, invisible and omnipresent assailants, was developing, an obsession that Christianity would claim for its own from the very start. Finally, the myths taught in the Gnostic sects, of which some existed within Christianity itself, are perhaps the most striking monument to the powers of

invention that were manifesting themselves at the time. These would have a medieval posterity of their own.

It was in this cultural context that the young Christian Church had to find its place. An Origen or a Clement of Alexandria were deeply imbued, on a philosophical level, with the very culture they found so easy to combat on a literally narrative or naively ritual level. This leads to an essential, secular ambiguity. The Byzantine elite, whether or not it was of the Church, would not abandon the philosophical approach, the rhetorical discipline, and the literary baggage of ancient Hellenism: the teaching it received assured its cultural preservation, with greater or lesser success from one period to another, and its distinctive social value remained intact as a result. On the other hand, Hellenic Christianity as a whole integrated into its new faith those traditions whose function remained necessary, such as the annual cycle of festivals. As a result, the encounter of the Eastern Church with the complex mythology that existed around the year 313 is not an encounter between a scholarly culture and a popular culture, but rather the beginning of a thousand-year coexistence of cultural practices at different levels of society and different levels of consciousness, levels whose respective scope and depth would vary according to the efficacy of the official repression imposed upon the ancient religion.

We may thus pass quite quickly over the well-known dates and facts that serve as landmarks in the battle against the old gods carried out publicly in the fourth century by the Church, which was associated with the ruling power except during the short restoration under Julian (361–363). The repression that had begun with Constantine reached its official end with the general prohibition against the ancient religion proclaimed by Theodosius I in 392. Nevertheless, the reign of Justinian I (527–565) was still marked by the confiscation of sanctuary properties and the prohibition of teaching by pagans. And although Bishop Porphyry tore down the sanctuary of Marneion of Gaza at the end of the fourth century, the last internal missions, notably those in the mountains of Asia Minor, were established around 542, and the last matters involving personalities of the capital, including the patriarch himself, occurred around 570. The whole of the sixth century is still marked by skirmishes that erupt in the cities on the days on which the old festivals, the *Vota* and *Bromalia*, provoke excitement. The seventh century marks the real threshold, for in Byzantium this was the period of invasions perpetrated by peoples who were in every way non-Christian—Arabs, Avars, and Slavs. The result is a definitive identification between the Christian cause and that of the political Roman-ness of Hellenic culture. In 626, the Virgin appears on the walls of the capital under siege by the Avars and their troops, and saves it. The historical data of Christian Hellenism are complete thenceforth and for all time.

The realm of Christian Hellenism would be immense if it were defined as that of churches born, directly or indirectly, of the Eastern Roman Empire, from Alexandria to Kiev and Moscow, from the Caucasus to the Balkans. We thus focus on lands which remained, for all intents and purposes, Hellenic in language and, at least predominantly, Hellenic in culture—for to venture further, especially into Slavic lands, would be to pursue the identical Christianization of too different a substratum. Delimited in this way, the history of Christian Hellenism presents three great continuities on three cultural levels: the elite, the Church, and the Christian people.

Most manifest is the great secular culture of an elite in which service to the State is closely associated with service to

the Church: both are taught at the same desks, and in a language whose mythological allusion remains a sign of recognition all the more appreciable for the fact that it is scholarly. To be sure, the formalism of an Agathias, in the century of Justinian, is not the scholarship of a Photius in the ninth century, nor the classical mastery of Psellus and his friends in the following period. But literary references to mythology adorn even sacred speeches, even episcopal correspondence, and even a Life of a saint of the eleventh or twelfth century that likens the struggle of the missionary saint Nikon in the region of Sparta to the labors of Hercules. In the same way, though to a lesser degree, the iconographic setting of secular life draws on the ancient repertory. The Neoplatonist current flows without interruption from Plotinus, from Proclus and the Athenian Academy of the fifth century, to the philosophers of the capital of the eleventh century, and finally to Mistra and the person of Georgius Gemistus Plethon as the empire dragged to its close and the Renaissance dawned. There was always a very fine line, right down to ideas which were suspect and subject to prosecution, as in the case of John "The Grammarian" and of Leo the Philosopher in the ninth century, the difficulties experienced by Michael Psellus, the accusations he himself made against the patriarch Michael Cerularius, and the trials of John Italos in the eleventh century. It is difficult to plumb the depth of the temptations thus denounced. But it must not be forgotten that people like Psellus and, it would seem, Cerularius drew from ancient Hellenism more than merely the forms and ideas of that great cultural tradition. They were also nourished with its obscure and dangerous curiosities, and recovered from it the magical or divinatory practices which the end of antiquity had developed against demons—for demons continued to offer the same face to people of the eleventh century, arousing in them the same obsession.

The greatest source of information on the relations of the Greek Church and its people with Hellenic mythology is to be found not here but in the documents written by clerical or monastic scribes. Such information thus has a twofold application, to the practices of the Christian people but first and foremost to the clerics themselves. We find it in accounts of martyrs (increasingly flamboyant in more recent periods), in the Lives of the saints (which range from quite fictional works of spiritual edification to biography), in the observations and interdictions of Church councils (of which the most significant takes place in 692), and in the commentaries of later canonists. Finally, liturgical books, notably those of southern Italy, like the collections of magic formulas that continue an earlier tradition, throw light on the marginal areas in which the Church accepts and absorbs the practices of its people, and in which Christianity imprints its own forms on ancient responses. With the end of the Middle Ages, ordinary ecclesiastical culture ceases to constitute a distinct and significant stratum, and the distance between the observer and the observed collectivity reaches its present dimension. Such is the case with Leo Allatius (1586–1669); a Uniate Greek born on Chios who settled in Rome, he left an important testimony within the framework of his work in favor of a union of the churches. In the nineteenth century, with the national self-reassertion of Greece and the general renewal of the study of ancient Hellenism, Christian Greek culture was scrutinized in a search for continuity. Information collected at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century is thus attributable to Greek or foreign scholars, who came for different reasons to a single path, the quest for the ancient stratum of con-

temporary Greek culture. The first of these scholars were mobilized by the fundamental debate provoked by the assertions of Fallmerayer (1842) on the historical rupture inflicted upon the populations of Greece by the medieval influx of Slavs. The next group left their libraries and universities to search in the field for still living traces of ancient Hellenism. All of these enterprises put together a mass of data in which the survival of ancient Hellenism naturally occupies an important position. Although marred by an overly vertical penetration downward through historical strata, the data nevertheless make possible a better method for analyzing the religious system into which Christianity and the vestiges of the ancient cults were integrated. We thus remain in the direct line of our medieval sources, and can verify their correctness.

There is certainly a continuity between the medieval sources and contemporary observations, and its course may be traced back to antiquity. Yet the true extent of this continuity must be appreciated. The most immutable grounding, and undoubtedly the oldest even with regard to the ancient religion, is that of the calendar, the annual cycle of festivals. The council held in 692 in the capital to extirpate the heretical contagion, whether Judaizing or Hellenic, still fully recognizes the ancient rituals in the traditional festivities that mark the year: the Calends of January 1st, the *Vota* of the 6th, the *Bromalia* of November-December, and March 1st. The council condemns the wild dancing that drives women out into the streets, encourages costumes and masques, and is performed, according to the Fathers, in the name of the false gods of the Greeks (i.e., the pagans). The Fathers refrain from naming these gods, with one exception: their explicit prohibition against proclaiming the name of the "infamous Dionysus" while trampling grapes in the press. The hagiography of Steven the Younger, martyred in 764 for his defense of icons, gives his date of death as November 28th—the day on which the iconoclastic emperor, by his own testimony hardened in his Hellenism (i.e., paganism), celebrates the *Bromalia*, proclaiming the names of Dionysus and Bromius, the fathers of seed grains and wine. Commenting on these canons in the twelfth century, Theodorus Balsamon asserts that the practices they condemn have not yet disappeared. Demetrius Chomatianus, archbishop of Achrida at the beginning of the thirteenth century, mentions the same festivities while also giving details about the *Rousalia* carnival, which Balsamon indicated as a practice found on the borders of the Empire. This immemorial cycle, in which the dead and living take part in the succession of the agrarian seasons, persists in the Greek islands today. Its culminating periods are the Twelve Days that separate Christmas from the Epiphany, the three weeks of Carnival (during which the pantomimes of the Kalogheroi reproduce an archaic Dionysian ritual of death and resurrection), Saint George's Day in April (a festival of shepherds, like the ancient Parilia), Pentecost in its connection with the dead, and the night of Saint John in June. The sites bear witness to the same permanence, especially the sanctuaries dedicated to Christian saints to which people still come in search of healing, most often through the ancient ritual of spending the night there (incubation): the practice is attested to without a break through the medieval and modern periods.

This victorious perennality was bought at the price of the almost total obliteration of the names of the gods themselves. At the beginning of the Greek Middle Ages, a lesser power, often malevolent, doomed to defeat in the end but uncontested in the present, was the lingering sign of the old gods in the Hellenic Christian consciousness (starting with that of

the clergy itself). But the names of those gods were quickly repudiated, which is equally significant; the council of 692 passed over their names in silence in reference to their festivals, but also in the important and oft-renewed prohibition against ancient forms of oath-taking and especially of divination. In the stories of martyrs composed after the triumph of the Church, the gods are named wrongly, or driven into anonymity. These tales recount the victory of their hero over the Hellenic gods his persecutor has ordered him to worship, gods whose statues crumble to dust at the invocation of a Christian. The designation of the gods snows to what extent their memory had become blurred in the mind of the ordinary cleric. Sometimes a single god, such as Apollo, is designated as superior to all the others. Sometimes they are degraded collectively as anonymous "demons." In the same vein, the Lives of the saints up to the sixth century relate militant episodes of destruction of local sanctuaries. But in the same period, and even later, they also evoke victories over demons of the countryside, phantoms without name or any semblance of a condemned past (as pagan gods), who perch in trees or lurk in isolated tombs or ancient

ruins. The action taken by the Church thus represented the other side of a general belief that it shared, and with which it was imbued, at both a popular and a local level, even in its own ritual: an example is the late repertory of Italo-Greek prayers preserved in a sixteenth-century manuscript, which continues to place demons that are to be avoided in trees and ancient tombs, as well as at crossroads—while references to names drawn from the ancient repertory remain insignificant, especially in proportion to those of a Judaizing tinge, such as are found especially in amulet texts. Dionysus constituted a lasting exception. One should not, however, succumb to the nineteenth-century authors' obsession with explicit ancient lineages, such as the story of Saint Dionys(i)us who brought the first vine stock to Naxos, or the story of Saint Demetra, honored at Eleusis, and of her daughter ravished by a Turkish magician, and of the young man who would go to her rescue. Whatever interest these tales may hold, they are perhaps less significant than the survival of Charon, of the bogey-woman Gyllu, or of the troop of Nereids. It should be noted that the aquatic and sylvan seductresses recur in Slavic folklore, and that the Slavic presence or influence in Hellenic territory is hardly taken into account by Fallmerayer's adversaries.

Christian Hellenism, then, did not forget the ancient religious strand but eclipsed the names of the gods under whose patronage the old rituals were performed and, by that act, dissolved the mythic accounts that explained those rituals. Does this mean that Christian Hellenism was bereft of a mythology? The question primarily involves a portion of the ancient heritage which is not that of classical or Romanized Hellenism, but that of Gnosticism. Its medieval posterity in Byzantium—the Paulicians and Bogomils—preserve or enrich the myths about Creation, the first man, and the role of Satan in the created world. The cults of the saints and of the Virgin are more difficult to analyze.

The first answers, formulated at the turn of the twentieth century, proposed direct and simple identifications, of the "Mithra = Saint George" type. But such identifications do not stand up to examination. First of all, they can never be justified by an exhaustive and point-for-point coincidence; their authors tied them hastily to various partial similarities, places of worship, attributes, and festival dates. Next, and more important, this collection of facts, however interesting it may be, has never accounted for the initial and major innovation developed by Christianity, which is the cult devoted to the saints, to their living person, to their tomb, to their images, and, in a comparable fashion, to the Virgin. Hence, the temple of Athena Parthenos became a church of the Virgin; shepherds celebrated Saint George's Day on a date which was more or less that of the Parilia; Saint Elijah, whose festival day falls in July, exercises from the heights of the hills an atmospheric power that justifies his biblical assumption but also recalls that of Zeus and of Helios; Saint Michael took Hermes' role as conductor of souls to the afterworld. But all of this is secondary. What must first be analyzed is the constitution of a network of supernatural mediators—nearly all, reputedly, of human birth, but of whom the most widely honored nevertheless have no history, nor even any legend, apart from the collection of their miracles; it is a repertory of rites of supplication, of the motifs and mechanics of these miracles. Research needs to be undertaken starting from local data. It will thus be found that the saints offer no myths, new or old—if the term "myth" is taken to mean an account which is at once explanatory and reversible—but merely fragments of earlier myths, as well as

Elijah in his chariot of fire. 1655. Amberg-Herzog collection. Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève. Museum photo.



fragments of rituals, some more coherent than others. To go beyond this would mean questioning the whole history of the Christian religion.

E.P./d.w.

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THE NAASSENES' USE OF PAGAN MYTHOLOGIES

Known only from the account in the *Elenchos* (V, 6, 1–10, 2), the Naassenes never went by that name, which was invented by some polemicist who wanted people to believe that they were worshipers of the snake (*nahās* in Hebrew), like those who were called Ophites in Greek and *Hēwē* in Syriac. They referred to themselves as Gnostics, as we learn from several passages (V, 2, p. 77, 4–5 Wendland; V, 6, 4, p. 77, 30–78, 1; V, 11, p. 104, 4–5). Two of the sacred writings they used

were the *Gospel according to the Egyptians* (V, 7, 9) and the *Gospel according to Thomas* (V, 7, 20), the first belonging to the pagan branch of Gnosticism, the second to a primitive literary form of Christian Gnosis. That they were connected, as has also been pointed out (V, 7, 20), with the apostolic tradition of James, "brother of the Lord," transmitted to Mariamme (Mary Magdalene), is a conventional argument added by the Christian editor of the pamphlet used by the polemicist in composing his account of the Naassenes. The document of pagan Gnosis that underlies it may go as far back as the waning of the first century B.C. The title of this earlier document as well as that of its reinterpretation, which

has come down to us, remain unknown. In the eyes of the Eastern author of the *Elenchos* compilation, the absurdity of this particular form of Gnosis comes from the systematic use of "Greek and barbarian" pagan mythology (V, 7, 1, p. 79, 3-5), these two denominations designating a Gnostic interpretation—through the language of mysteries—of myths that Greek esotericism attributed to the Assyrians, Egyptians, and Phrygians.

In this type of pagan Gnosis, reinterpreted in the Christian manner, the primordial man, Adamas, defined the principle of the universe as one because it was male, and as triple because it was composed of breath (spirit), soul, and earth. Breath and earth have a precise status, above and below, male and female. But what is this soul, which occupies the intermediary position? The essence of Gnosis was to answer this question. The median position of the soul, the passage that each being had to make, descending toward existences and rising again toward being, makes the soul the principle of becoming; it is Phusis, the universal cosmic nature, the Gnostic replica of the Platonic Soul of the world.

The Naassenes' interpretation of the three myths of Adonis, Endymion, and Attis allows us to determine the soul's status precisely. Because Adonis means both the desire of the soul to tend toward generation and its withdrawal toward death through its inability to procreate, the soul is at once fertile and infertile, Aphrodite and Persephone (Kore). Endymion, the beloved of Selene (the moon), expresses the desire of the beings from above to unite with the male beauty of the soul. Rhea, the mother of the gods, castrating her lover Attis, shows symbolically that the spiritual part of the soul, the object of Selene's desire, is the original and heavenly element that comes from Adamas and is thus intellectual and male because it rejects the perceptible, which is both inferior and female. The three myths complement each other and must be read together. The sterility of the soul—its Persephone side—is what relates it to the material of the bodies in which it is held prisoner; the fertility of the soul—its Aphrodite side—is what allows it to initiate the chain of life of those who exist and, after that, to rejoin and conjoin its origin.

All that is retained from the myth of Isis and Osiris, the "Egyptian" version of the "Assyrian" myth of Attis, is the sequence dealing with Isis's search for the sexual organ of Osiris. Isis is dressed in seven black robes, for which there is a triple interpretation. The first is astrological: the seven robes of Isis designate the realm of nature (*phusis*) and of generation (*genesis*), governed by the world of planets in a state of perpetual movement and change. The second is cosmological: Osiris is the symbol of water or "the seminal substance," the first element of life and of becoming. And the third is liturgical: the sexual organ of Osiris, lost and found again, henceforth naked, erect, and crowned with fruit in temples and on streets and paths, evokes the initiation ritual of the soul, which is first abandoned and then returned unto itself, made fertile through identification with its original male principle.

Hermes with his erect sexual organ, interpreter of the gods, psychopomp, holding sway over time, in opposition to the dividing and separating word of the demiurge Ialdabaoth, represents the function of a Logos that succeeds in achieving communication, a Logos of revelation because it allows a descent from above to the realm below, a Logos of redemption because it achieves the passage of the souls from

the country of death—Egypt or the Ocean—to the mother earth of the living—Jerusalem or Jordan—that is, from the mixed world, which is inferior and material, to the unified world, which is superior and spiritual.

This passage marks the end of the soul's wandering, the moment when "the unfortunate one [the soul] whose wanderings have led it into a labyrinth of ills" (V, 10, 2, p. 103, 10-11) has reached its celestial homeland. Its primitive unity restored, the soul belongs henceforth to the "kingless race" of those who have definitively broken with the world of forms and appearances. This state of beatitude, characteristic of the perfect possessor of Gnosis, is described in a series of images borrowed from the hierogamic ritual of the mysteries of Cybele: the drunkenness from the cup of Anacreon, a cup filled with wine from the wedding at Cana; statues from the temple of Samothrace, with hands raised and sexual organ erect, symbolizing the plenitude of the inner kingdom where all androgyny disappears in the identification with the primordial being; an allegorical interpretation, in the homiletic style, of a hymn in which all the names of Attis are proclaimed: Adonis, Osiris, Mene-Selene, Adamna, Corybas, Papas, the corpse (*nekus*), the god, the fruitless one (*akarpus*), the goatherd, the harvested ear of corn, and the fluteplayer born of an almond. Each of these terms is explained in detail and is applied to the Gnostic, who has in a sense become initiated into the mysteries and is the seer of his own essence. In this Eleusis of the world above, the Gnostic regards himself as an initiate and as Demeter's husband, stripped of all his clothes and then reclothed, at once virginal, because the hemlock made him into a eunuch, and fertile, because he wears the yellow, harvested ear of corn, in other words because he has assimilated the immeasurable fertility that comes from the castration of Attis: "I will sing of Attis, the son of Rhea, not to the thin sound of little bells, nor to the languishing flute of the Curetes of Mount Ida, but with the song of Phoebus's lyres I will mingle my cries of Evoe Evan! For he is Pan, he is Bacchus, he is the shepherd of the shining stars."

Such language harks back to a liturgical practice in the tradition of Greek mysteries that was in active use in an ancient pagan form of Gnosis, and was later reused in a purely fictitious way by the Christian author of the Gnostic pamphlet attributed to supposed Naassenes.

M.T./g.h.

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THE Gnostics AND THE MYTHOLOGIES OF PAGANISM

At first sight, the pagan heritage of the Gnostics appears less monolithic than their Christian adversaries would have it. The constant accusation brought against them of having systematically transposed the gods and myths of the Greeks with the help of "barbarian names" is an all-purpose argument that proves nothing. To show, for example, that Valentinus is nothing but a vulgar imitator of Hesiod, Epiphanius points out the parallels between the ordering into syzygies of the set of thirty aeons of the Valentinian pleroma, which are born of the Abyss (Bythos), and a series of entities of the *Theogony* born of Chaos, which are also set up in opposing pairs and reduced for practical purposes to thirty in number (see *Panarion* 31.2.4–4.9). In fact, only the parallel between the Valentinian Bythos and the Hesiodic Chaos is operative; all the rest is artificial.

From their self-proclaimed proofs that Gnosticism was merely camouflaged paganism, searching, according to the formula of Irenaeus, to "adapt to myths the sayings (*logia*) of God" (*Adversus Haer.* 1.8.1 = Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.24.6), the heresiologists drew the conclusion that the practices of the Gnostics were as contrary to the ethos of Christianity as their thought was to the "orthodoxy." And now the Gnostics are accused pell-mell of eating meat consecrated to idols, of participating in the festivals and games of the pagans, of practicing adultery and incest (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haer.* 1.6.3 = Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.21.1–6), of organizing, under the cover of sacred rituals, carousings, drinking parties, orgies, abortions, and manducations of sperm, menstrual blood, and fetuses (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26.4.3–5.8)! These facts were manifestly evoked to prove that deliquescent thought and dissolute practice go hand in hand.

In fact, the paganism of the Gnostics is not to be found where the Church Fathers placed it. It does exist, but elsewhere. Documents on the subject, which came to Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries or were discovered after the Second World War near Nag Hammadi, show it to be subtler than what was presented by the authors of heresy catalogs, who were eager to drive out those who contested from within, and more compact than is admitted by modern critics, whose knowledge is clouded by Jewish sources alone, following a long, fruitless search in the direction of Babylon or Iran for an explanatory frame-myth. As it appears to those who read the Gnostics' texts today and are familiar with what the Gnostics themselves read, the paganism of the Gnostics, who were more or less Christianized, is linked to the powerful influence exerted on their thinking by the literary, ideological, and practical models of the magical papyri, of Hermeticism, of Middle Platonism, and of the Mystery religions.

As for the gods of paganism themselves, those who were taken back and integrated by the Gnostics into their own pantheon were adopted in order to feed the Gnostic astrological demonology and Platonizing panallegorism. They were transformed in both cases, either into planetary categories of fate as among the Astrologers, or into figures of the wandering and saved soul as among the Platonists. The Gnostic interpretation of the gods and myths of paganism is thus founded upon the interpretation that was operative in the popular and scholarly philosophy of their time. But only rarely did they reproduce it as such; most often they brought to it an increase of signification, even as they tried to

compress myth to the utmost. The Gnostic reading of the myth of the phoenix remains a good example of this method (see *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* 183 [1973]:117–42).

Another example is the Gnostic habit of attributing to the planetary entities of paganism the status and role of the angels in the Jewish demonology of the apocalypses. Already reduced to an astral function by the Mathematicians, the Greek god as reused by the Gnostics gains a renewal of personality as the archon of intermediate space. In the description of the sphere of destiny that ends the *Pistis Sophia*, the five gods—Kronos, Ares, Hermes, Aphrodite, and Zeus—are appointed by Ieu to oversee all the archons of the cosmic system. Each of them bears a double name and is connected to a consort power; the one that belongs to Zeus, who is good, has the duty of holding the tiller of the world (p. 356, 2–357, 17 of the Coptic text, ed. Schmidt, Copenhagen 1925). This primary function of the guardians of the circular celestial motions enables the five planetary gods to be guides to souls after their death. Under the guidance of Hermes as psychopomp, they cause the soul to circle the earth three times, so that it can rejoice in the spectacle of creation; next they make it descend into the Amentes (Hades), so that it can be afflicted by the sight of the infernal fire; then they cause it to rise again to the "middle way," the sphere of destiny, in which the flame of punishment also burns; and finally it is led up to the Virgin of Light to be judged. Zeus and Aphrodite stand in front, Kronos and Ares behind. If the soul is needful of supplementary purification, it is then thrown into the water below the sphere, which is a boiling fire. Only after this ordeal may it drink of the cup of forgetfulness and the cup of sobriety, which cause it to enter a new and luminous body (p. 381, 24–383, 11 of the Coptic text). Among the Manichaeans, too, the luminaries become vehicles for souls, and Hermogenes makes the sun a refuge for resurrected bodies.

Paganism, while providing the soul with its escorts in the particular otherworldly zone in which they exert their authority, also provides it, more generally, with the images of its condition as a traveler who has left a far distant land to fall to this world below. In order to describe the fate of the wandering soul in search of its true homeland and delivered in this existence into the seductions and tribulations of the world, the Gnostics took up some of the allegories used by the Platonists in their own time. Two characters from Homer, Helen and Odysseus, were used as motifs for allegorical transpositions.

Held prisoner in Ilion (= matter), where she appears as a reflection (*eidōlon*) of the beauty of Hellas, her homeland, which is the intelligible world (see Hermias, *In Plat. Phaedrum*, p. 77, 13–78, 1 Couvreur), Helen incarnates, in a type of Christian Gnosis attributed to Simon Magus, the splendor of the first thought (*Ennoia-Epinoia*) of the intellect (*Nous*) of the Father. But she is also the lost lamb of the Gospel (Luke 15:4), wandering among the angels and the luminaries—her own creatures, who have forced her to live successive lives in the bodies of women. It is she who caused the Trojan War. The poet Stesichorus, who attacks her in his verse, goes blind; he recovers his sight while writing his *Palinodia*. Helen ends her long transmigration in a brothel in the city of Tyre in Phoenecia. It is there that Simon discovers her, and by means of a ransom he frees her from her bonds and marries her. They thus form, as a couple, "the perfect love," "the Holy of Holies," procuring salvation for humans through the revelation of Gnosis. The myth, told by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 1.23.2–3, pp. 191–93 Harvey) and his continuators (among others, *Elenchos* VI, 19, 1–7), rests upon a traditional mystic

interpretation, from the late period, of the *Iliad* and the Trojan War: the kidnapping of Helen (= the divine part of the soul), torn from her own people and nostalgic for them, provokes a combat of powers, as a result of which this soul will be restored to its original homeland.

In a non-Gnostic work read by the Gnostics, which was discovered at Nag Hammadi (II, 6) and entitled *Exegesis on the Soul*, the tears of Odysseus, whom Aphrodite has deceived and brought to Calypso, express this same nostalgia for one's lost homeland: "No one is worthy of salvation if he still loves the place of his wanderings. This is why it is written by the poet, 'Odysseus sat on the island, prey to his tears and his sorrow; he turned his face from the words of Calypso and from her impostures; he wished to see his homeland and the smoke of its hearths and, above all, wished for the assistance of heaven to return to his homeland.' The soul, in turn, says, 'My man has turned away from me; I want to return once more to my homeland.' For the soul groaned, saying, 'It is Aphrodite who deceived me; she made me leave my homeland; I left my firstborn behind me, along with my husband who is good, wise, and handsome'" (p. 136, 25–137, 5). As a prisoner in a world subjected to the heavenly bodies and to fate (= Calypso, the daughter of Atlas) and trapped inside a body enslaved by sex (= Aphrodite), the soul will seek to "flee" and to free itself from the double bond of microcosm and macrocosm to reach its "true place," which is Gnosis, as quickly as possible.

In the *Apophysis Megalē*, a treatise placed under the authority of Simon Magus and related in the *Elenchos*, the *molū* plant with the black root and the milk white flower (*Odyssey* 10.304–6), the magical herb given by Hermes to Odysseus to protect him from the enchantments of Circe, is an allegory on the transformation made by Moses (= the Logos) when he turned the bitter water of the desert into fresh water (*Exodus* 15:22–24). It is thus the image of the metamorphosis of the wandering soul, restored to itself by Gnosis, which has been brought to it by the Logos and brings it to the knowledge of life in its movement (exodus) through the desert of the difficulties and bitter things of this world (VI, 15, 3–4). The *molū* procures the knowledge of all things and restores the soul to its primal "character," which properly belongs to it (VI, 16, 1). The Stoic philosopher Cleanthes associated the *molū* of Odysseus with the logos, that is, with reason, whose role is to calm the ecstatic leaps and passions of the soul (*SVF* 1.526 Arnim). For Porphyry, the *molū* represents the virtue of prudence and wisdom (*sōphrosunē*), which allows the soul that is thrown into the "kukeōn of generation," the mixture that is this world, to escape from its "miserable and bestial form of life" (Stobaeus, *Anthologion* 1.49.60 Wachsmuth).

The allegorical interpretation of the tale of Eros and Psyche, transmitted by Apuleius, is connected with the mystic exegesis of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Eros draws Psyche into the machinations of existence: sensuality, marriage, procreation, and death (*Nag Hammadi Coptic II/5*, p. 109, 19–25). For Justin the Gnostic, Psyche is under the power of Naas the serpent; incited by him, she sows corruption among the beings (*Elenchos V*, 26, 26). But the blood that flows from Psyche after her intercourse with Eros, which then spreads over the earth, gives birth to roses "for the joy of the light" (*Nag Hammadi Coptic II/5*, p. 111, 8–14). This twofold aspect of the dark and light soul is connected, in the same work, with the ambivalence of an Eros established in the middle of paradise, at the origin of all life and all death.

Heracles also becomes a Gnostic hero as the traditional figure of the Stoic sage before he comes to symbolize in



The zodiac. Rome, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, MS gr. 1087, folio 310v. Library photo.

(Right) Gnostic papyrus from Nag Hammadi (Codex II, no. 10544, p. 136). Cairo, Coptic Museum, Museum photo.

(Far right) Hermaphrodite. Rome, Capitoline Museum. Photo Oscar Savio.

Plotinus the fate of the double soul divided between the darkness of Hades (= the body and the world) and the light of the gods (= the intelligibles), a reflection (*eidōlon*) that is separated yet remembers its true being, which is "above" (*Enneads* 1.1.12.31–39; 4.3.27.7–23). In the mythology of Justin's *Book of Baruch*, he appears as a link in a chain of prophets sent by Elohim to try to recuperate the divine element—breath (*pneuma*)—that dwells in men (see *Elenchos V*, 26, 27–28). Following the messengers Baruch and Moses, the one sent to Adam and the angels of heaven and the other to the circumcized (the Jews), Heracles is portrayed as the "prophet coming from the uncircumcized peoples" (p. 131.5); the pagans will be the object of his mission. His twelve labors are allegories of the battles he fought against the twelve planetary angels of the Earth called Edem. Seduced by Omphale, however, whom Justin assimilates to Babel and to Aphrodite, he puts on the robe of Edem, which shuts him into the universe of lesser powers. "It is in this way," the myth concludes, "that the prophecy and works of Heracles had no effect." The Heracles of Justin the Gnostic, as savior and then prisoner, and the divided Heracles of



Plotinus, the reader of Homer, belong very much to the same period in the history of ideas.

The Egyptian myth in its Greek reinterpretation of the wanderings and tears of Isis, who is searching for her twin brother and lover Osiris (Plutarch, *Moralia* 356a–358b), served as the starting point for the Valentinian myth of the wanderings and tears of Sophia, abandoned to the sorrows and passions of this world, “a supplicant to the Father,” because she has lost the unity of her origin and suffers from love of her twin (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.2.2 = Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.11.4). Similarly, in the version of the myth presented in the *Elenchos*, the offspring of the Sophia above, himself called the “external” or “lower Sophia,” overcome by sorrow and anxiety, looks for his twin everywhere and begs that he who has abandoned him return to him; it is then that the “common fruit of the pleroma,” Jesus, who makes the sadness of Sophia into the “material substance” of the universe (*Elenchos* VI, 32, 3–6), is sent to him. Transformed by the creative Logos of Osiris and rendered capable of “receiving all bodily and spiritual forms,” Isis incarnates, by her nature, the female principle of the universe; it is she who

contains the whole (*pandechēs*) and who presides over all of generation (see Plutarch, *Moralia* 372e). Hence she is assimilated to Platonic matter, as the support and recipient of all things (*Timaeus* 49a; 51a). In the same way, among the Gnostics, the Valentinian Sophia, having surrendered to passion, becomes the principle of the constitution and essence of matter, out of which the world is born (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.4.2 = Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.16.7). The child of Isis, Horus (= Harpocrates), “debased by matter through the bodily element” (*Moralia* 373b3–4), corresponds to the deformed offspring of the Valentinian Sophia, and is described as a “substance disorganized and without form,” analogous to the primordial earth of Genesis and called “the runt” (*Elenchos* VI, 30, 8–31, 2). But just as the Isis of the Platonic tradition has an innate love for the first principle, which is the Good (Plutarch, *Moralia* 372e), so the Valentinian Sophia feels passion and desire for the Father (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.2.2 = Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.11.4). Just as Isis is called “the seeking of Osiris,” *zētēsis Osiridos* (*Moralia* 372c20), Sophia is “the seeking of the Father,” *zētēsin tou Patros* (GCS 25, p. 403, 13). The joy of Isis, who carries in her

the seeds of the world (Plutarch, *Moralia* 372e13–14), corresponds to the laugh of Sophia, who gives birth to light (GCS 25, p. 410, 22). The prostrate and weeping Isis, whose tears fecundate the soil of Egypt with floodwaters (Pausanias, *Periegesis* 10.32.18), corresponds to the sorrow of Sophia, whose tears are the source of the sea, springs, and rivers, from which all the elements of the world come (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 1.4.2–4 = Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.16.7–17.8). Last, the sequence of the myth about Isis's search for the phallus of Osiris (*Moralia* 358b) becomes the object, in Naassene Gnosis, of a triple interpretation, which is astrological, cosmological, and initiatory.

The portrait of Isis "of manifold names," *murionumous* (Plutarch, *Moralia* 352e), who is hermaphroditic by nature because of her identification with the moon (368c), underlies the portrait of this universal Mother of living creatures, who among the Gnostics is called Sophia, Eve, or Barbelo. Following the pattern of aretalogies which enumerate the titles and virtues of Isis, the Gnostics composed hymns, of which certain fragments have been found at Nag Hammadi (II/4, p. 89, 16–17; II/5, p. 114, 8–15); an entire treatise was even constructed upon this literary genre (*Nag Hammadi Coptic* 6/2; see, for example, p. 13, 27–14, 14). After the fashion of Isis, the mother goddess of the Gnostics encompasses what for humanity are opposites; she is at once virgin and mother, father and mother, prostitute and virgin, male and female, whole and part, self and other: "My husband is he who engendered me, and I am his mother and he is my father and my lord." The soul of each is henceforth engulfed in this soul of the world. With the Gnostics as with their contemporaries, the myth of the soul that wanders across the multiplicity of this world has for its corollary the myth of the repose of this soul in the fullness of the transcended division. The dispersion (*diaspora*) of the soul that is in submission to the

planetary god is answered by the coming together (*sullexis*) of the Isian and sovereign soul.

The gods of paganism thus served the Gnostics merely as a means to illustrate this dialectic. In the same way that they are used by their contemporaries who are magicians, philosophers, and astrologers, so the Gnostics use these henceforth supernumerary entities of a drama, whether classifying them in catalogs of demons or dissolving them in allegorism. With the exception of Eros, none of the pagan gods that pass into Gnosis provides a new myth. Mythos and logos are no longer balanced. On the other hand, the fact that certain Gnostics, such as the Perates, the Naassenes, and, to a lesser extent, Justin, chose this very field of Hellenism to satisfy their appetite for allegory made possible the efflorescence of surprising systems of thought—the truly original and most successful forms of the Gnostic interpretation of the gods of paganism.

M.T./d.w.

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THE PERATES AND THEIR Gnostic INTERPRETATION OF PAGANISM

In the first half of the second century A.D., some Christian Gnostics were connected with the Ophite branch of Gnosticism by virtue of the important role of the serpent (Greek *ophis*) in their system of symbols. Known only from the account of them in the *Elenchos* (V, 12–18), the Perates are presented as adepts of the Chaldean science, devoting themselves to "allegorizing the order of the astrologers" (V, 15, 4, pp. 110, 29–30 Wendland) and to "transforming the names" (V, 13, 9, p. 107, 9–10; V, 15, 2, p. 110, 22) of Chaldean categories of stars into entities for their own pantheons. We are also told that they called themselves Perates because they alone, being aware of the laws that fix the "necessity of becoming" and the "ways by which man came into the world," were "able to cross over and go beyond (*perasai*) corruption" (V, 16, 1), in other words the planetary spheres that determine the fate of any individual that is subject to generation. Only the names of their founders are known: Euphrates the Peratic (a surname added by the heresiologist) and Celbes of Carysta, also known as Acemes or Ademes (V, 13, 9; IV, 2, 1; X, 10, 1). In the *Contra Celsum* (VI, 28, 31–2), Origen points out that "those who call themselves Ophites (*Ophianoï*) boast of having a certain Euphrates as the

instigator of their ungodly doctrines." As this comment comes right after the refutation of the astrological chart that Celsum attributed to some Christians, we may surmise that Euphrates and Celbes represented the primitive layer of what the heresiologists called "Ophitism." In fact, "Ophitism" was nothing more than a form of theological reflection within Christianity itself; it used astrological terminology just as Bar-Daisan did, and the Peratic system was to become one of its later variants, marked by a specifically Gnostic character.

The books that the Perates read were the "Book of Moses" (V, 16, 8, p. 112, 14)—that is, Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers—in the Old Testament, and the Gospel according to John in the New Testament. Among the books they drew from "ignorance" (a Gnostic term for Hellenism) to support their theses, the Perates used Homer, Heraclitus, Aratus, and the Sibylline oracles among other "poets" and "sages." They also used short astrological treatises analogous to those recorded on magical papyri. By way of example, the author of the *Elenchos* cites a long excerpt (V, 14), purposely chosen for its particular obscurity, from one of the books "held in high esteem among them," which was entitled *Hoi Proasteioi heōs Aitheros* ("The Suburbanites up to the Ether") (IV, 14, 10, p. 110, 12–13). As the content of the treatise reveals, such a title designates the gods and demons assigned to each of the planetary spheres that in some way constitute the periphery (*proasteion*) of the ethereal realm in

which the first principle resides. Each god is introduced with his various names, consorts, functions, and signs. The first among them, Kronos, "tied in ropes after having locked up the dense, nebulous, obscure, and dark network of Tartarus," is assimilated to the power of the sea, Thalassa, who came from chaos and the slime of the abyss and is the mother of the Titans. Chozar, the androgynous daughter of the sea, guardian of the waters, which she soothes by playing twelve small flutes, corresponds to Poseidon. The Curetes are associated with the rising of the sun; Ariel is chief of the winds; Osiris and Isis, the latter identified with the constellation of the Dog, designate the keepers (Archons) of the hours of night and day. Rhea, Demeter, Mên, and Hephaestus, presiding over food, fruit, and fire, represent the dual movement, upward and downward, right and left, of the signs of the Zodiac on the ecliptic. The Moirai, cause of generation, are three powers of the middle air. Finally, at the lower extremity of the circles, and therefore the closest to us, is Eros, "forever a child" and androgynous, the "principle of beauty, pleasure, freshness, youth, concupiscence, and desire"; he brings to a close the catalog of the gods who are rulers (*toparchai*) of the planets.

The content of such a document has nothing Gnostic about it and can in no way be considered the source of the whole account of the Perates in the *Elenchos*, as the critics unanimously claim. The Christian polemicist in fact used two separate books. The first was the *Proasteioi* of the fragment summarized above, which was read by the Perates and belonged to the pagan literature of magic and astrology. The second, the title of which is not given (citations being always introduced by "said he"), was a document of genuinely Peratic revelation, an apocryphon placed under the name of an Old Testament revelatory figure, perhaps Moses, by virtue of the place it occupies in the excerpts cited in the *Elenchos* as well as in late Greek esotericism in general.

The world according to the Perates, like that of the Valentinians, is a triadic emanative system but, unlike the Valentinian world, does not fit into any syzygies. The triad forming the unity of the whole includes the first principle,

the Perfect (*teleion*), which is the Good or the Unbegotten, followed by the Unlimited (*apeiron*), constituting the self-begotten world (*autogenês*) of the powers of the intermediary space, and finally, in third place, the Particular (*idikon*), that is, our own world, begotten by flow (*kata aporroian*) originating in the stars, the causes of generation.

Unlike the third, the first two worlds are essentially incorruptible and imperishable. Furthermore, each part of the triad defines a class of gods, of logos, of intellect, of man, of nature, of the body, of power, and therefore of Christ, who, "starting with the three parts of the world, possesses within him all compounds and all powers" (V, 12, 4). His function will be to "cause to go back upward what had come down from on high" (V, 12, 6), that is, to restore to its fullness the original unity of being.

For the Perates, this basic outline corresponded to the triadic models used by the Astrologers (center or monad, a universe of powers subject to declination and ascension, generation), by Physicians (brain, cerebellum, spinal cord), and by Platonists (Father, Son, matter).

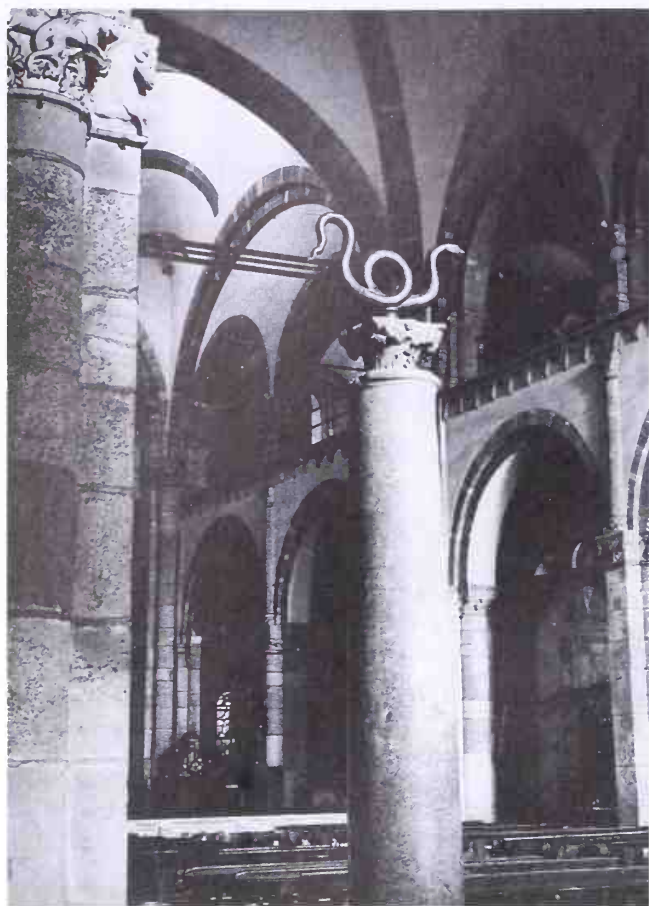
Matter (*hulê*), defined as having no quality (*apoios*) and no shape (*aschematistos*), is the work of the homicidal demiurge, the Archon of this world, "an aborted being who was born in the night and will perish in the night" (V, 17, 6). Because water is the fundamental constituent of matter, matter is identified with the Kronos of astrology, the consort of Thalassa. Thalassa is the power of disorder and mud that has come from the eternal humid element, always in motion and in convulsions, mistress of becoming and of death, analogous to Thalath-Omorka (Homoroka) in the cosmogony of Berossos (FGRH III C no. 680 F 11[6] Jacoby) or to the Gûhra' of Qûq, the gaping cavern of the waters of death swallowing the seven virgins who are the companions of the Mother of living creatures (cf. Theodore bar Konai, p. 334, 20-25 Scher).

Precisely by virtue of the position that he occupies in the triad, the Autogenês, identified with the Johannine Son and Logos, is declared to be in "perpetual movement," attracted simultaneously upward by the immobile Father and downward by moving matter (V, 17, 2), like Hermes ferrying "downward all that belongs to the Father" (p. 114, 34) and "from here below to points beyond" (p. 115, 17). From the Father he receives powers, impressions, and ideas, which he transmits to matter, somehow channeling their flow, like a painter mixing on his tablet (= matter) forms and colors, that is, that which comes from the Father (V, 17, 5). This same function is described with the help of another "proof" (*apodexis*, p. 116, 1) drawn from the nature of the cerebellum, the intermediary between the encephalon and the spinal cord; the cerebellum "attracts through the pineal gland the spiritual and life-giving substance that flows from the brain" (V, 17, 12), and from there directs it into the spinal cord, where it is changed into semen and at the end of its flow is expelled through the phallus.

The character of this second principle, defined as "always in motion" and analogous to the serpentine cerebellum (*drakontoidês*), connects it with the bronze serpent in Numbers 21.6-9, trained by Moses in the desert, that is, on the other side of the Red Sea (= Thalassa), which stands for the water of corruption and death (= Kronos) of this world, in which "little Egypt" (= the body) swims. The soteriological function of this serpent, which is called "universal" (p. 112, 18), "true and perfect" (p. 112, 7-8), is described with a remarkable profusion of allegories. It is the rod of Moses, the vanquisher of the rods of the magicians of Egypt, and it stands for the power within the very person of Moses. It is

The serpent Ouroboros (ms. gr. 2327, fol. 196). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN/S.R.D.





Brass serpent. Milan, Basilica of Saint Ambrose. Photo Segre.

Eve, universal distributor of Logos, wisdom, and life, the "common nature" (*koinē phusis*, p. 113, 6) of the world above, as opposed to the particularity (*idikon*) of our world. It is the very mystery of Eden, whose river carries the waters of life. It is the emblem of the victims of the God of the Old Testament: Cain, the just slayer of a brother sullied by a bloody sacrifice; Esau of the blessed robe, who saw the face of God; Nemrod the builder of the Tower of Babel, "giant

and hunter before the Lord"; and finally Jesus, "betrayed by his brothers" and "raised up" on the wooden cross. It is the constellation of the serpent-bearer (Ophiuchus, *Serpentarius*), which "shines eternally in the sky" and was described by Aratus as holding east and west, merged together, near its head (V, 16, 15). Finally, it is identified with the motionless *ouroboros*, closed upon itself, holding its tail in its mouth and thus symbolizing the completeness of the Father, the conjunction of the beginning and the end. It is thus the supreme anti-Kronos, countering the bond of death, which holds the world in its grip, with the bond of knowledge (*gnōsis*) and of the vision of the first unity: "By gazing up at the sky, someone with blessed eyes will see the splendid image of the serpent coiled up at the great beginning (*archē*) of the sky, becoming the principle (*archē*) of all movement for all who are born" (V, 16, 14). Thus there are three serpents corresponding to the three elements that make up the triad: the *ouroboros* for the Father; the bronze serpent for the Son; and the burning and venomous serpents of the desert for matter. The first two evoke life and Gnosis; the third evokes the ruin that is bound up with this world.

Peratic mythology drew from the thought of Egyptian astrologers and magicians. It took the possibility of multiple allegorical combinations, which the Jewish Platonistic current of Alexandria offered it, and made that possibility its own. But unlike other Gnoeses, which chose one side or the other, proceeding by way of selective elimination or retrieval, Peratic mythology simultaneously had recourse to Judaism by way of anti-Judaism, to astrology by way of anti-Chaldaism, to Greece by way of anti-Hellenism, and to the Gospel by way of anti-Christianity. In this, it is Gnostic. It is highly unlikely that it was the expression of a school or a church. Between Valentinus and Bar-Daisan, Heracleon and Qūq, its inventor occupies a profoundly original position in the history of thought.

M.T./g.h.

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EROS AMONG THE GNOSTICS

The sole writing that speaks of the mythic itinerary traveled by Eros (*Nag Hammadi Coptic II* 5, p. 109, 1–111, 28) concentrates, as do most descriptions of the period, on the genealogy and function of the god. Eros is the son of Pronoia, the *paredros* (consort) of the demiurge Ialdabaoth. Upon seeing the beauty of the angel of light, still called the primordial Adam or Light-Adam, that creature arisen out of the splendor of the ogdoad—i.e., from the Father, who is the principle of all things—Pronoia ardently wishes to unite with him. But the angel refuses, and she herself is too weighed down by her tenebrous element to be able to mount up to him. So she

tears the luminous particles away from the angel, mixes them with her blood, and spreads them over the earth. By this act Pronoia responds, in kind, to that of her husband, who had flung his sperm "into the center of the earth's navel," whence the terrestrial Adam of the Garden of Eden had arisen. It is in the very middle of paradise that Eros is born as the fruit of the moist desire of his mother and the astral fire of the angel: he is thus androgynous by nature. "His masculine nature is Himeros, because he is a fire that comes from the light. The femininity within him is a soul of blood and comes from the substance of Pronoia" (p. 109, 3–6).

Because he unites in himself the two antagonistic forces of the primal Adam and of Pronoia, and because he is the place in which the union of love-desire (Himeros) and the beloved

soul (Psyche) is realized, Eros produces sensual pleasure (*hēdonē*), which will lead to marriage, procreation, and death (p. 109, 20–25). Apart from the discrete allusion to the popular tale of Amor and Psyche, the Gnostic myth of the origin of Eros refers especially to the hermaphroditic conception of the Orphic Eros, whom the *Pseudoclementine Homilies* assert to have been formed “by Pronoia of the divine breath (*pneuma*)”: “This living being Orpheus calls Phanes, because, when he appeared, the whole universe was illuminated by his splendor, Phanes having been brought to perfection in the womb of the liquid element by the brilliance of fire, the most magnificent of the elements; and there is nothing incredible about this, for in glow-worms, for example, nature has given a watery light for us to see” (6.12.4). Born of the mingling of the dry and the wet, of male fire and female blood, under the aegis of a Pronoia who was the bearer of light and of the divine breath, the Gnostic Eros governs the fusion of the primordial elements. According to an expression in the *Oracles*, he is their bond and their unifier, he who by projecting all things unifies them (pp. 25–26 Kroll). But, at the same time, this role of the conjoiner of opposites played by Eros does not give him in the Gnostic pantheon the eminent status which he enjoyed among the Orphics. He remains at the very source of the death that is transmitted by his daughter, sensual pleasure. Like the Eros of the Platonic myths of the *Symposium*, who is shared between heaven and earth, Poros and Penia, and gods and men, the Gnostic Eros is halfway between the light of the Father and the darkness of chaos, a daemonic intermediary being, situated neither above in the ogdoad nor below on earth, but in a space described by Plato as the garden of the gods (203b6); the Gnostic author specifies that this place is “in the center of the navel of the earth,” in Eden, which is the garden (*paradeisos*) of the biblical god, beyond the sun and the moon.

Installed in paradise, Eros inaugurates his function as intermediary by stimulating all beings by the sight of his splendor: “He is very handsome in his beauty, having more loveliness than all the creatures of chaos. When all the gods and their angels saw Eros, they became enamored of him. But when he appeared to them all, he set them on fire. Just as many lamps are kindled from a single lamp, and the light is one light, and the lamp is not diminished, so Eros was scattered in all the creatures of Chaos, and he was not diminished. In the same way that he appeared in the midpoint (*mesotēs*) between light and darkness, so Eros appeared between angels and men” (p. 109, 6–19). Here we find a series of themes common to the whole period. In the *Poimandres*, personified Nature “smiles with love” upon seeing the “inexhaustible beauty” of the primordial man reflected in the water (§ 14). As a means to express the idea of the nondepletion of the primal energy of a God who gives his knowledge, Numenius would employ the same terms as the Gnostic author: “It is in this way that one can see a lamp lit from another lamp, bearing a light which did not deprive its source of light: only its wick was lit by that fire” (fr. 23 Leemans = 14 Des Places). Justin too uses the same image to describe the inexhaustible character of the Logos, which communicates itself: “Just as we see that from a first fire another fire is produced, without diminishing the fire from which the other was lit, the first fire in fact remaining the same, even so the new fire too which is lit here is seen to be entirely real without having diminished the one from which it was lit” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 61.2). Furthermore, by placing Eros between light and darkness, the Gnostic author brings together, in an erudite syncretism, the Greek genealogy of Eros, who is born of the night and is a transmitter of

fire, and the activity of the God of Genesis, who separates light from darkness and night from day. Like a lamp that makes visible what is indistinct in darkness, Eros illumines beings submerged in the confusion of chaos. By allowing the elements to be distinguished, he is a reference mark and a center (*mesotēs*). As a sign of recognition and a principle of order, he is also that being who transmits the fire and blood from which he comes, and from which the disorders of the world are born. Born of the night, he remains a child of the night, communicating to beings and things the irrationality of his mother.

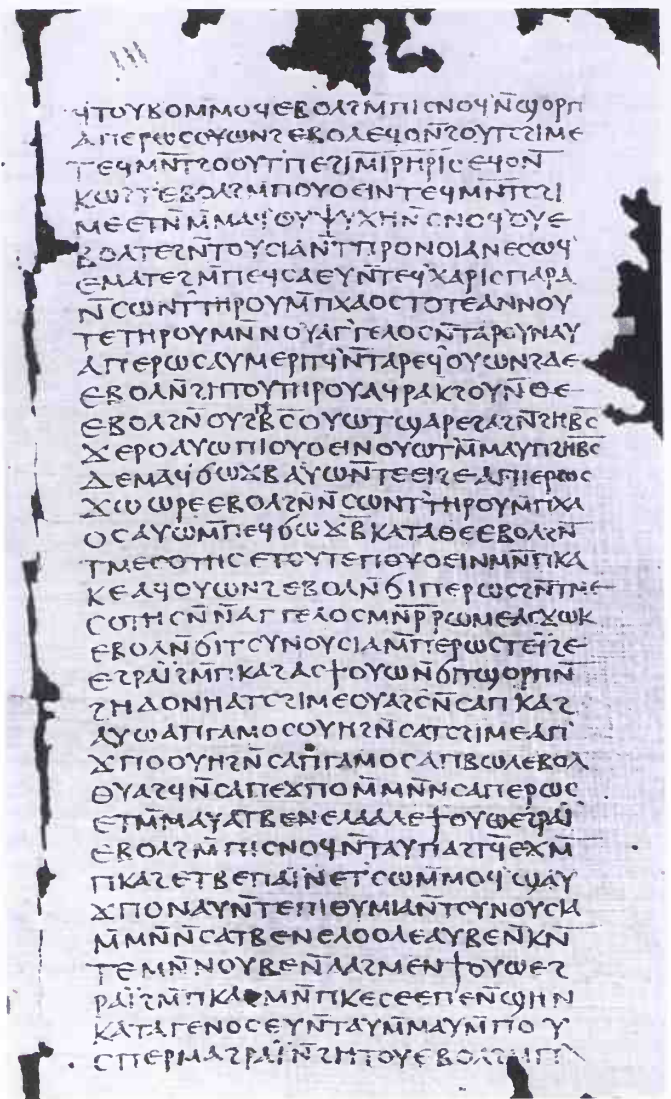
The luminary function of Eros was linked to his dependence on light and fire, and his sexual function to his connection with the “blood of the virgin” (p. 109, 1–2), by virtue of which Eros would govern all of the watery sphere, in the fecundated woman as much as in the fertilized ground: “Thus the intercourse (*sunousia*) of Eros was accomplished. The first sensual pleasure sprouted upon earth, woman followed earth and marriage followed woman, procreation followed marriage and death followed procreation. After that particular manifestation of Eros, the grapevine sprouted up from the blood which was poured upon the earth. Therefore those who drink it (the vine) engender in themselves the desire for intercourse. After the grapevine, a fig tree and a pomegranate tree sprouted up on earth, together with the rest of the trees, according to their kind, having their own seed within them derived from the seed of the powers and their angels” (p. 109, 19–110, 1). As principles of fertility and destruction, earth and woman represent the two aspects of the ambivalence of Eros. This is nothing new to the Greek world. Yet the way in which our Gnostic draws a correspondence between the three consequences of the sensual pleasures of woman (marriage, procreation, and death) and the three trees (vine, fig, pomegranate)—all three connected with Eros and possessed of a precise sexual symbolism—is entirely original. Wine, the drink of Aphrodite and Dionysus, composed like Eros of fire and boiling blood, leads man to the “desire for coitus” (p. 109, 29). The fig tree, a tree that is always green because it provides, according to Pliny, four harvests each year, is the phallic symbol par excellence; Dionysus uses a branch of the fig tree as a substitute for a phallus in a myth told by Clement of Alexandria (*Protrepticus* 2.34.3–4). Later Judaic writings would designate the fig tree as the tree of the forbidden fruit. Its leaves would serve to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. The pomegranate, which is filled with a multitude of grape seeds that ferment beneath its skin, contains a wine that is particularly recommended for the pleasures of love. Like his mother Aphrodite, Eros is portrayed holding pomegranates in his hands. But this fruit is also associated in the Greek world with Hera, the goddess of marriage and of procreation. Thus, the ancient myths still have their say when the Gnostic author wishes to name three plants associated with the sexual function of Eros. And it is not by mere chance that the mythic horticulture of Eros is built upon these three trees alone, for each one, within a single semantic field, portrays a particular aspect of the sexual function (fig tree–phallus–Dionysus; wine–sensual pleasure–Aphrodite; pomegranate–fecundity–Hera) and recapitulates through the perspective of the vegetal code the semantic totality of the cosmogonic and anthropological manifestation of Eros. It is thus in a very coherent fashion that the Gnostic author constructed, by reusing traditional schemata, the picture of an Eros who rules over both woman and earth.

While the cosmogonic epiphany of Eros, which separates light from darkness, remains positive, that of the Eros who



Androgynous winged Eros. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Museum photo.

Gnostic papyrus from Nag Hammadi (Codex II no. 10544, p. 109). Cairo, Coptic Museum. Museum photo.



appeared "between angels and men" would, through recourse to woman, cause a principle of death to enter the world. The Coptic Gnostic text calls this death a dissolution of beings, a *bōl ebol* (p. 109, 24; the term is also found in *The Dialogue of the Savior*, Nag Hammadi Coptic III, 5, p. 122, 3). One consequence of this manifestation was the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. But if, by reason of his fundamental duplicity, Eros is the most dreaded of the gods, he is also the most beautiful and most desirable, since his ambivalence, composed of fire and blood, expresses the totality of the primordial elements, the dry and the wet, from which the world was born. At once a principle of the dissolution of things and a principle of their reintegration, he both originates the sensual pleasure of copulation and, at the same time, according to the elegant formula of the *Pseudoclementine Homily*, "realizes the culmination of the beauty of the world" (p. 111, 16–17 Rehm). After the description of Eros's function as source of the madness that carries away the world, there is a description of this same function organizing what is beautiful in the world: paradise.

The Eden of Eros was created by Justice, an entity belonging to the ogdoad of the Father, "outside the circuit of the

moon and the circuit of the sun in the luxuriant earth, which is in the east in the midst of the stones. And desire (*epithumia*) is in the midst of the trees that are beautiful and tall" (p. 110, 2–7). Paradise is situated beyond the time determined by the luminaries of day and night, in a mythic east of the Age of Gold in which precious stones abound. Because they are made up of the antagonistic elements of the wet and the dry, solar fire and river waters, precious stones belong to the biological and sexualized world, as do animals and plants, and consequently, just like trees, enter the semantic field of Eros. The plants of paradise, named by the Gnostic author, conform to the data of Jewish and apocalyptic tradition: to the north is planted the tree of life and immortality, which has a solar brilliance and is identified with the cypress-olive pair; near it is the tree of knowledge, which has a lunar brilliance and is identified with the fig-palm pair (p. 110, 6–11, 8). The relationship between Eros and paradise is also illuminated by the threefold reference to Eden as the land of beauty, of delights, and of desire—three titles that are eminently related to the god of Love. The description of paradise ends with an interpretation of the myth of Amor and Psyche. Just as Pronoia had spread her blood over the

earth, from which Eros was born, so Psyche unites with Eros in paradise and spreads her blood over the earth, from which roses and lilies will be born (p. 111, 8–12). And then each of the daughters of Pronoia, one at a time, comes to unite with Eros, to give birth to all of the plants (p. 111, 14–24). By a skillful, harmonious syncretism, the editor of the Gnostic text seeks to present symmetrically the two universes—or rather the two gardens (*paradeisoi*)—in which the beauty and the desire of Eros dwelled: first the biblical Eden, from which evil powers are excluded and where, consequently, all the trees and fruits are beautiful and desirable; then the Greek paradise of Eros, in which the powers connected with sexual defilement appear. These two paradises, the Judaic and the Greek, constitute the two faces of an ambivalent Eros, whose androgyny, made of blood and fire, implies that his work will itself be ambiguous, being male and good on the one hand (fire = biblical Eden) and female and evil on the other (blood = Greek garden).

Eros is the only Greek god to have escaped an astrological and daemonological reduction among the Gnostics because he remained omnipresent and in fashion during this period—the end of the second century B.C.—when the system of which this treatise speaks was being constructed.

Romances, oracles, and epigrams take possession of him; depictions of him abound in sarcophagi as well as in private homes as a companion at every moment in this life and the life beyond. Plotinus commented on him in his lectures as tending toward the beauty of the One, and the *Chaldean Oracles* proclaim him to be the son of the paternal intellect and the unifier of the totality of being. So it is not surprising that this god, familiar in the popular and scholarly mythology of Roman Egypt, should have furnished Gnostic thought with one of its least obscure and most brilliant pages. From the Eros of the ancient theogonies, who arose out of the earth, from chaos, or from an egg, to the beautified Eros of Gnosticism, placed in the midst of the stones and trees of paradise, we can trace the history of a single idea: that this world bears within itself the force that makes it survive.

M.T./d.w.

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HECATE IN GREEK ESOTERICISM

To the Christian Gnostics, who believed that magic had been brought to the earth by fallen angels, Hecate represents one of the five Archons appointed to rule over the 360 demons (or daemons) of the "Middle," the aerial place below the zodiacal sphere or the circle of the sun, which fixes the Heimarmene. She has three faces and twenty-seven demons under her command. She occupies the third level in the hierarchy of the "Middle," between two female demons, long-haired Paraplex and Ariouth the Ethiopian, and two male demons, Typhon and Iachtanabas (*Pistis Sophia*, chap. 140; Coptic text: p. 363, 8–364, 6 Schmidt).

During the same period, this secondary figure of Gnostic daemonology is also an omnipresent personage in the pantheon of magical papyri, because of the range of meanings attributed to her emblems and because of the system of associations which link her to, and even identify her with, other gods and goddesses.

Her three forms (*trimorphos* PGM XXXVI, 190) and her three faces (*triprosôpos*, IV, 2119, 2880) make her, as in classical Greek tradition, the goddess of crossroads (*triadites*, IV, 27, 2962) and the protectress of roads; but they express above all the "abundance of all magical signs" (XXXVI, 190–191), possessed by the "sovereign" goddess (*kuria*, IV, 1432) "of many names" (*poluônimos*, IV, 745). The three-faced Hecate of the love charm of Pitys, contained in the magical Greek codex of Paris, has the head of a cow on the right, the head of a female dog on the left, and the head of a girl in the center (IV, 2120–2123). The Hecate engraved in a magnetized rock (IV, 2881–2884) also shows three faces: a goat on the right, a female dog on the left, and in the middle a girl with horns.

Her mouth exhales fire (*puripnoa*, IV, 2727); her six hands brandish torches (IV, 2119–2120). Hence, engraving her name with a bronze styletto on an ostrakon (XXXVI, 189) or

on a lead tablet (IV, 2956) will have the effect of a fire "burning" and "consuming" the beloved woman (XXXVI, 195, 200), so that she is deprived of sleep forever (IV, 2960, 2965–2966). Furthermore, the fire that inhabits Hecate, as the most subtle of the four elements, characterizes her keen intelligence and the extreme sharpness of her perception (*puriboulos*, IV, 2751). Her whole being radiates with the brilliance of the fire from the stars and from the ether. The *Chaldaean Oracles* made this Hecate "of the breasts that welcome storms, of resplendent brilliance" into an entity "descended from the Father," associated with the "implacable thunderbolts" of the gods, with the "flower of fire," and with the "powerful breath" of the paternal Intellect (p. 20 Kroll). Because she carries and transmits fire from above, she is the supreme goddess of vivification. The reason Hecate's womb is so remarkably "fertile" (*zôogonon*, p. 19 Kroll) is that she is filled with the fire of paternal Intellect, the source of life or the strength of thought, which it is her duty to communicate and to disseminate.

Through her emblems and her triadic conception, Hecate is associated with another goddess of time and destiny, Mene or Selene, the goddess of the moon. The prayer to the moon of P IV, 2785 invokes them as one and the same entity; epithets and attributes of the two goddesses are interchangeable. Hecate/Selene also has three heads, carries torches, presides over crossroads: "You who in the three forms of the three Charites dance and fly about with the stars . . . You who wield terrible black torches in your hands, you who shake your head with hair made of fearsome snakes, you who cause the bellowing of the bulls, you whose belly is covered with reptilian scales and who carry over your shoulder a woven bag of venomous snakes" (IV, 2793–2806). She has the eye of a bull, the voice of a pack of dogs, the calves of a lion, the ankles of a wolf, and she loves fierce bitches: "This is why you are called Hecate of many names, Mene, you who split the air like Artemis, shooter of arrows" (IV, 2814–2817). She is the mother (*geneteira*) of gods and men, Nature the universal mother (*Phusis panmetôr*): "You



Hecate. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Cabinet des Médailles.
Photo BN.

come and go on Olympus and visit the vast and immense Abyss: you are beginning and end, you alone rule over all things; it is in you that all originates, and in you, eternal, that all ends" (IV, 2832–2839). Another hymn in the Paris codex used as a love charm shows the same joy in piling up titles of

the goddess, who has this time become Aphrodite, the universal procreator (*pangemēteira*) and mother of Eros (IV, 2556–2557), at once below and above, "in the Hells, the Abyss, and the Aeon" (IV, 2563–2564), chthonic (IV, 1443), holding her feasts in tombs (IV, 2544) and associated with Ereskigal, the Babylonian queen of Hells (LXX, 4), but also the "celestial traveler among the stars" (IV, 2559), nocturnal, but also the bearer of light (IV, 2549–2550).

Her ring, scepter, and crown represent the power of the one who, possessing the triad, embraces all. Above and below, to the right and to the left, at night as during the day, she is the one "around whom the nature of the world turns" (IV, 2551–2552), the very Soul of the world, according to *Chaldaean Oracle* "the center in the middle of the Fathers" (p. 27 Kroll), occupying, according to Psellus, an intermediary position and playing the role of the center in relation to all the other powers: to her left the source of virtues (p. 28 Kroll), to her right the source of souls, inside, because she remains within her own substance, but also directed to the outside with a view to procreation.

Whether invoked in love charms to bring to oneself the woman one desires (the *agōgai* of the magic papyri) or evoked by the "constraints that subdue the gods" (the *theiodamoi anankai* of the Chaldaean philosophers, p. 156, v. 190 Wolff), Hecate is henceforth inscribed in a table of correspondences and combinations which go far beyond her proper function as a goddess of enchantment and magic. It is from this Hecate, the product of the syncretism of the papyri, that the tradition of the Hecate of the Neoplatonic commentators on the *Oracles* takes shape.

M.T./t.l.f.

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JUSTIN THE Gnostic: A SYNCRETISTIC MYTHOLOGY

Justin the Gnostic is artificially linked by heresiology to the Christian Gnostics through a triadic system superficially analogous to that of the Sethians or the Perates, and through the very secondary role that Jesus plays in the final phase of the soteriology. In the single account by the Christian polemicist who speaks of him (*Elenchos*, V, 23–28), he is described as the author of a treatise on revelation entitled *The Book of Baruch*, written in the second half of the second century A.D. Nothing is said of the individuality of the author, but the passages cited from his book lead one to believe that his was

a personality that remained profoundly Oriental, closer to Qûq, to Monoïme, or even to Elchasaï than to the representatives of the schools of Platonizing Gnosticism.

Three principles (*archai*), roots (*rhizai*), or sources (*pēgai*) dominate the universe, all three of them uncreated (*agēnētoi*). Above is the innately good being, male, endowed with foresight (*prognōstikos*) and identified with Priapus. His ithyphallic symbol, in charge of guarding the ripe autumn fruit (*opōrai*), represents all of creation, which he protects. From then on, according to one of those etymologies of which the Gnostics were very fond, he becomes "the one before (*prin*) whom there was nothing," "the one who created whereas nothing existed before" (*priopoein*), the source of the inexhaustible fertility of the universe (V, 26,

33). In the middle of the triad is the Father, identified with the Jewish Elohîm, endowed with will (*thelēsis*) and split between the extreme limits of the triad. As in the Valentinian myth of the ignorance of the demiurge, he at first has no idea of the existence of the first principle and believes himself to be the only God (V, 26, 15). In the third place is a young girl who is a goddess, half earth, half snake, to whom is given the Hebrew name of paradise, Edem, land of origins where the snake lives, also called Israel, endowed with anger (*orgē*), deceitful and perverse, jealous and evil. With a double intelligence and a double body (*dignōmos* and *disōmos*), she incarnates the duplicity of all women, simultaneously drawn toward men, whom she pollutes, and attracted by Elohîm, whom she makes her lover. But, unlike the Valentinian Sophia at the boundaries of the two worlds, the origin of evil but also of salvation, the unique function of Justin's sly and lubricious Edem is to be forever responsible for all misfortunes that befall men; this perfidious goddess of the earth is the "prostitute" (V, 27, 4, p. 133, 13) who chains everyone she approaches, both God and men, to his destiny of death. The three principles being outside of time and without any descendants, the sole object of the myth is thus to explain how one of the divine elements—the breath (*pneuma*) of Elohîm—escaped from the control of its owner (the fall) and was then restored to him (salvation).

In Justin's mythology, the story of the fall does not describe, as does the Valentinians' version, a second time frame for the process of organizing the universe; it takes place not outside the triad of the principles but inside it, coextensive with the primordial order itself. Indeed, the demiurgic scenario takes place at the beginning of things through the desire that instantaneously carries the second principle (= the Father, or Elohîm) toward the young girl Edem, a union that is allegorically represented by the two loves of Zeus, in the form of a swan for Leda and of golden rain for Danaë (V, 26, 34–35). It is thus a metamorphosed Elohîm who unites with Edem. But the account of the Christian polemicist does not indicate the particular form of metamorphosis undergone by virtue of the will to dissimulate, since desire (*epithumia*) and will (*thelēsis*) are the Gnostic constant at the origin of all faults. Thus smitten with each other, Elohîm and Edem unite and give birth to twelve angels, who form the astral structure of the universe, or the paradisiac land of origins. Thus the paradise of Genesis is merely an allegorical interpretation proposed by Moses for those angelic seeds planted in Edem by Elohîm (*Genesis* 2.8). The two trees in paradise allegorically designate the two angels which appeared in the third rank of the zodiacal entities: Baruch, the tree of life, on the side of the father; Naas (= the snake), the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on the side of the mother. Similarly, the four rivers in paradise are an allegory used by Moses to describe the tetradic organization of the angels: "These twelve angels, which are intertwined with the four parts of the universe, surround and rule the world, holding it in a kind of satrapic power which they derive from Edem; they do not always stay in the same places, but surround the world as in a dancing circle, moving from place to place, and gradually leaving to others the places that were established for them" (V, 26, 11–12). The first consequence of Elohîm's reciprocal love for Edem is the installation of the Heimarmene, an uninterrupted torrent that rolls its stream of distress and vice around the world, chaining all beings to "the necessity of evil" (p. 129, 1). The Valentinians had responded to the problem of the origin of evil by adopting the Platonic solution; Justin adopts the determinism of the astrological

conception, whose materialism he radicalizes by transferring it to ontology: evil is nothing but the product of a movement in the very center of the triad. The evil being, engendered by nature and materialized by the astral sphere, comes directly from the unbegotten themselves, Elohîm and Edem, under the indifferent eye of Priapus.

The emergence of the sphere of planetary angels will set the entire anthropogonic process in motion. The angels of Elohîm pull an animal body, heavy and lifeless, out of the earthly part of Edem—a variant of the Valentinian myth of Sophia's abortion. Elohîm and Edem then undertake to make it the "seal and memorial of their love, the eternal symbol of their union" (p. 128, 4). Edem gives it a soul (*psuchē*), the principle of existence (*bios*); Elohîm gives it breath (*pneuma*), the principle of life (*zōē*). Thus arises the primordial couple, Eve and Adam, each "in the image" of their model. The centripetal mobility of the astral angels, circling around the world, corresponds to the centrifugal force of the human microcosm trying to escape the circle of destiny in order to rejoin the point of origin.

The myth of the fall, which opens with the union of Edem and Elohîm, ends with the story of their separation. Curious to know the secrets of the universe, and by nature drawn toward the heights (*anōpherēs*, p. 129, 5), Elohîm climbs with his angels into the upper reaches of the sky, where he discovers the perfect light of Good. Without his angels, since they are Edem's sons, he then enters into the luminous depths of the supreme principle, and sits down on its right. But from that moment it is no longer possible for him to regain his breath (*pneuma*), which is trapped in humans. Sad to have been abandoned, Edem attempts one last time to seduce Elohîm, and surrounds herself with all the cosmic beauty of her angels. All is in vain. Furious, she avenges herself by striking at what remains of Elohîm in humans, the breath-spirit. In order to make Elohîm experience in his turn the torture of separation and sadness, she enjoins Aphrodite-Babel, the first of her demons, to inspire in humans the dramas of love—broken hearts, adultery, and divorce. She then commands Naas (the snake), the third of her angels, to unite with Eve and then with Adam, as a result of which the spirit of Elohîm in man is brought to lewdness and pederasty.

As in all the systems of the time, a corollary of the myth of the fall states that salvation will consist in seeing to it that the breath-spirit of Elohîm, which resides in humans, is detached first from the multiple degradations, mutilations, and humiliations that it underwent through the power of the inventor of sexuality, Edem-Israel of the double and earthly body, so that it can then reascend, pure and light, to its originating principle. To this evil action of Edem—striking, through her intervening angels (Aphrodite-Babel and Naas), the breath of Elohîm inherent in the human spirit—Elohîm will set up a counteroffensive of salvation in four stages, each marked by the dispatch of a prophet and dominated by the antagonism of Psyche (on Edem's side) and Pneuma (on Elohîm's side)—the anthropological version of the antagonism inherent in the macrocosm (the angels of the father against the angels of the mother).

Elohîm first sends Baruch, the third of his angels (= the anti-Naas), to the children of Edem-Israel, the Jews. The voice of Baruch, calling the people of the circumcised to conversion, is stifled by the hissing of Naas. Elohîm sends Baruch off a second time, but this time only to the Jewish prophets. They are seduced by Psyche, who is manipulated by Naas, and make a mockery of Baruch's words. Two dispatches, two failures. For the third mission, Elohîm

chooses Heracles, whom he sends among the uncircumcised (= the pagans) to fight the twelve angels of Edem. In twelve gigantic battles, Heracles triumphs over the lion, the hydra, the boar, and so forth, allegorical names of the mother's angels. Seduced by Omphale, however, who is none other than Aphrodite-Babel, Heracles is stripped of his strength, that is, of the orders transmitted to Baruch by Elohim, and puts on Edem's own robe. Unsatisfied by this partial victory, Elohim sends Baruch off once again, "in the days of King Herod," to a boy of twelve, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary, who is busy tending sheep. He reveals to him the Gnosis—the knowledge of the past (the loves of Edem and Elohim, and the repentance of the latter), the present (Naas's fight against Baruch), and the future (the return of Pneuma to the Good). Furious at seeing Jesus resist all his attempts at seduction and remain faithful to Baruch, Naas has him crucified. But Jesus, "abandoning on the wood the body of Edem" (p. 131, 31–32), "gives back the spirit (*pneuma*) into the hands of the Father (= Elohim) and rises up to the Good" (p. 132, 23). The death of Jesus thus marks the end of the antagonism of Psyche and Pneuma and the definitive victory of Elohim over Edem. Justin's tritheist system is therefore a camouflaged dualism: above, the male universe of good, the domain of Priapus-Elohim; and below, the female universe of evil, the domain of Edem. To classify such a Gnostic system among the Christian Gnostics, as the author of the *Elenchos* followed by later criticism has done, is not acceptable.

The anti-Judaic bias of a Justin so taken by Jewish Scriptures is obvious. On the other hand, when Christian heresiology accuses Justin of "following word for word the myths of the Greeks" (p. 125, 8) by simply applying the myth of the union of Heracles with the young girl/snake "to the generation of the universe" (V, 25, 1–4), this constitutes a polemical argument invented for the sake of the cause. The myth of the half-earth/half-snake woman associated with the biblical Edem was not borrowed from Herodotus, as is said in the *Elenchos*; according to Van den Broek, it emerged from speculations that are connected with the cult of Isis-Thermouthis in Hellenistic Egypt. But it is more likely that

the goddess of the earth, described by Justin as a young girl or a young virgin (*korē*, p. 127, 4), the wife (*suzugos*, p. 129, 6) of an astral god, comes from the esoteric tradition of the "Hellenized Magi," according to whom the earth is a young virgin betrothed to Parnsag (Theodore bar Konai, *Liber scholiorum*, 11, p. 297, 12–14 Scher). Moreover, the chain-of-prophets theory recalls the theory that is found in pseudo-Clementine writings or among the Elchasaïtes. Unlike the latter, Justin lacks the essentially Christian element almost entirely; at the same time, the uncreated and eternal character of the elements of the triad appears incompatible with the "Judeo-Christian" theses in the strict sense. However, the importance given to water symbolism (stagnating waters below the firmament; living waters above) is connected with Eastern baptist trends. Finally, Justin's Christological Docetism recalls that of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, in which Jesus "the carnal" is nailed to the cross while Jesus "the living" is joyful and laughs (*Nag Hammadi Coptic VII*, 3, p. 81, 10–22), just as his diatribe against the Jewish prophets is related to that of the *Second Logos of the Great Seth* (*Nag Hammadi Coptic VII*, 2, p. 62, 27–64, 12). This pagan-dominated Elchasaïsm, which is Justin's system, is the response to a desire for synthesis between a syncretist mythology stemming from the Chaldean astrologers and a baptist practice impregnated by Gnosticizing Docetism.

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THE MEDIEVAL WEST AND "MYTHIC THOUGHT"

The conjunction of the terms "Christianity" and "mythology" was not at all shocking to the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century: on the contrary, analogous to their unfavorable judgments on the myths of other civilizations, the "great minds" saw in Catholicism a tissue of errors and affabulations that strained the limits of Reason, a "Christian mythology" relegated by the Enlightenment to the dark centuries of the Middle Ages.

In the nineteenth century, this "Christian mythology" entered the fields of study of historians and folklorists. But, though it partially avoided polemic in order to become an object of knowledge, it was still not apprehended through a unified vocabulary and precisely defined concepts: each author, it seems, could furnish his own definition of myth. Agreement was reached on one point: no one questioned the use of the word "myths" and "mythologies" when treating of the Middle Ages.

A primary procedure, which is generally recognized as outmoded today, was the search for the *origins* of "myths" spread by medieval Christianity. In his *Essays on Christian Mythology* (1907), Paul Saintyves was especially concerned with the Greco-Roman origins of the "Christian mythology" of the Middle Ages. More recently, Henri Dontenville has connected "French mythology" with an ancestral Celtic mythology, which he claims to have recovered from eleventh- to sixteenth-century documents and from more recent folklore.

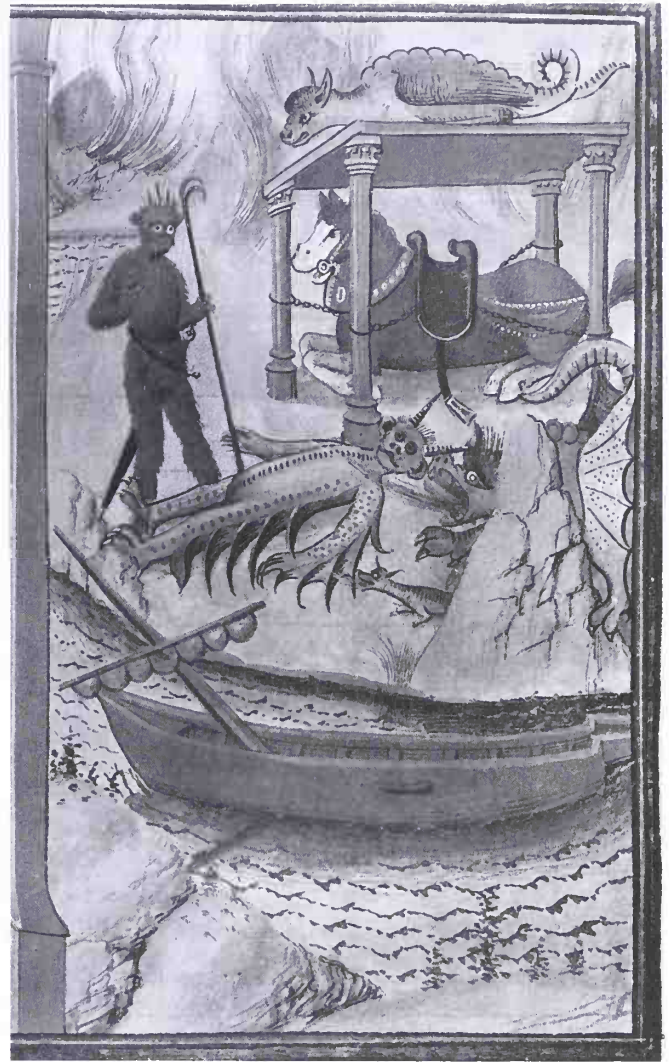
Commenting on the title of his great work *The Saints as Successors to the Gods*, Saintyves strongly asserts that "the cult of martyrs and saints is of pagan origin," though he does go on to say more precisely that "this does not mean that they are not Christian." Churches have been built on numerous sites of pagan cults, and the pagan festivals yielded to the great Church festivals (Christmas, All Saints', etc.) on the same days. Similarly, the gods or heroes of antiquity were transformed into saints of the Church, and ancient myths are found to lie at the origin of certain hagiographic legends. For example, the legend of Saint Julian the Hospitable seems to

reproduce the myth of Oedipus (page 269). It is true that the same might be said of the apocryphal legend of Judas, who was never—far from it—assimilated to a saint; but Saintyves never explains this contradiction in his thesis. His hypotheses nevertheless have the merit of being applied to long periods of time, necessary in the study of narrative traditions, and of taking account of an important part of the cultural heritage from which Christianity progressively arose. But these merits should not obscure the fact that the function of the saints who interceded with God was, simply because of the central presence of God, radically different from that of the pagan gods.

On the other hand, Dontenville's reconstitution of a "French mythology" bears the stamp of the "Celtic school": this is organized around the "mythic" giant Gargantua, to whom are connected the great legendary characters of the Middle Ages—Merlin, Morgan Le Fay, King Arthur, the serpent woman Mélusine, the horse Bayard, Tarasca, etc. One may wonder about the validity of a method which rests more on phonetic analogies than on a genuine scientific etymology. Elsewhere, though it is true that these narrative traditions were quite widespread, it is doubtful that they operated on a "national" or even a pan-European scale: it is likely that no narrator, let alone any listener, was ever aware that Gargantua could have been connected both to Mount Gargan in Italy and to Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy. The perspective that time and the scholarly work of Rabelais offer to the modern Celticist should not make him forget that the social context in which these folkloric traditions functioned was certainly much narrower. Our opinion is that this framework should be brought back to the scale of village or urban communities, or even to lineages such as that of the Lusignans, who explain their origins by reference to the legend of Mélusine.

A second methodology tends to reserve the expression "Christian mythology" solely for those medieval narrative traditions that were concerned with the world beyond. This is the implicit procedure followed by Sabine Baring-Gould in his *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages* (1866–88), and especially by Arturo Graf in his great book *Myths, Legends and Superstitions of the Middle Ages* (1892): myths, and not mere legends, were those accounts which, in the twelfth century, placed in the East the earthly Paradise to which Seth, the son of Adam, went to ask in vain for his father's pardon. In the same period, other "myths" relate that Morgan Le Fay carried the wounded Arthur to the Isle of Fortune (according to Geoffrey of Monmouth); if we are to believe Gervase of Tilbury, this Arthurian court was in Sicily in the depths of Mount Etna, where purgatory was located.

Graf sees a connection between these representations of the world beyond, which is nevertheless located on earth, and the "myth" of the land of Cockaigne. Cockaigne is also situated on earth, but it is made for the living, for people who enjoy good living, in fact, since it spares its inhabitants from eating the overly delicate food of paradise, "where it is prohibited to eat anything other than fruits or to drink anything other than water," according to a fourteenth-century German poem. Cockaigne—whose name evokes cakes (the German *Kuchen* or the English *cake* have the same root)—is the world of the carnival inversion of rules about eating and of the Church calendar, signifying the definitive triumph of "Carnage" over "Lent." Thus Lent is only observed once every twenty years, while the festival of Easter is repeated four times each year! As František Graus (1967) has shown so well, Cockaigne, essentially conceived as a village region or, less often, as a manor, is one of the



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three great forms of the medieval utopia. Another is the pursuit of the ancient utopian traditions, which continue to be known in literate circles; the third, by contrast, is "popular," and represents the medieval version of the Golden Age. This is pushed back into a past that is never as distant as that of the earthly Paradise before the fall, and is generally connected with the name of a more or less legendary saint-king whose reign remains the symbol of peace and opulence. Cockaigne is thus the expression neither of the most scholarly culture nor of folkloric culture; it is associated with the intermediate milieu of Goliards and students, who were aware of both village traditions and the Latin culture of the clergy. It expresses the utopia of a world in which, thanks to the fountain of youth that is at the center of this land, sensual pleasure and youth are perpetually renewed.

We must dispute Graf's use of the word "myth," but we should recognize that the author did not devote himself to the traditional quest for "origins." On the contrary, he grounded his research in history, demonstrating—with regard to the image of the devil, for example—how these representations are the product of a constantly evolving society, and are not reducible to "origins" containing all of

their future developments in advance. If, however, he seems to have sensed the need for a typology of narrative genres, he was never explicit about it; if he distinguished "myths" from "legends," he never really gave his reasons for doing so. He assimilated utopia into myth, which, as we shall see, is unjustifiable.

The word "myth" is also employed by historians of medieval heresy when they speak of a "Cathar myth." Here the observer is presented with a body of structured and apparently autonomous beliefs (some have even spoken of "another religion" rather than a heresy, which is merely a deviation from Christianity) which express essential truths about the origin of the world, of evil, of man, and about the fate of the soul after death. The principal theme of this "Cathar myth," such as it appeared in the south of France and in northern Italy from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, is the rivalry between the two principles of Good (God) and Evil (Satan). This opposition underlies the story of the origin of souls: by means of the charms of his creature, Woman, Satan succeeds in seducing the majority of the spirits of God, who leave Paradise through a hole. When the Father notices what is happening, he puts his foot over the hole, but in vain; it is too late and nearly all of the spirits have gone away. These spirits, however, in the presence of Satan, remain nostalgic for the celestial glory they once knew. To make them forget it, Satan gives them a carnal envelope, the body, which is thus a creation of Evil; upon the death of the body, the soul leaves it and goes to dwell within another body, that of an animal or a man. This transmigration of souls is the only hell that exists, and here too it is situated on earth. When a soul eventually enters the body of a Cathar Perfectus, it is assured its salvation, for the death of this man will allow it to return to the Father. And when all of the souls have returned to God, it will be the end of the world. Legends were grafted upon this basic narrative, and those concerned with the migration of souls play an important role. One of these relates that a Perfectus found in a ravine a horseshoe that he had lost in that very spot when he was previously a horse. All of these accounts have multiple functions: they offer an explanation for the history of the world, from its beginning to the end of time, and a unified representation of this world and the world beyond. At the same time, they justify the internal divisions between the heretical groups, between Perfecti and Believers, and the alimentary and sexual taboos of the Cathars, for whom all that concerns the flesh is diabolical. This group of narratives, organized into a coherent whole, does resemble what might be understood as a "mythology." But first the illusion of its autonomy must be dissipated: Like orthodoxy, this body of narratives was constituted out of an interpretation of the Scriptures. Furthermore, it would be a mistake not to see it as a complete theology, seeking, through the same rational avenues as does the theology of the Church, arguments it might use to counter the Church. Under these conditions, is it legitimate to speak of "myths"?

Although historians of medieval Christianity have not hesitated to use the words "myths" and "mythologies," they have given them widely varying contents. Beyond these divergences there is the basic question of whether it is legitimate to speak of "myths" with reference to medieval Christianity, regardless of the particular meanings one might give the word. This question demands that the word be given as clear a definition as possible, to ensure its applicability to the Middle Ages. The clarification demanded of the medievalist is all the more urgent for the fact that the analysis

of myths has constituted one of the most dynamic branches of research in the human sciences for at least thirty years.

Myth defines itself at the heart of a structured narrative system according to its own logic, constituting the sole form of articulation and reception for the essential truths of a given society: myth tells what is known about the world, the cosmos, human society, animals, and gods. The logic of myth is that of "savage thought," which keeps reorganizing the same elements ("mythemes") according to symbolic codes of affinities, in the same way, according to Lévi-Strauss, that a *bricoleur* (a kind of professional scrap collector and fix-it man) assembles given materials already at hand. Furthermore, myth, as opposed to legend, does not claim to be the account of a historical tradition; nor does it express, as opposed to a utopia, an aspiration for a different society: on this subject, the reader may refer to Pierre Vidal-Naquet's pertinent remarks. We should also note, along with Jean-Pierre Vernant, that mythic thought, which is the totality of the thinking of a society at a given moment of its historical development, may yield its place to another kind of thinking, as occurred in ancient Greece, when political reason and philosophy came to birth at the same time as the polis.

These definitions seem to exclude from the outset any evocation of a medieval "Christian mythology." In fact, the essential verities of medieval Christianity were uttered not by the voice of myth but by the Book, which reproduces the revealed and immutable Word of a unique God and is interpreted by the clergy. Far from engaging in a discussion that was closed on itself and founded on combinations of ever-repeated images, the clergy found, in the very distance they placed between their reason and the Word of God, the possibility of a continuous transcendence of their thought. As faith in quest of understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*), and as a refusal to take pleasure in the play of oppositions or in the opposing will to reduce all contradictions (the meaning of Abelard's *Sic et Non*), theological reason excludes myth.

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Of course, medieval Christianity did inherit myths, starting with the Semitic myths of Genesis, the Flood, etc., which the Bible had bequeathed to it. Deposited as they were in the Bible, however, and spread and explained by the Church, these myths were not lived as such: they constituted the *historia* par excellence, sacred History, and Moses, as the Dominican Vincent de Beauvais stated in the thirteenth century, "was the first among us to write the history of the beginning of the world" (*Speculum Doctrinale* 3.127). What has elsewhere been stated by myth is now attested to by the historian.

Historia, which enumerates in chronological order those events which in fact took place (*res factae, res gestae*), is set against *fabulae*, the artifices of language—that is, according to Saint Augustine, against the myths of pagan antiquity (known to the authors of the Middle Ages through the mythographers of late antiquity, especially through the *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius), against entertaining fables (those of Aesop above all), and against the false beliefs of the Manicheans (*Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, ed. Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 42, col. 374). Here we can see just how much the "Cathar myths" of the modern historians are in fact inherited from the clerical tradition of the Middle Ages. Thus, not only is it impossible to assimilate medieval Christianity to a "Christian mythology," but medieval Christianity itself took its distance from all the accounts that it perceived as myths (*fabulae*) in order to pass judgment on them.

Medieval Christianity is not to be identified, however, with the religion of the clergy alone. The clergy designated as *fabulae* the oral traditions of the *illiterati*, that is, all persons—long including the lay members of the aristocracy—who had no access to writing, to the Latin language, in a word, to the culture of the clergy. Is it appropriate, at least at this level, which by convention we call folkloric, to speak of "mythology" and "myths"?

Historically, it is true, the roots of medieval folklore are to be found in a pre-Christian past, which at that time had until quite recently been on the fringes of Christianity for the Slavic, Scandinavian, Celtic, and Germanic populations who had just been Christianized or were being Christianized. This pagan past was more complex in the case of Gaul, where Romanization had preceded Christianization. But here the collapse of the social structures of the Late Empire may have favored a Celtic "revival" with which Christianity, still not firmly established, would have found itself in brutal confrontation. Whatever the case, folkloric culture is not reducible to these "origins": it was perpetually taking shape and transforming itself in symbiosis with the scholarly culture of the clergy; it became Christianized even as it folklorized official Christianity.

These reciprocal borrowings were not, however, the products of chance; nor were they at all symmetrical. We know that hagiography borrowed heavily from folkloric legends. In the same way, even if the Church had a definite view of the Creation and of the origin of time, it was less comfortable about concrete descriptions of the last things: here there was a certain deficiency or at least a perceptible rift between the account of Genesis, which was realistic but set in the past, and the eschatological symbolism of the Apocalypse, set in the future. Thus it was particularly with regard to the last things that a need was felt to complete and render more concrete the beliefs and even the dogma of the Church: whence the success of the resulting commentaries on the Apocalypse, elucidations that were scholarly but which, quickly vulgarized, fueled a popular millennialism from the

thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries that easily slipped into heresy (Spirituals and Beguines, Hussites, etc.). There was a consequent pressure for folkloric depictions, soon assimilated by the clergy, which A. Graf calls "myths." Jacques LeGoff has shown that from the twelfth century onward, under pressure from folk culture, the Christian afterlife became definitively organized, and purgatory took its place between hell and paradise. An analogous deficiency could also be found in the case of the figure of the devil; to be sure, Satan is present in the New Testament, where he comes to tempt Christ himself; and antiquity also had its demons. But it is only with the high Middle Ages that the devil becomes ever-present, obsessive, and tyrannical, which had never previously been the case. It should be further noted that one of the reasons for this medieval diabolical proliferation is the attribution, from the time of Christian antiquity, of a demonic character to certain pagan divinities. It must be clearly recognized, Saintyves to the contrary, that the devil too, and not only the saints, succeeded the gods.

Inversely, what was the effect of Christianization on folk culture? Clerical culture was not content with vulgarizing its topics, baptizing legends, and informing traditional rites. It had especially dispossessed folk culture of its preeminent knowledge: knowledge of the other world, an ear for supernatural beings, and the interpretation of visions, the control of which the clergy meant to reserve for itself alone. The constitution of a "white magic" domesticated by the Church and the increasing repression of all folk demonology followed the same pattern.

Under these conditions, it is difficult to see how medieval folklore could have spoken through myths, for it is the function of myths to constitute and transmit such knowledge. Since this function was monopolized by the Church, the clergy could no longer speak of myths, for their efforts tended in the opposite direction, toward a rational explanation of the Word of God.

Folklore, then, was left with the other narrative genres, which, though far from negligible in importance and function, do not go to the heart of the matter as myth does. Specialists in the study of popular narrative genres strove to give them definitions, which were sometimes too rigid: folktale, whose function is to offer a "naive ethics" (A. Jolles); legend, which has a familial thematization and is anchored to a particular topography and history (H. Bausinger), etc. These narrative genres were allowed to develop freely, and it is they rather than myths that are revealed to us in the written documents of the Middle Ages.

At the same time, although we should not speak of "mythology" or of "myths" in this connection, we may perhaps find "mythic thought" in these folktales and legends. The originality of medieval folk culture resides not only in its contents but also in the way it has organized those contents. Current studies on the narrative traditions of medieval folklore all show that this folklore operated according to a logic that was different from the theological reasoning of the clergy, at least of the most scholarly fraction of the clergy. The structural transformations revealed by the variants of a single account also allow us to speak here, like the ethnologists, of "savage thought" and, like the historians of ancient Greece, of "mythic thought." It is in this sense, we believe, that medieval studies can and should take their place in the now open field of the analysis of myths and oral traditions.

The prudent position we are adopting is also dictated by the state of the documents with which we are constrained to

work: it is on the local scale, as we have shown, that one must reconstitute the narrative system of a thirteenth-century village community, for example. But through the written texts of the scholarly culture we can grasp only dispersed shreds of oral traditions, rescued from oblivion by the zeal of an inquisitor or the curiosity of an "intellectual" of the Middle Ages. We are also unable to restore narrative systems, and without them it is difficult to speak of "mythology" and "myths"; Dontenville's attempt is too ambitious in its geographical scope to be convincing. However, sometimes the documentation seems more favorable: using the inquisition register of Jacques Fournier, bishop of Pamiers, Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie recently brought back to life an entire village community of the upper Ariège in the early fourteenth century. This case is a peculiar one in many regards: at Montaillou, the Cathar heresy had, so to speak, restored to the laity the knowledge of the essential truths, and the "Cathar myth," unlike the interpretations of the Perfecti in the twelfth century, who were so well versed in theological debates, had been reinterpreted in the light of local folklore and inserted into the narrative traditions of the village. In this way, the respect that the Perfectus of the time inspires in the simple Believer is compounded by the attractiveness of his eternal word, for he knows all about Good and Evil, the Creation and the end of the world, and the fates of the souls of deceased family members who, in the ravines close to the villages, search for a body to enter. He knows all about the social order, too. In the beginning was incest: brothers and sisters married freely. Today, on the contrary, the village is a collection of neighboring "domus," familial groups which are at once rivals and relatives since they practice the exchange of women between them. The marriage of dowried girls threatens the material equilibrium of each "domus." It creates a permanent danger and inspires nostalgia for a bygone day when girls were not expected to leave their homes, and gave themselves to their brothers. But that primordial incest set brother against brother, and had to be put to an end: by imposing exogamy and marriage, the Church instituted the present social order, which, for the sake of peace, sacrifices these peasants' ideal of self-sufficiency. One would like to find other versions of this account, so as to compare it with all of the parallel accounts that must have been circulating at that time. One may at least ask a question: on the inner fringes of Christianity, where folklore and heresy were intermingled and the ascendancy of the Church was less strong, is it not possible that the medieval West also knew myth?

J.-C.S./d.w.

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THE SURVIVAL OF THE ANCIENT GODS IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND THE RENAISSANCE

I. The Middle Ages

Before inquiring how mythology was interpreted in the Middle Ages, we should remember that it had survived on different levels, mainly in folklore. It was among the *pagani*, in rural areas, that polytheism had most tenaciously persisted. With the advent of Christianity, the cult of sylvans and nymphs was not annihilated along with the temples knocked down by the first apostles in Gaul. "Immutable at

the depths of rivers, in the eternal twilight of forests, the spirit of the old days lived on." Regarding this tenacity we have the testimony of the capitularies and the councils who up to the Carolingian period denounced superstitious practices and condemned as sacrilegious those who continued to light flares and fires near trees, rocks, and fountains. Their anathemas remained powerless. Gregory the Great had already recognized the impossibility of extirpating the layers of beliefs rooted "in such stubborn minds"; the only way to fight superstition was to assign the pagan vestiges to the new cult, to put pious images on trees, to carve crosses on menhirs, to place fountains under the invocation of the Virgin—in a word, to cover the ancient veneration with a cloak of orthodoxy. Indeed, strange assimilations had made the saints the successors of the gods. Saint Christopher, for example, had become the heir of Mercury, Hercules, and even Anubis. Having lent him their attributes and practices, they continued to be honored under the saint's name. These amalgams and avatars were further means of survival. But demons, too, took over guard duty from the gods, so to speak. "It was foolishly said: the great Pan is dead; then, seeing that he lived, he was made into a god of evil." The pagan origins of the sabbath were denounced by the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle, which found Diana, *panagorum dea* ("goddess of the pagans"), among the wicked women straddling animals, along with Satan. Michelet describes sorcery, a pact with the powers of instinct, as a rebellion, a revenge of nature oppressed by Christian asceticism.

But it was the Christians who, paradoxically, preserved mythology and even taught it. For it remained well above rustic superstitions; it was an integral part of classical culture, a culture adopted by the Church in the first centuries. The Church Fathers, who were imbued with it, were aware of the difficulty and the danger of preserving in education a literature and an art indissolubly linked to polytheism; but they accepted the necessity of permitting their youth to be instructed in schools of the Greco-Roman type. Tertullian himself recognized this necessity. In the fourth century, Christian children and adolescents were raised as pagans; despite the immorality of fable, they entered with Virgil into a familiarity with the gods, for the essence of the grammarian's schooling remained the explication of the poets; it was, moreover, from the list of the gods' names that one learned to read. The last generation to receive this instruction was the one raised by Ausonius. With the invasions that destroyed the ancient school, an eclipse began which lasted until the eighth century. In the middle of the sixth century, scholastic life was perpetuated in Rome and in Africa, and then came the collapse of culture and the decadence of letters. However, the ancient sources had not dried up; beyond the barbarian rupture, seeds of renewal survived. The Carolingian "renaissance," to which the name of Alcuin is linked, flourished in the twelfth century, when Chartres and Orleans became the great seats of classical studies. But each renewal was accompanied by a rise in neopaganism—witness the popularity of Ovid in the twelfth century (the preeminent *aetas Ovidiana*). The correspondence of monks is full of mythological allusions, and the goliards, who resuscitated paganism even in their mores, dedicated poems to Narcissus, to Philomela, and to Pyramus and Thisbe. At the end of the century, Alexander of Villedieu complained that old gods were being worshiped in Orleans, that Venus,



Deianira being abducted by Nessus. Fragment from a small column in Chartres Cathedral. Photo Giraudon.

Bacchus, and Faunus had their altars and their festivals there: the path to Paradise was lost.

Medieval art shows signs of these "renaissances." Here, too, antiquity once again became inspirational. When the first churches rose from the ruins of pagan sanctuaries, and oratories replaced shrines to the Lares, the vestiges were incorporated into new constructions and were put to use for the new religion. Sarcophagi were transformed into altars, their fragments into stoups or baptismal fonts; diptyches and ivory cases served as reliquaries; images of the Olympians were encrusted in the ambo of Aix-la-Chapelle. The sculptors who copied these pagan relics looked to them first for decorative forms and formulas, for lessons in technique and style—but also for profane themes, which they would combine with sacred representations. In decorating Christian tombs, the sculptors of Arles had already introduced mythological motifs on the covers of their sarcophagi: Castor and Pollux, Eros and Psyche, and so forth. In Roman art, ancient allegories of the Earth and the Ocean, and of the Moon and the Sun on their chariots, accompanied the crucifixion and the apparition of Christ in his glory. Sirens and centaurs reappeared on tympana, lintels, and capitals. Chiron's education of Achilles is depicted at Vézelay. The same scene was formerly depicted at Chartres, together with the abduction of Hippodamia. And on a column of the western portal one even sees Deianira carried away by Nessus. The end of the twelfth century offers one of the most unexpected examples of a pagan monument in the interior of a cloister—the famous fountain that was constructed to serve as a washbowl for the monks of Saint-Denis. Its mutilated basin stands today in the courtyard of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris; the rim is decorated with medallions, perhaps copied from cameos, on which about thirty heads are sculpted in relief. Among the heroes and allegories one can distinguish Jupiter, Neptune, Thetis, Ceres, Bacchus, and pastoral divinities. Gothic art, which abandoned ancient forms, seemed to retain from antiquity only its prophetic prefigurations: antiquity is scarcely represented in cathedrals except by the Sibyl. However, at the base of the portal of Auxerre there is a sleeping Eros.

In the last analysis, the survival of the gods through the Middle Ages, up to the dawn of the *Rinascimento*, can be explained by an important and general reason: they were protected by the interpretations that antiquity itself proposed for their origin and nature. These various interpretations, corresponding to various representations, can essentially be reduced to three.

The first is Euhemerism, popularized by Ennius: the gods were only humans, raised from the earth to heaven by the idolatry of their contemporaries. Christian apologists and the Church Fathers willingly adopted this interpretation and used it as a weapon against paganism—a two-edged sword, for though it relegated the gods to the level of mortals, it confirmed their existence and allowed them a place in history. Paulus Orosius, Isidore of Seville, and their successors would later attempt to assign them a place in time. Going back to the primitive ages in Egypt, Assyria, Greece, and Rome, Isidore discovered mythological dynasties; every single chronicler after ranked the gods among ancient kings and heroes, and at the same time sought to connect them with the great figures of the sacred History in lineages parallel to those of the patriarchs, judges, and prophets. As a result of these synchronisms, the prestige of the gods was restored. Moreover, to make a place for characters of fable in the annals of humanity was to recognize that they had been its benefactors. They had earlier obtained the honors of

apotheosis because they had destroyed monsters, built cities, invented arts. Prometheus, Atlas, Hercules, Theseus, Isis who taught writing, and Minerva who taught women weaving were the venerable precursors of civilization.

In the twelfth century, the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor codified the parallelism between profane history and the history of the people of God. In its translation by Guyart des Moulins it became a sort of scholastic manual of mythology, providing Vincent de Beauvais with the essence of what he wrote about the gods in his *Speculum Historiale*. Iconography illustrates this diffusion, and this direction, of Euhemerism. In Florence, Giotto's bell tower, on which the prophets are represented, depicts on the first section of the bas-reliefs, near Daedalus the first aeronaut, Orpheus the father of Poetry, and Hercules the conqueror of Cacus.

On the other hand, pride of race prompted scholars of the Middle Ages to seek ancestors and forebears for their people in the fabulous past. Thus the Franks claimed to be descended from the Trojan Francus, as earlier the Romans had claimed to have been from the Trojan Aeneas; the Italians had Janus and then Saturn and his sons for their first kings. The prodigious success of the *Romance of the Rose* is explained in part by its ethnogenic character. Mythological characters became the patrons of such and such a people, the stock from which it was born. They were also founders of dynasties; princes discovered ancestors for themselves among them, and boasted of having at least a demigod as the originator of their house. Thus Brutus, the Trojan hero, became the ancestor of the kings of England; and that is why the abduction of Helen is portrayed in a thirteenth-century genealogical scroll illustrating that royal lineage. The chronicles and world histories thus became vehicles of a mythographic tradition that would flourish in the Renaissance.

The physical interpretation, according to which the gods were heavenly bodies, perpetuated another tradition. Anyone discerning a governing intelligence behind the movement of the spheres is inclined to place divinity in the sky; but astronomical nomenclature, which attached each planet, each constellation, each sign of the zodiac to a character from fable, had encouraged the Greeks and the Romans to identify celestial bodies with gods. This "mythologization" of the sky was the result of a long evolution, complicated by the intrusion of exotic "signs" from Egypt or Chaldea: the *sphaera graecanica* was rivaled, or fed upon, by a *sphaera barbarica*, whose elements became mixed up with classical elements.

The definitive fusion of astronomy and mythography shows the influence of the Stoics, who were satisfied with a rationalist interpretation that seemed to legitimize and purify the gods by reducing them to cosmic symbols; but the major influence was that of Oriental cults (particularly the cult of the Sun, in Persia, and the Babylonian cult of the planets), which were prevalent in the Greco-Roman world. Not only was the belief in sidereal gods confirmed; it took on an extraordinary religious intensity. Indeed, the stars were alive; they had a face, a gender, a personality, and their power was awesome, for they were the arbiters of destiny: they determined the fate of men and of empires. Thus, toward the end of the pagan era, the gods who were dethroned on earth became all-powerful once again, thanks to astrology, in the sky. But here, too, Christians preserved what they wished to abolish. Astrology, which they ought to have abhorred, maintained its partisans and supporters among them; even its adversaries made important concessions to it. Neither Lactantius nor Saint Augustine questioned the influence of the stars; but they maintained that the will of man and the grace of God could conquer this



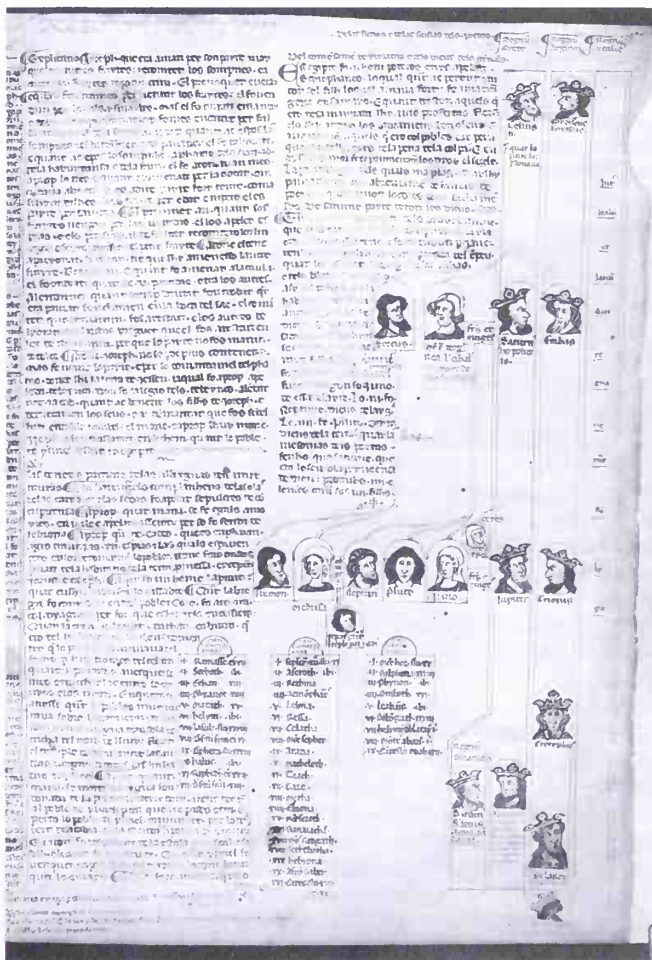
Monks' wash basin in the Abbey of Saint-Denis. Thirteenth century. Ecole des Beaux Arts. Photo Giraudon.

Caelus and his descendants (Ms. Egerton, 1500, fol. 6). London, British Library. Library photo.

influence. Others saw the coercion of the stars as merely an expression of the doctrine of predestination, or at least as the intermediary through which God manifested his immutable decrees. Indeed, even when they condemned astrology, the apologists and the Church Fathers kept its deep root intact; the fear of demons and their evildoing haunted the popular imagination, but the astrological conception of causality dominated the greatest minds.

After the twelfth century, the influx of Arabic science into the West gave astrology a renewed virulence. The *Ghāya*, a manual of practical magic composed of Oriental and Hellenistic materials, was translated into Spanish at the court of Alfonso X; about twenty Latin manuscripts of it are known under the title of *Picatrix*—"the Reverend Father Picatrix, rector of the Diabological Faculty," as Rabelais would call him. This manual taught how to conjure up celestial powers and render them favorable; it taught formulas of prayer and invocation and prescribed instruments for the purpose: images of Jupiter, Venus, Mars, and Saturn, engraved on rocks, gained the influence of the corresponding divinities. As we have seen, gemstones bearing effigies of the gods had never ceased to be used; now they served as amulets and talismans; this time it was in the lapidaries that the gods found refuge.

The third system of interpretation consisted of discovering a spiritual meaning in the figure of the gods, and a moral lesson in their adventures. This sort of allegory had been applied by the first critics of Homer, such as Heraclitus, and, at the end of the pagan era, by Stoics such as Cornutus, to justify the apparent impiety of the myths by distinguishing





Juno-Memory (Vat. ms. Palat. lat. 1066, fol. 223v). Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana. Library photo.

their literal meaning from their deep or secret meaning. Since that time, the old legends had gradually been elevated: in the *Aeneid* the Olympians regained their dignity; with his genius for deifying moral ideas, Virgil moralized the gods. But in the hands of the Neoplatonists, allegory became a means of sanctifying them. They studied fable in depth as if it were a sacred text. In his treatise, *On the Gods and the World*, "a veritable pagan catechism," Sallust, a friend of the emperor Julian, chose the most shocking myths in order to reveal a philosophic content in them—accessible, it is true, to initiates alone. Julian himself applied the method in his hymns to Helios and to the Great Mother, with the intention of contrasting the mythology thus regenerated to the Christian cult.

The Church, for that reason alone, should have been hostile to allegory. But the apologists and the Church Fathers themselves applied the method to holy books; and they employed it in education. Having conserved profane poetry in their own education, they were inevitably led to moralize mythology in their turn. In the sixth century, the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great, biblical allegories, had their counterpart in the *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius, profane allegories. In the Middle Ages, the fable as a whole became a *philosophia moralis*. Thus the three goddesses between whom Paris had to choose were, according to Fulgentius, symbols of the active life, the contemplative life, and the amorous life. In the Carolingian period a poem by Theodulf, bishop of Orleans,

explained how wise men could turn the lies of poets, beginning with Ovid, into truths.

Beginning in the twelfth century, this type of exegesis reached stunning proportions. It was then that Bernard de Chartres and John of Salisbury meditated on pagan religion, "not out of respect for false divinities, but because they disguised sacred teachings, incomprehensible to the common man." It was above all the time when the rehabilitation of Ovid—who was proclaimed *Ethicus* and even *Theologus*—was affirmed. Arnolphe d'Orleans and John Garland rigorously demonstrated the edifying nature of the *Metamorphoses*. In the first years of the fourteenth century the immense *Moralized Ovid* appeared, whose author distinctly declared that if one knew how to read the poems, "everything is for our edification." The eyes of Argus on the tail of Juno's peacock are the vanities of the century; Phaethon is Lucifer; Ceres searching for Proserpina is the Church beckoning the souls of sinners. To the same century belonged (among other commentaries) Robert Holkot's *Moralia super Ovidii metamorphoses* and Thomas Waleys's *Metamorphosis Ovidiana moraliter explanata*. Rabelais would mock the allegorizers who claimed to discover "the Sacraments of the Gospel" in Ovid; Luther, who denounced allegory as a seductive courtesan, would thunder against those who "turned Apollo into Christ, and Daphne into the Virgin Mary." But they would not halt the popularity of these aberrations.

Allegories and conventional moralizations are again found in the works of Dante, where mythology holds a place that is at first sight surprising. With Dante, too, fable, a repertory of passions, is full of edifying meanings. In the *Purgatorio*, the stories of Aglaurus, Progne, Midas, Meleager, and Pasiphaë become so many examples of human deviation. But Dante's attitude toward pagan divinities is profoundly original. He treats them seriously, even with reverence. Not only does he accept the reality of these supernatural beings, but he suggests that between the Fall and the Redemption they played a premonitory role, so that they sometimes elucidated the lessons of the Old Testament. In the "Bible of the Gentiles," the great gods, the *superi*, veiled intelligences, were instructed to make the world aware, in a disguised form, of the authority of the true God. Through the sanctions that Jupiter or Apollo inflicted on sinful mortals they gave human creatures a presentiment of the absolute submission owed to the Creator. Hence the importance, in the *Commedia*, of the "titanic" theme of insubordination, revolt, and the punishments for these transgressions. Dante confirms the judgment by condemning to hell the rebels struck down by the gods. As for the demons that torment them, the most notorious—Charon, Pluto, Minos—are taken from among the *inferni*. Whereas the *superi*, the heavenly spirits, acted for a yet hidden God, these fallen spirits were invested with infernal functions; they passed into the service of Satan.

In the following century, the most extravagant and systematic monument of Christian allegory applied to mythology is a revised version of a treatise by Fulgentius—the *Fulgentius Metaforalis* by the Franciscan John Ridewall. The order of the chapters is governed by the identification of the gods with virtues, an identification stretched by analysis to the most minute subtleties. Thus Saturn is Prudence; the elements that compose this virtue are Memory, Intelligence, and Foresight. Ridewall examines these children of Saturn one by one: Juno ("Memoria"), Neptune ("Intelligentia"), and Pluto ("Providentia"). The respective attributes of these gods are explained precisely by the ideas they represent. Juno's veil is meant to hide the shame of sin, fostered by Memory; the rainbow that crowns her is the sign of her reconciliation with

God, obtained through remembrance and repentance; the scepter she holds indicates that the pardoned soul has regained control of itself, another benefit of Memory.

It was through these three systems of interpretation that the gods ultimately survived. The three systems, however, were not mutually exclusive. At the risk of proposing contradictory explanations, scholars of the Middle Ages frequently applied all three of them to the same character or to the same fable. Pierre d'Ailly, who affirmed the concord between astronomy and history, maintained that the gods were both stars and rulers. On the other hand, there were points of contact as well as of interference between the three cycles. When mythological heroes were taken as examples, morality came to the aid of history. Each planet had its temperament; it determined not only the destiny but the character and the abilities of those born under its influence, who, through this transmission from the physical to the moral, truly became its "children." The ambition of medieval culture, its concern with embracing the totality of knowledge, confined within the *Summaries* the *naturale*, the *morale*, and the *historiale*. In this reduction to unity, numerals played a primordial role: by reason of their number, the planets, the signs of the zodiac, and the elements were placed in concord with the virtues, the months, and the humors, in order to

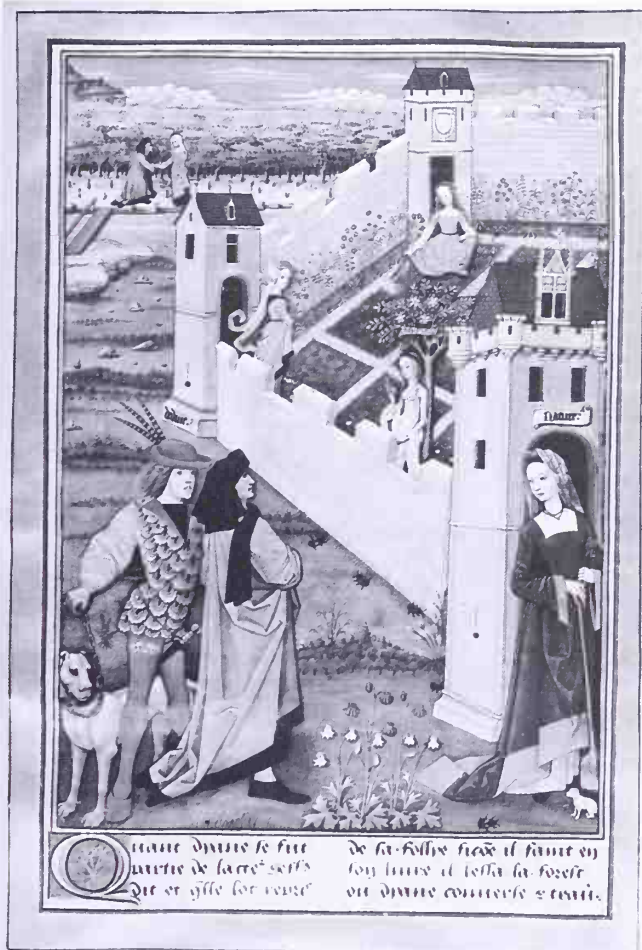
establish the interdependence of all parts of the cosmos and all forms of knowledge. Scholasticism further develops these tables of concord. In his *De natura rerum*, Alexander Neckham codified the relationship, established in the ninth century, between the planets and the virtues. In the *Convivio*, Dante compares these same planets "by reason of their properties" to the liberal arts: the Sphere of the Moon corresponds to Grammar; that of Mercury, to Dialectic; that of Venus, to Rhetoric; that of Jupiter, to Geometry, etc. As for the sphere of fixed stars, it showed "manifest" resemblances to Physics, Metaphysics, Morals, and Theology.

Diagrams graphically express these relationships, by circles containing smaller circles that form a tracery of symmetrical compartments. At the center of these microcosms is written the name of Man, himself an abridgment of the Universe. But the gods have their role in these correspondences, which is why they are first found in the miniatures in encyclopedias, before reappearing in Italian monumental art. In Florence they are seated on Giotto's bell tower with the Sibyls and the prophets, in the same row as the virtues, the sciences, and the sacraments; they dominate the entire cycle of figures that recount the creation of man and the invention of the arts. At the Trinci palace in Foligno, frescoes painted around 1420 also developed the great encyclopedic theme; the gods are once again in evidence, and once again historic and cosmic traditions intersect; mythical characters and stellar powers make an essential contribution to this decorative whole.

The Renaissance gathered together and developed these various interpretations; when the gods reappeared in full daylight, it was first in one of these frameworks. In this matter the Renaissance is greatly indebted to the Middle Ages. The reason the continuity long remained unsuspected is that the classical form of the gods was lost in the meantime; they had become unrecognizable. The history of their metamorphoses can nevertheless be followed from the Carolingian period up until the fifteenth century, mainly because of the extremely rich documentation furnished by miniatures in astrologic-mythological manuscripts. These illustrations can be divided into two groups, according to whether they had a visual model as a prototype or were derived from a simple descriptive text.

The "visual" tradition may be further broken down into several families. The first had a purely Western origin and character and flourished until the thirteenth century or thereabouts. Essentially it included the *Aratea*, that is, the manuscripts of that poem (translated by Cicero), the *Phaenomena*, in which Aratus describes the constellations as a mythographer rather than as an astronomer. The Carolingian copies of the *Aratea* restored the ancient model with striking fidelity. But new and strange versions appeared at the end of the Middle Ages, which came from the Orient. They are found in two contexts—first, in Arabic astrological manuscripts, where Hellenistic figures had been profoundly altered by the transcribers who were ignorant of mythology. Hercules, for example, is dressed as a Turk, with a scimitar and a turban; Medusa, decapitated by Perseus, becomes a bearded demon. Second, they are encountered in illustrations in Michael Scot's treatise, composed in Sicily around 1250. This treatise, of which we have more than thirty manuscripts, shows the strangest constellations, borrowed from the "barbaric sphere." The drawings of the planets are even more bizarre: Jupiter is represented as a scholar, Saturn as a warrior, and Mercury as a bishop. This last series of figures goes back, by way of the *Ghāya*, to a Babylonian tradition. It, too, played a role in fourteenth-century Italian

Venus, Juno, Pallas (ms. fr. 143, fol. 198v). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.



monumental art: in the Spanish Chapel in Florence, in the Eremitani of Padua, on the capitals of the Doges' Palace—it is in this extraordinary iconography that the Olympians were disguised.

Apart from astronomical manuscripts, examples of the "visual" tradition are rarely found outside of Byzantine art, though miniatures of profane manuscripts and ivory caskets with mythological motifs still remain very close to Hellenistic models. There is, however, a surprising Western illustration of Raban Maur's *De rerum naturis* in the copy by Montecassino. However crude the divinities represented may be, an ancient model can still be detected behind each one of them.

The types derived from a descriptive text, a "literary" source, constitute a distinct group. Here the Byzantines were privileged; they had the "Library" of Apollodorus, and perhaps even an illustrated manuscript of the work that served as a mythographical manual from the ninth to the fourteenth century. In the West, this family of gods is found in allegoric treatises. These treatises contained two parts, the first descriptive and the second moral. The descriptive elements were generally taken from early mythographers and scholiasts such as Macrobius, Servius, Lactantius Placidus, Martianus Capella, and Fulgentius: it was their erudition that served as a basis for the medieval compilers. After 1100, illustrations appeared in the margins of treatises of this kind. A manuscript of Remi d'Auxerre's *Commentaries* on Martianus Capella shows a series of gods: Cybele, Apollo, Saturn, Mercury, and others; but they are difficult to identify, for the miniaturist had only one text to guide him, and this text, slavishly followed, engendered only barbaric images. This also applies to Ridewall's *Fulgentius metaforalis*, whose illustrations are grossly anachronistic caricatures.

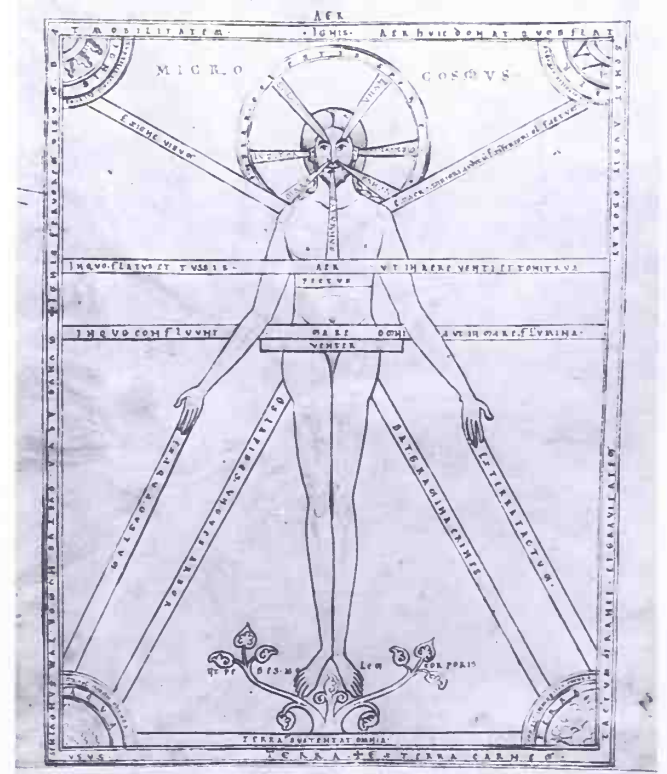
The *Liber imaginum deorum* of Albricus deserves special attention, for it was to have a lasting influence on iconography. Albricus, who has been identified with the *Mythographus Tertius*, may have been Alexander Neckham, who died in 1217. His work, called the *Poetarius* or the *Scintillarium poetarum*, enjoyed great popularity as an aid to reading the profane poets; but it is encumbered by a heavy allegorical critical apparatus, and there is no illustrated manuscript of it available. Two centuries later an abridgment, the *Libellus de imaginibus deorum*, would become a useful aid to artists. Between the *Liber* and the *Libellus* came an eminent intermediary, Petrarch himself, who in describing the images of the gods decorating the palace of Syphax, in his *Africa*, followed Albricus step by step, though retaining only his pictorial elements. In this pared-down form, the *Libellus* was taken up again in 1340 by a friend of Petrarch's, Pierre Bersuire, who put it in the Fifteenth Book of his *Redictorium morale*. This Fifteenth Book, in which Bersuire "moralizes" Ovid, includes a series of "portraits" of the gods, borrowed, says the author, from Petrarch, "for I was unable to find images of the gods themselves anywhere else." It was Bersuire's "portraits," collected and rid once again of their commentaries, that finally, around 1400, constituted the *Libellus*. This time the result was pure iconography, and the same formula kept recurring: *pingebatur* ("it is painted"). The Codex Reginensis 1290 of the Vatican, which contained the text of the *Liber*, also contained that of the *Libellus*, illustrated with ink drawings executed around 1420. The images were lively and charming, but they showed only a distant kinship with the ancient forms, for they were only "reconstructions" of the gods following a text, or rather a mosaic of texts; indeed, as we have seen, all the descriptions come from disparate sources.

Nonetheless, these composite figures in the *Libellus*, which "codify" the gods' traits and fix them in an immutable attitude, were to establish a lineage in art. The *Libellus* was to become a repertory, as is attested not only by a rich series of Italian, Flemish, and French miniatures but by representations of all sorts: tapestries, enamels, and sculptures. On a capital at Autun on which Luxuria is depicted, Vulcan, Venus, and Eros appear as they are described in the *Liber*. The illustrated book, as we shall see, helped propagate the *Libellus*, which, while it continued to serve as a source for mythographers and as a reference for humanists, was to furnish artists with guiding examples during the entire Quattrocento, and even after.

In sum, by the end of the Middle Ages the "visual" and "literary" traditions had profoundly altered the classical forms of the gods. Unfaithful copies, substitutions, disguises, or naive reconstructions—it is hard to tell from which procedure they suffered most, not to mention the mistakes, blunders, and misconceptions that further aggravated this corruption and that can be explained by their peregrinations from east to west, and from north to south.

The gods were gradually to regain their shape. By examining certain series it is possible to follow the stages of this restoration. Some factors delayed it, however, of which the most important were the influence of the printing press and the illustrated book. The printing press first published only the mythographers that the Middle Ages had drawn from (aside from the *De natura deorum*), and medieval compilations

Microcosm (ms. lat. 13002, fol. 7v). Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Library photo.



themselves, beginning with the *Liber* of Albricus. Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum*, heir to this tradition, would be the great repertory during the first half of the Cinquecento. It underwent eight printings between 1473 and 1532, whereas Apollodorus's *Library* (used, as we have seen, by the Byzantines) was not published—in Greek and Latin—until 1555. Above all, the illustrated book served to disseminate an iconographic tradition that was still completely medieval. The great mythological incunabula were Boccaccio's *De Casis* (Ulm 1473) and his *De la ruyne des nobles hommes et femmes* (Bruges 1476). During the same period there appeared, in Anvers and Paris, the *Recueil des Histoires de Troie*, the *Faits et Prouesses de Jason*, and the *Destruction de Troie la Grant*, which had nine printings from 1484 to 1526. The tradition that was perpetuated through these books was that of the *Libellus*—a Norse tradition, not a classical one—and the woodcuts could just as well have illustrated romances of chivalry. It was these woodcuts, however, that first assured the graphic diffusion of the favorite themes of the Renaissance: the abductions of Europa and Proserpina, and so forth. Toward the end of the fifteenth century these models, still Gothic in appearance, could be found everywhere, whereas the archaeological discovery of antiquity had begun long before. The unique role of the Renaissance would be to restore to ancient subjects their ancient forms.

II. The Renaissance

Collectors, among whom the prototype was Cyriacus of Ancona, brought together copies of medals, inscriptions, and fragments of sculpture and architecture. And two camps were formed in elegant society and among patrons: admirers of courtly romances, and antiquarians. The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, published by Aldo Mannucci in 1499, is a compromise combining a love story—a story which also conceals an initiation into the most serious mysteries—with a repertory of classical archaeology. This strange book, magnificently illustrated, was to have a deep and lasting influence not only on the appearance and the decoration of books to come, but also on architecture and painting. It can be compared to Petrarch's *Triumphs*, another great book, which underwent several printings before 1500 and whose illustrations were inspired by classical sculpture, such as Mantegna's "Triumph of Caesar."

Another category of illustrated books, the *Emblemata*, engendered a long tradition. Their principal sources were old medals—especially the reverse sides (from whose figures Pisanello drew his inspiration)—as well as hieroglyphics engraved on obelisks. Scholars had believed that they could decipher them ever since Cristoforo de Buondelmonti had returned from Andros, in 1419, with the manuscript of the *Hieroglyphica* by Horus Apollo. Their influence exploded in the *Hypnerotomachia*. Aldo printed them in 1505, and Piero Valeriano provided them with a monumental commentary in 1556. The humanists, who believed them to be the key to a sacred language, fabricated cryptograms in turn. The first collection of *Emblemata* was the one by Alciat, in 1531, which underwent more than fifty printings in all languages. And mythology had an important place in works of this genre; the countenances and attributes of the gods in them were interpreted as signs concealing truths or moral maxims. In turn, these alleged hieroglyphics (which drew from several sources in addition to Horus) introduced a curious deviation into figurative mythology, a deviation with major consequences. For the time would come, toward the end of the



Hercules (ms. arab. 5036). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.

sixteenth century, when it would once again be necessary to reconcile the pagan fable with Christian teachings, and the *Emblemata* were to become the ideal instrument for this compromise.

Around 1500 in Italy the gods seemed omnipresent: they were on the ceilings of palaces, sometimes on the cupolas of churches, on marriage chests, almanacs, and suits of armor; they participated in the ceremonial entrances of rulers and in carnival processions; they presided over fountains in public squares and haunted garden grottos. But their role was not always purely decorative. They often reappeared, as we have said, in particular frameworks, systems of ideas elaborated in the Middle Ages, whose encyclopedic spirit still breathed in works such as the Malatesta temple and the Stanza della Segnatura. Raphael's "Parnassus" can be fully understood only as an element of a design in which all parts are connected even in their details: Poetry combines with Philosophy, Theology, and Justice to compose the four human understandings; on the ceiling the four elements are represented by episodes arranged in pairs: in each, a mythological scene is combined with a historic scene, and these diverse cycles are intertwined. The elements are attached to the sciences by way of the virtues, according to a diagram which at the same time makes apparent the relationship between the sciences: Theology and Philosophy have the same relationship as fire and water; Jurisprudence and Poetry have the same relationship as the earth and the sky.

But fable also played a part in real life: certain programs allied politics with morality. Aside from their edifying intentions—the triumph of Reason over the passions, of mind over matter—they contained (and always under a



Venus and the Graces. "The Tarots of Mantegna."

mythological cloak) allusions to contemporary events. In the decoration of the Palazzo del Te, Jupiter whipping the Giants illustrated the punishment of those who rebel against divine authority; at the same time it was a tribute to the efforts of Charles V for having reestablished imperial power in Italy. Likewise, in the Doges' Palace, Mercury and the Graces, Bacchus and the Ariadne of Tintoretto sing the praises of the Most Serene Republic, of its prosperity, and of the wisdom of its government. In the ballets given at the French court for Catherine de Medicis, Circe represented the horror of civil wars, and Minerva the return of order and peace. The Renaissance assigned a pagan demeanor even to Christian themes. On a candelabra in the basilica of Saint Anthony of Padua, Riccio portrays the pascal sacrifice of the lamb in front of an altar on which an Olympian Christ is standing; conversely, the *Sacrifice to Priapus* by Jacopo de' Barbari utilizes the elements of a Presentation to the Temple. These overlaps are not blasphemous; rather they express a sense of

harmony and continuity. While Bellini's Redeemer pours his blood into a chalice, behind him, on a bas-relief, a drinking scene is taking place. The famous example of the Maenad transformed into a holy woman at the foot of the Cross reminds us that the Renaissance employed ancient models not only in a different context but also with a meaning totally different from the original.

Nor should the omnipresence of the gods be regarded as the boasting expression of liberated instinct and joy of life. With their beauty, certainly, they recovered their power of heroic or sensuous contagion. But at the same time they regained a singular dignity. This restitution of form is also a reconsecration, for fable is theology as much as it is poetry. It is no longer bound by a lying religion; for the pagans it was true. Such is Boccaccio's argument; and it followed that the poetry of the ancients, like their philosophy, maintained its legitimacy even in a Christian century. Hence the attitude of the humanists toward pagan beliefs. The fervor of their mythological erudition, like the archaeological and philological fever that consumed them, was a form of piety, *docta pietas*. They pursued the dream of a syncretism or a universal theism, with Platonism for a gospel; and they elaborated a religion of initiates.

Nothing is more expressive of this ambition than the great mythological creations of the Renaissance, many of which are enigmatic—such as Botticelli's "Primavera" and "The Birth of Venus," Piero di Cosimo's "Mars and Venus," Michelangelo's "Leda" and "Bacchus," and Titian's "Sacred and Profane Love." To clarify these works completely it is not enough to indicate their immediate sources; one must find a spirit, a climate—that of the humanists among whom they were born. The iconological studies by Panofsky and Chastel, and Wind's *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, have proved the worth of this method. The Neoplatonists of the Quattrocento, Pico della Mirandola, and Marsilio Ficino, who saw Plato through the eyes of the final representatives of paganism—Iamblichus, Proclus, Porphyry, and Plotinus—borrowed their notions about the mysteries and the rites of initiation; and they elaborated a theory of cryptic expression, which was applied to the visual arts. The artists whom they counseled, or who came under their influence, deliberately clouded the profound meaning of their works: the works only become fully intelligible when one is aware of the intentions and secret "doctrines" that they contained in abundance.

The principal key is to be found in the "Orphic theology," to which Plato, according to Proclus, was the heir. It was a Trinitarian system, a philosophy of transmutation. The development of the unity into a triad; the coincidence of opposites in the unity; *discordia concors*—these maxims were the clue to the mythological compositions that were the most hermetic in appearance; they formed their hidden structure. For mythology, too, has its triads of the Parcae and the Charites, illustrating procession, conversion and return; and Paris sees perfection divide into three goddesses. Every god was ambiguous, encompassing two extremes: the eloquent Mercury was the god of silence; Apollo inspired both madness and moderation; Minerva was peaceful and warlike; and Pan was hidden in Proteus. Their duplicity engendered infinite combinations, for they were alternately divided and united by a dialectical movement. As for Marsyas and Psyche, their stories, illustrated by Raphael, hide essentially the same lesson: purification through trial. The terrestrial Marsyas is tormented so that the celestial Apollo may be crowned; the misfortunes of Psyche are merely stages of a mystical initiation and redemption.



Raphael. *Apollo and Marsyas*. Rome, Vatican. Photo Anderson-Giraudon.

Other nuances remain inexplicable as long as one fails to appreciate the role of paradox and irony in the intentions of the artist and his advisers. The Neoplatonists learned from Plato himself how to speak of sacred subjects playfully; Apuleius and Lucian taught them the art of *serio ludere*. The facetious note is evident in Bellini's "The Feast of the Gods"; and Mantegna himself, serious as he was, created his "Parassus" in a spirit less heroic than mocking. The unique accent of the great mythologies of the Renaissance, their singular splendor, may reside in what radiates through the veils, the soothsaying, and the smiles.

J.Se./t.l.f.

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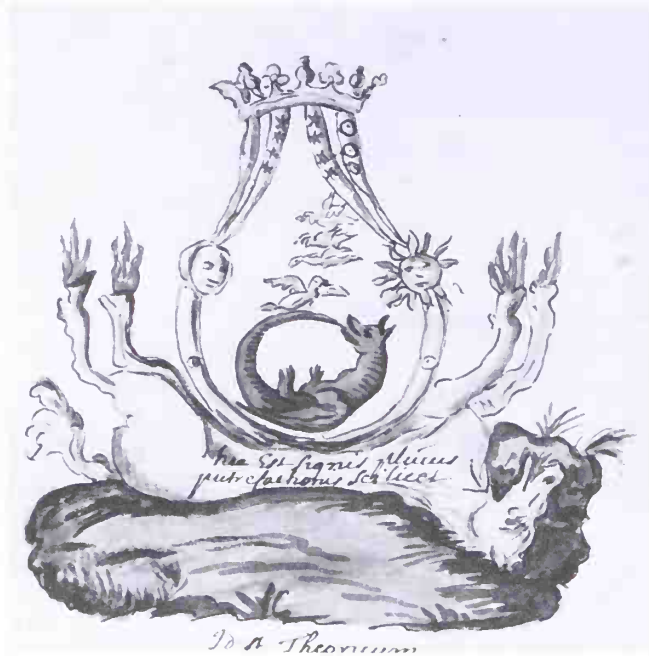
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ALCHEMY AND MYTHOLOGY

"It is easy to be a poet among the gods."

All other things being equal, it might be said of history, especially the history of the Renaissance, what the Cabalists, uncovered by the Phoenix of that period, said of the book of Revelation, that each of its letters presents seventy faces, meaning by that number the inexhaustible totality of the words of God.¹ One after the other, various modes of thought of that time, rejected by a history that based itself on a science rendered still darker in the occultist night,² have been studied by historians of science,³ of art, of religions: magic, astrology, hermetism, lapidary, the science of numbers, physiognomy, in a word, the cabala. And although the history of these strange researches has not always escaped the frowns of the historian for such an episode of "menschlichen Nartheit,"⁴ people have nonetheless discovered in it the poetry that makes all things new.

Though alchemy scarcely appears in works on the Renaissance,⁵ historians of alchemy⁶ have long made room for it in the *Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary in which One Finds the Fabulous Allegories of the Poets, the Metaphors, the Enigmas and the Barbarous Terms of the Hermetic Philosophies Explained*, the complement and table to the *Egyptian and Greek Fables of Antoine Joseph Pernety* (1716–1801), and in several other works of his predecessors. The most famous, because of the beauty of Matthäus Merian's engravings, is Michael Maier (1568–1622), physician to Rudolph II and friend of the Rosicrucian Robert Fludd, whose entire program is displayed on the title page of the *Arcana arcanissima, hoc est Hieroglyphica Aegyptio-Graeca vulgo necdum cognita, ad demonstrandam falsorum apud Antiquos Deorum, deorum heroum, animantium et institutorum pro sacris receptorum originem, ex uno Aegyptiorum artificio, quod aureum animi et corporis medicamentum peregit, deductam, unde tot poetarum allegoriae, scriptorum narrationes fabulosae et per totam encyclopaediam, errores sparsi clarissima veritatis luce manifestantur, quaeque tribui singula restituntur, sex libris exposita* (The most secret secrets, i.e. the Greco-Egyptian hieroglyphics not yet widely known, are here set forth in six books, in order to show the origin among the ancients of the false gods, goddesses, heroes, and living beings, and the received institutions for sacred matters, deduced from the art of the Egyptians, which produced the golden remedy of the body and the soul, whence come so many allegories of the poets, the fabulous narratives of the ancient writers, and the errors that are scattered through the entire encyclopedia, and which are here shown in the clearest light of truth and are individually restored in order to be assigned). There is also the fabulous Salomon Trismosin, author of the *Vellus aureum* (the *Golden Fleece*); Jacob Tollius, author of the *Fortuita, in quibus praeter critica nonnulla, tota fabularis historia graeca, aegyptiaca ad chemiam pertinere asseritur* (Chance occurrences: in which, in addition to several critical



Treatise on alchemy, *La clef de la grande science* (MS Ars. 6577, fol. 8^v). Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. Photo BN.

matters, the entire Greek, Egyptian history of fable is asserted to pertain to alchemy); and, in the sixteenth century, Giovanni Bracesco, Cesare della Riviera. It is nevertheless important to know the history of the interconnections between alchemy and mythology.

The first witnesses to alchemical mythology cited in the Renaissance⁷ are medieval authors: Suidas, whose *Lexicon* mentions alchemy, notably the Golden Fleece, three times; Eustathius, the commentator on Homer; Albert the Great, whose *De mineralibus* alchemicizes the myth of Pyrrha and Deucalion and the myth of the Gorgon; and the *Pretiosa novella margarita*, written around 1330 A.D. by Petrus Bonus Lombardus,⁸ which allegorizes the *Bucolics*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*, as well as the *Metamorphoses*. It is the same fire that hardens clay and melts wax; it is Proteus, the golden bough, Phaethon, the Labyrinth, Medea, the Dragon whose teeth Jason sows, Pyramus and Thisbe. Nicolas Flamel evokes⁹ "those serpents and dragons that the ancient Egyptians painted in a circle . . . they are those dragons that the ancient poets set to guard, never sleeping, the golden apples in the gardens of the Hesperidean nymphs. They are those upon whom Jason, in the adventure of the Golden Fleece, poured the potion prepared by the beautiful Medea . . . they are the two serpents sent by Juno, who is metallic by nature, which the mighty Hercules, that is, the sage, must strangle in his cradle." Or:¹⁰

. . . These of Mythology
In whom the ancient knowledge shines,
As seen in Jason, Cadmus,
Hercules, Aesacus, Achilles,
Then in the two monsters of Perseus.

Giovanni Aurelio Augurelli (ca. 1454–ca. 1537) was the first Renaissance poet to extol alchemy under the veil of fables. He is supposed to have been imitated by Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533), if we may judge by the poems included in the *De auro libri tres*, long suspect

because of the late date of its publication. With the testimony of Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479–1552), who took refuge in the castle of Mirandola after the sack of Rome, we can no longer neglect valuable information about the readings: Giraldi, who had brought with him a manuscript of Psellus on the royal art, read the *Argonautics* with his friend, who had an alchemical eye.

About the same time in France, a Norman alchemist, Vicot, who worked in Flers like Nicolas de Grosparmy and Nicolas Valois, composed in verse, unfortunately rather prosaic, *The Great Olympus, or Poetic Philosophy Attributed to the Much Renowned Ovid*. The "initiated," who claim that this work dates from the time of Flamel, have not read, among other things, a precise reference to the French translation of Alciat's *Emblemata*, of which it constitutes, moreover, the first alchemical interpretation. Moreover, one of the numerous copyists of these works by the Flers alchemists, another Norman, Jean Vauquelin des Yveteaux (1651–1716), proposed—well before Pernety—a mytho-hermetic dictionary that remains in manuscript: *Fabulous Truths, a Curious Treatise on the origin of the Sciences and on the Progress of their Communication, with the Exposition and Explanation of the Fictions of the First Sazants. The Whole for the Comprehension of Ancient and Modern Authors Who Treat of Theology, Morality, Philosophy, Physics, Alchemy, History, Fables, Romances, Stories and Poetic Fictions, Magic and the Early Sciences, Divine Cults*.¹¹

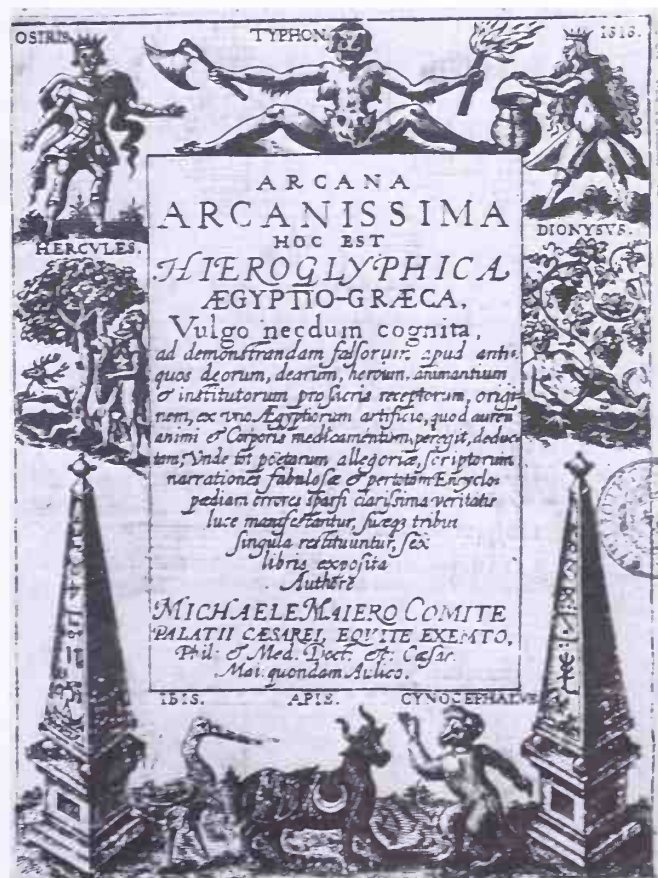
Meanwhile, in the realm of dictionaries more properly alchemical, Giovanni Bracesco da Iorci Novi in *La esposizione di Geber* of 1544 supplied the alchemical meaning of several important fables. Another Norman, Robert Duval, recopied the whole, sanctioning these interpretations with the examples of Pico della Mirandola and Flamel, whose enigmas he had seen at the cemetery of the Innocents. Most of the symbols of the period are found in two folios published in 1591 by Antonio Ricciardi (ca. 1520–1610), a friend of P. Bongo, the author of *Mysticae numerorum significationis liber: Commentaria symbolica in duos tomos distincta, in quibus explicantur arcana pene infinita ad mysticam, naturalem et occultam rerum significationem attinentia, quae nempe de abstrusior omnium prima adamica lingua: tum de antiquissima Aegyptiorum coeterarumque gentium orphica philosophia, tum ex sacrosancta veteri mosaica et prophetica, nec non coelesti nova christiana, apostolica et sanctorum patrum evangelica theologia deprompta sunt. Praeterea quae etiam celeberrimorum vatum fragmentis et denique in chymistarum secretissimis involucribus continguntur* (The book of the mystical meaning of numbers: symbolic commentaries separated into two volumes, in which are explained almost infinite secrets pertaining to the mystical, natural, and secret meaning of things, which are derived from the more abstruse, first Adamic language of all peoples; both with relation to the most ancient Orphic philosophy of the Egyptians and other peoples; then from the time of ancient Mosaic and prophetic theology; and especially from the heavenly new Christian Apostolic and evangelical theology of the holy fathers. Besides which, these matters are also touched upon in fragments of the most celebrated prophets and finally in the encased and most secret beliefs of the chemists).¹²

Jacques Gohory Parisien (ca. 1520–76) added to these interpretations those from the romances of the Middle Ages. In dedicating the translation of the thirteenth book of *Amadis of Gaul* to the duchess of Nevers, Gohory, who published a translation of the *Poliphilus*, wrote: "But it is not to be forgotten in connection with Poliphilus (whose lover Polia is said to have been born in the Trevisane border region), and with the goldsmith Augurel, who also throws light on the matter, and with Count Bernard Trevisan, that Merlin tells

among his prophecies how at Tarvis a person is to be born who will make gold and silver." And Gohory, who also published *The Perilous Fountain . . . Containing the Cryptography of the Secret Mysteries of Mineral Science*, added: "It is not a ridiculous absurdity that princesses are carried away by Magicians, Giants, and Giantesses, at the beginning of this book, in an azure chariot conducted by four harpies, and the fortunate virgin in the chariot of swans, nor that Medea of Colchis is mounted on her chariot that is yoked to two dragons, nor that Juno the goddess of wealth goes in her chariot drawn by two peacocks. For the preceding wonders are set forth by the Englishman Bacon in the book *On the Admirable Power of Art and Nature*." Gohory was well-read, because in the preface he states: "Here you see the infernal Rock on which Jason's rich weapons are found, and the terrible serpent like the dragon of Columna and his dark cavern, things also treated by our authors François Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, the poet of the *Amorous and Perilous Fountain*, and Nicholas Flamel, who has left notable signs of them in his pictures in Paris at various temples in the form of dragons and angels of certain colors. Two gilt leaves from that work have lately been carried off by curious people, from the two ossuaries of the town's public cemetery."

Blaise de Vigenère (1523–96), who was in the service of the Gonzagues de Nevers (who were kindly disposed toward alchemy) and who praised the romances of the Middle Ages, has added many digressions on alchemy in a work of a

Title page of *Arcana Arcanissima* by Michael Maier. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.



translator likened at that time to Amyot. And we must set in its proper place *The Images or Pictures from the Flat Painting of Philostratus*, which Michael Maier knew, Goethe appreciated, and Tollius cited. Clovis Hestean de Nuysement (ca. 1560–ca. 1624) is our greatest alchemical poet, but we will have to make room at his side for Nicolas Barnaud (ca. 1538–ca. 1607), who gave an alchemical interpretation to the famous inscription from Bologna of Aelia Laelia Crispis, as well as to the *Enigmas* of C. Symposius, which François Bérulade de Verville included in *The Voyage of the Fortunate Princes, a Cryptographic Work*, but which he criticized in his *Palace of the Curious*. Let us not forget Claude Barthélémy Morisot (1592–1661), a friend of Rubens, who dedicated his alchemical romance *Peruviana* to Gaston d'Orléans. It was about the same time that Pierre Jean Fabre de Castelnau (1588–1658), whose *Hercules Piochymicus* became part of Pernety's *Dictionary*, dedicated to the same prince and his adepts his *Summary of Alchemical Secrets*.¹³

Another figure in this history was one Angelo Ingegneri,¹⁴ who published at Naples, in 1606, *Contra l'Alchimia e gli Alchimisti, palodia dell'Argonautica, con la stessa Argonautica dichiarata da copiose postille del proprio autore*. A friend of Cesare della Riviera, the author of the *Mondo magico degli Heroi*, and of an ambassador for Charles V, Giacomo Antonio Gromo surnamed Ethereo, who had composed a *Medea ricamata*, an alchemical work illustrated with drawings, Ingegneri had at first extolled alchemy in the myth of Jason and Medea, through which a symbolism often difficult to grasp could be assessed. Giving an account of the *Fortuita* of Tollius, one of the collaborators of the *News from the Republic of Letters* noted:¹⁵ "To tell the truth, I might never have believed that an idea of alchemy could be extracted from the speeches of Sophocles, . . . but everything changes in the hands of a clever man," while one of the admirers of Tollius in our time,¹⁶ who presents himself as an "adept," could write: "The mythologies of the gods and heroes, like the religion of Christ, the Apostles, and the evangelical annals, have solid meaning and real value only in the undeniable and numerous connections that they show with alchemy, its materials and its operations."

F.S.b.f.

NOTES

1. G. G. SCHOLEM, "La signification de la Loi dans la mystique juive," G. Vajda, trans., *Diogenes* 15 (1956): 14.
2. F. SECRET, "Du 'De occulta philosophia' à l'occultisme du XIX^e siècle," *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 1975.
3. It suffices to mention the Warburg Institute studies: L. THORNDIKE's *History of Magic and Experimental Science*, published in 8 vols. beginning in 1923; *Ambix*, the *Journal for the Study of Alchemy and Early Chemistry*, founded by F. Sherwood Taylor; *Isis*, founded by George Sarton; etc.
4. Cf. review by J. DE BALTRUSAITIS, "La quête d'Isis," *L'oeil* 161 (1968): 38.
5. One need only consult the bibliography in the English translation of J. SEZNEC's classic work, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art* (New York 1953); M. TURKER, *Bibliographie zur Symbolik, Ikonographie und Mythologie* (Baden-Baden 1960); and *Bibliographie zur Symbolkunde* from 1964.
6. See, among others, the bibliography in J. VAN LENNEP's *Art et alchimie* (Paris and Brussels 1966) and the preface to the Italian edition of PERNETY's *Dictionary* (Milan 1971) (this dictionary was reissued in the *Bibliotheca hermetica*, under the direction of R. Alleau, who wrote the article "Alchimie" in the *Encyclopaedia universalis*).
7. F. SECRET, "Notes sur quelques alchimistes italiens de la Renaissance," *Rinascimento* 23 (1973); "Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola,

Lilio Gregorio Giraldi et l'alchimie," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance* 38 (1976).

8. L. THORNDIKE, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science* (New York 1934), 3:155.

9. *Bibliotheca Hermetica* (Paris 1970), 104; cf. 110.

10. *Ibid.*, 144.

11. E. SECRET, *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études* (Sciences religieuses) 83 (1974-75).

12. *Annuaire* 79 (1971-72).

13. E. SECRET, "Claude Barthélemy Morisot, chantre de Rubens et romancier chymique," *Studi francesi* 40 (1970).

14. "Littérature et alchimie au XVII^e siècle: L'écusson harmonique de Jacques Sanlecque," *Studi francesi* 47 (1972).

15. *Nouvelles de la République* (April 1687), 400.

16. E. CANSELIET, *Les douze clefs de la philosophie* (Paris 1971), 18, and *Mutus Liber*, 79.

CABALA AND MYTHOLOGY

It is well known that the Cabala was much in vogue¹ after the scandal of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Conclusiones* and after the publication of *De arte cabalistica*, when secretive men were in open dispute. Equally well known are the relationships that were established between this current of new ideas and astrology, alchemy, etc. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that mythology was "Cabalized," in other words, that fables born among the Gentiles were interpreted with the help of a tradition peculiar to the Chosen People. Nor is it surprising that the Church Fathers had been able to interpret paganism, and that Peter the Venerable,² alerted by the denunciations of the Karaites, had judged the Talmudists, who read their fables literally, to be more foolish than the Ethnics. After the *Apologia* and the *Conclusiones*, the Orphic Hymns, "fables and pure nonsense" in appearance, took on meaning, thanks to the mysteries of the Cabala, which were not "imaginary nonsense or tales of charlatans" but more deeply rooted meanings hidden under the outer crust of the Law.³ The same can be said for the Curetes in the service of Orpheus, for the Powers in the service of Dionysus, for Orpheus and Night, and for Ensof in the Cabala.⁴

The *Theologia poetica*, which was supposed to interpret the *Graecia mendax* (Greek lie) according to the purest *veritas Hebraica* (Hebrew truth) and the principle of correspondences hailed by the *Heptaplus*, was never written. Circumstances were such that the work of Egidio da Viterbo (1469-1532),⁵ who tried to bring the *Theologia poetica* to fruition in his own way, remained in manuscript form.

Indeed, this hermit from Saint-Augustin, general of the order at the time of Luther's revolt, left a work that should not be too hastily judged as clashing with the religious reform brought about by Luther, but should be closely studied in order to be understood. Egidio da Viterbo became a cardinal and preached the urgent need for reform at the Lateran Council; according to him, it was up to *homines per sacra immutari, non sacra per homines* ("men to be changed through sacred things, not sacred things through men"). After the sack of Rome, he wrote that God had not permitted sacred things to be profaned, but the profaning of sacred things was to be avenged. Recalling that it was on hearing the cardinal preach on the Virgin that Jacopo Sannazaro conceived the idea for his *De partu Virginis*, a historian insisted with Erasmus that Sannazaro should have sacrificed less to paganism when treating an altogether Christian subject. The historian, however, quoted the cardinal as saying to the poet, "When I received your divine poem, I wanted to become better acquainted immediately with this marvelous creation. God alone, who inspired it with his breath of life, can reward you worthily, not by giving you the

Elysian fields, the fabulous retreat of the likes of Linus and Orpheus, but by giving you blessed everlasting life."⁶

It is still unclear how Egidio da Viterbo, perfect Hellenist that he was, became the most erudite Christian scholar of Hebraic literature. Yet from *De Ecclesiae incremento*, written in 1507 on the occasion of the discoveries made by Portugal, to his last work, the *Scechina*, in which the last of the Sephirot reveals to Clement VII and Charles V the mysteries of the Aramaeans (whose language was that of the *Zohar*), Egidio da Viterbo seems to have followed a path opened by his compatriot, the Dominican Giovanni Nanni, known as Annus of Viterbo (1432-1502). This Etruscan bard maintained that the Greeks had corrupted not only the true origins of the Latins, but also the truths that had been transmitted by the offspring of Noah or Janus, which in Aramaic means wine. It seems that one of the parties responsible for Annus's etymological delirium was a physician to Alexander VI by the name of Samuel Zarphati. Annus had projected a *Historia hetrusca pontificia a Pontifice Noa qui est Janus in Vaticano coepta* (The Pontifical Etruscan history from the Pontifex Noa, who is Janus, begun in the Vatican). This is the theme of the *Historia XX saeculorum* (History of Twenty Centuries) that Egidio dedicated to Leo X, in which knowledge of the Cabala informed an Etruscan subject matter. We do not possess the promised treatises—*De symbolis* (On Symbols) and *De Etruscorum arcanis* (On the Secrets of the Etruscans)—but we do have a rich corpus of themes barely sketched in completed works preserved in the series of glossaries *Glossarium chaldaicae linguae et Cabalae vocabula* (The Glossary of the Chaldean Language and the Words of the Cabala), or *Caldea Babylonica et Aramaea fratris Aegidii* (The Babylonian Chaldean and Aramaean of Brother Aegidius).⁷ Even Aegidius Viterbiensis, who sometimes signed his name Aegidius Palaeologus, followed in the footsteps of Annus, who claimed that Palaeologus was the Greek translation of Viterbiensis or Lucumo. These *arcana* (always called *cana* following Solon's apostrophe to the Greeks, who remained children) are worthy of study.⁸ Among them are the Sibyl; *semita Dei* (the footpath of God)⁹; Cybele, wife of the Etruscan king Jasius, whose nuptials Isis¹⁰ attended and who was named for the Hebrew word that means Cabala; Camilla,¹¹ who in Virgil's *Aeneid* (7.803) moves ahead of the advancing winds and is so named for the Chasm of Ezekiel, where holy animals moved with the velocity of thunder; and Paris,¹² so called by Priam, the descendant of Dardanus, because he would break the reign, since his name means "to burst in," according to Hebraic etymology. There are also interpretations of fables according to their biblical models or the great themes of Plato, Homer, and Virgil. Father de Lubac, after describing as "a strange polyphony" a sermon in which Egidio "calls on Minerva, Odysseus, Venus, Juno, Paris, Helen, Pallas, Ajax for help," went so far as to assert that the fifth book of the *Scechina* "ends on a few lines that are perhaps one of the

most beautiful poems of renascent Christian humanism."¹³

Drawing on common sources but proceeding along different paths and in an altogether different setting, Guillaume Postel (1510–81) systematized a craze of which the *Cratylus* is the masterwork and invented the word *emithology* to characterize it. The usual term *etymology* is in fact a metathesis of the word *emithology*,¹⁴ craftily effected by the Greeks. In the language of creation and revelation, its root *emeth* means truth (*veritas*), which Postel, according to his method, wrote as *Berritas*, meaning "a well."

Being an admirer of the etymologies of Annius of Viterbo and, like him, dead set against the *Graecia mendax* (Greek lie) and in favor of Etruria, Postel undertook to eliminate fables from calendars, geography, and astronomy. He made his purpose clear in the title: *Signorum caelestium vera configuratio aut Asterismus, stellarumve per suas imagines aut configurationes dispositio, et in eum ordinem quem illis Deus praefixerat restitutio et significationum expositio, sive Caelum repurgatum* (The true configuration of the celestial signs, or Asterism, or the disposition of the stars through their images and configurations, both restored in the very order in which God previously established them and explained in their meanings, or, finally, Heaven Recleansed). Cleansing this heaven of Greek fables and restoring the order willed by God, Postel expressed ideas he discovered by translating the *Sefer Bahir*,¹⁵ which ridiculed the theme of the thirty-six decans. When Postel was not measuring his sky, he was busy rediscovering in Capricorn the scapegoat sent to Azazel and in Taurus the bull that Adam sacrificed (according to the Cabalists) or the bull that is the fourth leg of the Merkabah.¹⁶ In 1572, when a new star appeared in the constellation of Cassiopeia, Postel inflated ancient mythology with the emithology of Cassiopeia that comes both from Cush, the firstborn conceived by Ham in the ark in violation of the law of abstinence,¹⁷ for which he stole the books of magic composed by Adam; and from Aph, the face. The new star heralded the coming of Christ "in us," and the end of the black faces of tyrants. Determined to refer to Africa as Chamesia, Asia as Semia, and Europe as Japetia, in order to abolish the fable of the cow and the "abominable ne'er-do-well,"¹⁸ Postel occasionally indulged in altering the spelling of the word Asia¹⁹ in the holy tongue, in order to recapitulate his sermon. With aleph and samekh, Asia means remedy, for God instituted in Asia the mysteries of salvation. With aleph and shin, Asia means founding, for the world was peopled by colonies that had come from Asia. With ayin and shin, Asia further means realization, for everything will be brought about through the mystery of Christ contained in Asia, spelled with a samec and a hain, meaning the bread of the Eucharist, which the firstborn of the Restitution consecrated at Venice for the whole world.

Postel multiplied these emithologies in his *De Etruriae originibus*, included them in the *Galliade*, and sprinkled them throughout his works, which he signed at the end of his life with the name of Pos-tel or Rorisperge, which in the holy tongue means distributor of dew.

Postel was not the last to play with the ways of Cabalistic art set forth in *De arte cabalistica*. Cesare della Riviera, who mixed the Cabala with his alchemy, found in Diana²⁰ *Diem, cioè lucem afferens naturae* ("Bringing the day, namely, the light of nature"). At the very least a new world, endowed with the genius of the Hebrew language and with the amazing parables of the Rabbis, had been opened up, and poetry flowed from it. One need only open *De harmonia mundi* by Franciscus Georgius Venetus (1460–1540), later translated by the poet Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie; the *Scechina* by Egidio da Viterbo; the wonderful digressions of Blaise de Vigenère, who was an astrologer, an alchemist, and a Christian Cabalist; and, last but not least, the reveries of Athanasius Kircher as found in the *Iter extaticum*, which is at the heart of J. Baltrusaitis's fine book on the quest of Isis.

F.S./g.h.

NOTES

1. F. SECRET, *Les kabbalistes chrétiens de la Renaissance* (Paris 1965).
2. H. DE LUBAC, *Exégèse médiévale*, IV, II (Paris 1964), 187. This fine book has a whole chapter on symbolism; cf., by the same author, *Pic de la Mirandole* (Paris 1974).
3. *Conclusiones* (Paris 1532), 12.
4. *Conclusiones*, ed. B. Kieszowski (Geneva 1973), 81, 82.
5. J. W. O'MALLEY, *Giles of Viterbo on Church and Reform: A Study in Renaissance Thought* (Leiden 1968). Cf. *Annuaire de l'École pratique des Hautes Études* 83 (1974–75).
6. M. AUDIN, *Histoire de Léon X* (Paris 1846), 513.
7. Ms B.N.F. lat. 596 et 597.
8. *Historia*, fol. 198 v.
9. *Ibid.*, fol. 229.
10. *Ibid.*, fol. 223.
11. *Scechina* (Rome 1959), 2:229.
12. *Historia*, fol. 42 v.
13. H. DE LUBAC, *Pic de la Mirandole*, 102 and 306.
14. F. SECRET, *L'emithologie de G. Postel, Umanesimo e Esoterismo* (Padua 1960).
15. *Notes sur G. Postel*, B.H.R., 1977.
16. *Signorum . . .* (Paris 1552).
17. F. SECRET, *De quelques courants prophétiques et religieux sous Henri III*, R.H.R., 172 (1967).
18. *De universitate* (ed. 1635), 31.
19. M. S. BRIT, *Sloane 1409, Commentarius in Apocalypsim*, fol. 238.
20. *Il mondo magico*, ed. J. Evola (Bari 1932), 47.

PAN AMONG THE CABALISTS AND ALCHEMISTS OF THE RENAISSANCE

There have been many reproductions of the hieroglyphic representation of Jupiter or of Pan as put forward by Athanasius Kircher in his *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*.¹ He may have taken the idea from the *De harmonia mundi*, a wonderful work, which Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie translated. We shall cite the passage from his great poem *La Galliade* in which the theme of Pan is Cabalized:²

To show a Whole that bounds all things,
He depicts a Pan who has two horns
On his head, designating by this obvious sign
Both the channel of the east and the channel of the west.
A large deerskin bespeckled with stars
He wears on his back; it is the vaulted tent
Of the glittering firmament wherein shine brightly
More eyes than ever-watchful Argos had.
From his chin his beard hangs down to his belt,
Which radiates influence upon the heart of nature:
He plays a flageolet with seven pipes,
Which are the seven pitches of the seven glowing lights

That make the world dance round and round,
 All the different feet falling into step.
 He delights in hearing, from the caves and the woods,
 The answering voice of Echo repeating his own seven
 voices,
 Because the influence of each part
 Harmonizes with the Whole of which it is a part.
 From his waist to his cloven-hoofed feet
 He is all covered with thick-layered hair
 To show that the bottom of the round machine
 Under his cloven hooves is made of earth and water
 And that the elements, mingling into one another,
 Seem to be unequal, hairy and bristly,
 And Syrinx who feigned to be his friend
 Was Nature organized in sweet alchemy.
 Because he had read on Chaldean monuments³
 That wines were kept within grapes
 Ever since the seven days when the world was created,
 And that we are intoxicated by the wine abounding
 In the house of God who pours his liquors
 Into the vessels of hearts through nine pure pipes,
 Therefore he invented nine Bacchuses and nine Muses
 Who with their sweet infusions go about intoxicating
 The divine poets who have drunk of them.

And Clovis Hesteau de Nuysement, who, like La Boderie, was in the service of François d'Alençon, was able to alchemize this theme by citing Orpheus. After he had presented his Demogorgon,⁴

Virgil, perfectly well versed in all these mystic secrets, gave to this Spirit or soul of the world the name of Jupiter, whom he has his shepherd Damete invoke for the sake of his songs since, he claims, all things are filled with him.

This god of the forests, Pan, worshiped by shepherds, may be taken to be the same thing. For, aside from his name, which means "all," he is also made into the lord of the forests because the Greeks considered him the priest of Chaos, which they otherwise called Hile, meaning a forest. In his hymn, Orpheus calls on him as follows:
 Pan the strong, the subtle, the whole, the universal;
 All air, all water, all earth, and all immortal fire,
 Thou who sittest upon the same throne with time,
 In the lower, middle, and upper kingdom,
 Conceiving, begetting, producing, guarding all;
 First in all and of all, thou who comest to the end of all,
 Seed of fire, of air, of earth, and of the waves,
 Great spirit enlivening all the limbs of the world,
 Who goest about from all to all changing natures,
 Lodging as the universal soul within all bodies,
 To which you give existence and movement and life,
 Proving by a thousand effects thy infinite power.

F.S./g.h.

NOTES

1. *Oedipus*, tomus secundus, pars prima (Rome 1653), 204.
2. *La Galliade ou de la révolution des arts et des sciences* (Antwerp 1578), 115. Cf. F. SECRET, *L'ésotérisme de Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie* (Geneva 1969), 136.
3. The wine kept in its grapes since the six days of creation (Talmud, *Berakot* 34 b) symbolizes the delights of the world to come; cf. G. VAJDA, *Le commentaire d'Ezra de Jérôme sur le Cantique des cantiques* (Paris 1969), 262, n. 40.
4. Ed. Matton, p. 279.

FABLES AND SYMBOLS FROM SIXTEENTH- AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HERMETICISM

I. The Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary

Henri de Linthaut's *Commentary on the Treasure of Treasures of Christophe de Gamon* glosses this brief outline of the main Hermetic fables, following G. Bracesco:¹

"I know (a) that we must cover up, as our Poems,
 This heavenly secret with a heap of allegories.
 I know that this scholarly knowledge of Nature
 Wants soundlessly to encircle her sacred forehead with
 laurel,
 To maintain her greatness in secret silence
 And to admire the excellences of her high secrets.

"(a) The ancient philosophers were admirable for their ability so dexterously to cover over all their science with the pleasant veil of poetical fables. For if we believe Empedocles, the entire practice and matter of this art is hidden under the fable of Pyrrhus and Deucalion, and, in particular, the preparation of Sulphur is hidden under the story of Hercules and Anthea. The conversion of Jupiter into a shower of gold hides the distillation of philosophical gold; the eyes of Argus converted into a peacock's tail hide sulphur changing its color. Under the fable of Orpheus is hidden the sweetness of

our quintessence and drinkable gold. With the Gorgon turning those who look at her to stone they have covered the fixation of the Elixir, and have hidden philosophical sublimation under Jupiter converted into an eagle, carrying Ganymede off to the heavens. Under the fiction of the golden tree that grows a new branch when a branch is cut off they have hidden the distillation of philosophers' gold, which they have also covered with Jupiter cutting off his father's genitals. They called Mercurial water the chariot of Phaethon. By Minerva armed they meant this distilled water, which has in itself very subtle portions of Sulphur. By Vulcan whom Minerva follows, they have hidden the Sulphur following this same water, and its salt in putrefaction. By the cloudy cover with which Jupiter surrounded Io, they meant the little skin that appears at the beginning of the congealing of the Elixir: and it is said that the black particles that follow are the black sails with which Theseus returned to Athens. By the flood and the generation of animals, they meant the generation and distillation of Sulphurs. By Mars our Sulphur, by Juno the air, and sometimes the element of earth. Under Vulcan hurled down to Lemnos for his deformity they depicted the preparation of our first black Sulphur. With Atalanta they covered our Mercurial water, quick and fugitive, whose race is arrested by the golden apples thrown by Hippomenes, which are our fixing and coagulating Sulphurs. And that with which Theseus anointed the mouth of the Minotaur are the different kinds of Labyrinthine Sulphurs, that is the Mercurial water of our limed vessel, which is the

true Minotaur, being both mineral and animal and thus sharing two natures.

"Here is a part of the fictions of poets that hide the main points of our science. If you desire a fuller interpretation of them, consult Bracesco in his Dialogue of Demogorgon and Geber. . . ."²

One can in any case consult the little "Dictionary" that we have put together here; Hercules, Orpheus, and Pan, however, are treated in other parts of this work.

II. The Chariot

Giovanni Piero Valeriano Bolzani (1477–1558), who dedicated to Cardinal Egidio da Viterbo, his protector, the hieroglyph of the stork, the symbol of piety chosen by the Cabalist,³ echoes, in the *Hieroglyphica seu de sacris Aegyptiorum aliarumque gentium literis commentarius* (Hieroglyphics, or commentary on the sacred writings of the Egyptians and other peoples), one of the main themes of the successor of Anniius of Viterbo:⁴ "The sovereign Majesty (so majestic and great that it is seen in the celestial regions) is borne in a chariot, not a Platonic chariot in which the great Jupiter, constructor and sovereign governor of heaven, rides lightly about, but a chariot that we can see in the venerable old monuments of the Tuscans, a chariot of which Giles of Viterbo, a figure strong in doctrine, has drawn out the deepest secrets or mysteries of the Aramaeans and made us see it in our day in a public form. The Aramaeans said that one and the same book had two ordinances or laws: one written, the other delivered from God to Moses: the former is for the people, the latter for the wise: the former represents human things in common shapes, while the latter represents the luminous forms of divine things: and the former reveals the history of the creation of the world and the way to rule it, the latter the instrument, even the image of divinity drawn from life. Plato seems to mention the two kingdoms of Jupiter and Saturn as the happiest and most perfect, in that by Jupiter he means human life and action, but by the kingdom of Saturn he means the contemplation of divine things. . . ."

Then, after citing the *Georgics* (1.125) on Jupiter and *Metamorphoses* (1.89) on the Golden Age, he continues: "To return to our theme, Hebrew has two different names for these two: the first is Bresit, that is, the work of creation: the latter is called chariot, that is, secret knowledge. So this secret second law, which must be unveiled by the Messiah and by his own, is hieroglyphically described by them in the figure of the chariot. This is Ezekiel's chariot in his vision of the four images by which, like precious pearls and seals, the Lord created four leading angels and princes of all the heavenly intelligences. The first pearl is on the right hand, whence come beautiful, pleasant things, and is called Michael. On the left hand is another pearl from which things of strong, austere complexion come, and which is called Gabriel. Raphael is like a medicine mixed and tempered by these first two. In the fourth place is Uriel, the closest to the earth as dispenser of the three above-mentioned. Thus Michael and Gabriel are taken for the two wheels, Raphael for the seat, which is in the middle, and Uriel for the axle. The Greek theologians call the power of Michael in God Venus, Gabriel Mars, Raphael Jupiter, to whom the seat is dedicated. The fourth, the sun, which has the power of the male and the female, source of all generation, in Hebrew is called Uriel and Adonim. Orpheus cites all four of these in a verse calling him male/female, geniture and Adonis; it is thus not so fabulous that Plutarch should have remarked on the honor and service the Jews pay to Bacchus . . . for he holds

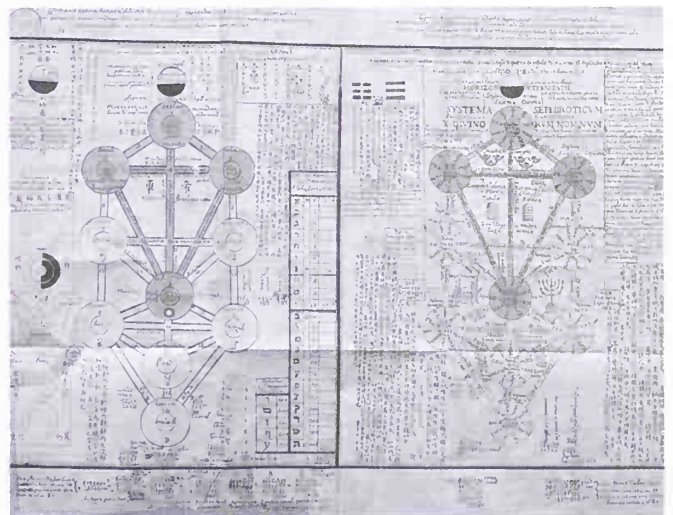
that they solemnize their feast of the Tabernacles in honor and praise of Bacchus, and that Adonis and Bacchus are the same. . . ."

The chariot is one of the themes most often evoked by Egidio da Viterbo. In the Golden Age, the Tyrrhenians, the Etruscans, who were not fixed to one place like trees or mollusks, had chariots for houses, acorns for food, springs and brooks for drink, and the sky for a roof. The patriarchs of Etruria devoted themselves to contemplation, despising wealth, and it was to those who practiced contemplation that the *sella curulis*⁵ was reserved, which the Romans, who for a long time sent their children to learn among the Etruscans, borrowed from them. The chariot, which symbolizes the contemplation of divine realities, is contrasted to the horse, which symbolizes the arrogant philosophy of the Greeks,⁶ as is witnessed in one of the last lines of the first *Georgic*, echoing the considerations of the *Pheadrus*: "*Fertur equis auriga, neque audit currus habenas*" ("The driver is carried away by the horses, and the chariot does not heed the reins").

The chariot theme is linked to the four mysterious letters F A V L, which were earlier deciphered by Anniius of Viterbo and designate the sacred wood where the Lucumons taught the doctrine proclaimed by Ezekiel for the fourth age, when he saw a human Face (*Facies*), an Eagle (*Aquila*), a Calf (*Vitulus*), and a Lion (*Leo*); and he saw these initials, which designated—with the names of the tribes of Faluceres, Arbanos, Vetulonios, and Longolanos—the Fountain (*Fons*) of sovereign good, whose Dawn (*Aurora*) it announced, which heroic Virtue (*Virtus*) loved in order to receive Light (*Lux*) from it.⁷ And because of the arcane nature of its transmission, they gave it the name of "Faulas" or fables.⁸

Two centuries later, a French Jesuit, Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730), rediscovered the Mercava in the Chinese tradition.⁹ This missionary, who presented Louis XV with the portrait of the Emperor Kangxi, whose envoy he was, and who corresponded with Leibniz, was called the father of the symbolic system, who discovered in Chinese traditions—particularly in the *Yi Jing*, "the Book of Changes,"—the mysteries of Christianity. In a magnificently illustrated text of 1724, *Pro expositione figurae sephiroticae Kabalae Hebraeorum, et generatim*

Page from a manuscript by the Jesuit priest Joachim Bouvet in which he shows concordances between Cabala and the *Yi Jing*. Chantilly, Archives of the Society of Jesus, MS Fonds Brotier.



demonstranda mira conformitate primaevae Sinarum sapientiae hieroglyphicae cum antiquiore et sincera Hebraeorum Kabala ab ipso mundi primordio, per sanctos Patriarchas et Prophetas successive propagata (Through the exposition of the figure of the sephiroth in the cabala of the Hebrews wondrous things are demonstrated, in general, by the conformity of the ancient hieroglyphic wisdom of the Chinese with the ancient and true cabala of the Hebrews from the very beginning of the world, propagated successively by the holy fathers and the prophets), he uncovered, masked under the figure of the monarch Huang Di on his chariot drawn by six winged spirits or six dragons, the Lord of the Mercava of Ezekiel and the Cabala.¹⁰

III. Demogorgon

The word Demogorgon appears in the *Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary*, but Pernety attributes to Raymond Lull a treatise on operations on stone, entitled *Demogorgon*, in the form of a dialogue in which Demogorgon is one of the interlocutors. In fact, it was Giovanni Bracesco degli Orsi novi who in 1544 published *La Espositione di Geber filosofo*, in which Geber, in a dialogue with Demogorgon, recounts the meaning of this ancestor of the gods according to the "genealogia delli Dei de Gentili."¹¹ And Jean Seznec,¹² following Carlo Landi's book,¹³ which is extremely rare in France, has summarized the fortunes of this invented god. Also to be noted is some later research, since Landi forgot Leo Ebreo¹⁴ in his list of vulgarizers of Demogorgon, and since citation of Demogorgon can upon occasion help us to date a work which "initiates" situate a century earlier.¹⁵ I am referring to the *Five Books, or the Key to the Secret of Secrets*¹⁶ of Nicolas Valois, who speaks of the calcination of the body, "which the Ancients symbolized by a Dragon asleep in the fire, guarded by an old man who is the virtue of sulphur retained in the soul, which Demogorgon awakens from the earth by our Mars." And among those who followed Bracesco we may note Clovis Hesteau de Nuysement, who, repeatedly citing Bracesco, was not shy about returning to this new character several times.¹⁷

"But in order for me to tell my portion of the meaning hidden under these Mythologies, do we not see clearly that the ancient Demogorgon, father of all the gods, or rather of all the members of the world, who is said to live at the center of the earth, covered with a green and iron-bearing cloak, feeding animals of all sorts, is none other than the universal Spirit who from the womb of Chaos, obeying the voice of the Lord, lights up the heavens, the elements, and all that is in them, which he has since then always maintained and quickened; for he truly does live in the middle of the earth, as I have amply declared at the beginning of this book, that is, at the center of the world, where he is placed as on his throne, and whence like the heart of this great body and seat of universal life, he produces, animates, and nourishes all. But this green and ferruginous coat in which he is dressed can hardly be anything but the surface of the earth which envelopes him, blackish and iron-colored, enameled and painted with grasses and flowers of all sorts."

And Nuysement ends up by assimilating him to Pan.

IV. Memnon

Memnon, who made harmonious sounds at the break of day, does not figure in the *Mytho-Hermetic Dictionary*, but Raymund Minderer (ca. 1570–1621), a doctor from Augsburg as unknown as his contemporary Michael Maier is famous,

did not fail to produce an alchemical exegesis of him. Minderer, who is neglected in Ferguson's *Bibliotheca chemica* but who discovered ammoniac acetate, did not claim that the ancients intended to teach alchemy under a veil. In the *De calcantho seu vitriolo . . . disputatio iatrochymica* (in which he studies, in turn, Proteus, Hercules, and Memnon), the Memnon of the *Theogony*, of the *Aeneid*, of the *Metamorphoses*, and of Tzetzes' *Chiliades*, is connected with vitriol.¹⁸ This black king of the Ethiopians shows the power of vitriol over the black fumes of atrabile, as does the fact that he is the son of Dawn. Memnon's expedition to Troy and the struggle against Achilles allow us to glimpse the battle of vitriol against the worst enemies of the human race, and Achilles is the Hermetic artisan who by fire and his alchemical art kills the calcanthum. The fight also demonstrates the weapons of Memnon, who like Hercules vanquishes monsters. His sword, hanging in the temple of Asclepius, completes the proof. His metamorphosis into a bird on the pyre perfectly illustrates the transformation of vitriol into volatile spirit. And the funeral column that made sounds at the break of day evokes, for those familiar with alchemical operations, the droplets tinkling at the beaks of retorts, which require the operator to keep watch lest there be an explosion.

V. The Phoenix

The phoenix has its place in the Hermetic bestiary,¹⁹ but its place in the illumination of Guillaume Postel seems all the more worthy of note in that it appears only in manuscript works, which illuminate, along with the profound myth of the firstborn son of Mother Jeanne, a totally Gnostic way of thinking, based particularly on certain monuments of Hebraic literature.

It is in the form of a prophecy of the Venetian Virgin that Postel presents the Palma or Thamar, explaining only that²⁰ "since among the elementary things there is no thing living that lasts longer than the Palma while producing such fruits, perfect in sweetness and nutritive value, the Lord desired to be recognized here in this world in the substance of this Palma not only as the supreme example of sweetness and nutrition, temperament and long life, but also for the sake of perfect love. For nothing better shows the disposition of the upper world toward the lower than the nature of the palm tree, which is made in such a way that it is impossible that it be found or survive in any place unless both male and female are found there . . ." Now, at the time when Postel met Mother Jeanne at her hospice in Venice, he was translating a certain number of texts from Hebrew literature. This is where he found, after the current etymology of Jehochanna, the grace of the Lord, the theme of the "god with a human face," interpreted as Tipheret, the Messiah who has a dual character as both male divinity and female humanity. Then he discovered the story of the bird²¹ as immense as its egg, the Bar Yūkne, which with Leviathan and the Ox will be served at the feast of the just. Postel, who himself was the egg laid by this "advice," rejected the reading Bar Iucneh, and, sure that it was really his own Jehochanna, he immediately interpreted it as the Gan Eden, the garden that God planted, which he rediscovered in the word "Wecanah" in Psalm 80, verse 15: "that which your right hand has planted." From here on we must follow Postel's glossed translation of the passage from the *Commentary on Genesis*: "Rabbi Simlai said: Chavah (Eve) (after she had eaten the fruit of the tree) came to Adam and said: Do you think that I am dead? Behold, another Chavah has been created for thee (she was predicting the Mother of the World for the new Adam) for there is

nothing new under the sun (everything returns) [and Postel uses the word 'revolvuntur,' which translates 'Gilgul,' the recirculation of souls]. If I were dead, you would remain alone. But as Isaiah writes [but Postel replaces 'the earth' in the text with 'woman']: It is not in vain that I have created even woman, I formed her so that she might endure (so that, restored, she might remain inseparably with Adam and her sons). The masters said: She began to say, 'There is an abundance of food.' Domestic and wild animals and all the flying things heard her, with the exception of one bird (*avem unam*) called Chul, as it is written in Job: I will have days as many as Chul." Postel, who translated this text twice, points out that literally the word means sand, and that it may thus be read as the Canah from which all Israel came, without noting that the Vulgate translated it "*sicut palma*" ("as if it were a palm"). In the other translation he claims that this Chul is the Phoenix, a bird imagined on the basis of the genius of the province of Phoenicia, whence everything comes and to which everything returns, but that here the Phoenix really seems to be, not a "chimeric goat-stag" bird, but a unique intelligence which rises above all other creatures, and Postel finishes the translation: "Rabbi Inai said: This bird lived for a thousand years. And at the end of the thousand years, a fire came out of its nest and burned it up. An egg remained in this fire, and the bird came back, grew up, and lived (thus under the image of the phoenix they represent what I have called Jochana, who comes back to life from the dust and gives life to the whole human race). Rabbi lodan, son of Rabbi Simeon, said: It has lived for a thousand years; at the end of the thousand years its body is consumed and its wings come off its body; what remains of it is like an egg, which produces new limbs."

And Postel concludes: "All things, but men above all, are restored by this bird in every age, for it is similar to the Chul or Phoenix, who for this reason is called Chaliah, which means 'revolution.'"

VI. Sagittarius

Fulcanelli's *Mystery of the Cathedrals* does not mention the representation that Pierre Jean Fabre de Castelnau (1588–1658) was still able to see at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, for which he offered an alchemical interpretation in the *Alchymista christianus*.²² "A centaur, or a Sagittarius, armed with his bow, fires an arrow against a monster whose face is that of a woman, the body that of an eagle, the feet and tail those of a dragon. An enigma which could receive a Christian interpretation, but which should be interpreted chemically and alchemically because it is such, allowing us to contemplate under the surface the admirable correspondence of the natural and divine arcana. Chemically the Sagittarius represents mercurial water. As in the Sagittarius, in this volatile piece of rock one can distinguish two natures: one igneous and sulphurous, overcoming other natures and essences by its power, just as human nature overcomes all others; and the Mercury of the philosophers, which like the equine nature of the centaur is characterized by the rapidity of its movement. And just as the horse is consecrated to the celestial sun, mercurial water is consecrated to the terrestrial sun. As for the bow and arrows, they represent the effects of mercurial water, which through putrefaction poisons and kills the metallic substance or chemical chaos represented by the monster, who contains three natures: sulphur, mercury, and salt, or animal, vegetable, and mineral natures. The animal nature, which has the color of fire, is indicated by the human face. The vegetable or mercurial nature is indicated

by the eagle's body. This nature the alchemists call eagle, which is of the nature of air, for in air is hidden the greatest abundance of the vital spirit. The mineral nature or salt of the philosophers is represented by the lower part of the monster, which is that of the venomous and murderous dragon. Just as the dragon dwells in the bowels of the earth, where it feeds and grows, so does the mineral nature or salt of the philosophers occupy the bowels of the earth, where it feeds and grows, and like the dragon devours everything and renews itself. This is the secret of the chemical art: chemical chaos or the metallic nature must be destroyed, put to death, and putrefied by the deadly poisoned arrows of mercurial water, so that everything may convert itself into an eagle and finish as a dragon, that is, be completed in earthy matter, fixed and permanent, which is the fixed salt of the philosophers, which converts everything into itself, as is said in the Table of Emerald: it is the strength of all strength, the strong strength, when it has been converted into earth. This can also be mystically understood of Christ and his Church, who should constitute one body, strong to resist tempests, as is said in the two verses carved in marble:

*Juncta simul faciunt unum duo corpora corpus,
Sic est in toto fortius orbe nihil,*

the two bodies joined together make a single body and there is nothing stronger in the world."

VII. The Scarab

Athanasius Kircher (1602–82), the hero of the quest of Isis,²³ even while attacking alchemy magnified its purely spiritual doctrine, finding it in concord with the true Cabala, which he did not condemn along with the Cabala of the rabbis. Dazzled by John Dee's discovery, copied by Cesare della Riviera, of the hieroglyph of Mercury, Kircher perceived the hieroglyph of the scarab as the key to the chemical art, in perfect concordance with the famous exegesis of *bereshit*, the first word of the Hebrew Genesis, at the end of the *Heptaplus*.

The scarab signifies the raw material of the metallic art: rolling up the bodies of the whole world, it produces an egg, visible above its tail. The seeds of all the metals that hide there eventually rise up to the seven spheres of the planets: besides the five spheres of the minor planets, the head of Horus designates the sun, and the segment of a circle above it designates the moon, and inside it is the cross, natural symbol of the elements. Between its forelegs the scarab holds a tablet bearing (in Greek script) the word *phulo* which signifies love. If like doctors we dissect this hieroglyph into its parts, we obtain this phrase: The soul of the world or the life of things is hidden in the machine of this lower world, where rests the egg fertile in seminal reasons, which, exercising its power over the spheres of the metallic planets, animates them with its heat and makes them act, so that Horus, that is, the sun and the moon, emerges through the dissolution of the elements and the separation of pure from impure things. When this is done, each thing is linked to every other thing by a natural and sympathetic love, and this is the completion of the work.

Kircher, before explaining a discourse too obscure for novices, referred to his *Prodromus Coptus*, in which, after analyzing the hieroglyph of the scarab, he connected it with Pico della Mirandola's analysis of the first word of Genesis:²⁴ "The father to the Son or by the Son, beginning and end or rest, created the head, the fire, and the foundation of the great man by good accord or alliance." "What can the winged



Scarab. In Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.

globe in the hieroglyph signify other than the famous circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, to speak with Trismegistus, which is the supermundane abstract Intellect, first Intelligence, celestial Father. What could the body of the scarab signify other than the Son whom his Father has constituted principle, rest, and end of all things, by whom all was made and without whom nothing is made. Lest someone be angered at seeing God himself, who surpasses all admiration, being compared to the most vile, the most horrible, the most stinking of all beings, let us hear what Saint Augustine, the great light of the Church, has said of the admirable humanity of Christ in his *Soliloquies*: 'He is my good scarab, not so much because he is the only son of God, author of himself who took on our mortal form, but because he rolled in our filth, whence he sought to be born a man.' By this son, then, eternal Wisdom and true Osiris, the world was created, this great man, whose head is the angelic world, source of knowledge, whose heart is the sun, source of movement, life, and warmth, and whose foundation is the sublunary world. What could the character signifying love designate but this Spirit, who, 'meharephet peney ha-maym, floating on the waters,' gives life to all things by the fire of his most fertile love, and ties all together in a good alliance."²⁵

VIII. The Sirens

Egidio da Viterbo dealt with this theme a number of times, in the *Sententiae ad mentem Platonis* (Opinions According to the Mind of Plato), the *Historia XX saeculorum* (History of Twenty Centuries), and in the *Sccechina*. In the *Sententiae*,²⁶ the Sirens represented the three powers of the soul—memory, intelligence, and will—since, according to Cicero, they are teachers of knowledge. Indeed, in the *De finibus* (On the Ends), Cicero, after translating the passage from the *Odyssey* about the Sirens, adds: "Homer could see that his fable would be without value if the Sirens sang nothing but little songs to catch a man like Ulysses in their net: it is, then, knowledge that the Sirens promise." In the *Historia XX saeculorum*,²⁷ speaking of Naples, "ornament of the Tyrrhenian sea, which breathes the sweetness of the sky and the winds, which blossoms with the wealth of the sea and the land, born for leisure, the fine arts and the pursuit of wisdom," Egidio

da Viterbo evokes Virgil who, though from Mantua, sang of Parthenope, one of the Sirens, whose body, when cast up on the shore, marked the birth of Naples. And he repeats Cicero's judgment, but in order to specify that the true knowledge is arcane wisdom, which was cultivated by the ancient Tyrrhenians. At that time it was forbidden to divulge this knowledge to the people, who, by hearing talk about several degrees of the divine realities, would have been separated from the Unity. This is what was taught by the Hebrews in their Cabala, by Pythagoras in his Symbols, Plato in his Epistles, Virgil in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, and the Romans when they forbade disclosure of the Books of Numa. But if divine wisdom is salutary, why were Ulysses' sailors drowned? What is good for the wise harms those who are not. It is like the sun, pleasant to our eyes, unbearable for the sick. The same is true of the Sirens' song, heard only by Ulysses and not by his troop of companions, like a warning given by the son of God not to cast holy things before dogs. He wanted to be the rock of foundation for some, but for others, according to the word of the Apostle, a rock of scandal. Or, as Paul says (2 Corinthians 2.16): "To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life." A signification that Egidio picks up again in the *Sccechina*²⁸ concerning the Talmud's interdiction, in the treatise *Haghiga*, against revealing this divine wisdom to the vulgar, "neither to several nor to two, but only to the single pious, wise, and full-grown man," and he sees as a parallel to the Sirens' reefs the mysterious stones, *lapides Bohu, mephulot*, plunged into the abyss,²⁹ which represent the desires of the body.

IX. Vesta

In the *Treatise on Fire and Salt*, published after his death, Blaise de Vigenère evokes Vesta, along with Pallas, as follows:³⁰

"These two deities, Pallas and Vesta, both virginal and chaste, as is fire, represent to us the two fires of the sensible world: Pallas, that is, is the celestial, and Vesta the elemental fire of this lower world: which, although cruder and more material than that of the upper world, nevertheless always tends contrariwise, as if it sought to separate itself from the corruptible substance to which it remains attached, to return free and exempt from all these hindrances to its first origin whence it came, like a soul imprisoned in the body:

*Ignus est ollis vigor, et caelestis origo
Seminibus, quantum non noxia corpora tardant,
Terrenique herbetant artus, moribundaque membra.*

(Fiery energy is in these seeds, their source is heavenly; but they are dulled by harmful bodies, blunted by their own earthly limbs, their mortal members).³¹

"The other, on the contrary, while more subtle and essential, throws itself toward the earth here below, as if these two ceaselessly aspired to meet and come before each other, like two pyramids, the upper one with its base firmly in the Zodiac, where the sun completes its annual journey through the twelve signs. From the peak of this pyramid, all that is born and has its being drops down here below, according to the doctrine of the ancient Astrologers of Egypt; therefore nothing appears on earth or in the water that is not sown there from heaven, which is like a laborer who cultivates it. And marking this world below with its warmth, with the efficacy of its influences, it leads the whole to its complete perfection and maturity: which is also confirmed by Aristotle

in his books *De ortu et interitu*.³² But the fire of this lower world, on the other hand, has the base of its pyramid attached to the earth, making one of the six faces of the cube, to which the Pythagorians attribute its form and figure because of its form and invariable stability: and from the point of this pyramid arise contrariwise the subtle vapors that serve to nourish the sun, and all the other celestial bodies; according to what Phurnutus, following others,³³ has written: an inextinguishable fire, he says, is attributed to Vesta, because the fiery power that is on earth takes from its nourishment from Vesta; and on this the sun sustains itself and consists. This is also what Hermes implied in his Table of Emerald: 'Quod est inferius, est sicut quod est superius; et e converso, ad perpetranda miracula rei unius' ('What is below is just like what is above; and the reverse, for the sake of accomplishing the miracles of the one world'). And Rabbi Joseph, son of Carnitol, in his *Gates of Justice*:³⁴ 'The foundation of all lower edifices is placed on high; and their peak or their summit here below, like a tree inverted. As if man were nothing but a spiritual tree planted in the paradise of delights, which is the earth of the living, by the roots of his hair, according to what is written in the Canticles 7: *Comae capitis tui sicut purpura Regis juncta canalibus*.'

"These two fires, the high and the low, which in this way recognize each the other, were not ignored by the Poets, for Homer in book 18 of the *Iliad*³⁵ put Vulcan's forge in the eighth starry heaven, where he is accompanied by his artisans, endowed with a singular prudence, who know all sorts of works, which have been taught them by the immortal Gods in whose presence they labor. In book 8 of the *Aeneid*, however, Virgil put this workshop here below on earth, on an island called Vulcanian,

*Vulcani domus, et Vulcania nomine tellus*³⁶

to show that fire is in both of these regions, the celestial and the elementary, but in diverse ways."

F.S./j.l.

NOTES

1. *Commentaire de H. de Linthault de Mont-Lion sur le Trésor des trésors* (Lyon 1610), 97.

2. *La esposizione di Geber* (Venice 1544); Latin translation in 1548; cf. "Notes sur quelques alchimistes italiens de la Renaissance," *Rinascimento* 23 (1973): 203.

3. F. SECRET, "Le symbolisme de la kabbale chrétienne dans la Scechina d'Egidio da Viterbo," *Archivio di filosofia* (Rome 1958), p. 150.

4. Trans. J. de Montlyard (Lyon 1615), 579.

5. *Historia XX saeculorum* (ms. Naples IX.B.14), fol. 208 v: "Domos urbesque aspernente curru contenti vitam traducerent ut currum semper ad decus currulis contemplationis allicerentur. Quare Chabala quae de divinis agit a Talmudistis doctoribus: et veterum sapientibus Maase Mercava: opus currule assidue nuncupatur. Statuas vero tam equestres: quam currules ab Ethruscis accepisse Romanos."

6. *Ibid.*, fol. 244 v: "Graecus philosophus superbiam philosophiam indicat equo: italicam Tyrreni plaustro curruque significat."

7. *Ibid.*, fol. 55 v, 181, etc.: *De Ecclesiae incremento, Traditio*, 25 (1969).

8. *Historia*, fol. 231 v "illis occultis narrationibus: quas a Faul faulas vocabant."

9. Cf. *Annuaire École pratique des hautes études (sci. religieuses)*, 86 (1977-78).

10. Ms. Fonds Brotier of the archives of the Society of Jesus (Chantilly), fol. 183 "de mystico ipsius curru, super nubes et alas sex

spirituum (quales spectantur in ipsa figura sephirotica) seu sex draconum, qui sunt spirituum seu angelorum typi."

11. *La esposizione*, p. 71 v.

12. *The Survival* (Harper, ed. 1961), 221.

13. *Demogorgone, con saggio di nuova edizione delle Genealogie deorum gentilium del Boccaccio e silloge dei frammenti di Teodonzio* (Palermo 1930) (an. VIII).

14. *Dialoghi d'amore*, S. Caramella, ed. (Bari 1929), 106ff.

15. N. VALOIS, *Les cinq livres*, Bernard Roger, ed. (Paris 1975).

16. *Ibid.*, p. 265.

17. *Traictez du vray sel secret*, Matton, ed. (Paris 1974), 278.

18. *De calcantho* (Augsburg 1617), 44.

19. PERNETY, *Dictionnaire*, s.v.; J. VAN LENNEP, *Art et alchimie*, p. III; bibliography in M. TARDIEU, *Trois mythes gnostiques, Adam, Èros et les animaux d'Égypte dans un écrit de Nag Hammadi*, II, 5 (Paris 1974).

20. *Le prime nove del altro mondo . . . intitolata La Vergine Venetiana* (Padua 1555), French trans. (Paris 1928), 42.

21. *Sloane 1411*, fol. 388 v: "Quare in psalmo 80 scripta est faeminea vox Canah et hortum"; *Sloane 1409* (translation of the *Beresith Rabba*), fol. 133, 135 v; *Sloane 1411* (*Commentaire du Recanati*, fol. 84, 98 v; cf. on the sources, J. BUXTORE, *Lexicon Chaldaicum talmudicum et rabbinicum* (Basel 1639), fol. 720 Hwl, and 952; cf. G. SCHOLEM, *Les origines de la kabbale* (Paris 1966), s.v. Palmier and M. Tardieu).

22. Cf. *Alchymista* (Toulouse 1632), 232; cf. *Littérature et alchimie*, B.H.R., 35 (1973): 520.

23. J. BALTRUSAITIS, *La quête d'Isis*.

24. F. SECRET, "Beresithias ou l'interprétation du premier mot de la Genèse chez les kabbalistes chrétiens," in *In principio: Interprétation des premiers versets de la Genèse* (Paris 1973).

25. *Cedipus Aegyptiacus* (Rome 1654), 3:405. *Prodromus coptus* (Rome 1636), 263.

26. Cf. text in E. MASSA, *I fondamenti metafisici della Dignitas hominis* (Turin 1954), 86.

27. *Historia*, ms. Naples, IX.B.14, fol. 148 v; see also fol. 53 v.

28. *Scechina* (Rome 1959), 2:83.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:178; on these stones see G. SCHOLEM, *Les origines*, s.v.

30. *Traicté* (Paris 1617), 69.

31. *Aeneid* 6, c. 730, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York 1961).

32. This is the title of the translation by J. PERION (Paris 1552).

33. Cf. CORNUTUS (L. Annaeus) in C. JULII, *Augusti liberti fabularum liber* (Paris 1578), 164 v (in Teubner, ed., 1881, p. 53).

34. *Cant.* VII, 5; cf. JOSEPH IBN GIQATILIA, *Sha'arey Tsedeq* (Riva 1561), f. 18 v; cf. on the theme G. VAJDA, *Le commentaire d'Ezra de Gérone sur le Cantique des cantiques* (Paris 1969), 301.

35. *Iliad* 18.370.

36. *Aeneid* 8.423.

HERCULES IN ALCHEMY

One of the last historians of the theme of Hercules,¹ Marc René Jung, offered a note on Hercules in alchemy. He cited² Michael Maier and Pierre Jean Fabre, whose *Hercules piochymicus* was summarized by Pernety. It is enough to observe that Hercules appears to be everywhere for alchemists who are eager to find Diana under veils. Blaise de Vigenère, quite unjustly neglected, spoke a lot about it in his *Philostate*: "If we want to apply this fantasy or poetic fiction to natural philosophy, we have already said in the preceding portrayal that Hercules is none other than the Sun, which by its heat and its rays, acting as arrows, exterminates the Hydra with all of its reborn heads, that is, the cold, the quality proper to water, of which this serpent is born and whose name it bears."³ But it was Nuysement who dealt with all of the labors:

The labors of Hercules that are regarded as vain fables
 Are by this secret art true symbols.
 Geryon with his three bodies, terrifying and powerful,
 Is the triple quicksilver embracing the ground and the moon.
 The giant born of the earth, the indestructible Antaeus,
 Whose power no one could supplant
 As long as he touched his mother the Earth,
 Is the spirit, living and hot,
 Of our gold, which our water draws out and raises on high.
 The Hydra that is constantly reborn, with seven horrible heads,
 Is water, mother of gold and of all fusible bodies,
 The water that never dampens, nor extinguishes the fire,
 The serpent that the sun must kill little by little.
 The monstrous species of the light Centaurs
 Are the hideous matter of the two joined seeds.
 The treacherous Diomedes with his cruel horses
 Is the Artist hiding his cache of metals
 In the secret room where his water devours it.
 The shield of the Amazon Hippolite is Iris who decorates
 This water with a hundred colors. The sickening dung
 Of the Augean stable is the stinking blackness
 That covers corpses after their putrefaction.
 The birds of Stympalus that ravage the pasture

Of the ill-fated Phineus, coming to defile him,
 Are the strong vapors that come out of bodies.
 The pursuit and capture of the wild boar
 Is when matter enters the color grey
 And leaving its darkness in order to become white
 Gives a sign for the worker of its good fortune.
 The skin of the great lion that this demigod wears
 Is the red color that puts on the whiteness.
 The bull he subdues is the body that is fixed.
 The stag with golden horns is the yellowing fixed body.
 Cerberus with the three throats is the newborn child, who asks
 That someone feed it with new meat.

F.S./d.w.

NOTES

1. Cf. H. DE LUBAC, *Exégèse médiévale* 4, 2, p. 228, on Hercules and the theses of M. Simon, R. Trousson, and Pierre Sage.
2. *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVI^e siècle* (Geneva 1966), p. 202.
3. *Poème philosophic de la vérité de la phisique minerale*, Matton, ed., p. 95, v. 1600.

ORPHEUS IN THE RENAISSANCE

Orpheus was so much in vogue during the Renaissance that a number of chapters could easily be added to the studies¹ already devoted to the subject. One Joannes Goropius Becanus (van Gorp, 1518–72), who was a friend of Christophe Plantin and Benito Arias Montano, both artisans of the Royal Polyglot of Philip II, and who is generally derided for having found that Flemish was more ancient than Hebrew in his bizarre *Origines Antwerpianae sive Cimmericorum Becceselandae* (1568), accumulated in his *in-folios* the substance of an Orphic theology, which revealed the meaning of poetry to the Bishop of Antwerp, Laevinus Torrentius.² We should at least recall that the sixteenth century opens with a *Vellus aureum* by G. A. Augurelli, who in his *Chrysopoeia* evoked the *Argonautica*³ which Lilio Gregorio Giraldi later read by the fireside in the company of Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola:

And in this place the most happy Nymphs
 Through these treasures lush and rich
 Untangle with a beautiful ivory comb
 The Golden Fleece. There,
 To acquire glory,
 Prince Jason came first, by boat,
 With his men, to carry off this fleece.
 The noble youths did not fear,
 Under Hercules and Jason,
 Skillfully to wend their course
 Through so many ocean waves
 To reach the wealthy isle of Colchis.

According to the Reverend Vicot, chaplain to the lord alchemists of Flers, in the commentary to his *Grand Olimpe*,⁴

Some believed that this fleece was a book made of a sheepskin, so named for that reason, a book in which this noble secret was inscribed. Others allegorizing more subtly believed that the reference was to the first lord of this work, namely, Aries. Still others speak about a potent medicine consisting of fine wool gathered and fleeced from the back of a sheep. But whatever the case, at least we know that some time ago a brave young person, who by means of this divine powder had faithfully served one of our neighboring states, was rewarded by having an Order established in memory of him in this present state, which is still today called the Order of the Golden Fleece.

It is to a knight of the Golden Fleece that the Doctor from Antwerp, Guillaume Mennens, dedicated his *Aurei velleris sive sacrae philosophiae vatum selectae ac unicae mysteriorumque Dei, naturae et artis admirabilium libri tres* (Three books, of the golden fleece or the sacred philosophy, unique and chosen by the prophets, and of the mysteries of God, and of the nature and art of wondrous things), in which there are many references to the *De harmonia mundi* (On the harmony of the world) of Franciscus Georgius Venetus, who like many of his contemporaries was as much interested in astrology and alchemy as he was in the Cabala. Nor should we overlook the *Aureum Vellus, oder Guldin Schatz und Kunstkammer* by the great Salomon Trismosin, translated by Pierre Victor Palma Cayet (1525–1610), known as Petrus Magnus because he was interested in alchemy and the Cabala, and because he introduced Doctor Faustus to France.⁵

Orpheus, in whom Guy Le Fèvre de la Boderie found the "Mouth of Light" according to his teacher's emithology, is enthroned right in the middle of the temple of Intelligence engraved by Bartolomeo del Bene in his *Civitas veri*, which was published by his nephew Alphonse del Bene, bishop of Alby (1538–1608).⁶ Del Bene attacked the alchemists in this



Orpheus. From Bartolomeo del Bene, *Civitas veri* (1609). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.

work and wrote a poem in Italian in which he showed that it was because of their longing for the divine poets David and Orpheus, the bards of immortality, that the Furies invented the alchemists, who boast of making men immortal during their own lifetimes.⁷

It is, moreover, for the same reason that Jean de Sponde (1557–95) praised Paracelsus, actually “Aureolus,” for having resumed the conquest of the Golden Fleece in his own time. Jean de Sponde mentions this in *Homeri quae extant omnia*, dedicated to Henri III in 1573, in which he expounds on alchemy, having come to study this science at Basel, notably with one Theodor Zwinger.⁸

F.S. g.h.

NOTES

1. Cf. D. P. WALKER, “Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists,” *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 16 (1953), reprinted in *The Ancient Theology* (London 1972); F. IOLKOVSKI, *Orphée et ses disciples dans la poésie française et néo-latine du XVI^e siècle* (Geneva 1970).

2. F. SECRET, *Annuaire de l'École pratique des hautes études (sciences religieuses)*, 82 (1973–74): 257ff.

3. F. HABERT DE BERRY, trans., *Les trois livres de la Chrysopée* (Paris 1550), 69.

4. Ms. F. FRANC, 12299, fol. 115, cf. *Notes sur quelques alchimistes italiens*, p. 209.

5. *Alchimie et littérature*, in *Bibl. d'Hum. et Ren.* 35 (1973): 516.

6. *Civitas*, p. 249, “In medio intelligentiae templo suo . . . Statua est Orphei vatis theologi”; the attack on the alchemists is on p. 153.



Orpheus. From Bartolomeo del Bene, *Civitas veri* (1609). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.

7. Le Mans, ms. 7, fol. 94 v. cf. M. E. COUDERC, “Les poésies d’un Florentin,” *Giornale storico dell. Let. Ital.*, 1891.

“Poi che dal ciel la bella donna et pia
Qual manna o mele hybleo
Di Liban piovve infra gran cedri pria
Et detto il carme al pastorello Hebreo

Et con la Tracia poscia, et dolce lyra
Mosse le piante, e sassi . . .”

8. F. SECRET, “Notes pour une histoire de l’alchimie en France,” *Australian Journal of French Studies* 9 (1972): 222.

KING ARTHUR, THE ROMANCES OF THE ROUND TABLE, AND THE LEGEND OF THE GRAIL

I. The Arthurian Legend

The term “Arthurian legend” has existed in scholarly French usage only since the publication of Edmond Faral’s famous work by this title dealing with the genesis of certain Latin texts from the Middle Ages. The title is somewhat paradoxical, for according to Faral these texts, rather than

recording a legend, fabricate one from bits and pieces, and stem from no particular folk tradition. Such is the case of the *Historia Regum Britanniae* composed by Geoffrey of Monmouth in 1137, the earliest date for the imaginary chronicles of the reign of King Arthur, from his great conquests to his heroic death on the battlefield in 542. This chronicle and its adaptation in French verse by Wace (1155) were already part of the Arthurian stories that had as their protagonist the fabulous king surrounded by his knights, who owed him, according to feudal custom, their homage and faith. In order to explain the appearance of these texts and their many derivatives, need we hypothesize the existence of a true legend transmitted orally from generation to generation? The theory of folk origins has never been anything more than a succession of postulations which are often contradictory and almost always unverifiable, since no positive proof can be summoned in favor of the existence of a preliterate Arthurian myth. This does not mean that Celtic or Scandinavian folklore lacks parallels and analogies to certain narratives which are connected with the legendary figures of King Arthur and his knights. The point is, however, that none of these parallels is recorded within the Arthurian framework, none is linked to the characters or themes as the literary texts of the Middle Ages present them, and so none can be properly called "Arthurian." Literary scholarship has persisted in cultivating this type of speculation because it has been unable to propose an alternative explanation which would even begin to do justice to the texts. Such an explanation was not possible until the day that the narrative literature of the Middle Ages gained the right to be treated as a body of work subject to the laws of literary creation. Before giving up the search for the myth, however, we must be convinced that the blossoming of stories grouped around the character of King Arthur and his Round Table can explain one another, as so many other analogous traditions do, through the autonomous and spontaneous effort of the authors of our texts, and notably through the use of two distinct and yet complementary procedures. One consists of gathering together all the elements already in existence, which until now have appeared only in isolation. Like a magnetic field, the work thus becomes the locus where, once reunited, these elements form a new structure, acquiring an original significance. This procedure underlay the formation of epic and fictional cycles that dominated all French narrative literature in the thirteenth century. The other procedure, a term used here in no pejorative sense, is a timeless one. It consists of rethinking a given body of work to give it a new meaning, more profound, more subtle, or simply more in keeping with the tastes of the public to whom it is addressed. The pseudo-chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth was only the beginning of the myth of the greatness and the fall of the Arthurian monarchy, a myth that was elaborated over the course of the last three centuries of the Middle Ages through the successive contributions of French and English writers. According to Geoffrey, as in all the chronicles derived from his *Historia* (Wace's *Brut*, Layamon's *Brut*, and the fourteenth-century English poem *Morte Arthure*), Arthur dies a victim of the treachery of Mordred. This is a fortuitous incident which is unexpected and unjustified. French prose writers of the thirteenth century, authors of the great Arthurian cycle (1220–25), applied themselves to creating a motive for this major event, making it the culmination of a whole series of intelligently developed themes. This process continued until the third quarter of the fifteenth century, in the hands of the greatest of the Arthurian prose writers, Sir



King Arthur. Vision of the holy grail. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS fr. 112. Photo Bibliothèque nationale.

Thomas Malory. We move from a single episode in a chronicle to the tragic drama of *Morte Arthure saunz guerdon*, just as, in a work of romantic fiction, we move from a single fact to a structured work. Insofar as the main Arthurian themes have undergone this evolution, it may be said that Arthurian mythology as a whole springs from the dual movement that forms wholes and continuously renews their meaning. This mythology is found in English-speaking countries at all levels of oral and written culture, from stories still told aloud today in Wales and Cornwall to the works of poets and prose writers of our times.

At what precise moment was the idea of the great king's survival and eventual return to the country he had once made the most beautiful kingdom on earth added to this already rich and fertile collection of romantic themes? Here again we encounter a very general belief, which appears in the folklore of many other countries: the refusal to accept as final the disappearance of a savior, a liberating hero, who must return to ensure the salvation of his people. It is in the logic of things that tales of the glorious exploits of a great king lead to the hope for his return, and there is nothing to contradict the view that, in the British tradition, this hope itself was also of literary origin. Its first expression is found in the chronicles based on the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth and those of Wace and Layamon, and the Latin formula *Rex quondam rexque futurus* ("the Once and Future King") continued to appear even in the fourteenth-century *Morte Arthure*. In the fifteenth century, Malory described this belief, while at the same time indicating that he did not share it: "This," he

said, "is what some think; all we really know is that in this world the great king changed his life."

Two other themes developed in an analogous manner: the theme of the Grail and that of the romance of Lancelot and Guinevere. Clearly, it is within an Arthurian framework—in the stories of Chrétien de Troyes—that they appear for the first time, one in the *Conte de Graal* (*Story of the Grail*, ca. 1181), and the other in the *Conte de la Charrette* (*Story of the Cart*, ca. 1172). But these stories are actually foreign to the Arthurian "legend" proper. The King Arthur to whom they refer is no longer the fabulous warrior of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace. The King Arthur of Chrétien de Troyes does not even remember the exploits attributed to that warrior. His role consists solely in encouraging the adventures that take place around him; he has no thoughts of becoming involved himself. It was not until the thirteenth century, in the great Arthurian cycle in prose attributed to Walter Map, that the epic of Arthur's kingdom, the Grail, and the passionate love affair of Lancelot and the queen all came together. In this context, the latter two themes acquired new meaning and depth. From that moment on, their true value appears as a chance phenomenon born of the imagination of remodelers and adapters rather than deriving from the mysterious depths of popular traditions. Sequences created in this manner sometimes seem to be preliterate myths, such as the theme of the kingdom transformed into a wasteland (*terre gaste*). Recent research has shown that this story was formed through the agglutination of diverse elements originally independent of one another; so we cannot regard them as parts of a single original myth. Simply by respecting the chronology of our texts from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, we see how the true architects of the legend of the *terre gaste* worked their material. And this work did not cease with the vogue of French Arthurian novels; it continued through the work of Thomas Malory in the fifteenth century right up to one of the greatest poems of the twentieth: Eliot's *The Waste Land*. If Chrétien de Troyes had lived to see the extraordinary development of the Grail motif, he might have asked himself, like Boaz: How could this have come from me? Such a question would remain unanswered if we forgot to take into account the creative imagination of the writers of the thirteenth-century prose cycle, who used the Grail as a symbol of divine grace without asking what it meant.

II. The Grail

We do not even know the meaning of the Grail in the poem by Chrétien de Troyes that bears its name (ca. 1181). The pageant of the Grail as he described it has caused rivers of ink to flow in our time. For the young knight Percival who saw it, as well as for all readers of this passage, it provides an opportunity to look in wonder at two mysterious objects: the Grail itself, that is, the sacred vessel carried by a maiden, and the bleeding lance in the hands of a young man who leads the procession. If, when that procession passed before him, Percival had only asked its significance, the *méhaigné* king, the wounded king who lived in the castle, would have been cured of his wounds. But Percival, interpreting too literally the advice given him by a wise man named Gornemant, was careful not to ask that question. If he had asked it, who knows what the people of the castle would have told him? Did Chrétien de Troyes himself know the exact meaning of the object he introduced into his poem? We do not know, just

as we do not know whether a Grail legend ever existed before Chrétien de Troyes. The evidence suggests that if there was a legend, it was of strictly literary origin like the Arthurian legend, created and propagated by writers. Chrétien de Troyes was followed at the end of the twelfth century by Robert de Boron, the author of a poem called *Estoire du Graal* (*The Story of the Grail*) or *Joseph of Arimathea*. According to Robert de Boron, the Grail was the vessel in which Joseph had collected a few drops of Christ's blood after the crucifixion, and which Joseph's brother-in-law Bron, and his son Alan, were to carry to England—a symbol of the faith which would spread through the Western world. Did Robert de Boron compose a *Percival* as well? No record remains of such a work, but it is possible that the *Perlesvaus*, a prose text from the beginning of the thirteenth century, was an adaptation of a lost poem of Robert de Boron.

The main event in the evolution of the Grail theme in the thirteenth century is the substitution of Galahad for Percival in the role of the hero of the Grail. Galahad, the pure knight and natural son of Launcelot, appears for the first time in the great Arthurian cycle composed between 1220 and 1225, where he seems to play the role of a liberator charged with delivering the Arthurian kingdom from the sin of lust. He alone would be able to see the Grail clearly and openly and to achieve his quest. He alone, because of his character and his behavior, would be able to give human incarnation to the magic light which emanated from it. Furthermore, the Grail here has a very specific meaning, as Etienne Gilson has demonstrated in a famous study (*Romania*, 1925). Before this symbol of divine grace, the knights of King Arthur are somehow ranked according to their degree of perfection or imperfection. Galahad attains the highest knowledge of the divine mystery, which can be obtained through a pure mind (*pura mens*). At a lower level are Percival and Bohort, who arrive at this knowledge through their senses, while Launcelot reaches it only through dreams: three mystic states admirably described in the preceding century by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. The cycle in which Galahad's quest first appeared was followed by a composition almost as extensive as what is now called the *Roman du Graal* (1235). While the quest for the Grail was only an episode of relatively limited scope in the great Arthurian cycle, in the *Roman du Graal*, Arthur's kingdom, "the adventurous kingdom," is destined from the beginning to face this magical object, whose mere presence seems to condemn the kingdom as much as the ideology of chivalry it embodies. In the same period, Wolfram von Eschenbach in his *Parzival* reestablished the eponymous hero in the role of knight of the Grail and transformed the Grail itself into a magical stone with a profoundly moral significance. Wagner was visibly inspired by Wolfram, whose source seems to be none other than Chrétien de Troyes. This had a curious consequence: for most modern readers, the Grail legend is a legend of Percival, while for readers in the last three centuries of the Middle Ages the Grail legend was essentially that of Galahad, inseparably linked to the prose poem about Lancelot. Because this story survived to modern times only through Sir Thomas Malory's adaptation (published in 1485 by William Caxton), only English-speaking countries retain the memory of the pure knight Galahad. As with the Arthurian legend or the legend of Tristan and Isolde, the Grail legend became diversified according to the various forms and interpretations given to it by the poets and prose writers of the late Middle Ages. As a poetic theme, or as a religious or moral symbol, the Grail has never been anything but the product of their imagination.

We have no reason to search elsewhere for the secret of its emotional power and its prodigious and widespread influence.

III. *Terre Geste* (Wasteland)

In its most complete and latest form, this theme includes four elements: a miraculous weapon, a serious wound suffered by a great man (king or knight), the devastation of a kingdom, and the healing of the wounded man. The blow that inflicts the wound—the “dolorous stroke”—is almost always given by the miraculous weapon, while the other elements of the narrative are often separated from one another. They are found together for the first time in one of the branches of the *Roman du Graal*, sometimes called the *Suite du Merlin* and dating approximately from 1230–35.

The four elements of the theme of the wasteland in this work form a continuous narrative whose protagonist is Balain, an unfortunate knight who seems destined to bring sorrow to all he meets. The “dolorous stroke” which causes the devastation of the country is dealt by him while he is defending himself against the powerful king Pelles, a king mysteriously linked to the theme of the Grail, since it is the Grail in the hands of the pure knight Galahad that will heal him. The architects of the legend of the *terre geste* not only constructed a perfectly coherent and well-balanced scenario; they knew how to enhance in a new way the theme of the Grail within the Arthurian cycles, as the hapless knight was contrasted to the fortunate knight Galahad. The one plunges Arthur's kingdom into gloom and misfortune, while the other floods the kingdom with a new light and shows it the way to salvation.

E. V./d. b.

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TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

We have many texts pertaining to the legend of Tristan and Isolde, among them fragments of two great French poems of the twelfth century, one attributed to Bérout, the other to Thomas; a German poem of the same period composed by Eilhart von Oberg; a Norwegian saga; a German poem of the thirteenth century by Gottfried von Strassburg; an English poem entitled *Sir Tristrem*; a prose version in Italian; and finally a prose romance in French preserved in a very large number of manuscripts as well as in a few printed editions of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. In an attempt to explain both the origin and the vast diffusion of this legend, scholars first applied to the legend of Tristan the general theory of the mechanical formation of epic, just as they had done for other literary traditions including the Homeric poems and the French *chansons de geste*. This theory, conceived and developed by the great German romantic thinkers, was tinged by the mystique of the spontaneous and the primitive, which saw poetry as an impersonal product of popular genius created by virtue of an immediate intuition, presumably the manifestation of the divine in man. According to the theory, all narrative poetry was originally a tradition of short songs, each devoted to an isolated event. These songs were not frozen by writing. Rather, expert singers peddled their wares, so to speak, on street corners, and the songs thus passed on from generation to generation by simple word of mouth. Finally, collectors gathered them, set them down in writing, and developed them with the view toward putting together vast collections of narratives. According to this hypothesis, what was preserved of the legend of Tristan may well be just such a series of assemblages. Behind it all was a theme of singular strength and vitality, namely, the illegitimate and guilty love of Tristan for Isolde, a love whose fatal and indestructible nature was symbolized by the love potion that Tristan and Isolde drink by mistake during their voyage from Ireland to Cornwall. According to Gaston Paris, to this basic theme were added progressively the various components of what we now call the romance of Tristan: the dangers met by the lovers, the attempts by their enemies to destroy them, the episode of their joint exile and their life in the forest, then their summons by the king to return, their renewed indiscretions, their forced separation, Tristan's exile in Brittany, his futile effort to forget Isolde the Fair by marrying Isolde of the White Hands, the poisoned wound that he suffers in combat and that Queen Isolde alone can cure, her own departure for the distant land where Tristan is dying, her arrival at the moment after his death, and finally her own sudden death on the dead body of her lover. According to the romantic canon, this theme did not take shape in its overpowering simplicity inside the soul of a single poet. Separate poems joining together and breaking up into various groups may have made up the first phase of the life of the legend. During the next phase, an attempt may have been made to group into one coherent story the adventures of Tristan and Isolde until their deaths. A late nineteenth-century German scholar by the name of Golther described the poem of Eilhart von Oberg as a "conglomerate of disparate scenes and episodes artificially linked together." In the same period, Novati, an Italian scholar, was writing: "Bérout's poem, although it can be said that it is rather solidly constructed, at every moment reveals the solderings between the pieces from which it was made." Against the background of this doctrine, the great



Le roman de Tristan et Yseult (ms. fr. 103, fol. 1). Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.

medievalist of our century, Joseph Bédier, put forward his findings with all the strength of his talent and erudition. He claimed that the basis of the whole poetic tradition has always been a single poem, the common archetype of all the known romances that speak of Tristan and Isolde. This archetype is not an aggregate of collected pieces, but a spontaneous work of art resplendent in the unity of its creation. Few people seriously challenge this hypothesis today. There are of course divergent views regarding the content of the common archetype. Again it was Bédier who first attempted to reconstruct the archetype by adopting a very simple method that he explained in the following terms. First, one compares the four "primary" versions derived from the original romance, i.e., the poems of Bérout, Eilhart, and Thomas, and the prose romance. When these versions yield differing accounts, one must ask by what criteria the antiquity of a particular feature may be determined: its archaic "turn," its intrinsic value, its conformity to the overall work? We are aware of how precarious such determinations may be. Nonetheless, Bédier's work led him to make the following statement:

Every time the comparison could apply to at least three of the texts, the features which, for reasons of taste, feeling, and logic, we deemed original were features attested by three versions or by at least two of them. Conversely, the features which for reasons of taste, feeling, and logic we deemed to have been revised and of more recent date, appeared to be isolated in a single version of the ones compared.

Bédier was able to make the important claim that the compared versions were independent from one another for

the following reason: since each time two or three of them were in agreement, they were faithful to their source, whereas each time that they were not in agreement, they were at variance with the source. Hence, our texts allow us simultaneously to establish the existence of an archetype and to reconstruct it in its broad outlines. Bérout and Eilhart, according to recent investigations, were probably the most faithful to the archetype. Their adaptations most clearly assert the essential theme of the original romance, namely, the juxtaposition, forever unresolved, of the two irreconcilable powers, that of the love potion and that of the social law which the lovers never repudiate. This does not alter the fact that if we are to understand the evolution of the legend into the modern period, we must consult Thomas's version and the French prose version, which implicitly or explicitly proclaim the sovereign rights of love. Thomas inspired, among others, the German poet Gottfried von Strassburg, from whose work, in turn, Wagner learned the legend of Tristan. The prose romance (1230), itself widespread in medieval Europe, made the legend of Tristan into one of the romances of the Round Table. In a collection of English prose romances published in 1485 by William Caxton under the title of *Le morte d'Arthur*, Sir Thomas Malory gave us an abridged version of the romance that serves as the source for most modern English versions.

Should we assume that a popular legend, predating the first Tristan romance, was disseminated by the Celts from across the Channel and passed on by Breton bards, as certain French poets claim? The existence of a legend featuring Mark, his wife, and his swineherd Tristan in love with the wife is attested in a very ancient Welsh triad, a plain, unpolished story in which there is talk neither of a love potion nor of the social order that the lovers are destined simultaneously to violate and to respect. It is not of this story that one thinks when postulating an original Celtic Tristan, but of something as complete and as profoundly poetic as the French archetype of our earliest romances. But we have no proof that such a work ever existed. A romance of Tristan composed in France toward the middle of the twelfth century is, outside of our texts, the sole tangible reality. Given the current state of our knowledge, we cannot deny the most compelling poem of the French Middle Ages its profound and startling originality.

E.V./g.h.

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GYPSY MYTHS AND RITUALS

Of all the ethnic minorities scattered throughout the world, Gypsies are perhaps one of the most original by virtue of their life-style and their adherence to tradition. In the heart of our developed and urbanized countries, this wandering people manifests a profound will to survive despite all attempts to assimilate it and despite the countless harassments and persecutions of which it has been the target. The last such attempt resulted in the extermination of nearly five hundred thousand Gypsies in Nazi concentration camps.

One of the basic factors of this resistance is the Gypsies' religious sense. We say religious sense rather than religion, because it is above all a general state of mind and a specific ethical and religious behavior rather than a system of dogmatized beliefs and institutionalized ritual practices. This kind of religious life is closely tied to the history of the Gypsies and to their culture, which it nurtures and endows with meaning. We therefore begin with a brief overview of the origins of the Gypsies and the originality of their nomadism.

I. Nomadism and Gypsy Life

In order to understand the Gypsy soul, we must never lose sight of the close link between the history of this people and the type of nomadism within which it has preserved its identity to this day. Gypsy myths and rites may then be perceived in the context of their true nature and of their functioning.

Originally from India, Gypsies reached Europe at the beginning of the modern era (fifteenth and sixteenth centuries), after long wanderings through the Near East. Many invasions have swept over Europe and shaped its population. The Gypsies constitute the last such invasion, the most peaceful and by far the least numerically significant. They came too late into a world already organized politically, so that there was no place left for them, and no hope of occupying some vacant territory. They were compelled to scatter throughout all civilized countries, cornered as they

were by two necessities: first, they had to be accepted by native populations despite the suspicion they aroused by the alien character of their ethnic type, language, and customs, marking them as intruders or undesirables; second, they had to live. They did so by preserving their originality and continuing in the path of nomadism that had always worked for them, which we have elsewhere called "parasitic nomadism" (without any pejorative overtones). Whereas most nomadic people are largely self-sufficient, hunting or raising cattle on lands that they know, such could not be the case for the Gypsies. To survive, they had to establish a trading pattern with settled populations, often by limiting their nomadism to a single country. To make such commerce possible, Gypsies learned many small trades compatible with their wandering life and incorporated them into the old rural world: tin-plating of kitchen utensils, basket weaving, pot and pan making, saddlery, handicrafts, door-to-door retailing, horse trading, metal scrapping, circuses, bear training, popular and veterinary medicine, musical entertainment for festivals and country weddings, fortune-telling, etc.

Needless to say, such trades have become less and less profitable. The advent of industrial and urban society has brought about considerable change in the rural world with which the Gypsies lived in a symbiotic relationship. The rural world has shrunk quantitatively; industrialization has reached the farmer; the standard of living has increased; and widespread education and the pervading influence of the mass media have transformed needs and made obsolete the small-scale trading (except for metal scrapping and the secondhand market) which allowed Gypsies to survive while continuing to practice their ancestral nomadism. This has led to the crisis of acculturation that now threatens the very survival of this people's cultural identity (see my article, "Les Tsiganes face au problème de l'acculturation," *Diogenes*, 1976, no. 4).

II. Christianity and Animism

When speaking of the religion of the Gypsies, we should distinguish clearly between two things. On the one hand, Gypsies officially profess a particular religion, usually the Christian faith. On the other hand, a backdrop of animistic religion survives tenaciously in an abundance of ancient myths and in the practice of magic rites, more or less integrated into the official religion.

Gypsies have usually adopted the faith of the country in which they wandered, be it Islam or Christianity (Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and today Pentecostalism in many instances). Here again, it has been a question of survival. On arriving as aliens in the Christian West, to take one example, where being a pagan was the worst of all disgraces (the same may be said of the Muslim areas in the Balkans, where the Gypsies adopted Islam), Gypsies saw that adopting the local religion was in their best interest, especially in view of the fact that baptism constituted the only real form of identity. Insecure as Gypsies were and uncertain of the welcome they might receive, they were afraid of being expelled or persecuted (even today the precariousness of camping zones reserved for nomads perpetuates this form of racism), and of being unable to practice their indispensable trades. Belonging to the local religion thus became a basic guarantee for the Gypsies. It alone could confer on them the minimum of credibility that they needed to be accepted by the settled populations. We should not, however, think that joining the official religion was merely a

superficial act. Though initially an act of self-interest, it was most often incorporated into the Gypsy religious mentality, which, as we shall show below, was of an animistic type.

Gypsies reinterpreted Christian beliefs and rites from a more primitive and fundamental religious structure. This animistic base indicates an overarching religious mentality that pervades all of Gypsy life, even while leaving it open to other religious beliefs experienced in an original style. To summarize this basic religious sense, we could say that for the Gypsies there are not two realms—that of everyday, secular life, and that of far-off, extraterrestrial deities. Rather, the world in which the Gypsies lead their daily existence is peopled with mythical and supernatural beings—kindly and evil spirits, demons, fairies—who bear various names and assume all sorts of bodily features and appearances.

At every moment of their life, Gypsies feel that they are in contact with those beings on whom their personal fate rests, beings who are hidden behind the most familiar events, persons, and things. This attitude is a form of the "law of participation" that characterizes people who live close to nature, who feel that they have a special bond with the cosmos and are subject to the influence of the mythical beings that control the generally menacing cosmic forces. Knowing that they are in communication with this supernatural universe, the Gypsies try to make it work on their behalf by performing specialized rites (of purification, exorcism, prophylaxis, healing, divination, etc.). This religious element has played a major role in the Gypsies' resistance to a hostile environment, as it is the soul of their very own nomadism. Openly despised by sedentary populations, under constant threat of persecution, the Gypsies could reach deep inside themselves for the strength of their conviction that they are part of a superior world dominating the real world. Moreover, the pride they experience in their destitution and the mystery with which they shroud their magic rites make them respected and feared, and thus encourage others to accept their meager services.

III. The Gypsy Religious Sense

It is difficult to isolate the original religious elements of the Gypsy world from the successive contributions of religions adopted at a later time. Certainly, with the progress of evangelization the earlier elements have gradually become blurred or, at best, have survived within a kind of reinterpretation of Christian dogmas that they themselves have influenced. Ethnologists of the previous century, H. von Wlislocki among them, who managed to live in close touch with Gypsy groups in central Europe, collected a number of mythical narratives, especially cosmogonies. With respect to the creation of the world, we can observe a basic dualism, conceivably of Iranian origin (after leaving India, the Gypsies stayed in Persia for a long time), whereby God opposes the devil in a kind of contest, but with a clearly Christian tone, for the devil ultimately submits to God. This cosmogony contains many elements common to most such accounts, including primeval waters, the tree as the source of life, and the separation of heaven and earth.

Underlying the Gypsy religious mentality, one thing we know for certain: Gypsies believe in the existence of a benevolent God (Del, Devel) who is a creator-god. Far from any pantheistic concept, he is very much a personal god, the almighty whom Gypsies often invoke for his kindness in connection with every event, even in the midst of magic rites.

Specifically Christian elements seem to coexist happily with the older, animistic core. In particular, belief in Jesus Christ (Baro Devel) is hardly distinguishable from belief in God the creator and protector of mankind. In their quest for a happy existence, Gypsies have a great cult of the saints and particularly of the Virgin Mary (see § V below, on the mediating importance of femininity). Accustomed as they are to believing in a myriad of superior beings, benevolent or malevolent, they are comfortable with devotion of the saints (hence the success of pilgrimages, such as that of the Saintes-Maries in Provence). They are likewise serious about exorcising the devil; hence the importance attributed to Christian baptism, understood to fall under the general rubric of exorcism.

Two features of Gypsy religiosity seem to be carryovers of a pre-Christian stage: the problem of death and salvation, and the existence of numerous spirits that influence daily life.

The god of the Gypsies may be God the Creator, Providence, who loves mankind, but he is by no means the God who redeems from sin (little importance is given to this redemptive aspect of the mission of Christ), nor is he the God who rewards or punishes after death. The absence of the idea of repayment in the afterlife is connected with a fatalism characteristic of Gypsy psychology. It is undeniable that the Gypsies believe in the immortality of the soul, the soul being conceived of in a rather material way. This afterlife, however, is not the salvation that concludes existence in the Christian sense. It is not an immortality capable of bringing about total happiness (or the misery of hell). It is, rather, a kind of painful peregrination of the soul in a mysterious world full of terror and fright. This bodily soul or vital principle remains in death until it reaches putrefaction. Accordingly, numerous funerary customs assume that the dead person slumbers and that the living have the obligation to help him in his laborious peregrinations in the Kingdom of the Dead, particularly through libation, meals, and festivals. The best known funerary festival is the famous Pomana, celebrated a year and six weeks after the burial. Whereas the meal that is eaten in the presence of the deceased before his burial takes place in an atmosphere of jubilation, of licentiousness even, the meal of the Pomana assumes a certain dignity and takes place in accordance with a precise ritual. The deceased who is being celebrated is represented by a living being, of approximately the same age, who is washed and dressed in new clothes and assumes the role of the deceased by imitating his or her tastes and mannerisms. The objective of the Pomana is twofold. On the one hand, it is an act of solidarity toward the deceased, who is thought to be still living elsewhere and who needs help and consolation in his painful new roaming. But the Pomana also has a prophylactic purpose (and here we are introduced into the real mythological universe of the Gypsies), namely, to protect the living from the harmful influences that every dead person releases in the form of evil spirits.

IV. Gypsy Mythology

Gypsies indeed believe in a multitude of supernatural beings, good and evil spirits, who exercise their influence throughout the course of life. This belief comes across in numerous tales and magic rites.

The importance of these numerous spirits would lead us to believe in a kind of polytheism among the Gypsies, one that stands out against the background of monotheism referred to above, which it does not contradict. Adopting an official monotheistic religion (Christianity or Islam) kept Gypsies

from seeing these spirits as "gods" in the classical sense. These beings, however, participate no less in the divine absolute, for they influence the existence of mortals. Their functional character further explains their multiplicity. The general acculturation of Gypsies today makes it difficult to pinpoint the origins of these mythical beliefs, strata of a layered religious consciousness that bears the traces of influences of various populations among whom Gypsies once lived.

Among these countless spirits, all of whom have more or less physical features, we can distinguish several groups that are often confused even by modern Gypsies themselves. The main group is made up of the famous goddesses of fate, the Oursitori (or Ursitory, called Ourmes by certain tribes) or "white women," because they wear white dresses. Their descriptions and life-styles vary greatly from tribe to tribe. In general, they are connected with the plant kingdom and regarded as kinds of souls of trees. They go in groups of three and intervene mainly at the birth of a Gypsy, determining the child's fate. One of these fairies is good, another is bad, and the third plays an intermediary role. Some historians see a link between this belief and that of the ancient Parcae. Most magic rites prescribed by this belief aim to influence these goddesses of fate on the occasion of a birth by offering them the appropriate food and by invoking them with numerous prayers whispered by a magician at the entrance to the house in which the delivery has taken place. A contemporary Gypsy has written a novel (Mateo Maximoff, *Les Ursitory*, Paris 1946), later produced as a movie, which popularized this belief.

Beside these goddesses, the Gypsy world of the supernatural is peopled by many other spirits whose actions are revealed mainly at the time of illness or death. Convinced that they live symbiotically with all of these spirits, Gypsies see them in all natural phenomena. Accordingly, they explain illness as the invasion of a pathogenic spirit struggling against the vital spirit that every man bears within him.

Gypsies generally believe in the existence of an individual protective spirit, a sort of guardian angel, which is often difficult to distinguish from the breath of life (what we might call the soul), and which the Gypsies of southeastern Europe call Butyakengo (etymologically, "he who has many eyes," to be better able to spot dangers threatening his protégé). This protective spirit helps to unite the generations. Every person who dies leaves on earth part of his vital or protective spirit, which goes on to live in the body of a descendant (generally the oldest). The other descendants are not shortchanged, however, because the protective spirit of the departed remains on earth and continues to protect the descendants. In so doing, this spirit acts as a portion of the soul of the departed which generations pass on to one another. Each individual, whose body is enlivened by his own spirit or soul, is also visited by a portion of the spirit of his descendants. Herein lies a fine point: to the extent that this portion is distinct from the spirit that belongs strictly to a given person, it constitutes within him a protective spirit, which can leave him for a while.

The protective spirit actually watches over the man in whom it dwells, even though it leaves his body while he sleeps in order to protect him from impending danger. Whereas a dying man gives up his soul (his individual vital spirit) through the mouth, it is through the ears that the protective spirit inherited from the ancestors moves in. It warns its protégé by a ringing in the ear. If it should leave the body momentarily, it does so out of the right ear, the left ear being the port of entry; hence the care Gypsies take in

cleaning their left ear with their little finger, also known as the auricular finger because it is small enough to be introduced into the ear. For that purpose, Gypsies carefully file the fingernail of their auricular finger. It is essential to facilitate the return of the protective spirit and its warning messages on which the protégé's life may depend. Since the deceased has no more need of a protective spirit (being destined to roam in a parallel and mysterious world), certain Gypsy tribes break the little finger of the corpse and tie a coin to it with a red thread.

Many such beliefs and rites must have been borrowed from the prevailing folklore in a more or less distant time. Traces of some have come down to us in popular language, for example, in the French expression *Mon petit doigt me l'a dit* ("My little finger told me," equivalent to "A little bird told me" in the English-speaking world). Such borrowings are undeniable even if the demands of Gypsy life have resulted in the integration or reinterpretation of these alien elements. We could find many other examples in beliefs in evil spirits as causes of illness and misfortune. Among them, we can cite those spirits who are freed by death and who explain why, for Gypsies, death is laden with curses and taboos that affect those who remain. Though often mixed together, these evil spirits are of two sorts, the Moulo and the vampires.

The Moulo, synonymous with "ghost" or the "moving dead," designates the spirit of a dead person that can make itself manifest and reincarnate itself in another person or animal. It is often translated as the "living dead." The origin of the Moulo is revealing. Not every dead person becomes a Moulo, only a stillborn child. For some Gypsy tribes, the Moulo has no bones, and both hands lack the middle finger, which he left in the tomb. He lives in the mountains and often visits houses to steal what he needs. He can become visible to the eye, which is always a bad sign.

In other tribes where belief in the Moulo is less pronounced, it is more or less subsumed into the belief that the souls of the dead transmigrate to animals—a dog, a cat, a frog—in the form of evil spirits.

This brings us to the other kind of spirits freed by death, the vampires. The myth we are encountering here is not endemic to Gypsies but is found in the folklore of many Indo-European branches (especially Slavs and ancient Germans). Historians have established a clear link between the *lukanthropos* of the Greeks, the *versipellis* of the Romans, the werewolf of the ancient Germans, and the Gypsy vampire, an evil spirit that possesses the body of a deceased man. Hence the precautions taken by Gypsies when one of their own dies, lest such a harmful spirit escape and bring misfortune. This further explains certain libations during the funerary meal, particularly the Pomana (see above): to ward off evil spirits from the tomb, wine or aquavita is poured over it.

Also widespread among the Gypsies is the belief in witches, conceived of as women endowed with evil powers rather than as supernatural beings, fairies or goddesses, like the Oursitori. A woman turns into a witch after having sexual relations with a demon that causes disease. (Etymologically, the Gypsy word for witch means a woman who becomes irritated by the delight of her human brothers.) Their special feature is that they can transmit this demoniacal spirit to a man or an animal, for instance, to a worm or a small snake, which in turn may transmit the spirit to a man sleeping with his mouth open.

In their great variety, these beliefs have also often been borrowed from the prevailing, even Christianized folklore. Accordingly, many Gypsy tribes schedule their great annual

festival of the witches during the night of Whitsunday. Similarly, the connection between many dietary taboos and the belief in witches is probably attributable to a reinterpretation of ancient taboos, the meaning of which has been lost. Incorporating these taboos into the mythology of witches gave them a new vitality. This carryover was in fact made within a context dominated by sexuality. For example, the broad bean is a forbidden food because it looks like a testicle. Besides the sexual origin of the witch's powers (relations with demonic spirits), the renewing of such powers takes place in a similar context, namely, the blood vow. In classical Christian demonology, this vow can be made by a man or a woman, and involves giving the devil a little blood taken from one's arm after inflicting a wound on oneself. In the case of the witch, she revives her power by giving the devil her menstrual blood to drink. Obviously, the Christianization of many Gypsies often eliminated these older mythical elements. But belief in the power of witches, in their capacity to cast spells, to cause misfortune by giving someone the evil eye or by breathing on someone, was bound to create an aura of mystery surrounding the Gypsies, especially among gullible people, susceptible to superstition and thereby more likely to respect these strange nomads and to supply them with a few resources.

V. Magic Rites and Femininity

Myths condition rites. The multiplicity of myths and their highly varied origins explain the variety of ritual practices, some examples of which we have already seen. We should now look at the major place occupied by women in Gypsy mythology. On the one hand, we have the intermediaries between evil spirits and men, namely, witches. On the other hand, the benevolent Oursitori are goddesses. The intermediaries between the supernatural world and the human world are mostly women performing a magic function, be it divination, healing, or propitiation. Although the Gypsy world knows no priestly function (not even in the person of the tribal chief), sorceresses perform the functions that are ordinarily relegated to the priestly castes in most religions (telling fortunes, exorcising, invoking the gods, healing, etc.).

A Gypsy woman usually becomes a sorceress by inheriting such powers and the knowledge of the rites from an ancestor. Some Gypsies compare sorceresses with witches (for example, when the sorceress has sexual relations with water spirits), but the connotation of sorceress is less pejorative and does not involve the blood vow.

Living in a symbolic universe peopled by evil forces and taboos, Gypsies know that their fate is controlled by the random alternation of good luck (*Bacht*) and bad luck (*Bi-bacht*). They therefore engage in more and more rites in an effort to know what their fate may be and to redirect it to the extent that they can. Hence the rites of purification performed against the impurities carried by a woman at the time of her period or by a child at birth, or at the moment of death when numerous impure spirits are freed. This impurity is not ethical. It is mostly involuntary and connected with an existential situation. The rites of divination that have popularized fortune-tellers reflect the need to scrutinize inexorable fate. Best known is the use of Tarot cards, but other more esoteric techniques also apply, for instance, the use of an animal's scapula. For healing rites, various dialectics are used, the best known being "signs," in which the apparent properties of an animal or plant designate that animal or plant as a remedy for a given sickness. For instance, a stiff

joint is wrapped in the supple skin of an eel. Other rites refer to Christian symbolisms: the ass that had the privilege of carrying Christ may show up in certain therapeutic techniques.

All these myths and rites certainly suggest a syncretising of religious elements that originated in very different sources. But from a more phenomenological point of view, we should rather be talking of symbiosis. For these borrowings are not purely artificial, nor have they been artificially preserved. Once incorporated into the mythical universe of the Gypsies, they took on new life, allowing this marginalized people to preserve its identity to this day.

F.C./g.h.

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FABLE AND MYTHOLOGY IN SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL REFLECTION

For anyone who hopes to define the status of ancient myths in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there are two extremely dissimilar domains for consideration. One domain includes all the events of culture (poetry, theater, ballet, painting, sculpture, decorative arts) in which mythological motifs are recognizable; the other comprises the historical, critical, and speculative texts that attempt to elaborate a knowledge of myths, a science of myths. In the period in question, this distinction was clearly expressed by terms that demarcated to the fullest extent the difference established by contemporaries between the free use of mythological motifs and the studied knowledge of myths: for the former, *fable*, and for the latter, *mythology*.

I. The Function of Fable in Classical Culture

Fable is the body of received ideas about the gods of paganism. Largely founded on Hesiod, Ovid, Apollodorus, and more recent popularizers (such as Natale Conti), it is a repertory of genealogies, adventures, metamorphoses, and allegorical correlations. And as the motifs of fables are omnipresent—among the ancients read in secondary schools, in the tragedies seen at the theater, in historical presentations, in decorations and dwellings—fable is an obligatory discipline in the education of a respectable man. Thus a circle is formed: it is necessary to know fables in order to understand the works offered by recent and ancient culture; and, because fable is learned, and the ancient model remains alive, new works that are composed go back to fable either to borrow its subject matter or to use its ornamentation—in depictions, emblems, and phrases.

Rollin, in the sixth book (part four) of his *Treatise of Studies* (1726), which remained authoritative for more than a century, mentions fable and justifies its study in a subtle way:

There is hardly a subject in the study of belles lettres that is either of a greater utility than that of which I speak here, or that lends itself better to profound scholarship. . . .

Without knowledge of fable, there can be no knowledge of literature:

It is (an advantage) of great application . . . for the understanding of authors, be they Greek, Latin, or even French, in the reading of whom one is stopped short if one does not have some tincture of fable. I am not only speaking of poets, of whom we know this to be almost the natural language: it is also often employed by orators; and it sometimes furnishes, through favorable application, the liveliest and most eloquent touches. . . . There are other kinds of books to which everyone is exposed: paintings, engravings, tapestries, and statues. These are so many enigmas to those who are ignorant of fable, which often serves as their explanation and their key. It is not rare for people to speak of such matters in conversation. It seems to me not at all agreeable to remain silent and to appear stupid in a group for lack of instruction in a matter that may be learned in youth at little expense.

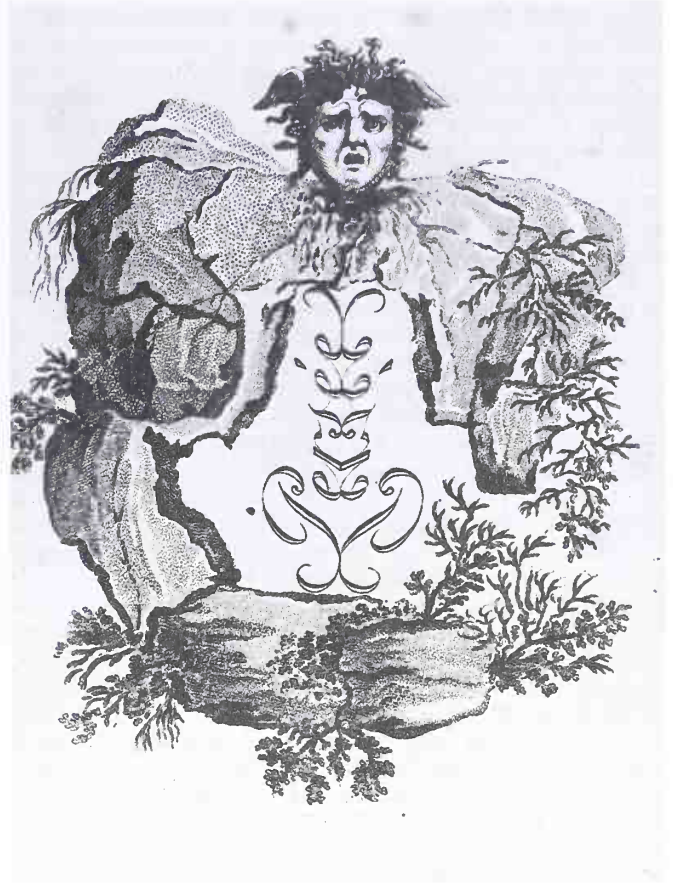
Knowledge of fable is the very condition for the legibility of the entire cultural world. It is one of the prerequisites for participation in the "conversations" in which an educated man is called on to play a part. Fable, for Rollin, is indispensable to anyone who would understand the aesthetic milieu in its entirety, and who would be accepted into a chosen "group." It thus serves a double function; it is an imaginal language offering access to a certain type of organized speech, and this language functions as a social sign of recognition between individuals who can decipher in the same fashion the universe of mythic fictions.

Jaucourt, in his *Encyclopedia* article on "Fable," is in emphatic agreement:

This is why knowledge, at least superficial knowledge, of fable is so common. Our plays, both lyric and dramatic, and every genre of our poetry allude to it perpetually; the engravings, paintings, and statues that adorn our cham-



Oedipus. From Mme. de Genlis, *Arabesques mythologiques* (1810–11), vol. 2, pl. 4. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.



Perseus. From Mme. De Genlis, *Arabesques mythologiques* (1810–11), vol. 2, pl. 2. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo BN.

bers, our galleries, our ceilings, and our gardens are nearly always drawn from fable: finally, it is so widely used in all of our writings, our novels, our pamphlets, and even in our ordinary conversations that it is impossible to be unaware of it at least to a degree without having to blush at one's lack of education.

. . . Fable is the heritage of the arts; it is a source of ingenious ideas, of humorous images, of interesting subjects, of allegories and emblems whose use—whether more or less favorable—responds to genius and taste. Everything is active and endowed with breath in that enchanted world where intellectual beings have bodies, where countrysides, forests, and rivers have their particular divinities: I know that these are chimerical characters, but the role they play in the writings of the ancient poets, and the frequent allusions made to them by modern poets, have almost made them real for us. Our eyes are so accustomed to them that it is difficult for us to see them as imaginary beings.

The author of an *Elementary Encyclopedia*, which appeared in 1775, betrays irritation with fable but nevertheless maintains its necessity. His way of recommending Chompré's *Dictionary of Fable* (which Rollin had already hailed) clearly shows that this work, being at once an allegorical iconology and a repertory of fabulous heroes, aims not so much to examine the substance of myths as to decipher the *attributes*

used by artists: at most, it is a semiological code that serves to express an "intention" in a consecrated language:

It is an assemblage of puerile tales bereft of verisimilitude, which would be worthy of scorn were these chimeras not absolutely necessary in order to understand the ancient authors, to be moved by the beauties of poetry, of pictures and allegories, and even to make use of an infinity of conventional expressions, such as "She's a Megara, a Fury, a Muse." . . . I invite my readers to equip themselves with the small portable *Dictionary* by M. Chompré. It is very useful to young people and, indeed, to everyone. Whether one is looking, for example, for the subject of a tapestry, a picture, or an allegorical piece, with this book one is certain of finding it.

If there is an eagle, look up this word, and it will refer you to *Jupiter*, to *Periphas*, and to *Ganymede*. If it is a scythe, you will find *Saturn* or *Time*. If a figure is holding a trumpet, the word trumpet will refer you to *Fame*. . . . Through the attributes you will come to know the subjects: and with a little judgment you will come to guess the artist's intention.¹

This dictionary enables one to slip from one language into another; it is a translation tool, permitting artists and poets to find the appropriated "figures" and, furthermore, ensuring that readers will be able to go back from the figure to the

original idea. Recourse to the dictionary postulates a disjunction between appearance and meaning, which is immediately nullified by a system of fixed correlations, a system that makes all possible strangeness vanish from allegory. For this reason, the use of mythological figures is reduced to a stylistic procedure: the reader or spectator is to translate the image of trumpet by the concept of Fame; and if a particular image of the trumpet holds our attention by the elegance of its form or the shine of its brass, an informed reading will avoid tarrying over this literalness whose only function is to be temporary, to indicate the "elevated" or "noble" register of the expression.

Reduced to this sort of lexicon, fable—even as it refers back to a fictive past located in Greco-Latin space—takes on an ahistorical appearance: in it, everything becomes simultaneous, even genealogies. Fable develops its networks synchronically, as if it were the vocabulary of a single state of language. The internal chronology of fable is not inscribed in the historical passage of time. From the moment that the gods, their names, their cults, their connections with people and places, etc., become the object of historical research, fable becomes an object of scholarship, and is no longer the closed and self-sufficient system we have described. It then becomes a matter for "antiquaries" (if they restrict themselves to inventories of exhumed documents: statues, altars, medals, side by side with written sources such as inscriptions, literary texts, etc.) or for mythologists (if they develop hypotheses on the origin of fables, and on the differences or resemblances between the religious beliefs of various peoples, etc.). This is a difficult and dangerous domain, and Rollin advises educators to halt at its threshold: "It would be best, it seems to me, to avoid what is related only to scholarship and would render the study of fable more difficult and less agreeable; or, at least, to relegate reflections of this kind to brief notes."

Jaucourt ends his *Encyclopedia* article on "Fable" by drawing up a program of mythological knowledge that goes beyond a mere familiarity with the figures of fables:

But to carry one's curiosity to the point of attempting to pierce the diverse meanings or the mysteries of fable, to understand the different theological systems, and to know the cults of the pagan gods is a branch of learning reserved for a small number of scholars; and the branch of learning that constitutes a very large part of belles lettres, and is absolutely necessary in order to have an understanding of the monuments of antiquity, is what is called *Mythology*.

It is thus a matter of interpreting the figures of fable according to the exigencies of a historical, genetic, and systematic understanding. Whereas fable itself, in a vulgarized and facile form, is a universal means for "poetizing" everything, "mythology" questions it about its origins, its intellectual import, its revelatory value, and its ties with institutions and customs. In short, the semantic opposition between fable and mythology may be enunciated as the difference between a generalized and stabilized interpretive system, and a rational type of reflection that makes this interpretive system an object to be interpreted according to other criteria of validity.

The renewal of myth at the end of the seventeenth century arose from this type of scholarly reflection, which applied itself to understanding mythic inventiveness in a new way since stereotyped recourse to fable had revealed itself to be sterile and tedious. Nevertheless, before reviewing the development of mythological theories, we must define, more

clearly than we have done thus far, the function of fable in the "classical" European—especially French—culture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In a culture that tolerates the coexistence of the domains of the sacred and of the profane, fable clearly occupies the profane area: it inhabits the world of mundane diversions. We may even go so far as to say that, by its avowed absence of truth value, fable is the very index of the futility of mundane existence. Fable desires to be nothing more than fiction or ornament, or, at most, scholarly remembrance. Its authority is declared to be nil vis-à-vis religious authority from the very start. As aestheticized paganism, claiming no more than beauty or grace, it is not a dangerous rival to the Christian orthodoxies—unless souls allow themselves to be unduly controlled by it and to become inflamed by the impure examples of the pagan pantheon.

Let us return to Rollin, the perfect spokesman for the religious institution at the beginning of the eighteenth century. When he includes fable in his educational program, it is not only in order to enhance the understanding of literary or pictorial works. It should also serve as a warning, as a counterproof to Christian truth:

This study, when followed with the caution and wisdom that religion demands and inspires, may be of great utility to the young.

First, it teaches them what they owe to Jesus Christ their liberator, who freed them from the powers of darkness and allowed them to move into the admirable light of the Gospel. What were men before him . . . ? Fable gives us the answer. They were blind worshippers of the devil who knelt before gold, silver, and marble; who offered silver to deaf and dumb statues; who recognized gods in animals, reptiles, and even plants. . . . Every story told in fable, every circumstance in the life of the gods, should at once fill us with confusion, admiration, and recognition. . . . A second advantage of fable lies in the fact that, in disclosing the absurd ceremonies and impious maxims of paganism, it inspires in us a new respect for the august majesty of the Christian religion, and for the sanctity of its morality.

Belief is thus to be reserved for the sole legitimate authority, revealed dogma; whereas these pagan figures are to be censured, even though in everyday life—as Rollin recognizes—their visual images, ever-renewed, surround us. At the very least, and in spite of its power to seduce, the unreality of fable leaves no doubt about the vanity of worldly existence. The presence of fable is a sure indication that worldly desires lead one astray into "false" objects. Thus the necessity of directing one's love toward its true object—God, Christ—becomes all the more urgent.

But the demarcation between the sacred and the profane has its own legitimacy, for it is postulated by religious authority itself. By way of determining the exact domain of its own jurisdiction, religious authority tolerates the existence of an external domain, which it watches over without forcing it to comply with its strictest rules. In order not to break the ties with the sacred order, human life is permitted to unfold, in part, in a profane time and space; and the figures inherited from a sacred order that has come to an end—the order of paganism—may innocently serve as ornaments to a part of existence that is not directly governed by the truths of the faith. Certainly, the imaginary is dangerous, and the images of desire constitute a grave peril to Christian souls: but in one way—in the form of a pantheon to which no one could try to attach any serious belief—orthodoxy permits

a superficial survival of what is, in another way, censured and repulsed by Christian ethics. Hence, in a more or less balanced compromise, Christianity (and especially the Catholicism of the Counterreformation) allowed the entire universe of polytheistic drives and undercurrents—which it had historically supplanted and which its true believers were invited to deny and surpass—to coexist by its side, though in the form of a gratuitous image and a defused fiction. This compromise authorizes a certain duplicity: “worldly” people (including the king himself) could taste of profane diversions, surround themselves with pagan scenes, and even become actors in mythological ballets, but they had to listen to the preachers and receive the sacraments.

Love and ambition—the two great provinces in which worldly concupiscence operates (*libido sentiendi*, *libido dominandi*)—celebrate their triumphs in the disguise of fable. In love poetry, recourse to the code of fable is a part of a system of distancing which, in transposing feeling into heroic or pastoral fiction, allows desire to be made manifest, while giving it a glorious, purified expression which is detached from trivial contingency. In this sense, fable ensures a displacement of all of the elements of discourse in the direction of a register that is entirely ludic and “polite”—which is exactly what defines the “gallant” attitude. When we recall that the principal corpus of myths—Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*—already has a strong ludic component, it is obvious that in order to satisfy the taste for novelty, for the “piquant,” which held sway in cultivated circles, artists and poets strove to outdo one another in playing this game. This competitive bidding is particularly perceptible in the art of the European rococo, with its proliferation of the decorative, its supple sinuosity, and its ornamental use of miniatures. But this element of the intellectual game, at times combined with more authentically experienced components, is already apparent in mannerism and in the vogue for literary conceits (as, for instance, in the *Adonis* of Marini); we find it again in the affectation of the seventeenth century, and it is still present in the badinages of the end of the eighteenth century. Benserade and his *Metamorphoses of Ovid Set in Rondeaux* are an excellent example of this excess of affectation: the work was seen as “piquant” because it was a well-tempered paraphrase that made use of a small, regular form to abridge and rework a Latin text whose mythic content had itself already been made the object of playful levity. The game is thus doubled. The rondeau is a miniature in comparison to the model it imitates: all is made to turn in a tight circle of twelve verses, of which the first four syllables reappear two more times—concluding the poem in their final appearance. At the end of the ancien régime, in C. A. Demoustier’s *Letters to Emilie about Mythology*, the mythic narrative is reduced to banter interspersed with verse: the versified elements are sometimes episodes or commentaries from the narrative, sometimes gallant compliments to the person addressed. This form, inherited from the seventeenth century, becomes so light as to be meaningless. Here again, the mythology, which is told letter by letter, undergoes a paring down, an attenuation, turning it into the minimal substance of an adventure story and the excuse for a facile pedagogy whose aim is merely to please. It is only one step away from that work patronized by Madame de Genlis, in which all that remains of the gods is their names, represented by calligraphy in the form of an emblem.

Yet the mythic repertory that is capable of transcribing current events or feelings in a fictive register may also serve to magnify and celebrate them in a triumphant mode. Miniaturization is just one of the propensities of the joyous

imagination, the one in which play seeks to ally itself with the conquest of innocent levity. When play, on the other hand, becomes charged with glorifying intentions, it magnifies without allowing itself to be restrained by the regulations of the real world. The mythological fiction makes possible the laudatory hyperbole, which would otherwise be unpronounceable within the bounds of Christian order. For a victory in battle, the Christian festival culminates in the adoration of the God of armies: *Te Deum laudamus*. But the Christian festival has as its double a profane and thus mythological festival, which exalts the prince himself: he is compared with Mars or Hercules, he is the favorite of Bellona, and so forth. For a princely birth, Christian baptism has its double in ceremonies or poems of fabulous inspiration, in which announcements are made of nothing less than the imminent return of Astraeus and the Golden Age. The apotheosis of the prince may set the stage for his lawful representation within a system of divine figures, the validity of which is established, from the start of the game, as belonging to the past and which is now pure appearance. This “white” divinization allows the energies of celebration to blossom; and while these powers remain captives of the Greco-Roman model, they allow for every sort of extravagance, for they pretend to be nothing but pure show. The Sun King is allowed to dance in the costume of Apollo. Jupiter can descend from the sky, in a stage machine, to announce to future centuries an illustrious lineage of sovereigns.

Although the conventional system of Greco-Roman mythology favors a purifying or glorifying transmutation, it is no less vulnerable for this, since the authority upon which it is founded is nothing more than an aesthetic habit. There is nothing to protect it against parody, or against the ebb of tastes, which would abandon mythic embellishment to return to the ordinary reality of desire.

The direction taken by satire and comedy in the seventeenth century was to remove the masks, to reverse the trajectory of the mythological enterprise with its purifying trends (affectation) or glorifying trends (the ideal of the nobility), and to return to literalness all that the mythological code had previously transferred into the metaphorical dimension. In contrast to the tableaux in which desire is exalted and divinized, satire brings us down again into the world of everyday life and into the reality of instinct in its brutal state. The following episode from the *Discourse on the Journey of Saint-Germain in Laye*, which figures in the *Satirical Cabinet* (1618), is exemplary in this regard: the mythic decor is read as an erotic stimulant:

Mais faisons, je vous pry, pour saouler nostre veuë,
Dans la chambre du Roy encore une reveuë.
Voyez, en cest endroit, comme Mars et Venus
Se tiennent embrassez, languissans et tous nuds;
Voyez les à ce coing, en une autre posture:
Avez-vous jamais veu si lascive peinture?
Haussez un peu les yeux, et voyez les encore
En une autre façon, dessus ce plancher d'or;
Voyez les ici pres, tous deux encore aus prises.
Quoy! tout est plain d'Amours et de flames éprises.
Dans ceste belle chambre! Allons, fuyons ces lieux:
Sortons-en, je vous prie, ou bien faisons comme eux!

But I pray you, to proclaim our vows,
Let us meet again in the bedroom of the King.
Look over there, as Mars and Venus
Embrace, languishing and entirely nude;
Look at them over here, in a different position:

Have you ever seen such a sexy painting?
 Raise your eyes a bit, and look at them again
 In a different form, above this golden floor-board;
 Look at them close by here, the two of them still locked
 together.

O my! Everything is full of love-making and heated
 passion,
 In this beautiful bedroom! Come on, let's get out of here:
 Let's leave, I beg you, or else do what they are doing!

One may be sacrilegious with impunity when dealing with the pseudo-sacred. Burlesque plays freely upon such license. The great mythic images that are used to ennoble the circumstances of public and private life are the means of transmutation and travesty. By disfiguring and caricaturing them, one realizes a return to their trivial reality: to travesty what was a means of travesty is to nullify its depicted purity and glory, and to return to the grit and smell of the world as it exists for those who have lost their illusions. Dassoucy's *Ovid in a Good Mood*, Scarron's *Virgil Travestied*, the young Marivaux's *Homer Travestied*, and Blumauer's late *Virgil's Aeneas Travestied* (Vienna 1732-94) constitute more than attacks on the most highly respected literary models. Through those models, they assault the very virtues that were exalted by the epico-mythic tradition: warlike exploits, the sacrifice of one's life for country and glory. Their mockery, which took aim at the heroes and gods of antiquity, was more generally directed against the heroic ideal. The simple pleasure of living is of far greater value. What is denounced, then, is fictive immortality, a deal offered to fools, counterfeit money whose mythic celebration pays those who shed their blood on the field of battle. Following the wars of Louis XIV, parody, as employed by Marivaux, attacked not only the ancients and their partisans but, even more, the illusions of military glory. Verses such as these (addressed by Andromache to Hector) are demobilizing. They "demystify" the common ground of the undying memory:

Oh! great gods! when I contemplate
 The afflicted state of widowhood,
 I find a bed to be quite fearsome,
 When in that bed we are no longer two!
 Once the bloody Achilles
 Killed my father in a town . . .
 Well then! What was its name?
 I do not remember its name.
 He buried him himself, it is said,
 With great sumptuousness:
 But when a body is buried,
 What is the good of honoring it?
 No matter what glory one is buried with,
 One has nothing but the earth for cover.

This resolutely worldly confession of faith (which reduces death to mere interment), in challenging a "pagan" image of immortality,² implies disbelief in Christian immortality. We might even say that parody is a burlesque of mythic narratives and pastoral or warlike fables which does not limit its destructive effect to the aesthetic dimension alone, or even to the hierarchy of "official" values: indirectly it directs itself against the highest authority. For, even though fictive, the world of fable nonetheless offers images of a sovereignty that is homologous to the ruling sovereignty but is, so to speak, legal tender. To attack Jupiter and the gods of fable is, according to one's insinuations, to attack in *effigy*, and with impunity, the king and the powerful, the holiness of God, of the Pope, and so forth. Since the world of fable is, by the decree of the spiritual powers that be, a profane world



Louis XIV as the Sun God in the ballet *La nuit*, 1653. Anonymous watercolor. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo Giraudon.

without any true sacred content, there can be no blasphemy or lèse-majesté in disfiguring it. The critique leveled by libertinism against religion or against the centralizing monarchy can thus be effected obliquely by attacking (in appearance) only those powers which the least suspect Christian tradition had never ceased to condemn. As may be seen, the duality of the (Christian) sacred and the profane (placed in its "mythological" setting) is arranged in such a way as to make it possible to play sometimes upon their separation and their mutual exclusion and sometimes upon their parallelism and their isomorphism. If pagan and Christian sovereignty are considered in their formal similarity (an identical structure in which all is dependent upon a supreme divinity; an identical presence of the miraculous), then a polemic against Christianity (or against the superstitious aspects of Christianity) may be developed in total safety by directing its darts only against what at first sight appears to be the gods of paganism (for example, the article "Jupiter" in Bayle's *Dictionary*). If Christianity and paganism are viewed as incompatible, hos-

tility to Christianity may be manifested by the more dangerous means of resolutely favoring the world of fable. Under the cover of an aesthetic tradition that had become acclimated to mythological fiction and had given it its noble pedigree, the rebellious mind would proclaim its preference for the pagan fable over the doctrine imposed by the Church, which was no less fabulous and lying but was a thousand times less agreeable. This was the time when anti-Christian feeling first showed its face unveiled: that open antipathy recurred several times after the Renaissance, but especially in the seventeenth century. In the case of a Voltaire, the option of paganism—in his *Apology for Fable*—does not so much attest an authentic sentiment in favor of the world of myth as it attests the opportunism of a method of propaganda that is capable of putting barbs on anything:

*Savante antiquité, beauté toujours nouvelle,
Monument du génie, heureuses fictions,
Environnez-moi des rayons
De votre lumière immortelle:
Vous savez animer l'air, la terre, et les mers;
Vous embellissez l'univers.
Cet arbre à tête longue, aux rameaux toujours verts,
C'est Atys, aié de Cybèle;
La précoce hyacinthe est le tendre mignon
Que sur ces prés fleuris caressait Apollon. . . .*

Wise antiquity, beauty always new,
Monument of genius, happy fictions,
Surround me with the rays
Of your immortal light:
You know how to animate the air, the earth, and the seas;
You embellish the universe.
This tree with the high head, with branches always green,
It is Atys, loved by Cybele;
The precocious hyacinth is the tender darling
Whom Apollo caressed in these flowering meadows. . . .

Another series of examples follows, and Voltaire continues:

*Tout l'Olympe est peuplé de héros amoureux.
Admirables tableaux! séduisante magie!
Qu'Hésiode me plaît dans sa théologie
Quand il me peint l'Amour débrouillant le chaos,
S'élançant dans les airs, et planant sur les flots!
Vantex-nous maintenant, bienheureux légendaires,
Le porc de saint Antoine, et le chien de saint Roch
Vos reliques, vos scapulaires,
Et la guimpe d'Ursule, et la crasse du froc;
Mettez la Fleur des saints à côté d'un Homère:
Il ment, mais en grand homme; il ment, mais il sait plaire;
Sottement vous avez menti:
Pour lui l'esprit humain s'éclaire:
Et, si l'on vous croyait, il serait abruti.
On chérira toujours les erreurs de la Grèce;
Toujours Ovide charmera.*

All of Olympus is peopled with amorous heroes.
Admirable scenes! Seductive magic!
How Hesiod pleases me with his theology
When he depicts Love disentangling chaos,
Bounding in the air and soaring on the waves!
Praise us now, you fortunate creatures of legend,
The pig of Saint Anthony, and the dog of Saint Roch,
Your relics, your scapulars,
And the wimple of Ursula, and the squalor of the monk's robe;
Put the Flower of the saints next to a Homer:

He lies, but like a man; he lies, but he knows how to please;
You have lied stupidly:
With him, the human mind is enlightened:
But if anyone believed you, he would be made stupid as a brute.
People will always cherish the errors of Greece;
Ovid will always charm.

Voltaire appears less inclined actually to enter the world of fable than to make an ally of it in his battle for the Enlightenment and for a civilization of earthly happiness. His *Apology for Fable*, far from taking him out of his own element, only confirms his choice—in favor of an urban civilization and the pleasures to be had through the arts—which is proclaimed in his famous poem *The Man of the World*. Voltaire's Homer, through whom "the human mind is enlightened," has nothing "primitive" about him. Fable, as sung by Voltaire, comes down to a modern, profane diversion, in clear contrast to religious practice. The dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, to which we have alluded from the start, is nowhere more noticeable than in the final verses of the poem:

*Si nos peuples nouveaux sont chrétiens à la messe,
Ils sont païens à l'Opéra.
L'almanach est païen, nous comptons nos journées
Par le seul nom des dieux que Rome avait connus;
C'est Mars et Jupiter, c'est Saturne et Vénus,
Qui président au temps, qui font nos destinées.
Ce mélange est impur, on a tort; mais enfin
Nous ressemblons assez à l'abbé Pellegrin,
"Le matin catholique, et le soir idolâtre,
Déjeûnant de l'autel, et soupant du théâtre."*

If our new peoples are Christians at Mass,
They are pagans at the Opera.
The almanac is pagan, in which we measure our days
Only with the name of the gods that Rome knew;
It is Mars and Jupiter, it is Saturn and Venus,
That preside over time, that make our destinies.
This mixture is impure, it is wrong; but in the end
We resemble rather closely the Abbé Pellegrin:
"Catholic in the morning, and idolatrous in the evening,
Lunching at the altar, and dining at the theater."

Up to this point we have considered myth only in its formal and most general aspect; that is, as the agent of an aesthetic transformation on the profane level, under the assumption that the starting point of myth was regularly presented in a circumstance of life that one wished to celebrate, to purify, or to magnify. But the mythological code, with its variants and its multiple branches, also exists for itself, independent of those embellishments to which it might serve as a vehicle. It presents a broad canvas abounding in passionate connections, extreme situations, and monstrous acts. Upon this preexisting material, imagination and desire may freely project their most authentic energies by making use of its choices and scenarios. Certain seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works may be regarded as reinterpretations of great mythical themes—with the proviso that these artists were less interested in modifying the meaning of myths than in using them as a field for the free play of their faculties. In its received form, of course, myth remains a "subject" that demands respect. But in an aesthetics which, contrary to our own, did not place a premium on the kind of "originality" that could produce content, subject, and style (i.e., the entirety of a work's constituent parts) ex nihilo, the

freedom of expression left to the artist in treating a known fable in whichever way he desired was enough to liberate, in certain cases, some very deep-seated forces. Even the most apparently frivolous narrative or tragedy can be intensely seductive in its hidden meanings. As told by LaFontaine, the story of Psyche, in its playful and free form, is charged throughout with symbols that are piled upon the primary data and revolve around the themes of the secret and of instant recognition. *Andromache*, *Iphigenia*, and *Phaedra* are plays in which the mythic element is psychologized, thus allowing for the free play of the dark forces of passion. The abandoned Ariadne or Dido present lyricism as well as music with an occasion for the melodious *lamento*, the mournful lament. Under the safeguard and the cover of an existing myth, which offers it a form of reception, desire is allowed to live out its imaginary satisfaction impersonally. The traditional mythic structures are perceived as obstacles only from the time when the exigencies of personal expression are to prevail. The role played by the mythic universe as foundation for and receiver of projections of desire is complemented by a more intellectual function, which may build pedagogical, political, or ethical constructs upon the epico-mythical schemata. The mythic framework allows for the embellishment, enlargement, and "detemporalization" of moral lessons for the edification of young princes. Fénelon's *Telemachus* is at once a prose poem, a "Bildungsroman," and a political utopia. The Odyssean setting, with its foam-capped sea, its apparitions of Amphitrite, and its nymphs lying under verdant arbors, ensures a harmonious fusion of these composite elements. Mentor, who is Minerva, in the guise of a profane fable lavishly distributes a lesson of wisdom in which the most rigorous precepts of Christian doctrine are protected, decanted, universalized, and rendered agreeable.

Furthermore, in examining the choices made by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers and artists working within this mythic complex, one cannot help but observe the emphasis on certain themes, according to the period in question, that point to a common anxiety often related to the preoccupations to which that particular time was sensitive. It is fair to say that the baroque, haunted by the changeableness of appearances, enjoyed fables of metamorphosis (Bernini's *Daphne* is one case among many). *Pygmalions* abounded in the eighteenth century, not only because that century posed the question of the animation of matter, but also because its artists dreamed of an imitative perfection for which they might be rewarded by a loving embrace from their own work come to life. It is no coincidence that the sole writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on a mythical subject is a *Pygmalion*, in which the writer's fundamental narcissism is given free play: the artist's desire is paid back by the being formed by him as the image of his ideal. A limit has been reached here. The fable of Pygmalion represented, in a language that was still mythic, a demand for self-expression whose next manifestation would consist of a rejection of any mythic mediation, any recourse to preexisting fable. Similarly, in a later period (around 1800), certain heroic myths (Prometheus, Heracles, Ganymede) would be called upon to express hope and revolt: the apotheosis of the human hero makes it possible to glimpse a future in which the rule of the ancient gods will have collapsed, giving way to man. Here again, mythic language tends toward its own abolition, to the extent that the disappearance of the authority of the gods carries with it the fall of traditional imagic discourse as this was organized around them. This would lead, ultimately in Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods*, to recourse to a total myth culminating in the fall of the mythic universe,

conceived as a now inoperative expression of an ancient law of the world.

But this tendency, far from being the only one, is mirrored—as we shall see—by an exactly opposite tendency.

II. The Growth of Mythological Theories

Fable, stabilized in the form of a body of fixed accounts and symbols which are indefinitely repeatable, can thus, in the most favorable cases, be relived, reanimated, and given presence by a fiery imagination capable of projecting its dream upon a preexistent image. A musician or painter (more often than a poet) could at times, in the eighteenth century, breathe new life, a passionate shiver, a seemingly invented strangeness, into the theme of a fable.

But the renaissance of mythic material took place via a more circuitous path which, paradoxically, at first sight seemed to be leading to the death and final expulsion of fable. It was mythology—that is, scholarly discourse applied to myths—that put the world of fable to death, but even in doing so it gave it the grounds, in an unexpected way, for a new, enlarged, and rejuvenated efflorescence.

It was a case of a progressive evolution, whose stages are not difficult to trace.

The mythology of the eighteenth century fuses, in variable proportions, the learning of the antiquarians (concerning the attributes of the gods, places of worship, written sources, coins, etc.) and the conjectures of the theologians: the convenient hypothesis, which goes back to Clement of Alexandria, is that the pagan gods are the pluralized and degenerate reflections of the true God of which Genesis speaks, or of the kings of the sacred scriptures. For infidels and sinners, primordial Revelation has been progressively obscured. After the dispersion of Babel, when people had forgotten the first and only God, nothing held them back from divinizing their princes, their rivers, their animals. But, in the same way that the pagans' languages, in the eyes of the etymologists, are corrupt derivatives of the Hebrew, so one can divine in their deities, though falling short, the holy religion of which they are the distorted reflection. The Abbé Banier perfectly summarizes this common view:

In the earliest times, men worshiped one God. Noah preserved in his family the devotion his fathers had offered to the creator; but it did not take his descendants long to corrupt its purity. The crimes to which they abandoned themselves soon weakened the idea of the Divine, and people began to associate it with perceptible objects. What appeared to them to be the brightest and most perfect in nature moved them to homage; and for this reason the sun was the first object of their superstition. From sun worship, they moved to the worship of other celestial bodies and planets, and the entire heavenly troop . . . attracted a religious cult to itself, as did the elements, the rivers, and mountains. Things did not stop there; nature itself was regarded as a divinity, and under different names she became the object of worship for different nations. Finally, great men were seen as meriting, either by their conquests or by their invention of the arts, honors due only to the Creator of the Universe: and this was the origin of all the gods adored by paganism.

Such a mythological system places the various traditional theories of the origins of myths (Euhemerism, astral symbolism, etc.) on an equal footing in order to explain the false religions even as it indicts them, all the while maintaining,

intact, the authority of a primary Revelation, of which the Church has remained the depository.

But this orthodox mythology, in developing a psychological explanation for the cause of the crimes and the impiety of the infidel nations, engendered an even bolder line of thought directed at the very motives of every faith and every form of devotion: the skeptics would use it to undercut the authority that orthodoxy thought to preserve and reinforce. The weapons used by the Church against superstition could easily be turned against the Faith, and the most common ruse was to attack Church dogma itself, in the guise of carrying on the fight led by the defenders of the Faith against idolatry. From this point on, the God of the Hebrews was to be submitted to a causal interpretation analogous to the one that the theologians reserved for the pagan gods. The explanation given by Lucretius, "inborn dread" (*insitus horror*, 5.1160–1239), would hold for every cult without exception. (The "libertine" current of the seventeenth century had widely cultivated this return to the Epicurean doctrine.) Fable, instead of being secondary and derivative, would appear as the primary response of men to the terrors of dreams, to great natural events, to all that amazed them.

Fontenelle's short dissertation *Origin of Fables* connects myths and polytheism with simple causes: ignorance, wonder, terror in the face of the powers experienced everywhere in nature, and the propensity to explain the unknown by the known. Fables offer us "the history of the errors of the human mind." It follows that one should not hesitate to learn every aspect of fable; mythology is to be practiced as Fontenelle does it in order that we may be set right: "To fill one's head with all the excesses of the Phoenicians and the Greeks is not a science, but to know what led the Phoenicians and the Greeks to these excesses is indeed a science. All mankind is so alike that there is no people whose idiocies should not make us tremble."

Here we see the meeting between scorn for fable and the affirmation of the great epistemological value of reflecting on the beginnings of our relationship to the world and on the errors committed by the mind when it was first left to its own devices. Everything began, for the savage as well as for the infant, with a deplorable propensity for false explanations, up to the time when our intelligence, as it was slowly and progressively disabused, became capable of laughing at its childish beliefs, and even of knowing why it allowed itself to be drawn into the world of fable. The cultivated mind sees a warning here too: the "primitive" errors into which every people has fallen are also errors of every period, and nothing is easier than falling back into error. One must always be on one's guard against yielding to the ever-renewed temptation of myth. Our imagination ever remains receptive to myth even when our reason denies it: "While we may be incomparably more enlightened than those whose crude minds invented the Fables in good faith, we all too easily return to that same way of thinking that made Fables so agreeable to them. They passed them on because they believed them, and we pass them on with just as much pleasure even though without belief; all of which proves that imagination and reason can have little to do with one another, and that matters of which reason has been disabused from the start lose nothing of their attractiveness as regards the imagination." The dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, which allowed fable to subsist on the periphery of sacred history, is thus replaced by the dichotomy of reason and imagination. Once again, fable is regarded as stripped of all truth, all authority; it is reason (and not revelation) that is master. But the imaginary and the pleasure that attaches to it are not

branded with any moral reprobation: they are perfectly legitimate so long as they do not usurp the prerogatives of reason. Illusion has the right to enchant us as long as we know that we are in the realm of poetry and not science: when we give in to the seductions of myth, by playing its game we tarry in a world that we were capable of leaving behind forever. The poets of the childhood of the world—Homer and Hesiod—are certainly admirable, but their great images are nothing but the reverse side of their ignorance. In the perspective of a progressive becoming in which reason perfects itself from one century to the next, myth is the innocent witness to the first babblings of the mind, starting from the time when the soul could speak only in metaphor to voice its terrors and its wonders. This general theory of myth places all faiths on an equal footing: it makes an exception for the "true religion" only as a precaution and for the sake of style. The intellectual education of men should lead them to shed all prejudices, all errors, all cults. (Such disillusionment leads to poetry that makes use of fable without admitting to it, in a cold, spiritual, and mocking tone: the entire antipoetic eighteenth century defines itself in this way.)

But not everyone bore witness to the same confidence in the powers of cultivated reason. Hume, who interprets the birth of fables more or less in the way of Fontenelle, betrays doubt about the constructs of reason. It is possible that these constructs are no more solid than the polytheistic cosmogonies—in which case our "progress" becomes precarious, and the pleasure that we derive from ancient myths is less childish than it might appear. In our uncertainty regarding the true, myth can at least claim the privilege of beauty, without being any more of a lie than the things we take to be reasonable. Reason that is divested of illusions about its own powers can still show indulgence for the first creatures produced by the imagination.

The complete rehabilitation of myth would soon follow in this vein. But in order for this to occur, the primary experience of the mind, instead of being assigned the mark of imperfection, had to become endowed with the character of plenitude, the prerogative of unity. In this reevaluation of myth it is easy to see a return of theological thought, which would come to be combined with the psychological explanation of the production of primary ideas and primary feelings. *Genesis* reappears behind (or in) the simple impulses of the mind, which constitute the first stage of the genetic reconstruction of the intellectual faculties of the human race. However "stupid" we may call the child, the savage, or early man, they nevertheless lived in immediate contact with the world: they were like Adam in paradise. Revelation was not given to them from the outside like a doctrine; it ruled from within. Their knowledge consisted not in reflection but in participation: they lived in familiarity with the world and its forces. In this image of primordial community (which is itself based in myth), a primary role falls to those powers attributed to primitive language: it is at once speech and song (Strabo says this; Vossius and Vico repeat it;³ Rousseau and Herder develop its theoretical consequences). It carries in itself the "almost inevitable impression of passion seeking to communicate itself" (Rousseau). Speech and feeling are not dissociated; expressive fidelity is absolute; there is no longer any place for lying or abstraction. The heart and speech of humans no longer make two. As for the gods that humans imagine, in the grip of terror or in a playful spirit, they are but the face of a living nature that turns toward them—a nature to which they are not strangers. Immediate to themselves, immediate to nature, humans manifest, in early lyricism and in the first great epics, the impulse in which the



Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*. Rome, Villa Borghese Museum. Photo Alinari-Giraudon.

greatness and the limits of their mortal condition are inscribed. Such is the new conviction which restores to myths a legitimacy at once ontological and poetic, and which lends equal attention to the testimonies of every primitive literature. As if in response to this new attention, entire mythologies come to light or are partially invented: the Edda, Ossian, the sacred books of the East, the songs of the American Indians. These works reveal an art that preceded art, a poetry anterior to any rule of composition. And people took delight in recognizing, in this "barbarism," a grandeur and an energy no longer possessed by the civilized languages.

The result was not only a broadening of the field of mythological knowledge, nor a mere increase in the repertory of epic or naive texts made available to people of good

taste who were weary of the frivolities of their own century. For those who experienced the power of these texts, the idea of a regenerated poetry, a language restored to its primitive vigor, inevitably prompted the desire for a new way of living and feeling which would recover the fullness of primitive times. In its nostalgia for the high language that has been lost, the mind turns toward the beginnings of societies in the hope of drawing out an enthusiasm that will give birth to songs capable of restoring to peoples, in the immediate future, the boiling impetus and the unanimous soul that have deserted them. The resurrected notion of genius is an invitation to listen to the voice which speaks out of the depths of nature and the collective consciousness. In a project of this sort, the poet, having recognized that all of the peoples of the world, at the time of their first self-affirmation, glorified themselves in their gods and heroes, felt himself drawn toward a past which he could offer to his fellow citizens in order to unite them in the state of mind of the reinvented community. Thus, it is once again toward the Greek and Roman (and, subordinately, Celtic or "Gallic") models that the French poets turned: but the traditional models themselves—after the revelation of the Nordic and Oriental antiquities—now offered a new face. Now it was no longer bad taste that was to be found in Homer, Aeschylus, Pindar, or even Virgil, but a gigantic, savage sublimity, contact with which could only be revivifying. Marked by an idealistic conviction of Neoplatonist inspiration, the Neoclassical system aspired not only to bring together the atemporal forms of the Beautiful, but also, following Winckelmann, to affirm that the archetypes of "beautiful nature" could only manifest themselves by virtue of the flowering of political liberty in the Greek city-states. At the cost of certain displacements and condensations, the deities presented in Greek statuary appear as the incarnation of this ideal, as it was fashioned by free citizens. To be sure, this perspective causes the primitive world to lose much of its harshness and ferocious savagery: the all too smooth serenity celebrated by Winckelmann as the reflection of an intelligible heaven cannot be the vehicle for energies that are meant to erupt from the mysterious depths of living nature. But for an André Chénier there is no contradiction in seeking the juxtaposition, in the Hellenic past as a whole, of a formal harmony, the heat of young desire, and, especially, the great breath of freedom. This to the extent that the imitation of the ancients amounted to more than a mere repetition of names or images: it was to be a second conquest of fire, a transfusion of energy. "Let us light our torches at their poetic fires." Herder, about the same time, hoped that the poetry of the ancients, without being made the object of a servile imitation, could become the source for a modern "heuristic poetry" which would allow for the invention of "an entirely new mythology." But he quickly recognized the difficulty there would be in reconciling "the spirit of reduction with the spirit of fiction," the "dismembering of the philosopher" with the "ordered reassembling of the poet."

The appeal is thus addressed to the poet, who is expected to awaken the collective impulse by exalting the hearts of men and restoring the presence of forgotten divine forces. At stake is society itself, people's search for renewed awareness of the bond that unites them. The figure of the ancient gods becomes charged with a political significance here. They are witnesses to what the popular soul needs in order to recognize itself; they must again become what they were: respondents and guarantors whom the social group imagined in its own image, and in whom it discovered its truth, its own nature. The privileged theater for the return of the gods as

evoked by the poets is human celebration (national or universal celebration, according to whether one generalizes or particularizes its scope).

We see here the formation of a "myth of mythology" (H. Blumenberg), which makes the uncertain origins of myths coincide with the origin of the nation (or of humanity), and shows the people in a world in crisis their duty to reunite themselves with their lost origins (with lost nature) lest they lose their souls and perish. No sooner is this new myth formulated and this duty enunciated than questions are raised. Is it possible for the people of an age of science and of reasoned reflection to recover the naive wonderment of a young humanity that peopled nature with deities that were changeable and not slaves to the principle of identity (K. Ph. Moritz)? In the ode entitled *The Gods of Greece*, Schiller evokes at length the ancient host of gods: but they were banished and will never return; nature is thenceforth *entgöttert*, bereft of gods. Our poetry can only live by coming to grips with this absence, by saying that we miss them: "What must live immortally in song must perish in life." Incapable of recovering naive simplicity, modern poetry devotes itself to sentimental nostalgia. Jean-Paul would restate it in his own way: "The beautiful, rich simplicity of the child is enchanting not to another child but to someone who has lost it. . . . The

Greek gods are but flat images for us, the empty clothes of our feelings, and not living beings. And while there were no false gods on earth at that time—and every people could be received as a guest at the Temple of another people—today we hardly know anything but false gods. . . . And whereas in the old days poetry was an object of the people, just as the people were the object of poetry, today we sing only while going from one office to another. . . ."

The impossibility of bringing ancient mythology back to life (not because we no longer admire it, but because we admire it too much and because the present time has become incapable of accepting it) merely accentuates the desire to see the birth of a new mythology. We find this idea at the end of a text (copied in Hegel's hand in 1796, but perhaps the work of Schelling, and certainly inspired by Hölderlin) known as "the oldest systematic program of German idealism": "We need a new mythology, but this mythology should be placed in the service of ideas, it should become a mythology of *reason*. Those ideas which do not present themselves in an aesthetic form—that is, a mythological form—are without interest for the people; and conversely, a mythology that is not reasonable is an object of shame for the philosopher. Thus the enlightened and those who are not enlightened will end up joining hands: mythology must become philosophical in order to make the people reasonable, and philosophy mythological, in order to make the philosophers sensitive. Then will we come to see the establishment of an eternal unity between us." In many of his writings (*Bread and Wine*, *Archipelagus*, etc.), Hölderlin chose to speak of the intermediate moment, the time of anxious waiting, between the irreversible disappearance of the ancient gods and the rise of a new god, a Dionysus or a Christ of the final hour. In 1800, Friedrich Schlegel in turn called for a new mythology, arising not, as had the old, from a contact with the perceptible universe, but "from the most profound depths of the spirit," just as harmonious order unfolds "when chaos is touched by love."

Though it may have been disappointed, this expectation of a new flowering of myth (a myth which would once again become the kingdom of unifying imagination, but also the triumph of sensible reason, and which would no longer borrow the face of the ancient gods) attributes to the future, to history that is to come, a function whose equivalent may be found only in religious or gnostic eschatologies. And even when myth seems still to be lacking, both human time and history as made by humans are profoundly mythicized by this hope. In awaiting the coming of a new mythology as if it were to be a veritable Parousia, this thought was already mythically defining the present as the deaf gestation of a new Adam, as the nocturnal examination of the point from which the universal dawn would shine forth: the present was a time of working and testing, moving forward, forced halts, attempts at new beginnings. Human history, the object of the new mythopoesis, reveals an intelligible meaning; it is the reconquering, under a still unknown appearance, of the lost wholeness, the collective reintegration into a unity, the return to the oldest truth, at the cost of bringing an entirely new world into being. Conceived in this way, myth, which at the beginning of the eighteenth century had been purely profane ornamentation, becomes the sacred par excellence, the ultimate authority—a sacred that imposes its laws in advance and judges human values in a final tribunal. Having never come to pass, it is nevertheless the judge of all that comes to pass. Such a change is but the corollary of another change: what had been the sacred at the beginning of the eighteenth century—written revelation, tradition, dogma—is

Falconet, *Pygmalion and Galatea*. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery. Museum photo.



submitted to a "demystifying" critique which reduces it to a mere human work, a fabulous work of the imagination. The sacred is reduced to a psychological function, while certain human faculties (feelings, consciousness, imagination) or certain collective acts (the common will) become endowed with a sacred function. In the intellectual history of this century, the sacralization of myth is closely associated with the humanization of the sacred. It is no longer sufficient, as has so often been done, to see the philosophy of the Enlightenment as a process of "secularization," in which human reason laid claim to prerogatives which had previously belonged to the divine *logos*. A reverse movement is also apparent, whereby myth, at first cast aside and held to be absurd, was now seen as having a deep and full meaning, and valued as revealed truth (Schelling). This double transformation effects a redistribution of the contrasting elements of the profane and the sacred. The old sacred sheds its skin and the profane order becomes charged with a mythic hope for a liberating progress. In the expectation of a ruling myth which will invent the humanity of the future, the old myths are taken up again as prefigurations—myths of Prometheus, Heracles, Psyche, and the Titans—but now they are used to designate rebellion, desire, and the hopes of those who aspire to become masters of their destiny. The myth that is to come, as sketched in advance by a diffuse expectation, will not only be imagined by man (by the poet-prophet, the people-poet, or humanity at work), but will also have man himself as its hero. The awaited Myth—born neither of the truth of history nor of the truth of poetry—is no longer a theogony but an anthropogony. It is one that will celebrate in song, in order to assemble the peoples, the Man-God who produces himself from his own song or by the work of his hands. All the mythologies of the modern world are but the substitutes and small change of this unfinished Myth.

J.St./d.w.

NOTES

1. Revised, amplified, transformed, Chompré's *Dictionnaire* became F. Noël's *Dictionnaire de la fable* (1801), which was used by artists and poets of the nineteenth century. Noël's *Dictionnaire de la fable* includes the mythologies of the Norse, Asia, etc.; the Greco-Roman world, while remaining predominant, ceased then to be the sole purveyor of imagery.

2. Of course, it is not a matter of the afterlife as the Homeric poems present it, but rather as it is promised by the mythological convention current in the seventeenth century.

3. Vico proposes a false etymology according to which *muthos* is related to *mutus* (mute), indicating that fable appeared in silent times and was the earliest form of speech, which came to be joined with an earlier language consisting of gestures and mute signs.

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THE MYTHOLOGY OF ANCIENT SWITZERLAND

Despite occasional hypercriticism, archeological discoveries made in Switzerland lead us to conclude that there was a ritual life in the area even in Paleolithic times.¹ But it is not until the Bronze Age that we find evidence of a mythology, of which certain vestiges are reflected even in contemporary Switzerland.

With the Roman presence on Helvetian soil, documents bearing on native beliefs or on great Celtic deities multiplied: Lugh, Sucellus, and Epona all had their devotees, as did local deities such as Artio, Mars Caturix, Genava (protectress of Geneva), and Aventia (patron goddess of Avenches). An inscription from this last locality mentions the "Lugavi"; this inscription is analogous to the one at Uxama (Osma) in the Spanish province of Soria and supports the view that Lugh was a "multiple" god, perhaps triple. An Irish story alludes to triplicity. Like Danaë, Ethnë—Lugh's mother—is locked up in a tower. McKineely, the owner of a blue cow, disguises himself and manages to rescue the young woman. From that union triplets are born; two die by drowning, and Lugh is the sole survivor.²

The great Celtic myths have not left clear traces on Swiss folklore; yet a curious coincidence should be mentioned. The city of Bern, founded in 1191 by the Zaehringen family following a successful bear hunt, is adjacent to a site called Muri, where in 1832 a votive statuette dedicated to the goddess Artio was discovered: she is depicted sitting, facing a large bear, which seems to be climbing down from a tree. To this day, the city of Bern raises bears in pits, but the present inhabitants' affection for their ursine heraldry cannot be connected with the goddess Artio or with any kind of totemism. Yet various popular traditions, of which some are still alive and others disappeared during the past few centuries, must have connections with myths of ancient Switzerland, though it is not possible to establish whether these myths are Celtic or Germanic. There are carnival customs common to youth groups that existed among both the Celts (for example, the Irish *feinid*) and the Norse (for example, the Scandinavian *berserkir*). The "Punchiadsurs" of Grisons indulged in ritual combats analogous to those that took place on the occasion of the Roman Caprotine Nones. The Roitschegetten of Lötschental (Valais) or the Klausen of Appenzell still indulge in a kind of wild hunt in carnival season.

A custom still observed in Sursee (Lucerne) on Saint Martin's Day, 11 November, consists of decapitating, blindfold, a goose hanging from a string; this custom cannot merely be connected with a memory of the days of the tithe.³ Each competitor must wear a blindfold in the shape of the sun and a loose-fitting red cape. In other places, "wild men" appear, whether at carnival time, in tales and legends, or on inn signs. Sometimes they wear bear costumes. This ancient heritage was formerly neglected because of its popular character, and the related mythical stories were treated with contempt like old wives' tales.⁴ In central Switzerland and in Valais, legends have been recorded that correspond to the story of the death of the great Pan told by Plutarch in his treatise on the disappearance of the oracles. Since Switzerland is hardly an isolated case, Plutarch may have recorded the Greek version of an ancient popular European theme.⁵

Stories about giants and dragons also show how arbitrary it often is to speak of French or German mythology. Gargan-



The bear goddess Artio. Votive statuette. Bern, Historisches Museum. Museum photo.

tua has left his traces in French-speaking areas, whereas in German-speaking Switzerland the giants have a rather Norse look about them. All these giants really look alike. Similarly, the legendary dragons of Switzerland remind us of Tarasques or Mélusines as much as monsters from the Germanic epic stories. Celtic and Norse sources, similar in background, interpenetrate and cannot be told apart.

One Swiss theme, however, the best known by far, has origins that must be sought in northern Europe—the theme of William Tell.

Several historians of religions have recently demonstrated that certain Indo-European heroes, formerly considered historical characters, in fact belong to mythology. A striking case, and probably the most recent, is that of William (Wilhelm) Tell. It had long been noted that the stories about Tell, Toko, Puncker, William of Clouesly, and others were very much alike, and it was agreed that the theme of the remarkable archer came from a Scandinavian source. But this case study had generally been limited to the episode of the apple placed on the head of a child and hit with a shot from a crossbow.⁶

Skill in archery was thought to have a supernatural quality. The *Malleus maleficarum* devotes several pages to this subject, and if he had actually lived, the skillful crossbowman would certainly have brought down upon himself the thunderbolts of the Inquisition.⁷ Fairies and witches were credited with the power of unleashing magic, harmful arrows. The esoteric symbolism of the bow and arrow may also be at play here.

Shadows also obscure the episode of Tell's escape as a prisoner navigating a lake. Norse heroes comparable to Tell have also escaped, but on skis. Such is the case of Toko, Heming, and Geyti Aslaksson. Toko ends up at sea, but the two Scandinavian deities famous for their bowmanship, the god Ullr (Ollerus) and the goddess Skadi, move about on skis. Furthermore, Ullr navigates on bones as well as he does in a boat; a picture in the *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* by Olaus Magnus illustrates the practice of supernatural waterskiing.



Sucellus. Viège bronze. Geneva, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire. Museum photo.

The very name Wilhelm (*helm* means helmet) and the episode of the hat shows that the headdress plays a significant role—its magic value in several myths is well known—and also that Tell (or Toll, i.e., crazy) by his very name belongs to a troublesome category, that of madmen. Tell's refusal to take off his own hat to a piece of headgear hooked onto the end of a pole is interpreted as the political gesture of a madman, that is, of an individual quasi-ritualistically authorized to express popular sentiment and unpleasant truths. This interpretation takes no account of ethnographic or religious facts such as the worship of the symbol of a deity placed on top of a pole (a fact mentioned by Olaus Magnus, book 3, chapter 2), or belief in magic arrows. In this realm of ideas, we should also mention the rock engravings of northern Europe that depict horned or masked skiers and a

remarkable sorcerer shooting numerous arrows at another figure.⁸ Nor should we forget that the fool and the archer have played a prominent role in the British Morris dances and mystery plays.

The story of Tell is a composite of several stories, one of which, the skier-archer, might be of Paleo-Finnish origin. In the nineteenth century, the historian Jean de Müller wrote that Tell's male line of descent ended in 1684 with Jean Martin's death, and his female line ended in 1720 with Vérena's death. Today, this Swiss national hero has left the bounds of history and entered, full-grown, the realm of myth.

R.C./g.h.

NOTES

1. For the cult of the bear, see CHRISTINGER and BORGEAUD, *Mythologie de la Suisse ancienne* (Geneva 1963), 29ff. The excavations of the Petit Chasseur at Sion (Valais) and those of the Carschenna (Grisons), for example, have brought to light important documents on cultural life prior to the Roman occupation or the arrival of the Celts, but these documents cannot be linked to particular myths.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

3. Another game played in Switzerland, *marelle* (hopscotch), is probably connected to ancient initiatory rites and to the myth of the labyrinth (*ibid.*, 2:107ff.).

4. This is, for example, the attitude of Apuleius with regard to the tale of Psyche and Cupid (*Metamorphoses*, 4.27).

5. PLUTARCH, *De defectu oraculorum*. J. MÜLLER, *Sagen aus Uri* (Basel 1969), 3:207–10. L. COURTHION, *Les veillées des mayens* (Geneva), 197–201.

6. *Quellenwerk zur Entstehung der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft III Chroniken*, Band 1 (Aarau 1948). H. DE BOOR, *Die nordischen, englischen und deutschen Darstellungen des Apfelschussmotivs*. M. DELCOURT, "The Legend of Sarpedon and the Saga of the Archer," *History of Religions* 2, 1 (1962).

7. H. INSTITORIS and J. SPRENGER, *Le marteau des sorcières (Malleus maleficarum)* (Paris 1973).

8. H. KÜHN, *Die Felsbilder Europas* (Stuttgart 1952). W. J. RAVDONIKAS, *Les gravures rupestres des bords du lac Onega et de la mer Blanche* (Moscow 1938), vol. 2.

MYTHIC ELEMENTS IN FRENCH FOLKLORE

It may appear surprising, if not paradoxical, that France is covered in this book. France does not have, and probably never has had, its own mythology in the sense of an organized system of narratives about origins and supernatural beings. The mythology of France is not really French, for it is an emanation and complement of the Christian religion. First, therefore, we must demonstrate the historical absence of a "French mythology" while at the same time justifying its presence in this work.

I. The Absence and Presence of a French Mythology

Historians caution us against any temptation to make Celtic or, later, Roman Gaul the prefiguration of modern France, which would thus be the end of a linear evolution. It took many centuries for the political, linguistic, cultural, and religious differences between the diverse ethnic strata to be

effaced and for a certain national cohesion to develop. Popular French consciousness nevertheless tends to place the Gauls in a special position as the ancestors of the French, but this Gallic "myth" is of scholarly origin and does not appear before the sixteenth century. Gallic religion, mythology, and culture left very few material traces, and we know that the political structures of Gaul were replaced by those of the Romans after the conquest, and then by those of the Franks. Latin was quickly imposed over all of the Gallic territory, both because it was the language of the conquerors and because it could be written. The invasions and implantations of the barbarians finally drove out all that may have remained Celtic in Gaul. It is not our purpose here to explain the Celtic vestiges: that subject is treated in other articles in the present work.

The instrument that turned out to be most effective in concealing a potential and precocious French mythology was incontestably Christianization. Its action was twofold, positive on the one hand and negative on the other. It was negative when, over several centuries, it strove to condemn, combat, and extirpate those beliefs and practices which the Church held to be pagan. This struggle changed the two known forms of such belief, through the organic processes of rejection and assimilation. In 452 the Council of Arles condemns worshipers of rocks; in 538 the Synod of Auxerre stigmatizes those who worship fountains, forests, and rocks. In 567 the Council of Tours recommends that all those who, before rocks, do things unrelated to the ceremonies of the Church be driven from the Church. In the seventh century, Saint Eligius, in the homilies related in his *Vita*, written by Saint Owen, stigmatizes the practices denounced as pagan. The continuing struggle was apparently quite ineffective, since the Church was obliged to pursue it until well after the Council of Trent. The assimilative method met with much greater success, but it was a success that sometimes turned against the victor. It consisted in Christianizing practices that were—or were considered to be—of pagan origin. "It is the same with sacred forests as with the Gentiles," declared Saint Augustine; "one does not exterminate the Gentiles but one converts them, changes them; in the same way one does not cut down sacred groves; it is better to consecrate them to Jesus Christ." In the same way, local deities that watch over springs and fountains are replaced by the names of missionaries and local saints (Sébillot, 1904–7). From the texts of the councils and synods that have come down to us, the essential objects of persistent paganism appear to have been water, rocks, and forests. We may thus speak of survivals, even though the forms of the beliefs and practices may have changed considerably over the centuries.

Christianity acted much more positively, however, when it offered the Gallo-Roman peoples a self-sufficient mythic and religious system. Here we find the main reason for the absence of a French mythology, since the needs of the majority of the people were satisfied by the Christian system. But because not all of the people were completely satisfied, a number of beliefs, stories, and practices managed to slip through the cracks of the Christian religion, while others thrived independently, parallel to Christianity. Whether grasped in its state of syncretism with Christianity or in an independent state, this ensemble belongs to the domain known as folklore. In comparison with "authorized" mythologies which are learned as relatively well organized systems, folklore, by its very nature, often appears in pieces. To anyone first encountering it, folklore presents itself in the form of crumbs, debris, and fragments, in which it conceals its mythic nature. Folklore thus carries forward those mythic



Festival of the Tarasque at Tarascon (1946), a good example of a popular festival inserted into the Christian liturgical calendar. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.

materials to which Christianity and later scholarly culture refused to give a noble expression, so that they had to appear in seemingly harmless forms—tales, legends, beliefs, and "popular" practices—although the inoffensive appearance of such forms did not always shelter them from the condemnation of the Church or the dominant culture.

This is, in all likelihood, the only mythology France has known—although it does not belong to France alone in all of its expressions, since European folklore is divided not according to strict national boundaries but into broader areas. An attempt has nevertheless been made to bring to light a French mythology, by attributing Celtic origins to it: we are referring to Henri Dontenville's work (1948). The central character of this recovered mythology is Gargantua—not so much Rabelais's hero as the Gargantua of a great number of stories and beliefs which are essentially topographical. To Gargantua is attributed the creation of numerous mountains, hills, buttes, menhirs, lakes, swamps, etc. (Sébillot, 1883). According to Dontenville, Gargantua is the son of the Celtic god Belen (Bélénos), but this divine origin is demonstrated by an etymological elaboration that lacks rigor. Other supernatural personages, such as the fairies Morgana and Mélusine, also gravitate around this mythology. It is incontestable that Gargantua was a popular character before becoming a literary figure thanks to Rabelais. On the other hand, it is quite difficult to make him the hero of a French mythic system postulated through beliefs and accounts called survivals and vestiges. Mythology has not reached the scientific level of linguistics, which is able to reconstruct with some accuracy the earlier state of a language. According to Émile Benveniste's formulation, linguistics has succeeded "in restoring the wholes that evolution has broken up, in bringing buried structures to light" (Benveniste, 1969, 1:9). The science of mythology, unlike the science of etymology, is not ready to produce reconstructions of an earlier stage on the basis of present-day elements: it does not have laws that direct the evolution of mythic systems, for the evolution is the function of too many variables for all to be studied at the same time.

The theory that folklore consists of the vestiges of vanished mythologies is not a new one. Set forth more or less explicitly earlier, the theory did not spread until the begin-

ning of the nineteenth century, when it became the foundation of the vast undertaking of the brothers Grimm. The folktales that they collected and published under the title of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812–15) were thought to have preserved the beliefs and customs of the ancient Germanic peoples, after they had given them a poetical form which was the product not of scholarly poetry but of “natural” poetry which, through the intermediary of creative people, was of divine origin. In Jacob Grimm’s *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835), the theory becomes more explicit. It surmises that a mythology and a pantheon which were highly developed in the pre-Roman era were destroyed by the medieval Church and survive only in the form of the fragments found in folklore.

While the brothers Grimm gave this theory the fame and influence that are so well known to us, they did nothing but express—albeit in a work of great importance—a current of European ideas which was to be found in France from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The first systematic collection of what was not yet called folklore was undertaken by members of the Celtic Academy—transformed after 1815 into the Society of the Antiquarians of France—whose expressed goal was to collect dialects, patois, and jargons, place names, monuments, usages, and traditions, in order to “explicate ancient times by modern times.” It was the same doctrine—which we will call the ideology of survivals—which governed both the French venture (which declined after 1825–30) and that of the brothers Grimm, which was more abundant and prolonged.

It should be noted that this current of ideas in the Europe of the first half of the nineteenth century was characterized by strong nationalism, as it was in France in the second half of the century, after the research was temporarily eclipsed between 1830 and 1860–70. This nationalism would seek its foundation in the camp of the Gauls and the Celts, so it was natural that the historians and archaeologists should determine its theoretical foundation. The foundation is accepted without discussion by folklorists such as Paul Sébillot and all those who worked on the *Review of Popular Traditions*, while the Celticists, archaeologists and historians such as Henri Gaidoz, Alexandre Bertrand, and Alfred Maury, turn into folklorists the better to affirm their thesis. As far as Henri Gaidoz is concerned, refer to the article “Popular Customs and Rituals in France,” in which one of his studies is presented and discussed. As for Alexandre Bertrand, in his book *The Religion of the Gauls* (1897) he writes the following lines, which the brothers Grimm themselves could not have disavowed:

There exist, or there existed in human memory, in our country, as in Ireland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries, old customs, old traditions, and old superstitions, which are faint but still recognizable echoes of primitive times. “Driven from their temples,” H. Gaidoz could write, “the Gallic gods took refuge in our countryside”; we shall go in search of them. The very care taken by the Church very early to stigmatize the old beliefs, to anathematize them, or to Christianize them by changing their spirit—most often without visibly modifying their form—in its inability to uproot them, strongly attests to the important role that they played in the country before Christianity and to the people’s lively attachment to them. (Bertrand, 18–19)

In order to elucidate the problems arising from the connections between mythology and folklore, we must criticize the notion of survivals. Despite its fragility, it has constituted

the founding principle of folklore studies until recent times, for in France it was only with the works of Arnold van Gennep that the notion was abandoned, even though his contemporary Pierre Saintyves continued to use it. Note that van Gennep was a man of the soil and Saintyves was not. Ethnology has taught us that a belief or custom can never be a pure survival. It may sometimes be an archaism with respect to the dominant culture, but it is never an anachronism. In order to be maintained, traditions must have a function in the culture of which they are a part. Claude Lévi-Strauss expresses this very clearly concerning the beliefs and customs of Christmas:

Explanations by survivals are always incomplete; for customs neither disappear nor survive without reason. When they persist, the cause is to be found less in the viscosity of history than in the permanence of a function which modern analysis should be able to disclose. . . . We are, with the rites of Christmas, in the presence not only of historical vestiges, but also of forms of thinking and of behavior which reveal more general conditions of life in society. The Saturnalias and the medieval celebration of Christmas do not contain the final ground for a ritual otherwise inexplicable and devoid of meaning; but they do offer comparative material which is useful for drawing out the deep meaning of recurrent institutions. (Lévi-Strauss, 1952)

Even assuming that a practice might have been preserved without much change from Gallo-Roman antiquity to the nineteenth century, its meaning could not be exactly the same, since its cultural context is fundamentally dissimilar, and the greatest differences are found in the diversity of the religion and the economy.

Although it is inadmissible that popular beliefs, practices, and narratives are pure vestiges or survivals of an earlier state, they should not be divested of all reference to the past. The past is essential not as an explanatory principle but as a given in the material. It is a constant in folklore, at whatever historical time one observes and collects, to be at once caught in the present moment and reflected into a more or less distant past. The term “popular traditions,” which is sometimes used for folklore, is a good indication of the nostalgic component of these materials. A reality observed *hic et nunc* always refers to a tradition; that is, to a past. But this past is

Steps of the ages. Gangel, Metz. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.





The twelve months of the year. Calendar from Epinal, Pellerin. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.

not truly historical: it is reflected from generation to generation back to distant origins which are difficult to inscribe in history. But the quest for origins is by definition not historical but mythic. In this sense folklore, by its very nature, includes mythic fragments whose importance varies according to the form and technique by which it is expressed. Clearly, popular beliefs, practices, and stories are likely to serve as vehicles for mythic fragments. These are the three forms we have chosen to study.

It is thus evident what separates us from the early folklorists of France and Europe, but also what we hold in common. They regarded folklore as the vestiges of ancient mythological systems altered, mutilated, and even corrupted by the wear of time, as archaeological monuments may be. As with such monuments, it became necessary to submit them to reconstruction, a mental reconstruction that would invest them with meaning. Failing this reconstruction, "survivals" were regarded as freaks, curiosities, if not aberrations. Throwing them back into the past provides them with a meaning, a meaning that cannot always be restored to them, but which exists because it did exist: this kind of meaning may be called retrospective.

On the other hand, we believe—without denying the phenomena of transmission—that folkloric acts are bearers of a *present* mythic component, even if this component is viewed as ancient and archaic both by observers of the acts and by those who practice them. It is not possible for depictions and practices bereft of a current meaning, and thus of a function, to continue to exist: in the case of folklore the current sense and function are constituted by a throwback into the past. Curiously, this throwback is accompanied by a feeling of extreme precariousness. All folklorists, regardless of the age for which they gather folklore, insist on the urgency of their work and on the inevitability of the

disappearance of what they collect. The same fragility is attributed to the collected folklore as is attributed to archaeological fragments which are freed from their earthly gangle and thus likely to crumble because of their great age.

II. Popular Beliefs, Rituals, and Narratives

The forms of folklore from which we will attempt to extract the underlying mythic forms are popular beliefs, rituals, and narratives. It is not that folklore is manifested only in these three forms, but they are easier to decipher than popular art, dress, or dance, whose apparently greater technical material and social function mask their mythic component even more.

In their techniques, popular narratives are obviously closest to myths, yet are not myths, since this "fluid oral literature" involves only folktales and legends. The folkloric taxonomy which distinguishes them is useful from a formal point of view inasmuch as it introduces terms of reference. This taxonomy is certainly less clear-cut on the level of meaning. The legend is an account which appears to be inserted into time or space, and usually into time *and* space. It presents real places and a cast of characters which are supposed to have existed. This historico-topographical insertion essentially occurs through the presence of proper names: personal names and place names. An example is the Charlemagne of epic legends, who is imagined to be the king of the Franks who was crowned emperor of the West at Aix-la-Chapelle in 800. The folktale, by contrast, appears as a purely fictional account; people and places are impersonal, and its temporality is not historical but narrative, i.e., internal to the account. Although popular legends and folktales are narratives, as opposed to beliefs, rituals, and practices, we will not examine them all together. Legends have a more fundamental relationship with beliefs than with folktales, in

the sense that the relationship between them is generative: beliefs generate legends in forms of varying complexity. As for popular folktales, we will treat only those which are elegantly, and rightly, called *contes merveilleux* ("supernatural stories" or "fairy tales"), i.e., numbers 300 to 749 in the Aarne and Thompson classification (1961).

Of all of the folkloric expressions, the most difficult to comprehend are undoubtedly folk beliefs, since these offer the least material support. They are also often apprehended under a form other than their own: i.e., that of the legend. As they engender, or of the practices and rituals they underlie. These practices are characterized by the fact that they exclude—or try to exclude—language, and only use objects and actions. Of course, no practice or ritual has ever totally eliminated language, but the words or formulas used in them are to be assigned to what Claude Lévi-Strauss calls implicit mythology.

Formally, these diverse expressions are distinct from one another. From the point of view of their contents, this is not completely the case. There are slippages from one form to another. A motif from a popular folktale may be found in a legend. A practice refers to a belief. Another belief may have been collected as a legend in another time or place or from another informant. But the most developed form of the legend allows for the identification of a generative or contracted core, reduced to its most basic expression by a reverse movement. In the schema of a ritual, one may recognize the theme of a popular folktale, to which this form clearly gives a much greater freedom.

These movements, these shifts, these comings and goings have at least two causes. We know from the works of Lévi-Strauss that "mythic thought is essentially transformational," as testified by the mythic fragments that are carried in this way. The other cause is the particular nature of this mythology "in crumbs," which could not be expressed in the form of a coherent whole because Christianity occupied, and not without a certain aggression, almost the entire authorized field of expression. Forced to be fragmented in order to be expressed, this "implicit" mythology became perhaps even more fluid than the others.

In spite of its fundamental fluidity, we will attempt to grasp its most important aspects under the following rubrics: "French Fairy Tales, Folktales, and Myths"; "Folk Beliefs and Legends about Fairies in France"; and "Popular Customs and Rituals in France."

N.B./d.w.

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FRENCH FAIRY TALES, FOLKTALES, AND MYTHS

Vladimir Propp's contribution to the study of the folktale, especially to the study of the tale as myth, is both important and unsatisfying. His well-known analysis of the functions of the folktale provided the fundamental schema for the folktale but at the same time constituted a reductionist approach. And while Propp is convinced that the fairytale

derives from myth, he sees this process as what could be called devolutionist. Propp's works on this problem are not sufficiently known in France, but what he says here and there in his *Morphology of the Folktale* is explicit enough. "If we define these tales from a historical point of view, they deserve the old, now abandoned, name of mythical tales" (p. 122, alluding to Wilhelm Wundt's terms *Mythusmärchen* and *Märchenmythus*). The tale derives from the myth through the intermediary of an historical evolution: "It is quite possible that there is a relationship, governed by laws, between the archaic forms of culture and religion on the one hand, and between religion and folktales on the other hand. A culture dies, a religion dies, and their content is transformed into a folktale. The traces of archaic religious representations that are preserved in folktales are so obvious that they can be isolated before any historical study" (pp. 131-32).

Once more we find the historical problematic as the theoretical foundation of folklore. Unfortunately, there is nothing to indicate that French fairy tales are derived from ancient religion and mythology, either Celtic or Gallo-Roman. We know, on the other hand, that they are variants of tales found throughout the Indo-European domain, so their origin goes back much earlier, perhaps to the beginning of the Neolithic—in which case we cannot say anything about them at all. On the other hand, if one is willing to admit that fairy tales include still-meaningful mythical fragments within a structure that has lost its coherence, then an attempt at decoding becomes possible.

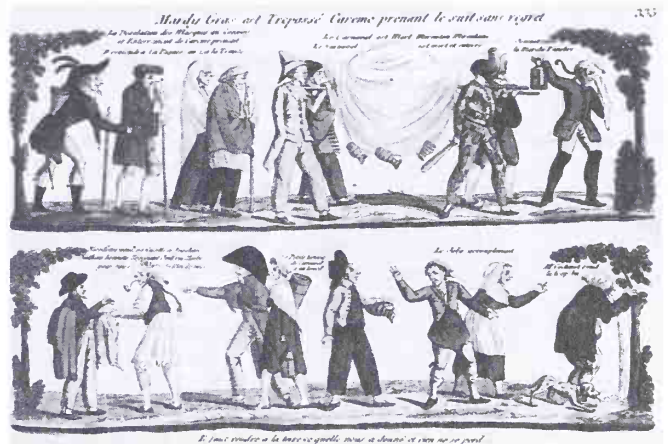
Another Russian formalist, E. Meletinsky, sees the opposition between myth and folktale as based on an opposition between the collective and the individual: the myth is concerned with the collective fate of the universe, of humanity, of the local community, while the folktale is concerned with the fate of individuals. This remark is very helpful and does not contradict Claude Lévi-Strauss's proposition that the difference between myth and folktale is a difference of degree. On the one hand, "folktales are built on weaker oppositions than those of myths: not cosmological, metaphysical, or natural, but more often local, social, or moral ones"; on the other hand the folktale "is less subject than the myth to the triple exigencies of logical coherence, religious orthodoxy, and collective pressure. . . . The folktale's permutations become relatively freer and progressively acquire a certain arbitrariness" (1960). Folktales may be considered myths that are weakened in their structure and expression, but this does not make the meaning of their content any less mythic. It is only harder to grasp.

In this analysis of the contents of French fairy tales, which represents only a preliminary outline, we will make use of a remark of Propp's. In the *Morphology of the Folktale* he says "The voyage, one of the main structural foundations of the folktale, is the reflection of certain representations of the voyages of the soul into the other world" (p. 132). The motif of the voyage, particularly the voyage into the other world—but is it just one motif among others, or is it rather the very essence of the fairy tale?—sometimes appears quite explicitly, sometimes more obscurely, and sometimes in an insignificant guise. It certainly reflects an eschatology which, in spite of sometimes having a Christian appearance, has little to do with Christianity.

One tale type (T471, *The Bridge to the Other World* in the Aarne-Thompson classification) has the French name of the *Voyage dans l'autre monde* (journey into the other world). Its distribution in France is uneven: sixteen of the twenty-six known versions are from Brittany, seven others are from Gascony, and the others from Alsace and Nevers. The initial



Wedding party leaving a church. Lithograph, Laruns. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.



"Mardi Gras is dead; shrovetide follows without regret." Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.

motif makes it possible to divide them into two groups. The young hero's journey is provoked either by an unknown person who asks him to bear a message to the other world or by his decision to visit his sister, who is married to a foreigner who took her to a distant land. We will summarize what seem to be the richest versions from the second group.

A girl who does not want to get married finally marries a foreigner, who appears in different guises depending on the version: a young man dressed all in white and as handsome as an angel; a beggar, when she is the king's daughter; the *Ankou*, death personified, in a Breton version; a magnificently dressed lord who turns out to be a dead man; a young man as bright as the sun; a man with red teeth, or simply the Sun in person. After the wedding he takes her far away to his kingdom. Her brother decides to visit her, but his journey turns out to be long, difficult, and full of challenges and strange spectacles. When he arrives at the castle where his sister lives, she tells him that her husband is gone all day long, leaving early in the morning and only coming back in the evening. The husband agrees to let his brother-in-law go with him on this daily trip, on condition that he remain completely silent while they travel. In some versions it is during this journey that he sees strange spectacles whose



Mardi Gras procession. Woodcut (Second Empire). Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.

meaning is revealed to him only when he comes back in the evening: these are always Christian allegories, the main one being that he visits Heaven and sees Purgatory and Hell as he goes by them. He returns to his village; certain versions indicate that his voyage seemed short to him but really lasted several hundred years. He dies soon after his return.

The archaic appearance of this tale is especially striking in the least-Christianized versions. It readily evokes cosmogonic myths, since we understand that the husband of the hero's sister is the Sun, even in the most Christianized versions in which he is not designated as such: his daily trip is sufficiently explicit in this respect. The Christianization of the story has caused a shift in the axis of the narrative: it is no longer centered on the marriage with the Sun, which now serves as a subsidiary motif to the Christian journey of the hero.

This fairy tale, perhaps better than any other, gives the impression of being the result of a complex labor of stratification. Around its archaic kernel (the motif of the Sun, his wife, and his daily journey) Christian allegorical motifs have been assembled, most of which were probably created in the Middle Ages, at the time of the formation and fixing of the representations and images concerning the triple localization of the world beyond, in Heaven, Purgatory, and Hell. The form proper to the fairy tale has included all of these motifs within a single narrative.

Among the other archaizing traits of the story, note the motif of the journey itself, which is used to express a temporal problematic. The voyage to the other world, that is, a spatial displacement, has the function of translating a temporal category, that of eternity. We have said that in certain versions the time the hero spent in the other world seemed very short to him, but in fact he had spent several centuries there. No one recognizes him when he comes back to his village: "They looked in the old record books and found that about three hundred years earlier there had been a family of that name which had since completely died out." This way of expressing time by space and the unfolding of time by displacement in space are used a second time in the tale. For the husband, the Sun (whether he is named as such or not), goes on a daily journey which requires him to leave early in the morning and return only in the evening. The story rarely justifies these regular absences; if it does so, it says that he goes around the world, or that he goes to Heaven. The daily displacement thus expresses a daily periodicity, while the hero's long and laborious journey conveys, by contrast, a long duration, covering several generations, which is too much for human memory to master



Handing on the distaff to the new bride. Sketch by Jules Lecoq in *Le Monde illustré* of 1865. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.

and which is revealed only in written documents (inscriptions in record books or on tombstones), the image of eternity. The time of a human life lies in between these two times, one of which is periodic and the other, by definition, not periodic. It shares something of the qualities of both: it is periodic in the sense that generations follow one another but is of a longer periodicity than the succession of days and nights, though its prolongation never lasts until its abolition, that is, for eternity. In most of the versions, the end of the

hero's journey and (sometimes) his return home are followed by his death, which is the promise of the eternal joys of Heaven for him—since at this point Christianity takes over the narrative again.

The mythic character of the principal motifs of the tale is beyond doubt. If necessary, we can confirm this by comparing the tale with a story collected among the Ossets, a population of the northern Caucasus, among whom a piece of ancient Indo-European mythology has survived in the form of legends about people called the Narts (Dumézil 1930 and 1968–73, and “Popular Customs and Rituals in France”). Sozryko, the hero of the story, is equally well known among the populations neighboring the Ossets, the Chechens and Kabardinians. The tale possesses obvious solar traits.

One day while hunting, Sozryko pursues a hare and shoots all his arrows at it, but it vanishes before his very eyes. The hunt leads him into the Black Mountains, to a black castle of iron, where the daughter of the Sun dwells, guarded by her seven brothers. He immediately asks for her hand, which is granted to him on two conditions: he must bring a hundred deer, a hundred wild sheep, and a hundred head of various kinds of game; and he must fill the four quarters of the castle with leaves from the Aza tree, a tree of heaven. His mother advises Sozryko to go first to the Master of Game and then to his own first wife, now dead, who will ask the Master of the Dead for the leaves. He sets out for the land of the dead; on his way he sees strange spectacles whose meaning he does not understand: a man and a woman lying under the skin of a bull which, although it is enormous, cannot cover the one without uncovering the other, while farther along he sees another couple who fit comfortably under the skin of a hare; he sees two shoes, one of goatskin, the other of pigskin, fighting and jumping on one another. When he finally reaches his late wife she explains the meaning of the strange visions: they are the punishments and rewards for actions on earth. But other encounters are allegories for the future: the puppies lying on a heap of rags who barked at him were announcing the coming insolence of the young. In addition, his wife gives him the leaves from the tree of heaven. To shake off the dead who try to follow him back, Sozryko shoes his horse backward and bursts through the gates of the infernal kingdom. With his game and his leaves he returns to the castle of the seven brothers, who give him their sister, the daughter of the Sun, in marriage (Dumézil, 1930, no. 28).

Despite a great deal of remodeling, this narrative is highly evocative of the French folktale version of the “journey into the other world.” The same characters appear, although their distribution is different: a girl, sister, wife or future wife, a brother or brothers, a hero who is clearly solar in the French story, who has solar traits if we consider the whole set of Caucasian stories about him. All of these characters are involved in a voyage to the world beyond. In both cases the journey is crowded with strange spectacles which are only explained afterward in the form of allegories. The allegories are not at all the same in the French folktale and the Caucasian legend, although there are elements common to both, such as the couple united or divided on the ground, or the battle of the two shoes, which is worth comparing with one of the encounters in the French tale. Most versions of that tale say that the hero finds his way blocked by two goats violently butting their heads together, ravens fiercely fighting, two trees banging together with such fury that pieces of wood shoot out of them, and two stones smashing each other brutally. According to the explanation at the end of the story, these are generally two brothers who were enemies

during their lifetimes, or two quarreling spouses. The motif of two objects that crash together violently, and through which the hero must pass—the rocks of the Symplegades—is found in a great number of mythologies and designates the perilous entrance to the other world. In what is certainly a weakened form, we find it both in the French folktale and in the Caucasian legend.

Both of these narratives, then, bring together comparable or similar motifs to tell the story of a voyage to the other world, while each orders the motifs in a somewhat different way. While the Caucasian legends have probably undergone less remodeling than the folktales in relation to the ancient stock of Indo-European mythology, they probably do not represent an archaic, original, and primitive state in comparison with the folktales: the Caucasian stories have at least undergone a considerable change in form, since they have passed from myth to legend. But the comparison shows that the common theme and motifs of the two stories are indeed mythic, even if their form is not.

The theme of the voyage to the other world occupies the whole narrative space of this particular story. But it also appears frequently in other French fairy tales, where it does not present the same irreversible character and is often linked instead to the quest for, or a reconquest of, a husband or wife.

In *The Love of Three Oranges* (T408), the initial explicit motif is the quest for a wife.

A young prince breaks a container that belongs to an old woman; she puts a curse on him: he will never be happy until he finds and marries the Love of Three Oranges; or else he desires to marry a girl who is “rosy, black, and white”; or else he simply wants to get married. He goes off on his search; he walks for months or years and finally meets one or more supernatural beings (the Mother of the Winds, for example) who advise him to arm himself with certain objects: their usefulness will be revealed at the castle where the old woman with the three oranges lives. He arrives there after an exhausting voyage, and thanks to the objects, which are exactly right for the job, manages to get to the old woman's room; he steals the three oranges from her and runs away. On the way back he cuts one of the three oranges in two, and a marvelously beautiful girl comes out of it, asks him for something to drink, and dies, since he has no water to give her. The same thing happens with the second orange, so he waits until he finds a fountain to open the third. This time the girl quenches her thirst and survives. But he leaves her by the fountain in order to go and find clothing and ornaments for her worthy of the rank she is going to have. During his absence a witch, black woman, or Moorish woman takes her place after turning the girl into a dove or a fish. The prince, surprised to find her so ugly, marries her anyway, or gets ready to marry her, since she blames her transformation on her long wait. But the dove attracts the prince's attention, and he breaks her enchantment.

This lovely tale is typical of the stories of the quest. That it is a journey into the other world is hardly in doubt: the great length of the journey, its difficulties, and the meetings with supernatural characters mark it clearly, as does the marvelous origin of the girl whom he desires. Indeed, the very motive of the journey is desire, desire for a woman without even knowing whether she exists, desire inflicted on the hero by an old woman. In this sense we can speak of a journey of initiation, if initiation consists of the adolescent's tearing himself away from the influence of his mother to become integrated into the society of men. Success in this transitional passage is rewarded with the possibility of

marriage. In so-called primitive societies, this passage takes place by means of rituals that are often demanding, long, and complex. European societies, on the other hand, in which initiation rites as such have never existed or have not existed for a very long time, nevertheless maintain the idea of an initiation, a purely imaginary one, since it appears more or less clearly in folktales. The initiation essentially consists of a journey, beginning with a departure from home in which can be seen the symbolic rupture of the Oedipal ties. The voyage leads to another world which is not necessarily conceived of as a world of the dead: strictly speaking, it is a world that lies beyond the human world. A young Ojibwa Indian leaves his family and village to retire to a deserted place where he fasts and meditates until a supernatural being appears to him and becomes his guardian spirit. In fact, all initiation rituals have a phase in which the initiate is supposed to be dead, that is, they always include a passage to the world beyond.

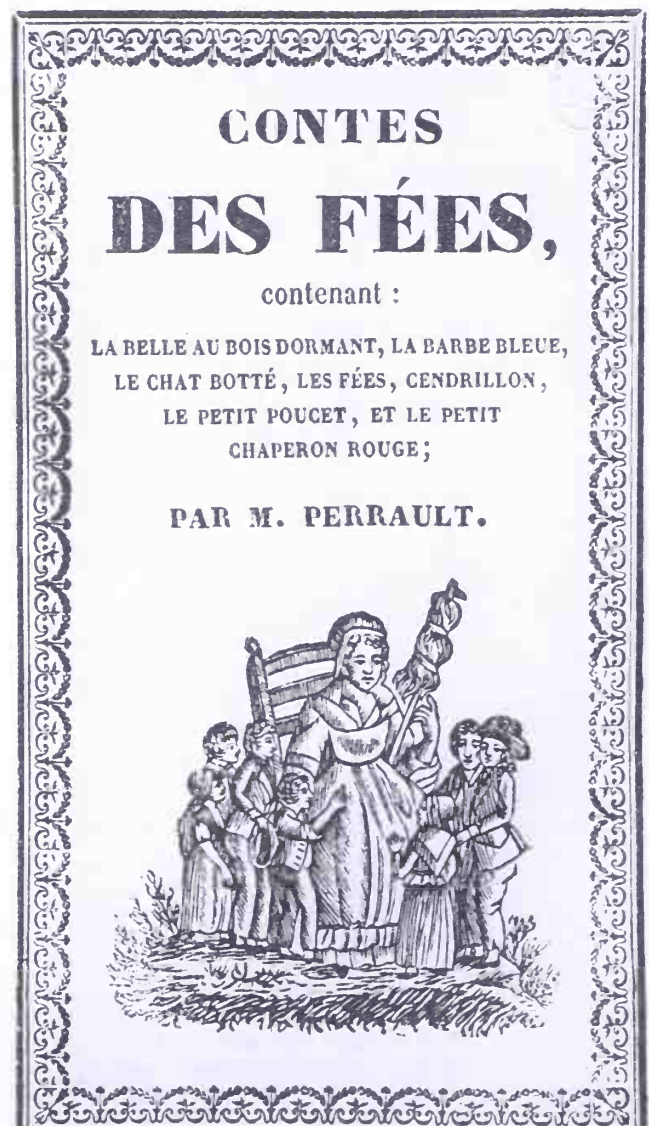
The theme of the voyage in fairy tales thus represents, on the one hand, the adolescent's flight from and break with his Oedipal feelings and, on the other hand, the winning of magical objects and a beautiful bride who brings gifts; she is often the daughter of a king. The journey is thus charged with the possibility for him to become a hero, often by triumphing over his own brothers: thus in the version of *The Love of Three Oranges* from Guyenne, only the youngest of the three brothers receives from an old woman the fruits (here they are apples) containing the marvelous young women, since only he was kind to her; his two older brothers, who set off with him "to seek their fortune as if it were something you could pick up along the side of the road," come back empty-handed, since they refused to help the old woman in distress.

In all these tales the hero is male. Are there any in which he is replaced by a heroine, and do they show the same narrative pattern? There are, of course, stories in which the main character is a girl or a young woman, but while they too contain the motif of the voyage to the world beyond, their lesson is quite different. The most important of these tales in terms of the number of versions and the beauty, variety, and richness of the story is entitled *The Search for the Lost Husband* (T425). The ancient story of Psyche as told by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* is one of its European forms, although it is not the prototype. *Beauty and the Beast* is another of its forms. Here is the version from Gascony collected by J. F. Blade (1886).

A Green Man with one eye has three daughters, each more beautiful than the next. One evening the King of the Ravens comes to ask for one of the daughters in marriage, and to force him to agree he puts out the Green Man's one eye. The youngest daughter accepts him in order to restore her father's sight; the marriage is celebrated and the bridegroom carries her off to his castle, which lies three thousand leagues away, "in the land of cold, in the land of ice, where there are no trees or greenery." At midnight, in the darkness, the King of the Ravens reveals that he and his people were changed into ravens by a sorcerer. His penance must last for seven more years, and until then his bride must not try to see him at night when he takes off his feather clothing and lies down next to her, separated by a sword. In the morning before daybreak he gets up and goes out. During the day the poor bride wanders around, always alone, in the ice and snow; but one day she comes to a poor hut; next to it a wrinkled old woman is washing linens as black as soot and singing a refrain that says she is waiting for the "married virgin" to come. The girl helps her wash her clothes, which become as white as milk. The old woman foretells trials for her, but

promises to help her in the day of her greatest need. Seven years, less one day, pass, and that night the girl decides to see what her husband looks like. He is as beautiful as the day. She brings the candle closer, and a drop of wax falls onto him; he wakes up and sadly tells her that since she has violated the prohibition, he has fallen back into the power of the sorcerer. The sorcerer chains him to the peak of a high mountain on an island and sets two wolves to guard him: one is white and keeps watch during the day; the other is black and keeps watch at night. The young wife leaves the castle and goes back to the old washerwoman's cottage. The washerwoman tells her where her husband is being held prisoner and gives her magical objects: an inexhaustible sack and an inexhaustible gourd, iron slippers, and a golden knife for cutting "the blue grass, the grass that sings night and day, the grass that breaks iron." When her slippers break, it will be almost time for her to rescue her husband. She walks for one year through the land "where there is neither night

"Fairy tales." Cover of a chapbook. Woodcut. Épinal, Pellerin. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.



nor moonlight, where the sun always shines"; then for another year in the land "where there is neither day nor night, where the moon always shines"; finally for a third year in the land "where there is neither sun nor moon, and it is always night." There she finds the grass that cuts iron: her iron slippers are broken. She gathers the grass and sets off again, walking until she finds the sun. At the edge of the sea she takes a boat, disembarks on the island where her husband is being held prisoner, puts the wolves to sleep with the singing grass, kills them with the golden knife, breaks the chain of seven hundredweight with the grass that breaks iron, and frees her husband and all his people, who had been turned into ravens.

In this story, then, it is the young girl who must undertake the journey to the world beyond, characterized in this version by cold, ice, darkness, emptiness, and great distance. But unlike what we see when the hero is male, marriage is not the result of the adventure, its crown and reward: marriage represents, rather, something already given at the beginning of the narrative. For the heroine the marriage is acquired almost from the start, but it appears to be an unhappy union with a repulsive creature, a monstrous animal, whom she agrees to marry through filial piety to free her father from a terrible evil or even to save him from death. By overcoming a terrible trial she succeeds in transforming the monstrous marriage into a happy union with a prince "as beautiful as the day." But first she violates a prohibition, and this greatly delays her final happiness.

We see then that the lesson of this story is different from those in which the hero is male. The adolescent boy must undergo an initiation before he can find a bride and accede to the married state; the girl undergoes the same kind of initiation during marriage and through her own fault, because she violates the taboo laid down by her husband. While the nature of the initiation may be the same for both—a voyage full of difficulties to the other world—its meaning is different in the second case: it seems that for girls it is marriage itself that constitutes the initiation. The *Laws of Manu*, the early collection of texts from ancient India compiled between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D., confirms this hypothesis: "For a woman, mar-

riage replaces initiation. Her zeal to serve her husband is for her what study and discipline under the Brahman are for a man, her care in keeping house is equivalent to his maintenance of the sacred fire." For the woman must transform the attachment she has to her father into affection for and devotion to her husband, who appears to her, in a patriarchal society like that of the ancient Indo-Europeans and the cultures that developed from it, as a horrifying monster. One of the forms of the prohibition laid down by her husband consists, in a fairly large number of versions, of not staying too long with her family when she goes to visit them, as she is permitted to do after her marriage. She obeys this rule once, twice, but the third time she goes she forgets the time. That is, the taboo the heroine transgresses is that against remaining too attached to her natal family. As punishment she must suffer a long trial to win her husband back and so to prove her devotion to him. In patrilineal societies, such as Indo-European societies past and present, brides are usually foreigners: they come from a different family, a different lineage. They are introduced into a family that is not their own to fulfill a duty that is essential to the future of this family, i.e., to bear children. It is thus necessary to test their loyalty, devotion, and zeal toward their husbands; this trial constitutes their initiation which, unlike that of the boy, takes place at the time of marriage. This initiation, which has disappeared from the rituals of the Indo-European peoples (assuming that it ever existed), is no longer present except in the popular realm of the imaginary, in the myths underlying their fairy tales. The motif of the voyage to the world beyond, which thus goes back to the initiation of young people, girls or boys, is not, of course, the only mythical motif that appears in these stories, but it is certainly the most important, the richest, and the most persistently fascinating.

N.B./j.l.

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FOLK BELIEFS AND LEGENDS ABOUT FAIRIES IN FRANCE

Although they are different in form, beliefs and legends are comparable in their modes of production and their functions. It has often been observed that beliefs engender legends through a process of narrative development: a belief may be expressed in a sentence or unfolded in an account. Such an account always includes specific information about time and place, which are often nearby. Anatole Le Braz, who had noted this phenomenon in his investigations, states it very clearly in the introduction to his book, *The Legend of Death among the Armorican Bretons* (1923):

The legend is a local product: we have seen it take root, grow, and flower. It is perpetually in the course of formation and transformation: it is alive. The actors that it brings into play are known or have been known to all. They are the people of the canton, of the parish; they are

your neighbors, they are you yourselves. . . . The setting is also real: it lies before your very eyes, at your door. It is the sunken road you have passed over a hundred times, the moor that you see here made fuzzy by gorse, the cemetery enclosed in the dark greenery of great yew trees; it is the sea.

In his book, one can see clearly how the mechanism functions by which belief engenders legend. For example, Le Braz relates the following belief (which is not peculiar to Brittany, since it is certainly found throughout all of France): "As long as a dead person is lying out on the funeral platform, it is an offense to him to send the people of the house out to work in the fields, as if nothing had happened" (1, p. 220). After setting forth this prohibition, he goes on to cite the account of one of his female informants, an account which she had related as a personal reminiscence:

While she was a servant girl at Kersaliou, the master of the house died. It was the beginning of July, and the eldest son was out haying with the household staff. They



Farmhouse mill and raised stone. Saint-Pierre, Morbihan. Photo Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires.

heard the news at the three o'clock collation. When this was over, the eldest son sent the servants back to work, in spite of being told that such was not the custom. Returning to the field, they perceived a man trampling down the hay, whom they recognized to be their deceased master. The vision disappeared. They finished their work and brought in the hay. The time came a few months later to begin using that hay as forage for the animals. But within a few days all the animals in the stable died, and the veterinarian was unable to do anything for them. The ruined son began drinking, and hanged himself on Christmas night: his failure to respect his dead father had brought about his misfortune.

We can see very clearly in this account the narrative development which has the initial belief for its object. This belief, far from being fixed like a dogma, plays a part in everyday experience and produces its events, which only take on their meaning when they are reconstituted in a narrative form. Here we encounter once again what Henri Hubert affirmed in his study "The Representation of Time in Religion and Magic" (1909): "Myths are rejuvenated in history. They draw out from it elements of reality which serve to consolidate the belief of which they are the object as

myths. . . . The rejuvenation of myths is not a phenomenon that is different from the general phenomenon of their localization in the past, but a particular form of the same phenomenon."

"Myths rejuvenated in history" are nothing but legends. It is precisely by virtue of this phenomenon of renewal in and through history that legends are diverse, unstable, and abundant. As the collection of Anatole Le Braz so clearly shows, the same belief may give rise to a great number of different accounts. But one nevertheless always finds in them the generative mythic core that is the belief.

The same phenomenon of the engendering of legends from beliefs is also found in what may be called the topographic mythology of France, in which the principal protagonists are fairies, supernatural beings characterized by their small or Gargantuan size.

Beliefs about fairies are an excellent example of the interpretation of folkloric facts in terms of survivals. A. Maury forcefully declares that "fairies appear to us to be the last and most persistent of all of the vestiges that paganism left imprinted on peoples' minds" (1896). For him, fairies are the inheritors of the characteristics and functions of the Parcae and of the name of Fatum or the Fata, these being no more than the Roman designation for the Parcae. The etymology from *fatum*, *fata* is certain. As for the attributes of fairies, it cannot be denied that they greatly overlap those of the Parcae.

Like the Parcae, fairies preside over childbirth and decide the fate of the newborn child. They are, as was once said, "wombmates." In Brittany, they were served a meal in a room next to that of the mother who had given birth, as a means of conciliating them. They are also spinners. Van Gennep reports in his *Folklore of Burgundy* (1934, p. 175) that at Clamerey, a fairy named La Beuffenie formerly came to thread her distaff at midnight in a secluded place, on a crag that dominated Armançon. It is sometimes said that menhirs or rocks are distaffs planted in the ground by fairies. The association made about the Parcae between their function as dispensers of fate and their character as spinners is not found explicitly for fairies, although such an association may be postulated on the basis of the great importance of the symbol of the thread of destiny in Europe. But fairies have characteristics that the ancient Parcae do not have. Fairies are connected with the megaliths. The relationship is sometimes only toponymic, resulting in the appellations of the Rock of the Fairies, the Stone of the Fairies, the Cabin of the Fairies, the Cave of the Fairies, etc., to describe menhirs, dolmens, and shady walks throughout France. At times the designations are accompanied by legends:

Long ago, a fairy traveling through Sainte-Colombe (Landes) carrying the Peyre-Lounque (a rock located in the region) attached to her distaff, met an unknown old man who said to her: "Where are you going?" "To Dax." "You will, if you say, 'And may it please God.'" "Whether or not it pleases Him, the Peyre-Lounque is going to Dax." The old man, who was none other than God himself, ordered her to abandon her rock at that very place, which she had to do, and he added, "Until it pleases God, it will not leave this place." (Sébillot, 1904-7, vol. 4, p. 6)

Sometimes they carry these enormous rocks in their aprons: a rockslide near Ailly in the Vosges is called the Burden or the Fairies' Load—it fell from their aprons. But they are not content merely to spread megaliths around: they are also builders. Near Remiremont, a causeway built with Cyclopean masonry which joins Saint-Mont to the mountain

of Morthome bears the name of the Bridge of the Fairies. The amphitheater of Cimiez is called the "Tub of the Fairies." In Poitou, the fairy Mélusine constructed the old roads of the region, as well as the arenas and aqueducts of Poitiers and a great number of châteaux: one night was sufficient for her to build the castle of Lusignan.

This role of builder is totally unknown among the Parcae. It is thus incorrect to see fairies as the heirs of the Parcae merely on the basis of two shared characteristics. The other characteristics of fairies should connect them on the one hand with the popular figure of Gargantua, and on the other with the supernatural and innumerable populations of goblins, elves, sprites, imps, etc.

In French topographical beliefs and legends, Gargantua shapes the countryside, particularly irregularities in terrain.

In the canton of Châtillon-sur-Indre, people give the name of "foot scrapings of Gargantua" to large mounds, of which the largest is the Footstep of Bourges, located near Clion. It is maintained that once, when Gargantua had one foot in Bourges and the other in this place, he shook one of his shoes, and thus flung his foot-scraping (the mass of clayey soil that sticks to the bottom of the shoes of people who walk in the rainy season) next to the church of Murs, two leagues from Clion, while the other shoe dropped another scraping in the vineyards of Châteauneuf, close to Bourges, which has been called Mottepelous from time immemorial. (Sébillot, 1883, p. 197–98)

Gargantua is the source of the elevation upon which the city of Laon is built: finding his basket to be too full, he emptied part of it onto the plain, which became a mountain. But it was not only by unloading that he shaped the irregularities in the terrain; it was also, as Rabelais himself said, "en fuyant et compassant (in shitting and pissing)." "In the Chartreuse range, the Aiguille de Quaix is known in

the area by the name of l'Etron de Gargantua (Gargantua's Turd). The giant, needing to stop to satisfy a bodily need, placed one foot on the helmet of Nero and the other on Mount Rachais. The needle (Aiguille) does seem to resemble this object from a certain angle. Gargantua pissed at the same time, which is what produced the cascade of Vence." His appetite is not described as any less formidable in popular tradition than it is in Rabelais. He is a glutton who swallows, without noticing them, enormous boats, which he takes to be small flies. But he is sometimes nauseated and vomits them, thus forming the rock of Bé near Saint-Cast, for example.

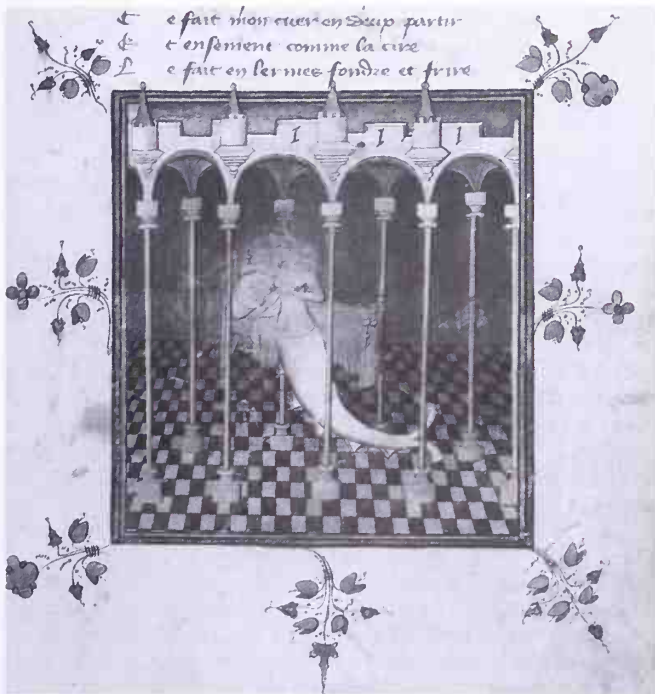
All of these beliefs and the accounts that develop them are to be found in nearly identical form throughout France, in which Gargantua mythically modeled not so much the landscape in its totality as the most remarkable accidental landforms. The means he uses for this are of an oral and anal nature, so that a mythic character may be seen in him that comes from those two stages of infantile development. His gigantic size has its source in the inverted projection of the disproportionate view that children have of adults and the world.

Tradition often stresses, on the other hand, fairies' diminutive size. They manipulate—it is said—materials which, if they are not always construction materials, are nevertheless hard and resistant. They sometimes carry them in the form or manner of distaffs, or else in their aprons: Gargantua carries malleable materials in his basket or in his stomach (earth, excrement). These characteristics of fairies are clarified if, in opposition to the character of Gargantua, one sees in them phallic figures which would thus belong to the following stage of infantile sexual development.

In their contacts with humans, fairies manifest a certain ambivalence, just like the numerous populations of various goblins, who resemble them in their diminutive size. They render services to humans, but it is difficult to have social ties with them because of their sensitive and skittish character. In the Alps and Pyrenees, those supernatural beings of small stature who help the herders are called servants; in exchange, they are left small offerings in kind, such as the first skimming of the best cream. If one neglects to leave them their share, they may take cruel vengeance, for example, by leading the herd over a cliff and leaving the region forever.

Sometimes the relations between fairies and humans extend to marriage: the legend of Mélusine is the best known of these, but there are a great number of others which always include a prohibition which the husband must scrupulously respect. The nature of the prohibition is quite varied: not to see his fairy-wife while she is bathing, not to see her on Saturday, not to look at her naked shoulder, not to call her a "bad fairy," etc. The union brings prosperity, but one day the husband violates the prohibition and the fairy disappears forever. It is striking to note the frequency of this denouement in accounts which relate the variety of relationships between humans and the small supernatural beings. They disappear, leave the country, and never appear again. The pattern is so marked that one cannot help but wonder whether the etiology of these accounts does not reside precisely in this matter: they exist to explain the disappearance of fairies, goblins, and other sprites, which is due to a fault of men who are unable to maintain good relations with them over long periods of time, in spite of the advantages of such associations. What we see here is a schema similar to that of the great origin myths of primitive peoples, which place at the beginnings of humanity a golden age in which all things were realizable and death did not exist. As the result of a sin, the violation of a taboo, all of the advantages

Mélusine returning to suckle her child. Couldrette, Bibliothèque nationale MS fr. 12575, folio 89. Photo BN.



enjoyed by humanity are withdrawn, and relations with the supernatural beings are interrupted or grow difficult. This is a particularly good example of the process of weakening from mythology to folklore: it is no longer a question of the fate of humanity or the social community, but of the fate of an individual and the outcome of his conjugal union and prosperity.

These legends also manifest, more or less explicitly, a symbolic teaching: the world of fairies and sprites disappeared in the face of Christianity because they belonged to paganism. Once again the ideology of survivals is at work:

legends about fairies and their relations with humans are very much of the present, but they tell of a past regarded as finished. The past nevertheless remains inscribed in various places which thus serve as the basis for remembering it.

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POPULAR CUSTOMS AND RITUALS IN FRANCE

In the preface to his book *Les Saints successeurs des dieux* (The saints: successors of the gods) (1907), P. Saintyves let it be known that his work would be followed by another volume entitled *La Mythologie des rites* (The mythology of rituals), in which he intended to examine the pagan rites that persisted in the cult of the saints and led to the development of certain hagiographic legends. This work never saw the light of day, but its suggestive title raises the question of whether it is proper to speak of a mythology of rituals.

For Saintyves, the transition from myth to ritual was never in question. Referring to the tales of Perrault, he maintains that "a myth is but the exegesis of or the commentary on a ritual," which allows him to regard the stories as the narrative relics of ancient seasonal or initiation rituals that have fallen into disuse. Cinderella is thus the Bride of the Cinders, paraded around on Shrove Tuesday and promised to the young sun, while her stepmother is the old year, and the stepmother's daughters are the months preceding spring. Tom Thumb is the young boy who must undergo initiation rites; he is led by his father into the initiation enclosure, the forest, where he must undergo a number of trials.

I. The Popular Rituals of Marriage

This theory assumes a historical process of degeneration and argues that the evolution proceeds from ritual to myth. If we make an effort to avoid this historicizing point of view, and if we consider the materials of ritual and myth to be coupled in an ongoing relationship, we may then argue that myths and rituals are, in the words of Claude Lévi-Strauss, "different transformations of identical elements." We shall attempt to show this by taking as an example a popular ritual of marriage that was quite widespread in France at least until the end of the nineteenth century, a ritual that is called the "hidden bride," the "false bride," or the "substitute bride." The following description was published in 1823, but its author observed the ritual in Bresse before the Revolution (Monnier, pp. 355-56).

The day set for signing the contract is commonly the eve of the marriage celebration. Before supper, a peculiar scene unfolds among the Bressans: the bride-to-be invites several of her girlfriends to her house where they put on one another's clothes and move into a separate room. The groom-to-be then shows up with his friends and his brothers and finds the house locked up. They knock at the

door and ask about a ewe they have lost. They are told that there is no ewe there that belongs to them, but they are persistent and finally gain entry into the house and search every room. When they get to the door to the room with the girls in it, they knock, ask again, and receive the same answer as before. Finally, one person comes out and, after asserting that he has just checked to see that there was no strange ewe in his flock, makes all the young maidens file out one by one. The husband-to-be makes them dance successively, and if he fails to recognize his bride-to-be, he becomes the object of banter for the rest of the evening.

There are many parallels to this amusing description, among them one that George Sand recounts in the appendix to *La Mare au Diable*, and another, more recent one that originated in the province of the Loire and was in practice until about 1920 (Fortier-Beaulieu).

The young men on the groom's side show up at the door of the bride's house on the morning of the wedding. Everything is locked. They climb over the wall and sing in the courtyard so that the door may be opened for them. They finally get in, but the bride-to-be hides in the hayloft, behind her grandmother's bed, in the kneading trough, or in the covered tipcart, or else she is disguised as a pipe-smoking beggar sitting by the fireplace or as an old woman. In some villages, they used to throw down a dummy called "the ghost," or "the first bride," to the young men assembled in front of the house and then burn it in the farmyard.

These scenes surely have a playful element, but they could not have been enacted for the sole purpose of entertaining the wedding guests, especially the young men. An apparently insignificant clue suggests that this ritual was so important that just as it was disappearing a new element came to pick up a part of the meaning of the former practice. At the time when the custom was waning in the country in France, i.e., between 1870 and 1880, the bridal gown as we know it today came into fashion: the white dress and veil. The function of the veil may have been to conceal the bride temporarily, when the ritual of the hidden bride was no longer performed; for the veil harkens back through the centuries to the custom in ancient Rome, where *nubere* meant both to veil and to marry.

The symbolism of this ritual may first be deciphered on the social level. It is meant to express and play upon the reservations felt by the "wife givers," which is what at that moment the parents and friends of the bride happen to be, toward the "wife takers," the groom's party. This can only be a game, since it takes place at a moment in the long process of betrothal and marriage when the marriage agreement has



Peasants carrying firebrands in the fields on Christmas Eve. Ton-neins (Lot-et-Garonne). Drawing by Gustave Janet. Photo Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires, Paris.



The lamb cart at Christmas. Les Baux. Photo Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires, Paris.

long since been concluded and would be very difficult to undo.

But the ritual has a deeper symbolic level that reaches down to the underlying myth. To bring it to light, we must call on a set of supernatural stories known in the international typology as the substitute bride (T403). One of the finest versions in French was collected by J. F. Bladé in 1886 and is entitled *Le Drac*.

By his first wife, a man has two strong, brave sons and a daughter as beautiful as the morning. His wife dies, and he marries a wicked, ugly widow who has a daughter who resembles her in every way. She persecutes her stepchildren until the two exasperated brothers leave for the war in order

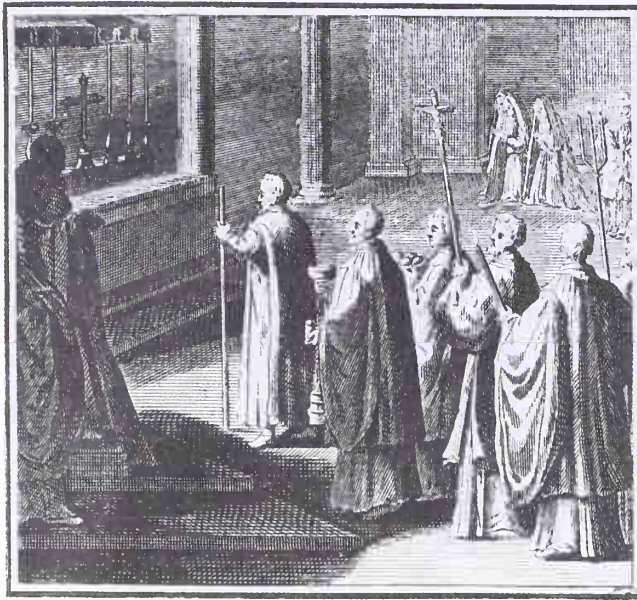
to distinguish themselves; they promise to find a husband for their sister, and they take a little statue with them made in her likeness (in other versions, it is a portrait). They demonstrate such courage in war that the son of the king of France summons them. He sees the statuette, falls in love with their sister, and orders them to fetch her so that he may marry her. The jealous stepmother, with her daughter, escorts the two brothers and the bride-to-be, who is dressed in her wedding gown. On the way, the stepmother intercepts the communication between the brothers and the sister and forces the sister to take off her wedding clothes. She puts them on her own daughter and throws the bride-to-be into a mud pit. The king's son, furious to see such an ugly girl arrive, sends the two brothers, the stepmother, and her daughter to their deaths. (In other French versions the prince marries the homely girl because he falls victim to the stepmother's magic spell.) The true bride-to-be is first rescued by a gardener's wife and then carried off by the Drac into his underwater kingdom. He ties her to a long gold chain that allows her to reach the shore. For three days she sings a riddling song that intrigues the prince's servants. The prince is alerted, breaks the chain, and recognizes the girl as his promised bride. (In the versions in which the prince kept the false bride and the stepmother, he expels the intruder and punishes her mother severely.)

In this story as in the ritual, a bride is temporarily hidden from her groom and replaced by a false bride. This thematic core is enriched in the tale with important imaginary developments that the ritual cannot afford. The theme, however, is the same. What is its meaning?

If we accept Claude Lévi-Strauss's contention that men exchange women in the same way that they exchange words, it is easy to recognize in the tale of the substitute bride the transfer of a woman to a man, the prince, her future husband, a transfer brought about by another man, her brother; the transfer is interrupted by the stepmother and then reestablished. The interruption of the transfer is achieved by the interruption of communication between the brother and sister. Coming as an intermediary between them, the stepmother alters the brother's words and is thus able to eliminate the sister and to substitute her own daughter, the false bride-to-be. But if women stopped circulating among men, marriages could only be incestuous. The false bride-to-be of the ritual and the tale is a representation of the imaginary incestuous bride-to-be and is substituted in play for a brief moment in place of the true bride-to-be, the one whom it is socially permissible to marry.

This interpretation of the tale, and later of the ritual, is confirmed by a story that is not French but most certainly belongs to the Indo-European mythical heritage. We are referring to a story that is part of the Nart epic that was made known to us by G. Dumézil (1930, 1968-73). This collection of popular epic legends is characteristic of some populations of the northern Caucasus, from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, and most particularly of the Ossets, the probable descendants of the ancient Scythians, among whom the narrative tradition has proved to be the most long-lived, though their neighbors, the Chechen-Ingush, Cherkess, and Abkhaz have sizable fragments in the form of variants. The saga of the Narts, fabulous heroes who lived in very ancient times, is of considerable interest: in a "folklorized" form, it has preserved to this day features of ancient Indo-European mythology, particularly the trifunctional organization of society identified by Georges Dumézil.

This epic presents an extremely popular female character, remarkable for her birth, beauty, and intelligence: the Prin-



The new fire of Holy Saturday. Copperplate. Paris, Picard, 1724. The rekindling of the fires is prescribed by the Roman rite, but it is also a ritual found in a large number of religious systems and carries a cosmological meaning and function. Paris, Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires. Museum photo.

cess Satana. The story of her wedding may be viewed as a parallel to the ritual and tale of the substitute bride. This reading of the story is much more direct, much cruder, but all the more interesting in that we are dealing with a tradition that originates in Indo-European mythology and is better preserved, less worked over and altered, than the French tradition.

Satana is the sister of the two high-ranking heroes from one of the three principal families of the Nart epic, the Åxsärtätkats, characterized by valor and strength; one of the other two families is distinguished by abundant cattle and the other by intelligence. When she is old enough to marry, Satana asks herself who is the man most worthy of her and concludes that only her own brother, Uryzmäg, is bold and intelligent enough for her. She sees only one obstacle to this project: he is already married. Nevertheless, she shares her project with him: "No one gives away his finest possession as a gift. Would it not be a pity for me to go over to another family? So I can marry only you." He repels her indignantly; she must therefore practice deceit. Some time later, Uryzmäg sets out on an expedition for a year and orders his wife to prepare food and drink for his return. When the year has nearly elapsed, she dutifully proceeds to prepare the intoxicating beverage of the Narts. Try as she may, she cannot make the liquid, because Satana has prevented this by a magic spell. The desperate wife asks her sister-in-law to come to her aid. Satana consents on condition that her brother's wife will lend her her wedding gown and veil for one night. The wife agrees and soon the drink is ready. Uryzmäg comes home; a great feast takes place and at night Satana dressed as the wife takes the wife's place in the conjugal bedroom. Through magic she prolongs the wedding night beyond its normal duration. When the legitimate wife dies of a broken heart, Satana reveals her true identity to her brother, who is at first horrified and then resigned.



Carnival in Paris. Woodcut by Gangel in Metz. Photo Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires, Paris.

It would be hard not to see in this account one of the primitive forms of the French tale and ritual despite the alterations they have undergone, alterations that change the reading but not the meaning. The tale and the ritual show that in all marriages there is the risk and temptation of incest, which is conjured up and played out in this manner to make it easier to avoid it. The Ossetic account shows this incest as having been realized, but it is realized by supernatural heroes and not by human beings, since the narrative form is that of a legend: this is another way to avoid incest.

This example of the deciphering of a ritual through a story need not imply that the myth predates the ritual and serves as its basis. These are two different forms of expression, one of which, myth, enjoys greater freedom in the realm of the imaginary and thus allows us to register a greater number of elements that may lead to an interpretation. On the other hand, what ritual loses in the imaginary realm, it gets back in the form of the considerable affective impact of enactment. In this light, the old debate about the priority of one of the forms or the other is no longer at issue.

This popular ritual of marriage, which seems to stem from

a common Indo-European source, may be classified in the very important category of rites of passage. The inventor of this heuristic concept, Arnold van Gennep (1909), placed under this rubric not only the rituals that mark the course of a human life from the cradle to the grave but also those that mark the passage of time, that is, periodical and cyclical, seasonal and calendrical ceremonies. Among the first kind, marriage was certainly the most important and the most developed. Baptism, which marked the newborn child's entrance into the social and religious community, long remained a ceremony restricted to a very small number of individuals. And although funerals sometimes brought the entire local community together, the authority of the Church acted as an obstacle to any significant development of popular rituals on these occasions.

II. Bonfires, Stakes, Firebrands, Fire Wheels, Christmas, Lent, and Midsummer Day

Among the numerous periodic rituals, those that involve the use of fire, whether bonfires or firebrands, are particularly noteworthy because of the mythical content one is tempted to see in them. In France, as in most European countries, rituals of fire were performed during the cycles of Christmas, Lent, and Midsummer Day (24 June). The dates of Christmas and of Midsummer Day fall close to those of the winter and summer solstices (21 December and 21 June). As a result, authors have viewed these holidays as Christianized forms of pagan solar cults. Despite the denials by van Gennep, who insisted that these were *not* solstitial ceremonies, the near coincidence of the dates is striking, though it does not fully explain the content of the rituals as they were performed.

The bonfires of the cycle of Shrove Tuesday–Lent are, within the general schema, related to those of Midsummer Day. In fact, in most instances they are mutually exclusive: wherever fires are made during Lent, they are not made on Midsummer Day, and vice versa. The rule is not absolutely general, since there are some folkloric zones where the practice takes place at both times of the year. Such places, however, are rare and are situated mostly at points of contact between areas of Midsummer Day bonfires (northwestern, western, southwestern, southeastern France) and areas of Shrove Tuesday–Lent fires (eastern, central-eastern France). The general schema of ceremonies of bonfires and firebrands calls for a celebration at each solstice except when the summer celebration is replaced by another one scheduled halfway through the cycle, at around the time of the equinox. This very general arrangement shows that the part of the year that is ceremonial in this respect begins at the moment when the day begins to grow longer and ends when it stops growing longer; the beginning of the period is marked by a bonfire ritual at home and the end—or the midpoint—by a communal bonfire ritual.

During the Twelve Days of Christmas, that is, the period from Christmas to Epiphany, there were few localities where bonfires or firebrands were lighted. The custom practiced at Pertuis in the Vaucluse is therefore noteworthy because of its rarity. The feast of the Beautiful Star, fully described in the eighteenth century by the Abbé Achard, was celebrated on the eve of Epiphany. This is how an observer at the beginning of the twentieth century described it: "The star is nothing but a cart with its rear carriage loaded with flammable material. In front sits a man who seems to drive the team. The cart is drawn by ten or twelve animals and crosses

the town at full gallop to the acclaim of all the people. Buckets of water are poured at every moment over the firebox so as to prevent the flame from reaching the driver. If the fire flares up, it is a sure sign of a good crop. . . . But if the fire goes out or does not rise in a spiral, the crop will be poor, and everyone goes home unhappy. After the ride, the cart is unloaded in the town square and whoever gets hold of a burning firebrand first and carries it home to his hearth will bring good fortune there" (van Gennep, 1937–58, p. 3043). This curious moving bonfire, which represents the star followed by the Magi, thus determines whether crops will be good or bad, while its firebrands protect the house.

In some festivities in the Christmas cycle, firebrands are carried as individual torchlights. In and around Dreux, the processions of the Flaming Coals took place on Christmas Eve. The torches were pieces of wood dried in an oven and split lengthwise down the middle. The children's torches were mullein stems dipped in oil. All the townspeople would gather by neighborhoods around five in the afternoon and assemble at the Town Hall, where the clergy and the magistrates would join them. From there they would all walk three times around the covered market and the Church of Saint-Pierre, shouting "Noël, nolet, nolet." Upon returning to their neighborhoods, the people would lay down their torches to form a bonfire with the nonburning ends facing outward. They would then bring the remainder of that end piece back home with them to ward off misfortune. "This procession would take place in surprising order and with great respect, considering the size of the crowd." It was also said that the fire from the torches did not scorch or hurt. The circumambulation of the market and the presence of shepherds who had brought lambs with them from nearby farms suggest that the ritual was meant to attract prosperity.

The custom of the Yule log, though not practiced everywhere, was nevertheless much more widespread than the custom of the firebrands. The earliest description of this ritual comes from a student from Basel who was working on a doctorate in medicine at Montpellier. It dates back to 1597.

On 24 December, Christmas Eve . . . a large log is placed on the andirons in the fireplace, over the fire. When it starts burning, the entire household assembles around the fire and the youngest . . . is supposed to hold a glass full of wine, a piece of bread, and a little salt in his right hand and a lighted candle in his left hand. Then all the boys and the men remove their hats and the youngest (or his father in his place) speaks thus: "Wheresoever the master of the house comes and goes / may God grant him much good / And no evil at all / And may God grant him childbearing women / kidding goats / lambing ewes / foaling mares / kittening cats / rat-bearing rats / And no evil at all, but plenty of good." It is said that the live coals cannot burn through a tablecloth on which they are placed. The people carefully keep the coals the year round. . . . When this has been done, they sit down to an ample meal, without fish or meat, but with excellent wine, preserves, and fruit. The table is set and left overnight, and on it are placed half a glass of wine, bread, salt, and a knife. (van Gennep 1937–58, pp. 3101–5)

This precise description requires only a few additional bits of information that are easily furnished by the accounts of countless regional witnesses. It is sometimes said that the log must be big enough to burn for three days (in which case it is called *Tréfoué*), or even for all twelve days of the cycle. Usually it is supposed to come from a fruit-bearing tree; in this connection, it is not hard to understand the choice of a

log from an oak tree, since acorns once were human and animal food, and oak is a hard and slow-burning wood.

The half-burned logs are kept and used in often well-defined magical ways: they protect people and animals from illness; they keep harmful animals away from the house and the fields; they forewarn against the evil spells of sorcerers. Like the fire of Midsummer Day, the fire of the Yule log does not cause burns, nor do its sparks. Sometimes people would hit it with a firebrand in order to make as many sparks fly as possible, while uttering the following formula of prosperity: "So many bushels of wheat, so many jugs of wine" (Auvergne); "As many sparks as little chicks" (Poitou); "As many sheaves and sheaflets as sparks and sparklets" (Côte d'Or). The children would also hit it with a stick to get out the preserves and dried fruits that had been hidden in it for them. People would then say in Burgundy and in Franche-Comté that the log was "vomiting," "pissing," "shitting," or "giving birth."

The ritual of the Yule log is designed to promote prosperity, human, animal, and agricultural. The ritual is in most cases celebrated inside the home and within the family circle. Furthermore, it does not appear as if the Church tried to eradicate it as being superstitious, nor did it try to Christianize it. The few observable Christian embellishments seem to have been added spontaneously and rather late in the process without altering the essence of the ritual. In all of these matters, the fires of Midsummer Day differ from the Yule log. The Church fought long and hard against the Midsummer fires and, unable to eradicate them, tried to give them a Christian veneer through the presence of the clergy and through a process of rationalizing the ritual by assimilating it to the feast of Saint John the Baptist. Moreover, the fires are lighted by the whole local community and out of doors, in the most public way possible: the site is often chosen so that the fire can be seen from a great distance. Thus, not only do the Midsummer Day bonfires differ from the Yule logs in a number of characteristics, but they also have a much more highly developed and much richer ritual. A great number of descriptions of the Midsummer fires are listed in a bibliography in the *Manuel* by van Gennep (1937-58). The following one comes from the marshlands of Poitou; it was published at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The eve of Midsummer Day is a great festival throughout the countryside. After sunset, each brings his piece of firewood to the square; the firewood is shaped into a pyramid; the priest then comes forward in a solemn procession and lights the fire. The crackling fire thrills every heart; everyone looks joyful. Young men and women hold hands and are eager to start dancing around the new fire. But the heads of the families are there, and before they give way to the impatient young people, everyone must pass through the salutary flame the thick clump of mullein plants and walnut tree branches which, before the following dawn, must be placed above the door of the main cattleshed. Finally the ceremony is over, the young people remain in possession of the arena, the silence is broken, the groups spring forward, shouts of joy are heard, and there is dancing and singing. In the meantime, the old people warm themselves and place cinders in their clogs to ward off a multitude of ills.

From these descriptions, a certain number of general features of rituals can be identified that are pertinent to this particular ceremony. First, the entire local community participates in the preparation of the bonfire, and each person,

even the poorest, contributes a piece of firewood. Sometimes, but more rarely, all the young people are charged with collecting the wood. Second, the lighting is performed by the clergy so that the Church may appear to be in control of what it could not prevent. Third, there is a procession around the fire, sometimes once, sometimes repeatedly, either before, or more often after, the lighting. The procession may make three, nine, or, rarely, fourteen (as in Bresse) full circles around the fire, or it may last until the fire dies out. Rounds are danced by "young people of both sexes" according to the reports of almost all observers. In some localities, the dances predicted and assured a prompt marriage. Fourth, the people made the fire give off as much smoke as possible by throwing herbs and green branches (sometimes bones) on the fire, and people and animals would be exposed to the smoke. Finally, when the fire began to die down, there were still two ritual acts to be performed. The participants, especially the young men and women, would jump over the bonfire once or several times, in order to get certain benefits: to protect themselves from illness, to get married within the year, to enjoy general prosperity. Then the half-burned pieces of firewood would be retrieved and kept in the house throughout the year so they would protect all those who lived in the house, human and animal alike, against lightning, fire, thieves, and sickness. The remains of the Yule log had the same power, and the fire of Midsummer Day, like that of Christmas, is not supposed to scorch.

The other forms of the ritual fires of Midsummer are relatively rare but all the more noteworthy. The most beautiful description, published in 1822, recounts the festival of the fire wheel of Basse-Kontz, in the district of Thionville (Teissier). This village is built halfway up the slope on the left bank of the Moselle River. The top of the slope forms a plateau called the Stromberg. The men and boys of the village go to the top at nightfall, while the women and the girls remain halfway up by the fountain. The wheel is on top; it is a straw cylinder "weighing four to five hundred pounds with a pole going through its center and sticking out three feet on either side. The pole is the rudder which the two drivers of the wheel hold on to." Every inhabitant has willingly provided a bale of straw: refusal to do so would bring certain misfortune in the course of the year. The surplus straw is used to make firebrands. As soon as the wheel is set on fire, two young men grab the ends of the pole and send it rolling down the slope. The goal is to dive into the Moselle river and extinguish what is left of the flaming wheel. But they rarely manage to do it. Success means that there will be a good crop. During this time, the men light straw firebrands, hurl them into the air, and relight them as long as the wheel continues to roll. Some run alongside the wheel. When it passes by the women assembled halfway down, they greet it with shouts.

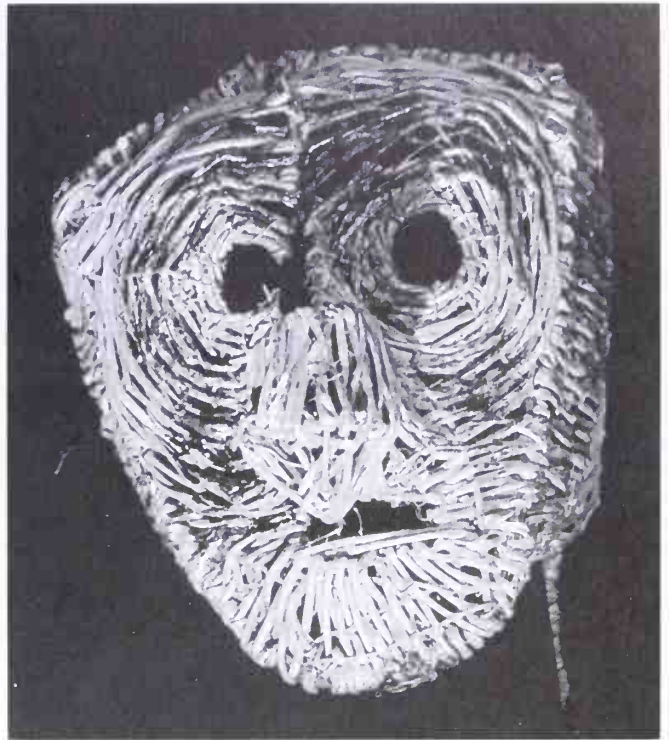
This ritual clearly reveals an agrarian magic. The proper guidance of the wheel and its immersion in the river are the guarantors and omens of a plentiful harvest in the vineyard. This feature is also present in the bonfires of Midsummer Day, but often more diffusely and less explicitly.

Authors have identified these festivals as the remnants of a pagan cult of the sun. In this regard, the most interesting study was Henri Gaidoz's work on the Gallic sun god (1886). Some Gallic statues represent an individual often naked, bearded, with a full head of hair, and carrying a six-spoked wheel in his hand. More highly Romanized in southeastern Gaul, he seems to have been assimilated to Jupiter. For Gaidoz, the wheel is the image of the sun. There is no shortage of evidence in Indo-European (particularly Indian)

mythologies to convince one of this. Furthermore, "the principal Christian festivals were substituted," he claims, "for festivals predating Christianity by quite some time, and for dates that for many centuries had already been devoted to popular cults." Since the two solstices were the most striking dates in popular imagination, the two great festivals of the year must have been scheduled at these times. In fact, we know of only one, the great feast of Mithra, the *Sol invictus*, which was celebrated on December 25. We must not forget, however, that Mithraism, which came from the East, was adopted by the Roman legions at the beginning of the Christian era and was not firmly established among the populations among whom they were camping. As far as the feast of Midsummer Day is concerned, Gaidoz is content to assert that it is "the continuation, under a Christian label, of the feast of the summer solstice, that the wheel, the symbol of our Gallic god, played a major role in these rites, and that our memories of it are not yet lost, though they are becoming fainter every day." This course of development is difficult to prove, for there is no known ancient ceremony celebrated on the summer solstice. Moreover, the first reference to the feast of Midsummer Day dates from the seventh century and appears in a homily of Saint Eloy, who says: "Let no one on Midsummer Day or on certain solemn occasions honoring the Saints practice the observance of the solstices, dances, carols, and diabolical songs." A survival of Germanic paganism is excluded from this, since the oldest reference to the fires of Midsummer Day in Germany dates from 1181. What remains is the problematic Celtic origin. No document indicates that solstitial fires existed in Gaul. Nothing proves that the god of the wheel, most likely a solar deity, was indeed associated with rituals of this kind. To account both for the Gallo-Roman deity and for the popular rites of Midsummer Day, it is enough to see in the wheel and particularly in the flaming wheel an Indo-European symbol of the sun.

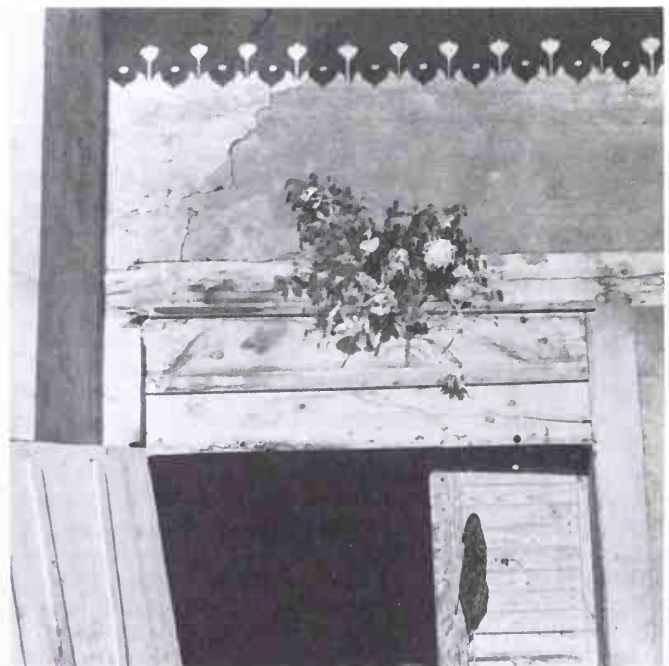
It is, however, difficult to exclude totally from the data concerning the popular festivals of Midsummer Day the fact that at this time in the solar year the sun is at its apogee and that it is about to wane. In certain communities of the Auvergne, Bourbonnais, Languedoc, the Vosges, and the Bouches-du-Rhône, people would climb to the top of a hill during the night of June 23–24 to watch the sun rise and to greet it, often with shouts of joy. In this way, they would topographically mark the most extreme point of the sun's summer rising. Curiously, the Church in its efforts to Christianize these moments of rejoicing rationalized their connection with the summer solstice through the hallowed character of John the Baptist. In John 3:30, Saint John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus and introducing himself as his precursor, says, "He must increase and I must decrease," while Saint Augustine, making an error of a few days, says, "*In Johannis nativitate dies decrescit*" (on John's nativity the day decreases). We can see in this an example of the complex process by which French folklore was formed, probably mostly during the high Middle Ages according to the repeated claims of van Gennep. This formation, this invention, is by and large the result of the encounter, sometimes even the collision, between the Christian tradition, well established by that time, and popular mythical creativity.

Symbolically, the fires of Midsummer Day thus represent the sun at the height of its strength, just before it starts decreasing. The symbolism is quite clear in the case of the flaming wheels, since many mythologies represent the sun in this form. But the French rituals of the summer solstice are neither the reflection nor the relic of an improbable solar mythology. They can only really be explained if we consider



Mask. Aubrac. Photo Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires, Paris.

Midsummer Day bouquet above a cowshed door (Doubs). Photo Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires, Paris.



the general annual system of fires and bonfires: at Christmas, Shrove Tuesday–Lent, and Midsummer Day. It has been said that these rituals defined, in a way, one-half of the ceremonial year. Not that the second part of the year has no calendrical festivals, but they are much rarer and of lesser importance. As a result, the ritual organization of the year does not follow the Celtic calendar that divided the year into two parts in terms of two great festivals: Samain (November 1) and Beltaine (May 1), to which were added two other divisions determined by the festivals called Imbolc (February 1, Feast of Saint Bridget) and Lughnasad (August 1). This calendar did not follow the movement of the sun like the French popular calendar, the key to which rests not so much in solar symbolism as in the accompanying agrarian magic. The increasing sun, represented and supported by fire rituals, is the symbol, the guarantor, and the omen of the growth of plants, the propagation of domestic animals, and the prosperity of human beings. As the youngest in the family in Montpellier would say after the lighting of the Yule log: "And may God grant him childbearing women / kidding goats / lambing ewes / foaling mares / kitting cats / rat-bearing rats / And no evil at all, but plenty of good." All the fires that were lighted between Christmas and Midsummer Day, including Shrove Tuesday and Lent, involved formulas

and rituals with an agrarian function. Within this general frame of reference, the rituals of Shrove Tuesday–Lent are partly the doublets of those of Midsummer Day. Of course, they also involve other elements, which the reader will find described in Gaignebet's book on the subject, a book full of erudition, but sometimes questionable from the theoretical point of view.

In the underlying mythology of the calendar ritual system, bonfires and firebrands represent the sun increasing from the winter solstice to the summer solstice, not as the symbols of a forgotten pagan deity but because the nature of fire enables it to materialize the idea of growth and the irresistible burgeoning of plants. Like the plant kingdom, fire moves upward and defies gravity. The Church accorded only a limited place to agrarian rituals (ember days and Rogation Days), but popular mythical thinking spontaneously created those forms of ritual for which it felt the need.

N.B./g.h.

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ROMANTICISM AND MYTHOLOGY: THE USE OF MYTHS IN LITERARY WORKS

I. In France

According to Schelling, the products of mythology "by their depth, their endurance, and their universality are comparable only to nature itself." Nineteenth-century French literature sought a grand epic synthesis, philosophical and social; this is evident in Balzac's *Human Comedy*, the works of Ballanche, Lamartine's *Visions*, Victor Hugo's *Legend of the Centuries* and *God*, Michelet's *History of France*, and Auguste Comte's *Course of Positive Philosophy*.

Moreover, myths, as Mircea Eliade has pointed out, "reveal the structures of the real and the multiple modes of being in the world." Archaic myths are generally simplifications, designed to facilitate the understanding of the real, whereas later myths, by contrast, complicate forms and relations. The myths elaborated by nineteenth-century writers generally fall into the second category, whether they consciously modified an old myth to give it a new meaning or created a wholly or partially new myth.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a debate was launched between supporters of Greek and Roman mythology and partisans of the Christian supernatural. In Germany (see references to Herder below) and in France, many pondered over the origins of mythologies and over the meaning that they should be given.

For our purposes, the century begins with Goethe and Schiller in Germany, with William Blake in England, and in France with Chateaubriand's publication of *The Genius of Christianity* in 1802. This date, a milestone, also happens to be the year of Victor Hugo's birth. From then until 1825 there was a veritable war of mythologies. In a work entitled *On Literature*, which appeared before 1800, Madame de Staël

called upon the Olympian Zeus, also known as the celestial Jupiter, to make way for Óðinn. She proposed to replace the fables of the Greeks and Romans with fables by Scottish, Icelandic, and Scandinavian bards, which she mixed together, designating them under the general rubric of Norse Mythology. In fact, as early as 1756, Paul-Henri Mallet had published his *Monuments of the Mythology and the Poetry of the Celts, particularly of the Ancient Scandinavians* [sic]. In this work he brought to French readers the poems of the *Edda*, which he introduced as the "Bible of the Norse God Odin." In 1760, James MacPherson published his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, which inspired the pseudo-Ossian fashion. According to Madame de Staël, again in *On Literature*, "the shock to the imagination that the Ossianic poems cause inclines one's thought toward the deepest meditations." She thought that this mythology prepared the way for the acceptance of Christianity among the Norse peoples, because she did not understand the violent and bloody character of most of the gods in the *Edda*. It was not by chance that Ossian was one of Napoleon's favorite readings and remained in vogue throughout his reign.

In England, people never stopped reading the Bible. In France, Chateaubriand in the *Genius of Christianity* (1802) took up the defense of the Christian supernatural and recommended that poets seek inspiration in the Bible, in Milton, and in Tasso. It was partly through his influence that the Old Testament was rediscovered and became one of the bedside books of the French romantics.

Germanic influences helped to give the Christian supernatural its full vigor. Among these influences were Gessner's *Idylls* and Friedrich Klopstock's *Messiah* (1758–73). Vigny owed his "Jewish poems" to them, and by 1823 he was ready to institute in France a "Christian theogony" modeled, he claimed, on that of Hesiod. During the Empire, Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–45) made the Last Judgment a fashionable subject. Milton's *Paradise Lost* was translated into verse by Delille in 1804, and into prose by Chateaubriand in

1836. But Chateaubriand's theories led poets on a false trail. Chateaubriand criticized the epics of Dante, Milton, and Klopstock, condemning any poem in which religion constituted the central subject and not the subordinate theme, "where the supernatural is the *basis* of rather than incidental to the image." In his pamphlet *The Literary Scruples of the Baroness Muir de Staël* (1814), Alexandre Soumet opposed this theory; he wrote: "Could it be that subjects almost entirely based on the supernatural such as *The Messiah* and *Paradise Lost* are the only ones that can henceforth be apprehended by the stern imagination of the moderns? Our epic concepts must touch throughout upon the mysteries of another world." When in 1840 he published *The Divine Epic*, he stated in his preface that he had turned the Muse into a "mystical initiate," adding: "The supernatural, which is only incidental in ancient epics, almost always becomes the very subject of the songs of a modern epic poet. A wholly spiritualist religion commands him."

In order to avoid the sublime monotony that such a conception of an epic might engender, writers resorted to national traditions, fairies, magicians, and witches for the sake of variety. From 1813 to 1817, Marchangy published his eight-volume *Poetic Gaul*, devoting a large part of it to Scandinavian mythology and to an enchanting supernatural derived from Tasso. He claimed that the French national epic was organized around the figure of Charlemagne and that France's national epics might well rival Homeric literature. Charles Nodier emerged as the promoter of this "national" supernatural. In the *Journal of Debates* of 27 November 1817 (an article collected in book 2 of the *Mélanges de littérature*, pp. 317–24), he enthusiastically hailed the completion of the publication of *Poetic Gaul*, and he wrote:

Look at your fables, your mythology, your old customs, poems, and tragedies: sublime subjects among which we merely have to make a choice, to give the seal of genius, so that in the empire of drama and epic they can take the place of the lamentable and eternal stories of Troy, Argos, Thebes, and Mycenae.

Nodier himself later illustrated the mythology of superstitions with *Trilby* and *The Crumb Fairy*.

The coexistence of Christianity with popular beliefs, some of which go back to prehistoric times, can be astonishing. Nonetheless, Madame de Staël pointed out in *De l'Allemagne* (1810) that popular superstitions are always analogous to the dominant religion, and she added: "A host of beliefs ordinarily attach themselves to religion and history alike." Joseph de Maistre went even further: "Man's worth can only be measured by what he believes. That does not mean that one should believe in nonsense, but it is always better to believe too much than to believe nothing." Moreover, in the tenth homily in the *Soirées in Saint Petersburg* the same author declares that superstition, as the term implies, is something beyond legitimate belief, and that, as such, it is "an advanced work of religion that must not be destroyed." This is a kind of paraphrase of the Gospel parable of the good and bad seed. Notes published by E. Dermenghem argue: "Superstition is the excess of religion . . . We must not believe that religion is one thing and superstition another, rather we should seriously ask ourselves if superstition might not be a necessary advance post of religion" (*Joseph de Maistre the Mystic*, p. 28).

Nodier always claimed that the supernatural answered a fundamental human need, the need to believe. He was later saddened to see popular beliefs on the wane, and would take great pains to preserve their memory. He showed clearly

how the frenzied supernatural and the fantastic were born of the decadence of faith. Several works present the confrontation of mythologies. In *The War of the Gods* (1797), Evariste Parry burlesqued the confrontation of gods from various regions. Curiously, this mythological hodgepodge foreshadowed the parades of divine characters in Flaubert's *Temptation of Saint Anthony*. Chateaubriand, looking back with irony on his early work, *The Natchez*, later said, "It shows the supernatural in all its forms—the Christian supernatural, the mythological supernatural, the Indian supernatural: muses, angels, demons, spirits." In *The Martyrs* (1809), too, episodes associated with the religions of the Gauls and the Norse are added to the central struggle between Greco-Roman mythology on the one side and Christianity on the other.

Marchangy suggested as a subject for an epic the reestablishment of the empire by Charlemagne, precisely because it offered an opportunity to depict the gods of various religions. This is what the Vicomte of Arlincourt referred to in the second canto of his epic *Charlemagne, or the Caroleid* (1818), in which the gods Teutates, Óðinn, and Irminsul foment a rebellion against Charlemagne for his role in the spreading of Christianity. Throughout the epic (which has no less than twenty-four cantos), many mythologies are brought together. One step farther and it would be syncretism. This can already be found in Fabre d'Olivet, the author of *The Loves of Rose and Ponce de Meyrueis* (1803), who wrote a poem entitled *The Troubadour*, made up of five cantos and written in the archaic French of the langue d'oc. In this last work, the angel Gabriel is assimilated to Cupid, and Mary to Juno; Mary Magdalene becomes a figure of Mylita-Astarte as well as Aphrodite-Venus, and the deadly sins bear Hebrew names.

Vico's *New Science* appeared in 1725, although its influence in France was not felt until Michelet's translation in 1827. According to Vico, myths could be viewed as a kind of summary of primitive history. He saw in Homer a collective being, a symbol of the Greek people chanting their own story in national epics. In eighteenth-century France, Vico had a heterodox disciple in Nicolas Boulanger, who in his *Antiquity Unveiled by Customs* (1766) claimed to have found the source of all mythologies in the revolutions in nature, especially in the memory of the great geological catastrophes.

The nine-volume *Primitive World* of Court de Gébelin (1773–84) exerted a considerable influence. In this work, all myths were endowed with a historical meaning, often closely related to the history of agriculture. But the etymological dictionaries included in this work also engage in a deep meditation on language, an extension of some of the speculations of Father Athanasius Kircher.

In year III of the First Republic (A.D. 1794), Charles-François Dupuis published his *Origin of All Cults*, which set forth the thesis that the adventures of the gods describe the phenomena of nature, primarily celestial phenomena, such as the revolutions of the sun and the moon, their movements with respect to the constellations, etc. Although these theories have a measure of truth, they cannot account for the totality of all myths.

The idea of a universal revelation, which already appears in Lafitau's work in the eighteenth century, was quite widespread in the nineteenth century. With the development of secret societies and Illuminism, some authors claimed to recognize a prefiguration of Masonic rituals in the mysteries of Egypt and Eleusis. They traced the universal tradition step by step, and in their view myths had multiple and deep meanings. One work was particularly representative: *Freemasonry Traced to Its True Origin, or the Antiquity of Freemasonry*

Proved by the Explication of the Ancient and Modern Mysteries, by Alexandre Lenoir (1814).

Joseph de Maistre shared with these authors the belief in a primitive revelation identical with Hebrew and Christian monotheism. In his *Essay on Indifference in the Matter of Religion* (4 volumes, 1817–23), Lammenais later claimed to have rediscovered the original monotheism hidden behind the gods of polytheism. Baron Eckstein later introduced Hindu mythology into France in his newspaper *The Catholic*, and Lamartine then used his translations from the Sanskrit in his *Plain Course in Literature*. According to Eckstein, paganism was nothing but a corrupted and degenerate Catholicism, and he searched everywhere for the old sources of beliefs, doctrines, and symbols that could make up what might be called "the catholicism before Catholicism." He laid the groundwork for the comparative history of religions by comparing the myths of India, Iran, Greece, Scandinavia, and ancient Germany. Some of these studies foreshadow astoundingly the works of George Dumézil.

Eckstein's role was considerable. He introduced into France the ideas of his master, Frederick Kreuzer, the author of the celebrated *Symbolism and Mythology of Ancient Peoples* published in 1810–12. In 1824, Benjamin Constant, who had read the work in German, predicted in the first volume of his book *On Religion* the triumph of Kreuzer's book over "the narrow and arid system of Dupuis," and Constant added, "It will be a triumph for the imagination and in certain ways a gain for science." In fact, Kreuzer's work marked the dawn of the science of myths; Joseph-Daniel Guigniaut would later devote his life to translating him, to completing and rectifying him, and thus he became in France the true founder of religious studies, as Michelet pointed out. The French edition of Guigniaut's work, thus enriched, appeared in ten volumes between 1825 and 1851, with an extremely suggestive volume of plates. Entitled *Religions of Antiquity Considered Principally in Their Symbolic and Mythological Forms*, it fascinated the poets because it supplied them with a whole repertory of symbols and analogies. Drawing upon Schelling's philosophy of nature, Kreuzer claimed that the symbol is "the primitive form of human intelligence" and that it makes it possible to give finite intelligences an image of the infinite. By this means the priestly caste in the Orient received the primitive revelation and transmitted it to still uncultivated peoples. The symbol, which is "the idea made palpable and personified," gives birth to the myth, which explains and illustrates the idea through a narrative. Primitive revelation is preserved in mysteries. The Neoplatonists alone were able to penetrate the real spirit of paganism and the meaning of its secret rites.

The notion of a language of nature, of the primitive spoken word, formulated by Kreuzer, is related to certain speculations of Court de Gébelin, Claude de Saint-Martin, and Fabre d'Olivet.

In the December 1823 issue of *The French Muse* (thus before Guigniaut's publication), Alexandre Soumet echoed these doctrines. He claimed that poetry "explains and completes the work of the Creator." Everything is symbolic in the eyes of the poet. Through a continuous exchange of analogies and comparisons, he seeks to rediscover some traces of the primitive language, revealed to man by God, of which modern languages are but a flimsy shadow. Thus the faith in the truth of the imagination arose. Pierre Leroux, and later Charles Baudelaire, took this doctrine as far as it could go; Baudelaire went on to speak of the inexhaustible depths of the universal analogy.

This led to the flowering of epics, mentioned earlier, which owed as much to Vico as to Kreuzer in their conception.

The proponents of syncretism—Thalès Bernard, Gérard de Nerval, and Louis Ménard—must also be counted among the disciples of Kreuzer. They could claim to belong simultaneously to all religions (Nerval is said to have espoused seventeen) because they interpreted them symbolically. In their eyes, the symbol redeemed both religion and poetry. Beginning in 1828, Victor Cousin developed his brand of syncretism, which was thoroughly imbued with Neoplatonism and would later influence Quinet, Vigny, and Nerval. In *The House of the Shepherd*, *The Death of the Wolf*, and *The Bottle in the Sea*, Vigny appeared as the creator of modern myths. In *Daphne*, he reproached Christianity for having adulterated pure ideas, but after he had dreamed of a religion without images, he came to realize that he was dreaming an impossible dream.

French romanticism essentially fed on myths. This is especially true of the work of Victor Hugo, who dominated this period.

II. In Germany

Goethe deserves special attention here because his work served in many respects as a prelude to romanticism in Germany. A large number of great mythic themes gravitate around *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust*. In his dramatic works, Goethe treated such subjects as Pandora and Iphigenia, which go back to classical antiquity. *The Green Serpent* is an allegory of human life inspired by *The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz* by Johann Valentin Andreae.

With *The Robbers* (1781), Schiller made current a modern myth with an extraordinarily promising future, the myth of the "noble bandit." Works like *Maria Stuart* (1800) and *Wilhelm Tell* (1804) give a mythical dimension to historic characters. Finally, his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1793) reflect on the proper use of mythology.

Although Bonald, Fabre d'Olivet, Joseph de Maistre, Saint-Martin, and Ballanche exerted a great deal of influence on literature in France, German Romanticism was imbued with occult doctrines to an even greater extent than was French romanticism. The loftiest ideas of Neoplatonism had been reintroduced in Germany by Meister Eckhart, Paracelsus, Agrippa von Nettesheim, and finally Jakob Böhme. Such poets as Ludwig Tieck and Novalis, and after them the storyteller E. T. A. Hoffmann, were deeply marked by their reading of Böhme.

For Johann Georg Hamann, the "magus of the north," all of creation is "a discourse addressed to the creature by means of the creature." Another great stimulus was Johann Gottfried von Herder, who took an interest in popular traditions and who in his quest for syncretism arrived at immanentism (the perception of God in the universe). The German romantics conceived of nature as an animate being. One of their fundamental myths is the quest for the primitive language from which all languages were differentiated and for the original religion which was at the origin of multiple beliefs.

Herder began his essay *On the Germano-Oriental Poets* by condemning all imitation of Oriental poetry, by which he meant imitation of the Old Testament. Converted for a time to Eastern aesthetics between 1769 and 1774, while he was preparing his *Oldest Document of the Human Race*, he returned to the idea of the supremacy of the language, mythology, and poetry of Greece. Later both Friedrich von Schlegel and his

brother August Wilhelm Schlegel helped to acquaint Europe with Hindu literature. Numerous German scholars, among them J. A. Kanne, F. Majer, Görres, Karl Ritter, and Gottfried Müller, took myths seriously and encouraged others to do so.

But from the standpoint of our concern, the most important statement comes from Friedrich Schelling's *On the Philosophy of Art* (1802–3), in which he asserts that "the gods are the absolute itself seen through the particular and considered as real," that mythology "is the necessary condition and raw material of all art," and, further, that

mythology is the universe in holiday dress, in its absolute state, the true universe per se, the image of life and supernatural chaos in divine imagination, already poetry by itself and in turn poetic matter and poetic elements. It is the world and in a sense the earth, the only place where works of art can flourish and live. Only in a world of this kind are immutable and determined forms possible, the only forms through which eternal ideas may be expressed.

Herder's ideas came to be known in France primarily through Edgar Quinet. Since works by Goethe, Schiller, and E. T. A. Hoffmann were also translated and discussed, their influence became, oddly enough, more significant than that of Sir Walter Scott and James Fennimore Cooper. Novalis, Tieck, Arnim, and Kleist were also translated and appreciated, but only later.

III. In Great Britain

With regard to the gradual swing into romanticism that took place in England—a writer like William Blake (1757–1827) may already be identified with romanticism—Louis Cazamian spoke of the phenomenon of collective paramnesia. Indeed, the English merely discovered within themselves latent tendencies that had already prevailed in their literature during the Elizabethan era. This explains why sensational statements or manifestos were almost entirely absent. The preface that Wordsworth and Coleridge wrote for the anonymous *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), or Shelley's *Defense of Poetry* (1821), cannot really be compared with Stendhal's *Racine and Shakespeare* let alone with Hugo's *Preface to Cromwell*.

Endowed with an exceptional imagination, William Blake was a prophet and visionary who elaborated a whole mythology in which he objectified the powers of his mind. He associated the imagination with the sun in the air and the ego, and called it *Los-Urthona*; sentiment, connected with fire, was *Luvah-Orc*; sensation and water were *Tharmas*; cold reasoning, connected with the earth, was *Urizen*. A throng of secondary figures, no sooner noticed than named, came to make up a personal mythology parallel to the Old Testament and Greek mythology. Blake was convinced that he was the reincarnation of Milton. His Gnosticism persuaded him that Satan was man's true friend, and he identified Christ with the human Imagination.

The most vigorous mind of the first generation of romantics was Samuel Taylor Coleridge, but since he was addicted to opium, he completed virtually nothing of what he began. In both of his most successful poems, *Kubla Khan* (1791) and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), he assumed the role of a maker of myths. Poe's *Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym* later derived partly from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

In Byron's sizable oeuvre, *Manfred* and *Cain* were conceived according to the system of philosophic symbolism. Shelley transmuted his ideas into poetry and traversed a brief trajectory that allowed him to pass from anarchistic individualism to the meaning of human brotherhood and the meaning of the authority of sages. He disavowed rationalism and affirmed intuitive truths, finally espousing an idealistic pantheism. Like Vigny's *Moses*, his poem *Alastor* is devoted to the theme of the solitude of the superior individual. John Keats, in his majestic though unfinished masterpiece *Hyperion*, sought to rival Milton by describing the heavenly revolutions of pagan mythology, as Milton had described the Christian cycle of paradise lost and regained. Even the imagination of Thomas Carlyle, eloquent prose writer though he was, was of a mythicizing nature, and he was imbued with German idealism. His *Sartor Resartus* (The tailor retailed) (1833–34), based on a philosophy of clothes reminiscent of Balzac, is a transposed autobiography in which he expresses his contempt for his time by setting appearances in opposition to essences.

IV. A New Renaissance?

The return to myth that characterizes romanticism in France, Germany, and Great Britain appeared in all the countries of Western Europe in the nineteenth century. In Spain, José Zorilla y Moral gave the Don Juan myth its definitive form with *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844); Leopardi, who treats Prometheus with irony in *The Wager of Prometheus*, also wrote *Sappho's Last Song*. This poem may explain the mental leap that poets always make, the step that binds them to myths: "The happiest days of our lives are the first to wither away."

The glance backward constituted by the recourse to myths may well be at the same time the quest for a lost happiness, for a golden age when the young gods revealed themselves to humans. Maier later defined Sanskrit poems as "the dreams of children of our own species." The nineteenth century was for Europe the period of a true "Oriental Renaissance." In 1841, Edgar Quinet entitled a chapter of his *Genius of Religions* "The Oriental Renaissance." The following year, L. Dussieux, the author of the remarkable *Essay on the History of Oriental Erudition*, published in *The New Encyclopedia*, emphasized the fact that this renaissance had its roots in the previous century and was complementary to the first Renaissance.

In 1800, Friedrich Schlegel wrote, "It is in the Orient that we should look for the supreme romanticism," and before the end of the century, the inquiry of the elite takes on a planetary character. The goal of all the great Western poets was to rival the Hindu epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, which explains in part the immense though only partially complete projects to which we alluded at the beginning of this article.

An oneiric text by the English writer De Quincey (translated into French successively by Musset in 1828 and Baudelaire in 1860) gives a probing account of the way in which Oriental mythologies, largely conflated and mixed together, invaded Western consciousness. In his book *The Oriental Renaissance* (p. 215), Raymond Schwab cites a passage from *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (chapter 4, "Pains of Opium," originally published in 1822): "I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brahma through all the

forests of Asia; Vishnu hated me; Seva lay in wait of me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at" (*The Collected Writings of Thomas de Quincey*, vol. 3, London: A & C Black, 1897, p. 412).

For all the poets of this time, the knowledge of Egyptian religion, Zoroastrianism, Hindu mythology, the Vedanta as expressed in the *Upanishads*, and Buddhism informed their work and supplied points of reference and comparisons. Such references, even when they remain implicit, help us to understand not only Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo, Nerval, and Michelet, but also Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Goethe, and Novalis.

J.Ri./g.h.

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ROMANTICISM AND MYTH IN BLAKE, NERVAL, AND BALZAC

For the second time, the gods have deserted the earth. Almost two thousand years ago, a cry went out, "The great Pan is dead." A second cry that proclaims that God is dead now answers that first cry. How are we to think about the world, to give meaning to our individual histories, to the history of mankind, to the history of the universe? We must somehow attempt to recover from the shock caused by the brutal challenge to a conception of the world that made it possible for everything to have meaning, from suffering to war, from birth to death, from individual fate to collective destiny. Suddenly it all collapses. What are we to do in such times of anguish? It is not a matter just of believing, but of thinking, of living. But it is no longer possible to believe or think for others: "I must create a system, or be enslaved by another man" (Blake). And all of these systems can be constructed only with the debris of the lost gods.

Some people limit themselves to acknowledging the absence of the gods and try to live in remembrance of the times when the gods were here. Others stand still, waiting for a new epiphany on the edge of the promised land which they herald but will not see. Still others become hardened in a refusal that rejects all possible forms of myth; but the refusal is coupled with a pathos that owes everything to struggle and to the minimality of absence. Nietzsche still struggles with the gods and is unable to get beyond the point where the struggle against the gods is also a struggle among the gods, Dionysus against Christ on the Cross. The deniers are not so far from the prophets. The downfall of mythology and religion assures that they will be diffused everywhere and

inscribed within everyone's vision. The great Christian schemata that until now constituted a place forbidden to mythical elaboration are freed through the power of religious criticism and come to merge with the schemata of all other mythologies; the Christian religion lends all of its underground strength to the reactivation of the old myths. And the great figures of the denying prophets who arise are the figures of giants, who, worn out from fighting the gods in their attempts to replace them, can only be recognized in the dark forms of Satan, Prometheus, or Dionysus. Among these figures are not only Byron, Blake, and Hugo, but also Marx and Nietzsche.

Still others choose to hear Nerval when he asks, "Will I see myself compelled to believe everything just as our fathers the philosophers felt compelled to deny everything?" But whether they refuse myth or want to believe in it at any cost, they all confront the same problem: we must, by whatever means, respond to the threat of seeing all meaning disappear. And the poet responds by asserting the omnipotence and omnipresence of meaning. To ward off the advent of a disenchanted and empty world, he constructs a wholly meaningful nature, and two thousand years later he renews the bonds with the pre-Socratic world in which myth is possible. For myth cannot develop from a desacralized nature; it demands a new way of conceiving what exists. Nature is not inanimate matter. It is energy: "Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (Blake). Thus invested with productive power, nature is all activity and movement. The materialist Engels seeks to rediscover in matter the dynamism that produces history and gives it meaning. We must go beyond the dualism that separates body and soul: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul" (Blake). The body is nothing but a degenerate, heavy form of energy, which is, in contrast,

wholly spiritual. The body is only an envelope, below which acts the dynamic essence that informs it. If Balzac believes in phrenology, it is because he sees at work everywhere the traces left by energy in its incessant activity, in man's brain as well as in social organization. Energy is present everywhere, in the inanimate world as in the human world: "A pure spirit grows larger under the outer crust of stones" (Nerval).

There are two worlds, a corporeal world and a spiritual world, that correspond point for point and make up the outer and inner components of whatever exists. Between the two worlds gates are erected that open to all who have the courage to cross the threshold: the gates of dreams, the gates of revelation, the gates of madness, the gates of artistic creation. These are the gates crossed by Milton and Blake, Louis Lambert and Balzac, Nerval and Aurélia. On this now animated world supernatural beings can multiply, beings who are nothing but the various shapes taken by various aspects of nature and history. There is no longer any break between the history of the earth and the history of humanity: once again, the universe is full of gods. In reading Buffon like a theogony, Blake and Nerval unfold the mythical stages in the life of the earth, and Balzac sees the gods and heroes in the street, in the office, in the store, and in jail. He does not enlarge the stature of his characters to make them closer to the gods; he makes them great only because he sees myths and gods in them. Balzac does not proceed from the fantastic to realism; he embodies myths progressively in the raw material offered to him by history and society. Esther Gobseck is an incarnation of Seraphita, and together with Lucien de Rubempré they reconstitute the couple Seraphitus-Seraphita; Vautrin is the devil, he is Cain, he is part of an infernal family whose demons are named Attila, Charlemagne, Robespierre, and Napoleon. The big city—Blake's London or Balzac's Paris—is a myth only because one projects upon it the vision of infernal cities that make it bear witness to the Apocalypse.

Nor is there a break between the history of humanity and individual history. Since the explanatory model is that of the organism, of the Great Animal, there is a direct relationship between ontogenesis and phylogenesis: simultaneous lives, successive lives, reincarnations, parallelisms of existences weave the fabric of historical and social events. If Vautrin is Cain, if Lucien de Rubempré is Abel, why should Nerval not be Lusignan or Napoleon? Once again, everything has meaning, right down to the slightest incidents, or perhaps the most fortuitous encounters in the life of an individual. The soldier who comes into Blake's garden and makes him stand trial is also a character of universal history, like the soldier of Africa whom Nerval meets and who becomes the sublime interpreter, the predestined confessor, the mediator between man and the supernatural. Each encounter has a meaning just as, for Balzac, each facial feature, each idiosyncrasy, each habit of the body and the mind carries a determined meaning. And these are the same mythical schemata that regulate the rhythm of individual existence and social life: masculine and feminine poles, grandeur and decadence, the descent into hell and the ascent back into the light, condensation and diffusion, separation and reconciliation; dualist schemata in which two opposite terms introduce the contradiction in being while awaiting the synthesis that is to reconcile them. This explains the importance of the Double, which haunts all creators: for Blake, all personalities are divided into Emanation and Specter, the feminine and masculine parts of the soul, which one day will rediscover their fruitful unity, in opposition with the hermaphroditic horror of Satan. Nerval sees himself threatened with dispossession



William Blake, *The Eternal*. Etching. Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery. Photo Manor, Kay, and Foley.

by a Double who takes his place: "Am I the good one? Am I the bad one?" Balzac, also threatened by his own Double, gets rid of him and has all the characters into whom he put much of himself die: Louis Lambert, Valentin, Savarus, Z. Marcas. An obsession with the Double, but also a writing technique to overcome it.

In this world animated by mythical forces, in this figurative history, the poet and the artist—double beings—occupy a central place. The poet is the seer, one who, like Blake, perceives the soul of beauty in the forms of matter; one who, like Balzac, penetrates deep into the soul of a stroller, to recover his share of the gift of life; one who, like Nerval, sees once again the unknown relatives that make up his genealogy. Knowledge through sensation is deceptive; it is the result of the contraction of a human being reduced to the state of opaqueness (Blake) and made insensitive to supernatural realities. Beyond the realm of knowledge through sensation, knowledge of another order flashes like lightning; this is the knowledge that Blake awaited for twenty years before he recovered the intellectual vision which intoxicated him. Within the scope of this exceptional experience, "objects and bodies are luminous in themselves" (Nerval). Then contact is established between the two parts of the universe, the material part and the supernatural part. The artist knows how to read and understand the signs of the language that is spoken by nature and that guarantees the existence of correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm. The

poet is the intermediary between these two worlds, and his dwelling place is "the house of the Interpreter," the name that Blake's friends gave to his house. The paths of the communication may vary: Blake enters directly into contact with supernatural beings: "I am under the direction of heavenly Messengers day and night." Nerval can only see the gates of the Great Beyond open through the converging experiences of dream and madness. Balzac creates intermediaries who ensure passage to the two realms or who, like Seraphita, themselves participate in both realms. It is essential that these moments of contact leave enduring traces, for what is transmitted must be set down. The revelation must be inscribed on the page—by drawing or writing—both to allow the poet to ensure the vision for himself and to bear witness before men of the presence of the gods. "I wanted to have a material sign of the vision that had consoled me" (Nerval). Blake, Nerval, and Balzac rediscover what Swedenborg did when he gave the name of *Memorabilia* to the story of his mystical inspirations. Nerval edited the *Memorabilia*, which he placed at the culmination of *Aurélia*; Blake inserted

"memorabilia" ("A Memorable Fancy") in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and "memorabilia" would be a fitting word for the Sibylline phrases recorded from the mouth of Louis Lambert, who had gone mad in the eyes of the world. A special intermediary with the world Beyond, the poet is himself a maker of myths. Thus he shares responsibility for creation, before which he experiences the anxieties of the demiurge, anxieties and agonies that are recapitulated in Blake's *Milton*, *Aurélia*, or *Unknown Masterpiece*.

Blake, Balzac, and Nerval faced a common spiritual dilemma, and many others could have appeared beside them: Hölderlin and later Nietzsche, to mention only two. Clearly it would be illusory to expect to understand them solely on the basis of the particular conditions of their visions, on the basis of their peculiarities, excesses, or madness. What matters is not excessiveness or madness in itself, but this excessiveness or that madness. Both date from a time of crisis when myth alone, both in reason and in madness, could respond to the anxieties of someone who sought and asked.

J.M./g.h.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF EUROPEAN DECADENT AND SYMBOLIST LITERATURE

Nothing could be more baffling than the history of decadence and symbolism. Of symbolism, Valéry said that it was "a certain region of the literary universe, that is, in France between 1860 and 1900." This says too much if we define symbolism strictly; too little if we mean decadence and symbolism taken as a whole that extends in space beyond France and in time beyond 1900. Valéry finally became aware of this and stated that "nothing in what has been written, nothing within the memory of those who experienced this period ever went by that name at any given date." Symbolism is therefore just "a myth."

Introducing the new term "myth" only adds to the general state of confusion. It can be invoked only if its full meaning is restored and if a study of the myths in symbolist and decadent literature replaces the vain attack on some ill-defined "myth of symbolism." This new alliance of decadence and symbolism under the sign of myth should be more enlightening than the quarrels and reconciliations of tiny groups within the literary arena.

I. The Glamour of a Word

Ancient, vague, inevitably the bearer of a potentially negative nuance and yet offering access to the fullness of the sacred, the word "myth" could not help but fascinate the men of that time. It swept their imagination into a dream of universality. "Myth is a tree that grows everywhere, in any climate, under any sun, spontaneously and without cutting," wrote Baudelaire in his article "Richard Wagner and *Tannhäuser* in Paris." "Religions and poetry from the four corners of the world provide us with overwhelming proof on this subject." But precisely because myth is in essence religious, it also contributed to this "vague sort of aesthetic spiritualism," which is, according to Valéry, the main characteristic of symbolism.

The great variety of mythological flora bears witness to the

universality of myth. Although the Greco-Roman pantheon and its appendages have the lion's share, poets did not hesitate to make their contributions with Hebrew mythology (Herod, Salome) and national mythologies (Celtic myths in Yeats, Maeterlinck, and Apollinaire; legends of the *Kalevala* in Leino; the Cid in Manuel Machado; Indian myths in Rubén Darío), when they were not forging personal myths, such as Stefan George's Maximin or Blok's Beautiful Lady. It was no longer a matter of collecting myths in the manner of Leconte de Lisle or gathering up "all the gods the world has known" in the manner of Louis Ménard, but rather of molding them into boldly synthetic figures. Baudelaire had already noted that Wagner's Elsa was none other than "the ancient Psyche, who was also the victim of demonic curiosity, and who was also unwilling to respect her divine spouse's anonymity; she too lost all her happiness upon penetrating the mystery." For Gabriele d'Annunzio the "royal Herodias" was at the same time "the ancient Gorgon with her full head of hair . . . Circe, Helen, Omphale, and Delilah, the courtesan with a horrible laugh" (prelude to the *Intermezzo di rime*, 1884).

The sampling might be deemed superficial and the mix ornamental. They are, however, indicative of a quest that can be said to be spiritual. The Monsieur de Phocas of Jean Lorrain left society and abandoned the salons and the boudoirs of young women in order to find in the solitude of his townhouse on the rue de Varenne, in the contemplation of the jewels of Barruchini, or in Oriental self-annihilation, the gaze that he sought: it was "the gaze of Dahgut, daughter of the king of Ys, the gaze of Salome too; but especially the limpid and green clarity of the gaze of Astarte, of Astarte who is the demon of lust and also the demon of the sea." Similarly, J. K. Huysmans's *des Esseintes* thinks he has discovered in Salome, as Gustave Moreau represented her, "the ancient Helen," "Salammbô," Isis, Kālī, in other words, always "the deity symbolic of indestructible lust, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, the cursed Beauty," the one that Swinburne had celebrated under the name of Dolores.

Symbolic? Allegorical rather—allegory being only a "chilled symbol," as Hegel pointed out. The mythological syncretism of Jean Lorrain or Huysmans seems to have but



Gustave Moreau, *L'Apparition*. Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau. Photo Giraudon.

one aim, the triumph of a single deity, or better still, the triumph of a principle identified with the obsession of the decadent individual. When Tédor de Wyzewa stressed in *La Revue wagnérienne* of 8 June 1886 that for moderns, legends and myths are "nothing but symbols," he meant "allegories." And when Baudelaire defined his wretched swan which escaped from its cage as a "strange and fatal myth," he made it an allegory of fate that compelled man to exile. The exile of a mythological character (Andromache) and of a paradigmatic figure (the consumptive Negress) confirms this all the more, and confirms as well the compulsion that acts upon the poet himself, exiled from the ideal and immersed in the world of the spleen. The myth of the swan is indeed his myth—and the myth of himself—since he takes from it only one meaning, his own, identifying it with himself. Baudelaire wastes no time in recognizing it: "everything for [him] becomes allegory."

Such is the jeopardy into which decadent and symbolist literature casts myth, reducing it, as Henri de Régnier said, to "the conch shell that resounds with *one* Idea." For Yeats, Helen represents the fatal power of all beauty. In this respect, no example is more characteristic than Henri de Régnier himself. He made the birds of Lake Stymphalis into an allegory of passing time (*Epigram* in *Les Jeux rustiques et divins* [Rustic and divine games]), and he made the trials of Ulysses into the poet's martyrdom (*L'Homme et la Sirène* [The man and the siren]). Symbolic rather than symbolist, this treat-

ment of myth is not new. It recalls Vigny's Moses, Shelley's Prometheus, Leconte de Lisle's Niobe, and Victor Hugo's Satyr, all of whom also embody an idea. And for Ballanche the ultimate meaning of all myths could be reduced to a single idea. Baudelaire treated the issue no differently when he discovered the universal meaning of sin in the Wagnerian myths and, more generally, in the "allegory created by the people," which is myth.

To ward off this danger, the "overly precise meaning" condemned by Verlaine in his famous *Art poétique* had to be erased. The use of myth becomes truly symbolic when the writer attempts to apprehend a mystery that is never completely discovered and must never be solved. "The perfect use of the mystery constitutes the symbol" was Mallarmé's answer to Jules Huret's question. And in the Manifesto of 18 September 1886, Jean Moréas took care to point out that "the essential character of symbolist art consists in never going as far as conceiving of the idea in and of itself." Mallarmé's faun and Mallarmé himself hesitate among diverse interpretations of the nymphs that appear to them. Everything begins with questions about a myth. Doubt, "heap of ancient night," is the very reason for the length of the discourse which will try in vain to exhaust the bulk of the mystery: "I, proud of my repute, I will long speak of goddesses."

The result is a fondness for ambiguous mythological figures—monsters, sphinxes, chimeras; a fondness also for the central and ever-dissolving figures of mystery cults (Orpheus, Isis, Dionysus) or of the celebration of mystery (the Grail); a fondness for myth to the extent that, more mysterious than discourse, myth gropes its way tentatively closer and closer into the zone of the unknowable.

The danger this time is that myth will express nothing but the quest itself. For Cavafy, for instance, the trials and tribulations of Odysseus are no longer, as they were for Henri de Régnier, merely the sufferings of the martyr-poet. They are the stages of an Orphic initiation through which the poet must pass:

You will never meet the Lestrygonians,
the Cyclopes and the fierce Poseidon,
if you do not carry them within your soul,
if your soul does not raise them up before you.

(Trans. Rae Dalven, *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976, p. 36)

For Mallarmé, myths of the voyage to the world beyond play an essential role that can only be explained by such an imaging of the poetic quest. Although in *Le Guignon* (Bad luck), the *Mendieur d'azur* (The azure beggar), the *Martyrs de hasards tortueux* (Martyrs of tortuous perils), and the vultureless *Prométhée* (Prometheus), there are still the romantic mannerisms of Odysseus, we are on the other hand dealing with an Odysseus who faces the mystery of death and nothingness, the Odysseus of the *Nekuia* (The journey to the dead), when we deal with the poet of the *Tombeaux* (The tombs) or "the one who went to draw tears from the river Styx." A flash of union between decadence and symbolism, the "Prose pour des Esseintes" emerges as the annihilating evocation of another voyage, seemingly more Platonic than Homeric, toward the isle of Ideas. But the inquiry about myth makes room this time for the negation of a Utopia (the land of Pulcheria) where myth itself self-destructs.

II. The Rebirth of Myth

In July 1885, after Baudelaire and before Claudel, Mallarmé dedicated to Richard Wagner his *Rêverie d'un poète français*

and thereby found himself led by his very subject to return to myth. To avail himself of another mythological motif dear to him, namely, the Phoenix, he established for his own time and in his country a death and resurrection of myth. In fact, "the French mind, strictly imaginative and abstract, therefore poetic . . . , loathes legend, and as such is at one with art, the inventor, in its integrity." And yet "this century or our nation which extols it have dissolved myths through conceptions only to make new ones."

The model which the French mind was supposed to spurn was Wagnerian drama. In giving preference to myth over history, Wagner fulfilled the vow of the first German romantics, Schlegel, Arnim, and Brentano. "Myth is the primitive and anonymous poem of the people," he wrote. "In myth, human relations shed their conventional form almost completely . . . and reveal what makes life truly, eternally, understandable." At issue, therefore, is not an ascent into the increasingly thick mists of the unknowable, but the revelation of what could be termed the essence of life. Baudelaire, who thoroughly understood that Wagner's poems "borrowed in large measure from the romantic spirit," also saw clearly that the ambition of the German master was to discover "the universal heart of man," and all this through myth.

The rebirth of myth did not happen without major modifications, which significantly transformed mythological figures, as in the case of *Tannhäuser*. "Radiant ancient Venus, Aphrodite born of white foam, has not crossed the horrifying shadows of the Middle Ages with impunity. She no longer dwells on Olympus nor on the shores of a fragrant island.

Odilon Redon, *Brunchilde*, "Twilight of the Gods," final scene. Lithograph. Illustration for *La Revue wagnérienne*, 8 August 1885. Photo Martine Pont.



She has withdrawn deep inside a magnificent cave, to be sure, but one illuminated by fires that are not those of kindly Phoebus. By going underground, Venus draws close to Hell, and with certain loathsome ceremonies is undoubtedly about to pay steady homage to the archfiend, prince of the flesh, and lord of sin." It is as if, after the death of Venus (her disappearance from Cythera in *Les Fleurs du mal* [The flowers of evil], her corpselike stillness in Swinburne's *Laus Veneris*), one could witness the weird spectacle of her resurrection (the Venus in furs of Sacher-Masoch), the birth of an ambiguous deity, simultaneously statue and woman, hetaera and goddess, Greek and barbarian.

The use of mythology in theater also changed. Wagnerian drama sought to reinstate the mythic force of Greek tragedy. Nietzsche wrote his famous book *The Birth of Tragedy* in order to hail the rebirth of tragedy thanks to Wagner, tragedy in the post-Euripidean and post-Socratic sense of the term. For Nietzsche, myth remained a temporary and necessary concession to the Apollonian, since society would not tolerate the eruption of the purely Dionysian. Between music and our musical feelings carried to their utmost, "myth and the tragic hero arise, both being fundamentally nothing but symbols of universal realities of which music alone can speak directly. If we could feel as purely Dionysian beings, myth as symbol would have no effect on us; we would pay it no heed and would not stop lending an ear to the echo of the universals *ante rem*. But it is at this point that the Apollonian force erupts and, restoring our almost annihilated individuality, brings to it the balm of a delightful illusion." Jean Lorrain felt free to create a pretty vignette from the love of Tristan and Isolde (*Yseut*, in *Le Sang des dieux* [The blood of the gods]). Gabriele d'Annunzio felt free to turn the cup of tea, which had become as ritualistic in Rome as in London, into the modern avatar of Tristan's love potion. According to Nietzsche, Wagner introduced the mythical couple only to bring us to the moment when the image fades out, when the phenomenal world reaches its limit, and when Isolde's song of the love-death rises like a "metaphysical swan song." Myth proceeds on its course of self-destruction. Yet, curiously enough, this self-destruction cannot be articulated without recourse to mythological language. The paradox of Wagner's *Tristan* is renewed with Nietzsche's commentary, a vast fresco of Apollo and Dionysus which must nonetheless suggest that what exists beyond these images is as illusory as the others.

One would like to believe that Mallarmé understood the difficulty. Instead of indulging in philological erudition, as Nietzsche did, instead of bantering heavy-handedly, as Claudel did over that *gros édredon d'Isolde* ("stout eiderdown of Isolde"), he favored an abstract concept of myth, as if it had become disembodied, a mental myth stripped even of the prop of a name. At the very most, one will see "awaken" in this setting "the Figure which is None," and art admiring itself in the empty space it has opened up for itself.

III. The Myth of Decadence

People often compare the *Néant* (Nothingness) of Mallarmé to Stefan George in *Algabal* (1892), particularly where the Roman emperor Heliogabalus represents the despotic and inhuman soul which in its omnipotence can find only loneliness and sterility. This figure is very characteristic of what can be called the myth of Latin decadence or simply the myth of decadence.

Since for quite some time Edward Gibbon, Montesquieu, and others had applied the word "decadence" to the degra-

dation of the Roman Empire, the switch to the empire of Badinguet and to the years which followed its collapse was easy. When the Sâr Péladan (Joséphin Péladan, 1859–1918) entitled his vast epic novel, his “éthopée,” *Latin Decadence*, he meant to represent and condemn modern customs that had been corrupted by materialism. We all know Verlaine’s famous statement, so characteristic—considering its date (1883)—of a general state of mind:

*Je suis L’Empire à la fin de la Décadence
Qui regarde passer les grands Barbares blancs
En composant des acrostiches indolents
D’un style d’or où la languueur du soleil danse.*

I am the Empire at the end of Decadence
looking at the great white Barbarians passing through
All the while composing indolent acrostics
In a golden style in which the languishing sun dances.
(*Languueur* in *Jadis et naguère*)

Often explicit, as in this sonnet by Verlaine, the comparison with the decadence of the Roman Empire is a constant. Baudelaire, in his study of the painter Constantin Guys, had already spoken of “decadences,” i.e., troubled, transitional times “when democracy is not yet all-powerful, when the aristocracy is only partially tottering on the edge and degraded.” The decadence he lived was of just such a kind, and he recognized himself just as easily in the Apuleian era, the second century A.D. Toward this century and those that followed, which were even gamier, were drawn men like des Esseintes in Huysmans’s *A Rebours* (Against the grain) (1884): “Stormy times, jolted by horrendous troubles, . . . while the Roman Empire shook at its foundations, while the lunacies of Asia, the filth of paganism, overflowed its bounds.”

Many writers of the decadent and symbolist era felt surrounded by barbarians. For Huysmans, it was “the new generations, those hotbeds of hideous boors who feel the need to speak and laugh loudly in restaurants and cafés; who without apologizing push you around on the sidewalk; who without even excusing themselves or even addressing you, stick a set of baby carriage wheels between your legs.” For Maurice Barrès, it was other people, those who surround Philippe (his double in *Le Culte du moi* [The cult of me]), people who have a conception of life diametrically opposed to his (*Sous l’œil des Barbares*, [Under the eye of the barbarians]) (1888). In act 2 of *Tête d’Or* (The head of gold) (1889), Claudel’s first masterpiece, Simon Agnel triumphs over the redheaded barbarians. The helpless watchmen who were supposed to guard the palace show up again, ten years later, in *Le Poème des décadences* (The poem of decadences) by Milosz, in which courtesans discuss precious stones to the roar of “the ocean of barbarian hordes from afar.” Some people resist, withdraw into their splendid solitude, or declare themselves ready for the supreme fight. Others, however, accept, or even with loud cries call the barbarians liberators. There is the new aristocracy of Nietzsche, the Pleiades of Gobineau; there are also the patrician dandies of Milosz and the d’Annunzio of the *Intermezzo di rime*, who does not answer the call of cohorts fighting against the barbarians and who would rather forget his happy fate in idleness, “amidst mad or treacherous pleasures.”

Simple imagery of the time, one might claim; but it is more than that. The myth of decadence, the myth of the barbarians, betrays the haunting obsession that the doomsday myth (or at least doomsday for a certain kind of world) imposed on the imagination of turn-of-the-century writers. As early as 1866, the Goncourt brothers spoke of “the end of societies.”

In *Le Crépuscule des dieux* (The twilight of the gods) (1884) of Elémir Bourges, the duke, attending a performance of *Götterdämmerung* in Bayreuth, sees in it the symbol of the end of the world as he knows it: “All the signs of destruction were visible on the old world, like angels of wrath, above a condemned Gomorrah.” A critic praising Marcel Schwob writes, “Magically you evoke antiquity, this Heliogabalesque antiquity toward which flow the imaginations of thinkers and the brushes of painters, these decadences and these doomsdays, mysteriously perverse and macabre.”

But the modern age is just as Heliogabalesque. Must we condemn it, or must we, on the contrary, delight in it? The same hesitation recurs. Despite the “pagan school,” myth, in any case, is not an opportunity for a return to “naked eras,” for a “renewal of resources”; it proclaims a forthcoming *eschaton* for which setting suns are the decor. In “a world worn threadbare where the most beautiful things on earth seem to fall into pieces by themselves,” as Walter Pater writes in *Marius the Epicurean* (1884), is there any possible hope of starting over beyond chaos or mere exhaustion?

IV. Back to Basics

To answer this question after the fact, we will deliberately set aside the revival of Christian literature and aesthetic consolation and for the moment concentrate on the way in which the decadent and symbolist period conceived myth. Mallarmé’s *Les Dieux antiques* (The ancient gods) happens to be an extremely loose adaptation of a manual attributed to the Reverend George William Cox and published in 1867: *A Manual of Mythology in the Form of Question and Answer*. But the manual and its French adaptation are inseparable from the school of comparative mythology, which ever since the mid-nineteenth century posits a so-called naturalist conception of mythology. The assumption made by Ludwig Preller is that “nature was the maternal foundation and the starting point for the representation of gods.” The names of the principal exponents of this school—Preller, Bréal, Adalbert Kuhn—figure prominently in the foreword to *Les Dieux antiques*. The only name missing is that of Max Müller, the most important of all.

The great merit of the naturalistic conception of myth is to pull it away from an allegorical system and give it back to an archetypal system. For the aforementioned scholars and for the popularizers who came later, mythology reenacted the spectacle of the primordial elements. These are the elemental forces of nature and its dazzling manifestations—sun, rain, lightning, the flow of rivers, the growth of plants, all “represented as the varied actions, the changing states of living beings” and expressed “in narratives full of imagery” in the great divine myths. The foreword to *Les Dieux antiques* further states: “What pleasure is added to our sense of surprise at the sight of familiar myths slowly evaporating in water, light, and elemental wind, through the very magic that analysis of the ancient word implies!” Hence a new task that might well be assigned to the poet: to reenact the great spectacles and permanent conditions of life that stand behind mythological figures and to reveal in them elemental symbols.

Adalbert Kuhn preferred the archetype of the storm. Max Müller, G. W. Cox, and after him Mallarmé inclined rather toward the sun. For Cox, “the epic poems of the Aryans are merely versions of one and the same story, and this story originates in the phenomena of the natural world and in the course of each passing day and year.” In a more concise and striking form, Mallarmé presents the same idea. The poems

"are never anything but one of the numerous narrations of the great solar drama performed under our eyes each day and each year." Zeus is the pure sky; Athena, dawn; Hermes, the wind accompanying daybreak; Paris, the dark power of night that robs the western sky of the beautiful twilight. The desertion of Ariadne, and of Brunhild, means nothing but the fact that the sun cannot be delayed in the east by dawn. And if "Oedipus proves to be overcome by a power he cannot resist," it means that "the sun cannot rest in its course: the heavenly body does not act freely; in the evening, it must join the dawn from whom it was separated in the morning."

In Claudel's first drama, the parallel between the fate of Tête d'Or (Head of gold) and the course of the sun is too clear to conceal a new paraphrase of what Mallarmé would call "the solar act." (Claudel was one of Mallarmé's audience on the rue de Rome.) The victorious hero attempts in vain to forget that sun "whose first rays would in olden times make him sing / like a stone cast against bronze," and he attempts instead to see in it nothing but a "cow's lung floating at a butcher shop door." He comes back to fetch it, however, to take it with him finally on his expedition toward the gates of Asia, toward the land of the dawn. The death of Tête d'Or takes place at the end of a long death struggle, which is also the dying of the sun in the sky.

Ô soleil! Toi, mon
Seul amour! ô gouffre et feu! ô sang! ô
Porte! Or, or! Colère sacrée!

Je meurs. Qui racontera
Que, mourant, les bras écartés, j'ai tenu le soleil sur ma
poitrine comme une roue?

O sun, Thou, my
Only love! O abyss and fire! O blood! O
Gate! Gold, gold! Holy wrath!

I die. Who shall tell
That, dying, arms outstretched, I held the sun on my
chest like a wheel?

Reappearing quite explicitly this time is the myth of Memnon, the famous black statue that sings under the influence of the sun's first rays.

Many other examples could be cited: Odysseus appearing as the "avenging sun" in *Anciennetés* (Antiquities) by Saint-Pol Roux ("Le Palais d'Ithaque au retour d'Odysseus métamorphosé en mendiant" [The palace of Ithaca on the return of Odysseus disguised as a beggar]) (1885); the inspiring sun in *The Seventh Ring* (1907) by Stefan George; the murderous sun in Bély's "A mes amis" (To my friends) (1907); the Herculean sun in Rubén Darío's "The Optimist's Greeting" in *Cantos of Life and Hope* (1905); the menstrual sun in Apollinaire ("Merlin et la vieille femme" [Merlin and the old woman] in *Alcools* [Alcoholic spirits]) (1913); the sun of "light and life" which the Jewish poet Chernichovsky in his indefatigable hope sought in an extraordinary collection of the most diverse myths leading up to a "face-to-face encounter with the statue of Apollo."

The end point of this solar quest through myths might well be the astonishing *Cantique de la connaissance* (Hymn of knowledge) by Miłosz, in *La confession de Lémuel* (The confession of Lémuel) (1922), fruit of "the teaching of the sun-bright hour of the nights of the Divine." Here again the sun is the primal element; from it "gold draws its substance and its color; man draws the light of his knowledge." The sun



Alexandre Séon, *Le sar Mérodack* Joséphin Peladan, Catalogue of the Salon de la Rose-Croix, 1892. Photo Martine Pont.

Frontispiece for the *Androgyne*, from the cycle "la décadence latine" ("Ethopée"), 1891, by Alexandre Séon. Catalogue of the Salon de la Rose-Croix, 1892. Photo Martine Pont.



makes it possible for the new poet to reach the knowledge of archetypes: "being of the nature of our mind," they "are situated, as he is, in the consciousness of the solar egg." This immediate knowledge must lead to the abolition of symbols, instruments of a mediating knowledge:

The poets of God saw the world of archetypes and described it piously through the precise and luminous terms of the language of knowledge.

The decline of faith is manifest in the world of science and art by a growing dimness of language.

The poets of nature sing the imperfect beauty of the world of the senses according to the ancient sacred mode.

However, struck by the secret discordance between the mode of expression and the subject,

And powerless to rise up to the only special place, I mean Patmos, the archetypes' land of vision,

In the night of their ignorance, they imagine an intermediary world, floating and sterile, the world of symbols.

We pass from what Gilbert Durand calls the "numinosity" of myths to the luminosity of archetypes. The "Idea" sought by the symbolist mystique descends from heaven to return to earth, less ideal than "surreal," or perhaps even just simply real. For deep down, Milosz seems to be dreaming of the abolition of the dualism phenomenon/noumenon, and with him all those poets who are referred to as "naturalistic" and who were often nothing but repentant symbolists. This milestone in literary history, for which the turn of the century could easily be made responsible, is more likely explained by the ambiguities of symbolism. There is no better example of this than a poem from *Chants de pluie et de soleil* (Songs of rain and sun) (1894) by Hugues Rebelle, in which the poet persists in speaking of the "Idea" when he really means "things":

*Je ne m'occuperai point de ces petites agitations
qui commencent sur un vagissement,
Et se terminent par un râle,
Mais de l'Idée qu'elles révèlent.
Je regarde les larmes, je regarde les sourires,
Ainsi que la pluie et le soleil;
Et les rugissements, les cris, les clameurs joyeuses,
les appels désespérés,
Passent en moi comme le vent dans les branches
d'un grand chêne.
Je n'étudierai point une passion, une âme, un visage,
Mais je monterai sur la Tour qui domine l'horizon,
Pour découvrir les peuples en marche,
Voir la forêt, la plaine et la mer
Et entendre des milliers de voix célébrer l'harmonie.*

I will no longer busy myself with these trifling agitations
that begin with a wail
and end with a death rattle,
but with the Idea that they reveal.
I regard tears, I regard smiles,
like rain and sunshine;
and the bellowings, the cries, the joyous outcries, the
desperate calls,
are to me like wind in the branches of a great oak tree.
I will no longer study a passion, a soul, a face,
but I will climb the Tower that dominates the horizon
in order to discover the peoples on the march,
to see the forest, the plain, and the sea,
and to hear the thousands of voices celebrate harmony.

After Whitman, writers like André Gide and Vicente Huidobro came to an agreement in their appeal to the things

of the earth. In a famous mythological poem, *Les Muses* (The Muses) (the first of the *Cinq Grandes Odes* [The five great odes], 1900–1905), Claudel assigned to the second creator, namely, himself, the task of discovering the gold buried in the heart of each element, the gold of divine presence hidden by the Wagnerian myths. As if in accordance with the wish of Saint-Pol Roux, the renewal of the Word corresponded to "l'Age du Soleil" (The age of the sun), "the star bursting like a ripe fruit whose seeds of sensitive and moral clarity must be welcomed."

A decadent art could easily be accused of being epigonal, of giving too much attention to works and traditions of the past. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century a mythology of the times, mythological bric-a-brac, emerged. It went against the grain of a modernity deemed vulgar; but curiously enough, it also went hand in hand with it. Nietzsche had a brilliant explanation for this phenomenon: deprived of myths, modern man is starving for myths, and he "rummages in all past eras to find his roots, even if he has to rummage back to the farthest reaches of antiquity." Accumulation is not the only characteristic of the turn-of-the-century use of myth. Ornamental, allegorical, symbolic, it tends to cut itself off from its archetypal roots, at least among second-rate writers. The Rimbaud of *Illuminations* constitutes a remarkable exception. And Nietzsche proposed for the myth of Prometheus simultaneously an allegorical interpretation (the need for crime that is imposed on the titanic individual) and an archetypal interpretation: "the hyperbolic value which a naive humanity attributes to fire as it does to the true palladium of a nascent civilization." The poets of life, the "naturalists," whom literature textbooks present as the grave-diggers of symbolism, benefited nevertheless from a current that was not interrupted during the second half of the nineteenth century, namely, comparative mythology, with an original attempt to return to the elemental meaning of myths. Was this the finish or the rebirth of myths? The end has all the makings of a renewal. The poetic quest, seemingly reaching out to a "beyond," reverts to a "here below." It remains, like the myth in what is alive, the locus of a contradiction.

P.Br./g.h.

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THE ANDROGYNE

There is no one myth of the androgyne, but rather a family of myths. Should these be considered different variants of the same original or fundamental myth? Probably not. It is better to speak of a mythic theme, whose actual unity we cannot affirm but which functions as an exemplary case. All the constitutive elements of myth are encountered in this theme, as in a microcosm, and all the explanations, all the patterns of analysis of myth, find their justification in it.

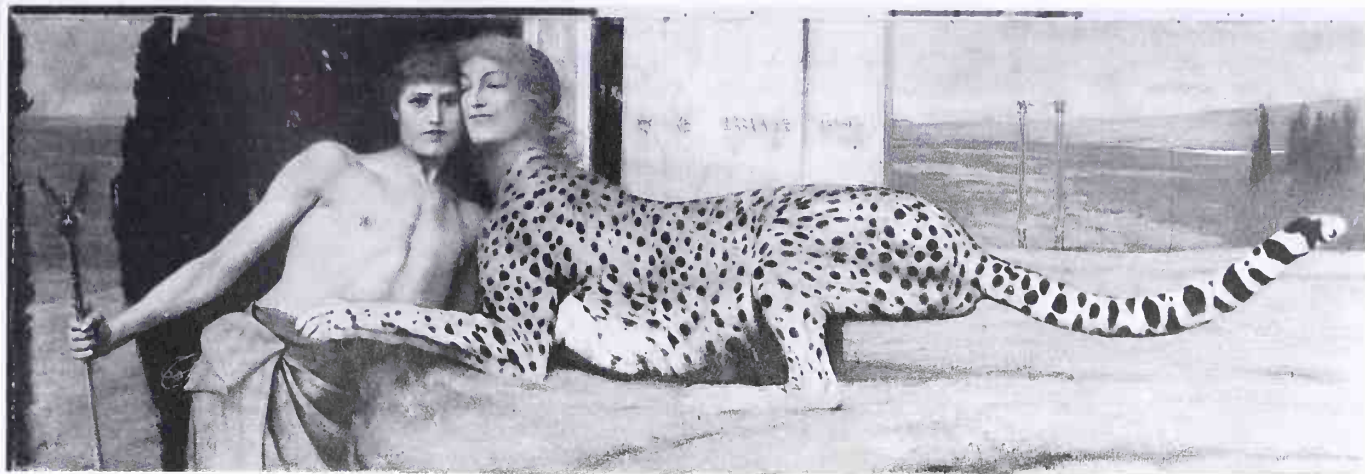
The androgyne theme is extremely widespread, one might almost say universal: it is recognized everywhere, from Greece to China, from Egypt to pre-Columbian America, from Africa to Oceania. It does not occupy the same position everywhere and almost never takes the same shape; but there is hardly a mythical construction in which a trace of the androgyne is not found. The theme is extremely polymorphous and appears not only in the form of mythical narratives: it is a complex in which the observation of nature, rituals, personal fantasies, the figures of gods, and narratives are blended. The point of departure is surely the consideration of an essential given of human existence: there are distinct sexes with corresponding physical and psychological characteristics. But nature everywhere offers to observation the presence of beings of uncertain sex, bisexual beings, the whole gamut of intersexual states. The recognized limits and forms of the states may vary from culture to culture, as the characteristics of each sex vary: their presence poses a problem and requires an explanation, since the irreducible presence of the two sexes demands it.

Thus a combination of three terms is formed—masculine, feminine, androgynous—which appears in the form of a myth that is lived and represented, a myth in action. A whole series of rituals, in particular those that are called rites of passage, give ample place to bisexuality: disguises in which one sex assumes the dress and attributes of the other, and operations such as subincision by which a man is symbolically endowed with the sexual organs of both sexes. Ceremonies of initiation, marriage rites, mourning ceremonies, fertility festivals, agrarian rites, and carnivals play upon the inversion of the sexes, mingling them in order to institute, if only for an instant, a symbolic androgyny. Multiplying and perhaps explaining the effect of these rites, almost everywhere there are fantasies of bisexuality, which belong to the most archaic foundation of our representations. For each sex, the presence of the other constitutes a source of anxiety, a threat, and a complement at once desired and feared. Accordingly, having both sexes is a recurrent fantasy, present in dreams, stories, works of art, and alchemy: simultaneously *animus* and *anima*, a human being is double and oscillates between the two poles of a totality that he seeks to reconstitute.

The androgyne also appears in the form of gods, double deities who have both masculine and feminine powers. These gods may be the origin of cosmologies, representing the primordial confusion before beings separate, divided according to the categories of the organized world as we know it, but also incarnating the double aspect of power and fertility, Zeus Labraundos, bearded and with six breasts on his chest, or Dionysus the man-woman. Besides the gods there are androgynous heroes, such as Tiresias, who passes successively through the two sexes; and something of a mythic fascination endures in the interest taken in an Aeonian knight. The priests themselves may be androgynes: devotees who castrate themselves in order to reconstitute the bisexuality of their god, shamans who dress and live as women in order to incarnate the cosmic totality. The rites and gods are associated with mythical accounts, in which the androgyne serves to explain the birth of the world and its development. More or less elaborate, the accounts are gradually transformed into mythical allegories or explicit philosophico-religious systems (the myth of Plato's *Symposium*, Orphism).

Can the mythological complex of the androgyne be explained by a single schema? People have claimed to account for it by ritual, by the psychology of archetypes, by a function of mediation: between the two poles of masculine and feminine there is a mediating category, androgyny, that makes it possible to pass from one pole to the other and to reflect at the same time on both terms of the opposition; might not the serpent of Genesis be the hermaphroditic intermediary between Adam and Eve, as the androgynous shaman is the intermediary between earth and heaven? It is certainly imprudent to reduce a mythical complex to its formal surface structure: the semantics of a myth is richer than its basic combinatory organization, as is demonstrated by the diverse forms of its preservation and its revivals in occidental tradition.

Although polytheistic religions everywhere grant androgyny an important place, the situation is completely different with the monotheistic religions of salvation: androgyny is not only put aside, it is systematically concealed. And we can understand why: the one god, refusing the empirical determinations of the gods of polytheism, cannot participate in one sex or the other without contradiction. As the object of a negative theology, he can be neither masculine, nor feminine, nor androgynous. But, concealed by the orthodoxies, androgyny continued to live on their margins, in the esotericisms of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions. Recurrent themes circulated in these traditions, in which Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, cabala, alchemy, and mysticism came to meet: an androgynous god, a god of origins, the product of an unbegotten forefather, the primary celestial power that gives birth to a series of aeons symmetrically distributed in male and female pairs; the first androgynous human, who possesses both sexual powers and is thus truly



Knopff. *The Sphinx*. Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique. Museum photo.

made in the image of god; the fall of man, who finds himself separated from the universal life and for whom the division of the sexes marks the origin of evil, which is separation; finally the ascension toward the light that at the end of time must reconstitute the androgyny of the origins. Androgyny thus marks the beginning and the end of history, to which it gives a meaning.

At the end of the eighteenth century, esoteric traditions emerged from the shadows and converged with two other movements to reactivate the theme of androgyny. On the one hand, with Winckelmann artistic neoclassicism accorded a central place to the hermaphrodite, regarded as the incarnation of ideal beauty, in which the partial beauties of the two sexes are harmoniously merged; and, after the heroic nudity of David and his school, plastic arts from the turn of the century offered a new type of nude: the clear-cut opposition between the male and female canons of beauty is succeeded by a beauty in which sexual contrasts are subdued, in which the body assumes the uncertain forms of the androgyne (Girodet, J. Broc, Granger, Dubufe). From another quarter, nascent biology lent a new force to the masculine-feminine pair, which became one of the fundamental categories of the romantic *Naturphilosophie*: the pair of terms, separated and tending to reconstitute an original unity, constitutes a polarity, a model particularly able to account for the physical and social world. At the same time, scientific observation multiplies the cases of intersexuality that exist now with all the force of scientific affirmation, while literature takes an interest in homosexuality or ambiguous sexuality. In this way, physical hermaphroditism and psychological androgyny reconstitute the double effect produced by mythical androgyny—horror and the holy, repulsion and adoration—reactivated by scientific understanding of living forms.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the theme of androgyny assumed greater prominence. Two types of androgyny succeeded one another and intermingled. In the first half of the century, the androgyny of synthesis and totality was theorized by F. von Baader and appeared in the works of Michelet, Balzac, and Wagner. In the second half of the century, the androgyne became a central figure of literature and the arts, from Swinburne and Peladan to G. Moreau and Stefan George: this was a more ambiguous androgyny, who

lives only on the hesitation and indecision between the two poles, while adorning himself in the glimmers of erotic or even satanic provocation. Does this revival of androgyny involve a real myth or only a fantasy reserved for a few creators? But the diffusion of the fantasy is itself a sign, the sign of a reflection on identity and sexual roles, thus proclaiming that mutation which leads us to question the masculine-feminine duality in our culture. Androgyny became again a myth; after Fliess, Freud affirmed the existence of a primal bisexuality: the human being is, at at least one moment in his development, woman-man and man-woman (Groddeck). And if, as Freud has said, the theory of instinct is our mythology, it was reserved to psychoanalysis to restore to the androgyne his function as myth, that is, as the paradigmatic narrative that makes sense of the world for a whole culture.

J.M./b.f.

THE ANDROGYNE, THE DOUBLE, AND THE REFLECTION: A FEW MYTHS OF ROMANTICISM

I. The Androgyne

Nineteenth-century writers generally accepted the dogma that the original Adam or "Kadmon Adam" of the Hebraic tradition was androgynous—the Platonic myth of the first androgyne furnishing, moreover, confirmation from a different tradition.

Fabre d'Olivet made Isha, the wife of Adam, a representation of human will, a notion that Ballanche was to take up again. Ballanche saw the descendants of Seth as the Orientals, representing the male, active, and initiating principle, in opposition with the Cainites or Occidentals, associated with the female, passive, and initiated principle. From another point of view, in which he followed Vico, he held that the patrician principle must regenerate the female and plebeian principle through initiation.

Father Enfantin saw himself as representing only half of the revelatory couple, while his imitator Ganneau ("the one-who-was-Ganneau") claimed to be Mapah (father and mother), the perfect androgyny. In 1829, H. de Latouche published *Fragoletta*, a clever and rather vulgar romantic treatment of the theme of a creature who is both man and woman. The heroine of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1836) of Théophile Gautier is an ambiguous being, a woman nevertheless, whose androgyny is chiefly mental. A late story from the same author, *Spiritist* (1865), describes a search for the union of souls that results in the creation of a new being, according to the doctrine of Swedenborg, who had also inspired Balzac's *Seraphita* (1835).

Novalis, who always dreamed of total fusion with the loved one, found the image of the hermaphrodite prominent in the works of J. Boehme. But in both Balzac and Novalis, the process of angelization takes place through carnal ecstasy, which assumes absolute monism, the identity of body and spirit.

Though Balzac clearly describes "two creatures reunited in an angel, lifted by the wings of pleasure," the writer's degree of sincerity in *Seraphita* poses a problem. He badly wanted to seduce Mme Hanska, and it is somewhat disturbing to note that in the same period he described a case of lesbianism in *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. The invention of the character of Seraphitus-Seraphita suggests a misunderstanding of Swedenborg. For Swedenborg had not imagined that such a hypostasis could assume human form and become incarnate.

II. The Theme of the Double

The theme of the Double, in its various aspects—the Dioscuri, the Menechmes, Narcissus, and Amphitryon—has close connections with the theme of the Androgyny, but nevertheless gave rise, in the nineteenth century, to a whole series of works which must be mentioned separately. In a sense, the link between the theme of the Double and the recollection of a primordial Androgyny, or the myth of Narcissus, is established through the Gnostic belief that Adam lost his celestial nature because he became enamored of his own image. But in the Occidental conscience, at least, every work is born at first from the author's interest in himself, and it is with good reason that A. W. Schlegel saw Narcissus as an image of the poet.

In the foreground of romantic works pervaded by the theme of the Double must be placed the work of Jean-Paul Richter. In *Siebenkäs* he had defined the *Doppelgänger* (or *Doppeltgänger*): "It is what people call those who see themselves." Of course, a psychic phenomenon so exceptional (and one to which alcoholics seem especially inclined) has given birth to a modern myth, illustrated by numerous and important works. In Jean-Paul's novel *Siebenkäs*, the protagonists Leibgeber and Siebenkäs are "a single soul in two bodies," which is the very definition of the mystic androgyny. The same conception is found in *Titan* (1800), by the same author; however, in this work Albano commits the fatal error of believing that the demonic Roquairol is his soul brother. In this story, there are no less than five pairs of doubles, several women have the same appearance and are substituted for one another, and, in this gratuitously complicated plot, Jean-Paul finally also introduces the Menechmes of his *Siebenkäs*. *Flegeljahre* (The mad years, 1804) depicts the twins Walt and Vult, whose personalities are portrayed as complementary.

Goethe, in book 11 of *Poetry and Truth*, relates the vision of

his double that he had after he had left Frederica Brion. In *Wilhelm Meister*, he multiplied the family resemblances and the doubles. He approved the analysis of J. J. Ampère, who saw in Faust and Mephistopheles the complementary aspects of his self.

In *Isabelle of Egypt* (1812) Achim von Armin introduced an original variant of the Double: Bella Golem, a magical double of the protagonist. In *Peter Schlemihl* (1814) Chamisso told the story of the man who sold his shadow. The theme of the double, in all its aspects, is a fundamental idea in the work of E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose stories abound in split personalities, transfers of personality, and malevolent doubles, in keeping with the interest of the times in "magnetism" and somnambulism. Especially characteristic is *The Devil's Elixirs* (1814), which was influenced by the theories of G. H. Schubert; there the storyteller produced counterparts who also serve as doubles. The hero is a young Capuchin friar, Médard, whose double is his half brother Victorin. Beside the satanic woman, Euphemia, is Aurelia, who is eventually identified with Saint Rosalie. In *Princess Brambilla* (1820), the protagonists suffer from "chronic dualism." Finally, it is striking to see Hoffmann, in *The Adventure of the Night of Saint Sylvester*, introduce Schlemihl, who no longer has a shadow, bringing him together with Spikher, who abandons his reflection.

The underlying idea throughout is that madness is a form of wisdom, that dream and fantasy alone may permit us to connect the external aspects and the mysterious aspects of our existence. In many respects, the character of Kreisler, the genial musician and fool, the hero of *Kater Murr*, is the double of Hoffmann himself.

Hoffmann's work (especially *The Devil's Elixirs* and *The Night of Saint Sylvester*) exerted a profound influence on Gérard de Nerval. The memory of the *Elixirs* reappears in *The Chimeras*, especially in *Aurelia* (1855). Moreover, the theme of the double also intrudes repeatedly in this story; Nerval gives it the Oriental name of *ferouer* (*farvāsīs*). Previously, in "The Story of Raoul Spifame," from the *Illuminati*, and in "The Story of Caliph Hakem," from the *Voyage to the Orient*, Nerval had treated several aspects of the theme of the double. For him, the obsession with resemblances is linked to paramnesia and the quest for personal identity; *Corilla* and the scenario of *Polygamy Is a Hanging Matter* are equally characteristic. For both Hoffmann and Nerval, the problem of the double is associated with the problem of literary creation. It is by looking at his self in a crystal with multiple facets that the creator brings forth his characters, who themselves nearly always appear in pairs, the laws of the human spirit being in this respect consistent with those of biology: Balzac and Dostoyevski, for example, conceived their characters both in twos and in fours. Dostoyevski treated the theme in his early novel *The Double* (1846), and in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) he depicts Ivan conversing with the Devil, an objectification of the obscure part of his being, before coming to grief in madness. The counterpart, the real person, should not be confused with the double, a projection or reflection that has only a potential existence; on the literary plane, however, the two themes are closely connected. It is the double that is treated in Heinrich Heine's poem *The Double* ("I am the fruit of your thoughts"), Coleridge's poem *Transformation*, Musset's *The Night of May* (1835); in Edgar Allan Poe's *William Wilson* (1839), somewhat as in the work of Hoffmann, the theme of the double is combined with the theme of the counterpart.

Heinrich von Kleist wrote of "tragic somnambulism"; his characters are subject to the absence of their selves (as was

their creator). His *Amphitryon* (1807) depicts Jupiter endeavoring to make Alcmena understand that there are two distinct selves in her husband's personality. The principal characters of his great plays *Penthesilea* (1808), *Catherine of Heilbronn* (1810), and *The Prince of Homburg* (1821, posth.) contain two antagonistic personalities, and the conflict between the conscious personality and the suppressed tendencies plunges them at times into a sort of hypnosis, at which point they lose consciousness of their actions.

Ralph Tymms has pointed out that Zacharias Werner, at about the same time, created characters subject to similar divisions of consciousness in *Attila, King of the Huns* (1808) and *Wanda, Queen of the Sarmatians* (1810), and Grillparzer saw in Zacharias Werner an image of Narcissus. In a different vein, Charles Nodier told the *Legend of Sister Beatrice*: this is a pious story from the work of Abraham Bzovius, according to which the Virgin was supposed to have assumed, for some years, the appearance and the place of a nun unfaithful to her vows, while awaiting the return of the nun to the convent from which she had fled.

In the background of all these literary works lurks, transposed onto the plane of individual consciousness, the long Indo-European and biblical tradition of legendary twins, one of whom is usually inferior to the other: Pollux must assign half of his immortality to Castor, Zethus dominates Amphion, Romulus kills Remus, Cain slays Abel. Always one is sacrificed and the other becomes a founding hero. All of

these myths express the same truth, conveyed in parallel terms by novels and stories: that the resolution of antagonisms is necessary for survival.

But, in another formulation, the image of the soul is conceived as a double (on the same scale or smaller). Thus, in several ways, the myth of the Double appears to be quite fundamental, and there is no reason to be surprised that this myth assumed such importance in the nineteenth century.

J.Ri./b.f.

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ROMANTIC MYTHS OF THE REBEL AND THE VICTIM: SATAN, PROMETHEUS, CAIN, JOB, FAUST, AHASUERUS, DON JUAN, AND EMPEDOCLES

In his *Introduction to Universal History* (1830), Michelet in a strange mixture of ideas placed Prometheus at the origin of a wholly romantic lineage: "Liberty without God, impious heroism, in literature, the satanic school that was heralded in Greece in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, and was revived by Hamlet's bitter doubts, is idealized in Milton's Satan and with Byron falters into despair" (*OEC*, vol. 35, pp. 457-58). A "titanic" tradition flourished in nineteenth-century Europe in numerous works: next to the Titan Prometheus, Satan, as remodeled by Milton, participates as chief of the rebels and, curiously enough, is identified with Pan.

We have long known that the romantics never ceased to draw from the ancient well, which explains the parallel development of myths borrowed from Judeo-Christian books (the Bible, the *Book of Enoch*) and of Greek and Latin myths. In an attempt to assess the contemporary, apparently fallen, condition of man, myths of the fall develop along several parallel tracks, with the oppressor god sometimes called Jehovah and sometimes Zeus-Jupiter.

I. Satan

In the aftermath of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (book 1), Satan's successors go in several directions. One of his descendants, Karl Moor in Schiller's *The Robbers* (1781), was to be the original model for the "noble bandit," whose extraordinary literary posterity included Vautrin and Jean Valjean. Another track consists of mysterious and domineering men, rebels of

high caliber such as Montoni in Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Schedoni in *The Italian, or the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797) by the same author, Ambrosio in Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). In Germany, the figure of the mysterious bandit inspired Heinrich Zchokke's *Abellio* (1794), which in turn inspired Charles Nodier's *Le Voleur* (1805) and *Jean Sbogor* (1818). These are all dual characters, so that the theme of the noble bandit is tied to that of the dual personality, of which we shall speak later.

But it was probably Byron who carried the type of the rebel to its peak of perfection by conceiving a whole series of gloomy heroes, all prey to a mysterious fate, in works that bear their names: *Lara*, *The Corsair*, *The Giaour*. Byron wanted to be like his heroes, which led him to playact his life and to waste it away sedulously. We may recognize the debased forms of the Byronic hero in the protagonist of Alexandre Dumas's *Antony* and in certain characters created by Eugène Sue or Paul Féval, late incarnations of the noble bandit who, in Satanic disguise, represent the Good and aim to save the state. But Médard, the hero of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *The Devil's Elixirs* (1816), had great trouble in distinguishing good from evil. Moreover, Paul Féval puts Byron himself on stage in *The Mysteries of London* (1844), where he appears under the name of the Marquis de Rio Santo.

Hugo's Satan has an intense dramatic presence, and yet he is by definition the one-who-does-not-exist, since the poet does not really believe in the existence of the Devil and identifies evil with matter. All the incarnations of Evil in the work of Hugo, as Pierre Albouy has shown, are envious or jealous before they are wicked.

II. Prometheus

Resorting to an ancient image, Byron (*Prophecy of Dante*) and Hugo (*The Genius, Odes and Ballads*, IV, 6) turn

Prometheus into the image of the misunderstood genius, bringing men the fire from heaven, that is, inspiration. According to P. S. Ballanche (*Orpheus*, book 8), man, thanks to Prometheus, "has acquired the capacity for good and evil." The romantic Prometheus is the foremost example of Titanism; he protests and rebels against the state of things imposed on earth by the Deity, which strikes him as neither rational nor moral. This rebellious posture directed against the apparent reign of evil on earth often involves writers in a kind of Neognosticism that leads to the rehabilitation of beings heretofore considered guilty, such as Cain and, more particularly, Satan, who are then depicted as man's helpers (Byron, *Cain*; Vigny, *Eloa*).

With Lamartine, the pendulum swings constantly from revolt to resignation and back. Resignation seems to be an idea formulated in *The Desert* to mean a God conceived as unknowable. In the piece entitled *Man*, the second of the *Poetic Meditations* (1820), dedicated to Byron, he takes a position with regard to the English poet, saying to him: "Leave doubt and blasphemy to the son of night." But the significant inversion of the roles of God and Satan had already appeared in William Blake, who finally identified himself with Milton, pointing out that Milton "was on the devil's side without realizing it," and who saw Jesus Christ as representing the human imagination.

The romantics' misinterpretation, in part deliberate, of Aeschylus's *Prometheus* was further encouraged by the fact that only the first part (*Prometheus Bound*) of the Greek playwright's trilogy has survived. Of *Prometheus Unbound*, which showed the Titan's reconciliation with Zeus, we have only fragments, and on *Prometheus the Fire Bringer* we can merely conjecture.

In his preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley explains that reconciliation was inconceivable: the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, and his opposition to a tyrannical god, seemed to Shelley to constitute the very essence of the myth. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is a lyric masterpiece; in it, the Titan simultaneously represents the human spirit and, in certain respects, Christ. Jupiter appears as the objectification of man's base desires, an incarnation of evil. To free himself from oppression, it is enough to will it by depending on reason and science; this is what makes the work a hymn to human freedom. Demogorgon, a complex character difficult to analyze, seems to represent Necessity seen as a chain of events. The fourth and final act reaches the cosmic dimension; its last verses express recurring optimism in the face of sufferings and evils:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power which seems omnipotent;
To love and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

In thus expressing his hope in man, Shelley, as M. Raymond Trousson has shown, established the prototype of the romantic Prometheus. In *The Bible of Humanity*, Michelet makes Prometheus the first democrat and extends the inspiration of the English poet. Edgar Quinet summarized his own conception of Prometheus in the preface to his trilogy *Prometheus*, after indicating that in his opinion this hero "is the image of religious humanity." He goes on to say: "But not only does

he have this historical character, he also encompasses the inner drama of God and man, of faith and doubt, of creator and creation; because of that, this tradition can be applied to all times and this divine drama shall thereby never end." In accordance with Herder's philosophy of history, whereby each form is born of the one preceding it, Edgar Quinet makes Prometheus the pagan forerunner of Christ. Such a conception of the religious evolution of humanity clearly implies that religions are mortal, as are all things human ("as the eagle grows old, so will the dove"). Quinet never lacked inspiration, but his power of expression was never quite commensurate with his ideas, which explains why he is seldom read.

In *God* (4, *The Vulture*), Hugo contemplates the character of Prometheus at length, and sees him as the awakener of consciousness and reason, the man of progress, who pushed back superstitions and ignorance. In a short early poem entitled *Prometheus* (1816), Byron had already hailed the Titan who rebelled against the deity, the Titan whose "divine crime was to be good." Louis Ménard's early work *Prometheus Unbound* (1843) is also the apotheosis of progressive faith: "The Ideal is within you: Behold the supreme God." As M. R. Trousson pointed out, what attracted the romantics to the character of Prometheus is the fact that he was not content to limit himself to an egocentric revolt, but managed to be regarded as a philanthropist, building a new world with the help of reason and knowledge. With the exception of Nerval, the theme of Pandora disappears almost entirely, since Prometheus is no longer considered guilty. The romantic *Christ* becomes a Promethean figure. But it was Madame de Staël who provided an incomplete translation of Jean-Paul Richter's *The Dream in her On Germany* (1810), and who must surely be held chiefly responsible for the fact that Vigny (*The Mount of Olives*, 1843) and Nerval (*Christ among the Olive Trees*, 1844) almost simultaneously made Christ a purely human figure, rebelling against the ruthless Jehovah.

III. Cain

The romantics place Cain among the great rebels or great victims, and in 1821, Byron devoted to him the "mystery" that we have already mentioned. This character, interpreted within a more traditional framework, inspired Hugo to write his celebrated *Conscience* in *The Legend of the Centuries*. *Conscience* was first intended for *Châtiments*, because Hugo was identifying the accursed Cain with Napoleon III, as is evident from the piece entitled *Sacer esto* (Let it be holy) in *Châtiments* and from numerous fragments that have been preserved.

IV. Job

In the Bible, the Book of Job raises the problem of divine justice and the relation of man to the divine (who takes the form of a hurricane). It inspired Edward Young's *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*, and was widely commented upon during the nineteenth century. Chateaubriand spoke of Job in his *Genius of Christianity*, Pierre Baour-Lormian includes in his *Poetic Evenings* a *Job, a Lyrical Poem*. In 1842, P. Christian prefaced a new edition of a translation of Young's *Night Thoughts* and Hervey's *Graves* with an "Essay on Jobism." In 1851, Isidore Cahen states in his *Sketch on the Philosophy of the Poem of Job*: "Job is more modern and timely than Prometheus himself because he better expresses the bitter disenchantment that is the fruit of

a more advanced civilization." In his *Book of Job* (1826), William Blake had explained the sufferings of Job through an exhausting literal interpretation of the text. Only upon accepting his misfortunes and understanding that the spirit alone brings life will Job again find grace in the eyes of Jehovah.

In Ballanche's *Orpheus*, the story of Job runs parallel to that of Prometheus. Whereas Prometheus inaugurated the mode of revolt, Job was the first to raise the moral problem of evil. Ballanche sees the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as emerging from the very despair of Job. Quinet in turn says that Job heralds Christianity (*The Genius of Religions*, V, 4); he does, however, consider that Job "stops at doubt" and contrasts him with Prometheus, "who goes so far as to curse." According to P. Leroux (*Job*, 1866; prologue published in 1860), God answers the plea of his creature with the theory of progress. Lamartine put Job among his "faithful books"—whenever he feels sad and evokes the problems of suffering and death, an irresistible propensity leads his inspiration back to the Book of Job, as we see in some of the most famous poems in *Poetic Meditations* (*The Vale*, *Despair*, *Providence for Man*, and *Autumn*). In *Harmonies*, the poem *Why Is My Soul Sad?* is in the same vein; other examples can easily be found. All of this culminates in the magnificent pages on Job in the *Familiar Course of Literature* in 1868.

Hugo's Job is sometimes seen as an actual character and sometimes perceived from within. According to Hugo, Job is superior to Prometheus; we read in *The Unfortunates* (from *Contemplations*): "Even when Prometheus is there, it takes only you, Job, / To make the manure heap higher than the Caucasus." Everywhere one looks one finds this gigantic manure heap or "homo humus." In *William Shakespeare*, in which Hugo articulated his *ars poetica* most explicitly, he stresses the fact that "Job's resignation completes Prometheus's revolt," but he also emphasizes Job's titanic character and power: "Fallen, he becomes gigantic. He crushes the vermin on his open wounds, while calling out to the stars." And, like Quinet, Hugo concludes, "Job's manure heap, once transformed, will become Christ's hill of Calvary."

As P. Albouy has rightly asserted, one might expect Hugo to come up with a wretched but pugnacious character who would embody both Job and Prometheus—and this he did in *The Laborers of the Sea* (1866), with Gilliat: "A struggling Job, a fighting Job, who faces scourges squarely, a conquering Job, and if such words were not too lofty for a poor fisherman of crabs and crawfish, a Promethean Job." As Hugo intended, Gwynplaine in *The Laughing Man* is a thunderstruck Titan, part Job and part Prometheus. He represents the misshapen people ripe for liberation and rebellion. After Villequier, moreover, Hugo relived Job's drama for himself, and an entire part of his poetry may be deemed "Jobian." This holds true particularly for *Contemplations*, book 4 (*Pauca mea*).

The same inspiration can also be found in numerous poems. It was already evident in *Interior Voices* (1836) with the poem *Sunt lacrymae rerum* (Things Have Tears), for example, and it can still be seen in *Lux* (in *Chastisements*), in *All of the Past* and *All of the Future* (in *The Legend of the Centuries*), in *The Donkey*, and, in fact, every time Hugo takes up the theme of the Almighty overwhelming his human creature. The Jobian theme of God's unfathomable grandeur also appears in *At the Window through the Night* (in *Contemplations*). Among the fragments published by René Journet and Guy Robert under the title *Things of the Bible*, which

appear in P. Albouy's second volume of *Poetic Works* (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 859–63), many lines translate or paraphrase passages from the Book of Job. These fragments are sketches for *Contemplations*.

V. Faust

Faust is one of the rare modern myths. For many French romantics, the first reading of Goethe's *Faust* in Gerard de Nerval's translations of 1828 and 1835 was a kind of initiation. And when in 1840 the second part of *Faust* began to be known in France, it became apparent to what extent writers were projecting their hopes and dreams on this one work. Faust as a character took his place beside Hamlet among the heroes of knowledge and understanding and was considered to be a typical representative of the conscience of the Western world as it had been affirmed since the Renaissance. The profound remarks formulated in 1840 by Nerval in his preface to the new edition of *Faust*, parts I and II, had endless repercussions: of particular significance were Nerval's comments on the Helen episode, which he saw as an attempt to reconcile the ancient and modern worlds.

Parallel to Goethe's version of the story of Faust, a popular version of the legend was evolving. This version was preserved by Friedrich von Klinger, who wrote a novel based on it, in which the protagonist travels in many countries and meets with one disaster after another, trying to use the power of Mephistopheles to good ends. Klinger's account inspired Byron's unfinished work *The Deformed Transformed* (1822) as well as Méry and Nerval's joint work *The Image-Maker of Harlem* (1851), which they complicated with ideas about reincarnation. Many other works and characters owe more than one element to Goethe's *Faust*. They include William Beckford's *Calif Vathek* (1786) and numerous rebellious characters: Byron's Giaour mentioned above, the hero in *Manfred* (1817), and Ambrosio in M. G. Lewis's *The Monk*.

Next to Quinet's *Ahasvérus* belongs George Sand's *The Seven Strings of the Lyre* (1839), a symbolic drama in which Albertus, Mephisto, and Helen encounter one another around a lyre, whose strings embody man's noblest inspirations. Honoré de Balzac parodied the theme of the pact with the devil in *Melmoth Reconciled*, which superimposed the memory of Maturin on that of Goethe; but he treated it seriously in *Lost Illusions* (1842), in which Vautrin proposes the diabolic pact to Lucien de Rubempré. And Nikolaus Lenau wrote a lyric and pessimistic *Faust* (1835, definitive edition 1840) in which the hero, like Lucien, commits suicide. This last example represents what one might call a contamination of the character of Faust by that of Werther. The Faust theme was also taken up by composers: Berlioz produced his *Eight Scenes from Faust* in 1828 and *The Damnation of Faust* in 1846. Gounod's *Faust* is dated 1859. To his credit, Robert Browning chose a character closer to the legendary Faust than to the historical Faust (if we are to believe Trithemius and Melanchthon's contention that Faust was an imposter and a sodomite) in his *Paracelsus* (1835).

VI. Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew

In his youth, Goethe had sketched the outline of an epic poem on Ahasuerus, but the extant fragments have no direct bearing on the character himself. In the seventh canto of Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813), Ahasuerus speaks out: he curses Jehovah and the priests and derides Jesus. Shelley's Wandering Jew prefers "the liberty of Hell to the servitude of



William Blake, *Job*. London, British Museum. Photo Fotomas.

Heaven"—a good demonstration of juvenile illusions. Friedrich Schubert also chose this character to express his own pessimism.

Perhaps because it was written in his youth, Edgar Quinet's *Ahasvérus* (1833) remains one of this writer's most readable works, characterized by a kind of fresh, youthful inspiration not always evident in his later writings. The principal character is the Wandering Jew, and in the first part there are numerous literary echoes and imitations of the first part of Goethe's *Faust*. Many of Quinet's characters speak with voices unfamiliar to us: Leviathan, the great serpent, the Vinateya bird, the Ocean, the rivers, the Valley of Josaphat, the desert, the stars, sphinxes, and griffins, but also mules, chariots, and birds, not to mention angels and demons. The interweaving sometimes becomes forced when not only Strasbourg Cathedral but even the characters on its stained glass window (including the symbols of the Evangelists) are endowed with the ability to speak! This may well be a poetic idea applied too systematically, although some of the curious dialogues show real strokes of inspiration.

As for doctrine, Quinet begins with Herder's philosophy of history; he then places at the center of his concerns the phenomenon of religion and ends by refuting God and deifying man. Ahasvérus is saved by the love of Rachel, a fallen angel, because she took pity on him and became a servant of Mob (death). In the scene of the Last Judgment, which precedes the conclusion, Ahasvérus is forgiven and becomes the image of mankind to come, whereupon the Eternal Father says to Christ the Judge: "Ahasvérus is the

eternal man. All the others are like unto him. Your judgment of him will serve us as the judgment of them all. Our work is now ended, as is the mystery. Our city is closed. Tomorrow we shall create other worlds." The last word is given to Annihilation and Nothingness. The conclusion as a whole must be interpreted within the framework of a pessimism for which, on a cosmic scale, the sum total of all human lives constitutes but a brief moment in time before man makes way for a better-endowed or different species or else Nothingness. In this regard, Quinet never wavered, for he wrote at the end of his *Genius of Religions*: "In the rapid course of our lives, we are barely granted a moment to get to know this universe, and then we must die. Let us then take a hurried glimpse at the spectacle of what people have thought, invented, believed, hoped, and worshiped before our time. By tying all this past to our brief existence, it will seem that we ourselves grow in scope and that, starting from an imperceptible point, we too are making an infinite line."

These words help us to understand why writers, particularly eighteenth-century writers, have so often chosen to express themselves through myths. For myths give the individual a feeling of belonging to a long tradition and thus of overcoming solitude.

VII. Don Juan

Faust is in search of both love and knowledge. The romantic interpretation of the character of Don Juan, formulated in a tale by E. T. A. Hoffmann (1813), tended to turn Don Juan, the mythical hero, into a hero in quest of love and thirsting for the infinite, which went beyond the explicit intentions of Mozart and his librettist Da Ponte. Henceforth, parallels and comparisons between the two heroes recur everywhere, notably in Hugo's *Preface to Cromwell* (1827), in Musset's *Rolla* (1833), and in Théophile Gautier's *Comedy of Death* (1838). It was Christian Dietrich Grabbe who wrote a *Don Juan and Faust* (1829), which superposed two plots and tied together, without actually mixing them, Da Ponte's libretto and Goethe's *Faust*. The main idea was to contrast two heroes who aspired to be superhumans, one typical of the Latin temperament, and the other representing the Germanic mind and soul ("I would not be Faust if I were not German").

Meanwhile the figure of Don Juan, born in Spain, continued his career in the various literatures. Byron used him as a transparent mask for his ironic, sometimes burlesque, and largely autobiographical epic *Don Juan* (1819/1824), which he said he wrote "without any plan but with materials." It is often regarded as his masterpiece; in any case, it is the only work in which Byron succeeded in casting an almost lucid gaze upon himself. In the same year, 1830, Don Juan was the subject of Pushkin's *The Stone Guest* and of Balzac's *The Elixir of Longevity*. In *Namouna* (1832), Musset made him an artist in search of beauty, and in the following year, in *The Morning of Don Juan*, he focused on the confrontation between reality and life. In 1834, Blaze de Bury in *The Commandant's Dinner Party* created a single character combining Don Juan Tenorio and Don Juan Mañara, and absolved the sinner.

In 1834, Prosper Mérimée published his narrative *Souls in Purgatory*; in 1836 Alexandre Dumas staged *Don Juan de Mañara or the Fall of an Angel*. In Lenau's play of 1844, Don Juan, grown old, is killed by the Commander's son; it is really a suicide in disguise. We should also mention Levasseur's *Don Juan the Graybeard* (1848); J. Viard's *The Old Age of Don Juan* (1853); and Baudelaire's 1846 poem, *Don Juan in Hell* (1846, in *The Flowers of Evil*, 15).

As might be expected, Spain is where the play that established the theme was written, *Don Juan Tenorio* by José Zorilla y Moral (1844), acted communally on All Soul's Day. It is a large-scale play in two parts, in which Don Juan is saved through the intercession of Doña Inés.

VIII. Empedocles

Among the pre-Socratic philosophers, Empedocles was probably the one whose life lent itself most readily to a romantic interpretation. That explains why several nineteenth-century authors counted him among the heroes of knowledge. Like Hamlet, about whom Hugo wrote substantially in *William Shakespeare*, he is a victim of the constant replay of melancholy thoughts. Unlike Faust, he does not succeed in freeing himself through pleasure and action and finally throws himself into the crater of Mount Etna. Hölderlin persistently lends this character some of his own fundamental questions. The successive versions of his *Empedocles*, unfortunately never finished, are strikingly beautiful. The character is depicted as unable to resign himself to having lost the direct contact with the divine which he once possessed and which deified him. "He through whom the spirit has spoken, must depart on time," we read in the first version in 1798. The third version (1799) features a moving dialogue with his disciple Pausanias. The ode that the poet dedicates to the death of Empedocles starts as follows: "Searching and searching for life, you see / A divine fire shooting forth in brilliance deep beyond the earth."

In 1829, Count Jean Labensky (whose pen name was Polonius) published in French a poem of a thousand lines, entitled *Empedocles*, in which he states: "But man chose error over ignorance. / He was meant only to love, but he wanted to know." Louis Ménard, in a poem bearing the same title published in 1851, endows Empedocles with a belief in metempsychosis.

If only because of its romanticism, Matthew Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna" (1852) may well be his masterpiece; after its completion he reverted to a kind of neoclassicism. Arnold's character has read *Hamlet*, *Faust*, and *Manfred*, as well as Obermann and Amiel. He is a lonely man because of his very superiority. His philosophy is borrowed from Lucretius and Epictetus. He is nothing but knowledge; a particularly beautiful line captures the sense of the poem: "Nothing but a devouring flame of thought."

In Hugo's *God (The Ocean from Above)*, a spirit challenges him in these admirable terms: "... curious about the abyss. Empedocles from God."

J.Ri./g.h.

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SPIRITS OF THE ELEMENTS IN THE ROMANTIC PERIOD: SYLPHS, WATER SPRITES, SALAMANDERS, GNOMES, AND ELVES

At the confluence of popular traditions with Neoplatonism and the cabala is situated the belief, at least a poetical belief, in the spirits of the elements, which appeared in the writings of numerous nineteenth-century authors. The relevant texts include the writings of certain Fathers of the Church (Lactantius, Cyprian, Clement of Alexandria), Neoplatonists, and cabalists such as Macrobius and Philo, and the Byzantine Michael Psellus (eleventh century), the restorer of Neoplatonism. In 1566, Paracelsus published a *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris et de caeteris spiritibus* (Book of

nymphs, sylphs, pygmies, and salamanders, and of various spirits); various Christian cabalists of the Renaissance, such as Pico della Mirandola, R. Fludd, G. Postel, and Thomas Heywood in England, also spoke of the spirits of the elements.

In 1670, the Abbé of Villars, in a humorous tone, set out in the *Comte de Gabalis* the theory of elementary spirits, thus constituting what would come to be called the "philosophy of the Rosacrucians": this distinguished the ondines, water sprites; salamanders, spirits of fire; sylphs, associated with the air; and gnomes or elves, connected with the earth. But in narratives, these inventions become superimposed upon the fairy wonderlands of folktales or upon the belief in other beings of the intermediate world, ghosts, spirits, and demons.

Superimposed upon the influence of the various authors

already mentioned was the influence of Jacques Cazotte's novel, *The Amorous Devil* (1772), in which the incarnation of a demon, Biondella, in order to seduce and tempt Alvare, pretends to be a sylph who needed to be loved by a man in order to attain immortality. Schiller left an unfinished work, *The Visionary* (1786–89), which was inspired by this theme. La Motte-Fouqué published *The Mandragore* in 1810 and *Ondine* in the following year. In order to be reunited with Eros, Psyche must become immortal; the love of Huldbrand of Ringstetten can immortalize Ondine.

But Huldbrand falls in love with Bertelda, with disastrous results. As early as 1812, Achim von Arnim, in *Isabella of Egypt*, develops the theme of the Mandrake, a wicked little magician born from the tears (or the sperm) of an innocent man who is hanged. From La Motte-Fouqué's Ondine is directly derived the White Lady of Avenal in *The Monastery*, by Sir Walter Scott (1820); the very idea of a "white woman" may have come from one of the bedside books of the romantics, Collin de Plancy's *Infernal Dictionary*, which says that this is a name given to certain sylphs or nymphs. In Scott's *Peveril of the Peak* (1822), there is a Fenella who seems to be a caricature of Goethe's Mignon. Finally, *Anne of Geierstein* (1829) tells the story of a complex being, Hermione, who partakes simultaneously of the nature of the sylphs and that of the salamanders.

In 1821, Alexis-Vincent-Charles Berbiguier de Terre Neuve du Thym published his astonishing work *The Elves, or All the Demons are not in the Other World*. Charles Nodier, in *Trilby* (1822), set in the Scotland of Sir Walter Scott, creates an enigmatic being who is something of a synthesis of the spirits of the elements since, depending on the episode that he is in, he is connected with air, fire, or water. E. T. A. Hoffman, who had read *The Amorous Devil* and *Gabalus*, both of which were translated into German, introduced references to the spirits of the elements into his narratives, which are directly influenced by La Motte-Fouqué and also by Louis Tieck, the author of the *Runenberg* and *The Elves* (1811). In this way the archivist Lindhorst in Hoffman's *The Golden Pot* is the incarnation of Oromasis, the prince of igneous substances (who duly added to the repertory of Collin de Plancy). *The Mines at Falun* (1819), the subject of which was hinted at in a story by Johann Peter Hebel (*The Unhoped-for Meeting*, 1808),

combines the theme of the mines, evoked by Novalis in *Henry of Ofterdingen*, and the influence of the *Runenberg* of Tieck; the great Venus of Tieck corresponds to the Queen of Metals in Hoffman.

Finally, it is appropriate to connect the spirits of the elements with the figure of the queen of Sheba. In *The Crumb Fairy* (1832), by Charles Nodier, the hero, Michel, is protected in his waking state by the Fairy, who has singular powers. But he also lives a kind of dream from one night to the next, in which the Crumb Fairy, so wise in the daytime, at night becomes the wife of Solomon, the radiant Makeda. This can be traced back to the Platonic concept that identifies Wisdom and the Good with Beauty. And it is said that Michel becomes "the emperor of the seven planets." Nerval's queen of Sheba in his *Voyage to the Orient* (1851) is an authentic "daughter of fire," who also commands the spirits of the air through the mediation of the Hudhud hoopoe bird.

One wonders about the deep motivations of all these authors, who depicted the spirits of the elements as representations of a cruder creation relative to human beings, but with an element of purity that is associated with their very nature. A detailed study of each author would make possible an exposition of the compensatory mechanisms or projections that came into play. A study of the group as a whole remains to be done.

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ORPHEUS AND THE POETIC AND SPIRITUAL QUEST OF ROMANTICISM

In the romantic period, the figure of Orpheus shone with particular intensity. All the great poets referred to the singer and magus of Thrace, and Brian Juden could with good reason place much of the literature produced in France from 1800 to 1855 under the patronage of Orpheus. But in fact, all of European romanticism corresponds to a rebirth of Orphism, understood in a broad sense, insofar as religious aspirations were expressed in terms of lyricism. And in many respects the romantics joined the spirit of the Renaissance when, for them, the figure of Orpheus served to support the expression of a spiritualist philosophy that allowed the poet to be affirmed as both a magus and a leader of peoples. Indeed, each episode of the myth of Orpheus—the loss of Euridice, the descent into the underworld, the death of

Euridice, Orpheus dismembered by the Maenads—is apt to receive diverse interpretations, and as a whole these exemplary situations form something like the breviary of the existential condition of the poet in the world. In other respects it was understood, from the time of Kircher, Dupuis, and Kreuzer (translated by J. D. Guignaut), that the Orphean Lyre represented not only the constellation of that name, but planetary harmony, and even the entire universe, while the animals charmed by Orpheus represented the constellations (as Lucian of Samosata had already stated in his treatise, *On Astrology*).

Saint-Martin and Fabre d'Olivet made Orpheus a great theosophist. According to Fabre d'Olivet, the love of Orpheus for Euridice represented the love of true science, and the loss of Euridice was associated with a collapse in personal and descriptive lyricism when the first inspiration, prophetic and philosophical, had become inaccessible. In his *Orpheus* (1829), P. S. Ballanche turns the character into a pontiff and a theologian, whose teaching prefigures Christianity. Or-

pheus is a northerner and a plebeian by choice. In his misfortunes Ballanche sees above all the pain of a failure in love (which results in giving the myth a personal meaning), and the descent into the underworld seems to him to represent an initiation. Generally, Orpheus expresses "universal lamentation." Nevertheless, through suffering, the magus reaches the transcendent vision, the fullness of knowledge, and his gaze acquires the power to transfigure Nature.

Victor Hugo, in the preliminary passage of the *Odes* (*The Poet in the Revolutions*), saw a modern Orpheus in André Chénier ("Who knows how to love, knows how to die"), and he regrouped all the aspects of the myth—the social role of the poet, prophecy, purity, sublime love, the martyr—all the abysses. In *The Satyr* he put the great cosmic lyre into the hands of the main character, turning him into a complete Titan, simultaneously Pan and Orpheus. And in the Idyll of *The Legend of the Centuries* dedicated to Orpheus one reads: "I am the human soul that sings / And I love." In poem 50 of the third book of the *Four Winds of the Spirit*, *Sacred Horror*, Hugo has this phrase: "The serene poet contains the obscure prophet / Orpheus is black." And in *God*, he depicts Orpheus releasing Prometheus, whereas according to the traditional story Heracles was the author of this deed. This means that the poet represents the spirit triumphing over matter and tyranny. The character of Orpheus is often, for Hugo, the pretext for fruitful comparisons with Job, Jacob, Moses, and Dante.

Indeed, one could establish a long list of characters who, in the works of this period, represent the poet. We should add at least Amphiion, Arion, Homer, Pythagoras, and Faust.

In the *Voyage to the Orient* Nerval took too seriously the episodes of the *Sethos* by the Abbé Jean Terrasson (followed also by A. Lenoir) who, claiming to tell of the initiation that Orpheus received in Egypt, described the trials by the elements, also present in the libretto of Mozart's *Magic Flute* by Emmanuel Schikaneder. But exhuming, in *The Illuminated*, the *Thrace* of Quintus Aucler, a title that refers to the *Threicius vates* ("Thracian prophet," the name given to Orpheus, not by Virgil, but by Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 11.2), he cited numerous pages from it, which summed up the complete doctrine of the *Orphica*. In *El Desdichado*, identifying in turn with the poet-magus, he would use the expression "constellated lute" for the human element subject to celestial influences (a meaning that he had found in the *Three Books on Life* by Marsilio Ficino, and in Guy Le Fèvre de La Boderie, the translator of the Florentine Neoplatonist). Orphism and neo-Pythagoreanism nurtured the best of the inspiration of the author of the *Chimeras*. Finally, *Aurelia* describes a modern "descent into Hell"; the second part has the epigraph: "Euridice! Eurydice!"

In Germany the theories of J. G. Hamann and J. G. Herder laid the foundations for a new Orphism. The theme of the hero's descent into hell was taken up and developed in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* by Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) and in Goethe's *Faust*, part 2. Hölderlin was truly spellbound by ancient and modern Greece, and most of his work is essentially Orphic. The titles of some of his poems



Delacroix, *Eurydice Picking Flowers*. São Paulo, Museu de Arte. Photo Giraudon.

Gustave Moreau, *Dead Poet Being Carried by a Centaur*. Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau. Photo Musées nationaux.



Gustave Moreau, *Orpheus on Eurydice's Grave*. Paris, Musée Gustave Moreau. Photo Musées nationaux.

are revealing (*To the Heavens; To the Parcae; To the Morning; The Poet's Vocation; To Mother Earth*). Recall the surprising beginning of *Patmos*: "So near. And difficult to grasp, the god!"

Shelley, author of *Hymn to Apollo* and *Hymn to Pan*, also, in 1820, dedicated a poem to *Orpheus*. In it he depicted plants forming a natural sanctuary around the singer who mourns Eurydice and whose lament imposes silence even on the nightingale. Finally, John Keats was the author of *Ode to Apollo*, *Hymn to Apollo*, and *Endymion*. His most ambitious work, *Hyperion*, remained unfinished. In order to celebrate the Greek gods it was truly something of Orphic inspiration that the poet, in his Miltonic lines, was trying to recapture.

The Orphic vision of the universe should be connected with certain prose poems by Alphonse Rabbe and Maurice de Guérin. The former, in *The Centaur*, describes the loves of the Centaur and of Cymothoë. Visits to the antiquities in the Louvre, in the company of Trébutien, are the source of Maurice de Guérin's prose poem *The Centaur* (1836), upon which his posthumous glory long rested. *The Maenad* came shortly afterward. Guérin relived something of the pagan intuition of the ancient poets; he juxtaposed in himself two irreconcilable traditions, and at the last moment he chose Christianity. But in his *Journal* he had noted on 10 December 1834: "I live with the interior elements of things." And in a text of the same year he evoked the fable in which the forests departed in Orpheus's footsteps, seeing in it the memory of a time when nature understood the language of man and

obeyed him. His prose poems, inspired by statues, have a Dionysian rather than a truly Orphic character. One may say the same of Keats's *Endymion* and of Kleist's striking *Penthesilea*.

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THE ISIS OF ROMANTICISM: THE MYTH OF THE WIFE-MOTHER—HELEN, SOPHIA, MARY

In the works of many writers, especially poets, of the nineteenth century, a great female character, mother or wife or both, appears. Many, even if they are detached from Christianity, retain an attachment to the Virgin Mary. Goethe introduces into the *Faust* of 1824 the descent to the Mothers, who have preserved the essence of Helen, who represents the archetype of Beauty. Helen contributes to Faust's reconciliation with fate. In Faust's dream, the feminine ideal moves from Margarethe to Helen and then to the Virgin Mary. The final chant of the celestial choir says: "The eternal feminine leads us upward." George Sand, in her anti-Faustian novel *The Seven Strings of the Lute* (1840), gives the name Helen to the character who represents human love.

At the root of the importance of Isis to the romantics is the romantic interpretation of the Egyptian mysteries proposed by various scholars and writers of the eighteenth century, as well as the Masonic rituals (often derived from the works in question), which gave importance to the figure of the goddess, making her a representation of Nature. The libretto of Mozart's *Magic Flute* by Schikaneder was derived from the *Sethos* of the Abbé Jean Terrasson (1731) and from Liebeskind's Hindu story, *Lulu, or the Magic Flute*; the tests by the elements which are described there represent what was believed at the time to have constituted the Isiac mysteries. Goethe was so interested in them that in 1798 he wrote a *Second Part of the Magic Flute*. It was in 1798 as well that Novalis began his *Disciples of Saïs*, in which we read: "To understand Nature, one must recreate Nature within oneself in her complete cycle."

In the philosophy of Jakob Böhme, Sophia represented not only Wisdom, the mystical spouse, half of the androgynous Adam, but also the Virgin of Light, identified with Logos. Poets such as Novalis explored both the Masonic tradition and Boehme, combining Isis and Sophia. After the death of his young fiancée, Sophie von Kühn, Novalis recorded in his journal the phrase "Christ and Sophia." His *Hymns to the Night* (1800), with their stunning sensuality, represent the triumph of the nocturnal and feminine side of being, much like the famous sonnet *Artemis* in Nerval's

Chimeras. In both cases, the love object is identified not only with Nature but also with Night and Death ("C'est la Mort ou la Morte . . . [It is death or the dead woman]," wrote Nerval). In Novalis's *Henri d'Ofterdingen* (1800), the central moment of the novel is marked by the love of Henri and Mathilde, and Mathilde can be identified with both Sophia and the Virgin of Saïs.

An important episode in Ballanche's *Orpheus* (1829) retraces the initiation of Thamyris—a disciple of Orpheus—into the mysteries of Isis. Alfred de Vigny's extremely maternal conception of the character of Kitty Bell in *Chatterton* (1835) corresponds to this same search for the feminine ideal. His great poem *The House of the Shepherd* (1844) deals with the whole problem of man's relationship with Nature ("On me dit une mère et je suis une tombe [They call me a womb, and I am a tomb]"), which is well described by the two fundamental aspects of the Earth (Demeter and Persephone), while Eva, the companion of man, is seen as a mediator between him and nature. Even in the posthumous poem *The Anger of Samson*, we read: "L'homme a toujours

besoin de caresse et d'amour / Sa mère l'en abreuve alors qu'il vient au jour [Man always needs caresses and love; his mother drenches him in them when he comes into the world]." In the poem *Helen* (1821), as well as in the narrative *Daphne* (1837), Vigny applauds the feminine incarnations of the divine: the Virgin, Venus, the houris in the case of Helen and Thea in the case of Daphne, Ceres-Deo, Minerva-Pronoë, and Venus-Ourania, who correspond to the religious orientations of the poet even more than to those of his hero, Julien.

It would be possible to include many excerpts from Alphonse de Lamartine here too, since his entire life was colored by the memory of his mother. One excellent example is *The Tomb of a Mother* (circa 1829–30) in *Harmonies*. And the force of the maternal image in Lamartine's work is responsible for the grandeur of his admirable poem *The Vine and the House* (1857).

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JULIAN THE APOSTATE IN ROMANTIC LITERATURE

The mythic transfiguration of the emperor Julian II, also called Julian the Apostate, is a remarkable case in the history of ideas. For after he had been, for a dozen centuries, associated with Satan and the Antichrist, he was to become from the sixteenth century onward a model of tolerance and good government, mainly because of the influence of Erasmus, Bodin, and Montaigne. Two historic traditions, parallel and contradictory, explain these differing viewpoints—that of the Fathers of the Church (with Saint Gregory of Nazianze and Saint John Chrysostom), who accused him of all possible crimes, and that of the witnesses and panegyrists Ammianus Marcellinus and Libanius. By giving credence to the testimony of one group of witnesses or to the other, it is possible to arrive at diametrically opposed conclusions, which explains how Julian, over the centuries, could serve as a pretext and support for the expression of the most diverse ideologies.

In 1817 Charles Nodier, in an account published in the *Journal of Debates*, made Julian an image of Bonaparte, a tyrant without religion, and himself the image of the Antichrist. But twenty years later, in the *Dictionary of Conversation*, he used a portion of the same text to make him into a kind of Voltaire: "There was a certain affinity of character and intention between these two men, the most violent enemies that hell could raise against Christ." Thus, by a

Isis. From Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 1652. Photo X.



clever shifting of the scales, Nodier returned to the image of Julian which had prevailed for so long.

In 1822, Aubrey De Vere Hunt wrote a dramatic poem whose main character was Maximus of Ephesus, the magician and theurgist, who appears throughout the work and is presented as the "emperor's evil genius." Julian, bereft of personality, is but a puppet in his hands: his only free act, in the end, is to kill Maximus. Maximus, seeing luck turn against him, passes over to the Persian camp. The best scenes of the play are lyrical, as when the genie of the empire appears to Julian. Victor-Joseph Étienne de Jouy (en-Josas) in 1827 wrote *Julian among the Gauls*, a classical tragedy in five acts in verse; this play recalls one of Voltaire's tragedies because it has all the qualities of a pastiche by Corneille, to the point of textual borrowing. Julian and the Gallic prince Bellovese are both in love with the beautiful Greek slave Theora. She dies by poison at the end of the play. The chauvinism of the author is given free reign in his conception of the character of Bellovese, who has all the noble virtues of his race.

In the first two discourses of his *Historical Studies*, a late work (1831), Chateaubriand discusses Julian at length, and the second discourse is entirely devoted to him. Documentation is plentiful and the author seems to force himself to judge equitably this emperor who "brought his erudition into his life." But in fact, Chateaubriand proceeds without much critical spirit, by an accumulation of evidence of very uneven worth, and collects, without objection or reservation, the commentaries of Christian historians—detractors of the emperor—and the tales of persecution that they invented.

In his youth Alfred de Vigny (1816) wrote a tragedy about Julian which he later destroyed. Beginning in 1832 he dreamed of writing a *Second Opinion of Dr Black*, which, like the first play, would consist of three narratives, dealing, respectively, with Julian, Melanchthon, and Rousseau, each ending with a "suicide." The general problem envisioned was to have been the influence of religion on ethics. The plan was reworked several times, but the definitive work never took form. The part of the work that was written was entitled *Daphne*, from the name of the region near Antioch, and dates essentially from 1837.

Vigny introduces Julian in this work, although the main character is Libanius, the Old Sage of Antioch (known in history for having been Julian's friend and panegyrist). In *Daphne*, Julian comes to ask Libanius's advice and, surprisingly, the philosopher discourages his efforts to restore paganism: one cannot go back in history. Julian's longest speech is a summary of his treatise *On Helios the King*. When he has come to understand the futility of his efforts, Julian, despairing, leaves for his Persian campaign. His death is presented as a disguised suicide (which, in fact, it may have been). For years Vigny meditated on the character of Julian, and a great deal of material for his unfinished work can be found in his *Journal*. In 1833 he confessed to the process of identification in these words: "If metempsychosis exists, I was this man. He is the man whose role, whose life, and whose character would have suited me best of any in history."

In 1853, the German poet Eichendorff wrote an epic poem on Julian, focusing on his wars against the Germans. In his posthumous poem *The Dove* (*Last Songs*, 1872), L. Bouilhet depicted Julian mourning the death of paganism, and he himself announced the impending end of Christianity. Louis Ménard's *Dreams of a Mystic Pagan* (1876) contained *The Last*

Night of Julian; in his poem the genie of the empire exhorts Julian to resign himself to the inevitable.

Henrik Ibsen first planned a trilogy on Julian, but then replaced the whole section about the battle of Strasbourg with a narrative and divided his work, published in 1873, into just two parts. The general title was *Emperor and Galilean: A Drama of World History*. Each part had five acts; the first part was *Caesar's Apostasy* and the second *Emperor Julian*. Among the primary sources, Ibsen had read only Ammianus Marcellinus and the *Life of Maximus* by Eunapius of Sardis. For the rest he turned to modern historians—first, the Germans Neander, J. E. Auer, and David Strauss, then to Albert de Broglie, author of *The Church and the Roman Empire in the Fourth Century* (1856). Ibsen put whole pages copied from these sources into the mouths of his characters, but at the same time he invented the character of Helena, the wife of Julian, a cruel and sensual woman who reveals to Julian at the moment of her death by poison that she has been the mistress of his brother Gallus.

Ibsen was unaware of the fact that Julian was raised in Arianism, nor did he seem to know, although it was indicated by all his sources, that Julian quickly returned to paganism and had hidden the fact for ten years, not proclaiming it publicly until he became emperor. A passage written by Neander on the Cainites probably inspired the major scene of evocation, in act 3 of *Caesar's Apostasy*: Maximus of Ephesus causes Cain and Judas to appear and indicates that Julian is the reincarnation of the same principle. Another possible source for this scene was the memory of canto 34 of Dante's *Inferno*, in which Judas, Brutus, and Cassius are crushed by the three mouths of Lucifer. The Manichaean schema which Ibsen implicitly proposes is the following:

Cain—Abel (and his "substitute" Seth)
Judas—Christ
The pagan Julian—the Christian Jovianus

Maximus is presented as the apostle of the "third reign"; he respects Christ because he is a prophet, but he announces the arrival of a religion superior to Christianity. This is where we must look for the philosophy of history which underlies the work. Ibsen had been very much affected by the Franco-Prussian war and by the Commune. He adopted the belief that events and men are directed by a "will," the agent of a rigorous determinism. According to him, the advent of the "third reign" would be the reconciliation of the spirit and the flesh, of paganism and Christianity.

The second part of the work, *Emperor Julian*, was perhaps written too rapidly. It covers the eighteen months of Julian's reign, while the first part dealt with a period of ten years. Only the negative side of Julian is developed here; he is shown as a personal enemy of the Galilean; he pursues the Galilean's disciples in his hatred and cruelly persecutes them, all the while remaining unable to detach himself completely from Christianity. He is reduced to bad temper, hypocrisy, and vanity, to the point where one wonders if he is really the same character as in *Caesar's Apostasy*. Ibsen modifies the historical order of events in order to make Julian's order to burn his fleet on the Tigris appear an act of madness. The play ends with an inquiry about predestination and the fact that some people can be "damned by obedience," an idea that is already present in the poem *Judas* ("And if Judas had been refused?").

Whatever point of view is adopted and unless only one specific episode in the life of the emperor is treated (as was

done by de Jouy), every romantic writer who told the history of the emperor was forced to end in a stalemate: Julian was out of step with history.

J.Ri./d.b.

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NAPOLEON AS MYTH

Napoleon, who had a keen sense of propaganda, was the architect of his own legend. During his reign, the press, literature, and painting were systematically placed under his control and gave a glorious and embellished image of him that tended to present him as a pacifist and the restorer of Catholicism and, outside France, as the liberator of oppressed peoples. As soon as Napoleon fell, there was a change. Caricatures of the emperor dominated for a while, making him the Corsican Ogre; they were circulated far and wide by his opponents. Satirical drawings thus joined the anti-Bonapartist propaganda that was already present among German nationalist poets such as Arndt, Theodor Körner, and Rückert. The condemnation is blatant in Chateaubriand's *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons* (1814) and also in Byron's *Ode to Napoleon* (1814). The same year Senancour protested openly in his "Letter from an inhabitant of the Vosges," and was one of the first to depict Napoleon as the man who, after conquering fate, was in the end overcome by it. This eventually became the essential idea behind the romantic myth.

The transition to the level of myth finally came with his death on Saint Helena on 5 May 1821, making the emperor a victim, which accounts for his frequent identification with Prometheus. His death occasioned Manzoni's poem *Il cinque maggio* (The fifth of May) and Grillparzer's *Ode to Napoleon*. Lamartine's *Bonaparte*, in his *Nouvelles Méditations* (New meditations) of 1822, is a poem that coldly questions Bonaparte and his fate and that echoes Manzoni. There is also Béranger's poem *Le Cinq mai*, in his *Souvenirs du peuple*

(*Memories of the people*) (1828), and his famous *Parlez-nous de lui, Grand-mère* (Tell us about him, Grandmother). The *Mémorial de Sainte Hélène* (Memorial of Saint Helena), published in 1823, went on to enrich the legend. In it, Bonaparte poses as the liberator and unifier of the people, whereas in reality he had fought against liberalism and nationalism in all their forms.

There was then a progressive turnabout by certain writers. Hugo's mother may have taught her son to hate Napoleon and his crimes; but with his poem *Les Deux Iles* (The two islands) (1826), resentment gave way to pity, and the life of Napoleon was compared to the sun in its passage from east to west. The *Ode à la Colonne* (Ode to the pillar) (1827) was Hugo's response to an affront directed at four marshals of the empire during a reception at the Austrian Embassy.

Nerval, the son of a military doctor of the Grand Army, thought of himself as (or wished he had been) a "Napoleonnite." He was sixteen years old when he wrote his own "Cinq mai" (The fifth of May, 1824), and in 1827 he published *Napoleon et la France guerrière, Elégies nationales* (Napoleon and France at war, national elegies), dedicated to Napoleon and for the most part written before 1825. The memory of the emperor haunted numerous texts by Nerval, particularly the six sonnets known by the title of *Autres Chimères* (Other fancies). Stendhal is known to have "fallen with Napoleon"; the heroes of his novels refer constantly to the emperor. Julien Sorel in *The Red and the Black* (1831) reads the *Mémorial*, and Fabrice in *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) is present at the battle of Waterloo. Balzac helped reinforce Napoleonic legend by the place he gave the emperor in *The Human Comedy*. Moreover, he conceived his opus as an imitation of Napoleon in which he intended "to achieve with the pen what he began with the sword." Already in *The Country Doctor* (1833), he presented an unforgettable "Napoleon seen by the people."

After the Return of the Ashes to Paris on 15 December 1840, the infatuation became widespread. Napoleon appeared in Balzac's work again: *The Vendetta* (1830), *A Shadowy Affair* (1841), *The Thirty-Year-Old Woman* (1844). Balzac admired Napoleon as a remarkable example of energy and of the sublime. In 1835, Vigny published *Military Servitude and Greatness*, in which a hovering presence of the emperor appeared. In *Memories from beyond the Grave* (1818), Bonaparte became "the colossal man," and Chateaubriand described his epoch as though it had consisted of a long dialogue between Napoleon and him. In 1844, Carlyle devoted a chapter of his *Cult of Heroes* to Napoleon. In 1845, Thiers began to publish his *History of the Consulship and the Empire*, completed in 1862.

A day in the reign of Napoleon, or the sun personified. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale. Photo D.R.





Franque, *La France dans l'attente du Retour d'Egypte*. Paris, Musée du Louvre. Photo Musées nationaux.

The first history of what was then a recent period, it was to have great success. Hugo sang the praises of the Return of the Ashes; in *The Châtiments* he included the *Expiation* (1852), in which he exalted Napoleon in order to humiliate his nephew. In his novel *Les Misérables* (1862), he chose to reenact Waterloo. Although Tolstoy in *War and Peace* (1864) made the emperor into a kind of soulless marionette, its strings pulled by fate, and although Proudhon, Littré, Erckmann, and Chatrian (*The Conscript of 1813*, 1864) saw Napoleon as a *condottiere* without scruples, Goguelat's account in *The Country Doctor* already suggested the deification of Napoleon, who was identified with the messiah. As early as 1816, Wendel Wurtz had given the black legend a mythical extension by identifying Napoleon with Appolyon, the destructive genie of the apocalypse. Mickiewicz, in *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), paid Poland's respects to Napoleon; later, under the influence of Towianski, he would make him the new messiah. Nerval took J. B. Pères's hoax seriously: Pères, in *How Napoleon Never Existed* (1827), satirized the theories of Dupuis and turned Napoleon into the new Apollo.

One problem remains that has never received a satisfactory solution. The objectively verifiable elements of Napoleon's career—the names of individuals, the general course of events—spontaneously organized themselves according to the structure of the solar myth. Although Napoleon is not entirely identified with the sun, it is nevertheless true that the myth built around his historical personality is of a complexity seemingly born of the resolution of certain opposites. He represents both liberty and authority; the messiah and, at the same time, the antichrist; warrior and also legislator. And if one tries to understand how, after his death, many of his contemporaries changed their attitudes toward him from hostility or resentment to admiration, one reaches the conclusion that they subconsciously made Napoleon into an image of the father bigger than life—at the same time simple and mysterious, kindly and terrifying. Since many of their fathers or paternal uncles had fought in Napoleon's armies, this image is not hard to explain.

The extension of the myth over the whole world came later and goes beyond the limits of this essay.

J.Ri./g.h.

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MODERNITY'S CHALLENGE TO MYTH, IN THE POETRY OF HÖLDERLIN, HEINE, BAUDELAIRE, MALLARMÉ, T. S. ELIOT, AND RILKE

Hölderlin

Two-thirds of the way through *Patmos* (1803), one of his last great hymns, Hölderlin, who has just evoked the disappearance of the evidence from the mythic time of Christ, the destruction of the temples, and the invisibility of the gods both in heaven and on earth, abruptly interrupts his evocation to ask about the meaning of these deficiencies that he has identified with his own time. The question, "What is it?," with which the tenth stanza of the poem ends, is answered by some lines as simple as they are essential in their attempt to repossess the truth of a historic becoming:

It is the cast
Made by the sower when he scoops
Wheat into the shovel and sweeps it
In an arc
Toward the clear
Void over the threshing floor,
The husk falls at his feet, but
The grain does reach its goal,
And no bad thing it is, if
Some disappears, the live sound
Of speech
Fades, for divine work too is akin
To ours, the Highest does not want
All things at once. . . .

(Translated by Christopher Middleton from Friedrich Hölderlin and Eduard Mörike, *Selected Poems*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972, pp. 83–85.)

The reader will have recognized in this response the condensation of at least three biblical passages: the image of the preaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:12): "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire"; the story of Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 2:2–17); and, perhaps especially, the passage from the Gospel (John 12:24): "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

What should nevertheless arrest us even more than this syncretism is the use that is made here of a parabolic language on the level of poetry. The question posed at the end of the preceding stanza bears fundamentally upon the meaning of a history whose upheaval Hölderlin could indicate as few others could. The night of the absence of the gods, in the writing of this poet, is far more than a simple

metaphor: it is the declaration, the sharp act of perception, of a historical and metaphysical reality, which seems at first to lack the support of a transcendence that might assure its redemption. Nothing could be more serious, less "metaphoric," for Hölderlin, than this declaration.

It is precisely this seriousness that makes the lines we have cited so interesting. What the poetry achieves here is nothing less than a mythical repossession of the real. Just as the grain dies in order to be reborn as wheat, after failing to reach its goal, so too we are to understand that this night of history is called upon to cut across the proof of its negativity so that, in the end, the day will dawn that will mark the return of the gods. The concrete image, invested with the authority of the sacred text, makes it possible to signify the historical process by anchoring it in a natural rhythm. Existence and its meaning are one: we are in the poetic universe of myth.

What Hölderlin succeeded in affirming once more in 1803, at the price of great tension and an unequaled dialectic force, constitutes the model—at once dreamed of and inaccessible—of what has since been called modern poetry. Whoever inclines to the history of the poetic texts of the last 170 years or so cannot help but be struck by the progressive movement by which the gesture of confidence in the use of a mythic model loses if not its validity at least its force of credibility. The few remarks that follow certainly do not aim to exhaust the subject, but propose to illustrate this movement.

Heine

In his poem, *The Gods of Greece*, composed in 1825–26, Heinrich Heine reverses the order of the certainties that we saw at work in Hölderlin. In Heine, myth no longer serves as a foundation for history, but rather submits to history. The gods of Greece, which the imagination identifies in clouds at night, in this poem are made "suppressed and defunct" figures; Zeus appears here with "extinguished lightning" in his hand and with his face marked by "unhappiness and sorrow"; Aphrodite, "once golden, now silver," here has no more than an "appalling" beauty and is said to be the "goddess of corpses," "Venus Libitina." The founding nature of the gods in Hölderlin is succeeded here by a series of figures born of history and subject to its finitude: "For even the gods do not reign forever; the young ones take the place of the old ones." The relativization of mythic beings leads them to become no more than the supports for an entirely immanent vision of history, in which the struggle of antagonistic forces, far from representing a metaphysical confrontation, has taken a clearly political turn: man, in this poem, becomes morally superior to the gods because, unlike them, he does not side with those who are strongest, but joins in solidarity with those who are conquered.

Baudelaire

This feeling of a lost mythic integrity is found again, though in a rather different sense, at the beginning of the work of the one who, together with Georg Büchner in the medium of theater, could be said to be the founding poet of modernity: Charles Baudelaire. From his earliest poems, Baudelaire seems to long for the "naked epochs / When Phoebus amused himself gilding statues," and when "Cybele, fertile in generous fruits, / Did not find her sons too heavy a weight"; yet he does not hesitate to point out the contemporary truth of myth in those "poor twisted bodies, thin, pot-bellied, or flaccid," which "the god of Utility,

implacable and serene, / swaddles as children in their bronze diapers," in other words, we understand, in the allegorical vision of a reality dispossessed of its mythic fullness.

In *The Swan*, for example, Baudelaire evokes the "strange and fatal myth" of the animal "that has escaped from its cage," in which he sees the image of the human condition of exile. But, except for the fact that this poet does not distinguish the term "myth" from the term "symbol," or "emblem," or even "allegory," his use of the swan does not so much reactualize a sphere of meaning or a mode of being that belongs to myth as it transforms the creature—just like Andromache, to whom it is compared—into a sign of the loss of or separation from myth. Baudelaire's swan is not an identity whose presence is sufficiently solid to suggest, if not to found, a poetic order in which signs are organized according to their own essence—which would be the very definition of a poetry of myth; on the contrary, it marks a division that allows only divided realities and the image of that division to become linked to it. And it is precisely in this division that Baudelaire deciphers the modernity with which, in opposition to romanticism, to pantheism, or to metaphysical Manicheanism in the style of Hugo, he will identify his poetry.

One could argue that some of his poems, some of his essays (on Poe, on Hugo, on Gautier), express the idea of a "shadowy and profound unity" that is able to bring together and to integrate the whole of reality into a network of "correspondences" which assure it of meaning in the manner of a myth. The importance accorded to the imagination, to the dream, is a sign of this meaning. But though these tendencies are incontestable, they do not go beyond the stage of intention. The only genuine figure that can really claim the status of a unifying locus of the real in Baudelaire is, paradoxically, death. The Baudelairean One is the unity of what perishes; death, moreover, is the only absolute that can measure itself against the absolute of the exigency of infinity. And if certain poems in the *Flowers of Evil* seem to reach a mythic dimension, despite everything—notably the great passages in the *Parisian Pictures*—they do so precisely because their repossession of finitude raises death to the level of a necessity that is visibly constitutive of what is real.

This recognition of death as a presence that is simultaneously intimate and universal is also what leads Baudelaire to attempt to make the work of art the only place the other side of death. Beyond his macabre Petrarchism, this view of death underlies a poem such as *A Piece of Carrion*—even though, against the avowed intention of the author, it could also be read as the expression of the triumph of a poetics designed to speak of the perishable part of existence (cf. the letter from Rilke to Clara of October 7, 1907). The architectural will of the poet of *Flowers of Evil*, his insistence on the independence and immanent logic of form, constitute an extension of and a response to the consciousness of a reality that could formulate no other myth than finitude. What ultimately characterizes the poetics of the *Flowers of Evil* is a tension—the tension between a palpable reality accepted in its opacity, its irreducibility to any idealization, and a (formal) dream in which the imaginary is able to recompose the network of identities that are as much material as they are spiritual.

Mallarmé

It might be supposed that the thinking of the greatest French disciple of Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, developed from a tension of the same kind. At least his early

poems, as well as certain documents dating from his formative period, suggest such a connection. But, unlike his master, Mallarmé was to situate his place of choice in the realm of dream: "Yes, I know," he wrote to Henri Cazalis in April of 1866,

we are nothing but vain forms of matter, but quite sublime for having invented God and our soul. So sublime, my friend, that I want to give myself this spectacle of matter, being conscious of it and nevertheless rushing passionately into the Dream that matter cannot be, singing of the Soul and all the parallel divine impressions that have accumulated in us since the earliest times, and proclaiming before the Nothing, which is truth, these glorious lies! Such is the plan of my lyric volume, and such perhaps will be its title, the Glory of the Lie or the Glorious Lie.

As one can see in these lines, the degenerating structure of Mallarmé's vision, which affirms in the same stroke the idealistic orientation of matter and the unreality of that orientation, hardly lends itself to a mythical apprehension. Moreover, even when Mallarmé did resort to mythic motifs in his poems, his use of myth remained marked by his vision of the real as a fiction. This is certainly true of the two great poems sketched during those years, the "Herodiade" and "The Afternoon of a Faun."

Mallarmé's Herodiade is not the temptress that Flaubert would describe ten years later, in a dazzling page of his *Three Tales*, in the act of seducing Herod Antipas. She is the figure of a poetry dedicated to reflexivity, a poetry incarnate in his image of a woman looking at herself in a mirror. Her narcissism, her fierce refusal of any nobility (cf. "Yes, it is for me, for me, that I have blossomed, alone!"), are the image of Mallarmé's (mythic) desire for a language restored to its purity of a musical essence. A "dyad," in that her concern for herself determines her both as the desiring subject and as the image of her own desire, this "heroine"—even in her name—suggests the recoiling inward in which Mallarmé sought the salvation of language through poetry.

The mythic subjugation of the Faun is still more subtle. Since for Mallarmé the solar and musical figure of this fabulous creature is manifestly nothing but the image of the poet, or of poetic power, this poem too reveals the desire for reflexivity that was already at work in the "Herodiade." At the same time, however, the artifice by which the Faun feigns possession of the nymphs, whom he really has only desired, ends with the evocation of a reality which, for being fictive, is no less endowed with a charge of concretion and even of a sensuality of which there are few other examples in French poetry:

As for me, proud of my voice, I'll speak at length
Of those divinities and by idolatrous
Depictions strip yet more veils from their shade.
Thus, when I've sucked the brightness out of grapes,
To chase regret deflected by my feint,
I lift the empty cluster to the sky,
Laughing, and, wild to be drunk, inflate
The shining skins and look through them till night.
(Translated by Patricia Terry and Maurice Z. Shroder, in *Stéphane Mallarmé, Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Mary Ann Caws, New York: New Directions, p. 37.)

The use of a mythical figure (a Faun) makes it possible to question what is immediately real ("Did I dream that love?") but leads here to the emergence of a poetic reality all the more absolute for being manifestly more fictive.

The gesture by which fiction was identified with the very site of reality, this absolute poetic idealism—which Mallarmé himself later went beyond by transforming his negative theology into a kind of theology of the twenty-six letters of the alphabet—set off one of the two currents which, following the turn-of-the-century symbolism, were to fertilize the poetry of the twentieth century and notably its use of myth: a Valéry, a Saint-John Perse, in France, a Stefan George, a Rilke, in Germany, would tap into that current, each in his own way.

Eliot

But this would not happen without the close parallel development of another current, which should be identified here. The end of the nineteenth century set the stage for an exacerbated and mythicizing idealism in the realm of literature; yet it also saw the development of works which, following the upheaval stirred up by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, manifested a kind of renaissance of materialism. Starting in 1896, Freud wrote his *Interpretation of Dreams* (published in 1899), which is practically contemporary with the first volumes of Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, the pioneering work in the field of mythic ethnology. Significantly, once Freud's fundamental concepts had been developed, the interest of psychoanalysis was to shift into the field of myth (*Totem and Taboo* dates from 1913, one year after Otto Rank's great book *The Incest Motif in Literature and Folklore*), that very myth whose historical origin and nature Frazer, after others, had demonstrated. Despite the general crisis of values in European society and civilization that led to the first World War—a crisis that was expressed in art by an impressive spate of inventiveness (cubism and futurism in painting, the Vienna school, Stravinsky in music)—writers were strongly stimulated by this challenge to their range of choice. This helps to explain how the great poem that would attempt to draw up the double balance sheet of civilization and literature, once the war was over, at the same time presents itself as a profound questioning of mythic speech.

We refer to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, published in 1922. *The Waste Land* signifies any barren land, ravaged land, but the title is also a direct reference to the land stricken with sterility in the legend of the Grail, in which Eliot, influenced by a book by an English medievalist who was a disciple of Frazer, learned to recognize a medieval, Christianized transposition of certain myths of fertility borrowed mainly from Egyptian and Mesopotamian antiquity. At its simplest level, use of the Grail myth tends to establish an equivalence between the medieval symbol of a land awaiting its deliverance and the ruined condition of postwar Europe. Such was, one might say, the mythic analogy of this text.

But this analogy constitutes only one of the levels of meaning in this poem—the most apparent, perhaps, but not the most profound. Aside from the fact that the mythic narrative is borrowed only in a most discontinuous manner (and is used much less closely, for example, than the myth of the *Odyssey* in Joyce's *Ulysses*, which had appeared in the previous year), *The Waste Land* is concerned less with the theme of mythic desolation than with questioning an entire series of previous poetic discourses, which are themselves quite often connected with a myth, for which this poem constitutes a kind of museum.

As Eliot himself indicated in the notes that accompany his poem, and as has often been remarked since, *The Waste Land* is largely made up of quotations. These quotations, bor-

rowed from sources as diverse as Dante's *Inferno*, the *Satyricon* of Petronius, Elizabethan drama, the Bible, the *Upanishads*, the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, and the *Flowers of Evil*, actually have less to do with a unified way of thinking—in this case a way of thinking about desolation—than they signify, through the often ironic or parodying use that is made of them, the decrepitude of the mythic design of their original context. "I had not thought death had undone so many," says one of the speakers of this poem (quoting Dante), as he watches a crowd of resigned pedestrians file over London Bridge—people who are so many metaphors for speech. As much as it is the enactment of a myth, *The Waste Land* is the properly Babelian actualization of the impossibility of a founding speech. The "death" of the inhabitants of the waste land, a synonym for the spiritual collapse of Europe of 1920, here also prefigures the end of the demiurgic period of poetry. Or, to put it differently, the figures who speak in the poem are not the only ones stricken by death, but through them the integrity of the poetic source or realm of which they have been made the symbols is also stricken.

Rilke

The fact that death is necessarily connected with the very possibility of myth is something few poets, after Eliot, have failed to realize. Rilke, for example, though he rejected Eliot's method of collage and fragmentation, in that same year 1922 could let his Orpheus emerge only by specifying in characteristic fashion that "Only one who has lifted the lyre / among shadows too, / May divining render / the infinite praise" (*Sonnets to Orpheus*, translated by M. D. Herter Norton, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1942, p. 33). When one turns to the poets of France, Italy, the United States, or Latin America, it seems that this is a universal experience, one that World War II made even more oppressing.

The historic relativization of spiritual horizons and social ideals, the affirmed will of a critical attitude of the mind, combined with the collapse of the sacred rhetorics and orders of speech, contributed more than a little to take apart what Western poetry since Homer had never ceased to put together. Belief in myths, as Paul Ricoeur has remarked, has for many people ceded its place to the interpretation of myths and of modes of belief that connect us with myth. Is it not time to close this chapter of our history, even if it is a principal chapter?

HÖLDERLIN'S DIONYSUS

Dionysus became the god of poetry at the very moment when poetry itself analyzed its own status with the greatest precision, namely, in Germany in the work of Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843). In answer to Klopstock, who was content with rather superficial identifications, Hölderlin proposed a much more finely tuned connection between poetry and the god of wine, who in his eyes was also the god of joy, as attested by his translation of the last great chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone*. He writes:

For two reasons, beyond all the skepticisms and all the rationalizations, it may be too early to do so. First, despite the immense deployment of efforts to objectivize, formalize, and grasp the origin and the nature of language, language continues, in the final analysis, to refuse to reveal its essence other than in a movement of the invention and creation of images which, while integrating ever more extended levels of reflexivity, keep their metaphoric essence. Nor must we forget that this growing reflexivity has come to be joined, by a kind of necessary counterpoint or compensation, with a simultaneous liberation of the unconscious which, while ruining certain conventional poetic forms, has not stopped and still does not stop formulating its truth by the creation of new structures that find in myth one of their most profound resources. The averred impossibility of a metalanguage that could formalize the essence, in the last analysis a metaphoric essence, of language returns dialectically to a consciousness of the mythic founding of that metaphor. As a result, in the connections that unite (and disunite) man with his human environment, earthly or cosmic, the need for the fiction through which the first connections with the world are avowed and formulated remains perceptible.

Despite all the impasses of literature today, at least the hope of giving voice, through the language of myth, to the always difficult harmony of an enchanted flute beyond all disenchantments may thus continue to affirm itself.

J.E.J./g.h.

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The banks of Ganges heard how the god of joy
Was hailed when conquering all from far Indus came
The youthful Bacchus, and with holy
Wine from their drowsiness woke the peoples.
And you, our own day's angel, do not awake
Those drowsing still?
("The Poet's Vocation," 1800, translated by Michael Hamburger, from *Friedrich Hölderlin: Poems and Fragments*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, p. 173)

"Day's angel" is the mediator between the gods and men in the sphere of temporal action where contemporary history is made. He is the poet who, like Dionysus, stirs the soul of

people by reinterpreting the moments when, according to tradition, God has revealed himself, seeing these moments in the light of great movements of the present, such as the French Revolution. But while he renewed the sacred chant of the Old Testament prophets and of the Greek poets, and made his own poetry the equivalent of the Revolution, Hölderlin must indeed have feared that he was not on the level of his god, since in the same ode he reminds us of the humiliating scene in Euripides' *Bacchae* when Dionysus, in bonds, is dragged about by the servants of Pentheus "like a captured wild animal," a "tame beast." The poet is almost tempted to take advantage of the god's docility to gain control over him, thus usurping the authority of the divine message. He would then have used the innocence and purity of the god for the benefit of his own arbitrary and idle humors, and would not have listened to him. Hölderlin is thus compelled to create an equivalent of the ancient song, but one that is renewed by modern-day events so that it might keep alive the fire that glows in the countenance and actions of Dionysus.

Hölderlin is the only modern poet who attempted to conform scrupulously to the Pindaric and Sophoclean modes, not by imitation, which would be a reduction, but a *fundamento*. Since Dionysus was no longer the god of a large community, his re-creation could be achieved only by song, or, to put it more precisely, he would be the fruit of the components of song, that is, a metaphor of song itself. In the quasi-Pindaric hymn "As on a holiday" (1800), the poet's attention was called to "the signs and deeds of the world"—the Revolution and the coalition wars that resulted from it. He is struck by the thunderbolt of Zeus as if, in Hölderlin's language of mythical metaphors, he were himself Semele, the mother of Dionysus. The thunderbolt engenders his poem, which is therefore identical with Dionysus, the synthesis of heavenly fire and maternal earth. In this frame of reference, the god appears both as the sign reverting to the pure elements of father and mother, and as the shelter offered by the earth against the danger of paternal fire. He is the god of encounter, exchange, of the mutual appeasement of two powers that men cannot receive without something to mediate between them; and this mediation comes about through language, which has a dual character: it reveals the burning immediacy of the spirit, but it also reveals the structuring and legislating form produced by word order and the laws of syntax and rhythm.

Dionysus may thus be the model for the union of opposites. But he is also the mediator between the origin and the developments which are indicated throughout the tradition right up to the threshold of a future not yet realized. Wine, the sign of his double birth, is a promise. Friends are seen feasting together—something Hölderlin frequently evokes, as in the *Stuttgart* elegy, which is thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Dionysus; the friends not only recall with rapture the presence of Zeus but also express ardent hope for a return of his presence in a new form. The French Revolution initiates a movement that could renew the times to the point at which community spirit would again be possible, the spirit of brotherhood of an entire people. This future heralded by wine, by Dionysus, is in keeping with the festivities that Dionysus inspired in ancient times. "Bacchus is the spirit of community"; here we have a renewal of what the Greeks knew. Hence the poem, Dionysus, and the wine which is his sign, are all three at the pivot where the past is called upon to transmute itself into the future. All three both recall and announce the mediation that they ensure between spirit and language, heaven and earth, masculine and feminine, an-

cient and modern, north and south, east and west, ancient community and future community. All told, Hölderlin bestowed on Dionysus the same status as that of his poem. He is a demigod always moving between Hellas and Hesperia, who sweeps his disciples along in his voyage "from land to land in the holy night."

In the elegy "Bread and Wine" (1800), Dionysus appears as someone who attracts creatures that have fallen prey to holy delirium, leading them beyond all bounds. He also appears as the conciliator of night and day, guiding the stars upward, downward, eternally joyful, "like undying verdure . . . because he remains." This god of awakening is the dynamic principle that pushes its devotees beyond all finitude, but it is also the principle of stability that resists the night of forgetfulness through the firmness of its attachment to the fullness of life past or to come.

In this period, Hölderlin charges the poet with the mission of delivering the German spirit from the torpor of its wintery slumber, which makes Dionysus above all the incarnation of the heavenly fire. Later, starting in 1803 when he began to be debilitated by illness, Hölderlin thought that he could see hovering over the world the threat of total collapse, anarchy, a new reign of the Titans; he then saw Dionysus in a very different aspect, as a guide capable of restraining nations intoxicated with death, of keeping them in shape, helping them curb their elemental forces. His fear of imminent universal dissolution inspired a Dionysus of stability and bounds, henceforth brother to two other demigods, Heracles and Christ. Their three labors forge, in heroism, a new permanence in the relation between man and the earth, which becomes habitable again by virtue of the institution of an order and of its law ("Unique," 1803). This Dionysus, guarantor of the people's stability through the grace of the rites and words born of his fire—tragedies, for instance—is finally merged into Christ, the founder of religious orders and communities.

Here is a dual dimension, already hinted at in the hymn "The Rhine" (1801), in which Rousseau is first interpreted in the light of the "divine delirium" of the god without law but later appears as the man in the background, like the recluse who prefers obscurity to profusions of joy, in order to relearn a weak song. This second dimension, the aspect of moderation, aspires to the security of a refuge and goes hand in hand with Hölderlin's belated image of the god who recovers from his perilous birth in the shade of German forests among the flowers, but who at the same time brings to the Northmen the virtues of the children of the sun.

B.B./g.h.

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MYTH IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

The problem of myth, of how we should deal with it and how it might deal with us, has troubled English-language writers in this century, as it has troubled writers everywhere. It is not a problem that will go away; it has at least been given several new twists. It would seem appropriate to begin considering it by looking at Yeats, the writer who appeared, at times, the most willing to allow myth to persuade him.

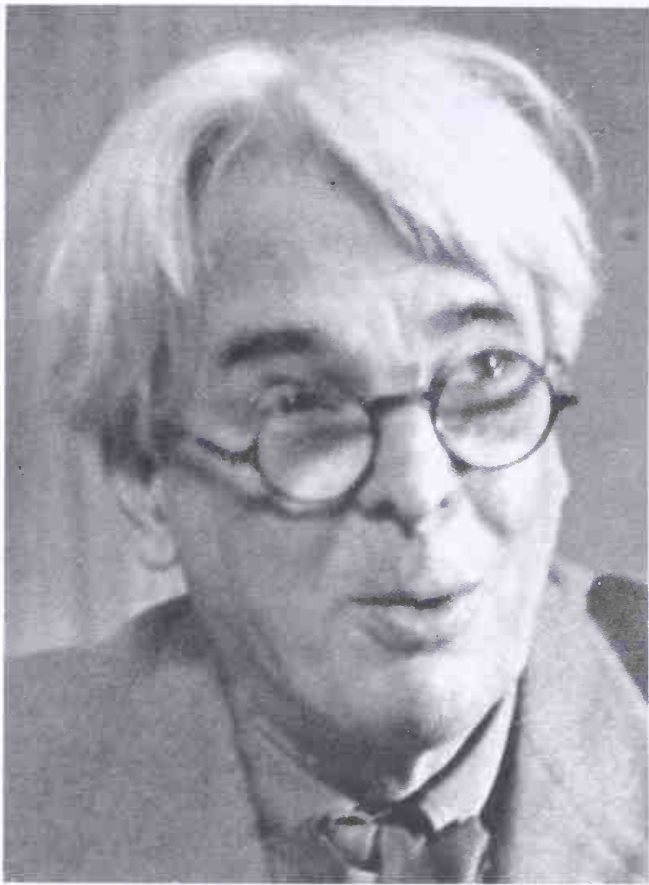
Yeats turned first to the mythology of Ireland, participating in the Celtic Revival of the end of the last century, which followed from several decades of work on the old Irish legends by scholars and translators and which coincided with a general renewal of interest in myth and folklore. He was twenty-five years old when Frazer's *The Golden Bough* appeared in 1890. Myth represented for him a kind of hygiene of the spirit. It was a means of seeing, utterly opposed to science, to materialism, and to Anglo-Saxon abstraction. The illuminist tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relives in his work, offering to the imagination a universe saturated with dream and symbol, and allowing a return to origins, "to the roots of the Trees of Knowledge and of Life." Yeats even entertained the hope at one point that Celtic mythology would spread with the same force as the Germanic mythology of Wagner and others, being convinced that "every new fountain of legends is a new intoxication for the imagination of the world." It is true that, at first, he distorted Irish legends by assimilating them to a fin-de-siècle revery and to the melancholy of an infinite longing, reliving in a way that earlier Celtic revival that had penetrated European romanticism via the writings of Chateaubriand and Goethe, having been launched by Macpherson's so-called translations from Ossian.

Myth was also the possibility of recreating the Irish nation. Yeats desired to nourish the memory of his compatriots with the tales of Cúchulain, Ossian, Deirdre, and also of the fairies, witches, and ghosts of popular belief that he celebrated in *The Celtic Twilight*. He claimed that the Irish had a particular aptitude for myth: that stories of meetings with supernatural creatures were more numerous in Ireland than in the whole of the rest of Europe, that peasant and nobleman alike, to the end of the seventeenth century at least, respected those legends, and that even in his own day country people spoke with the dead "and with some who perhaps have never died as we understand death." The aim was in part political: in its myths, legends, and folklore could be discovered an Ireland utterly free of English contamination, at a moment when the relationship between the two countries was intensely at issue. But the aim above all was to discover place. By speaking "out of a people to a people," Yeats endeavored to reunite the Irish nation to the Irish land.

Mythology, he believed, bestows on a race its first unity, "marrying" it "to rock and hill," and so giving birth, one might say, to a meaningful geography and to a geography of meaning. Even Christianity was not to be excluded. Although in "The Wanderings of Oisín" he opposed the druidic Ireland of Ossian to the Catholic Ireland of St. Patrick, he recognized elsewhere that the "places of beauty or legendary association" had also been impregnated for centuries with the Christian faith.

Mythology also provided a place for his own poetry, preserving it from what he saw as a false subjectivity, a fragmentary individualism inherited from the Renaissance. One of the deep aspirations of modern poetry expresses itself in a passage like the following: "I filled my mind with the popular beliefs of Ireland . . . I sought some symbolic language reaching far into the past and associated with familiar names and conspicuous hills that I might not be alone amid the obscure impressions of the senses." Nevertheless, despite this belief in locality, Yeats combined Celtic myths with others in the gradual elaboration of a cosmology that in the end was heterogeneous and personal. A member of the Theosophical Society and an initiate of the Order of the Golden Dawn, he studied Oriental religions, occult systems, magic, astrology, alchemy, the cabala, Neoplatonism, the "correspondences" of Swedenborg and Blake, and out of this eclectic brew produced *A Vision*. This preposterous and unforgettable book, whose concepts and images feed into many of his greatest poems and plays, emerged, according to Yeats, from revelations communicated to him by certain spiritual masters through the automatic writing of his wife. They taught him that everything was governed by the twenty-eight phases of the moon, which could be represented by a geometrical construction of wheels and "gyres." Each period of history had its phase, as did each individual, and as the whole of history passed again and again through all the phases, so each individual followed the same sequence in a series of reincarnations. Hence the existence of an *anima mundi*, a great general memory of the race, a notion that is clearly related to the collective unconscious of Jung.

Rather than delving further into this intriguing "phantasmagoria" (the word is Yeats's own), it is worth noting the attraction of a cyclical, lunar system for other writers of the period—it is to be found, in one form or another, in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, Pound's "Pisan Cantos," and Graves's *The White Goddess*—and also the apocalyptic nature of Yeats's version, since he worked out the cycles of history in such a way that the moment of his own life would correspond to a cataclysm. Around 1927 our period of civilization, founded by Christ, was to encounter, in war and terror, its antithesis, the Antichrist, the "rough beast" slouching toward Bethlehem to be born. Yeats's thinking here corresponds to that of his age. From Mallarmé ("the trembling of the veil") to Spengler's *Decline of the West*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and D. H. Lawrence's *Apocalypse*, apocalypse became the myth of an



W. B. Yeats. Photo BBC/British Council.

epoch. In the imagination of many, of course, the myth was actually lived through.

So myth also represented a possibility of order, when "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold." Hence Yeats's preoccupation with the "unity of being" and "unity of culture." Yet to meditate on the unity of culture is arguably to recognize that such unity no longer exists; and to meditate on myth is surely to reduce it to an object of culture, to a series of objects exhibited in the imaginary museum. The irony is that Yeats, who could not endure "an international art, picking stories and symbols where it pleased," exploited mythologies for his poems and other works with the same cosmopolitan and skeptical erudition as Joyce, Eliot, or Pound (or Thomas Mann, for instance, since the phenomenon was not exclusive to writers in English). It is true that Yeats believed that the parallelism between Celtic and, say, Indian mythology was not fortuitous, and that every symbolic system derived from a single original belief. The result is nonetheless a mythology blatantly synthetic. As Eliot wrote, in *After Strange Gods*: "Mr. Yeats was in search of a tradition, a little too consciously perhaps—like all of us."

With Eliot too the exploitation of myth is a late-cultural phenomenon, and our distance from myth is suggested in his work even more decisively. The theme of *The Waste Land* could be seen as the sterile multiplicity of mythologies that we find at our disposal, fragments of an excessive and shattered past that we no longer know what to do with. The notes added to the poem refer to two works of anthropology,

Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. *The Golden Bough*, which exerted a profound influence on Eliot's generation, derives religion from sympathetic magic, studying the persistence, in the Middle Ages and even in modern folklore, of ancient fertility rites, whose purpose was to ensure the rebirth of spring after the death of nature in winter, and whose focus was the death and resurrection of a vegetation god such as Adonis, Attis, or Osiris. Eliot's poems may be read in this perspective. At the beginning the vegetation god is buried, and there is talk of his dog, that is to say, Anubis, the jackal-headed god who aids Osiris's restoration, and of the hyacinth that is associated with him. In the fourth part Adonis is submerged in water in accordance with a parallel rite, in the person of a sailor who shares his Phoenician nationality, while at the end the rain falls, and it does so by the Ganges, the source of the most ancient of all vegetation myths. The poem is also a descent into Hades, like that which the golden bough made possible for Aeneas.

Jessie Weston sees in this fertility cult the origin of the Grail story, with even the miraculous cup itself representing a cultic object. She also associates the four symbols of the Grail: cup, lance, sword, stone or dish, with the four suits of the Tarot pack (having, as it happens, consulted Yeats). In *The Waste Land*, accordingly, the quest of the Grail and the laying down of Tarot cards become further spectral paradigms of the narrative. The place of the poem is a land laid waste and infertile partly by the sexual inadequacy of its inhabitants, like the Fisher King's territory in the Grail stories, where the vegetation fails because of his mysterious wound. At the end of the voyage, Eliot's reader finds himself, like the Grail knight, in the Perilous Chapel and the Perilous Cemetery, so as to be initiated into the mysteries of physical life (the rain falls) and spiritual life (the thunder speaks). It is the Tarot which predicts the entrances of a hanged god, of Adonis, and of the Fisher King.

These readings, however, are inexact, because of the dysfunctioning of the various narratives. The Tarot pack, for example, is interpreted by a charlatan who has "a bad cold." The reference to Parsifal's ritual purification occurs in a line quoted from the "Parsifal" of Verlaine, a poem which duly celebrates a man who has "overcome Women" but which is dedicated to a notorious homosexual. The reference is followed in Eliot's poem by another homosexual encounter. This derision of narrative can be partly explained by the fact that the modern victims of sterility, and the "hypocritical reader" who observes them, do not desire the regeneration promised by the myth. But the derision is also internal: narrative itself, as well as its "content," is in question. The narration breaks down. The rain falls, yet the plain remains arid; the quester's voyage is accomplished, yet he seems to lose his reason. The quest is even rendered null in the very first line of the poem, since April, the month which in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* encourages people by its sweet showers to go on pilgrimages, has become "the cruellest month."

The derision is clearest in the famous assembling in the text of juxtaposed and contradictory fragments. The quester is the reader himself who, confronted by these impenetrable objects, must ask their meaning. In another mythical perspective, the fragments are also the leaves of the Sibyl, who appears in the epigraph and elsewhere—shards of an oracle blown about by the wind. One might argue that traditional narrative is a kind of Grail quest, since it seeks its accomplishment in its ending. *The Waste Land*, on the contrary, mocks linear and teleological narrative in a text deliberately

incoherent, a kind of waste land of writing. And at the deepest point of the poem another myth, of dispersal and confusion, is being recreated: the myth of Babel. Babel is present in the poem through a number of allusions—above all, its tower is “abolished” in the ending, precisely at the moment when the text crumbles into five different languages—and its effect is everywhere. A variety of languages seethes disquietingly throughout the text; the notes employ as many, and not always the same ones; the short epigraph and dedication contrive to use Latin, Greek, English, and Italian; and the translation of the *Upaniṣads* that a note recommends is in German. Even within individual languages, syntax dislocates and words fall apart.

If there is a derision of narrative, in fact, there is also derision of language. Language is one of the themes of the poem (the most *superficial*) so that cultural and psychological alienation are accompanied by a linguistic alienation, a fall of language that reflects the fall of man. In the Babel of the poem everything is dispersed: mythologies, places, historical moments, literary works quoted in fragments. According to this text built from the ruins of other texts, the Great Memory is a plethoric jumble, and historical consciousness a “heap of broken images.” The last part of the poem, it is true, seeks a remedy for Babel. The thunder pronounces a restorative syllable, “Da,” and the three words of salvation which derive from it are taken from Sanskrit, the oldest Indo-European language and the one which might serve to gather the scattered tongues. Yet the last lines are fixed in a definitive ambiguity, a juxtaposition of the rain of Sanskrit and the aridity of the numerous dialects.

The myth of Babel is at the center of *The Waste Land*, as of the whole of Eliot’s work. And isn’t Babel, a language myth, the fundamental myth in modern literature? Polyglot writing is one of its signs, in *The Waste Land* but also in the *Cantos* of Pound and, among more recent works, in *Renga*, a quadrilingual poem preoccupied with languages, texts, myths, composed by three Europeans of different nationalities and a Mexican. Above all, writers since Mallarmé (“languages imperfect through being several, there lacks a supreme one”) recognize in one way or another the failure of language, and aspire to its renewal. Hence, in so many poets, novelists, and dramatists, a voluntary dilapidation of writing and the elaboration of new idioms.

This effort to recreate language is even more striking in Joyce, whose use of a multivariety of myths seems an attempt at an encyclopedic complexity. *Ulysses*, a rewriting of the *Odyssey*, has its main characters—Stephen-Telemachus, Bloom-Ulysses and Molly-Penelope—travel through a story-world abounding in other reminiscences of the Homeric tale, while also involving them in numerous further myths of Greek, Jewish, Christian, and other origins. *Finnegans Wake*, a *summa* patient of a plurality of readings, enacts the myth of universal fall and resurrection, centering it on the original fault of the hero, H.C.E., on his dream and his awakening. The book also uses the theory in Vico’s *The New Science* of the three phases of history and their eternal recurrence. It relives the dream of the whole of humanity, which at the end begins anew, and more particularly the dream of Finn MacCool, a mythical Irish hero asleep on the banks of the Liffey in Dublin, whose awakening or return is the awakening of all the heroes of the past. One finds in *Finnegans Wake* a use of Irish mythology quite different from that of Yeats, and one sees above all the oneiric nature of the narrative, dream being the natural domain of myth, for Jung as for others.

One also sees that the mythology is accompanied by a topography. Mythographer of the city of Dublin, Joyce

makes the Irish capital a kind of *omphalos*; as the author of novels at once intensely realist and densely symbolic, he furnishes universal myths with a quotidian site. This concentration on Dublin distances him again from Yeats, and links him with that wider literary opening of the modern City to the insinuation of myth, other major expressions of which are the Paris of Baudelaire and the London of Eliot.

Joyce was far from considering myth as an initiation to knowledge, or a form of being. According to Eliot, the presence of myth in *Ulysses* is “a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history.” (This comment dates from the year following the publication of *The Waste Land*.) “It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats . . . It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible in art.” Certainly, *Ulysses* offers itself as a kind of cosmos, where Joyce has endeavored to transpose myth *sub specie temporis nostri* (under the vision of our time), and where he has articulated a single story through several “stories” in parallel series: episodes of the *Odyssey*, organs of the body, Jewish rites, colors, etc. In the same way, the abundant material of *Finnegans Wake* is organized in a highly concentrated cyclic order (which recalls Yeats’s *A Vision*, about which Joyce said, moreover: “What a pity he did not put all this into a creative work”). Nevertheless, the order that myth imposes upon a refractory world is far from secure. *Ulysses* even seems as problematic in this respect as *The Waste Land*, and its symbolism of lost keys suggests our distance at once from the novel and from a common mythology that reader, author, and characters might share. Its relations with the *Odyssey* are in any case in part burlesque, and the entanglement of mythic and literary reminiscences—Bloom is a rerun of Ulysses, Moses, the Wandering Jew, Sinbad the Sailor, Rip Van Winkle, and God the Father, among others—is as much a marvelous hotch-potch as an encyclopedic order. As for *Finnegans Wake*, it describes itself explicitly as “Chaosmos” and “Microchasmé.”

Parody and self-parody would seem to be a sure sign of a troubled relation to myth. A possible resolution, for a modern mind assailed by knowledge, is the comedy which, at the deepest level of the works, maybe absorbs that irony; and another, in terms of the myth itself, is in the heroines of the two novels, Molly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle. These women are also, with due allowance for mirth, goddesses, feminine principles, who absorb everything into themselves. Molly “is” *Gea Tellus* or Cybele, the Earth and the universal mother; Anna Livia, the river, the sea, the maternal waters.

Like Eliot, Joyce also uses myths of language, as of art, and his use is equally ironic. Stephen, the future writer, is associated in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* with the Egyptian god Thoth, who was accused of theft and impiety for having invented writing. In both *A Portrait* and *Ulysses* he also represents Icarus, son of Daedalus. His father is not only the architect of the labyrinth—the labyrinth of Dublin, of Ireland, of his own past, and perhaps of the book itself, where Stephen wanders in search of a way out—but a forger, and thereby, according to the paronomasia which presides over Joyce’s writing, a maker of false coin, a fabricator of texts and of stories. One finds in Joyce, as in Eliot, the same persistent and uneasy mockery of one’s craft.

This irony too, however, seems resolved in *Ulysses*, by the fact that all the characters, events, symbols, and so on, are united by metempsychosis in language, “metempsychosis” being a word that actually circulates in the book; while *Finnegans Wake*, which is set “by the waters of babalong” and



Khnopff, *The Silver Headdress*. Pencil sketch. Private collection. Photo Dulière-Skira.

which, to return to another myth, is a kind of apocalypse of language, nevertheless finds its beginning, like Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, in its end: the last word of the book is a definite article which seems to introduce the sentence-ending that opens the book. The Egyptian serpent bites its own tail, Vico's eternal recurrence is enacted by the story itself, and the whole book becomes a noun.

Other writers have explored various strata of the land's mythology. David Jones in particular, a poet and painter of both English and Welsh extraction, was preoccupied with "the Island of Britain" and with King Arthur, "the central figure of our island myth." Like Yeats, and like the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*, he explored "the Celtic cycle that lies, a subterranean influence as deep as water troubling, under every tump in this Island, like Merlin complaining under his big rock." Also like them he founded his myths on a topography. The body of the hero in *The Sleeping Lord*, who is in part Arthur, is also the landscape, as are the bodies of Finn, and of the giant Albion in Blake.

In *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves excavated the prehistoric mythologies of Britain, examining the conflicts that existed among them and speculating on the cults that existed at Avebury and Stonehenge, in quest of the White Goddess, who gave to the island, he surmised, its early names of Samothea and Albion. In her capacity of goddess of the moon and the universal mother, he claimed to trace her worship from the Mediterranean to northern Europe, before her displacement by male gods and by the logic of Socrates. To rediscover the White Goddess, with whom Molly Bloom and Anna Livia Plurabelle are not unconnected, would be, for Graves, to recover the possibility of myth and also of poetry. For the goddess is equally the Muse (she was ousted in this role too by the male Apollo), and the center of the most widespread myth to do with literature. In Graves's

version, however, she is creative and yet destructive, the goddess of death as of inspiration, demanding from her adept total sacrifice, and what she recalls most in modern times is the "belle dame sans merci" of the romantic agony.

Lawrence too was concerned with pre-Olympian mythologies, in his search for the openness to the cosmos, the veneration of the body of the universe, which he saw as chronologically prior to the cult of gods. It is true that, before Graves, he referred to the White Goddess, "the great cosmic Mother crowned with all the signs of the zodiac," and to "the great dark God, the ithyphallic, of the first dark religions"; and that *The Plumed Serpent* envisaged the return of a pre-Columbian Mexican god. Yet this further attempt to recover a mythic consciousness in a way bypassed the gods, whom, at the deepest level of his conviction, he "refused to name." He studied rather a kind of cosmic sensitivity, among the Etruscans, among the American Indians, and in what he considered the primitive and pagan substratum of the *Apocalypse* of Saint John. Inspired by a cyclic conception of time, he even foresaw a return to the living cosmos, via the apocalyptic crisis through which our civilization was passing, by means of certain ancient rites that mime a descent into the underworld followed by rebirth. It may be that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* enacts the seven phases of a rite of initiation in the domain essential to Lawrence, that of sexuality.

During a period covering about two generations, writers questioned mythology with something like fear and trembling. Their readers are bound to ask, as they asked, whether it is still possible, and vitally useful, for a modern European to place himself in contact with mythic sensibility, and it is not surprising to find among certain contemporary writers an impatient hostility to myth. Myth continues, however, in the work of a writer like Ted Hughes, who turns to mythology and folklore to make contact with "the bigger energy, the elemental power circuit of the Universe," and who also refers to "the great goddess of the primeval world." In *Crow* he creates a mythology, yet without overtly deploying myths drawn from a diversity of times and places: his poem does more or less without history and anthropology. He has declared that he wanted to produce "something autochthonous and complete in itself . . . with the minimal cultural accretions of the museum sort . . . hoarded as preserved harvests from the past." The words could be aimed at many of the texts we have considered, especially *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses*. A whole period of literature seems to be concluded when he demands that his myth should be the springing of "essential things . . . from their seeds in nature . . . after the holocaust and demolition of all libraries."

M.Ed.

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THE SURVIVAL OF ANCIENT MYTHS IN MODERN GREEK POETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Though modern literature frequently refers to and uses ancient myths, in modern Greece such practices are, understandably, matters of special concern. The Greek spirit, naturally disposed to create myths, continues to use, maintain, and illustrate legends that belong to the national heritage, and it sometimes does so in the simplest aspects of everyday life. Frequent visits to sites where mythological events occurred and habitual contemplation of the heights on which a particular hero performed his exploits help make legends familiar. When a Greek names his child Athena or Dionysus, when a vine grower from Nemea refers to his wines as the "blood of the lion," he does not feel that he is adopting elements of culture. There is no intellectual search, no artifice, no affectation in those choices. Their lives are simply imbued with an idea that is not acquired but passed down from ancestors, with subconscious memories and with a tradition as old as the memory of their country. That is why myth, rather than being an object of metaphor, is the essential element and building block of Greek literary thought.

Prior to the rebirth of the Greek state in the early nineteenth century, popular Greek song, the constant expression of the thought of the Hellenic people, included legendary subjects, although its content was often based on current reality, that is, on the misfortune of the enslaved Greek people. In many different versions, one can discern the recollection of a minor mythological act or references to great legends. In a song portraying the rape of a woman by the Saracens (Isle of Symi version), the sun goes to warn the husband, Yannakis, of his misfortune, thus playing the role of the "guardian of gods and men" who warned Demeter of the abduction of Persephone (in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*). The exploits of the heroic frontier guardian Digenis Acritas are sung all over Greece. When Digenis kills a snake or, by the command of his king, stands up to a monstrous and ravaging crab, the song refers to the legend of Saint George and, further back, to an adaptation of the Labors of Heracles or an exploit of Apollo. The theme of the sacrifice of a woman, necessary for the success of a human enterprise, inspired by the legend of Iphigenia, is developed in numerous versions of the Panhellenic song of the "Bridge of Arta." The bridge can be built only if the master mason immures his wife in its foundation. The adventure of the husband return-

ing after a long absence and bent on testing his wife's faithfulness before he is recognized is also widespread throughout Greece, on the islands as well as on the mainland. In versions from the Aegean islands of Zante and Thessaly, the meeting occurs at a fountain where the wife is washing clothes. Here the song alludes to two episodes in the *Odyssey*: Odysseus coming back to Ithaca and Odysseus discovered by Nausicaa on the beach. In a popular song, most likely from mainland Greece but widespread from Corfu to the Pontus, a murderous mother serves her husband the liver of their son, who had discovered the mother's infidelity. This recalls the feasts of Atreus and Tantalus. Yet, true to the very nature of popular songs, the ancient inspiration is never obvious but always implicit.

Modern Greek poetry, which was born with the independent Greek state, reserves a rather large place for ancient myths, elements of a national wealth that the newly freed Greeks had their hearts set on illustrating and developing. The way legends are treated varies both with the individual temperament and situation of each author and as a function of the evolving new Hellenism.

Andreas Kalvos (born 1792 on Zante, died 1867 in London; author of twenty *Odes* that appeared in 1824 and 1826) wrote a work, often compared to that of Pindar, in which he celebrates the high points of the War of Independence by simulating a war of antiquity through the use of ancient terms and forms, and through constant recourse to allusions and comparisons that create an intensely mythological climate. In the *Odes*, he often uses allegory and invokes the Muses, Graces, Friendship, Wealth, Wisdom, Virtue, Victory, and Liberty, "brilliant daughters of Zeus." By personifying them, the poet commemorates the sites of martyrdom: Chios, Psará, Samos, Souli. He evokes mythological traditions: the feasts of the gods (*To the Muses*), the nourishment of immortals whose mouths have the fragrance of ambrosia (*To Parga*), and the dwellings of Olympus (*To Liberty*). Deities and heroes appear: Kypriis, whose touch was so sweet (*To Psará*); Icarus, whose wings freed him (*To Samos*); the Maenads and Eros, who made way for Ares on the devastated island (*To Psará*); but also the Erinyes summoned to punish the Turk (*To Chios*). The constant intention of Kalvos was to ennoble the act of war by applying to the modern event the meaning and the symbolic value of the ancient myth and to restore to the newly freed land the poetic beauty that legends had conferred upon it.

Konstantinos Kavafis (Cavafy) (born 1863, died 1933 in Alexandria; author of nearly 150 short published pieces, *Poems*) wrote a scholarly work, often difficult, in which

ancient history and mythology occupy a major place. Allegory is there too. In *Dionysus and His Crew* (trans. Rae Dalven, *The Complete Poems of Cavafy*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976, p. 23), seated next to the god are License, Drunkenness, Song, Feast, as well as Telete, goddess of rituals; Sleep and Death take part in *The Funeral of Sarpedon* (ibid. p. 21). Sometimes the poet's intention is essentially aesthetic, in specific scenes such as the description of the handsome young man, the son of Zeus, killed by Patroclus (see Homer *Iliad* 16.665–83) in *The Funeral of Sarpedon*. From another perspective, starting with the experience of life, of the eternal human problems that arouse his pessimism, the author conceives his poem as a recollection and transposition of a moral premise or a philosophical universal into the world of mythology. In *Ithaca* (ibid. p. 36), the poet invites man, the new Odysseus, to face courageously the assaults of the Laestrygones, the Cyclops, and Poseidon. Sometimes he develops the theme of man abandoned by the gods: in *Infidelity* (ibid. p. 20), Thetis, who has been assured of Apollo's protection for her child, Achilles, learns that it was this god himself who killed her son; the original version of the poem bore in epigraph an excerpt from Plato's *Republic* that refers to this incident as recorded in Aeschylus's *Tragic Iliad*. When the hour has come, Antony loses the protection of the gods, and the poet invites him to resign himself to his fate in *The Gods Forsake Antony* (ibid. p. 30). In *Footsteps* (ibid. p. 15), when the Furies enter Nero's home, the "wretched" Lares hide. The sadness of death is illustrated by the grief of the immortal horses pulling the body of Patroclus in *The Horses of Achilles* (ibid. p. 24; see *Iliad* 17.423–55). The impotence and ignorance of mortals are very briefly and laconically illustrated in *Interruption* (ibid. p. 12), a poem that shows Metanira preventing Demeter from making her child immortal and Peleus terrified by the exploits of Thetis when she is trying to make Achilles invulnerable (cf. Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 4.865–79 and Apollodorus *On the Gods* 3.13). The notion of opposition can be expressed at another level, namely, that of the relationship between a dying paganism and a rising Christianity, illustrated by the seven poems devoted to the Emperor Julian, but also by isolated works such as *Supplication* (ibid. p. 5) or *Kleitōs' Illness* (ibid. 133), in which the meaning and the image of the myths more or less disappear behind the historical antagonism of the two religions. Whether it is a philosophical thought, an invitation to Stoicism, or the mere description of an aesthete, the use of the mythological element in Cavafy's work, sometimes allusive, sometimes explicit, sometimes intimately tied to historical recollection, is never based on an overarching view, but on the analysis of a particular fact or of an exact detail.

The often scholarly aspect of the expression of myth and its occasionally artificial application are characteristics common to Kalvos and Cavafy, perhaps due to the same cause: their lack of contact with Greek soil. When he published his *Odes*, Kalvos had lived mostly abroad (in Italy and England). Cavafy spent his life in Alexandria.

Wholly different is the inspiration of Kōstēs Palamas (born 1859 in Patras, died 1943 in Athens; author of numerous collections of poems, two epics, a drama, etc.), who always lived in Greece and took part in the political and social evolution of the young state. This was a time when events and intellectual movements were causing a global dread of Hellenism and of the traditions of Hellenism, which follow one another without conflict. In the *Hymn to Athena*, a long poem, the author evokes the bond that in his mind ties the ancient world to the modern world. Indeed, Palamas treats

myths as did the romantics who influenced him, but he also often expresses the strictly Hellenic attitude that takes possession of the indivisible elements of the whole Greek domain. In the poem *My Fatherlands* from the collection *Life Immovable*, Palamas projects allegorical forms of beauty onto the landscape of Missolonghi, where he grew up, and later onto the site of Attica. He presents a personified Pentelicus and Olympus, and he sings of the sites "where Homer's Phaeacians still live" and of the bliss that the specter of Solomos finds in the Elysian fields. In a single burst and in the same poem, he aims to celebrate the works of Digenis and the exploits of the heroes of the Independence, and then to evoke the maidens with baskets on the Acropolis, carrying Athena's cloak to the temple; thus he gathers together the immortal beauties from the history of Hellenism. He draws another parallel, rather unusual in the eyes of a Western reader but natural to the mind of a Greek artist, which goes beyond apparent distinctions to link notions common to paganism and Christianity, especially Eastern Orthodoxy. In *Sibyl*, after a reference to Virgil's *Aeneid* 6.65, he compares the prophetess to the *Panagia Odigitria* or "Guiding Virgin," a type of Byzantine virgin frequently found in religious iconography.

Assimilations on the same order were to be widely developed by Angelos Sikelianos (born 1884 in Leneade, died 1951 in Athens; author of a massive poetic work, *Lyrical Life* [trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, *Selected Poems*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979], and of tragedies). He was an intellectual, an author exceptionally sensitive to the spirit and meaning of myths, a man for whom the gods had never left Greece. He told the story that, as a young child, during an earthquake he was filled with joy at the thought that the earth was speaking to him. Sikelianos's eagle eye saw through material appearances and was able to reach down to the deep meaning and eternal value of each scene. The spectacle—so common—of a he-goat in the midst of a herd of she-goats grazing by the shore of the Aegean Sea is for the poet the pure and simple materialization of a myth, so obvious that only the title, *Pan*, makes an explicit reference to the legend. He makes *The Greek Funeral Banquet*, inspired by a ceremony to which he was invited, an occasion to evoke the libations and banquets of initiation; with the "blood of Dionysus" he calls forth the souls of the dead and invokes the protection of Dionysus-Hades. Sikelianos's imagination exalts ordinary moments of life, finding a hidden meaning for them that links them to the most ancient traditions. In *Sacred Way* (ibid. p. 99), the showman's she-bear who stands erect on the Sacred Way at Eleusis in front of her cub suffers at the sight of his young nostrils wounded by the iron ring, and becomes the symbol of the weeping mother in the poet's consciousness:

One of them,
the larger—clearly she was the mother—
her head adorned with tassels of blue beads
crowned by a white amulet, towered up
suddenly enormous, as if she were
the primordial image of the Great Goddess,
the Eternal Mother, sacred in her affliction,
who, in human form, was called Demeter
here at Eleusis, where she mourned her daughter,
and elsewhere, where she mourned her son,
was called Alcmena or the Holy Virgin. (Ibid. p. 101)

The kinship of faiths and religions and the hidden unity of symbols—marked by a number of titles: *Conscience of My*



Fresco from the facade of the refectory of the Great Laura, Mount Athos. Upper righthand corner: Artemis withdraws at the moment of the Annunciation. Photo Paul Huber, Bern.

Land, Conscience of My Race, Conscience of Faith—such were the convictions that animated Sikelianos when in 1926 he established the Delphic Feasts and attempted to create a center, a spiritual “omphalos,” at Delphi, where he also had the tragedies staged in interpretations that allowed room for the neo-Hellenistic tradition.

George Seferis (born 1900 in Smyrna, died 1971 in Athens; author of *Poems* and *Essays*) lived through the painful experience of the catastrophe of Asia Minor. Endowed with a nature easily inclined toward melancholy, he was twenty-two when the Greeks were expelled from Ionia, and he lost his native land forever. Like all the Greeks born at the turn of the century in Turkey, he was to remain deeply marked by this misfortune; a significant part of his work is colored by melancholy, nostalgia, and the sentiment of parting, loss, frustration, shipwreck, and death. In this framework, he uses many mythological themes to illustrate the permanence of their symbolic value and the endurance of the Greek spirit. In *Mythistorema* (trans. Rex Warner, *Poems*, London: Bodley Head, 1960), allusions to myths are numerous, sometimes expressed in subtitles such as *Argonauts* (ibid. p. 13), *Astyanax* (ibid. p. 27), and *Andromeda* (ibid. p. 29), sometimes very discreetly indicated by a single proper name: Odysseus,

Adonis, Orestes, the Symplegades. The collection ends with a wish borrowed from Homer's *nekuia* (journey to the dead):

Those who one day shall live here where we end,
If ever the dark blood should rise to overflow their
memory,
Let them not forget us, the strengthless souls among the
asphodels.
Let them turn towards Erebus the heads of the victims.
We who had nothing shall teach them peace. (Ibid. p. 31)

In a long mythological poem from *Log Book 3*, *Helen* (bearing inscriptions of verses from Euripides' *Helen*), the heroine reveals that only her shadow went to Troy and that the war was a snare:

Great pain had fallen on Greece.
So many bodies thrown
To jaws of the sea, to jaws of the earth:
...
That so much suffering, so much life
Fell into the abyss. (Ibid. pp. 115–16)

Through these lines, it is easy to see the memory of another Ionic war, the massacres at Smyrna in September

1922. Numerous references to the tragedies and to Homer could also come from a more purely intellectual attitude. In *The Thrush* (ibid. p. 15), a man—simultaneously Odysseus and Seferis—seized by the dizziness of imagination and dreams, recalls “the lustful Elpenor.” In *The Light*, Seferis evokes the fate of Oedipus deprived of the sight of the sun before the Nereids and the Graiae who “come running at the sight of scintillating Anadyomene” Aphrodite. A poem written in the Transvaal in 1942, *Stratis the Sailor among the Agapanthi*, from *Log Book 2*, is in a most significant way thoroughly permeated with mythological memories and traditions: the Agapanthi; “asphodels of the Negroes,” who demand silence and prevent the author from speaking to the dead; and the goatskin bottle of the winds, which deflates itself (the author tries in vain to fill it); the memory of the house and of the old dog who waits until the voyager returns to die—all these are so many separate elements that illustrate an idea expressed by Seferis in *In the Manner of G.S.*, included in *An Exercise Book*: “Wherever I travel, Greece keeps wounding me” (ibid. p. 51).

But in modern Greek literature, all the genres use myths. Nikos Kazantzakis (born 1883 in Heraclion, died 1957 in Fribourg-en-Brisgau; author of novels, essays, dramas, and poems) wrote a drama in three parts, *Prometheus*, in which the gods appear on stage; also a tragedy, *Theseus*, or *Kouros*, directly inspired by the legend; and a very long epic of 33,333 lines, *The Odyssey*, which begins at the moment when the hero returns to Ithaca, an epic that can be interpreted as the adventure of modern man.

George Theotokas (born 1905 in Constantinople, died 1966 in Athens; author of essays, novels, and plays) narrated the venture of ambitious young idealists in his novel *Argo*. In his drama *The Bridge of Arta*, he takes up the theme of the popular song. In a brief tragedy, *The Last of the Wars*, he deals with the departure of the captive women after the Trojan War. He also wanted to create a “myth of Alcibiades” in his long play *Alcibiades*.

Pandelis Prevelakis (born 1909 in Rethymnus; author of essays, novels, plays, poems), without borrowing his title from tradition, created in his novel *The Sun of Death* the

character of Aunt Roussaki, a deeply Christian Cretan peasant woman who serenely adopts and embellishes legends such as that of Demeter and Persephone, and the exploits of ancient heroes (by a device similar to that of Sikelianos), and whose daily life is illuminated by a familiar, intimate, and intuitive knowledge of the meaning and value of each plant, animal, and heavenly phenomenon. In her world where all is spirit, Roussaki lives out in utter calm both the pagan myth and the orthodox Christian myth. She creates them and maintains them and deserves to be regarded as a feminine image of Hellenism.

In their attempts to become part of world literature, modern Greek authors since World War II have had a slight tendency to withdraw gradually from traditional Greek fields, and thus from the world of mythology, in order to devote themselves instead to the universal problems of twentieth-century man.

R.R./g.h.

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IMAGINATION AND MYTHOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE (TOLKIEN, LOVECRAFT) AND SCIENCE FICTION

Every human being has two umbilical cords: one, made of flesh, is cut at birth; the other, even before conception, weaves a person into language. But not only can this second cord never make up for the cutting of the first, it is itself an ambiguous, or paradoxical, umbilicus: it connects only by keeping apart; it plunges each person into the immense universe of meaning only at the price of an irrevocable break (marked particularly by the proper name), a gulf that forever separates every subject from what would fulfill him. Moreover, the object of fulfillment, of completion, is constituted only within the universe of meaning (although the body is always determinative for its elaboration). And language thus comes between the object that it has itself helped to create and the subject who desires this object.

Fictional narratives are one of the forms of compromise (sexual life is another, and the most basic) which seek to reduce this paradox. They portray a thousand figures of fulfillment, figures which external reality would find it hard to provide; but the narratives offer the possession and full enjoyment of the figures only on condition of raising a symbolic barrier, which they announce: “This is a story, it’s not true.”

Fictional narratives, like myths and religions, are responsible for producing a link with fulfillment for man: an umbilicus of replacement. There is, however, a wide gap between a discourse, presented as fiction, that aims to produce wonder and a sense of pleasure, and another, presented as true, that regulates the individual’s relations with the social body and writes his destiny on a register whose absolute points of reference are established and expressed by myths or religions.

The symbolic barrier in this second type of mythic discourse is marked above all by the fact that nothing can be changed by an individual: the truth is believed to escape the

grasp of any particular person. Furthermore, one cannot possess and use the truth as one likes, but only according to the order of particular rituals and institutions, within the limits which the doctrine assigns to human beings. In the fictional narrative, by contrast, everything is permitted, since "it's not true." Someone who renounces telling the truth gains in return the right to make worlds out of the materials that language and symbolic representations provide for him.

Subjection to verisimilitude is not much of a constraint: quite simply, the fictional narrative must not maintain a discourse that is more unlikely than religious discourse. This is the limit within which it must remain (even if it sometimes narrows this limit to align itself with a positive discourse—psychological observation, history, the sciences, etc.—as, for example, in the classical novel). The literature that is called imaginative always stays the closest to its function as a pseudo-umbilicus, and thus to the broadest of its conditions of verisimilitude: it invents myths.

But this type of literature does not, any more than any other, escape the necessity to give some density to the representations evoked by the words of the narrative. To this end, one convenient procedure consists in dipping into the vast storehouse of already existing religious discourses, with the reservation that these discourses must cease to be taken as true, or rather as true for everyone; religions that have come to be considered beliefs, representations labeled folklore or superstitions, myths reduced to the level of fables or fairy tales, all these materials are able to provide grist for imaginative narratives. The narratives do not take up these materials as such: they acclimatize them to their new function; they use the pieces to make something different; they parody them, betray them, disown them (in brief, they use them), and this both to make them function in conformity with the representations in force among the category of readers to which they are addressed and to give the texts the character of a creation, to make the reader share in the pleasure of mastery: the reader must always be able to see that he is dealing with a created work, even when its artificiality is elaborated by the author so as to be "true to life."

Thus, while all narratives can be considered, in one way or another, to be bearers or creators of myths, only some, by the expedient of borrowing or parody, are linked with already existing beliefs, religions, or myths. But even a category limited in this way remains far too vast to cover here. I will therefore touch on only a few points to mark certain of the most representative directions of this use of mythology; with J. R. R. Tolkien first of all (a British author who died in 1973), whose work is addressed both to children (*The Hobbit*) and to adults (*The Lord of the Rings*, a long narrative in an archaic style, reminiscent of a medieval saga). We will then look at H. P. Lovecraft, the American author of horror stories who wrote between the two world wars. I would like, finally, to sketch the position of the gods in the problematic of the narratives of science fiction (or futuristic fiction).

I. *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien

With *The Hobbit*, Tolkien joins the tradition of J. M. Barrie, whose hero Peter Pan is still famous; but Tolkien differs notably in that his fantasies are systematically based on beings whose names, at least, come from folklore (although he adds characters of his own invention, such as "hobbits"): dwarfs (with beards and hoods, naturally), giants (ferocious ones), elves, goblins, a sorcerer (old and wise, with a long

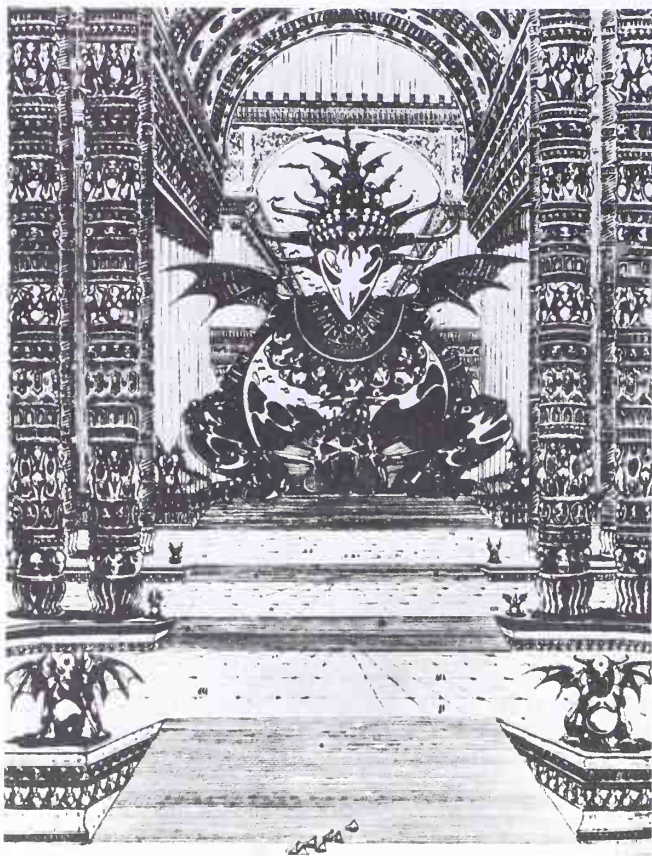
white beard), a dragon (who, of course, breathes fire), raven messengers, etc.

With a cast like this, a setting made up of vast regions with varied landscapes, the wondrous possibilities provided by spells, enchantments, a ring of invisibility, and an attractive goal (a well-guarded treasure), Tolkien has the makings of a story with innumerable ups and downs—but a story that offers pleasure of what kind? In other words, where in this tale are the figures of fulfillment? According to what modalities do narratives like Tolkien's put their readers into some sort of relationship with fulfillment?

For the beginnings of an answer to this question, I will first note the following: the writing in *The Hobbit* supports the consistency of characters and plot by basing itself essentially upon the recollection of a convention, and the establishment of a connivance, between reader and author. To read *The Hobbit* is to enter into a game in which you enjoy a kind of guarantee: that however horrible certain episodes may be in themselves, they will not impose, they will never absorb the reader completely. For the author is constantly reminding us that he is there, in the wings of the story that he is telling; although his commentaries to the reader can be called humorous, it is precisely in this sense: although they are presented as serious and useful explanations of particular points in the narrative, they really have the effect of placing in the foreground the author's connivance with the reader, indicating that "at bottom, none of this is really true," and that the only ground on which the characters are standing is precisely that of the complicity between the author and the reader.

In this narrative mode, the fact that the names of many characters, along with some of their semiological traits, have been taken from a tradition external to the narrative itself is important and effective. For dwarfs, elves, and goblins constitute a set of representations shared by the author and his readers (since they know that these representations exist outside them). To introduce them by name is to ask the reader more or less explicitly to place himself within the frame of a convention. This procedure is the inverse of the one that consists of introducing a character through the weight of his (pseudo-) reality, i.e., through the multiplicity of semiological traits which engage him in a discourse of verisimilitude. It is as if at the moment of bringing a new character into play, Tolkien announces: "What about an elf—that suggests something to you, doesn't it? Here is my variation on the theme of an elf's traditional descriptive traits. Now here are the modifications entailed in this new element's entry into the current conjecture of the story."

Alongside these shared representations, explicitly introduced as such, the author calls upon others, which act as if there were nothing out of the ordinary about them and so come to portray reality. For example, while Bilbo the Hobbit is a being of pure fantasy (that is, the fruit of an accepted convention), he nevertheless presents the "reality" of a child. Not that he objectively displays the same types of motivations and feelings as children; rather, he evinces the same reactions of pleasure and fear as those which the child reader can suppose are characteristic of his own nature. This, then, is a bridge which connects not the reader to the author but the subject of the enunciation (the reader in the act of consuming the narrative) to the subject of the enunciated (Bilbo, for example). This link is not the register of connivance, but of analogy, identification. It is reinforced by all the indications that surround the daily life of the hero: Bilbo's lodgings, for instance, with all that a comfortable life re-



Elric the Necromancer. Drawing by Philippe Druillet. © Dargaud éditeur, Paris, 1975.



Dead Gods. Drawing by Philippe Druillet. Photo D.R.

quires, like the house of the three bears in the fairy tale, and especially with all the fixings for breakfasts and teas that leave nothing to be desired. The indications of comfort (or, by contrast, of insecurity) used in the narration function as an echo and amplification of the comfort felt by the child in the very act of consuming the narrative (especially when the story is read to him by an adult).

The connection with fulfillment which narratives like *The Hobbit* establish is thus nothing but the deployment, in the imaginary space of the enunciated, of the connection that is

the basis of the very possibility of their enunciation. The voice of the storyteller, or the very pages of the book, are the concentrated site of a possibility of comfort; they establish the reader or listener in a position where all reality calls a truce; it lets him suck the milk of a story (a story of hidden treasure, for instance) at the breast of the storyteller. Elves and dwarfs, goblins and dragons—precisely because everyone knows that they have no existence other than their names—help to maintain this truce by reminding us that here (in the enclosed space of the enunciation of the narrative), the linguistic convention is law and has the power to suspend the dangers and privations that a confrontation with reality involves.

II. H. P. Lovecraft

Of all the authors classed in the genre of fantastic fiction or science fiction, Lovecraft is the one who has had the most systematic recourse to a pantheon. A pantheon purely as a parody: Lovecraft speaks of his gods as if they were generally recognized as gods. He carefully respects his own conventions, the same pantheon being common to all of his fiction (here too, as with Tolkien, we find that dimension of play by which the author simultaneously creates a universe and explicitly marks its conventional character, based on language).

At the apex, at the deepest level of the hierarchy, Azathoth, the unbounded, the sultan of demons, dwells in Primal Chaos. Among the mute gods who surround him are Nyarlathotep, the Crawling Chaos; in Outer Chaos, Yog-Sothoth, the Protoplasmic, also from the stars; Cthulhu, imprisoned inside a submerged city. Less horrific than Cthulhu is Dagon, another marine divinity. Minor gods include Umr-Attawil, Tsathoggua, Ghatanothoa, Hastur, and the Shub-Niggurath mentioned in an undiscoverable book of black magic, the *Necronomicon*: for along with these deities there are secret books that perpetuate their worship, as well as worshipers, dark and deviant personalities or degenerate human groups.

Maurice Lévy has called this effort at consistency the "myth of Cthulhu." But any kinship of Lovecraft's work with a myth or a religious system is entirely external. Defined as they are by their names and descriptions, the gods of the Lovecraftian pantheon are not differentiated like those of a genuine religious mythology: they repeat one another in a redundant way; all are representatives of more or less unfathomable regions of Chaos.

Lovecraft's knowledge of mythology may have helped him to enrich the description of his deities: Cthulhu, for instance, has many traits in common with Typhon, who is, like him, akin to the powers of Chaos, to "those who came before" (Hesiod's formula, but it could have been Lovecraft's), those cut off from the orderly world by a gate forever sealed (although for Lovecraft this gate opens often enough).

These imaginary deities are of a type with whom human beings cannot connect themselves by any symbolic and institutional mediation. Contact with them is a transgression, a short-circuit, an encounter which "normally" should not take place (Lovecraft's narrative is always the story of an exception). They are sacred pollution, the omnipotence of a glutinous and eternal matter; in brief, Lovecraft evokes a sense of the religious that overflows any symbolic inscription, and tongue-ties the universe of signs. Phrases such as "daemon activity," "shocking rituals," "outlaw sect," and "devilish exchange" are frequent and are used to amplify the word "blasphemous" (one of the author's favorite adjectives).

tives). In their constant repetition, these stereotyped phrases themselves become elements in a litany of incantation that reactivates a holy terror for each story, the evocation of powers which, like the pagan deities attacked by Christianity, come from the register of the diabolical.

Lovecraft's mythological base thus presents a very different sense from that of an author like Tolkien. The representations that Lovecraft gathers around his nonhuman entities are supported more by a paradoxical use of language than by the simple conventions of play: here language seeks to point out its own insufficiency in the face of the ineffable, the unnameable. Lovecraft portrays (by means of language, of course) various figures of the power that overflows and silences all language and all convention. Far from extending and illustrating the cozy fulfillment created by the reader's position in the enunciation (the reader, reading, lives only events of language), the sites of fulfillment in Lovecraft are those where, eluding the grasp of language, the real bursts forth.

For those who reach them, these forbidden places offer a restoration of the umbilicus of flesh; but this time it is an umbilicus whose circulation, to be restored, must be reversed: no longer nourishing and constructive, it is now a destructive suction, going toward the mother, toward the hero's absorption into flesh and into a lineage of the dead (from which he has only temporarily emerged). The power of Lovecraft's gods thus lies not in their science, laws, or wisdom (since for this they would have to recognize their subjection to some symbolic instance); it lies in their monstrous flesh, their power of contagion, a result of their crushing disproportion to any human order.

If Lovecraft abundantly, repetitiously, portrays sites of fulfillment, the subject of those that he has enunciated, the narrator, is plunged into these sites, to benefit from the experience. In these tales the author never marks himself as the subject of the enunciated: the reader must be alone in his confrontation with the site of fulfillment, for the goal of the narrative is to produce dread, not comfort. Here, language wants to restore conditions in which it would not have existed, but does so, and can do so, only from the moment that it exists. The enterprise is thus simultaneously serious (fascinating, extreme) and not serious, since it plays tricks and knows that it is playing them. Although in the enunciated no barrier now separates the hero from the divine (which, *by this fact*, is transformed into the diabolic), the reader is nevertheless in contact with the abyss of fulfillment only through the mediation and the screen of the narrative.

III. On Mythologies in Science Fiction

In science fiction, fulfillment is signified primarily in the form of the mastery of the immeasurable, the domination and spanning of enormous distances of space and time. Scientific discourse comes in, on the one hand, to connect reality (as well as it can) with the elaborations which otherwise would remain simply phantasmic. On the other hand, the presence of scientific discourse also serves to affirm the power of symbolic activity over what tends to go beyond it.

The introduction of fragments of discourse that parody the discourse of the exact sciences is thus never a sufficient reason to discount the presence of the divine. One need only peruse the titles of works of science fiction to be convinced of this: the struggle for omnipotence, faced with the obstacles of immensity and death, calls for the use of the vocabulary of religion and the cosmic.

The theme of a disproportion to be surmounted is everywhere present in science fiction, sometimes depicted in a problematic close to that of Lovecraft: the awesome omnipotence of the aliens, masters of vast distances in space and time, a diabolical invasion by creatures of flesh dominated by eyes or tentacles, threatening the measured universe of men. But, more specifically, the gods in science fiction are large-scale human beings, freed from the limits of death, possessing science and power on a universal scale; and yet never quite certain of having the last word in the struggles and rivalries that oppose them to other gods. Men become gods (in the work of Roger Zelazny, for example), or gods with a human face (in the work of A. E. Van Vogt), must keep up a constant outbidding for symbolic mastery: they must constantly be foiling plots, inventing machines that outclass those of the enemy, defeating the totalitarian rationality of a power (religious, political, technological) that bears all the earmarks of a fulfillment against which the hero must measure himself. Thus the figures of fulfillment presented to the reader are based on the disproportion between the reader himself and the material universe of which he is part, and *inseparably*, on discourses that, in their totalizing vocation, offer simultaneously the means of portraying this disproportion and the means of measuring up to it.

F.F./j.l.

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Science Fiction

Gods and god-men are frequently employed by authors such as O. STAPLEDON (the first one to tackle this theme), P. J. FARMER, M. MOORCOCK, A. E. VAN VOGT, D. F. GALOUE, and R. ZELAZNY.

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General

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MYTH AND POLITICAL THEORY: NATIONALISMS AND SOCIALISMS

Although the nineteenth century is the century of the rebirth of myth and of mythology, this is a renaissance only of the myths of pagan antiquity and the mythologies revealed by the curiosity of travelers and the discoveries of scholars. Poets and artists use these mythologies to construct their own symbolic universe and to restore meaning to a world from which the gods seem to have retired. But many do not stop at a purely individual perspective, and attempt to build collective myths. Since the beginning of the nineteenth

century, the poet, and more generally the intellectual, has felt that he was invested with a mission that is situated at the crossroads of two traditions: the tradition of the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century, who assert that they are fighting for enlightenment and progress, and the tradition of unknown prophets, those obscure interpreters of history who read the characters of the divine tongue in the symbols of the world and comment on its revelation (Hamann, Saint-Martin, Court de Gébelin, Fabre d'Olivet). The intellectual picks up where the disqualified clergy left off and claims a capacity to create myths and religions. When waiting for the gods—old or new—ends in disappointment, an ersatz mythology appears: the myth of religion as art and revelation as art. Thus, for the first time, the great literary and artistic works of the tradition are regarded as myths: Faust, Don Juan, and Don Quixote become the bearers of a universal and sacred meaning of which their creators were unaware. This religion of art may take all forms, from the artistic socialism of William Morris to the lofty and hopeless religion of Mallarmé. But more often the writer seeks to take on a social responsibility and perceives himself as being invested with authority; this involves intervening in social struggles, bringing the judgment of history to bear on events, and pointing out the just course of action. The intellectual has just discovered a new territory over which he seeks to become an expert, namely, political territory: "Political Science, which is the Science of Sciences," writes Blake. The new gods will be the gods of political struggle.

It is on the political terrain that truly collective myths arise; not the personal myths of poets and writers, but the myths of social prophets, which are born of a cross between the ambitions of the intellectuals and the new social entities that appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These entities include on the one hand the nation, in the modern sense of the term, of which all the inhabitants are at least by right equal citizens, and on the other hand, the social classes, the distant legacy of the Estates of the ancien régime. The situation of both protagonists is quite comparable. Just as the classes struggle for power within the nation, so the nations fight for the conquest of the universal empire. The two entities are thus inseparable, by virtue of their birth and their meaning. History explains the development of nations by the struggle and the oppression of peoples (A. Thierry), just as Karl Marx explains it by the struggle and the oppression of classes. But the two new actors are the ones in whose hands the fate of all is played out: these new fighters need new conceptions of the world. Moreover, the very appearance of these actors and their awareness of their roles are symbolic facts, the result of a mythological construction as well as of the material evolution of societies. Heroes of new struggles, the people and the social class need narrative paradigms to define their function and remind everyone of their significance. Naturally they need myths. An enormous effervescence of ideas is thus produced, the creators of which are the intellectuals, but also the marginal intellectuals, the semiliterate and the self-taught, as well as established writers and ideologues. We are dealing with something like a "primitive soup" of modern ideologies, comparable to the flowering of philosophical and religious sects at the beginning of the Christian era, out of which a selection of ideas unfolded, similar to the natural selection of species: the fittest survived in the end.

Out of the period of ideological creation that spans the years between 1800 and 1850, two great mythical complexes emerged, the complex of the people and nationalism and the complex of the class and socialism, with a largely identical

structure. To begin with, myth includes actors: on one side, the people (as described by Michelet or Hugo), and, on the other, the social class—whether the captains of industry of Saint-Simon or the proletariat of Marx. This mythical actor, who is not individual but collective, becomes incarnate in a series of mythical heroes: the Grand Ferré, Joan of Arc, or Gavroche as seen by Michelet and Hugo, or Spartacus and Thomas Münzer regarded as the martyrs of the oppressed classes. What matters is that the actors are aware of their lives and their roles: on the one hand, *Volksgeist*, the spirit of the people, in which the profound vocation of a culture is crystallized (Herder, Humboldt, Hegel); on the other hand, class consciousness, as a result of which the proletariat can see itself as the bearer of an exemplary fate. The fact is that the actors, people and class alike, have a mission to accomplish, which they carry within themselves and which historical development must let them bring to fruition. This realization is revealed in an ambiguous and contradictory form. It is the result of a struggle (the people's war, the class struggle) and at the same time aims for a universal reconciliation. Each country believes that it is invested with a providential mission, just as each class believes that it is destined to triumph over the others in the end; but in the universal fatherland, individual countries will find a "melting pot," just as the classes will all disappear in the classless society. It is thus a matter of bringing about peace, but peace can be achieved only at gunpoint. The transition to the final state must take place in a sudden mutation, conquest, or revolution by which all values are transmuted. Thus a new form of government is set up, an unprecedented era that inaugurates the end of history, the end of separate nations and classes. The linear time of human history is broken; the rupture puts an end to it and at the same time goes beyond it without recourse to transcendence.

In order to recognize the movement of history and hasten its development, a man of knowledge and action is needed, a prophet-theoretician, heralding the change to come. The moment he appears, he founds a school around him, with disciples and institutions that guarantee the spread of the doctrine (Saint-Simonists, Fourierists, positivists, Marxists). The party is only the organized and conscious form of this militia of disciples.

This myth rests on a scientific component (largely pseudo-scientific at that) whereby the prophet-theoretician is a man of science, a historian, a geographer, a sociologist, an anthropologist, an economist, or a politician, and his theoretical construction is seen as scientific, science being the only orthodox model of knowledge. To the scientific component a technical component is added, the one already inscribed in the myth of Faust: science can make us the absolute owners and masters of nature. This technique of domination must also be exercised on society and history: the myth of the real Utopia, according to which a complete and coherent organization of the social world is possible. There is, however, a difference between the two mythical complexes. Originally the socialist complex favored the technical and scientific models, and the nationalist complex favored organic models; but in both cases, the concern for organization and coherent domination is the same. Gradually the two types of models tend to combine, as can be seen in today's nationalisms and socialisms. In the same way, the two complexes and the two great mythical actors tend to overlap thanks to notions such as imperialism (Lenin) and proletarian nations (Mussolini): the relations between nations are the exact equivalents of the relations between classes.

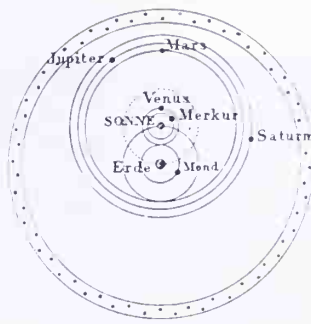
Thus a new kind of myth arose, which came to take its

place next to the traditional myths in the repertory of the historian of religions and which led to a new conception of mythology. For the correct understanding of myth had been blocked by two obstacles: the refusal to consider revealed religions as myths and the affirmation of modern rationality, which would empty heaven of its gods. In fact, there are three kinds of myths. First there is the traditional myth of polytheistic religions, sacred history that took place in a primordial time and space and that ritualistically guarantees the creation and preservation of man and the world. Next there is a myth characteristic of religions of salvation with a universalist vocation. This is a historical myth, anchored in the history of men by the presence of a prophet or a founder who has perforated human time with transcendence; the relationships between time and myth are thus transformed. The historical time of the founder partakes of the sacred time that he exemplifies, but it simultaneously introduces into sacred time the linear dimension of a time divided up between before and after, between creation, annunciation,

and salvation. Finally there is the myth of modern ideologies, not what is incorrectly called modern myths, but mythic history in which it is no longer gods but ideas that guide the movement of the real and guarantee the second coming. Here again the essential dimension is the organization of human, individual, and collective time; this is why it is better to speak of ideological myth than ideology—which is a confusing and misleading notion—when one wishes to designate the third form of myth. In any case, myth is defined as a specific organization of time.

At the end of each mythical cycle, some people have believed that all mythical thought had to be effaced before the splendor of what is true: each time the myth has begun anew, but in a guise in which no one could recognize it any more. If we are at the end of the age of ideological myth—and nothing could be less certain—then surely somewhere, unbeknownst to anyone, the myth of tomorrow is already crystallizing.

J.M./g.h



EPILOGUE: THE CONTEMPORARY NEED FOR MYTHS—A TESTIMONIAL

On a woodcut from Dürer's studio, the cosmos is represented by three circular spaces: in the center is the earth that is our place and its sky studded with stars; on the edge is the luminous space in which God reigns alone; and separating them both, a circle of dark fire. Between the divine kingdom and the human world there is no passage. Such was undoubtedly the initial state of creation. The tragic abandonment of the human species is balanced by the solitude of the deity. But it was man's task to bore a hole through the circle of dark fire. It is a long adventure, the last phase of which the Gnostic Clement of Alexandria has clearly depicted for us: "The knowledge of what we are and of what we have become, of the place from which we came and the place into which we have fallen, of the objective toward which we hasten and of what we are redeemed from, of the nature of our birth and our rebirth." On this path of knowledge, men separated from the divine have undertaken first to make the divine descend among them.

Thus the gods were born from the tears of mankind; men invented myths to console themselves, for the gods were all silence and opacity. They had no regard for the strangeness of our condition, and any compassion for our sufferings was alien to them. All creatures therefore had to force them to exist fully and to manifest themselves; a single path presented itself to the human imagination: to forge a history for them so that they might be engulfed in time and space like living creatures and, like us, be both actors and spectators in the savage theater of life and death. This foundation of mythic adventures was not achieved haphazardly. Well before the first rigors of reason defined our earthly existence as a line staked out by our birth and our demise, men had a premonition of those disastrous abysses which are the upstream and downstream flow of our belonging to the earth. Since these forever impenetrable areas of nothingness nurture anxiety and madness, there remains only one way out, which is to restore time's circular deployment, to enclose fate within a sequence of events either lived or dreamed, closely intertwined and eternally tied together by the miracle of

metamorphoses. That is, furthermore, what plant life shows us: from the tiny fruit rotting in the mud is born the luxuriant bough, whose seed will return into the depths of the earth when the season comes.

This mythical imagination appears as a revolt against the basic perversity of matter, against creation's profound indifference toward us. It is a way to force nature to recognize our necessity, for the only justification for our long and painful history is that we are not in any sense a useless suffering nor the last link of an itinerary destined for destruction; we mortals are what makes nature immortal. If matter is perverse, if nature is indifferent, and as indifferent to itself as it is to our human destiny, it is because they are unaware of the heart that underlies them and gives them life. In their blindness, they are unaware of what makes them act within the vast unfurling of time.

I. The Hidden Creation

It is incumbent upon human inventiveness to reveal the heart that hides what mythic dreaming calls the Word, the Logos, the breath of life. This revelation is the object of myths. Through them, men reveal to creation what, in its depths, makes it live. The projection of the human spirit toward nature is not a game: it is born of the certainty, inherent in our condition, that the Word hidden within matter is also the word hidden within our being. And all revelation concerning the secret energy of nature is a revelation concerning our own essence.

Thus, far from being an explanation of the organization and the movement of the universe, mythology appears as a voyage toward knowledge, as an ever fresh approach to a knowledge of which the ephemeral character of our existence will allow us to discover only fragments. Far from shedding light on this mystery, myths are, on the contrary, designed to deepen it. An image common to all mythical representations introduces us to this nocturnal expedition: the image of the cave.

The first habitat of the human being, who alone in the entire realm of the living finds himself at birth bereft of everything and constrained to seek help from his environment, the cave is also the image of the maternal dwelling

from which we are torn to be thrown into the harsh light of day. But the cave is a place of mixed associations in which all the opposing figures of our condition coexist: the white of the sky and the black of the earth, the dryness of the rock wall and the wetness of the spring. It is open like a shelter, yet closed like a tomb. The cave is the very image of our endurance; it is the fortress within which both life and death are enclosed. It is in a cave that Aphrodite reveals to human beings the mystery of love, but it is also in a cave that the Buddha meditates for millennia to give rise to as yet unimagined worlds.

We are inside the cave, as Plato says. All we can know of the world is that there is fire below us and above us, that there is also air outside, water inside, and the earth. But existence in the cave is tolerable only if we see it as the center of the universe; thus the blind, unknowable forces that whirl about far from the cave are directed around it, and for us. Such is the meaning of mythologies: to give the house of men its true dimension, to make our dwelling the Temple. In this way, depending on its time and place, every tribe invents what is necessary for its own coherence. Every element of creation is a sound or a word, and out of the totality of elements a language must be made which is audible to everyone, for if words go off on their own wandering paths, creation has no aim and slips toward absurdity and suicide.

These mythological dramas cannot be enclosed in the strictures of rational analysis. All attempts of contemporary scholarship to account for the enormous load of mythical materials carried along by the human past may lock up heroic adventures in the frozen compartments of learning. The vast inventories are like greenhouses in which wild plants have been imprisoned: their lively shoots break through the glass and proliferate skyward far from the guardians' watchful eyes, or their roots sink cunningly into the darkness of the virgin soil. It is better to regard myths as theater that is meant to carry a different message at each performance. The text of the play can remain the same, but each performance constitutes a different event because the acting conditions, the actors, the spectators, and also the immediate story of which they are the witnesses have changed.

II. The Masks of Mystery

If we look at these cosmogonies as integral parts of life as it was experienced in its intensity or endured in its daily round by the peoples of long ago, if we restore their movement and the passionate charge that was once theirs in the city, we can see that they were felt to be "revelations of being," that they allowed each participant in the community to become an active witness of those energies which by their confrontations and connections determined the metamorphoses of creation. The image at the center of archaic ritual celebrations is an image whose emotional force we can still entirely grasp, because, whether provoked or refuted, it remains at the core of our existence. It is the image of sacrifice. The sacrificial theme is directly involved in the most innocent contemplation of natural life, in which mortal and nascent forms, destruction and change, putrefaction and desiccation are endlessly exchanged. At the community level, any form of sacrifice is an alliance with the moving landscapes of nature, a humble participation in the vast holocaust which is the very condition of the survival of creation. In primitive communities, human blood is an object of exchange with the gods, just as gold is an object of exchange among the powerful in mercantile societies. Any

blood that is shed is a tribute paid to the fertility of the earth; it is the promise of things to come. The values attached to particular kinds of blood, female blood, animal blood, the blood of certain special plants, are inscribed within this general concern with a pact between men and the powers of the Elsewhere. The gods must also take this pact very seriously since, if they fail to keep their word, men can exclude them from their kingdoms and make dead gods of them, never again to be celebrated in ritual.

Mythical representation has abandoned the wide stage of the tribe to be devoted entirely to each being in all his intimacy. The gods are no longer shared by a multitude. They have become the exclusive property of anyone who invents them. What once functioned on the collective level is now achieved on the personal level. Although today the only nameable progress is one that frees the individual from the constraints of the social body and hands him over totally to his true identity, imagination allows each person to explore the depth of his hidden source and to nurture his own mythology. But since we are not born of nothing, since we are but one parcel of the immense experience accumulated in time and space by our fellow creatures, the mythological corpus is revealed to be a treasure cave in which we mine riches meant especially for us.

For the divine adventures reported by myths are not the errant or aberrant fruits of a primordial imagination led astray by enthusiasm or the anxiety of solitude. On the contrary, they mirror the adventures experienced by men in a universe laden with meaning, a universe in which human destinies take their positions on a more general stage on which all the figures of creation, those of the plant, mineral, and animal kingdoms alike, play their roles. The stories present the dialogue between living beings and the basic mystery of life that no rational knowledge could ever hope to bring to light and of which the fundamental incarnations are birth, dreams, love, and death.

This dialogue, however, since the earliest days of our species, has been able to change its outer face as the material field of our history has undergone its own changes. The dialogue has not changed its nature. It has no object other than to open our eyes to the back country that is beyond words, beyond explicit communication, but where true fusion is achieved between the beings that we are in our turbulent individuality and the being of the world.

Images of fire provide the classic illustration. All mythologies give them a key place in their accounts of the origin. Two characteristics are common to all these mythical narratives. On the one hand, the stories dramatize an artisan's imagination, which is the very condition of the survival of the species. On the other hand, they put flesh on the heroic energies that made the mystery of fire familiar and gave it its place in the community. The artisan's imagination, for which men have often sought a model in animal society or in the secret lives of plants and stones, functions the same way in modern times as it did in antiquity. Only the instruments with which we invest reality have changed. Instead of having a direct relationship with fire, we usually experience it in the secondary form transmitted to us abstractly by machines.

The figures that serve as masks for the mystery have lost, perhaps provisionally, the carnal resonance that people bestowed on them in earlier times and have instead donned conceptual garments. But the garments of modern rationality do not delve into the depth of the enigma, and the loss of divine flesh makes us experience it as an impoverishment, conducive to solitude.



Rubens, *The Festival of the Gods*. Prague, Narodni Galeri. Photo Prokop Paul.

The permanence of our intimate tie with fire has been underscored by Gaston Bachelard in the single evocation of the flame of a candle. Before a candle or the brightly burning log in the fireplace, the daydreams of a child of today are just like those of the Neolithic, just like those of Mary Magdalene, whom Georges de la Tour painted in the humble smock of a peasant girl of seventeenth-century Lorraine. The universe experienced and the universe represented are confused in the uncertain territory of our inalienable intimacy. In the depths of our being, inaccessible to social constraint, sheltered from the curse that reduces us to being merely another person among others, the amalgam of forces unfolds, and the confrontation or the connection of these forces writes the history of life. We must turn for a moment to the imagery of Paracelsus when he describes each human creature as a microcosm that reflects the totality of the macrocosm, that is, all that the cosmos bears within itself as a creative spark, as a passion to exist, as anguish, as contradiction, as uncertainty.

To return to the realm of fire, this macrocosm, whose imagination has no bounds, figures in all the accounts that have nurtured the dreams of human tribes since the beginning. Its memory retains others, those that history has buried under its ruins, those that the eyes that we have now do not yet know how to excavate, and beyond memory are all the narratives yet to come. Although we are microcosms, we have the potential to recreate the totality of these accounts in ourselves, but our nature is fragmented and immature. As Michelet pointed out, we are far from being complete; we are, as the Greeks said, "not sufficiently cooked." We can therefore explore only a very small part of the timber yards of the imagination during our personal itineraries.

But however partial our course, our elementary connection with the flame of a log fire introduces us to the sum total of

the values in which daily existence is invested. Through fire, time is manifested. The evening fireplace stands against the heat of the sun; the winter hearth protects against the harshness of the cold. Beyond this temporal relationship, fire defines our dietary mode, that is, our feelings about our own bodies. Within the secret of the unconscious, the presence of Eros is also experienced as a secret permanence of fire, while Thanatos is perceived as the absence of all igneous elements.

In archaic societies where cosmogony is directly implicated in the essential moments in the life of the tribe, the various representations of fire govern a certain number of daily rituals and practices and roughly define the boundaries that separate the forbidden from the permitted. These rituals and practices make ancient societies into communities invested with the sacred. Into this fabric of the sacred is woven a series of ties between man and the universe. It is through these ties that men are protected from anguish and solitude. When the boundaries of the sacred collapse, when the ties that bind creatures to the sky and the earth are annihilated, men are reduced to their own company, and the foundations of the community are based merely on ethics. The primordial image of life, the only one that can be the point of convergence of all ancient mythologies, is replaced by images of good and evil, underground figures that leave a living creature helpless before the opacity of his development.

By nature, ethics reduce the mental field of individuals to the measure of city life or throw individuals into what Ronald Laing calls "ontological insecurity," an insecurity that arises as soon as the being feels or anticipates that a part of him is moving far from the play of social requirements. Anyone who wishes to recuperate his being in its fullness must found his own sacredness, create his own myths and rituals. He must experience a new birth, he must be reborn to

himself and the world, as the hermetic philosophers whisper. But this new spiritual birth is precisely comparable to a carnal birth. It is inscribed within a long heredity, whose different elements constitute traditional knowledge. Of this knowledge, myths are the underpinnings.

III. The Seeds of the Sun

There is opaque matter. Beyond Darkness is the Word. Between matter and the Word that is enclosed in it are the gods, and the gods live in our flesh. They are our flesh. "We dream of voyages through the universe," Novalis tells us. "Is not the universe within us then? The depths of our spirit are unknown to us. The mysterious road leads within. It is within us, if anywhere, that we find eternity with its worlds, the past and the future." In this way, all human experience is a metaphysical experience. It engages the totality of the human being within the historical totality of the world; it is the confrontation between an ephemeral and unique destiny and the multiple eternity that is the obligatory scene of our earthly existence. And in this way, the experience of each of us is similar to the experience of the great mythical figures whose trials prefigured our own trials, whose glory prefigured our own glory. Oedipus the orphan, Oedipus the lame, Oedipus the assassin and the incestuous—these various forms of the same living creature herald our own difficulties with our birth, our feet, our desires for love and for murder. Jason's quest for the fleece is also ours, in the face of the need for possession and power, in the face of the evil or benevolent forces of the feminine, in the face of the difficulties of brotherhood, conjugal love, and fatherhood.

These distant images are not alien to us because we are in the same situation as the men of antiquity, in whose midst the first cosmogonies were elaborated. We need a world which speaks to us, and the only road that ends where the world can begin to speak to us is that of poetry.

Poetry of this kind is Gnostic; in the extreme, it is gnosis itself, the ultimate heart of the knowledge that is the shape of our destiny. Gnosis is not a slow and difficult discovery of the reality of beings and elements; it is the creation of reality. It is the breath of life that founds and unveils in a single movement the various geologies of the real. Geology moves like life itself: the gods curled up in front of the central hearth of things are born, grow, die, and change, but the immediate appearance of reality is never transformed. The twilight forests and hillsides that the Celts peopled with deities associated with the sun that kept them warm, the water that made them fruitful, the winds that disturbed them, and the turf that sustained them, address us with an urgency as clear as the urgency with which they addressed the first tillers of the soil. It is wrong to say that these deities are dead because they have been covered over by three millennia of history. They are dead only as winter leaves are dead, torn from the immutable tree, mixed with mud, decaying in the humus the better to nourish the roots and to be reborn in the mad joy of spring on branches through which new blood flows. All that separates our excursion from that of the Celts of the past is that the very nature of their community led them all to look with the same gaze on the face of these deities. Our gaze is more solitary, and this solitude is largely intolerable. Men have not yet learned to know gods other than those of the city, to recognize temples other than those in which the faithful confuse their own piety with that of their fellow men. Our long series of trials is the story of this slow conquest of our differences, and the inability of so many people to recognize their inner sovereignty impels them to embark

blindly on the vast ships of fools that contemporary society builds with the same blind perseverance with which it builds the monstrous factories of human labor.

But little by little, in anguish and in contradiction, the image of this imaginative genius within each creature, depicted for millennia by the Oriental tradition, is affirmed within each creature. Brahma can be seen founding his own being and the being of the world, not by a deliberate act of the will but by a meditative fathoming of his very flesh, whose hidden richness he will slowly penetrate in the course of millennia, a richness that is inexhaustible because it is multiplied in a series of unpredictable childbirths. In the progress that each being, magnified in his solitude, makes toward the exploration of his own labyrinth, in the fascination that leads each to his own Minotaur or Ariadne, the great mythical imageries are familiar landscapes. They help us not to lose our way; thanks to them, as Victor Hugo suggests, "the extent of the possible is, in a way, in front of our eyes. The dream you have within yourself can be found outside yourself . . . You hold your head in your hands, you try to see and understand; you are the window looking out on the unknown . . . The man who does not meditate lives in blindness; the man who meditates lives in obscurity. We only have the choice of darkness."

This diving into our own shadows, far from pushing us into darkness, vividly illuminates the banality of our worry-bound existences. First of all, it forces us to make our lives a drama that retraces, according to our limits and needs, the great tragedies that myths are able to stage. The passionate attachment that ties Merlin and Vivian together in the dense forest of Brittany is the medieval stage of the misfortunes that temporarily separated Eurydice from Orpheus, and the loves to which we are condemned are themselves the stage of the enchantments of which Vivian and her companion were victims. Like actors, facing the turmoil and disasters of their time, we take on a role that humanity has never stopped interpreting since its beginnings. But the text of the role, this unwritten word more imperative than any writing, is merely a prop, comparable to the mask and the set in a theatrical performance. It is the warmth of a memory that helps to warm up the present. But the essence of the play is found within ourselves, and the particular virtue of theatrical performance lies in the fact that within the daily accomplishment of individual passion, the individual bursts out beyond his limits and transforms into eternity the irremediably instantaneous element that he bears within himself.

What is theatrical in this mythical crossing within ourselves, and within all those who, before us, invented the hidden history or manifesto of the species, is the inherent capacity for doubling or splitting into two. On the one hand, we are a body enclosed in its sufferings and its desires, and we will forever collide with the suffering and the desires. On the other hand, we are a sign of the general breath of the universe. We carry within us the dreams and accomplishments of those who have begotten us; and we are heavy, like a pregnant woman, with the dreams and works of those whom we shall beget. Myths show us the path of this connivance with the past and the future—a connivance which is knowledge.

IV. The Word of the Stars

Astrology as a field bears witness to that connivance. For astrology has been throughout the millennia the burning consciousness of the tie that binds human time and space to eternity and infinity. Since the tragic agony of the Renais-

sance, astrology has been swept away by the undertow of the Reformation and the Counterreformation and dumped into the dubious traps of occultism, from which it reemerges timidly only in the mists of personal divination. Other vistas gradually become apparent. The major mythical figures both in the East and West join in astrology, as can be seen in the admirable manuscripts or imageries that are gradually emerging from the shadows to which they have been confined for four centuries.

The circle of the zodiac describes the union of the undying forms of creation (the earth and the sky) and the divine adventures. In the radiant meadow of the stars, the wrenching upheavals and frenzies of the gods find their coherence. Human fates, which duplicate divine fates, are displayed in the same way as so many signs of the imaginative freedom of the being. The reading of the stars had no purpose other than to allow every creature, existing in one well-defined place and century, to discover the special territory of his journey.

The astrological quest is the nostalgic quest for our origins. There is no greater misery than that of being orphaned, and we must know those who have begotten us in spirit so that we may be able to beget ourselves, that is, to survive, according to the spirit. To fathom the untold night of knowledge is to draft the map of the sky; it is the need to reveal this hidden geography that has led us to the shores on which we now stand. Through fascination with the stars, we gain access to the kingdom of the Mothers; and on the faces of all those nocturnal queens, we must recognize those who gave us birth, surrounded by the divine lovers in whose embrace they became fruitful. The zodiacal sky with its complex cartography of signs, planets, and divisions is there only to inform us of our native land, of which the gods are the emblematic symbol. The metaphysical landscape that it sets forth for our fulfillment is replete with dwellings: in some we shall be welcomed as honored guests and we shall experience joy; in others, we shall be received as undesirable strangers, and we shall have only heartache and nightmares as our share.

For such is the pitiless price that we must pay for our presence on this clod of earth: he who has not found his native land, his original fatherland, in the perplexing fires of the stars may never discover, here below, the land that was destined for him. Among the Hellenes, Apollo brought fortune to some and misfortune to others; Aphrodite opened the doors of the paradises of love to some, but for others, under the mask of desire, she flung open the gates to the stronghold of murder. The Christian pantheon with its complex interplay of virgins, saints, and black angels spoke the same language to the people of the Middle Ages. That is why these gods whose indelible imprint is visible in the sky accompany us on all our journeys. The decipherment of their adventures guides us on our way and keeps us from being forever aimless vagabonds. Many men standing before Isolde have taken themselves to be Tristan and have ended up in shame, when it was the role of King Mark or of the traitor that was meant to be theirs.

But this metaphysical landscape does not cross the fragmented course of our journey episodically; it is our day and our night, our dawn and our twilight. And the exploration of the shadows of being, to which every reading of myths refers us, opens our eyes to another realm, that of daily life. People of the earliest times attempted to put order and harmony into the movements of the universe, dreamed up sumptuous epics that reveal the gradual taking shape of what would eventually become civilization, because they wanted to re-

discover in the innermost depth of their being the harmony and order that existed in the cosmos. The inner is the mirror of the outer, and the outer is the mirror of the inner. Between the outer and the inner, in the continent that is the locus of our condition, the faces that cross our days and our nights find their place: the landscapes, the houses, the humblest of objects that accompany our gestures and our attention. These backdrops are not naked, transparent surfaces. They refer us constantly to their interiority. And it is this interiority that all the ancient rituals reveal to us. In a community where myths are experienced as incarnations, the slightest fragments of reality are charged with meaning.

These meaningful fragments do not drift aimlessly. They are carriers of the language addressed to us by the multiplicity of created things. From one civilization to another, they bear witness to certain common characteristics, whose permanence has made it possible to constitute a vast symbolic "corpus." This forest of symbols translates the fundamental obsessions of the species in a rather similar manner, and it is on this similarity that contemporary psychology has relied in order to show how the images that flow through our dreams reveal the conflicts and obstacles that trouble our waking hours. What applies to symbolism also applies to astrology. In no way does it constitute a rigorous configuration. It offers the human imagination a network of paths upon which each of us can venture at our own pace and according to our own thirst.

For the symbolic figures that are, as it were, the shadows, the material projections of the divine or heroic avatars that we are told about in myths do not represent fixed forms, set in their original meaning, anymore than those original avatars did. Like myths, they belong to life and to metamorphosis. They have an original tie with creation, a tie that is reflected in our spirit, but that our own inventive genius can constantly enrich and transform. Each symbol needs to be experienced at the level of the most trivial and the most personal existence in order to become precisely the kind of bud that each of us causes to flower according to the inclination of his inalienable need. For instance, if we refer to the color red and to the meaning that it may have taken on in various cosmological representations and ancient rituals, we can see that it is both the same red and a different red, here beneficent, there maleficent, here associated with fertility, there with decay. We carry within us all the contradictions of a symbol that has been experienced differently in time and in space. And among the various scenarios that it offers us, we are given the choice and the chance to find the one which is irreducibly attached to our own nature.

V. The Inner Gold

The subtle artisans who built the bridge spanning the collective myths of the ancient civilizations and the personal mythologies that find their fulfillment in poetic exploration are obvious to us. They are the alchemists. In the ruins of the great ancient religions, haunted by the tragedy of the rupture between rationality and symbolism, between the idea and the image, which took place in the classical Mediterranean world, alchemy fosters in consciousness itself the happy conjunction of the spirit and the flesh. *Solve et coagula*. Matter is penetrated by spirit, and spirit cannot create anything without matter. But the dissolution of matter is not a work of destruction; it is the fruit of an intimate sympathy, and this encounter, as destructive in its own way as the encounter of love, parcels out all the sufferings, anxieties, and nightmares of matter itself. Each one of us human beings in the fullness

of our development is this supreme alchemist capable of taking charge of the misfortunes and joys of matter and those of spirit, so that in their always ephemeral conciliation the creative breath of life may continue to inspire them.

At the inaccessible end of the alchemic road, in the last action of the Great Work, lies gold, the gold of time and also the gold of space. Called together in the garden of Eden are all the people of whom history spoke, as well as all those whom silence has entombed forever, but also all those who will come after us, lost like us within the narrow boundaries of the flesh, within the density of their hopes and despairs. This garden, so dazzlingly present in the mythologies that have now disappeared, is also present in the opacity of our modern existences. The voice that calls us to it has remained the same since the beginning, and this voice tells us that the field of knowledge is inexhaustible, for in our hearts the

peaceful gold of the Mystery abides, hidden only under the disquieting passion of the blood.

C.Me./g.h.

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Two-headed Hermes. Third to second century B.C. Marseille, Musée Borély. Museum photo.



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