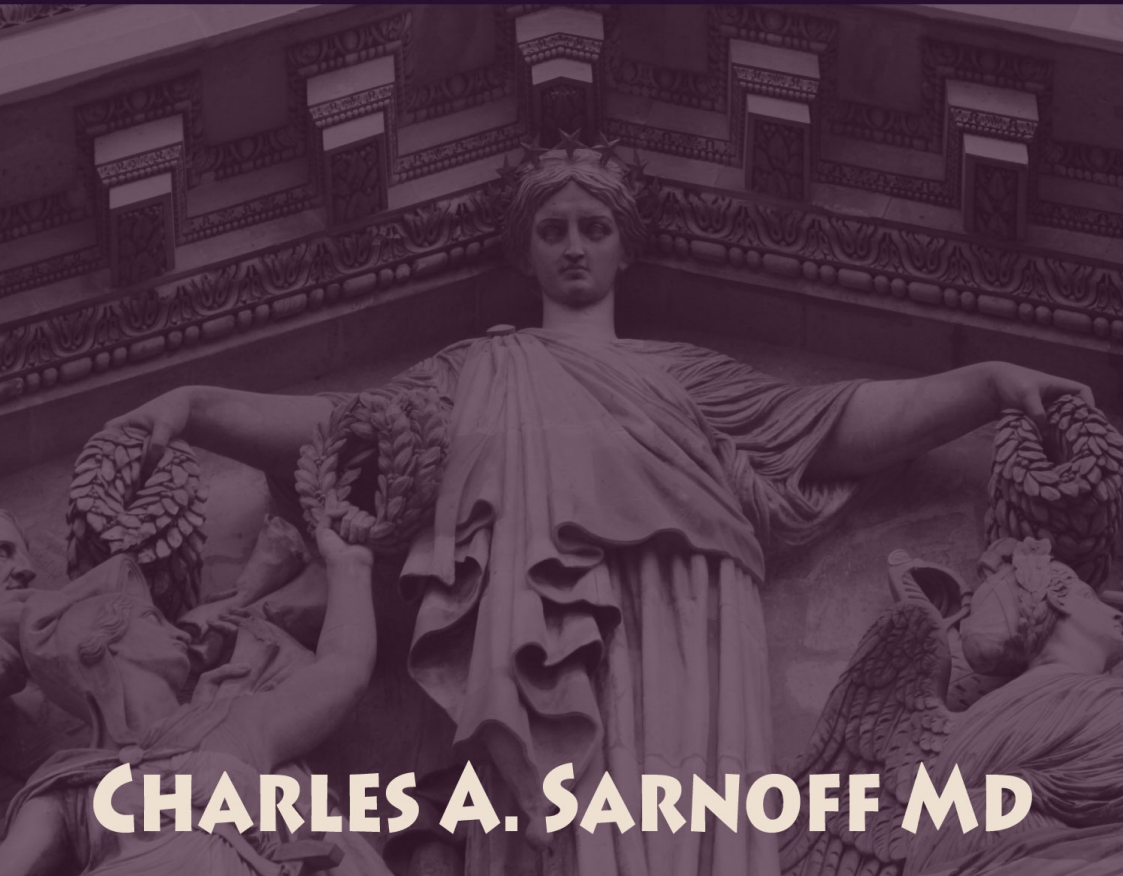


SYMBOLS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Symbols of Religious Mythology and Historical Beliefs



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**THE GROWTH OF SYMBOLIC FORMS AND THE LIFE AND
DEATH OF MYTHS DURING THE EVOLUTION OF THE
SYMBOLS OF RELIGIOUS MYTHOLOGY AND HISTORICAL
BELIEFS**

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From

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THE GROWTH OF SYMBOLIC FORMS AND THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MYTHS DURING THE EVOLUTION OF THE SYMBOLS OF RELIGIOUS MYTHOLOGY AND HISTORICAL BELIEFS

Introduction

A developmental line of symbolic content and forms related to the religious appreciation of world origins and the organization of history is created during the evolution of culture. For instance at first the symbols of early religious myths contained animals as gods, magical rituals through which man could evoke the powers of nature and blatant sexual content. More chaste forms followed, which epigenetically inhibited drive expression and intensified the use of repression dominated symbol formation, which with its emphasis on realistic manifest symbols, increased the influence of reality on judgment. With the advent of science, the sources of beliefs were dehumanized and beliefs in the shape of reality came to be expressed in numbers and mathematical formulas (See Langer 1942). Deistic control of the universe is now being abdicated by man in favor of the laws of physics. This chapter is devoted to the interactions between men and myths that occurred during the development and demise of a sense of reality that was increasingly based upon cryptically symbolized and desexualized remembrances, which were encoded in myths about the past and that define the world as interpreted.

Maturation of the Symbolizing Function Confronts Frank Sexual Content In Non-Western Myths

In religious mythology frank sexual content appears in the early stages of culturally based symbol evolution. Examples of the frank sexual symbolism that characterizes early stages of culture are: ritual penile subincision amongst the aboriginal peoples of Australia (prehistoric to recent), the gathering of semen for ritual libations in Mesopotamia (first and second millennia BC), frank sexual situations in ancient Egyptian myths (beginning third millennium BC and then absorbed into Greek mythology), the sexual predations of the Greek gods. (1400BC to 200AD), the great phallus at Mayan Old Chichen Itza (600 A.D.), the Lingam (Phallus) and Yoni (vulva) stones of Hindu worship (ancient to present day), the Yab-Yum (God and Goddess in sexual congress symbolizing the unity that exists between worshippers and

their gods) of Tantric Buddhism. These symbols reveal a manifest view of sexuality, which sees a sexual act as a model for the relationship between adoring men and their gods as well as a source for tithes including those, which consist of fluids with powerful influence on harvests.

These blatant sexual contents, which were found in early myths, were interrupted in Western culture by a great repression in which the sexuality of the early myths and related rituals were criticized and effaced. Then the old rituals and legends were reinstated with displaced and more acceptable symbolic substitutes, which replaced the “abominations” of the old beliefs. As the new symbols were selected from elements of the world in place of fantastic dream elements, reality came to mean that man and the universe were generated and controlled by an asexual prime mover.

Semen as divine fluid used in rituals existed in the roots and rituals of Western culture before repression and symbolization produced a masking cryptic symbol (i.e. wine) for use in fertility rituals and myths. The transition from semen to wine as a cryptic symbolic form was motivated by the emphasis placed by ethical monotheism on repression of sexuality outside of marriage. Celibacy is required by monotheism. It prevents expansion of pantheons to include new godlings. Acquisition of a limitation of sex set the tone for an equivalent transition in the lives of men and in the contents of religious symbolism, and interfered with the use of sex in religious ritual. Concurrently the displacements that influenced the symbolic forms found in dreams reflected the subjugation of the id to the new ways of the world, as monitors from the new mythology organized the cultural patterns of evolving society. (See this volume Chapter 5.)

Strengthening of the ego is also involved in the maturation of the repressive forces that transform a society. This takes the form of strengthening of goal directed neutralized energies and the replacement in the sense of reality of symbolized “facts” by reality tested components. In addition the symbolizing function transitions from the use of evocative to communicative consensually validated manifest symbols. Under these circumstances, the existence of magic is less tolerated as an explanation of natural phenomena. Maturation in the choice of symbols is manifested in a strengthened capacity for repression, which is supported by the benefits derived from shifting expenditures of effort into work in the world of external reality. Examples of changes in symbols influenced by repression are the shift from frank Mayan phallic symbolism to worship of a symbolic snake, and the adaptation of water and wine as a symbol to

replace semen as the divine fluid used in the promotion of fertility and crop growth in the world religions of the West (See Chapter 3 in this volume.)

Cryptic Symbols Serve as Vents for Drives

Symbols that hide secrets were a product of the invasion of myth by repressive refinements demanded by the requirements of evolving cultures. Through cryptic symbols forbidden antisocial wishes could be expressed without endangering society, much in the way that movies and sports serve as outlets for audience aggression in twenty first century industrial societies. As manifest cultural symbolic manifestations strayed further and further from the impulses they represented, the impulses became more private and their surfacing in individuals became a source of anxiety for social leaders. This situation was countered by symbolization, a process, which resulted in suppression of impulse and repression of the link between the symbol and the impulse. Simultaneously cryptic symbols served conscious preservation of the inner secrets of cults for kings and priests who were initiated into their meanings.

When new religions appeared they replaced symbolic elements that served human need in the old religions. For instance the earliest religions served the need for an explanation for man's existence and destinies after death. Gods arose who were known to control cosmogony and populate an eschatology. To explain storms and the rain, gods for the ground water and for the control of the seas were found. There must also be a fluid symbol to represent the fluid from the body of the god that fills grails as well as a fluid that heals the faltering genitals of god kings so that through sympathetic magic, fruitfulness can be returned to the earth. Semen, acquired through temple prostitution served early religions as a symbol to be used in religious rituals.

The symbols chosen by the priests of new religions to replace those of the old, must satisfy the needs served by the symbols of earlier religions. Little displacement is needed if the transformation of faith is mild. If the transition is severe and colored by impassioned anger, the old symbols are destroyed along with the structures and the saintly acolytes of the old order. In the latter case, cryptic (Psychoanalytic) symbols become weapons in the political repressions generated when new religions replace old ones. New symbols repress by replacing old symbols. For instance, semen acquired through temple prostitution

(see below) is replaced by ritual wine by the worshippers of chaste gods.

Manifest Symbols Identify Stages of Culture

The level of evolution of a culture can be identified through the manifest forms found in its web of symbols. In progressive stages of culture, the symbols, which are involved in the formation of both myths and dreams, have stage distinct characteristics. Cognitive level and psychological mechanisms, such as degree of displacement from direct expression of drive, used in the selection of manifest symbols in myth formation, are the tokens that mark the stages in the cultural evolution of symbols. In this evolution, the number of the year is less a factor in assessing that, which is early, than the stage of development of the culture. For instance, the degree of cryptic form given to the contents of the memory panels by which religious truth is defined offers insight into the amount that internalized control has developed. And the principles by which reality is defined lets us know how far a society has advanced in replacing myth with scientific method in defining reality. (See Volume 1, Chapter 11, "Symbols and the Sense of Reality".)

Blatant Unrepressed Sexual Symbolism in Early Religious Mythology

Psychoanalytic symbols, which present distorted substitute content in art and dreams, were available by 10,000 BC. However, the effect of their application in the myths that define the horizons of a culture did not begin to be felt until circa 2000 BC. Prior to that, myths, which served to control procreation, successful hunting and fertile harvests could have depicted gods in blatantly erotic sexual situations, which were thought to have a sympathetic magical influence on individual and cultural survival.

Goodenough (1953) described such blatant sexual symbolism in the myths of the "early Semites of Syria" as they appeared in poems written in the mid second millennium B.C. He recognized poems based on "The Ugaritic Myth of El" to be precursors of "later forms of Syrian religion which seems to center so much in the great Goddess and Adonis." These "Ras Shamra" poems contain "direct reference to divine sexual intercourse which was presumably mirrored in human sexual intercourse in the celebration of rituals." (P 136) Presented as a ritual drama, the poems tell of the restoration of the virility of a deity. At

first when El attempts intercourse with his wives. “. . . his rod lowers and he is unable to impregnate them. He then shoots a bird and roasts it on the fire.” When the bird is thoroughly roasted, his potency returns and he is able to impregnate his wives. (See P 110 of Volume 12 and Pp 127-37 in Volume 5.) It may be inferred that this myth was the source of rituals involving sacrifice of animals through fire, which were used as a means of restoring the reproductive powers of gods, kings, penises, and plowed fields. Equally blatant sexually were the symbols in the myths of India. For instance (Atri) “was a great ascetic. Wishing to have issue, he practiced severe penance for three thousand celestial years. His semen, drawn upward, was changed into ambrosia, and sprang forth from his eyes. It broke into ten parts, which illuminated the ten corners of space . . . the goddesses of the ten corners received it in their wombs. And seeing the soma (the divine seed) fall, the Immense Being, the Patriarch, considering the welfare of the world, took the moon in his car and with him went thrice seven times round the earth. Some drops of lunar ambrosia fell upon the earth and became the useful plants on which the world lives.” (See Mahabharata Salya parvan, Ch. 36 1591; see also Bhjgavata urina 6.7.23-24.) The parrot is sometimes connected with myths of Agni the fire god. It is told that he had watched the love play between Siva and Parvati and then stolen the blazing seed of the god in its beak. Equally sexually explicit are tales of the titans (giants) in Greek mythology. The directness of sexual symbolism in these early myths is apparent. For instance, at his death, “the blood of (Uranus) . . . genitalia flowed from the fountains and the waters of the rivers.” (Goodenough Vol. 12, p 137) Egyptian religious beliefs contain equally direct sexual references. In one myth a fight between gods culminates in the feeding of semen on lettuce to the loser. Goodenough (1953) quoting Plutarch tells us that “Osiris is the Nile fertilizing Isis, the earth . . .” “. . . the casting of Osiris’ phallus into the river gave the river divine spermatic power, the power which antecedently had produced all generation in the cosmos . . . The flow of light to man from Osiris as sun and moon is the same divine flow.” (P 119) In Ancient Egypt symbols of ritual were also blatantly sexual in content. For example, Goodenough (1953) describes “. . . the seminal fluid of the sun god, which was offered in ritual to the king of Egypt”. This was the nmst vessel. It contained Nile water. In presenting the vessel to a king the prophet described it thus: “I bring to thee that which has issued from Nun, that which first issued from Atum in its name of nmst” The succeeding texts make it clear that it is the seminal fluid of the sun god which is in the vessel. Goodenough Volume 5 (P 183 Volume 5 footnote 277). The symbolic forms used in these sexually blatant religious mythologies were a step beyond late protosymbols. The simple displacements involved in the creation of these stimulating direct expressions of sexuality were

kin to the symbols of the sublime.

With the evolutionary steps in culture that led to self disciplined behavior, latency states, abstract conceptual memory, cultural identification through myths with less magic and incipient monotheism, the manifest forms of sexual symbolism in myths were increasingly shaped by repression. Mythologically guided sexual rituals such as temple prostitution and bacchanalias were sequestered in ancient Rome. Ritual sexuality took the form of ever more evolved indirect symbolized manifestations such as the autocastration expected of the worshippers of Cybele in Rome. With the introduction of monotheism sexual references that persisted were cloaked in cryptic form. Displacement and repression shaped the condemnation of erotic rituals. With the sexual repression associated with the need of monotheism to avoid procreative children of a sexually procreative god, who could become gods themselves, fully formed repression linked psychoanalytic symbols took precedence in myth formation and ritual. It became a small step to move from conception through a shower of gold to procreation through annunciation.

Stages in the Evolution of a God

Mahesha is a four headed god. His statue stands in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. This statue represents three levels in his evolution. At first and most blatantly sexual is a portion of the statue devoted to Siva as a lingam, a standing stone, depicted as an erect phallus. This is Rudra, an early (Vedic) form of Siva. A transitional stage is next. It takes form of a lingam with a human face on its side. Finally Mahesha takes the form of a many headed humanoid deity, made up of Siva with Vishnu and Brahma facing to the side.

A similar development can be seen in the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza, Mexico. In old Chichen the god is represented as a phallus projecting from a wall (circa 600 AD.). After 900, it is represented as a life-giving serpent.

The Great Repression¹

In its sexual history mankind started with an approach dominated by spontaneous expression of the sexual drive. This approach contained remnants of the sex life of primates including physiognomic

immediate responses to sexual opportunity. These innate mechanisms of response created primate females, usually in heat², with freedom to accept the strongest of males, and primate males with freedom to gain for their seed priority in influencing the makeup of future generations. Man evolved a sexuality free of estrus. As it became subject to delay of discharge and self-reflexive awareness sex became facultative. Selective expression enabled evolving mankind to trace a course from a primate's sexual freedom to superego enslavement, from frankness to inhibition, and from eroticism to asceticism.

Both primate and evolved human approaches are found in direct confrontation in Kalamantin in Borneo. There orangutan and human societies share the forest and the use of a frontal approach during coitus. Rape of a woman by a male orangutan can and does occur occasionally.³ For this reason, women are instructed not to enter jungle terrain while menstruating. Sex for orangutans and sex for men and women is recognized to be conceptually different by local people. The woman involved in sexual contact with an orangutan is seen by her community to have been physically assaulted, rather than involved sexually with a primate cousin. A study of the psychological sexual transition from primate to modern man follows.

Symbols, Sex and Religion

A new tributary was added to the contextual flow of evolving human sexuality, when with the advent of the tool of verbal memory and thought, sex became the subject of self-reflective awareness. The evolved human approach to sex arose when the advent of simple symbols permitted delay of discharge and deferment of direct expression through displacement of drive discharge from immediate objects to thought substitutes.

Simple symbolic images were used in representing sexuality in thought, fantasy and myths. Obvious links to fertility, descent of god-kings, the strength of herds, and the wealth of harvests were expressed in these images. For example Upper Paleolithic Gravettian (20,000 B.C.) female fertility figurines appeared. Clark (1961 Pp 38, 47, 48) described them as "... found over a wide territory from southern Russia, Italy and France." "Clearly what interested their makers were the sexual characteristics of the women . . ." (P 38) They reflect at the least "... primitive man's concern with fertility and the reproduction of his own kind . . ." (p 38) Their sexual symbolism is widely recognized. Erotic

(ithyphallic) male images also appeared. They represented clear evidence that sex was regarded with deep concern and was respected as a central life supporting function. Such figures continued in widespread use during the Neolithic period, indicating that sex and reproduction had become linked to worship and the magical rituals of religion.

A growing power for women occurred when delay of action as a result of civilizing forces shifted power over sexual favors to women. They were the ones who would suffer most or even die during childbearing. Continence became a choice. In response to this shift in power, which limited reproduction, there arose in the ancient Middle East, a counter position. This called for the suppression of women's new power through the use of the symbols of a religious dogma that added—use as an erotic religious ritual as well as an event subject to tithes—to the sexual experience. A new social contract was generated which suppressed the freedom of women through rules, which proclaimed blatant sexuality to be suitable as a ritual for use in worship. Temple prostitution, which is described below, is an example. This orientation towards female sexuality is in keeping with the early Mesopotamian myth of Ninlil (See Jacobsen in Frankfort 1977 P 155). In this tale, sexual relations take place in a social context in which public sex was acceptable and personal honor was an irrelevant concept.

In Babylon sex with a stranger activated obligation to make a donation to the church. Sex in marriage was not taxed directly for marriage gave rise to its own tithe. By way of contrast, in the Middle Ages of Christendom sex in marriage was the only form permitted by the church. Extramarital relations were punished by death.

Ancient Babylonian Erotic Religious Practices

Ancient Babylonian erotic religious practices used temple prostitution as a source of ritual fluids. The historical reality of temple prostitution is reflected in a number of direct and indirect ancient sources. It was described by Akurgal (1966) as a source of the semen that was used in temple rituals. He quoted Herodotus to the effect that "... every Babylonian woman (was obliged) once in her life to go and sit in the temple of Aphrodite and allow a strange man to have intercourse with her ... for the most part they sit in a great crowd, wearing a cord around the head in the precinct of the goddess ... straight gangways are left clear passing in all directions between the women, and along these the strangers walk

and make their choice. And a woman who has once sat down there will not leave and go home until a stranger has thrown a silver coin (*the hire of a harlot?*) into her lap and lain with her outside the temple. After throwing the coin the man must say: 'I demand thee in the name of the goddess Mylitta.' (the ancient Babylonian equivalent of the biblical phrase "let me come in unto thee"), for so the Assyrians call Aphrodite . . ." "By having intercourse she has discharged her duty to the goddess and she goes away to her home . . . In some parts of Cyprus there is a custom of the same kind.'" (P 144) The seminal fluid that was produced was collected in a goblet for ritual use. There is no indication of the means by which the collection took place. Coitus interruptus seems indicated in light of a later negative reference to the sin of Onan, which appears (Genesis 38.9) in the biblical story of Tamar. (V.I.)

Indirect Insights into Frank Sexual Rituals in Babylon

Countererotic shaping of details in the biblical tale of Tamar offers insights into elements that were repressed with the introduction of the biblical ascetic religion. Solle (1994) describes the story of Tamar (Genesis 38.6-30) as a clash of the rules of sexuality of the Hebrews, which was controlled through marriage and inheritance laws, and the sexual rules of the Canaanite religion, which welcomed as well as taxed sexual expression. Taxation can be assumed from the statement that a woman who " . . . gave herself to a stranger by the wayside . . ." was expected to consecrate a kid to Astarte, the goddess of love. (P 91) If we apply Solle's theory that the story of Tamar (Genesis 38.6-30) retains traces in negated details of the religion of the Canaanites, we can add indirect insights to our presumed knowledge of the ancient religious symbols of the people of the Middle East.

The Story of Tamar

In the Old Testament story of Tamar, there occur biblical age symbols, which are mythically altered derivatives of referents that are remnants of the rituals, which governed the sexual use of women amongst the polytheistic peoples of the ancient near east. Tamar has been widowed. Her father in law Judah gives her Onan, another of his sons, to replace her husband with the admonition to Onan that he " . . . marry her and raise up seed to thy brother." Rather than give seed that " . . . should not be his . . . (Onan) spilled the seed on the ground . . ." For this sin (onanism), he was killed by God.

So much negation of onanism in the story of Tamar indicates, through a reversal into the opposite, the use of coitus interruptus in rituals aimed at the collection of semen. This action is more direct and quicker than the collection of drippings. Here one finds lingering evidence of the ancient concept that one can “raise up seed” to another, transfer ownership and implied origin, as well as the inherited privileges associated with semen of the mythical father. This may be a remnant of the Babylonian idea that seed taken from temple prostitution and raised up for gods in mythic reality was of the gods,.

In the lands of Baal seminal fluid produced from temple prostitution was collected and was poured on the ground to fertilize the earth or was used as a sacred libation. Goodenough (1953 Volume 12) identified this religious usage. The product of temple prostitution, semen saved in a goblet, (See below, the whore of Babylon.) was given to the Babylonian church for ritual use. Such ritual use was described by Goodenough in his exploration of activities of ancient people in regard to fluids thought to be divine. Goodenough (1953) described a ritual in which “... seminal fluid of the sun god (was) ... offered to the king of Egypt”. (Vol. 5 P 183 footnote 277) He (1965) also noted that “the Syrians so craved the life fluid that they would use any available symbolic form to express it.” “No one symbolic formulation was so important as the getting of the fluid itself for their cups and for themselves.” (Goodenough (1993) Vol. 12) equated the repression of this usage with the later evolution of myths and religious rituals in which semen as divine fluid became symbolized by wine. (P 114)

In the tale of Tamar as told, the transmission to the temple of a price (a goblet filled with sacred fluid) by a ‘woman by the wayside’ no longer existed. Wine had become the ritual fluid. The hire of a harlot still existed. It was made use of by Tamar to catch her father-in-law. The widow Tamar covered herself with a veil and sat in an open place. Her brother in law, who had been offered to her, was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. She wished to snare her father-in-law into giving her issue with the birthright that descended in his family. When her father-in-law saw her sitting in disguise in an open place by the side of the road, he thought her to be a harlot. He turned to her and said, “let me come in unto thee” She said, “What wilt thou give me, that thou mayest come in unto me?” (In the story of Tamar, the hire of a harlot is expected as of old.) He said, “I will send *thee* a kid from the flock.” She said, “Wilt thou give *me* a pledge, till thou send it?” He said, “What pledge shall I give thee?” She said, “Thy signet, and thy bracelets, and thy staff that *is* in thine hand.” “He gave *it* her, and came in unto her, and she conceived by him. Then she put on her garments of her widowhood. Her father-in-law sent the kid by

the hand of his friend and expected to receive back his pledge. She was nowhere to be seen. About three months after that it was told that Tamar was with child by whoredom. When she was brought forth she sent the tokens to her father-in-law, saying, 'By the man, whose these are, am I with child'. She was freed.

The father-in-law of Tamar was tricked by her request that he pay the expected hire of a harlot. Such an entity existed and was apparently derived from the rules of temple prostitution of prior religions. The hire of a harlot in Babylon had been a silver coin.

Other Evidences of Religious Sexual Passions in Babylon

Use of a goblet to hold seminal fluid is described in the text of "Revelations" in the New Testament. In the description of the whore of Babylon there is reference to a practice in which a woman holds a goblet filled with abominations. The passage reads: "And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of names of blasphemy with seven heads and ten horns. The woman was garbed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold, gems, and pearls, and bearing a golden goblet in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication". (Revelations 17:3,4)

An erotic religious ritual involving semen is reflected in Kramer and Sprenger's⁴ (1484) description of the theft of semen by succubi for use in impregnating witches. (P 112) If the witch is "disposed to pregnancy, then if he can conveniently possess the semen extracted from some man, he does not delay to approach her with it for the sake of infecting her progeny." (P 112) Since there are no succubae, clearly this accusation is a projection of a repressed fantasy of the above-mentioned authors.

Deuteronomy (24:18) contains rules that add to our information about the sharing of 'the wages of sin' with the temple of the earlier religion. The rules may be seen as a contradiction of the orientation toward sexuality of the Mesopotamian peoples in which religious harlotry was seen as an eleemosynary resource yielding church revenue. It is forbidden for there to be a "... harlot of the daughters of Israel ..." (18) and "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a harlot into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow; for ... these are an abomination unto the LORD thy God." Apparently it was customary for the harlots of Baal to devote some of their earnings to the donation of religious objects. Of what else did the contribution to the temple consist? The answer could well lie in the description of the whore of Babylon, whose golden

goblet was filled with the “filthiness of her fornication” (17:3,4).

Asceticism: Cryptic Symbols Open The Way

Self-reflective verbal representations of sex as an agent of human survival became precipitates in unconscious human memory with the advent of cryptic (psychoanalytic) symbols. Inner feelings and disquieting recalls that were related, became the referents for conscious representations. These masked awe stimulating inner pressures that were beyond direct control and which posed a potential threat to society. Their affects were responded to with repression in service to civilization.

Sexuality rejuvenates society. It offers a gateway through pleasure to the sustained population that supports culture. Because sexual favors taken at whim can undermine the structure of society, sexuality represents a possible source of danger to society, whose content, beliefs, and sublimations it threatens. A protective renunciation was added to the human regard for sexuality. The positive aspects of sexuality became subject to a counterflow, when the historic flow of human sexuality based on wishes for delight was joined by fear. This affect was defended against by countererotic asceticism. The latter blunted the force of the drive in ancient times and shaped the ambivalent attitude toward sex that permeates the religions of the Western World (by way of Savonarola and witch trials) today. The most striking modern manifestation of asceticism is religious continence and modern distortion of Greek myths, which lose sexual details in their telling. (See for instance “Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion” of Harrison, J. (P. LIV.)

In the ancient world asceticism arose from evolving reactions toward human sexuality. Fear revolved around the power of the sexual drive to disorganize man and culture and return man in culture to a feral state. Should the symbols that provide substitutes threaten, they were defended against with further displacement to symbols that shaped a new sensed “reality”, till a more acceptable ascetically oriented world was created.

Asceticism displaced sexuality. It did not replace it. Though incompatible, both elements were maintained in culture as opposing forces that persisted side by side for millennia. Erotic cults observing fertility oriented sexual rites persisted side by side with cults that dictated ascetic continence. Murray, M.

(1931) in describing worship of the god of the witches in sixteenth century ascetic Christian Europe, mentions “orgiastic ceremonies . . . in the religion of the Horned God, as in the cults of Bacchus and other deities of fertility . . .” which were aimed at “. . . promoting and increasing fertility.” (P 128) Those cults existed side by side with worship of virgin goddesses.

In the world of Rome, there were gods and goddesses who stood for love and of eroticism. Bacchus, Venus, and Eros represented love. Conversely there were gods and goddesses who symbolized asceticism, such as Athena Parthenos, the virgin warrior for whom the Parthenon was named⁵, Heracles, and there was Artemis, the huntress and goddess of the moon, whose cult of virginity produced the myth of Actaeon. He was torn apart by dogs as punishment for having seen some of the goddess' young nymphs at bath. A battle between the acolytes of both divinities is presented in the Greek play “Hippolytus” by Euripides. In this play, Phaedra, a follower of Venus attempts the seduction of her stepson Hippolytus. Hippolytus, a follower of Artemis, refuses her. In revenge, she has him killed. He is brought back to life and transported to a temple dedicated to Artemis at Lake Nemi in Italy where he protects himself with a golden bough from those who would overthrow him.

With the generation of gods to uphold eroticism as well as gods who condemned such joys, mankind developed banners under which to organize forces to sally forth to battle for the souls of men. Thenceforth the socially accepted expression of sexuality resulted from a battle for priority and prominence between erotic frankness and ascetic inhibition. Through windows into the history of sexuality we will reconstruct this battle and the role of symbolism in its unfolding. This alteration of the relation of sexuality to religion was forecast by the cultural context of the time.

Polytheism to Monotheism to Ethical Monotheism

Multiple names for and images of the gods characterize polytheism. Many symbols incorporated into a single figure express the abstraction “an all powerful god”. This symbolization of power based on the mechanism of condensation is a characteristic of a monotheistic god. Examples of an approach to this state are the Egyptian sun god Akhnaton and the Hindu goddess Durga, who took on the attributes of all the gods in order to achieve her conquest of the buffalo demon. This simple monotheistic symbolization accrues great power for a single god. Improved ethics is not part of the system. Survival of a single god

required that he be continent. Children grow up to challenge the power of a father. Greek myths are filled with this oedipal theme. Therefore a god of a monotheistic religion cannot procreate. The single god who evolved through displacement and repression into the symbol of asceticism had to be a single sexless God without issue. This motivated a great repression of sexuality and introduced sexual self-discipline to religion. A leader god, who ruled man's relationship to nature, was transformed through symbolization into an ethical monotheistic god whose purpose included control of a conscience with a sexually moral dimension. This step foreshadowed continent saints and a sexually neutral and parthenogenetically procreated God. The existence of a single god image of great power, who could be courted through imitative self denial, provided a countercaethetic manifest symbol that held man's attention at the expense of the symbolic power of erotic deities such as Baal.

Asceticism Augmented by Ethical Monotheism Activates a Great Repression

The trend toward an ascetic response to manifest sexuality in myth and ritual that grew in the ancient world was augmented by the introduction of monotheism⁶. Sexually repressed myths, which were introduced with "Pure gods" provided less affect-loaded symbols. The absolute reign of sexually active gods began to totter. Monotheistic religions arose with their continent gods, whose failure to generate issue guarded against the impact of too many newly generated godlings, around which regressive transitions to old polytheistic beliefs could be organized. Repression was especially active against early blatantly sexual local ritual practices. The use of temple prostitution as a source of a symbol of divine fluid for use in ritual divination was replaced by wine as a symbol. This change, paralleled the pervasive inhibitory ethics that became the tissue of monotheism.

Mutual support between monotheism and asceticism enhanced the role of sexual repression in creating the symbolic forms that characterize the Judeo-Christian tradition. An example of the ascetically driven shift from frankness to inhibition in the religious expression of sexuality can be seen in the substitution of wine for semen as a symbol of divine fluid to be used in religious ritual. (See Goodenough Vol. 5). Goodenough (1965) noted that "In classical antiquity the symbols of wine themselves had only pre-empted . . . primeval symbols which seem to go back to the period long before wine had been invented." These primeval symbols were ". . . blood, water, semen, milk, sap, and even the fluid of antiquity, light (Mazda/ Mithra)." (Vol. 12 P 108) (For extended evidence for this hypothesis, see pages

105-109 in this volume.) In the ancient Near East semen was used as a symbol acquired through temple prostitution for use in rituals related to fertility of the land. With monotheism this symbol was repressed and replaced with wine.

Effects of the Great Repression

After the great repression, *the hire of a harlot* continued as a secular culture element. The transfer of the "hire" to the church was forbidden. The transfer to the church of semen in a goblet for ritual use was also forbidden. The divine seed that was spilled on the ground was carried by a new symbol, wine, which was put in its place. (Genesis 38 1-30)

The Great Repression and the Dream Interpreter

Blatant sexual content in myths decreased markedly after the influence of the great repression was carried to the ends of the known earth by the monotheistic religions. In contrast, overt sexual content continued to appear in everyday dreams. Any discomfort that may have been generated by such dreams was diminished by the interventions of professional interpreters of dreams. Their interpretations served as external symbolizers, who finished the dream work. They produced countercaethetic contents that drew the dreamer's attention away from socially offensive blatant dream symbols. In this regard White (1975) in commenting on the work of the Greek dream interpreter Artemidorus noted that manifest "Undisguised Oedipal dreams . . . were common . . . in later antiquity. Artemidorus' surprisingly detailed treatment of them could be taken to imply a less rigorous repression of incestuous longings than is usual in (a more evolved) society. The forbidden impulse was not disguised in the dream images themselves . . . (Disguise) was . . . accomplished through an interpretation, which attached an innocent symbolic meaning to it." (P 81) Here may be seen the diluting effect of dream interpreters. They slowed the influence of repression on manifest content during the evolution of symbols. They extended the anxiety blunting part of the symbolizing function by providing a countercaethesis on a more displaced surface level than the dream. They enhanced the process of hiding the true meaning of dream symbols, while supporting a channel for drive discharge in the dream. The dreams of individuals remained less disciplined while in waking life the impact on myth and ritual of the refinements demanded by evolving culture enforced the conformity that was the hallmark of the great repression.

Asceticism Enforces a Great Renunciation

A Roman Proverb "Bathing, wine and Venus wear out the body but are the stuff of life" is quoted by Aries and Veayne (1987 P 183). It serves as a summary of the erotic life of second century Rome. The cult of Cybele with its voluptuous self-castrative dances, and the existence of orgiastic Bacchanalias and Saturnalias attest to the religious application of this observation. At this time a group of people, soon to be called Christians, brought new emphasis to the role of asceticism in the sexual priorities of Rome. Brown (1978 p 263) describes their "austere sexual morality" which included "... total sexual renunciation by a few . . . and exceptional sexual discipline . . ." for the many. Galen described a number "... of individuals who, in self-discipline and self-control attained a pitch not inferior to that of genuine philosophers." (P 263) The appeal of asceticism and celibacy was the product of rejection of the force of drives, fear of pain and death in childbirth, and the need of the developing church to use the time, strength, and power of celibate worshipers. The miracle of the conversion of holy fluids to wine and the miracle of its transubstantiation gained complete power with the vision of Constantine's dream, the conversion of Rome to new symbols, and the death of myths and symbols of the old Pantheon.

THE BIRTH OF SYMBOLS AND THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF MYTHS

The Birth of a New Symbol

Symbolic representations are introduced to societies by mystics with a special form of poetic creativity at times when the world is ready. Thomas Cole, (See this volume Chapter 8) the American painter, who founded the Hudson River School, was such a person. He served a role in society that transcended that of an artist. An artist's skills capture a momentary mood and image, or portray a moment from literature or history that is so well known to the viewer that the image of the moment is all that is needed to awake a total concept. A mystic artist offers more. He offers "transcendent" symbolic elements from the mystic way that fit emerging spiritual needs for change in an evolving culture. From the pages of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" to the paintings in Cole's "Voyage of Life", the mystic carries a mythic message of such newness that it is not easily absorbed into the repertoire of culturally shared and acknowledged symbols, unless there is an unfulfilled spiritual need to welcome it as part of the accepted iconography.

Seaver (1955), an historian of American Art, described the role of the artist mystic in the introduction of such new symbols to a society hungry for a fresh iconography. In America in the early nineteenth century, art patrons commissioned paintings such as Cole's "The Voyage of Life". Such paintings played a special role in the life of the time. The paintings or their copies, which had religious and philosophical messages were used as "decorations for chapel like 'meditation rooms' . . ." (P 16) "Meditation upon history along with nature had become almost a religion for many intellectuals." (P 16)

America lived in a milieu of religious symbol hunger in the early mid-nineteenth century. The symbols in Cole's paintings, of man guided and protected by an angel through life from birth to death, filled a spiritual and iconographic vacuum left by contemporary Protestant churches at the time, whose Calvinist and Puritan foundations had little use for religious art. (See p 160) Emerson's transcendentalism was in the air. The image of the guardian angel, who watches over the voyager in the "Voyage of Life" as he passes through the four stages of life from "Childhood" through "Youth" and "Manhood" to "Old Age", serves as a benevolent symbol to be shared with others in need of succor and a guide through harm's way.

Influences that Alter Living Symbols The Great Mistranslation

Myths within a culture evolve as the result of cultural factors, which alter the sources of their manifest content. For instance, in the fifth century, Western visual imagery experienced a specific transition. Priests shifted the emphasis in establishing roots for manifest religious symbols from sources in dreams to sources in visions. There was a shift in emphasis from the divine power of dreams (creative power of the mind in sleep) to the divine power of visions and revelations. The paraphrase "Your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions" sums up the situation. The change in emphasis occurred as a result of a mistranslation in the preparation of the Vulgate by St. Jerome (419AD). (See Savary 1984 p 16 also Joel 2:28-29 and this volume, Chapter 5.) The word *anan*, which means "observing dreams", was mistranslated as "witchcraft". The result of this has been a shift of the pendulum away from the evocative mystic dreams of sleep to the induced mystic visions of the wakeful state as a source of transcendent symbols. Dream symbols tend to be more personal and divergent in their content. They are influenced more by personal experience and memories than are mystical visions. Mystical visions reflect reality, culture, current custom, and spiritual needs to a greater extent than do dream

visions. The communicative symbols that are found in visions tend to support conformity to the conscious thought patterns of a culture, and are more apt to be shaded by the sense of reality and the symbols contained in the memory panels of organized religion.

An example of such a change of emphasis in the source of details of a gospel may be found in the depiction of Christ's nativity as it was modified to accord with a vision of St. Bridget, a 14th century Swedish saint and visionary. (See Kup (1957). She experienced a revelation in a vision in which St. Joseph became an active participant in the story of the birth of Christ, replacing his usual iconic image as a sleeping man or pale observer. Joseph had formerly been depicted as a figure in deep contemplation, asleep.— "... not so (for Bridget). He became a holy knowing man, who brought straw for Mary to rest on, and after leaving a candle for a light went outside so he might not be present at the birth." "The burning light symbolizes the sacred light which he too now experiences."

Since the great mistranslation had shifted emphasis to visions over dreams, her experience was taken quite seriously and led to a change in depictions of the nativity throughout Europe. Kup (1957) noted that "dissolution of the older iconography begins about the end of the fourteenth century and the tendencies in representation (that follow Bridget) make themselves felt soon thereafter, first in Italy, then in Germany and France." (P 7)

The revelation as revealed to Bridget also led to a change in the depiction of Mary. In Bridget's vision, Mary was freed from travail at Christ's birth. Mary had previously been described as giving birth in pain, then lying down and holding the child in her arms. In Bridget's revelation, birth occurred "while the Virgin knelt in prayer; there was no pain". She described Mary with "... her hands extended and her eyes fixed on the sky ... Knelt down in ecstasy, lost in contemplation, in a rapture of divine sweetness ... while she was thus in prayer. Suddenly in a moment gave birth to her son." (P 7) There was no physical knowledge of the birth. The birth conveys a sense of divine mystery. Thenceforth Nativity scenes depicted "The Virgin in a kneeling position with the child lying on the ground and not in the manger." P

7

Metamorphoses During The Migration of Symbols

Even a manifest symbol that seems to migrate and appears to be thereby universal does not merely move from place to place following a simple arrow across boundaries and through cultures and centuries. Cultural symbols like dream symbols serve and mask referents through the mechanisms of condensation, repression and reversal into the opposite. Symbolic transit and metamorphosis are seen for instance, when manifest symbols are adapted to serve new needs that arise with the evolution of culture such as that which occurs when new religious expressions of old rituals appear on the landscapes of history. For instance, the enchanted cup of the pagan grail legend with its salves, which brought health to the Fisher King and to the harvests that depended on the state of his genitals, was adapted for use for Christian Redemption. It became the Sangrail: the cup Christ first used to offer his blood transubstantiated into the wine that afforded men grace in the first Eucharist.

Though it is told that Joseph of Arimetha, had brought it to England after the death of Christ, it is known that before this time, there had existed in Britain another referent meaning for the cup. It was the cup for which men searched to cure the wounds of the Fisher King. It was a cup filled with a balm to cure the genital injury that created a wasteland of his kingdom.

The cup is a manifest symbol used universally. Long before the British Sangreil and the Christian "Silver Chalice", there were, as noted above, cups of semen in the lands of Baal, which were collected from the products of temple prostitution. This was poured on the ground as a sexual ritual whose sympathetic magical power gave fertility to the earth. With the arrival of ethical monotheism, the whores of Babylon were suppressed. The cup continued on as a symbol with subtle changes in meaning. Referent contexts behind its manifest symbol contents were reshaped to conform to the demands of repressive forces in the cultures through which the cup was passed.

Translations of old symbols into new meanings occur in many cultures. The elephant headed Hindu god Ganesh has one tusk. He is known to be most kind and the remover of obstacles. In prevedic times, he was known as Ekadonta (see Sahi 1980 p. 32), which means one tooth. His single tusk was a symbol of the plow, which has one tine and can be used to remove stones and other obstacles to the progress of a farmer. Today the referent has changed. It is explained that he tore the other tusk from his

face to throw at the moon, which had laughed at him when Ganesh fell off his vahana, the rat. This was strange behavior for this kind god. Old wine found its way to a new bottle when the culture evolved. Though the old explanation for the single tusk has been replaced, Ganesh is still turned to as the remover of obstacles.

Symbol Transitions During Migrations Associated with the Establishment of New Religions

Where there is an apparent loss of a given symbolic theme during the migration of belief across a cultural boundary accompanied by the creation of a related new religion, the cultural and historical factors that lead to the suppression or exclusion of the theme from the manifest new beliefs can be studied. Such a migration of symbols is accompanied by the introduction of substitutes produced when symbolic forms are masked through displacement, or de-erotized as a result of new cultural pressures. As a result a potentially universal symbolic dyad may not be apparent in all climes and cultures. In the cultures in which it is discouraged from making a manifest appearance, the referent concept (latent symbolic form) expressed in the symbol is maintained in place in the cognitive unconscious. It is held there by cultural forces, which motivate repression through the neglect that accrues when another manifest symbol is favored in the verbal ecology of the culture. The culturally neglected manifest symbol may appear in awareness in infrequent isolated productions in the thinking of divergent or immature personalities.

The Myth of the Death of Symbols

Though symbolic entities may fall from use when the symbol networks of their cultures dwindle, they do not really die. Their manifest forms retain the power to migrate. There are two categories.

FIRST there are those symbols with extensive participation in the symbol webs that declare the identity of their society. They appear to die, when their culture wanes. For instance symbols of royalty or a flag which defines a culture have a life cycle, which includes a time to emerge and a time to wane that parallels the life cycle of their culture. Through conquest and commerce, through attrition and time's passing, this form of manifest symbol may become divorced from its cognitive roots and used to express the needs of new cultures that adopt them. In this situation the symbols of the vanquished contribute to

the symbol webs of successor cultures or are adapted to new technologies. For instance, the crown of kings becomes the symbol for the paragon of excellence, which characterizes an outstanding car. Though such hand me down symbols are seen to have the characteristic of eternity and universality, only the manifest symbol crosses the boundaries of culture, and then may be grafted onto new referents. The eagle, which signified the power and glory of empire in ancient Rome before man could fly, becomes the symbol of Air Force when man can.

There is a common belief that some ubiquitous psychoanalytic symbols are not dynamically produced. They are seen to be absolute in meaning, universal—and never dying—perhaps eternal. Such manifest symbols, which occur in many cultures are offered by their acolytes to be a proving manifestation of a transcendence that places them in an eternal zone of being that only occasionally offers its contents to human awareness. Their referent is held to be the creativity of an eternal prime mover god. This theory falters when the manifest forms of symbols migrate across borders and though apparently universal are found to represent a latent meaning other than that to which they were linked in their culture of origin. The latent meanings of manifest symbols vary with new cultural contexts, for manifest symbols in transit may be subject to adaptation to the unique inner cares of the varied and newly emerging cultures of mankind. Often all that migrates is the manifest content of the symbol, which is soon adapted in new settings to new beliefs. The manifest symbol persists, while the affect and referent components of the original symbol triad changes so that the original symbol triad is no more. For instance the early Greek symbol “Icthus” which was a secret symbol for Jesus and was indicated by a drawing of a fish, became a visual calendar symbol for a meatless day in the Roman Catholic Church during the 1920’s.

Exceptions occur which prove the rule. The preoccupations and referent contents that beset man universally easily adopt migrating symbols into new cultures with the same latent meaning that they had in their culture of origin. Strong links between migrating symbols and referents persist, when referents reflect universal needs. For example, all men in their individual lives experience patterns of memory and fantasies that are derived from early family relations, jealousies and aspirations. All the parts and particles of mankind have descended through eons of development in which they have achieved an unfolding awareness of the elements of life and of fate and of death. These acquisitions have left an universal imprint on all man’s legends and have given rise to latent referents in common. It should be no

wonder therefore that some but not all symbols and their referents should appear to be universal. Examples are the snake that represents a phallus, the small animal that represents a sibling, and the references to dialing telephones that signal to the analyst that associations that deal with masturbation will soon appear.

Symbols seem eternal simply because there is a finite limit to the number of manifest representations that can serve the need to retreat into myths. This results in overuse of a few symbols. Repeated use of symbols selected from a limited number of possibilities gives rise to an illusion of ubiquity that can be confused with universality. Symbols fade from view when the symbol webs in which they are imbedded fall to the challenges of new languages and new cultures, as well as the social and political needs that shape the content of and demand for myths.

SECOND there are those simple symbols that are so transparent to their referents that they are self reinforcing and appear unchanged for new generations and new cultures. They take easy root in new and varied climes. Thus the dawn is a constant symbol of birth and new beginnings, and the westward journey of the sun is an universal symbol of decline into the night, which is death.

At times, such symbols are adopted for use for the communicative value implied by their easily perceived connections to their latent content. They often can be used as simple symbols. When sales appeal, monetary value, and artistic merit become the measure of a painting, replacing the religious context that originally contributed to its power, the painting ceases to carry the power of the transcendent symbol of the original god. It becomes instead a servant of mammon. When a religious worldview changes, many symbol laden works of art are shifted from venues of worship to art museums. For example the transcendent landscapes of Frederic Church passed from inspiration to admiration with the introduction of Darwinism. When religious paintings have become so well known that they are used as metaphorical simple communicative symbols, their glamour is acquired at the expense of transcendent mystery and power. The works of art, not that which they represent, become the target of attention. Contact with their religious referents is diminished. When symbols pass from use it is not the symbol that fades, it is its link to latent meanings that dies.

There are religious rituals, which are used to reinvigorate the symbolic power of religious symbols.

These are used when an idol is returned to its worshipers, or when reassertion is required by beliefs. Examples are the repainting of the eyes of Siva and the yearly restoration of the virginity of Hera.

Transcendent symbols fade when manifest symbols themselves come to serve a common meaning agreed upon by convention. An example would be the pyramid symbolism on the American dollar (the obverse of the Great Seal), which is universally recognized as a symbol of America. Its true reason for being is rarely known. The power charge of a symbol diminishes when its referent becomes apparent, as happens with a psychotherapeutic interpretation or when culture changes and the symbol are no longer needed. In these cases the symbol weakens in what it conveys and its power to influence. This waning of function and effectiveness is that which gives the impression that manifest symbols die.

The Curriculum of Symbols

Loss of manifest symbol elements change the curriculum that defines an educated man in a given culture. For instance, the symbolism based on Greek mythology, which was necessary for understanding Victorian poetry has fallen into disuse before the college juggernaut of scientific course work. The shift to the study of the sciences and technology in our own generation has taken much study time away from the humanities. This has left the symbol web of classical mythology to wither untended and to slide swiftly towards oblivion. The poetry that had carried it forward and that it adorned is less and less read or studied. As Jacobi (1943) an expert on Jungian approaches to symbolism, has noted, the symbol is not an allegory and not a sign, but an image of a content that largely transcends consciousness. Yet symbols can 'degenerate' into signs and become 'dead symbols' when the meaning hidden within them is fully revealed, when it loses its richness of implication because its whole content has been made accessible to reason, it has died as a symbol.

In the history of Human Societies there is a life cycle to symbols. They wax and wane. They are created. They grow and they decline. The migration of symbols across the boundaries of cultures is often not a move of intact symbol triads across cultural boundaries. Instead, it consists of grafting the manifest symbolic forms of one culture onto a new culture in service to the referent requirements of the latter. The meaning of Coleridge's poem "Xanadu" underwent a sea change when it moved from China to England. It came to stand for enchantment, while its inspiration, Kublai Kahn's Shang-Tu in the summer palace of

Yenching, was denied existence in the academic worlds of the west. Shangri-La, whose origins are obscure to Western eyes, has taken on a modern meaning as a land of prolonged life or the name of a hotel chain in Asia. The mystical kingdom of Shambhala, which was the inspiration for the Shangri-La of Hilton's "Lost Horizon" has deep religious and political import for the Mongolian people. It remains locked and unlinked in the mountain wilderness of central Asia.

THE BIRTH AND DEATH OF MYTHS

Introduction

Unlike symbols, which can be carried over and adapted from one culture to another to represent latent content, myths are born and they die. The myths of major cultures appear and disappear like living shadows. The myths of India find few cognates amongst the myths of the Western world. The wheel of samsara is unknown in mainstream Milwaukee. Symbols express ideas and contents, while myths answer cultural needs. When their ability to fulfill needs falters, old myths fade and new myths take their place.

Myths are syntaxes in which symbols serve like the words in a sentence. Myths come to life when needs dawn in a society for templates by which "realities" or "truths" that can support the rituals and beliefs of a culture can be identified. Myths support contexts that explain natural phenomena or support the aspirations of leaders. The manifest symbols from which myths are constructed may go on to ornament new societies and their myths, like the old parts of autos that find new life on newer cars after their old auto has fallen out of use. Myths dwindle in the gloamings of cultures, when they are no longer needed to support parochial "realities".

Let us trace the concept of the birth and death of a myth through a study of the myth of the Hunnenschlacht (The Battle of the Huns), which was used by Freud as a metaphor to illustrate the dynamic force of the unconscious mind in the "Ego and the Id". (1923B P 23)

THE MYTH OF THE HUNNENSCHLACHT

In 451 A.D., a Roman army fought the forces of Attila the Hun near the city of Chalons in what is

now France. Reportedly over one hundred thousand soldiers died in a few hours. A century later, the “Hunnenschlacht” legend appeared. It spoke of the quick, who while gleaning in the killing fields below, heard from the sky above the din of continuing battle between the dead souls of both armies as they ascended heavenward.

The legend was spawned as a support for the neoplatonic dualistic concept that the personality and its affects can persist after death. The myth persisted for over fourteen hundred years. In (1837) it was so well known that the German artist Von Kaulbach was commissioned to paint a mural depicting the legend. The painting and myth were well enough known in 1923 for Freud (1923B) to use a reference to them as a reinforcing simile to convey the image that conflict can find conscious expression after it has been repressed. The theme of aggressive activity in the hollow halls of death was adapted actively by Freud to create a monistic paradigm for the dynamic unconscious. In this way, the Hunnenschlacht legend was invoked to support the psychoanalytic observation that repressed drives can persist in the unconscious where they retain a potential to reach conscious expression. By 1957, the myth of Die Hunnenschlacht (the Battle of the Huns) had lost currency to the point that it could no longer serve as a reference for the general public.

Myths As Metaphors

Freud used a myth as a metaphor or simile to explain a concept. This is a common technique. Ideas and elements drawn from common cultural knowledge are often used by writers as metaphors and similes. They are chosen because they clarify or emphasize new ideas by allying them with past familiar experiences. With the passing of decades, such elements of common knowledge are prone to fade or be lost. Should this happen, they lose their power to explain, leaving references in classic works that dangle. Similes, based on referents to shared knowledge that time has shorn of meaning, offer enigma in place of clarification.

Such an enigmatic simile involving the Hunnenschlacht confronts us on page 39 of the “The Ego and the Id” where Freud (1923B) states—“... the Oedipus Complex[s] ... energic cathexis ... springing from the id, will come into operation ... in the reaction-formation of the ego ideal.” “The struggle which once raged in the deepest strata of the mind, and was not brought to an end by rapid sublimation and

identification, is now continued in a higher region, like the Battle of the Huns (Hunnenschlacht) in Kaulbach's painting." Freud's reference bears witness to persistent vitality of the myth during the early twentieth century.

Such a simile is relevant if there is awareness in the mind of the reader of the meaning of its referent. By the late thirties the "Hunnenschlacht" had faded and so served awareness poorly. At the time that the Standard Edition of Freud's works was published, knowledge of the "Hunnenschlacht" which had once raged ubiquitously in the universal cultural memory of Europeans and Americans, had dwindled before the workings of time's attrition and the use of other myths to support propaganda, till it became an item only to be found in rarely visited corners of the academic storehouses of culture.

In a footnote to the quoted passage from "the Ego and the Id" (Freud 1923B P 39), the editor of the Standard Edition of Freud's works tried to correct the situation and clarify the simile. The picture itself had become unlinked from the mainstream of common knowledge, as did the myth it depicted. The editor could only give us verbal leads to follow. He tells us (Freud 1923B P 39) that the battle was the Battle of Chalons, in which in 451, Attila the Hun was defeated by the Romans and Visigoths. We are told that the German artist Wilhelm von Kaulbach made it the subject of one of his mural decorations, originally painted for the Neues Museum in Berlin. "In the mural, dead warriors are represented as continuing their fight in the sky above the battlefield, this accords . . . with a legend that can be traced back to the fifth century Neo-Platonist, Damascius." (Freud 1923B P 39) There is far more to the picture and to its story. Let us trace the myth of the Hunnenschlacht in terms of the cultural needs, which spawned it, its impact and the reason for its demise.

The History of the Painting

Von Kaulbach's painting, depicting the legend of a raging battle that continued between dead soldiers on the way to heaven was ordered as a mural for the New Museum in Berlin. It was included in a set of murals used to illustrate Western history. The date of completion of the painting was 1837. Its existence testifies to the strength of the then contemporary universal knowledge of the myth.

Wilhelm von Kaulbach, the artist who painted the Hunnenschlacht bore witness through his art to

the vitality of the myth during the early nineteenth century. He was a famous illustrator, muralist, and painter, associated with the German Romantic movement. He was known especially for melodramatic illustrations. As a muralist, he worked in a style derived from that of Raphael and Durer. He was (Encyclopedia Britannica (1994-1998) on CDROM) "... one of the most renowned artists of his day ..."

The painter and painting were well known at the time of von Kaulbach's death in 1874. His paintings had been distributed through oil copies and steel engravings, on both sides of the Atlantic. Von Kaulbach's painting "Hunnenschlacht" was described in his obituaries (undated American journal articles, pasted in a scrapbook {MCK x K22.N5} in the collection of the New York Public Library) as follows.

"... in 1837, he produced his masterpiece, "The Battle of the Huns" taking his subject from the old legend that tells us how the spirits of the Huns and the Romans slain in the fight before the walls of Rome [sic] meet in the air and fight their battle over again. This great painting has been admirably engraved and is well known in this country. [USA]" An obituary in a periodical, the ALDANE (no page) dated 1874, noted that copies of the painting were made to order in these words, "In 1837, he painted in sepia for Count Rapzycki, one of his masterpieces, "The Battle of the Huns."

Apparently the painting was quite popular. There are references to the sale of at least two color sketches. One of these color sketches was four feet five inches high by five feet six inches wide. A steel engraving, which was distributed in both Europe and the United states, has excellent detail as can be seen in the photograph of it that is in the scrapbook in collection of the New York Public Library mentioned above. (See Figure 11)



Figure 11
Steel Engraving of the Hunnenschlacht (the Battle of the Huns) by an unknown engraver after Von Kaulbach

One color sketch for the mural (*farben skizze fur das wandbild*) is of particular interest. (See illustration on front cover of Volume 3.) It was delivered to the Princess Caroline Sayn-Wittgenstein in 1837. She met Franz Liszt and took up residence with him in 1847. The painting went with her. In 1857, Liszt wrote the tone poem, *Die Hunnenschlacht*. Interest in the painting and the myth was certainly reawakened by this tone poem. Richard Wagner, Liszt's son-in-law, later depicted dead soldiers borne heavenward in glory in his opera "Die Valkyrie".

Theme-Becker (1927 vol 20 p 25) reports that the color sketch was in Munich in 1921. In 1923, the fame of the painting and the myth was sufficiently strong for Freud to use its content as a simile. The oil sketch is currently at the Stuttgart Staatsmuseen. The original oil painting is presumed to have been lost to allied bombing during World War II.

WHO WERE THE HUNS?

Who were the Huns that they could suggest a myth of postmortem rage and valour? The word "hune" apparently referred to a group of powerful second through fifth century warriors with origins in

the eastern steppes of Siberia. These warriors had early on attacked the Han Chinese, who took the Sanskrit word for the warriors, and adapted it to Chinese speech as Hiong-Nu, which was transformed by the Latins into Hun. The term has come to mean capable of savage brutality. Current usage conveys the concept that the Germans are the Huns, though this is an historically recent usage.

The term Hun is not generically related to German speaking people. In the Nibelungenlied, Attila appears as a king of Hungary called Edsel. He is represented to have been a benign ruler such as those who ruled before Attila during the 50 years of peaceful reign and alliance with Rome that characterized the Huns when their holdings were limited to the Hungarian plain. Edsel's great army was needed by the singer of the epic to move forward the story of Kriemhild's revenge for the murder of Siegfried.

Interestingly, Malia (1999) reports that in 1768, Frederick the Great of Prussia, called the Russians "Huns" (P 74). In the movie "Alexander Nevski", the eleventh century forces of the Mongol Golden Horde are depicted. They are not called Huns. In this movie the term Hun is reserved for the Swedish army. In WWI The French used the term Hun to describe the Germans. "Hun" is apparently a term, which calls an enemy an extreme barbarian without regard to ethnicity. In our time in the cycle of musical chairs that we call history, the Germans have become affiliated with its expletive meaning.

The Hunnic People

The original Huns were one amongst the many warlike nomad Mongol empires. They roamed the grasslands (steppes), which extend from northern eastern Asia, sweep south of the Ural mountains and extend into Europe as far as France. The Huns were skilled horsemen and archers, who created mobile cities on horseback. With no sure boundaries they took their cities wherever there was fodder to sustain their horses. Going forth to conquer, they inflicted rage, rape and murder on their way to creating empires. Morgan (1986) noted that "The longest lasting of these . . . empires was that of the Hsiung-nu, {Hun} which reached its apogee in the third and second centuries BC, but survived to trouble the Chinese until the fourth century AD." (P 45)

Ferrill (1999) in quoting The Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, (end of the fourth century AD), describes the savage customs of the Huns and elaborated on their military tactics thus: "They make

no use of fire, nor any kind of relish, in the preparation of their food, but feed upon the roots which they find in the fields, and the half-raw flesh of any sort of animal. I say half-raw, because they give it a kind of cooking by placing it between their own thighs and the backs of their horses." They fight at a distance with missile weapons having sharpened bones admirably fastened to the shaft. When in close combat with swords, they fight without regard to their own safety. The Huns late fourth century attempt to conquer the Han Chinese ended in defeat for the Huns. The Chinese numbered amongst their fighters, a young girl named Mulan, who took her father's place and fought dressed as a man.

Defeat in the East usually prompted the Mongol empires to devote their forces to an invasion of Europe in the West. Following this pattern, the Huns swept west towards Rome, when they were turned away by the forces of the Chinese Empire. Riding their war horses out of the vast steppes of Asia, the Huns arrived on the fringes of the Roman Empire in the late fourth century.

When the Huns had first appeared on the steppe north of the Black Sea, they were nomadic mounted warriors. In Europe, however, the grasslands were confined to smaller plains. The Huns could find fodder from grazing that would support only a fraction of their former horse borne legions. Soon they could only field sedentary armies with emphasis on foot soldiers, who became capable of siege operations, and fixed battles. They settled in the Great Hungarian Plain along the Danube. For nearly fifty years they were allies of the Romans. Young hostages were exchanged as a means of preserving the peace. During one such exchange, Aetius, the future Roman general at the battle of Chalons, and Attila learned each other's language and ways and became personal friends.

Enter Attila

The turning of the Huns to pillage and conquest directed at their Western Roman allies came when Attila took power, after murdering his brother and making himself the sole King of the Huns. At the outset of his reign (sometime after 435) Attila began his brutal assaults on his European neighbors. The brutality of the Huns can be seen in the aftermath of Attila's attack (441-42) on the city of Naissus, which is south of the Danube on the Nischava River. The Huns so devastated the place that Roman ambassadors passing through to meet Attila several years later, had to camp outside the city near riverbanks that were still filled with human bones. The smell of death was great. No one could enter the city.

The Hunnic army was enormous for the fifth century AD. Some of the greatest cities of Europe were sacked and put to the torch: Rheims, Mainz, Strasbourg, Cologne, Worms and Trier. Many cities of Gaul would soon suffer the same fate. According to Ferrill (1999), the total destruction visited on Gaul by the Hunnic forces before the Battle of Chalons in 451 AD informed medieval folklore and tradition for generations to come. It fueled the rage that surfaced with the legends that told of the battle of Chalons and its aftermath.

Impelled by a lust for conquest, Attila had sought a reason to attack Rome. He found it in a romantic gesture from Honoria, the Roman Emperor Valentinian's sister. In 449, it had been discovered that she was having an affair with her steward. Honoria was confined in seclusion. Her response was to smuggle a ring and a message to Attila asking for his protection. Attila interpreted this gesture to be a marriage proposal. He demanded half of the Western Roman Empire as a dowry. He already had conquered the Eastern Roman Empire. Under the circumstances, were his armies to cross the Rhine, he would be able to assert that he sought by force to gain property that was his as dowry as a result of his betrothal to Honoria.

Rome was not without its champions. Attack on Paris was not undertaken for it had the advantage of having St. Genieve as a resident. Her ministrations were said to have caused the city to be spared. The Romans had as their general, Aetius (known as the last of the Romans). By the year 451 CE he had served for many years as the foremost general in the Roman Empire. In addition he was the chief political adviser to the western Roman Emperor, Valentinian III.

Events Immediately Preceding the Battle Of Chalons

In 541, Attila crossed the Rhine, bypassed Paris, and moved into central Gaul where he laid siege to the city of Orleans. The Roman reaction was fierce. Attila abandoned the siege on June 14. He thus avoided entrapment between the Roman forces and the walls of Orleans. The Hunnic forces withdrew into open country east of Paris. About June 20 the forces joined in battle on what was then called the Catalaunian Plains. The battle is referred to by name as the battle of Chalons, a city on the river Marne.

The battle started in the late afternoon of the longest day of the year. This left time for extensive maneuvering before nightfall. The battle took place on a plain, which rose in a sharp slope surmounted

by a ridge. The struggle for the yet untaken ridge began. Aetius gained the high ground ridge first. From this position of advantage he faced the ascending Huns. The Visigoths stood to the right side of the Roman line. Aetius and his Romans held the left. A weak group, the Alars took the center. In the uphill moving battle line of the Huns, Attila and his best soldiers had taken the center against the Alars. Hand to hand clashes during fierce, unrelenting fighting took many lives. Attila attacked and advanced against the weak center. The Alars fell back. The forward momentum of the Huns in the center exposed their flank to an attack on either side. The Romans taking advantage of the high ground attacked the flank of the Hunnic right wing while the King of the Visigoths attacked from the left. The Romans and the Visigoths had caught the Hunnic leaders in a vise. The Visigoths fell on the Huns and nearly killed Attila. He fled to his fortified wagons.

As the battle dwindled with the coming of the night, a brook in the field of battle filled to overflowing with the blood of the wounded and the slain. Injured men driven by thirst drank water thickened by gore that poured from their own wounds. Confusion reigned. In the end the Roman-Visigothic army had won the field of combat. Losses on both sides were extraordinary. As many as one hundred sixty thousand soldiers are estimated to have died in one brief late afternoon and evening. At the next day's dawn, the Huns did not venture forth. The fields were piled high with corpses in what was called *cadavera vero innumera* ("truly countless bodies"). The battle was over. Victory had fallen to the Romans. Attila withdrew across the Rhine.

The following year (452) Attila's army pillaged and destroyed Northern Italy. The city of Aquileia at the tip of the Adriatic was wiped off the face of the earth. The fugitives from that city are said to have fled into the lagoons of the Adriatic and to have founded the new city of Venice. Then Attila turned his forces toward the city of Rome, which was the seat of the Roman Catholic Church. (The secular capital of the Roman Empire had been moved to Ravenna.) It was the pope who was called upon to confront the Huns. Pope Leo I went to meet Attila in Northern Italy. He persuaded Attila to leave Italy. Attila's servants asked him why he had capitulated to the request of the Bishop of Rome. Attila answered that while the Pope was speaking, there appeared above the Pope's head a man dressed as a priest. The man held a sword in his hand. His actions carried the threat of death unless Attila consented to Leo's demands. The man was St. Peter! There were other factors contributing to Attila's decision to withdraw. There had been a famine in Italy in 450-51 and a plague was sweeping through the army of the Huns. Attila planned a

new attack on Italy for the following year (453). However destiny in the form of Attila's avarice intervened. He had added to his coterie of wives a young and beautiful young bride (Ildico). The wedding party was marked by heavy drinking. The next morning he was found to have drowned in his own blood, from a nosebleed. In 454 the Germanic tribes revolted successfully against the Hunnic hegemony. So ended the history of the Huns. Attila's legend lived on, inspiring a novel, a character in the *Niebelungenlied*, a title role in an opera by Verdi and eternal fame as a murderous leader.

The Hunnenschlacht Myth Is Created

The term Hunnenschlacht is reserved for the myth of a continuation of rage and battle in the sky above the battlefield at Chalons that involved the souls of the slain, who crowded the air in their haste to reach heaven. The myth is derived from a description written one hundred years after the event by the Platonic philosopher Damascius. As he described the situation (see Thompson (1999) “. . . no one survived except only the leaders on either side and a few followers: but the ghosts of those who fell continued the struggle for three whole days and nights as violently as if they had been alive; the clash of their arms was clearly audible.” (P 155)

Damascius sought to use the occurrence of so many deaths at once as a means to established proof of the Platonic belief that soul and motivation continue after death. “Still sentient, still unsatisfied”, the warriors “. . . flit about the places where they died.” Still soaked in rage, the dead souls, it was said, fought on as “. . . ignorant armies clashed by night.” They made “havoc in heaven”. The clang of swords and the sound of battle resounded on the earth below. The term Hunnenschlacht is reserved for the episodes of rage and combat that involved the souls of the slain while on their way to a heaven beyond and above the skies of the battlefield of Chalons.

The Myth of the Hunnenschlacht Persists for One and a Half Millenia

The myth of the Hunnenschlacht, which dates from its first telling by Damascius (551 AD), persisted for over a millennium. It supported the concepts of the neoplatonically oriented world. In 1837 the myth was well enough known to become a topic for a mural in a Berlin museum. Reflections of its theme appear in nineteenth century retellings of the Norse Eddas. In 1923 the myth was familiar

enough for Freud to use as a simile. Then the myth faded. By 1961 an explanatory note was needed in the Standard Edition of Freud's works to clarify his use of "the *Hunnenschlacht*" in the "Ego and the Id". There has been no return to life for this myth. The most recent link forged in its historical chain of being is its consignment to the limbo land of lost legends.

Freud and the *Hunnenschlacht*

There is no way of knowing whether Freud's contact with the painting preceded his discovery of the dynamic unconscious. The myth was certainly available to him. The least we can infer is that reference to the painting served for Freud as a metaphor for his concept of dynamic activity in that which seems lost through repression. At most, we can surmise that the theme of aggressive activity amongst the departed may actually have been introduced to Freud by the painting. There is a precedent for this sort of sourcing. Freud was introduced to the concept of catharsis by the work of his future wife's uncle, Jacob Bernays, the Greek scholar who was the first to understand Aristotle's (ant-"Poetics") use of the word (P 240ff) (see also P 484 of Ellenberger, H (1970). The faded legend of the *Hunnenschlacht* itself continues in transformed guise in the part of Psychoanalytic theory in which we are told that drives and concepts, though repressed, continue to express themselves.

The Life and Times of Myths The Birth of a Myth

The myth of the *Hunnenschlacht* is remarkable in itself because of the finiteness of both its origins and its demise. As such, it offers an opportunity to enhance knowledge, test theories of myth dynamics, and study the intricacies of their life trajectories. Myths like cryptic dreams have origins that are both immediate and remote. Dreams contain residues of the day and intimations of childhood hopes. Myths are amalgams of the current needs of a people and their ancient strivings. Yeats (1961) described mythopoetic man as "... himself mingled with the procession." And the symbols found in myths to be forged "... out of the dreams of one poet and of a hundred generations whose hands were never weary of the sword." (P 64) Myths tell us of the current hopes of a people and of the shared history, which binds them together. Abraham (1909) tells us that "It is in legends and fairy-tales that the phantasy of a nation is revealed." (P 154) Among these fantasies are myths, which when handed down through generations lose links to the circumstance of their beginnings and in the process knowledge of him, "who first

recounted them” (P 154). This explanation is limited to a description of the origin of content. Someone had to have been there to create the myth and there had to be an affect charged motivation that inspired its creation and persistence. In the case of the Hunnenschlacht, the name of the creator is known. The person who in Arlow’s (1961) words created a myth “. . . to alter the harsh facts of reality by manipulating symbolic representations of these facts.” (P 374) was Damascius. His Neoplatonic belief was that the body is only a temporary abode for the soul. The fact of reality that this belief addresses was the inexplicable event of death and its companion, the extinguishing of the personality. The incredible number of people who died at Chalons became for Damascius a manifest symbol for death. The platonic belief that the body and the soul are separable and that the life i of the soul continues after death was applied through the myth as a means for death’s undoing. The fact of an after-battle fought out in the sky was used as a symbol for persistence of the soul. It establishes a venue for the pursuit of grace and Christian salvation.

The Origin of Myths in the Transformation of Data

As noted above, the myth of the Hunnenschlacht is an adaptation of an impressive historical event, the battle of Chalons (451CE), which was fought on the Catalaunian Plains of eastern Gaul. This kind of adaptation of data is an example of what Sperber (1975) has described as “. . . the transformation into myth of data . . .” from history rather than “the transformation of other myths, endogenous or exogenous . . .”. (P 79)

Applications and Uses of Myths

Many stories have been told which are soon to be forgotten. Only those stories onto which a people can in the words of Karl Abraham (1909) “. . . project their fantasies . . .” and permit “the people themselves (to) form the central point of their own myths (in which) they experience the fulfillment of their wishes.” (P 206) survive as myths. The myth of the Hunnenschlacht filled this requirement for well over a thousand years. It accompanied the Western world so long because it fit well into Spengler’s (1918) concept of a “. . . culture . . . born of its mother-landscape.” (P 174) It supported the core Western cultural concept of an eternal life beyond life. The myth of the Hunnenschlacht fit the culture well enough to be chosen as the topic for a mural for a Berlin museum. In the nineteen thirties elements of the

myth faded and lost their power to enhance explanations, leaving as its only trace, a reference in a classical paper that dangles.

Decline and Death of the Myth

By 1961, the time that the Standard Edition of Freud's works was published, knowledge of the "Hunnenschlacht" had suffered the workings of time's attrition, politics, and the inroads of propaganda that shifted the attention of German society to other collective fantasies. Such relegation to rarely visited academic vistas of culture is a characteristic of Karl Abraham's (1909) concept, "disappearance" (P 207) of a myth. So ends the final fragile trajectory of this myth's career.

It is interesting to speculate as to why the Hunnenschlacht fell from grace. About 1870 there was an eroding of religious mythology with the introduction of the concept of evolution. This undermined transcendence. This fits Abraham's (1909) concept that "The fact that myths disappear is well known . . . No absolute forgetting ever occurs . . . a time comes when a people forgets its myths . . . discards its traditions . . . (and replaces it with a) progressive understanding of natural phenomena and . . . the attainment of increased mastery over reality."

The fading of dualism is only the beginning of the story. The "mother landscape" of German culture was undergoing other changes that diminished the usefulness of the myth of the Hunnenschlacht by intruding a competing stronger countercathetic focus of attention.

The situation is described in Marie Bonaparte's (1945) review of the landscape of "German Mythology" (P 7) during the period of the Hunnenschlacht's decline. She speaks of the despair of the German people in the face of the sanctions of the treaty of Versailles. Germany needed a mythic hero who could attract attention from their plight and symbolize a rescuer for their nation. Hitler appeared to be an "avatar of Siegfried" (P 7), the demigod who killed a dragon to recover lost treasure. The Hunnenschlacht offered no such hero. Attila's reputation for rapine disqualified him as the source of a noble image whose appearance could reverse into the opposite the image of Hitler, a tyrant leader whose rage filled projective identification with those who had defeated Germany in World War I, was soon to reveal itself as a lust to annihilate the world that was not he. In addition, the desired mythic image did

not tolerate identifying through a legend about Huns. “Hun” has become a term to use when one wishes to call an enemy an extreme barbarian. The term is not good stuff for creating the image of a just hero.

Bonaparte (1945), following the lead of Professor Rosteutscher of the University Du Cap thought of Siegfried as the heroic sword of vengeance who was conflated in the minds of the German people with Hitler. She predicted that the death of Hitler will be followed by a new legend, retrieved from the legend of Frederic Barbarossa, who waits sleeping along with his knights in a cave near Berchtesgarden for the time when Germany will be in need and Barbarossa will be called upon to provide victory and vengeful glory.

Hitler’s own associations lead us elsewhere. It seems that the primary hero that Hitler identified with while yet he lived was Barbarossa. He had posters made of himself as a knight in armor. When Russia was invaded, the operation was named Barbarossa. There was no longer room in German awareness for a cathexis of the Hunnenschlacht. The myth, which was created to serve Platonic dualism was pushed aside and way was made for the myth of Barbarossa, the mythic hero who could serve Germany in a time of need.

Discussion

Man’s relation to his dreams and his myths are similar. They are both transient. Their timelines differ. Dreams disappear within moments. Myths can last for eons, then they too pass into oblivion. In regard to dreams and myths, mankind is fickle.

Notes

[1](#) I am grateful to Dr. Dagmar O’Connor for her contribution to this section.

[2](#) Ford and Beach p 204.

[3](#) Personal communication to the author during a visit to the Tanjung Putting preserve in Kalamantin, Borneo during Aug. 1991.

[4](#) In the Malleus Maleficarum, a book, which stood on the desks of every judge during the 15th century in support of suppression of primitive religion in Christian lands.

[5](#) The only ancient temples left intact in Greece were the Parthenon, which was used as a church dedicated to St. Mary and the Heracleon in the Athenian agora.

[6](#) The effect of the great repression on polytheistic religious systems is presented in volume 3, section A, Chapter 2. ("Universal Symbols")