Climbing Jacob's Ladder: A Hierarchical Approach to Imagistic Mysticism

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Abstract
Discusses a number of poets and writers (including Lewis and Williams) related by similar philosophical and mystical traditions. Demonstrates how their work relates to Rudolph Otto's definition of the Imagistic Way and its stages.

Additional Keywords
Mysticism in literature; Mysticism in poetry; Otto, Rudolph. Mysticism East and West; Valerie Protopapas
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BY

JOE R. CHRISTOPHER

DOROTHY L. SAYERS, in her essay "The Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams," speaks of them as belonging "to a particular philosophical and mystical tradition." Likewise, Charles Williams in The Figure of Beatrice: A Study in Dante makes clear that he considers Dante and William Wordsworth as belonging to the Way of Affirmation of Images. In the study which follows, I wish to apply to this view a framework which I found in Rudolph Otto's Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature of Mysticism. Perhaps this sounds like a dry exercise of the sort which is usually called academic, maybe it is. But I have found this particular exercise valuable in establishing a framework within which I can understand what a number of my favorite writers, including three of the linkings, are saying. It enables me to see them better, to compare their statements one to another, to clarify their thought in my mind. I can ask no more of an academic exercise.

Since I am being academic, let me start with two clarifications of my intentions. First, since professionally I teach literature in a state college, no doubt this secular background influences my approach to these writers; therefore, I do not claim that the material I discuss has any necessary religious meaning. The writers often think it has, but they may be wrong. Lionel Trilling, for example, in his essay entitled "The Immortality Ode," discusses Wordsworth's poem in terms of Freudian psychology: Wordsworth thought he had a visionary clear reflection from Heaven because his ego had not reached the point of not identifying the whole world with himself. Perhaps this is true. Perhaps these religious moments which I will discuss are simply moments in which the ego is lost in the unconscious mind. I like to think otherwise, that being an academician in a state school, I carefully point out to my students when I teach Wordsworth that a secular reading is quite possible—and has been done.

Second, let me remind my title may be slightly misleading in two ways. "Jacob's Ladder" sounds as if I wanted to refer to visions of angels; this is not correct, as I will make clear in my next paragraph. But I could not resist the phrase about a religious ladder, since it may be thought to echo Plato's Ladder of Love in The Symposium, which is another example of a hierarchy of experiences—one that ends, at least, in mysticism. Second, "Climbing" in my title may suggest that the mystic works his way up this ladder (whether or not he kicks away the lower rungs, as Plato's lover does); this also is not quite accurate: the scale is not a sequence, but some mystics seem to grasp onto the top rung without climbing up the steps. However, we, as students of the subject, will certainly climb up rung by rung.

Proceeding academically, I next propose a definition of this Imagistic Mysticism. Rudolph Otto, in the book which I am following, spends some space distinguishing types of mysticism. Particularly, two distinctions should be made. First, the visionary experience should be separated out—such visions as St. Teresa or William Blake saw. These mystics are called the Illuminists by Otto. And second, of the angels climbing up and down from Heaven, which Jacob saw, was similar, my earlier comment about my title is pertinent here. Second, a distinction should be made between the two types of mysticism which ultimately seek identification (or union):

(1) The Inward Way: The Way of Rejection. Here the mystic withdraws from outward things, empties his mind from all images, ideas, and emotions, and waits for the Spirit to enter. With this discipline of negation we are not concerned.

(2) The Imagistic Way: The Way of Acceptance or of Unity. Here the mystic united himself with God through, or by means of, one or more images from the world. I shall outline the steps of the process (for those who process up it), or the levels of awareness, below.

In what follows, I should make clear that I am not following Rudolph Otto exactly; my first step he does not mention, but I find it in Wordsworth and others. Also, I consider nature mysticism to be part of the second step, although Otto spends some space attacking nature mysticism as not being the same thing as he is discussing, although he admits some similarities; correctly or incorrectly, I believe he is wrong at this point. At any rate, for my purposes of comparing descriptions of mystical experiences, the descriptions are enough alike that the comparisons should be made at that point, whether or not the similarities signify identities; however, I follow Sayers and Charles Williams in believing they do.

I The Experience of Joy

I SHOULD LIKE TO BEGIN with a text from Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," out of the second verse paragraph. Wordsworth is describing the effect his memory of the natural scenery of five years earlier has had on him during the time between his visits; he writes:

...I have owed to them [the beauteous forms he has remembered],
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration...

Pleasure from the memory of beauty is no surprise, nor Wordsworth's next comment, that he may have been influenced morally by his memories—the man who is at peace with himself, who is not bothered by tension, may well be politer to others, more responsive to their needs, than another. Then Wordsworth adds another way in which his memories have influenced him:

Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen [burden] of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, and a sleep so paceless
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy.
We see into the life of things.

The two points I wish to emphasize in this passage are (1) the loss of bodily awareness and (2) the feeling of joy. (I shall return to what Wordsworth says about "seeing into the life of things" later.) The first of these is an obvious part of the mystical experience; the second seems to be a common concomitant (I find Evelyn Underhill mentioning it). I believe in Joseph Wood Krutch one finds a man who never went much beyond this simple feeling of joy. In his autobiography More Lives than...
One, he writes:

... recreation, pleasure, amusement, fun, and all the rest are poor substitutes for Joy; and Joy, so I at least am convinced, has its roots in something from which civilization tends to cut us off.

Are some at least of the animals capable of teaching us this lesson of Joy? Some biologists deny categorically that they feel it. But by no means all and by no means the best. If I listen to carding, or see the plover and the lapwing, I am convinced. The gift for real happiness or joy is not always proportionate to intelligence as we understand it, even among the animals. As Professor N.J. Berrill has put it: "To be a bird is to be alive most intensely than any other living creature, man included. Birds have hotter blood, brighter colors, stronger emotions...They are not very intelligent...but they live in a world that is always the present, mostly full of joy."

Similarly Sir Julian Huxley, certainly no mere sentimental "nature lover," wrote after watching in Louisiana the love plays of herons, with loud cries of ecstasy, tying their necks into a lover's knot: "Of this I can only say that it seemed to bring such a pitch of emotion that I could have wished to be a heron that I might experience it."

Thus sounds his if Krutch felt this Joy to be simply emotional intensity, based on a physical stimulus, as perhaps his own experiences of Joy, in the essay "The Mystique of the Desert," suggests something less physical in basis:

I happen to be one of those, and we are not a few, to whom the acute awareness of a natural phenomenon, especially of a phenomenon of the living world, is the thing most likely to open the door to that joy we cannot analyze. I have experienced it sometimes when a rabbit appeared suddenly from a bush to dash away to the safety which he values so much, or when, at night, a rustle in the leaves reminds me how many busy lives surround my own. It has also come almost as vividly when I suddenly saw a flower opening or a stem pushing out of the ground.

But what is the content of the experience? What is it that at such moments I seem to realize? Of what is my happiness compounded?

First of all, perhaps, there is the vivid assurance that these things, that the universe itself, really do exist, that life is not a dream; second, that the reality is pervasive and, it seems, unapproachable. The future of mankind is dubious. But one knows that all does not depend upon man, that possibly, even, it does not depend upon this earth. Should man disappear, rabbits may well still run and flowers still open. If this globe itself should perish, then it seems not unreasonable to suppose that what inspires the stem and the flower may exist somewhere else. And I, it seems, am at least part of all this.

From my point of view, Krutch is here experiencing a low-grade mysticism which he does not understand. The feeling that life is somehow unified is a hint of the Perception of Unity which I shall take as the next step. (By the way, I do not imply that Krutch did not intellectually understand what mysticism is; his references elsewhere make clear that he understood what Wordsworth was claiming—he simply was not certain that his experiences meant religiously what Wordsworth claimed.)

Another person at this level of mysticism is C.S. Lewis. His experiences of Joy, of Sehnsucht (since he refers to the German Romantics), are discussed most clearly in his autobiography, Surprised by Joy (the title is a phrase from a sonnet by Wordsworth); in his poem of Glory, "The Weight of Glory"; and in his allegory, The Pilgrim's Regress. In the Preface to the Third Edition of the latter title, Lewis comments that this Desire is distinguished from other desires by two characteristics: first, that it is a pleasure even if no relief of it is forthcoming ("For this sweet Desire cuts across our ordinary distinctions between wanting and having. To have it is, by definition, a want: to want it, we find, is to have it."); second, that the object of this Desire is by no means a desiring of the perfect beloved; he falls upon literature (like Maeterlink or the early Yeats) which cast its spell in words of spirits and the like with some show of serious belief, he may think that he is hankering for real magic and occultism. When it darts out upon him from his studies in history or science, he may confuse it with the intellectual craving for knowledge.

But every one of these impressions is wrong. The sole merit I claim for [The Pilgrim's Regress] is that it is written by one who has proved them all to be wrong. There is no room for vanity in the claim: I know them to be wrong not by intelligence but by experience, such experience as would not have come my way if my youth had been wiser, more virtuous, and less self-centered than it was. For I have myself been deluded by every one of these false answers in turn, and have contem-}

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**IMAGISTIC CREATIVITY**

This is intended to summarize Man's imagistic creativity. The "star" represents the creative image, either emanating from a Greater Source into the mind, or originating in the mind itself, depending upon whether the religious or secular connotation of creativity is used. Secondary to this is the Mind which makes use of this "gift."

In conclusion, the eye and hand are the tools which translate the image into our understanding.

—Valerie Protopapas
but desire for what? not, certainly, for a biscuit—tin filled with moss, nor even (though that came into it) for my past.

'Joel is no Boh [Oh, I desire too much]—and before I knew what I desired, the desire itself was gone, and whole glimpse withdrawn, the world turned commonplace again, or only stirred by a longing for the longing that had just ceased. It had taken only a moment of time; and in a certain sense everything else that had ever happened to me was insignificant in com-

Here the experience comes through the double means of the sight of a flowering currant bush (like Krutch's experiences of nature) and the memory of a toy garden (as Wordsworth's experiences tended to be based not on scenes present but scenes remembered). The particular images are not important to us as analyzers (although they are of course important to the mystic himself); as Lewis says, the experience is basic, the images are a means—but in the Imagistic Way, a necessary means.

Lewis's negative view of some of the images through which this experience of Selmautoh may come; before going on to the next step in my scale, I would like to turn to John Heath-Stubbs' account of a discussion by Charles Williams of the most important of these means for poetry, which necessarily omits such things as the study of science or history which Lewis mentions:

In a lecture which I heard him deliver at Oxford in 1943 [writes Heath-Stubbs], Charles Williams distinguished five principal modes of the Romantic Experience, or great images, which one can in good faith (a) The Religious experience itself. Having posited this,

(b) The Image of woman. Dante's Divine Comedy is the fullest expression of this theme, and its potential development.

(c) The Image of Nature. Of this Wordsworth in The Prelude... was the great exponent.

(d) The Image of the City. Had Williams not been addressing an audience composed of English Literature students, I have no doubt that he would have cited Virgil, the Rosellini, as the great exponent. As it was, he pointed to 'what were, until recently, known as our younger poets' as expressing, in their vision of the Unjust City, a negative aspect of this experience. [Heath-

(e) The experience of great art. Of this, Keats's Ode on a

Grecian Urn was a partial expression. Heath-Stubbs hesitates about the last of these, saying that it, 'like the first, seems to stand in a special category. It is, it might be said, included by the others, just as the others are included in the first. And it also seems to me doubtful whether it could ever lead to a more than partial expression....' So much says Heath-Stubbs; from my point of view, the reason it cannot serve as a model for the images and impressions of the Romantic Experience, or great images, man-made, cannot (or cannot often) lead beyond its finite creator. Keats was able to mediate on the paradoxes of eternal art by the anonymously created urn, but the escape outside of time altogether by means of art would logically seem rare.

The flashes of Joy he found in Nordic art; perhaps it is important that the art which so moved him involved gods and symbolic adventures (whether in the original myths and legends or in later treatments of them). This question of art as a means of mysticism need not be decided here (for it's out of context with the immediate issue of full discussion): art is, let us say, a lesser means—and perhaps one which is more common at this first level of mysticism, with its flashes of Joy, than at the later stages. (But there will be exceptions to this in some of the works discussed in this paper.)

If the mystical is as far as Joy, or only a little ways into the next step, then it is often called an aesthetic experience if the object is somewhat of art, or a reaction to the sublime (in eighteenth-century terminology) if the object is rugged nature, or a sublimation of the sexual drive (in modern terms). The subject may be a man, a woman, and thus this low-grade mysticism is easily dismissed. And, as I said when I started, perhaps these explanations are correct; Lewis, who tried a number of these paths, thought not—but he may have mistaken: perhaps he found simply that a sexual experience and the same thing given to a man in a different way (as they are), and so thought he could dismiss sublimation as a cause of his Joy since it was not what he found in physical consummation. Perhaps. So as Kierkegaard said, belief is a leap in the dark; in the modern world, there are many who know what is there without leaping, for Freud or someone else has given them a map.

II The Perception of Unity

AFTER THE FIRST STEP comes the perception of unity; based generally on Otto's summary, we may distinguish three character-

(After the first step of mysticism, we are able to see the whole of our experience as one thing.) The mystic is the most important of these means for poetry, which necessar-

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Since I have been admitting possible secular interpretations, let me here add a secular experience. Alan W. Watts, in his book The Joyous Conception, describes his experience of taking L.S.D. in terms which suggest a perception of unity also:

I am looking at what I would ordinarily call a confusion of bushes—a tangle of plants and weeds with branches and leaves going every which way. But now that the organizing, relational mind is uppermost I see that what is confusing is not the bushes but my clumsy thinking. Every twig is in its proper place, and the tangle has become an arabesque more delicately ordered than the fabulous doodles in the margins of Celtic manuscripts. In this same state of consciousness I have seen a woodland at fall, with the whole multitude of almost empty trees, with their bare branches and twigs in silhouette against the sky, not as a confusion, but as the lacework or tracery of an enchanted jeweler. A rotten log bearing rows of fungus and patches of moss became as precious as any work of Cellini—an inwardly luminous construct of jet, amber, jade, and ivory, all the drives and lines and tensions and desires and emotions, all the passions, innumerable, inexpressible, and impersonal, having been carved out with infinite patience and skill.

A journey into this new mode of consciousness gives one a marvelously enhanced appreciation of patterning in nature, a fascination deeper than ever with the structure of forms, the balance of parts, the way a universe comes together. A satori, if you like, of the incredible jewelry of such unicellular creatures of the ocean as the radiolaria, the fairy architecture of seeds and pods, the engineering of bones and skeletons, the aerodynamics of feathers, and the astonishing profusion of eye-forms upon the wings of butterflies and moths.

More and more it seems that the ordering of nature is an art akin to music—fugues in shell and cartilage, counterpoint in fibers and capillaries, throbbing rhythm in waves of sound, light, and nerve. And oneself is connected with it quite inextricably—a node, a ganglion, an electronic interweaving of paths, circuits, and impulses that stretch this way and that throughout the whole of time and space. The entire pattern swirls in its complexity like smoke in sunbeams or the rippling networks of sunlight in shallow water. Transforming itself endlessly into itself, the pattern alone remains. The crosstalk, nodes, nets, and curlicues vanish perpetually into each other. The "baseless fabric of this vision." It is its own base. When the ground dissolves beneath me I float.

Let me move directly from this drug-induced vision to C. S. Lewis's description of Ransom's vision near the end of Perelandra; it is not clearly a vision given out of an image of this world, yet it is obviously related to what Watts discussed:

He thought he saw the Great Dance. It seemed to be woven out of the intertwining undulation of many cords or bands of light,
leaping over and under one another and mutually embraced in arabesques and flower-like subtleties. Each figure as he looked at it became the master-figure or focus of the whole spectacle, by means of which his eye disentangled all else and brought it into unity—only to be itself entangled when he looked to what he had taken for mere marginal decorations and found that there also the same hegemony was claimed, and the same authority presided. I was dispossessed but finding in its new subordination a significance greater than that which it had abdicated. He could also see (but the word "seeing" is now plainly inadequate) wherever the ribbons or serpents of light intersected, minute corpuscles of momentary beauty existed, and he knew these particles were the secular generalities of which history tells—people, institutions, climates of opinion, civilisations, arts, sciences, and the like—ephemeral coruscations that piped their short song and vanished. The ribbons or cords themselves, in which the whole solid figure of these enamoured and inanimate circlin gs was suddenly revealed as the mere superficies of a far vaster pattern in four dimensions, and that figure as the boundary of yet others in other worlds: till suddenly another, in a new and different pattern, the weaving yet more ecstatic, the relevance of all to all yet more intense, as dimension was added to dimension and that part of him which could reason and remember was dropped farther and farther behind that part of him which saw, even then, at the very moment when he stood farthest from our ordinary mode of being he had the sense of stripping off encumbrances and awaking from trance, and coming to himself. At this point, Ransom knew that the unity he has perceived is a literary description of this step in the mystic scale; the stillness beyond the unity hints at the next step—but does not describe it fully.

What can we say of these two descriptions, one of an L.S.D. experience, the other of a fictional account of a vision? Obviously both are fuller than Wordsworth's account of a motion uniting natural objects, yet both are in the same tradition. If I had set myself up as an arbiter of the truth of these accounts with which I am dealing, I would have to pass over much of the material evidence of Watts' experiences. But I have not, and I decline to do so. In Charles Williams' Arthurian poetry, the region of Broceliande stands for the unconscious mind, and both madness and divine inspiration are in frequent passages of it. This is perhaps the Christian answer; other critics offer other answers. I only suggest that, if one accepts Williams' view, he had best add that the borders of many of the regions are difficult (with human eyes) to discern.

So much then about the first and third aspects of this second step, for the perception of unity in nature and for the realization of the self's participation in this unity. Wordsworth has shown a motion in all things, including the mind of man; Watts has described a drug experience which centers on the patterns in nature, including "deer-leap", and is presumably based on the basis of others' descriptions, a vision of the Great Dance, the universal harmony, which includes in its weaving patterns streamers of personal beings "fishing with colors." According to R. J. Otto, most nature-mystics—such as, in the East, Jelal, or as we might add, in the West, Joseph Wood Krutch—do not get much beyond an ecstatic identification with nature.

However, I need now to consider the second of the points I took from Otto concerning this level of perception of unity; he suggests that the seeing of the archetypal in the individual is a method of such perception. I must admit that I am somewhat uncertain about this, for it seems to me that this vision often becomes very like, or perhaps part of, the Illuminist's type of vision—those of St. Teresa, William Blake, and Jacob, mentioned at the start of my paper. However, it is worth considering the archetypal vision of Watts, for whether or not it is fully typical of the Affirmative Way, it does allow the type of comparisons I am interested in.

Let me begin with a vision (if it can be called such) which seems perhaps more poetic elaboration than inspiration; in a passage from Dante's La Vita Nuova, as translated by Barbara Reynolds:

"...I saw approaching me a gracious lady, renowned for her beauty, who for a long time had been the beloved of my closest friend. Her name was Giovanna, but some say that because of her beauty she was nicknamed Primavera, that is, Spring, and thence that she was amorous and related to her beauty, as I looked, I saw the miraculous Beatrice. They passed by quite close to me, one behind the other, and Love seemed to say to me in my heart: 'The first is called Primavera, and the sole reason for this is the way you see her walking today, for she inspired him with this name of Primavera, which means that she will come first (prima verrà) on the day Beatrice appears... If you also consider her first name, it too signifies "she will come first," for Joan comes from John, who preceded the True Light, saying Ego vox clamantis in deserto: parate viam Domini.'"

And afterwards Love seemed also to say these words: 'Anyone who thought carefully about this would call Beatrice Love because of the great resemblance she bears to me.'

If we assume this procession of Giovanna and Beatrice actually took place on the streets of Florence in the Middle Ages, then the description which Dante gives us seems to be an archetypal description. As John preceded Christ, so Giovanna precedes Beatrice—in fact, all of Giovanna's nominal history to that point seems simply to be a forebear of this Persephone, which means that she will come first (prima verrà) on the day Beatrice appears...

In my second example, from Watts' book on his drug experiences again, the archetypes are much more pagan:

At some time in the middle of the twentieth century, upon an afternoon in the summer, we are sitting around a table on the terrace, eating dark homemade bread and drinking white wine. And yet we seem to have been there forever, for the people with me are no longer the humdrum and harassed little personalities with names, addresses, and social security numbers, the specifically dated mortals we are all pretending to be. They appear more as personifications of archetypes themselves without, however, losing their humanity. It is just that their differing characters seem...to contain all history; they are at once unique and eternal, men and women also gods and goddesses: that is now that we have time to look at each other we become timeless..."
the Emperor of the Trumps [in the Tarot deck], helmed, in a white cloak, stretching out one sceptred arm, as if Charlemagne, or one like him, stretched out his controlling sword over the tribes of Europe, pouring from the forests, and bade them pause or march as he would. The great roads ran below him, to Rome, to Paris, to Aix, to Byzantium, and the nations established themselves in cities upon them. The noise of all the pausing street came to her as the roar of many peoples; the white cloak held them by a gesture; order and law were there. It moved, it fell aside, the torrent of obedient movement rolled on, and they with it. Here the archetype is in terms of the Tarot cards, since Williams is using them (and particularly the Fool) in his novel as the basic symbols of the universe. The Tarot Emperor sums up the principle of rule, of order, in the world: both the policeman and Charlemagne are particular manifestations of the archetype. Thus, within the fictional world of the novel, Henry and Nancy perceive the universal through the individual. Is Rudolph Otto right that this is connected to a perception of unity? Perhaps, if we consider that the particular policeman and Charlemagne, as well as all the Emperors and Khalifs, and others, are archetypal passages are unified in the Archetypal Ruler; I suppose most Christian theologians would call this archetypal principle God the Father. But it is far easier to see a unity through the archetype here than it is in Watts' book, where the mythological archetypes suggest individuality of personality rather than generality of function, of office. I am not certain, therefore, that Otto is correct in assuming that archetypes necessarily suggest an underlying unity.

III The Perception of The One

Rudolph Otto turns to the writings of Meister Eckhart in medieval Germany for four steps moving from the Perception of Unity to the Perception of the One:

The Many (the things of this world) are seen as one (and only this, rightly seen),

The Many are seen in the One (where the One is still a form of the Many).

The One is seen in the Many (as supporting and conditioning reality).

The One is seen.

As often with mystical theologians, the description is somewhat lacking; but the general movement is clear. Obviously "the One" is often called God (by Christian mystics, for example), although Emerson can write of going out into nature as a naked eyeball which eventually perceives the Oversoul. But it is one Spirit which is found (or so writers on mysticism usually assume), whether the mystic refers to it as God, the Godhead, the One, or the Oversoul.

In this procession from one level to the next, the passage from "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" with a spirit whose dwelling was in nature seems at the third step: "The One is seen in the Many." I have already alluded to Emerson's Nature and "The Over-Soul": let me give two brief examples from the former: near the end of the next-to-last chapter, Emerson writes, "Idealism sees the world in God. It beholds the whole circle of beings, of actions and events, of country and religion, not as painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past, but as one vast picture which God paints on the instant eternity for the contemplation of the soul." In this, Emerson suggests more than just the negation of unity in nature; he seems to be at the second of the four steps which Eckhart listed: "The Many are seen in the One." Again, like Wordsworth's passage, a sentence or two from the last chapter suggests the third step: "...the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which God speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to itself." For my purposes of illustration, these passages are enough; after all, Emerson and Thoreau continue the Nature Mysticism of Wordsworth; in my terms, they equally represent the Imagistic Way, here by means of images drawn from nature.

Examples of actual perception of the One—where the mystic has completely penetrated through the Many (the images from which he began), and, leaving them behind, sees the One as completely as he is able—are rare in the material with which I am dealing. Alan Watts has a description at the end of his L.S.D. experiences, which resembles the above against his closed eyelids, and it involves so much imagery that it seems to be more part of the visions of the Illuminists; nevertheless, I will quote it here:

Time to go in, and leave the garden to the awakening stars.

Again music—harpsichords and a string orchestra, and Bacchus—harpicords, flutes, a string orchestra, and Bacchus in his most exultant mood. [These are records.] I lie down to listen, and close my eyes. All day, in wave after wave and from all directions of the mind's compass, there has repeatedly come upon me the sense of my original identity as one with the
very fountain of the universe. I have seen, too, that the foun-
tain is its own source and motive, and that its spirit is an
unbounded playfulness which is the many-dimensioned dance of
life (like Ransom, in Perelandra). There is no problem left,
but who will believe it? Will the whole of vision return to
to normal consciousness? Yet I can see at the moment
that this does not matter. The play is hide-and-seek or lost-and-found, and it is all part of the play that one can get
very lost indeed. Now, then, can one go in getting found?
As if in answer to Beatrix, three years before my
closed eyes a vision in symbolic form of what Eliot has called
"the still point of the turning world." I find myself looking
down at the floor of a vast courtyard, as if from a window
high upon the wall, and the floor and the walls are entirely
surfaced with ceramic tiles displaying arabesques in gold,
white, and blue. The scene might be the inner court of some
Persian palace, were it not of such immense proportions and its colors of such preternatural transparency.
In the center of the floor there is a great sunken arena,
shaped like a combination of star and rose, and bordered with a
strip of tiles that suggest the finest inlay work in vermilion,
gold, and obsidian.
Within this arena some kind of ritual is being performed in
time with the music. At first its mood is stately and royal,
as if there were officers and courtiers in rich armor and
many-colored cloaks dancing before their King. As I watch,
the mood changes. The courtiers become angels with wings of
golden fire, and in the center of the arena there appears a
pool of dazzling flame. Looking into the pool I see, just for
a moment, a face which reminds me of the Christos Pantocrator
of Byzantine mosaics, and I feel that I am gazing back with wings over their faces in a motion of reverent
dread. But the face dissolves. The pool of flame grows
brighter and brighter, and I notice that the winged beings are
drawing back with a gesture, not of dread, but of tenderness—for
the flame knows no anger or fear. The pool of flame is
"tongues of flame infolded"—are offshoots of love so
dearning that I feel I have seen the heart of all hearts.
I should add a note to this passage from Watts: I have been
taking his descriptions as literal and his experiences as the
histories of the world. He does say in the last paragraph of his "Prologue" that he has
combined a number of experiences into that of a single day for
artistic purposes; I suspect also that the ending of his experience
with this vision against eyelids is a deliberate climax on his
part—in his case, he says, to a vision of God which he suggests. He goes on to suggest also that these hints be followed up with
meditation; since Watts is within the tradition of Zen Buddhism,
his final suggestion is obvious enough—but I'm not certain what
a Zen priest would say about that vision of "Christos Pantocrator.
" But, as I suggested before the quotation from Watts, his
vision of the tiled courtyard seems more an example of the
Illuminists' type of mysticism than of the Imagistic Way; let
me set up another example, partially as a contrast—that of
Dante's vision of the end of the Divine Comedy, where as we saw earlier, had a vision of Christ within Beatrice, which
he recounted in his New Life. Later, at the first of La Divina
Commenda, he has gone astray from his original vision and was in
danger of damnation; Beatrice, in Heaven, had pity on him and
was the immediate cause that Divine Grace to be extended to him,
to lead him to the Right Way, to Salvation. At the end of the
poem, after Beatrice has guided Dante up the spheres of Heaven,
he is allowed to gaze at the Godhead.
[St.] Bernard conveyed to me what I should do
By sign and smile; already on my own
I had looked upwards, as he wished me to.
For now my sight, clear and yet clearer grown,
Pierced through the ray of that exalted light
Wherein, as in itself, the truth is known.
Dante pauses at this point to say that language is inadequate
for what he is trying to describe; he prays for aid in recalling what
he saw at that moment—then he continues:
The piercing brightness of the living ray
Which I endured, my vision had undone,
I think, if I had turned my eyes away.
And I recall this further led me on,
Wherefore my gaze more boldness yet assumed
Till to the Infinitive Point, at whose
In that abyss I saw how love held bound
Into one volume all the leaves whose flight
Is scattered through the universe around;
In such wise
That this I tell of is one simple light.
Yes, of this complex I believe mine eyes
Beheld the universal form—in me,
Even as I speak, I feel such joy arise.
As, according to Ernst Haekel's biogenetic law, Ontogeny
recapitulates Phylogeny, so one notices here a recapitulation of
the earlier steps in the Divine Comedy. As Dante looks
at God, he perceives the Unity which ties together the universe,
and he feels Joy. (In the original Italian, the phrase is oh'to
godo.)
Dante continues, with a passage which foreshadows the
Union with the One, which will be the fourth and final step of my
analysis:
That light doth so transform a man's whole bent
That never to another sight or thought
Would he surrender, with his own consent;
For everything the will has ever sought
Is gathered there, and there is every quest
Made perfect, which apart from it falls short.
(For those of us who are much involved in mythopoetic literature,
the statement that in the Godhead "is every quest / Made perfect,
which apart from it falls short" is one which almost demands
another paper, and one far longer than this which I am writing—
and probably a less secular essayist. The word quest, I should add,
is not in the Italian, but I can only consider it an
inspired translation!)
To continue:
Now, even what I recall will be exprest
More feebly than if I could wield no more
Than a babe's tongue, yet milky from the breast;
Not that the living light I looked on wore
More semblances than one, which cannot be,
For it is always what it was before;
But as my sight by seeing learned to see,
The transformation which in me took place
Transformed the single changeless form for me.
That light supreme, within its fathomless
Clear substance, showed to me three spheres, which bare
Three hues distinct, and occupied one space;
The first mirrored the next, as though it were
Rainbow from rainbow, and the third seemed flame
Breathed equally from each of the three pairs.
........................................
External light, that in Thyself alone
Dwelling, alone dost know Thyself, and smile
On Thy self-love, so knowing and so known!
The sphere thus begot, perceptible
In Thee like mirrored light, now to my view—
When I had looked on it a little while—
Seemed in itself, and in its own self-hue,
Lilied with our image; for which cause mine eyes
Were altogether drawn and held thereto.
The first of these steps, the seeing of the Eternal Light, is the eye-step, and to the experiences of Jewish, Moslem, and Neo-Platonic
mystics (and perhaps others as well); the second step, the seeing
of the three spheres of different hues which occupied the same
space, is a Christian vision of the Trinity (Dante seems to
follow The Western version of the Nicene Creed in which the Holy
Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son jointly, rather than just
from the Father, as the Eastern [and original] version has it; here,
"the third seemed flame / Breathed equally from each of
the first pair"); the third step, the seeing of "our countenance—
that is, a human face, Christ's face—indicates the Mystery of the Incarnation, in which God became Man. It is at the point
that Dante is unable to comprehend any more of God, by himself:
As the geometer his mind applies
To square the circle, nor for all his wit
Finds the right formula, how'er he tries,
So strove I with that wonder—how to fit
The image we see into the idea
How it maintained the point of rest in it.
Thither my own wings could not carry me,
But that a flash my understanding clove,
Without whose desire came it suddenly.
So grace provides the answer which understanding could not give.
At this point, The Divine Comedy ends.
High phantom last point of it shot off;
Yet, as a wheel moves smoothly, free from jars,
My will and my desire were turned by love,
The love that moves the sun and the other stars.
There are three notes which I would like to add to this
discussion of Dante's poem. First, I am uncertain as to how well
it illustrates my thesis. Obviously, Dante did not see Beatrice,
see her inner, Christ-like character, and somehow pierce through
to the Godhead the figures of this world: there is a time lag
Here. It was not until a number of years later that Dante, by means of Beatrice's guidance, was able to have his ultimate vision. No doubt those who wish to draw parallels to the Inner Way, the Way of Negation of Images, will say that Dante's period of apostasy is equivalent to the Dark Night of the Soul. Perhaps so. Perhaps this delay is inevitable; Dante returned to his image of Beatrice and saw God, while Wordsworth could not (or, at least, did not) return to his image of Nature, and so his poetic life dwindled. (This is the comparison made by Dorothy L. Sayers, in her essay "The Beatrician Vision in Dante and Other Poets.")

Even so, Beatrice was dead by the time Dante returned to the True Way; as she appears in The Divine Comedy, she is an image in a dream-vision. Thus is she an image of this world (as she clearly was in The New Life), or is she an Illuminist's vision? She is obviously somewhere in between: she was a person, she is now a ghost (a saved one, of course, but not yet in her resurrected body); on the other hand, she is also part of a dream. Yet she remains an Image, in the Williams-Sayers interpretation of Images. Where am I left? She is not exactly an image of the world, being dead; yet she is an image which was in the world, and which appears in her human appearance to Dante when he finishes his climb of Mount Purgatory. Further, she is not exactly an image through which Dante sees God, or at least such a vision is not literally so described. (Sayers argues, in her essay "The Poetry of the Image in Dante and Charles Williams," which I cited earlier also, that Beatrice on her appearance at the top of the mountain is literally herself but is allegorically the Sacrament—that is, morally, she is the manifestation of God as he appears to each individual, Beatrice being His manifestation to Dante; historically, she is the Sacrament of the Altar, and in a larger sense the Church; and mystically, she is "the whole doctrine of the Way of Affirmation—the union of the soul with God in and through all the images.") However that may be, at the literal level, Beatrice is not an image penetrated by Dante as his vision of God; yet she guides him up the ranks of Heaven to his ultimate vision. Therefore, although her image does not work precisely the same way here that images have worked on other levels, yet there is obviously a nearness to the tradition I am concerned with.

The second note I wanted to add to my discussion to Dante's poem returns me to a problem I have raised before: in this case, are the three spheres with three different colors which occupy one space and which also, somehow, contain Christ's face—are they a true picture of the Godhead, or are they the vision of an Illuminist? Or—a third possibility—are the spheres an intellectual attempt by Dante to create a picture for the reader of something which cannot be described at all? I cannot answer this question, for, to begin with, I do not know how much fictionalizing there is in The Divine Comedy. Did Dante really have any such dream vision? All we have is the poem; all we can trust is the poem. I suspect that most readers take the three spheres as symbolic, but whether they were a symbol that Dante's mind created for him in a vision, as a limited means of comprehending something incomprehensible, or whether they were a symbol which Dante invented for his reader, in order that he might have something more specific to grasp than an emotional rhapsody on Dante's part, I do not know.

The third and last note is a simply a promise to return to Dante's poem at the end of this paper, at the fourth step, to suggest an application there.

Dante's level of mysticism has taken us far beyond C. S. Lewis, with his personal moments of Sehnsucht, who is far down the scale now, and even Charles Williams' archetypal policeman is left behind; my commentary on this level is logically at a close. However, I would like to digress for a moment on an idea which I do not find in Rudolph Otto. It seems to me that if the perception of the Archetype in the objects of this world is typical of the previous level, so also the perception of the Archetype by itself should logically appear at this level. No doubt this could be illustrated by the perception of the pure Ideas in the Platonic scheme; however, I have in mind another passage from an Inkling—this time from Owen Barfield.

**VISION**

This deals with the quotation of the vision of Alan Watts, which mentions several iconographic references (the Christ Pantocrater and seraphim). The Head of Christ is produced in the iconographic way, sans halo, as are the eyes and the eye-nose and flames. The seraphim are usually represented as six wings with faces in the middle (sometimes by just a single eye in the middle, but it was felt that this was already esoteric enough!)

The face in the second eye is representative of the dreamer, hence the closed eyes. The Christ Figure, angels and over-all eye are shown against the reclining profile, again representative of the passive nature of the visionary; the further and diminishing profiles with the flame of vision receding show the debilitating effect of the method this individual uses in order to obtain his imagery (LSD).

—Valerie Protopapas
In This Ever Diverse Pair (published under the pseudonym of G.A.L. Burgeon), in Chapter VII, entitled "Vision," he describes the three types of solicitors under the names of Lynx, Glossy, and Applejohn:

With the human lynx it is not the physical act of swallowing, but the spiritual one of over-reaching that is typical. It is in the moment when he is over-reaching someone that his true nature flashes upon the inward eye of the observer.

The lynx's proper element is litigation and negotiation.

In the City of Westminster, the solicitor and his partners, and the sums about which he litigates and negotiates are substantial in quantity, whether or not they ever existed in cash. In the little streets adjoining the Police Courts and County Courts he acts for anybody who comes along and strives to ally his cravings by getting 6s. 8d. allowed by the Registrar instead of the 3s. 4d. to which he is entitled.

The second of these sub-archetypes: The Glossy is better educated than the lynx and more of a gentleman. He is often to be found occupying such of the better-paid legal appointments in the Civil Service as are open to Solicitors. He does not have his cravings; he is usually fortunate in his clients, perhaps because he is well-to-do enough to refuse those whom he does not like.

He of course acts so as to further his client's interests, but he does not identify himself with them, as the lynx does. Consequently you may feel quite at ease in negotiation and disagreement with him, even when the clients themselves are embittered.

And the third of these figures:

The true Applejohn, as his name implies, has a face covered all over with little snout-like documents as such. This is particularly one of the Applejohn's characteristics, although it is eponymous, is not absolutely essential.

The Applejohn is not so much the craftsman of our profession. I think the little wrinkles have something to do with the particular manifestation of the archetypes as such. He relishes the drafting of them. If he knows your draft about, it is because you have departed in some way from conveyancing practice or precedent, and it grieves his soul. He is an 'Attorney' in the old good sense, carrying an aroma about him of the fast-fading days of parchment and the 'fair and clerkly hand'.

Now let us return to "Burgeon's" vision of the Absolute Solicitor; Barfield writes:

I am at a loss to know how best to convey or in what imagery to fashion the true nature of this great One, which manifests itself so partially as perfectly in each of us individual solicitors. It has been said that no-one has ever really seen Tree or Horse, but only trees or horses. Those who would rise in contemplation from the particular to the spiritual, stood far beyond and above these faulty approximations. He relishes the drafting of them. If he knows your draft about, it is because you have departed in some way from conveyancing practice or precedent, and it grieves his soul. He is an 'Attorney' in the old good sense, carrying an aroma about him of the fast-fading days of parchments and the 'fair and clerkly hand'.

It is at this point that Barfield offers, as intermediate types, the lynx, Glossy, and Applejohn; after teaching his reader to perceive the sub-archetypes, he continues his commentary on the combination of types often in actual solicitors; then the true Archetype is described:

The true Applejohn, whom I now perceived in the spirit, stood far beyond and above these faulty approximations. In him none of the three humours was predominant and none deficient, but all three were mingled in just proportion and sweet harmony. The gentleness and sure craftsmanship of the Apostle John chimed perfectly with the tact and suavity of the Glossy and, while the lynx continued to preserve a balanced detachment from the passions of the client, so as to uphold the fraternity of the profession, the lynx, tamed now to a trusty bandog, crouched at the feet of both, with a watchful eye open to ensure that the client's true interest should never be sacrificed for the sake of gentleness or the love of ease, or to preserve that suavity or that fraternité.

It was an inspiring vision. I do not know if this Absolute Solicitor, whatever or not he is an inspiring vision, is appropriately considered here.

Barfield's approach is intellectual, very Platonic, but in the context of the book, the vision is also a dream—that is, Barfield's explanation of the Solicitor is intellectual, but the vision itself seems to come to Burgeon in a moment, not through intellectual training. Is the perception of an archetype, the Perception of the One in the Imagistic Way? Certainly there seems to be no exact piercing through the Many to the One Archetype—or is the movement from individual lawyers, to the three types, to the Absolute Solicitor, a movement from Many to One? It is analogous, at least... And the perception of the Archetypal Solicitor part of the Illuminists' tradition, or is it not? I have no answers here; I only offer the parallels for what they are worth.

IV The Union with The One

Ultimately the objects of this world are forgotten as the divine union takes place, the soul/bride uniting bridegroom/bride.

Obviously the mystic's soul can unite with God only to the extent that the soul is prepared to experience the Omni-Aspected One: Sakrana finds the static joy, Plointus finds the aesthetic eros, and Eckhart finds the moral agape, of God. If therefore consider this passage for another secular interpretation—to demonstrate, in the language of the next-to-last sentence of Pilgrim's Progress, "that there is a way to Hell, even from the Gates of Heaven," although it hardly intend my illustration as seriously as Bunyan intended his, my reader will notice that the first three steps of the Mystic Ladder I have been climbing are:--

1. From a this-worldly experience of joy, to a half this-worldly, half other-worldly discovery of unity, to a wholly other-worldly vision of the One; but this final step, the Union, does not arise through the One; instead, it seeks a merging with the One. Now then, this dream analysis will tell us that the rhythm of climbing ladders is a symbol of sexual intercourse, may we not suspect this whole structure I have developed is simply an intellectual sublimation of the sexual drive: a three-step rhythm followed by a mental orgasm? Since I am confirmed archetypalist, I would prefer to put it the other way around: sexual intercourse may be simply a physical imitation of a spiritual truth—yet I suspect that few in the modern world would agree to such an interpretation. Still, whichever way a reader or critic wishes to take the parallel, he should not deny the similarity.

Indeed, C. S. Lewis, in discussing Psalm 45 in his book Reflection on the Psalms, makes a concept which reflects both my language of the bride and bridgework and in the first paragraph of this section and which prepares for my final examples in this paper. The critic will notice that it does not deny the Freudian interpretation, although, like my archetypal suggestion, it looks at the matter from what is, from Freud's point of view, the wrong way around:

Few things once seemed to me more frigid and far-fetched than these interpretations, whether of this Psalm or of the Song of Songs, which identify the Bridegroom with Christ and the bride with the Church. Indeed, as we read the frank erotic poetry of the latter and contrast it with the edifying headlines in our Bibles, it is easy to be moved to a smile, even a cynical knowing smile, as if the pious interpreters were fleecing an abused innocence. I should still find it very hard to believe that anything like the "spiritual" sense was remotely intended by the original writers. But no one now (I fancy) who accepts that spiritual or second sense is denying, or saying anything against, the very plain sense which the writer intends. The divine love poetry is thus a rich, festive Epithalamium, the Song remains fine, sometimes exquisite, love poetry, and this is not in the least obliterated by the burden of the new meaning. (Man is still one of the primates; a poem is still black marks on white paper.) And later I find too that the new meaning is not arbitrary and springs from depths I had suspected. First, the language of nearly all great mysteries, not even in a common tradition, some of them Pagan, some Islamic, most Christian, confronts us with evidence that the image of marriage, of sexual union, is not only profoundly natural but almost inevitable as a means of expressing the desired union between God and man. The very word "union" has already entailed some such idea.

Lewis goes on to discuss pagan mysteries, the Jewish "marriage" of God and Israel, and the similar Christian "marriage" of Christ and the Church; before that passage there is:

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air was growing brighter and brighter about us; as if something had set it on fire. Each breath I drew let into me new terror, joy, overpowering sweetness, and a strange power. I struggled through and through with the desire of it. I was being unnamed. I made no one. But that's little to say; rather, Psyche herself was, in a manner, no one. I loved her as I would once have thought it impossible to love, would have died any death for her. And yet, it was not, not now, that really counted. Or if she counted (oh, gloriously she did) it was for another's sake. The earth and stars and sun, all that was or will be, existed for his sake. And he was coming. The most dreadful, the most beautiful, the only dread and beauty there is, was coming.

The pillars on the far side of the pool flushed with his appearance. I cast my eyes on him. In Lewis's work, Orual awakens a moment later. It would have been nice to have found an actual description of sexual intercourse, symbolizing spiritual union, to conclude this paper. But I am afraid that poets were more thorough and thorough with the desire of it than that: the way to bring the earthly and the heavenly Bridgegroom together and allow us to imagine the rest. Unfortunately, most of us have what in Christian terms would be called fallen imaginations.

Let us therefore return to Dante for a moment. I used his poem as an example of seeing the Godhead, not of becoming one with it. Yet, intellectually, he certainly tries the latter. First, he is pierced by "the living ray" of the light of God (which in Freudian terms also suggests God's masculinity and the individual soul's femininity); then, as he writes, "...I recall this passer by and wonder.

Wherefore my gaze more boldness yet assumed
Till to the Infinite Good it last had won.

Since the medieval position on eyesight was that it was carried by rays, Dante (again, in Freudian terms) can be said to become masculine for this purpose. (Perhaps this spiritual exchange of sexual roles is why Christ said that in Heaven there was no marriage or giving in marriage.) However that may be, Dante's actual imagery is chaste enough; yet this winning of "the Infinite Good" may be the best way of expressing in Christian terminology the Union of God and man's soul. It is the spiritual climax of the Imagistic Way.

Bibliography

AUGEN, W. H. "Introduction" to The Protestant Mystics, edited by Ann Freeman, pp.3-37. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964. [Augen's introduction is an interesting survey of four types of mystical experience: The Vision of Dame Kind (nature mysticism), The Vision of Eros (the Beatrician experience, with some negative comments at Plato), The Vision of Agape (the experience of sudden charity felt for others or among members of a group), and the Vision of God. I did not read Augen's work until the above essay was finished.]

BARFIELD, Owen A. (under the pseudonym of G.A.L. Burgeon). This Ever Diverse Pair. With an Introduction by Walter de la Mare. London: Victor Gollancz, 1950. [The various passages quoted in the above essay concerning the "Vision of God" are in the semi-archetypal humors of lynx, Glossy, and Applejohn appearing on pp. 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96-97, and 98.]


FREUD, Sigmund. "Symbolism in Dreams," The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, translated and edited by James Strachey, pp.149-169. New York: W.W. Norton, 1966. ["Ladders, stairs, or of more precisely, walking on them, are clear symbols of sexual intercourse. On reflection, it will occur to us that the common element here is the rhythm of walking up them—perhaps, too, the increasing excitement and breathlessness the higher one climbs." (p.159).]


LEWIS, C.S. "The Weight of Glory." In Transposition and Other Addresses, pp.21-33. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1947. [Important for its identification of Heavenly Glory, or the energy of God, with—at distant remove—Sehnacht; its discussion of a few of the ways of dismissing the religious meaning of Joy, p.24, is tied to my final paragraph on the first step.]

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MILLER, James Whipple. "English Romanticism and Chinese Nature Poetry." Comparative Literature, 24:3 (Summer, 1972): 216-236. [In this I add this item to the bibliography in lieu of footnoting in my paper. Miller's essay provides an interesting contrast of the English and Chinese approaches to nature, for one of the basic elements in the discussion is the Chinese refusal of any transcending of the self or of the world.]

OTTO, Rudolph. Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of the Nature and Mysticism. Translated by Bruce W. Bracey and Richenda C. Payne. Copyright 1932. New York: Collier Books, 1962. [Part A, Chapter 4, "The Two Ways: The Mysticism of Introspection and the Mysticism of Unifying Vision", the material most commonly used in the above, covers pp.57-72; Otto's distinction between Nature Mysticism and that of "Dancing upon the Water", appears in Part A, Ch.6, Sec.4, pp.92-95. I wish to thank Balfour S. Whitney of Norman, Oklahoma, who introduced me to this book and who gave me the copy I here cite.]

SAYERS, Dorothy L. "The Beatrician Vision in Dante and Other Poets." In The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement, and Other Posthumous Essays on Literature, Religion, and Language, pp.45-68. London: Victor Gollancz, 1963. [The four poets most thoroughly compared are Dante, Wordsworth, Blake (to a lesser degree), and Traherne; the loss of the First Vision, and the missed opportunity of God's refusal to return to it (as contrasted to the other three poets' return) on pp.61-67. Parallel to my citation from Alan Watts in the essay above is Sayer's quotation from Aldous Huxley's Doors of Perception on p.47. In fact, Sayer's essay is close to my thesis throughout, except that she is not working with a Mystical Scale.]


people became poets long before they learned how to read or write. The balloon-pricking type of person might say that he worked a

Celts were still closer than most people. In his essay on Magic he referred to look upon them as part of what he called the romantic

plenty of others to point it out. Too many of them, in my opinion, are necessary and tremendously dramatic, but I never enjoy them one tenth as much as the weird journey itself. During the descent into the abyss with its awesome sense of unseen watchers and gathering forces—the horror made all the more real by the little ordinary human touches, such as hobbits' inquisitiveness and Gandalf's snappishness—you too use your imagination. You keep wondering: "What are they going to find?" or "What is going to happen?"—are necessary and tremendously dramatic, but I never enjoy them one tenth as much as the weird journey itself.

To revert to Yeats himself: having always been fascinated by forests I am particularly interested by his remarks about the different, and often approach. To Wm. Butler Yeats, himself every inch an Irishman, felt that it was wrong to nail down certain literary traits as "Celtic." He preferred to look upon them as part of what he called the "Ancient Religion of the World," which he thought even modern Celts were still closer than most people. In his essay on Magic he described this primeval religion as only a poet could, speaking of gods whose passions flamed in the sunset, of ancient fishermen and hunters, and of the ecstasy that descended upon those who danced on the hills or in the depths of the forest. The balloon-pricking type of person might say that he worked a good deal of W. B. Yeats into primitive man, but now that we are becoming familiar with folklore we must admit that the ancient people became poets long before they learned how to read or write, and if Yeats ignored their existence, there'll always be plenty of others to point it out. Too many of them, in my opinion.

Whenever I read a modern, non-fantasy novel based on an ancient myth—generally on Greek or Norse material—I don't think the Celts have as much appeal for the realists—I am always shocked at how much more the Celts of the more modern reconstructions seem than Homer or the sagas ever did. But then our realists seem to me to have cultivated a really wonderful sense of beauty, whereas Homer and the Norse "song smiths" appeal to the eye-beauty or terrible images—and the imagination. (Though of course these ancient gentlemen may have been too used to the smells to notice them: I admit that.)