

MAGDALENIAN¹

See color plate III.

From the waist up, she is mostly headstone
and this only intensifies my love
for what we are, something walking
with snout for groin, sniffing the fresh blue
between the cracked brown bones
that are her legs. There is no horizon
to her, no explanation, only a narrative
slash above her pelvis. Something has been taken
from her, or out of her—
all I can feel, when I place a finger
on the slash, are rows of tiny teeth,
as if behind them is the paradise of
mouth and tongue. Her glory is
to have nothing behind her image.
The swipe of red across thorax
is what is left after the necklace of becoming
is removed. She is
what remains after fire
and water and earth, a hardness of the air
that keeps my softness alert to the singular
voicing, the past tense of
I speak
she seems clenched upon in belly.

—pinned in—
The Meat Server
 masticated by the broken
 chariot of the earth



★

“fantastic figures”³—more beast-
 like here than human—one
 horn one ear— { one large figure
 one small figure

as in Lascaux?
 (the *grand* and *petit* sorcerer?)⁴

First indications of master/
 apprentice? (“tanist” re. Graves)⁵

the grotesque archetype⁶

vortex in which the emergent
 human and withdrawing animal
 are spun—

grotesque = movement

(life is grotesque when we catch
 it in quick perceptions—
 at full vent—history
 shaping itself)

the turns/twists of the cave
 reinforce the image turbine—
 as does the underground river,

the cave floats,
 in a sense, in several senses,
 all at once,
 it rests on the river, is penetrated
 by it, was originally made
 by rushing water—
 the cave
 is *the skeleton of flood*



Le Tuc d'Audoubert: The Abbé
 Breuil's drawing of the two “fantas-
 tic figures” in the Upper Gallery
 facing the cathole.

images on its walls
participate, thus, as torsion,
in an earlier torsion—

Here one might synthesize:

1) abstract signs
initiate movement
brought to rest in

3) naturalistic figures
(bison, horses etc)

In between, the friction, are

2) grotesque hybrids

(useful—but irrelevant to systematize forces that must have been felt as flux, as *unplanned*, spontaneous, as were the spots/areas in caves chosen for images—because shadowing or wall contour evoked an animal? Any plan a coincidence—we have no right to systematize an area of experience of which we have only shattered iceberg tips⁷—yet it does seem that “image” occurs at the point that a “naturalistic” ibex is gouged in rock across an “abstract” vulva already gouged there, so that the rudiments of poetry are present at approximately 30,000 BC—

image is crossbreeding,
or the refusal to respect
the single, individuated body,
image is that point
where sight crosses sight—

to be alive as a poet is to be
in conversation with one's eyes)

What impresses at Tuc is a relationship
between river

hybrid figures
and the clay bison—

it is as if the river (the skeleton of water = the cave itself) erupts into image with the hybrid “guardians” (Breuil's guess) and is brought to rest in the terminal chamber with the two bison i.e., naturalism is a kind of rest—naturalism returns us to a continuous and predictable

nature (though there is something unnatural about these bison to be noted later)—takes us out of the discontinuity, the *transgression* (to cite Bataille's slightly too Catholic term, of the grotesque

(though the grotesque, on another level, according to Bakhtin, is deeper continuity, the association of *realms*, kingdoms, fecundation and death, degradation and praise—))

on one hand: bisons-about-to-couple

assert the generative

what we today take to be

the way things are (though with ecological pollution,
"generation" leads to mutation,
a new "grotesque"!)

★

to be gripped by *a womb of stone*

to be in the grip of the surge of life

imprisoned in stone

it is enough to make one *sweat one's animal*

(having left the "nuptial hall" of white stone breasts in which one can amply stand—the breasts hang in clusters right over one's head—one must then squirm vertically up the spiral chimney (or use the current iron ladder) to enter the upper level via a cathole into a corridor through which one must crawl on hands and knees—then another longish cathole through which one must crawl on one's belly, squirming through a human-sized tunnel—to a corridor through which one can walk haltingly, stooping, occasionally slithering through vertical catslits and straddling short walls)—

if one were to film one's postures through this entire process, it might look like a St.-Vitus dance of the stages in the life of man, birth channel expulsion to old age, but without chronological order, a jumble of exaggerated and strained positions that correspondingly increase the *image pressure* in one's mind—

while in Le Tuc d'Audoubert I felt the broken horse rear in agony in the cave-like stage of Picasso's *Guernica*,

at times I wanted to leave my feet behind, or to continue headless in the dark, my stomach desired prawn-like legs with grippers, my organs were in the way, something inside of me wanted to be



Le Tuc d'Audoubert: Iron ladder leading to the Upper Gallery from the "nuptial hall."



Le Tuc d'Audoubert: Max Bégouën (one of the "three brothers") by the cathole he has opened that leads to the clay bison.

an armored worm,
one feeler extending out its head,

I swear I sensed the disintegration of the backbone of my mother
now buried 12 years,

entangled in a cathole I felt my tongue start to press backwards,
and the image force was: I wanted to *choke myself out of myself*, to
give birth to my own strangulation, and then nurse my strangulation
at my own useless male breasts—useless? No, for Le Tuc d'Audoubert
unlocks memories that bear on a single face the expressions of
both Judith and Holofernes at the moment of beheading, mingled
disgust terror delight and awe, one is stimulated to desire to enter
cavities within oneself where dead men can be heard talking—

in Le Tuc d'Audoubert I heard something in me whisper me to
believe in God

and something else in me whispered that the command was the
rasp of a 6000 year old man who wished to be venerated again—

and if what I am saying here is vague it is because both voices had
to sound themselves in the bowels of this most personal and imper-
sonal stone, in which sheets of myself felt themselves corrugated
with nipples—as if the anatomy of life could be described, from this
perspective, as entwisted tubes of nipples stone through which per-
petual and mutual beheadings and birthings were taking place—

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See color plate IV.

but all these fantastic images were shooed away the moment I laid
eyes on the two bison sculptured out of clay leaned against stuff
fallen from the chamber ceiling—

the bison and their “altar” seemed to be squeezed up into view out
of the swelling of the chamber floor—

the sense of *culmination* was very severe, the male about to
mount the female, but clearly placed several inches behind and
above her, not in contact with any part of her body, and he had no
member—⁸

if they *were* coupling, and *without* deep cracks in their clay bod-
ies, they would have disappeared into their progeny thousands of
years ago, but here they are today still, as if Michelangelo were to
have depicted God and man as not touching, but only reaching
toward each other, caught in the exhaustion of a yearning for a
sparkling that has in fact never taken place, so that the weight of all
the cisterns in the world is in that yearning, in the weight of that
yearning is the real ballast in life, a ballast in which the unborn are
coddled like slowly cooking eggs, unborn bison and unborn man, in
the crib of a scrotum, a bone scrotum, that jailhouse of generation

from which the prisoners yearn to leap onto the taffy machine-like pistons of shaping females—

it is that spot where the leap should occur that Le Tuc d'Audoubert says is VOID, and that unfilled space between two fertile poles here feels like the origin of the abyss, as if in the minds of those who shaped and placed these two bison, fertilization was pulled free, and that freedom from connection is the demon of creation haunting man and woman ever since—

we crawled on hands and knees about this scene, humbled, in single file, lower than the scene, 11 human creatures come, lamps in hand like a glowworm pilgrimage, to worship in circular crawl at one of the births of the abyss—

if I had stayed longer, if I had not with the others disappeared into the organic odors of the Montesquieu-Avantès woods, I am sure that I would have noticed, flittering out of the deep cracks in the bison clay, little winged things, image babies set free, the Odyssei before Odysseus who still wander the vaults of what we call art seeking new abysses to inscribe with the tuning forks of their wings . . .

PLACEMENTS II: "THE ARANEA CONSTELLATION"

An Aranea centered in her web, afloat yet anchored between ground and sky. The natural mind of the earth always spinning. Her one "decision," where to start the web. A small male enters, testing, sounding, the thread. At the center of the orb, after mating, the penetrator is killed.

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Arachne is not Ariadne, although the figures are intertwined: The natural mind of the earth always spinning anticipates the mistress of the labyrinth that the initiate is to traverse. In the labyrinth of the creative life, "the bitter combat of the two natures"¹ can be sublimated from a life/death struggle to an orgasmic union with a priestess whose lunar energies are at flood-tide.

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1963: There was a gorgeous red, yellow, and green Aranea centered in her web attached to a persimmon tree in the Okumura backyard. I got used to taking a chair and a little table out under the web where I'd read. After several weeks of "spider sitting" the weather turned chill, with rain and gusting wind. One afternoon I found the web wrecked, the spider gone. Something went through me that I can only describe as the sensation of the loss of one loved. I cried, and for several days felt nauseous and absurd.

A week later, I decided to motorcycle out to northwest Kyoto and visit Gary Snyder. Gary was not home, so I had tea with Joanne Kyger and, late in the afternoon, started the half-hour drive back home. Riding south on Junikendoori, it appeared that the motorcycle handlebars had become ox horns and that I was riding on an ox. A lumber company turned into a manger of baby Jesus and kneeling Wise Men. I forced myself to stay aware that I was in moving traffic, and looking for a place to turn off spotted Nijo Castle with its big tourist bus parking lot. Getting off my ox-cycle, I felt commanded to circumambulate the square Castle and its moat. I saw what seemed to be Kyger's eyeballs in the moat water. At the northwest corner, I felt commanded to look up: Some forty feet above my head was the spider completely bright red, the size of a human adult, flexing her legs as if attached to and testing her web. After maybe thirty seconds the image began to fade . . .

I immediately felt that I had been given a totemic gift and that it

would direct my relationship to poetry. Out of my own body, I was to create a matrix strong enough in which to live and hunt.

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At 50,000 B.P., a fetally tied corpse is carried on a bed of branches and flowers to an ochre-packed pit in the Zagros Mountains.² The red-gated pit accepts the bound one—"Then closes the Valves of her attention—Like Stone—."³ With the power of her red interior, she will wombify the entombed. In primitive peoples a belief has persisted that the soul, or the new-born self, is a result of the coagulation of menstrual blood. In my spider vision the green and yellow of Aranea's abdomen disappeared: The visionary spider was all red.

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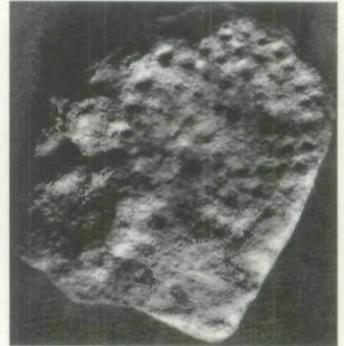
At 30,000 B.P., sixty cupules were gouged in the shape of a filled-in spiral in a block discovered at ochre-stained La Ferrassie. Red discs surrounding vulva-like openings in the caves of Chufn and Pech-Merle, and the red vulva symbols in La Pasiega and El Castillo,⁴ indicate that at the very beginning of image making, creation magic was related to menstruation.

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I see in the Cretan labyrinth not only the ancient ghost of a spider-centered web but Paleolithic man leaving a living site and becoming a hunter following the herds, thus entering the mythos of killing and sacrifice. Far from the living site a new "center" was being tested. As a conjunction of man and animal, the Minotaur was sounded possibly as early as 32,000 B.P. in its depiction at Chauvet. Bull-headed men scamper among bounding animals at Les Trois Frères and Gabillou.⁵ In killing his Other, man was also killing his merely biological creature self. By driving a spear into an animal's side, he was, in a way, thrusting himself into the animal, so as to emerge with its head and his own body—to then make the long trek back, to the women and children, with animal in mind and bloody meat in hand.

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The alchemist Fulcanelli: "The picture of the labyrinth is thus offered to us as emblematic of the whole labour of the Work, with its



La Ferrassie: Aurignacian block showing spiral cupules.

See color plate V.

two major difficulties, one the path which must be taken in order to reach the centre—where the bitter combat of the two natures takes place—the other the way which the artist must follow in order to emerge. It is here that *the thread of Ariadne* becomes necessary for him, if he is not to wander among the winding paths of the task, unable to extricate himself.”⁶

*

Anton Ehrenzweig: “Any creative search, whether for a new image or idea, involves the scrutiny of an often astronomical number of possibilities. The correct choice between them cannot be made by a conscious weighing up of each single possibility cropping up during the search; if attempted it would only lead us astray. A creative search resembles a maze with many nodal points. From each of these points many possible pathways radiate in all directions leading to further crossroads where a new network of high- and by-ways come into view. Each choice would be easy if we could command an aerial view of the entire network of nodal points and radiating pathways still lying ahead. This is never the case. If we could map out the entire way ahead, no further search would be needed. As it is, the creative thinker has to make a decision about his route without having the full information needed for his choice. This dilemma belongs to the essence of creativity.”⁷

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Every artist participates in Ariadne. The transformation of the “given” life to a “creative” one not only involves entering a dark or “inner” life, but generating as well a resistance substantial enough to test oneself against and to shape the focus of one’s work. Having experienced the bestowal of soul (which is the reality of Ariadne), one must liberate the experience in a creative product, must emerge with more than the claim that something “happened” while “inside.”

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There is an archetypal poem, and its most ancient design is probably the labyrinth. One suddenly cuts in, leaving the green world for the apparent stasis and darkness of the cave. The first words of a poem propose and nose forward toward a confrontation with what the writer is only partially aware of, or may not be prepared to address until it emerges, flushed forth by digressions and meanders.

Poetry twists toward the unknown and seeks to realize something beyond the poet's initial awareness. What it seeks to know might be described as the unlimited interiority of its initial impulse. If a "last line," or "conclusion," occurs to me upon starting to write, I have learned to put it in immediately, so it does not hang before me, a lure, forcing the writing to skew itself in order that this "last line" continues to make sense as such.

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As far as poetry is concerned, "the bitter combat of the two natures" can be understood as the poet's desire to discover something new or unique versus the spectral desire of tradition to defeat the new and to continue to assert its own primacy. It is a "bitter" combat because the realization which writing a poem may provide is inevitably partial. The Minotaur is at best crippled, never slain, and the poet never strides forth from the labyrinth heroic and intact. At best, he crawls forth, "wounded," as in the cry of César Vallejo in his poem, "Intensity and Height";⁸ more often than not, he never emerges at all. The poet never leaves this place of combat with a total poem, because such a poem would confirm that the discrepancy between desire and the fulfillment of desire has been eliminated. But since my desire is ultimately to create reality and not merely to observe it, I am bound to be defeated if reality is at stake in my poem's ambition. As I emerge from the poem, regardless of what I have realized while in the poem, I am back in the observable biological continuum, and part of it, part of its absolute mortality.

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The earliest earth-wombs were probably caves in which the one to be initiated slept "in magical imitation of the incubatory sleep in the womb."⁹ We know that shamanic initiation involved long periods of incubation, pantomimed destruction, burial, and rebirth. This incubus was not a perverse, Christianized friend, but an angel brooding on the initiate's body, perhaps in psychic imitation of the digger wasp/caterpillar conjunction. The signs, grotesques, and animals in Upper Paleolithic caves may have been painted there as dream allies, left as records of the dream/initiation, or both. The fact that this imagery is often found in remote and "tight" parts of a cave not only stresses the underworld journey, but the womblike congruence between the cave's body and the initiate's body.

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Hans Peter Duerr: "In order for [these night travelers] to understand their own essence, they had to descend to that place, to return to the uterus of she who gave birth to everything, the place of origin not only of humans, but of all creatures of nature.

"The act of insight was at the same time also an act of love, which would have represented incest with the mother if at the place of origin incest itself had not been dissolved together with the barriers to incest. There is no sin at the place of origin. Where there are no longer any norms, no norms can be violated. Knowledge of the place of origin means: dissolution of the separation of things from each other . . .

"In later time, in the classical Greek period, people spoke of 'knowledge as memory.' This is actually a watered down form of what in archaic times was a factual leaving behind the 'world of separation' and a return to the unifying womb of things, which knew no knowledge and no object of knowledge, no above and no below, no animals or people, no men and women.

"Archaic humans . . . possessed the insight that one had to leave the world, that one could become 'tame' only if before one had been 'wild,' that one could only live in the true sense of the world if one had proved one's willingness to die.

"In order to be able to live within the order, in other words, in order to be consciously tame or domesticated, one had to have lived in the wilderness. One could know what *inside* meant only if one had once been *outside*."¹⁰

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Planned, direct access to "the unifying womb of things" today seems to be restricted to specially trained figures in tribal societies. The problem of inducing transformational visions on the part of artists in the modern world did not begin with Rimbaud, but at 17 years old, in 1871, he expressed this knotty dilemma: "I'm lousing myself up as much as I can these days. Why? I want to be a poet, and I am working to make myself a *seer*: you won't understand this at all"—he was writing to his Rhetoric teacher, Georgez Izambard—"and I hardly know how to explain it to you. The point is, to arrive at a disordering of *all the senses*. The sufferings are enormous, but one has to be strong, to be born a poet, and I have discovered I am a poet. It is not my fault at all. It is a mistake to say: I think. One ought to say: I am thought . . . *I is someone else*."¹¹

Rimbaud finds himself in the fix of needing to learn how to be what he already claims he has been determined to be. Claiming that he is a poet, he sees his work as breaking the poet down into a seer

(at that point, by getting drunk) while knowing that even the sympathetic Izambard will not grasp what he is up to. The unconscious as an active, directional power seems right around the corner from Rimbaud's notion that his unknown "I" is not the subject but the object of his thought. However, "The Drunken Boat" as well as *The Illuminations* are the products of a bold, inventive ego (that has quickly assimilated, in Kenneth Rexroth's words, "the radical disassociation, analysis, and recombination of all the material elements of poetry"),¹² not an ego that has returned to "the place of origin" and reconstructed itself after experiencing symbolic dismemberment. Which is to say that Rimbaud's "disordering" is more aesthetic than it is psychological. In fact, it could be argued that his desire to cross over into what he was "not" only become possible after he stopped writing poetry, and the journey into the African wilderness appears to have remained, as a record at least, on a literal level.

With rare exceptions, nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets do not have access to a context that would nurture the kind of shamanic apprenticeship pointed at the states of mind Duerr has described. Many of us would agree with Antonin Artaud: "Who does not want to initiate himself to himself there is no other who will initiate him."¹³ When poets do cross over to a mystical "outside," such experiences are usually unplanned, brief, and, from an archaic viewpoint, not thorough. I have in mind here Walt Whitman's erotic fusion detailed in Section 5 of "Song of Myself," or Rainer Maria Rilke's sudden contact with what he called "the other side of nature" in "An Experience," or Allen Ginsberg hearing Blake's voice as a novice poet in 1948. Having been jolted by the author's recitation of "Ah, Sunflower," Ginsberg spent the following twenty years attempting to retrieve that moment via drugs, travel, and a homoerotic openness to his and others' feelings. His itinerary in one respect bears a curious relationship to Rimbaud's: Rather than building to a dissolution of the self, Rimbaud's trip to Africa and Ginsberg's pilgrimage to the East took place *after* early, unexpected empowerments.

In some ways, the poet's peripheralization today is a parody of the *hagazussa*, the witch who, in the Middle Ages, was said to sit on the *hag*, or fence, which was built behind the gardens and separated the village from the wilderness.¹⁴ As a figure employing ointments, spells, and entheogens to fly back and forth between wilderness and culture, the *hagazussa* synchronizes with the shaman whose presence appears to be documented by certain hybrid/grotesque images in the Upper Paleolithic caves. We can only conjecture, on the basis of such imagery alone, what being "outside" vs. "inside" might have meant at 20,000 B.P.

A contemporary image of flight into a demonic "outside" and

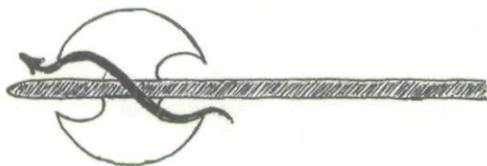
clad in bison skins, wearing horns? Eight hundred yards from the entrance to Le Tuc d'Audoubert, the sculpted bison becomes a new "center" at the physical periphery. Wherever one finds a "center," one may also find the labyrinthine ghost of a torn, once connecting, web.

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On the isle of Naxos, commemorating Ariadne's transformation, Theseus and his fourteen companions danced a Le Tuc d'Audoubert-like swirling dance around a horned altar,¹⁹ which recalls the actual bull horns through which Cretan bull-dancers flipped in the sacred marriage of king sun and queen moon. The "horned altar" also evokes the womb's birth cone (and the labyrinth itself is prefigured by the cervix, lined with a branching called the "arbor vitae," or tree of life, where devouring white cells may be imagined to hide and wait like monsters for the Odyssean sperm over whose turbulent voyage the Athenic aspects of woman preside).²⁰

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The horned altar is also the Double Axe, or labrys: Bound together by a haft, the crescent-moon blades are a glyph of the labyrinth. The path through is serpentine, and in respect to the material, the central confrontation is the movement from iron to wood to iron, inorganic vs. organic materials.²¹



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As an early form of Ariadne, Arihagne (the "utterly pure")²² was a spinning hag or sorceress who enjoyed intercourse with the labyrinth and its grotesque inhabitant. When patriarchal consciousness overwhelmed matriarchal centering, Ariadne became a "maiden to be rescued," who, "falling in love" with the hero Theseus, gave him a "clew" or thread that would enable him to get in and out and, while in, to slaughter the sleeping Minotaur. The labyrinth, without its central being, was thus emptied of animality.

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In the twentieth century, the burden of the vacated labyrinth involves hairline connections with the cul-de-sacs of the deep past. On the other hand, after the first split-off, or separation crisis, there has only been unending bifurcation. The myth of Ariadne seems to capture much of Charles Olson's vision of "life turning on a SINGLE CENTER" until a mysterious "counter will" manifested itself around 3400 B.P.²³ In Olson's view, the heroic attempt to overthrow and dominate external reality" resulted in the migration waves (they look like tentacles on maps) that spread out around the planet.

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Garcia Lorca's essay on the "duende"²⁴ identifies this diabolism of the blood, or bloodmare, which provokes some of the world's great art, as a struggle with a wound that never closes. Is Garcia Lorca therefore caught, whether he knows it or not, in Ariadne's turnstile, responding to blood that for thousands of years has mesmerized and enraged men as it appeared in rhythm with the moon and the tides and, without violence, ceased, to only reappear again and again?

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In Tantrik sexual magic, the two ingredients of the Great Rite can be *sukra* (semen) and *rakta* (menstrual blood). The sulfurous red ingredient in alchemical goldmaking probably was at times this female essence (the *rubedo*, or precious red "stone" that sweats blood and turns the world to gold, and is also a conjunction of a whitened Queen and a reddened King—such a blending could be seen as a *pinkening*).²⁵ Some images of the labyrinth have not a Minotaur but a rose at their center, a sign that a transformation has taken place. Seven days, across her period, the Old King is dissolved, rinsed of himself, his selves, lost in her "bath," her anabasis. The Dionysian initiate who is assimilated into this rose appears with a beard of roses to complement, below, Ariadne's rose-wreath crown.²⁶

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The natural spinning mind of the earth weaves itself in personifications throughout our humanity. Biological peril is always central, and sublimated by image-making into "scorpion hopscotch," or the imaginative gambling called poetry. It is possible to formulate a perspective that offers a life continuity, from lower life forms, through human biology and sexuality, to the earliest imagings of our situation, which now seems to be bio-tragically connected with our

having separated ourselves out of the animal-hominid world in order to pursue that catastrophic miracle called consciousness. If the labyrinth is a Double Axe, one might see it as humanity's anguished attempt to center a ceaseless duplicity conjured by the evidence that each step forward seems to be a step backward. And the haft? Phal-locentricity that fuses the menstrual/ovulatory cycles into an instrument of inner and outer ceremony that injures but does not restore.