

often violent progression of the family-community through tribalism into the age of empires and nation-states, pausing for comment on the unique contributions made by the ancient Greeks and Jews to the idea of community. The Greeks used their technical inheritances from preceeding cultures to shore up their novel idea that there was a "vast orderly universe governed by law and accessible to human reason." The result was a governance based on internal integrity rather than propitiation. New moral obligations were perceived by the Jews, chief among them a compassion for the poor and the outcast.

Out of these new beliefs came elements of social justice and order which loom large in subsequent societies. Late in the book the author turns back to these sturdy foundations as the only base upon which a surviving world can rest. But first she deals with two major attempts to replace the old nationalisms—capitalism and Communism, "bourgeois supranationalism in the West and Communist internationalism in the East." In neither system does she find that the expectations of the designers were met.

**T**HE difficulties encountered in exporting the American "proposition" beyond its own borders are no less than those quickly discovered by the purveyors of international Communism. When the simplistics of the Marxist nostrum—the rooting out of private property and the profit motive—failed as an exportable model, Russia turned inward to a central-planning bureaucracy on a scale never before contemplated, and held her fiefs by force. The limited viability of both these two great substitute systems has, in Miss Ward's view, "reinforced, not weakened, the nation-state."

The centers of power must accept the responsibilities of power. The author puts the heavy end of the log onto the United States. Our wealth and its continuing conscious, well-directed outflow to the developing world is, she contends, the only effective means by which to mitigate the hardening of nationalist positions. But she feels that Americans are disillusioned about the short-range consequences of generosity. "Today faith, not fact, is what cripples our programs, closes our pockets, and dries up our hearts." That the USSR will lead or even significantly participate in this great endeavor is, she believes, too much to hope for a long time to come. Essential world authority in the cause of peace thus falls to the United States.

Miss Ward's final chapter echoes and elaborates on her earlier references to the persuasive moralities of ancient Judaism. She specifically declines to "go back" to the old orthodoxies, but hopes for a new encounter between faith in man and religious faith.

# Prometheus and Persephone Reborn

**Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice**, edited by John B. Vickery (University of Nebraska Press. 391 pp. \$7.95), a collection of essays, seeks to establish mythical prototypes for works by writers from Milton to Saul Bellow. Theodor H. Gaster wrote "Thespis: Myth, Ritual and Drama in the Ancient Near East."

By THEODOR H. GASTER

**T**HIS series of essays (all reprints) is designed to expound the theory and practice of a new approach to literature known as Myth Criticism. The primary concern of this approach is to recognize in works of fiction and poetry the rearticulation of themes and figures long familiar from classical and other ancient mythology. Thus (to quote examples cited in this volume) Saul Bellow's *Herzog* is Prometheus *redivivus*; Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* are Cronus and Rhea; Priscilla in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* is a Persephone type (she is of wan hue, is secluded, and gathers flowers); and Moodie in the same novel is a Zeus-Hades (whatever that might mean).

Moreover, since—as is now well known—myth is intimately bound up with religious cult, many of the situations that appear in fiction and poetry may be recognized as refractions of standard rituals made familiar to us in *The Golden Bough*. The struggle between the two men in D. H. Lawrence's *The Prussian Officer*, for instance, "parallels the ritual combat in the grove at Nemi, in which victory entails a new and unknown life that leads to a final defeat." Similarly, in the same author's *England, My England*, the savage conflict between Egbert and Winifred "that culminates in World War I and Egbert's death is Lawrence's version of the myth of the dying god and the rites of the expulsion of the scapegoat." And Egbert and Winifred's initial sexual ardor is the mimetic ritual "observance by human beings of the Sacred Marriage of the god and goddess." Mrs. Gould, in Conrad's *Nostromo*, in conducting her good deeds from a blue and white boudoir, approximates "the colors assigned by liturgical art to that Christian 'good fairy,' the Virgin Mary." Milton's *Lycidas* reflects "the

archetypal pattern of death and rebirth," and the reference in it to the two friends who had gone out "by fountain, shade and rill" is a rearticulation of the mythic character of water as a symbol of fertility. Finally, when pine trees are mentioned in Lawrence's *St. Mawr*, *The Border Land*, and *The Man Who Died*, they are to be understood as "mythopoeic vegetative forms," illustrated by the role of the pine in the myths of Attis and Osiris.

The business is tiresome—and thoroughly muddleheaded. For one thing, there is ample evidence throughout these essays that (with rare exceptions) the literary critics have simply not done their homework, for many of the archetypes of myth and ritual that they so cavalierly posit are simply distortions or figments of their own imagination, lacking adequate documentation in the ancient sources. Thus we hear a great deal about the scapegoat, but it may be doubted whether the scapegoat was ever in fact a symbol of vicarious atonement—a mere "fall guy"—in the sense commonly assumed. Most scapegoat rituals include a previous public confession of guilt, so that the true purpose of despatching the beast (or man) was not so much to shift blame as to remove a communal miasma for which no one person could be held responsible. Similarly, the representation of the dying-and-reviving god as one who dies *for* his people is open to question; he may equally well be interpreted as one who dies *with* them and who dramatically epitomizes in his single person the periodic death and revival which all concurrently undergo.

**M**ORE important, however, is the crucial error of assuming that there are certain basic situations which belong primarily to the realm of myth and ritual, so that when they appear in literature they must be thence derived. Representative of this attitude, for instance, is John Vickery's statement that the stories of D. H. Lawrence are "densely populated . . . with the figures of comparative religion." The plain truth is that there are no such things as distinctive figures of comparative religion; there are only figures *in* comparative religion, and this means simply figures in the various religions that happen to be compared; which in turn means nothing more than general human figures who appear there purely because they *are* general. In other

words, myth, ritual, and literature are variant expressions of common and recurrent situations and concerns, and parallelism does not imply derivation. Are we to say, for example, that a trip on the subway during the rush hour consciously imitates the archetypal myth of the journey to the netherworld or the perilous ordeal of the initiate? Or is a rape in Central Park an enactment of the Sacred Marriage? No; all that the mythocritics are really saying, when you boil it down, is that myth, ritual, and literature deal with the same kinds of human situations. Which is scarcely worth saying.

A welcome antidote to these beclouded lucubrations are the essays of the anthropologists and philosophers. Joseph Campbell, for example, makes a valuable point when he observes that the comparative study of myths is designed primarily to demonstrate their psychological affinities rather than their literary or historical affiliations, and that consequently the objections of the isolationist anthropologists and historians (my term, not his) really fall wide of the mark. He might have strengthened his argument from the analogy of semantic parallels in languages philologically unrelated. Philip Wheelwright, too, does useful service in proving that mythopoeia ought to be stratified into primary psychological myth-making and derivative use of literary myths. And Richard Chase—though I disagree with him—makes a strong case for the treatment of myth as a form of art rather than as a distinctive mental activity, as Cassirer would regard it. Useful, too, is Stanley Edgar Hyman's survey of the Cambridge school of mythologists (Cornford, Harrison, and Murray), though he credits the present reviewer with the preposterous view that all ancient Near Eastern sacred literature is of ritual origin—a view he has never held. (What about Leviticus?)

Nevertheless, one gets the impression that even the theorists are talking without real conversation, and that they ought first to ask a number of salient questions. Is myth an instinct or an artifice? When is it primary, when sophisticated and contrived? Is mythopoeia chronologically prior to philosophy (as Frankfort supposed), or a parallel phenomenon? When we speak of *mythopoeia*, what is *mythos* and what *poiesis*? Is myth an abstraction of reality or a dimension of the ideal?

Until these questions are seriously pondered, and until the literary critics learn to distinguish between recurrent situations and archetype, between imagery and myth, between myth and symbol, and between myth and poetry, one feels that this whole business of so-called Myth Criticism is largely verbal and ideological legerdemain.

## From I-Thou to I-It

***The Ways of the Will: Essays Toward a Psychology and Psychopathology of Will***, by Leslie H. Farber (Basic Books. 226 pp. \$5.95), presents an existential psychotherapist's analysis of the distinction between conscious and unconscious volition. Robert J. Levin is articles editor for Redbook Magazine.

By ROBERT J. LEVIN

LESLIE H. FARBER's *The Ways of the Will* must be studied, not read. Of these nine "essays toward a psychology and psychopathology of will," eight have appeared previously in such professional journals as *Psychiatry*, *Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, and *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, publications unlikely to appeal to the average intelligent layman. In both style and content Dr. Farber's book makes severe demands on any reader who approaches it without a solid background in psychology and philosophy. This is regrettable, because *The Ways of the Will* is an adventure of the mind, exploring ideas that have always been vitally relevant to man's efforts to under-

stand himself—and perhaps never more so than today, in the age of alienation and depersonalization.

What is the nature and function of man's will? In suggesting answers, Dr. Farber has retrieved for consideration a subject that has been, since Freud, virtually excluded by psychological theorists. He defines will as "the category through which we examine that portion of our life that is the mover of our life in a certain direction or toward an objective in time." But how can a "portion" of my life move my life in any way? Who—or what—moves my life but me?

The answer lies in the fundamental distinction the author draws between two different "realms" of will. In the first realm, will is not a matter of immediate experience. It can only be inferred after the event and may be called unconscious. Thus to say that I changed my life would be an oversimplification. It would imply complete and conscious intention, choice and decision; it would ignore the fact that I was committed and in motion before becoming aware that change had already occurred.

In the first realm, Dr. Farber writes, "will is joined to all appropriate human capacities . . . to form a seamless whole enclosing me that pushes in a particular



"Care for a bit of Mendelssohn with your meal?"