

"Leda and the Swan" is a poem about the failure of the modern to regain mythic consciousness precisely because of his self-consciousness or fall into history; it is a poem concerned with the same problem that Wordsworth articulates in "The World Is Too Much with Us." Furthermore, the poem is a political allegory of the rape of Ireland by England, and, as D. H. Lawrence reminds us, myth and allegory are incompatible. In any case, if Gallagher wants a poem that is truly mythic and that evokes rather than invokes the archetype of "Leda and the Swan," I suggest he read James Dickey's "The Sheep Child."

If, in turn, Gallagher wants another example of "literature about myth," he should read *The Longest Journey*—which brings me back to Herz's comments and, specifically, her argument that Stephen's wife is "clearly none other than the Demeter of Cnidos," that his marriage is thus of the "hierogamous" rather than of the "wedlock" variety, and, accordingly, that the novel does not end with love and nature triumphing for the good of society. But what, I wonder, does Herz then make of Forster's concluding introduction of Stephen's child or of the thoroughly domestic conversation between Stephen and the child's mother; do semi-divine children really have a taste for "shoe polish," as this child has? Do goddesses really address their spouses as "Stevie, dear"?

But, in conclusion, I should like to contend with Gallagher's mistaken belief that Walter Otto's theories of the "mythic" contradict my association of "mythic narrative" and "hierogamy" by asking him to ponder carefully the following statement by Otto on the significance of Dionysus for the student of "myth and cult": "Whereas all of the other divinities are accompanied by attendants who are of the same sex as they, women make up the retinue of Dionysus. . . . To be sure, he is in no way a weakling but a warrior and a hero who triumphs. . . . *But his manhood celebrates its sublimest victory in the arms of the perfect woman.* This is why heroism *per se* is foreign to him in spite of his warlike character" (*Dionysus*, p. 175; emphasis mine). Otto, it thus seems to me, would find nothing objectionable in my "hierogamous" approach to the "mythic" but much to criticize in Gallagher's "Christian" apologetics.

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Tartuffe

To the Editor:

In your "Editor's Column" of the January 1977 issue of *PMLA* you stress the point that articles are

now intended to be read with pleasure and also to be of importance to scholars: You single out Marcel Gutwirth's article, "*Tartuffe* and the Mysteries" (*PMLA*, 92, 1977, 33–40) as one that is "provocative" in that it says "new things" about a "well-known and highly provocative work."

In spite of this and other encomia included in your column, the article fails to satisfy me by any of the standards that you mention. The author uses esoteric language to cover up the deficiencies in his thinking and scholarship. The "Mysteries" turn out to be no more than his own obsessions. For example: "The sexual overdetermination of *Tartuffe* (suitor to Mariane, roused by Dorine, in hot pursuit of Elmire) displays, in triplicate as it were, the strategy of the play: to undress the man, letting the naked truth dispel false mystery—pitting, in fact, the mystery of sex, whose nature lies in an unveiling, against the higher mysteries, too easily alleged, of an invisible Presence" (p. 37). I am surprised that, though meaningless, such jargon should have progressed through "nine favorable readings." Moreover, whatever the intended meaning of the quoted sentence may be, the parentheses contain erroneous information. *Tartuffe* is not a suitor to Mariane. Thus we may dismiss as idle chatter the author's claim that "His is the sexual enactment of the father's dwindling potency" (p. 38). *Tartuffe*'s criticism of Dorine's décolleté is no evidence of titillation (excuse the pun) as the author seems to realize only one paragraph later, leading him to self-contradiction: "A studied recoil from sexual realities feminizes *Tartuffe* as decisively as would the priestly robes he does not, in fact, wear" (p. 38). As for *Tartuffe*'s "hot pursuit of Elmire," the point of the scene is that *Tartuffe* is made to believe that Elmire is in hot pursuit of *him*! The reader gains nothing from the author's appraisal of *Tartuffe* "as simultaneously too little and too much the man . . ." (p. 38). The author's hyperbolic language is a mask for his insufficient understanding of the psychological potentialities of the character he discusses.

A great deal of wordage in "*Tartuffe* and the Mysteries" is devoted to "an *Urtartuffe* . . . ingeniously reconstructed by modern scholarship" (p. 34). I have conclusively shown (see *Tartuffe devant l'opinion française*, Paris: P.U.F., 1962, pp. 159–64) that the "ingenious reconstruction" of the 1664 version of Molière's *Tartuffe*, to which the author refers, is neither ingenious nor a reconstruction. We simply do not know how the 1664 version of *Tartuffe* differed from the final version of 1669. Marcel Gutwirth has much to say, but nothing new or provocative, about this tired subject. Or are we to consider provocative his claim that "the transformation

of the play blackens the villainy of its protagonist almost past belief . . ." (p. 34)? One may invalidate this claim on three counts: it is undocumented; it assumes Tartuffe to be the "protagonist," whereas Orgon's role (played by Molière himself) is far longer and far more active; it is precisely Tartuffe's "humanity" ("mixed" nature, neither black nor white) that constitutes the character's title to literary greatness ("C'est . . . un homme enfin").

In his retelling of the play's history, the author is several times guilty of historical misrepresentation. Where, for instance, is his documentation for the statement: "As we now know, Molière's play was hounded off the stage by the well-orchestrated campaign of a secret benevolent society, 'La Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement' . . ." (p. 33)? We *do* know that the entire Catholic establishment of "the Court and the City" was aroused and shocked by Molière's play. Why should we suppose (let alone assume or take for granted), in the absence of documentation, that the voice of an outlawed organization holding illegal meetings should have been the strongest in the chorus of opposition to the play?

I shall limit myself to but one further example of how Gutwirth misleads the reader, who may not be a specialist on the history of the play. Gutwirth claims that "Molière's plea for the purity of the play's intentions had been swept aside [sic] with the gruff [sic] retort: 'It is not the business of the stage to be preaching the Gospel'" (p. 36). The "retort" was made by a highly respectable individual, Guillaume de Lamoignon, First President of the Parliament of Paris. A case could easily be made for its justification. As for the gruffness attributed by Gutwirth to Lamoignon, let the source speak for itself:

"Monsieur [said Lamoignon to Molière], je fais beaucoup de cas de votre mérite; je sais que vous êtes non seulement un acteur excellent, mais encore un très habile homme qui faites honneur à votre profession et à la France. Cependant, avec toute la bonne volonté que j'ai pour vous, je ne saurais vous permettre de jouer votre comédie. Je suis persuadé qu'elle est fort belle et fort instructive; mais il ne convient pas à des comédiens d'instruire les hommes sur les matières de la morale chrétienne et de la religion: ce n'est pas au théâtre à se mêler de prêcher l'Évangile. . . ." (Auguste Laverdet, *Correspondance Boileau-Brossette*, Paris: J. Techener, 1858, p. 565)

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Mr. Gutwirth replies:

We must be grateful to H. P. Salomon for turning to good use the hospitality of the Forum in

bringing us in full the Brossette account of Lamoignon's celebrated sally, which, it might be added, left Molière, for once, entirely speechless. The reader may judge whether my characterization of its content—forbidding the playwright to meddle with what is holy—is compatible with the suavity of its form. Salomon rests his case on the latter. Let the reader choose. Let the reader, in fact, choose his reading of the play or mine: neither has, to my knowledge, a mandate from heaven. But, if the reader should agree that "Tartuffe's criticism of Dorine's décolleté is no evidence of titillation" he will choose to side against Dorine's own estimate of the situation, as quoted in my text. Just as, if the reader should opt for the view that "Tartuffe's 'humanity'" is indeed represented by the line Salomon quotes in part: ("C'est . . . un homme enfin"), he will find himself sharing the optic of that supposed protagonist, Orgon himself. *Les volontés sont libres*. . . .

I am not minded to quibble whether Orgon or Tartuffe is to be given exclusive title to the appellation "protagonist." In fact, I am perfectly content to let such matters fall where they may. H. P. Salomon, however, a reader of more peremptory temper, believes to "have conclusively shown (see *Tartuffe devant l'opinion française* . . . , pp. 159–64) that the 'ingenious reconstruction' of the 1664 version of Molière's *Tartuffe* . . . is neither ingenious nor a reconstruction." A perusal of the pages cited reveals no more than two paragraphs, on page 162, devoted to Cairncross' views. They hit hard, in the author's best dismissive style, at the actual weaknesses of a work that is indeed guilty of seeking to nail fast what can only be suggested. Salomon is content, however, to heap ridicule on some overstatements. Salomon does not so much as address the very real strengths of that thesis: the discovery within the five-act play of a three-act scenario that stands the test of theatrical plausibility, and helps make sense of Molière's silence, in his heated defense of the play, concerning the manifest injustice of attacking an *unfinished* play. My reading of Salomon does not convince me that he has demolished Cairncross and rendered his views unfit to be quoted with favor. And, while there exists no *proof* that the Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement's voice "should have been the strongest in the chorus of opposition to the play," there surely is something disingenuous in dismissing a secret society that numbered the prince of Conti and M. de Lamoignon in its ranks as no more than "an outlawed organization"—when in Salomon's own book the first item of its *Chronologie* reads:

11 avril 1664: Réunion des membres de la Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement chez le marquis de Laval. "On parla