

turned Odysseus's men to their former shapes (and they were younger and fairer than before), took Odysseus to her bed, after which she led him to the netherworld, where he met and talked with—among others of the living dead—the male-female sage Tiresias (once again Figure 3, Station 11). In the general body of Celtic folklore the classical legend of the pig-goddess-guide to the mysteries beyond the plane of death is matched by the Irish folktale, retold in *Primitive Mythology* and noted a few pages back, of the Daughter of the King of the Land of Youth whose head was the head of a pig. When she appeared on earth and attached herself to Finn McCool's son Ossian, he kissed the pig's head away and became the King of the Land of Youth.⁶⁶

Gottfried's vision of Tristan as a wild boar ravaging King Mark's bed, the Welsh triad of his role as Mark's pretended swineherd, and the legend of the scar on his thigh all point in the same direction: to his derivation ultimately from the Celtic-megalithic god of the boar with the eyes of the Great Mother engraved along either side (Figure 18), who, as lord of the wilderness, the underworld, and the vital force of nature, was also king of the Land below Waves and the music-master of its spell.

But, on the other hand, King Mark appears to have been associated with a totally different mythic context, as contrary as the day to night, or as the world of fine clothes and horses to that of harping, fiddling, singing, and the lore of love and the moon. For whereas Tristan, as we have just seen, was originally a Pictish, pre-Celtic king of a Bronze Age matrilineal folk—possibly with memories of ritual regicide not distant in its past—and whereas Queen Isolt, as a legendary daughter of pre-Celtic Ireland, of the breed somewhat of Queen Meave,⁶⁷ was likewise of a matriarchal line; King Mark—known also, in Wales, as Eochaid—seems to have been a Celtic king of Cornwall of about the period of Drustan/Tristan (c. 780–785 A.D.), whose legend, on entering Wales some time before the year 1000, became combined with that of the other two—in a relation generally comparable to that of the Celtic warrior-prince Ailill to Queen Meave.

His name, Marc, is understood usually as an abridgment of the Latin Marcus, from the name of the war-god Mars. It may also bear some relation, however, to the Middle High German *marc*, meaning "war-horse," Welsh *march*, old Irish *morc* or *magg*,

"stallion or steed"; and this alternative is supported by his other Celtic name, *Eochaid*, which is related to the old Irish *ech*, Latin *equus*, meaning "horse." Moreover, in one old French version of the romance (by the continental Norman poet Béroul, c. 1195–1205 A.D.) we find the following startling statement:

Marc a oreilles de cheval,

"Mark has horses' ears."⁶⁸ And with this we are suddenly dropped into an extremely suggestive vortex of both mythological and high historical associations.

v. Moon Bull and Sun Steed

We think first of the classical legend of King Midas, who had ass's ears and whose touch turned everything, including his daughter, into gold, the metal of the sun; recall, too, that the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon invasion of Britain (c. 450 A.D.) were Hengest and Horsa, both of which names are from Germanic nouns meaning "horse." Figure 26 is a bronze solar disk ornamented with a gold

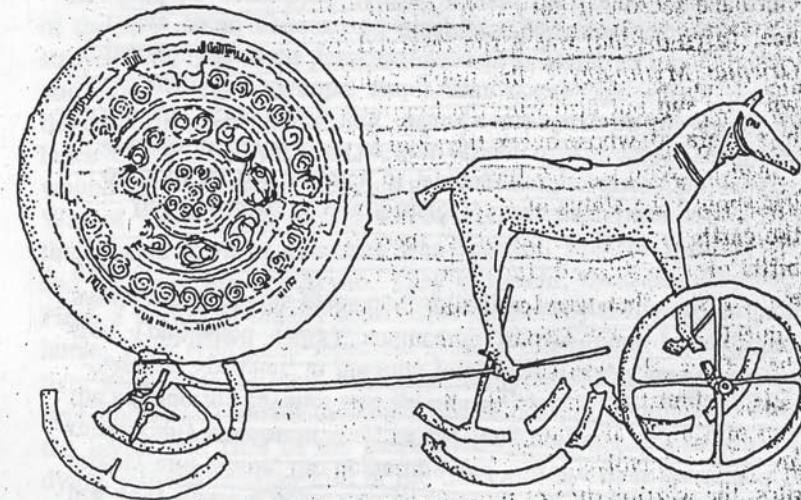


Figure 26. Bronze Solar Horse and Car; Denmark, c. 1000 B.C.



Figure 27. Sun Steed and Eagle; France, Gallo-Roman Period

design of spirals, set on wheels of bronze, and with a bronze steed before it, found at Trundholm, Nordseeland, Denmark (whence Hengest and Horsa came), and usually dated c. 1000 B.C.; while in Figure 27 are a couple of late Gaulish coins showing horses, each with an eagle (sun-bird) on its back, and in one the horse has the head of a man. We know that annually in Rome in October a horse was sacrificed to Mars, and that at midsummer both Celts and Germans sacrificed horses. In Aryan India the high "horse sacrifice" (*asva-medha*) was a rite reserved for kings, where, as seen in *Oriental Mythology*,⁶⁰ the noble animal was identified not only with the sun but also with the king in whose name the rite was to be celebrated; whose queen then had to enact in a pit a ritual of simulated intercourse with the immolated horse: all of which gave to her spouse the status of a solar king whose light should illuminate the earth. And, more remotely, there is the kindred legend of the birth of the beloved Japanese prince Shotoku (573–621 A.D.) while his mother was inspecting the palace precincts. "When she came to the Horse Department and had just come to the door of the stables, she was suddenly delivered of him without effort."⁷⁰

It is almost certain, in the light of these facts, that the association of King Mark with a horse, and even horse's ears, testifies to an original involvement of his image in a context of royal solar rites, the warrior rites of those Celtic Aryans who, with their male-oriented patriarchal order, overran in the course of the first millennium B.C. the old Bronze Age world of the Mother Goddess and

mother-right. The composition of the coin of Figure 27 in which a human-headed horse leaps over a bull as the sun leaps over the earth suggests the relationship of the two orders of the conquerors and conquered in that early Celtic heroic age; and when these figures are compared with those of Pablo Picasso's "Guernica" (Figure 28), where a horse and its rider lie shattered and a bull stands mighty and whole, the beginning and end are seen illustrated, in a remarkably consistent way, of the long majestic day in Europe of the conquering cavalier and his mount.

Oswald Spengler, in his final published work, *Years of the Decision* (published 1933), delineated in two bold paragraphs the whole reach of this great day, of which we are now in the twilight hour:

In the course of world history, there have been two great revolutions in the manner of waging war produced by sudden increases in mobility. The first occurred in the early centuries of the first millennium B.C., when, somewhere on the broad plains between the Danube and Amur rivers, the riding horse appeared. Mounted hosts were vastly superior to men afoot.* The riders could appear and disappear before a defense or pursuit could be assembled. It was in vain that populations, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, supplemented their foot forces with mounted contingents of their own: the latter were hindered in maneuvers by the footmen. Nor were the Chinese and Roman empires saved by the building of walls and moats: such a wall as can be seen to this day cutting half across Asia; or such as the Roman *limes* recently discovered in the Syro-Arabian desert. It was impossible to send an assembled army out from behind such barriers quickly enough to break up a surprise attack. The settled agrarian, peasant populations of the Chinese, Indian, Roman, Arabian, and West European spheres were, time and again, overwhelmed, in helpless terror, by swarms of Parthians,

* "And to war-chariots as well, which could be employed only in battle and were of no use on the march. Chariots first appeared about a thousand years earlier than the mounted horse, in the same area, and, wherever employed, were invincible on contemporary battlefields: in China and India, shortly after 1500 B.C.; in the Near East somewhat earlier, and in the Hellenic sphere shortly after 1600. Soon they were in service everywhere, but disappeared when mounted troops came into general use—even when the latter were employed only as special auxiliaries to forces afoot." (Spengler's note.)

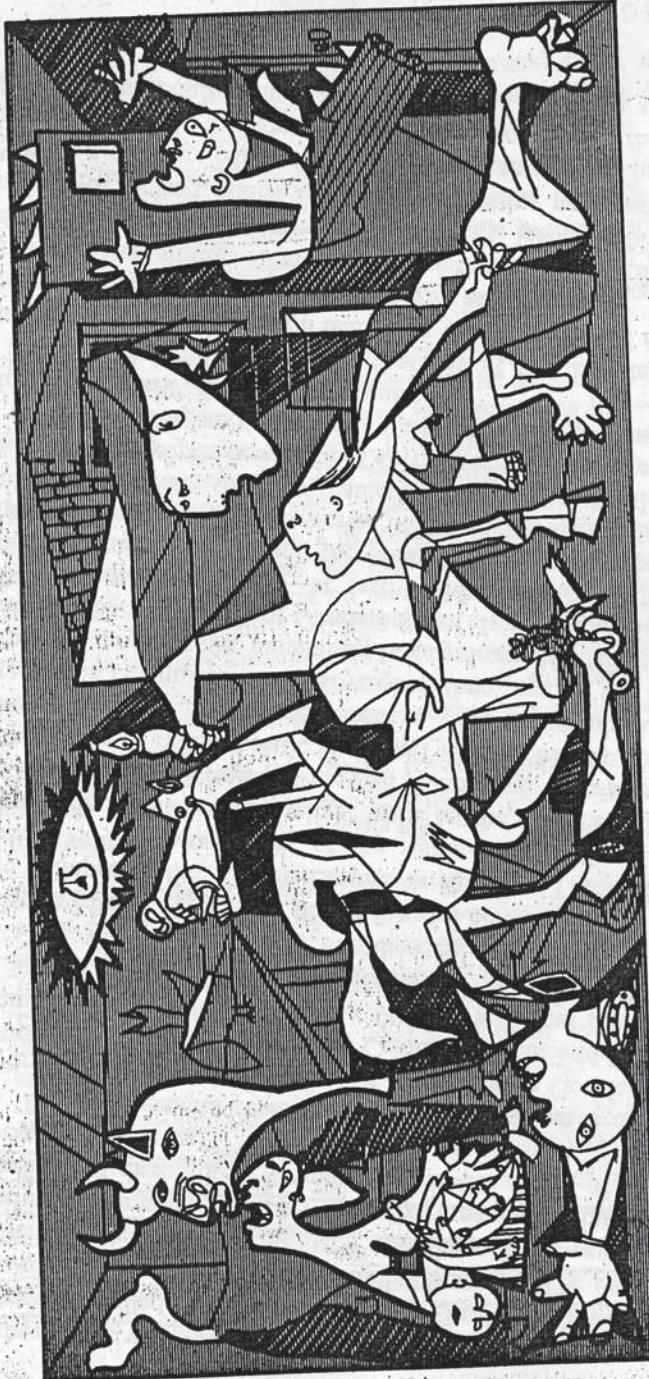


Figure 28. Adapted from Pablo Picasso: *Guernica*: 1937

Huns, Scythians, Mongols, and Turks. Cavalry and peasantry, it is apparent, are in spirit irreconcilable. It was in this way, to their superior speed, that the hosts of Jenghis Khan owed their victories.

The second decisive transformation, we are witnessing at this very hour in the displacement of the horse by the "horse power" of our Faustian technology. As late as through the [First] World War there hung about the famous old West European cavalry regiments an atmosphere of knightly pride, daring adventure and heroism, which greatly surpassed that of any other military arm. These had been, for centuries, true Vikings of the land. They came to represent more and more—much more than the infantries of the general armies—the true sense of vocation of the dedicated soldier's life and military career. In the future all this will change. Indeed, the airplane and tank corps have already taken their place, and mobility has been carried with these beyond the limits of organic possibility to the inorganic range of the machine: of (so to say) personal machines, however, which, in contrast to the impersonality of the machine-gun fire of the trenches of the [First] World War, now will again challenge the spirit of personal heroism to great tasks.⁷¹

In Picasso's "Guernica," the glaring electric bulb is the only sign of the new order of power and life by which the old is being destroyed: the old, of the barnyard bull and the warhorse, peasantry and cavalry. The shattered steed, the once conquering vehicle of the day of history now ending, appears to have been pierced by the lance of its own rider, as well as gored by the bull. The lance wound is a reference, obviously, to civil war: the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, during the course of which, in April 1937, the Basque town of Guernica was bombed. But the Basque race and language are pre-Aryan. They represent, thus, like Drustan's Picts, a period of history antecedent to the day and people of the horse. They typify and represent even to this present hour the patient spirit of those long, toiling millenniums of the entry into Europe and establishment there of its basic peasant population: when the myths and rites of the sacrificial bull—symbolic of the ever-dying, self-resurrecting lord of the tides of life, whose celestial sign is the moon—were the life-supporting forms of faith and prayer. In the bull ring, from which Picasso took his imagery, the old worn-out picador-horse is gored by the bull, but the bull itself is then

slain by a solar weapon—the sword of the matador, who is clothed in a garment called "the garment of light." In Picasso's work there is no such avenger: the enigmatic bull still stands. The day of the cavalier is ended; and tracing back now through the centuries, to identify the symbolic moments of its beginning, culmination, climacteric, and dissolution, we may number the stages of this culture period as follows:

1. The long, general period represented by the eons of Figure 27, of the pagan Aryan beginnings of what today is Occidental civilization: the centuries, first, of the Celtic (Hallstatt and La Tène) expansions, raids, and invasions, c. 900–15 B.C., and then, of the rise and world empire of pagan Rome, c. 400 B.C.–400 A.D.⁷²

2. The very dark, at first, but then brightening years of the Christian Middle Ages: first of the forceful conversion and immediate collapse of the Roman Empire in Europe (Theodosius the Great, 379–395 A.D.); next of the saints of Christian Ireland, maintaining a dim yet steady light while on the Continent the ravages of the pagan Germanic wars and plunderings were augmented by the works of riding Asiatic Huns and African Moors (the dark ordeals of this stage endured from the sixth to the ninth centuries);⁷³ the beginnings of improvement, then, among the Franks, Lombards, and Saxons, emanating largely from the palace school (but also the weaponry) of Charlemagne (Holy Roman Emperor, 800–814 A.D.); and then—at last!—with the fall of Moorish Toledo in the year 1085 and the preaching ten years later of the First Crusade, the sudden flowering of the golden age of European courtesy and *amor*, theology, cathedrals, and knighthood on adventure: that age *par excellence* of chivalry and the mounted steed, of which the paragons for all time must be the knights and ladies fair of King Mark's and Arthur's courts.

But now, passing the noon of that day of the mounted steed, and moving onward toward a later time when gunpowder and cannons will have given the advantage to men afoot, we ask:

3. who that strange silhouette against the setting sun might be, riding tall and lean, picador-like, on a tall, lean, knobby-kneed horse, with a short, round second figure trotting now beside, now after, on a donkey. Why none other, indeed, than Don Quixote, in his patched armor, on Rozinante, his "Horse of Yore": the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, about 1605 A.D., riding to adventure

on the dusty plane of La Mancha with his portly squire Sancho Panza, "poor in purse and poor in brains," loyally behind! As Ortega y Gasset has remarked in his *Meditations on Quixote*: "Don Quixote, in a certain way, is the sad parody of a more divine and serene Christ: he is a Gothic Christ, torn by the modern anguish; a ridiculous Christ of our own neighborhood, created by a sorrowful imagination, which has lost its innocence and its will and is striving to replace them. . . ."⁷⁴

"Don Quixote stands at the intersection where two worlds meet, forming a beveled edge," he writes again: the two worlds, on the one hand, of poetic aspiration and spiritual adventure, and, on the other, empirical reality, "the anti-poetic *per se*."⁷⁵

"Cervantes looks at the world," Ortega states, "from the height of the Renaissance. The Renaissance has tightened things. . . . With his physics Galileo lays down the stern laws that govern the universe. A new system has begun; everything is confined within stricter forms. Adventures are impossible in this new order of things. . . ."⁷⁶

"Another characteristic of the Renaissance," Ortega then adds, however,

is the predominance acquired by the psychological. . . . The Renaissance discovers the inner world in all its vast extension, the *me ipsum*, the consciousness, the subjective. The novel *Don Quixote* is the flower of this great new turn that culture takes. In it the epic comes to an end forever; along with its aspiration to support a mythical world bordering on that of material phenomena but different from it. . . . The reality of the adventure is reduced to the psychological, perhaps even to a biological humor. It is real insofar as it is a vapor from a brain, so that its reality is that of its opposite, the material. . . .

Regarded for itself, in a direct way, reality, the actual, would never be poetic: that is the privilege of the mythical. But we can consider it obliquely, as destructive of the myth, as criticism of the myth. In this manner reality, which is of an inert and meaningless nature, quiet and mute, acquires movement, is changed into an active power of aggression against the crystal orb of the ideal. The enchantment of the latter broken, it falls into fine, iridescent dust, which loses gradually its colors until it becomes an earthy brown.⁷⁷

And with this we are brought to our terminal stage, namely: 4. The present, of Picasso's shattered horse and the broken, hollow rider: T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men." For by the middle of the nineteenth century, three centuries after Galileo, Quixote, and Shakespeare's Hamlet ("To be, or not to be . . ."), not only had the motions of life become reduced to mechanistic formulas, but even those of the mind and will were on the point of being so interpreted. In Ortega's words, once again:

The natural sciences based on determinism conquered the field of biology during the first decades of the nineteenth century. Darwin believed he had succeeded in imprisoning life—our last hope—within physical necessity. Life is reduced to mere matter, physiology to mechanics. The human organism, which seemed an independent unit, capable of acting by itself, is placed in its physical environment like a figure in a tapestry. It is no longer the organism that moves but the environment that is moving through it. Our actions are no more than reactions. There is no freedom, no originality. To live is to adapt oneself; to adapt oneself is to allow the material environment to penetrate into us, to drive us out of ourselves. Adaptation is submission and renunciation. Darwin sweeps heroes off the face of the earth.⁷⁸

And so it is that, in this dismal scene of mechanized cities of "adjusted" automatons, the age arrives, as Ortega states, of the *roman expérimental* of Zola and the rest.

The subject matter is still man, but since man is no longer the agent of his acts but is moved by the environment in which he lives, the novel will look to the representation of the environment. The environment is the only protagonist. People speak of evoking the "atmosphere." Art submits to one rule: verisimilitude . . . : the beautiful is what is probable and the true lies only in physics. The aim of the novel is physiology.⁷⁹

With the conditioned-reflex experiments on dogs of the Russian physiologist Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1848–1936)⁸⁰ and the application of his methods to the study and control of human thinking and behavior,⁸¹ psychology itself became a department of mechanics. The last dark cavern of retreat of Schopenhauer's "intelligible character" of the individual was about to become wholly illuminated by a laboratory lamp, and the old Germanic sense of

destiny as *wyrd*, an irreversible process of becoming from within,* reduced to an electrician's diagram of afferent and efferent nerves; so that what romantics still were attributing to some vague force, felt to be divine, within, was actually to be analyzed as a property of matter, no less and no more mysterious or divine than what goes on within the carburetor and cylinders of one's car. In the words of an American master of this ultimate field of nineteenth-century science:

There are common factors running through all forms of human acts. In each adjustment there is always both a *response or act* and a *stimulus or situation* which calls out that response. Without going too far beyond our facts, it seems possible to say that the stimulus is always provided by the environment, external to the body, or by the movements of man's own muscles and the secretions of his glands; finally, that the responses always follow relatively immediately upon the presentation of the stimulus. These are really assumptions, but they seem to be basal ones for psychology. . . . If we provisionally accept them we may say that the goal of psychological study is *the ascertaining of such data and laws that, given the stimulus, psychology can predict what the response will be; or, on the other hand, given the response, it can specify the nature of the effective stimulus.*⁸²

Little wonder, then, if in Picasso's apocalyptic "Guernica" the fallen broken hero is revealed as a hollow statue and his pierced Rozinante a strange thing of papier-mâché. The dead child of the pieta at the left is a doll, and the entire canvas, for all its great size (11 feet, 6 inches, by 28 feet, 8 inches), suggests a puppet stage: the only centers of possible life being the heads and mouths, with their flashing tongues, of the bull, the mother, and the screaming horse, plus the tails of the two beasts, the mother's hair, and the modest flower at the fallen hero's right hand. The other mouths are without tongue. Even the flames are unreal of the ecstatic (falling or rising?) woman at the right. The figures are two-dimensional cut-outs, without depth, as we all are now supposed to be in this self-moving machine world: mere masks of nothing beyond.

This seems to many to be an exclusively modern way of conceiving of the universe and mankind. However, in the long per-

* Supra, pp. 121–22 and 138–40; also, p. 194.

spective that has been opened to our view by the scholarship of comparative world mythology, it must be recognized that it actually was anticipated, together with its moral implications, in the absolutely impersonal, mathematical space-time cosmology and associated social order of those priestly watchers of the skies of the old Sumerian temple cities (fourth millennium B.C.), from whose heaven-oriented gaze and related cerebrations the world has received all the basic elements of archaic high civilization: calendric astronomy, mathematics, writing, and monumental symbolic architecture; the idea of a moral order of the universe, made known by way of the features of the night sky, with the waning and waxing moon its focal sign (the rhythmically dying and reappearing lunar bull, whose light is for three nights dark), and, subordinate to this, the moral order and symbolic rites of the hieratic priestly state, with its symbolic king and court enacting, as well as enforcing, here on earth the order of death in life and life in death made known aloft. We have discussed all this at length in the earlier volumes of this series: in *Primitive Mythology*, pages 144-69 and 404-60; in *Oriental Mythology*, throughout; and in *Occidental Mythology*, pages 9-92. There can now be nothing new to us about it, or surprising.

However, what I do find surprising, and cannot help pausing a moment to remark, is the fact that in the tortured figures of Picasso's masterpiece (and he surely knew what he was doing—as will appear on a later page) what we are contemplating is a constellation of perfectly traditional mythological symbols, arranged in such a way as to bear to us in their silent speech (whether intended or not by the artist) a message still in perfect concord with the spirit and lore of the old Sumerian lunar bull: "That One," as we read in the Indian Shatapatha Brahmana, "who is the Death on whom our life depends. . . . He is one as he is there, but many as he is in his children here."⁸³

In *Occidental Mythology* there is an illustration (Figure 16, page 55) in which the old Sumerian bearded moon bull is shown with the sun bird perched on his back biting into his flank. The bull is unconcerned, as here in Picasso's piece. Moreover, the flames emanating from the knee joints of the earlier symbolic beast have their counterpart in the flamelike spike pointing backward from the right foreknee of the "Guernica" bull. And further, since

the mountain peak above which the old Sumerian lunar bull stands represents the mountain body of the Mother Goddess Earth, whose child is that ever-dying, self-resurrecting god that is in substance one with his father (and so, is "the bull," as they say, "of his own mother"),⁸⁴ symbolically, in traditional terms of which Picasso surely was aware, the bull and pietà of his "Guernica" correspond precisely to the moon bull and world-mountain of the old Sumerian icon. The dead child is the living god in the oxymoron of his death: the Christ of the sacrifice, who in the Gnostic view (as we have seen) is the living substance of us all. And the scene, then, of the gored horse in the central, triangular field—illuminated by the hand-held lamp, which intervenes below the higher light—is the scene of this dear death that is our bitter life, where, as we read in the *Bhagavad Gītā*: "Even as a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that are new, what is embodied casts off worn-out bodies and enters into others that are new."⁸⁵

The hollow hero of Picasso's vision and the torn body of his paper horse contrast calamitously with the young, naïve, life-willing and -daring hero-symbols of the early European pagan coins. The bird of prey, the sun bird riding on the back of the prancing steed, has become, in the late work, a broken, screaming pigeon. The most obvious thing to say is that the initiative in shaping history and the destiny of man has passed from the cavalier and his civilization; and that a great, a very great culture cycle has therewith terminated—whether we like it or not.

Picasso's enigmatic bull, unharmed, has eyes of two perspectives. The eye in the center of the brow is at that point at which in Indian art the eye of time-transcending vision opens, to recognize in the passing forms of this world the mere shadow-play of that inevitable, bitter yet bitter-sweet round that James Joyce, in *Finnegans Wake*, has dubbed "the Here-we-are-again Gaieties":⁸⁶ the bull-god Shiva's cruel, ecstatic, unremitting, endlessly repetitive Dance of the Burning Ground. And the other eye, beneath the pricked ear, is apparently regarding—as the ear is heeding—the catastrophe of the day: the day, that is to say, of the witness of the picture; for its focus, certainly, is on us. Worth noticing also is the fact that the nostrils of both this bull and the sacrificial horse, as well as the eyes of both the wailing mother and the flaming figure

at the right, suggest the well-known *yang* and *yin* elements of the Chinese symbol of the ineluctable, ever-revolving light-and-dark

Way and law of nature, the Tao:



⁸⁷ The rays from

the glaring bulb are dark as well as light. So too is the body of the dove—which, in contrast to the solar eagle riding the backs of the conquering steeds of the Gallo-Roman coins, suggests the suffering, complaining, as opposed to the active, aggressive, energetic, side of the *yin-yang* polarity. Meanwhile the Graces three—those three women at the right, participating with surprise and anguish in the scene, as though it were not an already well-known passage of their own oft-repeated choreography—are without tongues. They are in the place here of Silent Thalia at the base of Gafurius's scale of the Music of the Spheres (Figure 13), at the top of which—above that blazing bulb, as the mystai of Figure 11 are above the blazing sun door—they would have been revealed in their supernal aspect, in that dance before the lord of light of which this scene below is but a reflex in Plato's shadow cave.

Picasso's bull, like the serpent of Gafurius's design, is thus the vehicle of the appearance of an eternal present in the field of passing time: future, present, past. Standing in the posture of the world-father bull of the old Sumerian archetype, beyond the triangle of the lesser light, within which the tragedy of the pierced horse appears, he elevates us, through his two eyes, to that higher sphere, where his horns suggest the balanced crescents of the waning, but then waxing, moon. And finally, we note that the floral element of Gafurius's design, represented blooming in the vase of the immortal water above, has here its counterpart in the modest flower blooming by the clenched hand of the broken hollow hero and bent right foreknee of his steed.

Of Picasso's treatment of traditional symbolic forms there will be more to say in our last chapter. Already obvious here, however, is the power of his art to capture and inflect anew the multifarious ambiguities of their silent speech. His choice of black and white for this masterwork, and its setting, at once indoors and out, suggest immediately the shadow play of Plato's cave. The door at the extreme right is ajar; a wall is omitted at the left; the window at

THE LOVE-DEATH

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the upper right opens to a void, a light void, whereas the void within the steed is black; so also, that within the hollow man....

In Schopenhauer's paper "On an Apparent Intention in the Fate of the Individual" it has been asked whether in such an overwhelming event, for example, as that here depicted by Picasso there could be any possibility whatsoever of detecting an accord between the outer circumstance and inward character of the individuals involved. Picasso's figure of the *hollow* man suggests strongly that there might. Moreover, since all the other elements of his scene are well-known classical symbols of the play of a secret will in the general course of temporal event—death itself, however it may come, being of the essence, part and parcel, of each man's life, to which he must be reconciled if he is to penetrate beyond the monstrous show of things to what the poet Robinson Jeffers termed the "Tower beyond Tragedy"—it is evident that here, as in all truly tragic art (as opposed to critical caricature), there is implied an affirmation in depth of this world in being, either exactly as it is or as it might be taught to become.

The latter is the way of the historic hero, hero of a day: the knight riding on crusade, the bombardier in his plane. The whole history of a culture—briefly told—is a function of its incidence of heroes of this kind, tried and true; as in this European cycle of the four stages of a day fulfilled which we have identified schematically as: 1. the dawn—in the Celtic Aryan pagan coin, with its steed overleaping the bull, representing the young and barbarous beginning; 2. the forenoon, of the courtly world of King Mark (or, alternately, Arthur), at that supreme period of flowering of the European creative imagination when, as Henry Adams saw, the moment of the apogee of spirituality was attained (1150–1250); then 3. the post meridian of Don Quixote (1605), when the will to the ideal, though still there, was no longer a match for the force of matter; and finally 4. the Angelus hour of Picasso's "Guernica" and Wagner's *Twilight of the Gods*.

But there is another type of heroism as well; namely, of the son of the abyss, Dumuzi-absu: not the warhorse, but the ever-dying, self-resurrecting son, who is "the bull of his own mother," and whose sign is the orb not of day but of night, whose world is not of history but of nature and its mystery—nature without and nature within: as in Wagner's music of the all-resuming waters at the end

of his cycle of *The Ring*, or that of the soaring second act of his *Tristan*, where the lovers together—"Heart to heart and lip to lip"—curse the day with its deceits:

Daylight phantoms!
Morning visions!
Empty and vain!
Away! Begone!

VI. The Legend of the Fair Isolt

THE POISONED WOUND

Figure 29 is another of the Chertsey tiles. At the left Prince Morold the Mighty, maternal uncle of Isolt, has come from Ire-



Figure 29. Morold Wounds Tristan

land to claim from the nobles of Mark's court sixty of their sons. There is here an echo of the legend of the youths and maidens required of Athens to feed the Cretan Minotaur. Morold has arrived as the emissary of King Gurmun the Gay of Dublin, scion of a northwest African house, who, having conquered Ireland many years before and there married Morold's sister, turned upon Cornwall and imposed this cruel tax. Gurmun is the Minos of this legend. His daughter, Isolt, bearing the same name as her mother, is to be its Ariadne, and Tristan (at the right), its hero Theseus. At the time of the previous tribute collection, Tristan had not yet appeared from the sea. But he is now a knight without peer. Having challenged to single combat the seasoned fighting man from Ireland, he is receiving on his left thigh a stroke from the enemy's poisoned sword.

"How now?" yelled Morold. "Will you give up?" He wheeled his charger and, on guard, continued shouting through his helm. "Think fast! No doctor now can save you, but only my sister Isolt. That wound, unless I help, will be your death."⁸⁸

Figure 30 shows Tristan's answer. "He delivered a buffet on the helm" states Gottfried, "and went so deeply through that when he pulled the weapon out, his tug left a piece of blade in the skull, —which in due time would bring him into the greatest jeopardy and distress."⁸⁹

In the earlier Norman French version of the legend by Thomas of Britain, Gottfried's source, the two champions met on a jousting field; in Gottfried, however, they battled on an islet off the Cornish coast, to which they and their mounts were conveyed in skiffs. Morold stepped into one, leading with him his charger, took up the oar, and ferried himself across. "And when he came," we read, "to the islet, he beached the boat and made it fast, quickly mounted, gripped his lance in hand, and across the isle went galloping most elegantly. His charges were as easy and playful as for a game."⁹⁰ And the young Tristan, eighteen, also unbeaten up to then, was standing at the bow of his own skiff, bidding God's grace to his uncle. "Be not anxious for me and my life. Let us leave it all in God's hands," he said and, pushing off, paddled, likewise with his mount aboard, to the isle.

It is amusing to remark that in the figures on the Chertsey tiles, where Tristan is attacking, the lion of his shield rears forward,

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