

volume, he equates Germans with anality and love of feces; he claims that Germans love sausages because they are “stuffed [i.e., feces-filled] intestines”—but why do Mexicans and others love sausages? Because they look like penes?—and that Germans dropped bombs [i.e., feces] “from the bowels of airplanes.” Poisoned by his narrow-minded anti-German prejudice, he conveniently ignores the bombs dropped by American, British, Japanese, and Russian airplanes. Those bombs were not rose petals, I can assure you, having survived years of bombing by American and British airplanes.

When not engaged in his tiresome German-dumping, Dundes finds sexual and especially homosexual meanings everywhere, even in names. The name of one *Star Wars* character, *Han Solo*, twisted by Dundes to *Han[ds] Solo*, “has a bit of an on-anistic ring about it.” If we apply Dundes’s sleuthing, we note that his first name, Alan, is an anagram of *anal*. Aha!

Even though everything Dundes writes contains much valuable information, I can recommend this book only to readers with a strong Freudian point of view or pronounced anal and homosexual fixations.

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DUNDES, ALAN, editor. *The Flood Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. vi+452 pages. Index. Paper US\$15.95; ISBN 0-520-06353-8. Cloth US\$48.00; ISBN 0-520-05973-5.

In spite of the great diversity of their methodological leanings, most modern students of myth seem to adhere to the hermeneutic principle of immanence. To put it into Schellingian terms, if myth is a “tautegoric” system subsumed by specific laws, it has to be understood in itself instead of being reduced to its referent. Another well known rule of myth analysis is that no version should be given priority over the others. However, even the staunchest advocates of the semiotic approach admit that it is difficult to comply with these two principles when dealing with written traditions such as those of the Old Testament. The Flood myth is perhaps the best example of the specificity we are referring to. This is not to say that the “kerygmatic” nature of the biblical texts should be opposed to the semantic simplicity of the “totemic” traditions, to use Ricoeur’s ethnocentric dichotomy (1963, 630–632). We don’t think either that the Christian belief in the absolute truth of the biblical narrative is in itself a sufficient reason to grant it a special status: after all, in most of the “tribal societies,” myth was considered as a true story. What makes the Flood myth a special case, and what explains the massive scholarship it has inspired, is that “no other myth has been examined so meticulously from the point of view of its being reconciled with the findings of science” (357). Hence this curious situation: the mythologist has to take into account the reductionist interpretations because they have become a part of the problem. In this context, we understand why the aim of this eclectic and thought provoking casebook is to present the Flood story not only as a narrative, but also as a cultural complex.

For conveniency’s sake, we shall treat this book under four sections. The first one focuses on the biblical narrative and on the cognate Assyro-babylonian and Sumerian versions. The presentation of the Genesis account of the Flood is followed

by a contrastive study of the Yahwist and the Priestly Writer's versions (Norman C. Habel). Then, Smith's famous lecture retraces the deciphering of the XIth tablet of the "Gilgamesh epic" which deprived the biblical narrative of its claim to uniqueness and chronological anteriority. The following contributor, Hämmerly-Dupuy, provides us with a general picture of the Mesopotamian corpus, presenting three Assyrian, two Babylonian and three Sumerian versions. Then follow interpretative essays. In a very stimulating article, Frymer-Kensky explains that the biblical narrative, although built on the same structural pattern as that of the Atrahasis epic, betrays a significant shift of message: the concept of blood pollution overshadows the Mesopotamian concern for overpopulation. The last part of the first section consists of three essays displaying different brands of reductionism. Follansbee sees the Deluge from the point of view of the "ritualist theory," and reconstructs a composit text from different traditions. Woolley claims to have found material proofs of the Flood during his excavations at Ur. Finally, Calder, after establishing that the Ovidian tale of Philemon and Baucis is an Anatolian legend, identifies its cradle as Lake Trogidis.

The second section is devoted to global hypotheses. After Frazer's wide comparative outlook and Kelsen's generalizations about the "principle of retribution," Roheim expounds a psychoanalytical interpretation which would have us believe that the desire to urinate is the primary "source" of the Flood myths. Stating convincingly that dreams are not necessarily antecedent to myths, Dundes offers a brand of psychological explanation which seems less dogmatic and more respectful of the narrative elements of the Flood story than Roheim's own attempt. According to Dundes, "flood myths are an example of males seeking to imitate female creativity" (171).<sup>1</sup>

The third section deals with specific Flood traditions outside the Near Eastern orbit, and shows that the myth has a worldwide distribution. After Horcasitas' typological treatment of Meso-American versions, which includes unpublished material, Lammel provides us with a semiotic analysis of South American narratives while studying the impact of the Bible on the vernacular traditions. Subsequently, Kolig stresses the importance of topology in the Australian myths, Kähler-Meyer refutes Frazer's contention that Africa didn't have its own Flood traditions, and Demetrio applies the Eliadean concept of rebirth to the myths of the Philippines. Next, a Swedish team (Lindell, Swahn, and Tayanin) takes us to the Kammu of northern Thailand where we can observe the mythopoetic process at work in an oral tradition. Traveling westwards, we reach the Indian subcontinent. Koppers describes the cosmological features of the Bhil myths before comparing them with the Hindu tradition. Schulman's erudite essay demonstrates that the Tamil Flood stories "are essentially myths of creation" (317) and underlines the close connection between the Flood and the origin of the Cankam. With Ginzberg's presentation of a Jewish apocryphal version of the Flood, and Utley's analysis of Aa.Th.825, we are taken back to the starting point of our mythological trip: the biblical plot.

The last section of the book focuses on the various attempts to harmonize the literal interpretation of the Bible with the findings of science. Allen and Rappaport, who deal respectively with the 17th and the 18th century, describe the different stages of the "local vs. universal" polemics. Moore reminds us of the debate stirred by the man who popularized the uniformitarian interpretation of geological phenomena, Charles Lyell. And finally, Gould's witty article depicts the desperate efforts made by modern Fundamentalists to present creationsim as a scientific alternative to evolution.

The main quality of this dense book is to provide a vast array of different ap-

proaches to the Flood story: biblical exegesis, classical philology, archeology, comparative mythology, psychoanalysis, typology, semiology, history of science, are each in turn taken into account here. Of course, a four hundred page book devoted to such a tremendous subject cannot possibly satisfy everybody. Among the few shortcomings of the book, it is worth mentioning those that were easily avoidable.

Southern China, whose ethnic minorities are rich on Flood traditions extensively studied by Japanese and Western scholars (See MURAKAMI 1975, ITÔ 1979, and LEMOINE 1987), is not represented in the comparative section of the book. To mention casually (265) that the Kammu versions are very close to their Chinese counterparts is not really enough.

The fact that Japan has been altogether ignored is also to be deplored. This omission is surprising when one thinks of ŌBAYASHI'S (1961) or KURAISHI'S (1979) important works on that very subject. The Austronesian area, which is so rich in deluge narratives that it seems an ideal field for typological and/or comparative research, would have deserved more than some cursory considerations on rebirth symbolism.

We don't deny the "special position held by the version of the flood myth in Genesis" (4), but one can't refrain from thinking that the anthology devotes too much attention to the Bible and Bible related narratives.

Moreover, a few essays of dubious theoretical interest shouldn't have been included at the expense of the "area studies." With due respect for his many accomplishments, we can state that Frazer's lecture was not his most brilliant contribution to the field of mythology. Kolig's essay doesn't teach us anything about Australian myths in themselves. Kelsen's article is hardly more than a collection of random examples loosely connected to an idea which embraces so many things that it becomes meaningless.

The problem of the relations between Flood *stricto sensu* and "world calamities" would have deserved a typological or even a structural analysis. To be sure, Kähler-Meyer (256) and Demetrio (262) refer incidentally to some paradigmatic analogies, but, as such, the functional equivalences within the motifemic cluster A1000-A1099 have been neglected.

Finally, on the syntagmatic level, the close association of dual motifs (flood/incense; flood/origin of death; flood/origin of fire, etc.) should have been granted more attention. Sibling incest is mentioned several times (Dundes, Kähler-Meyer, Demetrio, Lindell) but the semantic implications of its connection with the Flood are not dealt with in a satisfactory manner.

However, let it be said here that the overall qualities of this book make it very readable notwithstanding these few shortcomings. The lack of dogmatism which guided Dundes's choices is to be greatly appreciated. The valuable comments which introduce each of the twenty six articles, several seminal ideas, and the wealth of bibliographical indications within the anthology or at the end of it, will certainly help the general reader, guide the comparatist, and inspire future researchers.

#### NOTE:

1. This interpretation is very stimulating indeed. It could be applied to the famous episode of the *misogi* in Japanese mythology: Izanaki's parthenogenesis in the primeval is a negation of Izanami's creative powers. However, Dundes' basic idea is at the same time too narrow and too comprehensive. Too narrow because it can't explain numerous flood myths where the urethral element or the male vs female opposition is absent. Too comprehensive because in many societies of simple technology, such as the Baruya, the male tendency to deny female

creativity impregnates the culture as a whole, and is not linked to a specific myth.

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GRAHAM, WILLIAM A. *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in History of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. xiv+306 pages. Bibliography, Index. Hardcover; ISBN 0-521-33176-5.

*Beyond the Written Word* is like a teacher's pointer, a pointer focusing attention on an important but usually neglected dimension of Biblical hermeneutics. The immediate oral and aural experience which precedes and yet generates scripture is such an obvious phenomenon that Biblical scholars often gloss beyond this in textual-analysis. One result is that our "holy books" become texts to be deciphered rather than dynamic "words" to challenge. By concentrating on the oral and aural dimension of scriptural experience framed against the backdrop of a variety of scriptural traditions, William A. Graham suggests new light for appreciating our "holy books." Within this wider context, common human skills of recitation, memorization, chanting and internally "hearing" the WORD acquire more profound dimensions. Similarly, the "sacredness" of "orality" (ix) is appreciated anew.

Part One calls attention to the actual oral experience which precedes the formation of books and texts; Part Two concentrates on the words which precede "the Word" in Scriptural traditions. Special consideration is given to the Indian tradi-