

Of course such diachronic investigations cannot be done seriously, as Dundes states correctly, by pure speculation. But to call diachronic methods generally obsolete, while the synchronic patterns of structuralism and/or functionalism are regarded as the only legitimate methods of our modern times seems at least questionable to me.

The continuation of this discussion would lead to exactly that kind of general debate about the theory of myth which cannot be carried out in this context. But it can already be said that the anthology compiled by Alan Dundes raises issues and compels deeper thinking about myth. So the present book can be said valuable in two respects: it presents a great amount of primary and basic material, and it provokes controversial discussion, always fruitful for our knowledge of the subject.

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GOLDBERG, BENJAMIN. *The Mirror and Man*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985. Xii+260 pages. Illustrations and index. Hardcover US\$20.00, ISBN 0-8139-1064-1

Benjamin Goldberg, a retired Director of the US Army Night Vision Laboratory at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia, has not only compiled a history of the mirror from ancient polished metals to modern plane glass, but has also discribed a superb vision of its future. In the final chapter a vision is conjured up of huge photon-propelled reflecting sails which will sweep through space, tacking with or against the solar photon stream. Orbiting mirrors are foreseen which will reflect the sun's energy onto terrestrial conversion sites, providing mankind with all the electrical power it may need. To top it all, above the first colony in space, which has been programmed under the name of "Stanford Torus," a hovering half-mile wide mirror will reflect enough solar photon power not only to enable the "colonists" to grow their own food, but also to smelt and refine lunar minerals.

The mirror, which is about to become the essential element of technical civilization, was originally conceived as a magic gateway leading into the spirit world. The archaic sryer fixed his gaze upon burnished metal surfaces and let their hazy images stimulate his subconscious in the manner of Rorschach blots. He tapped his inner resources of subliminal perceptiveness and foreboding by allowing the mirror's sparkle to mesmcrize him. The mirror was not only a source of revelation and prophecy, a window opening onto the world of doubles and essences, but also a receptacle of magic and divine power. From it there originated an invisible fire which burnt objects from afar. In ancient Mexico the name of the god of the North and of sorcery was "Smoking Mirror." In China mirrors attracted the very essence of yin and yang from their heavenly abodes. The latter was manifested in the reflection of the sun's rays, while the former descended from the moon in the form of the slight film of dew which collected upon a mirror after it had been exposed to the moon's rays during the night.

Goldberg has gathered a conspicuous amount of diverse materials concerning mir-

rors from the folklore of many peoples, but the display gives the impression of a certain randomness. Possibly his array of information would have hung together properly, as a coherent whole, if he had referred each item back to the interrelated specific roles which the mirror plays in the general framework of shamanic ritual. Unfortunately, the book fails to tackle the subject of shamanism and possession cults.

Readers moderately knowledgeable in Far-Eastern topics are not likely to pick up much information in the sections devoted to China and Japan. Nahum Stiskin's *The Looking Glass God* (Kyoto, 1971) is not mentioned.

Students of literature will also find little of interest in the sketchy chapter on the role of doubles in fiction, but they will greatly profit from the connection which Goldberg establishes between literary themes and the psychological study of self-images, which has followed upon the invention in 1964 of the "Adjustable Body Distorting Mirror."

Goldberg eventually comes into his own when coping with the modern scene: optics, technical applications, economic and sociological consequences, from the Venetian Renaissance manufacture of plane glass to the present. His treatment of the 17th century controversy over Archimedes' reported invention of burning mirrors is informed and lively. Descartes, on purely abstract grounds, dismissed the whole story as fabrication, while Athanasius Kircher, the Jesuit student of esoteric lore, proved its possibility experimentally. But, since Descartes was considered *the* modern philosopher, Kircher's evidence was ignored.

Plane glasses offered an impeccable replica of the actual world and their spread coincided with the rise of empiricism. In a looking-glass outlines and perspectives appear etched out even more sharply than in our naked eye view of reality. The true-to-life quality of Flemish and Italian Renaissance painting depended on the use of plane glasses to augment the painter's vision. Yet there has also existed during the modern age an alternative trend, bent on stressing the mystifying properties of mirrors. This was the object of Jurgis Baltrusaitis' recent research on anamorphosis, which Goldberg fails to mention. He also skips the entire Islamic tradition of the mirror as a simile for Divine Manifestation, along with the Sufi theurgic use of mirrors.

Glaring gaps notwithstanding, Goldberg's book offers a valuable contribution to this immense subject and succeeds egregiously in making two crucial points: 1) the metaphor of the mirror mirrors our history faithfully through the ages, and 2) after providing mankind in pre-modern times with a simile for God's primal act of emanation and for man's analogous, specular act of cognition, the mirror is now on the verge of turning into the main source of energy.

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