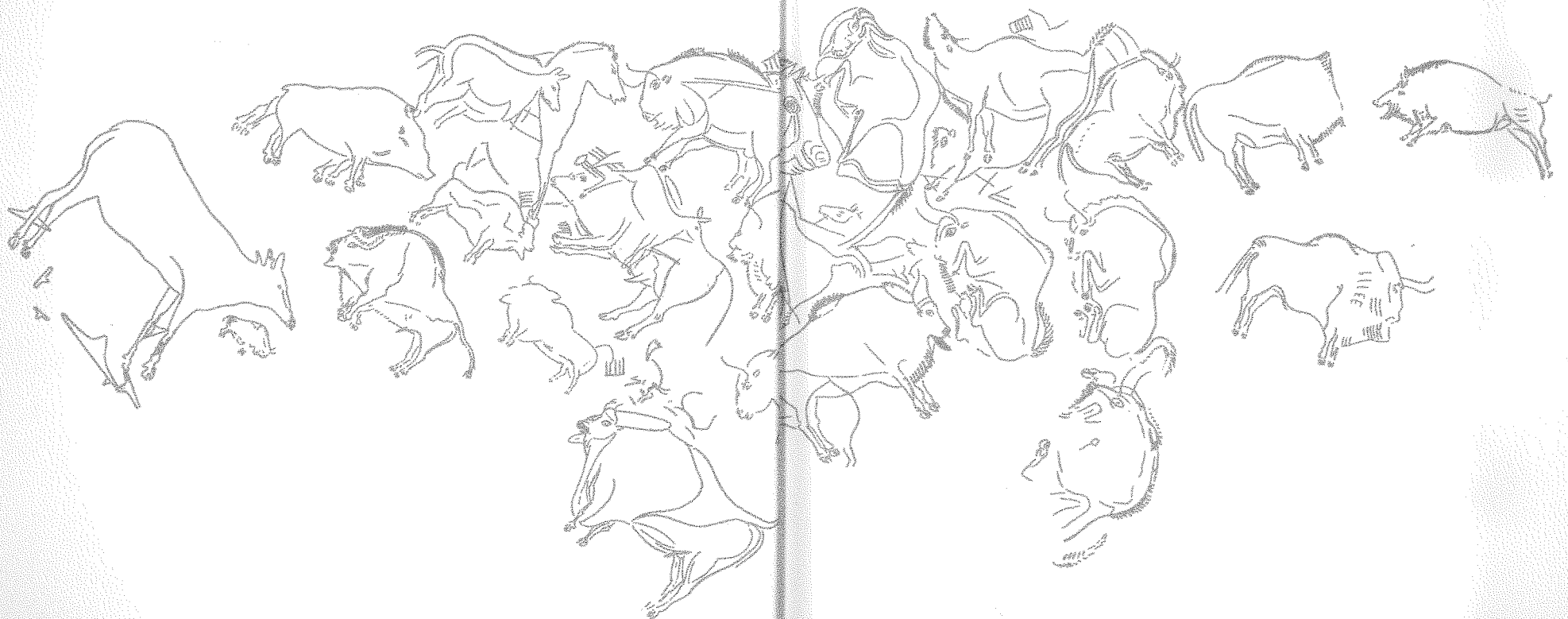


# JUNIPER FUSE

Upper Paleolithic Imagination & the Construction of the Underworld

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*Color plates follow page 134.*

*Introduction*

Wicks made of quarter-inch juniper branches were used in many of the 130 hand lamps found in Lascaux.

Over the cave, a tall juniper had fallen, lifting up with its roots a large mass of earth and creating a pit, soon entangled with brambles. On September 8, 1940, Marcel Ravidat (a young garage hand from nearby Montignac) was drawn to the pit by his barking dog, caught in the undergrowth. While cutting the dog out, he discovered a dead donkey and under it, a vertical shaft. On September 12, with his friend Jacques Marsal, Ravidat returned. Working with his knife, head first, he dug down some 20 feet, at which point he tumbled into the cave.

Juniper as the wick of the cave!

Since the Upper Paleolithic, wick has become fuse as the conveyor of ignition for electrical purposes, as well as for shells and bombs.

\*

This book envisions and examines some of the origins and developments of imagination recorded in cave wall imagery (for the most part in southwestern France)<sup>1</sup> during the last European Ice Age, roughly between 40,000 and 10,000 years ago. It looks at theories proposed by others, as well as my own two-part thesis that considers why such imagery sparked when and where it did. The metaphorical unfolding that can be traced back to a 30,000 year-old Aurignacian engraving of a horse head and neck—across which a vulva of equal size was superimposed—startles with the same refreshed energy as Allen Ginsberg's "hydrogen jukebox."

To follow poetry back to Cro-Magnon metaphors not only hits real bedrock—a genuine back wall—but gains a connection to the continuum during which imagination first flourished. My growing awareness of the caves led to the recognition that, as an artist, I belong to a pretradition that includes the earliest nights and days of soul-making.

This book is also an attempt to answer the first question that the science writer Alexander Marshack fired at me when he walked into our kitchen in the French Dordogne in the spring of 1974:

"What is a *poet* doing in the caves?"

\*

In 1955, Charles Olson wrote two letters to the young poet Ed Dorn, later revised as *A Bibliography on America for Ed Dorn*. I read this compilation in the late 1960s. At one point, Olson argued:

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS. And to hook on here is a lifetime of assiduity. Best thing to do is *to dig one thing or place or man* until you yourself know more abt that than is possible to any other man. It doesn't matter whether it's Barbed Wire or Pemmican or Paterson or Iowa. But *exhaust* it. Saturate it. Beat it.

And then U KNOW everything else very fast: one saturation job (it might take 14 years). And you're in, forever.<sup>2</sup>

His admonition is to Dorn as a novice, and rings with a certitude that at sixty-four I can only partially share. But it planted a seed in me for the writing of this book. My aim is not to know more than "is possible to any other man," but to make use of a pluralistic approach that may result in a fuller "reading" of Upper Paleolithic imagination than archeological or literary approaches alone might yield. I don't want to engage the caves in an ahistorical void or to strip-mine them for "poetic" materials. Among other things, I want to incorporate their imagery into poetry as a primary antecedent dimension, in effect opening a trap door in poetry's floor onto these unbounded but evocative gestures. As a poet's book, *Juniper Fuse* is an attempt to reclaim the caves of the Dordogne and the Pyrénées for poets as geo-mythical sites in which early intimations of what we call "muse" may have been experienced. Poetry itself is questioned throughout this book: How can I make use of its strategies to engage materials that have no historical frame or recorded language?

Ice Age imagery, sealed off for thousands of years, reemerges as a nearly disintegrated Atlantis in the twentieth century, offering a basis for the "hidden wealth" attributed by different cultures to the underworld. In a century rife with alienation and hopelessness, Upper Paleolithic imagination implies that we belong to an undifferentiated paradise, a primordial underworld of unchanging perpetuity.

\*

Before leaving for France in 1973, I attempted to bring my writing to a close in the following summation:

Yorunomado closed the left hand of my book.  
From this point on, he said,  
your work leads on into the earth.<sup>3</sup>

In retrospect, "the left hand of my book" becomes the first half of my life, and "on into the earth" points to our 1974 discovery of the Ice Age underworld.

\*

After my wife Caryl and I began to visit the caves in the Les Eyzies area, our then neighbor, the translator Helen Lane, loaned us her cave book collection and I found something of equal importance in regard to anything I might write: No poet had taken on the Upper Paleolithic to perform what Olson called a "saturation job." There was the novelist and essayist Georges Bataille's 1955 monograph and that was it.<sup>4</sup> Henry Miller and Ezra Pound seem to have known of the existence of the painted caves discovered at the turn of the century, but neither of them, to my knowledge, visited caves or wrote about them.<sup>5</sup> T. S. Eliot appears to have visited a cave in the Pyrénées—Niaux, Hugh Kenner conjectures<sup>6</sup>—and on the basis of what he saw there he determined that "art never improves." In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" he writes:

[The poet] must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawings of the Magdalenian draughtsmen.

At about the same time Bataille was visiting Lascaux nightly (after crowds of tourists went home) for his monograph, Olson was reading Henry Fairfield Porter's *Men of the Old Stone Age* and Gertrude Levy's *Gate of Horn*, taking notes and writing lectures for what he hoped would be an Institute in the New Sciences of Man at Black Mountain College, with the archaic as its basis.<sup>7</sup> This institute never materialized, nor did Olson work up his notes and lectures into a book or use them to extend the range of his epic, *The Maximus Poems*, into the Upper Paleolithic: However, in a 1946 poem, "La Préface," he struck a profoundly dissonant chord for our times with:

My name is NO RACE address  
Buchenwald new Altamira cave<sup>8</sup>

Olson's presentation of Buchenwald and Altamira (shadowed by Odysseus' response to the Cyclops' question), with space rather than

a verb between the two nouns, presents the reader with an overwhelming question: What do these two nouns have in common? The answer that I find suggests that the astonishing ancientness of the human creative impulse, which was discovered in this most inhuman century, may somehow offset total despair. Olson's choice of Altamira is slightly inaccurate for my meaning as it was discovered in 1879 (although its antiquity was not officially recognized until 1902). However, the majority of the known Upper Paleolithic caves were discovered between 1900 and 1940 (the year that Lascaux was tumbled into). This represents a staggering synchronicity and argues *contra* Adorno that there can be poetry after Auschwitz. Jerome Rothenberg pulls Adorno's statement inside out in his long poem "Khurbn," written after visits to what is left of the death camps in the 1980s: "After Auschwitz there is only poetry."<sup>9</sup>

The Upper Paleolithic's resurfacing can be thought of as a retrieval of depth, of a bottomlessness that is not simply absence but one complexed with hidden presence and invisible connections. While cave stone might well be thought of as the *tabula rasa* par excellence, caves themselves are hardly *tabula rasas*: Each has its own character. For some, the caves' sensory isolational atmosphere is experienced as spirit-filled, even as hallucinogenic. For example, grotesque and hybrid cave images suggest a fusion between early consciousness and subterranean "entities." It is as if the soul of an all-devouring monster earth could be contacted in cavern dark as a living and fathomless reservoir of psychic force.

We see our present world of vanishing species not only against what we know of the immense and diverse biomass of Pleistocene Europe, but also against the end-Pleistocene extinctions that eerily forecast our own. While climatic change, unaffected by humans, appears to have played a major role in early extinctions, there is credible evidence that from the late Upper Paleolithic on, especially in the New World, extinctions have been increasingly human-induced. So I'm haunted by the rock shelter's name where our ancient and direct ancestors' skeletons were first discovered: Abri du Cro-Magnon, or shelter of the Big Hole People. It seems that over the centuries our "big holeness" has increased in proportion to our domination of the earth. Today it is as if species are disappearing into and through an "us" that lacks a communal will to arrest their vanishing.

\*

As one might expect, studies of Upper Paleolithic image-making have been written by archeologists, in scholarly, objective prose,

based on fieldwork, and often framed by a single theory to account for the art. However, the archeologist Margaret W. Conkey, along with certain colleagues, writes articles that examine the way Upper Paleolithic images have been used to exaggerate or to disguise the complexity of this ever-deepening field. She has also scrutinized gender issues as they involve the presentation of female imagery. Her writing attempts to establish what she calls "a new archeological integrity." She calls into question the matter of "Objectivity" and the tendency for archeologists to keep the past in the past. "Undoubtedly," she writes, "it is extremely challenging for archeologists to make inferences about what an artifact or image 'meant' to its creators and their contemporaries. Some of us recognize that certainly this is never an 'objective' enterprise distinct from the questions and concerns of the present."<sup>10</sup>

In the late 1970s, I found that cave imagery is an inseparable mix of psychic constructs and perceptive observations. That is, there are "fantastic" animals as well as realistic ones. There are not only human figures representing men and women whose social roles cannot be determined, but others, with bird masks, bison heads, and peculiar wounds, that evoke an interior world, in some cases shamanism. Instead of solely employing rational documentation (as have the archeologists), it struck me that this "inseparable mix" might be approached using poetic imagination as well as thorough fieldwork and research. In other words, in the spirit that I served the cave images as observer, to ask them to serve my imagination, so as to translate them not back into their own original unknown-to-us context, but forward into my own idiom.

Thus in the writing of *Juniper Fuse* I sought to be open to what I thought about and fantasized while in the caves or while meditating on their image environments—to create my own truth as to what they mean, respecting imagination as one of a plurality of conflicting powers. I also sought to be a careful observer, and to reflect on what others have written, photographed, and drawn. Sometimes a section is all poetry, sometimes all prose—at other times it is a shifting combination like a Calder mobile, with poetry turning into prose, prose turning into poetry.

I brought to bear on what I have come to call "Upper Paleolithic Imagination & the Construction of the Underworld" a range of thinkers outside of archeology proper. While I studied the work of the Abbés Breuil and Glory, Annette Laming, André Leroi-Gourhan, S. Giedion, Max Raphael, Paolo Graziosi, Alexander Marshack, Jean Clottes, Margaret W. Conkey, and Paul Bahn, I also read C. G. Jung, Sandor Ferenczi, Geza Róheim, Mikhail Bakhtin, Weston LaBarre, Charles Olson, N. O. Brown, Kenneth Grant, James Hillman, Hans

Peter Duerr, and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone. I sought to match my pluralistic approach with varying styles. *Juniper Fuse* is an anatomy, composed of poetry, prose poetry, essays, lectures, notes, dreams, and visual reproductions.

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My thinking concerning the origin and elaboration of cave image making began with a 1970s intuition, while in Combarelles, that it was motivated by a crisis in which Upper Paleolithic people began to separate the animal out of their about-to-be human heads and to project it onto cave walls (as well as onto a variety of portable tools and weapons often made out of the animals themselves). In other words, that the liberation of what might be called autonomous imagination came from within as a projective response on the part of those struggling to differentiate themselves from, while being deeply bonded to, the animal.

To arrange the bones of a slaughtered horse, say, in proper anatomical position might have been both atonement for having killed and hope for the horse's regeneration. To my understanding, such a ritual—which Weston LaBarre proposes to be the oldest of which we have any knowledge<sup>11</sup>—was insufficient to appease a dawning psychic hunger for coming to terms with what was at least a triple bind of feeling superior (on the basis of weapons and tools), equal, and inferior to the animal. After Cro-Magnon people discovered that a tool could produce lines on a wall and that by curving or jumbling them something evoking a creature could be formed, they had the opportunity to bring the animal under their scrutiny into miniature. Which is also to suggest that as their ambivalences concerning the animal became unbearably concentrated, the observed animal imploded, and with the aid of a wall or a piece of antler its spectral double could be drawn forth.

The separating out of the animal as a formative function of Cro-Magnon imagination indicates, on a daily, practical level, the increasing separation between human and animal domains. I conjecture that this separation was brought about in part by action-at-a-distance weapons (the spear, the spear-thrower, the harpoon, and probably the bow and arrow).<sup>12</sup> Shamanism, or what might be more accurately termed proto-shamanism, may have come into being as a reactive swerve from this separation continuum, to rebind human being to the fantasy of that paradise that did not exist until the separation was sensed.

While overlapping and intermingling of animal forms typical of cave imagery certainly evokes the historic shamanic paradise of

direct communication between animals and humans, or other-worlds/underworlds and earth, the strongest evidence for shamanic trance activity is the hybrid or grotesque animal/human forms positioned in relation to one or many animal forms in such caves as Les Trois Frères, Lascaux, Gabillou, Pech-Merle, Cougnac, Combarelles, and Chauvet.

As we come forward in time, the animal-headed figures become gods in human form with animals as consorts or antagonists. The so-called "Fall" is hardly a singular event, as depicted in the Bible, but rather a multiphasic expulsion from something that took on increasingly paradisaical depth (and loss) as human beings became more self-conscious.

Since historic rock art is often made to empower a particular site, or is a response to a ritual performed there, it is reasonable to suggest that compositions clearly depicting a psychic reality (such as the "scene" in the Lascaux Shaft)—in comparison to the more widespread realistic animal outlines that would seem to represent an observational reality—were done in conjunction with shamanic activity. Barbara MacLeod's recent sensory isolation experiences in Mayan caves suggest that some of the hybrid or grotesque Cro-Magnon images are the result of an interaction between a quester and what MacLeod has called the "entity" of the cave.<sup>13</sup> And while it is fair to assume that a realistically depicted horse outline is contingent upon careful observation of horses, we cannot rule out the possibility that such a horse, while not grotesque, was a shaman's animal familiar or helping spirit, presented in a naturalistic way. The fact that there are no landscape or hunting scenes per se in Upper Paleolithic cave imagery leaves all figures open to magical interpretations. Deep caves especially would be ideal locations for the experiencing of symbolic death and regenerative vision. Such transformations—fundamental to world historic shamanism—may have roots in the separating-out-of-the-animal and the proto-shamanic rebinding of man to animal that, as I see it, underlie the imaginative turmoil of the Cro-Magnon people.<sup>14</sup>

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What psychologically did these people bring with them into the caves? What did the caves offer them as interactive materials?

Based on the thinking of a number of mythologically and psychoanalytically oriented writers (such as Freud, Melanie Klein, Róheim, Ferenczi, and Brown), one can propose that cave exploration in the Upper Paleolithic was stimulated by regressive fantasies concerning the insides of the mother's body; that our distant ancestors, like

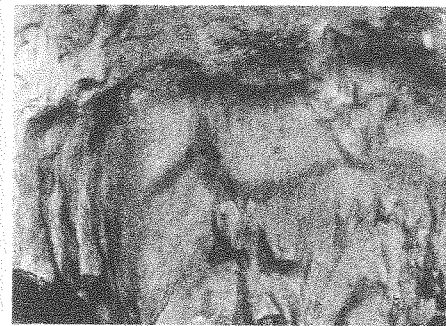
historical people everywhere, may well have associated fissures, holes, cavern corridors and tunnels with female sexual organs; and that these same people furthermore withdrew into themselves as dreamers, forming cavelike dream wombs out of their own bodies. Since both caves and dreams as we know them are charged with uterine sensations and fantasies, might they not then too have had a metaphorical relationship? For example: To be in a cave with its wondrous topography of "insides," at once organlike *and* alien, is certainly like being in a dream. Dreaming, in which a godlike dreamer watches a dream-self venture into a psychic landscape, unsure of his fate, at the constant mercy of blocks, shifting itineraries, and bizarre openings, is like being in a cave. Cave insides were marvelous and forbidding partially because of what they dramatized, or even magnetized, in the insides (body and soul) of the person groping through those cavernous innards.

\*

Cro-Magnon hand lamps made certain aspects of wall contours suggest animal and human anatomy. A significant number of engravings, paintings, and wall sculptures employ natural formations. In Font-de-Gaume, a horizontal ripple in a wall that curves down into a cluster of fluted draperies is turned into a painted horse's dorsal line, rump, and springing rear legs. In Combarelles, a stag lowering its head while drinking is positioned so that the tongue touches a widening fissure in the wall. In the Combel section of Pech-Merle, ochre disks have been painted around a stalactitic "breast." And in Le Portel, a tiny belling stag is painted on the ceiling of a tight cul-de-sac in such a way that to view it one must scrunch backward on one's back, head craned back in the same position as the stag's.

It may have seemed to these early explorers that animals (and, less often, humans) were partially embedded in, or emerging through, such walls, and that such presences only needed the assistance of some man-made lines to be completely present. As the animal was sighted partly submerged in stone, imagination, reinforced by actual modeling or engraving, brought forth its form. If a wall was "with animal," then some Cro-Magnon midwifery could help it to give birth.

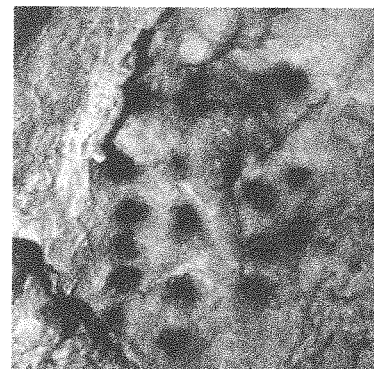
While some areas of caves appear to have been spontaneously marked, others seem to have involved team planning, including the collecting, mixing, and heating of pigments, the making of burins and brushes (or dabbing pads), and even in a few cases the construction of scaffolds. Pollen analysis in Fontanet suggests that a small group of people entered the cave and spent a few nights there,



Font-de-Gaume: Leaping horse, its rump and hind legs formed by folds in the rock.



Les Combarelles: Reindeer with outstretched head, seemingly drinking from a fissure in the wall.



Le Combel: Stalactite in the form of a human breast surrounded by red disks.



Le Portel: Belling stag on ceiling of a cul-de-sac.

making some images and sleeping on grass cushions. In such caves as Cougnac and Pech-Merle, paintings have had new elements added to them; on the basis of recent solid radiocarbon dating, there appear to be thousands of years between one stage and another. The aesthetic range extends from spontaneous poking and scratchings, possibly done in the dark by children, to complex, friezelike palimpsests, involving different belief systems, worked over by "technicians of the sacred" and their apprentices.

The earliest proto-images include small cup-shaped cavities (or cupules), and wandering, crisscrossing lines (which at Rouffignac are so mixed in with cave bear claw scrapings that the thought occurs that the bears might have started the whole image process!). I agree with Maxine Sheets-Johnstone that such markings need not have had a referential focus (such as hunting or fertility) to have been felt as magical, and that much proto-image gesturing was probably done out of an impulsive desire to participate, as she puts it, in "the transforming powers of insides."<sup>15</sup> It is also possible that in quests involving prolonged isolation in a cave, marks on walls were a spontaneous expression between the quester and the cave itself.

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"To explore is to penetrate; the world is the inside of mother,"<sup>16</sup> Brown writes in *Love's Body*. If we follow out the psychic implications of penetrating and exploring, we might imagine finding a Cro-Magnon adolescent gouging a hole in the wall of a cave's terminal chamber. By gouging a small cavity in the limestone this person would symbolically be feminizing the surface of the wall but would also be facing an uninvadable impasse.

The simple but extraordinary solution to this impasse was to abandon penetration *into* for cutting a line *across* the otherwise unyielding matroclinic matter. Engraving especially was a remarkable solution as it allowed for a shallow surface penetration at the same time that it opened up a surface area for a laterally extending line. Once the line turned, a shape in nature was suggested; when it formed an enclosure, not only were insides and bodies at hand, but also the hole-making impasse had been converted into a successful hole outline.

At the point where the line became referential (a curve, say, suggesting an animal's rump or head), a range of intentional possibilities must have come into play, such as the desire to make a number of lines look right or conform to one's memory of a shape. I want to emphasize here, however, that the crucial move enabling the image projection and drawing skill to merge was the deflection of a stymied

head-on penetration. The hole that had become a line was a fundamental metaphoric transformation.

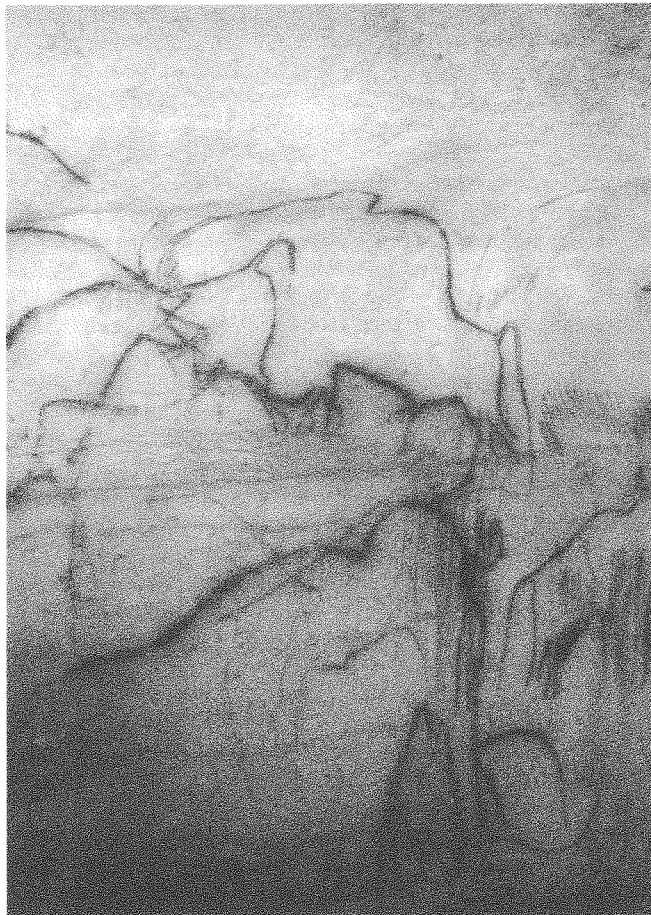
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If the cave was charged with a dreamlike womb atmosphere, we can imagine that the person crawling into it, groping from one unknown object to the next, perhaps in total darkness, entered fantasies in which he or she played a fetal role and sought, in some fashion, to be reborn. Implicit here is the idea that the birth from one's mother is not a complete or the real birth, and that the real or second birth involves something more than merely continuing to exist. Those who do not attempt to realize their symbolic fetal role risk moving from substitute womb to substitute womb all their lives, and interment of the dead can be thought of as the final stop in these changes of residence. Yet like the cave, earth burial implies that there are two mothers: one's flesh-and-blood mother to whose insides one can never physically regress, and one's transpersonal or cosmogonic Mother who, as long as one is alive, may provide the conditions for a second or fully realized birth.

The transformation of regressive penetration into the forming of self-conceived images is one of the ways this second birth is brought about. A person engraving the image of a bison on a cave wall could be said to be realizing him- or herself within the great Mother, or to be giving birth to himself. Drawing upon the bacteriologist Hans Zinsser's words to Hart Crane, one could say that this engraver has loosed himself within a pattern's mastery that he himself has conceived, and can yield to.<sup>17</sup>

The release implicit in such transformations may account for the waves of energy that subtly ripple through many large compositions of friezes. Animals and animal parts are often superimposed as if passing behind, through, and before each other with no sense of contradiction or subordination. There is no background, no frame. While often at a considerable remove from the sunlit earth of fauna and flora, the imagery is coextensive with it. Only occasionally is there any hint of vertical or horizontal grids that subsequent lines must take into consideration. No ascendant/descendant duality. Commenting on what he defines as revolutionary Romantic imagination, Northrop Frye seems to be addressing this Cro-Magnon "release":

Poetic thinking, being mythical, does not distinguish or create antithesis: it goes on and on, linking analogy to analogy, identity to identity, and containing, without trying to refute, all oppositions and objec-



Pech-Merle: Section of the Black Frieze with intersecting bison, horse, and mammoth outlines.

tions. This means, not that it is merely facile or liquid thinking without form, but that it is the dialectic of love: it treats whatever it encounters as another form of itself.<sup>18</sup>

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In the late 1970s, Alexander Marshack showed Caryl and me a photo of an incised ox rib from an Acheulean dig near Bordeaux. The astonishing thing was that between 200,000 and 300,000 years ago a hominid appears to have made a curving slash in the bone (referred

to by Marshack as a "core meander"), and then to have placed this cutting instrument on the end of the slash and made another curving cut (referred to as a "branch meander").<sup>19</sup> This act was repeated several times. This is hardly an image, but it certainly is as *readable* (with the help of a microscope) as the cupules and meanders, made much later, that can be thought of as proto-images. Whoever made these meanders was, in a subliminal way, creating history (thinking here of "history" in the Charles Olson derived sense of "istorin, to find out for oneself," in which I put the stress on "out," or exit for the self).<sup>20</sup>

Taking a lead from the caves and the terms Marshack used, I attempted to find a way to branch out in my poetry while keeping a core at work within the meandering. I sought a focused movement forward through material that would keep open to associative side-tracks. Like someone exploring a cave, I wanted to be able to probe any opening regardless of where it might lead. As each cave has its own shape and character, so I believed a poem could end up being a display of its core and branch meanders. Later, I read Anton Ehrenzweig's commentary, in *The Hidden Order of Art*,<sup>21</sup> on the relation of the maze to the creative search, and realized that my approach to core and branch meandering was a way of schematizing the labyrinth I entered when I started to work on a poem.

As one sees *into* a shifting field, there is a desire to see *through* it. One risks finding that what one is writing is absurd, which of course stops the process in its tracks. However, seeing through what one is writing is the critical aspect of poetic thinking that along with inspiration (or subconscious input) offers imagination its potential wholeness, its dyad of synthesis and melee, the will to cohere in conjunction with the desire to ramify.

In caves I associated *seeing into* with aesthetic appreciation and historical contextualization; *seeing through* with grasping what the images signified to those who made and originally saw them. *Seeing into* and *seeing through* combined into a winding window. Because of the labyrinthine associative field created by unexpected and provocative images, they often wind out of sight before a *seeing through* can take place.

This fascinating and frustrating interplay held for assemblies of images in a particular cave, as well as for isolated compositions. Inching along walls and through tunnels, sometimes on my knees or waddling, occasionally on my belly, the cave and my mind became a synesthetic "salad" of splitting overlays. Sensations and associations amassed and crumbled, bent and extended, died then flashed again, in ways that made me feel I was being processed through them rather than the other way around. Standing before



large compositions in which the realistic, the fantastic, and the unreadable are in overlapping juxtaposition, I have felt myself drawn into a vortex of shifting planes which afforded no place for a perspective or a terminal.<sup>22</sup>

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The chronological unfolding of *Juniper Fuse* also has cavelike aspects. I never followed a recipe, and I worked hard not to constrict the writing into an elaboration of a single intuition or thesis. I wanted to make this book as multifoliate as the image-making it is focused on. As poems and essays developed, with one segment making the next possible in a nonnarrative way, so did the manuscript move out of itself, from year to year, with no end in sight until the spring of 1997 when at long last I gained permission to climb down into the Lascaux Shaft and view its extraordinary "scene" with my own eyes. I realized standing there that I was not only at the end of Lascaux, but very near the end of the investigation I had started shortly after Caryl and I, thanks to H. L. Movius, Jr., visited Lascaux for the first time in the summer of 1974.

As should be clear from my approach set forth in this introduction, *Juniper Fuse* is not an overview of Upper Paleolithic "art." I wrote about those caves and images that moved me imaginatively and about which I had something special to say. There is a great deal of material on Lascaux here (shifting perceptions spread out over more than two decades) along with a significant amount on Combarrelles, Le Tuc d'Audoubert, Montespan, Pech Merle (especially the Combel section), Bernifal, "Venus" figures and statuettes, Aurignacian engraved blocks, the Abri du Cro-Magnon, and the hybrid figures to be found in Cougnac, Les Trois Frères, and Gabillou. I have received the Upper Paleolithic in this book as it thrusts into, and is shadowed by, my twentieth century. I have also included work on more ancient materials (Neanderthal skulls, slabs, and the Drachenloch assemblages) as well as on more recent ones (Mesolithic, Babylonian, and Greek figures and myths), for both are, either as roots tunneling under or shoots budding above, mysterious outgrowths of the Paleolithic rootstock.

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I believe that we make images not simply because we are creatures who seek to lose ourselves within a pattern's mastery, but that the making of images is one of the means by which we become human.

In this sense, to be human is to realize that one is a metaphor, and

to be a metaphor is to be grotesque (initially of the grotto). While it is understandable to think that we stand on blind Homer's and Shakespeare's shoulders, it is perhaps more accurate to say that we stand on a depth in them that was struck hundreds of generations before them by those Upper Paleolithic men, women, and children who made the truly incredible breakthrough from no image of the world to an image. The cathedrals and churches in which humankind passively sits today, listening to watered-down statements based on utterances of visionaries and ecstasies, were, before being in effect turned inside out, active underground "sanctuaries" or "incubational pits."<sup>23</sup> These people created the first electrifying outlines of animals while performing rites of passage, commemorations of the dead, rituals to insure fertility, and just messing around.

At the point imaginative depth is evoked, soul becomes involved. With the Greeks in mind, James Hillman writes: "When we use the word *underworld*, we are referring to a wholly psychic perspective, where one's entire mode of being has been desubstantialized, killed of natural life, and yet is in every shape and sense . . . the exact replica of natural life."<sup>24</sup> Behind such a definition is the Upper Paleolithic underworld: animal forms removed from their flesh and blood. These simulacra propose that the soul is always partly hidden or submerged, because the weight of reality lies in a realm we cannot completely conceive. As Cro-Magnon people killed, ate, wore, and tooled animals, they must have felt like parasitic spectres as well as beings who were both "familiar" and an "other" to the animal.

\*

Previously I spoke of the contours in the wall itself that gave rise to some engravings and paintings. Such imagery could be thought of as containing the figure's emergent, or retreated, essence. Attempting to understand how early consciousness managed to make the nearly invisible visible, I thought of a moment in a prose work by Rainer Maria Rilke called "An Experience." After leaning against a small tree in the Duino Castle garden by the sea, and having suddenly been filled with the most delicate of vibrations that he could not physically explain, Rilke "asked himself what was happening to him and almost immediately found an expression which satisfied him, as he said aloud to himself that he had reached the other side of nature."<sup>25</sup>

Is it possible that the "place" Rilke reached in the interior or night-side of the tree was a "place" that Cro-Magnon people looked out from? If it were, it would suggest that the locus of projection was sensed as inside the material the surface of which was being painted

or engraved. Of course they must have had an intimate relationship with the surface of a wall to be able to pick up, by a flickering flame, the contour that implied the potential presence of a figure. Such people could be said to have seen from the "other side of Nature" as well as outwardly, to have had no fixed boundary or "reality principle" within the fluidity of the imaginal and the observational.

Thus the double separation—from the animal, from mother—endured by our ancient forebears may not only have taken them to the wall but allowed them an encompassing access behind the wall's undulating surface as ghosts of their own potential. Do we today look at images that once were the rounding out of an outwardly directed, interior gaze, "the movement of a self in the rock"? Are Upper Paleolithic images for us the worm casts of this presence?

"The descent beckons . . ."<sup>26</sup>

## Part I



## INTERFACE I: "THE SEPARATION CONTINUUM"

When we returned to Los Angeles in the fall of 1974, I continued reading about the Upper Paleolithic caves. Nearly all of the material treated the imagery as reflective of daytime activities, i.e., success in the hunt or fertility magic. The only person who impressed me for having looked at the signs and animals as possessing a coherence relative to themselves (in contrast to one *reflective* of hunting and procreation) was André Leroi-Gourhan. Unfortunately, what he drew from his experience, while original, seemed to be inadequate and based on juggled and incomplete data. Leroi-Gourhan argued that the animal juxtapositions represented sexual pairing, and that there was a predictable distribution of sexual pairs, animal types, and signs at the entrances, and in the corridors and recesses of the caves that he had visited or studied. Reading this, I was puzzled, as my experience in a cave like Les Combarelles, for example, led me to think that the corridors there had been visited and engraved over thousands of years and that there was no plan to them whatsoever.

In 1978, Caryl and I returned to the Dordogne. When we revisited Les Combarelles, I took Leroi-Gourhan's map and compared it with that of the Abbé Henri Breuil, in the possession of Claude Archambeau, the guide and caretaker at Les Combarelles. We found that Leroi-Gourhan had not indicated certain animals and signs that were on Breuil's earlier map, and that if all of Breuil's were added, along with the additional engravings that Archambeau had discovered, Leroi-Gourhan's thesis made no sense. This made me distrust his data for the other sixty-five caves mapped in *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the empirical data itself, the thesis of sexual pairing was reductive and staticizes what in my experience is a multidimensional sense of mobility and unpredictability in cave imagery.

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Before returning to the Dordogne in 1978, I read an essay, later published as a book, by the archetypal psychologist James Hillman, called "The Dream and the Underworld."<sup>2</sup> Hillman was not concerned with prehistory in this work, but what he had to say about dreams and the way we have used them suggested a way for me to begin to think about cave imagery.

According to Hillman, modern people have interpreted their dreams and treated them as a reflection of daylight and daytime activities, thus denying them an autonomous realm, an archetypal place that corresponds with a distinct mythic geography—in short, an underworld that is not merely a reflection or diminution of an

empirical sense world. I was astonished! This was exactly the same kind of interpretation that had been cast over the Upper Paleolithic caves. Like Plato's allegory of the cave, the caves, since the discovery of prehistory in the mid-nineteenth century, were thought to contain a world of shadows in contrast to a "real" sunlit world of higher good above them.

It was not a matter of merely reversing such a verdict, but of acknowledging how the mysterious animals, human forms, and signs behind what might be called "the history of image" might prefigure a way to dream and imagine. In a contemporary way, Upper Paleolithic cave imagery is a language upon which all subsequent mythology has been built. From my point of view, the distinction between history and prehistory started to look like the distinction between poetry and prose at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Of course Cro-Magnon people were affected by all that was in and around them, and undoubtedly they brought their desire to live—to kill, eat, and wear animal—into the depths of the caves. But the work on the cave walls has behind it a much more formidable crisis than depicting game.

After I crawled for four hours in Le Portel or Les Trois Frères, I realized that "sympathetic magic" and "sexual pairing" interpretations had only skimmed what has been recorded. There I glimpsed outlines of isolated animals (with only several possible exceptions, no hunter/animal juxtapositions occur until *after* the Upper Paleolithic), or crouched before friezes of hundreds of entangled animal figures, sometimes scratched on one great bison outline, as if the earth were seen as a ripe pelt of animals. I saw within this labyrinth little half-human animals beginning to appear, more often than not as mere dancing mites. I felt that I was witnessing the result of the crisis of Upper Paleolithic people separating the animal out of their about-to-be human heads, and what that we call "the underworld" has, as its impulse, such a catastrophe behind it.

\*

Eden, which most people regard as a primordial image, from the viewpoint of Upper Paleolithic imagery is the end of a primordial condition in which what is human and what is animal are bound together. It is possible to follow their separation as it is recorded in imagery. At around 15,000 B.P. a figure popularly known as the "Dancing Sorcerer" was engraved and painted in the "sanctuary" at Les Trois Frères.

Wearing the antlers of a stag, an owl mask, wolf ears, bear paws, and horse tail, a human appears to be dancing—or is he (he *is* male,

with an animal-like penis) climbing a tree? Is he a shaman— or is he a Covering Shaman, the prototype not only of Shiva but also for the Covering Cherub? The armature of this figure is clearly human, yet his surface is stuccoed with a patchwork of animals (the word “stuccoed” here comes from Walt Whitman’s “I find I incorporate gneiss and coal and long-threaded moss and fruits and grains and esculent roots, / And am stucco’d with quadrupeds and birds all over . . . ,”<sup>3</sup> lines that in the context of the *Trois Frères* figure evoke a human being in magnetic fusion with other kingdoms).

As we come forward in time, we can observe the animal adhesion giving way. While Egyptian gods have animal heads, the rest of their anatomy is “designer” human. With the Greeks, many of the deities appear completely human—with animals as consorts—or in the case of some chthonian figures, like the Medusa, bits of other kingdoms remain, such as snakes for hair and tusks for teeth. It is possible in the case of Medusa to imagine the snakes encircling her face as the winding corridors of a cave, and the tusks in the center of her face as the specter of that dreadful encounter where in total dark and possibly more than a mile from the entrance a human met a nine foot cave bear.

By the end of the eighteenth century, in the “civilized” European world, the shaman had lost even a consort relation with the animal. In William Blake’s “Glad Day” watercolor, the shaman/poet displays himself naked and free of all animality, his left foot treading on a worm while a bat-winged spirit, symbolizing evil, glides into the background. Counter to this progression, the animal spirit becomes not only “fabulous,” a hybrid mix emphasizing claws, beaks, and fangs, but increasingly less and less an ally and more a figure of terror and wrath, pounding on our chests in nightmare, as if a door forever locked on separation is in us. While the Nemean lion, the Lernaen hydra, and Stymphalian birds appear to be in some way connected to the hybrid animals on the walls of Upper Paleolithic caverns, the Greek ones are “fabulous” man-hating monsters to be vanquished by Hercules, whose labors became “heroic” to the extent that he accomplishes their destruction.<sup>4</sup>

\*

Charles Olson’s vision of *The Odyssey* as a dance drama in which a shaman quester wends his way through a labyrinth of monsters to be reunited with a human other is a fascinating tie-in of prehistory with history.<sup>5</sup> Such a vision also bears the shadow of the hero out of bond with living animals. By tending to depict animals realistically



Les Trois Frères: The Abbé Breuil's drawing of "The Dancing Sorcerer," including engraved as well as painted lines. For Breuil's description of the figure, see p. 155.

and himself as a hybrid monster, Cro-Magnon man seems to be in accord with Wallace Stevens's

It is the human that is the alien,  
The human that has no cousin in the moon.<sup>6</sup>

\*

Leaves lay  
Persian on colorless ground.  
Passionately I appeared with Caryl  
stepping into Combarelles,  
dreamers into the dream,  
phalli through vulvar folds,  
a lioness finding her way is  
furrowed, linked to a stallion,  
a deer drinking from the abyss is  
crossed by a bear,  
a hut is formed, the core  
disappears, can core  
be struck again?

Lion-headed Ialdabaoth,<sup>7</sup>  
"child of chaos,"  
is it your feline eyes I see while leaving sleep  
or are these eye negatives  
the ringed ghost eyes of childhood pets?  
What is my initial slash?  
Can my line grasp my coreless condition?

An old Quechuan word  
Halma Christina Perry intoned to me,  
New York City, 1967,  
"kachkaniraqmi," starts to define again:  
*in spite of everything we still are,  
we still exist with all our possibilities for  
reintegration and growth.*

## HADES IN MANGANESE<sup>1</sup>

for James Hillman

Today I'd like to climb the difference  
between what I think I have written and  
what I *have* written, to clime being,  
to conceive it as a weather  
generate and degenerate,  
a snake turning in digestion with the low.

But what you hear  
are the seams I speak, animal,  
the white of our noise  
meringues into peaks  
neither of us mount—or if we do,  
as taxidermists, filling what is over  
because we love to see *as if* alive.

Seam through which I might enter,  
wounded animal, stairwayed  
intestine in the hide of dream,  
Hades, am I  
yule, in nightmare  
you weigh my heart,  
you knock, in the pasture at noon,  
I still panic  
awakening at 3 A.M.  
as if a burglar were in the hall,  
one who would desire me, on whose claw  
I might slip a ring, for in the soft  
cave folds of dream  
in conversation you woo, I weigh,  
I insert something cold in you,  
you meditate me up, I carry  
what is left of you, coils  
of garden hose, aslant, in my gut . . .

Hades, in manganese you rocked, an animal,  
the form in which I was beginning to  
perish, wading in eidola  
while I separated you out!  
To cross one back line with  
another, hybrid, to take from the graft  
the loss, the soul now wandering

### SEEDS OF NARRATIVE IN UPPER PALEOLITHIC IMAGERY

It is impossible to know today when something that we would recognize as narrative began to occur in human life. It is possible that it came about as a result of the invention of night life (social life at night)—as well as caves transformed by image-making into underworlds), on the basis of the institution of fire. According to Louis Leakey, “before that, like birds or baboons, with the fall of darkness we sought our perch. Our daytime lives were pragmatic, absorbed with the chores of survival. The leisure of the evening was for the human being a new ecological niche. There was the security of the shelter or cave, and the social focus of the fire that fascinates us yet today. Here talk became a pleasure, not a necessity. The day’s adventure of the hunt could be told and retold, while children listened and learned. Memories were enhanced, myths began to take form.”<sup>1</sup>

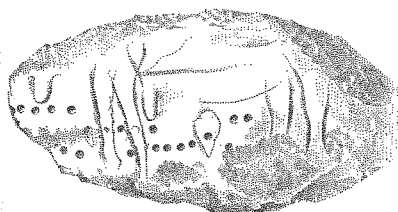
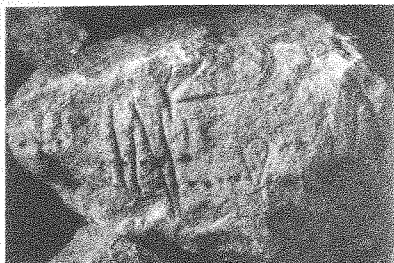
When we look for evidence of the seeds of narrative, we come upon Neanderthal burying his dead in ochre-lined pits, on pine boughs and covered with wild flowers,<sup>2</sup> at around 60,000 B.P. By tying the corpse up so that it looked as if it were being buried in fetal position, Neanderthal may have been sensing the earth as both womb and tomb. He also may have been trying to prevent the formation of a ghost, for the tied-up corpses were sometimes covered with heavy slabs. The only marks Neanderthal made were small cup-shaped gouges on the undersides of burial slabs or on rocks,<sup>3</sup> and while such gougings are evocative of concave female space, they also may be no more “narrative” than a two-year-old chipping at the wall with a pencil, simply to act on matter, to affect the outside.

It is not until around 35,000 B.P. that we find evidence for the beginning of the liberation of the autonomous imagination. Much of this evidence comes from southwestern France and northern Spain, and was done by our direct ancestors, the Cro-Magnon people—consisting of finger doodlings in soft clay, incised weapons and tools, sculpture, engravings, and paintings in rock shelters or caves. While cup-shaped gouges, engraved vulvas, and vague animal parts are at one end of the Upper Paleolithic spectrum, at the other end we find large, polychromatic frescos of astutely perceived animals, involving shading, perspective, outlining, and movement.

I believe that what we call image-making and, consequently, art, was the result of the crisis of the separation of the hominid from the animal to the distinct but related classifications of the human and the animal. Why it resulted in image-making when and where it did probably has much to do with Ice Age conditions—a considerable dependence on animals for survival (though Cro-Magnon seldom

depicted red deer, his main food source), as well as the effect of severe and prolonged cold on a body that originally evolved under temperate and even tropical conditions. Seemingly suddenly, at around 32,000 B.P.<sup>4</sup> these people began to put the animalness they were losing (or really, had lost), yet were utterly dependent upon, onto cave walls—often in the depths of caves they did not live in, in barely reachable places. Consciousness, as I am thinking of it here, seems to be the upswing of a “fall” from the seamless animal web, in which a certain amount of sexual energy was transformed into fantasy energy, and the loss partially and hauntingly compensated for by dreaming and imagining—processes not directly related to survival.

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La Ferrassie: Engraved Aurignacian block. With drawing. (See p. 285 n.6 to “Montespan” for author’s reading of the engravings.)

The first images of which we have record appear to be crudely gouged vulvas and possibly phalluses mixed with vague animal indications, as well as thousands of seemingly nonreferential meandering lines, dots, and other signs, alone or in various formations.<sup>5</sup> While we now know that sophisticated techniques were invented at very early dates, and that no monolithic linear theory of aesthetic development can account for regional differences occurring over a 25,000-year time span in a land mass ranging from southern Spain to Siberia, it appears that the human image emerged as if sighted as a potential in these labyrinths of lines and body parts, often in one of these image situations:

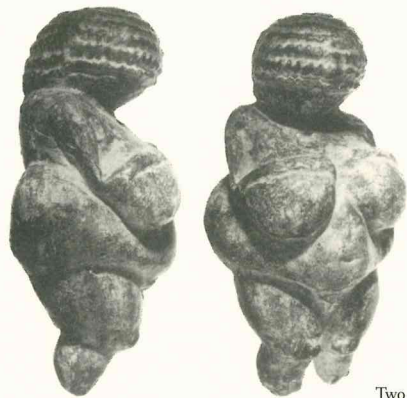
1. The potential human appears to be a satirized, bestialized, phantasmal hominid with no clear gender.<sup>6</sup> Such terms indicate that, with few exceptions, man throughout the Upper Paleolithic

did not recognize himself as human in any finished, completed (or even vertical) sense. In such figures, man appears abstract to himself, in comparison to the fleshed-out details of his animal renderings.

2. Woman, less often depicted on cave walls than man, is, unlike man, carved into free-standing miniature sculpture, the so-called “Venus” statuettes.<sup>7</sup> Many are small enough to fit in the hand, and many, but not all, are also footless and faceless (or in Willendorf’s case, the face is covered with an entwined rope, which begins at the vertex and winds in spirals around the whole head). Many are obese, with a thick mid-lower body girdle of buttocks, stomach, and



Les Combarelles: Grotesque engraved head in the Inner Gallery.



Two views of the "Venus of Willendorf."

See color plate III.

breasts. The so-called "shameless Venus" appears to never have had a head.

3. Man begins to appear as a dancing, elfin intruder in engraved assemblies of wandering lines and realistic animals. While the anatomy indicates a masculine human being, he is either part animal, or garbed in animal, a camouflaged piece of the shattered hominid/animal mosaic. At 15,000 B.P. man appears as a small, insistent wedge, relative to weather and fauna a mere fleck, but a fleck with a point, a foreign element capable of running a fracture through the whole log, so to speak, at a certain depth of insertion with the grain.

In nearly every case, the human figure is masked (or headless) and appears to be moving (dancing behind or before animals, or bending over in file)—or, as in the case of the "Venus" statuettes, has been tapered as if to be fixable in the ground (several were discovered in such a position). Two narrative prototypes may be gleaned here:

—the masked, dancing shaman as Coyote or Shiva, the trickster/transformational hero of myths all over the world, constantly in stasis-defying motion, in contrast to

—the fixed matriarchal figure of "The Great Goddess" or "Cosmic Mother," who will become the central figure of Mesolithic and Neolithic visions of the womb that is the tomb, the contrapuntal rhythm of spring and autumn, where the natural and the human are as strands of one cycle twisted upon itself.

Cro-Magnon's main cave wall obsession was with big herbivores, such as bison, horses, mammoths, ibexes, megaloceroses, and rhinoceroses. Bears and lions were much less depicted. These animals were initially sketched (generally in black manganese or charcoal),

(Opposite page) Les Trois Frères: The Abbé Breuil's drawing of a portion of an engraved wall in the "Sanctuary." The bison-headed man appears to be involved with the two animals leaping away from him.





then sometimes painted in, as if they had been hung on the wall separately, with no relation to each other. Occasionally the animals seem to interact, for example one sniffing another's sex, or a male nuzzling a female. There is one considerable exception to what I say here—the Lascaux Shaft “scene”— and I turn to it in a moment.

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Upper Paleolithic space appears to be multidirectional, not only a world of broken interrelation where everything is in association, but also a world that is not partitioned from its material by a frame or some other boundary device. Since there seems to be no evidence for distinguishing sacred space from secular space in Upper Paleolithic imagination, it makes sense to me that some paintings were retraced, participated in again and again by people who were probably in no way related to the original painter.

One could almost say that there is no evidence in Upper Paleolithic art space of the distinctions we make between an exterior and an interior. It seems to be neither inside anything nor outside anything. On the other hand, a sense of boundary appears to be emerging *within* painted or engraved areas. I imagine an Upper Paleolithic frieze as a kind of whirlpool within which the flotsam of inside/outside are spinning toward me. If so, of what does this “wreckage” consist? In following out the metaphor, I come again to the animal/hominid separation as a catastrophe in the ocean of life, the ramifications of which we have hardly begun to investigate. Inside and outside, in this view, could be seen as the “shipwreck” of an inter-related life vessel.

Once we have crossing lines, a sense of the vertical and the horizontal seems incipient. S. Giedion writes:

Each of us carries in his brain a kind of secret balance which impels us unconsciously to weigh everything we see in relation to horizontal and vertical—to the rectangular. This ranges from the composition of a painting to our everyday habits. We feel slightly uneasy when our knife and fork are not laid out straight beside our plate or when the writing paper on our desk is not parallel to the blotter. But this is not the only possible conception of order. A conception not dependent upon the vertical occurs in primeval art . . .

All directions were of equal importance . . .

The multiformity of surfaces, with an infinite freedom of direction and perpetual chance, is at the root of all primeval art.<sup>8</sup>

Giedion is perceptive here, but there are indications that freedom and chance were already being restricted. While there is no definite

ground line upon which animals and humans are presented (or figures within a landscape setting), there are indications, at Lascaux, for example, that verticality/horizontality and the right angle are operative. The Rotunda at Lascaux is divided horizontally between an upper white calcite-covered level and a lower tannish limestone level. The calcite is more attractive and absorbent for painting than the limestone, so Cro-Magnon painted the animals on it. The top of the limestone, right under many animals, running like a band throughout the Rotunda and the Axial Gallery, thus functions as a ground line. In the Axial Gallery, below the stag with fantastic antlers, there is a row of dots ending in, or beginning with, the outline of a rectangle (see cover art). In a number of other caves, there are tectiforms and brace-shaped signs, all of which involve right angles and rectangular shapes. While it is probably true that the right angle does not become a “conception of order” in the Upper Paleolithic—as it will in Egyptian representation—it is not absent.

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While the Shaft in Lascaux has received more cursory attention than any other Upper Paleolithic painting site, it has, since the cave's discovery in 1940, resisted both hunting and shamanistic interpretations. As the final extension of the Passageway and the Apse, the corridor and curved chamber that branch off the central Rotunda, the 16-foot Shaft represents the “bowels” of Lascaux. George Bataille gives an adequate description of the “scene” painted on one of its walls:

Midway down . . . a narrow platform brings one opposite a rock shelf (below which the Shaft continues to plunge) bearing images, on one side, of a rhinoceros and, on the other, of a bison; between them, falling or supine, is a bird-headed man; below him, a bird poised on an upright stick. The infuriated bison's hair literally stands on end, it lashes its tail, intestines spill in thick ropes from a gash in its belly. A spear is painted diagonally across the beast's flank, passing over the place where the wound has been inflicted. The man is naked and ithyphallic: drawn in puerile fashion, he is shown as though just felled by the bison's two projecting horns; the man's arms are flung wide and his four-fingered hands are open.<sup>9</sup>

Bataille then quotes the Abbé Breuil, who had written that it is “a painting perhaps commemorating some fatal accident that occurred in the course of a hunt.” On the basis of this hunch, Breuil looked for the hunter's body at the foot of the stone rim above the Shaft, but he found nothing—other than some spears at the bottom

*See color plate I.*

*See color plate II.*

of the Shaft itself, which were dated earlier than the paintings in Lascaux.

In response to Breuil, Bataille comments that the bison could not have been disemboweled by the thrust of the spear (which in the painting is clearly broken off at two-thirds of its length), and while this does not prove the man is not a hunter, it does eliminate him as the cause of the bison's condition. I should add here that since there are no hunting scenes per se in Upper Paleolithic imagery, all things that look like weapons may be symbolic and relate to magic.

Bataille then quotes from H. Kirchner's interpretation. According to the latter, it is not at all a question of a hunting accident. The prostrate man is not dead; rather, he is a shaman in the throes of an ecstatic trance. Kirchner, we are told, has drawn on the idea of "a relationship between Lascaux civilization and the Siberian civilization of our own times." A Siberian scene concerning the sacrifice of a cow is cited; posts topped by carved birds mark the road to heaven, to which the shaman will guide the sacrificed animal while he is unconscious (the birds being auxiliary spirits without whom the shaman could not undertake his aerial journey).

This interpretation might account for the man's erection (and it also supports S. Giedion's argument that "this bird man is in fact standing upright at the moment of supreme exaltation"),<sup>10</sup> but as Bataille points out, Kirchner's theory overlooks the bison and its wound: "that is to say, it is probably that, in a sacrifice, a bison would be disemboweled? And has not Kirchner's theory forced him to view the rhinoceros as independent of the rest of the scene? However, if one inspects the actual Scene at Lascaux, one quickly discovers the group's unity and similarity in treatment."

The interpretations of other writers seem to be based on fantasies concerning shamanistic rites. Andreas Lommel claims the scene is a battle between shamans, "a fight in which only one of the contestants has assumed the shape of an animal." Weston LaBarre suggests that a bird shaman has come to grief in the underground world of a reindeer shaman. François Bordes proposes that a bird-totem hunter was killed by a bison, and a man of the rhinoceros totem painted this picture of revenge: disembowelment by a rhinoceros. William Irwin Thompson states that the bison is "the Great Goddess coming to the shaman in the power vision that sets him apart from ordinary men."<sup>11</sup>

While I have not yet been in the Shaft, I have visited Lascaux three times. On my last visit, the guide, Jacques Marsal (one of the original discoverers of the cave, who has dedicated his life to its preservation), mentioned that carbon monoxide accumulates in the Shaft because there is no air circulation. Marsal suggested a dead

man may have been depicted there because the gas might have made it a lethal area.

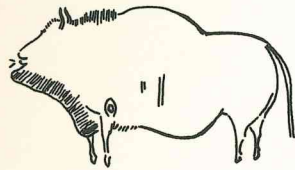
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Let's turn back to the "scene" and reevaluate what is depicted. None of the cited interpretations take into consideration the six black dots apparently issuing from the rhinoceros's anus—not depicted as falling, as literal dung would, but as floating toward, or in alignment with, the bird on the stick who appears to be watching the dots, and thus on a narrative level connecting the right-hand side of the "scene" to the left-hand part. The rhinoceros's tail, turned backward, seems to be in acute contrast with the bison's tail, flipped forward. Is it possible that these two animals signify contrasting aspects of a single image?

While the raised bison hair does suggest aggression, the animal is hardly charging or writhing, but appears to be stoically rigid, in striking contrast to the bolting, leaping and trotting animals which swarm the Rotunda and Axial Gallery. The bison's front hooves are in geometrical alignment with its downdrawn head aligned, eye to eye, with the man's bird mask.<sup>12</sup> Might there be a compositional motif to which bison and man are being subordinated? Upper Paleolithic art has been so dominated by "the hunting hypotheses" and antithetical shaman fantasies that compositional layout has hardly been considered.<sup>13</sup>

Going back to Bataille for a moment: I do not find a "gash" as the source of the spilling intestines (but do want to acknowledge his observation that the spear is laid *across* the bison, not plunged into or through it).<sup>14</sup> The intestines, according to Leroi-Gourhan, are "given the shape of concentric ovals." Because of this they may be one of the many variations of images of the vulva, which in Upper Paleolithic art can be demonstrated to manifest itself, according to Leroi-Gourhan, as triangles, rectangles, claviforms, and ovals.

Once we begin to notice female aspects of the bison, we may be struck by the fact that the bison and the bird-headed man are, compositionally, sides of a triangle standing on its apex. The horizontal side is the flattened out bison hump and back. The left diagonal is the man's rigid body underlined by his right arm, the head and back of the stick bird and the short, hooked object (in hunter interpretations referred to as a spear-thrower; in shamanic interpretations, not discussed). The right diagonal is made by what has been referred to as a spear. If one reads the spilled intestines as a vulva image, then the spear can be seen as a phallus. Leroi-Gourhan has offered his own evidence for an Upper Paleolithic system of gender pairing. His



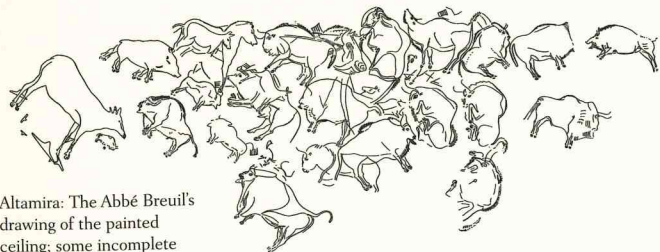
Bernifal: Leroi-Gourhan's drawing of an engraved bison with paired signs.

comments on signs on a bison at Bernifal may be relevant to the Shaft "scene":

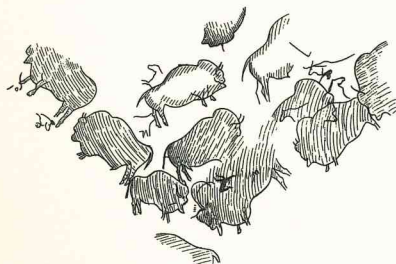
When we consider the variants of the "arrow" and of "wound marks," we become aware that these graphic markings can be assimilated to variant forms of the male and female signs. In other words, it is highly probable that Paleolithic men were expressing something like "spear is to penis" as "wound is to vulva." To be fully persuaded of this, it is enough to see that the bison in the central panel at Bernifal is marked on its side, not with a "wound" and "arrows," but with an oval vulva in double outline and two pairs of short strokes.<sup>15</sup>

Here I might add that the so-called intestines in the Shaft "scene" could be described in the same words.

Thus if we think of the "intestines" as a variation of the vulva image, and keep in mind the triangular framing, the right-hand aspect of the "scene," compositionally, is a small oval vulva tangential to a large triangular one, with each diagonal of the triangle—the ithyphallic man and the spear/phallus—clearly male.<sup>16</sup> While such a reading does not reduce the painting to abstract or merely geometrical "gender" art, it does interfuse the surface male shaman/hunting ambiguities with strongly feminine rudiments.



Altamira: The Abbé Breuil's drawing of the painted ceiling; some incomplete outlines and signs have been omitted below the hindquarters of the lowest bison.



Font-de-Gaume: The Abbé Breuil's drawing of the composition in the Chamber of the Little Bison.

The female triangle that I have coaxed out is not a fluke; it is implied in a number of cave frescoes, in particular, the Altamira ceiling and the Chamber of the Little Bison in Font-de-Gaume.<sup>17</sup> The imaged vulva is possibly the oldest and most enduring force in creative expression. It first appears with certainty before 30,000 B.P. in Aurignacian bas-relief rock shelter sculpture, and spreads forward through history as the Delta, Holy Door, Yoni Yantra, Virgin-Mother-Crone trinity, etc.<sup>18</sup>

If we allow an ambiguity of interpretation in the right diagonal and do not insist on a literal spear identification, it is possible to locate it in a slightly different but possibly relevant context: There are numerous depictions of headless or masked figures of women, in profile, with protruding buttocks, slightly leaning forward, as if dancing or

exposing their buttocks (the Losotho of South Africa still perform such a dance on the occasion of a girl's menarche).<sup>19</sup> Most such figures in Upper Paleolithic art are marked, or "signed," with a forceful gouge that traverses the body downward from the rump. Such a line neatly converts a rump-in-profile into a vulva viewed from the front. Such a gouge may suggest sexual maturity, availability, and/or fertility. If we now go back to the Shaft "scene," we can see how, in this context, the "spear" turns the bison's rump into a kind of vulva seen upside down.

Given the location of the Shaft "scene"—in Lascaux's lowest level, part of a cul-de-sac filled with noxious if not lethal gas—we might expect such a "scene" to relate to the lower body. I have mentioned earlier the ways in which the animals' tails contrast, and that rhinoceros and bison may reflect contrasting aspects of a single image. I would now like to suggest that the female-signed bison complex is identified with fecundity, while the rhinoceros, less storied, more naturalistic, with no prominent sexual identification that I can see, is identified with fecality, and that the two together are a kind of diptych, or synthesis of eroticisms (an *amphimixis*, to borrow Sandor Ferenczi's coined word from his book, *Thalassa*).<sup>20</sup> The implication of the "scene" is that permeating magic and hunting, creation and destruction, fecundity and death—potentially all dualisms—is a shuttle, or Double Gate, grounded in genital contrariety (or genital opposition, when retention is stressed at the expense of reception, or vice versa).

Linking the "panels" of this diptych are the stick bird and the black dots, or seed turds, whose relationship seems to be corroborated elsewhere. Bird and animal excrement are joined ecologically, and humanly, in at least a half dozen spear-throwers, whose carved deer are depicted, in Leroi-Gourhan's words, "with an enormous sausage of excrement issuing from their posterior orifice, with two birds at the end of the sausage, tenderly kissing."<sup>21</sup>

The failure of earlier scholars to consider, let alone integrate into their interpretations what appears to be the rhinoceros's excrement is part of the tragic limitation of Western Christian civilization.<sup>22</sup> Focused on a raised and broken man on a cross, we have lost the perspective offered by a triangle balanced on its apex, a poised life-gate, as it were, pointing down to and cathecting an underworld, which might make us comedically earthy rather than apocalyptically heaven-obsessed.

If Cro-Magnon imaginative space is multidirectional unbroken interrelation without frame of sacred/secular distinction, perhaps the experience displayed in such space is too. Maybe it is time to stop saying that the man in the Shaft is *either* supine/dreaming or

See color plate X.

supine/dead or falling or standing in exultation. Maybe the experience concretized here is all those things at once, with the further implication that he is but a strut in female fecundity, and that his phallus/spear is the *yang* power in feminine *yin* suppleness, a kind of visionary resiliency felt in all realms. In this extended sense, the significance of the Shaft "scene" is not a Rashomōn-like situation-tragedy in which "truth" is a never completely interlocking mosaic of contrasting viewpoints, but a significance in which all the associated surfacings fuse into an image capable of bearing the inconsistencies and contradictions that have sapped the power of the interpretational views—

Fecality wants to be born—  
the fecal nature of the soul offers its berries to this bird  
who will pick life  
from 6 rhinoceros turds, not  
off the ground, but as semaphoric pairs  
in the depths of Lascaux's  
Shaft,

at the end of 15,000 years of image we are  
*gathered* here, much more than we now  
suspect, by black manganese turds containing  
the seeds of narrative, or the berries which  
like that bird we must take in our mouths and chew  
to mourn a coalescence, a congruity of all we touch,  
distilling from it the fundamental substance of the soul—  
look, already our torso is a slack empty loop,  
a kind of lariat falling nowhere, at the top of which  
is the bird head we've desperately put on to stop  
conformity to ourselves—already we are a mask  
atop a watery loop of rope, heartless, organless,  
but not sexless, for look, like a gash in motion  
our penis is out, without terminal,  
night-bathing, pronged up as if it could  
match the uterine hunger of Who is that  
hovering above? Looked at  
through a star shower of centuries it may be Madam Death,  
her forehead buried in her chest, under  
her filthy black beard, lashing her tail as if she could fit  
on us, with her uterine loops sounding  
like bells under water the labyrinth of our already  
organless dream—or is she another like us,  
got up in trance, the soul of smallpox, or mange,  
or the soul of our itch

to merge with a dug and forestall  
the unfolding of this tight bud in which  
raised rhino tail is pressed to little bird cheek  
inside of which is my head my whole stiff body  
a lance against which womb and colon are one mass,  
thus kangaroo sac in which the fluid  
I am giving off is the fluid I am taking in, my eyes  
half-filled green windows, a rolling  
sea in the brine emptiness of this Shaft  
now rotating rhino to bird to man, as the heart  
tinkers with forever in the chance of putting out  
while drawing in an intestinal body hard as a diamond,  
spirits hurling lances through my body asleep  
at the bottom of this Shaft, remaking my body,  
giving me vixen power to insert stones into others,  
freeing me from having only wind to pierce, woman to  
pierce, bison to wear and that is why  
I am talking to you this way, Shaft through death  
in which I hurtle both ways, and in that friction  
to generate narrative, to make the bison teach me how to dance  
their slow, swaying dance through which the shadows of  
myself begin to emerge, I pin them to signs, to the paths  
I am lost between, umbilical hoses, to make this substance,  
this showing Emerge, monster to stop  
the cascade of separating ends, yet weaving the separations,  
splitting the very ends I am mourning never having  
been born, to die in the belly of my mother

barren

but for my fetal jungle.

[1981]

NOTES ON A VISIT TO LE TUC D'AUDOUBERT<sup>1</sup>

for Robert Bégouën

bundled by Tuc's tight jagged  
corridors, flocks of white  
stone tits, their milk in long  
stone nippy drips, frozen over



the underground Volp in which  
the enormous guardian eel,  
now unknown, lies coiled—

to be impressed (in-pressed?) by this  
primordial "theater of cruelty"<sup>2</sup>—  
by its keelhaul sorcery



Volp mouth—the tongue of the  
river lifting one in—

to be masticated by Le Tuc d'Audoubert's  
cruel stones—  
the loom of the cave

Up the oblique chimney by ladder to iron cleats set  
in the rock face to the cathole,

on one's stomach

to *crawl*, working against  
one, pinning one

as the earth in, to, it, to  
makes one feel for an instant  
feel its traction— the dread of

WITHERING IN  
PLACE

—pinned in—  
*The Meat Server*  
masticated by the broken  
chariot of the earth



\*  
"fantastic figures"<sup>3</sup>—more beast-  
like here than human—one  
horn one ear— { one large figure  
one small figure

as in Lascaux?  
(the *grand* and *petit* sorcerer?)<sup>4</sup>

First indications of master/  
apprentice? ("tanist" re. Graves)<sup>5</sup>

the grotesque archetype<sup>6</sup>

vortex in which the emergent  
human and withdrawing animal  
are spun—

grotesque = movement

(life is grotesque when we catch  
it in quick perceptions—  
at full vent—history  
shaping itself)

the turns/twists of the cave  
reinforce the image turbine—  
as does the underground river,

the cave floats,  
in a sense, in several senses,  
all at once,  
it rests on the river, is penetrated  
by it, was originally made  
by rushing water—  
the cave  
is *the skeleton of flood*



Le Tuc d'Audoubert: The Abbé  
Breuil's drawing of the two "fantas-  
tic figures" in the Upper Gallery  
facing the cathole.

images on its walls  
participate, thus, as torsion,  
in an earlier torsion—

Here one might synthesize:

- 1) abstract signs  
initiate movement  
brought to rest in
- 3) naturalistic figures  
(bison, horses etc)

In between, the friction, are

- 2) grotesque hybrids

(useful—but irrelevant to systematize forces that must have been felt as flux, as *unplanned*, spontaneous, as were the spots/areas in caves chosen for images—because shadowing or wall contour evoked an animal? Any plan a coincidence—we have no right to systematize an area of experience of which we have only shattered iceberg tips<sup>7</sup>—yet it does seem that “image” occurs at the point that a “naturalistic” ibex is gouged in rock across an “abstract” vulva already gouged there, so that the rudiments of poetry are present at approximately 30,000 BC—

image is crossbreeding,  
or the refusal to respect  
the single, individuated body,  
image is that point  
where sight crosses sight—

to be alive as a poet is to be  
*in conversation with one's eyes*)

What impresses at Tuc is a relationship  
between river

hybrid figures  
and the clay bison—

it is as if the river (the skeleton of water = the cave itself) erupts into image with the hybrid “guardians” (Breuil's guess) and is brought to rest in the terminal chamber with the two bison i.e., naturalism is a kind of rest—naturalism returns us to a continuous and predictable

nature (though there is something unnatural about these bison to be noted later)—takes us out of the discontinuity, the *transgression* (to cite Bataille's slightly too Catholic term, of the grotesque (though the grotesque, on another level, according to Bakhtin, is deeper continuity, the association of *realms*, kingdoms, fecundation and death, degradation and praise—))

on one hand: bisons-about-to-couple

*assert the generative*

what we today take to be

*the way things are* (though with ecological pollution,  
“generation” leads to mutation,  
a new “grotesque”!)

★

to be gripped by a *womb of stone*  
to be in the grip of the surge of life  
*imprisoned* in stone

it is enough to make one *sweat one's animal*

(having left the “nuptial hall” of white stone breasts in which one can amply stand—the breasts hang in clusters right over one's head—one must then squirm vertically up the spiral chimney (or use the current iron ladder) to enter the upper level via a cathole into a corridor through which one must crawl on hands and knees—then another longish cathole through which one must crawl on one's belly, squirming through a human-sized tunnel—to a corridor through which one can walk haltingly, stooping, occasionally slithering through vertical catslits and straddling short walls)—

if one were to film one's postures through this entire process, it might look like a St.-Vitus dance of the stages in the life of man, birth channel expulsion to old age, but without chronological order, a jumble of exaggerated and strained positions that correspondingly increase the *image pressure* in one's mind—

while in Le Tuc d'Audoubert I felt the broken horse rear in agony in the cave-like stage of Picasso's *Guernica*,

at times I wanted to leave my feet behind, or to continue headless in the dark, my stomach desired prawn-like legs with grippers, my organs were in the way, something inside of me wanted to be



Le Tuc d'Audoubert: Iron ladder leading to the Upper Gallery from the “nuptial hall.”



Le Tuc d'Audoubert: Max Bégouën (one of the “three brothers”) by the cathole he has opened that leads to the clay bison.

an armored worm,  
one feeler extending out its head,

I swear I sensed the disintegration of the backbone of my mother  
now buried 12 years,

entangled in a cathole I felt my tongue start to press backwards,  
and the image force was: I wanted to *choke myself out of myself*, to  
give birth to my own strangulation, and then nurse my strangulation  
at my own useless male breasts—useless? No, for Le Tuc d'Audou-  
bert unlocks memories that bear on a single face the expressions of  
both Judith and Holofernes at the moment of beheading, mingled  
disgust terror delight and awe, one is stimulated to desire to enter  
cavities within oneself where dead men can be heard talking—

in Le Tuc d'Audoubert I heard something in me whisper me to  
believe in God

and something else in me whispered that the command was the  
rasp of a 6000 year old man who wished to be venerated again—

and if what I am saying here is vague it is because both voices had  
to sound themselves in the bowels of this most personal and imper-  
sonal stone, in which sheets of myself felt themselves corrugated  
with nipples—as if the anatomy of life could be described, from this  
perspective, as entwisted tubes of nipples through which per-  
petual and mutual beheadings and birthings were taking place—

\*

See color plate IV.

but all these fantastic images were shooed away the moment I laid  
eyes on the two bison sculptured out of clay leaned against stuff  
fallen from the chamber ceiling—

the bison and their "altar" seemed to be squeezed up into view out  
of the swelling of the chamber floor—

the sense of *culmination* was very severe, the male about to  
mount the female, but clearly placed several inches behind and  
above her, not in contact with any part of her body, and he had no  
member—<sup>8</sup>

if they *were* coupling, and *without* deep cracks in their clay bod-  
ies, they would have disappeared into their progeny thousands of  
years ago, but here they are today still, as if Michelangelo were to  
have depicted God and man as not touching, but only reaching  
toward each other, caught in the exhaustion of a yearning for a  
sparkling that has in fact never taken place, so that the weight of all  
the cisterns in the world is in that yearning, in the weight of that  
yearning is the real ballast in life, a ballast in which the unborn are  
coddled like slowly cooking eggs, unborn bison and unborn man, in  
the crib of a scrotum, a bone scrotum, that jailhouse of generation

from which the prisoners yearn to leap onto the taffy machine-like  
pistons of shaping females—

it is that spot where the leap should occur that Le Tuc d'Audou-  
bert says is VOID, and that unfilled space between two fertile poles  
here feels like the origin of the abyss, as if in the minds of those who  
shaped and placed these two bison, fertilization was pulled free, and  
that freedom from connection is the demon of creation haunting  
man and woman ever since—

we crawled on hands and knees about this scene, humbled, in  
single file, lower than the scene, 11 human creatures come, lamps in  
hand like a glowworm pilgrimage, to worship in circular crawl at one  
of the births of the abyss—

if I had stayed longer, if I had not with the others disappeared into  
the organic odors of the Montesquieu-Avantès woods, I am sure that  
I would have noticed, flittering out of the deep cracks in the bison  
clay, little winged things, image babies set free, the Odyssei before  
Odysseus who still wander the vaults of what we call art seeking new  
abysses to inscribe with the tuning forks of their wings . . .

THROUGH BREUIL'S EYES<sup>1</sup>

The earth so fully referential  
it appears to press out nothing but  
aspects of itself,

cave stone bulging  
rump, flint-fine dorsal line, bison interior  
milling with beast particles—

the earth a herd of waves breaking,  
a beast abattoir containing a beast springhead,  
birth and slaughter a mobius beastband—

here the human is recognizable  
only as a freak created by superimposed  
webs of beast fabric,

peering stone,  
the point in repression where  
a child of stone is born, calcite beauty,  
a dancing of home sensation, a bison-headed man  
hopping with a little fiddle, the bison-reindeer  
he is pursuing turns her head  
to look at this bipedal bison who wants to  
penetrate her with his music—

sing-song see-saw by which he strikes,  
chewing he recalls the smell of being born  
right below the earth's waist—

nothing sweeter than moon  
consummation, to be taken up a little eel into  
her silver-horned chamber, and there  
to be devoured into another, to be  
crowned with a Fallopian hat  
so as to prance ibex-wise  
and feel the hordes mounting from behind,  
tides of ghost bison, eyes  
crossed in oestrus, the panic to pass on  
the thud of semen  
lolling the sun into the moon,  
to soothe this burning to drown in blood,  
this lust for the hood of her cervix where  
sweeping her perineum

[See page 33 for this figure]



life glimpsed the dilated rainbow  
of beast eyes receiving  
the lithopaedion born of the lithouterine  
earth.<sup>2</sup>

Les Trois Frères: The Abbé Breuil's drawing of a portion of an engraved wall in the "Sanctuary." Note the twisting bison-man at the bottom of this charged composition.



THE CHAOS OF THE WISE<sup>1</sup>

Why this yearning to travel?  
 More, this deeper yearning to return?  
 Falcon intuition. Human foible loop.  
 At the far end of the drive to flee from one's feet  
 there is psyche. Who is strong enough  
 to take up residence there?  
 Imagination desires circularity,  
 not repetition. Psyche wants recurrence,  
 on each swing the path to deepen,  
 a rattler raga, wants to uroboros herself.  
 Or take Pech-Merle:

the rockwall bears an image  
 which presses in a fraction of an inch.  
 Someone's squatting there, drawing horse and bison  
 close as she distances them,  
 as she works the primordial hourglass,  
 a double bellows, or butterfly.

Wall as thorax:  
 out there one wing, in here another.  
 Imagination as dorsal lines superimposed,  
 one crossing another, making a statement  
 imprisoned by the ochre on her finger—  
 she can't press through the wall she is to penetrate,  
 a finger in the void, a traveling semen-travesty.  
 Chaos' lips purse to suck on her plunger-finger.  
 Her drawing times her, as here each word  
                                   has its worm ward.

To be underborn in the chaos of the wise,  
 to take the oath of the abyss<sup>2</sup>  
 verging on being of the physical world!

All the I/s huddle, as if, as one,  
 they could remain in goddess doorway all their lives  
 —what terror! What delight! Psyche wonders:  
 might there still be one great mother with everyone  
 daisy-chained to her rich hole? Do we sink  
 Hades and Persephone into Hades  
 for a sensation of life wedded to its origin?

NEANDERTHAL SKULL<sup>1</sup>

Flared sockets under  
 bulging brow bridges tough as tusks  
 evoke rock shelters with visible rear walls.  
 In countermotion to cheekbones sweeping back,  
 incisors—carrot-orange at base,  
 surfaces warped from gripping hides—buck forward,  
 a third arm,  
 an anatomical vise.  
 As if this convex brow glacially furled the cranium back,  
 flattening it,  
 lifting facial planes toward late-morning sun.

*See color plate VII.*

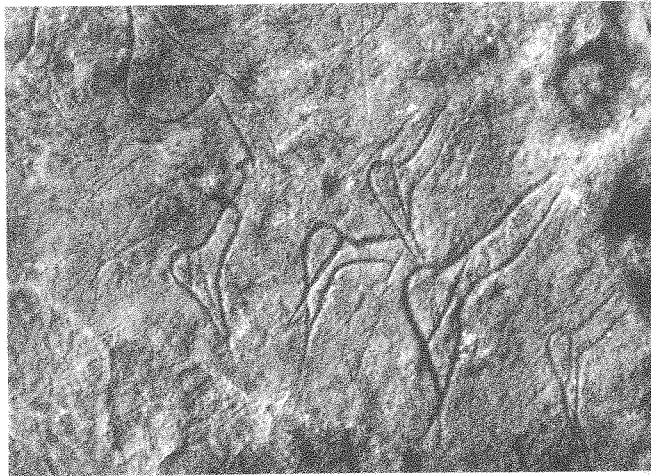
Our smaller faces are tucked  
 in, beneath our brain-case's dome.  
 Rectangular sockets tilting outwardly down  
 imply our brow beam is bending under awesome pull.  
 Our sockets aim straight into auroral red,  
 their cranial pits evoke deep caves,  
 sealed hidden wealth,  
 mind a synesthetic abyss.

Weregaze oriented to "the wild, blue yonder,"  
 did Neanderthal have an interior  
 refuge in which to fetalize and fantasize a bow?  
 Scavenging in dread,  
 under predator arrest,<sup>2</sup>  
 Neanderthal took the Paleolithic's full assault.

## ON SUNLIT GARAGE FRONT

fluttermounting pigeon shadows  
and in them:  
female outlines,  
La Roche Lalande, 13,000 B.P.<sup>1</sup>

Most ancient women,  
the egg still to be laid  
gripped in their protruding butts.<sup>2</sup>



La Roche Lalande: Part of a stone block with seven engraved schematic female figures.

CAVE ART THEORY<sup>1</sup>

The earliest theory of the meaning of Upper Paleolithic art —based on portable art discovered in the 1860s and '70s— was that it had no meaning—it was doodling, play, “art for art’s sake.” This view reflected the anti-clericalism of such scholars as Gabriel de Mortillet who refused to believe that ancient people had any religion. Like all the theories that have followed it, it was a blanket theory, and one that distracted attention from the actual work, envisioning the artist as a kind of ancient gentleman (a gender bias that was hardly noticed for a hundred years), and one with lots of time on his hands, whiling away the hours. I will come back to this now discredited theory, as it has recently been reenvisioned by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in a way that deserves our attention.

With the authentication of prehistoric art at the turn of the century,<sup>2</sup> and a dawning awareness of the often elaborate compositions involving animals and signs in caves, it was becoming harder to believe that primeval art was completely meaningless. Not only was this art complex, but it was often placed in remote and nearly inaccessible areas that suggested initiations, rituals, and other magical motives. That it might have been produced as part of a ritual hunting magic was supported by Spencer and Gillen’s work (1899) on the life of the Australian Arunta, said to perform ceremonies in order to multiply numbers of animals. Arunta ceremonies and sacrifices involved drawing the likeness of animals in the sand or on rocks. Fraser’s *The Golden Bough* (1890) argued that before there was religion, there was magic, which attempted to manipulate the material world. The notion that like produces like was the basis of “sympathetic magic,” which gave further support to a Western understanding of Arunta sand and rock rituals. The pre-historian Salomon Reinach’s position, based on Arunta ethnography and *The Golden Bough*, was that the only way to know why cave dwellers painted and sculpted was to ask the same questions of living primitives. This position, based on the assumption that ethnographic parallels provide meaningful information about the past, has continued to proliferate throughout the twentieth century, achieving its most popularized form here in the cross-cultural mapping of Joseph Campbell.

Hunting magic theory enabled scholars to understand lines and V-shapes on painted animals as spears and wounds—that is, wounding the animal on the wall was done to insure good luck in the hunt. Claviforms became clubs, penniforms arrows, and tectiforms huts, traps, or soul houses. The Abbé Henri Breuil, who wielded enormous influence in the understanding of primeval and primitive art for many decades, adopted the hunting magic theory because he felt

that Paleolithic art expressed hunting anxiety about the availability of game. Such also explained, from Breuil's viewpoint, pregnant horses: Artists were expressing the tribe's hope that animals would reproduce and flourish to provide food. Regarding the human sphere, fertility magic theory, yoked to hunting magic, proposed that the so-called "Venus statuettes" were pregnant and that sexual imagery (cupules, vulvas, ithyphallic male figures, etc.) indicated a preoccupation with conception and childbirth.

There are many problems with both hunting and fertility magic theories.<sup>3</sup> Here are some of the most basic: There are no verifiable hunting scenes in Upper Paleolithic art. Very few of the animals depicted are wounded—less than 10 percent, and we are not sure that such signs actually depict wounds and/or spears. The animals depicted do not correspond in any predictable way to species eaten. Sometimes you find the bones of depicted animals in a nearby midden, at other times not. The most striking discrepancy here concerns reindeer, who abound in middens (at Lascaux, for example, reindeer account for 88 percent of the bones, while one is found engraved in the Apse), but are rarely depicted. At Altamira, for example, people seemed to eat red deer but drew bison.<sup>4</sup>

In regard to problems with fertility magic: We now know that Upper Paleolithic hunting and gathering peoples inhabited much richer and varied environments than do modern hunter-gatherers. Herds of horses, reindeer, woolly mammoth, woolly rhinoceroses, bison, deer, elk, megaloceroses, and aurochs inhabited Western Europe in great numbers. Such availability throws into question Breuil's assumption that anxiety over game was the driving force behind portable and parietal art. Because art depicting copulation is rare, and depictions of childbirth (with one controversial possible exception) completely nonexistent,<sup>5</sup> and because the presence of pregnancy is not verifiable (the mares could have been well-fed, the "Venus statuettes" based on obese women), fertility anxiety seems, on the basis of the visual evidence, a very minor preoccupation.

In *Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art* (1967), Andreas Lommel proposed that prehistoric and primitive art is largely the outgrowth of shamanistic practice. For Lommel, the shaman is the central figure in what he calls "hunting societies," a composite magician-priest, medicine-man, and healer, who, acting under inner compulsion, enters into trance states in which he has an amazing array of psychic experiences, including flights to paradise and to the underworld, battles with ancestor shamans, the escorting of the recently dead to their final resting place, the rescue of lost souls, and the penetration of the source of animal vitality. In these senses and others he acts as a kind of magnetized psychic quagmire for his group,

and often experiences symbolic destruction (his body cut up and cooked, his organs torn out and replaced with solidified light).

While the shaman may indeed be the best candidate that we presently have as an ur-prototype of the self-creative artistic personality, all firm evidence that Paleolithic art is shamanistic in practice rests on cross-cultural comparisons with relatively recent historical hunting societies in Siberia, Greenland, Alaska, Australia, and North America. Lommel's evidence, in fact, when strictly focused on Paleolithic art itself, is meager. He proposed parallels between man-animal representations, hybrid or grotesque figures, men and animals fighting, and drawings in x-ray style. However, he actually produces no examples of Paleolithic x-ray style, and as for men and animals fighting, he simplistically states that the Lascaux Shaft "scene" with the ithyphallic man and the disemboweled bison represents a fight between two shamans, one of whom has assumed the form of a bison.

I must say that it is very tempting, in trying to trace the figure of the poet (or the artist, at large) back through shamanism, to sense his primordial presence in a small but potent series of compositions involving mysteriously wounded or killed male figures as well as beast-headed males, a few of which appear to be in magical conjunction with animals. While I do not agree with Lommel that the disemboweled bison is another shaman, I am willing to accord magical significance to the composition, to see the bird-headed man as in a trance and definitely not, in this context, representative of a hunter (who would wear a bird mask to hunt a bison, let alone a rhinoceros?) So while I agree that the traces of shamanism can be discerned in Paleolithic art, I do not think that shamanism can be confirmed as a general theory. Given our present awareness that Upper Paleolithic art did not have a single beginning and a single line of development and disappearance, I think that the era of seeking single theories to explain this art is over.

After Breuil, the dominating theorist was André Leroi-Gourhan, whose range of research, at once quite complex and very simple, is set forth, in English translation, in *Treasures of Prehistoric Art* (1967). Breuil's tack was to look at the animals on the cave walls as isolated figures, presumably done on a one-by-one basis. Leroi-Gourhan intuited that not only might whole galleries contain an all-over compositional motif, but that each decorated cave might represent a compositional layout permeating all of Upper Paleolithic cave art. He decided that the animals were not to be taken literally (as in the hunting/fertility hypotheses) but that they were symbols that participated in a complementary/oppositional dualism, tied to male and female principles (he later, in the 1980s, rejected the sexual component but kept the primary dualism). Using a computer, he studied

the contents of sixty-six caves (not all of which he personally visited—thus he was sometimes piggyback on early observers whose work would have been questionable by 1960s standards), identifying the species, counting them, noting what was next to what, and in what location of the cave. Because he found some evidence that bison images were considered to be interchangeable with images of women (on the underside of the Pech-Merle rock), he decided that bison (and aurochs and mammoths) represented the female principle, and that horses (along with ibexes and stags) represented the male. Since bison and horses are the most often depicted animals in Upper Paleolithic art, and since, according to Leroi-Gourhan's research, they appeared mostly in the middle portions of caves, they became the centerpiece, as it were, of his evolving system, with less depicted animals located at the peripheries of the central zones, and seldom-depicted animals (bears, felines, rhinoceroses) located in the most remote areas.

Seeing a relationship between triangles, ovals, and vulvas, he determined that all enclosure-oriented signs were female (variations on the vulva), and that their complementary male signs consisted of lines (variations on the phallus). Dots remained indeterminate, as did the seldom-depicted animals. Leroi-Gourhan formulated an "ideal sanctuary," in which the female category was central, and the male category semicentral and peripheral. The image of female centrality encroached upon as well as guarded by a male periphery has deep mythological resonance and is quite sympathetic with theories that posit matriarchal organizations for ancient cultures that were destroyed by patriarchal invasions.

Before offering some criticisms of Leroi-Gourhan's system, I want to acknowledge that regardless of its limitations and inconsistencies, it has made everyone involved in the deep European past look much more carefully at its art than before. Just by countering his proposals, new aspects of what is now hypothesized as a multiphasic and regionally specific art come to the fore.

I became suspicious of Leroi-Gourhan's layouts while visiting Combarelles in the 1970s. On the basis of his map of the cave in *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, one is given the strong impression that there are roughly one hundred or so figures and signs there. However, the Combarelles guide and caretaker Claude Archambeau pointed out that Leroi-Gourhan's map left out a number of figures and was designed to highlight material that supported his overall theory (as of 1997, Archambeau claims that there are more than six hundred figures in the cave). Leroi-Gourhan himself acknowledged, regarding his map of Lascaux, that he had not taken into consideration the hundreds of engravings in the cave (presented in the 1979 *Lascaux*

*inconnu* book). Furthermore, his survey was based on only sixty-six caves and rock shelters. When he did his research, over one hundred and thirty sites were known in France alone, not counting Cantabrian Spain, Central Europe, and Russia. Many caves with only a few paintings or engravings that would have not supported the "ideal sanctuary" concept are left out of the survey. In short, the combination of selecting only certain materials within his limited choice of sites seriously undermines Leroi-Gourhan's theories.

There are other problems too. Caves are all different and their shapes and sizes vary considerably. It is often impossible to determine what the central zone is, relative to peripheral areas. In many cases, the original, or Upper Paleolithic, entrance is either unknown or not the same as the entrance discovered in the twentieth century (thus throwing into question locations of first and last decorated areas, the exactness of which is essential to Leroi-Gourhan's schema). Finally, Leroi-Gourhan does not give importance to the number of animals in a particular area. A single horse could be the equivalent of many bison in his compositional layout. Thus he treats the Altamira ceiling as an example of an ideal central zone, while there are actually fifteen bison and one horse there—not a balance at all.

Alexander Marshack has also used a technological approach to cave research. He believes that microscopic photography of primarily portable objects enables him to read the mechanics, micromorphology, and ballistic traces of incisions. On the basis of excellent photographs and blowups (which enable the nearly unreadable to be read), he has worked out a thesis that grants intentionality to notches on bones that were in the past considered to be random doodlings. In *The Roots of Civilization* (1972), he argued that there is a conformity, on portable objects, between notch series and lunar phase cycles. This is a fascinating proposal that implies that a single, formal notational system existed in the Upper Paleolithic. In Marshack's view, such a system would have enabled people to calculate the passage of time, to predict the seasons, and to juxtapose carved images of plants and creatures according to the time of their mutual appearance. Marshack calls this process "time-factoring." After carefully observing an engraved bone from La Marche with a horse head, an apparently pregnant mare, and many notational marks, he writes:

The Mare drops its foal in the spring after an eleven month gestation and so the mare may be a seasonal image. The associated darts and signs may then represent rites, sacrifices or acts of participation related to the time of foaling. The combination of naturalistic "art,"

sequences of darts and signs, and a lunar notation hints at a complex time-factored symbolism and mythology.<sup>6</sup>

At work here is almost sheer guesswork based on a primary assumption that we are dealing with people who think like we do. The seasonal message that Marshack extracts from the composition is based on counting the notches (some of which he acknowledges are lost on a broken portion of the bone!), and coming up with a count which he interprets as "a possible lunar phasing" which "gives a perfect tally for 7½ months." To make a solid case for lunar phases (or for that matter, menstrual periods, which he does not address), Marshack would have to demonstrate repeated sets of 28 to 31 notches, representing lunar months. Such groups of notches within the "7½ month" period do appear, but many other groups do too, with much larger and much smaller numbers.

Like Breuil, Lommel, and Leroi-Gourhan, Marshack (on the basis of portable art alone) has come up with a provocative if very questionable theory (that constantly disappears into circling generalizations in his writing) to interpret, as he puts it, "the roots of civilization." At this time, it makes sense to suggest that there are undoubtedly traces of hunting and fertility magic, shamanism, and intentional notation in what has been rediscovered of image-making from this 25,000 year continuum. Recent improved and solid carbon 14 dating has revealed that Cognac and Pech-Merle, for example, may have a multiphasic decoration period spanning 10,000 years. It is possible that one set of images came from a people involved in hunting magic while another set (or an addition to an earlier composition) was made by a people who used the cave for shamanic initiation and who had developed a notational system that associated female shamanistic rites with menstrual cycling. Images may be layered with differing worldviews even in a single composition.

In her essay "On the Origin and Significance of Paleolithic Cave Art," in *The Roots of Thinking* (1990), Maxine Sheets-Johnstone argues that all theoretical approaches to the significance of Upper Paleolithic cave art fail to take into consideration the experienced character of the caves themselves and what might have moved someone to make marks on their interior surfaces. Sheets-Johnstone believes that merely being inside a cave was a magical experience for Cro-Magnon people.

"To engrave or paint on the inside surface of a cave is precisely to enter actively into the potential magic of insides," she writes. "To draw on the inside walls of a cave is to be part of the potential transforming powers of insides."<sup>7</sup> In other words, she believes that a flurry of lines on a cave wall need not have been connected to hunt-

ing or fertility or shamanism or time-factoring to be experienced as magical. She proposes that merely to draw a line on a stone wall was to animate a surface and that it was through such animation that the wonder of enveloping forms was discovered. For Sheets-Johnstone, an oval has impact as an oval, or a closed enclosure, and before it could represent a vulva or wound, it must have generated a kind of aesthetic pleasure based just on being an enclosed shape, implying interiority, in the cave's enclosed space.

Her thinking here seems to me to be a sophisticated and thoughtful reenvisioning of the old "art for art's sake" theories of the nineteenth century. Sheets-Johnstone's ideas fill in an important gap between the unadorned cave wall and the various theories that have been brought forth to account for why someone might draw or scratch on a wall. She has grounded what might be called a "line for line's sake" approach in the physical, kinesthetic sensation of participating in an insideness. She sees cave art as an extension of ancestral stone tool-making, in as much as both were generated by manual concepts, the results of "handiwork," and the creation of spacial forms. Reflecting on her work here, it occurred to me that a person standing before a cave wall with a burin was in a position to redirect that utilitarian tool initially crafted for destruction/survival to an involvement in creation: the pleasure of inscribing a wandering or containing line. The wall itself becomes, in a sense, a tool-extension of the burin redirecting gouging and tearing (as in the case of hides) to a lateral glide.

A line in itself, especially an engraved one that cuts into a surface, creates a kind of suspended insideness, somewhat thwarted in that the stone resists direct penetration and by its often large and flat surface encourages an offshoot exploration. It reminds me of the thrill of ice skating, of cutting into a surface and then horizontally extending the cut to form figures that with every drive and swoop not only contain their own integrity but imply an ongoing, even endless, charge of created integrity.

Of course, we will never know why someone made the first line on a cave wall. Such a move might have been stimulated by cave bear claw scrapes, interesting cracks and fissures, or someone with a dirty hand slipping and grabbing for the wall.

At the point the engraver associates a curving line with an animal's dorsal line, and is then in a position to add a head and legs, or to draw a specific animal marked by certain signs, Sheets-Johnstone's ideas become less relevant. At the point we can say a curved enclosure is probably a vulva (or a horse hoof), then all of the theories I have briefly discussed become worthy of consideration. There must have been many occasions in which the drawer of a

wandering line saw, in his mind's eye, a bison's dorsal line and, thunderstruck by the sensation, perceived that the bison which was not there *was there*.

In bringing up the matter of the experienced character of the caves themselves, Sheets-Johnstone touches on a possibility that to my knowledge has not been discussed in studies of Upper Paleolithic cave art: that becoming part of the potential transforming power of insides might involve experiencing cave interiors as a living power whose presence the visitor might feel compelled to depict. While such activity evokes shamanism and may merge with it in certain instances, it does not require shamanistic "credentials," as it were, to experience a force outside of oneself in an isolational situation—especially one of prolonged time. The difference might be that unlike the uninitiated visitor, the shaman would have a mythic system to draw upon in explaining to himself and to others the power structure he is participating in.

In her essay "Sensory Isolation and Vision Quest" (1980),<sup>8</sup> Barbara MacLeod reports that a shaman's assistant—uninitiated apprentice I gather—left alone for some hours in the Balank'anche cave (near the Mayan temple complex, Chichen-Itza, in the Yucatan peninsula) reported feeling a chill, after which "four times he heard noises from the water, as if something was moving on its surface. The shaman told him that he had been listening to the Balames—underwater jaguar spirits commonly propitiated in Yucatecan cave ceremonies."

For the Maya, the sun in its night aspect became the Jaguar God of the Underworld, often pictured on Classic Maya monuments. Thus it would make sense for the Jaguar God to manifest itself in a cave—even today. In a similar way, certain Upper Paleolithic animals may have become associated with caves, and have been thought to sound or manifest themselves in particular caves. The night-jaguar-underworld complex of the Mayas makes me think of the Upper Paleolithic depiction of predators often but not always in the most inaccessible or terminal areas of caves.

Were a cave to have manifested itself as bison or as horse power, it would be understandable if the person who experienced such would leave an image of that animal on the wall as testimony to his experience (or even as a record for others, as instruction or confirmation). Were the cave's power to have been indeterminate—a power neither animal nor human—then hybrid and/or grotesque depictions might have been attempts to come to terms with a power that defied visualization.

None of the Upper Paleolithic archeologists I have read have reported visions or other psychic experiences that appear to have come

about through prolonged time spent in a cave. One rather odd explanation for this might be that the power of a cave like Lascaux, having been magnificently received and documented in chamber after chamber, is now contained—having been "trapped" and applied to the walls; it only exists today as the images themselves. Might cave decoration have been exorcistic in nature, in which fearsome underworld powers were "tamed" by being "translated" from psychic manifestations into concrete images on the wall anyone could observe?

Given the lack of reported visions, it was fascinating to read MacLeod's account in the first of a series of experiments with sensory isolation in the caves of Belize. In November 1972, with a Peace Corps companion, she spent 48 hours without lights or watches "an hour's scramble from the entrance" of an unnamed cave.<sup>9</sup> She and her companion, Kim, had water, food, foam pads, ponchos, and sleeping bags (brought into the cave with the help of friends who were instructed to return forty-eight hours later). Given that MacLeod's account is believable and genuinely mysterious, and that such experience has yet to be brought to bear on the meaning of Upper Paleolithic cave imagery, I feel that it is worth quoting here at length:

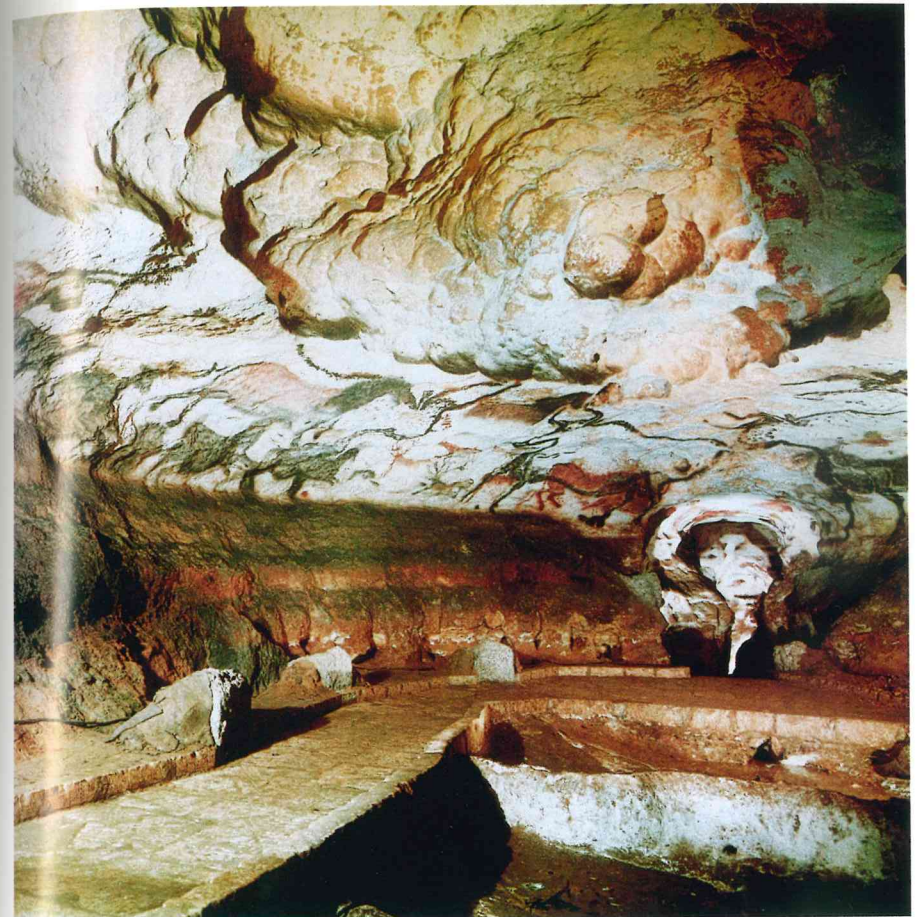
At first I perceived the darkness as two-dimensional—a flat screen spattered occasionally by drifting, bluish cloudlike images whose edges continued to unfold. I had observed this on other occasions, on caving trips, waiting in darkness for five or ten minutes. These images were the same whether my eyes were open or closed. A ripple in the visual field accompanied the motion of my hand back and forth before my face; this too was unchanged by closing my eyes. I assumed that my brain could somehow translate positional information (it "knew" after all what my hand was doing) into visual experience. The ripple itself seemed to be a barely perceptible shift from very pale illumination to *no* illumination. Throughout the stay this phenomenon did not vary.

The most striking feature of the early phase, beginning within some four hours, was synaesthesia. While we were in total silence but for the sounds we ourselves made, the cave occasionally yielded a murmur—a drip plunking into some distant pool. This triggered a brilliant geometric pattern before my eyes (open or closed) much like the visual displays produced by psychedelic drugs (with which I had been familiar for eight years). Duration of these images was measurable in fractions of a second, yet they occasionally occurred in rapid-fire sequence. The scrape of Kim's foot on rock (but not my own) triggered them as well. More "realistic" content appeared: street scenes, images from last week, last year, Little Lulu scenarios, faces of elementary school playmates. The dredging up of early material, while not emotionally charged, was unsettling; I felt that "anything" could

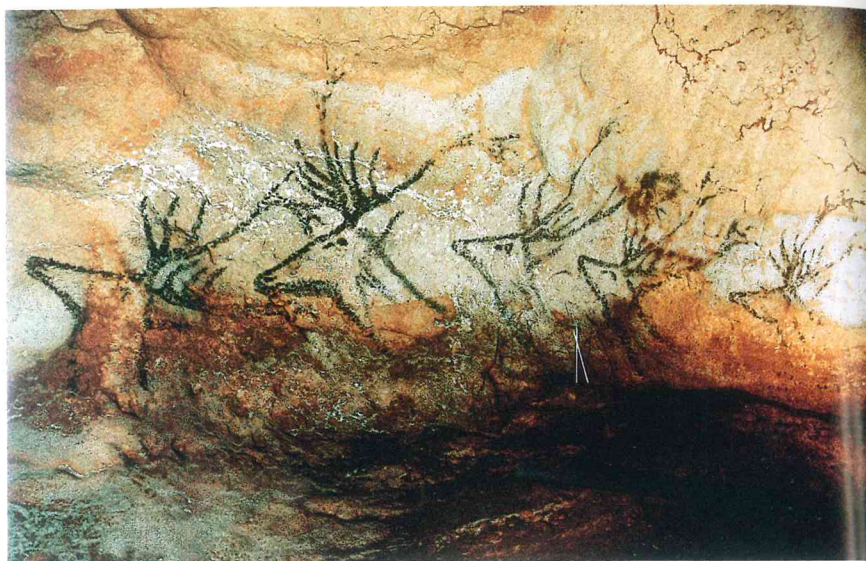
happen. Otherwise I had the impression of being “not quite awake”—in an eternal hypnopompic state. At no time did I think the visual phenomena were outside my head. Struggling to “awaken” and shake off the growing uneasiness, I began to explore my immediate surroundings with my fingertips, and found fascinating complexity in the variegated landscapes of the cave floor. Somehow reassured, I gave in more easily to the random visual play. We discussed this briefly; as soon as each was satisfied that the other was experiencing the same thing, we returned to silence. Thus it seemed that acceptance of the inner kaleidoscope was facilitated by occasional external contact.

My only panicky moment came upon awakening from my first sleep. I found myself in interstellar space, chest tight, heart pounding. Then I felt the ground beneath me, and heard Kim’s even breathing, and knew where I was. It was an important transition point. The visual displays were much diminished after the first sleep period, and another phenomenon prevailed instead. The darkness had acquired three-dimensionality, and seemed to be illuminated by a light behind and above my head. There was of course nothing to be seen, and the infinity of the field before me seemed to take me into itself, such that I was no longer contained in my skull. The “illumination” varied in intensity. Briefly I considered this light against that of flashlights, carbide lamps—and the thought of the latter made me wince. Artificial lighting was a deception, a lie. Stalagmites—and a few other things—knew the truth. Had I undertaken a walk to another part of the cave—even out into the adjacent room—with this attitude, I’d likely have had a comeuppance, but I felt no more need to move than stalagmites did, and I was amused at the absurdity, the simplicity, the profundity. I perceived the incessant, now disorganized verbiage in my head as a disintegrating tapestry. I watched warp and woof drift apart, watched threads slide silently off-stage . . . this is it . . . all there ever was . . . I could not hold my concentration for long, but that was it, and I returned easily to it, letting the last thought go, again and again. It was a gentler yet more profound merger with that elegant emptiness than any I had ever experienced with LSD. Much of the last half of the stay was spent in this state, or drifting in and out of it.

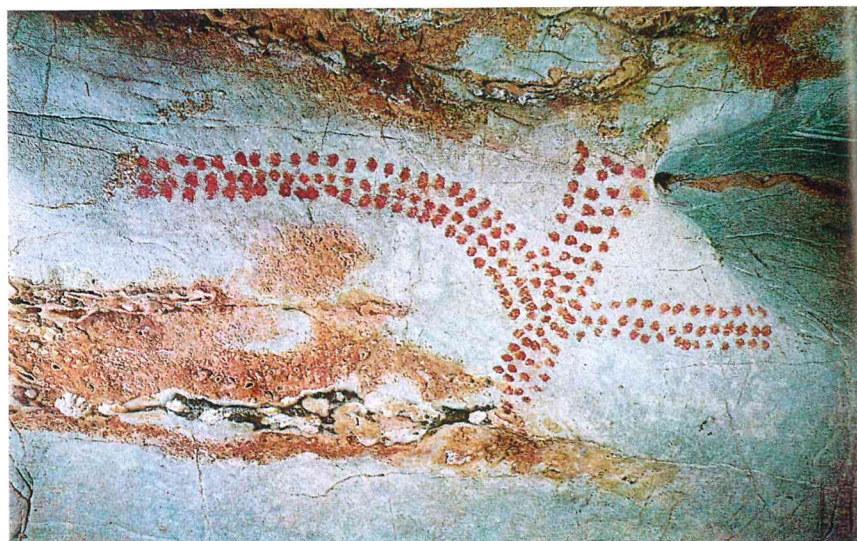
Two auditory phenomena were noteworthy, in that they were unexplainable, and we both heard them. Nearing the halfway point (as best I can judge) I heard a tinkling sound on the ceiling—some two meters above my head, as though two soda straw formations had been repeatedly struck together. Only a human (or the unthinkable . . .) could make such a sound. I told myself it was a cave cricket . . . doing a staccato drum tap on a soda straw with his antennae? Impossible! Still, it was a cave cricket. Fifteen minutes later Kim asked me if I heard that sound, like a small bell tinkling. He’d been pondering it too. The other unexplained sound came perhaps three hours later. I heard a series of howls coming from the direction of the entrance. This time there was no delay:



I. Lascaux: Part of the north wall of the Rotunda, indicating the imaginary ground level on which many of the animals appear to be standing or moving. At the back is the entrance to the Axial Gallery, the ceiling of which is painted along with the walls. Photo: Hans Hinz, *The Cave of Lascaux*, Mario Ruspoli, Abrams, 1987, p. 103.



IX. Lascaux: The frieze of swimming stags on the west wall of the Nave; the dark coloring of the rock appears to have been used to represent the river water that the stags are swimming through. Note the seven dark red dots over the fourth stag's head. Photo: Mario Ruspoli, *The Cave of Lascaux*, Ruspoli, Abrams, 1987, p. 143.



X. El Castillo: Rows of red dots are developed into a symbolic form. Photo: Achille Weider, *The Eternal Present*, S. Giedion, Bollingen, New York, 1962, color pl. 18. © 1962 by the trustees of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.—published by Princeton University Press.

"Did you hear THAT?"

"I SURE DID!"

End of conversation. My disordered mind grappled with explanations . . . a dog at the entrance in frustrated pursuit of game? No, the entrance was much too far away. Another small entrance hitherto unsuspected? A possibility. The Maya K'ank'in dog, who guides the souls of the dead on the first leg of the journey into the underworld? A possibility, as good as any other, and for that matter, that was no cave cricket. Now I knew I had crossed a discriminatory threshold, beyond which supernatural explanations worked as well as any other, and rather than fear for my sanity I welcomed the chance to meet ancient Maya gods head-on. Much later:

"Isn't the entrance too far away?"

"Much too far away."

The supernatural tour de force was not long in coming. Kim was suddenly struck by a chill. He climbed, trembling, into his sleeping bag (the cave was a stable 74°) and I wrapped mine around him, and then put my arms around him. On contact, I felt his chill as an energy field, and my trembling was that of fear. There was something else in here with us. My last vestiges of rationality crumbled, and I felt like the sorcerer's apprentice who'd thumbed the wrong spell book. Neither of us could speak for several minutes, and during this time I had an image of the "presence" as an amoeba-like consciousness which *was* the cave, rather than some spook flitting around in it. I knew the several kilometers of its corridors quite well, and now I felt myself to be everywhere in it all at once. I suddenly realized that this was only the portal—that I could still choose to enter or not—into a relationship with this entity. I chose to postpone the apprenticeship, to be better prepared before I sought it out again. (I have not yet encountered it again, nor have I consciously sought it out, though I have had other remarkable experiences in this domain.) When we could speak, Kim and I concurred that we had been three, and were again two. He had felt no more prepared to deal with the Other than I, though, like myself, he had considered it essentially benevolent. Thereafter, until our friends came (moreorless when expected), the rest of our sojourn was tranquil, anticlimactic. At the distance of this writing, it is extremely difficult to grasp the certainty I had about the entity and the potential apprenticeship. I feel that the strategy of a second approach requires a long solo sit in the same place; I have not yet done it. On the other hand, if this entity was a projection from within myself, it should be accessible in another cave, or in the isolation tank. The concepts of "strategy" and "approach" are linear; I actually have no adequate way of thinking about a second encounter. May we meet again; may I not blow it.

What for the shaman assistant was something moving on the surface of the water has, in the context of MacLeod's experience, become



an "entity" with whom one could enter into a relationship. MacLeod's sensing it as an "amoeba-like consciousness" evokes two things for me:

1. A fusion between MacLeod's projected subconscious materials and the forceful presence of the cave's stone and darkness—an unstable fusion to be sure, a wavering intermixing that could be sensed as "amoeba-like"—
2. The hybrid heads and figurations in Upper Paleolithic caves in which there appears to be a struggle going on within the head (or figure) itself, as if some amoebic power were on the brink of division.

I have also elsewhere suggested that in Upper Paleolithic imagery we may be witnessing the result of the crisis of paleolithic people separating the animal out of their about-to-be human heads. On the basis of Sheets-Johnstone's and MacLeod's writing, I can now ask: What role did the caves themselves play in this process?

I more and more think that the empirical daytime world of hunting and surviving effected a widening gap between early human culture and animal life, a gap that was fraught with ambivalence. Via tools and weapons that led to increasing group coordination, man was no longer fundamentally prey. In fact, he was beginning to assert himself as superior to animals, which were increasingly his materials as well as his arsenal: He used their bones and antlers to help him kill them. At the same time, they were still his teachers, auraed with a sense of perpetuity, extraordinary display and variety, and innate survival instincts so mysterious as to make them seem divine. Cro-Magnon had entered a separation continuum with creatures upon which his life depended, with whom he must have felt a profound bond.

Under such circumstances, it would seem that a terrible need welled up in Cro-Magnon to somehow deal with sensations that were internally tearing him apart. I think the caves presented themselves as a kind of primordial laboratory in which this unsettling innerness—sensations that were completely inexplicable—could be dramatized, or more simply, expressed. In comparison to the animal-filled flurry of a world above, the caves were a *tabula rasa*: blank and receptive once the play on "insides" that Sheets-Johnstone discusses charmed people into simple, mimetic gestures involving scrawls and meandering lines. At the same time, the caves were hardly a *tabula rasa* at all. They possessed personalities—their marvelous natural formations. They were fearsome, awesome, and charged with an atmosphere in which the burgeoning human subconscious may have become aware of itself. Not as itself as such but

as part of a conjunction experienced as the "entity" of a particular cave. Returning to the two numbered points that I made following MacLeod's commentary, it is possible that the amoebic "entity" experience (an unstable fusion between a person and the cave itself) was transformed, on the cave walls, into grotesque and hybrid figures, which, on one level, represented a momentary truce in the separation continuum—Cro-Magnon rejoined in image his world-in-division.

From this perspective, it would seem that after meandering lines and crude cup-shaped indentations, the earliest figurations would have been grotesque and hybrid formations, and that once Cro-Magnon spotted the emergent animal as part of a hybrid, he would have been in a position to draw the animal itself. However, several considerations lead me to believe that this perspective is false, and a trap too.

It will probably turn out that hybrids appear in all periods of Upper Paleolithic image-making, and that realistic animals do too. Chauvet, with its earliest figures (realistic animals) dated earlier than 32,000 years ago, contains what appears to be a hybrid Minotaur-like figure bending over a black vulvar form. To my knowledge, this hybrid figure has not yet been dated, but when it is, chances are it will be very early, though probably later than the 32,000-year-old rhinoceros. Combarelles, whose engravings are dated (stylistically) between 13,000 and 11,000, contains over 50 human figurations, many of which are hybrids.

Furthermore, I tell myself, I must not fall into the blanket, monolithic theory trap of positing a gradational scale of image evolution for the entire Upper Paleolithic. Since it is turning out to be multiphasic and highly regional, a kind of magma of appearing and disappearing creative peaks and hollows, one needs to study a specific regional culture from start to finish to be able to assess the changes in its image-making. This will most probably never be possible.

Finally, I think we have to acknowledge that there is a significant difference between experiencing an "entity" in isolated cave darkness, and the kind of work that seems to have taken place in Lascaux: many lamps, indications of scaffolding, and a very good chance of coordinated team work. I think that a significant number of the realistically depicted animals must have been painted or engraved by people who went into the cave with the intention of depicting them. Such people may have previously had extraordinary experiences in that very cave. They may have returned to it to record an a priori occasion that was so overwhelming they could do nothing more than just be in it! But I feel a strong sense of a difference between the planned and the unplanned in Upper Paleolithic cave

art, and there must be numerous instances of a conjunction between the planned and the unplanned—let alone multiphasically incremental compositions, with totally different circumstances and cultural systems making up what we would call “a single painting.”

In the long run, the images most difficult to grasp may turn out to be realistically depicted animals either in isolation, such as the single engraved bison at La Grèze, or in groups that appear to have little or no narrative connection (the Salon Noir of Niaux). Most of the cave art theories over the past one hundred years have been based on exceptions and not rules. The “hunting hypothesis” was based on the relatively small percentage—less than 10 percent—of wounded or struck animals; the fertility theory on the tiny percentage of questionably pregnant figures and childbirth scenes; shamanism on another small percentage of hybrid, grotesque, and other magical figures; Leroi-Gourhan’s “ideal sanctuary” on a statistically inaccurate “ideal” model and his “sexual pairing” on an arbitrary symbolization of animals and a Freudian reductionism of signs; Marshack’s “time-factored,” “storied” symbolism on arbitrary “lunar” readings of notches on portable objects alone. All of these theories have two serious faults:

1. On the basis of a small percentage of evidential yet fundamentally questionable evidence (are the animals really wounded? Are the notches really lunar countings?), overall blanket theories resulted that attempted to sweep everything under a single explanation.
2. No theory has accounted for realistic, unwounded, nonpregnant, nonnarrative animals, for the most part horses and bison, that make up by far the largest percentage of Upper Paleolithic imagery.

Hans Peter Duerr writes: “Concepts such as *fylgia*, *nagual* and *chargini* designate that part of human nature about which we can say nothing, or at least nothing that would be intelligible to those who have never crossed the boundary.”<sup>10</sup>

Since no one today has crossed what might be called “the Upper Paleolithic boundary,” some of us find ourselves like hungry ghosts hovering at a primordial psychic feast that we can sense, and see, but cannot contextualize. It touches something in us that we struggle to unlock, and by attempting to do so find a grounding and belonging that historical antecedents do not provide.

I continue intuitively to believe that there is a core complex radiating through many aspects of Upper Paleolithic image making: Animal figurations, whether partial, hybrid, or whole, represent the collective passing of certain Ice Age fauna through Cro-Magnon

mind. As the animals pressed through, this mind infused them with its own animality about which it felt so ambivalent—with the end result being a simulacrum of the animal world on the surfaces of a cave’s “insides.” Stone walls became a kind of image range containing the paradoxical application of animal outlines on stone as emergence of animals from stone. The facilitator of such two-way traffic must have been, at times, in any region’s cultural turmoil, the fusion of person and cave, stuff moving out of each to “grotesque,” as it were, in the lamplit or total dark.

Such experiences were certainly not limited to shamans or artists or even to adults. The wavering spectrum of groping crudeness to masterful finesse offers a foundational dream for universal creativity: Art can be made under almost any circumstances by anyone, anywhere.

Over the Neanderthal child's cranium I see the cupule  
 become a dome,  
 the cathedral-to-be as the cave pulled upward inside-out<sup>5</sup>  
 —the burial vault in the base of a pyramid  
 is the terminal form of the cave,  
 the space in which immortality is contested

Cupuled slab and egg-shaped pit  
 an alchemical vessel  
 containing the stuff of resurrection?

Depressed is raised, what is above is below

"I now am what I am: a horror and an astonishment."<sup>6</sup>

I got hot and became pregnant,  
 I could feel the sun rising through my diaphragm

With the tongs of my tongue  
 I tore at my thought-heart

I ground rock out of rock,  
 this waste was my food

"And they builded Golgonooza: terrible eternal labour!"

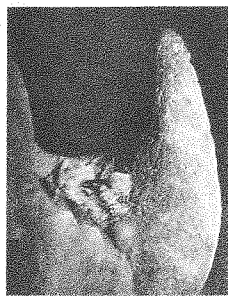
### A PHOSPHENE GAUNTLET<sup>1</sup>

Phosphenes are geometrical percepts  
 occurring within the eye, "closed-eye vision,"  
 induced by knuckle pressure on closed eyelids,  
 larvae uncials grading into each  
 swarming thrones rose windows breaking  
 sun a drilled-out black wreath  
 auraed by a rubblework of light . . .

I believe Cro-Magnon practiced closed-eye vision  
 or saw phosphenes, without knuckle pressure,  
 while confronting cave walls, lamp flicker urging out  
 amorphisms suggested by cracks contours  
 a rich nigredo of dots zigzags spirals  
 intersected by anatomical noticings  
 curve rumps vulva zags dot volleys—  
 the animal re-drawn and quartered in phosphene collision,  
 remembered sightings had to run  
 a phosphene gauntlet

fingered  
 wall grooves that thudded  
 back into the gouger  
 sensations of fingered wounds,  
 a morpho-sparking channel:  
 memory through phosphene to wall  
 wall through phosphene to memory,  
 fire drill of a finger  
 rock mind  
 hottest tinder—  
 inner ignition initial mind  
 phosphene and memory  
 emery—

LE COMBEL<sup>1</sup>



Le Combel: Phallic stalagmite pitted with tiny cupules, its surface worn smooth.

"The hollow"  
intestinal  
prolongation of Pech-Merle

A 3-foot stalagmitic, cupule-pitted, much polished  
prong  
scored my mind with intimations of the Muse

How far back? There is no first  
—an African pythonesse is feeding a snake  
up her vagina, shrieking a gloss of its moves<sup>2</sup>  
—a Cro-Magnon is swinging up, and over,  
easing this horn in,  
does she feel its cold hiss through her  
"All is transfer!"  
Does this pike fill her with premonitions of the Hydra-  
headed tools we all turned out to be?

In the first chamber:  
17 red ochre disks and a red lioness  
whose body, in death rictus,  
arches across the bodies of 3 horses  
(who do not appear to be involved,  
were they painted earlier? Later?)  
The lioness' head is stuffed up into  
the stalactitic bubblework

Below her raised muzzle are slops of red.  
For a belly, she has 4 red disks.  
Her body attenuates, tiny hind legs nearly horizontal,  
as if she's being sucked into . . .

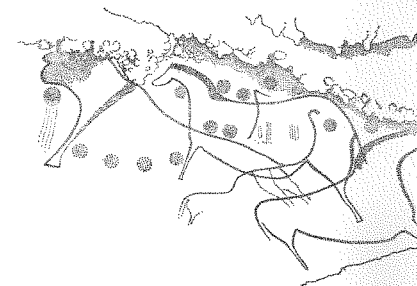
The painting has a waver to it, as if under water

Network of animal drift electrified by animal spasm

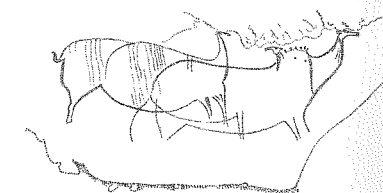
Three more ensembles of red disks,  
as if in spagyric<sup>3</sup> relation to  
vaginal fissures in the rock:  
the first: a large triangle of 36 disks,  
the second: like 21 bees, they swarm the alcove,



Le Combel: Wounded lioness, three horses, and red disks.



Le Combel: Composite animal made up of (from the left) a rhinoceros rump, an antelope, a lioness with a diadem of red disks, and another antelope head.





## HYBRID RESONANCE

In the cave imagery under discussion here, there are a number of different yet related modes of imaginal intelligence. Here I want to look at man's image of himself as it is registered in animals and birds. My primary focus will be on that most transmutable of Upper Paleolithic animals, the bison, and on the obsession with the horned head. However, before examining some of these hybrid images and considering the conditions under which cave environments encouraged such images to emerge (apparently from the beginning to the end of the Ice Age), I would like to look at the etymology of the word "hybrid," which is generally used as synonymous with "grotesque" but also diverges from it.

\*

*Webster's Dictionary* and Eric Partridge in his book *Origins* agree that the word "hybrid" comes from the Latin *hybrida*, defined as "the piglet resulting from the union of wild boar with tame sow." This root conflicts with the definition of the word, which states that the hybrid represents combinations of different species (and, by extension, humans and animals), stressing antinatural or heterogeneous fusions, such as the "fabulous" centaurs, sphinxes, manticores, mermaids, and minotaurs of folklore and mythology. The *hybrida* root stresses that the incongruity of the fusion derives not from different species but from the intermingling of wild and tame states. Translating these states into anthropological terms, it defines aspects of both shamans and witches whose identities and activities are comprised of wild and tame, or wilderness and cultural, experience. Concerning witches, Hans Peter Duerr writes:

As late as the Middle Ages, the witch was still the *hagazussa*, a being that sat on the Hag, the fence, which passed behind the gardens and separated the village from the wilderness. She was a being who participated in both worlds. As we might say today, she was semi-demonic. In time, however, she lost her double features and evolved more and more into a representative of what was being expelled from culture, only to return, distorted, in the night.<sup>1</sup>

This *hagazussa*, "the one riding the fence," may be indirectly connected to, or correspond to, the bird-headed man in Lascaux's Shaft, who appears to be reaching for, or dropping, a bird-headed staff. As part of his ritual paraphernalia, this staff, or "conductor's baton," synchronizes with the fence on which the witch symbolically "rides," her magical animal "before it acquired the meaning of

rod."<sup>2</sup> The phallus is implicitly part of this scene, and human coitus with an animal is evoked. Initially, then, male and female shamans may have been the *hybrida* of wild animal and tame human marriages.

We might also look at hybrid's cognate, "hubris"<sup>3</sup> (from the Greek *hybris*), and see how it affects our understanding of the former word. *Webster's* defines "hubris" as "wanton arrogance or violence arising from passion or recklessness; insolent disregard of moral laws or restraints." The consequence of hubristic acts might be hybrid formations. This implies that hybridity is achieved only via transgression, and that whoever possesses it will be viewed by the tame as demonic. Humility and moral restraint are in the service, then, of established boundaries, not the breakthroughs of boundary-destroying tricksters or theriomorphic shamans.

Wildness and tameness must have become a frenetic, cultural dyad as wilderness became forbidding to increasingly domesticated living enclaves. Perhaps as early as 30,000 B.P., proto-shamans had moved to the shifting peripheries of tribal encampments and had begun their psychic negotiations between animal and human worlds. At the point that wildness and tameness were established as antagonistic realms, the endless proliferation of dualisms—inside/outside, real/imaginary, subject/object, physical/mental, conscious/unconscious—that still divide human beings from a wholeness may have been ignited. In N. O. Brown's *Love's Body*, the primary enemy of imaginative fulfillment is the swarm of dualisms (generically identified as "the reality principle") that separates the metaphoric into univocal meaning and linear time.

\*

One's first impression of bestialized or distorted figures in Combarrelles or Commarque, or on portable objects from Abri Murat or La Madeleine, might very well be: how grotesque! During my 1982 visit to Le Tuc d'Audoubert, after looking at the engravings of two grotesque heads, I saw they were part of an early imaginal formation. They may have been visualized through an interaction between the cave and man, extending what might be thought of as *the grotesque archetype*.<sup>4</sup>

While both "hybrid" and "grotesque" stress the use of incongruous and heterogeneous elements in composition, "hybrid" is the more specific of the two, in as much as it always refers to the fusion of the nonhuman and the human, or in the case of hybrid animals, different species. The "grotesque," however, is the more comprehensive,<sup>5</sup> including the hybrid as well as most of the hominid and

human figurations, such as the Venus of Willendorf, the incomplete female outlines from LaRoche Lalande, and many of the Combarelles engravings of human figuration. The latter are so fragmentary and abstract that no animal elements can be identified with certainty. With these definitions in mind, the Tuc d'Audoubert figures mentioned earlier, because of their bestial snouts, would be grotesque in general but more specifically hybrid.

The main focus of Upper Paleolithic hybridization is the head of human figures, which undergoes a range of bestialization. Sometimes the head is completely that of an animal or a bird. At other times, hybrid heads suggest anatomical confusion, a blurring of animal and human characteristics—as if the Cro-Magnon artist saw himself or his fellows as not yet fully differentiated from animality. Such composite images imply that the artist was projecting a conflict of his own mental state. It is as if some amoebic power were on the brink of division. The grotesqueness of such images resides in the mind's unwillingness to declare itself fully animal or fully human. Since such heads are usually characterized by having an animal snout and/or a prognathous jaw, and if, bizarre as it seems, this is a head on its way to becoming human, such facial figurations represent the final site of animality. It is as if the bestial elements were being expelled through the frontal area of an about-to-be-human head. If image-making is involved with a separating out of the animal from the about-to-be-human head, such grotesques would seem to illustrate, in the image itself, a stage of this struggle.

The grotesques of nature may also have inspired Cro-Magnons to depict the deformed, the diseased, and the monstrous in images that appear to be composites. Extremely disfigured people may have held special status in certain tribes, making them candidates for depiction on walls or on bones and antlers.

One of the many grotesque heads from Combarelles—one of three heads in a group in the Inner Gallery—is a good example of this blurry head type.<sup>6</sup> While probably more animal than human, it does not look like any identifiable animal, and its body is more human than animal, in spite of a possible tail and animal neck. The torso and head are thrust forward, but they seem to swing out of vertical haunches, suggesting that the figure is standing and leaning over at nearly a right angle. Occupying the area between its belly and upper thigh is a tangle of nested, curving lines. The figure sort of swings on these lines, as if they are some kind of fulcrum. The sketchy left arm is bent, with the forearm line moving forward. The head appears to be bald (or covered with animal fur). The left eye seems intent on something before it, and the mouth, while straight, gives the impression of smiling. Because of its bestial and human

referentiality, it seems to be of our world—at the same time, it seems to be autonomous, a “mental thing.” Over the years I have developed a kind of affection for it, thinking of it as one of the fundamental porters, or carriers, of the realm of the freely creative imagination.

Before passing on to the clearly hybrid figures from Les Trois Frères and Gabillou, I want to say a few more words about the human figurations—all wall engravings—in Combarelles, of which there are at least fifty, more than in any other Upper Paleolithic cave. Claude and Monique Archambeau, as Combarelle's guides and caretakers, have studied the cave for years. Monique did her PhD dissertation on these figurations, of which she has made meticulous drawings. They are extremely hard to read for anyone not familiar with the cave. The walls, wrinkled and furrowed as elephant hide, would seem to be very inappropriate for engraving. Yet, counting animals, hominids, signs, and indeterminate figures, there are more than six hundred engravings in Combarelles.

It is often impossible for the Archambeaus to say what exactly a particular figure represents, so they have categorized what they refer to as “human figurations” as expressive, enigmatic, geometric, and indeterminate, with more or less an equal number in each category. Because a significant number of the figures are associated with horses, and because the horse is the most often represented animal in this cave, the Archambeaus propose that human figures in caves at large may be linked with whatever animal is most frequently represented. This is a fascinating notion, and while it is probably true for Combarelles (as well as for Les Trois Frères), I suspect that it would not pan out as a general theory.

The human figurations in Combarelles as a whole are open to wide interpretation because of their indeterminacy. Many look as if they were done in the dark. Lines straggle this way and that. Some of them suggest anatomical shapes, but never depict the human figure as a finished or closed unit, with a bounding line separating it from its environment. The Combarelles figurations, more than any others, present hominids as wispy creatures, as unstable as fog. Genitalia and sexual intention appear to be present in about a fifth of the fifty figures studied by Monique Archambeau. The least straggly are the schematic engravings of female profiles emphasizing the middle and lower body, and dispensing with heads, feet, shoulders, etc., which is of course typical of Upper Paleolithic female depictions. All in all, there are more meandering lines than lines that seem to be part of anything one could identify. It is as if the human figure is “in the air” as a notion competing with the fascination of merely drawing lines. While Combarelles' imagery is dated at 13,680

to 11,380 B.P., near the end of the Magdalenian, these engravings strike me as extremely rudimentary, as if before them there were only meandering lines. In the same cave, it must be pointed out, are engravings of animal profiles that are realistically accurate and executed with sophistication and finesse.

\*

Of the two dozen or so hybrid images in Upper Paleolithic parietal and portable art, three figures from Les Trois Frères, three from Gabillou, and the bird-headed man in Lascaux's Shaft offer the most convincing evidence for some form of shamanism in image-making.<sup>7</sup> While all of these figures are juxtaposed with animals (and in one case, a hybrid animal), none are assaulting animals or preparing to do so. Three of the seven figures (along with two of the three Teyjat figures) seem to be dancing, and a fourth—the bird-headed man—is depicted with shaman paraphernalia. While there is no hard evidence, such as written verification, for any meaning system in Upper Paleolithic image-making, there is more evidence for the presence of some form of shamanism based on these figures than for any other theory.

The real problem of interpretation still lies with the realistically depicted animals in profile which, other than occasional mysterious signs, are generally presented without any contextualizing indications. They *could* be shamanic animal familiars, or helping spirits, but we have no evidence for such in the way we do with the hybrids.

I continue to feel that while the cave environment was extremely conducive to trance, something in daily and nightly life had to encourage certain people to go into the caves on a quest. That is, there must have been a crisis outside the caves that some people felt could only be resolved inside them. In my thinking, given the materials we have to work with, a resolution involved the momentary reestablishment of a human and animal connection, that to be reestablished had to have been lost, or sensed as being lost. I have proposed that this loss, or separation from animals, which was occurring during the Upper Paleolithic, may account for animals being put on walls as projections of the animality Cro-Magnon people were distancing themselves from. The fact that realistically depicted animals are present but not part of any realistic, survival-based landscape is very odd, and strongly suggests that while the animal outlines depend on accurate observation, they appear on walls as psychological entities. Many hang like hides on the walls, not as if they were sacrificed or killed in the hunt, but as if they were killed out of man's struggle to release himself from merely natural

identity. It is as if we have on these walls the projective result of the separation *and* a proto-magic, or proto-shamanic, reaction to it.

The Abbé Henri Breuil worked in Les Trois Frères, off and on, from the end of World War I to the eve of World War II, tracing and deciphering hundreds of paintings and engravings. It is his drawing of the "Dancing Sorcerer" (which includes both painted and engraved lines) that is often found in books on the Upper Paleolithic. His description of this figure is still the most comprehensive that we have:

First of all, the "God" first called the "Sorcerer" by Count Bégouën and I, the only figure painted in black of all those engravings in the Sanctuary, four metres above the floor in an apparently inaccessible position, only to be reached by a secret corridor climbing upwards in a spiral. Evidently, he presides over all the animals, collected there in incredible numbers and often in a terribly tangled mass. He is 75 cms high and 50 cms wide, he is entirely engraved, but the painting is unequally distributed: on the head there are only a few traces, on the eyes, nose, forehead and the right ear. The head is full face with round eyes with pupils; between the eyes runs a line for the nose, ending in a little arch. The pricked ears are those of a Stag. From a black painted band across the forehead rise two big thick antlers with no frontal tines but with a single short tine, fairly high above the base of each branch, bending outwards and dividing again to the right or left. This figure has no mouth, but a very long beard cut in lines and falling on the chest. The forearms, which are raised and joined horizontally, end in two hands close together, the short fingers outstretched; they are colorless and almost invisible. A wide black band outlines the whole body, growing narrower at the lumbar region, and spreading out around the legs which are bent. A spot marks the left knee-joint. The feet and big toes are rather carefully made and show a movement similar to steps in a "Cakewalk" dance. The male sex, emphasized but not erect, pointing backwards but well developed, is inserted under the bushy tail of a Wolf or a Horse, with a little tuft at the end. Such is the Magdalenian figure considered to be the most important in the cavern and which, after much thought, we consider to be the Spirit controlling the multiplication of game and hunting expeditions.<sup>8</sup>

Besides the "Dancing Sorcerer," there are the two other very striking hybrid figures in the "sanctuary" at Les Trois Frères.<sup>9</sup> One is bison-headed, with a bison-human back and stomach, animal-leglike arms held out before him, and human legs and feet. He appears to be wearing a tailed pelt, and he also has a small, erect phallus. A sign in the form of a long, pointed loop seemingly attached to nose (or muzzle) is engraved (in Breuil's drawing)



Les Trois Frères: Hopping bison-headed man with female figure inside of him. See page 33 for figure in context.



across the higher of the stiffly held out leg-arms. It has variously been described as a "cigar," a wind instrument, and a musical bow. Since it is not manipulated by either arm or hoof-hand, it is possible that it represents a gush of blood or air. As if seated within this figure's bisonesque frame is a smaller human figure with very long hair (extending through the larger figure's back), whose face is obscured by a set of diagonal lines. This figure's body seems to be female. Her one visible arm, the left, is lowered along her side and disappears inside her left thigh, which also, at once, disappears and joins with the lifting leg of the larger figure, making a total of three legs, and creating a legs-in-motion blur. Projecting from what would be the woman's forehead (were it not for the mass of lines) is a long, twisting leglike form that also emerges from the larger figure's chest. Upon emergence, it twists down, and is crossed by three pointed, cometlike groups of lines, one of which seems to originate in the lifted knee belonging to both the woman and the bison-headed male.

The bison-headed hybrid, loaded as it were with his anima or muse, is dancing or hopping in place. Before him, seemingly arresting its movement as it turns its head back to look at the dancer, is a hybrid animal with reindeer hindquarters and bison forequarters, whose open anus is emphasized. An amorphous hominid ghost with a long neck and small, bloblike head hovers this animal's rump. A reindeer with web-footed forefeet bounds away in front of the reindeer-bison. The positioning and emphases concerning the hybrid animal and the bison-man suggest a chase involving human and animal coitus.



Les Trois Frères: Bison-man with human leg and phallus. See page 77 for figure in context.

The second hybrid figure, a meter or so away from the first, has a bison's head and upper body, which tapers to a protruding human buttock and thigh. A bent knee and calf end in a footlike, spindly hoof with a claw jutting from where the heel might have been. Here the hybridity is more assimilated than in other combinations: For example, the bison has a high, human forehead, and the body is modeled in such a way to imply a shifting metamorphosis. The figure has a long, rapierlike erection, and human testicles. It appears to be springing forward while swerving its head to glance behind it. While it has two front legs with hooves, the back leg, mainly human, is singular. Its head and forequarters cross the hind leg of a much larger reindeer above it.

The attention I have placed on these two hybrid figures may give them more size and prominence than they actually have in their context in the cave. Some fifty animals, mainly bison, in styles from different periods, swarm the first hybrid figure. Most of the animals

show signs on their bodies: V-shaped projectiles, barbed lines, and parallel lines. The sense of the panel is one of a melee, animals intersecting animals, some in stampede, others in stasis. The second hybrid figure is at the bottom of a panel containing more than thirty animals (again, mostly bison), so densely engraved as to make bounding animal outlines almost impossible to distinguish. Animals are superimposed and their bodies filled with bushy patches of parallel lines. One sees bodies, but the churning turmoil is so intense that what meets the eyes could also be described as Paleolithic Abstract Expressionism.

Some commentators have suggested that the animal heads on human bodies are masks. While this is theoretically a possibility, I have never noticed any tie strings or straps attached to such heads. A stronger case against the existence of masks is the organic hybridity throughout the heads and bodies of these figures, making them truly fantastic and not just human beings wearing ritual paraphernalia. Such thorough hybridity emphasizes their mental reality, as figures that were imagined, dreamed, or seen in trance.

It should also be pointed out that the three Trois Frères hybrids are extremely well executed and are as impressive, as engravings, as any of the animals surrounding them. They are, in this respect, at the other end of the spectrum from the incomplete, and vaguely executed grotesques and hybrids in Combarelles.

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Gabillou is a narrow, gently peristaltic corridor cave, less than 100 feet long, containing 223 engravings (no paintings, though as in the case of Combarelles there are some color traces on a few of the engravings, suggesting that like the "Dancing Sorcerer" they may have been over-painted originally). The majority of the animals are horses. There are also twenty-one engravings of reindeer (an important food animal, but rarely depicted)—the most in any Upper Paleolithic cave. It is unclear where the engravings begin, as the walls near the entrance were cut back in historic times to make a cellar. Since 1956, Gabillou has been owned by Dr. Gaussen, who cleaned the cave out, and made a complete inventory of the engravings, which he published as a monograph.<sup>10</sup> Gabillou's engravings are hair-line thin. Giedion describes them as having been "breathed upon the limestone," and compares them with "those refined dry-point etchings of the 17th century." Most of the animals and signs (of which there are sixty-eight) are quite readable, and relatively unentangled with enigmatic lines.

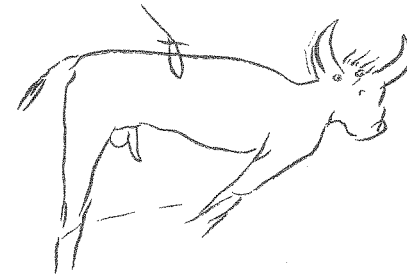
Given the present layout of the cave, the three hybrids are placed at almost equidistant points (at the beginning of the engravings, in the middle, and at the end). The first is a bovine-headed hominid who appears to be either lunging forward or projected forward by unseen powers.<sup>11</sup> Like many of animals in Gabillou, his front arm-like appendages are collapsing, as if boneless, under him. As if pursuing him, the head of an open-mouthed feline is incised right behind his buttocks and thighs. Engraved behind the feline head is a small horse facing the opposite direction, suggesting that the horse and feline may have been engraved with no intended relationship to the hybrid. Cut into the top of the hybrid's buttocks is a curious loop, which, while looking like an anus, is also attached to lines meandering away from the figure. Right before the hybrid's snout is a small headless and armless schematic hominid whose waist line seems to turn into a lance.



Gabillou: Dr. Jean Gausсен's drawing of a bovoid-headed hominid facing a tiny hominid possibly holding a spear.

In roughly the middle of the cave, and facing a human figure wearing an anorak, or hooded arctic jacket, is a second bovine-headed hybrid with two eyes placed much higher in the head than they would naturally be.<sup>12</sup> Like the first hybrid, it seems to be lunging forward, even though the hind leg is still and vertical. Again, as in the case of the first hybrid, the front leg or arm is collapsing backward. This figure has a tail (on its primarily human body), a tapered, erect penis, and round testicles.

The third hybrid is the last figure in the cave and, like the second, may have been placed where it is to relate to a female figure in profile on her back with raised knee directly across from it. Interestingly, the female has an incised loop where her thigh rounds into her buttocks at exactly the same place as the first hybrid. Gausсен describes this figure as being in a "gynaecological position."



Gabillou: Dr. Jean Gausсен's drawing of a bovoid-headed hominid with curiously placed eyes.

The third hybrid itself is presented vertically, legs slightly bent, as if dancing.<sup>13</sup> In certain respects, it is similar to the second Les Trois Frères hybrid that dances behind the reindeer-bison. Gausсен calls it bovine-headed but the head shape and horns are significantly different from those of the first two Gabillou hybrids. The right leg is carefully articulated, with identifiable thigh, calf, ankle, and foot; the right arm has an elbow and vague hand lines. Both the left leg and left arm are schematic and incomplete. The muzzle is rectangular. Below the eye a line extends through the muzzle, continuing beyond it, to be interrupted by a gap in the wall; on the other side of the gap this line continues and appears to link two deeply engraved signs, both consisting of three vertical lines (which are squared in the first sign). The lower body of the hybrid turns into a tail-like tattered pelt, even though there are no pelt indications on its upper body. I presume it is male, since it lacks breasts. Between the horns there are two pronounced, upright tufts of hair.



Gabillou: Dr. Jean Gausсен's drawing of "The Sorcerer of Gabillou," a hybrid dancing and probably wearing an animal pelt.

All six of the Trois Frères and Gabillou hybrids have horned heads; thus, one might ask if the horned aspect of these heads makes them appropriate for hybrid depiction. A response to this question will involve a short digression on the importance of the male head for prehistoric people.

In *Muelos: A Stone Age Superstition about Sexuality*, Weston LaBarre offers extensive documentation to support his thesis that there was "a very ancient belief in human life-power apparently resident in the skull, to be obtained by eating the brains of other men." LaBarre traces this superstition to what he believes is the oldest of cults, the bone cult, in which hunters would place the bones of a killed animal, "often only the head and the feet, in proper anatomical position" in the hope that "the animal, reconstituted and clothed in flesh, [would] return alive." According to LaBarre, participants in such a cult believed that "the semen-like marrow (*muelos*) in the bones . . . was the source of semen." It follows that "the skull, as the bone enclosing the most plentiful *muelos*-marrow in the body (the brain) is therefore the major repository of the generative life-stuff or semen," and that "consciousness and life are the same stuff and thus have the same site." Arguing that the concept of *muelos* (which has no basis in fact) has had a "fundamental impact on religion, philosophy, sexuality, and war," LaBarre locates the earliest signs of it in "the skull cult found throughout the entire Upper Paleolithic." If the head is the main repository of *muelos*-semen, then "the springing of male antlers directly from brain-*muelos* is quite to be expected," and it is possible to trace the horned god of the "Celtic cult of severed heads" back to the antler-crowned "Dancing Sorcerer," as well as to his bison-headed cohorts. After examining "the awesome power of the Blood Horn" among the American Indian Blackfoot shamans, LaBarre concludes: "the horn, sprouting from the life-containing head of animals, is from the Old Stone Age onward the most sacred symbol of male power and fertility."<sup>14</sup>

LaBarre's evidence for an Upper Paleolithic "*muelos*-semen" cult is based on the existence of bone cults involved with ritually mutilated skull burials going back to the Middle Paleolithic. While his documentation for the *muelos* phenomenon is convincing from the Neolithic forward, the Upper and Middle Paleolithic evidence is problematic. I must say that I wish this were not so, for I intuitively feel that the horned hybrid head, especially when attached to bodies that are ithyphallic, reflect a powerful procreative masculinity. But there is no solid evidence for an Upper Paleolithic bone cult like the anatomical reconstitution that LaBarre offers as his prime bone cult example.<sup>15</sup> As for Neanderthal skull burials (upon which ritual mutilation and brain eating is hypothesized), the evidence is now

doubtful for the most part. Today there is little support for Alberto Blanc's argument for a skull cult at Monte Circeo.<sup>16</sup> The fragmentary remains of the Choukoutian skulls, the greater part of which were lost in 1941, are now considered to be between 250,000 and 400,000 years old. Not only are they too old to be Neanderthal, but the fragments themselves will not support any ritual theory.<sup>17</sup> The only information I have come across that supports LaBarre's thesis is a comment by Trinkaus and Shipman that the large Neanderthal bones discovered by Gorjanović-Kramberger at Krapina were splintered, presumably for marrow extraction.<sup>18</sup> It should also be kept in mind that conjectures about Upper Paleolithic cultures based on Mesolithic and Neolithic evidence are hard to support. These later cultures are for the most part considerably removed in time and space from the Upper Paleolithic world, which ecologically and artistically disappeared at the end of the Würm glaciation.

LaBarre's most crucial assumption for his *muelos* theory, as far as the Upper Paleolithic is concerned, is that the role of semen in pregnancy and childbirth was known when the Magdalenian horned hybrids appeared. Again, there is no solid evidence either way, and in the past many commentators have assumed that the Venuses were indication of a matriarchal focus that considered pregnancy and child birth to be an autonomous female function. Such a supposition now seems very questionable because male genitalia in animals and men is clearly part of the record. While scenes of copulation and childbirth are extremely rare, if existent at all,<sup>19</sup> it seems condescending on our part to assume that Cro-Magnon women would not have been able to pinpoint the moment of conception (as modern women have been able to do) and to connect it with the act of intercourse! We also know that medicinal plants were being used as early as the Mousterian<sup>20</sup> and, given the ongoing small size of hunting groups, it again seems condescending to assume that plants with contraceptive or abortifacient qualities would not have been discovered and used. Of course, there are a number of possibilities concerning interpretation of an intercourse/pregnancy connection. Intercourse might have been considered as an activity that stimulated the women to conceive (without the role of semen being understood), or that the father contributed the child's soul while the mother constructed its body. Or that semen was merely a nutrient for the growing fetus conceived by a woman alone. And of course it would have been possible for Cro-Magnon people to believe that bones were the framework of life and that marrow was the life force of the bones on the basis of empirical evidence from slaughtering. They could have also believed that animal and human heads—as the main sites of the senses—were worth possessing

and even cannibalizing, without connecting semen to bone marrow, and this semen-marrow to the brain. When and wherever the *muelos*/semen superstition did take hold, it is reasonable to assume that it dramatically increased male social empowerment and provided a chronic justification for whatever subordination of women already existed.

Even if we grant that bone and skull cults support a *muelos* connection concerning the life force, with horns viewed as a spectacular display of *muelos* mana, there is no thorough-going support for it on the cave walls themselves. While the "Dancing Sorcerer" wears reindeer antlers, reindeer are seldom depicted in caves. Might this suggest that reindeer antler only becomes potent when used in a hybrid context? Yet there are far fewer reindeer-antlered hybrids depicted than realistic reindeers! Other than at Chauvet, rhinoceroses are also quite rare in cave imagery—yet the longer of the two rhinoceros horns is awesomely phallic. And why only a handful of depictions of the magnificently antlered megaloceros? While it is true that there are a significant number of other horned animals shown—mammoths, ibexes, and oxen—the hornless horse is the most often depicted animal in Upper Paleolithic imagery.

\*

Horses are very popular animal helpers in historic shamanism, and are employed in many contexts. The Norse Odin, for example, who displays many shamanic aspects (such as changing shape at will into a bird, beast, fish, or dragon, evoking the Greek Proteus), rides an eight-legged horse, Sleipnir, who is, according to Eliade, "the shamanic horse par excellence."<sup>21</sup> Horses enable shamans to make mystical journeys and to fly; they carry shamans, gods, and the deceased into the beyond.

But while horses are the dominant animal in the Upper Paleolithic caves, there is little evidence for shamanic involvement with them. For the most part, horses are depicted realistically, nearly always in profile, and with only a few exceptions they do not appear to participate in the hybrid/grotesque realm.<sup>22</sup> When nonequine elements are added to a horse composition (other than at Combarelles, where they occasionally mingle erotically with wispy hominids), they are almost always weapon or wound signs (or indeterminate lines that in some cases may represent vegetation).

Bison, on the other hand, are the most transmutable Upper Paleolithic animals. They appear in both male and female roles: Their heads and horns are usually associated with men, while their bodies sometimes relate to women. They seem to be the primary shaman-

istic or magical "vehicle" until their disappearance with the spread of the forests. Some examples suggest their rich image range:

Male: The bison-headed men in Les Trois Frères and possibly the last hybrid in Gabillou; in Font-de-Gaume several of the bison heads in profile look like bearded men; the bison-horned figure with snarling mouth in La Pasiéga; the Minotaur-like figure in Chauvet whose bent over, curling body bears some resemblance to the bison-human hybrid carved in a stalagmite in El Castillo.

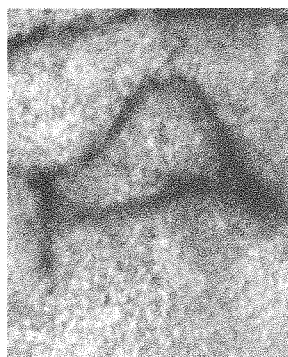
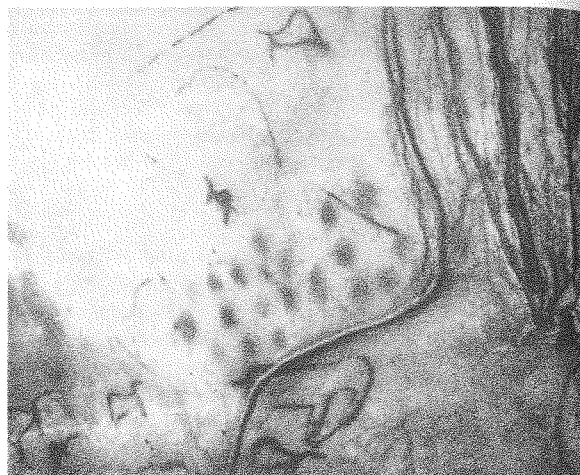
Female: The notched bison horn held up by the Venus of Laussel; the phallic bison standing over a supplicating pregnant woman on an engraved reindeer bone from Laugerie Haute; the possibly birth-giving bison at Altamira; the "bison-women" in Pech-Merle whose schematic hybrid bodies may be variations on the Aurignacian female profiles traced on the cave's ceiling; the third Venus at Angles-sur-l'Anglin who obliterates one bison and whose lower body is crossed by another bison; the reindeer-bison at Les Trois Frères, given the context, appears to be female, as does the disemboweled bison in the Lascaux Shaft.

Male/Female: In Le Tuc d'Audoubert a male bison (with convex eyes) may be mounting a female (with concave eyes); the two headless, embracing bison that are part of a spear-thrower found in Enlène.

To this list might be added the engraved bone fragment from Raymondén depicting a bison head and spine, before which are two detached legs and hooves.

There does not appear to be, in the Upper Paleolithic, any image-making of animals with human heads (which abound in classical mythology). Given the considerable Magdalenian advance in weapon and tool technology, it is possible that Cro-Magnons considered aspects of the human body superior to the animal body in as much as humans could hurl spears, possibly shoot arrows, employ spear-throwers, fashion and use needles, fish with harpoons, and chip axes and blades that could transform a carcass into a life-sustaining system—all actions being part of man's alloplastic experiments outside his own body, in contrast to autoplasmic animals who had failed to evolve beyond their own bodies. Surely Cro-Magnon recognized that by using especially his arms and hands he was not only able to equalize the balance of animal/human aggression but to tilt it in his own favor. But it must also have been clear to him that animals were older and complete in a way that he was not. They possessed sharper and more extensive senses. They were certainly more at home at night than man, and they knew how to live and

Pech-Merle: Red disks and several "bison-women" above and below the disks.



Four "bison-women." A bison outline appears to be gradually transformed into a schematic female in profile.

to multiply in places where humans, without animal sustenance, could not.<sup>23</sup>

Hybrid images may represent a combined human and animal capability in which the animal head symbolized animal senses extended, via a predominantly human body, by bipedal dexterity. In the hybrid, man invades the domain of animal anatomy, magically inserting his head into an animal head, and complexing the animal body with attributes of his own body. The butchering of carcasses gave Cro-Magnon people an extraordinary familiarity with animal insides, and there must have been many instances in which large animal heads were scraped out and literally worn. I think here of the historical example of Aztec priests wearing the skins of flayed human victims. My hunch is that hybrid figures, which are sheerly imaginative for us today, had a physical basis in Cro-Magnon life. By evoking man and animal, and their imaginary fusion, in a single form, such people may have been symbolizing the maximum concentration of power available to them. And if there was also a *muelos* connection at work, we could tentatively add "divine" to the hybrid make up.

The hybrid image resonates throughout the Upper Paleolithic with a stylistic range that includes unidentifiable fragmentary figures. These may have been scratched in the dark with the extremely sophisticated fusions, such as I have described, that attest to a much more thorough transformation than men wearing masks. That some of these bodies appear to be roving fusions with the animal indicates not only a proto-shamanism but goals similar to those of countless historical shamanic quests: "the recovery of that first unbroken condition when the thoughts and desires of men and women were in fluid and absolute accord with the terrestrial and animal energies surrounding them."<sup>24</sup>

Theriomorphic figures may also represent a reactive swerve against the separation continuum that Cro-Magnon people set in motion with their tool and weapon-based defense and aggression systems against what must have been a terrifying vulnerability to nature at large. And LaBarre might be right: The vast patriarchal shadow of male supremacy that has so far engulfed the historical world may have been present by 30,000 B.P. when the earliest bison-headed human was painted at Chauvet. The power of the horn is deep and complexly embedded in humanity's obsession with the head.

At the same time, we must also be careful not to write off (as has been the archeological tendency in the past) those obscure, indeterminate figures that have no aesthetic appeal to us. Done in cavern blackness or with minimal lighting, they register something about what happens to a human being when he finds himself, or loses himself, in a stone environment that is unlike anything on

earth. Stone may have drawn the animal out; that is, being surrounded or even encased in stone may have triggered devolutionary fantasies. On this level, the grotesque archetype is a fusion, or tangled milling about, of cave and human being. It is an attempt to wire the wall, as it were, with sensations of the earth monster as it expressed itself or kintically pressed through those for whom outer and inner dark suddenly turned into the fissure of a line.

INDETERMINATE, OPEN<sup>1</sup>

for Monique and Claude Archaubeau

Parietal human figurations  
of the Combarelles cave

A dorsocaudal line  
hovering  
a ventral line

engraved on the tunnel ceiling by someone lying down

Incipient  
heaven  
and  
earth

\*

The human is indeterminate, initially unclosed

\*

Thighed female torso  
tangent to  
an equine cervicodorsal line

The hybrid contingency

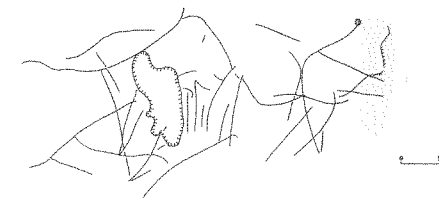
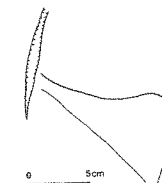
\*

Of the elephant-hide wall  
a partiled non-head with triangular eye  
supported by a palm and arm wisp of riverine  
divergences.

An immense, flattened breast floats below,  
sunfish through limestone shallows

\*

Les Combarelles: Nineteen human figurations, or scenes involving human or hybrid figurations.





Planted in lifting female buttocks germinating lines,  
bearers of thrust,  
an erection

\*



What is a nodule? Can be a nipple  
from which two lines widen  
cutting through clay into the limestone,  
as if by X-ray,  
the vaginal canal is deeper

\*



Without eyes  
whose nose  
only the "carriage of the head"  
makes human

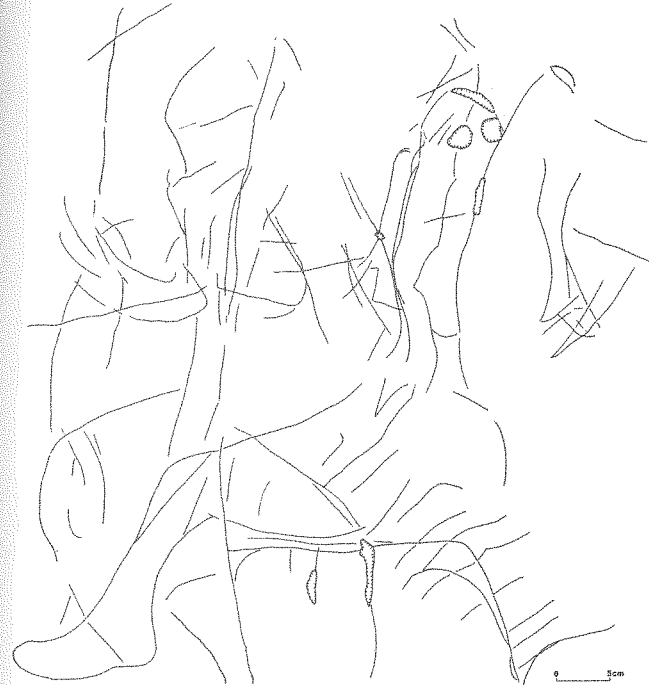
\*

Mask eyehole observing the back of someone's head  
or is that a spider abdomen?  
The face side reveals a bald, deer-muzzled geezer



\*

A horse's rear leg outlines a woman's upper body,  
her torso and head enphallused inside the leg,  
her bump eyes staring blindly up



\*

On the periphery between nature and human nature,  
between unconsciousness and consciousness,  
inrescent self

\*

Upon the altar edge of a huge,  
scratched, open vulva  
superimposed on a horse's side,  
a dorsocaudad female outline places her  
why



\*

Bending forward, a belly-sagging, bag-headed man,  
ithyphallic, gesturing Up Yours —  
using his rump for a back line  
a one-legged armless half-head turns toward us  
as if he is

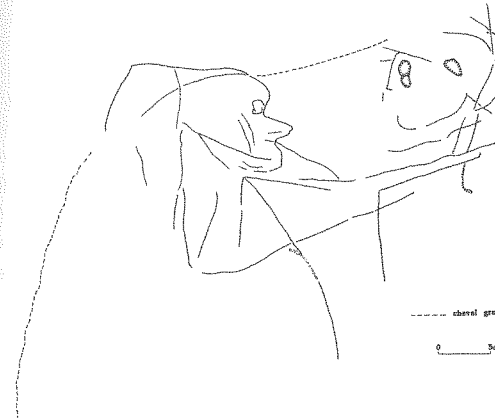


Bag-headed may be giving the finger to  
a lumpish dinosaur ghost  
shitting as it prepares to mount  
a thatch of hindquarters



\*

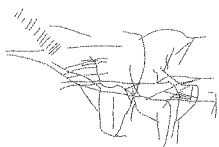
In a horse's belly  
a hairy prognath holds out and looks into  
the mirror suggested by the jawbone







\*  
On the fulcrum of a vertical thigh  
a dorsoventrocaudad bundle



\*  
A huddle of horned vulvas



\*  
Head and neck wisps of a phantom fetus  
up to its sole eye in horizons

\*  
A human erection ascending  
as if in a circular revolution with  
a saiga head descending

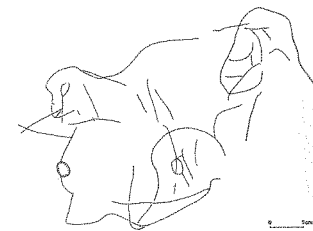
As if the 20th century were embedded in that hub



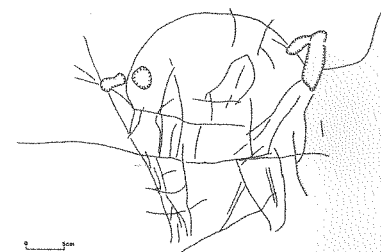
\*  
Like sled dogs bounding in slow motion,  
animal-snouted archai on the leash of  
alchemical mush, moving along Combarelle's Inner Gallery,  
as if in snowy dust

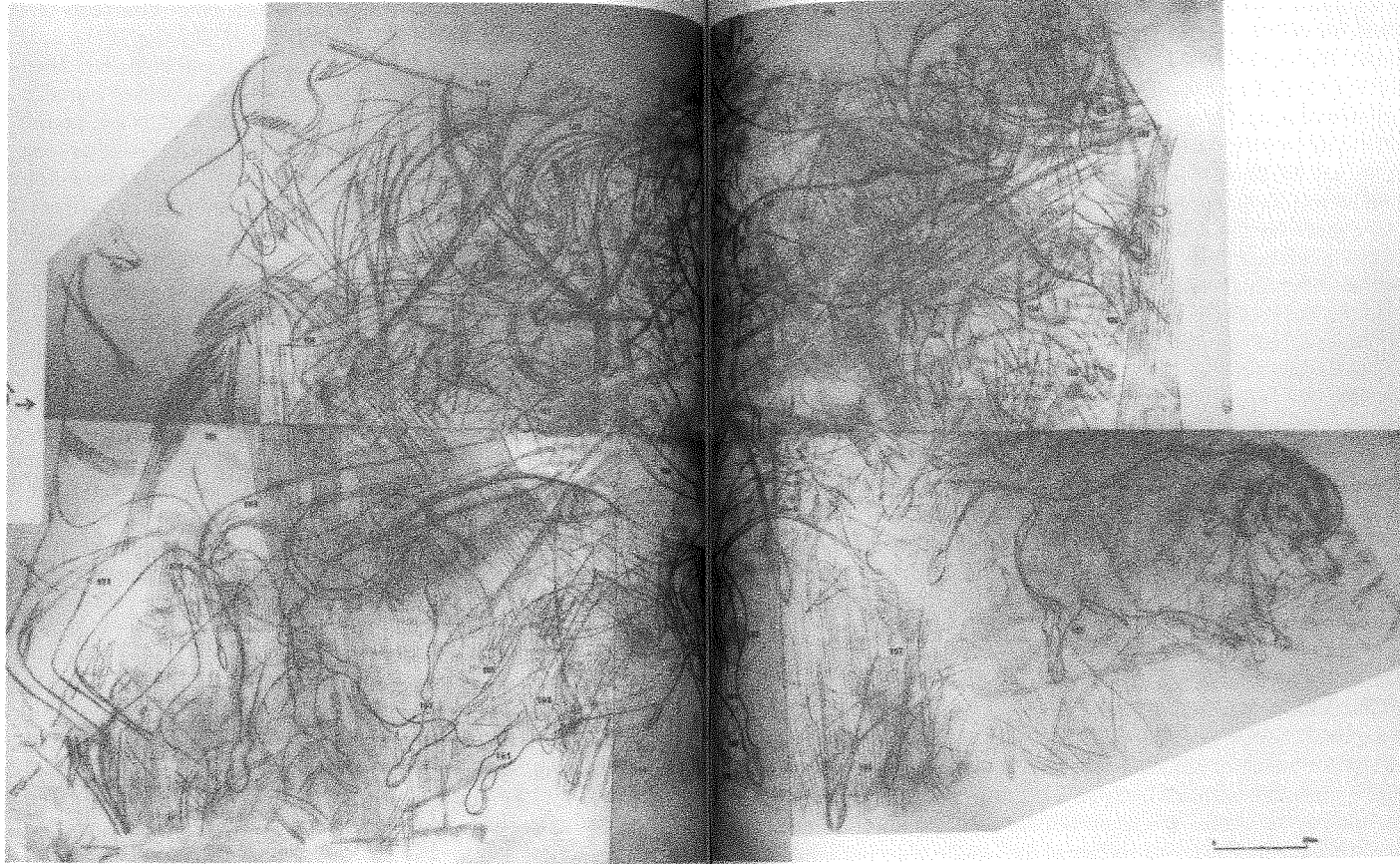


\*  
Four hybrid judges.  
The simian remains moved.  
The others—bear-nosed, duck-billed—  
bend forward through the schist to not  
acquit us



\*  
Armored death's-head with vulvar jaw flaps,  
necked,  
goateed,  
with escutcheon nosepiece,  
one eye a pebble,  
the other an overturned vulva,  
mouthless and  
crossed out.





Lascaux: A section of the North Wall of the Apse (numbers refer to descriptions in *Lascaux Inconnu*).

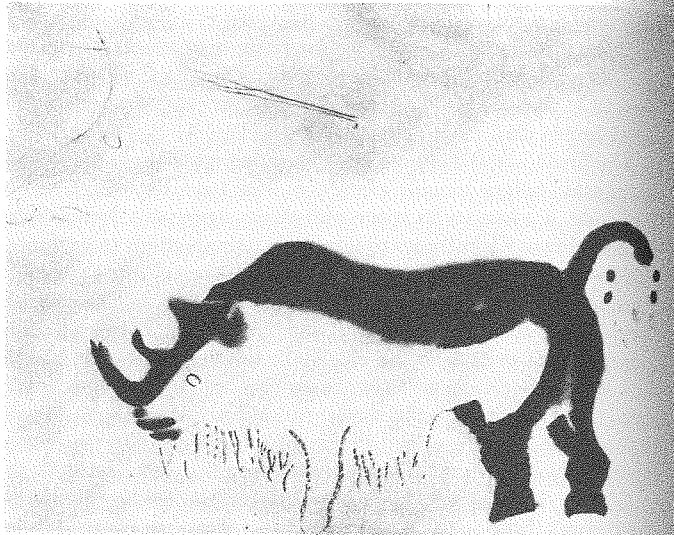
down such a rope. After Lascaux's 1940 discovery, the floor of the Apse and the hole leading to the Shaft's edge were lowered by several feet, extending the spacial relationship between the two areas.

The ceiling and upper walls of the Shaft, the Apsidole, is a continuation of the Apse's ceiling. It is smaller than the Apse but, like the Apse, it is heavily engraved, in Laming's words, "with various animal figures, latticed signs painted in several colors, long bands of short parallel strokes and clusters of diverging lines, similar to those in the Apse, but of a smaller size. The quintessence of all the signs in the cave would seem to be concentrated on the restricted surface of this dome."<sup>5</sup> Glory has documented (including unidentifiable and partial figures) 355 animals in the Apse, and 118 in the Apsidole,

along with 433 signs in the Apse, and 167 in the Apsidole. I should point out that especially in the case of the signs, Glory has numbered and described less than appear to exist in his tracing-based drawings. There appear to be many "loose" lines unaccounted for, especially on the Apsidole's crowded south wall.

\*

The first people to excavate the floor of the Shaft were Breuil and S. Blanc (then Director of Prehistoric Antiquities in the Dordogne) in 1949. As an advocate of a hunting theory to explain the meaning of Upper Paleolithic art, Breuil anticipated discovering the skeleton



Lascaux: The Abbé Glory's drawing of the Shaft Scene. For an all-over view displaying accurate alignments of the various figures, see color plate II.

direct access to all realms as the overseer and/or goal of any later shaman's journey. It does not seem farfetched to me to propose that this bird-headed man, in a magical, not religious, sense, lifting up from the depths of Lacaux's Shaft, is reestablishing a communication between earth and some "height" that his prowess and paraphernalia symbolize his potential access to.

He may thus be spreading his arms in imitation of the flight of the bird designated by his mask and staff.<sup>11</sup> Or it also seems possible that with his outspread left hand he is "directing" the strangely pivoting bison head, and with his outspread right hand inducting power from the bird-staff below it.

Not only is the bison not charging (contrary to what some commentators have asserted), its front legs have been pulled back to the extent that it could hardly stand. One explanation for the unrealistic position of the front legs is that they may have been pulled back to accommodate the bird-headed man's legs and pointed up slipper-like feet. In a number of aspects, from a realistic point of view, this is a peculiar bison. Its beard, neck, and withers appear to be unconnected to its head. The twisting, horned head turns down, as if cut free from its muscles. This anti-anatomical gesture could be the result of the bird-headed man having been painted first, with the bison then having to fit in a cramped space in order to spacially interlock with him. Whatever the purpose may be, the bison's black outline has been confined to an area of the wall that is mostly cov-



ered with brown clay (with patches of limestone showing through), avoiding the calcite-speckled areas before and below it. Had the bison's head been drawn in such a way as to be anatomically in sync with its beard and neck, it would have had to enter a calcified area. Of course, we do not know the extent of the calcification on the Shaft's wall at 17,000 B.P. It is also possible that it is simply a matter of chance that, as Georges Bataille put it, "the rock's native ochre is used to supply [the bison] with warmth and animation."<sup>12</sup> However, it is a fascinating detail, so I point it out, as part of my plan to notice as much as is possible in this complex composition that has, over the years, too often been treated in a perfunctory, generalized way.

The bison's hind legs give no indication of the spasmodic response one would associate with having just been disemboweled. But has it been disemboweled? Compositionally speaking, the rhinoceros appears completely unconcerned with the bison, while the nearness of the spear to the guts would seem to indicate that if there is any explanation in the composition itself for the bison's condition, such would concern the spear. But the spear is not only laid across the bison's hindquarters, it is broken at several points and bends at one break point as it grazes the top of the intestinelike ovals. It is of course possible that the painter could have placed a broken spear diagonally across the animal's hindquarters to indicate that at an earlier point in time the spear had been used for disemboweling. Without wishing to belabor my commentary here, I must add that it

sense of the term, outward looking. The fauna that roam, trot, and gallop the walls of the Rotunda and Axial Gallery, while painted by human beings, exist outside of a human dimension—they are 100 percent animal and, with the possible exception of the unidentifiable “unicorn,” devoid of anthropomorphic gestures. Only in the obscure signs and blazons cropping up around and across the animal bodies does a symbolism assert that these divine beasts are being shifted into a human context. Such signs circulate around the animals like incipient corrals and brands, looking for ways to move in. The art of the Apse and Shaft continues the inversion of this outward gaze. The plethora of signs that track the topsy-turvy animals and animal parts in the Apse suggests a desire to mark natural surge, to helplessly interfere with it, to hex it with jabs and swipes. Such markings may also be the spontaneous testimonies of those who, having inched through a hole, descended into depths given psychic bottomlessness by a painting that assimilated the inversional gestures elsewhere in the cave and realized them. In contrast to dynamic animal movement, here was a hybrid mental traveler, like an aroused and exultant ghost, in a realm made up of bird, bison, human and possibly other powers.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the animal world had not collapsed into sheer symbolism: Parked to the left of the ascension was a representative from the world of the Rotunda, a rhinoceros, defecating—but defecating what? Six die-like spots. More signs. Except that here the generational/regenerational mesh proclaims that what we must know to explore human potential is likewise encoded in that which is neither dead nor alive.

## SPARKS WE TRAIL

Profiled on whitish-ochre calcite:  
5 antlered stag heads,  
necks vanishing into  
an imaginary river,  
file toward Lascaux's depths

Bodies unsketched on brown rock  
as if river obscured

The first, head tilted, appears to be stepping up onto a bank

The second, head held high, must be walking the river bottom

The third and fourth, noses lifted, must be swimming

The fifth seems to be faltering, sinking into

Mu-ch'i's "Persimmons"<sup>1</sup> come to mind:  
the emptiness in fullness as the stain of the real

We fill in the bodies of the stags, the water they are in,  
so empty are our heads

Their heads of stone  
lighter than we  
weighted with mortal blight

This coming into appearance, this blooming, this full moon and the  
tried sparks we trail as we disappear, stages of the crossing to be  
filled in, suddenly total, emptying manifesting emptying reverber-  
ating fore and aft vibrations

Suddenly noon—more suddenly, twilight

Or that other light Jacques Marsal spread across the antlered heads  
—I strained to see what was below: dark, cloudy rock, waterless  
rock, waterless water. Their below: unsketched

They are in the below  
but there's a deeper below

The limestongue off which stagstalk is struck.

*See color plate IX.*

That salmon also serves bear  
that I also serve hyena

O the chunks of eeling, the hamstrung  
natal-ringing  
thuds, the icerian  
isolation

Divine peak  
                  its snow our rivulet  
To drink in my buried-alive daughter:  
highest altar

"After the first death, there is no other"<sup>9</sup>

Before the first death, was all other?

Can I grasp the news of this newness?

I have eaten my prow,  
cradles have sprouted in my nightcoat  
—or are they cromlechs?  
Or birth cones?  
Or starry sarx?

Passionate Eros suffuses mind in layers of storm mergers

This excites the bears in the void  
turning the honey into ransacked hives

Poetry  
          "sunyata ryori"  
          Emptiness cuisine

It is mind from scratch that leads.

## UPON EMERGING FROM BERNIFAL

I first emerged as a partially obliterated mammoth,  
in the lines I incised my difference emerged,  
I was lines of hair crossing lines of hair,  
hair crossings that were not mammoth  
but lines of something else I saw in my mammoth mirror—  
I was to enter these hair lines and find my sway,  
what kind of swarm I was, warm and wayward,  
a moth man of sorts, a pupa inside a mammoth womb,  
a moth womb man mite, lines groping lines,  
fingers groping walls, a mite womb working through its man lines,  
a moth sitting on a mammoth staff,  
a world knot of hairline grubs, a thickening coiling,  
lines revealing eyes concealing veils,  
a mammoth veil in which I am, tied to mite,  
mite to mammoth swarm, a knot of coiling mirrors,  
a mine dark with own and none,  
a mirror of hair tented hair,  
a womb unraveling moths and mites,  
a tent a tectiform an arch of textual loans,  
mammoth as architectural bone, home for my am in loan to lines,  
incisions generating veils, veils concealing bottomless, topless lines,  
a between in which my am is an eye of hair,  
mine with no beginning because I'm already in  
the word inside the veil, a world knot arched and textual,  
an infinite am of eyes and mites,  
an all minted with separation,  
an infinite nothing that I am, without boundary,  
a labyrinth of womb mammoth and man.

beyond our own, a tunnel generating its own light—or crown of flame. It is a hole grounded in both absence and appearance, a convexcavatiuous abyss. When it rests for a moment in contraction, some of us experience it as a cave or pit. When it expands beyond what the mind can contemplate, some call it the void.

### *Chronologies and Cultures*

The Middle Paleolithic (150,000–40,000 B.P.) is the cultural period associated with Neanderthal people (also called Mousterian). The Upper Paleolithic, associated with Cro-Magnon people, has been divided into various phases (named after different sites in France). The following Upper Paleolithic chronology is taken from *The Cave Beneath the Sea: Paleolithic Images at Cosquer* (Abrams, 1996):

End of the Mousterian (or Chatelperronian):	35,000–32,000 B.P.
Aurignacian:	32,000–24,000 B.P.
Gravettian:	24,000–21,000 B.P.
Solutrean:	21,000–18,000 B.P.
Early Magdalenian:	18,000–16,000 B.P.
Middle Magdalenian:	16,000–12,000 B.P.
Late Magdalenian:	12,000–10,000 B.P.
Azilian	10,000–9,000 B.P.

The Upper Paleolithic, then, spans 35,000 to 9,000 B.P. In *The Last Neanderthal*, Ian Tattersall presents evidence that Neanderthal persisted well into the Aurignacian; for example, at Zafarraya (Southern Spain), Mousterian tools as young as 27,000 B.P. have been discovered with Neanderthal remains that are not much older. It is now thought that during the Mousterian, and possibly the Aurignacian, there was cultural contact between Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons.

At the other end of the scale, there are early human remains that appear to be modern (vs. Neanderthal) at some African sites in Swaziland, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Morocco. This suggests that fully modern humans evolved on the African continent as early as 120,000 years ago. They appear to have left no examples of image-making.

Late Mousterian, or Chatelperronian, people still belonged to the Neanderthal group. Tools mainly consisted of scrapers and denticulated flints. Bone industry began to appear, along with perforated teeth and the use of red ochre. The only apparent image-making from this period is gouged-out cupules (tiny cup shapes) in slabs and blocks.

It is during the Aurignacian that Cro-Magnon fully emerged, nearly 6 feet tall, with a flat forehead and large skull capacity. Varied and elaborate tools made of bone began to appear: points with a split base, lozenge-shaped points, perforated staffs. What has traditionally

been called "art" also took place: crude engravings on stone slabs, including cupules, vulvas, and schematic animals.

All of these cultures developed on a wavering band of extremely cold and relatively warm (interstadial) periods. Warming may have been responsible for developmental spurts (as can be proposed for Lascaux). Gravettian deposits contain many tools made of mammoth ivory, and abundant body decoration (thousands of beads were discovered arranged in rows along the arms and legs of skeletons at Sungi in Russia; they had once been sewn into sleeves and trousers). While engraved animals are still schematized, a cervio-dorsal line is now emphasized and twisted perspective (head in profile but horns depicted frontally) emerges. This is also the period of the so-called "Venuses," small female statuettes in ivory, bone, and stone, from southwestern France to Siberia.

According to burials at Roc-de-Sers, the people of the Solutrean were smaller and less sturdy than their predecessors. Much of the Solutrean was bitterly cold; such climate is cited to explain the development of flint-working and the lack of imagery. Needles appear, along with some monumental sculpture.

The great Magdalenian cultures took place between 18,000 and 10,000 B.P., which included three interstadials (e.g., the Lascaux interstadial, at 17,000 B.P.). The people were Cro-Magnoid but smaller and frailer than the Solutreans (adult skeletons average about 5 feet in height). Stone industry is characterized by many kinds of burins, borers, and backed blades. There is also a proliferation in cylindrical spears, engraved spear-throwers, and barbed harpoons. At the end of the twentieth century, around 160 decorated caves had been discovered in France, with another 130 in Spain. Most of these caves were painted and engraved by Magdalenian people, and the amount of imagery in them varies considerably. In the late 1970s we were taken into one cave in the Dordogne that had only a red dot on the back wall; in contrast, Lascaux has around 600 paintings and 1,500 engravings.

It is impossible to say how many portable objects there are. In *Journey Through the Ice Age*, Paul Bahn mentions a 1980 estimate of over 10,000 pieces from Western Europe, and adds that this is certainly a minimal figure. As with parietal (wall) imagery, the number of portable objects found in any one site can range from a few to thousands: Enlène, in the French Pyrénées, contained over 1,100 engraved stones, and Parpalló, in eastern Spain, yielded over 5,000 engraved plaques and painted stones.

The first engraved portable objects were found in the 1830s, at a time when there was no concept of an Old Stone Age (such pieces were thought to be Celtic). Early authentication was based on the

pieces' association with stone and bone tools in archeological layers, and the fact that many objects depicted extinct species (mammoths, woolly rhinos, megaloceroses). Early discoveries triggered a virtual "gold rush," during which many sites were plundered. There are, in fact, as of now, only a handful of caves—for the most part recently discovered—whose floors are intact.

The development of radiocarbon testing since World War II has led to increasingly stable dating. Originally, portable objects were seldom subjected to this method because it destroyed the object. With recent advances, only minute pieces of charcoal or bone need to be subjected to radiocarbon testing. Certain caves now appear to have been decorated much earlier than previously thought, and also to have multiple phases of decoration, spaced between thousands of years. In the past, most dating was based on stylistic comparison, often between sites so far from each other it is unlikely that the cultures had any contact. On the basis of the improvement of paint analysis, and new techniques such as scanning electron microscopy and accelerator mass-spectrometry, stylistic guesswork is being replaced by forms of dating whose only limitation is within the material itself. For example: In the case of charcoal, what is dated is the point at which charcoal was formed, not the point at which it was applied to a cave wall.

Entangled with the traditional chronologies established by Breuil and Leroi-Gourhan is the assumption that the oldest art must be the crudest, and that over thousands of years a mature art develops, flowering in the Magdalenian phase, after which a kind of "decadence" sets in at the end of the last glaciation. Such a theory seems to be based on the rise and decline of individual skills, from childhood to maturity to dysfunctional old age, and it has recently met with a formidable challenge: The Chauvet cave, discovered in the Ardèche at the end of 1994, has masterful imagery some of which is solidly dated between 32,000 and 30,000 B.P. A significant amount of Chauvet imagery renders perspective, shading, the outlining of realistic animals, and movement—which is to say that in the early Aurignacian, one comes upon Magdalenian images or, to put it another way, that while the Aurignacians in the Dordogne are producing vulvas and crude animal outlines, in the Ardèche they are creating complex, polychromatic compositions. The Upper Paleolithic may turn out to be a kind of bubbling magma of regional rises and falls rather than a single current timeframe for early cultures as distant as southwestern Spain and Siberia.

Finally, a word must be said about the difference between portable and parietal Upper Paleolithic imagery.

In contrast to portable imagery—worked off materials that appear

to have been part of an everyday, survival world—deep cave imagery involved the exploration of an interior and foreign landscape. By drawing in the recesses of a cave, the boundaries of the familiar were extended, and an insideness was engaged, an insideness that with its bizarre and marvelous rock formations must have appeared to be the earth's equivalents of corporeal insides.

Other contrasts abound. Portable imagery is concentrated and restricted to an object's often very small surface, one that is sometimes round, thus partly unseeable as a person carves. Much portable image-making was done on material that was once alive, and while such may give a carved piece of deer antler a unique soulful feeling, the antler is also an element of an animal that was assimilated by humans, one that is part of as well as used by their bodies.

In the unsolvable debate over who exactly carved, engraved, and painted in the Upper Paleolithic, the words "artist" and "art" often feel unreal and inapplicable. Given the wide range of proficiency, from meandering scratches to Lascaux's "Rotunda," the most fair guess is to suggest that all sorts of hands, children to "masters," were involved in what has come down to us. A passage from Wade Davis's *Shadows in the Sun* (Island Press, Washington, DC, 1998), set in the Arctic polar desert, casts a faint ray of light on the making of Upper Paleolithic carved objects:

Simon Qamaniq [an Inuit] is both artist and hunter . . . On his accordion, he plays Scottish reels adapted from those of ancient mariners and whalers, and with his firm hand turns soapstone into exquisite figurines of animals, all depicted so powerfully that they seem to move within the stone. "You can't be a carver," he explains, "if you are not a hunter."

Cave imagery takes place on a surface that is relatively flat, sometimes vast, stationary, and not directly related to survival. The size of a figure is often up to the drawer's discretion. While caves are organic, their still and very dark presence is on a much different order of organic life than fauna and flora. At the same time, cave walls form a seamless congruity with the outside world. Cave images are also unframed, and seldom reflect any awareness of horizontality or verticality.

While a ground line is suggested by wall surface contrasts in Lascaux, Upper Paleolithic figures do not seem to ever have been presented in a landscape (other than schematically in a few portable scenes). Perspective is utilized in a few caves, but there is no background in the sense that we would say a portrait or a still-life has a background. Many of the animals seem as still as the limestone on

which they are depicted. Such has led one writer to propose that the "models" for the depictions are dead.

The decoration of Lascaux, for example, required scaffolding, considerable advance preparation (collecting pigments miles away from the cave, heating ochre dioxides to change their colors, fashioning brushes, burins, lamps), work coordination, and, undoubtedly, some kind of apprenticeship. While the paintings and engravings had no visual background, we now assume they had an aesthetic one, and a tradition, in that they were evolved out of earlier, less sophisticated techniques and images. We are probably closer in time and aesthetics to Lascaux today than the painters of Lascaux were to early Aurignacian engravings within walking distance of the cave.



## Notes and Commentary

### Epigraphs

Paul Celan: from the Cid Corman translation of "EATENAWAY by the . . ." *origin* #15, third series, October 1969.

Wallace Stevens: from the lecture "Poetics Acts" (given at Bard College, 1948), *Opus Posthumous*, Knopf, New York, 1975.

### Introduction

1. The global Upper Paleolithic is wrapped, as it were, in historical gauze. All our words for continents, countries, regions, areas, sites, tools, weapons, techniques, and aesthetics are historically imposed, more often than not, by modern history. While this is obvious, it is a slippery matter: Many a subliminal association has linked "France" to "the origin of art." In earlier drafts of this book I had used the word "art" to refer to parietal and portable imagery. Because "art" today implies transcendent values while cutting itself off from utilitarian, magical, and occult activities, I have dropped it, feeling more at home with "imagery" and "imagination"—except when referring to "cave art theory," for the most part worked out before such archeologists as Margaret W. Conkey, Olga Soffer, and Silvia Tomaskova began to challenge the applicability of the word. Their current thinking on this matter is to be found in *Beyond Art*, *Memoirs of the California Academy of Science*, #23, San Francisco, 1997.

2. Charles Olson, *Additional Prose*, Four Seasons Foundation, Bolinas, California, 1974, p. 11.

3. Clayton Eshleman, *Coils*, Black Sparrow Press, Los Angeles, 1973, p. 147.

4. Georges Bataille, *Lascaux, or The Birth of Art*, Skira, New York, 1955. Bataille associates ancient man, including Neanderthal, with work (tool-making) and prohibitions. Cro-Magnon, or in Bataille's phrase, "Lascaux man," breaks with the past, inaugurating the world of play and transgression. Bataille considers Lascaux to have been decorated during the Aurignacian period, around 30,000 B.P., that is, Before the Present or 1950,

when absolute radiocarbon dates were first obtained. For Bataille, 30,000 B.P. is curiously at once the dawn and the pinnacle of prehistoric art. While his dating and theoretical approach are not relevant today, Bataille's description of the cave itself (interspersed with excellent color photography by Hans Hinz and Claudio Emmer) is well written and moving. Bataille places the "art" of Lascaux in a wider context, including the concepts of taboo, sacrifice, and sexuality, in *Eroticism* (City Lights, San Francisco, 1986).

5. Miller's stirring evocation of the prehistoric Dordogne occurs in his book on Greece, *The Colossus of Maroussi* (New Directions, New York, 1958, pp. 4–5). He seems to have known about the decorated caves, but I have been unable to find any evidence that he visited any of them:

A few months before the war broke out I decided to take a long vacation. I had long wanted to visit the valley of the Dordogne, for one thing. So I packed my valise and took the train for Rocamadour where I arrived early one morning about sun up, the moon still gleaming brightly. It was a stroke of genius on my part to make the tour of the Dordogne region before plunging into the bright and hoary world of Greece. Just to glimpse the black, mysterious river at Domme from the beautiful bluff at the edge of town is something to be grateful for all one's life. To me this river, this country, belong to the poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. It is not French, not Austrian, not European even: it is the country of enchantment which the poets have staked out and which they alone may lay claim to. It is the nearest thing to Paradise this side of Greece. Let us call it the Frenchman's paradise, by way of making a concession. Actually it must have been a paradise for many thousands of years. I believe it must have been so for Cro-Magnon man, despite the fossilized evidence of the great caves which point to a condition of life rather bewildering and terrifying. I believe that the Cro-Magnon man settled here because he was extremely intelligent and had a highly developed sense of beauty. I believe that in him the religious sense was already highly developed and that it flourished here even if he lived

like an animal in the depths of the caves. I believe that this great peaceful region of France will always be a sacred spot for man and that when the cities have killed off the poets this will be the refuge and the cradle of the poets to come. I repeat, it was most important for me to have seen the Dordogne: it gives me hope for the future of the race, for the future of the earth itself. France may one day exist no more, but the Dordogne will live on just as dreams live on and nourish the souls of men.

Based on his notebooks kept during a walking tour of southwestern France in 1912 (*A Walking Tour in Southern France/Ezra Pound among the Troubadours*, New Directions, New York, 1992), we know that Pound passed through towns that put him within walking distance of a few of the caves discovered around the turn of the century.

6. Hugh Kenner writes: "The exchange value of the pound sterling in 1919 made that a good summer for the impecunious to travel, and Ezra and Dorothy after five years cooped up in England, met Tom Eliot near Giraut de Bornelh's birthplace, Excideuil. The three headed south, the Pounds finally to Montségur but Eliot on a divagation of his own to inspect nearby cave drawings. That may have been at the Grotte de Niaux. We are to imagine him, rucksacked, deep inside a mountain, individual talent confronted by the Mind of Europe, satisfying himself that art never improves ('but the material of art'—here, bison 'd'un purté de trait étonnante' drawn with magnesium oxide in bison grease—'is never quite the same'), while 20 kilometers eastward by crows' flight the Pounds, fortified with chocolate, were climbing the southwest face of Montségur to the white walls that ride its summit like a stone ship." (*The Pound Era*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971, pp. 333-334).

Kenner also mentions that Picasso visited Altamira in 1902.

7. For Olson's lectures and notes, see *Olson #10*, the Journal of the Charles Olson Archives, University of Connecticut Library, Storrs, 1978.

8. "La Préface," *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson*, University of California Press, 1987.

9. Jerome Rothenberg, *Khurbn & Other Poems*, New Directions, New York, 1989, p. 14.

In 1980, Gary Snyder wrote to me:

The '50s-'80s was the discovery of the depths of Far

Eastern religious thought for Occidentals. The '90s should be the period of the beginning of the discovery of the actual shape of early Homo Sapiens consciousness: for both Occidental and Oriental seekers. A profound new step. Knowing more of the Paleolithic imagination is to know the "Paleo Ecology" of our own minds. Planetwide human mental health in the twenty-first century may depend on arriving at these understandings. For it is in the deep mind that wilderness and the unconsciousness become one, and in some half understood but very profound way, our relation to the outer ecologies seems conditioned by our inner ecologies. This is a metaphor, but it is also literal.

10. "Making Things Meaningful: Approaches to the Interpretation of the Ice Age Imagery of Europe," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Views from the Outside*, Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995, p. 61.

11. Weston LaBarre, *Muelos/A Stone Age Superstition About Sexuality*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1984, p. 1.

12. In *The Creative Explosion* (Harper & Row, New York, 1982, pp. 50-51), John E. Pfeiffer writes:

Using a spear alone, it is rarely possible to kill a large animal unless you are close enough and fast enough to make repeated thrusts. Equipped with spear-throwers, Australian aborigines today can hit a target, say a kangaroo, three out of four times from more than 100 feet away, and kill from 30 to 50 feet.

The bow and arrow was something else again, another world when it came to advanced design and hunting efficiency. It may have come into its own with longer seasonal camping, when local game may have been scarcer and more difficult to hunt. Not only did it provide greater range and power, but it also increased the possibility of stealth and surprise. To hurl a spear you must spring out of your hiding place, move forward, and swing your arms and shoulders to achieve maximum momentum. With a bow and arrow you stay put, practically motionless, shooting from your stationary, concealed position. This considerably raises the odds favoring a successful ambush, especially since it can all be done silently and invisibly, and you can take a second or third shot if you miss the first time.

There is some question about who invented this

weapon. The earliest known bows date back some 8,000 years to a site in Denmark, but direct proof of arrows is more ancient. A pair of shafts has been preserved in 10,000-year-old water-logged deposits, also in Denmark, with tanged arrowheads still in place; and, perhaps two millennia older in northern Germany, a cache of some 100 pine shafts was found, most of them slotted for arrowhead insertion at one end and notched at the other with a bowstring groove. But a cave in south-eastern Spain, a Solutrean site, has yielded a collection of flint points which if mixed in with a collection of American Indian points known to be arrowheads would be accepted without question as the real thing. So it would surprise no one if future evidence shows that the bow and arrow is 17,000 years old.

The invention of power-amplifying devices represented an industrial revolution, and one of the most important signs of the cultural explosion. It was the beginning of a new coming of age, a pulling away from our fellow species.

Concerning Upper Paleolithic depiction of arrows: André Leroi-Gourhan notes that on a pebble from Colombière the belly of an engraved rhinoceros appears to have been struck by three arrows (*Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, Abrams, New York, 1967, p. 484). It is possible that some of the many strokes, or barbed signs, painted or engraved on or around animal images, could represent arrows.

Anthony Appiah, reviewing John Reader's *Africa: A Biography* (Knopf, New York, 1998), in the December 17, 1998, *New York Review of Books*, mentions that Reader reports the discovery of fifty-nine skeletons near Wadi Halfa, dated at 14,000 B.P., many of which had projectile points embedded in their bones.

In his essay "Wars, Arms, Rams, Mars" (*Facing Apocalypse*, Spring Books, Dallas, 1987), James Hillman distinguishes between military and nuclear imaginations: "Mars moves in close, hand-to-hand, Mars *propior* and *propinquus*. Bellona is a fury, the blood-dimmed tide, the red fog of intense immediacy. No distance. The nuclear imagination, in contrast, invents at ever greater distances—intercontinental, the bottom of the sea, outer space."

The quantum leap in concept and technology signalled by a taut bowstring and humming arrow has, in our century, widened the distance between assailant

and object beyond visibility, beyond continents. The motionless archer behind cover has become a finger on a computer.

13. See the section "Cave Art Theory" for a quotation from MacLeod's unpublished paper, written for "Advanced Non-Ordinary Reality," taught by Henry Selby, Anthropology Department, University of Texas, Austin, Fall 1980.

14. The basis for dualism may lie in such separation and rebinding. Body is the result of separation, soul of rebinding. In the Upper Paleolithic, boundaries between wild and tribal areas may have investigated time versus eternity. Boundary seems to me to be the primal quake whose aftershocks are content and form.

15. "On Paleolithic Cave Art," from *The Roots of Thinking*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1990, p. 242.

16. *Love's Body*, Random House, New York, 1966, p. 36.

17. The passage paraphrased is from "Havana Rose," in *The Poems of Hart Crane*, Liveright, New York, 1986, p. 201:

And during the wait over dinner at La Diana,  
the Doctor had said—who was American also—  
"You cannot heed the negative—, so might go on  
to undeserved doom . . . must therefore loose  
yourself  
within a pattern's mastery that you can conceive,  
that

you can yield to—by which also you  
win and gain that mastery and happiness which  
is your own from birth."

18. *A Study of English Romanticism*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, pp. 121-122.

19. Alexander Marshack, "Exploring the Mind of Ice Age Man," *National Geographic*, Washington, DC, January 1975, p. 81.

20. Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 249.

21. *The Hidden Order of Art*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971, pp. 35-37.

22. My susceptibility to "a vortex of shifting planes" may be linked to hallucinogenic experiences—not involving stimulants—in Kyoto, 1963. Nightly, for weeks, right before falling asleep on the futon I would hear a bell ding, seemingly in my forehead, after which there would be a loud thud, as if someone had slammed a

window down next door (an impossibility, since the Japanese houses in our neighborhood did not have Western windows). Then, as if part of this "schedule," upon falling asleep, I would hurtle through a winding tunnel only slightly larger than my body (a portent of the caves to come?). Each time in the tunnel, I would anticipate my father's face at, or as, the tunnel's end, something I never reached.

Subjects participating in controlled hallucinogen testing report that as they move deeper into trance, a rotating tunnel often surrounds them, the sides of which are marked by lattices of squares.

J. D. Lewis-Williams and T. A. Dowson identify the "tunnel" experience as the third stage, resulting in trance, of the altering of consciousness. They propose that the first stage involves seeing entoptic forms (dots, zigzags, grids, meandering lines), and that the second stage turns these simple shapes into potentially ikonic forms (e.g., a shimmering band of light becomes a snake). They view this three-stage alteration as the neurological process by which shamans enter trance. Basing their work on nineteenth and twentieth century Bushman and Coso (South African) rock art, which they allege is shamanistic, they propose that this "neurological bridge affords some access to the Upper Paleolithic." Some access, possibly (though the three-stage alteration seems highly formulaic). More recently, having teamed up with Jean Clottes, Lewis-Williams argues that the making of rock art, including Ice Age cave imagery, "was largely, but not exclusively, associated with institutionalized, ritualized altered states of consciousness, a central feature of shamanism." This assertion now takes on the blanket force of a single theory for such image-making, and in that way evokes older, now rejected, single theories (such as the hunting hypothesis, or "art for art's sake") that tended to explain away rather than open up this realm in which nothing can be absolutely verified. Trance is not the sole possession of shamans (as my Kyoto experience taught me), nor is there any evidence whatsoever that all (or even most) Ice Age image-making was done in a state of trance.

For Lewis-Williams and Dowson's work, see "The Signs of All Times," *Current Anthropology*, April 1988. For the Clottes/Lewis-Williams work, see *The Shamans of Prehistory*, Abrams, 1998, and "The mind in the cave—the cave in the mind: altered consciousness in the Upper Paleolithic," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 9 (1).

For a collection of papers contesting Clottes' and Lewis-Williams's claims, see *The Concept of Shamanism: Uses and Abuses*, ed. Francfort and Hamayon, Bibliotheca Shamanistica, Budapest, 2002.

23. For "incubational pits," see Barbara G. Walker's *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, Harper & Row, New York, 1983, pp. 2-3.

24. James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, Harper & Row, New York, 1979, p. 46.

25. Rainer Maria Rilke, "An Experience," *Selected Writings/Prose*, New Directions, New York, 1960.

26. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, Book Two, Part III: A few lines later, Williams proposes that the depths are "inhabited by hordes heretofore unrealized." That certainly expresses my experience upon first visiting the Ice Age caves.

### Silence Raving

1. Chapter three of *The Road to Eleusis* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1978): "There can be no doubt that Persephone's abduction was a drug-induced seizure."

2. See G. R. Levy's *The Gate of Horn* (Faber, London, 1948, p. 18) for two drawings of "enclosures" based on paintings in the Spanish cave at La Pasiega. Both "enclosures" have vulvar forms at what appear to be their gates. The larger of the two "enclosures" contains parts of a bison and a hind inside two of its three "compartments." This "enclosure," presented vertically on Levy's page, evokes a cathedral, with the vulvar shape acting as a kind of parvis. Leroi-Gourhan also reproduces the larger of these two "enclosures" (*Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, p. 522), but he omits the vulvar shape. I put such words as "enclosure" and "compartment" in quotes, as there is no solid evidence that they represent corrals or stables.

### Interface I: "The Separation Continuum"

1. See p. 349 in *Treasures of Prehistoric Art* for the Leroi-Gourhan map, which appears to be based on the Abbé Breuil's earlier map (which I have seen but not studied). The Leroi-Gourhan map is very difficult to read as it is not clear whether the numbers assigned to

wall portions refer to individual animals and signs, or groups of such. According to my understanding, there are 100 animals and signs for the 116 numbers. In the early 1990s, Claude and Monique Archambeau (the caretakers and principle scholars of the cave) told me that there are more than 600 animals, signs, and human figurations engraved there (many of which are fragmentary). It appears that Leroi-Gourhan's map, made in the early 1960s, accounts for less than one-fifth of the figures. The unreliability of Leroi-Gourhan's approach is revealed (*ibid.*, p. 348) in his characterization of the cave:

Along with El Castillo, the sanctuary of Les Combarelles is the most complicated of those I have had occasion to study. The dense crowding of the figures and the numerous additions make for extreme confusion. Nevertheless, I chose this cave for my first statistical testing, and it was this cave, together with Le Portel and Covalanas, that made me realize the deliberate character of the figure grouping and of their topographical arrangement.

2. *The Dream and the Underworld*, Harper & Row, New York, 1979.

3. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," 1855 edition, Section #31.

4. These observations draw upon material from "The Sacred Animal" chapter of S. Giedion's *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art*, Bollingen Foundation, New York, 1957.

5. *Olson #10*, pp. 78 and 91.

6. From Wallace Stevens's "Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit."

7. C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works*, Volume 14, Bollingen Series XX, Princeton, N.J., 1976, p. 402.

### Hades in Manganese

1. To place Hades in manganese is to take the Greek god of death and the Greek underworld and imagine them as having been prefigured in the black manganese cave imagery of the Cro-Magnon people. In this revisionism, the emphasis is on the first construction of an underworld in which the Hadic figure is less a god of death than a proto-shaman envisioning the forms he is expressing on the walls.

The burden of this poem is to assimilate a range of

personal and transpersonal twentieth-century "hells," which may be thought of as rubble packed against the gate to the Upper Paleolithic (in the same way that debris is often found covering decorated cave walls). My notation was that only after this material cleared (imagined) could I give myself to the deep past. This kind of clearing away is a never-ending process and crops up at many points in this book.

2. As I was coming to the end of the fourth stanza, I realized that I had entered the magnetic field of César Vallejo's poem, "Telluric and Magnetic," in particular its impassioned central stanza beginning "Oh human fields!" My fifth stanza, beginning "O dead living depths!," draws on the energy and some of the strategies of Vallejo's stanza. This is a good example of how poetry that one has previously translated may, out of nowhere, move into psychic accessibility and act as an emanative angel for a new poem under way (*César Vallejo: The Complete Posthumous Poetry*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, pp. 86-89).

3. Paul Blackburn (1926-1971) sent several tapes of poems and conversation to me while I was living in Kyoto (1962-1964). One poem, "Crank it up for all of us, but let me heaven go," went off like a depth charge in me; I couldn't shake it for weeks. It conveyed a level of anguish that I had not thought could be expressed in poetry.

4. There is a fuller treatment of the American fraternity "hell week" as a belated and anticonstructive "rite of passage" in "Still-life, with Fraternity," *What She Means*, Black Sparrow Press, Los Angeles, 1978.

### Permanent Shadow

1. The title refers to the human shadows blasted onto walls during the atomic bombing in Hiroshima.

### Placements I: "The New Wilderness"

1. Written for Jerome Rothenberg's *New Wilderness Letter #7*, 1979, in response to a query asking some writers, artists, and musicians how they would define the "new wilderness." In a note to the issue containing our responses, Rothenberg wrote: "I felt the strong pull of contradictory meanings for 'wilderness' (from awesome

other-than-human wilderness of west coast earth householders to wilderness ruins of collapsed high industrial dwellings)—that coupled with the strange twist 'newness' added to the concept(s)."

2. Charles Olson, *The Maximus Poems*, p. 332.

3. Artaud's writing of the postwar 1940s is permeated with attacks on what he sees as spiritually devised "heights" and "depths," which act as distractions from the true zone of contestation: the surface—ultimately, the human body with its badly constructed organs. In *Letter to André Breton* (Sparrow #23, Black Sparrow Press, Los Angeles, 1974), he wrote:

I do not believe that there is an occult world or something hidden in the world, I do not believe that under visible reality there are buried and repressed levels of notions, perceptions, realities, or truths.

I believe that everything and above all the essential was and is always in the open and surface and that this sunk vertically and to the bottom because men did not know and want to maintain it.

4. James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld*, p. 90.

5. In *The Sixth Extinction* (Doubleday, New York, 1995, Chapter 10), Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin propose that the fifth extinction was that of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago, and that a sixth extinction began at the end of the Pleistocene (between 12,000 and 10,000 years ago), when the glacial ice melted and we entered the interglacial epoch known as the Holocene. The demise of especially large mammals at this time was initially attributed solely to the rise in global temperatures. However, as early as 1911, Alfred Russel Wallace (co-developer of the theory of evolution by natural selection) wrote: "I am convinced that the rapidity of . . . the extinction of so many large Mammals is actually due to man's agency." More recently, the paleontologist Paul Martin has argued a "Pleistocene overkill" thesis for the Americas, in which the Clovis people, accomplished Eurasian hunters with bows and arrows, crossed the Bering land bridge around 13,000 years ago and within 2,000 years had eliminated fifty-seven species of large mammals throughout the Americas. According to Leakey and Lewin, we are now in an accelerated phase of the sixth extinction, in which 30,000 species are wiped out by human agency every year.

We are thus, in the late twentieth century, witness to the following phantasmagorical and physical spectacle:

The animal images in Ice Age caves are also the ghosts of species wiped out at the beginning of our Holocene epoch; today they "stand in" for the species we are daily eliminating. This is certainly one of the reasons that Ice Age animal images move people profoundly: Such images are primogenous to the extinction of possibly all animal life.

### Dot

1. In the beginning of this book I envision the root tips of certain Humanistic divinities. Hermes, for instance, may be indicated by a meandering line, dots, dot formations, and more complex "closed signs," called claviforms and tectiforms. If Hermes is the god of boundaries, it may be possible to detect his archetypal activity in the earliest "boundary signaling" available to us today.

### Our Lady of the Three-Pronged Devil

1. The title attempts to tie Aurignacian engraved vulvas into their reactive development, the trident, so that what was originally open and receptive becomes, at the point intercourse and pregnancy were linked, an uroboros enclosing germination. According to this thinking, the uroboros is hardly "prior to any process, eternal" (Neumann à la Jung), but rather a major arrest of movement drawing into its vortex an overwhelming preoccupation with mother-goddessing the earth (carrying in its wake the attribution to women of all the horrors to be found in nature). Of relevance here is an insightful poem that Olson excluded from *The Maximus Poems* (to be found in *Olson #9*):

the IMMENSE ERROR  
of genderizing  
the 'Great Mother'

INCALCULABLE  
damage

The open Aurignacian vulva evokes a simple labyrinth with an exit and stresses, sexually, torsion. It seems possible that the earliest intercourse/pregnancy association was torsion (underscored by the fire drill) and that the subsequent uroboros belongs to agricultural peoples,

with stress on the enclosed seed, the male as "star," i.e., patriarchy in contrast to an earlier more mysterious "open" union, in which the female was place-of-fire and phallus (the so-called "Venuses" fit neatly in the hand).

2. Concerning the unlifted veil, Barbara G. Walker writes (*The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, p. 855):

Latin *revelatio* meant to draw back the veil (*velum*). It was the Goddess's rainbow veil that concealed the future and the secrets of the spirit under the colors of earthly appearance. After death, men might see her "face to face." A vision of the naked Goddess was vouchsafed to her sacred kings, who could draw back the veil of her temple, the *hymen*, pierce her virginity and die in their mating, to become gods. But as the Goddess said on her temple at Sais, "No mortal has yet been able to lift the veil which covers me." Those who saw her unveiled were no longer mortal.

Elsewhere (p. 367), Walker writes: "The Hag as death-goddess, her face veiled to imply that no man can know the manner of his death, was sometimes reinterpreted as a nun. Christianized legends were invented for their veiled figures." Hans Peter Duerr notes (*Dream-time*, pp. 18–19) that "the head of the Venus of Willendorf is covered with a pattern of horizontal ridges in such a way as to suggest the masking of the face. If this interpretation is valid, then we may have here a prototype of the 'one who veils' of later times, the goddess of death such as Calypso or 'fraw Holt' whose names hide the Indo-German stem *kel-*, 'hide' or 'veil.'" See Duerr's footnote 14, pp. 177–178, for additional and fascinating information on veils.

3. A room in the old Regional Prehistory Museum containing a dozen or so Aurignacian engraved blocks. I have elsewhere referred to this room as "the power room" (see poem in Section III by that title).

4. The schematic map of Le Portel in *Treasures of Prehistoric Art* (p. 361) makes the cave shape look like a straggly trident-shaped "being," with the prongs containing most of the cave's paintings and engravings.

### The Aurignacians Have the Floor

1. The Aurignacian (32,000–24,000 B.P.) is the period in which the first image-making takes place. The

kinds of images vary considerably from region to region (crude engravings in the Dordogne; Chauvet's polychromatic splendor in the Ardèche). Not only is it time to let the Aurignacians have the floor, but to acknowledge that they *are* the floor. Working off de Kooning's 1956 painting "February," I saw congeries of spectral images via the pick-up-stick flurry of lines, and found my way to a distinction between Abstract Expressionism and early Upper Paleolithic proto-imagery:

A Luba jaw

curve juts stops spurts up as if along a crossed-out upper face. Khakis, sages,

swank with white. Flotsam from Soutine's Céret assembled on a beach.

Only some "rope" and "ain't" are left from European Painting. Raw paint, as if

we were in Mas d'Azil facing rampant "macaroni," a penis, animal parts. Not quite. Under de Kooning is a done-to-death tradition.

Under the Upper Paleolithic is no image.

The Aurignacians still have the floor.

The complete poem is to be found in *From Scratch*, Black Sparrow Press, 1998.

### Seeds of Narrative in Upper Paleolithic Imagery

1. Robert Ardrey quotes Louis Leakey's words in *The Hunting Hypothesis*, (Bantam, New York, 1977, p. 175).

2. Ralph S. Solecki, "Shanidar IV, A Neanderthal Flower Burial in Northern Iraq," *Science*, Vol. 190, 28 November 1975. Solecki also reports that seven of the eight flower species (determined by pollen analysis of the Shanidar soil) have herbal and medicinal properties. If Neanderthals and, later, Cro-Magnon people were aware of such properties it is curious that apparently no such flowers are depicted in the Upper Paleolithic.

3. The triangular tombstone with eighteen man-made cupules from La Ferrassie is the most well-known example. Giedion discusses these cupules on pp. 132–139 of *The Eternal Present*. See also the poem, "Prolegomena," in Section V.

4. I proposed this date before the 1994 discovery of Chauvet, which has a rhinoceros that is solidly dated

at 32,410 B.P. The level of sophistication in Chauvet imagery suggests that image-making started up in that region many years earlier. Also it must be taken into consideration that as of 1996, only seven of the now known 149 decorated French caves have had a few of their images dated by the recently much improved radiocarbon method. Additional datings, along with yet to be discovered caves, may push the chronological "backwall" further back.

5. The Chauvet dates throw such information into question. Had I qualified this information by "in the Dordogne," it would probably still hold up. We do not yet have a record of what might be the earliest image-making in the Ardèche, where Chauvet is.

6. Were I to rewrite this sentence in 1999, I would include the hybrid figures discussed in "Hybrid Resonance," Section V.

7. Over 400 human figures have now been discovered in the Upper Paleolithic; of these, 140 are "Venus" statuettes, spanning 31,000 to 9,000 B.P. My figures come from Henri Delporte's *L'image de la femme dans l'art préhistorique* (Picard, Paris, 1991), the best overview of female representations. Camille Paglia has a couple of good pages on Willendorf in *Sexual Personae* (Yale, New Haven, Conn., 1990, pp. 54-56). See also Margaret W. Conkey's and Ruth E. Tringham's "Archeology and the Goddess: Exploring the Contours of Feminist Archeology" in *Feminisms in the Academy* (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1995). Conkey and Tringham write: "Few considerations of the symbolic possibilities ever take into account the striking diversity of female images that are all too readily collapsed under the rubric of fertility images. The Paleolithic statuettes have often been read as sexually charged because the ones that are usually depicted in texts—a non-representative sample to begin with—have large buttocks, breasts, and/or hips. This does not necessarily and immediately signify fertility but reveals a very contemporary (and partial) notion of sexuality." See "Gagarino, Avdeev, Willendorf," in Section IV, for the range of differences in such statuettes.

8. See "The Space Conception of Prehistory" chapter in *The Eternal Present*.

9. *Lascaux, or The Birth of Art*, p. 113. The other Bataille quotes in my text are to be found on pp. 117 and 139-149.

10. *The Eternal Present*, p. 508. When this essay was

written, in 1981, I had not visited the Lascaux Shaft. However, I did visit it in the spring of 1997, and can report that the bird-headed man is not portrayed standing upright, but at a definite slant as other observers have said.

11. Andreas Lommel, *The World of the Early Hunters*, Evelyn Adams & Mackay, London, 1967, p. 128; Weston LaBarre, *The Ghost Dance*, Delta, New York, 1972, pp. 417-419; John E. Pfeiffer, *The Creative Explosion*, p. 31; William Irwin Thompson, *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light*, St. Martin's Press, New York, pp. 110-112.

12. In most descriptions of the bird-headed man and the bird on the stick, the bird heads are treated as similar if not identical. According to the photos I have inspected, they are not. The stick bird's beak is short and curves down, with the eye more or less centered in the head. The bird man's beak extends straight out of the top of his head, with the eye attached to the stroke that forms the top of the head. It appears that the bottom part of the beak, the neck, and a brief curve (indicating the beginning of a shoulder) are one stroke. Both beaks are open. The stick bird's tail has an opening that oddly corresponds with its open beak.

13. An exception to this statement is Max Raphael's 51-page essay that makes up most of his *Prehistoric Cave Paintings* (Bollingen Foundation, New York, 1946). Raphael writes: "It has been said that paleolithic artists were incapable of dominating surfaces or reproducing space: that they could reproduce only individual animals, not groups, and certainly not compositions. The exact opposite of all this is true: we find not only groups, but compositions that occupy the length of an entire cave wall or the surface of a ceiling; we find representations of space, historical paintings, and even the golden section! But we find no primitive art." Raphael's essay anticipates Leroi-Gourhan's research on decorative organization expounded in *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*.

14. This observation strikes me as less significant today than it did in 1981, for the reason that very few weaponlike objects placed on human or animal bodies indicate penetration.

15. *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, p. 173.

16. Just because something is long and straight it is not necessarily symbolically male. The "phallic" serpent is a modern invention. Barbara G. Walker writes: "The

ageless serpent was originally identified with the Great Goddess herself. Hinduism's Ananta the Infinite was the serpent-mother who embraced Vishnu and other gods during their 'dead' phase. She was also Kundalini, the inner female soul of man in serpent shape, coiled in the pelvis, induced through the proper practice of yoga to uncoil and mount through the spiritual *chakras* toward the head, bringing infinite wisdom. The Serpent-goddess occupied the famous Kmer temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia where she embraced the king every night." (*Woman's Encyclopedia*, p. 903).

In *Of Woman Born* (Norton, New York, 1986, p. 100), Adrienne Rich writes: "The tree in leaf is not phallic; it is a female symbol; it 'bears, transforms, nourishes; its leaves, branches, twigs are contained in it and dependent on it'; it is inhabited by its own spirit, which it also contains." See "The Black Goddess" in Section VI. Any Freudian-derived male/female polarities are questionable especially when it comes to the deep past.

17. For more on triangular composition, see "The Composition of the Magic Battle at Altamira" in *Prehistoric Cave Paintings*, and "The Space Conception of Prehistory" in *The Eternal Present*.

18. See Walker's entries on "Triangle" and "Trinity" in *Woman's Encyclopedia*.

19. See "The New Maiden and the Eland" in Lewis-Williams' *Believing and Seeing: Symbolic Meanings in Southern San Rock Paintings* (Academic Press, London, 1981).

20. Sandor Ferenczi, *Thalassa*, The Psychoanalytic Quarterly, Inc., Albany, 1938. Ferenczi defines "amphimixis" on p. 9 as "the synthesis of two or more eroticisms in a higher unity."

21. *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, p. 64. More recently, Paul Bahn has written: "Many of the finest of these carvings have been found in the Pyrénées, and none finer than the intact spearthrower from Le Mas d'Azil with its image of a young ibex which stands, turning its head to the right and looking back to where two birds are perched on what seems to be an enormous turd emerging from its rear end; this composition is all the more startling because of the almost identical specimen found a few years later at Bedeilhac, a few miles away—this one had lost its shaft, and the ibex is kneeling, and turns its head to the left, but otherwise is identical in all respects. Broken specimens have also been tentatively identified from other sites in and near the Pyrénées,

with the result that up to ten examples are known; if one allows for preservation, recovery, recognition and publication, it becomes obvious that these must represent a tiny fraction of the scores—perhaps hundreds—originally produced" (*Journey Through the Ice Age*, University of California Press, 1977, pp. 96-97).

22. In an earlier version of this essay, I had used as epigraph a passage from a letter written by Artaud to Henri Parisot, from the asylum at Rodez, on October 6, 1945. While pondering what he calls "the harmonies of the generative tone," in certain poems by Baudelaire, Artaud envisions a "shaft" in which ensouling is involved with fecality and death. Such relates in an eerie way to the Shaft Scene at Lascaux. Artaud writes: "Such harmonies are a shaft in which the uterine hunger of the soul mourns a love that has not been born, in which the fecality of the supernatural body of the soul writhes to death because it has not been born. This century no longer understands fecal poetry, the intestinal malady of Madame Death herself, who for ages has been sounding her dead woman's column, her dead woman's anal column, in the excrement of an abolished survival, in the corpse of her abolished selves as well, and who for the crime of not having been able to exist, for never having been able to be a creature, had to fall—the better to sound the depths of her own being—into this abyss of foul matter, so pleasantly foul indeed, in which the corpse of Madame Death, madame fecal uterine, madame anus, hell upon hell of excrement, foments hunger, the fecal destiny of her soul, in the uterus of her own foyer." The translation, to which I have made a few changes, is from *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (Farrar Straus Giroux, New York, 1976).

### A Small Cave

1. A cave a few kilometers west of Les Eyzies, discovered by Denis Peyrony in 1902, with a couple of dozen animals (including ten mammoths), dates as Middle-Late Magdalenian (around 12,000 B.P.). The most fascinating thing about Bernifal is the relatively large number of strokes, dots, tectiforms (tent-shaped designs), and lines that accompany the animal figures. There appear to be over a dozen tectiforms in Bernifal, with the exception of Font-de-Gaume, more than any other French cave.

## Interface II: "Fracture"

1. "The Death of Bill Evans," *Fracture*, Black Sparrow Press, 1983.
2. Reich's presentation of "cosmic superimposition" can be found in *Cosmic Superimposition* (Orgone Institute Press, Rangely, 1951). For a solid view of Reich's life and work see *Fury on Earth/A Biography of Wilhelm Reich* (Myron Sharaf, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1983).
3. *origin*, Second series, October 1961, p. 64.
4. *Novices: A Study of Poetic Apprenticeship*, as of 2002 a part of *Companion Spider* (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Conn.).
5. *The Dream and the Underworld*, p. 49.

## Visions of the Fathers of Lascaux

1. Several weeks after the accident previously described, Caryl and I had planned to spend a month in Germany, where readings and lectures had been arranged. I began to write this poem, leg in cast, sitting in the front seat next to my wife as she drove vast German autobahns from city to city. Goaded by the jolt of the accident and my phantasmagoric night in the wrecked car, I plunged into what I had dreamed of writing for years: a narrative of human genesis, tracing the roots of Western alienation to a primordial rupture in the natural continuum. I envisioned Lascaux as a wild creature that sought to defend itself against those imposing upon it their own form. Priming the walls with "menstrual effluvia," the Mothers signed the cave with female power, driving the Fathers to transform their own sexuality as they symbolically castrated Lascaux's geology.

Not only did it seem inadequate to merely describe Lascaux's paintings in such a poem, it also seemed superficial to describe the act of painting. So I tried to set up Chinese firecracker-like bursts of metaphoric interactions between the mythic figures and their image worlds-in-progress.

These mythic figures are part of a personal mythological constellation that goes back, in my writing, to the early 1960s in Kyoto when I read Blake and worked on Vallejo translations in a downtown coffeehouse called Yorunomado (in English: "night window"). I had decided that getting *Poemas humanos* into English was

to be my apprenticeship project, and because of the considerable difficulties in rendering these poems, I began to fantasize that I was in a life-death struggle with the spectre of Vallejo. I was trying to wrest his language away from him as if it were his food while he ferociously tried to thwart my thievery. Such work and fantasy led to the writing of the first poem that fully engaged and tested me: "The Book of Yorunomado" (*The Name Encanyoned River*, Black Sparrow Press, 1986). At the same time, inspired by Blake's mythic figures, I worked on a long poem to be called "The Tsuruginomiya Regeneration," with a cast of my own figures, including Yorunomado, Niemonjima, Mokpo, Origin, and Coatlicue. I abandoned this long poem finally as unresolvable, and included a few sections of it, with these figures, in *Coils*.

For "Visions of the Fathers of Lascaux," I invented three new figures: Kashkaniraqmi's meaning is identified at the end of "Interface I: The Separation Continuum" in Section I. Atlementheneira is a word given to me by Charles Olson in a dream ("Poem Copied from Text Written in a Dream," *What She Means*, Black Sparrow Press, 1978). Savolathersilonighcock appeared spontaneously in the poem's first draft.

## Magdalenian

1. The first Upper Paleolithic statuette to be found, around 1864, the so-called "shameless Venus" from Laugerie Basse (Dordogne), is a little over three inches tall. Never precisely dated, she is probably Middle/Late Magdalenian, and is carved from mammoth tusk.

## "Tiresias drinking, on his hands . . ."

1. Colin Tudge (*The Time Before History*, Touchstone, New York, 1996, p. 49) writes: "By the time of the mid-Permian, around 265 million years ago, almost all of the land of the world was joined into one huge continent known as Pangaea — 'All Earth' . . . Pangaea was hook-shaped; and within the eye of the hook was the then giant sea known as Tethys. Modern-day Africa lay to the bottom of the hook; modern-day Europe lay to the top of it." See Tudge's pages 49–53 for drawings showing the shift of land masses to their present positions.



## Notes on a Visit to Le Tuc d'Audoubert

1. Le Tuc d'Audoubert is a Middle to Late Magdalenian cave in the French Ariège, near St.-Girons, and one of three caves that make up the group known as the Volp caves (the Volp being an underground river which emerges near the entrance to Le Tuc d'Audoubert). The other two caves are Les Trois Frères, and Enlène (with no wall imagery but more than a thousand small engraved plaquettes). A 90-foot tunnel connects Les Trois Frères and Enlène; while the end of Le Tuc d'Audoubert overlaps a Les Trois Frères passageway, the caves appear to have never been open to each other. Privately owned, the Volp caves have been protected against thoughtless exploration and destruction. They were discovered in 1912 by Count Henri Béguen and his three sons (Les Trois Frères being named for the three brothers). The Count's grandson, Robert, is currently in charge of the Volp caves.

While Caryl's and my six-hour visit was unexpected (a chance phone call to Jean Clottes in Foix leading to an invitation to join Clottes, Robert Béguen, and several students who had spent the summer excavating a midden outside the cave), I had been reading what I

Historic visit to Le Tuc d'Audoubert in 1912. Count Béguen is second from the left; his son Jacques is in front of him; the other two brothers, Louis and Max, are sitting on the rock to the right. All are at the mouth of the Volp where it emerges from the cave.

could find on the cave. I had some notions about what I would see when, in rubber-raft units of two, we floated off on the underground Volp to the cave's interior shore to begin our 800-yard, mostly crawling, ascent. We emerged at midnight. I slept a few hours, awaking in the giddy, image-filled trance that over the years I have learned to trust as an ignition point for a piece of writing. I was so excited that the "note" jumped back and forth from prose to poetry several times per page. About two-thirds of the way through what is now the finished piece (with the words "image pressure"), my mind went blank and I stopped writing. Upon reaching this point while typing up the "Notes" several months later, the earlier charge returned and everything flowed without revision to the end.

After finishing these "Notes"—a mix of poetry, prose, paragraphs, and visual "punctuation"—I recalled that Northrup Frye had referred to Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" as an *anatomy*, suggesting

that it was a composite work that included as its "members" various forms and strategies of the art of writing. Such a term also evokes the writing that Artaud did beginning in 1945: a fusion of genres incorporating letters, poetry, prose, and glossolalia.

In the mid-1990s, I realized that "Notes on a Visit to Le Tuc d'Audoubert" was the nuclear form for a book that would become an amplification of its multiple genres.

In the "Notes," the cave diagram is from *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, p. 366; the drawing of the "fantastic figures" is by the Abbé Breuil, and is reproduced in *Les Cavernes du Volp*, Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris, 1958, p. 89; the other drawings are my own, done while writing the "Notes."

2. "Theater of Cruelty," a translation of Artaud's proposed name for a revolutionary theater.

3. In *Les Cavernes du Volp*, Bégouën and Breuil describe these "fantastic figures" in the following words: "The left side of this gallery contains several strange engravings: two fantastic animals, half-feline, half-bull, one above the other, of which one cannot make out the hindquarters. The upper figure has a horrible head, with a single short horn flanked by a large ear behind it. Its narrow neck supports a large head with animated contours, a prominent and rounded muzzle, and an open mouth. Its withers are very convex; its vertically striped head and body, and its slender, long foreleg, end in long, retractile claws. The lower figure has been reduced to a grotesque head, topped by two little ears. I think that we have here the Guardians of the Sanctuary."

4. See pp. 176–178 for details on these two figures.

5. An association between the "fantastic figures" and the sacred king with his tanist (or deputy) is discussed in Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* (Noonday Press, New York, 1969, pp. 125–126).

6. This phrase came to me spontaneously upon seeing the "fantastic figures." I then realized that my phrase was a spin-off of Mikhail Bakhtin's "grotesque realism," discussed in his Introduction to *Rabelais and His World* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1968—all of the Bakhtin material here comes from this Introduction). According to Bakhtin, the word "grotesque" appeared at the end of the fifteenth century in descriptions of certain Roman ornaments excavated from Titus's baths (which were in grottos, implying that these ornaments were an expression of the grotto itself). While the word initially

referred to the fanciful interplay of plant, animal, and human forms (which often seemed to be giving birth to each other), the classical canon soon relegated "the grotesque" to the barbarous, associating it not only with playful energies, but with the alien, the illegitimate, the bestial, and with humankind's infantile and "primitive" past. By defining the carnivalesque atmosphere in Rabelais as "grotesque realism," Bakhtin not only rehabilitated the word but suggested the extent to which it has permeated all the stages of historical antiquity.

While there are elements in common between the medieval, classical, and primordial grotesques, none of the historical terms express what I intend by "the grotesque archetype." As a way of approaching a definition, I want to consider some observations that Jung—the originator of the twentieth-century use of the term "archetype"—made about these primary psychic structures.

Jung differentiates between "archetypal" and "archetype," writing that "archetypal representations (images and ideas) mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are varied structures which all point back to one essentially 'irrepresentable' basic form . . . The archetype as such is a psychoid factor that belongs, as it were, to the invisible, ultra-violet end of the psychic spectrum" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 8, para. 417). Comments by North Kimberly (Australian) aborigines to Geza Róheim seem to anticipate Jung's approach: "The natives say they do not make the *wondjina* figures but only repaint them. The figures themselves are called *wondjina made themselves*. They are self-created." (*The Gates of the Dream*, International Universities Press, New York, 1979, p. 107.)

I would propose that hybrid images, arrived at perhaps via shamanic trance stimulated in part by cave environments, are grotesque archetypal representations of somatic (until then unrecognized) materials. Another possibility involves the so-called "mythical times" when man and animal were one (or as some historical shamans put it, when man and animal spoke the same language). These "mythical times," undoubtedly populated by infant sensations and childhood repressions, could represent Jung's "essentially 'irrepresentable' basic form."

Commenting on Michael Maier's alchemical journals (specifically his 1617 *Symbola aureae mensae*), Jung speaks of Maier

approaching that region of the psyche which was not unjustly said to be inhabited by "Pans, Satyrs, dog-headed baboons, and half-men." It is not difficult to see that this region is the animal soul in man. For just as a man has a body which is no different in principle from that of an animal, so also his psychology has a whole series of lower stories in which the spectres from humanity's past epochs still dwell, then the animal souls from age of Pithecanthropus and the hominids, then the "psyche" of the cold-blooded saurians, and, deepest of all, the transcendental mystery and paradox of the sympathetic and parasymphathetic psychoid processes. (Vol. 14, para. 279.) Here we have an active, vertical midden image of the personal unconscious down through the collective unconscious, based on evolutionary scale. One might conclude that "animal souls" began to intermingle with nascent human souls when Cro-Magnons projected and drew/engraved animal and hybrid images.

I would call the grotesque archetype primary, for it does not appear to be a reaction against or a development of earlier systems, as do the classical and medieval grotesques (again, in another sense, the Aurignacians seem to have the floor). Among its elements might be a coming into being at the point that meandering lines curve into enclosures that in turn evoke animal or hominid or animal/hominid bodies. Its character seems most pronounced when images apparently based on perception and images apparently based on mental activity combine. This relationship between perception and fantasy seems to us ambivalent, unbalanced, and often undifferentiated. Examples of what I consider to be the grotesque archetype often seem to invoke the unknown or to subdue something threatening. They are sometimes simultaneously "empty" (probably because they lack background or landscape) and "full" (due to superimposition or figures seen through each other). Isolated lines, or realistic animals (the clay bison at Le Tuc d'Audoubert, for example) are at best tangential to the grotesque archetype.

I should note that Bakhtin mentions something he calls the "archaic grotesque," which he associates with "the ever unfinished, every creating body, the link in the chain of genetic development, or more correctly speaking, two links shown at the point where they enter into each other." The sense of a body exceeding its own limits comes from Bakhtin's thinking about Rabelais here,

and he does not cite specific instances of an archaic grotesque. But his notion of open, intersecting bodies can be applied to a significant number of Upper Paleolithic images, such as some of the human figurations at Combarelles, the "bison-women" at Pech-Merle, and the "wounded" figures in Cougnac.

7. By implication, an argument against Leroi-Gourhan's concept of the "ideal sanctuary," which assumes that the Upper Paleolithic caves that he studied—less than half of the ones known at the time—were laid out, imagewise, on an all-over plan, with certain animals juxtaposed in the "central portion," others in "side portions," still others in *cul-de-sacs* and at the supposed cave entrances. It should be noted here that Leroi-Gourhan acknowledges (on p. 366 of *Treasures of Prehistoric Art*) that he personally did not visit any of the Volp caves, and that his comments on *Les Trois Frères* and *Le Tuc d'Audoubert* are based on the Abbé Breuil's publications on them (he does not describe the Enlène plaquettes).

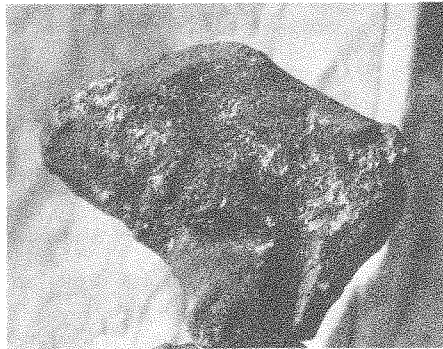
8. The sculptor Bruce Beasley visited Le Tuc d'Audoubert on two occasions in 1984 specifically to examine the clay bison. His observations are detailed and worth considering because here we have a sculptor looking at sculpture, approaching it from a combined viewpoint of craft and aesthetics ("Les bisons d'argile de la grotte du Tuc d'Audoubert," *Bulletin de la Société Préhistorique Ariège-Pyrénées*, Tome XLI, 1986, pp. 23–30).

Beasley finds it unlikely that the upper bison is mounting the lower one in a mating position because there is no curved flexing of the spine; nor are the forelegs of the upper bison projected forward (at an angle different from standing). While the upper bison is clearly above and behind the lower one, Beasley argues that given its downward-pointing front and rear legs and straight spine, this bison is in a standing position.

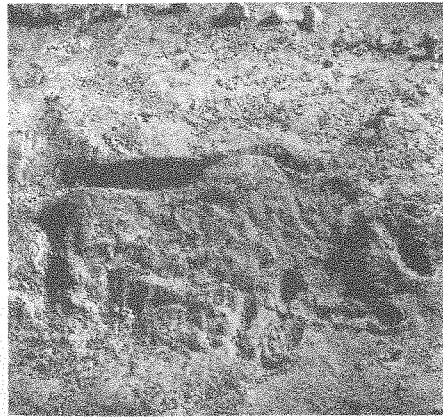
It should be pointed out here that the upper bison has convex eyes and the lower one concave eyes, a fact mentioned to our group by Robert Bégouën, leading him to identify the upper bison as male, the lower one as female. If one respects the possible gender implications of the eye modeling (Beasley does not acknowledge it), one can also conjecture that a male and female bison were sculpted out of cave floor clay and placed against a stone outcropping in such a position to evoke a mating.

Beasley also does not comment on the fifty or so heelprints probably made by adolescents near the bison. These prints are deep enough in the floor to suggest agitated movement, such as dancing. They may represent a ritual response to the bison (in contrast to the movements made by sculptors while doing their work). A ritual interpretation of the heelprints supports in interpretation of the bison that includes symbolic copulation.

Beasley also should have mentioned that behind the stone supporting the two bison (each 24 inches long) a crudely carved statuette of a 5-inch-long bison was



Le Tuc d'Audoubert. Small clay bison.



Le Tuc d'Audoubert. Small unfinished bison in the cave floor.

found, and that, nearby, in the floor, there is a partially sketched, partially modeled fourth bison, about 5 inches long. If one thinks of the small bison as potential offsprings of the large ones, such also supports a symbolic copulation interpretation.

Several sausage-shaped pieces of clay in a nearby area have often been interpreted as phalluses. Beasley suggests that these shapes result from testing the clay's plasticity, pointing out the palm lines and fingerprints on them.

### A Kind of Moisture on the Wall

1. Besides the running, partial human figure (whose body may have been struck by three lances, or, in a shamanistic interpretation, may be projecting lines of power), there is, inside the body outline of the same Cougnac megaloceros (a male, now solidly dated at 19,500 B.P.), a small legless stag, a complete ibex, and what appears to be the dorsal line of a bison or horse. These four figures are placed in what might be called trapezoidal alignment. To my knowledge, they have not been dated, meaning that they could have been painted earlier or later than the megaloceros.

### Through Breuil's Eyes

1. The title echoes Olson's "On First Looking out through Juan de la Cosa's Eyes," which echoes Keats' sonnet, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer."

Henri Breuil (1877-1961), an ordained priest who never took up parish duties, became aware of prehistoric "art" in 1897 while traveling in the Dordogne and the Ariège; almost immediately he determined to dedicate his life to the study of what was then called "the Reindeer Age." In 1901, with others, he discovered the imagery in Combarelles and Font-de-Gaume, and the following year examined Altamira and Marsoulas. Such discovery and exploration led him to the work that he will mainly be remembered for: the tracings, drawings, and watercolors of cave imagery, especially in Combarelles, Altamira, and Les Trois Frères (see *Les Cavernes du Volp* for his exceptional drawings of Les Trois Frères engravings, which are mainly the source for this poem).

John E. Pfeiffer writes: "No one before or since has looked at cave walls as long and intensively as he did; only seasoned investigators can appreciate fully what Breuil achieved." Not only did Breuil have to distinguish between cracked, scratched surfaces and human lines but, as in the case of Les Trois Frères, among "numerous figures enmeshed in an incredible snarl of lines, a maze of animals and abstract forms superimposed, interlocking, and crammed together in all positions." His fortitude and perseverance were remarkable: "During one of his visits to Altamira, Breuil painted eight hours a day for three weeks, doubled up in crawlspaces lit by candles, lying on sacks stuffed with ferns, making watercolor copies of the animals on the ceiling of the Great Hall . . . From 1900 through 1956, he spent a total of more than 700 days in 73 caves." (*The Creative Explosion*, pp. 33-33.)

The reader might not be aware that there is a big difference between the time Breuil was able to spend in such caves as Les Trois Frères, and the time that someone such as myself is allowed today. As a tourist in the 1970s, I simply went in with groups, and was given only seconds in many instances to look at images (during which time the local guide would be lecturing, a well-intended offering that mainly acted as a distraction from careful looking). Privately arranged visits in the 1980s, mainly to caves in the Ariège, allowed a little more viewing time, but I was never alone (with one exception, and then in the dark with nothing to look at), and the guide who had been in the cave many times was always waiting by my side to press on. While Caryll and I have been in Lascaux seven times, we always had to respect the 45-minute limit placed on all visits (making it impossible to even begin to inspect the most heavily engraved area of the cave, the Apse). Barbara MacLeod's 48 hours in a Mayan cave was a dream visit, enabling her to experience cave darkness in a way that no one who visited the caves under conditions that I did could hope for.

Breuil also worked out the first comprehensive chronological divisions of Upper Paleolithic art, adding the early Aurignacian culture to the already postulated Perigordian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian periods. His theoretical work, much of which has been challenged beginning with the 1950s/60s work of Leroi-Gourhan, was based on assumptions that cave "art" was characterized by an orderly and monolithic development of

stylistic change, with an increase in complexity leading to decadence in its final stages. Under all his theory was an absolute reliance on hunting magic to explain the presence of the "art." Breuil also worked in England, Romania, South Africa, China, and Ethiopia. For many years, he has been referred to as "the father of prehistory." Some sense of his lifework can be gleaned from *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art* (Centre d'études et de documentation préhistoriques, Montignac, 1952). A biography by Alan Houghton Broderick, *Father of Prehistory* (William Morrow, New York), appeared in 1963.

2. See "Did the Ancients Have Wisdom," in Shuttle and Redgrove's *The Wise Wound* (Penguin, London, 1980) for some of the lore upon which this stanza draws.

### Placements II: "The Aranea Constellation"

1. Fulcanelli, *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, Neville Spearman, London, 1971, p.48.

2. "Shanidar IV, A Neanderthal Flower Burial in Northern Iraq," p. 880.

3. Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1960, #303, "The Soul selects her own Society—."

4. For commentary on Chufin, El Castillo, and La Pasiega, see Ann Sieveking, *The Cave Artists* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1979, p. 177); for Pech Merle (the Combel section), La Pasiega, and El Castillo, see *The Eternal Present*, pp. 191, 214-215, and 244.

5. See "Hybrid Resonance," Section V, for detailed commentary on some of the Trois Frères and Gabillou figures.

6. *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, p. 48.

7. *The Hidden Order of Art*, pp. 35-37.

8. *The Complete Posthumous Poetry*, p. 157.

9. *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, pp. 2-3.

10. *Dreamtime*, pp. 42-43.

11. Arthur Rimbaud/*Collected Poems*, Penguin, 1986, p. 6. For a fascinating meditation on "I is someone else," see *Dreamtime*, pp. 74-75.

12. *Classics Revisited*, New Directions, New York, 1986, p. 197.

13. *Letter to André Breton*.

14. *Dreamtime*, p. 64. See Barbara G. Walker's *The*



avoid plunging into the lowest state—the State of Ulro in which one is simply, unimaginatively, stuck with oneself—one must practice a sort of imaginative androgyny called art. While Brown does not appear to include cave art in his discussion of the labyrinth, I should point that he ultimately views coitus as a fallen metaphor for poetry.

Were Blake alive today, I am confident that he would make the connection I am about to make: The womb that cannot be returned to à la Ferenczi was imaginatively reentered when Cro-Magnon crawled into a cave and drew, painted, or sculpted an image. I conjecture that one stimulation for this going into the cave was orgasm itself, which flooded the mind with fantasy material that demanded a fulfillment beyond mundane concerns. Image-making, then, can be seen as the attempt to unblock the paradoxical male impasse of genital expression, or, in my poem, it is what the belling deer image “says” to its Cro-Magnon maker, on his back in that cul-de-sac in Le Portel: “Image is / the imprint of uncontainable omega, / life’s twin.” In the same stanza, I attempted to draw upon the Freudian/Ferenczian theory of the sexual stages of development, working with the possibility that from childhood on, oral, anal, and genital formations are incorporated in image-making, which for the creative individual becomes a kind of fourth dimension (or State à la Blake) that includes the earlier three and pushes beyond.

Walker offers some fascinating speculation on “omega” in *The Crone*, pp. 80–81. She writes that the female genital symbol “was sacred to Kali, representing her Om or Word (Logos) of Creation. Her spouse Shiva performed his sexual dance within a horseshoe of fire, representing the cosmic yoni. The symbol passed into the Greek alphabet as the Crone’s letter, the horseshoe-shaped omega, which literally means ‘great Om.’”

“Image” sounds “imago,” zoologically “an insect in its final adult, sexually mature, usually winged state.” It is on this basis that the conjunction of wall, image, and artist is envisioned as a “butterfly” in “The Chaos of the Wise,” a poem which appears later in this section.

### Venusberg

1. Considered to be one of the sculptural masterpieces of this period (Middle/Late Magdalenian), this

broken reindeer-antler spear-thrower depicts, in the Abbé Breuil’s words, “two young ibexes playing and fighting one against the other.” It is my impression that they are bison, and were carved without heads as the width of the tine from which their torsos have been shaped narrows and allows no head room over the animals’ neck areas. Its width also determines the embraced position of the bodies. About 2½ inches tall, the piece was found in the tunnel between Les Trois Frères and Enlène by Count Bégouën. The animals’ bodies are covered with hatch marks, suggesting fur. Each has one foreleg pressed against the shoulder of the other. It also appears that both animals employ the haft of the spear-thrower as a sitting area: The one straddling it appears to be pushing the other back onto it.

2. These lines composed themselves in my mind after reading the following aphorism from “Reflections on Sin, Suffering, Hope and the True Way” in Franz Kafka’s *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* (Exact Change, Boston, 1991): “43. The hunting dogs are still romping in the yard, but the prey will not escape them, however it may be stampeding through the woods even now.”

3. Before quoting this passage from Tannhäuser, Duerr writes (*Dreamtime*, p. 19):

Even the bison horn, which the equally faceless Venus of Laussel holds in her right hand, may presage the horn of plenty of Mother Gaea, the horns of the goat Amalthea, from which issued nectar and ambrosia. Perhaps it is the same as the drinking horn once held in her left hand by an Iberian goddess of the lower world, whose name may have been Ataecina, and who was venerated in a grotto near the Straits of Gibraltar. She was bare-breasted and her head was veiled. Finally, the horn of the Venus from the Dordogne is reminiscent of the drinking horns offered by the Teutonic Valkyries to the warriors killed in battle, or of the beaker proffered to Tannhäuser by the Lady Venus.

(The other “faceless Venus” referred to at the beginning of the quotation is the Venus of Willendorf.)

### Gagarino, Avdeev, Willendorf

1. For photos of all the statuettes mentioned in the poem, see Henri Delporte’s *L’image de la femme dans l’art préhistorique* (Picard, Paris, 1993).

### The Chaos of the Wise

1. The title comes from Fulcanelli’s *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* (pp. 74, 131, and 155). In Fulcanelli’s view, the “occult Fountain, [a] powerful solvent, capable of penetrating every metal—gold in particular—and . . . of accomplishing the great task in its entirety” issues from “the Chaos of the Wise,” also called “Metallic chaos,” “in which all hidden secrets exist in potential.” I understand this term as an esoteric metaphor for the regenerative potential of the earth’s elements, specifically, in an Upper Paleolithic context, for the combination of stone, manganese, ochre, water, and the cave’s living dark that enabled the “great task” of image-making to occur.

2. “The Oath of the Abyss” is discussed by Kenneth Grant in several books. See “The Abyss,” Section VI.

### Neanderthal Skull

1. The source for these speculations on the differences between Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon life based on skull differences is a photo of the skull of the “Old Man” from Abri du Cro-Magnon, next to a Neanderthal skull from La Ferrassie, in Ian Tattersall’s *The Last Neanderthal* (Macmillan, New York, 1995, p. 85).

2. The implicit proposal here is that because Neanderthal appears not to have had the sophisticated weapons associated with Cro-Magnon people, he met the world more as prey than as predator, and was primarily a scavenger at carnivore-infested kill sites. Barbara Ehrenreich believes that the human compulsion for violence was stimulated by the blood rites performed to reenact terrifying experiences of being preyed upon by carnivores. See *Blood Rites* (Holt, New York, 1997).

### Some Fugal Lubrication

1. *The Ghost Dance*, pp. 414–416. LaBarre sees Cernunnos, the Celtic deer-horned Master of Animals, as a later variation on the antlered “Dancing Sorcerer” of Les Trois Frères.

2. Björn Kurtén (in *The Cave Bear Story*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1976, p. 83) writes:

During the years 1917 to 1921 Emil Bachler, of the

museum in St. Gallen, Switzerland, dug the Drachenloch Cave—one of the “Dragon Lairs”—near Vattis in the Tamina Valley. The cave, at an altitude of 7,335 feet above sea level, forms a deep tunnel running more than 200 feet into the cliff. The deposits in the cave turned out to contain an immense number of cave bear remains, including several well-preserved skulls and complete limb bones. At that elevation, the site would have been inaccessible during the glaciation; thus the bears must date from the interglacial, the time of early Neanderthal man in Europe.

Bachler’s finds included a kind of stone slab chest containing bear skulls, as well as a bear skull with a thigh bone twisted into position through its cheek. On the basis of these finds, along with the discovery at Wildenmannisloch (also in Switzerland) of bear skulls with limestone slabs resting on top of them, Bachler concluded, in 1940, that “the purposeful collection and arranged preservation of cave bear skulls and long bones behind dry walls (*Trockenmauren*) set up along the sides of the caves; and more especially, the hermetic sealing away of the skulls, either in crudely built stone cabinets, protected by slab coverings, or in repositories walled with flagging, allow no other conclusion . . . but that we have here to do with some sort of Bear Cult, specifically a Bone-offering Cult, inspired by the mystical thoughts and feelings of an Old Paleolithic population” (quoted in Joseph Campbell, *The Way of the Animal Powers*, Van Der Marck Editions, San Francisco, 1983, p. 5).

However, it turns out that Bachler delegated the digging to gangs of laborers, only showing up from time to time to inspect the foreman’s report and look at the finds. He kept no detailed records, made no photographs, and in the course of the excavation the stone chests were destroyed. The exception to this is a single photo taken by Bachler of the bear skull with a long bone pushed through its cheek. Bachler’s two sketches of the cave with its stratigraphic deposits, skulls, and bones, published in 1923 and 1940, differ significantly (Campbell publishes a drawing based on Bachler’s 1940 sketch and identifies it as based on Bachler’s “1920” sketch).

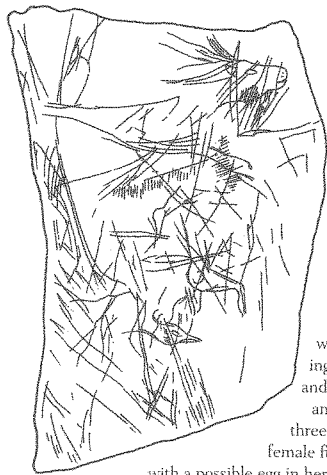
Both Kurtén and Tattersall offer their own explanations of natural processes to account for what Bachler interpreted as Neanderthal arrangements. Only Campbell finds Bachler’s work entirely credible, claiming

Abri Murat, Grotte Carriot, and Fontales (all in the Dordogne or Quercy). The 12-inch slab from Fontales is of particular interest: It contains three Roche Lalinde-like figures, a deer head and a bird head. One of the female figures has a relatively naturalistic leg (thigh, knee, and calf), a circle inside her buttocks, and an "X" scratched across her lower body.

All of the figures mentioned here are presented in drawings and photographs in Delporte's *L'Image de la femme dans l'art préhistorique*.

2. These last two lines are based on remarks by Buffie Johnson (in *Lady of the Beasts*, Harper & Row, 1981, pp. 16–17):

The Late Magdalenian figure engraved on a cave wall at Fontales . . . is not pregnant with a human child. She bears the Cosmic Egg, whose size and contour account for the exaggerated posterior of the Bird Goddess.



Fontales: Limestone plaquette with engravings of a deer and bird head, and probably three schematic female figures (one with a possible egg in her buttocks).

The egg-carrying figures . . . illustrate a concept of the deity as Bird-Goddess-Creatrix. We have a record of twenty-five thousand years, from the thirtieth to the fifty millennia B.C.E., in which the bird and the Goddess are fused. They express the idea of creation taking place from the Universal Egg laid by the deity. The Paleolithic origin of the Primordial Egg explains the "buttocks silhouette" or egg-carrying stance of the leaning figures found in art

throughout the Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Chalcolithic eras. . . . The primordial life substance, the germ of matter, grew inside [the Bird Goddess's] body until it no longer needed protection, and the universe burst forth.

Johnson cites in support of her Bird Goddess/Cosmic Egg idea (which appears to be based on a sole image), the bird-headed female drawn on the Pech Merle ceiling, the Roche Lalinde figures, a figure from Abri Murat, and a number of "Venus" statuettes with enlarged buttocks, in particular the Venus of Lespugue, "distinguished by egg-shaped haunches and a bird-like head and tail."

### Cave Art Theory

1. Margaret W. Conkey's "A Century of Paleolithic Cave Art" (*Archeology* 34, 1981) was helpful in organizing this.

2. Evidence for genuine antiquity made use of any or all of the following: parts of paintings covered over and sealed by layers of ancient calcite; objects or paintings covered by archeological deposits; depiction of long-extinct species; stylistic affinities with antlers and other organic surviving materials from which radiocarbon estimates (beginning in the 1950s) can be obtained.

3. See the four-page footnote in *Dreamtime*, pp. 180–184, for Duerr's objections to the hunting magic theory.

4. In "When the Beasts Go Marchin' Out! The End of Pleistocene Art in Cantabrian Spain" (*Beyond Art*, pp. 189–199), Manuel R. González Morales contests the reliability of assumptions based on the discrepancies between "the art and the faunal assemblages in the caves. . . . Since we have considerable changes in environment and in parietal art throughout the Upper Paleolithic, it is impossible to generalize about the total time span from a single moment, and *vice versa*." González Morales's point is strengthened by the recent solid datings in some caves that span thousands of years: It is possible that those who painted some or all of the images may not be the people who slaughtered the animals whose bones are found in middens near the cave.

5. I refer here to a low relief at Laussel, about 8 inches high, that appears to depict two figures, with a head above and a head below, mirroring each other, or,



Laussel: Double figure incised in rock.

in Paul Bahn's phrase, "resembling a playing-card." The most precise description of the figures, or figure, is still that of Dr. Lalanne, who excavated Laussel in 1908. He describes the possibly interlocked figures as follows:

One of the figures is a woman, recognizable by her large, pendulous breasts. . . . The belly is represented by a strong, central projection. . . . The thighs are raised. The arms extend the length of the body and the hands appear to be beneath the lower limbs. The second figure . . . is in an opposite position but symmetrical to the figure already described. Only

the chest is carefully sculpted; the rest of the body disappears beneath that of the woman. (*The Eternal Present*, p. 237.)

Conjectures by Giedion and others as to what is depicted include copulation, childbirth, a standing "Venus" figure making use of an earlier unfinished figure, an androgynous figure, two half figures joined at the waist, and a person standing waist deep in water.

Comparing Giedion's shadowed black and white photo with Bahn's smaller but color photo (presented, it appears, upside down in *Journey Through the Ice Age*,

p. 186), I feel that the best interpretation is copulation: a woman sitting, knees raised, on a man whose lower body is beneath hers and thus, in the relief, invisible. This interpretation is not without problems, as the lower figure consists of only a head and upper chest. But the lower figure's head is roughly the same size as the upper figure's, suggesting that it is not that of an infant being born.

In *The Gate of Horn*, Gertrude Levy reproduces Salomon Reinach's "restoration" of the relief, which converts the lower figure's head into "the remains of [the upper figure's] two legs ending in feet set together" (Plate VII, p. 60). While such a "revision" is not at all supported by the photographs, it is repeated by Leroi-Gourhan (*Treasures of Prehistoric Art*, p. 476).

6. *The Roots of Civilization*, p. 195.

7. *The Roots of Thinking*, p. 242.

8. See note 15 of the Introduction. With MacLeod's cave "entity" in mind, I note that one of the goals of sexual magic, according to Kenneth Grant, is that it aims to bring a person into conscious intercourse with "the entity behind the Veil."

9. I suspect that many reports similar to or sympathetic with MacLeod's could be collected from twentieth-century shamans. An example: "The medicine men of the Seri Indians, whose shamans had to spend days and nights in a dark cave without food or drink, in order to meet the spirit living there and thus be initiated, told ethnographers: 'If you undertake the journey into the sacred cave, you will never grow old the way other people do'" (*Dreamtime*, p. 19).

10. "The *nagual*,' the Indian Don Juan says to the ethnographer Castaneda, 'is the part of us for which there is no description—no words, no names, no feelings, no knowledge.' And just as the Tungus shaman who sees his 'animal nature' three times, at his birth, his 'initiatory death' and his real death, so the Indian avers that at the time of our birth 'we are all *nagual*,' but also at the hour of our death and at rare moments of our lives. Then we hear something 'like a voice that comes from the depths, the voice of the *nagual*.'" (*Dreamtime*, p. 66). Duerr had previously explained that the *fylgia* is "visible only to him who stepped across the dividing line [between culture and wilderness], entrusting himself to his 'second sight,'" and that the *chargi* is one's animal part "which lives out in the *taiga* in a lonely tree."

## Prolegomena

1. Golgonooza is William Blake's vision of the total form of creative acts, "the eternal reality of Everyman's existence," as Frye puts it (*Fearful Symmetry*, p. 248). Golgonooza is also Blake's city of imagination, his New Jerusalem, described as a visionary square fortress, with Northern, Eastern, Southern, and Western Gates, on Plates 12 and 13 of his poem, *Jerusalem*. Each gate in turn is fourfold, containing its own Ulro, Generation, Beulah, and Eden (Blake's levels of consciousness). Frye also identifies Golgonooza as "a huge machine shop or foundry, a vast crucible into which the whole physical world has to be thrown before the refined gold of the New Jerusalem can emerge from it." Artists are, in this sense, alchemists, attempting to transform the *nigredo* of experience into the Philosophic Stone of imagination.

2. Giedion discusses the discovery of the cupules at La Ferrassie on pp. 132-138 of *The Eternal Present*.

3. These two lines draw upon imagery from Plate 1 ("The Birth of Vishnu") in Erich Neumann's *The Origin and History of Consciousness* (Pantheon, 1964) and the image reproduced with the poem from Jung's *Collected Works*, Volume 12, p. 217. Jung writes:

We can hardly escape the feeling that the unconscious process moves spiral-wise round a centre, gradually getting closer, while the characteristics of the centre grow more and more distinct. Or perhaps we could put it the other way round and say that the centre—itsself virtually unknowable—acts like a magnet on the disparate materials and processes of the unconscious and gradually captures them as in a crystal lattice. For this reason the centre is often pictured as a spider in its web, especially when the conscious attitude is still dominated by fear of unconscious processes. But if the process is allowed to take its course, then the central symbol, constantly renewing itself, will steadily and consistently force its way through the apparent chaos of the personal psyche and its dramatic entanglements. . . . Accordingly we often find spiral representations of the centre, as for instance the serpent coiled round the creative point, the egg.

4. Peyrony quoted in translation in *The Eternal Present*, p. 135.

5. Here is a collage of materials all reflecting on what might be called "the chamber archetype."

Olson, from "Session #4—Sunday, February 15 [1953], in *Olson* #10:

THE CAVE: we shall never leave the cave, for it is next TOMB, then it is TEMPLE (with sybilline HOLE maintaining old chthonic religion), then HOUSE (when trade has made the urban revolution, as agriculture replaced the cave by the town), then CHURCH, and now, in the refusal of any of us any longer to admire the SKY-SCRAPER, we have that pseudo-cave, the WOMB, in place of that recognition which I have suggested will force itself more and more on men, that they, now, are literally CAVE—that the phrase that we are forced back on ourselves, has just such meaning.

Brown, from "Nature," in *Love's Body*:

The history of mankind goes from the natural cave to the artificial cave, from the underground cave to the aboveground underground. Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus are getting nowhere. The pyramid, with its winding corridors and labyrinthine galleries inside, is an artificial cave; the ziggurat an artificial or architectural mountain with spiral stairs on the outside. The megalithic maze at Stonehenge or Carnac is an alternative architectural embodiment of the same idea. The palace is a labyrinth. . . . The palace was the nucleus of the city: the Cretan cities, their archetype was the labyrinth. Troy, the archetypal city, is the archetypal maze. The spiral is the entrails; and the entrails are "the palace."

Ptolemy Tompkins writes (in *This Tree Grows Out of Hell*, Harper, San Francisco, 1990, p. 16) that "The Aztecs believed themselves to have come originally from a 'Place of Seven Caves,' and the enormous Pyramid of the Sun, the largest and earliest sacred structure at Teotihuacan in central Mexico, is centered directly upon a natural cave that the city's creators enlarged into a clover-shaped space before building the pyramid over it." There is a colored reproduction of the Place of Seven Caves, known in Nahuatl as Chicomoztoc, in *The Flayed God*, Harper, San Francisco, 1992, Plate 24. Its form is more of a tree than a clover, with seven small caves appearing like rounded branches. These small caves contain Chichimecs, skulls, crocodiles, and eagles, all poised to emerge from a cave that is also an egglike world tree.

Moving from Olson's abstract progression, in which natural cave via permutations finally translates into the cave of self, through Brown's more specific variations, to the mythic nucleus suggested by Chicomoztoc, caves can be viewed as core meanders sending out branch meanders that today include all *on*, *under*, and *above* earth human habitations.

For more on Chicomoztoc, see Doris Heyden's article "Cave Under Teotihuacan" in *American Antiquity* #40, 1975. "Every individual," she writes, "has his Chicomoztoc, his place of the 'good old days,' the place we would like to call home."

6. This line, and the one that ends the poem, comes from Chapter 1 of Blake's *Jerusalem*.

## A Phosphene Gauntlet

1. For a discussion of entoptic phenomena as they might pertain to Upper Paleolithic imagery, see "The Signs of All Times" (note 22, Introduction).

## Le Combet

1. A kind of cave within a cave, Le Combet is off to the right of Pech Merle's present-day entrance. Its walls and ceilings have clusters of red disks. There are two small chambers with fantasy-animal paintings, and a treelike stalagmitic formation (given female characteristics by red ochre and black manganese markings). See "The Black Goddess," Section VI. To my knowledge, only Giedion discusses Le Combet at length (*The Eternal Present*, pp. 214-216, 321-327).

2. Information on which this image is based comes from Alfred Mettraux's *Voodoo in Haiti*, quoted by Kenneth Grant in *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (Muller, London, 1973, p. 4). It makes sense to me that the speaking in tongues on the part of sorceresses may have originated in such rites.

3. John Lash, in *Twins and the Double* (Thames and Hudson, London, 1993, p. 94), defines "spagyric" as "the clash of whirling vortices that intersect and spill through each other, generating the perpetual tide-change of inner turmoil that occupies the 'inner space' within dense materiality." Jung occasionally uses the

word; for example, he proposes that the alchemist Gerard Dorn's saying "Make the fixed volatile and the volatile fixed" may lie at the root of "spagyric" (*Collected Works*), Volume 14, p. 481). Robert Fludd defines alchemy as "the spagyric art."

4. *Sexual Personae*, p. 75.

### Hybrid Resonance

1. *Dreamtime*, p. 46.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244. Also see Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism* (Bollingen Series LVII, Princeton, N.J., 1972, pp. 466–470) for commentary on shamans' horse-headed sticks, associated with ecstatic dancing and flying. In "The Paleolithic Caves" chapter of *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (Viking, 1959), Joseph Campbell quotes Geza Róheim on an Australian "lethal phallic rite" in which sorcerers draw a bone out from between their scrotum and rectum and then perform black magic on an enemy by "passing the magical bone just beside [his] penis."

3. "From *hubrizein*, 'lecherous behavior,' came the Roman word *hybrid*, describing a child of a Roman father and a foreign mother" (*The Woman's Encyclopedia*, p. 416).

4. See note 6 for "Notes on a Visit to Le Tuc d'Audoubert."

5. The grotesque as a category is indeed so broad that we find Montaigne describing his essays as "grotesques and monstrous bodies, pieced together of divers members, without definite shape, having no order, sequence, or proportion other than accidental." And Thomas Mann wrote: "The grotesque is that which is excessively true and excessively real, not that which is arbitrary, false, unreal, and absurd."

6. I have the middle head in the drawing by Monique and Claude Archambeau. Their drawing of the entire scene is to be found in "Undeterminate, Open," in Section V; it goes with the nineteenth section of the poem. See p. 31 for a photo of this head.

7. While Clottes and Lewis-Williams include photographs or drawings of five hybrid figures in *The Shamans of Prehistory*, these images are mixed in with animals, hominids, hand negatives, cupules, claviforms, dots, rectangular signs, footprints, and rolls of clay in such a way that they lose their distinctiveness. They

become just more examples of images made during the three stages of trance that are claimed to provide "a framework for an understanding of shamanic experience" (p. 19), which, it is pervasively implied, is behind Upper Paleolithic "art."

Sadly too, some of these figures are presented out of context. The entire left half of the Shaft Scene in Lascaux is left out. The one bison-headed hominid from Les Trois Frères who is included is presented in a "cleaned-up" version: All the lines crossing his body that, in effect, wire him into the surrounding action—hundreds of animals—have been eliminated, as has the hybrid animal bounding away from while looking back at him. Clottes and Lewis-Williams's commentary on such figures is restricted to photo captions.

8. *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*, p. 176. See p. 7 for a photo of Breuil's drawing.

9. Breuil's drawings, based on tracings, of the engraved panels containing the two bison-headed hominids are reproduced in both *Les Cavernes du Volp* and *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*. According to Clottes, these drawings are for the most part very accurate. The hybrids are but two of hundreds of figures of animals, animal parts, and meandering lines that make up twelve panels along the lower part of the walls in this bell-shaped "sanctuary." The "Dancing Sorcerer" is up about 12 feet from the floor, more bent forward than often depicted in book illustrations. His high position suggests that he presides, as a Master of Animals, over the animal plethora below him. Unlike the two bison-headed hominids, however, he is not directly part of the action, and may have been placed where he is long before or after the engravings below.

There are two bears among the engravings, and one (with blood spurting from its mouth, its body covered with tiny circles and arrowlike "V"s) resembles in certain ways the clay bear statue in Montespan.

For an up-to-date reassessment of the cave, see "Les Trois Frères after Breuil," by Robert Bégouën and Clottes, *Antiquity* 61, 1987.

10. Jean Gaussen, *La Grotte Ornée de Gabillou*, Delmas, Bordeaux, 1964.

11. *Ibid.*, planche #43 (photo), planche #5 (drawing).

12. *Ibid.*, planche #54 (photo), planche #18 (drawing).

13. *Ibid.*, planche #69 (photo), planche #35 (drawing).

14. The quotations in this paragraph are from LaBarre's Introduction to *Muelos*, and Chapters One and Three.

15. An image that might be used to directly support ur-bone cult thinking is a bone fragment from Raymond (blown up on p. 107 of *The Roots of Civilization*), with the engraving of a bison head attached to its spinal column, with two of its legs placed before its head. This image is flanked on each side by three and four extremely schematic hominids. It is possible too that animal regeneration could be intended by engraving images of intact animals on the bones of slaughtered ones. But this would be a considerable variation on LaBarre's thesis.

In *The Last Neanderthal*, p. 152, Tattersall recounts some of Lewis Binford's findings at Combe Grenal in southwestern France that could bear on LaBarre's *muelos* speculations. Binford claims to have discovered two distinct areas, one typified by ashy deposits where small fires once burned. In another area, carbonized sediments indicated fires of a very high temperature. Associated with the first area were simple tools made of local stone, splintered marrow bones, and cranial fragments from medium-sized animals. Associated with the second "hotter" area were scrapers made from materials only available at some distance from Combe Grenal, along with the ends of marrow bones of horses and pigs from the same distant areas. Binford conjectured that the ashy deposit areas were occupied by females who cooked plant materials over small fires. He proposed that males may have eaten the fleshy parts of animals where they caught them and brought home only the heads and marrow bones, which required very hot fires to release their fat contents. Combe Grenal is Neanderthal. If something like this scenario did take place, the tastiness alone of the marrow might have justified the portage, and such a male focus on marrow could have led to its association with semen. Conkey and Tringham detect "sexist archeological complicity" in Binford's sex/gender attributions here, and attack his conclusions in a footnote to "Archeology and the Goddess," in *Feminisms in the Academy*, pp. 234–235. I also wonder how Binford knew that the marrow bones were not local.

16. See Erik Trinkhaus and Pat Shipman, *The Neanderthals*, Knopf, 1993, pp. 253–258; *The Last Neanderthal*, p. 101; Bruce Dickson, *The Dawn of Belief*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1990, pp. 151–152.

17. "The long period of intense cold around the peak of the next-to-last glacial (about 180,000 to 130,000 years ago) is when we first encounter human fossils that appear without a doubt to be Neanderthal in preserved features" (*The Last Neanderthal*, p. 139).

18. *The Neanderthals*, p. 169.

19. Previously I commented on the possible copulation/childbirth relief sculpture at Laussel (which I read as copulation). Several of the human figurations at Combarelles could also express copulation, but like all images that can be possibly read as copulatory—such as the sculptural frieze at La Chaire à Calvin with two superimposed horses, the sketchy sexually gesturing figures at Los Casares, and several plaquettes from Enlène with ambiguous sexual superimpositions and gestures—they are indeterminate. This may in fact be the most striking thing about Upper Paleolithic eroticism: that, according to the images we have, it was ambiguous and disconnected, with body parts—especially genitalia—floating free or shifting about in a nonanatomical way. Such images look messy and groping to us. It is possible that for Cro-Magnon people their bodies consisted of disconnected parts and processes, with undefined boundaries between "inside" and "outside." There may not yet have been a unity of consciousness, or a center, in terms of the body as a discrete, composite unit. Were this to be so, it would not mean that there was no sense of unity present. Rather, such a soul center might have been similar to what Castenada's Don Juan called "the voice that comes from the depths, the voice of the nagual." Such a voice, or calling, may have initially presented itself as a "depth" in the depths of caves and there have been experienced, and expressed, as a charged space between animals and human beings, energized by ambivalences involving separation and dependence. Such might help account for the indeterminate, partial images of the human—and their rarity and grotesqueness—in contrast to the often complete (at least in profile) and observationally accurate images of animals. Whatever sense of unity, or soul, Cro-Magnon people participated in must have been weighed and formed by their distance from and closeness to animals.

20. Timothy Taylor, in *The Prehistory of Sex* (Bantam, 1996, p. 108), reports that large deposits of borage or star flower were recently discovered "at the Doura cave site in Syria, dated 100,000–40,000 B.P." Borage is

today used to alleviate premenstrual syndrome and is also considered to be an aphrodisiac. Taylor proposes that medicinal plants—including contraceptives, abortifacients, and emmenagogues—were used “in prehistory and possibly throughout our evolutionary emergence.” Although, as one would imagine, the evidence is scanty, Taylor’s proposal makes sense to me. Such speculation is supported by what we now know of the knowledge of the medicinal and hallucinogenic properties of local flora on the part of indigenous people. It is complex and deep; much of it is still off the Western scientific “scale.”

Plants are depicted in Upper Paleolithic imagery but rarely so, and with no apparent healing or hallucinogenic connection. For example, among the 400 or so signs in Lascaux, several are of lianas, creepers, or long branching stems. To my knowledge, none of these plants—or those that occasionally appear in conjunction with animals, birds, fish, and hominids on engraved portable objects—have been botanically identified.

There is some speculation on the part of such scholars as Weston LaBarre, David Lewis-Williams, T. A. Dowson, and Paul Devereux, that hallucinogenic plants were used in the Upper Paleolithic. LaBarre, for example, writes: “There is another reason to suggest Mesolithic (even Paleolithic) antiquity, since the base culture of the American Indian, is essentially Paleo-Mesolithic in horizon; and Boas long ago noted that the base religion everywhere in the New World was shamanism.” (“Hallucinogens and the Shamanic Origins of Religion,” in *Flesh of the Gods*, Praeger, New York, 1972, p. 270).

The earliest solid evidence that I know of hallucinogenic plants that may have been employed for cultural use is Mesolithic: red bean seeds found at the lowest strata of human occupation in a northern Mexican site (Bonfire Shelter) at roughly 8500 B.C. (Paul Devereux, *The Long Trip*, Penguin, 1997, p. 107). This is of course in the New World and not directly relevant to Europe. In response to my query concerning Upper Paleolithic hallucinogenic plants, Dale Pendell (author of *Pharmako Poieia*, Mercury House, San Francisco, 1995) wrote to me: “The cave itself is enough even without any psychotropic plants. I would guess that *Amanita muscaria* would have been common in southwestern France during the cool periods, along with conifers and perhaps birch. . . . I think that the nightshades were probably much more important than is generally recog-

nized. Any food-gathering people would come across them.”

As in the case of medicinal plants, it would certainly make sense that hallucinogens, if they existed then, would have been discovered by Cro-Magnon people. What is strange is that, given the significant instances of proto-shamanic imagery, there are no plant image alignments that scholars have been able to identify, let alone contextualize, as hallucinogen related.

21. *Shamanism*, p. 380. See also pp. 141–149 of *Gods and Myths of the Viking Age* for more material on Odin as shaman.

22. Shamanistic horse materials might include the horse (or wolf) tail aspect of the “Dancing Sorcerer”; the dotted, clearly unrealistic horses in Pech-Merle; the horse between the little chamois-robed hybrid figures on a staff from Abri Mège; the possibly horse-tailed sorcerer (wearing vague antlers and holding up a strange creature to his mouth) from a plaquette found in Espéluques; and the blowing horse head whose neck is crossed by a vulva from Abri Cellier.

23. Henri Frankfort (quoted by James Hillman in “The Animal Kingdom in the Human Dream,” 1982 *Eranos Yearbook*) writes: “We assume that the Egyptian interpreted the non-human as super-human, in particular when he saw it in animals—in their inarticulate wisdom, their certainty, their unhesitating achievement, and above all in their static reality. With animals the continual succession of generations brought no change. . . . They would appear to share . . . the fundamental nature of creation.”

24. *This Tree Grows Out of Hell*, p. 35.

### Indeterminate, Open

1. With two exceptions (sections 2 and 10), all of these short poems are based on Monique and Claude Archambeau’s photographs and drawings of some 50 “human figurations” in Combarelles, presented in “Les figurations humaines pariétales de la grotte des Combarelles,” *Gallia Préhistorique*, Tome 33, 1991. Their presentation (which I have followed, omitting certain figurations) follows the order in which one encounters the figures as one moves deeper and deeper into the cave. There is a photo of one of the “animal-snouted archai” on p. 31.

### Apse and Shaft

1. All of the figures and detailed information on the Apse in this essay come from *Lascaux inconnu* (Editions du CNRS, Paris, 1979), specifically the chapter “Le Passage de l’Abside,” pp. 191–301. This chapter contains many reproductions of the Abbé André Glory’s tracings and drawings of Lascaux’s engraved areas.

2. *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*, pp. 146–147.

3. *Love’s Body*, p. 252.

4. Annette Laming, *Lascaux*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, Md., 1959, p. 94.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

7. Mario Ruspoli, *The Cave of Lascaux*, Abrams, 1986, p. 29.

8. While studying the Shaft Scene in 1957, Glory reported discovering some new engravings near and in the painting: a large bovine head to the upper left of the rhinoceros’s head, a small bovine head above the bison’s tail, and a large horse head with its muzzle crossing the bison’s upper foreleg. These are documented on pp. 290–291 of *Lascaux inconnu*. In 1975, A. Leroi-Gourhan, B. Delluc, C. Delluc, D. Baffier, and J. Marsal reexamined the Shaft’s wall in an attempt to confirm or dispute these quite unusual findings. They were unable to find any evidence for the existence of such engravings.

9. Breuil’s biographer, Alan Houghton Brodrick, states that “His [the bird-headed man’s] neck is broken” (*Father of Prehistory*, p. 235). I presume that this is a comment by Breuil passed along to Brodrick. While the bird-headed part of the figure is angled backward a little, there is no real evidence for a broken neck.

10. Or simply beholding an induced vision. I am reminded of the relief sculpture on Lintel 25 at Yaxchilan (Chiapas, Mexico), dated 723 A.D. A huge, hallucinatory serpent rears up over an awestruck, crouching Lady Xoc, who apparently has just drawn blood by pulling a thorn-lined rope through her tongue. Here the vision appears to materialize from the blood itself. In both cases, the quester is surrounded by his or her parphenalia. See Schele and Miller’s *The Blood of Kings* (Kimbal Art Museum, Fort Worth, Tex., 1986, p. 199) for a photo of Lintel 25.

11. Davenport and Jochim (“The scene in the shaft at Lascaux,” *Antiquity* 62, 1988) point out that the bird-

headed man has four fingers on each hand. Such, in their view, makes these hands birdlike, since most birds have four digits (or toes). This is an interesting observation, but it should be noted that only the three forward digits splay forward like human fingers; the backward digit, high and stubby in walking birds (such as the Black Grouse or Capercaillie, to which Davenport and Jochim relate the man’s bird head), is not part of these fingerlike digits. Concerning the bird-headed man’s fingers: The left hand appears to have three fingers and a thumb—the right hand the same except that the first finger is detached. Neither of these hands strikes me as birdlike.

When they offer an interpretation of the Scene, Davenport and Jochim, like most interpreters before them, fail to address all the figures and objects involved. They don’t mention the rhinoceros. Their brief comment on the bison has it goring the bird-headed man, for which there is no evidence in the painting. To explain such a goring they cite “the close relation of the abandoned spear-thrower below the humanoid and the long, eviscerating spear.” Such tools and their proximity could be brought to bear on the bison’s fate, but they have nothing to do with the bison as the cause of the man’s death. To complicate matters further, at other places in their article, Davenport and Jochim treat the bird-headed man as not dead but in a shamanic trance.

12. *Lascaux, or The Birth of Art*, p. 111.

13. Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries*, Harper, 1960, pp. 220–221. With Lapland shamanism also in mind, Röheim writes: “The horse or bird carries the shaman to the other world but he may also invoke his own phallus. The ecstasy is phallic, the goal uterine” (*Gates of the Dream*, p. 160). If the wounded bison does represent an animal sacrificed by a shaman before beginning his performance, it is possible that this animal would appear to the shaman in vision, with its physical interior the goal of his flight. In this way, the shaman’s identification with the sacrificed animal would become complete and represent an overcoming of death that seems to be one of the key realizations of the shamanic calling.

14. *The Ghost Dance*, p. 425. In *On The Grotesque* (Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 62–63), Geoffrey Galt Harpham writes:

Women-bison, anthropomorphic figures, bull-men, sorcerers, and other metamorphic figures converge