

ORACULAR NATURE: ARNOLD'S ROMANTIC QUEST

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A primary value of myth criticism, understood as a study of literature's structural principles or archetypal framework, is that it encourages a search for coherence and meaning in the whole of a writer's work. Instead of examining the internal structure of any given work as a statement about the nature of things, one can also seek for the informing structure of, say, a poet's canon, and ask if that body of work can be understood as a comprehensive and unified statement. Thus, to take one example, recent critical approaches to Matthew Arnold's poetry have considered the poems as an imaginative whole possessed of a high degree of unity. A. Dwight Culler finds the ultimate source of the poems' unity in Arnold's poetic or imaginative world, a world which consists of "a symbolic landscape, a group of related figures, and the myth or history of their lives" (pp. 2-3).⁽¹⁾ The central feature of the landscape is a river which connects the three essentially distinct regions of the landscape: the Forest Glade, the Burning or Darkling Plain, and the Wide-Glimmering Sea. When the river is taken to denote historic time, the regions can be interpreted as representing the past, present, and future; when the river is considered as the River of Life, the regions correspondingly represent childhood, maturity, and old age or death (Culler, pp. 1-16). Hence the poems have a unifying principle in their imaginative landscape, and Arnold can direct this poetic cosmos to dramatize intellectual propositions, to examine man's relationship to life, and to explore

(1) *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold* (New Haven and London, 1966). Citations will appear in the text.

the nature of poetry and the poet's role.⁽²⁾

From speaking of Arnold's "imaginative landscape" or "poetic world" it is but a short verbal step to referring to Arnold's "myth." It is a significant step, however, for myth criticism implies more than a study of structural pattern. Since the language of myth is inherently metaphorical, it is a natural progression to explore the dimension of meaning which results from linking the archetypes or pattern of images of a body of work to a pattern of mental events and attitudes. This is to suggest that to approach Arnold's poems in terms of myth is to see that the informing structure of his poetry has to do with mental events: the informing structure is not simply a landscape, but a landscape which has meaning in mental or psychological terms.⁽³⁾ It is possible to perceive a pattern of mental strife in the poems which can be expressed in a number of corresponding oppositions: action/contemplation, commitment/detachment, public man/poet, Moses/Scholar-Gipsy, West/East, man/nature—all of which can be subsumed by the basic opposition of reason and imagination. In the realm of the Forest Glade—at one stage of man's or civilization's development—there is no tension because man exists in harmony with nature. And for Arnold, it was Wordsworth who was preeminently the poet of the harmonious glade. In *Memorial Verses*, he praises Wordsworth's power to put by man's mortal destiny and through the influence of his po-

(2) Alan Roper, *Arnold's Poetic Landscapes* (Baltimore, 1969), cautions against the dangers of reductive *oeuvre* criticism, yet his intent is also to "determine degrees of wholeness and coherence in Arnold's poems" (pp. 3, 17). As the title of his book reveals, Roper also finds a source of coherence in the variations of a poetic landscape, and his work essentially modifies and elaborates Culler's approach. Further citations of Roper will appear in the text.

(3) As Roper suggests, though speaking only of *Tristram and Iseult*: "The landscape provides external equivalents to inner qualities and moods and to human situations" (p. 167). Culler's description of the Burning Plain strongly suggests mental disharmony: "it is at once empty and terrifyingly full: the one thing that it is not is harmoniously unified. For whereas in the Forest Glade man was in union with God, nature, and his fellow man, he is here abandoned by God, divorced from nature, and alienated from his fellow man. What is more, he is alienated even from himself, as the symbol of the river makes clear" (p. 12).

etry to keep man at home in the glade :

He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease ;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again ;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd ; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world. (ll. 48-57)⁽⁴⁾

But Wordsworth has died, and no other poet will be able to put by man's destiny (ll. 69-70). Therein lies the root of the tension, for man's mortal destiny is to grow away from the glade, to grow away from a harmonious union with the natural world and to become an isolated creature on the Burning Plain. In his isolated and terrifying position on the plain, man tries to make sense of his condition through reason and thereby arrives at the fundamental opposition he recognizes in *A Summer Night* :

Is there no life, but these alone ?
Madman or slave, must man be one ? (ll. 74-75)

The answer is implied : man can only be a slave to passion or a slave to the world. Moreover, in his alienated condition, the man of reason perceives imagination to be an alien mental mode, and he thus experiences it as passion which is a threat to rational order. The poem which most explicitly deals with passion as a threat to man is *Tristram and Iseult*. Tristram and Iseult of Ireland quaffed a "spiced magic draught" which bound their souls as slaves to passion (I. 64-66). As a result, Tristram, "the peerless hunter, harper, knight" (I. 22), is

(4) All quotations of Arnold's poetry are from *Arnold: Poetical Works*, ed. C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), and line citations will be included in the text.

reduced to a "fever-wasted wight" (I. 107) caught in the fatal bands of an unmentionable love (I. 149-50). Throughout the poem the narrator acts as a moral guide. He points out that Tristram tried to replenish his dried-up spirits first by participating in King Arthur's heroic wars (I. 254-60) and then by meditating in the Forest Glade (I. 276-87). But, as the narrator concludes, the man who is obsessed by one desire can never regain primal harmony by altering his external environment. The Madman, the man who conceives a furious attachment to one goal or passion, has made an irreparable breach with all other aspects of his own nature (I. 288-93).

In the second section of the poem, the fever-wasted Tristram dies and Iseult of Ireland expires at his bedside. The moral comment is in the interplay of the coda the narrator imagines to be spoken by the hunter wrought in the tapestry and the narrator's response to this speech (II. 164-93). The tapestry-work hunter, paradoxically "rooted" in the midst of a scene of action in the "free green wood," is a figure comparable to Tristram before passion possessed him. In his innocence, the hunter misinterprets the scene: "' That knight's asleep, and at her prayer / That lady by the bed doth kneel'" (II. 180-81). The narrator urges the hunter to disregard the "cold," "unmoved" pair and to continue his hunt. The hunter's credulity and the narrator's hasty intervention both reveal the precarious nature of life in the Forest Glade: experience of the Darkling Plain can overwhelm innocence.

The coda of the third section, the "old-world Breton history" of Merlin and Vivian told by Iseult of Brittany to her children, is a further amplification of the basic theme. The narrator of the poem cancels out all possible beauty of the passion and in his moralizing denies Tristram any dignity:

And yet, I swear, it angers me to see
How this fool passion gulls men potently;
Being, in truth, but a diseased unrest,
And an unnatural overheat at best.

(III. 133-6)

The story of Merlin is thus revealed as yet another example of a man thralling himself to unwholesome desire. Vivian is "witching fair," and the "learned wight" forgets all his craft and foolishly submits himself to her command (III. 181-84). The consequence is severe, for in submission to passion Merlin becomes a less than conscious creature:

They sate them down together, and a sleep
Fell upon Merlin, more like death, so deep. (III. 213-14)

Merlin is enchanted—"a prisoner till the judgment day" (III. 222)—because he has given himself over to passion. Like Tristram, he has been reduced to less than human dignity by his submission; he has become a Madman, a slave to passion.⁽⁵⁾

If passion is dangerous to men like Tristram and Merlin, it presents a special danger to him who would be a poet. *The Strayed Reveller* presents a picture of a youth who strays from the realm of poetic quest to a desire for passion in its aspect of intoxication. Ulysses suspects that the Youth may have followed a divine bard and learned what Ulysses believes is the social function of poetry: to delight (and instruct, no doubt) the chiefs and people at banquet with songs of gods and heroes, war and arts. If so, Ulysses will hail and honor him (ll. 117-29). The Youth knows that the wise bards have a god-like ability to behold and sing (ll. 207-209), but with a great difference—mortal bards must pay the terrible price of labor and pain:

(5) Roper believes the effect of the final coda is to leave the love situation of Tristram and Iseult "faintly ridiculous." For Roper, the story depends upon the "old joke of January and May"; Merlin is made "sufficiently absurd to neutralize any feelings of pity or sympathy for him," and therefore the tale does not "provide a definitive commentary upon the main action" (p. 173). I cannot agree with any of these points. The story of how Vivian ensnared Merlin is an artful exemplum of the preceding story: Merlin, like Tristram, allowed one passion to dominate him, and for this Merlin forfeited his powers. Culler describes it rather more accurately as "the tale of one who thought he was wise but foolishly allowed himself to be enslaved by passion" (p. 149).

—such a price
 The Gods exact for song :
 To become what we sing. (ll. 232-34)

The Youth has found an easier way, however. He has turned aside on his way to the revels into Circe's palace and there has discovered the mysteries of intoxication. The "sweet fumes" from the "red, creaming liquor" of Circe's bowl allow a wild throng of images to sweep through his soul (ll. 1-6). In that state he is able to see

Without pain, without labour,
 Sometimes a wild-hair'd Maenad—
 Sometimes a Faun with torches—
 And sometimes, for a moment,
 Passing through the dark stems
 Flowing-robed, the beloved,
 The desired, the divine,
 Beloved Iacchus. (ll. 274-81)

But, significantly, Circe is the terrible female associated with the negative transformation of the male into a lower bestial state. (In *The New Sirens*, l. 56, there is a more explicitly ominous feminine threat in the "yon whitening bone-mounds" of the Sirens.) Her mysteries are those of drunkenness, which involve lowering an individual's level of consciousness, and thus they lead to dissolution. The Youth has succumbed: he does not want to pay the price of becoming a poet. He desires painless mental stimulation and hence thralls himself to intoxication just as Merlin bound himself through his passion for Vivien :

Ye fade, ye swim, ye waver before me—
 The cup again !

Faster, faster,
 O Circe, Goddess,
 Let the wild, thronging train,
 The bright procession

Of eddying forms,
Sweep through my soul! (ll. 290-97)⁽⁶⁾

Yet the assertion of reason as the guide to life is not the answer, especially since the source of the problem lies in the fragmentation of the mind. The desire for union with the life of All is fruitless if the conscious, rational mind is an isolating principle.⁽⁷⁾ This is the specific problem explored in *Empedocles on Etna*. In his early advice to Pausanias, Empedocles suggests that "Mind is the spell which governs earth and heaven" (I. ii. 27). However, this statement and his long lecture (I. ii. 77-426) are not his own philosophy, but are "offered to Pausanias as a view of the world, better than what he has, by means of which he can, if he will, descend into the cities and live a life more satisfactory than that which he now knows" (Culler, p. 164). The problem is more complex for Empedocles, and the intellectual predicament is summed up in the controlling image of man's soul as a mirror which wind-born spins, catching thousands of glimpses, but never seeing whole:

The Gods laugh in their sleeve
To watch man doubt and fear,

(6) Roper believes the poem presents the conditions for a positive creativity, and finds this contrast: "The revels of art, the consequences of the Circean cup, are solitary, creative, and painful. The revels of worship, from which the youth has strayed, are communal and painless" (p. 103). This is clearly not so: in the here perfectly fitting slang expression for intoxication, the Youth is "feeling no pain" in Circe's palace. The point about *where* the pain lies—the price of being a mortal bard and becoming what one then sings—is quite explicit. To Roper's hesitant admission that "it is difficult to avoid feeling that the intoxicating loss of self-control [the 'deep cup'] brings constitutes a tacit reproach" (pp. 99-100), I can only say "Yes indeed." Furthermore, I disagree with Culler about the sense of the title (p. 74). I find it no tautology to consider the Youth a reveller who has strayed from the revels into the extremely dangerous realm of the terrible Circe.

(7) See W. Stacy Johnson, *The Voices of Matthew Arnold: An Essay In Criticism* (New Haven, 1961), p. 114. As Roper remarks, the ideal state of being in union with nature is expressed in the songs of Callicles which "record a time when man was completely in harmony with nature" (p. 197).

Who knows not what to believe
 Since he sees nothing clear,
 And dares stamp nothing false where he finds nothing sure.
 (I. ii. 87-91)

Able to furnish an image of mental disharmony in his own song, Empedocles is also able to realize the essential truth in Callicles' song of the impetuous Typho who was undone through "curst treachery" (II. 37-88):

The brave, impetuous heart yields everywhere
 To the subtle, contriving head. (II. 90-91)

In his youth—that is, when he dwelt in the glade—it was otherwise, for then Empedocles could still enjoy: "neither thought / Nor outward things were closed and dead" to him (II. 240-41). In those days he had not yet lost his balance, he had not yet become thought's slave (II. 248-49). But that condition seems to belong to a far distant time of feeling (II. 283-87), for Empedocles has become

Nothing but a devouring flame of thought—
 But a naked, eternally restless mind! (II. 329-330)

To Empedocles, the desired state of existence is one in which we are able to

be true
 To our own only true, deep-buried selves,
 Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
 (II. 370-72)

but Empedocles now desires complete annihilation because he fears that yet again in the "sad probation" of life he might

once more fall away
 Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
 Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
 Forged by the imperious lonely thinking-power.
 (II. 373-76)

Again, the echoing question: Madman or slave, must man be one? Like Tristram and Merlin, Empedocles has been a slave—the slave of thought. His dignity lies in his awareness of his bondage.⁽⁸⁾

Reason, in fact, distorts its opposite, imagination, and makes it appear to the rational beholder as only negative passion. *The New Sirens* describes this process in terms of the historical degeneration of the sirens. The sirens have always been allurers of men, but at least in “that primal age” (l. 50) they were associated with the goal of a romance-quest, “the dragon-warder'd fountains / Where the springs of knowledge are” (ll. 33–34). Now, however, the modern Graces—the “false ones” (l. 39)—are intellectual lures which distract men from high aspirations:

‘Ah,’ you say; ‘the large appearance
Of man’s labour is but vain,
And we plead as staunch adherence
Due to pleasure as to pain.’ (ll. 57–60)

In the “primal age” rewards were greater because there was no intellectual distraction:

‘Come,’ you say, ‘the brain is seeking,
While the sovran heart is dead;
Yet this glean’d, when Gods were speaking,
Rarer secrets than the toiling head.’ (ll. 77–80)

Unhappily, in the course of historic time, rational man has made over the sirens in his own image (ll. 247–50), and they have thereby degenerated from being visions of beauty into a vain existence as trifling distracters of men (ll. 139–54). In this unpoetic and rational stance, man finds or invents barriers to any movement towards the feeling heart (ll. 187–90). The speaker could only accept the sirens as images

(8) Johnson, p. 112: “It is the philosopher’s dignity that he is aware ... of his own tendency toward an excessively dry and intellectual view that alienates him as much from his spontaneous self as from society.”

of beauty which beckoned the way to heart-felt and enduring truth under what reason knows to be impossible conditions: "if the dawning / Into daylight never grew" (ll. 105-106). But historical time progresses, the morning approaches, and the prosaic light of rational day precludes imagination:

In the pines the thrush is waking—
 Lo, yon orient hill in flames!
 Scores of true love knots are breaking
 At divorce which it proclaims. (ll. 259-62)

Reason finds poetic vision no longer possible. In the working out of this thought process, we observe the mechanics of imaginative degeneration. At the very time the speaker sighs "Yes, I muse!" (l. 105) in a resigned, wearied, and painfully ironic note, he is destroying the muses (or recording their transformation and devaluation, which comes to the same thing) and ensuring their "new" status of the sad refrain:

Pluck, pluck cypress, O pale maidens!
 Dusk the hall with yew! (ll. 275-76)

For the public man who finds himself on the Burning Plain—the age of alienation and mental fragmentation—one positive resolution is available: to make reason and the will of God prevail. One must embody radiant vigour, force, and strength, and work in the world to succor and guide those who falter in the difficult journey of life on the plain. One must become a shepherd, a Servant of God, who strives to marshall the dividing factions of a mankind which has been long in the wilderness. The resolve of the public man, as expressed in *Rugby Chapel*, is to become a Moses to one's despairing generation:

Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
 Strengthen the wavering line,
 Stablish, continue our march,
 On, to the bound of the waste,

On, to the City of God.

(ll. 204-208)

Wearing the mask of the public man, one's announced resolution is to make reason the and will of God prevail, but in the still unsilenced and cautioning voice of the poet there are strong and repeated hints that this public pose is not sufficient to the nature of man. *Written In Butler's Sermons* speaks of "man's one nature" as a "harmonious Whole" which men unravel (ll. 1-8), and the speaker of *Lines Written In Kensington Gardens* senses the "Calm soul of all things!" (l. 37). As the usual state of rational, public man is that of alienation from the soul of all things and from his own true nature, it is the poet who above all needs to seek the psychic or mental unity which will enable him to be in harmony with nature and his own soul.⁽⁹⁾ The speaker of *Buried Life* feels a "nameless sadness" because he realizes that although "The same heart beats in every human breast!", men are alien to others and to themselves (ll. 20-23). The river of life flows undiscerned in the deep recesses of man's heart, even though there often "rises an unspeakable desire / After the knowledge of our buried life" (ll. 47-48). The echoes from the "soul's subterranean depth" are "vague and forlorn" (ll. 72-73), yet at rare and valuable moments an epiphany is possible:

The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

(ll. 86-90)

(9) See Erik Frykman, "*Bitter Knowledge*" and "*Unconquerable Hope*" (Goteborg, 1966), pp. 53-55, on the theme of division/unity of mind. E. D. H. Johnson, *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry* (Princeton, 1952), p. 157, gives this description of the "essential conflict": "On the one hand, the world with its manifold claims exerts a centrifugal pressure on man's nature. This tendency towards fragmentation is counteracted, however, by a nucleus of individuality, the buried life which makes for unity, stability, and equilibrium."

The poetic resolution, then, is to seek for these moments of insight and harmony, to get at and to raise to consciousness the buried life. It is the poet—and only the poet—who can speak the unspeakable desire. The method and possibility of this poetic and healing quest are presented in *The Scholar-Gipsy* and *Thyrsis*. In the first stanza of *The Scholar-Gipsy*, the shepherd is urged to “again begin the quest” (l. 10); this injunction suggests the motif of the poem, which is the Scholar-Gipsy’s quest for mental powers. He leaves Oxford to roam with a gipsy-crew who

had arts to rule as they desired
 The workings of men’s brains,
 And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
 ‘And I,’ he said, ‘the secret of their art,
 When fully learn’d, will to the world impart;
 But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill.’ (ll. 45–50)

The Scholar-Gipsy’s quest can thus be seen to be a quest for an expanded consciousness or a unity of mind, and the “heaven-sent moments” are those when one is able to raise the buried life. The Scholar-Gipsy loves “retired ground” (l. 71), for the man of nature is “a solitary much given to communing with untamed nature, and who thus represents the potentially expanding and liberating elements in that nature.”⁽¹⁰⁾

In line 131, the speaker abruptly realizes that he dreams—two hundred years have passed since Glanvil wrote the story, and the Scholar-Gipsy must therefore have died. But with line 141 comes the reversal: the Scholar-Gipsy lives because he has avoided, through the unity of his life and quest, the shocks that wear out the lives of mortal men. He is immortal because he left the world of men with his powers undiverted, free from doubt (ll. 161–65). Since the Scholar-Gipsy was born in the days “Before this strange disease of modern

(10) Northrop Frye, “The Romantic Myth,” in *A Study of English Romanticism* (New York, 1968), p. 31.

life" (l. 203), he is urged to

Fly hence, our contact fear!

Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!

.....

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!

For strong the infection of our mental strife,

Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest.

(ll. 206-207, 221-23)

The goal and source of value is the "spark from heaven" (l. 171), the psychological or mental event which occurs in the Scholar-Gipsy's own consciousness. He is a solitary—indeed, here *urged* to flee human contact—who has rejected the social reality of the Burning Plain for the social ideal of the Forest Glade, which is a sense of identity with nature and the soul of all things. And that social ideal is an event in his own mind. The coda can thus be read as emphasizing the *means* by which the poetic quest is achieved, for surely the functional part of the long simile is the action it describes: the entire simile elaborates the injunction to the Scholar-Gipsy to "fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!" (l. 231). Fly, just as the grave Tyrian trader fled before the merry Grecian coaster with its young, light-hearted masters. The Tyrian trader's voyage "To where the Atlantic raves / Outside the western straits" (ll. 246-47) is the nautical equivalent of the Scholar-Gipsy's urged flight "deeper in the bowering wood." Thus to Roper's objection—"We do not know the secret of the gipsies' skill, nor the meaning and validity of the spark from heaven, nor the contents of the bales. If we did know the contents we would certainly, being what we are, prefer a good dinner of fish, figs and wine" (p. 223)—one can only say, Yes, that is precisely the point. Being what we are (public men), we would prefer the figs and wine. We may, of course, be many things, but whatever we are, to react in Roper's fashion clearly reveals that we are certainly not poets. The method of the poetic quest has been made explicitly clear, and the ultimate goal of self-realization is achieved only through detachment

from the soul-destroying division of the world.⁽¹¹⁾ In a nice reversal, the poet's detachment from division leads to unity—indeed, it is the only expressed way to gain unity. The poet needs detachment as much as the public man needs commitment.

The emphasis of *Thysis* is not on the method of the quest, but rather on the very possibility of the quest. The speaker, identified as a poet, is revisiting the Cumnor hills, a region associated with poetry, the Scholar-Gipsy, and the dead Thyrsis. Much has changed with the passage of time, and the speaker is uncertain about the continued existence of the emblematic tree:

That single elm-tree bright
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on. (ll. 26-30)

The significance of the signal elm is heightened when we learn that the speaker lost the pipe of poetry upon his entrance into the world of men (ll. 36-39). Thyrsis had also lost the pipe of poetry—or, at least, “his piping took a troubled sound”—before his death (ll. 48-50), and now the speaker feels compelled to carry out the Dorian rites “And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead” (l. 90). Even though Proserpine knows not of the Thames or the Cumnor hills, the mourner wishes to give his grief its hour and thereby find the “tree-topp'd hill” (ll. 98-103). Thus the speaker will attempt the quest, for if he is able to give grief its hour he will have fulfilled the quest in creating a poem and will thereby in effect have found the emblematic tree. But time has passed, things have changed, and the way is difficult (ll. 111-47). It is only when he repeats the Scholar-Gipsy's action—therein finding the method of the quest—that he attains his

(11) See Frykman, p. 58: “the ultimate goal seems clear enough—we can take it to be self-realization, achieved by detachment from soul-destroying division of occupations and of mind.”

goal:

Quick! let me fly, and cross
Into you farther field!—'Tis done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree! (ll. 156-60)

The tree is a "happy omen" (l. 166) because it reveals that the quest is possible, that poetry is possible, that the Scholar-Gipsy lives.⁽¹²⁾ The significance is that the Scholar-Gipsy "was a symbol of that abiding inward life which all men desire, and thus with the question about the tree the poet is no longer exploring the Cumnor hills but is exploring a region of the mind ... it is not so much a question of whether the tree is there as of whether he can see it. Essentially, it is a question of poetry" (Culler, p. 256). And the question has called forth a positive answer: one can still seek and find the "fugitive and gracious light he seeks" (l. 201); one can achieve unity of mind and harmony with nature; one can become a poet. The poetic quest is a still-possible course of life:

Roam on! The light we sought is shining still. (l. 238)

(12) Roper objects to the resolution because he believes it "depends upon a highly questionable metaphysics involving a fanciful association more expressive of feeling than thought and the arbitrary selection of one object from a literally rendered landscape as a symbolic sign. The poem's heart is stronger than its head" (p. 229). Again he touches on the main point: the poem's heart is stronger than its head. If man is not whole—if his mind is fragmented—on the Burning Plain of civilization, then there might well arise the *feeling* that physical nature (and man's feeling response to that nature) provides the missing complement of human nature. There is a restorative wisdom to be found in the sirens' cry that "Only, what we feel, we know" (*The New Sirens*, l. 84). Thence, in man's felt response, nature may be sensed as oracular, as capable of communicating the power of creation and of evoking a healing response to creation. In *Thyrsis*, the signal-elm, the "lone, sky-pointing tree" (l. 174), signals to him who will seek and see that nature is still oracular. See Frye's "The Romantic Myth," pp. 28-29, for a consideration of nature in these terms.