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THE CONSCIOUS GODS: A CRITICAL STUDY  
OF THE NOVELS OF GWEN MACEWEN

by  
Jane Kilpatrick

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies through the  
Department of English in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
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1972

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## ABSTRACT

In Julian the Magician and King of Egypt, King of Dreams, Gwen MacEwen attempts to celebrate the mythical and magical qualities of life so often neglected in the mechanized, technological twentieth century. Her mythic heroes, Julian and Akhenaton, are symbolic of the heights man can, and has achieved, in his efforts to develop a consciousness beyond the consciousness demanded by the routines of ordinary daily life.

The novelist has adapted both Christian and Egyptian traditional mythology as a structure for her novels. Such adaptation allows MacEwen a freedom to explore the development of her heroes as they move from a natural consciousness to a Divine consciousness, through their participation in the cyclical process inherent in mythology. This process takes the magician of the first novel, and the king of the second, beyond the rational, practical man, resulting in the celebration of life.

That the novelist senses a possible lack of response to heroes so unlike the heroes of her own society, is evidenced in the abundance of explanations superfluous to the actual stories she wants to tell. While such interpolations tend to hinder the progress of the reader in his attempts to understand the vision of the novels, their presence is understandable, given Gwen MacEwen's unusual vision for her particular

time and place.

This thesis is written, firstly to elucidate the vision contained in the novels, a vision understood through a critical study of magician and king as they move through the cyclical process of mythology, and secondly, to explicate the techniques employed by the novelist in her attempts to offer her vision of the mythical and magical qualities of life to her readers.

## INTRODUCTION

Critical study of the novels of Gwen MacEwen is limited. A scholarly article devoted to the alchemical and religious symbolism in Julian the Magician<sup>1</sup> by E. B. Gose sheds much light on the novel but over-simplifies the role of the magician, "Julian is imitating Christ,"<sup>2</sup> without illuminating the total vision of man's encounter with the Divine. The symbolism surrounding the magician is reduced to formula:

. . . the fact that Julian has his gypsy father's dark skin but blond "golden hair," and we realize an intended parallel. Just as Julian has a "dark" past (illegitimacy) but can have a golden future . . .<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the novelist in identifying her magician with Christ is an attempt to break with past interpretations of Christian symbolism, to present a deeper insight into the central myth of Western culture. The factual knowledge contained in the article is helpful in understanding alchemists generally, but does little to make the character of Julian come alive.

There have been no such studies exploring Gwen MacEwen's second novel, King of Egypt, King of Dreams.<sup>4</sup> Reviews by

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1 G. MacEwen, Julian the Magician (Toronto, 1963).

2 E. B. Gose, "They Shall Have Arcana," Canadian Literature 21: 36-25, p. 37.

3 Ibid.

4 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, (Toronto, 1971).



Randall Ware<sup>5</sup> and George Jonas<sup>6</sup> retell the novel to some extent but do so from a very subjective viewpoint. Ware is impressed that the novelist can make history "speak movingly and directly to our 24-frames-per-second cultural nodes"<sup>7</sup> without however, explaining his contemporary jargon. His praise of technique is naive, for his review intimates a simple story told in a simple way:

The story is written in a straight-forward manner, the prose is economical and clean, and we are mercifully spared the miasma of irrelevant historical data that so many novelists feel compelled to pour upon us. Here, the story's the thing.<sup>8</sup>

A reader approaching the novel from this perspective would be greatly shocked by the language of the novel. It is full of the ironical implications, of ambiguity and pun. Also, there is in the novel a surplus of historically based data, which is tiresome to the reader who would have a simple story for an evening's reading.

The Jonas review tends to do the reverse. Where Ware simplifies, Jonas complicates:

If Gwendolyn MacEwen's novel were a landscape it would be a jungle of startling colours and strange sounds, dense vegetation and humid silence. If it were a fruit it would be over-ripe. If it were a dream it would be haunting and vivid and one would try to rouse oneself from it. As a woman it would be dramatic and demanding,

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5 Randall Ware, "Sad Story of the Death of Kings," Books in Canada, November 1971.

6 George Jonas, "MacEwen's Monarch: King of Myth, King of Magic," Saturday Night 87: 36 January, 1972.

7 "Sad Story of the Death of Kings," p. 8.

8 Ibid., p. 9.

with lips too pale and eye shadow too black, a soft voice and razor-sharp fingernails.<sup>9</sup>

The inflated language of this review tends to put the reader off altogether. Cautioned that "a sip could be delicious, a gulp nauseating,"<sup>10</sup> the reader becomes confused as to the point of the review.

Both of these reviews misinterpret, in this reader's opinion, the stance MacEwen has taken with regard to the character of Ay. Ware calls him "one of the touchstones of [Akhenaton's] life,"<sup>11</sup> while Jonas says Ay's insights into the character of Akhenaton are positive and helpful.<sup>12</sup> The character of Ay is certainly helpful in interpreting MacEwen's vision with regard to Akhenaton, as will be shown in the first chapter of this thesis, but it is help from a negative source. Akhenaton is what Ay is not and can never be.

What is interpreted as positive in the reviews of this novel, is a very negative aspect in terms of Gwen MacEwen's expanding vision, discovered through an examination of both magician and king. While Ay's rationality and practicality might understandably appeal to readers, the novelist has made it her purpose to present to modern man an alternative approach to life, an alternative embodied in the conscious Gods of her novels, who are neither rational nor practical. A critical study of the expansion of vision contained in the two novels

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9 "MacEwen's Monarch," p. 36.

10 Ibid., p. 40.

11 "Sad Story of the Death of Kings," p. 8.

12 "MacEwen's Monarch," p. 40.

has not been undertaken and the complementary nature of their themes certainly points to the necessity for this, if the novels and their heroes are to be understood individually.

Interesting in the Gose article is the description of the magician, the novel, and finally the novelist herself, as "self-conscious,"<sup>13</sup> a description pointing to the very purpose of the novelist in her novels:

. . . I try, through my work, to recapture links with the Jungian consciousness, with the mythical and magical. . . since I feel man's only hope lies in these.<sup>14</sup>

The author's allusion to Jung indicates an extensive exploration of self. In his autobiographical Memories, Dreams, Reflections,<sup>15</sup> Jung states:

I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only circumambulation of the self.<sup>16</sup>

This self "connotes the totality of the psyche, embracing both consciousness and unconsciousness."<sup>17</sup> It was Jung's desire to understand the unconscious part of self, which led him to a study of alchemy, where he found those symbols which explained discoveries made concerning the unconscious:

His interpretation of the symbol content of medieval alchemical literature stems from his conviction that the conscious mind is based upon, and results from, an unconscious psyche which is prior to consciousness and continues to function together with, or despite consciousness.<sup>18</sup>

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13 "They Shall Have Arcana," p. 37.

14 A letter from the novelist to the writer.

15 G. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York, 1963).

16 Ibid., p. 196.

17 C. G. Jung, Psyche & Symbol, (New York, 1958), p. xxvii.

18 Ibid., p. xxviii.

Knowledge of conscious and unconscious self, or, Jungian "self-consciousness," is then, what the novelist seeks. She has chosen a magician through whom she too can trace the alchemical transformation in human terms, a magician who has served his apprenticeship with an alchemist. After the transformation of the unconscious self into conscious self has occurred, the transformed one is whole. The transformation is complex because "the unconscious is a process,"<sup>19</sup> compelling submission before one can claim its knowledge.

The process involved in the transformation of the unconscious into the conscious lies at the heart of the novels of Gwen MacEwen. To dramatize this process she uses the symbolisms of Gnosticism, Christianity, alchemy and ancient Egyptian monotheism. These symbols contribute pieces to the puzzle, which, when completed, comprise the whole man. They help to describe his confrontation with Divinity and the ensuing transformation into the microcosm who is conscious of his reflection of the macrocosm. Brought to such a place, the conscious man can do nothing more than celebrate what he is.

It is this celebrative quality in MacEwen's novels which has been overlooked, yet celebration is at the very core of her vision. She does not merely recreate what has been, (Christ through Julian, the first monotheistic king through Akhenaton); rather, she sees also that which enabled the prototypes of her fictional characters to leave so lasting a mark on human history. She seeks to dramatize creativity

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19 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 209.

through characters who bring fresh insight to man's encounter with the Divine.

Jung's exploration of the unconscious self compelled him to give in to the impulse to repeat an action he remembered doing as a child. Wondering about the significance of this repetition, he concluded, "I had no answer to my question, only that inner certainty that I was on the way to discovering my own myth."<sup>20</sup> Myth has been described as "the gossamer cloak of folk memory overlaying the bare bones of pre-history."<sup>21</sup> The concept of folk memory is equivalent to Jung's idea of a collective unconscious, which, when brought to consciousness, makes an individual whole or God-like. Since wholeness is the ultimate consequence of man's encounter with the Divine, the use of myth to express this state is most appropriate.

Within the mythic structure MacEwen creates characters in a certain time and place. Structure, narrative, setting, character development and language must be examined to determine their degree of correspondence to the vision in the novels. However, such an examination of the technical skill of Gwen MacEwen will be conducted in the spirit of Jung:

The categories of true and false are, of course, always present: but because they are not binding they take second place. The presence of thoughts is more important than our subjective judgment of them. But neither must these judgments be suppressed, for they also are existent thoughts which are part of our wholeness.<sup>22</sup>

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20 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, pp. 174-175.

21 E. Sykes, Dictionary of Non-Classical Mythology, (New York, 1968), p. vii.

22 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 298.

## CHAPTER ONE

Essential to the discovery of the vision of Gwen MacEwen is an understanding of her heroes, Julian the magician, and Akhenaton the king. The anthropological relationship between magician and king is to be found in their historical origins. In a discussion of primitive societies, J. G. Frazer indicates the initial correspondence of the two:

In early society the king is frequently a magician as well as a priest; indeed he appears to have often attained to power by virtue of his supposed proficiency in the black or white art.<sup>1</sup>

The evolutionary connection between magician and king provides a developing symbolism for the author when she explores man's encounter with the Divine, and the evolution of the whole man. The character of the magician affords Gwen MacEwen the exploration of the process which brings man to the transformation of Divine encounter; the character of the king allows her to explore ramifications of this transformation which are brought to light by his position of temporal power.

There is then, an expansion in vision which parallels the evolution of magician to king. The magician has the arduous task of reclaiming his Divine self before he can participate in the celebration of life. The king on the other hand, has only to realize himself as the son of God for the

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1 The Golden Bough (Toronto, 1970), pp. 13-14.

celebration to begin.

. . . turning himself towards the  
four corners of the world and  
saying "iao, iao, iao . . ."

iota, because the universe hath  
gone forth;

alpha, because it will turn itself  
back again;

omega, because the completion of  
all completeness will take place.

--from the Pistis Sophia

This epigraph to Julian the Magician<sup>2</sup> indicates the depths of the exploration made by the novelist into the process of wholeness. With it the author introduces the concept of Gnosticism:

Literally, the Gnostics were the "knowers." They claimed their secret esoteric knowledge was superior to that imparted through the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. They said man was saved, not by faith, but by knowledge - not knowledge in general, but specific knowledge of the Gnostic myth, which was essentially self-knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

The epigraph specifically refers to a third century gnostic work,<sup>4</sup> the portion quoted indicating the external process of the universe. The Greek letters, whose names are italicized, represent the ninth, first and last letters of this alphabet. Partial significance of the letters lies in their collective number, three:

Three symbolizes spiritual synthesis, and is the formula for the creation of each of the worlds. It

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2 G. MacEwen, Julian the Magician, Toronto, 1963.

3 A. K. Helmbold, The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Texts & The Bible (Michigan, 1967), p. 24.

4 Ibid., p. 66.

represents the solution of the conflict posed by dualism. . . . It is the number concerned with basic principles, and expresses sufficiency, or the growth of unity within itself.<sup>5</sup>

Unity, the enclosing of dualities, is at the heart of the epigraph.

Iota, the ninth letter of the greek alphabet, represents the small "i" of the English alphabet. Its individual numerical placement in the alphabet represents "the end-limit of the numerical series before its return to unity."<sup>6</sup> Since it is the first letter mentioned in the passage it suggests that this is the present state of things. Alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, has its numerical counterpart in one:

Symbolic of being and of the revelation to men of the spiritual essence. It is the active principle which, broken into fragments, gives rise to multiplicity, and is to be equated with the mystic Centre, the Irradiating Point and the Supreme Power.<sup>7</sup>

This heralds Julian's encounter with the Divine. Omega, the last letter of the Greek alphabet, is representative of the completion of the process of synthesis or unity. In terms of Gnosticism, the completion of the process indicates total self-knowledge.

Julian, as apprentice to an alchemist, discovers in fiction connections between alchemy and Gnosticism similar to those made by Carl Jung in his intensive study of alchemy:

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<sup>5</sup> J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (New York, 1962), p. 222.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 221.



. . . when I began to understand alchemy I realized that it represented the historical link with Gnosticism and that a continuity therefore existed between past and present. Grounded in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages, alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other, into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious.<sup>8</sup>

Jung's contact with Gnosticism and alchemy led to his formulation of the process of Individuation, which is also a description of man's attainment of wholeness or unity. The young magician, in his search for self-knowledge, makes these same discoveries:

. . . Boehme first, then back to Magnus in alchemy, Paracelsus and the rest. Alchemy began to bore him-- . . . He abandoned this line and fell into philosophy; emerged later sobered, but still dissatisfied. The human element wasn't there as he wished it. The human element. Myth. Folklore. Bible. Kabbala. The Gnostics. The mystical Christ, . . .<sup>9</sup>

The allusion to Boehme, who has been described as the "last of the great European mystics,"<sup>10</sup> is the first step into self for Julian. It is Boehme who first raises the possibility of the whole man for the magician:

The best treasure that a man can attain unto in this world is true knowledge; even the knowledge of himself; for man is the great mystery of God, the microcosm, or the complete abridgement of the whole universe: . . . to know whence he is, and what his temporal and eternal being and well-being are, must needs be that one necessary thing, to which all our chief study should aim . . .<sup>11</sup>

Boehme's chief study became that of the young magician.

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8 Memories, Dreams, Reflections (New York, 1963), p. 201.

9 Julian the Magician, p. 7.

10 J. Boehme, The Signature of all Things, (London, 1912), from the introduction by C. Bax, p. x.

11 Ibid., p. 3.

Dissatisfied with the superficial magic of his craft, Julian discovers the ultimate goal of alchemy to be similar to that of the mystic. Jung discusses the ultimate concern of the true alchemist:

The more serious alchemists realized that the purpose of their work was not the transmutation of base metals into gold, but the production of an aurum non vulgi ('not the common gold'), or aurum philosophicum ('philosophical gold'). In other words they were concerned with spiritual values and the problem of psychic transformation.<sup>12</sup>

This psychic transformation is complete in Julian when he becomes the "mystical Christ", but, while it is clear that MacEwen would have her magician identified with the "Nazarene,"<sup>13</sup> it is essential first that the reader witness the process which brings Julian to this end. This process is one of equation,<sup>14</sup> for Julian eventually equates himself with Christ, and through this equation comes to the knowledge of self, the aim of the Gnostic movement, which is the completeness referred to in the novel's epigraph.

In order for Julian to arrive at self-knowledge he must determine the true nature of his profession. Through a negative approach he comes to know, to some extent, what "magician" means when applied to him:

Ancient magicians had a fine time -- making the sun rise, inducing rain, assuring the appearance of the moon -- but now the duties were more varied and uncertain, success hinged on the more doubtful aspects of human credulity. If success did not come, the magic-maker could take it with delicacy and restraint, keeping a good eye on practicalities. Or he could double under the weight of his people's devotion if

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<sup>12</sup> Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 210, n. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

he were an unusually sincere magician with super-respect for his craft. And fear for its real power.<sup>15</sup>

Julian is not an ancient magician practicing his power over natural elements for the sake of a good harvest or more pleasant weather. Nor is he concerned with the practical rewards of his craft. The reader's introduction to this magician is one which makes his attitude toward the response of the people clear. After a particularly successful performance, "He'd had to slip out the back way to avoid that sea of bodies that was folding itself up onto the stage, ready to crush him with its love, its hideous worship."<sup>16</sup> He will not be crushed, nor will his head be turned by the more glamorous aspects of his profession. At a later performance, given in honour of a newly-married couple, Julian responds to the effusive praise given him with, "Fame is distasteful to me,"<sup>17</sup> a remark which immediately silences the man caught up in the awe of the magician.

While Julian does have respect for his craft, and a very real fear for the power he suspects might underly it, neither his respect nor his fear is so great as to incapacitate him in his search for self-knowledge. His Aunt Anya warns him to "keep to the essentials." Julian sees her as "a good woman -- but altogether too basic, too solid, unwilling to see any of the marginal horrors of his profession."<sup>18</sup> Julian cannot merely keep to the essentials.

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15 Julian the Magician, p. 6.

16 Ibid., p. 1.

17 Ibid., p. 21.

18 Ibid., p. 5.

His discoveries about the hidden elements of his craft are too compelling:

. . . the sorcerer's real art is obscured under the weight of action and reaction, play and response -- this he learned quickly enough. The art becomes the means of inducing the state of suspended logic -- whale on a thread, the teacher had said. The art was indirect, the magic a front, the art a frame.

'Yes, yes, yes . . . but the shadow of the greatest magician moves behind me, O, the shadow of the greatest magician moves behind me, . . .'<sup>19</sup>

The intimations of these thoughts and the curious circumstances of the baptism of the magician<sup>20</sup> are partially explained by a revelation which comes as a result of a fever the magician is subjected to: "A-ha! Alpha and Omega! That mystery is I, and I am that mystery. I am Alpha and Omega, the duality of existence, the attainment of completeness . . ."<sup>21</sup> At this point in the novel this knowledge is his, only unconsciously. It is the revelation of a feverish dream rather than reality, and the magician in waking hours, freed from the fever, is able to explain the strange pattern of his life only in terms of Boehme:

The lubet is the free will, soaring to black or white, the manifestation in man, nature . . . . Let the artist but consider . . . how he may awaken the dead and disappeared life which . . . lies hidden and captivated in the curse . . .; and if he does -- . . . and if he does but bring it so far, it works of itself . . .<sup>22</sup>

Julian is only vaguely aware of the mysterious source of the power underlying his craft. The reference to Boehme indicates

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19 Julian the Magician, p. 8.

20 Ibid., p. 13.

21 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

22 Ibid., p. 35.

the inability of the magician to formulate in his own mind the significance of the process thus far. He must still rely on those who have experienced the process and reached the goal of self-knowledge, for he is not yet to the place of firsthand knowledge.

The importance of the "lubet" is obscured in this passage which recounts Julian's first faltering steps on the journey in to self. The term, borrowed from Boehme, is clearly explained by his translator:

. . . lubet, from the Latin word lubitum, whereby is meant the divine beneplacitum, or good pleasure. By it is understood the origin to a desire in the eternal nothing, or pregnant magic, God's free will-liking to the desire of the manifestation of nature and creature, without which all had been an eternal stillness in the nothing. This lubet in man is the moving will to good or evil, light or darkness, love or anger.<sup>23</sup>

While the riverman, who has been cured by the magician, is convinced that Julian's power is "from the very God,"<sup>24</sup> the magician is not so confident of its source. He is only sure the power he has tapped is somehow working through him of its own accord. He made the initial step in calling it forth, by saying yes to the call to know himself, but more and more is he aware that its movement and development is no longer up to him.

The question of his possible Divinization becomes increasingly more important. When his disciple Peter timidly likens him to Christ, he receives an evasive answer:

The only christ-like thing about me is that I took my apprenticeship outside of my own country and Christ took his in Egypt where he acquired marvellous

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23 The Signature of all Things, p. 222

24 Julian the Magician, p. 36.

powers on which the Egyptians pride themselves . . . .  
 a wicked and God-hated sorcerer whose miracles were  
 wrought by magic not divine powers. Unquote -- Celsus.  
 Don't question what I am, boy . . .<sup>25</sup>

Julian's attempt to show the relationship between himself and Christ as a superficial one based on similarities of apprenticeship, and then to reduce the possibility of Divinity in any case by saying that even Christ was suspect to some, is unconvincing. It is an attempt by the magician to evade that knowledge of self which is his goal. The dream which precipitates his waterwalk<sup>26</sup> is followed by the resumption of the playful banter with young Peter,<sup>27</sup> but this too is a feeble means of denying his knowledge of self. His light-heartedness is temporary and ends with his awareness that "the innocence was robbed him again; he had to fill his place."<sup>28</sup>

Submission to what compels him to fill his place enables Julian to see clearly what he is:

. . . the magician is basically the sole conscious agent in the course of things. All the elemental laws come under his hand; he manipulates, he controls . . . he is the true forerunner of every science, every religion . . .<sup>29</sup>

His place, then, is at the source, the beginnings of things, before "the elements of magic were forked off into science and religion."<sup>30</sup> Of Boehme it is said " . . . he counsels men . . . that they should rediscover within themselves 'what

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25 Julian the Magician, p. 40.

26 Ibid., p. 41.

27 Ibid., pp. 42-43.

28 Ibid., p. 45.

29 Ibid., p. 47.

30 Ibid., p. 48.

was before nature and creature.'"<sup>31</sup> The goal of self-knowledge takes both magician and mystic back to these dark beginnings.

What the man of science, Philip Korowitch, brands as "trickery,"<sup>32</sup> the magician sees as "ambiguity."<sup>33</sup> His clarity of vision is such that he can see the parallel lines between magic and mysticism,<sup>34</sup> parallels which he sees are contained in himself. In explaining this ambiguity, Julian describes the relationship between magician and audience:

What I accomplish, hinges solely on what is already potent and existing in the minds of those I perform for. My audience creates me, sir -- over and over -- I do not tamper with their minds, I merely open them a little, I do not force belief, I let them believe what they will.<sup>35</sup>

Julian has come to the place where he realizes the importance of surrender, at least of his own conscious willing. He is allowing all things to happen, to his audience, to himself. Initially, Julian fights the imposition of Divinity upon his person, consciously and unconsciously: "I don't want to be divine. . . . I don't want them to make me divine . . . they force it . . ."<sup>36</sup> By the time he reaches the town where the riverman and the blind man reside, he ceases to fight, and accepts. This acceptance is manifested in his powers to induce the belief of those who would have him cure

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31 The Signature of all Things, p. x.

32 Julian the Magician, p. 48.

33 Ibid., p. 48.

34 Ibid., p. 49.

35 Ibid., p. 50.

36 Ibid., p. 30.

them. They believe and are cured.

The explanation for Julian's surrender can only be grasped in terms of the influences which have been working upon him. Boehme's mystical call to discover self, became Julian's goal. Wholeness is the end of this process of self-discovery, where the one contains the all. In Jungian philosophy the completion of this process, Individuation, is described in such a way as to clarify the magician's transformation:

The search for wholeness, for an integration of the personality, has been designated by Jung as the process of individuation. This process is twofold in that it comprises the spontaneously arising symbol to which he refers as the unifying symbol, and also an assimilation of its value and message into consciousness in terms of an understanding and of a responsible participation.<sup>37</sup>

Christ, then, is Julian's unifying symbol. Once the identification of himself with Christ is complete Julian can consciously participate in the fulfilment of the Christian prophecy:

Then his movements became almost automatic a replay, a pattern previously followed; there was a new deliberation in what he did; he knew.<sup>38</sup>

The night following the magician's work with the blind man is spent outside, "under a blanket of pine needles after eating nuts and wild berries like a true Essene."<sup>39</sup> This allusion to an offshoot of the Gnostic movement<sup>40</sup> signifies

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<sup>37</sup> Psyche & Symbol, ed., Violet S. de Laszlo, (New York, 1958), Introduction, p. xxvii.

<sup>38</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Vol. 2, p. 2.



the completion of the process of unification in the magician, for he has worked his way back to the pristine existence of the initiators of the search for self. His vision is crystal clear now. What was only unconscious intimation is now conscious knowledge and as such can be acted upon:

Boehme spoke of a silver sickness, Julian thought,-- well that's what the moon's got -- silver sickness, in which case it follows that it's the sky holding the moon up. Somehow this muddled him; there should be no ambiguity in nature, no bi-metaphor, one as valid as the other. So he settled down under the pine needles and directed his mind to a concept of unity, absolute unity.<sup>41</sup>

Julian's movement towards wholeness, the Jungian Individuation, a process which has occurred within him, is now projected out of the magician to what is beyond him. The natural world is but a larger magician. If the person of the magician is whole, complete within himself, then the seeming ambiguities of nature are only apparent and not real. Nature too is whole, complete, therefore one:

. . . all held silent communion; all were a part of; all tapped the latent elements of seed and death undertree, underroot. The world was a green cornucopia on God's banquet table, housing magician devilweed flower fruit horse and sparrow.<sup>42</sup>

The attainment of unity, the assimilation of the all into one, leaves the magician with nothing more to do than complete the Christian prophecy. In doing so he brings new insight into its rituals, for his is the wisdom of one who sees the unity of all things:

. . . the most magnificent deed of all -- Christ, a Jew, begging them to drink of his blood, begging

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41 Julian the Magician, pp. 58-59.

42 Ibid., p. 59.

them smash the law to splinters, letting them return to a natural religious cannibalism where they could eat him, drink him, take the body of the deity into their own bodies!<sup>43</sup>

The whole man sees the law as that which confines. He has entered a time where past and future have vanished. The present is a magic place where he, the mystical magician, is Divine:

The purpose of the mystic is the mightiest and most solemn that can ever be, for the central aim of all mysticism is to soar out of separate personality up to the very consciousness of God.<sup>44</sup>

The betrayal and subsequent trial follow naturally from this position of conscious Divinity, as does the crucifixion of the magician. Interesting though, is the magician's wisdom concerning the necessity of his death:

None of you . . . wants my death in return for the death of Ivan. You want it in return for the death of your own belief. Why do you think I came here in the first? to show you what your separate minds will not show you.<sup>45</sup>

He must suffer death, then, for allowing them to believe. The power of belief is astounding, for what is believed happens. Thread takes on the aspects of the camel and goes through the eye of a needle.<sup>46</sup> A blind man attains sight.<sup>47</sup> The magician becomes Christ.

That the people wish only for the vicarious experience of this vision rather than the firsthand one is explained by

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43 Julian the Magician, p. 72.

44 The Signature of all Things, p. ix.

45 Julian the Magician, p. 90.

46 Ibid., pp. 52-53.

47 Ibid., p. 55.

the tortuous ordeal the magician undergoes in order to attain it. His studies lead him to the confrontation of the unconscious part of his being, that part of self which is unknown and therefore frightening: "Unpopular, ambiguous and dangerous, it is a voyage of discovery to the other pole of the world."<sup>48</sup> In the introduction to the diary kept by the magician while undergoing the process of self-discovery it is said:

Here lie, ink on paper, the blood, brain and soul of Julian the Magician. While we read this, he bargains for his soul by producing red rabbits for Lucifer and several clay sparrows for an audience of angels.<sup>49</sup>

This reclamation of the unconscious side of self is a task which very few can undertake. The man of the audience, however, can only believe for a short time in the vision of him who has undertaken it. If he is to believe in it totally, he must make the task his task and attempt his own reclamation. Only then is the vision which comes from the knowledge of the unity of all things a complete and lasting one, one which can be acted upon.

Julian's task was to show his audience the possibility of the completion of the process of wholeness and its subsequent power. Once he had done this it was up to those left behind to fulfill their separate destinies and attain wholeness, or deny the vision, according to their own wills.

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48 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 189.

49 Julian the Magician, p. 109.

The Epilogue, which contains the magician's diary, is a first person narrative depicting the process of self-discovery, but as this has been shown through an examination of the initial chapters of the novel, intensive study of it is unnecessary. There is, however, contained in the last section of the diary, the most exhilarating account of the magician's newly acquired consciousness, the insight indicative of "the completion of all completeness"<sup>50</sup> described in the novel's epigraph:

That there is no knowledge is the Knowledge.  
 That the sperm on the wheel continues in the  
 wheel and is the sperm.  
 The river is its motion.  
 The ox is its function.  
 The eagle is its flight.  
 The man is his realization.  
 Pools of clarity and pull of elements.  
 Introspection from without.<sup>51</sup>

The man of self-knowledge sees the process of wholeness at work in the universe outside himself. There is nothing fixed, nor permanent, nor essential. Things merely are. With this discovery come the numerous possibilities for creativity. Man is not fixed nor definable in any one way. He is "his realization." Coupled with this knowledge is Julian's wisdom concerning the initial state of man: ". . . the unconscious agent of God's creative will. He pushes genesis."<sup>52</sup> The process of wholeness makes man the conscious agent. Once conscious he no longer pushes creativity (genesis), he is it.

Julian, in saying yes to the process of self-discovery,

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<sup>50</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

in ceasing to resist his destiny, undergoes the transformation of the unconscious into consciousness:

I have become a conscious agent; Have dipped  
into my own divinity and found it warm. And thus  
did I approach the conscious state of deity within  
myself, Julian the magician.  
I am therefore conscious God.<sup>53</sup>

At this point there are no rules, but more importantly, there are no goals. Julian the magician is the manifestation of the macrocosm in microcosm:

I am the IAO. The fingers must turn back into the  
hand; Julian the Magician who is Christ must complete  
Himself and enter the one knowledge which is death.  
And death is the Iao. . . .<sup>54</sup>

Here the magician is on the threshold of celebration. He moves forward joyfully.

The character of Akhenaton (Amenhotep the fourth, Wanre, Pharaoh of Egypt), is an extension of the magician Julian, an evolution in the discoveries made by the novelist through her magician's encounter with the Divine, as well as an evolution in the power of the magician which results in his becoming king. For this reason Akhenaton's confrontation with what is to eventually transform him comes much earlier in his life than in his predecessor's. Since the two stages of confrontation and transformation in the process of wholeness have been explored through the magician, MacEwen devotes the bulk of the second novel to the exploration of the consequences of Akhenaton's celebration. The conscious God is seen next to those who do not realize their Divinity, who see no cause for celebration.

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<sup>53</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 150.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

Because of his weakened physical condition, "the falling sickness, the shivering and vomiting disease, the noise in his head which only he could hear, the wild pulsating of his heart,"<sup>55</sup> Akhenaton's sick room was a darkened place where "Ra [the Sun God], in his absence was wholly present, and that painful sliver of light was a dividing knife of fire across his flesh (cutting him up, he claimed, for sacrifice)."<sup>56</sup> In the process of wholeness, which Julian participated in and eventually completed, the importance of belief was established. Whether or not the young prince was right in his claim to be marked for sacrifice by Ra is insignificant. Of greatest importance is his belief in Ra's interest in him:

He passed the time studying the painful little slit of sunlight across his belly, until he decided his body was a broken, alien thing, and he cursed Amon, Lord of the Gods, for creating him. When servants came to ask him if he wanted anything he used to cry, 'Light, give me light!' as a man lost for days in the desert might plead for water.<sup>57</sup>

During these agonizing times his mother would come and whisper his secret name, with remarkable effect:

'Neferkheprure,' 'Beautiful Are the Creations of Ra' -- and her salt-sweet breath was the burning nest of spices in which the bird of Ra was consumed, and the syllables would fall like petals of flowers onto his eyes, his ears . . .<sup>58</sup>

This magic of the sun increases for the young prince as he grows.

Physically inept, a life of solitude and inactivity

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55 King of Egypt, King of Dreams (Toronto, 1971) p. 1.

56 Ibid., pp. 1-2.

57 Ibid., p. 3.

58 Ibid.

affords this magic its cultivation. Akhenaton's studies become the key to solving the problem posed by Ra, as did the studies of Julian help in his encounter with Divinity:

. . . he mastered the problem of the area of a triangle at a very early age; later he could calculate the number of men needed to transport an obelisk of given dimensions, and the proportions of the ramp needed to lift it, with amazing speed. Still, mathematics bored him. He longed for knowledge of another kind.<sup>59</sup>

The knowledge for which he longed was that which "plunged to a depth beyond books and words,"<sup>60</sup> a desire so exasperating to his teachers that his mother was forced to put him in the charge of a special tutor.

In the teaching of Parennufer, Akhenaton found what would change his life. Confused by the many accounts of creation the boy wonders why it is not possible to say there is but one truth, since the many myths have at their hearts this one truth.<sup>61</sup> It is man's inability to express this one truth about his encounter with the Divine which becomes his prime concern:

He disliked mysteries and paradoxes; he even disliked simple diversities in food. (He once ate nothing but goose meat for a solid year, and when asked about it he replied that if something was good, then it was good enough.) Eventually his attention returned to the last part of the lesson, the part he disliked, the part that nevertheless fascinated him.<sup>62</sup>

The energy once directed toward food, in dealing with diversity, now has another focal point. The prince's fascination

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59 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 5

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid., p. 9.

62 Ibid., p. 10.

with the many conflicting stories of creation stems from his desire for unity. It becomes increasingly clear that his task is the task of the synthesizer. He is to be the instrument or conscious tool of God bringing the many to one. His response to the prophecy of the Priests of Opet, uttered by the blind seer,<sup>63</sup> indicates the extent of Akhenaton's insight despite his youth:

He knew that to be damned meant that one was feared. He also sensed the great secret of the priests -- that in predicting the future they helped to bring it about.<sup>64</sup>

It seems that he is born with the knowledge that his predecessor Julian had to work so hard to attain. The knowledge that he is feared by the priests of Opet is the knowledge of his possible power. The insight into prophecy indicates that this young prince has already discovered the power of belief. With this knowledge Akhenaton is ready to assume the role of unifier. He lacks but one thing to bring his spiritual pre-occupation into full force, the position of temporal power. The death of Amenhotep the Third<sup>65</sup> provides him with that position, which would enable him to leave a lasting mark upon his Kingdom.

The temporal position afforded Akhenaton parallels his spiritual role:

In accepting the weight of the Red and White Crowns, another weight had been lifted from him, and he shone with a secret triumph -- whether over the forces within or without, no one could say.<sup>66</sup>

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63 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 17.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid., p. 29.

66 Ibid., p. 34.



As Pharaoh of the two lands of Egypt, his role as King is to politically unite the two empires. His person is to be the focal point of allegiance for all peoples. Given such power is indeed a great weight lifted from him, for through his position as king it becomes possible for him to attempt the spiritual unification of the two lands.

The new king understands the urgency of his task. His sense of Divine purpose opens possibilities to him which were denied the Pharaohs of narrower vision who preceded him:

In the past, all kings of Keme were officially represented by the priests in their temples, but never themselves assumed the High Priesthood; they were themselves the offspring of Ra and were required only to offer to their divine father as dutiful sons. For Wanre to set himself up as First Prophet of Ra-Horakhte was an uncomfortable breach of tradition, and his advisors looked on askance, afraid to criticize his move lest, like a pregnant woman given a scare, he might let loose some dreadful hysteria.<sup>67</sup>

His actions indicate a growing awareness of the God whose presence was to unify Egypt. His daytime dreaming,<sup>68</sup> while not altogether understood by the king, becomes incorporated into the teaching of Ra.

His firsthand knowledge of Ra is not an easy thing to communicate to his followers. Still, his attempts to convey Ra's essence to those who will listen are persistent:

It was a long time before he could successfully explain the inexplicable or speak the unspeakable. The very nature of his vision was such that mere words could not convey it. For some months people were baffled by his meaning, and there were some around him who would never quite grasp what he was trying to say.<sup>69</sup>

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67 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 39.

68 Ibid., p. 40.

69 Ibid., p. 41.

In Gwen MacEwen's first novel it was established that the magician's purpose was to open the minds of his audience to possibilities of which they, as individuals, could not conceive. The King of Egypt, because of his position of temporal power can do more than show through personal example the effects of the encounter with the Divine. His political power parallels his spiritual power and he can subject those who are under his rule to the consequences of his discoveries made through communion with the Divine:

What confounded them always was the fact that finally the god had no form. The Disc contained the god but was not in itself the god. He tried to explain that the god was 'Lord of all that the Disc surrounds.' He asked of his pupils that they see the Invisible and became impatient with them when they could not.<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately, telling about his encounter proves no substitution for firsthand knowledge on the part of his subjects, and their attentiveness is partly deferential, partly obsequious.

To make more real his god of light and love, Akhenaton plans a city which is to be "the horizon of the Aton."<sup>71</sup> His clarity of vision with regard to his purpose as king, that of unifier, results, paradoxically, in blindness to matters of another sort:

He couldn't see how the city of No Amon rocked with the insult he was dealing it, for his new city would reduce it to the status of a mere provincial town. Blind, he couldn't see the obnoxious cloud which gathered over the capital, its origin in the burning offering-trays of Opet. He saw nothing. 'The sun,' mused Parennufer, 'is in his eyes.'<sup>72</sup>

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70 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 41.

71 Ibid., p. 44.

72 Ibid.

This blindness is an added dimension in MacEwen's fictional representation of man's encounter with the Divine. Julian's experience led him to believe he was to fulfil the Christian prophecy, and while this belief resulted in his death, he was not faced with the overwhelming responsibility of a king with regard to his vision. Akhenaton's celebration is an inclusive one. As king it is his task to manifest Ra's qualities to his people, so that they too may celebrate God's presence.

Interesting is the use of prophecy, and its effect upon the heroes of these novels. Julian saw his identification with Christ as his call to fulfill the Christian prophecy and in doing so attain the wholeness for which he longs. Akhenaton's experience with prophecy was a negative one, which he was able to turn to his advantage:

When a man lived beneath the shadow of a prophecy he had two choices -- he could either wilt like a flower and humbly await his death; or, he could fight the god by calling up some inner power and drawing upon a hitherto unused source of energy. Wanre twisted the secret threads of his will into a thick strand; he turned about and discovered a power in himself which most men did not need to find.<sup>73</sup>

This seems at first to contradict Julian's experience with prophecy since he did submit and "await his death." His submission, however, was to his unifying symbol, Christ, a submission making wholeness possible. Akhenaton also submits to his unifying symbol in order that wholeness may be completed in him. His symbol, that of the sun, the God Ra, gives him the strength to defy the powerful prophecy uttered

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<sup>73</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 48.

by the Priests of Opet. In defying them he strengthens his bond with Ra: "Does not the thought of death make us giants? . . . I swear I will be He Who Lives To Live Long. . . . Aton, [Ra], . . . will determine the length of my days."<sup>74</sup>

Akhenaton used the prophecy of Opet, which predicted his death in his fifth regnal year to make his communion with the god Ra complete. He believed; therefore, it came to pass:

The sun beat down upon his naked head and beneath the layer of his skull and toughed with fingers of fire the soft tissues of his brain. He covered his head and bent forward under a crown of pure light, and at that moment the god entered him. Something crashed against the wall of his vision and he felt he would faint. Just as he was about to fall, he saw it. Not the light, not even the Disc, but something within his own sense. A force terrible and miraculously silent.

It was the living centre of all things.<sup>75</sup>

The initial description of Akhenaton's confrontation with God parallels Julian's experience with the fever which was to reveal so much to him concerning his undiscovered self. At one point the magician tells his apprentice that the baptism is one of "water and fire."<sup>76</sup> As the confrontation with the Divine was to give Julian miraculous powers, so it is with Akhenaton. He is able, with this new power, to abort the attempt upon his life. An added dimension to the experiences of Divine encounter are the physical manifestations in Akhenaton which are tangible to others:

A temple servant saw him emerge from the sanctuary with a hesitant step like that of a man

<sup>74</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>76</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 26.

walking after a long illness or a child walking for the first time. He rushed forward to give him aid, but he was repelled by a kind of shield which surrounded the king's body -- a layer of pure heat or light, forbidding and untouchable.<sup>77</sup>

Amazing too, is Akhenaton's reaction to his would-be assassin: "He wondered why he suddenly loved the man who had come to kill him."<sup>78</sup> This relates to the King's discovery about death in his musings with the prophecy of Opet. In defying the priests and flaunting his success over them,<sup>79</sup> he was not denying death, only their right to predict when such an event would occur. His new name, incorporating the phrase, he "Who Lives To Live Long",<sup>80</sup> enforces the fact that he knows he one day will die. Merire, the man who had come to kill him, also serves to remind him of his death. While it may not be imminent, it will occur, and for this reason Akhenaton takes Merire into his court, that he may be reminded of his limited lifetime.

Such a reminder is necessary for one who is now a conscious God. As Julian attained his vision of unity and subsequently his own Divinity, through the process of wholeness, so too has Akhenaton. Julian's revelation, however, came near the end of his life, whereas Akhenaton's encounter with the Divine marks the beginning of his strenuous efforts to impose monotheism upon his unruly Kingdoms. During this time the affinity between himself and Ra is such that the king needs constantly to remember he is a manifestation of

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77 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 50.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid., p. 52.

80 Ibid., p. 54.

Ra, but in human, temporal form. While Ra shall endure for all time, he as Ra's King, will not. Hence Merire serves the urgency of his task to unite Egypt by reminding him he is God in human form and, as such, subject to death.

While Akhenaton's devotion to Ra obscures his clarity of vision with regard to temporal matters, it increases his power to understand the oneness of the polarities of human existence. In the building of his city he discovers that his God is more than love and light:

He did not enjoy the desert. It was mean, it taught him that the god could be ruthless as well as merciful, and the rays which gave tremulous life to green and growing things were the same rays which scorched human flesh and shrivelled the eyes.<sup>81</sup>

Ra then, possesses both positive and negative qualities which give rise to the King's ability to celebrate the seemingly harsher aspects of life. To the king the polarities are all a manifestation of Ra, and as such must be celebrated.

His vision of the unity of all things is a result of his direct encounter and identification with God. Those who have not had such experience cannot share his enthusiasm and are as blinded by the seeming dualities of temporal existence as he is by the sun:

There's nothing in my whole city which smells so foul as the Records Office . . . -- how I loathe history! Shelves full of dusty rolls of papyri, cabinets full of tablets I can't even read. It turns my stomach -- . . . why do men spend days recording their pitiful little problems, when they need only look up and witness the very majesty of creation.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 60.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

The Records Office is but one place which challenges the importance of Ra. As Akhenaton cannot understand the lack of rejoicing in everyday existence, those who have not had a firsthand encounter with the symbol which unifies cannot understand his lack of concern over matters which are so important to them.

It is not surprising then, that as his spiritual kingdom grows, his political kingdom declines:

. . . The balance of power is shifting almost daily,  
The provinces have become small turbulent seas; city  
states rebel or sell out to the enemy.

. . . . .  
There are the usual lies, slanders, secret coalitions,  
all the diseases which infect . . . a dying empire.<sup>83</sup>

The desire to unify his people through the worship of Ra has the paradoxical effect of disintegrating his empire. The inability of Akhenaton to realize his goal of a monotheistic Egypt intimates a further dimension in Gwen MacEwen's portrayal of man's encounter with his Divine self. Her King's identification with his God does not ensure the success of the goal of a united Egypt. Neither does it make him invulnerable physically. The overwhelming consequence of his transformation is his attempt to do what has never been done before. The conscious Akhenaton sees the possibility of a religiously united Egypt, something no other Pharaoh previous to him has seen. His failure to make his "Dreams" a reality is of little significance. The transformation makes it impossible for him to interpret life according to

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83 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, pp. 73-74.

the traditions of other rulers. As a result his dreams are original, his very own. Evidence of Ra is everywhere, invoking the celebration of the king.

The relationship between the king and his father-in-law, Ay, gives MacEwen a further opportunity to express her vision of unity. Seemingly opposite, these men have an enigmatic bond which is another instance of the enclosure of dualities. Ay's love for horses prompts his effusive praise of them:

They're so glamorous, so sensitive, so utterly unconcerned. They can be trained to strut their magnificence and go through all the required motions without a single serious thought as to what they do. They perform to perfection -- they're kings of ritual!<sup>84</sup>

The significance of this remark is its relationship to Akhenaton's physical appearance, which has been likened to that of a horse.<sup>85</sup> That he too is a king of ritual accounts for Wanre's frown<sup>86</sup> when Ay describes his horses in such a way. After hearing his father-in-law's remarks, Akhenaton declares him "Father of the Horse"<sup>87</sup> alluding both to Ay's relationship with actual horses and the possibility of Ay's relationship to himself. The possibility of Ay being Akhenaton's true father is brought out in his memoirs:

Tiy reminded me of another time, years later in the palace of Amenhotep when we had slept together a little drunkenly, stupidly, and then forgotten about it afterwards.

She did not understand. I did not want to be reminded of that night. Couldn't she see what it meant to me: Didn't she know I was a haunted man?<sup>88</sup>

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84 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 89.

85 Ibid., p. 4.

86 Ibid., p. 89.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid., p. 242.



Ay, haunted by the suspicion that he might have actually fathered the horse king, makes a study of Akhenaton. His insights into the king are the most penetrating, for they are the reflections of a man who has developed his rational powers:

Akhenaton was a lie.

. . . . .  
 It is a lie to assume there is only light, only goodness. Behind the tales of creation and the doings of the gods are strange and dark meanings which perhaps only the gods themselves can fathom. If ever the weird stories of the creation and life of the universe could somehow be made real, they could destroy that universe; if ever a bull were to enter his mother and be reborn from her loins it would be an abomination. Thus the holy and the obscene exist side by side . . . .<sup>89</sup>

Ay will not admit to the possibility of Divine encounter. Belief in its possibility is what makes the process of transformation and celebration possible for Julian and Akhenaton. In spite of Ay's lack of belief, his natural introspection enables him to attain knowledge of the whole man, but with very different results:

I was always my own mystery, unable to make a single movement, however trifling or grand, which wasn't at once thrust up against the judging council of my own mind and questioned as to its final value.

. . . . .  
 My life was always a string of inner queries, but I found peace in my paradoxes.

. . . . .  
 I sought no answers, though I pretended to . . . . for I regarded answers as spiritual stagnation. The disappointment of something reached.<sup>90</sup>

His introspection afforded him the knowledge of others. Akhenaton is the man who sees wholeness as a manifestation of the Divine. Ay, whole through the reclamation of self, does

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89 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 235.

90 Ibid.

not see this process in terms of Divinity. His knowledge of the dualities of existence is not the manifestation of the Divine process of the universe, but a dreadful burden which the man of knowledge must carry. He sees no reason for celebration. Life is a serious business and Akhenaton seems to him to concentrate on the most frivolous aspects:

. . . Wanre [Akhenaton], never permitted himself to reveal that underworld of his soul. Full of the creeping crawling things like violence or bitterness which all men must contain. He distorted those evils and let them build within him until they emerged in grotesque, insane disguises. He couldn't bring himself to imagine human suffering -- but let a flower be trodden on or a useless alley cat mistreated by children and he'd be depressed for hours.<sup>91</sup>

Ay sees the illness of the king as "his violence redirected against himself."<sup>92</sup> His contemplative life affords him an inner peace, which the intensity of Akhenaton's existence does not achieve:

Only in intelligence lies the harmonious silence which brings restraint in life. Maat is harmony; anything which is not harmonious is not Maat; anything which disturbs the restrained silence of the thoughtful man is not Maat.<sup>93</sup>

This peace is bought at a terrible price, for its restraint incapacitates Ay. He sees the unity of all things with his intellect: "Do not lovers turn into antagonists during their act, tearing each other's flesh for love? Do not the barriers between love and hate break down then and all truths become one?"<sup>94</sup> Intellectual knowledge of unity cannot take him out of himself. His restraint prevents any possibility of

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91 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, pp. 235-236.

92 Ibid., p. 236.

93 Ibid., p. 239.

94 Ibid., p. 249.

rejoicing.

In spite of his condemnation of Akhenaton, Ay speaks of the differences existing between himself and his king as superficial:

I wondered if Wanre [Akhenaton], had ever doubted (as I have doubted) if there's anything that can give form and order to this life. Isn't the greatest adoration born of the greatest doubt? Are not priest and unbeliever finally, of the same spirit?<sup>95</sup>

Again, this knowledge is of the intellect. He cannot celebrate the unity of all things as Akhenaton and Julian do because he lacks the knowledge of his own Divinity.

Parennufer, tutor to the young prince, is able to take delight in Akhenaton, as Ay cannot:

I loved his folly, I loved his god. Was I a nostalgic, stupid old fool for that? He was a child; only children question the inner meaning of things which have long since sunk deep into a part of ourselves which sleeps and doesn't care . . . such a terrifying mature child.<sup>96</sup>

Ay will not let himself become a child. He will not give himself to dreams which, when heeded by his king, become his source of truly creative action. The contemplative life of Ay brings no joy or originality. He cannot love his king during his lifetime. Restraint and duty are the fruits of his contemplation. For this reason he is the perfect instrument of death for the king. Akhenaton knows Ay's restraint and devotion to duty will prevent an emotional outburst which would interfere with his command. Yet, in asking Ay to kill him, he offers his father-in-law the opportunity for involvement in life which defies restraint.

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<sup>95</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 253.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

The murder of Akhenaton is the most passionate act committed by Ay, but it is a passion carefully controlled:

I drew near to him, guiltily, passionately, preparing a deed which was part pain, part love -- the proportions of those parts being such that no man could count them.

. . . . .  
My Sun Akhenaton! . . . I lunged forward with my knife, my whole body following the thrust of the blade until my weight fell upon him like a rock.<sup>97</sup>

The pun on the title of the king is Ay's only allusion to the bond which exists between them. The act of killing Akhenaton was a partial release, for Ay could love, but it is love without commitment. This seems the only possible way for the man of restraint to love.

At the end of his secret account, the rational man, the "beloved Unbeliever,"<sup>98</sup> withdraws his curse upon the man who discovers his secrets. "What does anyone hide anything for, . . . except to have it found?"<sup>99</sup> is his feeble attempt to unlock those doors which he has guarded so carefully for so long. There is, though, the strong impression that the attempt has come too late.

The business of discovery is the business of life and in the case of Akhenaton "[dreams] are the facts from which we must proceed."<sup>100</sup> His encounter with the sun so possesses him, as does Julian's identification with Christ, that eventually his entire life evidences the compulsive actions of one who believes he is in the grips of God -- or devil.

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97 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, pp. 248-249.

98 Ibid., p. 248.

99 Ibid., p. 259.

100 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 171.

In spite of the fearfulness of submission to this compulsion, the results are the celebration, which is denied the man who reasons but cannot love. Jung describes the positive attitude which applies to both magician and king:

I might formulate it as an affirmation of things as they are: an unconditional 'yes' to that which is, without subjective protest -- acceptance of the conditions of existence as [they] see them and understand them, acceptance of [their] own nature, as [they] happen to be.<sup>101</sup>

Akhenaton's affirmation of his dream, his imposition of Ra upon his subjects, is his unconditional yes to what he is. Ay, the thinker, weighing and deliberating, makes his subjective judgments of himself and others more important than the reality he and others are. He loves his thoughts but he does not love himself, and therefore, cannot be loved by others.<sup>102</sup>

Jung is useful in explaining the positive and negative consequences of Akhenaton's devotion to his blinding dream:

. . . when one follows the path of individuation, when one lives one's own life, one must take mistakes into the bargain; life would not be complete without them. There is no guarantee -- not for a single moment -- that we will not fall into error or stumble into deadly peril. We may think there is a sure road. But that would be the road of death.<sup>103</sup>

Despite mistakes made by the strange misshapen king, the affirmation of his destiny, the following of his dream, leave lasting impressions upon those who survive him. Creative to the point of becoming incomprehensible to his people, misunderstood, undermined, and finally blinded by his own

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101 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 297.

102 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 256.

103 Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 297.

fantastic vision, he nevertheless, dramatizes the celebration of the conscious God.

Julian and Akhenaton are first subjected to confrontations signalling the beginnings of celebration. Both magician and king suffer through these confrontations, Julian in his feverish sleeps, Akhenaton in his physical confinement. Whether the illness of magician and king is brought about by confrontation, or whether the illness makes confrontation possible through the physical inactivity, is not made clear in the novels. The illness of Julian and Akhenaton may well be MacEwen's attempt to symbolically represent the Christian axiom of man's salvation through suffering. However, the purpose of the suffering of Julian and Akhenaton is slightly ambiguous.

The symbols of Christ and Ra, initially experienced externally, compel the submission of magician and king to the Divine wholeness each represents. Identification with these symbols becomes total, affecting the transformation of Julian into Christ, and Akhenaton into Ra. Here the parallel between magician and king ends.

In a very real sense Julian dies to give birth to Akhenaton. His life is marked by the struggle towards self-knowledge. It ends with his fulfilment of that goal. The consciousness of his own Divinity becomes the birthright of his evolutionary follower, the king. Akhenaton need only be reminded of this inheritance. With the conscious knowledge that he is a son of God, he is indeed a king. His life is devoted entirely to the celebration of his Divine Father.

The novelist makes it clear that magician and king are symbolic representations of man's encounter with the Divine. Through Julian she shows the importance of consciousness, the key to wholeness. Julian's consciousness enables him to see the wholeness of Christ, and therefore, his own wholeness as a fellow magician concerned with human alchemy.

The whole magician, made so by the spiritual power of conscious Divinity, suffers and dies for the sake of belief. Akhenaton, also transformed, celebrates and lives for this same cause. But, while the importance of belief is established in both novels, its nature and object is unclear. MacEwen understands the strength of belief, for both magician and king believe in something outside of themselves and allow the belief of others in themselves. The relationship between the external and internal beliefs touched upon in the novels, is not defined. What, ultimately, is most important for the novelist -- belief in God or belief in belief? Before the reader can fully identify with the symbols who represent the possibility of transformation into conscious Gods, the role of belief would have to be made clear. The nature of the relationship between suffering and confrontation, and a more definite depiction of the role of belief, would render more comprehensible MacEwen's vision of man's encounter with the Divine.

In some instances, obscurities in the vision of the novelist can be attributed to an imperfect technical ability. A careful study of MacEwen's technical skill, exemplified in her first attempts with the form of the novel, will

undoubtedly illumine further her vision, and also bring to light those aspects of her craft which tend to obscure it.



## CHAPTER TWO

The vision of man's possible Divinity through the process of gradual self-knowledge, the bringing of the unconscious self into consciousness, lends itself particularly well to that form of expression which employs the symbolic as opposed to the real. By real is meant the tangible aspects of environment experienced so frequently that they lose any magic they might contain. Familiarity tends to have a devaluing effect upon those aspects of environment involved in the routines of life; relationships are carried on with them without much thought, and thought is the key to consciousness. It is not surprising then, that Boehme, in his attempt to show the way to the magic encounter with the Divine, suggests that "we have but to extricate our consciousness from all that is the effect of our time and place."<sup>1</sup> Gwen MacEwen, in choosing magician and king as heroes, is doing precisely this.

Julian and Akhenaton, in undergoing the process of reclamation of self and identification with the Divine, become the archetype heroes of myth. Mythology, man's attempt to "explain the inexplicable," as Akhenaton would do, has as one of its subjects, the world of the gods:

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<sup>1</sup> The Signature of all Things, p. x.

In the divine world the central process or movement is that of the death and rebirth, or the disappearance and return, or the incarnation and withdrawal, of a god. This divine activity is usually identified or associated with one or more of the cyclical processes of nature.<sup>2</sup>

Julian and Akhenaton consciously participate in the cycle of the Divine world. They suffer the death of their egos to be born as conscious Gods, participate in the celebration of life, and return to the unity of all things. In choosing the mythological as opposed to the realistic mode of expression, the novelist is approaching the goal of all art, the fusion of form and content.

Mark Schorer makes a distinction between content and achieved content which is particularly helpful in the study of the novels:

Modern criticism has shown us that to speak of content as such is not to speak of art at all, but of experience; and that it is only when we speak of the achieved content, the form of the work of art as a work of art, that we speak as critics. The difference between content, or experience, and achieved content, or art, is technique.<sup>3</sup>

The content of Miss MacEwen's novels, man's encounter with the Divine, is clear enough. A study of the form of the novels, what Schorer calls technique, must be undertaken before the distinction can be made between content and achieved content and the subsequent judgment of the value of the novels as art. For this study Schorer's definition of technique is valuable:

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<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New York, 1969), p. 158.

<sup>3</sup> "Technique as Discovery," Approaches to the Novel, ed. by Robert Scholes (San Francisco, 1966), p. 141.

. . . technique is the means by which the writer's experience, which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally, of evaluating it.<sup>4</sup>

The experience of wholeness through encounter with the Divine has led the novelist to a mythological structure. The most obvious aspects of this structure are the basic divisions of the novels. If content is to fuse with form these divisions must in some way parallel the experience of Julian and Akhenaton. The cyclical aspects of the Divine world as portrayed in myth, death, rebirth and the ultimate concept of unity, do find a correspondence in a mythic structure designed by the novelist.

The first chapter of Julian the Magician, devoted to "the baptism,"<sup>5</sup> alludes to "a ceremonial immersion in water, . . . as an initiatory rite or sacrament of the Christian Church."<sup>6</sup> This marks the author's first attempt to fuse the experience of the magician with her mode of expression, for the baptism heralds the advent of the God, the initial phase in the cycle of myth. Julian speaks of his baptism as an act of compulsion:

Collective belief, mass hypnotism--this was what he longed for and feared most of all. The slow seduction and the post-performance hysteria when the power he generated left him, but would not leave its object--still he walked blithely into that fire, never learning from its brilliant scars.<sup>7</sup>

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4 "Technique as Discovery," p. 141.

5 Julian the Magician, p. 3.

6 The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, (New York, 1966), p. 118.

7 Julian the Magician, p. 11.

The compelling desire to enter the fire of the baptism has its counterpart in water: "The desire for water is overpowering, the desire to immerse his body completely in it."<sup>8</sup> The cyclical accounts of myth are man's attempts to synthesize or fuse seeming opposites of existence. Julian's baptism of fire and water is a further attempt on the part of Gwen MacEwen to reinforce the notion of wholeness through a fusion of the polarities of existence.

The compulsion involved in this baptism points to the death of the natural magician. This smaller self must die if the Divine self, the God, is to be born. In order for the self to die the magician must submit to those impulses which lead him to Divine encounter:

He has forgotten his initial reason for coming,  
if there had been one, more of a suddenly acquired  
instinct, urgent and purging.  
. . . he steps in further . . . the birds are  
fitting . . . the water belts his waist now . . .  
the bird, the mystical dove . . . 801 . . . the dove  
descending . . . Alpha and Omega combined--the sum of  
their numbers . . . 801, the ineffable Name, the  
dove . . .<sup>9</sup>

The dove not only serves to link this magician with Christ but is of further significance in that it "partakes of the general symbolism of all winged animals, that is, of spirituality and the power of sublimation."<sup>10</sup> Coupled with the descent of the dove, the numbers Eight, zero and one are of significance, individually as well as collectively. Eight complements the symbol of the dove and the theme of whole-

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8 Julian the Magician, p. 13.

9 Ibid., p. 14.

10 A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 81.

ness through reclamation of self, by virtue of its symbolic meaning:

The octonary, related to two squares or the octagon, is the intermediate form between the square (or terrestrial order) and the circle (the eternal order) and is, in consequence, a symbol of regeneration.

.....  
Because of its implications of regeneration, eight was in the Middle ages an emblem of the waters of baptism.<sup>11</sup>

The baptism marks the beginning of this regeneration and it is therefore fitting that the number eight be first in the sequence.

"Zero" reflects the state occurring between the death of the natural magician and the birth of the Divine one. Its symbolic value is that of "non-being, mysteriously connected with unity as its opposite and its reflection."<sup>12</sup> Here again the enclosing of dualities as the function of the whole or Divine man is complemented, as is the actual baptism of the magician: "From the viewpoint of man in existence, it symbolizes death as the state in which the life-forces are transformed."<sup>13</sup> Transformation is the result of baptism, at least when the participant is conscious of its meaning.

The significance of "one" has been discussed in relation to the epigraph of the novel, but as the number associated with unity it is again relevant to mention that this unity is "the symbol of divinity."<sup>14</sup>

The collective value of these numbers, "nine", has also

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11 A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 223.

12 Ibid., p. 221.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

been discussed in relation to the novel's epigraph. As "the end limit of the numerical series before its return to unity" it too enhances the theme of the birth of God. The baptism then, marks the beginnings of a new Julian, a magician involved in the process of becoming whole, conscious, aware of his own Divinity.

The first chapter in King of Egypt, King of Dreams, is also devoted to baptism. Akhenaton, in "morning the sun rises," is initially described as a "walking medical library of arcane illnesses."<sup>15</sup> When, in brief periods of health, he was allowed to visit the court of his father, he was a constant source of embarrassment:

The prince lacked sophistication. He simply couldn't navigate in public, and carried himself like a frail boat caught in an eddy during floodtime.<sup>16</sup>

Parennufer became a refuge for the boy who was so out of place with worldly men. His love for Ra and the many lessons concerning the myths of creation mark the initial phases of the confrontation which parallels Julian's baptism:

Always remember this night, remember that I told you that when the affairs of state and temple are closely joined, their union is an abomination. In the old days the priests were mere delegates of the royal house, performing their services in the king's name . . .  
 . . . . .  
 Now they grow fat and ugly preying upon men's fears --not their love, little prince, but their fears. They are many, but they are corrupt, and their god is a piece of wood chewed up by termites, dry and full of holes.<sup>17</sup>

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15 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 1.

16 Ibid., p. 5.

17 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 7.

The existing state between the priests and the royal house leads to Akhenaton's interest in the nature of the relationship between king and God:

Yesterday we were talking of how the ruling king receives the state to deliver it to the god in the form of crown land which is donated to the temple . . . But the boy's voice interrupting was urgent and high-pitched. 'If the land is already the god's, why should the king deliver it back to him?'<sup>18</sup>

Parennufer's explanation is the key to understanding Akhenaton's eventual relationship with Ra: ". . . doesn't a son often buy a present for his father with money that he got from him in the first place?"<sup>19</sup> Akhenaton as king is the son of Ra. The mysterious relationship which he develops with his spiritual father, comes after he has been baptized by the God of light.

In his first contact with a festival of Opet, the prince shows the first marks of baptism:

The late afternoon light stung his eyes, and at the quay he could scarcely absorb the frantic activity going on around him. His hurting eyes were following Ra, who was about to dip His fiery red day boat into the horizon; the sight filled him with joy and terror and made the blood pulse wildly in his wrists and temples. It was a glory sense but uncaptured -- a glory related to other times, the times he lay on his dark bed between sheets of thoughts. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Confused by the activity of the feast as well as the activity of his own mind the prince questions the wisdom of travelling to Opet when he had been warned of the priests of Amon. Parennufer explains "One must face what one fears"<sup>21</sup>,

<sup>18</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

and in spite of the prophecy delivered by the blind seer which predicted his death in his fifth regnal year the boy takes comfort in the God which is to make him strong:

The boy shivered and stared hard into the black depths of the eastern horizon until at last Ra rose in his boat of the morning, and then the early rays outlined the dim peaks of the West. Soothed by the sight he dozed; the morning river was silent, yet alive.<sup>22</sup>

The birth of Ra each morning reinforces the importance of the cyclical aspect of existence through Akhenaton's strong identification with the sun. Assurance that the sun will rise leaves him desperately in need of some proof that he too will continue to participate in the cycle of myth. His relationship with Sitamon is the solution to this problem, for after he had slept with her and she had given birth to the child Smenkhare he was assured of his regeneration in spite of his humanity:

There was a night, . . . when the seed of my dark years was wrung from me, . . . and my weeping ceased, it ceased from that moment.<sup>23</sup>

Now, like Ra, he will continue to participate in the mythic process, for he has a son, as he is Ra's son.

The last phase in his baptism is completed when Akhenaton comes to terms with his father, Amenhotep the Third. The bitter relationship between father and son ends with the death of Amenhotep, enabling Akhenaton to develop fully his identification with Ra. In the young Prince's mind, his human father had too much to do with establishing the state of corruption in Egypt. His allegiance could not be with

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<sup>22</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 27.



Amenhotep then. He is forced to look outside the traditions of the Pharaohs for guidance. His confrontation with his dead father and the traditions he perpetuated comes when he visits the tomb of the king:

He ripped open his tunic and stood stark naked in front of the terrible twin effigies of his father. He lifted up his arms to Ra and let the rays of the god caress his chest and loins.

. . . . . There was a smile on the prince's face, the smile of a dreamer freshly awakened.<sup>24</sup>

In this moment Akhenaton takes a stand. His faith is in the intangible, in that which will obliterate his father and his father's way. The land of Egypt acquires a conscious king, a king baptized in and by Ra:

As my father Ra lives, the divine Youth who came into being out of Himself, joining His seed with His body to create His egg within His secret self . . . I tell you this is how I came to be.<sup>25</sup>

Akhenaton eagerly adopts the myth of the creation of Ra as his own myth. His baptism of fire allows him conscious knowledge of his Divinity. As king of Egypt he is son of Ra. As son of God, he too is God.

The baptisms of Julian and Akhenaton are similar in that both magician and king are confronted by something outside of themselves which compels their submission. With Julian it is the art behind the art of simple magic. With Akhenaton it is the God Ra. The baptism for both magician and king marks the beginnings of internalization of the symbol originally external to them. The basic difference is Julian's resistance. He is not eager to accept the

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<sup>24</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 30.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

revelation of baptism. He fights the Divinity imposed upon him, whereas the king assumes it as his birthright.

This difference is fitting considering the evolutionary aspects of magician and king spoken of by Frazer. The magician is not granted immediate knowledge of Divinity. As the initial phase in the linear development which culminates in the Divine king, he must go through the painful process of acclimatizing himself to his Divinity. The king has the right to this Divinity by reason of his position of temporal power attained, according to Frazer, by the struggles of his predecessor.

The difference between magician and king, in the acceptance of Divinity does not alter the appropriateness of the mythic structure. Both baptisms herald the conscious Gods, and are, therefore, fitting places for the novelist to begin her mythic structure. The evolutionary differences between Julian and Akhenaton account for differences in structure within the individual novels.

Julian, as the first step in the human attainment of Divinity through consciousness, must be shown what he does not believe. Chapters two through six are devoted to presenting proof of Divinity to reader as well as to magician. He must be taken through specific events which prove to him the miraculous nature of the power he has acquired. The second chapter, "water and wine"<sup>26</sup> presents the beginnings of this proof. It is reinforced by Julian's work in the third chapter, "the riverman."<sup>27</sup> Chapter four, "waterwalk"<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

evidences the full knowledge and acceptance of Divinity, for in the next chapter he performs the curing of the blind man without resistance.

"Ivan"<sup>29</sup> marks the zenith of the mythic cycle. Appropriately, MacEwen presents this high point in Chapter five, the centre of her ten chapter structure. Thematic development of the birth of the conscious God culminates in this central chapter. After he cures Ivan, Julian's movements occur within the shadow of the cross. His death is imminent. He must participate in the rituals of the last supper, the betrayal and the trial. In the tenth chapter he is crucified. The myth and the structure created to house this myth are completed.

With Akhenaton Divinity is his assumed right. He does not have Divinity imposed upon him, rather, he accepts it eagerly. The second portion of the novel, "daytime Aton is in the sky" deals, among other things, with the actual transformation of Akhenaton into the sun God, the consequences of which closely parallel Julian's work with the blind man. In these incidents both magician and king assert the power of the conscious creator. Here their Divinity is obvious to others as well as to themselves, for they are able to manifest this creative power in tangible ways.

In both novels then, the structure parallels the initial concern of myth, the birth of the God. Akhenaton's decline or disintegration into the unity of all things takes much longer than the magician's, for his acceptance of Divinity

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29 Julian the Magician, p. 47.

came with his position of king, and therefore was a much earlier occurrence. The bulk of King of Egypt, King of Dreams, in many ways completes Gwen MacEwen's mythic structure, for as Julian's novel is devoted to the final acceptance of Divine self after the confrontation of baptism, the novel containing her vision of the king is devoted largely to the consequences of this accepted Divinity. It is fitting then, that "night the land is in darkness,"<sup>30</sup> contains twelve chapters which correspond to the twelve hours of the night, the twelve hours of Ra's absence.

All night Ra sails through the terrible darkness of the Underworld, and Wisdom and Magic are with Him. As He passes through the Twelve Cities and Fields and Gates and Circles of the night, He battles hundreds of demons and almost dies . . .

Parenufer noticed that the prince was absently tracing the twelve circles in the air.<sup>31</sup>

Akhenaton as incarnate Ra, possesses the wisdom and magic of the God as he travels through his night. This allows him to survive the "demons" who would kill him in order to prevent the imposition of his dream on a land which does not want the monotheistic ruler's vision.

The last chapter dealing with Akhenaton is suitably "the twelfth hour of the night."<sup>32</sup> The novelist's initial description of this hour of the night foreshadows what is to come:

In the twelfth hour there are goddesses holding many eyes. The Snake enters his tail and comes forth through his mouth. It is the final hour of the night.<sup>33</sup>

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30 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 55.

31 Ibid., p. 10.

32 Ibid., p. 215.

33 Ibid.

The allusions to the many eyes held by the goddesses warrants explanation:

An excessive number of eyes has an ambivalent significance . . . In the first place, the eyes refer to night with its myriads of stars, in the second place, paradoxically yet necessarily, the possessor of so many eyes is left in darkness.<sup>34</sup>

Paralleling this aspect of myth is the loss of sight by the king and its paradoxical effect: "Since my eyes are failing me, old man, I see things more clearly than ever before.

. . ." <sup>35</sup> The inner sight of the king does not prevent his terror at the thought of ultimate blindness. Ra, so important in his days as king, will be denied him if his sight is lost. In desperation he calls upon gods whose names he has not been heard to utter in years.<sup>36</sup>

The snake alluded to in the introductory sentence of the chapter was seen to be devouring his tail. This is one of the many graphic depictions of unity<sup>37</sup> or completion of the mythic process of life, death, regeneration. It signifies the attainment of unity in the life of Akhenaton. His enigmatic disappearance, "as though the earth itself had swallowed him up"<sup>38</sup> results in the discovery of his body, torn to shreds by jackals.<sup>39</sup> The death of Akhenaton is followed by the death of his son Smenkhare,<sup>40</sup> thus completing the second phase of the mythic process, the death of the God.

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34 A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 95.

35 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 216.

36 Ibid., p. 219.

37 A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 274.

38 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 227.

39 Ibid., p. 228.

40 Ibid., p. 229.

It is in the concluding sections of each of the novels that MacEwen completes the mythic cycle, the attainment of unity. In Julian the Magician, the unity is conveyed through the diary of the magician. In King of Egypt, King of Dreams, it is to be found in the secret papers of Ay and Meritaton.

The diary of the magician further complements the mythic theme of the novel in that its divisions, "Day One" through "Day Seven," parallel the seven days of creation, as told in the Hebraic myth. As would be expected the consciousness of the magician builds, until, in "Day Five," he is finally able to formulate what has happened to him:

An enclosed genius has come out of my skin and rules me, a genius and a will so sharp, so complete I cannot recognize it as my own. It is not my own. Things I know, deeds I do, miracles I perform, all stem from this foreign genius who is not me.<sup>41</sup>

The genius is the Divine Julian. It is not his own in the sense that he did not create it, rather, he submitted to the genius, fusing the conscious self with the unconscious self:

. . . he is brilliant. I feel him speaking through my lips sometimes and I marvel at his speed, his intellect. I prostrate myself before him; he is complete.

It continues. I give in and let him take over.<sup>42</sup>

In "Day Six"<sup>43</sup> the dichotomy is resolved. The magician who is Julian and the conscious God who is born out of the fusion of his conscious and unconscious selves are one:

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41 Julian the Magician, p. 140.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., p. 142.

Soon I must leave Gethsemane and the painful olive trees. The passionate garden is falling away, branch by branch. My knees ache. Almost I can hear horses.<sup>44</sup>

The day of rest follows: "There is no need now to elaborate on events, for their coming is inevitable and rehearsed."<sup>45</sup>

"Day Seven" has its parallels in the omega of the epigraph and in the completion of the process of wholeness. The work is done, the cycle completed. The hint of regeneration is given:

And if anyone destroys what I say he must wait for all patterns to come the full circle. For on the third day the son must rise.<sup>46</sup>

In the novel dealing with Akhenaton the completion of the myth is attained through memoirs which parallel Julian's diary. Ay, father of the king, and Meritaton, daughter of the king, leave papers to explain much of the enigma of the king's life. What completes the myth is to be found, however, in "The Papyrus of Meritaton."<sup>47</sup> Here the author deals with the mating of the children of Akhenaton, Smenkhare and Meritaton. The unity of the process is discovered when both children recognize each other as the mirrors of themselves:

We stared at each other and saw nothing but the shadow of the king our father who had made us one. Your flesh was my flesh; your mouth, my mouth. The great wings of the royal hawk thrashed the air between us.<sup>48</sup>

Their unity of flesh is destroyed by the murder of Smenkhare. However, before Meritaton dies of self-imposed starvation

<sup>44</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 147.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>47</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 260.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

she also hints at the regenerative aspects of the myth:

Before I left your tomb I pulled a single cowrie shell from my collar and placed it in the dirt at your feet. Your ba will see it glittering there forever like small brilliant vulva, the entrance and the exit of life. You will remember the curled and swirling passages of our love. You will call upon me by name and never<sup>49</sup>

Presumably the young princess dies as she writes this final line. The "ba" is explained by the author as "Half-bird, half-human creature, soul of the deceased which hovered about the tomb area."<sup>50</sup> The cycle is completed but will begin again.

Structurally then, the author has expressed her vision of mythic archetypal experience in a suitable form. Within this structure she has told her vision in a specific way. It is in the kind of narration employed by the novelist that the first discrepancy is discovered between form and content. Both novels are told through a third person narrator, but as Wayne Booth has pointed out:

. . . that a story is told in the first or third person will tell us nothing of importance unless we become more precise and describe how the particular qualities of the narrators relate to specific effects.<sup>51</sup>

Booth goes on to distinguish between dramatized and undramatized narrators,<sup>52</sup> the latter category corresponding to MacEwen's type of narration. The most helpful aspect of third person narration discussed by Booth is the concept of commentary:

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<sup>49</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 179.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., "A Glossary of Ancient Names and Terms," p. 285.

<sup>51</sup> Approaches to the Novel, "Types of Narration," p. 275.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



Narrators who allow themselves to tell as well as show vary greatly depending on the amount and kind of commentary allowed in addition to a direct relating of events in scene and summary. Such commentary can, of course, range over any aspect of human experience, and it can be related to the main business in innumerable ways and degrees. To treat it as a single device is to ignore important differences between commentary that is merely ornamental, commentary that serves a rhetorical purpose but is not part of the dramatic structure, and commentary that is integral to the dramatic structure, . . . 53

The third person, undramatized narrator of the MacEwen novels is one who tells as well as shows. This telling quality while appropriate as the mode of expression of some visions, has on occasion, the effect of working against the vision of myth.

It has been stated earlier that the subject of myth is conveyed through certain archetypes or symbols. If symbolism is truly "the art of thinking in images,"<sup>54</sup> and the symbol "a precise and crystallized means of expression,"<sup>55</sup> then it follows that presentation of the symbol is all that is necessary if the reader is to understand the message of myth.

Argument might be made for the explanation of the symbolism in a work which is devoted to a very exclusive vision. Such explanation would allow those unfamiliar with the vision to see the correspondence between the symbol and what it represents. The vision of the incarnation of God is not, however, the exclusive vision of Gwen MacEwen. Her

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53 Approaches to the Novel, "Types of Narration," p. 274.

54 A Dictionary of Symbols, p. xxix.

55 Ibid. p. 101.

vision is as old as the oldest myth and is, therefore, a familiar subject in literature. Too, symbols she has chosen to represent this vision are most familiar subjects of myth: magician and king are common in art devoted to the transformation of the natural man into the Divine. It would seem then, that explanation of such is unnecessary. Julian, as symbolic of the transformation of man into the Divine needs only his physical characteristics and his thoughts concerning alchemy and the ultimate aim of the alchemical process to invite the readers' understanding. The novel's epigraph allows the introduction of Gnosticism into the text and the magician's study of this movement also complements the vision of the myth. Both Gnosticism and alchemy are concerned with transformation and are therefore complementary symbols in the transformation of the magician.

Commentary provided by the narrator has the effect of devaluing these symbols so appropriate to the myth and mythic structure of the novel, for they explain away all the mystery which is at the very core of the process of wholeness. The character of the magician as the focal point for seeming dualities is seen in his dark, gypsy features and blond hair. He becomes, however, almost a parody of himself through the many comments on these features. In a dialogue between the magician and his aunt,<sup>56</sup> the novelist establishes the synthesis of these dualities very clearly. The narrator reinforces the importance of these contrasts which are brought together in the person of Julian in comments concerning

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<sup>56</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 5.

Julian's teacher: "--his old teacher had been the first to prostrate himself before the blond boy with the gypsy's features."<sup>57</sup> The character who is to symbolize Peter, the disciple of Christ, is described as "prime worshipper of the blond magician in black."<sup>58</sup> Shortly after his return to the wagon Julian is found to be in conversation with an admirer: "His sable eyes, startling and incongruous under the blond hair were cold, if brown can be cold."<sup>59</sup> The admirer is described as wanting "to stay and get a good look at the magician, figure the blond hair and the cold dark eyes."<sup>60</sup> The frequent allusions to the contrasting physical characteristics of Julian tend to lessen the force of this powerful symbol.

This same criticism applies to the frequent references to "the essentials" of the craft of the magician. Anya<sup>61</sup> is the first to mention them. They are repeated by the narrator in relation to Peter<sup>62</sup> and again through the magician's dialogue<sup>63</sup> with his disciple after the compelling baptism has occurred. Had the fear which accompanies the acts of compulsion been inadequately drawn, the author might be justified in repeating Julian's desire to adhere to the essentials of magic. However, the narration which conveys

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57 Julian the Magician, p. 7.

58 Ibid., p. 9.

59 Ibid., p. 10.

60 Ibid., p. 11.

61 Ibid., p. 5.

62 Ibid., p. 10.

63 Ibid., p. 37.

the terror felt by the magician is such that the reminders of the essentials of magic as a safer preoccupation are redundant.

There is, within the story about Julian, a story told by the magician concerning the boy Ernest. This story, contained in the diary of the magician,<sup>64</sup> contains the quest of Ernest, which in many ways parodies the magician's quest. Ernest is described as not having interest in the god whom he has discovered to be non-existent. Yet the boy "had the presence of mind to realize that the only way to get back at Pan for his dreadful non-existence, was to hunt him down and tell him what he thought of the situation straight to his face."<sup>65</sup> Here the narrative produces a similar effect to the repetitive explanations and references to symbols in earlier chapters which alone convey meaning. The story is humorous, but considering the serious subject of this particular myth and the powerful symbolism employed as vehicles to express its many facets, the humour here is out of place. Had the magician not attained Divinity, but instead had the kind of confrontation with God as Ernest had, then the parody resulting from repetitious allusions would be appropriate as would the interpolation of the Ernest story with its depiction of modern man's 'God is dead' school of belief and its more ridiculous aspects. The humour resulting from inappropriate narration, narration which tells too much and is often redundant, is out of place in a novel dealing with the process of wholeness and the reclamation of

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64 Julian the Magician, p. 136.

65 Ibid.

self.

Narration in the second novel also influences the credibility of the story. Akhenaton, having one blue eye and one brown eye, one weak and one strong,<sup>66</sup> is symbolic of the enclosing of dualities in the dreamer king. Complementary to his physical characteristics is his position as ruler of the upper and lower kingdoms of Egypt and the crown he wears as a result of this position.<sup>67</sup> As with the magician, this dualism is devalued by constant allusions to it.

The italics employed in the narration of this story are representative of a lack of restraint in allowing the natural symbolism of myth to speak for itself. They imply that the reader is unable to distinguish the more important aspects of the narrative when they are employed in the prose passages of the novel. Their use in setting off the songs and prayer poems are not as offensive as the italicized interpolations of the life of Christ in Julian the Magician, where the magician himself shows similarities to Christ. Christian mythology is well known to the general reader and these passages are unnecessary interruptions in the story of a magician who so obviously identifies with Christ.

With the italics used to indicate songs and prayers in King of Egypt, King of Dreams, it is only their frequent usage which is suspect. MacEwen's ability as a poet, and indeed as a translator of Egyptian writings is laudable, but again, out of place, for it lessens the force of the symbolism

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66 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 1.

67 Ibid., p. 34.

contained in the prose of the novel.

Italics incorporated into the prose narration have this same devaluing effect. As repetitious allusions imply an underestimation of the audience, so do the many obvious emphatic statements made by the narrator. Mythology is man's attempt to come to terms with the ineffable. As such, it merely hints at origins through very definite symbols. It does not state in dictionary-like fashion the way things came to be. Its essence is mystery. The commentary employed by MacEwen, her italics and her repetition, deny to some extent, the reader's ability to participate in the working out of this mystery.

Both novels contain a variation in narrative. The diary of Julian and the papers of Ay and Meritaton are all told in the first person. In the case of the magician's diary, the use of ellipses is indicative of the author's attempt to recapture some of the mystery lost in the main body of the novel through too much telling: "Let her be kept in golden ignorance of . . . (text obscure) . . . and all the rest too. So slowly we build and work our wagons that . . . (text obscure) . . . and eagles result."<sup>68</sup> The insertion of the parenthetical comment, presumably made by the discoverer of the diary, is however, a superfluous addition, for it is common knowledge that an ellipsis signifies an omission.

An unfortunate habit of the discoverer of the diary is the marking of the text with asterisks and explanatory foot-

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68 Julian the Magician, p. 111.

notes. A passage dealing with the magician's desire and motives for changing his name is so marked:

\*This entire passage gives us an unparalleled glimpse into the early workings of the magician's mind. Perhaps here as nowhere else we can see the intellect and spirit uniting.<sup>69</sup>

These explanatory notes imply the reader's inability to understand the workings of the mind of the magician; yet his words are such that the transformation is obvious, leaving no explanation necessary. However, the use of footnotes, a scholarly technique, relates to the urgency of the author in the presentation of a really clear vision. It results in a didacticism, misplaced in mythology, but nevertheless indicative of her sincere desire to have her reader see.

The motives of the novelist in employing such insertions are hinted at in the magician's ruminations about poets:

The making of words is a fine party, kaleidoscopes and craze all around. Poets, I think, are simply magicians without quick wrists. The only one I ever met was at a sort of a party that Kardin held.<sup>70</sup>

This poet, in a conversation with the magician, establishes a further link between magician and poet: "I am a mystical poet and fearfully misunderstood. Magicians are sometimes good subject matter . . . They are likewise misunderstood."<sup>71</sup> It would seem, then, that these insertions, while explaining much of the magician's narrative, are indeed attempts to make

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69 Julian the Magician, p. 114.

70 Ibid., p. 127-8.

71 Ibid., p. 128.

the process of self-discovery understandable, perhaps to author as well as reader.

The first person narrative of Ay, offers the rational man's view of the king. It reinforces the idea that Akhenaton, in spite of his single-mindedness, attained a joy in life which was denied this rational man:

I confess now--to have it done with--that I've never experienced anything remotely holy in my life. I never understood the passion which causes grown men to moan like lovers at the feet of stone images, or even beneath the sun. I care little for the gods,  
 . . .<sup>72</sup>

But confession is redundant, as is the explanation of the results of being rational:

Despite my high rank I never felt I'd proven my worth to my own satisfaction. My early years spent as a student scribe copying the ancient books and writing the wisdom of the sages in the common tongue had planted in me an everlasting love for philosophy, and sometimes I longed for nothing more than to spend my days in quiet meditation of the follies of men and the hopelessness of all causes and all gods-- . . .<sup>73</sup>

The novel's initial chapters established clearly the cynicism of the rational man. Ay's confession is interesting but indicative of a fear of the novelist in having her vision misunderstood. The reviews referred to in the introduction intimate this fear is well-grounded, for both reviewers seemed to miss the point made by the author concerning the rational man and the safe unemotional way, and they missed it in spite of the confessional ending. This suggests that the reader who is familiar with the process of self-discovery and the possibilities perceived by the dreamer will understand

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<sup>72</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 232.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 233.



the vision without the secret confessions, as the reader who is not familiar with such a vision will disregard Akhenaton's celebration and strike an alliance with the person who appears to be more sane.

The final first person narrative, "The Papyrus of Meritaton,"<sup>74</sup> is of value in that it heralds the regenerative aspects of the myth, as does the "Seventh Day" account in the diary of Julian. (The unity of all things, the never-ending cycle of loss and reclamation are reinforced in the final first person narratives of both novels). A flaw in the Meritaton section has to do with the use of italics. As ellipses and documentation tend to make the obvious even more so in the diary of the magician, the many italicized passages in "The Papyrus of Meritaton" are overly emphatic. The poetry included in the final passages, and indeed the poetry and prayers in both novels, intimate the author's ambivalent attitude toward the ultimate power of prose.

Ambivalence toward the setting of a mythological vision is also evidenced in the novels. The article by E. B. Gose<sup>75</sup> previously referred to, criticized Gwen MacEwen's vague setting in Julian the Magician. This quality of vagueness is commented upon by the discoverer of the diary of the magician:

Without time and location, we cannot place his figure anywhere in history. Perhaps it is just as well, for we are the rabbits and fingers he speaks of. We do not know.<sup>76</sup>

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74 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 260.

75 "They Shall Have Arcana," p. 36.

76 Julian the Magician, p. 151.

The criticism of other italicized portions of the novel applies as well. It is obvious that the first-person narration of the magician has stopped, for the thoughts themselves convey third-person narration, making the italics unnecessary. The narrator attempts to justify the unspecified time and place of the novel by saying the magician's experience is a universal one, applicable to all people and time. But indefinite setting has detrimental effects, avoided in the creation of a specific time and place, a setting rich in a symbolism complementary to her vision, which would render the italicised portions and the diary used to explain the more enigmatic aspects of her vision unnecessary.

The vague setting also influences the authenticity of the vision. The modern attitude conveyed through the Ernest story<sup>77</sup> is told in such a way as to devalue the quest of a magician in the seventeenth century. The novelist tries to justify the tone of the story through Julian's explanation of it:

There is the story. And after it Peter was silent for a long time. I don't think he approved, even though he'd been sitting rapt with attention all through the narrative. For, in his mild way, he accused me later of employing one quality which a magician should never employ--cynicism. I told him of course, that there was no cynicism there; that negative is positive, that satire reflects tragic situations. But I didn't convince him. Not in the least.<sup>78</sup>

The enclosing of all contrasts at the heart of the process of wholeness, while substantiating this particular claim made by the magician, does not enhance the credibility of the novel.

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<sup>77</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 136.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

The humour is out of place, for it is not the joyful expression of the conscious God; it is rather, a kind of forced humour, an attempt to convince which fails: "I'm truly sorry. We gods are all out of print . . . Really I am . . . O, the horrors of being half and half, . . ."<sup>79</sup> Gwen MacEwen wants to bring God back into print, but the establishment of a setting conducive to the concept of the conscious God's difficulty to fit into any particular time would lend a more harmonious tone to the novel. The story is delightfully clever but does not seem quite like a story Julian, or conscious God would tell.

The author, in failing to establish time and place, is indicating that it is her vision which is most important, and that this vision is a timeless one. But she has inadvertently made the expression of this vision more difficult. Perhaps the choice of Egypt as the setting for her second novel represents MacEwen's attempts to rectify the problem of setting. As spawning ground for myth it is a fitting place to depict her vision of the dreamer king.

The "Historical background and family relationships,"<sup>80</sup> given by the author at the conclusion of this novel, explain her concept of the historical novel. Facts surrounding the life of the dreamer king are such that the author could have a free hand with regard to interpretation. The mythology of this country contains the paradox and ambiguity that was first hinted at in the life of the magician. A description

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79 Julian the Magician, p. 138.

80 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, pp. 280-283.

of this mythology might very well apply to the novelist herself:

The search for new symbols went on constantly; each one considered to represent one facet of the truth and did not necessarily entail rejection of previously held concepts . . . (T)he modern reader must constantly bear in mind that the Egyptian myths . . . cannot be considered as fixed stories.<sup>81</sup>

With process, cycle and reclamation as the essence of her vision, MacEwen could not have found a more suitable setting for her novel. There are disadvantages to the realistic aspects of setting, however; for the nebulous and mysterious qualities of mythology lose their magic when they are committed to actual time and place. Their usual setting is the home of the gods, a timeless land in close proximity to earth, but not of it.

Akhenaton might very well have been for the novelist, concrete proof of her vision of the magician. Her fictional character, Julian, with his commitment and celebration is very much like the historical Akhenaton. While the facts surrounding the reign of this king are indeed nebulous, they do exist, and therefore invite criticism of the novel as historically authentic or inaccurate. It would seem then, that while the novelist searches for new symbols as did the Egyptians in their mythology, she has not yet found suitable place for her vision. In her discussion of historian and writer the novelist hints at this very real problem:

In the process of conjecture, the historian is no less involved than the writer of historical fiction; while the former must account for history's

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<sup>81</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 282.

frustrating silences, the latter must try to fill in those silences for his narrative purposes.<sup>82</sup>

The filling in necessitated by the choice of Egypt as place during the reign of Akhenaton, commits the author to a sizable portion of history. As a result, this setting is responsible for many of the more superfluous aspects of the novel.

Ay's journey to the warring provinces<sup>83</sup> is a specific example of surplus data concerning the country's political decline. This is certainly relevant to the overall vision of the novel, but the dialogue between the Foreign Minister, Tutu, and Ay establishes the state of affairs very clearly, leaving the author free to get on with her king. MacEwen places great stress on the decline of Egypt, to show the negative aspects of the single-minded king, while wanting, at the same time, to praise his very positive creativity. In the historical notes the author says of her king:

Akhenaton himself was neither saint nor sinner; no doubt like all great reformers he was a combination of both. He created a religion but lost an empire through neglect; it is little wonder, then, that scholarly opinion is sharply divided. As always, the truth should rest somewhere between the apparent extremes, yet I doubt it is the task of either historian or writer to establish that kind of truth.<sup>84</sup>

This paragraph intimates a wish toward objectivity on the part of the novelist. She goes on to say that "in the present book [she has] tried to find a midway point between the major theories of historians and [her] own view of Akhenaton himself."<sup>85</sup> This attitude at once lessens the importance

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<sup>82</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 280.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-85.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

of the king as the focal point for the novel, for emphasis is shifted from the actual vision of the novelist to setting. Hence, the city of the king, spoken of as his child, Akhenaton, "the Horizon of the Aton,"<sup>86</sup> is given an important place in the story of the king, paralleling her preoccupation with setting rather than actual vision.

The detailed description of setting does not deny the vision of the king as symbolic of the conscious God, but it does lessen the impact of this symbol. In trying to find some mid-point between historical attitudes and her own vision, MacEwen indulges in data concerning setting. The prose passages devoted to general Egyptian manners and customs are spurious off-shoots of the novel's central image, Akhenaton, and often take the reader in no particular direction. Restraint with regard to setting might well remedy the novel's indefinite shape.

Austin Warren defines setting in such a way as to show clearly its purpose in fiction:

Setting is environment; and environments, especially domestic interiors, may be viewed as metonymic, or metaphoric, expressions of character. A man's house is an extension of himself. Describe it and you have described him.<sup>87</sup>

If Warren's claim is accepted, the kingdoms of Egypt are extensions of Akhenaton. Descriptions of these kingdoms are important only in so far as they relate directly to the king. The state of the peasant farmer is an important aspect of setting, for it is confrontation with the farmer which leads

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<sup>86</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 44.

<sup>87</sup> Approaches to the Novel, "Nature and Modes of Fiction," p. 16.

Akhenaton to realize the corruption of the priestly caste:

. . . the land surveyors of the temple came out and decided to seize my neighbour's farm for temple land. He was completely dispossessed, and now he and his family are working as serfs--on their own farm! . . . They only took half of my land--but the best half, of course-- . . . They decided to let me manage it myself, so long as I paid my taxes. Then the taxes went up--and up, and up.<sup>88</sup>

The result of the increase in taxes places the farmer in the position of having to sign over the rest of his land to the temple. The farmer's stoicism regarding his reduced position is caused by a very necessary practicality: "At least when you're a serf you're guaranteed the clothes on your back and food on your table."<sup>89</sup> This shows the Prince's relationship with Ra to stem from a very real sympathy for humanity. He tells the peasant that it is possible for a change in these conditions when the son of Amenhotep comes to power.<sup>90</sup> This environment, showing the corruption of the priests of Opet, is an integral part of the novel. It establishes the Prince as noble and concerned.

Yet there is much description of setting which has little to do with Akhenaton as the first monotheistic ruler of Egypt. A case might be made for the appropriateness of this description if the novel's basic concern was with the land itself and not its strange ruler. As large and all-inclusive as the vision of the conscious God is, it is still most effective to seize upon that one symbol which best exemplifies it, such

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<sup>88</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 23.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

as the symbol of magician and king. In the case of setting Gwen MacEwen might better have disregarded those scenes where the relationship to the vision of Akhenaton is unclear. The mid-point which the author has expressed as desiring to achieve might better be represented through a more cohesive setting.

The major criticism then, of Julian the Magician in terms of the setting of time and place or lack of it, is best expressed by E. M. Forster:

. . . It is never possible for a novelist to deny time inside the fabric of his novel; he must cling, however lightly, to the thread of his story, . . . otherwise he becomes unintelligible, which, in his case, is a blunder.<sup>91</sup>

The valiant attempt to adhere to the story line without the help of time and place creates the problem of telling in the narration of the novel. It also makes the story of Julian less credible. Credibility is of necessity an integral part of mythology, for myths are created to invoke belief. The symbolism of mythology has as much need of a credible setting as the most realistic of novels. Both are written to invite belief, so that the vision contained in them will have some effect upon the reader.

In the case of the second novel, while appropriate time and place is discovered, for the subject of myth, there ~~are~~, in descriptions of this setting, digressions from the story of Akhenaton. Of the story's importance in the novel, Forster states:

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<sup>91</sup> E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (England, 1968), p. 37.



. . . the story can be defined. It is a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence . . . It can have only one merit: that of making the audience want to know what happens next. And conversely it can only have one fault: that of making the audience not want to know what happens next.<sup>92</sup>

The inability of the novelist to include only those aspects of setting which have a direct bearing upon the life of Akhenaton has, on occasion, the effect of frustrating the reader. The vision of the conscious God is clouded by the more superfluous comments about Egyptian domestic and state affairs.

MacEwen has, however, made a step toward rectifying the indefinite setting in her first novel. While King of Egypt, King of Dreams has a setting so elaborate as to detract from her vision of the sun king, restraint with the details of time and place would strike a balance between the overly-vague setting of the first novel, and the overly-specific setting of the second.

This balance would provide a more credible setting for the characters of her novels, characters who provocatively suggest the discoveries of a creative existence.

Such characters are rare in modern literature according to Nathalie Sarraute. In an article lamenting the denigration of character in the modern novel she speaks of the relationship between writer and reader which is at the core of this denigration in fiction:

There is , on the part of both author and reader, an unusually sophisticated state of mind. For not only are they both wary of the character, but

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92 Aspects of the Novel, p. 35.

through him, they are wary of each other. He had been their meeting ground, the solid base from which they could take off in a common effort toward new experiments and new discoveries. He has now become the converging point of their mutual distrust, the devastated ground on which they confront each other.<sup>93</sup>

With the characters of Julian and Akhenaton is MacEwen's attempt to present once more that meeting ground conducive to experimentation and discovery. Both magician and king contain in their symbolism the element of power. It is not the power of simple magic trickery, nor the power of the temporal ruler; it is rather, the power attained by the totally conscious man. The characters of Julian and Akhenaton, while elevated in terms of the position of common humanity, are drawn in such a way as to convey the universal quality of their experience, suggesting the possibility of the reader's discovery of such power.

The magician Julian eats bread,<sup>94</sup> makes disrespectful remarks about his parents,<sup>95</sup> and generally finds his home life an unsatisfactory one.<sup>96</sup> These very real problems of late adolescence are universal for thoughtful man, whatever his particular time and place may be. And while the nature of Julian's professional interests does set him apart, alchemy is no more distasteful to the mother of the magician<sup>97</sup> than acting might be to the mother who wished for her son a career in law or medicine. This choice of profession in the

93 Approaches to the Novel, "The Age of Suspicion, p. 209.

94 Julian the Magician, p. 4.

95 Ibid., pp. 5-6.

96 Ibid., p. 111, p. 113, p. 116.

97 Ibid., p. 111.

face of parental dissent marks the captivating independence of the magician.

A further fascination in the character of Julian is the obvious duality of his physical character. It is true that this aspect of the magician is overworked in the novel's narrative, but the romance surrounding a beautiful physical appearance is not entirely diminished. When the magician himself becomes aware of the importance of his body and its role in the evocation of belief, the hypnotic effect created by his presence is a reality for the reader as well:

Suddenly he was hopelessly aware of his own arresting beauty--he could scream at the bloneness of his hair, the startling depths of his impossible eyes, the arms hanging limply at his sides, hard and white, the outstanding blueveins at his wrist, the delicate strength of his fingers, the quick knuckles and loose joints. Feeling himself, alive and watched in every section, every corner of his being, he became loaded with the weight of it; he dulled blessedly for a moment and bowed his head.<sup>98</sup>

The physical beauty of the magician, the gift of a blonde mother and gypsy father, mark his physique as his studies mark his spiritual growth. Both set the magician apart, not only from the common man, but from others in his profession as well.<sup>99</sup>

Because Julian does have a very definite character, one which exemplifies sensitivity,<sup>100</sup> ambition,<sup>101</sup> and humility and arrogance in equal portions,<sup>102</sup> he brings to the novel a

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98 Julian the Magician, p. 44.

99 Ibid., p. 122.

100 Ibid., p. 114.

101 Ibid., p. 123.

102 Ibid., p. 116.

humanity which transcends the one-to-one correspondence of allegory or defective symbolism.

The characters of Peter, Johann and Aubrey are flat by comparison. Peter serves as blind idolizer, useful in the development of the character of the magician and eventual counterpart of Christ's Peter, denying his master so that the magician might face the anger of the mob alone. Johann is given the role of the Judas, betraying his master when no betrayal was necessary. However, the mythic structure of the novel and the total identification of the magician with Christ, does make this role necessary. It is merely that; for Johann does little more than have jealous thoughts concerning the relationship of the magician and Peter, drive the wagon, betray his master and finally drown himself.<sup>103</sup> The character of Aubrey is the least definite, which makes his role in the novel the most difficult to define.

Philip Korowitch is representative of the man of science. His character serves a contrast to the mystical magician in terms of his insistence upon clarity and logic<sup>104</sup> but his ultimate symbolism is in his position of the rational man, the counterpart of Pontius Pilate, who sees the irrational desire of the mob to kill the magician:

It's out of my hands . . . I'm not responsible . . . they're a pack of children . . . they're a pack of savages, he went on, wringing his hands as in a ritual.<sup>105</sup>

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103 Julian the Magician, pp. 81-82.

104 Ibid., pp. 48-50.

105 Ibid., p. 99.

It is, then, the character of the magician which is of prime importance to the novelist. In this sense his diary is a justifiable addition and a fitting conclusion to the novel which bears his name.

But the diary again raises a possible failure in the novelist's ability to depict the character of the sensitive magician in her third person narration. Had more time been spent developing the other characters of the novel, the first-person narration, which explains so much while employing obvious techniques to maintain some of the mystery of the novel, might well have been avoided.

The character of Akhenaton is drawn in such a way as to invite the belief inspired by the character of the magician. The child who loves the myths of creation,<sup>106</sup> becomes the man who loves and celebrates Ra. The tender relationship with his sister<sup>107</sup> finds its parallel in his relationship with his wife Nefertiti.<sup>108</sup>

His physical characteristics, originally the cause of much shame and embarrassment, eventually had the hypnotic effect achieved by the beauty of the magician:

Almost naked, for now they judged him not in terms of his dress but of his flesh, and his nakedness was a matter of degree. Since they had come to Akhenaton he had gradually stripped himself of the elaborations of a king and made it known that he preferred to wear his own flesh like an extraordinary costume. He flaunted its gross contours, its insane symmetry, and everyone became fascinated with his body.<sup>109</sup>

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106 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, pp. 1-10.

107 Ibid., p. 19.

108 Ibid., pp. 42-43.

109 Ibid., p. 57.

The character of a man who can twist what is disadvantageous to his advantage is the essence of Akhenaton. Bullied by his father,<sup>110</sup> laughed at by his people generally,<sup>111</sup> his story of the successful conversion of dream into reality, however briefly the reality of monotheism lasted, is a compelling one.

The character of Ay is, in this novel, a parallel to the character of Philip Korowitch in the story of the magician. Both men serve as foils to the mystical heroes of the novels in their belief in rationality. The character of Ay, and consequently the relationship between the rational man and the mystic, is more fully drawn in this second novel. Of Akhenaton and Ay it is said:

They enjoyed each other in an odd, incomplete sort of way. They seldom conversed in the real sense of the word, but challenged each other instead. It never occurred to the cynical Master of Horse that Wanre might have wanted to learn something from him. He merely recognized his role and played it well.<sup>112</sup>

Ay's ability to play the roles required of him may well be the motivation of the novelist in including his memoirs. Here she offers the rational man opportunity to defend his chosen stance:

I was not treacherous, as everybody seemed to think. I merely reacted differently to different people. With the king I was one man; with Tiy, another, and so on. I remember being vaguely frightened by the idea that perhaps, after all, everything depends on where one stands.<sup>113</sup>

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110 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 26.

111 Ibid., pp. 22-24.

112 Ibid., p. 89.

113 Ibid., pp. 233-234.

Ay, in his inability to commit himself to one person, one ideal, and indeed one dream, exposes the isolation of the rational man. It is then, to the credit of the novelist that she chooses the creative dreamer of her novel as her hero.

The characters of Akhenaton and Ay, complement each other in the way that Julian and Philip Korowitch do not. Both sense the dependence each has upon the other as necessary for each to be himself.

As there is an evolution in symbolism and mythic structure from magician to king, so too there is an evolution or development of character. While none of the characters in the second novel are portrayed as completely as Akhenaton, there are none as flat and allegorical as the characters of Peter, Johann and Aubrey.

The development of character is an improvement in the technique of the novelist. However, in the second novel, MacEwen creates characters of questionable significance to the novel's story. The character of Benremut, for example, seems only to be included as a means for showing the superiority of her sister, Nefertiti:

Ay's other daughter, Benremut, whom he lovingly called the Ugly One . . . was usually highly dissatisfied. . . . She would have gone about totally unnoticed, even shunned, were it not for her two dwarves, who lent her a kind of perverse distinction. <sup>114</sup>

The purpose served by the character of Benremut is principally that of contrasting characterization with the lovely Nefertiti. She serves this purpose well but is not essential to the story of Akhenaton.

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<sup>114</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 168.

The number of characters in King of Egypt, King of Dreams and their diversity of kind, certainly testifies to the fact that the novelist is working toward the unity of all things by representing in her fiction as many contrasts as possible. The character of Tiy is contrasted with the character of Nefertiti. As a "basically tasteless woman,"<sup>115</sup> it is her drive and ambition which Akhenaton defies in taking his stand against the priests of Opet. In Tiy Gwen MacEwen develops fully the negative traits hinted at in Benremut. As balances to these treacherous women, the novelist creates Sitamon, Meritaton and most importantly, Nefertiti. Each character has the effect of being the opposite to some other character, with the result that the poles of human types assume primary importance, and the story of the dreamer king seems secondary.

The character of Parennufer balances the character of Ay, for while neither of the men really understand the king, Parennufer is able to love him because of his dream, while Ay finds his dream suspect. Akhenaton learns from Parennufer the positive lessons of Ra, which are balanced by the cynicism of Ay.

All attitudes portrayed by the various characters of the novels are valid in terms of actual human existence. Their inclusion in the story of the dreamer king, who houses all dualities, is the novelist's attempt to have the combination of characters parallel the character of the dreamer king. An alternative might be the sole characterization

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<sup>115</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 2.



of Akhenaton, Tiy, Nefertiti and Ay, where the contrasts would be represented in very intense degrees. This would probably result in a much shorter work, where the memoirs concluding the novel would seem unnecessary.

These memoirs, a variation of the diary of Julian, indicate a pattern favoured by the novelist; and indeed, all three of the first-person narratives--the diary and the memoirs of Ay and Meritaton--are very strong in character development. It might well be to the novelist's advantage to abandon third-person narration altogether, and have each of her characters speak for himself through something like a diary, developing a language suitable to each of the characters depicted.

In an essay devoted to the study of the poetry of Gwen MacEwen, D. G. Jones observes comments on the type of language used in her poetry and the motivation for this use. These observations are surprisingly relevant to the novels:

Gwen MacEwen is another who cannot resist the appeal of old visions, and her language becomes hieratic, incantatory. Yet she does not abandon her immediate world or the intonations, the accent of contemporary speech. She . . . would suggest that the concern to be inclusive, to take an inventory, to make a dumb wilderness vocal, and in a speech that is true to its time and its place, cuts across the division frequently drawn between myth-makers and realists. All eloquence need not be lies, all myths academic.<sup>116</sup>

The use of the word "hieratic" to describe her language (hieratic alluding to priests and the priesthood, and an ancient abridged form of Egyptian hieroglyphics),<sup>117</sup> is fitting in terms of the subject matter of the novels, as

<sup>116</sup> D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock (Toronto, 1970), p. 180.

<sup>117</sup> The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, p. 669.

is the "magical chanting"<sup>118</sup> suggested by "incantatory." Also of value, is Jones' noting of the contemporary aspects of Gwen MacEwen's language, first brought to light by Gose, in relation to Julian the Magician: "the language is poetic and ironic, slangy modern and analytic."<sup>119</sup>

That these descriptions of the language of the poetry of Gwen MacEwen apply equally to the language of her prose, raises questions of a deeper order. Although the descriptions bring to light the combination of the language of 'old visions' (myth) and the language of contemporary speech, and the reasons for this combination (to be inclusive, to take an inventory, to make a dumb wilderness vocal, and in a speech that is true to its time and place), they do not come to grips with the problems this combination entails.

The opening line of Julian the Magician has the incantatory language referred to by Jones: "Bulls up out of their rushes, bats' wings, bulls up out of rushes, bats' wings, bull's blood! . . ."<sup>120</sup> The symbolism surrounding the bull, partially established by Jung as a representative of the father,<sup>121</sup> placed in the first lines of the novel, can be viewed as a kind of invocation by the magician of this Father, capitalized because of its connection with the Divine Father of Julian and Christ. The chant is alluded to in the next line as sounding like "a skipping-rope chant of devils,"<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, p. 719.

<sup>119</sup> "They Shall Have Arcana," p. 36.

<sup>120</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 33.

<sup>122</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 3.

at once introducing the opposite of Divine encounter (devils), modified by an adjective connoting children at play. The desire to be inclusive (that is, to enclose all polarities in a single unified work), is said to be at the root of the combinations of language used by Gwen MacEwen. But credibility of the story contained in the novel must be given precedence over this desire.

Inclusiveness is inherent in the magician's symbolism, for he is a focal point for opposites. Enclosure is also attained through his initial suspicion of the power he has tapped with regard to the art underlying magic, for he first believes it may well be of the devil as of God. Since inclusion is an integral part of the symbolism chosen to tell the story of the magician, the shifts in the kinds of language used by the novelist are unnecessary, and diminish credibility.

Through her narrative, MacEwen suggests a further problem in the use of language:

More and more his statements became allusive and each word volleyed back to its unspoken genesis. Each sentence was a glass window through which you were to look and discover. Stained glass, thickly stained.<sup>123</sup>

The image on a stained glass window is much like the vision of a novel. Light will illumine the image on the glass as language will illumine the vision of the novelist but it must be a strong and focused light, and a strong and focused language. While inclusiveness prompts Gwen MacEwen to combine the kinds of language used, its result is a diffusion of

<sup>123</sup> Julian the Magician, p. 27.

imagery, leaving the vision she would impart to her reader in partial darkness.

Strong narrative passages offset the poorer use of language, and in these passages the novelist strikes the note of harmony between her vision and the language used in expressing it:

The magician had flung back the covers in sleep and stretched his body to the point of pain. The long arms were spread like wings from the chest, the palms turned up; the chin fitted into the hollow between shoulder and collarbone.<sup>124</sup>

The strong identification of the magician Julian to the posture of Christ in crucifixion is through allusion. The narrator need not explain the correspondence, for this image of the magician foreshadows his own crucifixion and is readily likened to the crucifixion of Christ.

The third person narrative is an attempt to enclose the similarities and differences in Julian and Christ: "The villagers had raided the camp that afternoon, angered to tears at their inability to find their black christ."<sup>125</sup> The lack of capitalization in the reference to Julian, and the insertion of the colour black as descriptive of the magician, remind the reader of the contrasting possibilities focused in the magician. But the magician himself personifies the contrasts, rendering the descriptive passages about him less effective.

The diary of the magician contains much forceful language conducive to presenting the symbolism surrounding him in a

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124 Julian the Magician, p. 28.

125 Ibid., p. 63.

less contrived way. His speech about himself has the quality of honesty, inviting the reader's belief in him:

Enough of raging. I am a quiet man. While I write I endeavour to squash too much into too little. The page is too thin--like the transparency of a flywing and the ink is too thick, made, it seems, from frog's blood and treesap. The quill has a mind of its own; it digs into the leaf without mercy while my mind, O my mind, is a restrained thing; would not under any conditions, involve itself in aggression.<sup>126</sup>

The compelling experiences of magic and alchemy and his studies of Boehme and the Gnostics stretch the magician in many directions at once. He longs for peace, but senses the importance of giving in to the quill, the importance of submission to the power manifesting itself to him.

This passage may indeed be autobiographical. The novelist, like the magician, sees too much for the word on the page to convey. She, like the magician, is hampered by a vision too large for expression. His worries are her worries, as his questions are hers:

I worry about lack of enclosure, lack of self contained self. I create then; must I pass myself around like pieces of wedding-cake to do so? Must the creative whole be slit, split and sliced merely to manifest itself? No--the Tarot Cards say differently: beth, the letter beth, they say, is the magician. And the letter beth means "house." Then what does the magician house? The magician in the picture has a wand, a cup, a sword and a coin.  
. . . The magician houses the four elements . . .  
but are they one or four? Is he one or many?<sup>127</sup>

Answers to the many questions asked by the magician have a direct bearing on the kinds of language used by the novelist:

My creative power, . . . is the projection of myself and produces the semblance of another; . . . I only

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<sup>126</sup> Julian the Magician, pp. 114-115.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

am the Knower and the Actor. That one I AM, whether alone and unmanifest or appearing in the multiplicity of created things . . .<sup>128</sup>

Inclusion of many different kinds of language does not mean there is more than one vision or meaning. Indeed, the vision must be expressed in as many different ways as possible:

The magician eats his parts. We eat our parts to form wholes. And the wholes are parts of a Whole and the Whole has all parts and no parts.<sup>129</sup>

This view of the process of wholeness indicates the necessity for magician (and novelist) to assimilate as many contrasts as possible into self. Indeed, this assimilation is the only way to discover the contrasts as manifestations of the One, the Divine. The parts the magician refers to may be likened to the contracting language of the novelist. Contemporary speech intimates the inclusion of the small and ordinary aspects of daily life, into the Whole. The symbolic language of myth intimates the inclusion of man's spiritual, less tangible concerns. Magician and novelist would leave nothing out. All is a manifestation of the Divine.

The symbol of king, while similar to magician in terms of conscious knowledge of Divine self, is much larger and therefore able to "house" even more of the contrasts manifesting the "Whole." Colour symbolism in the story of the magician, overworked at times, and obvious as a technique to show the significance of all things, takes on a subtle spiritual dimension in the second novel:

Akhenaton was almost naked. He stepped down from his silver-gold . . . chariot and saw that the pastel

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128 Julian the Magician, p. 124.

129 Ibid.

reins had left blue and pink stripes on his palms where his sweat had mingled with the colours. He rubbed his palms together and they went purple.<sup>130</sup>

The gold of the chariot (interestingly the end product of the transmutation of metal in alchemy) is presented with the purple stain on the hands of the king, purple being a colour associated with royalty, as well as with the "processes of dissimulation, passivity and debilitation."<sup>131</sup> Miss MacEwen attempts to show the disintegration as well as the integration of the process of wholeness.

As with the first novel, criticism of this second novel is not levelled at the attempts to assimilate the many contrasts of existence; rather, it is concerned with description superfluous to the novel's story line. Depiction of the character of Tiy is illustrative of this superfluity:

. . . Tiy fought for her own claims and vowed up and down the palace that she would put her son on the throne and marry him to his sister, so that her only two offsprings would be the rulers of Keme. She would storm through the palace, which was known as the House of Rejoicing, in a splitting rage, cursing the world and everyone in it, mistreating her handmaidens, insulting the noblemen, and finally fall into a long deep sleep from which she would awake clear and calm with a new plan.<sup>132</sup>

Irony is most fitting to a vision working toward the inclusion of all contrasts, but the irony of Tiy raging through a palace known as the "House of Rejoicing" lacks subtlety.

Furthermore, the description of Tiy as storming through the palace because of an inability to get her own way, is not entirely credible. Gwen MacEwen, in her choice of the

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130 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 57.

131 A Dictionary of Symbols, p. 50.

132 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 6.

symbol of Queen, is limited by the connotations of this symbol. A decorum surrounds the persons of royalty, which is totally lacking in the character of Tiy. If it is the purpose of the novelist to shatter the symbolic implications of queen she risks the diffusion of energy caused by digression from her main story.

A device used frequently to convey the assimilation of contrasts, is that of pun. Ay cries "My Sun Akhenaton,"<sup>133</sup> as he lunges forward to murder his king. The king does not have the advantage of the spelling of the word and so he may interpret it as his royal title, or as Ay's final acknowledgement of himself as Ay's son. The clever use of this pun is in its spelling. Through it Gwen MacEwen allows the reader to see the character of Ay as non-committal in his relationship with the king, even at his death. Akhenaton longed for Ay's admission that the "Beloved Unbeliever" did indeed sire the king he called "a lie". The paradoxical relationship between Ay and Akhenaton brings together the contrasting spirits of believer and non-believer. The puns on the word "Sun" between the two men during the reign of Akhenaton are so numerous, that this final pun is easily missed by the reader who is tired of struggling with the relationship.

The lyrical quality in the language of Gwen MacEwen is indeed an asset. Descriptions often become the incantations so suitable to man's encounter with the Divine. The final section of King of Egypt, King of Dreams, where the

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133 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 249.



author describes the poignant love affair between the son of Akhenaton, Smenkhare, and his daughter, Meritaton, exemplifies this lyric quality:

I stood over you. All the torches had flickered out save one, and its light played upon your golden mask, your hands. I suddenly remembered that of the three coffins--past, present, and future--this was the middle one, the present. Only it had survived, for the past was destroyed and the future unsown.<sup>134</sup>

At this point in the lives of the children of Akhenaton, the priests of Opet have fulfilled the prophecy and killed the young king, Smenkhare. In describing the coffins of death the narrator alludes to the magic discovery of the importance of the present in the vision of the whole man. It is the present which demands celebration, the present, in all its contrasting guises. The child of Akhenaton is blessed with this knowledge through her relationship with the son of Ra.

The lyrical language of the last portion of this second novel signals the completion of the mythic cycle. The process of wholeness, begun by the heroic magician and marked by the advent of God, is completed in the symbol of Akhenaton. The present is the place for celebration, of the many, of the one, of the birth, of the death, of God:

The rays of the Aton were remote, virginal. The power of the god was in its rawest form. Things were merely being lit by it, not drawn towards it. Was this the horror that my father had felt, was this his private fear--the remoteness of the god? There was nothing beneficial now in those awful rays, nor did it seem to me there was anything simple about dark and light--for this cold impersonal dawn was for me another kind of darkness, a new and secret form of night.<sup>135</sup>

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134 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 277.

135 Ibid., p. 279.

The language of Meritaton is descriptive of the death of God, at least as He is manifested in Ra. This manifestation of the Divine dies only to give birth to "a new and secret form of night." The mystery ever-present in the vision of Gwen MacEwen is conveyed through a language subtly implying the regeneration of the mythic cycle of man's encounter with the Divine. The night is the place of confrontation for the next magician. Day will dawn when he discovers the knowledge of his Divine self. He will be king. This transformation will be caused for celebration of God as manifested in the many contrasts of the present. And once again the conscious God will die.

Gwen MacEwen's fascination for the mystery in this process is evident in the language of both novels. In her story of Julian, she attempts to create a truly mysterious language by having her magician, in times of stress, curse backwards: "gnud s'y!f!" The narrator explains this phenomenon is attributable to the "curious backward character to Julian's mind."<sup>136</sup> The concept of "backward" is intrinsic to the theme of making the unconscious conscious, for this process takes the magician deep into his own mystery. The man who has no interest in the Divine, goes out. He assumes that his surface self is all he is, and that the only direction there is, therefore, is outward, to people, to things. The magician's movement is inward, to himself and Divine mystery.

A variation of this backward concept is the author's invention of "an esoteric dialect which [she has] not been

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136 Julian the Magician, p. 118.

able to decipher."<sup>137</sup> It has the effect of producing the mysterious atmosphere experienced during the process of wholeness, and may indicate the failure of ordinary language as a fit medium for expressing encounter with the Divine.

Blith ga rexrtrono, has eem noo halek ronom;  
kalooth kalooth, haara natzeem onboi ts com  
oomyo.<sup>138</sup>

More effective, however, than this spontaneous language are the allusions to the mysterious ancestors of Julian in alchemy and Gnosticism; and it is, perhaps, this which prompted Gwen MacEwen to employ Egyptian terms in her second novel. Their unfamiliarity brings mystery to the novel, while their realistic nature lends authenticity. A conversation between Ay and Akhenaton during an afternoon of drinking together exemplifies the author's skillful use of actual Egyptian words:

Ay suggested a trip into the desert around the northern suburbs where they might come across several thunderbolts if they looked long enough. Would he like to make a search? He quickly added that biya iron might be extracted from them--very good for knives--to which the king replied he had no use for weapons.<sup>139</sup>

Biya, "iron extracted from meteorites which was thought to have magical powers,"<sup>140</sup> is implied by Ay, to be possible motivation for Akhenaton's search for thunderbolts. No doubt the magic quality of this metal suggests to Ay that his king might have some interest in it. Ay does not realize that the king has no need for magic metals, or for magic knives. He

137 Julian the Magician, p. 123.

138 Ibid.

139 King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 135.

140 Ibid., p. 285.

himself is magic.

The glossary of names and terms included in the novel, is also helpful in that the author occasionally presents modern day parallels useful in grasping the full meaning of words. For Example, Heb Sed Jubilee, is defined as follows:

A ceremony wherein Pharaoh publicly renewed his youth by demonstrating his vigour. A sort of anniversary, as well, marking the end of a certain regnal term. A modern parallel might be found in Mao's swimming of the Yangtse River.<sup>141</sup>

The purpose of inclusiveness (here shown in the linking of past and present), finds expression even in the choice of Egyptian words used by the author. The myths of creation, told to Akhenaton by his tutor, Parennufer, also serve this purpose. These myths and legends contain the mystery of existence in their ambiguities and paradoxes:

Now another time, the Eye of Ra fell to earth; it didn't want to go back to heaven so it cried, and its tears created man. Remyet, romyet, tears, mankind . . . you see how similar the two words sound? Perhaps it means that man was born to weep.<sup>142</sup>

Gwen MacEwen has obviously found the exploration of language, all language, to be a most important part of the process of wholeness. What things are named, is only the beginning. She is interested in the why of language, and in the discoveries made through experimenting with it.

It is true that this experimentation often blurs the vision in the novels and that this blurring can frustrate the reader. But the heroism of innovation, in language and in other aspects of her craft, overshadows the individual failures in technique.

<sup>141</sup> King of Egypt, King of Dreams, p. 285.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

## CONCLUSION

Gwen MacEwen, through the symbols of magician and king, has endeavoured to make conscious the possibility for man's encounter with the Divine. She has tried to call forth the dreamer living deep within the rational man as she has tried to call forth the magician living deep within this dreamer. The elevated mythic language and symbolism and the contrasting contemporary language depicting scenes from ordinary life are her attempts to show the presence of myth and of magic in daily living, a presence invoking the celebration of the conscious God.

Critical response, and the response of the general reading public, hint at the failure of MacEwen's attempts to dramatize this vision. Celebration is rarely heard in the literature of modern man, but it is heard. Leonard Cohen, in his controversial Beautiful Losers,<sup>1</sup> offers a vision set in the century which sees the mystic, the dreamer, as loser. His characters do not succeed in terms of twentieth century success, but their lives exemplify the magic quality Miss MacEwen is striving to depict. The Steppenwölf<sup>2</sup> of Herman Hesse strives for this same magic of the whole man; and while Harry Haller has not attained it at the novel's end, Hesse makes it clear his character will

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1 Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers (Toronto, 1970).

2 Herman Hesse, Steppenwolf (New York, 1966).

continue to work toward this goal.

But it may well be that Gwen MacEwen, in her desire to manifest the celebration of God in her novels, has decided that the twentieth century, with its emphasis upon reason and practicality, is not a fitting place for the magical dance of life. It is a century of gleaming surfaces, of shining exposure. Its advertisements play upon the obvious, in man's nature, in the nature of the machines he creates.

Possibly it is this lack of subtlety in the twentieth century that has prompted MacEwen's flight into the past, first to the mysterious seventeenth century of her magician, and then to the cryptic world of her ambiguous king. She could see in these settings the mysterious symbolism illuminating man's hunger for God, a hunger she could not place in her own time. But this flight betrays that very quality she longed to avoid in her own century — the obvious. Her magician and king are not subtle expressions of Divine Confrontation. Their myths belie the mysterious nature of transformation for they are too well explained. The novelist could not present her myths and then let go, for her settings demanded explanations because of their unfamiliarity to the twentieth century reader. And explanations do not belong in mythology.

In a very real way, MacEwen's choice of setting hinders her attempts to show the mythical Divine celebration in everyday life. The revelation of man's Divine self must be shown to him where he is, as Cohen and Hesse have tried to do. Twentieth century man cannot identify with a seventeenth

century magician until he is aware that he himself is a magician. He cannot identify with the celebration of a Son of God, in Egypt until he has seen this celebration in his own time and place. Once the magical Divine life has been depicted and understood in his own time, then he can extend this knowledge to all time, to eternity, and does indeed have cause for celebration.

But the twentieth century is an abrasive place to live. The survival of magical dreamers depends upon their strength, but more importantly, upon their conscious knowledge that the Divine Life is offered and evidenced in their particular time and place. The novelist, in her attempt to hang on to her dream, may have imposed an isolation upon herself that has denied her the actual experience of her vision. Such an isolation would make the experience of magical creativity a vicarious one, an experience had through studying those writers who have consciously celebrated their God.

As was shown in the discussion of character development in both novels, vicarious experience cannot replace firsthand participation in the unifying process at work in the universe. If it is to be understood, it must be submitted to and lived. It must be lived in the time and place of the present, for only the present offers the actual experience of Divine magical creativity. Karl Jaspers, in a philosophical rendering of his hunger for Divinity, gives the necessity for participation eloquent expression:

I do not relate to transcendence by thinking of it, nor by dealing with it in the sort of action that might be repeated according to rules. I am soaring

toward it or declining from it. Existentially I cannot experience the one except through the other; my rise depends upon my possible and real fall, and vice versa. For thousands of years, man's rise and fall have been transcendently narrated in primal thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

Gwen MacEwen also has an eloquence befitting the expression of the celebration of Divine life. Her voice, like her dream, is strong and clear. But she must give this voice to her own time and place after she has discovered and participated in the magic of the twentieth century, if her dream of the conscious Gods is to be realized and their voices heard.

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<sup>3</sup> Karl Jaspers, "Rise and Fall," Philosophy, Vol. 3, (Chicago, 1971), p. 74.



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