

THEY SHALL HAVE ARCANA

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SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, the medical profession became more attached to gold and methodology than to the human nature of the patient. Chaucer recorded this in the fourteenth century, as did Paracelsus in the sixteenth. After sixty years of psychiatry, modern readers are probably sympathetic with Paracelsus' concern for the patient's emotions, and perhaps even with his mystical evocation of alchemy. In 1529 he made an attack on the establishment of physicians, looking to the occult for future progress.

Don't trust you Galen and Avicenna. The Stone will be crushed and the Heaven [i.e., alchemy and astronomy] will make new doctors who know the four elements, magic and Cabbala. They will be *adepts* and *archei*. They will be chemists and possess the quintessence. They shall have arcana, the tinctures, and the mysteries.¹

The attempt to turn some such yearning for a spiritual key to the secrets of life into active and practical help for man is made by the hero of Gwendolyn MacEwen's novel, *Julian the Magician*.² Like the hero of Bergman's movie, *The Magician*, he travels with a small troop in a wagon from town to town. He also meets with "the town elders" and is quizzed by the sceptical town physician whose wife feels an affinity for the magician. Like the other again, Julian both believes and doubts the mysteries and illusions he is involved in. Actually his relation to them is quite different, but before we begin to discover how, let me mention some of the defects of Miss MacEwen's novel.

Bergman's strong point — his mastery of the mood and tone which force us to suspend disbelief — is unfortunately her weak point. The setting of the novel is vaguely post-Renaissance, but the language is poetic and ironic, slangy modern and analytic. The ingredients do not mix smoothly. There remains the story:

Julian is imitating Christ, as indicated not only by chapter titles but by long italicized passages paraphrased from appropriate sections of the New Testament. Consequently, the reader who knows what happened to Christ knows what happens to Julian the Magician. If, therefore, this study, which began in alchemy, now leaves behind any attempt to deal with the story as such, and moves on to more alchemy, a fairy tale, and mystical psychiatry, my excuse is that Miss MacEwen brings it on herself.

Like this study, her book is self-conscious. Especially so is her title character. The parallels with the life of Christ are there mainly because Julian forces them on himself and others. By the time we reach the end of the novel, we are even ready to believe that they are the natural manifestation of an archetypal pattern. I mention this possibility to indicate that Miss MacEwen is also self-conscious. Undigested references to little-read religious figures help attest to this: we are given quotations from Celsus, in his anti-Christian work; Origen, the early church father who answered him; Boehme and Paracelsus; the Zohar, the Kabbalah and the *Pistis Sophia* ("a Christian Gnostic writing with roots in upper Egypt" [p. 113]).

"Undigested," I said, *as references*. But suppose we take seriously the world this opens up to Julian and his author. Suppose we look at the details and patterns of the novel in the light of Julian's main difference with his teacher Kardin. Kardin is a magician whose real interest is in alchemy, that is, in the real if mysterious changes substances can undergo. Julian is a magician whose real interest is "human alchemy," that is, the real if mysterious changes people undergo. Holding the full implications of the "human" part until later, let's begin with the alchemic part of the phrase. Julian scorns the magician who can see no farther than trickery. "Woe to a pig like Cagliostro who shoved gold into a tube during an experiment where he claimed to 'transmute' metal!" (p. 112). This opinion takes on force when we remember Julian's comment on his mother from the previous page: "I think that even after 20 years she still feels that gypsy shoving me into her womb." Add to the verb "shove" 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, so as a human alchemist he tries to create gold out of lead, light out of dark.

The two undoubted miracles that Julian performs are first to give an idiot the light of human intelligence and second to give a blind man the light of human vision. Both miracles occur in the same place, by the river in the dark, in the

mud and bullrushes. The first man appears to an outside observer like “a log, a piece of darkness” (p. 31). The second one has his eyes wiped with Julian’s spit mixed with dirt; he is then sent to the river whence he returns dripping with riverweed, his sight restored. The crowd hails Julian as a man of God, a “divine black-christ” (p. 56). Julian runs away, partly because he is dazed and humble, but also partly out of self-irony. When, for instance, his disciple Peter asks of the first miracle, “what did you do there?” Julian answers, “Spit spittle! Made charms . . . peed in the bullrushes!” (p. 39 author’s ellipses). He also speaks of “magic manure.” Earlier, while still an apprentice magician, he had noted in his diary, “bullrushes, by the way — I noticed this yesterday — are actually bulls’ feces” (p. 119). He is in other words working from the dark principle which the Gnostics, the alchemists and modern psychiatry have all seen as the true source of “high” aspiration.

An alchemical motto was “Our gold is not vulgar gold.” Although early practitioners, as well as late, certainly worked with physical substances, the spiritual theme is present in one of the earliest of alchemical documents, the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus, a brief, general, and typically obscure series of statements. I quote two:

What is below, is like what is above, and what is above is like that which is below, for the performing of the marvels of the one thing.

It ascends from the earth into the heaven, and again descends into the earth and receives the power of the superiors and inferiors.³

Similarly, Julian in his diary writes,

The wholes are parts of a Whole and the Whole has all parts and no parts. IAO IAO IAO. Is the High Self going forth in manifestation. IAO is the disciplined lower mind.

IAO is christ and I am iao.⁴

We will follow this central identification or transformation farther presently. But first we must look at the passage preceding the foregoing in Julian’s diary. “Saturn devoured his children, says Boehme. What is this? . . . The magician eats his parts. We eat our parts to form wholes” (p. 124). Saturn was lead in alchemic symbolism. He was also the devouring father (Cronos) who ate the younger gods, one of whom was destined to overthrow him. That one, Jupiter (Zeus), forced him to disgorge the glory he contained. We can see a basis, in other words, for the alchemic symbolism. But the same situation can also be phrased in a

pattern with religious overtones: the dark wild man both contains and is the forerunner of the saviour figure.

In case this way of putting it doesn't automatically turn the reader's mind to the New Testament, let's look at the first of Miss MacEwen's italic passages, her version of John the Baptist: "The wild man, standing knee-deep in the water, his coat of camel's hair dripping and absurd . . . acknowledged and baptized him" (p. 14). "Him" is of course Christ, or in the novel Julian. Keeping in mind Julian's golden hair "like the sun rising" (p. 42), and not forgetting Saturn as the heavy father, I would like to turn aside from the novel for a page or two, and assert that Miss MacEwen's description of John the Baptist is strikingly similar to the description given in a German folk tale of its title character, "Iron Hans" (as collected by the brothers Grimm). Because the tale itself is relevant — like alchemy a carryover from the dark ages — I shall simply retell it as briefly as possible.

A MAN HUNTING GAME in a forest where other huntsmen had disappeared saw a naked arm reach out of a deep pool and draw in his dog. When three men had emptied the pool with pails, they discovered at the bottom a wild man whose hair hung down over his face to his knees. This wild man (Iron Hans) was bound and taken to the castle where the king had an iron cage made for him. The key to it was entrusted to the queen. The king's young son, playing alone in the courtyard one day, bounced his golden ball into the cage by mistake. Iron Hans refused to give it back unless freed. When the boy reluctantly agreed, the wild man told him that the key lay under his mother's pillow. The boy got it, but in opening the cage door pinched his fingers. The wild man came out, gave him the golden ball and started to leave. The boy pleaded with him not to go or he would be beaten for freeing him. Iron Hans then set the boy on his shoulder and carried him into the depths of the forest.

There he explained that the boy must stay with him, but that he would be treated well if he did as he was told. "I have treasure and gold enough and to spare, more than anyone in the whole world." The boy's task was to guard a golden well to see that nothing fell in and contaminated it. As he sat by it, however, the boy's finger pained him so much that involuntarily he dipped it in the water. It came out gilded and nothing he could do would take off the gold. Iron Hans discovered it, but let him off. Next a hair from his head fell in. Again

he was let off. The third time, as he was looking at himself in the water, his long hair fell in, and when he pulled it out, it was golden and glittered like the sun. He tied his handkerchief over it, but Iron Hans exposed it and said that this time he must banish the boy. Since he knew the boy's heart was not bad, however, Iron Hans granted him one thing. If he were ever in need, he could come and call for Iron Hans at the edge of the forest.

Keeping a cap over his gold hair, the youth became a cook's helper to a king. When the king asked why he did not take off his cap in the royal presence, the youth answered that he had a bad wound on his head. He then became the gardener's boy. The king's daughter, attracted by the reflection of his hair, asked him for some flowers. To her surprise he brought her wild ones; when he would not take off his cap, she snatched it off. Then she gave him some gold coins. He gave them to the gardener's children to play with. This sequence was repeated a second day. On the third day he foiled her efforts.

War broke out, and the youth was determined to help, despite the ridicule of the warriors. He rode a three-legged horse to the forest where he called "Iron Hans!" Thanks to the wild man, the youth was able to lead an iron troop on a fiery charger and win the day for the king. Afterwards, hoping to find out who his unknown helper was, the king gave a three-day feast. On the first day, the princess threw a golden apple which was caught by the youth, who had been outfitted again by Iron Hans. The second day the same thing happened. The third day, the youth, dressed in black armor, was pursued. He escaped after being wounded in the leg, but his helmet fell off, exposing his golden hair.

Next day the princess asked about the gardener's boy. The gardener said he was working in the garden and had given his children three golden apples. Again the princess removed his cap, and charged him with being the unknown knight. He admitted it, and being asked by the king to name a reward for his help, he chose the princess. During the wedding, a proud king burst into the hall. He identified himself as Iron Hans, whose bewitchment the youth had broken. All his treasure now belonged to the youth.

Despite my abbreviated telling of it, I assume that a sense of the impressiveness of this simple tale comes through. But what about the novel we are ostensibly considering? Comparing the two, we might draw the moral that Miss MacEwen needs a greater mastery of the genre to make the image patterns work for her as naturally as they do in the tale (where the impersonal form of repeated tellings is presumably substituted for the conscious form that a single individual must give). Yet, as we have seen, a great deal of effective patterning does exist in

Julian the Magician, and we can find more now that we have the other to put beside it.

TO BEGIN WITH "Iron Hans", then, I will pass by the Freudian sexual overtones without denying them. Neither will I try at this point to apply Jung directly, even though he deals with three- and four-legged horses among more interesting things in his essay on "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairy Tales". Working instead with what we have been dealing with, we must note the alchemic motif. From one point of view the youth is engaged in a process which results in the transformation of base metal into gold (Iron Hans into a king). The boy's actual father could see no use for the wild man but to confine him in iron. But the boy contributes his little bit of gold to liberate Iron Hans, who becomes his guardian father and finally gives him a treasure of gold. We must also note that the youth consistently gives away his gold and never asks for the treasure. On the other hand ("our gold is not vulgar gold"), the youth's unaided actions do cause his hair to turn gold.

At this point, however, we must bring in a second level, the Christian motif, which is also working in the tale. Releasing the wild man, the boy pinches his fingers, one of which he presumably then puts in the well. His head bandaged, he tells the king he has a wound on it. Later, dressed in black, he is wounded just before his gold hair is revealed. Not only is there a conjunction of dark-wound-gold, there is a pattern of the saviour (first of Iron Hans, then of the father of the princess), of his being wounded while helping, of his somehow turning the hurt to help, as if the highest good of gold or sun could be interchangeable with hurt or sacrifice. Although we are only a step from the Legend of the Grail, I will forbear and turn back to Julian.

He also has brought light out of black, using the water. Instead of the golden well he has a river. But Julian does not have what Christ and the youth had, an actual wild man to show him the way. Although John the Baptist is evoked, it is only as an analogue. Julian must baptize himself. To put it another way, we can say that he invokes what the wild man stands for: brute nature, uncivilized yet powerful, potentially divine.⁵ We have already seen Miss MacEwen's images for it — darkness, dirt, excrement. In addition, toward the end of the novel, she introduces through Julian's diary an "incident" that contains a wild figure and

explains the “panic” that gripped the crowd after Julian’s performances. At the request of his naïve disciple, Julian tells a myth or parable.

The boy’s name was Ernest and he was. A sort of dandelion optimism drove him to do it. . . .

. . . He began a relentless search for the great dead god Pan, fanning out over the whole countryside. He had two assistants and they split up to form a shifting, searching triangle of which Ernest was the apex. (p. 136)

The triangle is searching for another figure which will make it a square, in Jung’s terms change the incomplete trinity into a quaternity, a stable number and relation, if it includes one opposite. This opposite may be brought in by conjunction, in which case she is a woman (as the princess the youth marries or Mary in the Catholic church), or by union, in which case the hero must give himself at some point to night, to the shadow or dark wild man (as the “Devil” or Pan). But the two assistants fall asleep (under three oaks), and Ernest confronts Pan by himself. He berates Pan for being dead and leaves with Pan’s apologies for not existing ringing in his ears. (Julian says of the parable: “Satire [can] reflect [a] tragic situation.”)

At first we are tempted to take Julian as Ernest, since he can be connected with the gold-topped dandelion. On the other hand, Julian has two lower helpers, Johan and Aubrey, who adding Peter as Ernest, can be seen as the three searchers. The irony of Peter’s relation to Julian is similar to that in the Ernest-Pan relation: He wants to help Julian and to be led, but he cannot believe in Julian’s divinity or his miracles. Julian, as the “black Christ” whose performances cause panic, is a plausible Pan figure. Instead of an enchanting reed pipe, he has bullrushes by the river; his first miracle is called “the divine cure by the bullrushes” (p. 45).

True union resolves polarities, and we have seen that for Julian the whole process must be internal; he cannot naïvely look for salvation from a god or a process outside himself. In the Saturn passage he said, “The magician eats his parts . . . to form wholes.” Clearly he has taken the Freudian concept of the father as a castration threat beyond its biological limitations. He makes a virtue out of castration or the loss of sexual fulfilment, as have comparable figures in history: Origen castrated himself the better to serve God. Paracelsus may have moved as Julian did beyond Celsus to an acceptance of Christ’s role of magus, a miracle worker free from the contamination of women.

The search for purity and the protection from contamination links up with the golden well which Iron Hans sent the youth to guard. If he had been success-

ful in this appointed task, we can speculate that the youth would have won through to another kind of victory than that which he achieves in the outside world. Instead of the hero's victory (success in battle followed by conjunction with the princess), he would have achieved the triumph of the patient guardian, the seer, the pure Narcissus (staring at his image in the water without contaminating it). As it works out, the youth has to purge his impurity (his long hair) in action, but this should not keep us from realizing that it was theoretically possible for him to be a successful Narcissus. Julian becomes one, becomes "a perfect gold fish from the water" (p. 81). (The youth in "Iron Hans" saw gold fish swimming in the well.) And Heletius in *The Golden Calf* quotes an adept in "the philosophical mystery" of alchemy: "Break open the glassy seal of Hermes, in which the Sun sends forth a great splendor with his marvellous colored metallic rays, and in which looking glass the eyes of Narcissus behold the transmutable metals, for out of those ways the true adept philosophers gather their fire" (Taylor, p. 147).

(Lest this talk of purity confuse the reader who still recalls the earlier emphasis on darkness and dung, let me re-emphasize the paradox on which alchemy was based: it is out of the impurity of dark matter that divine light comes. Like Christ Julian dies on a cross and is buried in darkness. The youth is technically held captive in a dark forest by Iron Hans while he guards the golden well. One phase of the alchemic process was frequently the heating of a substance by placing its container in dung. A later alchemic phase is conjunction. Not to move on to it could be termed, in the Freudian reduction, to remain in the anal instead of moving out to the sexual. Like other reductionists who are out to break the code, Freud often seems not to get the point that the high is nonetheless high for being rooted in the low.)

To continue our examination of Julian as free from one kind of contamination, we should note that Miss MacEwen goes out of her way to underline his separation from womankind. His refusal of sex gives him a kind of passive power. "My gender is no matter — my mind is decidedly bi-sexual; this I can navigate in both female and male territory as freely as grass, and anticipate both female and male qualities in all things" (p. 121). This condition is a possible stage in the imitation of Christ, yet according to Jung it is a step beyond Christian dualism. "The self is a union of opposites par excellence, and this is where it differs essentially from the Christian symbol. The androgyny of Christ is the utmost concession the Church has made to the problem of opposites."⁶

Early in the book, Julian told his disciples, "Inside the womb . . . of the art,

my dear Peter . . . is a foetus, another art. The virgin craft . . . expands, feeds the other . . ." (p. 29). The art of magic contains within it the seed of another. Julian had to allow a passive feminine process to go on in him for that other to grow. Later he quotes Boehme: "Let the artist but consider . . . how he may awaken the dead and disappeared life which . . . lies hidden and captivated in the curse." Then, "if he does but bring it so far, it works of itself . . ." (p. 35, author's ellipses in foregoing quotations). This process goes on at the religious level as well.

Man is the unconscious agent of God's creative will. He pushes genesis. . . And 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 (p. 150)

The similarity of this conclusion to Jung's unorthodox Christian view is clear.

The unavoidable internal contradictions in the image of the Creator-God can be reconciled in the unity and wholeness of the self as the *coniunctio oppositorum* of the alchemist or as a *unio mystica*. In the experience of the self it is no longer the opposites "God" and "man" that are reconciled, as it was before, but rather the opposites within the God-image itself. That is the meaning of the divine service, of the service which man can render to God, that light may emerge from the darkness, that the Creator may become conscious of His creation, and man conscious of himself.⁷

If Julian's cry is less measured and more triumphant than Jung's, it is because he is about to suffer the fate of the Western man who becomes God: he is about to be re-absorbed into nature.

In conclusion, I would say that by allowing "the dead and disappeared life" to awaken in Julian and through him in other characters in the novel, Miss MacEwen has created patterns which may awaken her readers also. The only thing she lacks is enough control of the novel as a form, and by the time she gets into the diary, she has begun to develop that too. For the reader who can suspend his disbelief, *Julian the Magician* has a lot to offer.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Translation and comment by Henry M. Pachter in *Paracelsus: Magic into Science* (Collier paperback, 1961), pp. 153-54.

² By Gwendolyn MacEwen, Macmillan, 1963.

- ³ F. Sherwood Taylor, *The Alchemists* (Collier paperback, 1962), p. 79.
- ⁴ P. 124; an interpretation of the letters IAO is given in the Gnostic epigraph to the novel.
- ⁵ These qualities, and more, are discussed by Richard Bernheimer in his interesting book, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages* (Harvard, 1952). He mentions *Iron Hans* briefly. He also mentions the legend of St. John Chrysostom who was discovered in the forest by a hunting party, crawling on all fours, his body covered with hair. He does not mention John the Baptist, nor that Chrysostom means "golden mouth." He does, however, connect the wild man with the problem of death and the religious notion of life out of death. For an essay on St. John Chrysostom that does emphasize the connection of light and dark, see pp. 52-65 of Heinrich Zimmer's fascinating book, *The King and the Corpse* (Bollingen, 1948; Meridian, 1960). Zimmer handles fairy tales and Arthurian romance in the Jungian manner, as examples of the psychic search for integration.
- ⁶ "Introduction to the Religious and Psychological Problems of Alchemy," included in *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung* (Modern Library, 1959), p. 450.
- ⁷ *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Pantheon, 1963), p. 338.

