

## HAMLET AND MYTHICAL THOUGHT

“The myth is linked to the first knowledge which man acquires of himself and his environment; moreover it is the structure of his consciousness; primitive man does not have two images of the world, one ‘objective’ ‘real’ and the other ‘mythical’, but a unique understanding of the landscape.” (Gusdorf)<sup>1</sup>

The survival of some masterpieces of literature across the ages is still an unexplained mystery. Deeply rooted in their time, they reflect the preoccupations of a given historical period and have an impact, by means of their testimony, on future generations. They bring into play images, drives and phantoms which have remained unchanged from prehistoric time to our day. The perfection of their form has remained unequalled; their examples incite us to meditation and creativity.

While studying the impact of these works, full of spiritual energies, one is aware that they reproduce in an original way ‘some basic human conditions’ (Schadewaldt) which are directly related to mythical thought. From this point of view, archaeologists’ discoveries about prehistoric man or ancient civilisation, along with the reports of ethnologists, folklorists and anthropologists on the survival of a magical understanding of the world, are

Translated from the original French.

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especially valuable to the historian of literature. The discoveries and reports reveal the 'fundamental situations' which characterise human life and of which characteristic variations can be found in every era: "It is not the narration of any old events whatsoever which is surviving but only of those which express a general human idea, which is being eternally and continually rejuvenated", writes C. Jung.<sup>2</sup>

Mythical thought is anthropocentric; it is based mainly on the conviction that there is a close correspondence between man and nature, the microcosm and the macrocosm. The primitive man whose existence is constantly threatened thinks that he can influence the external world because this world is interiorized within him. In his private world, the laws of nature sanction the moral code. "This kind of disease is caused by adultery, that by incest; this meteorological disaster is the effect of political disloyalty, that the effect of impiety" (Mary Douglas).<sup>3</sup> This vision of the world is thus essentially religious in that it attributes a sacred character to the seasons, to lunar rhythm, to organic life (sexuality and nutrition) and to social life. Human life is a continual participation in this *sacredness* which "in a real sense founds the world" (Eliade) and which, by its cohesive power, protects the individual and the group against forces of dissolution.

We find certain elements of mythical thought in the philosophy of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The Elizabethans inherited from the Middle Ages the image of a well-ordered universe arranged in a fixed system of hierarchies, in which Angels and Aether, the Stars and Fortune, the Elements, Man, Animals, Plants and Metals form the Great Chain of Being. In this universal order, the position of man is of paramount importance. "*Homo est utriusque naturae vinculum*". His "microcosmic" world is in close relation with the "political body" and the "macrocosm". However, Shakespeare's contemporaries are obsessed by the fear of chaos, of cosmic anarchy before Creation and by changing factors threatening the regular course of natural laws. They fear the evil influence of the planets on man's destiny which, in their eyes, is the inevitable result of the fall of man. It is the sin of Adam which has corrupted the perfect nature of the world. Evil prevails in the Great Chain of Being, and astrology helps to forecast the calamities. But to a certain extent,

the Elizabethan remains under the influence of mythical thought. He has the impression that his own actions can influence or disturb the cosmic mechanism. Shakespeare makes use of this feeling of conflict in his plays following the tradition of Greek tragedians.<sup>4</sup>

In *Hamlet* we find many traces of mythical thought. The king himself is at the centre of the tragedy. The murder of the king and the incestuous marriage provoke an upheaval of cosmic character, upsetting the organisation of space and the cycle of time. Moral contamination is incarnated in a physical way, decaying healthy bodies, corrupting the blood and striking the inhabitants of Elsinore with sterility. Shakespeare chooses some typical scenes to illustrate this universal decadence, such as Scene II of Act I which opens with the usurper's speech, occurring after the wedding and the coronation. There is an inevitable degradation of the tragic universe towards chaos. However, this return to a *primaeva* time, that time before Creation, permits the recovery of the spiritual energies which can regenerate the Cosmos. This "cosmogonic myth" animates the tragedy and makes the final disappearance of the redeeming hero especially pathetic.

## I

In primitive societies, in the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Syria and Canaan, the king is a sacred being. The kings are revered as "real gods able to bestow on their subjects and worshippers those blessings which are commonly supposed to be beyond the reach of mortals and are sought through prayer and sacrifice" (Frazer).<sup>5</sup> Their power seems not only collective but unlimited. Endowed with spiritual and temporal powers, the kings are responsible for the regularity of the seasons, the fertility of the earth and animals and the health of the community. The pharaohs are called "masters of heaven, masters of the earth, creators of the harvest, pillars of the sky"; they are responsible for the "harmony between human life and the supernatural order." (H. Frankfort)<sup>6</sup>

The tradition of kings as miracle-workers perpetuates in the Western world the mythical belief in a "marvellous and sacred

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kingship.”<sup>7</sup> The rite of “touching the scrofula”, a reflection of ancient beliefs, “bears the trace of primitive thought, altogether rooted in the irrational world.” But whereas in primitive times the king could exercise his power for collective purposes, the Lord’s anointed king no longer possesses cosmic power but instead heals individual sickness. Henry II healed the scrofulous; Edward the Confessor cured “the strangely visited people, all swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,”<sup>8</sup> according to the statement of Malcolm in *Macbeth*. Throughout the Middle Ages however, the pagan belief in “royal magic” is deeply rooted in the minds of people, despite the Christian doctrine which denies the influence of the great cosmic phenomena to the king.

Shakespeare recognises the king as the representative of God. The Bishop of Carlisle refuses to judge Richard II because the latter is “the figure of God’s majesty, / His captain, steward, deputy elect / Anointed, crowned, planted many years”.<sup>9</sup> He predicts a national cataclysm if Richard were to lose the throne: “Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny / Shall here inhabit, and this land shall be call’d / The field of Golgotha and dead men’s skulls.”<sup>10</sup> Richard himself believes in the correspondence which exists, according to tradition, between the political world and nature. In Scene II of Act III of *Richard II* he talks to the Earth: “Feed not thy sovereign’s foe, my gentle earth, / Nor with thy sweets comfort his ravenous sense; / But let thy spiders, that suck up thy venom, / And heavy-gaited toads, lie in their way, / Doing annoyance to the treacherous feet, / Which with usurping steps do trample thee.”<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, it is characteristic of the ideological crisis of the period, reflected by the royal tragedies of Shakespeare, that the conception of kingship should be developed in a tragedy devoted to depriving a legitimate king of all his power.<sup>12</sup> In Shakespeare’s theatre, the idea of kingship remains abstract and pure, as it is not necessarily incarnated in an individual worthy of the function. Richmond declares on the eve of the decisive battle with Richard III: “A bloody tyrant and a homicide; / One rais’d in blood, and one in blood establish’d; / One that made means to come by what he hath / And slaughtered those that were the means to help him; / A base foul stone, made precious by the foil / Of England’s chair, where he is falsely set.”<sup>13</sup>

While examining this theme of usurpation in *Hamlet*, we cannot ignore the complex attitude which Shakespeare adopts towards kingship; it is in the presence of Claudius, the murderer who has become king, that Guildenstern and Rosencrantz praise the idea of kingship: [“The cess of majesty / Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw / What’s near it with it. O,’tis a massy wheel / Fixed on the summit of the highest mount, / To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things / Are mortised and adjoined.”]<sup>14</sup> And it is the “vile king” Claudius who declares “There’s such a divinity doth hedge a king.”<sup>15</sup>

The regicide transgresses the sacred barrier and threatens the life of an individual who, because of his being, has become a *taboo*. (Eliade). According to Northcote W. Thomas... “Persons or things which are regarded as taboo may be compared to objects charged with electricity; they are the seat of a tremendous power which is transmissible by contact and may be liberated with destructive effect, if the organisms which provoke its discharge are too weak to resist it.”<sup>16</sup> The sacrilegious man releases dangerous fluids and sets off forces which he can no longer keep under control. The wounds inflicted on the king seem “like a breach in nature, for ruin’s wasteful entrance.” (*Macbeth*)<sup>17</sup>

In fact, the foundations of life are shaken at Elsinore: the sacrilegious attack against the king murdered in the “blossom” of his “sin”, has transformed the latter into a wandering spirit, who appears on the walls of the fortress as well as in the private apartments of the Queen. The murdered king has become, dare we say it at last, a walking corpse. The “fair and warlike form” hides a body, horribly disfigured and covered with a “vile and loathsome crust.”<sup>18</sup>

Shakespeare gets his inspiration from an ancestral fear which is provoked by sickness, death and corpses, Death is felt as a contagion in mythical thought. According to Levy-Bruhl, in certain Indian tribes of Eastern Bolivia “when the relatives think that a disease is fatal, they try to close as hermetically as possible the nose, the mouth and the eyes of the sick person so that death will not contaminate other bodies.” Primitive man feels in his entire being the solidarity of the social group towards the danger that death represents: “The person who has just died can communicate death [...] to one or several of those who belong to

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his group.”<sup>19</sup> As a result, the funeral rites and the commemoration of the dead take on a major importance. Under the influence of this ambivalent emotional attitude, analysed by Freud and Otto Rank, primitive man wants to protect himself from the dead and earn their goodwill.<sup>20</sup>

In imagining the circumstances of the murder of King Hamlet, Shakespeare uses various symbols in connection with the primitive mentality, which illustrate the idea of the mystical union between the dead person and society. According to Mary Douglas: “Even more direct than animal symbolism is the symbolism used with the human body. The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.”<sup>21</sup> Consequently, we understand the symbolical importance of the orifices in mythical consciousness. Thus, Old Hamlet is poisoned by the ear: “And in the porches of my ears did pour / The leperous distilment.”<sup>22</sup> The poison quickly penetrates the blood, as if it were dropped in a mucous orifice.

Shakespeare obviously attaches great importance to the image of poisoning by the ear. From the first to the fourth act, the word “ear” is used nine times with an emotional connotation of violence. Bernardo would like to “assail” the ears of Horatio with the story of what the guards have seen.<sup>23</sup> Hamlet afterwards refuses that Horatio should do his ear “that violence to make it truster of [his] own report against [himself].”<sup>24</sup> In the soliloquy “For Hecuba”, talking about the Player moved by the tragic history of the Queen of Troy, Hamlet exclaims: “He would drown the stage with tears / And cleave the general ear with horrid speech.”<sup>25</sup> Hamlet forbids the Players to “split the ears of the groundlings.”<sup>26</sup>

Unconsciously, both Queen Gertrude and Claudius, the usurper, refer to the violence suffered by King Hamlet. Affected by her son’s remarks, Gertrude exclaims: “O speak to me no more / These words like daggers enter in mine ears / No more, sweet Hamlet.”<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Claudius fears that “pestilent speeches” might infect Laertes’ ear on his return to Denmark after his father’s death.<sup>28</sup>

Royal blood is sacred; Richard II emphasizes this idea when he speaks to the Duke of Norfolk: “such neighbour nearness to our sacred blood...” The Duchess of Gloucester compares the

seven children of Edward to seven vials of his sacred blood.<sup>29</sup> In Hamlet, the poison of Claudius corrupts, infects and curdles the sacred blood of the King: "And with a sudden vigour, it doth posset / And curd, like eager droppings into milk / the thin and wholesome blood."<sup>30</sup> Before meeting his father's ghost, Hamlet uses a metaphor which seems to announce the sudden effect of the poison described by the ghost. "The dram of evil / Doth all the noble substance of a doubt, / To his own scandal." The poisoned blood of the King seems to have a corrupting effect on the vital fluids of the other characters. Fever and uncontrolled passion ravage their blood. Laertes warns his sister Ophelia against Hamlet's sensual caprices: "For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour, / Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood."<sup>31</sup> This is a very strong expression because it is used with reference to animals in rut. Apparently, in Gertrude's case, "the hey-day in the blood" is not controlled by reason.<sup>32</sup> The King's blood is marvelously distempered with "choler".<sup>33</sup> Claudius orders the King of England to kill Hamlet, as "like the hectic in my blood he rages / And thou must cure me"<sup>34</sup> said he.

The infected blood transforms the smooth skin of the poisoned King. His body is covered with a "vile and loathsome crust." And his decomposed blood generates ulcerous images. After the ghost's apparition in the bedchamber of the Queen, Hamlet speaks to his mother in these terms: "Mother, for love of grace / Lay not that flattering unction to your soul, / That not your trespass but my madness speaks, / It will but skin and film the ulcerous place, / Whiles rank corruption mining all within / Infects unseen."<sup>35</sup> All of these images set up a sort of intuitive communication among the protagonists which is independent of their consciousness.<sup>36</sup>

The corrupted blood of the King seems to act in a magical way on the physical and mental integrity of the individuals. In assuming his "antic disposition", Hamlet tries to pacify the threatening forces of madness which the revelations of the ghost are likely to provoke in him. The ghost seems to foresee the *physical* effects of his revelations. "I could a tale unfold whose lightest word / Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, / Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres / Thy knotted and combined locks to part."<sup>37</sup> Afterwards, one can

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measure through the descriptions of Hamlet by Polonius and Ophelia the threatening evil which seems to “shatter all his bulk.”<sup>38</sup>

When we study this system of images, we realize that in his play Shakespeare brings to light one of the most ancient and profound beliefs of humanity, the one which is linked to the *corporal ghost*. Violent death changes the deceased into a wanderer, throwing him into a supernatural and demoniacal world. He threatens to drag the living with him, as long as the family vendetta, the rites and the ceremonies performed by the members of the group do not re-establish the social and cosmic balance. In his work on *The Fear of the Dead in Primitive Religion* Frazer quotes Saxo Grammaticus to illustrate the ambivalent attitude of primitive man towards the dead: “When a pestilence was raging, the misfortune was attributed to the angry ghost of a man who had been killed in an uprising shortly before. To remedy this evil they dug up his body, cut off the head and ran a sharp stake through the breast of the corpse.”<sup>39</sup> The setting-up of funeral stones on the tomb is in keeping with the emotional ambivalence. The sacred stones protect the living from the dead and *imprison* the ancestors so that they will be forced to act beneficially.<sup>40</sup>

Attacked by a murderer, violated in his physical integrity, disfigured by a “loathsome crust,” King Hamlet cannot attain this “*second death*” in which primitive man believed. His body cannot decompose, his soul cannot reach the community of the peaceful dead. He “unshrouds” his corpse and forces “the marble jaw” (symbol of the “mouth of hell” which devours man, according to Otto Rank)<sup>41</sup> to cast him up again. No solemn mourning, worthy of his royal person, has pacified this wrathful soul, because the funeral has been followed by the “o’erhasty marriage” of the Queen. While referring to pagan myths, Shakespeare makes allusion as well to Christian beliefs. The ghost is a soul from purgatory... “cut off even in the blossom of my sins/unhouselled, disappointed, unaneled”<sup>42</sup>. Hamlet himself thinks of his father’s sins when he finds himself sword in hand standing behind his uncle in prayer: “A’ took my father grossly, full of bread / With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May...”<sup>43</sup>

A sinner in the Christian sense of the term, King Hamlet is

at the same time a weakened man. He sleeps in his orchard every afternoon; he obviously does not succeed in satisfying the sexual passion of his wife, because she is rapidly won by the “shameful lust” of Claudius.<sup>44</sup> King Hamlet looks like one of those old men with grey beard and wrinkled face who has “most weak hams” to which Hamlet refers when he speaks to Polonius.<sup>45</sup> This weariness constitutes as well the main theme of the conversation between the player King and the player Queen. The Queen “trembles” for the King who is “so sick of late, / So far from cheer and from [his] former state.”<sup>46</sup> He seems to feel that his death is not far off. “My operant powers their function leave to do,” he says to his wife—and adds: “Sweet, leave me here awhile, / my spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile / The tedious day with sleep.”<sup>47</sup>

The mythical conscience is very much preoccupied by this enfeeblement of the powers of the King. Primitive man believes that the duty of the King, successor to the creator, is to maintain the harmony of society and nature.

“Now primitive peoples, as we have seen, sometimes believe that their safety and even that of the world is bound up with the life of one of these god-men or human incarnations of divinity. Naturally, therefore, they take the utmost care of his life, out of a regard for their own. But no amount of care and precaution will prevent the man-god from growing old and feeble and at last dying. His worshippers have to take account of this sad necessity and to meet it as best they can. The danger is a formidable one; for if the course of nature is dependent on the man-god’s life, what catastrophes may not be expected as a result of the gradual enfeeblement of his powers and their final extinction in death? There is only one way of averting these dangers. The man-god must be killed as soon as he shows symptoms that his powers are beginning to fail, and his soul must be transferred to a vigorous successor before it has been seriously impaired by the threatened decay.”<sup>48</sup>

Old King Hamlet sleeping in his garden, or his double in the dumbshow, the player King, reclining on a bank of flowers, remind us of this “weakened spirit of vegetation” which at the winter solstice can no longer use its generative power to fertilize the crops.

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Frazer refers to these popular peasant jousts during which “a representative of the summer clad in ivy combats a representative of the winter clad in straw or moss and finally gains a victory over him.”<sup>49</sup> But in *Hamlet*, this representative of the spring is a vile murderer, traitorous and sacrilegious. The fundamental ambiguity of the tragedy is linked in part to this initial situation.

### II

We can guess the period at which the action begins, thanks to one of the guards, Marcellus, who is very preoccupied by the ghost's apparition. “It faded on the crowing of the cock. / Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes / Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated / This bird of dawning singeth all night long, / And then they say no spirit dare stir abroad, / The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike, / No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm, / So hallowed, and so gracious is that time. /”<sup>50</sup> A number of critics have recognised the importance of these lines for the spiritual viewpoint with which the whole tragedy is imbued. “The intense and solemn beauty of these verses lifts us, and was designed to lift us, high above the level of Horatio's conjectures. The night wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated is holy and pure beyond all others; therefore these nights which the ghost makes hideous by rising so incredibly from the grave, are impure beyond most. Unless Greek tragedy has bemused me”—writes H.D.F. Kitto in *Form and Meaning in Drama* “this passage does more than ‘give a religious background to the supernatural happenings of the scene’ (Dover Wilson); it provides the ‘background’, that is, the logical and dynamic centre of the play.”<sup>51</sup> Critics seem to have missed the interest of the precise period when this “dread sight”<sup>52</sup> appeared before the guards.

The meaning of Marcellus' speech is clear: the ghost has disappeared because it has heard the shrill voice of “the cock that is the trumpet to the morn.”<sup>53</sup> However, this temporal circumstance is of minor importance as Marcellus thinks that the main reason for the disappearance of the spirit is the coming of Christmas,—the period of festivity “when the birth of Christ is celebrated.” If, for the Christian, “this period is sacred” then, for the primi-

tive, it is charged with sacred, dangerous but beneficial forces.

The feast of the winter solstice is related to the instinctive fears provoked by the weakening strength of the sun. At this period of the year, when the sun obviously lacks its full duration and intensity, the primitive man thinks that it is important to renew nature's energy which, to him, is gradually weakening. He turns to "sympathetic magic" so that the vital and sacred fluids might circulate and so that the cosmic crisis might be warded off. Writing about the annual observance of a licentious period, Frazer notes in the *Golden Bough* that "such outbursts of the pent-up forces of human nature, too often degenerating into wild orgies of lust and crime, occur most commonly at the end of the year and are frequently associated with one or other of the agricultural seasons."<sup>54</sup> There is a need to stimulate the productivity of the harvest by an outburst of forces felt to be chaotic. The regression into the "universal coalescence," (Mircea Eliade) of the unformed world, where limits and norms are abolished, enables the very source of the cosmological world to be dipped into.

The souls of the dead are attracted by the overflow of life and the re-actualization of the "mythical chaos before the universe" resulting from the festivals; these souls are then associated with the renewal of the forces of vegetation. Seasonal fertility rites and death cults are closely linked in agricultural societies. "Among Nordic peoples, Christmas (Yule) was both the feast of the dead and an honouring of fertility and life. At Christmas there were huge banquets; often it was the time for weddings, and also for the caretaking of tombs." (Mircea Eliade)<sup>55</sup>

The return of the dead during this "suspension of recorded time" (Caillois)<sup>56</sup> and their collaboration in the stimulation of the fecundity of the earth are considered as eminent facts in the social life of the primitive. "During the annual feast of *milamala*"—writes Malinowski, who studies Melanesian culture—"the spirits return from Tuma to their villages. A special platform is erected for them to sit upon, from which they can look down upon the doings and amusements of their brethren. Food is displayed in large quantities to gladden their hearts, as well as those of the living citizens of the community."<sup>57</sup>

In the Western world, there is a deeply-rooted belief in the

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generative power of deceased kings. A legend recorded in the thirteenth century collection *Heimskringla* relates that Halfdan the Black, king of Norway, had been “of all kings the one who had brought most success to the harvests. When he died, instead of burying his entire corpse in a single place, his subjects cut it in four pieces and buried each portion under a mound in each of the four principal districts of the country, for the ‘possession of the body’—or of one of its members—seemed, to those who obtained it, to give hope of further good harvests.”<sup>58</sup>

In *Hamlet*, the apparition of the Ghost requiring vengeance occurs at the precise period when men believe in the community of the dead and the living collaborating in the regeneration of the universal forces. The Ghost “/usurps / this time of night / Together with that fair and warlike form / In which the majesty of buried Denmark / Did sometimes march.”<sup>59</sup> His armed presence, moving along the ramparts of the fortress, renders the guards ineffective. To Hamlet’s eyes, he makes the “night hideous,” annihilates the laws of nature and “/shakes / our disposition / With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.”<sup>60</sup> This erring spirit aggravates the sexual nausea of the prince and incites him to carry out a murderous vendetta. It is not working with the powerful and motivating forces of the Cosmos: it is a dangerous incarnation of the principle of confusion. Far from stimulating the crops, it seems to destroy their productivity. Does it not refer to “that fat weed / That rots itself in ease on Lethe’s wharf?”<sup>61</sup>

The “heavy-headed revel” presided over by the usurper Claudius, which takes place *during* the meeting of Hamlet and his father, is characteristic of the period of intermission which is situated around the winter solstice. The Romans celebrated the Saturnalia from the 17th to the 23rd of December. According to the testimony of poets and historians, “the distinction between the free and the servant classes was temporarily abolished. The slave might rail at his master, intoxicate himself like his betters, sit down at table with them, and not even a word of reproof would be administered to him for conduct which at any other season might have been punished with beating, imprisonment or death /.../. This inversion of ranks was carried so far that each household became for a time a parody of a republic

in which the high offices of state were discharged by the slaves, who gave their orders and laid down the law as if they were indeed invested with all dignity of the consulship, the praetorship and the bench.”<sup>62</sup> A mock king who personified the god of sowing (*satus*) and viniculture was chosen. When the revels were over, he killed himself or was publicly executed. Carnival perpetuates this tradition. The burlesque figure publicly burnt is no other than “a direct successor of the old king of the Saturnalia,” according to Frazer. In the popular mind the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany are still conceived as exceptional. These twelve days are the difference between the lunar year (354 days) and the solar year (365 days). They form an interregnum during which “the customary restraints of law and morality are suspended and the ordinary rulers abdicate their authority in favour of a temporary regent, a sort of puppet king, who bears a more or less indefinite, capricious, and precarious sway over a community given over for a time to riot, turbulence and disorder.”<sup>63</sup>

In Shakespeare’s tragedy, it is Claudius who personifies this “mock king”. At the end of the play within the play, when he has shown that the king is guilty, Hamlet, carried away by his success as the director of the play, rejoices, saying “For thou dost know, O Damon dear, / This realm dismantled was / of Jove himself, and now reigns here / A very, very—peacock.” Let us note that according to Dover Wilson, “peacock” symbolically typifies for the popular imagination lechery and vanity.<sup>64</sup> In the bedchamber of the Queen, Hamlet describes Claudius as a depraved being, “A murderer, and a villain / A slave that is not twentieth part the tithes / Of your precedent Lord, a vice of kings, / A cutpurse of the empire and the rule, / That from a shelf the precious diadem stole / and put it in his pocket.”<sup>65</sup> It is Hamlet’s duty to put an end to the reign of this “mock king” not by blindly executing the order of the dreaded father but by following his own personal decision. He says to Horatio: “Does it not seem that a duty is imposed on me? / He that hath killed my king, and whored my mother / Popped in between th’election and my hopes, / Thrown out his angle for my proper life, / And with such cozenage—is’t not perfect conscience / To quit him with this arm?”<sup>66</sup> The usurper’s revels begun in the first act end with Act V. At the beginning of the play, Claudius “takes his

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rouse” and “as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down / The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out / The triumph of his pledge.”<sup>67</sup> At the end of the tragedy, Hamlet forces him to drink from the poisoned cup. “Drink off this potion,” he says.<sup>68</sup>

The word *drink* has a sinister connotation in this tragedy “Now I could drink hot blood,” declares Hamlet as he makes his way towards the Queen’s bedchamber.<sup>69</sup> Passing behind the King in prayer, he sheathes his sword: “Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent, / when he is drunk asleep, or in his rage, / or in th’ incestuous pleasure of his bed.”<sup>70</sup> It is Ophelia’s garments, heavy with their drink, that pull her to “muddy death.”<sup>71</sup> And the Queen, poisoned by the drink prepared for Hamlet, cries: “No, no, the drink, the drink—O dear Hamlet—The drink, the drink! I am poisoned!”<sup>72</sup>

If the first apparitions of the Spectre occur before Christmas, the coronation and the royal wedding are probably celebrated around the New Year. Both of these events have a clearly sacrilegious character.

In the mythical consciousness, the New Year represents the setting up of a “new period,” the regeneration of the universe, the re-creation of the Cosmos and the repetition of the cosmogonic act. In Mesopotamia, the King plays a central role in the New Year’s celebration, as he is responsible for the universal harmony, the regular sequence of the seasons, the fertility of the earth and the reproduction of animals and the human race.<sup>73</sup> Mircea Eliade reminds us that the Fijians called the ceremony of inaugurating a new chieftain—“*the creation of the world.*”

By his accession to the throne, Claudius acts against the laws of nature. The new King of Denmark, consecrated by the coronation, is but a vile murderer. The wedding of Claudius and Gertrude is closely linked to the coronation, because this union legitimates the assumption of power by the usurper. “Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen/Th’imperial jointress to this warlike state. /.../ Have we taken to wife” says the King in his coronation speech.<sup>74</sup> The sacred character of the wedding rite is tarnished by Claudius and Gertrude; the cosmogonical aspect of this rite reminds us of those rites which celebrate the New Year. Mircea Eliade is again the one who draws our attention to the German term “*Hochzeit*” (marriage) derived from

“*Hochgezit*”—feast of the New Year. According to this author, in mythical thought marriage regenerates the year and consequently confers fecundity, wealth and happiness,<sup>75</sup> but the royal wedding of Claudius and Gertrude is a sexual crime which pollutes the earth and, by a magical effect, disturbs the cyclic order of life. It is a caricature of the archetypal and sacred marriage of Heaven and Earth, a blasphemy and a violation of the natural order. Hamlet is disgusted with this: “We will have no more marriage.”<sup>76</sup>

### III

The incestuous adultery; the murder of the King; the marriage which goes against nature; and the usurpation of the throne unleash a cosmic catastrophe. In referring to the ghost's apparition, Horatio speaks of cosmic phenomena which announced the assassination of Julius Caesar. “In the most high and palmy state of Rome, / A little ere the mightiest Julius fell, / The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead / Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets, / And even the like precurse of fierce event, / As harbingers preceding still the fates / And prologue to the omen coming on, / Have heaven and earth together demonstrated / Unto our climatures and countrymen. / As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood, / Disasters in the sun; and the moist star, / Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands, / Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.”<sup>77</sup> This theme of an upset universal order in Shakespeare's tragedy is associated with the anxieties of the mythical consciousness. For primitive man the course of the sun, the cycle of the seasons and the functioning of the astronomical cosmos are not set once and for all but remain under the influence of human and demoniacal forces: “Who ever knew the heavens menace so?” asks Casca in *Julius Caesar*. Cassius answers him, “Those that have known the earth full of faults.”<sup>78</sup>

The cosmic catastrophe seems inevitable because the sun, above all the symbol of royal power in Shakespeare's theatre, is degraded and corrupted.

In the hierarchy of the universal order “the glorious planet Sol / In noble eminence enthron'd and spher'd / Amidst the

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other whose med'cinable eye / Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil, / And posts, like the commandment of a King, / Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets / In evil mixture to disorder wander, / What plagues and what portents, what mutiny..." says Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*. The weakened sun is unable to oppose its radiant power against the influence of the "bad revolting stars" which cause, according to Bedford in *Henry VI*, Part 1, the death of kings and the fall of empires.<sup>79</sup>

In the works which precede *Hamlet*, in particular *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar*, these cosmic signs are the forerunners of the death or the fall of kings.<sup>80</sup> From this point of view, Horatio's declarations in *Hamlet* have a particular importance since they refer directly to *Julius Caesar*. In this tragedy, Casca, Cassius and Calpurnia tell of monstrous events forecasting great upheavals: "But you ask / Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts, / Why birds and beasts, from quality and kind; / Why old men, fools, and children calculate; / Why all these things change from their ordinance, / Their natures and preformed faculties / To monstrous quality..." exclaims Cassius.<sup>81</sup> He characterizes these events as "strange eruptions." Horatio uses a similar expression with reference to the erring spirit of the King "...This bodes some strange eruption to our state."<sup>82</sup> Horatio also speaks of the "dews of blood" which fall on Danish soil. In *Julius Caesar*, Calpurnia seems to reveal the origin of this strange phenomenon... "Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds, / In ranks and squadrons and right form of war / Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol..." She says to Caesar: "When beggars die there are no comets seen: / The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."<sup>83</sup>

In *Hamlet*, the "Disasters in the sun"<sup>34</sup> metaphorically reflect the past—the death of Old Hamlet, murdered in his sleep. They are the image of the present and at the same time announce the future—punishment of the usurper.

The sun, "god of day," is the subject of a riddle from the very beginning of the play, as seen in the second reply of Hamlet to Claudius. King: "How is it that the clouds still hang on you?" Hamlet: "Not so, my lord, I am too much in the sun."<sup>85</sup> What is the sense of this play on words? According to Dover Wilson, the enigma refers to the proverbial expression "in the

sun” which means “out of house and home, outlawed, disinherited.”<sup>86</sup> However, the French translators, André Gide and Yves Bonnefoy, are not wrong in making Hamlet utter these words: “Je suis si près du soleil” (“I am so close to the Sun”). The Sun can refer to the old King: it is the memory of his father which animates Hamlet. Or it can refer to the usurper himself: this degraded “sun” cannot chase away the clouds which “overshadow” Hamlet.

It is once again the image of the corrupted sun which is found in the remarks Hamlet addresses to Polonius “For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion... have you a daughter? /.../ Let her not walk i’ th’ sun. Conception is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to’t.”<sup>87</sup> Here the sun’s action is associated with decomposition and debased sexuality. It seems probable that Hamlet wishes to protect Ophelia from the unhealthy influence that the usurping King may exercise on her. This warning prepares, in a way, the violent outburst of Hamlet: “Get thee to a nunnery, why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners.”<sup>88</sup>

The moon’s eclipse, “The moist star, / Upon whose influence Neptune’s empire stands,” is connected with the disturbance of the life cycle in *Hamlet*. We know the role attributed by mythical thought to the moon, star of bio-cosmic rhythms. According to Pliny the Elder the moon may be considered as the planet which gives the breath of life “because it saturates the earth and by its approach fills bodies, while by its departure it empties them. Hence it is that shell-fish increase with the increase of the moon and that bloodless creatures especially feel breath at that time; even the blood of men grows and diminishes with the light of the moon, and leaves and herbage also feel the same influence, since the lunar energy penetrates all things.”<sup>90</sup> The “Lunar” symbolism links together heterogeneous realities, “sea water, rain, the fertility of women and animals, plant life, man’s destiny after death and ceremonies of initiation.”<sup>91</sup> In *Hamlet* “the heated visage” of the moon is connected with the incestuous marriage of Queen Gertrude: “O such a deed / As from the body of contraction plucks / The very soul, and sweet religion makes / A rhapsody of words; heaven’s face does glow, / And this solidity and compound mass / With heated visage, as against the

doom, / Is thought-sick at the act.”<sup>92</sup> Actually, the universal order is reversed if the moon does not reflect the Sun’s light. Cfr. Thersites: “the sun borrows of the moon / When Diomed keeps his word” (*Troilus and Cressida*).<sup>93</sup> This abnormal aspect of the moon seems to account for Hamlet’s melancholia. Polonius and the King talk about “The very cause of Hamlet’s lunacy.”—“turbulent and dangerous lunacy.” This diagnosis conforms with the beliefs concerning the wandering of the mind provoked by this heavenly body which is found at the meeting of two worlds: Aether and Air, the universe of the gods and that of the demons, the sphere of necessity and the sphere of contingency.<sup>94</sup>

#### IV

The unsettled course of the planets provokes confusion in the intuition of time and space. Hamlet’s exclamation “The time is out of joint” gives a metaphoric proof of this profound disturbance. “One and the same concrete intuition—that of the interchange of light and darkness, day and night—underlies both the primary intuition of space and the primary articulation of time. And this same scheme of orientation, the same intuitively-felt distinction between the quarters of the heavens and the points of the compass, governs the division of both space and time into clear-cut sections. We have seen that the simplest spatial relations, such as left and right and forward and backward, are differentiated by a line drawn from east to west, following the course of the sun, and bisected by a perpendicular line running from north to south, and all intuition of temporal intervals goes back to these intersecting lines,” writes Cassirer in *Mythical Consciousness*, Volume II of the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.<sup>95</sup> These considerations are directly relevant to *Hamlet*, because in the imaginary world of the tragedy the normal boundary between night and day has disappeared. “What might be toward that this sweaty haste / Doth make the night joint labourer with the day, / Who is ’t that can inform me?” asks Marcellus in the first scene of Act 1.<sup>96</sup>

In the plays created before *Hamlet*, as in *Richard II* or *Macbeth*, the night, that breeds “vile contagions,” (see *Henry VI*, 2) is allowed to invade the day by the interruption of the

cosmic rhythm. "By th'clock 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp. / Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame, / That darkness does the face of the earth entomb, / When living light should kiss it" asks Ross, after the murders committed by Macbeth.<sup>97</sup> "Who saw the sun to-day?" asks Richard III at dawn, the day when he confronts Richmond.<sup>98</sup>

In *Hamlet*, the interruption of the alternation between night and day augurs a grave disturbance in the royal succession. Polonius is not rambling on when he says to Claudius and Gertrude "My liege and madam, to expostulate / What majesty should be, what duty is / Why day is day, night night, and time is time, / Were nothing but to waste night, day and time."<sup>99</sup> In fact, the legitimacy of the throne rests on the principle of succession which governs the universal order. The reproaches made by York to Richard II emphasize this political, juridical and moral aspect of the universal law: "Take Hereford's rights away, and take from Time / His charters and his customary rights; / Let not tomorrow then ensue to-day; / Be not thyself for how art thou a king / But by fair sequence and succession?"<sup>100</sup> These remarks establish a relationship between "the universal *temporal* order" and "the eternal order of *justice*"—the same link, between "the astronomical and ethical cosmos" which is found, according to Cassirer, in most religions.<sup>101</sup>

The disappearance of the natural frontier between night and day reflects the transgression of the law by Gertrude and Claudius: they have undertaken an incestuous marriage. From this point of view, Claudius' declaration concerning his marriage with Gertrude, "Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen / Th'*imperial jointress* to this warlike state" reminds us of Marcellus' astonished "make the night *joint-labourer* with the day."<sup>102</sup>

The principle of confusion is incarnated by the Ghost itself who has "a fair and warlike form" of the buried king and who behaves like a "guilty thing." This confusion is characteristic of the feelings and thoughts of Claudius. He feels "mirth in funeral" and "dirge in marriage," as he weighs "delight and dole" in equal scale.<sup>103</sup> The cosmic disturbance upsets the moral order: "reason panders will" and "virtue itself of vice must pardon beg."<sup>104</sup> Hamlet is aware of the cosmic dimension of his duty, to be the "scourge" and the "minister" of Heaven. This incites him to

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curse his fate which requires the setting right of a time “out of joint.”<sup>105</sup>

### V

“The development of the mythical feeling of space always starts from the opposition of day and night, light and darkness,” writes Cassirer.<sup>106</sup> It is not surprising that, as a result of the serious disturbance in cosmic rhythm, the organization of space and spatial intuition are deeply disturbed in *Hamlet*. The ramparts of Elsinore are shown to be useless in protecting the royal court against the sudden invasion of the Ghost. Let us note what Mircea Eliade says to this effect: “the fortifications of towns and cities” were probably “magical defenses; these fortifications—moats, labyrinths, walls, etc.—were constructed to prevent the invasion of demons and souls of the dead more than to prevent human attack /.../ Furthermore, mythical thought finds no difficulty in assimilating the human enemy to demons and death. In the end, the result of the attacks whether demoniac or military in origin is always the same: destruction, disintegration and death.”<sup>107</sup> The Ghost makes a breach in the walls of Elsinore and thus establishes a connection between the “chaotic” exterior space, lacking articulate form, and the organized interior space, focused on the royal throne. In Shakespeare’s plays, and in particular in *Richard II*, the royal throne is associated with the “scept’red isle,” with a “fortress built by Nature for herself / Against infection and the hand of war.”<sup>108</sup> In *Hamlet*, the usurper Claudius occupies the royal throne; he has caused the start of a universal disaster by the sacrilegious murder of the legitimate king and by his incestuous marriage with the widow of his own brother. The Ghost who haunts the ramparts of the fortress establishes a relationship between the polluted earth of Elsinore, the celestial region and the underworld. He creates an *Axis Mundi* and places Hamlet at the conjunction of the Heavens, Earth and Hell. Hamlet has an intuition of the cosmic dimension of the apparition. Before the Ghost has even spoken his first word Hamlet exclaims: “Angels and ministers of grace defend us! / Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damned, / Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell.”<sup>109</sup> Immediately after

the Ghost's disappearance, trying to recover his senses, he associates hell with heaven and earth. "O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? / And shall I couple hell? O fie! / Hold, hold my heart..."<sup>110</sup> From this moment on, space seems to dissolve in Hamlet's mind / Denmark is a prison for him. "... A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons."<sup>111</sup> To his eyes, external reality disintegrates in a "foul and pestilent congregation of vapours," as if his wish, expressed at the beginning of the play, had been fulfilled: "O that this too, too sullied flesh would melt / Thaw and resolve itself unto a dew." In this soliloquy, he compares the world to "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature / Possess it merely."<sup>112</sup> We understand the concrete political meaning of this "universal disgust" on Hamlet's part, when we re-read these lines in the light of the remarks made by the gardener in *Richard II*: "Why should we, in the compass of a pale, / Keep law and form and due proportion, / Showing, as in a model, our firm estate, / When our sea-walled garden, the whole land, / Is full of weeds; her fairest flowers chok'd up, / Her fruit trees all unprun'd, her hedges ruin'd, / Her knots disordered, and her wholesome herbs / Swarming with caterpillars?"<sup>113</sup>

In *Hamlet*, "Time is out of joint," and space disintegrates. The forces of external darkness besiege Elsinore. But this regression towards an inarticulated, chaotic, unformed world allows the recovery of the forces present at the Creation which will be able to renew the debased world.

## VI

The kingdom of Denmark is literally in decomposition because of the king's murder and Claudius' incestuous marriage. The theme of the humiliation of the father's role in *Hamlet* throws light on the progressive decadence of political authority.

Old Hamlet, the glorious soldier, is in reality a decadent, weak king with a troubled conscience. At the beginning of the play, he appears dressed in his armour; however, he removes this armour at the end of Act III and appears in his night-shirt in the queen's bedchamber. Norway, his contemporary, resembles King Hamlet: he is an old, impotent and bed-ridden sovereign,<sup>114</sup> who

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is made fun of by his nephew Fortinbras. These fathers have, as does Polonius, “a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams.”<sup>115</sup> This weakness is characteristic of old Priam, whose assassination is related by the First Player: “with the whiff and wind of his fell sword / Th’unnerved father falls.”<sup>116</sup> These fathers, dethroned kings, do not seem to deserve any particular respect on Hamlet’s part: “your worm is your only emperor for diet, we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table—that’s the end...”<sup>117</sup> To Hamlet, “the king is a thing /.../ a thing of nothing.”<sup>118</sup> In an enigmatic way, he says about Polonius’ corpse, “the body is with the king, but the king is not with the body.”<sup>119</sup> Dover Wilson thinks that by this strange declaration Hamlet means: “the body, that is, Polonius, is in the King’s my father’s company in another world, but the other king, my uncle, has not joined them yet.”<sup>120</sup> But is it not just as possible that when Hamlet thinks of his own father: “the body is with the king” he means that old Hamlet is buried; but that “the king is not with the body,” his spirit, the best part of his being, wanders and is unable to find peace?

In the same way, Claudius, the virile and powerful usurper, gradually loses his power as the play progresses. At the beginning of the play, he is a king sure of himself, a clever diplomat, who does not react to the insults of his nephew.

As early as the 2nd scene of Act II, he seems to be deeply worried by the strange mood of Hamlet. He cannot hide his worries from Polonius, who wants to reveal the reason for Hamlet’s change: “O speak of that that do I long to hear.”<sup>121</sup> During the play within the play, he realises that Hamlet knows the secret of his crime. He sinks down on his prayer-stool, and Hamlet finds him in this position. Feeling more and more threatened, Claudius redoubles his murderous plotting. Like Egisthus, Claudius’ whole life depends on his wife Gertrude, and this is one of the main reasons why he does not ask Hamlet to publicly account for Polonius’ murder: “The queen his mother / Lives only by his looks, and for myself, / My virtue or my plague, be it either which, / She is so conjunctive to my life and soul, / That as the star moves not but in his sphere / I could not but by her” he confides to Laertes. From a political point of view, he feels that

his power has been decreased by Hamlet's popularity, by "the great love the general gender bear him."<sup>122</sup> This murderer identifies himself in a way with his elder brother. As Old Hamlet, Claudius gambles his life, his throne and the queen: "Go but apart, / Make choice of whom your wisest friend you will, / And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me. / If by direct or by the collateral hand / They find us touched, we will our kingdom give, / Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours, / To you in satisfaction" he proposes to the young Laertes, who has accused him of the death of Polonius.<sup>123</sup> Claudius unconsciously imitates his predecessor who, provoked by old Fortinbras, accepted to "forfeit (with his life) all those his lands / Which he stood seized of"<sup>124</sup> that is, the kingdom of Denmark. In the past these two *fathers* had made a "sealed compact / well ratified by law and heraldry";<sup>125</sup> in the present, it is King Claudius, "father" of the kingdom, who finds himself forced to propose an identical arrangement to his subject, his "son", who rebels against his authority.

It is incontestable that the return of the excitable Laertes to Denmark constitutes a turning point in the play. "Keep calm, my lord! / The ocean, overpeering of his list, / Eats not the flats with more impiteous haste / Than young Laertes in a riotous head / O'erbears your officers: the rabble call him lord, / And as the world were now but to begin, / Antiquity forgot, custom not known, / The ratifiers and props of every word / They cry 'Choose we, Laertes shall be king'" says the officer to the king.<sup>126</sup> These lines remind us of those spoken by Sir Stephen Scroop concerning Bolingbroke's revolt: "like an unseasonable stormy day / Which makes the silver rivers drown their shores / As if the world were all dissolv'd to tears, / So high above his limits swells the rage / Of Bolingbroke, covering your fearful land / With hard bright steel and hearts harder than steel."<sup>127</sup> The theme of the disintegration of the universe and the return of *primaeval* time links *Hamlet* and *Richard II*. The irruption of Laertes in the royal court and the aggressive way in which he addresses the king emphasize the emergence of a new personality—the Son—in the tragedy. "That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard, / Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot / Even here, between the chaste unsmirched

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brows / of my true mother," declares Laertes, in addressing the king, whom he qualifies as "vile king."<sup>128</sup> We understand how Gerhardt Hauptmann, in his version of the tragedy, could have made Hamlet say these words.

"As if the world had just begun..." Hamlet disembarks *naked* on Danish soil. Following the tradition of young legendary conquerors who have been strengthened in their adventures abroad, he returns to claim his succession. This heir is in possession of his father's "signet" ring, which is "the model of that Danish seal."<sup>129</sup> To Horatio, who fears that the usurper may have been informed about the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet answers: "It will be short, the interim is mine."<sup>130</sup> Hamlet maintains that, until the arrival of the English ambassadors to Denmark, he remains the master of the game. In addition, he feels that he himself will exercise this "interim," that he will fulfill the royal function for at least a short time, after having punished Claudius and having given his "dying voice"<sup>131</sup> to Fortinbras. While the "arrows" of the usurper "to slightly timbered for so loud a wind" fall back on his "bow," those of Hamlet undoubtedly misaimed, mount quickly in the air: "Free me so far in your most generous thoughts, / That I have shot my arrow o'er the house, / And hurt my brother" says he to Laertes.<sup>132</sup>

In the last scene of Act V, Hamlet assumes in full his function as legitimate heir to the throne. He punishes the usurper by death. Fortinbras, who succeeds him, appreciates Hamlet's aptitude to rule. "For he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal." While the "fathers" in this tragedy are hurriedly buried "with no trophy, sword, or hatchment / nor any noble rite," Hamlet's funeral is celebrated according to the "rite of war."<sup>133</sup>

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There is a marked connection between the mythical, cosmic and religious character of *Hamlet* and the very structure of the *Globe*, Shakespeare's theatre. In his book "*Theatre of the World*" (1969), Francis A. Yates traces the role played by John Dee in England in the propagation of Vitruvius' theories on Hellenistic architecture. He links the movement of theatre construction, inaugurated by Burbage at Shoreditch in London, to the rediscovery

of Hellenistic theatre. The plan of the Vitruvian theatre is based on "the triangulations within the zodiac circle" with its twelve signs joined by four triangles, or polygons. This symmetry and these proportions also characterize the human body, and they emphasize the analogy existing between the macrocosm and the microcosm. From the point of view of theatrical technique, this "cosmic" plan allows the creation of a musical harmony of the actors' voices on the stage, with the "*musica convenientia astrorum*". From the point of view of spirituality, the cosmic plan lets the audience fit its imagination to the fictitious action in the "theatre of the world," *theatrum mundi*. This theatrical structure is particularly apt in reflecting the cosmic and religious allusions of mythical thought as well as in emphasizing the scenes and the situations which convey the elements of this thought.

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#### NOTES

Signs and References: PA (*Shakespeare, the Complete Works*, ed. by Peter Alexander, London and Glasgow, Collins, 1975)  
DW (*The Works of Shakespeare*, ed. by John Dover Wilson, *Hamlet*, Cambridge, 1969)

The author regrets that, for technical reasons, it has not been possible to cite the original texts by certain authors. In these cases reference is made to selected French translations.

<sup>1</sup> G. Gusdorf, *Mythe et Métaphysique*, Flammarion, 1953, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> C. G. Jung, *Métamorphose de l'âme et ses symboles*, Geneva, Georg et Cie., 1973, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Douglas, *De la souillure*, Maspero, 1971, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> See E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan Picture*, Penguin Books, 1974; and C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974.

<sup>5</sup> J. G. Frazer, *Le Rameau d'Or. Étude sur la magie et la religion*, Schleicher Frères et Cie, 1903, Vol. I, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> H. Frankfort, *La royauté et les dieux*, Payot, 1951, p. 36; and Frazer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 165-166.

<sup>7</sup> Marc Bloch, *Les Rois Thaumaturges*, Publications of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Strasbourg, No. 19, p. 50 *et seq.*

<sup>8</sup> PA, II, 4.3, 1020.

<sup>9</sup> PA, I, 4.1, 470.

<sup>10</sup> PA, I, 4.1, 470.

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- <sup>11</sup> PA, 3.2, 462.  
<sup>12</sup> See Maynard Mack, Jr., *Killing the King*, Yale Studies in English, No. 180, 1973.  
<sup>13</sup> PA, 5.3, 744-45.  
<sup>14</sup> DW, 3.3, 79.  
<sup>15</sup> DW, 4.5, 102.  
<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Freud in *Totem et Tabou*, Petite Bibl. Payot, No. 77, p. 31.  
<sup>17</sup> PA, 2.3, 1009.  
<sup>18</sup> DW, 1.1, 5 and 1.5, 29.  
<sup>19</sup> L. Lévy-Bruhl, *L'âme primitive*, Félix Alcan, 1927, pp. 275 and 280.  
<sup>20</sup> See Freud, *op. cit.*; and Otto Rank, *Don Juan et le double*, Petite Bibl. Payot, No. 211, especially Ch. 4 and 5 of the study on Don Juan.  
<sup>21</sup> Mary Douglas, *op. cit.*, p. 131.  
<sup>22</sup> DW, 1.5, 28.  
<sup>23</sup> DW, 1.1, 4.  
<sup>24</sup> DW, 1.2, 15.  
<sup>25</sup> DW, 2.2, 56.  
<sup>26</sup> DW, 3.2, 65.  
<sup>27</sup> DW, 3.4, 86.  
<sup>28</sup> DW, 4.5, 101.  
<sup>29</sup> PA, 1.2, 448. On the theme of royal blood, in *Richard II*, see Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies*, Methuen, 1973, p. 113 et seq.  
<sup>30</sup> DW, 1.5, 28-9.  
<sup>31</sup> DW, 1.4, 24 and DW, 1.3, 18.  
<sup>32</sup> DW, 3.4, 85.  
<sup>33</sup> DW, 3.2, 75.  
<sup>34</sup> DW, 4.3, 95.  
<sup>35</sup> DW, 3.4, 87.  
<sup>36</sup> DW, 4.7, 111.  
<sup>37</sup> DW, 1.5, 27.  
<sup>38</sup> DW, 2.1, 37.  
<sup>39</sup> Frazer, *La crainte des morts dans la religion primitive*, Emile Noury, 1935, pp. 68-69.  
<sup>40</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Traité d'histoire de religions*, Payot, 1970-1974, p. 190.  
<sup>41</sup> DW, 1.4, 24. See also Otto Rank, *op. cit.*, p. 147.  
<sup>42</sup> DW, 1.5, 29.  
<sup>43</sup> DW, 3.3, 81.  
<sup>44</sup> DW, 1.5, 28.  
<sup>45</sup> DW, 2.2, 45.  
<sup>46</sup> DW, 3.2, 71.  
<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* and DW, 3.3, 73.  
<sup>48</sup> Frazer, *Le Rameau d'Or*, Vol. III: *Les cultes agraires et silvestres*, Libr. Schleicher Frères, 1911, pp. 86-87.  
<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.  
<sup>50</sup> DW, 1.1, 8-9.  
<sup>51</sup> *Hamlet*, p. 255.  
<sup>52</sup> DW, 1.1, 4.  
<sup>53</sup> DW, 1.1, 8.  
<sup>54</sup> Frazer, *Le Rameau d'Or: Le bouc émissaire*, Ch. V, p. 273.  
<sup>55</sup> Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 296.  
<sup>56</sup> Roger Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*, Coll. Idées, Gallimard, p. 140 et seq.  
<sup>57</sup> B. Malinowski, *Trois essais sur la vie sociale des primitifs*, Petite Bibl. Payot, No. 109, p. 140.  
<sup>58</sup> Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

- 59 DW, 1.1, 5.  
60 DW, 1.4, 25.  
61 DW, 1.5, 27 and DW, 1.3, 23  
62 Frazer, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 387.  
63 *Ibid.*, p. 292.  
64 DW, 3.2, 75. See also the note to line 284, pp. 205-206.  
65 DW, 3.4, 86.  
66 DW, 5.2, 125.  
67 DW, 1.3, 23.  
68 DW, 5.2, 135.  
69 DW, 3.2, 78.  
70 DW, 3.3, 82.  
71 DW, 4.7, 113.  
72 DW, 5.2, 134.  
73 Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 539.  
74 DW, 1.2, 10.  
75 Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, Coll. Idées, No. 191, Gallimard, 1969, p. 39.  
76 DW, 3.1, 63.  
77 DW, 1.1, 7.  
78 PA, 1.3, 974.  
79 PA, 1.3, 793 and PA, 1.1, 589.  
80 PA, 2.4, 461.  
81 PA, 1.3, 974.  
82 PA, 1.3, 974; and DW, 1.1, 6.  
83 DW, 1.1, 7 and PA, 2.2, 980.  
84 DW, 1.1, 7.  
85 DW, 1.2, 11-12.  
86 DW, 150. See the note to line 67.  
87 DW, 2.2, 44.  
88 DW, 3.1, 62.  
89 DW, 1.1, 7.  
90 Frazer, *Le Rameau d'Or*, Vol. III, p. 191.  
91 Mircea Eliade, *op. cit.*, p. 140.  
92 DW, 3.4, 84.  
93 PA, 5.1, 819.  
94 DW, 2.2, 39. See on this subject C. S. Lewis, *op. cit.*; and Lawrence Babb, *Elizabethan Malady*, Michigan State University Press, 1951 (repr. 1965).  
95 Ed. de Minuit, 1972, p. 135.  
96 DW, 1.1, 6.  
97 PA, 2.2, 978 and PA, 2.3, 1009.  
98 PA, 5.3, 745.  
99 DW, 2.2, 41.  
100 PA, 2.1, 456.  
101 Cassirer, *La pensée mythique*, p. 143.  
102 DW, 1.2, 10; and DW, 1.1, 6. The sacrilegious aspect of the two feasts of which Hamlet speaks materializes, in a way, the violation committed against the right and morality. See DW, 1.2, 15.  
103 DW, 1.1, 5; DW, 1.1, 8 and DW 1.2, 10.  
104 DW, 3.4, 85 and 86.  
105 DW, 3.3, 88 and DW, 1.5, 32.  
106 Cassirer, *op. cit.*, p. 123.  
107 Mircea Eliade, *Le Sacré et le Profane*, Coll. Idées, No. 76, Gallimard, 1965, p. 45.

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- <sup>108</sup> PA, 2.1, 454.  
<sup>109</sup> DW, 1.4, 24.  
<sup>110</sup> DW, 1.5, 29.  
<sup>111</sup> DW, 2.2, 46.  
<sup>112</sup> DW, 1.2, 14.  
<sup>113</sup> PA, 4.1, 468.  
<sup>114</sup> DW, 1.2, 10.  
<sup>115</sup> DW, 2.2, 45.  
<sup>116</sup> DW, 2.2, 53.  
<sup>117</sup> DW, 4.3, 93-94.  
<sup>118</sup> DW, 4.2, 92.  
<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>120</sup> See the note to lines 26-27 of Scene 2, Act IV (DW, 219).  
<sup>121</sup> DW, 2.2, 39.  
<sup>122</sup> DW, 4.7, 107.  
<sup>123</sup> DW, 4.5, 105.  
<sup>124</sup> DW, 1.1, 6.  
<sup>125</sup> DW, 1.1, 6.  
<sup>126</sup> DW, 4.5, 101.  
<sup>127</sup> PA, 3.2, 463.  
<sup>128</sup> DW, 4.5, 102.  
<sup>129</sup> DW, 5.2, 125.  
<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>131</sup> DW, 5.2, 136.  
<sup>132</sup> DW, 5.2, 131.  
<sup>133</sup> DW, 4.5, 105 and DW, 5.2, 138.