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Mircea Eliade, *Ordeal by Labyrinth: Conversations with Claude-Henri Rocquet*, trans. by Derek Colman. University of Chicago Press, 1982. Hardcover. ix + 225 pages. \$17.50. Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

A useful introduction to Eliade the man, these interviews skillfully work through his life in Romania, India, and the West, and close with several interviews concerning his work and opinions. Appendices include a Chronology of Eliade's life, and a Bibliography complete through 1981.

Eliade is one of the most important scholars of the history of religions. Christian scholars have made use of Eliade's comments regarding cyclical and linear time, and his studies of alchemy and of other arcane forms of religion and occultism. Eliade's own perspective is sometimes hard to discern. This book is very helpful in enabling scholars to see where he is "coming from," and shows us many of his motives and presuppositions. It is thus of great value to specialists in the area, and to general scholars who have found Eliade to be of help.

While Eliade has some understanding of the difference between Christian faith and pagan religion (Creation versus Being), his own preference is clearly for paganism. He rejoices in what he sees as revived Baalism among the hippies of America (p.114f.), and looks to the creation of new man-made religions now that Christianity is dead (p.116f.). He likes the "Princeton gnosis," the modern pantheism of modern physics (e.g., Carl Sagan) (p.131ff.).

Eliade is never quite clear as to what the "sacred" is, but for him it is "real," not merely a projection of wishful human thinking. The "sacred," however, is not the Christian Creator, but seems to be a mystical force of life in the universe itself, like the "Force" in *Star Wars*. In this sense, Eliade is not a secular humanist, and there is a kind of conservatism in his thinking: "Culture is not a 'superstructure,' as the Marxists believe: it is man's specific condition. One cannot be a man without being a cultural being" (p.78).

These conversations also bring out helpful perspectives on Eliade's fiction, only now being translated into English, which present most fully his own magical view of the world. This reviewer was personally interested in Eliade's comments on America. In contrast to Europe, "people always invite you with your wife. When they wanted me to stay in the United States, the first thing they asked me was whether my wife liked it here" (p.109).

This book gives an interesting glimpse into one of the most profound pagan minds of our time.

Mircea Eliade, *Tales of the Sacred and the Supernatural*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1981. Paperback. 120 pages. \$7.95. Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

This short book contains two of Eliade's novellas, "The Three Graces," and "With the Gypsy Girls." It is the first book publication in English of these two stories. Both are fantasy tales. In the first, and better, of the two tales, a

scientist has discovered that cancerous cell growth is actually a perverted form of the rapid cell growth that Adam and Eve would have experienced periodically if they had not sinned and lost everlasting life. He discovers a scientific way of reversing this effect of sin, but the process is lost forever due to the bureaucratic bunglings of the communist state. We are given to understand that actually God has intervened, as He did at Babel, to prevent men from recovering Eden improperly. This is quite a good story, with real depth, and worth re-reading. It is marred only by Eliade's penchant for obscurity-for-its-own-sake, which confuses the reader at the beginning and end of the tale.

"With the Gypsy Girls" has been published in English before, in 1974, in *The Denver Quarterly*. It has occasioned some controversy concerning its interpretation. It is quite obscure, and is designed to illustrate "how the sacred takes us out of the normal time sequence into the future and eternity." Well, Eliade's view of "sacred time" is also a bit obscure, and is part and parcel of his neo-pagan worldview. I am afraid I found this story neither very entertaining nor stimulating.

Both tales are well translated. As more of Eliade's fiction comes into print, his "cult following" is bound to expand.

*Imagination and Meaning: The Scholarly and Literary Worlds of Mircea Eliade*, ed. by Norman Girardot and Mac Linscott Ricketts. New York: Seabury Press, 1982. Paperback. x + 214 pages. \$11.95. Reviewed by James B. Jordan.

Everybody involved seems fascinated that Eliade can write both fiction and scientific studies, and this book explores these two facets of the man's work. I don't find this to be so intriguing, especially since Eliade himself states that his "scientific" studies are actually philosophical writings that use material from world religions (pp.113-115). Both aspects of his literary corpus, then, are highly impregnated with imagination and speculation, for better or worse.

This volume is an indispensable contribution to the study of Eliade's work, however, for several reasons. It includes several newly-translated pieces by Eliade himself, including a fascinating essay on detective fiction, and a well-written fictional story on the "death of God." Essays on Eliade's hermeneutics of comparative religion, on his method in writing fiction, and on the religious (pagan) value of generating new "myths" in fiction, are included — six essays in all.

From that pagan viewpoint, this creation of new myths is of religious value in helping men escape the limits of God's world, and in helping them come up with alternative, non-Biblical explanations of the world. This is the opposite of the Christian view of fiction, which is designed to help the Godly man better understand and appreciate the real world God has made, even if (as in Tolkien) the method used for this purpose involves the creation of a (Christian) fantasy world. Eliade gives a most profound defense of the pagan view, in his philosophical studies, his fiction, and his essays on fiction. In a time when fantastic fiction is becoming all the rage, Eliade seems destined to emerge as a spokesman for the non-Christian viewpoint.

This is also the case concerning Eliade's philosophical writings (in the history of religions). The essence of his method is the discernment of the manifestation of the "sacred" in "profane" objects and events. This procedure

is an explicit violation of the Second Commandment, which tells us that God never manifests Himself in any created object except in the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, and thus that worship may never be directed "through" any creature. At the very least, a perusal of Eliade's viewpoint helps us understand what the Second Commandment forbids, and this could be a useful corrective to the rationalistic misinterpretations of the commandment ("no religious art") so common in certain Reformed circles.

Jean Starobinski, *1789: The Emblems of Reason*, trans. by Barbara Bray. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1982 (hardcover). 298 pages. Reviewed by Ray. R. Sutton.

Without Christ, man adopts a religion of revolution. One of the high water marks for revolution in western civilization was Europe, 1789. The ideological paradigm underlying this period of revolution appeared in every art form. Artists took the opportunity to use their skills to contribute to the philosophical upheaval. Books have been written about the theoretical side of the revolution, and a few writers have commented on the art work of that period. But Starobinski's unique contribution is that he "compares the style of the Revolution as an event with the style of the works of art produced in the same period (p.8)." This comparison is most effective because art forms are generally more concrete than the ideas. Therefore, the insight that grows out of this comparison adds to our understanding of the religion of revolution. Due to the length of the present review, only the major works of art, and the concepts they convey, are noted.

Starobinski begins with one of Francisco De Goya's tapestry cartoons (These were political in nature, and he painted approximately 100 of them). *Winter, 1787*. It portrays three common people struggling against the frozen elements. De Goya was a liberal who favored the Revolution until the incarnation of it in Napoleon turned its guns on Spain, but in his naive youth he promoted revolution with paintings like this one. Here, he attempted to capture the state of things: They were static and frozen economically and politically (pp.14-15). Starobinski calls this chapter *The Freeze*, because the world was perceived to be at a stand still, and it needed to start revolving (from revolution) again.

For this to happen, night had to come. Night and darkness represent the foundational idea of revolution, death. The old order of things must die. When death comes to the present and the previous, then the world is ready for a new beginning. Thus death became a central theme in Guardi (pp.23-26). Mozart speaks of the night as coming in *The Marriage of Figaro* where the chaos of two lovers turns into order after a day of love among the pines (pp.35ff.). And Boulée's *Newton's Cenotaph, Interior View, by Night* captures the "dark center" concept that death is at the center (pp.80-82). For these revolutionary artists, the old world

had to die before night would pass and the sun would dawn the beginning of a new era.

In Starobinski's chapter *The Solar Myth of the Revolution*, he talks about the other side of death. "Once the old order had been symbolically reduced to the semblance of a dark cloud or cosmic scourge, the struggle against it could, by the same process, represent its object as the advent of light (p.43)." Thus, in the painting *The Triumph of Marat*, by Louis Boilly, and in Blake's *The French Revolution*, the imagery of the light and sun predominate. The taking of the Bastille is retold with endless variations of the same theme — a new beginning.

Another art form Starobinski discusses is architecture. "In an age when divinity was thought of as a great architect, the human architect saw himself as a god and universal legislator. He arrogated to himself the power of rationally organizing material space and soon added to that power its full moral potential, making it in fact the power of transforming the whole world of man" (pp.73-74). These architects of revolution, such as Ledoux and Barbier, designed impractical structures, most of which were never built, thinking they would be the master builders of the new world. But an age born out of chaos does not build. Revolutionaries of that day, like the Marxists of ours, perceived decoration as antithetical to the simplicity of the original order to which they had returned. Moreover, the massive buildings that existed had been built by the monarchy. In the process of simplifying the decor, many were torn down; but equalitarian revolutionary economics could not provide the money needed to replace them with revolutionary architecture.

Much more needs to be said about this important work, but space only permits brief reference to Starobinski's other developments. Hopefully, this will call the reader's attention to things that will help him see the breadth of his research. *The Oath: David*, is a chapter devoted to the place of the oath "to seal the indissoluble bond which men contracted with one another and with which they would make the starting point of a new alliance (pp.101ff.)." In his chapter on Goya, Starobinski shows how the revolutionary turned against the sons of revolutionaries (pp.181ff.). And finally, he analyzes Mozart's, *The Magic Flute*, an opera which was created to show that the son of royalty, Tamino, could attain wisdom as a man, and not as the son of a king (p.211).

In conclusion, first, only one who is fairly familiar with Vantillianism and interested in the philosophy conveyed through art should tackle this book. Second, those who do will not agree completely with Starobinski's analysis of the Revolution. For him, the revolution failed because its ideals were incarnated in an angry mob (p.59) which implies he embraces those ideals. But he concludes his book with cynical reaction to Mozart's "The splendor of the sun drives away the dark night: Soon the noble youth will know the new life (*The Magic Flute*, 2:20)," with his own final comment, "We are still waiting for the new life (p.226)."