

**THE USE OF MYTH AND FANTASY  
IN DIANE WAKOSKI'S *GREED***

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## 要約

### Diane Wakoski の *Greed* における神話とファンタジーの効果

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これまでに20冊以上にのぼる著作を上梓している現代アメリカ詩人、Diane Wakoski の最も顕著な特質の一つは、神話とファンタジーの独創的な使用にある。彼女の最近の著作、*The Complete Greed* は、4部構成の詩で始まったものが、13部構成に発展してくる、テーマ上も構成上も複雑な作品であるが、この作品において、Wakoski はそれまでの作品においてより多量に、反復・発展・変化するファンタジックなメタファーを持続的に使用している。神話の使い方も多面的である。伝統的な神話は、時に確立された形で、時に新しいひねりを加えて用いられている。下地となる伝統的神話があり、その上に、Wakoski の個人的神話が、綴り合わされる。*Greed* における神話の枠の中に編み込まれているのは、墮落とエデンの園の聖書神話、新しきエデンとしてのアメリカ神話、そして月とナルキッソスといった異教神話であるが、Wakoski はさらに、科学や科学小説の情報、歴史や地理の情報、私的で些細・平凡な生活の詳細、そしてファンタジーをこれらに混然と織り混ぜて、その驚くべき世界を構築しているのである。

Diane Wakoski is a contemporary American poet, author of over twenty volumes, whose ingenious use of myth and fantasy is one of the most distinctive characteristics of her verse. Her latest book, *The Complete Greed*, is a thematically and structurally complicated work which started as a four-part poem and has continued to develop into the present thirteen parts. In this, as to a lesser extent in her previous works, Wakoski employs fantastic metaphors that recur, develop and change; or they are sustained for long passages. Her treatment of myths is multifaceted. She includes traditional myths, sometimes in their established forms, sometimes with a new twist. Or, especially, she uses a traditional myth as a base upon which she weaves her personal mythology. The framework of mythology in *Greed* incorporates the Biblical myths of the Fall and the Garden of Eden; national myths of America as a new Garden of Eden and the myth of the American West; and Pagan myths of the Moon and of Narcissus.

Wakoski uses a melange of scientific, science-fictional, historical and geographic information as well as personal and trivial details and fantastic creations in building her extraordinary world. For example, at the beginning of *Greed*, the origins of life in the sea and the Darwinian struggle for existence are not dealt with just in naturalistic terms, but are treated fantastically. Even the names of known fish take on a fantastic aura when mingled with the names of imaginary sea creatures. Inhabiting her fantastic sea-world are all kinds of fish, small and big, gentle and beautiful or ferocious and carnivorous, from gold fish to piranhas to sharks. Central to most studies of fantasy, as with *Greed*, is the element of the impossible which has historically been disguised by numerous perspectives and critical methods. As Roger Schlobin has said, "The concepts and turns of mind inherent in 'religion,' 'myth,' 'romance,' 'chronicle,' 'epic,' 'mysticism' among so many other systems have frequently been rationalizations for the impossible, facades behind which fantasy has brooded unnoticed and unexplored."<sup>1</sup> Schlobin regrets that since the industrial revolution and social Darwinism, "affection for realism and aversion to fantasy have become predominant characteristics of modern aesthetic culture."<sup>2</sup> Still, fantasy has managed to survive and even flourish, and "a strong case can be made for fantasy works as the most creative of imaginative acts; for fantasy's reliance on the impossible and the empirically unknown requires less imitation and more invention than mimetic art."<sup>3</sup> Such a creative achievement is evident in *The Collected Greed*.

Wakoski uses her fantastic water world to illustrate various kinds of "greed"—her umbrella word for her collection of "deadly sins" like dishonesty, envy, etc., against herself and the world. In her world she is aware of other living as well as non-living things. In "Of Accord and Principle," for example, the gold fish is the presiding metaphor, although she also creates what she calls kissing (poet) fish. She mentions the deadly piranhas, also. This part deals with the personal politics of absolute honesty. In "The Shark—Parents and Children," she explores her personal mythology more deeply as she starts weaving a metaphor of salmon as angel and shark as devil<sup>4</sup>. She sees herself as Everywoman asking herself questions about desire and her relations to men.

Just as I torture myself again and again  
with the question : what was wrong with me? Why  
has no man ever wanted me  
and my children,  
even now  
that I am old and past such desires,  
when words are more to me  
than flesh could ever be,  
yet I  
like every woman  
must ask myself  
those questions, and when I do  
my shoulders lift out of the water  
dazzled  
surrounded  
by the mouths waiting to tear apart  
my flesh(p. 69).

She is the fish and has already complained of "sharks like acid eating my throat" (p. 65).

In "Self-Righteousness," she is the beautiful and poisonous lion fish of the Red Sea, a deadly fish. This time, even the sharks steer clear of her.

I was a little ocean named Diane,  
a coral reef,  
a sea anemone,  
a chambered nautilus,  
glowing with possibilities no one knew.  
"Pride," my mother  
would whisper,  
as I played the piano,  
as I sped through school books with lightning speed,  
on the light of the underwater  
world,  
glinting,  
reflected, inside my own head I was  
the lion fish of Saudi Arabia,  
Swimming slowly through the Red Sea,  
long spines,  
like flies,  
or the rails from spiral iron stairs,  
stick up in a fan,  
a mane,  
over my body.  
Their poison is more deadly

than the bite of a cobra,  
my fins are angry too,  
slowly they open and shut,  
seeming to breathe,  
and I move wherever I want to go,  
unharmd and beautiful  
because  
deadly(pp. 85-86).

Having seemingly learned how to protect herself, she experiments with better possibilities of survival, birds as well as fish being used to signify herself :

I was a bird caught in an oil slick from industrial nations.

I was a fish contaminated with 10 parts of mercury per 1000 in my guts (pp. 91-92).

Thus Wakoski uses fantastic and sometimes bizarre metaphors throughout the poem to develop her theme. She has a keen ecological consciousness that other creatures abound and a developed ecological conscience that dictates that all creatures have a right to exist. Gary Wolfe has discussed two manners in which science fiction and fantasy writers seek to resolve the tension between the individual and the environment : what he calls autoplasic and alloplastic fantasies—the manipulation of the body to fit the environment, the way of primitive cultures ; or the technological man's solution, the manipulation of the environment to fit the body.<sup>5</sup> Wakoski is closer to primitive cultures in the sense that like them she is "autoplastically" involved in myth-making. Her attempts are positive and highly effective models for individual maturation through integration with environment. Also it must be remembered that implications of nature as mother is natural for women. Women are closer to nature in their role of perpetuating the species ; therefore, as Susan Griffin has recently remarked, "there has always been a strong link between feminist and ecological movements."<sup>6</sup>

As *Greed* continued growing, it came to evolve into a poetic quest for self during which the poet weaves a complicated personal mythology and confronts death. The developing structure of the book can be compared to the weaving of an oriental carpet. The various threads used to create the pattern of the first part of the carpet are supplemented with other threads and other colors as the pattern gets more diversified and complicated. Wakoski's persona "Diane" is always surrounded by reptiles, turtles and fish. About half-way through the volume birds become equally evident. Even more strikingly, the four elements also are incorporated into the poem.

In "The Water Element Song for Sylvia," Sylvia Plath as a suicide is contrasted to Diane as survivor. The poem becomes a celebration of life with "this fish won't die" (p. 118). Water gives and sustains life. The poem deals with life in the past, with mythical beginnings, beginnings in water, and continues to a future that probably belongs to robots. Elements of existential despair creep in as the poet confronts and rejects death.

"Power" deals with earth, "tiny and foolish" with fish below and birds above. Wakoski admires powerful big birds of prey—eagles, owls, hawks—and writes :

What I want is life beyond imagination,

one that is its own  
symbol, image and magic,  
one that is music in a deaf world.  
and I not a bird,  
but for a change,  
human. . .

.....

But only with my mouth  
am I a hawk,  
a sharp powerful beak twists vowels into a bloody meal everyday  
while my hands are gentle, soft, cannot hurt even when they are  
unjustly squeezed (p. 129).

In "Fantasies of Power," fantastic human characters appear. Wakoski writes about eloping with Bobby Fisher, whose rivals for her hand are the King of Spain, an astronomer-physicist and the Dean of Narcissistic Studies. Readers familiar with earlier Wakoski works will recognize these characters, who also will appear later in *Greed* where they are given more attention. At this point, however, she does not feel ready to deal with human beings. The section entitled "The Parable of Power" is introduced with these lines:

Let me return from men to birds,  
I have no power over them either.  
Stories are all I have the power to tell (p. 137).

From this point on, she dives completely into the world of fantasy, a fairy tale in prose about a family of ospreys with two beautiful daughters who lived "once upon a time." One sister is a flirt and the other a serious, accomplished piano player. Mysteriously, under a full moon, a piano appears on a cliff above the sea and reappears each evening at the same time. The sisters are surrounded by admiring birds. A horned grebe falls in love with the piano player, hardly noticing her flirtatious sister. This creates a tension until one evening the piano does not appear at the customary hour. They learn from an eagle that it has fallen into the sea. The birds try to recover it with a fishnet belonging to some fishermen. The sisters write a letter to the Moon:

Dear Moon,  
We loved your piano and are sad without it. May we know why  
you have taken it away? And if there is any way we can get it  
back?

Sincerely.

The Osprey Sisters (p. 140).

The efforts of the birds are to no avail. The Osprey sisters receive a letter with the imprint of the Moon. The letter is as follows:

Dear Osprey Sisters,  
Only the men who love you have the power to restore your piano.  
There is nothing I can do.

With regrets,  
The Moon (p. 141).

The ending of the story is aimed neither at proving that love is all-powerful nor that it is not. There is no meditative ending nor a discussion of ethics or morality. Surprisingly, Wakoski describes a rowboat full of fishermen. Also in the boat is the hurt and bleeding Moon, lying helpless. The fishermen dump her into the sea, ordering that she retrieve their fishnet. The moon sinks to the bottom of the sea. The birds are frightened away; the Osprey sisters cry; the fishermen cannot get their net, nor can they retrieve the Moon.

Wakoski's final comments are: "We now live in a dark world where we only imagine a moon, where love is irrelevant and life projects are as easily scattered as a flock of birds. . . . We hold the world together for small moments which add up to an hour of piano playing each day, flirtation while there is music, writing letters to the moon" (p. 141). Here, Wakoski's moon mythology is more in keeping with the existential stance of modern man than with ancient myths. Moon mythology seems to come naturally to Wakoski because of her first name, which she uses to designate her alter ego in the book. Diane Sadoff, not surprisingly, has remarked on the popular use of the moon in contemporary poetry by women like Denise Levertov, Nancy Willard and Diane Wakoski.<sup>7</sup>

At this point in *Greed*, Wakoski identifies herself with the moon, abandoning the earlier identifications with birds, fish and the "little ocean named Diane." Lauter has commented that Wakoski has transformed the coincidence of her name into "a remarkable exploration, over a ten-year span, of women's relationship to nature."<sup>8</sup> In this quest for self, Wakoski experiments with various roles for the moon as herself. Her works before *Greed* attest to that and Wakoski seems to expect her reader to know her previous poems, as she explicitly and implicitly refers to them. In *The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems* (1971), she had written,

I am thinking about myself  
now  
The Moon  
....  
The Moon  
is what I am thinking about<sup>9</sup>

Earlier she had described the moon as both motherly and erotic and at the same time fond of her independence in *Inside the Blood Factory* (1968). She displays the obvious attitude of looking for an astronomer to study her moon in the "Astronomer Poems" (1973). Moon mythology continues to play an important role in the rest of *Greed*.

"The Greed to be Fulfilled" is the longest and most complicated part of *Greed*. In addition to moon mythology, many other myths are evoked. It also incorporates an incredible amount of factual and fantastic detail. There are, for example, the factual and scientific references to "200,000 known types of flowers" and also to frogs and bees. As the verse changes to prose, Wakoski glides very easily from matter-of-fact thoughts on flora and fauna to a mysterious realm where Diane gets into a long, black Oldsmobile

driven by a Dalmatian wearing Tony Lamas boots “down Morning Street, down Evening Street and then to someplace where only masks indicate reality” (p. 147).

The narration takes on a dream-like quality with this new setting. Diane is like Alice in Wonderland. She says, “I am suddenly aware of a most remarkable sight. Ahead there is a plateau and on it, the most stunning building I have ever seen. It almost seems invisible made completely out of many-faceted glass. Seemingly, a three-storied building transparent and composed of cubes, angles and points. At times it seems to disappear, at other times it sparkles like a mountain of diamonds”(p. 148). The glass structure proves to be a wall and behind it is a garden. By this time the Dalmatian has disappeared, having guided her to what might be called “Fairie.” The term is one of Tolkien’s contributions to the theory of fantasy. In his essay, “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien created a terminology for fantastic art by proposing that fairy stories create “secondary worlds,” alternative kingdoms of desire, separate from the “primary world” of our daily, waking experience, “a world your mind can enter.”<sup>10</sup> According to Crossley, fairie is “represented as a nostalgically authoritarian kingdom of desire.”<sup>11</sup> Wakoski’s creation of this locale thus is a classic example of Fairie. Inside the gate is Wakoski’s authoritarian kingdom presided over by George Washington. The people around are all wearing pansy masks. A quotation from D. H. Lawrence’s *Pansies* and a reference to Pascal’s *Pensées* alert the reader to intellectual games and fantasies evoked by these masks.

Diane feels fulfilled. She is in the Garden of Eden and united with her father, who is also the father of all Americans. Diane says, “So it pleased me to see George Washington, the father of our Country, here in the improbable desert with his impossible garden, presiding over the Flower Society and, in fact, presenting its members as human flowers” (p. 155). So in this section, Diane has travelled in a fantastic manner to a fantastic place. Crossley’s description of the traveller in Fairie as “largely passive and receptive. . . at a loss for words to name or report her experience”<sup>12</sup> is applicable. From her awed reaction, the reader can surmise that she must be seeing things she cannot communicate. As Crossley has remarked, “What we perceive with the mind’s eye often cannot be seen with the corporeal eye.”<sup>13</sup>

The fantastic events in the fantastic desert continue with the President’s announcement of the performance of a masque entitled “Looking for the King of Spain,” which, he says, was written by Diane, although she knows nothing about it. The President assures everybody that they will all know what part to play when they are called. When the masque opens, there are two George Washingtons: the President of the country, who is also the President of the Society of Western Flowers, acting as the master of ceremonies; and George Washington as the character in the masque, played by a carpenter in a sunflower mask. The masque is further complicated by the parts played by four different Dianas: Diane Wakoski, the poet writing about her persona or alter ego; the Diane who was driven to the desert by the Dalmatian on a quest to find her father; the Diane recognized by the President as the girl looking for the King of Spain; and the Diane acted by a young boy in the play wearing a pansy mask. Wakoski is playing with play-acting, impersonations and multiple personalities. The ease and naturalness of such



transformations make the desert credible as a veritable Fairie.

Just before the performance starts, the President announces that Diane has introduced a new character into the masque who is "the Devil." Diane as persona sitting with the President claims she knows nothing about this, just as she knows nothing at all about the masque. So, this is Diane Wakoski, the poet, saying she is adding the Devil at the last minute. Once again it becomes apparent that Wakoski is trying to come to terms with conflicting desires and attitudes by means of parcelling them out to multiple personalities as different persons.

The Devil appears as the proverbial tall, dark, handsome man with a mask in the shape of a black calla lily. The President gets up to announce that the title of the night's masque has been changed to "The Moon Loses Her Shoes." The performance starts with the appearance of a band called "The Moon's Shoes" made up of four rock musicians and three Beethovens played by three different actors. As the references to "Dianes" and "Moons" increase, so do the fantastic elements. The first tune is entitled "The Long Note," played with a special reed which, we are told, allows a skilled performer to sustain a note without interruption for up to three hours. The first Beethoven, who is playing the note, is soaked in sweat and dissheveled.

Then comes the play proper in two acts, fifteen pages of prose. The plot revolves around the magic shoes of the mythic Diane, the moon, which enable her to create romance. At this point Wakoski weaves a mythical tale with national and political ramifications: the moon is the illegitimate daughter of George Washington and an Indian woman he met in the West when he was there as a surveyor to make money. At that time he was already married to Martha and running for President, so he has concealed the affair. The King of Spain was also out West, hoping to acquire some land. Washington makes a deal with him to become godfather to his daughter, and the King of Spain gives the magic shoes to her as his christening gift. She is not pleased, however, because even though they are magic, she does not want to have to wear the same shoes all her life. As the play opens, she is in love with a black man who is a Ferrari mechanic, and she asks her father to send her a secretary to help with the wedding arrangements. The Devil in the play is a homosexual who passes himself off as a travelling preacher; he wants to have the Moon's shoes so all men will fall in love with him. He tricks Washington to send the Blue Moon Cowboy, who is in love with the Moon, as secretary. The cowboy is so grateful to the Devil for getting him close to the Moon that he agrees to steal her shoes. At the end of the first act, the Moon has lost her shoes, her marriage is off, and she is desolate.

In the second act, the Devil is tricked at his own game by a plan devised by the third Beethoven, who is a Jesuit monk. The Moon dresses as a beautiful man, actually as the Blue Moon Cowboy, and woos the Devil until in his vanity he gives up the magic shoes. So the play has come full circle and ends with the Moon, wiser for the experience, happy to be reunited with her magic shoes. Charles Molesworth has accurately perceived that Wakoski "exploits the poem as myth for personal, satiric and lyric purposes and to create a tension or evoke the aura of a primitive ritual."<sup>14</sup> In this part of the poem there is a great

deal going on, including partly historical episodes with international, national and inter-racial ramifications as Wakoski weaves her personal moon mythology. Also the multi-layered disguises show that people are not what they seem, especially in connection with sexual identity, although both sexes appear to have a lot in common, including vanity and a great desire to be loved.

When the play is finished, the President announces that Diane will be leaving alone to continue her quest. She seems pleased with the whole fantastic experience and says, "I was beginning to realize that this place was not meant to frighten me, or to cause me trouble, but rather to bring me the pleasures of poetry, of fantasy, of life beyond the body" (p. 184). The poet has consciously delved into fantasy, perhaps, to bring a clarification to poetry and the creative process through the science-fiction device of the three Beethovens. At the end of the play, the body of the first Beethoven lies on the ground, deserted, indicative of out-of-body travel. Diane takes a walk around the garden and muses on love, life, death and poetry. She discusses scientifically, biological and psychological needs in connection with love. Then she launches into a discussion of the distinction between Apollonian and Dionysian poetry. She remarks, "I have only seen the truth of the Dionysian way. But, like Ginsberg, I see it as the alternate great truth to the Apollonian way. That way denied to so many of us, born in poverty or into disruptive lives. Yet if I start with wholeness now, then surely the Apollonian way is possible for me" (p. 184). The desert is symbolic of the Apollonian, but there is an underground spring which nourishes the flowers. Diane explains, "That spring is Dionysian, feeding the Apollonian landscape. George Washington and the King of Spain are both Apollonians. The woodsman, mechanic, carpenter are Apollonian, too, bringing order and civilization" (p. 186). Beyond this brief explanation, no clarification is brought to the allegory of the masque.

Instead, to help the reader to derive his own meaning, Wakoski poses some questions: "Was the Moon the personification of Good and the Devil a personification of Evil? Was the Moon a personification of humanity or foolishness or weakness? If so then so was the Devil" (p. 187). The reader can answer either yes or no to these questions. Her next question, however, is crucial for an explication of the masque: "Was the Moon representing the heterosexual world, the Devil representing the homosexual world? Perhaps the masque was one last magical rite to stave off the holocaust of a total male world, of men loving men exclusively, of women becoming biologically extinct as history has tried to make them intellectually extinct" (p. 188). So, in the final analysis Wakoski's fantasy is a feminist fantasy as Susan Gubar has observed in connection with another writer. In her article "She in Herland," Gubar considers the general drift of feminist fantasies away from patriarchal culture and its industrialized tyranny, war, pollution, and alienation toward a peaceful, maternal garden paradise.<sup>15</sup>

Diane's meditations in Fairie extend to her next journey which may lead her underground, one which will be offered in exchange for death and its rituals: rebirth and a new life. Here the reader may find parallels to journeys of Orpheus, Dante and other voyagers to the Underworld. Before this, however, the journey to Fairie must be

completed. George Washington tells her that she will be transported home as she was brought, "in comfort and with pleasure" (p. 212). At dawn, the Dalmatian in Tony Lamas boots wakes her up and drives her in the Oldsmobile, still going West, not back East. He stops the car in the desert, takes off his boots and coat, tosses the car keys to her and runs away on all fours, saying "It is your journey." She can find no maps and drives in the direction the car is headed, carrying in the trunk the pansy mask and other paraphernalia of the night. So at the end we see Diane heading in a direction not her choice with luggage she may have no use for, taking a risk into the unknown. This may be the closest to an existential stance that appears in the poem: that life involves venturing into unmapped territory carrying burdens that one cannot get rid of.

The whole fantastic prose episode seems to be the poet's way of stopping to think about her poetry and working out her frustrations. She is nourished at "the Dionysian spring that feeds the Apollonian landscape," and she returns refreshed and reconciled to her creative urges. As many critics, including C. S. Lewis and Jerome L. Singer have remarked, fantasy makes available insights that go beyond possible experience.<sup>16</sup> Wakoski uses this tool effectively, fulfilling what Tolkien saw as its purpose: to take us "there and back again," refreshed and purified.

As a result of this foray into prose and an alternate world, both the poet and the reader can return to poetry and the real world with renewed appreciation. In looking at the fantastic alternate worlds that Wakoski creates, the reader becomes aware of their elaborate mythic content. She has created her personal mythology by making use of Biblical and classical myths, American geography and history, science, science fiction, Freudian psychology and much encyclopedic information. She has created a striking desert setting peopled by the Dean of Narcissistic Studies, the King of Spain, George Washington, the Devil and many other characters, historical, mythical, Biblical but above all fantastic. She has created a patriarchal society presided over by George Washington, Diane's father and the father of the nation.

Of the myths Wakoski uses, the two most important deal with the Fall and Narcissus. Her mother, the serpent, is never far away, although attention is not focussed on her. It has been said that anyone born of a mother is affected by the Fall. As Terry Otten puts it, "However altered by psychology and behavioristic thought, by technology and scientific determinism, the Fall still offers an appropriate metaphor for what it means to be human. And the very pattern of the Fall—the movement from a garden state to temptation to self-knowledge to consequences—remains an apt description of the human drama."<sup>17</sup> Wakoski says she was brought up as a Protestant and grew up very conscious of the Fall. Into that she brings her knowledge of history and the concept of America as the new Garden. Wakoski believes the desert is the final place to go when one has fallen out of grace.<sup>18</sup> She also believes that it is possible to transform the desert through magic as amply provided by her imagination. Her desert is in the West: the specific geographic location seems to be between Las Vegas and Los Angeles. If her locale is identifiably American, it is also infused with mythic dimensions. It is characteristic Wakoski, as Yoknapatawpha is of Faulkner, Tralfamadore, Vonnegut. As Freder-

ick Stern has remarked, "The naming and evocation of American locales from Texas to 'the desert,' from Michigan to California—all work to give the poem a landscape and setting that we recognize as characteristic of all of Wakoski's large out-put."<sup>19</sup>

Wakoski makes use of the myth of Narcissus in the attainment of knowledge. Comparable to the fascination of Narcissus with his reflected image is Wakoski's admitted fascination with doubles, twins and shadows, and her insistent exploration of the possibility "to be" and "to see" at the same time. Many scholars have dealt with this dichotomy, and John Vernon connects this fascination to the Fall. According to Vernon, this state of modern culture derives from the loss of "Edenic oneness with the world, a fall brought about by that mode of perception that separates perceptions into what become mutually exclusive opposites: 'subject' and 'object,' 'I' and 'other.'"<sup>20</sup> George Slusser posits upon this base, "A more recent and radical fall: a total fascination with reflexive seeing (a desire to resolve this primary rift from the point of view of the 'subject' by turning its objects into mirrors that reflect that subject) that not only abolishes all sense of an objective world without, but all possibility of returning to a state of pure existence before—the immanent self-awareness that might precede this fall into seeing."<sup>21</sup>

Relevant in this connection are Wakoski's frequent references to Narcissus, which at one level embody her criticism of self-centered, vain poets, but at a deeper level embody the paradox of the poet: the desire to be and to observe at the same time. Narcissus falls and dies. According to Slusser, the lesson is that "Man cannot have his image both other and the same, cannot project the self and retain his own existence as image as well. In this existential world there is no Passage through the mirror but merely a drift toward it, a gradual and ultimately fatal transfer of existential locus from the projector to the projected image."<sup>22</sup> For man in this fantastic condition Kierkegaard sees a dangerous gap arising between seeing and existing—between image of self and knowledge of self—that is both characterized and realized by the mirror. "Even in looking at one's *self* in a mirror, it is requisite to know oneself; for if not, one does not behold one's *self* but merely a man."<sup>23</sup> And, according to Slusser, there is also the possibility of seeing "a gorgon we cannot bear to gaze upon. . . . Fear then drives us to manipulate the optical apparatus all the more frantically in hopes of preserving the reflexive mode we associate with ordered existence."<sup>24</sup>

Wakoski uses fantasy in order "to be" and "to see" concomitantly. She is precariously balanced on the edge, just short of falling, enjoying that ultimate moment of truth and beauty through her *fantastic* use of doubles and multiple personae. Her poems are characteristically concerned with perception at this ultimate moment.

Wakoski has said that her favorite film is *The Blood of a Poet* by Jean Cocteau. This choice is not surprising, for there are key aspects of the film which are closely related to her own poetic concerns. As is by now obvious, Wakoski uses the mirror image often. Its significance for her, especially as a feminist poet, is further emphasized by an even more frequent use of *water as mirror*, given the generally accepted perception of water as a medium consonant with women. In the film, a poet standing in front of a mirror breaks it violently, passes through amid shattered glass, and comes out on the other side

unscathed. The ramifications of the mirror imagery in the film ultimately involve the dichotomy between order and chaos, also of central concern to Wakoski in her distinctions between Apollonian and Dionysian poetry—and by extension European and American poetry, the former too civilized, the American more Dionysian. Wakoski herself tries to strike a balance; as poet, she wants to rip through the mirror violently and come through unscathed. Less dramatically, she says that she wants to live simultaneously in her imagination and in the real world, claiming that she can never remember Marianne Moore's description of poetry as "imaginary gradens with real toads in them,"<sup>25</sup> because it could just as well be "real gardens with imaginary toads."

At this point an insight of Freud may provide clarification. The operations of such existential fantasy may be located in the involuntary mental processes he calls "dreamwork, that dream within the dream of our mirror projections that displaces and condenses all images toward and around that center of resisting obduracy which is the self."<sup>26</sup> Wakoski, herself, however, prefers a Jungian interpretation of the archetypal shadow, believing that it is this shadow or double that humanizes and civilizes.

In Wakoski's poetry, the fantasy world coexists with the experiential world; and her treatment of both these worlds constitutes a sensuous analysis of humanity. Realism is sacrificed in the fantastic parts, but never psychological validity, for, as in the ancient myths, fantasy actually reinforces psychological validity. As Leslie Fiedler has so aptly put it, fantasy and "mythopoeic power" provide easy access to the poet's unconscious "at the point where it meets the collective unconscious of us all."<sup>27</sup> Diane Wakoski, woman, poet, in her quest for the self, and in understanding the existential drama in which she is involved, makes extensive use of fantasy and myth; and it is through such devices that she can reach her readers in ways at once more intimate and more complex. As Barthes has said, "Today to write is to make oneself the center of the action of speech; it is to effect writing in being affected oneself."<sup>28</sup> Wakoski speaks in a voice identifiably and only hers in creating her fantastic and mythic world that is yet germane to late-twentieth century concerns.

#### NOTES

1. Roger C. Schlobin, ed., *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). Preface, p. xi.
2. Schlobin, p. xiii.
3. Schlobin, p. xiv.
4. Diane Wakoski, *The Collected Greed*: Parts 1-13 (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1984). p. 62. Subsequent references will be given in the text.
5. Gary K. Wolfe, "Autoplastic and Alloplastic Adaptations in Science Fiction: 'Waldo' and 'Desertion'" in *Coordinates Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy* ed., George E. Slusser, Eric S. Rabkin and Robert Scholes (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), pp. 67-68.
6. Susan Griffin, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), passim.
7. Diane F. Sadoff, "Mythopoeia, The Moon, and Contemporary Women's Poetry"

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8. Estella Lauter, *Women as Mythmakers: Poetry and Visual Art by Twentieth-Century Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 98.
  9. Diane Wakoski, *The Motorcycle Betrayal Poems* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971) p. 55.
  10. First presented as a lecture in 1938, Tolkien's "On Fairy-Stories" was published in *Essays Presented to Charles Williams*, ed. , C. S. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1947) reprinted Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965) p. 41.
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  12. Crossley, p. 183.
  13. Crossley, p. 186.
  14. Charles Molesworth, "Contemporary Poetry and the Metaphors for the Poem". *The Georgia Review*, 32, 2, 1978, p. 321.
  15. Susan Gubar, "She in Herland: Feminism and Fantasy" in *Coordinates Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy*, pp. 139-150. Passim.
  16. C. S. Lewis, "On Science Fiction" in *Of Other Worlds, Essays and Stories*, ed. , Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), p. 70 and Jerome L. Singer, *The Inner World of Daydreaming* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 185.
  17. Terry Otten, *After Innocence: Visions of the Fall in Modern Literature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), p. 6.
  18. Here and in other places, references to what Wakoski said are from an informal interview I had with her in June 1985, in her home in East Lansing, Michigan.
  19. Frederick C. Stern, "The Collected Greed: Parts 1-13 by Diane Wakoski", *Chicago*, March 1985, p. 113.
  20. John Vernon, *The Garden, and the Map: Schizophrenia in Twentieth Century Literature and Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), pp. 5-6.
  21. George E. Slusser, "Death and the Mirror: Existential Fantasy" in *Coordinates Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy*, p. 191.
  22. Slusser, p. 154.
  23. Soren Kirkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, Tr., Walter Lowrie (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 170.
  24. Slusser, p. 156.
  25. Marianne Moor, "Spenser's Island" in *A Marianne Moor Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1961), pp. 33-34.
  26. Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams" in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, tr. , Dr. A. A. Brill (New York: Modern Library, 1938), pp. 319-364.
  27. Leslie Fiedler, "The Criticism of Science Fiction" in *Coordinates Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy*, pp. 12-13.
  28. Roland Barthes, "To Write: An Intransitive Verb?" in *The Structuralists From Marx to Levi-Strauss*, ed. , Richard T. De George and Fernande M. De George (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 165.

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