

STANISLAV GROF, M.D.

Modern Consciousness Research AND THE Understanding of Art



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The Visionary World of H.R. Giger

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Modern Consciousness Research and the Understanding of Art including The Visionary World of Hansruedi Giger

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Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS)

PO Box 8423, Santa Cruz, CA 95061

Phone: 831.429.6263, Fax: 831.429.6370

Email: askMAPS@maps.org

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*To my dear brother Paul
and with grateful memories of my beloved Christina
and my unforgettable parents.*



Stanislav Grof and Hansruedi Giger together at Giger's house Oerlikon.

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Depth Psychology, Artists, and the Works of Art

The dawn of the twentieth century saw the discovery of the unconscious and the birth of depth psychology. This new field was inspired and spearheaded by the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud, who practically single-handedly laid its foundations. Freud's contributions to psychology and psychiatry were truly ground-breaking. He demonstrated the existence of the unconscious and described its dynamics, invented the method of free association, developed the technique of dream interpretation, identified the psychological mechanisms involved in the genesis of psychoneuroses and psychosomatic disorders, discovered infantile sexuality, recognized the phenomenon of transference, and outlined the basic principles of psychotherapy.

Although initially Freud's interest in the human psyche was primarily clinical—to explain the etiology of psychoneuroses and to find the way of treating them—in the course of his explorations his horizons expanded enormously. The range of phenomena that he studied included—beside the genesis of psychoneuroses and the symbolism of dreams—also such themes as the psychodynamics of jokes, slips of the tongue and other forms of “psychopathology of everyday life,” and a number of cultural and socio-political phenomena—problems of human civilization, wars and revolu-

tions, religion, and art (Freud 1953, 1955ab, 1960ab, 1964ab). It will be this last area—application of depth psychology to the understanding of art and artists—that will be the subject of this study. Freud was not alone in his effort to apply the psychological insights from clinical work with his clients to art. He surrounded himself with a group of unusually talented and imaginative thinkers, several of whom shared Freud's interest in art and creativity; they developed their own renegade schools and had unique perspectives on this subject.

In the following text, I will briefly review the history of the attempts of the representatives of various schools of depth psychology to use their understanding of the psyche for the analysis of artists and their works. This will serve as an introduction for the main theme of this study—application of the new extended cartography of the psyche, which has emerged from my consciousness research, to the understanding of art. Using as an example the extraordinary work of the Swiss visionary genius, fantastic realist Hansruedi Giger, I will try to demonstrate that this comprehensive model of the psyche brings revolutionary insights and perspectives into this field. ♦

Freud's Interpretation of Art

Freud was himself a gifted writer and in 1930 received the Goethe Prize, Germany's highest literary award. His interest in literature permeates all his work. An early sign of his love for literature can be found in his letters to Wilhelm Fliess, an intimate friend of his, in which he describes his dreams and relates them to various literary works (Freud 1985). Freud's work opened up a new original approach to the understanding of art and artists and had a profound influence on the artistic circles. He attempted to apply the observations from the analysis of his patients to the understanding of the personality of the artist, of the motives for artistic creation, and of the nature of art.

According to him, an artist is a person, who has withdrawn from reality into his fantasies; the primary source of these fantasies are Oedipal wishes associated with strong feelings of guilt. The artist finds his way back to the objective world by representing these forbidden wishes in his work. The public, having Oedipal wishes of its own, admires the artist for the courage to express what they have repressed and for relieving them in this way of their guilt feelings. In turn, the acceptance for his work means for the artist that the public shares his guilt and this relieves him from his own guilt feelings. According to Freud, art offers substitutive satisfaction for the oldest and still most deeply felt cultural renunciations of basic biological drives and, for that reason, it serves as nothing else to reconcile humans with the sacrifice they have made on behalf of civilization (Freud 1911).

Freud's research and his writings generated in the artistic circles great interest in the unconscious psyche and became a major inspiration for new

movements, particularly surrealism and fantastic realism. After Freud's discovery of the unconscious and publication of his *Interpretation of Dreams*, painters and sculptors of the artistic avant-garde began to imitate the dream work by juxtaposing in a most surprising fashion various objects in a manner that defied elementary logic. The selection of these objects often showed preference for those that, according to Freud, had hidden sexual meaning.

Freud's research had a profound influence on the artistic community also in another way. His concepts of the Oedipus complex, the dangerous and castrating *vagina dentata*, the castration complex, the Id, the Superego, and the discovery of the profound impact of memories from childhood and infancy on later life became a treasure trove of inspiration for novels, movies, and paintings in the decades to come. And it became fashionable for artists to undergo their own personal analysis, not only for therapeutic reasons, but also as a rich source of artistic inspiration.

However, Freud's major contribution to the psychology of art was his attempt to understand and interpret the content of various works of art. The emphasis here is on the word "content," because Freud explicitly stated that psychoanalysis was not able to explain the artistic talent itself. According to him, the nature of genius resisted any attempts to analyze it and account for it by psychological means; it remained for him a profound mystery. Freud's approach to the study of works of art was based on his discovery that the daydreams of the artists, which play the key role in the creative process, can be analyzed in the same way as the dreams experienced during sleep.

Freud's most famous attempt to interpret works of art is his analysis of

the ancient Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by the Athenian playwright Sophocles (Freud 1953). Freud's insights into this play, in which the main protagonist Oedipus unwittingly kills his father Laius and marries his mother Jocasta, fulfilling the prophecy of the Delphic oracle, were the main source of his famous Oedipus complex. In Freud's own words, the destiny of Oedipus "moves us only because it might have been ours—because the Oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth as upon him. It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father. Our dreams convince us that this is so."

Freud's other famous attempts at interpretation of art and artists are his studies of Leonardo da Vinci², Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevski, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Wilhelm Jensen, and William Shakespeare. Freud's analysis of Leonardo was based on Leonardo's earliest childhood memory, which he described in mirror-writing in one of his notebooks in the *Codex Atlanticus* (Freud 1957b). Explaining his obsession with devising a flying machine, Leonardo wrote that when he was a baby, a kite (*nibbio*, a small kind of hawk) landed on him and stuck its tail into his mouth, repeatedly hitting his lips with its feathers. Freud concluded that this was a fantasy involving fellation by a phallic mother and also being nursed by her. The idea that the mother has a penis is, according to Freud, a common fantasy of small children. For Freud, this fantasy indicated that Leonardo did not spend his early childhood with his father, as was commonly believed, but with his mother.

Leonardo's enormous curiosity that drove him to avid exploration of so many areas from human and animal anatomy, botany, and paleontology to the laws of mechanics and hydraulics was then the sublimation of great interest in sexuality that this situation evoked in him as a child. According to Freud, this insatiable curiosity interfered with Leonardo's artistic activity



2. Leonardo da Vinci, *Self-portrait*, 1512.

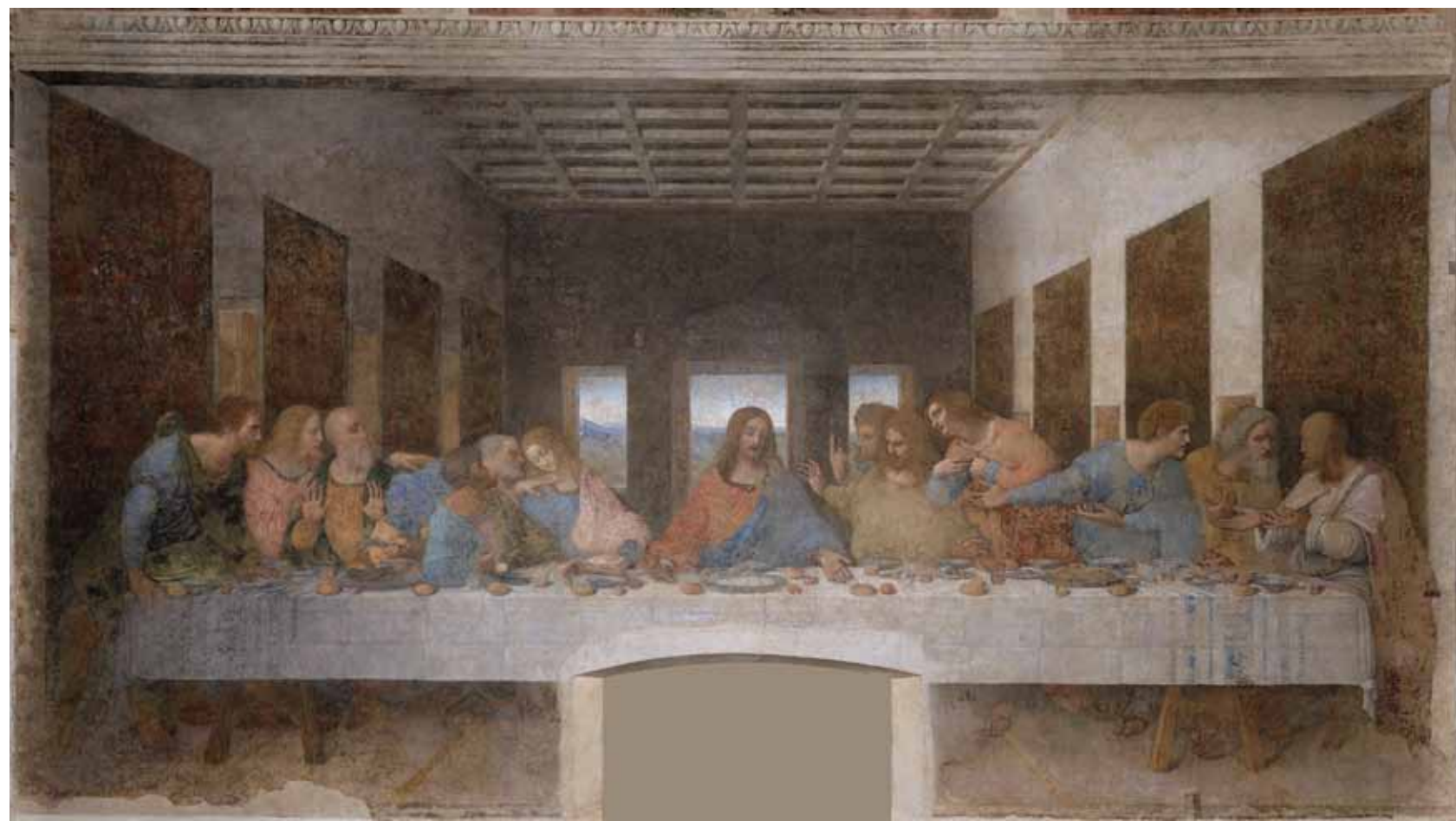
and creativity. He painted slowly and it took him a long time to complete his works; for example, painting *Mona Lisa* took him four years. This conflict was also responsible for the enormous damage that his famous *Last Supper* in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan³ suffered in the course of centuries. Leonardo chose for it the slow process of

painting with oil colors, rather than the more durable *al fresco* technique that required much faster activity.

According to Freud, the excessive sublimation of the sexual drive also inhibited Leonardo's sexual life. Leonardo was very shy and sexually inhibited and reserved. He was repulsed by the sexual act and, with a few excep-

tions—several drawings of the anatomy of pregnancy^{4,5} and a strange drawing of sexual intercourse⁶—avoided sexual topics. He did not seem to have a relationship with a woman and liked young beautiful men as his models and students. During his apprenticeship with Verocchio, he was accused of homosexual relationships. Freud attributed Leonardo's homosexual tendencies to the disappointment that he experienced as a child when he discov-

ered that his mother did not have a penis. Freud also pointed out Leonardo's conflict in relation to aggressivity. He was a vegetarian and was known for buying captured birds in the market and letting them go. However, as engineer for Lodovico Sforza, he designed a large number of war machines, some of them truly diabolical^{7,8}.



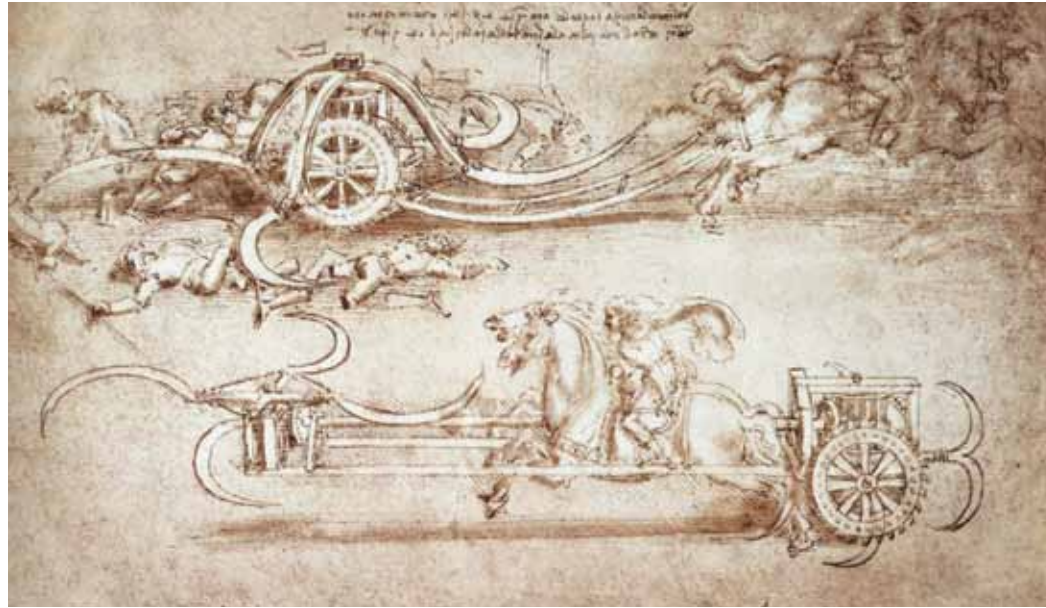
3. Leonardo da Vinci, *Last Supper (L'ultima cena)*, a late 15th-century mural painting in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.



5. Leonardo da Vinci, *Sketches of fetuses in the uterus*.



6. *Copulation* as imagined by Leonardo da Vinci.



7. and 8. Leonardo da Vinci's drawings of war machines for Duke Lodovico Sforza.

All through his study, Freud put great emphasis on the fact that the bird in Leonardo's childhood experience was a vulture. He pointed out that ancient Egyptians believed that the vultures were only of feminine gender and that they got inseminated in flight by the wind. This belief was used by Christian Church Fathers as an argument for the possibility of immaculate conception. Freud found surprising support for his thesis in the work of

Oskar Pfister, who suggested that Leonardo's painting *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*⁹ contains a hidden figure of a vulture with its tail near the mouth of the child (Pfister 1913)¹⁰. As we will see later, this discovery is extremely puzzling, because Freud's references to a vulture were based on a linguistic error. The term "*nibbio*" used in Leonardo's description of his childhood memory actually means a kite (*Milvus milvus*) and not a vulture.



9. Leonardo da Vinci, *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, 1508. An oil painting depicting St. Anne, her daughter the Virgin Mary, and the infant Jesus. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



10. Line drawing of Leonardo's *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* showing the hidden image of a vulture (according to Oskar Pfister).

According to Freud, the complexity of Leonardo's relationship with his mother found its expression in the mysterious, ambiguous "Leonardesque" smile on Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*—simultaneously cold and sensual, seductive and reserved¹¹. To paint her took Leonardo an extremely long time; the painting was considered unfinished even after four years. This smile also



11. Leonardo da Vinci, *Mona Lisa*, 1519. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

figures prominently in some of his other paintings—*St. John the Baptist*¹², *Bacchus*¹³, and others.

Freud's attempts to apply psychoanalysis to the understanding of art include also the study of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky, entitled *Dostoevsky and Parricide* (Freud 1957a). In this essay Freud used analysis of



12. Leonardo da Vinci, *John the Baptist*, 1516. Musée du Louvre, Paris

Dostoevsky's book *The Brothers Karamazov* in an attempt to elucidate this writer's personality and account for his epilepsy, gambling, and morality. He concluded that Dostoevsky did not suffer from epilepsy, an organic neurological disease, but hysteria, a psychoneurosis caused by emotional trauma. He attributed great significance to the rumor that Dostoevsky's father was murdered by his serfs, and asserted that this was the cause of Dostoevsky's alleged "epilepsy."

According to Freud, the ecstasy Dostoevsky experienced at the beginning of the seizure (*aura*) reflected his joy at the news of his hated father's death and his own ensuing liberation. The ecstasy was followed by a fall, loud scream, convulsions, and unconsciousness. The slow and confused recovery was associated with depression and a profound feeling of guilt, as if he had committed a great crime. These symptoms reflected the punishment imposed on him by his superego—his father's authority introjected into his unconscious. Dostoevsky's whole life, said Freud, was "dominated by his twofold attitude to the father-czar authority—by voluptuous masochistic submission, on the one hand, and by outraged rebellion against it, on the other." Freud's conclusions were seriously criticized by neurologists as well as historians.

Another of Freud's attempts to understand the content of art is his analysis of Goethe's "Poetry and Truth" (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*) (Freud 1917a). At the beginning of this essay, Goethe writes that one day in his childhood he threw out of the window with great pleasure the dishes of the dollhouse and some kitchenware. Interpreting this situation, Freud introduced the motif of "sibling rivalry." He suggested that Goethe had done this while his mother was pregnant or was giving birth to a child. By his aggressive act, Goethe was giving expression to his anger about his mother's pregnancy or the birth of a sibling. Freud also interpreted many elements of the "Witch's Kitchen" (*Hexenküche*) in the first volume of Goethe's *Faust* as references

to pregnancy and thus related to the same motif.

Freud's analysis of the German writer Wilhelm Jensen focuses on this author's novella *Gradiva: A Pompeian Fancy* (2003). The protagonist of this story is a young archeologist Norbert Hanold, who during a visit to an exhibition of Roman antiquities discovers a bas-relief of a beautiful young woman with a distinctive gait and gives her the name Gradiva ("the woman who walks"). He becomes obsessed with her image and she keeps appearing in his dreams and visions. After a dream about Gradiva that takes place in Pompeii at the time of the explosion of Mount Vesuvius at 79 AD, Norbert decides to travel to Pompeii. There he meets a young woman whom he takes for Gradiva. In the course of meetings that follow, the mysterious woman restores Norbert to sanity by revealing her true identity. She is Hanold's childhood sweetheart Zoë Bergang with whom he had grown up. He repressed the memories of his childhood infatuation with Zoë and his obsession with the archeological object was sublimation of his desire for her. Freud uses this story to discuss the phenomenon of psychological repression and compares the material hidden in the unconscious with Pompeii, the ancient town-city buried under the layers of lava and ashes.

One of the best-known attempts to apply psychoanalysis to art is Freud's analysis of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* played a pivotal role in Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex, one of the cornerstones of his conceptual framework. In one of the letters to his friend Fliess, in which he discussed the myth of Oedipus, Freud wrote: "From understanding this tragedy of destiny, it was only a step further to understanding a tragedy of character—*Hamlet*, which had been admired for three hundred years without its meaning being discovered or its author's motives guessed" (Freud 1985). Freud's basic ideas concerning *Hamlet* were then further developed in his book *Interpretation of Dreams* and in a study by his student and official biographer Ernest Jones (Freud 1953, Jones

1976). Both of them accepted as the starting point the Romantic assumption that the central mystery of *Hamlet* and the main reason for the interest in the character of Hamlet is his procrastination and hesitancy to avenge his father's murder and kill Claudius. Finding this reason became the main focus of Freud's interest in this play.

This mystery has been called the "Sphinx of modern literature." Freud wanted to be remembered as "the psychological detective who found the solution to The Problem"—the reason for Hamlet's procrastination. According to a widely accepted explanation by Goethe, Hamlet represented the type of man whose power of direct action is paralyzed by an excessive development of his intellect. Freud offered a radically different interpretation: Claudius acted out Hamlet's own repressed Oedipal fantasies, and to kill him would be to murder a part of himself (Freud 1953).

In his essay *The Theme of the Three Caskets*, Freud discusses two Shakespearean plays that he sees as the playwright's meditation on the role of women in a man's life and death (Freud 1913). He emphasizes the importance that the number three has in both plays. In *The Merchant of Venice*, three suitors seeking Portia's hand have to choose between three metal caskets, made respectively of gold, silver, and lead. In *King Lear*, the aged ruler intends to divide his kingdom among his three daughters, according to the love each of them pledges for him.

Freud suggests that in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia's choice of her future husband is inverted—following the logic of dream work—into the choice the man makes between three caskets, sexual symbols for women. Both plays thus portray "a man's choice between three women." After exploring the meaning of number three in myths and fairytales, such as *Cinderella*, *The Judgment of Paris*, *The Norns*, and others, Freud identifies the third woman as death. In Shakespeare's plays mentioned above, it is the heaviness and darkness of the third leaden casket and the silence of

Cordelia, the third daughter, that support this interpretation. Freud then concludes:

"...what is presented here are the three inevitable relations that a man has with a woman—the woman who bears him, the woman who is his mate, and the woman who destroys him; or that they are the three forms taken by the figure of the mother in the course of his life—the mother herself, the beloved one who is chosen after her pattern, and lastly the Mother Earth who receives him once more."

It is the third feminine principle—the one representing death—that is chosen in both plays. Freud reminds the reader that fantasy typically inverts what is disagreeable into its opposite. The fatality of death is thus replaced through a wishful reversal by its precise opposite and transformed into free choice. *The Theme of the Three Caskets* marks the beginning of Freud's radical change with regard to the importance of death in psychology. In his earlier writings, Freud saw the human psyche as governed by a dynamic tension between two conflicting forces—the sexual drive (libido) and the self-preservation drive (ego instinct). During these early years Freud believed that death had no relevance for psychology; he viewed the unconscious as a realm beyond time and space, incapable of knowing and acknowledging the fact of death. His recognition of the importance of death eventually led Freud to significant reformulation of his theory (Freud 1949, 1975). In this new version of psychoanalysis, the self-preservation instinct was replaced by the death instinct (Thanatos) as the rival of the sexual drive (libido, Eros). ♦

Marie Bonaparte's Analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's Stories

By far the most comprehensive attempt to apply Freudian concepts to the analysis of art is the trilogy by Marie Bonaparte, a Greek princess and ardent student of Sigmund Freud, entitled *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Study* (Bonaparte 1934). She based this work on Freud's premise that the content of art works can be understood by applying to it the principles of dream analysis. As Freud himself, she used as the basic explanatory principle and source of artistic inspiration the Oedipus complex. This is reflected in the basic structure of her three-volume opus.

The first volume is an extremely detailed reconstruction of Poe's biography. The second one, *Tales of the Mother*, focuses on the stories that, according to Bonaparte, are inspired by Poe's relationship with his mother, Elizabeth Arnold. They describe seriously ill and dying female lovers and wives, feature the murder of a female figure, portray the mother as a landscape, or represent a confession of impotence. The third volume, *Tales of the Father*, then presents analysis of the stories reflecting relationship with male authority—either revolt against the father figure, patricide, masochistic surrender to the father, or struggle with conscience (Superego).

In discussing ethereal lovers and wives in Poe's stories, dying of mysterious afflictions—Berenice, Morella, Ligeia, Rowena, Eleonora, Lady Madeline, and others—Bonaparte makes repeated references to the fact that the model for these heroines was Poe's mother, a frail actress dying of tuberculosis, to which she surrendered before little Edgar was three years old. There were additional important female figures in Poe's life suffering from the same disease—his sister Rosalie and his wife/cousin Virginia. Bonaparte

attributes the blood appearing in several of Poe's stories to his observation of hemoptysis—coughing of blood—a frequent symptom of tuberculosis.

Poe's father David was an erratic and intractable person who drank and also suffered from tuberculosis. He disappeared in New York City when Poe was eighteen months old. After his mother's death, little Edgar was taken into the home of Frances Allan and adopted by the couple more or less against the will of her husband, John Allan, a strict Scotch merchant, who became Poe's second father figure. In Marie Bonaparte's analysis, there are also occasional references to Edgar's sibling rivalry with his older brother, William Henry. She also attributed great significance to the fact that in the restricted quarters in which his poor parents lived, little Edgar very likely experienced the famous Freudian "primal scene"—observed their sexual activities and interpreted them as sadistic acts.

Marie Bonaparte's basic tenet is that works of art reveal the creator's psychology, particularly the dynamics of the unconscious. She described Poe's unconscious as "extremely active and full of horrors and torments" and mentioned explicitly that had he not had his literary genius, he would have spent his life in prison or a mental institution. Bonaparte's conceptual framework is limited to postnatal biography and to the Freudian individual unconscious. Although Poe's early life was difficult, it is not a convincing source of the kind of horror found in his stories. Bonaparte makes several references to birth and the maternal womb, but—as it is common with most psychoanalysts—her language shifts at this point from "memories" to "fantasies."

Like Freud, she refuses to accept the possibility that prenatal life and birth could be recorded in the unconscious as actual memories. To account for my observations from psychedelic therapy and Holotropic Breathwork, I had to expand the cartography or model of the psyche in such a way that it contains, in addition to the usual *postnatal biographical level*, two additional realms: *the perinatal domain*, which contains an authentic memory of the trauma of biological birth; and *the transpersonal domain*, which is the source of such phenomena as experiential identification with other people or with animals, visions of archetypal and mythological beings and realms, ancestral, racial, and karmic experiences, and identification with the cosmic creative principle.

I have also noticed that experiences on the perinatal level form four experiential patterns that are closely connected with consecutive stages of birth; I refer to them as Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPMs)¹⁴. BPM I describes the experience of the fetus prior to the onset of the delivery; BPM II the claustrophobic situation when the uterus contracts but the cervix is not open; BPM III reflects the struggle through the birth canal after the cervix opens; and BPM IV relates to the experience of the moment of birth and the immediate postnatal situation. The phenomenology and psychodynamics of the BPMs will be discussed at some length later in this book.

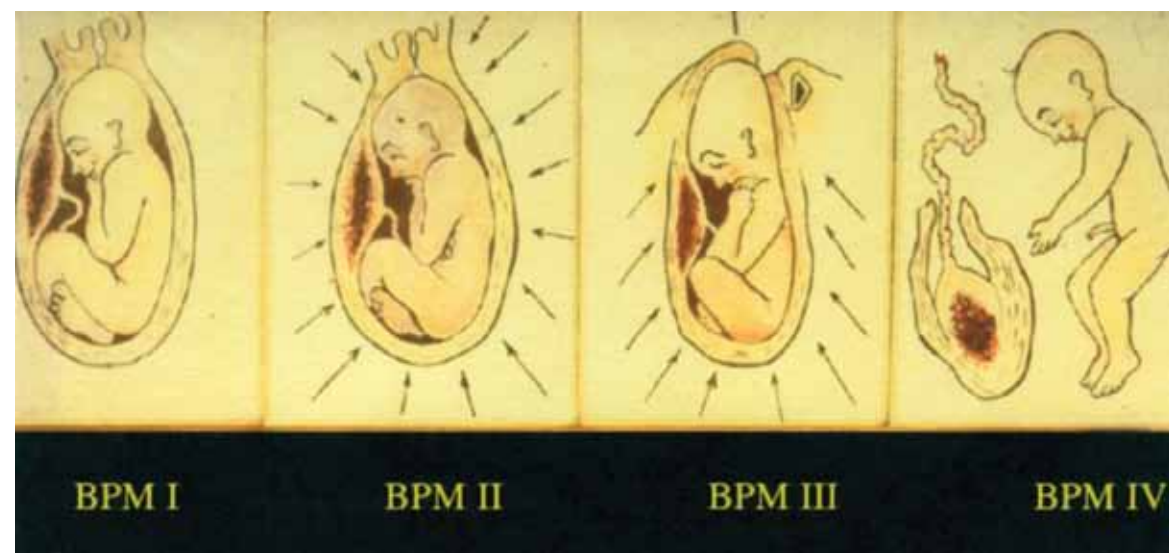
The space does not allow me to show how this extended cartography of the psyche would allow a much deeper and more convincing analysis of

Poe's stories. Poe was an exceptionally creative and prolific writer and the analysis of his copious legacy would require a special volume. I therefore have to limit the discussion of this fascinating subject in this book to a just a few brief allusions and remarks. Interested readers will find many other perinatal elements in Poe's stories, particularly in the most macabre and emotionally powerful ones.

Thus, for example, the experience of the engulfing whirlpool, typically accompanying the reliving of the onset of birth (BPM II)¹⁵, shows a deep resemblance to the hair-raising adventure of three brothers, Norwegian fishermen, described in Poe's story *A Descent into the Maelstrom*. The boat the brothers are using during their fishing expedition is entrapped by this gigan-

tic whirlpool and drawn relentlessly toward its center. Two of the brothers lose their lives in a hopeless fight with this raging force of nature. The third one, using an ingenious strategy, finds fortuitous escape after a close encounter with death and survives to tell the story.

The prison of the Inquisition described in Poe's story *The Pit and the Pendulum*, with its diabolical torments and its contracting and eventually fiery walls, from which the hero is rescued in the last moment, has many characteristics of the delivering uterus¹⁶. Similarly, the escape of the dwarf Hop-Frog from the torturous ambience of the royal court, described in Poe's story of the same name, resembles rebirth experiences (BPM III-IV) from holotropic and psychedelic sessions¹⁷. Asked to devise a special form of en-



14. Diagram of the Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPMs), experiential patterns encountered during reliving of the four consecutive stages of birth.



15. A painting representing reliving of the onset of delivery (BPM II) in a high-dose LSD session experienced as engulfment by a giant Maelstrom. The little boat with a skeleton suggests the impending encounter with death.

tertainment for a masked ball, the clever court jester camouflages the cruel king and his ministers as orangutans by using tar and flax, and the sets them ablaze. In the ensuing mayhem, he then climbs up a rope to a hole in the ceiling to unite with his female companion Tripetta. The experience of being buried alive, Poe's favorite theme appearing in many of his stories—*Premature Burial*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *Loss of Breath*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and others—appears frequently in perinatal sessions.

Many perinatal motifs are also found in Poe's longest, strange, and mystifying novel entitled *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (Poe 2002). The story is complex and takes many bizarre turns. The main protagonist, a stowaway hiding in the entrails of a whaling ship that belongs to his

best friend's father discovers that the vessel has been overtaken by pirates. He has to spend many days cramped in the stuffy atmosphere of his miniature hideout, starved and without food and water. Terrified by the presence of the cruel pirates aboard and by the sounds of their roughhousing, Pym becomes increasingly comatose and delirious. He is finally liberated when, following mutiny and slaughter on the she ship, he manages to seize the vessel with the help of his friend Augustus and a friendly pirate.

They experience a shipwreck and, latched to the hull and floating on the ocean for many days without provision, they again face death by starvation and thirst. A passing ship giving them hope of deliverance turns out to be Flying Dutchman-type specter full of rotten corpses of the sailors. After

an episode of cannibalism and dangerous adventures, they are rescued by another ship and experience more perilous challenges on an island inhabited by natives who are all black, including their death. They escape the island on a stolen pirogue taking along a captive native. The small boat drifts further south on a current of increasingly warm water, which becomes milky white.

Sullen darkness hovers above them but luminous glare arises from the milky depths of the ocean. They encounter a rain of fine white powder resembling ashes and then observe a huge cataract of fog or mist, which splits open and allows them to enter. While the boat moves forward with increasing speed toward the milky cataract, a huge shrouded white figure appears before them. Here the novel ends abruptly. The ending of the perilous journey by entering a world of milky liquid and appearance of a mysterious being seems to suggest the transition from BPM III to BPM IV. In her post-Jungian analysis of Gordon Pym's adventure, Grace Farrell Lee detected deeper roots of the story, the archetypal motif found throughout religious mythology of the world—the night sea voyage, journey into the recesses of the human psyche and backward in time to the origins of creation (Lee 1972).

In his macabre stories, Poe always shied away from deviant sexual and scatological motifs. Ladislav Klima, German-writing philosopher, novelist, and madman adoring Nietzsche, did not hesitate to delve deeply into these taboo aspects of perinatal dynamics. In his novel, *The Sufferings of Prince Sternenhoch* (Klima) he described the descent into madness of Prince Sternenhoch, the German Empire's foremost aristocrat and favorite of the Kaiser. Having become the "lowliest worm" at the hands of his demonic, cruel, and abusive wife Helga, the "Queen of Hell," Sternenhoch eventually locks her in a dungeon in his castle and leaves her there to die. When he continues to be haunted by her appearance in his terrifying visions, he

attains an ultimate state of bliss and salvation through the most grotesque form of perversion—necrophiliac union with her after he soiled her face.

Marie Bonaparte's interpretive approach limited to the Freudian model proves most inadequate when she uses it in the analysis of Poe's *Eureka*. This magnificent vision of cosmic creation is very different from anything that Poe had ever written. In his introduction, he promises to speak about the Material and Spiritual Universe, about its Essence, its Origin, Creation, its Present Condition, and its Destiny. When writing about these things, he capitalizes the first letters of nouns and adjectives in a way psychiatric patients often do. Marie Bonaparte sees this as a sign of pathology, but it is clearly an indication that Poe was tapping here deep transpersonal sources. For this reason, his experience—like the experiences of the mystics—could not be adequately conveyed in ordinary language.

Poe's cosmological vision has a deep resemblance to the worldviews of the great spiritual philosophies of the East, particularly their Tantric branches (Mookerjee and Khanna 1989). He describes the creation of the universe as a process that begins in a singularity and involves a series of countless divisions and differentiations. This then creates a counterreaction—the tendency to return to the original unity. The continued existence of the universe also requires a third force—repulsion, preventing the coalition of the separated parts. The parallel of Poe's three cosmic forces with the three gunas—*tamas*, *sattva*, and *rajas*, feminine cosmic forces of creation described in Tantra is striking. The final aim toward which the completed universe strives, however, remains the ultimate reunion with God; the sole function of this repulsive force is to delay that reunion. In my book *The Cosmic Game: Explorations of the Frontiers of Human Consciousness*, I have described a similar cosmology that had emerged from the psychedelic and Holotropic Breathwork sessions of the people I had worked with (Grof 1998).

Like the insights of some of my clients, Poe's cosmological vision bears



16. Painting from a high-dose LSD session dominated by BPM II; it portrays the delivering female genitals as a combination of a prison, a torture chamber, and a giant press.



17. Experience from a high-dose LSD session (BPM III), in which uterine contractions are portrayed as archetypal predatory birds attacking the fetus.

deep resemblance not only to the scriptures of what Aldous Huxley called perennial philosophy (Huxley 1945), but also to theories of modern science, in this case to cosmological speculations of famous physicists supported by astronomical observations. Poe himself believed that his Eureka would revolutionize astronomy and his ideas have been actually seriously discussed in scientific circles. One of Poe's major hypotheses—that the universe filled with matter after a single, high-energy particle exploded—was the rough equivalent of the cosmogenetic theory developed in the twentieth century by Lemaitre, Gamov, and Alpher. Its opponent Fred Hoyle referred to it facetiously as the “Big Bang” theory and it has been known under this name ever since. It has remained one of the leading cosmogenetic theories until this day (Alpher and Herman 2001).

Poe theorized that the universe must be expanding, since the energy of the explosion is pushing matter outward. He also concluded that gravity eventually would pull all particles back together and the process would start all over again; this idea appeared in Alexander Friedman's theory of the pulsating universe (Friedman 1922). Modern consciousness research has shown that visionary states have a remarkable potential to provide not only extraordinary religious illumination and artistic inspiration, but also brilliant scientific insights that open new fields and facilitate scientific problem-solving. Numerous examples of this kind can be found in the excellent book by Willis Harman, entitled *Higher Creativity: Liberating the Unconscious for Breakthrough Insights* (Harman 1984).

In her analysis of Eureka, Bonaparte was most blatantly reductionistic. For her, Poe's God was his physical father and the creation of the cosmos referred to the biological creative act. Poe's original particle from which the cosmos evolved was the spermatozoon. In his fantasy, the universe was allegedly created by a Father figure without female participation. Yearning for the original unity was return to the Father and reflected Poe's detachment

from the feminine. Poe's cosmic fantasy about multiple universes reflected the fact that there were other siblings in his family. According to Bonaparte, Eureka expressed Poe's avoidance of Mother and Woman; he thus ended his literary career with a cosmic homosexual fantasy.

I hope that this brief excursion into Marie Bonaparte's Freudian interpretation of art showed that the expanded cartography of the psyche, including the perinatal and transpersonal domain, would provide a much deeper, richer, and convincing conceptual framework for psychological analysis of the content of art works. However, as I mentioned earlier, the above text is meant to be just part of a general introduction to the study of the art of Hansruedi Giger, in which I will try to demonstrate more fully the explanatory power of the new model of the psyche. ♦

Otto Rank and the Trauma of Birth: Art and Craving to Return to the Womb

Another member of the Viennese psychoanalytic circle, who was keenly interested in the psychological aspects of art, was Freud's disciple and critic, Otto Rank. In his early work, Rank brought supportive evidence for the importance of Freud's Oedipal complex for the choice of the topics used by dramatists. In his large volume *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend*, he was able to show how often imaginative writers had taken as their subject the Oedipal situation (Rank 1991). Freud expressed his deep appreciation for this study with the following words: “Among the strictly scientific applications of analysis to literature, Rank's exhaustive work on the theme of incest easily takes the first place.” For twenty years, Rank was one of Freud's closest colleagues and held important positions in the psychoanalytic movement.

This situation changed radically after Rank published his book *The Trauma of Birth*, in which he downplayed the pivotal role of the Oedipus complex and emphasized instead the important role that the separation

anxiety associated with birth plays in therapy, art, myth, religion, and philosophy (Rank 1929). Concerned about the threat that Rank's book posed to the homogeneity of the psychoanalytic movement, Freud distanced himself from Rank and accused him of “anti-Oedipal heresy.” Confronted with Freud's decisive opposition, Rank resigned in protest from his positions as Vice-President of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.

Rank differed from Freud both in his understanding of the motivation of the artist to create and in his interpretation of the content of art. In his attempt to understand the art and artist, Rank emphasized the difficult conflict that a creative person is facing. On the one hand, the artist has a particularly strong tendency toward glorification of his own will. Unlike the rest of humanity, he feels compelled to remake reality in his own image. However, at the same time, a true artist also needs the promise of immortality, which he can only achieve by identifying himself with the collective will of his culture and religion. Good art could be understood as a joining of the

material and the spiritual, the specific and the universal, or the individual and collective (Rank 1989).

Rank emphasized that bringing the two needs together is a challenging task. We are all born with a will to be ourselves, to be free of domination. In early childhood, we exercise our will in our efforts to do things independently of our parents. Later, we fight against the domination by other authorities, including the inner authority of our own sexual drives. The form this struggle for independence takes determines the type of person we become. According to Rank, an average person is the adapted type, a passive, duty-bound creature, who obeys authority and his or her society's moral code. Neurotics have a much stronger will than the average person, but are totally engaged in the fight against external and internal domination. The artists, instead of fighting themselves, accept and affirm themselves and create an alternative world.

In his analysis of the works of art, Rank rejected the Freudian emphasis on the primacy of the Oedipus complex and saw the birth trauma as the crucial source of artistic inspiration. According to him, artistic creativity is driven by a profound need to come to terms with the primordial anxiety associated with the trauma of birth (Uranst) and to return to the safety of the maternal womb. While the work with non-ordinary states of consciousness brought convincing support for Rank's general thesis concerning the importance of the memory birth as a powerful motivating force in the psyche, it shifted the emphasis from the wish to return to the womb to the drive to relive the trauma of the passage through the birth canal and to experience psychospiritual death and rebirth. As I mentioned earlier, it also made it possible to identify specific experiential patterns related to the four consecutive stages of birth—Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPMs).

This research has also shown that the mythological figures and realms of the psyche are not derived from the trauma of birth, as Rank believed, but

are expressions of archetypes, autonomous organizing principles of the collective unconscious. Instead of being products of the memory of birth, they are instrumental in forming and informing the experiences in the different stages of birth. Thus Rank saw the Sphinx and other demonic female figures, such as Hekate, Gorgo, the Sirens, and the Harpies as representations of the anxiety-laden mother of childbirth rather than figures belonging to a superordinated archetypal domain. As we will see in the following section, this is the perspective that emerged from the therapeutic work of another renegade from psychoanalysis, C. G. Jung (Jung 1956, 1990). ♦

The Jungian Approach to Art: The Role of the Collective Unconscious and Its Archetypes

The discussion of the psychological interpretation of art would not be complete without mentioning the pivotal contributions of the Swiss psychiatrist, C. G. Jung. Jung strongly disagreed with Freud's idea that the motivation for artistic creation is to share forbidden Oedipal fantasies. According to him, the secret of artistic creation and the effectiveness of art is to be found in the return to the state of "participation mystique"—to that level of experience at which it is collective Man who lives, and not the individual. Every creative person has to deal with a difficult contradiction: on the one side, he is a human being with a personal life and personal needs, on the other, he is the instrument of an impersonal creative process. Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and uses him as its channel. It is not Goethe, who created Faust, it is the archetype of Faust who created Goethe. To perform this difficult role, it is sometimes necessary for the artist to sacrifice happiness and everything that makes life worth living for the ordinary human being (Jung 1975).

Another major point of dissent between Jung and Freud was the concept of libido. For Jung, libido was not a biological drive, but a universal force comparable to Aristotle's entelechy or Henri Bergson's *élan vital*. This understanding of art answers the problem of genius that Freud was not able to account for by using the explanatory principles of his psychoanalysis. The phenomenon of genius cannot be understood in terms of individual psychology; according to Jung, the genius functions as a channel for cosmic creative energy of the *anima mundi* (World Soul). Jung also rejected Freud's model of the psyche limited to postnatal biography and the individual unconscious. He extended it to include the collective unconscious with its

historical and mythological domains (Jung 1990).

The concept of the collective unconscious and its organizing principles, the archetypes, brought to art analysis the depth that Freudian analysis could not provide. Jung's first major attempt to analyze art was his extensive analysis of the partially poetic, partially prosaic book of an American woman, Miss Frank Miller, which was published in Geneva by Theodore Flournoy and became known as the *Miller Fantasies* (Miller 1906). Jung's analysis of this book, entitled *Symbols of Transformation* (Jung 1956), was a work of major historical importance, since its publication marked the beginning of a break between Jung and Freud. The method of "amplification" that Jung used in the analysis of Miss Miller's book became the model for Jungian approach to the analysis of dreams, psychotic experiences, art, and other manifestations of the psyche. This technique consists in finding parallels to the motifs and figures of the analyzed work in folklore, history, literature, art, and mythology of other cultures and revealing their archetypal sources.

Jung had a profound influence on modern writers and film-makers. Like Freud's famous concepts—the Oedipus complex, castration complex, *vagina dentata*, the Id, and the Superego—Jung's descriptions of the principal archetypes—the Shadow, Anima, Animus, Trickster, Terrible Mother, Wise Old Man, and others—not only provided insights into the already existing works of art, but also inspiration for generations of artists. The difference between the Freudian and Jungian approach to the understanding of art can best be demonstrated by comparing Freud's analysis of the childhood memory of Leonardo da Vinci with the critical essay on the same subject written by Erich Neumann. ♦

Erich Neumann's Critique of Freud's Study of Leonardo

The author of one of the most famous examples of the Jungian approach to analysis of art was Erich Neumann, a German-Jewish psychologist, writer, and one of Jung's most gifted followers. Neumann's essay, entitled *Art and the Creative Unconscious: Leonardo da Vinci and the Mother Archetype* (Neuman 1974), offered a strong criticism of Freud's interpretations, pointing out some major factual errors. He presented evidence that Leonardo lived with his father and stepmother in his grandfather's house and was brought up by his grandmother, not by his own mother. These facts undermined Freud's speculations about Leonardo's relationship with his mother and its effect on his sexual orientation and curiosity. Neumann also demonstrated that Freud's far-reaching speculations considering the "vulture" in Leonardo's childhood memory involved a serious linguistic error. As I mentioned earlier, "nibbio" (the word Leonardo used for the bird) does not mean "vulture," but "kite." But for Neumann, Freud's linguistic error was of relatively little significance. He did much more than just correct factual errors in Freud's study; he also shifted the focus of Leonardo's analysis to the archetypal level.

Leonardo referred to the event with the bird as a memory, not as a fantasy as suggested by Freud. According to Neumann, the pre-personal world

of the child is conditioned by archetypes and does not differentiate the inner from the outer; everything has a numinous, mythical quality. In Jungian interpretation, birds represent spirit and soul and usually transcend sex. Leonardo's bird was the uroboric symbol of the Great Mother, who is both male and female. It is the archetypal feminine, the all-generative power of nature and creative source of the unconscious. The nursing mother is uroboric. Her breasts are often represented as being phallic; she is nourishing and fecundating the male as well as the female child.

It was Leonardo's connection with the archetypal Great Mother that, according to Neumann, was the source of his immense creativity. Leonardo's driving force was of spiritual, not sexual nature. *Mona Lisa* with her enormous richness, ambiguity, and mysteriousness, does not reflect Leonardo's strongly ambivalent relationship with his biological mother; she clearly represents an Anima figure, Sophia. As far as the image of the vulture hidden in Leonardo's painting is concerned, it might have been a joke. Leonardo, known for his playfulness and for his strong opposition to all secular and religious authority, might have used it to ridicule the attempt of the Church Fathers to use the allegedly unisex vulture to support the possibility of immaculate conception. ♦

The Contribution of Psychedelic Research and Holotropic Breathwork to the Understanding of Art

The serendipitous discovery of the powerful psychedelic effect of LSD-25 by the Swiss Chemist Albert Hofmann and experimentation with this extraordinary substance brought revolutionary discoveries concerning consciousness, the human psyche, and the creative process. For historians and critics of art, the LSD experiments provided extraordinary new insights into the psychology and psychopathology of art. They saw deep similarity between the paintings of "normal" subjects depicting their LSD visions and the Outsider Art (*Art brut*) and the art of psychiatric patients, as it was documented in Hans Prinzhorn's classic *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* (Prinzhorn 1995), Walter Morgenthaler's book *Madness and Art* (Morgenthaler 1992), and Roger Cardinal's *Outsider Art* (Cardinal 1972). Other psychedelic paintings bore deep resemblance to artifacts of native cultures, such as African masks and fetishes, the sculptures of the New Guinea tribes, bark paintings of the Australian Aborigines, yarn paintings of the Mexican Huichol Indians, Chumash cave paintings in Southern California, and others.

There was also an unmistakable similarity between the art of LSD subjects and that of representatives of various modern movements—abstractionism, impressionism, cubism, dadaism, surrealism, and fantastic realism¹⁸⁻²⁰. For professional painters, who participated in LSD research, the

psychedelic session often marked a radical change in their artistic expression. Their imagination became much richer, their colors more vivid, and their style considerably freer. On occasion, people who had never painted before were able to produce extraordinary drawings and paintings. The power of the deep unconscious material that had surfaced in their sessions somehow took over the process and used the subject as a channel for artistic expression.

The effect of LSD on creativity and artistic style was clearly demonstrated in a classic study by Oscar Janiger, a Beverly Hill psychiatrist who had given LSD to scores of artists, intellectuals, and elite members of the Hollywood entertainment community, including Cary Grant, Jack Nicholson, Aldous Huxley, Anais Nin, and André Previn. As part of his study, Janiger gave to about 70 artists the same Hopi Kachina doll and asked them to paint it before taking LSD and then again one hour after ingesting the substance^{xx-xx}. Some 250 pieces of art, drawings, and paintings were produced during these sessions; the differences between the paintings created before the session and under the influence of LSD were striking and extraordinary (Janiger and Dobkin de Rios 1989, Dobkin de Rios and Janiger 2003). During psychedelic sessions, the perception of the environment is typically il-

lusively transformed in a way that resembles modern paintings^{23,24}. I myself attempted in one of my early LSD sessions to depict how my perception of the clock tower in the research institute kept changing under the influence of the substance²⁵⁻³¹.

However, the impact of LSD and other psychedelic substances on art went much farther than influencing the style of the artists who volunteered as experimental subjects. An entire generation of avant-garde young artists embraced them as tools for finding deep inspiration in the perinatal domain and in the archetypal realm of the collective unconscious. They portrayed with extraordinary artistic power a rich array of experiences originating in these deep and ordinarily hidden recesses of the human psyche^{32-XX}. Their self-experimentation also led to serious interest in areas closely related to their psychedelic experiences—study of the great Eastern spiritual philosophies, intense meditation practice, participation in shamanic rituals, worship of the Goddess and of the Sacred Feminine, nature mysticism, and various esoteric teachings. Many of them documented in their art their own spiritual and philosophical quest.

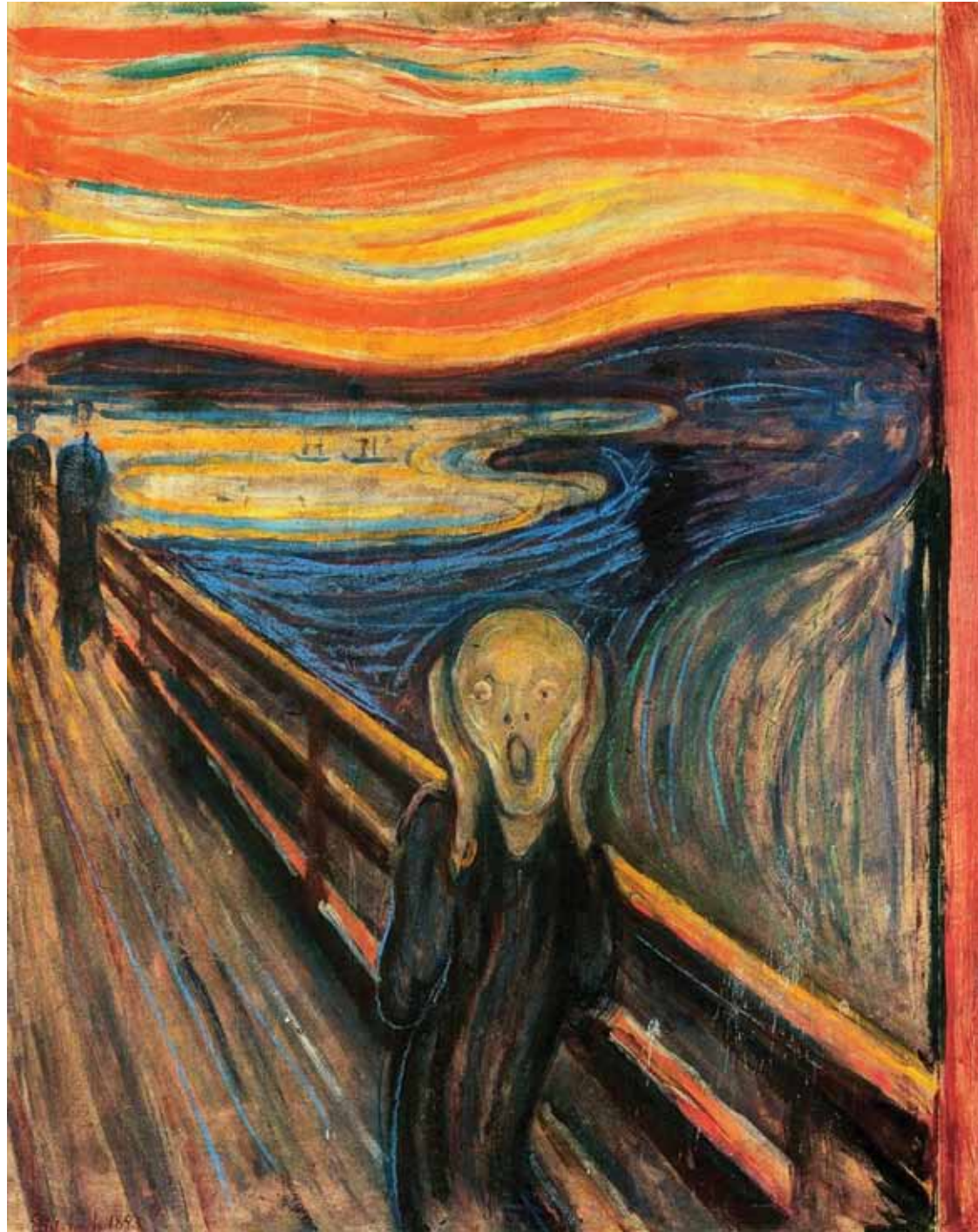
Psychedelic research has had equally profound impact on the fields of psychology and psychiatry. It opened access to vast domains of the human unconscious psyche unrecognized and uncharted by Freudian psychoanalysis and academic psychiatry. Most LSD researchers, including myself, came into this work equipped with the traditional map of the psyche, limited to postnatal biography and the Freudian individual unconscious. They soon discovered that the experiences of their LSD subjects and their own sooner

or later transcended the narrow confines of this model.

Writing about his discovery of the unconscious, Freud once compared the psyche to an iceberg. He declared that what we had thought was the totality of the psyche—the conscious ego—was just the tip of the iceberg. Psychoanalysis, according to him, discovered the hidden part of the iceberg of the psyche—the individual unconscious. Paraphrasing Freud’s simile, we can say that what classical psychoanalysis discovered about the human psyche was, at best, just the tip of the iceberg. The part revealed by psychedelic research remained concealed even for traditional psychoanalysts. Or, using the whimsical image of the great mythologist Joseph Campbell, “Freud was fishing while sitting on a whale.” ♦



XX. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, 1912. A modernist classic painting, combines elements from both the cubist and futurist movements. Philadelphia Museum of Art.



XX. One of four versions of a painting which the artist, Norwegian painter Edvard Munch, called *Scream of Nature* (1893); it shows a figure with an agonized expression against a landscape with stormy sky. 1893. The National Gallery, Oslo.



XX. Pavel Tchelitchew, *Hide and Seek*, 1942. [NEED GALLERY IMAGE](#) New York Museum of Modern Art.

Hopi Kachina doll perceived in the ordinary state of consciousness and under the influence of LSD (research of Oscar Janiger).



18. Photograph of the actual Kachina doll.

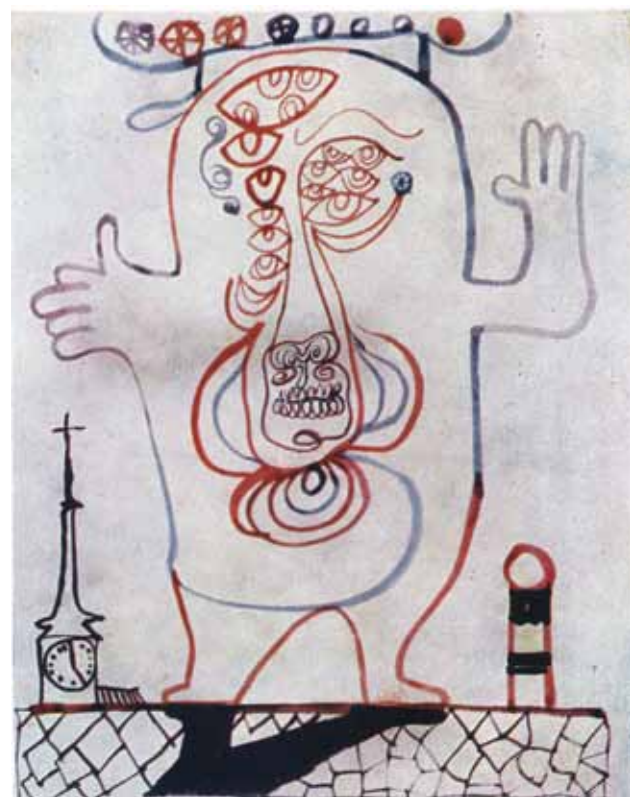


19. Painting of the doll before the session by one of the artists.

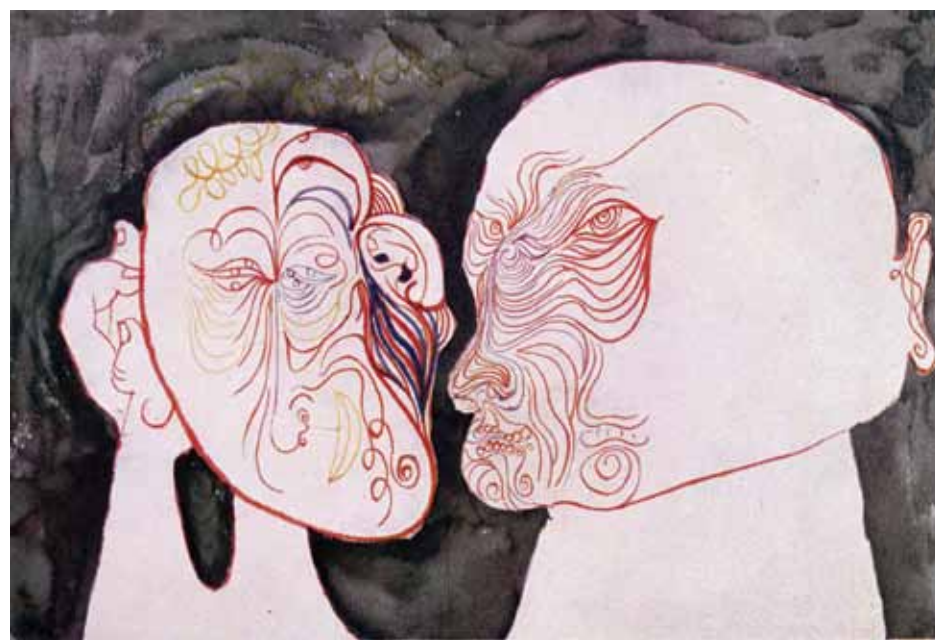


20.-22. Illusive transformation of the same doll under the influence of LSD.

Optical illusions of the environment under the influence of LSD.



23. Illusive transformation of a policeman directing traffic experience on the way home from the session.



24. Observation of two persons involved in conversation.



25.-31. Changes in perception of a clock tower in the research institute under the influence of 150 mcg of LSD-25 (Stanislav Grof).

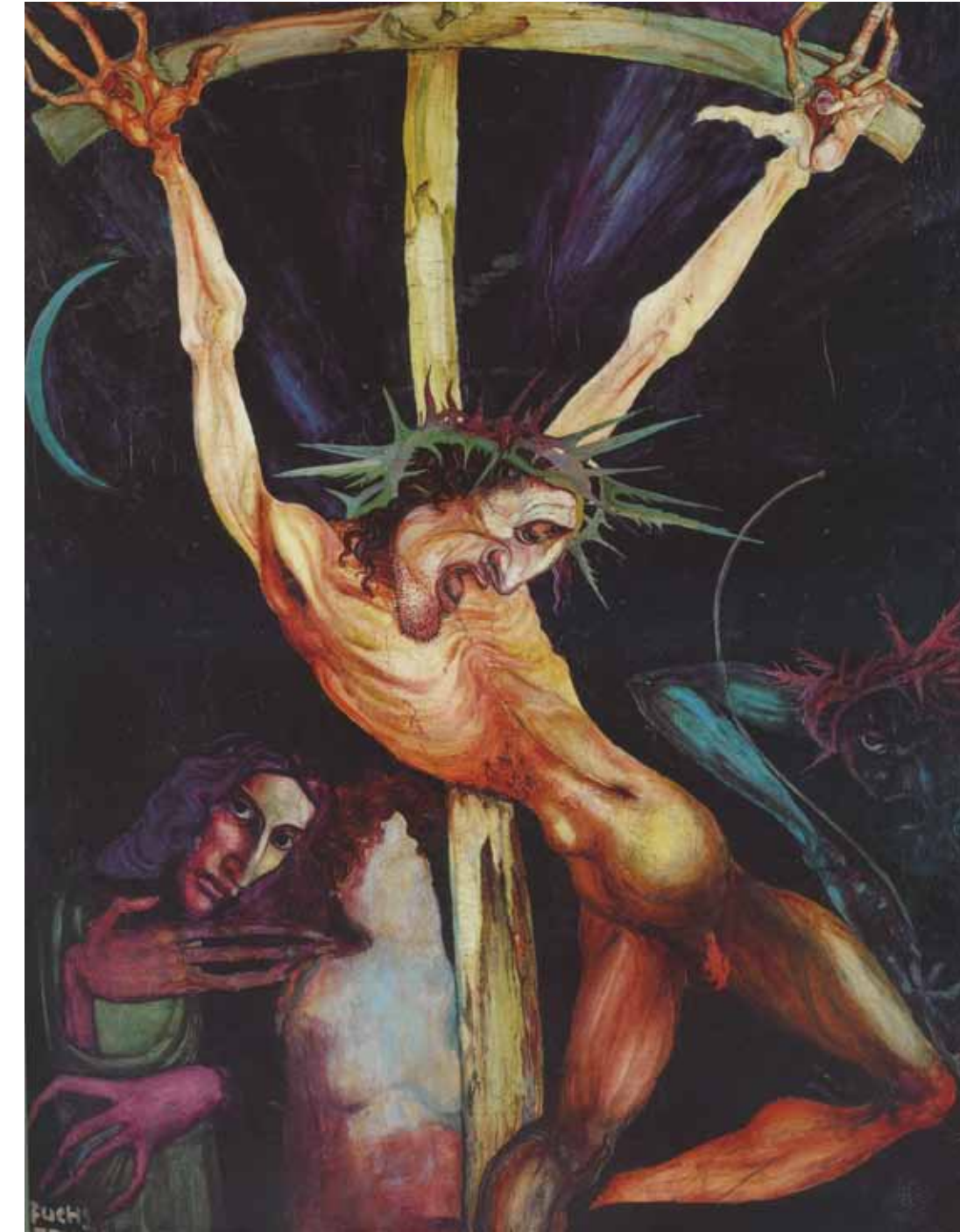
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XX. *Grain of Sand* (1963–65), a painting by surrealist and fantastic realist Abdul Mati Klarwein, combines many disparate images including portraits of famous artists, political and historical figures, and deities into a coherent visual panorama. Oil on Canvas © Klarwein Family



xx. Ernst Fuchs, *Moses and the Burning Bush*, 1956



xx. Ernst Fuchs, *Crucifixion and Self-Portrait with Inge beside the Cross*, 1945.



XX. Ernst Fuchs, *Mary with the Infant Jesus*, 1958–63



XX. Ernst Fuchs, *The Sorrowful Rosary*, 1958–61



32. Roberto Venosa, *Astral Circus*, 1976–78



33. Roberto Venosa, *Seconaphim*, 1974



35. Roberto Venosa, *Return to Source*, 1976



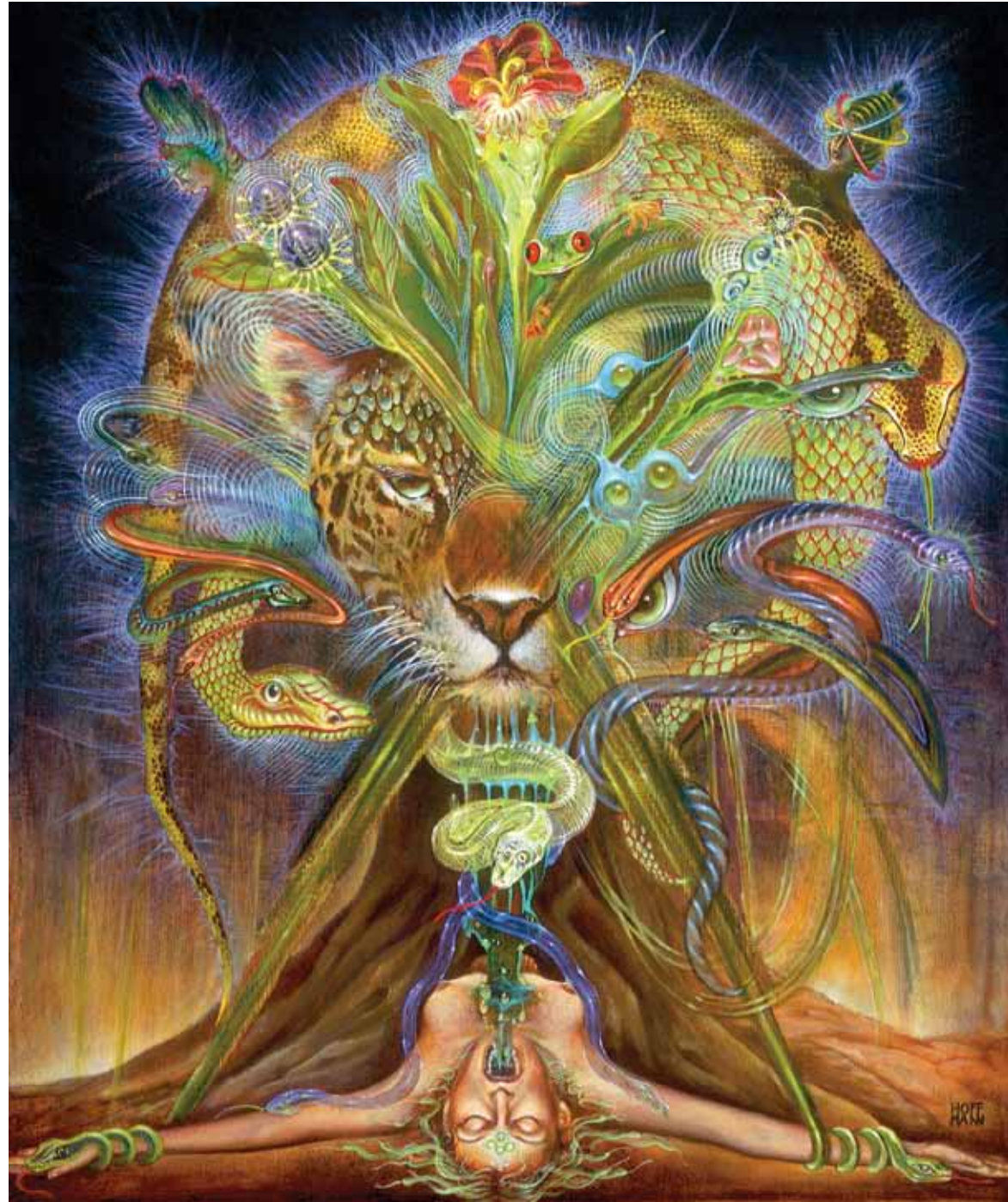
xx. Roberto Venosa, *Sovereign of Nebadon*, 1974.



39. Martina Hoffmann, *Lysergic Summer Dream*, 2006.



36. Martina Hoffmann, *The Goddess Triangle*, 1988–95.



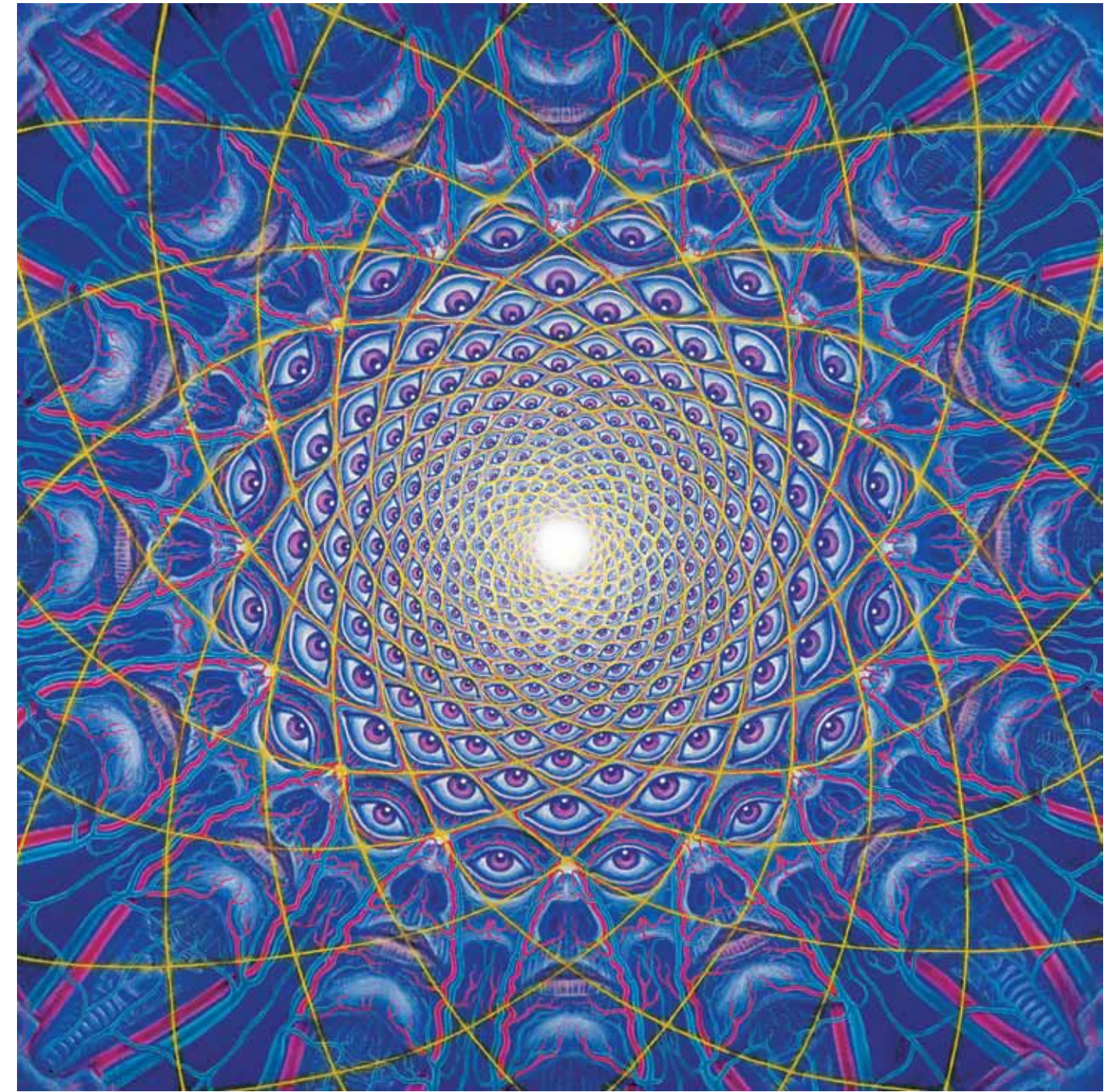
37. Martina Hoffmann, *Caught in the Web*, 2003.



38. Martina Hoffmann, *Initiation*, 2007.



40. Alex Grey, *Psychic Energy System*, 1980.



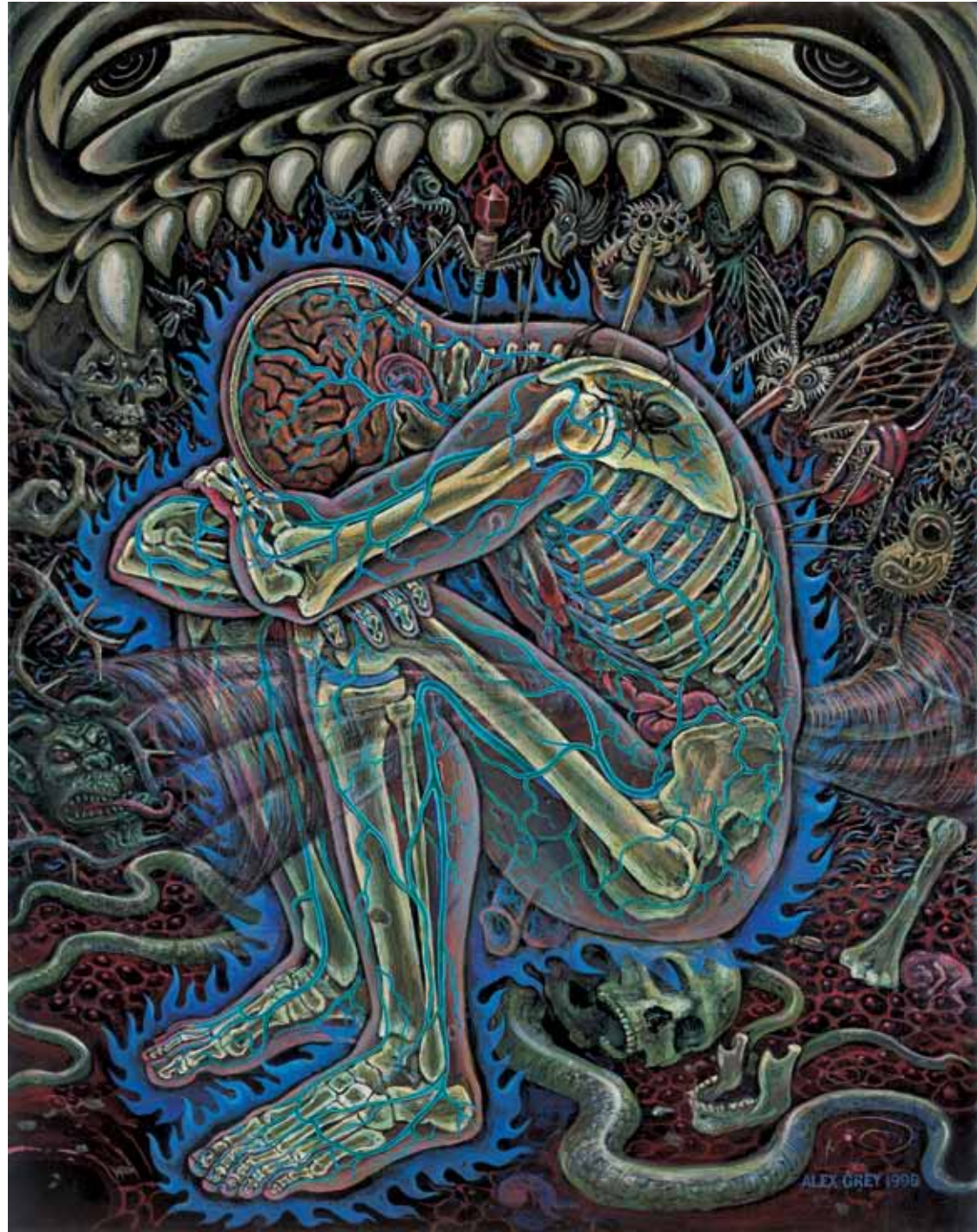
41. Alex Grey, *Collective Vision*, 1995.



42. Alex Grey, *Nature of Mind*, 1995–96. Seven oil paintings on wood with sculpted gold leaf.



40. Alex Grey, *Nuclear Crucifixion*, 1980.



45. Alex Grey, *Despair*, 1996.



XX. Android Jones, *Aya*, 2011.

TBD work by A Andrew Gonzales
other artists?

A New Cartography of the Human Psyche

I have already mentioned that, in the early 1960s, after many unsuccessful attempts to explain psychedelic experiences of my clients and my own in Freudian terms, I was forced by my observations to vastly expand the cartography of the psyche by adding two new domains to the traditional biographical model—perinatal and transpersonal (Grof 1975, 2000). This new cartography integrated the maps created by Freud and his various renegades—Rank, Reich, Jung, and Ferenczi, complemented, revised, and enriched by the observations from psychedelic and Holotropic Breathwork research.

People experiencing deep psychological regression with the use of these new techniques very rapidly move beyond the memories from childhood and infancy and reach the level in their psyche that carries the record of the traumatic memory of biological birth. At this point, they encounter emotions and physical sensations of extreme intensity, often surpassing anything they previously considered humanly possible. The experiences originating on this level of the psyche represent a strange mixture of a shattering encounter with death and the struggle to be born⁴⁴.

This intimate connection between birth and death in our unconscious psyche is logical and easily understandable. It reflects the fact that birth is a potentially or actually life-threatening event. The child and the mother

can actually lose their lives during delivery, and children might be born severely blue from asphyxiation, or even dead and in need of resuscitation. The birth process involves violent elements—the assault of the uterine contractions on the fetus, as well as the fetus’ aggressive response to this situation. Suffering and vital threat engender in the fetus a sense of vital danger and overwhelming anxiety. The reaction of the fetus to this situation takes the form of amorphous fury of a biological organism whose life is seriously threatened⁴⁵.

The fact that the reliving of birth is typically associated with violent and terrifying experiences abounding in images of sacrifice, death, and evil makes good sense in view of the emotional and physical ordeal of the fetus. More surprising is the fact that individuals involved in this process regularly experience intense sexual arousal. It seems that the human organism has a built-in physiological mechanism that translates inhuman suffering, and particularly choking, into a strange kind of sexual excitement and eventually into ecstatic rapture. This is responsible for the fact that, in the depth of the human unconscious, sexuality is inextricably linked to fear of death, physical pain, claustrophobic confinement, suffocation, and encounter with various forms of biological material, such as amniotic fluid, vaginal secretions, blood, and even feces and urine.

The spectrum of perinatal experiences is very rich and is not limited to the elements that can be derived from the biological and psychological processes involved in childbirth. The perinatal domain of the psyche also represents an important gateway to the Jungian collective unconscious, both to its historical and mythological/archetypal realms. The intensity of the suffering can be so extreme that it can bring identification with victims of all ages and evoke archetypal images of evil—the Terrible Mother Goddess, scenery of Hell, and various demonic beings^{46,47}.

The reliving of the consecutive stages of biological birth results in distinct experiential patterns, each of which is characterized by specific emotions, psychosomatic sensations, and symbolic imagery. I refer to them as Basic Perinatal Matrices (BPMs)¹⁴. The connections between the stages of birth and various symbolic images associated with them are very specific and consistent. The way in which various elements are brought together makes little sense in terms of ordinary logic. However, far from being erratic and arbitrary, these associations have a meaningful order of their own. They reflect what can be called “experiential logic;” various constituents of the BPMs are brought together not because they share some formal characteristics, but because they are connected with the same or similar emotions and physical sensations. ♦



44. A drawing of a professional artist (Sherana Harriette Frances) from a high-dose LSD session, in which she had an experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth. It illustrates a deep connection between birth and death on the perinatal level of the psyche. The lower part of the picture features death symbols (skulls, bones, and ribcage), while the upper part reflects the struggle to be born.



45. A painting depicting reliving of the onset of delivery in a psychedelic session. While experiencing painful engulfment by a demonic archetypal ogre, the subject responds with fierce aggression that is transforming her into an evil being (by Robin Maynard-Dobbins).



46. The encounter with Mahakali, the Great Mother Goddess of the Tantric tradition, at the moment of death and rebirth experienced in a high-dose LSD session. Her spear, piercing a turtle and nine elephants, which according to Hindu mythology represent the support of the universe, symbolize her power over all of creation. The head of the fetus emerges in blood out of her vagina and in the upper right corner, the adult having the psychedelic experiences is surrendering to the archetypal Feminine.



47. Painting representing devilish being encountered in a psychedelic session.

First Basic Perinatal Matrix: BPM I (Primal Union with Mother)

The first perinatal matrix (BPM I) is related to the intrauterine existence before the onset of the delivery. The experiential world of the fetus in this period can be referred to as the “amniotic universe.” During intrauterine existence, the fetus does not have the awareness of boundaries and does not differentiate between the inner and the outer. This is reflected in the nature of the experiences associated with the reliving of the memory of the prenatal state. While reliving episodes of *undisturbed embryonal existence*, we typically experience vast regions with no boundaries or limits. We can identify with galaxies, interstellar space, or the entire cosmos⁴⁸. A related experience is that of floating in the sea, identifying with various aquatic animals, such as fish, jelly fish, dolphins, or whales, or even becoming the ocean^{49,50}. This seems to reflect the fact that the fetus is essentially an aquatic organism. I refer to this experience as oceanic or Apollonian ecstasy. Positive intrauterine experiences can also be associated with archetypal visions of Mother Nature—safe, beautiful, and unconditionally nourishing like a good womb. We can envision fruit-bearing orchards, fields of ripe corn, agricultural terraces in the Andes, or unspoiled Polynesian islands. Archetypal images from

the collective unconscious that often appear in this context portray various celestial realms and paradises as they are described in mythologies of various ancient and native cultures.

When we are reliving episodes of *intrauterine disturbances*, memories of the “bad womb,” we have a sense of dark and ominous threat and often feel that we are being poisoned⁵¹. We might see images that portray polluted waters and toxic dumps. This reflects the fact that many prenatal disturbances are caused by toxic changes in the body of the pregnant mother. Sequences of this kind can be associated with archetypal visions of frightening demonic entities or with a sense of insidious all-pervading evil. Experiences of a hostile womb feature vicious and fierce archetypal creatures⁵². Those people, who relive episodes of more violent interference with prenatal existence, such as an imminent miscarriage or attempted abortion, usually experience some form of universal threat or bloody apocalyptic visions of the end of the world associated with paranoid feelings. This again reflects the intimate interconnections between events in our biological history and the Jungian archetypes. ♦



48. Amniotic universe. A painting depicting identification with the blissful experience of the fetus in a good womb accompanied with feeling of cosmic unity. The galaxy ("Milky Way") shaped as a breast reflects the fact that this experience is closely related to the symbiotic union with the mother during nursing. In both situations, the union is mediated by the flow of a liquid (blood inside the womb and milk on the breast).



49. Oceanic womb. A painting showing identification with a fetus in a good womb in a high-dose LSD session. It is accompanied by simultaneous identification with various aquatic organisms—fish, dolphins, whales, jellyfish, kelp, and others.



50. Experience of identification with life in the ocean during a high-dose LSD session reflecting the influence of the first perinatal matrix (BPM I) (Sherana Harriette Frances).



51. Toxic womb. A painting representing an episode of toxic intrauterine disturbance experienced in a high-dose LSD session. The toxicity of the womb is experienced as a painful ordeal in a diabolical laboratory full of insidious demons. This experience is also accompanied by simultaneous identification with fish in polluted water and with a chicken embryo in advanced stage of development when the inside of the egg is contaminated by toxic metabolic products.



52. Hostile womb. A painting from a psychedelic session representing the experience of a bad womb trying to destroy the fetus. The hostility of the womb is experienced as attacks of vicious animals and archetypal creatures (by Robin Maynard-Dobbins). This experience is particularly common in situations that involved Rh-incompatibility between the mother and the fetus.

Second Perinatal Matrix: BPM II (Cosmic Engulfment and No Exit or Hell)

While reliving the onset of biological birth, we typically feel that we are being sucked into a gigantic whirlpool^{53,53} or swallowed by some mythic creature^{45,54}. We might also experience that the entire world or cosmos is being engulfed. This can be associated with images of devouring or entangling archetypal monsters, such as leviathans, dragons, whales, vipers⁵⁵, giant constrictor snakes⁵⁶, tarantulas^{57,58}, or octopuses⁵⁹. The sense of overwhelming vital threat can lead to intense anxiety and general mistrust bordering on paranoia. Another experiential variety of the beginning of the second matrix is the theme of descending into the depths of the underworld, the realm of death, or hell. As Joseph Campbell so eloquently described, this is a universal motif in the mythologies of the hero's journey (Campbell 1968).

In the fully developed first stage of biological birth, the uterine contractions periodically constrict the fetus and the cervix is not yet open. Subjects reliving this part of birth feel caught in a monstrous claustrophobic nightmare; they experience agonizing emotional and physical pain, and have a sense of utter helplessness, hopelessness, and meaninglessness⁶⁰. Feelings of loneliness, guilt, absurdity of life, and existential despair can reach meta-

physical proportions. A person in this predicament often becomes convinced that this situation will never end and that there is absolutely no way out. An experiential triad characteristic for this state is a sense of dying, going crazy, and never coming back.

Reliving this stage of birth is typically accompanied by sequences that involve people, animals, and even mythological beings in a painful and hopeless predicament similar to that of the fetus caught in the clutches of the birth canal⁶¹. This can be a medieval dungeon, a torture chamber of the Inquisition, a smothering and crushing mechanical contraption^{62,63}, a concentration camp, or an insane asylum. Our suffering can take the form of pains of animals caught in traps or even reach dimensions that are archetypal. We may feel the intolerable tortures of sinners in hell, the agony of Jesus on the cross⁶⁴, or the excruciating torment of Sisyphus rolling his boulder up the mountain in the deepest pit of Hades. Other images that have appeared in sessions dominated by this matrix include the Greek archetypal symbols of endless suffering—Tantalus, Ixion, Prometheus, and other figures representing eternal damnation.

While we are under the influence of this matrix, we are selectively blinded and are unable to see anything positive in our life and in human existence in general. The connection to the divine dimension seems to be irretrievably severed and lost. Through the prism of this matrix, life seems to be a meaningless Theater of the Absurd, a farce staging cardboard characters and mindless robots, or a cruel circus sideshow. In this state of mind, existential philosophy appears to be the only adequate and relevant description of existence. It is interesting in this regard that Jean Paul Sartre's work, as we will see, was deeply influenced by a badly managed and unresolved mescaline session dominated by BPM II (Riedlinger 1982). Samuel Beckett's preoccupation with death and birth and his search for Mother also reveal strong perinatal influences. Going deeper into this experience seems like meeting eternal damnation. And yet, this shattering experience of darkness and abysmal despair is known from the spiritual literature as the Dark Night of the Soul. It is an important stage of spiritual opening that can have an immensely purging and liberating effect. ♦



53. A drawing by Sherana Harriette Frances from a series depicting her experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth in a high-dose LSD session. The onset of birth is experienced as a giant whirlpool sucking her into the underworld. The mandala of skulls and ribcages suggests that she will undergo an encounter with death.



54. A painting portraying an episode from a holotropic breathwork session, in which the onset of the process of psychospiritual death and rebirth was experienced as being engulfed by a grotesque archetypal figure. The skull represents the imminence of death, the root system of a tree the placental circulatory system, and the snake the umbilical cord and a vital threat.



55. Painting from a perinatal LSD session governed by BPM II, in which the delivering uterus was experienced as a dangerous snake pit with no exit. Vipers symbolize on the perinatal level of the unconscious the imminence of death, but—because of their regenerative molting—also the possibility of rebirth.



56. Painting from an LSD session portraying the birth struggle as fight with a python. Giant constrictor snakes are frequent and important perinatal symbols. When they swallow their prey whole, they look pregnant; they also twist their bodies around their victims and crush them. They thus represent both pregnancy and birth.



57. Painting from a holotropic breathwork session dominated by BPM II. It depicts an encounter with the Devouring Mother Goddess in the form of a giant tarantula who immobilizes and constricts the victim by wrapping her up as a mummy (by Jaryna Moss)



58. A painting from a high-dose LSD session governed by BPM II. The archetypal figure of the Devouring Mother Goddess in the form of a giant spider exposes fetuses to diabolical tortures.



59. A painting portraying an episode from a high-dose LSD session dominated by the onset of BPM II. The uterine contractions are experienced as an attack by a giant octopus-like creature.



60. *Life as a Trip from Nowhere to Nowhere in a Rainy Day*. Painting from an LSD session dominated by BPM II, reflecting a deep existential crisis during which life appears utterly meaningless and absurd.



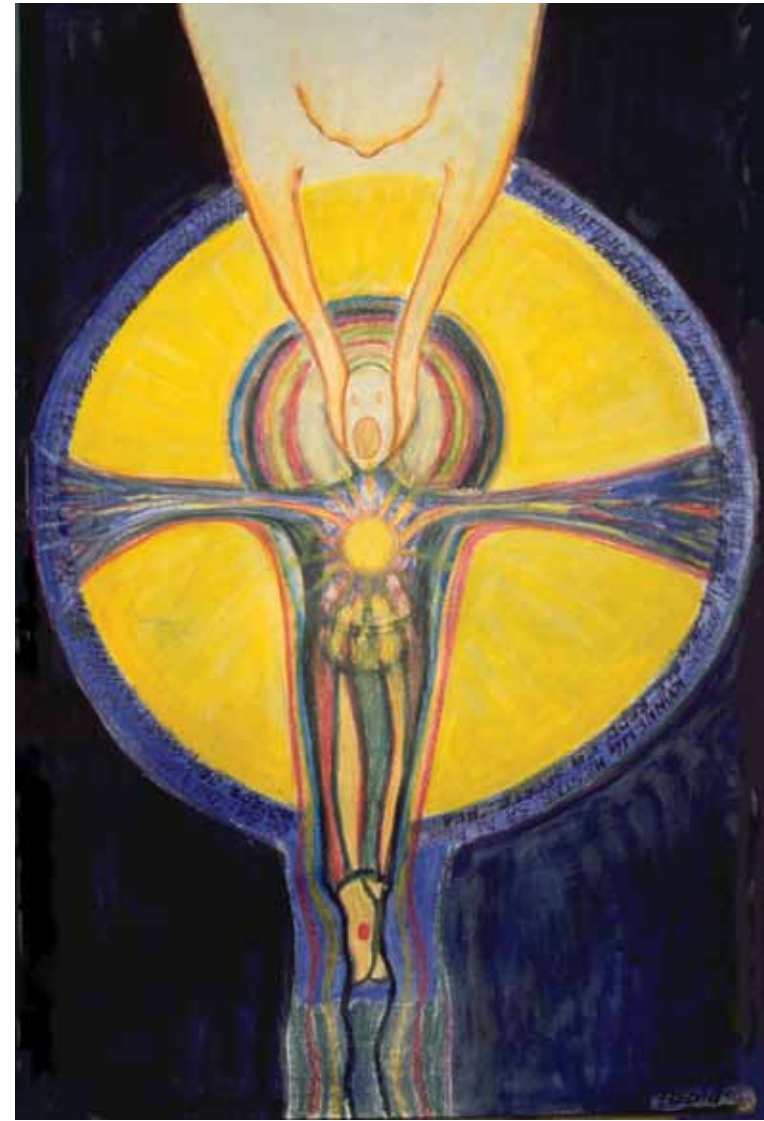
61. A painting from a holotropic breathwork session dominated by BPM II representing experiential identification with a fetus imprisoned in the delivering uterus.



62. A drawing by Sherana Harriette Frances from a series depicting her experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth in a high-dose LSD session. The boulder crushing her has human features; it represents on a superficial level her husband and her "oppressive marriage," on a deeper level her mother and the crushing she experienced when her mother was giving birth to her.



XX. *The Persimmon Tree and the Boulder*. Experience of an encounter with the negative feminine in a holotropic breathwork session related to reliving of rough birth. Mother, older sister, and female spiritual teacher all becoming meshed together in an intense feeling of suffocation and hopelessness. The dark Earth, great symbol of the nurturing feminine, has broken apart and taken up a repressing role. Surrender to the situation brings relief of the fear of death and in the sky appears the golden light of the spirit. The persimmon tree bares fruit which holds the seeds to a new beginning. (by Kate Silver).



63. A painting from a holotropic breathwork session, in which reliving of manual help during final stages of birth was associated with experiential identification with crucified Jesus.



64. A series of paintings from an LSD session dominated by BPM III, depicting Jesus suffering on the cross.

Third Perinatal Matrix: BPM III (The Death-Rebirth Struggle)

Many aspects of this rich and colorful experience can be understood from its association with the second clinical stage of biological delivery, the propulsion through the birth canal after the cervix opens and the head descends into the pelvis. In this stage, the uterine contractions continue, but the cervix is now dilated and allows gradual propulsion of the fetus through the birth canal. This involves crushing mechanical pressures, pains, and often a high degree of anoxia and suffocation. A natural concomitant of this highly uncomfortable and potentially life-threatening situation is an experience of intense anxiety.

Beside the compression of the arteries providing oxygen to the fetus, which is caused by uterine contractions, and the ensuing interruption of blood circulation, the blood supply to the fetus can be further compromised by various complications. The umbilical cord can be squeezed between the head and the pelvic opening or be twisted around the neck. The placenta can detach during delivery or actually obstruct the way out (*placenta praevia*). In some instances, the fetus can inhale various forms of biological material that it encounters in the final stages of this process. The problems in this stage can be so extreme that they require instrumental intervention, such as the use of forceps or even an emergency Cesarean section.

BPM III is an extremely rich and complex experiential pattern. Besides the actual realistic reliving of different aspects of the struggle in the birth canal, it involves a wide variety of imagery drawn from history, nature, and archetypal realms. They feature various titanic fights, aggressive and sado-masochistic sequences, experiences of deviant sexuality, demonic episodes,

scatological scenes, and encounter with fire. Most of these aspects of BPM III can be meaningfully related to anatomical, physiological, and biochemical characteristics of the corresponding stage of birth.

The *titanic aspect* of BPM III is quite understandable in view of the enormity of the forces operating in the final stage of childbirth. When we encounter this facet of the third matrix, we experience streams of energy of overwhelming intensity, rushing through our body and building up to explosive discharges. At this point, we might identify with raging elements of nature, such as electric storms, earthquakes, tsunami waves, tornadoes, or volcanoes⁶⁵. The experience can also portray the world of technology involving enormous energies—tanks, rockets, spaceships, lasers, electric power plants, or even thermonuclear reactors and atomic bombs. The titanic experiences of BPM III can reach archetypal dimensions and portray battles of gigantic proportions, such as the cosmic battle between the forces of Light and Darkness, angels and devils, or the Olympic gods and the Titans.

Aggressive and sado-masochistic aspects of this matrix reflect the biological fury of the organism whose survival is threatened by suffocation, as well as the introjected destructive onslaught of the uterine contractions. Facing this aspect of BPM III, we might experience cruelties of astonishing proportions, manifesting in scenes of violent murder and suicide, mutilation and self-mutilation, massacres of various kinds, and bloody wars and revolutions. They often take the form of torture, execution, ritual sacrifice and self-sacrifice, bloody man-to-man combats, and sado-masochistic practices.

The experiential logic of the *sexual aspect* of the death-rebirth process



65. Painting from a holotropic breathwork session, in which the author relived her birth. It depicts experiential identification with an erupting volcano (Tai Hazard).



66. A painting from a high-dose LSD session representing a scatological scene from the Sabbath of the Witches (Walpurgi's Night)—ritual kissing of the unimaginably foul-smelling anus of "Meister Leonard," the Devil in the role of the president of the Sabbath.



67. A series of drawings from a high-dose LSD session, in which the theme of crucifixion was defiled by elements of what the patient called "obscene biology." This seemingly blasphemous combination had its roots in the final stage of birth, during which the sacred process of giving and receiving life is inextricably connected with sexual organs and various forms of biological material (vaginal secretions, amniotic fluid, and sometimes even urine and feces).



68. The final picture of the preceding series, depicting the image accompanying emergence from the birth canal. The figure of "Purified Christ" is separating from the birth canal and from the realm of biology. The patient's hands are reaching beyond Jesus for the "Black Sun," symbol of the divine without any form, the creative principle of the universe, transcending any specific forms of mainstream religions.

is not as immediately obvious. It seems that the human organism has an inbuilt physiological mechanism that translates inhuman suffering, and particularly suffocation, into a strange kind of sexual arousal and eventually into ecstatic rapture. This can be illustrated by the experiences of the martyrs and of flagellants described in religious literature. Additional examples can be found in the material from concentration camps, from the reports of prisoners of war, and from the files of Amnesty International (Sargant 1957). It is also well known that men dying of suffocation on the gallows often develop an erection and even ejaculate.

Sexual experiences that occur in the context of BPM III are characterized by enormous intensity of the sexual drive, by their mechanical and unselective quality, and their exploitative, pornographic, or deviant nature. They depict scenes from red light districts and from the sexual underground, extravagant erotic practices, and sadomasochistic sequences. Equally frequent are episodes portraying incest and episodes of sexual abuse or rape. In rare instances, the BPM III imagery can involve the gory and repulsive extremes of criminal sexuality—erotically motivated murder, dismemberment, cannibalism, and necrophilia. The fact that sexual arousal is on this level of the psyche inextricably connected with highly problematic elements—physical pain, suffocation, vital threat, anxiety, aggression, self-destructive impulses, and various forms of biological material—forms a natural basis for the development of the most important types of sexual dysfunctions, variations, deviations, and perversions, Krafft Ebbings *psycho-pathia sexualis* (von Krafft Ebing 1884).

The *demonic aspect* of BPM III can present specific problems for the individuals who encounter it, as well as their therapists and facilitators. The uncanny and eerie nature of this experience often leads to reluctance to face it. The most common themes observed in this context are scenes of the Sabbath of the Witches (*Walpurgi's Night*)⁶⁶, satanic orgies, Black Mass

rituals, and temptation by evil forces. The common denominator connecting this stage of childbirth with the themes of the Sabbath or with the Black Mass rituals is the peculiar experiential amalgam of death, deviant sexuality, pain, fear, aggression, scatology, and distorted spiritual impulse that they share^{67,68}. This observation provides important insights into the experiences of satanic cult abuse reported by clients in various forms of regressive therapy and the psychology of heresy.

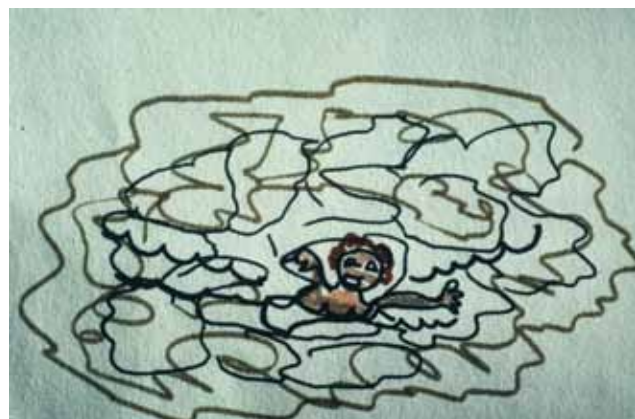
The *scatological aspect* of the death-rebirth process has its natural biological basis in the fact that in the final phase of the delivery the fetus can come into close contact with various forms of biological material—blood, vaginal secretions, urine, and even feces. However, the nature and content of these experiences by far exceed what the newborn might have actually experienced during birth. Experiences of this aspect of BPM III can involve such scenes as crawling in offal or through sewage systems, wallowing in piles of excrement, drinking blood or urine, or participating in repulsive images of putrefaction. It is an intimate and shattering encounter with the worst aspects of biological existence⁶⁹.

When the experience of BPM III comes closer to resolution, it becomes less violent and disturbing. The prevailing atmosphere is that of extreme passion and driving energy of intoxicating intensity. The imagery portrays exciting conquests of new territories, hunts of wild animals, scenes from extreme sports, and challenging adventures in amusement parks. These experiences are related to activities that involve "adrenaline rush"—car racing, parachuting, bungee-cord jumping, dangerous circus performances, and acrobatic diving.

At this time, we can also encounter archetypal figures of deities, demigods, and legendary heroes representing death and rebirth. We can have visions of Jesus, his torment and humiliation, the Way of the Cross, and crucifixion, or even actually experience full identification with his suffering.

Whether or not we know intellectually the corresponding mythologies, we can experience such archetypal themes as resurrection of the Egyptian god Osiris, or death and rebirth of the Greek deities Dionysus, Attis, or Adonis. The experience can portray Persephone's abduction by Pluto, the descent of the Sumerian goddess Inanna into the underworld, Quetzalcoatl's journey through the chthonic realms, or the ordeals of the Mayan Hero Twins of the Popol Vuh.

Just before the experience of psychospiritual rebirth, it is common to encounter the *element of fire*. The motif of fire can be experienced either in its ordinary everyday form or in the archetypal form of purgatorial fire (*pyrocatharsis*)^{70,71}. We can have the feeling that our body is on fire, have visions of burning cities and forests, and identify with the victims of immolation. In the archetypal version, the burning seems to radically destroy whatever is



69. Painting from an LSD session governed by BPM III depicting the scatological experience of drowning in a cesspool.

corrupted in us and prepare us for spiritual rebirth. A classical symbol of the transition from BPM III to BPM IV is the legendary bird Phoenix who dies in fire and rises resurrected from the ashes⁷².

The pyrocathartic experience is a somewhat puzzling aspect of BPM III, since its connection with biological birth is not as direct and obvious as it is the case with the other symbolic elements. The biological counterpart of this experience might be the explosive liberation of previously blocked energies in the final stage of childbirth or the overstimulation of the fetus with indiscriminate “firing” of the peripheral neurons. It is interesting that this encounter with fire has its experiential parallel in the delivering mother, who at this stage of delivery often feels that her vagina is on fire.

Several important characteristics of the third matrix distinguish it from the previously described no-exit constellation. The situation here is challenging and difficult, but it does not seem hopeless and we do not feel helpless. We are actively involved in a fierce struggle and have the feeling that the suffering has a definite direction, goal, and meaning. In religious terms, this situation corresponds to the image of purgatory rather than hell. In addition, we do not play exclusively the role of helpless victims. At this point, three different roles become available to us. Besides being observers of what is happening, we can also identify with both the aggressor and the victim. This can be so convincing that it might be difficult to distinguish these three roles from each other. Also, while the no-exit situation involves sheer suffering, the experience of the death-rebirth struggle represents the borderline between agony and ecstasy and the fusion of both. It seems appropriate to refer to this type of experience as *Dionysian* or *volcanic ecstasy* in contrast to the *Apollonian* or *oceanic ecstasy* of the cosmic union associated with the first perinatal matrix. ♦



70. Painting from a psychedelic session depicting the experience of purifying fire (pyrocatharsis) in the final moments of the death/rebirth experience.



71. Painting from a psychedelic session, capturing the experience of the last seconds before being re/born. The triangle in the center is the place where the vortex of the fetus' head breaks through and the fiery red, yellow, and orange colors represent the explosive energies involved in this situation.



72. A painting from a psychedelic session depicting experiential identification with the Phoenix, an archetypal symbol of psychospiritual death and rebirth mediated by fire.



73. Painting from an LSD session depicting the experience of psychospiritual rebirth—emerging in fire from the vagina of the Great Mother Goddess and feeling supported by nourishing cosmic hands. While the upper part of the painting represents BPM IV, the lower part—the star-filled sky and the nourishing hands—represent BPM I, the prenatal situation when the uterus meant nourishment and safety.

Fourth Perinatal Matrix: BPM IV (The Death-Rebirth Experience)

This matrix is related to the third clinical stage of delivery, to the final expulsion from the birth canal and the severing of the umbilical cord. Experiencing this matrix, we complete the preceding difficult process of propulsion through the birth canal, achieve explosive liberation, and emerge into light. This can often be accompanied by concrete and realistic memories of various specific aspects of this stage of birth. These can include the experience of anesthesia, the pressures of the forceps, and the sensations associated with various obstetric maneuvers or postnatal interventions.

The reliving of biological birth is not experienced just as a simple mechanical replay of the original biological event, but also as psychospiritual death and rebirth. To understand this, one has to realize that what happens in this process includes some important additional elements. Because the fetus is completely confined during the birth process and has no way of expressing the extreme emotions and reacting to the intense physical sensations involved, the memory of this event remains psychologically undigested and unassimilated. Our self-definition and our attitudes toward the world in our postnatal life are heavily contaminated by this constant reminder of the vulnerability, inadequacy, and weakness that we experienced at birth. In a sense, we were born anatomically but have not caught up with this fact emotionally. The “dying” and the agony during the struggle for rebirth reflect the actual pain and vital threat of the biological birth process. However, the ego death that precedes rebirth is the death of our “false ego,” old concepts of who we are and what the world is like, which were forged by the traumatic imprint of birth and are maintained by the memory of this situa-

tion that stays alive in our unconscious.

As we are clearing these old programs by letting them emerge into consciousness, they are losing their emotional charge and are, in a sense, dying. But we are so used to them and identified with them that approaching the moment of the ego death feels like the end of our existence, or even like the end of the world. As frightening as this process usually is, it is actually very healing and transforming. However, paradoxically, while only a small step separates us from an experience of radical liberation, we have a sense of all-pervading anxiety and impending catastrophe of enormous proportions. What is actually dying in this process is the false ego that, up to this point in our life, we have mistaken for our true self. While we are losing all the reference points we know, we have no idea what is on the other side, or even if there is anything there at all. This fear tends to create enormous resistance to continue and complete the experience. As a result, without appropriate guidance many people can remain psychologically stuck in this problematic territory.

Experiential completion of the reliving of birth takes the form of psychospiritual death and rebirth and giving birth to a new self^{74,75}. When we overcome the metaphysical fear encountered at this important juncture and decide to let things happen, we experience total annihilation on all imaginable levels—physical destruction, emotional disaster, intellectual and philosophical defeat, ultimate moral failure, and even spiritual damnation. During this experience, all reference points—everything that is important and meaningful in our life—seem to be mercilessly destroyed. Immediately



74. *Out of Darkness*, a painting representing the combined experience of being born and giving birth in a session of holotropic breathwork. Experiences of this kind typically result in a sense of giving birth to a new self and can be very transformative and healing (Jean Perkins).



75. A painting representing the experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth in a holotropic breathwork session. The old body/ego has disintegrated and out of it emerges a new Self, which has a spiritual connection. The inscription at the bottom reads: “LIBERATION” (Jaryna Moss).



76. A painting from an LSD session depicting the experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth. The patient’s naked body rises from the realm of death, symbolized by a cemetery, a coffin, and a burning candle—and merges with transcendental light.



77. A drawing depicting an experience from a perinatal LSD session, which provided insight into the castration complex and its deep roots in the cutting of the umbilical cord. It combines feelings of constriction of the body with painful umbilical and genital sensations.

following the experience of total annihilation—“hitting bottom”—we are overwhelmed by visions of white or golden light of supernatural radiance and exquisite beauty that appears numinous and divine^{76,77}.

Having survived what seemed like an experience of total annihilation and apocalyptic end of everything, we are blessed only seconds later with fantastic displays of magnificent rainbow spectra, peacock designs, celestial scenes, and visions of archetypal beings bathed in divine light. Often,

this is the time of a powerful encounter with the archetypal Great Mother Goddess, either in her universal form or in one of her culture-specific forms^{79,80,81}. Following the experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth, we feel redeemed and blessed, experience ecstatic rapture, and have a sense of reclaiming our divine nature and cosmic status. We are overcome by a surge of positive emotions toward ourselves, other people, nature, and existence in general. ♦



79. A painting depicting the final stage of the psychospiritual process of death and rebirth in a psychedelic session. The body of the newborn is still in the birth canal consumed by flames, but its head emerges into a peacock heaven of a Great Mother Goddess.



80. Vision from a holotropic breathwork session portraying the Great Mother Goddess, Mother Nature, personification of divine feminine energy that is source of all creation.



81. A vision from a holotropic breathwork session, depicting the Great Mother Goddess with the Divine Child against the background of the rainbow and the star-filled universe.

Transpersonal Experiences

The second major domain that has to be added to mainstream psychiatry's cartography of the human psyche when we work with holotropic states of consciousness is now known under the name *transpersonal*, meaning literally "beyond the personal" or "transcending the personal." The experiences that originate on this level involve transcendence of the usual boundaries of the individual (his or her body and ego) and of the usual limitations of three-dimensional space and linear time that restrict our perception of the world in the everyday state of consciousness.

Transpersonal experiences can be divided into three large categories. The first of these involves primarily transcendence of the usual spatial barriers, or the limitations of the "skin-encapsulated ego," as Alan Watts referred to it. Here belong experiences of merging with another person into a state that can be called "dual unity," assuming the identity of another person, identifying with the consciousness of an entire group of people (e.g. all mothers of the world, the entire population of India, or all the inmates of concentration camps), or even experiencing an extension of consciousness that seems to encompass all of humanity. Experiences of this kind have been repeatedly described in the spiritual literature of the world.

One can even transcend the limits of the specifically human experience and identify with the consciousness of various animals, plants, or even with

a form of consciousness that seems to be associated with inorganic objects and processes (2006). In the extremes, it is possible to experience consciousness of the entire biosphere, of our planet, or the entire material universe. Incredible and absurd as it might seem to a Westerner committed to materialistic philosophy and to the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm, these experiences suggest that everything that we can experience in our everyday state of consciousness as an object has in the holotropic states of consciousness a corresponding subjective representation. It is as if everything in the universe has its objective and subjective aspect, the way it is described in the great spiritual philosophies of the East. For example, in Hinduism all that exists is seen as a manifestation of Brahman and in Taoism as a transformation of the Tao.

The second category of transpersonal experiences is characterized primarily by overcoming of temporal rather than spatial boundaries, by transcendence of linear time. We have already talked about the possibility of vivid reliving of important memories from infancy and of the trauma of birth. This historical regression can continue farther and involve authentic fetal and embryonal memories from different periods of intrauterine life. It is not even unusual to experience, on the level of cellular consciousness, full identification with the sperm and the ovum at the time of conception.

But the historical regression does not stop even here; it is possible to have experiences from the lives of one's human or animal ancestors, and those that seem to be coming from the racial and collective unconscious as described by C. G. Jung. Quite frequently, the experiences that seem to be happening in other cultures and historical periods are associated with a sense of personal remembering (*déjà vu* or *déjà vécu*); people then talk about reliving of memories from past lives, from previous incarnations.

The third category of transpersonal experiences is even stranger; here consciousness seems to extend into realms and dimensions that the Western industrial culture does not even consider to be "real." Here belong numerous encounters or even identification with deities and demons of various cultures and other archetypal figures, visits to mythological landscapes, and communication with discarnate beings, spirit guides, superhuman entities, extraterrestrials, and inhabitants of parallel universes. Additional examples in this category are visions and intuitive understanding of universal symbols, such as the cross, the Nile cross or ankh, the swastika, the pentacle, the six-pointed star, or the yin-yang sign.

In its farther reaches, individual consciousness can identify with cosmic consciousness or the Universal Mind known under many different names—Brahman, Buddha, Cosmic Christ, Keter, Allah, the Tao, Anima mundi, the

Great Spirit, and many others. The ultimate of all experiences appears to be identification with the Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void, the mysterious and primordial emptiness and nothingness that is conscious of itself and is the ultimate cradle of all existence. It has no concrete content, yet it contains all there is in a germinal and potential form.

For a more complete understanding of the new cartography, I have to introduce another important concept. The work with powerful experiential forms of psychotherapy involving holotropic states of consciousness, such as clinical research with psychedelics, Holotropic Breathwork, and psychotherapy with individuals undergoing psychospiritual crises ("spiritual emergencies"), revealed the existence of dynamic memory constellations in the psyche that I call COEX systems, or systems of condensed experience. A typical COEX system consists of emotionally strongly charged (cathected) memories from different periods of the individual's life—prenatal existence, birth, infancy, childhood, and later life. What links these memories into a COEX system is the fact that they share the same quality of emotions or physical sensations. Deeper roots of a COEX system reach into the transpersonal domain to past life experiences, archetypal motifs, and phylogenetic sequences.

The layers of a particular system can, for example, contain all the major

memories of humiliating, degrading, and shaming experiences that have damaged our self-esteem. In another COEX system, the common denominator can be anxiety experienced in various shocking and terrifying situations or claustrophobic and suffocating feelings evoked by oppressive and confining circumstances. Rejection and emotional deprivation damaging our ability to trust men, women, or people in general, is another common motif. Situations that have generated profound feelings of guilt and a sense of failure, events that have resulted in a conviction that sex is dangerous or disgusting, and encounters with indiscriminate aggression and violence can be added to the above list as characteristic examples. Particularly important are COEX systems that contain memories of encounters with situations endangering life, health, and integrity of the body.

There exists a two-way relationship between the BPMs and emotionally relevant postnatal events. When the memory of birth is close to the surface, it tends to make the individual oversensitive to situations that involve similar elements, such as dark and narrow places and passages, confinement and restriction of movement, conditions interfering with breathing, exposure to blood and other biological material, enforced sexual arousal, or physical pain. By their association with birth, these situations become more traumatic than they would otherwise be and the memories of them constitute new layers of a COEX system. Conversely, layers of such postnatal traumatic imprints prevent creation of a buffering zone of positive memories that would protect the individual from the influx of painful perinatal emotions and physical sensation into consciousness. These would then have a strong in-

fluence on the individual in everyday life by coloring his or her perceptions.

The extended cartography outlined above is of critical importance for any serious approach to such phenomena as shamanism, rites of passage, mysticism, religion, mythology, parapsychology, near-death experiences, and psychedelic states. This new model of the psyche is not just a matter of academic interest; it has deep and revolutionary implications for the understanding of emotional and psychosomatic disorders, including many conditions currently diagnosed as psychotic, and offers new revolutionary therapeutic possibilities. As we will see, it also opens completely new perspectives for the understanding of art and of the creative process.

The implications of the new cartography for the understanding of movies and of their emotional impact on viewers are so far-reaching that it would require a separate volume to adequately explore them. Perinatal and transpersonal scenes play an essential role in the success of many movies including major blockbusters. Salient examples are *Star Wars*, *Lord of the Rings*, *The Matrix*, *Aliens*, *Raiders of the Lost Arc*, *The Passion of the Christ*, *The Fountain*, *Jacob's Ladder*, *Dracula*, *Anaconda*, *Arachnophobia*, *Total Recall*, and many others. The strong reactions of the audiences to prenatal and perinatal scenes in the movies inspired Tav Sparks, holotropic breathwork practitioner and Director of Grof Transpersonal Training (GTT), to develop a process that he calls Movie Yoga. His book encourages and guides moviegoers to observe and study their emotional reactions to specific sequences in the movies and use them as important clues in their self-exploration and therapy (Sparks 2009). ♦

Perinatal Roots of Jean Paul Sartre's Art and Philosophy

Before coming to the main focus of this essay, application of the new cartography of the psyche to the art of the Swiss visionary genius Hansruedi Giger, I would like to briefly review an earlier attempt to use the extended map of the psyche in the analysis of the great French writer and philosopher Jean Paul Sartre. The author of this brilliant study, entitled *Sartre's Rite of Passage*, is Tom Riedlinger, who published it more than thirty years ago in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* (Riedlinger 1982). Riedlinger brought convincing evidence showing that significant aspects of Jean Paul Sartre's writings and his existential philosophy can be understood from his poorly managed and unresolved psychedelic session focusing on the perinatal level.

In February 1935, Sartre was given an intramuscular injection of mescaline at Sainte-Anne's Hospital in Le Havre, France. He was at the time twenty-nine years old, unpublished and unknown, and worked as a college philosophy teacher. He was writing a book on imagination and hoped that the drug would induce visions and give him some insights into the dynamics of the psyche. His wish was fulfilled and he got more than he bargained for. When his partner Simone Beauvoir called him in the afternoon of his session, he told her that her call had rescued him from a desperate battle with octopuses. As we saw earlier, the octopus is a frequent symbol of BPM

II, representing the termination of freedom experienced in the aquatic setting of the womb⁵⁹. Sartre also experienced massive optical illusions. When he opened his eyes, the objects in the environment were grotesquely changing their shape, becoming symbols of death—umbrellas were transforming into vultures and shoes into skeletons. Faces looked monstrous and from the corner of his eyes he saw octopuses and crabs. He saw such frightful apparitions for the rest of the evening.

The next morning, he seemed to be completely recovered, but several days later, he began suffering recurrent attacks of depression and anxiety and felt pursued by various aquatic monsters, such a giant lobster and crabs, houses had leering faces, eyes and jaws, and every clock-face seemed to turn into an owl. These states continued until summer. Sartre made his own diagnosis: "I am suffering from a chronic hallucinatory psychosis." He blamed for his "bad trip" the psychiatrist Lagache, who gave him the mescaline; he was "rather saturnine" and told him during the preparation for the session: "What it does to you is terrible!" Sartre himself insisted that the drug was not primarily responsible for what was happening to him. He called its effect "incidental" and thought that the primary "profound" cause was his pervasive identity crisis resulting from his passage to adulthood. He was unwilling to accept the social responsibilities imposed on the individual by

bourgeois society.

Hazel Barnes, an expert on Sartre and his philosophy wrote that Sartre's frightening hallucinations were projections in symbolic form of his anxious sense of being engulfed in the trappings of the bourgeois world; the submarine creatures represented his fear of being submerged in the ocean of bourgeois society (Barnes 1978). But Sartre's visions clearly had much deeper and earlier roots than his identity crisis and his fear of being swallowed by bourgeois society. Similar confrontation with deep-dwelling oceanic monsters is recorded in *Les Mots*, Sartre's autobiography of his childhood (Sartre 1964 a).

He described there that when he was eight years old, he discovered the power of creative writing. Whenever he started experiencing anguish, he took his heroes into wild adventures. Sartre's typical childhood heroes were geologists or deep divers, who were fighting various subterranean or undersea monsters—a giant octopus, a gigantic tarantula, or a 20-ton crustacean—creatures that play an important role in psychedelic and Holotropic Breathwork sessions focusing on the perinatal level (BPM II). Sartre said about it: “What flowed from my pen was myself—a child monster, my fear of death, my perversity....”

It seems that the mescaline session activated a COEX system associ-

ated with the second perinatal matrix and its effect continued long after the pharmacological action of mescaline had subsided. The layers of this COEX reached far back into Sartre's childhood; its most important aspect was a sense of pervasive presence of death. His father died at the age of 30, less than two years after Sartre was born. His mother, concerned about her husband's disease, stopped lactating; Sartre had a strong reaction to weaning and developed severe enteritis.

His life since then had a “funereal taste.” At the age of five, he saw death as a tall, mad woman, dressed in black; when he looked at her, she muttered: “I will put that child in my pocket.” He responded strongly to the disease of his friend and to the death of his grandmother. When he was seven, he lived in a state of terror that the “shadowy mouth of death could open anywhere and snap me up.” When he looked in a mirror, he saw himself as “a jelly-fish, hitting against the glass of the aquarium.” Other children shunned him as a playmate and he felt abandoned and alone. In his daydreams, he would discover “a monstrous universe that was the underside of my impotence.” He said about it: “I did not invent these horrors; I found them in my memory.”

Many aspects of Sartre's problems and his work can be understood by a strong influence of BPM II—fear of death and insanity, horror of engulf-

ment, preoccupation with aquatic monsters, sense of absurdity of life and other elements of existentialist philosophy, loneliness, inferiority, and guilt. His famous play even carries the title *No Exit (Huit clos)* (Sartre 1994). In the critical years of his life, Sartre saw himself “strained to the breaking point between two extremes—being born and dying with each heartbeat.” This strange experiential amalgam of dying and being born is again a characteristic feature of perinatal dynamics.

The tension reached unbearable proportions a few months before Sartre's thirtieth birthday. Using the strategy of denying death that Ernest Becker called the “immortality project” (Becker 1973), he attempted to rob death of its sting by writing and fantasizing that he would reach post mortem fame. However, his effort failed and he did not succeed in getting published. He was also realizing that he was approaching the age at which his father died. His COEX system with death as the central theme was thus close to the surface when Sartre took mescaline. It got intensified and partially emerged into consciousness, but was not resolved. Its elements appear throughout *La Nausée*, a book he started writing at the time of the mescaline session (Sartre 1964 b). It seemed that working on it helped Sartre integrate the experience; it deals with such issues as nausea, suffocation, scatological elements (“sticky rotten filth”) and there are references to sea

monsters and the uncanny chestnut tree (tree of death from Sartre's childhood described in *Les Mots*).

After this general introduction, discussing the use of depth psychology in the analysis and understanding of art, I will explore in more depth the work of Hansruedi Giger, which is particularly suitable for showing the advantages of the extended cartography of the psyche for art criticism. For Freudian analysts and psychologists of other schools using models of the psyche limited to postnatal biography, the work of this great master of the deep recesses of the unconscious would appear utterly incomprehensible. ♦

H. R. Giger and the Zeitgeist of the Twentieth Century

Several years ago, I had the great privilege and pleasure to spend some time with Oliver Stone, American Academy Award-winning movie director and screen-writer, who has portrayed in his films with extraordinary artistic power the shadow side of modern humanity. At one point, we talked about Ridley Scott's movie *Alien* and the discussion focused on H. R. Giger, whose creature and set designs were the key elements in the film's success⁸²⁻⁸⁵. In the 1979 Academy Awards ceremony held at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles in April 1980, Giger received for his work on *Alien* an Oscar for best achievement in visual effects.

I have known Giger's work since the publication of his *Necronomicon* and have always felt a deep admiration for him, not only as an artistic genius, but also a visionary with an uncanny ability to depict the deep dark recesses of the human psyche revealed by modern consciousness research. In our discussion, I shared my feelings with Oliver Stone, who turned out to be himself a great admirer of Giger. His opinion about Giger and his place in the world of art and in human culture was very original and interesting. "I do not know anybody else," he said, "who has so accurately portrayed the soul of modern humanity. A few decades from now when they will talk about the twentieth century, they will think of Giger."

Although Oliver Stone's statement momentarily surprised me by its extreme nature, I immediately realized that it reflected a profound truth. Since then, I often recalled this conversation when I was confronted with various disturbing aspects of the western industrial civilization and with the alarming developments in the countries affected by technological progress.

There is no other artist who has captured with equal power the ills plaguing modern society—the rampaging technology taking over human life, suicidal destruction of the eco system of the earth, violence reaching apocalyptic proportions, sexual excesses, insanity of life driving people to mass consumption of tranquilizers and narcotic drugs, and the alienation individuals experience in relation to their bodies, to each other, and to nature.

Giger's art has often been called "biomechanoid" and Giger himself called one of his books *Biomechanics* (Giger 1988). It would be difficult to find a word that better describes the Zeitgeist of the twentieth century, characterized by staggering technological progress that entangled modern humanity into a symbiosis with the world of machines. In the course of the twentieth century, modern technological inventions became extensions and replacements of our arms and legs, hearts, kidneys, and lungs, our brain and nervous system, our eyes and ears, and even our reproductive organs, to such an extent that the boundaries between biology and mechanical contraptions have all but disappeared. The archetypal stories of Faust, the Sorcerer's Apprentice, Golem, and Frankenstein have become the leading mythologies of our times. Materialistic science, in its effort to gain knowledge about the world of matter and to control it, has engendered a monster that threatens the very survival of life on our planet. The human role has changed from that of demiurge to that of victim.

When we look for another characteristic feature of the twentieth century, what immediately comes to mind is unbridled violence and destruction on an unprecedented scale. It was a century, in which internecine wars,

bloody revolutions, totalitarian regimes, genocide, brutality of secret police, and international terrorism ruled supreme. The loss of life in World War I was estimated at ten million soldiers and twenty million civilians. Additional millions died from war-spread epidemics and famine. In World War II, approximately twice as many lives were lost. This century saw the bestiality of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, the diabolical hecatombs of Stalin's purges and his Gulag Archipelago, the development of chemical and biological warfare, the weapons of mass destruction, and the apocalyptic horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We can add to it the civil terror in China and other Communist countries, the victims of South American dictatorships, the atrocities and genocide committed by the Chinese in Tibet, and the cruelties of the South African Apartheid. The wars in Korea, Vietnam, and in the Middle East, and the slaughters in Yugoslavia and Rwanda are additional examples of the senseless bloodshed we have witnessed during the last hundred years. In a mitigated form, death pervaded the media of the twentieth century as a favorite subject for entertainment. According to some estimates, an average American child has witnessed on television 8,000 murders by the time he or she finishes elementary school. The number of violent acts seen on television by the age of eighteen rose to 200,000.

The nature and scale of violence committed in the course of the twentieth century and the destructive abuses of modern science—chemical, nuclear, and biological warfare and use of concentration camp inmates as human guinea pigs—gave this period of history distinctly demonic features.

Some of the atrocities were motivated by distorted understanding of God and by perverted religious impulses resulting in mass murder and suicide. This century saw the mass suicides of the members of Jim Jones' People's Temple, Marshall Herff Applewhite's and Bonnie Lu Nettles' Heaven's Gate, the Swiss Sun Temple cult, and other deviant religious groups. Violent terrorist organizations, such as Shoko Asahara's cult Aum Shinrikyo that carried out sarin gas attacks on Japanese subways, Charles Manson's gang, the Symbionese Liberation Army, and the Islamic extremists acted out deviant mystical impulses. This was further augmented by a renaissance of witchcraft and satanic cults and escalating interest in books and movies focusing on demon worship and exorcism.

Yet another important characteristic of the twentieth century is the extraordinary change of attitude toward sexuality, of sexual values, and of sexual behavior. The second half of this century witnessed an unprecedented lifting of sexual repression and polymorphous manifestation of erotic impulses worldwide. On the one hand, it was removal of cultural constraints leading to general loosening of sexual repression—sexual freedom of adults, early sexual experimentation of the young generation, premarital sex, popularity of common law and open marriage, gay liberation, and overtly sexual theater plays, television programs, and movies.

On the other hand, the shadow sides of sexuality surfaced to an unprecedented degree and became part of modern culture—excessive promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, escalating divorce rate, adult and child pornography, sexual scandals of prominent political figures, red light districts offering

all imaginable forms of prostitution, sadomasochistic parlors, sexual “slave markets,” bizarre burlesque shows, and clubs catering to clients with a wide range of erotic aberrations and perversions. And the darkest shadow of them all—the rapidly escalating specter of worldwide AIDS epidemic—forged an inseparable link between sexuality and death, Eros and Thanatos.

The stress and excessive demands of modern life, alienation, and loss of deeper meaning of life and of spiritual values engendered in many people a consuming need to escape and seek pleasure and oblivion. The use of hard drugs—heroin, cocaine, crack, and amphetamines—reached astronomic proportions and escalated into a global epidemic. The empires of the drug lords and the vicious battle for the lucrative black market with narcotics on all its levels contributed significantly to the already escalating crime rate and brought violence into the underground and streets of many modern cities.

All these essential elements of twentieth century’s *Zeitgeist* are present in an inextricable amalgam in Giger’s biomechanoid art. The entanglement of humans and machines has been over the years the leitmotif in his paintings, drawings, and sculptures. In his inimitable style, he masterfully merged elements of dangerous mechanical contraptions of the technological world with various parts of human anatomy—arms, legs, faces, breasts, bellies, and genitals⁸⁶. Equally extraordinary is the way in which Giger blended deviant sexuality with violence and with emblems of death. Skulls and bones morph into sexual organs or parts of machines and vice versa to such degree and so smoothly that the resulting images portray with equal symbolic power sexual rapture, violence, agony, and death^{87–89}. The satanic dimension of these scenes is depicted with such artistic skill that it gives them archetypal depth⁹⁰.

Giger portrayed in his unique way the horrors of modern war, the specter that plagued humanity throughout the twentieth century as part of ev-

eryday reality or as a haunting vision of possible or plausible future. We can think here about his *Necronom II*⁹¹, the three-headed skeletal figure wearing a military helmet, which combines in a terrifying amalgam symbols of war, death, violence, and sexual aggression. Many of Giger’s paintings depict the ugly world of the future, destroyed by excesses of technology and ravaged by nuclear winter—a world of utter alienation, without humans and animals, dominated by soulless skyscrapers, plastic materials, cold steel structures, beton, and asphalt⁹². And in his *Atomic Children*, Giger envisioned the grotesque population of mutants, who have survived nuclear war or the accumulated fall-out of the nuclear energy plants^{93–95}. Allusions to drug addiction appear throughout Giger’s work in the form of syringes inserted into the veins and bodies of his various characters^{96,97}.

There is one recurrent motif in Giger’s art that at first glance has very little to do with the soul of the twentieth century—the abundance of images depicting tortured and sick fetuses^{98–100}. And yet, this is where Giger’s visionary genius offers the most profound insights into the hidden recesses of the human psyche. Adding the prenatal and perinatal elements to the symbolism of sex, death, and pain reveals depth and clarity of psychological understanding that by far surpasses that of mainstream psychiatrists and psychologists and is missing in the work of Giger’s predecessors and peers—surrealists and fantastic realists.

Mainstream psychology and psychiatry is dominated by the theories of Sigmund Freud, whose ground-breaking pioneering work laid the foundations for modern “depth-psychology.” Freud’s model of the psyche, however avant-garde and revolutionary for his time, is very superficial and narrow, as it is limited to postnatal biography and the individual unconscious. The members of his Viennese circle who tried to expand it, such as Otto Rank, with his theory of the birth trauma (Rank 1929), and C. G. Jung, with his concept of the collective unconscious and the archetypes (Jung 1956,

1960), became renegades. Rank was ousted from the psychoanalytic movement and Jung left it after a heated confrontation with Freud. In official handbooks of psychiatry, the work of these renegades is usually discussed as historical curiosity and considered irrelevant for clinical practice.

As we have seen, Freud’s theories had a profound effect on art. Freud’s discovery of sexual symbolism and his interpretation of dream imagery was one of the main sources of inspiration for the Surrealist movement. In the 1920’s, Freud was even referred to as “patron saint” of surrealism. It became fashionable for the artistic avant-garde to imitate the dream work by juxtaposing in a most surprising fashion various objects in a manner that defied elementary logic. The selection of these objects often showed a preference for those which, according to Freud, had hidden sexual meaning.

However, while the connections between the seemingly incongruent dream images have their own deep logic and meaning, which can be revealed by analysis of dreams, this was not always true for surrealistic paintings. Here shocking juxtaposition of images often reflected empty mannerism missing the truth and logic of the unconscious dynamic. This can best be illustrated by considering the famous Surrealist dictum, which poet-philosopher André Breton borrowed from Count de Lautréamont’s (Isidore Ducasse’s) *Chants de Maldoror (Songs of Maldoror)*. This succinct statement describing the aesthetic of jarring juxtapositions represents a manifesto of the Surrealist movement: “As beautiful as the unexpected chance meeting, on a dissecting table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella.”

Another important inspiration for Surrealism was medieval alchemy. André Breton came across a medieval image from one of the alchemical texts, representing the synopsis of the first and second opus of the “royal art”¹⁰¹. The picture was extremely complex and featured all the most important symbols used to portray various stages of the two works of the alchemical process. Breton was fascinated by the fantastic array of seemingly incon-

gruous images that this picture brought together and the shocking surprise it induced in the viewer. As C. G. Jung discovered in twenty years of his intense study of alchemy, the alchemical symbolism—like the symbolism of dreams—reflects deep dynamics of the unconscious and reveals important hidden truth about the human psyche. The same certainly cannot be said about most of surrealist art.

While the combination of a sewing machine, a dissecting table, and an umbrella might provide an element of surprise for the viewer, it would be very difficult to find a meaningful psychodynamic connection between these three images. Similarly, the assemblies of objects in most surrealist paintings would not make much sense to an alchemist familiar with the symbolism of the “royal art.” Giger’s art is diametrically different in this regard. The combinations of images in his paintings might seem illogical and incongruous only to those who are not familiar with the discoveries of pioneering consciousness research in the last several decades. The observations from the study of holotropic states of consciousness have revealed that Giger’s understanding of the human psyche was far ahead of mainstream professionals, who have not yet accepted the new observations and integrated them into the official body of scientific knowledge.

Giger spent many months analyzing his dreams, using the technique invented by Sigmund Freud and described in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. This focused self-exploration provided the inspiration for Giger’s collection of drawings entitled *Feast for the Psychiatrist (Fressen für den Psychiater)* (Giger 2000). However, Giger’s self-analysis reached much deeper than Freud’s. By seeking the source of his own nightmares, terrifying visions in psychedelic self-experiments, and disturbing fantasies, Giger discovered, independently from the pioneers of modern consciousness research and experiential psychotherapy, the paramount psychological importance of the trauma of biological birth.



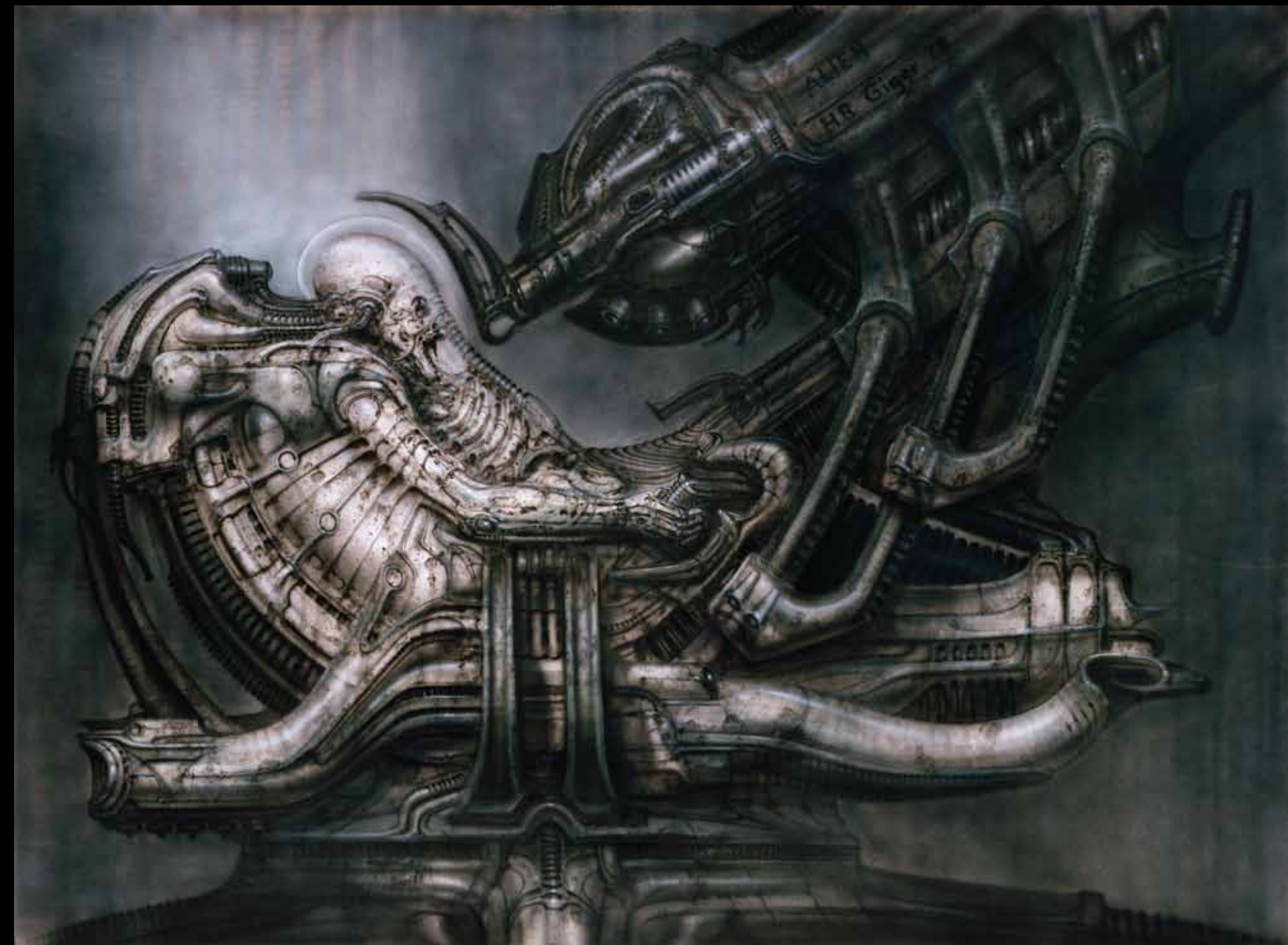
82. Work #373, *Alien III*, 1978.
70 cm x 100 cm (frontal view). Acrylic on paper.



83. Work #372, *Alien III*, 1978.
140 cm x 100 cm (side view). Acrylic on paper.



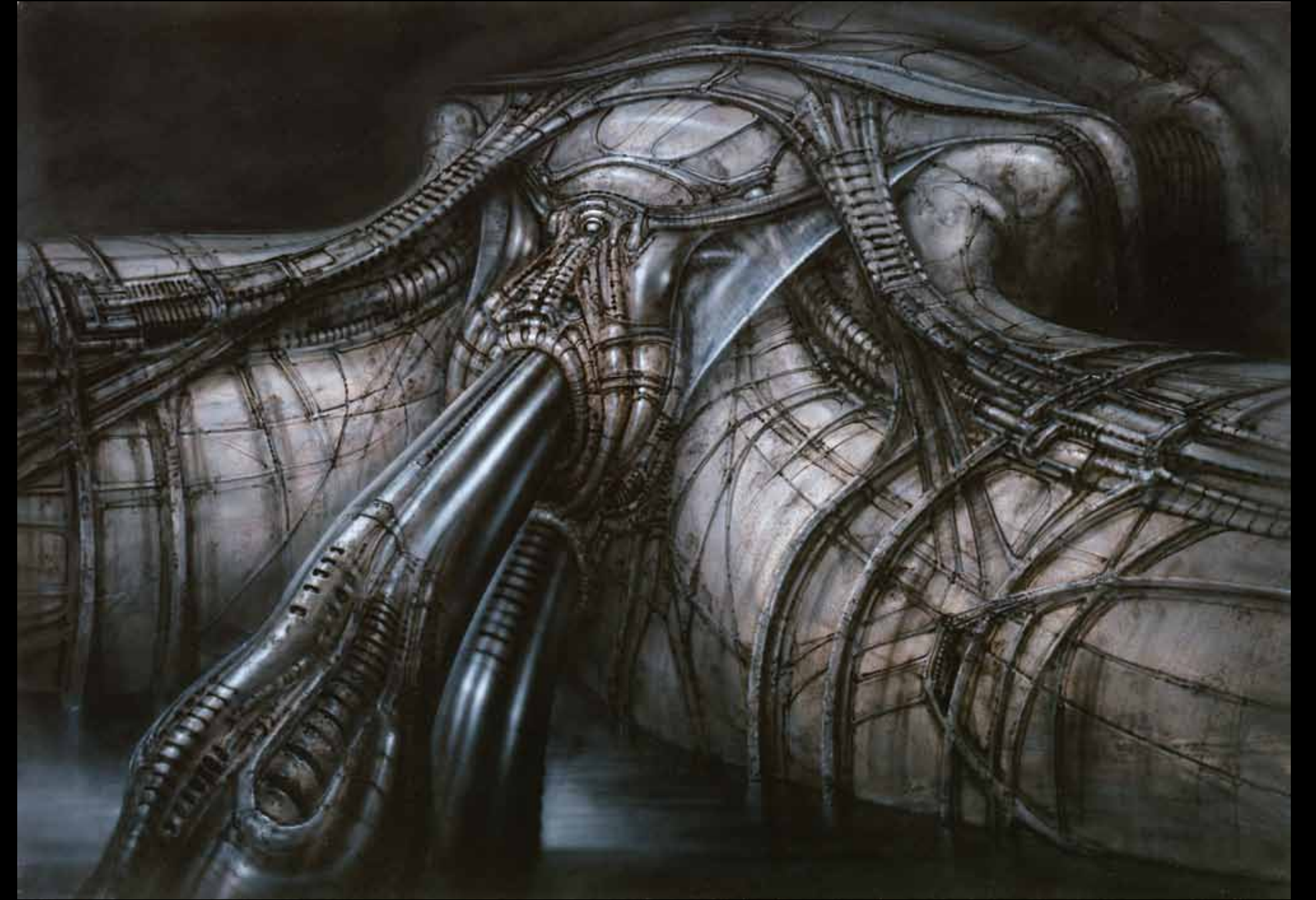
84. Work #377, *Cockpit, Alien*, 1978.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



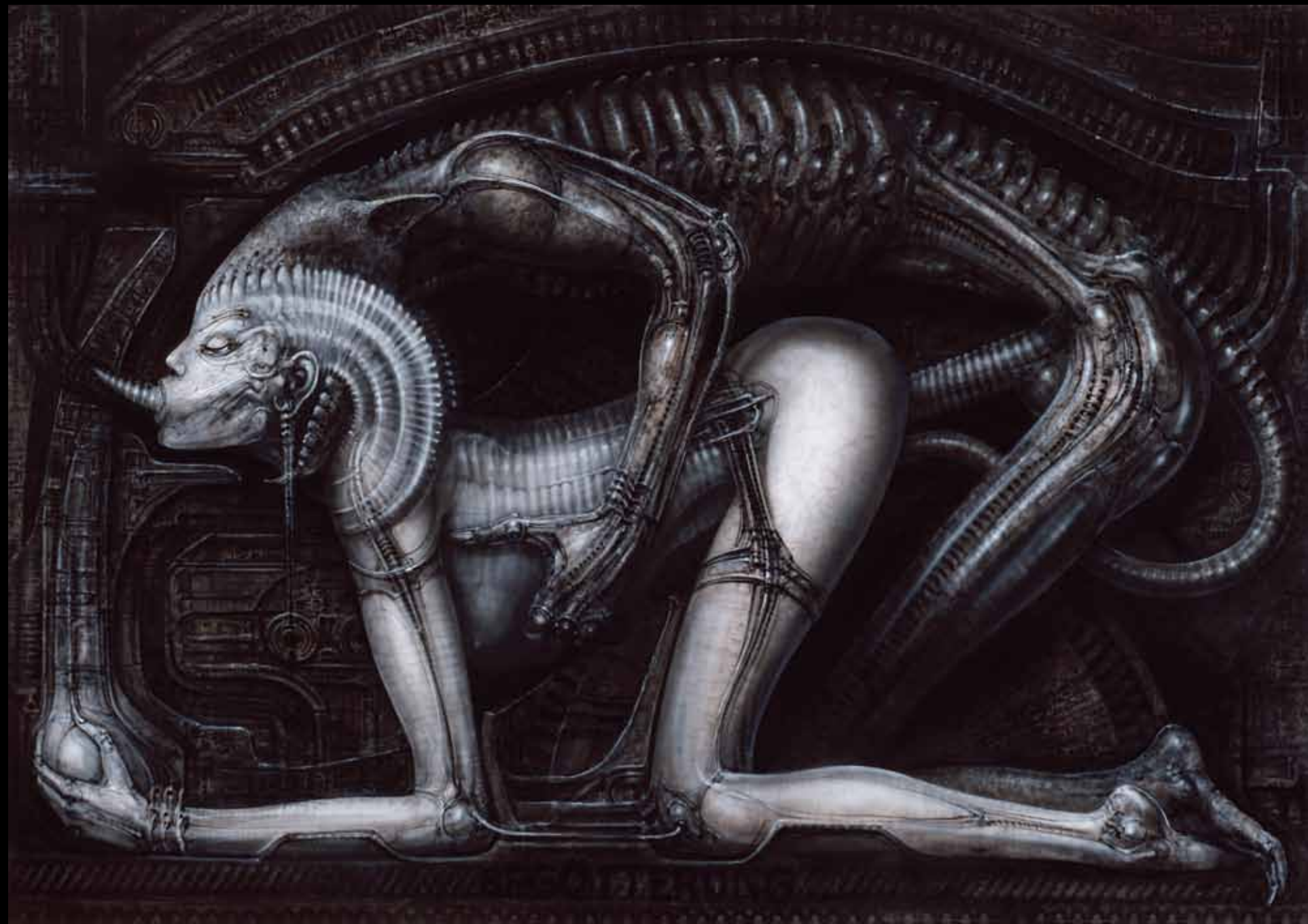
85. Work #380, *Pilot in Cockpit, Alien*, 1978.
100 cm x 140 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



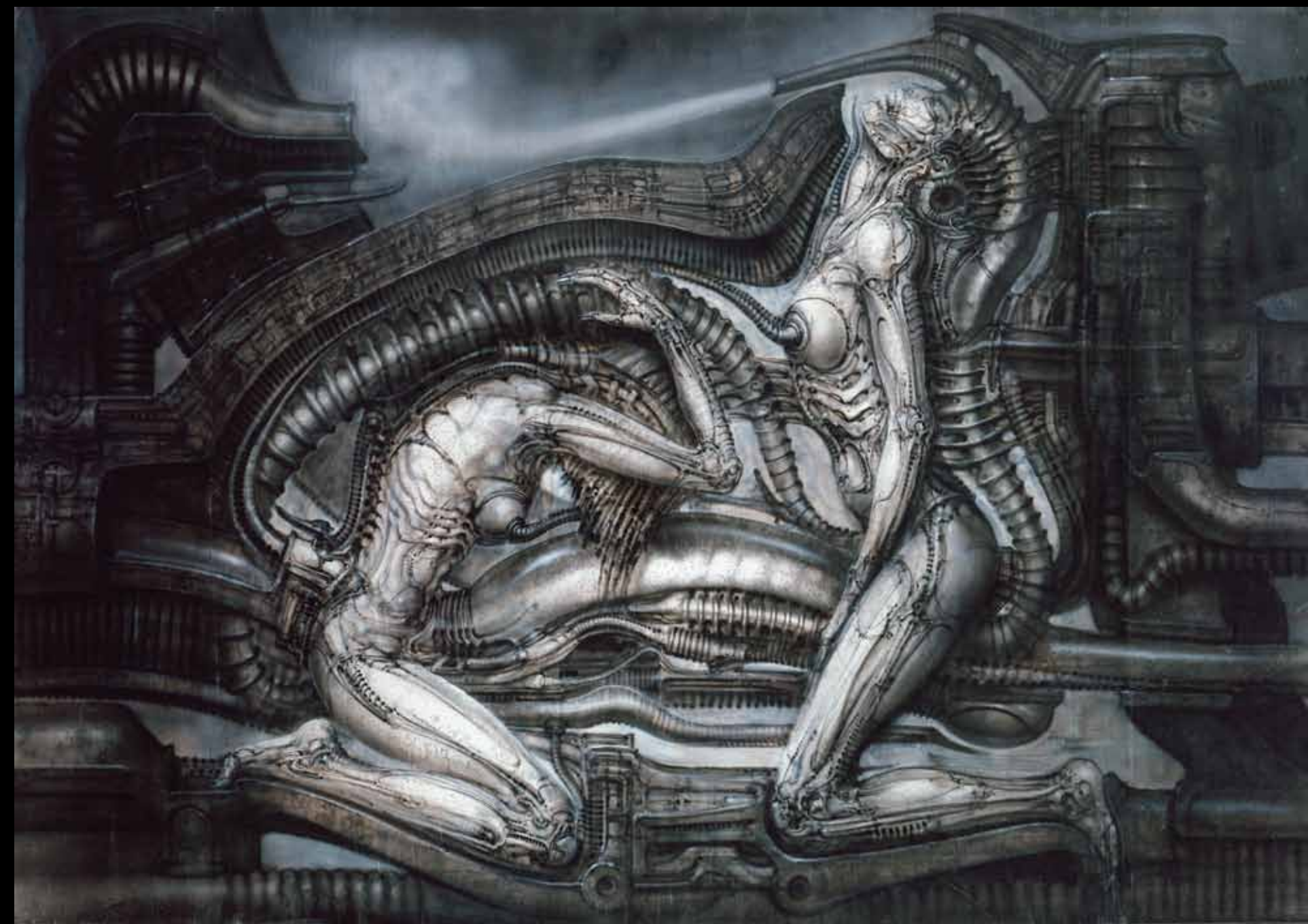
86. Work #487, *Anima mia*, 1980/81.
Triptych 240 cm x 420 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



87. Work #423, *Erotomechanics VIII*, 1979.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper.



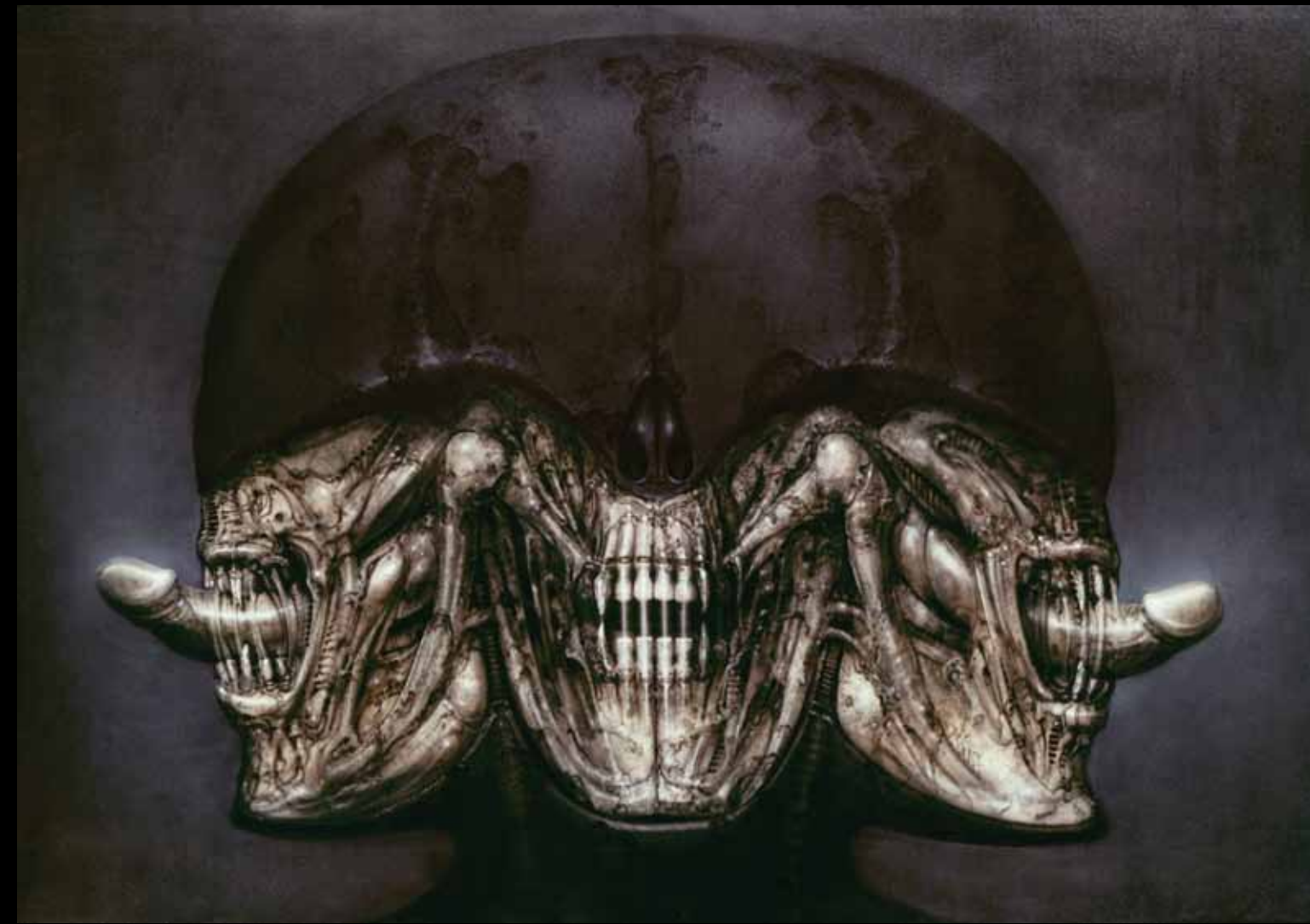
88. *Work #428. Erotomanics XI. Deification*, 1979.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper.



89. *Work #422, Erotomehanics VII*, 1979.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper.



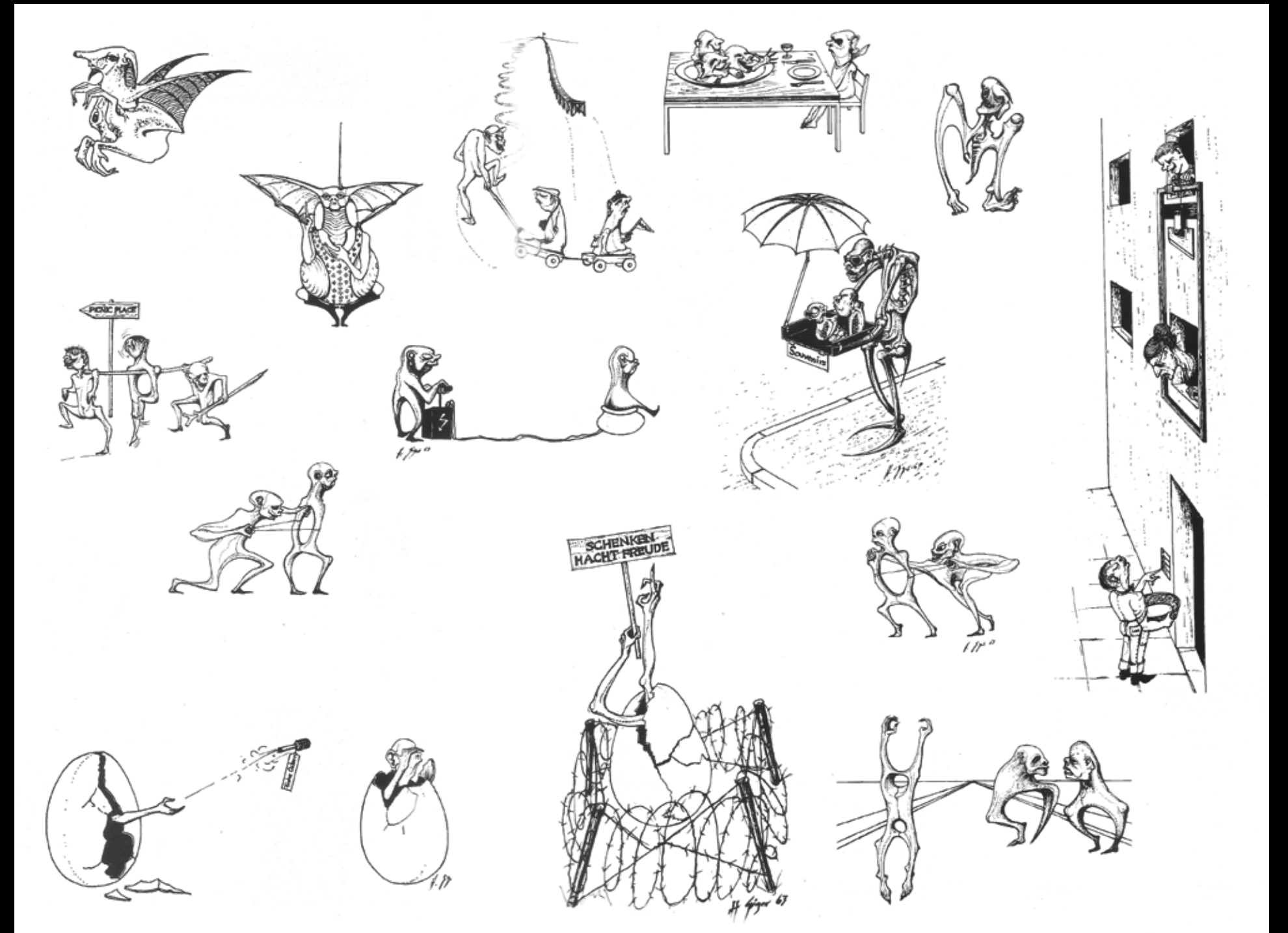
90. *Work #251, Li II*, 1974.
200 cm x 140 cm. Acrylic and Indian ink on paper on wood.



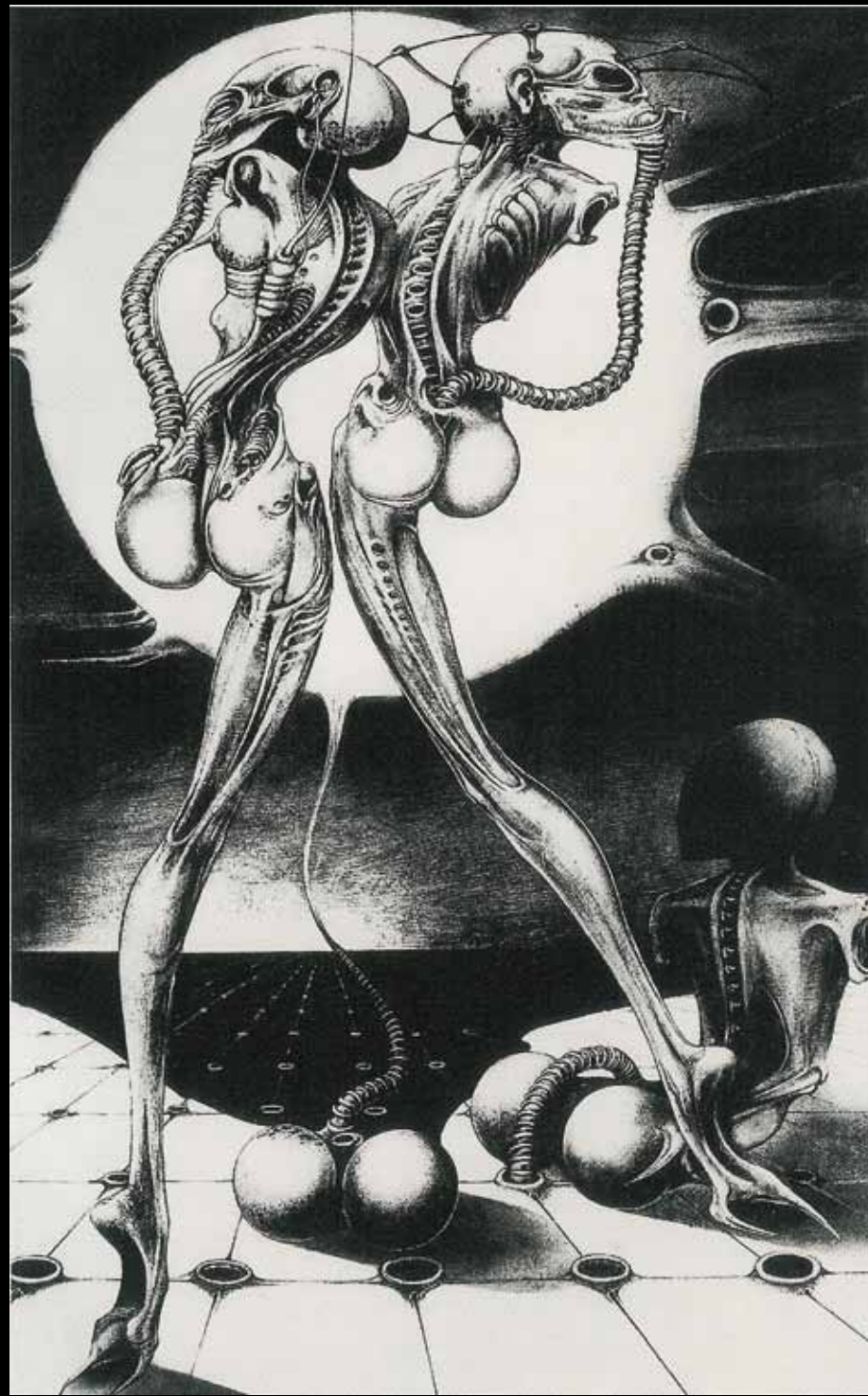
91. *Work #301, Necronom II*, 1974.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



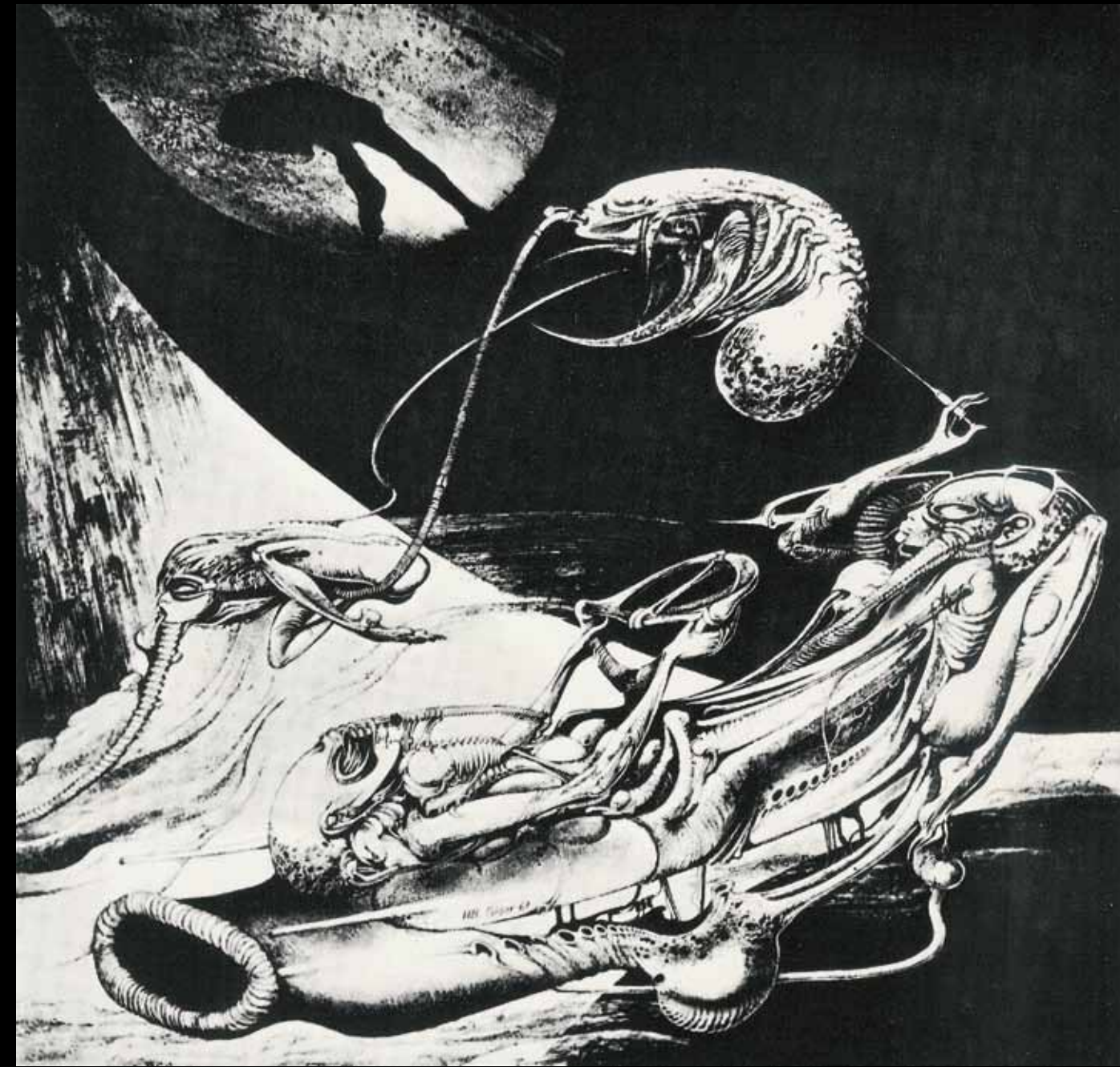
92. Work #478, New York City XXIV, 1981.
100 cm x 70 cm. Acrylic and ink on paper.



93.-94. From the cycle *We the Atom Children*, 1963.



95. *Work #69b, Atomic Children*, 1968.
165 cm x 109 cm.



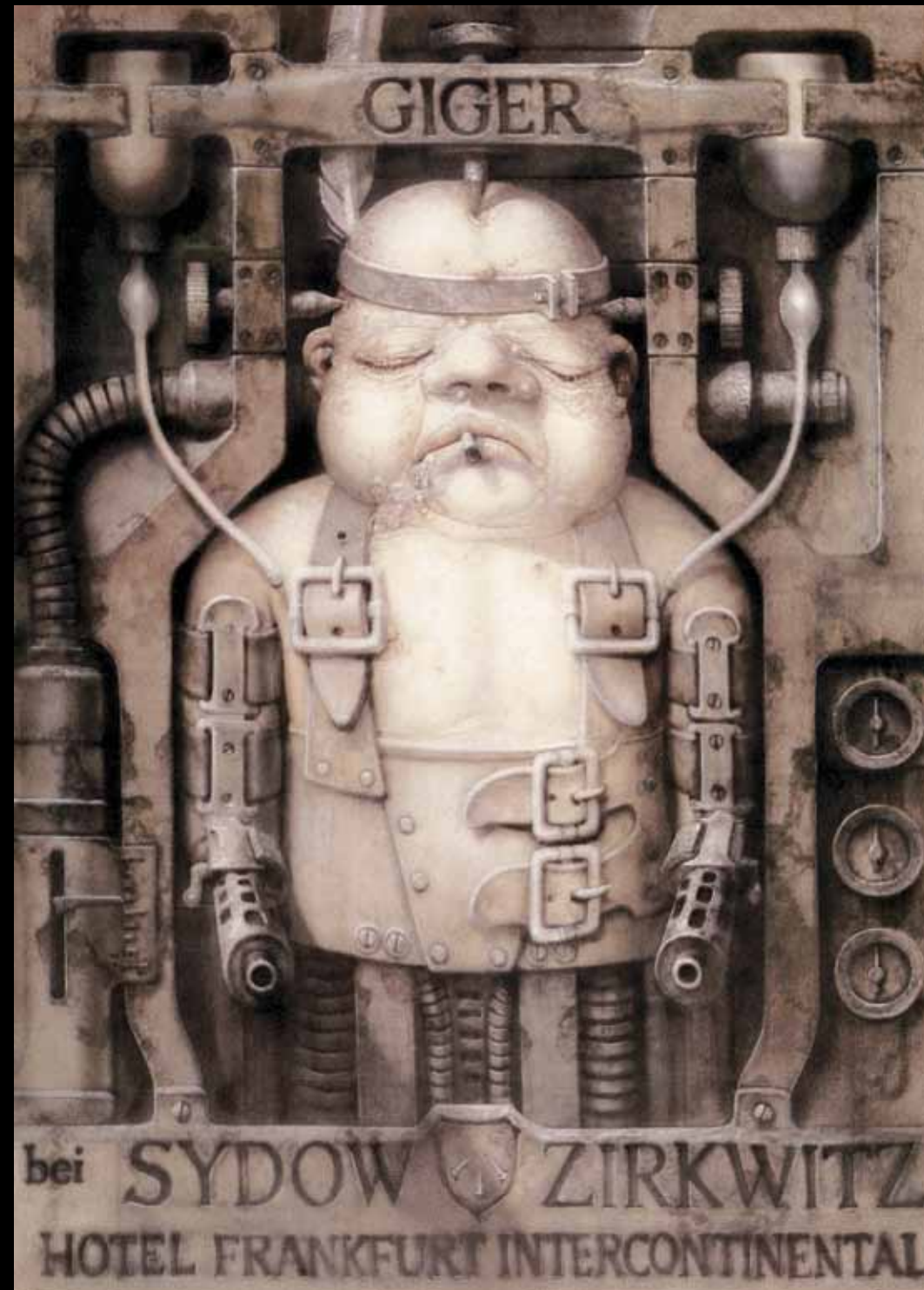
96. *Work #71, Astreunuchs*, 1967.
69 cm x 69 cm. Indian ink on paper on wood.



97. *Mother and Child*, 1962.
18.7 cm x 9.9 cm. Acrylic and Indian ink on paper.



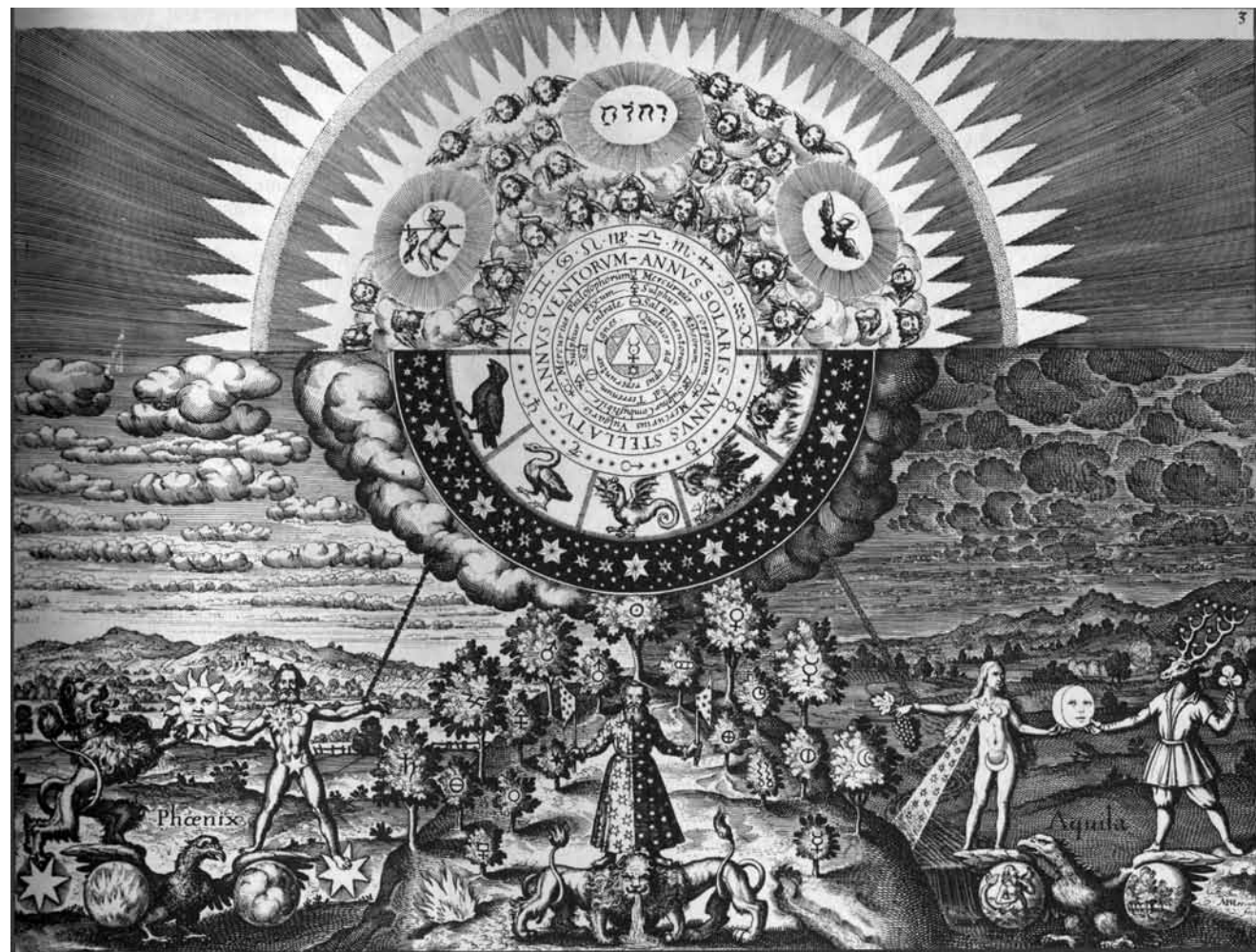
98. *Work #252, Biomechanoid I*, 1974.
200 cm x 140 cm.



99. *Work #254, Biomechanoid II* (poster for the Sydow Zirkwitz Gallery), 1974.
100 cm x 60 cm.



100. *Work #207, Landscape XIV*, 1973.
70 cm x 100 cm.



101. Synopsis of the Alchemical Opus I and II featuring Sol and Luna chained to the stone between unbeing and being surrounded by alchemical symbols. Janitor pansophus, fig. IV. Musaeum hermeticum.

Unlike the psychoanalytic renegade Otto Rank, author of the book *The Trauma of Birth*, whose primary emphasis was on the “paradise lost” aspect of birth—the unfavorable comparison of the prenatal and postnatal state and craving to return to the maternal womb, Giger’s emphasis was on the various forms of distress associated with the torturous passage of the fetus through the birth canal. It is interesting to notice in this context that Sigmund Freud, during the very short period when he considered that biological birth might be psychologically important as a possible source of all future anxieties, came closer to Giger’s understanding of birth than Rank. Freud put emphasis on the difficult emotions, physical sensations, and innervations generated by the passage through the birth canal, rather than the loss of the intrauterine paradise.

However, Giger went far beyond Freud’s relatively tame description of the passage through the birth canal; he captured the torturous ordeal the fetus has to endure in the grip of the “death-delivering machine” of the uterus. Steel rings and vises crushing the heads, mechanical contraptions with cogwheels, compressing pistons, and spikes that can hurt feature abundantly in his paintings. Equally frequent are elements associated with the emotions and physical feelings accompanying the difficult passage, such as grotesque, repulsive, terrifying, and demonic creatures, sadistic archetypal figures, vomit, and other scatological motifs. As we will see, Giger’s understanding of the psychological impact of birth has been confirmed by modern consciousness research.

The very term used for Giger’s art—biomechanoid—reflects the nature of human birth. Birth takes place within a biological system—female

reproductive organs—and is governed by anatomical, physiological, and biochemical laws. Yet, at the same time, it has a distinctly mechanical features, which it shares with the world of machines—the power of the uterine contractions oscillating between fifty and hundred pounds, pushing the fetus against the narrow opening of the pelvic opening and its hard surfaces, forceful torques, and the hydraulic quality of the process. It is thus not far-fetched when Giger used for his paintings the name “birth machine” and portrayed the birth mechanism as a system of cylinders and pistons¹⁰².

The existence of a fascinating and important domain in the human unconscious, which contains the shattering memory of our passage through the birth canal, intuited by Giger and reflected in his art, has not yet been recognized and accepted by official academic circles. Intimate knowledge of this deep realm of the psyche is also absent in the work of Giger’s predecessors and peers—surrealists and fantastic realists. Giger’s artistic skills and his talent to portray the Fantastic match those of his models—Hieronymus Bosch, Salvador Dalí, and Ernst Fuchs, but the depth of his psychological insight is unparalleled in the world of art.

Some critics described Giger’s work as being simultaneously a telescope and a microscope revealing dark secrets of the human psyche. Looking into the deep abyss of the unconscious that modern humanity prefers to deny and ignore, Giger discovered how profoundly human life is shaped by events and forces that precede our emergence into the world. He intuited the importance of the birth trauma not only for postnatal life of the individual, but also as source of dangerous emotions that are responsible for many ills of human society. He said about the tapestry of babies he painted:

“Babies are beautiful, innocent and, yet, they represent an uncanny threat and beginning of all evil. As carriers of all kinds of plagues, they are predestined to represent the psychological and organic harms of our civilization.”

One could hardly imagine a more powerful representation of the terrifying ordeal of human birth than Giger’s *Birth Machine*¹⁰², *Death Delivery Machine*¹⁰³, or *Stillbirth Machines I and II*^{104,105}. Equally powerful birth motifs can be found in *Biomechanoid I*⁹⁸, featuring three fetuses as heavily armed grotesque Indian warriors with steel bands constricting their foreheads, in Giger’s self-portrait *Biomechanoid II* on the poster for the Sydow-Zirkwitz Gallery showing him as a helpless warrior encased in a heavy metallic cage⁹⁹, and in *Landscape XIV*¹⁰⁰ that portrays an entire tapestry of tortured babies. The symbolism of *Landscape X*¹⁰⁶ is more subtle and less obvious; here Giger combined the uterine interior, symbolizing sex and birth, with black crosses in the shape of Swiss army’s targets for shooting practice that signify death, as well as violence. Echoes of birth symbolism can also be easily detected in his *Suitcase Baby*¹⁰⁷, *Homage to Beckett*¹⁰⁸, and throughout his work.

Two motifs that appear in Giger’s art do not involve explicitly fetal images, but represent important perinatal symbols—the spider and the volcano. As we saw earlier, spider is an image that often appears in the context of psychedelic or holotropic sessions dominated by the second perinatal matrix (BPM II), usually in the form of giant terrifying tarantulas^{57,58}. As C. G. Jung correctly described in his book *Symbols of Transformation* (Jung 1956),

spiders often symbolize the Devouring Feminine. This reflects the fact that they rob insects of spatial freedom, something that the fetus experiences in a good womb. The explosive liberation during the final stages of birth often takes the form of experiential identification with a volcano⁶⁶. Both spiders and volcanoes belong to Hansruedi Giger’s favorite themes^{109–111}.

Once we have recognized the prenatal and perinatal roots of Giger’s art, it is easy to understand why he incorporated into his drawings, paintings, and sculptures the motif of syringes, toxic substances, and drug addiction^{96,97,112}. Most of the disturbances of prenatal life are due to toxemia of the mother and for many of us the anesthesia administered at our birth represented our first escape from pain and anxiety into a drug state. It does not seem to be an accident that the generation afflicted by the current drug epidemic was born after obstetricians started using anesthesia routinely and indiscriminately in delivering mothers.

Hansruedi Giger was in touch with the perinatal domain of his unconscious since his childhood. He had always been fascinated by underground tunnels, dark corridors, cellars, and ghost rides. Many of his nightmares and experiences during his psychedelic self-experiments spawned by his memory of the birth trauma gave him a deep understanding of the symbolism of the perinatal process. He knew intimately the agony of the embryo in a hostile or toxic womb, as well as the suffering of the fetus during the arduous passage through the birth canal. And he was fully aware of the fact that the source of this knowledge was his own memory of birth. The following is his description of one of his nightmarish experiences, involving the sense of terrifying engulfment characteristic for the onset of the birth process (BPM II):

“Again horror took control of me. Harmless passersby who my mind turned into insane murderers had to be avoided by making wide detours around them. Everything seemed evil to me. The houses, the trees, the cars. Only water could placate my spirit. I felt as if I was about to be swallowed by a hole. The sidewalk became so steep that I was always about to fall off it and into the adjoining gorge. With tears streaming from my eyes, I clutched onto Li (his girlfriend at the time) without whom I would have been lost.”

Experiences of this kind were not limited to Giger’s dream life: they occasionally occurred in the middle of his everyday life. Horst Albert Glaser made the following comment about this aspect of Giger’s life: “The artist has always been interested in what might be called the cracks in a seemingly smooth daily life. Places where the dreamer steps into a bottomless abyss and the sleeper contorts his body—this is what captures the artist’s frightened inner child. What seems to be the road to freedom is a plunge into black nothingness.”

The motif of the engulfing vortex that transports the subject into a terrifying alternate reality appears in several of Giger’s paintings¹¹³. I mentioned earlier in this book that another experiential variety of the beginning of birth is the theme of descending into the depths of the underworld, the realm of death, or hell, known from the initiatory visions of the shamans and from the mythology of the hero’s journey, as described by Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Campbell 1968).

This immediately brings to mind Giger’s childhood fantasies of monstrous labyrinths, spiral staircases, and subterranean enclosures that served as inspiration for his *Shafts*¹¹⁴ and *Under the Earth*¹¹⁵. The claustrophobic nightmarish atmosphere of a fully developed BPM II dominates many of Giger’s paintings. He portrayed with extraordinary artistic power the torment, anguish, and hopeless predicament of the fetus caught in the clutches of the uterine contractions and the ordeal of the delivering mother¹⁰⁴. Clinically, this is the domain of the unconscious that underlies deep depression. But Giger’s masterful depictions of the no exit situation reach beyond the ordeal of the fetus to other situations involving similar desperate ordeals.

Giger’s art features torture chambers, in which various eerie creatures are tied, stabbed, mutilated, crushed, and crucified. His incisive probing vision traces this suffering to its sources in the archetypal depth of the psyche, where it assumes hellish dimensions. Giger’s gallery of bizarre mutants represents a category of its own. These strange creatures are not like Frankenstein, who was composed entirely of heterogeneous human parts, nor are they android robots, lifeless automatons only remotely resembling people and imitating human activities. Giger’s biomechanoids are strange hybrids between machines and humans, like the Cyborgs from the *Star Trek* space odyssey, and they are surrounded by a world that itself is biological and mechanical at the same time. As we have seen, this is the same combination that characterizes childbirth.

Individuals, whose psychedelic or holotropic sessions are strongly influenced by BPM II, see the world as it is portrayed in existential art and philosophy or in the Theater of the Absurd—as meaningless, absurd, threat-

ening, and even monstrous. They made frequent references to authors, who captured the atmosphere of this domain with particular artistic power—J. P. Sartre, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, and Ingmar Bergman, all of whom belong to Giger’s favorite authors, or even provided direct inspiration for his paintings^{108,116}.

Unique and unparalleled were Giger’s insights into the dynamics of BPM III. The rich array of symbols characteristic for this matrix plays a particularly important role in his art. Images of birth and death, horror and violence, sexual organs and activities, mechanical contraptions that can constrain and crush, sharp objects that can hurt, body excretions and secretions, satanic figures and symbols, and religious scenes and objects appear side by side or merge into each other. This otherwise incomprehensible aggregate of elements appears very logical when we understand its connection with the final stages of biological birth.

Here the fetus experiences a violent assault coming from the uterine contractions, which is painful and anxiety provoking, and responds to it with amorphous biological fury. A long or complicated delivery can take the mother and the fetus to the threshold of death. The extreme suffering and, particularly, suffocation generates a strong sexual arousal and various forms of biological material are natural constituents of birth. The fact that reliving of birth is a process that is not only biological, but also psychospiritual, accounts for the numinosity of the experiences and for the religious symbolism involved. The collective unconscious contributes to this experience visions of archetypal figures representing death and rebirth. Nothing except

the perinatal domain of the unconscious reflecting this stage of birth (BPM III) can bring these seemingly incongruous elements into a meaningful and logically consistent gestalt.

The work with holotropic states of consciousness has shown that BPM III plays a very important role in individual, as well collective psychopathology. On the individual scale, it is responsible for a variety of clinical conditions from extreme violence through various psychosomatic disorders and a wide array of sexual dysfunctions and aberrations to messianic delusions. Here again, Giger’s horrifying experiences are sources of invaluable insight, as exemplified by the following account. In this blood-curdling visionary journey the toilet bowl turns into a combination of Freud’s *vagina dentata* that can castrate and the life-threatening female genitals of delivery that can engulf and kill.

“The first sign of anxiety came when I suddenly had to piss and went to the lavatory. The edge of the bowl grew slowly toward my penis like a wide-open vagina as if to castrate me. At first, the idea amused me. But suddenly the whole room began to grow narrower and narrower, the walls and pipes took on the aspect of loose skin with festering wounds, and small, repellent creatures glared out at me from the dark corners and cracks.”

The toilet bowl, the most ordinary and humble object of everyday life had for Giger deeper levels of meaning and appears in several of his paint-

ings¹¹⁷. We can speculate here that the toilet bowl points to the scatological aspect of birth and that the deeper source of Giger’s fear of castration was the memory of cutting the umbilical chord. He thus seemed to be aware not only of the obvious relation of the castration complex to the loss of the penis, a motif that clearly fascinated him^{118,119}, but intuitively also the perinatal roots of the castration fears. Many individuals involved in experiential self-explorations have confirmed independently Giger’s insight concerning deep psychodynamic link between Freud’s concept of *vagina dentata* and the perils of birth and between his famous castration complex and cutting of the umbilical cord and separation from the mother⁷⁷.

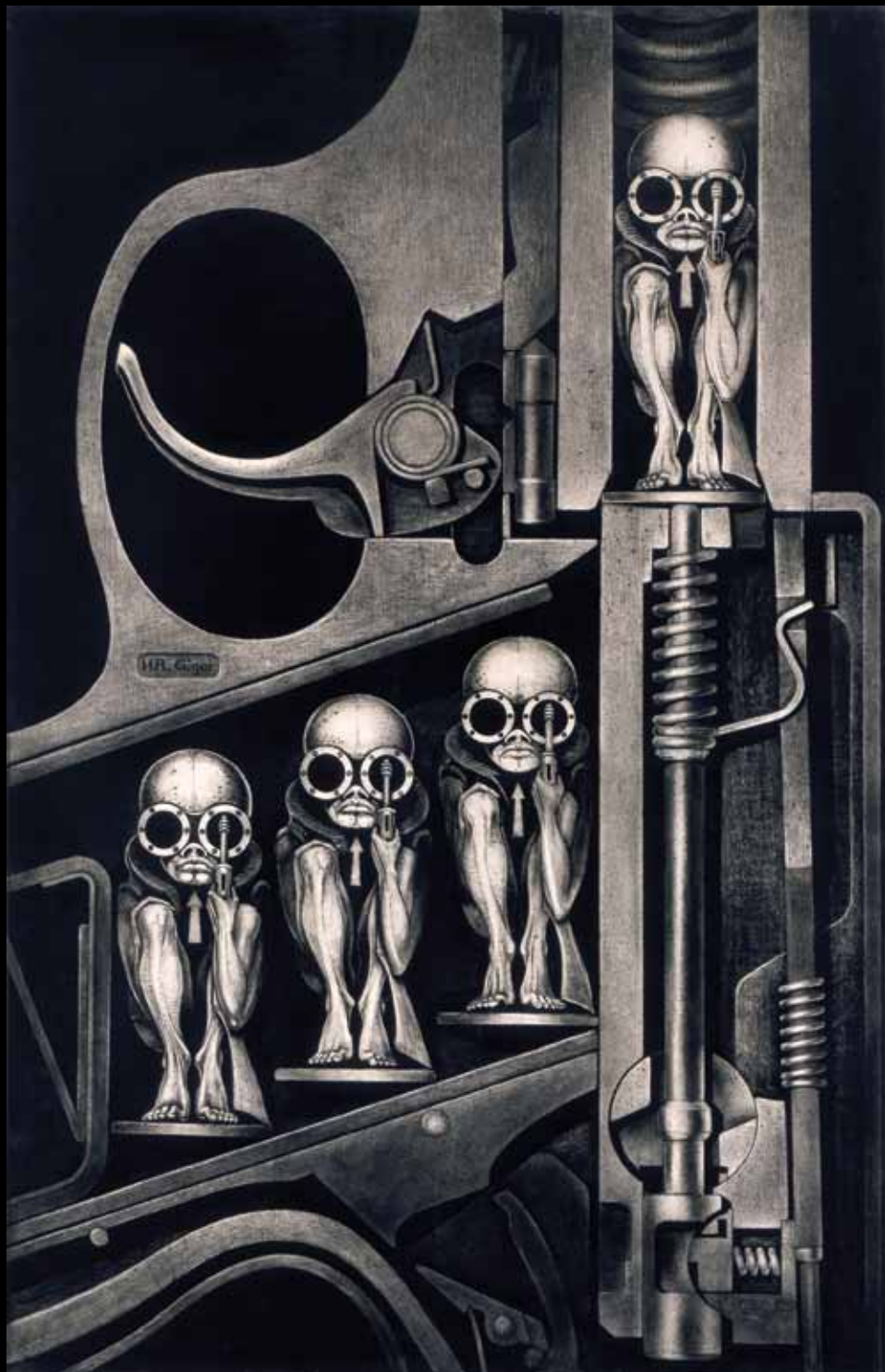
On the collective scale, the dynamics of BPM III seems to be the deep source of some extreme forms of social psychopathology, such as wars, bloody revolutions, genocide, and concentration camps (see p.73 of this book). It engenders and feeds such societal plagues as Nazism, Communism, and religious fundamentalism. In a more mitigated form, BPM III accounts for insatiable greed and acquisitiveness characteristic of the human species. In everyday life, it seems to account for the excessive attention that the media and audiences worldwide give to forms of entertainment that draw inspiration from this level of the psyche. For many years, the triad sex, violence, and death has been the favorite formula of the Hollywood film industry, responsible for box office success of many blockbuster movies. Incisive psychological insights of Giger’s work thus have extraordinary social relevance.

The scatological dimension of BPM III finds its expression in Giger’s

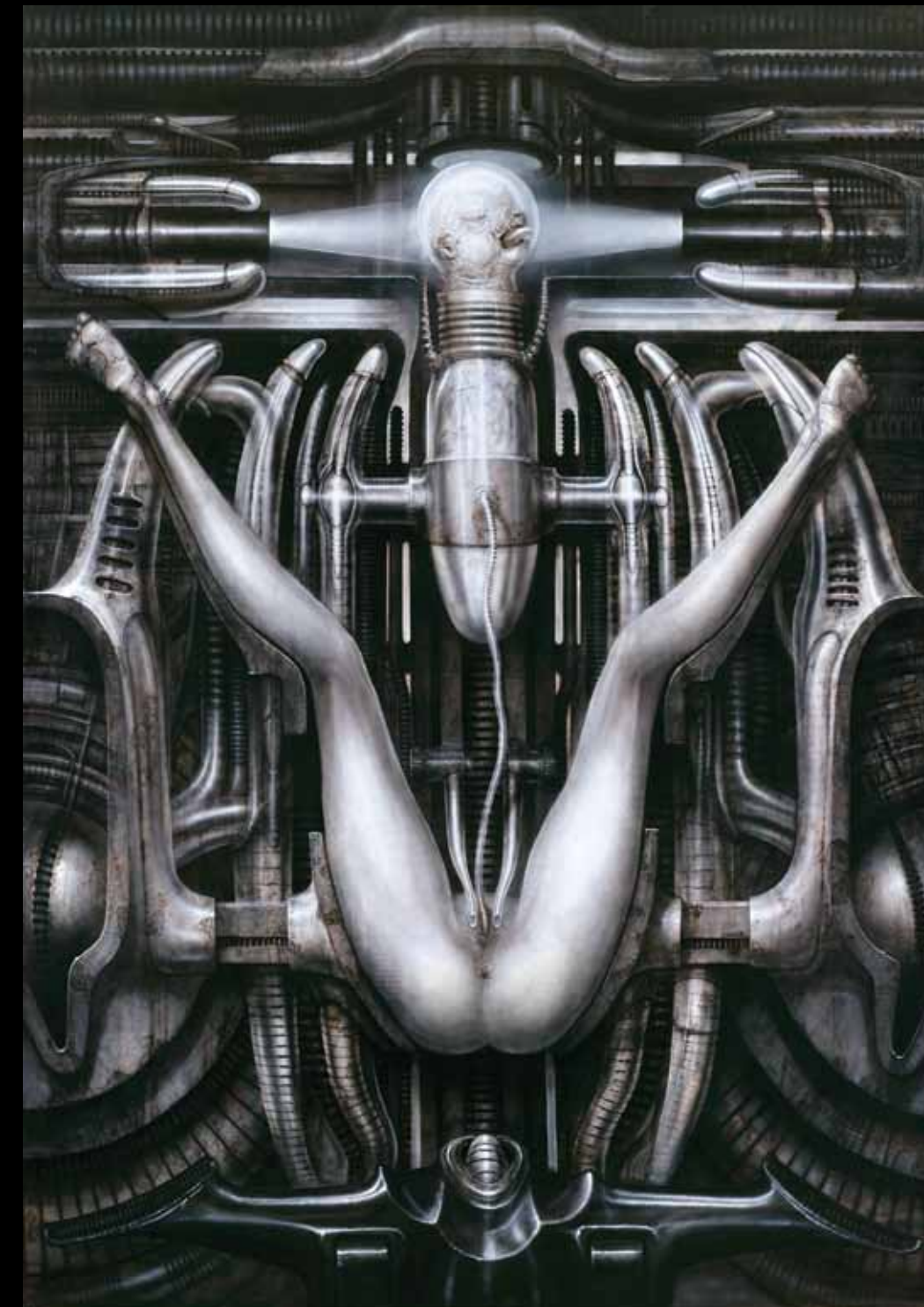
art in his fascination with toilet bowls, garbage trucks, and refuse collection and his sharp awareness of the erotic overtones these objects and activities had for him^{117,120}. It also seems to account for the inclusion of the motif of offal, decomposition of corpses, repulsive worms and insects, excrement, and vomit in his paintings^{121,122}. The scatological motifs found their fullest expression in Giger’s suggestions for the imagery in the movie *Poltergeist*.

Satanic motifs, intimately interwoven with fetal and sexual elements and images of violence, suffering, and death, form an integral part of many of Giger’s most powerful paintings. Giger had a profound understanding of this aspect of the perinatal domain of the unconscious. He was fascinated by Eliphas Levi’s picture of *Baphomet*, a mysterious, obscurely symbolic figure combining human, animal, and divine features¹²³. This creature, appearing in medieval manuscripts of the Templars, served for him repeatedly as a source of artistic inspiration. Giger intuitively grasped the full range of meaning of this archetypal figure and its connection with the perinatal domain; one of his renditions of *Baphomet* includes not only elements of violence, death, and scatology, but also sexual and fetal symbolism¹²⁴.

In some of his works, the satanic represents the main thematic focus. This is particularly true for *Satan I* and *II*^{125,126} and the paintings of the *Spell* series—the Kaliesque female deity flanked by phallic condom fetuses¹²⁷ or *Baphomet* with a female figure resting with her *mons pubis* on his trident horn¹²³. *Departure for Sabbath*¹²⁸, *Witches’ Dance*¹²⁹, *Witch*¹³⁰, *Satan’s Bride II*¹³¹, *Vlad Tepes*¹³², and *Lilith*¹³³ are additional salient examples.



102. *Work #85b, Birth Machine*, 1967.
165 cm x 109 cm.



103. *Work #355, Death Delivery Machine III*, 1977.
200 cm x 140 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



104. *Work #313, Stillbirth Machine I, 1976.*
200 cm x 140 cm.



105. *Work #342, Stillbirth Machine II, 1977.*
200 cm x 140 cm.



106. *Work #203, Landscape X*, 1972.
70 cm x 100 cm.



107. *Work #77b, Suitcase Baby*, 1967.
Gold-plated bronze.



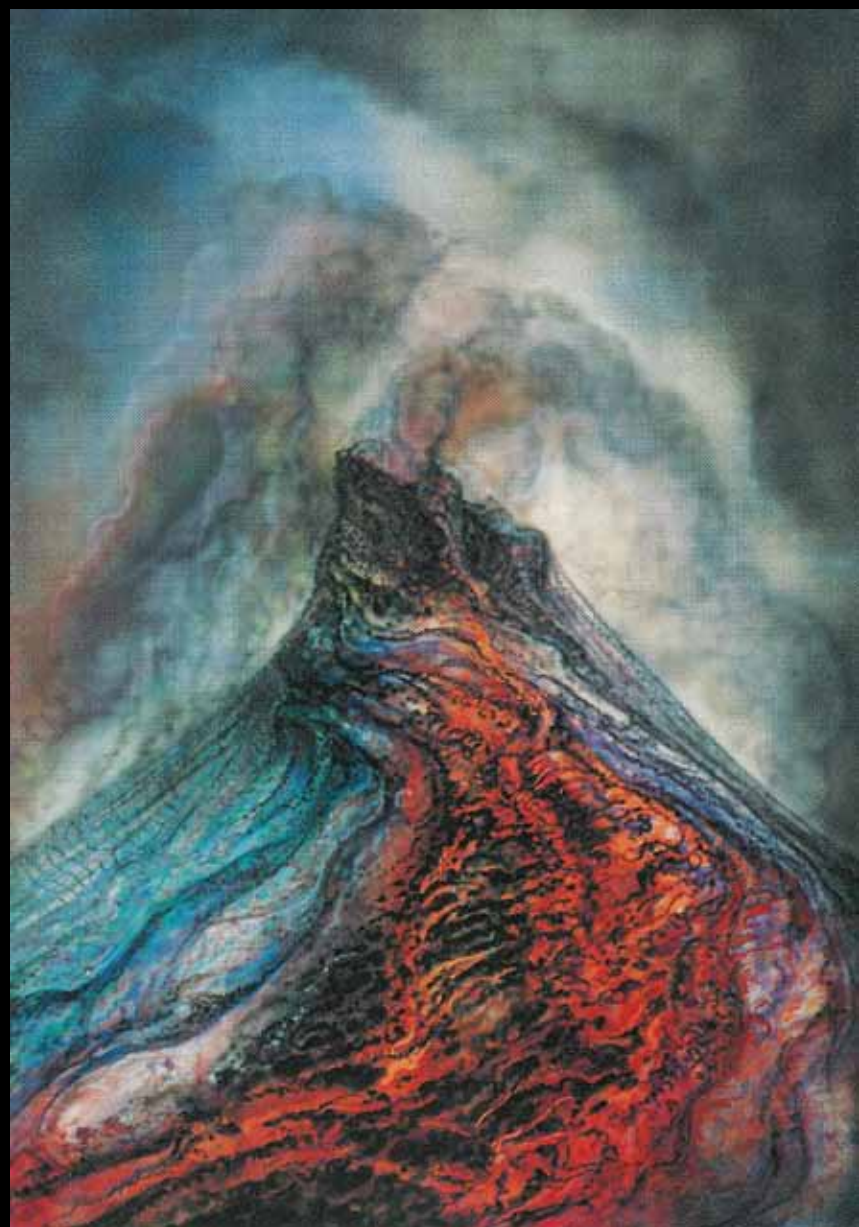
108. *Work #111, Homage to S. Beckett, 1969.*
100 cm x 80 cm.



109. *Sketch, 1961.*



110. *Work #16, In the Net.*
25 x 21 cm. India ink on Transcop on wood.



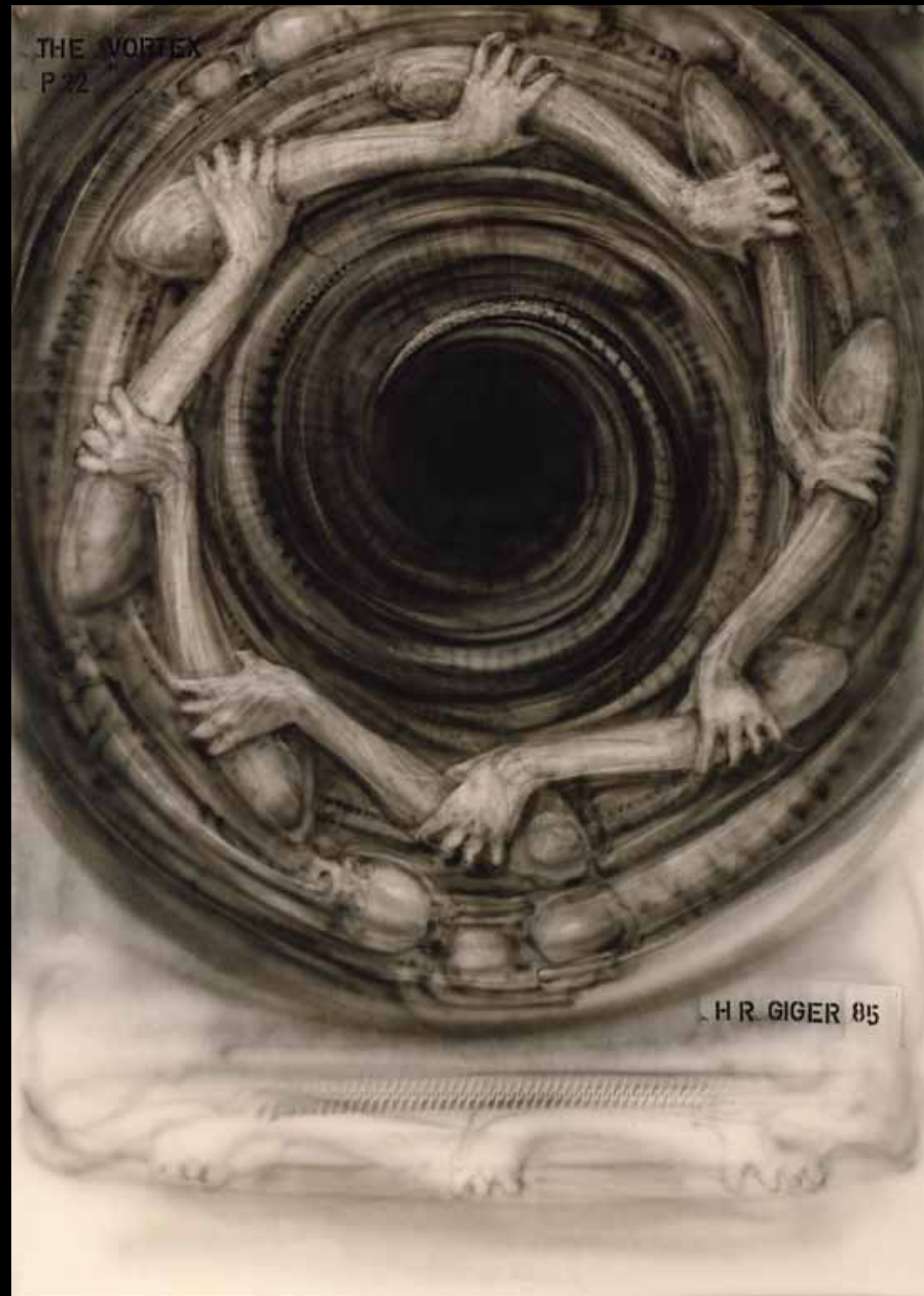
111. *Work #579, Magma V*, 1985.
47 cm x 33 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



112. *The Zodiac Fountain*, 1992.



112. *The Zodiac Fountain*, 1992.
Lithograph. 70 cm x 100 cm.



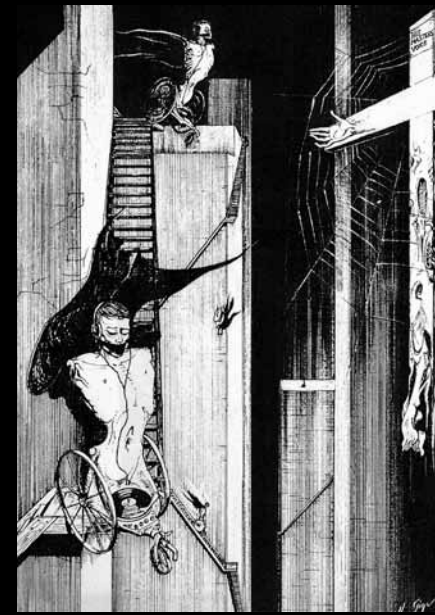
113. *The Vortex, Poltergeist II*, 1985.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper.



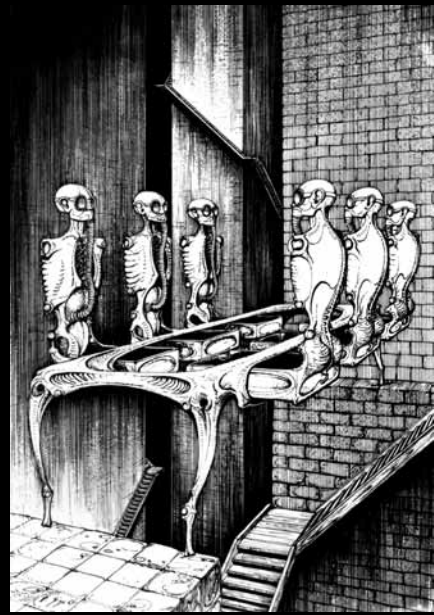
Work #25, *Shaft #1*, 1964.
21 cm x 15 cm.



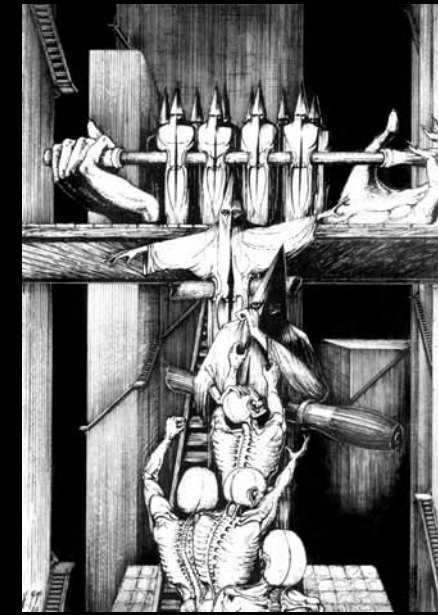
Work #26, *Shaft #2*, 1964.
21 cm x 15 cm.



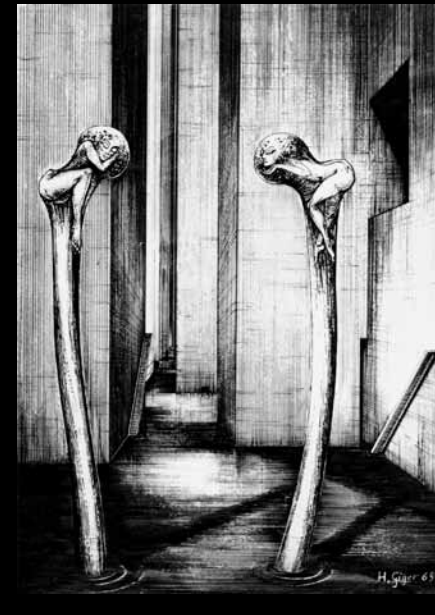
Work #38, *His Master's Voice*, 1964.
30 cm x 21 cm.



Work #43, *Shaft #5*, 1965.
30 cm x 21 cm.

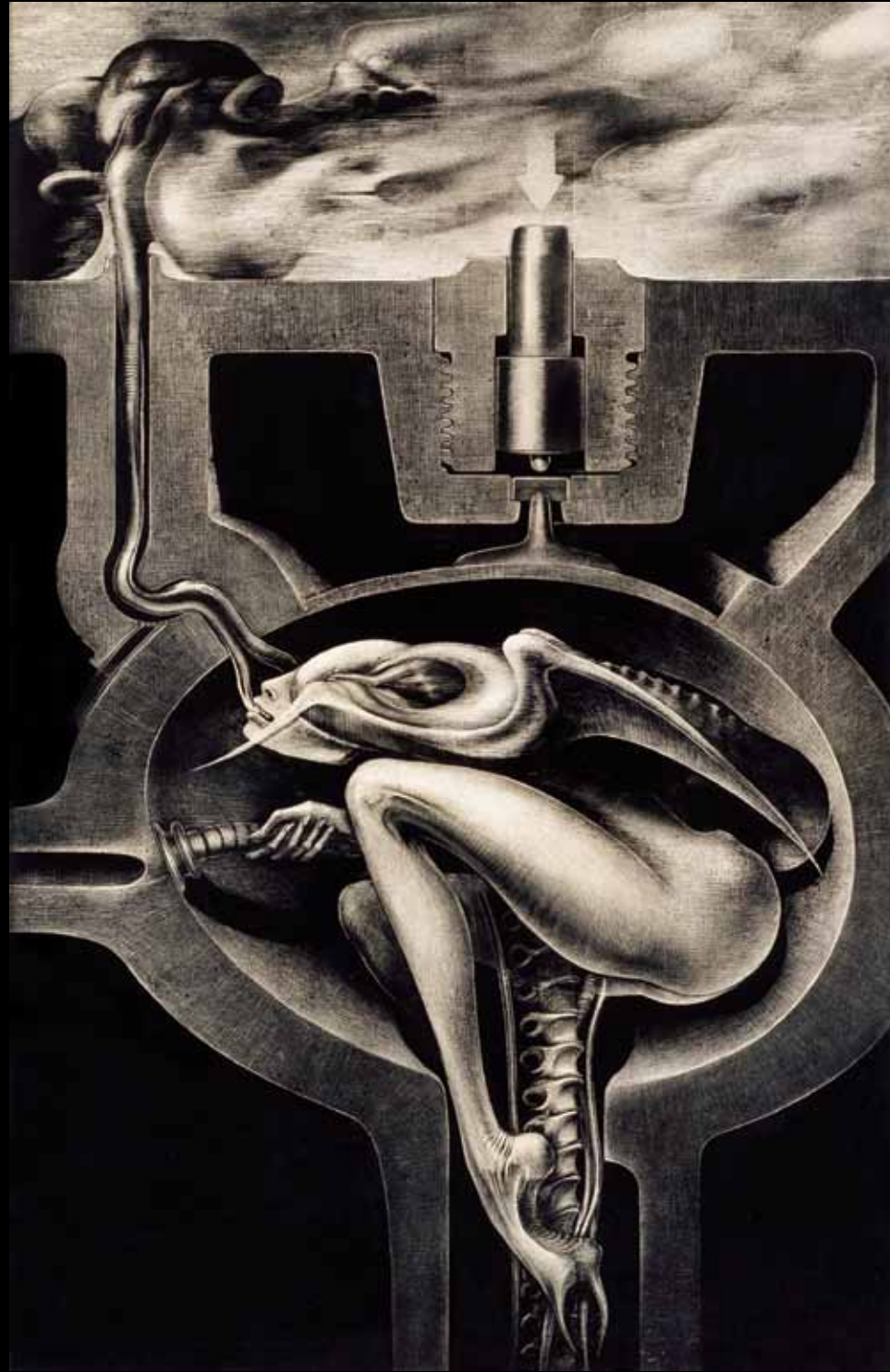


Work #42, *Shaft #4, The Power and Powerlessness of an Organization*, 1964. 30cm x 21cm.



Work #39, *Shaft #3*, 1965.
30 cm x 21 cm.

114. *Shafts*, Indian ink on paper



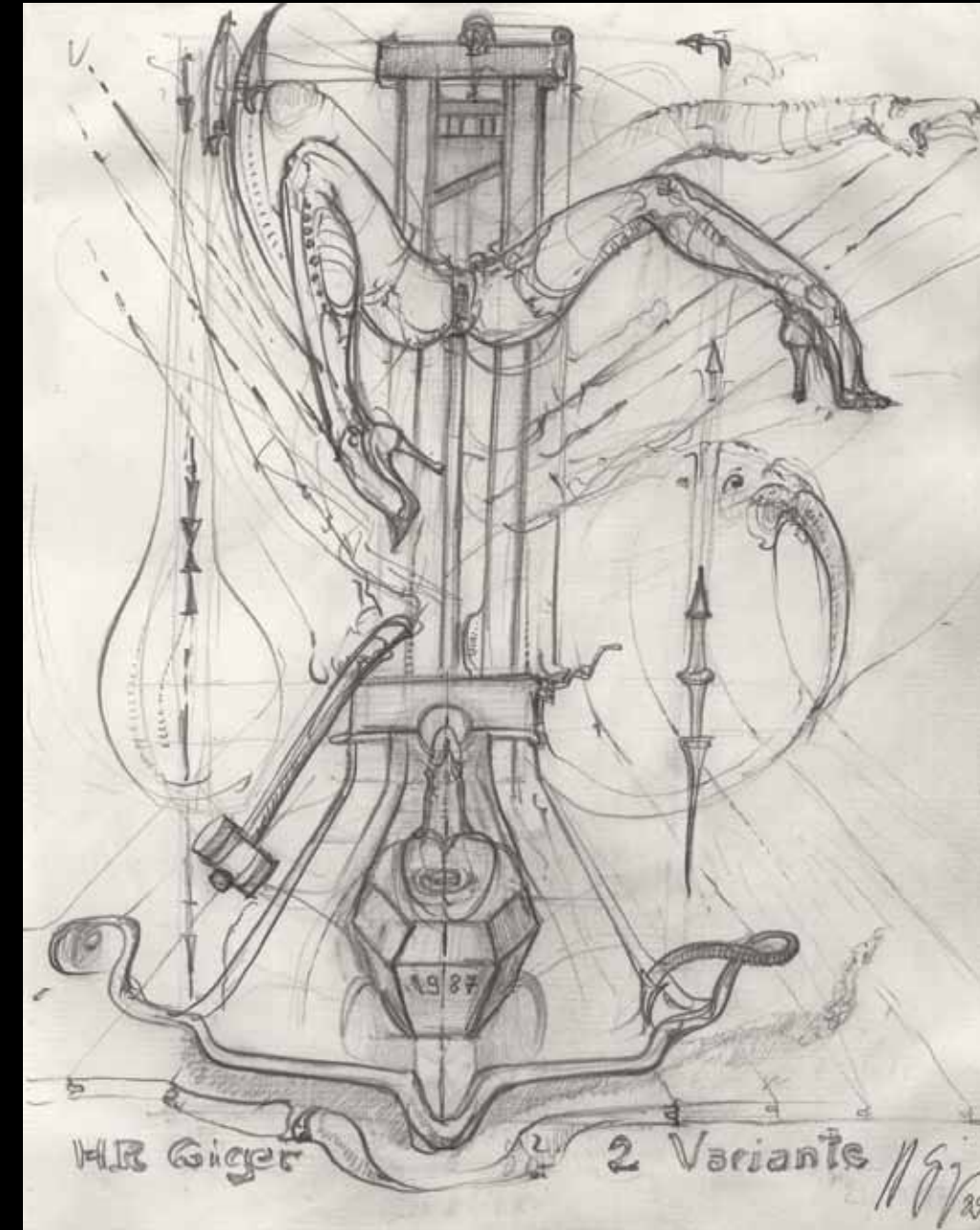
115. *Work 87b, Under the Earth*, 1968.
170 cm x 110 cm.



116. *Work #28, Waiting for Godot*, 1965.
From: *Feast for the Psychiatrist*.



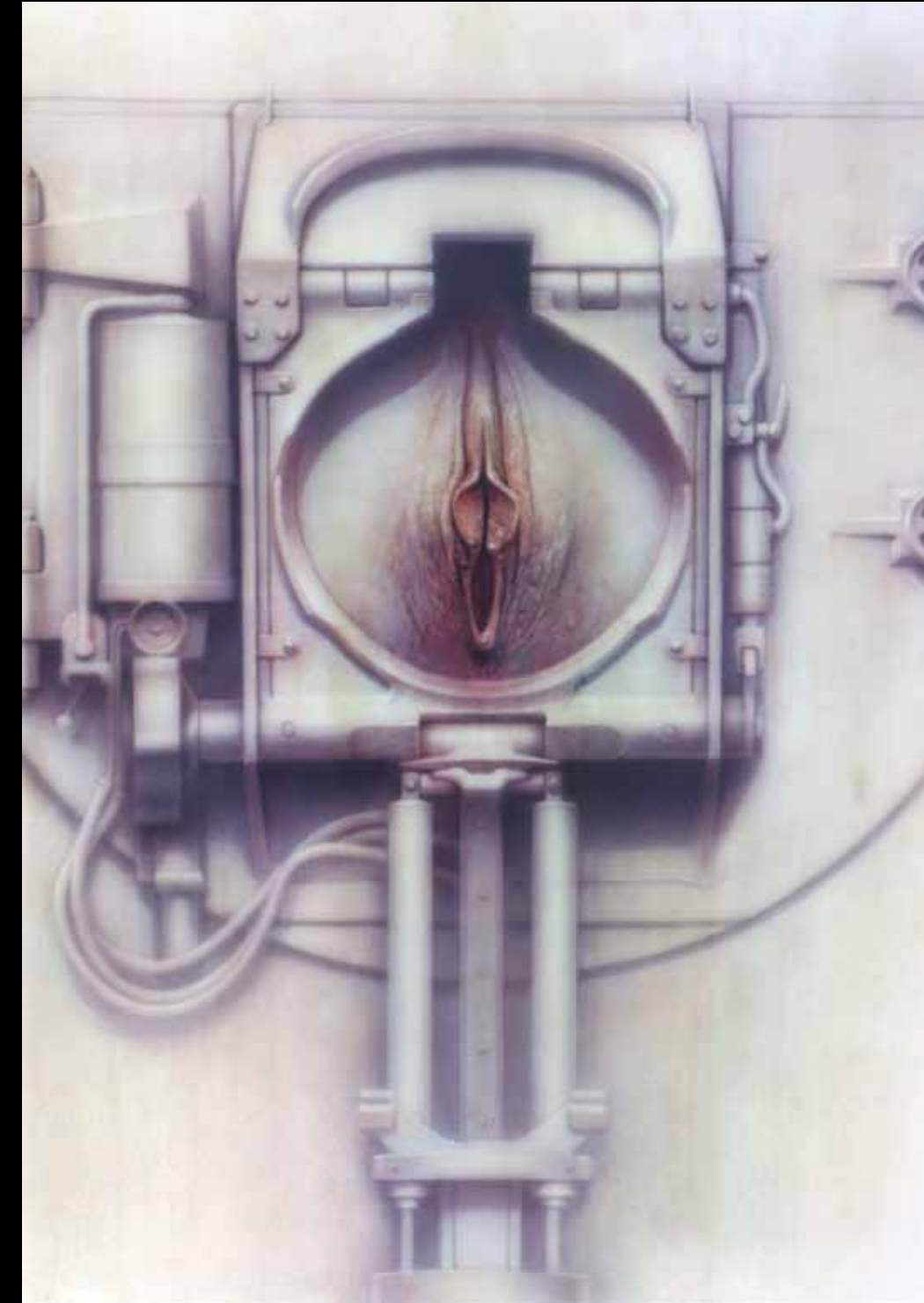
117. Work #211, Bathroom Door, 1973.
200 cm x 75 cm. India ink on paper on wood.



118. Hit Lukas (Hau den Lukas), 1987.
Pencil drawing.



119. Models of killer-condoms for the movie *Condom of Horror*.
Animal skulls and silicon.



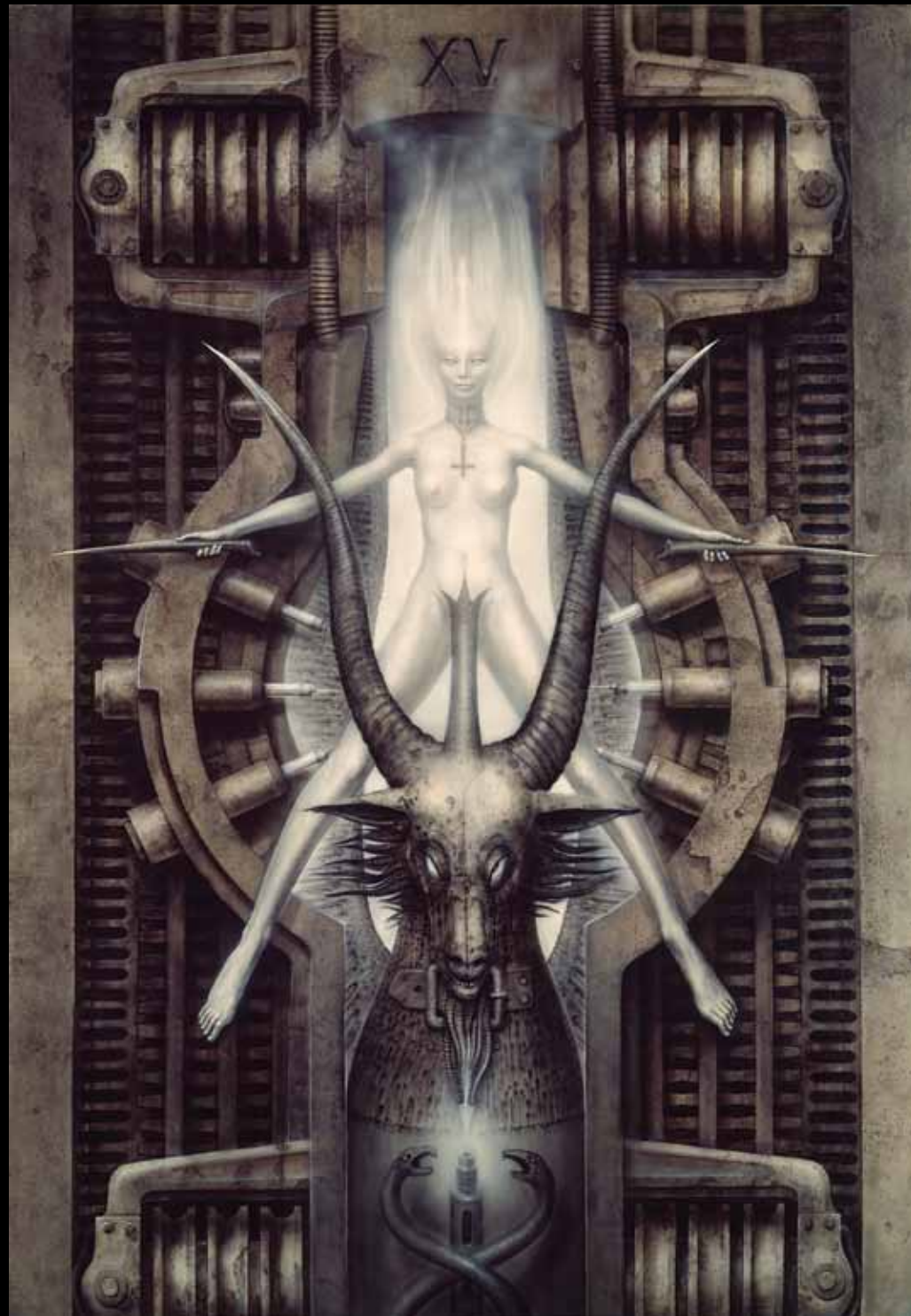
120. *Work #232, Passage XXIX*, 1973.
100 cm x 70 cm. Acrylic on cardboard on wood.



121. *Work #307, The Master and Margeritha*, 1976.
100 cm x 70 cm.



122. *The Vomit, Poltergeist II*.



123. *Work #272, Baphomet (after Eliphas Levi), 1975.*
200 cm x 140 cm.



124. *Work #331, The Spell IV, 1977.*
240 cm x 420 cm.



125. *Work #324, Satan I*, 1977.
100 cm x 70 cm.



126. *Work #325, Satan II*, 1977.
100 cm x 70 cm.



127. Work #238, *The Spell II*, 1974.
240 cm x 420 cm.



128. Work #327, *Departure for Sabbath*, 1976.
100 cm x 70 cm.



129. *Work #341, Witches' Dance, 1977.*
200 cm x 140 cm. Acrylic on paper.



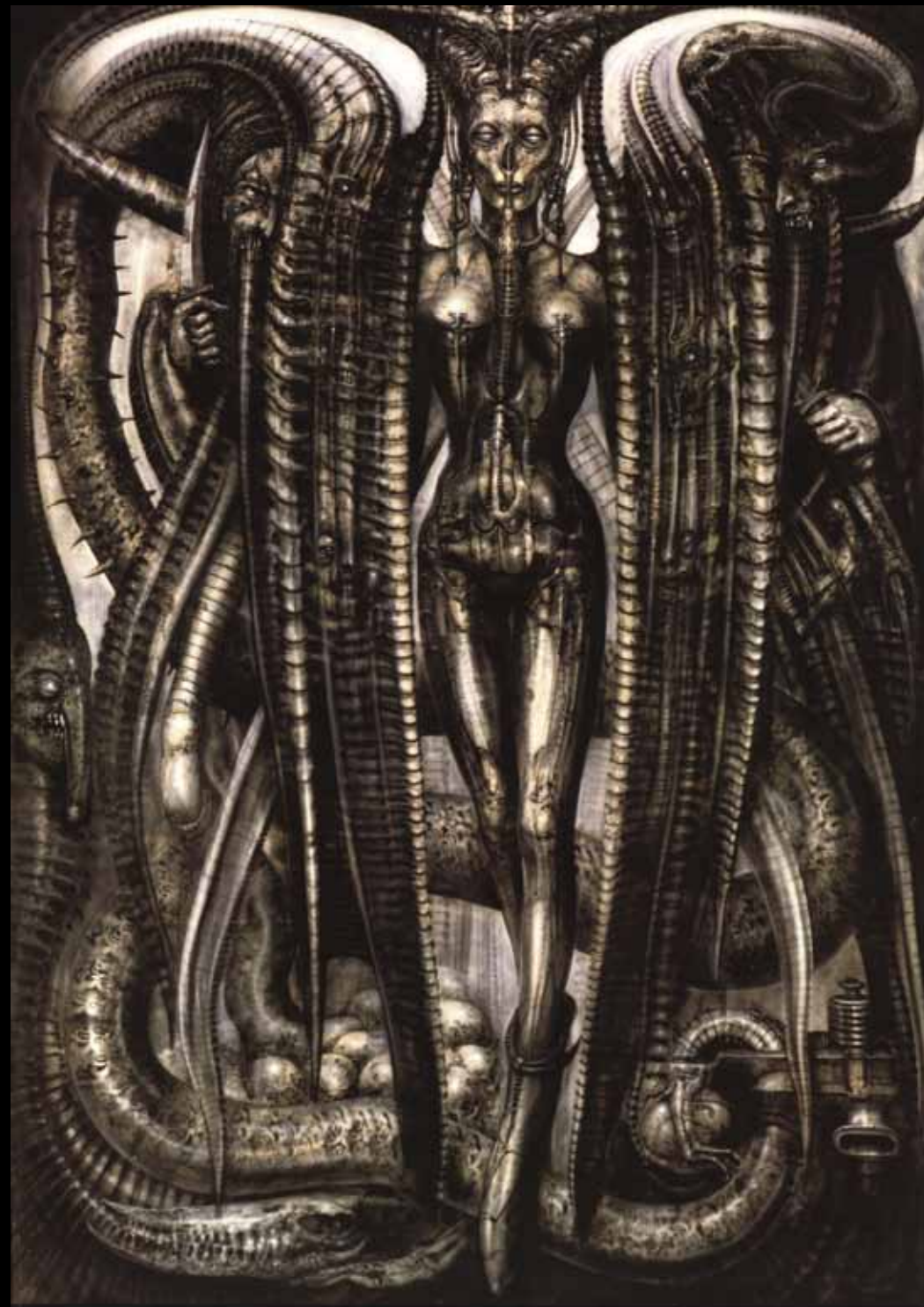
130. *Work #17, The Witch, 1967.*
25 cm x 21 cm. India ink on Transcop on wood.



131. Work #608, *Satan's Bride II*, 1985-7.
114 cm x 70 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



132. Work #412, *Vlad Tepes*, 1978.
80 cm x 56 cm. Acrylic on paper/wood.



133. *Work #340, Lilith*, 1976–7.
200 cm x 140 cm. Acrylic on paper/wood.

Giger's extraordinary art has been difficult for an average person to understand and for many years, it has been the subject of heated controversy. Giger was the target of many angry reactions from lay persons and vicious attacks of art critics, including those that used moral judgments and psychiatric labels, questioning his character, integrity and sanity. However, he also received highest admiration and praise from many prominent figures of cultural life, including Ernst Fuchs, Salvador Dalí, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Ridley Scott, Oliver Stone, Albert Hofmann, Timothy Leary, and many others. And, of course, he received for his art an Oscar, the highest award from the Los Angeles Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for excellence in cinema achievements.

Freud, trying to understand the role of the artist in human society wrote that the artist has withdrawn from reality into his Oedipal fantasies, about which he feels guilty and finds his way back to the objective world by presenting them in his work. For Freud, the forbidden fantasies revealed in art are related exclusively to the Oedipus complex and the pregenital libidinal drives. The intensity of the controversy surrounding Giger seems to be related to the fact that his art reaches much deeper, to deep, dark recesses of the human psyche, which in our culture have remained subjected to deep repression even after Freud's work succeeded in lifting to a great extent the taboo of sexuality.

The perinatal domain of the unconscious is perceived as particularly dangerous, because it represents an emotional and instinctual inferno associated with the memory of an actually or potentially life-threatening situation—biological birth. It also harbors the deepest roots of the incest taboo—memory of the frightening intimate contact with the mother's genitals. And the fact that Giger portrayed the perinatal domain in the form in which we would experience it in deep self-exploration—using powerful symbolic im-

ages rather than verbal means—is a particularly effective way of lifting the repression that normally keeps the perinatal material from emerging into consciousness.

Those who recognize the deep truth in Giger's art and his courage in facing and revealing this problematic aspect of the human psyche, which is responsible for many ills in the world, admire his art. Much of the hostility against him comes from determined denial of the existence and the universal nature of the perinatal domain of the unconscious. It is easier for many people to see Giger's images as an expression of his personal depravation, perversion, or psychopathology, rather than recognize in his art elements that we all carry in the depth of our psyche. The world would not see phenomena like Nazism, Communism, murderous religious extremism and suicidal fanaticism, if all we had to deal with would be adverse consequences of unsatisfactory nursing, dysfunctional family dynamics, and strict toilet training.

To avoid misunderstanding, it is necessary to mention that not all admirers of Giger are individuals who appreciate his art for its mastery and the depth of psychological understanding. His museum in Gruyères also attracts many visitors from the Goth subculture, recognizable by their black clothing, white make-up, body piercing, tattoos, chains, and other bondage items, members of the punk subculture with their outrageous hair styles, provocative t-shirts, unusual jewelry, and body modifications, and other individuals, who are attracted to Giger's art because of its dark themes and the provocative and shocking effects it has on conservative circles. Some tend to see him as a black magician indulging in the elements he portrays in his paintings—occultism, deviant sexual practices, and satanic worship. They would have been very surprised if they had a chance to get to know Hansruedi personally and found out that he was a shy, gentle, amiable, and

loving person, who used his art to struggle with his anxieties, insecurities, and inner demons.

The discovery of the paramount importance of the perinatal and transpersonal realms of the unconscious—the domains of the human psyche as yet unrecognized by mainstream psychiatrists—does not make the postnatal experiences in infancy and childhood irrelevant. Freud's insights concerning infantile sexuality, the Oedipus complex, and various psychosexual traumas still have their place in psychology, but instead of being the primary sources of emotional, psychosomatic, and interpersonal problems, they are conditions facilitating the emergence of deeper emotions and physical sensations from the perinatal and transpersonal levels of the psyche into consciousness.

We have already seen the interplay between biographical levels of COEX systems and deeper levels of the psyche in Riedlinger's study of J. P. Sartre (Riedlinger 1982). Similar dynamics can be clearly demonstrated in Hansruedi Giger's life, since many of his traumatic experiences in childhood and later in life were deeply connected with his memory of birth. Using them as a bridge, perinatal material then found its way into Hansruedi's nightmares and psychedelic experiences and through them into his art. For example, the inspiration for his series of paintings entitled *Shafts*¹¹⁴ came from terrifying dreams, the sources of which were in the memory of birth and related memories from his childhood. One of these memories involved a secret window in the stairwell in the house of his parents in Chur, which lead to the interior of the neighboring Three Kings Hotel. In reality, this window was always covered with a dingy brown curtain and Hansruedi never saw what was behind it. But in his dreams, it was open and revealed gigantic bottomless shafts with treacherous wooden stairways without banisters leading down into the yawning abyss.

Another childhood memory was related to a cellar in Hansruedi's parents' house. Hansruedi heard from the hotel proprietor that there were two subterranean passages in Chur, which led from the bishop's palace to another part of the town. This hotelier also told him that their cellar was allegedly part of one of these passages. The idea of these underground corridors had enormous impact on Hansruedi's imagination. Again, the exit leading from their cellar to the hotel had always been closed, but in his dreams it opened into a monstrous, dangerous labyrinth with a musty spiral stone staircase. He felt great ambivalence toward this image—both attraction and fear.

The motif of a journey into a dangerous labyrinth is one of the standard themes in the sessions of people reliving their birth in a therapeutic context or during a spontaneous psychospiritual journey. It is also an important part of the initiatory visions of novice shamans, of the hero's journey as described by Joseph Campbell, and of mythological stories of gods and demigods involving death and rebirth, as exemplified by the underworld adventures of the Assyrian king Gilgamesh, the Sumerian goddess Inanna, the Thracian bard Orpheus, the Aztec Plumed Serpent Quetzalcoatl, and the Mayan Hero Twins Xbalanque and Hunahpu. The association between the above places from Hansruedi's childhood and his memory of birth would explain how he responded to them in his childhood and why they figured so strongly in his nightmares and subsequently in his art.

Another example is Giger's extreme reaction to anything related to torture, mutilation, dismemberment, and impalement. These again are themes that appear regularly in psychedelic and holotropic sessions of people reliving the trauma of birth. In these sessions, the physical and emotional suffering associated with the reliving of biological birth *per se* is further augmented by the fact that perinatal experiences often come interspersed

with images of extreme suffering and torture from the historical domain of the collective unconscious. When Giger attended the Zürich School of Applied Art, a fellow student showed him a 1904 photograph, depicting the tortures inflicted on the murderer of the Emperor of China. The assassin was impaled on a stake and his limbs were cut off one after the other. Having seen this photograph, Hansruedi was not able to sleep for a number of weeks. The images from the Nazi concentration camps had a similar impact on his imagination and sleep.

The most powerful aspect of the photograph depicting the Chinese torture was for Hansruedi the image of severed limbs. He encountered amputated limbs also during his visits to the Civic Museum in Chur, where the Egyptian exhibition featured parts of dismembered mummies. At the age of six and seven, Hansruedi spent there many Sunday mornings, all alone. It was a subterranean, musty hall with huge vaults, poorly illuminated only by light that came through shafts from above. Apart from the fascination, it was for him a "test of courage," since the place terrified him so much. He felt compelled to go there again and again. The motif of severed limbs also played an important role in Hansruedi's strong emotional reaction to the scene from Jean Cocteau's 1946 film *The Beauty and the Beast* (*La belle et la bête*) with Jean Marais and Josette Day, where candelabras of a large hall are held by arms protruding from the walls.

The motif of arms and legs separated from the body imprinted itself deeply into Hansruedi's mind and figured prominently in his paintings and sculptures. Salient examples are the painting *Preserving Life* featuring arms crucified on a peace sign¹³⁴, the sculpture *Beggar*¹³⁵, and the astrological signs on one of his masterpieces, the *Zodiac Fountain*¹¹². Beings created by connecting arms with contralateral legs represent the central theme in *The Mystery of San Gottardo*, Giger's concept for a movie that currently exists

only in the form of a book and accompanying sketches (Giger 1998). It is interesting to mention in this context that the theme of dismemberment is an archetypal motif, which plays an important role in the psychospiritual death and rebirth experiences of novice shamans.

Giger also responded strongly to another prominent aspect of the Chinese photograph, the motif of impalement. He encountered it in the story of the Transylvanian prince Vlad Tepes (literally Vlad the Impaler), whose preferred way of executing his enemies was to impale them on stakes¹³². He was known to have his breakfast amidst the heads of his enemies displayed on poles. Vlad was initiated by Sigismund, the Holy Roman Emperor into the prestigious Order of the Dragon and took on the nickname Dracula (son of the Dragon). Under this name, he became the model of Bram Stokes famous horror story of the same name and for countless vampire books and movies.

Giger even responded strongly to a local fairy-tale about a scarecrow impaled on a stick and asked his mother to read it to him again and again. When he later thought about this episode in his life, the scarecrow became for him a powerful symbol of the meaninglessness of life. Echoing the advice Silenus gave to King Midas in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Nietzsche 1961), Giger wrote: "I think this stake-bound life, for whom redemption meant death as soon as possible, showed me the senselessness of existence, an existence better never begun." As I mentioned earlier, preoccupation with meaninglessness of life, existentialist philosophy and literature, and the Theater of the Absurd is very characteristic for individuals who are under the influence of the second perinatal matrix (BPM II). Giger's interest in Samuel Beckett and particularly his *Waiting for Godot* belongs to this category^{108,116}.

The motif of torture also played an important role in Giger's interest in

the story of Madame Tussaud and her wax museum, particularly the *Chamber of Horrors* and the *Chamber of Torture*. He was intrigued by the fact that she used as models the heads of criminals executed by guillotine on Place des Grèves during the French Revolution. Giger even attempted to build a guillotine himself and employ it to behead plastic figures. In his mind, the image of the guillotine was connected to his memory of the “Try Your Strength Machine,” which he experienced as a child at the confederate rifleman festival held shortly after the end of World War II in Chur. One year, many people attending this event experienced food poisoning by sausages made by butcher Lukas. At next year’s celebration of the same group, the machine was adapted in such a way that it featured a fork piercing the effigy of a sausage made by Lukas. In Giger’s drawing, entitled *Hau den Lukas*, (*Strike Lukas*) the strength-testing machine became a castrating guillotine, a perfect representation of Freud’s *vagina dentata*¹¹⁸. Giger’s nightmares and psychedelic sessions with the motif of castration and his interest in guillotines also inspired castrating devices and condoms in Giger’s sketches for the movie *The Condom of Horror (Kondom des Grauens)*¹¹⁹.

Giger repeatedly wrote about his childhood obsessions, to which his parents referred as “*Fimmel*,” it is a term, for which the closest translation would probably be “craze.” One of these was obsession with trains and ghost rides. Hansruedi encountered his first ghost ride when he was six years old as one of the attractions at Chilbi, the annual fair held on the main square in Chur. He mentions that one of the reasons for his interest in this attraction was that he liked to observe the naughty behavior of the operators, who often feigned a blown fuse and used the ensuing darkness to grope and kiss terrified women. He liked the ghost ride so much that he got depressed when the show left after three weeks.

Later, at the age of twelve, Hansruedi created his own ghost ride, for

which he charged the neighborhood kids five Rappen. It was a dark corridor full of skeletons, monsters, and corpses made of cardboard and plaster. The ghosts, villains, hanged men, and the dead rising from their coffins were manipulated by Hansruedi’s friends. He liked to watch his masked assistants to take advantage of the girls and experienced vicarious pleasure, but he was too shy to participate in these naughty activities himself.

The work with holotropic states of consciousness has shown a deep psychodynamic connection between trains and the memory of birth. Individuals suffering from phobia of trains typically discover in their self-exploration that in their unconscious the experience of being carried by a powerful mechanical force on a trajectory that includes passing through tunnels, without having any control over this movement, is closely linked to a memory of biological birth, which involved similar elements. The importance of loss of control as a factor in this fear can be illustrated by a related phobia involving cars. The same people, who have problems being driven by a car, feel quite comfortable when they sit behind the wheel and are in charge of the car. Fascination with trains thus might be a counterphobic reaction to the trauma of birth. This is even more plausible in case of a ghost ride, where the shocking emotional impact is deliberately amplified by terrifying props.

Hansruedi’s fascination with rides was lifelong. He constructed in his house in Oerlikon a small railroad that winds its course through the garden and the corner of one of the ground-floor rooms and allows the passengers on a little train to admire a rich array of his sculptures, many of which feature perinatal themes, and the remarkable *Zodiac Fountain*^{112-XX}. He even seriously considered building a similar ride in his museum in Château St. Germain in Gruyères, but had to abandon his plan because of technical difficulties and the costs involved.

Another of Hansruedi’s childhood obsessions was his passion for collect-

ing suspenders. He preferred those, which had severely damaged silk-bound rubber loops and traded them for new ones with his schoolmates. According to Hansruedi, one of his fantasies underlying this obsession was the image of the rubber breaking and the pants falling down. He also felt that his fascination by the damaged rubber loops was connected to his loathing for worms and snakes. These creatures are among the elements that repeatedly appear in Giger’s paintings^{123,125,127,136,137}. According to his own admission, to find a worm in excrement is the most terrifying thing he could imagine and even mechanical objects resembling worms or snakes, such as hoses and tubes, made him feel uncomfortable.

This aversion seems to be the central theme of an important COEX system comprising memories from different periods of Hansruedi’s life. One of its layers is a traumatic memory from his visit to the island Mauritius. In the morning after an evening swim in the Indian Ocean, he discovered that what in the darkness he had considered to be kelp were actually giant ugly sea worms about five feet long. An older layer of the same COEX system is a childhood memory of a visit he and his mother made to his grandmother’s tomb. As they were turning over the earth, a thick worm crawled out and Hansruedi thought: “*My God, that’s part of my grandmother!*” He dropped the spade and ran out of the graveyard in horror.

It is conceivable that the perinatal root of this COEX system is the memory of cutting of the umbilical cord or an even older one from prenatal life. Both worms and snakes also represent important perinatal symbols. Images of worms appear often in the scatological phase of BPM III in connection with images of decomposition and putrefaction of corpses. Boa constrictor snakes, because of their ability to twist their body around their victims and crush them, symbolize the crushing uterine contractions during birth⁵⁶. Constrictor snakes are also symbols of pregnancy, because of the bulging of

their bodies after they swallow their prey whole. Vipers are symbols of imminent death^{54,55}, but also initiation and psychospiritual death and rebirth. Both vipers and constrictor snakes feature prominently in Giger’s art.

The connection between worms, scatological material (slime, vomit, of-fal), and birth is evident in the full version of the frightening experience to the beginning of which I alluded earlier (p.114):

I was lying on my bed watching Li dancing in a yellow dress, which sprayed sparks of yellow light across the room. The space was interwoven with red geometric shapes and the pictures on the wall were coming away in layers. The walls pulsed in step with my heartbeat. The first sign of anxiety came when I suddenly had to piss and went to the lavatory. The edge of the bowl grew slowly toward my penis like a wide-open vagina as if to castrate me. At first, the idea amused me. But suddenly the whole room began to grow narrower and narrower, the walls and pipes took on the aspect of loose skin with festering wounds, and small, repellent creatures glared out at me from the dark corners and cracks.

I turned and hurried toward the exit, but the door was infinitely far away and very narrow and tall. The walls hemmed me like two paunchy lumps of flesh. I leapt for the door, drew the bolt, and rushed into the corridor, gasping for breath. Rid of the specter, I went to Li’s room and lay down. Little Boris (son of Li’s friend Evelyne) was also in the room and wanted to play with me. He began to trample on the bed beside me, kicking me. I was as helpless as a small child and could not defend myself. Li finally rescued me from my diminutive tor-

mentor, who had by now turned into a little violet-green devil with an offensively mean and aggressive expression. Li took Boris to his mother, who was hanging around in the kitchen.

But the couple of kicks in the stomach had been enough. I felt sick. The air in the room was stifling. My only thought was to throw open the window and escape to the garden, for the room was at ground level. But at the last minute, I noticed a woman looking at me strangely. The vomit already in my mouth, I turned round, rushed into the corridor and suddenly stopped dead—I was afraid to go into the narrow lavatory again. In the kitchen, I noticed Evelyne with her son, both staring at me. The only sanctuary was the small bathroom and the rusty blue bathtub with its flaking enamel. So I grabbed Li by the hand and dragged her into the bathroom, where I vomited into the bathtub. The vomit spewed endlessly from my mouth in the form of a thick, gray, leathery worm turning into a kind of primeval slime, and once into the living intestines of a slaughtered pig.

During this whole performance, I had held Li firmly by the left wrist. She had been struggling to free the clogged waste pipe by poking at it with a ballpoint pen. Finally, she could no longer stand the repulsive garlic-impregnated smell and we both vomited together into the bathtub, hand in hand, while the gas water heater glared at us malevolently...” (Toward the end of the dream) “...the fear of losing control of my senses made me more and more confused in my actions. Suddenly I felt I could not stand the torment any more! I had to kill myself. Now the loaded revolver became highly

dangerous. I asked Li to empty it and throw the ammunition away. But as she did not know how, I had to take hold of the revolver to do it myself and, in doing so, suddenly became aware of the ridiculousness of my fear. My horror vanished and—thanks God—I awoke.

Another of Hansruedi’s obsessions was his strong passion for weapons. His uncle Otto taught him the art of lead casting and working in wood and metal, necessary for making home-made weapons. Hansruedi returned from his holidays laden with bows and arrows, lead axes, handcuffs, flintlocks, knuckledusters, knives, and daggers. Uncle Otto also taught him how to fish and hunt fowl and animals. One day in Chur, Hansruedi got to know Goli Schmidt, an extravagant antique dealer and began to spend most of his free time with him. Goli lived in a hut cluttered with objects almost to the ceiling. He believed in ghosts, could touch a wire carrying 220 volts without blinking his eye, and sprinkled petrol in his coffee as tonic. He taught Hansruedi how to handle weapons and provided many weapons for Hansruedi’s collection.

The first lecture Hansruedi gave at the gymnasium was on the history of the revolver. Some of his experiences with weapons went beyond just a hobby. On afternoons when there was no school, he took his collection of weapons and his friends to a piece of terrain reserved for military maneuvers. There they shot with barrel and breechloaders at the targets set up for the military and blew up abandoned cars with trotyl (trinitrotoluene). During these plays, he was twice nearly shot dead. According to Hansruedi, so far four people in his life shot at him and he shot at one person; in two cases, the cartridges were dud and three bullets missed him “by a hair’s breadth.” He was also nearly killed by a stranger in his bedroom. Hansruedi’s practical

interest in firearms disappeared completely when he was drafted and experienced firsthand the hardships of military life and abuse from the officers. His interest in weapons as esthetic objects survived this ordeal.

An interesting example of how deeply Hansruedi’s perception of everyday life was influenced by his easy access to the perinatal level of his unconscious was his reaction to a scene of garbage collection. In 1971, on the way to London, he saw in Cologne a German refuse truck in front of the Floh de Cologne house. He was fascinated by it and it became the subject of a series of his paintings, in which it appears in numerous variations. For Hansruedi, the refuse truck has multiple meanings, all of which have important perinatal connotations. Besides the obvious connection to impermanence, decay, scatology, and death, it represents for him also a Freud’s *vagina dentata*, a female organ that can castrate, as well as the dangerous engulfing and devouring reproductive system of the delivering woman. Giger made this connection quite explicit in some of his paintings, in which the transformed the opening into the rear of the truck into a vulva¹²⁰. By its resemblance to the ovens of the crematoria of the Nazi concentration camps, the back of the refuse truck also became for Hansruedi the symbol of sacrificial murder.

Many of Giger’s paintings depict tight headbands, steel-rings held together by screws, heads in vices, and bodies fettered with cords and straps^{87,98,99}. On a deeper level, these are clearly echoes of the memory of birth, which involves hours of life-threatening confinement. This connection is particularly obvious in pictures featuring constrained fetuses. However, Giger also remembered childhood situations that seemed to have helped to keep the perinatal memory alive. When he was three years old, he and his mother participated in a carnival procession. His mother dressed him for this occasion as an elevator boy; he had to wear long trousers and a dark red satin jacket with silver stripes. The costume included a velvet-covered pill-

box held by a tight elastic band, which cut into his chin. He felt ashamed to appear before the other children in this outfit, rather than wearing a costume of one of his childhood heroes, but he had to put on a pleasant face.

When Hansruedi was about four years old, emotionally more important layers were added to the COEX system, the core element of which was confinement. His mother made him an overall, which was fastened by a row of little buttons running from his neck down his back and between his legs. Whenever he tried to have a bowel movement, he also needed to pee. Since the buttons made it impossible to do both at the same time, he would inevitably pee in his pants. He was unable to convince his mother to change the arrangement of the buttons and solved this problem by waiting until bedtime when he could get out of this straitjacket and relieve himself.

A psychiatrist or psychologist trying to analyze Hansruedi’s art using the traditional Freudian approach limited to postnatal biography and the individual unconscious would assume that he came from a highly dysfunctional family and would expect to find major psychotraumatic influences in his infancy and childhood. However, unless Hansruedi’s traumatic memories were subjected to complete repression or his account was not accurate for some other reasons, the family in which he grew up was relatively normal. We do not find anything that would come close to the childhood of one of Hansruedi’s heroes, Edgar Allan Poe, whose erratic, intractable, and alcoholic father left the family when Edgar was eighteen months old and the death of his frail mother suffering from tuberculosis left the little boy in the care of an unloving foster father before he reached the age of three years. There is nothing in Hansruedi’s childhood history comparable to that of Toulouse Lautrec, whose legs, fractured in a riding accident, did not heal and grow because of a genetic defect and left him crippled for the rest of his life, or to Frida Kahlo, who suffered serious injuries during a bus crash

and used her art as an escape from intolerable pain and confinement to bed.

Hansruedi described his childhood as “beautiful;” he appreciated that his parents let him play, but he disliked the domestic helpers who tried to discipline him. He referred to his mother Melly as being a wonderful, kind, and supportive mother and an object of envy of his friends; he felt that he was her “beloved.” It would be difficult to see her as a model for Giger’s women, most of whom radiate dangerous sexuality or seem to be demonic and sadistic dominatrices. It seems that this motif came from levels of the psyche, which lie beyond postnatal biography—from the perinatal and the transpersonal domains of the unconscious. The same seems to be true for the problems Hansruedi has had since childhood in relating to women.

According to his account, his father Hans-Richard Giger, was very introverted and upright. He helped everybody who got into trouble and commanded respect as a doctor, pharmacist, and President of the Pharmacists’ Association and of the Alpine Rescue Service. Hansruedi described him as strict and authoritarian. Their relationship clearly was not very close and intimate; Hansruedi complained that his father was difficult to read and that he hardly knew him. But again, we do not get the image of a towering brutal and tempestuous emotionally abusive bully as Franz Kafka portrayed his father in his famous letter he addressed to him. The overwhelming physical and psychological presence of such a man in Kafka’s childhood might be seen as the reason why the characters in his novels are so often impotent and insecure victims coming up against overbearing power.

Hansruedi’s father never hit him, except once during a major confrontation, when his anger appeared to be justified. At that time, Hansruedi stole from a street construction power cables made of copper and lead and covered with bitumen. When he was burning the cables in the cellar of his parents’ house in order to get lead for making bullets, the smoke polluted

and almost destroyed his father’s pharmacy, covering everything with black, sticky, oily film. The cleaning was very tedious, took long, and was very expensive.

Hansruedi’s father did not seem to have great ambitions for his son. Following the common practice of his time, he expected him to take over his pharmacy. He certainly did not have much interest in Hansruedi’s artistic talent and did not show great understanding and support for it. He shared the opinion held by the citizens of Chur, where “*the word artist was a term of abuse, combining drunkard, whore-monger, and simpleton in one.*” He tried very hard to steer Hansruedi to a respectable profession—if not a pharmacist, then at least an architect or a draftsman. Responding to his father’s opinion that art was “unprofitable,” Hansruedi went to Zürich, to study architecture and design at the College of Arts and Crafts, and graduated three years later. Before his interest in painting surfaced fully and took over his life, he also worked with designer Andreas Christen at Knoll International.

From the very beginning, Hansruedi showed very little interest in formal school education. Reading about his educational environment, it is hard to tell whether he was disinterested, unteachable by conventional educational methods, or victim of incompetent teachers and poor school system. His Marienheim Catholic kindergarten at Chur was run by an elderly nun, who kept in her desk as an educational tool a series of pictures of Jesus, which showed him in various degrees of suffering, ranging from a few drops on the thorn-crowned head to his face fully covered with blood. Depending on how disobedient the children were, she showed them the appropriate picture, suggesting that the amount of his suffering reflected how bad they were. This experience seems to have contributed to the fact that Jesus and the motif of crucifixion often appear in Giger’s paintings and sculpture, the salient examples being *Untitled*¹³⁸, *Jesus candelabrum*¹³⁹, *Jesus table*¹⁴⁰, *Satan*

I and II^{125,126}, *The Crucified Serpent*¹³⁷, and *The Spell I*¹⁴¹. On a deeper level, Jesus is a powerful perinatal symbol associated with the process of psychospiritual death and rebirth.

In elementary school, pupils of different ages shared the same classroom and Hansruedi was the only boy in a class of seven. The girls wanted to play kissing games, but he found them embarrassing. He preferred to play horses and enjoyed putting harnesses on girls and whipping them. He remembered often masturbating at school during the classes. School toilettes signified for him places of forbidden sex. Among his favorite fantasies was the theme of “damsel in distress,” in which he played the role of the heroic rescuer. Many of these fantasies about liberation from the claws of a vicious enemy revolved around a girl who lived in Villa Saffisch. This villa reminded Hansruedi of his favorite film, Jean Cocteau’s *Beauty and the Beast*.

From the data we have available about Giger’s childhood, it seems that the problems he was struggling with reflected more his inner life than objectively difficult external circumstances. We have to think here of the Jungian psychologist James Hillman, who in his interesting book *The Soul’s Code: On Character and Calling* argues that character and calling are the result of “the particularity you feel to be you” and criticizes the tendency prevailing in contemporary psychology and psychiatry to blame childhood difficulties for all the problems in life. Hillman gives numerous examples of prominent individuals, who seemed to intuit from early childhood the role they were destined to play and pursue it with unswerving determination (Hillman 1996). Although Hillman does not speculate any further about the forces that might be involved in this scenario, modern consciousness research revealed deeper influences shaping our life, which include perinatal, prenatal, karmic, archetypal, and even astrological determinants.

It becomes clear that Giger’s art comes from the depth of the collective

unconscious, if we consider his enormous creativity and the way in which he creates. He shared with me during our personal discussions that he frequently does not have an *a priori* concept of what will be the final outcome. For example, when he was creating some of his giant paintings, he did not have any idea what they would look like and worked without any preliminary sketches. He started in the upper left corner and aimed the airbrush toward the canvas. The creative force was pouring through him and he became its instrument. And yet, the end result was a perfect composition, often showing remarkable bilateral symmetry.

Listening to Hansruedi describing his work, I had to think about Jung’s discussion of the work of genius and particularly the example of Nietzsche that Jung gave in that context. Nietzsche said about his state of consciousness when he created:

“*Has any one at the end of the nineteenth century any distinct notion of what poets of a stronger age understood by the word “inspiration?” If not, I will describe it. If one had the smallest vestige of superstition left in one, it would hardly be possible to set aside the idea that one is mere incarnation, mouthpiece, or medium of an almighty power. The idea of revelation, in the sense that something, which profoundly convulses and shatters one, becomes suddenly visible and audible with indescribable certainty and accuracy, describes the simple fact. One hears—one does not seek; one takes—one does not ask who gives; a thought suddenly flashes up like lightning, it comes with necessity, without faltering—I never had any choice in the matter (Nietzsche 1992).*”

As the ultimate master of the nightmarish aspect of the perinatal uncon-

scious, which is the source of individual and social psychopathology and of much of the suffering in the modern world, Giger has no match in the history of art. However, the perinatal dynamics also has its light side and harbors great potential for healing and transcendence, for psychospiritual death and rebirth. In the history of religion, a profound encounter with the Shadow in the form of the Dark Night of the Soul or Temptation has often been a prerequisite for spiritual opening.

The arduous ordeals of Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, and Saint Anthony, as well as similar elements in the story of The Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, and Padmasambhava testify to that effect. Thus religious scholar Christopher Bache was able to find many difficult perinatal experiences in the mystical states of Teresa of Avila and Saint John of the Cross (Bache 1985, 1991). They also feature prominently in the spiritual autobiography of the late head of the Siddha Yoga lineage Swami Muktananda Paramahansa entitled *The Play of Consciousness* (Swami Muktananda 2004).

It has been repeatedly noted that for many great artists finding creative expression for the stormy dynamics of their unconscious represented a safeguard for their sanity or even an effective method of self-healing. The great Spanish painter Francisco Goya, who was haunted by terrifying visions, felt that painting them gave him a sense of control and mastery over them. I have already mentioned earlier that Marie Bonaparte, Greek princess and an ardent student of Sigmund Freud, wrote in her three-volume work, entitled *The Life and Work of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psychoanalytical Study*, that the unconscious of this tortured genius was extremely active and full of horrors and torments. She suggested that had he not had his extraordinary literary talent, he would probably have spent his life in a mental institution or in a prison (Bonaparte 1934). As we saw earlier, Jean Paul Sartre used for

a period of about fourteen years his writing to overcome adverse aftereffects of a poorly managed self-experiment with mescaline that had left him connected with a difficult domain of his perinatal unconscious (Riedlinger 1982).

Giger's determined quest for creative self-expression was inseparable from his relentless self-exploration and self-healing. In analytic psychology of C. G. Jung, integration of the Shadow and the Anima, two quintessential motifs in Giger's art, are seen as critical steps in therapy and in what Jung calls the individuation process. And Giger himself experienced his art as healing and as an important means of maintaining his sanity. It has been suggested that his art can have a healing impact also on those who are open to it. Like a Greek tragedy, it can provide powerful emotional catharsis for the viewers by exposing and revealing dark secrets of the human psyche.

Giger said about the function that art played in his life: "Since I have taken the path of art, it is like a kind of LSD trip with no return. I feel like a tight-rope walker; I see no difference between work and free time. Suddenly, I became aware that art is a vital activity that keeps me from falling into madness." Like Goya, who struggled to harness his terrifying visions by portraying them, Giger tried to overcome in his paintings his scary claustrophobic nightmares and experiences in psychedelic sessions. He described this process while talking about a series of dreams that had provided the inspiration for a collection of his paintings called *Passages* (Giger 1974):

"Most of the time in those dreams I was in a large white room with no windows or doors. The only exit was a dark metal opening which, to make things worse, was partially obstructed by a giant safety pin. I usually got stuck when passing through this opening. The exit at the end of a long chimney,

which could be seen only as a small point of light, was to my misfortune blocked by an invisible power. Then I found myself stuck as I tried to pass through this pipe, my arms pressed against my body, unable to move forward or backward. At that point, I started to lose my breath and the only way out was to wake up. I have since painted some of these dream images in the Passages series and, as a result, have been freed from recurring memories of this particular birth trauma. But the Passages, which for me became the symbol of becoming and ceasing to exist, with all the degrees of pleasure and suffering, have not let me go until this very day."

However, Giger's personal quest did not end here. It seems that he intuited not only the healing, but also the spiritual potential of a deep experiential immersion in the world of dark perinatal images. As I have already mentioned earlier, he was intrigued by the motif of crucifixion and used it often in his paintings. The prime example is his painting *Untitled*, clearly portraying an experience of psychospiritual death and rebirth¹³⁸. Jesus also appears in Giger's sculptures, such as in the candelabrum and the table support, each made of identical figures of crucified Jesus^{139,140}. The painting entitled *Spell I* features the motif of crucifixion¹⁴¹. As we saw earlier, visions of Jesus appear often in psychedelic and Holotropic Breathwork sessions of people experiencing BPM III^{64,65}. Giger's image of the staircase to Harkonnen Castle for Alejandro Jodorowsky's film *Dune*, lined with dangerous phallic death symbols appears to lead to heaven¹⁴², and Giger's *Magus*¹⁴³ and *Death*¹⁴⁴ have definite spiritual overtones.

It is also important to mention in this context the extraordinary series of paintings created in the early 1980s that Giger called *Victory*¹⁴⁵. They depict

demonic female figures painted in fluorescent red color. The combination of biomechanoid elements with fierce sexuality and death symbolism gives them awesome archetypal power. The radiant fiery quality of these paintings is suggestive of the pyro-cathartic aspect of the psychospiritual death/rebirth process (transition from BPM III to BPM IV). The comment that Giger made about these paintings reveals that he was himself aware of the perinatal origin of these visions. He said of his *Red Women* paintings: "This must be the kind of perspective a newborn has when looking back after being forced out of his mother's body." We can also speculate that the title *Victory* alludes to the experience of the neonate, who is still very much in touch with the memory of the demonic power of the delivering mother, yet feels the triumph of having escaped from the clutches of the birth canal and the exhilarating sense of liberation.

The paintings mentioned above suggest that, at times, Giger's exploration of the deep unconscious approaches the realm of psychospiritual death and rebirth (BPM IV). However, the most dramatic illustration of Giger's awareness of the transformational potential of the perinatal process is the *Passage Temple*, one of his masterpieces created between October 1974 and May 1975. The paintings decorating the temple show all the essential aspects of perinatal dynamics. In Giger's original conception, the entrance into the temple consisted of a sarcophagus-like opening padded with two down-filled leather bags. Every visitor thus had to painfully force his or her way into the interior with outstretched hands, thus reenacting the sensations of birth.

The temple's interior consisted of four paintings, fading into a diminishing perspective at the edge. The entrance, which was also the exit, showed a cast iron wagon, also in the form of a sarcophagus, moving on rails through primeval slime, containing a strange amalgam of organic and technological

material, one of the signatures of Giger's art. According to Giger, it represented impermanence, the passage of all becoming and dissolution¹⁴⁶. Giger's preoccupation with the unrelenting nature of time resulting in aging and decay seemed to be also the deep underlying motive for his fascination with swatches, which found its expression in his collection entitled *Watch Abart (Deviant Art of Watches)* (Giger 1993 b).

The painting on the right side of the temple, entitled *Death*, featured prominently the symbolism of the second perinatal matrix (BPM II). It depicted a mechanism on the back of a refuse truck, "the perfect gate of hell, through which passes everything that has outlived its usefulness¹⁴⁷." It had for Giger a very powerful symbolic meaning and was clearly overdetermined. As we can infer from his other paintings, the opening in the garbage truck also represented female genital, the dangerous *vagina dentata*¹²⁰. In addition, Giger mentioned himself a powerful association he had between the opening of the garbage truck and the ovens in the crematoria of the Nazi concentration camps. This archetypal garbage truck was flanked with bizarre figures of corpse-robbers rising from a sea of bones.

The painting on the left side, entitled *Life*, had all the essential characteristics of the third perinatal matrix (BPM III), bringing together elements of birth, death, sex, and aggression¹⁴⁸. Giger depicted these fundamental aspects of nature in a symbolically stylized way revealing the brutality of the life process. The central focus of the painting was a giant phallic object penetrating a massive metal pelvis and appearing in a mandorla lined by an oversized zip fastener. This phallus was composed of pairs of sickly children with raised fists, placed above each other, who were shown in various stages of birth and death.

The last painting, facing the entrance, could be seen as portraying the transition between BPM III and BPM IV—emergence from the world of

mechanical tensions and pressures, suffering, death, and deviant sexuality into the transcendental realm¹⁴⁹. Giger depicted here a throne bathed in diffuse light, standing at the top of seven steps decorated by symbols of death. The throne was flanked by biomechanoid virgins, two of whom were supported by hydraulic mechanical contraptions. Giger confirmed the spiritual connotation of this painting by describing it as "the way of the magician that has to be taken to attain man's most desirable goal and become on a level with god."

Ernst Fuchs, Giger's friend and kindred visionary genius, seems to have intuited the spiritual potential in Giger's art when he wrote: "(When we experience Giger's art) ...despair and craving for manifestation of new heaven and new earth have begun to fight for our soul. Yes, even the hope that we will once again see the celestial blue of the sky becomes a complementary wishful image, as if in this negative had to be hidden a positive. I have long suspected the existence of this element and believe that I have discovered traces of it in Giger's art."

Timothy Leary, Harvard psychology professor turned psychedelic guru, whose knowledge of the deep recesses of the human psyche attained in many hundreds of his LSD experiences gave him a unique perspective on Giger's art, seemed to share Ernst Fuchs's opinion. He wrote in his preface to Giger's book *New York City*: "In Giger's paintings, we see ourselves as crawling embryos, as fetal, larval creatures protected by the membranes of our egos, waiting for the moment of our metamorphosis and new birth.... Here is the evolutionary genius of Giger: Although he takes us far back, into our swampy vegetative, insectoid past, he always propels us forward into space" (Giger 1981).

And Horst Albert Glaser wrote about this aspect of Giger's work: "What can be said about the fact that, as a boy, the artist had already decorated his

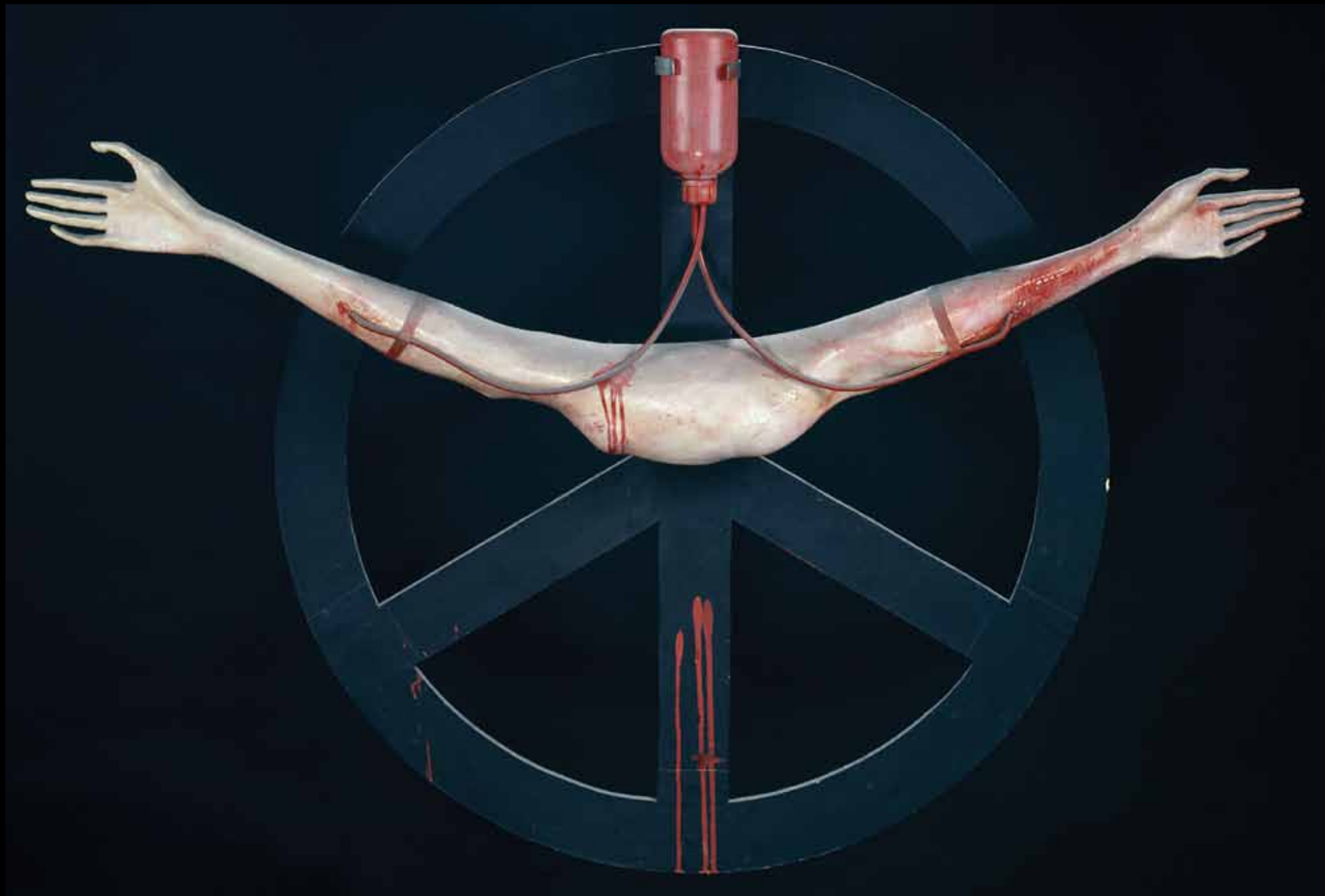
bedroom like an Egyptian crypt? Perhaps it expressed the longing for a state of Nirvana by a pubescent boy who had, haplessly, turned within. Consequently, he often assumed a Buddhist meditative pose and even had himself photographed in that position in the *Black Room* as a young artist."

How close Giger's art came to the resolution of the perinatal process can best be illustrated on a series of his paintings entitled *Pump Excursion*¹⁵⁰. At first sight, these paintings seem to feature a musician absorbed in deep meditation. However, closer inspection reveals that we are witnessing an act of self-destruction. What appears to be a musical instrument is actually a deadly weapon inserted in the protagonist's mouth. A beautifully configured lower part of a nude female body then suggests sex and birth. This scene is illumined from above by light that has clearly a numinous quality. These paintings thus bring together the motifs of aggression, self-destruction, sex, birth, and divine light—essential elements of a psychospiritual death-rebirth experience.

In general, however, the transcendental potential of the perinatal process received little of Giger's attention. It would be interesting to speculate about the possible reasons for it. The great American mythologist Joseph Campbell once commented that the images of hell in world mythology are by far more intriguing and interesting than those of heaven because, unlike happiness and bliss, suffering can take so many different forms. Maybe Giger felt that the transcendental dimension had been more than adequately represented in western art, while the deep abyss of the dark side had been avoided. It is also possible that Giger's own healing process had not yet proceeded far enough to embrace the transcendental dimension with the same compelling force with which it engaged the Shadow.

I personally hope that the last alternative is closest to truth. I would have loved to see Giger's genius use his incredible imagination and masterful free-

hand airbrush technique to portray the transcendental beauty of the imaginal world with the same mastery, with which he captured its "terrible beauty." I have heard this comment from many others from the circle of his admirers. But Giger always pursued his own inner truth and disliked taking orders from his customers. It is unlikely that the wishes of his fans, however sincere and passionate, would have been more successful in this regard. He followed the inner logic of his Promethean quest, wherever it took him, as he always did, and those of us who admire his art will continue enjoying the extraordinary products of this process as they keep emerging into the world. ♦



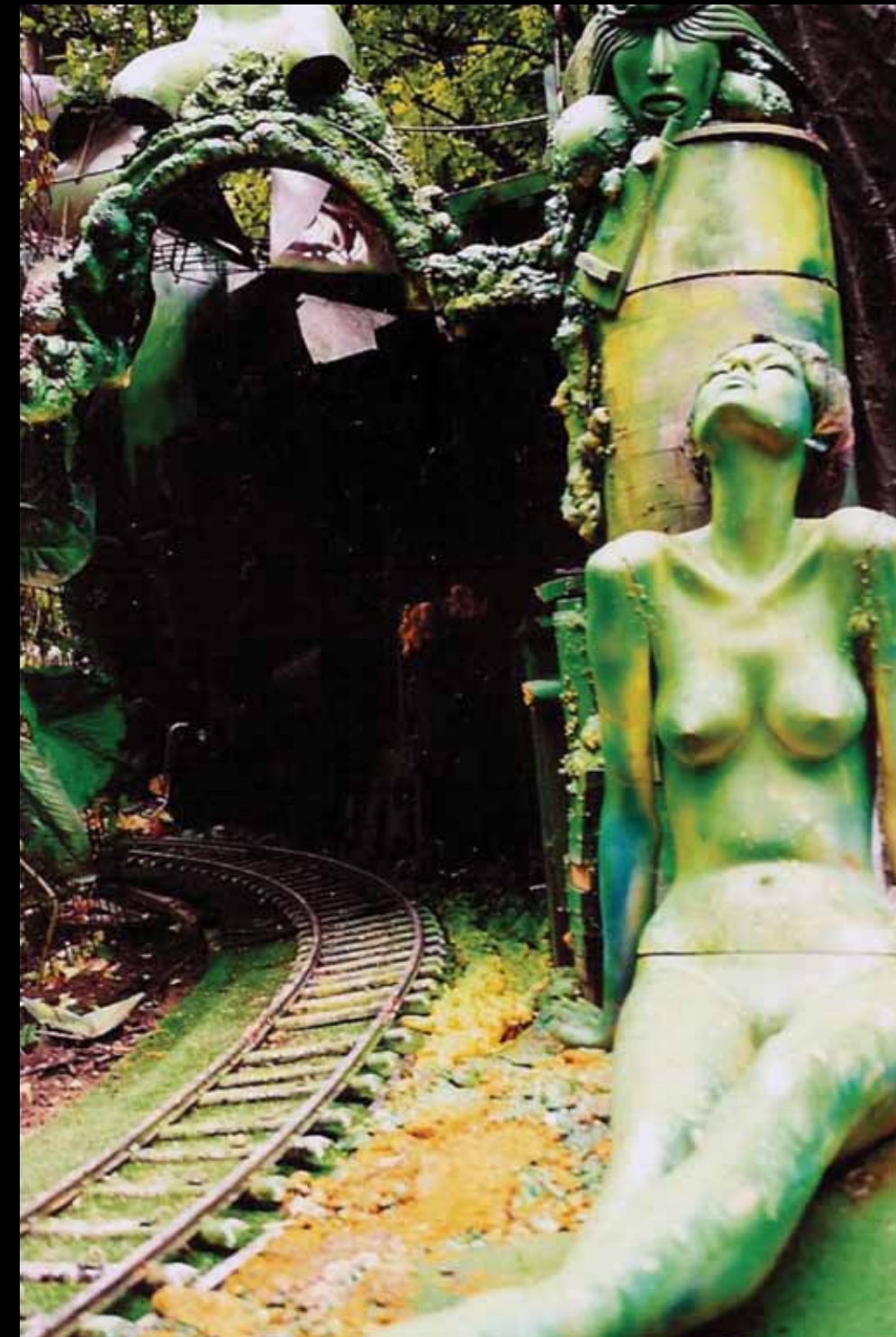
134. *Preserving Life*, 1966.
Object of polyester and wood.



135. *Beggar*, 1967.
Bronze



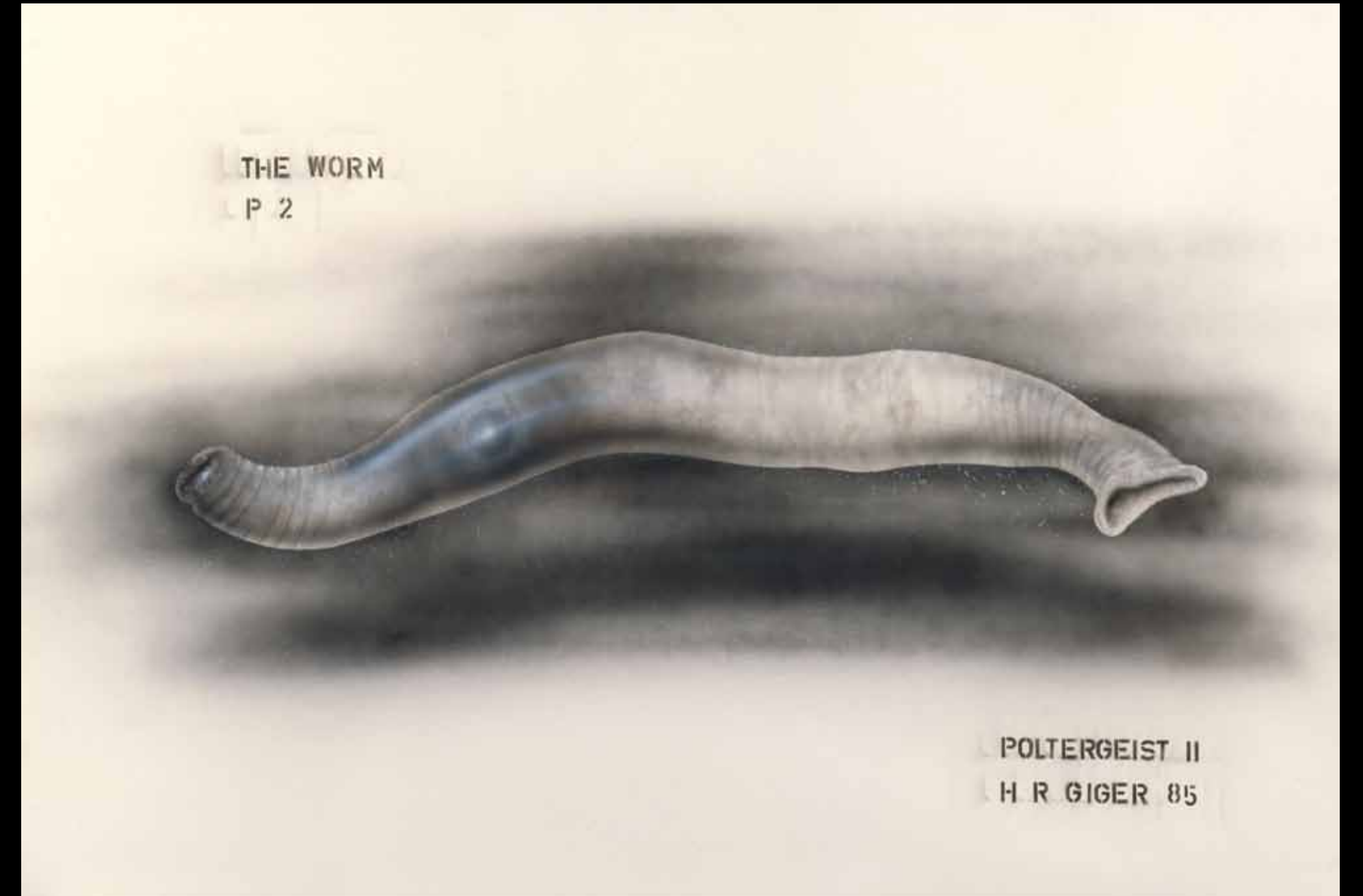
XX. Hansruedi Giger taking Stanislav Grof for a ghost ride that he built in the garden of his house in Oerlikon. The little railroad takes the visitors through a perinatal world, featuring tapestries of suffering fetuses, tunnels, demonic women, and a life-size crocodile..



XX. Entrance into a tunnel with a sculpture of a naked woman; one of the vistas experienced during the Oerlikon ghost ride.



XX. Suffering fetuses represent an important element of H.R.Giger's ghost ride.



136. *The Worm*, *Poltergeist II*, 1985.



137. *Work #275, The Crucified Serpent (Chidher Gruen), 1975.*
200 cm x 140 cm.



138. *Untitled, 1962.*
19.9 cm x 9.8 cm. Cover color and Indian ink on paper.



139. Candle candelabrum consisting of six figures of crucified Jesus, 1976.



140. Table support constructed from six figures of crucified Jesus, 1992.



141. *The Spell I*, 1973–4.
95 cm x 110 cm. Acrylic on paper.



142. *Work #289, Dune I*, 1975.
70 cm x 100 cm.



143. *Work #276, Magus, 1975.*
200 cm x 140 cm. Acrylic on paper/wood.



144. *Work #368, Death, 1977.*
100 cm x 140 cm.



XX. Work #296, *Biomechaniod 75*, 1975.
100 cm x 70 cm, acrylic on paper on wood.



145. Work #553, *Victory VIII, Homage to Max Ernst*, 1983.
70 cm x 100 cm. Acrylic on paper.



146. Work #262, *Passage Temple (entrance)*, 1975.
240 cm x 280 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



147. Work #263, *Passage Temple: Death*, 1975.
240 cm x 280 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



178 | 148. Work #261, *Passage Temple: Life*, 1974.
240 cm x 280 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



149. Work #264, *Passage Temple: Way of the Magician*, 1975.
240 cm x 280 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.



151. *Work #621, Pump Excursion IV*, 1989.
100 cm x 70 cm. Acrylic on paper on wood.

Epilogue by Carmen Scheifele-Giger

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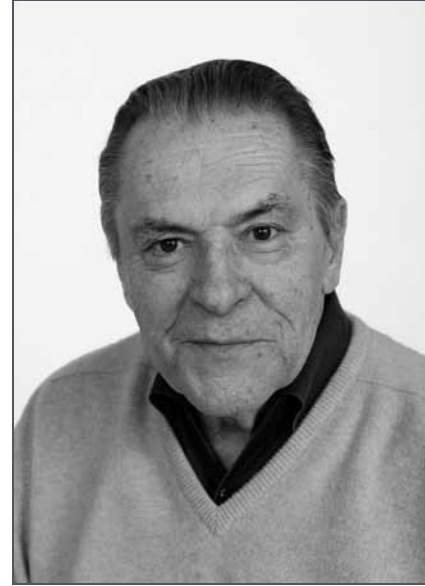
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About the Publisher



STANISLAV GROF, M.D., is a psychiatrist with more than fifty years of experience in the research of non-ordinary states of consciousness. In the past, he was Principal Investigator in a psychedelic research program at the Psychiatric Research Institute in Prague, Czechoslovakia; Chief of Psychiatric Research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center; Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD; and Scholar-in-Residence at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA.

Currently, Stan is Professor of Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA, conducts professional training programs in Holotropic Breathwork and transpersonal psychology, and gives lectures and seminars worldwide. He is one of the founders and chief theoreticians of transpersonal psychology and the founding president of the

International Transpersonal Association (ITA). In 2007, he was granted the prestigious *Vision 97 Award* from the Václav and Dagmar Havel Foundation in Prague and in 2010 the *Thomas R. Verny Award* from the Association for Pre- and Perinatal Psychology and Health (APPPAH) for his pivotal contributions to this field.

Among his publications are over 150 articles in professional journals and the books *LSD: Gateway to the Numinous*; *Beyond the Brain*; *LSD Psychotherapy*; *The Cosmic Game*; *Psychology of the Future*; *The Ultimate Journey*; *When the Impossible Happens*; *Healing Our Deepest Wounds*; *The Stormy Search for the Self*; *Spiritual Emergency*; and *Holotropic Breathwork* (the last three with Christina Grof).



H.R. GIGER was born in Chur, Switzerland, in 1940. As a child he developed a strong passion for all things surreal and macabre. His need to express himself and share the unique aspects of his powerful imagination drew him to the visual arts. Giger's own dreams and the brilliant imagery of such fantastic geniuses as Gustav Meyrink, Jean Cocteau, Alfred Kubin and H.P. Lovecraft combined to form a rich soil from which the amazing imagery of Giger's own art has come to sprout. It has since bloomed into the vast wealth of exotic women, wondrously bizarre landscapes, and frightening creatures that have captured the fascination of millions of fans worldwide.

Meticulously detailed, Giger's paintings are usually done in large formats and worked and reworked by this maestro of the airbrush. It was Giger's popular art book, 'Necronomicon', that caught the eye of director Ridley Scott as he was searching for the right look for a creature in his upcoming

film. That creature, of course, turned out to be the Alien, and Giger's masterful designs for the film of the same name garnered him a much-deserved Academy Award.

Giger's fascinating biomechanical style, that brilliant synthesis of flesh and machine, has been realized not only through his remarkable paintings but also via sculpture pieces, elegantly fashioned furniture, and architectural and interior design projects. His paintings have been displayed in galleries and museums throughout the world.

Giger's alien aesthetic, his 'biomechanics', goes beyond talent, and even art. It enters the rarified realm of the near magical, and certainly the land of genius. The ensuing art is a mere taste of the phenomenal oeuvre that this unique Swiss maestro has created.



H.R.Giger, Allyson Grey, Stanislav Grof, and Alex Grey at the the Giger Museum in Gruyères.



A rare smile for H.R.Giger.



Richard Tarnas, Carmen Scheifele-Giger, Stanislav Grof, and H.R.Giger at the Giger home in Oerlikon, Switzerland.



Tav Sparks, Stanislav Grof, Albert Hofmann, H.R.Giger, and Carmen Scheifele-Giger in front of the Giger Museum in Gruyères.



Giger giving Stanislav Grof and Albert Hofmann a guided tour through his museum in the Gruyères castle.



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