

GODS OF THE CATAclysm

by Hugh Fox

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For Margaret—for when she can read it.

INTRODUCTION

In 1967, when I started to write a book about the Indian, I intended to discover how the world looked through his eyes. I didn't want to be historical but psychological. More than enough books had been written about Indian wars and White conquests, whether Spanish or North American, but who had unfolded the enigmas of the Indian mentality? That's what I wanted to do. I certainly never intended to find myself embracing the conclusion, as I read through all the written records of all the Indians in both North and South America, *that the pre-Columbian world had been visited a number of times by visitors from the Old World, . . . and perhaps from outer space!*

I'd married a Peruvian Indian in 1957. In less than a year, I was in the Andes going from ruin to ruin, traveling the Cordilleras in the backs of old trucks with worn-out springs, sleeping on the floors of schoolrooms or in the corner of an Indian hut. My wife was seven months pregnant, I was always worried she'd miscarry in the back of one of those trucks, packed in the way we were with Indians speaking Quechua, with their chickens and pigs and their dogs. We were up ten thousand, twelve thousand, fifteen thousand feet. For me, because of the altitude and lack of sleep, the days sometimes took on the dimensions of a dream. Sometimes, as during the month we spent at a hacienda in Quillabamba, in the Sacred Valley of the Incas, just on the edge of the Madre de Dios jungle (in the tropics but surrounded by snowcapped mountains) I felt like I'd wandered into an abandoned set of *Lost Horizon*.

We'd sit around after a dinner of dried bananas, yucca root, pork, homemade wine, and oranges, and they'd tell stories that weren't exactly "stories":

A man not far from here was out in the jungle one day, fell into this hole, way, way down. There was a little light coming in from above, he looked around, felt on the ground. He was in some kind of treasure storeroom filled with gold objects. He took some of the things with him, managed to get out, got lost, got back to his home raving about this storeroom. He'd lost all the things he'd brought with him, everyone laughed at him, said he was crazy, and then he reached into his pocket and pulled out a solid gold ear of corn of obvious Inca craftsmanship.

“When you have more time we should go on an expedition,” the owner of the hacienda would say to me in total seriousness. “OK, I’ll be back,” I’d tell him. Only I’ve never gone back.

But one thing I did learn in Peru and Bolivia: No matter what “story” you hear, no matter what “legend,” there’s always a reality behind it bigger than the story/legend itself. It’s an important principle to keep in mind as you read this book.

I learned Quechua, saw the Indians burning incense to Pachacamac, the Great God, saw them tell fortunes with *coca* leaves, chewed the *coca* the way they did. (It was a mild dose of cocaine, but it did wonders for altitude sickness.)

In ruin after ruin I saw the *Intihuatanas*, the stone “posts” carved out of the living rock. I even learned the literal meaning of *Intihuatana* in Quechua—“that to which the sun is tied”—but I never gave a second thought to it, regarding the sun symbolism of the Inca empire as very “quaint,” “picturesque.” When I heard over and over again the central “myth” of the Inca empire—the story that the Sun had descended at the Isla del Sol in Lake Titicaca and a brother and sister, Manco Capac and Mama Ocello, had gotten out, and had then come down from Bolivia to Peru and founded the Incas—again it was quaint. It wasn’t history; it was myth, and as we all know—or at least have been *taught*—*myths* are just fairy tales, the inventions of imaginative primitives.

After some months of visiting Andean ruins in Peru and Bolivia, we went down to the Peruvian coast, visited Chan Chan in the north, Paracas in the south. I became acquainted with the pre-Inca world. I remember when I first saw the Paracas mummies sumptuously robed in red and black wool, I said something about their looking Chinese. There were these dragonish-looking things and these malicious-looking cat-gods. I’d spent my childhood in museums in the United States,

Europe, and the Mideast and had seen hundreds and hundreds of examples of Chinese embroidery and weaving. I was making a valid value judgment, but I never gave a second thought to it at the time.

My brother-in-law's wife's father lived in Chancay, north of Lima, and was an amateur *huacero*, a grave robber. "*Ven, quiero mostrarte algo*, come here, I want to show you something," he said when we were there one day, and he took me into a padlocked room in the back of the house—the floor was filled with hundreds of ceramic figures, *huacos*. There was such a wealth of objects that it took me a while to see them individually, but when I did, one figure stood out from all the rest. It didn't look "Indian" at all. It was bearded, thin. I picked it up. "This is weird-looking isn't it? It looks almost Egyptian." How many sarcophagi, Egyptian bas-reliefs, paintings, and statues had I seen in my life? I was making an informed judgment, but I didn't know it then.

"Take anything you want," he said. I could have taken the bearded figure but didn't; I felt it was too much to take. I took a little ceramic figure that looks like an Indian version of a crucifixion. But, of course, it couldn't be, could it? It was at least 2000 years old, and the Spaniards had only brought occidental civilization to Peru 500 years before. It was just coincidence, wasn't it? *Wasn't it?* The enigmatic little figure is hanging on the wall just above my typewriter, still not telling who he was, what he meant, how his iconographic structure managed to coincide with that of our occidental dying god—Christ.

When I returned to the United States after my initial baptism in the enigmatic pre-Inca and Inca cultures, I had gone through the first step of my enlightenment. Step two was, once I was back in the states, to read and read and read and read, to fill my head with all available written records: the records of the *conquistadores* who had invaded and destroyed the pre-Columbian world, the conquerors who had entered that now lost world when it was intact, who had seen the temples, the idols, the whole complex social, religious, and economic world when it was still alive and functioning. They were books that you just don't come across in the course of a normal or even above-normal U.S. or European education. We're so English and French- (and now Russian-, Japanese-, Chinese-) oriented, sixteenth century South American chronicles are totally outside of our range.

And unfortunately so, because in the works of Cieza de Leon, Garcilaso de la Vega, Francisco de Jérez, Miguel Estete, Bernal Diaz del Castillo you relive the Conquest, you listen to the Indians themselves tell you what *they* believed, their legends, their history.

I suppose the dramatic highpoint of all the “conqueror literature” is Bernal Diaz del Castillo’s *Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva España* (*The True Story of the Conquest of Mexico*). He describes Tenochtitlán, Mexico City, with its islands and canals, very much like Venice, as if it were the coming-to-life of the chivalric romances that were so popular in Spain in the sixteenth century. Tenochtitlán was beyond the dimensions of Diaz del Castillo’s sense of the real—the temples, the markets, the canals, all laid out in the Valley of Mexico, had an unreal, chimeric quality about them that absolutely confounded him.

And when he saw the idols in the temples smeared with blood, with human hearts in little sacrificial dishes being offered to the gods, what was he, dogmatic, medieval Catholic, supposed to believe? That the Aztecs were devil-worshippers and that the New World was the realm of the Devil. There was no such thing as comparative religion in those days. There was the True Faith and outside the True Faith: Heresy, Error, Diabolism. In fact, that was the verdict passed by the Spanish as a whole, and—apart from greed, which was the strongest force in their psychological makeup—one of the main reasons why everywhere they went they destroyed every statue, temple, book, rite, ritual of the Old Religion. They were exorcising the Devil! Even in seventeenth century North America, Cotton Mather was still talking about the “outer darkness” of the New World and the need to bring this New World the Christian light.

By reading the *conquistadores* you began to feel the dynamics of the reality of the pre-Columbian world, and the priests that accompanied the *conquistadores* often were even more evocative, cataloguing, describing with tenderness and fidelity the world that they were replacing with Christ, the Virgin, and the saints. Like Sahagun in Mexico. Sahagun journeyed and talked to the survivors of the conquered, decimated Aztec world, asked about every detail of every festival, every ritual, and then cross-referenced, rechecked, double-checked until he created a handbook of Aztec civilization. He deserves the title of the Father of Amerindian anthropology; although, for the most part, he remains (like Bernal Diaz del Castillo) relatively unknown.

Through the work of priest-ethnologists like Sahagun or Bishop Landa in Yucatan, I moved further inside what seemed a bewildering pantheon of gods and goddesses, much more complicated than anything I'd come in contact with in Egypt, Greece, Babylon, and Assyria, although there were things I found I was familiar with— like human sacrifice. As an orthodox Catholic, educated by the Jesuits, and as a teacher at Jesuit Loyola University in Los Angeles, I believed the Eucharist contained the *real* body and the *real* blood of Christ. Christ was incarnated, was crucified for our sins, and at the Last Supper instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist in which he was wholly present, and we really ate him and drank his blood. Human sacrifice was no stranger to me than it was to the Spaniards, which was one reason why they (and perhaps I) got so involved with it.

In 1961, I went to Mexico for a year and took one step further inside the pre-Columbian mind, because for the first time, I went into the jungles of Yucatan, Chiapas, Tabasco, Guatemala, Honduras, and saw the Mayan cities: Palenque, Chichén Itzá, Uxmal, Tikal, Bonampak. I went to the Zapotec ruins of Mitla and Monte Albán; there was very little that had been “unearthed” that we didn't see.

My Quechua wife and I by this time had three children. We went on mules, buses, trucks, trains, boats, and planes. We spent a month on the Gulf coast of Yucatan. I started learning Maya from Indians whom I'd meet down on the beach. Most of them spoke both Maya and Spanish, and I'd ask for Mayan equivalents of Spanish words and try to write them down. I was coming along pretty well when we had to get back to Los Angeles, California, and make some more money.

The usual unconsciously knowledgeable judgments kept pouring out of me. At Chichén Itzá I saw the serpent heads at the bottom of the stairway on the pyramid misnamed “El Castillo” (The Castle), or again similar serpent-motif columns at the entrance to the so-called “Temple of the Warriors,” and commented, “It looks just like the snakes at Teotihuacán.....you know, Quetzalcóatl.” I'd been about eight years old when I'd first seen Quetzalcóatl, the plumed serpent, but the memory was still there reaching out, trying to make analogies and comparisons.

At Tulum, on the east coast of Yucatan, there's a carving of a figure descending head first out of the sky. I made a joke: "He looks like he needs a parachute doesn't he?" Years later I was slowly forced to the conclusion that, no, maybe he didn't need a parachute at all—he could descend (or ascend!) without it.

The enormous, complex stone figures (stelae) at Copán in Honduras struck me with their oriental intricacy. Other ruins kept floating through my head: Angkor Wat, the Bayon Temple in Cambodia, the sculpture in the Ellora caves in India. Palenque, is perhaps the most romantic of all Mayan ruins, set as it is in the middle of the hilly, rich jungles of Chiapas. When I went inside the pyramidal "Temple of the Inscriptions," where in 1952 Alberto Ruz Lhuillier found a tomb under the pyramid, I couldn't help but be reminded of the interiors of the Egyptian pyramids. Was it a parallel development or an "influence"? In Villahermosa, Tabasco—Olmec country—when I saw the Olmec heads for the first time as well as the Olmec black stone mosaics, I kept thinking of Phoenician bas-reliefs I'd seen in Ankara and in the Louvre. Not only the faces and the features but even the helmets. Why?

I bought a huge number of books in Mexico that year. I even bought records of poetry read in Nahuatl, the Aztec language. Once back in California I started studying editions of what are called the "Codices"—the few remaining illustrated Indian manuscripts that survived the wholesale book-burning of the Spanish ecclesiastics. The Mayans and the Aztecs both had a written language, and when the Spaniards conquered them, they found whole storehouses of written books. They burned them. A handful survived. Some of them aren't even "originals" but copies of pre-Hispanic Indian books. They are valuable because they *picture* the pre-Columbian universe, visualize it. It is one thing to read the Nahuatl text about the "Legend of the Four Suns," it is another thing to see it visualized. According to this legend, the world has passed through four cataclysmic, apocalyptic epochs. Without getting excessively involved with details at this point, supposedly during the second epoch a wind came up that swept everything away: "their homes, their trees, everything was taken away by the wind..." In the description of the third sun, it rained fire: "This Sun was consumed by fire. All their homes burned ...they perished when it rained fire for a whole day..." In the Vatican *Codex A*, folio 6. there's a picture of "The Age of the Second

Sun,” and up in the right-hand corner there is a series of flaming balls resembling meteorites falling from the skies. I hadn’t read Velikovsky’s *Worlds in Collision* yet and hadn’t correlated in my own mind the biblical plagues in Egypt with anything that had happened in the New World, but my unconscious programming was still going on.

It was in the early sixties that I began to read the Mayan books of Popol Vuh and Chilam Balam, the works of the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Durán’s *Book of the Gods and Rites* and *The Ancient Calendar*. I reread Sahagun and whatever I could find of Nahuatl, Maya, and Inca poetry. It was still just a hobby, and then in 1964 I went to Caracas, Venezuela, for two years and got involved with the Spanish part of Spanish-American history and let go of the Indian involvement. I wrote a book called *Caliban and Ariel: A Comparative Cultural History of North and South America*. All the chapters got published in scholarly magazines and literary quarterlies. I wrote a biography of Simon Bolívar, got very much involved with the literary life of Caracas, and didn’t get re-involved with the pre-Columbian past until 1966, when I toured Bolivia, Ecuador, and Chile for the U.S. Information Service and I reentered the pre-Columbian mind.

I traveled across the Bolivian altiplano by jeep from La Paz to Potosí and then by plane to Sucre and Cochabamba. In the museum in La Paz, I saw the archaic Tiahuanaco statues which are almost identical to and predate the archaic statues dug up on Easter Island, and which Thor Heyerdahl claims prove the American Indian origins of Easter Island culture. I revisited the Island of the Sun in the middle of Lake Titicaca where, according to Inca legend, the sun descended and out stepped the brother and sister who founded the Inca Empire. I got re-involved with the Indians themselves. My wife and I in a sense were at home, both of us a bit depressed, disheartened by the inhuman conditions under which our Indians lived.

But I was enthralled again. I’d written a whole so-called “cultural” history of Latin America which began with the Conquest. When I got back to the United States, I began to write about the pre-Columbian mind.

I ignored all post-Columbian reality. There was no South America or North America, no “America,” just “tribes.” At first I was going to break down the chapters into tribal groups, the Olmec-Mayas, Toltec-Aztecs, Incas, etc., but that was going to entail all kinds of

oversimplifications, and so I just started out with particular “tribes”: the Tlingit, the Hopi, the Iroquois, the Maya, the Aztecs, Incas. I was going to do an exhaustive treatment of each tribe individually and then, at the very end, see what interconnections, if any, existed. To some extent, of course, my choice of a particular tribe was somewhat determined by just how much pertinent information was available.

I was surprised to find huge amounts of ethnological material compiled by U.S. ethnologists at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, when the U.S. tribes still retained their identities—their customs, tales, rites, chants. I coupled this with the material I already was familiar with in South America.

The heliocentrism, the sun-centeredness of the Middle and South American tribes came as no great surprise to me. I took it at face value. The sun was important to agricultural people because it was important to agriculture. Period.

When I got up to North America, to what are now the Southwest tribes, I started noticing a transformation taking place in the sun myths. They weren't really just sun-centered any more, not the way the Aztecs were sun-centered, sun-obsessed; now everything got very “folksy” and “ingenuous.” I passed over from the world of gigantic, cosmic myth to the world of folktales, and the further north I went, the less interested the tribes seemed to be in the sun until, up on the Northwest coast (the Tlingits), I moved into a world of pure animal stories about raven and bear and killer whale. The Aztecs sacrificed thousands of captive victims to the sun in order to stave off cosmic disaster. Their whole world view revolved around a nightmarish fixation on the sun's destructive powers. The sun had to be appeased; it was the only way to fend off apocalypse. The Tlingit were much more involved with the animals that surrounded them. There was a little bit of “magic,” but the tales almost sounded like recountings of things that had actually happened to them.

Then I came across a rather obscure account of an obscure French explorer's visit to a rather obscure Mississippi Valley tribe in the seventeenth century. The French explorer's story went like this: The chief of this tribe had taken him into a kind of “lodge” and at the front of the lodge on the wall was hung a gold disk. This disk, the Frenchman was told, was a symbol of the Sun. The Sun had come down, and out of the Sun had stepped this man who had founded this tribe, and....

It was almost identical to the Inca story of the Sun coming down and a brother and sister emerging from it; this sun-disk story connected with all the odd goings-on about disks and moving stone platforms in the Mayan sacred books. I really didn't want to turn my Indian book into science fiction, but my head kept telling me: obviously pre-Columbian America had been visited by flying saucers; it had been colonized from outer space.

My head wouldn't stop there. It followed that if visitations of this sort *had* occurred, they hadn't *just* occurred among the Inca, Maya, and other tribes. Then one night in Detroit, I was on a poetry-reading program with Diane DiPrima, and she went on and on about the "descent of the gods" to the tops of mountains: Mount Olympus, Valhalla, Moses on the Mount. Suddenly the whole descent pattern became worldwide in my mind: From the time I was a kid on, my whole mind had been filled with God the Father and the Angels, with Ezekiel's chariot, and Christ coming on clouds on the last day to judge mankind. Of course, it *made sense*. Not only had the major religions among the "Indians" been founded by extraterrestrials, but the same thing had happened among the Greeks, the Nordics, and the Semites.

Reading G. S. Kirk added another dimension I must say something about. It wasn't that Kirk, in his book *Myth, Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Other Cultures*, said that some myths aren't myths at all but crypto-history, but the fact he *hadn't* said it that really got my mind to make distinctions between *real* myths and crypto-history, by which I mean *accounts of things that really happened but which seem mythic because the narrators don't fully understand what they're narrating and so reduce their narrative reality to cryptic, allusive form*. This conclusion was published in the *Western World Review* in 1971.

Which brings me right up to the present: the reworking and expansion of my original pre-Columbian mind.

Oh yes, I don't want to forget *Chariots of the Gods* and the whole school it has spawned. Its influence on me and this book? Well, because of its attempt to fit too much into the puzzle of ancient astronauts, my reaction has been to include only what is absolutely necessary and to doubt, to doubt, to doubt... and, if possible, to disprove my own arguments.

If the pre-Columbian world *was* visited from outer space, after all, it really wasn't *everything* was it, just as our moon shots and sky-labs and galactic probes aren't everything to us. We'll look at the evidence, try to account for it in ways that don't need extraterrestrial visits, and if we can't account for it in any other way, then and only then—enter the gods.

Myths, Folktales, and Crypto-History—"Normal" and "Abnormal" Myths

Myths are a very normal way for primitive peoples to explain their world. Take the myths of the Northwest coast. There are all kinds of myths about human-animal animal-human interrelationships, like the myth about how the Bear King marries a woman and they have half bear, half human children, and when she suckles them they bite her breasts. Or the myth about the Killer Whale who captures a woman and makes her his wife and takes her down to the bottom of the sea with him. There are myths about Raven, the Creator, a whole series of stories that relate the Indians to their environment. They anthropomorphize their entire world, reduce everything to human forms, human terms.

Which makes great sense for people who depend on animals for their livelihood, who don't really live a life much different from the animals that surround them, who have no way at all of explaining "scientifically" what causes the natural phenomena that rule over their lives: rain, thunder, lightning, and sunshine. Why shouldn't the Algonquins create a Thunder Bird whose eyes flash lightning and the beat of whose wings causes thunder? Why shouldn't the Eskimos create Frost-Giants and the Black Feet make the moon and sun and morning star into people who more or less resemble themselves?

Really, Garcilaso de la Vega's description of the Andean Indians before the coming of the Incas seems 100 percent normal, the way Indians or any "primitive" people including, say, the Greeks *should be*:

...they worshipped grasses, plants, flowers, trees of all kinds, high hills, great rocks and nooks in them, deep caves, pebbles... they worshipped various animals, some for their ferocity, such as the tiger, lion, and bear.

... They also worshipped the dog for its faithfulness and nobility, the wild cat for its quickness, and the bird they call *cuntur* (Condor) for its size.

... In a word, there was no beast too vile and filthy for them to worship as a god.... But we need not be surprised that such unlettered and untaught people should have fallen into these follies, but it is well known that the Greeks and Romans, who prided themselves so greatly on their learning, had thirty thousand gods when their empire was at its height. *

It's a good point that Garcilaso makes about the Greeks and Romans, because their gods and goddesses weren't much different from the gods and goddesses of the "primitive" Indians. There were water gods like Pontus and Oceanus, Nereus, Proteus, Glaucus, Triton; earth gods like Gaea, Demeter, and Dionysus; birth gods and "morality" gods. Sometimes they got a bit abstract, but in their earliest phases they were just as related to the functions of Nature, the interrelatedness of Man and Nature, as the early gods of the Indians.

Only what, then, do you make of a "myth" like this:

Before the Incas came to reign in these kingdoms or were known there, these Indians tell a thing that far exceeds all else they say. They state that a long time went by in which they did not see the sun, and that they suffered great hardship from this lack, and that they made great prayers and vows to those they held to be their gods, imploring of them the light that had failed. When things stood like this, there emerged from the island of Titicaca, which lies in the great lake of the Colla, the sun in its splendor, at which all rejoiced. And after this had occurred, they say that out of the regions of the south there came and appeared among them a white man, large of stature, whose air and person aroused great respect and veneration. And this man whom they saw in this guise had great powers, making plains of the hills, and of the plains, high mountains, and bringing forth springs in the living rock. And when they saw his power, they called him the Maker of all things, their Beginning, Father of the Sun, for aside from these, they say he did other even greater things, for he called into being men and animals... And this man, so the Indians say who told me this which they had heard from their forefathers, who, in turn, had heard it in old songs that had come down to them, took his way to the north, working and doing these wonders, by the route of the uplands, and they never saw him again. In addition to this they say that after some time had elapsed another man

*In *The Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, Part 1, p. 31 (Austin, Texas: Univ. of Texas Press, 1966).

similar to the one described was seen, whose name they do not state, and that they heard for a fact from their forebears that wherever he went he healed the sick and restored their sight to the blind.... And in this manner, working great things with his words, he came to the province of the Canas, where ... the natives rose up without consideration and advanced on him with the intention of stoning him. Suiting their acts to their thought, as they drew near, they saw him kneeling, with his hands raised to heaven as though imploring divine aid against the danger that threatened. These Indians go on to say that at that very moment a great fire appeared in the sky, so that they thought they should all be consumed. Filled with fear and trembling, they crowded toward him whom they wanted to kill, and with loud cries they begged him to have mercy and save them ... then they saw that when he ordered the fire to cease, it went out, but the flames had so scorched and consumed the stones that they served as witnesses that this which has been set down took place.... And they further relate that, leaving that place, he went until he came to the shore of the sea, where, spreading his cloak, he moved on it over the waves, and never again appeared nor did they see him. And because of the manner of his departure they gave him the name of Viracocha, which means “foam of the sea.”*

The first thing that occurs to me, in the account of the second visitor, is the similarity it bears to the crucifixion of Christ. Christ looks heavenward, “My Lord, My Lord, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And he *is* forsaken. No one descends. No fire. No help. But he seems to have *expected* help—it just never came.

Certainly, though, these accounts have nothing to do with anthropomorphized natural forces, nor with animals. They aren’t “normal” myths; in fact, they’re so abnormal that they sound exactly like history. It sounds like an eyewitness account written by someone who doesn’t have the haziest notion of what he’s actually witnessing—the account of someone witnessing events, forces, “powers,” totally beyond his own cultural comprehension. It’s important to keep in mind too that Pedro de Cieza de Leon, the Spaniard who recorded this “history” between 1541 and 1550, didn’t have the slightest hint of our modern weapons. What sounds to us like a rocket-exhaust that “scorched and consumed the stones” meant nothing to him and even less to the original Indian tellers of the tales who weren’t even acquainted with firearms.

*From Cieza de Leon, Pedro de. *The Incas* (Norman, Univ. of Okla. Press, 1959), pp. 27—29.

Another important factor is the exactitude with which this legend was passed down in an almost exclusively oral tradition. We, with our notebooks and tape recorders, forget that in oral cultures information is passed on with extreme precision so that the account is accurate in all its details.

Let's review the myth in modern terms:

I. First Visitor—There is a slight confusion of sixteenth and twentieth century geography. The lake referred to is now called Titicaca and the island in the middle of it is called *Isla del Sol*, the Island of the Sun. It is filled with old temple ruins. Supposedly the sun was obscured for some reason, the Indians prayed, and the sun reappeared. Contemporary with this reappearance of the "sun" there appeared a white man from the south. Now come the remarks about Power: "...this man... had great powers, making plains of the hills, and of the plains, high mountains, and bringing forth springs in the living rock." In other words, he was some kind of engineer, and although no mention is made of machines he seems to have leveled and piled up dirt and drilled for water. Was he a builder, an architect, a city-planner? If the leveling and building-up were extended out in time, could this be a description of city-building?

The part about calling "into being men and animals" is a little harder. Maybe we're talking about a geneticist ... *or* maybe we're making the mistake of judging the powers of this visitor solely in terms of our *very* limited science. Perhaps there could be a science called Genesology: the Science of Creation. We don't know about it, but that means very little. We didn't even know about the New World five hundred years ago and a hundred years ago the first plane hadn't flown. My ninety-one year old grandmother has been a witness to the development of cars, lights, phonographs, tape recorders. practically our whole "modern" world. As far as leveling hills and creating hills—the first thing that comes to mind is atomic power, but in the infancy of the Atomic Age, without doubt there are principles of power-production that haven't even been ideated yet.

II. Second Visitor—He doesn't seem to be very different from the first, except for the fact that when threatened he calls upon "celestial reserves." He seems to have been on some kind of scouting mission and when threatened he either summons the "ship" from which he came,

or else has some kind of cosmic-weapon that is able to generate intense heat and fire. The part about going down to the sea and spreading his cloak and moving on it over the waves . . . are we talking about some kind of nautical “boating-saucer”? At any rate I don’t think it’s extravagant to claim that these two visitors have nothing whatever to do with normal, ordinary Indian myth but that, on the contrary, what we really have here is a kind of protohistory recorded by individuals who had no way whatsoever of understanding what they were recording.

What happens next is that this actual, historical visitation begins to undergo a process not so much of “mythification” as mystification, confusion. Viracocha (or Tiki-Viracocha) becomes a god, and temples are built to him. He is incorporated into the Inca pantheon. According to Garcilaso de la Vega, Viracocha wasn’t historically Number One in the Inca pantheon. First came a kind of super god, Pachacamac, invisible, ultimately unknowable. Then came the Sun, and maybe then came Viracocha. At least this was the case until the reign of the Inca, also called Viracocha (d. 1440), who had a very strange “dream” and afterwards turned the god Viracocha into the Number One Inca god.

The time is the fifteenth century, roughly 100 years before the coming of the Spaniards to Peru. Inca Yahuar Huacac was on the throne. His son, Inca Yupanqui, has his “dream” or claims to have had it, saying that

...the creator Viracocha had spoken to him while he was alone and greatly troubled, complaining that though he, Viracocha, was the universal lord and creator of all and had made the sky and Sun and the world and men, and all was in his power, no one paid him due obedience, but venerated equally the Sun, the thunder, the earth and other things which had no virtues but those he had endowed them with, adding that in heaven, where he lived, he was called Viracocha Pachayacháchic, meaning universal creator...*

Father Acosta, the author of this account, claims that Inca Yupanqui—who henceforth called himself Inca Viracocha—faked this dream, that he didn’t have any dream at all. The Incas were under attack by the Chancas, a tribe that lived between Cuzco and Lima, and Inca

*This quote appears in Garcilaso de la Vega’s *Royal Commentaries of the Incas*, Part I, p. 281, and is originally from Jose Acosta’s *Historia Natural Moral de las Indias* (1590).

Yupanqui needed something “supernatural” to inspire his tribe to unite them and give them and himself power.

However, if the dream was indeed a fake, why, after the victory, did he not only build a temple to Viracocha but also insist that the statue of the god be so precise and true to the image of the dream itself, that he dressed himself up just the way the god had appeared in the dream and then had his artisans use him as a model? If it was a faked dream, why not just put up any old kind of statue? Why such precision: “... he himself dressed himself many times as the phantom had been dressed and assumed the attitude in which he had seen it.”*

One hundred years pass, the Spaniards arrive, and all the Indians call them Viracocha. They exactly fit the traditional descriptions of the original Viracocha. They are the white gods returned! As if that isn’t enough, when the Spaniards are shown the statue that the Inca Viracocha had built modeled on his “dream,” it is a statue quite familiar to them—the statue of Saint Bartholomew, a statue of a tall white man with a long beard, wearing a tunic or cassock reaching down to his feet, with some kind of strange animal on a chain. The Spanish reaction was predictable:

Spaniards, on seeing the temple and the statue as we have described it, have suggested that the apostle Saint Bartholomew might have reached Peru to preach to those heathens, and that the Indians made the statue and temple in his memory.**

One of the reasons the Spaniards had such an easy time conquering Peru in the first place was that in a sense they’d been expected. Nothing could be clearer. The Inca, looking at Pizarro and de Soto, turned to his courtiers and said, “Here you see the face, figure and habit of our god Viracocha, just as our ancestor Inca Viracocha left him portrayed in the stone statue, after he had appeared to him...”***

What happened to Pizarro and the Incas in Peru was exactly what happened to Cortés and the Aztecs in Mexico. Just as the Incas had been awaiting the return of Viracocha, so too the Aztecs had been waiting for the return of Quetzalcóatl, the white god equivalent of the northern hemisphere.

* *Royal Commentaries*, I. p. 291. ** *ibid.*

*** *Royal Commentaries*, II, 672.

Nautical and Cosmic Travelers and the Why of the Great Flood

In 1966, Donald W. Patten wrote a book called *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch* in which he dates the Great Flood, Noah's flood, at about 2800 B.C. Then he goes on to theorize about what *caused* the flood, claims it was not a local, Middle Eastern affair but global. He uses worldwide flood myths and legends as well as geological evidence to support this claim.

According to Patten, our planet was approached by a celestial "visitor" traveling at the speed of between 1.5 and 2.0 million miles per day (Earth's speed is 1.7 million miles per day). The "visitor" was bigger than the moon but smaller than Mars or Venus. Its density was between 0.05 and 0.10 that of the earth. It approached the earth, causing huge tidal waves, a shift in the locale of the geographical and magnetic poles, and wholesale changes in the climate of our planet, but most important for us, causing violent oceanic upheavals, taking the ships that were sailing on the world's seas and tossing them wildly about so that all "normal" sense of course and direction was lost.

And the connection between this cataclysmic oceanic upheaval and Viracocha and Quetzalcóatl? In Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa's *History of the Incas*, another sixteenth-century Spanish "source work," there is a very explicit linking of Viracocha and the Flood:

It is related that everything was destroyed in the flood called *unu pachacuti* (literally *world-overturned-by-water*)... the flood being passed and the land dry, Viracocha determined to people it a second time, and, to make it more perfect, he decided upon creating luminaries to give it light. With this object, he went with his servants to a great lake in the Collao, in which there is an island called Titicaca... Viracocha went to this island, and presently ordered that the sun, moon, and stars should come forth, and be set in the heavens to give light to the world, and it was so. They say that the moon was created brighter than the sun, which made the sun jealous at the time when they rose into the sky. So the sun threw over the moon's face a handful of ashes, which gave it the shaded color it now presents.*

What we have here is a very vivid description of the appearance of Patten's "astral visitor." The moon that is described here as

*Printed for the Hakluyt Society (Cambridge: 1907), pp. 32—33.

brighter than the sun wasn't our moon at all, but the "astral visitor" looming gigantically over the earth, close enough to have caused the Flood and a score of other geological changes catalogued by Patten. The description of the sun getting "jealous" of the moon and throwing ashes in its face, which gave it its present "shaded color," was a result of the increased water vapor and volcanic particulates in the atmosphere as the waters returned to their basins and some degree of normalcy was restored.

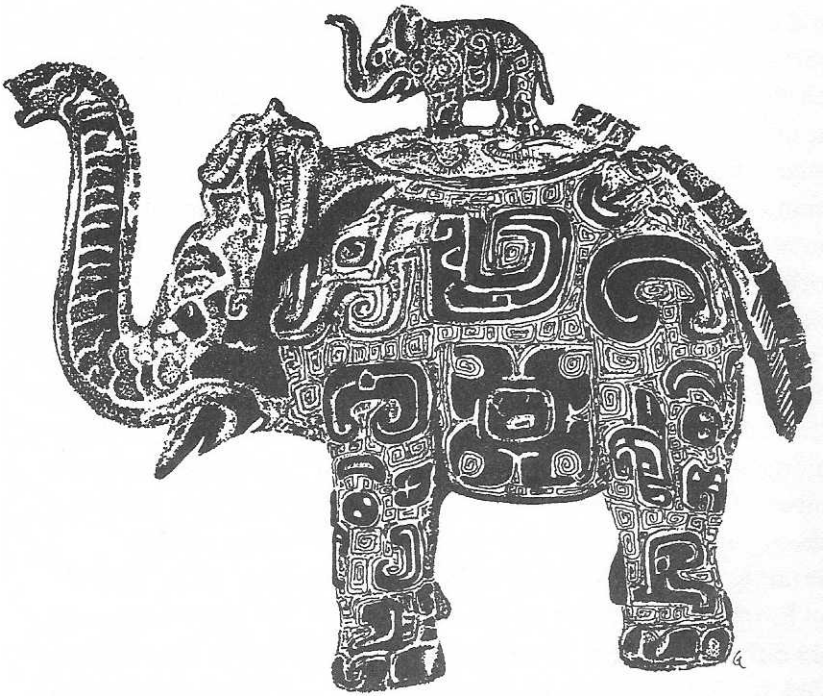
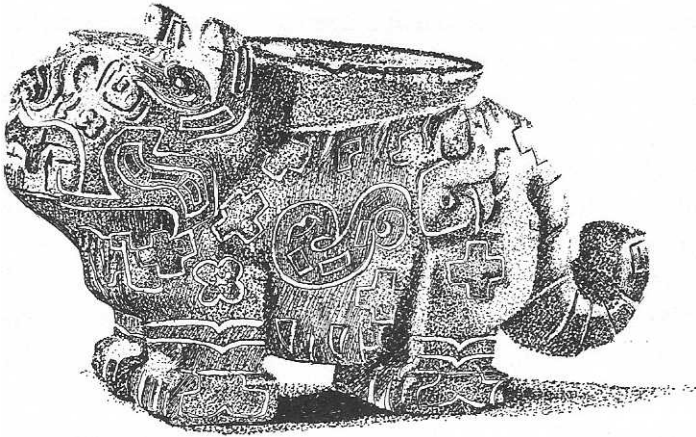
This connection between the Flood and Viracocha's appearance is important because it: (1) establishes a scientific reason why ships from the Old World might have been blown off course and ended up in the New and (2) gives us an idea of *when* to search for contacts with and influences of Old World culture on the Indian cultures of the New World.

In other words, as I shall show, there are a *number* of definite landings of "strangers" in the New World. These landings are often connected with the beginnings of whole civilizations: the Aztecs, Olmec-Mayas, Tiahuanaco-Chavin-Incas. The visitors bring with them a definite heritage, and they fuse this heritage with the passive barbarity of the Indians to form new hybrid civilizations in which the traits of the parent culture are very evident in the traits of the offspring. By studying building techniques, languages, number systems, calendar systems, clothes, religious patterns, ship-building techniques, and social and economic organization, we can show what cultures came from where and so create a whole new perspective on the origins of the great Indian civilizations of the New World.

Using Patten's work as a basis, we begin with an approximate date and a definite cause—worldwide oceanic upheavals. Wherever we are unable to trace back a cultural trait to a definite Old World source and we encounter events like Viracocha's walking on water or calling down fire from the sky, which cannot be explained in terms of cultural hybridization, then, still using Patten as a basic historical backbone, we will be forced to look to other cosmic origins.

Certainly the same cosmic events that produced the major upheavals on Earth also produced (or were produced *by*) major upheavals within our solar system. The same events that brought visitors from the Old World to the New may also have brought visitors from other worlds to our own—all within the last 5000 years.

Stone cat from Chavin, Peru.



Shang dynasty Chinese elephant.

1

CHAVIN

The Prehistoric Transpacific

I'd like to begin with a stone cat from the preeminent ancient American Indian civilization—Chavin, which has its roots in Peruvian coastal culture that dates back to perhaps 3500 B.C. and which was completely unknown until the first temples and artifacts were unearthed by Julio Tello *in 1919*.^{1*} It still is the major mystery civilization in American archeology, and nobody knows where it came from, who lived there, when or why it vanished.

My Chavin stone cat is a very odd-looking cat. Its surfaces, instead of being clean and uncluttered, are full of crosses and curlicues/swirls. There are no *undecorated surfaces*; in fact, the decoration does not complement or highlight the natural curves and lines of the cat's body but is sculpted contrapuntally on the surface so that the cat as cat is one thing and the decoration very much something else. The best way to describe the style, I think, would be to call it contrapuntal overdecoration.

It's so unusual, so distinctive, that I thought I'd have no trouble at all finding other artifacts like it. I was curious about origins, counterparts, influences, and so my mind naturally went to the traditional places to which occidental minds always go when searching for the origins of anything—Ur, Sumer, Egypt, Crete, and the ancient civilizations of the Middle East and Mediterranean—with zero results. When the Egyptians or Hittites or any of the people of the other ancient “occidental” civilizations drew an animal, they simply drew it, and the rump, the flank, the legs, if they had any decoration at all, were simply lines drawn to complement the form of the animal itself.

*Notes begin on page 268.

But I was sure I'd seen something like my Chavin cat before. I walked around for two weeks waiting for my memory to release the information, and finally it came to me: in the Freer Gallery in Washington there was a beautiful little bronze elephant *with crosses and curlicues all over its rump and sides*. It's Chinese! Late Shang dynasty. I checked the dates. I was back to 2000 B.C.... and in China. Really, although it was the most logical thing in the world to stand in Peru and look out across the Pacific at China, I hadn't done it, and in fact, practically no one else had seriously done it either—except a few theoreticians like Levi-Strauss who in his *Tristes Tropiques* does say:

It is difficult to understand the origins of American civilization without admitting the hypothesis of an intense activity on both the Asiatic and the American coasts of the Pacific.²

I laid aside my occidental biases and began to look more closely at Shang dynasty China... and all kinds of links, ties, and similarities began to form in my mind. On the wall over my desk hangs a gold mask from another pre-Inca Peruvian coastal culture, the Chimu. It has the same orientalesque eyes, the same squat, flat nose, the carefully delineated ears (and earrings) as the face on a bronze Shang broadax.³

I was startled to begin to allow that the face on my wall might have originated in China at the beginning of recorded Chinese history. And it wasn't only the face but also the *style*. There is an exaggerated sense of bilateral symmetry in all American Indian art. Both sides of pieces are precisely, exactly the same, and there is always the sense of over-decoration—the same thing that first caught my attention in the Chavin cat. Here in Shang China I found this same characteristic over and over again on knives, masks, helmets, and bronze vessels of all kinds. Nor could I fail to see the similarity between Shang bone handles and the work of the “totem pole” Indians on the Pacific Northwest coast: stylized, exaggeratedly decorated figures in serial progression, mounted one on top of the other. Shang bone handles were essentially miniature totem poles.⁴

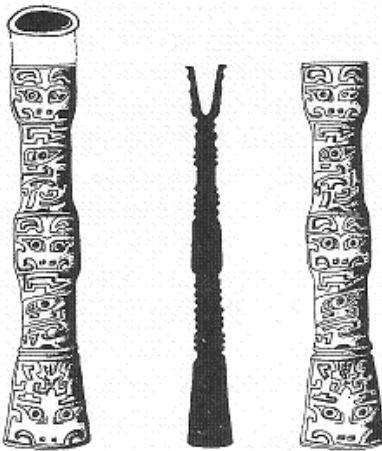
On the west wall of the main temple at Chavin, which had been excavated in 1940, there were a number of bug-eyed-looking heads with flat noses and exaggerated nostrils. A piece of pottery in the Academia Sinica museum in Taipei has eerily similar features.



Chimu mask, Peru.



Shang dynasty bronze broadax.



Shang dynasty bone handles.

Head from main temple at Chavin.



Chinese pottery head (Shang?)

Let me quote a little bit from a book by Chavin discoverer Tello, about the kinds of things he found at Chavin:

... a dragon with an elongated body... an anthropomorphized felinoid monster, a humanized bird-monster... a monster fish... humanized felines...⁵

This reads like a catalogue of Shang dynasty figures: tigers and dragons, birds, and odd, spliced-together, hybrid types that are neither human nor animal, neither one animal nor another, but combinations and conglomerates of various animals. In Shang and Chavin art, nothing stays in a definite, neat category. The monstrous and the chimerical (always beautifully symmetrical) are the rule rather than the exception.

A scenario began to write itself in my imagination. Some Shang fishermen from Shantung Province across the Pacific from Peru, perhaps from the Shang coastal towns of Chi-Mo, Ts'ing-Tal, or Jih-Chao, were out fishing one day, way, way out at sea...

... when the Great Flood came with its tidal waves sweeping across the seas. The fishermen were swept out into the Pacific, and the currents carried them toward Peru. They survived precisely because they were fishermen, and they landed on the coast of Peru, intermarried with the barbarous Indians already there, and Chavin culture was formed....

The Great Flood

Donald Patten's *The Biblical Flood and the Ice Epoch: A Study in Scientific History*⁶ has convinced me that the Great Flood was *the* pivotal point in human history; in fact, more or less the dividing line between the prehistoric and the historic. According to Patten's account, the Great Flood was caused by an astral visitor of some sort coming into our solar system, approaching the earth, causing huge tidal waves and increased seismic activity and volcanism, drastically altering the climate of our planet. More recent theories support Patten's basic hypothesis. *

Whole cultures were wiped out. The only people who survived were people in ships and people who fled to high mountains. It was a theme repeated over and over again in most world mythologies, including those of the American Indians. The ancient Aztec "Legend of the Four Suns" reads like Genesis, Job, the Book of Psalms, and the Book of Revelation:

Those who lived under this second Sun were carried away by the wind...In a single day they were carried off by the wind. They perished on a day...those who lived under this third Sun...also perished. It rained fire upon them. This sun was consumed by fire...they were swallowed by the waters...the heavens collapsed upon them and in a single day they perished...they perished, all the mountains perished...⁷

As Patten points out, the Bible is filled with like references to mountains shaking, the earth quaking, and the sea heaving up out of the deep with waves sweeping across the surface of the globe. Here is a sample from the Book of Psalms which shows how the ancient Middle East and ancient Meso-America were subjected to exactly the same catastrophic events:

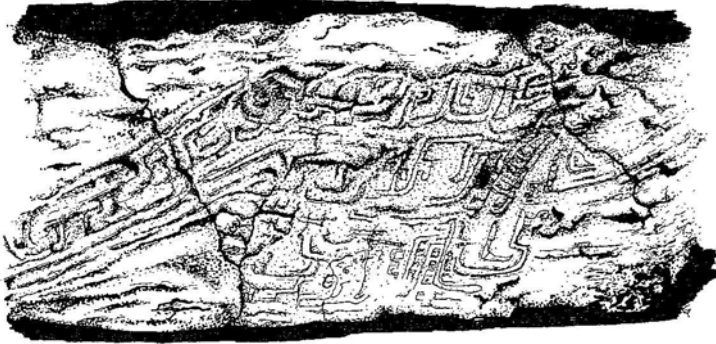
... the mountains shake in the heart of the sea... its waters roar and foam...the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain...the waters stood above the mountains... the mountains rose, the valleys sank down...⁸

* Masse, 2004, Los Alamos National Labs, conjectures that the event was a comet or asteroid impact in the Indian Ocean about 3000 B.C.

I stress the catastrophic nature of the Flood—the tidal waves, the climatic effects, the volcanic and mountain-building activity—especially because it was so very *recent*. Patten actually dates the cosmic upheaval at 2800 B.C., give or take 500 years. Now the vital significance of this date is that it separates history from prehistory, fact from “myth.” In other words, everything before the Flood and all its accompanying disasters is vague, anonymous, and uncertain. We are left with excavations, myths, suppositions; after the Flood there are written records, and mankind recovers from this tremendous catastrophe; then between 2800 B.C. and the present there is a more or less continuous record.

Besides, Patten’s date *roughly* coincides with the transition period between pre-Shang and Shang. The Shang dynasty begins in Neolithic times and the Shang people begin to rise to power in the second millennium B.C. ⁹ *My scenario of the Shang fishermen being blown out across the Pacific worked out very, very nicely.*

I was especially happy when I began to study the Shang excavations at An-yang and saw the similarities in burial patterns between the ancient Chinese and the Maya. In one royal tomb, the ruler was buried with his horses and his entire sacrificed retinue. The tomb was underground and had the look of Mayan underground burials about it. I was reminded very much of the Mayan tomb under the Temple of Hieroglyphics in Palenque. Of course there aren’t any pyramids over the Shang tombs, but there might have been. All the Shang palaces and temples had been razed to the ground. There might have *been* pyramids! And, as if to confirm decisively my suspicions, in the soil of a royal tomb at Hou-chia-chuang, Chinese archeologists had found the impression of a wood carving that had disintegrated thousands of years ago. It was a tiger, and the principal god of not only Chavin but also other prehistoric Peruvian coastal cultures was the puma, a glorified, transcendental cat-god.



Shang dynasty tiger.

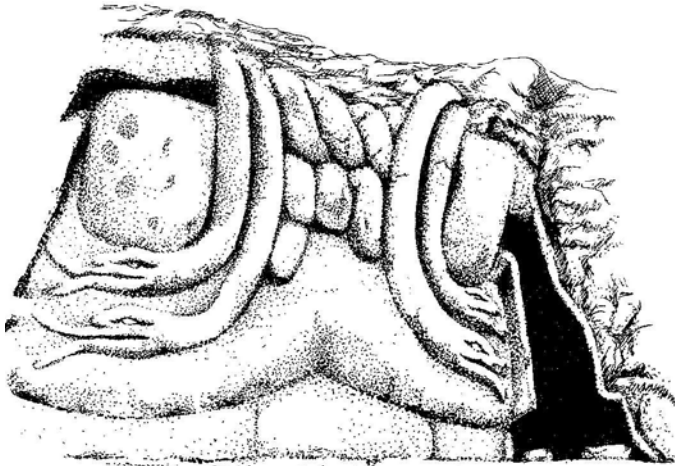
When I began to study the archaic Shang script, which was pictographic (obvious picture writing) instead of hieroglyphic (stylized and/or phonetic), with its abundance of people, sheep, tiger, and ox symbols, I began to think that perhaps, just perhaps, this “pre-Chinese” Chinese picture writing might open up the symbols and inscriptions not merely of the Peruvian coastal cultures, but perhaps those of the Olmecs, Mayas, and even the Zapotecs.

Only when I looked at the monoliths decorating the principal facade of the temple of Cerro Sechin (a major Chavin site), I found no similarity to anything Chinese, neither Shang archaic script, nor oracular script, nor even totem/clan symbols¹⁰ that decorate the bottoms of Shang pots. On one fragment, for example, there are two rows of stacked heads, six heads to a stack. The heads all have their eyes closed. Is this merely a literal, realistic depiction of a stack of dead men’s heads, or an ideograph, a “word”? Are the rows of wavy lines, the bamboo-like joints, the weeping, grimacing, gesticulating figures merely figures per se or parts of sentences, messages?



“Glyphic” fragments from façade of Chavin site, Cerro Sechin, Peru.

I couldn't help but notice that two of the heads have tongue-like ribbons flowing out of their mouths, which is something you see now and then in the Aztec codices, ¹¹ but there was *no* similarity at all between Chavin and Chinese inscriptions! The art used identical patterns, was based on identical aesthetic dynamics, but other cultural elements were very, very different. Among the Chavin ruins, for example, there is an odd-looking "temple" covered with snakes. It's a different kind of sinuosity from much of the other Chavin art, and very different from anything Chinese. The dragon/snake motif is prominent in Shang art, but a snake temple? The snake as god? There was really nothing at all comparable to this in Shang culture.



Chavin snake temple.

A remark of Julio Tello's kept running through my mind. Wherever he had excavated Chavin ruins, they had been covered with and embedded in huge amounts of dirt and rocks, as if they had all been swept over by huge waves, covered with water, and sediment had been deposited in great quantities all over them. I had Patten's date for the Great Flood. I was on the far edge of Chinese history, just on the edge of the mythical, and then I decided to jump off the edge and postulate that the Chinese didn't come to the New World because of or during the Flood, but before.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Iconic American author and poet Hugh Fox was born in Chicago in 1932, the son of a violinist-turned-M.D. father and a frustrated actress mother. Steeped in the arts and music during his upbringing, Hugh was enticed out of medical school to pursue his interests in the humanities, obtaining a B.S. and M.A. from Loyola University in Chicago, and a Ph.D. in American Literature from the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign). He held positions as Professor of American Literature at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, Fulbright Professor of American Studies/Literature at several prestigious centers of learning, and Professor in the Department of American Thought and Language at Michigan State University (MSU).

Everything Hugh Fox did transcended the normal. Hugh's wide-ranging interests showed his indefatigable curiosity about the overwhelming pre-occupations of life: love, sex, death, and loss. He wrote poetry, fiction, and non-fiction to include archaeology, anthropology, and religion. With over a hundred and twenty published works to his credit, Hugh Fox was prolific. His sometimes eccentric and emotional intensity earned him friends and followers from all over the world who appreciated not only his work *as* a writer, but his work *for* writers and as a founding father of the alternative press literary scene. He retired, as a Professor Emeritus at MSU, living in East Lansing, Michigan until his death on September 4, 2011. Hugh will not only be remembered, he will be sorely missed.