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Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye: An Essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview

*Alan Dundes**

If one bothers to read extensively in the scholarship devoted to a given issue, one may well become discouraged both by the amount of material to be digested and by the sobering thought that probably everything worth saying about the subject has already been said by someone else. Perhaps this is one reason why relatively few students of the evil eye took the trouble to locate and examine much of the previous scholarship. On the other hand, it is surely an exciting challenge to try to say something new and worthwhile about a well studied topic. Having taken the trouble to review the earlier scholarship (and to present in this volume what I consider to be some of the highlights of this literature), I should like to present my own analysis of the evil eye. I have, I hope, profited from the insights offered by other students of the subject.

The reader is cautioned against thinking that this is the final word to be written on the subject. It is only the final word in this volume. If the reader has learned nothing else, he or she should realize that scholarship is a cooperative chain extending through time with each individual scholar forging no more than one link in that chain. Future investigators of the evil eye may choose to use this essay or more likely this volume in general as a stepping stone to

I should like to dedicate this essay to the memory of Ernest Jones whose brilliant application of psychoanalytic theory to the materials of folklore has served as a continual inspiration to me over the years. I must also thank Stanley Brandes, Robert Coote, Osama Doumani, George Foster, Steve Gudeman, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Wendy O'Flaherty, Felix Oinas, Saad Sowayan, and Tim White for valuable references and suggestions.

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construct more rigorous and more accurate analyses of the various facets of the evil eye belief complex.

The evil eye is a fairly consistent and uniform folk belief complex based upon the idea that an individual, male or female, has the power, voluntarily or involuntarily, to cause harm to another individual or his property merely by looking at or praising that person or property. The harm may consist of illness, or even death or destruction. Typically, the victim's good fortune, good health, or good looks—or unguarded comments about them—invite or provoke an attack by someone with the evil eye. If the object attacked is animate, it may fall ill. Inanimate objects such as buildings or rocks may crack or burst. Symptoms of illness caused by the evil eye include loss of appetite, excessive yawning, hiccoughs, vomiting, and fever. If the object attacked is a cow, its milk may dry up; if a plant or a fruit tree, it may suddenly wither and die.

Preventive measures include wearing apotropaic amulets, making specific hand gestures or spitting, and uttering protective verbal formulas before or after praising or complimenting a person, especially an infant. Another technique is concealing, disguising, or even denying good fortune. One may symbolically disfigure good looks, for instance, by purposely staining the white linen of a new dress or placing a black smudge of soot behind a child's ear (Rodd 1968:160–61, cf. Crooke 1968:2:6), so as not to risk attracting the attention of the evil eye. This may be the rationale behind behavior as disparate as the veiling common in Arab cultures, the refusal in Jewish culture to say "good" when asked how one's health or business is—the safe reply is "not bad" or "no complaints"—the common tendency among millionaires in Europe and America to insist upon dressing in rags, and the baseball custom in the United States of not mentioning that a pitcher has given up no hits. (The mere mention of a possible "no-hitter" would supposedly jinx the pitcher and result in a batter's getting a base hit of some kind.)

In the event of a successful attack by the evil eye, there are prescribed diagnostic and curative procedures available. One may first need to ascertain whether or not it is a true case of the evil eye and second, if it is, who is responsible for it. Sometimes, the agent, who was perhaps an unwitting one, is involved in the ritual removal of the

evil eye and its ill effects from the victim. He may, for instance, be asked to spit on the victim's face (cf. Dodwell 1819:35–36).

Although widespread throughout the Indo-European and Semitic world, the evil eye belief complex is not universal. In the most recent cross-cultural survey Roberts found that only 36 percent of the 186 cultures in his world sample possessed the evil eye belief (1976:229); and he suggested that the belief "probably developed in the old world, particularly in India, the Near East, and Europe" (1976:234). From this and other surveys (e.g., Andree, Seligmann), it is clear that the evil eye appears to be largely absent in aboriginal Australia, Oceania, native North and South America, and sub-Saharan Africa. The few rare reports of its occurrence in Africa, apart from the Maghreb where it flourishes, suggest Islamic influence. In Latin America, the evil eye was surely part of the general Spanish and Portuguese cultural legacy. Yet within the Indo-European and Semitic world, it is difficult to think of a more pervasive and powerful folk belief than the evil eye.

The scholarship devoted to the evil eye goes back to classical antiquity. Many of the ancients referred to it and Plutarch (46–120 A.D.) featured it in one of the dialogues in his *Table Talk* (V, Question 7) "On those who are said to cast an evil eye." This dialogue begins as follows: "Once at dinner a discussion arose about people who are said to cast a spell and to have an evil eye. While everybody else pronounced the matter completely silly and scoffed at it, Mestrius Florus, our host, declared that actual facts lend astonishing support to the common belief." Sometimes the passing references indicated belief in the evil eye, sometimes disbelief. In his insightful homily "Concerning Envy," written in the fourth century, Saint Basil remarked "... some think that envious persons bring bad luck merely by a glance, so that healthy persons in the full flower and vigor of their prime are made to pine away under their spell, suddenly losing all their plumpness, which dwindles and wastes away under the gaze of the envious, as if washed away by a destructive flood. For my part, I reject these tales as popular fancies and old wives' gossip" (Saint Basil 1950:469–70).

One of the issues often discussed was whether the evil eye was a conscious or unconscious power. The famed Arab historian Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) tended to consider the power of the evil eye as deriving from an involuntary act and, for this reason, to be distinguished from intentionally malicious sorcery. In section 27 of chapter

6 of the *Muqaddimah* (1967:170–71), Ibn Khaldūn commented on the evil eye, calling it a natural gift, something that is innate and not acquired, not depending upon the free choice of its possessor. He ended his discussion as follows: “Therefore it has been said: ‘A person who kills by means of sorcery or a miraculous act must be killed, but the person who kills with the eyes must not be killed.’ The only reason for the distinction is that the person who kills with the eyes did not want or intend to do so, nor could he have avoided doing so. The application of the eye was involuntary on his part.” Ibn Khaldūn’s distinction, somewhat analogous to the modern differences between first and second degree manslaughter, is not held by all writers on the evil eye. Some (e.g., Mackenzie 1895; Cutileiro 1971:274) suggest that some cases of the evil eye reflect an evil disposition on the part of the person possessing the power while others believed to have the power are “innocent of any ill design.”

During the Renaissance a number of treatises were devoted to the evil eye. Representative are Enrique de Villena’s “Tradado del Aojamiento” of 1422, Leonardus Vairus’s “De Fascino” of 1589, Martinus Antonius Del Rio’s “Disquisitionum magicarum” of 1599–1600, Joannes Lazarus Gutierrez’s “Opusculum de Fascino” of 1653, and Joannes Christianus Frommann’s “Tractatus de Fascinatione” of 1675. These and subsequent surveys often contain valuable data. For example, Nicola Valletta in his *Cicalata sul fascino volgarmente detto jettatura* of 1787 ended his discussion with a series of thirteen queries, designed very much like the modern questionnaire, about the evil eye and the *jettatura*, the casting of the evil eye. Valletta’s queries were: 1) Is the evil eye stronger from a man or from a woman? 2) Is it stronger from someone wearing a wig? 3) Stronger from someone who wears glasses? 4) Stronger from a pregnant woman? 5) Stronger from monks and, if so, from which order? 6) If the evil eye does approach, after the attack, what effects must be suffered? 7) What is the range or limit of the distance at which the *jettatura* can be effective? 8) Can the power come from inanimate objects? 9) Is the evil eye stronger from the side, from the front, or from behind? 10) Are there gestures, voice quality, eyes, and facial characteristics by which *jettatura* can be recognized? 11) What prayers ought to be recited to protect us against the *jettatura* of monks? 12) What words in general ought to be said to thwart or escape the *jettatura*? 13) What power then have the horns and other things? (Valletta 1787:152). Valletta then asked anyone who had had experi-

ence with the evil eye to get in touch with him and added that he would be happy to pay for any information furnished.

The steady flow of treatises continued in the nineteenth century. Italian scholars in particular were intrigued with a phenomenon that flourished unabated in their country. Typical are Giovanni Leonardo Marugj’s *Capricci sulla jettatura* in 1815, and Michele Arditi’s *Il fascino, e l’amuleto contro del fascino presso gli antichi* of 1825, and Andrea de Jorio’s *La Mimica degli Antichi* of 1832, which was especially concerned with the traditional gestures used to avert the evil eye.

Modern scholarship on the evil eye may be truly said to have begun with Otto Jahn’s pioneering essay, “Über den Aberglauben des bösen Blicks bei den Altern,” which appeared in 1855. It, like so many of the early treatises, concentrated upon ancient Greek and Roman examples of the evil eye, but it differed in its honest and erudite consideration of all facets of the evil eye complex, including the obviously phallic character of so many of the apotropaic amulets. By the end of the nineteenth century, numerous essays had been written on the evil eye, though most of them were limited to descriptive reports from one particular area. Among the more general surveys of the subject was Jules Tuchmann’s remarkably detailed series of articles on “La Fascination,” which began to appear in the French folklore journal *Mélusine* in 1884 and continued intermittently until 1901. Tuchmann’s massive and impressive collection of citations on the evil eye drawn from a huge variety of sources in many languages (Gaidoz 1912) may well have been the inspiration for folklorist Arnold van Gennep’s delightful parody of the doctoral dissertation writer who tried but failed to write the definitive work on the evil eye (van Gennep 1967:32–36). A better-known nineteenth-century survey work is Frederick Thomas Elworthy’s *The Evil Eye*, first published in 1895.

The next major effort, perhaps the most ambitious of all, was the encyclopedic two-volume work by oculist S. Seligmann, *Der Böse Blick und Verwandtes*, published in 1910. This, or the 1922 version *Die Zauberkraft des Auges und des Berufen*, remains probably the best single source of information on the subject, at least in terms of sheer quantity of ethnographic data. Other landmark studies of the evil eye in the twentieth century include Westermarck’s extensive consideration of the evil eye in Morocco (1926:414–78) and Karl Meisen’s two comprehensive essays (1950, 1952) in the *Rheinisches*

Jahrbuch für Volkskunde, the first covering the evil eye in the ancient and early Christian eras and the second treating the medieval and modern periods. Also worthy of mention are oculist Edward S. Gifford's *The Evil Eye: Studies in the Folklore of Vision* (1958), classicist Waldemar Deonna's marvelously learned and brilliant *Le Symbolisme de l'Oeil*, posthumously published in 1965, psychiatrist Joost A. M. Meerloo's *Intuition and the Evil Eye: The Natural History of Superstition* (1971), and a collection of anthropological essays on the evil eye, *The Evil Eye*, edited by Clarence Maloney (1976). This latter group of fifteen essays consists primarily of ethnographic description and makes little reference to the voluminous literature devoted to the evil eye in classics, folklore, and psychiatry. It does, however, include a long, important paper by John M. Roberts, "Belief in the Evil Eye in World Perspective," which carefully canvasses 186 diverse cultures to see if the evil eye occurs and, if so, with what other cultural variables it might meaningfully be statistically correlated. Still another comprehensive study is Thomas Hauschild's dissertation *Der Böse Blick: Indeengeschichtliche und Sozialpsychologische Untersuchungen* (1979).

The works mentioned thus far are essentially overviews of the evil eye belief complex but it should be noted that there are a number of valuable books and monographs on the evil eye in a given culture. Among the best of these are investigations in Scotland, R.C. Maclagan's *Evil Eye in the Western Highlands* (1902); in Spain, Raphael Salillas's *La Fascinación en España* (1905); in Finland, Toivo Vuorela's *Der Böse Blick im Lichte der Finnischen Überlieferung* (1967); and in Sardinia, Clara Gallini's *Dono e Malocchio* (1973). When one adds to these the literally dozens on dozens of notes and articles that discuss the evil eye either en passant or in some depth, it is clear that one has an unmanageable number of sources available to consult for relevant information.

Despite the enormous bibliographic bulk of the evil eye scholarship, it is not unfair to say that there have been few attempts to explain the evil eye belief complex in terms of a holistic integrated theory. By far the majority of the discussions of the evil eye consist solely of anecdotal reportings of various incidents. Anthropologist Hocart summed up the situation aptly when he said (1938:156): "There is a considerable literature about the evil eye, but it does little more than add instances to instances." Unfortunately, the situation has not

changed; and as Spooner puts it (1976:281): "Permutations of practice do not appear to lead to a satisfactory formulation of theory."

Formulations of theories of the evil eye do exist. Recent speculations about the possible origin and significance of the evil eye have included the suggestion that it is related to gaze behavior perhaps involving gaze aversion, common in many animal species (Coss 1974). With regard to gaze behavior, Erikson proposes (1977:50, 58) that an infant experiences the unresponsive eye of an adult as a rejecting, hostile environment or "Other" (as opposed to self). Thus, according to Erikson, "the unresponsive eye becomes an evil one." It has also been claimed that the evil eye is an ancient type of hypnotic phenomenon (MacHovee 1976). But probably the most widely accepted theory of the evil eye contends that it is based upon envy. In his celebrated *Folkways*, first published in 1906, Sumner argued that the evil eye depended upon primitive demonism and envy. According to Sumner (1960:434), "It is assumed that demons envy human success and prosperity and so inflict loss and harm on the successful."

There is no question that envy is somehow closely related to the evil eye. This is clear in the earliest Near Eastern texts we have. The word envy is etymologically derived from the Latin *invidia*, which in turn comes from *in videre*, thus ultimately from "to see" or "seeing" as Cicero first observed (Elworthy 1958:7; cf. Odelstierna 1949:72, n.1.). To see something is to want it, perhaps. A common reaction to seeing a desirable object is to praise it, to admire it. An expression of admiration or praise is understood to imply at least a tinge of envy. Envy can accordingly be expressed either by eye or by mouth (or by both). Schoeck considers the evil eye to be a universal expression of malevolent envy (1955), but Spooner has criticized the envy theory, noting (1976:283) that "although it is perfectly valid and necessary at one stage of analysis, the anthropologist should attempt to build models at a higher stage of abstraction." Spooner might also have realized that no theory can be persuasive unless or until it enables one to explain the particulars of a given custom or segment of human behavior. How does the notion of envy explain, for example, the specific details of fruit trees withering, the common symptom of yawning, or the various gestures, such as spitting, employed to ward off the evil eye. Spooner does ask why, since envy in some form is probably universal, it should give rise to the evil eye in some societies but not in others (1976:283). One can only conclude that whereas

envy is surely a component of the overall evil eye complex, it is not sufficient in and of itself to explain the complex in all its concrete detail.

The same difficulties inhere in suggestions that the evil eye complex provides an outlet for the expression of aggression, or that it acts as an agent of social control. The question that must be addressed is: why does the evil eye manifest itself precisely in the forms that it does? Why are very young children and infants especially susceptible to the effects of the evil eye? Or, why is the butterfat content of milk in a churn magically removed?

Psychoanalytic interpretations of the evil eye have also been partial. Because many of the apotropaic amulets and gestures have unmistakable phallic elements (Valletta 1787:18-25; Jahn 1855; Michaelis 1885; Wolters 1909; Elworthy 1958:149-54; Seligmann 1910:II:188-200; Deonna 1965:180-81), it has long been obvious that the male genitals are involved in some way with the evil eye complex. Since phallic gestures like the *fica* (Leite de Vasconcellos 1925:92) were used to ward off the evil eye, and since males often touched their genitals upon seeing a priest or other individual thought to have the evil eye (Valla 1894:422n; Servadio 1936:403; n. 8) then it is not unreasonable to assume that the evil eye threatened to make men impotent (Seligmann 1910:199; Servadio 1936). But if the evil eye constituted a danger to masculinity, why was it believed that a weaned infant who has returned to the breast would grow up to have the evil eye, and why was the evil eye especially damaging to female animals, such as cows? Roberts attempted a factor analysis of various features associated with the evil eye in his cross-cultural survey; he found the highest correlation with milking and dairy production though he was unable to explain this linkage (1976:241, 258). Of course, psychoanalysts have also argued that the eye could be a female symbol (Reitler 1913:160) with "the pupil representing the vagina, the lids the labia, and the lashes the pubic hair" (Tourney and Plazak 1954:489). Is the eye a phallus, or is it a vagina, or is it both (or neither)? And how would this possibly relate to injury to cows and their milk supply?

Géza Róheim suggests (1952:356) that the key to the whole evil eye belief is oral jealousy and oral aggression. This would illuminate the apparent connection with nursing children as well as the appropriateness of the use of spitting or oral incantations to avoid

the evil eye. But in this case, it would not be so obvious why phallic means should be equally effective. Róheim does not succeed, in my opinion, in reconciling the oral and phallic elements in the evil eye complex.

Freud himself, writing about the evil eye in his 1919 essay on the 'uncanny,' considered its origin to be fear of envy, coupled with the device of projection. "Whoever possesses something at once valuable and fragile is afraid of the envy of others, in that he projects onto them the envy he would have felt in their place" (1959:393). Tourney and Plazak follow this psychiatric tack by emphasizing the eye as an organ of aggression. They suggest (1954:491) that "with the utilization of the projective mechanism, fear of the evil eye may represent the manifestation of one's own aggressive impulses attributed as being apart from the ego and acting in turn against it. A need for punishment because of guilt over hostility and aggression can be realized in the suffering of a recipient from the influence of the evil eye." Through projection, the original would-be aggressor is spared feelings of guilt because "I hate you" or "I envy you" has been transformed into "You hate me" or "You envy me." By means of this projective transformation, the active becomes the passive, the aggressor becomes the victim. This may explain why the rich and powerful are so often thought to have the evil eye—popes and nobility have frequently been said to have it. The poor envy the rich and powerful, but this envy is transformed into the rich casting an evil eye at the poor. But this psychiatric notion does not really explicate all the particulars of the evil eye belief complex either.

A plausible theory of the evil eye must be able to account for most, if not all, of the elements in the complex, including the manifestly male and female components. Consider the following modern Greek cure for the evil eye, which involves the formula (Dionisopoulos-Mass 1976:46): "If it is a woman who has cast the eye, then destroy her breasts. If it is a man who has cast the eye, then crush his genitals." In a variant (Hardie 1923:170), "If a man did it, may his eyes fall out. If a woman did it may her eyes fall out and her breasts burst." In India, we find the same alternation of male and female attributes. According to Thurston (1907:254):

When a new house is being constructed, or a vegetable garden or rice field are in flourishing condition, the following precautions are taken to ward off the evil eye:

- a. In buildings—
 1. A pot with black and white marks on it is suspended mouth downwards.
 2. A wooden figure of a monkey, with pendulous testes, is suspended.
 3. The figure of a Malayali woman, with protuberant breasts, is suspended.
- b. In fields and gardens—
 1. A straw figure covered with a black cloth daubed with black and white dots is placed on a long pole. If the figure represents a male, it has pendent testes, and, if a woman, well-developed breasts. Sometimes male and female figures are placed together in an embracing posture.
 2. Pots, as described above, are placed on bamboo poles.

Since the evil eye is as dangerous to female breasts (including cow's udders) as to male genitals, it is necessary for the magical counter-measures to defend against both threats. The question is: what theoretical underlying principle or principles, if any, can explain the whole range of phenomena believed to be caused by the evil eye, from the withering of fruit trees, to the loss of milk from cows to impotence among males. The striking similarity of evil eye reports from different cultures strongly suggests that whatever the rationale behind it may be, it is likely to be cross-culturally valid.

I suggest that the evil eye belief complex depends upon a number of interrelated folk ideas in Indo-European and Semitic worldview. I should like to enumerate them briefly before discussing them in some detail.

1. Life depends upon liquid. From the concept of the "water of life" to semen, milk, blood, bile, saliva, and the like, the consistent principle is that liquid means life while loss of liquid means death. "Wet and Dry" as an oppositional pair means life and death. Liquids are living; drying is dying!
2. There is a finite, limited amount of good—health, wealth, etc.— and because that is so, any gain by one individual can only come at the expense of another (cf. Foster 1965). If one individual possesses a precious body fluid, semen, for instance, this automatically means that some other individual lacks that same fluid.
3. Life entails an equilibrium model. If one has too little wealth or health, one is poor or ill. Such individuals constitute threats to persons

with sufficient or abundant wealth and health. This notion may be in part a projection on the part of well-to-do individuals. They think they should be envied and so they project such wishes to the have-nots. On the other hand, the have-nots are often envious for perfectly good reasons of their own.

4. In symbolic terms, a pair of eyes may be equivalent to breasts or testicles. A single eye may be the phallus (especially the glans), the vulva, or occasionally the anus. The fullness of life as exemplified by such fluids as mother's milk or semen can thus be symbolized by an eye and accordingly threats to one's supply of such precious fluids can appropriately be manifested by the eye or eyes of others.

I am not claiming that any of the above folk ideas or principles are necessarily consciously understood by members of Indo-European and Semitic cultures. They may or may not be. What I am proposing is that they are structural principles of thought among the peoples of these cultures. I hope to show that they explain not only the evil eye but a vast range of traditional behavior ranging from tipping to some specifics of burial customs.

Documentation for the folk idea that life is liquid is amply provided by Richard Broxton Onians in his brilliant tour de force, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate*, published in 1951. Onians is able to explain one of the rationales behind cremation. Burning the dead expedites the "drying" process, the final removal of the liquid of life (1951:256). He remarks on the Greek conception of life as the gradual diminishing of liquid inside a man (1951:215). I would add that the metaphor probably made sense in light of what was empirically observable in the case of fruits, among other items. Juicy grapes could become dry raisins; plums could become prunes, etc. With increasing age, the human face becomes wrinkled and these inevitable wrinkles could be logically construed as signs of the same sort of drying process that produced the wrinkles in raisins and prunes. It should also be pointed out that this Greek conception is also a manifestation of the notion of limited good (Foster 1965, Gouldner 1965:49–51). Man is born with only so much life force and he is therefore ever anxious to replenish it. Milk and wine are obvious sources of liquid (1951:227), noted Onians, and he correctly observes the content of toasts in this connection. One drinks "healths." What Onians failed to understand is that healths are supposedly drunk to others, that is, accompanied by such verbal formulas as "Here's to

you," "Here's to your health," or "Here's long life to you." What this means in terms of limited good, I submit, is: "I drink, but not at your expense. I am replenishing my liquid supply, but I wish no diminution in yours." The very fact that a drinker mentions another person's health before drinking implies that if he did not do so, that person's health might suffer. In other words, drinking without a formulaic prophylactic preamble might be deleterious to the other person's health. In an unusual volume published in 1716 entitled *A Discourse of Drinking Healths*, we find this thought articulated: "And what strange Inchantment can there be in saying or meaning, As I drink this Glass of Wine, So let another Man perish" (Browne 1716:19).

Lévi-Strauss, in a rare instance of ethnographic fieldwork, reports on a custom observed in lower-priced restaurants in the south of France (1969:58-60). Each table setting includes a small bottle of wine but etiquette demands that one does not pour the contents of the bottle into one's own glass. Rather the wine is poured into the glass of an individual at a neighboring table. This individual will normally reciprocate by pouring the contents of his bottle into the initial pourer's glass. Lévi-Strauss explains this custom in terms of a structural principle, namely the principle of reciprocity: "Wine offered calls for wine returned, cordiality required cordiality." This is not an implausible explanation, but this custom which reflects an attitude towards wine remarkably different from that towards food, as Lévi-Strauss himself notes, may also exemplify the special rules governing the incorporation of liquids among Indo-European and Semitic peoples. The notion of limited good—as applied to the essential liquids of life—requires one to offer beverages to others. If one drinks without regard to one's neighbors, one risks being envied and becoming the object or victim of an evil eye. The reciprocity of courtesy is demonstrated in a Gaelic incantation against the evil eye reported from the island of Skye in the Hebrides. When washing in the morning (Mackenzie 1895:39), a person may recite:

Let God bless my eye,
And my eye will bless all I see;
I will bless my neighbor
And my neighbor will bless me.

Numerous reports attest that eating in public is thought to be especially dangerous with respect to the evil eye. Westermarck (1904:211; cf. Gifford 1958:48-50), for example, notes that "the

danger is greatest when you eat. To take food in the presence of some hungry looker-on is the same as to take poison; the evil—*i-bas*, as the Moors call it—then enters into your body. When you commence eating, everybody must either partake of the meal or go away." In Egypt, Lane (1895:262) reports that his cook would not purchase the fine sheep displayed in a butcher's shop because "every beggar who passes by envies them; one might, therefore as well eat poison as such meat." A report that appeared in the Russian paper *Ilustriravansk Mir* in 1881 (according to Gordon 1937:306) reflects a similar belief: "The Russian government turned over a convict sentenced to die to the Academy of Science for the purpose of testing the powers of [the] evil eye. The prisoner was starved for three days during which a loaf of bread was placed in front of him of which he was unable to partake. At the end of the third day, the bread was examined and found to contain a poisonous substance." Gordon (1937:307) observes that while the story proves nothing—the bread could easily have been spoiled by being kept in a damp cell for three days, the very fact that a newspaper could print the report shows the readiness of the public to believe in the power of the evil eye.

One technique used in restaurants to avert the dangers of the evil eye is to offer onlookers some of one's food. In Spanish restaurants, for example, any person waiting to be seated at a table is frequently invited by patrons already eating to join them or share their food. This formulaic offer is inevitably refused but the point is that the invitation is made. Foster (1972:181) has described this very well:

In Spain and Spanish America—to this day in small country inns—a diner greets each conceptual equal who enters the room with "*Gusta [Usted comer]?*" ("Would you care to share my meal?"), thereby symbolically inviting the stranger (or friend) to partake of the good fortune of the diner. The new arrival ritually replies "*Buen provecho*" ("Good appetite," i.e., may your food agree with you), thereby reassuring the diner that he has no reason to fear envy, and that he may eat in peace. The entrant normally would not think of accepting the invitation, and the courtesy appears to have the double function of acknowledging the possible presence of envy and, at the same time, eliminating its cause.

After commenting upon the probably similar functioning of such ritual predining formulas as the French "bon appetit," Foster proceeds to discuss the necessity for offering something to a waiter in

a restaurant. Since a waiter may also envy a diner, he needs to be given something to ensure his good will, namely, a tip. In a fascinating brief survey of analogues to the word *tip* in a number of European languages, e.g., French *pourboire*, German *Trinkgeld*, Spanish *propina*, Portuguese *gorjeta*, Polish *napiwek*, Swedish *drincs*, Finnish *juomarabaa*, Icelandic *drykkjupeningar*, Russian *Chaevye [den'gi]*, and Croatian *Napojnica*, Foster concludes that the English word *tip* must come from *tipple* which means "to drink." (This is obviously much more likely than the folk etymology often encountered that *tip* is an acronymic formation from "to insure promptness" or *tips* from "to insure prompt service.") While Foster is surely correct in stating (1972:181) that "a tip, clearly, is money given to a waiter to buy off his possible envy, to equalize the relationship between server and served," he fails to comment on the possible significance of the fact that the waiter is invited to *drink* (as opposed to eat). In the light of the present argument, it is precisely liquids which must be offered to avert the evil eye.

The use of a liquid bribe, so to speak, is also found in other evil eye contexts. For example, in Scotland,

A well-informed woman, an innkeeper, said that in cases where a person possessed of the Evil Eye admired anything belonging to another, no injury could follow if some little present were given to the suspected person on leaving . . . In the case of churning the small present naturally takes the form of a drink of milk to be given to anyone suspected of the Evil Eye, and so a reciter said that one should always, for safety's sake, give a visitor a drink of milk, and stated further that the beneficial effect was added to if the one who gives it first takes a little of it herself before handing it to the stranger (Maclagan 1902:22-123).

The suggestion that the efficacy of the "tip" is increased if one first takes a little of the milk before offering it to the stranger is reminiscent of one of the folk theories of the evil eye, which claims a connection exists between breast-feeding practices and the evil eye. One notion is that an infant allowed to drink freely from both breasts (rather than from just one) will grow up to have the evil eye. Another notion is that an infant once weaned who is allowed to return to the breast will likewise grow up to have the evil eye. Representative ethnographic data includes the following. In India (Crooke 1968:1:2), "One, and perhaps the most common theory of the Evil Eye is that 'when a child is born, an invisible spirit is born with it; and unless the mother keeps

one breast tied up for forty days, while she feeds the child with the other (in which case the spirit dies of hunger), the child grows up with the endowment of the Evil Eye, and whenever any person so endowed looks at anything constantly, something will happen to it.' " In Greece (Hardie 1923:161), "It is known, however, that if a new-made mother suckles her infant from both breasts without an interval between, her glance will be baleful to the first thing on which it rests afterwards. Again, should a mother weakly yield to the tears of her newly weaned son and resume feeding him, he will, in later life, have the evil eye." (This belief could function as a socially sanctioned charter or justification for mothers weary of breast-feeding and anxious to finalize weaning.) Similarly, in Greece, one of the things that can cause the evil eye is "if the baby resumes breast feeding after having been interrupted for a few days or weeks" (Blum and Blum 1965:186, 1970:146). Analogous informant testimonies concerning the presumed causal relationship between reversing the weaning act and the evil eye have been reported in the Slovak-American tradition (Stein 1974) and in Romania (Murgoci 1923:357). (The folk theory that weaning reversal can cause the evil eye would seem to offer support to psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's claim that the primary prototype of envy in general is the infant's envy of the "feeding breast" as an object which possesses everything (milk, love) the infant desires [Klein 1957:10,29].) In all these cases, the infant is displaying what is construed as greedy behavior. Either he wants both breasts (when one is deemed sufficient) or he wishes to return to the breast after having been weaned (perhaps thus depriving a younger sibling of some of the latter's rightful supply of the limited good of mother's milk). An infant who gets more milk in this way is likely to become an adult who also attempts to get other forms of material good in this same way, that is, at someone else's expense. Thus he will be an adult with the evil eye, a greedy individual who, craving more than he deserves, or needs, may seek to take from the bounty of others. (In this context, it might be more apt to say that *tip* derives not just from *tipple*, but ultimately from *nipple*.) One wonders if the yawning symptom of victims of the evil eye might not be reminiscent of weaning insofar as the mouth in the act of yawning is constantly opening without obvious material benefit.

Confirmation of the importance of weaning and sibling rivalry in the evil eye belief complex comes from a curious detail in a remarkable legend which itself serves as a charm against the evil eye.

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The text typically involves the personification of the evil eye, usually as a female demon, perhaps a Lilith, child-stealing figure. A saint or archangel encounters the she-demon and forces her to reveal all of her names (through the recitation of which she may henceforth be controlled) and to return any infants she has already carried off or devoured (cf. Gollancz 1912; Hazard 1890-91; Naff 1965:50-1; Montgomery 1913:259-62; Gaster 1900; Fries 1891; and Perdrizet 1922:5-31). Gaster cites a Slavonic version of the legend (1900: 139-42) in which it is the devil who steals and swallows a sixth infant after having similarly disposed of five previous ones. The mother Meletia dispatches her brother Saint Sisoe to recover her infants. When he confronts the devil and demands the return of the infants, the devil replies, "Vomit thou first the milk which thou has sucked from thy mother's breast." The Saint prays to God and does so. The devil, seeing this, regurgitates the six infants, who are safe and sound. In two seventeenth-century Greek versions cited by Gaster, the same motif recurs. Two saints, Sisynnios and Sisynodoros, demand that the villain Gylo return the children of their sister Melitena. The she-demon Gylo replies, "If you can return in the hollow of your hand the milk which you have sucked from your mother's breast I will return the children of Melitena." The saints pray and "they vomited at once into the hollow of their hand something like their mother's milk." Gylo then brings up the abducted children and reveals her other names (Gaster 1900:143-45; cf. 147-48). If the brother's regurgitation of mother's milk equals the restoration of infants, then one might logically assume that swallowing mother's milk is symbolically equivalent to destroying infants. Since the protagonists are brother and sister, we appear to have a case of sibling rivalry revolving around the allocation of mother's milk. Incidentally, the name of the personification of the evil eye, Gylo, may, according to Perdrizet (1922:25) who has studied the legend in some detail, be related to the Arab *ghoul*, which may in turn be related to the Babylonian *gallou*, which means "demon." The root may possibly be related to a variety of Indo-European words associated with greediness in drinking. Consider French *goulu*, meaning "gluttonous," or *gueule*, meaning "the mouth of an animal," with *gueulee*, meaning "a large mouthful." In English, it may be related to such words as *gullet*, *glut*, *gulp*, *gully*, and possibly *gurgle*, *gobble*, *gorge*, and *gurgitation*. *Gulch* once meant "drunkard" or "to swallow or devour greedily" while *gulf* once

referred to a voracious appetite (and may derive from the Greek for bosom). To engulf means to swallow.

Water *is*, of course, necessary for the sustenance of life, and life itself is empirically observed to begin in some sense with an emergence from a flood—of amniotic fluid, perhaps providing a human model or prototype for creation myths involving supposed primeval waters or floods (cf. Casalis 1976). But it is the metaphorical and symbolic quests for water that are most relevant to our consideration of the evil eye. Onians explains that the idea that life is liquid and the dead are dry accounts for the widespread conception of a "water of life" (1951:289). The search for the water of life in fairy tales (cf. motif E80, Water of life), which is found throughout the Indo-European and Semitic world, as well as the common quest for the fountain of youth (cf. motif D1338.1.1, Fountain of youth), certainly support the notion that liquid is life. Hopkins (1905:55) distinguishes the two motifs, arguing that the "fountain of youth" comes from India while the "water of life" stems from Semitic tradition. In any case, the magic liquid can cure wounds and even bring the dead back to life. It can also rejuvenate, making the old young again. If the passage of life consists of the gradual diminution of finite fluids, then the only logical way to reverse the process would be to increase one's fluid supply. Whether fluids were taken internally (by drinking) or externally (by bathing, baptism, or being anointed), the life-giving or -renewing principle is basically the same.

If increases in liquid mean health, then decreases might signify the opposite (Onians 1951:212-14). I think it is quite possible that the English word *sick* comes ultimately from the Latin *siccus*, which means "dry." The total loss of liquid, that is, loss of life, would mean death. And this is why in the Indo-European and Semitic world, the dead are specifically perceived as being thirsty. The following custom is typical (Canaan 1929:59): "Water is not only essential for the living but also for the dead. As in ancient days so also now the Palestinian is accustomed to place for the dead a jar containing water; the only difference is that we often find on the tombs a shallow or deep cup-like cavity. Some believe that the soul of the dead visits the tomb and expects to find water to quench its thirst; therefore they that visit the tombs of the dead fill these cups with water." Onians in writing of the thirst of the dead notes (1951:285) that in Babylonia the provision of water to the dead fell to the deceased's nearest kinsman. This

kinsman was known as a man's "pouurer of water." One Babylonian curse was: "May God deprive him of an heir and a pouurer of water." The widespread distribution of the conception of the thirsty dead has been amply described (cf. Bellucci 1909 and especially Deonna 1939:53-77).

Certainly the presumed thirst of the dead is a major metaphor in ancient Egyptian funerary ritual. According to Budge (1909:34), one of the oldest of the ceremonies performed for the dead was called the "Opening of the Mouth." The deceased was told, "Thy mouth is the mouth of the sucking calf on the day of its birth" (Budge 1909:60, 156, 209). Various offerings of food and libation were presented to the deceased, most of them specifically said to come from the Eye of Horus. "Accept the Eye of Horus, which welletth up with water, and Horus hath given unto thee" (Budge 1909:147; cf. 117, 129, 185). The Eye of Horus as a breast or other body part containing liquid is understood to refresh the deceased by offering him the necessary additional "fluid of life" to replace the fluids lost before death or during the process of mummification (Budge 1909:46, 52).

In the light of the centrality of liquid as a metaphor for life, it makes sense for envy to be expressed in liquid terms. The have-nots envy the haves and desire their various liquids. Whether it is the dead who envy the living (as in vampires who require the blood of the living and who are commonly referred to as "bloodthirsty"), the old who envy the young, or the barren who envy those with children, it is the blood, the sap or vitality of youth, the maternal milk, or masculine semen that is coveted. The notion of limited good means that there is not really enough to go around. Thus an admiring look or statement (of praise) is understood as a wish for precious fluid. If the looker or declarer receives liquid, then it must be at the expense of the object or person admired. So the victim's fruit tree withers from a loss of sap or his cow's milk dries up. The point is that the most common effect of the evil eye is a drying up process.

There have long been clues revealing the desiccating nature of the evil eye. A thirteenth-century Dominican, Thomas of Cantimpré, claimed that if a wolf and a man meet and the wolf sees the man first, the man cannot speak because the rays from the wolf's eye dry up the spiritus of human vision, which in turn dries up the human spiritus generally (Tourney and Plazak 1954:481). At the beginning of the twentieth century, twenty-three informants in Spain mentioned

secarse, "drying out," as one of the characteristic symptoms of the evil eye (Salillas 1905:44). An interesting clinical parallel is provided in a case of schizophrenia where a nurse believed a private eye (not a detective but an actual eye) was watching her and that it had the power to draw vital body fluids from her (Tourney and Plazak 1954:488).

One of the oldest texts extant that treats the evil eye is a Sumerian one; it too confirms the association with water. It begins, "The eye ad-gir, the eye a man has . . . The eye afflicting man with evil, the ad-gir. Unto heaven it approached and the storms sent no rain." The evil eye even takes away water from the heavens. The Sumerian text suggests the cure involves "Seven vases of meal-water behind the grinding stones. With oil mix. Upon (his) face apply" (Langdon 1913:11-12, cf. Ebeling). One may compare this with a Neapolitan charm from Amalfi (Williams, 1961:156), which is nearly four thousand years later: "Eye of death, Evil Eye, I am following you with water, oil and Jesus Christ." The protective power of fluids including water is apparent in many ancient texts referring to the evil eye. For example, in the *Berakoth*, a book of the Babylonian Talmud, we read, "Just as the fishes in the sea are covered by water and the evil eye has no power over them, so the evil eye has no power over the seed of Joseph" [Simon 1948:120(20a), 340(55b)]. On a portal plaque from Arslan Tash in Upper Syria, a Phoenician incantation text inscribed in an Aramaic script of the early seventh century B.C. (Caquot and Mesnil du Buisson 1971) urges the caster of the evil eye to flee. It begins, according to Gaster (1973, but cf. Cross 1974:486-90) with these words: "Charm against the demon who drains his victims." This suggests the antiquity of the idea that the evil eye constitutes a threat to the body fluids. In modern Saudi Arabia, a person who is accused of having the evil eye may be labelled by the adjective *ash-hab* which means "grey and desiccated." A person with the evil eye is thus one who is dried out, in need of liquid refreshment. 271

Once it is understood that the evil eye belief complex depends upon the balance of liquid equilibrium, it becomes possible to gain insight into various apotropaic techniques. For example, on the back of a large number of ancient amulets used to keep the evil eye away appears a Greek inscription meaning "I drink." Bonner (1950:213) and other scholars puzzled by this inscription felt that this meaning was inappropriate and suggested alternative translations such as "I am hungry" or "I devour." But if these meanings were intended, one

might ask, why should "I drink" appear so often. Bonner even went so far as to suggest that "perhaps the 'error' occurred on the first specimen manufactured in some important workshop and was slavishly copied." The point is surely that the folk know (in some sense) what they are doing—even if scholars do not. In the light of the present hypothesis, "I drink" makes perfect sense as the inscription of an anti-evil eye amulet.

Or consider the following detail of a contemporary Algerian Jewish custom. Whoever removes the effects of the evil eye from someone afflicted evidently runs some risk of having the effects transferred to him. "Pour éviter que le 'mauvais oeil' enlevé au malade ne pénètre en lui l'opérateur après avoir terminé absorbe un verre d'un liquide quelconque (eau, anisette, vin, etc.) que lui offrent les parents du malade" (Bel 1903:364). Clearly, the incorporation of liquid—whether it is water or wine is immaterial—is thought to guard against the dangerous effects of the evil eye.

Structurally speaking, the various apotropaic methods employed to avoid or cure the evil eye ought to be isomorphic. But how is showing a phallus or the *fica* isomorphic with spitting? I would argue that all these amulets or gestures signify the production of some form of liquid. Whether the liquid is semen or saliva, it provides proof that the victim's supply of life force is undiminished. Spitting is also an act of insult and it is quite likely that spitting as a counteractant to the evil eye represents a devaluation of the victim. In other words, a beautiful baby whether praised or admired or not represents a potential object of attack by an evil eye. If one spits on the baby (or asks the possessor of the evil eye to spit on the baby), one is mitigating the praise or admiration expressed. It is as if to say this is not a beautiful, admirable object (and that it should not be subject to an evil eye attack). On the other hand, spitting involves the projection of liquid for all to see. Crombie (1892:252) was quite right in remarking that saliva seemed to contain the element of life, but he did not realize that saliva can also be symbolically equivalent to semen (cf. Onians 1951:233, n.5). The initial consonant cluster *sp* occurs in both *sputum* and *sperm*, suggesting the emission of liquid, but even more persuasive is the unambiguous metaphorical evidence provided by the idiom "spitten image" (or "spit and image" or "spitting image"), used to refer to a child who greatly resembles his father (cf. Jones 1951:63, 273). The symbolic equivalence is also attested in jokes. Legman (1968:584)

reported the following abbreviated text collected in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1930: "Two twins are conversing in the womb. 'Who's that bald-headed guy that comes in here every night and spits in my eye?'"

The important role of saliva in the evil eye belief complex is confirmed by an interesting practice reported in Greece and Saudi Arabia. In the Oasim district in north central Saudi Arabia, in cases where someone is afflicted by the evil eye and it is not known who caused the misfortune, someone representing the victim, usually a small male child, stands in a public area, for example, outside a mosque with a small bowl half filled with water and asks each male passerby to spit into it. This is done so as not to embarrass anyone in particular by accusing that person of having the evil eye. After everyone or, at least, a good many individuals have expectorated into the container (or made a pseudo-spitting gesture), the container is taken to the victim who drinks half the contents and anoints his body with the other half. In eastern Greece in the beginning of this century, a village girl fell ill. Her mother, fearing that the cause was the evil eye, hired a curer (female) to go to the church to collect forty spits in a glass from people going into the church. The curer kept track of the number of spits by counting kernels of corn. When she counted forty kernels, she brought the glass to the victim who drank it. The victim recovered within a few days. However aesthetically displeasing or hygienically unsound such a practice may be adjudged by nonmembers of the cultures concerned, the cure certainly does exemplify the principle of liquid intake as a counteractant to the evil eye.

As for the Malabar custom described earlier, the male figures with pendulous testes and female figures with protuberant breasts used to ward off the evil eye can also be understood as liquid-bearing symbols. The large testes and breasts presumably represent an abundance of semen and milk. (The overturned pot may suggest that the abundance is so great that hoarding is not necessary.) The symbolic equivalence of breasts and eyes is suggested by a variety of data. In ancient European iconography circles with short lines radiating from the circumference were used to symbolize both eyes and breasts (Crawford 1957:41, 48, 96, 98; cf. Deonna 1965:64; Meerloo 1971:36). In contemporary German folk speech, dozens of idioms support the fact that "Eine der merkwürdigsten Gleichsetzungen im Vokabular der Sexuelsprache ist Auge = Brust" (Borneman

1971). The interchangeability of eyes and breasts is also obvious from an examination of different versions of the folktale or legend "Present to the Lover" (Aarne-Thompson tale type 706B). Its summary reads "Maiden sends to her lecherous lover (brother) her eyes (hands, breasts) which he has admired" (cf. Williamson 1932, González Palencia 1932). Further data come from contemporary tattooing. "Open eyes are tattooed on American sailors' lids or around their nipples because the sailors believe that such tattoos will keep watch for them when they are tired or asleep" (Parry 1933:136), a belief probably identical to the one that accounts for the widespread Indo-European custom of painting an eye on either side of the bows of ships and boats (Hornell 1923, 1938). But the important point here is that the eyes are sometimes drawn around the nipples, which would exemplify the breast-eye equation.

Similar folkloristic data suggests that testicles and eyes may be symbolically equivalent on occasion. In Irish mythology, we find motif J229.12, prisoners given a choice between emasculation and blinding, an alternative reminiscent of Oedipus' self-imposed punishment of blinding for a sexual crime. (For a discussion of blindness and castration as allomotifs, see Dundes 1962:102.) One may note the same allomotifs in another European narrative setting. The plot summary of Aarne-Thompson tale type 1331, The Covetous and the Envious, is as follows: Of two envious men one is given the power of fulfilling any wish on the condition that the other shall receive double. He wishes that he may lose an eye. Legman (1975:611) reports a version from New York City in 1936: "A Jew in heaven is told that whatever he asks for, Hitler will get double. He asks that one of his testicles be removed." This kind of incontrovertible data strongly supports the idea that testicles and eyes are in some sense interchangeable. We can now better understand the modern Greek formula cited earlier, in which it is wished that the possessor of the evil eye suffer crushed genitals or burst breasts, in other words, that his or her vital fluids be wasted. (The wish for breasts to burst may also imply a wish for the death of a female evil eye caster's infant—an event which might tend to cause the mother's unused breasts to swell to the bursting point.)

One detail we have not yet explained is the singularity of the evil eye, and I mean singularity in the literal sense. Why the evil eye instead of evil eyes? In most languages the idiom for *evil eye* expresses

the notion of a single eye. To my knowledge, none of the previous scholarship devoted to the evil eye has even raised this elementary but intriguing question. Any plausible theory of the evil eye should be able to account for it.

To better understand this facet of the evil eye belief complex, we may profitably examine ancient Egyptian beliefs. According to Moret (1902:40-47), all living things were created by eye and voice. Life was an emission of fecund light from the Master of rays. Above all, it was the sun Ra who was the primary creator, using his eye, the sun, "Eye of Horus." (For the sun as a heavenly eye generally, see Weinreich 1909.) The solar virtues of the gods were transmitted to the pharaoh through a magical fluid called *Sa*. That *Sa* which flowed in the veins of the pharaoh, son of Ra, was the "liquid of Ra," the gold of the sun's rays. Sa was emitted by a process termed *soipou*, a verb used to describe the shooting forth of water, flames, and arrows and the ejaculation of semen (Moret 1902:47n.2; cf. Róheim 1972:162). Another source of life, incidentally, besides the liquid of Ra, was the milk of Isis (Moret 1902:48, n.1), which suggests that the symbolic equivalence of semen and milk is of considerable antiquity (cf. Jones 1951b:233; Legman 1975:139, 367).

The curious verb *soipou* with all its nuances reminds us of the term *ejaculation* for the action of the evil eye. Francis Bacon in 1625 spoke of the act of envy producing an "ejaculation" of the eye; and many reports of the evil eye among Greeks and Greek-Americans use the term *ejaculate* in speaking of preventatives, e.g., ejaculating the phrase "garlic in your eyes" (Lawson 1910:14; Georges 1962:70). The eye shoots forth its rays just as the Egyptian sun, the eye of Horus, emitted its life-force liquid, *Sa*. The sun's rays, according to Ernest Jones (1951b:303), are often regarded as "a symbol of the phallus as well as of semen." The phallic interpretation of the sun with its rising perceived as a metaphorical form of erection was first suggested more than a hundred years ago (Schwartz 1874; cf. Jones 1951b:278, 285) and it certainly puts solar mythology in a new light! What is important in the present context is that the sun is both phallus and eye. Noteworthy also is that *jettatore*, the common term in southern Italy for the possessor of an evil eye, and *ejaculation* come from the same Latin root.

In 1910 Ernest Jones commented, in the course of discussing the power of the eye in hypnotism, on various beliefs in magical fluids

including so-called magnetic fluid. (In this connection it is of interest that a report of the evil eye mechanism in Corsica [Rousseau 1976:6] suggests that the force involved may be a kind of fluid, a fluid that is released after an unguarded compliment or expression of admiration.) Jones noted (1910:239) that the magnetic fluid was principally emitted from the hypnotist's eye; and he suggested that such a belief in the influence of the human eye, for good or ill, had its origin in the notion that the eye and its glance were symbolically regarded as the expression of the male organ and its function. Freud too spoke of "the substitutive relation between the eye and the male member which is seen to exist in dreams and myths and phantasies" (1959:383-84). In the case of the phallus, one is tempted to observe, the glance might come from the glans. If one looks at the glans of a penis, it is not impossible to imagine it as an eye, the urinary meatus serving as a surrogate pupil.

What is startling about this notion is that iconographic representations of the phallus with an eye do occur. A number of scholars have noted the existence of the phallus oculatus (Seligmann 1910:2:28; Servadio 1936:405; Perdrizet 1922:31; Deonna 1965:70), but none have theorized about its significance. The idea of a phallus with an eye is no stranger than contemporary risqué puns on cockeye (Legman 1968:241). Even more germane is some striking evidence from Arabic folk speech. In the fifteenth-century Arabic classic *The Perfumed Garden* (Nefzawi 1963:166, 176), epithets for a man's sexual parts include el aâouar, "the one-eyed," and abou aîne, "he with one eye." The Arabic word for eye is similar to the Hebrew word ayin, which means both "eye" and "well" (Gifford 1958:81). One of the biblical verses used in phylacteries to ward off the evil eye was Genesis 49:22: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well," because of the understood play on words. Joseph and his descendants were fruitful even though next to a well (= eye). The strength of the liquid metaphor even in the twentieth century is perhaps signalled by the fact that "Maiyeh, water, in colloquial Arabic is also used as the name of male semen, the life medium" (Canaan 1929:58).

The folk notion of the penis as the one-eyed also occurs in Walloon folklore. According to an anonymous report in *Kryptadia* (1902:24), a traditional epithet for the phallus is li bwègne, a dialect form of le borgne, which means "one-eyed." We are told that this

remarkable appellation can be understood by the "ressemblance vague que la gland et ses lèvres présentent avec un oeil et ses paupières." However, the resemblance cannot be all that vague if we find the same one-eye idiom in other cultures! The tradition of the Walloon metaphor is confirmed by the reporting of an additional illustration: "sain-ni-s-bwègne," which is explicated as "saigner son borgne, c'est-à-dire pisser." If bleeding or, more figuratively, draining the one-eye refers to urination, then this would certainly support the idea that an eye containing liquid might represent a phallus!

We need not go so far afield as Arabic and Walloon folklore for the idea that a third eye, like a third leg, can be a circumlocution for the phallus. The fact that the phallus is the third eye or leg would be in accord with the phallicism of the number three in Indo-European tradition, with the phallus cum testiculis perceived as a triform cluster (Dundes 1968:420, n.1). The phallus as the one-eyed has been reported in American folklore. One of the "unprintable" folk beliefs from the Ozarks collected by Vance Randolph in 1946 has been published by G. Legman. It concerns the custom of the so-called dumb supper by means of which young women learn the identity of their future husbands. In most versions of the custom, the girls prepare a supper in total silence and then await the arrival of the first male visitor, who is supposedly a spouse-to-be. In Randolph's account of a prank played around the turn of the century, a "local ruffian" overhears the plans of two young girls near Green Forest, Arkansas. Here is part of the story: "Exactly at midnight the two girls sat down and bowed their heads. The door opened very slowly, and in came a big man walking backwards, clad only in a short undershirt. Approaching the table he bent forward, took his enormous tool in hand, and thrust it backwards between his legs, so that it stuck right out over the food on the table. One of the girls screamed and fled into the 'other house' crying 'Maw, maw, he's thar! He's come a long way, an' he's only got one eye!'" (Legman 1975:823). Whether or not the prank actually occurred is immaterial in the present context. What is important is that a narrative collected in 1946 refers to a phallus as a one-eyed man.

Even more striking is the widespread joke reported from both America and Europe in which fleas conceal themselves next day to compare notes. The flea who spent the night in the vagina reports that

a bald-headed, and in some versions a one-eyed, man entered and spat on him (Legman 1968:585-586). This is not only another instance of the phallus described as one-eyed, it also exemplifies the equivalence of spitting and ejaculation.

*Eye
and
phallus*

If a healthy eye, that is, a phallus, can spit or ejaculate, then an unhealthy one cannot. Given this logic, it is not impossible to imagine that a larger, more powerful eye may rob a given eye of its ability to produce liquid, or of the precious liquid itself. The idea that an evil eye absorbs or sucks up liquid as opposed to a good eye, which emits liquid, is paralleled by an analogous folk belief attached to snakes and serpents. La Barre in his insightful discussion of the phallic symbolism of serpents observes that snakes are commonly endowed with such body image features as feathers or hair, despite the fact that "no snake in the world has either hair or feathers" (1962:61). Snakes are also believed to be able to suckle human breasts and to drink milk (La Barre 1962:94; cf. Aarne-Thompson tale type 285, *The Child and the Snake*, in which a snake drinks from the child's milk bottle). The point is that phalluses in the form of snakes or evil eyes are thought to have the power of stealing precious liquids.

If the phallus is the "one-eyed," then it is at least reasonable to speculate that one-eyed objects or persons in folklore might have phallic connotations. The tale of Polyphemus (cf. Aarne-Thompson tale type 1137, *The Ogre Blinded*) might be examined in these terms. Odysseus makes his escape by thrusting a burning mass into the giant's single eye. It may be of interest that one reported technique for removing the threat of an evil eye is to "blind the eye" (Westermarck 1926:1:434-35; Stillman 1970:90), while another entails a "symbolic burning of the eye" (Stillman 1970:85), which would be an extreme form of desiccating it. Analogous perhaps to the rationale of cremation discussed earlier, this technique would remove all liquid from the hostile eye.

With respect to Polyphemus, Comhaire (1958:26) remarks that while Homer consistently speaks of the one eye of the Cyclops, he does mention eyebrows in the plural. This suggests that the eye may be a nonliteral or symbolic one. As early as 1913, Reitler suggested that the eye of Polyphemus represented the father's phallus and that Odysseus's blinding of Cyclops represented a son's castration of his father (cf. Glenn 1978:151-52). Reitler's Freudian discussion began with a consideration of a curious Austrian folk toy. It is a little wooden

man. When his head is pushed down, a potent phallus emerges from under his clothing. Not only does this toy equate the head with the phallus, but the head of the toy has three eyes. Besides the usual two, a third one appears above them right in the middle of the forehead. Reitler assumes the third eye represents the phallus (1913:161).

In folk tradition, the eye of the one-eyed giant is centered (cf. motif F531.1.1.1, Giant with one eye in middle of forehead). Onians presents much evidence to show that the head is the male genital organ displaced upward (1951:109-10, 234, n.6). If the head can represent the male genital organ, and if the phallus is perceived as a single eye, then it would be perfectly appropriate for the eye to be centrally located. One must remember, after all, that single eyes situated in the middle of foreheads do not occur in nature. We are dealing with fantasy. The importance of the middle of the forehead is also signalled by the idea in Lebanese-American custom that a counteractant blue bead (against the evil eye) "to be truly effective should suspend from the forehead to lie between the child's eyes" (Naff 1965:49). The location of the third eye in the middle of the forehead is also paralleled by the efficacy of the middle finger, the so-called *digitus infamis* or *digitus impudicus* (Seligmann 1910:2:183-84), in warding off or curing the ill effects of the evil eye. Typically, spittle is placed on the middle finger and applied to the infant's forehead (Napier 1879:35). The phallus is often considered to be a third leg placed obviously in the middle between the two regular legs.

The equivalence of eye and phallus may be suggested in ancient Egyptian mythology when Horus battles Set. Set tears out one of Horus's eyes and Horus counters by tearing off one of Set's testicles. In this connection, it is interesting that the Eye of Horus presented to the deceased in Egyptian funeral ritual is said to be the one devoured by Set, who later vomited it up (Budge 1909:134-135, 255); and even more significantly, the deceased is told, "The Eye of Horus has been presented unto thee and it shall not be cut off from him by thee" (Budge 1909:128, 245). In a variant text, "The Eye of Horus hath been presented unto thee, and it shall not be cut off from thee" (Budge 1909:184).

In Irish mythology, we find *Balor*, a famous robber, who had an eye in the middle of his forehead (Krappe 1927:1-43). Interestingly enough, *Balor's* was an evil eye and he used it to steal a wonder cow. The use of an evil eye to steal cattle is, of course, very much a part of

the evil eye complex in the Celtic world and elsewhere. The evil Balor is eventually slain by his grandson Lug who, as prophesied, "thrust a red-hot bar into Balor's evil eye and through his skull so that it came out on the other side" (Krappe 1927:4). The antiquity of this notion of a male third eye is suggested by its possible occurrence in Sumer, where Enki (Ea) allegedly bore the epithet "Nun-igi-ku, the god with the gleaming eye." Reportedly this was described as "the god with the holy eye in his forehead" (Van Buren 1955:164, 169). In Indic mythology, Siva has a third eye. In light of the hypothetical phallic association of the eye in the forehead, it is of more than passing interest that Siva's cult consisted largely of the worship of his phallus (O'Flaherty 1975:137). The third eye of Siva has been interpreted in an erotic sense (O'Flaherty 1969).

I should like to suggest a logical, albeit magical, paradigm that also supports the idea that there is a phallic component of the evil eye. The paradigm is based upon the principle of homeopathic magic, in which a form of a dangerous object is itself used as a prophylactic counteragent. In Turkey and surrounding areas, for example, blue eyes are considered to be dangerous, perhaps evil eyes (Westermarck 1926:1:440). Lawson (1910:9), who had blue eyes, reported how difficult this made the conduct of fieldwork in Greece. He was often taken aback at having his ordinary salutation, "Health to you," answered only by the sign of the cross. Yet the color blue in the Near East is also regarded as protective against the evil eye (Westermarck 1926:1:440; Lawson 1910:12-13). The "like against like" principle also applies to eyes themselves. Eye amulets are commonly used (Westermarck 1926:1:459; Elworthy 1958:133). Bonner has noted that "the commonest of all amulets to ward off the evil eye consists of an apotropaic design which has been found on numerous monuments, and which, though subject to slight variations, remains the same through several centuries. It represents the eye, wide open, subjected to various injuries and assailed by a variety of animals, birds and reptiles" (Bonner 1950:97, cf. 211). The technical name of this design, Bonner discovers, is reported in a passage in the *Testament of Solomon*, an important source for the study of demonology dating perhaps from early in the third century (McCown 1922:108). In this passage, each of the thirty-six decans, or segments, of the zodiac is required to tell the king his name, his power, and the means of guarding against him. The thirty-fifth says, "My name is Rhyx

Phtheneoth. I cast the glance of evil at every man. My power is annulled by the graven image of the much suffering eye." Conybeare's translation of the relevant passage (1899:38) is "The thirty-fifth said: 'I am called Phtheneoth. I cast the evil eye on every man. Therefore, the eye much-suffering, if it be drawn, frustrates me.'"

The paradigm then can be sketched as follows. The color blue causes the evil eye but the color blue is used on amulets to ward off the evil eye. An eye causes the evil eye but an image of an eye is used to ward off the evil eye. Now something, that is, something analogous to an algebraic unknown, causes the evil eye, but an amulet or gesture representing a phallus or vulva wards off the evil eye. If our paradigm is valid and our reasoning is correct, then one of the "causes" of the evil eye must be the phallus or vulva.

The horseshoe and crescent moon—charms of both shapes are used to ward off the evil eye—could represent the female genitals. The symbolic equation of eye and female genitals is substantiated by a well-known pretended obscene riddle. A version recounted by Bessie Jones of Georgia to enliven a discussion workshop at a folk festival in Berkeley, California, in 1963, is representative: "What's round and hair all around it and nothin' but water comes out?" The answer is "Your eye." (Cf. riddles 1425, 1426, and 1443-44, "Hair Above, Hair Below" in Taylor 1951.) The vulva as maleficent object would also explain Frachtenberg's observation that "the glance of the eye of a woman during her menstruation period was extremely dreaded by the Zoroastrians" (1918:421). Clearly, a woman who was losing blood, a life fluid, would represent a threat to the life fluids possessed by others (potential victims of the evil eye). According to a limited-good worldview, the loss of menstrual blood would require making up the liquid deficit—at someone else's expense.

The association between the eye and the genital areas may also explain the curious belief that too much coital activity (Meerloo 1971:54) or excessive masturbation will lead to blindness. Masturbatory ejaculation causes a loss of liquid and the eye would reflect this by dimming with each successive loss. Gifford (1958:166) reminds us of Francis Bacon's note that the ancient authorities believed "much use of Venus doth dim the sight." Bacon was puzzled that eunuchs were also dim-sighted but if their organs could not produce semen, then this lack of liquid life force might be responsible for poor vision—at least according to the folk theory. The logic is remarkably

consistent. If the loss of liquid causes blindness, then the addition of liquid can cure blindness. Urine, for example (cf. the trade name of a solution to refresh eyes: *Murine!*), was commonly used to cure the effects of the evil eye as well as for eye diseases generally (Gifford 1958:66). Mother's milk is as effective a form of eye medicine as liquid from a male source. Numerous reports relate that "a few drops of mother's milk directly from the breast is also a favorite remedy for inflamed eyes" (Gordon 1937:313). "If a few drops of his mother's milk are poured into his eyes, the child will have good eyesight" reads a typical Hungarian superstition (Róheim 1952:353). Urine and mother's milk are evidently effective male and female curative fluids.

The phallus or the vulva as a liquid-seeking evil eye would explain why the evil eye is singular. But it may not be entirely clear why a phallus or a vulva should be perceived as liquid-seeking. To understand this, it is necessary to consider an important folk theory of sexuality, namely, that coitus is dangerous and debilitating insofar as it may result in a loss of liquid. Legman refers to the fantasy that "sexual intercourse is 'weakening' to the man, but not to the woman, because he 'loses' a fluid, the semen, which she receives" (1975:653). Legman relates this fantasy to the notion of the succubus. Earlier Ernest Jones (1951b:120) had suggested that "the simple idea of the vital fluid being withdrawn through an exhausting love embrace" was related to the vampire belief. Jones also (1951b:179) cited the fascinating folk belief that the devil has no semen and that "he can impregnate a woman only by having first obtained some semen by acting as a Succubus to a man." The crucial point with respect to the evil eye complex is that it is not farfetched to claim that the eye as phallus or vulva poses a threat to the victim's vital fluids. The widespread idea that hunters should refrain from sexual intercourse just before a hunt (or warriors before a battle or athletes before a game) is very likely related to the notion that a man has a finite amount of energy and this energy might be siphoned off or drained by the female genitals. The empirically observable fact that a man can manage only a limited or finite number of erections, hence sexual acts, within a given period of time while a woman, at least in theory (and fantasy—cf. Legman 1968:356–60 for the "unsatisfiable female"), can indulge in an infinite number of sexual acts might account for the idea that males have "limited good" with respect to semen.

In like manner, the Arab practice of *Imsāk*, the special art of delaying the male orgasm (Nefzawī 1963:30), is probably selfishly intended to decrease the loss of precious semen rather than altruistically increasing the sexual pleasure of females. The idea that "women emit a special fluid at orgasm similar to the semen in men," which Legman calls a superstition "once almost universally believed at the folk level" (1968:403), would encourage such a practice. If the male succeeded in drawing fluid from the female genital while at the same time retaining his own fluid, he would presumably suffer no diminution in the finite amount of his life force. The fact that most males are unable to prevent ejaculation no doubt accounts for the widespread fear of female demons who threaten to suck a male victim dry in one way or another (cf. Legman 1975:134).

This battle of the sexes for precious liquid of life is quite explicit in Chinese sexual theory. In this theory, the Yang-Yin distinction includes a male-female component. According to one authority, the Chinese believed that "while man's semen is strictly limited in quantity, woman is an inexhaustible receptacle of Yin essence" (Weakland 1956:241). Men were supposed to retain their semen insofar as possible and to use the sexual act as a means of "absorbing the woman's Yin essence." According to the folk theory, "this art of sexual intercourse with a woman consists of restraining oneself so as not to ejaculate, thus making one's semen return and strengthen one's brain" (Weakland 1956:240). Since men wanted children (especially sons), they were "supposed to ejaculate only on those days when the woman was most likely to conceive . . . On all other days the man was to strive to let the woman reach orgasm without himself emitting semen. In this way the man would benefit by every coitus because the Yin essence of the woman, at its apex during the orgasm, strengthens his vital power . . ." The goal is absolutely clear. Man was to retain his vital essence while drawing the essence from his female sexual partner. In Chinese folklore, one finds dangerous, beautiful women who delight in draining their male sexual victims dry (Weakland 1956:241–42). While the evil eye was reported "to be no less common amongst the native population of northern China than it was and still is in Europe" (Dennys 1876:49), it seems to be largely absent from China (cf. Seligmann 1910:1:43). But even though the evil eye complex is not a major element in the Chinese folk belief system, the

Chinese perception of coitus in terms of gaining or losing sexual fluids seems to be paralleled by similar folk theories among Indo-European and Semitic peoples.

In Uttar Pradesh in northern India, it is believed (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966:74) that excessive sexual activity may cause minor illness and that "sexual intercourse is thought to make men in particular weak and susceptible to disease because the loss of one drop of semen is considered the equivalent of the loss of 40 drops of blood." Moreover, "the longevity of several men is attributed to complete abstinence in their later years." Clearly the loss of vital fluids through ejaculation is believed to diminish a finite supply of life energy. An Andalusian expression (collected in Andalusia by my colleague Stanley Brandes in 1976) confirms that the same reasoning is traditional in Spain: "Si quieres llegar a viejo, guarda la leche en el pellejo." "If you want to reach old age, keep your semen within your skin."

Essentially the same folk idea is described in Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*.

"For many centuries, men have wanted to know whether early involvement in sexual activity, or high frequency of early activity, would reduce one's capacities in later life. It has been suggested that the duration of one's sexual life is definitely limited, and that ultimate high capacity and long-lived performance depend upon the conservation of one's sexual powers in earlier years. The individual's ability to function sexually has been conceived as a finite quantity which is fairly limited and ultimately exhaustible. One can use up those capacities by frequent activity in his youth, or preserve his wealth for the fulfillment of the later obligations and privileges of marriage" (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948:297).

Kinsey goes on to remark that medical practitioners have sometimes claimed that infertility and erectal impotence were the results of the wastage of sperm through excessive sexual activity in youth and that Boy Scout manuals for decades informed countless youths "that in order 'to be prepared' one must conserve one's virility by avoiding any wastage of vital fluids in boyhood," which presumably was an attempt to appeal to self-interest to curb self-abuse, the common euphemism for masturbation. That a woman's genital area is perceived as a dangerous mouth posing a threat to the male genitals is confirmed not

only by the *vagina dentata* motif (F547.1.1) but perhaps also by the use of the Latin *labia* for the outer and inner folds of skin and mucous membrane of the vulva. *Labia*, of course, means "lips" (cf. La Barre 1962:89n) and lips drink up liquid.

In the context of the evil eye belief complex, I suggest that showing the phallus or making the *fica* gesture (which symbolically shows a phallus in a vagina) affirms the prospective victim's ability to produce semen. The ability to produce a liquid is explicit in a curious detail in Lebanese-American custom. An exorcist who specialized in combating the effects of the evil eye maintained that a child was not cured until he had urinated. She insisted that "no one should kiss a child while he is being read over and not until he has urinated after the eye has been expelled." Asked why this was necessary, she replied, "It's just natural. That's the way it is supposed to be" (Naff 1965:50). From the present perspective, the child's cure from the ill effects of the evil eye is demonstrated by his ability to make water, to produce liquid normally. (This would also be consonant with the fact that urine is sometimes reported to be an effective agent in curing the effects caused by the evil eye [cf. Pitre 1889:245; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Lenowitz 1973:73].) It is, in sum, entirely consonant with the wet-dry hypothesis.

There is yet another way of blinding the evil eye and that is by defecating upon it. An unusual marble bas-relief reported by Millingen in his paper delivered in 1818 shows a man lifting his clothing to allow his bare buttocks to sit upon a large eye, which is also being attacked by a host of animals (cf. Elworthy 1958:138-41; Deonna 1955:93-94; 1965:180). This belongs to the same tradition as the painting unearthed at Pompeii next to a latrine, in which a man squats in a defecating position between two upright serpents next to a woman whose feet are pierced by a sword. Above the squatting man is inscribed *Cacator cave malum* (Magaldi 1931:97; cf. Deonna 1955:94). Seligmann (1910:1:302-3) notes that excrement is sometimes used to counteract the effects of the evil eye, e.g., in the case of a cow whose milk has gone dry, but he does not attempt to explain why excrement should be so used. Róheim (1955:28-31) suggests that "the magical value of excrement is based on the infantile anal birth theory" in which very young children equate the act of defecation with the act of giving birth. Thus, according to Róheim, "The defecating child is the mother; the excrement, the child." Róheim remarks that

in Scotland, a calf can be protected against the evil eye if some of its mother's dung is put into its mouth (1955:25); and he interprets this as meaning the witch cannot "eat" the child with her evil eye because the child is eating the witch (bad mother, excrement). Says Róheim, "To possess the evil eye means to have oral aggression or a desire to eat the child" (1955:7). If the production of feces is equivalent to giving birth to a child, then defecation could be construed as an alternate means of proving one's fertility. But like spitting, the act of defecation can also have an insulting aspect. Defecating on the evil eye could also be a means of repudiating and defiling it. If the eye were that of an all-powerful and ever-watchful parent or all-seeing god, then a child (or an adult considering himself a child vis-à-vis his parents or a deity) might take pleasure in depositing feces in or on that eye (cf. Jones 1951b:176).

Deonna (1965:183) reminds us of a formula employed in Asia Minor by a mother attempting to keep the evil eye away from her child. The mother addresses the possible possessor of the evil eye as follows: "Que ton oeil soit derrière de mon enfant." Deonna wonders if wishing that the eye be positioned at the child's rear might be related to the curious custom of painting an eye at the bottom of chamber pots sold at fairs. Such chamber pots are reported in England, Scotland, and France, among other places, where they are commonly used in wedding customs (Monger 1975). In Stockport, Cheshire, a premarriage ceremony includes the groom's friends presenting him with a chamber pot. It is decorated with the names of the bride and groom and a large eye is painted on the bottom of it with the words "I can see you" (Monger 1975:52). Later the man and his friends take the pot to a tavern and everyone drinks from it. In Scotland, a chamber pot filled with salt was given as a wedding present to the groom. Miniature chamber pots were sold at the Aberdeen market in the mid 1930s "usually inscribed with the words 'For me and my girl' or with an eye at the bottom" (Monger 1975:56-57).

Van Gennep (1932:I:161-162) reported French versions of the custom, including one called *Saucée* (which one is tempted to translate as "soused" or "wet through"), from Revel-Tourdan in the Dauphiné district, in which melted chocolate was poured into a chamber pot with an eye design at the bottom in such a way as to leave the eye clear. After the chocolate hardened, other ingredients were

added, such as white wine or champagne, grated chocolate, balls of chocolate, creams, etc. The concoction was taken later to the nuptial chamber after the bride and groom were considered to be asleep. The bride had to drink first, then the groom. Monger (1975:58) suggests a possible though admittedly highly speculative, connection to a supposed ancient eye-goddess cult in the Middle East (Crawford). However, it is more likely that it and the Scottish custom mentioned above are vestigial fertility rituals. Salt, as Ernest Jones convincingly demonstrated, is a symbolic substitute for semen (1951a:22-109), and thus a chamber pot filled with salt is a container full of semen given to the groom. Newlyweds are especially concerned with performing the sexual act satisfactorily. Tournay and Plazak observe that "the nuptial pair may fear impotence, frigidity and sterility" and that apotropaic charms are used to demonstrate that the threatened genitalia are safe (1954:491-92). If the eye at the bottom of the chamber pot represents the parental or peer group's attempt to observe the first connubial act of intercourse (cf. the words "I can see you") then the act of pouring in chocolate (a sweet, sublimated substitute for feces) might be analogous to defecating upon the evil eye.

If the evil eye represents the threat of impotence and/or the lack or loss of the necessary sexual fluids, then it would make sense to drink from an evil eye container. The chamber pot, an obvious receptacle for the passing of liquid, is converted through ritual reversal into a drinking goblet allowing for the incorporation of a potent liquid. (The ritual may also signal that a part of the body hitherto associated primarily with excretion will be employed in a new and different way.)

In the context of defecating upon the evil eye, it might be worth conjecturing that the common drinking toast "Here's mud in your eye" may stem from the same psychological source. The person who drinks is incorporating the liquid of life. The liquid is taken at someone else's expense. This other person, rather than taking in vital fluid, receives the end product of digestive incorporation in his eye. Certainly the above-mentioned wish "May your eye be at the posterior of my child" is not all that different from "Here's mud in your eye."

In terms of the possible symbolism of body parts, it is conceivable that the anus could constitute a metaphorical eye. This is suggested by a number of standard joke texts. One traced by Legman back to the

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late eighteenth century tells of a man who puts his artificial glass eye in a glass of water before retiring and swallows it by mistake. He visits a proctologist who after examining him exclaims, "I've been looking up these things for thirty years, but this is the first time anyone ever looked back at me!" (Legman 1975:515). Another involves a drunk who attempts to convince a bartender that he is sober: "Drunk? Hell, I'm not drunk. I can see. Look at that cat coming in the door there. It's got only one eye, hasn't it?" The bartender replies that the cat has two eyes, and besides, it is not coming in but going out (Legman 1975:822). In both Italian and Spanish, there are metaphorical references to the anus as an eye. From Liguria in Italy, we have the following example. A young girl refused to drink her coffee because she noticed coffee grounds in it. Her mother asked, "Ti ae puia che o te o l'euggio de cu?" which might be rendered "Are you afraid that it will stop up the eye of your ass?" i.e., cause constipation. Similarly, ojo means culo in Andalusia. In this connection one recalls Chaucer's reference at the end of his celebrated Miller's Tale to duped Absolon kissing Alison's "naked ers" with the words "And Absolon hath kissed hir nether ye." The nether eye was thus known in the fourteenth century.

To the extent that the evil eye has an anal cast, it would be perfectly reasonable to confront a threatening anus with anal power. In this light, an unusual Spanish ritual and charm against the evil eye might be cited (Diego Cuscoy 1969:502). According to this account, since individuals who give the evil eye are generally known as such, one turns a child's back or an animal's butt towards them when they are seen approaching. Then one thinks mentally or recites in a low voice the following text:

Tres garbanzitos
tiene en el culo:
quitale dos,
déjale uno.

Virate p'al monte
virate p'al mar,
virate el culo
y déjalo andar.

Three little chick peas
He has in the ass;
Away with two
Leave one.

Turn towards the mountain
Turn towards the sea
Turn your ass
And let it go.

This would seem to be consistent with the *Cacator cave malum* pattern noted earlier.

Most folklorists eschew symbolic analysis, and they may therefore be skeptical of the analysis of the evil eye proposed in this essay. But even leaving aside the symbolic considerations, one cannot avoid the obvious psychological aspects of the evil eye. Sometimes the possessor of an evil eye used the power for both psychological and mercenary advantage. In Scotland, fear of the evil eye led people to bribe or buy off the potential evil eye inflictor (Maclagan 1902:30-31, 47). One informant reported that Mrs. MacE. "was believed to have the Evil Eye very strongly, and people would do almost anything rather than offend her, so general was the impression that she could injure any person if she wished to do so" (Maclagan 1902:69). There are similar accounts from Italy. "I know also a most disagreeable woman whose daily task of running errands is made profitable by propitiatory tips, lest she blight her patrons, their children, or their cattle" (Mather 1910:42). In America (Gordon 1937:219), "one case in Philadelphia came up before a magistrate recently in which a dark-haired little old Italian woman was terrorizing the neighborhood. For many years she had extracted large sums of money from those who came under the influence of the evil eye. She also sold charms made out of bones of the dead, articles of ivory, stones, and herbs, wrapped in rag bags." These are surely examples of transforming what might be a liability into a kind of asset.

Occasionally, there have been attempts to put the power of the evil eye to good use. One of the most unusual of these attempts took place in Sassari in Sardinia near the end of the last century. According to the report (Edwardes 1889:326-27), the evil eye was enlisted to battle a plague of locusts: "Not long ago, Sassari elected a mayor who openly

scoffed at the priests. This gentleman was not, however, a thorough type of the modern Sassarese. For though he condemned religion, he was sufficiently in the thrall of superstition to give his earnest sanction to the employment of a youth gifted with the evil eye. The country happened to be plagued with locusts. There was no remedy except the evil eye. And so the lad was perambulated about the district, and bidden to look his fiercest at the insufferable ravagers of vineyards, gardens, and the rich orchards of the north. Even when the locusts remained unmoved by this infliction, the mayor's faith in the remedy was unchanged. They had requisitioned an 'evil eye' of comparative impotency, that was all. It behooved them, therefore, to find a person better gifted than the lad they had used."

Evidently, humans are more likely to be intimidated by the evil eye than locusts are. In 1957, a committee of the U.S. Senate charged with investigating possible connections between organized crime and labor interviewed an Italian racketeer from New York City. The committee was told that the evil eye had been used to keep unhappy employees on the job. According to Gifford's account (1958:103), the racketeer was hired by one employer simply to come in once or twice every week or so to glare at the employees. The employer found that it was enough to have this individual come in and look at the workers to keep them at their work.

Most of the time, however, the possessor of the evil eye is shunned and ignored. In Morocco, "A person who is reputed to have an evil eye . . . is not allowed to take part in feasts or gatherings . . . he must not pitch his tent near the tents of others" (Westermarck 1926:426). Like accusations of witchcraft, accusations of possessing the evil eye give social sanction to ostracizing an individual, often transforming him into a pariah. Pitre (1889:247) is one of the relatively few scholars to express sympathy for the poor soul who may be unfortunate enough to be victimized by an accusation of possessing the evil eye: "The *jettatore* has no name, no friends, nor the possibility of a social life . . ."

The evil eye, like so many forms of human custom and superstition, is condemned automatically by so-called educated members of Western elite societies. But it should be realized that the evil eye, like most customs, serves an invaluable projective function. When an infant becomes ill or dies, there is potentially a great deal of guilt and shame felt by parents. The evil eye belief complex provides a nearly

foolproof mechanism that allows the anxious parents to shift the responsibility and blame for the misfortune upon someone else, perhaps even a total stranger whose eyes are a different color from the parents'. Similarly, if a cow's milk dries up or a favorite fruit tree withers, it is not the fault of the owner of the cow or the tree: the evil eye caused these calamities.

Even the diagnostic and protective techniques involved in the evil eye belief complex may provide important psychological supports. A small child who feels ill is assured of a great deal of parental attention. In Italian and Italian-American tradition, a bowl or shallow dish filled with water and a drop of olive oil may be placed on his head to determine whether or not his discomfort has been caused by the evil eye. Whether the child or parents believe in the efficacy of the procedure or not, most children surely enjoy being the cynosure of all eyes. Thus whatever evil results from the evil eye, there is also a beneficial aspect of the belief complex.

The concern in this essay has been not so much with the evil eye per se, but with the attempt to understand the folk ideas or worldview principles underlying it. The delineation of the wet-dry opposition and the idea of limited good is, however, not just an idle intellectual exercise. There are applications to be made that may lead to a better understanding of cultural differences. For example, in the United States, the idea of limited good is not as common as in the Old World. Instead, it has been argued that an idea of unlimited good prevails (Dundes 1971). In theory (as opposed to practice), there is enough "good" for everyone to have his fair share. One could also argue that the collective guilt felt by citizens of the United States for their relatively high standard of living accounts for their attempts to "tip" less fortunate countries by offering them substantial foreign aid. Just as many wealthy individuals turn to philanthropy as a means of salving their consciences (for enjoying the possession of more goods than they need for simple survival) so the have-nations feel impelled to help the have-nots by offering grain surpluses and other aid.

But there are some substantive differences. In American culture, praise is not only permitted but expected. One can praise the beauty of an infant or a friend's new house or dress without giving offense or causing anxiety. But Americans need to remember when they travel in other parts of the Indo-European and Semitic world that praise can be considered threatening. When a new acquaintance literally gives a

visiting American the shirt off his back (which the American may have admired), it is not necessarily because of friendship so much as because of fear of the evil eye. By the same token, Americans, who from infancy are accustomed to hearing and receiving lavish praise for even the slightest deed, should not be offended when praise is not forthcoming from colleagues from cultures in which belief in the evil eye remains a vital force. One American woman married to an eastern European told me she had never understood why her in-laws so rarely praised her or her children. She took it personally, not realizing that their unwillingness to indulge in the public praising so common among Americans might have been due to the cultural imperatives demanded by the evil eye complex. To praise is to invite disaster in evil eye cultures.

The contrast between American conventions of socialization and those of evil eye cultures is quite pronounced. American children are typically asked to perform and show off in front of family and friends (and sometimes even strangers). Not so in evil eye cultures. The case of the Syrian and Lebanese Americans is instructive. "Experience taught that to show off a 'smart' child in front of people, especially strangers, is to invite the eye to strike him" (Naff 1965:49). The same is reported for northern India: "Because of the belief in the evil eye, a visitor who followed the American custom of admiring the baby, praising its unusual healthiness, good looks, or well-kept appearance would cause panic rather than pride, and a village mother would no more show off her baby to the admiration of a visitor than an American mother would deliberately expose an infant to a contagious disease" (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966:111-12).

For most of the Indo-European and Semitic world, the philosophy articulated by Herodotus and Horace prevails with respect to fame and fortune and the praise thereof. Herodotus in Book VII, chapter 10, of the *Persian Wars* speaks of lightning striking the tallest trees. "See how god with his lightning always smites the bigger animals, and will not suffer them to wax insolent, while those of a lesser bulk chafe him not. How likewise his bolts fall ever on the highest houses and the tallest trees. So plainly does he love to bring down everything that exalts itself." Horace says, "It is the mountaintop that the lightning strikes" (*Odes* 2.10). A low profile is essential to avoid the envy of one's peers or the gods. Certainly one element of the evil eye complex is the "fear of success" (Haimowitz and Haimowitz 1966). This is

analogous to the underdog theme in American culture—politicians and athletic teams prefer to be the underdog because they ardently believe that front runners and the favored are likely to be overtaken and defeated. In the same ode Horace says, "Whoever cultivates the golden mean avoids both the poverty of a hovel and the envy of a palace." This is an ideal—to be neither envied nor envier.

One needs enough liquid to live but that means not too little and not too much. But eventually the finite amount is depleted. "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." If drying is dying, then death is dust. The American slang idiom "to bite the dust" reflects not only the convulsive act of a dying man whose mouth may touch the earth, but also the same wet-dry continuum that I have suggested underlies the whole evil eye belief complex.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, ideas of the after life include a solution to the problem of the imagined thirst of the dead. For heaven or paradise or the promised land is one which flows with milk and honey (Genesis 3:6, Exodus 33:3, Jeremiah 11:5, etc.). The phrase "and the hills shall flow with milk" (Joel 3:18) strongly suggests that there may be an infantile prototype for this metaphor, namely, the initial postnatal breast-feeding constellation. In the idealized afterlife, one is finally safe from the evil eye. Here there is plenty of milk and honey—enough for an eternity of replenishment. With unlimited liquid, one is free to enjoy life eternal. On the other hand, in hell, we have excessive heat—fire and water are presumably in opposition. And one thinks of the plight of the unfortunate Tantalus, perpetually consumed by thirst he is unable to slake because the waters cruelly recede whenever he bends down to drink.

In conclusion, it seems reasonable to argue that the wet-dry opposition is just as important as the hot-cold opposition, which has been frequently studied by anthropologists and students of the history of medicine. Perhaps it is even more important. Classical humoral pathology in fact included all four distinctions: heat, dryness, moistness, and cold (cf. Story 1860:697, Lloyd 1964). In this connection, it is noteworthy that a reported native classification of foods in northern India included hot, cold, dry, and wet (Minturn and Hitchcock 1966:73). If the wet-dry distinction does underlie the evil eye belief, then the distribution and age of the complex would tend to suggest that the wet-dry opposition is much older than its articulation among the ancient Greeks concerned with humoral pathology.

Rather, it would appear that the formulations of humoral pathology simply formalized a folk theory already in existence. One must keep in mind that all of the so-called humors were fluids, and for that matter, the term *humor* itself comes from the Latin *umor*, meaning "fluid" or "moisture." It is even possible that the idea of an exceptionally dry sense of humor might imply that the normal state of humor was wet!

Foster (1978) has assumed that the wet-dry distinction has disappeared in Latin America. He asks, "But why have the moist/dry qualities disappeared—apparently everywhere—in contemporary systems?" Foster answers his own question by suggesting that the moist-dry component so basic to classical humor pathology is less critical than the hot-cold distinction. "Heat and cold, and not moistness or dryness, are the primary causes of illness," argues Foster, who is, of course, speaking only of conscious articulation of theories of illness causation. If the wet-dry opposition is related to the evil eye belief complex (not to mention beliefs about the dead), one might take issue with the idea that the wet-dry distinction has disappeared and also with the idea that it is less critical than the hot-cold dichotomy with respect to folk theories of disease. On the contrary, I believe there is ample evidence to support the notion that the opposition between wet and dry is a fundamental folk idea, albeit an unconscious one, in Indo-European and Semitic worldview, a folk idea which is, metaphorically at any rate, a matter of life and death. With respect to the ideal of moderation, I can only hope in closing that my argument holds water but that my ideas are not all wet. God forbid that anyone who disagrees with me should give me a withering look, or tell me to go dry up and blow away.

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