Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life: An Anagogic Interpretation

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LEHI'S VISION OF THE TREE OF LIFE:
AN ANAGOGIC INTERPRETATION

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of English
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Julie Adams Maddox
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This thesis, by Julie Adams Maddox is accepted in its present form by the Department of English of Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Foreward

Lehi's Vision of the Tree of Life

1 Nephi 8

1. And it came to pass that we had gathered together all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind.

2. And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision.

3. And behold, because of the thing which I have seen, I have reason to rejoice in the Lord because of Nephi and Sam; for I have reason to suppose that they, and also many of their seed, will be saved.

4. But behold, Laman and Lemuel, I fear exceedingly because of you; for behold, methought I saw in my dream, a dark and dreary wilderness.

5. And it came to pass that I saw a man, and he was dressed in a white robe; and he came and stood before me.

6. And it came to pass that he spake unto me, and bade me follow him.

7. And it came to pass that as I followed him I beheld myself that I was in a dark and dreary waste.

8. And after I had traveled for the space of many hours in the darkness, I began to pray unto the Lord that he would have mercy on me, according to the multitude of his tender mercies.

9. And it came to pass after I had prayed unto the Lord I beheld a large and spacious field.

10. And it came to pass that I beheld a tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy.
11. And it came to pass that I did go forth and partake of the fruit thereof; and I beheld that it was most sweet, above all that I ever before tasted. Yea, and I beheld that the fruit thereof was white, to exceed all the whiteness that I had ever seen.

12. And as I partook of the fruit thereof it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit.

13. And as I cast my eyes round about, that perhaps I might discover my family also, I beheld a river of water; and it ran along, and it was near the tree of which I was partaking the fruit.

14. And I looked to behold from whence it came; and I saw the head thereof a little way off; and at the head thereof I beheld your mother Sariah, and Sam, and Nephi; and they stood as if they knew not whither they should go.

15. And it came to pass that I beckoned unto them; and I also did say unto them with a loud voice that they should come unto me, and partake of the fruit, which was desirable above all other fruit.

16. And it came to pass that they did come unto me and partake of the fruit also.

17. And it came to pass that I was desirous that Laman and Lemuel should come and partake of the fruit also; wherefore, I cast mine eyes towards the head of the river that perhaps I might see them.

18. And it came to pass that I saw them, but they would not come unto me and partake of the fruit.

19. And I beheld a rod of iron, and it extended along the bank of the river, and led to the tree by which I stood.

20. And I also beheld a strait and narrow path, which came along by the rod of iron, even to the tree by which I stood; and it also led by the head of the fountain, unto a large and spacious field, as if it had been a world.

21. And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree by which I stood.

22. And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree.
23. And it came to pass that there arose a mist of darkness; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost.

24. And it came to pass that I beheld others pressing forward, and they came forth and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press forward through the mist of darkness, clinging to the rod of iron, even until they did come forth and partake of the fruit of the tree.

25. And after they had partaken of the fruit of the tree they did cast their eyes about as if they were ashamed.

26. And I also cast my eyes round about, and beheld, on the other side of the river of water, a great and spacious building; and it stood as it were in the air, high above the earth.

27. And it was filled with people, both old and young, both male and female; and their manner of dress was exceedingly fine; and they were in the attitude of mocking and pointing their fingers toward those who had come at and were partaking of the fruit.

28. And after they had tasted of the fruit they were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost.

29. And now, I Nephi, do not speak all the words of my father.

30. But, to be short in writing, behold, he saw other multitudes pressing forward; and they came and caught hold of the end of the rod of iron; and they did press their way forward, continually holding fast to the rod of iron, until they came forth and fell down and partook of the fruit of the tree.

31. And he also saw other multitudes feeling their way towards that great and spacious building.

32. And it came to pass that many were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from his view, wandering in strange roads.

33. And great was the multitude that did enter into that strange building. And after they did enter into that building they did point the finger of scorn at me and those that were partaking of the fruit also; but we heeded them not.

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34. These are the words of my father: For as many as heeded them, had fallen away.

35. And Laman and Lemuel partook not of the fruit, said my father.

36. And it came to pass after my father had spoken all the words of his dream or vision, which were many, he said unto us, because of these things which he saw in a vision, he exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel; yea, he feared lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord.

37. And he did exhort them then with all the feeling of a tender parent, that they would hearken to his words, that perhaps the Lord would be merciful to them, and not cast them off; yea, my father did preach unto them.

38. And after he had preached unto them, and also prophesied unto them of many things, he bade them to keep the commandments of the Lord; and he did cease speaking unto them.
Chapter One
Introduction

When one imagines to have felt the exhilaration of renewal, one is certainly the last to know whether such a change actually took place or whether one is just restating, in a slightly different mode, earlier and unresolved obsessions.

Paul de Man

My study of the tree of life has been a rebirthing. By rebirthing I mean the lengthy process that opened my mind to the depth and dynamics of a symbol and to the reaches of the mind—a rebirthing that rekindled my love for literature. The tree, in fact, signifies rebirth. The regenerative powers of the tree can be seen in tree mythology. Christianity worships a Christ who hung on a cross—a tree—that mankind might be reborn. The Scandinavian god Odin hung himself upon the great Ash Yggdrassil for nine days to obtain great knowledge and immortality. Frazer takes the title of his work *The Golden Bough* from the branch that enables Aeneas to cross the threshold of death yet return to life.

Myth, folklore, and poetry contain so much tree imagery that it is not surprising to find the tree with its mythical implications in scripture. Biblical prophets condemn worship of Ashteroth, the tree goddess, yet the Genesis tree itself symbolizes life—forever. Tree
imagery is particularly important to the Latter-day Saint scriptural companion to the Bible, the Book of Mormon.

Lehi's dream of the tree of life in the eighth chapter of the book serves the Book of Mormon as "the key to understanding its typological or figural unity" (Jorgensen 18). Lehi tells his sons he dreamed he was traveling a difficult course to the tree that proffered the fruit of life (1 Nephi 8). Jorgensen identifies the dream as a "simple transformation: from dark and barren waste by means of the Word to a world fruitful and filled with light." Jorgensen then briefly summarizes several Book of Mormon narratives that develop according to the same transformation pattern (19).

By eating of the life fruit in dream, Lehi opens the matrix of life for himself and his progeny. Lehi's dream serves as myth that creates a culture because it "supplies models for human behavior and, by that very fact, gives meaning and value to life" (Eliade, Myth 1-2). Because the dream holds the culture together, the dream serves as myth, or world view; the dream as myth creates a culture.

Some contemporary critics perceptively identify the tree as a unifying function for both myth and literary structures. In a superb analysis of Finnegans Wake, Brivic analyzes the tree as having a "key role in refining the structure of the letter in the Wake, which is at once the structure of the book of God, of the eternal family,
and of Joyce's presence in his work" (7). Tusken sees the tree as structural unity and the key to Hesse's *Narziss und Goldmund* (250).

Other symbolic implications of the tree point to kinship, divinity, death, love, and a symbolic guide for the self. Critics such as Clayton A. and JoAnne T. Hubbs trace mythic elements in Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*. They identify the tree as the love goddess of transformation from life to death. Claire Russell, a folklorist, says the tree symbolizes kinship (217-233). Russell also believes that the power of the tree is due to the tree's original place in "human food production and human settlement" (217-220). Scriptural texts, replete with tree imagery, counsel man to see the tree as symbolic spiritual nourishment that leads man to knowledge of the self. The Asvattha, the Bhagavad Gita life tree, exemplifies the value of the tree as spiritual nourishment. The Asvattha grows upside down: its branches plunge into soil and its roots grow out of the sky. The roots suck nourishment from the highest heaven; the branches reach and nourish the human planes. Vision of the Asvattha leads one to knowledge of the ultimate self (*Bhagavad Gita* 314-315). If man follows the pattern of the Asvattha, he will obtain heavenly nourishment to sustain and enrich human life.
The tree may represent kinship, divinity, death, love, or a guide to the self. Yet, however varied these trees may seem, a deep meaning of life unites them. The kinship-tree signifies life branching out from parents to children, perhaps to endless posterity. The divinity-tree signifies man's desire to live immortally, for the tree represents a rich and lengthy life. The death-tree signifies a death requisite to renewed life. The love-tree fills and encourages life. The tree that guides the soul teaches man to nourish his own life with both earthly and heavenly sustenance. In all its variations, the tree represents the beauty and power of life.

By studying the life tree of the LDS scripture, a symbol pregnant with meaning for my own culture, I assume an ambivalent critical stance. I lack a certain critical distance, yet I know the culture. This ambivalence, however, enables me to study the tree. Despite my cultural background, I am distanced from Lehi's intimate dream because I can only interpret what he might have experienced. Bachelard emphasizes that dreaming and philosophizing differ from each other. "Dreaming reveries and thinking thoughts are certainly two disciplines that are hard to reconcile" (Reverie 177). What Lehi dreamed in entirety I cannot know, and I am limited to a study of his experience by looking at a text. Still, the text, though not the actual dream experience, outlasts Lehi's
family and generations of his posterity, and it engenders purpose for millions of LDS members today.

To understand the tree symbol, it is necessary to reduce distance. Lehi envisions the tree because he overcomes distance. When Lehi separates himself from his own culture and penetrates the center of the tree symbol, the symbol lives. He is ostracized from Jerusalem, and in dream he is isolated from his family. The dream isolates him because he is the only one who experiences the tree; the others do not have his dream. The isolation forces him to know the symbol; only when his family or others experience the tree can they understand the symbol.

Lehi's vision awakens in him a powerful inner desire. Suffering in great darkness, he desires escape--and receives it. Upon sighting the tree, he desires to reach it and eat its fruit--and actually does eat it. After eating, he desires his family to share the fruit with him--some do and some do not. Upon his awakening and telling the dream, his dream becomes myth (true story or cultural model) that consequently creates a culture.

Lehi's dream bespeaks an engendering desire that expresses itself as rebirth. Bachelard defines such desire as appetite that determines the value of existence.

For every appetite, there is a world. The dreamer then participates in the world by nourishing himself from one of the substances of
the world, a dense or rare, warm or gentle substance clear or full of penumbra according to the temperament of his imagination. And when a poet comes to help the dreamer in renewing the beautiful images of the world, the dreamer accedes to cosmic health. (Reverie 175)

Bachelard is also careful to point out that after dreaming, the dreamer may deny the reality of his experience. "Upon his return from such reveries, one hardly dares say he has dreamed that big" (Reverie 176-177). Paul de Man agrees when he says that man cannot know the actuality of renewal (xii).

Lehi's designating his experience as a dream or a vision indicates an uncertainty common to reverie. If, after dreaming, man cannot clearly label his experience, how can he or anyone verify it? Yet both its symbolism and its concealed desire continue to haunt the dreamer, simultaneously empowering him to live.

Although many reasons affect my choosing to study Lehi's life tree, perhaps the most significant factor is the fact that Lehi's life tree represents my own desire for life. Paul de Mann maintains that "prior to making any valid statement about a distant society, the observing subject must be as clear as possible about his own" (7). The tree is Lehi's experience, yet it also represents my
inner desire for indestructible being. The tree is,
paradoxically, mine though not mine at all.

Though I will concentrate on the tree's meaning as a
life-engendering power, I am forced to eliminate several
intriguing and equally valid topics. Discussing these
four topics is beyond the scope of this work, but
outlining them should help create an overview of the
symbolic possibilities of the tree.

1. Tree as kinship symbol, birth and love. Lehi's
dream deals with an intense family movement. His family
flees the Jerusalem society to eventually establish its
own culture in a new land. Lehi's tree represents both
ancestry and progeny that continue growing, establishing
permanence. I do discuss the question of the tree as
kinship briefly. My chapter on vision concludes that the
only way Lehi could achieve meaningful life-expression was
by leaving the dream to create a new culture. Instead of
returning to Jerusalem to renew the society, he creates a
greater life by producing progeny. But I do not detail
the tree's meaning as a family symbol. In Lehi's case,
the family appears to represent an ultimate culture.

In the African folktale The Magic Tree, Mavungu, a
rejected twin, is confronted by a large magic tree
(McDermott). Each time he plucks a leaf, it becomes a
person. The leaf-to-man incident illustrates an ancient
belief that man came from trees and tree from man. What
does this belief tell us about birth? These beliefs open questions about love within the family and a beyond-family phenomenon--creation of a new culture.

2. Tree, death, and sacrifice. Tree mythology abounds in examples of self-sacrifice. My studies, however brief on the subject of sacrifice, provoke manifold questions. Although neither my text nor I directly address sacrifice, my third chapter shows that vision itself is a transcendent suffering, an act of self-sacrifice. Although I cannot discuss this issue in detail, I touch this question in my analysis of the term dream-vision and in looking at death as one form of life power.

The tree and its connections with death and sacrifice also raises questions about guilt and restoration of order. To renew cultural order, cultures often sacrifice a scapegoat on a tree. A scapegoat, able and willing to represent the community's guilt, may assume guilt to different degrees--perhaps in relevance to his own guilt. The symbol invites a study of guilt. The symbol also represents a connection between sacrifice and new life, as symbolized by Christ crucified on the cross to allow man rebirth. Campbell lists Jesus, Attis, and Wotan as cosmic figures attached to the cosmic tree or universe (41).

3. Tree as cultural model. Many individuals and cultures see a life tree as a cultural model. Three
prominent figures in the LDS religion dream similar dreams. Lehi, his son Nephi, and Joseph Smith Sr, the father of the first LDS prophet, all receive morphologically similar dreams. The similarities might encourage some to discredit the dreams. I believe that the tree is an almost universal symbol, yet I do not concern myself with questions of origin or historical validity. I read my text, 1 Nephi 8, on its merits as a valid literary symbol that structures a book and the current LDS religion. I see Lehi's tree of life as a literary verbal structure.

4. The tree's relationship to other life symbols. A study of the relationship between the tree and other life symbols would be appropriate to my thesis. In myth, the tree often grows within or near water. Lehi's tree overlooks a fountain that leads to death. Generally a benevolent or life symbol, water here opposes the tree.

The book of Revelation describes a tree whose trunk stands in and around crystalline waters (22:1-2). Mavungu, of The Magic Tree, meets the tree as it blocks passageway down the river. After Mavungu transforms the leaves into people, the group travels down the river to a magnificent village. The symbolic life tree promises valuable study in its connection with other life symbolism.
Other life symbols have close affinity with the tree. Jung's *Symbols of Transformation* contains a Hittite relief with the winged sun-moon disk resting above the tree (plate 9a). An Egyptian bronze vessel portrays the sun disk on top of the goddess-life tree (plate 31). Neumann speaks of the tree as a symbol of the elemental light and dark opposition. The light fruit luminesces from the darkness of the night tree (*Great Mother* 57). Because my study is limited, I can only propose the value of further study exploring the relationship between life symbols.

My purpose is to use myth analysis as an academic method to interpret Lehi's dream. I do not work with Lehi's tree in relation to the LDS culture or theology. I have gained an enriched view of the LDS culture, and any reader may consider the dream in relation to his own culture. These considerations are a reader's personal experience. My purpose is to open the world of the tree of life.

The Opposition, Power, and Vision of the Life Tree

In my thesis I analyze Lehi's tree as a life engendering power. Lehi has taken his family out of Jerusalem to avoid destruction. Lehi's sons bring Ishmael's family to provide wives "that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise" (1 Nephi 7:1). The group travels in the wilderness for several years, during which time Lehi dreams that he travels
through a dreary wilderness and eventually eats the fruit of a life tree. After his dream, he counsels his children to seek the tree. If they do not follow the path to the tree, he fears "lest they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord" (1 Nephi 8).

My reading of Lehi's dream indicates the following pattern: Lehi travels a course of opposition toward the tree, confronts symbolic death, and by suffering in vision, opens the symbolic rebirth. My thesis accordingly attempts such an explication of the tree. In Chapter 2, Opposition: The Way to The Tree, I undertake the journey to the tree. In Chapter 3, Power: Death as the Key to Life Power, I see the symbol as essential death leading to rebirth. In Chapter 4, Vision: Suffering the Symbolic Tree of Eternal Becoming, I discuss the suffering required to experience the visionary symbol of life.

Each chapter has grown out of my work with myth, tree mythology, and a personal reading of Lehi's dream. My work with myth includes background readings from Eliade, Jung, Freud, Girard, Canetti, de Mann, Neumann, Frazer, Graves, Campbell, Frye, and Bachelard. Several of the preceding works, along with a catalogue by Porteous, provide a wealth of information on tree mythology. These readings have complemented my reading of Lehi's dream.
Opposition: The Way to the Tree.

Mythical information on the principle of opposites is sparse. In *Psychology and Alchemy* and in *Symbols of Transformation*, Jung says that consciousness is born when man first perceives opposites. Jung continues that opposition is characteristic of every development in the psychic state. Opposition is "a way of life itself" (*Alchemy* 43).

Whereas man often defines opposition as absolute extremes, Jung sees opposition nontraditionally, as a dynamic growth. Consciousness, or symbolic creation, begins by division into opposites that must eventually be reconciled. His studies designate opposition as stages of transformation. Consequently, while man might see the moon as an image that opposes the sun, Jung would see that it might also oppose the night. The differing pairs of opposition reveal stages of transformation.

Opposition is significant in tree mythology because so many trees represent an explicit or implicit opposition. The tree manifests opposite powers. The tree or forest can be a place of worship or rescue. Frazer designates sacred groves as some of the earliest places of worship (127). Porteous also believes groves were early sanctuaries (45).

The forest is also a place of rescue. Sir Launfal, a knight at the round table, after having difficulties with
Gwennere, received comfort and rescue by the beautiful dame Tryamour in a "fair forest" (Porteous 23-24).

In contrast to worship and rescue, forests also present possible destruction. Porteous recounts narratives of several travelers who describe a forest as a place of mystery that gave them eerie, gloomy feelings of being watched (15-16). In the folktale Hansel and Gretel, the wicked step mother leads the two children into the forest to lose them.

The forest, having a soul-like power, may also discriminate between the opposites of good and bad. In Hansel and Gretel, the forest eventually destroyed the wicked and redeemed the innocent children. "The Castle of the Sun," a folktale from Brittany, tells of unworthy sons who unsuccessfully confront the forest, while the worthy son and daughter successfully travel through the forest. The two youngest children are "treated as drudges." The daughter escapes and, unknown to the rest, is happily married. When the older sons search for the daughter, they lose themselves in a wide forest. Eventually they are lucky to return home. The youngest son, having suffered as did his sister, wanders through the forest but is guided to find his sister (Porteous 25-26).

In Perrault's "The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood," the trees, briars, and thorns let no one pass. When the prince arrives, the forest parts, letting him through to
the princess. As soon as he reaches the castle, the growth closes behind him (Porteous 32-33).

Trees may also represent good or evil beings.

Some [beings] possessed benevolent qualities, seeking to do good to mankind, while others were of a malevolent disposition, ever trying to work harm. Among the former may be mentioned the Fairies and other genial spirits, and the latter class comprised Demons of every description. There were also Elves, both good and evil, and Witches, generally malignant. (Porteous 84)

Trees also provide poisonous or medicinal herbs. Serbian mythology tells of a female being that inhabits forests and hills. "The Vila is a skillful physician, curing wounds for a high fee, but if offended, she will poison her patient" (Porteous 109-110). Tree mythology also illustrates an opposition principle that poses trees as explicit opposites or combines the opposites into one symbol to create life. Some cultures celebrate marriages of trees to increase fertility (Frazer 132). Finns believed that the Oak is married to the Mountain Ash (Porteous 161).

A complex of opposition surrounds the Edenic trees central to our own culture. Adam and Eve, themselves a prototypical union of opposites, confront dual gods and
trees. God the Father forbids Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, while the devil succeeds in getting our first parents to eat. By eating from the death (knowledge) tree, Adam and Eve are cut off from the life tree.

Some cultures reverence a tree that signifies a union of opposites. The Scandinavian Ash Yggdrassil offers man both death and life. Upon this great ash, Odin sacrifices himself to receive all knowledge and immortality. Similarly, a later Christian myth weaves the tree of life with the death tree: a branch of Adam's death tree is preserved and transformed into the cross whereon Christ obtains resurrection (Metford 76).

Other myths feature one tree that combines opposition implicitly. The Jambu of Hindu mythology, for example, is a world or life tree. Though a culture may not consciously acknowledge that a tree features opposition, the world tree grows from a union of opposites. Death and life may converge into one, or fructifier and life-bearing-vesel may unite to create life. Jung explains the tree as a valuable alchemical symbol because it signifies the union of opposition.

At times, two goddesses beside the tree indicate opposition as the way to the life tree. Two winged deities kneel at each side of a "stylised" tree that represents Bel, god of the earth, he who dispenses good
and evil. Two winged female deities stand on each side of a similar tree, also with hands outstretched towards the tree. F. Guirand says the two deities are twin guardian figures (70).

To approach the tree god or goddess, man must first approach the dual guards. The path leading to the dual guards as requisite to reaching the ultimate god indicates that opposition signifies what Jung calls a way of life (Alchemy 43-44). Because man has to overcome the guards in order to reach the gods, the path of opposition also signifies a way to life. The two goddesses that flank the tree god indicate that by experiencing and overcoming opposition, one can begin to know the life symbol. My personal reading of Lehi's dream has indicated that Lehi reaches the life tree by traveling a path of opposition. Lehi's dream produces no death tree to oppose his life tree, yet Lehi experiences a transformation from dark to light and again from inner dark to inner light. Lehi's images express a soul's search through a deep experience of extremes that eventually leads to liberation.

Power: Death as the Key to Life Power.

Nowhere is the tree's opposition more extreme, visible and misunderstood than in its connection with life and death power. In his text Crowds and Power, Canetti defines man's ability to inflict death as power. Power is antithetical to transformation and "exists for nothing and
no one except itself" (206). The man that inflicts death becomes powerful.

Girard argues that man inflicts death to avoid knowing the truth and violence of his soul. "Indeed, the formidable effectiveness of the [sacrificial] process derives from its depriving men of knowledge: knowledge of the violence inherent in themselves with which they have never come to terms" (82).

Foucault contends that power can only be strong if it is produced by desire and leads to knowledge (59). Jung's discussion of transformation symbols indicates that true power transforms the soul.

Tree mythology suggests that true power comes as a result of transformation from death to life. Frazer interprets the golden bough as a representation of the life powers of the goddess Diana, worshipped at Nemi. With the protection of the golden bough, Aeneas journeys to the underworld and is able to return to life (3).

Other tree and vegetation myths emphasize the death to life cycle. By living with her husband Pluto in the underworld for six months before returning to Ceres, Proserpine symbolizes the death and life cycle necessary for life (Bulfinch 52-57). Frazer interprets the Demeter and Persephone myth as a ritual of "decay and revival of vegetation" (456). The decay and revival cycle brings transformation and growth of ultimate life power.
Lehi experiences death through dream, an isolated other-world sphere, and also through dream images of darkness. Lehi's dream images indicate death as the seedbed of life. While mortals often define power as the ability to inflict death, the tree's knowledge, revelation and true power bear fruit for man only when he overcomes death: he must isolate himself from the crowd, he must desire beyond any fear of death, and he must commune with his soul.

**Vision: Suffering the Symbolic Tree of Eternal Becoming**

The wise gain wisdom through vision. Subhuti learns that wisdom comes only through vision (Campbell, *Masks* 303). Brivic defines *Finnegan's Wake* as a mind's dream structured as the ancient Jewish Kabbalah, or tree of knowledge. "*Finnegan's Wake* is about a mind that includes all of history in a dream" (7). Bachelard celebrates the dreamer gaining truth through reverie of a simple fruit or flower. "Suddenly an image situates itself in the center of our imagining being. It retains us; it engages us. It infuses us with being" (*Reverie* 153-154). Vision, dreams, and reveries each differ distinctly, yet each manifests similar characteristics. In each, the unconscious communicates knowledge of the self and its being through symbols.

Myth and literature often show that man cannot obtain ultimate knowledge in the mortal sphere. When Adam and
Eve eat of the tree of knowledge, the tree of life was forbidden. E. O. James cites many instances where the hero knows the tree of life offers immortality, but the hero cannot by any means obtain it (241-244). Because man cannot eat of the ultimate life tree in mortality, he must approach the tree through non-mortal means, literary symbolism, myth, dream, or vision.

Symbolic similarities between myth, dream, reverie, and literature allow man expression of a deep inner desire. Neumann says that "myth, art, religion, and language," express desire that "takes an objective, perceptible form, becoming conscious of itself through man's consciousness of it" (Origins 369). The unconscious communicates knowledge of the self through symbolic language. Freud believes that dream symbols represent the self. "Dreams are completely egotistical." Because dreams represent the self, they can be interpreted through the dreamer's thought associations and consequently allow man to uncover the dream's underlying and hidden meaning (358).

Jung also explains dreams to be a symbolic representation of the self (Dreams 192). In contrast to Freud, Jung believes dreams are more than a wish fulfillment. Jung further maintains that they serve a compensatory function and are produced by the unconscious to regulate the psyche from an imbalance to individuation
or self-awareness. Jung contends that repression proportionately forces expression. The dreamer unconsciously reveals his desires through symbols (Dreams 101). Jung says that if the individual represses dream symbols, the symbols become dangerous. But when the patient assimilates dream contents "that were previously unconscious, the patient improves his mental health" (Dreams 100).

To understand or assimilate the symbols of the self, man must travel to the center of the symbol. To reach the center of the symbol, man often suffers what Frye calls "sophisticated pathos," the study of the isolated mind, the story of how someone recognizably like ourselves is broken by a conflict between the inner and outer world, between imaginative reality and the sort of reality which is established by a social consensus" (39).

In vision, the soul communicates through the silence of symbols. In The Magic Tree, Mavungu enjoys the treasure of the magic tree as long as he is silent as to the source of his beauty and happiness. When he discloses the secret, he kills the tree. Mavungu's tree signifies an ultimate reality between consciousness and unconsciousness. Bachelard describes the images that occur in the reverie as "our intercessors to teach us to sojourn in the double life, at the sensitized frontier between the real and the imaginary" (Reverie 162).
According to Jung, a quality of eternity, a timeless, weightless existence, characterizes the "frontier between the real and the imaginary." "The other center of the personality lies on a different plane from the ego since . . . it has the quality of 'eternity' or relative timelessness" (179). Bachelard states, "Time is suspended. Time no longer has any yesterday and no longer any tomorrow. Time is engulfed in the double depth of the dreamer and the world" (Reverie 173). He who has travelled to the center of the symbol has reached the ultimate reality. "Attaining the center is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation; yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring, and effective" (Eliade Return, 17-18).

The tree of life, though silent, may endow man with the renewal of the transcendent moment. For the tree, which often represents various meanings, is strong because of its life power. Interpreting Lehi's life desire poses many difficulties. Yet by merging myth, tree mythology, and Lehi's dream into a study of the life tree, I find opposition, life power, and vision as elements crucial to understanding the tree's power.

By following Lehi's pattern to the tree, we open to ourselves the possibility to know the tree. To do so we must experience the reality of Lehi's dream. Through intense suffering of darkness and light, Lehi experiences
life and death power, enters a timeless reality, and returns to his family to enliven their culture with the power of the life tree.
Chapter Two

Opposition: The Way to the Tree

The world actually lives because it combines earth and heaven, night and day, death and life.

Neumann

The Way of Life Itself

Lehi travels a repetitive course of opposition from dark to light to reach the tree of life. Lehi's course of opposition that Jorgensen calls a "wearying sine curve" eventually blesses Lehi with an ultimate fruit of a life-bearing tree (21).

Lehi dreams of a "dark and dreary wilderness." He then sees a man "dressed in a white robe" who speaks and bids Lehi to follow him. When Lehi follows him, Lehi travels "for the space of many hours" in a "dark and dreary waste." After "many hours," Lehi prays that the Lord will have mercy on him, and Lehi sees a "large and spacious field."

He then sees a "tree, whose fruit was desirable to make one happy." Lehi eats of the fruit that is sweet beyond any sweetness he has ever tasted and white beyond any whiteness he has ever seen. When Lehi eats of the fruit, he says it "filled my soul with exceeding great
fruit, he says it "filled my soul with exceeding great joy" (1 Nephi 8:4-12).

Lehi's first pair of images, the wilderness and man dressed in a white robe, represent an elemental opposition of dark and light. Lehi then undergoes a more intense experience of dark and light by traveling through a dark waste and exerting an intense prayer. These images represent the "wearying" path of opposition that ultimately leads Lehi to the tree of life.

Even as I begin an explication of Lehi's course to the tree, I seem to assign absolute meanings to each symbol. Though my attitude may seem narrow, I do not mean to deny possible variations or different readings. I cannot say that any other reader would interpret the symbol in exactly the same way. Each person's reading of a text will of necessity differ. Through each of the chapters the interpretations may seem absolute, or dogmatic, but I feel my interpretation is valuable and strongly substantiated.

In Lehi's dream, the contrary images reveal opposition as a creation and way to ultimate life. To explain the significance of opposition as the way to Lehi's life tree, I will discuss 1) the precreation sphere of undifferentiated opposites, 2) wilderness and man as the elemental opposition, 3) dark waste and intense prayer
as inner experience of opposition, 4) the field as reconciling image and 5) the ultimate life tree.

The Precreation Sphere of Undifferentiated Opposites

Precreation is a sphere of undifferentiated opposites, a state of chaos. The mind exists in a precreation state prior to consciousness that Jung and Neumann label the primordial archetype or "archetypal an sich" (Neumann Great Mother 6). Neumann believes that at its deepest, the archetypal state contains so many contradictions, or contrary opposites, that it can neither be seen nor understood. The uroboros, as Neumann labels the archetype, conceals itself from man because of its undiscriminated contradictions.

It is an essential feature of the primordial archetype that it combines positive and negative attributes and groups of attributes. This union of opposites in the primordial archetype, its ambivalence, is characteristic of the original situation of the unconscious, which consciousness has not yet dissected into its antithesis. (Great Mother 12)

For this reason Jung argues that it is "inconceivable" that man could visually imagine indefiniteness (Alchemy 18).
Wilderness and Man as the Elemental Opposition

Creation, or consciousness, begins by division into opposites. Lehi's first two visual images, wilderness and man, can be seen to represent the elemental light and dark opposition.

Before I look at Lehi's first two images as elementary opposites, I encounter contradictions of Lehi's dream as text. According to Lehi's telling of the dream, he sees images in sequential order. Jung asserts, however, that creation, or the dream sphere, begins by division into opposites. Although Lehi's first images seem to represent an elemental opposition, according to Lehi's telling of the dream, he only sees one image at a time. Yet Lehi must see two images to experience this mythic birth of consciousness.

It seems likely that Lehi's first description could be a precreation image, a contradictory darkness. The biblical creation account illustrates this first step of a creation that follows a similar sequence. The earth at first, like the archetypal state, "was without form and void"—a state of darkness (Genesis 1:2). Like the earth, Lehi's wilderness represents a formed yet formless sphere.

The formless yet formed sphere can describe a transition from precreation to creation, for light has not yet been isolated and separated from the dark. It may be
that Lehi does not identify the wilderness until he sees the man in a white robe.

When Lehi sees the man in the white robe, he experiences the first step of creation. Light is divided from dark just as at the biblical creation. Jung calls the division the dawn of life:

As soon as the unconscious begins to manifest itself [the opposites] split asunder, as at the creation; for every act of dawning consciousness is a creative act, and it is from this that all our cosmogonic symbols are derived. (Alchemy 25)

The man in white perfectly completes a contrast against a dark wilderness. The man in white and the dark wilderness simply express Lehi's personal vision of light vs. dark. Light and dark represent a fundamental opposition because the images have a sharp contrast and are seen as a whole. The Chinese Yin and Yang, and the dark and light halves of the orphic egg, also express the fundamental opposition. Likewise, the moon against the night sky represents the primary opposition. Neumann explains that although "in the human psyche the experience of totality always precedes the experience of the particulars," lunar mythology preceded solar mythology,
because the images contrast so sharply and represent a unitary wholeness (Great Mother 56).

In addition to representing a fundamental dark and light opposition, the images express other contrasts that strengthen their hold as an elemental opposition. The man in white represents a concrete entity against a background of the contradictory and rather dreary, formed yet formless wilderness.

The man and wilderness also represent movement opposed to stasis. The man that approaches and speaks to Lehi moves among what Lehi sees as a death sphere. The man in white signifies movement against a quicksand-like darkness. Movement introduces life. Jung might identify these images as self-division, representing the dual nature of Lehi. The man in white represents the definite "essence of human wholeness," and the wilderness represents the indefiniteness or "indescribable and indeterminable nature of this wholeness" (Alchemy 18).

Lehi's first images seemingly contrast life and death, but a closer look at the opposition reveals a contrast that also combines to create life. Lehi labels the wilderness "dreary" and seeks to escape because he sees the wilderness as death. The man as guide also contrasts a negative, lifeless sphere.

It is easy, however, to ignore the fact that the dark wilderness necessarily precedes the light—Lehi cannot
perceive the man in white without this dark background. The contrasts Lehi labels as death and life unite to create life. The wilderness signifies death as potential life or seedbed of life.

The mind, which cannot comprehend a composite of contradictions, can perceive polar images. After experiencing the extremes, Lehi can reconcile the poles into the unity of life.

Lehi's first contrast, the dark wilderness and man in a white robe, becomes the balanced foundation for the dream's development. Because the images represent a sharp contrast, Lehi's dream retains the contrast as the structure for further conscious growth.

Lehi's first images, wilderness and man, represent a wholeness that encourages Lehi to travel further. When the man in white leads Lehi to the waste, the light and dark division unite to prepare the path of future growth:

Each stage of transformation rests on the foundation of a unity of lotus and cobra, of life-giving and deadly power. The base consists of the material world of the tortoise [elementary], the lunar world of earth and water; it supports the tree of life with the antagonistic dragons to either side of it: the world of life in the opposites. (Great Mother 335)
Dark Waste and Intense Prayer as Inner Experience

A reconciliation of Lehi's first images lead him to a deeper experience of the fundamental opposites. Lehi follows his guide into the heart of the wilderness to experience "dark and dreary waste" and its opposite, intense prayer. These second images are striking because of their heightened movement, emotion, and space.

Movement intensifies an image. By action, the images become inner experience. In the first images, Lehi sees a wilderness—he does not see himself in it nor does he penetrate it. Rather, the man in white travels toward him. As Lehi follows the man, he travels deeper into a darkness. Lehi's description of traveling into a waste as traveling into a "dark and dreary" waste indicates that the wilderness has been transformed from outer image to an integral personal experience.

This second experience yields an emotional depth of the original contrast. The man in white (Lehi's guide from the unconscious) has led Lehi from pictorial opposites to emotional opposition. Lehi follows the man deep into the dark image where the ego explores the nethermost ends of the "wilderness." His immersion is a traversing of infinity that seems a dark, limitless, boundless abstraction. Ignorant, his consciousness suffers an enlargement of soul. Neumann defines the
experience as the ego being overpowered by a pole of the unconscious archetype (Great Mother 76).

Jung emphasizes that the weight of the death experience cannot be underestimated.

By descending into the unconscious, the conscious mind puts itself in a perilous position, for it is apparently extinguishing itself. It is in the situation of the primitive hero who is devoured by the dragon. . . . all this means a diminution or extinction of consciousness, an abaissement du niveau mental equivalent to that 'peril of the soul' which is primitive man's greatest dread. (Jung Alchemy 333)

Jung explains that the dark unknown "exercises a fascinating attraction that threatens to become the more overpowering the further [man] penetrates into it" (Alchemy 336).

In suffering, Lehi's consciousness explores the limitlessness of the unconscious. Lehi submits himself to nothingness. Yet Lehi's submission is not extinction. Though he experiences lifeless waste, he is always moving.

The duration of Lehi's movement through space also heightens the intensity of the waste. Lehi's lengthy travel through the waste increases the negative emotional
value of the waste. To explain the overwhelming strength of the negative but supra-physical experience to a physical world, Lehi says he traveled "many hours." We know his dream could have taken only seconds. In life, a lengthy duration of drama intensifies emotion; in dream, a short space of mortal time, the opposition renders emotion and experience. The principle of opposition enables Lehi to explain an experience that surpasses mortal limits. Lehi explains his confrontation with the waste as traveling for the "space of many hours." Bachelard explains:

"An empty drawer is unimaginable. It can only be thought of. And for us who must describe what we imagine before what we know, what we dream before what we verify, all wardrobes are full." (Space 184-190)

Lehi's phrase, "for the space of many hours" becomes apt expression for an unpredictable duration. "For the space of many hours" is an enlargement of the soul; the emotion is an enlargement of normal human emotion. The space within which Lehi travels is within himself.

Because Lehi's conscious mind has perceived the fundamental contrast, it seems he continues moving according to a concept of opposition. As Lehi suffers the interior darkness, he seeks the opposite--he prays. Were
he to stay in the waste—a stasis—he would die. His prayer brings opposition. When he vocalizes his desire, he initiates movement. Neither waste nor prayer is an image, yet the prayer is a directed vocal movement contrasting his aimless travel through dark waste. The images reveal that he travels to the center of wilderness and to the center of the man in white. After seeing dark and light he moves to their centers. This movement within the soul sustains life through the dream and expands Lehi's consciousness.

Reconciliation—the Field

After praying, Lehi sees a large field. The field reconciles the first opposition, uniting two contrasts into a balanced support of the tree. An apparently unifying symbol, the field involves no movement or extreme emotion. The field itself opposes waste, the field as a life or potential-life image against non-life. Though large and spacious, the field is marked by its boundaries. Whether composed of man-made or natural bounds, the field conjures up an image of a large, enclosed area. As Bachelard describes it, the field is probably cleared and cultivated by man.

In the vast world of the non-I, the non-I of fields is not the same as the non-I of forests. The forest is a before-me, before-us, whereas
for fields and meadows, my dreams and recollections accompany all the different phases of tilling and harvesting (Space 188).

Lehi's field seems to signify man cultivating the land. Lehi had to immerse himself in the wilderness to transform it. He had to confront the wilderness darkness himself to attain a promised land. Lehi's dream parallels his temporal journey through the wilderness seeking a promised land. The dream predicts the transformation of wilderness sphere to rich soil.

The field signifies that Lehi himself has cultivated the land; he has cultivated the wilderness into field. In The Virgin Land, Henry Nash Smith describes the integral relationship between man and the American soil. The American who settled the land did the same labor as the common English laborer. Economically, he was not elevated, but theoretically he became the hero of the American "myth that the soil yielded the wealth of the mythic garden" (135).

In the soil-to-mythic garden myth, man dominates as the initiator of divine creation. The soil signifies the female fertility goddess. By cultivating the soil, man impregnates the land and consequently participates in divine creation. Lehi likewise participates in divine creation. In dream, interaction with the dark wilderness
and the man in white shows that Lehi has prepared the base and nourishment of the tree.

**Reconciliation through Space Liberates**

Lehi describes a "large and spacious field" that reconciles darkness and light. The dark waste equals the field in intense contrast. The field opposes the waste because the field is now limited, or bound space, and has received light. Yet both images as stages of transformation oppose the ultimate tree. Waste and field both manifest a personal movement through them as prerequisite to achievement. As Lehi travels, darkness expands his soul, prayer initiates his desire, and the field clears his soul.

When Lehi confronts a dark waste, encloses it, and infuses it with light, the dark waste becomes a fertile soil. By reconciling opposites, the field leads to liberation. By experiencing the extremes and their reconciliation, Lehi reaches a wholeness. The process allows him to escape earthly bounds in a Jungian "moment of eternity in time" *(Four Archetypes* 52).

The poet Milosz reconciles contradictions through space and thereby transcends mortal limits.

Oh, space, you who separate the waters; my joyful friend, with what love I sense you!
... Is this instant really eternity? Is eternity really this instant?

As Milosz continues reconciling contradictions he achieves great freedom:

Away with boundaries, those enemies of the horizons! Let genuine distance appear! . . .

Everything was bathed in light, gentleness and wisdom; in the unreal air, distance beckoned to distance. My love enveloped the universe.

(168)

Lehi achieves a similar freedom through an immersion into light. Lehi achieves the light that opposes both endlessness and spaciousness by traveling to the tree and eating its fruit. Just as Milosz embarks upon the dawn of the ultimate through space, Lehi penetrates the periphery of freedom through space. He travels to a tree whose fruit can "make one happy," an image of light, the growth of freedom.

Lehi journeys to the life tree through a repetition of opposites. The elemental light and dark opposition are repeated until Lehi achieves a wholeness. As Jung postulates, the contrast repeats itself in Lehi's vision at every stage of the transformation. The tree represents the eternal life presence of darkness and light, the essence of the conscious and unconscious.
The alchemist saw the union of opposites under the symbol of the tree. . . . In the history of symbols the tree is described as the way of life itself, a growing into that which eternally is and does not change; which springs from the union of opposites, and, by its eternal presence, also makes that union possible. (Alchemy 43-44)

Lehi does not see his tree as a union of opposites, yet he knows opposition is the way to ultimate life experience. When Neumann sees the symbolic tree, he sees "the light fruit of the night tree and the night" (Great Mother 57). Lehi, however, mentions no darkness. He does not see the tree as night or death containing white fruit. Rather, he experiences darkness that eventually yields a tree bearing ultimate white fruit.

The Fruit of the Tree

When Lehi reaches the tree, he travels to the center of the light. The fruit becomes an inner experience that perfectly contrasts limitless darkness in size, space, and emotion. Just as Lehi traveled through a transforming experience of the darkness, he travels through light. The first light image has become a prayer in God, is then reconciled by the "cultivated" field, and finally becomes
the light fruit Lehi eats. Lehi completely internalizes this inner beauty by eating the fruit.

The fruit represents the power of desire and height of achievement. When Lehi sees the fruit that is sweet above any sweetness tasted, white above mortal whiteness, that contains exceedingly great joy, his desire becomes an intense and directed obsession. His soul focuses on the fruit, and the fruit becomes the center of the dream. He immediately eats of the fruit that "filled my soul with exceeding great joy" (1 Nephi 8:12).

The small yet powerful fruit fills Lehi's soul—a soul with the expanse of an indefinite wilderness, with the depth of dark waste, with the vastness of a spacious field. But it is precisely because the soul has traversed its expanse and suffered dark infinity that the fruit has power to fill and liberate him.

The small fruit liberates the soul. Bachelard explains that only he who enters the miniscule enters the interior and discovers "interior beauty" (Space 149). Bachelard also explains that the miniscule liberates man.

Right away images begin to abound, then grow, then escape. Large issues from small, not through the logical law of dialectics of contraries, but thanks to liberation from all obligations of dimensions, a liberation that is
a special characteristic of the activity of the imagination. (Space 154-155)

Though Bachelard counters that man does not escape through contraries, Lehi has just recounted an escape through contraries of images. The fruit represents liberation, but the liberation is achieved after Lehi struggles through the path of opposition. He explains contraries as the way to the tree. It may be that when he eats of the fruit, his dream becomes a liberation. But it is also true that he cannot explain the actual experience without speaking of contraries. The dark wilderness to man dressed in white lead to the inner experience of dark waste and intense prayer, images that are reconciled by the spacious field that lead to the life-bearing tree.

Lehi has learned that man's soul, a combination of unconscious and conscious, of death and life, lives by opposition. Lehi first experiences what he terms opposition as a prerequisite to transcend bounds. Though his imagination might enjoy liberations of dimensions, his consciousness is composed of limits and must be liberated through dimensions. Lehi's images express opposition that stretch the soul and distill it through the extremes of being to free him into the experience of eternity.
Conclusion--Opposition Is the Way to Life

Lehi's path of opposition leading to the tree exemplifies an opposition essential to life. Precreation, like Lehi's wilderness, is chaos. Creation, like God's dividing light from dark, begins by division into opposites. Once the unconscious crystallizes opposites, usually an image of light against darkness, the conscious mind is born. The mind retains the elemental dark and light division as a structure of further conscious growth.

A repetitive separation-to-unity cycle marks each stage of growth. Lehi's dream images show a development through opposition that leads to the ultimate tree. The dark wilderness of precreation becomes "knowable" when a man dressed in a white robe appears to Lehi. Lehi explains his travel to the center of dark and light through the terms "dark and dreary waste" and intense "prayer." Reconciling the dark and light images, the field becomes a balanced support for the ultimate tree. Lehi's sequence of images shows that seeming opposites represent stages of transformation. While the wilderness first opposes the man in white, it later opposes both the spacious field and finally the tree and its life fruit. However, Lehi's dream opposites reveal that the tree grows out of a transformed wilderness.

When Lehi reaches the tree and eats its fruit, he escapes temporal bounds into liberation. Lehi's images
show he has experienced the darkness and light of his soul and cleared his soul. He can enter the miniscule. As Lehi eats the fruit, he achieves an inner beauty. His desire transforms his soul, and endows him with life power.
Chapter Three

Power: Death Is the Key to Life Power

It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.
It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear, and do it?
Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?
But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart that thou mayest do it.
See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil.

Deuteronomy 30:11-15

Lehi's Tree--A Paradox of Life and Death

Lehi's tree represents a paradox of death and life. After confronting the symbolic death of the dark wilderness, he experiences symbolic life, represented by a man in white; after confronting the symbolic death of the dark waste, he experiences symbolic life represented by the ultimate tree. Lehi's travels through the death images to the life tree reconcile the opposites of death and life into an ultimate wholeness.

Lehi's integration of death and life show the necessity of reconciling opposites to achieve power. Jung agrees that the tree represents the paradoxical opposition of the self: "thesis and antithesis, and at the same time
synthesis," an integration necessary for wholeness (Alchemy 19). Because Lehi experiences these opposites, he achieves an ultimate wholeness. As Jung accords, man must experience such opposition to achieve personal wholeness. "Without the experience of the opposites there is no experience of wholeness and hence no inner approach to the sacred figures" (Alchemy 20).

Lehi's dream of the tree indicates that the tree must be a personal and inner experience. Through Lehi's intimate dream experience, he confronts and unites opposites. Jung claims that because man is composed of opposites, the Christian church fails to serve modern man by failing to reconcile opposites.

The self is a union of opposites par excellence, and this is where it differs essentially from the Christ-symbol. The androgyny of Christ is the utmost concession the Church has made to the problem of opposites. The opposition between light and good on the one hand and darkness and evil on the other is left in a state of open conflict, since Christ simply represents good, and his counterpart the devil, evil. This opposition is the real world problem, which at present is still unsolved. The self, however, is absolutely paradoxical in that it represents in every respect thesis and
antithesis, and at the same time synthesis.

_Alchemy_ 19)

Because Lehi reconciles the dark and light opposites, he eventually eats the fruit of the tree. Lehi's achievement is significant because the task of reconciling opposites is so difficult. Although I explore the difficulty of integrating opposites in more detail later in the chapter, it is significant to note some apparent difficulties.

For many people the tree is an enigma. Robert Frost's character Maple is contrasted with Lehi in his course toward the tree because she does not reconcile opposites. Maple falters when confronting the reality of a symbol. Because she fails to integrate the tree's opposite meanings of life and death, she cannot gain the knowledge or strength of the tree.

Man also fails to reconcile the opposite powers of the tree by accepting his own tree as sacred and rejecting the value of other trees. The scriptures exhibit a contradictory strain between pagan tree worship and the tree as an integral church symbol. Prophets sought to eradicate the strength of such "pagan" worship. The Jewish Encyclopedia recounts that "the Prophets were unable completely to suppress tree worship, which has survived in Palestine through all religious changes to the present day" (240). Porteous agrees that Christianity,
unable to quell the strength of heretical tree worship, transformed the tree into a symbol of the church (162). But the tree's roots suck nourishment from more than pagan soil; its powerful fruit-laden branches overhang more than pagan ground.

While Biblical prophets condemn heretical tree worship, the Edenic garden contains both a sacred life and a death (knowledge) tree. In addition to ignoring opposites by rejecting other sacred trees, man even today often fails to reconcile the death and life powers of his own scriptural tree. Lehi suffers death to achieve the tree. Yet modern man dislikes the tree of knowledge because it brings death. Modern Christians often ignore the religious paradox that the death tree introduces our first parents into mortality.

Treating ancient myths as nonsense stories, man may ignore the mythic death to life pattern. Persephone and Demeter, goddesses of corn and wheat, dwell with the dead—only to return to life. Lehi's experience with the tree strongly contrasts the failure to reconcile the opposites of death and life.

For Lehi's path to the tree identifies death as the path to life power. Lehi's tree represents a life power that transforms Lehi as he surpasses death. To illustrate the significance of Lehi's accomplishment, I will first discuss the difficulty of surpassing the death threat.
Then we can see the strength of Lehi's transformative life power. While man fears the power of death, Lehi confronts death to obtain the tree's knowledge, revelation, and ever-bearing life fruit.

**Lehi's Life Tree--A Highly Visible Yet Deeply Concealed Meaning**

Lehi's life tree represents a highly visible yet deeply concealed meaning. Even though Lehi suffers death to attain the tree's fruit, Lehi labels the tree "the tree of life." Because he focuses on the tree's life meaning, he seems to ignore the tree's death meaning. With less insight, man often focuses on the tree as a life symbol, yet ignores its representation of death. When man contradictorily seeks knowledge of the life tree, yet ignores its death meaning, he cannot know the tree.

Lehi's dream illustrates man rejecting the knowledge of the life tree. To some people the knowledge is concealed, and they lose their way on the path without nearing the fruit. To others, the knowledge lacks value. While Lehi and many of his family eat of the tree's fruit, others scorn those eating the fruit. Many people who have eaten the life fruit see the scorners, succumb to their derision, and leave.

Lehi's dream illustrates man's contradiction between desire and disregard of the fruit. Foucault says that as man seeks knowledge he may simultaneously repress knowledge
Perhaps the tree's paradoxical symbol results in man's contradictory desire. For while the tree reveals life, it conceals its death meaning.

Lehi's Tree Represents a Highly Visible Life Meaning

Lehi's tree symbolizes many aspects of life: preservation of his family, preservation of his posterity, and transcendence to an ultimate life. Primitive man also believed in a tree that symbolized many aspects of life. Frazer asserts that though man has perceived the tree differently through the evolution of time, its power remains constant. Whether the tree is a divine entity of animism or the sacred abode of divine spirits in polytheism, the tree continues to ensure fertility of men, cattle, and crops, and give rain and sunshine (135-137). To ancient men, the tree gave life.

Lehi's tree symbolizes a concern for family life. Lehi dreams that he calls his wife and sons to come eat from the tree. In addition, his wife bears two sons as they sojourn in the wilderness. These births typify the concern for offspring. Many cultures also see the tree as a fertility blessing. "Among the Kara-kirghiz barren women roll themselves on the ground under a solitary apple-tree, in order to obtain offspring" (Frazer 138). The European May-pole blesses both women and cattle with fertility (Frazer 137).
Although Lehi does not travel with flocks, the family desires to increase their substance. We know the family owned riches in Jerusalem, because the brothers retrieved their treasures hoping to purchase sacred records from Laban. According to Nephi, when Laban saw the gold, silver, and precious things, "and that it was exceedingly great, he did lust after it, insomuch that he thrust us out, and sent his servants to slay us, that he might obtain our property" (1 Nephi 3:22-25).

We also know that the family carried "all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind, and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind" (1 Nephi 8:1). The family labored to sustain themselves physically, a prerequisite for ultimate life. Genesis records early traditions of trees blessing some with fertility. Jacob uses rods of the green poplar, almond, and chestnut trees to increase his flocks. After receiving spotted cattle from Laban he peeled the rods to uncover the white spots. He then put the rods in the water troughs before the strongest, spotted cattle that they might conceive. "And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted" (Genesis 30:28-39).

Lehi's dream and journey to a new land illustrate the significance of fertility as requisite to ultimate life. Lehi can become immortal through earthly descendents who
survive him and remember and represent him. Lehi can also gain immortality by enduring mortality as a way to an enriched after-life.

Lehi's tree also represents an ultimate life. He labels the tree simply "a tree," and "the tree," indicating its significance as the ultimate life tree. The tree centers his vision and offers supreme joy. Other mythologies center upon a sacred, ultimate life tree. Hindu mythology reveals the Jambu as the main tree, existing in a cosmogonic forest, bearing "an immortal fruit as large as an elephant, resembling gold, and of which the seeds produce pure gold" (Porteous 17). Babylonian tradition records the Forest or Eridhu as the site of the Edenic garden and tree of life (Porteous 18). The Epic of Ancient Chaldea records the black pine as the tree of life (Porteous 17). These gods give ultimate life.

In addition to its strength as a life symbol, Lehi's tree interconnects with other significant life symbols, such as "a strait and narrow path," and "a rod of iron," that lead to the tree. The symbols weave an integral pattern of eternal life. Other cultures display similar patterns, weaving together life symbols. The Scandinavian Ash Yggdrassil is the tree of the universe, "the principal and most sacred tree of the gods . . . the best and greatest of all trees." The branches of the Yggdrassil
"extend over the whole universe, reaching beyond the heavens; its stem bears up the earth; its three roots stretch themselves wide around." Under one root is the well in which "all wisdom and prudence are hidden" (Pigott 216-218).

The great Ash also represents various aspects of life power. The branches contain or support the world, and the well hides wisdom, signifying that one must search diligently to obtain great life wisdom. The tree that extends over the well of wisdom and around the universe creates a meaning of eternal life.

Lehi's dream images, as well as other cultural images, emphasize life. The myth expert Joseph Campbell calls such symbols expressions of eternal life. Campbell claims that "the infantile fantasies which we all cherish still in the unconscious play continually into myth, fairytale, and the teachings of the church, as symbols of indestructible being" (Hero 177). The poet and phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard explains the connection of life symbols as open symbolism: "The symbol may change but the underneath is a current of eternal life" (Reverie 157).

Man Often Conceals the Tree's Death Representation

Like Lehi, man often sees the tree as a life symbol. But unlike Lehi, man often fails to obtain the tree's life power because he fears the tree's representation of death.
Perhaps Lehi cannot escape the confrontation with death because he is in dream. Man, however, may consciously or unconsciously conceal his fear of death.

By concealing his fear of death, man often sees death as the ultimate power. Canetti essentially equates death with power. He says that what man fears he ascribes as powerful. Because man fears death, he ascribes power to anyone who threatens him with death (15, 206). A person who kills others or outlives others appears powerful. Power is a death threat.

Death power precisely opposes Lehi's visionary achievement. Lehi's vision reveals a core of transformation power. The death images precede life images: Lehi suffers through the wilderness to see and follow a man; Lehi suffers through dark waste to eventually eat from the life tree. Lehi later ignores a crowded building full of people who scorn those eating the life fruit, while his family and descendents also eat from the tree. Lehi's dream images show that he achieves power because he overcomes death.

Canetti, who defines death as power, admits death power is limited. It cannot "bring the dead back to life" (299). Because power cannot bring life, power is antithetical to transformation.

Power at its core and its apex despises transformation. It is sufficient unto itself and
wills only itself. In this form it has always seemed remarkable to man; free and absolute it exists for nothing and no one except itself.

(206)

When we see the strength of death power, we can then see the singularity and significance of Lehi's achievement. Three characteristics distinguish Lehi's achievement from death to life power. First, he separates himself from society. Second, he desires beyond any fear of death. Third, he communes with the symbol to learn that death leads to ultimate life.

**Lehi Overcomes Death Power of the Crowd**

The crowd signifies one of the most poignant differences between death power and Lehi's ultimate life achievement. Lehi can achieve transforming power because he confronts death on an individual level. In contrast, man believes he can escape his fear of death by joining a crowd. In a crowd, a man gains security against the death threat. He is not a single and therefore possible victim, but part of a group that can inflict death as it desires. One who threatens others with death, or one who, like Josephus, can outlive others, appears powerful. Canetti explains that in a crowd one man escapes his fear by becoming a threat.
This is the only situation in which fear changes into its opposite. . . . As soon as a man has surrendered himself to the crowd he ceases to fear its touch. Ideally, all are equal there; no distinctions count, not even that of sex. The man pressed against him is the same as himself. Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one and the same body. This is perhaps one of the reasons why a crowd seeks to close in on itself: it wants to rid each individual as completely as possible of the fear of being touched. (15-16)

In a crowd, one man becomes many men. One may escape the death threat by actually becoming the death threat.

At times it may seem that one has power over many, yet a ruler merely represents the crowd. The ruler represents the crowd or death threat. As with the crowd's power, the ruler's power comes through his ability to destroy or outlive others. One survivor of the Hindu city, Mudkah, escaped to report the tragedy to the Sultan Muhammad Shah. In "grief and rage," the king declares that one who has witnessed death of such "brave companions" is an evil wretch. The king kills the survivor. In reality the king sees the survivor as having power over death and kills him to eliminate a power greater than his own (Crowds 243). An authority figure
often reveals his lack of power when he faces a crowd. George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" explores the relationship between the one in authority and his lack of power when he faces a crowd. Orwell carries a gun as he searches for an escaped and dangerous elephant. When he sees the elephant, Orwell realizes it is no longer dangerous. He knows the animal ought not be killed, but he also knows a large crowd of spectators follows him and know he has already brought a gun, a power symbol. Orwell weighs the people's expectations of death against his knowledge that the elephant ought to live. To maintain respect for his authority, he kills the elephant. He acts as the crowd would act. He becomes one with the crowd (Readings 438-443).

Each monarch is similarly subjected to the crowd. Emperors who can no longer act as power symbol lose their positions. The priest who guarded the sacred tree in the grove of Diana of the Wood held his post until he was murdered (Frazer 1). Sickly emperors in one country are forced to take poison as they lose strength and can no longer embody power (Canetti 382).

Crowd power is limited. The king bears limited power. Canetti details an account of a king who appears powerful by sentencing a man to death and then excusing the condemned. The king "is able, as it were, to despatch them from life to death and then to bring them back to
life again" (233-234). Likewise, "the supreme manifestation of power is the granting of a pardon at the last moment" (299). By imitating a greater power, these rulers reveal their lack of power.

The crowd's death threat is temporary. Canetti explains that a crowd must eventually disperse. Whether as crowd or king, a representative of the crowd, death power is temporary. For example, when the great king Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a great tree that is cut down to the roots, he learns that power is limited.

The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. (Daniel 4:12)

The holy watcher from heaven then descended and commanded the tree be cut down to a stump.

The dream illustrates the fact that a king's power is short lived. Although the dream seemingly contradicts the tree's life symbolism, the dream acknowledges that the self can achieve true growth. The heavenly messenger destroys much of the tree, but the remaining stump indicates that the king may again grow and perhaps achieve true life.
Crowd power is a limited but strong power. Generally the ultimate life tree represents an individual while the forest symbolizes the crowd. Usually the individual tree represents life power, the crowd death power. On rare occasions a sacred forest represents an individual in opposition to the crowd symbol of many woods. Nebuchadnezzar's tree conforms to general life symbolism in that he feeds all flesh. The dream reveals, however, that his position as king is not a true source of power. The king as tree represents a crowd. He is at the mercy of conspirators as well as his constituents, either of whom may rescind his right to power.

Tree symbolism also signifies that a ruler who appears strong may actually be weak. An Old Testament parable from the book of Judges illustrates the relationship between rulers and true power. Jotham, Gideon's youngest son, decries the false rule of an older half-brother Abimelech. Jotham compares Abimelech to a bramble or thistle. Many trees seek a leader. The olive tree, fig tree, and vine decline the throne because they know it will rob them of their fatness, sweetness, and wine that nourish mankind. In contrast, the bramble cannot nourish man, yet accepts the kingship (Judges 9). The trees know that the tree as ruler is weak. Men of integrity, represented by trees that nourish mankind, know that only as individuals can man become powerful.
Difficulties of Separating Oneself from the Crowd

Though crowd power is limited, it has a great hold over man. While Lehi disregards the scorning crowd, the crowd deters many from achieving the tree's fruit. To show the significance of Lehi's achievement, an isolation that eventually yields immortal fruit, I want to discuss the difficulties of separating oneself from the symbol.

Isolated from the crowd, Lehi achieves the tree's fruit. But man often encounters difficulties. He may believe he has separated himself from the crowd, only to reunite with his peers. Canetti explains that separation can limit a person's progress by actually separating himself from the symbol.

A mask expresses much, but hides even more. Above all it separates. Charged with a menace which must not be precisely known—one element of which, indeed, is the fact that it cannot be known—it comes close to the spectator, but, in spite of this proximity, remains closely separated from him. It threatens him with the secret damned up behind it. Unlike a face, there are no passing changes in it which can be interpreted, and so he suspects and fears the unknown that it conceals. (375)
When one sees the life symbol as a mask, one becomes part of the crowd. The person then misses the symbol's depth. Frost's poem "Maple" illustrates that a symbol can yield a false sense of separation. The protagonist Maple realizes that her name has "meaning." Consequently, she sets herself apart from schoolmates. She feels that some names, like Rose, might have meaning, but "hadn't as they went."

Maple's name masks depth of the symbol. Because she sees her name as an unknowable meaning, she isolates herself from the symbol as do the rest of the crowd. Because Maple's desire to know the meaning of her name contradicts her idea that the meaning is unknowable, she searches ambivalently. She cannot blame herself for her impossible task, yet she cannot avoid suffering.

Since Maple cannot reconcile her contrary desire for truth that she believes unknowable, her separation unites her with the crowd. Maple becomes part of the unknowable. Instead of learning the meaning of her name, Maple becomes as ignorant as her schoolmates. She joins the crowd.

**Further Difficulties: the Symbol as Symbol**

Once Maple succumbs to a pseudo-isolation, her difficulties increase. Maple confronts two major difficulties that prevent her from seeing the symbol as more than a mask. Her first challenge is that the symbol is so accessible. Campbell says the mind attaches to
symbols that are concrete and familiar and refuses to exert itself further. Because the symbol is familiar, the symbol often limits knowledge (Hero 177-178). In his study of dreams, Freud also found that no matter the motive, symbols tends to discourage intellectual activity (380).

Because Maple sees the symbol as a symbol, she never learns that the symbol conceals experience. Maple's name is a result of a death-life experience. Maple's mother dies from giving Maple birth. Before she dies, she is inspired to name her daughter Maple. The name reveals yet conceals the mother's experience of dying to give a child life. Maple looks at the name as a meaning, but she does not realize the meaning requires her to experience what her mother experienced, death and life, to understand the name.

The symbol hid from Maple what she was not prepared to accept. According to Jung, symbolic language conceals what people are unprepared to know. Jung says that the account of Moses speaking with God on the mountain is symbolic. When Moses descended from the mountain and his face shone, he had communed with his soul. Yet he spoke to the people symbolically. They could not understand his experience without personally experiencing the symbol (Four Archetypes 79). Likewise, Maple must experience the
life of the maple tree, its nourishment, life, and death to understand the meaning of her name.

**A Second Difficulty: The Symbol as a Power of Mystery**

Because Maple perceives the symbol as an object rather than an experience, she faces a second obstacle—-the power of mystery. Maple seeks something that is more complex than she is. Canetti explains this desire as a limitless need to worship (465). Indeed, Maple worships the concealed meaning of her name as she focuses her life on a search to know and become "Maple."

Because the symbol is "unknowable," Maple inevitably begins to worship mystery for the sake of mystery. Although Maple cannot understand her name, she "follows" it. Maple feels a name with pent-up meaning calling her. She feels that the name leads her to take dictation, to marry, to continue the search. She gives her name responsibility for her actions. Both she and her husband pilgrimmage to the house of her origin searching for the one tree of knowledge. Again they mislead themselves by searching for knowledge of the symbol instead of knowledge beyond the symbol. Maple continually searches "outwardly," wanting her name to "look good on her," rather than worrying about conforming to the meaning of her name.

Maple nears discovery only when she lacks a physical object. Maple and her husband search the orchard for a
tree that might have inspired her name. They seek a physical object that might reveal meaning. In fact, the only time they near "discovery" occurs when they despair of finding the original tree. The situation forces them to look inside, but they lack "faith in anything to mean. The same at different times to different people." Unable to look inside, Maple follows the unknown. Frost concludes that mystery can govern life:

Thus had a name with meaning given in death
Made a girl's marriage and ruled in her life.
No matter that the meaning was not clear.
A name with meaning could bring up a child.

Facing uncertainty, Maple follows the mysterious. Maple ascribes power to whatever seems more complex than she is. She ascribes power to the mystery by her reverence for the mystery. The secrecy of mystery endows the symbol with much power. Canetti emphasizes that "part of the strength of its effect is due to the fact that it reveals nothing of what is behind it" (376). Whether we discuss Maple's symbolic tree or Lehi's vision, the sacred tree embodies this secret power.

Some critics feel man worships the tree solely because of its beautiful mystery. Frazer believes that because immense, awestriking forests covered primeval Europe, man worshipped trees. Frazer writes, "Nothing
could be more natural" (126). Porteous claims that as man evolved he naturally felt awed by the vastness and beauty of his fertile, life ensuring environment (149-150). Canetti attributes man's attachment to the tree to its power of protection. Man easily reverenced trees that outdistanced him, forcing him to look upward at his protecting ally. "Looking up at trees becomes looking up in general" (86).

These theories inadequately explain the tree's power as coming from its mysterious beauty and physical protection. The sacred forest or tree may be beautiful, but what is beauty? Men also see trees as evil and ugly. What is the source or cause of awe? Why do early cultures and even later religions worship a tree, while others scorn the idea of a sacred tree?

Different theories of tree worship and varying attitudes toward sacred trees illustrate the difficulty of obtaining knowledge of the tree's power. Maple's struggle shows man searching for knowledge of the symbol as mask rather than experience. Many in Lehi's dream also struggle between the reality of the present and the possibility of knowing the symbol. Because the tree signifies such a powerful mystery, and because man faces difficulty acknowledging his desire to know the mystery, he often fails to gain the tree's transformative power.
As Frost's poem illustrates, to gain the knowledge and power of the tree, Maple needs to fully accept her inner desire. Jung warns that "To the degree that we repress [desire], its danger increases. But the moment the patient begins to assimilate contents that were previously unconscious, its danger diminishes" (Dreams 100). To gain life power, man must accept his inner desire.

Jung continues that the object draws man to it with a "magical compulsion."

Primitive man has a minimum of self-awareness combined with a maximum of attachment to the object; hence the object can exercise a direct magical compulsion upon him. All primitive magic and religion are based on these magical attachments, which simply consist in the projection of unconscious contents into the object. (56)

A desire for life characterizes both Maple's desire to know the meaning of the tree and Lehi's desire that leads him to the tree. Indeed, much of the tree's power comes from its representation of immortality.

The tree, which outlives generations and can theoretically live forever, represents indestructible life. Man believes that the immortal is divine. A
concrete symbol, the life tree that embodies man's desire to overcome death often receives man's deepest worship. To know the symbol's life meaning, man must accept and follow his inner desire beyond the fear of death.

Lehi Desires Beyond Fear of Death

Lehi's desire overpowers any fear of death. His journey into the wilderness has evidenced an already strong desire. He intends to suffer through the wilderness to obtain a promised land. This desire is consistently strong in his dream. He accepts each death experience to achieve ultimate life.

By overcoming each death phenomenon, Lehi centers his being on the life tree. After he eats the fruit, he calls his wife and sons to come to the tree. He watches with sorrow at those who reject the tree, and he rejoices at his family and posterity that accept the tree.

To illustrate the power of Lehi's desire over death, I want to explore the contrast between Lehi who overcomes fear and others in his dream who succumb to fear. Although Lehi desires beyond death, the death threat may engulf those who fear. Lehi saw "numberless concourses of people," "pressing forward that they might obtain the path which led unto the tree." Lehi also saw that when "an exceedingly great mist of darkness" arose, "they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they
wandered off and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:21-23). Even those seeking the tree could be deterred by great darkness.

Others succumb to fear because of shame or lack of guidance. Some who eat the fruit afterwards "were ashamed, because of those that were scoffing at them; and they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost" (1 Nephi 8:25-28). Others who felt their way toward the tree, but had no guide "were drowned in the depths of the fountain; and many were lost from [Lehi's] view, wandering in strange roads" (1 Nephi 8:31-32).

Because many in Lehi's vision fear, they waver between fear and knowing the reality of the desired tree. Symbols in Lehi's dream and in "Maple" contrast man's work, man's reality, with the reality of the symbol. Man's creations seem to dwarf the symbol's significance. Lehi sees a spacious building that "stood as it were in the air, high above the earth" (1 Nephi 8:26). The building contains many people who mock and point their fingers at those eating the fruit.

In Frost's poem, similar images express tension between knowing and fearing the symbol. Maple falters as she seeks knowledge because she fears knowledge is impossible. She looks out of a window of a nineteen-story building and sees a city "built with hands." Lehi's "great and spacious building" and Maple's
"nineteenth-story building" and "city built with hands" symbolize the conscious work and intellect of man.

Both buildings also contrast spiritual reality. The city "built with hands" contrasts a city built without hands, or by God, a heavenly city (Hebrews 11:10). The words "built with hands" echo and contrast King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a stone "cut out of the mountain without hands." Interpreting the dream, the Old Testament Prophet Daniel says the stone represents the heavenly kingdom that will be eternal and eventually overcome all previous man-made kingdoms (Daniel 2:44-45). Frost indicates that man carries a false pride in his achievements. Scriptural symbolism predicts man's accomplishments will dissolve under the reality of spiritual power.

Maple fears believing in a symbol when, as Canetti states, today we do not seriously entertain the idea of life after death (326-7). The buildings illustrate difficulty leading to man's contradictory approach toward the tree. Lehi sees that many people waver between the possibility of eating the fruit and man's intellectual scorn. Because Maple wavers between knowledge and fear, she seeks yet represses her desire to know the symbol. She finds a maple leaf in the Bible and reads "as if it was her mother speaking to her." After reading, she loses
the place and excuses herself saying "there had been nothing in it."

We know that although Maple weakens in her search, she still feels the power of the symbol. For she renews her search when her future husband "divines" her mystery. The words "divined" and "mystery" show Maple's search to know the symbol, yet Maple's search for origins weakens under a "filial diffidence" and lack of faith. As long as she takes a contradictory approach to a sacred symbol, she cannot help but vacillate. Her intellectual shame deters her from realizing a symbolical meaning.

The contradiction between fact and desire causes many to repress their desires. Freud has pointed out that the desire for being surpasses time and space, but "may easily be shown to have no basis in fact" (97).

The stricter the censorship, the more far-reaching will be the disguise and the more ingenious too may be the means employed for putting the reader on the scent of the true meaning. (Freud 176)

Though Lehi's desire overpowers fear, his dream illustrates man typically fearing the unknowable symbol. In Maple's case, her intellect dominates her search because she fears. Though she discourages herself from hoping in the impossible, her desire continues. When
Maple tells her husband of reading in the Bible, she then remembers the words "wave offering." Though she told herself the Bible had no meaning for her, she has retained the symbolic terms. Still she does nothing to understand them. She and her husband agree to give up the search, yet "they clung to what one had seen in the other / By inspiration." "It proved there was something."

Although Maple's intellectually dominated search discredits any discovery, she does not completely lose her desire. Unlike Lehi, however, Maple's desire weakens. Lehi shows that desire can increase and eventually overcome fear. Foucault explains that true power comes from desire and produces knowledge.

Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it only worked through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way. If, on the contrary, power is strong, this is because, as we are beginning to realise, it produces effects at the level of desire--and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it. (59)
The greater Lehi's desire, the greater is his power and knowledge of the symbol. Through Lehi's desire, he pulls himself closer to the symbol. This is best illustrated by Lehi's fervent prayer as he travels in the dark waste. After he prays, he sees a field, a preparation for the ultimate tree. When he sees the tree, he says he saw the fruit was "desirable to make one happy." He immediately goes and eats of the fruit. After eating, his desire continues. He says, "I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable above all other fruit" (1 Nephi 8:7-12). His indestructible desire eliminates fear and allows him to experience the meaning of the symbol. Through desire, Lehi envisions and begins to understand his soul.

In dream, Lehi's desire pulls him toward the symbol. In a similar dream, Joseph Smith Sr., an early member of the LDS church, pulls himself toward the symbol through desire. By gazing at a sacred tree, Joseph Smith Sr. enables himself to eat the fruit of the tree. In dream, he has travelled through a desolate and dreary wilderness, to a road leading to an ultimate tree.

Beyond me was a long but very pleasant valley, in which stood a tree such as I had never seen before. It was exceeding handsome, insomuch that I looked upon it with wonder and
admiration. Its beautiful branches spread themselves somewhat like an umbrella, and it bore a kind of fruit, in shape much like a chestnut bur, and as white as snow, or, if possible, whiter. I gazed upon the same with considerable interest, and as I was doing so, the burs of shells commenced opening and shedding their particles, or the fruit which they contained, which was of dazzling whiteness. I drew near and began to eat of it, and I found it delicious beyond description.

He then brought his family to eat with him, and the family praises God because the fruit creates inexpressible joy. Joseph Smith Sr. also saw a large building of mockers that his family ignored. They focused solely on the fruit, saying, "The more we ate, the more we seemed to desire, until we even got down upon our knees and scooped it up, eating it by double handfuls" (Smith 49-50).

Like Lehi's dream, and unlike Maple's experience, this dream illustrates a desire that brings man to the center of the symbol. Desire is strong because it can bring man to the center of the symbol. Because desire brings man to the center, it is often symbolized as the center. And indeed, the power of a symbol lies in its center. Lehi's dream suggests that Lehi gains power by eating the tree's fruit. The fruit represents the center
because it symbolizes potential tree. Bachelard says "The apple celebrated by the poet is the center of a cosmos, a cosmos where the living is good, where one is sure of living" (Reverie 156).

Foucault discusses the architecture of the panopticon as an example of power as the center. The panopticon means the all-seeing eye. Bentham used the idea of a central eye to design improved prisoner control. A central tower stood circumscribed by prisoners' cells. A man in the central tower could see each prisoner. The prisoner knew that he could be watched at any time and consequently governed himself appropriately (146).

The architectural design signifies that the strength of power lies in the building's center. Architecturally similar, the Portugese castle of Mafra surrounds its cathedral, signifying its divine source. The construction of castle around cathedral signifies that the ruler gains authority from a divine center. The construction is also somewhat contradictory, because, at Mafra, the ruler himself signifies the eye of power. The ruler does not go into the cathedral; the priest brings sacrament to him. The king participates in mass by looking down upon the cathedral's center from an opening in an upper floor. Not only does the king surround a divine center, he also becomes the eye of power. By looking down upon the
worship services, the king symbolizes he who can pierce and unleash the power's source.

The reason it is so important to open the symbol, to reach its center, is because there man can communicate with his soul. When Lehi travels to the center of the symbol, he travels to the center of his soul. For the tree lives within the soul. Lehi communicates with his unconsciousness, the voice of the soul. When his unconsciousness communicates with the consciousness, Lehi achieves a wholeness of being. According to Neumann, man projects his inner desires as outer symbols. The projection may then allow man to become aware of his desires (*Origins* 2:369).

Maple's desire reaches the projection level, but she never becomes aware of the strength of her desire. She "looked for herself, as everyone looks for himself, more or less outwardly." Unlike Lehi and Smith, who commune with their souls, she searches outwardly, and thus never discovers herself. Lehi, in contrast, is forced to search his inner self through dream. We know Lehi communes with an inner desire because the dream transforms his soul. His travel through the dark and dreary wilderness and waste detail the stretching of a soul. The large and spacious field suggest a cleared and cultivated soul. The life bearing tree describes a soul achieving transcendence. Maple's tree never bears fruit.
When Lehi eats the fruit, he communes with the symbol. The fruit, a sanctified or ultimate communion, transforms Lehi's soul. From his soul, Lehi learns that death necessarily precedes both mortal and transcendent life, both individual and cultural life.

Lehi Communes with the Symbol and Learns that Death Gives Life

The tree symbolizes a death requisite to further growth. Lehi's life tree grows out of a transformed wasteland. Lehi's travel begins in a death sphere that eventually yields life. Lehi's wilderness-waste represents the "cosmic image" that Bachelard claims begins and unifies a reverie. "The cosmic image is immediate. It gives the whole before the parts." (Reverie 175)

If we are to see Lehi's dream as a unified reverie, its immediate, but cosmic image can very well be the wilderness, itself a seedbed of ultimate life. Lehi's dream reveals life as a process that begins in a death sphere. Lehi's death sphere becomes a life image, a wasteland transformed to garden, a dark wilderness transformed to a light tree. The transformation process itself represents a unity of life.

A single cosmic image gives him a unity of reverie, a unity of the world. Other images are born from the first image, come together, and
mutually embellish each other. Never do the images contradict each other. (Reverie 175)

The wilderness gives birth to the tree. The wilderness and tree are not two opposites that represent existence vs. non-existence; they represent a way of life. Because death precedes each life image, we can say that death begins the life cycle. The images together bring the life man sees in the tree.

When man reaches the center of the symbol, his soul communicates to him of a death that will bring life. Doctoring his sick comrades in Auschwitz, Viktor Frankl recounts a visit with a woman who speaks the language of the soul. Knowing she was to die, her soul reveals death as the seed of life.

"In my former life I was spoiled and did not take spiritual accomplishments seriously." She now had only one friend that spoke to her—a tree. Through a small window she could see two blossoms on one branch of a chestnut tree. Fearing delusion, Frankl asked the woman what the tree said. She replied "It said to me, 'I am here—I am here—I am life, eternal life.'" (109-110)

Near death, the woman communes with the silence. Her spiritual accomplishment produces, as Foucault says,
"effects at the level of desire." Confronting death, the woman desires an indestructible value, and her desire causes the tree to speak. As Bachelard asserts, the value of existence is created by appetite" (Reverie 178).

**Lehi's Tree Bears Knowledge of Death**

Lehi's dream shows that man prevents the tree from becoming an inner experience because the tree both reveals life yet conceals death. Although man recognizes that the tree has knowledge, he cannot obtain its truth until he overcomes its death experience. In Lehi's dream, those who suffer through the mists of darkness yet cling to the path eventually reach the tree.

Lehi's tree holds valuable knowledge because it contains the death secret. Because many sacred trees contain the death secret, man sees the tree as a bearer of great knowledge. When Adam and Eve eat from the tree of knowledge, they eat of death. Yggrdassil and Odin carry the epithet "bearer of the thoughtful" because of their death experience (Pigott 216-218). Campbell claims that Attis, Jesus, and Odin represent cosmic figures attached to the tree of the universe, obtaining life through death (Hero 41).

Primitive tribes also evidence man's belief in the tree as a death to life vehicle. Some tribes sacrificed at sacred trees. A tribe of Volga sacrificed a victim at the roots of the sacred tree. Finish-Ugarian groups
worshipped in sacred groves and hung "skins of the sacrificial victims" on sacred trees (Frazer 128). These examples identify the tree as a death vehicle.

As Lehi's experience shows, the tree of death is one with the tree of life. The tree that slays also bestows life. Because Aeneas carries the golden bough, he can journey through the underworld to return to life. With the golden bough, Aeneas can know death and life.

Campbell, emphasizing the tree's duality of life and death, describes a "great mythological context opening out [like] the two arms of the tree: of the knowledge, on the one hand, of good and evil and, on the other, of immortal life" (Masks 302). Campbell's tree combines opposites, for the tree is one tree.

The Tree--Vehicle for the Written Secret of Death and Life

The tree's secret of life and death has exerted a great influence on man. Well beyond Lehi's death, prophets counseled man to seek immortal fruit. Lehi's son Nephi counsels his brothers to accept the truth of their father's dream (1 Nephi 15:21-36). Alma, a later descendent, speaks several times about the beauty of nourishing the seed in ourselves that it "might bring forth fruit unto you" (Alma 32:28-43; 33:23). And significantly, though not directly related to Lehi's dream, is the fact that the tree eventually became symbolic vehicle for writing the secret of death and life.
Early myths recount the gods teaching man to write that he might have and teach the secrets of immortality.

The Norse god Odin was held responsible for the invention of the runic alphabet. The inspired stroke of genius whereby the ancient Greeks adapted a variety of the Phoenician consonantal script so as to represent the distinctive consonant and vowel sounds of Greek, thus producing the first alphabet such as is known today was linked with the mythological figure Cadmus, who, coming from Phoenicia, was said to have founded Thebes and introduced writing into Greece. The Arabs had a traditional account of their script together with the language itself, being given to Adam by God. (Robins 10:643)

These myths emphasize primitive man's preoccupation with the secret of life. The connection between the life tree and writing illustrates man's concern for the secret of life.

Graves carries the connection between the life tree and letters further. According to Graves, trees, letters, and literature grow from similar etymological roots.

[We learn] that in all Celtic languages trees means letters; that the Druidic colleges were founded in woods or groves; that a great part of
the Druidic mysteries were concerned with twigs of different sorts, and that the most ancient Irish alphabet, the Beth Luis-Nion ("Birch-Roman-Ash") takes its name from the first three of a series of trees whose initials form the sequence of its letter. Beech is a common synonym for 'literature.' The English word 'book,' for example, comes from a Gothic word meaning 'letters' and, like the German buchstabe, is etymologically connected with the word 'beech'--the reason being that writing tables were made of beech. (52)

Graves' book, The White Goddess, supports the thesis that the function of all true poetry is religious invocation of the Muse, the White Goddess (9-10). The White Goddess or Moon-goddess, seems to originally have been the Danaan Barley-goddess of Argos. Frazer titles her "either Demeter or her Double, Persephone" (Graves 67).

Graves' thesis has captured the power of the life image. That which the tree embodies, the goddess embodies. The White Goddess takes many forms, but her essential qualities, birth, love and death, expressed in her colors, reveal life transformations.
When Suidas the Byzantine records that Io was a cow that changed her colour from white to red and then to black he means that the New Moon is the white goddess of birth and growth; the Full Moon, the red goddess of love and battle; the Old Moon, the black goddess of death and divination. (Graves 52)

The White Goddess embodies the life giving force, itself the object of poetical experience. According to Graves, true poets invoke life power of the muse. The Welsh poet Alun Lewis wrote of

'the single poetic theme of Life and Death . . . the question of what survives of the beloved.'

Granted that there are many themes for the journalist of verse, yet for the poet, as Alun Lewis understood the word, there is no choice. The elements of the single infinitely variable Theme are to be found in certain ancient poetic myths which though manipulated to conform with each epoch of religious change . . . yet remain constant in general outline. (21)

Knowledge of Death Bears Life Power for Lehi

The life tree renders death as the paradoxical life seed. In vision, Lehi encounters a death sphere that (1)
surpasses mortal limits and renews Lehi and (2) makes possible the creation of a culture.

In vision, Lehi is freed from mortal limits of time and space. In dream, time becomes nonexistent as Lehi watches scores of descendents seek or disregard the tree. His descriptions of the fruit also describe a more than mortal sphere. The fruit is whiter than any earthly whiteness, sweeter than any sweetness he has tasted in a mortal sphere, and brings joy beyond mortal expression.

Bachelard explains that as a dreamer eases into reverie his search for well being attaches to a simple concrete object, such as a flower or fruit which engulfs the mind. The fruit empowers man with a "new world" experience (Reverie 175-180). This other world experience means that though man sits on his couch, he may enter a sphere beyond himself. The dreamer who enters the symbol surpasses, however temporarily, the limits of mortality. The vision is timeless and matterfree.

Eliade repeatedly illustrates that the journey to the center of ultimate reality brings an enduring and new life. The journey is a

rite of the passage from the profane to the sacred, from the ephemeral and illusory to reality and eternity, from death to life, from man to divinity. Attaining the center is equivalent to a consecration, an initiation;
yesterday's profane and illusory existence gives place to a new, to a life that is real, enduring, and effective. (Return 17-18)

Bachelard insists that though the dreamer afterwards denies it, during the reverie he exists in a real state. While one dreams, his dream is true existence (Reverie 159). The dreamer, like archaic man, transcends time and physical bounds. The vision ultimately returns man to this life, but this temporary transcendence nourishes man in this life while strongly affirming a future. Lehi returns from dream, in a sense, rededicated to achieving the promise of a new land. His overall concern is that his family strive together toward achieving similar experiences of joy.

After experiencing a momentary vision, free of time and matter, Lehi returns to this life to create a culture. When Lehi awakes he shares his dream with his family so they may follow its pattern. He teaches that they will face opposition but must suffer through it to obtain the treasured fruit. They must also travel the way of opposition to achieve life.

The dream orients the Lehites to their future and gives them purpose. The dream becomes myth that molds the family as a culture in a new land. The wilderness-to-bright tree motif represents a transformation from dark waste to light fruit, an
emergence from darkness into dazzling light. Lehi's wilderness-to-tree motif illustrates that power produces. Those who experience the death to life transformation will create.

In its visionary strength, the tree serves other cultures in a manner similar to Lehi's, by producing and creating. Before the small Quaker group, known as the Shakers, left England for America in 1774, James Whittaker, a chief disciple of the group, envisioned an ultimate tree.

I saw a vision of America, and I saw a large tree, and every leaf thereof shone with such brightness, as made it appear like a burning torch, representing the Church of Christ, which will yet be established in this land. (Andrews 17)

The dream tree signified eventual success over discouragement. The dream also signified a hope that held the group together and enabled them to journey through hardships to obtain a better and eventually ultimate life. For the Shakers the future was reality.

The Shakers followed an abstract end—a later spiritual life. Whittaker, though not the founder of the sect, dreams of a tree that sets the sect apart and gives purpose to the group. Whittaker's tree takes on a
concrete and natural representation of a life symbol. He makes the pattern of church life a concrete reality.

Frost's poem "Maple" illustrates the emptiness of life without creation. The tree's knowledge reveals that death is the bed of life. Maple's search for the unknowable tree meaning endows her with a life search. But she never knows life power. She accepts the unknown as guide but cannot accept nor have faith in an "absolute" meaning. In his conclusion Frost suggests man might do better without a mysterious meaning, "As leaving more to nature and happy chance." He means that man must do as nature, sacrifice to create life.

Maple's search leaves her fruitless. As a secretary she only copies words of another's creation. Though her secretarial position leads to marriage, she produces no seed. As she tells her husband of the maple leaf in the Bible she recalls the words "wave offering." She does not read of the sacrificial rite of the feast of the passover. She does not see her origin in her mother's sacrifice, yet she "knows" her mother died by giving her birth. And though she read of sacrifice, she still could understand without suffering a death to give life. Without seed the tree is barren.

Life power yields a desire that creates. Lehi, in contrast to Maple, focuses on seed. His desire represents the undying seed of power. After eating and being
"filled" with joy, Lehi's desire is not quenched but expands. The contradiction adequately represents desire and power. For Lehi seeks immortality--continually--that can only be achieved through a process of eternal birth. Accordingly, he urges his family to come and eat, and he grieves when two sons refuse.

As Lehi's dream illustrates, true power is eternal. Lehi desires even after he eats the fruit. He desires that his family eat. Then he watches group after group confront the tree. Some seek the tree half-heartedly, some eat and then leave the tree, and some scorn those who eat. But the pattern is clear. Lehi desires more people to eat the fruit. Lehi's desire has led him through a wasteland into the heart of the tree. Desire enables transformation and creation.

Death Yields Life Power

Lehi achieves life power because he experiences concealed death. Through confrontation with the wilderness, Lehi awakens to a death sphere. Death, as tree mythology reveals, preceeds life. Precisely so for Lehi. For he follows a life-guide (man in white) through the depths of infinity to achieve ultimate existence.

Cultures generally accept death as power, but unlike Lehi, they grant death power over them. Fearing death, man seeks safety in the crowd. Unwittingly, Maple sets herself apart from others, only to remove herself from the
symbol and join the crowd. Girard explains that man in his desperation to maintain the status quo conceals the death and violence within his soul. Avoiding personal transformation, Maple avoids death; consequently, she never has power to create.

For death is life power. No matter how temporary, no matter how mortal, the moment of eternity brings life. The moment opens the symbol. Man's eye pierces the center of darkness and light; man sees, as does Lehi, the process of eternal birth.

Returning to mortality, Lehi has obtained power to create life. Renewed, he gives his descendents a death to life myth, the wilderness-to-tree pattern that creates cultural life.
Chapter Four

Vision: Suffering the Symbolic Tree of Eternal Becoming

The Bodhisattva Subhuti said, 'Profound, O Venerable One, is the perfect Transcendental Wisdom.'

And the Venerable One replied, 'Abysmally profound, like the space of the universe, O Subhuti, is the perfect Transcendental Wisdom.'

Subhuti said again: 'Difficult to be attained through Awakening is the perfect Transcendental Wisdom, O Venerable One.'

To which the Venerable One replied: 'That is the reason, O Subhuti, why no one ever attains it through Awakening.'

Campbell

Cutting down the tree of the Cosmos is not refusing to see it, but rather seeing it in the Self: he who sees so truly sees.

Baghavad Gita

Lehi's Tree: Suffering to Know the Self

Anciently man sought the sanctity of trees, for they bestowed oracular truths. Beneath great oaks or other trees, prophets listened to the secrets of the rustling leaves and brought life to themselves and their people. Similarly, Lehi travels to a supreme and light tree of life and gains life for himself and his family.

Yet Lehi does not travel to a physically living tree. He achieves his reward through vision. Though he expresses his dream as sequential images of opposition,
his achievement surpasses opposition and transcends mere dream. For dream belongs solely to an individual for the duration of the dream state. Upon awaking, the dreamer grasps at an ethereal substance. To the dreamer, dream vanishes. To a dreamer's audience, dream is but expression of distant experience.

Lehi's vision, however, is poetic seed, through which he achieves rebirth. In distinguishing between reverie and poetry, Bachelard concludes that "in the end, those documents formed by reverie are the most propitious matter to fashion into poems" (Reverie 158-159). Like poetry, the dream as poetic seed transcends origin through suffering. "'Poetry constantly surpasses its origins, and because it suffers more deeply in ecstasy or in sorrow, it retains greater freedom'" (Space xxxvi). As with poetry, vision provides limitless transformations of freedom.

In the transcendence of vision, Lehi communes with a life power. Bachelard explains that one who "goes to the bottom of reverie rediscovers natural reverie, a reverie of the original dreamer. The world is no longer mute." (Reverie 188) The vision renews Lehi and ensures renewal of his seed. After vision, Lehi returns to his family to bestow them with life power. Lehi's vision becomes a transformation of being. In vision, Lehi suffers the limitless transformations of eternal becomings.
Lehi's Transformational Sphere--Dream, Vision, or Reverie?

Although the terms dream, vision, or reverie can be used rather loosely to describe Lehi's experience, I feel Lehi's use of the terms dream or vision indicate what Bachelard calls a reverie of life. Lehi says, "I have dreamed a dream; or in other words, I have seen a vision" (1 Nephi 8:2). I favor the label reverie, because Lehi indicates the experience combined qualities of both dream and vision--a paradoxical combination. When I call Lehi's experience vision, I mean an experience with the power of the Bachelardian reverie. For vision extends beyond life, while dream, in the Freudian sense, is a product of the dreamer's past. Freud closed his Interpretation of Dreams with the following rejection of prophecy.

And the value of dreams for giving us knowledge of the future? There is of course no question of that. It would be truer to say instead that they give us knowledge of the past. For dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading us into the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as present, has been moulded by his
indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past. (559-660)

Both Lehi's dream world and the Book of Mormon, the dream's literary context, seem strongly born of the past. The Book of Mormon begins with Nephi recounting the preservation of their family from the destruction of Jerusalem. God commands them to carry the brass plates, a history and genealogy of their fathers and the law of Moses. And as Nephi and his brothers attempt to secure the records, despite life threats, Nephi encourages them to be "strong like unto Moses," for the "Lord is able to deliver us even as our fathers, and to destroy Laban, even as the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 4:2-3; see also 1 Nephi 1-4).

Lehi's dream begins as a coherent dream with an especially past-present image, the wilderness. Lehi brings his family out of a flourishing civilization to face the wilderness, a seeming dearth. The family faces destruction more immediately here than in Jerusalem. At times the sons cannot find animals for food and they break their bows.

Lehi's family has other concerns as great as finding food for their family. The sons risk their lives obtaining the record that contains their genealogy, history and the Law. First Nephi is beaten by "faithless" brothers because of his confidence in his father's counsel. Again,
as the brothers return with Ishmael's household, many rebel and seek to kill Nephi.

Both of these journeys spawn rebellions based on Lehi's being a visionary man. The wilderness context carries threats for Lehi and his family in many ways. They face the challenge of getting food, but Lehi's visionary nature is a subject as delicate and life-threatening as is survival. In addition to surviving in the wilderness, Lehi must prepare for future generations as well. Lehi must obtain the records and receives the directive to bring Ishmael's family "that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise" (1 Nephi 7:1).

Although the wilderness brings concerns for Lehi, these concerns are dream material that does not fully explain the power of vision. A Freudian dream analysis would require that I look at Lehi's dream in relation to his surroundings, such as Lehi's wilderness journey and life in Jerusalem. The analysis seeks to illuminate a person's thoughts and physical experience by analyzing image associations. Such an analysis might prove valuable, but I do not have the man Lehi before us, nor can I follow his dream-thoughts.

**Vision--an Isolated Suffering**

Lehi's dream is marked by an intensity he labels vision, a depth Jouvre calls suffering. Lehi has seen a
vision in a highly poetic sense. Bachelard would call his experience a reverie. For his vision gives birth and meaning to a culture, to people within the culture and most intensely to the dreamer. While Lehi's first vision recorded in the Book of Mormon sends his family and Ishmael's family out of Jerusalem to the wilderness, his dream of the life tree foretells the Lehites' new life in a new land.

Through vision Lehi experiences intense suffering, an experience often talked about yet rarely defined. Eliade defines suffering "as an event, as a historical fact, to suffering brought on by a cosmic catastrophe (drought, flood, storm), by an invasion (incendiarism, slavery, humiliation), by social injustices, and so on" (Return 96).

A better definition of intense suffering is Eliade's assertion that suffering is "the consequence of a deviation in respect to the 'norm'" (Return 98). Lehi is indeed exiled from the norm. In Lehi's case he leaves Jerusalem. Because Lehi chastizes Jerusalem for its decadence, the Jews ostracize and seek to kill him. Lehi furthers his isolation by escaping to the wilderness. His isolation from society and family creates a suffering preparatory to life. According to Frye,

the root idea of pathos is the exclusion of an individual on our own level from a social group
to which he is trying to belong. Hence the
central tradition of sophisticated pathos is the
study of the isolated mind, the story of how
someone recognizably like ourselves is broken by
a conflict between the inner and outer world,
between imaginative reality and the sort of
reality which is established by a social
consensus. (Frye 39)

Isolated, Lehi suffers solitary transcendence into
the limitless realm. Present or "social reality" is bound
in words and mortal limits of experience. Consciousness,
as with society, is obsessed with, lives by, and produces
by limits. Lehi's exodus from society into vision plunges
him into a realm beyond limit, necessary for life renewal.
This confrontation is suffering.

This suffering exceeds the isolation of mind Frye
discusses because the conflict is between the outer world
of social consensus and an unknown future. Frye grasps
some of this beyond-life-order of suffering as he labels
pathos a "queer ghoulish emotion" (39). More than
emotional suffering, Lehi's suffering encompasses a whole
man, mentally, spiritually, physically, awakening man's
unconscious to possibilities of life in a death mileu.
Gashe defines such an existence as the nothingness of,
possible potentialities (319).
In the wilderness, Lehi and his family face the unknown possibilities of the future. But in dream Lehi actualizes the highest suffering, being "more deeply" into a realm beyond. In dream wilderness, Lehi confronts the unknown, "the identity of impersonality, an identity of the possibility of being many identities, the trace of identity" (Gashe 319).

The Limitless Causes Suffering because it Is a Death Sphere

When the mind confronts the limitless, an aware consciousness confronts the death sphere of the unconscious. Neumann defines death as the unconscious overwhelming the ego, causing the ego to lose its power of differentiation (Great Mother 76). According to Neumann, unconscious domination may result in a spiritual death, such as madness, or even a physical death (Great Mother 69).

Jung says that death confrontation terrifies man because it requires him to be crucified.

We all have to be 'crucified with Christ,' i.e., suspended in a moral suffering equivalent to a veritable crucifixion. In practice this is only possible up to a point, and apart from that is so unbearable and inimical to life that the ordinary human being can afford to get into such
a state only occasionally, in fact as seldom as possible. For how could he remain ordinary in the face of such suffering? (Alchemy 21)

Lehi's dream sphere resembles the death sphere because his consciousness experiences the limitless darkness. During this conflict, Lehi suffers a crucifixion. His ego travels beyond limits and faces the unconscious, a precreation sphere.

According to Neumann, Lehi exists temporarily at the death pole, suffering the intensity of extremes. When Lehi's consciousness confronts the unconscious, the conscious mind experiences extremes, shown by Lehi's dream images. The dark wilderness precedes its contrast, and his travel through waste precedes his intense prayer. At the death pole, Neumann theorizes, the extremes resemble each other in intensity, color, feeling, and sense. Because of these similarities and the continually changing psyche, "extremes can coincide or can at least shift into another" (Great Mother 76).

Jouvre says the experiences of extremes frees poetry. He says that because poetry suffers in ecstasy or sorrow, it thereby surpasses origins. Likewise, then, in reverie, the matter of poetry, because consciousness suffers extremes of the unconscious, it surpasses origins. In Lehi's vision, as in Jouvre's poetry, intense suffering of extremes frees Lehi into the limitless.
Lehi's suffering the limitless is a process of transformation. Lehi describes his vision as a process of intense suffering to achieve the fruit of a life tree. His vision is patterned as the "structure of the tree," from the "dark materia" of roots to the "mediator" of trunk to the branches that reach the light of the heavens (Cook 7, 11). Lehi's terms "dark and dreary waste" are equivalent to the dark materia of roots, the early penetration into the boundless. Lehi's field is equivalent to the mediator or trunk, and Lehi's light fruit is equivalent to branches reaching the light of the heavens. I do not mean simply that Lehi goes through three distinct stages of infinity. However, Lehi's visionary images beautifully explain his process of suffering different facets of the infinite.

Lehi's suffering begins when he penetrates the center. Lehi's visionary images reveal a continual transformation. When Lehi's images become and assume varying degrees of their opposites, Lehi is forced to undergo the limitless possibilities of infinity. The wilderness becomes waste, then field and then holiest tree. Lehi's emotions, equally varying and intense, range from dreary despair to fervent prayer to the height of joy. Lehi's images and emotions reflect the nature of the ultimate center. The images that change reflect a center that changes. Nietzsche labels the center eternity. "In
each Now, Being begins; round each Here turns the sphere of There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity" (Marcuse 122). Such an eternity is by no means static.

Jung also calls the center eternity and says "eternity is a quality predicated by the unconscious, and not a hypostasis." Jung continues an analysis of dream images that causes him to question whether symbols express a mortal or immortal sphere.

[The dream symbol] raises the question of a quality which leaves us in some doubt whether the psychic phenomenon expressing itself in the mandala is under the laws of space and time. . . . the other center of personality lies on a different plane from the ego since, unlike this, it has the quality of 'eternity' or relative timelessness. (Dreams 179)

Thus the death sphere may not be a death sphere at all. Often a seeming death sphere contains ultimate life. Marcuse asserts that Nietzsche's transcendence into what is traditionally called a death sphere is the total affirmation of life. "This is the total affirmation of the life instincts, repelling all escape and negation. The eternal return is the will and vision of an erotic
attitude toward being for which necessity and fulfillment coincide" (122).

Lehi's images that lead him to attain the ultimate center reveal the ultimate life possibilities of his soul. The wilderness and waste reveal the soul's expanse and emptiness. The field, enclosure and form, also transforms him and Lehi begins to know the possibilities within himself.

Just as traveling through waste is an expansion of soul, Lehi's vision of field reveals his ego-consciousness maturing through Lehi's efforts to pierce the origin-less. Thus, the term "field," carrying with it the implications of self-cultivation, is particularly appropriate. The images reveal a transformation of Lehi's soul. When Lehi goes to the tree and eats its fruit, his soul rejoices, for Lehi discovers life power.

The Fruit's Seed Represents Eternal Birth

The transformation at the center of the soul is powerful because it produces the seed of eternal birth. The light fruit of the tree, the central dream image, yields the highest statement of eternal transformation. Many mistakenly emphasize Lehi's tree of life and overlook the fact that Lehi focuses on the fruit of the tree. In vision, Lehi's fruit takes a central position and reveals its value. "Psychical intensity coincides with psychical value: the most intense elements are also the most
important ones--those which form the centre-point of the dream-thoughts" (Freud 365).

In every sense, the dream stresses power of fruit and seed. Even interpreted as a mere dream, the context reveals the fruit as the seed of life. Nephi prefaced his father's dream saying they had brought "all manner of seeds of every kind, both of grain of every kind and also of the seeds of fruit of every kind" (1 Nephi 8:1). Lehi sent his sons to bring Ishmael's family that they might raise up seed unto the Lord in the land of promise" (1 Nephi 7:1). The fruit bearing tree represents fulfillment of life, survival through desert and immortality of Lehi and his family.

Yet the fruit yields life power for Lehi because it is beyond dream. Lehi dreams of fruit that opens itself to him. Figuratively, his gaze sheds the fruit's shell. The experience could describe a transubstantiation into absolute reality, for Lehi eats the fruit to obtain the ultimate reality. What Lehi eats becomes part of him.

Canetti explains that ritual communion symbolically gives men ultimate life. In some communion rituals, members mentally focus on all future hunts. The rite secures the group against death. If they eat a dead object, they increase their power against death. In higher religions the ordinance expands with "the idea of increase of the faithful." The most valuable aspect,
however, is "the promise of revival and resurrection" (113-114). Food rituals, similar to group communion, may better describe Lehi's fruit experience. "The increase of food is insured by a certain ritual of eating, food being originally thought of as something living" (Canetti 114).

Both rituals are explicatory. Part of the value of the tree and fruit symbol is that they represent a continual transformation. While the tree seems static, a cross section cut reveals circular growth rings. The branches and the roots also grow out from the tree in a circular manner. By bearing seeds that become new tree and fruit, the fruit produces both eternal and endless rebirth of fruit and tree. Thus Lehi eats, in symbolic existence, of more than static immortality--he eats of eternal birth.

Eating the fruit gives Lehi qualities of a supreme God. His "transubstantiation" affirms his dream as actualizing a god-wish wherein Lehi attains a portion of divinity. Lehi describes the fruit of the tree with superlatives because the fruit-bearing tree represents a beyond mortal sphere. In vision, Lehi achieves apotheosis. The dream seen as a god-wish reveals more than dream, for apotheosis is a quality of the soul, a function of the unconscious. Jung claims that the soul manifests a hunger for apotheosis. Jung rejects Christian accusations that he has deified the soul, saying "Not I,
but God himself has deified it" (Alchemy 18-21). The self, then, contains a divine structure.

According to Jung, dreams, visions, myth, folklore and literature demonstrate that the unconscious exists in a sphere of eternity--unbound by space and time. Thus though the dream, vision, or reverie may manifest itself through the cloak of "past images," the dream is vision, the structure of Lehi's self, his personal revelation of eternity.

Nietzsche calls such a transcendent moment the eternal now. Marcuse interprets Nietzsche as saying "man comes to himself only when the transcendence has been conquered--when eternity has become present in the here and now" (122).

Shield of necessity!
Star-summit of Being!
Not reached by any wish,
not soiled by any No,
eternal Yes of Being:
I affirm you eternally,
for I love you, eternity.
(Marcuse 122-123)

In vision, Lehi exists in an eternal eternity. Lehi's fruit and tree image fuse the tree as being, the fruit as eternal becoming. The tree bearing life-fruit
eternally grows. The tree grows and the fruit continues through it seeds that will bear both tree and fruit.

Thus the appropriateness of both Lehi's tree and Nietzsche's circle lies in their ability to portray the transformation or motion of the origin-less sphere. Any point on a circle in motion creates a center; any point of a rotational sphere serves as center. Any point in a "fourth dimension" harmonizing space and time is center. In visions, in eternal moments, the dreamer or hero exists at the center.

Lehi's eating the fruit of the life tree reveals a beyond mortal power. Eating the fruit opens to Lehi the creation power possible in reverie. Bachelard posits that through reverie a dreamer obtains sacred power.

Let us put our reveries back in front on a familiar object. Then let us dream further yet, so far even that we lose ourselves in our reveries when we want to know how an object might have found its name. ... Reverie sacralizes its object. From the beloved familiar object to the sacred personal object it is only a step. (Reverie 36)

The power to create lies in the sphere beyond limits or beyond name. That Lehi achieves an image before it is named once again indicates that his experience surpasses
dream. And as Bachelard states, the dreamer may know how an object found its name.

Lehi's vision takes him to the prename sphere. Indeed, Lehi never says "the tree of life" but rather "the tree" or "a tree" or "the fruit of the tree." Its name as "The Tree of life" comes from the editor, probably from Lehi's descendents and from the LDS culture.

The tree beyond name exists in the sacred sphere. Lehi's tree, for him a visionary reality, becomes a sacred symbol to his descendents. They receive and rever the sacred tree, the limit of the limitless, the naming of the indefinable.

Briffault explains the power of the name. In the Hindu faith, Briffault writes, "the sacred Word contains all potencies, for the Sacred Word expresses the one and latent Being, every power of generation, of preservation, and of destruction" (15). He explains further that the word symbolizing the originless contains power of creation.

In Egypt 'to possess the knowledge of the sacred name of God, of the gods, and of things animate and inanimate was the magician's chief object in life; and his desire to acquire it is easy to understand, for according to the beliefs of the period it made him master of all the power of
this world.' In Persia the magic art was called 'the science of names!' (15-16)

Because Lehi reaches the source beyond words, he obtains the creation power of the tree and fruit.

Creation Power--Personal and Cultural Renewal

Whether he is conscious of it or not, Lehi approaches a significant dilemma. While he temporarily resides in transcendence, he has reached the source beyond words. Yet his transcendence and the limit of name are mutually exclusive. Lehi has achieved transcendent revelation that must come visually, for the experience beyond--the limitless--and the limitation of words are so contradictory that they cancel each other. Yet his concern even in vision is to bring his family to the tree.

The enigma is that telling kills the vision but may renew the culture. Lehi returns to urge his family to attain the tree's fruit; yet the tree lives only in a beyond mortal sphere. Lehi faces the challenge of communicating the experience beyond words. His dilemma, significantly, can only be partly solved. The dilemma is unsolved when he tells his family to seek the tree because he cannot explain the tree's full power.

Gerald McDermott's *The Magic Tree: A Tale of the African Congo* crystallizes the delicate tension between words and vision of the source beyond. A rejected twin,
Mavungu leaves his home, travels down the river and meets a tree blocking any further passage. He pulls leaves and strange voices speak. "From each leaf [is born] a new person." The final leaf becomes a beautiful princess who gives Mavungu strength and beauty. Mavungu marries the princess, who pledges him to silence as to the source of his power and happiness. They live in joy until Mavungu longs for his mother and brother.

Visiting Mavungu, his mother desires his secret. As he begins to tell her, the princess stares at him. Her stare silences his words. Time passes and Mavungu again longs for the company of his family. He returns to his mother alone. This time he reveals the secret. As he speaks a metamorphosis occurs, rendering him to his original state. In fear he returns to the princess and the village only to find nothing.

By revealing the nameless source, Mavungu kills the transcendent. The folktale illustrates the fact that the power of the magic tree lies beyond the world of limits and words. As Mavungu discovered too late, the wisdom beyond words and words cannot coexist. As Mavungu speaks, he is transformed to the weakness of mortality. He also kills the transcendent.

Although awakening kills the vision, Lehi also solves the enigma in the only possible manner. When he counsels his family to seek the tree, his counsel renews the Lehite
culture. The culture cannot be restored unless the hero rejects the personal liberation to return to his people with the elixir of life.

The tree's power itself undergoes transformation. In Lehi's vision the tree lives. Although the tree "dies" in mortality, it engenders the culture with power. The life tree endows man with transcendence in vision; in mortality, the symbolic transcendence empowers the culture.

Achieving and communicating transcendence are difficult. Lehi's path toward the tree illustrates the difficulty of achieving the transcendent tree. His dream also illustrates the reluctance of his two sons and others to accept Lehi's tree. The novelist Patrick White illustrates the struggle for personal transcendence and the difficulty of communicating that liberation in his novel The Tree of Man.

Stan Parker, White's protagonist finally receives his life-sought revelation at his death. With the sun in his eyes, he sees its ultimate light. He "walked slowly, looking at the incredible objects of the earth or at the intangible blaze of sunlight. It was in his eyes now" (496-497).

At death, he achieves a revelation through opposition, power and vision. His life culminates in transcendence.
I believe, he said, in the cracks in the path. On which ants were massing, struggling up over an escarpment. But struggling. Like the painful sun in the icy sky. Whirling and whirling. But struggling. But joyful. So much so he was trembling. The sky was blurred now. As he stood waiting for the flesh to be loosened on him, he prayed for greater clarity, and it became obvious as a hand. It was clear that One, and no other figure, is the answer to all sums.

(497)

White also shows that the transcendent comes through death to the individual alone. Although Parker has fully entered the light, he must transcend alone. His faithless wife clings to her dying husband, desperately seeking his knowledge, yet Parker was unable to complete her "further sentence." "The man left, taking his greatness with him" (498-499).

At his death, Parker illustrates the impossibility of conveying the transcendence of the tree. Stan Parker does not communicate with anyone at the time of his death. No human word can reveal its power.

White emphasizes that man must travel to the tree himself to gain its truth. Parker's grandson, oppressed with the death in the house, wanders out to a tree. For
one can gain the tree's life knowledge only by going directly to the tree and suffering its death.

White describes the transformation of the tree's power as he closes his novel: "In the end there are the trees." There the grandson wishes to write a poem, and White concludes that "in the end, there was no end" (499).

Although the transcendent defies expression, and expression destroys the life tree, naming the experience may also enliven cultures. After the transformative revelation of the soul, Lehi returns to encourage his family to obtain the ultimate life. Lehi's expression cannot in any way equal the vision. Yet his family, and seed, lives according to the life pattern prophesied in his vision. Lehi's life and vision are intimately bound with the life of his sons. He begins his vision narration rejoicing in Nephi and Sam and fears exceedingly because of Laman and Lemuel. He concludes saying Laman and Lemuel did not eat the fruit. He "exceedingly feared for Laman and Lemuel, yea he feared that they should be cast off from the presence of the Lord."

Lehi's vision shows that to achieve the life tree, his seed must follow his pattern. Lehi's vision shows that Lehi suffered intensely to obtain the tree's fruit. As his dream continues, his immediate and then distant family confront the tree. As others approach the tree, Lehi's suffering decreases. Yet he sees that just as he
had to suffer, each individual must suffer beyond darkness to obtain the fruit of immortal joy.

The Book of Mormon also illustrates instances of Lehi's seed following Lehi's pattern. Those who experience the visionary power use Lehi's language. They echo Lehi's words. His son Nephi envisions a tree "like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow" (1 Nephi 11:8). Alma, a later descendent of Lehi, compares "the word unto a seed. Alma encourages the people to nourish the tree that it "shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life." He continues,

Because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure.

(Alma 32:42)

Alma ends this sermon with the same tree imagery. He counsels that if man will plant the word in his heart and nourish it with faith, "it will become a tree, springing up in you unto everlasting life" (33:23).
Lehi's return from the sacred, though destroying the transcendent, empowers and directs the culture. In vision the tree represents never-ending power. In vision, Lehi is originless. Though in mortality the ultimate tree dies for Lehi, it lives immortally, inviting man to surpass mortality. The tree yet lives and calls man to know its secret of death and life.

The culture names the tree because that is precisely what they receive—the named unnameable. Until each individual eats of the tree's life fruit, he will not know the ultimate life cycle.

Lehi's Suffering into Liberation Nourishes Eternal Becoming

Lehi has suffered intense vision to obtain the life of the tree. For in vision he gains the power of the life tree. Lehi knows, as does Mavungu, that he who plucks the leaves of the tree may hear the voices that speak beyond words. Lehi knows that in dream, he who gazes intently at the covered fruit may shed its burr-like shell and feast on its joy. Lehi knows that by eating the life fruit, he satisfies his desire, while increasing his desire. And Lehi experiences the revelation of death. For at death, though the man Stan Parker has gone with his secret, the tree extends itself to those strong enough to see.

In vision, Lehi nourishes himself with the fruit of immortal joy. "The beginning of life is the beginning of
a dream; thus Pierre Albert-Birot suggests that we live the happiness of Adam: 'I feel that the world enters me like the fruits I eat; yes, truly, I nourish myself with the World'" (Bachelard Reverie 154). By leaving the visionary sphere, Lehi destroys the transcendent life power of the tree. And though eternity fades, as it dies, it gives birth to man, birth to a culture, and birth to new eternities.
Chapter Five

Conclusion

So that in the end there were the trees. The boy walking through them with his head drooping as he increased in stature. Putting out shoots of green thought. So that, in the end, there was no end.

Patrick White

Although I label Lehi's dream a wilderness-to-tree metamorphosis, the tree of life is more than a mere expression of transformation. For Lehi's tree is a living symbol that renews Lehi, effectually creates a culture, and keys the structure of a viable, contemporary scripture.

To understand the symbol's poetry and life power, we must undergo the experience of the tree. I feel that experience is the only adequate approach to true criticism and understanding of a living and life giving symbol. Folklorist Austin Fife suggests that careful criticism of one's own culture leads to understanding (236). Paul de Mann also encourages study of the observer's culture. As noted earlier, de Mann asserts that "prior to making any valid statement about a distant society, the observing subject must be as clear as possible about his own" (7). I take a similar approach to the tree because I seek to
make a statement about Lehi's tree, a tree of a distant society, while at the same time, I speak of Lehi's tree today, a symbol for the LDS culture. By studying a living symbol, "mine yet not mine," I learn of its creation. By traveling to Lehi's tree through careful reading and writing about it, I experience and unveil the experience of the tree of life.

My thesis accordingly attempts the experience of the tree. My reading of Lehi's dream indicates the following pattern: Lehi travels a polemic course toward the tree, confronts death, and by desiring, opens the symbol to his inner vision. My three chapters grow out of this pattern. In Chapter 2: Opposition, I follow the journey to the tree. In Chapter 3: Power, death is unveiled as the key to life power. In Chapter 4: Vision, we pierce the center of the symbolic tree through inner vision.

By following Lehi's pattern, I find in chapter 2 that the opposition principle reveals a structure of mythic creation. I do not know if opposition as a way of cognition stands as any valid dialectic. Mythically, however, opposition enables birth and growth of consciousness. The first step of creation is the manifestation of opposites, usually a concrete, light object, such as the moon, against darkness. Creation, or conscious growth, then continues as man gains knowledge through a structure of opposition. By explaining his
dream as extreme images, Lehi can express the intensity and reality of his beyond-words-experience.

In Chapter 3, we see duality in the tree's connection with life and death symbolism. The tree represents a highly visible life meaning, yet conceals its death representation. Lehi confronts and overcomes a "mythic death," which he labels a "dark and dreary waste" that is the seedbed of the life tree. Lehi's dream images express a transformation of soul. Only after Lehi confronts and overcomes mythical death can he understand and gain the tree's power.

In Chapter 4, we see that the death confrontation allows Lehi to pierce the center of the symbol. Frye calls this experience isolation, a term synonymous with personal suffering that increases with the inarticulateness of the victim" (39). When Lehi awakes, he recounts his suffering as a transformation of darkness (waste) to light (tree). The requisite suffering of darkness eventually yields a complex desire that is not only filled but also increased.

Renewed, Lehi awakes to urge his family to accept his experience. His account becomes a myth in Eliade's sense of a true story that holds a people together. By standing as a pillar or world view for his family and subsequent generations, Lehi's dream creates a culture. The tree
dream continues to live as the key to the structure of the
Book of Mormon.

Lehi's desire, awakened in dream, creates. When Paul
de Mann says the actuality of renewal is perhaps
predicated on an obsession, he cannot be closer to the
truth. Lehi's fruit, containing potential fruit, signifies power because it contains an ever-renewing desire.

Though Paul de Mann speaks of the questionable nature
of renewal, renewal needs no proof. Whether people
consciously understand or accept the tree as a life
meaning, the tree will continue giving life. The tree
challenges us to seek it; we thereby realize our desires
and come to know our souls. Accepting a symbol as mask
yields no fruit. The tree requires self-transformation
that brings self-knowledge.

The tree of life cannot be dismissed as mere symbolic
expression. For the tree gives life. Lehi's tree is a
living symbol that expresses the nonverbal, renews Lehi,
effectually creates a culture, and keys the structure of a
viable, contemporary scripture. And perhaps more
importantly, through this study, Lehi's tree has become
for me a personal rebirthing.
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LEHI'S VISION OF THE TREE OF LIFE:
AN ANAGOGIC INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

The significance of Lehi's life tree is that it gives life. Lehi's tree expresses the nonverbal, renews Lehi, effectually creates a culture, and keys the structure of a literary, viable, and contemporary scripture. My thesis chapters grow out of my reading of myth, tree mythology, and Lehi's dream. I see Lehi 1) traveling a polemic course toward the tree, 2) confronting the tree's death, and 3) by suffering, opening the symbol to his inner vision.

Lehi's first dream images, a dark and dreary wilderness vs. a man in white, suggest the birth of mythic creation. By traveling through and reconciling opposites, Lehi eventually achieves mythic fulfillment and eats the fruit of immortal joy.

Lehi's tree represents a highly visible life meaning yet conceals its death meaning. Only after Lehi overcomes a mythical death can he understand and gain the tree's life power.

Lehi's death confrontation suggests that he, in isolation, suffers a limitless sphere. The requisite suffering eventually yields a complex desire that is not only filled, but also increases.

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