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HUMAN AS INDIVIDUUM

Perhaps in the northern art the human figure is meant as the triune, the mother-father-child. This would explain certain regular features:

- sexlessness
- neotenic proportions
- generic quality
- lack of expression

It is Raven-as-human, shown as individuum rather than man. A blend, neither-sexed and therefore both-sexed, no age and therefore all ages. Bland blend. An iconographic armature: the human figure as armature, stabilized in the style, the product of long slow thought.

The Nishka frontlets are the same thing confined to the face: a blended male-female-child-adult face, idealized and serene. It is a metaphor for Weget, Tkaimsem, Nankilstlas (The one who could wish it).

Most of the rest of the art is explication of that basic theme. On the human groundplan (so often noted, say, in Haida art), which becomes the basic melody, variations are played with noses becoming beaks, or meta-phoric jumps are made to the crest animals. A crest is a metaphor for the individuum. Or Raven himself is invoked, as on the Russian frontlet.

The INDIVIDUUM is the armature of the myth, but what is the plot? The plot is the CREATION story. Since the armature is human, creation is on the theme of human PROCREATION. It is Groddeck's "eternal theme of death and transfiguration, the male-female, child-adult nature of man".

Art is wish, and art is self-portrait. The triune individuum armature is the northern artist' diagram of how he would wish to be. This armature is a basic premise, arrived at long ago by the long slow thought of fantasy, and anchored in the subconscious logic of the "style". It is like the first premise built into "bilateral symmetry": let opposites be equ the same (and we can take it from there). One basic wish is all we really need. "Let opposite be the same" turns death into rebirth; "Let human (me) be individuum" takes immortality ~~for-granted~~, as given.

But the problem remains: how do you really do that? The mind goes back to the Creation Myth, to the creator. Whoever that was (Raven, Nankilstlas-lingai) he had the same problem in another form: how to generate himself. So the basic theme of the art could be phrased as the creator's SELF GENERATION. Human procreation as self-generation: the generative act: self-begetting and self-begotten at the same time: self-born. It can only be shown in metaphor: show Raven "doing" it; use the mouth-vulva identity and the beak-phallus identity.

The individuum as armature has been stabilized in "style", and the problem it poses is never far beneath the surface. The long-slow agenda of the profound artist is to diagram the act of creation that fits that basic premise. But meanwhile, the short-term, conscious, surface agenda of crests and myths goes on, little mindful of the depths beneath. Art is the depiction of crests....