

gives to the countenance the Grace of salvation, He unveils the face, He makes masks redundant, He abolishes the deathly stare of the dragon and the basilisk. Christ the King advances unimpeded in the world, fulfilling what had been prophesied about his work: nowhere will he stumble in his relentless path in the world and he will trample on the powers of evil, the basilisks and the dragons: *Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon* [Psalm 90. 12–13]. Since the first-fruit of this crushing of dragons was proclaimed at Christ's baptism in the waters of the Jordan, in popular Greek culture, which is all too familiar with the powers of the prince of darkness, unbaptized infants, who are still vulnerable to the power of dragons, are called '*drakoulides*' — 'little dragons'.



Peris spent the last three or four years of his life working on his Saint George icons. Perhaps he wished to assimilate deeply into his being those colours that brought him closer to the elemental, simple things of creation. Perhaps he wanted to convey in his own way how the clay muds from which man emerged are particular, subsistent pigments. It is these that will receive our earthly body. The black of soot is so intense because it is the transcendence of the superdensity, blinding in its glory, of the white of the Transfiguration. So much light, if it is to become visible, can only be seen and represented as black. Within this chestnut earth that surrounds rider, steed and dragon there are hidden glints of crimson and the cocciferous seeds of life that are sown here to be harvested in the Kingdom, just as on the All Souls

Saturday on the day before Pentecost the bodies emerge from the earth as the first fruits of the Resurrection of the dead. Here the dragon has been defeated, death has been trampled by death, pricked by its own sting, and the soul now free mounts on the steed that will transport it to the heavens, just as the souls used to ride on Triton's stallions of the sea, the dolphins that delivered them across the waters to the Isles of the Blessed.

This mythic history used to enthrall my friend, for whom it was much easier to believe in the dragons of the holy horsemen, and even in Pegasus and the Chimera of Bellerophon, than in the scientific axioms, which popular public opinion today holds as beyond dispute, but which are entirely unproven. Particularly grotesque for us was the theorem concerning the common descent of man and ape from an ape-man, which diminishes the value of both ape and man, since it attributes to each something that does not belong to them, transmuting the ape into something less than an ape, the highest state of existence for an ape, and man into something less than man, which is also the highest state of man. Ape-man is a genuine mythological animal, a hybrid beast that is neither ape nor man and who lives only in the scientific imagination of proponents of popular Darwinism. He is a composite animal like those we encounter in the *Physiologus* and medieval bestiaries, such as the Myrmecoleon, the Hydripos, the Aspidochelone and countless others. And yet the theory of evolution is so firmly fixed in contemporary perceptions of the world as a scientific fact that people are convinced beyond question of the existence of a figment of scientific fantasy for which there is not a shred of scientific proof. The sole evidence for the rationality of the theory derives from the ordering of data in such a way as to lead to the acceptance of a