PARABOLA

THE MAGAZINE OF MYTH AND TRADITION

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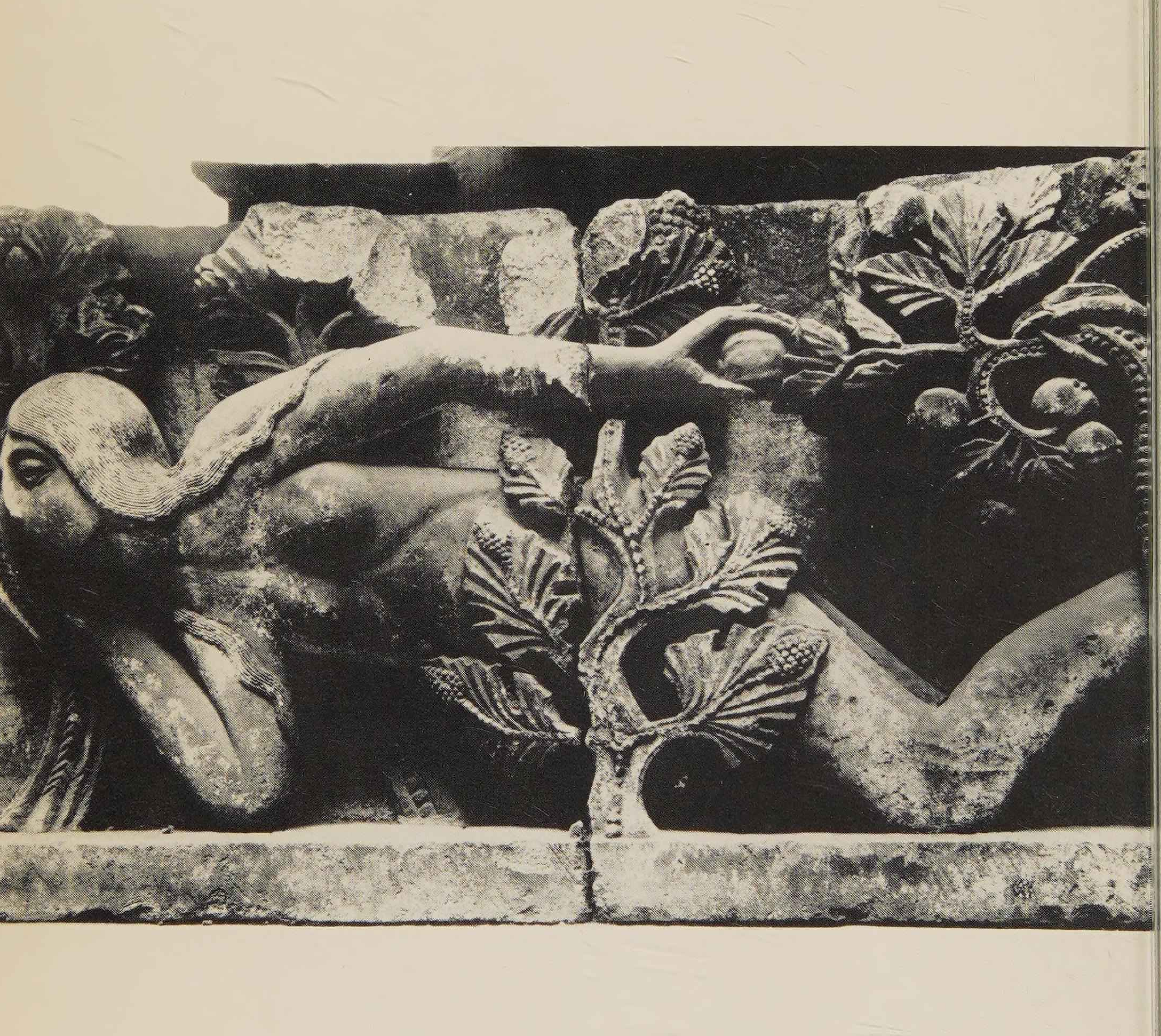
FICTION/P.L. TRAVERS, JANWILLEM VAN DE WETERING



Volume IX
Number 2

PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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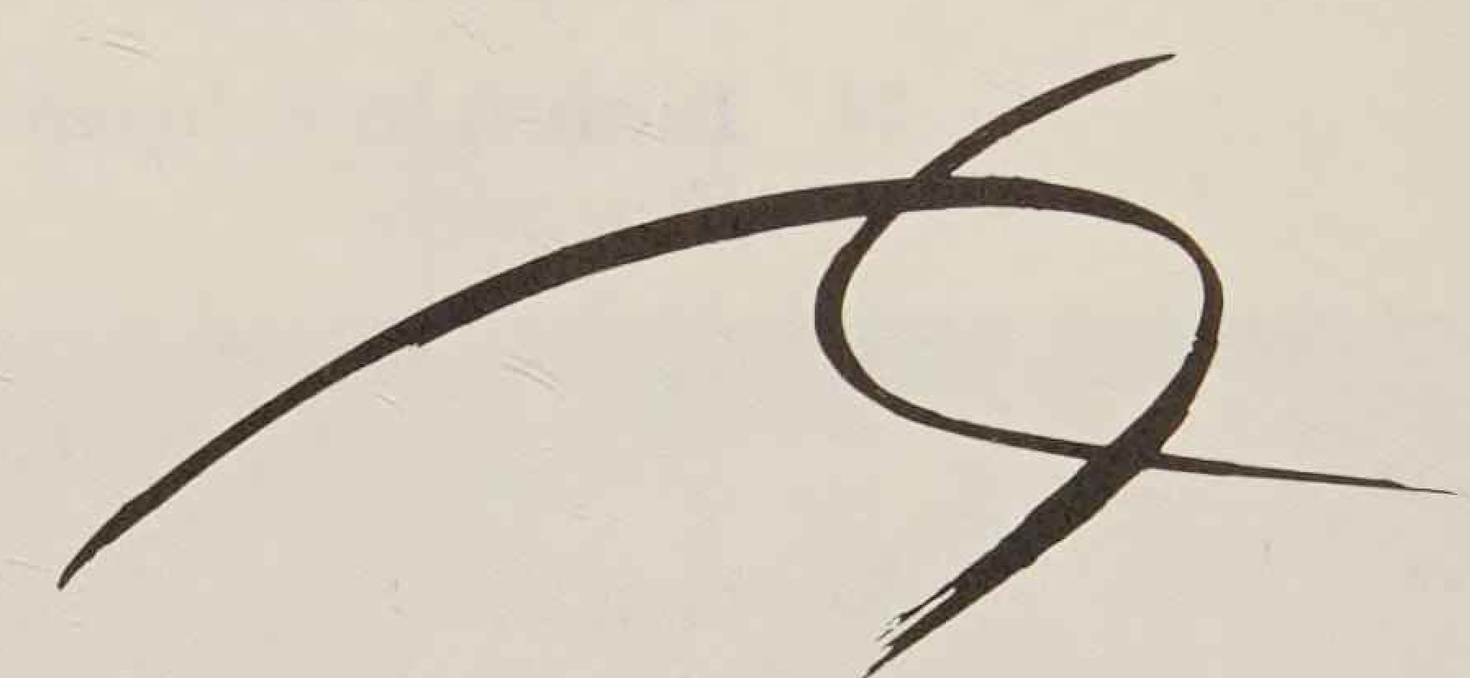
Inside cover: Eve by Gislebertus. Fragment of lintel from north portal, Cathedral of Saint-Lazare, Autun. Musée Rolin, Autun.

FOCUS



The last issue of PARABOLA affirmed the inherent order of hierarchy; the current issue looks at the other side of the coin, at the transgression of order which is theft. The question of theft derives its force from the contradiction and paradox at its core.

Thou shalt not steal—it is an injunction common to every tradition. It appears unambiguous at first: do not take what does not belong to you. But what, ultimately, belongs to anyone? I might say I own a piece of land; Native Americans tell me that the earth is our mother, that none can own her. And mortality effectively shows us that material possessions of all kinds are on very temporary loan.

The traditions warn us against theft for the good of our souls, not for the protection of property. If I steal something, I am stealing away my own possibilities. I am depriving myself of developing the ability to create my own wealth.

Yet everyone steals. Whose opinions do you hold? Whose gestures do you take? Whose convictions do you defend? Of what can you say, "This is my own"? Krishnamurti says that we steal because "in ourselves there is nothing . . . . Imitation is a form of stealing: you are nothing, but he is somebody, so you are going to get some of his glory by copying him. This corruption runs right through human life

and very few are free of it." Everyone steals, but no one wishes to be an imitation. There is a universal desire to be authentic. Unmasking the emptiness of what is called one's own and, conversely, indicating the direction of what cannot be stolen, what must be earned, what is worth paying for, are twin currents running throughout this issue.

It seems that there are circumstances in which we need to be stolen *from* before our wish for authenticity becomes clearer. John Stratton Hawley's article in this issue about Krishna as a thief, stealing the hearts of the *gopīs*, points to this necessity. It is only in a moment when we are stolen away from what ordinarily passes for life that we find we are capable of giving something we did not before know we possessed. The divine breaks through what I think I am, to what I essentially am—a creature who cannot possess, but who can give and receive.

Krishna's theft may leave suffering in its wake, but those from whom he steals will henceforth be oriented towards something higher, and in this light another aspect of theft begins to appear. PARABOLA's interview with David Maybury-Lewis, president of Cultural Survival, examines the destruction of indigenous peoples now taking place on all parts of the planet in the name of modernization and development. What emerges, as Dr. Maybury-Lewis asserts, is primarily a moral issue, quite apart from any future utilitarian advantages in protecting the threatened cultures. We can call this destruction theft because it is substituting something lower for something higher. The struggle to resist the substitution of the lower for the higher may be one of the principles of morality everywhere.

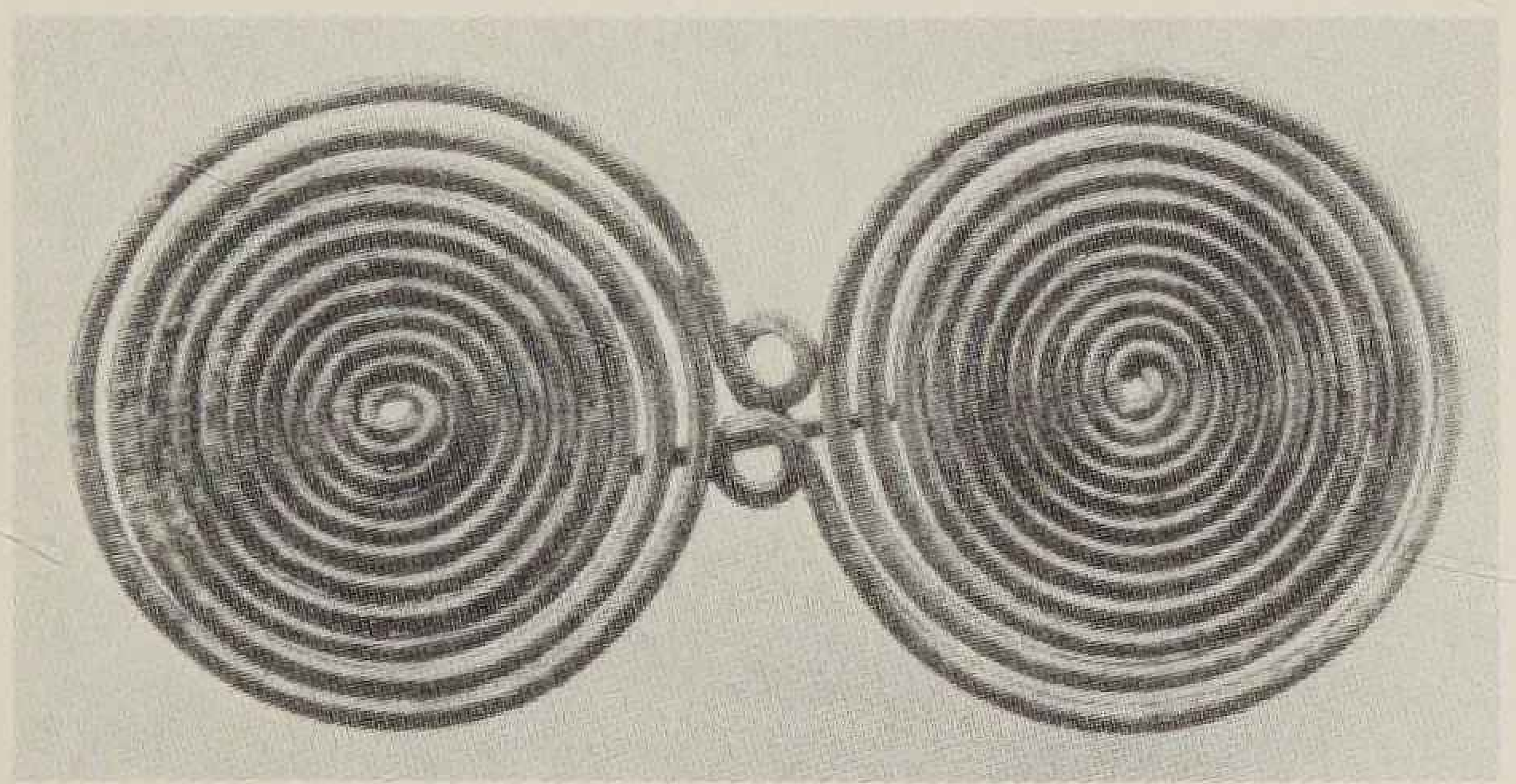
Perhaps this principle is behind the otherwise confounding instances of thefts which we are told are necessary. The Hasids, for example, hold that it is the student's duty to steal from the master, and the master's duty to make the theft as difficult as possible to achieve. Passivity and timidity, it seems, must be challenged in order to be overcome. The dangers of passivity must be, in part, what is referred to when Christ warns that he who has shall be given more, and that from him who has not, even the little he has shall be taken away. As D.M. Dooling suggests in her article in this issue, the way we live our lives can allow our energies and possibilities to be stolen from us if there is not an alert watchman on guard.

The Pied Piper on our cover is piping an irresistibly charming air to the children of the village. Pleasant, gay, surely harmless . . . but the Piper and the children are gone forever.

—Lorraine Kisly

FULL CIRCLE

A Readers' Forum



We encourage readers to use this space to share their thoughts and questions, either in response to a particular article or in order to raise matters of general interest. We are looking for letters which will help to open new ideas, and we will offer a free back issue for every contribution we publish.

On reading the interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr which appeared in your last issue (Fall, 1983, Vol. VIII, No. 4), I appreciated the way in which Dr. Nasr was able to make accessible the study of traditional cosmology compared with modern science.

When he speaks of his disappointment at discovering that scientists believe they need not interest themselves in the true nature of things, but only in their mathematical parameters, I was reminded of my own experience when I began to study the history of art, especially the Romanesque. A great deal was said about styles, capitals, arches, and vaults, but nothing about what I felt was essential in the presence of these works of art: the vivid impression they aroused in me of a particular quality of life which touched me deeply and opened new horizons. So I felt the need to search for other sources which might help me understand what this reality was. With this in mind, I began to read various authors such as those quoted in this article: Coomaraswamy, Avalon, and Nasr himself, a copy of whose *Introduction to Islamic Cosmology* I borrowed and pored over for some time. Considered in its relation to the inner world of man, this cosmology becomes passionately interesting; everything is connected in it because it envisages everything from the same perspective of different levels of existence. (I am told this work is out of print, but I would very much like to obtain a copy; is this possible?)

To return to the interview: I found that all that was said about the psychological symbolism of the sun and moon brought material that was very alive, new, and enriching to the more technical aspects. In this connection, I was struck by the quotation about the prophets: "Within thy being, there is not only thy known everyday consciousness, but there are seven prophets of thy being. Each human has the Moses of his being, the Christ of his being, the Muhammad of his being. . . ." I don't think I have ever before seen the subject approached in this way. Certainly I recall seeing diagrams where places were assigned to the prophets as well as to superior and inferior beings. But what seems to me very new is the idea of a continuous action operating inside man, one which, it seems,

is different with each of the prophets. Is it possible to find further material about this?

S. Bourgogne
Neuilly, France

Seyyed Hossein Nasr replies: *The idea of the "seven prophets" within man's being was developed especially in the Central Asian school of Sufism associated with the names of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Alā' al-Dawlah Simnānī, and through them entered into the teachings of many later Sufis. This subject has been treated amply by Henry Corbin as far as Simnānī is concerned (see his* En Islam iranien, *vol. III, chap. 4).*

(Editor's note: Dr. Nasr's Introduction to Islamic Cosmology *is in print in its English edition, published by Thames & Hudson, London).*

I enjoyed Janwillem van de Wetering's delightfully disrespectful article, "Master/Disciple, or how to beg for problems" (Winter, 1984, Vol. IX, No. 1). Evidently, it was not intended as a serious treatment of the Master/Disciple relationship, as all the examples given are of situations with pseudo-masters; and in any case, the only way to follow Mr. van de Wetering's logic at all is to accept in a spirit of fun the need to hop, skip, and jump with him across the tops of the lively waves he kicks up. But some leaps are too long and one submerges and swallows salt water. True, he does not quite say that all masters are bad; but it would be more exact to say that there are "saints" and saints, "masters" and masters, and the same rules cannot apply to the true and the false. To be the disciple of a master (without quotation marks) does *not* entail, as he claims, giving away one's "freedom," but trying to learn how to gain it. Certainly, everyone must free himself; but doesn't one have to learn how?

Another small but to me important quibble: Wu Ch'êng-ên's Monkey does not, to my understanding, represent the intelligence, but the intellect—a very different matter.

Catherine Quinn
New York, New York

Janwillem van deWetering replies: *I did intend my article to be a serious treatment of the Master/Disciple relationship, but by not coming from the usual angle, I highlighted "masters" and disciples' wrong attitudes. In essence, Ms. Quinn's and my presentations conform. In the right Master/Disciple relationship, the disciple's freedom will grow, but when goings-on in Western ashrams and hermitages are observed, the opposite effect is often noticed.*

Perverted truth is a lie, and I took it upon myself to stress that fact a little. ■

The Thief in Krishna

JOHN STRATTON HAWLEY

India is the land of the lock. Nothing is too small or humble to go without protection: biscuits, stamps, paper clips, toe rings —all are commonly held under guard; and at railway stations you cannot check even a torn backpack unless the zipper is secured with a tiny padlock. Houses, temples, museums, offices, and libraries bear gigantic locks, and if the important individual entrusted with the key does not happen to be in view, there simply is no admission.

Behind every lock lies the fear of a thief, and in India that fear has become a national obsession. No issue of the Benares daily newspaper is sent to press without an account of how some outlying village has been ravaged by robbers the night before; no movie marquee goes long without promising such favorites as *Three Thieves* or *Thief of Thieves*; and when Phoolan Devi, the bandit queen, was at large some years ago, it made the headlines every day.

Some of this attention is justified. Phoolan's band not only looted but killed, and dacoit gangs such as hers have acted with sufficient daring over the years to cause the importation of words like *loot* and *thug* from Hindi into English. But Phoolan Devi attracted as much fascination as fear. One heard stories of how stunning she was, stories all the more remarkable because, in a country where light complexions are prized above all other signs of beauty, Phoolan Devi's was jet black. In truth, the tone of Phoolan's skin often served to heighten rather than decrease her appeal, as did the reports of her sexual abuse as a child. Here was a thrilling figure in whom fear and love met as dangerous bedfellows.

India has a god who shares with Phoolan Devi a dark skin and a mysterious allure. This god is Krishna, whose very name means "black," but who, in keeping with recent Indian taste, is often depicted in a somewhat more acceptable midnight blue. His thievish episodes provide the land with some of its most vivid mythology. Krishna doesn't use force, but his skill in stealing away what people hold dear is unparalleled; and he doesn't kill, but he manages to unburden people of their ordinary lives. Once they've seen him, they lose the self-possession that makes for coherent biography in the first place.

Krishna's brand of thievery is all tied up with love. He is the great romantic hero of Indian legend—the Casanova, the Don Juan—but he is at once more simple than these and more grand: in the most celebrated aspect of his earthly self-manifestation, he is a plain cowherd lad, yet in actuality he is God. At the center of his activity on this earth is the dance he enjoys with the cowherd girls (*gopīs*) of his native Braj, just south of Delhi on the banks of the River Jumna. By means of the haunting

Krishna dipping into a butter pot

notes he plays on his flute, he lures the *gopis* away from all their worldly occupations. However far away they are, they drop their brooms and pails, turn from the demanding voices of their mothers-in-law, even catapult themselves from the marital bed. Off to the forest they run, far from the structures and confines of home and family, to dance with Krishna. And although by legend there are sixteen thousand in this *rās* dance, each one is made to feel as though Krishna is her partner alone, and that she is the sole object of his attention. In that moment they are his, soul and body, yet at the same time they are drawn into a circle, a community with each other that they could not have known in the profane world from which they were so abruptly summoned.

And then, like a thief, he slips away. He leaves them with a common memory of fulfillment beyond anything they had ever imagined possible, but a memory that makes them feel hollow to the core. Even the community they had attained is now one of longing and waiting, a shared impoverishment. And that, the theologians point out, is the rub in our human condi-

tion: we can know God, to be sure, but soon after the moment of truly knowing, we are ineluctably separated from the divine presence.

Hindu appraisals of who is responsible for this estrangement differ from Christian and Jewish ones. Hindus place the blame not only on human sin but on the nature of God, who sets—who indeed comprises—the conditions that ultimately structure our lives. But these same Hindus stress that the awareness of the loss of God is itself a powerful way of experiencing the divine. The *gopīs'* apprehension of Krishna is hardly dispersed by his absence; if anything, it is heightened. All of us are Krishna's milkmaids, wallflowers for life, who yearn to return to the dance floor just one more time. When these *gopīs* complain of their undeserved fate, we naturally join their lament. Here it is voiced on their—and our—behalf by the sixteenth-century Hindi poet, Sūr Dās:

Gopal has slipped in and stolen my heart, friend.
He stole through my eyes and invaded
  my breast
  simply by looking—who knows how he
  did it?—
Even though parents and husband and all
  crowded the courtyard and filled my world.
The door was protected by all that is proper;
  not a corner, nothing, was left without
  a guard.
Decency, prudence, respect for the family—
  these three were locks and I hid the keys.
The sturdiest doors were my eyelid gates—
  to enter through them was a passage
  impossible—
And secure in my heart, a treasure
  immeasurable:
  insight, intelligence, fortitude, wit.
Then, says Sūr, he'd stolen it—
  with a thought and a laugh and a look—
    and my body was scorched with remorse.

Though Krishna's departure from their midst is a terrible blow to the *gopīs*, they ought to have been prepared. Krishna is hardly famous for his reliability—he often steals off to a new bed at night and comes back with scratches of passion on his chest—and the poem quoted above could refer to any number of occasions. No wonder, then, that the friends of Rādha, Krishna's favorite *gopī*, frequently warn her about what may happen if she falls under his spell. In the following poem, for instance, we hear one of Rādhā's confidantes describe the dangers of consorting with Krishna. Referring to him by several of his affectionate titles—Kānh and Śyām—she portrays his lover's thrall as a principality ruled by thieves and tyrants:

No justice reigns in this realm, Rādhā.
Lust is King and Kānh is in charge;
  strange and cruel are their customs.
The swirl of curls that swarm round his ears
  and the eyebrows in league with his eyes
Serve as spies; they ferret out secrets
  and glean every word that you say.
They sit as a council of sycophants,
  fearlessly following the lead of King Lust.
Poor friend, you've newly encountered alone
  the despotic ways of this desperate place,
Where his gentle laugh and gentle speech
  and gentle moves engender love:
As the heart is stolen, the body follows,
  as minions mimic their king.
So since you embody the treasures of beauty,
  and handsome Śyām has heard your fame,
While he remains the ruler, says Sūr,
  force will forge his victory.

This sense of unjust power bubbles up at a number of points in poems and stories about Krishna, and in one of the best-known tales it is symbolized as an act of thievery. As the episode begins, we find the *gopīs* bathing in the Jumna at dawn one wintry morning. They have vowed to engage in a month of self-mortification in the Jumna's frigid waters to win the favor of the goddess Kātyāyani. They hope that the goddess will grant them in return a good

husband—someone to care for and protect them the rest of their lives—and many cannot help hoping that it will be Krishna.

Their prayers are answered a bit sooner than they had planned, for Krishna appears on the banks as they bob in the water. He sees that the girls are naked, and immediately gathers up their saris from the river's edge and takes them up into the branches of a nearby kadamba tree. There he perches while he festoons the kadamba with all the stolen saris.

At first the girls notice nothing, but when they have finished saying their mantras and are prepared to head for shore, they see that their clothes have disappeared. As their eyes scan up from the bank to the branches, they see what has happened. They excoriate Krishna for his mischief and beg him to return the clothes and get on his way. But he refuses, and in some versions of the story he taunts them with further outrages: he pretends to understand nothing about what they are saying and wonders out loud how they can imagine that the lovely new flowers on the kadamba tree are in reality their saris. In other renditions, he claims that the *gopīs* deserve this fate since they have been so brazen as to bathe in the nude. But whatever his first response to their recognition of their predicament, the condition that he sets for ending it is always the same; they must come out on the bank with their hands above their heads. Then he will be only too happy to return their garments.

This and similar tales have caused quite a flurry among theological commentators anxious to make sure that devotees of Krishna understand that such provocative behavior on Krishna's part can only be excused in the realm of the gods and ought never to become a model for mortal actions. But whatever clearings of the theological throat this episode has caused, there has been no shrinking from its importance.

Krishna dancing with a butter ball

It has traditionally been regarded as the test of the *gopīs'* true love for Krishna, their readiness to leave everything—every possession, every shred of female decorum—for his sake. To have him, they must give up all else; in short, they must appear before him naked. Then only can they earn the right to join in the ultimate act of intimacy, his *rās* dance.

It is the same with all of us. There's no fooling God with postures, pride, and the garments of civility. We appear before God naked or not at all, and the timing is not usually what we would choose.

That Krishna has a special talent for catching people off guard is made clear in stories that reach back into his childhood. In fact, his own mother (or to be exact, the foster mother who has raised him from the day he was born, believing him to be her own son) is his very first victim. Yaśodā does everything she can to provide him with the nourishment and comforts that every growing boy needs. She is happy to bake for him an array of sweets and goodies—*gujiyās, pāpaḍīs, lāḍḍus, mohanthārs,*

mohanbhogs—everything that would satisfy any ordinary child a hundred times over. But Krishna is no ordinary child. His favorite food is simpler than any of these; it's pure, creamy, white, and delicious. He insists on butter.

Krishna is wild for butter, and Yaśodā would be glad to give it to him, though she cannot understand why he shuns her more elaborate preparations. The difficulty is, however, that he never wants to take it when she wants to give it. Instead, his hunger always strikes when she is out of the house or otherwise occupied, and then, driven by an insatiable appetite, he goes to any length to obtain his favorite food. If she has hidden pots of butter in a dark storeroom, he finds them with unerring instinct. If she has suspended the pots from the ceiling, so that he cannot ransack her supply, he reaches them nonetheless, perhaps by climbing on a big stone mortar. Or he may take advantage of the shoulders of some of his little friends and let them share in the spoils. Krishna doesn't respect any closed doors, any fences or boundaries: he would just as soon perpetrate his wanton acts in the homes of any of the women of Braj. If he is caught in the act, he often claims he didn't know the difference.

The milkmaids of Braj, including Yaśodā, react with a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, they would love to have this lovely child eating out of their hands; sometimes they almost seem to invite him to come. On the other hand, they cannot abide his lawless independence, which is sometimes expressed by his spattering the walls with whatever he and his cohorts do not care to eat themselves, or by offering the leftovers to monkeys. On other occasions, Krishna and his friends recklessly smear their loot in the faces of any hapless children left at home to guard the house.

What is one to do with such a thief? The *gopīs* and Yaśodā make countless efforts to tie him up, but it is always futile. Either he manages to play on the emotions of one so that the other will have pity, or, even worse, he tangles them in their own efforts at order. In one episode much celebrated in the modern-day Krishna dramas of Braj, a *gopī* manages to apprehend the little marauder and vows to tie him to a pillar. But it turns out that she doesn't know how to tie a very good knot, and Krishna is easily able to wriggle free. Finally he comes to his captor's aid and offers to teach her how to tie a decent knot. But he demonstrates on her, and by the time he has finished, it is she who is the captive, not he.

Such escapades of the butter thief are told all over India, and wherever they are told, it is remembered that butter is not all that is at issue. For the butter Krishna eats builds not only his strength but also his character; hence these episodes have a lasting effect. Long after he has put away childish things, Krishna remains the thief he was as a boy, only with far more serious consequences. Many years later we find a *gopī*—again in the words of Sūr Dās—lamenting this legacy:

This is more than simply butter stealing.
Once we were happy to see your thieving face;
  we gladly gave, and the loss was small.
For in those days you were little Kānh,
  our prince,
  and we were simple country maids.
Kānh, you were a child in a family of kings
  so we kept your little butter thefts purely
  to ourselves.
Now you've grown, and we've grown too,
  wise in the ways of the world.
What, now, you'd go, you'd disappear,
  after stealing all the treasures of my soul?
Heart thief, head to toe you've gone
  and stolen everything—and now you'd
  wrench away!
Says Sūr, you've come and robbed my
  every part,
  and still I am tied and strung to your heart.

Krishna stealing butter from hanging pots

What does this fund of stories mean? Why must Krishna steal? Why does he have such a special taste for butter? Why can he never be caught? And why do Hindus affirm that this obstreperous, heedless thief is none other than God himself?

I have asked these questions of Indians many times, and though the answers I receive are not always the same, they always point back to the central affirmation made in the mythology of Krishna: this is a god of love, and love is at the heart of his story. Butter itself is love. It is the concentrated form of milk, the substance on which all human life depends for its beginning. And milk, in turn, issues from love. The cow is the great symbol of mother-love in India, and though we have grown accustomed to milking our cows with metallic milking machines, Hindus still do it the old-fashioned way. They put the cow in the vicinity of her calf and watch the juices begin to flow. So boundlessly loving is the source, they point out, that even an effigy of a calf will suffice to stimulate the cow's desire to give. Milk is synonymous with love, and butter is its densest form.

Krishna loves love, and he insists on having it in the concentrated, unadulterated measure that butter symbolizes. Anything that would separate him from it—whether the walls of a pot, the refinements of good cooking, the threads of a garment, or the confines of marriage—must be set aside. So he confounds all barriers, traps, and entanglements that are put in his path, sometimes turning them back on those who place them there. Such a trap is the rope

Theft of the gopīs' *clothes*

with which the *gopī* tries to tether Krishna in the play depicting the butter thief, and indeed this rope is called "the rope of love." But love is not the sort of thing that binds or sets boundaries; if the *gopī* tries to use it that way, she will find herself tangled in her own cord.

God is not to be limited, and neither is love. Because we have such a desperate penchant for order, even in games of love, God has no choice but to confront us in the guise of someone who does not play by the rules. He steals our love away, or so we think, and in so doing confronts us with a reality that is unpleasant, but that forces us to ask why we are so anxious to hold onto our love and its objects in the first place. The presence of the divine and the reality of love are such things as cannot be ordered and possessed; they always exceed what we are willing to allow. When God is pictured as a thief, then, it is to ask just who the thief really is in this tug-of-war between the human and the divine. Is God so unruly, or is it our own ordering process that robs reality of its inalienable freedom and ease?

We live in an era of savage order. We have seen bureaucratic finesse used to cause and at the same time justify unimaginable extremes of human suffering, and we are daily aware that with every further winding of the technological clock the possibility of our total destruction draws nearer. These realities, though especially terrifying in their twentieth-century form, have deep roots in history and are as

endemic to India's society as our own. But India's longer experience with the structural oppression of society has produced a notion of God that is peculiarly liberating. To perceive God as the sort of being who roams about outside our walls of reason and discretion, looking for a chance to make a raid, is to question the ultimate sense and authority of the structures we erect in such glorious and proud detail. These machines of the mind, these boundaries and perimeters, often cost us dear; hence it seems little wonder that as we watch them crumble in the mythology of Krishna, we register a certain glee. And the more so if we sense, as many of the stories of Krishna teach us to do, that the divine enemy is within—and is no enemy, but an uncanny, hidden ally who has been with us all the while.

Two fundamental intuitions about the nature of religious truth accord with this sense of apparently unwarranted delight. The first is that some of our most powerful experiences of the divine come in the form of surprise. The experience of God often has a deft, unexpected, intrusive quality about it. It is elusive, it defies description, it is not quite known, yet it sweeps us off our feet. Though we do not know quite what has hit us—or because of that fact—we say that we have known revelation. It overtakes us like a thief in the night; and we say, though we are not always sure afterwards, that we are glad.

The second intuition about religious awareness is as powerful as the first, but it has very little glee associated with it: we find that we often know the truth at just those times when we experience loss. It sometimes seems, in fact, that it is only when we lose that we truly gain. Even more unsettling, our sense of loss sometimes seems precisely to have been caused by having had a brush with the truth, since the new knowledge leaves us with the feeling that our ordinary perceptions are vacuous. In either sense there is the realization that in some measure, like it or not, to know God is to lose the world.

The mythology of Krishna breathes this sadness. We sometimes laugh at what happens when the thief is on the scene. But it is not so easy to laugh when the thief steals himself away, for we understand that to have been visited by the holy angel is, like Jacob become Israel, to limp forever after. Krishna's *gopīs* are fulfilled in their love, but at the same time they are maimed.

For thousands of years people have asked how God can be God if there is suffering in the world. It is the old problem of theodicy, and it will never go away. But there is a chance that by allowing ourselves to experience God as a thief, this debate can be stood on its head. Instead of expecting God to validate our convictions about what is orderly and right, we may begin to admit what our ordering leaves out. Instead of expecting God to be the answer to all our problems with the world, we may begin to sense that God is the question that puts them all in perspective. ■

The poems that appear in this article are selected from *Krishna, the Butter Thief* by J.S. Hawley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), and are based on critical editions of poems from the *Sūr Sāgar* of Sūr Dās. I am grateful to Mark Juergensmeyer for his help in improving the quality of these verse translations, and to Laura Shapiro for her steady hand with the prose.

Birthright

JONATHAN OMER-MAN

My name is Esau. This is my home, this is where I live, on Mount Se'ir, the hairy mountain. My line has prospered and grown strong here; powerful kings and princes have sprung from my loins. We are a warrior nation, and we seek the high road to God. We have had our defeats, but we do not complain. In our calling we take risks.

No one visits me now; I no longer await the arrival of my brother. Once he said that he would visit me up here on Mount Se'ir, but he found another way to complete what he had to complete. At any rate, when we last met, at our father's funeral, he made no mention of the matter. Our paths are separate now. For years they were intertwined, and we could do nothing without reference to the other. Now we no longer need each other. My brother no longer needs me. Do I feel used? Well, I was used. We are all used by our brothers, but I am no longer angry, I am not bitter. Even when he tricked me and stole from me, I did not remain angry for long. True, the second time he outwitted me, I did scream and roar that he was a cheap thief, and that I wanted to kill him, but that

passed. Some of his descendents tell strange stories about me, about the diabolic Esau, but they are not important. They do not understand. They follow after my brother, but they do not comprehend the significance of the story of Esau and his brother.

Even in our mother's womb, we struggled. Even in there, twins in the belly of the matriarch, our limbs entangled, we were two individuals, two nations bound together and yet destined to tread different, divergent paths. Our mother had waited a long time for the pregnancy, and when it occurred, she felt that she could not live with all the jostling and pushing and wrestling within her. Most women forget the pangs of pregnancy, but she remembered. When we were small children and were making too much noise fighting over some toy, she liked to tell us how she had gone to complain to the Lord about the inner commotion, what we were doing inside her, and what God had told her:

Two nations are in thy womb,
And two nations shall be separated from thy
bowels;
And the one people shall be stronger than the
other people;
And the elder shall serve the younger.

You know, for years I was tormented by that prophecy. I would brood over it, turning it over and over in my mind. Its significance seemed to change, to shimmer before me. Would the separation be just one brother from the other, or also one son from the parents? Who would serve whom? Would it be the stronger? I seemed to be stronger. And after my brother tricked me out of the birthright of the first-born, did I then become the younger? It was so unclear! For a long time that prophecy was the touchstone of my life. My brother's too, but for him it was different. You see, I thought that it was a challenge, that it meant that everything was open, that both of us had a chance; but he thought that it meant that everything was foreordained, that he was the chosen son. I was willing to fight for it, to strive for it, to risk my world on a single cast of the die, to win in glory or to lose in ignominy. But my brother was different: he didn't want to have to fight for the birthright, he wanted to be the first-born. When he stole something, and he stole a lot, he truly believed that it belonged to him. When he took my father's blessing from me, he thought that he was just correcting an accident of nature, a minor accident of chronology, the fact that he arrived in this dark world a few minutes after me.

When I was a child, I would accompany my father when each evening he went into the fields to pray. He used to stand motionless, mouthing words that I could not hear, gazing intently at a bush or a boulder or a lizard. It was then that I began to look at things, at the details. Later, as a lad, I used to go out into the fields and the forests alone to bring back game for the family. Whenever I caught a deer, I would prepare venison, which my father loved; we would all sit together and study, and he would favor and praise me. We were a strange family. My mother loved my brother, my father loved me. My brother stayed at home a great deal, and he learned the occult arts of the tent dwellers. I became a hunter, and I learned a different wisdom. I had to discover the limits of my powers: how fast I could run, how far I could throw, how long I could stand motionless. I learned to watch, to read the signs and to know the lore of the field. I learned patience and precision. I became a cunning person. But still my brother outwitted me!

I shall tell you what happened that first time. We must have been fifteen years old.

The Lord announces to Rebecca that two nations are in her womb

I had been out hunting for more than a week, tracking a small flock of mountain goats. There were seven or eight of them. Each time I approached, they would climb higher into the crags. At last I surprised them, and I killed a young male with a long sling shot across a crevasse; but when I lowered the carcass down a cliff face, I tore a muscle in my right thigh. The way back was difficult and took me longer than usual, as I was limping badly. A few hours trek from home, I saw a hyena in my path. It had been tracking me, and now it was blocking the trail. It didn't attack me, but it was waiting for me to falter. It stayed out of stone's throw. I was too tired to fight, and I had to abandon my winnings to the meanest of scavengers. As soon as it started devouring the carcass, I hobbled off to our encampment. So I came home with nothing, exhausted, injured, and hungry. When I saw my brother squatting outside our tent, making some red lentil pottage, I wanted to cry. I told him that I had lost everything, but he continued with his cooking without looking up at me. I told him about the hunt and the climb, and still he was silent. I told him about my hurts, and about the hyena, and he continued to cook, stirring and adding herbs. Then I told him that I was faint, and I asked him for some of his bloody red lentil stew, and he said, "Sell me first your birthright." Then I wept, for I realized that he was a better hunter than I. "Take it," I told him, "I have no use for it."

Later I learned that on that very day grandfather had bequeathed his powers to our father, who had thereby become great high priest; either my brother or I was to be his sole heir. Let them not say that Esau despised the birthright! He did not; he honored and revered it and fought hard for it, but he lost it in a game he didn't understand.

Isaac predicts that Esau will live by the sword

My father had married when he was forty, and at that age I took two Hittite women, Judith and Basemath, as wives. My father and mother hated them, for the Hittites worshiped a different way. But a man cannot dally forever. When my whoring days were over, I knew it was time to marry, and promptly. Later my brother was to work for years to win his brides, which I cannot understand.

My father and I grew closer again when his eyes began to fail. I would sit at his side and tell him stories of the hunt, and he loved every detail. He wanted to hear more, and so I began to invent adventures to please him. Sometimes when I was sitting with him, relating some improbable tale of the chase, I would hear my mother clucking in disapproval from her side of their tent. She thought that I was dishonestly trying to win his heart. I began to understand my father more in those days, especially after he told me about that awesome journey he made with his father to Mount Moriah. Perhaps he saw in me someone who would have refused to comply, who would have fought. Perhaps he saw in me all the attributes that he had lost. He certainly saw in me the future of his line. But by then his vision was seriously impaired.

One day he called me.

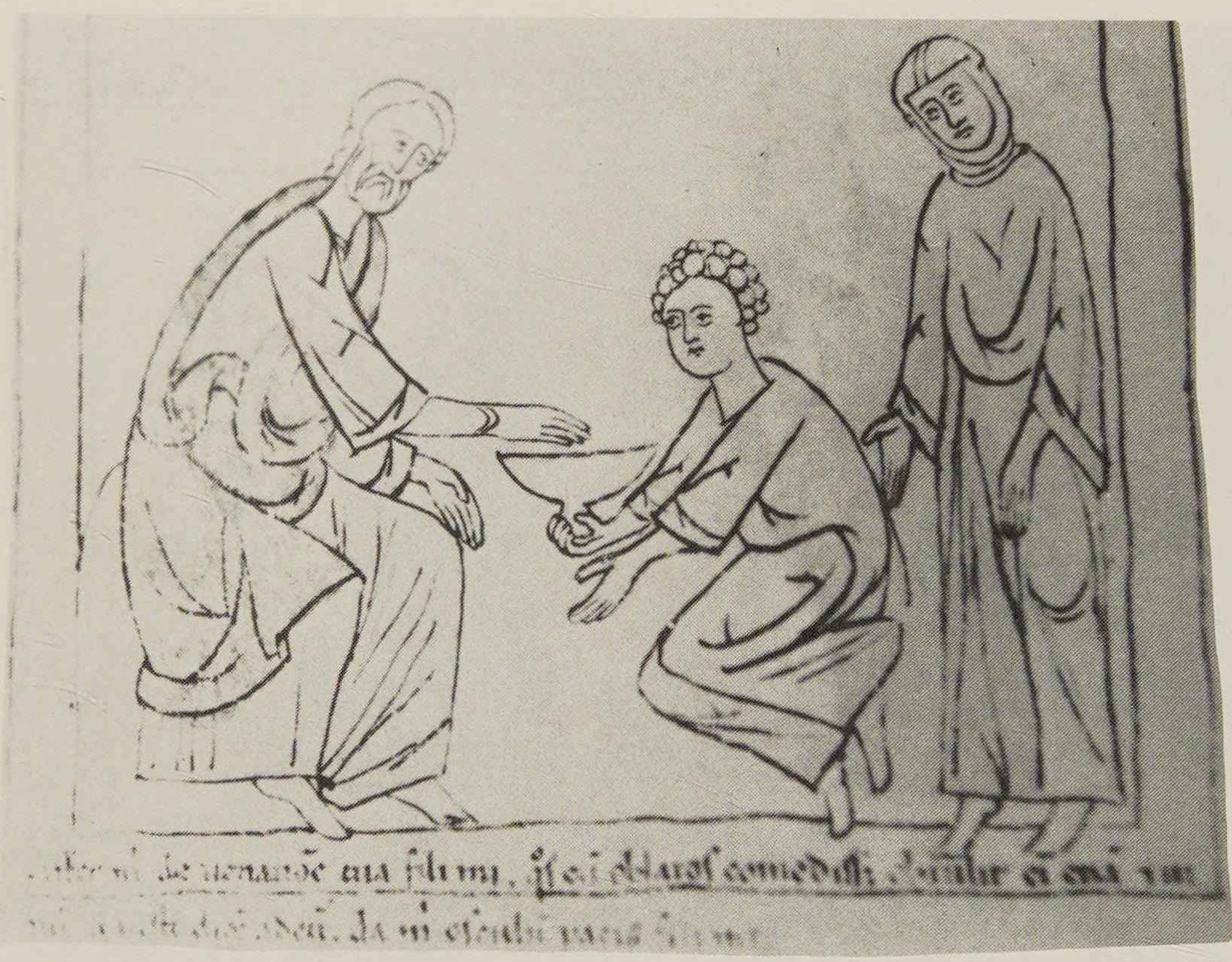
"My son," he said.

"Here I am," I answered.

"Behold now," he said. "I am old, and I know not the day of my death. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison; and make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."

O how my soul wept when I heard those words! What man can remain unmoved to hear the parting blessing of his

Jacob offers Isaac a meal supposedly prepared by Esau



poor old blind and dying father! I choked upon my tears and ran to do his will, happy like a child who knows that he is loved, and despondent like a lad who knows that to gain his treasured prize he must lose so much. My heart was overfilled with emotions as I left his tent, and I was not attentive to what was happening around me. The truth is, I wanted that love of his too much.

The rest is documented history. I came back and prepared my father his food. I brought the meal into his tent in mock ceremony, and playfully announced like a herald:

"Let my father arise and eat of his son's venison, that his soul may bless me."

My father looked perplexed. "Who are you?" he asked.

I thought he too was jesting, and answered: "I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau."

He became very agitated, as together we began to understand what had happened.

"Who was it then," he asked, "who prepared me venison, and brought it to me, and I ate it, all this before you came? Whom have I blessed? For whomsoever have I blessed, he alone shall be blessed."

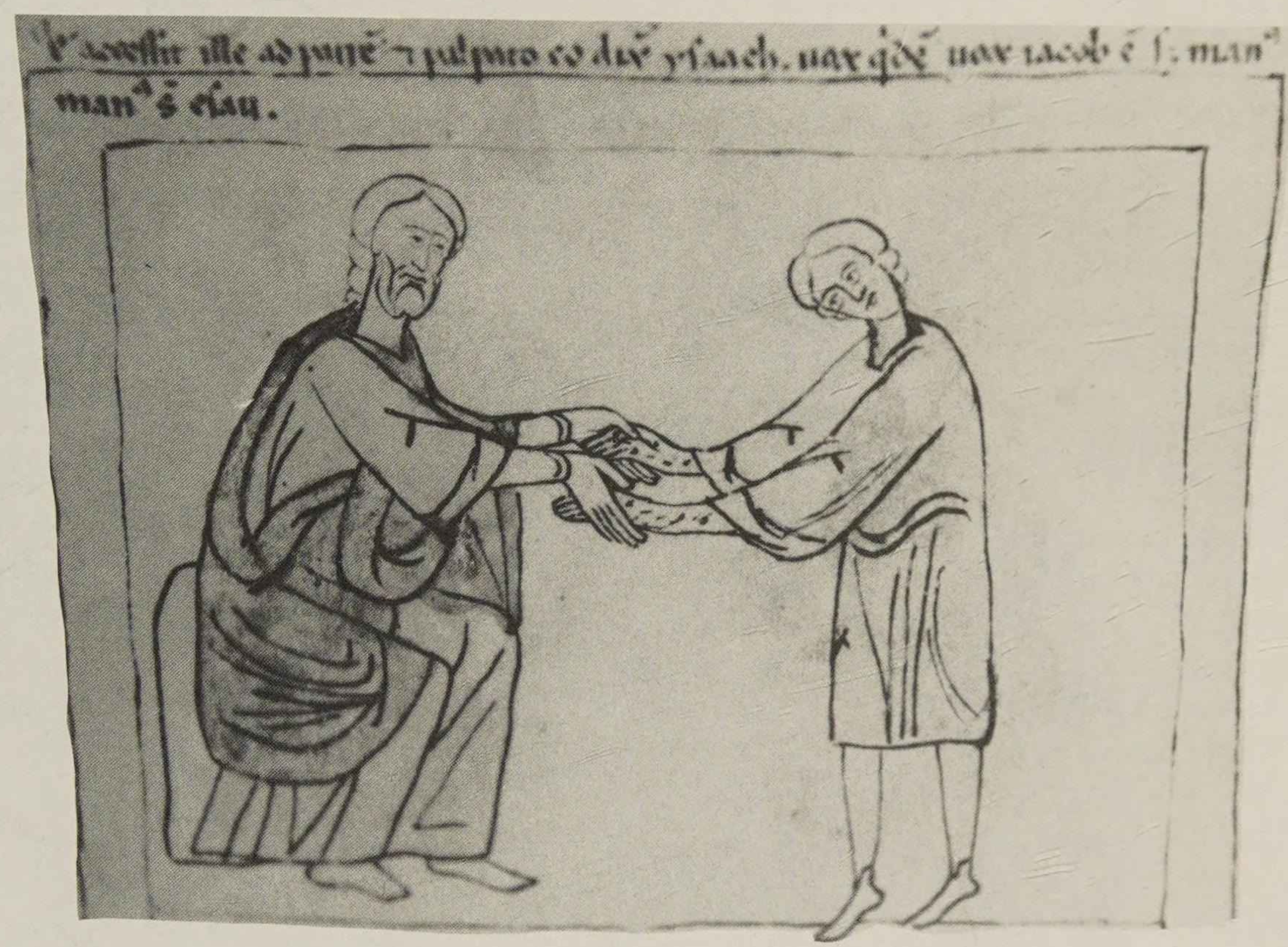
I was hurt and angry and bitter. I screamed and roared and sobbed. I asked my father for the impossible: "Bless me, please bless me," I implored. But the blessing he had given my smooth and slippery brother was unique: it was the transmission of a power that cannot be divided.

"Your brother came with cunning," he said. "He has taken your blessing."

"Have you not a blessing for me?" I begged.

His answer was more than I could bear. "Behold, I have made him thy master; I have given him his brothers for servants; I have sustained him with corn and wine; what then shall I do for thee, my son?"

Isaac hears Jacob's voice but feels Esau's hands



"Do you not have even one blessing for me?" I asked, and I wept.

Well, he did give me a blessing. It was not that which I desired, but I learned to live with it:

Behold, of the fat places of the earth shall be
thy dwelling
And of the dew of heaven from above;
And by thy sword shalt thou live, and thou shalt
serve thy brother
And it shall come to pass when thou shalt break
loose,
That thou shalt shake his yoke from off thy
neck.

My brother and I separated after that. I spent several days fuming and muttering that I was going to kill him, and with my mother's help he escaped to Uncle Laban in Haran. When I saw him again at Yabbok, my blessing had come to fruition; I was free of him, and he still had work to do. I had learned that it is not the fruits of victory that make a true warrior, but steadfastness in battle. And my brother was learning not to fear my strength.

You ask me if I still think that my brother was a thief. Well, he took things that did not belong to him. But no, he was not a thief. You see, my brother was not a man like you or me. His mind was different. He appeared to be devious, but he went straight to what he knew. He didn't think or speculate, he knew. My brother never doubted. The fact that he contradicted the law was irrelevant to him. He saw how things were meant to be, and how they would be in the future. And he was right. The birthright and the blessing probably did belong to him. I wanted too much to win, and losing them was my teaching. But I warn any lesser man not to try to imitate Jacob! We lop off thieves' hands here on Se'ir. ■

The Golden Bowl

ROBERT A.F. THURMAN

The great Guru Nāgārjuna had a magic golden bowl. He had been an alchemist and healer, a philosopher of selflessness, and a prophet of the Universal Vehicle of the Buddhas. His bowl produced medicine of immortality, among other things, and he lived for hundreds of years. During his fifth and sixth centuries, he became a Great Adept, a transmitter of the Diamond Vehicle. The golden bowl could also produce whatever its owner wished—delicious food, medicine, gold, jewels. But Nāgārjuna had no wish for anything for himself.[1]

A certain Brahmin in the west of India happened to be an intrepid thief. He heard of the magic golden bowl and decided he had to steal it. It would be his ultimate theft. What a challenge to rob the legendary Great Adept! The Brahmin traveled for many weeks to reach Glory Mountain in south India, near the great Stupa at Amaravati. Creeping stealthily through the forest, he came up to Nāgārjuna's house. To his delight, he saw the gleaming golden bowl on a table by the window. He was planning how to get it when the Guru came to the window, picked up the bowl, and, without a glance outside, flung it out to fall at the hiding place of the thief. The golden bowl was his for the taking. He slowly picked it up, peering toward the window. There was no one there. He was in the clear, his prize in hand!

But he had not stolen it. It had been given to him. In fact, his chance to steal it had been stolen from him. The Guru certainly must have been an Adept, clairvoyant enough to know his presence and telepathic enough to read his intentions. But why had he given him such a treasure?

The door of the extraordinary opened onto a new dimension for the bold thief. He had to see more of Nāgārjuna. Golden bowl in hand, he approached the house and entered into the presence of the Guru. "I was going to steal your golden bowl, but I no longer need to. Why did you throw it out to me?"

"Whatever wealth I have is for the benefit of others. I threw you the golden bowl because you wanted it. When we die there is no need for wealth. Stay here with me. Eat and drink whatever you wish. There is no more need for you to steal."

The thief knew that this was his destiny. He asked for the teaching of the Holy Dharma. Nāgārjuna anointed him in the mandala of the *Glorious Esoteric Communion Tantra*, the royal *Guhyasamāja*. He then led him into a room in which there was a heap of precious stones—diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires yellow and blue. "This is your room. Contemplate these jewels, how they lack intrinsic reality and radiate clear light brilliance. Imagine whatever substance you desire as if it were horns grown on your head!"

The thief spent twelve years there in contemplation. At first he was quite happy. He was so determined, though, that the unreal which he imagined began to become real, and real horns appeared on his head. They grew so long that they bumped into the ceiling and he could no longer move about. Nāgārjuna finally returned and asked him, "Are you happy now?"

"No, I am not happy!"

The Guru laughed. "Just as you have become unhappy through the mere imagination of horns upon your head, in the same way all living beings ruin their happiness by clinging to their false imaginations and thinking them to be real. All forms of life and all objects of desire are like clouds. But even birth, life, and death can have no power over those whose hearts are pure and free from delusions. If you can look upon all possessions of this world as no less unreal, undesirable, and cumbersome than the imagined horns on your head, then you

will be free from the samsaric life-cycle."

At this the thief realized the emptiness of all intrinsic substantiality, and the relativity of all things. Instantly, the horns vanished. For another six months he contemplated the indivisibility of nirvana and samsara, the unity of clear light brilliance and the magic body. He attained the Supreme Feat, unexcelled perfect Enlightenment, Buddhahood in his very body. He became renowned as the Guru Nāgabodhi, upholder of the lineage of the *Esoteric Communion Tantra*. Legend has it that he still dwells in south India, high on Glory Mountain, mystically effecting the welfare of living beings.

When you pull on the thread of "theft" in the complex tapestry of Buddhist civilizations, you discover its connection to every piece of the pattern. It is true that only an omniscient person can understand, not only everything, but even one little thing. Thus reduced to awed silence at the enormity of my task, my mind takes refuge in the shining golden bowl of Nāgarjuna. This golden bowl turns theft into its polar opposite—gift—opening the doorway to enlightenment, which is neither theft nor gift, though the end of all thefts and the wellspring of all gifts.

This story contains the various levels of Buddhist ethics relevant to the issue of property, as well as the basis of these ethics. To summarize, the Buddha was the first to discover that all persons and things are selfless. They lack fixed absoluteness or intrinsic identity and thus are thoroughly relativistic. Life is selfless relativity, total relationality. Living beings suffer from the delusion that they are a fixed, absolute self-center of existence. Good and evil are measured by whether beings are liberated from this predicament or involved even more painfully. Thus, good is selfless action. Evil is selfish action. Good causes happiness and freedom. Evil causes suffering and bondage. Upon this simple basis, there are three main levels of Buddhist ethics. The ethics of individual liberation emphasizes the restraint of action which is evil—harmful to self and others. The ethics of universal liberation adds to this a messianic code of actions aimed at liberation of all beings and transformation of the world. The ethics of inconceivable liberation consummates these two levels through the apocalyptic actualization of the Buddha-land, the universe as perfection of goodness.

In the story of the golden bowl, we see the first ethical level in the fact that both Nāgārjuna and the thief are aware that theft is evil. "Theft" is defined in Buddhism as "taking that not given" (*adinnādāna*) by another. "Gift" is its opposite, and it is more powerful than theft. Once Nāgārjuna has given up the golden bowl, the thief can no longer steal it. The second ethical level is indicated by Nāgārjuna's statement that his wealth is for the benefit of others. Once theft has been prevented, Nāgārjuna wants to give everything needed to all beings. The highest gift is the gift of the Dharma, since the Dharma enables beings to gain their own freedom.

The apocalyptic level of ethics is seen through the compounding of inconceivabilities observed in the story: the more mythic or symbolic aspects, as the modern mind would have it. The alchemist's wish-fulfilling golden bowl, the omniscience of the Guru, the growth of the horns, and the actualization of Nāgabodhi's Buddhahood in that very life, all weave another world beyond the ordinariness of space/time, the world of purity and perfection of the *Glorious Esoteric Communion*.

To understand the Buddhist attitude toward "property," we need to know the Buddha's own personal cosmogony, sometimes called by scholars the "Buddhist *Genesis*."[2] Of course, there is no "first creation" in this myth. The cyclic process of creation and destruction is beginningless, as are the souls of the infinite living beings inhabiting the various worlds.

In the beginning of our cycle, the realms of gross forms are energized by the previous merits of the souls seeking rebirth. At first there are no solid planets, and Brahma and other gods float in a great

Nāgabodhi

energy sea of pure bliss. These beings are androgynous, with subtle amorphous bodies of pure bliss-energy, their very soft boundaries gently merging. They differ very little among themselves or from the environment. There is almost no giving or taking, as almost all is inter-given. But they are gods, not Buddhas, and so there is some holding back, some core instinct of self-identity-habit. As self-definition progresses, the "other" becomes more differentiated. Each self wants more "other," yet each fears loss to others more: boundaries expand through greed and harden through aggression and defensiveness. Those of less merit begin to die from the heavenly energy-fields and are reborn in proto-human form on a gravity-bound planetary environment. This planet, at first all water, solidifies as the excretion of the pure energy gods, the product of delusion, greed, and aggression. Humans solidify it even more by consuming the water, and eventually a scum of earth forms on the surface. They re-eat this scum ever more greedily, until it becomes dry land.

After more huge time-spans, the earth becomes inedible, but produces mushroom-like fruits. Eventually these die out, and plants have to be cultivated. Then, sexual differentiation emerges, as beings become shorter-lived and apparition-birth gives way to womb-birth. Land is divided up. Houses are built to create privacy for sexual intercourse, and to hoard food supplies. Private property is established. Theft becomes a problem. This results in the establishment of the social order. The people gather together and elect one among them to guard them from each other. This first policeman is excused from cultivation, and given a tithe by each citizen in exchange for his protection. He is the first king, called "Great Elected One" (*Mahāsammata*). The social contract is thus based on generosity. The king is sustained by the gifts of all, set up to forestall thefts. Thus, he is originally a focus of generosity, not of absolute power, as in the Vedic myths prior to the Buddha.

This myth helps us to visualize the problem of the self, the core of the problem of property. If each heavenly being could have identified with all of life, each self identifying with all others, there would have been no "fall," no taking of the not-given, no violation, no death. These primal heavens would have been Buddha-lands. But being only divine, and not enlightened, each being carried its instincts with it from the beginninglessness. The core instinct is the erroneous habit of attributing sovereign absoluteness to the subject of "I am!" This is a key teaching of the Buddha's. It is emphasized that this misplaced absolutism that mis-knows the self and reality is not the same as individuation. A living being can use its "I" as a conventional, relative, pragmatic cipher for organizing its individual sense of sharing in the whole and being responsible for itself, without engaging in the excessive greed and aggression that go along with the false absolutism of egotism. If "I am I," "I am you," "You are I," "I am we," and "We are I" are all equally valid in specific contexts, varying expressions of shifting perspectives, no being would have felt a need to take what was not given, or to defend itself against other takers by hardening boundaries and developing aggression. Buddhist individuation is not a matter of trying to encompass infinity—that is the futility of greed, death, and poverty. It is the tolerance of infinity by one who opens to it by emptying himself.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught these ethics in his law of karma, the tenfold path of evolutionary action. He formulated guides to action both negative and positive, logically organized into three for the body, four for speech, and three for mind.[3]

THOU SHALT NOT

take life
take the not given
abuse sexuality

lie
slander to divide
speak harshly
speak frivolously

covet things
bear malice
hold false convictions

THOU SHALT

save lives
give gifts
observe proper sexuality

tell the truth
reconcile conflicts
speak sweetly
speak meaningfully

be detached
love
hold authentic views

These laws serve as commandments in Buddhist civilizations. Yet Buddha's authority is not incompatible with that of reason; they are also presented as laws of nature, as patterns of natural selection and evolution. If beings commit the ten evil actions, they degenerate in form of life and cause themselves suffering. If they commit the ten good actions, they progress in form of life and bring themselves happiness. No one punishes or rewards them. It is a biological process that good begets happiness and evil unhappiness. This karmic biology resembles the Darwinian vision in some

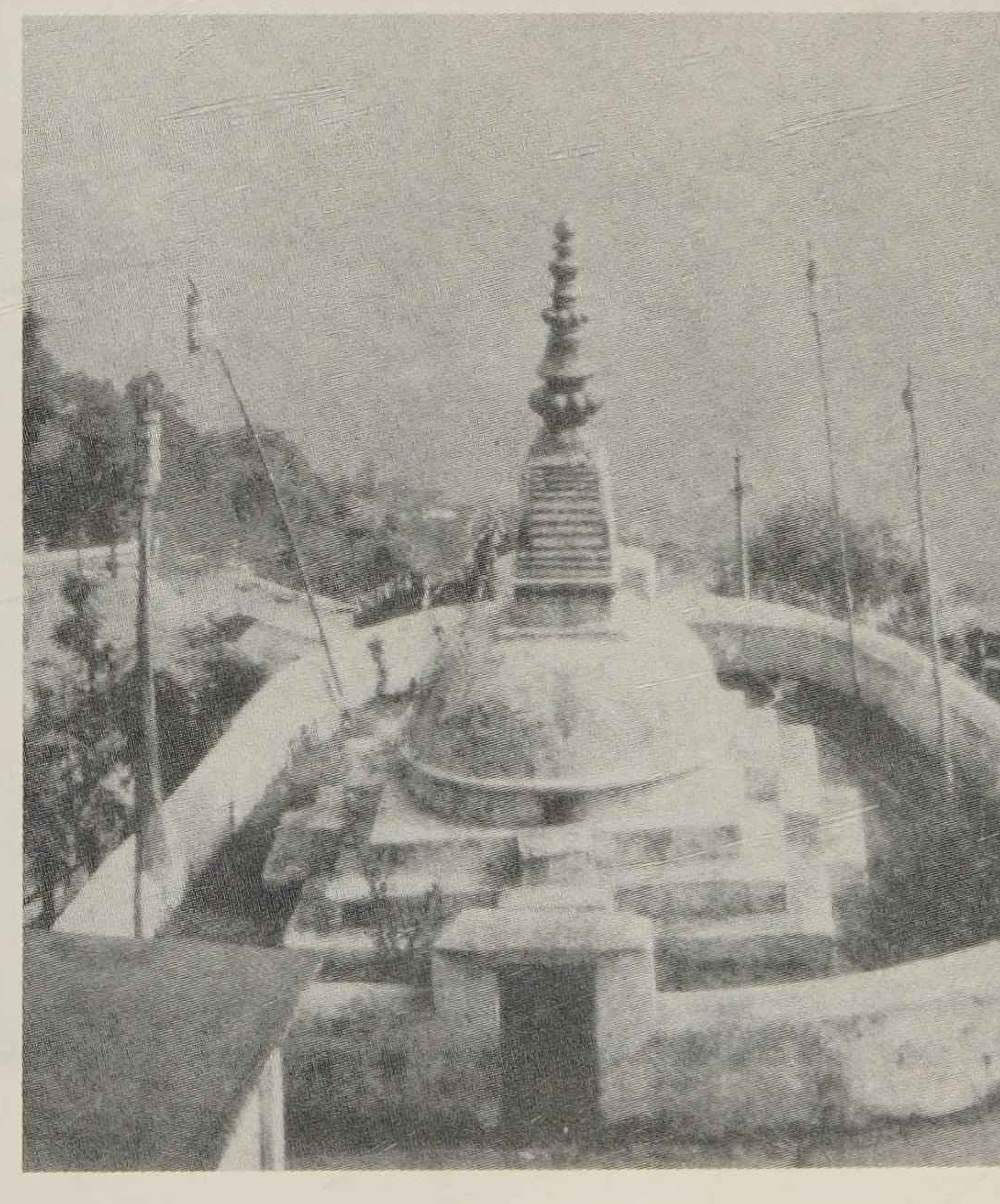
details of metamorphoses and in the basic relatedness of all species. The great difference is that karma refers to the cause-and-effect of the evolution of an individual being, life after life, and Darwin's theory addresses the evolution of soulless species. The Buddhist "chain of being" also goes below the amoeba as far as the many hells, and above humanity as far as the many realms of angels, titans, and gods.

Thus, if you kill, this act itself conditions further behavior. You get in the habit of killing, and you set yourself up for being killed. Your mind develops a kind of psychic-genetic code for killing, an adaptation for aggression and defense (this is the major difference between karmic naturalism and materialistic naturalism). This psychic gene continues after the death of an individual member of a particular species, and guides that individual towards association with, and eventual embodiment as, a member of another species of more efficient killers. Thus, a human who has become addicted to killing, whose aggression and paranoia structure his mental field into patterns resembling those of a lion, an ape, or a shark, will gravitate after death as a subtle energy field toward embodiment as an actual lion, ape, or shark. Or, even worse, he will turn towards the agonizing fields of pure explosion and compression known as *preta*-limbos and hell-realms.

On the other hand, if you save lives, you develop the habit of not killing. You feel less aggressive toward, and less afraid of, others. Freed to some degree of defensiveness, your sensitivity lets itself expand. You enjoy security and gentleness, and attain a greater awareness of your environment. Your psychic-genetic coding becomes more open and can evolve into the playful adaptability of peacefulness. After death, this psychic or spiritual gene will cause you to gravitate toward gentler and more beautiful human and heavenly realms, to become embodied as the more sensitive, more expansive beings of those realms.

Similarly, if you steal, you develop the habit of theft. Your mind develops a code for taking more and more. You become more greedy and more aggressive, to defend the many things you have gotten. You thus become more discontent and fearful. After death you are likely to be reborn as some kind of animal that is incessantly feeding its huge body, like a whale or a dinosaur, restlessly striving to satisfy an immense appetite. If the process grows even worse, after death your theft-conditioned psychic genetic code will lead you into the *preta*-limbo realms of inconceivable frustrations of tantalized appetite. We can picture this in terms of geometry, as if one's appetite were an expanding sphere. The more it takes from the universe around it, takes what is not given, the bigger it gets. The bigger it gets, the more things it wants to consume. Instead of becoming more content, it becomes more driven to devour. Finally it becomes a rapidly expanding sphere of appetite, agonizingly aware of its inability to swallow infinity. Having gobbled a tremendous amount, it feels as if it had nothing at all.

On the other hand, if you give, your mind develops a psychic-genetic code for letting things go. Your circle of appropriation decreases and you feel less defensive. Since you become used to giving away tomorrow what you have today, you are more content with what you have. You



The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara

feel disinclined to accumulate more and more, since you know that you will soon part with it by giving it to others with more need. As you become more generous by habit, and more detached from things, you differentiate less between "yours" and "theirs." You begin to enjoy things without owning them. You even enjoy others' ownership. You want to have things, so that you can give them away. You learn to enjoy everything by having nothing. This fully developed psychic-genetic code of generosity directs you to rebirth among human beings of vast wealth or gods of the realms of pure enjoyment and abundance.

If you kill others, you lose your greater life. If you save lives, you find your greater life. If you commit theft, you become poor, you are diminished. If you give gifts, you become rich, you expand your dominion. All human wealth is the result of the generosity of former lives; all poverty is the result of theft and miserliness of former lives. In Buddhist societies, thus, the wealthy are "self-made" persons, looked at from a multi-life, naturalistic perspective. There is no unearned wealth, even if one inherits it in this life. And the poor have created their own poverty by their lack of generosity in former lives. So if the poor wish to improve their lot, they must practice generosity, however modest the scale. And if the rich wish to enjoy their wealth, and avoid losing it in the future, they must practice generosity even more, reinvesting their stock of merit.

The messianic ethics of the Universal Vehicle stand firmly rooted on these basic laws of karmic evolution. The Bodhisattva, the "Enlightenment Hero(ine)," is driven by compassion to attempt to benefit all other beings at the same time as himself or herself. Seeking universal liberation for all, the Bodhisattva thus seeks to transform the entire world into a Buddha-land. The issues of karmic ethics thus become for him or her more complex, in that the greatest good of the greatest number involves a kind of cost-benefit analysis of specific actions. The individualistic, monastic Buddhist is prohibited from the ten sins, no matter what the provocation. There are no exceptions. There is only implicit consideration of issues such as how to react when one being is about to kill five hundred, and he can only be stopped if you kill him first. If you hold to the principle absolutely, you in effect let him kill the five hundred—are you then accomplice to the larger killing? Here the Bodhisattva has to be able to dirty his hands and accept the inevitability of sin in exceptional circumstances.

The scholarly Saint Asanga, for example, mentions a number of exceptional cases in which a Bodhisattva *must* commit the sin of theft in order to achieve a greater gift. He should play Robin Hood and steal from robber-barons, to give the wealth back to the victims. He should play the revolutionary and confiscate the kingdom of an unjust, greedy, and tyrannical king who oppresses and deprives the people. He should play the reformer and take back the misappropriated wealth of those custodians of religious monuments, temples, and monasteries who use pious donations for personal gain, and he must rededicate those funds to the maintenance of the religious institutions. Finally, he may play the capitalist entrepreneur, and temporarily underpay his workers, with the intention of building up an industry and community that can create more gifts of more wealth for more people.

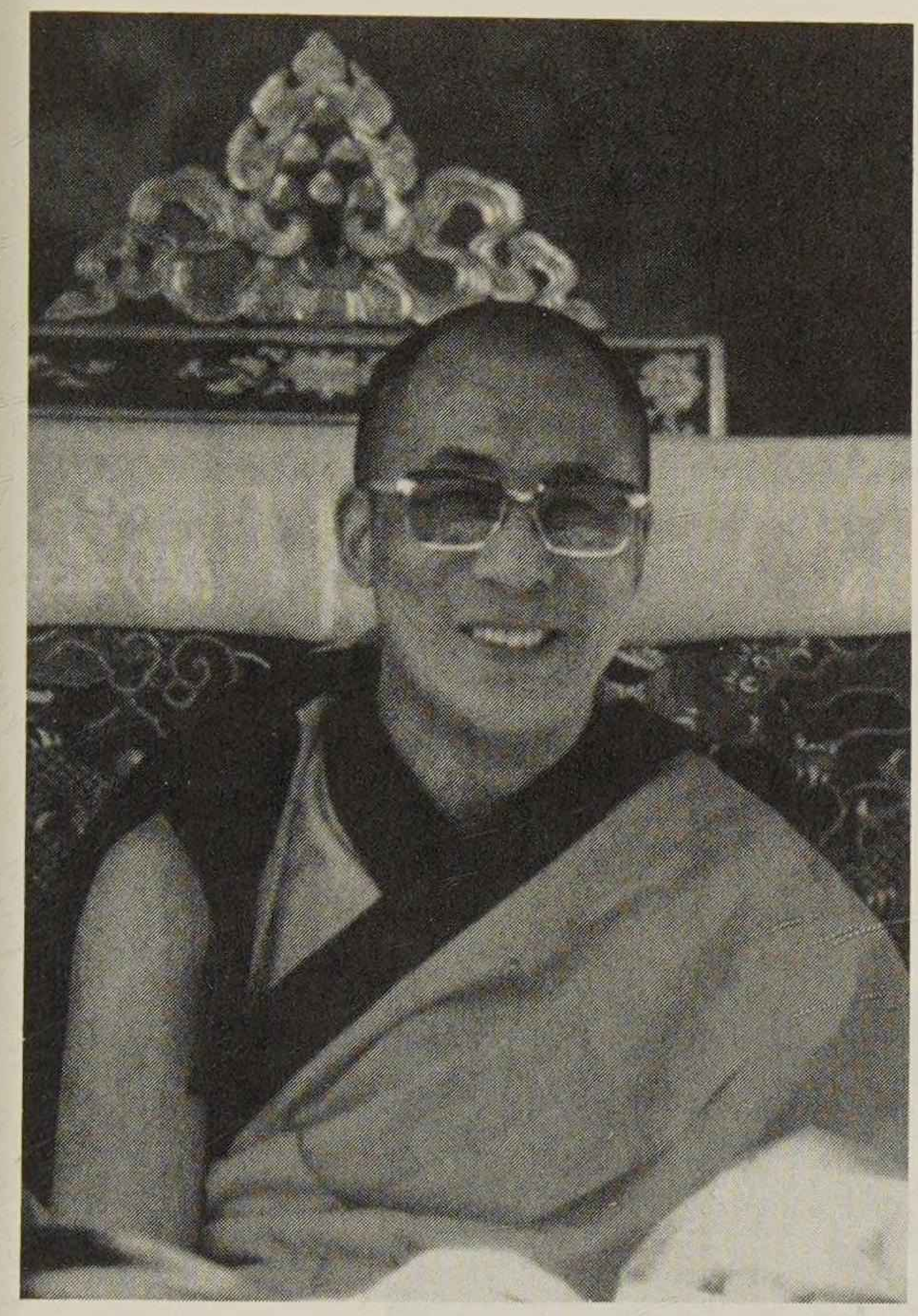
This brings up a historical point worth noting. Buddhist civilization was always closely interconnected with the flourishing of the middle classes, the merchants and managers of private and public sectors. The first humans to talk to the Buddha after his enlightenment were not the five ascetics, but two merchants. Receiving a meal from them, the Buddha mentioned not a word about suffering, but blessed their enterprises. The systematization of values in the karma theory was roughly contemporary with the emergence of a money economy from the old barter system. Many of the great Bodhisattvas of the Universal Vehicle were powerful merchants with great fortunes, like Vimalakirti. Lest this be thought a criticism of Buddhist civilization, remember that trading is between giving and taking. A fair

trade is a mutually advantageous exchange of gifts. Capitalism is based on generosity, not on rapaciousness and avarice. An investment is not taking what is not given, it is a gift to the future, which includes both self and others. When capitalists lose sight of this, they consume and hoard, consider short-term profits, and rapidly destroy the basis of their wealth, which is the generosity of the past. All the nations in which Buddhism flourished were exceptionally wealthy during those times. And charity is the first transcendent virtue (*dānaparamitā*) in the Universal Vehicle. Generosity is the base of the golden bowl that fulfills all wishes.

The Bodhisattva is able to commit an exceptional sin only because he usually sticks to the ten virtues, and even if he breaks the rules, his motivation is always loving altruism, and never tainted with the addictions of delusion, greed, and hate. On the universalist level of ethics, the Bodhisattva overcomes all theft by means of gifts out of compassion, and sees through the delusion of property, gift, and theft, out of wisdom. "There is no property, no gift, no theft, no lack of property, no lack of gift, no lack of theft, no somethings, and no nothings." Seeing through the ultimate nature of all these phenomena, however, does not disturb the relative reality of them all. In fact, their ultimate emptiness *is* their relative viability. Thus, wisdom reinforces compassion's commitment to the relative causality of gift and theft, to the transformation of all thefts to gifts. When this task concludes, we enter the apocalyptic realm of paradoxical inconceivabilities, and the level of the ethics of inconceivable liberation.

This comes up not only in the Tantras and their literature. Look at a basic *Jātaka* myth such as that of Prince Vessantara, the paragon of generosity.[4] The good Prince followed his vow to give everyone anything asked of him, and ended up giving away the national treasure, his children, and his wife. He gave so totally that his subjects rebelled and banished him, believing that his generosity in effect stole their national wealth. How do you give everything to everybody without taking everything from everybody first? On the universalist level, to realize emptiness you must dissolve all appearances into nothingness before you can resurrect them through love in perfected splendor. Thus, it is said that only he who steals all the property in the universe can attain enlightenment.

Here we begin to see the significance of the fact that Nāgabodhi inherits the teaching of *Esoteric Communion* because of his courage in theft. Nāgabodhi's extreme honesty even in error, his persistence in crime, is beautifully illustrated by the fact that he takes literally Nāgārjuna's metaphor for unreality, "like horns growing on the head," and actually imagines those horns into existence. To realize universal goodness, evil must be transformed into good; it cannot just be ignored. In a sense, the achievement of transcendent wisdom is itself the supreme evil, the supreme selfishness. The Bodhisattva here confronts the absolute nothingness of everybody and everything, in order to reach voidness and relativity. The attainment of such wisdom is called "the great death," because the Bodhisattva's critical insight kills off or takes away the apparent substantiality of all persons and properties. That the "Great Death" is the root of boundless life, and the "Great Theft" is the root of boundless gifts, in no way alters the fact that neither is accomplished without pushing the egotistic habit-pattern of selfishness to its uttermost extremes. The whole universe is killed off, stolen, and consumed by the wisdom-bound subjectivity. Jesus Christ had to die on the cross before he could be resurrected in the triumph of love. His Great Death was necessary to show the world the Great Hate at the core of the egotistical habit-pattern. Fortunately, the errors of death and hate destroy themselves at their extremes, leaving the nonextremist relativity of life and love triumphant. Nāgabodhi had to experience his erroneous, imaginary reification of ego-substance as a nasty set of horns jabbing into the ceiling before he could realize that all things are free of intrinsic substantiality. Only then could he join in Nāgārjuna's laugh, and fling the golden bowl freely in all directions to delight all beings.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama

I heard the story of the golden bowl from the Tibetans, even though it originated in India. It must be acknowledged as inscribed around the rim of the golden bowl of the Vajra Dharma of inconceivable liberation that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has recently flung out into the world. It is a perfect allegory for the sad recent theft of Tibet. Mao came to Tibet as a modern Nāgabodhi, to steal the golden bowl of the treasures of the Dharma which Tibet had so long preserved, hidden from the world. The Dalai Lama freely gave it all to him, signing the seventeen-point agreement. In a sense, he led Mao into a quiet room filled with treasures of precious gems, and told him to contemplate their insubstantiality and selfless beauty. All the Chinese have managed so far is to grow a set of ugly horns on their national head, even more embarrassing than the "ugly face" Prime Minister Deng was brave enough to mention. His Holiness has asked Mao's successor, "Are you happy now?" The Chinese have privately admitted they are not, and His Holiness has laughed, like Nāgārjuna, repeating the instructions.[5]

Actually, we should not single out the Chinese. We are all with them, in a sense, all party to the "opening up" of Tibet. We all benefit from the golden bowl of the Tibetan Teachings, now being flung all over the world. We all have horns on our heads, unable to enjoy the jewels because of being stuck in one spot. When we realize that there are no properties to be possessed in all the universe, when we affirm the freedom of all people, such as the Tibetans, then our horns and those of Prime Minister Deng will instantly disappear. His heart and ours will change together. Then the theft of Tibet will turn into a gift through the limitless generosity of the golden bowl. When Tibet is happy once again, China will be happy, and our whole human family as well.

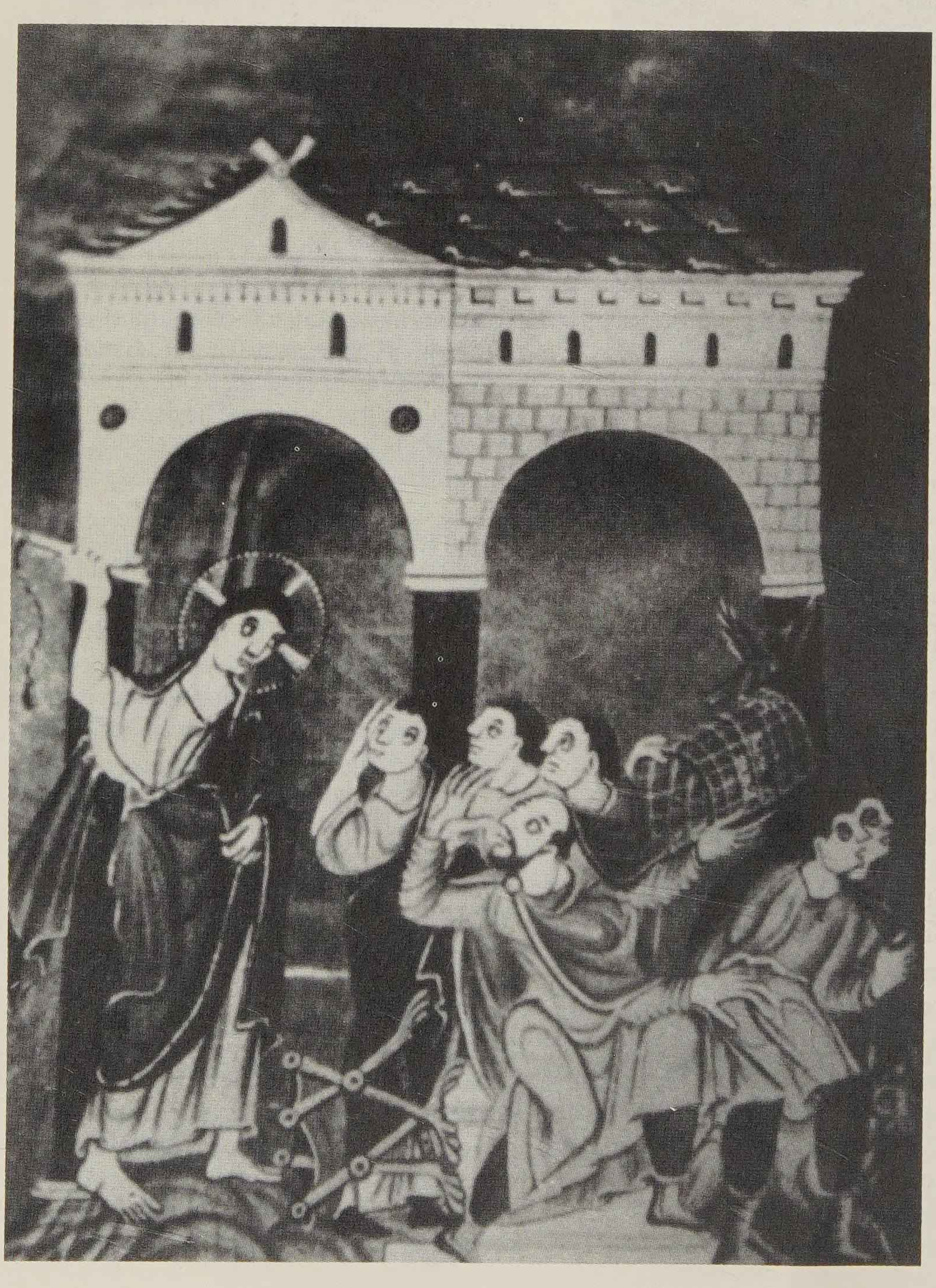
May Nāgabodhi never tire of using his golden bowl, down there on Glory Mountain, to prepare for us all a feast of celebration! ■

NOTES

1. This story is a favorite in Tibetan oral tradition. Lama Govinda tells it most beautifully in his *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), and I have quoted from his account. The dates of the legendary Nāgārjuna are 100 B.C.–500 A.D. This incident would have happened toward the end of that period.
2. This myth was taught by the Buddha in the *Agganna Suttānta* of the Pali Canon, and is found in many other Buddhist texts.
3. Note the similarity of these ten paths to the Mosaic commandments. See the discussion in my article, "Buddhist Social Activism," *Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, vol. XVI, no. 1 (Spring, 1983).
4. See M. Cone and R. Gombrich, *The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
5. I am recounting, of course, an allegorical conversation. The main point the story makes about the Chinese attitude to Tibet is the one His Holiness the Dalai Lama always emphasizes. The Chinese purpose itself will be much better served by a free Tibet than by an occupied and oppressed Tibet. The latter, what they have at present, is a financial drain, an embarrassment, a nightmare. The former will be a tremendous asset, a source of pride as an ally and proof of good intentions, and a delightful awakening.

Den of Thieves

D.M. DOOLING



Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer . . . for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Isaiah 56:7

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Matthew 21:12-13

This is one of the strangest, as well as most popular, of the stories in the New Testament about Jesus of Nazareth. What did he mean by "a den of thieves"? No doubt, the moneychangers charged their commission, as they still do, but then as now with the approval of the law; the merchants of livestock for sacrifice were selling sought-after goods, and if the purchasers grumbled, as we do, about prices, like us they paid them. Was the temple being more seriously desecrated by these commercial transactions than our churches nowadays, with their sale of pamphlets and postcards, their bulletin boards of goods and good works for exchange? What was being stolen, by whom, and from whom? Do we really understand?

For this same man who so rudely cleansed the temple said other very strange things about it: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"—a saying that was cast in his teeth as he hung upon the cross. "But he spake," his closest disciple added later, "of the temple of his body."* Or so his followers came to believe in the years that came after. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."**

*John 2:19, 21.
**I Corinthians 3:16-17

Is it true that there is an inner house that contains something precious, and if so, how can we be robbed of it? What is this "holy," this "prayer," that would link us with something higher? Did we lose it so long ago that we are not even aware of what it is, nor how it disappeared? Did we make some sort of deal with the thieves, or did they come silently, by night, and take us unaware, or were we deceived by promises to return the treasure with interest?

But what was taken? How can we complain of a loss, great or small, if we cannot report exactly what is missing?

"Prayer." "The Spirit of God." What are these, that we should contain them or even desire to do so? The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters to create the world. It descended like a dove upon the baptized Jesus; it "came" suddenly upon Balaam and Saul and Azariah, so that for a moment they spoke with more authority, from a higher certainty, than other men. The power of knowledge, the power of understanding, the power to create: if there is in the human being a potential channel for this finer energy, what could open it? If "prayer" is the link, what is prayer?

Centuries after Jesus of Nazareth, centuries after John and Paul, a father of the Russian Church called Simeon the New Theologian wrote on "three methods of attention and prayer." "The mind should be in the heart," he says. "It should guard

the heart while it prays, revolve, remaining always within . . . . He who does not have attention in himself and does not guard his mind cannot become pure in heart and so cannot see God . . . . Speaking generally, it is impossible to acquire virtue in any other way, except through this kind of attention . . . . Keep your attention within yourself, not in your head but in your heart. Keep your mind there (in the heart), trying by every possible means to find the place where the heart is . . . . Wrestling thus, the mind will find the place of the heart. This happens when grace produces sweetness and warmth in prayer . . . . God demands only one thing from us—that our heart be purified by means of attention."*

"Trying by every possible means to find the place of the heart"—for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

This attention—can we glimpse it? It is clearly far from that frowning mental effort of concentration by which we seek to nail down an understanding like a pinned butterfly. This attention does not close on anything; it is not a clamping shut, but an opening up to life in movement, an accompanying energy all the more intense because it is still, all the more still because it is continually, receptively alive to the flow of my life and being. This attention guards the feeling, and the feeling guards the attention; when they do not guard each other, both are stolen. The balance and energy of this relation are lost; the place of the heart is lost; the source and hearth of my consciousness, of my real being. I lose, in other words, *myself*.

Attention has never been defined. But it has been said: I am where my attention is; I *am* my attention. Unquestionably, my sense of myself—of where I am and who I am, as well as how and why I am—is bound up in what I am aware of at any given moment. At any given moment, its measure is my measure; its direction is the direction in which I am headed. That attention has value is conceded in the common phrase "to pay attention." At least one European language (Hungarian) acknowledges its active power by making it a verb instead of a noun. Certainly nothing can be done without it that could be called real doing rather than automatic reaction.

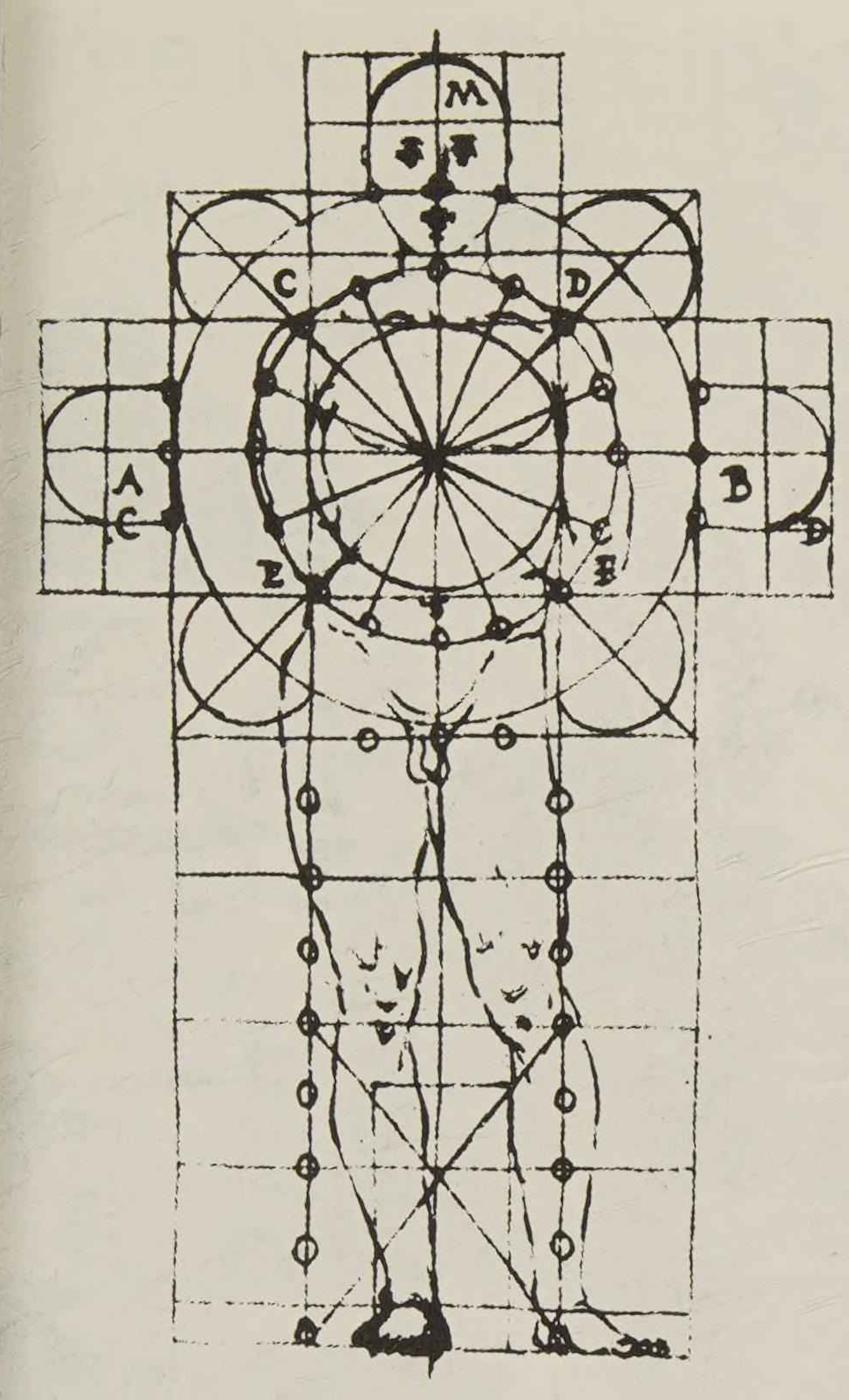
So it is my being and my doing that are at stake—my whole potential as a human being, with its possible development into knowledge and creativity—an upward evolving which "demands," as the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* tells us, "that you persistently insist on bare consciousness of your own self."* Brother Lawrence wrote in one of his letters, "We must prevent our mind from wandering, no matter what the occasion may be, for we must make our heart a spiritual temple for him."**

The mystics, intent upon the upward, evolving direction, knew very well what attention is, and described it in all their writings, but in their own religious terms which have seemed irrelevant to our irreligious age. Perhaps we need to listen more carefully to the meaning behind those terms. It is a serious matter, evidently, in any age, to be in charge of one's own being and doing. What can I call myself if I am not in charge, if I do not *possess myself*? But do I? I have to see that I am not in command, that I am without access to the place in myself where that balance of energy exists, where I know myself and my surroundings with my feeling as well as my mind. My attention is taken by every circumstance, by every one of the pack of thieves which I also harbor within myself.

They are all there, every member of the brotherhood. There is the holdup man with his gun, threatening my life if I don't

***Writings from the Philokalia—On Prayer of the Heart*, tr. by Kadloubovsky and Palmer (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1951).
**Matthew 6:21.

**A Letter of Private Direction*, Spiritual Classics Series, ed. by John Griffiths (New York: Crossroad Press, 1981).
***The Practice of the Presence of God*, tr. by Sr. Mary David, SSND (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).



pay—"pay attention," give up all my interest, all my time and energy, to his demands. He wears a mask; but he speaks with such authority! Truly, it is my money or my life: my career, my family, are at stake; I am forced to give in. But if I took off his mask, whose face would I see?

They are all there, and some others are as bold as this armed bandit: the hijacker, who twists my journeys to his own ends and takes me where I had no intention of going. Others are less bold, but slyer: the cat burglar, who seems to have inside information about the times of my little indulgences and enters my room when I am sleeping the heavy sleep that follows them. Then I wake to find the drawers empty and the jewels gone. Or the safecracker, who also seems to know when the watchman is not there, and with a sudden small explosion in my unattended house—sometimes so skillfully muffled as to be almost inaudible—robs me of all my hoarded savings. Some, with even less respect, steal from me without my even knowing it, when I am pushing through a busy street with the sole intention of getting to my office in spite of all the hideous obstacles of crowds and traffic; the quick fingers picking my pocket feel no different from my own hand making sure the car keys are there—*but now, my God, where is my wallet? Have I dropped it somewhere?*

The shoplifter and the embezzler, the con man, the rip-off artist, the plagiarist and the bag snatcher—I could know them all if I chose to do so; even the phony beggar of self-pity, and his face beneath its makeup of unmerited disasters. But in order to admit their identity, I would have to give up "my own"—I would have to cease playing the role of the innocent victim, the philanthropist, the respectable, well-to-do citizen protesting against the violence of an ugly world. I would have to admit that my wealth was all in promissory notes, that all my gold was in the pockets of that grinning beggar and his confederates. I would have to give up my masks, my costumes, my lies, and my secret midnight revels with my companions, my other selves, the brotherhood of thieves. And this seems impossible to me, because I feel that I would have nothing left; I have forgotten what it is I have lost, I do not remember my treasure, I have lost the place of the heart; I no longer know what it is to love.

Yet in an unexpected, startling instant, when in spite of myself I recognize the robbery and know for my own the bandit's face, his voice, his way of moving, a strange feeling assails me that is very like the memory of love; for with the glimpse of what I am comes a longing for what I could be, a recollection and an acute valuing of what it is that I am losing. Then for that instant of compassion, I accept that I am both the robber and the robbed. I am the den of thieves; I am the house of prayer. ■

The New Disciple

JANWILLEM VAN DE WETERING

Master Tofu lives on the eastern slope of Mount Hyee, a little west of the fishing village, Sakamoto, at Lake Biwa, in a cabin at the end of a winding path. The emperor appointed Tofu as a Living National Treasure. That title is given only to true artists who have reached their goals. There's a painter on the northern island of Oshima who's a Living Treasure. He only draws cormorants, on flat stones that he finds on the beach. The emperor acknowledges that the painter understands the essence of the cormorant.

Master Tofu makes vases and teabowls. He uses the local clay and burns twigs under his oven. His tools consist of a few blunt knives and a wheel. He built his cabin himself, and his disciple lives near him in an even smaller cabin. Master and disciple spend months turning pots and then place them in the oven. When the oven is full, the master goes for a walk. He sits on the rocks and watches the blue shine of the large lake down below. He sits in the sunshine or in the cold light of the moon and mumbles or hums. The wild animals pass close by, birds chirp near his ears, a butterfly rests on his hand. Then the master will become quiet himself, and once nothing disturbs him and his soul is as pure as empty space, he will return to the oven and light the fire. The flames roar up and lick at the closely fitted bricks, and the master sits on a stool and waits. When the fire dies and the ashes stop glowing, Tofu will pry open the oven to check whether his vases and bowls have withstood the ordeal. Most of the pots he will break up, but usually a few remain.

Every item that carries his seal is worth a fortune, and master Tofu will go to the art dealers in town and exchange his creations for bank notes. He looks like a kind old man. His clear eyes glitter between the wrinkles of his funny apple face. He doesn't walk easily and supports his spare little frame on a gnarled stick. When he has collected his money—he twists the notes in tight rolls that he secures with elastic bands—he will walk to the pleasure quarter and start the evening with a bowl of tofu soup. Tofu is a jelly made out of soybeans. It's supposed to be healthy, has little taste, can be bought everywhere, and isn't expensive. Rumor has it that the master was born in a noble family, but he lives like a poor hermit and gave himself that silly name. Perhaps he wants to show his modesty in that way. Except for tofu soup, he usually eats only fruits and the roots of plants that grow around his cabin, but when he's in town he'll drink rice wine and then wander about the streets where the prostitutes hang out. After a couple of days and nights of partying, Tofu goes back to baking pots, walking, and sitting quietly.

Some ten years ago, the experts requested the emperor to appoint Tofu as a Living National Treasure, because the master's art is so pure and simple and contains a touch of ungraspable refinement. The true artist tries to break through the frontiers of human restriction, and master Tofu must have been successful, for his pots cannot be caught within definitions. It goes without saying that young potters like to learn from him. It seems, however, that Tofu does not want to teach, and hides

whenever someone shows up. Only Turu has managed to penetrate master Tofu's defenses, but he had to camp for weeks near the master's property and wait patiently until the old man finally deigned to show himself.

"What can I teach you?" asked master Tofu. "Making good pots is ridiculously easy. You take some clay, form a vase or a bowl, put it in the oven, and wait until the fire is done. That's all there is to my simple craft. Don't think, make your hands surround the emptiness. Empty within, empty without. What else is a pot but a line in space? Do you have to bother me to hear what you know already?"

Turu stayed. "You have to pass on your skill so that your knowledge can be shared by whomever comes after you."

"I don't have to do anything," said Tofu, "but if you think that I'm wrong, I'll order you to weed my garden."

Turu did everything the master told him to do. He collected twigs for the oven, did the laundry, swept the floor, carried clay, cooked potfuls of tofu, and tried to imitate the master's ways. Turu also made vases and bowls and put them in the oven. At times his pots looked a little better than at other times, but they never in any way resembled what Tofu was doing. "No, no," Tofu said, "You've got to quit thinking. Allow the shape to come out by itself."

"Yes but," Turu said.

"Yes but," Tofu said, and broke all Turu's vases and bowls with his stick.

Turu bowed angrily and walked to the city, but came back the next day. He tugged on the master's sleeve. "What now?" asked Tofu.

"We've got to leave here," said Turu.

Master Tofu sighed.

"I do know," Turu said, "that you never have to do anything at all, but this time the obligation will save your own existence. If our very lives are threatened, do you think we should defend ourselves?"

"Are our lives being threatened?" master Tofu asked.

Turu lit a cigarette and bent his head to the side. "Yes. Don't you know that we now have neighbors?"

"I do," Tofu said. "Two strapping young fellows. They built a cabin on the other side of the brook."

"I met them," Turu said. "Just now, on the path. I know who they are. They are no good."

"Who is good?" Tofu asked.

"Not me," Turu said. "That's what you're always saying. I do everything wrong, in the wrong way. But our new neighbors do everything wrong in just the right way. They're terrorists from the capital."

Master Tofu kept quiet.

"Listen," said Turu. "You have no idea of what goes on in the world. They're against the existing order and want to destroy civilization, so that a new society can arise from the ruins. They blow up trains and kill ministers of state. They're afraid of nobody and nothing. There are all sorts of terrorists, and the most terrible are disciplined intellectuals. I think that these two belong to the worst kind."

"Exceptional people?" asked master Tofu. "I hope you're right. Muddlers I know aplenty. I believe I'm a terrorist myself, of the very worst kind, but unfortunately, I have neither time nor inclination to cause any trouble."

Turu closed his eyes and shook his head. "These fellows are werewolves who'll do all the evil they can envision. We've got to leave at once. I'm not even sure that it's not too late already. Their photographs are on the front page of the *Kyoto Times*. I recognized them at once, and I'm sure they noticed."

"So what?" asked Tofu.

Turu began to sweat. "Have you gone crazy, master Tofu? Am I really addressing a senile old codger? They asked me whether you happened to be the famous Living National Treasure. Everybody knows that you're stashing a fair supply of cash. Please, think of a plan so that we can escape. We're almost out of time."

"Bah," said master Tofu, and lit a cigarette, too. He blew the smoke into Turu's face. "Turu," said master Tofu, "you behave like a fool. I can't teach you anything. For years you've been scurrying around my feet, but your head is filled with

clay, and I can't get it out for you. Maybe you learned something here, but you won't notice until you've broken away from me. You have to understand your own wisdom, which is no different from my own. You've got to go."

"Where can I go?" asked Turu. "They'll wait for me and cut me down. They have binoculars and are watching us right now."

"I'll distract their attention," said master Tofu. "In the meantime, you'll sneak out of the rear window and crawl through the bushes, climb the mountain, and make your own escape down the western slope."

"Yes but," said Turu.

Master Tofu picked up his stick.

"What difference does it make," asked Turu, "whether I'm murdered on the eastern path or break my neck falling off the western cliffs?"

"If you stay here, I'll crack your skull," said master Tofu.

Turu grabbed an axe. "Don't try to fight me, old fool." He trembled with fear and rage.

"Choose," master Tofu said. "My stick is deadly."

Turu attacked the master. Master Tofu sat on his stool. Turu's axe flashed. The metal protector at the end of Tofu's stick kept warding off the axe's blade. Every flash of the axe coincided with a sweep of the stick. The fight went on until Turu came to the end of his strength.

"Well?" asked Tofu.

"I'll go," Turu said.

Tofu went outside and danced on the field outside his cabin. He sang and waved his arms. While Tofu danced, Turu slid through the rear window and crawled through the bushes. He reached the forest and sat on a rock. "I have to make a choice," Turu thought. "I can climb the mountain and try to get away via the steep cliffs on the other side, but then I'm almost sure to fall to my death. If I go down this side, the terrorists will see me and cut me off. They're tall and strong, and one is armed with bow and arrows and the other with a sword. If I go back, Tofu will go for me with his stick. It's time to face the truth. Tofu is no master at all. The terrorists want to rob him. What is that to me? I'll offer them my services, and get a third of the loot."

The more Turu thought about his plan, the better he liked it. Wasn't it true that he had given up everything to become a master's disciple, and had gotten nowhere after years of strenuous labor? Wasn't it equally true that he owed nothing to a society foolish enough to appoint unspectacular potters to the rank of Living National Treasure? "The ignorant people," Turu thought, "have supplied Tofu with a lot of money because they thought that he was a great man. I'll take some of that cash myself, so that I'll be equipped to make a proper beginning."

The two men now living on the land west of Tofu's were called Sakai and Yasudo. They were both honor students of Tokyo University's Department of Philosophy. Sakai had practiced sword fighting for some ten years, and Yasudo was a formidable exponent of the art of archery. They had become close friends because they both believed in "the opposite direction." "Only Nothing is of value," they were always saying to each other, "and therefore we have to reach that Nothing." Sakai had graduated with an exhaustive study of "The Essence of Duality," and Yasudo was approved by the University's authorities because of his brilliant comments on "The Untruth of Good." The professors who only practiced theory were much surprised when the two young doctors claimed credit for a devastating fire in downtown Tokyo, the disastrous derailing of one of Japan's famous "bullet trains," and the subsequent brutal murder of a minister of state.

Sakai and Yasudo were now resting on Mount Hyee, the holy mountain that protects the temple city of Kyoto, Japan's spiritual heart. Hyee is also known as the Mountain of Rumination, and its landscape resembles those of ancient paintings—impenetrable forests reach up to razor-sharp cliffs shrouded in lofty mists. There the human spirit sheds all that holds it down and floats over fields covered with fragrant herbs. The thinker learns to listen, like the clever fox whose ears turn around to catch the slightest rustle, in secret meditations that reach for and connect with the empty base of all.

Sakai lowered his field glasses. "Amazing. That old man limps somewhat, but his dance is impressive. One would think that he might try to compensate for his useless leg, but he exaggerates its lameness, so that the defect becomes the theme of what he's trying to express. What do you think he knows?"

"My guess'll be as bad as yours," said Yasudo, "but we're having a visitor, the fellow who scared so easily when we met him on the path today. There he is, under the gnarled pine tree." He picked up an arrow and lifted his bow.

Sakai touched his friend's arm. "Wait a little, maybe his information is of some value."

Sakai concentrated on master Tofu again, who had just finished his imitation of a wounded rabbit and now became a heron, standing silently on one leg, staring into clear water, beak withdrawn shyly, ready to spear a fish. "Quite an amusing fellow," Sakai said softly. "Now why was it, again, we wanted to kill him?"

"In order to combine the necessary with the pleasurable," Yasudo said. "A Living National Treasure represents the best of our present society. When we do away with him we'll advertise our effort, and Tofu's stash will enable us to continue our performance."

Turu approached and bowed.

"Hello," said Yasudo. "Formulate as clearly and succinctly as you can what brings you here."

Turu told his tale.

"Right," Sakai said, "from the frying

pan into the fire. Tofu tried to teach you the mystery of form, and obviously you failed to grasp his teaching. With us you're worse off, for we teach the art of how to do away with form."

Turu laughed. "I've been well trained in that particular field. Whatever I made was broken by Tofu's stick. I'm ready for revenge."

"Good," Yasudo said. "You say Tofu managed to collect some solid capital. You know him well, and the arrangement at his house must be familiar to you. Go down and make him give up his money, then return and give it all to us."

"That doesn't sound so good," Turu said. "I'll be of use to you, and you'd better be of use to me. Nothing is for free."

"Nothing is for free, indeed," Sakai said. "Wait until dark and then complete your mission. Don't try to get away, for it'll be easy for us to hunt you down."

Yasudo smiled. "Why do you hesitate? Your choices are already made. By coming here, you surrender to our power. Maybe we'll accept you, in time, as our comrade, but first you'll have to prove yourself."

"Good evening," Turu said.

Master Tofu woke up.

"Listen," Turu said. "I'm no longer your property, for I've broken my chain. Your stick may have parried an axe, but I'm now carrying a sword. See this magnificent weapon? My new masters stole it from Tokyo's Imperial Museum. It once belonged to Prince Yozo, and was forged by Tokoro. Whoever holds this sword is invincible. If you use your stick, I'll cut off your head."

"My stick is in the corner," Tofu said. "I don't need a stick when I'm asleep."

"Stop chatting," Turu said. "I've come for your money. If you give it to me, I may save your life."

"You don't mind if I don't get up?"

Tofu asked. "My money is in that vase."

"I hope you're not joking now," Turu said as he squatted and put the vase on the floor. His right hand held on to the sword as his left hand approached the vase's neck, which was wide at the top.

"Just a minute now," Tofu said. "I know you're all-powerful since you've become the friend of great spirits, and your sword that once conquered the country and was made by a master forger does frighten me a lot. Even so, I do think I should advise you. Are you sure you want to put your hand into that vase? I made it when I was still struggling with my own demons, and it could be that one of them sneaked into it. It's night now, and even demons have to rest. Perhaps he'll be upset when you disturb his sleep."

"For years you have used me as a slave," Turu snarled. "I thought that I could learn from you, without ever realizing that I was being abused. Now shut your trap, for when I lose my temper, you'll surely lose your head."

Turu put his hand in the vase and then out, yelling with fear and pain. A writhing viper dropped to the floor.

"Simpleton," said Tofu. "Did you really learn that little about forms and shapes? The money was at the bottom of the vase, and because its neck is too narrow below to admit your hand, you should have smashed the vase."

Turu rolled about on the floor. The snake's poisonous teeth had bitten deeply, and Turu's arm was swelling already.

"Help me," begged Turu.

"The poison is fast," Tofu said, "and in your blood, on its way to your heart. The viper is the demon that is born from greed. Each spot on its skin is a golden coin."

"I'm dying," yelled Turu.

"Take a deep breath," said Tofu, "and relax your muscles. It'll stop your fear. To die is an interesting experience, but fearfulness will spoil it for you."

Turu beat the floor with his fists and began to whimper. His eyes bulged, his face turned purple, his jaws cramped open, and spittle dribbled down his chin.

"The clouds keep passing the moon," Yasudo said, "and I can't see what's happening out there, but I do believe that master Tofu is preparing a burning pile. And now he's dragging a body. He's lifting it on the branches and lighting the fire. I'm afraid our new disciple has left us already."

"Would *you* like to go now?" Sakai asked.

"Now what?" master Tofu asked. "If you're after the money, I keep it in that vase. I don't mind if I'm to lose my life, but I detest being woken up all the time."

Yasudo studied the vase. He thought aloud. "The money is in the vase, but if one reaches for it, something unpleasant evidently results. Besides, the vase's neck is too narrow below. In order to get at the money, I'll have to break the vase."

"Splendid," master Tofu said. "Your logic is impeccable, but my teacher used to say that a little straight thinking does no more than produce a little answer."

"Was your teacher right?" Yasudo asked, while he fitted an arrow to his bow.

"Well," master Tofu said, "right or wrong, who'll make the ultimate decision? A little of both, it all depends how you look at the problem."

"Get up," Yasudo said, "find a hammer, and smash that vase."

"May I warn you?" Tofu asked.

"Please do," Yasudo said. "Although I really never care for advice."

"Go away," master Tofu said. "That vase contains only money. A lot of it, I do admit, and free to you, but you're still a young man, and it may be better if you make your own."

Yasudo aimed his arrow at master Tofu's heart. "You're not telling me that I shouldn't steal, I hope. What is possession? What difference can there be between what's yours and mine? I'm ordering you to break that vase."

"As you like," grumbled master Tofu. "All I'm trying to do is catch some sleep, and everyone barges in as if my humble abode were the Central Railway Station. Why should you involve me in your mistaken routine?"

"Our paths cross each other," Yasudo said, "and we'll both have to accept the

consequences of this meeting. Are you about to do as I say, or do I have to release this deadly arrow?"

Master Tofu got up, grabbed a hammer, and smashed the vase. The viper fell out and so did the money. Yasudo tried to watch the viper and master Tofu at the same time. The viper slid toward Tofu, and Tofu bowed his head. The snake turned in a flash and went for Yasudo. The arrow hit the spot where the viper's head had been half a second ago.

"Ouch," Yasudo said.

"I'm sorry to see that you're now dying," said master Tofu.

"I didn't pay sufficient attention," Yasudo said, stretched out on the floorboards, and crossed his hands on his chest. He took a deep breath and closed his eyes. The viper had bitten him on the leg, and the poison rushed up toward his heart.

"Now look at that," Sakai thought. "The performance is about to repeat itself. Master Tofu has plenty of firewood. I'm sure he'll leave enough to dispose of my body when the time comes. Isn't Yasudo burning brightly? Now how could he have lost that unequal battle? He's the best bowman I've ever met. He recognizes the danger of a situation long before a crisis occurs, and there I see his body, consumed by hellish flames."

Once more?" master Tofu asked. "Three is a strange number, indeed. I have often been successful at the third try. What can I do for you?"

"I'm unarmed," Sakai said. "Your former disciple brought you my sword, but I'm physically stronger than you and excel at karate."

"Are you threatening me?" Tofu asked from his bed.

"I'm not sure yet," Sakai said. "Frankly, I'm not even sure of the purpose of this visit. I've been watching you today. First you danced, then you burned the corpses of your own disciple and my friend. It seemed to me that you were quite contained in the midst of all activity, even when you were prancing about, showing me some of the aspects of your being."

"You like to chat," Tofu said. "But I prefer to sleep at this time. How about coming to see me in the morning?"

"There's some money on the floor," Sakai said.

Tofu groaned and sat up. "It's all yours, provided you leave my home. That money has been causing trouble all night. I should never have kept it. You know, when I make money I always get drunk, and once I'm drunk I like to play with the ladies, but there's always more of the stuff than I can possibly spend."

"And there's a snake, too," Sakai said. "He looks unhappy."

"That's because he lived in a vase," Tofu said, "and I smashed his home."

"Why do you call yourself Tofu?" Sakai asked. "Hermits go for fancy names. Master Cranebird, for instance, or Master Unicorn. Tofu is a colorless jelly, and once it hardens it becomes somewhat spongy. Are you colorless and spongy?"

"Yes," Tofu said. "Would you please take the money and leave me alone?"

Sakai shook his head. He got up, found a vase, and inserted the money. He put the vase in front of the viper. The viper slid into its neck. Sakai placed the vase on a shelf, found a broom, and swept the shards into a neat little heap.

"Will you be leaving now?" Tofu asked.

"No," said Sakai. "Will you take me as your disciple?"

Tofu kept quiet. Sakai continued sweeping.

"You walked the wrong way," Tofu said, "or the right way. It hardly matters how we define what has been brought about. The suffering that you caused will have to be put right some time."

"As you say," Sakai said.

"And there's nothing I can teach you, all that the mind needs to grasp is already present within the mind."

"That I haven't grasped yet," Sakai said.

Tofu sighed. "You'll find some bedding in that cupboard over there. Let's go to sleep. Tomorrow you have to weed the vegetable garden." ■

Surviving the Present

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID MAYBURY-LEWIS

We have witnessed in this century a series of thefts unparalleled in history: on every inhabited continent, industrialized cultures have dominated, decimated, or driven out their weaker neighbors. Maori, Kurd, Tibetan, Buraku, Estonian, !Kung San, Mosquito, Eskimo: the roll call of oppressed ethnic and tribal minorities goes on and on, until our eyes and ears close with weariness—or open wide in shock. To jolt us out of our complacency and into awareness of our neighbor's plight is one aim of Cultural Survival, Inc., a private, non-profit advocacy organization founded in 1972.

The expressed goal of Cultural Survival is "to help indigenous peoples survive, physically and culturally, the rapid changes which contact with expanding industrial society brings." Such changes often include disease, poverty, and the theft of ancestral lands. To counter these ills, Cultural Survival has offered advice and support to native groups on such projects as the establishment of a Sherpa Cultural Center at Tengboche Monastery, Nepal, to encourage traditional monastic education and to house a library and museum; a Kurdish Program to publicize the persecution of Kurdish minorities and to promote their land and language rights; a health care system in lowland Colombia; bilingual education for the Amuesha Indians of Peru; and medical assistance for Indian groups in Ecuador. In addition, the organization publishes a quarterly magazine, special reports, and occasional papers.

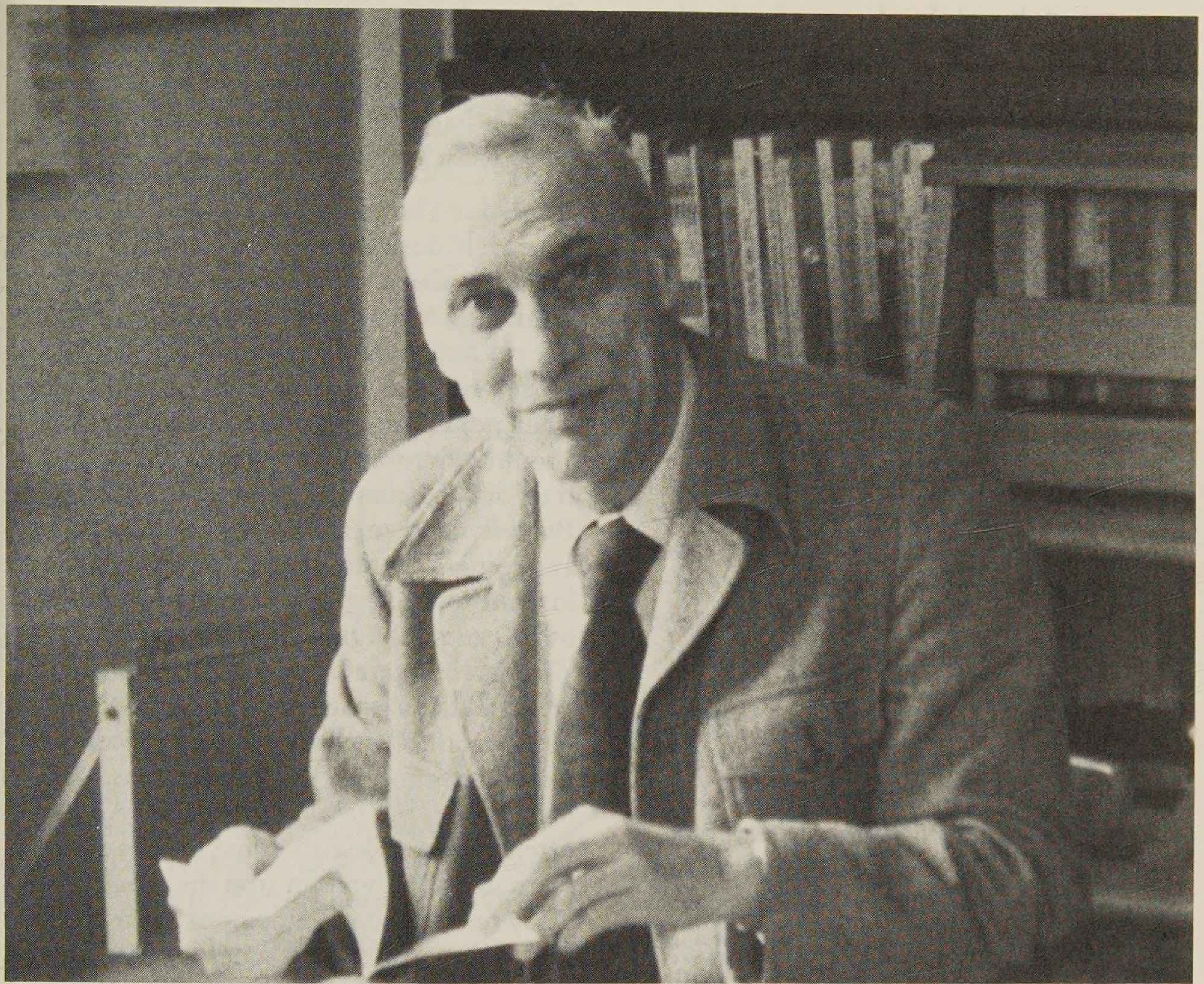
Cultural Survival's headquarters, in the Peabody Museum of Anthropology at Harvard University (11 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02138), can be found by wandering through a network of corridors crammed with anthropological artifacts from around the world. Close by lies the office of David Maybury-Lewis, founder and president of Cultural Survival. A professor of anthropology at Harvard, Dr. Maybury-Lewis is general editor of the Harvard Series in Cultural Anthropology and the author of several well-known books, such as The Savage and the Innocent, Dialectical Societies, *and the forthcoming* Structuralism and Social Organization. *On a chilly, overcast day in early February, Dr. Maybury-Lewis greeted me in his office. I sat, appropriately, beneath a vast, four-color map of the Amazon basin as we discussed the background and current activities of Cultural Survival.*

—Philip Zaleski

PARABOLA When and why did Cultural Survival begin?

David Maybury-Lewis The organization was started in 1972 by a group of social scientists here at Harvard. All of us had worked in areas where we saw tribal peoples or ethnic groups suffering, really suffering. They were being deprived of their lands; there were reports of genocide against Indian populations in various parts of the Americas, for example. When we began to look into this, we realized that all too often it was happening in the name of development. People would say, "Well, you know, that's the way of the world. Development has its own momentum, and these people are in the way. It's sad, but that's the way it is." We decided that this wasn't good enough, that this was a rationalization. So we founded the organization to propound an alternative view, to show that something could be done and should be done.

The arguments we make about the issues, I believe, are as important as whatever projects we can put into effect in the field. We discovered that there is an assumption about the problem in the developed world which we believe to be quite misguided. There's an assumption that there are people out there—call them primitive or tribal or whatever you like—who somehow are not going to make it. They are probably incapable of coping with the stresses of big cities; they can't



Photograph by Philip Zaleski

manage in a modern world, and so on—and so they'll have to move over and let us get on with the business of developing the world's resources. But what does "move over" mean? It means, at the least, that settlers move onto these peoples' land to shove them off. Without land they can't eat, and if they don't speak the language of the surrounding society and have no marketable skills, they are truly destitute. Sometimes if they resist they are gunned down. Or a big corporation decides there are natural resources in the area that they want, and so the native people are ceremonially moved off as a part of a government scheme.

I am focusing on the Americas, because this is where our expertise is and where our organization has concentrated its efforts. But we don't deal solely with the Americas. The problem is world-wide, and the arguments we present are also world-wide. In the Americas, however, the history is clear. Settlers moved in four hundred years ago, and the results both demographic and social on the the aboriginal population have been catastrophic. It's probably one of the largest and most rapid population declines that we know of in history.

In the beginning, it was assumed that there was nothing much to be done about it. Settlers were moving in, and they had to civilize the natives. What we have shown is that there is a continuation to the present day of the same type of argument. In the early days, they would say, "We don't know what kind of people these are, and whether they're deserving of human consideration." Or, "They're people like us, but they're non-Christian, so they have to be Christianized." A bit later, they would say, "They're uncivilized, and they have to be civilized." And now we say, "They're

undeveloped, and they have to be developed." But the bottom line is always the same. They are either killed or rendered destitute, and their societies are destroyed.

P. It seems nonetheless that this attitude is fairly new. Looking at the Roman Empire, for instance, one sees that the Romans made an attempt to let native cultures remain intact. Yet modern Western society takes over other cultures. What do you think has brought about this change?

D. M.-L. You're absolutely right. The difference is the overweening power of the West which came about with the Industrial Revolution. The ancient world might have been ruthless in its own way, but it had a much keener sense of the accommodations which were necessary. So we are really talking about something that became a predominant idea at the time of the European expansion. The point I want to make is that the idea still continues today in the so-called hard-nosed thinking of people in our think-tanks and board rooms. They haven't been jolted out of this knee-jerk reaction towards other people. Cultural Survival was set up in order to give the world that jolt, and also to try to do something practical about the situation where we could. That's very hard, because it requires not only money, of which we have very little, and expertise, of which we have a little bit more, but also the collaboration of the powers that be. And that's where the arguments come in. We try to persuade them that it's worth doing and that it can be done.

P. How do you persuade them?

D. M.-L. By a sort of push-and-pull strategy. You make it awkward for them, if possible, to go on in the way they're accustomed to. Consider a government which is riding roughshod over the interests of tribal peoples somewhere. If you can get sufficient international concern aroused, it may not do much good—but it may just make it irritating enough for them so they will say, "Isn't there any other way we can handle this, I'm taking a lot of heat on this."

P. That's a rather back-handed approach. Obviously it's sometimes necessary, but I wonder whether there's a way in which you can convince people that what tribal peoples have to offer is something they don't want to lose.

D. M.-L. That's a more idealistic approach. Some will be convinced—for example, there are people in the World Bank who are willing to listen to this. The World Bank now has, I think largely at our urging, a set of internal policy guidelines. They now require that something be done about the interests of tribal peoples and traditional societies in areas where the Bank is about to make loans, if these people are going to be adversely affected by these loans. This policy came about because I and others kept going down there and saying, "There is something worthwhile to be done here." Various people involved in policy at the World Bank were quite willing to listen to this. They said, "Yes, we understand, but *what* can be done? All too often, anthropologists come to us, and they seem to think they can stop the world. They tell us that development is a terrible thing, that we shouldn't make loans in areas where tribal peoples will be affected. And obviously we can't operate that way. The leave-them-alone approach is not going to be followed by anybody. If that's all you have to tell us, don't waste our time." So I said, "I understand the need for development. But this does not necessarily mean that you have to eradicate entire societies which are said to 'stand in the path' of development. There are ways of getting around this, if you are willing to take their rights seriously and bring them into the picture." So they said, "All right, show us how." And that's how we got involved in suggesting some solutions to the World Bank. There are also people in the Ford Foundation who are willing to listen to such arguments. And these are people who are not without influence.

When I was talking about what you correctly called the backhanded approach, I had in mind going to a busy Minister of the Interior, in a government that shall be nameless, who is desperately anxious to increase the gross national product in his country. When somebody comes and says

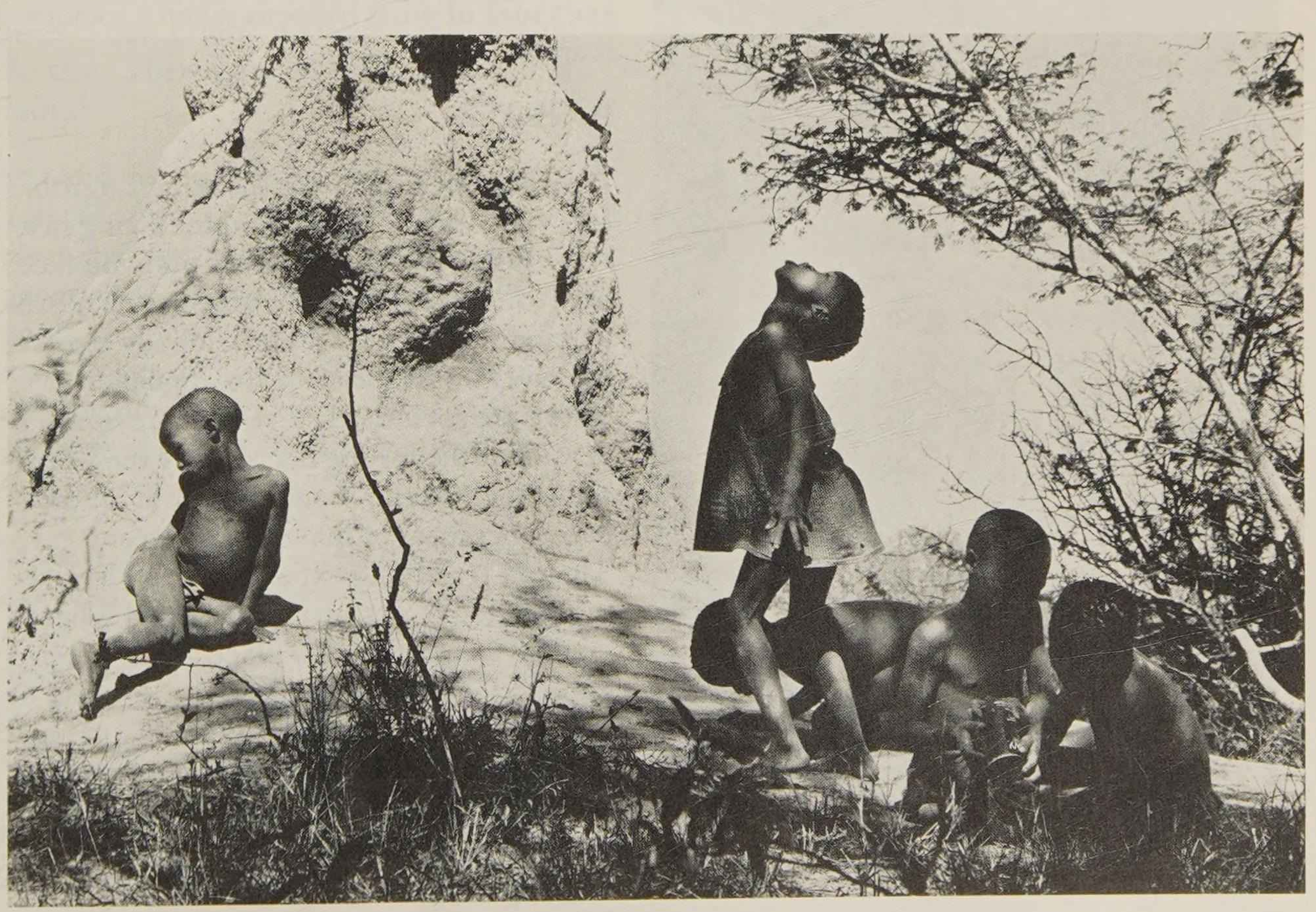
to him, "There are tribes of Indians living out there, and you really shouldn't do unpleasant things to them," his tendency is not to say, "Oh, yes, they have qualitites which we badly need." His tendency is to say, "For God's sake, stop bothering me with these Indians." Now, how can we solve that problem? There, our strategy has been to try to make it embarrassing for people who are doing wrong, but at the same time to come with some suggestions as to how they can do it right. This technique of embarrassment only works in some cases. You can try for all you're worth with the South African government, and they're not going to change their policy. That's why Cultural Survival doesn't try to operate there. Nor in the Soviet Union—they have their own policy toward their cultural minorities, and they'll stick to it no matter what we say.

P. Would you say, then, that your approach works in areas where people are more receptive to the positive side of your argument, or in places where you have more actual leverage against destructive policies?

D. M.-L. We don't have a lot of political leverage. Or rather, such leverage as we do have is not applied through force or power. We are not a large organization, we don't have a tremendous amount of clout. So what we do is try to influence influential people. If you can persuade the World Bank to accept some of your arguments, then the World Bank's leverage comes into play. There are other ways of applying leverage, of course. If a country is taking a lot of political pressure because of this issue, they may want to see this pressure damped down. It is our job to see that it is not damped down.

P. I'd like to return to the question of what it is about these cultures that is worth saving. Most people will never be in touch with these cultures; most people are involved in the culture of developed nations. Why should they care?

!Kung San children at play



Ethiopian refugees

D. M.-L. In the same way that people should care about the political systems in other places. Why should we care if people elsewhere live under dictatorships or are tortured to death? The argument for caring what happens to these people is exactly the same as the argument for caring what happens to people in Omaha. The other argument, about civilization, I reject out of hand. What is civilization? If you look at it from the ethnic or tribal peoples' point of view, they obviously care a great deal about whether their way of life survives—as indeed we do about our own. It is a mistake to assume that we want our way of life to survive because it is so civilized—we may want to believe that, but in fact we'd want our way of life to survive whether it was civilized or not. There are lots of people around the world who have seats in the United Nations who are considered uncivilized by the powers that be—but surely that's not a sufficient reason for eradicating their way of life. Most of us have absolutely no idea of what eradication means. We talk about it in much the same way as people playing war games in the Pentagon talk about World War III. They have no idea of what it would actually mean if it happened. But I have a very keen idea of what happens when a society is annihilated.

P. Tell me.

D. M.-L. You and I are speaking English. It is very hard for us to imagine living in a world which is so precarious that you face the real possibility of waking up one morning and finding that there's nobody else in the world who speaks your language. There are societies where a severe epidemic, or the wrong decision by the Minister of the Interior, could wipe out all the other members of the language group. That's a terrifying experience. It's terrifying also to be cast adrift in a world where you have absolutely no place at all. It's bad enough for people who have no jobs and no homes, as we find in our own society, but imagine having no society either. Imagine the situation of an individual who finds that not only he or she, but everybody else like them, is living in a world where there

is literally no place for them to stay. They're not Gypsies by choice; they've been made into Gypsies by this steamroller we call development. There's no place they can stop. There's nobody they can talk to. There are no skills which they can market, in a market which they don't understand. And they are forbidden to make their living in the way to which they've been accustomed.

This cutting of the lifeline of whole societies is a terrible thing to do. The question is often posed, "What's the advantage of allowing these people to exist?" I feel that's the wrong question. Because if you take that question seriously, you might say, as some anthropologists do, that these people have a greater understanding of ecological balance than we do, they have an understanding of the way to make societies work, and the sorts of conciliations and accomodations that you have to make, that is better than our own. There are half-a-dozen reasons for allowing them to exist. But suppose you met a group of people, and you couldn't find any extenuating reasons for allowing them to exist. Does that mean that you can just wipe them out? It's the wrong question. It's not up to us to decide whether other people should exist. This is to play God with other people's lives. I don't think we have a moral right to do that. The argument is fundamentally moral.

P. And yet one can see the pragmatic aspects of the argument also. It does seem clear that just as a gene pool constantly needs to be renewed, there are culture pools as well, and if we restrict our contacts to our own culture and ignore or destroy other cultures, a sort of incestuous collapse of the possibilities of development will take place.

D. M.-L. There are all sorts of things we can learn from traditional societies. In Cultural Survival, we are involved in trying to develop a series of television programs on exactly this theme. The series is called *Millennium.* It's about what we can learn from a close observation of traditional societies, and how we can synthesize their experience with our knowledge, in order to somehow do better in the twenty-first century.

P. So you do believe that developed cultures are malleable enough to absorb lessons from traditional cultures?

D. M.-L. Cultures are not determined in this sense. We are not on a railroad track so that we can't move in one direction or another. Because cultures can move with so much flexibility, there's a great deal of pushing and pulling.

P. That brings up the question of trying to understand why, in the past, when a native society came into contact with a developed society, often a magnetic attraction toward the developed society seemed to take place. Natives would flock to the cities, adopt Western dress, and abandon their own way of living. It seems that there's resistance to this now, but it was an apparent movement for a while. Why is this?

D. M.-L. I'm not sure that this is true. Africa is a marvelous area for studying this. People do go to the cities there; they go to get jobs, like anybody else. The trauma of what happens, and how the traditional way of life is undermined by the very fact that people are *forced* to go to the cities, has been beautifully documented by several West African novelists. It's not by any means that as soon as the West arrives, everybody wants it, and they abandon their own ways. What does happen is that people the world over tend to be pragmatic (but I'm not sure that's the right term). If you live by hunting and gathering, you're likely to appreciate the advantages of a rifle over a bow and arrow. Call that pragmatic, if you like. People tend to appreciate technological advances. It's not as if these cultures are so mystical that they don't want these advances. Give them a steel knife and they'll use it. What they don't understand is what goes with it. If you get used to hunting with guns, then you've got to be able to acquire guns, either by being able to manufacture them or by acquiring money in order to buy them. You get sucked into a cash economy. A cash economy is something with which

you are not equipped to deal. Apart from everything else, you must have some means of getting cash. One of the oldest tricks in the colonialist book, of course, was to force people into a cash economy. That was the best way of undermining their traditional way of life. People who didn't want to come into a cash economy, during colonial times, were taxed. By taxing them in cash, you force them to go and sell their labor at bargain rates. So essentially you've coerced them into forced labor, building roads or whatever at ten cents a day, so they can pay their taxes,

There's a great ambivalence on the part of traditional societies. They want many of the things that are offered by developed civilization. I'd be the last person to make the argument that these societies prefer, in some very romantic sense, to keep roaming the jungle or the plains. If you go to societies which are really at the frontier, where they feel themselves threatened, they'll probably say that they want to be left alone. And that I think is quite natural. But if you go to societies which have already established some sort of contact with the Western world, you find that they are anxious to adopt what they see as the practical advantages. But they don't particularly want the social upheaval that goes with it. In our own society, we see the same sort of ambivalence. We like to live in big cities, but we don't like the hassle it entails. We like excitement, but we would also like to be safe in the streets.

P. The preponderance of your board members are anthropologists. This seems to indicate a change during the last decade or two in the role of the anthropologist, from scientific observer to advocate.

D. M.-L. There's certainly a great interest within the anthropological profession in getting involved in this sort of way. There is a sense in which I feel some responsibility to the peoples among whom I've worked. I did my own field work among the Shevante Indians of Brazil. I've gone back to visit them, I try to do what I can for them, I would like to see them prosper. If you feel you have some sort of expertise which can be used to assist them, I personally think that it's a moral responsibility to put it at their disposal. That's why I founded Cultural Survival.

A lot of anthropologists feel this way. Many of them—if I may speak for my colleagues—would like to do something like this, but they don't know quite what to do. It's all very well to start off with a great moral impetus, and to say, "Here are people who have been wronged. We've lived amongst them, we can see the wrongs from which they suffer, we would like to do something about it." But it's not absolutely clear what one can do, or how best to set about doing it. There are quite a few complicated issues that we've had to sort out by the seat of our pants. There are no models for this sort of action.

P. Frankly, I'm surprised that not all anthropologists are involved. What would cause an anthropologist to resist this sort of call?

D. M.-L. Partly diffidence. This is one of the greatest barriers we faced when we first started Cultural Survival. People said, "That's a good idea, but nobody's going to pay any attention." And therefore the question arises of whether one should devote one's time to a lost cause. And partly it's traditionalism in the profession. They might say that it's fine for *me* to do this at Cultural Survival, I have tenure at Harvard, but it's not a wise strategy for a young anthropologist who wants to get tenure at a good university. That's probably not the way to make it in the profession. Also, there is tremendous reluctance to engage in "applied" anthropology, because it had been so oversold during the post-War years. Many anthropologists feel that they have been badly burned by applied anthropology as it was practiced at that time. Anthropologists came racing out of World War II with a sort of "we-can-do-it" hubris—take us to it, and we'll persuade the natives to have innoculations and build themselves sanitary privys—it was a little bit of "the best and the brightest" type of attitude. They soon discovered that to work on behalf of other people is unbelievably difficult and very messy. Many of

Aborigine calls relatives to ceremonial cycle

these projects became object-lessons in mistaken ideas.

P. Why is it so difficult to work well with other cultures?

D. M.-L. In the first place, you have to understand what other people want. They may not want what it seems that they ought to want. So you must try to understand the parameters of the local system. And then you've got to try to understand how that fits into the wider system. There's no use, for example, in going in and helping a village to become self-sufficient by some remarkable agricultural technique, if the traditional structure of the area has been and continues to be a neo-feudal one. The moment the anthropologist goes away, that village has got nowhere to market its products. The bosses who control the area are not going to allow them to make it on their own.

And then, other people have minds of their own. Anthropologists ought to be the first to understand this. Very often, people don't want to do the thing which the local anthropologist thinks is best. This is one of the greatest dilemmas in this sort of work. How do you cope with a situation in which a lumber company comes in and tells a group of people that they will pay them what seems to be untold wealth for the privilege of cutting down trees in their area? The local people are ecstatic. They never thought about that amount of money before. They have visions of transistor radios, bicycles, and maybe more elaborate consumer goods. Then along comes the

anthropologist, who says, "Do you realize what happens when a lumber company comes in? It's not just trees they're going to cut down. They're going to take away your environment." The people living there think that the forest is a limitless resource. So there you have the curious situation where the anthropologist is trying to get the people to do something which they themselves don't want to do.

Take another example. In Brazil recently, a Shevante has been elected to Congress—the first Indian in Brazil ever so elected. As you can imagine, he is an extremely interesting and determined man. But he has one major idea—or at least he used to, up until about a year ago—which I think is quite wrong-headed. He discovered, when he was making his tortuous way up through Brazilian society and learning the ways of the outsiders, that Brazilian farmers occasionally obtained money by getting loans from the bank. So he wondered, "Why can't we get loans from the bank?" "Well," he was told, "These farmers get loans by mortgaging their land." "Why can't we Indians mortgage our land?" he asked. He was told, "You can't, because you don't own it. It's held in trust for you by the Indian Agency." So he began to say, "This is discriminatory, this is disgraceful. Indians ought to be able to have private ownership of their lands, so they can mortgage them, get credit, and act like solid citizens." On the face of it, this sounds like a reasonable argument. But anybody who has had experience of seeing what happens to Indian peoples in the length and breadth of the Americas knows that the first, best, and quickest way to destroy their society and their culture is to break up commonly held lands and to insist on everybody owning them privately. Because then what happens? One man goes bankrupt and sells his land, somebody else moves in, and very quickly the community is destroyed. So this is an absolutely suicidal thing to do. In Chile, for example, Pinochet is now breaking up a tribe which has withstood four hundred years of contact precisely by forcing them to divide their land and own it individually.

P. Perhaps this would be the time for you to tell me about some of the specific projects that Cultural Survival has been working on.

D. M.-L. We pride ourselves on being able to react quickly to emergency requests. If a group telephones us—as they sometimes do, now that we are slowly becoming known—and asks us to help them with a problem, we try to respond quickly, either by taking the story to the newspapers, or by making an inquiry, or, as in one case in Papua New Guinea, by sending an anthropologist whom they trust to advise them. This case involved a group of people in an area where there are a number of very sacred shrines. A big lode of copper was discovered under the most sacred shrine in the whole area. What to do? The situation was complicated by the fact that the local people actually wanted the copper to be mined. If they simply didn't want it, then you've got a familiar dilemma: society, the nation, needs the copper; the local people don't want it mined—is there some way in which the nation can get the copper, and the local people can get part of the proceeds, so it's a trade-off? That's the sort of thing we would have pursued. We've often argued for the right of native peoples to get royalties. This ought to be absolutely standard. If the society needs oil or copper or something so badly, then surely to goodness, part of the proceeds can be used to set up the natives in return, and bring them into the process of development. In this area, the people realized that there would be jobs and some sort of economic benefit if this copper was exploited. However, they didn't know what the processes of mining would be, how it would affect the sacred site, and they just could not bring themselves to say, "Okay, dig it up." It's as if one discovered an incalculable deposit of uranium under Saint Peter's Cathedral in Rome. Do you just dynamite the whole thing, and dig it up to improve the Italian standard of living? They were really in a quandary. So they asked for a Canadian anthropologist whom they trusted to represent them. We were able to fly him out there within a couple of weeks to sort it

out. Otherwise it might have taken him a year to get the funds.

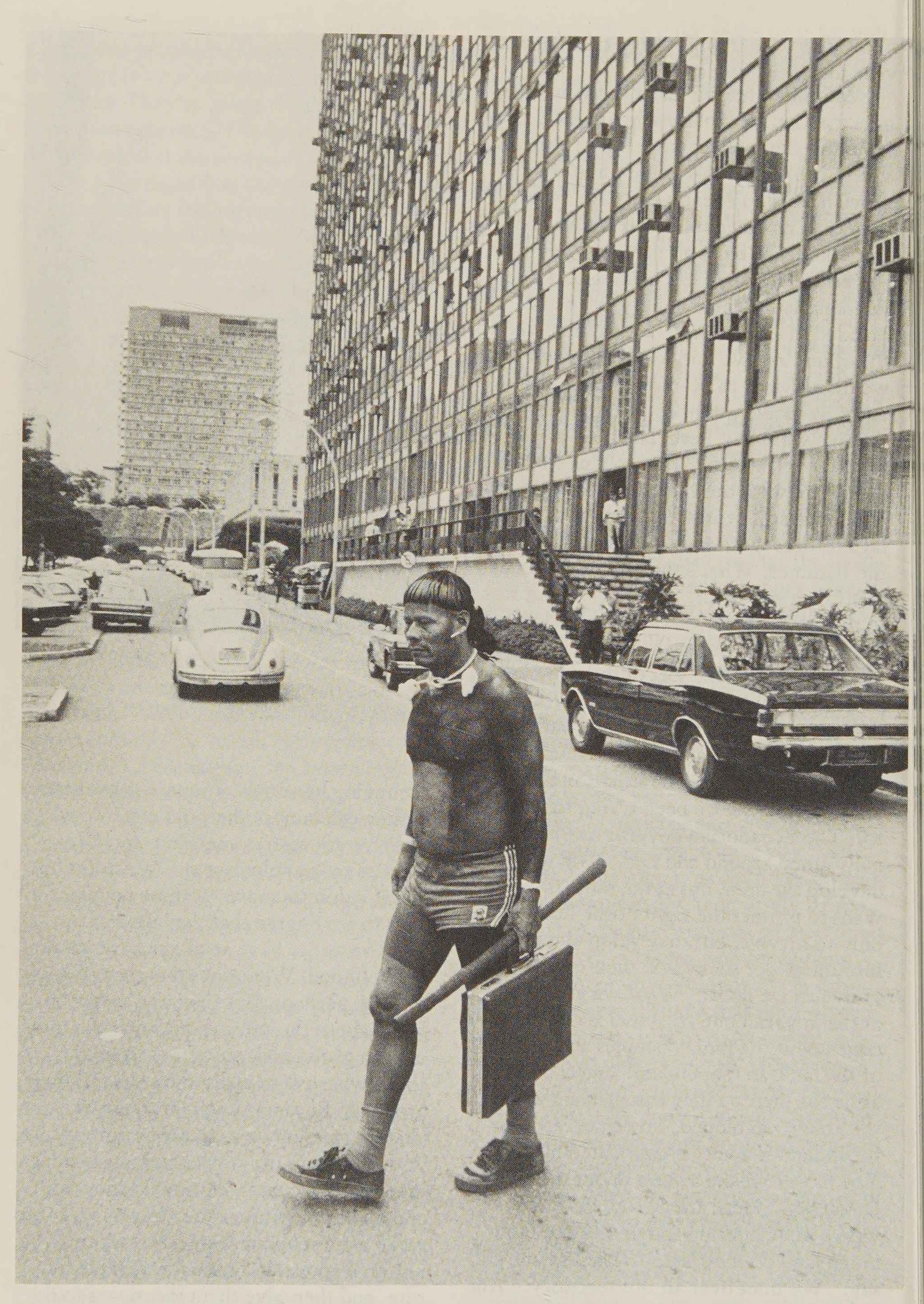
Another amusing instance of an emergency action took place when some people telephoned us collect from Lima, Peru, and said, "We've got this crazy filmmaker down here who's really messing up our society. Can you get him off our backs?" We asked, "What's his name?" They said, "Werner Herzog. He's making this film, *Fitzcarraldo*. He came in here and he demanded that we should do this, that, and the other, and we said we didn't want to, we didn't want to be extras in his movie, our kids should go to school. And he said that we were bad Peruvians, and he called in the army, and the army told us we had to cooperate with this important foreigner. When we still protested, some of the village leaders were arrested and carted off to the slammer. What's the matter with this man? Can you help?" So we took that story to the newspapers, and Herzog backed off. He made his film elsewhere.

Then there's the sort of follow-through project that we get involved in. Probably the most elaborate of those is a land-demarcation project up in the Amazonian regions of Ecuador. The situation there is exactly what we've been trying to work for. The Ecuadorian government has finally come around and said, "We want to develop the area, but at the same time we want to protect the right of the Indians not only to survive, but to develop and to come into the wider society on their own terms. How can we do it?" What we are putting at the government's disposal is our knowledge about the Indian peoples and their use of the land, so that enough land can be set aside for them so they can manage when the area is developed. To demarcate land for Indians is a very complicated business. You have to make a guess about the future. If you say, "Here are a group of people who live by hunting and gathering. How much land do they need?" The Indians will say, "We hunt over all this territory." And if you look at the map, you'll see that it's a huge tract of territory, very inefficiently used by a very small population. The Minister of the Interior is promptly going to say, "We can't have three hundred people

Aboriginal camp at dawn

occupying hundreds of square miles simply so they can hunt in their old conditions. They've got to do something else. We want to move colonists in." We point out that if colonists move in, these people can't hunt to the degree that they used to. They've got to have an alternative means of livelihood. What does that mean? Agriculture, perhaps. But then you've got to know about the soils, about what the Indians can grow, and, more importantly, about where eventually they can sell their products. Because if you put them on poor land, depending on subsistence agriculture, with no possibility of marketing anything, then you are guaranteeing that they will end up in a destitute state. So you've got to make a guess about their insertion into the regional economy in the foreseeable future, and then give them the means to do this properly. That requires a great deal of skill.

P. Have you come up against cases where there is no happy solution, where things



Shevante Indian in Brasilia painted and prepared for war with the bureaucracy

have gone on so far and so badly that the only alternatives are total absorption or extinction?

D. M.-L. Absorption is not a terrible thing, providing it's done at the volition of those who are being absorbed. I'm not one of those anthropologists who feel that it's awful if an ethnic group or a tribal society decides to pass into the wider culture.

P. But certainly there are cases where an ethnic or tribal group is pinched into a very small area, with its back against the wall, and with no real options to choose from.

D. M.-L. The only thing we've found to do in those cases is to argue for an increase in the land allotment. Sometimes Indians have been pinched into a small area of land because other people have invaded territories which are traditionally theirs. The problem is not usually that there is no solution, the problem is finding the will to follow through on the situation. If to do right by the Indians, you have to offend powerful local landowners, it takes a good deal of political courage to do that. Yet it can be done. The Shevante Indians have had their land demarcated. They got rid of the squatters, and they did it themselves. But here again, the role of an advocacy organization comes through very strongly. The Shevante have a reputation for being tough; God knows, having lived with them, I know how tough they are. They're not bellicose, but they don't back down. They're great orators in their language, and not bad in Portuguese, either. So they learned very quickly how to swagger into Brazilia, pound the table, and demand their rights from the head of the Indian Agency. Things got very, very tense in Shevante country, because it's the rice bowl of Central Brazil. There's a lot of money involved, and certain people want the Indians off their land so they can grow rice instead. The Shevante fought back. They kept marching into Brasilia and demanding that their land should be demarcated and guaranteed. And the Brazilian Indian Service would put them off by replying in quite their traditional fashion, "You go home, go in peace, and we'll look into it."

Finally, the Shevante said, "We're not going to put up with this procrastination any longer. You've got to do something. Otherwise, we'll take matters into our own hands." Now, how could they get away with being so truculent towards the authorities? This was a time when the military government was exercising fairly authoritarian rule. The answer is that the Shevante had two pieces of good fortune in their favor. They had sympathetic people in the society at large. The Brazilian political system was just beginning to open up, so these people could be heard. Opposition deputies could speak out. And the Shevante learned very quickly how to manipulate public opinion. When they went in to warn the head of the Indian Service that unless he did something they would take the law in their own hands, they were not simply arrested by the military police, because they went in with television cameras already alerted that there was going to be a confrontation, and accompanied by four or five members of Congress. The Indian Service very wisely didn't want it splashed all over the news that they had been beating up Indians. That example shows very well exactly the role than an advocacy organization can play. The Shevante did it themselves, but they couldn't have done it without the help of the society at large.

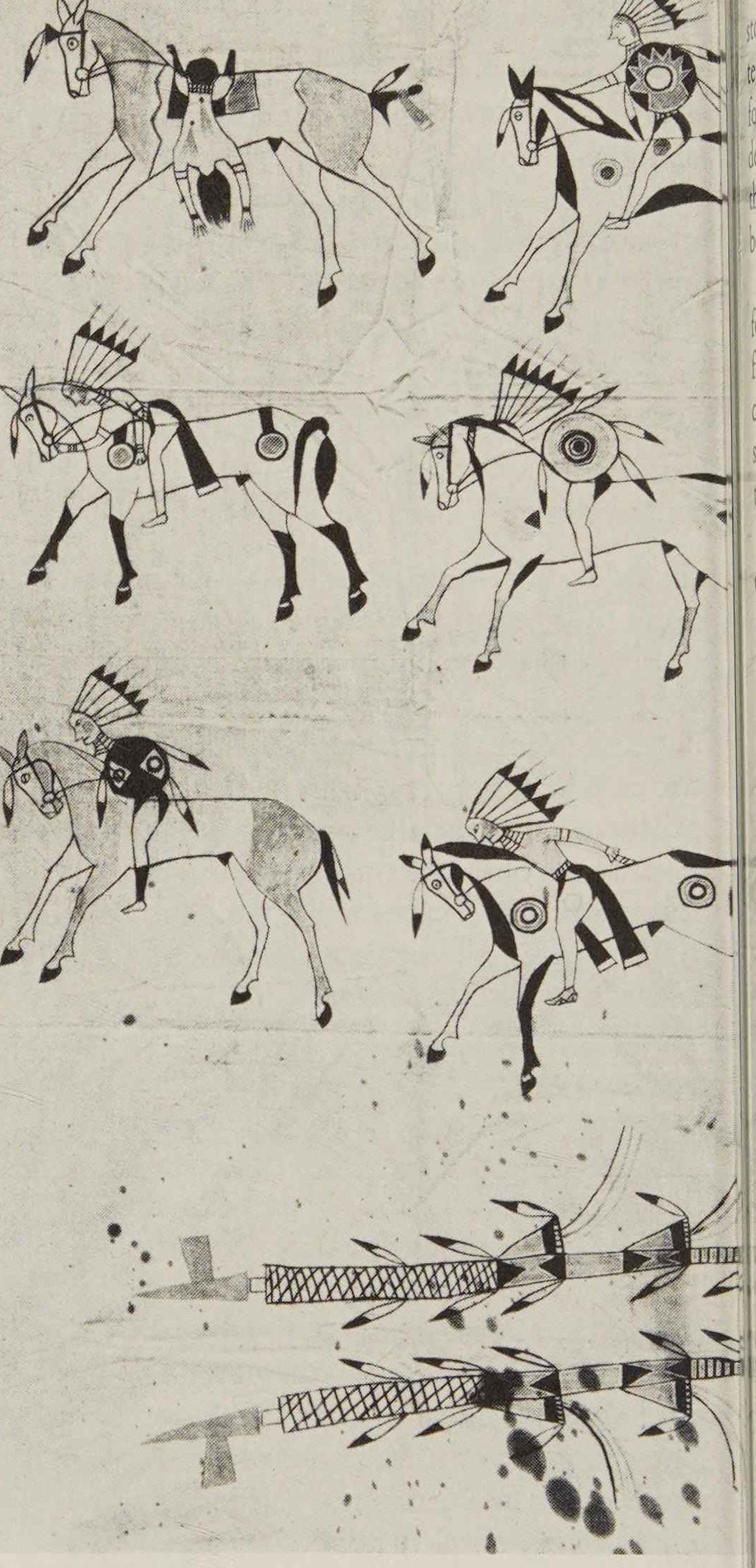
P. Could we end with your assessment of what the future holds for tribal and ethnic groups around the world?

D. M.-L. My guess is that things will improve for them, slightly. But not as dramatically as they would if I were writing the blueprint for the future. Things will improve slightly precisely because of the sort of movement which is being mobilized in a small way by groups such as Cultural Survival. We're one of many. Most important, however, are the efforts of these people themselves.

I think there is a great deal of concern being expressed world-wide about the rights of tribal peoples and underprivileged ethnic groups. This is now on everybody's agenda. This doesn't mean to say that their problems are going to solved. But at least they are being recognized. That's a first step. ■

Stealing Horses

JOSEPH BRUCHAC



Those who have lived closest to the Indian have been amazed at the absence of stealing in Native American communities. A contemporary observer of Native American ways, Richard Erdoes, wrote in his book *The Sun Dance People*, which deals with the Plains Indians and especially the Sioux:

> Among a people without locks, keys, or money, there were no thieves . . . . Without lawyers, contracts, or anything in print, men found it impossible to cheat. Without jails there could be no criminals.

Yet if those observations are true, what about stealing horses? The picture of the nineteenth-century Plains Indian as a "horse thief" is one of the few images of the Native American firmly fixed in popular culture that is basically true. Further, why does theft occupy such a central place in Native American folk stories? There are at least as many instances in the various mythologies of the many Native American nations of culture heroes engaging in acts of theft as there are in the classical mythologies of the Western world.

Part of the answer to those questions can be found in the quotation from Erdoes. Ideas of acquiring more wealth and personal property than one truly needs, so common to contemporary America, so connected with self-image and status, were foreign to the Native American. This is not to say that people weren't concerned with self-image. Quite the contrary, it is hard to imagine people more aware of their honor, their status, their place in the eyes of their peers, than Native Americans, past and present. But the orientation was towards *the people* rather than the individual. A man of great wealth who did not share freely was not respected. Sitting Bull once said to a reporter from the East who asked him why he was looked up to by his people, "Is it not true that in your country people look up to a man because he has much land, owns many horses, and is very rich?" "Yes," the reporter answered. "Well," Sitting Bull said, "my people look up to me because I am so poor."

If someone did something purely for himself—such as stealing another tribal member's personal property—he commit-

ted a double transgression. Not only had he stolen, he had placed his own personal interests above that of *the people.* Punishment for such an offense was usually the most devastating sort of treatment imaginable to the group-oriented Native American—to be exiled or completely ignored.

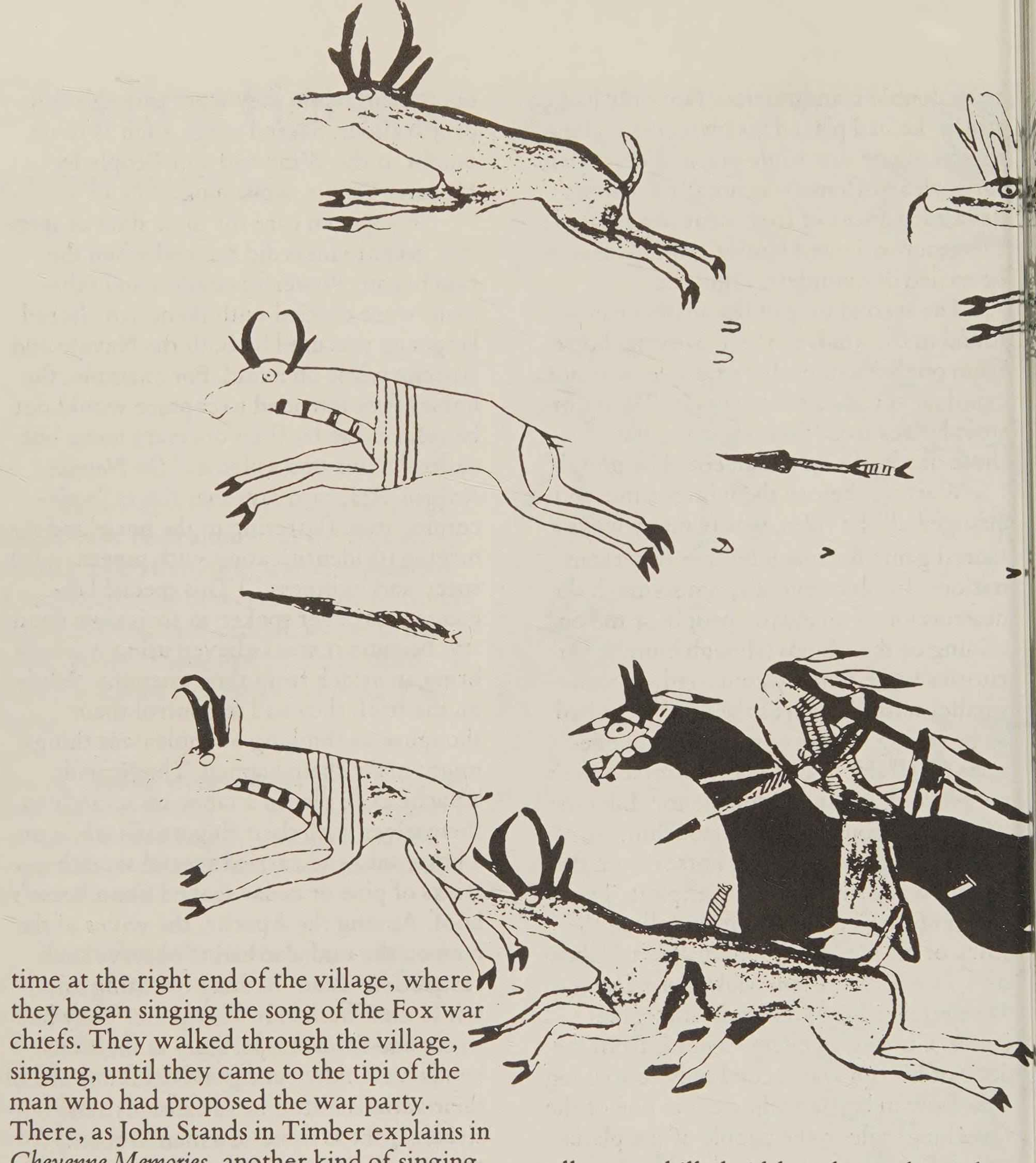
The second part of the answer can be found in the kinds of theft. Stealing horses from one's enemies, for example, was not a criminal act. As Erdoes puts it: "Warriors stole horses from their enemies, but of those deeds of war a man could be proud."

Warfare, before the whites came and changed all the rules, was in many ways a sacred game for many Native American nations. Its objective was not so much the destruction of an enemy people or the obtaining of their lands (though hunting territories were fiercely contested, and the smaller nations such as the Cheyenne had to be strong in war to survive with enemies on all sides) as it was to protect one's people and win individual honor. Like the practice of counting coup (touching an enemy in battle), stealing horses from the enemy was a praiseworthy exploit. Two Leggings, a Crow warrior, in telling the story of his life (as related in Peter Nabokov's *Two Leggings, The Making of a Crow Warrior*) listed the four most important coups. Cutting an enemy's horse from the door of his tipi was second only to striking an enemy in battle. A horse was one of the few things which the people of the plains saw as "private property," and a man's favorite horse, tethered at night by a rope which led through the tipi door to the arm of its owner, was not easy to take. In fact, spiritual help was quite often sought by those who attempted such daring exploits. (A famous medicine man named See The Living Bull gave Two Leggings dreams to guide him on his raids for horses.)

The preparation for a raid to steal horses was usually accompanied by ceremonial practices and even taboos among many Native American tribes. This was especially true among the Athapascan peoples of the Southwest. Apache and Navajo raiders purified themselves for four days in a ceremonial sweat lodge before they went on a raid. Sexual restrictions were placed upon them while they went through their preparations. Sacred songs, such as those taught to the Wind and Sun People by Monster Slayer, were sung.

This special care for their state of spiritual preparedness did not end when the raid began. Powerful amulets and talismans were carried with them. An altered language was used by both the Navajo and Apache while on a raid. For example, the horses they intended to capture would not be referred to by their ordinary name but called "a live one's plume." (In *Navaho Religion*, Reichard says that this is "a circumlocution flattering to the horse and signifying its identification with supernatural speed and lightness.") This special language was never spoken in their own country, because it was believed using it would bring an attack from their enemies. While on the trail, they had to control their thoughts, as thinking of unpleasant things might make them happen. The Jicarilla Apache even placed a taboo on scratching themselves with their fingernails while on a horse raid and carried special scratch sticks of pine or cedar shaped like a horse's hoof. Among the Apache, the wives of the men on the raid also had to observe such restrictions as not bathing or eating salt while their husbands were gone. They had to eat and drink as sparingly as their husbands were now eating and drinking. All of their actions had to be as cautious and circumspect as those of a man in enemy territory.

While their ceremonies for horse stealing may not have been as elaborate as those of the southern Athapascans, the people of the Plains also made a ritual of horse stealing. Little Old Man, a Northern Cheyenne, told of the preparation in 1855 for a raid on the Shoshones by the Fox Society. The society members were told by a crier to gather at a certain tipi wearing their finest clothing and ornaments, as if there might be a dance afterwards. When they gathered, the man who invited them made a short speech about his desire to go on foot (as did most such horse-stealing expeditions) to make a war trip against the Shoshones. That evening those who wished to go on the war party gathered again, this

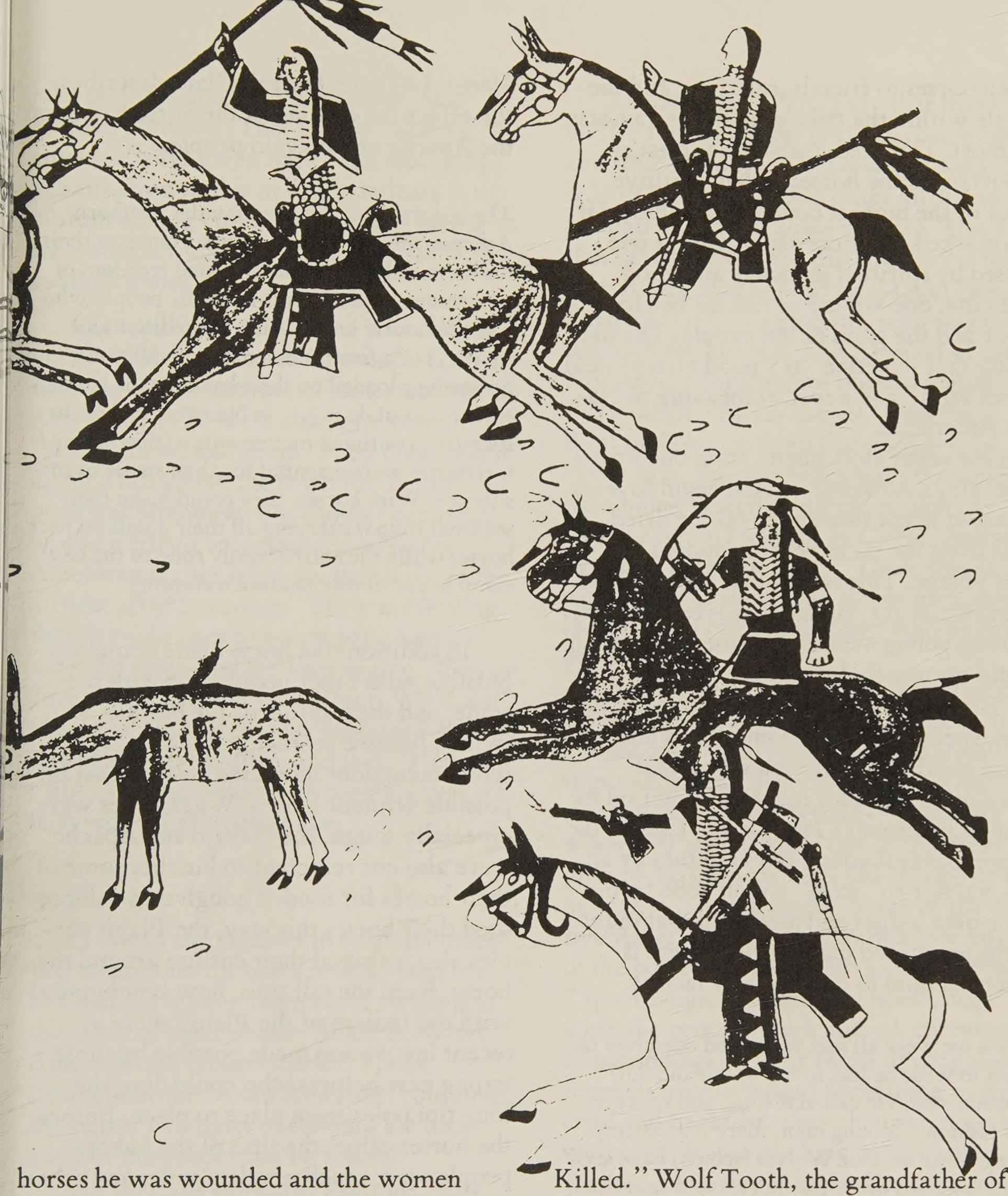


time at the right end of the village, where they began singing the song of the Fox war chiefs. They walked through the village, singing, until they came to the tipi of the man who had proposed the war party. There, as John Stands in Timber explains in *Cheyenne Memories*, another kind of singing began:

They called it singing wolf songs or love songs because they let their sweethearts know they were going out to do some brave things. After they reached the teepee they sang for a long time like that. The young men made beds around the inside and lay on their backs. Then the first one began singing some song about a girl, perhaps mentioning her name. The people all gathered to listen, and when the girl heard this she was glad and proud. After that he did not dare to change his mind or back out of what he had decided to do.

Though it was a sacred game, stealing horses was not for a man who was cowardly or unskilled. Although people might steal horses from the enemy themselves, when they caught someone from another tribe stealing *their* horses, the thief was never treated lightly. Just how grim that risk was can be measured by a story I heard a few years ago. Standing in the shadow of Taos mountain, a Pueblo friend of mine pointed across the fields:

"Down there in those cottonwoods," he said, referring to an incident more than a century ago, "is where they caught that Comanche horse thief. He came many times and took our horses. We knew it was the same man because he had a scar shaped like a half moon on the bottom of his left foot. You could see it in his prints. Finally one night when he was trying to steal



horses he was wounded and the women found him down in those trees. They grabbed him by the arms and legs and pulled him apart."

A similar tale can be found in *Cheyenne Memories*. Not far from the present-day town of Busby, Montana, a party of Cheyenne buffalo hunters heard someone singing in the hills above them. It was a member of a Crow raiding party driving a large herd of captured Cheyenne horses. The buffalo hunters cut across and waited for the Crow raiders on the other side. Charging them at daybreak, they drove them off and killed one of the Crows, a man whose hair was short. That spot is still called by the Cheyennes "The Place Where the Short-Haired Crow Was Killed." Wolf Tooth, the grandfather of Stands in Timber, was in on that and used to sing the song they heard that Crow raider singing.

Horse stealing may have been a game, but it was played for the highest possible stakes. Even that Cheyenne raid against the Shoshones which began with young warriors singing their love songs ended in death for six of the nine who went, when they found themselves surrounded by their enemies. Three escaped only because the Shoshones, who lost three of their own men in the fight, did not know how few Cheyennes were left.

Such risks, though, made horse stealing all the more honorable. Further, it was customary practice to give most of the

stolen horses to friends, relatives, and the people within the tribe who needed a horse the most. The deed itself was at least as important as the horses stolen. Positive proof of the highest courage and ability, it also marked the successful raider as one blessed by spiritual guidance and good medicine, one willing to risk his life for honor and the good of the people. The old saying that someone "is a good man to steal horses with" had a special meaning to Native Americans.

One never stole horses from one's own tribe. Boys, however, would begin to learn the art of horse stealing by taking dried meat from the racks near the lodges in their village. This was not an unorganized or antisocial act, but an approved means of training young men to do something which would eventually benefit the people.

Black Elk, the famed Lakota medicine man, speaks fondly of doing this when he was a child, and there is a wonderful description of such a meat-stealing raid in Frank Linderman's *Plenty-coups, Chief of the Crows*. Several young boys are told by an old warrior to "steal" a wolf robe from their own lodges and meet him that night at the appointed place, where there is plenty of mud to darken their faces:

> When we were all met we seated ourselves to listen to what he had to tell us. He did not mention *meat*. He called it *horses* and spoke in this fashion: "Young men, there is an enemy village near us. Our Wolves (scouts) have seen it and counted many fine horses tied near the lodges. To enter this village and cut a fine horse is to count coup. See! I have here some nice coup-sticks." He held up several peeled sticks to which were tied small breath-feathers of a war eagle.

Plenty-coups is only partially successful in his attempt. He is caught by a strong old woman, who washes his face to see who this disguised marauder is. She then gives him the best piece of meat in the lot, but "I could not say I stole it, because my face was clean."

Something of the importance of being a good horse thief can be best understood by realizing the place horses held within Native American cultures. In *They Sang For Horses*, LaVerne Harrell Clark describes the effect the coming of the horse had upon the Apache and Navajo peoples:

> The acquiring of the horse by the Southern Athapascans was of major importance to their lifeways. It brought mobility and freedom of movement to those semi-nomadic people who had previously known only the tedious foot journeys of a few miles a day with all their possessions loaded on their backs or loaded on slow packs of dogs. . . . In Navajo and Apache societies, continual movements within defined territories were essential for their mode of subsistence. With horses, they could make their seasonal rounds carrying all their goods on pack horses while the entire family rode to the new camp in previously unknown comfort.

In addition, the horse made contact possible with other peoples for wider trade, and the hunting of the buffalo (which became scarcer and scarcer as white incursions increased) was almost impossible without horses. When times were especially tough, the Navajo and Apache were also not reluctant to butcher some of their horses for food. Though they seldom used their horses this way, the Plains peoples also reshaped their culture around the horse. Even the tall tipis, now synonymous with the Indians of the Plains, were a recent innovation made possible by those strong new helpers who could drag the long tipi poles from place to place. Before the horses came, the tipis of the Lakota people were much smaller, and many other nations lived in small lodges or stayed in one place as farmers. The horse changed all that. It came to be that a people with many horses was a strong people. Those who stole horses for their people could hold their heads high.

Horse stealing, of course, is no longer possible today, but some contemporary practices keep a kind of good-natured rivalry alive. One of them is "stealing the drum." Each summer, all across the continent, wherever there are Native American people, the annual round of powwows begins. Drumming groups, who play social dance songs, engage in competitions with each other at such gatherings. Stealing another group's drum is a way to play a

joke on them and to "count coup" in a modern context. (The "stolen" drum is almost always given back. The closest approximation to this in Anglo culture is the custom among college students of trying to steal another school's mascot before a big football game.)

I can still hear a Shawnee friend laughing about the way he and a group of other students at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe were able, one year, to "steal" the school drum. They then took it up on a hill above the town for an impromptu powwow. On another occasion, he and a friend accompanied a Native American writer from another tribe to the airport after a reading. "He was carrying that drum he uses to accompany himself when he sings, and we kept saying, 'You go ahead and check on your flight. We'll just stay here and watch your baggage.' But he just held onto his drum and said, 'That's all right.' He knew that if he took his eyes off it, it would have been gone."

If one of the motives in raiding horses was to provide for one's people, then it is not that big a jump from horse stealing to the types of theft usually found in Native American myths and stories. There, throughout the North American continent, the purest examples of stealing for the good of the people can be found.

An Iroquois story, for example, tells of a group of hunters who encounter two Stone Giants, monsters that eat human beings. One of the Stone Giants has a magic finger that points to whatever one is after. While being pursued, one of the hunters climbs a tree, and when the Stone Giant, directly beneath him, asks the magic finger where his prey is, the finger keeps pointing straight up. While the Stone Giant stands there confused (Stone Giants are, though powerful, notoriously dense —rather like the Bureau of Indian Affairs) the hunter slips down the tree, steals the magic finger, and runs. He then uses that stolen finger to outwit and destroy the monsters and, later, to find game animals for his people.

The Southern Paiute say that there was no fire for the people until Coyote went and stole it from the fire-owners with the help of Crested Jay and other birds and animals. Then everyone had fire. The Tahtlan people of the Pacific Northwest tell how Raven managed to steal Light from the house of Daylight Man, who was keeping it all for himself. The Abenaki of the Northeast people relate the tale (retold in this issue of PARABOLA) of Gluskabe's theft of Tobacco from Grasshopper. In every case, the story ends with the stolen item being shared by all the people. As Raven says in Tristram P. Coffin's version of the "Theft of Light": "These things shall never again belong to one man, nor be locked up in one place. They shall be for all people."

If there is one evil which is greater than all others to Native American people, it is selfishness. When someone owns something which can benefit others and does not share it, it is a great wrong—especially when that something is one of the great gifts of the Creator such as Tobacco or Fire or Light . . . or the Horse. Some of the Native American people who first saw horses in the possession of the Spanish called them "Spirit Dogs." (Before the horse, dogs were the primary pack animal, carrying things in bags on their backs or dragging them on travois poles.) Something so powerful and beautiful, they thought, must be very holy. It was not long before horses worked their way into the Creation myths. Among the Navajo and Apache, there are many versions of how the horse was created for human beings by a culture hero or given to them by their deities, who had their own horses since the beginning of time. Horses, clearly, were meant for all the People.

Though the days of stealing horses may be gone forever, and the once scarce blessings of fire and tobacco are all too easy for most of us to come by now, the stories live on. The lessons they taught are as alive today as they were when the horse first appeared on the Plains several hundred years ago, or when all the world was in cold and darkness. ■

Breaking the Lock

I'll example you with thievery:
The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
Robs the vast sea: the moon's an arrant thief,
And her pale fire she snatches from the sun:
The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves
The moon into salt tears: the earth's a thief,
That feeds and breeds by a composture stol'n
From general excrement: each thing's a thief. . . .[1]

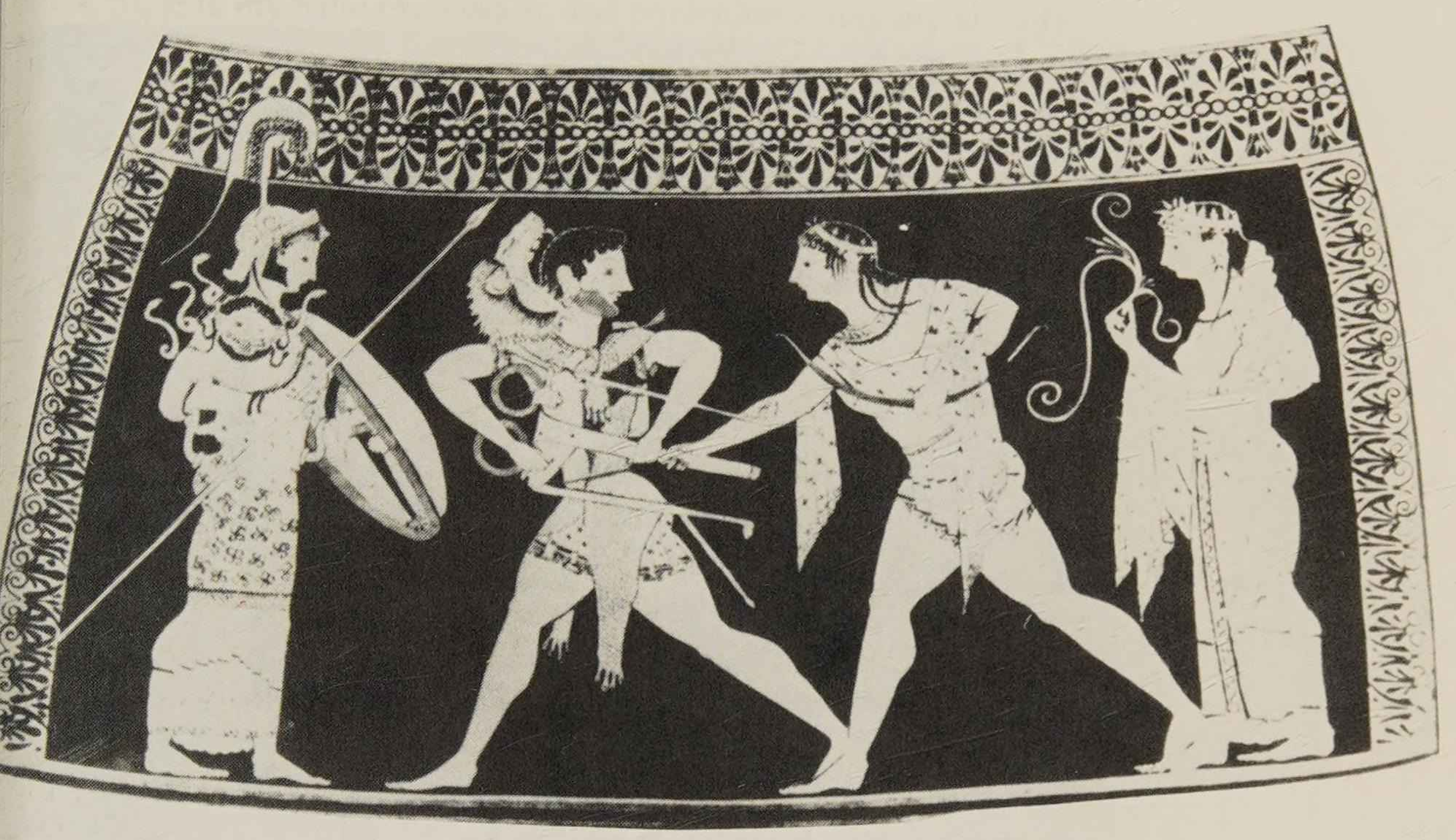
—*William Shakespeare*

Maya's the super swindler.
Trailing the noose of three qualities,
she wanders, whispering
honeyed words.
For Vishnu she's Lakshmi,
for Shiva she's Shakti,
for priests an idol,
for pilgrims a river.
To a monk she's a nun,
to a king she's a queen
in one house a jewel,
in one a shell.
For devotees she's a pious lady,
for Brahma, Mrs. Brahma.
Kabir says, seekers,
listen well:
this is a story
no one can tell.[2]

—*Kabir*

The stork, the cat and the thief,
By moving silently and carefully,
Accomplish what they desire to do;
A Bodhisattva too should always behave in this way.[3]

—*Acharya Shantideva*



[An example of] the negative approach [to] teaching can be obtained from the centuries-old sermon of the Zen Master Wu-tsu on sudden enlightenment. He [said] that it is like learning the art of burglary in the following story: The son of an aging housebreaker decided that it was about time for him to learn the profession to support the family. So he asked his father for lessons. The father approved the proposal and took him along on the next attempt. They broke through a fence, stealthily entered a rich home, and opened a large chest. The father suggested that the son step into the chest and pick out the valuables. Whereupon the son did. As soon as he got in, the father dropped the lid, locked the chest, sneaked out into the courtyard, loudly knocked on the door waking the whole household and quickly retired through the hole in the fence. The excited residents scurried around with their candles and discovered that the thief had gotten away. Meanwhile the son, imprisoned in the chest, was terribly afraid; an idea flashed through his mind. He made a scratching noise like a mouse, at the sound of which the master of the mansion sent the maid to investigate. When the maid unlocked the chest, out jumped the boy, who blew out the candle, pushed the maid aside and ran off with the neighbors on his heels. Passing a well, he lit upon a second thought. He picked up a large stone and dropped it into the well with a loud splash. Hearing the sound the pursuers all gathered around the deep and dark hole, attempting to see the burglar drowning himself. The boy ran on. Safely back at home the youngster blamed the old man for his

misfortune. Replied the father understandingly, "Tell me, son, how did you get away?" Whereupon the son recounted the harrowing experience. And the father finally smiled, "There, son, you have now learnt the art of burglary!"[4]

When the thief is needed, he's taken off the gallows.

— *Yiddish proverb*

Not having enough money to buy rich presents, and at the same time not wishing to return from the Pilgrimage quite empty-handed, I had taken one or two small stones from the Mount of Mercy. Then after the Pilgrimage it had occurred to me to enrich each of these by the addition of a pebble from the courtyard of the Holy Mosque. The idea had come to me when I was sitting on my prayer-mat in the courtyard, surrounded by pebbles, so I had then and there picked out a few of these and taken them back to our lodging. But just before leaving Mecca, as we were gathering together our belongings, I suddenly remembered that although it is perfectly licit to take a stone from Arafat, that is, from outside the Sacred Precinct, it is sacrilege to remove any natural object from within the Precinct itself. At first I did not know what to do; clearly no one could take pleasure in a gift which was the fruit of a violation of the sanctuary; on the other hand, how could I replace the pebbles seeing that after the rite of farewell one was not supposed to turn back? Then it occurred to me that since our lodging was well within the Sacred Precinct, the pebbles could be left there, so I put them down in a corner of the room where I had slept. But before leaving, when I took a last look around to see if I

had left anything behind, my eyes fell on the pebbles and it was as if they had spoken to me, saying: "We are stones, yet even stones are beings, and we were once glorious of our kind, in our hope that on the Day of Judgment we should be found lying among the pebbles of the Holy Mosque. But no, through you, this glory has been taken from us. Be merciful to us, even as you yourself hope for Mercy!" I took them in my hand once more, and notwithstanding my already made farewell—which I pray may not be effaced from the Book of Record—I went back to the Mosque. We were expecting to leave at any moment; there was no time to repeat the farewell. I laid the pebbles on the ground, putting them nearer to the Kaaba than they had been before with the words *Bismi 'Llahi'r-Rahmani'r-Rahim* (in the name of the All-Merciful God) and after making a gesture of reverence with my hand I turned away.[5]

—*Abu Bakr Sirāj ad-Din*

Men do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry.

—*Proverbs 6:30*

The invention
Of weights and measures
Makes robbery easier.
Signing contracts, setting seals,
Makes robbery more sure.
Teaching love and duty
Provides a fitting language
With which to prove that robbery
Is really for the general good.
A poor man must swing
For stealing a belt buckle
But if a rich man steals a whole state
He is acclaimed
As statesman of the year.[6]

—*Chuang Tzu*

The highest law gives a thing to him who can use it.[7]

—*Henry David Thoreau*

Every lock has its key which is fitted to it and opens it. But there are strong thieves who know how to open without keys. They break the lock. So every mystery in the world can be unriddled by the particular kind of meditation fitted to it. But God loves the thief who breaks the lock open: I mean the man who breaks his heart for God.[8]

—*The Maggid of Mezritch*

Questioner: Why do grown-up people steal?

Krishnamurti: Don't you sometimes steal? Haven't you known of a little boy stealing something he wants from another boy? It is exactly the same throughout life, whether we are young or old, only the older people do it more cunningly, with a lot of fine-sounding words; they want wealth, power, position, and they connive, contrive, philosophize to get it. They steal, but it is not called stealing, it is called by some respectable word . . . . There is also stealing at a higher level: the stealing of other people's ideas, the stealing of knowledge. When we are after the "more" in any form, we are obviously stealing.

Why is it that we are always asking, begging, wanting, stealing? Because in ourselves there is nothing; inwardly, psychologically we are like an empty drum. Being empty, we try to fill ourselves, not only by stealing things, but by imitating others. Imitation is a form of stealing: you are nothing but he is somebody, so you are going to get some of his glory by copying him. This corruption runs right through human life, and very few are free of it. So what is important is to find out whether the inward emptiness can ever by filled. As long as the mind is seeking to fill itself, it will always be empty. When the mind is no longer concerned with filling its own emptiness, then only does that emptiness cease to be.[9]

—J. Krishnamurti

This increased sensitivity of morals in consequence of ill-luck has been illustrated by Mark Twain in a delicious little story: *The First Melon I ever Stole.* This melon, as it happened, was unripe. I heard Mark Twain tell the story himself in one of his lectures. After he had given out the title, he stopped and asked himself in a doubtful way: "Was it the first?" This was the whole story.[10]

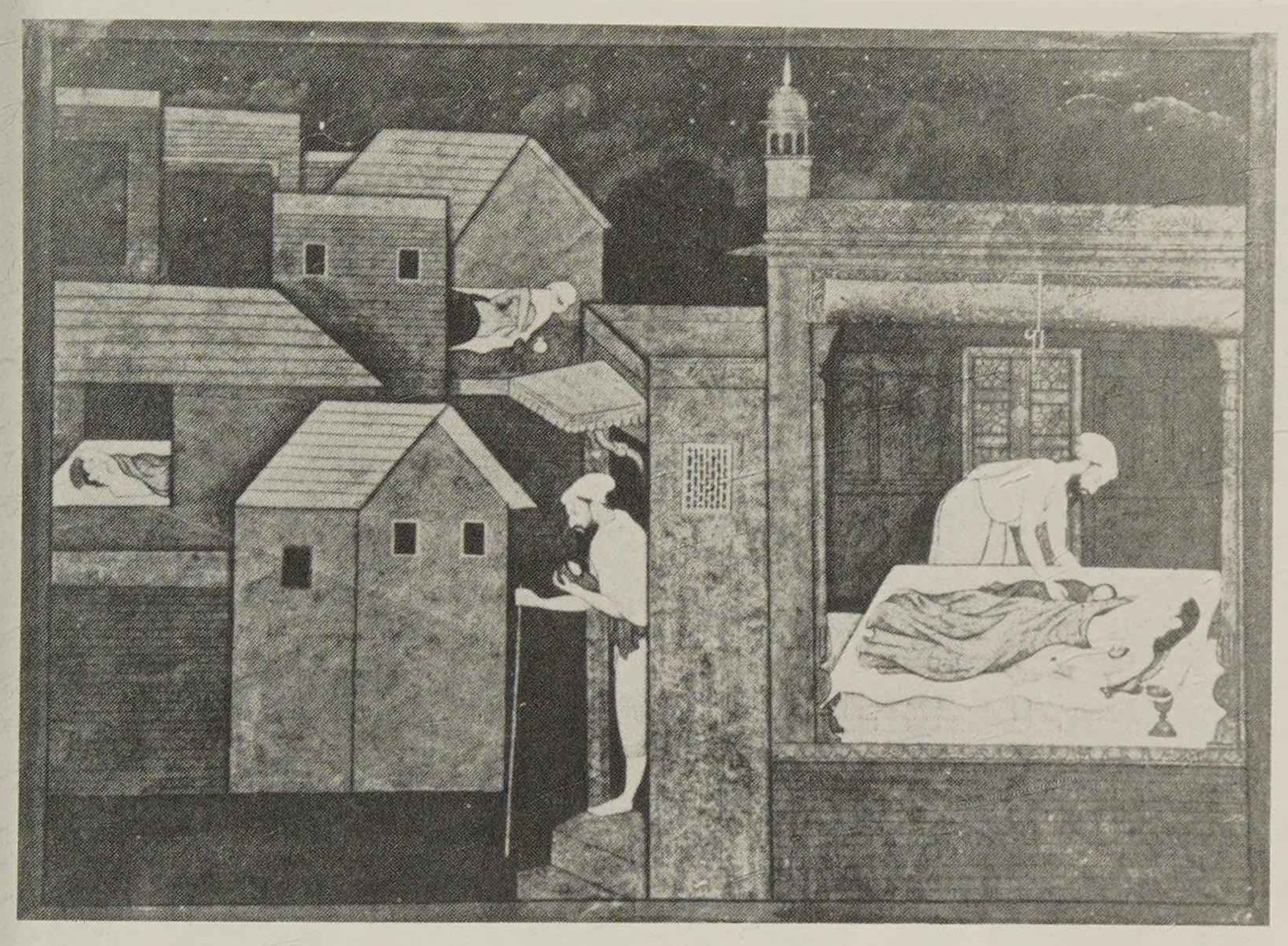
—Sigmund Freud

Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.[11]

—Oscar Wilde

He that first cries out stop Thief, is often he that has stol'n the Treasure.[12]

—William Congreve



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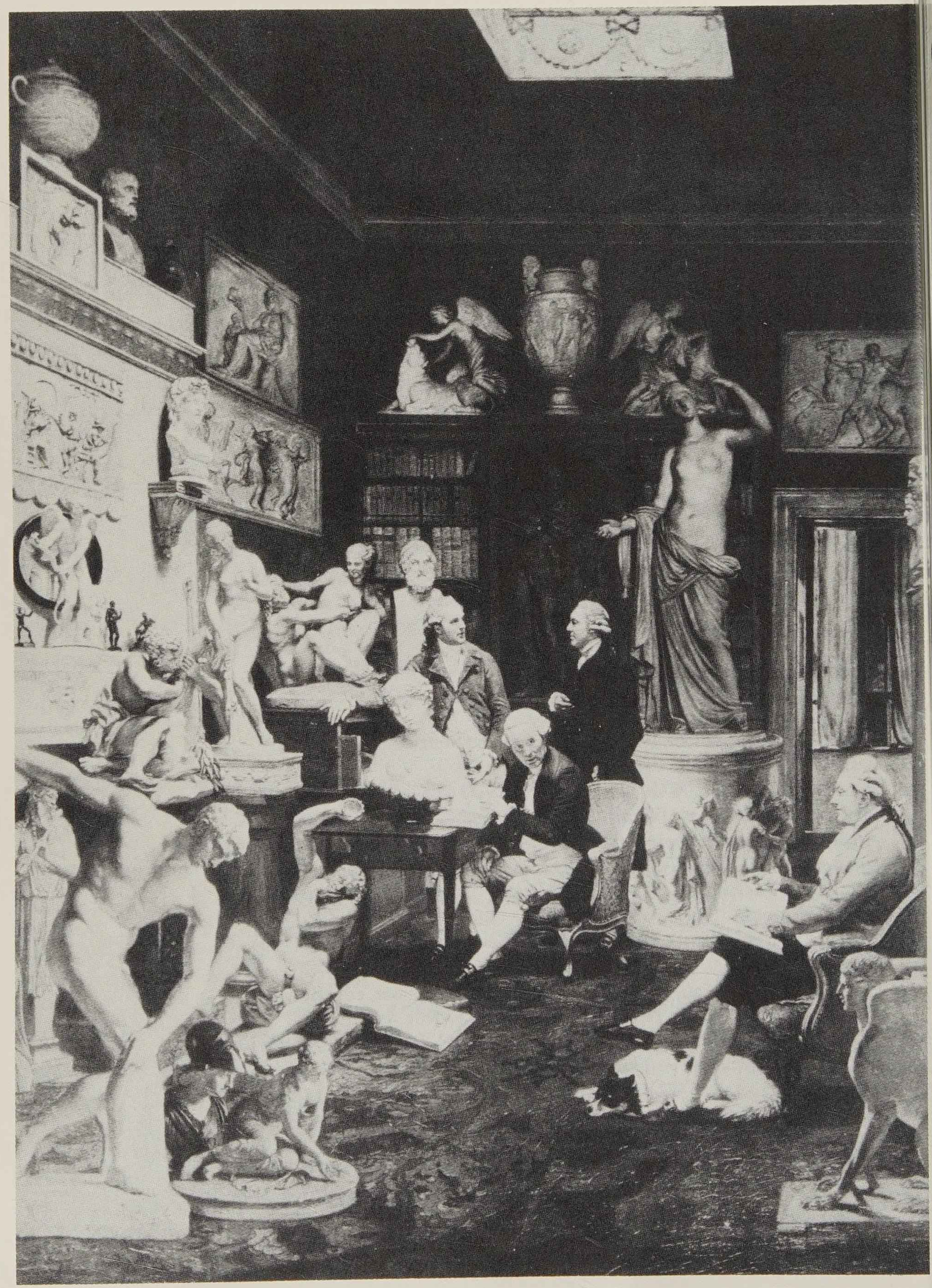


Co-opting Culture

ROBERT W. VENABLES

Recently in the United States and Europe, museums have held stunning exhibitions of European Jewish art and artifacts originally confiscated and collected by the Nazis during World War II. In the vast majority of cases, these objects of Jewish religion and culture could not be returned to their original owners. While many of the collections of Jewish culture seized by the Nazis are now under the care of qualified scholars who are also Jewish, some of these collections are under the ultimate authority of non-Jewish museum personnel who are directly answerable to Russian and Eastern European governments which have, at best, mixed reputations with regard to their view of Jews and Jewish culture.

What are the issues here? Should the objects be placed solely under the control of the actual or at least the spiritual descendants of the people who made and used them? Should non-Jews who are at least partially unsympathetic to Judaism be allowed to label and exhibit these objects? Since the Allies (then including the Russians) counterattacked against the Nazis and recaptured this Jewish art as part of a massive war which cost these Allies tens of millions of lives, are these objects simply war booty? Or perhaps, because these Jewish objects are part of humankind's great common heritage, does it really matter *who* preserves the objects so long as they *are* preserved?

There are no absolute answers to these questions, but, while reading the above, you have no doubt arrived at some personal, tentative judgments. Having done so, grapple with this: on January 27, 1984, Israel canceled an archaeological exhibit planned for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., because of strong Arab protest. The Arabs had protested because 11 of the 320 exhibit pieces were war booty, seized by the Israelis in the 1967 war. In fact, the Israelis in 1967 had seized an entire museum in Jordan: the Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem, established by the Rockefeller family in the 1920s and nationalized by Jordan in 1948. Which brings us right back to the issue of "to the victors belong the spoils." Do the Rockefellers, Jordan, Israel, or a combination of the above own the collection? Aside from who may be "wrong," is anyone "right"?

Art as war booty is at least as old as recorded history. It doesn't start with European colonial expansion or capitalism, and it doesn't seem to end when more recent political systems evolve, whether these political systems are Marxist or based on religious fundamentalism (such as the wide variety of Islamic movements now under way).

Within the international community, there have been many legal efforts to stop the looting of archaeological sites and the sale of stolen art. Whether a nation deals with the issue internally through domestic legislation or externally through agencies

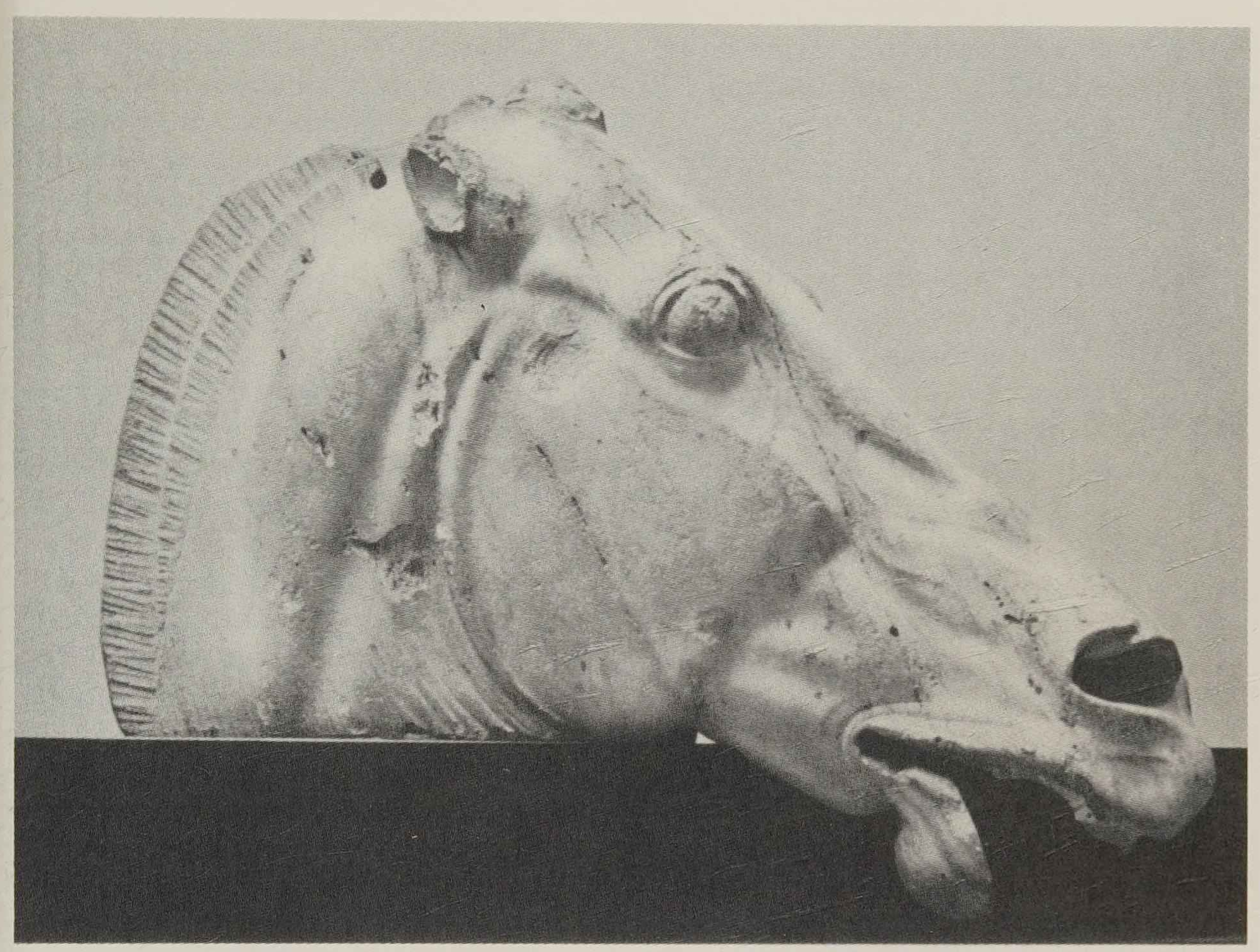
such as UNESCO and various international treaties, the problem with debating the issue around the term "theft" is that it places the question of who has a right to certain art objects and artifacts within narrow confines. These narrow confines limit the issue to whether possession of an art object is legal or illegal according to a law agreed to by *all* parties involved. Such a debate loads the dice, beginning with who can afford the lawyers. Within democracies, such a debate moves into areas such as whether enough voters are from an ethnic group to make it advisable for a legislator to vote one way or another. More significantly, debating the issue of who has the right to art objects solely around the issue of "theft"—was the object legally or illegally acquired—places the law above ethics. The other side of the coin is that the peoples of the world are more likely to agree on a code of laws to govern relations between them than to agree on a code of ethics. Ethics aside, the stakes are incredibly high. Involved are billions of dollars worth of art as well as the reputations and very existence of hundreds of museums and universities.

The director of the British Museum was characterized in 1981 by the English newspaper *The Manchester Guardian* as "the man who takes care of everybody else's marbles." This pun refers not only to acquisitive children's game of marbles but to the British Museum's Elgin Marbles, ancient Greek sculptures including a frieze taken from Athens' Parthenon which had been brought to England in 1806 by Lord Elgin. Greece wants them back, to take care of its own culture. The pun thus also allows us to encapsulate another important point: when a Greek or a Zuni Indian from the American Southwest demands the return of art objects, the issue usually includes more than whether a specific object was stolen and is illegally possessed by a museum. To these people, art theft includes the taking of part of a nation's spirit, a segment of national identity, by what had been and may yet be a more powerful nation. The question for these people is, who indeed is keeping my culture, who are these people who claim to be the custodians of *my* past. This is the essence of repatriation to people whose national art, or some significant part of it, is presently in some foreigner's museum. Repatriation is a demand to redress the "theft" of a heritage. Legal ownership proved by a transfer of papers is to these people only one consideration, and not necessarily the most important consideration. But the dilemma of Greeks, of Zunis, or of any people demanding their art back is also a manifestation of their sense of loss and of insecurity: by making their claims of repatriation on grounds other than whether or not an object was stolen, they are sometimes tacitly admitting that they are not yet fully in control of their own destiny and heritage and that somehow they need the art in order to insure their survival as a people with a strong identity.

Unfortunately, no culture can perpetuate tradition simply by getting things back. A national identity, a sense of tradition, must be living and ongoing from one generation to the next. There is no guarantee that the return of art from a culture's past will help perpetuate the future. The return of great works of art to a people not presently matching that past's artistic and/or political accomplishments may inspire new efforts to greatness or it may, by comparison, lead to a subtle depression of esthetic spirit. Repatriation also has political implications. If demands for repatriation are met and the objects in question are returned, it means political points for the nation—or for the individual leaders—that successfully pressed the repatriation. If repatriation is declined, political points are scored by the object's present owner, particularly in how the refusal is couched, in diplomatic or demeaning tones.

There is yet another complicating factor: to whom does a museum return an object, should the decision be made to do so? In America, for example, if a sacred medicine bundle once used by the Sioux contains something they seized in battle from their Crow Indian enemies, is the whole medicine bundle to be returned to the Sioux or is part of it also sent back to the Crows?

There is, finally, an extremely compli-

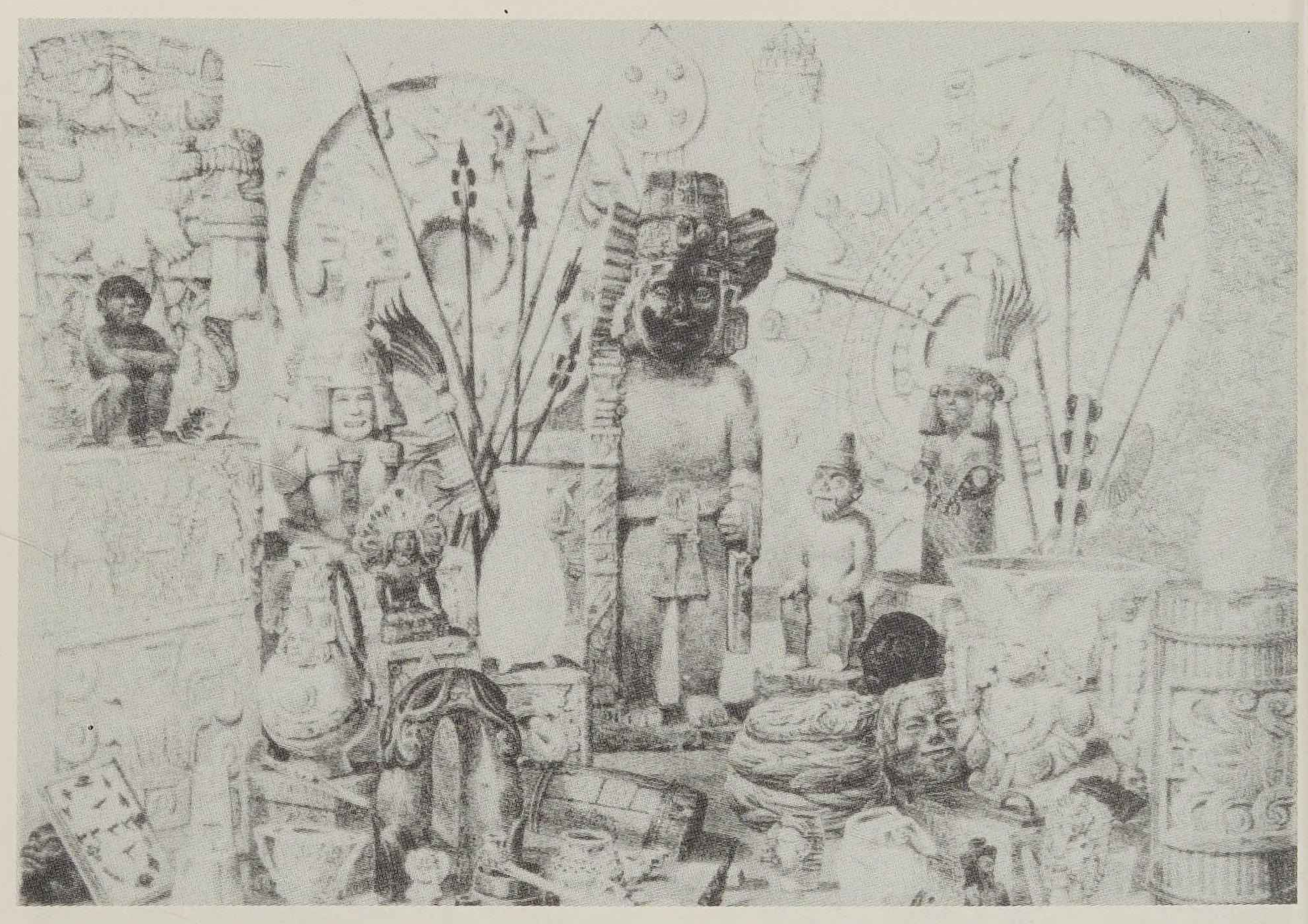


Elgin Marble from the Parthenon

cated issue: can anyone legally possess the remains of the dead? Archaeologists throughout the world frequently find human remains, from Egyptian mummies to the remains of simple peasants. These human remains reveal significant aspects of the history of a people such as their diet, diseases, and religious ideas. But what of the archaeological staffs in museums who are so used to having human remains around their laboratories that skulls are kept as office decorations? This is an example of an important point which encompasses more than just the issue of human remains: much of the criticism museums are receiving is well-deserved.

Museums have not been and are not the careful preservationists they claim to be, nor do they exhibit materials with the sensitivity and insight they should. Museum collections are frequently so vast that objects deteriorate because they lie ignored for decades. Ancient Greek art and other art that has long been recognized as esthetically valuable in Europe and the United States have fared better than the arts of Africa, the South Pacific, or the Americas, but even in these circumstances storage is often a travesty. Within the United States, the public would be appalled to see how thousands of pieces of American Indian art have deteriorated unnecessarily while in the supposed protection of the nation's ethnographic museums. Within the past decade, great strides have been taken by these museums to reverse this trend, but, to say the least, the effort is still sadly lacking. Furthermore, the exhibits mounted by these museums still too often reflect an ethnocentric bias.

One of the major arguments in favor of museum collections involving art from war-torn areas (such as Greece in 1806, when the Elgin Marbles were taken) or from depressed peoples (such as American Indians on their reservations) is that if it weren't for the entrepreneurs who—in a variety of ways—"rescued" the art, much



A British collection of Mexican antiquities

or all of the art would have been destroyed, or it would have deteriorated because the people involved were, supposedly, not taking proper care of the objects. Since the strife or depression of such a people (such as the American Indians) was in no small part caused by the very society that carted away the art, such an argument makes sense only in ethnocentric retrospect. But let us accept that some art which may otherwise have been lost has in fact been preserved by museums. No one would want the spectacular sculptures of ancient Greece now in the British Museum to have been destroyed, for example. Perhaps if they had remained on the Acropolis above Athens, they would have been destroyed by war; most probably they would have been ruined by the incredible air pollution that has already crumbled much of the art still there. In fact, plaster casts of ancient sculptures taken one hundred years ago are frequently all that is left to record the art now deteriorated by the pollution of Athens and Rome. What, then, should our response be to outdoor sculpture crumbling in the air pollution of cities like London and New York? And if seizure of art is excused because art is then better preserved, American Indians have every right to invade the premises of many of the nation's museums to liberate American Indian art from atrocious storage conditions. Of course that would be illegal. Challenging museums on the museums' own terms, those who want their national treasures back claim that they would treat the objects carefully, often in special climate-controlled museums of their own, which would have conservation standards far superior to the storage conditions of museums presently holding the objects.

If you are not by this point thoroughly entangled within the web of issues of theft and the repatriation of art, here is one more factor: some art is not meant to be preserved. Some religious art, such as certain masks and effigy figures among American Indians, for example, is meant to be used and then allowed to deteriorate if continued use brings that about naturally. Such wearing away—or even conscious

exposure to the elements—is part of a belief system which expects an object to return eventually to nature. To interrupt this natural return to the earth is to block the religious freedom of this particular people. Should this art be preserved anyway? Who should make the decision?

Curators of ethnographic collections will claim that preservation of these and other objects is necessary for study, because these objects are part of a scientific collection. But how scientific can such a study be when the objects in a museum no longer are seen in their cultural contexts? How scientific is a collection randomly collected by victorious military officers on the battlefield or stolen by thieves who know the risk will be worth the monetary reward with few questions asked? Some objects are collected scientifically by professional archaeologists. But even this can raise a question such as where should the objects which an archaeologist digs up ultimately be kept: in a faraway museum or as close as possible to the original site? The answers are not easy, if they exist at all.

What are the solutions to the overall problem? Whatever happens in the long run, whether or not certain objects are returned to the peoples who claim them, there are a number of steps which can be accomplished immediately:

—A dialogue—negotiations—should take place with the understanding that the questions have no simple answers and that ultimatums by any party are inappropriate. Careful planning by all sides in preparation for such dialogues will avoid long and costly battles in court and the controversial publicity which is sure to coincide with litigation. (The reader might be amazed to learn, for example, that several American Indian nations have clear evidence that some museums in the United States illegally possess, under definitions of United States and/or local state laws, American Indian objects stolen from their rightful owners. What is all the more incredible is that these museums know, often from evidence in their own archives, that the objects were stolen and yet refuse to discuss the issues.)

—The preservation of existing collections must be immediate. Otherwise, in a century or so very little will be left to discuss.

—Objects must be displayed by museums with sensitivity, up-to-date labels, and accurate catalogue information. Too often, collections of American Indian, South Pacific, and/or African art, for example, are in exhibit cases that were labeled decades ago and do not reflect recent scholarship and the more complete information available.

—Whenever possible, exchange programs of both art objects and personnel should be arranged between museums and the peoples whose art is exhibited. Particularly important are internships and other programs for the most recent generation of individuals interested in some aspect of art, history, or museum work. This will encourage channels of communication and, hopefully, of understanding.

All of the above have already been undertaken by some museums, but other museums invite confrontation by stonewalling significant issues. There will be some specific circumstances which reflect only specific parties' unique involvements. But because the issue is world-wide, there are likely to be more efforts in resolving repatriation through the cooperation of the world's nations and peoples. Finding this common ground is already one of the goals of organizations such as the International Council of Museums.

In both the short and long run, the alternatives to confrontations such as court battles will require patience. All parties to any dispute will need patience to work through what will always be very complicated issues. What is at stake is inspired and inspiring art. It would be ironic if the contestants for its possession matched in their modern confrontations those negative attitudes from the past (such as ethnocentricism and competing imperial goals) which brought the art into museums under controversial circumstances in the first place. Little if anything would have been learned from the art and the history it represents. The art deserves better. ■

Miss Quigley

P.L. TRAVERS

We had nothing to do. And where there is nothing, something inevitably arises. Satan chuckled contentedly as one thought, single and triune as the Trinity, entered our three heads.

And not our heads only. It ran like an elixir through our veins, quickening them with illicit joy—erotic had we but known the word—a serpent coursing along the blood.

"Let us," we said, as with one voice, "go and steal Miss Quigley's apples!"

They were Stripeys, so-called because they were streaked with alternate bands of color, the only fruit of their kind in the neighborhood; ours were merely common cookers.

It was not that we disliked Miss Quigley. She had, for us, an unique distinction, the only person of our acquaintance possessed of a broken heart. This piece of lore had entered our private mythology to the accompanying tinkle of elegant china on various local silver tea-trays, from which we were given sponge fingers and told to "Go and play, children!" Grown-up talk was not for our ears. Therefore, since, like all children, we were natively scandalmongers, we lusted eagerly after it. So, we crept back, whenever we could, to hear how they lived in that other world—how, for instance, Major "Bingo" Battle had a habit of "lifting his elbow" which, mysteriously, was why he was so often seen holding on to tree or fence as he staggered along the road; how Mrs. Scott-Campbell's baby, not being wanted by Mrs. Scott-Campbell—the nods and becks made it clear to us—was not allowed to be born; we thought of that infant with commiseration, sitting forever in its cramped dark place, no exit allowed to it through Mrs. Scott-Campbell's navel; how Mr. Farquhar "wasted his substance," which to us was the same as "wasting away," and yet, to our eyes, grew not thinner but fatter; and how Miss Quigley's broken heart had to do with a fair-haired soldier whose portrait hung on her drawing room wall. Crack! Like a Dresden cup it fell; we could almost hear it shattering against the wall of her bosom.

Oh, no, we liked Miss Quigley and because we liked her it would be an added sauce to the adventure to hurt her by stealing her apples; to take the forbidden path through the bush (Not unless there is somebody with you!) that led to her apple orchard.

We were there, distant though it was, as though it was no distance, the serpent doing its work within us, lifting us, light as birds, into the trees.

We picked with care, choosing the best, thrusting the beautiful striped darlings down between our vests and our chests, scooping them under the elastic of our sailor blouses and bloomers, growing heavier and more lumpish every moment, bulging and shapeless as Christmas stockings.

Then, suddenly, a voice hailed us and there was Miss Quigley, her skirts frothing over the grass, coming towards the slip rails.

"Children, how lovely! Have you come all this way to pay me a visit?" She had a lingering way with words, as though reluctant to let them leave her, or as if she were speaking them in a dream.

We looked at her stonily, caught in the act, pressing our bodies against the branches, one with the bark and bole of the trees, as we waited to be denounced.

But Miss Quigley was smiling. "Won't you come in out of the sun? We could play the musical box."

The musical box! Oh, it was our treasure, pored over rapturously whenever our mother took us to tea on Miss Quigley's "afternoons." Miss Quigley's father, it was said, had long ago brought it from Home—Home being England, where all good things came from—and, unlike common musical boxes, it played not one but three tunes: a *Lullaby* to a child improbably called Brahms, *Barbara Allen*, and *The Blue Danube*. The thought of the musical box was too much for us. We would have that and the apples, too.

Cautiously, we climbed down and followed Miss Quigley to the house like a trio of old arthritic men bearing their knotted bodies along. Arriving, we refused, though reluctantly, her offer of lemonade lest, lifting our hands to take the glass, the apples fell out of our sleeves.

"Well then," said Miss Quigley, girlishly, "we shall have music wherever we go." She waved her hand at a big brown box inlaid with silver and mother-of-pearl. Then she opened the lid and turned the screw.

We held our breaths as the long gilt cylinder began to turn, a golden hedgehog sending out its thin high hedgehog music. The infant Brahms was put to sleep, Barbara Allen—and serve her right—was buried beneath the briar. As we waited for the third tune, one of us said, for we did not know, "Miss Quigley, what is a Danube?"

"Oh!" Miss Quigley clasped her hands to her breast. "Oh, c-h-i-l-d-r-e-n, it is a r-i-v-e-r! Blue as an eye, blue as Heaven, blue, blue," she murmured, dreamily. And as the hedgehog tinkled again, she began to waltz in time to the tune, holding out her arms before her as though she were clasping something, someone—was it the fair, red-coated soldier? Round and round she went with the music, her eyes gazing raptly upwards.

And, caught by her fervor and the swinging, swaying, dipping tune, we, too, began to waltz, arms out, clasping to our bony chests presences hardly apprehended. The future was gathered in our arms, invisible, intangible, prefiguring what would one day be—soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor, poet, candlestick-maker—and the apples fell out of their hiding places and went bouncing across the floor. Alas, we had forgotten the Stripeys!

The music stopped. So did we. Miss Quigley came out of her dream and slowly took in the scene. We waited for the inevitable, the serpent steeling us to face it.

Miss Quigley swiftly left the room. Was she going to look for a horsewhip? No. She was back in a trice with three paper bags. Like marble statues we stood and watched her as on hands and knees, fossicking under chairs and tables, she gathered up all the apples.

"There!" she said, scrambling to her feet. "One for you! And you! And you!" She trust a bag at each of us. "I'm so glad you like my Stripeys. I'm partial to them myself." She swept her hand swiftly across our heads. "So fair, so fair!" she said, fondly. "Goodbye. Give my love to your mother."

And then we were out in the sunny day, tricked of our serpentine intention. With one accord we dumped the Stripeys and left the bags by the slip rails. They had no meaning for us now. We had come for booty and been given a gift. Without our wish, without our connivance, we had been found not guilty. Yet, for all that, not guiltless, either. Caught in a no-place between the two, we felt cheated, stolen from, and empty, the virtue all gone out of us. We went home by the bush path—the air spicy with the mingled scents of blue-

bottle ants and gum trees—nothing in either hand or heart.

"Where have you been?" we were asked.

"Nowhere."

"What have you been doing?"

"Nothing."

"Not playing alone in the bush?"

"No."

If we could not be thieves we could still be liars and face, as such, the consequences. However austere, they would be welcome and bring us their healing power . . .

We never went to Miss Quigley's again. This was a matter for comment.

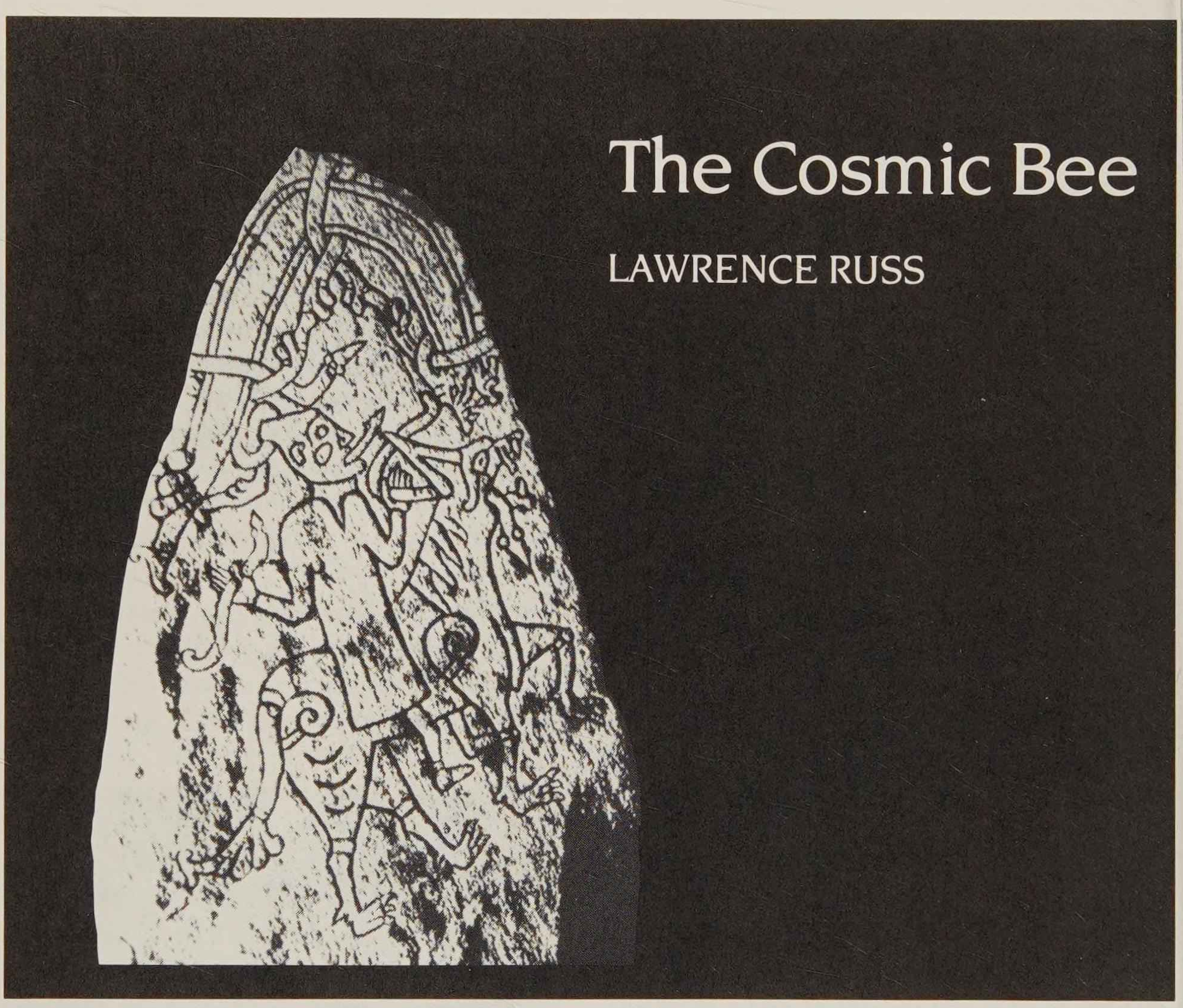
"Why not? You like dear Miss Quigley and her musical box!"

They might have been questioning the Sphinx. For how explain that these assumptions were no longer true, give reasons for what would be thought unreason? To explain is always in vain . . .

But all that was long ago. Now that I can speak my heart, I say to you, all you blond robbers of the world, robbers, indeed, of every color, let you beware Miss Quigley! Everyone steals—a purse, an apple, a piece of knowledge, another's good name, another's love; and time, itself a thief, can be stolen, secreted from the diurnal round for that in us which is not diurnal and which exacts its particular price. But Miss Quigley at any level—she may even be yourself in disguise—will absolve you by tearing up the bill. Thus she betrays you at the outset, defrauds you of rightful retribution, the chance to repair both yourself and the deed; and worst of all worsts, she will trick you out of the reconciliation, flowing and flooding mind and heart, that comes with metanoia.

Theft and consequence are one whole transaction. But Miss Quigley, with her good intentions, will prevent the accomplishment of the process. For she is, herself, a master thief, slipping a hand into Cause's pocket to steal away Effect. Thus she paves for you—oh, so bright and shiny!—that well-known downward path.

But do not indulge her self-indulgence. No robber worth his salt will lightly be party to forgiveness before it is wanted or asked for. "Take what you want," says God. "Take it and pay for it." That payment, in the long run, will shrive you. You do not need Miss Quigley. ■



The Cosmic Bee

LAWRENCE RUSS

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts . . . . I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

—*Isaiah 55:8-9, 45:7*

The contradictory and frightening aspects of the divine have always been an enigma to human beings. In Norse mythology, this enigma is embodied in the figure of Loki, whose acts disrupt all seeming fixity and defy all apparent divisions. He is like a Nordic Sīva, dancing on skulls. The world which he inhabits is one of danger and mystery, where death is many-faced and ever-threatening. Even the gods live in peril, their realm of Asgard surrounded by menacing giants; Asgard itself is a place of deceptive magic, shifting identities, and shadowy alliances. Odin, chief of the gods, frequently goes about in disguise, and practices sorcery to bring about misfortune and death. The thunder god, Thor, who protects Asgard from the frost-giants, consorts with giant maidens. Without question, however, the most puzzling and unsettling figure in Norse mythology is Loki.

Though always named as a god, Loki seems as strongly bound to frost-giants and

demons as to his fellow Aesir. His mother and his mistress are giants. Although divine, he fathers monsters. Time and again, by his folly or scheming, Loki renders Asgard vulnerable to the plotting or assaults of its enemies. At the same time, he obtains for the gods many of their greatest treasures, such as Odin's spear, Gungnir, which never misses its mark; Thor's hammer, Mjollnir, which cannot be shattered; and Freyr's boar, Gullinbursti, who can outrun the swiftest horse, and whose golden bristles make the darkest night as light as day.

Loki's nature is as mixed as his loyalties. He changes shape and character from moment to moment. He is male, yet he not only assumes the shapes of females, but on one occasion gives birth. At times he resembles a shaman, at times a trickster. And while there is little question about Odin's majesty or Thor's strength, Loki's stature and the extent of his powers are more difficult to gauge. In some tales, he seems merely a childish prankster, a mischievous fool at Odin's court. Out for a spin in the goddess Frigg's falcon-coat, Loki can't resist flying into the giant Geirrod's castle to spy on the giant-folk. As Loki perches on the ramparts, Geirrod spots the strange "bird" and orders it seized. Loki is so delighted, though, by the sight of the clumsy henchman clambering up the wall that he tarries too long and is captured.

But in other tales, Loki acts with purposeful malevolence, and appears to have powers and resources rivaling those of any other god. No simple jester could sire children like Loki's: Hel, the demigod who holds sway over Niflheim, the underworld of the dead: Fenrir the Wolf, whose jaws can reach from the earth to the heavens; and the Midgard Serpent, whose coils encircle the globe. Loki's ultimate display of power will come at Ragnarök, the Twilight of the Gods, when he will command an army of Asgard's enemies—including the Wolf, the Serpents, Garm the giant hound, frost-giants and fire-demons, and hordes of dead men—in an apocalyptic assault on the gods' bright realm.

To add to the puzzle, the divine Loki is, quite prominently and unbecomingly, a thief. By subterfuge, he arranges the theft of Idun's golden apples, the source of the gods' immortality. He steals the dwarf Andvari's gold, giving rise to the strife which Wagner made the subject of his Ring trilogy. In a less literal way, Loki steals the life of the peaceful god Balder, and the very existence of Asgard.

Theft implies that the stolen object belongs to a particular being or place, and that the offender has taken the object beyond the bounds within which it rightfully rests. To be a thief, therefore, is to violate proprieties and boundaries recognized by others. That is just what Loki does at every opportunity. He violates the boundaries between the godly and the monstrous when he turns into an aged giantess; between the divine and the bestial when he becomes a horse, a salmon, a flea. He is the most peripatetic of gods, traversing the borders between Asgard and Utgard (the outer realm of the frost-giants) for mischief, larceny, or murder. He violates propriety with foul-mouthed taunts and sexually deviant behavior, and by causing the murder of his brother and sister gods.

Loki's opposite is the sentinel god, Heimdall, whose duty, as guard of the rainbow bridge, Bifröst, is to maintain the boundary between the realms. If Heimdall's nature is defined by his task, Loki's seems similarly defined by his breaking and entering at Ragnarök, slaying Heimdall and thereby opening the reigning order to attack. Loki's transgressions bewilder and disturb even his fellow gods. In "Loka-

senna" ("The Insolence of Loki"), he baits an assembly of gods with bitter gibes, accusing them of promiscuity and perversion, cowardice and dishonesty, feebleness and faithlessness, and even goes so far as to taunt them with the prospect of their doom, which he himself will bring about:

Now we see Jord's son before us,
tough-talking Thor!

But you won't be brave enough to battle the Wolf,
and he'll eat Odin.[1]

Although Loki often seems to be merely a clown or a fiend, in "Lokasenna" he claims that Odin and he are blood-brothers, and that Odin has sworn always to share his good fortune with him. Odin seems, by his silence, to assent; and indeed, in the guise of the giant-king Utgard-Loki, Loki appears as a figure akin to the All-Father. (Loki, under his usual name, appears in the same tale as Utgard-Loki; but students of the myth have felt that whether the giant-king is a remnant from older myths or a disguise of sorts, his deeds should be considered as part of Loki's history.)

In the central part of Utgard-Loki's story, Thor, Loki, and a young couple—Thjalfi ("who could run faster than anyone else") and Röskva—gain entry to a stronghold of giants. There, the king of the land, Utgard-Loki, challenges the male visitors to engage in contests of skill. After Loki loses an eating contest and Thjalfi is embarrassed in successive foot-races, Thor suffers three apparent failures which are still more perplexing and humiliating. He first attempts a feat of drinking. But after three long draughts from a drinking-horn, he has barely lowered the level of the brew. Utgard-Loki ridicules him and urges him to try his hand at a feat the children of the kingdom perform: picking up the king's pet cat. When Thor can raise only one of its paws from the ground, Utgard-Loki is mockingly sympathetic. He invites Thor to display his wrestling prowess, but adds that since his men would consider it beneath their dignity to grapple with such a little fellow, Thor should try wrestling with Utgard-Loki's aged foster-mother, Elli. But the more Thor strains to throw her, the stronger Elli grows. At last she forces him down onto one knee, and Utgard-Loki stops the match. By that time it is late evening, and the giant-king and his court give Thor and his companions a feast, treating them royally for the rest of the night.

The dénouement comes when Utgard-Loki, after escorting his guests out of the stronghold, reveals the truth about their experience in his realm. The travelers have been deceived by his enchantments; Loki's voracious opponent was fire, and Thjalfi's fleet rival was Utgard-Loki's own thought. The king confesses that Thor's powers in truth had proven so great that the giants had been terrified: the bottom of the drinking-horn had been placed in the sea, whose level Thor had lowered visibly; the cat whose paw he'd lifted was the Midgard Serpent, whose length spans the earth; and Elli, the hag whom he had held off for so long, was none other than old age incarnate, who, as the king says, eventually trips up every man who lives long enough to meet her.

Utgard-Loki announces that he will use his spells to make certain that Thor never enters the giants' stronghold again. With that, he vanishes; and when Thor, enraged, whirls around to raze the giants' domain, he sees nothing but "spacious and beautiful plains." The strange peace of that closing phrase and the other details of the story show us a Loki with a dignity and a sense of poetry that one would expect from lordly Odin rather than from a deceitful robber of

dwarves. The tale makes clear that Utgard-Loki shares with Odin a wisdom about the limitations of the finite, which circumscribe even a god like Thor.

In their creativity, too, Loki and Odin resemble one another. Odin, the god of poetry and poets, participated in the creation of the world. But there are intimations in the myths that Loki was a partner with Odin in the world's creation; and his adventures and misadventures, however selfishly begun, frequently result in new creations for Asgard. His thefts, his crossings of boundaries, his taking of things from their "rightful" places, stir up the world of the myths, and cause the new, the unexpected, to germinate. Like a cosmic bee, Loki cross-pollinates the different realms of being. In one tale, he takes the shape of a mare in order to lure away a giant's workhorse. The offspring from that odd seduction is Sleipnir, Odin's eight-legged steed, who can cross between the lands of the living and the dead.

Loki in chains

Nevertheless, Loki's creations often differ drastically from those of his putative blood-brothers. Whereas Odin is the sire of shining gods, Loki is the father of fiends —Fenrir, the Midgard Serpent, and Hel. Loki is not, however, the only divine creator of monsters. In the Book of Job, there is another portrait which recalls the one of Loki in the Norse myths. Jehovah speaks in an exultant way of his own monstrous masterworks, Behemoth and Leviathan. He directs Job's attention to His awesome and glorious creations, to his own unending pollination of the many realms of the universe, and to the inability of finite creatures to understand the works of the Infinite.

Loki forces us, as Jehovah does Job, to feel how the divine transcends our desires and our visions, how the suffering or

Thor fishes for the World Serpent

destruction of the finite is sometimes required by the creative purposes of the Infinite, however cruel it may seem to us. If Utgard-Loki is wise in his knowledge of the finite's limitations, if Loki seems connected with every realm and kind of being, if nothing is so consistently true of Loki the thief as that he cannot allow any "rightful" boundary or separation to remain intact, it is because Loki is the active, "aggressive" agent of the Whole, the catalyst by whose action all that seems finite is dissolved in the Infinite.

As for Loki's thefts and fearsomeness, all creativity and growth require the displacement of old forms to create new combinations, the destruction of old boundaries to create new syntheses. And it is certain that new creations often inspire fear and loathing in those who cling to old structures. In the tales of Loki, as when God addresses Job from out of the whirlwind, we see how the purposes of the Infinite overwhelm the conscious interests of finite creatures. Job's terrible suffering is a necessary prelude to his closer union with the divine. At Ragnarök, almost all of the gods, including Loki, are slain, the "Earth sinks below the sea," and Asgard is incinerated; yet Ragnarök clears the way for the rise of new, more peaceful gods and an even more glorious world:

I see a hall fairer than the sun
thatched with gold; it stands at Gimli.
There shall deserving people dwell
to the end of time and enjoy their
happiness.[2]

For the denizens of Scandinavian mythology, as for Job and for us, the events which bring the greatest gains in wisdom are often those which, when they occur, seem most puzzling, painful, or destructive.

We might say of Loki what the Book of Job says of Leviathan: "When he raiseth himself up, the mighty are afraid; by reasons of breakings they purify themselves . . . he is king over all the children of pride."[3] In "Lokasenna," Loki assails the pride of the "mighty" continually, and frightens the gods with talk of their doom.

The terrible is an integral part of the divine. The punishments which Jehovah metes out to idolators and other transgressors in the Old Testament, however just, are terrible to contemplate. And there are shattering events in our lives which we, as finite beings, never see come to good use. There are tragedies which make us feel as if victimized by some cosmic thief who shakes our security, our sense of justice, our faith. In the face of disaster and suffering, even the uncommonly devout have been compelled at times, by their religious passion itself, to extremes of dejection or anger. Rabbi Levi-Yitzhak of Berditchev, one of the eighteenth-century Hasidic masters, for instance, was moved by the anguish of his people to argue with God, and even to challenge and threaten Him. Dur-

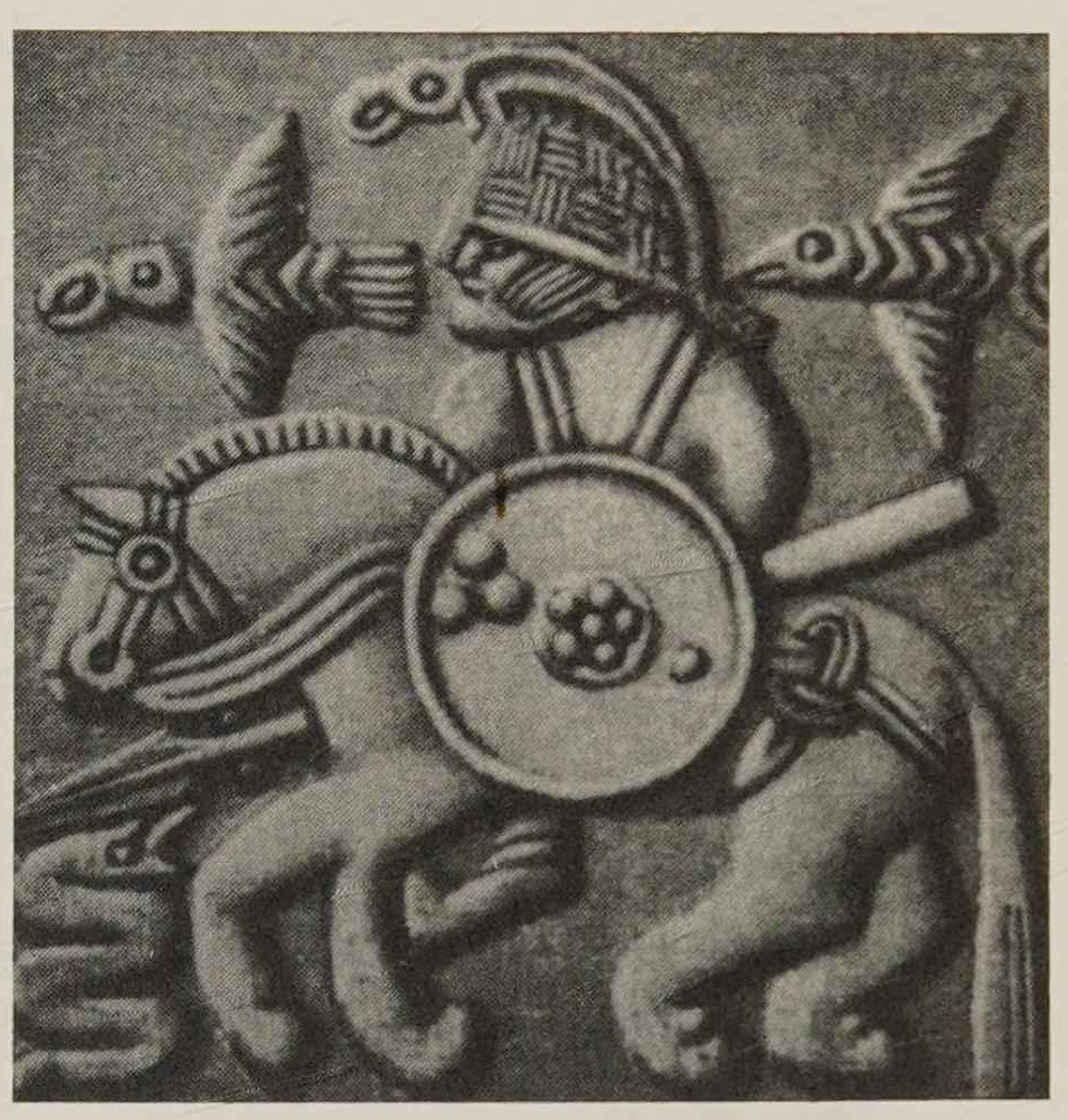
ing the Rosh Hashana services, he is said to have cried out: "If You prefer the enemy, who suffers less than we do, then let the enemy praise Your glory."[4]

Even apart from destruction and apparent evil, the Unbounded can be terrible for a finite creature to bear. In the myths of the ancient Greeks and in the Hebrew scriptures, for instance, we find the belief that no mortal, without special intercession from heaven, can endure the sight of God revealed as He truly is. Such a revelation, received without spiritual preparation and surrender, forcibly dissolves the structures of the finite self in madness or death—as Semele was consumed by the sight of Zeus in his splendor, as Loki brings about the deaths of the imperfect elder gods. The death of the remnants of self, even if it serves as a prelude to illumination, may, like Loki, be frightening and violent. We may think of John Donne's entreaty to the divine

> . . . to breake, blowe, burn and make me
> new . . . .
> Divorce me, untie, or breake that knot againe,
> Take mee to you, imprison mee, for I
> Except you enthrall mee, never shall be free,
> Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.[5]

In the Torah, it is God, not Satan, who commands the services of Death. And as the Old Testament tells us that Death is not a devil, but rather an angel of the Lord, so the Norse myths tell us that Loki is a god, not a demon. It is, after all, both a terrible and wonderful thief who frees Job from his last bonds of pride by first allowing him to be robbed of his happiness, his health, and his peace; who raises Christ only after stealing his friends' loyalty, his spiritual solace, and his earthly life; who brings about the reign of the just only after breaking into the old gods' kingdom and razing it with demons' fire.

Because this guise of the divine is the most dreadful and difficult to accept, we need its symbols, our Lokis, all the more. Without an image of that which stymies our human comprehension, thwarts our finite desires, and steals from us what we cling to desperately—without Loki, Ragnarök, and the Book of Job—the myths and scriptures would fail us, would fail to reach our deepest sufferings and our greatest hopes. Without Loki and his ilk, the myths would lie. ■



Odin with eagle and raven

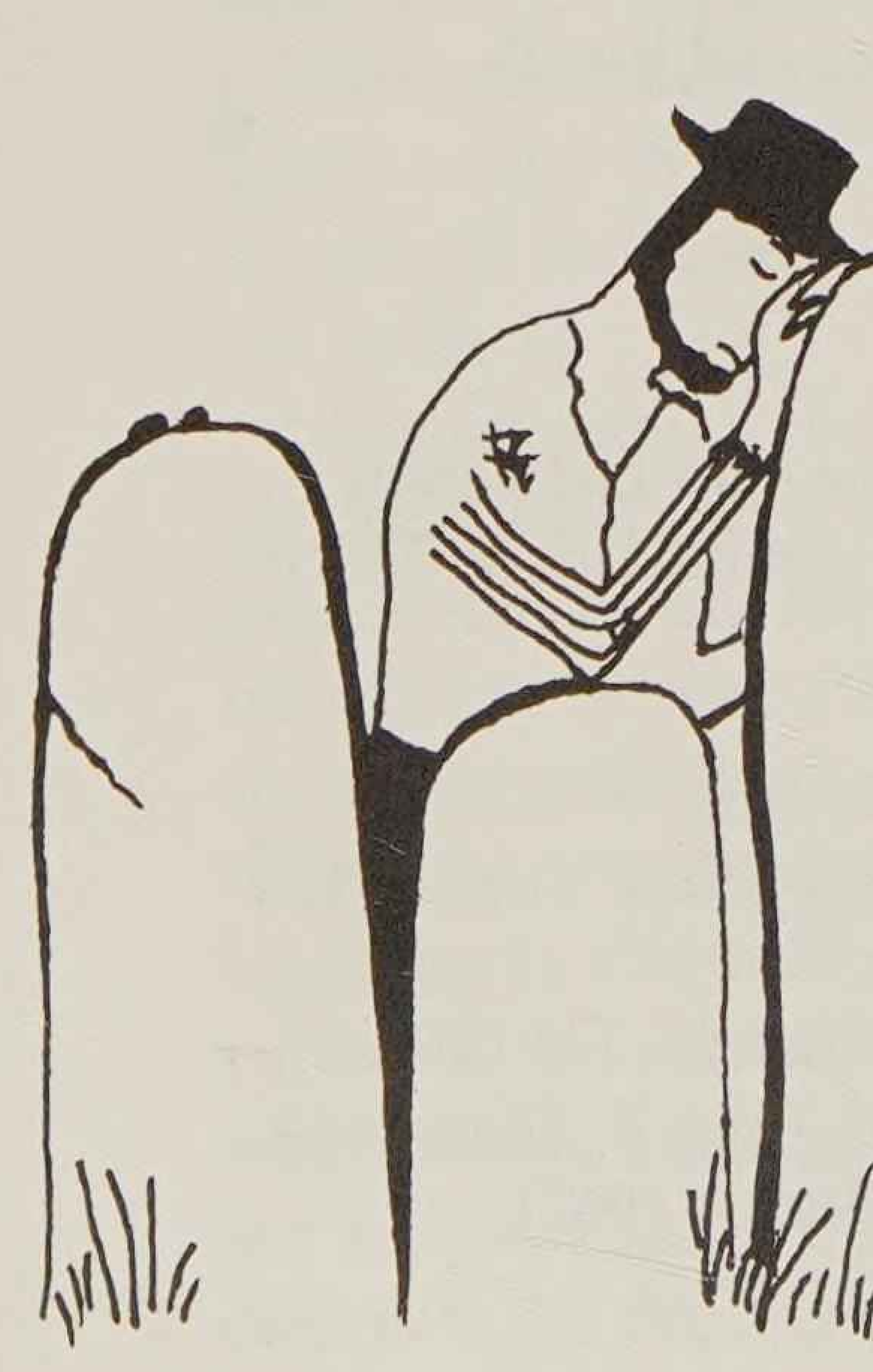
NOTES

1. *Poems of the Vikings: The Elder Edda*, trans. Patricia Terry (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969).
2. Ibid.
3. The Book of Job 41:25, 34
4. Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire* (New York: Random House, 1972).
5. John Donne, "Holy Sonnet," *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (New York: Anchor Books, 1967).

The Seer of Lublin's Shirt/ Hasidic

One day, as the other members of his congregation were leaving the synagogue, the Seer of Lublin noticed Moshe. He was the last to leave. Tripping over his feet, bumping into chairs, he wore a shirt which had one green sleeve, one striped sleeve, and the rest of the shirt was patched together from the remnants of forty years of old pants, coats, shirts, and vests. He looked so bedraggled the Seer of Lublin could not bear it. He said, "Moshe, wait here for me." He went into his room and brought out a shirt. It was made of one piece of material and was blue, entirely blue. Moshe's eyes lit up. The Rabbi put the shirt into Moshe's hands. "For me, Rabbi?" Moshe crowed with happiness. "Yes, Moshe, for you. Wear it in good health and try to be a mensche."

Moshe put the shirt on and was filled with joy. He strutted down the road, happily stroking his shirt, the shirt of his holy Rabbi. Soon the town drunkard, Yoshele, joined him. He noticed Moshe's new shirt. How could he help noticing it? Moshe was stroking it as if it were a newborn chick. "Where did you get the new shirt?" Yoshele asked. "The Seer of Lublin," Moshe answered. "He gave me *his* shirt. Imagine! Me, Moshe, wearing the shirt of my precious Rabbi. And look, look at the shirt." "It's a beautiful shirt," Yoshele agreed. "A beautiful shirt." And he, too, began to stroke Moshe's shirt. After awhile, he said, "Oh, if only I could have a shirt like that." Moshe, who loved to please others, said, "Do you want the shirt?" "Do I want the shirt! Oye, do I want the shirt!" "Then take it," Moshe said, "take it, it's yours."



Yoshele grabbed the shirt and ran. He ran into the town tavern and cried out: "What am I bid for the Seer of Lublin's shirt?" The bartender, who knew at once a good business deal, answered: "A year's supply of free drinks." "Sold!" said Yoshele.

The next day the bartender took the shirt to the market place and called out: "Whatever woman wears the Seer of Lublin's shirt will conceive twins! Whatever man wears the Seer of Lublin's shirt will double his fortune! What am I bid for the Seer of Lublin's shirt?"

Just at that moment the Seer of Lublin entered the market place. At the same moment Moshe also appeared in the market place. They were both drawn in the direction of the noisy crowd and watched in amazement as the Seer of Lublin's shirt passed from hand to hand and was sold for an amount as large as one week's salary! The Rabbi gave Moshe a thunderous look and hurried away. Moshe ran after him, trying to explain, but the Seer of Lublin shook his head saying, "No, Moshe, it's enough, not today."

Moshe was crushed. He had disappointed his holy Rabbi. He didn't know what to do with himself. His feet took him to the town cemetery. Moshe sat down on a grave and cried.

A stranger, passing by the cemetery, heard Moshe's sobs and went and sat down next to him. He waited a time, then he said, "Friend, tell me, what has happened? Was it someone close to you?" Moshe nodded. "Your mother?" Moshe shook his head. "Your father?" Moshe shook his head. "A child?" "It's me," Moshe said. "It's—whenever I try to help others—" And then Moshe told him the story. When he'd finished speaking, the stranger said, "But your story is not over. One can never tell what will come of helping others. Let me now tell you a story . . .

"Once there was a thief in our town. Not an ordinary thief but one with talent. Real talent. Just by looking at you he could tell what you had in your pockets. No one was exempt. He robbed from everyone in the town; yet no one could catch him. Soon he became rich. He married. He bought himself a fine house. He sent his children to school. He joined the synagogue. His life was wonderful, so he stopped being a thief. But then, with no money coming in, he became poor again. So he went to the people in the synagogue and asked for help. They laughed at him. They said, 'What? You steal from us, and now you want us to give you money. Give us back what you stole, and we will give it to charity.'

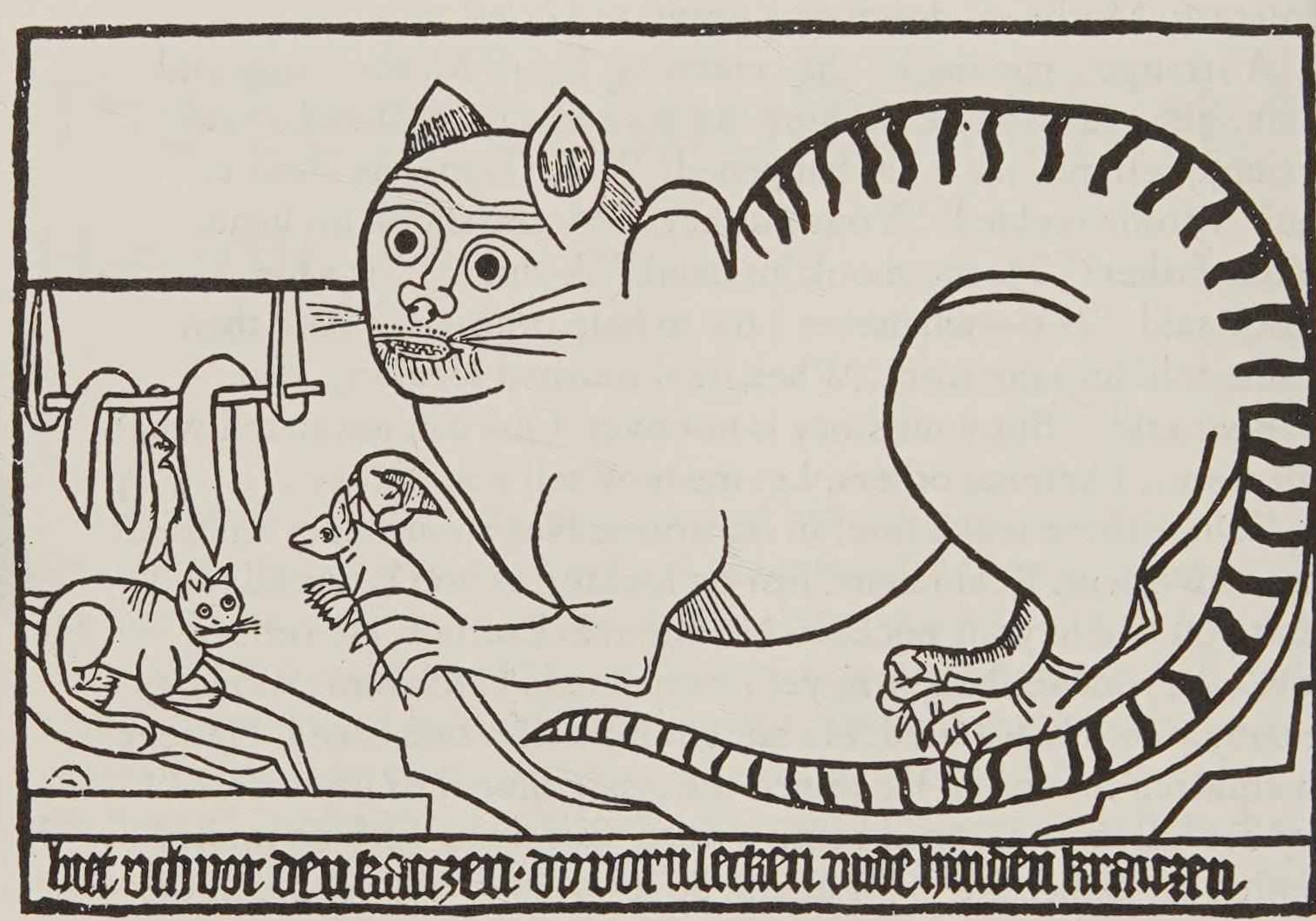
"Several weeks later, the richest man in the synagogue was passing the thief's house. He saw the thief sitting on the steps of his house, and he saw the thief was nearly dying of hunger. The rich man sent the thief some money to buy food for the Sabbath. The next week he did the same, and the next week and the next week; and every week after that he sent him enough money for food for the Sabbath.

"Many years later it happened that the rich man and the thief died at the same moment. Nearly everyone in the town attended the rich man's funeral. Maybe five people, if that, (probably his former students) went to the thief's funeral. The rich man went to heaven. His good and bad deeds were weighed, and he had so many sins the weight went entirely in one direction. The rich man realized he had no chance to enter paradise. Then, suddenly, there was a breeze, and he was pushed through. Once he was inside the gates of paradise, he asked, 'What happened, please, tell me, how did I get in?' He was told, 'Your friend, the thief, stole your sins.'"

—Retold by Diane Wolkstein

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach told this story on Yom Kippur, September, 1982 in synagogue. "Look to each other, bless each other," he urged his congregation.

The Cat and Mouse in Partnership/Grimm



A certain cat had made the acquaintance of a mouse, and had said so much to her about the great love and friendship she felt for her, that at length the mouse agreed that they should live and keep house together. "But we must make a provision for winter, or else we shall suffer from hunger," said the cat; "and you, little mouse, cannot venture everywhere, or you will be caught in a trap some day." The good advice was followed, and a pot of fat was bought, but they did not know where to put it. At length, after much consideration, the cat said: "I know no place where it will be better stored up than in the church, for no one dares take anything away from there. We will set it beneath the altar, and not touch it until we are really in need of it." So the pot was placed in safety, but it was not long before the cat had a great yearning for it, and said to the mouse: "I want to tell you something, little mouse; my cousin has brought a little son into the world, and has asked me to be godmother; he is white with brown spots, and I am to hold him over the font at the christening. Let me go out today, and you look after the house by yourself." "Yes, yes," answered the mouse, "by all means go, and if you get anything very good to eat, think of me, I should like a drop of sweet red christening wine myself." All this,

however, was untrue; the cat had no cousin, and had not been asked to be godmother. She went straight to the church, stole to the pot of fat, began to lick at it, and licked the top of the fat off. Then she took a walk upon the roofs of the town, looked out for opportunities, and then stretched herself in the sun, and licked her lips whenever she thought of the pot of fat, and not until it was evening did she return home. "Well, here you are again," said the mouse, "no doubt you have had a merry day." "All went off well," answered the cat. "What name did they give the child?" "Top-off!" said the cat quite coolly. "Top-off!" cried the mouse, "that is a very odd and uncommon name, is it a usual one in your family?" "What does that matter," said the cat, "it is no worse than Crumb-stealer, as your godchildren are called."

Before long the cat was seized by another fit of yearning. She said to the mouse: "You must do me a favor, and once more manage the house for a day alone. I am again asked to be godmother, and, as the child has a white ring round its neck, I cannot refuse." The good mouse consented, but the cat crept behind the town walls to the church, and devoured half the pot of fat. "Nothing ever seems so good as what one keeps to oneself," said she, and was quite satisfied with her day's work. When she went home the mouse inquired: "And what was this child christened?" "Half-done," answered the cat. "Half-done! What are you saying? I never heard the name in my life, I'll wager anything it is not in the calendar!"

The cat's mouth soon began to water for some more licking. "All good things go in threes," said she, "I am asked to stand godmother again. The child is quite black, only it has white paws, but with that exception, it has not a single white hair on its whole body; this only happens once every few years, you will let me go, won't you?" "Top-off! Half-done!" answered the mouse, "they are such odd names, they make me very thoughtful." "You sit at home," said the cat, "in your dark-grey fur coat and long tail, and are filled with fancies, that's because you do not go out in the daytime." During the cat's absence the mouse cleaned the house, and put it in order, but the greedy cat entirely emptied the pot of fat. "When everything is eaten up one has some peace," said she to herself, and well-filled and fat, she did not return home till night. The mouse at once asked what name had been given to the third child. "It will not please you more than the others," said the cat. "He is called All-gone." "All-gone," cried the mouse, "that is the most suspicious name of all! I have never seen it in print. All-gone; what can that mean?" and she shook her head, curled herself up, and lay down to sleep.

From this time forth no one invited the cat to be godmother, but when the winter had come and there was no longer anything to be found outside, the mouse thought of their provision, and said: "Come, cat, we will go to our pot of fat which we have stored up for ourselves—we shall enjoy that." "Yes," answered the cat, "you will enjoy it as much as you would enjoy sticking that dainty tongue of yours out of the window." They set out on their way, but when they arrived, the pot of fat certainly was still in its place, but it was empty. "Alas!" said the mouse, "now I see what has happened, now it comes to light! You are a true friend! You have

devoured all when you were standing godmother. First top off, then half done, then—" "Will you hold your tongue," cried the cat, "one word more, and I will eat you too." "All gone" was already on the poor mouse's lips; scarcely had she spoken it before the cat sprang on her, seized her, and swallowed her down. Verily, that is the way of the world.

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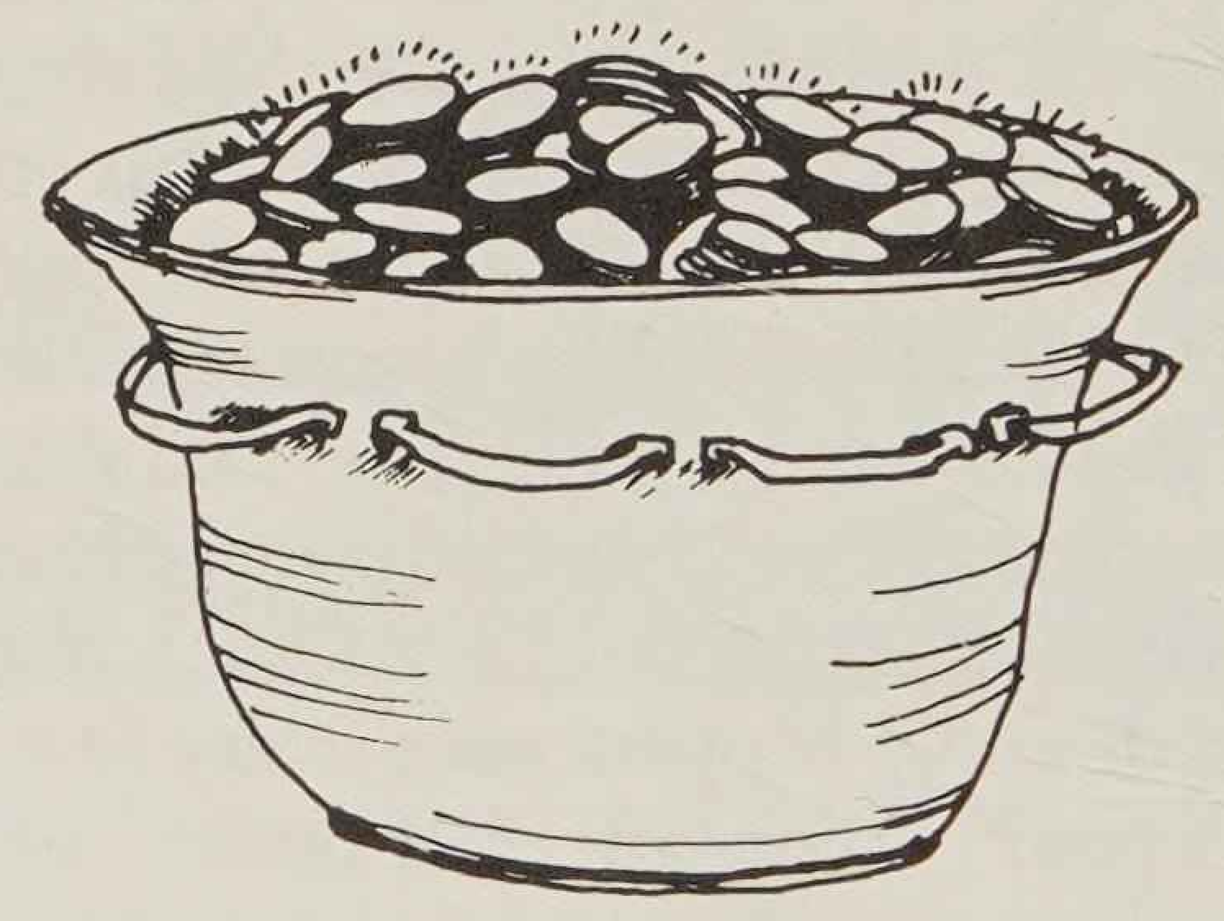
The Soul-Taker/Armenian



At one time there were three sisters who lived in the hills and worshiped God. One day they came upon a cave, and inside the cave they found a huge kettle full of gold. The kettle was so big that it had seven handles, and so heavy that it took seven men to lift it.

"Oh, the soul-taker! Run, sisters, run!" cried one of the sisters, and all three began to run. They ran from that cave faster than they had ever run before.

Now, six robbers were coming along a path on the mountain, and they saw the sisters running.

"Where are you going so fast?" asked one.

"We are running from the soul-taker!" the sisters cried.

"What do you mean, soul-taker?" asked the robbers. And they caught hold of all three sisters.

"The soul-taker, the soul-taker, the soul-taker in the cave!"

"What? Where?" said the robbers. "Lead us to this soul-taker. Show us what it is."

So the sisters led the robbers to the cave and showed them the kettle. "Gold!" roared the robbers. "So this is your soul-taker? Gold!" And while they were laughing and plunging their hands into the kettle, the sisters ran off to their home.

Now, even while the robbers were gloating over their find, fear

stole into their hearts. The kettle with the seven handles was too heavy to lift. They couldn't carry all the gold away, they were afraid to leave it unguarded, yet they had been hiding in the mountains for many weeks, and they were hungry, very hungry. How were they to get food?

"Brothers, let's three of us stay here and guard the gold, and three of us go to town to buy food," said one. And the others agreed. Off went three of the robbers to buy food in the nearest town.

The three who were left in the cave began to plot together. "Why should we share this gold among six? If we share among three, we'll each have far more," said one.

"What shall we do?" asked another.

"When the others come back, let us seize them and stab them. Then we'll have all the food and all the gold too."

And the rest agreed.

Meanwhile, the three who had gone to town were plotting, too. "Why should we share the gold with those others?" said one. "If there are only three of us, we'll each have far more gold."

"But what shall we do?"

"We can eat our food in the town, and poison what is left. The others are hungry. When they eat, they will die. Then all the gold will be ours."

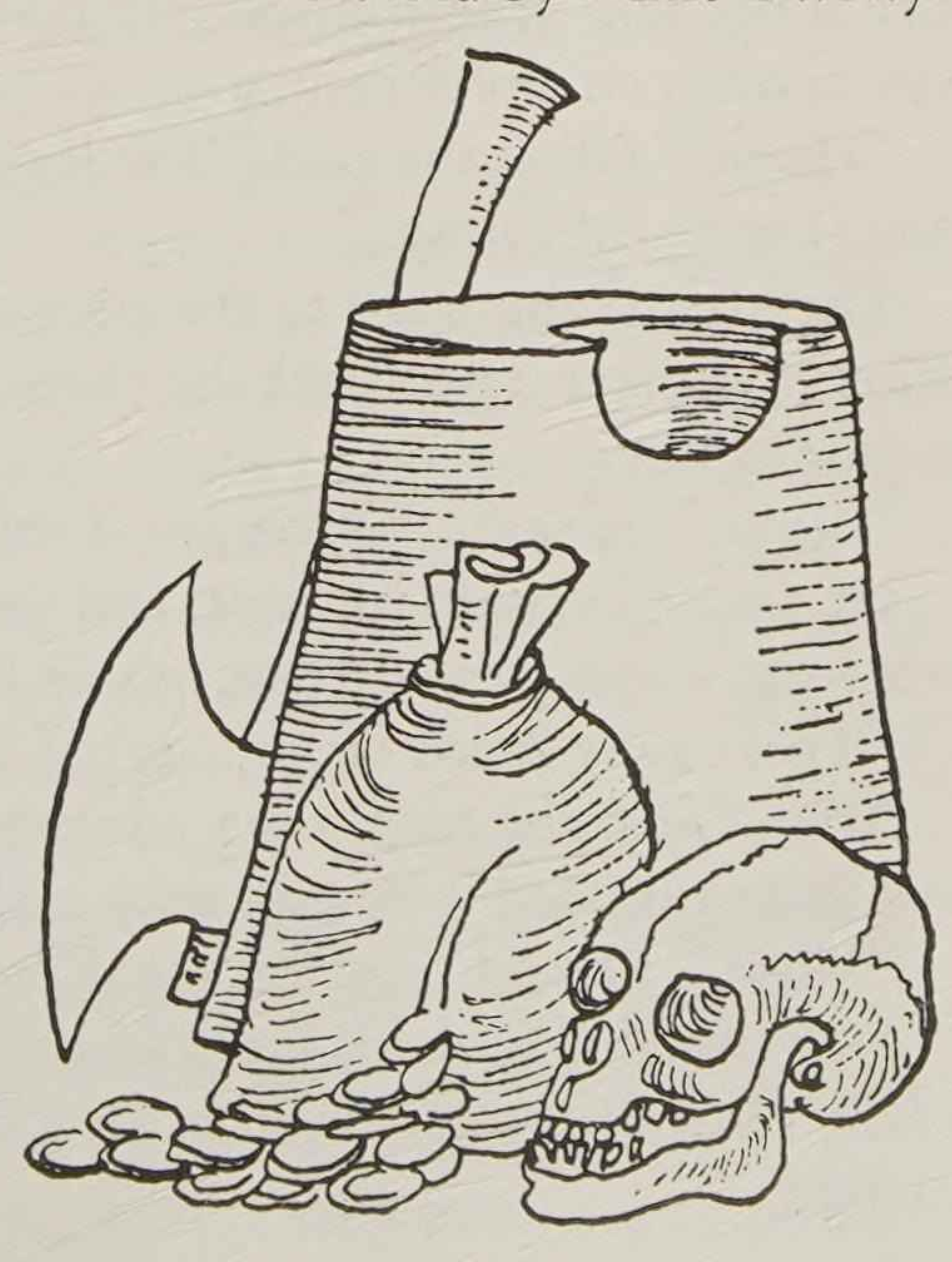
In the town they bought food and poison. They poisoned the food and carried it to the cave. When they reached the mouth of the cave, the other three leaped on them and stabbed them to death. Then the three who were still alive sat down and ate and ate until their bellies swelled up and they died.

There stood the kettle with the seven handles, full of gold.

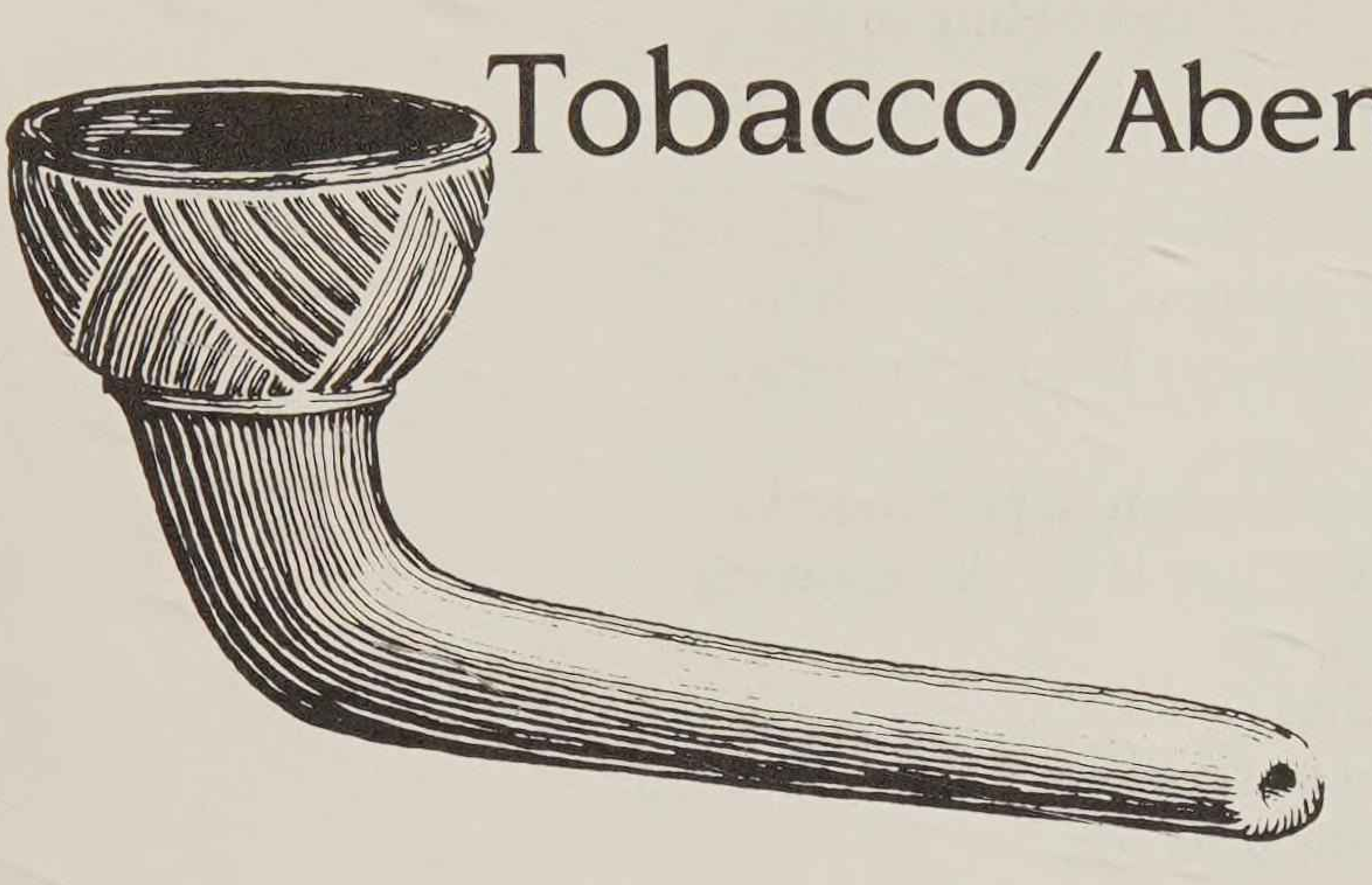
Some time later the sisters went back to the cave in the mountains. At the mouth of the cave they saw the skeletons of three robbers, with tattered rags still clinging to them, and inside the cave they found another three skeletons, still guarding the gold.

"You see, it really was a soul-taker," said the sisters. And once again they ran away from the gold.

—Retold by Anne Twitty



How Gluskabe Stole Tobacco/Abenaki



Long ago, Gluskabe and his Grandmother, Woodchuck, lived alone in a small lodge near the water. One day his Grandmother said to him, "My Grandchild, it is sad that we have no tobacco."

"What is tobacco, Grandmother?" Gluskabe said.

"Ah, Grandson, tobacco is a great gift from Tabaldak, Our Maker. If you are sick, you need only take tobacco out into the woods, and you will find the medicine plants. Then, when you place some tobacco on the earth, you can pluck those plants from the root and use them. Tobacco is a great comfort to the old. They can smoke it in their pipes and see all the happy days of their lives in the smoke as it lifts up. When you pray and burn tobacco, that smoke carries your prayers straight up to Our Maker. Tobacco is a very good thing indeed, when it is used as Tabaldak intended."

"Then we should have tobacco," Gluskabe said. "Where can I find it, Grandmother?"

"Ah, Grandson," Grandmother Woodchuck said, "it is not easy to get tobacco. It is on a big island far out in the water. A person with great magic lives there. He raises the tobacco and will not share it because of selfishness. He is very dangerous. Those who go to steal tobacco never return."

"Hunh!" Gluskabe said. "I will go and get tobacco, and I will share it with everyone."

Then Gluskabe went to the edge of the water. There was a hollow log there, and Gluskabe shaped it into a canoe. He put it into the water.

"Now," he said, "let me see if this canoe will go."

He pushed it with his foot, and the hollow log canoe shot out across the water. It went one whole look, as far as a person can see.

"This canoe is not fast enough," Gluskabe said.

Then Gluskabe took a big white birch tree. He stripped off the bark and fashioned it into a canoe and put it into the water.

"Now," he said, "let me see if this canoe will go."

He pushed it with his foot, and the birch bark canoe went very swiftly over the water. It went two looks, but Gluskabe was not satisfied.

"This canoe is not fast enough," he said.

Then Gluskabe fashioned a boat with ribs of cedar and the skin of a moose. He put it into the water and pushed it out and it went three looks. But Gluskabe was not happy with the moose hide canoe.

"This canoe," he said, "is not fast enough."

Gluskabe looked around. There at the edge of the water was a great white boulder. Gluskabe picked it up and turned it over. He shaped it into a canoe and put it into the water.

"Now," he said, "let me see if this canoe will go."

He pushed it with his foot, and it shot out across the water with Gluskabe inside. It went four looks almost as quickly as one could think, leaving a great white wave behind it. Gluskabe was very pleased.

"Now I can go and get tobacco."

He went back to the lodge. "Grandmother," he said, "I am going now to steal tobacco. But first you must tell me the name of my enemy, the magician who will not share the tobacco."

Grandmother Woodchuck shook her head. "Who will hunt for me and bring me wood for my fire and water for cooking if Grasshopper kills you? No, Gluskabe, I cannot tell you his name."

Gluskabe laughed. "Oleohneh, Grandmother," he said. "When I return, you will be the first one to smoke tobacco in your pipe."

Then Gluskabe climbed into his white stone canoe. He pushed off from the shore, and the canoe shot over the waves towards the island of the magician, Grasshopper. As the canoe sped along, Gluskabe sang:

Grasshopper, you are going to travel,
Grasshopper, you are going to travel,
You must leave your home now,
Grasshopper, you are going to travel.

He sang his song four times. By the time he finished, he had reached the island. Sure enough, just as he had wished in his song, Grasshopper was not there. The cooking pot was still on the fire, and a beautiful clay pipe decorated with bright stones was beside the fire, with smoke still rising from its bowl, but the magician was nowhere to be seen. Gluskabe picked up the pipe.

"Grasshopper," he said, "you are not going to need this anymore." Then he placed the pipe in his own pouch. Inside the lodge on many racks, tobacco bundles were drying. Gluskabe took them all and placed them in his canoe. All around the lodge were big tobacco fields. Gluskabe pulled up all of the plants and placed them in his canoe. He took all of the tobacco and did not leave a single seed. All around the fields were the bones of those who had come to steal the tobacco and were killed by Grasshopper. Gluskabe gathered all of the bones together and then shouted.

"Get up!" Gluskabe yelled, "your enemy is coming back." Then all of the bones came back together, and all of the people came back to life. They were very happy, even though some of them had been in such a hurry to return to life that they had gotten the wrong bones. Some of them had legs or arms that were too short or too long. The old people say that is why there are crippled

people today. Gluskabe shared the tobacco among them. He mended their boats which had been broken by Grasshopper and sent them back to their homes.

"Tobacco is for everyone," he said. "You must always share it and give it freely or it will not do you good."

Then Gluskabe climbed back into his white stone canoe. He pushed it with his foot, and it flew back across the waves to the place where his Grandmother Woodchuck waited.

"Grandmother," he said, "I have brought tobacco. Never again will it be scarce."

Grandmother Woodchuck was very happy. She filled her pipe with the tobacco and smoked it and gave thanks to Tabaldak. She began to sing a song in praise of her Grandson, Gluskabe. But as she sang, the magician, Grasshopper, came. He came across the sky in a magical canoe.

"YOU!" he shouted in a loud and terrible voice, "You have stolen my tobacco!"

But Gluskabe was not frightened. He reached up with one hand and grabbed Grasshopper from his flying canoe.

"That is so," Gluskabe said. "It was not right for you to keep it all to yourself. Now my children and my children's children will have tobacco to enjoy." Then he rubbed Grasshopper between his hands, and Grasshopper became very small.

"Please," Grasshopper said in a small voice, "give me seeds so I can grow tobacco for myself."

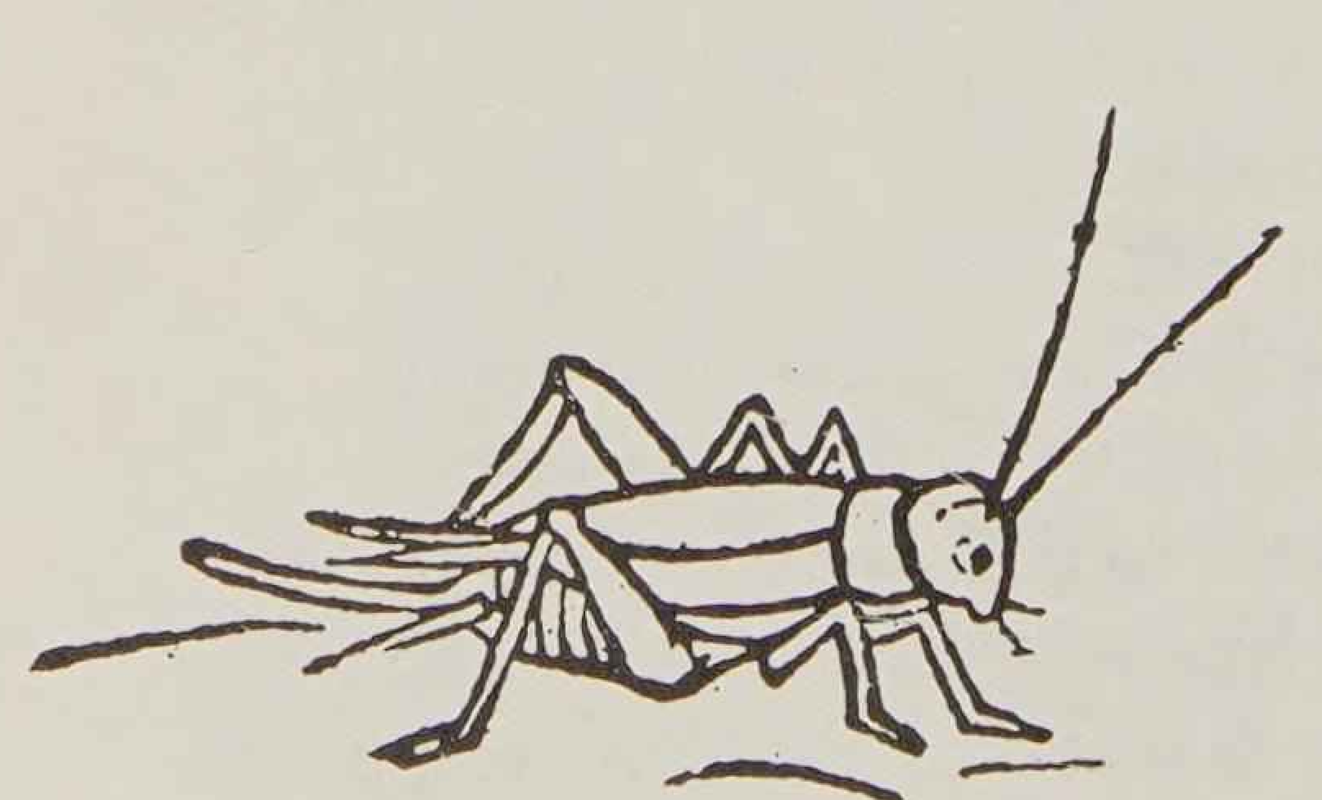
But Gluskabe shook his head. "No longer can you be trusted to grow tobacco. That will be the job of my children and my children's children. But since you were the first to grow tobacco, I will give you enough to enjoy in your lifetime. Open your mouth."

Grasshopper opened his mouth and Gluskabe filled it with tobacco. Grasshopper was pleased, but he spoke again. "Give me back my canoe so that I can fly across the sky."

But Gluskabe shook his head. "It is not right for you to have such a magical canoe. I will split the back of your coat and give you wings. Now you will be able to fly on your own, but you will no longer be able to frighten the people."

So it is that to this day tobacco is used by the children of Gluskabe and their children's children, and when they use it as Tabaldak intended, always giving it freely to others, it does them no harm. As for Grasshopper, he flies about with the wings Gluskabe gave him and chews his mouthful of tobacco which will last all his life. And he remembers the lesson taught him by Gluskabe. If you ever pick up any grasshopper it will immediately spit out its tobacco as if to say, "See, I am willing to share."

—Retold by Joseph Bruchac



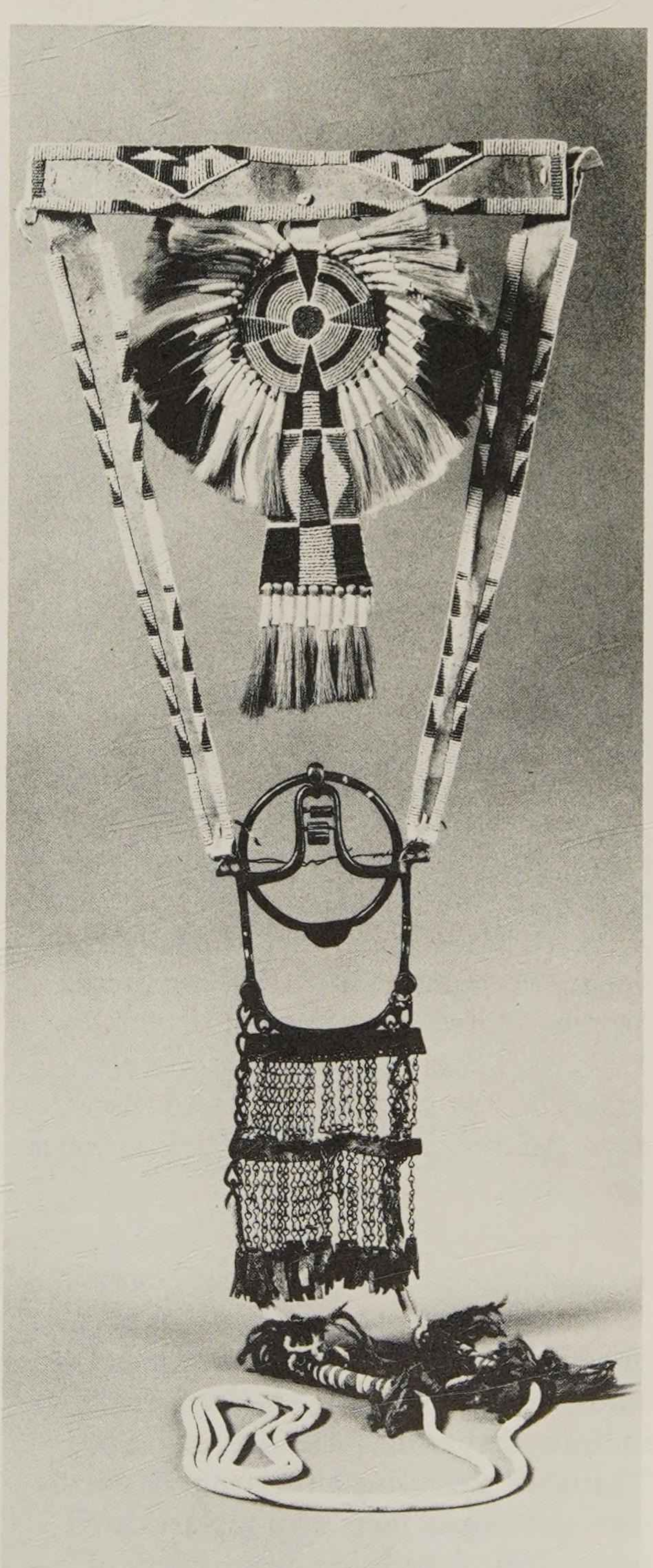
CURRENTS & COMMENTS

RIGHTS RECOGNIZED

A recent court decision scored a major victory for the constitutional religious rights of Native Americans. In May, 1983, Judge Stanley Weigel of the Federal District Court of Northern California ruled favorably on a suit brought by environmentalists and Native Americans to block construction of a logging road in a section of the Siskyou Mountains held sacred by the Yurok, Karok, and Tolowa Indians. The plaintiffs maintained that the road, designed to cut through part of the Six Rivers National Forest, would disrupt both the local ecology and the religious practices of Indian communities in surrounding regions. The site is traditionally used for training medical and religious leaders, and as a meditative focus for ceremonies. Proponents of the suit argued that the noise of intruding lumber trucks, the razing of acres of timber, and the influx of visitors would destroy the site's environmental purity and thus its spiritual integrity. In his decision, Judge Weigel acknowledged the link between environmental and religious issues, affirming the Indians' rights to practice a spiritual tradition with essential environmental aspects. The Forest Service is appealing the decision in California's Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals; a final verdict is not expected for another year.

MUSEUMS

Circles of the World: Traditional Art of the American Plains Indians will be on view from April 24 through July 15 at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City. The title refers to the belief held by Southwest American Indians that the circle is the perfect form and a metaphor for the universe. More than one hundred and fifty domestic, ceremonial, and tribal objects will be shown. The museum, located at 2 East 91st Street, is open



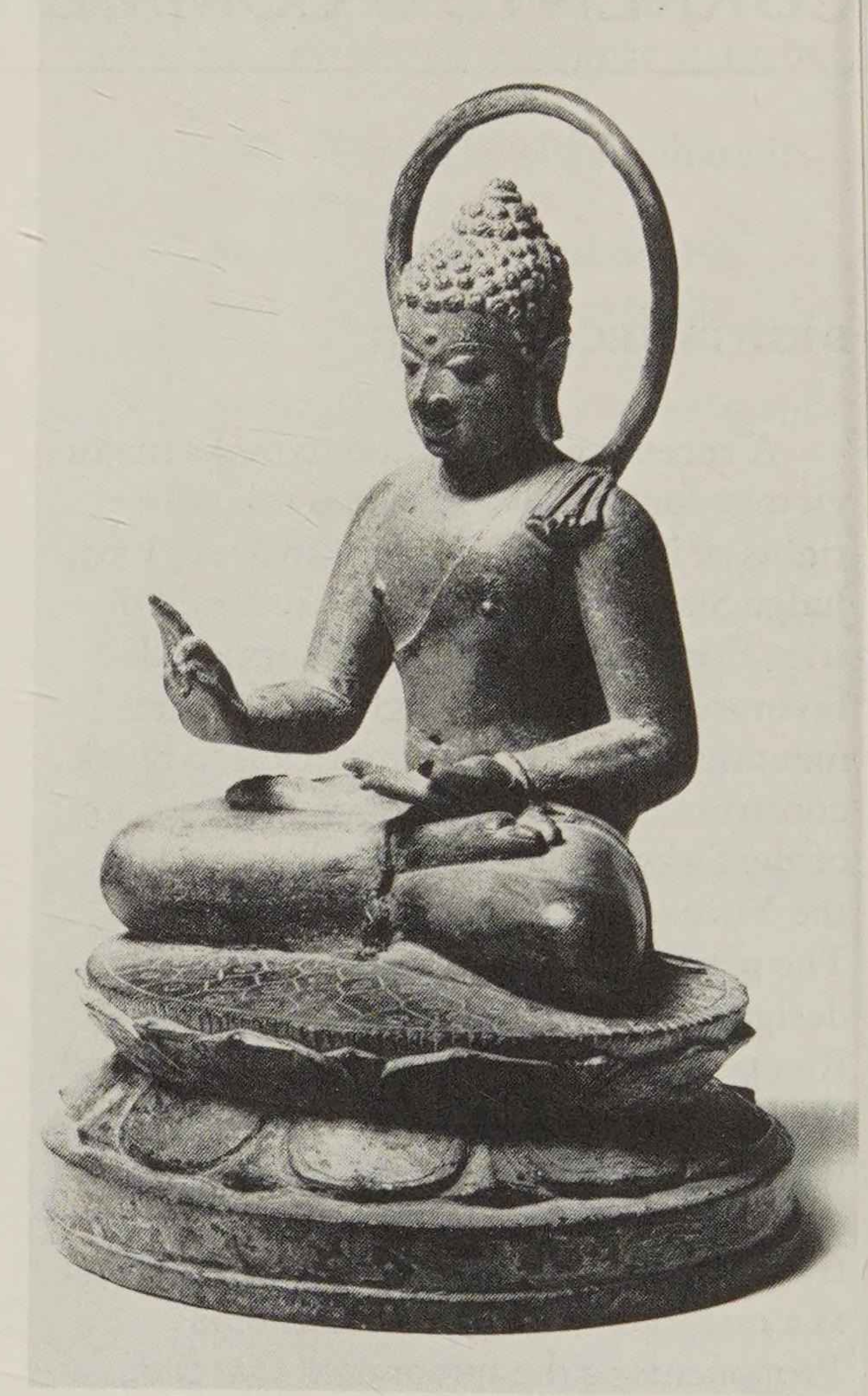
Wednesday through Saturday from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., Sunday from 12:00 Noon to 5:00 P.M., and Tuesday from 10:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. Admission is $2.00 for the general public, $1.00 for students and senior citizens, and free for everyone Tuesdays after 5:00 P.M.

Light of Asia: Buddha Sakyamuni in Asian Art brings to the United States sculptures of stone, bronze, stucco, jade, wood, and ivory from a multitude of Asian nations, demonstrating the complexity and strength of the Buddhist artistic tradition. The one hundred and ninety items on loan comprise the first major exhibition of the Buddha in Asian art to appear in America in twenty years.

Tour itinerary: Through May 27, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; June 30–Aug. 26, Art Institute of Chicago; Nov. 1–Feb. 10, 1985, Brooklyn Museum.

The complex physical and spiritual life of the people of western Alaska is on display in **Spirit Keepers of the North: Eskimos of Western Alaska**. Intricate hunting weapons, a fully outfitted whaling boat, amulets, feathered headdresses, a birdskin parka, and squirrel snares are among items that demonstrate how two distinct groups of Alaskan Eskimos employed technical skills and religious rites to survive in a hostile environment. Many of the artifacts are on public display for the first time. The show is on view through August 4 at the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, 33rd and Spruce Streets, Philadelphia. Hours: 10:00 A.M.–4:30 P.M. Tuesday through Saturday, 1:00–5:00 P.M. on Sunday. Closed Mondays. Admission is free; a $2.00 donation is requested.

New information about the beginnings of Southeast Asian civilization has been uncovered at Ban Chiang, an archaeological site in northeastern Thailand. Findings indicate that prehistoric inhabitants of Thailand, possessing a rural, agrarian culture, developed their own sophisticated metallurgical tradition independent of China sometime in the third millennium



B.C. This discovery contradicts the previously held belief that the development of metallurgy requires a complex urban culture, and that prehistoric Southeast Asia lagged well behind China in technological innovation. The story of **Ban Chiang: Discovery of a Lost Bronze Age** will be told through a multitude of objects from the excavation, including bronze and iron metalwork, painted pottery, ceramic animals, and bone and glass bead necklaces.

Tour itinerary: Mar. 1–May 31, Boston Museum of Science; July 1–Sept. 30, Milwaukee Public Museum; Nov. 1–Jan. 31, 1985, American Museum of Natural History, New York City; Mar. 1–May 31, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History.

The **Year of the Rat**, the first in the twelve-year cycle of the Asian zodiac, will be celebrated throughout 1984 at the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. In addition

to various special events, the museum will feature a display of more than forty-five *netsuke* in ivory, wood, and other material, depicting the auspicious figure of the rat. The Asian Art Museum, located at Golden Gate Park, is open every day from 10:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Admission is $2.00 for adults, 50¢ for children and senior citizens, and free for everyone on the first Wednesday of each month.

Forty-three masterpieces of Islamic art can be seen in **Masters of the Brush: Paintings and Manuscripts from the Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan** at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. The exhibit includes miniature paintings and book illuminations from Iran, India, and Turkey, dating from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries. In the Islamic world, book illumination and miniature painting developed as accompaniments to calligraphy, the principal Islamic art form. But they soon achieved a brilliant quality of their own, exemplified in such displayed works as *Portrait of Sultan Selim II* (Turkish) or *Jahangir's Lion Hunt* (Indian). Some of the paintings feature opaque watercolor on burnished paper; others are done on silk or cotton cloth. The Museum is located at Fifth Avenue and 82nd Street; the exhibit runs through October 14.

FILM

For once, in *Never Cry Wolf* (a Walt Disney Production, based on the book by Farley Mowat), a film brings another dimension to a popular book. Beautifully filmed, humorous, understated, and gentle (except in the improbable scene of would-be violence between man and plane near the end), *Never Cry Wolf* suggests a deeper relation between human and animal than Mowat's book attempts. Against a background of ecological and ethnic tragedy, a story unfolds of one man's joyful casting off of his psychological shackles, through a growing appreciation of nature and the wisdom of natural people. The film takes full advantage of the camera's access to sight and sound in its vivid presentation of the beauty of wolves, of the Arctic landscape, and of Eskimos, especially an old man and his drum. *Never Cry Wolf* features Charles Martin Smith as the author. Peter Matthiessen acted as nature consultant. ■

A Feather on the Breath of God

BARBARA L. GRANT

Sequences and Hymns
By Abbess Hildegard of Bingen. Gothic Voices with Emma Kirkby. Directed by Christopher Page. A Hyperion recording.

In her forty-third year, Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179) became the only woman of her century who, with papal approval and encouragement, began to create a startlingly large body of what became public writing and teaching. She was a deeply contemplative and strictly observant Benedictine nun from early childhood. A vivid Pentecostal experience triggered the recording of her first visions, which were brought to the attention of Pope Eugenius III at a Synod in Trier; they grew into a collection known as *Scivias*, richly illuminated later at her own scriptorium. For decades previous to this, Hildegard had received visions of divine mysteries which came to her in a particular Light—not of ecstasy, but through her keen inner senses. During those years, long periods of excruciating physical pain, self-doubt, and fear of the great monastic sin of pride conflicted with the urgency of accepting herself as an authentic spiritual vessel. It took the great crisis manifested through a vision of tongues of fire, the relentless insistence of the Voice of Wisdom (which gave further interpretation to her visions), the urging of her nearly lifelong secretary, Volmar, and the support of a devoted nun, Rikkarda, to break her silence.

Once she began writing, Hildegard never stopped, and her public activities increased. As she added to the *Scivias*, she also began a lengthy struggle to move her small group of nuns, annexed to a male Benedictine house. With persistent political maneuvering, she founded St. Rupertsburg and, later, a daughter house across the Rhine. As Abbess, she shepherded these women strictly, productively, and liturgically, according to the Rule of St. Benedict, on which she wrote a perceptive commentary. We have hundreds of her letters, addressed to people in high places all over Europe who, like herself, carried weighty spiritual and, in some cases, temporal power over the lives of others. Many other letters were written to those who needed encouragement in more modest walks of life. Drawing on her experience as a healer in the dispensaries she ran, Hildegard wrote two books on what we would now call natural science and medicine. The *Physica* is a kind of herbal, giving a taxonomy of trees, shrubs, elements, minerals, herbs, stones, fishes, and birds. The other book is about the human body, its composition in relation to the known natural elements, its ailments and their particular symptoms. She was a keen observer of psychological ailments, which she felt as important to name and describe as the more obviously physiological processes of gestation, menstruation, or the phenomena of rashes and boils. The *Operatione dei* is a late collection of visions, and perhaps her most fascinating and cosmological work. All of Hildegard's works were, of course, written in a Latin whose most pervasive influence was the language of Jerome's Vulgate. Good German translations

Hildegard, receiving a vision of "a great flash of light from heaven," records her revelations.

are available, but none of the written works I have spoken of is published in English translation, although several translated manuscripts of the *Scivias* await publication.

For those who have only heard about Hildegard's work, being introduced to it through the music and texts of this Hyperion recording is a fortuitous first encounter with the rich, heterodox thinking of the Abbess. On the record covers, two of the twelfth-century illuminations of her visions are reproduced in color: the hexameron (the six days of creation), and Hildegard receiving the tongues of fire. The seventy-seven liturgical songs and sung morality plays which Hildegard wrote (most of them in the 1150s) are her most personal, passionate, and lyrical writings; of the seventy-seven, some of the finest are on this recording. Unlike the letters and the visions, that went off to live in the world and establish a reputation extending well beyond the lifetime of the Abbess, the songs were intended for liturgical use by her own community and possibly one other.

By her own account, we know that it is sound that organizes Hildegard's universe, that gives it coherence and form. It is the Voice of Wisdom, which was with God from the beginning, that informs her and

interprets her visions. We know from her texts that to praise God through either song or instrumental music is to give back that breath of life (*spiraculo*) through which God created us; this musical praise is our bridge to life before the Fall. It is the highest praise. The *opus dei* which stands at the very core of the Benedictine life is this sung liturgy—particularly the seven daily offices which cover all 150 Psalms each week, interwoven daily with a myriad of other sung texts such as antiphons, responsories, hymns, and canticles, which make up the exquisite mosaic of the ever-changing liturgical calendar.

On this recording, Christopher Page's translations of the texts are accurate as well as sensitive to the density of Hildegard's symbolic language. In some cases, for example, synaesthesia became Hildegard's mode of giving form to visionary, spiritual experience, and the translations are sensitive to these nuances. Page's liner notes give us interesting historical information about the subject of each song, and he identifies important Biblical imagery. However, he says virtually nothing about the musical forms, and there is much here that is noteworthy.

To begin with, the record's title is *Sequences and Hymns*. Out of eight selections, six are sequences. The sequence has a very particular musical as well as textual form, whose inception, artistic growth and development, and quite remarkable proliferation began and ended in the medieval period. It followed the Alleluia in the order of the Mass, and was often written to honor a local saint, donor, or martyr, a figure well known to a particular community or diocese. It has been estimated that well over a thousand sequences were written during the Middle Ages. All but five were eliminated by the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, perhaps largely because they had such popular appeal and their subject matter tended to be apocryphal, non-canonical in its source.

Furthermore, by the twelfth century, the poetic expression of the sequence had become much more personal than other forms of chant, the intensity of devotional feeling was unprecedented, and a great many of these texts coincided with the growing devotion to the Virgin. On this recording, "O presul" was written at the request of Hildegard's former Abbot, Cuno, for the patron saint of his monastery, where Hildegard was raised. It combines exalted, spiritual language with intimate, lyrical biographical detail. The same is true for the two saints from Trier, Maximinus and Eucharius. For St. Rupert, whose gift of sanctified land provided the physical possibility for an autonomous monastery of Hildegard's community of women, and whose precious bones are hallowed by her own building, Hildegard is able to build a convincing typological relationship between the building of her monastery and that of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Still lyrical, but most intense and passionate, is Hildegard's sequence for St. Ursula (whose feast day has been removed entirely from the Roman liturgical calendar) and her eleven thousand Virgins. This is literally a passion; we still have at least two passion narratives about Ursula which Hildegard may have known when she composed her sequence.

Even before certain conventions about the subject and treatment of the text, the musical shape of the sequence developed. It has a particular formal structure (of strophe and antistrophe) which made sequences choral, rather than solo, works; they could by sung antiphonally by two alternating choirs or by one which divided itself. In addition, particular relationships and responses were set up between the sets of strophe and antistrophe which the composer continued to develop throughout the sequence, musically and/or textually. Hildegard takes both musical and textual freedoms with her sequences; she sometimes goes back to an earlier eleventh-century sequence structure for her musical model; but none of her sequences is written without an awareness of that formal structure and its inherent possibilities.

The first and fourth cuts on the record are most successful in these terms. The alternation in these two sequences is between the cantrix (as sung by Emma

Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.

—Christine Georgina Rossetti

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Kirkby, whose clarity, sense of line, and sensitivity to word accents in these equalist-rhythm texts are exquisite) and a small choir of women. Less successful are the sequences "O Euchari" and "O presul," which are done as solo pieces, thus obscuring the formal possibilities. Also disappointing is the sequence for St. Ursula, where the carefully written, unyielding dramatic tension is lost in a tempo too fast, without the sense of the contours of the line and sensitivity to the text. The remaining solo on the recording is the Marian hymn "Ave generosa," sung by Margot Philpot, who has a wonderful voice but whose rhythmic fluctuations seem excessive. This may be the result of the textual demands of heightened eroticism in the hymn, which says to the Virgin:

. . . Certainly a heavenly infusion

Poured into you,
Because the Celestial Word
In you took on flesh.

You are the radiant white lily
Whom God perceived
Prior to all Creation.

You are most beautiful and loveliest;
God so delighted in you that he pressed
within you
The passionate embrace of his own heat,
So that his own Son was suckled by you . . . .

This is virtually a *hieros gamos*; yet it remains a hymn, which is an invariable choral and regular form in the history of liturgical music.

For me, the least successful songs are the two sung by a small male choir. They don't sound like Hildegard, nor do they sound like Frankish chant generically, although they are absolutely equalist in rhythm and they meticulously observe subtle, liquescent neumes. Yet there are pauses with neither textual nor musical reason in the sequence, and in the gorgeous poem to the Virgin, which is neither sequence nor hymn (and probably a very late work), the brilliance and economy of the text never come across. If there were ever reason to hear a solo, it would be for the exotic goddesslike Virgin, who combines aspects in herself of Ceres, Tellus, Aurora; a fertility goddess who produces within herself food for humanity, and at the same time is a strong tree in which the birds of heaven nest:

Greetings, greenest branch
Who came forth on a spirit-filled
Quest for knowledge of all that is holy.

Since this is the time
When you have flourished in your branches,
Let there be greetings to you,
Greetings
Because the moist, vital heat of the sun has
sweated into you
Like the pungent odor of balsam.

For in you has blossomed the beautiful flower
Which has given fragrance to all the spices
Which were dry.
And they have appeared all in full greenness.

Because of you the heavens gifted the meadow
with dew
And every land has been made abundant,
Since your womb has brought forth wheat
And since the birds of heaven have made their
nests in you.

At last is there food made for humanity
And great joy for the banqueters.
Therefore in you, sweet Virgin,
Every joy is in abundance
All these Eve disparaged.

Now let there be praise to the Most High!

I admire and agree with Christopher Page's Note on Performance, and find these wonderful sounds are beautifully recorded, translated, annotated, and sung by some outstanding voices. But I miss, in most cases, any sense of their roots and life in the monastic liturgy. ■

Barbara L. Grant has published articles and translations of the works of Hildegard von Bingen. She has produced and performed in Medieval Offices built around the music of Hildegard. She is a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique and lives in East Haddam, Connecticut.

BOOK REVIEWS

Lakota Myths

By James R. Walker. Edited by Elaine A. Jahner. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983. Pp. 428. $27.95. Paper $14.95.

Reviewed by Joseph Epes Brown

The University of Nebraska Press and two leading scholars of Plains Indian intellectual history, Raymond J. DeMallie and Elaine A. Jahner, are to be commended for making available to scholars and the general reader the primary documentary materials recorded between 1896 and 1919 on the Oglala Sioux reservation by the physician and anthropologist James A. Walker.

Lakota Myth, edited by Elaine A. Jahner, is actually the third volume in a four-volume series of Walker's materials. They are of special importance since they contribute to the documentation of Lakota sacred lore at a period of traumatic and tragic transition. The editing of these works has posed particularly complex and difficult problems, to be outlined below; yet the completed volumes have achieved a fine balance between scholarly analysis and readable texts which allows glimpses of understanding into the values and world view of one of the great Plains peoples. This is, then, a unique presentation made possible by the editors' comprehensive understanding of the rich complexity of Plains cultures in general and the Lakota in particular.

The first volume of this series, *Lakota Belief and Ritual* (1980), edited by both Raymond DeMallie and Elaine Jahner, includes an especially important chapter on the life and work of James Walker. This chapter, which also contains Walker's own brief autobiographical statement, provides materials which are invaluable to a reading of all four volumes, since they situate Walker's background and orientation—elements which inevitably influence his treatment and interpretations of the oral narrations he heard. The second volume, *Lakota Society* (1982), provides access to Walker's descriptions of Lakota social structure and history. A forthcoming fourth volume will present Oglala culture as narrated to Walker by one person only, George Sword (Long Knife), a distinguished Lakota intellectual who is perhaps best known for his descriptions of various Oglala ceremonies, given to Walker and published with the support of Clark Wissler by the American Museum of Natural History in 1917 under the title *The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies*.

The content of *Lakota Myth* does not deal exclusively with myth, as Jahner explains, but includes narrations of many types, some of which are generally categorized as folktale. The scholar's insistence on sharp distinctions between myth and folktale is somewhat academic, however, since normally the core of the folktale, as of folklore in general, is metaphysical, even though it may be more disguised than in the case of myths. But whether we are dealing with myth or folktale—or even other genres which represent categories understood by the peoples themselves on the basis of their own criteria—the perennial and central question to be raised concerns the relative integrity of a body of orally transmitted sacred lore extracted out of cultures still close to primordial origins, and then represented in a literary mode for a culture of sharply contrasting values and orientations. Obviously, the complexity and importance of such problems have been matters of central concern to the editors of these volumes. However, since the question is of ultimate importance it may be useful to summarize a range of these problems as understood and raised both by the editors and by the present reviewer.

The original language which served as the vehicle for the oral transmission of the myths and tales was Lakota, one of the many dialects of the great Siouan language family which may possibly have roots in

Mesoamerica. This language may be called polysynthetic, since many levels of realities and understandings can be encompassed within phrases or even within single words. Further, for such primal peoples, language constitutes an immediacy of experience; the word or sound does not refer to some other reality that may be agreed upon, but what is named is mysteriously experienced as being actual, real, and present in the word or name. We are thus dealing with sacred language—as indeed are all Native American languages. Intensification of this sacred dimension comes through the peoples' understanding that the spoken word bears special power, since words are born by the breath, and in these traditions breath, which comes from the central area of the heart, is associated with the very source or principle of life. The richness of such languages becomes even more apparent when it is understood that many of the elders used special archaic word-forms in which to communicate certain especially sacred or esoteric concepts. The present writer recalls many times when the son of the old sage Black Elk could not translate his father's words, since they were drawn from such an archaic vocabulary. In translating language of this kind into English, it is evident that the reader is receiving only a faint intimation of the original force and experience of the message, for here the medium *was* the message.

A further consideration is the well-known phenomenon that transmission of myths and tales always took place under carefully specified conditions of time of day, place, season, and occasion. These stipulations were not arbitrary but were rooted in rich cosmological and metaphysical beliefs. Such provisions obviously added extra import and dimension to that which was told, perspectives which are lost in literary translation. It should be added that the human agent for the transmission was an important factor in the quality of experience on the part of the listeners, for the great orators engaged in quasi-shamanic acts through which the sacred places, events, and beings of the drama were made present and experienced in the timeless now of the moment.

We shall always be grateful for the sacrifice, devotion, and energy with which people such as J.R. Walker recorded Lakota oral accounts over so many critical years. Without such dedication, we should certainly have lost much that has been crucial to our understanding of the Lakota heritage. Yet it is also true that students and scholars such as Walker were inevitably molded by their own language and culural heritage, which constituted a determining filter for their recordings and interpretations. The imprint of a Western Christian heritage was obviously there, along with the classical gods of Olympus, who simply could not and cannot acculturate to the Black Hills of the Dakotas. Thus, Walker's attempts to organize and establish categories for the Lakota's own experience of their realities, priorities, and world view as they experienced it could not but be distorted and often falsified.

This sampling of the complex problems in recording and translating for today's world the sacred lore held and experienced by a people still close to their primal origins is not meant to suggest either the impossibility or undesirablity of such an attempt to communicate. It is intended rather to point out that what we are receiving is but a faint shadow of what the realities must have been for peoples who possessed, and still possess, those multilayered polysynthetic languages which bear and transmit a totality of values central to all facets of their lives and respective cultures. When all is said and done, what is of inestimable importance is that through the translated and written texts providentially passed down to us, we are enabled to have at least glimpses of the original realities, and these cannot but constitute an enrichment, and indeed a reminder, that increasingly our contemporary world is becoming one of impoverished realities.

Joseph Epes Brown, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA, *is the author, most recently, of* The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian *(Crossroad Publishing Co.). He teaches Native American religions at the University of Montana.*

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A Holy Tradition of Working: Passages from the Writings of Eric Gill

Edited with an Introductory Essay by Brian Keeble. West Stockbridge, Mass.: The Lindisfarne Press, 1983. Pp. 141. Paper $9.95.

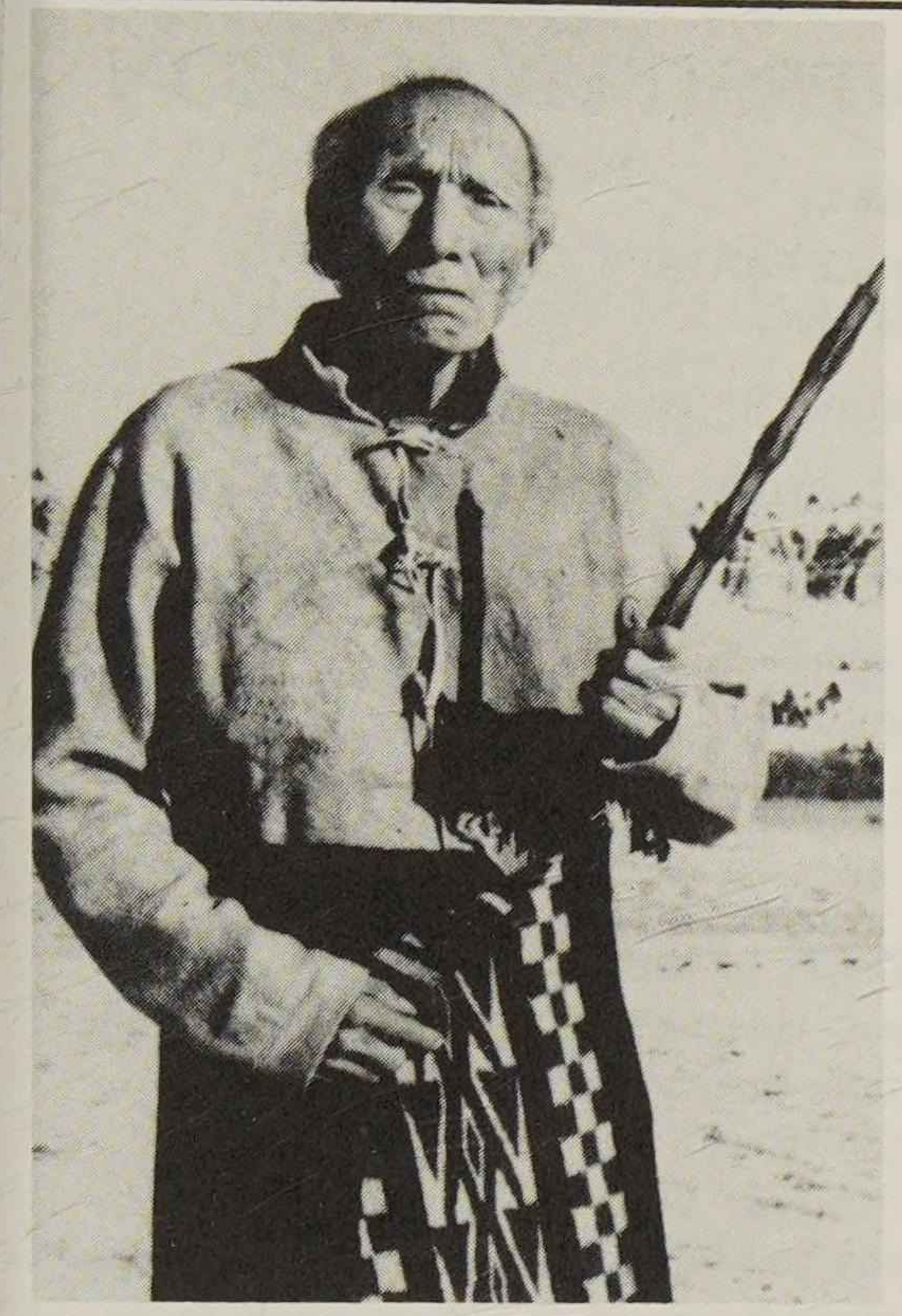
Reviewed by Harry Remde

This extraordinary book is a selection of Eric Gill's writings representing his thought over a period of many years. That the book may be called extraordinary is due to man's present situation. In a normal (traditional) society, i.e., a society in which human actions conform to spiritual needs, this book would not have been written; Gill would be an ordinary man. But all around us, now as in Gill's lifetime, an empty knowledge accumulates—empty not in itself, but in the way that we receive it.

The compiler of this book has selected sentences, paragraphs, and entire sections of Gill's writings and arranged them under headings appropriate to his work as a noted sculptor, designer, and craftsman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The result is pure Gill. Containing some of the most intense portions of his thought, the chapters have an almost aphoristic strength, although they are occasionally tedious to read. They show that Gill was a socially radical, intensely religious, extraordinarily perceptive man. Inevitably, there is repetition and overlapping of ideas within and between the chapters. The temper of the writing varies from psychological to aesthetic theorizing, from protest to religious assertion. Yet central to each chapter is Gill's belief that man's daily work, done properly and well, is the means by which he can look heavenward. Man must look here for his salvation. Through his working, he can become a man. "The working life is the contemplative life," said Gill. "Perfection . . . is the house of God to which [what is made] bears witness." Man's *need to work* is given to him, to be used for his becoming. This is the seed of tradition.

Gill lived and worked during a period of intensive industrialization in England. People had yet to lose faith in the notion that everything important to them could be brought under their control. Gill's indignation at what he saw happening was no mere resentment of change but a conviction that what was needful for human beings was systematically being destroyed. While his contemporaries looked to the outside for the source of their well-being, Gill looked to his work. Like Blake, he foresaw a condition of industry in which man the maker would have a smaller and smaller part, and perhaps no part at all.

Gill was as opposed to distinctions in the importance of different kinds of work as he was to the spreading of industrialism. He denied a line between fine art and art, between art and craft, between these and other forms of making. To him, all work was worthy. "Every man is a special kind of artist," said Coomaraswamy. What was made well, i.e., wholly, was art. Every good workman could recognize it as such. "By . . . common sense . . . men appreciate what is in accordance with right conduct." "By . . . a common sensibility . . . men ap-



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The Sixth Grandfather
Black Elk's Teachings
Given to John G. Neihardt
Edited by Raymond J. DeMallie
Foreword by Hilda Neihardt Petrie

In Black Elk Speaks and *When the Tree Flowered,* John G. Neihardt recorded the teachings of Black Elk, the Oglala holy man, who had, in a vision, seen himself as the "sixth grandfather," the spiritual representative of the earth and of mankind. Published for the first time are the transcripts of Neihardt's interviews with Black Elk in 1931 and 1944. These are Black Elk's own words as translated into English by Oglala interpreters, the most authentic records available. *The Sixth Grandfather* will help readers understand more fully the relationship between Black Elk and Neihardt, and Neihardt's role as Black Elk's amanuensis.

"This book is a major contribution to Lakota ethnology, history, and theology that further enhances the importance and prestige of *Black Elk Speaks.*"—Father Peter J. Powell.

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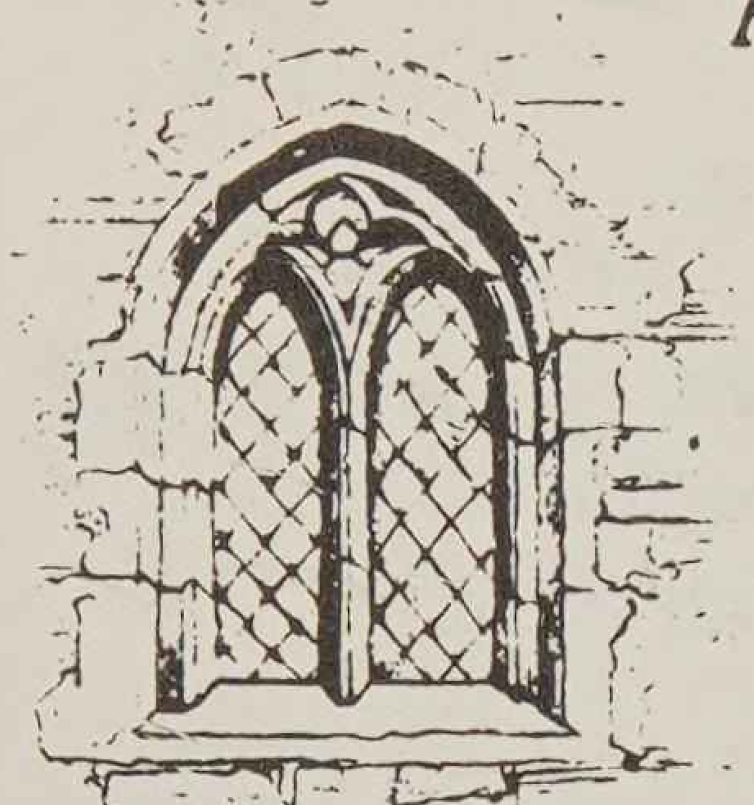
preciate what is in accordance with right making, that is to say, with art."

But, we ask, what is the *method* of this sensibility? How does *right making* come about? What method of working produces the seed? Here the book disappoints us. Gill replies, but not precisely. (To reply otherwise may be impossible.) He says that "man is matter and spirit." "Man is a bridge connecting the material and the spiritual." "Art is a translation into material of something seen inwardly." "The imagination is the faculty by which what the eye sees and what the mind thinks about it is re-created into what the man loves." And again: "Art abides entirely on the side of the mind." But what is the process? What is the method, the *way* of working? Each workman no doubt must find it for himself.

Perhaps it may be permitted to one workman to try to say, in his own words, what he believes it to be. Simply this: we cannot know what our work can tell us until we are ready. To arrive at this moment is difficult. We must *know* that we do not know. Not until man the learner stands unknowing and without regret in front of his work does he become man the maker. The work of man the maker is art. Gill says: "The good workman works well without knowing that he is wise."

What is given in this moment of becoming? Something is known within the body, it turns the heart, is transformed into an intelligence. Perhaps in this way we pay for our own existence. Gill says: "It is the result of the mind's recognition of what is after its own kind." From Romans 1:20, he quotes: "The invisible things of God may be clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made."

More than with other authors, the reader must recognize his own experience in Gill's, knowing that a common weakness unites us. The moment of perception seems so full of possibility that, without noticing, we allow it to slip into our ordinary thought or feeling. The effect is immediate: pride, theorizing, assertion, even



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naiveté. For example, I cannot agree with Gill's insistence that man is a thoroughly responsible creature, that he has a free will. At a moment of knowing, yes. At all other times, no. One has only to look around!

Gill's writings shift back and forth between strength and weakness, between dogma and what deeply moves the reader. There is a humbleness that reminds us that he, as he urges us all to be, was a maker of things.

Man the maker can remain independent of, but exert an influence on, whatever social system is present. "Let man rediscover his norm and he will re-create . . . a normal society." "It is the abnormal that must be planned beforehand—the bureaucracy, corporative or communist; the tyranny, military or capitalist." "In . . . a [normal] society the binding and informing power is a spiritual one."

Finally, like all naive and trusting men, Gill says that "the best will be made when all agree to start with sheer reasonableness, continue with honesty, and let the end be what it may."

Harry Remde is a woodworker in Morristown, New Jersey and the author of The Art in a Craft *(Traditional Studies Press, 1975).*

The Book of Sufi Chivalry

By Ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami. New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983. Pp. 121. Paper $8.95.

Journey to the Lord of Power

By Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi. New York: Inner Traditions International, 1983. Pp. 116. Paper $8.95.

Reviewed by Gisela Webb

Shaykh Tosun Bayrak and Rabia Terri Harris of the Halveti-Jerrahi (Sufi) Order, under the direction of their living spiritual master, Shaykh Muzaffer Ozak al-Jerrahi, have given us the first English translations of two pieces of traditional Sufi literature. Tosun Bayrak has translated *The Book of Sufi Chivalry (Kitab al-Futuwwah)* by Ibn al-Husayn al-Sulami, an important tenth-century Sufi from Nishapur: Rabia Terri Harris has translated *Journey to the Lord of Power* by the famous thirteenth-century mystic Ibn 'Arabi, the Andalusian poet-philosopher called *ash-shaykh al-akbar* (the greatest master) by some, heretic by others. The translators have been careful to provide a good deal of helpful and necessary background material in the form of forewords, biographical notes, commentaries, and glossaries.

These books present us with two different aspects of Sufism. Sulami's *Book of Sufi Chivalry* is a code of "honorable conduct" based on the life and example of the Prophet Muhammad and other saints of Islam. It discusses the virtues, the *adab*, the perfect behavior which is to be striven for

The Multiple States of Being
René Guénon

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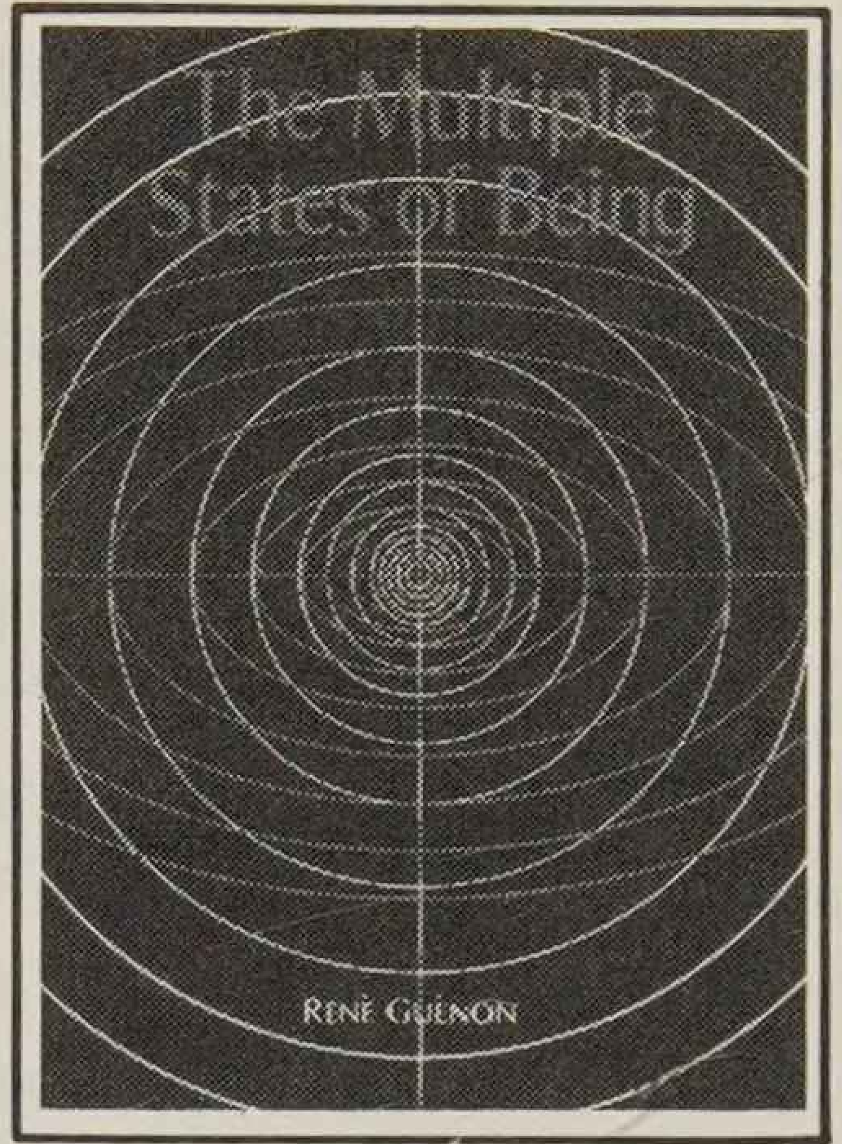

"...in his (Guénon's) works is to be found one of the most important restatements of the doctrinal aspect of the sacred in modern times..."
—S.H. Nasr, *Knowledge of the Sacred*

The Multiple States of Being treats a truly fundamental idea: the soul's freedom lies in discovering its own nature as essential self-cognition and realizing that all other states of knowledge and being are available to it as within itself. The metaphysics presupposed in such a realization is discussed with thrust, brevity, and incisiveness characteristic of the grand traditional style.

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by all "lovers of Allah." Thus, on the most basic level, it is a guide to the outer, social, communal life of the pilgrim. *Journey to the Lord of Power*, on the other hand, is a small treatise, certainly not intended to be read by all, but only by those with more advanced training in the spiritual life. It deals with the subject of *khalwa*, or spiritual retreat, a practice considered dangerous when undertaken in the wrong manner, but whose goal is the "attainment of the Presence of God through abandonment of the world."

Sulami's writings played an important role in the attempt to bring closer together the more orthodox, exoteric elements of Islam and the *tariqah* (Islamic mysticism). Sulami was born in 936 A.D., only fourteen years after the execution of al-Hallaj, an event which epitomized that confrontation. Sulami was a pioneer in the creation of a new "science of Sufism," which set out to gather information on the mystical experiences of various saints and the schools they represented. Experiences were interpreted and substantiated in the light of the Koran and *Sunnah* (practices of the Prophet), and a code of conduct for the daily life of the Sufi, in all its aspects—social, psychological, economic, spiritual—was established. The rules of conduct were eventually institutionalized in brotherhoods and guilds, whose relationship to the brotherhoods of knights and trade guilds in medieval Europe (briefly discussed in the introduction) is a fascinating issue in itself. This "code" is presented to us in *The Book of Sufi Chivalry* as a compilation of many stories and sayings—of early caliphs, prophets from scripture, Sufi masters—which exemplify and promulgate the virtues of the *fata*. In Arabic, *fata* has come to mean the ideal, perfect, noble man "whose hospitality and generosity extend until he has nothing for himself": *futuwwah* is the way of the *fata*. In this way of life there is no action which is "profane," for every deed has a meaning in eternity:

Futuwwah means opposing and arguing little,

being fair, preventing error in oneself and not criticizing; . . . being pleasant to both old and young; . . . loving one's friends and bearing peacefully with one's enemies. These are the visible aspects of the path that are sufficient for us to know until we are able to hear and tell about the truths of Futuwwah.

Here we are given a glimpse behind a lifted veil: loving one's neighbor is more than an outer commandment; to abolish what separates us from our neighbor is to abolish what separates us from God. Outward training prepares one for inward realization.

Ibn 'Arabi's *Journey to the Lord of Power* is the more enticing of the two books. With his theosophical blend of intellectual speculation and ecstatic vision, Ibn 'Arabi spreads before us a banquet table of gifts bestowed on those who participate in spiritual ascent. Not that he is unaware of the dangers of this enticement. In this treatise, he discusses the "conditions, experiences, and results of annihilation in God," and he implores the reader not to undertake this practice of retreat lightly. He explicitly states that because of the deceptions of the imagination it should only be attempted under the guidance of a shaykh, or by one "who has mastered himself." Ibn 'Arabi further points out that to pursue the experiences of *khalwa* without being thoroughly accomplished in the duties and practices of "external" religion or without the proper intention—a pure love of God— is to invite spiritual destruction. Ibn 'Arabi's writings must give pause to anyone who wishes to attempt this practice, for the fall from any stage on this mountain is a fall through the gates of hell. The imagery is beautiful, often elusive, as we hear of the plunge—or ascent—deeper into the reality (the *haqiqat*) of our own world and beyond. The pilgrim is granted a foretaste of experiences to come; the unveiling of the secrets of the mineral, vegetable, and animal realms, the infusion of the life-force in creatures, the power of symbols, the Throne of Mercy, the First Intellect . . . obliteration.

I think an addressing in the Introduction of some of the more controversial aspects of Ibn 'Arabi's writings vis-a-vis orthodox Islam and Western interpretations of his writings might have been in order. Nevertheless, it is a fact that for most Sufis after the thirteenth century, Ibn 'Arabi's work constitutes the height of mystical theory, and I commend the effort in bringing this work to light.

The Book of Sufi Chivalry and *Journey to the Lord of Power* together reveal the dialectic in Sufism between life's inner and outer dimensions. The virtuous life lends a clarity of vision necessary for progress on the spiritual path, and progress in the spiritual life is inevitably manifested in the very manner of our Being.

Gisela Webb is a doctoral student of comparative religion and philosophy at Temple University in Philadelphia, with a specialization in Islamic mysticism.

Our Life With Mr. Gurdjieff

By Thomas and Olga de Hartmann. New Revised Edition. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp. 160. Paper $7.95.

Reviewed by Louise Michel Welch

This new edition of Thomas de Hartmann's *Our Life With Mr. Gurdjieff*, which editor Thomas C. Daly has revised and enlarged with additional material written by Olga de Hartmann, is not only a captivating memoir, but a necessity for those interested in knowing more (it will never be possible to know everything) about the legendary spiritual guide, G.I. Gurdjieff. Olga de Hartmann's addition to her husband's account enriches and enlightens the fairy tale they both lived as disciples of the now famous esoteric teacher.

Throughout the book, both writers invariably refer to him as *Mr.* Gurdjieff, as though the customary title bore a special significance. Gurdjieff, in *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, identifies himself as "he who in childhood was called 'Tatakh'; in early youth 'Darky'; later the 'Black Greek'; in middle age, the 'Tiger of Turkestan'; and now, not just anybody, but the genuine 'Monsieur' or 'Mister' Gurdjieff . . ."

Pondering all this, I recalled a moment

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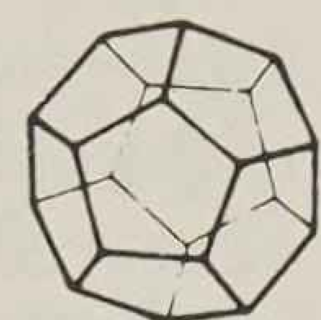

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when I said "Orage and Gurdjieff" in a casual, American reference to their being together in New York. Gently, but with emphasis, de Hartmann corrected me. "*Mister* Gurdjieff," he said. Whatever mid-Eastern connotation it may have, we should perhaps interpret that perennial "Mr." before his name, and the implied intonation, as "master."

For such he was to these pre-Bolshevik Russians, cultivated, civilized people who were open to the miraculous even as they were discriminating, and who accepted to follow Gurdjieff and his teaching wherever in the world it might lead them, certain that the expansion of their inner life depended on the material he alone could provide. They were truly, as they report, "in search."

When de Hartmann, already recognized as a gifted composer and independently well-off, offered Gurdjieff money, he little foresaw how soon he and his fellow aspirants in Gurdjieff's caravan would have to earn enough to appease the general hunger in unprecedented ways. Late in 1916, the de Hartmanns met their teacher in St. Petersburg; hardly a year later began the ten days that shook the world, which upheaval most Russians then regarded as a temporary aberration.

From his first rendezvous with Gurdjieff in a disreputable restaurant where his very presence, if known, would have unfrocked him as an officer of the Imperial Guard, de Hartmann's wish to follow Gurdjieff became his only reality. His wife, who was not present at that first encounter, remained skeptical until she read the typescript of an early version of *Glimpses of Truth*, an account of a meeting with Gurdjieff given them by P.D. Ouspensky.

"When I reached the place where it said that nobody can initiate you but yourself," she writes, "I told my husband, 'If we could find the man who said this, I would gladly follow his teaching.'"

All of which raises the question of what is meant by a teaching. What is it that one has to learn, that one *can* learn from someone who *knows*—not the stuff of opinion, which is prevalent, even cheap, but knowledge based on fact, however esoteric, and not on faith, however magnetic? De Hartmann's own understanding of his need, quite outside his then very successful outer life, was well answered when Gurdjieff wanted to know why de Hartmann was appealing for admission to his work.

"Without inner growth," de Hartmann said, "There is no life at all for me; but my wife and I are searching for a way to develop."

At that moment, still preceding the Bolshevik violence, Gurdjieff held meetings in St. Petersburg. It was not unnatural that the de Hartmanns expected their first official meeting there to be concerned with ideas and principles, probably in the form

of a lecture. It was quite otherwise. Little was said, but both felt a strong atmosphere of inner questioning.

"The mood was not one of lukewarm people interested in the occult teachings fashionable at that time," de Hartmann says. "These were people for whom the finding of real, active work on themselves formed the center of their lives."

Eager as he was to continue contact with Gurdjieff, de Hartmann found himself under military orders to depart for Kiev. You can feel his inner division: on the one hand, to carry out his duties as an officer of the Guard, and on the other hand, his need to be wherever his teacher was. Mme. de Hartmann was naturally primarily concerned for him to avoid the front, and asked Gurdjieff whether it was even possible.

"No," he answered. "When you're among wolves, you have to howl like a wolf, but you should not be taken over by the psychosis of war, and inside, you should try to be far removed from all this."

The de Hartmanns arrived eventually in Essentuki, where work with Gurdjieff continued. Theory and ideas became secondary to direct work on oneself. Their first undertaking after their introductory frugal vegetable dinner with the other pupils was to march, run, do all kinds of physical exercises. At a certain moment Gurdjieff shouted, "Stop!" Each person froze at once, no matter what he was doing. This was their initial experience of the storied "stop" exercise.

Work had indeed begun, much of it physical. Some tasks were necessary to maintain their daily lives; others were invented by Gurdjieff to give them all a taste of *super-effort*. Liberation from attachment, *non-identification*, became the acknowledged primary aim. Preparation for all manner of unexpected events had to be tried, felt, lived through. With the threat of Bolshevik penetration on the one hand, and the inroads of the White Army on the other, the group members had to develop their ingenuity to stay alive and learn what they were living for.

At this point in the story, the reader cannot help comparing the de Hartmanns as they were in 1916 with what was happening to them a few years later in their struggles with identification. The officer in an aristocratic regiment, who was also a composer who played in the Czar's court, cheerfully peddled cards of silk thread from house to house when the group was desperate for money. The cherished, lovely girl, who had never gone out of her house unaccompanied, became a woman who ventured alone into a dangerous war zone to retrieve some of Gurdjieff's belongings so that he could sell them to raise money for the group.

Since Gurdjieff's death in 1949, shelves of books, articles, plays, and doctoral theses have been written about him, ranging from attempts at biography to exegesis of his own writings, which include *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, Meetings With Remarkable Men*, and *Life is Real Only Then, When I Am.* The best of the writers who undertook to give an orderly account of the major ideas is P.D. Ouspensky, and his book is *In Search of the Miraculous*. There is no better account of the Gurdjieff ideas. *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff* is the perfect and exact title for the story the de Hartmanns tell, not only of the ideas they were touched by, but of the actual, practical inner work and the life they led under the direct supervision of G.I. Gurdjieff.

Louise Michel Welch is the author of Orage with Gurdjieff in America (Routledge & Kegan Paul).

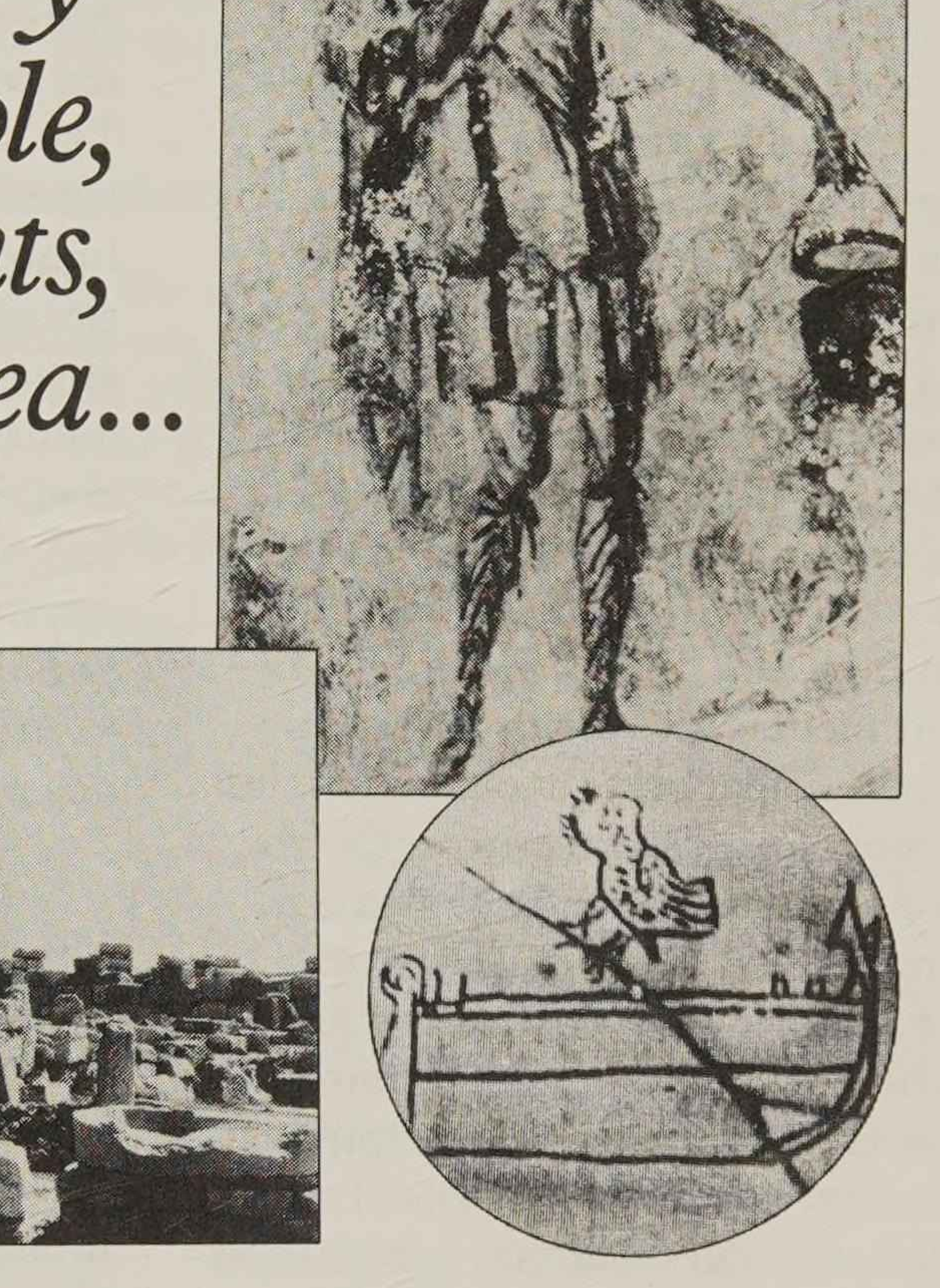
Monastery

By M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O. Photography by Nicolas Sapieha. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp. 127. $22.50.

Reviewed by Vincent Rossi

As a subject for books, articles, and film documentaries, monasticism is elusive, difficult of access, and even dangerous. It is elusive because, like the Holy Scriptures, it can be described as a beautiful bride whose face is covered with magical veils—any attempt to uncover her secret with rude or

Six centuries—
a rich tapestry
of people,
places, events,
and one idea...



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profane hands only results in a deeper veiling; it is difficult of access because the truth of monasticism is gained only through participation, and such participation means, ultimately, enrolling in a "school of charity" from which no "graduation" is possible until soul is sundered from body; and it is dangerous because monasticism is a stern judge of whatever medium is used to approach and transmit its message. It demands to be approached on its own terms, and monasticism on its own terms is a radical stripping down of life to its essence: worship of God and love of neighbor in a place that is no place and thus eternal Center, and a time that is timeless and thus Origin and *kairos*. Any attempt to describe monasticism outside this orientation will almost inevitably distort or sentimentalize. Hence, the failure of recent newspaper and magazine articles and television documentaries to get to the real heart of monastic life. They were all pulp and no pith, all bones and no marrow. Broadcast and print journalism, by nature worldly and object-oriented, thus unresponsive to the subtle noumena of spiritual experience that are the *raison d'etre* of monasteries, fail to understand that penetration to the pith and marrow of monastic life cannot be accomplished by arrogant frontal attacks, but only by humble indirection or symbolic evocation. It is like catching a glimpse of a fairy out of the corner of your eye; when you turn for a more direct look, you see nothing but your immediate surroundings.

The latest attempt to penetrate the veils of monastic life is a new book entitled *Monastery*. The publisher's flyer put me on my guard straightway with its description of the book as a "lavish, full-color" volume, combining "revealing text, exquisite reproductions of traditional art, and striking contemporary photographs in an unparalleled glimpse behind monastic walls." Lavish? Exquisite? These are words seemingly incongruous with the simplicity and ascesis of traditional monasticism. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, that fiery foe of monastic luxury and worldliness, would hardly approve.

But when I had the book in my hands, the critic in me was almost disarmed by the bibliophile. *Monastery* is indeed a beautiful book. The photographs *are* exquisite, even breathtaking. The text by Father Basil Pennington, a Cistercian monk who is a well-known author on monastic spirituality (*Centering Prayer, Daily We Touch Him*), and presently Novice Master at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, is written with compassion, humor, and clarity. The author's handling of the history of monasticism is informative, honest, and enlightening. He does not avoid the difficulties of the common life, but speaks of the all-too-human aspects of cloistered community with forthrightness and compassion. In this, Father Pennington is only following the example of the medieval spiritual masters of monasticism, for, as he points out, even the intrepid St. Bernard referred to community life as "my greatest penance."

And yet, despite its beauty, something is missing in *Monastery*. It does not quite live up to the publisher's claim on the dust jacket, of providing an "unparalleled glimpse" into monastic life. It seems *produced*, like a movie: you get a top expert on monastic spirituality, and a top photographer, and put their work together in a glossy package for a sure-fire gift book in time for the holiday buying rush. However, as any movie producer knows, assembling all the right elements does not always make a successful movie. There are subtle factors that need to be evoked or suppressed in order for the work of art to *work*: i.e., to evoke an act of awareness in which the knower, the known, and the act of knowing fuse, and truth is served. This does not fully happen in *Monastery*. The elements of the work remain separate, like a hollandaise sauce that doesn't thicken. By itself, Father Pennington's text would make a fine introductory pamphlet on monasticism; he proves a reliable guide to monastic life as he explores its principles and historical high points in a balanced and graceful manner. Without question, Nicolas Sapieha's photographs have a lyric beauty that is hard to resist. Yet the overall effect on the reader—this reader, at least—is not one of deepened insight, gradual or sudden, into the monastic experience,

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but one of exposure to everyone's romantic image of life in a monastery.

Ultimately, it is the photographs that, for all their beauty, fail to convey the true spirit of the monastic life. Despite their full-color "lavishness" and intimate candidness (nuns dancing, monks in solemn procession), a vital element is missing in Sapieha's photographs, a contemplative, symbolic awareness or dimension, in the absence of which the photographs only veil, rather than reveal, the face of monasticism. It is clear from the photos that Sapieha is not a monk. He does not have the monastic spirit, silence, and striving in his blood and at his camera-focusing fingertips. His camera work is more documentary than contemplative, more descriptive than evocative.

To understand the difference between documentary and contemplative photography, one has only to go to books like *A Hidden Wholeness*, with photographs by Thomas Merton, and especially to *Silence in Heaven*, a book with text by Thomas Merton published in 1955 that, in my opinion, is by far the best text-cum-photos book ever published on monastic life. The photographs in *Silence in Heaven* cover, in black and white, almost exactly the same subjects as Sapieha's lavish color plates in *Monastery*. In both we see bearded monks with heads bowed in prayer, monks and nuns painting icons, working in fields, operating power looms or reading quietly, walking in procession or kneeling in prayer. Yet in the former, those common monastic subjects are treated with a depth, profundity, and spiritual intelligence missing in the latter, an absence only made more evident by the exquisite surfaces of Sapieha's photographs.

Nearly twenty years and a revolutionary Vatican Council separate the publication of these two books; it is thus highly instructive to compare the difference in intent, perspective, approach, and just plain "feel" that exists between these two treatments of the monastic life. *Silence in Heaven* seems to breathe—and exude—a

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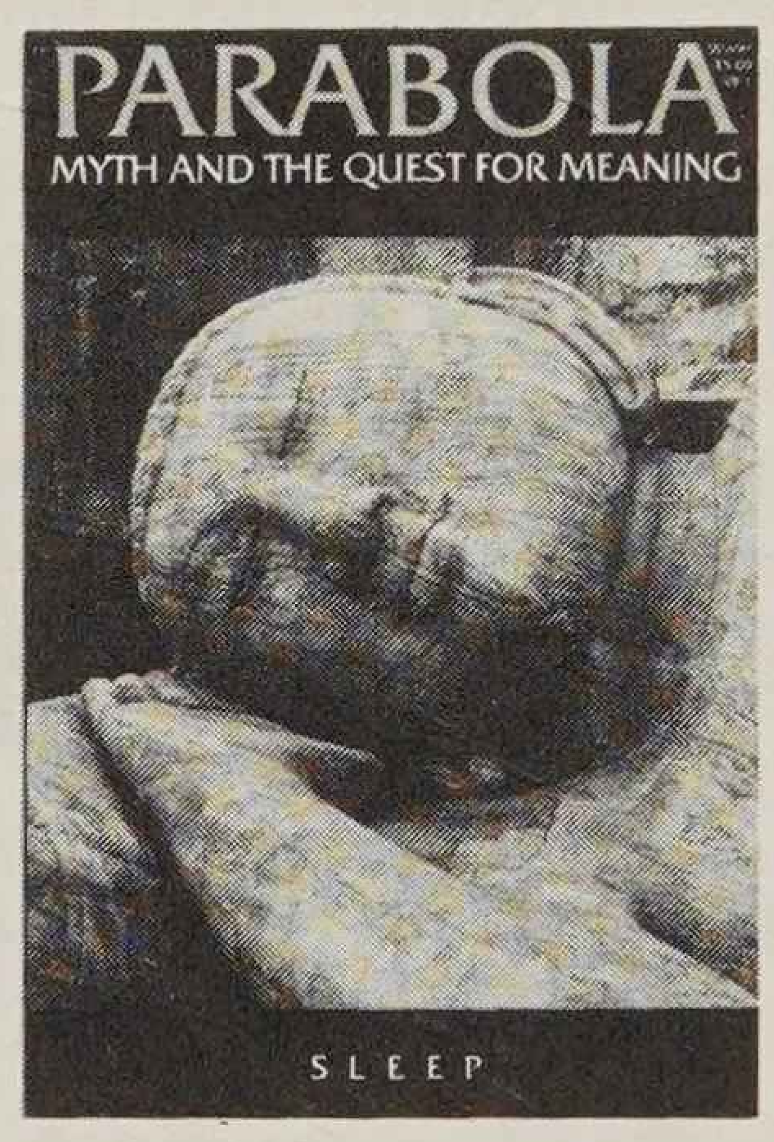

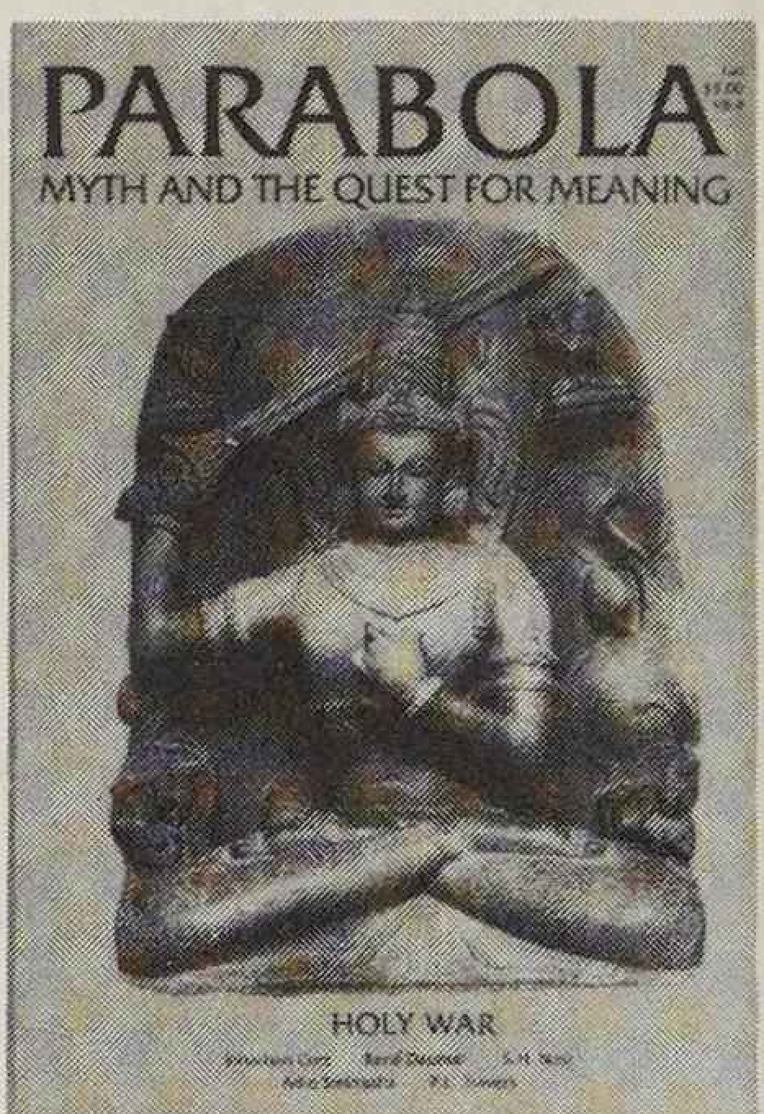

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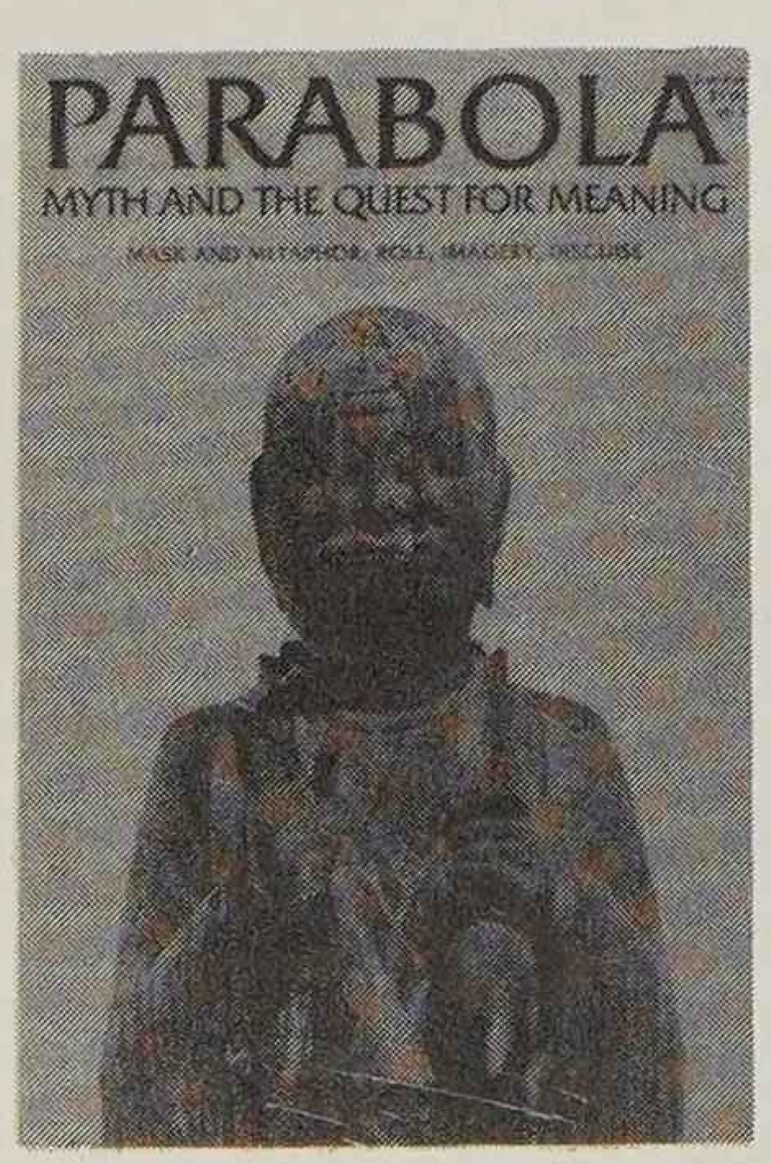

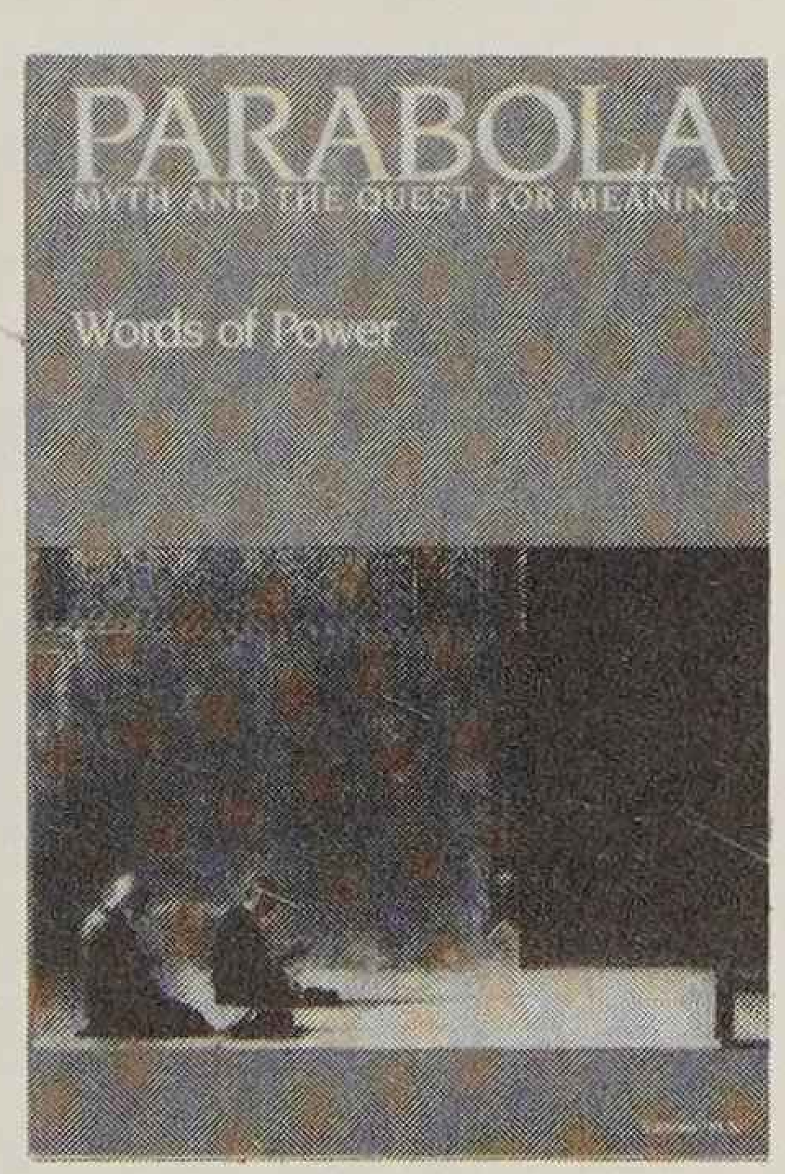

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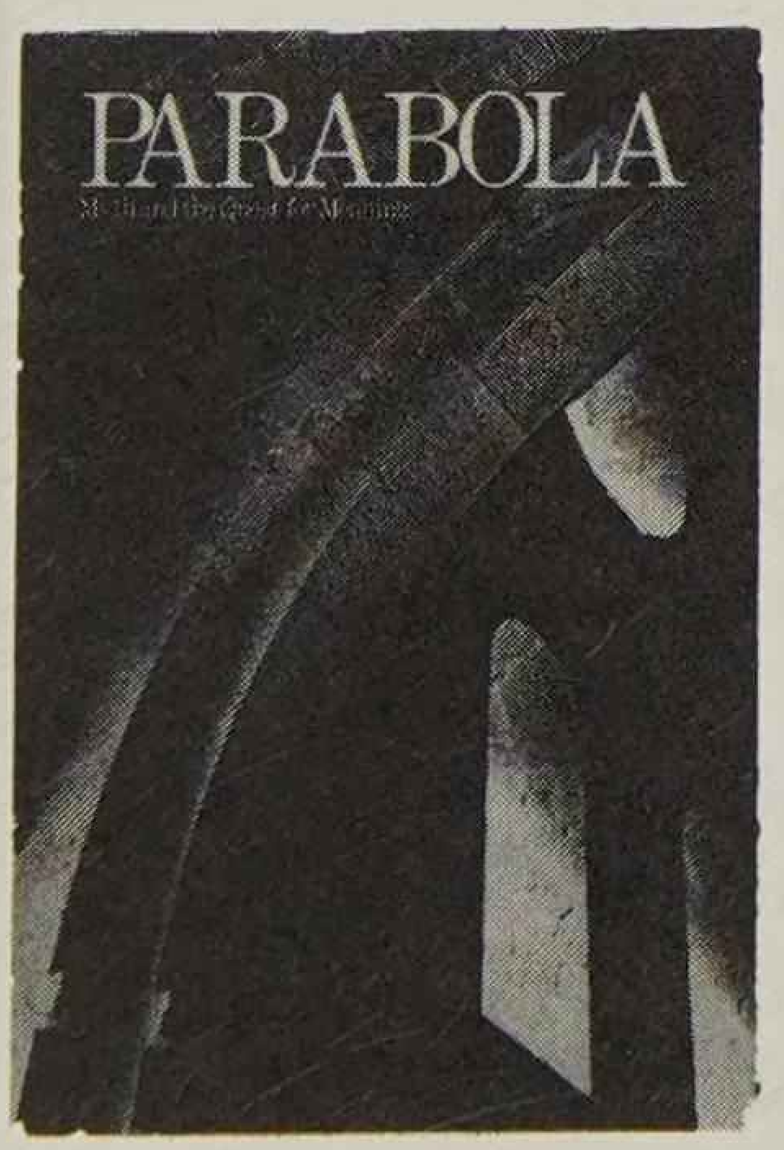

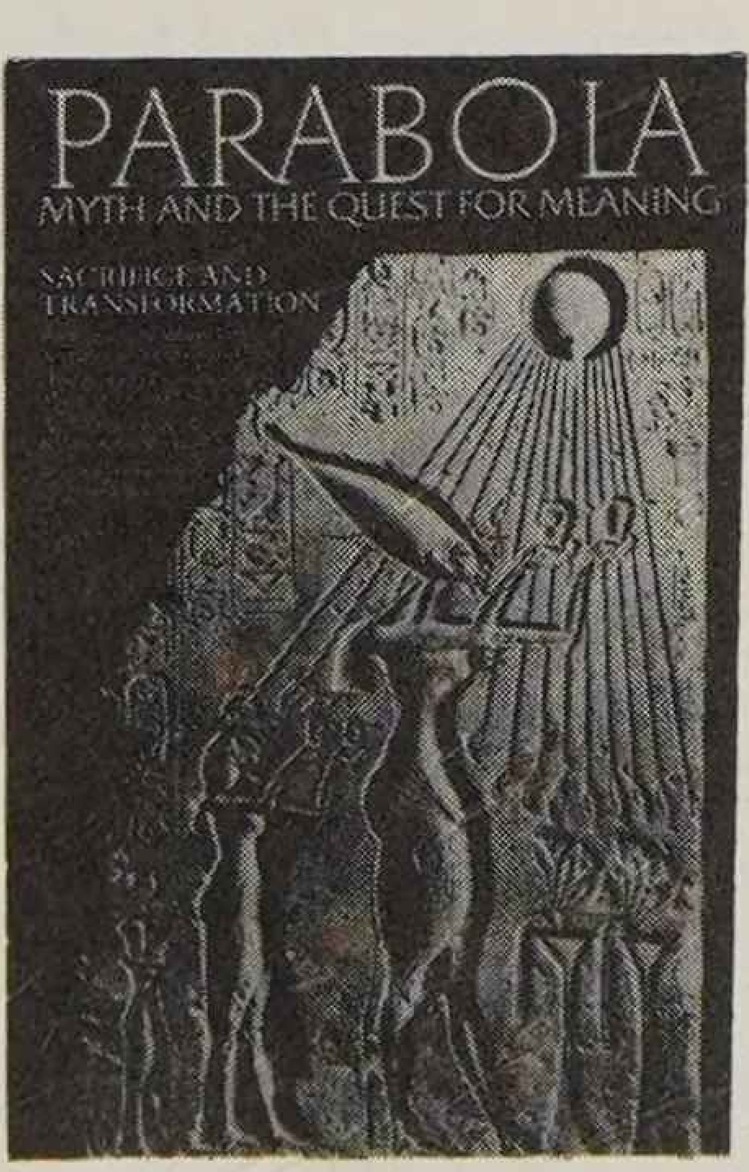

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different atmosphere from *Monastery*. There is, in the former, an unabashed pointing to the Divine, and an unalloyed confidence in the monastic life as a kind of heavenly existence made possible for sinners by the grace of the perennial monastic tradition. Its sole aim is, in the words of its monk-editor, "capturing and recording . . . the perceptible element of the Divine." Yet there is also a sharp-eyed sense of authenticity that aims to "dissipate the falsely romantic ideas of monastic life," and an awareness that the camera is ever capable of robbing images or figures or scenes of their authenticity, so that "the picture would turn out to be sugary and sentimental, or, worse still, nauseatingly 'holy.'" *Silence in Heaven* aims boldly "to seek out the essential, to go straight to the center from which no matter what his habit, the life of every monk radiates." There is no sentimentality, no false monasticism here, only an evocation of simple symbols pointing to the divine source and grace of monastic life, and a corresponding conviction in the reader of their truth and power.

By contrast, *Monastery* seems oriented to the human aspect of monastic experience, reflecting the Second Vatican Council's reorientation of the Catholic world toward a new Christian humanism. The concerted effort by the post-Conciliar church to adapt their religion to man, rather than man to religion (the traditional approach still visible in *Silence in Heaven*), has had its effect in all aspects of Christian life, from theology to liturgy to music and art to books such as *Monastery*. *Monastery* seems not so much interested in unveiling, by whatever means possible, the essence of a communal life totally consumed with seeking God, as it is in taking a peek behind monastery walls. It wants to satisfy our curiosity, not increase our spiritual hunger. The result is, inevitably, to sentimentalize.

Thomas Merton, who is frequently quoted in *Monastery*, had no use for sentimentality or the "nauseatingly 'holy'" in the monastic life. In the early sixties, he taped a series of conferences which he gave to the novices at Our Lady of Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky. In one of these talks, he ridiculed, with much laughter, the falsely romantic view of monasticism as one that would publish photographs of a solitary monk standing on a hillside at sunset or sunrise with his cowl over his head and his back to the camera. You guessed it! The cover photograph chosen by the editors of *Monastery* is, in full and glorious color, a solitary monk standing on a hillside (at Gethsemani Abbey, yet!) at sunset or sunrise with his cowl over his head and his back to the camera. Merton would savor the irony.

Do I recommend that you buy this book? Certainly, if you like beautiful books or are looking for a nice gift book with a spiritual theme. Besides his instructive text, Father Pennington provides a full chronology of significant events in the history of monasticism and some very helpful suggestions for futher reading on the subject. Despite the unfortunate sentimentality of some of the photographs, *Monastery* does give the reader a fascinating look into various aspects of monastic life around the world.

Vincent Rossi is the Director General of the Holy Order of MANS, an ecumenical order and community of men, women, and children in San Francisco.

Mythologies of the World: A Guide to Sources

By Ron Smith. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1981. Pp. 347. Paper $9.75.

Reviewed by Paul Jordan-Smith

Among the difficulties facing scholars and storytellers alike in the field of mythology is the lack of an adequate library of reference books that point to sources. There seems to be no concerted effort in what Ron Smith calls "myth study" to develop definitive bibliographies of myths and folk tales that could enable students of mythology, folklore, comparative religion, and related disciplines to find an orderly

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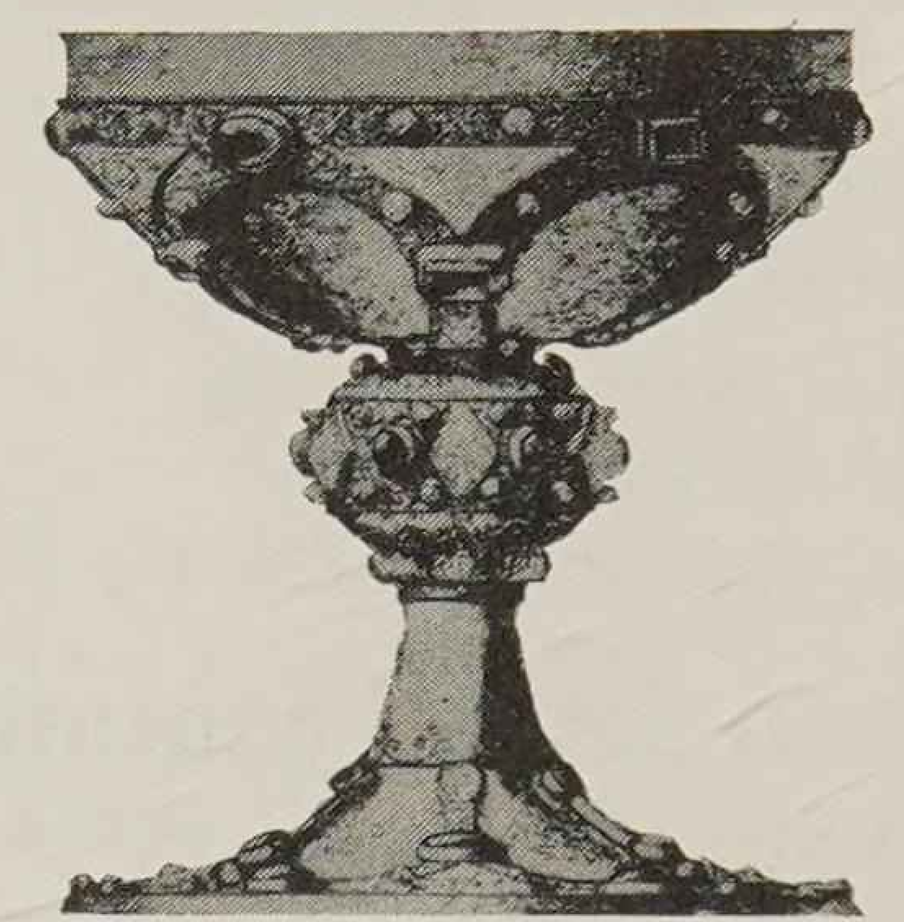

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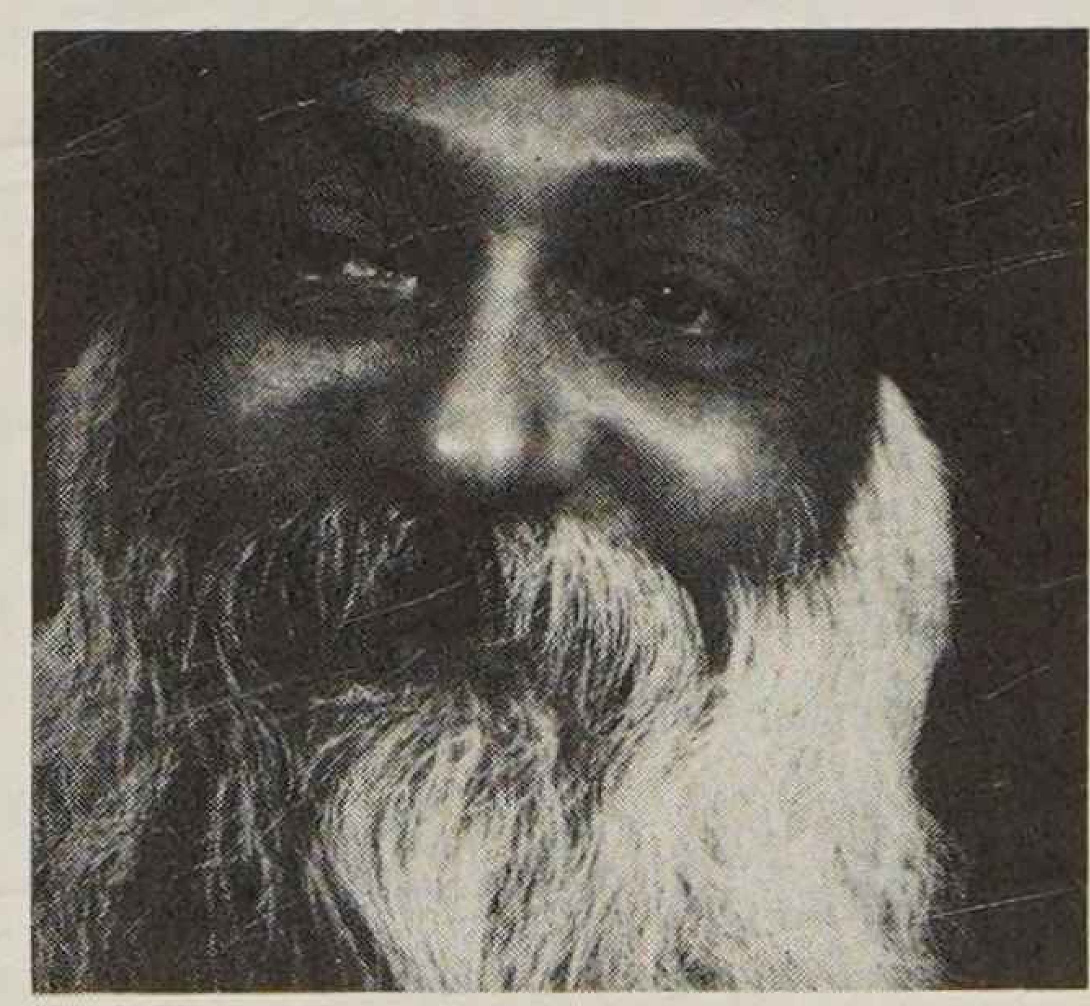

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way through the maze of books and other publications containing texts of stories. Collections and anthologies are in abundance, as are other kinds of reference books: dictionaries of mythological characters, studies of tale types and motifs, books about the religion and mythology of various peoples, as well as encyclopedias addressing global topics. Most of these books have bibliographies which are of great help; but there has been no bibliography of mythology itself, existing as a single reference to the field.

Ron Smith, a professor of English at Utah State University, has addressed this problem by writing a series of bibliographic essays surveying the most important books on mythology available in English. His book marks a step forward in simplifying the bibliographic confusion in the field. In fact, I have already found it to be a help in locating some rather specialized books in certain areas. But it is still far from being a full solution. With respect for the effort (which was obviously considerable) which brought the book into existence, I think it is important to point out some of its inadequacies. This onerous task is made no less difficult by the fact that Smith, in his introduction, quotes this reviewer (from an earlier issue of PARABOLA) as having already caviled about bibliographies as being "almost always the weakest part of any book." I take some comfort that that remark (which I stand by) was not completely disheartening, and that the book went forward anyway.

Mythologies of the World consists of a series of bibliographic essays organized by geography. Each essay consists of a number of sections, beginning with preliminary remarks on the nature of the mythology of a particular area, and followed by sections on collections of myths, studies of myths, works on religion and related matters, translations, works on historical/cultural background, works on archaeology, comparative studies, and works on art. This is a useful division of labor that lends itself to locating the kind of book one is looking for, provided always that the geographic organization is the principal means of approach.

The bibliographic essay, as a form of presenting technical as well as critical content, is useful when addressing a small and specific topic. When the topic is as broad as mythology, or even just the mythology of one country, it is debatable whether the essay would serve the same purpose as a *catalogue raisonné*, or even a simple annotated list. I missed a general bibliographic listing, which would have greatly increased the book's usefulness.

One of my earlier bibliographic remarks was that bibliographies tend to reflect one's own prejudices, and tend therefore to be somewhat limited in scope. One of the advantages of a bibliographic essay is that the prejudices are more or less spelled out, and one can take them with salt. The danger is that coming as they do in a reference work, critical remarks tend to be taken as authoritative. Even the presence of repeated references to the same books—for example, two Larousse encyclopedias of mythology, which are of

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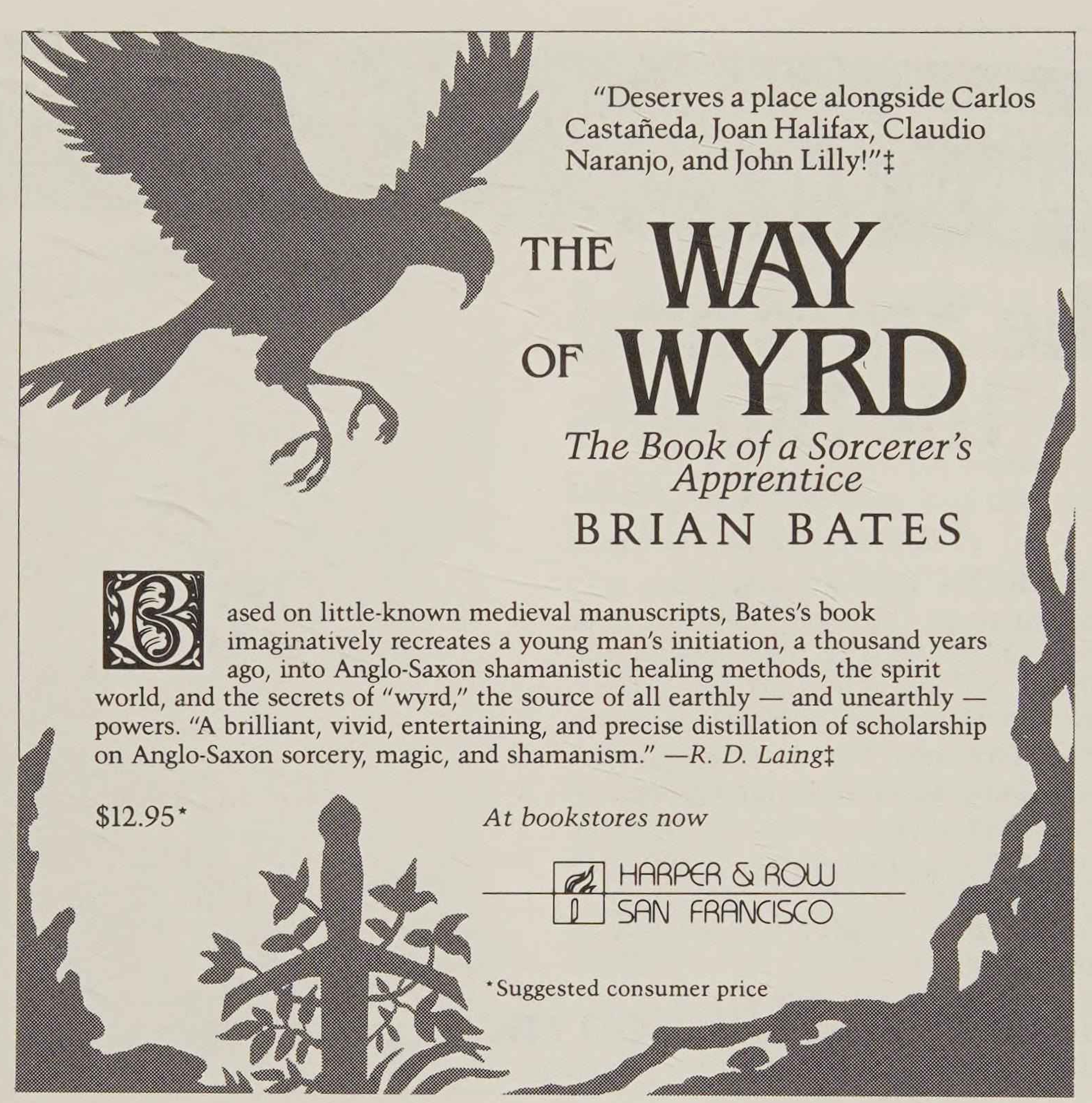
minimal use at best, and not always reliable—tends to lend them undeserved credit. A slightly different organization could have circumvented this problem. If a simple bibliographic list had been included, it would have enabled the author to refer to works by brief title, or preferably by author and year, rather than repeat full references again and again. This would have had two major advantages: first, the bibliography would have been in list form, far more useful in locating a specific book in a library or bookstore: and second, the author's annotations would have received greater weight and, not being broken up by citations, would have been more readable.

Taking at random various areas of my own interest, I found that the *Shah Nameh* in the chapter on Persian mythology was mentioned as a principal source "available in several English editions." Surely at least one of those editions could have been given full bibliographic citation. In the chapter on "Other European Mythologies," the *Kalevala* is mentioned as "the Finnish epic," which it is not: it is a collection of songs of a particular part of Finland, compiled and reworked by Elias Lonnrot, a nineteenth-century Finnish folklorist. It represents a minute fraction of the folktales collected (most of them untranslated) in Finland. The classification as "Finno-Ugric" moreover implies that the stories are also applicable to Hungary, which they are not. Finally, there is an egregious "boner" in the chapter on Celtic mythologies, to wit: "Lady Gregory's *Cuchulain of Muirtheme* . . . is one portion of the *Mabinogion* and, as such, is a good source." The *Mabinogion* is Welsh; Lady Gregory's collection of Cuchulain stories is Irish. Perhaps Professor Smith was thinking of Lady Guest's translation of *The Mabinogion*. It is a shame that he did not mention that or the other two extant translations of the Welsh tales.

My last complaint (and now I really feel like a heel) is that only works in English are cited. Of course, this is an explicit



intention of the book, and so it is completely unfair of me to mention it. However, in a plea for a definitive bibliography of mythology, and not an essay, it cannot be left unsaid that an enormous number—perhaps the greater bulk—of books on mythology are written in other languages than English. Even a list of the principle authoritative works in German and French alone would be a substantial addition to the paucity of reference works in the field.

Despite these objections, *Mythologies of the World* is a beginning, and a good one, in solving the bibliographical problem in mythology. It is a valuable tool, one which I expect to use a great deal.

Paul Jordan-Smith is a freelance writer and storyteller and a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

Forest of a Thousand Daemons

By D.O. Fagunwa. Translated with introduction by Wole Soyinka. New York: Random House, 1982. Pp. 140. $12.95.

Reviewed by Bettina L. Knapp

D.O. Fagunwa's *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* tingles with the excitement and mystery of a world awakening to life. Written in 1939 in Yoruba, the language of western Nigeria, *Forest of a Thousand Daemons* answers the needs of a changing cultural and psychological consciousness. This novel may be looked upon as a rite of passage, similar in this regard to the *Odyssey* or *Beowulf*—with all the harrowing experiences inherent in such works. More derivative than its predecessors, it also lacks their scope, poetry, and breadth. Nevertheless, Fagunwa's novel is fascinating for the excitement it generates in the reader, and for the manner in which initiatory processes are dramatized in the heart

of the forest and mountain experience.

Fagunwa creates the perfect backdrop for his tale in the opening lines, which describe a dance, the *agidigbo*, which arouses the senses with its accelerated momentum, inviting both participants and, vicariously, readers to whirl and twirl about, thereby allowing an irrational, dreamlike atmosphere to take precedence over the circumscribed realm of logic.

As the drumbeats slacken and the footwork comes to a halt, the narrator, Akara-ogun ("Compound of Spells"), takes up his story. A mythic hunter, the son of a great medicine man and warrior and an evil, witchlike mother, he comes from a home where spells and incantations dominated. "Two hundred and sixty incubi lived in that house and the birds of divination were without number," he tells us. Only after the death of his parents, when he is twenty-six years old, does he set out for the forest of a thousand daemons. Like the Sumerian Gilgamesh, the Celtic Cuchulain, the Germanic Siegfried, and countless other heroes who undergo an initiatory experience in the forest, Akara-ogun sets out for his ordeal. C.G. Jung has frequently referred to the forest as the realm of the Great Mother. It is within its thick, uncontrolled growth, which Jung identifies with the unconscious, that the hero learns to cope with danger, to confront those forces that might otherwise devour him. The primitive sphere of being that our narrator enters is inhabited not merely by flora and fauna, but by supernatural entities: *ghommids* who speak, cajole, love, threaten, arouse, and teach unsuspecting mortals who come upon them. Ranging from monstrous to exquisite, *ghommids* may be looked upon, psychologically, as projections of unconscious contents, entities that lie hidden within an individual's murky depth. Fagunwa concretizes them: "There is no breed of animal missing in this forest we speak of; it is the home of every vicious beast on earth, and the dwelling of every kind of feathered freak. Ah, a most evil forest is the forest of a thousand daemons."

As the narrator enters the forest, darkness enshrouds him; voices, shrill and metallic, emanate from every area, filling him with terror. Spells and incantations can do nothing to alleviate his fears as he penetrates deeply into a world that lives, breathes, and throbs with energy. Soon he encounters a tiny fellow who comes up to his waist, who is lamenting the fact that "the children of the earth lack charity and kindness." Reminiscent of the little man met by Vanaimonen, the hero of the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*, this little being teaches the narrator not to measure power according to size. The narrator then comes upon a sixteen-eyed devil, a monstrous force called Agbako, who wears "a cap of iron, and a coat of brass." He is somewhat like Tubal-Cain's citizens of Enochia, who also heat and bend this hard substance (Genesis 4:22), as well as the haunting hero of Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage in the Orient*. In the case of our narrator, Agbako's Medusalike eyes stun and frighten, but they also energize. While Akara-ogun is wrestling with the forest creature, flames leap from the ground. Agbako then thumps on the

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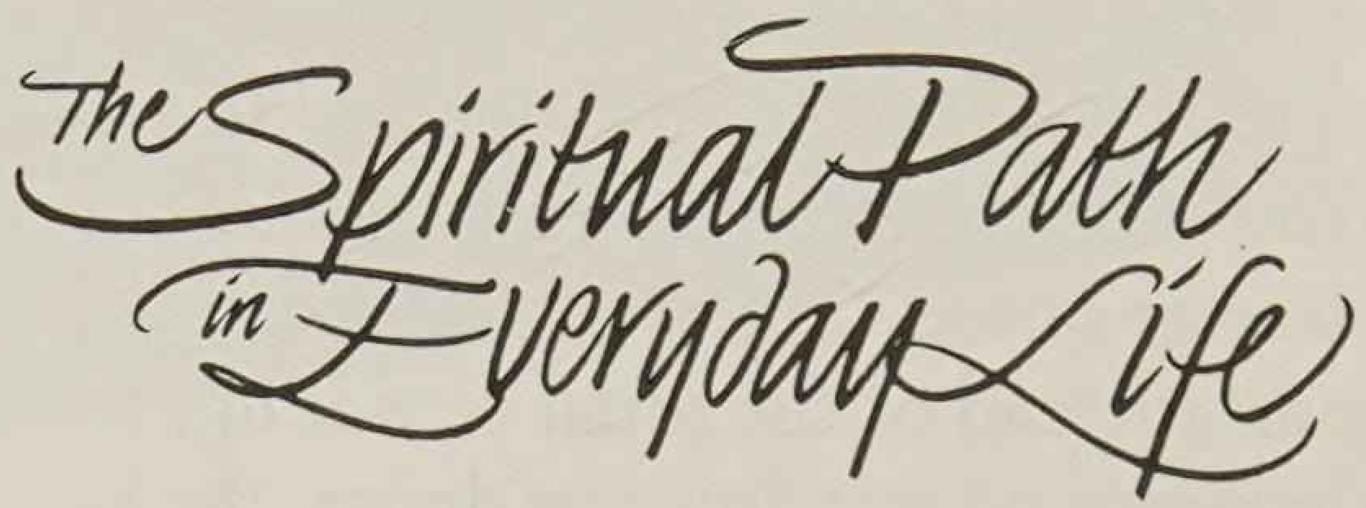

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earth, which suddenly opens up, and, like Prometheus of old, the narrator is "sucked into the void."

It is in the deepest layers of the earth that the narrator pursues his initiatory experience. Dazzled and dizzied, he awakens from his somnolence in a frighteningly strange house. The walls are lined with guns instead of the usual cowdung; though there are no windows or doors, the house is lit by an eerie light. As in Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, the walls move in on the narrator, then go back to their original position. Cold hands clutch him, after which he seems to expand and grow to monstrous proportions.

After the forest experience and the incarceration within the depths of the earth, the narrator attempts to reach airy, spiritual climes by journeying to the city on Mount Langbo. Like Mount Meru for the Hindu, Mount Tabor for the Israelite, the Mount of Olives for the Christian, and Mount Caf for the Muslim, Mount Langbo is identified with heavenly spheres by our narrator. Now, however, he is joined by others who also seek to purify their beings. The journey is harrowing, since they must reenter the forest, reach its other side and then ascend. On their way they meet four-headed creatures with serpentine tongues spewing venom, poisonous fish that spout flames, scorpions, wasps, and a city of birds, reminiscent of Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*.

Mount Langbo is a city of lawns, bronzes, mirrors, and a palace that glows like silver and gold, "displaying the glory of God." The narrator and those who have survived their ordeal so far must spend seven days in a house of seven wings. At seven o'clock on the mystical seventh day of God's Creation, the narrator and his friends, re-created according to their own dimensions, return home. Each understands that life is made up of polarities—"if tomorrow is bitter the day after may be like honey"—and truths, such as God "helps only those who help themselves."

Forest of a Thousand Daemons is verbal food for Nigerian, European, and American. As a psychological piece, its archetypal imagery explores hidden spheres which may not be approached except by means of visual experience; as a literary work, its viscerality entices, and its animistic world crackles with energy, serving to arouse and dazzle the reader.

Bettina L. Knapp is a professor at Hunter College and the Graduate School of City University of New York, Department of Romance Languages and Comparative Literature. Among her most recent books are Theater and Alchemy *and* Antonin Artaud; Man of Vision.

NOTICES

Arts of the Indian Americas: Leaves from the Sacred Tree
By Jamake Highwater. New York: Harper & Row, 1983. Pp. 372. $35.00.

Reviewed by Mary Jane Lenz

Jamake Highwater has undertaken a monumental task in this book—a one-volume survey of the Indian arts of the Western Hemisphere, past and present. He uses the nearly four hundred (mostly black and white) illustrations to reflect his contention that American Indians have a unique vision of the world, and that by looking at their "primal art"—a term he prefers to "primitive art"—we can reach into and understand their special outlook. Not everyone will be persuaded by the grouping together of Plains painted buffalo robes, Mayan polychrome vases, and Peruvian textiles that American Indian art is any more bound together in a common tradition than are, for example, a Cellini saltcellar, a Rembrandt etching, and a Henry Moore sculpture, all of which reflect Western sensibilities. Nevertheless, the juxtaposition gives us some sense of the range and variety of the beautiful objects created by Native Americans, and the book

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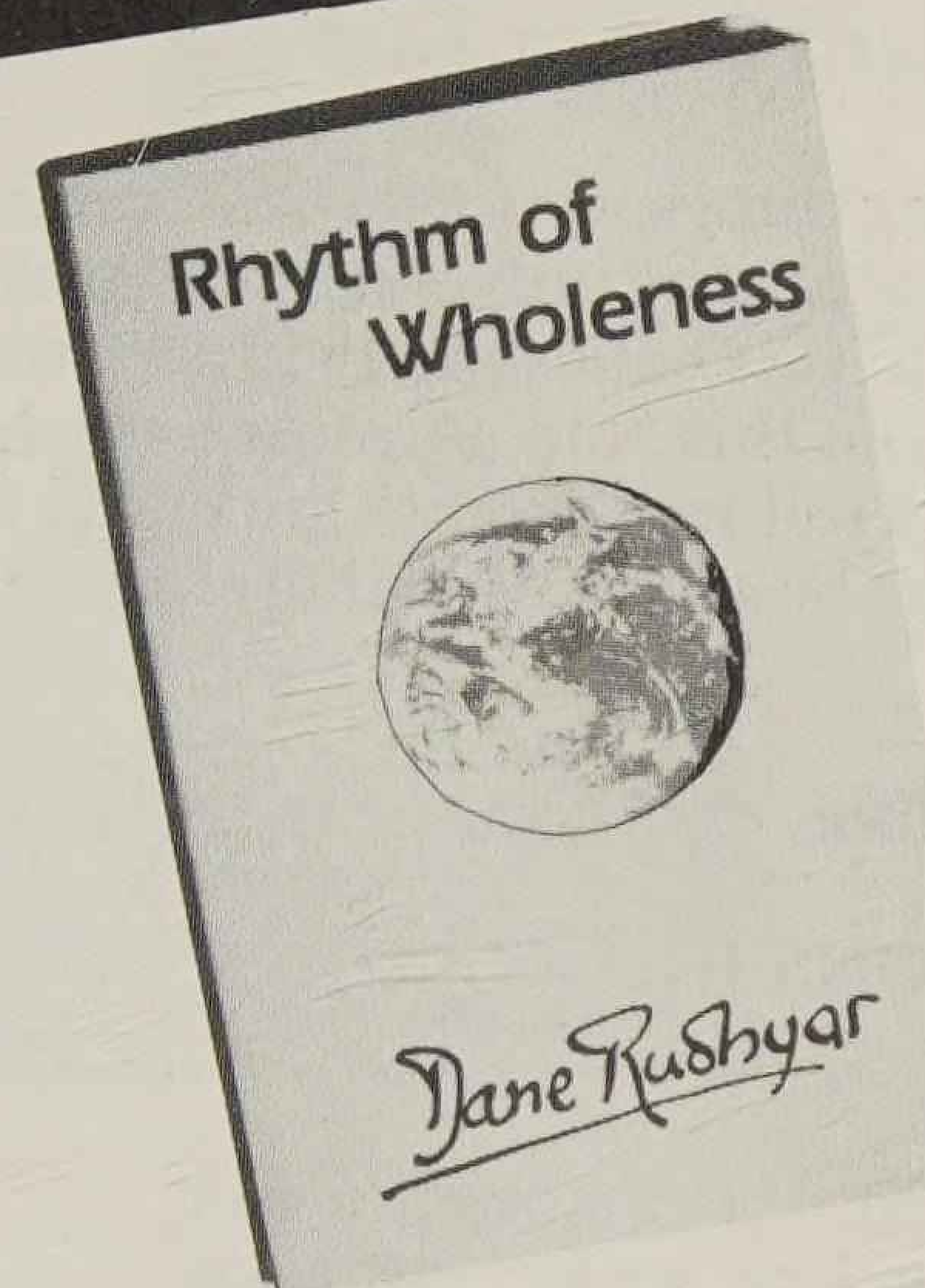

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serves as a helpful introductory text for those not familiar with the subject. Highwater also includes a useful list of museums, a glossary, and a selected bibliography.

The book begins with an overview of the cultural areas of the Americas, and offers short essays on art forms, iconography, and various techniques such as quillwork. The bulk of the text is devoted to a description, cross-cultural and historical, of a large number of American Indian arts—basketry, textiles, skinwork, feather and beadwork, mosaics, shellwork, cutouts, painting, oral and written literature, music, dancing, and ritual.

The illustrations include photographs (of objects, people, and architecture), line drawings, and maps. They vary in quality, as well as in completeness of accompanying information, and are not always well coordinated with the text. Some interesting-sounding art forms, such as "marriage reliefs" at the pre-Columbian site of Mitla in Oaxaca, are not shown; there are too many aerial photographs of temple mound complexes and drawings of their ground plans—one or two would have made the point. At least five objects are illustrated twice, each time with different (although not conflicting) information.

Some old fallacies are perpetuated here: that beadwork replaced quillwork on the plains, that Northwest Coast art only reached full fruition when European metal became available. There are other errors of fact: seed beads were not the first trade beads on the plains, wood carving in the Northeast and Canada is not sparse but includes numerous splendid examples of many types of objects; dentalium shell was not introduced by white traders in 1860 but was widely traded long before.

Highwater's inclusion of oral and written literature, a welcome addition in a book on the arts, is somewhat diffuse and idiosyncratic. Rather than sharing with us some selections from the rich body of available native texts, he chooses to make a series of general statements drawn from

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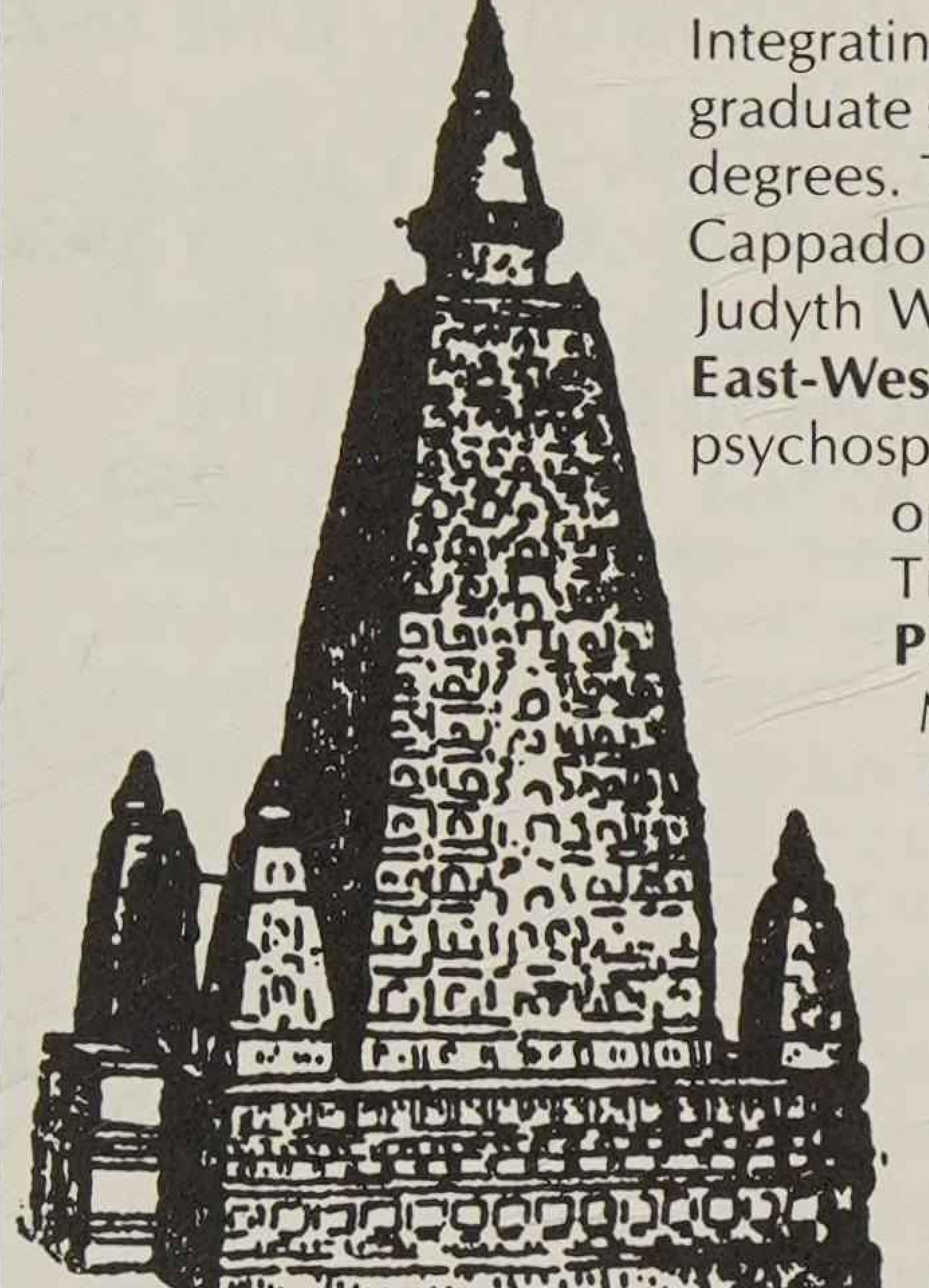

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other sources, and reviews twentieth-century writings by novelists such as Miguel Asturias and the controversial writer on "holy traditions," Hyemeyohsts Storm. He does include one brief passage from the Quiché Maya saga, the *Popul Vuh*, and has an interesting discussion about the power of Native American literature to raise the self to a higher level of reality. The section on music, dance, and ritual offers the same potpourri—specific information about native musical instruments and types of dance steps, some nice ethnographic photographs, and information about melody patterns in North America.

This book, while flawed and in some ways unbalanced, summarizes a great deal of complex material in one place, and will doubtless raise the consciousness of nonspecialists to the fact that Native American art is rich and diverse. It could serve, along with some selections from the bibliography, as a useful introductory text. Certainly, fans of Jamake Highwater will enjoy it; his personal vision permeates the entire book, and for those who are not familiar with his work, this might be a good place to begin.

Mary Jane Lenz is Assistant Curator at the Museum of the American Indian in New York City.

The Sacred Path: Spells, Prayers & Power Songs of the American Indians

Edited by John Bierhorst. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1983. Pp. 191. $9.50.

Reviewed by Thomas Buckley

I speak to your naked heart

—Chippewa

There are a hundred reasons, moral and ethical, not to like this book; but they are hard to maintain.

It is true that we will not fully know the intricate worlds of meanings within which these songs first made sense:

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Thirteen deer
Thirteen eagles
Thirteen white horses
Thirteen rainbows.

—Mazatec

Most of us cannot hear the original, resonant voices or smell the camp and village smells that once held them in air like "a haze . . . a growing vegetation in your ears . . . a mixture of beautiful flowers and water"; this speech of "dark wind and straight lightning" (Navajo) a

Knife Wing!

—Zuni

We will perhaps resent the editor's efforts to help us ("Only a portion of the full prayer is given here . . . ."), the clever juxtaposition of songs once entirely separate, the making-easy. But maybe, mysteriously, we will know each singer/song/spirit anyway, since

I, the song, I walk here.

—Modoc

Against all reasons, that "I" becomes this one, reading; we hear for ourselves our own voices, find our own meanings, and put aside many of our scruples. The book gathers momentum this way.

A dawn
appears
behold it

—Sioux

"This is true spirit, true power" (Aztec), pure word magic, real beauty. Looking for something else, some extrinsic "power" to expropriate, we will miss it. But seeing how this true power works in us, compelling, showing beauty everywhere, opening to us our own world, we'll have to let go of questions about domination and exploitation and oppression, about translation and native context and the co-optation of culture, and just go with it.

Don't you ever
you up in the sky
don't you ever get tired
of having the clouds
between you and us?

—Nootka

When we do let go we can really hear these songs. I think this is exactly what their makers wanted; for their audiences, for us, now, to find our own meanings here that are, too, the songs' real meanings; just beauty. It's a beautiful book.

We are glad to be here

—Modoc

Thomas Buckley teaches anthropology at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and is a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA.

Krishna, the Butter Thief

John Stratton Hawley

"... this is a volume to which I will confidently send my students as well as other, independent learners. Assuming that they already have an interest in Krishna, they are bound at some point to be caught up in a study as rich, resonant and rewarding as this one is."
—H. Daniel Smith, Parabola

$50.00

Princeton University Press
41 William Street, Princeton, NJ 08540

The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka. An Anthropologic and Historical Study
By Michael Carrithers. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983. Pp. 306. $32.50.

Reviewed by Edward Rice

There is a tradition (at least in Sinhalese Buddhism) that the Buddhist Way will survive five thousand years, enduring a decline and a rebirth, and then disappear. Since we are roughly at the midpoint, and Buddhism has experienced numerous disabilities due to colonialism, capitalism, and industrialism, in Sri Lanka as elsewhere, it now seems possible that a resurgence is on the horizon. In the middle of the nineteenth century, a handful of Sinhalese Buddhists, eschewing the often parasitic and corrupt life of the village temple priest, made an effort to return to the ancient canons and customs of Theravada, seeking out forest hermitages and caves in which to follow the Way along the earliest lines. So lacking in continuity with its roots was Sinhalese Buddhism that the forest monks had to turn to the Burmese for the rite of ordination and for important Pali texts.

This revival of the primitive Way is small in size but important, with about 150 hermitages and more than 600 monks. "All but a small handful have appeared since 1950," says Michael Carrithers, the author of this study, pointing out that the movement is so young that it can still be examined in its origins. Carrithers knows Pali, speaks the contemporary tongues of the island, and understands what the monks are striving for, a life of renunciation—"simplicity, poverty, and the rejection of luxury"—and a reliance on the "four necessities" only—food, dress, lodging, and medicine. Food may be begged or donated; clothing is likely to be robes made of rags; dwellings are a cave, a spot beneath a tree, or whatever a layman offers at the moment; and when ill, the monk "is to rely on medicine made of fermented cow's urine, but may also accept butter, honey, oil, and molasses"—this from a contemporary manual.

But these are the externals. It was nec-

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essary for the new monks to reestablish the tradition of meditation in opposition to the common belief "that it is no longer possible to attain Nirvana in the present age," for "man's moral and intellectual capabilities, as well as his lifespan, decay through extensive ages." Today, man, it is believed by some Buddhists, no longer has the mental capacity to attain Nirvana. But obstacles have been overcome, men are attracted from all over the island, and from Germany, England, and America, and the new monasticism is thriving. Carrithers spent over five years studying the movement, conducting numerous interviews and reading the ancient texts in Pali, but unfortunately the heavy hand of academia hangs over the book; some of the interviews read like case histories, and the work is marred by scholarly jargon. However, independent sources assure me that the movement is vital and important and an authentic rebirth in one of its earliest homes of a Way long in decline.

Edward Rice has traveled extensively in Asia and the Middle East as a writer and photographer. He is now completing a biography of Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton based on previously overlooked material.

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Page 97 Shen Chou, *Poet on a Mountain Top.* Ink on paper, 15th century. Courtesy the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (Nelson Fund).

PROFILES

Joseph Bruchac recently received a Rockefeller Fund Fellowship to study themes of continuance in contemporary Native American poetry. He is the author of two collections of retellings of Iroquois folktales, *Turkey Brothers* and *Stone Giants and Flying Heads* (The Crossing Press).

D.M. Dooling is the Founding Editor of PARABOLA.

John Stratton Hawley is Associate Professor of Asian Languages and Literature at the University of Washington. His *Krishna, the Butter Thief* was published last summer by Princeton University Press, and his religious and literary profile of the poet Sūr Dās (*Sūr Dās: Poet, Singer, Saint*) is about to appear from the University of Washington Press.

Jonathan Omer-Man is currently engaged in religious outreach work in Los Angeles. He writes about Jewish mysticism, teaches privately the lesser-known paths within Judaism, and serves as a religious counselor.

Lawrence Russ has been the Alfred P. Sloan Scholar for the Humanities at the University of Michigan and an Honorary Writing Fellow at the University of Massachusetts. His poems have been published in several anthologies and in numerous journals, including *The Nation*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, and *The Iowa Review*.

Robert A.F. Thurman is Associate Professor of Religion at Amherst College and President of the American Institute of Buddhist Studies. His latest book, *Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence*, will soon be published by Princeton University Press.

P.L. Travers, a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA since the magazine began, is the author of the Mary Poppins books, as well as *Friend Monkey*, *The Fox in the Manger*, *About the Sleeping Beauty*, and *Two Pairs of Shoes*.

Janwillem van de Wetering is the author of two books about Zen Buddhism, *The Empty Mirror* and *A Glimpse of Nothingness*. He has also written a series of well-known mystery novels, most recently *The Streetbird* (Putnam).

Robert W. Venables served as Curator of American Indian History and Head of the Education Department at New York City's Museum of the American Indian from 1980 to 1982. He is currently Director of Special Projects at New York City's Urban Indian Center at the American Indian Community Center, and Creative Director of a new company, Heritage Quest. He is also Co-editor and a contributor to *American Indian Environments: Ecological Issues in North American History* (Syracuse University Press).