PARABOLA

MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

THE TRICKSTER

CLOWNS — FOOLS — TEACHERS — AND THE TAROT

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VOLUME IV, NO. 1

PARABOLA

THE TRICKSTER MYTH AND THE QUEST FOR MEANING

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Cover: The Ashanti call him *Ananse*, the Sioux, *Iktomi*—the Spider Trickster. An original rendering by Julie Durrell.

Inside Cover: Painting of a Hopi Koshari by Cliff Bahnimptewa. From *Kachinas: A Hopi Artist's Documentary* by Barton Wright. Published by Northland Press, Flagstaff, Arizona, and the Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona.

FOCUS

There is a classic saying for the seeker of meaning: "When the pupil is ready, the teacher appears." This seems so simple and so reassuring that it is easy not to pay any real attention to it. But it is in fact not nearly so comfortable as it sounds. Perhaps it takes some sort of definite action to be ready. But nowadays, spiritual guides are in such plentiful supply that the young candidates for instruction discover no need for any preparation. They find themselves solicited rather than seeking; it cannot occur to them that *the* teacher is hard to come by, when there is one on every street corner. Nothing seems to be required of them but a willingness to shop around among the multiplicity of eagerly competing adepts. How rare, and how arresting, to find a teacher who refuses a pupil because he is not ready —as Christ sent away the rich young man —or who, like Marpa, tries to discourage him, in order to put his readiness to the test. Yet only such men are the real teachers.

"Disciple" is a word that is either claimed too easily, or rejected out of hand as occult nonsense by the non-followers. Yet it means, simply, one who submits to a discipline, a teaching; it means a pupil, an asker of questions—a seeker of meaning, which is something we will never find unless we are taught.

Perhaps one of the more destructive aspects of the recent horrors in Guyana is the association that it makes in our minds. Nine hundred people die in a mass suicide-murder under the orders of their teacher, and a connection is established between horror and the idea of obedience to a spiritual guide. There is a kind of shuddering but triumphant "I told you so" on the part of the uncommitted to all those who profess and call

themselves followers of a way; and a certain jolt of doubt in these latter. For every way has a Master who leads it, and a hierarchy that has been created among his nearer pupils. We would prefer a broad road on which we could all march abreast; but if such a way exists, does it lead where we wish to go? The way of transformation is one of ascending levels; it does not fit into the plane of a democracy. And very comfortable democracies have for the most part taken over the established traditions, in which the original Masters have been dead so long that it may even be hoped they never really existed.

But what if they did exist? What if we had lived at the time and place of an actual Gautama the Buddha or Jesus of Nazareth? What if one of the great teachers were here now, under a different, unfamiliar name—would we recognize him? And if we did, would we be too cautious, too clever, too democratic, to follow him? Perhaps, after all, a great teacher could come to the world even now; perhaps their season is not over. I used to wonder as a child if there were a sort of equatorial line around the middle of the world's history, on the south side of which we were born and where no *great* men could ever appear.

But certainly false prophets are not confined to either side of the time zone. It is very clear that they are with us today, and warnings about them have come to us since biblical times. We have also been warned to differentiate between the prophets—even the true ones—and the greatness they foretold. Zen cries woe to him who mistakes the pointing finger for the moon; and "love God and be indifferent to the saints," says a modern teacher. It appears that we do not understand very well the difference between teaching and brain-washing, between conviction and hypnosis: between the ego-shaking contradictions of the holy trickster and the soul-destroying ones of the unholy. Which is to say that we are losing our power—if we ever had it, or have not lost it already—to discriminate between the levels of sleep and waking, between the partial and the whole.

Who will teach us to discriminate, and are we ready to be taught? The true trickster, mixing up everything in impossible contradictions, shocks us into a greater clarity; the false trickster makes us believe that the opposites are the same. Jones of Jonestown, the leader of the People's Temple which came to its macabre end last November in Guyana, trained his followers with a frequent ritual potion of fruit juice to drink cyanide when he bade them. But the holy trickster makes it impossible for us to follow him blindly; he shakes us awake to stand on our own feet and make our own decisions. Yet without his help, we never could have made them. The master-pupil relationship, however terribly it may be misunderstood and distorted, is a necessary one for the searcher for meaning and for a way. The "moon" of the Zen parable, the greatness of the true master who is within, must be pointed to from without.

What is needed is what the churches have lost: the kind of knowledge that cannot be put into books, that depends for its transmission on human contact. It cannot emanate from someone who does not have it, nor be received by anyone who thinks that he already does.

Somewhere, somehow, there are always "men of knowledge." But they are recognizable only by the people who know that they do not know, who are open to laughter and to shock, and so are ready to learn.

—D.M. Dooling

FULL CIRCLE/A Readers' Forum

PARABOLA *is interested in an exchange of ideas and points of view through the active participation of its readers. We welcome your letters and comments on the issues raised in our pages. Please address all correspondence to:*

The Editor, PARABOLA, *150 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011*

The interview conducted by Irving Friedman with Adin Steinsaltz (Vol. III, No. 2) touched on a subject of considerable interest to this seeker: the meaning of *Daath*, the so-called "hidden" sphere of the Sefiroth. Rabbi Steinsaltz speaks of *Daath* in terms of "exchange," "symmetry," "involvement," and "connection." I would like to add to these the ideas of relativity, equilibrium, mirror image, and most specifically the idea of interconnection. There is a way in which all of these labels are accurate and isomorphic as applied to *Daath*.

It is possible to place it in a musical context where it becomes very simple and clear. If we take the octave of C-Major as our standard, the octave reads C-D-E-F-G-A-B—and then back to C again. The second C forms an interconnection between one octave and the next. The eighth note of the octave is a repetition of the first, only at a higher level. Two consecutive octaves of C-Major have only one note in common to both octaves, which is the C that stands in the middle.

In the octave there is a transformation through a series of seven major notes and then a return to beginnings—to the C above C. The second C is not the same C, but can be thought of as a mirror image of the first, and also as both an interconnection and an equilibrium.

The second C is equivalent to *Daath*, and it is the reason why *Daath* is called the "hidden" sphere, and often omitted from the Sephiroth, because the Sephiroth has no need to repeat the first note (the first "C"), and yet the interconnections among things cannot be explained without it.

This idea of systems going through seven major transformations, and then returning to beginnings *on a new level*, agrees with many different exegeses of myth and aphorism. The ancients had a name for this process, calling it the *aat shatet*—a universal cycle of seven-ness.

—James B. Porter
El Segundo, CA

In Barbara Myerhoff's excellent "The Older Woman as Androgyne" (Vol. III, No. 4), one sentence particularly caught my attention: "...their present, temporary inhabitation of [old sexual roles] is an adumbration of other times, other selves, other lives, when men and women lived and worked together and really needed each other, and reciprocity was more important than the relative inequality of one sex with the other." Myerhoff is speaking of old Jewish women in a social center, but I think that reciprocity is more important than relative equality to happiness in any setting. I observed this on a small scale in a community of Jesuits studying and teaching at Harvard. Because of a certain *savoir-faire* that the order managed to teach, a combination of intelligence and charm that was evidently different and refreshing in that setting, each of the Jesuits was much in demand outside the Jesuit community. At home, however, though each enjoyed perfect equality with all the others, there was little reciprocity. Each had that same *savoir-faire*, and none had a way to fill the lacks that the same common training had also created. We were, mostly, an unhappy group at home.

All this is a prelude to a comment about Women's Liberation. On occasion, one hears that movement call for a new reciprocity, reversing the old one in the marriage couple; i.e., he stays home, cooks, decorates, cares for the kids, etc., while she pursues a career and brings home a salary. But more often, one hears simply of her *also* having a career, while they divide those homely duties equally. But to thus eliminate reciprocity, leaving each partner with the same mix of duties, is to eliminate that sense in each that each has a "place" in the marriage. My brief, in other words, is not against women doing anything, but in favor of men and women seeking one way or another to arrange their lives in a network of reciprocal arrangements.

I know, too, that all talk of women's careers must sound a little silly down around the $5,000 per annum bracket where the career woman may be unknown but the working wife has long been the only kind of wife you could get. But note that this is a victory on the part of the universally competitive American economic system over perhaps the last surviving reciprocal relationship. Whenever it gets you to deal with it as you yourself and not as son or father or wife or daughter or brother or even as best friend, it wins. In Women's Liberation, it is about to win very big, I sometimes fear. Most of the women I know are going to look back on their lives, if they live to be old, not the way the resilient old women of Myerhoff's article do but the way the broken old men do. Once they were on their way, once they had so much promise. But someone broke the promise, and they never arrived.

—John A. Miles, Jr.
Los Angeles, CA

May I suggest that you consider an issue of PARABOLA devoted to children—mythical and spiritual thoughts on the nature of the child. As a parent, the importance of the subject is evident to me. As Paracelsus says in the summer issue, all potentialities are inherent in the child, and what you awaken comes forth from him. And, the spiritual quest involves regaining the consciousness of the child. It could be a great issue.

—Lawrence D. Ross
Madison, NJ

We think so, too, and are planning an issue on the child this year. The Editors.

I appreciate the review of the translation of Mircea Eliade's novel, *The Forbidden Forest*, that was made by Mac Linscott Ricketts and myself. It appeared in the issue, *Inner Alchemy*, (Vol. III, No. 3).

There is one point that I should like to make clear, however, and that is that Dr. Ricketts and I did not translate it from the French, but from Romanian.

Prof. Eliade wrote it in Romanian in the late 1940s, but it was not published in that language then. Alain Guillermou translated it from the manuscript into French and it was published in Paris by Gallimard. Later Prof. Eliade made some minor changes and arranged with Ioan Cuşa, Paris, to publish it in Romanian, and it was this edition that Dr. Ricketts and I used in translating it into English, with the title, *The Forbidden Forest*, published this year by Notre Dame University Press.

The title in Romanian is *Noaptea de Sânziene (The Night of St. John)*; that of the French edition is *Forêt Interdite (Forbidden Forest)*.

Prof. Kitagawa's review seems to imply that our translation was made from the French edition.

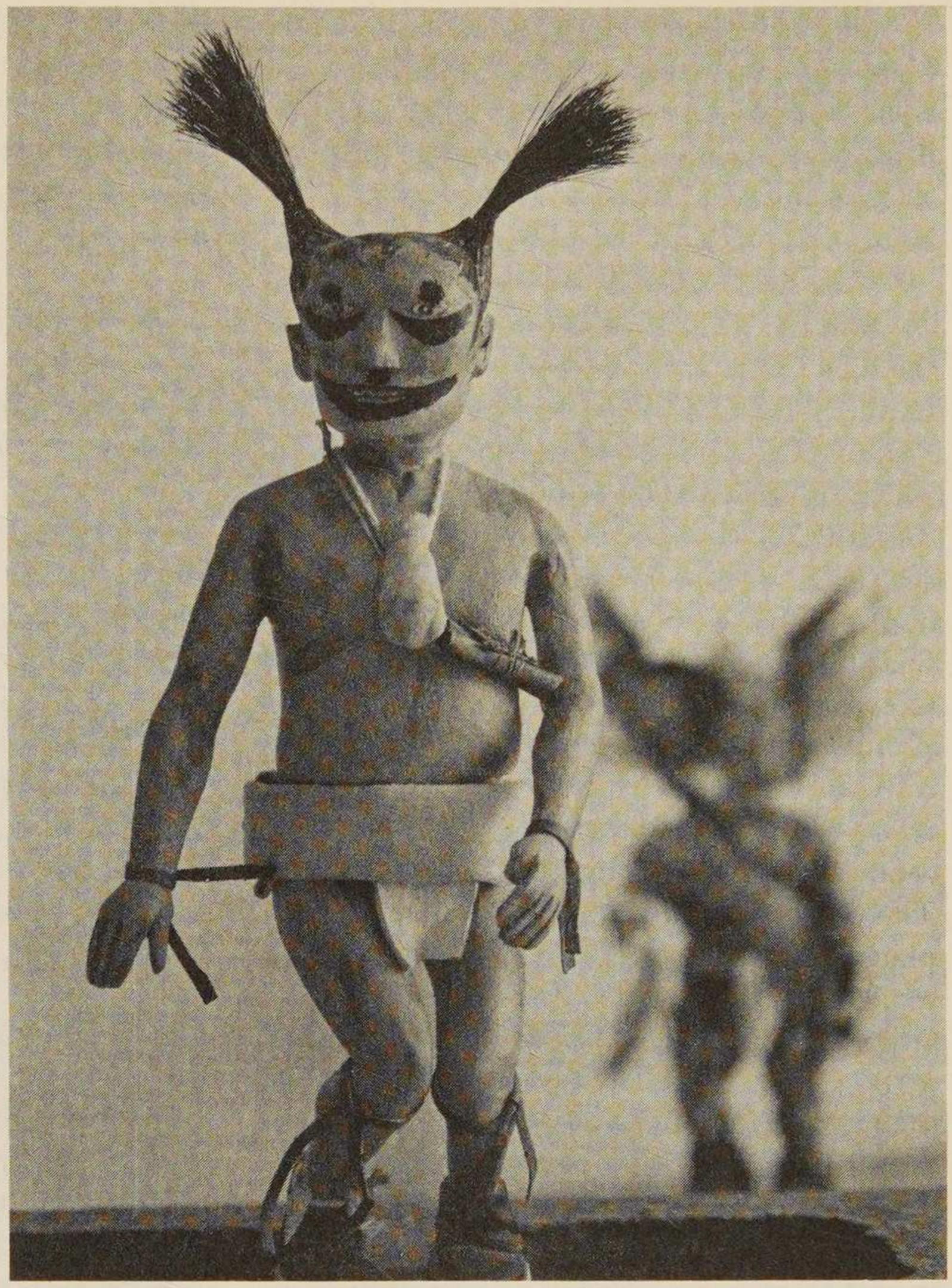
—Mary P. Stevenson
Winston-Salem, NC

Your last issue of PARABOLA, on the theme of "Androgyny," was as beautifully put together and as interesting as your other issues, which is to say that it reached a very high standard indeed. Amongst other articles, I enjoyed much of Barbara Myerhoff's article on older Jewish women; this type of analysis of the religious values latent in everyday behavior is very promising, and I

(Continued on page 134)

One More Smile for a Hopi Clown

by Emory Sekaquaptewa



The heart of the Hopi concept of clowning is that we are all clowns. This was established at the very beginning when people first emerged from the lower world. In spite of the belief that this was a new world in which no corruption and immorality would be present, the people nevertheless took as their own all things that they saw in the new world. Seeing that the people still carried with them many of the ways of the corrupted underworld, the Spirit Being divided them into groups and laid out a life-pattern for each of them, so that each would follow its own life-way.

Before the Hopi people left from the emergence place, one man chosen by them as their leader went up on a hill. I can just imagine the throng of his people around him who were excited and eager in getting ready to be led out to the adventures of a new world. The leader gets up on this hill and calls out, "yaahahay!" four times. Thus gaining their attention he said, "Now you heard me cry out to you in this way. You will hear me cry in this way when we have reached the end of our life-way. It will be a sign that we have reached the end of the world. We will know then whether we have fulfilled our destiny. If we have not we will see how it is to be done." The leader who was a visionary man chose this way of reminding his people that they have only their worldly ambition and aspirations by which to gain a spiritual world of eternity. He was showing them that we cannot be perfect in this world after all and if we are reminded that we are clowns, maybe we can have, from time to time, introspection

as a guide to lead us right. From this beginning when we have been resembled to clowns we know that this is to be a trying life and that we will try to fulfill our destiny by mimicry, by mockery, by copying, by whatever.

This whole idea of clowning is re-enacted at the time of the *katsina* dances. When they are dancing in the plaza the *katsinas* represent the spiritual life toward which Hopi destiny is bent. The *katsinas* dance in the plaza at intervals throughout the day and sometimes for two days. When the clowns come they represent man today who is trying to reach this place of paradise. That is why the clowns always arrive at the plaza from the rooftops of the houses facing the plaza where the *katsinas* are dancing. The rooftops signify that even though we have reached the end, we are not necessarily ready to walk easily into the spiritual world. The difficulties by which clowns gain the place of the *katsinas* make for fun and laughter, but also show that we may not all be able to make it from the rooftop because it is too difficult. We are going to clown our way through life making believe that we know everything and when the time comes, possibly no one will be prepared after all to enter the next world. We will still find the way difficult with obstacles in front of us. Maybe some of us won't make it.

The clowns come to the edge of the housetops around noon and they announce themselves with the cry "yaahahay!" four times. This announces as foretold at emergence the arrival at the end of the life-way journey. And then they make their way into the plaza with all sorts of antics and buffoonery representing the Hopi life quest. In their actions they reveal that we haven't yet fulfilled our destiny after all. By arriving at the late hour, noon, they show that we are lagging behind because we think we have many things to do.

Once in the plaza they act just as people did when they emerged in this world. They presume that they are in a new world, clean and pure. They are where they can finally have eternal life like the *katsinas*; indeed, this is the day all Hopi look forward to. But as they are remarking on the beauty of this place filled with plants and good things they hear the *katsina* songs. They grope around the plaza looking for someone. They pretend they cannot see them because they are spirits. Finally, one of the clowns touches a *katsina* and upon his discovery of these beautiful beings, the clowns immediately try to take possession of them. "This is mine!" "This is mine!" They even fight each other over the possession of the *katsinas* and over the food and things they find.

The remainder of the afternoon is filled with all sorts of clown performances, many of which are planned in advance. Others just happen. These are satires focused on almost anything whether it be in the Hopi world or in the non-Hopi world. Clowns make fun of life and thereby cause people to look at themselves.

Imagination is important to the clown. There are good clowns and not so good clowns when it comes to being funny and witty. But all clowns perform for the smiles and laughter they hope to inspire in the people. When the clowns leave the kiva on their way to the plaza the last request by each is a prayer something to the effect, "If it be so, may I gain at least one smile."

The clown skits and satiric performances done throughout the afternoon are reminiscent of the corruption that we experienced in the underworld, where we presumably had Conscience as a guide. We chose not to follow the Conscience and it comes into play during the clown performances in the form of *katsinas* that visit the plaza. The Owl *katsina* on his first visit comes with a handful of pebbles, carrying a switch. He appears at each corner of the plaza presumably unseen by the clowns and throws little pebbles at the clowns, occasionally hitting them. These pangs of Conscience are felt but not heeded by the clowns. Owl *katsina* returns to the plaza later accompanied by several threatening *katsinas* carrying whips. And this time, instead of pebbles, he may brush up against one of the clowns. He may even knock him down. Conscience keeps getting stronger and more demanding and insistent. On Owl's third visit, the clowns

begin to realize that they may suffer consequences if they don't change their ways. Still, they try to buy their safety by offering Owl a bribe. On the sly, the head clown approaches Owl, presumably unseen by anyone, but, of course, they are in the middle of the plaza and are witnessed by all the spectators. Those two kneel together in an archaic conversation modeled upon an ancient meeting.

Owl finally accepts the bribe of a string of beads and thus leads the clown to believe that he has bought his safety. The head clown asks Owl to discipline the other clowns so as to get them back on the right road, but he thinks he will be safe.

With each of Owl's visits more and more *katsinas* accompany him. They do not come as one big group, but in groups of two or three. Throughout the afternoon the tension builds with the threatening presence of the whip-carrying *katsinas*. All of the spectators begin to identify with the plight of the clowns. You feel like you are the one who is now being judged for all these things.

Owl's fourth visit may not come until the next day. On this visit he brings with him a whole lot of warrior *katsinas*. The atmosphere is one of impending catastrophe. They move closer and closer, finally attacking the clowns, who are stripped and whipped for all they have done. In this way they force the clowns to take responsibility for their actions. After they are whipped, water is poured on them and sprinkled about the audience to signify purification.

When it is all over the threatening *katsinas* come back to the plaza again, but this time they are friendly. They shake hands with the clowns signifying that they have been purified. Then they take each clown the length of the plaza and form a semi-circle around him. At this time the clowns make confessions, but even here they are clowns for their confessions are all made in jest. Having worked up satires for the occasion they jump and sing before the *katsinas*. Their confessions usually are focused on their clan, who, by way of being satirized, are actually honored.

I'll tell you one I heard not long ago. When it was time for this young clown man to make his confession he jumps up and down in front of the *katsina* and says, "ah ii geology, geology, ah ii." Then he made a beautiful little breakdown of this word so that it has Hopi meaning. "You probably think I am talking about this geology which is a white man's study about something or other. Well, that's not it," he says. "What it really is is that I have a grandmother, and you know she being poor and ugly, nobody would have anything to do with her. She is running around all summer long out in the fields doing a man's job. It breaks her down. She would go out there every day with no shoes and so her feet were not very dainty and not very feminine. If you pick up her foot and look at her sole, it is all cracked and that's what I am talking about when I say geology." Every Hopi can put that together. *Tsiya* means "to crack" and *leetsi* means things placed "in a row," so these cracks are in a row on the bottom of the feet, geology. Things like that are what the confessions are like.

There is a story about the last wish of a Hopi man who died many years ago that shows the character of clowning.

In those days the clown society was very much formalized. It was a practice for men who had great devotion for their ritual society to be buried in the full costume of their office. Of course, this was not seen by the general public since Hopi funerals are rather private affairs.

This story is about a man who had gained great respect for his resourcefulness and performance as a clown. Clowning had become a major part of his life and he was constantly attending to his work as a clown by thinking up new skits and perfecting his performance. As he reached old age he decided that clowning had made his place in this world and he wanted to be remembered as a clown. So he made a special request for what was to be done with him at his death as he realized his time was short. He made his request to his family very firmly.

When he died his nephews and sons began to carry out his request. In preparation

The dolls shown in this article are woodcarvings done by the author for his daughter as is customary for Hopi fathers in certain ceremonies when gifts are given to children. In the foreground is the Third Mesa version of a clown, with the Owl Katsina in the background.

for burial the body was dressed in his clown costume. Then the body was carried around to the west side of the plaza and taken up on a roof. While this was being done the town crier's voice rang out through the village calling all the people to the plaza. Everybody was prompt in gathering there. I can just see the women, as with any such occasion, grabbing their best shawl on their way to the plaza. It didn't matter whether they were dressed well underneath the shawl.

When the people arrived they saw this unusual sight on the roof of the house on the west side of the plaza, men standing around a person lying down. When all of the people had gathered, the attendants—pallbearers I guess you could call them— simply, quietly, picked up the body and took it to the edge of the house near the plaza. They picked it up by the hands and legs and swung it out over the plaza as if to throw it and they hollered, "Yaahahay!" And they'd swing it back. Then they'd swing it once more. "Yaahahay!" Four times! On the fourth time they let the body go and it fell down, plop, in the plaza. As they threw the body the pallbearers hollered and laughed as they were supposed to. It took the people by surprise. But then everybody laughed.

THE WAY OF BLAME

by Michel Waldberg

The greater part of G.I. Gurdjieff's life as a teacher was spent in France, where he died in 1949, leaving a small but dedicated group of followers and a controversial reputation. His teaching, set forth in Ouspensky's In Search of the Miraculous *and in his own books, published since his death, has now reached a very wide audience. A film based on his autobiographical* Meetings with Remarkable Men, *directed by Peter Brook, will be released this year.*

The name Gurdjieff almost always arouses suspicion or hostility. The man is usually described as a kind of werewolf, a cynical tyrant, demanding much of others and little of himself, making use of his disciples for some mysterious aims, seeking power rather than virtue, with an absolute contempt for the whole of humanity.

His teaching is considered forbidding, sterile and dry. His "objectively impartial" critique of man's life is merciless and ferociously funny; it is radical and nothing which constitutes the "human treasure" escapes it. In a supposedly Christian civilization, Gurdjieff denounces the fallacy by which inconsistency is forgiven in the name of mercy; like all the great masters, he reminds us of the primary truths, and tells us that a Christian "is not a man who calls himself a Christian, nor whom others call a Christian, but a man who lives in accordance with the precepts of Christ." The way he proposes, the way of consciousness, seems arrogant to the ordinary eye, and he is reproached for not yielding its place to love.

In contrast to the "humanity" of the understanding and compassionate master, Gurdjieff is accused of "inhumanity" because he exposes what he calls "the terror of the situation," and proposes a "dry" path to his disciples.

But it must be emphasized that in ordinary language the notions of benevolence or compassion are unduly associated with the notion of gentleness. Gurdjieff is not alone in rejecting the usual paths, accepted ideas, and ordinary morality, in reproaching men and using humor and vulgarity to act effectively on their psyches: the "way of blame." Whatever may have been said about him, benevolence and compassion—and above all, goodness—are qualities which he developed to the highest degree in himself, while never associating them with any useless and harmful softness. It is precisely in the apparently brutal relationship with the disciple that these qualities are manifested. For to love the disciple is not to console, but to heal him. And the more serious the illness, the more violent the cure. Sometimes it is even necessary to amputate: "If thy right eye offend thee," said Christ, "pluck it out and cast it from thee."

But Gurdjieff is not only a physician or a surgeon. He also shows paths toward wisdom and happiness; paths which are

often painful, arduous, barren to the eyes of those men whose "personality" (that rigid monster) lacks the flexibility necessary to overcome obstacles, but easier for those whose hearts have not yet hardened, for those "ordinary men" who have not systematically "sought difficulties where there were none" and who have set themselves to listening, humbly and attentively, to the "inner voice." For besides the harsh path of the school, there exists the path of life, of so-called popular wisdom, the importance of which Gurdjieff has always emphasized. Thus, in the first chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales,* he writes: "I am a confirmed believer in popular wisdom whose sayings have been established for many centuries; and I am a believer not only in theory, like contemporary men, but in practice."

This path of life is the path of the *obyvatel. Obyvatel*, Gurdjieff said, " is a strange word from the Russian language. It has the current meaning of 'inhabitant'; nothing more. It is also used for disdain or derision: *obyvatel*!—as if there could be nothing worse. But those who speak in this way do not understand that the *obyvatel* is the healthy, vigorous core of life."

It is also on the road of the *obyvatel* that we meet the legendary Persian master Mullah Nassr Eddin, to whom Gurdjieff constantly refers in his books, borrowing his most popular aphorisms and most baffling and wisest commentaries. A body of anecdotes which make up a whole legend in the Islamic world have for their hero this paradoxical master, for the Mullah is the wisest of initiates as well as apparently the most foolish of villagers. It matters very little whether this character actually existed. He is the protagonist of hundreds of "good stories" which are also excellent fables, some of which can rival the best of the "Zen stories" collected by Suzuki in his *Essays*.

One can find a number of the Mullah's stories, intelligently annotated, in the fourth chapter of Idries Shah's book *The Sufis*.

One of the most typical of these stories is the following: "The Mullah was thinking aloud. 'How do I know whether I'm dead or alive?' 'Don't be stupid,' said his wife, 'if you were dead, your limbs would be cold.' Some time later, the Mullah was in a forest, cutting wood. It was the middle of winter. He suddenly realized that his hands and feet were ice cold. 'I'm unquestionably dead,' he thought, 'so I should stop working, since corpses don't work.' And since corpses don't move either, he lay down on the ground. A pack of wolves approached, and attacked the Mullah's donkey, which he had tied to a tree. 'Go ahead!' said the Mullah; 'take advantage of the fact that I'm dead. But if I had been alive, I wouldn't have allowed you to take such liberties with my donkey!'"

In *Beelzebub's Tales* as well as in *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, Mullah Nassr Eddin is constantly making his opinions known, either in pronouncing one of his "just and caustic judgments," or in commenting briefly on a situation which Gurdjieff considers typical of man's inconsistency.

Mullah Nassr Eddin appears as a reminder of the limits of the intellect; unless the whole being is involved, experience is empty, and knowledge evaporates. The Mullah attains his ends by seemingly improbable means. He is a master of the "way of blame," where the initiator assumes the role of the fool, the simpleton, the madman. But the predicaments, however ticklish they may be, always turn to his advantage.

Another master of the "way of blame," at certain moments, was Christ. We live in a society where, consciously or not, the image of a "sweet Jesus" is dominant. Gurdjieff affirms that we suffer "from the crystallization of the consequences of the properties of the maleficent organ kundabuffer," the organ which causes us to see reality backwards. What better verifies this admirable myth than our application of the term "sweet Jesus" to the man who said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Nobody, however, would dream of speaking of Christ's inhumanity.

Gurdjieff is often reproached for the manner in which he ousted the curious,

whose questions he refused to answer. But this same "sweet Jesus" said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you."

One other remark must be made here: we are even more intolerant of Gurdjieff because he speaks to us in *our* language; he tells us, in *our* language: you must recognize your nothingness. If he had been, for example, a Zen master, we would accept him much more easily. However, in reading *Essays on Zen Buddhism* by Suzuki, one cannot ignore the violence that marks the relationship between master and disciple. But Zen is fashionable. It is acceptable, therefore, that a master treat his disciple like a "punching bag," that he beats him with a stick or slaps him—it's exotic. Or, worse yet, we sweeten Zen as we have sweetened Christianity. In Zen, we no longer consider anything but the bliss of *satori*, forgetting the incredible efforts made by the disciples to attain it. At worst, we come to confuse this or that rare emotion with the true *satori*.

Gurdjieff, understanding the psyche of men, protected himself against such abuses. He multiplied the obstacles, emphasized the difficulties, and demanded much of those who wished to follow him. He rejected the lukewarm, and for that they have not forgiven him.

Gurdjieff tells us: "Men are not men." This is a scandalous proposition; because if there is one thing we have never questioned, it is our humanity. We have accepted our sinfulness, of course, but we have always thought that however serious our weaknesses were, we could become aware of them and correct them. Gurdjieff denies that we have this capacity for understanding and for doing. We haven't really seen the "terror of the situation"; we take what is normal as accidental. We believe that with all its ups and downs, humanity progresses; that war, for example, is an exceptional phenomenon. When a master appears who tells us that most men are irresponsible machines, wholly enslaved by their own automatism, incapable of developing even the embryo of a soul, we react with indignation. However cynical we might be, such propositions threaten the humanistic ideas we have nurtured about ourselves: we have not heard the lessons of the masters.

We have not listened to Chateaubriand, Balzac, Baudelaire, Lautréamont or Rimbaud, nor taken seriously Breton's warning cry. We have grown fond of these writers in a sentimental way, admiring them for the beauty of their style or their noble bearing, but we have not listened to them.

Folly and error, avarice and vice,
Employ our souls and waste our bodies' force.
As mangy beggars incubate their lice,
We nourish our innocuous remorse.

Our sins are stubborn, craven our repentance.
For our weak vows we ask excessive prices.
Trusting our tears will wash away the sentence,
We sneak off where the muddy road entices.

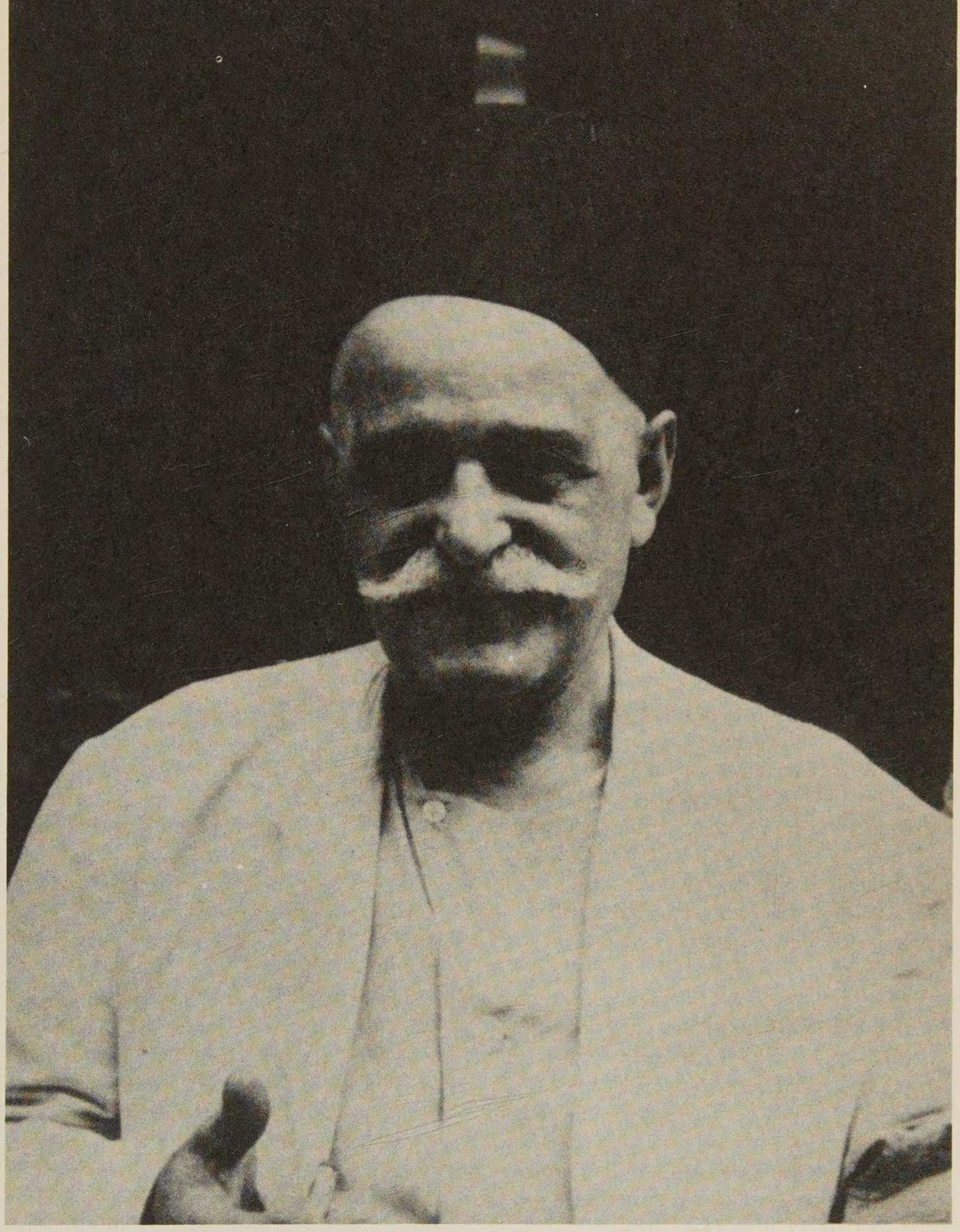
These are the first verses of *Les Fleurs du Mal.* We should also listen to Lautréamont:

"All my life, without a single exception, I have seen narrow-shouldered men doing many stupid things, brutalizing their fellow men, and perverting souls in every conceivable way, motivated by their desire for 'glory.'"

Or then again, the cry of Rimbaud in *Lettre du Voyant*: "If the old fools had not found merely the false meaning of the 'I', we would not have had to sweep out those millions of skeletons that, over an infinite amount of time, have accumulated, vaunted products of their distorted thinking."

Baudelaire wrote in his diary: "It is impossible to skim through a newspaper, of any day, month or year, without finding on every line signs of the most atrocious human perversity, coupled with the most astonishing claims to integrity, charity and good will, and the most barefaced statements about progress and civilization.

"The whole newspaper, from the first line to the last, is but a web of horrors, a drunken orgy of wars, crimes, thefts, obscenities, tortures, crimes of states, of nations, of individuals.



"And it is with this disgusting apéritif that civilized man accompanies his morning meal. Everything in this world oozes crime: the newspaper, the walls, and man's face.

"I do not understand how a clean hand can touch a newspaper without a shudder of disgust."

These poets, seers and clairvoyants were not mistaken nor lulled to sleep by the fatal illusion of progress. But they died from it. They died of this hunger which Gurdjieff says is essential in order to find the true path, murdered by the monstrous arrogance of those who ignore or deny the existence of a path, convinced that they possess a soul upon which a semblance of morality and the sacraments confer a blessed immortality.

Gurdjieff says the same thing when he describes those whom he calls "the three-brained beings of the planet Earth":

"As regards their general psyche itself and its fundamental traits, no matter upon what part of the surface of their planet they arise, these traits in all of them have precisely the same particularities, among them being also that property of the three-brained beings there, thanks to which on that strange planet alone in the whole of the Universe does that horrible process occur among three-brained beings which is called the 'process of the destruction of each other's existence,' or as it is called on that ill-fated planet, 'war'.

"Besides this chief particularity of their common psyche, there are completely crystallized in them and there unfailingly become a part of their common presences—regardless of where they may arise and exist—functions which exist under the names 'egoism,' 'self-love,' 'vanity,' 'pride,' 'self-conceit,' 'credulity,' 'suggestibility,' and many other properties quite abnormal and quite unbecoming to the essence of any three-brained beings whatsoever."

Humanity is thus unworthy, and can only achieve freedom by becoming conscious of its unworthiness:

"Individuality, a single and permanent 'I', consciousness, will, the ability to do, a state of inner freedom—none of these qualities belongs to the ordinary man...Man must realize that he doesn't exist; he must realize that he can lose nothing, because he has nothing to lose; he must realize his nothingness, in the strongest sense of the word."

This is the fundamental lesson of Gurdjieff's teaching, the prerequisite to any serious work in the spiritual domain. But how can men become aware of their monstrosity? What weapons can be sharpened to awaken them from this sleep which they presumptuously call their life?

The chief weapon, in this battle of consciousness against sleep, is humor, even vulgar humor. Freud said that this kind of humor "not only had something liberating about it, but something sublime and lofty." Breton labeled it "black humor," and took pains to dissociate it "from foolishness, skeptical irony, and frivolous fun..." He called it "the mortal enemy of sentimentality."

This is where the shoe pinches. We have the automatic tendency to associate notions that do not belong together. For instance, we assume that science, philosophy, theology, mysticism—in short, the search for truth—must be taken "seriously." But how do we understand the word "serious"? Of course, it means "worthy of consideration"; but it can also mean "dangerous or threatening." Such confusion is revealing. Take for example the following expressions: "tomorrow we will get down to serious business"; "serious as the Pope"; "a serious student," etc.

We tend to confuse seriousness and gravity. Breton denounced this confusion and Gurdjieff exposed it. We don't think of a wise man, philosopher, theologian, or mystic as one who laughs. We say a moralist is serious, as if we were describing an illness.

When we come to Gurdjieff with a question and he does not answer it with the seriousness we expect, we are baffled and upset by his apparently improper or even scandalous attitude. We then reason according to the following sophism: a real spiritual master is always serious; Gurdjieff is not serious; therefore, Gurdjieff is not a real spiritual master. But what about the Zen masters, with their use of laughter, cries and blows?

"One evening, Yao Chan climbed a mountain. Seeing the moon suddenly appear from behind the clouds, he laughed heartily. The echo of his laugh was heard ninety *li* to the east of Li-Yang, where his monastery was situated. The villagers thought that the voice came from their neighborhood. In the morning, it was discussed from door to door until it reached the monastery, and the villagers concluded: 'Last night, on the mountaintop, the master let us hear the biggest laugh of his life.'"

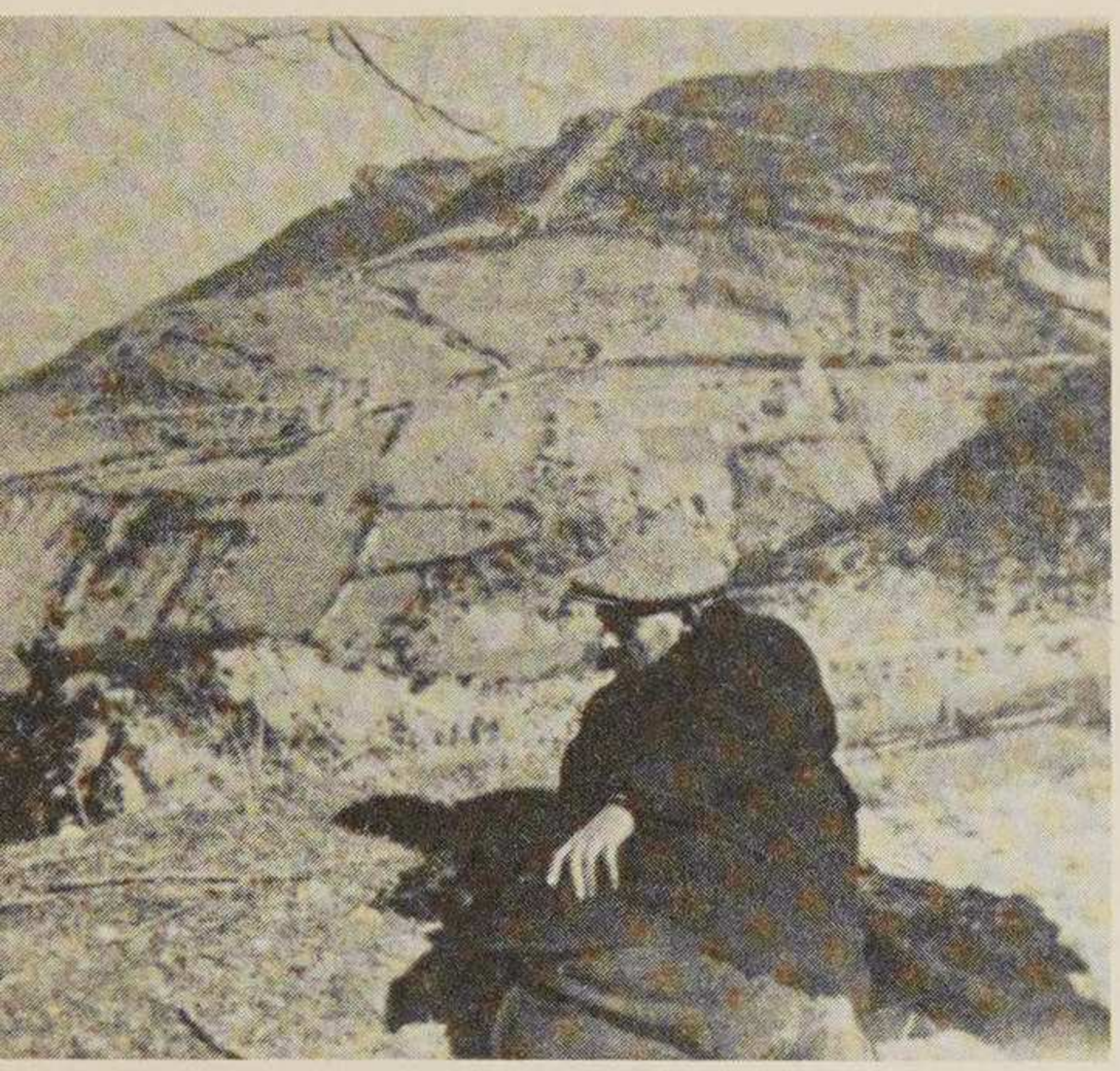
André Breton was the first writer who tried to restore the true and vivifying function of humor:

"It is more and more likely, considering the specific demands of modern sensitivity, that any poetic, artistic, or scientific work, any philosophical or social system that lacks *this kind* of humor will be doomed to perish more or less swiftly... We touch here upon a burning question... and expose ourselves to heated controversy when we dare to bring into the open this sort of humor—whose manifest results we nevertheless single out with such satisfaction in literature, in art, and in life."

This text can clarify Gurdjieff's approach; it may eliminate much ill-founded reserve and false shame. *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, which is often considered forbidding, should be read not as one is used to reading a didactic text, but as one of the highest expressions of an art form addressed to the heart and body as well as to the mind. It produces the "explosion" without which, as both Baudelaire and Breton emphasized, there would be no comedy.

True comedy is what Baudelaire called "absolute comedy"—which, as he said, is vertigo. In the *Tales*, this vertigo is produced by comic descriptions of the depth of man's foolishness and perversion. Any other approach would be unbearable.

One of the unique virtues of Gurdjieff's books is that they establish a distance between the reader and all that is banal and ordinary, and show him that what is banal and ordinary is horrible because it is in fact utterly foreign to him. The reader cannot escape the bewildering effect of Gurdjieff's writing. To bewilder, uproot and disorient is the master's first task; for we are in fact lost, taking the wrong road, going in the wrong direction.



Gurdjieff said to Ouspensky: "Awakening begins when a man realizes that he is going nowhere and does not know where to go." The master is the awakener, and his most effective weapons can be humor and vulgarity. His intervention has to be rough; otherwise, a man lets his conscience be rocked to sleep on the waves of daily life. To be persuaded of this, one has only to think of the meanings taken by the word "disillusionment." The dictionaries define it as "loss of an illusion." That should be positive and reassuring to men who claim to be searching for truth. But evidently it is not, for vexation, letdown, disappointment, disenchantment, error, are analogous terms. Man is too attached to his mistakes to allow anyone to point them out to him.

This is why the master is so often obliged to use the "way of blame," the way of scandal, seeming madness, paradox, contradiction. For what is wisdom in God's eyes is madness in the sight of men; what is true in the spiritual order is absurd in the social order. I would like to illustrate this fact with two anecdotes of the legendary master of the way of blame, Mullah Nassr Eddin.

In the village plaza, under a blazing midday sun, the Mullah, sweating and covered with dust, is on all fours looking for something in the sand. One of his neighbors sees him, approaches, and asks: "What have you lost?" "My key," answers the Mullah, who continues to search while his neighbor kneels down to help him. After several minutes, sweating and panting, the latter asks: "Are you sure that this is where you lost it?" "Oh no," replies the Mullah, "I lost it at home." "But then why look for it here?" "Because here, my dear neighbor, there is more light!"

The stories of Mullah Nassr Eddin, besides being "funny," have a "metaphysical" value. They are troubling and perturbing, and Gurdjieff delighted in telling them, even when he didn't invent them. Mullah Nassr Eddin, often the embodiment of popular wisdom, assumes above all the role of the fool whose apparently absurd logic subverts established notions:

One day, the Mullah goes into a shop. The shopkeeper comes forward to help him. "First things first," says the Mullah. "Are you sure you saw me enter your shop?" "Of course!" "Have you ever met me before?" "Never." "But then how would you know it's me?"

These anecdotes are shocking; everything that we take for granted is turned upside down.

Gurdjieff often behaved like the Mullah. One of his students writes: "He never hesitated to arouse doubts about himself by the kind of language he used, by his calculated contradictions, by his behavior—to such a point that people around him, particularly those who had a tendency to worship him blindly, were finally obliged to open their eyes to the chaos of their reactions."

On the "way of blame," the initiator can appear brutal, inconsistent, or outrageous.

The master, first of all, is the one who knows *me* and *my* needs (I don't know myself; I am unaware of what I really need). I am Nathaniel and the master saw me under the fig tree. He is the only one who knows what happened there. The master knows the paths that lead toward the Good I covet. But he cannot simply tell me these things. He can only help me to understand them with all my mass, as Gurdjieff says. He can only indicate these things to me, not explain

them: the finger doesn't explain the moon, the Zen saying reminds us—it merely points to it, and woe to him who mistakes the finger for the moon.

How does the master make reality known? He has recourse to what Zen calls "clever stratagems," responding to the disciple's question with a pointing finger, outstretched arms, brandished stick, or shouts and blows. He uses paradoxes, contradictions, repetitions, exclamations, seemingly irrelevant answers (or even refusals to answer) and many other unexpected means.

"A monk asked Chao-chu: 'Does a dog have Buddha-nature?' Chao-chu answered: *'Mu!'*"

"Ling-ien was asked: 'How were things before Buddha came into the world?' Ling-ien brandished his stick."

It seems to me that the essence of the "way of blame," which I have tried roughly to describe, is this refusal of the empty question, and provocative behavior that causes the often painful awakening of the disciple.

Gurdjieff offers his disciples, for the most part "intellectuals," a system of exemplary coherence, whose study makes real progress possible. The cohesion of this system is seductive, but it may discourage the follower by its complexity and by the demands of its method. The master, who embodies the system, seems distant, even inaccessible. Yet in his intimate relationship with the pupil, Gurdjieff lessened this distance by his patriarchal attitude and his benevolence. When necessary, however, he also played the role of the madman—the master on the way of blame.

"When he assumes this role," writes Charles Duits, "the master becomes a mirror in which the disciple sees himself. He caricatures and exaggerates the disciple's weaknesses, feigning anger, arrogance or decadence when necessary, shocking the disciple who has a long way to go before understanding that the odious character the master is showing him is himself." When he finally sees himself in the mirroring master, many apparent contradictions are resolved; reproaches and bitterness fade away.

In this way, Gurdjieff, in his life as in his writings, accomplished the first of the tasks he set himself:

"To destroy, mercilessly, without any compromises whatsoever, in the mentation and feelings of the reader, the beliefs and views, by centuries rooted in him, about everything existing in the world."

It is in this sense that he can appear "inhuman," for his undertaking is anything but "normal," in the ordinary sense of the word.

"What is necessary," he said to Ouspensky, "is conscience... We do not teach morality. We teach how to find conscience. People are not pleased when we say this. They say that we have no love. Simply because we do not encourage weakness and hypocrisy, but, on the contrary, take off all masks."

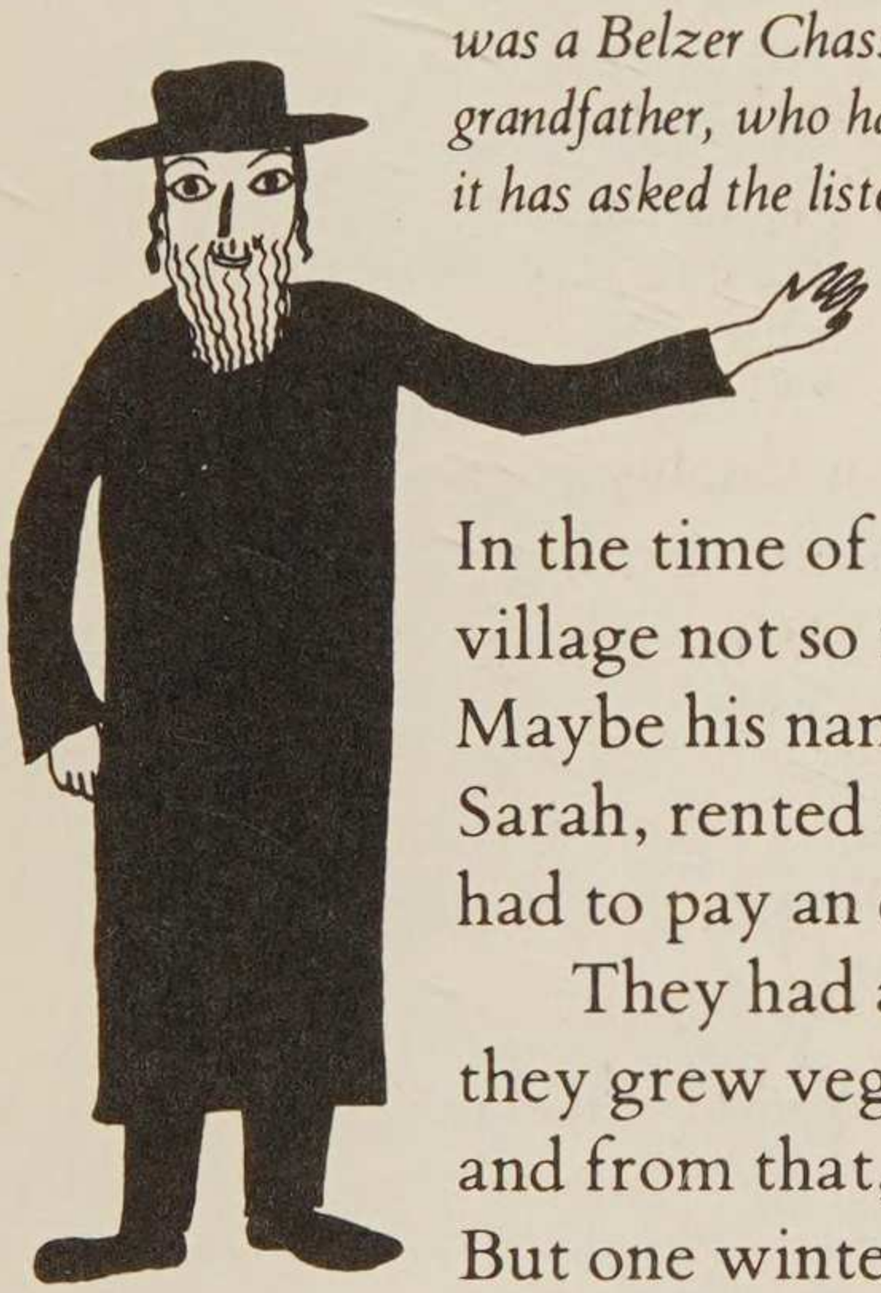
Excerpted from *Gurdjieff*, Copyright Editions Seghers, Paris, 1973. Reprinted by permission. English translation copyright PARABOLA, 1979.

Quotations from Gurdjieff and Ouspensky are from Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, *G.I. Gurdjieff, E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York, 1950, and* In Search of the Miraculous, *P.D. Ouspensky, Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., New York, 1949.*

EPICYCLE

Beyond the Seer of Lublin

Diane Wolkstein is both a storyteller and a collector of tales. Her latest book is White Wave, *a Tao tale from China. She says, "I heard this story from my rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, at a retreat in upstate New York in 1974. Shlomo Carlebach heard the story in 1947 from the Chief Rabbi of Persia, who was a Belzer Chassid. The Belzer Chassid had heard the story from his great-grandfather, who had heard it from his grandfather. Each person who has told it has asked the listener to tell as many people as possible. Now it is for you."*



In the time of the great Rabbi Elimelech, in a little village not so far from Lizensk there lived a poor Jew. Maybe his name was Moshe Dovidel. He and his wife, Sarah, rented a small inn from a nobleman for which they had to pay an enormous sum of money for rent.

They had a little garden behind their house where they grew vegetables. From that they had a little income, and from that, Sarah made soup and food for the guests. But one winter very few guests came, so in the spring they didn't have enough money to buy anything to plant in the garden. The garden was wasted and the customers didn't come and Moshe went bankrupt.

The landlord asked for his rent. Moshe had nothing. He begged the landlord to give him another week. The week went by. The landlord arrived. Still Moshe had nothing. He begged the landlord for one more week. This went on and on. Finally the landlord said: "I'll give you until next Monday. If you don't pay me the rent on Monday, I will kill you." He meant it. In those days that was how it was done. Either you paid, or you were killed.

When the landlord left, Moshe Dovidel sat there. He couldn't move. Then Sarah said:

"You know I heard there is a man named Elimelech who lives in Lizensk." (She was so simple she did not even know he was *the* great Rabbi Elimelech.) "If you want something, you write it on paper. You take it to him, and he grants your wish."

Moshe was desperate. What could he lose? He went and bought the biggest piece of paper he could find. If it was important he should make it big, and anyhow, he couldn't write small. So he bought a piece of paper as big as two tables and he wrote:

ELIMELECH. I CAN'T PAY THE RENT.

Then Moshe took his one pair of shoes, tied them together, and threw them over his shoulders, so they wouldn't get dirty. He rolled up the paper and tucked it under his other arm and set off.

As he walked along the highway, he looked a queer sight, carrying his shoes and his huge roll of paper under his arm. It happened that the holy brothers, the Seer of Lublin, Rabbi Riminova and the Rovsticha, were at that very moment walking on the opposite side of the highway. When they saw him they began to wonder among themselves what this strange bird was up to. Where was he going? What was the paper under his arm? Was anything written on it?

After awhile they crossed the road and began to follow him. Then they walked along with him. Moshe paid them no attention. Finally the Seer of Lublin asked him:

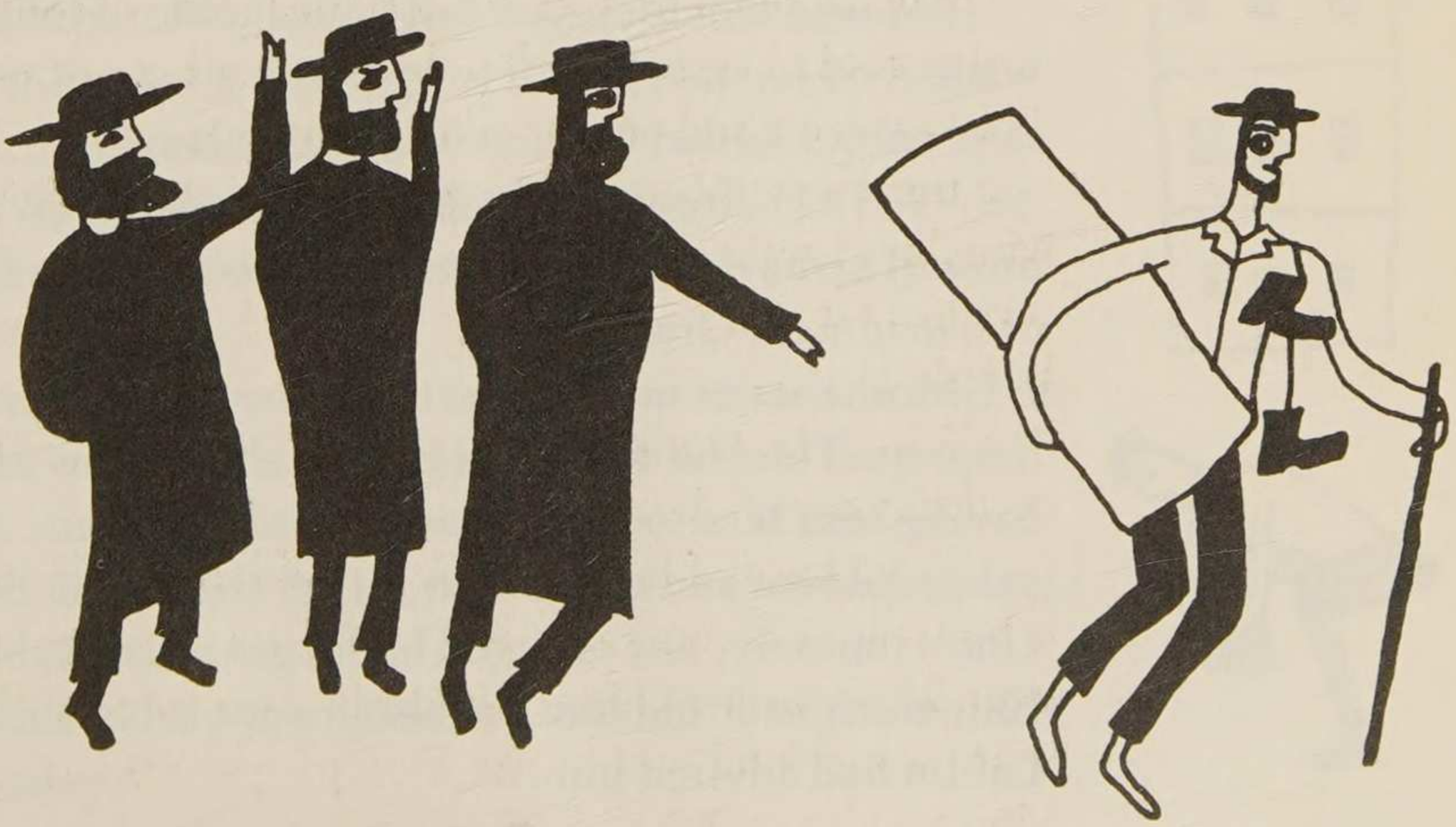
"Where are you going?"

"None of your business."

"Come, don't be so harsh. Tell us, where are you off to?"

"I'm taking this letter to Elimelech."

"Let me see the letter."



"What? Who do you think you are?"

"No, no, I can read. I'm very good at reading. I can help you. Let me see the letter."

He pestered Moshe Dovidel so much that at last Moshe showed him the letter. The Seer of Lublin read the letter. The Seer of Lublin could read very well. He looked at Moshe and said:

"Listen to me, Moshe Dovidel. I'm begging you, next Monday when the landlord comes for the rent, don't let him find you. If he does, he'll beat you to within an inch of your life. I'm begging you, try to hide on Monday."

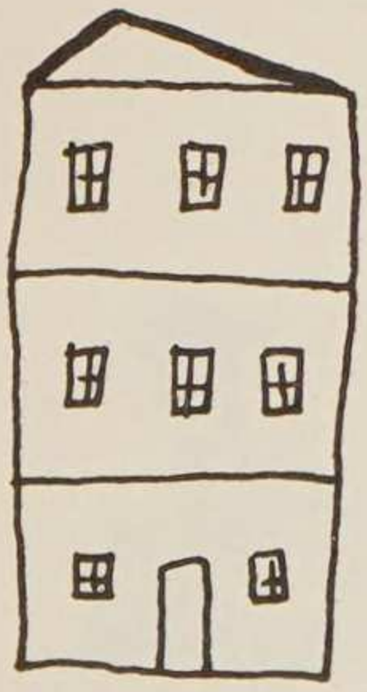
"You call that reading? I knew that before I even wrote the letter. Leave me alone."

The holy friends crossed back to the other side of the highway. Moshe continued on his way and the friends continued and they all arrived in Lizensk. But the friends entered Rabbi Elimelech's house first, for when Moshe saw Elimelech's three-storied house, he knew immediately the man was important. So he stopped and untied his shoes and put them on.

A servant led him to Rabbi Elimelech's study. Moshe saw that the Seer of Lublin and his friends were already there, but he ignored them.

"I have a letter for you," he said to Elimelech.

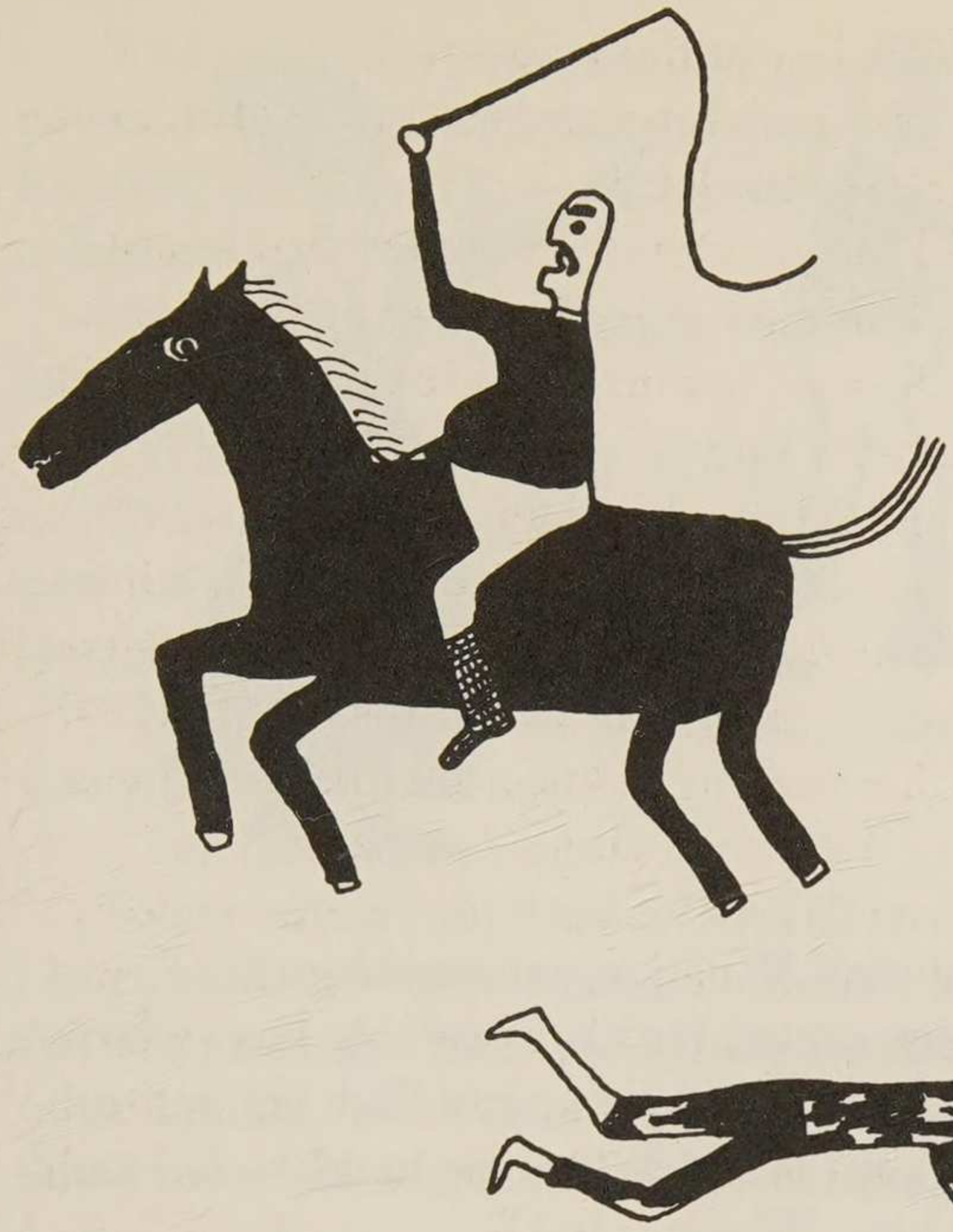
Rabbi Elimelech took the letter and read it. But not only could Rabbi Elimelech read a letter, he could also read who had read it before him. He looked over at the Seer of Lublin and shook his head. Then he turned to Moshe and said:



"Moshe Dovidel, you tell your landlord that if he wants you to stay, he has to give you a loan of ten thousand rubles. Otherwise, you refuse to stay!"

"WHAT? Are you CRAZY? The landlord give ME money! Crazy! Crazy! *I'm* crazy for coming to the house of a madman! Crazy!"

Moshe went on like this until one of the servants took him out. Then he went home and yelled at his wife for having sent him to a madman. But after awhile Moshe calmed down and decided to forget the whole thing. Unfortunately, not only did he forget what Rabbi Elimelech had told him, he also forgot what the Seer of Lublin had advised him.



Monday morning came. He did not hide. He walked about his garden, not knowing what to do. As he had promised, the landlord arrived.

"Moshe Dovidel, where's my rent?"

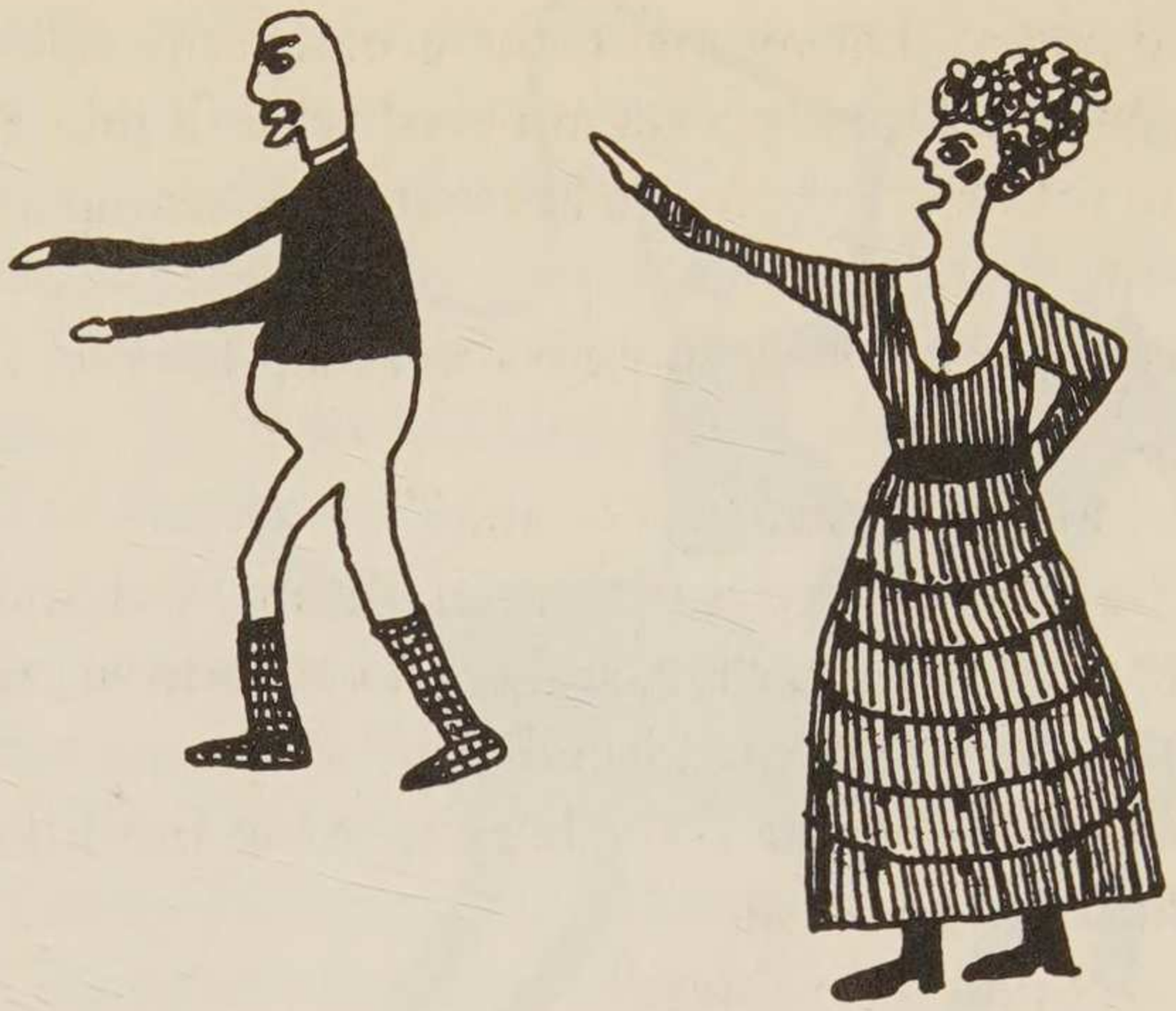
Moshe showed him his empty hands and said:

"I don't have it."

Oye. The landlord got off his horse. He took his whip and beat Moshe until he thought he was dead. Then he rode off. Soaking in blood, Moshe Dovidel somehow managed to crawl back to his house. Sarah heard his moans and carried him inside. She gently washed his wounds and bandaged him. Moshe Dovidel lay there aching, in terrible pain. There were no doctors nearby, and even if there were, they wouldn't have had the money to go.

Now at this time, although the nobles mistreated the Jews, they always had one Jew they liked. It happened that the favorite Jew of this baron's wife was Moshe Dovidel. When the baron returned that evening, she said to him:

"Where's my Jew, Moshe Dovidel? He didn't come to me today."



"Moshe Dovidel? What do you need him for?"

"What do you mean? He's my Jew. He buys whatever I need. He finds what no one can find. He gets me all kinds of bargains. What do you mean what do I need him for? I need him. Where is he?"

The baron didn't answer.

"Did something happen to him?"

"To tell you the sad truth, I think I killed him this morning. He didn't have the rent money, so I took care of him."

"Take care of someone else!" his wife shouted. "Leave my Moshe Dovidel alone. He must be alive. You go at once and make up with him."

"All right," said the baron. "I'll bring him a few gifts, and if he's still alive, I'll make up with him."

So the nobleman rode up to Moshe Dovidel's house. Moshe, who was lying in bed, recognized the sound of the baron's horse.

"Quick," he called to his wife. "Pile all the furniture in front of the door, now he's coming to finish me."

The wife pushed the tables and chairs against the door and the baron knocked.

No reply.

"Moshe Dovidel," the baron called.

Quiet.

"Moshe Dovidel, I came to apologize. Please forgive me. My wife is so angry she'll never forgive me if you die. Really, try to stay alive."

And just at that moment, the greatest miracle happened. Moshe Dovidel remembered what Rabbi Elimelech had told him. He made himself very strong and called out:

"Baron, the whole thing is too much for me. I'm leaving."

"What? What are you saying?"

"The whole thing is too much for me, and unless you give me a loan of ten thousand rubles to help me to get started again, I'm going elsewhere."

"No, no," answered the baron. "Stay and I'll loan you whatever you want."

"Ten thousand rubles."

So the baron paid Moshe Dovidel ten thousand rubles, and from that time on Moshe Dovidel's star began to rise. He was no longer the same Moshe Dovidel who had to wear his shoes over his shoulders. Now he had four and five pairs of shoes. He had fields and gardens. He was rich.

One day Sarah said to him:

"You know it's not fair. All this happened because of Elimelech and you didn't even go back to thank him."

"Yes, you're right," says Moshe Dovidel. So he loaded his wagon with potatoes and chickens, and all kinds of bread and cakes that his wife had baked, and he went to Lizensk.

When he walked into Rabbi Elimelech's study, the Seer of Lublin and his friends were there and they all remembered the queer bird.

"So he's back," they said.

Moshe Dovidel ignored them. He stood in front of Rabbi Elimelech and said:

"Elimelech, it worked. Thank you."

Then Rabbi Elimelech looked over at the Seer of Lublin and said:

"You see. And I see. But I see, *just* a little farther."

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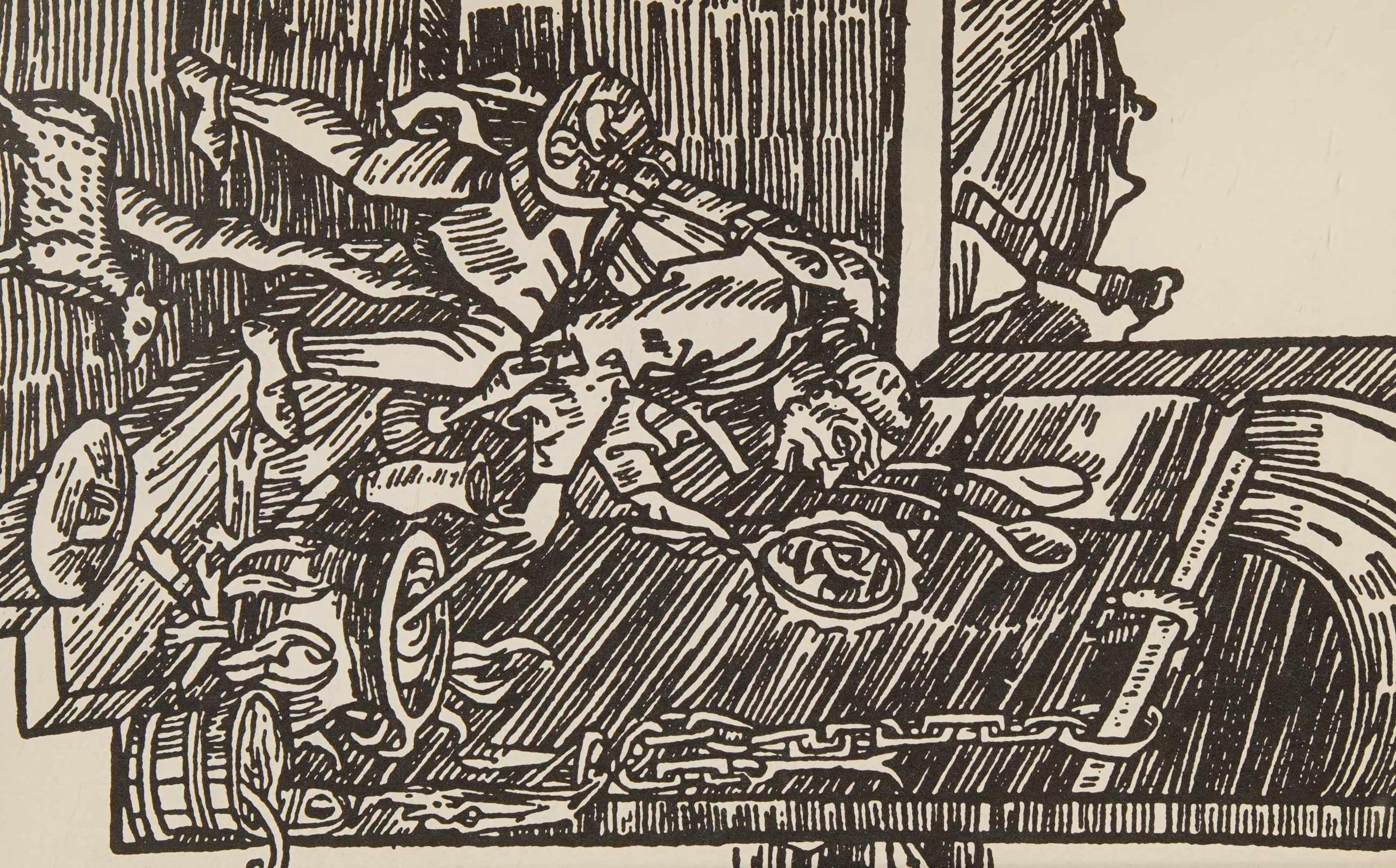


Craftsman of Chaos

by Lynda Sexson

The fool of the Tarot is a skillful player who disguises his sacred text as a pack of cards. His smile reveals that the sacred dimension of his text is intrinsic to the plaything—the game. The fool, this craftsman of chaos, uses guile, chance, stupidity, the joke and the revelation to turn us aside to the truth of his distorting mirrors.

Play, the making of our most ephemeral acts of creation, reveals at least as truly as stone monuments and codified texts the nature of our deep consciousness. Religions are generated from confluences of profound images; the religion of the Tarot is unabashedly composed of cardboard dolls.

From plaything to sacred text seems an inestimable leap unless it is made via dream, by way of imaginal disclosure. The fool of the Tarot crafts the sacred out of the imagination; he breathes life into the flat figures with his enormous bellows. He makes them to move and speak until, deflated, we return to the recognition of chaos.

The Tarot is a sacred text, the Gospel of Luck, that developed and endured without the assistance of cult or canon. It had only its primal, foolish, grotesque and beautiful images to carry its contents into our present consciousness; and it offers to us a special opportunity to look at the sacred in both its ephemeral and monumental forms, both as dream and as scripture.

Conventionally, the Tarot is composed of twenty-two symbolic images along with fifty-six playing cards which correspond to the familiar fifty-two card deck plus their antiquated colleagues, the four extra court cards. Early in the history of the Tarot, the two probably unrelated sets were joined, and by accident the seventy-eight card deck was created, obligating gamesters to incorporate the mysterious images into their sport and forcing occult masters to assign divinitory meanings to the playing cards. When we separate them once more, the fool card remains in both schemes at once: the joker is wild. In the regular deck of playing cards he is the extra, the rule breaker. Among the symbolic images, too, he is the unruly one who changes the shape and direction of the game. The symbolic cards are usually numbered one to twenty-one. The fool is zero, or unnumbered. These twenty-one plus zero images are the Tarot; and whatever power, mutability or transforming quality they have, it is through their fool figure, the zero.

Historically, the Tarot is a minor symbol system which seems to have emerged in fourteenth-century Italy. Crude versions of the cards circulated among the fools and magicians and were collected in fine miniatures by royalty and ecclesiastics. They were at once popular and esoteric. The images of the Tarot functioned for some of its users as diversion and for others as a text revealing the nature of the universe and their inner selves. They were occasionally condemned by church authority, sometimes discarded as insignificant, and often pondered for their philosophical and esoteric mysteries.

The cards are a collection of oddments from a variety of systems—selected and ar-

ranged by an apparent fool. Those cards bear a metaphorical depth (playfulness) which, though plagiarized from more orthodox sources, give birth to authentic dreams. The fool's Tarot distorts the outer facets of the social, the sexual, and the sacred in order to grant them their integrity, to make them symbolic, and hence to curve the outer world back to the inner self—to give meaning to experience, to give depth to image. The sacred text creates an alternative universe out of the approximated images of this world.

The fool of the Tarot is first cousin to the saint, the hero, the iconoclastic wit, the criminal, the outcast, the devil and the grotesque. His mother, Folly, is sister to Wisdom. In his excessive, ambivalent sexuality, he appears as absurd psychopomp guiding motley initiates, and then, in a sudden reversal, is the hanging man, the object of the initiation process. The fool has no place in the procession, but makes his way throughout the play, reflecting the other figures and giving them their oracular luminosity.

Without the fool the cards would remain stiff paper caricatures, and several of them hint at his necessary presence. The Juggler or Magician is the first card and the one which bears the most obvious resemblance to the fool—they were called "the Swindler and the Trickster." In some early printed cards the Juggler wears a fool's cap. Likewise, the most commonly illustrated wheel of fortune depicts a round of fools attached to Dame Fortune's wheel, driven blindly, now up, now down. Proverbial Fortune loves the proverbial fool.

These images had their origin outside the Tarot pack. The fool figure emerged as the unlikely hero of fairy tales, who through his trickery or naive foolishness, who through his role as the one who wins by failing, establishes, not that the common man shall prevail in the face of obstacles, but that the uncommon commoner will win through playing sleight of hand with the fates. He achieves through lying, through bumbling, through unexpected kindness and caring, through humor; but he never achieves through orthodox channels for success. The "uncommoner" is transformed, or is the transformer, through the wit of error; all possibilities mingle in the fool's patchwork mind.

Heroes, demons, and magicians are too clever, and like the fool, too ignorant, to be included in the regular order of the world. The fool is like the philosopher's stone of alchemical lore, disguised as the most humble of materials, dismissed and trampled over by all but the adept who can see through the transitory into the transcendent. Medieval saint tales, too, relate how simpleton devotees of the Virgin, able to do nothing more than tumble for her, are rewarded with eternal favor. Wild beasts, tangled forests, and old crones recognize the special quality of grace in the idiot and bestow their occult knowledge upon the holy fool. These are related to the fool of the Tarot, but he is not to be confused with the fairy tale hero, the adept or the saint. Nor is he to be equated with the fool of the festivals who turned established order upside down for a temporary holiday. The Tarot fool is neither hero nor anti-hero. He is not the conquering hero nor the disengagement from it. He is the playful embodiment of that quality of the psyche that reflects and distorts the contents of wakefulness and dreams and mingles the realms of each. The fool himself is tarnished and tasteless, but he manipulates his way into the core of our psyche before he disappears.

The Tarot is a silent text, a book without a binding, but there is an inscription on a sixteenth-century deck which makes the fool speak. He is dressed as an armed soldier and says what may be translated as, "I would wish the sling-stones be given to me." The fool is willing to take the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" upon himself, and is thus something of the holy fool. Moreover, there may be a playful reference to the hollow of a sling in which the stone lay. He is the bottom, the foundation which is absent. An earlier image of the fool from a hand-painted so-called Gringonneur deck, shows a mad and happy fool wearing his cap with ass's ears, unconcerned

about the four small figures at his feet who are gathering stones to fling at him.

Like the trickster, the fool disguises himself; in the Tarot he wears twenty-one other disguises. Gonella, one of the famous jesters of early Renaissance Italy, was the master of disguise:

> And sometimes he appeared as a knight, sometimes a physician, sometimes a judge, sometimes a jester, and sometimes a pedlar, according as he perceived the best means of drawing fish into his net; so that it was never possible to catch him, he being ever on the alert.[1]

The fool is a criminal, sometimes disguised even as himself—a jester—in order to hide himself. The drama of the Tarot is a dream in which the fool acts first as psychopomp, now as ego, then as anima, and fleetingly as the Self. He is more than a mere shape-shifter within the drama, he shifts the very shape of the theater. He tells us that the fragmented is a refraction of a deeper form. Nevertheless, our feelings toward the fool are ambiguous and ambivalent; we don't know whether to deride, bewail or revere him.

The *Defence of Contraries* gives us a hyperbolic interpretation of the Tarot fool that we're tempted to believe:

> The inventer of the Italian Cardes, whereat they have a play or pastime called *Tarault*,...deserved more praise for giving (in this play) the most honourable place to the foole:...The Foole doth not repose any confidence in his owne wisedom, neither hath recourse to the subtletie and deceits of this world, for God hath him in his costodie and safegarde....I will thus frame my conclusion, that fooles ought to be singularlie esteemed and commended: bicause God doth them so much favour, as hee that chosen to confound and overthrow the wisdome of this world...[2]

The ignorance of the fool is holy, but his wisdom is demonic. Medieval minds inquired if any soul could be as wise as devils. The proper response was that one could not, except for God's special grace. Yet the devil's cleverness, like the trickster's and the fool's, was interfaced with his own stupidity; ordinary mortals were superior to their extraordinary wit. The wit of the fool resembles the oxymoronic wisdom of devils; both are uncannily clever and might incite the mortal soul to blunder into damnation or slip into spiritual triumph. The fool is like the devil, too, in that he is a mythological figure who suffers the humiliation of the attempt to reduce him to a theological idea, or worse, a sociological example. The fool is subversive toward ideas and examples, he's subversive toward the social order, toward the religious order, even, it seems, toward the "order" of the Tarot pack. The common words "craft" and "fabrication" play their double meanings upon the mythic images of the trickster, devil and fool, the figures of art and deceit. The Tarot counterfeits its text from other sources and remythologizes them, or reinstates them in the mythic dimensions of the universe. The Tarot takes from allegorical, cosmological, social and devotional systems and makes them whole, remythologizes them, gives them depth.

The time of the Tarot was an imaginary moment in history, an imaginal place in the mind, and it was governed by the fool—the one permitted to rearrange the universe, to chart new lands, to expand consciousness. The fool has his source in medieval society, but his significance in Renaissance culture.

The Tarot image echoes through, but is not captured in, numerous fool prototypes. He is more than the negative object of social or religious scorn, more than the celebrative figure that temporarily reverses (and consequently affirms) the orthodox social order, and more even than the venerated figure under special divine protection and care.

Our fool seems to be pictorially aligned to the social madman and conceptually aligned to the holy fool. In him the holy and the mad merge. The Tarot was only one of many pageants, dramas, allegories, esoteric documents, or psychological treatises of the early Renaissance. It was, however, the one which came to hold a place of singularity in the ongoing cultural imagination. In 1540 one of the Mardi Gras parades was described by the abbot as "holding up a Socratic mirror to the world," with a procession of pope, emperor, Old Testament prophets uttering riddles—and a fool playing catch with the world. But the fool of the Tarot casts the same sort of procession to manifest something else—a significant psychological dimension of that culture which reveals the sacred in the ordinary, the less than ordinary, or the nothing.

If, however, the imaginal structure of the Tarot still acts within the contemporary psyche, its antique figures still manifest meaning. It continues to be a sacred text, a point at which the reader enters experientially into a field of synchronicity. The flow of synchronicity, the power of a sacred text, engraves harmonies between the patterns of the text and the experiences of the individual; it connects the intimate to the infinite.

The fool moves our imagination into his hollow place, and by the power of his zero moves himself easily into any position in the scheme. His zero is not *below* one, or less than one, it is *not* one. The fool is neither subject nor object, but acts between the two. He confronts a static, hierarchical world and moves it about, curving the spectrum of assumptions and perceptions into an extravagant reality.

It is perhaps due to this slippery quality of the fool and his realm that commentators with a dogged rage for order came to distinguish between "natural" fools who were genuine idiots and "artificial" fools who were clever players upon the theme. The fools of social moralities or allegories bear superficial resemblances to the Tarot fool who is maddened by a deeper vision.

But what of the mad fools? One of the apocryphal anecdotes about Dante is in the tradition of the wise man masquerading as the lunatic or dunce. King Robert of Naples heard of Dante's wit and worth and sent for the poet. Dante arrived at the court, "poorly dressed, as is the way of poets," and was placed at the bottom of the table rather than in the place of honor near the king. As soon as Dante satisfied his hunger he got up and went away. When the king was told that Dante had gone he sent his servants to retrieve him. Dante returned, this time all dressed up in a magnificent robe. The king then placed Dante beside him at the head of the table. When the food and wine were brought Dante began to sprinkle and smear them all over his fine clothing. The king and the barons stared at Dante and mut-

tered to themselves, "This man must be a fool, throwing wine and food over his clothes." Dante remained silent. Finally, the king asked why a man whose wisdom and learning were so highly reputed had such vulgar manners. Dante replied then that he realized the honor which the king had done was to his clothes, so he wished his clothes to enjoy the banquet. "When I am badly dressed, you set me at the bottom of the table, and now for my fine robe you seat me up here." King Robert realized that Dante had spoken the truth, gave him an even grander robe, and took him apart to talk with him privately, and "found him to be a man of even greater wisdom and worth than was commonly said, and honored him."[3]

In this aspect of the fool complex the clothing and manner of the fool (or the poet) disguises his wisdom. The silence of the "fool" was the eloquence of his wit which points to the folly of the king and which hints at the "even greater wisdom" that the king is privileged to hear when they are apart from the others. The fool/poet is the conveyor of the exoteric wit—the banquet joke—and the esoteric wisdom—the private conversation.

But the wisdom of the fool has become almost as much of a cliché as the proverbial stupid fool. If the fool is to succeed in his role he must embody the paradox. He is paradoxical not because he reverses the image of worthlessness into the image of sanctity, but because he holds the two in suspension. Poets, no matter how wise, can retain their condition as fool, but it is more difficult for saints. The fool of the Tarot is no saint; he chronicles the human soul, but writes the story by forgetting half his lines.

He is, likewise, too sexual to be an ordinary saint. There is an ambiguity to his sexual nature as there is to his spiritual nature. The ambiguity of his sexuality, like his spirituality, originates because he is disintegrating cultural roles. To do so, he insists with his absurd bauble, is not to surrender his masculinity, but to reimagine it. His incorporation of "feminine" characteristics is not a capitulation into hermaphroditism nor an integration into androgyny. It is the playfulness of sexuality rather than the working out of the sexual role. (The same conclusions could be drawn out of the female fool figures.) That playfulness mingles ordinarily understood boundaries of the sexual into the mysterious realms of the erotic. This is not to develop an exaggerated idealization of our fool who usually teases us with gross obscenities and disharmonies of every sort. In this esoteric text, the Tarot, there is, however, a special relationship that the fool bears with the feminine.

"My poor fool is hanged," says King Lear, referring to his daughter, Cordelia, with a cry of pathos that echoes upon the absence of the fool in the final scenes. But if our fool is hanging, he is hanging upside down and by one foot. Lear's fool mirrors Lear, echoes Cordelia, and even wears a resemblance to the other sisters. "Ladies," says the fool lewdly, "they will not let me have all the fool to myself. They'll be snatching." The fool is a bawdy no-body. He is below and beyond customary sexuality. The fool suggests that something is missing—some dimension of manliness, intellect or spirituality—he's foolishly deficient. Yet the zero is so powerful, so full, we wonder if something is missing, or is it the fool that's missing from ourselves?

The card that on the surface seems to bear least resemblance to the fool is Strength, but the presence of the feminine alerts us to his being there. The image of Strength that came to dominate the various Tarot decks is that of a woman grasping the open mouth of a lion. The earliest decks depict her as a man killing a lion, or a woman beside a breaking pillar. By conflating these images we recognize immediately the Samson story from his usual iconic representations among Old Testament figures. By looking at its iconographic history we may come closer to its archetypal depth.

There are numerous examples of Samson with his flowing locks bending over and rending the jaws of his lion which are perfectly duplicated by the Tarot woman. Yet, in the Tarot there are three recognizable

cardinal virtues—Strength, Justice and Temperance. The allegorical virtues were usually pictured as feminine figures from the classical tradition. Moreover, in this time period there was a generalized increase in feminine imagery ranging from the development of the chess queen to the devotion to the Virgin, from allegories of science to games of love. More than the factor of an iconographic misreading of Samson's long hair contributed to his disguise as a woman.

The fool loves to play the part of the woman, but is he doing that here, or has there been a shift to an authentic feminine image? It seems that a woman has usurped the position of the poor foolish hero Samson, who never did get on well with women. However, if Samson gives up his place to a mere allegorical abstract virtue, then the card has no archetypal depth, no mythological reality, even if it is demonstrating the paradoxical strength of the superficially weak woman overcoming the strength of the beast. If, however, Samson is still mingled in the icon, if the Old Testament narrative is enriching the allegory of strength, then we come much closer to the archetypal quality that has made possible the preservation of the cards. Samson's virility was in his long hair, but his hair gave him a "feminine" nature according to some medieval reckoning; conversely, his weakness was with women, who mediated his failure.

Samson, like the fool, was a great riddler who was out-riddled by his own foolishness. He insisted upon marrying a woman of the hated Philistines, and at the wedding feast asked a riddle that only he could have answered; he alone knew of his experience of killing a lion and later discovering honey in its carcass. His riddle, "Out of the eater came something to eat, out of the strong came something sweet," may have been an even more private joke if he was thinking that out of the strong eaters (Philistines) came something sweet to eat (his Philistine bride). The Philistines may have known it as an old harvest riddle (out of the constellation Leo comes the harvest). His bride seduced the secret from him, and on the final night of the wedding feast the Philistines taunted with another riddle, "What's sweeter than honey, what's stronger than a lion?" The irony was too much for Samson who probably knew the traditional answer to their answering riddle was "love" and that they had harvested their answers by "plowing with his heifer." Samson is abandoned to the murderous payment of the riddle debt, but we ask again, how does all of this relate to the Tarot, where Samson was finally and totally taken over by the feminine? The fool's presence in the feminine image assists us in remembering Samson and configuring the Strength card as an interplay of weaknesses, of Strength as the current of outsiders against the grain of expectations and proscriptions, and of Strength as the wit of finding new riddles to answer old ones. The Strength card may riddle us with, "What is it that is more foolish than a woman's power over a beast?"

This is just a partial story of Strength, and just when we think we have pinned down the "meaning" of a particular card the fool intrudes and makes meaning chaotic. By returning meaning to chaos, the unconscious, he maintains the authentic form of the Tarot figures. The fool prevents the figures from being literalized, stereotyped, codified. He shifts their foundations, and makes holes in our conceptual nets. He continues to reflect new referents and disguise old ones so that we never quite contain the variety and depth of their image within our certainties.

It has been speculated that the twelfth card, the hanged man, is an iconographic and linguistic error in translation, and that it hides the missing fourth cardinal virtue, and should be Prudence, stepping forward with one foot suspended. The early texts betray the ingenious theory, however. They nearly universally portray a man hanging by one or both feet, sometimes with bags of money. On titled decks he's sometimes listed as "the Traitor," and in a seventeenth-century version the Traitor card shows a man clubbing a sleeping boy. No doubt the hanged man with the money bags refers to Judas the traitor, but it was Peter who was

martyred upside down. The reversed hanging figure can be found etched in everything from the *Divine Comedy* to crude political cartoons of disgraced persons. And even some iconographic depictions of the virtues and vices show the vice figure, opposite of the virtue of Prudence, as a hanging figure. But among the more compelling references that may illuminate the obscurity of our visual text is one that comes from a cycle of wise fool stories. Throughout medieval narratives King Solomon and a character called Saturn alternate between playing the role of wisdom and the part of the fool. Among the earliest of the "Saloman and Saturnus" tales is a confrontation between a very holy monk and a devil that he captured in order to urge the devil to tell him of hell-pains. (Both the monk and the devil figure in the Tarot pack.)

The devil said thus, "Though there were the tallest tree on earth, and though it stood upon the loftiest cliff that is highest in the world, and should you bind at its top the feet of a man who had been but one night before in hell with us; and should you let his head hang down so that the blood gushed on all sides of his mouth and nostrils, and all the evils and terrors which the inhabitants of earth have ever heard tell of were to persecute him, yet will the man continue to bear it with pleasure, even though you add a thousand years—on condition that he never visit hell again."[4] The contentment of this fool is in the face of his experience with the depths.

We cannot, though, avoid the pitiable quality of the fool. Horapollo's *Hieroglyphics* lists among its allegorical figures "A Fool." The fool, surprisingly, is indicated by a pelican because the pelican lays its eggs on the ground instead of in a high, protected place. Men discover the nest, surround it with cow-dung and light it.

> When the pelican sees the smoke, it wishes to put out the fire with its wings, but on the contrary only fans the flames with its motion. When its wings are burned, it is very easily caught by the hunters. For this reason priests are not supposed to eat of it, since it died solely to save its children. But the other Egyptians eat it, saying that the pelican does not do this because of intelligence, as the vulpanser, but from heedlessness.[5]

The image is particularly ambivalent considering that the pelican often served to symbolize Christ's sacrifice, as the bird who fed its young with its own blood. The foolish pelican, like the feather-brained fool, is at once scorned by the common people and held to be sacred and taboo by the priests. The exoteric depiction of the fool is a figure of foolishness, but the esoteric depiction is one of special sacredness.

The fool is the guide who does not know himself where he is. Another medieval text, in order to illustrate a point about the folly of the love of the world, tells of a fool named Phillip who was given a new shirt by his master. Phillip put on the shirt and ran all through the house asking everyone who he was, for he did not recognize himself in his new clothing.

The fool is the disguiser who is taken in by his own masquerade. I suggest that in the context of a depth text such as the Tarot, the fool is the unconscious masquerading as ego, that is, the self seen in terms of the

dream, the unconscious made self-conscious. The fool plays the part of ego in twenty-one disguises in order to reveal the nature of being. He criticizes ego while he celebrates the self. He is the fabricator, the soul playing at, pretending to be ego, making fun of waking consciousness. The fool is *homo ludens*, the revelation of laughter as depth experience.

Laughter, in concept and in story, has an ambivalent history. It has been the expression of derision, fear, triumph, eroticism, and holy union. Laughter can be indicative of being totally absorbed in the moment or of standing quite apart from the moment and looking on as an observer. In the "Legend of the Holy Rood," when Adam learns that he is at last released to death—he laughs. Quite the contrary, the great mystic, Meister Eckhart, expressed his divine joy as his own soul laughing together with God. The Magical Papyri and the Zohar speak of the "great laughter" which is the creative energy. The fool is the embodiment of laughter. He appears first as derision directed toward his society, and his society's derision flung back like stones upon himself. He touches all of the elements of laughter, from being an amused bystander to being taken up by the divine, from being scorned to being loved. The fool is laughter, the essence of comedy, which may be disguising and recognizing, the essence of sacred drama, being lost and coming back together, found. Sacred text and game, then, the Tarot is a story of tangling and weaving. The fool, the craftsman of chaos, tangles the threads of his images until the design is revealed—or raveled. He will not make it easy for us, the skeptical and credulous fool. He scorns our orthodox verities, yet counterfeits enormous absurdities and asks us to believe them because he does, and believing them will give them life. He will laugh most if we attempt to turn his book back into a set of allegories with fixed meanings; they all have a zero in them; their meanings will not be contained.

The fool is the central, primary figure of the Tarot pack, but he's off-center. The Tarot is twenty-one plus zero—neither twenty-one nor twenty-two—indeterminate rather than merely infinite. The fool, the zero, serves to say that his sphere is not quite the circle which has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere. It is, rather, a skewing of the mystical paradoxical circle into a more amorphous figure, one whose edges are not the folds of eternity, but whose edges do crease upon the abyss, whose center is not cosmic wholeness but comic loop-holes. The fool slips on his Mobius strip as if it were a banana peel.

And whenever we get to the point where we've made too much of the fool, invested him with too much psychological consequence, he'll empty his whole bag of tricks, smile, and disappear—"an 0 without a figure."

Notes

1. From the "Tale of Gonella the Jester," in *Tales from Sacchetti*. London, 1908, p. 182.

2. *The Defence of Contraries*. Translated by A. Mundy. London, 1593. Reprinted, Da Capo Press, New York, 1969.

3. Retold from "Dante and King Robert of Naples." *The Facetiae of Poggio and other Medieval Story-Tellers*. Translated by Edward Storer. New York, 1928, pp. 131-134.

4. Book I, Number 54, *Hieroglyphics of Horapollo*. Translated and introduced by George Boas. Bollingen Series XXIII, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1950, p. 81.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-64. Boas mentions that this allegory contradicts the pelican's depiction in other zoological allegories.

Our Lady's Tumbler

Retold from the twelfth-century French legend.

Once long ago in France, the legend tells us, there was a minstrel who wandered from here to there throughout the land, earning his living by dancing and tumbling to entertain whoever would gather to watch him on the village greens and in the country fairs. So much he wandered and so much of life he saw that at last in his later years he tired of the world and entered the holy order of the monks of Clairvaux.

At first he was happy in the peace of the monastery, but soon he became aware that among all the monks he was the only one who had no skill of any kind to contribute to their common life. He knew no trade except that of tumbling, and he had no learning at all nor training in the service of the church. All the others had their work in the garden or the kitchen or the forge, or among the ancient manuscripts in the library of the monastery; but he could not even join with the others in their chants and prayers, for he could not read and had never learned the words or music of the holy offices. He became very ill at ease and felt he had no place there and no right to the bread he was given to eat, yet he longed to be a part of that life and could not bear the thought that he might be reproached for his idleness and cast out again into the world.

One day at the hour of compline, having fled the company of his brothers, he found himself in the crypt before the altar beside a statue of the holy Virgin, and sad at heart he knelt down to pray for help. "O sweet Lady Mary," he cried, "tell me how I can serve you and not remain idle and useless. I am good for nothing but my foolish trade. The skill to leap and tumble and dance is all I have; will you allow me to offer it to you?" Then he

rose with determination and stripped himself down to his shift, and began to vault and tumble with all his might before the altar of the Virgin. "I will give you all I have," he cried, "do not despise it!" And he strove to perform feats he never tried before. Often he fell on the hard stones of the floor but he picked himself up again without rest and tried again his leaps and somersaults, praying all the while and adoring the Queen of Heaven. At last he fell exhausted with sweat pouring from him, unable to do more. But daily then at each of the monastic hours while the other monks were engaged in the holy offices, he went down to the crypt and performed his leaps and dances before the Virgin until he fell half fainting, bathed in sweat, and could not move again.

With this life he would have been happy had he not dreaded that he would be seen and scorned and sent away. So he went to the crypt with the greatest secrecy. Nevertheless it was noticed that he disappeared and never performed the offices with the others, and one of the monks spied him out and followed him secretly to the crypt, where, hiding behind a pillar, he saw all that the man did. Then this monk went laughing to the Abbot and told him what went on.

"Hold your peace," said the Abbot, "and we will go together and see." So they came together to the crypt and waited in concealment, and presently came the man and began his dancing, his leaping and his praying until he fell at last in a faint. Then the Abbot and his companion saw a marvellous thing: the image of the Virgin stirred and came to life, and Our Lady herself, surrounded by her angels, stepped down beside the unconscious man, and wiped his face tenderly with a linen napkin, and ministered to him until he came to himself and rose to put on his clothes and went his way

without seeing her or knowing that he had had visitors from Heaven.

Then the Abbot stood struck dumb, and the monk who led him there fell weeping at his feet, saying, "God have mercy upon me, for this is indeed a holy man."

"I charge you to tell no one of this," said the Abbot, and they went away amazed at what they had seen.

After a few days the Abbot sent for the man who came weeping and trembling, for he was sure he had been found out and would be sent away. The Abbot made him confess what he had been doing as his service in the monastery, and when he had done he raised him up and

kissed him and bade him to continue, for it was good and pleasing to God. Then the man was so overcome with joy that his heart leaped up with such a bound that it began to break. Nevertheless he continued night and day joyfully to do his service before the Virgin until he became so ill that he could not leave his bed. The Abbot came at each of the monastic hours to chant the office beside his pallet, and great was his joy in this also until he came to the hour of his death. And at that moment the Abbot and all his monks beheld a glorious sight, for the Holy Virgin and her angels came, visible to them all, to receive the soul of her minstrel as it departed from his body, and to bear it with her to Heaven.

—Retold by D.M. Dooling

THE YOUNGEST BROTHER

by P.L. Travers

Illustrated with the art of Cecil Collins

In order to come to the Youngest Brother we have to go a long way back—retrace our footsteps, as it were, to the world of the Mother Goddess. In matriarchal society, the law of *Jungstens Recht*—the right of the last born—invariably prevailed. The logic of this is obvious. In the nature of things the youngest was likely to live the longest and would therefore be the natural support of aged parents, if alive, and inheritor, eventually, of farm, castle or kingdom. Moreover, in all the versions of *The Three Brothers*—a theme as universal as the universe—the youngest is the stay-at-home, sometimes as the parents' darling, more often as a simpleton, the two elders, presumably, having collared the best of the genes. This, too, sounds logical. But, beware! When did a fairy tale worth its salt have any truck with logic? And isn't this one asking us to look at the concept of Simpleton and see it as the grain of sand round which is to be crystallized the pearl of the story's meaning?

How simple is Simpleton, after all? Are we to think of him as a noodle, sib to the Three Wise men of Gotham? The story refutes the suggestion. Is he related to Simple Simon who went a-fishing for to catch a whale? The story, albeit guilefully, says "Yes, he is—blood brother!" For what, we must ask, is his mother's pail but the ocean? And where else would a sensible man attempt to catch a whale?

But, first, let us pay our respects to language and grieve for the way it has been degraded. It is we who have turned Simon into a noodle because we have lost the significance of his qualifying adjective. Simple (whose oldest dictionary meaning is *innocent*, not knowing, and yet, oh, it's tricky, not ignorant, either; nor stupid, it has a celestial shrewdness) is kin to the word silly; and silly comes from the Old English *saelig*, meaning blessed and, by extension, holy. In old songs and poems—and not so very old either—the phrase "my sweet silly" was often used as a love-word to a child; Sir Philip Sidney's Astrophel apostrophises his Stella with "O heavenly fool!"; Lear, weeping over Cordelia—a feminine aspect of the Youngest Brother—cries, "My poor fool is hanged!" Pope, in his *Essay on Man* says:

> Go teach eternal wisdom how to rule
> Then drop into thyself and be a fool.

The cup of legend runneth over with fools who have taken this advice. One finds them, most often, linked to the mighty, as complementary opposites. One, Filipos, according to Xenophon, dared to cross swords with Socrates and, though rebuked, was not deflated. He was fool enough to understand that a steady diet of the verities needs to be salted with flippancy in order to make it digestible. Solomon himself, not biblically, but in legend's book, was outriddled by Marcolphus who, once wise enough to confound the wise, under Christianity dwindled into a mere Lord of Misrule, by which appellation he is now known. In Europe we have Till Eulenspiegel, a Western cousin of Nassr Eddin, whose name, not for nothing, means owl-mirror—Athene's bird of wisdom reflected in a glass, sagacity and nonsense interacting. And the Teutonic Kasperle, with cap and bells and minimal knapsack, who, like the Fool of the Tarot, serenely passes through the world, here and there alike to him, unaware—or perhaps aware and unafraid—of the crocodile lying in wait. Shakespeare's fools, designed to throw light on princely follies, accepting to be wronged and mocked so that others may ease themselves in laughter of what, in them, is mocked and wronged—are often more memorable than their masters, for they carry the story's inner mean-

ing. They are the jokers in the pack, becoming a king or a seven at the will of the dealer, always aware that, for all the sunlight, the rain it raineth every day. The early Chaplin, while it was still instinctive in him, had something of this quality. So, too, had Don Quixote; and the Jugo-Slavian Boudala whom the folk assimilated to the Buddha; and so, superlatively, had Ryokan, the fool of Zen, who, when his house was robbed, rejoiced. "They left the best thing, the moon at the window!" If these were

Fool Praying (Pencil, 1976)

The Sleeping Fool (Oil, 1943)

mad, then let us, you and I, not be less. "The madman," as Rumi says, "is he that has not gone mad"; or, as the Bible puts it, has not made himself a fool for Christ's sake; nor yet become one of the children of light, than whom the children of this world are, it is said, so much wiser. We should remember all these, and there are more, as we come to the theme of the Three Brothers.

You know the story—there is no tradition that does not have it. Always it begins with requirement—something has to be sought for and (this is important) brought home—the water of life, the abducted sister, the golden apples, the mother borne away by a whirlwind. And no one but the three brothers can be deputed to perform the task.

So, first the eldest sets out, always spurning, or disregarding, advice from the dwarf, the toad, or Merlin. And, inevitably, since these are the harbingers of fate, he finds himself caught in a ravine, baulked at the foot of unscalable cliffs, pent in the Dark Tower of Elfland—it is all one prison, however named. If one thinks of the adventure in terms of an octave, he has gone as far as the note Mi and, for him, the quest ends there.

Now it is the turn of the second brother. He, too, is accosted by the sibylline figures; he, too, disdains the proffered help; he, too, can go no further. A certain energy is needed to leap the crevasse of the semitone and so arrive at Fa. And neither brother, from lack of wish, understanding, faith—put any word on it you like—is able to acquire it.

And so, at home, there is consternation. With the elder sons lost or dead, the quest, it appears, has failed.

But the Youngest Brother now steps forward. Since the story's purpose must be served, who but himself is left to serve it?

"No, no," the parents cry. "You are young! You have not the wit."

"Then, without wit!" says the Youngest Brother. And every fool murmurs assent to the phrase.

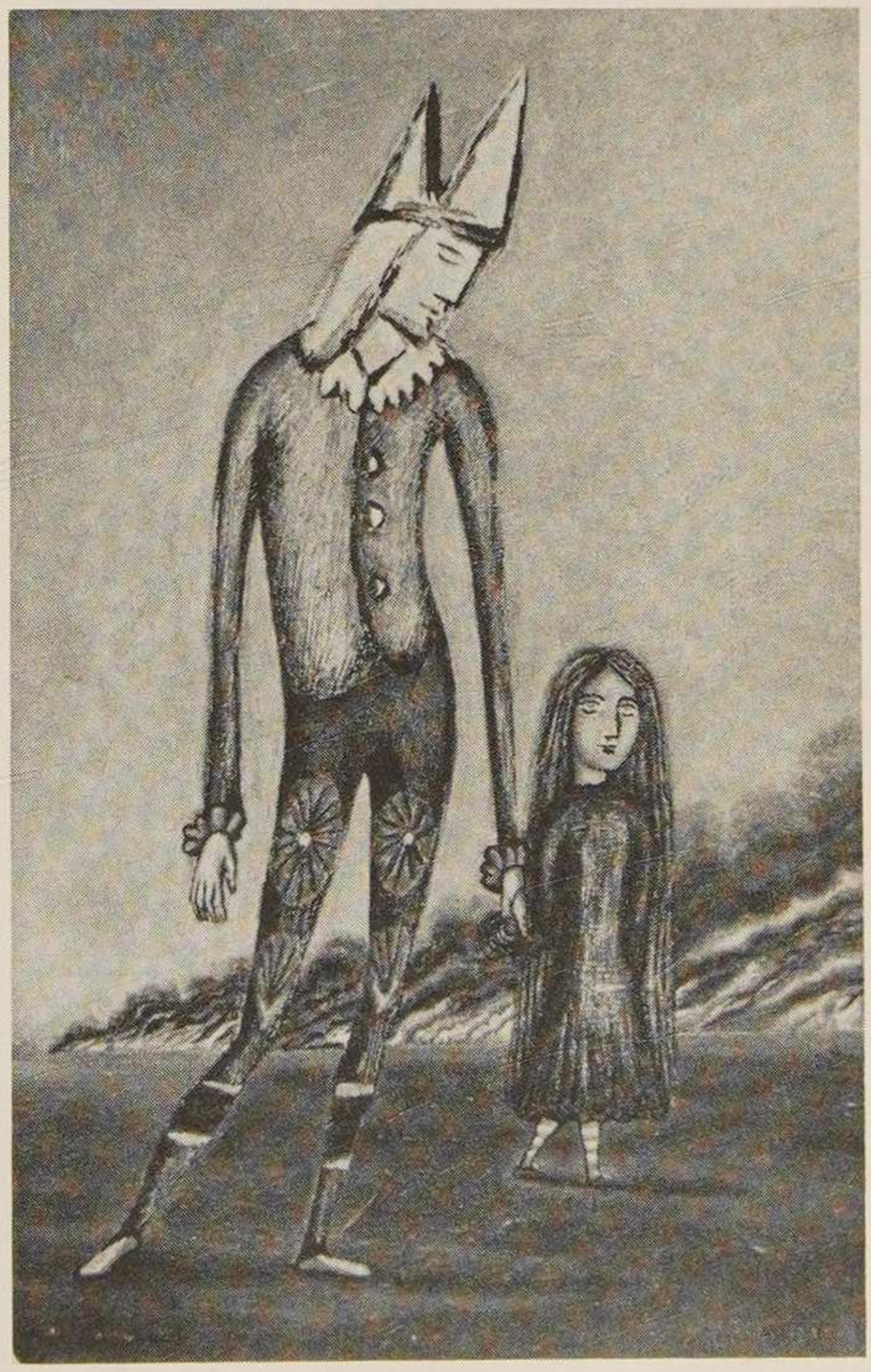
So, witlessly, off he goes, harkening to the oracles, following after the way-showers, be it ball, blown feather, beckoning cat. In Grimm's story *The Water of Life*—for me the archetypal version—the guide is a dwarf, quintessential creature of earth and as such privy to earth's secrets and the whereabouts of her vital wellspring.

"You will find it," he tells the Youngest Brother, "in the courtyard of an enchanted castle. Strike the door thrice with this wand of iron, throw these loaves of bread to the lions. Take the water ere the clock strikes twelve." The tale is packed with symbols. And, of course there is an imprisoned princess, the hero's complementary figure, the Yin that enables the Yang to prevail. "You have set me free," she tells our lad. "Fill your cup and take it home and come back in a year's time."

So far, so good. The Youngest has leapt from Mi to Fa. The octave can continue on its way and we can be content. Or can we? The answer, apparently, is no. Every note in the scale must be sounded. Disregarding the dwarf's warning but answering to the story's need, the last-born rescues his two brothers, shows them the water, describes the maiden, and thereupon falls asleep. And here, as between cup and lip, there are slips between note and note. Even at the last moment, the treasure can be lost. The brothers steal the elixir, substitute salt water for it, which the innocent Youngest gives the king who, therefore, unlike God, is mocked. "Put him to death!" the father cries. He does not know that one of the Saving Friends—this time in the form of a huntsman—will come to the Youngest's aid.

So now he must serve a further term in order to vault across the abyss, far deeper than that between Mi and Fa, that lies between the Si of one octave and the succeeding Do. He hires himself out to foreign lords who have need of his magic wand and bread. Anyone not familiar with the theme would think we had heard the last of him, which is just what the fairy tale intends. With its ingrained sense of drama—even melodrama—it slyly keeps us in suspense in order to build up to the well-known recognition scene which exposes the duplicity of the elder brothers and shows the Youngest as true hero, alive, and moreover, so rich and famous that, though relieved, we are also anxious. Can this be Simpleton, we wonder, the one we have loved since childhood for his lack of worldly gifts? Is this the earth that the meek inherit? If so, do we want to be meek?

And then, with a sweeping, theatrical gesture—the fairy tales are all ham actors—the story points to the heart of the matter, the fair, the chaste, the unexpressive She who, in various symbolic guises has



The Pilgrim Fool (Oil, 1943)

Fools Dancing (Pencil, 1976)

been with us from the beginning; the requirement, the enchanted castle, the water of life, the princess—or woman of Samaria?—who dwells beside the well. For now the allotted year is over, and the last great task must be undertaken. She issues a proclamation. He who shall ride straight up the road to her door is the one who shall have her hand in marriage.

At once the three leap to the saddle. And the first, as he approaches it, perceives that the road is made of gold. What! Sully such a highway? Never! So, prudently, he rides to the right, and is refused admission. The second brother rides to the left and he, too, is denied. But the third doesn't even notice the road, be it gold, macadam, or Orion's Belt. With his heart set solely upon that She, he gallops along it—oh, he gallops! Yes, he is Simpleton, indeed, given back to us with his witlessness, his imprudence, his lack of self. And we can be sure, though the tale is not on this point explicit —that when the question "Who is there?" is asked, the Youngest Brother will reply, as Majnun to Laila in the Persian story, not "It is I!" but "Thou!"

The stories grow as we ourselves grow. They are trees that are meant to put forth fruit, the ripened fruit of question. That being so, I have for a long time asked myself whether those three brothers are really three, or a threefold composite of one man, three stages in a single life? And whether the story is not a pattern, at once ancient and familiar, of how—if we could!—to live our own lives?

Here he is, that man, as eldest brother, setting out upon the quest—an essential element in any life whether in or out of a book. He has, or believes he has, everything —youth, beauty, capacity. And, above all, he *knows*! What does he need with the hoi polloi, be it dwarf, toad, little old woman, who presume to offer him advice as though he—he!—were in a tight corner? But very soon he finds out that that is exactly where he is and the helpers seem to have disappeared.

Well, then, there is nothing else for it, he has to become the second brother; older and perhaps, now, not so strong and handsome. Ah, but he's clever, he's a man of the world and he knows his way about it. So he, too, dismisses the counsellors and, having learnt nothing from experience, lands up in the same old place.

And in this place—I have to assume it, since I've asked the question—he begins to take stock of the situation and consider how to get out of it. Worldly wisdom, worldly possessions, will never help him here. But can he throw overboard his having, and what is harder, his knowing? Make a friend of Necessity? Cease to live by bread alone and cast himself on the waters as bread? Become the Youngest Brother?

The story, wordlessly, says Yes! At the same time it mutely points a finger at what has not yet been explored—the dual nature of the quest, the mutuality of its contraries, its inherent paradox. "I do not seek, I find," said Picasso, almost, but not quite hitting the mark. "I am found" would be nearer to the truth.

In his earlier phases, this one man we are contemplating is concerned only with seeking. All that he needs for the quest, he

believes, is contained within himself. Having no conception of what is "other," he thinks of the way as a mere object, inanimate, passive, there to be used; of the treasure as a commodity that merely awaits the taking.

But once he is in the tight place, he is forced, for the quest's sake—or for life's—to confront the dualities. Perhaps he begins to understand that the tight place itself is by no means all it appears to be; that the way could actively carry him onward and the treasure come hurrying to meet him—upon a single condition. "If I seek," he comes to realize, "then I am also sought. It does not all depend on me. And yet, to the extent that I am able to be found, it all depends on me."

So, he lets go—not his possessions but his possessing, uses the tight place as a springboard and marches forward against the thorn—empty and capable of being filled, helpless and able to be helped; unknowing and knowing that only unknowing can bring him to his knowing. It is thus that the man becomes the child, the last the first, the wise the fool, grown—not created—pure in heart. Only such a one, says the story, can put out a hand for the treasure. And even so, properly to have it, he must first be ready to lose it. What he was must steal it from what he is, while he sleeps, or forgets what he is. A further novitiate must be served before he can truly claim as his own, the water, that She, or his soul.

One task remains. In every version of the story, the Youngest either forgives his brothers or sees that they are fitted out with princesses of their own. You could say that he was re-enacting Plato's myth of the Cave, where those who have risen to the light go down again to rescue others who still live with the shadows. Or, as an alternative—which is more properly a similitude—this one man, by taking pity on himself (which has nothing to do with self-pity) repairs his past and redeems his world. And if his past, then all the past; if his world, then all the world. You cannot purify one stretch of the river without affecting the whole. If sweet Thames runs, for a moment, softly, so, too, do Ganges, Mississippi, Neva. "To repair the past," a wise Teacher said, "is to prepare the future." What then would this man's future be? I hazard a suggestion. "It's all yours," he would say to eternal wisdom and drop into himself. Or to put it into fairy tale words, he would live happy ever after—a hackneyed phrase, I admit, but one of significance. What does it mean? Nirvana? The kingdom of heaven? The void? Only a fool would know, I think, and he would be fool enough not to tell.

Now, this is all hint and surmise, a fallible finger thrust at the moon. You will know far more of *The Water of Life* by reading it yourselves. Like the loaves that the dwarf gave the Youngest Brother, it is a barrel of meal that does not waste, a never-failing wellspring.

And so, as the Russian storytellers say, the wind blows and the rain rains, put a log on the fire and give me to drink. For the tale has now come to its end. And if you don't like it, don't listen.

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The Master Thief

The following story is the first part of "The Master Thief," from the collection The Magic Orange Tree and Other Haitian Folktales. *In the collection each story is preceded by an introduction describing the storyteller. The collector, Diane Wolkstein, tells us that Willy, the storyteller of this tale, was a young fellow of twenty-two with a wife and five children. He refused steady employment but made his living "here and there." He was always merry and wore, though he had perfect vision, "glasses of fantasy." He had great admiration for the hero of his story and each time he told the tale doubled over with laughter at the stupidity of the peasant who thought he was about to find a new pair of boots!*

There was a wealthy man who had three sons. He paid for their education, and they were good students. After they had finished their schooling, he asked them what trade they wanted to follow.

"Papa, I want to be a lawyer," said the first one.

"That is fine," the father said. So the boy packed his bags and the father sent him to law school.

"Papa, I want to be a tailor," said the second.

"That is also fine," the father said. The boy packed his bags and the father apprenticed him to a master tailor.

"Papa, I would like to be a thief," said the third son.

"I do not think I heard you correctly."

"You heard me correctly, Papa. I want to study to be a master thief."

"How can this be? I spend my money to educate you, and deprive myself, and all you want is to steal. Why don't you choose something useful like your other two brothers?"

"But, Papa, one can only work according to one's abilities. Please, Papa, apprentice me to the shoemaker, the Boss shoemaker in the village who is known for his tricks."

From The Magic Orange Tree and Other Haitian Folktales *collected by Diane Wolkstein. Copyright 1978 by Diane Wolkstein. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.*

So the father took his son to the Boss shoemaker. "Teach him what you can," he said.

The shoemaker was rather surprised that the son of such a wealthy man wanted to work for him, but he soon saw that the boy was earnest.

In a very short time the boy became adept at explaining to the customers: "Not ready yet. Oh, come back tomorrow." "Did I say Friday? I meant the following Friday." "Really, you must be patient."

Many of the customers became so tired of waiting for their old shoes to be repaired that they bought new ones. So the shoemaker sold the old ones and by this and other tricks he made a tidy profit.

But one evening, the shoemaker and his student were sitting by the public road and the shoemaker was cooking rice. It seemed that his customers had been unusually patient lately so he was unable to buy meat. They were forced to eat dry rice without any sauce.

"We never ate like this at home," the boy said. "We had meat at both lunch and dinner, and bananas and potatoes as well."

"In my profession one must show patience when one's customers are patient," the shoemaker replied.

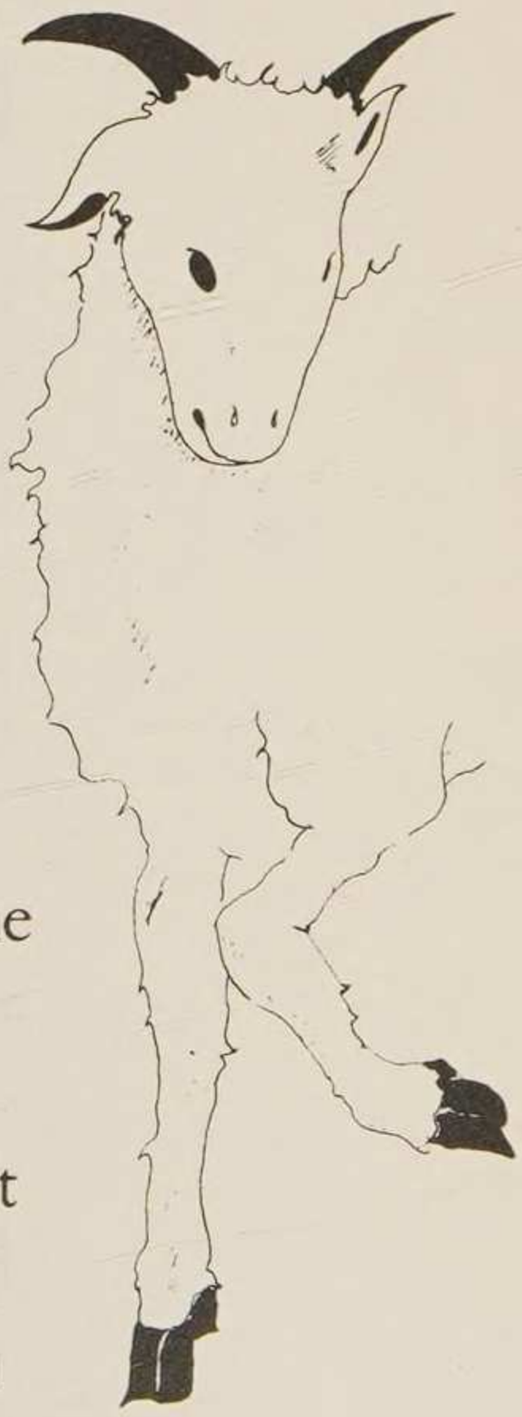
"Even so," the boy said.

Then they noticed a peasant in the distance leading his goat toward them on his way to market.

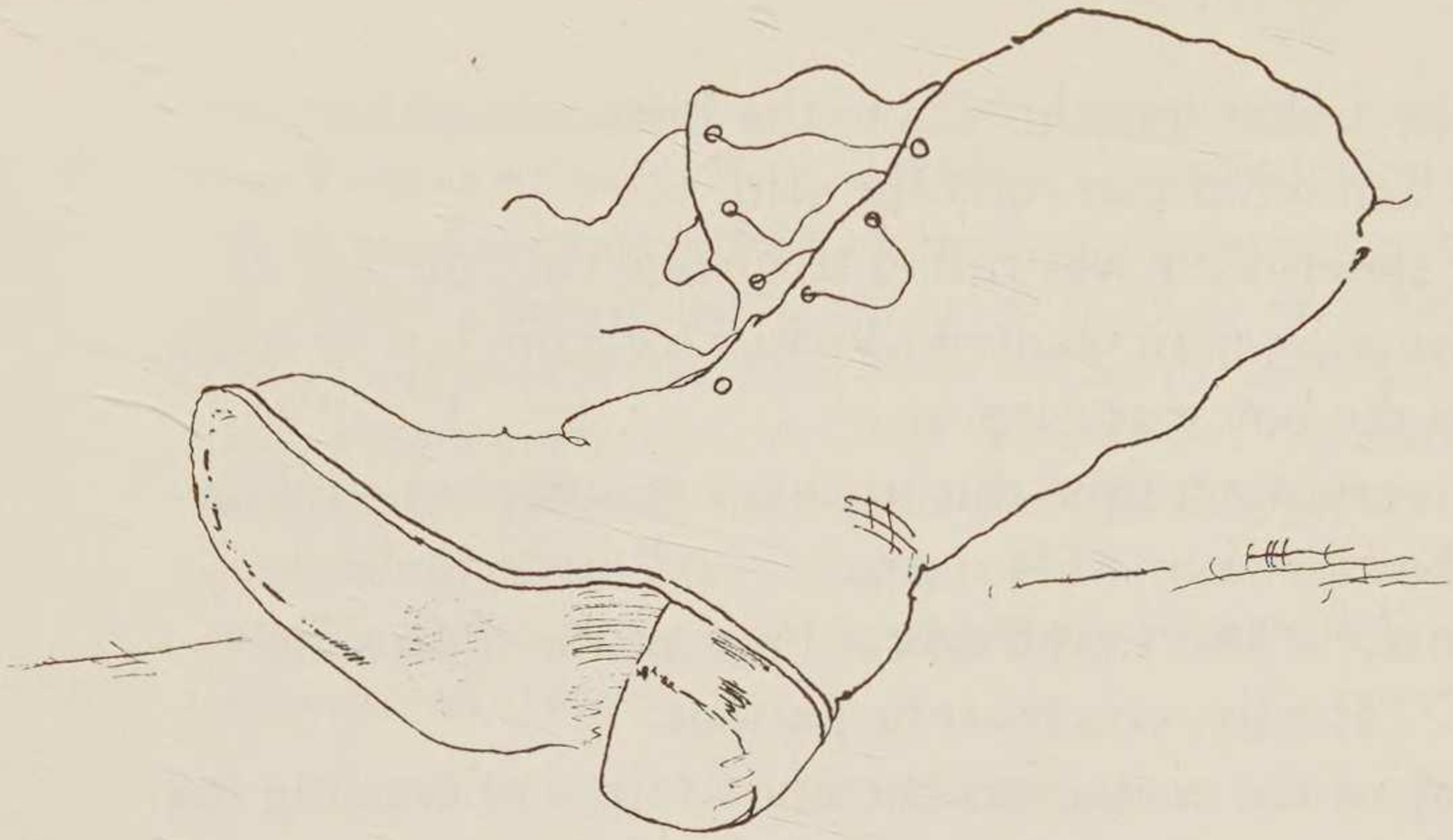
"You see that goat?" the boy said. "We are eating goat tonight."

"But how?"

"Give me one of your better boots and go hide in the bushes."



The boy took the boot and laid it in the road so the peasant would be sure to see it as he passed. The peasant walked by with his goat, noticed the boot, but did not stop. The boy then snatched up the boot, raced through



the bushes, and laid it in the road in front of the peasant. As the man approached the boot he slowed down.

"Awhile back I saw one boot," he said to himself. "This makes two. If I had them both I would have a pair."

So the man tied his goat to a mapou tree and went back for the first boot. Why he did not take his goat and the boot with him, I do not know. Well, the boy quickly untied the goat and led him to the Boss shoemaker. They feasted on goat meat for several days, and the Boss was pleased.

A week later they happened to be sitting in the same place by the public road and saw the same peasant walking toward them leading another goat.

"We shall eat goat meat again," the boy said.

"But how? You don't think you can fool the same man twice do you?"

"Wait and see."

The boy rushed ahead of the peasant and waited for him in the bushes by the mapou tree. As the peasant

approached, he began to bray: "*Be-be Be-be Be-be.*" The peasant stopped to listen. The boy brayed louder to excite him. "*BE-BE BE-BE BE-BE BE-BE.*"

"That must be my lost goat, calling me," the man said. He tied his goat to the mapou tree and started into the bushes.

The boy continued braying for a time, leading the man farther and farther from the road. Then he doubled back, untied the goat, and quickly led him to the Boss shoemaker.

When the man could not find his goat and came back to the road and found his other goat was gone, he said, "It's this tree. There is a spirit in this tree that is making my goats invisible."

"You are doing very well," the Boss said to the boy. "I think you will be getting your diploma soon."

Holy Laughter

SHOCK brings success.
Shock comes—oh, oh!
Laughing words—ha, ha!
The shock terrifies for a hundred miles,
And he does not let fall the sacrificial spoon and chalice.

—I Ching[1]

Our life must be converted into its contrary. We must unlearn those things which we have learned; by learning them we have hitherto not known ourselves. We must learn those things we have neglected; without knowing them we cannot know ourselves. We must like what we neglect, neglect what we like, tolerate what we flee, flee what we follow. We must cry about the jest of fortune; jest about its tears.

—*Marsilio Ficino*

A clown in our language is called a heyoka. *He is upsidedown, backward-forward, yes-and-no man, a contrarywise. Everybody can be made into a clown, from one day to another, whether he likes it or not. It is very simple to become a* heyoka. *All you have to do is dream about the lightning, the thunderbirds. You do this, and when you wake up in the morning you are a* heyoka. *There is nothing you can do about it.*

Suppose you have such a dream. What happens then? It is very unpleasant to talk about. What I mean is that a man who has

dreamed about the thunderbirds, right away, the next morning, he's got a fear in him, a fear to perform his act. He has to act out his dream in public.

If I had a heyoka *dream now which I would have to re-enact, the thunder-being would place something in that dream that I'd be ashamed of. Ashamed to do in public, ashamed to own up to. Something that's going to want me not to perform this act. And that is what's going to torment me. Having had that dream, getting up in the morning, at once I would hear this noise in the ground, just under my feet, that rumble of thunder. I'd know that before the day ends that thunder will come through and hit me, unless I perform the dream. I'm scared; I hide in the cellar; I cry; I ask for help, but there is no remedy until I have performed this act. Only this can free me. Maybe by doing it, I'll receive some power, but most people would just as soon forget about it.*

The wise old people know that the clowns are thunder-dreamers, that the thunder-beings commanded them to act in a silly way, each heyoka *according to his dream. They also know that a* heyoka *protects the people from lightning and storms and that his capers, which make people laugh, are holy. Laughter—that is something very sacred, especially for us Indians.*

—Lame Deer[2]

It is a profitable thing, if one is wise, to seem foolish.

—Aeschylus

Though this be madness, yet there is method in't.

—Shakespeare

In the Kaliyuga one does not hear the voice of God, it is said, except through the mouth of a child or a madman or some such person.

—Sri Ramakrishna

The poet makes himself a seer through a long, a prodigious and a rational disordering of all the senses.

—*Unknown*

'Alī ibn 'Abdān knew a madman who wandered about in the daytime and passed the night in prayer. "How long," he asked him, "hast thou been mad?"

"Ever since I knew."

—*Al-Yāfi'ī*

Look closely: you will find that the art of the comic poet consists in making us so well acquainted with the particular vice, in introducing us, the spectators, to such a degree of intimacy with it, that in the end we get hold of some of the strings of the marionette with which he is playing, and actually work them ourselves; this it is that explains part of the pleasure we feel.

—*Henri Bergson*[3]

That man alone is affected by tickling is due firstly to the delicacy of his skin, and secondly due to his being the only animal that laughs.

—*Aristotle*

What fabulous creatures these artists are! Are they really human at all? Take the clowns, for example, those basically alien beings, funmakers with little red hands, little thin-shod feet, red wigs under conical felt hats, their impossible lingo, their handstands, their stumbling and falling over everything, their mindless running to and fro and unserviceable attempts to help, their hideously

unsuccessful efforts to imitate their serious colleagues—in tight-rope walking, for instance—which bring the crowd to a pitch of mad merriment. Are these ageless, half-grown sons of absurdity, at whom Stanko and I laughed so heartily (I, however, with a thoughtful fellow-feeling), are they human at all? With their chalk-white faces and utterly preposterous painted expressions—triangular eyebrows and deep perpendicular grooves in their cheeks under the reddened eyes, impossible noses, mouths twisted up at the corners into insane smiles—masks, that is, which stand in inconceivable contrast to the splendour of their costumes—black satin, for example, embroidered with silver butterflies, a child's dream—are they, I repeat, human beings, men who could conceivably find a place in everyday daily life? In my opinion it is pure sentimentality to say that they are "human too," with the sensibilities of human beings and perhaps even with wives and children. I honour them and defend them against ordinary bad taste when I say no, they are not, they are exceptions, side-splitting monsters of preposterousness, glittering, world-renouncing monks of unreason, cavorting hybrids, part human and part insane art.

—Thomas Mann[4]

It is true the world will be apt enough to censure thee for a madman in walking contrary to it: And thou art not to be surprised if the children thereof laugh at thee, calling thee silly fool. For the way to the love of God is folly to the world, but is wisdom to the children of God. Hence, whenever the world perceiveth this holy fire of love in God's children, it concludeth immediately that they are turned fools, and are beside themselves. But to the children of God, that which is despised of the world is the greatest treasure.

—Jacob Boehme

If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

—William Blake

The wise through excess of wisdom is made a fool.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

It so happened to Dhu 'l-Nūn the Egyptian that a new agitation and madness was born within him.

His agitation became so great that salt from it was reaching hearts up to above the sky.

Beware, O thou of salty soil, do not put thy agitation beside the agitation of the holy lords.

The people could not endure his madness: his fire was carrying off their beards.

When that fire fell on the beards of the vulgar, they bound him and put him in a prison.

There is no possibility of pulling back this rein, though the vulgar be distressed by this way.

—*Jalal al-din Rumi*

Something wonderful has happened to me. I was caught up into the seventh heaven. There sat all the gods in assembly. By special grace I was granted the privilege of making a wish. "Wilt thou," said Mercury, "Have youth or beauty or power or a long life or the most beautiful maiden or any of the other glories we have in the chest? Choose, but only one thing." For a moment I was at a loss. Then I addressed myself to the gods as follows: "Most honorable contemporaries, I choose this one thing, that I may always have the laugh on my side." Not one of the gods said a word; on the contrary, they all began to laugh. From that I concluded that my wish was granted, and found that the gods knew how to express themselves with taste; for it would hardly have been suitable for them to have answered gravely: "Thy wish is granted."

—*Søren Kierkegaard*[5]

This symbol which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise of differentiation, of god and man. For this reason every generation occupies itself with interpreting the Trickster anew. No generation understands him fully, but no generation can do without him. Each had to include him in all its theologies, in all its cosmogonies, despite the fact that it realized that he did not fit properly into any of them, for he represents not only the undifferentiated and distant past, but likewise the undifferentiated present within every individual. This constitutes his universal and persistent attraction. And so he became and remained every-

thing to every man—god, animal, human being, hero, buffoon, he who was before good and evil, denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator. If we laugh at him he grins at us. What happens to him, happens to us.

—*Paul Radin*[6]

Notes

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6. Paul Radin, The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Religion *(New York: Schocken Books, 1972). Reprinted by permission of Schocken Books and Routledge & Kegan Paul. Copyright 1956 by Paul Radin.*

The Wisdom of the Contrary

A Conversation with Joseph Epes Brown

Joseph Epes Brown, well-known authority on Plains Indians cultures, first came in contact with the Native American view of the world and of nature in his boyhood, among the Northeastern and Southwestern Indians. It was an influence that has shaped his whole life. After graduating from Haverford College he travelled among the Plains Indians and studied Indian lore, and became convinced that among the tribes a great and ancient wisdom was still preserved. He was especially attracted by what he had read and heard of Black Elk, the great Sioux medicine man, then in the last years of his long life; he determined to meet and speak with him before he died. Following the tribe to where they were camped, he was directed to Black Elk's lodge and stood outside for a moment in some trepidation, not at all sure of his reception. When he entered, however, the old shaman raised his nearly sightless eyes and said, "There you are. Why did you take so long to come?"

Brown spent eight months with Black Elk, taking down what the old priest had been, it seemed, waiting to tell him about the rites and ceremonies of his people. The result was the wonderful book The Sacred Pipe, *"Black Elk's book," as Joseph Brown calls it, claiming no other title to it than that of "recorder and editor."*

Brown is now teaching American Indian religions at the University of Montana at Missoula. He built an enchanting octagonal wooden house, very much the shape of a tepee—at the foot of St. Mary's Peak in the Bitterroot Mountains, where he lives with his Swiss dancer wife and their four children, a number of horses which he trains, rides and shows, several dogs and a varying number of buffalo. Besides teaching, ranching, and writing, he travels a good deal: he is in much demand as a lecturer, he makes frequent trips to Europe, and goes often to visit his friends among the Plains tribes, hear their stories and take part in their ceremonies. His relation with Native American life and thought seems an essential part of him, entirely without pretense or sentimentality. His house is tepee-shaped not as a pose but because, like the people with whom he is so genuinely attuned, he really feels good in that traditionally circular space.

When we decided to have an issue on the Trickster, we wanted to hear what Joseph Brown had to say about it. We were fortunate to catch him at home—in the barn, actually, with his horses—and in having personal connections, as well as the tie of PARABOLA *(he has been one of our consulting editors since the magazine began) which allowed us to impose on him for an informal chat, which went as follows:*

D.M. DOOLING *We want to talk to you about the clown and the trickster who play such a prominent role in Native American cultures. In our culture we tend to think of him as being there for our entertainment: the circus or rodeo clown; something to amuse children. But perhaps even they have another, more hidden function. The rodeo clown, for instance: he isn't there simply to amuse the crowd with vulgar jokes; he's an extraordinarily brave man whose daring performances protect the riders from being trampled if they are thrown. But how could they be related, for example, to the Contraries of the Plains people?*

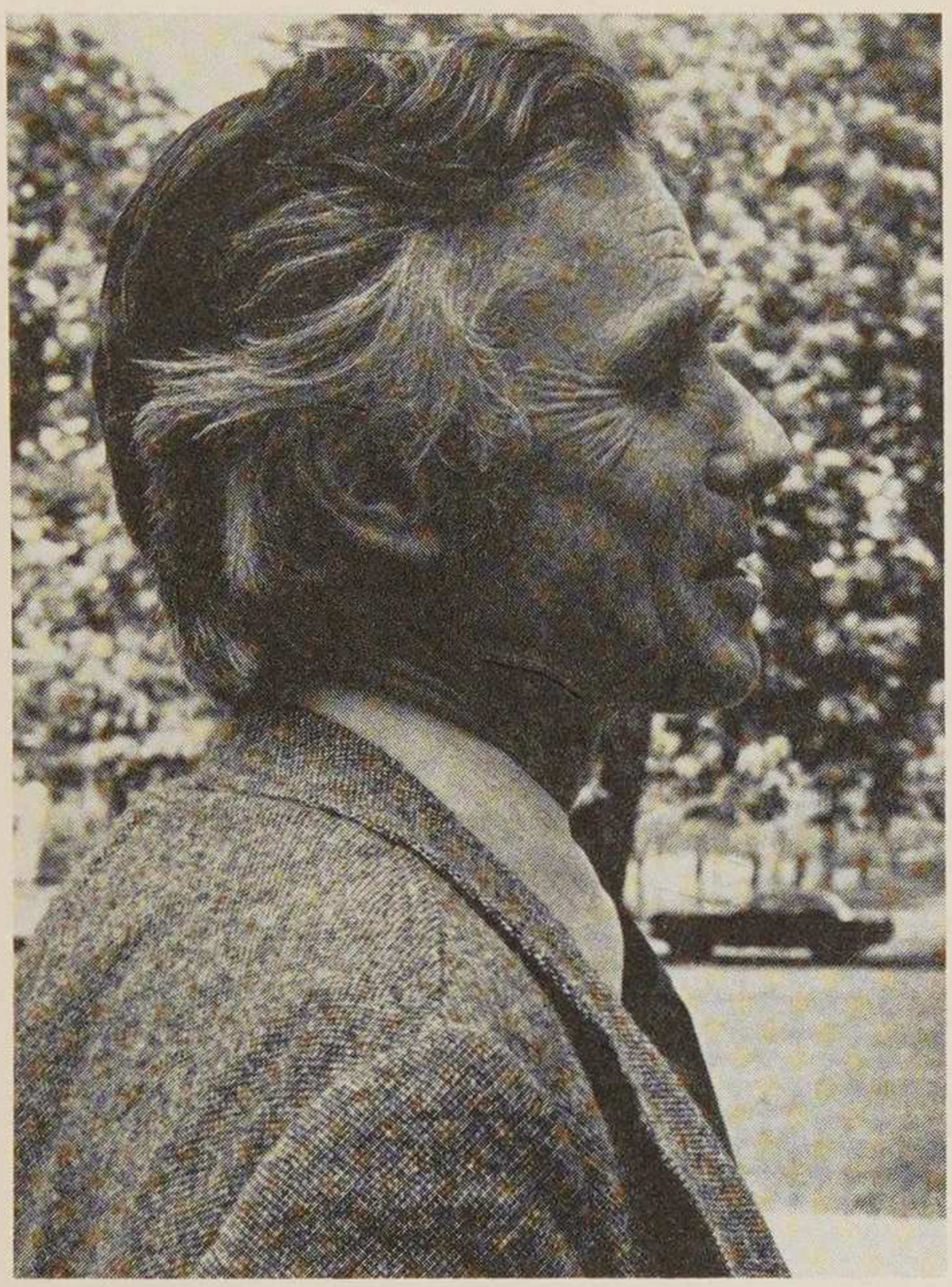
JOSEPH EPES BROWN Before we get into details such as Contraries and the Plains people's traditions, would it be possible to talk a little bit about the meaning of the general phenomenon of "clowns" across cultures, and then come to specific references to American Indian cultures? I have some very strong feelings about this that I would like to verbalize, if I can. If you were to ask me to sit down and write about it, it would take me many weeks; informally, there are a few things I would like to speculate about.

D.D. *We would like very much to hear your speculations!*

J.B. I would like to emphasize first that we are here talking about "clowns," Contraries, or Trickster beings within essentially religious contexts—that is to say, within what I call traditional types of societies. When we talk about clowns in our society, such as the rodeo clown or the Barnum and Bailey circus clown, we are dealing with a different perspective, because here clowns and clowning occur outside a traditional religious context, although perhaps this is not so true in the origins of the circus. But today one could say that in our society—and this is perhaps not a kindly remark—clowns don't have the quality of impact they do in traditional societies because it seems that in a society such as ours, everybody tends to be some kind of a clown, and life so often has the mood of a carnival, that the sacred context within which the traditional clown acts has become lost.

D.D. *Yes, it's not very kind, but rather true.*

J.B. Because with us, the carnival or the acts of a clown amuse but do not lead towards religious understanding or spiritual realization. In traditional societies in general, however, I would say that the role of the clown serves an enormously important purpose in that it opens a door, in a very subtle and effective way, into a realm of greater reality than the realm of the ebb and flow of everyday life. And this is accomplished, I think, essentially by two means. There is first of all the element of shock. Clowns among the Pueblos, for example, in the context of their ritual dance dramas, engage in, among other activities, sexual types of display which normally are quite taboo in such societies, and this causes a rupture with the ordinary everyday pattern of life. It does that by immediately catching the attention; it helps the people forget their petty little concerns about the routines of daily life. It shocks them out of that. Secondly, once that awareness, that alertness and openness, has been achieved through the initial shock, then it is possible to communicate on another level through the use of humor. As I see it, all this puts the mind of the person involved in a frame which relates to the humor of the situation, thus serving to open doors to a realm greater than that of ordinary life. It does this extremely effectively, because all of this takes place, as I have suggested, within a very serious ritual or dance-drama context, which involves enormous concentration, great attention to the minute details of the rites of the ceremonies that are being carried out—and the rigors



of all this demand some kind of relief, some way in which what is being stated through the rites can be translated onto a much deeper level, transcending the activities, or the forms and motions of the rite itself. Thus shock and humor open into another realm. It is a very Zen-like technique, it seems to me.

D.D. *Yes, I was just thinking of the traditional Zen master, who certainly uses the technique of shock and humor. But I have a question there: the humor is apparently very often directed toward the rite itself. It's as if the ritual solemnities were being made fun of. Now from what you say, I gather that you think this is done in order that the truth that is within these rites should be somehow put on a different level, but not destroyed; would you say the humor is not destructive, it is not* against?

J.B. No, I see it as a technique to translate the formal rite or to break through it into an area of deeper meaning and deeper awareness on the part of the participant. It is you might say a shattering of the structure of the rite in order to get at the essence of the rite. It seems to ridicule, thus destroy, but it does this so that deeper truths contained within the rite can come forth and reveal themselves.

D.D. *I wonder if you could describe some manifestations of the trickster or the clown when this role is being played?*

J.B. Well, there are many examples one could take, but I always like to use those out of Plains Indian culture, out of my own experience with the so-called *Heyhokas* among the Sioux, especially among the friends I lived with in Black Elk's family, and with Black Elk himself, who was a *Heyhoka*—

D.D. *He was? I didn't know that!*

J.B. Oh, yes! In the first place, to become a *Heyhoka,* or what is sometimes called a Contrary, requires a deep spiritual experience—a very intense quality of dream, or more often a vision experience. This sacred origin is important, because it gives the key to the fact that what we are really dealing with in the activities of the *Heyhoka* is of a spiritual nature, and is a means of transmitting spiritual truths to the larger community. The quality of the vision that leads to becoming a *Heyhoka* is institutionalized in a sense, in that it has to be a vision involving certain forms or certain powers—lightning, for example, the Thunder Beings, or the dog; if one has such a vision, this requires that the person become a *Heyhoka.*

D.D. *Any vision of any one of these?*

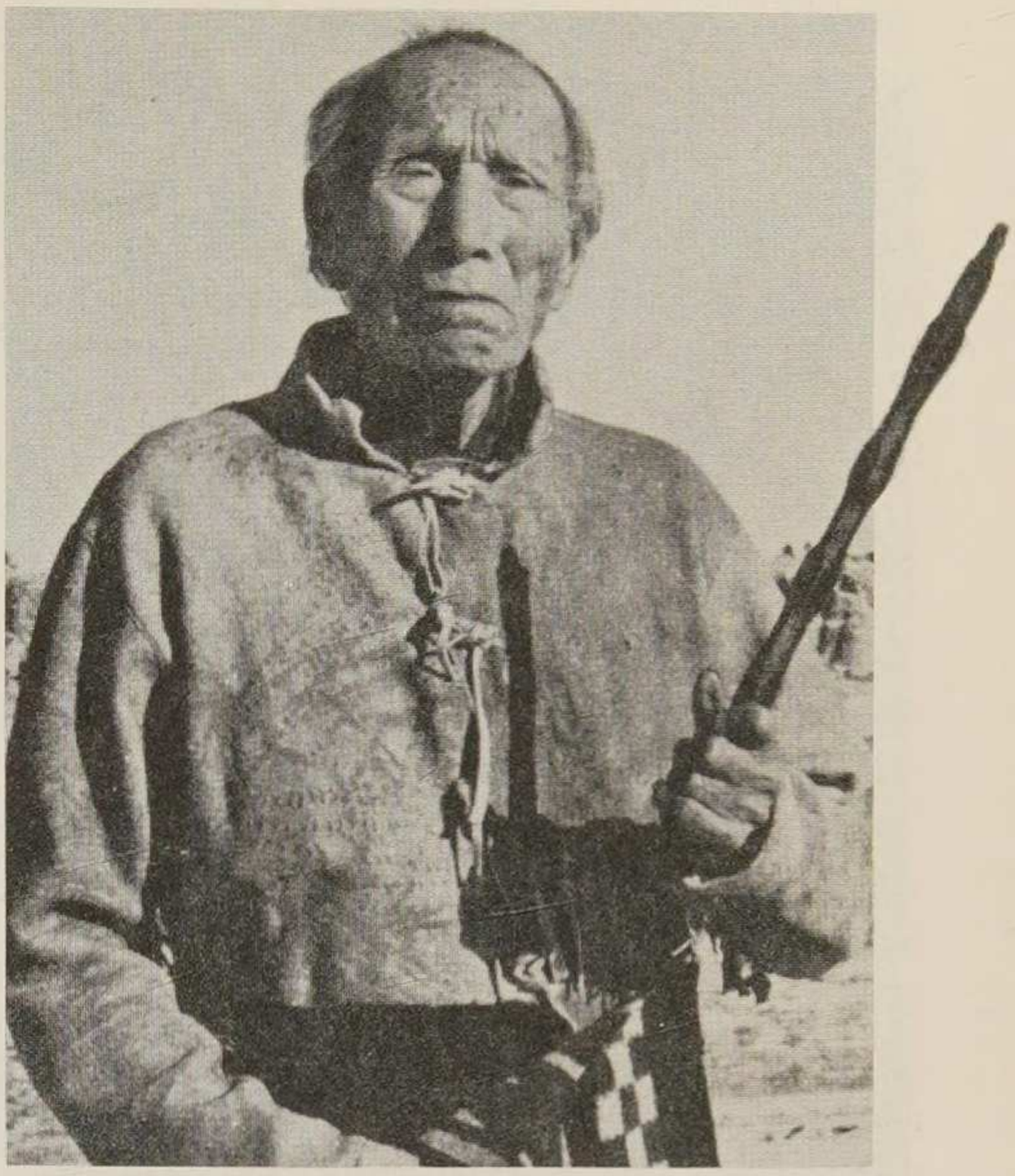
J.B. At least among the Sioux, yes. However, the strongest sign probably is of lightning, whether in the form of the Thunder Beings, or the eagle perhaps, which is associated with lightning. This was Black Elk's experience, which forced him to become a trickster figure, a *Heyhoka,* one who has the obligation—and it is a very weighty function that is imposed on such a person—to do things in ways which break with the traditional norms. Sometimes the *Heyhoka's* actions are very humorous, because this is, as we have said, a part of the technique for shattering a person's perception of, and participation in, the everyday routines of life. To break through the habitual enables one to take some distance from oneself—to see

things a little bit more objectively, and thereby on a higher level. So the *Heyhokas* do all sorts of strange things: they do things upside down or backwards; sometimes they will pitch a tepee with the poles on the outside of the lodge covering, with the smoke flaps facing the wrong way, or with the doorway to the west instead of to the east. When they sit in the tepee maybe they will do it upside down, with their feet up in the air, lying on their backs on the ground; and this of course makes people laugh. Normally when you enter a tepee in the Plains, you must move around it in a sunwise direction, clockwise; but the *Heyhoka* will do it the wrong way. Everything is done in reverse. Sometimes instead of going in the doorway they lift up the lodge cover at the back and crawl under; things like that. Sometimes their tricks aren't so funny. I remember one story an old Sioux woman told me, and she was really mad about it. Her husband was a *Heyhoka,* and she had just finished making a pair of decorated moccasins for him. They were in the lodge and she tossed them to him across the fire, saying, "Here, try them on." In their language, which is Lakota, that sounds very much like, "Here, burn them up," and so he picked them up and threw them into the fire, and burned up his nice new moccasins; and she was furious. She didn't think that was very funny.

D.D. *I really can't blame her!*

J.B. But maybe it did something for her, to help her to take a greater distance from her craft work. Sometimes in making things one becomes too attached to what is made, forgetting that things are never permanent!

There are hundreds of stories like that. I like the one Black Elk used to tell about the *Heyhokas* who rushed out of the tepee after a little sprinkling of rain and saw a large puddle; with great flourishes and gesticulations they took off their clothes down to the breech clout, and then they got a long pole, about twenty feet long, and laid it horizontally across the puddle; then they set it up



Black Elk

vertically in order to measure the depth of the water, and saw it was about twenty feet deep, you see? So with a great deal of display, making sure everybody in camp was looking, they dove into the water, which was only a few inches deep, and hit their heads hard, and made everybody laugh. And that's good, because what is life without laughter? It's very important.

D.D. *What did Black Elk do as a* Heyhoka?

J.B. Well, he was always doing funny things. That is why it was always good to live with him, because you never knew what to expect. It was always something completely unexpected that would happen, when you were traveling with him, for instance. There was a time—this isn't exactly humorous, but it shows the ability of the *Heyhoka* to seize on any occasion and use it in an imaginative, unusual way. It was in Denver—which was not a very pleasant city in the early 1940s; there was a great deal of prejudice and racism, and we had a hard time finding a hotel room. When we did find one it was a very dingy, horrible room and Black Elk felt bad about Denver and the hotel; he felt unclean and he wanted a sweat bath to cleanse himself of the impurities of that city. I didn't know how this

could be done in a hotel room; but the room was heated by a coal fire, and the fireplace was brick and so old the bricks were falling out of it. He said, "Here, let's take these loose bricks, and we'll pull some more out of the chimney and heat them in the coal fire," which we did. Then we took the chairs in the room and put them in a circle, and took all the bedding off the beds and put them over the chairs to make a kind of lodge right there in the middle of this hotel room. We found an old coal scuttle and when the bricks were red hot we put them in the coal scuttle, put that in the little lodge, and stripped down and crawled in; and it was good and hot in there and we sang and prayed and smoked and sweated and it was real good, you know? I think that was the first time a sweat bath has ever been taken in a Denver hotel room; but that is typical of the kind of thing that happens with these people—the unexpected, breaking with habitual patterns, adds a dimension to life that I think is terribly important.

D.D. *When Black Elk was acting as a religious leader among his people, did he put aside the* Heyhoka *role?*

J.B. No; it is incumbent upon the *Heyhoka* always to be a *Heyhoka;* you can't turn it on and off.

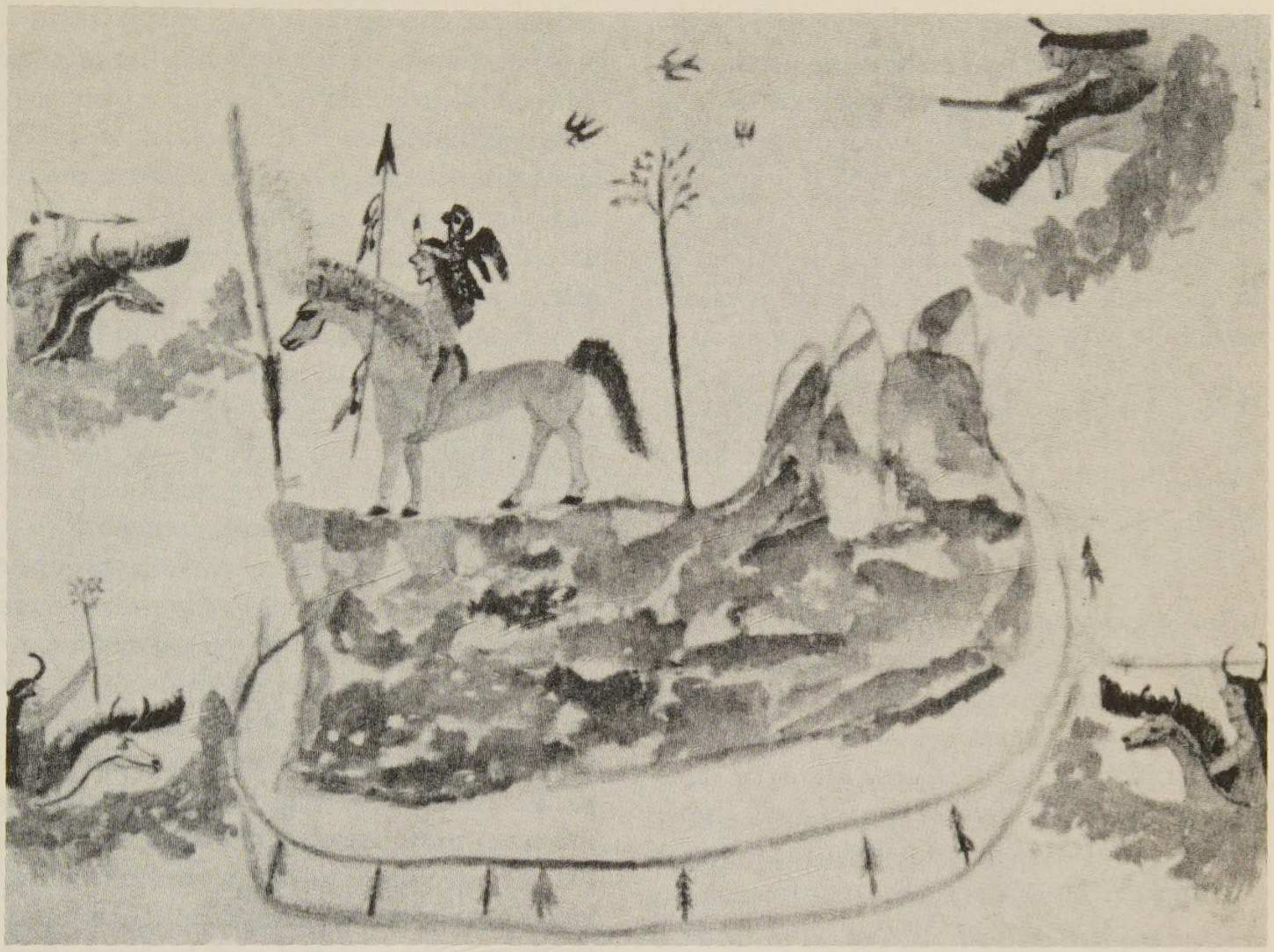
D.D. *How did he reconcile the two roles?*

J.B. The leading of serious, sacred rites isn't contrary to breaking the seriousness of those rites with humor. It gives dramatic relief; it is a universal technique. Very often, right in the middle of a sacred rite, the opening of a medicine bundle, for instance, there'll be a kind of break or recess, and at that time maybe they'll start telling very funny stories; and in this most serious context all of a sudden everyone is laughing and rolling on the ground.

D.D. *That reminds me of an experience of my own, when I was admitted to the preparation of a Navajo sand painting ceremony. At the same time that the medicine man was making the sand painting, and instructing a couple of young assistants in exactly how it was done, he was also making great fun of us, and there was a great deal of laughter. They would stop every now and then and say, "Thankyou thankyou thankyou!" They think it is very funny the way we say "thank you," and the laughter was uproarious. It was my first experience of Indians in action and I was very much astonished at this mixture of the solemn with ridicule.*

J.B. And so often for an outsider it is very, very hard to take, because we feel offended, and so on. But if we can really stand off from ourselves and see that indeed we really *are* very funny in certain circumstances, and start to laugh at ourselves, then all of a sudden—and this I think is the point of the whole thing—something opens up and another quality of participation becomes possible. You know, in many of those cults or sects where everything is taken so very seriously and everything must be very solemn and one must never smile because a smile is against religion, one wonders—in a truly spiritual sense, what is the real work that goes on within? In many American Indian cultures, on the Northwest coast, for instance, certain rites and ceremonies can't be started until the guests who have been invited to participate start to laugh—open up. Once they start to laugh, then the ground is prepared for a real quality of participation in the sacred dimensions of what the rite is all about.

Sometimes—I'm thinking now again of Black Elk—the tricks backfire in tragic ways. For example, as a *Heyhoka* Black Elk had the right and indeed the obligation to do things which were amazing and antinatural, and he once proclaimed that he was going to make the earth rise in front of everybody within the tepee. What he had done was to place gunpowder a few inches under the surface of the earth and then at a certain point in his ceremony, when he called on the earth to rise, he touched off the gunpowder with a cigarette or something, and indeed the earth did rise, but the flare-up from the gunpowder was too close to him and it singed his eyes; and from that time on he was very nearly completely blind. That wasn't so funny. No one else



Black Elk at the center of the earth, by Standing Bear

was hurt, but he always used to say that he had been punished for trying to go too far in fooling people.

There is something that I think is very important about these kinds of tricks and strange phenomena that some of the medicine men can accomplish: very often it is evident to the outsider that there is some pragmatic explanation for the trick, some sleight of hand or other, and very often that is the case and the people are very aware of it. But that doesn't mean to them that the performer is a fake or a charlatan; they relate to this in a different kind of way from the way we would—not with suspicion but with an understanding that however the phenomenon was accomplished, it illustrates the illusory nature of phenomena in general. And realizing the illusory nature of phenomena, the world of appearances, of *maya* as the Hindus would say, again helps one to break through to a reality that is more real.

D.D. *Do you remember an article of Sam Gill's, in an early issue of* PARABOLA, *in which he was speaking of just that among the Hopi, with the kachinas? There is a disillusionment of the children at a certain age: they have been brought up with all sorts of Santa Claus stories about the kachinas. He also spoke about some tribes in Australia and the initiation rites for young boys, where they frighten them to death with bullroarers, keeping them blindfolded, and then suddenly the blindfolds are taken off and they see that these terrible roaring gods are their own fathers, laughing at them! He made a very interesting case for the extraordinary effect that this could have on the children, of bringing them to an entirely different level of understanding.*

J.B. Right—that is what I feel is accomplished. He was writing about the kachina initiation rites of the Hopi and how after very serious rites, indeed, a terrifying display where the initiates are whipped, all of a sudden the elders take off their masks and start whipping each other and joking and

the children see they are their fathers and uncles and so on. So you have again the theme of the shock and then release of tension with humor, and then hopefully understanding on a deeper level which is appropriate at this particular age; they are old enough now to understand the mysteries of the kachinas, but on a deeper level possible with maturity.

D.D. *I don't succeed in understanding very well the connection here with the enormous body of Trickster myths—all the shenanigans of Coyote, for instance, combined with his semi-divinity. What is the intention there?*

J.B. Yes, these tales now involve not people who take on the role of the clown, but animal or mythical beings who take on similar functions, whether it is Coyote, the Algonkin Nanabozo, the Great Hare, or the Siouan *Iktomi,* the Spider. First of all, the stories are always transmitted orally by storytellers, the elders who are often great artists, actors who are able to tell it in a way that immediately catches the attention of the children, the old people, everybody. They use all kinds of dramatic devices to hold their listeners' attention. Also the telling of these tales is always under certain circumstances: sometimes only in the winter season, as among the Navajos, after certain beings have gone underground, like bears and spiders, who have negative potentialities. Or, in addition, they may only be told at nighttime; in other words, the context in which the tales are told has to be special, and that lends importance to the telling of them. Then the tales themselves are acted out, often using many theatrical devices, and most of them present things that one isn't supposed to do in everyday life—as in the Coyote tales. For example, Coyote is always complaining about his hunger; and everybody knows you should never do that. So when the moment comes when he complains of hunger, everybody laughs, because they know this is not appropriate. Or Coyote is always being carried away by his sex impulses, and again everybody laughs because they know that such excesses are not acceptable behavior. Of course eventually Coyote gets punished for allowing his appetites to run away with him; but a number of things happen in these tales on a number of different levels. First of all there is what you might call the moralistic level. (There is never the punch line that we have in Aesop's fables: "This is what happens if you do this"—everybody gets the point without having to emphasize it like that.) On this moralistic level, the tales set the parameters for acceptable behavior; they define the limits outside of which you are not allowed to go if you are a member of that particular cultural group. Secondly, on what seems to me a higher level of understanding, the miraculous events that are always a part of the tale instruct us that this shifting world of appearances is not really real; there are other levels of reality. For instance, Coyote is tricked into a hollow log and can't get out, nevertheless he is able to take a clamshell from behind his ear and he cuts the parts of his body into tiny pieces and throws them out of a knothole; then once outside he puts

Black Elk at the center of the world, Harney Peak, by Standing Bear

himself together again. Thus these episodes again help to break the shell of this world of appearances in which we tend to be too set. Then there is the humor too, and these together, as with the clown, open up the possibility of participation on other, deeper levels of reality. It is a *most* effective device, whether used by the clown or in the adventures of the Trickster being.

D.D. *Are there special people who are allowed to tell stories? Do they tell them in their houses, or is there a communal storytelling? Or does this vary?*

J.B. It varies a great deal. Sometimes just in the evening when the family is there, an elder is chosen, or spontaneously he begins to tell the story, or it may be a younger person who is noted for his skill in using dramatic devices. Such oral transmission is a great art form, and it is a tragedy that this has been disappearing over the past years. With the emphasis on literacy and so on it has been increasingly lost to the people, with all that this implies. For these truths are the kinds of things that are transmitted only through the oral traditions. Also, for the full import of the tales they must be told in their own language.

D.D. *Is the storytelling kept up at all in the families now?*

J.B. It depends; but I suspect that with families that have been acculturated and have lost their own indigenous language, with the impact of television and so on, it has not been kept up. But now on many of the reservations there is a new emphasis on regaining command of their own language and establishing in their schools a curriculum in that language. This is helping, I think, to bring back these traditions and the values which they bear.

As an educator, if that is what I am in part, it seems to me there is no more effective mode of communication and education than through the person-to-person oral transmissions.

D.D. *With stories? Yes, I quite agree. I think they are of vast importance.*

J.B. Or through dance-drama, or through ritual activity, of course. All these means are interrelated and work together to accomplish something that is very real and very important, as I see it.

D.D. *It does seem the quickest way to murder a culture is to change its language. You think it is coming back, then, the use of their own language, among the tribes.*

J.B. I think so. One can see it happening everywhere. As you know the people are taking education more into their own hands, and insisting on establishing a curriculum that fits their needs and on teaching at least certain courses in their own language. All this is happening on the Blackfeet reservation, and on the Navajo reservation, at the Navajo's Rough Rock demonstration school and in their Community College. They bring in elders to their schools to do exactly this, to tell the stories again in their own language. It is established among the Cree up at Rocky Boy; it is starting on the Crow reservation and the Sioux reservations. It is happening almost everywhere, and it is good.

D.D. *If it isn't too late.*

J.B. It is never too late!

If I were to sum up what I have been trying to say about the Trickster type tales, I think the basic thing is the ambivalent character of the Trickster; he can be a rascal, or he can also be a culture hero, who brings the good things, the sacred things, to the people. He always has this ambivalence: he is a rascal but he is also a hero. And to me what this suggests is that this is a way of explaining the ambivalence of nature—its tricky character, its seeming reality. Phenomena seem to be real and yet they are not. As Black Elk used to say, this world is a shadow of another, more real world.

D.D. *It is that kind of apparent duality that we talked about in the issue on "Androgyny."*

J.B. It is not exactly a duality in our sense, but as Coomaraswamy used to say, a "syzygy of conjoint principles."

D.D. *What a mouthful!*

J.B. Fused but not confused; dual, but not separate.

D.D. *That's it: the relation of the two; but very often what is apparent is contradiction.*

J.B. A seeming contradiction.

D.D. *Yes; actually what is interesting is the real relation. So this is what I am trying to get at also about the Trickster and the Fool, the hero and the villain. Could you give us an example of how, let's say* Iktomi, *the mischief maker and Trickster of the Sioux, appears also as a hero, or in a positive or creative form?*

J.B. *Iktomi* of course among the Sioux is a Spider being—*Iktomi* in Lakota means spider. As with Coyote, the Spider is also a tricky and very clever person.

D.D. *Is he related to the Navajo Spider Woman?*

J.B. A little bit, yes, in some ways. You appreciate why the spider was chosen if you look at all the different types of spiders and what they are able to do, and how superior they are as hunters, and how the trapdoor spiders can set traps for their prey, or how spiders that build their webs in concentric circles are able to draw out of their own being two different kinds of threads, one smooth and one sticky, and how in making these webs, the threads that go in to the center are smooth but the threads that are in concentric circles are sticky; and of course it is the sticky ones that catch the prey. There is in this, you see, a positive message for the people, indeed a spiritual message: that so long as you travel to the center, you don't get stuck, trapped, eaten up; but if you go to the right or left, if you diverge from the straight way to the center, you get caught. And so this, you have to say, is a positive lesson that Spider has taught the people. Then there are all the different ways of hunting their prey that spiders use; people learn from that. Or they observe that certain types of spiders, when they are hatched out of their eggs, send up little filaments into the air and they are carried by the winds for great distances, like balloons; and the people see this as a certain control that the spiders have over the forces of the winds, and this is a power that the people would like to have themselves. So there is a whole range of positive things that one can learn from the spider. He is thought of as a very industrious person, and thus is held up as an example to young girls, because he is always working, weaving, or building. In order to make this more concrete to children, mothers used to stretch ropes and make a kind of spider web between four trees so it became a hammock, and they placed their children in the middle. The trees were situated according to the four directions of space, and the feeling was that the child would receive powers from the four directions, situated there in the center of the spider web.

D.D. *Are there any myths about* Iktomi *in which he appears as benevolent, or is he always the mischief maker?*

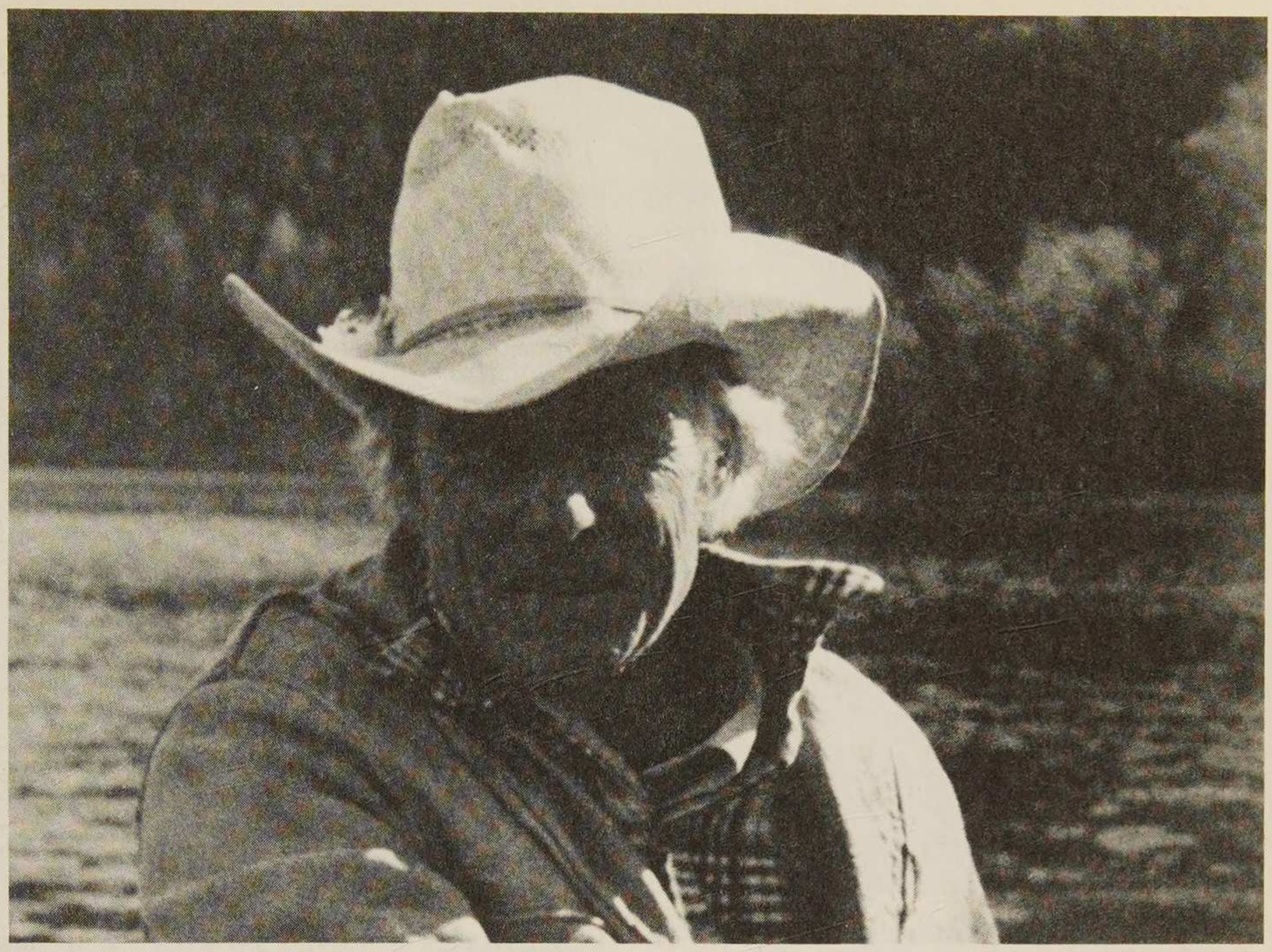
J.B. No; for example, the people also look on him as a kind of culture hero who brings important and indeed sacred things to the people—the Sioux, for instance, have a belief that they have never made their own arrowheads out of flint. They find them on the prairie already made, beautifully made; and the belief is that they were made by *Iktomi,* by the Spider, and this is his offering to the people. It is something valuable, something good; the flint arrow-point is very sacred, in part because of the association of flint with fire and lightning.

D.D. *But is it true that they don't make arrow points?*

J.B. As far as I know; I have never met a Sioux who knew how to chip an arrowhead out of flint. And their answer is, "Well, we never had to; the Spider did it for us and we find them in little piles on the prairie and we just pick them up."

D.D. *How extraordinary!*

J.B. On the other hand, as we have said, Spider can be very, very tricky. That is why sometimes a white person is called an *Iktomi,*



because they are smart, you know, and can be very tricky, and you don't know what they are going to do next; and you have to be careful. Sometimes FBI agents are called *Iktomis*—if they aren't called *igamoos,* which means cat.

D.D. *Is that even worse?*

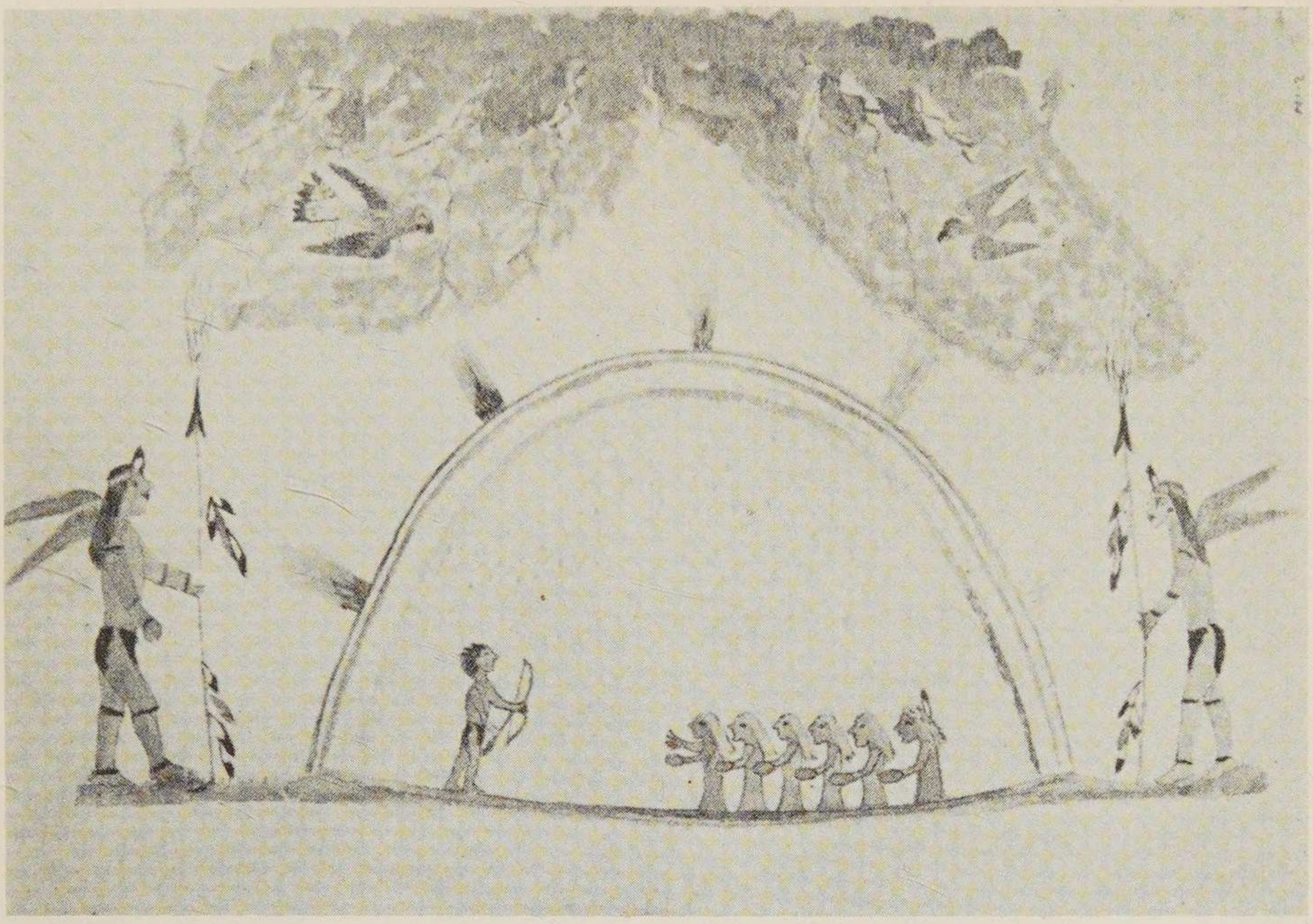
J.B. It's a little more derogatory!

D.D. *What more could you tell us about Black Elk?*

J.B. Well, just as a *Heyhoka*, a sometimes clown figure, he liked to make people laugh; he felt happy when people were laughing. When there were any little children around he would always be doing funny things with them or telling them funny stories, to make them laugh. I think he understood that there is no access to a deeper spiritual reality if there is not the opening force of laughter present there. It tends to open the heart for receiving a greater value than that of this world. That is why it was always a happy experience to be with him, in spite of the fact that in many moments of his life he was a very sad, tragic figure, because of his feeling that he had never been able to bring to reality the task that had been imposed on him through his visions—to mend the hoop of his nation, to bring his people together and have the tree of his culture flourish again. He always felt he had failed in that mission. So he was sad; and on the other hand (and this is typical of the dual nature of the *Heyhoka*) he loved to laugh and to make other people laugh.

D.D. *Can you tell us anything about his death? Were you there when he died?*

J.B. No, I wasn't; I was in Europe then. It is interesting that Black Elk always said: "You will know when I am dying, because there will be a great display of some sort in the sky." And it was true; in Europe I didn't see it, but in talking with people on the Pine Ridge Reservation, they said the sky was filled with falling stars at the time of his death—a very unusual display.



Black Elk before the Six Grandfathers, by Standing Bear

D.D. *Was there any special ritual of becoming a* Heyhoka—*a kind of initiation?*

J.B. Normally when an intense vision experience came to a person, he would be required to act it out or paint some aspect of it, so that the people, although somewhat passively, nevertheless could participate somewhat in the power of that experience. So I would think that the *Heyhoka* visions, since they were considered to be especially powerful, would be danced or acted out so the people would understand what had happened and share in it a little bit. Other than that, I don't know of any formal rite of initiation, because this is something that takes place directly from the spirits, from the other world, without human intermediary. There was a beautiful example of enacting elements of a vision in Black Elk's case, with the horse dance—a very complicated dance-drama involving a series of horses painted in special ways, as they appeared in his most powerful vision. It was incumbent on him to display that to the larger community.

D.D. *Then do those dances become a part of the whole public ritual? Are they repeated afterward?*

J.B. Yes, sometimes, they may become incorporated in a body of ritual as a dance-drama that can be put on by others, and also sometimes new rites and ceremonies come into being. But normally the particular enactment is specific to that person so long as he is living, and usually no other person would have the right to perform it.

D.D. *His songs also are his, and not to be sung by anyone else?*

J.B. Sometimes there is that feeling; sacred songs are usually very personal and very private, and no one else sings them. This is not always the case, but in many Indian cultures such songs are considered as private property. On the Northwest coast this is true, for there songs are a kind of commodity; they can be sold to someone else who thereby has the right to sing them. It is the same way with personal sacred names—they can be bought sometimes.

D.D. *I don't understand that very well.*

J.B. On the Northwest coast they have complex "Potlatch" ceremonies involving large amounts of property which is given away. Here intangibles like names and songs are considered to be of value and may be given away or more often sold.

D.D. *I can see how they could be given away, but I don't see how they could be bought and sold. Isn't that looked down on, to buy them or sell them?*

J.B. No, if you can come up with enough cowrie shells, or cedar boxes or whatever it is, to acquire the power of that name or song, you have the right to do so. Something of this probably also came into the Plains, probably through the Columbia River Basin. Among the Plains peoples a man had a right to own a sacred medicine bundle through the vision that related to the forms contained in that bundle. If a person didn't have a vision experience and therefore didn't have the power of a medicine bundle, he was a nobody; but there was the possibility that he could acquire enough property to buy a bundle from someone who would sell it. Sometimes it cost many, many horses. But by owning the bundle, he had access to the power that belonged to it. Perhaps he bought it from someone who had had several such experiences and several bundles, several sources of power. I am sure a man wouldn't sell his last source of power.

You see, we look on these things out of our usual attitudes towards buying and selling. One has to start thinking in other ways in order to understand some of these things that don't seem important to us. For instance, and as we have discussed already, in our culture seriousness is associated with religious activity, whereas here we are talking about cultures that insist on laughter as being integral and appropriate to sacred experience; this is what could be called institutionalized humor, for we are not talking about just telling bawdy jokes as might take place in a bar. Such institutionalized humor, always used in a manner appropriate to the time or circumstance, seems to occur across many religious traditions. You could make a case for the same sort of thing in Zen; you can find it in Islam, for example, in the exploits of Mullah Nassr Eddin, or among the "People of Blame," as they are called, who do all sorts of strange things in order to hide their true spiritual state. They may dress in strange ways, do things backward or upside down; and those who follow the conventional pattern are shocked by this, but perhaps it does them good to be shook up a little bit. You see, the people who do these things in such strange ways may be very holy men; they are often the real spiritual leaders.

The most sacred is often hidden in strange ways, and I think there is a very great wisdom concealed behind some of the Native American forms and practices. But at the same time, these same forms and practices could reveal that wisdom to us, if we could understand. And there are many things here we very much need to understand.

The illustrations by Standing Bear in this article will appear in a deluxe edition of Black Elk Speaks, *to be published by the University of Nebraska Press in Fall 1979. Reprinted by permission of the John G. Neihardt Trust, Columbia, Missouri.*

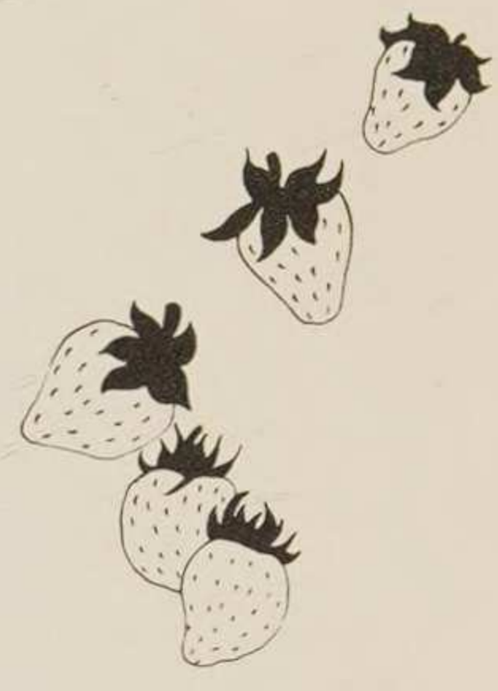
EPICYCLE

How Salmon Got Greasy Eyes

Will Wasson, of Coos-Coquille descent, told this story to Jim Metzner for PARABOLA. *It is part of a long cycle of stories about the creation of people which is traditionally told at night during the winter months.*

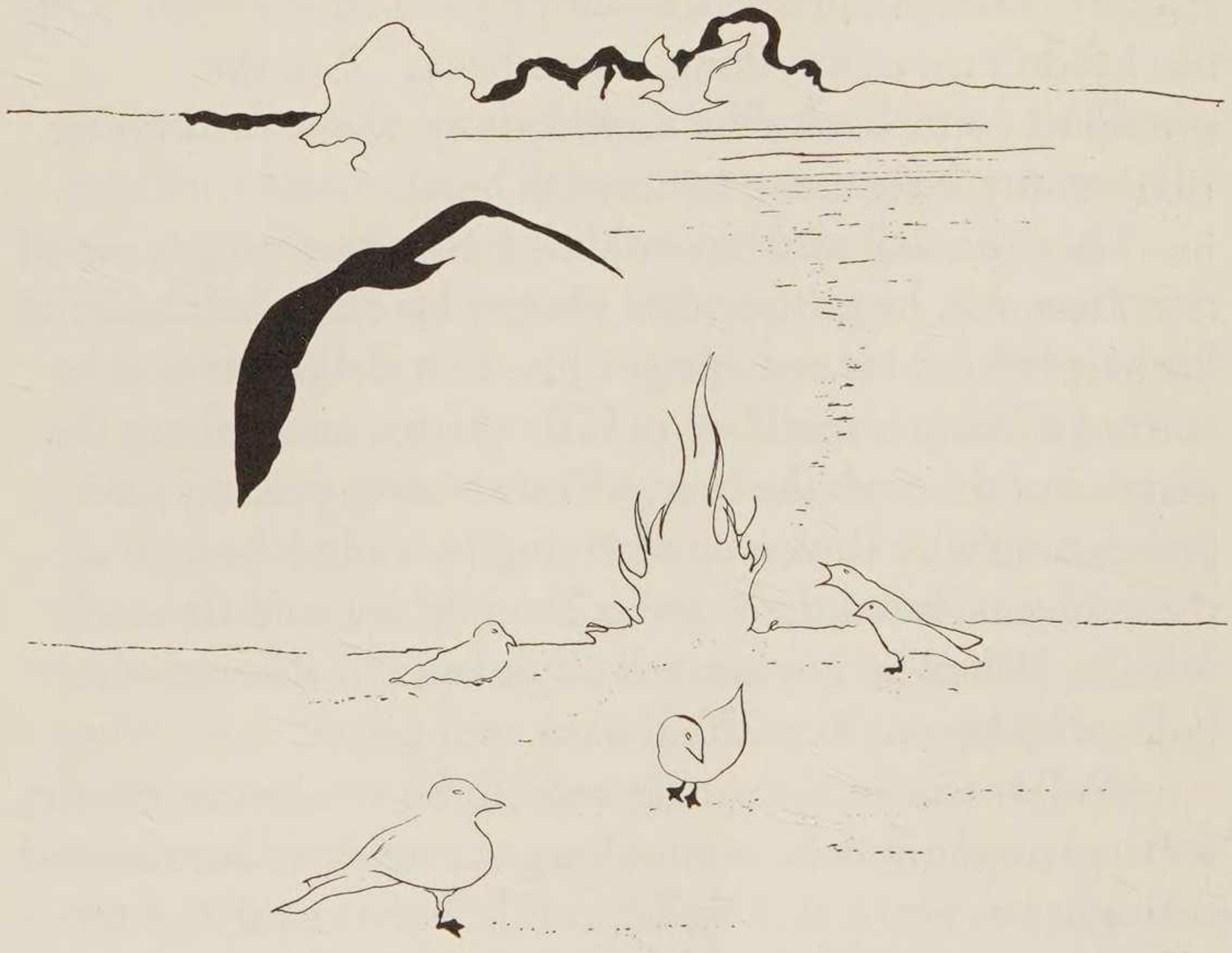
Old Mr. Coyote was up Big Creek, which is a creek that runs into Sunset Bay. Salmon was coming up the creek and oh there was all those pretty little Salmon girls. "Oh," he says "come here let me pet you. Oh you're such pretty girls. Oh you've got such bright shiny eyes; oh come sit on my lap." They did; he was holding all them Salmon girls on his lap, and all those little Salmon girls got pregnant. Everybody was mad at him and they were chasing Old Man Coyote. He ran looking for a place to hide. About that time came a hailstorm. Hail pelts were hitting him, beating him. There was this big hollow tree standing there. He jumped in the tree and commanded the tree to grow closed round him, because the hailstones were still coming in. It went and closed up except for one little hole to breathe through. So while he was in there, why, people came by looking for him telling everybody what he'd done—what a bad person he was. He commanded the tree to open up, but the tree knew what he'd done and the tree wouldn't do it; the tree wouldn't obey him. So there he was stuck in there, and he could just see out through that little hole, and oh he saw a woodpecker. He said "Oh little woodpecker, come here, peck this hole a lot bigger so I can get out." She said "Oh I don't know if I want to or not." "Oh please do, come on, come on." "All right." She came over and she started pecking on the hole, pecking it out

bigger. "Oh," he said "you're a pretty little bird. Oh you're so pretty. Come over here, let me feel your breasts." And he reached out and she jumped and flew away. "Oh-oh, I didn't mean anything, come back." No, she wouldn't come back. She stayed away; she wasn't going to have anything more to do with him.



There he was and he couldn't figure how to get out of that tree. Ah, he got an idea. He got his clamshell knife in his hair behind his ear. He got his clamshell knife and he started cutting himself up in little pieces, and poking the pieces out through the hole. While he was poking the pieces out, why Raven came flying by and oh he saw all those pieces down there and picked up one and flew off with it. When he got himself all poked out through the hole, why he put himself all back together.

Well it was in the spring and all the wild strawberries were growing. Oh he went along eating strawberries and eating strawberries. "Oh," he said, "what's the matter—I don't get full!" He looked around behind him and there was just a whole string of strawberries right behind him, because there was nothing to hold them in. His rectum was gone. "Oh what am I going to do?" He hunted around and found a spruce knot, and he put that up there and that was too rough and it hurt. Then he found a fir cone, and that was too rough and that hurt. Then he found a wild carrot, and oh he put it up there and that felt pretty good. It wasn't rough and it felt all right but it wouldn't stay in. He went around to the fir tree and he got some pitch. Then he took it and covered it all with pitch and then it stayed in. He went on eating strawber-

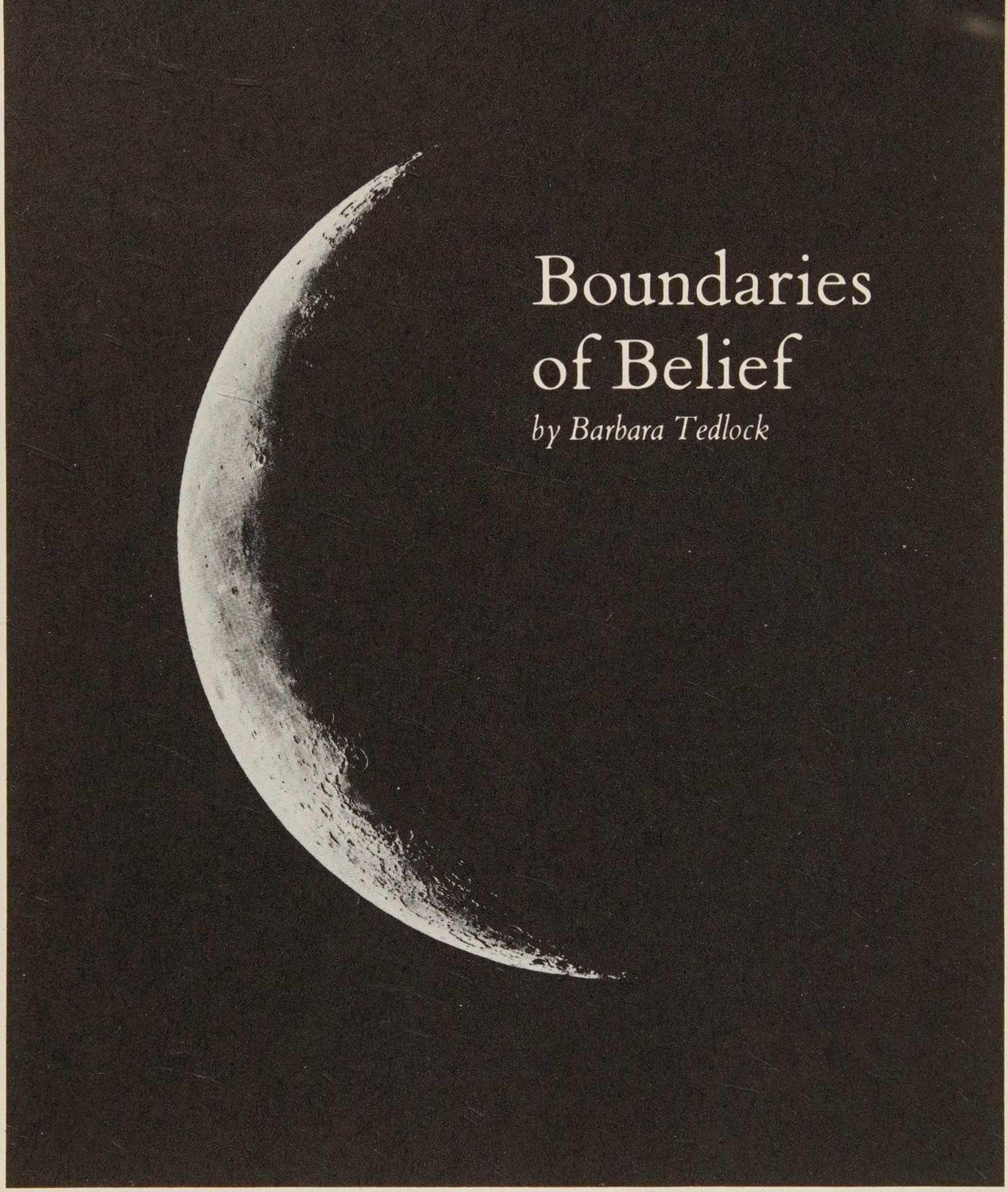


ries and oh he got full of strawberries. He got down to Bassendork Beach, near Coos Bay. There was some Seagull boys down there playing on the beach and they had a fire and they were jumping over the fire. "Oh," they said, "mother's brother, uncle—come over and play with us." "Oh," he said "what are you doing?" "Oh, we're jumping over this fire." "Oh," he says "O.K." He ran and he jumped over and they said "Oh no no no, not

there, jump over here where it's high." So he did. He ran and he jumped over there and the pitch caught on fire and pop! went the carrot! and shit and strawberries all over the Seagull boys. The pitch was burning and he ran down; he was going to jump in the ocean. As he jumped, there was a whale came up. He opened his mouth and he jumped right inside the whale's mouth.

There he was down inside the whale, looking around in there. Something up there above him—he reached up and battered it a few times, and it flopped back and forth, and took out his clamshell knife and he cut it off. It was the whale's heart, and the whale died. There he was up inside that whale drifting and he could feel the waves getting shorter and shorter as he got in close to the beach and drifted up and up on the beach, and he feel it when it hit the sand. Well how was he going to get out of there? So he took his knife and he just cut his way right out through the side and crawled out through there and he got his eyes all full of blubber. Oh he was going around and he could hardly see. He was just feeling his way around. He got up and back to Big Creek again and oh he found the salmon there. He said "Look at my beautiful eyes." He said "Wouldn't you like to try eyes like this?" Oh the salmon didn't know if they wanted to try eyes like that or not. "Oh, try 'em and see! Let's trade eyes and you can see how good these eyes are." O.K., so they traded eyes. Ah! He went around and went away. And that's why to this day salmon's got greasy eyes and the coyote's got bright shiny eyes.

—Told by Will Wasson to Jim Metzner



Boundaries of Belief

by Barbara Tedlock

On July 20, 1969, when the lunar module of Apollo 11 landed and Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, Jr. stepped out on the surface of the moon before the television cameras, the Zunis of New Mexico had to deal with a new threat to their religious beliefs. If what the television cameras recorded was true, and not merely a studio fiction, then the Moon Mother, who (along with the Sun Father) is the ultimate source of all light and life, had been violated by two white men in a metal space capsule. Not only did these white men not practice sexual abstinence and make offerings of cornmeal and prayersticks before they visited the Moon Mother, but they walked around on her body, left refuse on her, planted an American flag in her, and removed nearly fifty pounds of her sacred flesh without so much as a prayer.

Zunis feared that these profane acts could spell the end of the Moon Mother's gifts to humankind. Perhaps she, like Salt Woman and Turquoise Man before her,

who were defiled by ignorant Zunis, might also move farther away, causing serious repercussions. In the myth "Salt Woman Migrates,"[1] Old Lady Salt is said to have lived close to Zuni, at Black Rock Lake, but she became angry because young people who came to gather her precious flesh urinated and spat upon her. They wasted the salt they brought home, necessitating trip after trip to her. Likewise, the people found pretty turquoises, part of Turquoise Man's body, east of the salt lake, but they found so many that they wasted them, treating them as if they were a common thing. One day Salt Woman and Turquoise Man left Zuni, migrating southward. After a bit Turquoise Man turned east alone and settled far away near Santa Fe, while Salt Woman settled down forty miles south of Zuni. In this way, they removed their precious gifts from the reservation. Perhaps the Moon Mother, after suffering repeated indignities and being robbed of her flesh, would also move farther away; if so, she could cause totally black nights, droughts or floods, and massive human infertility. Many Zunis called the space odyssey "white man's witchcraft," and some old men felt that perhaps this was another omen of the coming death of the world, when all man-made things would rise against us and a hot rain would fall. Younger Zunis wondered aloud if the Moon Mother was really a deity. Perhaps the white man was right after all and she was only another object spinning around in space. Other youngsters pointed out that she had thrown stones at an earlier Apollo mission, causing it to turn back to earth.

Simply stated, the moon shots came as a profound religious shock to many Zunis. One of their important deities—one they offer prayers to each month (when she is full) for health, wealth, and fertility—was being visited, photographed, and dug into with mechanical claws by white men who did not worship her. Even worse, this important deity had been defiled and her divine status brought into question right before their eyes on national television. Zuni religion had withstood more than three centuries of Spanish and American missionization, the latter aided by the "Religious Crimes Code" implemented by the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the 1920s, but perhaps no single white religious argument of the past had been quite so startling and direct in its impact as the simple fact of the moon landing. Could Zuni religion, whose most basic obligation is monthly offerings to the Sun Father and Moon Mother, survive the unwanted group initiation of the majority of its membership, via mass communications, into the profane cult of space exploration?

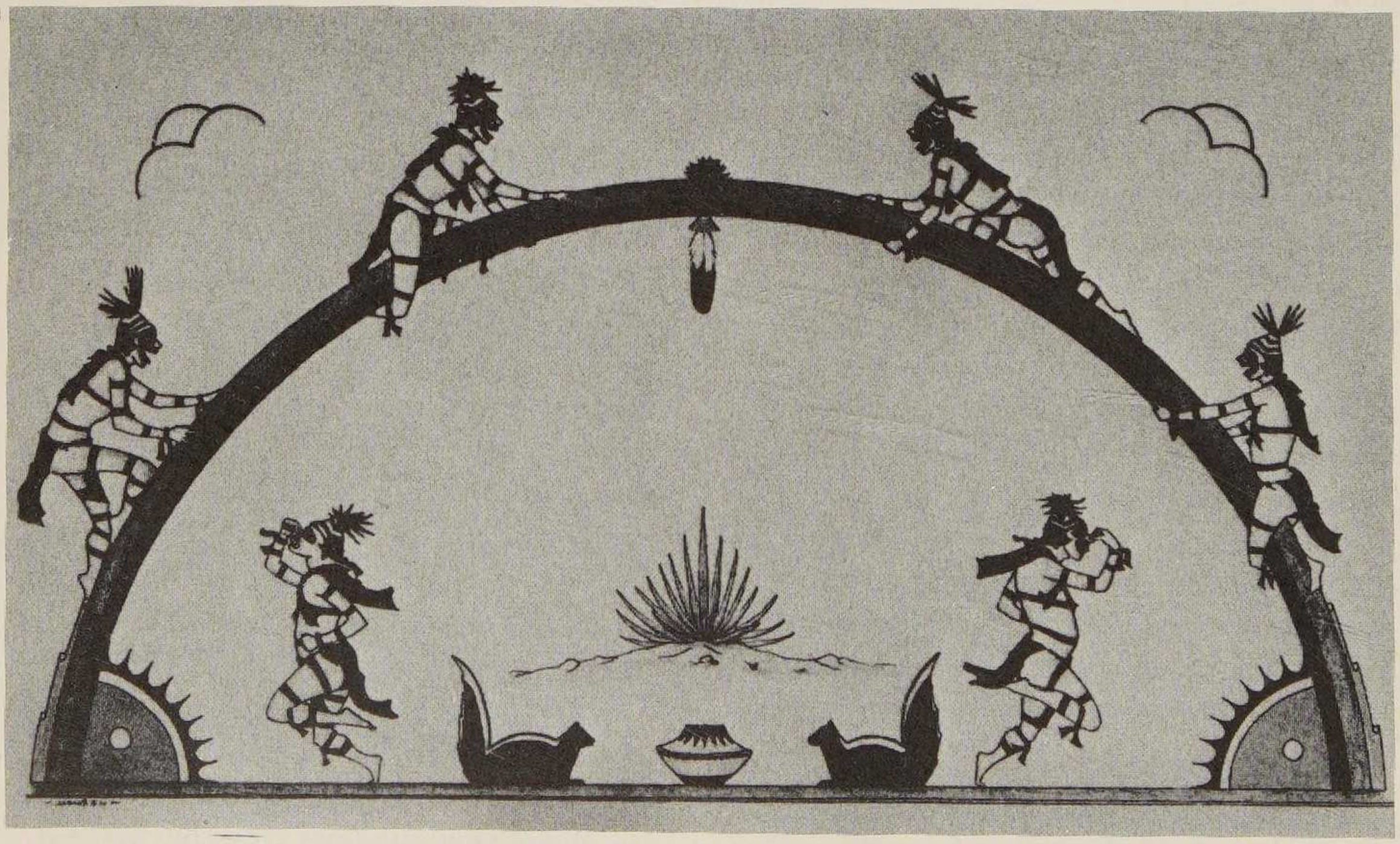
During the space programs initiated in 1957 by Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite, the Newekwe clowns, one of the fourteen organized curing societies at Zuni, had added space burlesque to their repertoire of hilarious skits. In an early skit, performed during a kachina dance-drama (in which Zuni ancestral gods are impersonated), a Newekwe clown with a cardboard box around his waist, shaped and painted to look like a spacecraft, went into orbit and circled the village several times before he crashed and rolled over dead before the line of singing dancers in the main plaza. In another skit, again during a kachina dance, one of these same clowns climbed up on the tallest building at Zuni and made a round ball out of himself; a second man was hurled aloft by a whole group of clowns to visit the "Moon Mother." This "astronaut" clown then jumped off the roof and was immediately surrounded by other clowns bearing a stretcher, playing nurses and doctors. They examined the returned clown carefully with a stethoscope, gave him a series of shots with a giant hypodermic, and then asked him what it was like on the moon. The patient reported that there were people, animals, lakes, watermelons, and whatnot up there—all to howls of laughter from the audience. A third popular skit involved a clown from Houston Control who telephoned the moon to talk (in English) with "The Man in the Moon." Here the astronaut "in" or "on" the Moon Mother was a deliciously bawdy joke for Zuni audiences.

These popular skits were performed throughout the period of the most intensive

Russian and American space exploration. Over and over again clowns dressed as satellites, rockets, and astronauts ran madly around the village, threw one another into the air, and fell off roofs, all this in the sober context of kachina dances. Such antics were not for mere entertainment. Before each performance, clowns are reminded by their leaders "to make your mind a blank" and "to go out there with a happy heart, a heart free from worry, to help the people." Their whole goal is to startle and even shock the audience in order to get a response, perhaps a sudden laugh, or at least a gasp of disapproval. In so doing, they "get to the people," they "open them," and release them from internal idle thoughts or worries. In the Zuni view, worry lodges in the stomach and is a primary cause of illness in general. The space program was a source of general (and one might say visceral) worry at Zuni, and so it was that for more than ten years the clowns trivialized, folklorized, and negated both its religious threat and its scientific seriousness. Throughout this period Zuni audiences laughed and laughed at the absurdity of space exploration—it was a fiction, a lie, or a silly joke.

The Newekwe, who constitute a medicine society, were particularly well suited to produce these space skits, since they specialize in public burlesques of intrusive foreigners and in private shamanic journeys on the Milky Way. Membership comes when a person with a serious stomach ailment seeks help from the Newekwe; after recovery, initiation into the society is necessary for a permanent cure. Among the shamanic powers gained through membership is the ability to eat any kind or amount of food and garbage (including human excrement) and to engage in shocking sexual displays without feeling shame. The Newekwe are known as the wisest and most fearless people in the entire pueblo.

The altar which this society of clowns sets up for its initiation and monthly meetings includes a long wooden beam, stretching across the entire width of its meeting room, bearing iconic representations of cumulus clouds, the seven stars of Ursa Major, and two figures of Payatamu, the son of the Sun Father. The beam itself is painted in alternating squares of black and white which represent the Milky Way, called "Ash Way" in Zuni, and in turquoise, the color



Clowns. Painting by J.D. Royobal (Oquwa), San Ildefonso Pueblo.

of the Sun Father. Attached to the lower edge of the bar are twelve eagle feathers which both are, and flutter in, the sacred breath of the Sun Father and the Moon Mother. The clowning costume of members of this organization includes a feathered wooden baton or jester's bauble, sloppy street clothes, a black overcoat, and a tight-fitting cap painted white, with bunches of cornhusk strips fastened on either side and on top. Wide, alternating black-and-white horizontal stripes are painted on the skin, from head to toe.

The stripes of the clown represent the Ash (Milky) Way, the sacred path travelled through the sky by Payatamu, the son of the Sun Father and the founder and patron deity of the Newekwe. In the myth of Payatamu,[2] it was his job to bring out the sun each day. One day, on his way to perform this task, he met a woman who challenged him to a game of hide-and-seek with their lives at stake. When he lost, she cut off his head and buried his body. She returned to her sisters with his head and placed it in a water jar. As a result of this deed, the sun ceased to rise. Payatamu's relatives met as a medicine society, summoning various animals to help find him. Finally, the lowliest animal of all, the mole, succeeded, and the society members reunited Payatamu's head and body, together with the flowers that had sprouted from his spilt blood. They sang over him, and by the fourth song both he and the sun rose. But Payatamu had changed: his hair-knot was in front instead of in back, and when he spoke he said, "I'm not even tired." From then on he has said the opposite of what he means and has been known as Nepayatamu (*Ne*— from Newekwe, the clown society).

In the myth, Nepayatamu decides to take revenge. He blows on his flute and out comes a Rocky Mountain swallowtail butterfly, which he sends to lure the murderess and her sisters out of their house. The butterfly sprinkles them with its wing powder, causing them to become sexually crazy, and then leads them to a tree where the beasts who had been sent out to find Payatamu—the mountain lion, bear, badger, coyote, and mole—have intercourse with the women. Next, Nepayatamu takes the women home, where his sisters make them grind corn that is too hard to grind and mock them. Finally, he takes the women on a journey to the east. When they become tired, he turns them into moths and butterflies and sucks them into his flute. He joins his Sun Father in the eastern ocean and rides with him across the sky toward the west, returning to earth at a spring called Ash Water. This becomes the shrine of Nepayatamu, founder and patron of the Newekwe of today.

The medicine of the Newekwe includes the plant, as yet unidentified, that sprouted from the spilt blood of its founder, and it may also include *Datura inoxia*. This sacramental medicine enables the communicant to clown without shame, to eat anything with impunity, and to travel on the Milky Way in search of knowledge and guidance for the Zuni people. The shamanic dimension of Newekwe knowledge was not often recognized by early ethnographers; their reports are largely limited to sketchy and disapproving descriptions of clowning. For example, in *The Urine Dance of the Zuni Indians of New Mexico*, published in 1881 by John G. Bourke—"strictly for private circulation" and "not for general perusal"—he calls the ritual gluttony of the Newekwe, including the drinking and eating of human urine and excrement, "a disgusting rite...revolting...abominable dance...vile ceremonial."[3] Twenty years later Matilda Coxe Stevenson described similar practices:

> Each man endeavors to excel his fellows in buffoonery and in eating repulsive things, such as bits of old blankets or splinters of wood. They bite off the heads of living mice and chew them, tear dogs limb from limb, eat the intestines and fight over the liver like hungry wolves. It is a pleasure to state that the Ne'wekwe is the only fraternity that indulges in such practices.[4]

But Frank Hamilton Cushing, who lived at Zuni for nearly six years during the 1880s and spoke the language, seems to have enjoyed the ritual gluttony:

I have seen one of them gather about him his melons, green and ripe, raw peppers, bits of stick and refuse, unmentionable water, live puppies—or dead, no matter,—peaches, stones and all, in fact everything soft enough or small enough to be forced down his gullet, including woodashes and pebbles, and with the greatest apparent gusto, consume them all at a single sitting. Once after such a repast, two of these Ne'we....fixed their staring eyes on me, and motioned me to give them *something else to eat!* I ran home, caught up some crackers, threw them into a paper, and in order to make them relish the better, poured a pint or two of molasses over them. I wrapped an old woolen army jacket around this...hurried back [and] cast the bundle into the plaza. The pair immediately fell to fighting for its possession, consequently broke the paper, scattered some of the crackers about the ground and daubed the back of the coat thoroughly with the molasses. They gathered up the fragments of crackers and ate them, with their whole burden of adhesions, then fought over the paper and ate that, finally tore pieces out of the back of the coat with their teeth and ate them (though it nearly choked them to do so), after which the victor put the coat on and triumphantly wore it, his painted skin showing like white patches through the holes he had bitten in the back of the coat.[5]

Whatever they thought of gluttony, Matilda Coxe Stevenson and John Bourke did seem to rather enjoy Newekwe mockery of Roman Catholic ritual. Stevenson reported that one afternoon, during a kachina dance, a small clown was declared to be a "*Católico santo*"; larger clowns carried him around in procession until they came to the main plaza, where they seated him on a blanket spread on a ledge (representing an altar) and placed a torch on either side of him.[6] John Bourke vividly draws the picture of himself being taken for a saint by these same clowns:

> One was more grotesquely attired than the rest in a long India-rubber gossamer "overall" and a pair of goggles, painted white, over his eyes. His general "get up" was a spirited take-off upon a Mexican priest....I suppose that in the halo diffused by the feeble light and in my "stained-glass attitude" I must have borne some resemblance to the pictures of saints hanging upon the walls of old Mexican churches....The dancers suddenly wheeled in line, threw themselves on their knees before my table, and with extravagant beatings of breast began an outlandish but faithful mockery of a Mexican Catholic congregation at vespers. One bawled out a parody upon the Pater Noster, another mumbled along in the manner of an old man reciting the rosary, while the fellow with the India-rubber coat jumped up and began a passionate exhortation or sermon, which for mimetic fidelity was inimitable.[7]

More recently, however, the government agent stationed at Zuni did not appreciate the clowns' mockery of the birth and death of Jesus Christ. This elaborate Newekwe skit of the 1930s was recently retold to me by a man who still savors it:

> Once they had a king and queen, and they had angels, too. They made a cart, and they had two burros pulling it. That king and queen rode in the cart, and they came to see Jesus. The guy who was Jesus had a real long beard, about this long [indicates two feet]. They nailed him up on one side of the plaza. The agent, Mr. Trotter, was there. I guess the governor had told him they were having a dance or something in the plaza, and he could go and see it. When he came they fined him right away. [Clowns "fine" outsiders who watch their antics, demanding $50, but all they want is a pack of cigarettes.] Later he left. I guess he didn't like the way they were nailing Jesus up—they had boards or something behind his hands to put the nails in, and that guy was really yelling and crying. They whipped him—you know how King Herod whipped Jesus. After a while he stopped crying and they said he was dead. They took him down and put him in a box, and he rose in three days—you know how Jesus rose from the dead in three days. They counted to three, and he popped out of the box.

The opening of this skit is ambiguous. Is this king one of the three wise men, so henpecked that he brings his wife along on his visit to the baby Jesus at Bethlehem? Or is this the poor carpenter Joseph, who led a burro to Bethlehem with his pregnant wife Mary seated upon it, transformed into a king who rides with his queen in a burro-drawn cart? Or perhaps both simultaneously. At any rate, for anyone to ride in such a cart is quite funny to a Zuni audience, since burros were used as pack animals to haul firewood

Koshares. Painting by Bob (Manuel) Chavez (Ow-u-Te-wa), Cochití Pueblo.

at Zuni and never to draw carts with people in them.

The skit then moves on, leaving out the entire life and teaching of Christ, and picks up at his crucifixion. Although no whipping of Jesus by King Herod took place in the Bible, Jesus was blindfolded, beaten, and mocked by the captains of the temple before his crucifixion. Portraying Jesus as "really yelling and crying" while being nailed to the cross—instead of calmly saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—changes Jesus into a common man with common emotions. It strips him of his divine imperviousness to his own human suffering, so masterfully portrayed in Luke 23:46, where, at the moment of his own death, like a priest at the deathbed of another, he calmly hands himself over to God by saying in a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" The placement of Christ in a box, from which he suddenly pops up on the count of three, reminds one simultaneously of a child's delight with a Jack-in-the-box and of a boxing match, where a man who was still down after the count of ten would be out.

As in the space burlesques, religious and secular ideas and beliefs alien to Zuni culture are brought into the sacred context of a kachina dance. Here the clowns share the plaza with men who have ritually purified themselves and have observed sexual continence before putting on the masks of ancestors. In contrast, the Newekwe members are not impersonating the dead, their face paint is not an ancestral mask, and they have neither fasted nor observed sexual continence. Instead of taking the part of the dead, they are very much alive; as medicine society members they ritually died during their initiation, but they were reborn with a new heart. The kachina maskers, under the guidance of well-known ritual forms, face the old dangers of close association with the dead, whereas the clowns are always facing new dangers, whether sent by Madrid or Washington, by Rome or by Houston Control. Eventually, in 1972, there did come a kachina song that alluded, through the indirect means provided by allegory, to the moon landings, but this happened only after the clowns had been dealing directly with such events for some years.

It is the clowns, and not the kachinas, who step so far beyond the boundaries of ancient tradition as to put on a religious performance specifically for the benefit of the newly-elected officials of the Zuni secular government. This government, instituted long ago by the Spanish, is still thought of as a foreign imposition, a necessary evil for dealing with the political aspect of the white world. In 1965, the theme of the Newekwe performance for the officers of this government was the intertribal pow-wow then being proposed for the Zuni Tribal Fair.

The hour-long clowning opened when a clown marched into the plaza carrying a sign reading "Oklahoma Indians" on the front and "Zuni ceremonial 1965" on the back, the choice of the word "ceremonial" being an allusion to the white-run Gallup Ceremonial. Six other clowns followed, with their usual feathered wands, skull caps, and black-and-white striped face paint, but now sporting the fringed breech clouts and vests of Plains Indian pow-wow performers. The lead man wore a Plains war bonnet and plastic glasses, with both

bonnet and frames in dayglow colors, and the drummer wore a buffalo fur cap and half-moon sunglasses. Another clown was dressed as a woman, with fringed white buckskin jacket and skirt, beaded collar and headband, a necklace of luminous plastic beads that looked more like Christmas-tree ornaments than proper silver jewelry, a single eagle feather that jutted out ridiculously from the back of the head, and a feather fan. Four more clowns wore large half-circles of feathers attached in the back at their waists, hanging down over their rears. These feathers were all dyed in loud primary colors, a Plains preference which Zunis always avoid in their own costumes, even for pow-wows.

The assembled clowns performed several dances to Plains music, provided by a victrola in the window of a house near the plaza. The dancing emphasized such Plains characteristics as a lack of organized formation, crouched posture, vigorous steps, and much up-and-down tossing of the head. During one song the dancers assumed a push-up posture and wiggled their hips in time to the music; at the point where they were supposed to leap to their feet and pivot around 360 degrees with one hand still on the ground, one of them fell down instead and did the entire pivot flat on the ground, to howls of laughter. At another point two dancers collided heavily with each other and responded with a comic-book "Oof!" The lines of dialogue between dances included these: "We from Oklahoma—that's a long ways from here," "When are we gonna get the money from the white men?" and "We'll put the white men in jail," this last a reversal of the situation when pow-wows are held in white towns. One clown suddenly asked, with great urgency, "Where's the Zuni restroom?" and then went over to the wall of the kiva and thrust his hand beneath his breech clout, relieving himself on the wall of that sacred edifice. When a clown began to sing "Oklahoma!" (with an interminable "O"), another interrupted him with a classic hillbilly song, "You're in the Jail House Now." The woman clown, clutching a mock microphone and smiling broadly, sang a song of the "Indian Love Call" genre, in cracking falsetto.

At this point the lead clown, announcing himself as the Governor of Zuni and calling attention to the star-shaped badge he was wearing, laid out a large piece of canvas and two Navajo rugs on the bench outside the main kiva and seated the seven newly-elected members of the Zuni Tribal Council. The seven clowns then shook hands with the officials and gave each of them a sacred ear of corn (one with every kernel perfect and in place, even at the tip); to the top-ranking councilmen—the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and First Teniente—they gave a feather as well. Now the clowns played especially for them. The impersonated woman sang again in falsetto, repeatedly breaking into a piercing screech. The council members seemed slightly embarrassed by some of the more ridiculous parts of the skit, and one of them even shrank back and held one hand before his face at several points. At the end, the clowns stood in an east-west row along the northern side of the plaza, facing south. The councilmen rose and stood in a group near the clown

Zuni Rain Dancers. Watercolor by Don Dewa, Zuni.

leader, at the east end of the row, and prayed. But even while the prayers were being said the vocalist clowned by herself, fanning herself and then making the head feather of the clown next to her wiggle in the draft she created with her fan. The councilmen ritually thanked the clowns by sprinkling them with cornmeal. When the woman was sprinkled, she said, in an insipidly sweet English falsetto, "Oh, *thank* you!" Finally the clowns were given change by the councilmen. The woman clown, while looking on and waiting her turn, said in a sharp voice, "I want some *money*!" When the councilmen had finished and left the plaza, all seven clowns suddenly broke ranks and, with shouts and war whoops, danced wildly for a few more minutes.

This side-splitting, hour-long clowning episode, which had attracted an enormous audience, brought out all the worrisome implications of staging an intertribal pow-wow within the Zuni Reservation. The clowns made an exploratory crossing of the boundary between Zuni and pan-Indian culture, bringing their findings right into the middle of the sacred dance plaza. At a level beyond that of pow-wows, their lampoon served as a reminder to the civil officials that even when they went on junkets to Washington, they would still be Zunis with Zuni traditions, symbolized here by the gifts of perfect ears of corn and natural feathers, and not pan-Indians with fancy dancing, dyed feathers, and a preference for English.

Newekwe dramas, as exemplified by the ritual gluttony, space burlesque, Passion Play, and pan-Indian pow-wow described here, take place on or beyond the boundaries of the religious forms and civil decorum observed by ordinary Zunis. More subtly, such dramas might be said to constitute a continuing discovery, or re-discovery, of just what those boundaries are. The behavior of the clowns provides an anti-creed for a religion which lacks any formal creed or codified body of doctrine. A believer in the Zuni religion does not say, "I believe in the Moon Mother," but the space skit provides an anti-statement of this belief. The clowns' portrayal of the materialist exploration of space as (in part) a literal search for signs of biological life beyond the earth contrasts with the implicit Zuni religious belief that the "life" of the Moon Mother, like that of Salt Woman, Turquoise Man, rainstorms, and the ancestors, is of a kind that transcends biological definitions.

Beyond creeds and anti-creeds, the clowns, by their ability not only to conceive but to carry out their burlesques, display their own ultimate detachment from the particulars of religious beliefs of all kinds. Even Zuni beliefs come under direct inspection: when the woman from Oklahoma said, "Oh, *thank* you" to a sprinkling of cornmeal, the humor cut both ways. In ritual gluttony, the clowns even violate the boundaries of their biological being: not satisfied with saying the unsayable, they eat the inedible. Their path is finally that of the Milky Way (or Ash Way), which arches over the entire human and biological world. From such a perspective, these doctor clowns see boundaries as easy hurdles rather than as walls. That is why they never laugh at their own jokes. But by causing others to laugh at the leaping of a boundary, they share a moment of shamanic detachment with the uninitiated.

Notes

1. Ruth Benedict, *Zuni Mythology*, 2 vols. Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology Volume XXI (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), vol. 1, pp. 43-49.
2. Dennis Tedlock, *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 87-132.
3. John G. Bourke, *The Urine Dance of the Zuni Indians of New Mexico* (Privately printed, 1881), pp. 5-6.
4. Matilda Coxe Stevenson, *The Zuni Indians: Their Mythology, Esoteric Societies, and Ceremonies*, Twenty-third Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 437.
5. Frank Hamilton Cushing, *Zuni Breadstuff*. Indian Notes and Monographs Volume VIII (New York: Heye Foundation, 1920), pp. 621-622.
6. Matilda Coxe Stevenson, *The Zuni Indians*, p. 437.
7. John G. Bourke, *The Urine Dance of the Zuni Indians*, pp. 3-4.

EPICYCLE

The Tortoise and his Creditors

The Igbo tortoise tale that follows is one of many collected by Professor Peter Thomas when he was a founding member of the University of Nigeria at Nsukka, 1960-65.

Once upon a time there lived in a little village near the great Niger River an old Tortoise who was far too poor ever to have got married. Now it was a law in those parts that any male villager who failed to marry by the age of fifty must be put to death, and since this Tortoise was nearing his fiftieth birthday he obviously had no time to lose if he wanted to keep his life.

He thought and thought about what he could do, and at last decided to discuss his problem with some of his closest friends: the Cockroach, the Fox, the Cock and the Hunter. When he asked for a loan to help him find a wife they all agreed to lend him money if he would repay them with interest later. The Tortoise promised them he would pay back all he had borrowed, complete with interest, on one and the same day.

Then he took the money and was able to pay not only the bride price for a wife but had enough money left for a wedding feast. Just in time, Tortoise found himself married and settled down to his new life as a husband.

When the day for repayment dawned, the Cockroach was first to arrive. He saw Tortoise working in his garden plot a few yards in front of the house.

"Good morning, Tortoise," the Cockroach said. "I hope you remember our appointment today."

"I do remember, my dear Cockroach," Tortoise replied. "If you will go and wait for me inside I shall soon come and repay you your money."

The Cockroach went in and waited for Tortoise to pay his debt.

A little later the Cock arrived and found Tortoise still working in his garden. "My dear fellow," he said to

his friend, "I hope you have not forgotten our appointment today."

"No, my dear Cock," said Tortoise, smiling. "I do not so easily forget appointments with my friends. Please go and wait for me in my house and I shall soon repay you your money. Until then, feel free to help yourself to whatever may strike your fancy there."

The Cock went in to join the other guest and when he saw the Cockroach he made a meal of him!

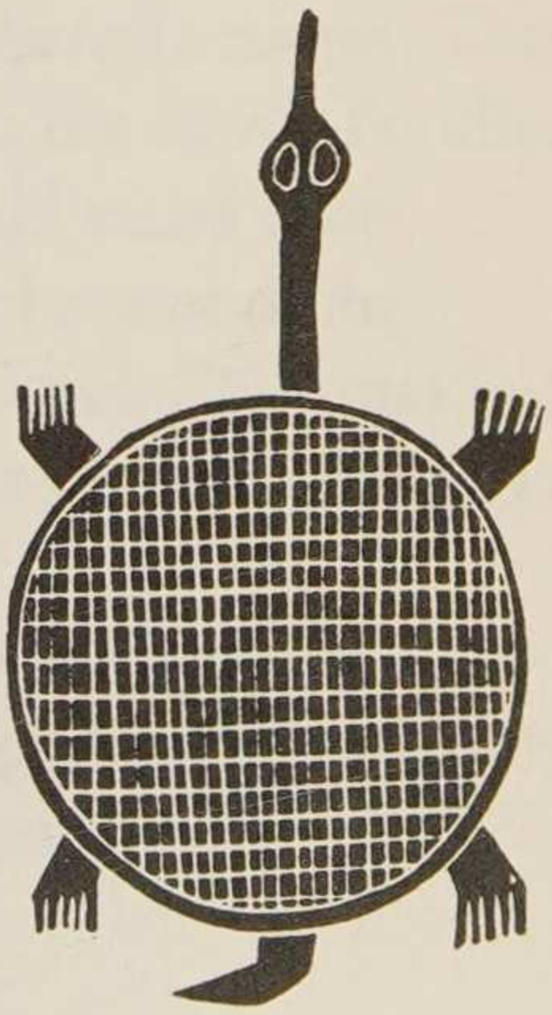
Soon after, the Fox arrived to find Tortoise busy in his garden. "Dear Tortoise," he said, "I hope you remember your promise to pay back my money today."

"Yes, Fox, of course," replied Tortoise innocently. "I shall soon bring you your money, and all the interest, too. Meanwhile, I hope you will enjoy yourself with whatever you may find to please you in the house."

When the Fox went in and found the Cock waiting, he pounced on him at once and gobbled him up!

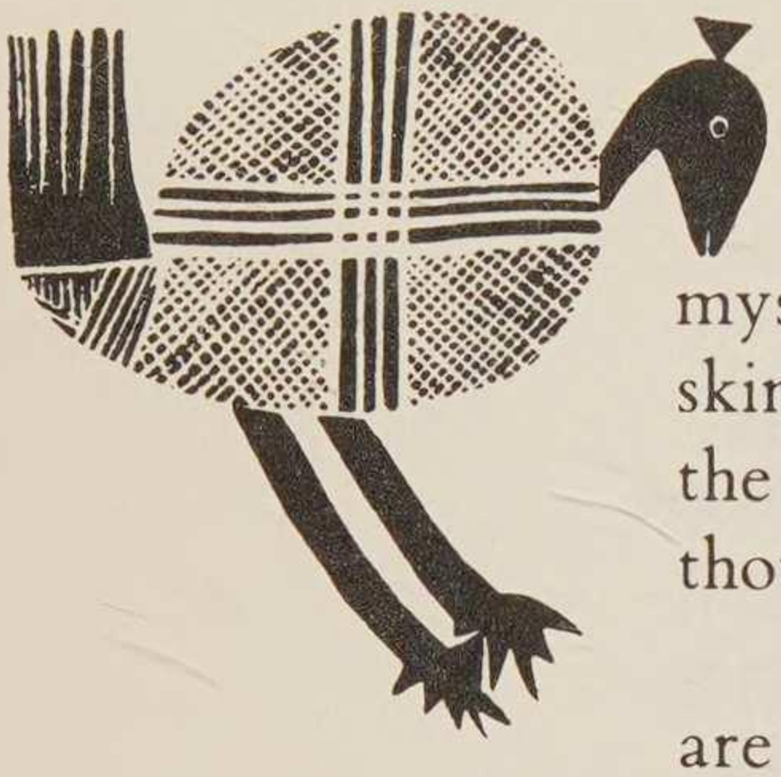
When the Hunter arrived shortly afterwards, Tortoise was still working in his garden. "Good morning, Tortoise," he boomed. "I hope you remember your promise to repay me my money today."

"Welcome, my friend!" Tortoise answered. "Certainly I remember my appointment with you and I will do as we agreed. Please step into the house and wait a few moments. I shall soon come and refund you your money. As a mark of my appreciation for all your help, I hope you will entertain yourself meanwhile with whatever you may find inside."



The Hunter went into the house and found the Fox waiting. He wasted no time shooting him dead before Tortoise came in.

When Tortoise entered he saw the Hunter with the dead Fox and knew at once what had befallen his other two creditors.



"Oh, Tortoise," the Hunter exclaimed, "I count myself extremely lucky, for I have been wanting a fox's skin these many years now! If you will allow me to take the skin I am prepared to pay you any price you ask, since though I shot the Fox the bounty is yours."

"My dear Hunter," replied the wily Tortoise, "what are friends for but to help each other when there is need? When I was in fear of death for not having married you saved me by lending me money. Now I can do you a service, it seems. By all means take the Fox's skin; also one half of the carcass for your supper. I hope this is sufficient repayment for all I owe you."

The Hunter was more than satisfied with Tortoise's easy generosity and went away believing him his very best of friends.

—Retold by Peter Thomas

EPICYCLE

The Brown Monkey

There is a certain rogue, rascal and vagabond—we never say his name lest he overhear us and, being the curious soul he is, pay us a visit—who travels from place to place, making his living (and a very good one it is) from the folly of others. Now the strangest thing about this fellow is this: nobody knows what he looks like, though he has been seen by nearly everyone, in every village. Some say he's tall, some short, some fat, some lean, but none agrees with the other, so there you have it. Maybe his roguery drives the wit from their heads. I don't know, and won't say, but here's a story about him.

One day, as the tradesmen began to gather in the marketplace, who should they find in the very center of the square but our rascally friend, sitting before a large pot, stirring it with a stick and mumbling over it some words or other. This curious sight attracted the attention of several merchants, who gathered about him. Beside the pot was a sizable pile of golden coins, growing every minute or so by the addition of one or more coins from the pot. Our vagabond would stir the pot, mumble something, reach into the pot, and pull from its recesses a golden coin.

Naturally, such a sight as this raised a good deal of curiosity, and soon a large crowd gathered around. The affairs of the marketplace had gone to the devil. Finally, those who had been there longest could stand it no longer, so they asked our friend what he was doing.

"Ah, but you can see plainly," he said. "I'm making my day's supply of gold out of the fine river mud that you have here."

"Gold out of mud? You must be a madman."

"Madman or not," replied the rogue, removing yet another piece of gold, "you see the results."

"But how is it done?"

"Ah, that is a professional secret. After all, this is my living."

A quick consultation took place among the merchants. With such an easy way of procuring wealth at hand, it behooved them to determine the secret.

"Allow us to ease some of your labors," said their spokesman. "We will give you a thousand gold pieces for the secret; enough to last you for months."

"Ah, no," said the rogue. "It is easy enough work, as you see," and he removed another piece of gold from the pot of mud. Another consultation took place.

"We will give you ten thousand pieces for the secret," said the merchants, but again the rogue demurred and added now not one but two pieces of gold to his pile.

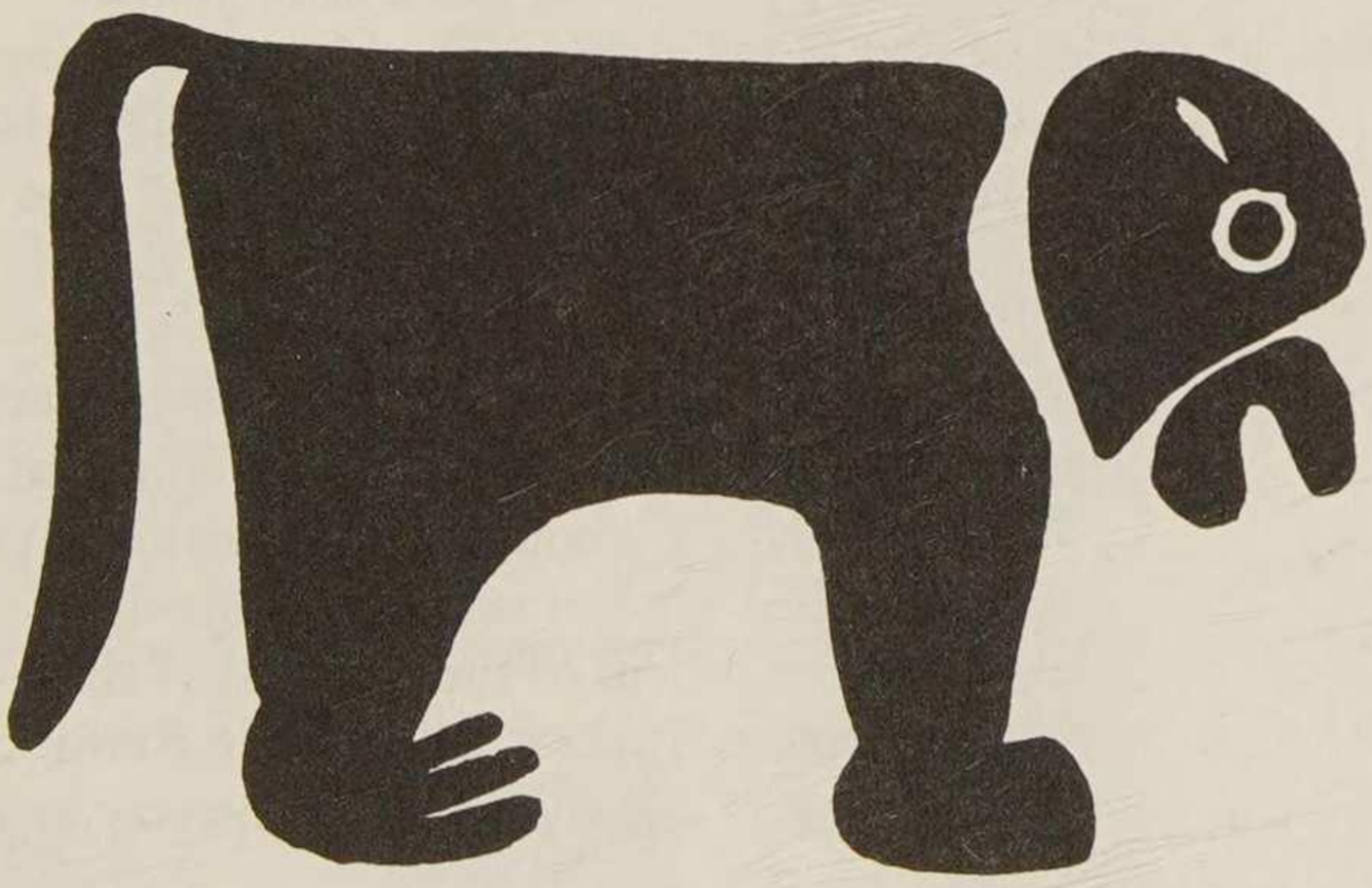
"We will make you the richest man in these parts," said the merchants after yet another consultation. "If you tell us the secret, we will give you all the gold we have. With such wealth, you will never have to work again."

"Very well," said the rogue, with a great show of reluctance. "I will tell you. It's really very simple. This is no magical pot, nor is the mud special mud. The secret is in the words which you must recite continually as you stir the pot. When you have recited the magical formula three times, you may then reach into the pot and retrieve the gold. Now I must not reveal the words of the formula publicly, so I will whisper them to your spokesman, and thus pass on in the traditional manner the secret of my craft." Then, with much show of secrecy and pomp, the vagabond took the merchant aside and delivered to his ears the magic words. Then he handed over the pot and the stick, and was given in exchange all the gold that the merchants had with them. There was so much gold that if he had not had a donkey with him, I'm sure he could not have carried it ten feet. Immediately, the merchant sat

down in the village square and prepared to apply the secret knowledge imparted to him, and all the others gathered around to watch. Carefully he stirred, while our rogue loaded the donkey.

"One moment!" cried the rogue, as he rushed back to the square. "I have forgotten to tell you the most important secret of all. When you have recited the formula three times and are reaching into the pot, you must not, under any circumstances whatever, think about the brown monkey!"

—Retold by Paul Jordan-Smith



The Hodja

by David Leeming

My introduction to Nasreddin Hodja* took place in Istanbul classrooms where, as a newly-arrived teacher in 1958, I was bombarded by his aphorisms and stories. The pious lectures I gave on the importance of honesty, hard work, and rational thought were countered by outlandish tales of the Hodja's cheating of merchants, his avoidance of duties, his disregard for beggars, his disdain for common logic, his extraordinary stupidity, and his general foolery. I hated this codger in his pointed shoes and *kavuk*, the huge turbaned headgear worn by Moslem scholars of old; I hated him with all the bright-eyed humorless fervor of a twenty-one-year-old committed to the bringing of Western ways of thought to the unemancipated and irrational Turk. The Hodja represented to me all that was inscrutable, frustrating, and even threatening about the Moslem Middle East. Who was this supposedly holy man (*hodja* is a title reserved for the wise teacher—especially for the one well versed in matters of Islamic practice and theology)? My idea of a holy man at that time was a composite of Jesus, Tolstoy, Freud, and Marx. If these men had little else in common they were at least serious. The Hodja when he was not being made a fool of was maliciously making a fool of someone else—or so it seemed to me. Of course, I did not know then about tricksters, about Sufis or, perhaps, about the fool within myself; and I had not yet read, let alone digested, these words of the greatest of the Sufi masters in Turkey, Jalal al-din Rumi (1207-73) who is known in that country as Mevlana:

> The man of God is beyond creeds and doubt
> alike;
> The man of God knows no sin, no virtue.

It was clear, then, that I could not understand Nasreddin when, through several of my students, he said, "Truth is the one thing I never speak."

I mention Mevlana in connection with Nasreddin not only for reasons which will soon become obvious but because there are clear points of contact between the history

** Mullah Nassr Eddin in the Persian tradition.*

TED ENIKI

of the former and the myth of the latter: Rumi frequently used Hodja-type stories to illustrate his ideas, the Hodja is said to have lived near Rumi's Konya in the city of Akşehir, many of the Hodja stories are set in Konya, and cults developed around the tombs of both figures—the tomb guardians in Akşehir and the Mevlevi order of Sufis (the Whirling Dervishes) at the great *tekke* in Konya. It is hard to resist seeing Mevlana's comic shadow in Nasreddin Hodja.

I should say, too, that my first serious conversations about Nasreddin were with a devotee of the Mevlevis. Aliye Berger-Boronai, a Turkish artist whose favorite subject for engravings was the Mevlevi dervish in his *sema* (dance ceremony) and who died recently, was a member of a family with close ties both to the urban Mevlevis and the more rural Bektashi dervishes. The combination of the sophisticated philosophy and poetry of the Mevlevis with the rustic wisdom of the Bektashis came to life in this woman who, with her ebullient and eccentric nature, her apparent ignorance of the most obvious "laws" of reason and orthodoxy, and her earthy knowledge of human nature, was herself an incarnation of the Hodja. Like him she brought insight with laughter wherever she went. As often as not she was the butt of her own anecdotes. Always she confronted her friends and neighbors with a logic all her own which left them looking on in amazement at an absurdity that was somehow true.

As long as I live I will not forget being telephoned by Aliye Hanim in the middle of a night in March of 1969. "My flat is burning," she screamed. "What are you going to do about it?" It was the Hodja and the Sufi in Aliye who led her to demand the assistance of a friend some ten miles away in the midst of what was in fact a fire which destroyed the entire apartment. In 1958 such a call would have seemed to me a joke or an act of stupidity; by 1969 it had a meaning which transcended the hour, the ten-mile distance, and the speed of fire. It was a call to action which made sense only in Sufic terms: "You are ot the life of dimension," wrote Rumi, "but you spring from absence of dimension. Drop the former; return to the latter."

It was Aliye Hanim who expressed for me by living example the mythical Hodja's essential nature as comic face of Sufi wisdom. It was her very madness, the demands it made, and the reality it released which pointed, for instance, to the significant connection between the apparently irrational Hodja jokes and the ecstatic Mevlevi dance. Both processes are a breaking through—a breaking down of the mundane barriers of I-consciousness and ordinary logic in order to discover and experience the enlightenment which is the goal of all mystics.

In Rumi's words, "The man who follows the ways of convention simply because they are inherited by him is not truly logical." True logic requires the overcoming of the automatic responses of our conditioning. The Sufi, who does not live by these responses, who operates on several planes of reality at once, appears from the more limited, single-planed position of the ordinary materialist to be a liar, a cheat, or an ignoramus. The humor of the Hodja stories is based on the irony implicit in this lack of understanding.

One day the Hodja's donkey strayed and could not be found. The Hodja ran all over the town looking for him, at the same time exclaiming loudly, "Praise be to God!"

Some passers-by whom he had induced to help in the search asked him what his reason was for praising God so loudly.

"I praise God," replied the Hodja, "because I was not on the donkey's back when he disappeared, for, if I had been, we should both infallibly have been lost."

All mystical thought is by nature paradoxical and apparently absurd to the non-mystic. With the connection in mind between the Nasreddin jokes and mysticism, it will be worthwhile to remember the traditional role of the trickster figure as the wounded wounder—the man who can be either perpetrator or butt of the educative joke. The trickster is a savior who uses both roles to break down the old consciousness in order to stimulate the new. Frequently he makes use of what appears to be an extra-

ordinary dull-wittedness to bring about this process. Thus the Hodja story which is concerned indirectly with the nature of being itself:

In order not to get lost on a long caravan journey the Hodja attached an eggplant to his waistband. Thinking that in this way he would be sure always to be recognized, he went to sleep in great tranquility. During the night, however, a practical joker stole the eggplant and tied it to his own waistband. The Hodja woke up to the sight of the other man wearing the eggplant and cried out in amazement, "If that is me there, and surely it is, who am I here?"

The mythical Nasr-ed-Din or "Defender of the Faith" is said to have lived near Konya perhaps as early as 993, the date on a *türbe* or tomb in Akşehir bearing his name, or as late as the early fifteenth century, when he is reputed to have been a kind of wise fool for the infamous Tamerlane. In fact, as Idries Shah has demonstrated with his modern Nasreddin tales, the Hodja belongs to no time and all time. He is always and everywhere a comic expression of the inner development for which the mystic strives. In the Turkish tradition he is, as I have suggested, a means by which the inexpressible wisdom of Mevlana is conveyed to those of us who are earthbound. He exposes the mysteries to the smiling light of the sun.

"Whenever the secrets of knowledge are learned by a man," wrote Rumi, "his mouth is closed against speaking of them."

One Friday in a mosque after prayers the Hodja climbed the *mimbar* (pulpit) and began to preach. "Oh people of Aksehir," he called out, "do you know what I have to tell you?" "No," they answered. "Well, since you are ignorant of something so important I had better hold my tongue," said the Hodja as he climbed down from the *mimbar* and left the mosque. The next Friday he returned and asked the same question of the worshippers: "Do you know what I have to tell you?" "Yes," they answered. "Then there is no sense in my taking up your time," said the already departing Hodja. When on the third Friday he asked the same question for the third time—"Do you know what I have to tell you?"—and half the people said "yes" and half "no," he smiled in relief and said, "Well, then, those who know can tell those who do not know," and he left the mosque.

Mystical wisdom is arrived at in the silence of communion; the many planes of perception cannot be directly transferred to the single plane of words. Rumi pointed to this fact when he said, "Intelligence is merely the shadow of Truth; how can a shadow compete with the sun itself?"

One day as the Hodja was relaxing under a walnut tree he began to speculate on

the oddity of small walnuts growing on a huge tree and great pumpkins growing on nearby vines of insignificant size. "How strange are the ways of Allah," he sighed. "What could be sillier than tiny things growing on a huge tree and huge things growing on a tiny plant?" At this very moment a walnut fell on the Hodja's head leaving an unpleasant and uncomfortable bump. The Hodja lept to his feet, raised his face and hands to Heaven and called out, "Allah oh Allah, I am a fool and you are wise; where would I be now if pumpkins grew on trees?"

Human intelligence can take us only so far, Mevlana reminds us. True wisdom comes only from God. Intelligence but hints at a truth which is much deeper and only apparently irrational:

There is no academic proof of Truth in the world;
It is hidden beyond all human reason.

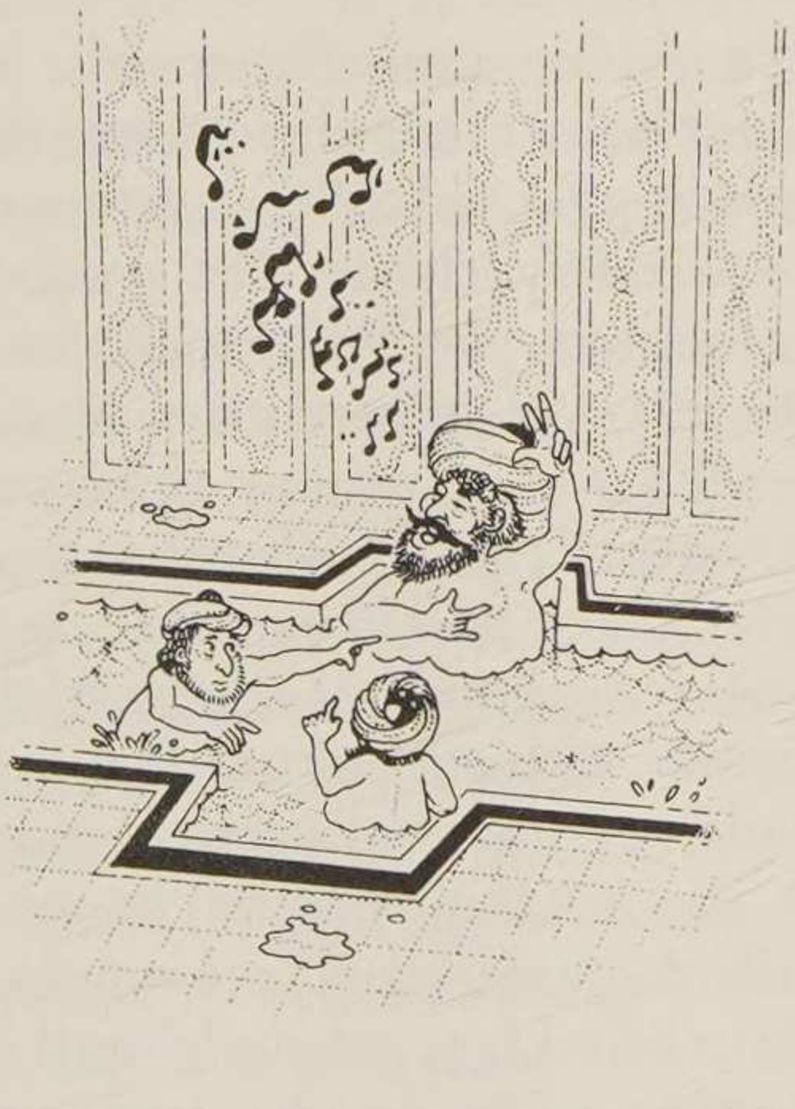
One day the Hodja went into a clothing shop in Konya and chose a pair of trousers. Then, as he was about to pay for them he changed his mind. "As a matter of fact," he said to the merchant, "the trousers I have on are good enough; please give me a *djübbeh* (cloak) instead." When he had found one that fit, Nasreddin left the shop. The shopkeeper followed him into the street: "Forgive me, Hodja Effendi; you have not paid me for the *djübbeh*." "How odd," replied the Hodja, "surely I left the pair of trousers in exchange?" "But you had not paid for them either," cried the merchant. "Really, you Konya people are beyond comprehension," said Nasreddin; "do not be so foolish as to think you can cheat me! Since I did not take the trousers, why should I pay for them?" The poor clerk, overwhelmed by this complex reasoning, shook his head in confusion and left the Hodja with the cloak.

The Hodja's argument is irrational but proves well enough that ordinary reason can carry one only so far. The most famous of the stories to illustrate this point is the one which tells of the absent-minded Hodja getting on his donkey the wrong way around so that he sat facing the animal's tail. As he was with a group of his young students, who could not resist laughing at this odd sight, Nasreddin had quickly to think of some explanation in order to preserve his scholarly dignity. "I realize that to you boys I may seem to be riding this donkey the wrong way around," he began,

"but in fact it is certainly the right way. You see, I could not possibly lead you to the mosque for our class and keep an eye on you at the same time without riding this way. And to follow behind you would be undignified for a teacher. Surely you can understand, then, that this is the right way for me to ride this donkey."

The Hodja is frequently depicted riding backwards on his donkey, who is in any case his almost constant companion. This is a traditional position for the buffoon. It also relates to the fact that what appears to most people to be the wrong way may well to the Sufi, from his all-encompassing point of view, be the right way. Of course, the story is also a comic reminder of the well-known ride of the holy man on the humblest of beasts of burden. Thus Lao-Tse on the water buffalo and Jesus on the ass. The lower forms must be assimilated; we must attach ourselves to humility before reality can be achieved. The holy man must not lose sight of his bestial nature.

"Soul," writes Mevlana, "is a clear mirror; the flesh is merely dust on the mirror. In the same way our true beauty is hidden by the dust."



When Nasreddin was in Konya one day he went to a *hamam* or Turkish bath. As he was alone in the bathing room he began to sing and was astounded at how beautiful his voice sounded. "*Maşallah* (God be praised)," he cried, "such a wonderful voice must be shared with all." So he quickly dressed himself, rushed outside, climbed to the top of a minaret and began to chant the call to prayer even though it was not yet the proper time. A man on the street shouted rudely at the Hodja, "Hey you old fool, it's not time for prayer. Anyway your terrible voice would frighten the faithful away; come down from there." The Hodja had to admit to himself that his voice on the minaret sounded nothing like his voice in the *hamam*. So he leaned over the minaret and answered the rude man: "If anyone in this town had the intelligence to place a *hamam* up here you would soon understand just how fine my voice is."

For the Sufi the beauty of soul is potentially expressible by all beings. It is simply that the relation to one's surroundings, one's world, must be correct. Sufi logic says that once that relationship has been established, time and place no longer matter. Such faith is characteristic of the Jalal al-din Rumis, the Nasreddin Hodjas and the Aliye Bergers of this world, people who recognize that if eternity is any time then it must be now too, that we live in eternity and do not know it, that once we do know it we can take that knowledge with us wherever we go, and that our song will always be the song of the mirror beneath the dust, the voice in the echoing *hamam*.

Nasreddin Hodja's grave in Aksehir stands behind an iron gate secured by a large padlock. But oddly enough for most of us, if not so oddly for the Hodja and those Sufi masters who understand such matters, there is no fence or wall to prevent one from simply walking around the gate to the grave. There are those who search for the logic or the bribe which will open the gate. There are also those who realize that the truth is there for the taking, that gates are only for people who do not look around them. Characteristically, there is a small hole in the Hodja's gravestone, a hole through which he looks out upon the world —perhaps to laugh at those who stand fretting at the gate and to beckon to those who would look in to "see" the true significance of this wisest of fools.

The Uses of the Past

by Roger Lipsey

Treasures of Tutankhamun
Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. December 20, 1978-April 15, 1979.

So much has already been written and televised about this great exhibition that, approaching the topic late, I have the impression that our Sanitation Department men must have in the aftermath of a parade, as they roll their trucks up the avenue, collecting debris that a short time before was part of the fun. I also prognosticate, in this pessimistic vein, that my review runs the risk of having no more order than Tutankhamun's tomb when Carter found it: twice rifled in Antiquity, its larger objects were in place, but many of the smaller ones had been randomly stacked by the thieves, and much was missing. That image of intrusion and greed, recorded by Harry Burton's photographic survey of the excavation and widely circulated this year in various books, at very least warns us, as we ponder the exhibition, to find some other, wiser way to handle its contents. The difficulty is that the topic of Ancient Egypt is overwhelmingly complex, as even a cursory study of Egyptological texts shows; the further difficulty is that we can benefit even from a tenuous connection to that culture. Never in recent times has the question of "the uses of the past" been brought so vividly forward; no expense was spared to circulate this exhibition throughout the United States and, granted that the considerable monetary profits it is yielding will usefully go towards the renovation of museums in Cairo and Alexandria, we are still challenged in this country to find its use.

Since entrance to the exhibition was a competitive matter, and the ticket line when I saw it stretched from the Metropolitan Museum to the Zoo (that makes one mile), it is worthwhile to mention to readers who decided against the ordeal or who live elsewhere that the exhibition *is* a marvel for direct observation, but most of the values that shine in it can be appreciated through publications more easily available than a ticket. Additionally, the fifty-five objects loaned for this show are not all of equal interest, and many wonderful ones that figure prominently in books on the tomb remained behind in Cairo. The objects on exhibition—many of them furniture, and furnishings such as jars, weapons, game-boards, boxes—give a first, and abiding, impression of peerless craftsmanship. The pharaoh's childhood chair (fig. 1), diminutive and regal, in ebony, ivory, gold, and bronze, with an in-curved seat as elegantly formed as a topologist's equation, sets the tone for the entire exhibition (in which it appears early). The harmonious but rich combination of materials, as in this chair and many other objects, and the abundant use of gold and other precious substances is, oddly, chaste. The vocabulary is partly familiar, partly not at all: for example, the inlays of colored glass, wood, and ivory to be seen in so many objects must be the distant ancestor of Islamic marquetry furniture that is still being made, but the religious iconography is almost wholly discontinuous with our culture. There is a perfection of craft and a sober beauty in all of the Tutankhamun objects, however splendid the materials, that I sought at length to formulate concisely until finally it occurred to me to consult Plato on the Egyptians, whom he knew. In his *Laws* appears a discussion of Egyptian music that sheds light on this art also. Socrates is speaking:

> ...it is a fact, and a thought-provoking fact, that it has actually proved possible in...[the] sphere

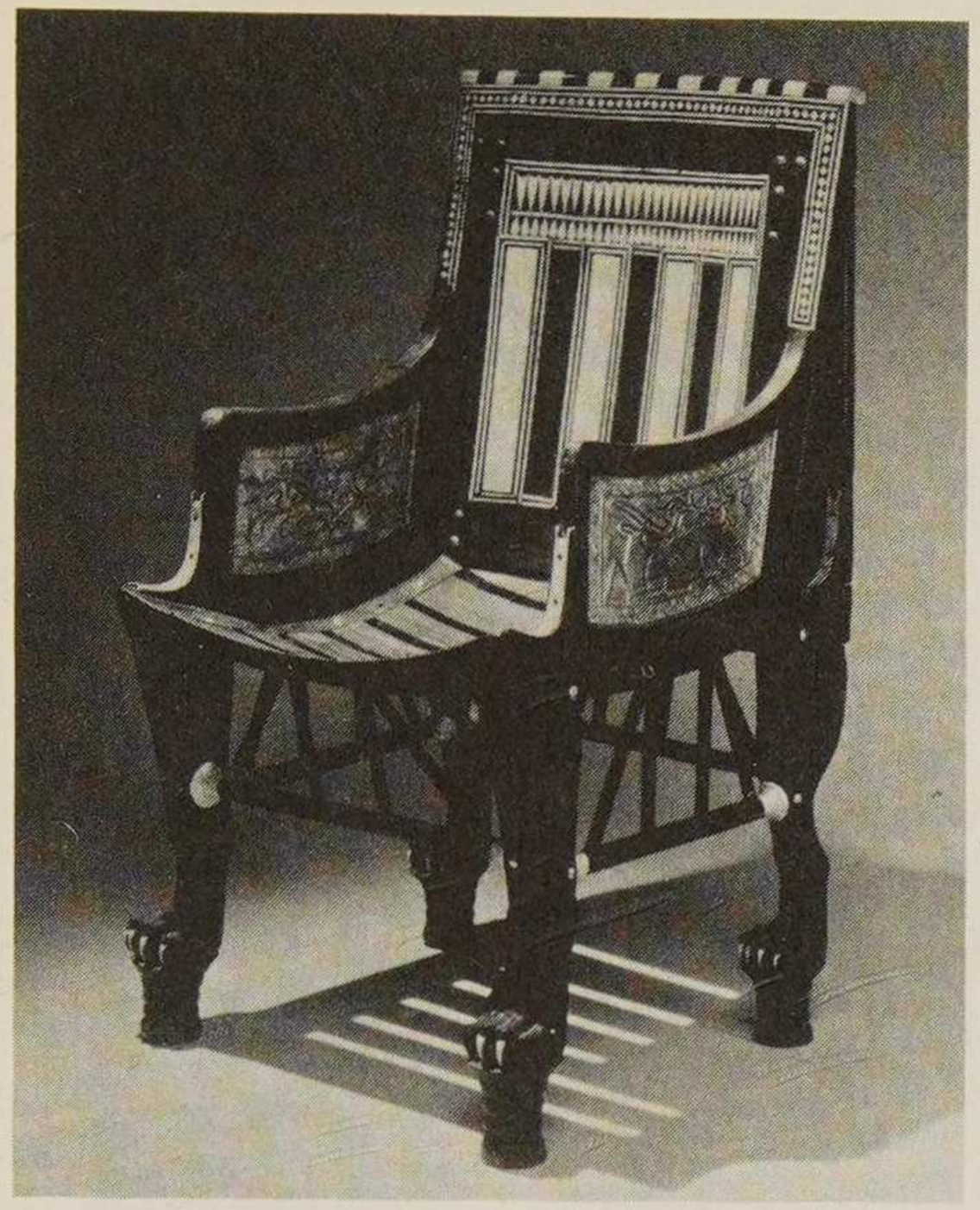


Figure 1

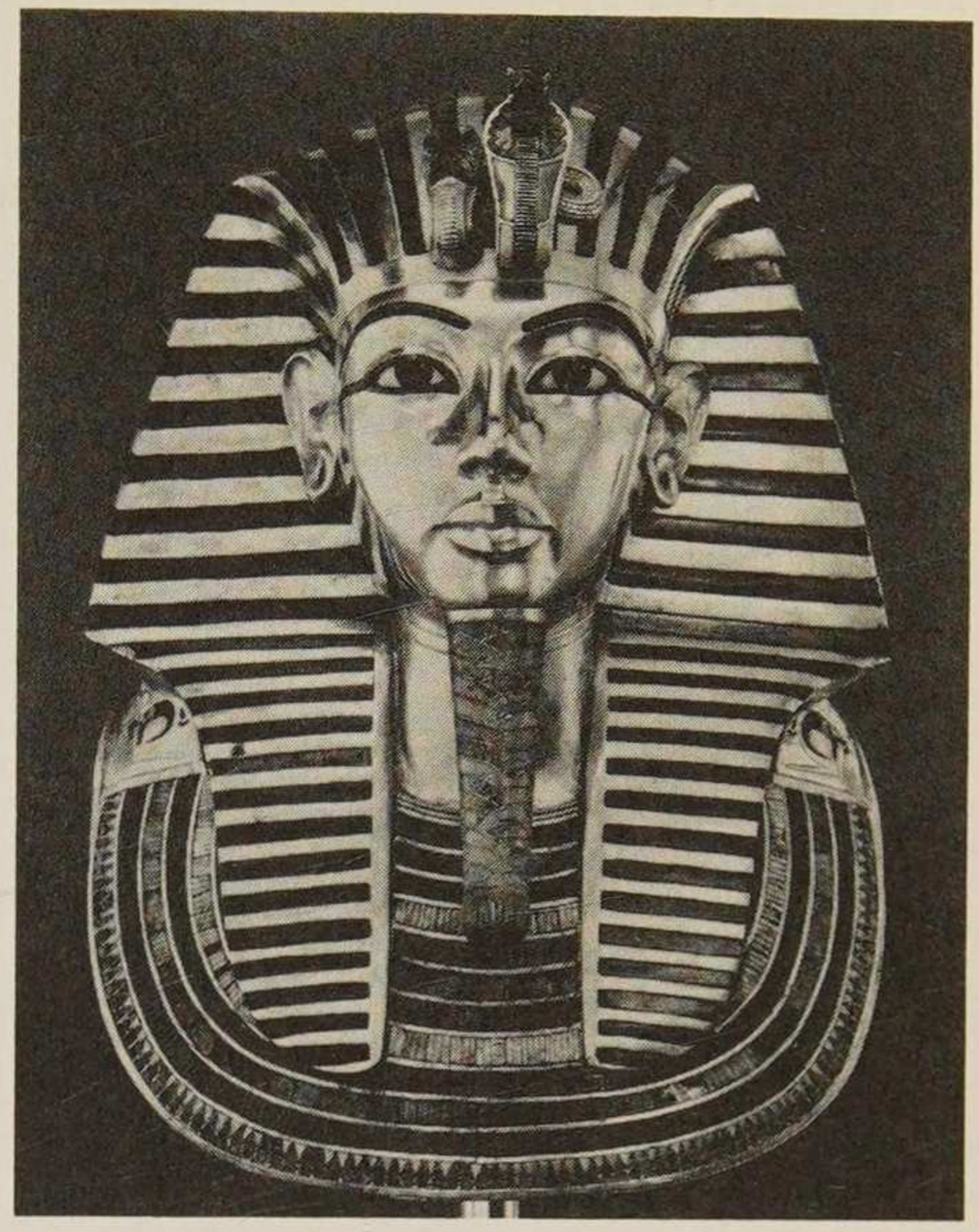


Figure 2

[of Egyptian music], to canonize melodies which exhibit an intrinsic rightness permanently by law. That must have been the doing of a god, or a godlike man—as, in fact, the local tradition is that the melodies which have been preserved for so many ages were the work of Isis. (2.657A)

There is the expression: intrinsic rightness. Other traditions of craft and art, of every age, are by no means excluded if I say that I know of nothing more intrinsically right than these works of the mid-fourteenth century B.C.

Apart from the objects that we today would class as craft, however elevated, there are others in the exhibition that our conventions describe as "art": that is, sculpture, paintings, and the gold mask of the pharaoh that is both a masterpiece of technical metalwork and a portrait of remarkable sensibility (fig. 2). The back of a ceremonial chair (fig. 3) is an openwork relief wood-carving that shows the god of eternity, Heh, kneeling with the symbol of life, the *ankh* cross, slung over his arm. The hieroglyphic inscriptions, I have been told, emphasize the divine origin of Tutankhamun, but it is the quality of carving, the quality of body and attitude in the figure of Heh, that will arrest the layperson. Its obvious traits can be listed—the shallow relief and summary anatomy that nonetheless give the strong impression of a relaxed and graceful body, the systematic rendering of details such as hair and garments that nonetheless does not quash an impression of compassion, reassurance, and yet distance—but such lists fall short of catching the magic that inheres in this and other consummately developed works in the history of art. Few of us can read the iconography of the relief beyond what we are told by the captions, but all of us can sense the little miracle by which a thin slice of wood—nothing, so to speak—has been transformed into what, for once without occult speculation, can be called a subtle body.

The photograph of Tutankhamun's gold mask has become a cliché, but the mask itself is not one; its qualities are not fully communicated by posters and prints. Tutankhamun as Osiris, Tutankhamun raised into a solar body of gold which is his for eternity, these are the dogmatic references of the mask, but it is also a portrait that, as you face it, becomes intimate. I am told that different people see different traits of char-

Figure 3

acter; I saw a vulnerable youth whose death at perhaps age eighteen may have been the result of treachery. I find myself admiring the culture that authorized a distinctly, although not sentimentally, personal portrait in a ritual context. This recalls the hope pinned by a strand of thinkers, from Heraclitus at the dawn of Classical Greece to C.G. Jung in the immediate vicinity, on "the coincidence of opposites," and it further suggests that their coincidence is not a mutual annihilation (whence springs an *Übermensch* of unknown proclivities) but rather a harmony in which each clarifies and trains the tendencies of the other. However one takes it, the portrait-mask is grand, and it is easier and more natural to pay homage to Tutankhamun and his Age before it than before any of the other exhibited objects.

Not to have stood before it, due to the ticket problem, is not necessarily a loss, since there are opportunities in our own culture to attempt, at least, a reconciliation of valued opposites. All art, particularly great art, is strictly utilitarian, providing models for attitudes and actions. To follow the model literally is usually impossible or ridiculous, but to seize the essence of the model and to let it be stored, even forgotten as such, where it will be of use is neither impossible nor ridiculous. This gathering of "examples," assimilating and then apparently forgetting them, does not seem to be *the* fundamental act of consciousness; it is subordinate, surely, to the growth of individual consciousness from its own resources and from relationships such as the family. But the gathering and understanding of examples, even from Eighteenth Dynasty Egypt, is perhaps first among the lesser acts of consciousness. In any event, I am not scaffolding a theory of consciousness in this review, only suggesting a route that runs opposite to the commercialization of Tutankhamun's treasures through scarves, totebags, and art clones (the term is Robert Hughes', in a *Time* column), a route by which the exhibition of these things comes into some relation with the other American values, such as the pursuit of happiness.

Howard Carter, the discoverer of the tomb, has described his first impressions:

> I suppose most excavators would confess to a feeling of awe—embarrassment almost—when they break into a chamber closed and sealed by pious hands so many centuries ago...you feel an intruder.
>
> This impression somehow communicates itself even to the museum-goer today, who may feel involuntarily conspiratorial and slightly shabby until it is realized that we have intruded on something of our own. Then the voyeur becomes, however slight and impaired, the seer.

Roger Lipsey is the author of the biography, Coomaraswamy: His Life and Work, *and the editor of* Coomaraswamy: Selected Papers, *Volumes I and II, all in the Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press.*

PATH TO THE CENTER

by Peter J. Awn

The Whirling Dervishes
Circle in the Square
New York, October 29 and 30, 1978.

The novice who ventures on the Sufi Path faces many challenges, none greater, perhaps, than the reorientation of the senses. Among the senses, hearing is especially significant since the Muslim first encounters Divine Revelation through the rhythmic chant of the Arabic Qur'ān.

For the thirteenth-century mystic Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, the power of these eternal rhythms was best captured in the plaintive cry of the reed pipe, whose penetration of the human spirit sparked the reordering of the Sufi's sensory life in the direction of the Beloved. As Rūmī describes in the opening lines of his monumental work, *The Mathnawi*, the mournful lament of the reed pipe is the metaphor of the soul's longing for God. In the same way that the reed yearns to be restored to the reed-bed from which it has been cut, so too does the soul yearn to recapture the intimacy with God she possessed before creation.

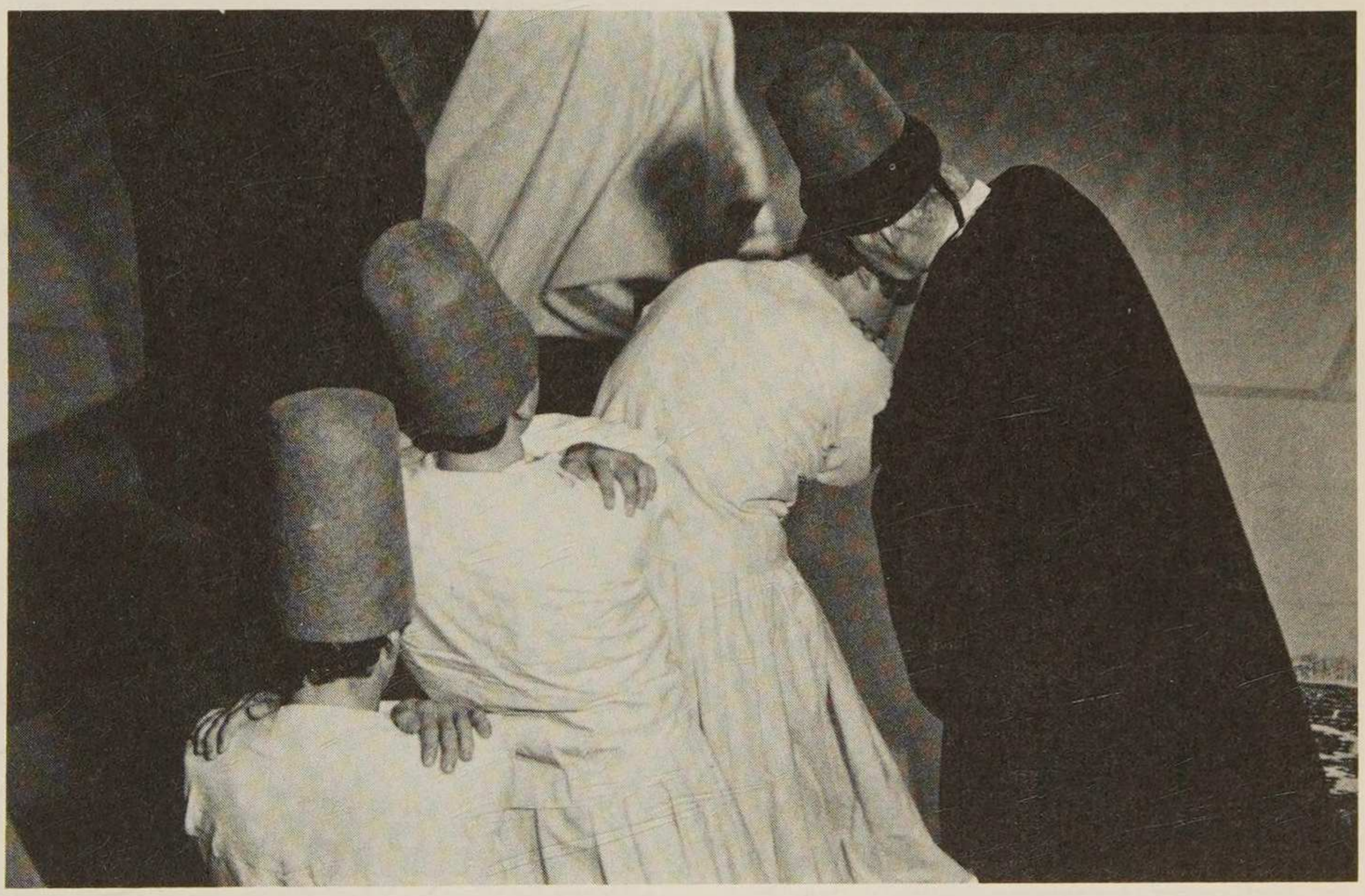
The religious fraternity, the Mevlevis, that grew up around Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī and his successors developed a complex and carefully controlled prayer rite with the song of the reed as primary catalyst. The rite is called *samāᶜ* (from the Arabic root "to listen") and the Sufi participants have acquired the name Whirling Dervishes because of the ritualized dance that accompanies the music of the reed pipe.

At the opening of the *samāᶜ*, both the *shaykh* (spiritual master) and the musicians take their positions at opposite ends of the room. The Dervishes stand silently to the left of the *shaykh*. Following a chant of praise in honor of the prophet Muḥammad and a Qur'ān recital, the flute intones her

lament of separation. In response, the Dervishes, led by the *shaykh*, process three times around the hall, bowing to one another as they pass the *shaykh's* red rug which symbolizes the *axis mundi*, the spiritual center of the universe.

The whirling dance now begins; each Dervish approaches the *shaykh*, kisses his hand as a sign of filial obedience, and proceeds to pivot in measured, fluid movements. As the dancers' arms gradually unfold and the ritual garments begin to swirl, one is reminded of the image of the burgeoning rose, so popular in Sufi mystical poetry. It is difficult not to be struck by the power of physical control that emanates from the turning bodies. There are no random or erratic movements; each gesture is expressive of complete physical harmony that transcends the mundane realm of the senses. This quality is most evident in the faces of the Dervishes themselves—faces that are motionless, quiet, serene, profoundly contemplative.

The dance ritual is repeated four times, with the *shaykh* himself joining for the final movement. Here the symbolism is particularly intense. In the same way that the



Photograph © Ira Friedlander, 1978, w/ a Leica CL.

angels circumambulate the heavenly *Kaʿba* (cube) in Paradise, and Muslims circumambulate the earthly *Kaʿba* in Mecca, so too do the Sufi Dervishes revolve around their center of spiritual power, the *shaykh*. He is the sun, the center of their universe; they are the revolving planets. The sun image is especially apt since Rūmī's own master bore the name of Shams, i.e., Sun, of Tabrīz.

The prayer exercise of the Dervishes

concludes with a recitation of the most familiar passage in the Qur'an, the opening chapter or *Fatiḥa*. Finally all the Dervishes join to proclaim in unison the Divine name *Hū* ("He"), the name of the Beloved whose beauty will never perish.

The *samāᶜ* of the Whirling Dervishes at *Circle in the Square* on the 29th and 30th of October provided many New Yorkers a unique and privileged insight into the dynamics of the Sufi life. Many in the audience seemed moved by the experience; there were others, however, whose reaction was, "So what? All they do is twirl around." That raises the question of the purpose of *performing* publicly and for money a religious exercise whose meaning is rooted in the complex spiritual discipline of another culture. Does that not vulgarize what is intended to be an avenue of spiritual experience? Or is it presented primarily as a cultural exchange?

Perhaps this is exaggerating the problem. It is true that to be unaware of the rich symbolism and mystical theology behind the dervish practices detracts from one's ability to participate in and appreciate the ritual. Nevertheless, there is a significant dimension of the experience that is self-revelatory, that communicates regardless of the particular religious or intellectual preparation of those attending. It seems better to be able to share this intense, albeit private, experience, rather than to have it hidden away in a *tekke*.

Photograph © Ira Friedlander, 1978, w/ a Leica CL.

Peter J. Awn is Professor of Religion at Columbia University.

GOOD NEWS, MOSTLY

by John Loudon

St. Mark's Gospel
Performed by Alec McCowen. Presented by Arthur Cantor and Greer Garson. The Playhouse Theater, New York City, October 24, 1978.

For over a year now something remarkable has been going on. A single actor has been reciting the Gospel of Mark and drawing sellout crowds here and in England. And the event continues as he returns to this country, after a command Christmas performance at Westminster Cathedral, to tour the show and eventually to air it nationally on the PBS television network.

While the show does not wholly succeed as either theater or religious encounter, its wonders are many. It involves a prodigious feat of memorization and rare acting ability. It attracts not only religious types, but precisely those who find something better to do on Sundays than listen to Scripture and preaching. Too, there are few of us—even the conventional churchgoers—who have ever experienced a Gospel *whole*. Rather, we have encountered the New Testament piecemeal—in quoted snippets, favorite passages, lectionary readings, sermon pretexts—not as a complete story with beginning, middle, and end and a single dynamism, and hardly as the *good news* that the Greek work for Gospel (*eu-angelion*) literally means.

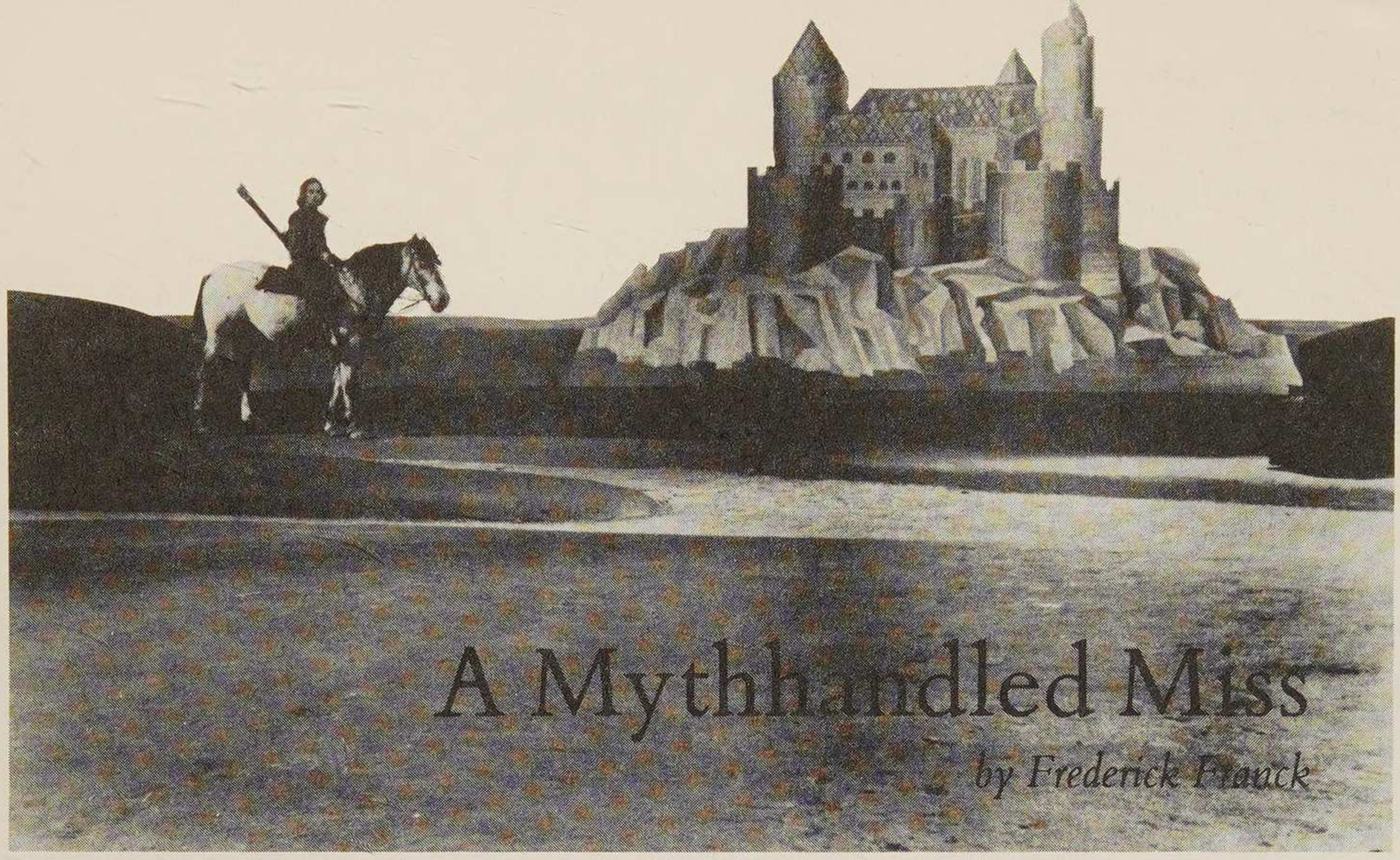
In Alec McCowen's spirited rendition, we not only get the Gospel whole for once, but told with the awestruck enthusiasm of an eyewitness (Mark's Gospel *is* supposed to be based on St. Peter's firsthand account). With McCowen as Mark (and Mark playacting other characters as scenes warrant), "you are there" marvelling at Jesus' sudden emergence, delighting in his parables and his put-downs of the Pharisees, astonished at his miracles. McCowen is a fine stage actor in the Royal Shakespeare tradition—though he lacks the intensity or depth of an Olivier or Gielgud—and he takes command almost effortlessly. He immediately captures the audience's attention with seemingly offhand chatter about one-man shows and about the Gospel he's about to recite; he then launches into a rollicking, wide-eyed tale of what really happened (but can scarcely be believed); and he peoples the almost-bare stage with a whole New Testament world (John, Jesus, disciples, Herod and Salome, crowds, scribes and Pharisees, animals, boats, trees). His excellent pacing, spare gestures, voice control, energy and wit, all bring the story to vibrant life, give this two-thousand-year-old word flesh. And the noble King James Version, with its poetry and vigor, lends its own beauty and theatricality. Jesus becomes a dynamic figure of mystery, inspiring wonder and fear, and early on the feeling comes, as the tale rushes headlong (despite an intermission) to its inevitable climax of death and resurrection, that this may just be the most incredible—and significant—story in history.

Still, even with McCowen's bravura performance, the production disappoints. It fails to sustain its dramatic power throughout and its religious impact is muffled. Perhaps dissatisfaction is inevitable in such an enterprise: how often *has* the Gospel been proclaimed with full authenticity and power? For one thing, despite its narrative power, the Gospel of Mark is not a play script. The drama dashes through parts where you want it to linger, and the incessant wonder-working and journeying pall after a time. The King James Version, for all its grace, makes the telling more aesthet-

ically pleasing than personally involving; if a contemporary reporter were really telling you an incredible-but-true story, it wouldn't be in this antique Elizabethan prose. (The *koiné* Greek in which Mark is written is, in fact, a very plain, earthy, direct language [almost the equivalent of, say, immigrant English] that has more force than beauty.) And McCowen's own histrionics—mime, impersonation, clever use of props and movement—make for an evening of stimulating entertainment but not, finally, an event of ultimate importance. Fundamentally, he is a comedic actor—not a jokester, but a light entertainer—and, in the end, it becomes difficult to take him and his message with full seriousness. Despite, or perhaps because of, his panoply of acting skills, you are always aware that he is *acting*, and an air of artificiality pervades the show. Nattily dressed in sports coat, slacks, and open-necked shirt, he comes across as a pretty ordinary guy who happens to be a great storyteller and has a hell of a story to tell. But the Gospel of Mark is not just a hell of a tale. It is, unavoidably, confessional, religious literature. It is testimony, witness. It aims to confront the hearer with the most important story ever told, the Christian *kerygma* or Proclamation, and it demands decision. It means to change one's life. But it is hard to be amused and converted at the same time, and it's not surprising that this perilous venture falters. McCowen runs into special difficulty in the second hour of the performance that is largely taken up with Jesus' coming to Jerusalem, his betrayal, Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection. These are not matters for light entertainment (no matter what your religious convictions), and though he attempts to strike an appropriately serious, even semi-tragic, tone, McCowen labors through much of this part of the story until the liberating climax of the empty tomb, the angels, and Jesus' appearances, when the story's almost lighthearted tumble-tale wonder is regained and the drama ends on a triumphal upbeat.

None of these demurs is to suggest that the performance is not worth seeing or poor theater (though one can imagine Peter Brook or Jerzy Grotowski making the event into a more arresting confrontation). Far from it. Even its shortcomings provoke a chain reaction of questions—about acting and theater, about the meaning of Jesus, the real challenge of his message, the ways teachings are kept alive or suffocated, about religious leaders and followers—that are not soon stilled. Jesus, for instance, emerges in this telling, without contrivance or shading on McCowen's part, as more an evangelical faith healer—performing miracles, demanding unquestioning faith, deriding the lifelessness of mainstream religion—than a saintly servant of the poor or a religious revolutionary, more Morton Smith's Jesus the Magus than Schweitzer's ethical ideal. Yet even here hearing the Gospel whole helps, for Mark's Jesus is always more than any one conventional image—whether it be Oral Roberts or Mother Teresa or Camillo Torres—uniquely unpredictable and free and out ahead. And that is the virtue and wonder of this show: it rescues the Gospel from the tomb of pious sermonizing, from being so comfortably known that it is never heard. Again, as for two thousand years, someone in his own fallible, culture-bound way, is freshly proclaiming the good news of Christ's coming. Let those with ears to hear, go hear.

John Loudon is a book editor in New York and a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.



A Mythhandled Miss

by Frederick Franck

Perceval
A film directed and written by Eric Rohmer. Produced by Barbet Schroeder. Released by Gaumont-New Yorker Films.

Rohmer's *Perceval* is less a film than a photographed, mock-medieval musical on the theme of *Perceval le Gallois*, that epic poem of enormous length of which, around 1175, Chrétien de Troyes wrote the first nine thousand verses. His work served as the basis for Wolfgang von Eschenbach's thirteenth-century *Parzifal*, from which in turn Richard Wagner constructed—adding that "Christian sanctimoniousness" decried by Nietzsche—the libretto of his interminable opera.

Where Bresson succeeded in making his *Lancelot of the Lake* into a cinematically authentic, poignant work of art which brings the mythic material to vibrant life, Rohmer's film is mainly of interest as an example of how not to handle mythic material. Apart from a few lively moments at the opening, the film ambles along for two and a half hours of pretentious preciousness and ever more slackening inner tension.

In an interview Rohmer said that he wanted to shoot his film entirely in the studio, in "a space as far from realistic as possible" and that he wanted to show the Middle Ages as medieval people saw them "in the spirit of their miniatures and illuminated manuscripts." But the painted backdrops and the puny toy castles do not derive from de Limbourg's *Les Plus Belles Heures du Duc de Berry* nor from the popular *Images d'Epinal*. They rather recall dismal Disney kitsch. A static camera registers yards of semi-abstract waves in those cloying decorator-colors referred to by sales ladies as "pastel," *fata morganas* of golden castles of an embarrassingly contrived naiveté, and fiberglass trees in cafeteria-style *art-nouveau* growing from striped astroturf. The set, the costuming and the casting seem to suffer from a curiously petit-bourgeois aestheticism flattering itself to be marvellously *raffiné*. Meanwhile the verses drone along, spoken in the third person by the protagonist and by the actors playing minor parts.

Of the Celtic legend of the Holy Fool (parsi-fal means "pure fool") in his *sanctas*

simplicitas, little remains. While there is something touching in the wide-eyed innocence of Fabrice Luchini, this Perceval is less guileless fool than dunce, and his *bonne bourgeoise* mother reminds one less of the widow of a hero-king than of Madame Maigret. King Arthur at his oblong Round Table speaks his lines in pure *Comédie Française,* but with the bonhomie of the *patron* of a provincial café, and Perceval's first love in her doll-castle with its Krylon-gold sprayed pillars looks like a nightclub performer. The rules of chivalry which Perceval learned from Lord Gurnemanz, his mentor, are—as are the somewhat odd rules of conduct instilled in him by his mother—to be transcended if he is to free the Fisher King from his suffering, and to gain the Grail. Rohmer's version gives hardly an inkling of any unfolding interior life of the hero. Wolfgang von Eschenbach, on the contrary, using Chrétien's work as his raw material, stresses in his *Parzifal* the spiritual journey of his hero from the bumbling yokel—full of contradictory ideals, desires and unbridled bellicosity, indifferent to his mother's sorrow, wresting ring and kisses from a defenseless woman—to compassion and insight. It is significant that in Eschenbach's epic the Grail is neither the chalice of the Last Supper (as in Wagner's *Parzifal*) nor the great dish Chrétien describes, but the Philosopher's Stone, thus indicating the dawning of a new age and a new model: that of a secularized spirituality in which man's spiritual quest is one for responsible humanness.

Rohmer's *dénouement* I found particularly baffling. His Perceval never seems to overcome his social programming with the virtues of honor, hospitality, courtliness and courage in combat, to attain that self-realization Eschenbach emphasizes. He has, however, abandoned faith in the God-image instilled in him, until he encounters, on Good Friday, a group of barefooted pilgrims. Chrétien's epic mentions Perceval's taking Communion on the following Easter Sunday and Rohmer seems to have pounced on this line to end his film with a passion play, which makes the spectator do a double-take: is that poor Fabrice Luchini? Suddenly, he is cast in the role of Jesus Christ and being crucified on a handsomely crafted cross, his breast pierced with Longinus' lance while the chorus, dropping all its coy sweetness, chants the Passion with a nasty fanaticism that fits the almost comical gruesomeness of the action. If Rohmer wants to suggest Perceval's identification with the crucified Christ, I miss any hint of Transfiguration or Resurrection on this Easter Sunday.

All this, I notice, is not quite complimentary and may sound highly presumptuous in discussing the work of a cinematographer somehow labelled *avant-garde*, that French term which, translated into contemporary English, too often comes out as "too chic to question." But if the Perceval story and the Grail romance is indeed as Joseph Campbell writes: "The first great spiritual biography in the history of Occidental letters," Rohmer has mutilated it beyond recognition.

Frederick Franck is a Consulting Editor to PARABOLA. *His latest book is* EveryOne, the Timeless Myth of "Everyman" Reborn, *published by Doubleday.*

The Silent Pulse
By George Leonard. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978. Pp. 225. $8.95.

Reviewed by David Finkelstein

When I was a kid, one cultural constant was the small ad in the back pages of science-fiction pulp magazines for a California company (A.M.O.R.C.) offering the secret mental practices of Isaac Newton for sale cheap. By and large the occult was a sleazy cottage trade linked to the numbers racket and living off ignorance. Americans are suckers.

Another cultural feature, one I sensed more remotely, was the self-improvement business of Dale Carnegie for salesmen, Charles Atlas for ninety-eight-pound weaklings. Americans are optimists.

I believe that to most scientists and many laymen, the consciousness industry appears as a string woven of these poor threads, claiming to lead its followers to mental health, physical prowess, and occult powers, and operating entirely by the market mechanism. Its mystical elements, moreover, recall the antirational poisons of Hitler; as I write, the mass suicide of Jonestown, another California product, is still fresh in our minds, warning us that the potion has not lost its strength.

George Leonard is a teacher, or, if you prefer, a tycoon, of the consciousness movement, and these thoughts from the past jog my elbow as I set out to present what is actually a highly positive reaction to his book, in that I feel he has tapped a powerful line of thought and done it well. The book was written before Jonestown, the review after.

The Silent Pulse is a field guide for a search that has motivated George Leonard for years. He formulates his goal now as "the perfect rhythm that exists in each of us." He has specific awareness practices to suggest, and brings together an important array of religions, arts, and sciences to back these practices. The central ontology of his world picture—it is nothing less than that—is that all is rhythm.

One almost uniform doctrine of the consciousness movement is that each of us knows all that happens anywhere in the world. George Leonard supports this with the metaphor of the hologram, each part of which has the whole picture, only fuzzy.

The early part of the book gives the latest developments in neuroscience that Leonard feels supports his teachings, and is rather thin in interest compared to the later part, for the findings adduced by Leonard do not seem to bear very strongly on the conclusion he draws. He brings in some of the many intricate rhythms of the life process, from the pulse rate of the individual neuron to the subtle entrainment of rhythms in the body language of mother and child, points out that nowhere in the hierarchy of aggregation that leads from humanity up to the cosmos and down to the atom do we find stasis, and argues by extrapolation that we never will find true substance of a material kind, no matter how deeply we dig in the hierarchy. I believe he may well be right. From this he seems to conclude that therefore there is nothing to withstand our omnipotence. Having dissolved matter, we are left swimming in the open ocean, free and clear. This is a *non-sequitur*. We have dissolved ourselves as well as our obstacles, and could deduce total impotence as easily as omnipotence.

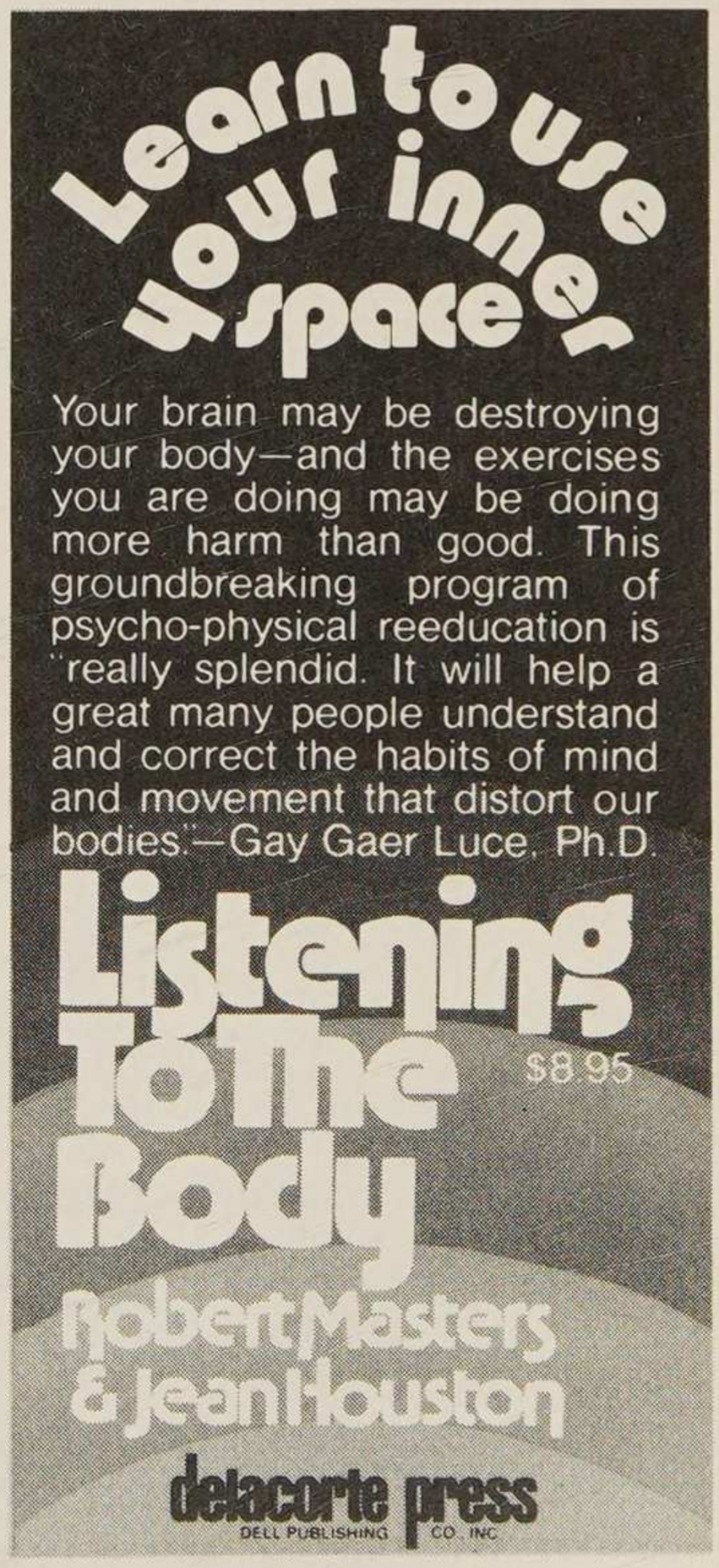
It is a good thing to weaken the strong grip that the mechanical world picture has

on us. Some people seem so grounded in "reality" they cannot walk lightly, and their lives may become more joyful if they are told they are omniscient. But what of the people on the edge of sanity? Will they try to fly out the window?

Indeed, as Blake well knew—I rely here on Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*—it is precisely the mystical element in the old mechanical view of Newton that is the enemy of creativity and vision. It is common to offer miracles to those who lead lives of quiet desperation, but miracles are for the jaded palate, like pepper. What cleanses the palate is clear water, the ordinary. That we can know anything at all is miracle enough. We do not have to know everything. Indeed the very idea of knowing everything is Newtonian and mechanical, alien to modern physics, which is characterized precisely by increasing limitations on our knowledge arising from the wholeness of the knower and the known.

George Leonard describes the controversial studies of Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff at Menlo Park. He reactivates the intense excitement I felt during my own visit to them, when they let me act out the role of remote-viewer in one of their experiments, not for the record, and Targ and I correctly located Puthoff going widdershins before the reflecting pool in front of the Stanford University bookstore. I recognized the kind of thinking Targ was evoking as one I had long practiced in doing crossword puzzles and dreaming up physical theories. Now I enjoy using it to hunt for Chinese restaurants and parking spaces. I believe it is close to what Leonard practices in *aikido*, the Japanese martial art of harmonious arm-twisting, where he holds a black belt, and in writing this book. If you try it in the stock market and lose money, I do not think you can sue George Leonard. I suggest such thinking be reserved for situations where the penalty for indecision is greater than the penalty for wrong decision. This suggestion is not made by George Leonard. Teachers in the oral tradition could adjust their message to their listeners. Modern writers are almost compelled by their medium to limit themselves to literal truths or accept misinterpretation.

The theory of the world on which this book is based is still but a gleam in the eye of the neuroscientist Pribram, who put for-



ward a holographic theory of memory and followed it with a similar theory of the physical universe. The world is full of waves traveling in all directions and velocities, and we are all interference patterns in the wave system, according to this picture, which Pribram calls holonomic to generalize his earlier term. I must register doubt that a theory built along these lines can work, for while some of the salient features of relativity and quantum theory are built in, others are not. Particularly the elasticity of time-space itself, the remarkable persistence and whole-number character of the particles that are to be modeled as interference patterns, and the Einstein speed limit to be obeyed by these particles, do not follow yet from any reasonable assignment of properties to these hypothesized waves. Holography, based on the photographic emulsion, seems too mechanical for our nonmechanical world. But in sketching how our present and future theories differ from the mechanical theories based on Newton—and from the Aristotelean conceptions that still seem to serve the great mass of people—George Leonard is informed, expressive and stimulating. The broad locale of his search is one traversed so charmingly by Alan Watts, ranging between the broad vistas of Eastern antimaterialist philosophies and the sharp jagged terrain of Western science, and Leonard takes notice of many of the exciting scientific developments since Alan Watts laid down his pen.

That everything *has* a rhythm, simple or complex, is apparently correct. For example if we combine Einstein's two most famous equations, the first relating mass to energy and the second relating energy to frequency, we find a frequency, a simple rhythm, for every mass. The step from *having* a rhythm to *being* a rhythm is a big one, too big for science yet, and bigger than this book cares to mention, but Leonard has taken it in imagination, and I think he will ultimately be found right.

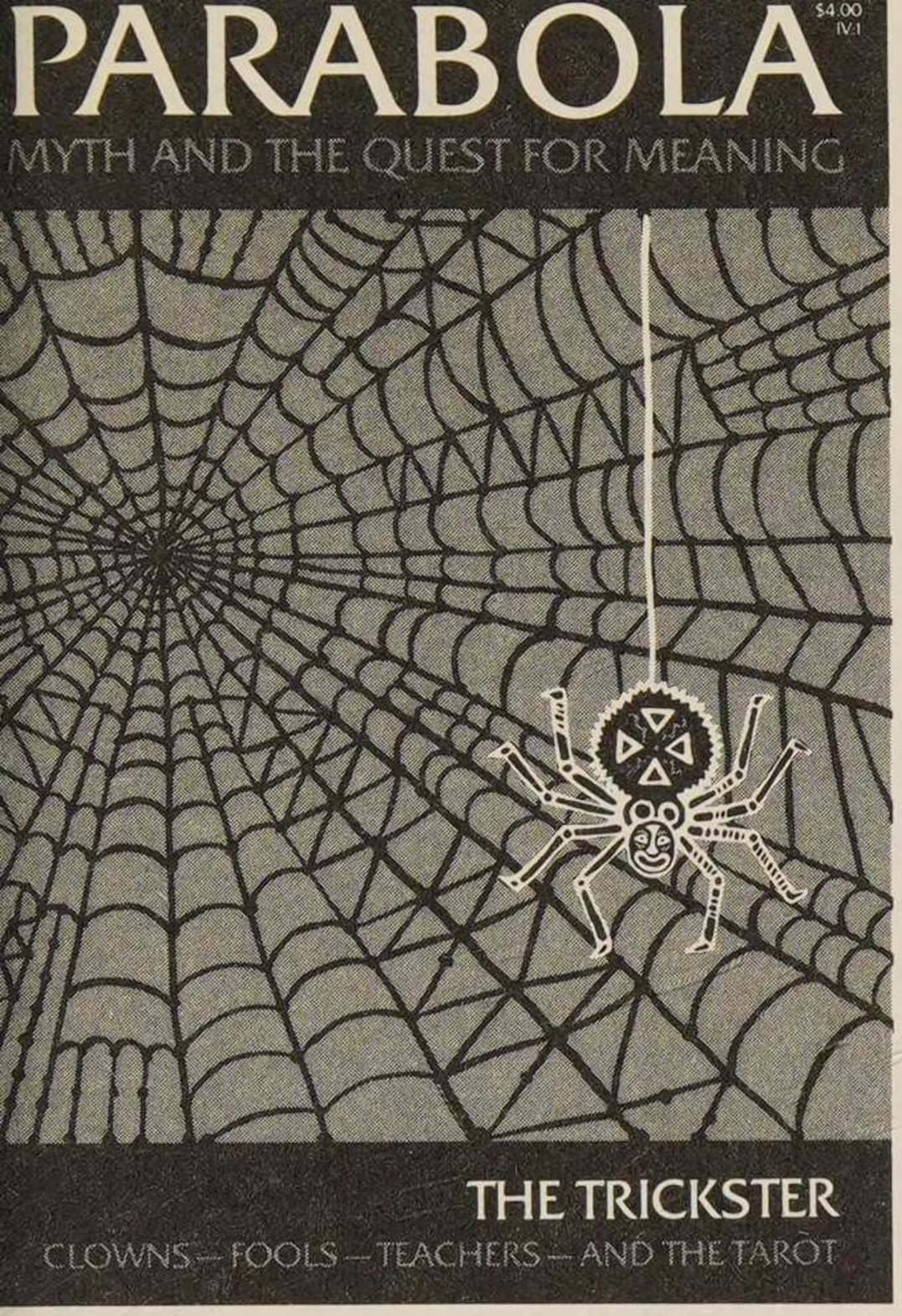
David Finkelstein is Director of the School of Physics at Georgia Institute of Technology and a member of the Adjunct Faculty of the Center for Holistic Studies at Antioch West in San Francisco.

The Last and First Eskimos
By Robert Coles. Photographs by Alex Harris. New York Graphic Society: 1978. Pp. 160. $19.95.

Reviewed by Barbara G. Myerhoff

This is a beautiful book, presenting the unusual combination of sweep and specificity. The Eskimos are photographed with care and their words are recorded with judgment and taste. We have in this book a visual and verbal portrait that is in accord with the view of Eskimos as they have so often been depicted by travelers, ethnographers, and missionaries alike—people full of patience, humor, realism and vision. Their affection for each other and the world which they share with animals and elements, spirits and supernatural forces, is notable.

Above all, I was struck by the absence of barriers between the things other cultures have been taught to separate, but which they perceive as unified. Adversity, pain, fear, danger, wonder, foolishness, delight, darkness and creativity swirl seamlessly in and out of texts and photographs, like Arctic gusts, which I imagine must also sometimes leave one smarting, alert and breathless. I finished the book with a sense of Eskimo life being ordered but not tamed. Their worldview appears exceptionally balanced and accepting of ingredients and



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emotions that others disdain or avoid. Here, one of many sensible yet surprising examples of this attitude, is a statement made by an old woman:

For me "fun" is to be scared as well as to laugh. You cannot survive if you forget how to be scared—my father told us that over and over. When an Eskimo forgets fear, he is ready to die.

The persistence of the old ideology—associated with hunting and shamanism—is striking, and reassuring; this, one suspects, is among the sources of their stability and resilience. Though fragmented and diffuse, it is still present and alive, although with modern features. But new concerns are also seen here: the chasms between the generations, the sense of inevitable change, the doubts about cultural losses not satisfactorily compensated for by social gains.

Informing nearly every page is the presence of the environment, and I was far more aware of its positive contributions than its harmful aspects in Eskimo life. Here is one very stirring example of its impact on human relations:

(My mother) was always asking us to come nearer and nearer. She told us that our only hope was closeness...That is how the Eskimos lasted, year after year...My mother said we had to be near each other, *really* near. We became one person! We were one family, as close as could be—all of us with our arms and our feet joined. If we froze, we'd be one. If we died because we ran out of food, we'd be one.

The dramatic alteration of darkness and light, of winter and summer, of proximity and distance appear nearly to dominate Eskimo thought, as it is portrayed here. Perhaps that explains, in part, the balance they attain, for neither pole is the enemy of the other.

There is still much to learn from these people. The author, too, seems to have been filled with profound appreciation, occasionally even awe, for his subjects' teachings. His attitude is low-keyed and without cant; still, he is no objective observer. His selections and comments are a significant part of the record, and his style is quite appropriate to the subject—simple, lucid and bold. Here is an excerpt illustrating both the author's and the speaker's observations. First Coles' voice about an Eskimo man:

Disciplines like psychology and psychiatry mean nothing to him, but he can look into his mind, in a way altogether his own, and come up with a mixture of reflection and memory that conveys a particular Eskimo man's effort to figure out the meaning of his life...

Now the Eskimo speaks:

"I am afraid of the summer. I am afraid that I will melt, and become a large puddle of bad dreams and worries...In school, the teachers have respect for the night and the cold winds, and don't say bad things about Eskimos. But when the light gets stronger and stronger, the teachers forget that the Eskimos can stay alive in weather the white people run from. All that our children begin to hear is what the Eskimo *can't* do, or *doesn't* do."

I finished the book with a simultaneous sense of yearning and of reassurance about human possibilities. There are occasions when a culture, an environment, and a people harmonize and enhance each other. Because each has taken the other so fully into account the whole surpasses the parts. Then, I think, maybe things are not so bad after all.

Barbara G. Myerhoff, Chairperson and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Southern California, is the author of Peyote Hunt *and the forthcoming* Number Our Days. *She is a Consulting Editor to* PARABOLA.

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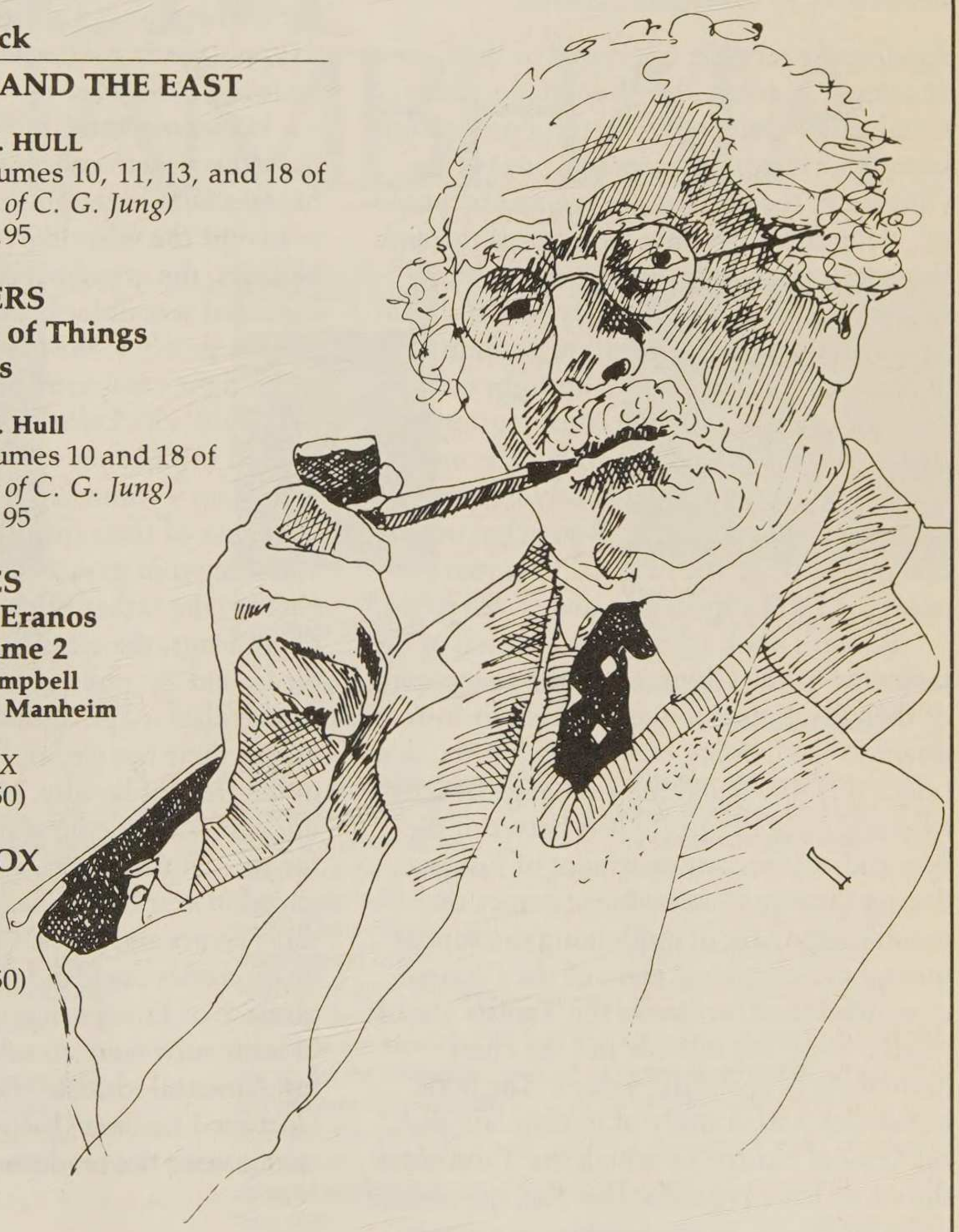

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The Shorter Science and Civilization in China: Volume I
An abridgement by Colin A. Ronan of Joseph Needham's original text. Volumes I and II of the Major Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.
Pp. ix + 326. $19.95.

Reviewed by L. Carrington Goodrich

As almost everyone interested in the history of science is aware, Dr. Joseph Needham of Cambridge University has for a generation been laboring on the contributions of the Chinese in the field of science and technology. Although he is only two-thirds through this prodigious undertaking, the publications he has produced already run to a total of 5,006 pages, not to mention perhaps a dozen specialized treatises brought out separately. Naturally the consumption of this material has daunted all but the most concerned readers. Fortunately we now have a way out: Colin A. Ronan has undertaken to abridge the original first two volumes (of 1,014 pages) into one of 326 pages.

Ronan's book starts with a sketch of the language of the Chinese and the geography of their land, then moves on to their history down to the coming of the first Jesuits (circa A.D. 1600) and the exchange of scientific and technological ideas between the two ends of the vast continent of Eurasia during these millennia. Next comes the troublesome task of explaining the fundamental philosophical ideas of the Chinese, in which Needham ranks the Taoists ahead of all competing schools and the chief nourishers of scientific values. The book concludes with a study of human law and the laws of nature, in which the Taoists are shown to have regarded the *Tao*, the cosmic order of things, as inscrutable; as a result, science for them remained on an empirical level. The Chinese legalists and Confucians seem to have shown little interest in nature outside of man himself. The Chinese in the earliest centuries—with their theories of the Yin and the Yang (the two great opposites) or the Five Elements (water, wood, fire, metal, and earth)—gave these theories the same status that the Greeks at the same time gave their early scientific ideas. But, while the Greeks developed a genius for geometry, the Chinese demonstrated a gift for arithmetic and algebra; but they failed to apply mathematics to the regularities to be found in nature.

However, the Chinese appear to have been the first to construct suspension bridges with wrought iron chains, the first to invent the wheelbarrow, the piston-bellows, the crossbow, paper printing by means of woodblock and movable type, explosive powder, the magnetic compass, watertight compartments in shipbuilding, porcelain, clockwork escapement, and—though this has yet to be developed in Needham's volumes—they were the first to make use of fingerprinting. In addition, the Chinese were greatly concerned with alchemy (the father of chemistry), the use of plant drugs, the classification of animals and birds, and the physics of magnetism. They made relief maps, and studied fossils, recognizing their nature, and wrote monographs in the field of botany. Medicine was of deep interest, and of course military technology, for the Chinese were almost perpetually engaged in warfare on land, on sea, and on their rivers and lakes. Only when the Jesuit missionaries came did they begin to get a glimpse of European science, and the Jesuits in their turn were to relay some of China's fundamental ideas to their homelands. Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716), who helped to organize the modern philosophy of or-

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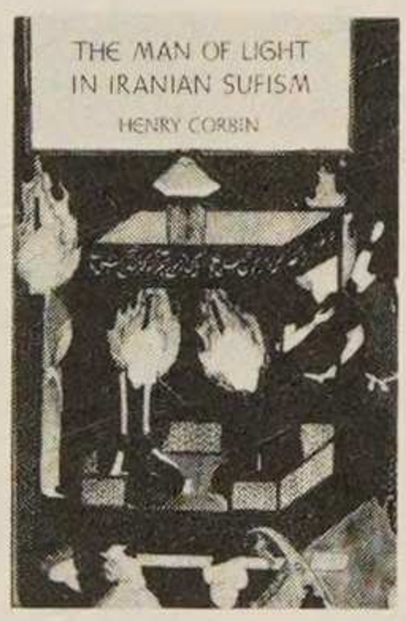

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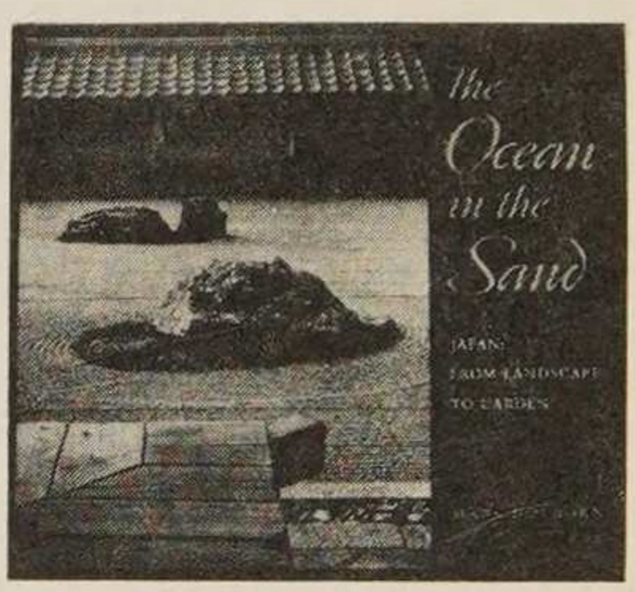

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ganism and was co-discoverer with Newton of the infinitesimal calculus, is an example of a Western thinker influenced by Chinese concepts.

In this book we are given generalizations along with a summation of the fundamental ideas of Chinese thought. Later will come the proofs. Let us hope that our author will continue his plan to abridge Needham's subsequent volumes. One does not need to agree with everything "according to J.N." in order to be stimulated by his expositions. I prefer the explanation of number 15 on Table 8, *ch'u*, meaning to be deprived of, as castrated man, and that of number 53, *nan*, meaning man, as field and arm, *i.e.*, the labor of a man. On page 72, I would include Indian medicine among the achievements of India welcomed by the Chinese. And so on. But this is niggling. What we are given is a rich and exciting contribution to the literature, and one that goes a long way toward setting things right in the general history of science and material development.

It remains to add that the book is published on fine paper, includes some excellent illustrations and useful tables, and has a bibliography of titles (all in the English language, although the original has titles in Chinese, Japanese, and many European languages), and a good index.

L. Carrington Goodrich, Dean Lung Professor Emeritus of Chinese, Columbia University, is the author of A Short History of the Chinese People, 15th Century Illustrated Chinese Primer, *co-author of* Printing in China and Its Spread Westward, *and most recently editor of the* Ming Biographical Dictionary *(1976).*

R.C. Gorman/The Lithographs
By Doris Monthan. Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland Press, 1978. Pp. 170. $35.00.
A Cree Life, The Art of Allen Sapp
Introduction by John Anson Warner and Theda Bradshaw. Vancouver, B.C.: J. J. Douglas, 1978. Pp. 126. $24.95.

Reviewed by Susan Peterson

This beautiful book, *R.C. Gorman/The Lithographs*, the story of the well-known Navajo artist, contains stunning color reproductions printed on unusually fine surface in a handsome layout, a creditable job by the author and this Western press. R.C. Gorman has produced over one hundred lithographic editions since 1967, a total of between five and six thousand prints. This is their first documentation, and Jules Heller's knowledgeable forward brings us a vivid description of the exciting process of making a lithograph.

I agree with the opening line of the biography: "If an artist could choose his birthplace he could find no more dramatic or compelling spot than the historic Canyon de Chelly." The mysteries of that canyon, the Anasazi apartments, the greens, blues, reds, the symbols, the whispers, seem to embody the whole of Navajo tradition, virile, strong and timeless. R.C. Gorman comes from this, has gone from it, and occasionally returns to it.

Young Gorman was raised in Navajo tradition, herding sheep, participating in clan life, and learning the life of his ancestors. His grandmother told him Navajo legends, pointing out the stars according to Navajo myths, and helped him with the understanding of growing things. "My grandmother introduced me to beauty," he says.

As Doris Monthan tells the story, Gorman's early background was multifaceted. His mother directed him toward the Anglo world. He attended public schools

and was early influenced by an Anglo art teacher, Jenny Louis Lind. His father, Carl Nelson Gorman, one of the first Indian artists to depart from traditional style, had attended Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles and was a Navajo studies leader in the academic arena as well as a painter.

Young Gorman drew constantly, but he also had interests in writing. Four years in the Navy and time at Northern Arizona University led him away from reservation life. The Navajo council awarded him a grant to study art in Mexico, and thus opened a major influence in his work. Gorman said: "Rivera went to Europe to discover himself. I went to Mexico and discovered Rivera and myself." It was the end of his Indian way.

As his place in the artistic establishment became more important he worried about the impact he might have on his own people: "I may be a prophet without honor in my own country." Only an American Indian with deep roots in his strange and different culture could experience the trauma of this dichotomy. It is one of the basic things we sense when looking at his work.

He returned to Mexico in 1966 to work with José Sanchez in lithography, a new medium for him. In 1971 at Tamarind Institute, University of New Mexico, he continued to explore the stone graphic and formed a publishing partnership with his patron, Dr. Byron C. Butler. In this productive period of the '70s Gorman's minimal style in the lithographs paralleled that of his painting, but the lithographic technique allowed him to be even more spare.

One of his first suites, a series of lithographic studies, was of Navajo rug motifs, strong and rakish with nuances of the real things fast disappearing in Indian culture. He has explored pottery motifs too, and has both interpreted and preserved their character. But it is the women who are most striking. Gorman's women are a symbol of all women, related in spirit to the women in historic Japanese prints. Gorman's lithographic output over the last several years is varied in techniques, prodigious, ever-changing; and the sensitive reproductions are the backbone of the quality of this book. With the receipt of an honorary doctorate in 1978, Doris Monthan says Gorman's life completed a full circle. Then she muses that according to Navajo way a circle is never completed. A path is left open for continuing a constant renewal of life. The evolution of these lithographs is an indication; these remain but more will come and this book will cause many more of us to be aware.

A Cree Life, The Art of Allen Sapp is a book of paintings in classic literal style depicting the simplicity, harshness, and beauty of the landscape and life of the Canadian Cree Indian.

A sixteen-page biographical introduction by authors Warner and Bradshaw precedes the portfolio of the work of the Saskatchewan Cree, Allen Sapp. Thirty-two color and fifty-nine black and white full page reproductions of the paintings are accompanied in nearly every case by an explanatory comment by the artist.

This is genre painting, not in traditional Indian style but with universal elements, telling the story of all people who live on and from the land, in cold lonely places. The color plates are hauntingly lovely with the light of the north. The poignant remembrances of Sapp richly illumine his life and tell, in his own dialect, of the particular ways of the Plains Crees. *A Cree Life* is an

unusual and valuable addition to descriptive American Indian literature.

Susan Peterson is a Professor of Art at Hunter College, a potter, and author of Shoji Hamada: A Potter's Way and Work, *and* The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez, *both published by Kodansha International.*

Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews
By Chaim Potok. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. Pp. xv + 431. $17.95.

Reviewed by Paul M. van Buren

As the subtitle says, this is the author's own history of his people. Others will tell this story differently. The novelist Potok tells it as one of cultural confrontations, out of which two Jewish civilizations have come so far, with a third lying ahead of us (every form of Jewishness is at least a little messianic).

The first Jewish civilization grew out of the confrontation between a family of tribes united by a Near Eastern "suzerainty treaty" with their invisible YHWH, and ancient paganism. It produced the Hebrew Bible. Exile marked its end, and confrontation with classical paganism gave birth to the second Jewish civilization, the Judaism of Torah and rabbi. It produced the Talmud. This was the civilization which confronted Islam and then Christendom, a confrontation producing great poetry and philosophy but marked by great suffering.

The breakdown of this civilization, we are told, began with a succession of messianisms which undermined that of the rabbis. The rise and fall of Shabbatai Zevi undermined confidence in the leadership, Chassidism set up the *rebbe* as an alternative to the rabbi, and secular Zionism offered (and made good on its offer!) return without the messiah of the tradition. These movements bring us into Potok's last period, "inside modern paganism," and it is from within the secularism of modernity that Potok surveys the history of his people.

A subject so vast and complex is hard to handle in only 230 pages of text. While Potok eschews originality, in fact he presents his own particular way of seeing the four millennia of the Hebrews. I judge his attempt to be neither a failure nor a major achievement. He knows the story and he knows many of its characters. I missed one of my favorites, in all his ambiguity: Franz Rosenzweig; and the One whom most Jews in most ages would have regarded as a central figure is conspicuous by His absence. It could be that "inside modern paganism"—i.e., modern naturalism, accepted uncritically—is not the ideal place from which to tell this particular story. Given the liberal sprinklings of "scholars tell us this" and "scholars are agreed about that," the use of the historical present is not helpful, especially in handling the shadowy realm of the Late Bronze Age. It works better in more recent times, which Potok seems to be able to feel more easily as his past.

The author's sketch of the history of the Jews makes up about 53 percent of this volume. The rest is primarily lavish and handsome illustration. The net result is an uncomfortable cross between a "coffee-table book" and an historical essay. The illustrations are beautiful but sometimes only tenuously related to the text. Reproduction and presentation are excellent, but unfortunately what is represented is sometimes not mentioned in the text, whereas at least one detailed discussion (of the stylistic

revolution under Amenhotep IV) begs in vain for illustration. A photograph of the interior of the El Aqsa Mosque is misidentified as one of the Dome of the Rock. I was one-third through the book when without warning a large chunk of the pages came unglued from the "binding."

It is the glory and the burden of the Jew to feel responsibly a part of all his or her past. Any attempt to meet that responsibility is easier to criticize than to match. I am sorry that my copy is now in pieces; an attempt at such an enterprise deserves a better binding, especially an attempt made by one who knows how to tell a tale. If you don't know this story, this is a good way to hear it. If you do know it, you will be both interested and bothered by the novelist's way of putting it together.

Paul M. van Buren is a Professor in Temple University's Department of Religion and the author of Secular Meaning of the Gospel *and* Theological Explorations, *both published by Macmillan Publishing Company.*

Conference of the Birds
By John Heilpern. Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978. Pp. 297. $10.95.

Reviewed by Toinette Lippe

This is an account of an extraordinary journey undertaken by a group of actors under the guidance of Peter Brook—the inventive director of *Marat/Sade, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Lord of the Flies,* and the forthcoming *Meetings with Remarkable Men.* On the surface it was a 100-day journey starting in

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the Sahara and proceeding through the small towns and villages of Algeria, Mali, Niger, Dahomey, and Nigeria, but on another level it was a search for the essence of theater. Brook is a man driven by a passion to understand. As Peter Hall of the National Theatre of England observes, "His actual presence makes one think, Where am I going, and what am I doing in life? His talents are like an X-ray machine. If there's anything rotten, he'll find it. He's the greatest lie-detector there is in theater. But now he's committed not to a diagnosis of what's wrong, but to a cure. He's trying to discover a form of theater that's totally new." He asks questions like "Why act? What is a play? Why go to the theater?" At the peak of his career he formed the International Centre of Theatre Research in Paris, and with a million dollars from the Ford Foundation and others for a three-year program, set to work to answer these questions. He feels that make-believe is a necessity and he seeks a form of universal theater, a truly popular art, regardless of language or class.

Neither Brook nor the international group of eleven actors knew what was going to happen on the African journey nor what would be performed, but they were aware that everything they did would be an exercise in heightening perception, for their life in the camp became an extension of their work. Brook was hoping to develop the theme of *The Conference of the Birds*, the classic Persian allegory of a long search which demonstrates that what you are looking for is right where you are but that you have to make the journey to realize this. In addition to their acting, they practiced various techniques for long hours—body movements like *t'ai chi chuan*, acrobatics, and the Feldenkrais exercises, musical work with the young American composer Elizabeth Swados, and work on language based on the theories of the poet Ted Hughes. Both Brook and Hughes believe that language as we know it has lost its vitality and meaning. In their experimentation with music and sound, the actors sought to go beyond form and express pure emotion. All these disciplines and many more were pursued in an attempt to liberate the actors from methods and convention, transform their state, and eventually enable them to perform spontaneously. Brook was asking his actors to become composers, singers, poets, dancers, writers—whatever the audience called forth from them at that particular moment in time.

Why Africa? Most of the villagers who formed the audience for their unscheduled performances had never seen a play, any play, and the test was whether the actors could communicate with them without the help of costume or scenery, dialogue or script. The only prop was a carpet laid out for each occasion; the actors made their entrances upon this "stage" and improvised everything in response to the audience.

The experiment met with varying measures of success. Only rarely did the group achieve a completely natural performance in which they became true vehicles and were at one with their roles, but perhaps what they were trying to do is more important than whether and how often they succeeded. This was after all just a beginning.

This is a book that contains marvelous insights into man's potential both on and off the stage. What it has to say should be read by as many people as possible. It is only sad

that the treatment of the material leaves a great deal to be desired. Heilpern often makes silly, extravagant statements, and occasionally his flippant remarks spoil the whole tone of the book. One is left thinking that if *he* managed to record so much amazing material, then how much better the book might have been if it had been written by someone else.

Toinette Lippe is an editor and Reprint Rights Director at Alfred A. Knopf.

Art of the Huichol Indians
Introduced and edited by Kathleen Berrin. New York: The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco/Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1978. Pp. 220. Paper $9.95.

Reviewed by Joan Halifax

Some 10,000 people, known to themselves as Wixárika and to us as Huichol, live on tiny ranchos in the remotest areas of the Sierra Madre Occidental of Mexico and on the outskirts of sprawling Mexican towns. The archaic traditions of these people have remained intact in spite of both Aztec and Spanish pressures. Their religious practices emerge from a complex mythological system, at the center of which is the Sun, "Our Father," and Fire, "Our Grandfather," the first shaman. *Hikuri,* the hallucinogenic peyote cactus, is the sacrament that gives depth and vision to Huichol myth and ritual.

The culture of the Huichols has been intensely and variously studied since the late 1800s. In spite of the scholarly enthusiasm for the Huichols, there seems to be little agreement as to their beliefs and perspective. It is for this reason that the finely done volume, *Art of the Huichol Indians,* is of particular interest to us. Here are gathered a group of superlative scholars, representing many different disciplines and approaches. The volume does not present a unified view of this protohistorical culture—it is a potent diversity of perspectives, not unlike Huichol culture itself. In Kathleen Berrin's astute introduction, she notes that Huichol culture has been only partially studied by outsiders; for the most part, the culture "still remains a mystery, enigmatic and refractory to analysis."

The book covers four major areas of Huichol life: "Huichol Sacred Art"; "The Religious Experience"; "Acculturation and

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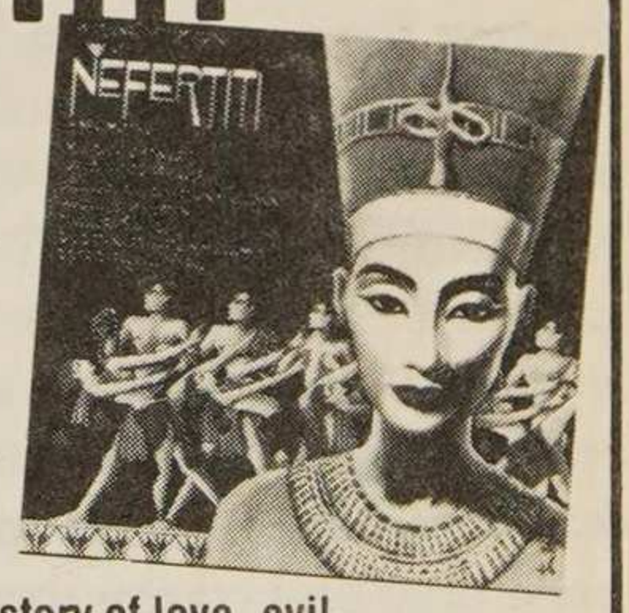

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Economics"; and "Shamanism." Each section has contributions by two or more leading scholars in the field. Peter Furst's and Susan Eger's chapters on Huichol aesthetics provide an illuminating background to the powerful visionary images of Huichol sacred art. Furst stresses diversity of Huichol culture, noting that the mystical and mundane coexist comfortably within the boundary of a single cultural complex. Although the archaic structures of sacred practice and belief have been essentially resistant to Christian influence, there has been a superficial syncretism between the Christian and the Huichol world view. Western influence has given rise as well to the development of the yarn painting, an art which demonstrates the fortuitous collision of two worlds necessitated by the changing economy of the Huichols.

Both Peter Furst and Barbara Myerhoff were privileged to work with the gifted shaman Ramón Medina Silva. If the book had a dedication, it would certainly have been to Ramón, whose vision and insights permeate the volume. In fact, it could be said that *Art of the Huichol Indians* is not only a tribute to this great shaman but also the realization of one of Ramón's dreams—that the traditions of his people be in some way preserved and transmitted so that both Huichols and non-Huichols could truly understand "how one goes being Huichol." It is also a tribute to the vision and personal integrity of a single individual whose energy, devotion, and abundant wit come to life as we experience him through the accounts and photographs of Furst and Myerhoff.

The work of the Huichol shaman is demanding, requiring a great amount of knowledge, aesthetic ability, physical resources, and social skills. The myths are complex and elaborate, and the chants emerging from these sacred stories are a frequently recurring element in Huichol life.

Susan Eger, research director for the Foundation for the Indians of the Sierra, has lived with and worked among the Huichols since 1975. She focuses on the "creative forces, the motivation, which go into the production of Huichol art." Her analysis indicating seven levels of influence in Huichol thought and character gives a new view into the dynamics of this culture, and insights regarding the shaman's path complement the work done by Furst, Myerhoff and Prem Das. In fact, one of the many virtues of *Art of the Huichols* is that diverse views of the shamanic complex are intelligently and sensitively represented.

Susan Eger's further contribution is to our understanding of the women's role in this spiritually enlivened culture, as conveyors of the traditions through their mastery of its art forms. The art work is seen as a way to encode and transmit the sacred symbol systems of the Huichol cosmos.

Anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff's scholarship and personal courage combine to give the reader a moving account of the opening of the spiritual domain of human experience and the emergence of a transcendent notion of the cosmos. Following this chapter, psychiatrist Arnold Mandell gives a provocative neurochemical analysis of the Huichol cultural context. His revolutionary approach is one that could well be a basis for the re-visioning of the study of traditional and nontraditional societies.

Other contributors are Kal Muller and Phil Weigand, both wrestling with the

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problems of acculturation that beseige not only the Huichols of the Sierras but most protohistorical peoples on the planet. They disagree on the impact of Western technology on the Huichols, and their differences raise a number of questions in the mind of the reader.

A general exegesis of shamanism by Lowell Bean and Sylvia Brakke Vane is complemented by Prem Das's narrative of his personal odyssey with the Huichols. This final essay brings the Huichol experience to life for the reader. We find ourselves drawn into the shaman's world, a world of synchronicity, myth, and humor.

The photographic reproductions of high quality, the attractive design and the insightful essays combine to make this an unusual and valuable book.

Joan Halifax is a medical anthropologist, specializing in psychiatry and religion. She is presently working with Joseph Campbell on an historical atlas of world mythology, is a consulting editor at McGraw-Hill and teaches at the New School for Social Research. She is author of Shamanic Voices *and co-author with Stanislav Grof of* The Human Encounter with Death.

The Inner Eye of Love: Mysticism and Religion
By William Johnston. New York: Harper & Row, 1978. Pp. 208. $7.95.
Silent Fire: An Invitation To Western Mysticism
Edited by Walter Holden Capps and Wendy Wright. New York: Harper & Row, 1978. Pp. 262. Paper $5.95.

Reviewed by Lawrence S. Cunningham

William Johnston is an Irish Jesuit priest who has lived in Japan for the past twenty-five years. He is thoroughly conversant with Japanese language and culture, has sat *zazen* under Zen masters there, and is an active participant in Christian-Buddhist prayer and study groups. This intense encounter with Eastern forms of spirituality has been an obvious influence on his earlier works of spirituality: *The Still Point*, *Christian Zen* and *Silent Music*. Father Johnston has also published a wonderful modern English edition of the medieval treatises *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling* as well as a study of those treatises: *The Mysticism of the "Cloud of Unknowing."* William Johnston, in short, brings impeccable cultural, spiritual, and intellectual gifts to bear on the subject of mysticism.

The Inner Eye of Love begins with the conviction that the future of Western theology will be shaped largely by its contact with the great historical religions of the East. The contact point with those religions will be mysticism. Johnston acknowledges that a common vocabulary of mysticism does not yet exist and this book is designed to begin such an enterprise. In the interim period one must be faithful to one's own tradition, deepen an understanding of it, and from that stance reach out for understanding and dialogue with other traditions. Johnston writes, then, from the viewpoint of a Catholic Christian with deep roots in Jesuit spirituality and Neo-Thomist theology.

In many ways this book is a first word, a primer. The author opens with a very brief, but satisfactory, historical sketch of mysticism in Christianity. The second part of the book discusses the relationship between mysticism and theology—a relationship that has not always been cordial—by utilizing very adroitly the theoretical categories of Bernard Lonergan. The third section deals with the mystical journey itself. It is in this third section where Johnston's immense sympathy for inter-religious dialogue manifests itself most clearly. Johnston attempts to get at the "infrastructure" of authentic religion by penetrating beyond formal theological or mystical vocabulary to basic meaning. He provides, to cite one example, a fascinating explanation of the Japanese concept of *mu* (roughly: "nothing" as in *mu-ga*—no-self) and its Christian equivalent which Johnston insists is to be found in a deepened theology of the Cross and the Pauline notion of *kenosis* or "emptying." There are also some intelligent observations in this section about Buddhist enlightenment and Christian conversion; Buddhist compassion and Christian love; Western misunderstandings about Eastern ideas like *maya*; and so on. The final part of the book—written as a response to those who *a priori* would condemn mysticism as world-denying—has a convincing presentation about mysticism and action. The emphasis in this section is on the Jesuit category of Discernment and the place of intercession in mystical prayer.

In sum: a valuable and well argued book by a writer who is totally prepared for the

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task at hand. Johnston's work is a healthy antidote to those works which treat mysticism as a product that must be imported from the East like so many Toyotas. His thesis, persuasively presented, is that we will all do much more for global understanding by being more sure of where we come from as a prelude to meeting those of the East who bring authentic treasures for our spiritual and personal growth.

The anthology of Walter Capps and Wendy Wright is a perfectly adequate, if somewhat pedestrian, collection of Western mystical texts. Western must be understood in the very restrictive sense of Christian or, more precisely, Protestant and Catholic, since, for reasons that elude me, the Orthodox Christian tradition is totally unrepresented; nor are selections from the Jewish mystical tradition provided. The general introduction to the anthology is too brief but generally accurate. Some would argue (as William Johnston does in his book) that it is the Pseudo-Dionysius and not Saint Augustine who should be seen as the Father of Western spirituality. The neglect of Christian Orthodox writers is unnecessarily chauvinistic. The selections are generous, if predictable, and the notes for the selections are reliable. This anthology would be a useful alternative to F.C. Happold's widely used anthology and, as such, is recommended for undergraduate teachers who are looking for a useful textbook.

Lawrence S. Cunningham is Associate Professor of Religion at Florida State University, Tallahassee. His books include Brother Francis (1972) *and* Saint Francis of Assisi (1976). *He has published widely on topics dealing with culture and religion and is currently working on a book about saints in the Western Christian tradition.*

EveryOne: The Timeless Myth of "Everyman" Reborn
By Frederick Franck. Handwritten and with drawings by the author. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978. Pp. 187. $12.50.

Reviewed by B.J. Chute

"The play gripped me like a riddle. I could not let go of it."

That is how Frederick Franck remembers the first time he saw the fifteenth-century morality play of *Everyman* when he was a child in Holland.

It still grips him, and it is still a riddle, but out of his deep enthrallment and his seeking mind, Franck has now created in his latest book something that is entirely new and, also, very old.

There are four parts to this book. The first is the author's own and very personal re-telling of the timeless classic in a play which he, rightly, calls *EveryOne*. He tells the story in terms of the modern world, with its lusts and pettiness, its greed and savagery. Complacent and successful in this world, EveryOne suddenly learns that he is about to die, and he struggles frantically against the unthinkable finality with every feeble weapon in his mortal arsenal. When at last he realizes that he cannot bargain for material safety, time or life, he realizes also what a wasteland he has made of his own world, and it is then that he calls on Death to take him. "No light, no light...Is there *no* light? Is there no *Light*? Light! *Light*! *Give me Light*!!" At this altitude of despair, Insight enters upon the stage, and, through her, EveryOne learns what Life really is and that it will not perish with him. "I, a stone, I see the stones alive..." Then, crying out "You are not real, Death. All is alive. All is Life," he dies.

But, in Franck's re-telling of the story, God thunders an order to Death to "Stop mowing! Stop reaping!" and tells EveryOne

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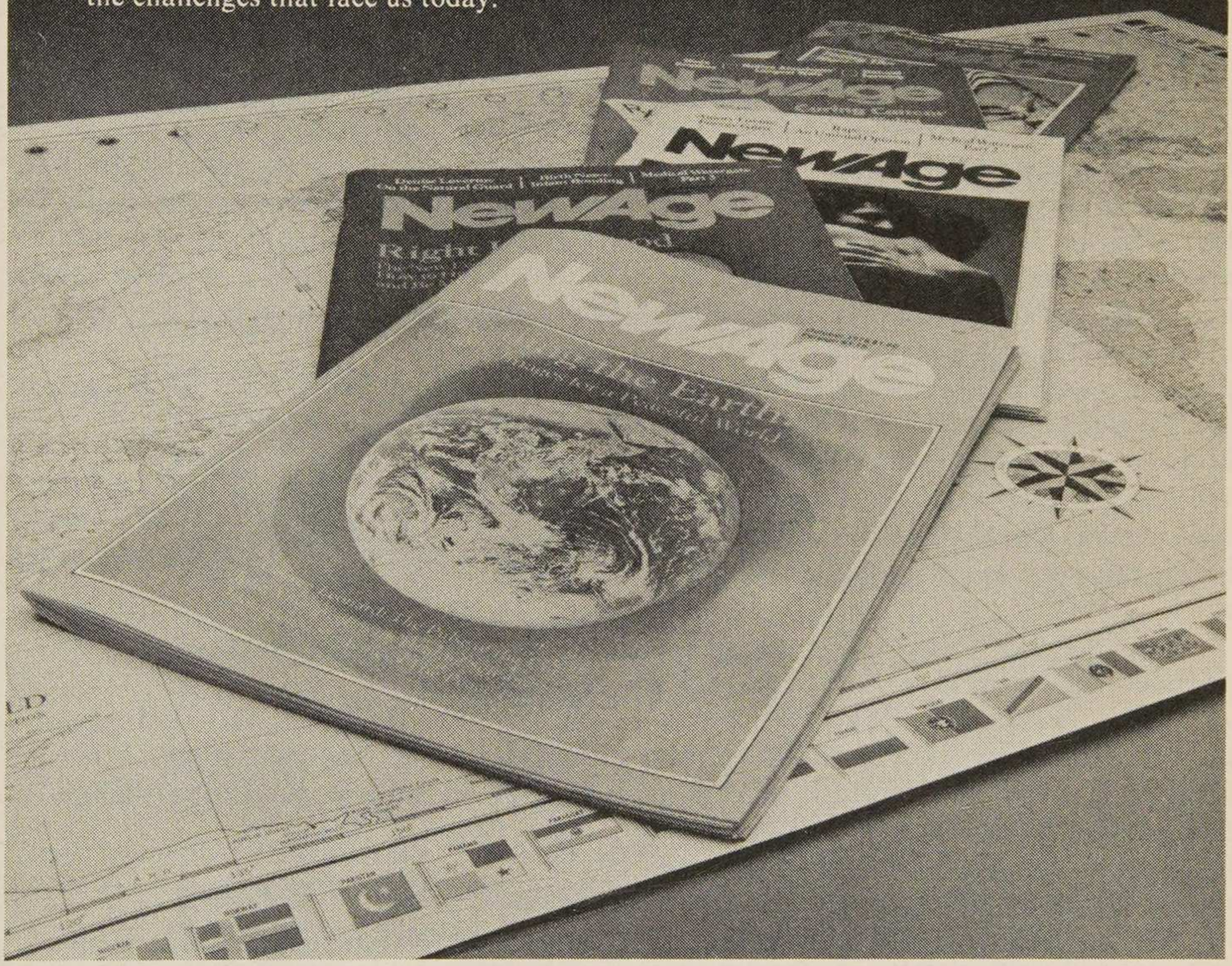

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to wake up, to be reborn, to arise. EveryOne then, and quite literally, comes to Life, for he is "ripe now, to live the *human* life, to love and live and glorify." EveryOne is newborn—that is, re-born—and at last he can truly wake and share and eat the Bread of Life. With this, the play ends.

In the second part of the book, Franck recounts his own lifelong pursuit of *Everyman*, for the meaning of what he calls "The Myth that was my Guru." He traces the concept of the play from a Buddhist parable that predates the birth of Christ, through its medieval archetype, and up to the singularly moving and altogether remarkable story of his own "twin project" of a play and a place, in which a massive-walled watermill in a New York town called Warwick has been transformed into a theater where *EveryOne* is performed and where people who want to hear the silence in their own hearts can come and share in EveryOne's story.

The third part of the book is simply the complete reprinting of *The Play of Everyman: A Treatise...in Manner of a Moral Play*, as first published in London early in the sixteenth century. This provides the reader with a text which is both scholarly and illuminating, and so completes the triptych of a landscape composed of words.

But there is still a fourth part of *EveryOne*, and its landscape is not in words but in pictures, since Franck is not only a writer and a philosopher but an artist as well. With him, the hand seems to trace immediately what the eye sees, and his book of EveryOne and for everyone is filled with his drawings. They are swift and accurate sketches of people and places and things—a hunched man in a crowd, a square in Rome, a cross in a field, grasses bent in high winds, a dove of singular peace. Beautiful or vulgar, the faces and bodies move; the trees grow out of real earth. These sketches, with their energy and tenderness and their astonishing simplicity, may seem almost random in their relation to the text, but this is never really so. They are all there for the same purpose: to mirror not only EveryOne, but also EveryThing, and EveryPlace.

It makes a lovely book, this recounting and recording of a spiritual search, and it is such a celebration of Life that one hopes it will find many fellow celebrants, especially among the young seekers of our present time, who are now looking inward with such passion and, often and contradictorily, with such shyness. They want what this author calls "the True Man without Label, the indestructible"—that is to say, the EveryOne.

With very true insight, Franck reminds us: "Beware of the once-born!"

B.J. Chute is a novelist and short-story writer, author of Greenwillow *and* Story of a Small Life*; and is Adjunct Professor at Barnard College.*

The Firebird and Other Russian Fairy Tales
Illustrated by Boris Zvorykin. Edited and with an Introduction by Jacqueline Onassis. New York: A Studio Book/The Viking Press, 1978. Pp. 78. $12.95.

Reviewed by Michael Patrick Hearn

Fairy Tales are not just for children anymore. The current hunger for Hobbits, Gnomes and Fairies has created an eager market for sumptuous, extravagantly illustrated picture books designed for an adult public. Among the more stunning of these gift editions is *The Firebird and Other Russian*

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Fairy Tales, edited by Jacqueline Onassis, who discovered the manuscript and contributed the introduction. However, Mrs. Onassis did not select the stories; the four *skazki* were chosen and adapted into French by the illustrator as a gift to a Parisian publisher, and the English translation is not credited to anyone. (It is not even clarified whether the present text is taken from these French versions or from the original Russian tales of Alexander Afanas'ev.)

The four tales are among the most popular of the *skazki*; but, despite the statement in the introduction that "they could not have originated in any other country" but Russia, they are variants of common folk themes. In Germany, the firebird is a golden bird; in Japan, the snow maiden becomes a lady of bamboo. The veneer of locale and costume merely implies a Slavic origin for these traditional narratives. As in all variations of folk art, the embroidery may vary from hand to hand, but the patterns remain the same. At times, the specific details in these versions betray an inauthenticity. For example, in "The Snow Maiden," the lengthy description of Tsar Berendei's palace which reads like a museum catalogue is not true to the generalities of folk literature. All in all, these translations are adequate and must be praised for their reluctance to conform to the modern custom of suppressing possibly offensive passages. Thus in this edition Baba Yaga of "Vassilissa the Fair" remains a cannibal and Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden, melts with the coming of spring.

The illustrator Boris Zvorykin was only a secondary figure in twentieth-century Russian art. He was not a member of the *Mir Iskusstva* ("The World of Art") circle as the introduction suggests, and the distracting discussion of the fashionable Diaghilev period is not pertinent to a treatment of this artist's life and work. Zvorykin was certainly influenced by one of this group's artists, Ivan Yakolovich Bilibin. *The Firebird and Other Russian Fairy Tales,* drawn and illumined in Paris in the 1920s, is actually a reworking of the *Skazki* series of picture books published in St. Petersburg at the turn of the century. Not only are most of the stories and the style and coloring of the art derived from Bilibin's classic interpretations, but also, as in "Vassilissa the Fair," Zvorykin has borrowed the majority of his compositions directly from the earlier edition. Surely Bilibin was the master and Zvorykin merely the gifted disciple.

It is a shame that it was not the Bilibin edition of the classic *skazki* rather than the Zvorykin that has now been so beautifully reproduced in an American edition. The Viking Press has painstakingly retained the integrity of the original manuscript: the brilliant color printing of Zvorykin's paintings on vellum is offset by the generous white margins which surround the clean, clear type. Despite its flaws, *The Firebird and Other Russian Fairy Tales* proves that American printers can still produce a most seductive full-color picture book.

Michael Patrick Hearn is the author of The Annotated Wizard of Oz *and* The Annotated Christmas Carol. *He is currently completing a critical history of the art of illustration for children,* The Pictured World.

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Rites and Passages
By Minor White. Biographical essay by James Baker Hall. Millerton, N.Y.: Aperture, 1978. Pp. 143. $25.00.

Reviewed by Cary Wasserman

Although this is only the first posthumous book devoted to the art and teaching of this important American photographer, it is significant in being one of the last for which the selection of photographs and format had his personal approval. Two other, more specialized books remain to be published—*The Creative Audience* and *The Expressive Photographer*—but, without a reprinting of the 1969 retrospective, *Mirrors, Messages and Manifestations,* it is *Rites and Passages* that will serve as a representative introduction to Minor White's multifaceted career, and it is adequate to the purpose.

As an artist-teacher Minor White was a complex and charismatic man who made a difference to all he came in contact with. After 1956 he developed an intense interest in oriental ways of life, and later in the work of Gurdjieff, which deeply influenced his relation to photography. The biographical essay includes verbatim testimonials, sometimes of remarkable insensitivity, by some of his most prominent disciples who turned away from what they perceived as excessive mystification of the photographic medium. In the long run this matter will be resolved more in terms of their limitations than Minor's own accomplishments.

To put the matter simply, *Rites and Passages,* in itself, is a beautiful book that demonstrates the force of Minor's aesthetic achievement. One example can suffice. The final series of images in the book is drawn from a sequence once called "Rural Chapels," made in response to the photographic blandness of the northeastern landscape. It might easily be called "God's Country." The imposing shadow of a telephone pole in one image graphically dominates the two barns and almost birdlike cloud formation, but it is the characteristically overwhelming sense of light that finally assumes principal importance in the photograph. The

viewer becomes aware that the shadow's transience is used as counterpoint rather than primary subject. The strongly graphic elements of Minor White's best pictures seduce a viewer into contemplating additional layers of meaning, and presents the possibility that what we see can become a vehicle (Steiglitz termed it "equivalent") for grasping what lies beneath the facades of reality.

In the final years of his work this attitude predominated, and was corroborated in his teaching by an emphasis on the technological aspects of photography as the means for revealing the sacred in life. His frequent notation, "The camera was used faithfully," serves, however, more as a statement of his personal interests and integrity than as a limiting prescription for photographic activity. Working within his self-imposed limits, Minor created a nourishing body of work that, at its best, reconciles the conflicting tensions of his life.

The newly published journal entries are beautiful in expression and amplify what is evident in the photographs—the degree to which he can be said to have lived in his work. Or as the biographical essay suggests in a moment of clarity, Minor's work offers a model for how to "take one's life seriously."

For their quality of expression, the biographical information and testimonials seem excessive in a representative selection of this sort, with undue attention focused on Minor's homoerotic orientation that was more eloquently established in the earlier version of one included series of images, "Sequence 17." The deletion of several key images of Bill LaRue from this sequence and texts that accompanied the original portfolio aesthetically undermine his acceptance of his sexuality. (In fairness to the publisher I must note that Minor himself exhibited a similarly truncated version of the sequence around 1972. But the change might have been indicated.) "Sound of One Hand Clapping" is reproduced in its ten-image entirety; however, other images seem diminished in scope by the omission of sequence titles they illuminated or prefigured, and that suggested the states of mind he wished his work to reveal. And no images are included from the barren landscape series "Sequence 1967," made shortly before his first serious illness, that suggests "the valley of the shadow of death."

Minor was not the first to sequence images for increased clarity of communication, nor the first to create images for the revelation of personal and universal values. He might be said however to have been the first to direct a broader audience's attention to these most fulfilling potentials of the photographic medium, for which the charisma of his person and the strength of his work were his principal tools.

If there were not the evidence of his earlier retrospective, now out of print, this book could be recommended without qualification as a guide to Minor White's achievements. One would prefer a reprinting of the earlier book with an added statement; or a book that included later work

that he had exhibited or collected, such as the "Jupiter Portfolio"; or one which included other unpublished work, such as a sampling of his photographs in color. But for those previously unacquainted with Minor White's exceptional body of work this book, with its superb (sometimes larger) reproductions and newly published personal material, can serve as a fine introduction.

Cary Wasserman, photographic artist, free-lance photographer and critic, teaches photography at the University of Lowell. He recently exhibited three bookworks: Death and The Maiden, Memory Shop *and* Ciudad de Los Angeles.

John Dee On Astronomy:
Propaudeutema Aphoristica (1558 & 1568) Latin and English. By Wayne Shumaker, with an introduction by J. L. Heilbron. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. Pp. 273. $17.50.

Reviewed by John Anthony West

Suppose that the ferment of "The Alternative Society," "The Counter-culture" and "The Quest for Meaning" should fizzle out, and the values and philosophy of scientific rationalism remain dominant, gradually changing, but clearly retaining their identity.

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Four centuries from today, Establishment popularizers would overlook the struggle altogether. More meticulous scholars might feel compelled to note that there had once been a challenge to the prevailing *zeitgeist*. But bedazzled by twenty-fourth century progress, and observing the undeniable failure of the movement, they would dismiss it as a sociological aberration, a perverse backsliding into superstition and unreason. It would then be up to a few perceptive scholars (themselves no doubt hostile to the unimaginable horror bred by four more centuries of scientific rationalism) to burrow through the detritus left behind by our age in order to describe accurately the situation as we see it: at its best, a movement that makes up in intensity for what it lacks in numbers; that takes place in a milieu of social chaos, degraded or spurious values, and spiritual bankruptcy, and that therefore possesses the potential power to incite a transformation of the huge whole of which it is, numerically, an insignificant part.

When we look into the failed mystical revival of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we are in a roughly analogous position to these hypothetical twenty-fourth century scholars.

As it stands, the majority of historians, entrenched in universities that are, first and foremost, bastions of the establishment and the scientific rationalism that supports it, overlook or minimize the Platonic, Pythagorean, magical, alchemical and astrological concerns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially when such interests are attached to the sacrosanct names of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo and Newton. At the same time, a heretical few, as formally qualified as their orthodox adversaries, insist upon a reevaluation of the role of these mystical pursuits. In recent years, this view has been argued most effectively by Frances Yates, whose persuasive works (*The Rosicrucian Enlightenment, Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition, Theatre of the World*) have actually broken through the confines of academic disputation to put the case before a more general public. One of the key figures in Miss Yates's reinterpretation is the Elizabethan alchemist and Hermeticist, John Dee. Shumaker and Heilbron's book sets out to diminish Dee and discredit Yates. But they have chosen an awkward vehicle to propel their argument.

Dee, it turns out, despite concerted effort, contributed little to astronomy as an exact science; his methodology was barren; and the translation and publication of his astronomical tract has therefore a certain academic curiosity value, but no other. It is enough to know that like the more successful Kepler and Newton who followed, Dee's scientific forays were directed towards religious ends. He believed that the physical universe was but the manifestation of Divine Law, and that study of the physical universe would reveal those hidden laws and their interactions. But his practical work was directed toward finding a physically verifiable basis for astrological influences of whose fundamental validity he had no doubt. Using the only science then available, he tried to weld optics, physics,

Copernican theory, Ptolemaic astrology, and Hermetic philosophy into a coherent rational system, and this was doomed to failure. Whether he recognized this failure is unclear, but at a certain point he abandoned experimental science and devoted the latter half of his life to pursuits that were wholly or quasi-spiritual: alchemy, astrology, magic, paranormal phenomena, hermetic philosophy.

It was Dee's work in these fields that was responsible for his influence among his contemporaries, not his science, but it is his science that is under review here.

In a long introductory essay, Professor Heilbron reveals three objectives. The third is to present Dee's fruitless astronomical-astrological system in accessible modern language, which he does admirably. The second is to direct an extended snigger at Dee's character, beliefs, and accomplishments and literary style, which he does with more relish than wit.

> It came naturally to Rowland Dee's son, who later tried to trace his lineage to the ancient kings of Wales, to center his expectations upon princes. John Dee was a courtier by nature and nurture, as the eugenicists used to say. Eventually he married into a group of high-placed hangers-on. His third wife was the daughter of a lady-in-waiting. He had begun with the widow of a London grocer...

The first objective is to attack Frances Yates and her school. But since Professor Heilbron's assault employs *ipse dixit* rather than evidence, no damage is done.

Meanwhile, he (and Professor Shumaker) reiterate a number of familiar Rationalist beliefs and values (my itals.):

> *Needless to say*, invoking spirits was useless and dangerous; conjurors might learn at great risk to their souls the hierarchies of demons and the unutterable names of God, but their exuberant animism blocked investigations of *the ordinary and the regular*, and they ended no wiser than they began.

And with the erosion *in reason* comes a willingness to accept reports of strange, isolated occurrences, of singular events, of prodigies; one loses the basis of judgement...one goes adrift without the *only* compass that can provide safe passage through the seas of uncertainty and confusion.

> Twelve, together with its factors three and four, had especially rich numerological significance. On the many expositions of this tiresome subject one of the more detailed is Peter Bongus's "Numerorum Mysteria."

The authors overlook the fact that the foremost physicists of our time are often forced by their own discoveries to take philosophical positions that are metaphysical and beyond the pale of "reason." They forget that every stroke of scientific genius, every masterpiece of art is an isolated occurrence, a prodigy and a singular event. They are unaware that the basic astrological premise (correspondence between celestial and terrestrial events) has been statistically established (*e.g.*, M. Gauquelin, *Cosmic Influences in Human Behavior*) and that vanguard scientists are again taking an active interest in a resuscitated Pythagorean Number symbolism (*e.g.*, Professor R. Espagnat in *L'Astronomie*, 1975).

Dee's attempt to account for the physical world in Hermetic terms is interesting

in its own right, but the notes and introduction to his text do nothing to illuminate a problem that, despite our vastly increased scientific knowledge, is as real today as it was then. Insofar as this little book has an astronomical significance, it resides in its price.

John Anthony West is a novelist, playwright and Pythagorean. His new work, Serpent in the Sky: The High Wisdom of Ancient Egypt, *a detailed examination of the work of R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz, will be published by Harper & Row in May, 1979.*

The Dance, Art and Ritual of Africa
By Michel Huet. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978. Pp. 241. $35.00.

Reviewed by Winifred Lambrecht

Whenever a new book on African art emerges, one expects a colorful display of masks and figurines usually devoid of much contextual information; this book is therefore a pleasant surprise. Regardless of the oft-repeated statement that masks should be appreciated in their social and ritual surroundings, and that the Western tradition has too often focused on the single object, few books have achieved a holistic approach. Huet's success is the more noticeable.

However, despite its title, this volume does not cover Africa as a whole; it limits itself largely to those areas—perhaps most documented by specialists—where artists and craftsmen have produced wood carvings. It does not talk about the music, textiles, bead-work, ritual architecture, art and dance of major parts of East and South Africa.

In his introduction, Jean Laude is concerned that the historical perspective be adhered to. In that mood, the pictures span a number of years, recording visually, perhaps for the last time, traditions that have vanished or may do so soon: "...although trying to remain true to her cultural identity, [Africa] is progressively giving up her practices, or at any rate transforming them." Nowhere is the juxtaposition of historical sequences better illustrated than by a dancing girl, otherwise in traditional costume, but displaying a wristwatch, what looks like a high-school ring, and a bra.

The book is divided into three sections, each covering a particular geographic and cultural area. Each photographic sequence is accompanied by an explanatory text of an ethnographic nature giving the tribal affiliation, the customs, and the ritual calendar of the objects displayed. Further study of these is facilitated by the bibliography and the discography that Jean-Louis Paudrat has provided.

As one thumbs through the book, it becomes evident that, notwithstanding the brilliance of the color photographs, those in black and white have more impact, exhibiting a genuine feeling of movement and flow. Perhaps the medium is here the key to the effect: a photographer will more often record a multiple photo sequence in black

and white than in color. Here are people adorning themselves, moving their bodies to the choreography of anonymous ancestors, to the traditional music of their homeland, singing, sacrificing, and displaying the magnificence of their art so that the human and the divine can merge for a while, to achieve the symbiosis of "earthly order and cosmic order."

What these performances bring to mind are the pre-Renaissance European miracle plays which combined religious drama with folk elements. They call up also the processions of saints and demons through middle Europe, or the masquerades that were part of our world in other times. Some have persisted in parts of the New World (for example, in Cuba and Brazil), amalgamating African and Christian elements and expressing new ways to search for identity.

Winifred Lambrecht, a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA, *is an anthropologist and photographer.*

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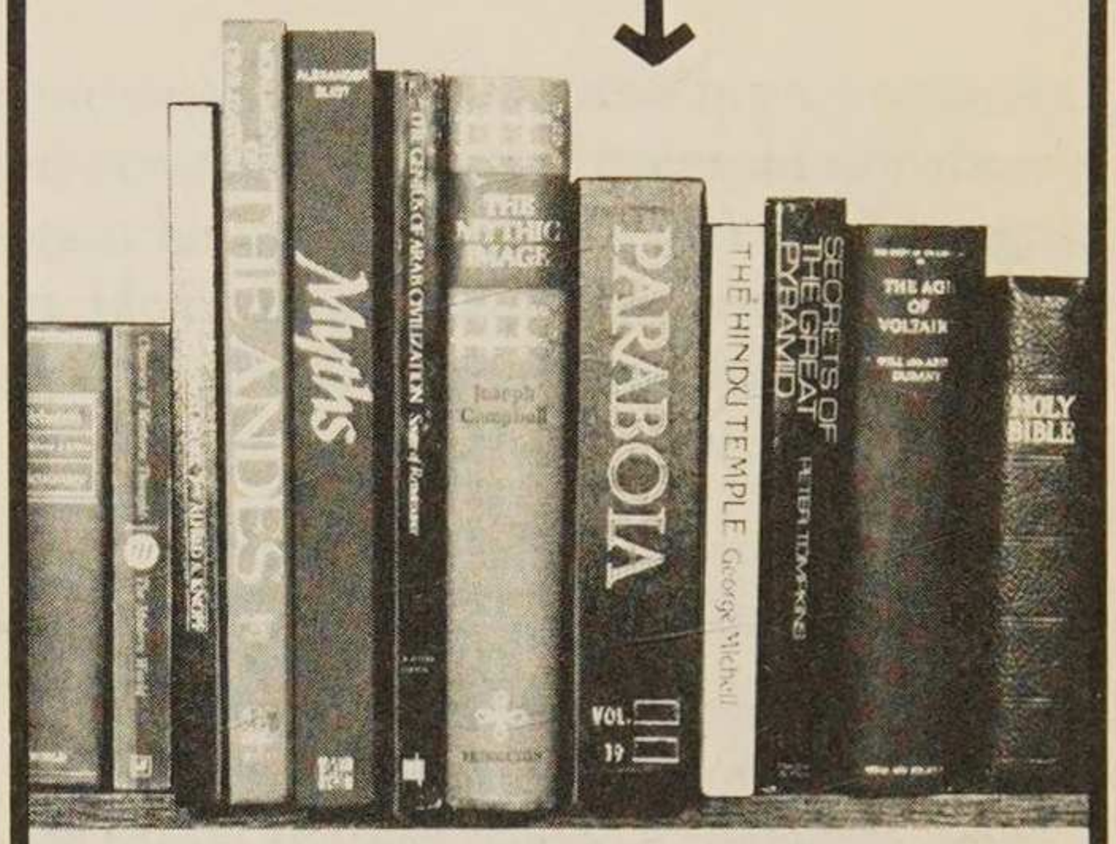

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PROFILES

Cecil Collins is an internationally known artist whose works are part of many museum and private collections. A number of the paintings and drawings from his cycle, "The Holy Fools," hang in the Tate Gallery, London. He is the author of *The Vision of the Fool*, first published in 1947, and the subject of a chapter in John Allitt's book, *The Magic Mirror*.

Julie Durrell, cover artist for this issue, is a free-lance illustrator. She studied at Pratt Institute and is currently working for Robert Kraus at Windmill Books in New York City.

David Leeming received his education at Princeton University and New York University. He is an associate professor of English at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, where he teaches in the general field of myth, religion, and literature. His books include *Mythology: the Voyage of the Hero*; *Flights: Readings in Magic, Mysticism, Fantasy, and Myth*; and the *Mythology* volume of the Newsweek Books "World of Culture" series. He lived and worked at Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey for some eight years. Dr. Leeming is a Contributing Editor to PARABOLA.

Lynda Sexson teaches Religious Studies at Montana State University. She is a doctoral candidate at Syracuse University completing a study of "The Feminine and the Fool, the Tarot in the Early Renaissance." She was director of "Eclipse '79" an interdisciplinary, multi-dimensional celebration of this year's solar eclipse. She lectures frequently on esoteric symbol systems.

Barbara Tedlock has taught ethnomusicology and is currently an assistant Professor of Anthropology at Tufts University. She is co-editor of *Teachings from the American Earth: American Indian Philosophy and Religion*, and is at work on a book on Quiché-Maya shamanism.

P.L. Travers, a Consulting Editor and frequent contributor to PARABOLA, has devoted much of her life to studying, lecturing and writing about myth, legend, folklore and fairy tales. She is the creator of Mary Poppins and the author of *Friend Monkey*, *The Fox in the Manger* and *About the Sleeping Beauty*. Among her recent awards are the Order of the British Empire and an honorary doctorate from Chatham College, Pittsburgh.

Michel Waldberg is a young French writer and student of religions, especially Zen Buddhism. He is the author of *Gurdjieff Hors les Murs*, a volume in the collection *Les Grands Initiés* under the direction of Jacques Brosse, and published by subscription by Robert Laffont in Paris.

FULL CIRCLE *(Continued from page 5)*

look forward to more such studies on Judaism. But of course anyone writing on such a profound topic must be expected to be thoroughly familiar with the religious tradition of those she is discussing. Unfortunately, Myerhoff evidently is not, at least on a number of points absolutely crucial to her topic. Despite the excellent description of events she actually observed, she apparently has very little idea of the Jewish heritage out of which these events must be interpreted. Thus she writes that an Eastern European Yiddish folk tale about a woman who sold her soul for her husband must be "apocryphal, since there was debate as to whether women actually had souls. It is quite consistent, in view of this description of woman's place, that she was identified with the animal side of humanness and that man was considered the spiritual."

This is astonishing. The only place I know of where we find *any* debate about women's souls even referred to is in the preface by Margaret Mead to Zborowski and Herzog's *Life is With People*. Apparently the anthropologists, several of them Jewish, who contributed to this study of Eastern European Jewish life, had no idea of what the Jewish tradition had to say on this essential topic and speculated about it. But there is in fact no debate in the Jewish tradition about women's souls. Mourning children recite Kaddish for their deceased mothers just as they do for their deceased fathers, praying for the souls of both equally. In the land of Israel, the tombs of Rachel near Bethlehem and Sarah, Rebecca and Leah in Hebron are major shrines for religious pilgrimage. Women as well as men will certainly be resurrected and judged in the last days. Talmudic tradition has it that before birth God assigns the souls of men and women to each other, and thus marriages are "made in heaven." The Zohar, the basic mystical text in Jewish Kabbalah, suggests that in the course of its transmigrations a soul may be born as a male one time, as a female another; some souls split into male and female components which in marriage are joined together to be lifted as a unity to God, other souls who have perfected themselves through several lives may elect to come down to earth again as male or female to aid through marriage or otherwise another struggling soul. Hasidic texts, like those of earlier Kabbalah, often discuss the multiple levels of the spirit extensively (actually, it was believed that everyone has several souls or distinct soul-modes, each of which could be viewed as female in one mode, male in another). These texts assume that their discussions apply to both men and women.

Many of these sources teach that women are more spiritual than men, and that men need women if they are to be completed or reach God. This casts a significantly different light on the dependence of the Jewish men on the women from that which Myerhoff reports and puzzles over. I would suggest to her that it is a basic assumption in Judaism. It helps explain the great religious importance assigned to marriage as a way of holiness in Jewish traditional texts, and on the folk level. The Zohar even asks whether men traveling apart from their wives can retain a link to God, and answers that they can, if when they are with their wives they maintain a loving and warm relationship. How strange, therefore, Myerhoff's equation of women with animality and men with spirituality! If anything, just the opposite is found in Jewish tradition.

In fact, the Jewish tradition's attitude to men and women is very complex and filled with subtleties; most comments on it broadcast by critics and even "scholars" show only ignorance. I would like to ask Myerhoff to have sufficient humility to study the sources in depth and at length before making strong sweeping statements.

—Evan M. Zuesse
Cleveland, Ohio

Dr. Myerhoff responds:

Perhaps the most important feature of this exchange betweeen Professor Zuesse and myself is that it brings to light a fundamental difference in our use of the term "tradition." To me, as an anthropologist, it refers to anything a group of people commonly say or do. This is similar to the everyday sense of the term referring to a group's customary practices, passed on from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth. Professor Zuesse seems to use "tradition" to refer to formal orthodox, codified Jewish laws, doctrines or beliefs. This difference is crucial, and hidden until a disagreement appears.

In the longer work of which this article is a part (Number Our Days)*, I discuss my own struggles and self-questioning, concerned among other things, with my "right" to investigate Jews when I had so scanty a background. Eventually I concluded that this scantiness—so common among second and third generation immigrants' children—made it all the more important for me to undertake the study.*

My work is in many respects shaped by standard anthropological practices. Like most sociocultural anthropologists, I have been trained to work with living people, examining their words and actions; this, more than written texts, is my subject matter. And it is in the observations and interpretations of the living people that I hope to have made a contribution. Life is too short to permit one to be equally prepared to do religious scholarship and anthropological fieldwork.

I do not doubt that Professor Zuesse speaks authoritatively about the absence of debate in "the Jewish tradition" concerning women's souls, given what I take to be his use of the term. To an anthropologist, matters of authority are much more ambiguous, nor would most anthropologists be comfortable speaking about "the" Jewish tradition. Judaism, after all, is more than a religion; it is also a culture. Thus, there are, as I have suggested, many traditions within Judaism, none more correct or authoritative than the others, all signifying variations in cultural forms, all valid in their own terms. They may be more or less close to Halachic Judaism, but that is a different matter.

Professor Zuesse also regards as strange my equation of women with animality and men with spirituality. My source for this interpretation is Rachel Adler, whom I esteem highly as a knowledgeable Jew, a scholar and a feminist. She discusses Jewish women as follows:

A woman's whole life revolved around physical objects and physical experiences—cooking, cleaning, childbearing, meeting with physical needs of children. Without any independent spiritual life to counterbalance the materialism of her existence, the mind of the average woman was devoted to physical considerations. It was, thus, natural that Jewish men should come to identify women with gashmiut *(physicality) and men with* ruchniut *(spirituality).*

The author's point is elaborated and supported in her article and indeed the entire issue of the magazine in which it appears (Response, *No. 18) is devoted to related matters. It demonstrates beyond question the extent to which Jewish women have* experienced *their status as inferior and oppressive, in the past and the present, regardless of official doctrines concerning their spirituality.*

It was my aim to depict the old people, their lives and my response to them faithfully, with subtlety, emotion, honesty and respect. Yes, and in strong sweeping terms, occasionally. That attitude mirrors their own passion, originality and courage, and I hope I have learned some of that approach to life from them. I regard it as part of my reward for undertaking this work.

My apologies to the zoologist George Schaller for consistently misspelling his name in my review of Peter Matthiessen's *The Snow Leopard* (Vol. III, No. 4). Dr. Schaller's own account of that journey can be found in his *Mountain Monarchs: Wild Sheep and Goats of the Himalaya*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1977.

—Joseph Cary
Mansfield Center, CT

We would like to add our own apologies for the oversight. The Editors.

The following note was inadvertently omitted from "The Gnostic Vision" by Elaine H. Pagels in PARABOLA, Volume III, Number 4: "The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the Rockefeller Foundation during the time of this research."

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