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Iron Mountain

A JOURNAL OF MAGICAL RELIGION



Winter 1985

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IRON MOUNTAIN - Winter 1985
(Vol. I, No. 2)

ERRATA

p.22, col. 1, line 5: for "Credit cars"
read "Credit cards."

p.35, col. 2, line 7: for "Sidney" read
"Sydney."

p.35, col. 2, line 16: for "spiritual
rather" read "spiritual guidance rather"

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Iron Mountain welcomes scholarly, informed journalistic or literary work relating to magical religious traditions and practices worldwide. Potential contributors should send a long, stamped, self-addressed envelope for the *Iron Mountain* writer's guide before submitting material.

On the Slopes of Iron Mountain

This second, winter 1985, issue of *Iron Mountain: A Journal of Magical Religion* comes from the press a bit later than planned, but after all, it is still “winter” here along the Front Range until May. The major reason for the delay was our relocation from Manitou Springs to Boulder, Colorado and the editors’ necessary period of adjustment to graduate school, new jobs, and all the other components of becoming resettled.

Our subscribers, correspondents and contributors should note the new address: P.O. Box 2282, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

We continue to welcome manuscripts and papers on magical religious traditions worldwide, in such forms as scholarly research, informed journalism, poetry, reviews and letters.

On another topic, we read in the current newsletter from Michael Harner’s Center for Shamanic Studies that he is teaching “core shamanism” to various American Indians, primarily in the northeastern U.S., and to Lapps (Samis) in northern Norway and Sweden. The reaction to this news from some of our acquaintances seemed to be basically, “how could he [an anthropologist] teach them anything?” but ultimately that, too, is “noble savagism.” No one is born knowing these things, regardless of their ethnic background.

Thinking of Linda Van Blerkom's article in this issue on "shamanic subterfuge," we wonder who Harner has cured and how he demonstrates his power. It reminds us of the professional astrologer we knew who used to say, "You're not really a pro unless you're listed in the Yellow Pages and willing to deal with whoever calls"—although in our chaotic and multi-cultural times, that's saying quite a lot. We certainly don't condemn Harner for teaching, as he phrases it, "the minimal general methods consistent with those once used by their ancestors, so that the members of these trival societies can elaborate and integrate the practices on their own terms in the context of their traditional cultures." This could have fruitful results. Let us just hope the next generation of anthropologists will be aware of Harner's efforts when they go to report on "Lapp shamanism." Fieldwork gets more complicated all the time, and nothing, least of all "indigenous religion" is as simple and lineal as it may look.

The Editors

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editors

The paper in *Iron Mountain 1* titled "Pagan Renaissance and Wiccan Witchcraft" raises certain issues about sociological treatment of new religious movements. Historically, the sociological literature on Paganism and Witchcraft has treated them as "cults," or belief systems that somehow have not "blossomed" into full religions. However, as these belief systems continue to grow in appeal and popularity, they are increasingly coming under the scrutiny of social scientists as an object of study in their own right.

The Kirkpatrick article represents an element in this new genre, and, I think, exemplifies some problems inherent in this literature. I may justifiably be accused of setting up a "straw man," i.e. finding faults in that article that in fact represent developmental problems in the emerging field of parasociology and vice versa, generalizing inconsistencies of argument unique to this paper. With those qualifications, I will proceed.

I. Parasociology: a new sociology?

Parasociology is defined in two different ways in the Kirkpatrick paper. First, it is defined as the "sociology ... of the hidden reality that transcends everyday life...." This approach, however, represents nothing new. The "hidden reality" approach to the study of observable phenomena has a considerable heritage. It represents the attempt to find some inherent meaning behind the facade of the phenomena of everyday life. Its philosophic roots lie in two directions: the perception of the immanence of "spirit" that provided the foundation for the ideational philosophers (e.g. Hegel), and the immanence of "form" or "essence" derived from Plato.

Both of these philosophical paradigms result in a distinction between the "observed" and the "real," or the manifest and the latent, in which the object of study is the latent or hidden reality, not that which is observed. The problem with this approach is that our object of study is forever out of reach of empirical analysis, since empirical analysis is concerned only with the observed, or manifest. Thus, since the empirical findings are unrelated to the latent "true" reality, they are trivial. In other words, all the statistics we use to describe the characteristics of Pagans, such as the various attitudinal tests used in the Kirkpatrick paper, are meaningless. They have nothing to do with the latent reality of Wicca.

There may be a way around this problem. Can we study the observed and thereby infer a picture of the hidden reality? In other words, can we assume a correspondence between the observed and the hidden, latent reality? The hidden reality behind Wicca may be thought of as the invoked powers of the Goddess, as the manifestation of elemental forces, etc. If there is a correspondence between this reality and observed reality (the objective practice of Witchcraft), by studying this practice can we thereby gain knowledge of the occult reality? If we can somehow justify a link between the observed and hidden, we can justify the study of the observed.

There are two ways we can do this. We can look for cognitive or affective manifestations of the "occult" reality. Both of these approaches, however, are problematic. First, concerning cognitive changes, the "occult" action usurps the empirically causal factor, making it instead intervening. For example, a person may bet on a horse and win a large sum of money. In this instance, the independent, or causal

factor, is the best and the effect is the gain in income. If, however, a magic was invoked beforehand to bring prosperity to the individual, the magical act becomes the causal variable, and the bet becomes intervening. Theoretically, there are two fundamental flaws with this approach. A lack of success in betting can be attributed to the incorrect use of magical technique. Thus, magic can be used to explain contradictory empirical results. There is no way to test the theory. Also, the approach lacks parsimony. There is an unnecessary and logically unjustifiable element in the causal chain. So the cognitive approach will not work.

Affective changes could be studied through measurement of changes in the emotive or perceptual states of individuals under certain (invoking) conditions. However, the idea of subjecting a group of people who have just consecrated a ritual circle and invoked their Goddess to a battery of psychological tests is ludicrous. The conclusion is inescapable: the existence of a hidden "occult" reality cannot be inferred from observed reality.

The second definition of parasociology is Tiryakian's: "...intentional practices that draw on hidden or concealed forces ... that cannot be measured and which have as their desired consequence empirical results." By this definition, the object of analysis is the objective practice or ritual of magic rather than some latent reality that makes magic effective. In other words, parasociology should concern itself with observable behavior, without attempting to infer a parallel, hidden reality. By this approach, the object of analysis is a specific, overt behavior. This, however, is mainstream sociology. It certainly represents nothing beyond (para) sociology.

To compound these problems, the Kirkpatrick article studies neither the hidden reality of magical religion nor overt behavior as the object of analysis, but instead demographic and attitudinal characteristics of the respondents. Can we assume a link between attitudes and behavior? Most

literature indicates that such a link is tenuous even under the best of circumstances. Thus, the article, is not consistent with either definition. This should not be interpreted so much as a weakness of the paper, but as an indication of definitional problems in a formative field.

II. Weaknesses in the paper.

It is easy to nitpick an article to death. It takes no great skill to be a critic. In this regard, I have identified a multitude of small problems with the paper that I will not mention here. However, I feel there are certain substantial problems that weigh against the findings. These are discussed below.

1. The sample size. Generalizing from 144 Pagans to the North American Pagan community is tenuous at best. Further, adherents of Wiccan and other Pagan faiths tend to be organized in relatively small groups of individuals, and Pagan interpretations and ideologies may vary dramatically between those groups. Clearly, Pagans as a group are no more homogenous than Christians. This mitigates against the use of generalizing, profile-type statistics. Perhaps at this stage of development, when the goals of a study are exploratory, purposive rather than random sampling techniques would be more appropriate. In this case, the object of analysis would be the comparative analysis of groups, with emphasis on such factors as the group social structure, belief or ideological characteristics, background variables, and networking patterns between groups, instead of composite averages or profile statistics.

2. I had a number of problems with the conclusions drawn from the analysis section of the paper. First, there was the recurring problem of ecological correlation. This is the fallacy of inferring a correspondence from group social characteristics to individual psychological characteristics. For example, the Pagan Witch is described as "partially rural." How can an individual be partially rural? Characteristics of the group do not always apply to the individual.

3. It seemed to me that the findings were inconsistent with the data analysis. At times the findings were contradictory to those statistics. For example, while the authors conclude in the “results” section that the data did not warrant the conclusion that Wiccans scored high on social isolation, in the “conclusion” they offer an explanation of why Witches feel social isolation! Also, where in the presented data is the conclusion warranted that “...Pagans are relatively authoritarian within their own covens?” Further, the statement is made that “Pagan Witches are underrewarded status discontents who care little for money...” Yet one of few hypotheses that is supported indicates significantly low scores on status concerns. Finally, there is the statement in the conclusion that Wiccans recruit from feminists, hippies and occultists. Yet nowhere in the preceding discussion is there any inference of the use of proselytizing technique. The use of the term “recruit” is an unnecessary casual assumption. While Pagans or Wiccans may be subcategorized as feminists, etc., this does not imply causality, unless one makes the tautological assumption that a variable is caused by its categories.

To conclude, it seemed to me that the most significant finding was a non-finding: that the people surveyed simply were not very different from anyone else. Of the six hypotheses, only two were supported, and those indicated that Wiccans had low scores on status concerns and relatively low scores on political conservatism. These findings could equally apply to young Democrats. They certainly do not warrant the array of findings presented in the paper.

John Crank
Department of Sociology
University of Colorado (Boulder)

To the Editors:

Since reading Aidan Kelly’s (in)famous manuscript dissertation on his beliefs about the origins of Gardnerian witchcraft—the document underlying his article “Inventing Witchcraft” in *Iron Mountain 1*—I’ve wondered why he did not make use in print of the available primary sources, the ones, that is, who could talk back and refute any erroneous assumptions on his part. I specifically wonder how the publication of *The Witches’ Way* has affected his viewpoint on Gardnerian origins and practice.

I’ve also wondered, having heard some stories from some of the folk who were around for the founding of the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn (the Bay Area Neopagan group Kelly helped form in the 1960s), how much he was influenced by the cold reception his new tradition got from some “apostolic succession” Gardnerians. Is there is scent of sour grapes in his attempt to debunk whatever historicity Gardnerianism has a right to? I can say from personal experience that there is still a lot of anti-Gardnerian feeling in the NROOGD, which seems based on the training strictures of the Gardnerian tradition and which is applied to *all* practicing Gardnerians, regardless of their personal relationships with those of NROOGD.

I’m especially interested in the elucidation of his theses on Gardnerian origins since I hope to enter a graduate program in theology in the fall at Kelly’s alma mater, the Graduate Theological Union at Berkeley, and to do my own doctoral work exploring those very primary sources available in Britain which Dr. Kelly overlooked.

Perhaps he would care to reply in this column?

Meredydd Barrowman-Harper
Concord, California

The following letter is excerpted from a 3,000-word response by Sun Bear to Akwesasne Notes in response to Joseph Bruchac's "Spinning the Medicine Wheel," which was reprinted in the first issue of Iron Mountain. The entire response may be seen in the Fall 1984 issue of Akwesasne Notes.

The Editors.

To the Editors:

I feel very sad that people are spending so much time in back-stabbing and character assassination of myself and other Native medicine people. I used to tell people that I was happy that our people never argued over religion as the white man did or tried to force our beliefs down each other's throats. Apparently that no longer holds true.

I have been taught that each person has a right to their own vision. I have been taught that the true Native way is that you never judge another person's path until you have walked in his moccasins. I have been taught that each person is entitled to follow his or her own spirit path. I was always told that a medicine man cannot carry the peace pipe and the tomahawk at the same time, and that to be a true spiritual person you have to get beyond fear, anger or jealousy. I have been taught that each person and each people has something to give to the whole. But the ways of many peoples have been destroyed all around the world by the forces that fear life. Even our own ways here on Turtle Island have been fragmented. Very few nations retain all of the knowledge that they once had. To heal the hoop, to heal the earth, I have been taught that it is time to bring the fragments of all peoples together and to weave them with the visions that people are being given today.

When people ask, "Who is your teacher?" I tell them that the Earth Mother and the Great Spirit are my teachers. To my understanding they have always been the teachers of all people of vision.

I think we need to remember that Sitting Bull was killed by Indians. Crazy Horse was

murdered because jealous Indians lied about him. We lost our land because it was so easy for the people that came to get us at each other's throats. Remember this, when the Chippewa were dancing in their lodges over a great victory, the Lakota were mourning in theirs. Up on my home reservation there were always two or three groups that instead of solving their problems would spend the whole council meeting arguing. From what I've heard that hasn't changed there or on many other reservations.

There seem to be many groups today who are bitter in their hearts against non-Natives and Native people who teach non-Natives. If we do not teach them the ways and the spirits of this land, who will? How can we tell them to go back to European ways when they live with us now on Turtle Island, and when the traditional European ways were destroyed hundreds of years before by life-fearing people who later came here and tried to destroy our ways?

I started the Medicine Wheel Gatherings because the spirit told me to. At them we bring together many Native and non-Native teachers because I believe each one has a gift of healing. I believe that for every problem there is a solution and for every sickness, a cure. Maybe the cure for a sickness may come from a white man or a black man or a Chinese man or a Native person. I work with many different kinds of healing. I use herbs, the sweat lodge, I pray, I work with diet, vitamins or whatever the spirit tells me.

People say that I get paid for workshops and that is true. What I am sharing in these workshops, or at our gatherings, is education; and I have found that people usually don't value education that they get for free. I also see many of the elders' names on the programs of healing and New Age centers, and some of them charge a lot more than we do for our Medicine Wheel Gatherings. I do not put down these elders who get paid for giving workshops, and when I heard that one would not come to a place because he was not getting enough money, I didn't speak against him.

Any of the money that we receive through workshops or Medicine Wheel Gatherings goes to pay bills, feed our people and set up teaching programs. I get that same amount of spending money as anyone else in the Bear Tribe—\$50 a month when the Bear Tribe can afford it.

We make some money by selling arts and crafts. I have been doing this for the last 20 years and I have many Indian craftsmen that benefit from the sales we make. Some of them are in prison. Some can feed their families without having to go to the big city to work because we sell crafts for them.

I look around me at this crucial time in the Earth Mother's healing and wonder why so many people who should be presenting a united front for the earth's survival are spending so much time and energy fighting with and criticizing each other. If people want to find an "enemy" to fight they don't have to look far. The enemy is the feeling of separation that dominates the earth now. It is this feeling that tells us that we are separate from the earth, the minerals, the plants, the animals and the spirit forces. It is feeling that tells us because we are "separate" and "stronger" and "more intelligent," we can misuse all of our relations on the earth in any way that we want to. It is this that has made the earth as sick as she is, and caused people to build nuclear bombs that could bring the total destruction of the earth.

When you see another person—Native or non-Native—trying to do something good, support them. Let us put aside all sickness and share unity and harmony. I thank you for this opportunity to share my heart. I have spoken.

Sun Bear
Spokane, Washington

Iron Mountain *welcomes letters from its readers. We reserve the right to edit any letters for length or clarity. Please send letters to Editors, Iron Mountain: A Journal of Magical Religion, P.O. Box 2282, Boulder, Colorado 80306.*

A response by Doreen Valiente to the article by Aidan Kelly, "Inventing Witchcraft: The Gardnerian Paper Trail," was received too late for inclusion in this issue. It will be printed in the Summer 1985 issue.

Carlos Castaneda: *A True Shaman After All?*

By Phil Carson

When a book jumps to second place on the *New York Times* bestseller list within a month of publication, as did Carlos Castaneda's *The Fire Within* in June 1984, one must assume that the author has a substantial audience. What is not clear in this case—and the *Times*' unequivocal classification of Castaneda's work as non-fiction only adds to the confusion—is how this audience is reading Castaneda. Do they still believe, as the dust jacket suggests, that Castaneda's work is a literal account of actual events? Or, hooked on the mysterious adventures, is this audience uncritical, simply “enjoying the ride?” Is the question of authenticity important to Castaneda's readers?

No doubt the answers to these questions would be interesting. But more pertinent to the current discussion is the fact that this audience exists in the first place, and in force. (After 20 weeks on the bestseller list, *The Fire Within* was still going strong at

number eight.) What are the implications of this immense popularity?

Anthropologist Michael Harner has stated emphatically that his friend of 15 years, Carlos Castaneda, is “really a shaman.” [1] Harner has also said, in response to charges that Castaneda “ransacks the work of genuine researchers like Michael Harner:” [2]

“I am thoroughly conversant with Castaneda's publications; I have known him for a decade and a half; and I am not familiar with any evidence that he has borrowed material from any of my works.” [3]

Despite this stout and explicit defense by a colleague and friend, the publication of *The Second Ring of Power* in the fall of 1977 marked a definite turning point in the overall credibility accorded Castaneda by his critics. With the publication of this fifth volume, there seemed to be a consensus forming that

the whole series of books should be viewed as inspired fiction. Two books by Richard de Mille present this argument in detail and attempt to close the case in no uncertain terms.[4]

Then what exactly did Michael Harner mean when he said that Castaneda is “really a shaman?” There are a number of ways in which Castaneda is “really a shaman,” though perhaps not in the same vein as Harner appears to intend.

A shaman is, among other things, a society’s intermediary with the supernatural world. He teaches and cures by magic, and often, out of necessity, by trickery. The shaman doesn’t trick his clients in a malicious way; he deceives them for their own good. Sleight-of-hand trickery by the shaman often provides material evidence to the laymen of events in the supernatural world.

For example, among the Jivaro Indians of the Amazon Basin, when a curing shaman is about to suck a deadly, magical dart from the body of a victim of sorcery, he first hides a solid “real” dart in his mouth. As he sucks the magical, illusory dart out of his patient, its “essence” is absorbed by the solid dart. The shaman then spits out the solid dart as proof of his success in curing the patient. The layman believes that the solid dart is what the shaman actually sucked from the body of the patient. The shaman doesn’t let on that this is not the case because, without material evidence that the cure had been effected, the patient’s recovery might be hindered, and the shaman might not be paid.

Nevertheless, “(the shaman) is not lying,” Harner wrote in *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*. [5] The shaman knows that the only important thing about a magical dart is its supernatural aspect, or “essence,” which he sincerely believes he has removed from the patient’s body.

If Castaneda’s books are fiction—and at this time the evidence points in that direction—there are a number of remarkably poignant parallels between his role in modern society and that of the shaman in

primitive society.

To begin with, it is undeniable that Castaneda has something to teach. The number of articles treating Don Juan’s concepts and their impact upon, and relevance to, modern society is overwhelming. Discussion and debate prompted by Castaneda’s books has run the gamut of disciplines: anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc. The immense popularity of Castaneda’s work and the gut-level effects it has had on its audience attest both to its intellectual and its emotional validity.

But what was the most effective way to get his message across?

Coming as he did from outside our culture (he immigrated from Peru in 1951 [6]), Castaneda could see the spiritual authority accorded the American Indian by portions of our society. He saw that he could make use of the fact that modern American culture had “rediscovered” the wisdom of the continents’ first inhabitants. Inspired by his studies in anthropology at the University of California at Los Angeles, Castaneda chose an elderly Indian shaman as his vehicle of instruction. People might not listen to an immigrant Peruvian artist, but they would listen to an old Indian sage.

In reality Castaneda’s situation at the time he created Don Juan was vastly more complicated.[7] A variety of dilemmas confronted him. In short, I believe the creation of Don Juan filled various needs for Castaneda—most pressing of which was conducting significant fieldwork in graduate school. But the details of such an explanation must wait for another time. Suffice it to say that Don Juan soon became the proverbial fountain of wisdom.

Thus in the tradition of the shaman Castaneda tricked people into listening and learning. He accomplished this with such skill that his “lectures,” coming from the mouth of the sage Don Juan, evoked comments like these:

“An extraordinary spiritual and

psychological document ... destined for fame." Paul Reisman, *New York Times Book Review*. [8]

"... Don Juan emerges as a spiritual master whose image of man offers a challenge and guide that a non-ethnocentric study of cultural phenomena cannot afford to dismiss lightly." Stan Wilk, *American Anthropologist*. [9]

"... it is obvious enough that (Don Juan's) lore derives from an oral tradition of immense age and complexity. The ritualistic precision and pedagogical discipline surround Don Juan's teachings resound with generations of experiment, meditation, and philosophical systematization." Theodore Roszack, *The Nation*. [10]

One prominent element in shamanic trickery is that the end justifies the means. For the curing shaman, sleight-of-hand meant only that he was making the patient aware of events clear to himself (often due to his own hallucinogenic intoxication), which were taking place in the supernatural world. That the shaman used a solid dart as a prop was inconsequential to him compared with the importance of the supernatural act being performed.

In Castaneda's case, publishing fictive manuscripts in the guise of actual field reports provided his audience with the material evidence they needed in order to consider ideas whose validity they might otherwise overlook. This point becomes all the more poignant when you consider that Castaneda's manuscripts were the *only* material evidence he ever offered that anything had actually occurred in the first place.

For Castaneda's deception to be effective, it had to be complete. This involved a one-man snow job, applied to absolutely everyone around him. In all of 20 years, not one of Castaneda's friends, relatives or colleagues has heard him admit to any fakery. It sounds distinctly unscrupulous, perhaps even psychotic. But it is in perfect keeping with the paradigm of shamanic trickery: deception, to be effective, must be

complete, and the end result will justify the means it took to accomplish it.

The success of this shamanic sleight-of-hand enabled Castaneda to succeed in two other shamanic roles: convincing one's fellows that the world they know is a surface world, beyond which lies the "real," supernatural world; and providing an explanation, or cosmology, that will put these supernatural forces into a unifying context or belief system.

Whether in a "primitive" or "sophisticated" society, these shamanic roles do not change. Living in a scientific-technological age has in no way diminished our characteristically human belief in the supernatural world. In fact our scientific advances may even produce a polarity of attitudes in which such beliefs are even more fervently embraced.

By presenting convincing reports of his own experiences with "non-ordinary" reality, and his confrontations with identifiable supernatural powers such as "Mescalito," "the guardian" and "the allies," Castaneda persuaded his audience that such a world exists. By playing the role of the naive skeptic, and professing incredulity at his own experiences, he tricked his audience into actively confirming for themselves that such events had indeed occurred. How many readers must have winced at the stupidity of the narrator "Carlos," only to reaffirm subconsciously their own deep-rooted beliefs in other-worldly aspects of reality?

In *Tales of Power*, his fourth book, Castaneda provided the unifying concepts, the cosmology, which tied all he had created together. Between the concepts of the "tonal" and the "nagual," the "sorcerer's explanation" and the "strategy of a sorcerer," he managed to interrelate his previous "lessons" and place them into an appropriate context. In *Tales* the cosmology or "sorcerer's explanation" was delivered verbally by Don Juan to "Carlos." Then, in a format that had proven convincing, the premises of the sorcerer's explanation were

experienced physically by the narrator. "Carlos" (narrator) had finished his apprenticeship, and Castaneda (author) had fulfilled an important aspect of the shaman's role in society: he had illuminated a cosmology.

So it is possible that Michael Harner could mean two distinctly different things with that apparently innocuous statement, "Castaneda is really a shaman." I have pointed out ways in which Harner could be playing with semantics and still be above reproach.

If Castaneda's works actually are authentic in the literal sense, then he may be a sorcerer/shaman. On the other hand, if his works are fictive, then he has become a modern myth-maker, a shaman for our times. That he provides a much-needed service seems apparent from his extensive popular and scholarly appeal. Whether the end justified the means is probably a matter of debate among those concerned about UCLA's award of a doctorate to Castaneda based upon his alleged fieldwork. Regardless, he has touched a primeval nerve in

many people, and for that achievement alone I would suggest he has been a benevolent teacher.

NOTES

1. R. Stein, Interview with M.J. Harner. *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 June 1975.
2. Robert Bly, "Carlos Castaneda Meets Madame Solitude." *New York Times Book Review*, 22 January 1978: 7,22.
3. Michael J. Harner, (Letter), *New York Times Book Review*, 7 May 1978:45.
4. Richard de Mille, *Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory*. (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1976) and *The Don Juan Papers: Further Castaneda Controversies*, (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, 1980).
5. Michael J. Harner, editor, *Hallucinogens and Shamanism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.24.
6. Phil Carson, "Who is Carlos Castaneda?" *Earth News* (Boulder, Colorado) I:3 (September 1982).
7. Phil Carson, "The Greatest Story Ever Told," *Front Range*, (Boulder, Colorado) II:3 (September 1983)
8. Paul Reisman, "The Collaboration of Two Men and a Plant," *New York Times Book Review*, 22 October 1972: 7, 10-12.
9. Stan Wilk, Review of *A Separate Reality* in *American Anthropologist*, 74(4) (August 1972) 921-922.
10. Theodore Roszack, "A Sorcerer's Apprentice," *The Nation*, 208(6) (February 1969) 184-186.

The Sorcerer's Apprentice: *Interview with Jose Cuellar*

By Michael and Patrick McNierney

Introduction

Carlos Castaneda's reticence in the face of requests for interviews is notorious. While he gave some lectures on college campuses in the early 1970s around 1970, his public appearances dwindled to nothing thereafter—and of course he never sought an academic appointment after receiving his doctorate. In 1978 *Boulder Magazine* did the next best thing, and published an interview by then-editor Michael McNierney and his brother Patrick with Professor Jose Cuellar of the University of Colorado Anthropology Department. Cuellar attended graduate school alongside Castaneda at the University of California at Los Angeles, receiving his doctorate in 1977. After field studies in Guatemala and among urban American Chicanos, Cuellar was at the time of the interview director of the Chicano Studies Program at CU.

To quote the original introduction, "While Professor Cuellar's interests and research differ considerably from those of Carlos Castaneda, he is able to resolve some of the controversy surrounding the mysterious author, based on his friendship with Castaneda, as well as to offer some new insights about his work from a unique perspective." *Iron Mountain* wishes to thank Michael and Patrick McNierney for permission to reprint lengthy excerpts from this 1978 interview.—The Editors.

BOULDER: When did you first meet Carlos Castaneda?

CUELLAR: Fall of 1969, in the UCLA Anthropology Department. We used to share the same mailbox so we would run into each other there. We had a mutual friend, Mike Gleason, who helped establish a relationship. Mike was also a first-year graduate student, interested in psychotropic

drugs. He was working-class Irish from New York City, having a rough time relating to West Coast graduate students. We had a little group of working-class deviants that would run together. And underlying was our relationship to Carlos.

BOULDER: Do you know anything about his background?

CUELLAR: Nothing much, other than what he has told me or others, and *that's* changed. That's different from individual to individual. He is a Latino, and I asked him once, "Are you or aren't you a Chicano?" and he said, "What do you want me to be? Do you want me to be a Chicano?" And I said, "Sure," but of course that didn't satisfy me. "I want to know if you *are* one, not if you'll admit to be." And he said, "If it's important to you, I'm a Chicano, if that's what you want." He would refuse to allow himself to be categorized. That caused problems in his biography later on. Is he Peruvian? or Brazilian? or is he a Chicano pretending to be a Peruvian or Brazilian or whatever?

BOULDER: You really don't know?

CUELLAR: No, I have no idea. But he speaks Spanish very well.

BOULDER: How long had he been at UCLA when you got there?

CUELLAR: Nine or ten years. He started in the early 1960s and had gone from one department to another. I heard that he had been in philosophy or one of the arts, but we never really talked about it. For him, personal history was out—it didn't make any difference. Personal history was a convenience, and you could use it to create any kind of illusion you wanted. He was concerned that any kind of biography would nail him, pigeonhole him. And physical appearance is the same way, in the sense that the way we dress, the presentation of self tells people who we are and what we think and what we believe. And that's one of the things Carlos and I used to get into because at that time, in the late '60s, I was into buttons, into activism, so he used to laugh at me. I had long hair, and a

moustache and buttons, "Free Angela Davis," "Chicano Liberation," and all that. And he used to laugh and say, "I bet you even have bumper stickers so you can tell people on the *freeway* what you think and what you believe and who you are." And he would say, "Look at me. Who can tell?" He used to dress in a suit, very conservative, short hair, and he would go around the department looking like a young professor. Not at all like someone who's doing psychotropic drugs and the kind of research he was doing.

BOULDER: Was your relationship with him more personal, rather than professional?

CUELLAR: Personal to some extent. But I was interested in his work because he was trying to bring an indigenous philosophy to prominence. I was searching ... I was approaching his work differently than most of the other people reading him. There were a lot of students reading his work in terms of psychotropic experience, the psychedelic experience. But at that time we were trying to deal with his works in terms of the significance for the Chicano. There was a concept of "Atzlan" going around in the Chicano community which dealt with the indigenous regions and philosophy which included Pueblo and Yaqui, Maya and other groups in the southwest on both sides of the border.

BOULDER: So he wasn't involved in the Chicano movement at all?

CUELLAR: No. We had some talks about that, and he thought that that was not the way of his warrior, his perception of the natural world. He was interested in seeking knowledge in another area, in another dimension, and it was political. That was one of the problems I had with his philosophy, that it was not action-oriented ... not towards this world.

BOULDER: His philosophy seems to be almost totally non-ethical.

CUELLAR: Not much morality involved—no moral guidelines except in the sense of the warrior's own guidelines, but

then you can play with anything by using controlled folly.

BOULDER: There doesn't seem to be any commitment to other people at all.

CUELLAR: There isn't. You see, within that context a warrior has no relationships, either personally or historically. He does away with his own life history, his own ethnicity, everything. In the warrior's life there are no significant others.

BOULDER: How was he accepted in the anthro department?

CUELLAR: He was more than accepted. Castaneda was to a great extent the star of the department. UCLA had received a great deal of publicity because he had written a bestseller.

BOULDER: Did he submit the *Teachings of Don Juan* as his dissertation?

CUELLAR: Yes, that was his initial dissertation. But there was a problem with theoretical perspective. There was some question as to what form he should submit it in because he was working with two social scientists who had opposite views of what the dissertation should do. One, an ethnomethodologist, said, "Don't give me an analysis, just give me the information and I will analyze it, and make sense of it." And the other said, "Give me an analysis." He was caught between them.

BOULDER: So the dissertation was ultimately rejected?

CUELLAR: Yes. That was one of the problems with the acceptance of the work. But it had more to do with theoretical concerns rather than with the validity of the research itself. At the time I don't remember any serious questions being raised about the nature of his research or the validity of his approach or his techniques or his ability as an anthropologist. *That* was never questioned at the time.

BOULDER: Where did he go from there?

CUELLAR: He submitted *A Separate Reality* as a dissertation and that was refused because of the same kind of arguments. One side it wasn't analytical enough and the

other said it was too analytical. So basically what he did was disband his dissertation committee.

BOULDER: Did he eventually get his doctorate?

CUELLAR: Yes. Certain individuals in the department became very concerned that we had a celebrity in the department, a man who had written two bestsellers. He was bringing a great deal of attention to UCLA, and the department still refused to give him his Ph.D. Even though Castaneda was recognized as having made original contributions based on research in the field of anthropology. So a couple of faculty members got together, and formed a new committee to review his work and they decided to give him a Ph.D.

BOULDER: That was on the basis of ...

CUELLAR: I think it was *Journey to Ixtlan*. I'm not sure about that, but I think that was the manuscript they used for the dissertation.

BOULDER: Did Castaneda seem to enjoy being a celebrity?

CUELLAR: Yes, to some extent he enjoyed the kind of things that we along with producing a bestseller. Money being one ... but the other things that were happening he enjoyed. He got a lot of invitations to lecture before various associations and organizations. He was also, I think, amused by the fact that he was a celebrity. He thought it was great, but at the same time didn't really believe it was happening so fast.

One reaction, for example, was a story he told me. He was invited to a faculty party given in his honor by someone at UCLA, I forget which department it was. Here he was, the guest of honor at this dinner party with all the faculty members and their wives. They sat him down at the head of the table and had dinner, and afterwards the hostess got up and said, "Now, Carlos, tell us the truth. Do you really believe all those stupid hallucinations?" And Carlos said that he looked at her and said, "Not anymore than I believe this one."

This is the kind of thing he had to deal

with in becoming a celebrity. He enjoyed lecturing quite a bit. When I was teaching at Pitzer, the Claremont Colleges, I was able to have him come out and give a lecture. One of his concerns at the time was that people were focusing too much on the psychotropic drugs and that whole aspect of his study, as opposed to the philosophy he was discovering and developing.

BOULDER: Did he have problems with groupies or people who were in the drug culture?

CUELLAR: Yes, sure there were always people following him around to tell him about their experiences ...

BOULDER: How did he react to this?

CUELLAR: Basically, he avoided them. People would come to him or leave messages, saying that they ran into an "ally" in the parking lot ... First he could handle it, but later it got to be too much. After a while he began avoiding people, including me. A lot of Chicano organizations began to ask him to lecture on the teachings of Don Juan and their implications, so he had to deal with that. That may be a curious aspect of his personality, the avoidance thing—it may reflect something deeper. I'm not sure.

BOULDER: In your day to day contact with him did you see the development of his ideas?

CUELLAR: Carlos was the kind of person who would naturally share his ideas. He would corner you someplace or come running in and say, "Hey, guess what happened! I was with Don Juan and this happened. What do you think?" Or he would corner a faculty member and say, "I've just been going through my notes and look what I've discovered." He was constantly doing that.

BOULDER: Any particular examples come to mind?

CUELLAR: One I remember was where Genaro and Don Juan hid in his car. I was in the UCLA library with a couple of other students and faculty members, and Carlos came running in and began to relate the incident in a very animated fashion. In-

identally, he discussed the incident in the context of having someone else with him at the time, an Anglo male, I believe, but later on in the text I think it turns out to be just him. ... The ethnographic incidents that he reports in the book he also related at a personal level.

BOULDER: That brings up the question of "glosses," in the anthropological sense. To what extent do you think his perceptions of his experiences and the way they are presented in his books are influenced by his philosophical and anthropological background, his theories?

CUELLAR: Let me tell you something he said to me. I'm not sure what significance it has. I was trying to work my way through *A Separate Reality*, I think—that was a quantum leap in his thinking—and I was really having a difficult time with it. Much of what was in the book was material he had related to us, gradually, and then they were the kind of neat ethnographic incidents one generally collects. But in the text I was trying to wrestle with "what does this mean?" And in a lot of what I saw, I was beginning to see some kind of phenomenological framework. I asked him about the book, and he said, "If you want to understand my work, the implications of this, read the collected works of Alfred Schuetz." Schuetz is a phenomenologist.

And I read his works, and that's when I began to wonder how much Castaneda's theoretical thinking affected his collection of data, and how the data is organized. Schuetz talked about *multiple* realities—there's a whole section in his works on that. So there's a very obvious kind of relationship there—separate reality, multiple reality. I mean, to what extent is Castaneda's perspective something that's been generated somewhere else, to what extent is it phenomenology? Is it something that is emerging from the data itself, the phenomena he is looking at, or is it based on theoretical thinking in another area? I think that is important in terms of the kinds of questions he asked and how he organizes his

material. Maybe people should read the collected works of Alfred Schuetz as a companion work to Carlos Castaneda. People can find a similar framework in Schuetz.

BOULDER: That's a question a lot of people are asking. *Did* this stuff really happen? It seems to me there is no simple answer to that question. Can we really differentiate between the experience and the interpretation?

CUELLAR: Right. But I guess one question is, did the ethnographic incidents really happen the way he reports them. And the answer to that seems to be, from my experience and the kind of contact I had with him, *yes*, those incidents did happen. And I say that because he reported them over a long period of time. Those incidents hang together without any kind of framework. I mean if those were field notes, they all fall into a pattern and are somewhat consistent with one another. Now the way those incidents are related in the text ... the glue that holds them together is German phenomenology, the nature of social reality from the perspective of people like Alfred Schuetz. And maybe that's what people begin to feel very uneasy about.

BOULDER: What about the accuracy of Castaneda's reporting? The immense detail in the books?

CUELLAR: Richard de Mille raises some questions about language, whether Don Juan spoke hip jargon. What was the nature of his language? Now those are very critical questions because the anthropologist is supposed to record verbatim what the informant says.

I know Castaneda's techniques were more than adequate. The amount of detail he was able to record is incredible, both verbal and non-verbal behavior. My question was how can you do that under normal circumstances, let alone under the influence of psychotropic drugs? It seemed impossible to me, as a first-year graduate student, to take notes that fast. But he could. He demon-

strated it to us. He used a steno pad and had developed his own system of shorthand. A lot of anthropologists do that.

Now the question is, whether he changed Don Juan's speech, whether he used poetic license. Maybe he invented the dialogues. If so, then he wasn't acting as an anthropologist. I don't know. How much license does an anthropologist have to make his material more readable?

BOULDER: What people are saying now of course is that Castaneda is a novelist. From what you said, that is obviously far from the truth.

CUELLAR: Right. He may be *now*, though—I don't know. But he definitely had the ability to do good anthropological work.

BOULDER: In my studies, I can't find any real connection between Don Juan and the Yaqui people, the Yaqui beliefs.

CUELLAR: That's true. It's very different. There are two questions. One, is Don Juan a Yaqui in terms of descent—descended from Yaquis? That doesn't necessarily have anything to do with culture or worldview. And two, is he culturally a Yaqui? Obviously, Don Juan is a multiworld person in that he can function in the Yaqui culture and also in United States society. He crosses the border, functions in bus stations, Tucson and other places. And he functions in wider Mexican society.

By all indications he was born around the turn of the century, a period of great turmoil in Mexico and the Southwest. If he's like many of the people in Mexico, particularly the Yaquis, he was moving around all over the place. He would have been exposed to all kinds of experience, and would have been deeply affected by the disruption, by the whirlwind that was the Mexican Revolution.

But as he is presented in the books, he gives no indications of having his roots in Yaqui culture. To that extent I think that the title of the first book was wrong. I don't think it reflects a Yaqui way of culture, a Yaqui way of knowledge. And I think that's thrown people off.

Magical Autobiography and its Practitioners

By Chas S. Clifton

PARADOX: A PSYCHIC JOURNEY. By William "Crazy Horse" Coppola. Tucson: Abbetira Publications, 1984. xii + 256 pp. \$9.95, paperback. (P.O. Box 17600, Tucson, Arizona 85731)

THE FIRE FROM WITHIN. By Carlos Castaneda. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984. \$16.95, cloth.

MEDICINE WOMAN. Lynn V. Andrews. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981. 204 pp. \$13.50, cloth.

FLIGHT OF THE SEVENTH MOON: THE TEACHING OF THE SHIELDS. Lynn V. Andrews. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. 208 pp., \$13.50, cloth.

THE WAY OF WYRD: TALES OF AN ANGLO-SAXON SORCERER. Brian Bates. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. 208 pp. \$12.95, cloth.

The invention of magical autobiography in the Western world could be credited to the 2nd-century C.E. Roman writer Lucius

Apuleius, author of *The Golden Ass, Or the Transformations of Lucius*.^[1] Lucius, a happy-go-lucky young aristocrat traveling in Greece, gets mixed up with wine, women and sorcery and is transformed into a donkey. In that shape he undergoes various adventures, such as being captured by a band of outlaws, and the middle portion of the book consists of the tales he hears from the bandits and others, including the well-known legend of Cupid and Psyche.

After many changes of owners and ups and downs of fortune, Lucius the ass invokes the goddess Isis by the ocean's edge and is rewarded with an opportunity to reverse the spell. Returned to his human form, he becomes a priest in Isis's temple.

Now Lucius Apuleius frankly admits that his story is a novel, not fact. But it is a religious novel and the conversion experience at the end is conveyed with a sincerity missing from the bawdy and farcical episodes preceding it. Lucius in fact was an initiated priest of Isis and Osiris, in the days when Egyptian mystery religion spread into the Roman world, as well as a student of Platonic philosophy. Some translators, such as Robert Graves, believe he wove incidents of his own youth together with traditional stories in creating *The Golden Ass*.

The autobiographical element of The Golden Ass might then be seen as the author's blundering on the wrong spiritual path before he found the correct one for him. Like the author of *Paradox*, below, he alternates in his adventures among the violent, the erotic and the sublime.

The past 15 years have seen another standard of magical autobiography—or so it is presented—set by Carlos Castaneda. Unlike his predecessor in the genre, the Englishman who wrote as T. Lobsang Rampa and who—years before the advent of Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche—gave us a picture of a Tibetan monastic boyhood and education, Castaneda was presented as a fact-oriented anthropologist who was also a spiritual seeker. Like Lucius, he makes an ass of himself while pursuing esoteric wisdom. But our age is less forgiving of literary artifice than was the 2nd century. Some 1,800 intervening years' emphasis on the development of rationality and the increasingly important distinction between "fiction" and "nonfiction" in writing, together with the emergence of professional journalism give 20th-century readers a different set of expectations about the printed word than had Lucius Apuleius's readers and hearers. Suspicions that Castaneda was presenting novels disguised as autobiography have led to a reaction against him, notably the publication of two books detailing inconsistencies and impossibilities in his works—Richard de Mille's *Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory* and his *The Don Juan Papers*. [2]

After a few public lectures following the publication of his first book, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, [3] Castaneda became a semi-recluse, rarely available for interviews and shunning the usual machinery of literary publicity. Of course this contributed to the mystique about his work, and journalists who did want to interview him had to settle for secondary sources, like the interview with his graduate school friend Jose Cuellar published in *Boulder Magazine* in April 1978

and reprinted in this issue of *Iron Mountain*.

Castaneda's works re-created the genre of *The Golden Ass*: a spiritual journey involving exotic places, mystic initiation and experiences that, like Lucius Apuleius's vision of Isis, the reader had to take on faith. Unlike the Romans, who didn't mind mixing religious teaching with a tall tale, we have become both more sophisticated and more naive as consumers of printed information. We sort through immense amounts of information every day, from the license plate number of the car in front of us at a traffic signal to advertising copy to business correspondence to the daily newspaper. We expect our advertising to be labeled as such and our newspaper to keep its editorials on the editorial page. And so we can be suckers for an author—and for publishers—who disguise one thing as another. The argument that it is acceptable to do as Apuleius did and mix "true teaching" with fiction—as I suspect is the case to a greater or lesser degree with all but one of the books here reviewed—is heretical in the Information Age, especially when it comes packaged by the publisher as "nonfiction," accompanied by the appropriate Library of Congress cataloging. (One should read some of the librarians' journals to see that cataloging is the end-product of many acts of editorial gatekeeping and "political" decisions in itself.)

William Coppola's *Paradox*, like many magical autobiographies, need not be taken completely as fact, but it is good entertainment and raises a few worthwhile points none the less. The author is an outlaw biker (Los Vagos), ceremonial magician, jailhouse lawyer, biker magazine columnist, proclaimed messenger of the New Age, and convict. Which is to say, at the time of this writing he is serving a sentence at the penitentiary in Huntsville, Texas. (He is already an alumnus of San Quentin.) The title *Paradox* is fully warranted. Like most of the convicts we have encountered, he was (of course) the victim of the cops' hatred and was unjustly convicted—the latter time of

aggravated kidnapping. Yet, like Jack London's *Star Rover*, his spirit is free to travel while his body is confined.

Coppola, describing his actions in the third person, goes from picaresque episode to episode: from busting heads in a barroom brawl to communing with higher intelligences while taking peyote, from signing on with a traveling carnival (hard work and all-night parties) to finding the obligatory Native American shaman to instruct him—one who speaks pure “Injun.” (Sample: “Many white skins have held brave spirits in the human nations who were adopted by Indian people.”) But for all his wisdom, Coppola can't resist mouthing off to a cop/judge/any authority figure, given the opportunity, and wham! it's back into the soup. He can only wrap himself in the Chesterfieldian quotation: “People hate the ones who make them feel their own inferiority.”

As mentioned, there is a parallel between *Paradox* and Jack London's little-known work *The Star Rover*, which deals with a convict who becomes adept at out-of-the-body travel when wardens and guards attempt to break his spirit. The magical portions of *Paradox* developed during Coppola's periods of enforced confinement, are based largely on the work of Franz Bardon (d. 1958), a German and one of the 20th century's more lucid exponents of magical self-training. *Paradox* breathes passionate glorification of the author's life and lifestyle: it does paint an accurate picture of the enjoyable components of the outlaw biker's reality. Some information that reached us post-publication may, however, point to Coppola's being a con man as well as a convict; *Paradox* should therefore be read with the reader's “hype” detector on the high setting.

Despite what has been written here and elsewhere about his veracity, Carlos Castaneda does progress as a storyteller. In *The Fire Within*, “Carlos” (the narrator, as distinct from Castaneda the writer—I owe to Richard de Mille the technique of so

distinguishing the writer and the sorcerer's apprentice) returns again to Mexico to sort out the meaning of events that took place a few years earlier—in the mid-1970s for the most part. What sounds like a commonplace mystical title announces a thoroughly mystical book, one whose effect on the reader is akin to the process of trying to remember a detailed and powerful dream.

Memory is the subject of much of *The Fire Within*. In it Carlos continues the act of conscious recollection he began in *The Eagle's Gift* (published in 1981) of buried memories of events and aspects of events first chronicled in earlier books, particularly *Tales of Power* (1974). Blended with this are further workings-out of Carlos's ongoing concerns, such as the real nature of the sorcerer's special mode of perception, *seeing*, here defined as (among other things), “a peculiar feeling of knowing, of knowing something without the shadow of a doubt” (p.17).

Little data is given as to the dates and places of the conversations with Don Juan retold here; further attempts to catch Castaneda in literary bilocation between California and Mexico are useless. Instead, Carlos's busy notebook has recorded the Yaqui or part-Yaqui magician Don Juan's magical history of Mexico, especially his stories of how the Spanish conquest altered the Indians' esoteric traditions. According to Don Juan, the “naguales” who survived the upheavals of the Conquest isolated themselves and their students from other similar magical teachers toward the end of the 16th century. Among the survivors were those who saw coping with their new overlords as a magical challenge: “We know that nothing can temper the spirit of a warrior as much as the challenge of dealing with impossible people in positions of power,” Don Juan tells Carlos (p.29). The new seers, he says, are less power-oriented and more interested in acquiring knowledge about the cosmos: “the reason for the existence of all sentient beings is to enhance awareness” (p.50).

Somehow these new seers have the power

to erase much of their students' memories of their instruction, or rather, they deliver the instruction when the student is in a heightened state of awareness. Memories produced in that heightened state are usually unavailable to the conscious intellect. "This inability to remember sets up an almost insurmountable barrier for warriors, who have to recollect all the instruction given to them if they are to go on. Only after years of struggle and discipline can warriors recollect their instruction. By then the concepts and the procedures that were taught to them have been internalized and have thus acquired the force the new seers meant them to have" (p.24).

What develops in *The Fire Within* is an increasingly coherent picture of Don Juan's teaching, based as was *The Eagle's Gift* on an idea of the Absolute as "the Eagle" whose emanations make up the universe and whose power attracts our consciousness as a magnet attracts iron filings. There is no cult of the Eagle, no worship: it is simply a fact, an indescribable force personified as a raptor whose food is all beings' awareness. Carlos, no longer the apprentice, is now the journeyman seer attempting this stupendous act of recollection, of gaining conscious access to heightened awareness and its insights. Will a new "new seer" keep narrating books? Or will he, like Don Juan and his partner Don Genaro, fade away into inter-dimensional mist?

While Castaneda himself fades into the mist to avoid interviewers, would-be admirers and debunkers, another literary magician has appeared in the shape of Lynn V. Andrews, author of *Medicine Woman* and *Flight of the Seventh Moon*. Like Castaneda, her homebase is Los Angeles—not a university anthropology department, but a glittery Los Angeles of designer clothes and celebrity name-dropping. Some critics of Castaneda are upset that his work, presented as anthropology, is included in college-level anthologies. It is unlikely that these pastiches of American Indian teaching will

ever get that far, but one might well shudder at seeing them cataloged by the gullible Library of Congress catalogers under "Cree Indians—Religion and mythology" as Castaneda's works are to be found under Yaqui Indians, ditto.

Andrews, who has the annoying habit in *Medicine Woman* of constantly digressing to tell us just which trendy restaurant or gallery she visited last, is started on the quest for her Indian shaman by a seemingly paranormal vision of an Indian wedding basket. (This is a Southwestern artifact; she winds up in Manitoba, but what the heck.) This turns out to be a Cree woman named Agnew Whistling Elk who lives on an unspecified reserve. She doesn't travel much, but she sprinkles her conversation with terms like the Hopi "kachina," but maybe that's just pan-Indianism at work. She has "a thick accent," but speaks like an educated white—and since Andrews doesn't make constant comment about her notebook as does Carlos, she herself must possess a magnetic memory.

The initial vision shakes Andrews up considerably, but she recovers after visiting the nearest Elizabeth Arden salon. Later, at a Bel Air dinner party, amid rich oilmen and bankers, she is encouraged on her quest by the controversial Cheyenne author Hyemeyohsts Storm (just by coincidence, another Harper & Row author).

"He was definitely Dakota or Montana," Andrews writes offhandedly. No wonder her Crees speak Hopi.

Storm sends her on to a Cree reserve in Manitoba where she perseveres through various misadventures, viz.: "I wondered if I had the right clothing. I was wearing Sasson jeans, boots, and a khaki hunting jacket from Kerr's." (p.21).

Of course, during her apprenticeship with Agnes (and with Ruby Plenty Chiefs, who neatly parallels Carlos's Don Genaro as the more enigmatic of a pair of teachers) she runs afoul of a rival sorcerer, Red Dog (a white man living on the reserve) and his two Indian apprentices. One night they attack

her. Do they battle on the astral plane? Do they feed her funny herbs? Do they generally disorganize her reality?

No: "My Gucci bag lay open on the floor with the lining ripped out. Credit cars and money were strewn everywhere. Even my makeup case was missing."

Crafty devils.

Eventually Andrews goes up against Red Dog in the one-on-one for possession of the magical marriage basket, which somehow symbolizes a woman's inner unity and which he isn't by rights supposed to have. She gets it—and *Flight of the Seventh Moon* (does that flight go into Winnepeg?) opens with Red Dog shooting magical turquoise darts into her leg in a Beverly Hills hotel.

Virtually every criticism leveled against Castaneda as to misleading or missing details of date, time, place, zoology and botany (gnarled tamarisk trees in Manitoba—or did she mean tamarack?) might well be laid at Lynn Andrews' door. Her mosquito-less Manitoba just doesn't seem like a real place. But isn't a Los Angeles socialite as entitled to a vision question and the search for a spiritual teacher as much as an immigrant Peruvian anthropologist? And to write about it? After all, Agnes Whistling Elk told her to write a book to spread the message of her female-oriented approach to ancient shamanic wisdom.

Somehow, however, I am made uneasy by the *Medicine Woman* dust jacket blurb that says, "readers will experience it [the book] as a factual account." That sounds like a publisher prepared to say at a later date, "See, we never said it really happened. We said you'll experience it *as though* it had happened."

As Jose Cuellar points out elsewhere in this issue, Chicano activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s wanted Carlos Castaneda to endorse their efforts at cultural renaissance, symbolized by the mystical nation of Aztlan. He didn't. Andrews, however, may be cynically exploiting many women's honest desire to find feminist magical traditions by writing them to order. In *Flight of the*

Seventh Moon we find more esoteric razzle-dazzle, pan-Indianism, and direct borrowings from the European magical tradition, e.g. "on the inner lodges" instead of "on the inner planes" and a discussion of psychic shields and thoughtforms that owes more to Dion Fortune and the ceremonial magic tradition than to any Cree who ever walked on earth. They pray to seven planetary spirits—including Neptune, not visible to the naked eyes of pre-contact Crees, but not including Saturn, which was. Ruby, who's been keeping up with Castaneda, notes that "some medicine men have four winds to help them."

Agnes and her Cree-speaking friends continue to sprinkle their excellent English with Lakota words; there is not one genuinely Algonkian/Cree phrase in either book.

For all their knowledge, Andrews and her teachers do even less with it than Carlos, Don Juan and that group did. Ruby and Agnes are supposed to be contemporary shamans, but their skill is not shown as being at the service of their tribe. In real life, as we have observed, the reputation of being an effective magical practitioner is insurance that one will rarely get to eat a meal without interruption.

What these two books suggest is an act of literary creation performed by someone who has read and partially digested much of the popular literature on Western American (but not necessarily Canadian) Indian religion, then invented some charmingly irascible Indian women from a distant place to re-tell it. Those women readers who, seeking a religious path with equality and a specifically feminine power, think, "This is it!" are being ripped off the worst.

After Andrews, it is a relief to deal with a novel that says it is a novel. Brian Bates's *The Way of Wyrđ* attempts to recreate the teaching of an Anglo-Saxon wizard (to use a good Old English word meaning shaman) in those shadowy centuries between the dissolution of Romano-Celtic Britain and the 11th-century Norman conquest.

Bates, who teaches psychology at the University of Sussex, describes this novel as "psychological archaeology." He writes in the Preface that it is based on *Lacnunga*, a compendium of Pagan-Christian "leechcraft and wort-cunning," that is, herbal lore, prayers and spells, recipes and curing techniques. The manuscript now in the British Museum dates from the 10th century, but contains material dated by scholars to at least the two previous centuries—a wonderful blend of Teutonic, Greek, Celtic, Roman, even Arabic theurgy, medicine and magic. (In some cases, notably the Celtic and Arabic material, words and phrases have been copied by rote without direct knowledge of their meaning, as the copyists' distortions show.) Some researchers, such as J.H.G. Grattan and Charles Singer, saw in *Lacnunga* signs of two or more authors, one more Pagan (probably a practicing "leech," or curer), one a Christian, either a monk or a layman attached to a monastery.

Although *Lacnunga* contains some "shamanic" elements, such as a powerfully evocative chant used during a cure for elf-shot, or magical shooting, it is pretty much a hodgepodge, and Bates overstates the case in implying it reveals a coherent system of Anglo-Saxon magical practice. So, he turns comparativist: "The second line of research [into Anglo-Saxon practice allegedly revealed by *Lacnunga*] concerned humanistic and transpersonal theories of psychological development, altered states of consciousness and psychological studies of traditional Eastern spiritual disciplines." In other words, borrowing and guesswork. For in truth, what else could he have done in reconstructing "a Western way of psychological and spiritual liberation?"

The spirit of the shaman of UCLA is upon this book. Instead of "Carlos" the anthropologist, Wat Brand the novice monk is sent on a mission in the late 600s to the Pagan south coast of England. There was such a mission of monks from a Christian Saxon kingdom; whether or not a young monk would have been sent alone into the

interior on an assignment to learn all he could about the Pagan deities and their priesthood is historically questionable. Christian missionaries of that era were not committed ethnographers, and these were Saxons preaching to Saxons: any Pagan practices were not that far in the past. Instead of Don Juan, he arranges to meet Wulf the shaman, who takes him gathering "power plants" (another Castanedaism), speaks enigmatically, frees Wat's psychic "fibres" (like Juan and Genaro, he learned to "jump" along them), arranges confrontations with powerful female figures, etc. Instead of clutching anthropological objectivity, Wat clutches Christianity.

But is *The Way of Wyrd* a good read? Yes. For one thing, even as Wat meets the spirits, journeys to other realms, and absorbs Wulf's learning and way of life, his imminent return to the Christian world is always in the background, until he is forced to make at least a provisional choice between the two.

Is it "Anglo-Saxon sorcery?" Who knows? Oddly, after perfunctory encounters in the first chapter, the old English deities are hardly mentioned, which does not square with some of the related Norse writing (Norse Pagan religion having a more extensive literature, due to cultural conservatism and later Christian conversion). At the core of Bates's reconstruction is the concept of "wyrd," (the word that became modern English "weird"), seen in Old English writing as a sort of unknowable Fate—in *Beowulf* the phrase "if wyrd is willing" modifies warriors' boasts. Bates sees it as the invisible web connecting all beings and events in the cosmos, a plausible 7th-century esoteric interpretation. Nevertheless, his language and concepts show more reliance on the non-Anglo-Saxon portion of his extensive bibliography, notably on Castaneda and the standard works of Joan Halifax and Michael Harner on non-European shamanism. In the end, despite the cosmetic changes, the talk of elves and runes, it is hard to say if *The Way of Wyrd*

really captures the sense of Germanic Paganism, even while telling a likeable tale of a young seeker tossed between conflicting world views.

NOTES

1. An accessible translation is Robert Graves's, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux in 1951.

2. *Castaneda's Journey: The Power and the Allegory*. Santa Barbara, California: Capra Press, 1976. (P.O. Box 2068, Santa Barbara, Calif., 93120); *The Don Juan Papers*. Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson Publishers, 1980. (629 State St., Santa Barbara, Calif. 93101).

3. I attended one of these lectures in January 1970 as a freshman at Reed College in Oregon. Like my classmates, I was struck by Castaneda's "ordinariness"—we took that quality as proof of his validity. No beaded shaman, in his conservative blue suit he looked like one of my high school Spanish teachers.

When Magic Fails: *Rationalization in North American Shamanism*

By Linda Miller Van Blerkom

Introduction

Few topics in North American culture arouse as much interest as does shamanism. Ethnographers have described shamans, their methods, and equipment in great detail. While many writers have concerned themselves with the shamans' world views, or with identifying universal elements in shamanism, the concern of this paper is rather with how the shaman copes with failure and how, in the broader view, shamanism harmonizes with a surrounding culture oriented toward acquiring life's necessities by practical means. In other words, how can the belief in the supernatural

powers of the "medicine man" be reconciled with the prevailing pragmatic world view found in hunting and gathering societies?

That "supernatural" techniques can be efficacious (or not) is not debated here. If one believes that something like natural selection operates in cultural evolution, then shamanism's survival argues for its utility: as an institution it is virtually universal among hunting peoples. But sometimes people fail to acquire power or the shaman fails to cure or to locate game or to foresee the future accurately—and supposedly invulnerable individuals do die. As I will show, there are a number of ready rationalizations both shamans and others use when magic doesn't work.

Methodology

The Human Relations Area Files were used as the major source of ethnographic materials. Only native North American cultures which were scored in Murdock's Ethnographic Atlas (1962-7) as procuring 0 to 5 percent of their subsistence from agriculture or animal husbandry. Native accounts of and stories about shamanism, together with the informants' reactions and rationalizations, make up the majority of the evidence. Statements in response to questions and ethnographers' opinions are used to a lesser extent. Accounts by shamans themselves are rare, however, because they often were reluctant to discuss these matters with skeptical observers. Clark Wissler recorded that a Blackfoot shaman felt he had to pray to his spirits for permission before he could relate his experiences.[1] Nevertheless, the shaman is a product of his culture and employs the same excuses for his failure as do others.

I used the words shaman, medicine man, and doctor interchangeably: what is of interest is the individual with supernatural power, hence members of medicine societies, vision seekers and others not considered shamans in the strict sense are also included.

Belief and Rationalization

The frequent use by shamans of legerdemain, ventriloquism and other tricks suggests that there might be difference between how the shaman views his task and how others see it. But are the people really fooled? And does the shaman himself view his performances as tricks?

Ethnographic accounts are full of statements that make it clear shamans are not entirely successful at fooling people. A Gros Ventre woman told John M. Cooper the following story:

I could see this medicine man's house from where I lived... During the day I saw this man and his wife walking together straight ahead without looking back. When I

saw them do so the third time I began to think they were up to something. So I waited and watched, and when they went the fourth time and had gotten as far as my corral, I ran over to their house.

"Sure enough by their bed was a bowl, covered. I ran over and uncovered it. The bag from the end of the guts was in water in this bowl and I said to myself, 'Sure enough. That is just what I thought. He is up to something. He is preparing this "cancer" or whatever it is that he is going to pull out of that sick woman.'" [2]

The woman told her husband, Little Man, what she had seen and they both went to watch the curing.

"Little Man sat by the door of the lodge. The man did his medicine work. He always had a white handkerchief and a black one. He would kind of do things under that black handkerchief. Of course he did it so quickly that you could hardly see what he was doing. Sure enough, however, he had that thing I had told my husband about and he pretended he had taken it out of the woman."

It is obvious that the woman quoted does not believe in the power of that shaman anymore. But often the medicine man is still respected even when the trick is known. Here is a story about a famous Nootka chief who was supposedly resurrected from the dead:

"Before he went in the house, he had cut his tongue to fill a fish bladder with blood. He had concealed the bladder in his mouth, and, when he pretended to fall dead, bit the bladder so that it burst, and blood streamed from his mouth. The people gathered around him and felt of his body. It was still cold, after all day in the water (the chief had sat in cold water all day in order to fake the coldness of a dead body). They wrapped him up in mats and took him to his house. The young chief had instructed his mother and four companions; when his body was brought in, they emptied a box of blankets and stuffed him into it, lashed up the box and took it to a burial cave. As soon as the crowd of mourners left, the four helpers cut the lashings to let him out.'" [3]

It is evident, then, that some explanation must be found for how the people can be aware of the attempts of the medicine men to fool them and yet have faith in their abilities. Skepticism was present, but it was aimed at certain individuals only, not at the institution of shamanism itself. John Cooper suggests that in the more recent, post-contact situation, such skepticism may be associated with demands for increased payments to doctors.[4] This is not as problematical in cultures where the shaman employs trance in his seances and curing, as among the Eskimo. Boas felt that the *angakut* of the central Eskimo believed in their performances, for while in the ecstatic state they really believed they had accomplished their journeys into the spirit world.[5] But the trance state is not as important in some North American cultures as it is in the Arctic.

In other societies, belief in the medicine is a prerequisite to obtaining it, as this account of a Blackfoot medicine man illustrates:

"This is about the Cree medicine [that is, love medicine]. When I was a young man I began to think of picking out a young girl for myself. Finally, I came to have one particular girl in mind and always thought of her, but she never took notice of me. Then I heard of a man who had power to make love medicine. So I took a horse and went over to his camp. I entered his tipi and after a time told him what I wished. He said to me, Do you believe this medicine has power? If you believe in it I will give it to you.' I told him that I did believe in it, but the old man repeated this question several times. Each time I protested that I did believe in it.'"[6]

There is no special frame of reference that the shaman uses to rationalize his tricks and failures, but rather he is the product of his culture and its beliefs, and consequently has the same attitudes and rationalizations as the rest. This was particularly true on the Plains, where all men sought the guardian spirit and there was no separate class of shaman. There are, however, several types of rationalization used by both medicine man and audience

when an expected supernatural effect does not occur. The most common excuse is malevolent sorcery. The power of the evil shaman was often considered to be greater than that of the curing shaman. One would be hard pressed to find a North American culture that does not share this belief. A paradoxical complement to this belief is that the practice of evil magic can be given as the reason for a shaman's failure as well: for instance, the Nez Perce belief was that "if you start killing people you'll lose your power." [7] Any kind of immorality, and especially the breaking of the rules associated with one's power, jeopardizes supernatural ability in virtually every society studied. This paradox can be reconciled if one believes that doing evil is a requirement of the sorcerer's allied spirits; that is, just as some medicine men have to acquire the feathers of a certain bird, or perform a regular ritual act in order to preserve their abilities, so other shamans are required to "shoot" people.

A failure of the shaman's medicine could also be blamed on a mistake made by a relative, either alive or dead. When a Saulteaux man who could not pass his urine freely failed to get better, the doctor managed to get this confession from the patient's mother:

"I don't know. Perhaps it is true. A long while ago there were four of us playing together—two boys and two girls. I was only a little girl then. We had made a little wigwam and we were playing that we were camping like the old folks. Of course I did not know that I was doing anything wrong. I had a little thimble belonging to my mother and I was sewing. One of the little boys was lying down and I was lying down too. His little penis was standing erect. I took the thimble and shoved it on the end of his penis. Then I told him to go and piss. He said, 'I can't. I can't. It's too tight. It hurts.' Then he started to cry a little. So I took the thimble off and we told him not to tell." [8]

The shaman replied, "I thought there was something that stopped the medicine from

working.” In another case among the same people, a man was suffering from pains in the waist, for which the medicine man’s treatment had done no good, and it was discovered in a seance that the man’s deceased father had one time dressed a dead man for burial and had pulled the belt too tight. When the presumed transgressor is dead, as in this story, the shaman has great latitude in finding an excuse. But usually the transgressor is alive, and the shaman then prescribes penance, which incidentally gives the doctor time before being put on the spot again.

Another very common rationalization is that the shaman’s spirits are either not willing or powerless to help the situation. Many doctors consequently “test” their power first (and presumably have a look at the patient) in order to find out if the spirits are willing. The following is an example from the Canadian Ojibwas of an occasion on which the spirits were powerless:

“I once helped to erect a Idjiskan [conjuring lodge] so that a conjurer might discover why a certain child was ill. We heard the *manidos* say to one another inside the lodge, ‘We cannot do anything. The child will have to die.’ The child died.”[9]

Another excuse is simply, “You should have called me sooner,” as with white doctors.

In those cultures where the vision quest conferred power, sometimes the fault lay with a bad vision. This type of excuse was more commonly used to explain the failure of war power:

“Some are deceived by visions, go out on the warpath and get killed, but not many are fooled about doctoring. Wraps-Up-His-Tail slept near Sheridan, had visions, and told everyone, yet he was killed. Sometimes everything told in a vision is false; perhaps some animal plays the part of another. It never happened that old men detected the deceit in a vision and warned the visionary when he told them. They only find out what happens later.”[10]

Established power can be lost if a mistake

is made in caring for the paraphernalia. And if the people do not exactly obey the instructions of the shaman while he is doctoring, both the patient and the doctor can be affected, as this case from the Paviotso illustrates:

“Pete Powell was doctoring in Yerington. People did not do what he told them. Ever since he has been paralyzed. He can’t talk anymore and he is always sick. He doesn’t doctor anymore. I guess he has no more power.”[11]

And if a doctor combines the methods of different groups, an unsuccessful outcome can be blamed on the lack of a “pure” technique.

A nearly universal rationalization is that the shamans of the past were more powerful than those of today. In the words of one Arapaho, “In early years there were many old men that had strong medicine.’ Now there isn’t one left who has strong medicine.”[12] Many groups blame the coming of the white man for the degeneration of power. One of Drucker’s Nootka informants had been seeking visions for years; his mother had been a shaman and had told him exactly what to do to become one himself, but his attempts had brought him no power. When he asked his aunt if his mother had been lying to him, she replied that the truth was that it was harder to have supernatural experiences now because there were more white man’s goods and customs in use.[13] More likely, belief in some past golden age of power predated white contact and the presence of white customs is just a convenient addition to the excuse.

It also is believed that too much success strains the magical abilities. This is good excuse for otherwise renowned shamans. The following story was collected among the Ojibwa of Parry Island:

“Brown Thunder was a great medicine man who cured many sick people. He cured a sick girl at Mikoganda Island, and traveled with her people to Lake Superior. He cured also a man who fell sick during the journey. On reaching Lake Superior he found in a

large camp of Indians a wounded man whom all the local medicine men had tried in vain to cure. Brown Thunder healed him ... He then went down to Badjewinong, near Sault Ste. Marie, at the outlet of Lake Superior, where a witch was killing a youth who had refused to marry her. Through his medicine power Brown Thunder forced the witch to cure the youth ... he lingered along the route, endeavoring to cure all the sick he encountered ... But when he continued his journey someone again spoke to him, saying, "Brown Thunder, this is the end of your power. You have cured the sick too often." [14]

It was quite common for certain very strong shamans to be considered invulnerable. When they died, some explanation was required. Sometimes they predicted the day of their death, and achieved some further distinction by expiring on that day. The death of others was explained by their having one particularly vulnerable spot, usually that part of the body where their power resided.

Among those groups that ascribe illness to soul loss, a rationalization for the doctor's failure to cure is that the soul has gone too far away:

"Captain Dave [a Paviotso] was almost dead. His mind was gone. Two shamans were doctoring him. They quit because they could do nothing for him. People brought Bull Tom to doctor Captain Dave. Bull Tom said, I am going to lie down here. I am going to find him. I do not know how long he has been gone. Maybe it is too long." [15]

Another way a medicine man can save face when the patient dies is by predicting the time of death:

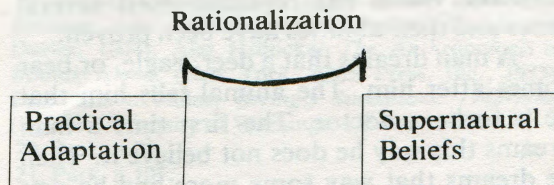
"When my sister was sick, Mom asked a medicine man to sing for her. He came and sang for her, but he said that she was going to die in three days. My sister died on the morning of the third day." [16]

Certain Ojibwa medicine men could perform only on those days on which their *manido* was in control. When a conjuring was required, a pipe was passed around a

circle of shamans, and if it remained unsmoked that meant that each medicine man's powers were inoperative on that day. [17]

Finally, there was the Crow medicine man who had many powers, among them the ability to keep his tobacco supply from ever running low. "When his tobacco was being consumed by himself, he managed to maintain his supply, but not if someone else smoked it." [18]

It should be evident that the possibilities for rationalization are limited only by human inventiveness. Rationalization is successful at maintaining faith in the face of seeming disproof and in societies where the efficacy of a technique can mean life or death. The situation can be schematically shown:



Rationalization is like a suspension bridge, spanning the gap. It allows a rich and imaginative belief system to co-exist with the practical exigencies of survival. The success of such a mechanism is inversely proportional to the amount of discrepancy between a society's belief system and the reality imposed upon it by the environment. Rationalization is successful in maintaining faith only when the distance between the means necessary for successful adaptation and one's world view is not too great. For example, using divination to find game presumably works better where animals are more abundant, and consequently such cultures have well-developed methods with concomitant systems of rationalizations for use when they fail. In areas where the relationship of humans to the environment is more tenuous, supernatural means probably

“fail” more frequently, and the ethos of such a culture is oriented more towards pragmatic flexibility than that of hunters in general.

The Arctic and the Great Basin are two such culture areas. The native peoples of these areas do have supernatural belief systems, and they also employ rationalization as a means to integrate them into the cultural adaptation. But close examination of their magical systems in comparison with other culture areas suggests that ideas about the supernatural are less well developed and that skepticism is more prevalent. Some anthropologists have judged that magic and religion are conspicuous by their absence among traditional Eskimos.[19] And although the Paviotso of the Great Basin seek power through the guardian spirit quest, they are much more wary of such experiences than, say, the Plains Indians, and they doubt their power until the vision has repeated itself several times and their abilities have been proven:

“A man dreams that a deer, eagle, or bear comes after him. The animal tells him that he is to be a doctor. The first time a man dreams this way he does not believe it. Then he dreams that way some more and he gets the things the spirit told him to get. Then he learns to be a doctor. He learns his songs when the spirit comes and sings to him.”[20]

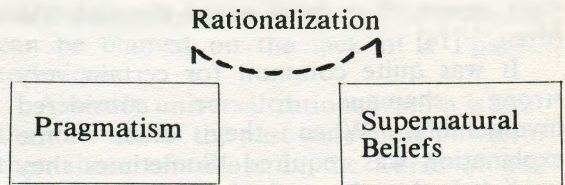
Note also that the shaman learns his doctoring methods rather than their being automatically conferred upon him in a dream. A woman informant had been taught how to cure by her father; his was rattlesnake power. After his death, she dreamed that he came to her and told her to become a shaman also, and the rattlesnake taught her songs and rituals in the dream; however, she had to dream of the snake three or four times before she believed she really was a shaman. [21]

Likewise, the people only believed in the medicine man after they had been shown proof to their personal satisfaction. Some demonstration is required in most cultures, in that the novice shaman must prove his

power, but in the Great Basin, the doctor who already has a reputation must prove his worth to every individual personally:

“The doctor would sing and see how the pain went. He would look and tell his medicine to stop it. He tried other medicines until one was strong enough. Then he was a little tired. He saw the patient again the next day. When the man got well he believed in the doctor.”[22]

To return to the model, the situation in the Arctic and Great Basin can be symbolized as:



The bridge between reality and the supernatural is weakened by having to span a great distance. The effect is that not everyone makes it across to belief, and those that do make it only do so by shoring up the system with personal proof.

Conclusion

Shamanism's widespread occurrence suggests that it fills a necessary, perhaps psychological, function in North American hunting and gathering cultures, and yet much of the people's experience might argue against the efficacy of magical methods as compared to practical ones. Therefore a paradox arises, which must be resolved if the belief system is to survive. Rationalization reconciles this opposition.

Shamanistic power must be demonstrated before it is believed in. Shamans are known to use sleight-of-hand tricks and ventriloquism in order to achieve effects, but this is considered part of the technique and it is often thought that spirits help the doctor do his tricks. Skepticism is directed usually only toward ineffectual individuals.

The shaman, as the product of his culture, views his performances and rationalizes them in the same as other people do. Noticeably deviant individuals probably are not very good at shamanizing. Many excuses can be used when an expected supernatural result is not forthcoming; most of these gain official sanction in stories about famous shamans of the past. By these means the rationalizations are built into the religious system and are less questioned. In more pragmatic societies, however, the contrast between magic and mundane reality is greater, and rationalization has a harder time harmonizing them. Therefore, a weaker general belief as well as increased individual skepticism prevails.

NOTES

1. Clark Wissler, "Ceremonial Bundles of the Black-foot Indians," *American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Papers*, VII:2 (1912) p.71.
2. John M. Cooper, "The Gros Ventres of Montana, Part II: Religion and Ritual," *Anthropological Series Number 16* (1957) p.358-9 (Washington: Catholic University of America).
3. Phillip Drucker, "The Northern and Central Nootkan Tribes," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 144*, p.162.
4. Cooper, p.360.
5. Franz Boas, *The Central Eskimo* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p.186.
6. Wissler, p.84

7. Deward E. Walker, Jr., "Sorcery Among the Nez Perce," in *Systems of North American Witchcraft and Sorcery*, ed. Deward E. Walker, Jr. (Moscow: University of Idaho, 1970), pp.267-295.

8. A Irving Hallowell, "The Role of Conjuring in Saulte Society," *Publications of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society*, II:56 (1942).

9. Diamond Jenness, "The Objibwa Indians of Parry Island. Their Social and Religious Life," *Bulletin of the Canada Department of Mines, No. 78*, (1935) p.67.

10. Robert H. Lowie, "The Religion of the Crow Indians," *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History*, XXV(1922) p.334.

11. Willard Z. Park, "Pavotso Shamanism," *American Anthropologist*, XXXVI (1934) pp.98-113.

12. M. Inez Hilger, "Arapaho Child Life and its Cultural Background," *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 148*, (1952) p.133.

13. Drucker, pp.194-6.

14. Jenness, pp.51-2.

15. Park, p.59.

16. Hiroko Sue Hara, "Hare Indians and Their World," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Bryn Mawr College, 1976.

17. Jenness, pp.60-1.

18. Lowie, p.353.

19. William Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries between Asia and America*. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1804); Ales Hrdlicka, *The Anthropology of Kodiak Island*. (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1975); Peter Simon Pallas, *Bering's Successors: 1745-1780*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1948).

20. Park, p.99

21. Park, p.101.

22. Isabel T. Kelly, "Ethnography of the Surprise Valley Paiute," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* XXXI:3, (1934) p.192.

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Book Reviews

Magic

Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic. By Edred Thorsson. xv + 156 pp., appendices, glossary, \$8.95, softcover. York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, Inc., 1984. (P.O. Box 612, York Beach, Me. 03910).

A year ago even the counters of general-interest bookstores blossomed with a set of runic divination tiles merchandised together with a guidebook to their use in divination by St. Martin's Press. Edred Thorsson's *Futhark: A Handbook of Rune Magic*, is nothing at all like that, but an effort at reconstructing a kind of north European Qaballa. The word rune apparently comes from a root meaning "secret," and like the Irish ogham was used primarily for short messages of a memorial or talismanic nature. Thorsson makes it a parallel to the term "arcana" for a Tarot trump. ("Futhark" is merely the pronunciation of the first six letters in the runic alphabet, where one symbol has the sound "th.") In his introduction he writes:

"The avowed intention of this work ... is to deal with the practical side of the half-forgotten, much neglected runic system of magic and mysticism. This is still one of the most powerful forms of metaphysical thought available to the Westerner and one which he himself developed."

He faces up to the fact that the Nazi movement has polluted any discussion of Germanic/Norse spiritual traditions, dismissing it as a "sort of pseudo-Christian messianic Manicheism." Indeed, if Thorsson is to be congratulated for any one thing it would be for shaking off the pall of Nazi associations that has hindered any discussion on all but the most scholarly level of Germanic and Norse magical and spiritual

traditions until now, insofar as anyone who brings them up still risks being labeled an "Aryan supremacist." We found that in writing this review we were tempted to find similes to his discussion of runes in the cosmological arrangements of trigrams in the *I Ching*; and in the veves of Voudoun. These may be valid comparisons, but how ironic in an English-language publication that one would have to go so far afield to find a concept to relate something that, if Thorsson is to be believed, lies still buried and potent within Euro-American culture.

No one ever wrote books in the runic alphabet, although it was used for inscriptions on buildings, weapons, personal possessions and the like. According to Thorsson, the medieval post-and-beam domestic architecture style we call "half-timbered" or "Tudor" could be and was at time originally designed to incorporate protective runs into the very framework of a house. Someone looking at the gable end of a building would see the timbers forming runs, set off by the plastered material filling in between them.

Thorsson traces the runic revival that accompanied the rise of pan-Germanic mystic nationalism in the late 19th century, and, as mentioned, poisonously flowered in Hitler's Germany. German mystics in the early 20th century even developed a runic yoga system (essentially physical postures that mimic the shape of the runes), which Thorsson diagrams. Another more benign force in the post-World War II runic revival was the formation in Iceland of the *Asatruarmenn* (those faithful to the Aesir, or Norse gods), now a recognized religious movement there with offshoots and parallel groups in the United States and Britain, to one of which Thorsson evidently adheres.

Futhark embodies the most exhaustive

recent discussion of runes we have seen in English, together with a magical system that, if reconstructionist, does appear to be coherent. We recommend it for anyone wishing to go beyond the quickie "pop" divination stage—a moderate-length bibliography is included for those who wish to draw upon the same written sources as did Thorsson.

Magic & Music: The Language of the Gods Revealed. By Juanita Wescott. Tucson, Arizona: Abbetira Publications. 144 pp., \$7.95, softcover. (P.O. Box 17600, Tucson, Ariz. 85731).

The first portion of this book in effect recapitulates much of the teaching about elemental kingdoms, astral travel, and meditation given with greater teutonic rigor in Franz Bardon's *Initiation in Hermetics*—indeed, Wescott makes clear her debt to Bardon in this work and elsewhere. In the second part she offers a system of using music—or more particularly, the vibrations of musical notes—to strengthen and add emotional power to ritual. The instrument of choice is the melodica, a blown "mouth organ" with 32 piano-style keys that easily produces a given note on pitch. The system underlying *Magic and Music* is one of Qaballistic correspondences between letters (originally Hebrew, now transposed to Roman), colors, and musical notes that was worked out by Bardon and other European ceremonial magicians. In this system, single notes or sets of three notes correspond to zodiacal signs, planets, elements, and so forth.

The remainder of the book consists of advice on ritual preparation, sample outlined workings, and a rite of self-blessing or self-initiation. With the sample rites are given the appropriate music notes to sing, play or incorporate (if one has the talent) into a longer chant or composition to increase the power of the working.

Magic & Music is clearly written, but presumes some familiarity with the ideas underlying Qaballistic philosophy. The

"jump right in" approach might be confusing to the neophyte for whom, at other times, it seems to have been written. And as mentioned, less than half of the book really deals with the magical uses of music. Although Wescott perhaps has summarized and abridged too much, the book's "personality" is low-key, honest and pragmatic and could be useful to someone with a working knowledge of the Qaballistic system of ordering the cosmos. That person, however, might find the first half of the book redundant.

Earth's Mysteries

The Rebirth of Pan: Hidden Faces of the American Earth Spirit. By Jim Brandon. Dunlap, Illinois: Firebird Press, 1984. 302 pp., illustrations and photographs, appendices, index, bibliography. \$10, paperback. (P.O. Box 69, Dunlap, Ill. 61525).

Something there is that does not love a trailer park. According to Jim Brandon's original hypothesis, it is the same "something" that produces mystery beasts (Mothman, Loch Ness Monster, Sasquatch, Springheel Jack, and friends), UFO sightings, allegedly prehistoric earthworths and postulated networks of telluric energy lines—not to mention the Midwestern tornados that so often seem to zero in on trailer parks. The Earth, Brandon proposes, is a gigantic superorganism with intelligence—and a will—of its own. This intelligence is shown not so much as the benign Gaia, but the trickster Pan, who reacts to civilization's injuries to the biosphere with ever-increasing "pranks." Various coincidences noted by collectors of odd events get their due attention: "23" and "33," archaeological anomalies, cycles of wars and disasters, megalithic mysteries, and more.

Rather than finding explanations in the acts of ancient astronauts or ocean-voyaging

peoples whom conventional archaeology has yet to acknowledge, Brandon says these occurrences are manifestations of a spirit "coiling and roiling in the bowels of the earth." That earth spirit—Pan—becomes increasingly annoyed at humanity's meddlings and reacts in ways both whimsical (constructing archaeological puzzles) and angry (causing large-scale industrial accidents, tornadoes, earthquakes, etc.).

Like all Fortean-type books, *The Rebirth of Pan* will be enjoyed by those who suspect there is more "out there" than the intellectual gatekeepers of scientific disciplines and the news media of record pay attention to. Whether one accepts Brandon's version or not (we don't), *The Rebirth of Pan* serves also as a compendium of mysteries and embarrassing questions that archaeology, geology and other disciplines have not convincingly explained.

Twilight of the Gods. By Michael Baran. Sunrise, Florida: Exposition Press. ix + 144 pp., \$10.50, cloth. (P.O. Box 130063, Sunrise, Fla. 33313).

Unlike Jim Brandon, above, Michael Baran is convinced that many questions about prehistory can be explained by reference to vanished civilizations, i.e. Atlantis and Lemuria (the latter was situated somewhere in the present Pacific Ocean, according to advocates of its existence). In this, his third book on the topic, the author (apparently a Massachusetts physician writing under a penname) does argue that these ancient peoples tapped inner-earth forces which current civilizations do not understand. In fact, he argues, they lived underground: the various Southwestern Pueblo and Navajo legends of emergence into the surface world (this world) are to be taken literally. Unfortunately for skeptics, the work mixes some scientific observation with the tales spun by H.P. Blavatsky, Ruth Montgomery and her spirit guides, and other creators of the modern esoteric "lost civilizations" mythos. Although his attempt

to gain historical data from ancient legends follows in the steps of Velikovsky and others, Michael Baran probably won't be granted even the occasional re-hearing granted to Velikovsky.

Metaphysics and Self-Help

A Garden of Virtues. By Sidney J. Taylor. Huntington Park, California: New Age World, 1983. v + 67 pages, \$5.50, paperback. (P.O. Box 3086, Huntington Park, Calif. 90255).

Taylor, a retired banker, organizes this homiletic collection under such headings as "Sensitivity," "Silence," "Simplicity," and so forth. Meant to be dipped into a page at a time for spiritual rather than read straight through.

Metaphysics: The Science of Life. By Anthony J. Fisichella. St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1984. xxix + 284 pages, index. \$8.95, paperback. (P.O. Box 64383, St. Paul, Minn. 55164).

Fisichella is an often-encountered writer in the metaphysical press. This work, part of the greater Theosophical tradition, sums up his views on the nature of the cosmos, reincarnation, the progress of the soul, and the place of the metaphysician in the modern world. The book is thorough-going or tedious, depending on one's point of view, and it is hard not to agree with the observation made on p.192 that, "In the occult field, a new language form is long overdue." There is little here that Madame Blavatsky and her immediate followers and imitators have not already said.

The Bright Angel Within You. By Eleanor Wright. Belen, New Mexico: Self-Published. 30 pp., \$2.95, paperback. (Distributed by New Age World Services & Books, P.O. Box 3086, Huntington Park, Calif. 90255.)

A short book on how to "get out of your

own way” and achieve harmony and communication with the soul or higher self, the “bright angel” of the title.

The Eternal Dance: Reincarnation, Hypnosis and Spiritual Synthesis. By LaVedi Lafferty and Bub Hollowell. St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications, 1983. 510 pages, bibliography, index. \$9.95, paperback. (P.O. Box 64383, St. Paul, Minn. 55164).

A fast-moving introduction to the concepts of progressive reincarnation within a group “family” of souls who incarnate together—which according to the author is how it happens. Readers of Marcia Moore’s *Hypersentience* or of Dick Sutphen’s *You Were Born Again to be Together* will find the discussion familiar. While high-spirited and consciously humorous, *The Eternal Dance* does attempt to give answers to the

perennial questions about evil actions in the world, why some people are born with afflictions, and so on. Its message might be described as “gnostic pragmatism.”

That Which Is. Clifton, New Jersey: Bethsheva’s Concern, 1983. 213 pp., \$2.95, paperback. (P.O. Box 276, Clifton, N.J. 07011).

The author of *That Which Is* would reconcile “the Way of Jesus” with “the Way of the East,” seeking to go past the “veil of Maya,” as Eastern religions have termed the intellectual grids by which we attempt (ultimately unsuccessfully) to comprehend the universe, and to reach the Ultimate Reality, the “That Which Is” of the title. A genuine mystical journey blending Christian and Hindu thought.



Contributors to this Issue

PHIL CARSON prefers to take Carlos Castaneda's advice and erase personal history. He gets his mail in Denver.

CHAS S. CLIFTON is a graduate student in religious studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder and co-editor of *Iron Mountain*.

JOSE CUELLAR now teaches at Stanford University. Since the publication of the 1978 *Boulder Magazine* interview, he has said he encountered Carlos Castaneda, incognito, in the audience of a symposium on Castaneda's works held in Mexico City.

MICHAEL McNIERNEY is editorial director of Johnson Books, a publishing firm in Boulder, Colorado.

PATRICK McNIERNEY travels the Rocky Mountain West as a representative for the publishing firm of E.P. Dutton.

LINDA MILLER VAN BLERKOM will receive her Ph.D. in anthropology in May from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Announcements

Iron Mountain: A Journal of Magical Religion No. 1, Summer 1984. Contents include: "Spinning the Medicine Wheel: The Bear Tribe in the Catskills," plus a poem by noted Native American editor Joseph Bruchac; "Inventing Witchcraft: The Gardnerian Papertrail," by Aidan Kelly, presenting Gerald Gardner as co-creator rather than inheritor of revived British Wicca; and "Pagan Renaissance and Wiccan Witchcraft in Industrial Society," a paper by George Kirkpatrick, Kathryn Rubi and Rich Rainey. Also included, a chapter, "Myth, Ritual and Symbolism," from Janet and Stewart Farrar's *The Witches' Way*. Send \$5 (includes postage) to Artemisia Press, P.O. Box 2282, Boulder, Colorado 80306.

OCCULT DIRECTORY

Guide to associations, organizations and publications. Available by mail from the distributors: Morrigan Book Company, Killala, Co. Mayo, Ireland. Enclose I.R. £3 or equivalent (includes postage) with your order.

Pagana, newsletter of the Pagan-Occult-Witchcraft Special Interest Group of Mensa. Articles, news, letters, more. \$12 for six issues from Pagans SIG, P.O. Box 9494, San Jose, California 95157.

NEW WICCAN JOURNAL SEEKING SUBMISSIONS

Deosil: A Journal of Traditional Wicca is seeking submissions by Craft folk for her initial issue, on the following subjects:

- creative mythology
- creative and Traditional ritual
- Traditional theology, including the hermeneutics of Traditional texts
- Traditional Wiccan practice.

No oathbound material will be accepted at this time, although an oathbound supplement is being considered if there is sufficient interest. This will eliminate the necessity for requiring written verification of initiation from subscribers.

Deosil will be printed four times a year, on the cross-quarters. The magazine will be 8 1/2 x 11 inches, reduced by photocopy process. Art will be accepted that requires offset printing if the quality of the artwork merits the expense. Subscription will be on an issue-by-issue basis, with reservation rates to be announced when the print run is estimated. Tentative date for the first issue is Lughnasadh 1985 CE.

The editor is high priestess of a Gardnerian coven, a national officer of Covenant of the Goddess, Inc., and has editing experience.

Send submissions (typewritten, double-spaced) with sufficient postage for return to Meredydd Barrowman-Harper, P.O. Box 27484, Concord, California 94527.

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