

ASHÉ!

JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Summer 2005



2005 FINALISTS
ASHÉ BOOK AWARD

Table of Contents

2005 Ashé Journal Book Award Finalists:

| | |
|--|-----|
| There Is No Trash, <i>Soko Morinaga</i> | 3 |
| There Was a Child Went Forth, <i>Will Roscoe</i> | 9 |
| The Shamanic Way of the Bee, <i>Simon Buxton</i> | 13 |
| To Make the Spirit Manifest: Eric K. Lerner/Adekun, <i>Randy Conner & David Hatfield Sparks</i> | 23 |
| The Foliage of Superior Insight, <i>Karl Brunnbözl</i> | 31 |
| No Matter How My Journey Ends, <i>Patrick Frank</i> | 59 |
| The Magick of Saints, <i>Adekun</i> | 61 |
| The Artist and the Tidal Wave: How Dreams Can Save Your Creative Life, <i>John D. Goldhammer</i> | 71 |
| Tales of Hindu Devilry: The Vikram Vetala, <i>Mogg Morgan</i> | 75 |
| A CEO and a Monk, <i>Swami Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta</i> | 87 |
| most sorry ass zen idiot, <i>borebound stillpoint</i> | 97 |
| SLAM! Interview with Emanuel Xavier | 100 |
| Tritiya-Prakriti Review, <i>Syamansundara dasa</i> | 107 |
| Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path Review | 109 |
| Sam in Samsara Review, <i>Trebor Healey</i> | 111 |
| Reviews | 113 |
| New & Notable | 133 |

Cover Design: Sven Davisson

ASHÉ

JOURNAL OF
EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Summer 2005, Volume IV, Number 2

EDITOR:

Sven Davisson

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Eric K. Lerner

Bobby Shiflett

Diane Chase

FRIENDS & ADVISORS

Baba Raul Canizares

Christopher DeVere

Peter Fuerst

Trebor Healey

William J. Malay

Mogg Morgan

Amara dasa Wilhelm

Ashé Journal was founded in 2002 by independent religious scholars, spiritual experimenters and investigators of new religious movements. The Journal is published quarterly—issues distributed online in HTML, downloadable PDF and print formats.

PRINT COPIES Current and back issues are available from Lulu Press <http://www.lulu.com/ashe-prem/>

SUBMISSIONS We encourage unsolicited submissions of original articles, fiction, poetry, photography and artwork. Electronic versions of submissions may be sent to submit@ashejournal.com. Please send material as an attached file not in the body of the email. For text documents MSWord is preferred.

ADVERTISING For information and rates contact the editor.

BOOK REVIEWS Publishers and authors may send review copies for consideration to the Journal's editorial offices, attn: Book Review Editor.

COPYRIGHT All rights reserved. Reproduction, storage or transmission of this work in any form or by any means beyond that permitted by Section 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law is unlawful without prior permission of the Publisher or the author.

DISCLAIMER The Publisher and Editors cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequence arising from the use of information contained in the Journal; the views and opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Publisher or Editors.

EDITORIAL OFFICES

P.O. Box 363

Hulls Cove, ME 04609

WEBSITE

www.ashejournal.com

2005 Ashé Journal Book Award

Ashé Journal is proud to announce the establishment of a book award for spiritual nonfiction.

The inaugural annual award is given in honor of Baba Raul Canizares. Canizares was one of the founding spiritual advisors to the Ashé project. He was a respected spiritual leader, author, artist and scholar. The Cuban born Canizares left a successful career in academia to devote himself full-time to his roll as a Santerian priest (santero). He passed away in 2002.

Journal editors chose five works as finalists for this years award. Eligible books included non-fiction works published between January 1 and December 31, 2004 that focused on a spiritual theme (historical, auto/biographical, scholarly, philosophical or devotional).

A selection from each chosen work follow. Selection of the final award recipient will be based on reader selection. Voting will be conducted online via the Journal's web portal (<http://www.ashejournal.com>) and will commence with the issue's release. The Award winner will be announced in the Fall issue, September.



The 2005 Finalists Are:

Novice to Master: An Ongoing Lesson In the Extent of My Own Stupidity,
Soko Morinaga, Translated by Belinda Attaway Yamakawa
(Wisdom Publications)

The Shamanic Way of the Bee, Simon Buxton (Inner Traditions)

Jesus & The Shamanic Tradition of Same-Sex Love, Will Roscoe
(Suspect Thoughts)

*Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and
Transgender Participation in African-Inspired Traditions in the Americas*,
Randy Conner & David Hatfield Sparks (Harrington Park Press)

The Center of the Sunlit Sky: Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition, Karl
Brunnhölzl (Snow Lion Publications)

There Is No Trash

Soko Morinaga

“Follow me,” directed the roshi, and he assigned me my first task: to clean the garden. Together with this seventy-year-old master, I went out to the garden and started sweeping with a bamboo broom. Zen temple gardens are carefully designed with trees planted to ensure that leaves will fall throughout the entire year; not only the maples in autumn but also the oaks and the camphors in spring regularly shed their foliage. When I first arrived, in April, the garden was full of fallen leaves.



The human being (or, my own mind, I should say) is really quite mean. Here I was, inside my heart denouncing this “old fool” and balking at the very idea of trusting so easily; yet, at the same time, I wanted this old man to notice me, and so took up that broom and swept with a vengeance. Quite soon I had amassed a mountain of dead leaves. Eager to show off my diligence, I asked, “Roshi, where should I throw this trash?”

The words were barely out of my mouth when he thundered back at me, “*There is no trash!*”

“No trash, but...look here,” I tried to indicate the pile of leaves.

“So you don’t believe me! Is that it?”

“It’s only that, well, where should I throw out these leaves?” That was all that was left for me to say.

“You don’t throw them out!” he roared again.

“What should I do then?” I asked.

“Go out to the shed and bring back an empty charcoal sack,” was his instruction.

When I returned, I found Roshi bent to the task of combing through the mountain of leaves, sifting so that the lighter leaves came out on top while the heavier sand and stones fell to the bottom. He then proceeded to stuff the leaves into the sack I had brought from the shed, tamping them down with his feet. After he had jammed the last leaves tightly into the sack, he said, “Take these to the shed. We’ll use them to make a fire under the bath.”

As I went off to the shed, I silently admitted that this sack of leaves over my shoulder was perhaps not trash; but I also told myself that what was left of that pile out there in the garden was clearly trash, and nothing but trash. I got back, though, only to find Roshi squatting over the remains of the leaf pile, picking out the stones. After he had carefully picked out the last stone, he ordered, “Take these out and arrange them under the rain gutters.”

When I had set out the stones, together with the gravel that was already there, and filled in the spaces pummeled out by the raindrops, I found that not only were the holes filled but that my work looked rather elegant. I had to allow that these stones, too, failed to fall into the category of trash. There was still more, though: the clods of earth and scraps of moss, the last dregs. Just what could anyone possibly do with that stuff, I wondered.

I saw Roshi going about his business, gathering up these scraps and placing them, piece by piece, in the palm of his hand. He scanned the ground for dents and sinks; he filled them in with the clods of earth, which he then tamped down with his feet. Not a single particle remained of the mountain of leaves.

“Well?” he queried, “Do you understand a little bit better now? From the first, in people and in things, there is no such thing as trash.”

This was the first sermon I ever heard from Zuigan Roshi. Although it did make an impression on me, unfortunately, I was not keen enough to attain any great awakening as a result of simply hearing these words.

From the first, in people and in things, there is no such thing as trash. These words point to the fundamental truth of Buddhism, a truth I could not as yet conceive in those days.

“Wonder of wonders! Intrinsically all living beings are buddhas, endowed with wisdom and virtue. Only because they cling to their delusive thinking do they fail to realize this.” This was Shakyamuni Buddha’s exclamation at the instant of his enlightenment. To put it in other words, all beings are, from the first, absolutely perfect, but because people are attached to deluded notions, they cannot perceive this innate buddha-nature.

In the classical Chinese sutras it is written that Shakyamuni said, “I attained buddhahood together with all the grasses, the trees, and the great earth.”

In a split second, the mist before his eyes cleared, and Shakyamuni Buddha could see the true form of reality. “Up to now, I thought all beings in this world were living only in pain and misery, in deep unhappiness. But, in reality, aren’t all beings, just as they are, living in buddhahood, living in a state of absolute perfection? And doesn’t this apply not only to those who are healthy and sound of body, but also to those who are blind, to those without hands, to the ones who are barely dragging themselves along? Isn’t each and every one, just exactly as he or she presently is, a perfect and flawless being?” Awed and astonished, the Buddha called out in the voice of satori.

Every year, I go to Hokkaido to lecture, and one year, there was a woman present who asked to meet me after the talk. The young woman, an ardent believer in Christianity, had this to say: “Listening to your talk today, I could see that about all Buddhism tells us to do is throw away our desires. On the other hand, Christianity says, ‘Ask, and it shall be

given you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and the door shall be opened to you.’ This teaching answers the hopes of young people like myself. What do you think about this, Roshi?”

I answered her with a question of my own. “Is that to say that no matter how you knock, no matter how you seek, you shall receive and the door will be opened to you? Is it not the case that unless one knocks and seeks in a way that is in accord with the heart of God, the door surely will *not* be opened, nor will one’s desires be granted?”

I have heard the Christian teaching, “You devise your way, but God directs your steps”—you desire and choose and seek as you please, but it is God who decides whether or not your wishes are to be granted.

So, too, Buddhism does not say only to throw away all desire, to toss aside all seeking. It is especially in the Zen sect that we seek, that we knock at that door through a practice so intensive as to be like carving up our very bones. Buddhism points out, however, that after all the seeking, what we attain is the realization that what we have sought was always, from the first, already ours; after all the pounding away, we awaken to the fact that the door was already open before we ever began to knock.

So you see, Zuigan Roshi pointed out the most basic truth right from the start when he said, “From the first, in people and in things, there is no such thing as trash.” Unfortunately, I did not understand him. I went on pretending to be a disciple who trusts his roshi, while inside my heart I criticized and resisted. To tell you the truth, I found almost everything he said irritating.

Excerpt from *Novice to Master: An Ongoing Lesson in the Extent of My Own Stupidity*, translated by Belenda Attaway Yamakawa. Reprinted with permission of Wisdom Publications.

Soko Morinaga (1925-1995) received the seal of dharma transmission from Sessō Ōta Roshi and served as head of Hanazono University.

There Was a Child Went Forth

Will Roscoe, Ph.D.

In 1979, I attended a retreat where Hay passionately presented his idea concerning subject-subject consciousness and called on us as gay men to foster it. At that event I discovered I was not alone in yearning to incorporate a spiritual outlook into my life. For many of us, a spiritual inclination began in childhood with a fantasy life that included talking to trees and animals, and inventing rituals. As we shared these experiences at the 1979 retreat, we realized that gay spirituality begins with reclaiming the child-like awareness we had before the crippling and stifling influence of homophobia penetrated our lives. Whitman had a similar intuition and frequently celebrated boyhood. In “There was a Child Went Forth,” he describes the child’s awareness in terms that resonate with Hay’s concept of subject-subject:

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look’d upon, that object he
became,
And that object became part of him

But in 1979 adhesive love and subject-subject consciousness were ideals not realities. In those years, it was difficult to see anything



redeeming in the way that gay men were pursuing love. The activist, experimental era of gay liberation was over. A grassroots movement of volunteer and self-help organizations was being replaced by agencies staffed with professionals. Gay marches had become gay parades, and gay social life was shifting from public and community-organized events to commercial venues.

Discussions of gay love gave way to a narrower focus on sexuality. Self-identified sex radicals claimed that simply having gay sex challenged the social system, while moderates claimed that sex was the only thing that distinguished lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals from heterosexuals, and, since it was a private act, it was an invisible difference. In either case, sex was the lynchpin of gay identity. To be gay or bisexual was to have sex. At the same time, many gays, lesbians, and bisexuals were rejecting the idea advanced by earlier liberationists that they might be gender different. The assimilationist mantra took its place: “We’re no different from heterosexuals except for what we do in bed.”

In the 1970s, to live up to their image as sexual athletes, gay men began using drugs and alcohol at rates far in excess of the general population. Our sexual experiences became increasingly intense, but they occurred in contexts that attributed them with no particular significance. Gay men began referring to sex as “play”—it became a form of recreation, to be consumed much as entertainment or travel or fashion. Far from posing a challenge to the social order, it turned out that a sexual minority community whose identity was derived from what it consumed was perfectly compatible with postindustrial capitalism.

All this occurred as an organized anti-gay opposition was emerging. In 1977, Anita Bryant’s campaign in Dade County, Florida overturned legislation to protect gays from discrimination. Soon gay civil rights protections were being repealed throughout the country. Heterosexual Americans were not ready to see gay lifestyles or relationships as equal to theirs in any way, nor were they willing to entertain the possibility that gays were different in ways that might be beneficial. Indeed, gays themselves increasingly rejected such speculations as elitist, throwbacks

to a discredited model of homosexuality as inborn and essential. Lesbian and gay intellectuals, under the influence of Michel Foucault and the theory of social constructionism, not only decried the idea of queer differences, the very desire to explore the meaning of one's sexual identity was dismissed out of hand.

In 1982, at the same time I was reading *Clement of Alexandria*, I decided to write an essay expressing my dismay at the role of sexual objectification in the gay men's community. Instead of healing the wounds inflicted on us by a homophobic society, we were perpetuating low self-esteem. And the consequences of this, I argued, could be seen in a growing range of health problems appearing among gay men—from alcoholism to sexually transmitted diseases to recent reports of a new and mysterious illness that was taking gay men's lives.

My essay, titled "Desperate Living" (after a popular John Waters' film), was published about the same time that I put down Smith's book. Our extended stay with Harry and his partner John in Los Angeles was over. Brad and I were still young, in our twenties, and life flowed in strong currents. We found ourselves back in San Francisco, immersed in new jobs and new projects.

Fifteen years passed before I took up Smith's book again. It was 1997, and I had been invited to speak at Gay Spirit Visions, an annual conference held outside Atlanta, Georgia. The theme was mentoring. As I thought about this topic, it occurred to me that gay men needed not only mentors—teachers, guides, role models—but also some form of initiatory experience to mark their passage from the closet to community and from gay childhood to gay adulthood.

Then I remembered the mystical rite of initiation uncovered by Morton Smith. As I began re-reading his book, I saw connections that had escaped me before. I realized how Jesus' secret baptism drew on ideas and images with a long history, and how it was that same-sex love could be part of, indeed, give rise to, visionary experiences. I realized as well that the insights I was having now were the result of what I had experienced in the fifteen years since I last picked up Smith's book.

Those were the years when the AIDS epidemic swept through our lives like wildfire, whisking away acquaintances, friends, and lovers—and, eventually, my own life partner.

Reprinted from *Jesus and the Shamanic Tradition of Same-Sex Love* by Will Roscoe (Suspect Thoughts Press) courtesy of the author.

Will Roscoe received his doctorate in Historical Consciousness/ Anthropology from University of California, Santa Cruz. His first book, *The Zuni Man-Woman* received the Margaret Mead Award of the American Anthropological Association and the Lambda Literary Award. His other books include *Queer Spirit: A Gay Men's Myth Book*, *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder* by Harry Hay, *Changing Ones: Third and Forth Genders in Native North America* and, as co-editor, *Islamic Homosexuality* and *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexuality*.

The Shamanic Way of the Bee

Simon Buxton

“On this evening I wish to share with you one of the great secrets of the tradition. It concerns the bee sting. We know it as the Sacramental Venom, or the Secret Fire, a powerful and mysterious substance with the ability to transmute illness into well-being alchemically. We have unlocked its application and it has become both an art and a science that has been developed and refined over generations.

“Hippocrates, the father of medicine, was an initiate of the usage of Sacramental Venom, which he called Arcanum, ‘sacred secret.’ One of the earliest of the Egyptian papyrus scrolls—the Smith Papyrus, dating back over three thousand years—suggests that its use was already a refined healing and initiatory methodology by then, and with each generation the refining of the work has continued. We who hold the deeper communion with the hive are the original acupuncturists, holders of an autochthonous system of healing, using the bee sting the way the acupuncturist’s needle is used today.

“To this day in China, you will find that a few—a very few—of the older acupuncturists dip their needles in the solar drops of the bee venom before inserting these needles into the patient’s body. These ancient ones are connected, perhaps by remove or more, to our lineage.



The ley lines, power lines, channels, meridians of the body have been known to the Keepers of Bee Wisdom for thousands of years as passages that connect certain energetic points, allowing energy to circulate throughout the body. The blood and life essences travel through this system of pathways, which connect a multitude of points on the body's exterior and interior. Some of these are points of major energy concentration, which can be adjusted encouraged, or even rerouted. This not only creates balance and healing, but also, when stimulated by the Sacramental Venom, allows the initiate to enter into the worlds that exist outside time and space, the place where the ancestors teach us. This teaching is the Magnum Opus, the Great Work, of this tradition.

My mind was working overtime through the effects of the liquor, the moment, and the way the moonlight had conspired to add its solemnity to these revelations. Bridge was saying that ancient societies had found a way not just to heal and balance themselves, but also to give them a route to the gods, through the bee sting. My mind was reeling, but my curiosity carried me beyond questions. I stayed silent.

"True," he continued, "the Path of Pollen has its dangers, for before there is birth there is labor—if honey, then also sting. But at its completion, it confers upon those who attain it extraordinary control over physical conditions. These include the ability to transmute matter, to heal all diseases, and to prolong the span of human incarnation. The Path of Pollen is our yoga, our means of union and communion with the incredible hidden universe and this beautiful blue-green jewel that is our Earth."

The Knowledge Lecture was complete, and I knew there would be no more talking, though I was now bursting with questions. If I had heard him correctly, Bridge had implied—no, more than implied, he had actually stated—that the special use of the bee sting and the powers it conferred could change physical matter, cure all sickness, and allow the recipient to become, if not immortal, then certainly able to increase his life span beyond the normally accepted limits.

This was not the time for questions, however. Something was about to happen. I knew it beyond all doubt. But what? I had never seen Bridge like this before. It was as if he was preparing to deliver a bitter blow to me. Perhaps he would ask me to leave and never return, the final secret having been revealed. I even considered for a moment in the darkness and the heat of the liquor that he would now have to kill me.

Finally he continued. “I am sharing this with you on this eve because you and I have now reached a crossroads in our work together. You have a choice of roads you may walk. You may step back the way you came and find an open road with fewer obstacles perhaps—one worth considering, my boy! Straight ahead, there is a place of struggle and challenge. This is where I am standing, waiting for you.”

His voice deepened, with a sobriety that was at one with the dark. “I wish to formally invite you to join us. If you accept, this will involve receiving and enduring initiation by Sacramental Venom and other tests and blessings beyond this.

“I wish to invite you to be initiated into—and remembered onto—the Path of Pollen, the Forest Way, the Brotherhood and Sisterhood of the Sacred Hive. I wish to invite you, ‘Twig’ —and here he paused for what felt like minutes—“to become my spiritual son.”

The night hung heavy, and the air itself seemed to take an inbreath. Nothing moved. It is difficult to explain how I felt at the moment of this invitation. It is not that I do not remember the feeling; it is rather that no single word exists to describe it. I recall that I cried a little, overwhelmed perhaps by a sense of homecoming, as if I knew this place but had forgotten it or had turned away from it and was now being welcomed back by a father who had forgiven me. Though he would never have admitted it, I think Bridge was moved and relieved by my reaction, too. I mouthed the word yes, and Bridge stepped quietly toward me. We hugged each other for a brief moment and then he stepped away. As befits a Kelt, I thought. Almost immediately it was back to the business at hand.

“Before we can begin the ceremony, I need you to undertake what is something of a secret within this business of the gods. We know it as the Theatre of Ambiguous Behavior.”

Just an instant before, I had been moved beyond words, able to make only the simplest of responses to the most wonderful and gracious invitation I had ever received. It was amusing how quickly this mood had passed and I was back to my puzzled questioning self. “Ambiguous behavior?” I asked. “What do you mean Bridge? Why?”

He replied, “To begin your transition into the encounter that lies ahead, you must very deliberately undertake actions and thoughts that are doubtful in meaning—doubtful not to me but to yourself, behavior that is to yourself quite indefinite. By doing this, a room will be built between two worlds, where your normal, ordinary state of being will no longer be able to operate, and yet a new state and awareness will not have been conferred upon you. Let us say it is the betwixt and between period, the action of bridging the worlds, if you will.”

He smiled ruefully. “Commence when you are ready. It is not a performance, so there is no need for performance pressure, simply deepen into a period of ambiguity and taste the liberty that this simple action brings.” At that, Bridge got up and left the room.

It was not much comfort to be told there was no pressure, for I still had hardly any idea of what was expected of me and, moreover, I had to assume that if I did not enter into the state of ambiguity that Bridge had asked for, whatever was meant to follow would not. I closed my eyes and took a few deep breaths, making every effort not to plan my actions or make any decisions about what I might do, as whatever I was supposed to achieve clearly had to be done spontaneously and with no forethought.

Self-consciously at first, I began to crawl on all fours around the room, sniffing table legs like a dog. As I warmed up to the task, it began to amuse me to act in such an illogical and irrational fashion. I started to laugh, deep from my belly, and then I leapt up, spinning like a Catherine wheel, dancing like a marionette on invisible strings, then throwing myself to the floor, all inhibition gone, jerking as if in a fit, rolling and

gamboling like a child. I was in the space between the worlds of which Bridge had spoken, playing the part of the fool in the Theatre of Ambiguous Behavior.

And then I felt Bridge's hand on my shoulder. When he had entered the room again, or what I had been doing at the time, I had no idea. Gently, he sat me down again upon the Green Man chair. Not a word was spoken. As I caught my breath, he silently began to trace honey over my forehead in the shape of an eight on its side, all the time intoning in Gaelic, *Ta' na ro'dannai' meala ag na bach in ins gach aird den sliab.* ("The bees have honey roads in every cardinal direction from the mountain"), repeating it again and again while sprinkling pollen over my head. Next, he picked up what resembled a small, flat frying pan made of shining copper and quietly spoke to me of what was he doing, wanting me to learn as well as experience. "This is our drum, Twig. Those who say that our ancestors in these lands did not use a drum in the old traditions have simply been looking in the wrong places."

He began to beat upon the metal drum with two sticks held together in his right hand, in a regular rhythm. This technique, I was to learn, is known as *tanging*: hitting a piece of metal in such a way that bees respond to the sound and may be easily subdued. Tanging is dismissed as superstition by modern beekeepers, but seen through shamanic eyes, it has exactly the same function as the shaman's drum when played in a certain monotonous beat of four to seven strikes a second. It puts the shaman into what is known as Shamanic State of Consciousness, and it is in this state that the bee shaman does his work. Recent studies have shown that shamanic drumming produces changes in the central nervous system and facilitates the production of brain waves in the alpha and theta ranges related to creativity, vivid imagery, and states of ecstasy. Indeed, shamanic drumming can positively affect well-being and the immune response. The repetitive sound of the drum is the channel through which shamans travel to other worlds via the shamanic "flight of ecstasy" —a term that might have been especially coined for the bee shaman! In Siberia, the drum is known as the shaman's horse; in the

Upper Amazon, it is the spirit canoe in which the shaman sails to the invisible land. The bee shaman knows this tool as the *quoit* and its sound as tanging.

Bridge explained a further reason for the tanging at this early stage in the ceremony: “Imagine we get a number of old-fashioned pendulum-type grandfather clocks. Let us hang them on a wall and arrange their pendulums so that they will be beating out of phase with one another. In a day or two, we would discover that all the pendulums would be beating in phase, as if locked together. The larger the number of clocks, the more stable they will be as a unit and the more difficult to disturb, and if one clock becomes wayward, it will be brought back into line very quickly. So, Twig, the tanging will begin to bring you onto the same rhythm as those others who walk the Path of Pollen and thus assist in giving you access to the hive.”

Bridge began to change his chant to the one he used when tending the hives: a low vibration punctuated with occasional whistles and distinctive clicks. I looked up at him and watched as he controlled his vocalizations deliberately, moving first the upper lip, then the lower, then both of them together, all the time breathing in a circular manner, in through the nostrils and out through the mouth.

The strange sound filled the room until it became something akin to the hum of the entire hive. The phrase “Ask the wild bee what the druids knew” flashed through my mind and the thought occurred that this was not just humming. Rather, it was the wisdom of the ages that the bee shamans had whispered into the hive over centuries, and it was being spoken aloud now by this man chanting in the language of the bees. Some form of information was being conducted directly into my brain. I had become a conduit for this knowledge, yet I knew not what electricity compelled me in such a way. No distinct words were discernable within the sound itself, yet at some level my body just *knew* the precious secrets that were being imparted to it and my mind was filling up. Images, poetry, snapshots of human history, scenes from worlds to come flew across my mind in snippets of awareness, like clouds across the moon.

The tanging and the chanting continued for some time—perhaps thirty minutes, perhaps an hour.

I felt my body getting warmer and my heart starting to race. The room darkened around me until only the eyes of the Bee Master were still visible. They seemed enlarged and darkened, changed. It was as if I had seen those eyes before, a long, long time ago, though I could not remember where.

I struggled to concentrate, to hold on to my rational mind. I wanted to watch, to question, to record what was happening, to analyze its effect, to understand its method. But it was no good. My body felt stunned and paralyzed and my mind was hitting overload. I was being swamped with sensory information and could feel myself falling backward into some other world of chaos and dreams. Upon his invitation, I had ventured into the dark forest that Bridge inhabited, filled with basilisks and shadows, and I knew now that there was only one way to traverse: straight ahead.

The tanging stopped, but the silence that replaced it was busy with tones and movements of sound. The jar with the bees was opened. Bridge reached into it and brought out a single honeybee. Holding it by its thorax, he brought it toward me, and I was stung on the side of my neck. As tears streamed down my wincing face, two more bees were brought out from the jar, and the other side of my neck and then the top of my head—my dream wheel—were penetrated, receiving the Sacramental Venom. A fourth bee was removed and gently held by the Bee Master. Slowly, he moved the bee closer to the midline of my face, directly between my eyebrows, while the deep harmonic sound of the humming became increasingly resonant and persistent.

I continued to focus on his eyes, which had darkened further. Then, all at once, I remembered. His eyes were those I had glimpsed in the healing dreams of a dying child. Suddenly, I knew that my childhood experience with Herr Professor had been an omen, a precognition of this moment, and that all my experiences had led me to this point. I had been called by the bees from the very beginning. As this thought crossed my

mind, Bridge reached me and held the bee on the area between my eyes. I felt a dull sting and passed out.

It all began with vibration and a slow dance of golden lights. I was floating upon a sea of electricity, dancing, moving through thick curtains of incredibly beautiful flames that did not burn but seemed instead to cleanse me. I moved in and out of different levels of consciousness, and I began to make out shapes of human being, of women.

I gathered that I was sitting, surrounded by six women whom I knew were bees ... or was it six bees whom I knew to be women? I was naked, and I felt like a baby—trusting them as they began to move forward and lick me, with the tongues not of women but of bees, stretching out and then withdrawing, sweeping forward and backward. With every lick I was changing, being massaged by their tongues into a deeper world. It seemed that days and nights came and went, connected by rivers of honey. I heard distant words— “changing man, changing man” —and I looked up into Bridge’s eyes, the huge compound eyes of a bee. His lips made strange beelike sounds, which became wind, then a long screeching whistle, as a torrent of faces and lines rushed past me.

Everything was falling and simultaneously gushing forward at an incredible speed, becoming landscapes, pebbles, glaciated mountains streaked with black ice, spectral rocky cliffs, and oceans of fermenting honey, and endless production of colors, rhythms, and forms. More lines flashed before me, crossing like rivers meeting, endless bifurcations, glyphs, and swollen symbols that copulated in front of me. Language was destroyed, leaving only intonements and vibrations, there was nothing left for me to hang on to.

I wanted to retch. I was going to retch. I could feel it: sickness rising. I tried to leap up and stumbled, vomiting, snapping myself back to full consciousness in one violent purge. Thank God it was over. I wanted to get away as quickly as possible, to make sense of it all and recover. IT was pitch-black and I could see nothing. I felt as if I had been involved in a great fire or earthquake; all that remained intact of me was what was essential to life. And then the emptiness within me, the hole that I had

become, started to fill. With what exactly, I had no idea, but I clung to it like a thirsty man offered water after a drought.

The sound of humming was quieter now, replaced by a gentle murmuring, and the room around me seemed unfamiliar once again, it was not the room I had been sitting in before. It was so small I could hardly move, and it even smelled different. I presumed that upon passing out Bridge had moved me to another room. Barely had this thought occurred to me when I lost consciousness once more.

Reprinted from *The Shamanic Way of the Bee* (Inner Traditions) with permission of the publisher.

Simon Buxton is a beekeeper, the British faculty for the Foundation for Shamanic Studies, and the founder/director of The Sacred Trust in England.



ASHÉ

SELECTIONS

ONE

ISBN: 1869928806
www.mandrake.uk.net
www.amazon.co.uk



124pp/£10.99/\$20.00
www.barnesandnoble.com
www.amazon.com

To Make the Spirit Manifest:

Eric K. Lerner/Adekun

Randy P. Conner

with David Hatfield Sparks

In an interview with Michael Lemmon (1998), Eric K. Lerner commented on the presence of LGBT-identified persons in Santería and other Yorùbá-based religions:

In terms of the way Yoruba religion is manifested in the new world, the number of gay people ... is disproportionate to the number of gays and lesbians in the population. Most ethnologists and anthropologists who have analyzed this phenomenon estimate that homosexuals compose 30 to 40 percent of the practitioners of Yoruba-based religions both in Cuba and Brazil, which is high compared to the general population which people estimate being anywhere from four to ten percent. People in Cuba derisively call Santería “that fag religion.” Historically you begin to see homosexuals playing roles in Cuban Santería as early as the 1800s...



In both Cuban and Brazilian society, one of the few avenues available to gay men, women, and heterosexual women, in which they could achieve a measure of real power and meaningful roles, was through the Yoruba religion. It provided them with a vehicle to lead fulfilled lives...

In the United States you do see numbers of homosexuals in the religion. I don't want to mislead people and say that anytime they see a Santería house they can automatically assume the house is gay-tolerant. [Generally speaking, however,] Santería or Orishá worship...teaches gay people how to recognize the divine within themselves, which is an important building block to achieving self-esteem, a quality that a lot of gay people seem to be lacking in due to the social prejudices they experience in our culture (p. 1)

I met Eric Lerner in August 1999. I had just read his article "Santería's Healing Path" (1999) in *Shaman's Drum* and was looking forward to asking him more about his experience of being a gay *santero* and to reading more of his work. I was surprised to learn that he is also an accomplished illustrator/artist; his work has been commissioned by the Baltimore American Indian Center and the Marriott Corporation (Lemmon, 1998) and has appeared in various journals including *Science*. A "Renaissance man," he has also worked as a hairstylist and is an expert diviner using cowries as well as tarot (in 2001 he was voted "best psychic" of Baltimore).

Born in 1961, he first became interested in Santería in the early 1990s: "The surface beauty of the religion, the beauty of the altars, and the sensuality and beauty of the music excited me. I began to go with some friends to New York to [drumming ceremonies, etc.]" (Lemmon, 1998, p. 19). He was initiated into the religion in 1998 as a son of

Obatalá; his mother is Yemayá, and his spiritual name, Adekun, translates as “crown of the ocean.” When I asked him about his conceptions of gender complexity in the context of the religion, Eric commented:

The notion that one’s gender identity is not a fixed thing is certainly consistent with Santería theology, which allows for all sorts of unusual combinations. For example, a very feminine woman can have a very masculine spirit as her “head,” while at the same time, a very butch dyke might have a very feminine spirit as her head. This suggests that gender is something fluid, that it’s not something that can be defined in terms of black and white. Even the *orishás* most archetypally associated with masculinity and femininity have transgender aspects. Even in cases of extreme gendered behavior, there’s a potential to change into the opposite. Shangó, to protect himself from danger, disguises himself as a woman. At one point, he disguises himself as the epitome of feminine grace and beauty in order to get away from the dead. Similarly, Oshún Ibukolé, the most beautiful of women, disguises herself as a vulture in order to carry prayers to heaven. The great archetype of beauty becomes the archetype of ugliness. There’s always a possibility of transformation. The *orishás* are transformative deities. They enable personal transformation. They enable spiritual transformation.

“I would say that my being a priest in the religion influences my behavior as a gay person more than my gayness influences my behavior in the religion. Because I am a priest, I’m aware that when I’m in public, I must maintain a certain profile. In other words, I would not be comfortable going to a bar and have someone grope my crotch.... It

would be unwise for me to indulgethat sort of behavior, as it might cause people to look at me disrespectfully.

Lerner has published numerous works, including books, journal articles, and writings on the Internet, nonfiction as well as poetry and fiction. His status as an individual who is HIV positive inspired, in part, publications (both of which he is co-author) concerning HIV/AIDS and the *orishás* most frequently associated with this illness: *AIDS Crisis in America* (1998, with Hombs) and *Babalu Aye: Santería and the Lord of Pestilence* (Canizares and Lerner, 2000). Of Babaluayé, he writes: “At times, I perceive Babalu’s kindness in the warm light of a yellow candle, in a cool morning breath after a wicked humid and congested night ... I do not ask Babalu for miracle[s] ... I ask him to give [me] the tools I need to endure” (Lerner, 1999, p. 17). He has also published essays on Oshún, Babaluayé, and other *orishás* in journals including *New Aeon*.



“Eleggua,” Eric K. Lerner

Lerner is rather fearless—some might even say “plucky”—in his willingness to foreground the sensuous characteristics of *orishás*. Of Oshún’s dominion, he writes:

Transformation underpins eroticism, one of Oshún’s mysteries. In sexual arousal, the stream of life surges, the pulse quickens. Blood freshens the cheeks, while eyes dilate. The sexual organs plump and moisten. One changes in anticipation of the caress of another. The reconfiguration of one’s being takes place in the instant of sexual radiance. Oshún is it essence.... Oshún

makes us more than what we are in realizing our own beauty. (Lerner, n.d., p. 21)

Some practitioners of Yorùbá-diasporic spiritual traditions may disapprove of what they judge to be Lerner's inappropriate eroticization—more specifically, his homoeroticization—of certain tales of the *orishás*; others, however, may appreciate them in the same manner that they appreciate Lorde's poetic celebration of the (possibly) lesbian sensuality of certain *orishás*, or the revisions of *patakís* by others (such as those of Luisah Teish in *Jambalaya* and elsewhere) who wish to foreground women's, black, and other identities in their renderings of these tales.

In his postmodern collage *Olokun: A Book of Mysteries* (2003), he envisions Olokun and Inlé as tragic lovers, in poetic prose mixing Yorùbá-diasporic imagery with Marlowe's wistful "Hero and Leander" (here, with Olokun taking the role of Neptune, and Inlé that of Leander) and late nineteenth-century Decadent sensuality:

I am eternal power, dancing beneath behemoth power of ages and release. Yet looking down at the crushed flower of youth sinking languidly in my essence, I was moved. I held onto him and lifted him up. I don't remember whether he stayed five minutes or five years. Time is irrelevant to me. I am a vault that holds infinite numbers of remains, ancestral keys, one bone breaks down into any other ...

I began to show him things, secret things ...

Inlé ... had the delicate cock of a schoolboy nervous as his first communal shower. His small crisp, golden eyes turned down at the outer corners into shallow furrows that at times cut deeper into his face than my memory

can reach—hints that his youth was ending, riven like a man splayed at a crossroads.... His armpits smacked of hyacinths... (Lerner, 2003, p. 7)

In his short story, “Yemayá and Orunlá,” Lerner revisits the tale of how the former became the patron of men who love men. In Lerner’s version, the *orishá* of the sea is escaping from her spouse, who would keep her from becoming a master of divination; incidentally, Lerner’s version rather uncannily evokes Walt Whitman’s “Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,” section 11 of “Song of Myself”:

Cold water splashes her legs. She can run no further, having come to land’s end. She looks around. The beach is empty, but for a group of young men frolicking in the tides. They are naked, their skins in various hues of cinnamon and coffee glisten in marriage of sea and sun. They laugh and caress one another, seemingly oblivious to the broad panting woman who’s intruded on their delightful afternoon. Yemayá is bent over catching her breath, when all of a sudden, one of the young men speaks. “You must be Yemayá, the Diviner.... We’ll protect you from [Orunlá].”

When Orunlá leaves due to the young men’s taunts, Yemayá relaxes. She closes her eyes as she lies across the waves.... “Her body undulates with the rhythm of the waves.... Now relieved and expanding boundlessly, she segues around the young men’s thighs as they dance about and rises in glittering droplets across their hands and bodies as they splash one another in joy.” (Lerner, Website, n.d.)

References

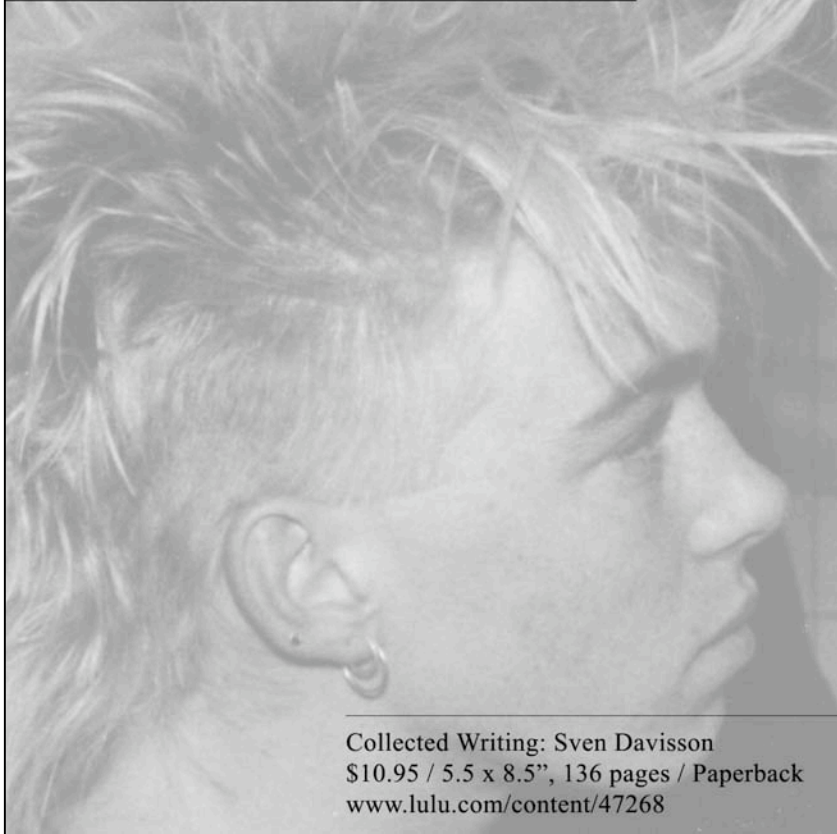
- Canizares, Baba Raul and Eric K. Lerner. *Babalu Aye: Santeria and the Lord of Pestilence*. New York: Original Publications, 2000.
- Lemmon, Michael. (1998) "Baltimore Native Finds God(s)." *Gay Life* November 6: 1, 19.
- Lerner, Eric K. (1999) "Babalu." *Orisha!* 1(1): 14-17.
- . *Olokun: A Book of Mysteries*. T and D Graphics Novels, 2003.
- . (1999) "Oshún the Healer." *New Aeon Summer*: 21-22
- . (1999) "Santeria's Healing Path." *Shaman's Drum* 51(Summer): 58-68.
- . "Yemaya and Orunlá." Available online at <http://www.voiceofthoth.com/story.htm>, accessed October 5, 2002.
- Lerner, Eric K. and Mary Ellen Hombs. *AIDS Crisis In America: A Reference Handbook*, second edition. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1998.

Reprinted from *Queering Creole Spiritual Traditions: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender participation in the Americas* (Harrington Park Press) with permission of the authors.

Randy P. Conner, MA, PhD candidate, is the author of *Blossom of Bone: Reclaiming the Connection Between Homoeroticism and the Sacred* and co-author (with David Hatfield Sparks and their daughter) of *Cassell's Encyclopedia of Queer Myth*.

David Hatfield Sparks, MM, MLIS, is a musician, ethnomusicologist, educator and librarian in Northern California. His work has appeared in *Afro-Hispanic Review* and *The Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*.

The Machinery of Night

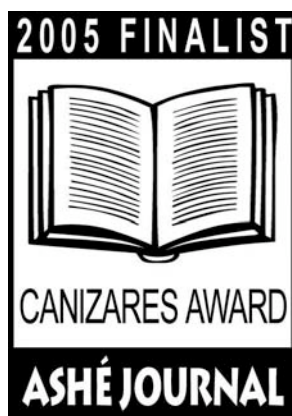


Collected Writing: Sven Davisson
\$10.95 / 5.5 x 8.5", 136 pages / Paperback
www.lulu.com/content/47268

The Foliage of Superior Insight

Karl Brunnhölzl, M.D.

Among Buddhists, when the issue of study and reasoning in Buddhism comes up, one often does not have to probe very deeply to encounter resistance to study in general and reasoning or logic in particular. This approach is apparent in statements such as: “Study and logic is only for intellectual people.” “It has nothing to do with me as a person.” “It only creates more thoughts.” “I had enough of that in school.” “I just want to meditate and make my own experiences.” “I’d rather take the path of devotion.” “Who cares about the views of different people and schools in India two thousand years ago?” But is it fair to portray Madhyamaka as being only of historical, intellectual relevance or as merely an abstract philosophy that has nothing to do with the personal experience of modern people? What could there be in Buddhist conceptual analysis—and especially in the Madhyamaka approach to it—that is relevant and worthwhile for Buddhist practitioners even today?



In 1973, the great Western Buddhologist Edward Conze addressed the issue whether Buddhist texts in general and the *Prajnaparamita Sutras* (the source of Madhyamaka) in particular are still “up-to-date” for a “modern Western audience,” weaving in some remarks that will continue

to guarantee him a top rank in the category of “not being politically correct” also today:

Finally one could also treat them as *spiritual* documents which are still capable of releasing spiritual insights among people separated from their original authors by two thousand years and vast disparities in intellectual and material culture. There is, however, a certain absurdity about interpreting spiritual matters in the abstract and in general terms, since everything depends on concrete conditions and the actual persons and their circumstances. Some will regard this literature as rather strange and alien, and may long for something more homespun. They will, I hope, allow me to retort with a remark that so endeared me to my students at Berkeley. Asked what Buddhism should do to become more acceptable to Americans, I used to enumerate with a smile a few concessions one might perhaps make respectively to the feminist, democratic, hedonistic, primitivistic and anti-intellectual tendencies of American society. Though in the end I invariably recovered my nerve and reminded my listeners that it is not so much a matter of the Dharma adjusting itself to become adaptable to Americans, but of Americans changing and transforming themselves sufficiently to become acceptable to the Lord Buddha.

In brief, the sole aim of all Buddhist teachings is to help us realize the true nature of our minds. Thus, apart from certain outer cultural forms, there is no point in trying to alter the essential core of the means to remedy our mental afflictions in order to make it more palatable to the various fashionable whims triggered by these very afflictions. Rather, the main point of Buddhist studies is always to connect with the teachings

personally by applying them to the individual experiences in our own mind. In Buddhism, we do not study in order to follow a curriculum or pursue a career but because we intend to learn how to tame our minds, see things as they are, and gain freedom from suffering. Moreover, when we engage in studying Buddhism, what is processed is our very mind. Since the materials are tailored to address the mind, plenty of emotional and intellectual reactions are sure to be triggered by this process of the mind working with its contents and being worked on by them. All of these reactions can and should be acknowledged, watched, and processed as they appear. This is nothing other than practice—mindfully dealing with our experiences.

Most people seem to believe that studying means creating more thoughts. However, this is just like the initial experience of having more thoughts when we start to practice the meditation of calm abiding. That this seems to be the case is only because we never took the time to really look at our thoughts before and thus remained unaware of their sheer number and rapid flow. Looking at them just shows us the perpetual rush hour in our minds, so it is only a matter of whether we notice this constant stream or are busily carried away by it. Thus, when we study Buddhism—and especially when we use analysis through reasoning—our thoughts about reality that are initially very massive and solid are chopped into “smaller” and “lighter” concepts. We observe that these concepts are more numerous, but actually the overall quantity of “thought mass” stays the same. The advantage of gradually processing our rigid and clumsy ideas by first noticing and then deconstructing them is that it is much easier to deal with our concepts once they become more flexible and subtle. In this way, we gradually approach a nonconceptual direct realization of the nature of our mind in which all concepts are absent.

This process can be compared to melting a big block of ice. If we take a large chunk out of the freezer and just let it sit there, it takes much longer for it to melt into water than if we chop it into small pieces, since each one of these pieces will melt much more quickly. In the same way,

when our hard, solid concepts in cyclic existence— which are often as painful and unyielding as some jagged chunks of ice— get broken down into their underlying assumptions, they can dissolve more easily into the gentle and soothing waters of nirvana. Moreover, if we try to deal with our massive and largely unconscious thought patterns merely by striving to attain some peaceful or blissful state through calming the mind in meditation, this will have no lasting effect on the deeply rooted habitual belief systems that govern our actions in the world. The lord of yogis, Milarepa, sang in one of his vajra songs:

Don't be attached to the pool of calm abiding,
But let the foliage of superior insight burst into open
bloom.

The Buddha always emphasized a three-step approach to practicing his teachings: listening (studying), reflecting, and meditating. He did not say, “Listen and then meditate.” However, it is exactly the middle stage of reflection that is often missing in the practice of Buddhists. As students of Buddhism, we are required to first gain sufficient access to the relevant information about Buddhist theory and practice through both scriptures and oral instructions. Following that, the material has to be investigated and integrated into our own personal understanding. Finally, meditation serves as the means to familiarize ourselves with this understanding on increasingly deeper levels until it becomes a spontaneous living experience in every situation.

Thus, it is at the step of reflection that reasoning in general— and Madhyamaka reasoning in particular— comes into play. Here, reflection does not mean just pondering something in a vague way but employing systematic and rigorous techniques of reasoning to gain thorough and incontrovertible certainty about the key issues of the Buddhist path. The Buddha himself said that his teachings should not be accepted out of unquestioning belief or because people of high rank propagate them. Rather, the teachings should be scrutinized carefully, in much the same way gold is analyzed for its purity. This means that, in Buddhism, true

and reliable confidence can arise only through a well-founded personal understanding of the proper reasons that something works and is trustworthy. Otherwise, it is just some kind of assumption or blind faith that can easily be lost when doubts appear.

Looking at the widespread dislike of reasoning and logic on the one hand and our everyday approach to the world on the other hand, we will probably be surprised when we have to acknowledge that we actually make daily use of reasoning and logic even though we may not always be aware of it. As Dharmakirti begins his *Drop of Reasoning*:

Since correct knowledge precedes the accomplishment of all purposes of persons, it is taught [here]. Correct knowledge is twofold: perception and inference.

All our sciences and much of our professional and private lives are based not only on direct observation but also on reasoning. Consciously or unconsciously, we usually act in one way or another because we know the connection between certain actions and the results we want to achieve or to avoid. We are not just acting randomly. Farmers plant seeds and cultivate them in a specific way in order to have a good harvest. Architects build skyscrapers based on mathematical calculations. Parents tell their children not to touch the hot stove, because it hurts. Besides that, our favorite question is always “why?” and we usually are not satisfied until the answer makes good sense. So we use and live with reasoning and logic all the time, but when we hear these words, we wince and run.

From a Buddhist point of view, our human mental world is a highly conceptual one. Pure, immediate experience unaccompanied by conceptual processing hardly ever happens. Since we deal with the world through thoughts and concepts most of the time anyway, we might as well make use of them in an intelligent way on our Buddhist path, rather than regarding our thoughts as something to get rid of and deliberately excluding our intellect from our practice. In Buddhism, being intelligent and inquisitive is not a crime. It is also not a question of being either

exclusively intellectual or exclusively devoted, with— we hope— lots of blissful experiences. There is nobody but ourselves to restrict the range of skillful means that we may beneficially apply as practitioners. Being skillful as well as developing higher insight and wisdom are certainly two major focuses on the Buddhist path, and both obviously require some intelligence and refined mental activity.

If incontrovertible certainty about the foundations of the Buddhist path and its fruition has not been achieved, it may be problematic to engage in meditation. Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye says in his *Treasury of Knowledge* that trying to meditate without study and reflection is like trying to climb a mountain without hands and feet. The Tibetan word *gomba* (sgom pa), usually translated as “meditation,” means “to cultivate, train or familiarize.” If there is no clarity or certainty about what to familiarize with even on a conceptual level, what are we going to cultivate or familiarize ourselves with? In fact, our meditation/familiarization will lack a clear and proper object. Without such an object, it is more than likely that doubts will arise during such “meditation” and afterward. If we carry around unresolved questions about Buddhist practice and theory, wondering what we are actually doing, we have only two real options: either go back and try to resolve our doubts by gaining certainty through convinced insight or eventually drop the whole enterprise. Once our initial enthusiasm has faded, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain the motivation for continuous practice without being basically convinced about what we are doing, especially when encountering unfavorable circumstances. That this is not merely a theoretical scenario is, unfortunately, amply illustrated by a number of even longtime Buddhist practitioners who finally give up their practice due to such doubts (which is not to say, of course, that this is the only reason for that to happen).

The practical approach to gaining incontrovertible conceptual certainty is called analytical meditation or superior insight. Starting with the most basic Buddhist notions, such as the four reminders that turn the mind away from cyclic existence, this kind of meditation may be applied throughout the whole path. For example, when we reflect on the

precious and rare opportunity of human existence or on impermanence, there is no point in trying to convince ourselves of these things by just repeating “My life is precious” or “Everything is impermanent” like a mantra. Rather, it is important to come up with some good reasons that this is the case. This process is, of course, supported by more systematic scriptural material, but there is a definite sense that we must apply personal investigation and mentally process these statements from various angles by connecting them to our own experience.

This is even more important with such key Buddhist notions as the lack of a personal self and the lack of any real identity of phenomena. Tackling these topics in order to make them personally relevant to our lives cannot be accomplished without some degree of personal investigation by honestly looking into our own views of the world and being willing to question them. Some of the most radical and challenging ways to do this are no doubt contained in the Madhyamaka teachings.

WHAT IS MADHYAMAKA?

A typical Madhyamaka answer to the question “What is Madhyamaka?” would state what it is not: It is not a philosophy, not a religion, not a doctrine, not a historical school of thought, not a belief system, not a linguistic theory or analysis, not a psychotherapy, not agnosticism, not nihilism, not existentialism, nor is it an intellectual mind game of some people in India and Tibet who had too much spare time and just wanted to tease others.

So, what is it then? When we use the word *Madhyamaka*, we first have to be clear about whether we are referring to a view, a meditation system, a spiritual path, its fruition, or the ultimate nature of all phenomena, including our mind. The most fundamental meaning of Madhyamaka is this last one. This ultimate nature is the fundamental ground within which Madhyamaka view, meditation, and conduct evolve. The essential characteristic of such view, meditation, and conduct is that they are all aimed at nothing but realizing this nature. Madhyamaka

fruition is then the direct and incontrovertible experience of this ultimate reality within our own mind.

Now, what can we say about this fundamental Madhyamaka? Basically, there are two kinds of answers that are pointedly illustrated in Pawo Rinpoche's commentary on *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

[Some] consider merely not giving an answer as the ultimate actuality. This is certainly a case of giving those who understand the meaning of Centrism a good chance for a laugh. . . . Therefore, it is explained that when Mañjushri asked Vimalakirti about the meaning of the actual, the genuine answer [in this case] was to not give an answer. However, when one naïve being does not give an answer to the question of another one, how could these two cases ever be comparable? You should know the difference between a bodhisattva in his last existence who dwells under the bodhi tree and [someone like] Devadatta sitting under a nimba tree. If you think, "These are comparable," then ask about genuine [reality] in front of an ox and you will get the final answer that you wish for.

Thus, ultimately, from the point of view of the true nature of phenomena itself and for such highly realized beings as Mañjusri and Vimalakirti who directly experience it in meditative equipoise, there is nothing that could be said about it, since its very essence is that all discursiveness and its reference points have dissolved. As Nagarjuna's *Fundamental Verses on Centrism* says:

Peace is the utter peace of all observed objects
And the utter peace of discursiveness.
At no time did the Buddha teach
Any dharma to anybody.

Conventionally and from the perspective of beings who have not yet realized this ultimate nature, however, this does not mean that nothing can be said about the view and the methods that gradually lead to the direct realization of this nature as an incontrovertible experience. *The Fundamental Verses* says:

Without reliance on conventions,
The ultimate cannot be taught.
Without realization of the ultimate,
Nirvana cannot be attained.

In other words, ordinary language is the container for the nectar of wisdom: The entire range of Buddhist notions related to ground, path, and fruition are but indications whose only purpose is to lead beings to mental freedom and not to trap them in just another conceptual cocoon. Thus, whatever might be said about Madhyamaka and whatever aspects of it we practically apply must be understood as being merely like a pointing finger that makes us look in a certain direction (or rather no direction). However, this finger should not be mistaken for what it points to. As it is said, “Do not mistake the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself.” Thus, it is on the basis of the ir minds directly realizing ultimate reality — the moon of the actual Madhyamaka— and for the sake of others realizing this too that Centrist masters set out to point with their scriptural, verbal, and physical fingers to this orb free from center or edge.

On the conventional level, in the great vehicle of Buddhism, Madhyamaka as a “school” is regarded as the second major system beside the Yogacara (Yoga Practice) school. Madhyamaka is not just something that was made up by Centrist masters such as Nagarjuna. Rather, it has a firm basis in the teachings of Buddha kyamuni. This refers not only to the *Prajñāparamita sutras* but also to many other sutras from the first and third turnings of the wheel of dharma. During the second century CE, Nagarjuna formulated these teachings in a systematic fashion that

embedded their basic message of emptiness in a rigorous system of reasoning. However, Nagasrjuna never referred to himself as a “Madhyamika,” nor did he consider himself the founder of a new school or a system called “Madhyamaka.” He just used the term “discussion of emptiness.” In fact, his approach is a system to get rid of all systems, including itself. Nagarjuna’s basic concern was to free the teachings of the Buddha from all superimpositions and denials, his main target being the scholastic systems of Abhidharma within Buddhism. It was only later when Bhavaviveka started to talk about Madhyamaka as a distinct view that Nagarjuna began to be regarded as the founder of this “new” school, whose followers were also called “Proponents of the Lack of Nature.” Over the following centuries, there were many debates in India and Tibet about the correct understanding of Nagarjuna’s presentation, which led to different streams within the Madhyamaka school. In this book, its system is explained as it was understood by the “early Centrists” in Tibet. In general, this refers to the ways in which Centrism was presented in Tibet before Tsongkhapa, which are based on the Indian treatises on Centrism and the oral teachings of the numerous Indian masters with whom Tibetans had direct contact during this time. More specifically, the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje identifies the lineages that come from Atisa (982–1054) and Patsab Lotsawa (born 1055) as “the early Tibetan tradition of Consequentialism.” This tradition of teaching Centrism continues to the present day in most parts of the Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

AN EXTREME MIDDLE

To find out what the whole project of Madhyamaka is about, it is helpful to look first at the Sanskrit word itself. In the West, *Madhyamaka* is usually translated as “middle way,” but the word “way” does not have any correlate in either the Sanskrit term nor its Tibetan equivalent *uma*. *Madhya* means “middle or center,” *ma* is an emphasizing affix, and *ka* refers to anything that deals with or expresses this middle, be it texts,

philosophical systems, or persons. (The latter are mostly called “Madhyamika,” however.) Thus, Madhyamaka means “that which deals with (or proclaims) the very middle/center.” The corresponding Tibetan term *uma* usually also refers to “the very middle.” Some masters, such as the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje, interpret the syllable *ma* as a negative and thus take the whole term to mean that there is not (*ma*) even a middle (*u*) between the extremes. This interpretation may not strictly conform with Tibetan grammar, but its meaning surely has a basis in the scriptures. *The Sutra of the King of Meditative Concentration* declares:

Both existence and nonexistence are extremes.
Purity and impurity are extremes too.
Therefore, having left behind both extremes,
The wise do not abide even in a middle.

The Sutra Requested by Crown Jewel states:

The perfection of knowledge is free from extremes and
also does not abide in a middle.

The Kasyapa Chapter Sutra says:

This so-called cyclic existence is an extreme. This
“nirvana” is a second extreme. What is the middle
between these two extremes is not to be analyzed, not
to be shown, without appearance, without cognition:
Kagyapa, this is called “the middle way, the perfect
discrimination of phenomena.”

The center is without form, unseen, nonabiding,
nonappearing, and without a location. Here, this center
is furthermore explained as being equivalent to ultimate
reality and suchness.

Nagarjuna states in his *Fundamental Verses on Centrism*:

Where there is neither beginning nor end,
Where should there be a middle?

In his *Song of Looking at the Expanse of Dharmas*, Atisa says:

If the middle is completely released from extremes,
Since there are no extremes, there is also no middle.
The view that is without middle and extremes
Is the perfect view.

The Treasury of Knowledge quotes the Sixth Shamarpa Chökyi Wangchug's *Collected Reasonings*:

Under analysis, neither middle nor end is found,
And one does not dwell even in a middle.
All claims will dissolve.
There is neither beginning nor end, and a center is not
observed.
There are no positions and no philosophical systems.
At this point, this is the great center.

In his commentary, Pawo Rinpoche agrees:

When clinging has been purified, finally, even a mere
middle cannot be observed. All views have completely
vanished.

One might wonder, "Is there actually a middle between
these two extremes?" If there are no extremes, where
should there be a middle? . . . When all kinds of grasping
that superimpose or deny existence, nonexistence, a

middle, and so on have subsided, . . . this is called
“seeing or realizing identitylessness.”

Thus, the actual Madhyamaka per se does not refer to a middle way between two extreme views (such as thesis and antithesis) in the sense of trying to find a synthesis or keeping some sort of balance between such extremes as existence and nonexistence or permanence and annihilation. It is also not some definable or identifiable middle in relation or opposition to any extremes, since— in the Centrist view— such a middle would only serve as another reference point and thus as a further extreme. Nor does it primarily indicate the middle way between extreme forms of practice or lifestyle, such as ascetism and indulgence in sense pleasures, which was taught by the Buddha in other contexts. Of course, such a practical middle way may very well be one of the expressions of the Madhyamaka view and realization, but Madhyamaka itself goes much further.

The whole point of Madhyamaka is what is called “complete freedom from any extremes.” Extremes in the Madhyamaka sense refer not only to polarities or notions that are extreme in a very obvious way, but to any kind of reference point whatsoever. In fact, “extreme” is just another word for reference point. It is important not to misunderstand the freedom from all reference points as just another reference point or theory, a more sophisticated philosophical point of view, or some mere utter blankness. Rather, the actual Madhyamaka stands for the unobstructed, supple, and relaxed openness of a mind in which all impulses of grasping at something have completely dissolved. As Nagarjuna’s *Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning* says:

By taking any standpoint whatsoever,
You will be snatched by the cunning snakes of the
afflictions.
Those whose minds have no standpoint
Will not be caught.

If there were a standpoint,
There would be desire and freedom from desire.
However, great beings without a standpoint
Do not have desire, nor are they free from desire.
Those whose minds are not moved,
Not even by a flicker of a thought about “complete
voidness,”
Have crossed the horrifying ocean of existence
That is agitated by the snakes of the afflictions.

MADHYAMAKA TRAVELS: THE COMPLICATED ROAD TO SIMPLICITY

When talking about Madhyamaka as the practical path or soteriological approach to this ultimate freedom from all reference points, what is most important is the underlying motivation and purpose of teaching and traveling this path. Especially at points when our minds get weary of all the reasonings, when nothing seems to make sense, and when we wonder why we got into this in the first place, it is helpful to remember this. If we just look at the complex techniques of deconstructive analysis and reasoning in which Centrists engage, it is easy to lose track of what this rigorous dismantling of everything is good for. Essentially, just as in the case of all other teachings of the Buddha, the only thing that Centrists are genuinely concerned about is to help sentient beings to overcome suffering and its causes and to reach the irreversible liberation of Buddhahood (which is nothing other than the ultimate Madhyamaka described earlier). Thus, what lies at the heart of the Madhyamaka approach is not a mere view but a bodhisattva’s motivation to free all beings from suffering.

In the Centrist approach, the root cause of suffering is identified as the clinging that takes oneself and other phenomena to be real in just the way they appear. Different from that, the luminous space of our mind’s true nature is essentially free from all discursiveness and reference points.

In itself, this space is basic awareness which unfolds as an unceasing natural display of its own. Through its vividness, we may momentarily become unaware of its actual nature and get caught up in its mere appearance. Being lost in the flux of mind's display without an awareness of its spacious nature leads to a fundamental fear of just allowing its free flow. There is some urge to feel grounded and safe within the stream of this infinite expanse, so we try to hold on to something within it or freeze it altogether. Imagine sitting on a sunny beach and looking at the ocean's large rolling waves, feeling relaxed and serene just from watching the play of this moving vastness. However, if you were to fall into this ocean and get washed away by its huge waves, your state of mind would be far from spacious and relaxed. Most probably, you would not think that the waves are just a superficial movement on the surface of the deep, still waters of the ocean and that their nature is nothing but freely flowing water. Rather, you would be helplessly carried away by the power of these waves. You would panic and desperately try to find something to hold on, which would only bring you closer to drowning. This is the situation of sentient beings in samsara.

In the ocean of mind, there is no fixed point to stand on, so all we do as mistaken beings is hold on to our initial impulse of trying to grasp at such a fixed point. This impulse of grasping itself becomes our first reference point, called "me." It is, in a sense, a very basic self-justification for our existence. To adapt the famous words of Descartes, we seem to say, "I grasp, therefore I am." This first, central reference point of "me" naturally leads to its counterpart of "other" and all further ones, such as subject, object, inside, outside, good, bad, and so on. Gradually, these reference points become more and more solidified through additional layers of conceptual paint and glue. Finally, we have managed to convince ourselves of the hard-and-fast reality of our magnificent work of art— this selfspun sophisticated cocoon that ensnares us— to such a degree that we feel it is the most natural thing in the world and hold on to it for dear life. We have completely lost track of where we started and of the fact that this construction is entirely

homemade. Within this castle in the sky, we feel attraction to those of its very real-looking parts that affirm ourselves, while giving rise to aversion toward its other parts. This emotional polarity calls for action: trying to obtain or keep what we feel attracted to and to avoid or get rid of what we feel aversion to. As the karmic fruits of such actions, we then experience the various types of happiness and suffering in cyclic existence. During this continuous process, every single aspect of it just adds up to and solidifies our cocoon even more. Thus, in the double sense of the word, we keep spinning in what is called cyclic existence.

Since, according to Centrists, the main cause of suffering is our basic clinging to reference points, it is this cause that we have to dissolve in order to obtain freedom from its result: suffering. Thus, whatever is taught in Centrism is based on precisely this motive and constantly points to what might happen once our cocoon unravels. For Centrists, apart from just being tools to the end of liberating sentient beings from their pains, there is no intrinsic value or purpose in philosophy, reasoning, refuting other people's positions, or even meditation altogether. Candrakyrty says in his *Entrance into Centrism*:

The analyses in [Nagarjuna's] treatise were not performed out of attachment to debate.

[Rather,] true reality has been taught for the sake of complete release.

It may well be that in the process of explaining true reality

The scriptures of others become ruined, but there lies no fault in this.

In the end, Madhyamaka refers to the actual direct experience of a nonreferential state of mind that is utterly free from all discursiveness obscuring the seeing of mind's true nature. So when Centrists talk about freedom from discursiveness, it means not only freedom from extreme or wrong ideas but complete absence of any coarse, subtle, conscious, or unconscious ideas, thoughts, or mental images whatsoever (obviously,

this does not mean some kind of coma). At the most subtle level, this means to be free from even the most deeply ingrained tendencies within the mental flux of ordinary sentient beings, such as our instinctive “gut feeling” of being individuals who are different from others and the appearance of subject and object as being distinct. Of course, we cannot affect such deep levels of mind with mere conceptual reasoning, but Centrists regard the path to mental freedom as a gradual process of stripping off the many layers of our cocoon of obscurations. Conceptual analysis is used as the initial remedy, but it is only a technique that points beyond both obscurations and their remedies (including this very analysis), that is, beyond the entire realm of reference points altogether, no matter whether we call them bondage and cyclic existence or liberation and nirvana.

Reasoned analysis is refined more and more through the threefold approach of studying, reflecting, and meditating. In other words, coarse concepts are counteracted with more subtle concepts, which are in turn dissolved by even more refined ones. Meditation basically means becoming familiar with such insights and thus letting them sink in to the deeper levels of the mind that will become more and more accessible and prominent as we proceed along the path. Finally, we will be able to let go of even the most subtle referential threads of the cocoon. Thus, reasoned analysis does not end up in some blank nothingness but eventually gives way to relaxing the mind on a profound level and just resting with crisp wakefulness in its natural, uncontrived state beyond words, concepts, and reference points. It is in this way that *Madhyama* is utter freedom from discursiveness and *Madhyamaka* is the view or teaching that points to this freedom. As Nagarjuna begins his *Praise to the Vajra of Mind*:

I prostrate to my own mind
That eliminates mind's ignorance
By dispelling the web of mental events
Through this very mind.

SHARPENING THE MIND, OPENING THE MIND

So far, we have seen what is dissolved on the Madhyamaka path and what is finally attained. What is the driving force that allows us to actually work with our delusion? What is the main mental factor that brings about freedom? It is called *prajñāparamita*, the perfection of knowledge. As their name suggests, the *Prajñāparamita sūtras*— on which the Madhyamaka system is based— deal extensively with such knowledge. Conventionally speaking, this involves two aspects: emptiness as the object to be realized by *prajñāparamita* and the wisdom of *prajñāparamita* as the subject that realizes emptiness. Ultimately, there is no difference between these two aspects of subject and object. However, in terms of cultivating the realization of this unity of the ultimate subject and object on the path, the *sūtras* do not address only the object, or emptiness. In a more hidden way, they also lay out the gradual subjective process of realizing emptiness, that is, how knowledge is perfected in the mind. This means a detailed description of what happens in the minds of bodhisattvas when they progress through the various levels of realizing emptiness that finally culminate in perfect Buddhahood. Thus, the texts always refer to “the perfection of knowledge (or wisdom)”; they never say “the perfection of emptiness” or “the perfection of the nature of phenomena.” Of course, by definition, there is nothing to be perfected in emptiness or the true nature of the mind anyway. However, there surely is a lot to be perfected in our awareness of this nature. So the perfection of knowledge means perfecting not the ultimate object to be realized but the realization of this object.

During what is experienced as the mental paths and *bhūmis* of refining and uncovering the perfection of knowledge, this perfection itself is something that is completely beyond all reification, inconceivable, and inexpressible. However, as mentioned before, other than just becoming mute about it, it is still possible to compassionately and skillfully point to just that which is beyond everything one could say or think about it. In *The Sūtra of Vast Display*, right after having become the

Awakened One, Buddha Shakyamuni is reported to have uttered the following verse:

I have found a nectarlike dharma,
Profound, peaceful, free from discursiveness, luminous,
and unconditioned.
Whoever I would teach it to could not understand it.
Thus, I shall just stay silent in the middle of the forest.

How can we understand that the Buddha first expressed the utter futility of teaching others what he had realized and then engaged in doing precisely this for forty five years, until the end of his life? Essentially, enlightenment is inexpressible and inconceivable, but it is not inaccessible. Possessing this insight as well as the infinite compassion and capacity to actually show others how to reach mental freedom, the Buddha taught what cannot be taught.

Again, it should be kept in mind that verbal or other indications are nothing but a pointing finger and not that to which this finger points. We cannot experience the taste of delicious food simply by talking or hearing about it. Still, we might become inspired to engage in preparing such food and then relish it. In the same way, we might become inspired to make some effort to experience the taste of enlightenment while not mistaking the words for their referents. Otherwise, if there is nothing to be said anyway, what would be the point of twentyone huge volumes of *Prajñāparamita sutras* in the Buddhist canon, all the detailed Madhyamaka scriptures, or the teachings of the Buddha in general?

Usually, Centrists— and particularly Consequentialists— are known for their refusal to make any statements about what happens when all obscurations have finally dissolved. The reason for this is that they try to avoid fueling our ever-active impulse to get hooked on anything that is presented to us as just another reference point. In particular, as we journey on the Buddhist path and thus refine our understanding, our reference points seem to become ever more sophisticated, up to the most

sophisticated reference point of thinking that we are without reference point. Hence, the Centrist approach is adamant in taking away our good old mental toys while strictly refusing to provide new toys, not even very nice ones such as “Buddhahood,” “enlightenment,” “Dharmakaya,” or “freedom from discursiveness.”

This is why Centrist texts so often deny that Buddhahood, wisdom, and the three enlightened bodies exist and that a Buddha possesses wisdom. However, these are not categorical statements that wisdom and so on absolutely do not exist in any way and under all circumstances. Rather, such explanations should be understood in the same noncommittal way that all Centrist negations are employed. For example, from the refutation of arising it does not necessarily follow that one asserts nonarising or anything else instead. Also, when Centrists deny that a sprout arises, they do so in order to stop our clinging to the notion that such arising is really existent. It does not mean that they try to refute or stop the activity of farming as such.

Likewise, the Centrist denial that wisdom and Buddhahood exist has a number of purposes. It serves as a means to put an end to the fixation that wisdom and Buddhahood are really established, since it is not only our getting hooked on worldly things that has to be dissolved but also the grasping at supramundane phenomena in terms of the Buddhist path and fruition. Thus, such denial is not a teaching that wisdom and Buddhahood are inert things or utter nothingness after everything has been annihilated. Nor is the denial of the existence of wisdom to be taken as an affirmation that wisdom is not established, since all thinking in terms of existence, nonexistence, and so on is nothing but being trapped in reification; that is to say, it is exactly what is to be relinquished. If even ordinary things cannot be seen as fitting into such categories as existent, nonexistent, and so on, how should these dualistic notions ever apply to the very means or the result of eliminating precisely these dualistic notions? Furthermore, the teaching that wisdom does not exist implies that subject and object are never found as separate entities within the nature of all phenomena. Since a Buddha realizes the expanse

that is primordially without the duality of subject and object, a Buddha does not possess any wisdom in the sense of a realizer that engages in an object as something to be realized. Still, the three enlightened bodies, the four or five wisdoms, nonreferential compassion, and enlightened activity do function as dynamic processes, but they cannot be solidified or pinned down in any way. The detailed explanations of these factors in Centrist texts are meant as conventional descriptions that in themselves point to nonreferential openness-awareness.

Thus, Centrist masters thoroughly prepare the ground by continually making it clear that our tendency to grasp at everything— be it mundane or supramundane — is our fundamental problem and that we must be constantly aware of it. It is against this background that a number of positive statements in the scriptures clearly indicate that freedom or enlightenment is not mere extinction. The final perfection of knowledge or wisdom manifests as a living and compassionate awareness of the nature of all phenomena in which all reference points— including those of emptiness as an object and knowledge as a subject— have vanished altogether. This wisdom is neither a mere negation of everything nor just emptiness. It is the luminous and open expanse of the true nature of mind which is aware of its own fundamental state. *The Prajñāparamita Sutra in Eight Thousand Lines* says:

“The mind is no -mind. The nature of the mind is luminosity.” . . .

“. . . does one find or observe existence or non - existence in this nomindness?”

“No, venerable Subhoti.” . . . “What is this no - mindness?”

“Venerable riputra, no -mindness is unchanging and nonconceptual.”

The Sutra Requested by Crown Jewel declares:

O son of good family, the knowledge of bodhisattvas is the source of wisdom. It is the source of merit. It is the source of studying. It is the source of qualities. It is the source of dharma. It is the source of the power of retention and self-confidence. It is the source of individual perfect awareness. It is the source of being endowed with the supreme of all aspects of qualities and wisdom. O son of good family, this is the completely pure engagement in the perfection of knowledge of bodhisattvas.

Nagarjuna's *Praise to the Expanse of Dharmas* reads:

Imagine that a garment that may be purified by fire
Becomes contaminated by various stains at some point.
When it is put into a fire,
Its stains are burned, but the garment is not.

Likewise, luminous mind
Has the stains of desire and so forth.
The fire of wisdom burns its stains,
But not luminous true reality.

All the many sutras spoken by the Victor
That teach emptiness
Make the afflictions subside,
But they do not weaken the basic element.

Rahulabhadra begins his *Praise to the Perfection of Knowledge*:

O perfection of knowledge, you are unspeakable,
inconceivable, and inexpressible.

You have not arisen and do not cease— your nature is that of space.

You are the sphere of personally experienced wisdom.

I bow to you, Mother of the Victors of the three times.

Bhavaviveka's *Heart of Centrism* declares that this highest cognition is real but that it has no object or content. It can be experienced but cannot be described in words; it can only be suggested. His *Lamp of Knowledge* says:

Since [true reality] is without discursiveness, it is peace. Since it is peace, it is the sphere of nonconceptual wisdom. Since it is the sphere of nonconceptual wisdom, it cannot be known through something else. Since words do not apply to that which cannot be known through something other [than this wisdom], the very nature of true reality is perfectly beyond the superimpositions of words.

Candrakirti says in his *Lucid Words*:

The ultimate is not known due to something other. It is peace. It is what the noble ones are aware of as that which is to be personally experienced [by them]. . . . This is not consciousness.

Once stainless nondual wisdom has been manifested . . . through the power of personal realization . . . , one will be released.

His autocommentary on *The Entrance into Centrism* states:

The ultimate of the Buddhas is this very nature. It is ultimate reality by virtue of its very undeceptiveness.

Still, all of them have to personally experience it on their own.

The Entrance into the Supreme Knowledge of Centrism declares:

In this natural state of primordial nonarising,
There is nothing to be negated and nothing to be affirmed.

Nirvana and nonnirvana

Are without difference in the natural state of nonarising.

This is not even nonarising as such,

Because arising things do not exist.

The seeming does not exist, the ultimate does not exist,

Buddhas do not exist, sentient beings do not exist,

Views do not exist, something to be meditated on does not exist,

Conduct does not exist, and results do not exist:

The actuality of this is what is to be cultivated.

Let this mind free from thoughts rest in its own peace.

Without identifying something, without being distracted,

Without characteristics, and luminous— thus meditate.

The Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje says in his *Chariot of the Tagbo Siddhas*:

I certainly do not say that there is no difference between wisdom (the cognizance that has changed state) and consciousness ([the cognizance that] has not [so changed]).

Pawo Rinpoche's commentary on *The Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* explains:

Once clinging in terms of superimposition and denial has come to an end in such a way, just this empty and luminous nature of phenomena in which there is nothing to be removed or to be added is the fundamental state of phenomena. This is expressed as primordial nirvana as such.

Thus, it is seen that the expanse of dharmas is not an object of speech, reflection, and expression. It is for just this [type of seeing] that the conventional terms “penetrating the nature of phenomena” and “beholding ultimate reality” are used. The conventional term “personally experienced wisdom” is then used for the very knowledge that does not observe the characteristics of the reference points of subject and object. Thus, the nature of phenomena is not seen through apprehending a subject and an object. Rather, if one knows that subject and object are not observable, one engages in the nature of phenomena.

Because one has engaged in emptiness through devoted interest on [the paths of] accumulation and junction, emptiness— which is, like space, without any difference— is realized on the path of seeing in a manner of being omnipresent. Through the power of eliminating adventitious stains on the paths of meditation, every aspect of the qualities intrinsic to emptiness is revealed. [This is] as if one were to fathom the extents and special features of every [instance of] space exactly as they are, starting from the space of the

limitless realms of sentient beings down to the [space] that is enclosed by the fibrils of the split tip of a hair. Finally, it is as if one were to simultaneously and fully comprehend in one single moment the entirety of the element of space that is included in the three times and beyond unity and multiplicity. Likewise, in one single moment, one simultaneously and fully comprehends the entirety of the expanse of dharmas (or emptiness) exactly as it is. It is beyond unity and multiplicity and has always been intrinsic to all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, hearers, solitary realizers, and sentient beings; to all the five aggregates; the eighteen constituents; the twelve sources; and to all the factors to be relinquished or to be attained. In dependence on the worldly seeming level, [this final realization is described by] saying, “Perfect Buddhahood is attained.”

Yet Buddhahood is in no way a self-sufficient or self-indulgent state, since its wisdom-space radiates the living warmth of infinite and spontaneous compassion. Realizing the nature of one’s own mind means seeing the nature of everybody’s mind. The more clearly Buddhas and bodhisattvas experience the shining of the true heart of all beings, the more clearly they realize the suffering of these beings that comes from cloudlike ignorance within the clear sky of their minds. Seeing through the illusory nature of both this ignorance and the ensuing unnecessary suffering, Buddhas and bodhisattvas cannot help doing everything they can to wake up and comfort their fellow beings, just as we would try to wake up people who show all the signs of having a terrible nightmare and soothe them by telling them that it was just a dream. Furthermore, Pawo Rinpoche declares:

Thus, by gaining power over and becoming very skilled in the dependent origination of the collections of causes

for the entirety of cyclic existence and nirvana, compassion for the assembly of sentient beings who do not realize this in the same way wells up unbearably. [However,] at this point, there is nothing to be observed as either oneself or sentient beings. To the same extent that great compassion increases, also this very [realization] that, primordially, nothing can be observed as sentient beings, what is not sentient beings, suffering, happiness, and so on grows and increases. This is the ultimate seeing that is like the orb of the sun. When it becomes stable and increases in such a way, great compassion— which is like the light rays of the sun— will grow even more than before. [Beings with such realization] do not behold sentient beings, but great compassion still flowers in them. They do not behold themselves either, but they still lend their support to all sentient beings. They do not behold anything to be attained whatsoever, but they still establish beings in great enlightenment. Just as there is no place whatsoever to go to beyond space, they do not behold anybody who would go somewhere beyond, but they still display [the activity of] liberating sentient beings from cyclic existence. . . .

Hence, just as skillful physicians exert themselves for the sake of the diseased, one makes one-pointed efforts for the sake of those who are ignorant since beginningless time because of various [ways of] having reference points. [Ignorant beings] only exert themselves for the causes of suffering and then angrily look at the results [of this]. They burden themselves with their own sufferings by plunging into a swamp that they stirred up themselves, and then they have no clue

what to do. Just as [people outside the swamp] know that this swamp in which these naïve beings are drowning is shallow and small, one fully comprehends the nature of cyclic existence through knowing true reality. Thus, one is released from both the extremes of attachment to and fear of swamplike cyclic existence. Through knowing that one moreover has the ability to pull sentient beings out [of this swamp], one will manage to remain in cyclic existence for the sake of others as long as space exists. This is the direct result of having meditated on emptiness.

Reprinted from *The Center Of The Sunlit Sky: Madhyamaka in the Kagyü Tradition* (Snow Lion Publications) by permission of the publisher.

Karl Brunnhölzl, M.D. was trained as a physician and also studied Tibetology. He received training in Tibetan language and Buddhist philosophy and practice at the Marpa Institute for Translators, founded by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamsto Rinpoche. Since 1989 he has been a translator and interpretor from Tibetan and English. He is affiliated with with the Nitartha Institute.

No Matter How My Journey Ends

Patrick Frank

Last night I awoke at 4 AM again
Thinking, in the darkness, beside my wife
She is invisible beside me
I take a closer look at
The red hands of the digital clock
Close my eyes again
Try to recall my dream
It slips away
I wish for dawn
I am adrift
The ocean I imagine
The shore where I began
More than distant
It is unreachable
I do not know
If I am drifting to any shore
All I know is, I care deeply for
This life, my loved ones
The colors weaving in and out
The stillness of dawn and twilight
It grows inside
When I take time to let it come in
Music, the magic of cinema

The strangers I meet who become friends
I care deeply for all of this
No matter how my journey ends

Patrick Frank is a published poet-songwriter, essayist, and counselor from South Carolina. He has served as a counselor and advocate for the poor in New England, the South, and in New Mexico.

The Magick of Saints

Adekun

Recently I wrote a book about Saint Magick entitled *The Powers and Magick of Saints* for Original Publications. The book raised some interesting issues for me. First, what is meant by Saint magick? The first part of the compound phrase is easy to define. Aleister Crowley wrote: “Magick is the Science and Art of Causing Change to occur in Conformity with Will.” That pretty much covers all your bases, whether you are trying to bring about a romantic relationship, the publication of a book or a lottery win.



Defining who and what we mean by a Saint is more difficult. The role a saint plays in magick according to Crowley’s valid model is that of an agent who makes something happen in accordance with our will. Typically, we entertain a Saint through a combination of incantation (prayer) and propitiation to realize our goals. That may sound a little clinical when talking about beings who have inspired such enormous love and religious devotion as saints, but it dispassionately describes the practice of Saint Magick.

However it does not answer the question, “what is a Saint?” Catholic doctrine is strict on this point. A prospective saint must undergo a process of canonization. The process begins after someone dies. If he, or she, led a life of sanctity to the very end, that person may be

recommended to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for veneration. The petitions for recognition is driven often by members of the prospective saint's own community or the public at large in cases of individuals whose holiness merited wide attention. If the Congregation approves veneration, the next step is for the person to be beatified, declared "blessed" by the Church. For someone to merit this, they must have performed a miracle after death. This indicates that they are in the company of God. Catholic Church dogma indicates that many of us will go to purgatory to atone for our sins before we go to Heaven. A Saint is among those who go directly to Heaven, since their character is without blemish. The miraculous intercession substantiates this. The next step is final canonization. Another posthumous miracle needs to be authenticated so that the Pope can issue his ineffable endorsement.

In practical terms, it is often a political issue who gets canonized. The investigations required for veneration, beatification and canonization are costly. The expense money is raised from those with a vested interest in seeing a particular individual canonized. Among those who are likely to contribute are those who shared either political views or ethnic affinity with the deceased.

The Catholic Church formally includes saints as being one of three types of entity worthy of being worshipped. The other two are: God the Father, as well as the Trinity of Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and Holy spirit and the Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary and her numerous avatars.

Of course, the Catholic Church does not formally endorse any type of magick. Typically, a witch exemplifies the Church's conception of a magick practitioner, a criminal who sought to realize her will through such horrible things such as intercourse with demons, the preparation of herbal concoctions and amulets and the use of incantations. Its remedy was to torture and execute such women by the thousands throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith, point out in their introduction to *Ancient Christian Magick: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* that even in ancient times, words for magick such as magos and mageia carried strong anti-social connotations.[Footnote: Marvin Meyer

and Richard Smith, 1994 .Ancient Christian Magick: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco), p.2] Magick practitioners threatened civilization.

However, as the authors go on to elaborate when one examines actual magical practices as evidenced by Coptic amulet texts they explore in their noteworthy book, the distinction between occultism and religious mysticism definitely blurs.

The following example is an oversimplification, but consider its practical purpose in light of Crowley's definition of magick. Henrietta wants to have a career as an opera singer. She lights candles to Saint Cecilia, prays to her and invokes both Mary and Jesus also in her prayer. She asks them to make her a better singer. Raised a devout Holy Roman Catholic she employs the refined practice of prayer, including the use of an ancillary item – a candle to improve (change) her voice in a manner consistent with her goals. What part of that does not fit: “Magick is the Science and Art of Causing Change to occur in Conformity with Will?” She could also pray to have a more modest disposition to be a better nun, and her act still fits the criteria. It still is magick. If she had made the same petition 500 years ago and substituted “Hecate” for Cecilia, the Church could have burned her as an example of moral abomination.

In many ways, the worship of Saints that has developed in the Church is the Church's manner of taming, yet still recognizing, the human need for magick. The veneration of saints has been an integral part of Roman Catholic piety for nearly two thousand years. Roman Catholicism emerged out of an earlier form of Christianity that was itself a branch of Judaism. By the early part of the fourth century of the Common Era, when Christianity, the once persecuted religion, was embraced as the state religion in Rome, certain accommodations had to be made if the religion was to successfully supplant the polytheistic religions of the Empire. Providing suitable substitutions for numerous patron gods – of everything from cheese making to specific community patronage - challenged their ability to effectively promulgate monotheism. The Church came up with the notion to immortalize

righteous Christians who had died for their faith and were rewarded by being ensconced in Heaven with Christ. They were thus in a position of privilege. They could serve as intercessors between the living and God himself. Thus they could take over areas of patronage left vacant by the old gods.

Most of the early saints were martyrs who faced torture and death rather than renounce Christ. Some may not have led what we would consider to be very saintly lives. For instance, St. Constantine had his wife boiled alive. Since his time, historical saints have laid the foundation for mass murder through developing the Inquisition and leading devastating crusades to the Holy Land.

Other saints appear to be simply the old gods renamed and “baptized” to serve as intercessors in the new religion. For instance, St. Tharteus may well have been simply a new personality assigned to the elder god Cernunos.

Even those saints whose lives have been historically documented also assumed the roles once held by the old gods. We see evidence of this in a beautiful tapestry from the Skog Church in Hälsingland, Sweden that is housed now in Stockholm's Museum of National Antiquities. Depicted are sainted heroes of the Church: St. Olaf, King Knud (martyred at Saint Alban's Church), and King Erik. St. Olaf, who elsewhere in Scandinavia is likened to the Thunder God Thor, holds a tree symbolic of the All Father Odin. King Knud holds a distinctly hammer like cross, symbolic of Thor, while Erik holds a corn stalk alluding him with the fertility/agricultural god Frey. The Heroes of the church are initially interchangeable with their pagan predecessors.

Eventually, cults that grew around these saints continued to reflect many of the characteristics of the gods. The original gods had fulfilled very specific roles for their followers. The needs these roles reflected did not go away. A Scandinavian going into battle might petition St. Olaf the same way his forefather petitioned Thor.

In the 1960's Pope Paul VI removed many saints who lacked historical documentation from the official Church calendar of saints.

However, he added that those who continued to venerate these saints locally in their homes and communities would not be found guilty of any wrongdoing.

In reality, many of the “saints” who are popularly worshipped are not those found on the Catholic Calendar.

In addition to so-called “non-calendar” saints, there are saints who have risen from the needs of the people. Some are likely old gods, while others may be fallen folk heroes. People dub them saints because of the spiritual and magickal value that they manifest.

The contemporary Catholic Church has condemned some like Santísima Muerte (Saint Death, Holy Death or Our Lady of the Good Death) whose cultus has grown exponentially in recent decades. Yet in her case, many Mexican clerics refuse to make her worship an issue with their parishioners. Some even allow small altars to be erected to her in their churches. People who are devout Catholics believe in Santísima Muerte because they feel that she is of the people and understands their needs. She delivers miracles when asked.

Santísima Muerte and many other saints have a distinctly working class appeal. The continually emerging saints often represent the interests of those who feel disenfranchised. Muerte’s cultus began its recent rapid growth amidst the slums of Mexico, places of little upward social mobility. A USA Today article noted that “death” was a daily reality for those afflicted by poverty, why not make a friend, even a goddess, of her? (Her true origins are infinitely more complex than that, a subject examined at length in *The Powers and Magick of Saints*.)

Many who petition saints for health cures or financial assistance do so because health care and economic growth represent miracles. Saints are available for help when the powers that be in society, whether they be political or religious institutions, offer no practical aid or hope. Someone like Saint Lazarus seems to have been the “Poor Man’s Physician” since his very inception. To this very day, his dedicated followers help thousands of impoverished people with health care, frequently through a

combination of prayer and herbal remedies. However, the saints are not solely advocates for the disenfranchised.

Recently, I had an educated upper middle class woman ask me to petition Santísima Muerte on her behalf because she had heard accounts of her great effectiveness as an advocate for jilted women. As human beings, we have come to expect a lot from religion. We want it to improve the quality of our lives. Sometimes faith does not always bring us the types of boons necessary for our happiness, whether it is the return of a wayward husband or the money to pay the rent. We want to be able to ask a higher power for immediate help in satisfying our human needs. Therefore, we want to realize miracles. That is the stock and trade of saints.

Whether approved by the Church or not, a saint is considered as such in people's heart if he can grant favors. Theoretically a saint does so through acting as an intermediary between man and God. Because a saint was once a human being himself, we believe that he can sympathize with our predicaments. People seeking miracles in their lives - and who isn't - don't care whether a saint is recognized by an official body, such as the Catholic Church, or not.

The decision about what saints to include in a book on Saint Magick is subjective. Some, like Saint Lazarus, have been indispensable to me for a number of years. Not to include him would feel like I was betraying a dear friend. I look at other individual saints like St. Brigid, Santísima Muerte, and St. Hildegard because I find that their examples bring to light universal truths about the complex natures of just what is a saint as well as Saint Magick. For instance, St. Brigid integrates Pagan, Christian and ultimately Afrikan-Caribbean philosophy through a series of transformations.

In terms of how I present the information, I group spells together under the topics of specific saints or cultural affinities. I favor the inclusion of specific saints and magickal workings that demonstrate the principles of an underlying belief system. For instance, in discussing avatars of the Holy Mother, I group together five who are venerated in

Santeria. Hopefully, by studying magickal rites associated with them, the reader may gain some insight into Santeria as well. I include similar groupings under the broad headings of Mexican Catholicism (and Curanderismo) and European Folk Catholicism.

Many of the spells are interchangeable between saints. When simply changing a few words or the color candle used can affect the exchange, I indicate this. Many of the magickal works described here are derived from time proven formulae. Whenever possible, I share spells that I have used myself. Otherwise, I have tried to verify the effectiveness of the spell through the testimony of another established St. magick practitioners. If you study the spells closely, hopefully it will become obvious that there are underlying formulae.

However, I am aware that intellectual analysis may be beyond the interest of some of my readers. To aid you, I generally insert the more analytical material at the beginning of the discussion of a particular saint. The “good stuff” is neatly organized after that with step-by-step instructions. I reiterate something Crowley wrote when describing his Book of Thoth, the literary companion to his and Frieda Harris’ Tarot deck. Perhaps you can omit reading those sections to your own advantage.

Some of the material goes beyond the scope of what might conservatively be considered Saint Magick. For instance, I include directions on how to perform a Spiritist mass. Spiritism is not saint magick. However, santeros, curanderos, voduisants, among others, have found that the Spiritist mass is the most effective means to communicate with both the departed and enlightened spirit guides. There is precedent for a Spiritist mass to provide direct communication with saints, as is evidenced by the famous message from Joan of Arc, the full text of which is included in the chapter on Spiritism. The misa is a powerful tool for the Saint Magick practitioner. I believe that you will benefit from also having some understanding of the philosophical system that developed it.

Simply put, I think the most important thing to me in writing this book is to motivate the reader to look at the saints themselves and the

practices they inspire with respect. This is all very real to me. I am a Santero. The religion of which I am a priest has its own unique relationship with saints. However, it also does not prohibit its practitioners from working with saints outside its purview. As a santero, I work as a healer, and sometimes that work requires me to either incorporate the belief system of my client or to work with aspects of Catholic belief. Just about every Santero uses the San Louis Beltran prayer either to heal the sick or remove the evil eye.

My initiator into the mysteries of Santeria liked to tell the story about how he was conceived due to the miraculous intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Keep in mind Our Lady of Guadalupe is not in any way part of the hierarchy of saints employed in Santeria. The story goes like this. His mother, who was a powerful santera born into a long line of santeros, desperately wanted to have a child. For a number of years her efforts to conceive proved unsuccessful, and she faced the onset of middle age childless. She went on tour as a performer to Mexico. In Mexico City, she saw pilgrims make their way to the Basilica for Our Lady of Guadalupe. She decided to join them, and was so moved by the experience that she petitioned Guadalupe to allow her to conceive. Within a month she was pregnant with my Padrino. Initially, when I was told this story, I was confused. Why didn't she petition one of the orisha/saints we worship in Santeria? As a santera, she had done so effectively on behalf of dozens, perhaps hundreds, of women in her same situation. Couldn't she have done so for herself? My padrino replied nonchalantly: "It worked, didn't it?"

I think that attitude sums up the reason a lot of us choose to work with saints. I have been privileged to talk to many very genuine and sincere Saint Magick practitioners in the preparation and research for this book. They perceive saints differently than I do. For all of us, the practices that will be described in this book are sincere expressions of faith. The spiritual entities with whom we work are our protectors, our advocates and our friends. Such practices have a long history of getting results. Even though the majority of us who work with saints tend to

have deep religious convictions, the bottom line is that our practices produce results. We work with saints who make positive differences in our own lives as well as those of our clients. I know that it was my informants' hope in sharing their information, as well as my own, that you too will be able to appreciate what saints have to add to your lives.

Adekun is an initiated Santero, gifted writer, artist and sought after diviner. His book on Saint magick will be published shortly by Original Publications.



The Artist and the Tidal Wave: How Dreams Can Save Your Creative Life

John D. Goldhammer, Ph.D.

Inside you there's an artist you don't know about.

—Rumi

apologize For many years the occasional dreams I remembered appeared to be either unintelligible nonsense or exhaustive dramas about frustrating work scenarios. I would wake up in a panic, relieved it was just a dream. But one December night over twenty years ago, everything changed. I dreamt that I was looking through a tiny window in a massive, ornate door, intently curious to see what was in a mysterious room. I was startled to see a huge single eye looking back at me intently. That winter night I began a remarkable journey that forever changed my life, an adventure that continues to this day.

Beginning with that dream, the floodgates opened and a torrent of dreams spilled over the walls of my well-planned and quite ordinary life. They contained thematic images, symbols, and dramas that moved through my life, leaving strange tracks, exotic fragrances, tearing down old buildings, setting fires. I was captivated. I committed myself to understanding their real meaning and gradually filled five dream journals with thousands of dreams, all the while voraciously reading everything I could find on dreams, symbols, the imagination, and theories and techniques of dream interpretation. Several years later, another unusual dream was the catalyst that inspired me to leave a lucrative business

career, return to school and become a psychotherapist specializing in dreamwork.

The poet and philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), once suggested a stunning possibility: that ‘Dreams’ may well have an analogy with our whole life and fate.’ I couldn’t agree more! After twenty-plus years of researching dreaming and techniques of dream interpretation, working with over twenty thousand individual dreams, I discovered something extraordinary, something with tremendous implications for both individuals and for our planet. I realized that the majority of our dreams have a profound intent and purpose; they stand as guardians at the gates of the human spirit, defending us from all manner of nefarious influences. In fact, our dreams focus, with laser-like precision, on freeing us from anything that is self-negating and self-defeating. Dreams are like a master sculptor removing everything from the block of marble that is not ‘elephant.’ This natural process slowly but surely brings one’s Authentic Self and particular genius into clear definition. Like a fog lifting as the sunlight emerges, we begin to see and to know exactly what it is that we must do with our life.

This astonishing characteristic of dreaming has tremendous implications: it means that we each have an inner, spiritual and psychological defense system designed to not only insure the survival of life as we know it but also to facilitate the evolution of the human spirit and change the world we live in.. To be sure, our dreams are social activists. They intend to derail the status quo, to dynamite the careening train of a routine life. Dreams want the individual life to become a creative intervention in the social order.

Here’s a fascinating example that appears to be a specific memory of dying: Terri, a beautiful, exuberant eighteen-year-old rebel, had a frightening dream immediately after joining a spiritual group. She had the dream just as she was in the process of moving across the country so that she could be near the minister, a commanding, charismatic woman in her early sixties who she described as ‘my spiritual teacher.’ Unfortunately, over time, the group evolved into a very destructive cult.

Many years later, after finally leaving the group, we worked on that old dream that still puzzled her. Back then, her spiritual teacher told her the dream was from a past life in Pompeii and that was the end of that. The dream had always haunted her and just would not go away. Here's her dream:

“I am on a beach at the ocean painting with an easel. There is a woman with me also painting. I then look out and see a gigantic tidal wave nearly on top us! Then I look back at my painting and my friend and I realize everything has been swept away and I am under the water and will drown. I repeat a prayer but I feel the water filling my lungs and I am surprised there is no pain.”

Terri's dream was to be an artist. Art was her passion in life. She told me, “I always dreamt I wanted to be a great painter.” And her dream begins with her ‘painting’ at the ocean. She described her friend as, “someone I had known for a couple of years. She's an eccentric genius, a writer, but also somewhat self-destructive.” Terri felt she accurately represented a part of herself—eccentric and talented as an artist but with a self-destructive side. I asked Terri to imagine being the tidal wave. “I'm going to overwhelm everything, wipe it out,” she said, adding, “I was amazed I was dying and there was no burning, no pain.” “All the time I was in the group, my guru said art was not my right work. I accepted this without a fight, I just let go, exactly like dying in that tidal wave, without a struggle,” she explained. Now Terri realized the tidal wave was the group's ideology that had killed her authentic life, her passion, her art; it was the artist, her creativity that drowned under that wave so long ago. Now the dream resonated powerfully; it made perfect sense. She told me, “Now after many years outside the group, I am struggling to find and uncover that artist, that painter that I let die.” Finally understanding her dream gave her the resolve and renewed determination to resurrect her art and her creative life.

Our dreams carry the awesome potential to help us to see clearly who we really are—our natural, inborn potential and unique character without anything ‘put on’ us. When understood, they become our

passport into a life that has meaning, passion, and purpose. Our dreams want our lives to make a difference. We need only remove all the isms and complex psychological systems that would like to tell us what our dreams mean and instead learn how to give our dreams the respect and the freedom to speak for themselves.

And he turned his mind to an unknown art.—James Joyce

John Goldhammer, Ph.D., is the author of three books, a psychologist, dream researcher, and educator. *The Artist and the Tidal Wave* is adapted from his newest book, *Radical Dreaming: Use Your Dreams to Change Your Life* (Kensington Publishing / Citadel Press). He lives in Seattle, Washington. www.radicaldreaming.com.

Tales of Hindu Devilry: The Vikram Vetala

Mogg Morgan

In 1987 Shantidevi and myself visited Shri Mahendranath (Dadaji), the now departed guru of the East West tantrik order AMOOKOS, in his retreat at Shamballa Tampovane just outside Ahmedabad. We exchanged gifts and he gave me an inconsequential booklet entitled *King Vikram and the Ghost*. After we had left I packed this away with other things and didn't look at it for several years when a chance conversation drew it to my attention.

It was in fact a reprint of C H Tawney's translation of *Vikram Vetala*, a classic of Tantrik folklore. At the end of the formal part of the ritual, when the gods have been invoked, the elixir shared, the ritual combat complete, then, as in times past, is a good moment for story telling. And what better tale to recall than one of these twenty five.

In earlier chapter I referred to the high tradition of Indian literature and the 'little' or folk tradition in which so much tantrik material finds its roots. The *Vikram Vetala* is part of this folk tradition. As so often when describing things Indian one must have recourse to superlatives. Indian literature has a vast wealth of narrative prose. The orthodox side of this is to be found in the *Puranas* or ancient legends such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. These may have been favoured for recited during the build up to the notorious horse sacrifice.

Separate from this heterodox tradition is the *Ocean of Story* or more accurately the *Ocean of the Streams of Story* (Kathasaritsâgara). A great

collection of tales that is likened to an ocean because the streams of all stories flow into it. But as if the mind needs any more boggling the *Ocean of Story* is itself a rendering of a greater lost original call the *Blooms of the Great Story* (Brihat kathamañjari).

Perhaps it would help if I explained that all Indian art mirrors life in its extreme intricacy - the ideals of Platonic simplicity are alien to it. This can be seen in the sensory overload incurred whenever one gazes upon an Hindu temple. Every available inch seems to be covered with images of the utmost complexity and from every aspect of life. In the temple at Halebid in South India, only one tiny segment is left uncarved - and this is done to underline the fact that despite the thousands of carvings, the temple is an incomplete representation of the world!

But the Indian mind is not so very different to our own and sections of the *Ocean of Story* were circulated in smaller, more manageable bits. Two particular sections have an independent existence from the *Ocean of Story* - the *Pañcatantra* and the *Vikram Vetala*.

THE PANCATANTRA

The first of these is not a tantrik work despite its name. Remember that the term 'tantra' has the mundane meaning of 'treatise'. The five treatises are in fact five sets of animal stories each of which teach some aspect of everyday ethics, for instance when the weak band together they can often achieve more than the strong. From its emergence approximately two thousand years ago, the *Pancatantra* has been translated into almost every language. Many other sets of animal stories such as Aesops *Fables*, Apulius' *Golden Ass*, Bocaccios' *Decameron* and La Fontane's *Fables* - all are almost certainly related to the *Pañcatantra* stories.

Take for instance the Welsh legend of Llewellyn and his dog Gerlert. Local Pembrokeshire folklore says that the Preseli mountains are the reified remains of the wrongly accused dog Gerlert. In his struggle to guard Llewellyn's child from a wolf, the dog and the baby's cradle is covered in blood. When Llewellyn returns and sees the bloodstained crib

he makes the over hasty assumption that Gerlert has gone mad and killed his child. He hurls his deadly javelin at Gerlert. Moments later he discovers the corpse of the wolf and the baby - alive and well. His remorse reminds us not to make hasty assumptions. The story is identical in almost all details with the frame story of the fifth book of the *Pañcatantra*, although the protagonists in that story are a cobra and a mongoose.

VIKRAM AND VETALA

Vikram and Vetala is thoroughly rooted in the world of witchcraft and tantrik magick. Both are described in a manner far removed from the medieval descriptions of the western witch-hunts. It is obvious that the narrators had a fascination, indeed a love/hate relation with the witches and magicians.

King Vikram, who is one of the central characters of the collection of these twenty five tales of Indian devilry, is encountered in the first or so-called 'frame' story. His name means 'son of heroism' and he is a legendary king, very like King Arthur. He ruled over a golden age that still bears his name and is used to set the date on Indian birth certificates. He patronized all the arts and sciences. Interestingly his father suffered the same fate as Lucius in the *Golden Ass* and was cursed to assume the form of an ass during the day.

The other central character is the Vetala. Richard Burton in his rendering of this book into English suggested that a Vetala is a vampire and this has been followed by many subsequent editors. The Vetala is neither a vampire nor a ghost. As the stories make clear a Vetala is a special class of demon, outwoudly ghoulish but in fact benevolent towards humanity.

It is interesting that the lost original from which these tales are said to be drawn was written in the language of demons -called 'Paishâchi' by the grammarians. I would remind the reader of what I said in chapter two about the possible demonic origin of Tantra. 'Paishâchi' may just mean

‘rough dialect’ of the common folk and is, according to some authorities, a dialect related to the Romany tongue. There is some convincing linguistic evidence that the Romanies migrated from Northern India, in approximately the third century before the common era. Whatever way one looks at it ‘paishâci’ is a lost ‘demonic’ language, which only survives in stories such as *Vikram and Vetala*.

Indian physicians were often called upon to deal with cases of demonic possession and the various kinds of demon are therefore described in some detail within their texts¹. Their medical expertise at ‘bhuta-vidya’, literally ‘knowledge of spirits’ may seem at odds with the overall materialistic tone of Âyurvedic medical education. In the main it was only in perinatal deaths and also certain intractable kinds of mental illness that the blame was laid on demonic possession. Some modern commentators have even seen in this a rudimentary form of psychiatry.

Demonic possession is called ‘graha’ in Sanskrit and there are said to be nine classes of possessing demon. The standard list begins with possession by the gods (devas), which shows that possession by a god can be undesirable in many circumstances. The other seven in order are Asuras (Elder Gods: see chapter two of this series); Gandharvas or nature spirits; Yakshas or ancient nature spirits; Pitris or ghosts of departed ancestors; Bhujangas or serpent spirits; Rakshasas or ferocious ones and finally Pishachas: demons. A person possessed by the last of these displays the following bad personality traits: haughtiness, emaciation, rough language and behaviour, extreme uncleanliness, restive, voracious appetite, fondness for cold water and lonely places such as the night forest, grave yards etc., where they weep and wail incessantly.

The demons are able to take possession when a ritual is badly performed or the correct observances forgotten. The pishacha demons are the only ones that can be driven out by force and without killing the victim. All the others must be propitiated or they will kill the possessed person. This is further evidence that this class of demon is somehow outside of the pale of orthodox society and can therefore be freely

¹ See Kris Morgan, *Medicine of the Gods* (Mandrake of Oxford 1994)

insulted if they refuse to leave after propitiation has been tried. They are in this respect like the demonic entities invoked in Goetic magick that are firmly licensed to depart by the magician and threatened if they refuse to go.

Various incenses and potions are recommended to drive them out. Cooked or uncooked meat is another favourite way of tempting a demon to leave a victim of possession. Grahas or possession in children is much more serious and with alarming regularity the incident ended in death. There are nine types of such demonic possession. Mythologically these demons are said to have to have been created by the gods to guard the new born god Karttikeya or Skanda. Paradoxically these same possessing entities can turn on the child. Unlike the adult versions, these are personified as fearful goddesses, for example Shakuni the bird goddess, or in two instances as male gods. They must be propitiated very carefully with the appropriate rites described in the medical texts of Sushruta².

Indian philosophy divides all matter into three fundamental particles or gunas called sattvas, rajas and tamas - which can perhaps be translated simply as essence, energy and substance.³ These are thought of as real particles and all matter is composed of them in various permutations. Mind is particularly rich in the three gunas and of them, disturbance of rajas and tamas is said to be the most productive of mental imbalance and not surprisingly we find that all classes of demons are predominantly rajas and/or tamas. Two thirds of the demons have no essence (sattva) at all - they are in effect automata. Some examples of this hierarchy of demons and the possible personality traits they inspire is shown in the following table:

² *Susbruta Sambita*, English translation by G D Singhal et al, *Medical & Psychiatric Considerations in Ancient Indian Surgery* (otherwise known as *Uttara-tantra*) ch 37sq.

³ See Kris Morgan, *Medicine of the Gods*, p. 10 and Kris Morgan, *Ancient Indian Gnosticism* (Mandrake of Oxford) forthcoming

The Āyurvedic Personality Archetypes

| Sattva Mind | Rājasa Mind | Tāmasa Mind |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Brāhma Type (godly) | Asura (ruthless) | Pāshva (bestial) |
| Rshi (sagely) | Rākshasa (aggressive) | Matsya (fishy) |
| Indra (authoritative) | Pishâcha (Manic depressive) | Vânaspatya (vegetative) |
| Yama (restrained) | Sarpa ⁴ (reptilian/deceitful) | |
| Varuna (courageous) | Preta (morbid) | |
| Kuvera (generous) | Shakuni (officious) | |
| Gandharva (ecstatic) | | |

The Pishâcha is associated with the one of the three gunas called rajas. This energetic and feminine aspect of our personality when out of balance leads in this system to manic depression or melancholia. In our own tradition enlightened melancholy is a magical state that can lead to liberation. Some of these personality types are associated with the lunar parts of Indian astrology. The Brahma type with the day of the full-moon; the Rishi and Asura with dusk and dawn; the Rākshasa with the moon's dark fortnight and the Preta with its bright fortnight.

One last piece of folklore before returning to our story - there are in the Hindu tradition said to be eight types of marriage - one for each of the classes of possessing entities. Gandharva marriage occurs very commonly in story and happens when the partners are so intoxicated with each other that they marry without informing any relatives or without any formal ceremony. It is said that a Gandharva inspires such unions because of its peculiar affinity with the sense of smell, and hence eroticism in general. The eighth class of marriage inspired by the

⁴*Sarpa-dosa* is the curse of bareness caused by harming a snake. See Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* p. 94

Pishacha is but a hair's breadth from rape. The erstwhile partner is tricked into union whilst asleep or by being placed into a compromising situation from which marriage is the only antidote.

I'm assuming that the Vetala of our story is one of those class of Pishacha demons given in the table. The standard dictionaries have no ready etymology for this word, a fact I always find exciting because it suggests a folk origin. Vetala's are often seen on the sides of Nepalese temples, shown with a horrific countenance and wearing a yellow skirt. Perhaps the creature became popularized in Nepal when the story cycle was translated into Nepalese in the eleventh century by the poet and folklorist Kshemendra. (I say folklorist because he is also responsible for an encyclopaedia of customs composed in 1037.

The Vetala was once a normal person who overheard Shiva telling Parvati a collection of stories for her ears only. He was cursed to remain a Vetala until such time as he could find someone clever enough to answer the riddles set in each story. There is in fact a whole tantra on Vetala magick in one a huge compendiums of tantrik ritual compiled by Krishnananda.⁵ This is called *Tantrasara* one of several works bearing the same title the most famous being the work of Abhinavagupta, who was an adept of the right hand path.

THE FRAME STORY⁶

And so to the story

Once upon a time there was a mighty king called Vikram. People came from far and wide to offer him presents as a token of their loyalty. And then one day a naked holy man walked into his audience room and offered him a single fruit. The king accepted the humble gift with as

⁵ There is an account his life in Sircar, The Shakta Pithas (1948) p. 74sq.

⁶ I have adapted this version of the story from C H Tawney's English translation of Somadeva's *Kathasaritsagara*. Various editions are available including one from Jaico Publishing House.

much grace as he would any other gift of greater value. At the end of the audience he handed it to his steward thinking he would eat it but in fact he placed it through a window in an abandoned part of the treasury. And from that day on the naked holy man was a regular visitor to the righteous King's audience room and each time he brought the same gift - a single fruit picked from the wild trees in the forest.

Until one day the king took a fancy to give the fruit to one of the semi tame monkeys that roamed about the place and then an odd thing happened. The monkey bit the fruit and then immediately threw it down. Glowing inside the broken body of the fruit they saw a wonderful diamond of the highest value. And when they looked in the place where the other fruits had been thrown they found a large pile of similar gems.

And so the King resolved to question the holy man the next time he came. The holy man said that the jewel was as nothing and that if the King would help him drive away the demons that plagued his forest ritual, then he would give him a gift greater than any so far seen.

And so it was agreed that King Vikram would meet the holy man at midnight at a desolate spot in the centre of a large forest cremation ground. Nervously the King, armed with his finest sword, walked through the fearful and desolate place to a lonely ritual fire. He saw the holy man and began to wonder at what manner of ritual he was celebrating at this hour. But before he could question him, he was reminded of his oath and sent on a quest to the loneliest and blackest part of the cremation ground where he would find a fresh corpse hanging from a tree. Bound by his oath he went there and climbed the tree and brought down the corpse with great difficulty. Sweating with the effort he laid it down ready to heave it up on to his shoulder for the walk back to the holy man's ritual circle. And in his mind he resolved to question closely the supposed holy man as to the nature of his activities. But even before he had struggled but a few yards he felt the corpse move. His heart in his mouth king Vikram steeled himself, took a deep breath and resolved to hang onto the corpse and fulfil his mission. For he had seen

many a corpse on the battle field and knew that this was surely a dead body when he brought it down from the tree.

On his grandmother's knee he had heard tales of the miraculous Vetala spirit that took hold of the body after death and could be very mischievous to the living. He must, he knew, get the possessed corpse to the ritual fire as soon as possible.

But then the Vetala began to speak. 'Righteous King Vikram, the night is black and cold and the way long. Let me tell a tale to shorten the journey.'

'Be silent', yelled Vikram as he quickened his pace, but still the Vetala demon went on:

THE FIFTH STORY

There was once a handsome washerman, who whilst on a sacred pilgrimage saw a beautiful woman and instantly fell in love with her. He mooned away for some time not knowing what to do. But eventually his loving parents realized his predicament and arranged a marriage to the liking of all involved. And great was the happiness of the loving couple and both families.

And then his brother-in-law, who was a zealous devotee of Kali, suggested that they should visit Kamarupa, the chief temple of the terrible goddess, and show respect to the one at whose festival the star crossed lovers had first met.

But when they got to the temple of Kali the brother-in-law remembered that they had no offerings to make to the awesome goddess and advised that they should not enter the holy of holies. But the bridegroom was flushed with the power of love and thought he would go in anyway and meditate at the feet of Kali. And during that meditation he was seized with a passion for the Goddess and resolved to offer everything he had to Kali, including his own life. And he took up a sword that had been left there as an offering, and fixing his hair to the bell rope

that hung above the shrine, he cut off his own head with one stroke, and his body fell to one side.

And the brother-in-law hearing the bell was filled with foreboding and ran into the shrine and saw the terrible carnage. Such was his sorrow at loosing his new friend and the bridegroom and his dread at causing his beloved sister pain by bearing such bad news, he resolved to repeat the sacrifice. And indeed the bell soon rang a second time.

The beautiful bride was by this time worried to distraction and she forced herself to go into the dreaded shrine and there the terrible sight of the decapitated bodies of her brother and lover she did see.

And with one piteous cry to the goddess she resolved to join them, taking up a nearby creeper she tied it about her neck in order to hang herself. But even as she began to stretch her neck the awesome goddess appeared to her and said ‘enough of this carnage, the piety of your family is not in question, ask what ever you wish of me, for I am moved to pity.’

And the widowed bride asked only for the lives of her lover and brother and was duly instructed to place the heads back on the shoulders and all would be well.

But her eyes streaming with tears she mistakenly placed the wrong head on the wrong shoulders. And when the bodies of the two men revived she saw her mistake.

‘Well’ said the Vetala to the righteous King who had all the time he was walking been listening intently to the Demon’s tale. ‘Well’ said the Vetala, ‘answer me this, which of those two men is now the rightful bridegroom?’

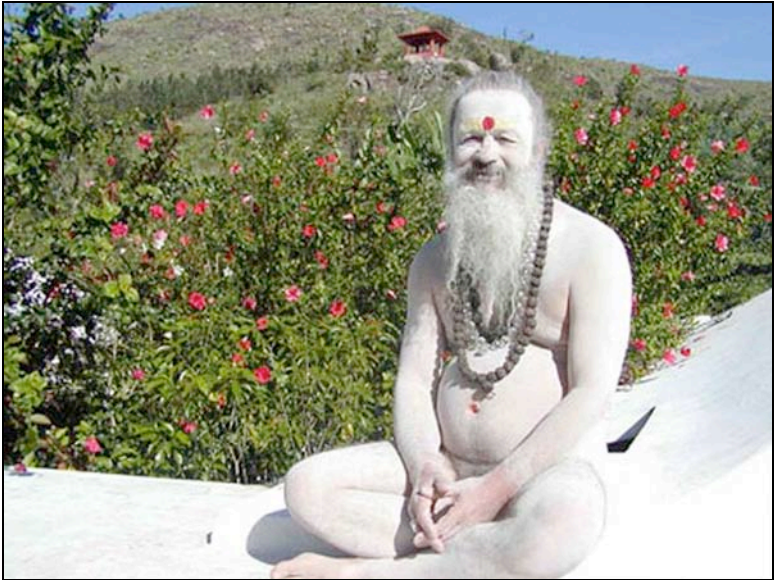
‘That is an evil tale Demon spirit, but according to Tantrik lore the head and not the heart as is sometimes said, is the true seat of consciousness. Whichever body bears the head of her husband, that shall be her rightful lover.’

And saying this the righteous king Vikram, renewed his grip on the Vetala, knowing that if his answer to the riddle was correct the demon would attempt to escape. And sure enough the corpse possessed by a

Vetala spirit slipped through his hands and flew off into the air, screaming through the forest back to its place in the tree.

There are twenty-five such tales, occupying the whole night and through them Vikram is eventually initiated into higher knowledge and learns how to avoid the tricky fate awaiting him when he does eventually get the demon back to the ritual.

Mogg Morgan is an author and publisher. His books include *Sexual Magick* (under the name Katon Shual) and *The English Mahatma*. He lives in Oxford where he runs Mandrake Press. His metaphysical writing has appeared in numerous publications including *mektoub*, *Nuit-Isis* and *Pentagram*.



Swami Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta

A CEO and a Monk

Swami Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta

The following are two talks given by Swami-ji given at a business conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil, September 2004.

Aum Namah Shivaya

Dear friends Self,

Let me first of all tell you how my friends Benhur, Ani and your servant feel deeply honored by your invitation to this meeting.

We are a very small company and we are not used to going about and giving speeches to such a distinguished gathering.

You must be very astonished to see this man (pointing to myself) dressed in such a manner and addressing you as a CEO of a small company from India.

My dress denotes that I am a Sannyasin (a Hindu monk) and the marks I have on my forehead are not make up to beautify me but rather a sign of belonging to a hindu religious order.

A C.E.O and a MONK? How could it be? Yes it can be as I do manage a company 80 employees strong called Fashions International, based in Chennai, ex-Madras, a city a bit smaller than yours but however with 6 million inhabitants.



Every time a journalist or a TV reporter comes to me, his first question is: 'How can you be a monk and the CEO of a company?' my answer to those journalists is the same as the one I am going to give you now:

When one is in love, one is in love all the time. There is no time when one is not in love.

From the moment one wakes up in the morning till again he falls asleep at the end of a heavy day's work.

During all those hours, whether he was physically with the person he is in love with or not he never ceased to be in love.

Yet, he fulfilled his duties as a lover, a friend, a husband or wife, a son or daughter...a man or a woman, an employee or a C.E.O. It goes the same for me. I am always a monk, a spiritual man, in love with the Ultimate at any time, any place and whatever I am doing or not doing...

Hence, I can talk to you on Corporate Mentality and New Age and yet seeing the Ultimate in what I am presently doing.

For me, there is no difference whatsoever.

When One has first understood with one's brain Who one is, one has to understand it with one's heart...

If this has been achieved, it never leaves him and goes along with him any minute, any second of his life, in whatever he is doing or not doing.

This is called Awareness.

Therefore, I can very well start my day with my spiritual practices we call 'Sadhana' and continue with meeting with our staff, see the various issues that have to be tackled, strategies to put into place, to put into implementation, have a hard bargaining discussion with a customer or enjoy a joke with our staff, talk about the latest pop singer or discuss the latest fashion trends with our Design Dept, analyze our financial reports with our Finance Executive or chat on line with our Offices in China, Delhi and Bangalore all at once...

Yet, I am a Swami, a Hindu monk, which I have never ceased to be.

As you can see I am of a European origin.

I am French by birth but Indian by heart, being a resident of India for the past 33 years now. India has opened up for me the gate of Knowledge of the Inner Self.

An Indianness which added to my French Culture loaded with stiff Cartesian beliefs and way of thinking, a new yet ancient, fresh yet coming through eons of time an ever indelible awareness of I AM THAT.

I am that man, that woman, that child, that boss, that employee, that flower, that tree, that bee, that cloud, that space, that emptiness as there is nothing I am not.

Awareness is much more than a belief.

One can change one's belief but one cannot escape one's awareness.

Awareness that I am you...that I am my staff has made me understand that their happiness comes first.

What more rewarding than the happiness of our friends in Fashions International when they got good orders or a new customer or when they get their share of our company Income.

Yes, not only do they get their monthly salary plus statutory government social security benefits, but also they get a share of their company income, not Profit...Income.

What will more personal income bring me? More of this dress? More food than what my stomach can accommodate? Jewels? I have no need of them as I do not need to appear rich....

I am quite aware also that my idea of Corporate Management is FAAAR from being 'normal' and I have no pretension to say that it is easily applicable to any company. But, I do believe that anyone with sensitivity and compassion for others, respect of others, feeling concern for the well-being of others, and above all being and more so remaining simply a complete human being at all times is what I would like to be an example for all CEOs or would be ones.

I am giving you this excerpt from an internet site.

'The Wealth of the top one hundred men in the World is equal to that of approximately 3 billion men and women at the bottom end of the

spectrum, mostly in third World nations. We seem to have been accepting the big winner scenario and attempting to ignore the even bigger loser scenario. Big winners are rich and powerful and big loser's babies die of bloated bellies'

There is no way that I can alleviate the sufferings of those three billion men and women and bloated-bellies babies' lives.

However, each one of us, in our little circle of our little life, in the companies we are managing could start by looking at his employees not as an expendable commodity but as a tool for not only making our Company work more efficiently but also and mainly to make it go a long way, if not for changing this situation our little World is into, but at least for making it a better place to live for the short time we are here.



II

Dear Maria Helena Self, dear friends self,

Let me first of all thank you to have so kindly invited my assistant and this man to be with you here, now, and experience your tremendous warmth and hospitality.

Yes indeed it reminds me of the hospitality one gets in India, my adopted beloved home.

I would like to share with you a few thoughts I had while sitting in our Ashram in our verdant Kolli Hills in South India....thinking about you whom I was going to meet in such a distant land...Brazil, South America.

Not so long ago, not even known to the then only known World. What are a few hundred of years compared to the billions of years of our Planet's existence???

This little planet called Earth where nearly 6 billions of us are packed has become a Village, albeit a big One....a Global village.

Thanks to the Human brain and its tremendous ability to invent, airplanes shrank distances to a mere few hours from our home....and, even sometimes few seconds by way of the Internet.

There is not one culture that is not at the reach of every one of us.

Of course, there is not one philosophy, not one religion, which anyone cannot get immediately detailed information about.

What was only 200 years ago or even let us say few decades ago the privilege of the few, endowed with time and money to spend, is now that of the many who are curious enough to know, to learn, and that too for a few cents only...

Population has grown tremendously since the last century and, will go on and on growing even more, despite efforts of some nations like India or China to reduce its birth rate.

This has resulted in a never-ending search for more cultivable land, leading to the alarming shrinkage of our Planet Earth's Lungs: THE FOREST.

Education spreads, Hygiene also.

The ability of men to fight deadly diseases increased noticeably the longevity of men and women of our little blue planet lost in this Infinite of our Universe.....and as always, every man and woman wanted to have, own, more and more than his/her neighbour,

more than one roof to protect them,

more than one cow to give them more milk than what they need,

more hens to give them more eggs than what they need,

more clothes than needed to cover their bodies,

more cars than what they need to move from one point to another,

eating more than what their bodies require, and so on and so on....

This tremendous growth in this Planet population and the egocentric nature of every man and woman led to more and more wants which the developed World transformed into absolute NEEDS.

Their little place was not sufficient to provide them that surplus they were looking for.

They had to go and find it elsewhere.

The local population needed higher and higher income in a never-ending mad cycle.

Manufacturing cost of goods in their own country would push its prices out of reach for the common people.

They had to look for places in our Globe where they could get their products at a much cheaper price in order to make enough profit to pay their local staff the ever increasing salaries and charges and taxes and ...their own wants...and on and on...

Of course, it led to abuses with a result that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer, contenting themselves with whatever would fall in their empty begging bowl.

The rich and powerful used unethical means to obtain what was not theirs....what a situation you may say....But, look backward in the History of man, it has always been the case...and it will never change.

Wars are waged and are ending faster....Technology: man's tremendous ability to think and invent amazing machine and means to kill!

You may think that I am painting a rather gloomy picture of our actual GLOBAL civilization.

I am not, as this is what is happening now and its effects will be felt more and more sensibly, acutely...

What did the Phoenicians do millenniums ago?...

They exported their products to the then known World around the Mediterranean Sea. Created trading post (see Massilia—now Marseilles)...

The Greeks followed and the Romans came and made their Roman empire a Global Village around their own global village and their Mare Nostrum (Mediterranean sea)...

Look at the Pharaohs who expanded their own known World to what is now known as Sudan. They also went to Lebanon to get their wood...

The globalization was starting. Meanwhile, Bharat now known as India had their own global village where all its inhabitants were linked with a common belief: Sanatana Dharma.

This is the real name for Hinduism... Seers (those who could see!) and sages were ever questioning the existence of God.

Through their Yogic intense meditation and performance of tapas (we could loosely translate this word as Penances) those seers came to the conviction that WE ARE THAT.

Voyagers from overseas came and were flabbergasted with Bharat Culture.

I am referring to Alexander the Great who came to India and was so much moved by a naked sadhu (a swami like me) who did not bother to stand up in front of the Greek man as he could see only himself in this emperor.

His trusted generals he put in charge of his newly formed kingdoms merged with Indian culture.

These new philosophies were brought back to Greece, to Europe...

The World was starting to shrink...

Chinese voyagers visited Bharat and traveled the width and breath of this country. They brought back to China Meditation, in Sanskrit

Dhyan which the Chinese people twisted by pronouncing ZEN. They also brought to the rest of Asia Buddhism, an off-shoot of Hinduism (Siddhartha was a Sivaite Swami like me!!).

This World was shrinking even more...Yoga could not come to the West in a more appropriate time.

The word YOGA as all of you here probably already know means: 'The act of Yoking to another' This term derives from the Sanskrit root YUJ. Its meaning being implicit in virtually all of its derivatives, in which the purpose of yoking the mind and body is to achieve perfect unity, the yoking of the whole psychosomatic organism to a single idea, functioning in the profoundest levels, beyond the limits of thoughts and languages and flowing freely in the currents of the energy that pervades space and time.

This system of 'yoking' one's body and mind the 'Supreme Reality' (whatever name you wish to give it: God, Allah or any other name) was readily accepted by the West as perfectly compatible with Christianity or Judaism or Islam or even Buddhism.

What more Global a system could be where everyone could find his religious belief being left untouched and more so, helping one to come closer to its more 'Personal Reality'?

Allow me to quote the following excerpt from a work from Lindquist in his book 'Die Methoden Des Yoga':

No system of yoga exists in isolation, each being often combined with the elements of another.

Being based on the infinite variations of human nature, its appeal is as universal and as fundamental as the age-old instinct for survival.

Its practice is common to all religions, from the simplest to the most sophisticated, and whether consciously recognized or not, its discipline is responsible for the achievements of the great artist and musician, for the soldier, statesman and the scientist.

But, you may ask: 'What is Yoga for this Swami?'

Well, for me as I just said above, it allows me to Yoke with the Ultimate.

It is a fundamental of my spiritual path and Order, which is the Advaita Vedanta, that we do see neither One Godhead nor Two nor many, as people think Hinduism is all about (you know those millions of Gods with so many heads, so many arms etc.).

The Advaita Vedanta demonstrates that there is only one Ultimate Reality. By giving a name to this ultimate reality makes it personal and also implies that it can be given another one.

We cannot also give the name as the One!

It would imply there could be a second or none.

Hence we always speak of That as That. It is left to you to give whatever name you feel like.

Therefore, we can truly say that Advaita Vedanta is not only Yoga as it yokes us to the Divine, but also is a truly global spiritual system as it fits all religious system known to us.

The Ultimate of Advaita Vedanta is truly and most accurately expressed in the simple Avadhuta Gita of Dattatreya.

‘There is no knowledge or ignorance and no practice of concentration.

‘There is no space or absence of space and no practice of concentration.

‘There is no time or absence of time and no practice of concentration. Why do you, who is identity in all, grieve in your heart?’

‘Here is the One without void and absence of void,

without purity and impurity,

without the whole and the part....’

And I shall end this little speech on the last quote from the Avadhuta Gita:

‘There is no distinction of the different and non- different.

There is no distinction of within, without, or junction of the two.

It is the same in all, devoid of friend and foe.

Why do you, who is the identity in all, grieve in your heart?’

How more global, how more yogic can one be.

It show us that there is no difference between anyone.

It is my sincere wish that these few words will entice you not only to know more about the Ultimate who is not only within you, but also to make you feel how close to you is the One who seems to be so far away from you now, and yet sitting next to you. He or she is you.

Much Love to all of you.

Swami Pranavananda Brahmendra Avadutta, a Frenchman by birth and an Indian at heart, has spent over thirty years in India. After many years of practice of Ashtanga Yoga, he was given sannyas dhiksha by his first Guru Vedananda Swamigal under instructions of his true Guru Sarveswara Swamigal in 1988. Swami-ji is also CEO of a successful manufacturing business and the author of *Swami, PDG et moine hindou*.
Online: <http://www.aumnamahshivaya.org>

most sorry ass zen idiot

horehound stillpoint

Sitting in the zendo, I can't help but think
I'm sorry I didn't make love the center of my life
Love trumps everything
Before I move into the Zen Center
I need to go on a National Apology Tour
On this planet for fifty years plus, I've been a busy bee and a nasty prick
I need to apologize to everyone from Mom to Afghanistan
Special apologies to the men I've fucked and forgotten or just didn't call
Also, sorry for the poetry I aired, concerning real people
Who need to get the literal and figurative shit fucked out of them
That ex-boyfriend is not the only one
Who needs to get royally, roughly, religiously fucked
But how often do any of us get what we deserve?
"All the time," my ex-guru used to say
Sorry about the bubbles of low self-esteem
That pop altogether too close to your face
When I move into the Zen Center
I am going to suffer like a son of a bitch
Take refuge in that
I want to be able to sit without resentment, without regret
For the peace and well-being of the planet
For the liberation of all sentient beings
For happiness, for freedom from suffering, for nonattachment to misery
For knowledge, wisdom, and Attainment

For love

Buddhists don't talk much about love

I must be a bad Buddhist indeed

I would give it all up for love

Zen priests tell me to sit down, shut up, and breathe

I may be a sorry ass idiot, but when I move into the Zen Center

I am going to be more zen than the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

I'm going to be more zen than whoever came up with whatever

I'm gonna be more zen than Yoda, Spock, and Galadriel put together

If I see the Buddha on my walks through the zen garden

I will tell him to shut up, roll over, and breathe

You've been God long enough

Now let me be the daddy

I guess I should resurrect my father so I can tell him how sorry I am

For confusing him with God

For thinking everything in the world was his fault

I'm sorry to the whole world for being so obsessed with men

When I move into the Zen Center

I am asking for a female roommate

She better be really feminine too

If they put me in with a butch dyke

With shoulders for days

Severe titties and a boychick ass

I could end up forgetting about the whole dick thing

Plunge myself into a brand-new sorry mess

Please, God, even though You don't exist in the zendo

Don't make me be bi at this late stage of my life

Aren't I confused enough?

When I move into the Zen Center

I hope I can go six months without sex

I hope my head doesn't explode

I hope my knees don't fall off

I hope my prostate doesn't get cancerously cranky

I hope the God who doesn't exist there
Sends me the perfect roommate
 (someone I won't want to kill after two weeks)
Might as well take him on my National Apology Tour right now
I'm sorry I'm this gaseous
I'm sorry I'm so timid and scared and accusingly silent and arrogantly
withdrawn
I'm sorry I'm not that funny in real life
When I move into the Zen Center, I will think of more things to
apologize for
I'll weave a brand-new worldwide web of apology
Till there's nothing left but one man standing
Or sitting, as the case may be...sitting...quietly, utterly still
Nothing left but love
What else but
Love trumpets the world into being and love blows it all away
It's too much to ask for and yet I ask
When I move into the Zen Center
Can I be brand-new?
When I move into the Zen Center
Can apologies be things of the past?
When I move into the Zen Center
If the center isn't love...can someone take me out to the edge and back?
I feel as if I'm almost there and somehow already coming
I'm still coming, I am
Don't stop now, you fuckin' idiot
That's all love is, you know: not stopping

SLAM!

Bullets & Butterflies: Queer Spoken Word Poetry, Emanuel Xavier
(Suspect Thoughts, 2005, 216pp, \$16.95)

Emanuel Xavier, the gifted writer of *Americano*, *Pier Queen* and *Christ-Like*, has produced an extraordinary collection presenting the work of America's top spoken word performers and slam poets. Lesbian, gay and bisexual folks have always been at the forefront of American poetry: Whitman, Stein, Hughes, Ginsberg to name but a few. Now at the cusp of the twenty-first century, poetry as the art of the SPOKEN word is coming again to the fore. Riding on the venerable backs of the medieval troubadours and echoing the reverberations of Whitman's carols, the poets represented in this anthology proves that the lyric is meant for the ear as much as the mind. Many of the authors are not well known outside the Slam, Performance and Hip Hop Poetry worlds. But here they are at last, spinning on the dialectics political, gentrified, aesthetic.



Bullets and Butterflies brings together the varied, and at times shocking, work of Cheryl Boyce-Taylor, Regie Cabico, Steceyann Chin, Celena Glenn, Daphne Gottlieb, Maurice Jamal, Shane Luitjens, Marty McConnell, Travis Montez, Alix Olson, Shailja Patel, horehound stillpoint and Emanuel Xavier. As diverse as their authors' experiences and background, topics covered run from race to religion, cavorting across class, gender, sexuality (of course) and politics along the way.

**INTERVIEW: EMANUEL XAVIER
BY HOREHOUND STILLPOINT**



Emanuel Xavier (Photo: Leo Toro)

Even the most boring hotel on Earth comes alive when it's full of those exotic, peculiar, spirited creatures known as writers, specifically, in the case of this Lambda Literary Festival, queer writers. The Holiday Inn on Eighth Street in San Francisco—a beige on beige emptiness—about burst its normally soulless seams with peacocks and femme-to-butch bookworms and neurotic dreamboats. I don't much like socializing, but this felt like Heaven to me.

At the opening ceremony, Tristan Taormino tore it up with her jaw-dropping monologue on pubic hair, Matt Bernstein Sycamore glittered effortlessly with his witty, fabulous deportment, and Emanuel Xavier held court with his quiet, gentle, sexy intelligence. Honestly, he took my breath away at first sight, and I think he would have even if his reputation had not preceded him.

His *Americano* is one of my favorite books of poetry by a single author. If you don't have it, get it. The poems are full of heart and heartbreak, spirits crushed and Spirit remaining, families and cityscapes and cocks arising and other fleshy comings and goings. It's real, it's raw, and it's glorious. I have to be honest, though: I'm an extremely bad boy for not having his other books; and while I plan on getting them soon, I still hope Manny will spank me for this transgression soon as we see each other again.

Back at the Lambda Literary Festival, the high point for me was the Poetry Slam. I participated, and even though I didn't do that well—either in the reading of my poem nor in the scoring—it was a blast. Kirk Read's

underwear got auctioned off (for a generously satisfying sum), we all got to hear some great performance poetry, and Mr. Xavier pulled off his baggy hip-hop outfit to reveal a Glam Slam get-up which I remember involving black spandex chaps and a bright red thong. It was hard, hard, to hear his poetry, since my tongue kept getting in the way, believing that if I just kept leaning forward, it might reach his exquisite rump.

horehound stillpoint: I hear you're going to be in a movie, so of course, my first question is how much of your beautiful skin can we expect to see?

Emanuel Xavier: Though it sounds like a porn flick, there is hardly any skin, much less skiing, in *The Ski Trip*.

hs: And here I was hoping you'd be playing a wildly unashamed guy who was totally connected to a fully-loaded range of sexuality.

EX: People still have this idea that if you're gay and sexual, you must also be ashamed and self-destructive. That's what I liked about my character [Carlos] in this film. He may be a stereotypical slut but he's happy and secure. He's not apologetic about being himself and ultimately gets what he wants.

hs: Nice. So, how's the Glam Slam going for you these days?

EX: After staging this event for several years, I found myself wondering if it was still relevant. Originally, I set out to create something positive that would inspire other Houses to consider spoken word as an important means of expression. But you can't reach the ballroom community if you're no longer part of it, and I accept that. So it became an entertaining production for the poetry scene.

hs: But you're still into it, right? It's just satisfying for different reasons now?

EX: It's been getting more difficult to make it happen with everything else that I'm doing. If it ever gets too much, or I feel like I'm not having fun anymore, I'd be happy to let somebody else take over.

hs: What was the trashiest thing that ever happened there?

EX: Well, the "Best Erotic Poem in Sexy Underwear or Lingerie" category could sometimes get out of control. There was one year a competitor used several dildos as props. It turned into a sex act. At first the audience was thrilled, and then they were shocked. You should've seen the look on their faces. No one was expecting it. She didn't read the best poem or anything, but she left an impression. She didn't win the trophy, but I'm pretty sure she got a lot of numbers.

hs: Were people falling in love with you left and right? I mean, here you are, this adorable, sexy poet-with-a-past, you must have had a new stalker every month!

EX: That was back in the early days of my spoken word career.

hs: Oh, come on! As someone twenty-five years your senior, I hope you're not telling me you think you are in any way past it?!

EX: I went through an awkward period after I stopped doing drugs and was no longer struggling to survive out on the streets. When *Christlike* got published, I gained a few extra pounds, thanks to my newfound success and moving in with my lover at the time. I was starting to look like Don Francisco and am surprised anyone still found me sexy.

hs: I think I better bite my tongue here! So, anyway, what are your hopes or your wildest fantasies for *Bullets & Butterflies*...or do you despair for the fate of poetry in America?

EX: Actually, we can't really complain. The spoken word movement has been greatly appreciated and is finally getting the attention it deserves. However, we can't change the world in a day. I don't know, maybe our style of poetry will be considered a true literary contribution.

hs: How did you go about picking the poets who would be represented in your book?

EX: I swore--after reading through all the initial submissions with Alix [Olson] and Regie [Cabico] for the original version of this book--that I wasn't ever going to be an editor. I didn't know I was going to end up doing it myself. That was the challenge: deciding to take this project on when all these other things started happening for each of us. As sole editor, I knew it couldn't be this big anthology with numerous contributors. I wanted to make it really personal and feature poets I admired and who had inspired me. And I think that's what I managed to do.

hs: Yeah, well, quite frankly, there are more than a few people who will ask, "What the hell is horehound doing in here with all these high-profile, well-known performance poets?"

EX: But I love the work you do! Maybe you're not aware of that. All the poets are very intense. Plus, your work has that sort of rebelliousness that all the other contributors share. And I think I really wanted to feature that similarity.

hs: How did you select the poems, from all the ones we sent you?

EX: It was both difficult and exciting because I didn't know if I was making the right decisions. I asked each poet to submit twice as many poems as I could select. If I chose one poem, it meant another would not be included...and I didn't know what the collection would lose or what it

would gain. I mean, you don't know what kind of collection you're going to end up with until you've made all the selections.

hs: Regie told me he thought this was going to be an important enough book that we should showcase our best work, regardless of when it was written or whether it had been published already. I agreed with him, but still, I couldn't resist sending you the stuff I was working on at the time, basically the pieces that went over the best with the audience at K'Vech [a queer open mic in San Francisco]. Plus, a few of the half-assed sonnets I was obsessing over during that phase.

EX: I couldn't make up my mind either--include signature poems or write new poems? That made it all that much more difficult. It's been a learning experience and a test of passion for all of us.

hs: What was your selection process for choosing your own poems for this collection?

EX: I guess at first I imagined including my most popular pieces. I saw the opportunity to reach a wider audience and so forth. Then again, I was bored with those poems because I had performed them so many times. I wanted people to see that I had other things to write about.

hs: How important do you think humor is in spoken word?

EX: Funny, I look back at my work and think, "Oh, God, what have I done? What have I written?" A lot of my poetry is so intense, and yet people close to me know I have such a childlike sense of humor. Every time a spoken word artist reads a poem, people think it defines them. And yet everything we share with an audience is personal--and it's not. You know what I mean? It's important for us not to take ourselves too seriously.

hs: I worry that I'm such a clown, sometimes, in my own work.

EX: In the end your poems have a message, and that's why your work is appreciated. People need to realize that the spoken word scene is not just a bunch of "angry" poets pissed off at the world.

hs: If it's okay, I'd like to end with a personal question about a specific poem in *Americano*. In "Risk," I can't help but wonder if you told your lover about all the things you mention in your poetry that put a strain on your ability to be affectionate?

EX: I let him [Michael] read it as soon as it was written. He actually loved it, strangely enough. I can never speak for him, but I learned a great deal about myself with that poem. He knew from the beginning that I would eventually write about us. But he was very supportive that way.

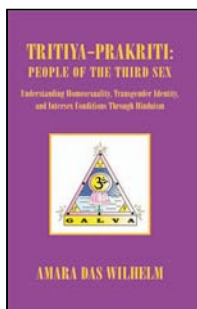
horehound stillpoint is a writer/waiter living in San Francisco. Other work by him can be found in *Poetry Slam*, *Rough Stuff*, *Poetry Nation*, *Of the Flesh*, *Tough Guys*, *Out in the Castro* and *Queer View Mirror 2*.

Tritiya-Prakriti

A Review by Syamasundara dasa

Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex, Understanding Homosexuality, Transgender Identity and Intersex Conditions Through Hinduism, Amara dasa Wilhelm

(Xlibris, 2004, 269pp, \$21.99 pb/31.99 hc)



Please accept my best wishes. All glories to Shrila Prabhupada. Of *Tritiya-Prakriti: People of the Third Sex* by Sriman Amara dasa Wilhelm, I feel compelled to write a very short letter of recommendation to all persons like myself who feel that it's well past time that material with a Spiritual perspective be read by all who consider themselves Spiritually minded (or non-Spiritually minded for that matter). I have been trying to serve Srila Prabhupada since the mid sixties, and have seen different “temperaments” towards the “gay/lesbian issue” depending on the Temple, or the times. I personally was present during some brief conversations with Prabhupada concerning the subject, and feel that He has been possibly misunderstood on His feelings on the Gay/Lesbian issue. I feel confident that He is very pleased with the scholarly way that Amara dasa treated the subject in his book. Prabhupada loved to see us think deeply on Spiritual matters, and would have welcomed such deep study on this subject matter as it pertains to Spiritual life—present, and past. He loved persons to be innovative; as we saw when Prabhupada expressed such appreciation with Bhavananda Visnupada's decorating of

His Temples. The Transcendental Road Show is another example. My personal humble opinion is that He would also want ISKCON to lead the way in its fair and Humanitarian treatment of it's Gay and Lesbian Spiritual aspirants. He often delighted in saying that Bhavananda had told Him that an Astrologer had said, "This Man [Srila Prabhupada] would build a house that the whole world could live in."

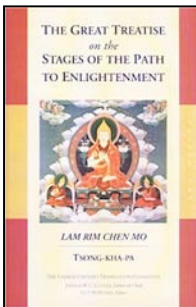
I would like to remind everyone that there has not been such a compassionate being on this Planet as Srila Prabhupada in a long time and will probably not be anyone so loving towards all suffering jivas (human beings) soon in the future. His main interest was, one way or another, to get us out of our consuming preoccupation for this material world and start focusing on the real important thing.... love of Radha-Krishna.

After reading Amara dasa's book, I feel that ISKCON needs to continue to look very carefully at its attitude toward its Gay and Lesbian population. ISKCON isn't a "museum" or stagnant institution. It's non-different then Prabhupada Himself. Fair, Loving, Compassionate, and forever leading the way in assisting any interested persons back to Krishna. For anyone to be interested in Krishna Consciousness in the Kali Yuga is a very rare thing. In fact such persons have been personally inspired by Radha Krishna from with-in their hearts.

Now the future will be witness on just how the aspiring servants within ISKCON treat their Gay and Lesbian aspirants. When someone reaches into the hive of Krishna honey; it's no good if they get stung by angry bees. It makes them look elsewhere for God's sweetness, as ISKCON has experienced way too often. I invite anyone to get themselves a copy of Amara dasa's book and, with a loving heart, read its contents over carefully. Ignorance is not bliss. Your humble servant.

Stages of the Path

The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment (*Lam Rim Chen Mo*) volume 3, Tsong-Kha-Pa, The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, Joshua W.C. Cutler, editor-in-chief, Guy Newland, editor (Snow Lion Publications, 2004, 295pp, \$29.95)



With Snow Lion's publication of the middle volume of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, the first full English translation of the Je Tsong-Kha-Pa's great work is now complete. The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, under the direction of Joshua Cutler has worked for years on the three-volume translation project.

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama calls this work the greatest of Tsong-Kha-Pa's texts. "Of the many works of the Tibetan master Tsong-kha-pa, none compare in terms of popularity and breadth of influence with *Lam rim chen mo*."

Je Tsong-Kha-Pa was the 14th century founder of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. He is considered one of Tibet's greatest philosophers and wrote prolifically about a wide variety of Buddhist subjects. Tsong-kha-pa combined a deeply meditative spirituality with the a careful philosophical approach. His teachings greatly advanced Tibetan logic and reasoning.

Tsong-kha-pa completed *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path* in 1402. The book stands as one of the most important and influential

works of the Tibetan canon. Tsong-kha-pa carefully grounds his work in classical Buddhism, frequently citing Indian Buddhist scholars and the Kadampa tradition.

To this day *The Great Treatise* remains one of the most important texts of Tibetan Buddhist and a valuable resource for Buddhist practitioners and students. The work condenses all the exoteric scriptures (sutras) in a single meditation manual. The work is as approachable now as when it was written.

Volume one of the work focuses on prerequisite practices for fostering *bodhicitta* (enlightened mind). Volume two elucidates the training in the six perfections as a means of developing the compassion. Volume three presents the basis of meditative quietude (*shamatha*) and the true perception of reality (*vipasyana*).

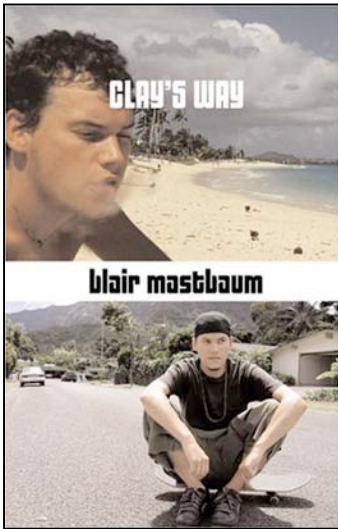
The publication of this complete and authoritative edition is an important event in the progress of Western Buddhism.

Sam in Samsara

Trebor Healey

Clay's Way, Blair Mastbaum

(Alyson Publications, 2004, 246pp, \$12.95)



In his astonishing debut novel (which incidentally and deservedly just won a Lambda Literary Award for best gay debut fiction, 2004), *Clay's Way*, Blair Mastbaum pushes the coming-of-age novel a step further than the usual fare, charting not only the loss of innocence of his conflicted young protagonist, but boldly examining, and perhaps even mocking, the cult of American masculinity itself. From a Buddhist reading, masculinity is the central obscuration in this tale, leading both to a

great deal of unnecessary confusion and suffering as well as to an awakening.

At the novel's outset, fumbling, 15-year-old skaterboy Sam wakes up to write some dubious haiku and piss out the window, setting the punk tone for what proves to be a tale both sweet and world-weary, for Sam is a jaded teenager with a crush that's making him pine with unfulfilled desire. It doesn't help that his skateboarding abilities are lame at best, he's self-conscious about the quality of his haiku, his parents are

clueless, and the object of his affection is one of the coolest and most decidedly not-gay cats on the local surfing scene. Clay, 17, with his ripped Portuguese bronze torso and jet-black crewcut, his pickup truck, his job at the board shop, his hot blonde girlfriend and his superlative taste in teenage cool—music, baggy shorts, tattoos, ratty t-shirts often as not pulled casually off and tossed on the floor; his preferred bud and Hawaiian slang—make him a superman of maleness, and by extension maya—a false god, but one with real power to induce raging hard-ons. And what’s a hardon, but the wick of samsara. The lit wick.

And Sam is burning. Though other than this perfectly normal, albeit difficult, teenage lust, Sam is really a pretty well-adjusted gay kid considering, with no real hang-ups about gender or sexuality. He’s not out, but he’s O.K. with it internally, and he’s not coming from a generation as trapped in such dualities as past generations of queers have been. This is definitely a new generation’s coming of age story, not a coming-out story at all in the traditional sense of the word. It’s a love story, plain and simple, about two boys—and one with a profound message about projection and the minefield that is desire and samsara.

It is heartening to see that 35 years after Stonewall, there is progress—not only in a young person’s self-acceptance, but in his ability to be himself and not adopt a ‘gay personality’ to help him navigate a hostile world, which in the past was arguably more common—some might say even necessary. In Sam’s case, it seems more about a gradual growing into his sexuality, more like how straight kids are able to develop. It feels less abrupt, less rife with fear and shame, but it’s still not easy and this book does not in any way sugarcoat it. There is violence, there is isolation and lack of support, and the climax of the story is a tour de force of the subconscious bubbling up and threatening to tear both boys’ worlds asunder. But there is hope, and a little more room to grow and learn, and most importantly, there is the encouraging message that tragedy is not inevitable for the gay protagonist. In fact, the real loser in this book is the boy who doesn’t have the courage to wake up, and that’s both a fairer and a more constructive message.

Reviews

The Pseudonomicon, Phil Hine

(New Falcon, 2004, 64pp, \$9.95)



Another *Necronomicon*?! I know. I can hear you saying it. But none of the many pretenders to the tentacled throne are really up to it, now are they? Author Phil Hine agrees with us. His is not a book trying to pass itself off as Lovecraft's fabled dread tome. Hence Hine's titling, with tongue firmly buried in cheek. *Pseudonomicon* is not a grimoire of magick in the sense that one would normally expect. It does not contain pages of wrote forumalas and complex workings formed of a mish-mashed amalgum of fragmentary sources.

Hine has produced a short practical guide for actually working with the Cthulhu mythos. He eschews the tendency of others to fit Lovecraft's mythos into an existing magickal framework. One will not find additional columns for 777 within these pages. For Hine such attempts only serve to constrain the primal potency of the mythos. "Awesome experiences have had all the feeling boiled out of them, into short descriptions and lists," writes Hine, "always more lists, charts, and attempts to banish the unknown with explanations, equations, abstract structures for other people to play with."

Lovecraft's work resists and indeed ultimately escapes this confining impulse to corral the unknowable in the mundane. This is the joy of Lovecraft's writing, that he only gives the reader just enough

information. He teases and tantalizes—leaving the reader with only hair-raising emotion. There is no rationality in his stories. There's no happy ending and explanatory denouement. Cthulhu is always a hint just there beyond the edge of the written word. Great Cthulhu in his slumber is simply before time. He's outside the world that we know. An entity beyond even the remotest darkness of our unconscious. For Hine this is source of the mythos power, his attraction to them and their frightening aspect.

Hine is truly a modern (or post-modern) shaman, flirting at the edges of the real, the unreal and the uncanny. As one would expect of a shaman, Hine's language often merges with the visionary imagery of the poet. This evocativeness brings moments that capture, as fully as one could, the shadowy mystery of this relatively unexplored territory. "Each god brings its own madness," Hine begins.

Experimenting with the Cthulhu mythos is not for everyone as Hine himself points out. Such practice is to court madness—indeed such may be a requisite for the gnosis. In "The Call of Cthulhu" Lovecraft writes, "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far."

Hine has long been a leading figure in the philosophical discussion of Chaos magic. He's uniquely suited to give the Old Ones their due. There's more authentic magic in these sixty-four pages than in all the classic grimoires combined.

Field Notes on the Compassionate Life: A Search for the Soul of Kindness, Marc Ian Barasch (Rodale, 2005, 356pp, \$24.95)

Reviewed by Joseph Gelfer



There's something a little saccharine about Barasch's title; 'compassion' and 'kindness' inhabit a strange world – for me at least – of high meaning and low value. On hearing these words the temptation is for an immediate, "Sure, but what are you doing about it?" Compassion fatigue sets in, not because we are tired of compassion (who could be?) but because we are tired of empty words. Barasch's aim is to set out some examples of real-world compassion and kindness in an attempt to reclaim them as actions rather than sentiments.

Barasch has written several well-received books such as 'Healing Dreams' and 'The Healing Path', the back of which carry pictures of him with a very friendly smile. He has a very friendly writing style, coupling both cerebral and popular references: one page might quote Thomas Aquinas or John of the Cross, while another might contemplate Star Trek or the fact that Audrey Hepburn suggests, "For lovely lips, speak words of kindness/For lovely eyes, seek out the good in people." Sometimes he creates little syntheses: on responding to a street person he notes, "I can't say I was pleased to meet him, but WWKD: What Would Kierkegaard Do?" This is the point in many similar volumes where I say farewell, but luckily Barasch is not in the business of dispensing wisdom, rather providing evidence; like an old-school reporter he wants to present us with facts.

There are many books currently appealing to science as an explanation for spiritual and emotional phenomena and Barasch continues this trend with a (rather familiar) comparison of chimpanzees and bonobos, suggesting we are not genetically hard-wired to fight like the former, but love like the latter. In an exploration of the science of the heart we learn from one biophysicist that, "emotion is faster than

thought;” elsewhere, meditating monks are monitored in a brain lab. Other chapters are more personal, such as the man who forgave his daughter’s murderer or another who donated a kidney to a stranger.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in the book is not the content, but the odd tension it may generate for the reader. There can be a self-destructive aspect that wants to crush kindness, despite the fact that it is good. Barasch notes, “Some seem to find almost a glee in wiping the moue of self-satisfied virtue from the do-gooder’s face, in stifling the trill of the pie-eyed optimist.” Often commenting on the Dalai Lama, Barasch reminded me of my own experiences attending a string of lectures with His Holiness in Dharamsala; part of me was delighted by him, another was saying, “Come on then, show me holy, you don’t look so divine to me.” It is the freeing of the ego which winces in the company of kindness that is the crucial step towards what neurobiologist Joseph LeDoux describes in the book as, “a more harmonious integration of reason and passion.”

Like many books written with a journalistic edge, Barasch’s may suffer from a lack of personal input. No doubt he feels this territory is well covered in his previous work (especially in his writing about his experiences with cancer), but some of the best parts are the darker, more personal moments, of which there could have been more. Barasch’s choice of themes could also have been more adventurous: something like compassion pursued via synchronicity may have been an interesting ingredient to the mix. In short, enjoying Barasch is likely to depend on whether you appreciate his tone, which like the title can be a little saccharine. However, the unfolding shift from this world to something better requires transmission in many different ways and Barasch’s book will no doubt play its own part in that essential process.

Inner War and Peace, Osho

(Watkins Publishing, 2005, 280pp, £9.99/\$14.95)

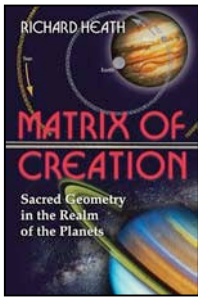


Osho was one of the most provocative spiritual teachers of our modern times. As the events of the Oregon experiment recede into the depths of memory, Osho's words are again rising to the fore. It was Osho's unparalleled ability to synthesize the world's great traditions, using them as frames within which to craft his own coherent and consistent message. *Inner War and Peace* brings us Osho's discussions on the great work of Indian scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Gita*, but a small section of the larger Mahabharata saga, tells the story of the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, two branches of the royal family. The events related in the *Gita* focus on the hero Arjuna, who fights on the side of the Pandavas. Krishna takes on the role of Arjuna's charioteer during the great battle. On the eve of combat, with both sides rallied on the battlefield, Arjuna's resolve wavers when presented by the prospect of killing his own kinsmen. Krishna speaks with Arjuna explaining that his doubt arises from the conditionings of his mind and his over-identification with the body instead of the immortal soul. Osho describes the *Gita* as "the first psychological scripture." He uses the imagery of the battlefield of *dharmakshetra* ('field of righteousness') to illustrate the danger of fighting wars behind the shield of religion. Osho's insightful message of peace through interpretation of a battle fought 5,000 years ago illustrate that the story of Krishna and Arjuna is as meaningful today as it was thousands of years ago. Through his verse commentary and in his responses to questions, Osho brings the conflict presented in the *Gita* to the level of internal conflict. He shows that the conflict suffered by Arjuna is, in fact, upon analysis, an inner turmoil arises from his mis-comprehension of the relation between one's soul and the body. All this is an unrecognized collaboration of one's temperament with the subtle conditionings of one's life and

environment. Arjuna's questioning of his activities are manifested his wavering resolve to fight. He looks to Krishna to provide a rationalization to resolve his guilt or to give him reason to stand down and not face his kin in battle. For Osho, Arjuna represents the divided mindset endemic in humanity. "We too are weak," says Osho, "we too have no will. The will has been lost in our 'What to do and what not to do? What is proper and what is improper?' All ground beneath our feet has been lost. The Arjuna in us is in suspension, is in limbo." In contrast, Osho calls Krishna a psychosynthesist (as opposed to a mere psychoanalyst) surpassing Freud, Jung and Adler. Krishna looks beyond the mind's fragmentations in pursuit of a mechanism for the recombination.

Matrix of Creation: Sacred Geometry in the Realm of the Planets,

Richard Heath (Inner Traditions, 2004, 135pp, \$14.95)



Numbers and ratios based on the structure of the solar system compose the foundation of ancient understanding of the universe, divinity, mythology and architecture. This concept is known as sacred geometry. Richard Heath demonstrates that ancients recognized proportions in the distribution and orbital relationships between the Earth the seven visible cosmic entities of the solar system in his book *Matrix of Creation: Sacred Geometry in the Realm of the Planets*. The formulae that express these measurements became encoded in architecture, music and religious beliefs. Mathematical descriptions of the solar system served as the matrix for original human expression.

Heath defines matrix as "an environment in which something has its origin, takes form, or is enclosed. In mathematics, a matrix is an array of mathematical elements arranged to show the numerical relations among its components." He employs the term to describe the

mathematical correlations in the solar system and how they relate to the evolution of human thought. He also argues that the elegant symmetry defining the solar system is proof of an organizing divine intelligence.

In recent years, there has been increasing support for Heath's appreciation of ancient sophistication in understanding sacred geometry. This is reflected in studies of how ancients applied these concepts to the design of both Mesoamerican and Egyptian architecture, calendar systems and art. Many once inexplicable phenomena such as the layout of Stonehenge are now consistently described as making use of early man's understanding and expression the mathematical models evident in the heavens. Evidence abounds that the ability to grasp the harmonies implicit in the solar system's makeup is a basis for human comprehension and creative expression.

Heath describes these fundamentals and demonstrates how they have been practically realized in both myth and science. His explanation is "to the point." His elegant tome is only 135 pages long and can be readily grasped by anyone with bare bones understanding of mathematics. (Although I did have the nagging feeling that I should have taken calculus rather than advanced placement history in high school when reading his book.)

Given how well formulated and comprehensible his text is, I think it not practical to recapitulate all of his theorems. Rather I think it more valuable to the Ashé reader that I make a couple suggestions for how these can be part of a continually developing dialogue about contemporary esotericism.

Among the models that really stuck in my mind when reading the Creation Matrix was that the tracery of Venus' orbital relationship with Earth when viewed from the axis of the solar system (with the sun at center) is that of a Pentagram. "So what," you're saying now. In Qabala, which serves as the basis for most Western occult theories, the numerical assignation to Venus is 7 and Mars is 5. Venus traditionally is the planet associated with eroticism, wealth and creative expression. The pentagram is a geometric expression of the five elements fire, air, water, earth and

light (or animating spirit.) It is associated with health, materialism, the five wounds of Christ, and the human hand. The only esoteric system that implicitly associates earth's relationship with Venus with the number 5 is the Yoruba. That designation is defined by the association of the orisha Oshún (commonly correlated with the goddess Aphrodite or Venus) with the number 5 in myths and divination verses that reveal knowledge of her. My point here is that the pentagram has become a substantial symbol of esoteric revelation. In terms of our solar system, its perfect model is the interpolation of earth's and Venus' orbital cycles. Perhaps we need to re-examine our own interpretations of both the pentagram's and Venus's significance in light of this model. Heath demonstrates that our ancestors had the requisite knowledge to design the pentagram as an enduring symbol based on that formula.

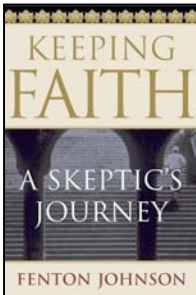
Even though we have a sense of eternal truths based on our grasp of symbol, these may still be expanded upon when we re-examine them in light of how our predecessors may have codified this knowledge.

Along this line of thought, we do find a rationale in the solar system model for the assignation of the number 7 to Venus. That is revealed by the correlation of the synods of Venus and Mars that is expressed as a three to four ratio. Venus and Mars are widely thought to represent the erotic relationship. The sum of the numbers of this ratio is 7. The assignation of the number to Venus indicates that the female embodies the sum of the erotic relationship since it is she who bares children and thus expresses its fruit.

Exploring the many formulae that Heath codifies may inspire the reader to many other such avenues of thought. They may be applied to our understanding of subtleties of human relationships, ecology, astrology, music, religion, etc....In short, *The Matrix of Creation* provides us with both a model for the historic and contemporary evolution of human thought. *The Matrix of Creation* is an invaluable reference work. In it, we have a trove of valuable formulae that can be utilized to enhance our understanding of both esoteric and exoteric realms.

Keeping Faith: A Skeptic's Journey, Fenton Johnson

(Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004, 324 pages, \$25.00)



Fenton Johnson's *Keeping Faith* could be called, more appropriately, "finding faith." The book is, as the subtitle implies, a journey—a personal journey to rise from institutionally enforced belief to the realization of personal faith. The book is part autobiography, part observation study and part historical analysis.

Following the death of his lover from AIDS, the author returns to his family home in rural Kentucky. While there a monk from the nearby Trappist monastery of Gethsemani invites him to attend a convocation of Buddhist and Christian monks. While attending the symposium Johnson discovers an underlying, recurrent question of anger. Across the days of the meeting, as the topic turns back to anger again and again, Johnson discovers the anger within himself—directed to a great extent toward the Catholic institution within which he was raised. He begins to realize what he might have lost, by rejecting the church in the face of logic. This revelatory moment at the Gethsemani encounter prompts Johnson to look beyond the façade of institutional edifice of the Catholic church and examine its origins, history and development to powerful and exclusionary institution it is today.

After the conference, instead of returning to San Francisco to work on his next novel, the author embarks on a journey exploring monasticism. His approach is two pronged. He spends time on retreat in monastic communities, interviewing residents and experience the monastic's life. At the same time, Johnson embarks on a historical investigation into the roots, influences and antecedents of the western Christian monastic tradition. He text mirrors this alternating approach,

weaving in reflections that are at times highly personal and others universalized to the larger gay community.

At the outset Johnson decides to limit his investigation only to those institutions he sees as having “been present in the United States long enough to contribute to and be shaped by the American religious psyche.” This decision, to limit his study to Judeo-Christian and Buddhist traditions, allows Johnson to go deeper into his exploration, than if he had taken a more far-reaching approach. On the other hand, the decision means that he examines only two, albeit significant, panels within the great quilt of American religious diversity. By concentrating on larger institutional expressions of religion, Johnson misses the breadth of New World religious individualism.

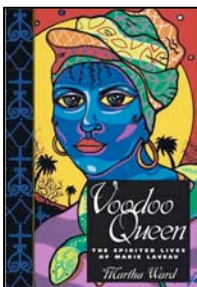
Johnson’s experiential study centers principally on two monastic communities: the Gethsemani monastery, which first inspired the author’s quest, and the three locations of the San Francisco Zen Center. The author alternates stays at the four locations slowly progressing deeper into the communities, yet always remaining an observer. He maintains a level of scholarly objectivity to the end of his quest. The book flows smoothly as Johnson moves from his anger through his historical and personal analysis.

Despite Johnson’s stated aims, he is not a Catholic apologist. He does not shy away from the important criticisms that are leveled against the organized religion in general and the Roman Catholic Church in particular. The question of gay identity and religion runs as a recurrent theme throughout the book, as Johnson raises the topic often with those he interviews. Interestingly, his presence within the Trappist monastery creates a situation where gay monks seek him out, opening up to the openly gay man who is at once local and an outsider. Johnson also includes chapters on the question of the church’s approach to women and child sexual abuse. As with the rest of the book, he deals with these tough topics with intelligence and a historical perceptiveness that goes far beyond the typical knee-jerk reaction.

Intercut with descriptions of stays at Gethsemani and the Zen Center facilities, Johnson provides a historical analysis of the influences on early Christianity, key figures within the development of the young church and the roots of western contemplative monasticism. He proposes an interesting theory of a possible connecting influence of Buddhism on the precursors of Christianity. He traces the Greek influences of Plato and Philo on the developing Christian philosophy—especially the critical emphasis on the separation of the body and spirit. He clearly illustrates the impact that Roman imperial power and the later disintegration of said power had on the Church’s philosophical direction.

Johnson ends his search finding more than he had set out to. Beyond the institutional history he first sought to analyze, he finds his own faith. In the end he realizes that belief is actually an impediment to faith and find his own space within an institutional hierarchy that may not always be happy with his inclusion.

Voodoo Queen: The Spirited Lives of Marie LaVeau, Martha Ward
(University of Mississippi Press, 2003, 224pp, \$26.00)



Marie LaVeau is perhaps one of those figures whose definitive biography is impossible. Shrouded in a century and a half of mystery and legend, the facts of her life may ultimately prove elusive even to the most determined of biographers. The person and the legend are inseparable, confused and overlapping as the lives of Marie LaVeau and her daughter Marie are. Both Mariés themselves intertwined with the evocative imagery of New Orleans.

Many have heard of Marie LaVeau, the Widow Paris. Thousands make the pilgrimage to her alleged tomb in St. Louis Cemetary One on Bason Street. But who is the real Marie LaVeau? A few have attempted

to write the biography of this mysterious religious and political power. Raul Canizares *The Life & Works of Marie LaVeau* stands out from the small crop of previous attempts.

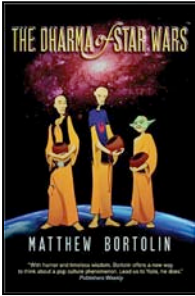
Martha Ward has made a valiant attempt in *Voodoo Queen*. She acknowledges at the outset the difficulty of her task. She notes the near non-existence of traces of either Marie with the historical record. What little might exist, would appear to have fallen victim to souvenir hunters over the years. Despite this, Ward does manage to find scant traces—an X on an old contract, for example—of the living breathing Marie.

Voodoo Queen is not a religious or magical biography—as Canizares' work is. A research professor in Anthropology, Urban Studies and Women's Studies, Ward has produced, instead, a feminist and cultural study of the two Maries. She goes farther than any other author on the subject in managing to portray a full picture of the unique placement of the Voodoo leader at the historical moment that saw the rise of Marie LaVeau. Ward has crafted from the fabric of myth and legend a biography of not just the two Marie LaVeaus but also one of mid-19th century New Orleans. She shows through careful analysis of the contemporary records, how the LaVeaus used the system of contracts to artfully manipulate the system and their relation to it for their benefit and to protect.

Ward deftly sets the context within which the Widow Paris rose to reign supreme. Through careful research she vividly captures the social and cultural forces that in many respects continue to color and shape the contrasts that are New Orleans.

The Dharma of Star Wars, Matthew Bortolin

(Wisdom Publications, 2005, 205pp, \$14.95)



Anyone who has seen any of the six films of the two Star Wars trilogies knows that the heroic epics owe more than a passing debt to Eastern philosophy. The movies themselves have created a fanbase whose enthusiasm borders on religious zealotry. The primary theme of the hero's journey is familiar to anyone familiar with the cross-cultural work of Joseph Campbell. Additionally many parallels have been drawn between the Jedi and eastern Zen practitioners. Indeed, it is reported that George Lucas based his definitive Jedi master, Yoda, on Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche whom he had met on a visit to Dharmasala.

It is not surprising then, that attempts have been made at extrapolating a spiritual philosophy out of the Star Wars saga. It has been linked to Buddhism, Taoism and, even, chivalrous Christianity. Other authors have attempted to draw forth a unique Jedi religion from the movie's celluloid frames.

In *The Dharma of Star Wars*, Matthew Bortolin has produced a clear and clever introduction to Buddhism. This is not a Buddhist interpretation of the films. Instead, Bortolin has written a concise and easily approached book on Buddhist using symbols drawn from his extensive knowledge of the films. The influence of Buddhism and other Eastern thought on Lucas makes the author's job that much easier.

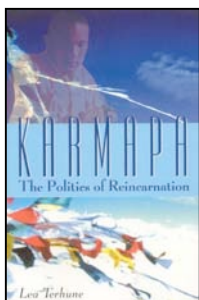
The book is primarily a book on Buddhism for die-hard fan and Star Wars neophyte alike. The work will also broaden anyone's understanding and appreciation of the subtle underpinnings of Lucas' films.

Dharma of Star Wars is not simply another attempt at capitalizing on the Star Wars franchise. Published by the nonprofit Wisdom Publications, Bortolin's work is an important contribution to the lexicon of modern Western Buddhist studies. The book draws an arc of

meaning and wisdom across the centuries from the deer park to the pinnacle of 21st century pop culture.

Karmapa of Tibet: The Politics of Reincarnation, Lea Terhune

(Wisdom, 2004, 224pp, \$14.95)



The concept of reincarnating Tibetan spiritual leaders is a strange mysterious notion for Westerners. This remains true even for many of those drawn to the growing practice of Tibetan Buddhism over the past several decades. Without the socially inculcated and historically rooted understanding of incarnate lineage systems, Westerners were even more puzzled by the debate that emerged over the past several years

centering on the recognition of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa.

The Karmapas are the leaders of the Kagyu or ‘Black Hat’ school, one of the four main lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. The Sixteenth Karmapa was one of the most visible faces bringing expatriate Tibetan Buddhism to the West. He attracted thousands of Western followers during his frequent visits to Europe and the Americas. The Sixteenth Karmapa died in 1981 and his four heart sons, Tai Situpa, Sharmapa, Jamgon Kongtrul and Gyaltzapa incarnations were entrusted with searching for the Karmapa’s next incarnation.

Several years went by without the recognition of the new Karmapa. Generally the previous incarnation leaves clues that may be decoded to lead searchers to the lama’s next incarnation. In the case of the Sixteenth Karmapa, no clue was immediately found. Great unease began to develop in the Kagyu community as more time passed without the recognition of their leader.

While engaged in a long retreat in 1990, Tai Situpa recalled an amulet the Karmapa had given him just prior to his death. Upon opening it, Tai Situpa discovered an envelope with “Open in the Iron

Horse Year” written upon it. The year 1990 is known as the year of the Iron Horse in the Tibetan calendar. The four members of the search team finally came together in early 1992 and the Karmapa’s prediction letter was opened. Jamgon Kongtrul and Gyalsapa were enthusiastic at the letter’s discovery and the clues it contained. According to Terhune’s reportage the Sharmapa, however, had an immediate negative reaction to the letter—going as far as accusing Tai Situpa of forging it.

The opening of the prediction letter appears to have exacerbated growing tensions between the four Heart Sons. Trihune shows how the Sharmapa worked against his fellows even before the letter’s discovery. Here the mysterious merges with a more familiar story of power and the desire to hold onto it once attained. This was increased by the tragic death of Jamgon Rinpoche in a car accident in April 1992 just months after the four had opened the letter.

A search party was eventually sent into Tibet and, following the previous Karmapa’s instructions, his Seventeenth incarnation was discovered. Orgyen Trinley Dorje was enthroned that fall at age seven as the new Karmapa. The Shamarpa refused to recognize the validity of the recognition and eventually produced his own claimant to the Kagyu lineage throne. Since that time, backed by a group of the Sixteenth Karmapa’s European followers, the Sharmapa has waged a public relations and legal battle against his fellows on the search committee and the vast majority of Kagyu Tulkus who recognize Orgyen Trinley Dorje as the Karmapa’s true incarnation.

In January 2000, the story of the young Karmapa captured the attention of the whole world. Realizing that he could not pursue his studies and requirements of his office while under the control of the Chinese occupational government, the fourteen-year-old made a treacherous and secret escape across the Himalayas. He arrived in India and Dharamsala, the home of the Tibetan Government in Exile. The legal battles with the Sharmapa over Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, India, the seat of the Kagyu lineage in exile, continue to this day.

Lea Trihune may be accused of being a partisan for the recognition of Oryen Trinley Dorje. This is due to her longstanding connection to the Kagyu lineage begun before the departure of the Sixteenth Karmapa. Trihune is an experienced journalist and has worked for CNN, Radio Deutsche Welle and Voice of America. This shows through in her impartial story-telling and the depths she has gone to collect the facts and intricacies underlying the ‘politics’ lying below the surface of the Karmapa’s recognition.

She draws on numerous interviews conducted over years with the majority of the story’s key figures—including the Karmapa himself. She unlocks the mysteries underlying the recognition process and the historical background for the incarnate lineage tradition. At the same time she carefully builds the ground work for her insightful analysis of the politics surrounding the process. She goes centuries back in time to draw out the threads and tendrils of history that nuance Tibetan temporal and spiritual politics to this day. *Karmapa: The Politics of Reincarnation* presents a riveting tale and Trihune upholds the highest journalistic ethics throughout its telling.

A New Reformation, Matthew Fox

(Wisdom University Press, 2005, 100pp, \$16.00)

Reviewed by Joseph Gelfer



WITTENBERG, Germany – 500 years ago Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of Castle Church, protesting against the indulgences and corruption of Pope Leo X. On a recent cloudy day, Matthew Fox repeated this act with his own 95 Theses, though Wittenberg bureaucrats forbade any door-nailing and Fox instead resorted to sticking them on a sandwich board.

Fox is the author of 26 books focusing on the themes of eco-spirituality and mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Hildegard of Bingen, and his 95 Theses comprise a significant chunk of his latest book, “A New Reformation,” in which he sets out his beef with the Catholic Church. Fox is no stranger to run-ins with the Vatican, having been forced by John Paul II and the then Cardinal Ratzinger to leave the Dominicans, subsequently converting to the Episcopal Church.

Fox’s small volume (just 100 pages) begins by drawing parallels between Reformation times and today: of technological revolution, the waning of nation-states and the rise of multi-national corporations, the corruption and ineffectiveness of Western religion, and an awakened scholarship. He then charts the divide between two Christianities, one that focuses on, “a Punitive Father in the Sky and a teaching of Original Sin,” while the other, “recognizes the Original Blessing that all being derives from.” Fox goes on to describe the Vatican’s hunger for domination, crowned by Ratzinger’s “coup d’eglise” and its sad treatment of women, gays and lesbians, liberation theologians and pretty much anyone with an ounce of magic and charm about them.

Fox does not spare other denominations in his critique, noting the similarities between Catholicism and other fundamentalist denominations, quoting numerous unsavoury passages from right-wingers such as George W. Bush and Ann Coulter. But all is not lost. “What is the good news in all this?” Fox asks: “That we can start anew. That a New Reformation for a new millennium is upon us.” This is where the 95 Theses come in (provided also in German for extra “authentisch”) which are so life-, person-, creation- and Christ-affirming that it is hard to imagine anyone complaining. But of course they will.

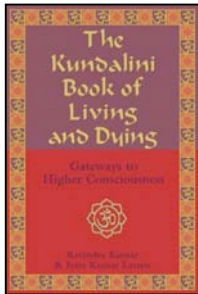
There is nothing new in Fox’s 95 Theses, but something does not need to be new to need saying out loud, and what Fox says will ring true for many Catholics caught between Christ and the Vatican. In an email shortly after John Paul II’s death I wrote, “I was watching JP’s funeral on TV and saw Ratzinger hold up the broken host and I had a powerful vision that the host was the Church, forever split into pieces... but the

rubble and the dust is back-lit by Christ who feels very close at hand.” This is the immediacy of our accelerating times and it is just possible that Fox’s act on the steps of Wittenberg Cathedral turns out to be less of a stunt and more of a symbol for a turning point in church history.

The Kundalini Book of Living and Dying: Gateways to Higher Consciousness, Ravindra Kumar & Jytte Kumar Larsen

(Weiser Books, 2004, 274pp, \$24.95)

Reviewed by Ron L. Adams



Ever since I had my Transient Ischemic Attack (mini-stroke), January 18, 2005, I’ve been meaning to read this book, but because of my health concerns the word Death kept me from it.

Of course, I finally gave in, since it also has the word Living in it.

This book was wonderful and really helped me understand St. Paul’s quote “One must die daily.”

This fits right in with Aleister Crowley’s “Ah! Ah! Death! Death! Thou shalt long for death. Death is forbidden, o man, unto thee. The length of thy longing shall be the strength of its glory. He that lives long & desires death much is ever the King amongst Kings.” (*Liber AL vel Legis* II:73-74)

Ravinda Kumar, Ph. D. experienced his Kundalini awakening in 1987 and he goes into detail how that changed his life. He went from a math teacher to writing books on yoga, chakras, dreams, and psychic development. The Kundalini experience usually opens up the spiritual side of life for most people who experience it.

Jytte Kumar Larsen had her Kundalini experience in 1992, which led to her meeting Ravinda at one of his seminars.

These two authors have constructed a very useful book on the use of yoga, mantras, and exercises to facilitate awakening the Kundalini.

They also tell the history of Kundalini and its connection to spiritual growth.

The Kundalini, or Serpent Fire, is something the East's spiritual masters have known for thousands of years. Only recently has the West begun to understand this spiritual emergence. The West used to misdiagnose this event as a mental disturbance and only recently has Electro-shock therapy been halted in the treatment of what they didn't understand.

I had my own Kundalini experience in the summer of 1984, without even knowing anything about it, with only a little experience with yoga and mediation since I was 18.

I can confirm from my own personal experience that these authors have experienced the same thing, in their own unique way. The information in this book is genuine and a great primer for those who want to experience a very dynamic spiritual awakening.

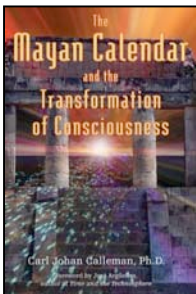
I believe that the Kundalini awakening is an evolutionary trigger for humanity and from reading this book I think it is safe to say that the authors would align with that statement.

The Mayan Calendar: And the Transformation of Consciousness,

Carl Johan Calleman, Ph. D.

(Bear & Company, 2004, 320pp, \$18.00)

Reviewed by Ron L. Adams



The Mayans kept very accurate calendars. It is speculated that there are probably over 18 different calendars, like the Haab, Long Count, Venus calendar and the Tzolkin, but modern man only knows a few of these. Some of the Guatemalan Mayan Day count shamans keep some of these sacred calendars secret, because of the prophecies that they contain.

Carl Johan Calleman has studied the Mayan Calendar since 1979. In this book, Calleman proposes an interesting theory of what the Mayan Calendar was saying and how its layout predicted the growth of world history.

Calleman uses the Mayan concept of the 13 Heavens as an outline of world history. He puts particular emphasis on what has happened on each even numbered Heaven and then what comes about on the odd numbered Heavens.

His section on the World tree is very interesting, as it uses the sacred view of the 4 directions of the ancient American Indians. In a lot of ways, this relates to the Hebrew Kaballah as well—they can be interchangeable if the student wishes to explore further.

Calleman explains the Tzolkin, the 260-day count of the Maya. He goes into depth about the prophecies of the Nine Underworlds, which are very revealing to where we are at today.

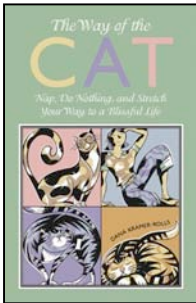
The author also suggests some practical uses of the Mayan Calendar.

My Tzolkin count is Kin 121, Red Self-existing Dragon.

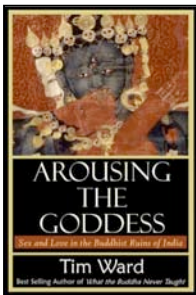
If you are interested in another look at time, one that is more in sync with the natural rhythms of the universe, then *The Mayan Calendar* is the book to read. It makes better sense than the oddly-partitioned Gregorian Calendar that we use in the world today.

There is a foreword by Dr. Jose Arguellas, who wrote *The Mayan Factor* and created the Dreamspell. This even though Calleman disagrees very much with Arguellas' Galactic Count. Nothing like a little in-house fighting to spice up the book.

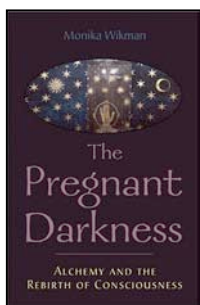
New & Notable



The Way of the Cat, Dana Kramer-Rolls (Conari Press) “Nap, Do Nothing, and Stretch Your Way to a Blissful Life.” *The Way of the Cat* contains exercises, amusing cat stories and feline food for thought. Kramer-Rolls draws on observations of the blissful lives cats lead every day to bring us a book which combines yoga and self-realization. “They are my teachers, and filled with a wisdom that goes beyond words or philosophy or theory,” writes Kramer-Rolls. “They live their wisdom... we will turn our hearts to loving Mother Earth, and listen to her teaching, just as our cats do everyday.”



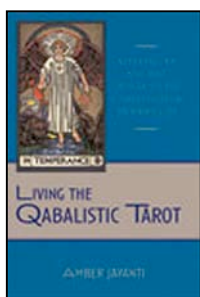
Arousing the Goddess, Tim Ward (Monkfish) This is the mystical and erotic story of the author’s two-year journey through India and the Far East. Ward spent three months in a Himalayan monastery before falling in love with an Austrian Indologist, Sabina. The two travel together on their joint spiritual quests through the Buddhist ruins of India. During the course of the journey, they begin to experience a new energy in their sexually charged relationship—a energy with all the hallmarks of ancient Tantric symptoms. *Arousing the Goddess* tells this true story of two lovers walking amidst the ruins of Buddhist India while wrestling with the truths being awakened by their passionate and surprising tantric practices.



The Pregnant Darkness: Alchemy and the Rebirth of Consciousness, Monika Wikman (Nicolas-Hays)

As a Jungian psychologist and astrologer, Wikman has worked for decades with clients and their dream symbols. Through the course of her work, she has witnessed the presence of the divine hand at work in the psyche. In *The Pregnant Darkness*, Wikman shows that the best way to cope

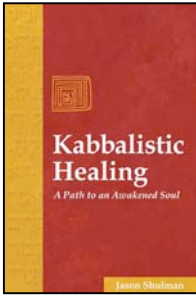
with one's darkest hours is by fostering a connection to the deeper current of life, those mysteries that give life form and meaning. Through her analysis of dream material, Wikman leads readers into a practical explanation of alchemical symbolism.



Living the Qabalistic Tarot, Amber Jayanti (Weiser Books)

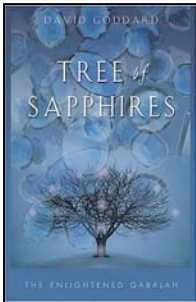
“Applying an Ancient Oracle to the Challenges of Modern Life.” Jayanti is the founder of the Santa Cruz School of Tarot and Qabalah Study. Within this book, Jayanti brings the reader her 22-week Qabalistic Tarot classes. She provides a step-by-step guide for experiencing the tarot in our daily lives. Each of the lessons is followed by suggestions

and guidelines for practical application and integration into everyday life. In *Living the Qabalistic Tarot* Jayanti combines her years of teaching into an accessible guide that even beginners may experience at their own pace and comfort level. Jayanti's other books include *Principles of the Qabalah* and *Tarot for Dummies*.



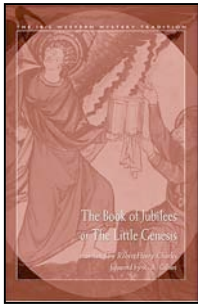
Kabbalistic Healing, Jason Shulman (Inner Traditions) Shulman describes how the Kabbalah—the Jewish mystical path—can assist in awakening us to our potential for uniting with the divine. He describes the healing possible for the human soul: an awakening to our essential nature that makes our former life seem as if we have been asleep.

Kabbalistic Healing presents a process of unification, joining with reality. Shulman then brings this process down to its implications on daily life. Shulman is the founder of A Society of Souls, a school dedicated to the awakening of the human spirit through the work of Integrated Kabbalistic Healing. The book draws upon Shulman’s work with the Society in promoting the creation of a unitive or nondual state of consciousness.

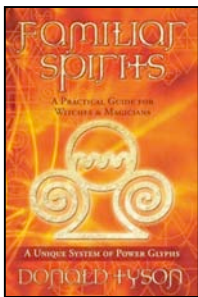


Tree of Sapphires: The Enlightened Qabalah, David Goddard (Weiser Books) Goddard offers students a working knowledge of the Qabalah, providing them with the key to unlocking the ancient and modern Western mystery tradition for themselves. The author avoids heavy theory, opting instead to offer exercises, meditations and visualizations as well as a prayer book to help readers

gain a better understanding of the Qabalah and the Tree of Life. Goddard explains how the Qabalah is the root source of all Western mystery traditions—Kabbalist, Rosicrucian and Sufi—as well as the more modern classic Western systems, such as the tarot, alchemy, angelology and ritual magic.



The Book of Jubilees or The Little Genesis, translated from Ethiopian by Robert Henry Charles (Ibis Press) This work purports to be a revelation given by God to Moses through the medium of an angel and contains a history, divided up into “jubilee periods” of 49 years, from the creation to the advent of Moses. Likely written in the 2nd century B.C., the author includes events of particular interest to his time as well as those events of Moses’ birth and early career. This text, though containing one or two passages of an apocalyptic character, is unlike typical apocalyptic works. The book is largely based upon the historical narratives in Genesis and Exodus, interspersed with legends and emphasizing certain practices (such as the strict observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, etc. The author’s primary objectives appears to have been the inculcation of a reform in the regulation of the calendar and festivals in place of the lunar calendar, which he condemns. He proposes to substitute a solar calendar consisting of 12 months and containing 364 days. The result of such a system is to make all festivals, except the Day of Atonement, fall on a Sunday—a radical idea for its day.



Familiar Spirits, Donald Tyson (Llewellyn) For centuries, magical familiars have assumed many forms: the heavenly lover of the shaman, the wise imp of the witch and the elemental companion of the theurgist. Whatever the form, the familiar’s function is always to help the practitioner. Tyson is the author of numerous books on the Western mysteries. In *Familiar Spirits* he reveals his own unique system for generating spirit sigils based on a set of symbols called Power Glyphs.