

The stars point past
the moon's reflected light
from one

Bob Noreault

In March 1973 I took part in a "research seminar" with Jean Houston, founder of the Foundation for Mind Research — an experience which lasted four days and involved the learning and practice of a technique for entering a deep trance state. There were about thirty people involved in the intensive (experiential) parts of this seminar, and together we explored the different kinds of "altered states of consciousness" which could be induced through the use of this trance, exercises, guided imagery, music, etc.

One of the experiences that was possible under the deep trance was the distortion or acceleration of (subjective) time. For several of the exercises we did, we were in the trance state for only a few minutes of "real" or clock-time, but subjectively lived through a much longer period, perhaps many hours or a full day. I recorded the following experience in my journal — the Visit to the Wise Old Man. We all lay on the floor and followed the steps to put ourselves into deep trance, and then Jean gave us the minimal guiding instructions: you will walk for quite a distance, going deeper into trance as you walk uphill, and you will meet at some point the Wise Old Man (or Woman), of whom you will inquire regarding the deepest and most important questions you have about your life at this time. He will answer you and you will spend as long as you like with him, questioning and being answered. Then I will call you, and you will leave the Wise one, knowing that you can return at any time in the future. The Wise Old Man is a symbolic person in your own unconscious depths, and everything that he says to you is truly your own wisdom speaking to you.

Here is what I recorded:

Walking up a very long turning road through thick woods, no houses or any sign of civilization . . . just very lovely trees, mostly pines, as far as I can see. Looking at the rocks in my way and along the sides of the road climbing higher as it gets steeper and harder to walk . . . thinking what a long road it is. I see up ahead at the end of the road, to my right, a little log cabin with smoke coming out of the chimney. Walk up to it and knock on the heavy wood door. It swings open and there is this old black dude . . . very old, Ozark type, very black leathery skin, about as tall as me . . . with this incredible white bush of beard and hair. Very old, but very clear and steady of voice and gesture. He acts as though he has been expecting me and steps aside to let me in. The inside of the cabin is really dark, and all I can see is this big fireplace with a strong bright fire throwing shadows all over the interior of the cabin. I sit in front of the fire, and he brings me a hot cup of tea in a metal mug. I know I am here to have an important conversation with this old man, but I realize that up to this point we have not said one word to each other. We sit half-turned to each other on opposite sides of the fire, gazing into it for a long time . . . just hanging out. Nothing is said for what seems a long time, maybe ½ hour. I feel very strongly that for the things we want to say, we should be conversing by some means other than verbal . . . and then I feel that we are in fact "telepathing" back and forth as we sit in silence. Finally he looks at me and says, "what is there that you need to ask me?" I don't answer . . . trying to think what are the vital questions about my life that I want him to answer. He says, "you don't really have to ask me anything, because you already know anything I would be able to tell you." I protest that I *don't* know . . . after all, HE is the Wise old Man. He smiles and says, "yes you do know . . . but you just don't always remember all that you know." I ask how I can make myself remember. "That is very simple. You just tap yourself on the shoulder and say, 'Hey! You're forgetting again!' And then look all around you and see very clearly that you DO know all of it." "What else should I do to keep myself from forgetting?" "You must stay very close to the ground as much as you can . . . you must touch things more, and listen and smell and taste. You rely too much on your eyes all the time to tell you about your world. You must use your other senses . . . go around blind for a day. Also you should walk barefoot on the earth as often as you can, feel the shape of the earth, and the changes all around. "What else do I need to do to move further along the Path . . . sometimes I really feel stuck . . . ?" "You are stuck because you are afraid of something. The only thing that holds you back is that you are afraid of breaking through something and pushing out into a new way of being you. There isn't anything important that you can risk or lose by pushing yourself out further . . . all you will lose is just another piece of your shell."

We continued talking for awhile longer . . . and then from far away I hear Jean's voice saying it's time to go. I tell the Wise Old Man (reluctantly) that I have to go now, but that I will come back again. I just transport directly out at this point, without walking out of the cabin or back down the road. All of this took place in 4 minutes.

Sue Durant

MAELSTROM

i

in ivory's eye waits, a semblance of
mutilated memory
peels charred off the sweating
spindel ladder, shocked by the need
to disengage, trembling with the
fear of holding on
relieved, fearful and ashamed
blackened wisps of mind fog
scatter floating downward and outward
casually composing,
ebony shrouds in batlike gyrations
tentatively touching, uniting, unreeling
the once linear ladder now
withered and curved, upon and outside
of itself
a configuration of petals tinged
now with death, leans beckoning and
invitingly cryptic; insinuatingly
proper
with a crackling rustle, in a
rising snapping catch, the burning
hook impales the seared eye
barbs immediately grabbing desperately
a new wave of trembling; convulsive
spinnings shaking flouderings found
anew.

ii

lazily soft, tenderly beautiful;
shimmering rings of gold spread silently
all possessed by a slower than slow
motion of purpose
solely the surface breeze, scattering light.
pervading quietude, the rising of
veil sounds:
ear trinkets, tinkling of small bells
the wash of sparkles
the web of tidings
completely composed effortlessly . . .
unconcernedly beyond the doorway of sound
the rustling, sighing, embracing
tremble continues.

iii

Ladies and gentlemen, I present you
the jury
composed of braless bouncing breasts
in the wind freely unfurled, two
to a person as is customary
meanwhile on the Nile, sturdy
crocodiles smile, flashing teeth with
cunning guile
the torpid waters flow against the
ankles and knees of mindless tapeworm
infested toilers
far from blazing boilers
sweating undersides, red light leaping
out and falling back, steaming images
glimpsed and forgotten in their complex
dance
all making free in their fall through
the chambered nautilus
a scenario of sand drifting amorously
although intricately; scorched nothingness
in everflow,
land of dead pharaohs sitting in
wraps amongst bones of slaves and sundry
possessions
out here where there are no stars
a slithering eye revolves slowly
backdoor abyss, plunging concentrically
to shadows, tilting windmills