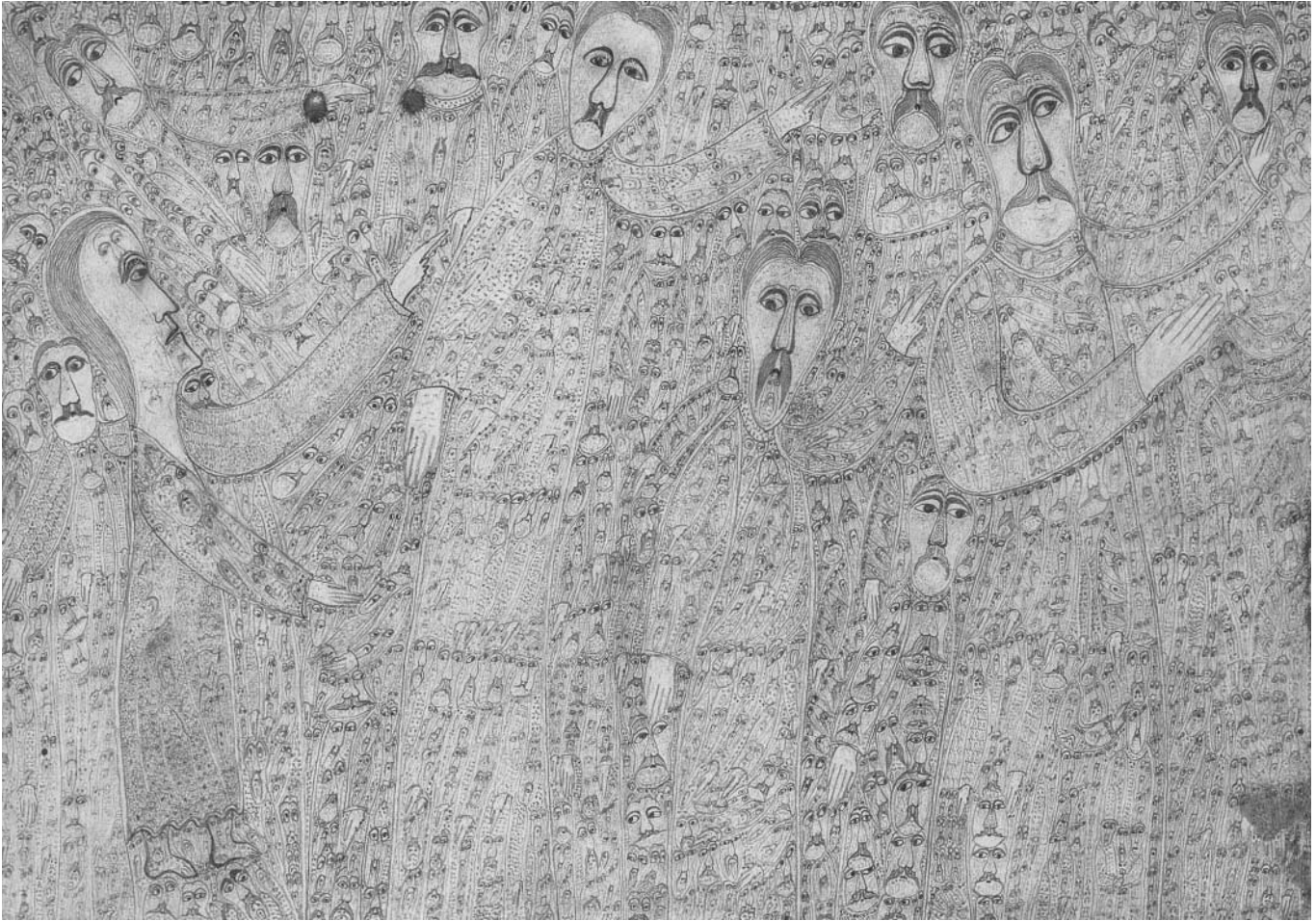


Psychiatry in pictures

CHOSEN BY ROBERT HOWARD



Edmund Monsiel (1897–1962): untitled pencil drawing, *c.*1945

When his shop in Poland was seized in 1942, Monsiel became convinced that the Nazis were going to come and arrest him and hid for what remained of the Second World War in the windowless attic of his brother's house in Lublin. Under these conditions he began to draw by candlelight on small scraps of paper. His drawings began with depictions of Christ and the Devil and passed through a phase of chaotic agglomerations of figures and faces before giving way to a rigidly defined and controlled image of a world dominated by the human face. The strongest features in the drawings are faces with moustaches, often reproduced in multiples within larger forms, set within a background of hundreds of pairs of staring eyes. Obvious religious elements echo representations of priests, Christ, God or the Devil from Eastern European and Russian church art. Monsiel's drawings were all made on a very small scale, typically about 15×10 cm, and this gives an overwhelming character in which composition is almost lost in the elaborate chaos of detail. After the War, Monsiel worked as a weighbridge operator but avoided all social contact and was obsessively religious. Although he is often described as having had schizophrenia, he was never treated for this condition. Image reproduced courtesy of Henry Boxer Gallery, www.outsiderart.co.uk.