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RITUAL CLOWNS AND SYMBOLICAL BEHAVIOUR

> The first Satan presented a visage of dubious sex... Round his purple tunic, a serpent wound its iridescent body in the manner of a belt... From this live girdle hung shining knives and surgical instruments, alternating with phials filled with sinister fluids. His right hand clasped another phial—its contents glowing red, and carrying for label the odd words: "Drink; this is my blood, a perfect cordial..."
>
> BAUDELAIRE

Chosen by English-speaking anthropologists to designate the ritual buffoons discovered among the North American Indians, in Africa and in Oceania, the word "clown" is no misnomer. Our circus clowns are the descendants of these puzzling ceremonial figures,[1]

Translated by Raoul Makarius.

[1] The parallel between circus clowns and *tricksters* is made by Caillois (1950, pp. 205-206. See also 1958, pp. 218-224). As regards the relationship between *tricksters* and ritual clowns, see below.

and it is perhaps thanks to their filiation to them (confirmed, as we shall see, by etymology) that our spleenish makers of laughter owe their fascination and their capacity to survive the vicissitudes of the stage. But we shall also see that in tribal society a clown becomes a clown only in a subsidiary way, the origins of this figure going back to a complex of causes having little to do with the jocularity assumed to be his unique purpose to arouse, but which overlays and conceals the true nature of his original role.

The so-called explanations advanced by anthropologists of the role of ritual clowns in terms of their function, apparently consisting of relieving the tension accompanying ceremonial activity by the laughter they provoke, illustrates the theoretical inanition to which functionalism condemns scientific research. Whole aspects of the "clown complex" are neglected in favour of superficial manifestations of the phenomenon, whittling down its significance and rendering it all the more incomprehensible by obliterating its ties with the ceremonial and mythical context that surrounds it.

It is precisely in these connecting ties that the guiding thread is to be found which will make it possible to explore in its totality a mode of behaviour that has remained enigmatic, and trace the association between the ritual figure represented by the clown and the mythical figure, also mischievous, also baffling by its multi-sidedness, represented by the *trickster*. Among the Dakota, one becomes Heyoka (ritual clown) by a vision of the god Iktomi, or of one of the beasts associated with him, appearing in dream. And Iktomi, according to Lowie, could be regarded as an ideal representative of the pure *trickster* type.[2]

[2] Lowie, 1909, p. 432. Among the Zuni, the Koyemshi clowns represent the sons of a mythical incestuous figure who played the part of cultural hero and creator (Cazeneuve, 1957, pp. 73-75; cfr. Cushing, p. 402). Other Zuni clowns, the Newekwe, have for patron Payatamu, chief of the fraternity and founder of one of the most important medicine societies (Id. pp. 84, 86). The Acoma ceremonial clowns represent Koshari, the original clown (Stirling, p. 65), characterised as the perfect violator of taboo. The Iroquois clowns are traditionally related to a legendary hero called "False Face", who had claimed to be the creator of the world, in defiance of the Great Spirit of creation. Vanquished in the contest that followed, his nose struck the mountain he had been unable to push more than half-way, but which the Great Spirit had succeeded in moving as he liked. In memory of this contest, recalled by their chief at the beginning of every meeting, the clowns called

If our analysis of the nature of the *trickster* is correct, heroes like Manabozo (Algonkins), Maui (Polynesia), Legba (Dahomey-Yoruba) are the projection in myth of the magician who violates a taboo in order to satisfy the needs and aspirations of his group.[3] This act of transgression would be that which enabled the group, at some time in its history, to acquire the magical "medicine" which plays a fundamental role in its magical and ritual life. The medicine—the medicine of sorcerers and hunters, of chiefs and kings—actually or symbolically based on blood, or on substances associated with blood, is obtainable only by violating the taboo on contact with blood. Forbidden and mortally dangerous to use, it constitutes the most efficacious instrument of magic, ensuring not only recovery from illness, but also good health, success in hunting and all undertakings, victory in war etc.[4]

The clown, earthly counterpart of the *trickster*, would have in ritual the role of evoking the violation of taboo, hypostasised in myth. These two imaginary figures would thus share a common origin in the experience of society, i.e. in the transgressive

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"False Faces" wear masks with twisted noses (Speck, pp. 69-70). The Onondaga Ho-Doi clowns have a similar legend, with the difference that their mythical hero has the better of the Master of Heaven (De Cost Smith, 1889, pp. 277-281). Among the Arapaho, the founder of the "Fools' Lodge"—the Fools being the clowns—is Nihaça, the *trickster* (Dorsey and Kroeber, pp. 17-19). Among the Cheyenne, the clowns, members of the "Society of Contraries," are related to the cultural hero called *Sweet Medicine*, founder of the magical life of the group, who owes his name to the medicine that is "good for the blood," which he gave to his people (Grinnell, II, pp. 344-345, 174). In California, clowns are identified with the Coyote who often incarnates the *trickster*. *Trickster* and clown blend to form a single personage among the Murngin of Australia. Bamapama is "a man who lived in the mythological period," and was the founder of ceremonies. An incestuous *trickster*, a mythical violator of tribal taboos, he is at the same time identified with a figure which actually dances in certain rites, brandishing a spear and indulging in all sorts of craziness and obscene pantomimes (Lloyd Warner, pp. 554-556).

[3] L. Makarius, 1969 A. This concept of the hero corresponds to that developed by Caillois in 1948. The individual, according to him, being incapable of extricating himself in myth from the situations he is in, except by infringing social restraints, shifts on to the hero the responsibility for doing so. The latter, by nature, is therefore the one to break the taboos. The present interpretation thus brings factual confirmation to Caillois's thesis (see Caillois, 1938, p. 26).

[4] As regards magical "medicine," see R. and L. Makarius, 1968 A, pp. 223-224 (medicine of hunters); 1968 B, pp. 209-210 (of chiefs and kings). Also consult L. Makarius "Du roi magique au roi 'divin'", to appear shortly, and 1969 A, pp. 22, 29-30, 31 and n. 1, 37 (medicine of *tricksters*).

activities of magicians engaged in prohibited operations and manipulations to gain magical power. It should be recalled that each tribal group possesses its own "medicine" with its material magical accompaniments, and that these in general are related to the *trickster*, as cultural hero.[5]

CLOWNS AND MEDICINE

One of the component elements of the "clown complex" consists of a magical "medicine," or of some liquid associated, in fact or symbolically, with medicines of this kind. The liquid stands in a privileged relation to the clown. It belongs to him it is his particular material possession. Thus, according to myth, Koshari, the original clown of the Acoma of New Mexico, was instructed by his mother on how to mix his medicine and sprinkle it on the altar. He gives it to the sick to drink in a shell, and each swallows a mouthful.

The clowns, who after initiation play the part of the original Koshari, exercise full power over their medicine. They are told that "even if the *chayani* (magician) has made the medicine, you can go in and take it without permission and go out and cure anyone you wish with it." Nowadays, adds the text, a Koshari will sometimes walk up to the medicine bowl, suck up some of its contents and administer it to the patient through his mouth. This is presumably to give evidence of the physical appurtenance, as it were, of the medicine to the clown. The medicine bowls of the Acoma often carry a sculptured head of Koshari. (Readers will find a description of the preparation of the medicine in the note below).[6]

[5] F. Pellizzi expresses the opinion that "sorcerers and ceremonial practitioners play in human society the role which the cultural heroes and *tricksters* play in myth" ("Witches and Ghosts," *Diogenes*, No. 65, 1969).

[6] Stirling, pp. 33-37, 65. During the rite of initiation, the clowns are daubed with a mixture of herbs and white chalk. At a given moment, an elder, taking part in the ceremony, urinates in a vessel, mixing his urine with the medicine. Another throws in snot from his nose, while a Koshari woman pulls out some of her pubic hair and adds it to the mixture. When all these ingredients have been well mixed, the chief takes some of the "medicine" into his mouth and spits on the other Koshari. The initiates do the same, and finally everyone drinks of the medicine from a shell. Having drunk four times of the medicine, they become fully initiated Koshari (Stirling, pp. 122-114).

Among the Zuni, the Newekwe are the clowns associated with the medicine. Formerly, it is said, they used to drink bowls full of urine and feed on excrements and all sorts of filthy matter. Together with the Koyemshi, other Zuni clowns, they used to drench the public with urine. During the Shalako ceremony, women pour water on the public.[7]

In all likelihood, water is used as a substitute for urine. Bourke reports that during the Joshkân dance, the Apache and Navaho clowns flooded their spectators with water which they carried in skin-bladders tied round their waist. The water was said to represent urine.[8]

During the ritual combats between the feminine societies and clowns' societies of the Hopi, large quantities of dirty water and stale urine are poured on the participants.[9] The urine and the water that replaces it carry a definite connotation of "medicine." During the initiation of a child to a society of clowns, Stephen saw a female clown, under whose skirt the other clowns had attached a bladder full of dilute coffee, open the bladder and pretend to urinate. The clowns gathered up pinches of moistened sand, placed them on their tongue and on that of the young initiate, pretending that that was urine, that it was sweet, and saying to the child: "Now you will have wisdom."[10] This wisdom, magically acquired, points to a breach of taboo. If the urine, which in principle ought to be feminine,[11] does not represent menstrual blood, it is its nearest substitute.

[7] Cazeneuve, 1957, pp. 112-113, 186; Stevenson, 1901-1902, pp. 430-437; Bourke, pp. 8-10. Stevenson indicates that if the Newekwe absorb excrement, it is in order to bear the absorption of another medicine, termed "hot," whose nature is not specified, without being destroyed (p. 435). It should be remembered that Reichard writes that menstrual blood is "generally considered even more dangerous than excrement" (1950, p. 183).

[8] Bourke, p. 435. According to Parsons, "water or urine (perhaps in burlesque, perhaps because urine is clown medicine) is poured on the clowns or clowning groups in all the western pueblos by women or by the Kacthina." This, she adds, was considered as a rain prayer (1939, I, p. 376).

[9] See Parsons, 1923, p. 183, and Fewkes, 1900, pp. 127-128.

[10] Stephen, p. 366.

[11] The same author describes another Hopi rite, the so-called race of "Wet Runners," in which the youthful participants are splashed with water by two men as they run. These men are dressed like women. When they have used up all the water, buckets of stale urine are brought forth, always carried by the "old women." The clowns plunge their head into the buckets and

During the Katchina feasts of Tusayan, Hopi clowns tease each other with thorny cactus leaves, besmearing one another with blood.[12] Blood also is present in the "Dance of Fools" of the Assineboine, who splatter their spectators with deer's blood, squirted from the bladders hanging from their belts.[13]

Among the Navaho, the real nature of the "medicine" is made more explicit. Gladys Reichard has described the clowns' behaviour in the Mud-Dance which she witnessed at Tiznasbas. A dozen men, the Natani, covered from head to foot with mud, treat their patients by throwing them up in mid-air, or sometimes by rocking them in a blanket. "They had," she says, "a small piece of sheepskin with a red blotch in the centre. This was used to cure some, but was used most by those joining the curing party. The blood on the sheepskin must be something disgusting and powerful. It may be the excretion from the sore of a horse, or menstrual fluid. A man shows his power by not fearing it. Some were made to sit on it, and it was rubbed on the heads and backs of others..."[14]. It is therefore menstrual blood which the Natani use for healing.

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swallow their contents with relish, as the women sprinkle them with urine with their fingers. They then rush among the public and subject them to the same treatment.

[12] Fewkes, 1893, p. 294.

[13] Lowie, 1909-1910, pp. 62-65.

[14] Reichard, 1928, pp. 132-133. See also 1950, II, 525. Another observer of the Navaho, Father Hailé, describes a ceremony similar to the Natani's, namely that of the "Black Dancers." They are not said to be clowns, but like them may indulge in forbidden practices. The menstrual periods of the patients do not interfere with the various phases of the ceremony in any of its features. "The pelt used by a menstruant is employed as a robe by the medicine-carrier of the Black Dancers. Even a small piece of pelt is sufficient, and if a menstruant's pelt cannot conveniently be obtained, an ordinary strip of a pelt, spotted with blood, is made to serve the purpose." (1938, p. 53). The medicine is administered to the sick. They are rubbed with it and it is given to them to drink. The dancers direct the attention of the public to this pelt covered with blood, and the chief is compelled to sit upon it, in spite of his resistance. The rite is associated with the Coyote and clearly appears in the context of a violation of taboo (Id. pp. 34-35, 241-243). Tonelili, another Navaho clown, is represented in myth carrying two bottles, one black, and one blue (Matthews, pp. 2, 29 and 150-151, and Reichard, II, p. 492).

Among the Maidu of California, the clown called Pehei'pe was the chief of the ceremony of the *yomepa*, or "poisons." These were powerful magical charms, carried by shamans and supposed to be capable of killing on contact.

The Navaho, Apache and Iroquois clowns are not the only ones to resort to magical healing. The Windikogan of the Plains Ojibway, like the Cree Wetikogan, had the function of exorcising the demons of disease.[15] The Acoma "prefer to call on a Koshari rather than on a medicine man."[16] The clowns are also healers among the Cheyenne,[17] the Papago,[18] the Delaware,[19] the Assineboine and the Dakota,[20] where the members of the Clown-Dance are regarded as the most powerful and accomplish extraordinary feats. Among the Sioux, in general, "by virtue of their medicine

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The clown dances masked, is regarded as the magician carrying the greatest *impurity,* and is purified with maximum care, as if the magical "poison" finds in him its privileged keeper (Cfr. Dixon, pp. 271-274, 286).

The Iroquois say that their medicine resides in the masks. The "big" and "true" masks are the red ones, which are supposed to have an ambivalent power. In various tales, men and children who see a "False Face" peering at them from behind a tree, are said to bleed from the nose, and obliged to be cured by mask-bearers (Speck, pp. 72, 70, 90). At Onondaga, to become member of the clown society called Ho-Do-I, it is necessary to bleed from the nose, to have a red or swollen face, and to show "a distortion or lameness of the limbs, or some other ailment." The rebellious eponymous hero who defied and vanquished the Creator, cures those who suffer "from nose-bleeding or hemorrhage, or from any other 'red' ailment," receiving offerings in exchange (De Cost Smith, 1889, pp. 278-279). The relation between masks and blood is thus clearly perceptible.

Among the Apache of New Mexico, the masked dancers participating in the feast on the occasion of a girl's first menstruation seem to have a similar role as the clowns. According to Opler, their principal task is to ward off sickness and heal the sick. They begin by blessing the camp and driving out all evil. Sometimes, they practise certain cures at the request of those present; more usually they dance to entertain the public.

Curiously enough, a clown is present by the side of the mask-bearers, but he is a personage of a different type. According to Opler, in the mind of the Apache, it is a good thing to be a clown before becoming a masked dancer; in this way one learns how to dance. The inference would be that a clown is a kind of apprentice. Furthermore, the fact that "it is not dangerous to touch a clown, whereas it is dangerous to touch a masked dancer" would show that the latter has greater power. And yet an elderly informer declares that "when they dance to drive away sickness, the clown is regarded as the most important dancer."—"The clown," he adds, "wields more power than any other masked dancer" (Opler, pp. 100, 105, 111, 115).

[15] Skinner, 1912-1916, pp. 501, 529.

[16] Stirling, p. 65.

[17] Grinnell, II, pp. 174, 205, 344-45.

[18] Underhill, p. 60.

[19] Harrington, p. 66.

[20] Wallis, p. 111.

and *tonwan* powers, the Heyoka render aid to sick men as revere them... by inflicting or healing diseases..."[21]

WHO ARE THE KOYEMSHI?

Among the Zuni, there exist a mysterious group of "sacred" clowns unrelated to the "medicine," which is a characteristic of the Newekwe and other fraternities. These are the Koyemshi, described by Jean Cazeneuve in his brilliant monograph on the Shalako, the most important ceremony of the tribe.

These sorry buffoons personify Shiwelusiwa, the mythical hero, and the nine children which his sister gave him. After committing incest, he and his sister-wife performed extraordinary things. They created rivers, mountains and a lake. They built a village on the bottom of the lake, and the village became the home of masked gods, called Katchina, evoked during the Shalako ceremony.

Shiwelusiwa had been disfigured owing to the sin he had committed. The transformation which he underwent is described as follows: "...Suddenly, his madness [incestuous] changed into anguish and terror. He felt he was being disfigured. His eyes swelled out, his mouth was nothing but a gaping blister; he struck out at his head in despair, and his skull was covered with bosses. He rolled on the ground, and the earth stuck to his face, which took on the colour and appearance of mud. Shiwelusiwa and his sister were like two small children, laughing and shouting, and speaking a strange language. He had become terribly ugly."[22] The nine children who were born after his metamorphosis were all "hideous like their father."

The Koyemshi wear horrible studded masks and black kilts and scarves. They may ridicule people and indulge in all kinds of jokes, including the most obscene. They are public fun-makers. And yet they constitute the most important and the most constant element in the Shalako ceremony. On the last day of the ceremony, rather than fool about, they act like priests fulfilling their

[21] J. O. Dorsey, 1889-1890, pp. 468-469.

[22] Cazeneuve, 1957, pp. 72-75.

sacred duties. These duties which force them into retreat, and impose on them fasting and other acts of purification, amount, according to Cazeneuve, to "a real apostolate." They are supposed to have power over rain and deliver oracles. The first Koyemshi (called Awantachu, "their father," in the ritual) plays a major part in the Corn Virgins ceremony, related to rain and fertility, and forming part of the Shalako.[23]

To Cazeneuve, the Koyemshi are clearly there "from beginning to end, in order to assume the role that consists of transgressing the taboos," and they represent what Caillois calls "the sacredness of transgression." Cazeneuve also indicates that they are feared "because they violate taboos and thereby acquire magical power." Through his study of the Koyemshi, and his considerations on the "sacred," Cazeneuve has contributed to the elucidation of the problem posed by the clowns and more generally that of the violation of taboo.[24]

Our characterisation of the clown as the ritual prototype of the magical breaker of prohibitions brings out the role which the Koyemshi share in common with other clowns, the "medicine-clowns," if such a term may be used. The former evoke incest, the latter the gift and use of the "medicine"—two manifestations of fundamentally the same violation of taboo, since in both cases the taboo transgressed is the blood taboo. We have seen that the clown's medicine is in actual fact, or symbolically, a blood medicine, involving in its acquisition and handling a violation of the blood taboo. And we also know that incest represents contact with consanguineous blood, the most dangerous blood of all, since it is accredited with the power of causing the blood of other members of the group to flow, investing the

[23] Id. pp. 168 sq., 134, 138, 240, 212, 242, 243.

[24] Id. pp. 245, 247. On the Koyemshi, see id. p. 244, and on the "sacred", p. 234. With regard to the relationship shown by Caillois between guilt and the heroes violating taboos, Cazeneuve points out that "instead of representing the tendency to commit a certain given form of incest, the Koyemshi could represent the need to sanctify the transgression of taboo, in general, by projecting it on the mythical canvas. The divine figure, being sacred, is above rules. There is therefore no contradiction between the sacred character of the Koyemshi and their opposition to the common rule. On the contrary, they represent a symbolisation of the synthesis between what pertains to human existence and what lies beyond it. They are guilty in order to sanctify guilt." (p. 244).

recipient with the most efficacious magical power.[25] Incest, which is dramatically symbolised in the persons of the Koyemshi, invests them as a consequence with a potency of the same nature as that attributed to other clowns by virtue of the medicine which they carry.

Other anthropologists have also noted that clowns break taboos, though less clearly perhaps than Cazeneuve. As regards the Newekwe, Parsons, for example, writes that they commit all the breaches of taboo on the plaza. "A Newekwe is regardless of all rules."[26] But if no one contests the fact that clowns violate rules and prohibitions, it is not yet clearly understood that it is only to the violation of taboo that they owe their existence as ritual figures—the violation of taboo is their *raison d'être*—just as the *trickster* has no other reason to exist in myth. Both, but at different levels, are called upon to express a general, basic, contradictory human experience that gives rise to dramatic situations, and has played a determining role in the evolution of mythologies and religions, with repercussions on our minds that are far from dying out.

As we shall see subsequently, the mechanism of certain symbolical modes of behaviour accompanying the violation of taboo has endowed the *trickster* with features of burlesque and assigned to the clown the task of merry-making. To limit our grasp of the phenomenon to such secondary manifestations as the functionalists would have it, and stop short of an analysis embracing it in its totality, would be tantamount to abandoning all attempt at reaching a fuller understanding of the nature of these two figures and completely missing the significance of their role.

[25] On incest and the incest taboo, see R. and L. Makarius, 1961, p. 58 sq. On the magical violation of the incest taboo, see L. Makarius, 1969 A, pp. 22-24.

[26] Parsons, 1917, p. 230. With regard to the Navaho clowns called "Black Dancers," Reichard says that they represent an example of reversal, they perform daring, shocking stunts, apparently scoffing at the most sacred decrees and breaking all rules (Reichard, 1950, I, p. 165, and II, p. 525). Traditional accounts underline in their way the violatory character of the clown. From his very birth, Koshari, the original Acoma clown, displayed the qualities of self-confidence, initiative and conceit attributed to violators of taboo. His mother, the goddess Iatku, said to him: "You shall be afraid of nothing, and you shall regard nothing as sacred. No place shall be forbidden to you." Following his example, clowns that have been initiated are allowed to penetrate into the most sacred places. (Stirling, pp. 33, 37, 65).

MAGICAL POWER AND AMBIVALENCE

It might be objected that in view of their meagre role in ritual, the importance here attributed to clowns is exaggerated. And, as a matter of fact, with the exception of the Koyemshi, who play the major role in the Shalako ceremony, their performance is marginal and, moreover, has all the appearances of being fortuitous, improvised, casual. Yet this effacement of their role is not accidental.

Torn by internal contradictions and the ambivalent character which marks it, the violation of taboo, when sensed, wavers on the threshold of consciousness. Most perilous of all acts, its mere evocation is deranging, and therefore deserving to be suppressed. The tendency is to minimise its effect, so that to focus public attention on it seems uncalled for. Above all, as it should be realised, even through undertaken in the interest of the group, the violation of taboo is an individual act, singular and exceptional. The stability of the social order, resting as it does on the observance of taboos, would be jeopardized should the act of transgression be committed by the group as a whole, or with their approval. It is furthermore obvious that if taboos were violated by the group as a whole, the magical power thus obtained by their negation would itself be negated.[27] Hence it is necessary that the breaker of taboo should be viewed as acting alone, even if for the benefit of all. It is necessary that he should be conceived as "the other," in opposition to the group, even though he acts on their behalf. That is why when participating in ritual, the clown appears as an individualist—independent, asocial, non-integrated. In the Navaho "Night Dance," Tonelili dances out of step, as though he were alone, disturbing everybody else.[28] In the "War Ceremony," the chief of the "Black Dancers" acts independently of the singer leading the ceremony.[29] The

[27] On this aspect of the violation of taboo, see L. Makarius, 1969 A, pp. 25-26, 34, 41.

[28] Matthews, pp. 150-151; Reichard, II, p. 492. Cazeneuve has noted the individualistic comportment of Tonelili in another dance, that of Yebitchai. The Herskovits call Legba, the Dahomean *trickster*, "that arch-individualist" (p. 36).

[29] Hailé, p. 34.

mythical Acoma Koshari sings more loudly than the others, and is ahead of them by one or two verses.[30] The Lenape clown dances by himself, edging away from the public and the other dancers.[31] Among the Dakota Heyoka, every clown possessed his special song, but all sang together in the greatest riot of voices. "No other cult," says Wissler, "has such a practice."[32] As their role is not integrated in the ritual, their dances and pantomimes tend to occupy a peripheral position, appear as accessory, episodic, and their importance is lessened.

Nevertheless, in spite of their marginal position in ritual, clowns are regarded as the masters of magical power. Their supremacy is acknowledged—grudgingly, one should say—but as an unquestionable fact. We saw that, although the Apache clown passes for an apprentice, an elderly informer affirms that he has "more power than any other masked dancer." The Pehei'pe Maidu is the chief and central figure in the "Medicine Dance," in which the greatest magicians take part. That is why "he is much respected by all persons."[33] Of the Acoma Koshari, it is stated that "all religious secrets are theoretically divulged to them."[34] The Zuni Newekwe are believed to be the most powerful in the practice of black magic; their chief figures as a great sorcerer..."[35] The Koyemshi are among "the most important masked gods."[36] Among the Dakota, the clown is "looked upon as the most powerful medicine-man."[37]

The magical power held by the clown is precisely that which

[30] Stirling, p. 34.

[31] Harrington, p. 154.

[32] Wissler, pp. 83-84. The asocial behaviour of the clown is sometimes assimilated to mental disequilibrium. When Iatku sent away her son, Koshari, the mythical clown. she said to him: "You are not acting normally enough to be with the people" (Stirling, p. 37). Bamapama, the Australian clown, is "a symbol of asocial behaviour, since he not only breaks the law of exogamy, but acts 'like a crazy fellow'". The word "crazy" for the natives refers to a person mentally deranged, just as it does to a young man who will not be disciplined. Although they distinguish between the two, they use the same term to refer to both (Warner, pp. 554-56).

[33] Dixon, p. 315.

[34] Stirling, p. vii.

[35] Cazeneuve, pp. 112-113.

[36] Id., p. 75.

[37] Wallis, 1915-1921, p. 325.

is acquired by virtue of a violation of taboo, and it manifests itself in the traditional forms it assumes: ability to heal the sick, to grant success in hunting and in war, luck in gambling and in love, happiness and prosperity.

We saw that nearly all clowns are healers. They also ensure success in war, like the Acoma clowns,[38] or in hunting, as among the Apache[39] and Arapaho. The latter possess the power to paralyse animals by sweeping their capes over the tracks left on the ground.[40] The Newekwe have the reputation of being past masters in love magic.[41] In other cases, emphasis is placed on chance, as among the Cheyenne and the Lenape. Elsewhere, clowns bring good luck in gambling by means of their rituals.[42]

This power has an ambivalent character. Danger moreover is always inherent to it, even when it manifests itself beneficiently. We saw how it was dangerous to touch the masked Apache dancers, although they possessed the faculty of healing the sick and warding off disease. Other clowns inspire both hilarity and fear at the same time. If they approach too close, "the smiles of the women and children quickly change to expressions of surprise, tempered with fear."[43] The Assineboine clowns provoke the laughter of their audience, but also frighten them. This intermingling of hilarity and fear is, ethnologically speaking, a stereotype sufficient to betray the presence of a clown.[44]

The ambivalent behaviour of the public reflects the ambivalent

[38] White, 1929-1930, p. 97.

[39] Opler, p. 110, n. 8.

[40] Kroeber, p. 191. The chief role of Missing, the Delaware clown, is to bring success in hunting; he is given tobacco for his help (Harrington, pp. 150, 157). The Assineboine clowns perform a hunting pantomime (Lowie, pp. 64-65). The Dakota Heyoka dance in order to facilitate hunting and ensure success, especially when game is scarce on account of some violation of taboo (Wallis, 1947-1949, p. 115 sq.). The Sioux Heyoka generally help their friends in hunting (Dorsey, 1889-90, pp. 468-469). During the "Fools' Dance," also called the "Animal Dance," the Cheyenne clowns, members of the "Society of Contraries," represent the hunters, each of them carrying four arrows and pretending they are killing game (Grinnell, p. 205).

[41] Cazeneuve, p. 113.

[42] On the relation between *trickster* and gambling, see Sabbatucci.

[43] Reichard, 1950, I, p. 184.

[44] Seligman, for example, mentions the intermingling of fear and laughter of the Shilluk, running away from the figures of Nyikang and Dak (p. 26).

character attributed to the clown, who may indifferently cure disease or inflict it, and who seems equally capable of causing suffering and giving health and happiness.

This amalgamation of power to do good with power to do evil in the person of the clown, with the result that people turn to him for his capacity of healing, purifying, bringing happiness and luck, and at the same time recoil from him as from an unclean being, to whom every kind of impurity is assimilated and whose contact is defiling and baneful—the kernel of that apparently unfathomable mystery of what is termed the "sacred"—is elucidated when brought into relation with the belief that blood, being dangerous, may be turned against noxious objects, and that the overdetermination of its now beneficient use, though negative in character, endows it with the quality of bringing about positive results. The power held by the clown is the power of blood, capable of warding off evil of every kind—or of exorcising the evil effects of menstruation and scalps,[45] for instance, or of keeping sickness away—and, through its overdetermination, of producing positive results, such as bringing luck in gambling or hunting, prosperity and happiness in love. The beneficient actions of the breaker of taboo do not efface his dangerous character, for the power of blood resides precisely in the danger it represents. The ambivalence and danger investing

[45] Clowns are sometimes associated with the preparation of scalps and accompanying rites. Among the Acoma, the Koshare wear scalps balanced on cedar branches, and lead the dance performed on such occasions. In the original myth, they are for four days the absolute masters of the feast, higher in rank than all the medicine-men and other ceremonial personages. Under penalty of being always haunted by scalps, no one may smoke a cigarette unless made by the Koshare (Stirling, pp. 85-88. See also Parsons and Beals, pp. 497-498). Among the Zuni Laguna, the Koshare had to turn away all the evil and all the fears that might have been introduced into the pueblo by the scalps (Parsons, 1926, 123-124).

Why are clowns "qualified to banish evil," as Parsons says? The answer is that the evil concerned consists of the blood danger which invests them, after a violation of taboo they have committed, and which gives them the power to ward off malignant influences. This is the first form of power which blood assumes. But clowns are in a contradictory situation. If they appear as the most qualified to deal with scalps (evoking the griot who carries in both hands two human heads that have been cut off, or who is entrusted with the transport of corpses or meat, oozing with blood (See L. M., 1969 C)—they also by their sheer presence represent the danger of blood, and may therefore be regarded as the least adapted to keep danger away.

individuals deemed "sacred" are thus fully explained.[46]

In the case of the Koyemshi, it seems that the ambivalence that invests them lies beyond the "fear-love" and "beneficient-maleficient beings" antitheses. These pathetic mask-bearers seem to evoke all possible kinds of opposition. "Just as in the romantic theory of the *mélange des genres* in literature," says Cazeneuve, "the Koyemshi represent both gravity and hilarity, the beautiful and the ugly, the sacred and the profane, respect and disrespect, licence and morality."[47] The fact is that the violation of taboo which they symbolise, namely incest, is that which persistently haunts the mind of tribal people, giving rise to frantic imaginary elaborations. Awantachu and his nine sons express the ambivalence of the mythical couple of brother and sister, of whom it is said that "thus it was with them ever after in those days. They talked loudly to each other; they laughed or they cried. Now they were like silly children, playing on the ground; anon they were wise as the priests and high beings, and harangued as parents to children and leaders to people."[48]

EXPRESSIONS OF "NON-VIOLENCE"

It is also with regard to the Koyemshi that the custom of making ritual gifts is displayed with greatest munificence. This custom, we see, is a manifestation of that behaviour of "intangibility" and "non-violence" which is a characteristic trait of the blood taboo.[49]

The meaning of these symbolical modes of behaviour[50] is as follows. Those beings who are placed under the blood taboo—

[46] See L. M., 1969 A, and more particularly p. 19 n. 2 as regards the dangerous nature of blood.

[47] Cazeneuve, 1957, p. 243.

[48] Cushing, pp. 400-401.

[49] A general account of the various interdictions of "non-violence" and of "ritual plunder"— the identification of "non-violence" and its relation with the blood taboo rendering it possible to account for "ritual plunder"—was given by the author in 1968 (*Diogenes*, No. 62, pp. 37-42). The significance of "ritual plunder," however, was already briefly indicated in 1956 (R. and L. Makarius, "Essai sur l'origine de l'exogamie et de la peur de l'inceste," *Année Sociologique*, 1955-1957, repeated in 1961). See also L. M., 1969 B, pp. 375-376 and 1969 C, pp. 630-636.

[50] Strictly speaking, only "ritual plunder" in this medley of conducts may really be said to be symbolical. Customs of "non-violence" are based on the fear of blood, and are therefore genuinely motivated, although the fear is

whether because they are subject to bleeding, or because they have come into contact with blood, or because they have broken the taboo—by their mere presence create a situation in which any act of violence is considered dangerous because it is liable to lead to the shedding or loss of blood. That is why ethnological records refer to the prohibition on fighting, on bearing arms, on chasing men and beasts, on beating them etc., in the presence of certain individuals, in certain places, and in given circumstances, blood danger in such cases being ascertainable on analysis.

Those who may not use violence may not defend their possessions, either. Denied the faculty of defending themselves, they are exposed to be plundered and spoliated, leading up to the institution of the custom of "ritual plunder." This situation is characterised by its reciprocity, so that the opposite possibility arises of their seizing the possessions of others with impunity, owing to the denegation of violence. In certain cases, "ritual plunder" takes the form of presents made to the person embodying danger. This is illustrated in those cases where gifts are demanded, as by the griots of Western Africa, or where they are extorted from the father of twins, as in the South-West of the continent.[51]

According to Cazeneuve, whoever touches the Koyemshi "when they are wearing their masks, exposes himself to attacks of hysteria ...Nothing should be refused them, if terrible consequences are to be avoided..." Thus, the Zuni are always ready to show their good intentions with regard to the Koyemshi. These good intentions manifest themselves in the presents that are made with characteristic prodigality to the ritual clowns by their clansmen. Cazeneuve describes the processions loaded with gifts destined to each one of them, the lorries discharging masses of merchandise, mountains of presents, on the plaza, displaying scarves, cloths, dozens of shirts with banknotes pinned on them,

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magnified, and in practice the custom comes to have the function of making explicit a situation of "non-violence". "Ritual plunder", on the other hand, has no other purpose whatever but to make this situation more explicit. In general, customs corresponding to a primitive system of ideas tend to become symbolical as they lose contact with the real—"rational", one might say—motives which dictated them. For the sake of clarity, however, we prefer to maintain the distinction between customs that correspond, or corresponded to a practical need, and those which subsist for no other reason but to render a given situation explicit, as for instance, "reverse behaviour" (see below).

[51] L. M., 1969 C, pp. 634-636; 1969 B, p. 376, quoting Dannert.

while sacks of flour, bread and quarters of meat are piled up on the ground.[52]

The offerings made in such profusion, and the remark that "the Koyemshi must be refused nothing," are to be associated with the "ritual plunder" practised by other clowns. The Miwok clowns, for instance, may enter private homes to steal food.[53] The young Iroquois, wearing the "False Faces" masks, used to go from house to house, demanding presents, and, if dissatisfied with what they received, stealing[54] and practising a kind of ritual robbery. Sometimes the order was reserved. It was the custom to "take things" from the Windikogan, the cannibal clowns of the Plains Ojibway, who dared offer no resistance.[55]

The Koshare, or Sia clowns, act as disciplinarians. "They can make people do anything. You can't disobey them." They may strip people in public and punish them for not doing their duty. They thus have the function of enforcing discipline, and become the keepers of law and order.[56] It is a paradox typical of a mode of thought enmeshed in the contradictions it has created that it should raise those very people, who have acquired their powers by breaking every rule and norm of conduct, to the status of guardians of tradition and the social order. These contradictions developed in the following way: the Koshare are breakers of taboo and as such are dangerous people. They may not be resisted or opposed under penalty of seeing one's own blood shed. In other words, violence may not be exercised against them, or in their presence. They thus find themselves in a privileged position that enables them to bend others to their will, and this power, in certain societies, is used to enforce the observance of prevailing customs and prevailing taboos.

For the same reason, namely non-violence, Missing, the Delaware clown,[57] and the Dakota Heyoka[58] are regarded as peacemakers. The Australian clown prevents people from fighting.[59]

[52] Cazeneuve, pp. 171, 198 sq.
[53] Gifford, 1955, p. 270.
[54] Morgan, I, pp. 204-205.
[55] Skinner, 1912-1916, p. 502.
[56] White, 1962, p. 166.
[57] Harrington, p. 165.
[58] Wissler, p. 84.
[59] Warner, p. 322.

Other traits characterise the behaviour of ritual clowns, namely "reverse behaviour." Its commonest form is that known as "backward speech," when a clown will say the opposite of what he means. From his birth, the mythical Koshari "talked nonsense, talked backward..."[60] The Newekwe say the opposite of what they mean.[61] During the bloody "Fool's Dance," the Assineboine clowns are supposed to use backward speech, that is to say exactly the reverse of whatever meaning they wish to convey, whether speaking among themselves, or to their spectators. Thus if a man is thirsty, he must say: "I am not thirsty. I don't wish to drink", if he wishes to be given to drink.[62] The Ojibway Windikogan observed the same custom—to use backward speech always.[63]

Sometimes backward speech has to be used when addressing the clowns themselves, for they will then do exactly the contrary of what they are told. In the Arapaho "Fool's Lodge", "when their elder brothers summon them to a fest, they say: 'Do not come'. If they should say: 'Come,' the dancers would not come."[64] During the Californian Miwok clowns' dance, the spectators shout at them the direction in which they are to turn, and the latter always turn the opposite way.[25]

What does the backward speech of clowns and the fact that they affect to understand only the contrary of what they hear mean? Simply that backward speech is the concomitant of a breach of taboo, because the latter likewise represents the reverse of normal, accepted behaviour. Backward speech is meant to render this inversion manifest, and to underline it symbolically. In the light of the interpretation of the character of both clown

[60] Stirling, p. 33.

[61] Parsons, 1917, pp. 229-230, writes that the first Newekwe talked all the time. "What he said was all the same to him; he did not care about the effect."

[62] Lowie, 1909-1910, p. 5.

[63] Skinner, p. 501.

[64] Kroeber, p. 192.

[65] Gifford, 1955, p. 290.

and *trickster* as representing the prototype of the magical violator of taboo, a problem whose solution has not even been attempted thus finds its answer.

The thesis that backward speech and reverse behaviour have the function of accompanying and rendering more explicit the violation of taboo rests on firmly established ethnological evidence. The myths of *trickster* twins, current among the North American Indians, afford other examples of backward speech and reverse behaviour associated with the feats performed by the breakers of taboo. The Winnebago tale of the twins, Flesh and Stump, is a case in point. After being forbidden by their father to visit a certain hill, Stump the rebellious twinbrother (who is also the carrier of greater *impurity*)[66] exclaims: "I say, Flesh, our father told us to go to a certain place where there was a hill!" "No! He told us not to go there," answered Flesh. "No, that is not so; he told us to go. Come, let us go!". Stump thus succeeds in dragging his brother after him.

The same flagrant denial of facts is repeated every time the twins embark on an undertaking involving a violation of prohibitions, a profanation of things sacred. It is also repeated when the prohibition is not imposed by their father, but by Earthmaker. When he forbids them to go back to see the supernatural being called Erecgunina, Stump reacts immediately saying to his brother: "Did not Earthmaker say that we should go and see Erecgunina?"[67] This inversed interpretation of the command appears as the trait underlining systematic disobedience by those whose vocation it is to break taboos and do the opposite of what ought to be done.

Again, it is from this commitment to the notion of inversion that all those modes of behaviour which seem contrary to common sense, or to nature, take their departure. The Heyoka, for instance, pretend to feel cold in summer and warm in winter.[68] "In the winter, they stand in the open air without clothing; in

[66] On *impure* birth and the predestination it carries, see L. M., 1969 A, pp. 26-27; 1969 B, p. 386 sq.; R. and L. Makarius, 1968 A, pp. 224-225.

[67] Radin, p. 137 sq.

[68] Wallis, 1947-1949, p. 112.

the summer, they sit on knolls, wrapped in buffalo-robes, and yet they are freezing."[69] The Arapaho clown carrying a heavy load pretends not to notice it, but groans under the weight of a light object.[70] In these mimics, the ritual buffoons of tribal society merge with our circus clowns. The Lenape clowns, for example, express their thanks to those who offer them some tobacco, by a kick.[71]

THE FIRE FOOLS

Other types of reverse behaviour are manifested in the handling of live cinders and the picking of meat from a kettle full of boiling water. The clowns plunge their hands into the water, or handle the burning embers, apparently without pain.

The first thing which Iatku taught his son, Koshari, the original clown of the Acoma myth, was "to hop on burning cinders, to throw them on his body and breast..." Koshari sprinkles cinders on the people.[72]

The Arapaho members of the "Fools' Lodge" perform the Fire dance, running through the flames over firebrands until they extinguish them. The night following the dance, they are supposed to be mad, enjoy every licence and indulge in reverse behaviour whenever they can.[73] When the Iroquois "False Faces" enter a house to attend to the sick, they make straight for the fireplace, turn over the smouldering cinders and spray their patients with the hot ashes.[74] The Cayuga clowns plunge their fingers into the fire, rub the sick with the burning cinders, and declare that their masks give them the capacity to act in thath way without feeling pain.[75]

In a Miwok tale, a pubescent girl, guilty of breaking some

[69] Dorsey, 1889-1890, p. 468.
[70] Kroeber, p. 192.
[71] Harrington, p. 156.
[72] Stirling, pp. 34-35.
[73] Kroeber, pp. 190-193.
[74] Morgan, I, p. 159; also De Cost Smith, 1888, p. 192, and 1889, p. 280.
[75] Speck, pp. 87-93.

obscure food interdict, is turned into a crazy "fire-eater", playing with the fire and the burning coals all the time.[76] The tale seems to point to a definite relation between the handling of fire and firebrands, and the infringement of a taboo, superadded to the more general notion that any act in contravention with the natural order of things is particular to breakers of taboo, just as it contributes to render their real nature more manifest.

Among the Dakota Oglala, an individual who reports seeing a vision must give a ceremonial feast. He pitches a small tent in the centre of the camp. The older and more deteriorated it is the better. The women kill dogs and cook them with the help of the Heyoka *wozepi*.[77] This is a source of amusement because it is contrary to custom that men should aid women in their work. The clowns perform all sorts of antics and comical acts, doing the opposite of what ought to be done. The man giving the feast must play the fool as best as he may, while the others play tricks on him, doing their utmost to make him appear ridiculous. When the dogs have been cooked, he must plunge his hands into the boiling kettles and draw out the meat to be distributed to those present. It may happen that he should be ordered to do "distasteful and dreadful things," such as killing "a man, woman or child," and the people around would egg him on; "until he does, he is upbraided for not doing what he was advised to do."[78] This last sentence, loaded with sinister allusion, to the breach of taboos becomes clear in the context here given.

The giver of the feast will henceforth be associated, like other Dakota clowns, with the god Heyoka, whose nature "is not simply super-natural: it is the opposite of nature." He is "the anti-natural God."[79]

During the Heyoka Oglala celebrations, the dog-meat is consumed; but the dog is generally regarded as an unclean animal, and the consumption of its flesh is an abomination, deliber-

[76] De Angulo and Freeland, pp. 232-252.

[77] The clowns are called *wozepi* Heyoka after the name of the god Heyoka (Iktomi) and the word *woze*, meaning "to dip out," with reference to the act of dipping one's hands inside the kettle.

[78] Wissler, pp. 84-85.

[79] Wallis, 1915-1921, pp. 112, 146-147.

ately committed, akin to a breach of taboo.[80] The kettle rite, where the meat consumed is dog-meat, consists itself in a breach of taboo, in addition to its representing an example of reverse behaviour—behaviour contrary to nature.

Backward speech and reverse behaviour, the handling of meat in boiling water, the handling of ashes and the consumption of dog-meat are not the monopoly of clowns. Among the North American Indians, the same kind of behaviour is witnessed in the ritual societies whose members are not always buffoons. However, on examination, these ceremonies, or the habits of the members participating in them, show that they turn on an act of transgression. Such is the case among the Cheyenne "Contrary Warriors,"[81] or the Hidatsa "Real Dogs,"[82] or the Blackfoot "Mosquitoes."[83] Thus the evidence shows that backward speech, far from consisting, as Lowie assumed, although he never grasped it meaning, of "a very loose feature readily entering various combinations,"[84] is associated with the violation of taboo in order to underline it, bring it out clearly and mark its author as a "contrary" person, exceptional and opposed to the other members of society. This association, far from being anything like a chance combination of elements, is governed by its own particular necessity and by no other.

THE PROTOTYPE OF THE BREAKER OF TABOO

If the themes stemming from the violation of taboo are current in American ritual life, and certain typical features of the clown are also to be met with among other violators of taboo, or in

[80] Eating a dog, in a context of taboo violation, is also reported of African customs. A dog-feast was filmed by Jean Rouch on the occasion of the annual ceremony of the Hauka in Ghana, where dogs are "a total food taboo" (*Les Maîtres-Fous*, Films de la Pléiade, 1953).

[81] Dorsey, 1905, pp. 24-26.

[82] Lowie, 1912-1916, pp. 284-290.

[83] Wissler, 1912-1916, p. 377. The members of this association use an eagle's claw to scratch all those they meet, shouting: "Now, I shall take blood from you." Their rule is to do the opposite of their victim's appeals. Here we have an example of reverse behaviour associated directly with contact with blood.

[84] Lowie, 1912-1916, p. 937.

certain circumstances where clowns are absent, nevertheless, ritual clowns do exhibit a number of traits which are clearly characteristic of them.

Excentricity in dress and demeanour; systematic trampling over rules and norms; full licence to ignore prohibitions and break them; ambivalence; magical power; ominousness; "non-violence" prohibitions and prerogatives; "backward speech" and reverse behaviour; individualism, asocial characteristics, insolence, buffoonery, phallicism, vulgarity, a sort of madness—all these traits common to both clown and *trickster* mark off the former clearly from ordinary mortals, who, although they may ritually break taboos, do not come to personify the prototype of the violator of taboo. It is not a matter of chance, moreover, if etymologically the clown is identified with the "clot-boy" of American folklore,[85] the boy born of a clot of blood, and therefore fatally involved in the violation of taboo by the condition of his birth. At some period of history, the clown has been conceived as having had the same kind of birth as the *trickster* and therefore as predestined to follow the same career.

The collective experience of society which the clown is called upon to revive expresses itself in ritual, but covertly, by half-suppressed, concealed acts, promptly channelled into boisterous mummery. The relation between clowns and medicine has here been elucidated only after a comparative study of the magical medicines used by magicians and hunters, given by the *trickster* and constituting the attribute of chiefs and kings. But the blood character of this medicine is made apparent only in the case of the Navaho Natani and "Black Dancers," who utilise menstrual blood to heal the sick. In other cases, the clown is associated not with menstrual blood, but with substances symbolising blood, such as snot, saliva or mud; or related to menstrual blood, like urine or the pubic hair of women; or symbolising matter associated with menstrual blood, such as dirty water or dilute coffee. Some of the factors that tend to curtail the role of the major ritual, which it is the function of clowns to render manifest, have already been mentioned. Of these, the asocial character of the violation of taboo, evidenced in the fact

[85] Disher, p. 27. "Clown" originally meant "clod," "clot," "lump."

that clowns are not fully integrated in the stage performances, is not the least important.

The most potent inner factor, though the best concealed, among those that conspire to mask the role of the clown, is the dim, yet well-rooted notion, shared by the clown himself, that the injustices committed against the violator of taboo are just and necessary. As Caillois rightly notes, the hero takes upon himself the guilt of others, even as he acts in the interests of all.[86] He must expiate, and this necessity is all the more imperative in the case of a symbolical figure called upon to exhibit all the aspects of a given situation and serve as an example to others.

The ritual drama, however, as it unfolds in American societies, does not enact the real punishment that is meted out to the guilty party. The clown is not flogged, expelled or put to death.[87] Perhaps the transgression is too familiar to be viewed detachedly in its satanic aspects; or perhaps it is too eagerly desired in order to satisfy a real and urgent need of the group.[88] Perhaps, also, the execution of the culprit would in itself prove magically dangerous.

But even if punishment is not inflicted on the clown, he appears, in the context of primitive life, as an expiatory figure. We know that in tribal society ridicule is deadly, and the clown is the target of every ridicule, of every mockery. His obscenity,

[86] Caillois, 1938, pp. 16-36. On the expiatory nature of the trickster, see L. M., 1969 A, p. 41.

[87] Ruth Bunzel, however, has proposed a theory concerning the sacrifice of the Katchina, and, according to Cazeneuve, the Acoma pueblo not so very long ago used to simulate the putting to death of the Katchina, whose blood was supposed to fertilise the soil. (See Cazeneuve, 1957, pp. 237-238).

[88] Cazeneuve often refers to the Zuni's expressions of gratitude to the Koyemshi, and, in this connection, the feelings of gratitude of the Indians towards their *tricksters* may be mentioned. On the other hand, ethnological records sometimes report the injustice which both *tricksters* and clowns suffer. Thus, in the Acoma myth, Iatku, while recognising that her son "has done his work faithfully," sends him away for no good reason (Stirling, p. 37). Among the Sia, Poshayanne lights cigarettes for others, but no one thanks him (Stevenson, 1889-1890, p. 59). Iktomi says that he himself did many good deeds and ought to be venerated like a god, but that he is turned into derision, owing to his strange appearance. When he performs good deeds, everybody mocks him, as though he were fooling (Walker, p. 166). Legba does good deeds, but is not thanked. All the merit goes to his mother (Herskovits, p. 45). All these statements show that it is intrinsically impossible to acknowledge the beneficient but asocial acts of the *trickster* and his earthly counterpart, the clown.

made public, and the state of abjection in which he sinks are themselves so many punishments. The aberration he incarnates is incompatible with the right to live in the group. The resulting image suffices to show that society turns its full weight against him who defies it, forcing him into impossible survival. The real executioner of the clown is his own impersonator, the involuntary accomplice of the social order, punishing the clown's figure all the better as he succeeds in bringing out its real nature. The zeal which the clown puts in stressing his singularity, in distinguishing himself by his accoutrement and conduct from "normal" men, enables the latter to mark themselves off from him and shift their common guilt on to his person.

The dialectic that penetrates into the very cleavage between the actor and his role should not surprise us; for the violation of taboo is situated at the focus where inner contradictions meet, since it expresses in the elementary terms of tribal life the fundamental contradiction of human existence, namely the contradiction between the individual and society.

The entanglement of all these irreconcilable elements invests the ritual drama with a force of impact out of proportion with its poverty of content. On the other hand, under their action it tends to shrink more and more.

THE SYMBOLICAL ELABORATION

When compared with other violators of taboo, the clown stands out in all his singularity. Clowns are not given by nature, like twins; they are not supported by their contribution to the material conditions of society, like the blacksmiths, nor by the importance of the duties they perform, like the so-called "divine" kings. Like the *trickster*, they belong to a fictitious world, but unlike him they have to introduce into the midst of the tribal group the material reality of an act which society rejects, and which the consciousness of its members tends to suppress. They therefore fall foul both of the derelictions of imagination and the constraints of reality. They survive only by force of tradition.

Indeed, to those factors, which added to the effects of oblivion

and the passage of time, conspire to efface all testimony of past experiences, there is opposed a force which—for want of a better term—we shall call that of tradition. This tradition, which embodies a knowledge that has slipped away from the memory of the individual, tends to revive dying customs, keep them ever present, and, by some conventional sign, make them comprehensible.

This is achieved symbolically. Modes of expression appear that are not in themselves explicit, but allow meanings to transpire. If the relation between clowns and medicine is not evoked, nevertheless, a way will be found to give it expression. Clowns, it will be said for example, as in the case of the Acoma, have free access to the medicine and may administer it to the sick *through their own mouths.* If the medicine is not generally that used by the Navaho Natani, the foul nature of the substances handled by the clowns will indicate what they are intended to replace. If the magical violation of taboo which the clowns are supposed to evoke is suppressed, they will commit multiple acts of transgression (as if to make up for the omission) by eating forbidden foods or mimicking the gods. Above all, they will resort to a symbolical mode of behaviour to render manifest that which it is their task to communicate, but which they lack the means or the knowledge to express directly.

"Backward speech" and the various "anti-natural" modes of behaviour have first claim to our attention. These modes of behaviour which correspond to no practical or emotional need are *invented* for the purpose of rendering manifest something liable to escape consciousness, or which has perhaps slipped away from the memory of those peoples.

In the same way, "ritual plunder" does not tend (initially, at least) to the appropriation of the property of others, but to render manifest and indicate to all the situation created by the condition of non-violence. It is noteworthy that "non-violence" and its corollary, ritual plunder, are observed in many cases where the blood taboo is violated, or more generally where a blood danger is believed to be imminent. It is only for this reason that they are associated with the clown.

Reverse behaviour, on the other hand, manifests itself in order to accompany and render explicit the violation of taboo. It is

at the origin of what Michelet defined as "the great satanical principle that everything must be done in reverse order."[89] This function, of rendering things explicit, is obviously all the more justified when the violation of taboo is evoked for "memory", rather than for achieving a practical purpose. In this case, everything, it seems, is called into play in order to give full significance to the evocation.

It is for this reason that reverse behaviour surrounds ritual clowns from all sides. These symbolical figures owe their existence solely to the need of evoking something which at the same time must be suppressed. It is, in fact, from the clash of two opposite tendencies, to suppress a given reality and to render it manifest, that symbolisation as a process emerges and finds expression in multiple ways.

Human modes of behaviour, too often regarded as meaningless, show, when analysed anthropologically with the aim of penetrating their content, that they are supersaturated with meaning. But it yet remains to be seen—and psychologists will tell us perhaps, for the problem would not have left Freud indifferent—whether or not these symbolical modes of behaviour are apt to shed some light of knowledge beyond the limits of tribal society.

[89] J. Michelet, *La sorcière*, p. ix.

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