

"Hieronymus Bosch"

Walter S. Gibson
Praeger Publishers
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The paintings of 15th century Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch can be numbered, along with the Tibetan Book of the Dead and Egyptian ankhs, among the cultural artifacts revived by the counter-culture during the 1960s. The surreal landscapes of such works as his "Garden of Earthly Delights" triptych, populated by suggestive nudes and ferocious demons that seemed to spring forth complete to the last detail from the collective libido, stimulated many a chemically-aided imagination to new heights back then.

Now, approaching the middle of the somewhat more sober 1970s, it may be valuable to retrieve these artifacts occasionally from the miasma of history into which they are already fast returning, pull up an easy chair, sit back, and try to figure out just what really is going on with the things that used to provide such cosmic hits. In the case of Bosch, Walter Gibson's *Hieronymus Bosch* is a good aid in the effort to peel off the old day-glo to lay bare the original, remarkably brilliant colors underneath.

Gibson's book has a number of plusses going for it. One is that his prose never deteriorates to the level of the musty footnotes that often pass for art historical writing, and occasionally rises considerably above it, making the information available in a manner that can please the lay reader as well as the scholar. Another is the price: the book's paperback edition, published by Praeger, goes for a modest \$4.95, not bad for an art book.

The author's thesis is that, far from being drug-induced hallucinations of an esoteric freethinker who was ahead of his time, Bosch's paintings are the expression of the cultural imagination of his milieu, Northern Europe in the late Middle Ages. It was a place and time, Gibson shows, in which most people were unsure of the effect of the decay of traditional values and institutions in progress around them. They might have seen it as the approach of a new day, but they were more prepared to interpret it as the coming of the end, the Last Judgment complete with hellfire and persecuting demons for the majority of the population.

Bosch's genius, according to this theory, lay in giving vivid realization to what was going through everybody's mind. His images were intended as moral allegories, and in paintings like "Death of the Miser" and the "Haywain" and "Garden of Earthly Delights" triptychs the artist used them to try to convince the world's sinners to quit their evil ways. Other works, often concerned with the lives of saints, were meant to induce additional piety in the righteous by way of example. As usual, the images of sin and retribution, which Bosch was a master at portraying, have proven more interesting in the long run than those of salvation.

Hieronymus Bosch provides ample visual illustrations to support the author's thesis: there are numerous black and white reproductions and even some middling-quality color plates of major works and details. Unfortunately, he doesn't give a clue as to the reason for Bosch's recent revival, leaving that to the reader.

Given Gibson's thesis, however, it might be useful to observe, as historian Barbara Tuchman has, parallels between the zeitgeist that produced so many forecasts and vivid descriptions of doom during the late Middle Ages, and the spirit of our own time. This analogy may go at least part way in explaining why the painter's work has become so popular.

And that last thought, after the book's been laid down, makes the old easy chair a little less comfortable than it used to be.

Stephen Bangs

"The Fireside Watergate"

Nicholas von Hoffman and Garry Trudeau
Sheed and Ward
Copyright 1973

With the continuing barrage of information about the Watergate scandals, you may feel like skipping this review. I know that as I sat down to read von Hoffman and Trudeau's book I felt like skipping it. Nevertheless, the book was amusing enough to hold my attention through its 110 pages.

But the sad fact remains that as each new revelation reaches our ears, as the realization that the government is essentially an unenlightened despotism sinks in, and as a sense of bewildered and numbed futility overtakes us, attempts at comic interpretation of the events around us inevitably fall flatter than they by all rights should. The incredible, breathtaking sweep of statements such as Ron Ziegler's "inoperativism" leaves the mind stunned—how can a society carry on with its business when the people are being lied to by the regime and the regime admits it? Comedy which tries to draw its laughs through reduction ad absurdum inevitably fails, overwhelmed by events which are themselves so absurd as to draw

the hysterical laughs accorded to natural catastrophes.

For example, one of the funniest running gags in the book is the hiring of an obscene demonstrator by Nixon to shock the tourists outside the White House into a reactionary sympathy. The President is very concerned about the exact wording on the sign. Well, then we discover that in real life, one of Nixon's German shepherds wrote "great" or "good," or both perhaps) on a memo suggesting that an anti-Nixon demonstration might be violent. It's like trying to satirically forecast television sitcoms: the most implausible show that one is able to dream up invariably appears the following fall. Only in politics, not only does one's mind rot, but one's very existence begins to fray.

But von Hoffman writes pretty well; this book is certainly more successful than Phillip Roth's *Our Gang*, the pre-Watergate vaudevillian roasting of Tricky Dick. Trudeau buffs will of course be pleased by the plentiful cartoons. However, this aspect of the book is not all new; in fact most of this material and decidedly most of the really funny material, is taken from "Doonesbury," and the drawings evidently done especially for this volume are not nearly as droll.

To guard against unintended emphasis of negativism, I will add that there are some very funny parts—images of the boy-wonder trickster Donald Segretti slinking across the nation in a cab, the agony of the campaign donors, James McCord stuck with a phone de-scrambler. Fairly funny is von Hoffman's use of names (check out what a goldmine Egil Drogh is), but, on reflection, humor developed from the ridicule of names is a few steps from a sort of adolescent racism. What finally carries the book is its texture, rich in the multitude of layers of cleverness.

So, as \$4.95 seems like an awfully high price, I suggest borrowing a copy from a friend or waiting till it comes out in paperback. Of course there exists the danger of becoming even more fed up with W++++rg+++e while waiting for a copy, but that's simply a risk the reader will have to take. If Nixon can risk America, the least the reader can do is risk boredom.

David Novick

"The People's Lawyers"

Marlise James
Holt, Rinehart and Winston
New York, Chicago, San Francisco
Copyright 1973

"What the legal profession has always been about is money, influence, power and status." As evidence, Marlise James points out the lopsided nature of legal representation in America. Some 210,000 lawyers serve the upper 25 percent of the nation (measured in terms of income) while a mere 4,000 serve the 16 1/2 percent of the population whose incomes place them below the poverty level. James' book concerns the aspirations and activities of a good number of those four thousand.

The influx of young lawyers into radical law practice slowed considerably with the beginning of this decade. While their entrance into practice swelled the ranks of alternative lawyers, it also added to its diversity. Summarizing the views of those she describes, James notes that "they range from liberal to revolutionary, from ethnic nationalist to total integrationist, from male chauvinist to woman's liberationist." What unites the "Second Nation" lawyers, then, is a refusal to do business-as-usual and an attempt to bring to poor, Black, Chicano, Asian, Native American and Movement groups and individuals the kind of legal representation that used to be the unique province of the rich and the corporate.

To a generation reared on the Perry Mason-Owen Marshall barrister image, this book dispels many illusions. The cloak of the American system of justice, Holy Objectivity, is universally discredited in this *Who's Who of Movement Law*. The names of Kunstler, Nader, Garry and the A.C.L.U. are familiar; those of Cockrel, Acosta, King and SLAM are less so, but the flow of ideas concerning attorney lifestyle, the chances of winning impartial adjudication and the relation of lawyers to those struggling for social change, is constant. In this age of intermittent repression, Nixonian recession and popular depression, many Movement lawyers echo the words of a member of a Gainesville law collective, "We have a lot of dreams...but now we are just trying to stay alive."

Written in a talking history style borrowed with unfortunate ineptitude from Oscar Lewis (*Children of Sanchez*) and Studs Terkel (*Hard Times*), *The People's Lawyers* wallows in utter gracelessness. If the book had been turned in as an eighth grade composition, it would have been returned bloody with corrections. Simply because James is reporting about proletarian law practice, there is no reason why her writing should be so impoverished. The tome's value is further constricted by its topicality, which will outdate the material very rapidly, and by the fact that those without a thorough understanding of recent radical political happenings will find great difficulty in placing the practice of radical law in perspective. Still, if you can withstand the medium, the message is worth encountering.

Ken Doctor

"White Bird Flies to Phoenix: Confessions of a Free Clinic Burn-out"

Ethan Nebelkopf
Illustrated by Peter Craycroft
Jack Rabbit Press
Copyright 1973

If you can get through the jive-ass talk of Ethan Nebelkopf's *White Bird Flies to Phoenix* and understand it, then you've opened up the secret channels to "reality" and stepped in front of Alice's Looking Glass. A paperback book about the White Bird Socio-Medical Aid Station, it mirrors the rise of the free clinic in Eugene, from its obscure birth three years ago to one of the largest social service agencies in Lane County.

The story, if you can kick away the refuse of dialogue, is about "a free clinic burn-out." The so-called "burn-out" image surrounds the life and times of the author in Eugene. However, the book is a collective effort with illustrations by Peter Craycroft and printed by the Jack Rabbit Press, with the goal of producing works of artistic and social significance.

The printing, colorful pages and cartoons signal a true version of a counter culture product, but the writing, "hot off the typewriter" style, reeks of humanitarianism profoundly based in the author's own story. "Confessions of" consists of 10 sections of confessional material interwoven with short essay type stories to accompany the general format.

"Confessions One" sets the stage for our fellow freak author to handle his own reasons and background leading to his bird-like drop into Eugene. "The vibes," he says of Eugene, "reminded me of the blossoming of flower power in Berkeley in the summer of 66..." However poetic, it's questionable as to whether Eugene ever did blossom before the coming of Nebelkopf.

It is hard to grasp the jargon of such sections as the "Friday Nite Bummer Squad," but perhaps that was the author's intent. Yet, with much sorting of the secret language of the Bummer Squad, you finally get the message and step into the world of the White Bird Clinic, what it does and how it does it. Nevertheless, "Confessions Two" straightens out the whole mess of "Friday Nite" and inadvertently lets a bit more history about White Bird escape the clutches of the author.

"Why I like Bananas," the mood James Taylor, and especially "California and the Lemming Instinct" give an enlightening look at society through the eyes of the alienated youth who grew up to become disillusioned adults under the bonds of social bias and hopes for social change.

Perhaps my favorite section includes the formation of the "West Eugene Bozo Association." Nebelkopf explains the mystery of human faults and does it with much compassion by saying, "A bozo is a human being who f--- up because he is a human being." Of all reasons for White Bird Clinic, this is the most useful. We are all bozos and at sometime we all make a mess of our lives and if White Bird can help out, thank god it's there. But Nebelkopf says it better, stating, "We love Bozos" — "We are you are us."

In a final look at *White Bird Flies to Phoenix: Confessions of a Free Clinic Burn-Out*, I must question the author's decision as to whether we should take him seriously in his writing. Regardless of this, *White Bird Flies* is simple, yet complex in its social concepts. It is real, yet sadly unrealistic in its ideals. But most of all, it endears us to such characters as Stone Queen, the Bozo Collective, Pear Queen, Crazy Frank, and Miz Lizzi as it endears us to humanity itself.

Who is White Bird for? The book, whose proceeds go to the Clinic, is for everyone in the Eugene area or out of it, because everyone has a right to medical, social and psychological help whether he or she can afford it or not. It's a right that lives in White Bird, and White Bird must fly, or she will die.

Deb Perumean

"The Knee of Listening"

The Method of the Siddhas
Franklin Jones
Down Horse Press
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"He has simply realized that he himself as he is, like a star, like a dolphin, like an iris, is a perfect and authentic manifestation of the eternal energy of the universe, and thus is no longer disposed to be in conflict with himself. Dangerous wisdom — and yet fire, electricity, and technical knowledge are also dangerous. But if you genuinely know this, it is nothing to be proud of or humble about. It is just what is so..."

"To say what Franklin Jones is trying to say is like drawing an asymptotic curve — a curve which is always getting nearer and nearer to a straight line, but only touches at infinity. Perhaps it could be said that this curve is approaching it a little faster than some others, knowing, however, that there is no hurry. Beyond words, in the silencing of thought, we are already there."

Alan Watts
April, 1973