

swallowed it thoughtlessly and continued drinking. But that moment was not lost on Hidoy, who thanked six gods and pounded his face onto the tatami.

\* \* \*

Some years after this, while he was working his way deeper beneath the giant truck and Ketchy was hot in pursuit, the latter crashed his booted foot down on a neat brown lunch bag and squashed a boiled egg, a curried tomato, a pack of takenoko gohan and a 200-milliliter carton of soybean milk. Hidoy heard his lunch die and screamed oaths not worthy of coherence. He instinctively crouched into combat position, forgetting he was pinned beneath a truck chassis. His head came up hard and caught the plate he himself had meticulously applied not thirty minutes earlier. The plate broke and tumbled off. Hidoy, confused by this noise, fell forward in an attempt to cover up from his unseen attacker, and the exposed nail from the dislodged plate sank into the mushy lump on his back. The sound Hidoy made after that dislodged the remaining plates and he was fired before the last one hit the concrete floor.

--Marco McCormick

## Five of a Kind

The old adage has it that the East approaches experience through intuition and the West through reason. When I first came to Japan it was with the idea of learning something about Oriental intuitiveness and mysticism, convinced that the West had little to offer in these areas. After I had been in Japan awhile, however, I came across an essay entitled "The Difference Between Eastern and Western Thinking" in which the psychologist Carl Jung suggested that rather than attempt to absorb Eastern thinking "whole," Westerners might profitably mine their own spiritual tradition for its intuitive treasures. Does the West have a tradition of intuitive spirituality? Here are five of the books I turned up in Tokyo bookstores looking for an answer to this question.

*An Introduction to the Medieval Mystics of Europe* by Paul E. Szarmach (ed.)  
S.U.N.Y. Press. ¥4780 [dollar price unavailable] (trade paperback)  
376 pages 15 cm x 23 cm  
ISBN 87395-834-9

This collection of scholarly, historical essays begins chronologically with Augustine, and while it covers both well-known

mystics such as St. Bernard and Meister Eckhart and less widely known ones such as Smaragdus, it does not include articles on Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, or any of the other later mystics. It does, however, have some important discussions of women mystics and of Jewish mysticism. T. M. Tomasic's "Neoplatonism and the Mysticism of William of St. Thierry" presents an outline of the metaphysics of Plotinus--undoubtedly one of the most intuitive-minded thinkers in the history of Western philosophy--and (inadvertently perhaps) invites the perceptive reader to draw comparisons with the *Tao Te Ching*. There is also a fascinating article on the mystical crisis in the later years of St. Thomas Aquinas which prompted the now-definitive Roman Catholic theologian to dismiss his massive *Summa Theologiae* with the words, "all that I have written seems to me like straw."

*Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* by Daisetsu T. Suzuki  
Mandala Books #2.25 (¥990) (paperback)  
152 pages 13 cm x 19.5 cm  
ISBN 0-04-149053-3

In this, one of his lesser-known books, Suzuki compares "three great schools of mysticism: Christian, Zen, and Shin" (the latter comprising Pure Land Buddhists who repeat the *namu amida butsu*) and chooses Meister Eckhart as the spokesman for Christian mysticism. The book is not as well-organized as Rudolph Otto's comparative study in *Mysticism East and West* (itself a classic in its field and strongly recommended if you manage to find it) between Eckhart and the Indian meta-physician Sankara, but despite its lack of systematic presentation, Suzuki's book points out more similarities than differences between Eastern and Western spirituality in its net result.

*Understanding Mysticism* by Richard Woods (ed.)  
The Athlone Press #3 (¥4600) (trade paperback)  
586 pages 14 cm x 21.5 cm  
ISBN 0-485-12037-2

A collection of 36 informative articles, mostly by Western scholars, the book looks at mysticism from several different perspectives. Five major selections discuss (1) methods for describing and analyzing mysticism; (2) mysticism in the world religions (including, for example, the Sufis and native American traditions); (3) scientific studies of mystical experience (one of the most useful sections of the book); (4) philosophical and aesthetic evaluations; and (5) theological appraisals.

*The Orthodox Church* by Timothy Ware  
Penguin Books #2.95 (yen price unavailable) (paperback)  
352 pages 11 cm x 18 cm  
ISBN 0-14-02.0592-6

This book provides a standard introduction to the history and doctrine of the Eastern Orthodox Church which, despite its influence on such Russian masters as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, remains little known in the West. What makes the book interesting from the point of view of Western intuitive spirituality is the fact that the Orthodox Church is arguably the most mysticism-oriented of all the branches of Christendom. While rejecting pantheism, it does not hesitate, for example, to speak of the "divinization" of man. It is also less inclined than Roman Catholicism or Protestantism to elevate spirit above matter, and one finds the two united in the Orthodox attitude towards icons, relics, and the role of the body--as well as the mind--in prayer (the body is equally important to Zen meditation). The book includes an account of the Hesychasm movement which arose in medieval Byzantium and spawned both a resurgence of "negative theology" (in which God is described *neti, neti*, in terms of what he is *not*) and the Jesus Prayer, a repetitive form of meditation which compares with Buddhism's *namu amida butsu* (and which, incidentally, figured in J. D. Salinger's *Franny and Zooey*).

*Christian Zen: A Way of Meditation* by William Johnston  
Harper and Row \$6.95 (¥2200) (paperback)  
134 pages 13.5 cm x 20.5 cm  
ISBN 0-06-064198-3

The author is a Roman Catholic priest residing in Japan and an acquaintance of the late Thomas Merton. Besides offering some valuable comparisons between Zen practice and traditional Christian doctrine, Johnston faces the crucial differences head on, namely those between monism and dualism, as well as those between nontheism and theism. The word "God" takes on new and seemingly non-traditional dimensions when looked at from Johnston's illuminating perspective. Johnston suggests that while the outward form of Western religion might remain unchanged, Christianity could benefit from a "blood transfusion" of spirituality from the East. What in traditional theological terminology went by the somewhat cumbersome name "infused contemplation" (imageless meditation as opposed to meditation on some object, such as the crucifix or a passage of scripture) could eventually give way to a form of Christianized zazen.

I bought all of these books at Kinokuniya Bookstore in Shinjuku, with the exception of *The Orthodox Church* which I found at Maruzen Bookstore in Nihonbashi. Kitazawa Bookstore in Jinbocho also has an excellent selection of books on this subject.

--Richard Evanoff

L a p i d a r i a M u s a L a p i d i s

A Reading of *History* by Eric Selland\*

Part 5

Poem 8

It is fall now

(fire  
and what other tools)

exchanged.  
A greeting

circular speech  
moves ahead of the streetlights

"night"  
gets written in  
along with its toys

'It is fall now', a statement about the voice being fully in the world of the past. Significantly, this Dasein immediately follows the destruction's beginning (and is followed by a mention of tools). In a properly Heideggerian spirit, when certain rules for playing the language game broke down, this voice found his being-in-the-world, noticing the fruits of fall (and of the Fall); this reading presupposes taking this poem, as it recommends, as circular speech so that the last line imposes on the first one its tone.

'(fire/ and what other tools)': brackets show that the verb 'exchanged' is more important than what is exchanged. The object in general now gives way to the more dynamic verb, now that even the verb in 'being', its potential dynamism, has become part of the voice's set of arms. 'fire' adds a sense of urgency; so do 'tools'. But with these exchanged comes a routine way of life where tools do function and hide the 'being', the world.

'A greeting/ a circular speech' develops this situation; 'circular' would have only itself as a purpose. Tension rises; the poem oscillates between breakdown and smooth functioning, consciousness and lack of it, the world and the non-world.

\* From Preface (a TELS Publication, Tokyo 1985), consisting of three parts: History, Preface, and The Unwritten Leaf (one possible reading of the title).