

The Kwakiutl Man Eater

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article se propose d'apporter, grâce à l'analyse comparative, certains compléments à l'analyse de Ridington (1976) du cannibalisme des *Beaver*. La comparaison apportée provient du matériel Kwakiutl. L'auteur traite des animaux mangeurs d'hommes, des mythes et des rituels cannibales chez les Kwakiutl. On montre que ce qui stimule culturellement le comportement cannibale chez les *Beaver* et les Kwakiutl et ce qui les aide à éviter la psychose est enraciné dans leur traitement de l'espace social.

Robin Ridington, in his article on Beaver cannibalism "Wechuge and Windigo: A Comparison of Cannibal Belief Among Boreal Forest Athapaskans and Algonkians" (1976) has asked for response from those engaged in comparative fields. I have found the issues he raises have a most interesting bearing on Kwakiutl cannibalism.

The point Ridington makes is that cannibalistic behaviour among the *Beaver* (Dunne-Za) is a sign of cultural and individual strength, and that the labelling of similar behaviour among the Algonkian as psychotic may be an anthropological ethnocentrism due to ignorance of the cultural context in which such behaviour is logical and necessary. In the course of his examination of the *Beaver* cannibal complex Ridington arrives at an explanation in terms of social functioning that is both extraordinarily interesting in itself and important in relation to the question whether such behaviour can be labelled as psychotic. He reasons (if I understand him right) that a *Beaver* Indian becomes cannibalistic (wechuge) as a result of a social projection, but that his behaviour follows an individually necessary logic.

Among the *Beaver*, any one whose 'personal space' has been intruded upon is liable to turn into the cannibal monster. This

individual personal space is symbolised by the medicine bundle and by the taboos surrounding a person, both acquired in the vision quest. The invisible borderline is overstepped by an attack on the medicine bundle or a deliberate violation of the taboos. Anyone so attacked will become wechuge, i.e. cannibalistic. In its extreme form this means beginning to eat oneself by chewing one's lips which turn to ice inside. The affected person does this because the medicine animal who gave him his bundle at his quest, and to whose nature and behaviour his taboos correspond is itself, mythically, a man-hunter and man-eater. We shall examine the nature of these 'giant animals' more closely later; what is important here is that the person whose social space has been violated is forced to become wechuge — the man-eating animal-person — by the logic of his myth.

So far the cultural pattern and belief. Ridington interprets this pattern in the following way. In the behaviour that leads to wechuge the group sees the danger of itself eating itself. It fears (in itself) a desire to trespass on the social space that must surround every adult — in other words a self-destructive desire to 'eat up' the very thing on which its health and viability is based. At least this is how I understand Ridington when he says: "If instead of receiving his [the Visionary's] return as return of benevolent power to the camp the people consume the space inhabited by his medicine power, it will come back to them only as an image of self-opposition... When people within the group for whatever reason refuse to provide the social space within which a person's essence can manifest itself, the group consumes itself and projects this in the person of Wechuge, the role that must be played by the logic of the one whose taboo has been violated" (Ridington 1976: 124). In other words the individual wechuge performance is a therapeutic act that allows the group to see its danger as in a mirror — the trespassing on someone's space coming back as cannibalism; a literal image of self-opposition — and to prevent it from becoming reality.

The interpretation comes from Ridington's knowledge of the culture and naturally cannot be 'proved' in the compass of a short paper. It therefore remains a theory, but a theory strengthened by the fact that though in principle a person who has become wechuge must be killed, in actual fact he is always cured before he has gone too far (i.e. begun to chew his lips and turned to ice inside). In the present state of knowledge and methodology concerning symbolism it is always difficult to prove that one has put one's finger on a fact. This

is why comparative examinations of related belief and behaviour systems are so important as supportive evidence. Ridington's interpretation is particularly interesting in the light of a comparison with Kwakiutl cannibal beliefs and cannibal behaviour. Especially his concept of social space and of a society which insists on the necessity for this social space (negatively expressed in the fear that it wants to consume itself) is relevant to the Kwakiutl material.

Kwakiutl cannibal beliefs and behaviour are associated with notions of 'being oneself' (being *naualak*, that is 'free' or 'unobliged', which means behaving anti-socially in the extreme) (Reid 1976) and simultaneously with notions of a perfect society, totally made up of members which are independent or 'free'. Both cultures, then, connect the cannibal complex with the problem of individual freedom versus social cohesion. But while the problem for the Beaver is to prevent people from consuming their fellow members' space and thus curtailing the expression of individuality on which their society is based, the Kwakiutl problem is making a society open enough to catch even the most wayward members. These are different aims, but they are connected — as will appear in the course of my paper — by the concern with a 'space within which the person's essence can manifest itself'.

The purpose of my comparison is to throw light with the help of the Kwakiutl material on some of the links that remain obscure in Ridington's paper. I shall discuss the man-eating animals among the Kwakiutl, Kwakiutl cannibal myths and Kwakiutl cannibal ritual. The nature of the man-eating animals, for instance, remains obscure in Ridington; and before turning to the Kwakiutl material I should say a few general words about this nature and its connection with cannibalistic behaviour.

Among the Beaver, it would seem people become adult in two steps: through the vision quest in childhood when they acquire an 'animal friend' and through dreaming in adulthood when they translate the power the animal friend has given them into socially useful action. The primary socially useful action in Beaver society is hunting and processing the meat and skins of the animals. Now Ridington tells us that the animal met with in the vision quest is simultaneously a real animal and the giant animal that was banished underground by the culture hero because it hunted and ate men in myth time. But he does not explain how the child (who has heard of

the giant animals in myth telling) reconciles the malevolent aspect of the mythic creatures with the benevolent ones of the animal friend. Naturally such things are difficult to find out about in a society where vision quest experiences are not talked about. Yet unless we know more about animal *friend* = man-eating animal we cannot understand why a person whose taboos have been infringed must become wechuge (a man-eating animal-person).

Here the comparison with Kwakiutl material will help. The Kwakiutl cannibal complex contains the same symbolic elements as the Beaver one: giant animals that hunt and eat men, acquisition of power in a quest, identification with a man-eating monster that leads to cannibalistic behaviour, curing of cannibalistic behaviour etc. But the Beaver and Kwakiutl systems are variations of one another; and as this means that the elements are transposed, so that an item of belief in one system can come up as behaviour in the other or vice versa, the Kwakiutl are sometimes explicit about links which the Beaver are silent about.

An examination of the Kwakiutl initiation myths which serve as charter for the power quest suggest, for instance, that the power the Beaver child gains in its quest is originally not socially beneficial but ambiguous: a killing power that is only life-giving in the proper social context of being directed *against* animals *for* men. Only in adult dreaming (when the game animal 'meets' the hunter and 'their paths cross') is it transformed into a socially beneficial power. In adult fighting (when people 'get into one another's way') this social achievement would seem to be withdrawn and the angered person retreats into the myth world of the vision quest in which he is one with the man-killing animal. Meeting a man in his way instead of an animal he naturally becomes himself an animal, but, because of the reversed or anti-social situation, a man-eating animal. This retreat into the myth the Beaver call wechuge or becoming 'too strong'. So Ridington tells of a man who, on his medicine bundle being violated, became the mythical man-eating 'wolf with silver teeth! He sharpened a nail and drove it through a boy's hand, symbolically eating the boy.

The same line can be traced in the Kwakiutl initiation myths, where we find however a refusal to leave the myth rather than a retreat into the myth. In the Kwakiutl context this refusal to leave the myth is thought of as distinctly abnormal if it goes on too long.

To 'remain with the Cannibal' leads inevitably to the initiate-hero's death. But, as with wechuge, we have no record outside myth of a novice fleeing 'to the Cannibal' which means going back to the isolation of the forest and dying there. The winter dance society to which the novice returns is organised to cope with the wildest and most cannibalistic behaviour. In the same way actual Beaver society provides ways to return from myth.

The question about the 'abnormality' of cannibalistic behaviour (which cannot be answered) would seem to resolve itself then into two anthropologically more precise questions which can be answered: why the society stimulates a dangerous degree of self-abandon and anti-social behaviour, and what it does to help people to find their way back to normal interpersonal relations. On these questions the study of the Kwakiutl material collected by Boas and Hunt throws an interesting light.

THE MAN-EATING ANIMALS AND THE KWAKIUTL WINTER RITUAL

The mental world of the Kwakiutl is the world of hunting, just as it is with the Beaver. One of the key elements of this world is the idea of a reversal of the conditions that make life possible; the idea that animals might hunt and eat men. It may seem strange that the Kwakiutl, who live under very different ecological conditions, should share this basic mental premise with the Beaver, who are indeed hunters. The Northern Athapascans, to whom the Beaver belong, are late immigrants to the American continent from Asia. They are subarctic hunters, and have never in their history been anything else. The Kwakiutl, on the other hand, are coast-dwellers and predominantly rich fishermen and sea-mammal hunters, with a far more highly developed social organization than the Beaver. Yet the Kwakiutl have a history of hunting behind them that must have formed their philosophic conceptions and expressive culture long before they came to the coast. They descend from inland hunters who migrated to the continent 10-40,000 years ago and who are thought to have come ultimately from the same region as the Athapascans — the Lake Baikal region of Siberia.

As with the Beaver the relation between men and animals remains the key to Kwakiutl thought. Both peoples are basically

preoccupied with the problem of a debt: the perception that man the hunter is a predator on the life of others and can give no adequate return for what he takes. In pre-Christian Athapascan mythologies the earth is the mother of both men and animals. They are therefore brothers, and the fact that man kills his brother in order to live constitutes a dilemma (Teit, 1919). It seems to me that this dilemma or worry about the animals is transformed by the well-known psychological process Freud describes in the *Interpretation of Dreams* into a wish: "if only we could live in harmony with the animals", and this wish is transformed through the images of myth into a fact: "we live in harmony with the animals: they give themselves to us so that we can live" (Freud, 1905: 162). But this is only one aspect of the image-forming activity. In other mythical symbols the dilemma appears as an anxiety: there are myths about the anger of the earth who withholds food and about the revenge of the animals. (Teit, 1919)¹ The Beaver believe that there was a time when animals hunted and ate men but that this was superseded by a new age, introduced by the culture hero when it became right for men to hunt animals, and animals gave themselves. In a sense therefore they have paid a forfeit to justice in the dawn of history. But — as with other religions — this large-scale cosmic scheme is only a blueprint for something the individual has to work out in his own life. He therefore meets the man-eating animals again in the vision quest where he follows in the culture hero's footsteps. In the wechuge performance the giant animals surface again, but now symbolically conceived as arbiters of interpersonal justice. The animal spirits of the Kwakiutl winter ritual have a similar symbolic significance. They gain this significance when the original dilemma of repaying them is shifted from the plane of men's relation to the outside world (where it is insoluble) to the social plane where it is soluble: they can be repaid indirectly, when their sacrifice for men is emulated by a man who sacrifices himself for his fellow-men. As the man-eating animal-persons are 'overdetermined' in both cultures — that is, they are animals and men at once — such a shift is possible and is made by both people though in different ways.

The Kwakiutl do not tell of a mythological age when animals hunted men. It is part of Kwakiutl wealth and of their highly

¹ Anxiety about the anger of the animals is also expressed directly by the hunters of the circumpolar wood-land area. (see Hallowell, 1926: 55).

developed social life that they divide the year into two and spend only the Summer involved in the practical business of food gathering. The winter they dedicate to thought, expressed in their complex communal rituals. They deal with the dilemma concerning the animals in the framework of this seasonal rhythm. Every Summer they accumulate a debt which they try to repay in the Winter (Boas 1930; Reid, 1976). In myths and ritual the animals who are game in the Summer reappear as hunters and eaters of men in the Winter. They are in conception close to the animal-persons of the Beaver: anthropomorphic or zoomorphic or monstrous in form, with human intelligence and super-human strength. The rationale of the winter ritual as expressed in the initiation myths is that the novices voluntarily go to seek the animal-spirits and offer their lives to them. The animal-spirits are the occasion for a display of courage, of sacrifice, of an 'overcoming of the self' that has strong psychological reverberations. It is therefore no wonder that they are lifted out of their original role as avengers and become symbolic antagonists in the drama of intrapersonal and interpersonal relations.

With this transposition of the problem between men and animals to the purely human and social level the true hunting myths have withered away among the Kwakiutl. One can clearly see how many stories have changed from an original emphasis on retributive justice to initiation by the animal spirit. The two themes are close, as the resurgence of the giant animal in the Beaver vision quest shows, and there is a possibility that myths told in hunting societies have always fluctuated between these two poles. However that may be, the predominating theme among the Kwakiutl is that of initiation, with no reference to hunting. There are, however, also transitional myths, as I call them, that can be read on two levels at once, as stories of the revenge of the animals and as initiation tales. The story of Elxabae is one of them.

The Dzawadenox live in a village at the head of an inlet cut deeply into the coastal mountain range. Though they are salmon fishers like all Kwakiutl their geographical position makes them land hunters to an equal degree. The mountains above the village abound in game, especially mountain goat and bear. This land above the village, forested and difficult of access is also a supernatural realm, the land of the animals. The animals rival men in their skills, especially the bears who, in actual fact, come down to the rivers to fish for salmon like men.

The story begins with a famine. A person dies every day and in their trouble the people come to their chief to discuss what can be done. The chief sends his

son Elxabae to look for salmon. Elxabae sees salmon in the river above the village. He constructs a salmon weir, as his father has taught him, taking great pains. When he visits the weir in the morning it is broken, with only the jawbone of a salmon lying around. He mends the weir during the day only to find it has been broken again in the night. This goes on for three days and nights. On the fourth night Elxabae watches by his weir. In the early dawn he sees a huge grizzly coming out of the wood, breaking the weir and taking the salmon. Elxabae attacks him but the grizzly dashes the spear out of his hand, picks him up and carries him away with him into the mountains. At the grizzly's house Elxabae is treated with great politeness as an honoured guest. His host, Grizzly, tells him to sleep well and not to worry — tomorrow he will meet his tribe. Elxabae sleeps badly. Next morning the animals, called by the grizzly's messenger, enter the house according to rank: first the black bear, then the wolf, the wolverine, the deer, the elk and all the other animals. Great Grizzly makes a speech: 'Welcome friends! I only longed for you. You have all come in; therefore I shall invite this kind of animal to sit among you in the house'. He beckons Elxabae to his side, and, tapping him lightly on the temple so that he falls down dead he continues: 'O friends! I have invited you so that you may all partake of a little of this!' The 'carver of men's flesh' then cuts Elxabae into portions and Great Grizzly winds up: 'O friends! I hurt our friend because he tried to spear me by the river where my salmon trap stands, but I forestalled him for I took his spear and threw it away. I took him and carried him in my arms for you to eat him'. After the feast the animals leave to go home. The wolf is the first to feel qualms about what they have done and invites them to gather in a place near the grizzly's house and vomit up what they have eaten. Having been served by rank they now vomit their portions by rank. The wolf sprinkles the pieces with the water of life [no doubt by lifting his leg] and Elxabae is restored. The animals now advise Elxabae to return to the grizzly, who will challenge him to a medicine fight. (Being twice-born Elxabae is now a man of power, like the grizzly.) It will be a diving contest and the grizzly will dive for a very long time, but Elxabae is to pretend that he stays under for hardly a moment. This will encourage the grizzly to stay under very long indeed and Elxabae is to take advantage of the long dive to steal the grizzly's mask and run for home. Everything happens as planned. Elxabae picks up the heavy mask Great Grizzly has taken off before going into the water and runs. But before he has quite reached his father's house he hears the growling of many grizzlies behind him. He jumps into the house and his mother calls her tribe into the house and bars the doors. At that moment the grizzlies reach the house. Great Grizzly's speaker calls: 'O Elxabae! Do not let your forehead be ugly. Bring the food-obtaining mask of our chief here!' But the people in the house answer with the war cry and the grizzlies are frightened. Then Great Grizzly speaks himself: 'O friend Elxabae. Bring my food-obtaining mask here. You shall try to imitate me when you have your winter dance. Your name shall be Great Grizzly Bear. And that is the same as my grizzly-bear mask when it is used. That means also that you will be rich in food, for I shall always be near you'. Elxabae gives him his grizzly bear mask at once (Boas and Hunt 1905: 25-36).

The story is so clearly structured that it is probably best and most economic to consider it from a structural point of view. The

main building blocks the narrator uses are three locations, each of which turns up twice: the village, the river, the mountain. The village is the ordinary world, where people must work and eat. At the beginning of the story life in the village is paralysed by famine. At the end there is the promise of the winter dance: a promise of power and of a neverending supply of food. Life will flow again through the suffering and efforts of Elxabae. By having gained the bear's name and dance, Elxabae has gained the bear's power to 'obtain food'. The bear has become what the Beaver would call his animal friend; and the setting of the famine-stricken village provides a vivid illustration of what the hunter's animal friend means for the community.

The river is a testing place for power, a half-way house between village and mountain. Here Elxabae makes his salmon weir — a skill his father taught him. The story teller is at pains to describe the process accurately, enumerating the materials he uses, where he gets them and what techniques he uses for the construction. The point is that without power, this skill is as nothing and will not gain the people food. The bear deprives Elxabae easily by a trick of the fruits of his labour. But once Elxabae has been on the mountain he has gained a power that enables him to trick the bear. If the bear has stolen food at the first meeting by the river Elxabae steals the food-obtaining mask at the second meeting by the river. With the mask, he gains 'bearness' that is, he adds to his purely human skills the bear's supernatural ability to get food.

The mountain is the place of transformation. It is the reversed world, where animals are men and where a man by becoming the animals' animal can gain power. And here, at its centre, the story shows clearly how a tale of the animals' revenge can be at the same time a tale of initiation, of the gaining of power. The first place in the mountains — the bear's house — is most obviously the scene of revenge. It is a very funny take-off of what people do when they have killed an animal. When the Kwakiutl killed a bear, for instance, they pretended that he came as a visitor to the village. He was received in the chief's house like an honoured guest, and messengers sent out to call the tribe together for a feast. Speeches were made, and the people even went up to the bear one by one to press his 'hand' and apologise to him. A 'carver of animals' flesh' would cut him up and the people would be served according to rank at the banquet (Curtis, 1970: 37).

The delightful irony of the story must not blind us to the point that is being made. The story teller is insisting on a point that amounts to a moral law among the Kwakiutl, a law that permeates mythology and ritual: that he who wants to get food must become food. The Dzawadenox have a myth about the origin of the winter dance whose hero is called Food Giver. But we do not learn her name immediately: first she is plit open and hung over the fire in the initiating spirit's house to dry — just as salmon is hung in Kwakiutl houses to dry. At the end of the story when she has obtained the winter ritual she is indeed a food giver, for she is able to feed her tribe from a never-ending supply (Boas and Hunt, 1905; Reid, 1977). The same law is operative in the Beaver myth that in earlier times animals hunted and ate man. And it is conceivable that this collective view of the law has a personal aspect and is reanimated on the level of individual experience when the child gains its animal friend.

The law is difficult to formulate in rationally acceptable terms. Its logic seems to be that you have to give an earnest of being willing to sacrifice your life. Only by giving such an earnest can you establish the balance of justice and expect that the animals will willingly sacrifice themselves for you. The ideas I have mentioned above — debt, revenge, the question of who hunted whom first — are all just images for this justice held in balance by men and animals together. For hunting people, life depends on that balance.

The most immediate and vivid image for that earnest is that you become the animals' animal, and the role of eater and eaten is reversed. The animals appear therefore naturally (from the point of view of the balance of justice) as dual: destroyers and givers at once. And this image of the dual nature of the animals is in its turn the key to why a hunting story can at the same time be read as an initiation story in which not the necessity for food but a psychic change of the hero stands at the centre. The man-eating animals who themselves bring forth the new man (in our story in the secret place on the mountain where they vomit Elxabae and sprinkle him with the water of life) act as catalysts of the change from passive to active, from being dependent to being oneself. In this capacity they do not need to be animals any more; the double-natured anthropomorphic Man Eater fulfils the same role. But in Kwakiutl mythology the link between belief in the debt to the animals and belief in the task of being 'twice-born' has never been severed: most of the Kwakiutl initiating spirits are animals or can at least take animal form.

Yet in spite of the fact that the Kwakiutl keep this link they seem to have realised more consciously than other hunting peoples the fact that there is no way of paying the debt to the animals on a realistic level. The only way of discharging it (according to Kwakiutl thought) is indirectly by emulating the sacrifice of the animals for men on a purely human plane, by the sacrifice of an individual for his group. The story of Elxabae foreshadows this development, but, as he suffers death to bring his people food the relation between animals and men still stands at the centre. In the initiation story and initiation ritual to which we now turn this relation recedes while the image of eating and being eaten, derived from it, remains the key.

CANNIBALISM IN KWAKIUTL MYTH

The figure that corresponds to the Beaver Wechuge among the Kwakiutl is Baxbakualanuxsiwa, the Man Eater, whose name literally means He-who-first-ate-man-at-the-mouth-of-the-river. The Man Eater lives in the forest, by a crag or mountain, near a lake. He roams the forest as a hunter, but his prey is man and his hunting cry hap, 'hunger, eating'. He is imagined in various forms, usually as a man, but also as a monster bird of prey, or a formless horror 'all mouths'. The last image shows that he is the essential swallower, and his name indicates that in the last resort he is that which is waiting to swallow us at the end of the river of life, death (see Boas 1970: 394, 397).

The Kwakiutl are, however, not primarily interested in physical death and the life to come, but rather in a death that can be experienced in the middle of life, and in the change that can be wrung from such an experience for this life. The Man Eater (and his many refractions) is the image under which they subsume this experience of death. At the same time he is patron of the most respected of Kwakiutl dancing societies, the society of hamatsas (eaters). To enter this society one has to have inherited a myth in which an ancestor meets the Man Eater, is swallowed and takes on his nature, released and given a treasure. To inherit the myth means a right to a seat in the hamatsa society. Yet the right cannot be exercised automatically: the myth has to be activated through an initiation in which the novice follows in his ancestor's footsteps. In this way the myth becomes charter for an initiation which is the experience of death in life.

It is initiation into the hamatsa society that involves among the Kwakiutl cannibalistic behaviour. The novice returns from a period of isolation in the forest with an obsessive desire for human flesh. The myth explains that he acquires this behaviour from being ingested and becoming one with the Cannibal. One might say that the myth gives us the grammar or structure of the cannibalistic experience, while the ritual itself is a language of communication in which this experience is shared with others. The myth concentrates on inner experience, and this will occupy us in this section.

The direction of the initiation myth is towards the gaining of the winter dance from the spirit. What appeared as a, rather surprising, appendix in Elxabae ('You shall try to imitate me in your winter dance') is the object of a quest in the initiation myth proper. To have gained the spirit's dance (name, song, cry) is to have gained power. Power means, on the most general level, to be stronger than death. I think we can link this quest for power to the Beaver vision quest; and we can therefore link the strength of which the myth tells with the Beaver concept of getting 'too strong' in wechuge. Yet wechuge belongs to ritual behaviour, that is to communication with others and here we have so far only to do with myth, that is with the laws of inner experience on which that behaviour is based.

If it is true that to gain power means to become *stronger* than death, the myth is built on a contradiction, because the experience it describes is that of death. (Many of the myths actually start with the hero setting out to take his own life.) To become stronger than death would seem to involve dying first. Having died, the hero gains, not immortality — his death takes place in the middle of life — but a kind of freedom, which can either be seen as freedom from fear or invulnerability. The Kwakiutl call the initiation experience 'going through'. In a sense the hero of the myth and the initiate following in his footsteps are dead men, they cannot die again. This 'state of death' puts them outside society and therefore confers licence, and the strongest image of this licence is cannibalistic behaviour. But to understand the logic of that behaviour we must know more about the nature of the spirit.

The contradiction at the centre of the myth can only be resolved if the death died to overcome death is in some way distinguished from ordinary death. The distinguishing factor is that it is voluntary death. And here the nature of the death-dealer plays a role.

What distinguishes the initiatory spirit is that he is extremely fear-inspiring, or revolting or both. He rouses the instinct of revulsion and of flight to a very high degree. Yet this is the creature with which the hero has to come into the closest possible physical touch — being eaten being perhaps the closest touch that can be imagined. Flesh and blood shrinks from the mere thought, as one would shrink from death. The myth is therefore a test myth whose central contradiction resolves itself into the central problem of how to do something one cannot do. If the hero flees from the monster, he is overtaken and eaten anyway, but then for good. If, on the other hand he overcomes his fear and turns to the creature voluntarily, he has already overcome death, because he died at this moment. The monster now turns into its opposite: a friend and helper, and giver of treasure.

Before we turn to the difficult question of why the hero has now to become like the spirit I shall quote part of a story from Boas' *Kwakiutl Tales*, which illustrates what I have said so far.

Far-End-of-World was in danger of being killed by the sorcery of a fellow chief. Dying, he escaped to an uninhabited island, buried himself in an underground chamber and lived in total isolation for three months to make believe he had already died. He recovered, however, and at the end of his stay on the island had the following experience.

Then night came and Far-End-of-World was sitting in the doorway of his house. Then he saw again what was seen by him on the mountain when it was burning. It came coming near, that sound of the cannibal. Then Far-End-of-World did not know that he imitated it. Then he knew that, behold! he was also uttering the cannibal cry. Now he was left by the cannibal. Then night came again and the cry of the cannibal came again. Then he went out to look at it "for what can you do even if it should bring death". He saw it had four faces. He was taken hold of and the man of the woods flew away with him. Then Far-End-of-World discovered that he had been taken into his supernatural treasure. It had four faces. Then he was asked, "What are you doing on the rock?" Then Far-End-of-World said, "I am trying to get a treasure". He was asked by War-Leader, "Go on! Stand up and look at me that I may test you." Then he tried him. He gave him advice what to do. "Go on, try to utter the cannibal cry." Then he uttered the cannibal cry. Then he was told that he did it right. "Now your red cedar bark will be like this. Now you will have the name War-Leader. Now your name will be Great Cannibal..." Now he left him. Now War-Leader flew and arrived [home]. ... He saw the old woman Moving-about-in-the-World. Then he uttered the cannibal cry. The old woman became afraid and told her tribe. She said she had seen something bad. Then a roof was put over

[her]. They took good care of her. However, the roof had not been over her for a long time before he appeared again. Then it was known. It was he, behold! Far-End-of-World, he was a cannibal... Now he held a winter ceremonial. Then War Leader was caught. Four songs were sung. He was tamed (Boas, 1969: 102-104).

Particularly noticeable about this story is how the narrator uses vision and touch. The hero flies to the burning rock in the arms of the Cannibal. His test is impossible to pass, because he is asked to 'look' — but you cannot look that in the face which has four faces. The hero, however, already resolved to die, stands up to the horror and gains the spirit as a friend and the red cedar bark, symbol of the winter dance. He returns home as the Cannibal, just as revolting and frightening to his tribe as the Cannibal was to him.

We must now turn to the question of identification. Why must the hero who has passed the test take on the shape of the death-dealer? We do not want to ask the question here from the functional point of view, from the point of view of the ritual. There the answer is that he has to return as the death-dealer in order to bring about the 'communal initiation' that is the object of the winter dance. Ritual and initiation myth overlap, but we want to say for the purpose of this investigation as far as possible within the frame of reference of the myth.

The myth concentrates on the inner experience of a hero. We must therefore ask: why does the myth insist on a hero who has 'converted' death by his own courage becoming 'death' himself?

This question concerns the central meaning of the myth. And here I must diverge to what will seem a wayward statement. Kwakiutl initiation myths are structurally simple and repetitive and resemble in structure the classic European fairy tale (*Zaubermärchen*). This structure, and the characteristics known to folklorists as 'laws of the folk tale' correspond to externalizations or 'projections', in other words, to the strategies of the psyche. This is why folk tales as well as Kwakiutl initiation tales can be interpreted psychologically. It has of course long been recognized that fairy tales belong to the field of psychology, but not that the examination of their formal regularities must be the basis for a psychological interpretation. Yet the correspondence between narrative laws and psychic strategies is the single distinguishing feature of all tales of this type, including the Kwakiutl initiation myth. I can only briefly outline the psychological background of the initiation myth here.

The hero of the Kwakiutl initiation myth is not a child but a young man or woman — a fully socialized human being. When he meets the cannibalistic spirit he meets himself.² This is the key to the identification. The spirit represents (or 'images') a split of the self. He is the projection of those aspects the self cannot cope with — the forbidden drives and anti-social aspects of the self which the child has been taught to reject in the course of socialization. He is revolting because he represents the most deeply repressed desires of the individual, his 'ugly' face.

The myth sets this 'alien' over against the hero and asks the hero to let himself be swallowed by him. Essentially the hero is asked to accept himself; yet, not at this point himself in a whole or balanced form. Rather he is asked to accept himself in a form he cannot accept, in his 'revolting nature' which revolts himself. This is the impossible task set him by the spirit and the 'death' he is asked to die, a death that cuts him indeed off from all normal contact. It is a test of courage because what is asked is essentially the totally unteachable leap of trusting oneself.

Yet initiation myths (or folk tales) are not simply made to give psychological help. Being so intensely about the inner life they also represent a psychological trap or snare. Kwakiutl myth calls that snare 'staying with the Cannibal'. Myths are in fact meant to defeat themselves — in other words the hero has to extricate himself from the myth and return to normal life. If he identifies too strongly with the Cannibal he will lose his grip on normality. A second act of courage is asked of him: to remember and turn back to his life with men. One might almost say that the hero is asked to be split in this way too: he is asked to keep in mind the practical and social consequences of his journey to 'the other world' (the inner self) even while making the journey. (It is possible that in the myth this is imaged by the frequently occurring tricking of the Cannibal.) If the hero indulges himself by remaining 'wild' his courage in having passed the test (having accepted himself) comes to nothing. In the end his power does not lie in having become a cannibal but in having become a cannibal and been 'tamed'. The psychological implication is clear: individuation does not lie simply in releasing the repressed and

² The following is not meant to be an exhaustive interpretation of the cannibalistic spirit. The Cannibal is 'overdetermined' like the giant animal to whom he is related, and can be interpreted from different angles.

impersonal contents of the subconscious, however difficult that may be, but in integrating these contents with the conscious and personal ones. What the myth calls staying with the Cannibal — the swallowing up of the personality by the subconscious, whether temporary or permanent — is called insanity in our culture, and for the myth hero it means death.

There are myths which end with an untameable hero. Yaxstal, one of the fullest of Kwakiutl initiations myths, shows that passing the test is not enough; the hero has to be 'cured' in the ritual (Boas 1910: 415-442). I can only give the most rudimentary impression of the myth here. It is set at a time when Yaxstal's tribe did not yet have the cannibal ritual, but neighbouring tribes had it. Yaxstal's father, an ambitious chief, insults Yaxstal by suggesting that he is not good enough to get cannibal power. Yaxstal decides to kill himself. He wanders for three days through the wilderness of the forest without eating. On every day's journey he comes to a lake in which he dives, rubbing himself afterwards with hemlock branches. On the fourth day he meets Mouse Woman who promises to help him get the cannibal dance. She trains him strenuously, and in the course of the training swallows him and makes him come out again at her anus. When Yaxstal is perfect, she points out that they are at the shore of the fourth lake. Across the lake rises a mountain and at its foot stands the Cannibal's house with the cannibal pole (hamspeq) in front of it. Yaxstal meets the Cannibal and passes his test, slipping out of his anus when the Cannibal has swallowed him. The Cannibal turns into a friend and gives him his name, song and dance. He commands Yaxstal to swallow a man of his tribe every fourth day when he comes home, otherwise the Cannibal will keep him with him for ever. At home Yaxstal swallows first one of his uncles and then a man every fourth day. He wreaks havoc among his tribesmen who cannot tame him. Finally they decide to break the power they cannot channel to the tribe. The only force greater than supernatural power is that of menstrual blood. Having been brought ritually into contact with menstrual blood Yaxstal leaves for ever. The irony is that the Cannibal has tricked him. Having obeyed him, he must now 'stay with the Cannibal'.

I said that the ritual was distinguished from the myth by being a language of communication. At its end the myth usually overlaps with the ritual and a dialogue develops between hero and community. In Yaxstal this dialogue fails. The reason may here be

historical: the people did not know the cannibal dance yet and therefore could not interact with Yaxstal. Generally speaking, such a failure does not affect the initiation myth, which is complete in having laid out the structure of the initiation experience. It takes the hero back to the village in his monstrous shape and may break off at that point, leaving the problem of his reintegration to the ritual.³ All initiation myths make it clear, however, that the hero reaches a danger point when he comes back. He may be too proud of his superhuman strength to be tamed, or too intense and serious. Kwakiutl culture does not encourage overintensity, though it encourages a good strong show. The show is the means of sharing the experience as we shall see in the next section.

The person who cannot overcome the myth — who is overpowered by the drives the myth released and cannot find his way back to normality — is treated as a lunatic, as the following extract from Boas shows. A youth has been initiated by the Hoxhok, a monster bird who cracks open skulls and sucks out the brains with a long straight beak specially made for this purpose. The youth has returned to the village.

He sang of the hoxhok, and suddenly he jumped up in order to devour his father, who was sitting on the opposite side of the fire. He had the cedar-bark ornaments of the hamatsa round his neck and head. His head ring slid down and fell right over his mouth, so that instead of biting his father he bit a piece out of his ring. His grandfather took a large black blanket which he wound around the youth's head. He tore it with his teeth. Then the people wound a rope over his mouth; he tore it. Nobody was able to subdue him. All the people fled out of the door for fear. They heard him singing in the house and looked through the chinks and through the knot holes to see what he was doing. They saw him climbing the posts and pushing the roofboards aside. He wanted to pursue the people. Then they stationed two men at the doors, and others held the roof down so that he should not escape. Others entered and threw a bearskin over him. But he crept about in the house and his skin was so slippery that nobody could hold him. In the evening he quieted down and lay so still that the people thought he might be asleep. They made a jacket of cedar bark in which they tried to catch him. But as soon as he approached he jumped up and ran out of the house. On the island Nalkuitxoiias there were a number of women engaged splitting salmon. He scented them and jumped into the water to devour them. They escaped in their canoe when they saw him coming. [He recovers for a bit but after a short time he falls again into a state of ecstasy.] He lay flat on the floor, his face downward. The people threw a net made of cedar bark over him in order to

³ For a discussion of the relation between initiation myth and ritual see *Reid*, (1975).

catch him. Sometimes they succeeded in placing a foot on his neck, but they were unable to hold him, not even by winding his long hair around their hands. He escaped and nobody knew what had become of him. He ran about in the woods and when he came back to the village he bit whomsoever he met (Boas, 1970: 407-8).

The parallel with Beaver wechuge is unmistakable here, but we must leave the comparison for the conclusion. One thing has to be said now, however: if cannibalistic behaviour is about 'being oneself' it is clear that the unfortunate youth of the story has not achieved this goal in spite of intensely cannibalistic behaviour. In Kwakiutl terms he is not 'free' because he has made only one of the two necessary steps. The second necessary step is part of the ritual to which we now turn.

CANNIBALISM IN KWAKIUTL RITUAL

In turning from the initiation myth to the initiation ritual, we are turning from the strategies of the psyche to the strategies of the culture. The major cultural strategy of the Kwakiutl — and this may be found to apply to hunting cultures in general — is to throw the individual back on himself. The society, it seems, cannot do with members who are not 'themselves'; and to be oneself involves distancing oneself from one's society and being able to view it from a distance. This is what the first part of the ritual — isolation — is about.

There is a contradiction at the centre of the ritual as there was at the centre of the myth, only here it is social. No society can have as its aim the alienation of its members. Yet the Kwakiutl seem to say that unless a person is alienated he cannot be a member of society.

This contradiction can also be expressed in terms of repression. Kwakiutl culture is like any other culture a system of repressions through socialization, or it could not function socially. Yet we have seen from the myth already how far the Kwakiutl go in sanctioning the loosening of repression. They seem to put a premium on identifying with one's anti-social and violent drives. This is borne out by the ritual. At the same time it is clear from the ritual, as it was from the myth, that the process is dangerous. If we keep in mind that the strategies of the ritual are social we must then conclude that the 'free' or anti-social individual has a supreme value for the Kwakiutl socially. It will be our task to determine what this value is in

examining the second part of initiation — the public ritual. Yet the first part of the ritual, to which we turn now — isolation — also has bearings on the question.⁴

The isolation ritual

Initiation begins with an 'abduction by the spirits' which is dramatised to varying degrees by the different tribes. In some tribes it is very dramatic; a bundle of torn and bloody clothes marks the spot where the candidate was seen a moment before. The spirits have killed and eaten him.

In actual fact the novice is led blindfold and at night to a place in the woods known only to the members of the hamatsa society. When he opens his eyes in the morning he has entered the imagery of the myth. The place is a hut in a secret and unknown part of the forest, with a lake in front and a mountain behind. He has reached the place of the Cannibal and entered the house of the Cannibal. And as house and Cannibal are always interchangeable, he has entered the Cannibal himself through the mouth-door of his house (Boas, 1970: 466, fig. 75 and plate 29). The symbol of the eating pole (hamspeq) is missing in this scenery, as is everything man-made except the bare shelter of the hut.⁵ The cosmic symbol of mountain and lake takes its place.

Mountain and lake is an image of the world centre for the Kwakiutl. The Cannibal's house in myth is always "at the centre of the world" (Reid, 1976: 178-189). In the public ritual the returned novice sings of how he stayed with the Cannibal at the "middle of the world" and at the "post of the world" (Boas, 1970: 688). The Kwakiutl have two main image clusters to convey their conception of the world centre: pole and hole (here in the image of mountain and lake but in myth always duplicated by the cannibal pole, hamspeq, and "pool with the water of life") and the vortex or whirlpool, the place that sucks in yet spews out again. The main point of both is that reality springs from an unthinkable coming together of opposites. The true centre of the reality of the world is where opposites

⁴ For the Kwakiutl winter ritual see Boas (1970) especially p. 500 ff. The most coherent account however, based on Boas' diffuse material is Werner Müller's (1955: 65-90).

⁵ For sources and discussion of the concept of the world centre see Reid (1976: 178-189).

have come so close that they cancel one another. This is of course also the point of possibility, of the new and the transformed.

On the most abstract level the world centre resembles mathematical zero, where signs are exchanged and plus and minus are one. It is a place of possibility, of discontinuity and transformation. On the most concrete level its image is that of the Cannibal, through whose labyrinthine intestines you have to find your way. The Cannibal is a mythical personification of the world centre as destroyer and giver at once. Because he is a personification he can be impersonated and in this form the mystery can be taken from the forest to the village.

During isolation a meeting with the Cannibal, such as the myth describes, seems to play no role. The novice is given over to the cosmic manifestations of the world centre. Our best source for his experience are the ritual songs. In them the Cannibal becomes the world, both centre and periphery. The novice travels in the Cannibal's arms, fusing with the Cannibal.

What is the effect of these grandiose images, combined with isolation, on the mind of a young person? We must remember that the Kwakiutl hamatsa novice is not a child but a young adult, fully socialized into the habits and patterns of thinking of his community. What happens to him, suddenly cut off from his family and village life, from all work and all responsibility to others, surrounded only by plant and animal life, and that at a critical point in his life, when he is about to enter on the highest social status Kwakiutl society has to offer?

The first most obvious effect — obvious from the myth but more clearly demonstrated still in the behaviour of the novice when he returns to the village — is of regression. The novice in isolation is desocialized. The ritual shows him at various points as an animal, a cannibal and an infant. The slate has been wiped clean. Yet with this desocialization goes an immense inflation of the ego. Entering the cosmic images, he is like an infant again who is the centre of the world, even a baby who with his will makes the world. The images of the Cannibal and the world centre subtly fuse with this regression and social alienation. Flying in the arms of the Man Eater he can suddenly "see": he *knows* the world now. He is distant and separated from everything. He knows, like the craftsman who has made it

himself how the world hangs together, he can 'look through' things. And knowing the world he can also see his own place in it.

But seeing and knowing is not enough. Being with the Cannibal at the world centre he is also the active principle that *makes* the world. He is the creative point from which reality springs; not the mechanical reality of cyclic repetition but an unforeseen — a reality that is new and endowed with all possibilities.

All this, we remember, is a delusion, induced by isolation and the world centre imagery of the myth. The initiate has no contact with reality, he lives totally in himself. At this point however, an event takes place that drastically changes his situation.

Towards the end of his stay in the forest the old hamatsas come to teach him the tricks and sleights of hand that will, for the community, manifest the coming of supernatural power. The whole of the winter dance is one great edifice of such tricks. The "secrets" of each of the secret societies are, in their practical aspect, the tricks which only the initiates to this society know and nobody else. The winter dance is therefore known by the name 'all is not as it seems', or, more succinctly, 'all lies'.

From the unreality of his dreams of omnipotence and omniscience the novice has to make the adjustment to human practical exigency. But let us consider the curious character of a lie. On the one hand it is a shoddy, man-made thing. On the other, just because it is so totally man-made, arising as it were out of nothing, it has the character of an invention, something unheard of and new that gives it a god-like quality. We do not know how much in actual fact a non-hamatsa knew about the theatrical tricks employed by the hamatsa society in the winter dance. But given the fact that he did not have the professional interests of the active member we can assume that he was absorbed by the spectacle; a remarkable spectacle indeed, of the man-eater flying, appearing upside-down hanging in the air, or climbing the cannibal pole out of sight. The novice however, who now becomes an initiate is taken 'into the secret'; its shoddy, man-made quality is revealed to him and from a spectator he becomes an actual maker of the lie. What effect would this have on him, in his peculiar psychic state in isolation? We have mentioned that isolation gives him distance from society: being taught the hamatsas' 'lies' would give him the first practical and realistic lesson in how to make use of this distance. He would learn to be sceptical and critical of

what he has up to now accepted. The process is parallel to that of the experience of the myth, which, we have said, must in the end lead out of the myth and beyond itself. The isolation experience was an entering into the myth, and the revelation of what 'the secrets' consist of is the social strategy of helping the novice to find his way out of the myth.

Yet if this were the only effect, the novice would only become a cynic, joining a band of older cynics at his initiation. Then the winter dance would indeed be the arena for the exercise of power by an élite, as anthropologists so commonly take it to be. The whole context of initiation however should convince us that something quite different is at stake. In teaching the novice the 'lies' the hamatsas actually give him a field for the omniscience and omnipotence he has gained. The symbolic apparatus may be shoddy and man-made but it is the language of communication that enables him to share his experience. In sharing it, his experience is redeemed from its unrelated introspective quality. Indeed, though the initiation experience, charted by the myth, must always essentially be a private inner experience it is of course culturally channelled and a cultural or communal experience at the same time. The community is, however, dependent on the initiate to body forth this experience for them. The experience itself is deeply connected with their image of society. The initiate therefore becomes an active maker of society. He does not 'believe' in the symbols any more, they are not 'givens' as they were in his childhood, they have become adaptable tools. It is to this new, inventive quality the novice brings to the ritual symbols that societies based on initiation owe their adaptability in the face of change and their flexibility when quite severe historical pressure is brought on them. The Kwakiutl winter dance for instance can be shown to have gone through a number of adaptive changes since contact. The novices dreams are, then, not just the delusion of grandeur. Every initiate is in fact, to use Kwakiutl conceptions, a 'world centre' and place of possibility and transformation. The world of men depends on him.

Kwakiutl society gives a lot of help to the novice. Yet the novice who clings to the symbols and does not experience them as 'lies', that is as tools meant to make possible an experience of the world remains inflexible, unadult, not properly human. He is lost in the myth and "stays with the Canibal".

The public ritual

The novice returns from the forest in a state of violent excitement; he has an obsessive desire for human flesh, bites people whenever he can and is, generally speaking, quite dangerous. At this period he is not integrated into village life yet but hovers at the edge of the forest, making inroads into the village. The village is prepared for him; the immediate task of the community is to lure him in and tame him sufficiently for him to be able to perform his dances.

The details of the novices' cannibalistic behaviour are too well known from Boas to need treating here. The novice can only be caught with the help of a human bait — a naked man whom he smells from afar and comes out to bite; he is lured into the ceremonial house with the help of a corpse and he and the old initiates celebrate a mummy feast eating the 'corpse' (which actually consists of dried and smoked human skin). He dances his frightening and obsessed dances, giving the cannibal cry and singing his songs, while the community endeavours to tame him and to "smoke the wildness out of him".

Less well known than these lurid details is the context into which they fit. Yet the context can be clearly established from Boas ethnographic accounts and from the collection of texts that support them. The most important contextual fact is that with the novices return to the village as the Cannibal, the village itself becomes the world centre. The ceremonial house that is prepared for the novice makes this clear. It contains an inner room for the novice alone, symbolically marked as the Cannibal's house. Its door may for instance be painted as the mouth of the Cannibal — a device that also indicates the fusion of Cannibal, ancestor/hero of the myth and novice. In front of this secret room in the body of the house stands the hamspeq (eating pole), piercing the roof and extending beyond it. The house has become the world, and the Cannibal's house is the centre of the world. The community within the house, taking part in the dances, is now the novice who is "with the Cannibal". They have come to the 'post of the world'; and in its circular dances and in his songs the Cannibal takes them 'around the world'.

On the symbolic level this is quite clear. The novice must be cannibalistic to bring the mystery of initiation to the village. The

“post of the world” and “middle of the world” are images of initiation on the cosmic plane. But what does the shift of the “middle of the world” to the village, to the centre of tribal life mean as a social fact; In Kwakiutl mythology generally the world centre is almost a philosophical proposition, the place of change per se where death can be transformed into life. For the novice in isolation it is an image of the place where he dies to society and is reborn as an active maker of society. What does it mean for the community as a whole, imaged in their permanent winter village?

The question is important because the whole of the winter dance revolves around this becoming the centre of the world. From the community's point of view the novice himself is like an ambassador, sent out to bring this change to the village. It is in order to become the centre of the world that the Kwakiutl insist on having a least one hamatsa initiation every winter, since world centre symbolism has become attached to the hamatsa dance above all others. In order to answer the question we have to examine what the novice brings back — his gift to the society — not on the symbolic level but in rationally understandable terms. If the movements of the ritual really do correspond to cultural strategies it is here in this surely, that the desire of the society is revealed.

We know from the myths that the novice returns an anti-social, unrepressed being, and from the isolation ritual that he is desocialised, almost non-human, a clean slate. The ethnography leaves us in no doubt that the Kwakiutl value such a being highly, that it is, in the first place the novice himself who is the gift to the society. But not in order to impress on that clean slate the rules of society, as anthropology traditionally interprets initiation. On the contrary the ‘free’ (naualak) being is precious in himself, and we have seen that the effort of the community is directed to securing him for themselves, getting him into their midst, taming him enough to enable him to perform his dances. However, an anti-social, unrepressed individual cannot be integrated into the ordinary society. The social order with its hierarchy, rank system and division of labour is itself repressive. No society based on domination and subordination can hope to assimilate the ‘free’ individual. Therefore the society itself has to change. The real gift of the novice would seem to be the new society — the ideal human community free from domination and subordination in which everyone is himself and still part of the whole.

We know from Boas that at the beginning of the winter season the Kwakiutl abolished their normal social order. Rank and name disappear and are replaced with dancers' roles (Boas, 1970: 418). It has usually been taken that the secular hierarchy is revived in non-secular terms. Nothing could be further from the truth. The winter dance society is the social face of the world centre. Instead of being based on domination and subordination it is based on the balance of opposites. Every group, every office and every individual, whether dancer or administrator, is balanced by its own opposite in the social structure of the whole. Only the dance can express a simultaneous balance of all parts in motion. Apart from music — and the Kwakiutl did not have any elaborated orchestral music — only in the dance is every individual part totally itself, and by being itself contributes to the whole. The Kwakiutl society of the permanent winter village was therefore simultaneously the winter dance. Society and dance are synonymous in the winter.

The novice then (or rather all the novices who return from isolation during the winter dance) is the focus of a utopia to which the Kwakiutl give reality for three or four months every year. From the ritual point of view his purely individual act of 'giving himself up', divesting himself of social restraints, is a *social* act, because it alone can move the society to throw off its own constraints. But this claiming of the individual act of courage by the society has again a reflexive effect on the novice: the egoism of his alienation is turned into giving. 'Being himself' itself makes him a giver. In the dance he shares with others that which he could only gain in separation from others.

The cannibalistic behaviour of the Kwakiutl hamatsa is therefore not the same as Beaver wechuge. Rather the hamatsa presents a ritual and symbolic picture of what is the Beaver's role in everyday life. A Beaver has to have been with the giant animals if he wants to be successful in finding game. But he is only an independent, adult being when, as a hunter, he shares his kill with others. In being wechuge his sharing is withdrawn and he retreats to 'being himself' without reference to others. Here he resembles the hamatsa who has not yet been tamed to take part in the dance. He shows the *basis* of his independence — a dangerous and anti-social basis. But wechuge behaviour is not the *expression* of his independence. That, as with the Kwakiutl, lies in giving.

CONCLUSION

I asked in the introduction why both Beaver and Kwakiutl society culturally stimulate cannibalistic behaviour, and what help they give to avoid the danger of psychosis. The answer to these two questions lies in the concept of social space which is present in both cultures.

Both peoples take it for granted that an adult must have some distance from society, and that he will express this distance in symbolic behaviour that goes back to his most private experiences (the mythically charted vision quest and isolation experience). The behaviour includes imitating the animal-spirits that have given him power; and there is a certain cultural scope for this imitation that includes cannibalistic behaviour.

Taking this as a basis, one can sum up the difference between cannibalistic manifestations in the two cultures in the following way:

1. *Beaver*. People become individuals through the vision quest, where they acquire an animal friend and through 'dreaming' where this power is translated into socially useful action. Their social space is their inviolable individuality; it is symbolised in their animal power, made visible in their medicine bundle. If this social space is violated they retreat from their social individuality, which is beneficent, to its source, the 'animal individuality' which is anti-social and destructive and expresses itself in cannibalistic behaviour. It is a defensive action, guarding their individuality. The application of their medicine bundles to their bodies, or the singing of someone's medicine song or covering them with a medicine coat forms the bridge over which they can cross back to their social individuality.

The question is then whether wechuge — 'too strong' is a psychosis. From a purely personal point of view it is, because individuality can only be social individuality. Its source — where, according to Beaver belief its strength comes from — is an unlimited real of 'freedom', of the realization of every possibility. It is by its nature undefined (the imagery of man-eating animals has no defining power), while individuality is by its nature defined through a relation to others. The source of strength, the source of individuality is not the 'true self'. In retreating to that source one only catches up with death. Eating one's own lips is a good image for this retreating-inward process.

But the point about wechuge is that the afflicted person does not in fact eat his own lips and does not die. There is a social aspect to wechuge behaviour which cross-cuts the categorization as psychosis. The society depends on members in free possession of their 'social space'. A person is free to express his individuality in symbolic behaviour that relates to his encounter with the animal spirits which, as we know, are double-natured. If someone trespasses on his personal space the individual is free to show his apotropaic face — to become himself a hunter and eater of men.

This essentially private process is a social safety valve. Beaver, who form small loosely structured groups of nomadic families are fearful of mingling with strangers because in the larger group, where people do not know one another, mistakes about taboos are easily made. In a wechuge possession, which is apt to happen on such occasions, the society expresses its own fear of consuming itself in people's not respecting one another's personal space, thus destroying the basis of adult independence and socially beneficent power. The cure lies in reinforcing independence and socially beneficent power by the application of its visible symbols: medicine bundle, song and coat. Especially the medicine bundle is a symbol of a man's hunting power and therefore of his most beneficent interaction with others.

2. *Kwakiutl*. People become individuals through isolation rituals, as adolescents or young adults. The isolation period is a period of desocialization, symbolised (in our case of the hamatsa novice) as identification with the Cannibal. We know from the myth that identifying with the Cannibal means accepting oneself in one's socially forbidden and therefore deeply repulsive form. The step demands such courage that it engenders pride. Displaying oneself in this form can become an addiction. The fear which one's unrepressed behaviour causes in others can feed a sense of power.

Psychologically, the danger point is the same as in Beaver wechuge: a loss of self that ends in death, through the adoption of a socially unrelated and mythically "limitless" self.

The difference is that while wechuge is socially sanctioned under certain circumstances the hamatsa performance is socially encouraged. It is not a defensive action triggered by a fear for one's personal space but an offensive one, a display of power and show of strength that insists on one's personal space. (Wechuge was probably histori-

cally used in the same way in the medicine fight.) Under these conditions, what does Kwakiutl society do to safeguard the novice's sanity?

The bridge the Kwakiutl build leads back — as with the Beaver — to society, to the novice's interrelation with other people. But the Kwakiutl do not cure the novice they 'tame' him — they do not lead him back to normally useful interaction, they exploit his freedom to make him the source of an ideal society. They use him to realise the dream of all human beings, to live in an association of the free.

One might think that this is only a way of spreading psychosis so that it becomes mass psychosis. But the Kwakiutl winter dance society is not orgiastic or anarchic. It is temporary: it lasts as long as the stores last and as long as the salmon remain in the deep sea. It is, as with the Beaver, simply an insistence on social space for everyone; but because the Kwakiutl were blessed with an unusually rich environment they could experiment with the abolishing of social hierarchy, the abolishing of labour and the sexual division of labour, with the setting up of a society that caught full self-expression in an overall balance. The symbols in which they expressed that society are strange and repellent to us, but surely no stranger than their visual art which we have learnt to appreciate.

Like art, the winter dance is not an answer, it is a piece of thinking, and the problems the Kwakiutl think about are the same as those we think about.

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