The Alaskan Athabaskan Potlatch Ceremony: An Ethnopsychoanalytic Study

L. Bryce Boyer, M.D.

Associate Director of Psychiatric Residency Training
Herrick Memorial Hospital, Berkeley

Ruth M. Boyer, Ph. D.
Research Associate
Lowie Museum of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley

Arthur E. Hippler, Ph. D.

Associate Professor of Anthropology
University of Alaska, Fairbanks

Reprinted from
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY
Volume 3 Number 3, © 1974

The Alaskan Athabaskan Potlatch Ceremony: An Ethnopsychoanalytic Study

L. Bryce Boyer, M.D.

Associate Director of Psychiatric Residency Training
Herrick Memorial Hospital, Berkeley

Ruth M. Boyer, Ph. D.
Research Associate
Lowie Museum of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley

Arthur E. Hippler, Ph. D.

Associate Professor of Anthropology
University of Alaska, Fairbanks

The psychotherapist who is confronted with patients who stem from sociocultural backgrounds quite different from his own will find them difficult to understand and treat, even though they may have character structures with features which are familiar to him. While a knowledge of the general principles of transcultural psychiatry will lighten his therapeutic burden, he will be especially helped by awareness of the psychological implications of the social structure of their groups of origins, as well as their socialization experiences, expectations, and communication qllusions.

When dealing with patients who stem from nonliterate groups, it is especially important that the therapist be cognizant of their folklore, ceremonies, and taboos, because much of their education has been transmitted by means of their oral and expressive literature and their veiled allusions to its themes often carry the essence of what they mean to communicate.

Including the Navahos, the Athabaskan Indians compose far and away the majority of Canadian and United States natives. In spite of this fact, psychotherapists who have treated Alaskan Athabaskan Indians have been ineffectual and have become disheartened. No sophisticated socialization studies exist and the oral and expressive literature have not been psychoculturally analyzed. However, in a continuing project of seventeen years' duration, which has included psychotherapy as a research tool among Athabaskans of the Southwest, it was found that knowledge of such phenomena made psychotherapy more effectual. This presentation uses social structural and socialization data in an ethnopsychoanalytical study of the most important ritual of the Alaska Athabaskans, their potlatch ceremony and its attending taboos.

Hollingshead and Redlich (1958) found that people with differing socioeconomic backgrounds had varying dominant personality structures, expectations, and modes of communication and that they sought and benefited from different kinds of psychotherapy. Transcultural psychiatric research has sought to determine the influence of cultural factors on the etiology and symptomatology of personality disorders and to establish general principles which might assist therapists in their efforts to understand and better treat people from divergent sociocultural backgrounds (Boyer, 1964b; Devereux, 1951; Galdston, 1963; Kiev, 1972; Opler, 1959).

However, no amount of familiarity with the basic principles of transcultural psychiatry can absolve the therapist from the obligation to learn about the patient's specific cultural background. Probably because there are more blacks in the United States than members of any other ethnic minority, the influence of their socialization and environment on their character structure and problems related to their psychotherapy have received more attention by American researchers than has been accorded any other group (Glicksberg, 1957; Kardiner, 1959; Meers, 1970, 1972; Meers and Gordon, 1972; Ohrback and Saxe, 1958; Rohrer et al., 1959; Sclare, 1953; Yamamoto et al., 1972). Increasing transcultural psychiatric attention has been paid also to American Indians (Boyer 1964c; Devereux, 1951, 1952; Freeman, 1968; Leighton and Kluckhohn, 1947).

Clinics in addition to that of the Alaska Psychiatric Institute in Anchorage are currently being set up in various Alaskan areas where psychotherapy is made available to aborigines, including Athabaskan Indians (Foulks, 1972). While there is a large anthropological literature pertaining to the Athabaskans of Alaska and Canada, no sophisticated socialization studies have been done; the existent psychological analyses of their oral literature, taboos, and rites are in general too superficial to be of use for therapists and there are no detailed reports of the psychological treatment of disturbed Athabaskans. In consequence, little is available to help the psychiatrists and paramedical personnel of the clinics understand the character structure, world view, and needs of their potential Athabaskan patients and make their clinical work easier, more interesting, and more efficacious.

The present contribution consists of an ethnopsychoanalytical study of the potlatch ceremony of the Alaskan Athabaskans, and its associated taboos.[1] The analysis of the ritual and its allied behavioral restrictions will provide psychotherapists with information concerning the expectations, character structure, and interpersonal problems of those Athabaskans. Its usefulness will not be limited, however, to Alaskan and Canadian ethnopsychiatrists.

It appears that Athabaskans share dominant personality attributes and a world view regardless of the social structure of the individual group, the length of time it has been separated from other Athabaskan groups, or the effects of acculturation (Boyer, Boyer, and Hippler, 1974). We know this to be true from personal experience with (1) the Chiricahua, Lipan, and Mescalero Apaches of the Mescalero Indian Reservation, Athabaskans who have been

separated from those of Alaska and Canada for over a thousand years and who have been dominated by whites for over a hundred years (Boyer 1964c; R. Boyer 1962); (2) the Tanainas who live on the shore of Lake Iliamna and have been influenced heavily by contacts with Eskimos, Haida Indians and the Tlingits, an Athabaskan group with a more elaborated social structure and expressive aspects of culture, although they share fundamental personality traits (Krause, 1885) and have had such intimate contact with whites during the past two hundred years that their surnames are all Scandinavian or Russian (Hippler, et al., a; Osgood, 1937); and (3) the Upper Tananas who live in the remote interior of Alaska and have been little influenced by Eskimos or non-Athabaskan-speaking Indians; and their meaningful contacts with whites having begun only during World War II (Allen, 1887; Hippler, et al, b; McKennan, 1959).

Briefly, the potlatch ceremony consists of the distribution of "gifts" following the death of an adult, and is an important means by which prestige can be acquired and maintained. The ceremony is still carried out in many interior Alaska Athabaskan villages (Balikci, 1963; Jenness, 1937; McKennan, 1969) and is considered by these Indians as their most significant ritual institution. They state that its purpose is to assuage the grief of the person who gives the "party," the potlatch man.

In this contribution, we present data primarily from the Upper Tanana, since our information concerning them is more complete than that pertaining to other groups who have or have had the ceremony. As is true for other Alaska Athabaskans, the Tanana are organized into matrilineal clans that are divided into phratries, each of which is divided into a dual moiety system. One must marry outside the matriline, preferably with a cross-cousin.

The ceremony usually occurs when a man who is matrilineally related to the deceased organizes a party some months or years after the burial. During the ritual, he customarily distributes presents among the important members of the lineage of the moiety opposite that of the dead person. Since members of the matriline are prohibited by taboo from touching the dead body of a matrilineal kinsman, they call up people from the moiety opposite that of the deceased to prepare the cadaver for burial. This service is recompensed by the gift distribution of the potlatch ceremony.

The members of the matriline of the deceased give presents to other members of the opposite moiety in addition to those who assisted them in the preparation of the body. The distribution of gifts is determined by a schedule which recognizes affinally based ties, political considerations, and expectations of future rewards. Thus, presents are bestowed upon important individuals of widespread settlements who may be but distantly related.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE POTLATCH

The children of a man, A, belong to his wife's matriline; he does not "own" them but rears them for her matriline. If his marriage were properly arranged, A and his clan are repaid through "owning" the children of his

wife's brother, who is married to A's actual or classificatory sister. He and the other powerful men in the exchanging clans act within a system of reciprocal obligations that leads, through the judicious use of arranged marriages, to maintaining implied contracts between the clans and a continuing gift exchange.

The presents which are donated at the potlatch ceremony have always been numerous and expensive; those given in an Upper Tanana ceremony held in 1971 were valued in excess of $10,000. The potlatch man who distributed them had to borrow from members of his matriline and to pay them usurious interest rates; he will be indebted for years.

As a man ages, he develops increasingly ramified relationships through his maturing offspring. At the same time, gift exchanges involve a growing number of persons who live in other communities and are related to him either matrilineally or affinally. He becomes the recipient of an expanding number of presents through other potlatches and, having progressively more people to whom he is obliged to give presents and more from whom to borrow, his political power gradually increases.

Aboriginally, intense hostilities existed among these small, isolated bands of mutually suspicious people. Informants regularly state that the relationships that were afforded by gift exchanges at potlatch ceremonies reduced the incidence of feuding and warfare and provided a basis for stable, predictable relationships outside the matrilineal clan. Additionally, the rite provided the incentive for the amassing of goods and a technique for their distribution in a physical environment in which capital accumulation might otherwise be seriously retarded. The gift exchanges also maintained a generally egalitarian level of wealth and reduced interfamilial envy. Capital goods, above those needed for subsistence, were collected largely to be used for the purposes of political influence and friendship.

Thus, functionally, the institution provided an acceptable distribution of capital and offered an incentive for saving. It helped maintain ties between groups and established and fulfilled mutual obligations and reciprocal expectations. Finally, it permitted subtle expressions of aggression and could signal distaste as well as desires for alliance.

However, even institutions that seem self-evident as to their meanings, when interpreted in a commonsense fashion, have additional functions at an unconscious or emotional level, functions which may be more important to individuals than those which are overt. We suggest that a principal reason for the existence and continuation of the potlatch ceremony is to be found in the provisions it makes for individuals to express emotional needs and defend themselves against anxieties in a group-supported manner.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE POTLATCH

We assume, as will be discussed below, that the major unconscious concerns which are reflected in the potlatch ceremony pertain to conflicts re-

garding the death of and ambivalent feelings toward the deceased loved one, and archaic notions about fusion with the parental image.

We turn initially to a brief overview of the psychodynamics of Alaska Athabaskans. To trace the origins of the psychodynamics, we first briefly present our conclusions concerning the effects of the environment on their lives and their socialization patterns.[2]

Athabaskan Psychodynamics

With few exceptions, the aboriginal Alaska Athabaskans lived in one of the harshest environments on earth that is humanly habitable, with average low winter temperatures of less than -50°F. Nearly devoid of dependable sources of protein and fat, they lived in small, isolated matrilineal family groups of ten to fifteen persons, widely separated from each other during the food-gathering period of the year, risking village groupings for but three or four months during winter, living off cached food. If too many people lived in the same area for too long, starvation would have been inevitable. As it was, hunger was endemic and starvation, periodic.

Socialization

Our notions about aboriginal Athabaskan socialization and its effects on their psychodynamics have been largely derived inferentially. We have come to the conclusions which follow by considering the implications of older informants' accounts, an intensive study of the published taboos, superstitions, and oral literature (Kluckhohn, 1942), and of the rich ethnographic record of the past two hundred years;[3] the results of Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Tests which we have administered; and finally, our observations of current child-rearing. We have visited the Tanainas and Upper Tananas; Hippler has studied the home life of Athabaskans who have moved to Fairbanks and he has spent varying periods in at least ten Athabaskan villages in addition to those studied conjointly.

We believe the aboriginal Alaska Athabaskan mother to have been matter of fact in her treatment of her babies, affording them care which was physically adequate when subsistence products were available, but which frequently lacked warmth and affection. Genealogical accounts suggests that, as recently as three generations ago, fifty to eighty percent of the children died before they reached the age of two years. We think that aboriginal parents developed a defensive noninvolvement with their very young children who were so likely to die, as certain Southern Athabaskans claim they did (R. Boyer, 1962).

Because the interaction between the mother and the infant is more decisive in regard to its early psychological development and its growing capacity for object relations than is that between the father and the very young child, we place most stress henceforth upon the psychology of the mother.

For reasons that will be given below, we assume that the aboriginal mother was a product of a child-rearing pattern which left her unconsciously jealous of and hostile toward infants, and unconsciously orally aggressive. As a child, to some degree, she became an emotional isolate who feared experiencing and expressing both the hostile and the loving components of her ambivalent feelings, first toward younger siblings; as an adult she had the same constellation of feelings about her children. Briefly, unconscious forces and the harsh reality of an infants's possible death by starvation combined to render her cold, distant and nonnurturant.

Thus, three critical factors came together in the early life of the aboriginal Alaska Athabaskan child, factors which had implications for its entire psychocultural development: (1) the fact of hunger, which was real and endemic, (2) the inevitable death of younger children, and (3) the relative emotional withdrawnness of the mother.

For the nursling, the experience of hunger resulting from a decrease in the food supply of the group is at first less immediate than it is for the older individuals. Nonetheless, if the mother's milk is chronically scanty or deficient, as a result of her own malnutrition, the baby may be affected psychophysiologically. He may feel both affect hunger and diffuse anxiety without clear mental conflict throughout his life (Greenacre, 1941).

All children go through a developmental phase in which they split the mothering figure into good and bad objects. Klein (1932, 1957) and Lewin (1950) have written of the youngster's simultaneous wish to orally destroy the bad breast/mother object and fear that the same object will destroy him and his wish to fuse with the good breast/mother object, either by means of eating or being eaten by it or her. The ego of the child comes to consist in large part of introjects of meaningful objects as they have been perceived by him (Freud, 1923).

Children who grow up in environments in which parental, particularly maternal, warmth is consistent are ordinarily able to correct their archaic evaluations of their mothering figures and thus eventually to surmount their primitive oral fears. As we know from our clinical practices, even among children with such fortunate backgrounds periods of stress result in regressive recathexes of such fears and primary process thinking. Such consistent emotional support is unavailable to the average Athabaskan child. His mother's capacity to react protectively and warmly is severely limited. The child's early negative picture of her is supported by reality.

The Athabaskan child grows up feeling that he is inferior, inadequate, and bad inside. The Upper Tananas are the least acculturated of the Athabaskans we have studied in Alaska and the Southwest. Their Rorschach protocols reveal a strikingly high number of responses involving diseased or deformed internal organs. We believe the development of the self-evaluation of badness to have at least two roots: (1) the child introjects the bad mother and (2) the overt attitude of parents toward their young is one of ridicule and debasement. It is commonplace to hear Athabaskan adults tell their children "You're no good" or "You don't know nuthin'."

There is a vastly prolonged psychological adolescence in Alaskan Athabaskan groups. Despite lip service to the contrary, people are not expected to behave as morally responsible adults until they become grandparents, as a rule at about the age of forty. The mother receives covert group approval for narcissistic behavior which deprives her young children of the consistent presence and warmth which is so necessary for their development of a sense of basic trust (Erikson, 1950) and psychological maturation. We do not know to what extent this state existed aboriginally. It is current and probably was found in the past among the Southern Athabaskan Chiricahua and Mescalero (Boyer and Boyer, 1975) and Kiowa Apaches (Freeman, 1968).

Among both those Apachean and the Alaska Athabaskan groups, the maternal grandmother affords the child more consistent and warmer care than does his mother, thus providing him with a factual "good mother" introject.[4] Despite the psychological sustenance this affords the child, we suspect that the ongoing presence of the factual good and bad mother objects may have a damaging psychological effect. The presence of the relatively good grandmother and the relatively bad mother in the child's environment may support the maintenance of the archaic psychological splitting; the child may continue to perceive his mother solely as a persecutor and be unable to appreciate the good qualities she has. The actual presence of the good and bad maternal objects may thus hamper the development of an ego that is capable of maintaining and resolving ambivalence toward whole objects.

Since socialization patterns tend to remain conservative despite acculturative changes (Boyer, Boyer, and Hippler, 1974; Lubart, 1970) we suppose the aboriginal Alaska Athabaskans to have developed personalities much like those we observe today. We also assume the existence then of a prolonged psychological adolescence which included the parents' placing narcissistic pursuits ahead of their children's welfare, although they consciously sought to "do their best" for their children.

To return to the interaction between the mother and the older nursling and toddler, we note that another characteristic of primary process thinking is the belief in fantasied omnipotence. When the mother is irritable, whether because of her own hunger, her guilt because her child is unhappy, or for some other reason, the little one, under the influence of his fantasized infantile omnipotence and applying the lex talionis, becomes fearful. At a later time, after his superego has begun to develop, he will also feel guilty. Even the mother's efforts to allay his anxieties may paradoxically result in his experiencing fear and guilt, since he will observe the sequence of mother's irritability and compensatory indulgence and believe he has caused her pain.

As the child's ego develops and his thinking becomes influenced to a greater degree by secondary process thinking, he will observe and feel grateful toward his mother because of her efforts to satisfy him. However, as the preceding material illustrates, his unconscious attitude toward his mother and her later surrogates will retain strong elements of confused anger and guilt. As he grows older and more babies appear, he will feel intense jealousy of them because of the relatively greater care they receive while being nursed. The

aboriginal child inevitably observed the deaths of most of his subsequent sibling rivals, thus experiencing situations that intensified his guilt and a belief in his omnipotence. Under those circumstances, the feelings of omnipotence were more terrifying than gratifying, since they supported his primitive fear that his anger, per se, could kill.

The jealous anger the infant felt when viewing his mother's care of the younger rival, however, came in conjunction with oral incorporative, loving wishes toward the mother. Thus, he might also interpret the frustration he experienced as punishment for the intensity of these positive emotions. Such dynamics are evident during the psychoanalyses of some neurotics when transference relationships contain strongly regressive elements and are blatant in the productions of psychotic patients. Given this constellation of infantile and early childhood experiences, the Alaska Athabaskan youngster comes to fear intense feelings, whether negative or positive, and values emotional and behavioral control. To have relatively shallow emotional ties with others would then seem to some degree desirable, even though such relationships are accompanied by feelings of loneliness and emptiness.

One defense which develops against the persistence of hatred toward the younger rival is reaction formation. Older Athabaskan siblings, particularly the girls, are expected on many occasions to take care of the toddler who has been displaced by the baby as the recipient of maternal care. Wanting approval from their parents, young girls welcome the opportunity to emulate their mothers' role as caretaker of the young. Additionally, they are impelled by wishes to deny their hostility toward the next younger sibling and by their empathy for the displaced toddler, who now suffers as they once did. The net result is that older children tend toward oversolicitousness toward the younger as a defensive and adaptive posture. In this way, babies of Athabaskan families grow up to be flagrantly "spoiled." Because of the entire constellation of the child-rearing circumstances, they possess very weak inner controls; their superegos are sadistically punitive and yet have serious lacunae.[5]

The development of reaction formation helped the youngster in his effort to repress his anger and his oral longings with their attendant guilt into his unconscious. But reaction formation is only unusually a very successful defense and at various times of stress fails utterly, whether briefly or for long periods. When its inhibitory effects are lost, there is a frightening return of the repressed. We do not discount the possibility that some young Athabaskan people develop the capacity to sublimate, but it is our impression that few do today. Thus anger, anxiety, and poor internal controls seem characteristic of the group.

The ethnographic record contains scant information pertaining to aboriginal cleanliness training, and today's parents are perhaps influenced by their interpretations of white standards when they state that toilet training should begin early and be strict. Nonetheless, such behavior is congruent with what is known of aboriginal times. For example, in one Upper Tanana household, we saw an unwed teenage mother's interactions with her five-month-old baby who lay in a hanging cradle. As the infant grimaced before

having a bowel movement, she yelled, "You're a bad baby, just trying to upset me," while her middle-aged mother placidly watched her behavior, thus at least covertly supporting it. We have had little opportunity to observe actual toilet training in the villages because of a paucity of children who were less than five years old, since today's Athabaskan girls often seek to marry whites or move elsewhere. Our observations, however, indicate that while parents may seek to make their children feel guilty because they have bowel movements, actual toilet training is highly inconsistent and in some cases may be almost nonexistent. When schoolchildren soil themselves, they and their peers appear to be scarcely concerned. To urinate in an inappropriate part of the school ground, however, may elicit strong peer disapproval.

We can infer that the youngster may be unable to gratify and control his mother through efforts to keep himself clean and that he gets little actual support in this area through efforts to grow up and develop inner controls. He cannot use this means to warm the mother, whom he perceives to be cold. We infer also that the oboriginal child received similar treatment.

While we have little observational data on the oedipal development of Alaska Athabaskan children and our conclusions are largely inferentially derived, it appears that this period reinforced the above-noted problems.

Among the Tanaina, who were influenced heavily by the Tlingit and the Haida, in the past a mother's brother is reported to have served effectively as his nephew's disciplinarian and educator in hunting and fishing techniques and folklore, since he was a leading male in the boy's clan. These esteemed roles, on the other hand, were denied the boy's own father. Unless the father had a reputation for unusual prowess in the community, we assume he may have appeared weaker to the son than did the mother's brother. Add to this the situation wherein parental sexual activities could not be entirely hidden from children. The actual oedipal rival of the boy, the father, was a man consciously viewed as comparatively weak, and the boy's sexual strivings toward his mother, however unconscious they may have seemed, added one more psychological threat to be faced. Our observations of the behavior of today's adults confirm this assumption.

The subsistence patterns of the Upper Tanana were more typical for Alaska Athabaskans. Among them, while the father reared his children for another matriline and mother's brother reciprocated, the small bands who hunted and fished for some eight months of the year did not in fact include the maternal uncle. During the long periods when the father was away from the camp, hunting caribou and sheep (moose were not available to them until the last thirty years or so), he was accompanied only by prepubertal and older sons who were strong enough to be of physical service. During the four months when the Indians who now live at Fish Lake, Highway Point, and Caribou Springs were together in their permanent houses at Old Village,[6] the men and older boys lived in the men's house, apart from their mothers, sisters and younger brothers, and cooked for themselves. Old Fish Lake informants say the men also used to do their own cooking while camping.

In the past, all of the Alaska Athabaskans isolated pubertal girls for

months. They were placed in huts far from the camp and visited only by females who brought their food. Today's pubescent girls are isolated, but far less stringently and for shorter periords. Women who were menstruating or in childbirth were also secluded, again, more stringently than today. However, blood from female genitalia continues to be considered poisonous. Many taboos can only be understood to mean that bleeding women are dangerous and degraded. Undoubtedly, the isolated girls were terrified and lonely in the factually hostile environment, which was peopled by imaginary monsters. We may assume that, with their tendency to judge themselves as bad, they blamed themselves for their menstrual bleeding. The treatment afforded them, however rationalized, suggests that it resulted partly from female rivalry and jealousy toward younger siblings and mothers and partly from male hostility toward women, hostility which, as we have noted, had its roots in their early relationships with their mothers. That the women tolerated such treatment, even considered it to be logical, suggests the degree to which they believed themselves to be bad and dangerous. That mothers permitted such treatment to be inflicted on their daughters bespeaks another dimension of emotional distress. At the same time, such treatment of girls undergoing unavoidable, natural physical experiences must have resulted in resentment.

Perhaps one motive for the men's preference for cooking for themselves and living apart was their fear of the dangerous, poisonous attributes they ascribed to their womenfolk, who concurrently may well have been struggling to control their anger against men.

The younger Upper Tanana children were continually with their mothers. There was no way they could avoid perceiving at times the excitements of their parents during sexual relations. Under such circumstances, all young children feel stimulated and interpret their parents' actions and exhibitions of passion in terms of their own levels of understanding, which are colored by oral and anal aggressive concerns. Those concerns would have been amplified by the actually hostile nature of the sexual relations between the parents. The young observers also want to experience the sensations of both parents, even though they fear doing so. Such events can contribute to later problems concerning one's self-image and a lack of clear sexual identity.

When the father was absent, the little boy's proximity to his mother probably made him fear he would lose control of his wishes to imitate his father's actions with her and risk being the object of her passion. If the boy did not spontaneously invest his mother's vagina with teeth in his fantasies, later exposure to the oral literature which will be discussed below would reinforce his earlier unconscious view that the mother whom he knowingly or unknowingly perceived to be enticing might destroy him or his penis.

The successful resolution of oedipal conflicts depends on the child's having satisfactorily coped with preoedipal concerns. Among the Alaska Athabaskans, they are not adequately resolved. The as yet incompletely analyzed Rorschach protocols of individuals of all ages and both sexes from Fish Lake reveal gross confusion of oral and genital phenomena. As noted

earlier, the records of teenagers and adults are laden with responses which indicate very strong worries about bad, diseased, internal bodily organs. Sexual activities are presented thinly veiled as bloody battles which involve cannibalism. The degree of barely controlled aggression to be found in the protocols and their general primitiveness is remarkable. It would be difficult to ascribe the psychological problems which are so blatant in the protocols to the effects of acculturation. The people of Fish Lake have had meaningful contact with whites for only thirty-five years and the records of middle-aged and older people are not materially different from those of teenagers.

Oral Literature

We are concerned here only with some of the psychological functions of the oral literature of the Upper Tananas (Bascom, 1954; Boyer and Boyer, 1967; Dundes, 1965, pp. 177-78). Folklore provides a group-supported means of expression of individuals' asocial urges in ways that alleviate the anxiety which would be experienced in private rather than shared fantasies. The major concerns common to members of a group are expressed in its oral literature, whether it has arisen within the society or been accepted as the result of diffusion (Boyer, 1975). To uncover the unconscious concerns requires the interpretation of the folklore material as though it consisted of individual dreams (Freud, 1900).

We have noted how the child who perceives his caretaker as cold splits her and the maternal introject into the "good" and "bad" mothers. In an effort to deny that he perceives his mother and himself as bad, he projects the good and bad mother introjects onto the universe and peoples it with saviors and baneful figures. The manifest symbols which constitute the good and bad demons of the child's fantasies and nightmares gradually include and may be mostly supplanted by religious and other folklore figures which are supplied during his socialization.

If the youngster is reassured by his childhood experiences, his id-ego differentiation will be encouraged, and he will more easily become able to use more mature defensive techniques than the primitive splitting, projection, and introjection in his efforts to adapt.

For Alaska Athabaskans, the demons are omnipresent and very real. All of the Upper Tanana, regardless of age or degree of acculturation, appear to be convinced that the universe is populated with a variety of frightening figures. We shall interpret here only a few of the recurrent themes and ogres of their oral literature, most of which seem obvious. Those who are interested in the stories themselves are referred to McKennan (1959) and Hippler, Boyer and Boyer (b).

In the demonic pantheon, some figures are vague and shadowy and are dangerous in mysterious ways. We assume that they represent free-floating, unbound anxiety and guilt. Others have sharp teeth and devour humans. They do to people what the frustrated child wanted to do to his mother and others

and feared they would do to him. Some steal children who are surrogates of successful sibling rivals, and remove them forever. The themes of many stories, as exemplified by the Raven Tale Cycle, include manifest confusion of oral, anal, and genital concerns. In some stories, females isolate and degrade men, some of whom have been injured and are bleeding. This theme suggests retaliation by women for the treatment they were afforded while menstruating. A great number of tales include overt murder, reflecting the intense intersexual hostility so manifest among the young people of Fish Lake. The mythology is replete with overt dentate vaginas which chew off penises; in one case, the villainess made a chain of penises she had bitten off with her toothed genital. She could be overcome only by having a log four feet long rammed into her rapidly chewing vagina, which had splintered other logs. Other stories, too, picture in graphic forms the uses of phallic symbols as weapons against women, reflecting thereby the view present in the Rorschach protocols and everyday conversations of drunken men and women that sexual encounters are dangerous to either participant and constitute potentially deadly battles.

We could discuss more of the socialization experiences of the growing child and adolescent and their reflection in the oral literature, but to do so would add little which would be relevant to the present communication. They tend to reinforce the early childhood conflicts. At the same time, the cultural heritage provided means for creatively integrating residual cares and anxieties into values and customs as well as institutional behaviors, as must that of any enduring society. The potlatch ceremony is an interesting expression of this creativity and of the human capacity to integrate terrifying emotional forces for the common good.

The Potlatch Ceremony

The potlatch was ordinarily given for matrilineal kinsmen and the ceremony given by a son for his mother was the most important. In effect, it was given by the entire matrilineal clan for any of its members. Though the ceremony was performed as an overt expression of the importance of the potlatch man himself, the gift-giving served as payment for the caring for the body of the deceased.

According to Freud (1913), in the primitive, infantile, emotional organization the difference between the sacred and the unclean is indistinct and taboos constitute prohibitions against doing that which is deeply desired. The unconscious wish to kill the kin is the genesis of the fear of touching him. We may assume that the taboo which prohibited members of the matriline from touching the body of the consciously revered dead person reflects their unconscious murderous wishes, or their wishes to defile the body in some manner. We believe they feared retribution by the affronted ghost of the deceased. The Upper Tanana, as indeed do all Athabaskans, overtly express an abiding fear of ghosts.

The dynamics are clearest in the case of the son who gives a potlatch for his mother. We assume that whoever conducts the rite is a substitute for the son and that whoever died is the unconscious surrogate for the mother. The son's ambivalent feelings toward his mother are displaced onto other members of her matriline. Extending Kris' (1952) concept of regression in the service of the ego, we can say that the regressive use of the primary process *pars pro toto* equation is used in the service of the group. If we remember that the Upper Tanana child developed ambivalent feelings toward both his mother and siblings, members of his matriline, that he feared the omnipotence of his wishes to harm them, and the timelessness of unconscious wishes and evaluations, it seems likely that those archaic desires generated both guilt over the death of the ambivalently loved clansman and talion anxiety of retribution by his ghost.

We are thus offered a clue not only to the reasons for the taboo against touching dead matrilineal kinsmen but also to the need for payment of others for preparing the cadaver for burial. Paternal relatives were considered to be outsiders, too distant from the dead person to fear the malevolence of his ghost, which would be directed at his loved ones. At the same time, the long-established system of mutual obligations that were maintained with another matriline had bound them to undertake the potentially dangerous duty.

We must wonder why a simple exchange of death duties did not serve as an adequate compensation. One possible reason is that the giving of a potlatch was itself a reaffirmation of clan solidarity in the face of the mutual, unconscious, destructive wishes of its members. The potlatch man had to indebt himself to his clansmen, an action which permitted them to share in his expiation of guilt. If we venture to assume that the goods which were amassed by the matrilineal group symbolized ambivalently viewed representates of mother, we can then postulate that the taking of the gifts in the potlatch exchange carried with it an unconscious meaning of taking in parts of mother and that the presenting of them to others symbolized a denial, an undoing, of having done so. We could further suppose that the gifts which were passed on to others represented good things which could be ejected or excreted.

We noted earlier competitive aspects of the potlatch, as well as those which were directed to the aggrandizement of the potlatch man. Upper Tanana society was hierarchically organized and deference to authority, whether to members of one's own matriline or the chief, was strongly ingrained. We suggest that both elements of subservience toward authority and acceptable expressions of sibling rivalry are involved.

We postulated above that Upper Tanana boys aboriginally had difficulties in resolving oedipal problems for a number of reasons: they had been unsuccessful in resolving preoedipal conflicts, had been subjected to repeated primal scene traumata, and had periods of proximity to their mothers in intimate situations in the absence of the father. The Rorschach responses and the oral literature suggest that unconscious problems exist pertaining to the self-image and sexual identity. We did not find evidence of overt adult

homosexuality. There were many instances of shared visits to prostitutes and Don Juanism, activities which would suggest a need to repetitively prove masculinity. Among the Apaches, who shared all of the aforementioned phenomena, latent homosexuality created strong conflicts among the men (Boyer, 1964b). It is likely that the Upper Tanana boys did identify with their mothers to some degree. To do so would result in their taking a relatively passive position vis-a-vis their fathers, an attitude which could symbolize sexual receptiveness toward them. Previously men are said to have been very deferential to their fathers. The institution of the absolute chief supports this notion. We have already noted the presence of great sibling rivalry and attendant anxieties relating to it.

In the light of these data, we might view the potlatch man as deferring to authorities, father surrogates, and using subtle techniques for the derogations of brother surrogates.

The Potlatch Taboos

An examination of the taboos associated with the potlatch ceremony reveals that it serves more detailed and subtle psychological functions. The taboos, as presented by McKennan (1959), follow.

Gifts received at one potlatch may not be given at another.

For three days immediately following the potlatch, the potlatch man may not lie down but must sit constantly with his knees doubled up before him and hold them there with clasped hands. He may eat nothing but a special kind of grass seed.

For ten days following the potlatch, he must never lie at length but must keep his legs folded under him. He must keep his hands clenched. He may not handle fire without wearing mittens. He may not allow women to see his teeth. He may not cross water.

For 100, 90, 80, etc. days following the potlatch, he may not eat the heads of animals but must subsist largely on soup and eat sparingly of meat. He must suck water through a bone tube. He may not cut meat lest he get blood on his hands. He must not spit. He must cache his excrement in a tree to prevent its being eaten by dogs.

The psychological functions of the potlatch ceremony was stated explicitly to be that of enabling the potlatch man to complete the mourning process (Freud, 1917). If the potlatch giver acted in accordance with all of the rules associated with the rite, he would be "reborn as a new man" (McKennan, 1959).

We propose that as an innocent newborn, he was to be finally purged of unconscious cannibalistic urges, the ultimate function of which had been to reestablish intimate contact with the deceased through incorporation. In addition, the rite permitted him to discharge toward the dead, hostile impulses

which had been but partially discharged by projecting them onto demons and ghosts.

Today's informants are unable to give coherent reasons for the various taboos. In their absence, however, we can postulate some meanings.

The prohibition against giving gifts received at one potlatch as presents for another served both social and psychological purposes. The gift was given in honor of the dead. Presenting it to someone at another potlatch would imply that the initial recipient did not prize it enough to keep it in memory of the first deceased person, that is, did not hold him or her in sufficient respect. The spirit of that person would be affronted by the second giving and might choose to harm the recipient-donor.

For three days following the ceremony, the potlatch man was to sit with his knees drawn up before him and clasped by his hands. The immobility which was to be assumed resembles death. Formerly, the spirit of the deceased would not or could not leave the neighborhood of the corpse until its mourning process and that of its relatives had been completed and the spirit had been appeased for wrongs it had suffered while living. The imitation death was supernaturally prescribed. We can understand it to symbolize the mourning period. We see also the projection onto the supernatural of death wishes toward the person who had died on the part of the potlatch man and the people whom he represented. He was punished symbolically according to the lex talionis. After his "death" the spirit of the dead could finally leave.

It is, we believe, symbolic of this entire process of rebirth that the Upper Tanana potlatch giver could finally renounce the intrauterine position he was forced to take only at the conclusion of the three days.

During the three days, he could eat nothing but certain grass seeds. Meat was proscribed. This can be understood as another reference to defenses against cannibalistic urges toward the mother-surrogate. We can only wonder whether the seeds symbolize ovules and potential sibling rivals.

Some of the elements of the taboos which determined the potlatch man's subsequent behavior are reminiscent of the infant's postnatal sequential actions. The man was to keep his legs folded under him when lying down. Except under unusual cradling positions such as are assumed by certain Southern Athabaskans (R. Boyer, 1962), the infant does not lie with his legs outstretched until after he has begun to learn to walk. The potlatch giver was to suck water through a bone tube and conceal his teeth from women; the nursling has no teeth for some months. After he could reveal his teeth, the potlatch man was still to eat sparingly of meat and subsist largely on soup. The diet of the infant only gradually comes to include solids. He was not to cut meat lest he get blood on his hands. In this, as in most societies, the toddler is thought not to have the capacity to use dangerous tools safely. At yet another level, such prohibitions may reflect both a recognition of the infant's oral aggressive urges and their resultant talion anxiety. Finally, the potlatch man must hide his excrement and this reminds us of cleanliness training, as does the prohibition against spitting.

While many of these actions are no doubt overdetermined, they seem to point clearly in the direction of infantile concerns, and thus to reinforce the notion of the potlatch as a period of rebirth. In fact, the earliest mother-child relationships have many qualities which are reminiscent of prenatal existence. As the child matures, the symbiotic phase is gradually supplanted by separation and individuation (Mahler, 1968). The wish to be in a situation without frustration is often expressed as a wish to return to intrauterine existence. In primary process thinking, that can be achieved either by reentering the mother or by ingesting her. In either case, the reestablishment of the psychological syncytium of the symbiotic phase is expressed in physical terms. Thus, one can ingest the mother by gathering gifts and reenter and ingest her before being reborn.

The taboo which makes the potlatch man keep his hands clenched is of a similar nature. To keep one's hands closed is to deny the wish to grab, the existence of greed or, ultimately, the oral incorporative mode. At the same time, to make a fist betrays the wish to hit someone perceived to have been thwarting, as mother was. Once again, the concealment of the teeth denies impulses to express oral needs or aggression by biting or even to cannibalize. The prohibition against getting blood on the hands denies the wish to murder and be caught red-handed.

In the context of birth and postnatal life, the taboo against crossing water can be understood as a denial of a wish to reenter the womb, where, in fantasy, one can be totally satisfied without behavioral restriction. The potlatch giver was not supposed to eat meat, symbolically not to express his love and hate through cannibalism.

The prohibitions against spitting and leaving excrement on the ground are more overdetermined. In Athabaskan witchcraft practices, parts of cadavers or items which have touched them are agents that can be used to harm the living. Parts of living people can be used against them, such as hair, fingernail clippings or excreta, whether spit, nasal secreta, feces, urine or menstrual effluvia. In unconscious thinking, those excreta are living body parts. The potlatch man was to cache his feces in a tree to prevent their being eaten by dogs. The small child views his feces as valuable. In terms of his relations with his mother, he has some power over her, if she is concerned with his cleanliness, through his giving his feces to her on her terms, or withholding them. The cache is a place for the safekeeping of valuables. Dogs and other canines are *betes noires* for Athabaskans.

The same frightening qualities are projected onto canines as are projected onto the imaginary monsters, many of which are both furry and humanoid, that populate the world of the Upper Tanana. Witches and the demons are replacements for "bad" parents, upon whom are projected the undesired attributes of the living. In the taboo, wishes are ascribed to the dogs to eat the feces of the potlatch man. We can assume that the danger involved is that of witchcraft. We have seen that on a deep psychological level, the mourning process of which the potlatch is a part constitutes a reenactment of the

problems of the baby in leaving the symbiotic phase with its psychological continuity with the mother. Thus, it is the mother who wants to fuse with the child, by oral incorporation, to eat the living body part of the baby, the feces. The wish to be reunited with her is projected onto the dog.

The potlatch man could not eat the heads of animals. Many preliterates everywhere consciously, and everyone else unconsciously, as clinical evidence indicates, believe that to eat the brains enables one to take over the thinking powers and certain behavioral characteristics of the person or animal whose brain was ingested. We can suppose that, were the potlatch man in his role of young child to eat the heads of animals, he would assume some of their traits before he was old enough to use them in an adultlike, controlled manner. He might become unduly wild, uninhibited, in his actions. It may be of note that this taboo applied also to adolescent Upper Tanana boys. Adolescence is a period when oedipal and preoedipal conflicts are revived, to be reorganized on the adult level.

Among the Upper Tanana taboos was the feeding of animal heads to dogs. In the excrement taboo of the post-potlatch period, dogs were to be deprived of the potlatch man's excrement. Perhaps, we have here a kind of equation of the feces with the animal heads, but with, in a sense, opposite results. If the dog were to eat the feces, he might take over undesirable qualities of the potlatch man and his ascribed primitive wishes might be even less controlled. Both dogs and the potlatch man were thus equated. This would appear to present further confirmation that the dog was a projection of the bad parts of the mourner.

At the funerals of Mescalero and Chiricahua Apaches, individuals surreptitiously spit as a defense against the dangerous spirit of the corpse, a practice reminiscent of the actions of some Jews and southern Italians who spit to avert the evil-eye. The agent that can be used by the witch to harm is used to defend against the hostile wish which has been projected onto the ghost, an example of reverse magic. The potlatch man was not to spit. We can interpret his spittle both as an agent that could be used to hurt him and as a defense against the assumed bad wishes of the dead. At the same time, the need to swallow rather than expectorate the saliva can be viewed as caching or hiding it. Here again, the wish to be reunited with the mother is projected onto the spirit of the dead.

In the feces taboo, the excrement was to be cached in a tree. In unconscious thinking, the tree has various elements which cause it to be equated with the woman. Its bole, if hollowed out for a cache, may represent the mother's body. Where the trunk or a limb branches, there is a resemblance to the legs coming from the body and the zone between the branches is perceived as the vaginal area. Yet again, leafy branches in the language of the dream are sometimes equated with pubic hair. Thus, at the same time the feces are hidden from the dog and the wish to be incorporated by the mother is denied, its presence is betrayed by the symbolic replacement of the feces into the

mother. Understood in terms of the *pars pro toto* equation, the potlatch man as baby attains reunion with the mother.

Finally, a last taboo. The potlatch man, like the menstruating woman, could not handle fire without wearing mittens. Leaving aside why they shared the status of being dangerous, we must wonder why just this taboo applied to both. The punishment for the woman's defiance of the prohibition was broken fingers. Perhaps in this instance fire is equated with sexual passion and the punishment for her giving in to masturbation urges while she was deprived of sexual congress was the breaking of the offending fingers, as in some cultures the offending hand of the thief is severed. Maybe the taboo also symbolically prohibited masturbation by the potlatch man. We might entertain yet another supplementary possibility. If the analysis which has preceded is valid, the potlatch man was unconsciously perceived to be a pregenital child and, in a sense, undifferentiated as yet into male or female. We might add at this point that not only the potlatch man had to suck water through a bone tube but so did the pubertal girl during her isolation, as does the Apache girl during her puberty ceremony.

We may conjecture that a further function of making the potlatch man into a pregenital child might be to prevent a possible attempt to gratify necrophilic incestuous wishes which could serve the purposes of discharging sadistic wishes or achieving fusion through sexual union (Calef and Weinshel, 1972). Finally, his need to suck water in the manner of the pubescent girl might constitute a highly disguised statement that his ritualistic imitation of the intrauterine baby during the symbolic mourning period did indeed achieve a temporary union with the mother surrogate.

Concluding Remarks

Particularly since World War II, psychiatrists in the United States have been paying increasing heed to the special problems which are encountered in the treatment of varying ethnic and socioeconomic groups. The study of the effects of the environment and socialization upon the psychological development of blacks has progressed more rapidly than has that of native Americans and as a result, some psychiatrists have begun to feel more secure in treating the former. The ethnopsychiatric study of native Americans, such as Indians and Eskimos, has lagged.

Athabaskan-speaking Indians constitute by far the largest number of native Americans. They include many groups in Alaska, the Navahos and the Apachean Tribes of the Great Southwest, and very small numbers elsewhere.

The socialization patterns of Athabaskans are such that much hostility develops toward family members; this must be projected onto and discharged against outsiders, cultural bogeys, witches and ghosts in order for the group to function. The personal price paid in unease by individuals is high. The men are less secure than the women in their personal and sexual identities, but the vast majority of Athabaskans are anxious and suspicious; they have inconsistent

areas of ego and superego development. Athabaskans appear to share dominant personality traits and conflicts regardless of the degree of acculturation to which the group has been subjected or the differences in social structure to be found in individual groups.

An ethnopsychiatric literature about the Navahos and Apaches is developing, but none exists to help psychiatric personnel who have recently become involved in treating the Alaskan Athabaskans. While by far the largest number of today's Athabaskans are schooled to some degree, they stem from nonliterate societies. Much of their traditional education has consisted of hearing oral literature and observing rituals and their communications involve vital allusions to folkloristic phenomena.

Because of the shared personality traits and conflicts of Athabaskans, ethnopsychoanalytic study, including analysis of the folklore (Boyer 1964a, 1965, 1975; Boyer and Boyer, 1967) and rites of one group will assist psychiatrists who deal with members of another.

This article constitutes an ethnopsychoanalytic analysis, using combined anthropological and psychoanalytic methods, of the most important continuing ritual of the Alaska Athabaskans, their potlatch ceremony.

It was found that the principal unconscious concerns which are reflected in the potlatch ceremony pertain to ambivalent love and hatred toward the dead person who belongs to the matriline and serves as a mother surrogate. The ritual helps people to defend themselves against hostile impulses toward the person who has died and his corpse, and the guilt which emanates from those wishes; it also helps them to avoid some anxiety related to desires to fuse with the maternal imago via cannibalism and possibly by sexual relations with the corpse, as a substitute for the sleeping mother.

The information about the Alaskan Athabaskans to be found in this article should enable psychiatrists to anticipate certain aspects of transferential relationships which might develop during intensive psychotherapy with them. Psychiatrists should be alerted to the possibility of the emergence of intensely ambivalent love and hate feelings which might result in overt actions, of the development of deep desires for and fears of dependency, of the emergence of suspiciousness which can become openly paranoid, and of the various manifestations of sexual identity confusion, at least among males. Unless the psychiatrist is well aware of transference manifestations and qualified to deal with them, has become well acquainted with the culture of these Indians, and unless he is prepared to spend many months if not years in their individual treatment, he would probably achieve more and have less difficulty if he were to avoid intensive psychotherapy with them.

Notes

[1]The field work on which this paper is based was funded by NIMH Grant DERMPH 16338-01-1 R03 MSM. Institutional support was provided by the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, University of Alaska, and assistance was provided also by the Alaska Psychiatric Institute.

Boyer, Ruth M. (1962), *Social Structure and Socialization Among the Apaches of the Mescalero Indian Reservation.* Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.

Calef, Victor, and Edward M. Weinshel (1972), On certain neurotic equivalents of necrophilia. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis.* 53:67-75.

Devereux, George (1951), *Reality and Dream: Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian.* New York: International Universities Press.

———(1952) *Vie Sexuelle et Psychopathologie des Indiens Mohave.* Paris: Gallimard.

Dundes, Alan (1965), *The Study of Folklore.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Erikson, Erik H. (1950), *Childhood and Society.* New York: Norton.

Foulks, Edward F. (1972), *The Arctic Hysterias of the North Alaskan Eskimo.* Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

Freeman, Daniel M. A. (1968), Adolescent crises of the Kiowa-Apache Indian male. In *Minority Group Adolescents in the United States.* E. B. Brody, ed. Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins. pp. 157-203.

Freud, Sigmund (1900), The interpretation of dreams. *Standard Edition,* London: Hogarth Press, 1953. Vols. 4 and 5.

———(1913), Totem and taboo. *Standard Edition,* 13:1-161. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.

———(1917), Mourning and melancholia. *Standard Edition,* 14:237-258. London: Hogarth Press, 1957.

———(1923), The ego and the id. *Standard Edition,* 19:3-68. London: Hogarth Press, 1961.

Galdston, Iago, ed. (1963), *Man's Image in Medicine and Anthropology.* New York: International Universities Press.

Glicksberg, Charles I. (1957), Psychoanalysis and the Negro problem. *Phylon Quarterly,* 17:41-51.

Greenacre, Phyllis (1941), The predisposition to anxiety. In *Trauma, Growth and Personality.* New York: Norton, pp. 27-82.

Hippler, Arthur E., Boyer, L. Bryce, Boyer, Ruth M., and Day, Richard (a), *A Psychoethnography of the Upper Tanana of Alaska.* Unpublished ms.

Hippler, Arthur E., Boyer, L. Bryce, Boyer, Ruth M., and Day, Richard (b) *A Psychoethnography of the Western Tanaina of Alaska.* Unpublished ms.

Hollingshead, August B., and Fredrick C. Redlich, (1958) *Social Class and Mental Illness. A Community Study.* New York: Wiley.

Jenness, D. (1937), *The Sekani Indians of British Columbia,* National Museum of Canada, Bull. No. 84, Anthropool. Ser., No. 20, Ottawa.
Kardiner, Abram (1959), Explorations in Negro personality. In *Culture and Mental Health,* Marvin K. Opler, ed. New York: Macmillan. pp. 413-423.
Kiev, Ari (1972), *Transcultural Psychiatry.* New York: The Free Press.
Klein, Melanie (1932), *The Psycho-Analysis of Children.* London: Hogarth Press, 4th ed., 1950.
Klein, Melanie (1957), *Envy and Gratitude.* New York: Basic Books.
Kluckhohn, Clyde (1942), Myths and rituals: A general theory. *Harvard Theological Review,* 35:45-80.
Krause, Aurel (1885), *The Tlingit Indians.* Verne F. Ray, ed., Erna Gunther, trans. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1954.
Kris, Ernst (1952), *Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art.* New York: International Universities Press.
Leighton, Dorothea, and Clyde Kluckhohn (1947), *Children of the People.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Lewin, Bertram D. (1950), *The Psychoanalysis of Elation.* New York: Norton.
Lubart, Joseph M. (1970), *Psychodynamic Problems of Adaptation: Mackenzie Delta Eskimos.* Ottawa: Queen's Printer for Canada.
Mahler, Margaret S. (1968), *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation: Infantile Psychosis.* New York: International Universities Press.
McKennan, Robert A. (1959), *The Upper Tanana Indians.* Yale University Publications in Anthropology, Vol. 55. New Haven: Department of Anthropology, Yale University.
———(1969) Athabaskan groupings and social organization in central Alaska. National Museum of Canada, Bulletin 228, Paper No. 4, pp. 93-115.
Meers, Dale R. (1970), Contributions of a ghetto culture to symptom formation: psychoanalytic studies of ego anomalies in childhood. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child,* 25:209-230.
———(1972), Crucible of ambivalence: sexual identity in the ghetto. *Psychoanalytic Study of Society,* 5:109-135.
———and Gene Gordon (1972), Aggression and ghetto-reared American Negro children. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly,* 41:585-607.
Ohrbach, Channing H., and Carl H. Saxe (1958), Role confusion in a Negro-Indian Woman. In *Clinical Studies in Culture Conflict,* G. H. Seward, ed. New York: Ronald Press. pp. 125-150.
Opler, Marvin K., ed. (1959), *Culture and Mental Health.* New York: Macmillan.
Osgood, Cornelius (1937), *The Ethnography of the Tanaina.* Yale University Publications in Anthropology, 16. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Rapaport, David (1951), Toward a theory of thinking. In *Organization and Pathology of Thought,* D. Rapaport, ed. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. 689-730.
Rohrer, John H., M. S. Edmondson, Wm. C. Thompson, D. C. Thompson, and Harold I. Lief (1959), *The Eighth Generation: Cultures and Personalities of New Orleans Negroes.* New York: Harper.
Sclare, A. B. (1953), Cultural determinants in the neurotic Negro. *British Journal of Medical Psychology,* 26:278-288.
Seward, Georgene Hoffman, ed. (1958), *Clinical Studies in Culture Conflict.* New York: Ronald Press.
Yamamoto, J., F. Dixon and M. Bloombaum (1972), White therapists and Negro patients. *Psychiatry Digest,* May 1973, p. 41.

Dr. L. Bryce Boyer is a widely published psychoanalyst who has written on schizophrenia and character disorders and, with his coauthors, on a variety of anthropological subjects. He holds a number of consulting positions in these areas and has been engaged in extensive psychoanalytically-oriented anthropological researches.

Dr. Ruth M. Boyer is a research associate at the Lowie Museum of Anthropology of the University of California, Berkeley, and, with her doctorate in anthropology, holds a number of consultantships in this area.

Dr. Arthur E. Hippler is Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Alaska and has published many articles and books describing his anthropological studies, including those related to the Eskimos, American Indians, American Negroes, and issues in culture and personality.

Send reprint requests to: L. Bryce Boyer, M.D., 3021 Telegraphic Ave., Berkeley, Ca. 94705

Soul Murder: A Review

Leonard Shengold M.D.

Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry
Downstate Medical Center
State University of New York

The concept of Soul Murder—*a term coined by Strindberg and popularized in psychiatry by Schreber's* Memoirs—*is far more important than would appear from Schatzman's account, which is based largely on Niederland's fine work on Schreber's father. The complete subjection of one individual to another—which has become such a central political problem in this century of brainwashing, concentration camps, and* 1984—*derives genetically from the plight of the powerless child in the hands of psychopathic or psychotic parents (or their substitutes). The child's identity can be shattered; the capacity for love and joy can be destroyed. Being in the complete power of the persecutory parent frequently means needing to turn to that very parent for rescue. The child must deny what he has experienced since, to survive, he needs to "love Big Brother," as Orwell puts it. Paradoxically, the results of soul murder (if the child survives) are not always completely destructive, do not always (Schatzman to the contrary) lead to psychosis, and sometimes may even evoke creativity. Since soul murder leads to the most important problems of pathogenesis and creativity, it deserves a much deeper study than Schatzman has furnished.*

After fifty years during which *concentration camp* and *brainwashing* have become familiar words, we are approaching *1984*. Soul murder—the extinction of a person's individuality—has become not only a private but a public technique. Schatzman's book may well become popular; the story of the relations between Schreber and his father, from which the author derives his generalizations, will fascinate those who come to it for the first time. Almost all the material about Schreber's father is a re-presentation of Niederland's work. Schatzman's own views, expressed sometimes tentatively and sometimes dogmatically, are too confused and shallow to do justice to a subject that is central to the human condition, involving as it does the vulnerability of the human being, and especially of the child, to the basic trauma of overstimulation. But Schatzman's book has a symptomatic interest—the tone of the times is in it.

The reduction of a human being to a puppet arouses dreadful fascination; it touches off primal fears and wishes. Yet a paradox exists. In a recent television colloquy with R. D. Laing, Norman Mailer commented, after seeing a