

EL TOPO

PART ONE



When a man buries a pole in the sand,
he automatically creates a sundial and begins to mark time.
To begin marking time is to begin creating a culture.

A pole rises out of the desert sand.
El Topo appears riding a black horse.
He is dressed entirely in black:
boots, pants, shirt, jacket, hat.
He carries an open umbrella.

**[Strange to carry an umbrella in the desert
where it never rains! Perhaps El Topo is
waiting for the rain to come forth from his body
to collect it in the black chalice: the umbrella.]**

His seven-year-old son rides behind him,
holding on to his back. Except for a hat and
moccasins, the child is nude. His name is Brontis.

**[My own son's name is Brontis. I named him
after a family from the town where I was born,
Tocopilla, Chile. The father of the family, a baker,
always allowed his children to play with any toy they
wanted. My father forbade me to play with war toys.
He was a pacifist. And since all toys symbolize war,
I could never play. But the Brontis children could play.
They were free.]**

**El Topo dismounts and lifts his son down.
He ties the umbrella to the pole so that the black
chalice, the cup, becomes fused with the pole.**

**[A marriage between that which exists face down
waiting to be nourished from the ground: the umbrella;
and that which exists growing upward waiting
to be nourished by the sun and the sky: the pole.]**

**He removes a leather pouch from his saddle and
takes out a toy bear and a picture of a woman.
The picture is mounted in an antique frame banded
in black. A symbol of grief. El Topo speaks to Brontis.**

EL TOPO

**Today you are seven years old.
Now you are a man.
Bury your first toy and your mother's picture.**

The child sits beside the sundial.

**[Filmed at noon so there is no shadow.
Perhaps the child is the sundial's shadow.]**

**He digs a hole in the sand and buries the bear,
while El Topo plays a flute. The child tries to bury
his mother's picture but can't quite complete the task.
Half the picture remains above the surface of the sand
as El Topo rides off holding the open umbrella,
his song seated behind him.**

**The titles appear in the sky as El Topo
and Brontis disappear in the horizon.**

PRODUCCIONES PANICAS PRESENTS

A FILM BY ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY

EL TOPO

**DRAWINGS OF HANDS DIGGING EARTH.
The credits appear superimposed over the hands.**

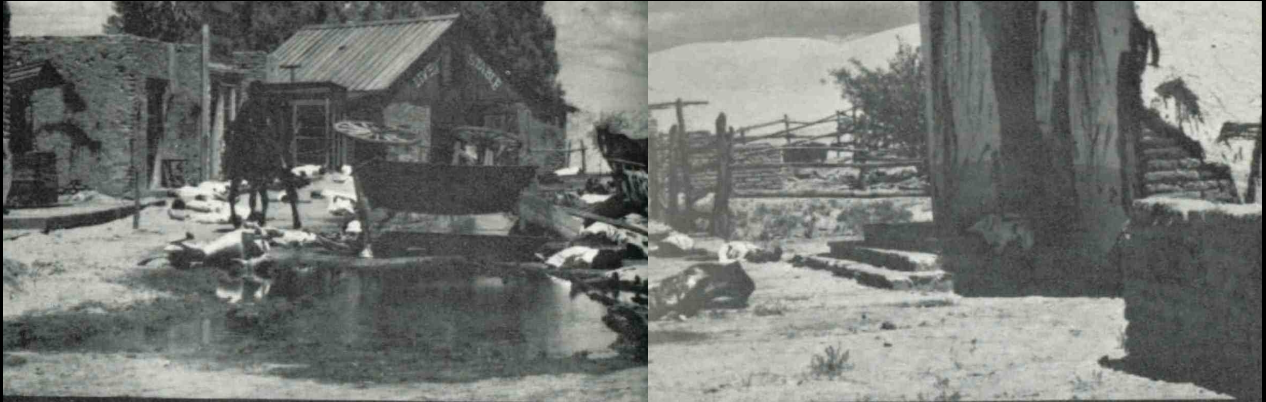
**with
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MARA LORENZIO**

**and
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GARZA, the child BRONTIS JODOROWSKY**

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Written and Directed by ALEXANDRO JODOROWSKY**

DRAWINGS OF MOLES. The following narration is heard.

MAN'S VOICE
THE MOLE IS AN ANIMAL THAT DIGS TUNNELS
UNDERGROUND SEARCHING FOR THE SUN.
SOMETIMES HIS JOURNEY LEADS HIM TO THE SURFACE.
WHEN HE LOOKS AT THE SUN, HE IS BLINDED.



Coming out of the desert, El Topo and Brontis ride past a green tree, the first sign of the desert's end. El Topo crosses the threshold marked by the tree as if he were entering the vegetal door to the human world.

Cries of vultures. El Topo sees a circular pool filled with blood.
On a tall stake, the body of a child is impaled.

[Another sundial, but this time a criminal sundial.]

El Topo continues his riding and enters a village street where he sees disemboweled burros, the corpse of an old horse, painted red, and one hundred women dressed in white, immobile as if asleep, raped and murdered. Brides.

El Topo rides along the street past the smouldering ruins of furniture. He approaches a church splashed with blood. In front of the church runs a river of blood. El Topo dismounts with his son and carries him across the bloody river.

[Rite of Initiation.]

Opening the doors of the church, he sees the multitude of men hanging from the rafters. Bridegrooms.

El Topo leaves the church and sees an Old Man who has been butchered dragging himself along the ground.



OLD MAN

Kill me. Have mercy.

EL TOPO

Who were they?

The old man doesn't answer.

**El Topo grabs him and tries to make him speak,
but the Old Man only repeats his plea.**

OLD MAN

Kill me. Have mercy.

**El Topo hands his revolver to Brontis,
who shoots the Old Man in the heart.
El Topo takes the revolver from his son.
Brontis embraces his father.**

**El Topo places four rings set with precious
stones on the fingers of his right hand.**

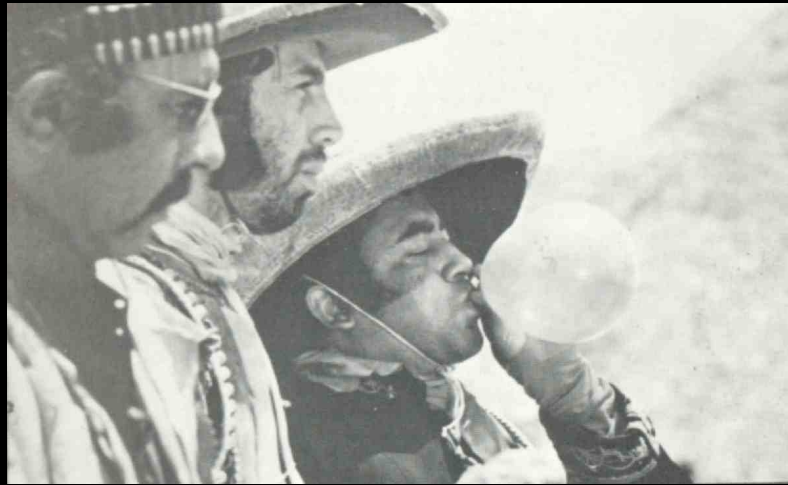
**High on a red rock mountain, the First Bandit scans the
horizon through a pirate's telescope. He smells a little flower,
picks up one of many high-heeled shoes scattered around him
and kisses it as if it were a woman's sex. Then he sucks it as if it
were a phallus. He fires at the shoes, practicing his marksmanship.**

**The Second Bandit, dressed like a typical Mexican cowboy,
peels a banana he has stuck on the top of a cactus.
He unsheathes his sword and violently cuts the banana into little
slices, leaving it in its original form balanced on top of the cactus.
Very elegantly, he takes a toothpick out of his mouth and
uses it to pick up the top slice of the banana, then eats it.**

**On a ledge of the mountain, the Third Bandit spreads beans on the
ground to form a huge woman. The woman's legs are wide open.
The Bandit lies on top of the woman as if he were possessing her.
As he finishes, he gluttonously devours the beans.**

**The First Bandit tires of his shoes. He hurls them off a cliff.
He is bored. He takes out his pirate's telescope and
scans the horizon. He sees El Topo's hand with the rings.
He signals the Second and Third Bandits with a mirror.
The Third Bandit loads his pistol from the gunbelt he wears as a
headband. The Bandits gallop off on their horses after El Topo.**

**They reach him. El Topo continues on his way with great dignity.
The Bandits jeer at Brontis as he rides in front of El Topo on the saddle.
They tug at El Topo's beard. They spit at the head of El Topo's horse.
El Topo does not respond.**



**They come to a flock of goats and a little stream of water.
The Third Bandit dismounts and washes his face without removing
his glasses. He remounts, and the Bandits confront El Topo.
The Second Bandit inflates a small red balloon. He passes it to the
First Bandit, who passes it to the Third Bandit, who dismounts and
places the balloon on the ground between the Bandits and El Topo.
He remounts. The balloon whistles as it begins to deflate.
El Topo slips Brontis behind him on the horse. The Bandits
and El Topo wait for the balloon to deflate completely before
they fire. The balloon has deflated. El Topo fires rapidly.
The Second and Third Bandits begin to fall very slowly
from their horses. Their faces are destroyed.**

[Their deaths resemble a snail crawling down the trunk of a tree.]

**El Topo and the First Bandit have dismounted.
The Bandit stands facing El Topo, waiting for him
to make a move. El Topo hands his pistol to Brontis
to cover him while he picks up two rifles from the ground.
He throws one of the rifles to the First Bandit and challenges him.
The Bandit attacks El Topo. El Topo strikes him in the stomach
with the butt of his rifle, knocking him down. He shoots the
Bandit in the right knee. He grabs him by the hair.**

**EL TOPO
Who?**

THE FIRST BANDIT
The Colonel.

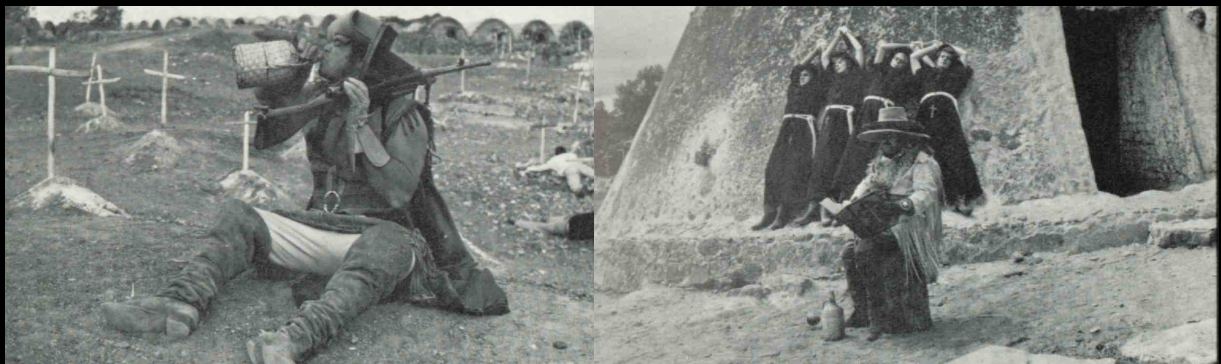
EL TOPO
How many?

THE FIRST BANDIT
Five other men.

EL TOPO
Where?

THE FIRST BANDIT
In the Franciscan Mission.

The Bandit dies with his mouth open.
El Topo removes the four rings from his
fingers and places them in the Bandit's mouth.
He closes the Bandit's lips and climbs out of the pool.



The Franciscan Mission.

A gigantic bandit, nicknamed El Chiquilin (Tiny),
shoots ten children with a machine gun.
Countless graves, perhaps of former victims.
As the children fall to the ground bleeding,
a gilded gramophone is seen.
It is playing music. El Chiquilin laughs.

El Topo and Brontis approach the wall of the Mission.
They peer over and see the Bandits of the Franciscan Mission.

Four Monks are tied by the wrists with two ropes secured to the cross
of one of the bell towers. The Bandit of the Three Hats drinks rum
and reads a large red Bible. The Thin Bandit drinks rum from a
gold chalice. He is surrounded by icons, candelabras, altar robes,
religious paintings. There are many graves. The Thin Bandit
plays solitaire on one of the paintings. The Thin Bandit drinks.
He chokes and spits up in a burst of laughter.
He is happy with his treasures.

A Bandit called Cacama is dressed like a bridegroom, in veils and a crowned hat. He cuts off the leg of a live chicken with his machete and tries to feed it to his collection of iguanas. Another Bandit, the Plumed One, walks among the graves carrying the old gilded gramophone. The Bandit of the Three Hats tears out a page of the Bible, blows his nose in it, wads it into a ball and tosses it away. He calmly continues reading the Holy Book.

Cacama approaches, dragging his mascot iguana behind him by a rope. The Plumed One winds up the gramophone and puts on a record. An old Mexican waltz plays. The Four Bandits walk toward the Monks tied to the bell tower. They untie them, bow to them, threaten them with their pistols. The Franciscans come toward the Bandits. The Bandits take the Monks by their waists and begin to waltz with them. The Bandits kiss the Monks as if they were women. Each kiss is more passionate than the last.

Cacama undresses one of the Monks and drapes an altar cloth around him like a veil. He cuts his own finger with his knife and reddens the Monk's lips with his blood.

The Four Bandits run off among the cactus with the nude Monks over their shoulders.

The Four Monks get down on their hands and knees, and the Bandits ride them like horses, whipping their buttocks with spiny cactus leaves. Their buttocks bleed.

A row of two hundred townspeople lean face forward against a wall of the convent. El Chiquilin walks by them. He pulls out his revolver, and at each ten steps he fires at random into the lineup. Those who are hit fall slowly to the ground.

The Four Bandits return from their orgy carrying the Monks, whom they have bound.



A Woman, dressed out of Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, appears at the door of the Mission. She wears a long skirt and a hat, and carries a wooden water bucket.

She walks toward the well in the middle of the courtyard and lowers the bucket into a water barrel. The barrel is too full, and the water overflows.

**[A man goes to see a Zen Master.
The Master places a cup in front of the man
and begins to fill it with tea until the liquid
spills over the rim. The Master says:
"Your mind is like this.
How can you expect to understand Zen?"]**

The Bandits hoot euphorically at the Woman.
Each one picks up an iguana, puts it between
his legs and pretends to ride it like a horse.
The iguanas look like prehistoric phalluses.
The Bandits surround the Woman.
They caress her sadistically with their iguanas.

BANDITS

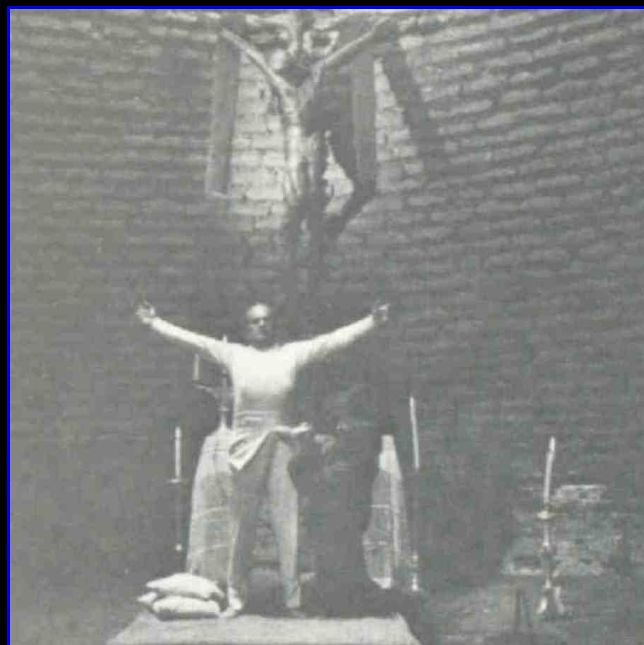
The Colonel isn't selfish. He uses his women
once and then turns them over to us.

With raucous laughter, they caress the
Woman's breasts and sex with their iguanas.

WOMAN

The Colonel said he'd kill anyone who touched me.

The Four Bandits are frightened by the
Colonel's name and back away from the Woman.
She goes to the well and fills the bucket.
She returns to the Mission and enters.



The Woman walks through a corridor full of black pigs and old crosses

made from pieces of tree trunks. In the center of an adobe room shaped like a cone, the Colonel awaits her. Clad only in the red satin shorts of a rhumba dancer, he lies on his back on top of an old painting.

As the Woman approaches, he extends one of his feet to be kissed.

She kisses it. The Colonel is a small old man, selfish, weak and swollen. After the Woman kisses his foot, he stretches and scratches himself like a baby. He calls for the Woman as if she were his mother. She pulls him up and leads him to a confessional, where she sets him down. She walks to the wall of the cone-shaped room and takes down an undershirt stretched out over a religious painting. She puts it on the Colonel. He stands in the middle of the room while his woman dresses him in his riding pants. As the Colonel is dressed, he begins to gain strength and power. He washes his hands in the bucket the Woman holds between her knees and dries them with her hair.

He is seated, half dressed. He has added a wide leather belt. He makes himself up with false eyelashes, lipstick, powder, etc.

He lets the Woman place a toupee on his head.

The Woman goes for his boots. She opens a box containing two heel lifts, and carefully places them in the boots. She approaches the Colonel with the boots, and he kicks her in the stomach, throwing her to the ground, and screams at her.

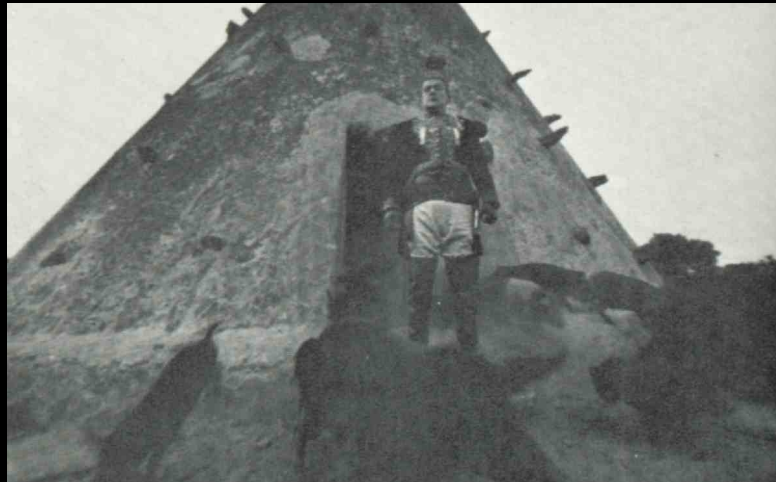
COLONEL

**Who asked you for them?
Don't anticipate my wishes!**

He extends one of his legs, gesturing the Woman to put on his boots.

Now completely dressed in military tunic out of an operetta, many medals and makeup, the Colonel picks up a pistol and heads for the door.

He opens the door and stands on the threshold. A stampede of black pigs bolt out of the door from behind him, bursting into the day like heralds of the night.



The Colonel appears in the doorway,
and the Bandits fall to their knees.

BANDITS

Forgive us. Forgive us.

The Colonel fires a volley of shots at the ground,

centimeters away from the whining Bandits.
They drag themselves along the ground and
kiss the Colonel's feet. The Woman walks over
to the Colonel with great pride. She feels protected.

El Topo and Brontis silently edge along the old Missions walls.
They come to the base of a tower where El Chiquilin stands guard.
El Topo hurls a knife into the air. It cuts El Chiquilin's throat.
He vomits a liter of blood. With comic violence, he falls from
the tower and crashes to the ground. El Topo cleans his knife
on El Chiquilin's shoulder and goes looking for the other Bandits.

The Colonel stands with one foot on the stomach of the Plumed
One, who is sprawled out on the ground with the other bandits.



COLONEL

(to the Woman)

They have no soul. They're like dogs.
But sometimes they get bored and
I have to give them my leftovers.

(to the Bandits)

All right, dogs. Beg for your share.

The Bandits rise to their knees, their tongues hanging out.
They twist their buttocks as though they had tails
and beg the Colonel to give them the Woman.
Barking impatiently, they want to touch her,
but the Colonel yells at them.

COLONEL

Down, dogs!

The Bandits freeze with their tongues still out.

COLONEL

(to the Woman)

Kiss them on the mouth.

**Humiliated, the Woman kisses the horrible Bandits, one by one.
When she kisses the Thin Bandit, he can't contain himself.
He grabs her and tries to rape her. The other Bandits
are aroused and start to close in on the Woman.**

COLONEL
Down, dogs!

They freeze again. The Colonel pushes the Women down to her knees.

COLONEL
**These animals like to look.
They want to see your breasts.**

**The Woman raises her blouse and shows her breasts to the Bandits.
The Colonel pushes her down to the ground.**

COLONEL
Eat, dogs!

The Bandits throw themselves on top of the Woman.



With Brontis on his back, El Topo kicks down the enormous wooden doors of the Mission. He bursts into the patio, challenging the Bandits and the Colonel. Started, they raise their hands in surrender. Brontis takes their pistols. The Plumed One reaches for a knife hidden in the collar of his shirt. El Topo shoots him. Several liters of orange colored blood gush from the Bandit's wounded body. The dying Bandit staggers away, terrifying the chickens, trying to gather up candelabras, pictures, chalices and finally his gramophone. But he hasn't the strength, and the gramophone falls from his hands. His hat falls from his head, revealing a sad bald spot. He dies.

**The Monks pick up the pistols and point them at the Bandits.
El Topo gives the Colonel back his pistol and challenges him to a duel.
The Colonel tries to flee. El Topo follows him. They come to a large circular corral. El Topo backs off a short distance from the Colonel and slowly turns his back to him. The Colonel raises his pistol. El Topo turns**

abruptly and fires, shooting the gun from the Colonel's hand. The Monks and Bandits jeer at the Colonel. El Topo fires at the Colonel's head and shoots off his toupee. The Bandits and Monks laugh even harder. El Topo grabs the Colonel by his uniform, and with a single jerk, rips off all his clothes, even his boots. The Colonel looks like an old baby dressed in the red panties of a rhumba dancer.

COLONEL
Who are you to judge?

EL TOPO
I am God.

El Topo signals the Bandits and the Monks.
He takes out his knife.

COLONEL
No! Anything but that!

The Bandits and Monks force the Colonel to the ground and hold apart his legs.
El Topo raises his arm and lets the knife fall with uncontainable fury to the Colonel's sex, castrating him. The mutilated Colonel walks away slowly, nude.
He picks up his revolver, places it in his mouth and blows out his brains.

The townspeople cover the Bandits with white cloth sacks. El Topo walks away, followed by his son, the Four Monks and the Woman. The Woman runs after him. She places his left hand on her left breast and looks in his eyes. El Topo feels the breast with his palm, pushes the Woman aside and continues walking.
The townspeople fire a machine gun at the white sacks.
Huge streams of blood burst forth.



El Topo reaches for his horse. The Woman follows and stops him again. She stands facing him. Brontis forces himself between them and pushes her away.
The Woman pushes the child to the ground. She embraces El Topo.
El Topo mounts his horse and pulls her up to him.

Brontis grabs at El Topo's foot. El Topo kicks him in the mouth.

EL TOPO

Destroy me.

You no longer depend on anyone.

**El Topo gallops off, leaving his son behind with the Four Monks.
Brontis' mouth is bleeding. One of the Monks speaks to Brontis.**

MONK

(in a high, feminine voice)

Cry, child.

Cry so he will pity you.

**The child does not cry. His face is impassive.
Quite suddenly, we see him dressed in a monk's habit.**



PART TWO



El Topo and the Woman gallop through the mountains under a beautiful blue sky covered with white clouds like celestial spheres.

The Four Monks form a circle around Brontis and enclose him like a tower of four points of a threatening cross. They lower their heads, not even allowing the light of the sun to shine on the child.

El Topo rides with the Woman straddling in front of him, facing him. They merge together on the back of the black horse.

A water hole surrounded by tall rocky cliffs. El Topo is resting high on a rocky ledge. He plays a flute. The Woman frolics through the foliage. She discovers the pleasure of a leaf. She opens her cupped hands, and birds fly out of them.

[We don't know whether she captured them or whether she's liberating her thoughts or pain.]

El Topo now rests at the edge of the pool, still playing the flute. The Woman throws stones into the water. The pool trembles and produces beautiful sounds.

["The millennial pool, a frog jumps, water sounds." Basho.]

The Woman goes to the water and drinks. She grimaces.

WOMAN
It's bitter.

El Topo picks up a long branch. He lowers it into the pool and stirs the water.

EL TOPO
Moses found water in the desert.
The people could not drink it
because it was bitter.

They named the water Mara.



El Topo stops stirring the water and throws away the branch. He motions the Woman to drink. The Woman drinks the water hesitantly, then with pleasure.

WOMAN
(surprised)
It's sweet!

She offers El Topo some water. He drinks from the Woman's hands as though he were kissing her.

EL TOPO
I'll call you Mara because
you are like bitter water.

El Topo plays the flute while Mara throws stones into the pool.

A white desert. Vast. Almost infinite. With no destination,
El Topo and Mara lead the black horse across the sand.

MARA
How are we going to live here?
We'll starve to death.

El Topo digs in the sand between Mara's feet. He pulls out turtle eggs and breaks them open, letting the yellow of the yolks glisten on the white sand like new suns.

El Topo and Mara continue across the desert.
Mara, dressed in browns, beiges, earth colors,
falls to her knees before a rock of the same colors.

MARA
We'll die of thirst.

El Topo closes his eyes and prays.

EL TOPO

**As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.**

He draws his pistol and fires at the rock.

**[El Topo has taken water from the rock
with his pistol as Moses took water
from rocks by tapping them with his staff.]**



**A jet of water bursts forth.
El Topo and Mara drink and shower themselves.**

**Mara is amazed at the sight of these miracles. She wants to create them too.
She digs in the sand between El Topo's feet, looking for food, but finds nothing.
She takes El Topo's pistol and fires at the rock, but no water comes forth.
She is disheartened. She feels what she has felt all her life: failure,
lack of achievement, lack of an orgasm. She begins to chant.**

MARA

Nothing, nothing, nothing ...

**El Topo sits on the sand like a Zen Buddhist monk.
Mara walks around him in a circle and continues
to circle him, constantly chanting.**

MARA

Nothing, nothing, nothing ...

**El Topo ceremoniously takes off his hat, his jacket, his gun belt,
his two knives, his pistol. He rises to his knees and begins to unfasten
his fly, which is exaggeratedly laced with two long leather thongs.**

**[El Topo should communicate the impression
that his fly has not been opened for many years.]**

**El Topo stands in the path of Mara's circle and waits for her to reach him.
He puts his hand on her shoulder, prays to himself, reaches a state of**

concentration and hits her hard on the face. He pushes her down and springs on her like a beast. He tears off her clothes, ripping them violently. He opens her legs and forces his penis into her like a bullet -- with the same power the Dove forced himself into Mary's ear at the Annunciation.

Mara screams in the middle of an ocean, floating in the water.



She cries.

In her torn clothes, she gallops across the desert on El Topo's horse.

She drags herself along the sand dunes. She falls face down on the sand, digs in the sand and finds thousands and thousands of turtle eggs.

In front of her is a rock shaped like a phallus.

**[This stone is an exact replica of my own phallus:
thick, not very long, but with a voluminous head.
That's how I am. That's how the rock is.
That's El Topo's sex.]**

Mara taps the rock with a stone, and a stream of water spouts forth -- like urine, like a stream of semen. She immerses her face in the miraculous water.

El Topo is dressed and seated in a Zen position. Mara kneels before him, looking at him.

MARA
Do you love me?

EL TOPO
Yes.

MARA
Well, I don't!
For me to love you, you have to be the best.
Four Master Sharpshooters live in this desert.
You have to find them and kill them.

**In response, El Topo draws a circle in the sand with his finger.
The finger continues toward the center of the circle, forming a spiral.**

EL TOPO

**The desert is circular.
To find the Four Masters,
we'll have to travel in a spiral.**

He hits the sand with his fist in the center of the spiral.



**El Topo and Mara ride across the desert.
Day. Night. Day. Night. A sand storm.
El Topo and Mara walk through the sand clouds.**

**[With their faces protected with a piece of cloth,
they are reminiscent of covered faces we have
seen in Persian engravings of Mohammad.]**

MARA

I can't go on. Let's go back.

EL TOPO

When I start something, I finish it.

**The storm has stopped. El Topo and Mara are buried in the sand.
Only their heads can be seen above the surface.**

["From dust we come and to dust we shall return."]

**They slowly lift themselves up from the sand
as though the dunes were giving them birth.**

MARA

We'll never find them.

**El Topo continues on. Mara follows.
They ride across the infinite dunes.**

EL TOPO

If they are Masters, they'll give us a sign.

**The dunes stretch out to the horizon.
The sky grows larger.**

MARA

**Days have gone by. Weeks, months.
How can you have such faith?**

EL TOPO

They're waiting for us.

At that moment a small light streaks across the sky.

**[Perhaps it's a falling star like the one
that guided the Three Kings to Bethlehem.]**

MARA

**(screaming)
The sign!**



**Time has passed. El Topo and Mara come
to a place in the desert where they see
a white octagonal tower.**

[Templars, baptismal fonts.]

**Beside the tower, a white horse is tied
to a post inside a low square fence.
The tower is surrounded by a low square wall.
Thirty-three centimeters high.**

[An octagon within a square!]

**El Topo silently draws his pistol and approaches.
A man composed of two men appears:
a Legless Man sitting on the shoulders of an Armless Man.
The Legless Man, the upper part of the body,**

is the one who fires, the one who carries a lantern.
The Armless Man, the lower part of the body,
is the one who walks, who wears the holster and pistol.
The Double Man approaches El Topo with the lighted lantern.
It is daytime.

[El Topo should ask himself why they are carrying
a lighted lantern in the middle of the day.]

The Double Man bruskiy blows out the lantern.

DOUBLE MAN

You look for light in broad daylight!
I know why you've come.
You'll have to wait to see him ... like that woman.

On a dune some yards away, we see a woman
dressed almost exactly like El Topo: in black leather,
with black boots, black hat, on a black horse.
She is putting on black eye makeup.
She looks at herself in a mirror, on the back
of which is carved a six petaled lotus blossom.

DOUBLE MAN

The Master has not wanted to fight her.

From the interior of the octagonal tower the sound of a gong is heard.

[We don't know if it's the tower itself
making this sound or a musical instrument.
Perhaps the octagon is the musical instrument.]



DOUBLE MAN

The Master wishes to receive you immediately.
How strange! He's never received anyone
without making him wait.
(motioning to Mara)
Behind the dune is an oasis.
Your woman should wait there.

**Mara hears this and disappears
behind the dune leading to the oasis.**

**El Topo follows the Double Man to a ladder
that leans against the walls of the octagon.**

**El Topo starts up the ladder.
At the third rung, the Double Man interrupts him.**

DOUBLE MAN

Give me your pistol and your hat.

El Topo gives them to the Double Man and continues up the ladder.

**[Perhaps he is performing the same ritual as Moses
when he took off his sandals to climb the mountain
where he would see the Divine Fire.]**

**He reaches the top of the tower and climbs down another ladder
to a sunken roof. He finds there only a white sheep at rest.
He pets the sheep, and it stands, revealing a trap door.
The sound of a giant heartbeat is heard, then a voice.**

[It can be the octagon itself beating or the Master.]

FIRST MASTER

(with a woman's voice)

I dont need light. I am blind.

El Topo descends into the interior of the octagon.

The First Master is seated on a wooden bench.

El Topo sits down on another bench.

The Master is a beautiful young man, very thin.

His body is marked with scars of bullet wounds.

A necklace from the Sixth Nichiren hangs around his neck.

At his side is a bell that rings when struck with a clapper.



**In front of the Master on the bench is a small figurine
of a man in the position of meditation. The First Master
picks up the figurine and sets it down again.**

[An authentic pre-Columbian sculpture found in Lake Texcoco.]

FIRST MASTER

Count to three and try to grab it.

EL TOPO

One, two, three.

El Topo grabs at the figurine, but the Master
picks it up long before he can reach it.

EL TOPO

How?

FIRST MASTER

I don't try to win, but to gain perfect control.

El Topo touches the Master's scars with his index finger.

FIRST MASTER

It's to lose the fear of bullets.

The Double Man is seen laboriously climbing
the ladder to the top of the octagon.

FIRST MASTER

Fire.

The upper part of the Double Man, the Legless Man,
takes the revolver from the holster around the waist of
the Armless Man and fires a shot into the Master's shoulder.

The bullet passes through the shoulder.
A very small wound is seen. It hardly bleeds.

The Master takes a little of his blood with his
right hand and extends his hand to El Topo.
annoints his fingers in the Master's blood.

**[This should give the idea of El Topo
sinking his hand into a baptismal font.]**

FIRST MASTER

I bleed very little now.

I offer no resistance to the bullets.
I let them pass through the empty spaces of my flesh.



El Topo abruptly throws the figurine to the Master.
The Master doesn't allow himself to be surprised
and catches it, like a cat, in mid-air.

FIRST MASTER

Do you still want to fight me?

EL TOPO

Yes.

FIRST MASTER

Killing you doesn't bother me because
I know that death does not exist.
I'll let you fire first.

The Master closes his eyes for the first time,
indicating that the interview has ended.

El Topo stands in a circular lagoon in the middle of the oasis.
He's playing with the stone figurine. He floats it on a
splinter of wood and places a small live lizard on its back.

[Here I express the relationship that exists between the stone sculpture
buried so many years in the depths of the desert and the small lizard
living so many years on the surface of the desert. Joining the lizard
with the stone sculpture symbolizes the union of depth and surface.]

Mara sits on the side of the lagoon with a willow branch in her hand.

EL TOPO

He is my superior.

MARA

You will win.

EL TOPO

Even if I won, I would lose.

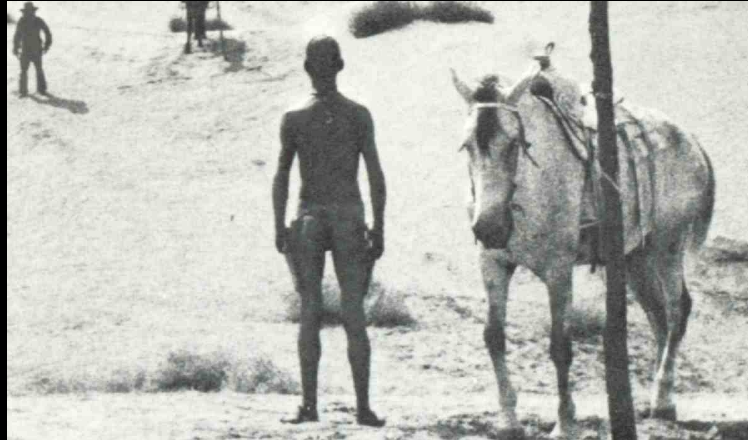
In anger, Mara strikes out at the lizard and the figurine with her branch.

They sink.

MARA

(furious)

**I want a winner. You have to win.
Don't be so honest. Don't fight on the same level.
Think of something. Trick him.
You can always win. Find a way!**



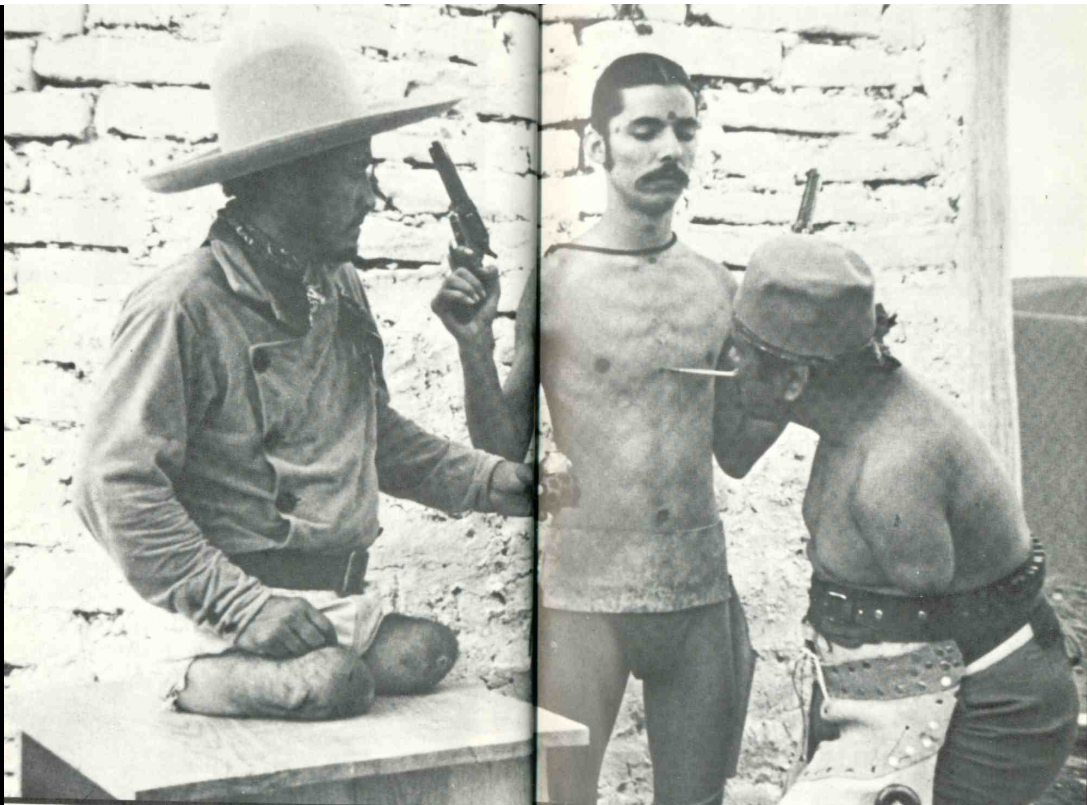
El Topo begins to sink little by little into the pool as if pushed down by the responsibility Mara has placed on him.

The ceremonial preparations for the duel begin. Between the white tower and the white horse, the First Master is being prepared by his two helpers. With a comb in his foot, the Armless Man braids the Master's long hair, while the Legless Man massages the Master's feet.

On a nearby dune, El Topo stands in concentration. There are some pieces of wood in front of him. We don't know why. El Topo dresses himself. He ties back the tails of his jacket so they won't interfere with his draw.

The Master's helpers paint red circles on the vital centers of the Master's body. The Legless Man holds a dish of paint in his hand while the Armless Man paints the circles with a brush he holds between his teeth. While El Topo is thinking about the possibility of his own physical destruction, the Master contemplates the spiritual centers of his body.

The duel begins. El Topo approaches, mounted on his horse, which is led by Mara. She ties the reins to a pole buried in the sand. The Double Man leads the Master's white horse by the reins and ties it to another pole. The Woman in Black approaches and stands on a dune to observe the duel. The Double Man positions himself to form a line with Mara. The Master and El Topo form another line. Together, the two lines form a cross.



PART THREE



**El Topo dismounts and approaches the Master.
The Master approaches El Topo on foot, slowly.**

**Suddenly, the Master falls into the trap El Topo had dug the night before.
As he falls, El Topo shoots him in the head.**

**Slow motion image of the Master, his long hair flowing,
riding a white horse like an angel.**

**The Double Man screams in desperation when he sees the trick.
El Topo throws away his revolver in self-disgust. Mara picks it up**

and shoots the Double Man. The Legless Man falls to the ground and writhes like a worm. The Armless Man tries to strike Mara but lacks the arms to do so. Nor does he have the hands to draw his pistol. He kicks at her furiously. Mara, laughing hysterically, takes the pistol from the Armless Man's holster and shoots him in the stomach and head with his own weapon. The Legless Man crawls to the Master.

He takes the Master's revolver and tries to shoot El Topo. El Topo struggles with him. Mara kills the Legless Man with a single shot.

Mara tries to embrace El Topo, but he rejects her. He picks up the Legless Man's body, carries it to the body of the Armless Man and places it by the side so that the two dead men form a single body. Mara, splattered with blood, approaches El Topo and kisses him.

MARA

**I told you you could win. I am proud of you.
Now you only have three Masters left.**

El Topo rides off with Mara as fast as he can. Mara's blouse is stained with blood. The Woman in Black rides over to the First Master's body. She takes out her revolver and shoots him in the head. She rides away.

El Topo and Mara come to the oasis. Mara dismounts, runs ahead of El Topo and throws herself into the pool to wash the blood off her clothes.

**[Mara and El Topo are like two gigantic hands
entering a gigantic wash basin. Perhaps they are
the two hands of Pontius Pilate.]**



The Woman in Black rides up. She approaches El Topo, who sits at the edge of the pool. El Topo draws his pistol.

WOMAN IN BLACK

**I know where the Second Master lives.
If you let me go with you, I can lead you to him.**

El Topo nods. He is exhausted.

Mara stands nude, waist-deep in the pool. She holds the open black umbrella over her head.

**The Woman in Black stands at the edge of the pool.
She is nude except for her boots.
She holds the lotus blossom mirror over her sex.**

**The Woman in Black wades toward Mara, bringing her the mirror.
The Woman opens her mouth, revealing two pebbles on her tongue,
one dark and one light. Mara gently lifts the stones from her tongue.
Mara takes the mirror and looks at herself. For the first time, she discovers
her face, her physical being. A strong self-love is aroused in her. She begins
to turn in the water, gazing at herself in the mirror. She appears fully clothed,
with heavy eye makeup, still turning in the water, looking at herself in the mirror.**

**[The scene should remind us of the moment Narcissus
saw himself reflected in the water for the first time.]**

**Sand. Smooth and glistening. A foot emerges from the sand, then a leg.
Two bodies. El Topo is on top of Mara. They are fused with the sand.
He kisses her breasts. He licks her nose. He possesses her.
Mara does not surrender herself. She lets El Topo go through the
motions of lovemaking while she contemplates herself in the mirror.**



**The Woman in Black leads El Topo and Mara through the desert.
El Topo follows her on his horse. Behind El Topo, Mara rides
the First Master's white horse and gazes at herself in the mirror.
El Topo takes out his revolver and, with one bullet, shoots the mirror
out of Mara's hand. Mara picks up some of the shattered fragments.
El Topo motions her to give them to him, and she does. El Topo places the
fragments of glass in the pocket of his jacket, and the journey continues.**

The three travelers come to some strange lunar dunes of white earth.

**WOMAN IN BLACK
It's here.**

**EL TOPO
Wait for me.**

**El Topo dismounts and walks toward the dunes.
He will challenge the Second Master alone.
He jumps down into a ravine and comes to a small stream.**

[Water in the desert!]

The stream borders a small peninsula. A gypsy wagon stands on the peninsula. A lion, rather than a horse, is tied to the wagon. In front of the wagon are piles of Oriental pillows and a Persian carpet. On the carpet is a table. On top of the table are Tarot cards arranged in the form of a cross and a large hashish pipe. On the side of the table hangs a crucified owl. Next to the table the Second Master's Mother sits reading the Tarot. When she sees El Topo, she speaks.

MOTHER

(with a man's voice)

We've been waiting for you.
This is what the cards say about you.
You are falling. You'll fall even deeper.
The deeper you fall, the higher you will rise.
Traitor, coward, murderer.
God's orders are inexplicable.
My son and I must respect you.
You may fight him. Cross over.



El Topo tries to cross the stream. With his first step, he sinks into a kind of sandy mud. He continues crossing and sinks into the mud up to his knees. The crossing is very difficult.

[We should think of crossing a magic threshold, of a new baptism.]

Finally, he reaches the other side.
The Mother speaks, without moving her lips.

[Perhaps the words come from her eyes.]

MOTHER

The duel begins at this moment.
My son and you can fire when you wish.

El Topo cautiously approaches the Second Master.
The Second Master is young, about twenty-eight.

[He could also be a young man of 150.]

He is reclining on the Oriental pillows. He plays with a model of the Pyramid of Cheops, made of toothpicks. An old revolver in a holster hangs precisely at the level of his sex. The Second Master gets up lazily and confronts El Topo. El Topo tries to fire, but the Second Master, with extraordinary speed, shoots the gun out of El Topo's hand. El Topo is defeated. The Second Master playfully points his gun at El Topo's hand. But instead of firing, he yells like a child.

SECOND MASTER

Bang! You're dead.

(mumbling)

Technically ... Now I want to talk to the dead man.



Among the white clay cliffs, the workshop of the Second Master.

He finishes hammering out a copper plate.

He shows El Topo several delicate objects made of toothpicks.

SECOND MASTER

**First I worked copper objects
and strengthened my fingers.**

**Now my fingers are so strong that
I can play with these delicate forms
without breaking them.**

The Second Master picks up another model of the Pyramid of Cheops and plays with it. He offers it to El Topo. El Topo takes it in his hands. His hands clumsily destroy the delicate form. The Second Master laughs.

The Second Master places two structures made of toothpicks side by side in front of El Topo, several feet away. They are two six-pointed stars, designed cubically, painted red. The Second Master's Mother places a revolver at El Topo's temple to prevent him from tricking her son. She hands him his pistol.

MOTHER

Fire.

El Topo fires at one of the stars and completely destroys it without touching the star next to it. The Second Master stands beside the lion.

His Persian lamb coat is the same color as the lion.

[The Second Master probably is a lion.]

The Second Master fires at his star.

At first glance, he seems to have missed.

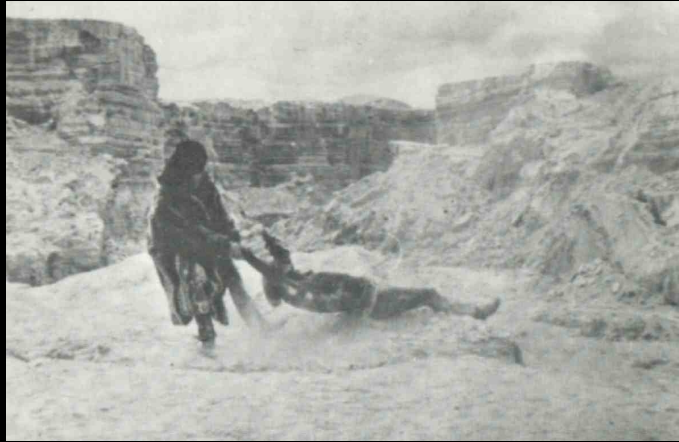
But he goes over to the star and picks up a tiny piece of wood.

His bullet has broken only one toothpick without destroying the object.

SECOND MASTER

A clean shot. Delicate.

It destroys the necessary.



The Second Master jumps in front of El Topo. At the level of his navel he wears an iron rivet belt. The buckle is shaped like an eye.

The center of the eye, like a pupil, is a circular piece of copper.

The rivets are silver plated. The Master blows in El Topo's face. He yells in El Topo's face as the Zen Masters yell at their students to awaken them. He strikes El Topo, throwing him to the ground.

The Master jumps on top of him, twists his arms, hits him, almost pulls his beard off. El Topo doesn't defend himself.

He is defeated.

SECOND MASTER

(as he hits El Topo)

You shoot to find yourself. I shoot to disappear.

Perfection is losing yourself.

And to lose yourself, you have to love.

You don't love. You destroy. You murder.

And no one loves you, because when you think are giving, you are really taking away.

The Second Master throws himself violently on El Topo.

The two fall at the feet of the Second Master's Mother, who sits beside the table. Her face has the same expression as the owl crucified on the wooden table.

The Second Master kisses the Mother's feet. He caresses her hand.

SECOND MASTER

**I've surrendered myself to her. I've given her everything.
She is within me. Her infinite love fills me.
Whatever I do and say are dictated and sanctified by her.
I detest anything that is mine because
it removes me from her Divine Presence.**

**The Second Master walks over to El Topo, who still lies on his back.
The Master lies on top of him.
He embraces and kisses him, not sexually, but with extra-human love.**



MOTHER

(without moving her lips)

**Two are better than one.
For if they fall, the other will lift up his fellow.
But woe to him that is alone when he falleth;
for he hath not another to help him up.**

The Master raises El Topo up. El Topo is embarrassed and hurt, physically and spiritually. The Master takes a small copper ashtray from the table and shows it to El Topo.

SECOND MASTER

**When I made it, I didn't think about it's being of any use.
I simply made it the best I could.**

**He ceremoniously gives it to El Topo. It falls from El Topo's hands.
El Topo stoops down to pick it up while the Second Master, distracted, caresses his Mother. The sight of the Mother's naked foot gives El Topo an idea, and he reaches into his pocket for some of the broken glass from Mara's mirror and places it on the ground.**

MOTHER

(to El Topo)

**Here is your revolver.
My son wishes to give you a last chance.**

The Mother stands and walks toward El Topo to hand him the revolver.

Suddenly she opens her mouth and screams. It is not a human scream, but bird cries. She has cut her foot on a fragment of the mirror. The Second Master, unaware of anything but his mother's pain, bends over her to remove the glass from the sole of her foot. El Topo takes advantage of the moment to place his revolver at the back of the Master's neck. He picks up the copper ashtray, puts it inside his shirt, takes the Second Master's gun from him and fires.



The Mother shrieks like a wounded bird. The Master staggers away. El Topo follows and shoots him in the back. The Master falls to the ground. The Mother limps over and throws herself on top of him. Her shrieks become more intense. The Second Master has died. El Topo runs for the stream. He throws the Second Master's revolver to the ground. His feet sink in the mud of the stream.

El Topo rests against the white horse that is lying on the sand. He is suffering. Mara and the Woman in Black are talking.

MARA

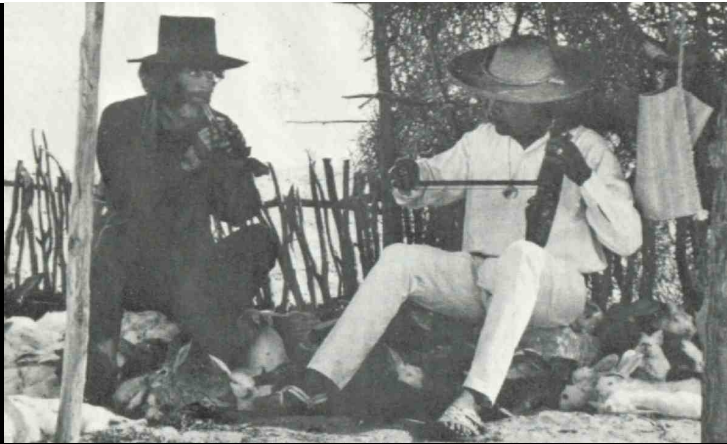
**I don't want you to go near him!
Why are you following us? Go away!**

The two women are on horseback, fighting each other with whips. The Woman in Black is much more agile than Mara, and she violently whips Mara across the back. Mara falls from the horse. She drags herself along the sand. Relentlessly, the Woman in Black continues to lash Mara's back. Mara acknowledges her defeat. The Woman in Black slowly raises Mara's blouse. She kisses the wounds, then with bloody lips, kisses Mara on the mouth. Mara feels pleasurable relief, pain, sexual excitement, perhaps without realizing it.

**Another desert location.
A black crow pecks at the ears of a dead white rabbit.**

[Black, white and red: alchemist colors.]

El Topo rides up, followed by the two women who now ride side by side. He tells them to wait for him. He dismounts and looks at the crow. The crow cocks its head toward another part of the desert. El Topo walks in that direction.



He sees a beautiful long-haired white rabbit with a string tied around its neck.

El Topo picks up the rabbit and begins winding the string around his arm.

The string will lead him through the labyrinths of the dunes toward the Third Master.

**[Parallel between the string tied to the rabbit and the thread
with which Ariadne led Theseus through the labyrinth.]**

El Topo comes to a low rectangular picket fence.

Inside the fence are a canvas lean-to and hundreds of rabbits.

In the center of the rectangular enclosure is a cement watering trough.

It is oval like the halos that encircle the virgins in certain Medieval paintings.

Music is heard. It sounds like a metal flute.

El Topo takes his revolver from its holster and tosses it over the fence.

He raises his hands, steps over the fence and walks among the rabbits.

El Topo sees a beautiful dark Mexican Indian sitting under the lean-to.
The Third Master. He is playing music by blowing into the barrel of his revolver.

The Master stops playing and speaks to El Topo.

THIRD MASTER

You didn't have to drop your gun.

I don't distrust you.

The Third Master invites El Topo to sit at his side, in the shade.

All the rabbits cluster around the two men like a little white lake.

The Master takes El Topo's flute from his jacket and hands it to him.

THIRD MASTER

You have a flute!

We'll come to know each other through music.

He takes a primitive violin from a canvas bag

hanging from the lean-to and begins to play.

El Topo plays his flute. A beautiful duet is heard.



THIRD MASTER

You loathe yourself.
You no longer want to cheat.
You want to respect the law.
Some people offer flowers, other valuable gifts.
You offer me your life.
You don't fear death anymore.
That's why you're a dangerous enemy.

The master replaces the violin in the canvas bag and motions El Topo to follow him. They walk along the rectangular corral, which is divided into two squares by the oval pool. The rabbits are dying as though attacked by a plague. The ground is sown with dead rabbits. The Third Master picks up El Topo's pistol and hands it to him.

THIRD MASTER

When you were seven meters from the corral,
my rabbits began to die. Now almost all of them are dead.
Now that you're here, not one of them will survive.

The Master hands his pistol to El Topo.

THIRD MASTER

It's made from a piece of wood and a piece of iron.
A very simple gun, but made very well.
I made it myself. Do you feel its fine lines?
It can fire only one shot. That's all I need.
One bullet. Always fatal.

The Master takes back his pistol and places it at El Topo's heart.
Almost all of the rabbits are dead.
Only three or four remain alive.
Two crows devour the cadavers of the animals.

THIRD MASTER

Shoot.

The two fire simultaneously, and the two crows explode.
The Master walks over to the crows, stoops down and picks them up.

THIRD MASTER

Can you tell which one you killed and which one I killed?



El Topo shakes his head.

THIRD MASTER

**This one is yours. It was shot through the head.
This one is mine. It was shot through the heart.**

**He stands up. He lays one of the bloody crows against
El Topo's heart and the other against his forehead.**

THIRD MASTER

The heart. The head. Switch them around.

**He switches the positions of the dead crows, laying the one that
was on El Topo's heart against his head, and the one that was
on his head against his heart. He tosses the cadavers away.**

THIRD MASTER

It's time.

**El Topo and the Master walks to opposite ends of the corral. They open
their arms, forming crosses with their bodies. They advance toward
each other, holding their revolvers in their hands. When they reach the
center of the corral, separated only by the oval trough, El Topo takes aim.
His movement is almost deliberately slow. The Master fires and shoots
El Topo in the heart. He falls. He agonizes in pain for a moment,
but then rises to his feet, laughing. The Third Master cannot
understand why El Topo hasn't died. El Topo continues laughing
as he aims his revolver at the Third Master's head, then lowers
it to his heart and fires. The Master falls into the oval pool.
The water turns red instantaneously. The Third Master dies.
From the "wound" in his chest, El Topo removes the copper ashtray
given him by the Second Master that had protected him from the
Third Master's bullet. He throws the ashtray into the oval pool.**



EL TOPO

Too much perfection is a mistake.

El Topo picks up the dead rabbits and lays them on top of the Third Master's body.

A grave of rabbits. He dips his hands into the pool, trying to cleanse them, but the water has turned to blood and the stains do not wash off. Mara runs up to El Topo, ripping open her blouse in an act of surrender to offer him her breasts.

El Topo rubs his hands on her breasts, staining them with blood. He mounts his horse and rides off at a gallop. Mara runs after him crying and screaming.

MARA

**Don't leave me! You won!
You're going to be the best! I'll help you!**

El Topo, Mara and the Woman in Black are sitting on the sand.

El Topo stares into space, very unhappy. Mara looks at him.

The Woman in Black looks at Mara. There are three prickly

pears on the ground. Suddenly Mara feels the intense

gaze of the Woman in Black. She looks at her. Her mouth twitches involuntarily: an ambiguous gesture of contempt

or surrender. The eyes of the Woman in Black are

penetrating and desirous. She picks up a prickly pear and,

her eyes fixed on Mara, peels it as though she were opening

a woman's sex. She opens it wider with her knife and rubs

it with her finger. She licks it, turning the fruit into an obscenity.

She offers it to Mara. Offended, Mara knocks it out of her hand.

The Woman in Black stands up violently. She puts her knife

in Mara's hand as if to say, "If you want to kill me, do it!"

Mara lacks the courage. The Woman in Black grabs Mara and

kisses her on the mouth. Mara is unable to resist and allows

herself to be embraced. Then she pushes the Woman away.

She is sexually excited. She throws herself on El Topo.

She rolls with him on the sand and makes him take her

while the Woman in Black looks on.

The three horses, two black and one white, trot off together.



A tall pole in the desert is all the Fourth Master has for a house.

**[The possessions of the Masters have been diminishing.
The First Master lived in a tall tower,
the Second Master in a wagon,
the Third Master in a lean-to,
The Fourth Master has only a pole in the
desert and a sheet covering his body.
The First Master had two revolvers,
the Second Master one revolver that fired several shots.
the Third Master one revolver that fired a single shot.
The Fourth Master has no revolver, only a butterfly net.
The First Master had a large oasis,
the Second Master a small stream,
the Third Master an oval pool.
The Fourth Master has only sand in the desert.]**

FOURTH MASTER

**You want to fight me?
How do you plan to do it?
I don't have a revolver.**

He digs in the sand and pulls out an old rusty revolver that no longer works.

FOURTH MASTER

**I trade my revolver for a butterfly net.
You'll have to fight me with your fists.**

**The Master assumes the comic posture of an oldtime boxer.
He challenges El Topo.**

FOURTH MASTER

Hit me. Hit me.



He pushes El Topo. El Topo is disconcerted.
He decides to strike at the old man. But he cannot land
his punches. The Master dodges them with magical speed.
El Topo becomes impatient. He tries some Karate blows.
All of them miss the Master. Desperate, El Topo draws his gun,
as the Master picks up his butterfly net, and fires. The Master catches
the bullet with his net and sends it whizzing back to El Topo. The bullet
explodes near El Topo's black boots. The Fourth Master laughs.

FOURTH MASTER

You see? My net is mightier than your bullets.

The Master stops laughing.

FOURTH MASTER

**If you fire again,
I'll return your own bullet into your heart.**

El Topo doesn't know whether or not to believe him.
He starts toward him. He tries to fire, but can't.
He knows he's been defeated.
He lets his revolver fall to the ground.
The Fourth Master falls to his knees with El Topo.

FOURTH MASTER

(gently)

**How could you possibly have won?
I don't fight. I have nothing.
Even if you'd tricked me,
you couldn't have taken anything from me.**

EL TOPO

Yes! I could have taken your life.

FOURTH MASTER

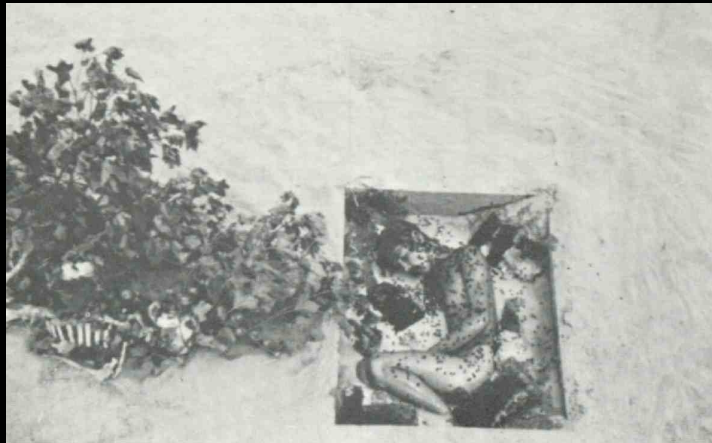
My life? It means nothing to me. I'll show you

He grabs El Topo's revolver and shoots himself in the liver.
El Topo frantically takes him in his arms.

FOURTH MASTER

You lost.

He dies.



**El Topo cries out in pain to the Heavens.
He tears at his clothes and tugs at his beard.
He bolts like a madman.**

[Think of *The Song of Roland* or of the madness of Don Quixote.]

**He runs through the desert toward the places where he left the bodies
of the other Masters. He comes to the tomb of the Third Master where
he had left him covered with rabbits. He tries to approach the grave,
but it bursts into flames. He can't bear the heat and runs off.**

[Parallel between the flaming grave of rabbits and Moses' Burning Bush.]

**Completely crazed, El Topo comes to the place of the Second Master.
He looks for the body. One the very spot where the Master died,
he sees a huge structure made of toothpicks. An irregular, deformed
pyramid built by lunatics. El Topo tears down the toothpick walls
with the butt of his revolver. Inside he finds the bodies of the
Second Master and his mother, her arm around her son.**

**[The Mother probably built the pyramid and
remained trapped inside until she starved to death.]**

**El Topo continues running through the heart of the desert
until he comes to where the First Master died.
He sees the skeleton of the Master's two helpers.
Green plants have sprung from their bones.**

[Life springs from putrefaction: inspired by alchemic drawings.]

**The trap into which the first Master fell is filled with bright yellow honey.
The First Master's body floats in the honey like a foetus.
El Topo falls to his knees, picks up a piece of honeycomb
and squashes the cells against his face,
filling his mouth with honey and screaming desperately.**

**[The wax filled with honey should also resemble
a piece of flesh full of pus.]**

El Topo appears inside the octagonal tower of the First Master.
He beats against the walls, trying to knock them down.
He feels trapped within the bones of his skull and is beating
against his head from within to open it into eight parts.
The lamb from the roof of the tower is seen crucified to one
of the exterior walls. El Topo manages to break open the
immense tower. The walls fall outwardly like eight
stone petals. Standing in the center of the fallen
tower, El Topo, liberated, releases two doves,
which disappear into the sky.

**[Parallel between the two doves that ascend
into the air and the alchemical process of evaporation.]**



El Topo holds a rock in his hand.

[Parallel with the acquisition of the Philosopher's Stone.]

He drops the rock on his revolver,
smashing it into a thousand pieces.
Mara runs up to him and embraces him.

MARA

You won! You won! You're the best!

Enraged, El Topo struggles free from her grasp.
He raises his fist to strike her, but feels no violence within him.
Gradually his fist becomes a caress. He leaves Mara and runs off.

El Topo comes to a long bridge that stretches a mile across a mile-deep precipice.
The wooden floor of the bridge is rotten. The abyss can be seen through the holes of
the floor. El Topo walks out onto the bridge. His voice is heard reciting a psalm.

EL TOPO'S VOICE

**I've been spilled like water and my bones have been disjointed.
My heart has melted like wax over the entrails of my body.
And my tongue has stuck to my palate.**

**And You have placed me in the shadow of death.
My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?
Why are You so distant from my salvation and the words of my plea?
My God, I cry out by day and You don't answer.
And by night and there is no relief.**

El Topo climbs out on the catwalk of the bridge and leans facedown against the suspension cables. He opens his arms, forming a cross with his body. He has decided to fall, when a bullet explodes at his feet and snaps him out of his reverie. He climbs down to the floor of the bridge.

The Woman in Black throws one of her gold revolvers at El Topo's feet and challenges him to a final duel on the bridge. El Topo bends down and picks up the revolver. He studies it. But the metal of the weapon seems to burn his hands, and he drops it. He lets it lie, straightens up, extends his arms like a cross and walks toward the Woman in Black. She fires a bullet into his right hand. El Topo doesn't defend himself. She fires a bullet into his left hand. El Topo doesn't defend himself. She pierces the insteps of both his feet. El Topo doesn't defend himself. The first four wounds of Christ. El Topo continues advancing toward the Woman in Black. His feet are now bare and bleeding. He steps off the bridge onto firm ground and waits, his arms still extended like a cross. The Woman in Black hands her revolver to Mara.

WOMAN IN BLACK **It's either him or me!**

Mara hesitates. She has to choose between devoting herself to El Topo or leaving him forever for the Woman in Black. Mara shoots El Topo in the side. The fifth wound of Christ. El Topo doubles up in pain. He sees the two women ride off together on the same horse.

**[Parallel between the two women
and the Templar's symbol of two men riding one horse.]**

**He sees their profiles merge.
Slowly, their tongues meet and fuse together at a single sensitive point.
Again, El Topo feels the bullet in his side.
He sees the two women kissing and scratching each other in a caress.
Again, he feels the bullet in his side. He sees the two women making love.**

El Topo gives in to death.

A band of crippled, insane, retarded people wearing old army uniforms approach the body of El Topo, dragging a stretcher made of branches. They lay El Topo on the stretcher and carry him off. El Topo's voice is heard reciting other psalms.

EL TOPO'S VOICE
**Show me Your ways and Your paths.
Guide me. For You are the God of my salvation.
I have placed my trust and my hope in You forever.**

**You will teach sinners the way.
Your justice will guide the humble.**



PART FOUR



**El Topo appears sitting motionlessly
in the lotus position with a flower in his hands.
His hair is bleached, his beard is white, his lips are
painted red, his cheeks are rouged, his eyes are made up.
He wears only a saint's loincloth and a vest.
His eyes are shut closed.**

**El Topo awakens.
He is inside an enormous grotto,
sitting on a rock shaped like an altar.
He wants to stand, but his body is numb.
He can barely move. He hears footsteps.
El Topo returns to his former position
and pretends to be asleep.**



A woman wearing a grey cassock approaches.
She is very small, much smaller than a normal woman.
Her steps are very short. Her face is very lovely.
She climbs a ladder that leads to El Topo.
She arranges the flowers around him, combs his hair,
paints his mouth and eyes, the way a priest would
paint the face of a wooden statue of a saint.
Suddenly, she is stirred by desire. Affectionately
and sensually, she touches El Topo's body and
kisses them on the mouth. El Topo opens his eyes.
The Small Woman screams and backs away.

EL TOPO

(to the Small Woman)
I'm not a god. I'm a man.
How long have I been here?

SMALL WOMAN

I wasn't born when you came.
I've taken care of you since I was a child.
The Elder says that you will free us. Come!

The Small Woman leads El Topo through a city of rusty oil drums.
Hundreds of drums are piled one on top of the other in the enormous
cave. Deformed human beings sleep inside them like larvae.
El Topo and the Small Woman walk through the narrow passages
of children's cries, misery, sickness. The beings stare at El Topo
as though silently asking for help. El Topo is moved.
The Small Woman leads El Topo down into the inner cavern.
The ceiling is more than a mile high.
In the center of the ceiling is a small opening.
Some beggars approach El Topo and offer him biscuits.

SMALL WOMAN

We've been prisoners in this cave for many years.
That opening is the only way out.
It takes several days of climbing
the walls of the cave to get to it.
Outside, at the foot of the mountain is a large town.

**They won't help us out of here.
We're deformed from years of incest.
We're repulsive to them.**



El Topo caresses the Small Woman tenderly.

EL TOPO

**Was it very difficult to bring me here?
Why did they do it?**

SMALL WOMAN

**The Elder knows why.
She was the one who sent them to look for you.
She wants to see you now.**

The Elder is a woman more than a hundred years old. She has long bushy white hair and wears priests' robes made of burlap. A Tree of Life is embroidered with bright colored yarns on her outer vestment. Beside her is another old woman dressed as a Cardinal. Her vestments are made of rubbish. On the ground in front of the Elder, two large black beetles lie on a wooden plate. Egyptians scarabs.

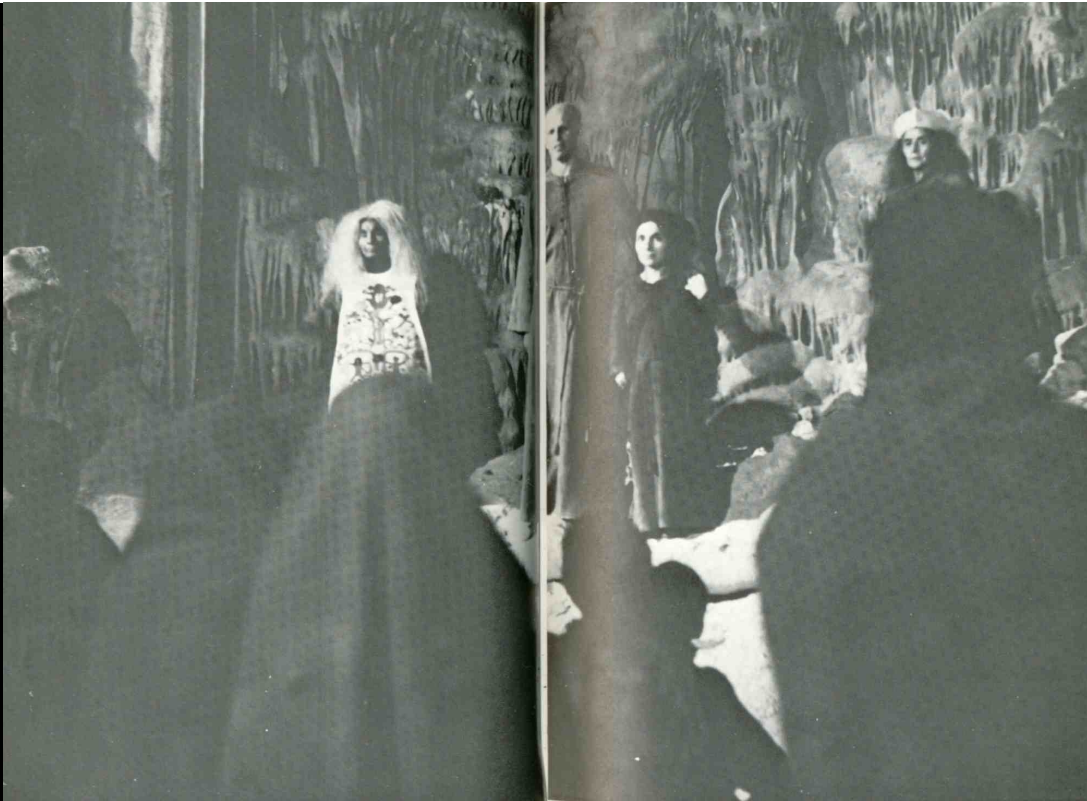
The Elder picks up one of the beetles and sucks on the rear of its carapace. She hands the other beetle to El Topo. When he puts the animal to his mouth, he is overcome with nausea. He forces himself to swallow the juices he sucks from the beetle's stomach. The juices drug him. He feels a change in his breathing. He feels his consciousness dissolve. Suddenly, he finds himself embracing and kissing the Elder, crushing himself against her, disappearing beneath her robe. Assisted by the Small Woman and an altar boy, the Elder cries out as though she were giving birth. El Topo feels the old woman's belly eject him into life once again. His body squirms on the ground like a child being born.

EL TOPO

(screaming)

This isn't me! This isn't my face!

**He tries to tear the skin from his face.
He raises his torso off the ground, forming an arc with his body.**



**With the Elder and the Cardinal as witnesses,
the Small Woman clips El Topo's hair with a pair of scissors.
His face radiates with enlightenment.**

**El Topo's head is completely shaved, including his beard and eyebrows.
His face resembles that of a newborn child.**

**All the inhabitants of the cave come to see him.
El Topo wears a brown floor-length cassock.**



EL TOPO

**I'll get some money and dig a tunnel through the mountain.
When I finish the tunnel, you will be free.
You shall leave this place.**

El Topo emerges with great difficulty from the opening of the cave.

He carries the Small Woman on his back. They stand, hand in hand, on the grassy top of the mountain. They see the town below.

[The physical relationship between El Topo and the Small Woman is very congenial. They could be brother and sister, father and daughter or, when they climb out of the cave, a mother carrying her baby on her back. El Topo gives no sense of sexuality: he is androgynous.]

EL TOPO

So this is the great town!



Masked executioners gallop through the main street stabbing at a large group of Indians with wooden spears. Among the Indians, all dressed in white, is a Young Black Man.

A group of ladies appear. They are lavishly dressed in furs, hats, and parasols. Each carries a banner painted with a triangle and eye. The women walk over to some bleachers and sit down to watch a rodeo. Instead of steers, the cowboys rope the Indians and the Young Black Man. They chase them on horseback, lasso them, brand them with the triangle and eye symbol. The victims scream with pain. The women squeal with delight.

Their husbands are all in front of the town bar, the Oriental Saloon, trying to conceal the arrival of a long wooden crate transported in a horse-drawn cart. They attempt to lift the crate with a pulley, but it crashes down into the cart and breaks open. A woman's ass is seen. A rhumba dancer steps out of the crate, very drunk. She wants to seduce all the men, but they are preoccupied with concealing her secret arrival. In her drunkenness, she begins to strip as she lurches toward the door to the saloon. The men cover her with their jackets, and they all disappear into the bar.

The women of the town are led by an executioner to a lineup of slaves. They inspect their teeth as though they were buying horses and select the most valuable specimens. They climb onto the slaves' backs and ride them into town.

Six of the slaves throw their riders to the ground and try to flee, but they are stopped short of the men of the town, who surround them.

The Sheriff and his Deputy arrive. The Sheriff, dressed in bright green satin, is a totally effeminate queer. His Deputy is a quiet, obese homosexual.

**He is dressed in sheepskin. His beard is bleached yellow.
They capture the slaves, line them up face down on the ground and,
amid rounds of applause from the townspeople,
shoot them one by one in the back.**



A religious procession. The townspeople parade through the street carrying a statue of Christ. The procession halts at an intersection to allow six men on horseback to cross. They drag behind them the bleeding bodies of the executed criminals. They ride past the intersection, and the procession continues.

El Topo and the Small Woman have observed these events from the mountaintop. They are distressed. They realize how hard it will be to accomplish their goal.

EL TOPO
We'll have to beg.

**Hundreds of children run through the street yelling, "El Topo! El Topo!"
The sound of a horn is heard.**

[A chofar.]

**The children run to El Topo, who rides into town on a burro.
He carries a small seven runged ladder on his lap.
The burro is led by the Small Woman, who is blowing the horn.**

**[An image that can be related to the Virgin and Saint Joseph
searching for shelter or to the arrival of Christ riding a burro.]**

**El Topo jumps off the burro and runs through the street,
playing with the children: he's become a clown.**

**The entire town joins the children, who have formed a circle around
El Topo and the Small Woman. The two begin their pantomime act.**



El Topo lifts up his cassock, exposing to the crowd black satin shorts with a large red heart sewn on the back. That's how he expresses his love for the Small Woman. She returns it. El Topo walks over to her and tries to embrace her. She is so small, he misses her. He tries again. He misses. It doesn't occur to him to get down on his knees. They are unable to kiss each other. Suddenly, the Small Woman has an idea. She kisses her own hand and holds it out to El Topo. El Topo rubs his hand over hers, lifts it to his mouth and licks it. The people laugh. Finally, El Topo discovers the solution. He picks up the ladder, leans it against his chest and lets the Small Woman climb until she reaches his height. They kiss. As the people laugh, El Topo pretends to be overcome with emotion and falls to the ground with the Small Woman. El Topo is seen passing his hat among the crowd. He carries the Small Woman on his hip. The people give them many coins.

A beauty salon.

Five women of the town are dressed in corsets and brassieres. The Young Black Man quietly attends them. A large woman wearing black underwear and rollers in her hair calls to the Young Man. She speaks with a coarse baritone voice.

LARGE WOMAN

Curl my hair!

The Young Man goes over to her and starts fixing her curlers. Aroused, she sticks out her tongue and wets her lips.

Another woman, dressed all in pink, romantically extends her hand to the Young Man, exposing an underarm so full of black hairs that it looks like a woman's sex.



WOMAN OF THE HAIRY ARMPITS
(delicately)
Paint my nails.

The Young Man paints her nails while she sighs, exhaling in his face.

Another woman, her arm grotesquely deformed
by a huge scar, calls to the Young Man.

SCARRED WOMAN
The cream.

The Young Man rubs her scar with a gelatinous cream.
The woman presses the Young Man's hand against her large, soft breasts.

Another woman with a protruding stomach calls to the Young Man.

WOMAN OF THE LARGE STOMACH
Fan!

She pretends to be overcome by the heat.
The Young Man brings a fan.
As he fans her, she edges closer and closer,
pressing her large stomach against his sex.

Finally, a fat woman sitting at a dressing table
tells the Young Man to paint her lips.

FAT WOMAN
(with the voice of a child)
Lipstick!

He paints her lips. She opens her legs and drops a brush
between them. The Young Man bends down to pick it up.
She takes his head and presses it against her sex.

FAT WOMAN
(screaming)

This degenerate is looking at my legs!

**The Young Man backs off, stand up and is confronted
by the Large Woman of the Black Underwear.
She slaps him several times and forces him to embrace her.**



LARGE WOMAN

Help! He's holding me by force!

**The Woman of the Large Stomach
takes his face in her hands and kisses him.**

**WOMAN OF THE LARGE STOMACH
You are witnesses. He's kissing me by force!**

**The Woman of the Hairy Armpits
takes his hands and rubs them over her breasts.**

**WOMAN OF THE HAIRY ARMPITS
(squealing)**

Filthy slave! How dare you!

FAT WOMAN

Help! He's raping us!

**The women throw themselves on top of the Young Man,
who is sprawled out on the floor. Roaring like lions, they
begin to lick his body or devour it. We don't know which.
Half dressed, the women run into the street screaming,
"Help! Arrest him! Rapist!"**

**The Young Man tries to escape, but the executioners overtake him
and deliver him to the Sheriff and the Deputy, who order him strung
up by his feet. The Sheriff selects one of his Deputy's eight pistols
and aims it at the Young Man. The Deputy curls his finger around
the trigger and fires. The Young Man dies. The people applaud.**

El Topo and the Small Woman are on their way back to the cave.

**This time, the Small Woman rides the burro and El Topo leads her.
He carries a small round stool, half red and half blue.**

[Parallel with the Tao symbol.]



SMALL WOMAN

**Do you think it's worth it for my people
to leave the cave for this? This is worse!**

El Topo halts the burro.

EL TOPO

I'll keep digging.

With great determination, he heads toward the mountain.

**Part of the tunnel has been completed. El Topo comes out of
the opening he has made high on the side of the mountain.
He carries a large basket filled with rocks. With the help of the
Small Woman, he dumps the rocks over the side of the mountain.**

SMALL WOMAN

How many meters have we progressed?

El Topo gives her an affectionate tap on the head.

EL TOPO

I progress.

He disappears into the tunnel to continue digging.

**In the town, a large crowd has gathered to watch a new show:
a boxing match between two slaves. Someone wraps barbed
wire around their boxing gloves, while others yell, "Place your
bets, gentlemen. Place your bets." An executioner fires a shot
in the air and forces the slaves to fight. The crowd heckles them
and goads them into destroying each other with the barbed
wire gloves. They are very frightened, but have no alternative.**

One punches the other, who falls to the ground bleeding.

El Topo passes by with the Small Woman and tries to help the fallen slave. The crowd kicks him away.

EL TOPO

We've lost our audience.

They walk past the Sheriff's office.

SHERIFF

Hey! Monsters! Come here!



El Topo and the Small Woman look at each other.

SHERIFF

Yes, you. Monsters. Come here.

**They walk over to the Sheriff's office.
The Sheriff and his Deputy offer them a job.**

DEPUTY

We'll pay you well.

El Topo and the Small Woman enter the jail. The Deputy gets up from the toilet where he has defecated and tells them to clean it. They start to work while the Deputy forces three prisoners out of a luxurious bed at gun point. The bed is covered with a velvet spread. The prisoners are in nightshirts. A banquet table has been prepared in the jail with fine linens, champagne, roast chicken, pastries. The jail looks more like a brothel than a prison. The Sheriff plays romantic music on an organ. The Deputy kisses him affectionately and, like a pair of newlyweds, they stroll over to the prisoners. The Sheriff inspects them from head to toe. He orders them to turn their back to him. He rips the nightshirt of one of the prisoners to expose his buttocks, then lunges at him. The fight continues on the street. The two slaves are covered with blood from head to foot.

A Franciscan monk ties his horse to a nearby post and heads toward the crowd. He is a young man, but has El Topo's features. It is Brontis, fully grown. Brontis works his way through the crowd and tries to stop the fight, but the prisoners fall to the ground. He stoops to examine the prisoners. Both are dead. He blesses them and stands up.

BRONTIS
They're dead.

DRUNKEN CROWD MEMBER
Who died first?

Brontis points to one of the boxers. The Drunken Crowd Member reaches down and raises the other one's arm.

DRUNKEN CROWD MEMBER
This one's the champion!

The crowd applauds, and the winners begin to collect their bets.



Brontis enters a church. Painfully, he removes his white gloves stained with the blood of the two slaves. He goes to the front of the church where an Old Priest kneels before an altar, seemingly in prayer. Brontis lays his hand on the Priest's shoulder. Startled, the Priest jumps up and spits out a mouthful of wine. With the bottle still in his hand, the Priest embraces Brontis and offers him a drink. Brontis refuses.

The church is filled with people chanting and clapping their hands in an ecstatic rhythm. They seem possessed.

CONGREGATION
You will protect us, Oh Lord.
You will protect us, Oh Lord ...

The interior walls of the church are covered with white sheets painted in black with the triangle and eye. The Old Priest, his vestments also decorated with the triangle and eye,

stands before the congregation and draws a revolver.
He loads it with a single bullet, spins the cylinder and approaches
the congregation, his arms raised high above his head.

OLD PRIEST

(shouting)

God loves us and protects us.
If he have faith in Him, nothing can harm us.
We have to gamble with Our Lord.
The bet is Death. May he who doesn't believe perish.

The chant continues. Members of the congregation cry out,
"Me! Me!" They reach for the revolver. A woman grabs the gun,
puts it to her temple and pulls the trigger. The gun clicks.



CONGREGATION

(in unison)

Miracle! Miracle!

The chant continues: "You will protect us, Oh Lord ..." Another woman
reaches for the revolver, puts it to her temple and pulls the trigger.

The gun clicks again. Everyone shouts, "Miracle! Miracle!"

A gravedigger, dressed in black and wearing a brimmed hat
decorated with black flowers and chiffon, takes the gun and pulls
the trigger. The gun clicks. Once again, the people shout, "Miracle!"

The gravedigger hand the revolver to the young priest, to Brontis.
He examines it. The Old Priest pulls him aside and whispers in his ear.

OLD PRIEST

Don't be afraid. It's a blank.

Brontis reacts violently. He removes the blank from the gun,
takes a real bullet from the gunbelt of one of the members of
the congregation, loads it into the revolver, spins the cylinder,
puts the gun to his temple and pulls the trigger.

The gun clicks. With great reverence, the congregation says,
"Miracle!" A stupid-looking man grabs the gun from Brontis and
pulls the trigger. The gun clicks. A child runs up, grabs the gun,

pulls the trigger and blows out his brains. Desperate screams.

**The church is empty. The Old Priest sits in one of the front pews.
He is wearing lay clothes. His bloody vestments are on the pew
beside him. Brontis stands before him.**

OLD PRIEST

**They won't come back.
The circus is over. I'm going too.**



**The Old Priest walks out of the church. Brontis closes the door
behind him. He rips from the wall one of the sheets with the
triangle and eye. He moves around the church tearing down all
the sheets until he comes to the altar, where a huge sheet
with an enormous triangle and eye covers the entire wall.
He tugs at it furiously and pulls it down, uncovering a large
painting of a black cross with a white cross crucified on it.**

**[Parallel between the duality of the cross
and the duality of the Tao symbol.]**

**In front of the Oriental Saloon, El Topo does a clumsy dance inspired
by American music hall routines. The Small Woman stands off to one
side playing an instrument made out of a pole, a tin can and a string.
A group of ladies arrive carrying placards of the triangle and eye.
The owner of the bar greets them courteously and opens the
door for them. They enter the bar. El Topo and the Small
Woman haven't received a cent from passers-by on the street.
A drunk opens the bar door and sees them going through their act.**

**DRUNK
Come on in.**

**El Topo and the Small Woman enter the bar. Three or four men
are earnestly listening to the leader of the group of ladies.**

**LEADER
After its monthly inspection, the League of**

**Decent Women congratulates their husbands
as usual. Everything here is utter decency.**

**The ladies start to file out. El Topo holds out his hat to see if they will
give him a little money, but the women ignore him as they pass by.
The men whisper among themselves. One of them comes over to El Topo.**



MAN

You want to earn some money?

**El Topo nods. When the men are sure the ladies have gone,
they open a trap door that leads to the basement of the bar.
Sensual music rises up from below. They motion El Topo
down the ladder. El Topo and the Small Woman descend.**

**A large basement. A man dressed like a woman plays a
bass fiddle, a child plays a violin, an old woman plays a
piano. Nude prostitutes dance with the men. Other nude
prostitutes are sprawled on a bed in the middle of the room.
The women's clothes are strewn over the floor like rugs.**

**One of the drunken customers shoves El Topo
and the Small Woman into the group of people.**

DRUNK

Do your kissing number!

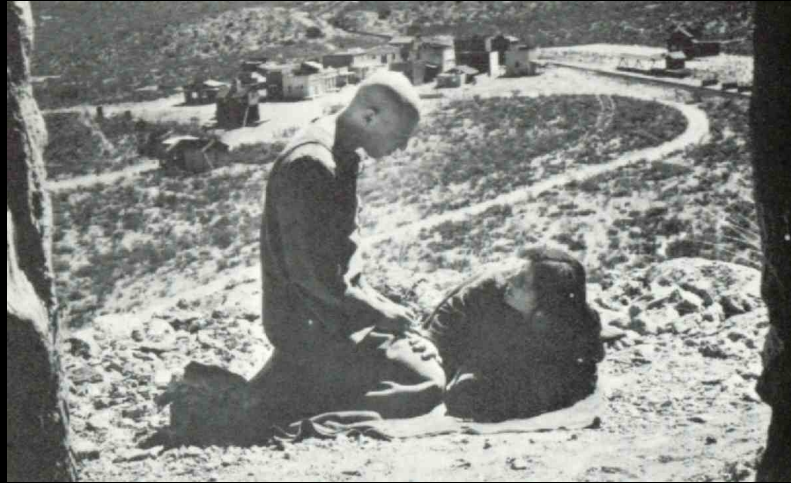
**El Topo and the Small Woman sadly go through their act among
the prostitutes and drunks, who watch them passively. When they
come to where the Small Woman has to reach El Topo's mouth to
kiss him, he lifts her up on the bed. One of the women on the bed
makes room for the Small Woman, and she kisses El Topo.
Abruptly, one of the drunks draws his pistol on the pair.**

DRUNK

Now we want to see the rest. Undress. The Wedding Night!

Raucous laughter. El Topo is forced to take off his

cassock. He helps the Small Woman take off her dress. Slowly, she turns, exhibiting her breasts to the audience. More laughter. The drunk shoves them down on the bed, and El Topo falls on top of the Small Woman.



DRUNK

Come on! The Wedding Night!

Offensive laughter. El Topo embraces the Small Woman.
She whispers in his ear.

SMALL WOMAN

**I love you. They don't exist.
There's not one here but you.
Take me. Please.**

El Topo embraces her tenderly while the prostitutes vomit up crude laughter. The drunk bites off a piece of a raw carrot he holds upright on the prongs of a fork.

El Topo sits on top of the mountain resewing the red heart on his black satin shorts. On the ground in front of him, some blankets cover a bulky form. The Small Woman, hiding. El Topo takes off his hat, jingles the coins he's placed inside and dumps them on the ground. He jingles some of the coins in his hands. The Small Woman doesn't move. El Topo taps the blanket a few times. He tugs at the blankets to try to uncover her face, but she holds them tightly over her. El Topo taps her again affectionately. She continues to hide.

EL TOPO

We'll be able to buy dynamite to continue digging.

No answer. He hits her with his hat and forces her out from under the blankets.

EL TOPO

Hey! Why are you hiding?

SMALL WOMAN

**I'm ashamed. I must be repulsive to you.
You're going to leave me.**

**Smiling wordlessly, El Topo kisses her on the forehead,
picks her up in his arms like a sack of flour and runs her
down a path that leads to the town. She kicks and screams.**



**With the Small Woman still struggling in his arms, El Topo enters
the church. He sits down in one of the pews and motions
toward the priest praying at the altar with his back to them.**

EL TOPO

Tell him to marry us.

**The Small Woman can't believe her ears.
She's overcome with joy. She runs to the priest.**

SMALL WOMAN

We're going to be married, Father.

**Smiling, Brontis turns to meet the bridegroom. He recognizes his
father immediately. El Topo remembers his own. The two faces
are almost identical. Suddenly, Brontis throws El Topo to the floor.
He lifts up his robe and draws a pistol..**

[I don't know if he draws it from a gunbelt or from his unconscious.]

**He strikes El Topo several times with the butt of the gun and
backs off to take aim. The Small Woman grabs the barrel
of the revolver to stop Brontis from pulling the trigger.**

SMALL WOMAN

Don't kill him! He's doing important work!

**Brontis emerges from the dark cave. He wears the same outfit El Topo
used to wear, down to the silver-plated pistol and the two knives.
El Topo and the Small Woman are sitting on the ground outside the**

opening of the cave. El Topo cleans the wounds on his face from Brontis' blows. The Small Woman is telling Brontis about El Topo's new life.

SMALL WOMAN

... and he promised to dig a tunnel to free us.



Brontis stands over El Topo. He hesitates.

BRONTIS

(with controlled hatred)

I'll wait until you've finished your work.
Then I'll kill you. But I intend to watch
you day and night so you won't escape.

And from this moment, Brontis doesn't let El Topo or the Small Woman out of his sight. He follows them everywhere, like a shadow.

El Topo lifts a beer keg from a cart. The Small Woman taps him on the back. She wants to help. El Topo picks her up and lets her wash the upper part of the window. She is four months pregnant.
Brontis stands guard.

El Topo gathers up horse manure from the streets and dumps it into a burlap bag the Small Woman holds for him. She is seven months pregnant. El Topo stops working and puts his ear to the Small Woman's belly, trying to hear the baby's movements.
Brontis stands guard.

El Topo carries a basket of stones from the cave and dumps them over the side of the mountain. The Small Woman helps him laboriously. She is eight months pregnant. Brontis can no longer contain himself.
He stands facing El Topo.

BRONTIS

(furiously)

This is endless! You are taking too long!

EL TOPO

(with a saintly expression on his face)
If you want us to move faster, help us dig.
And if you want us to finish sooner, help us beg.



A crowd of people in the town. El Topo, the Small Woman and Brontis are doing a pantomime routine. Brontis wears a cassock again. Bright-colored ribbons stream from his head. The people laugh. The three receive many coins.

El Topo unloads a water jug from the cart, and Brontis unloads a beer keg. They carry them into the bar. The Small Woman, barely able to move, follows them and wipes their brows.

El Topo and his son wash a shop window. The Small Woman taps them both on the back. Brontis kisses her very gently on the forehead. They pick her up and let her wash the upper part of the window.

Inside the tunnel, Brontis and El Topo hit at a rock obstructing the passageway. The Small Woman watches.

BRONTIS

It's very hard rock. We've hit it a thousand times.
We'll never crack it.

El Topo hits the rock with his pick, and a large piece breaks off.

EL TOPO

Only a thousand times?

He continues working.

An explosion in the tunnel. Brontis carries El Topo outside to the fresh air. El Topo bandages his wounded leg.

BRONTIS

Your pain must be unbearable.

EL TOPO

This body feels the pain. I don't.

He finishes wrapping the wound, picks up a stick, limps back into the cave, determined to continue working.

More time has passed. Brontis can endure it no longer. He throws down his pick and tears off his work smock. Again, he's dressed in black leather.

BRONTIS

Stop it! You'll never make it!

He draws his gun on El Topo. El Topo shoves him aside and, with superstrength, runs to the far wall of the tunnel, hits the rock with his pick and finally breaks through into the main cavern.

SMALL WOMAN

(shouting)

We've done it! We've done it!

She climbs through the hole to tell the others.

EL TOPO

(calling after her)

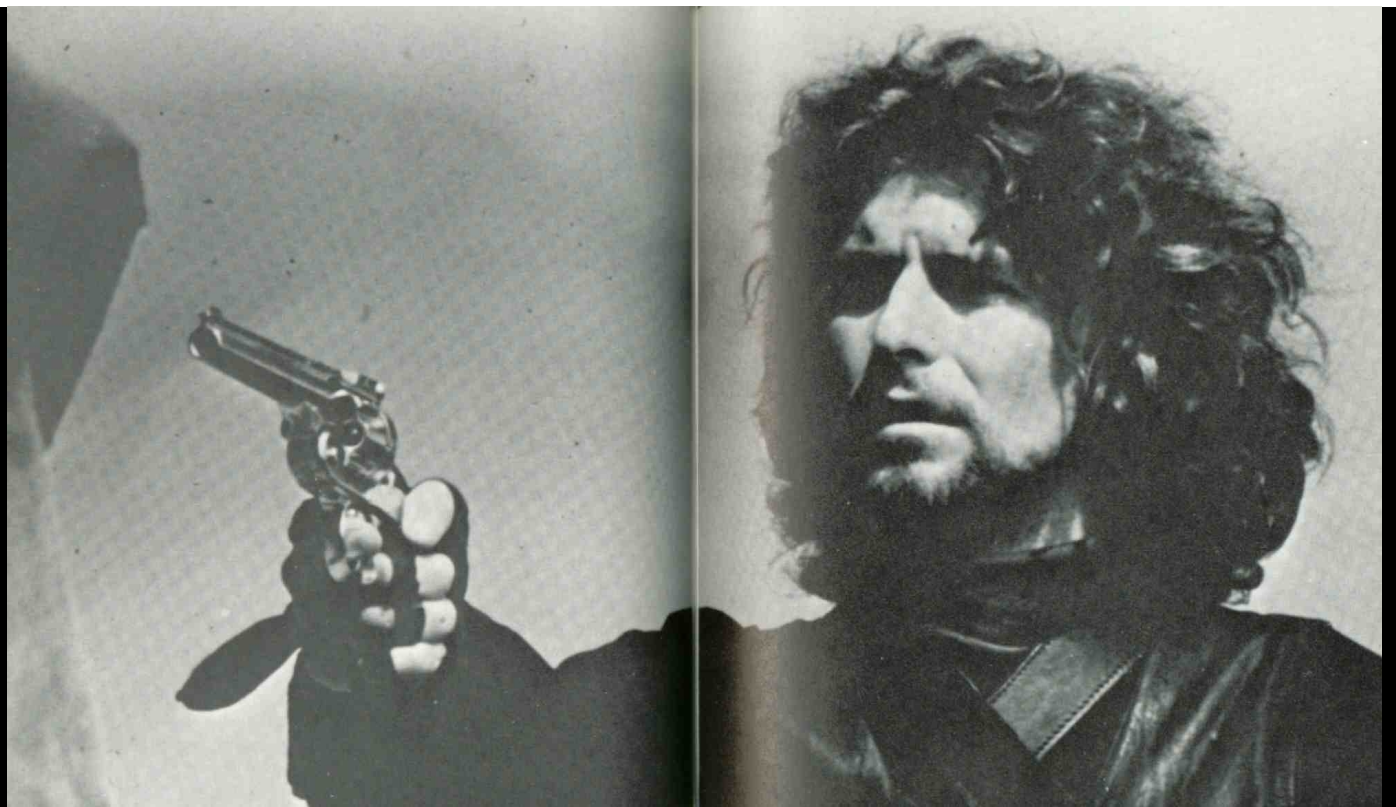
Don't tell them yet. They're not prepared.

He tries to stop her, but Brontis pulls him back and leads him outside the tunnel. El Topo takes off his work smock, looks Brontis in the eye, calmly awaits his death. Brontis points his gun at him and tries to shoot. He hesitates, then closes his eyes.

BRONTIS

I can't kill my Master.

He throws down his gun and runs off in tears.



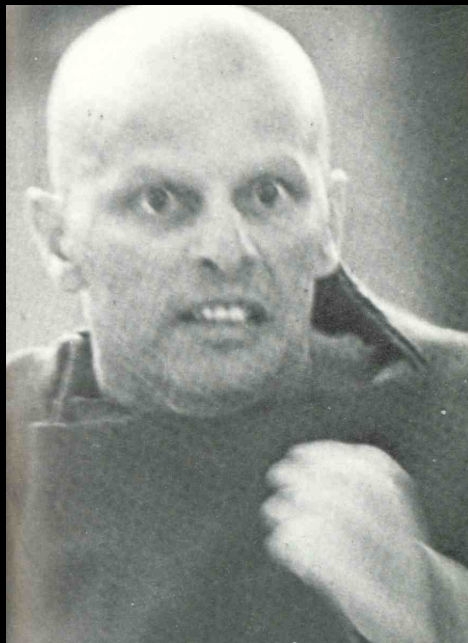
PART FIVE



El Topo starts to enter the cave to stop the Small Woman, but he's too late. Thousands and thousands of cripples, dwarfs, undernourished children, deformed beings pour out of the tunnel like a turbulent river. They knock El Topo down on the way and run down the mountain toward the town.



**The Sheriff warns the townspeople.
Armed with rifles, they advance toward the cripples.**



**El Topo gets up and runs down the mountain, trying to prevent the
massacre. He cannot arrive soon enough. The shooting has begun.
The cave's inhabitants are all shot down and killed.**



At the mouth of the cave, the Small Woman falls to the ground in great pain. She begins to give birth.



El Topo reaches the fallen cripples. He kneels down beside one of the children and cries out in a bestial scream. He rises, possessed with a saintly rage.



A shot to his heart throws him to the ground, but he refuses to accept death. He stands and advances towards the townspeople.



They shoot him again and again, riddling his body with infinite bleeding wounds. His body is destroyed, but he defies death and continues his advance. The townspeople are terrified.



They drop their rifles and run screaming in all directions. El Topo picks up a rifle and kills them one by one.



**He shoots at a box of dynamite. It explodes. A stampede of horses.
The sound of an atom bomb. The slaves free the town.**



El Topo kills the shop owner, the last survivor.



El Topo throws down his rifle, enters the shop, picks up a burning oil lamp.



He staggers out into the street, sits on the ground in the lotus position, and pours the oil over his body.



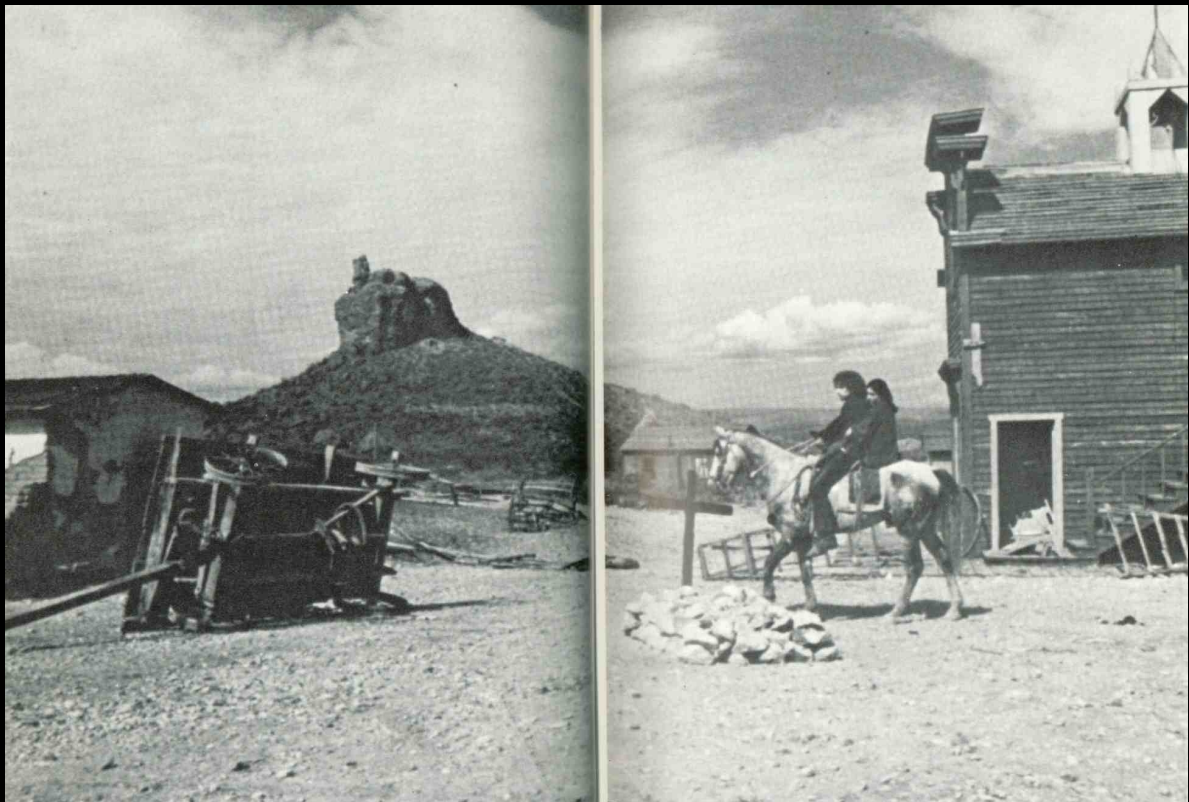
Smiling, he presses the flame against his breast and immolates himself.



**The Small Woman approaches with El Topo's son in her arms.
Brontis approaches from the opposite direction.**



**They stare at the remains of El Topo,
a heap of smoldering cinders.**



**Brontis, dressed like El Topo, and the Small Woman and
her baby slowly ride away from the town on a black horse.
Behind them they leave a stone grave marked with a cross.**



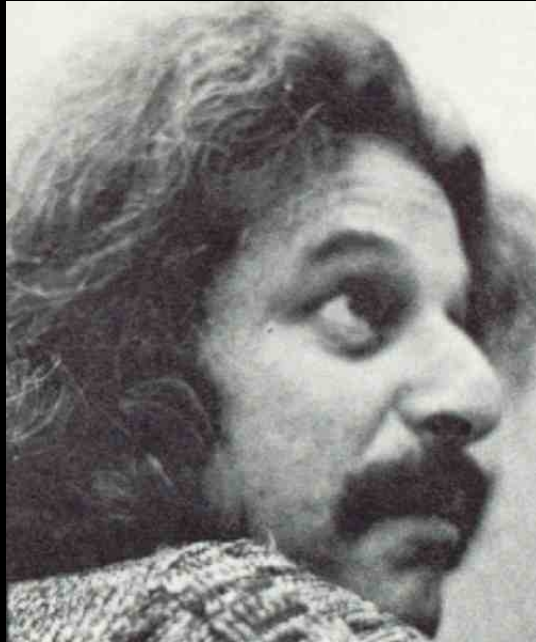
Thousands and thousands of bees swarm over the stones.



They have created a river of honey over the grave.

THE END

CONVERSATIONS
WITH
JODOROWSKY



These conversations took place in New York City in December, 1970.

Those who came together to question Alexandro Jodorowsky about **EL TOPO** include Ira Cohen, Steve Roday, Ross Firestone, Marty Topp, Susan Sedgwick, and Stefan Bright.

Joanne Pottlitzer was also present to translate their questions into Spanish and his answers into English, wherever necessary.

This interview was done in one sitting.

The reader must read it in one sitting.

And then take a shower and try to forget it.

**If he cannot forget it, he must open a window
and stick out his hand and wait for a bird
to build a nest in it and lay three eggs.**

**And then he should pull in his hand violently
and crack the eggs on his forehead.**

If the reader is not ready for that experience,

he should not eat this book.
Alexandro Jodorowsky

JODOROWSKY

I believe that the only end of all human activity --
whether it be politics, art, science, etc. --
is to find enlightenment, to reach the state of enlightenment.
I ask of film what most North Americans ask of psychedelic drugs.
The difference being that when one creates a psychedelic film,
he need not create a film that shows the visions of a person
who has taken a pill; rather, he needs to manufacture the pill.
I think that the journey of Alexander the Great is a psychedelic trip.
Many say that Alexander the Great was an idiot because his conquest
was so great, so complete, that he was actually progressing toward
his ultimate failure. I think that Alexander the Great was journeying
into the depths of his being. I think that Odysseus was another great
traveler. I want to travel the route of the Odyssey, I want to travel
the route of Alexander the Great. I want to travel into the
deepest areas of my being in order to reach enlightenment.

Punto!

OK, that's the introduction.
Now shall we talk about the movie?

FIRESTONE

You say it's a journey into the self. You had told us when we
met before that certain scenes and images in the film related
to you personally. For example, that is your son in the first scene
and that is the first toy you gave him. What I'd like to do is talk
about that sort of thing in the picture: the personal elements,
not necessarily an explanation of the picture *per se*.

JODOROWSKY

Very concrete things.

FIRESTONE

Yes. Scenes and images.

JODOROWSKY

I use concrete symbols in every scene. Cultural symbols.
For example, the pole in the desert is the Tao symbol.
For me, it is a sundial. And I wanted to try to film the
scene at noon because I remembered a Sufi story.
It tells of a person who, standing at a given point

and facing a given direction, would cast a shadow
which would point to the site of a hidden treasure.
He went to that site. He dug and dug, but found nothing.
And his shadow began to shorten until at noon
he had no shadow at all. And then he understood.
This is an ancient symbol. And the other symbol is real.
The child who works with me in the film is really my son.
He is the son of a French woman who's name is Landru.
When the child was born, his mother took him away.
I gave him a toy bear. Sometime later I was reading
a book by Maitre Phillipe, the teacher of Papus.

COHEN

The author of the book about Tarot, you mean.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, a very obscure author and a very strange person.
Philippe went to Russia and spoke with Rasputin. And in
his book, he says that if one has debts which he doesn't
pay in this life, he will return in another life to pay them.
And since I don't want to come back to settle old debts,
I decided to settle all my debts now. I had three children
by three different women. So I began to ask them to give
the children to me. Two of the women did. One was Brontis --
the child in the movie -- who came to live with me when he
was seven years old. He arrived with his toy bear.
And when we made the film, I took a photograph of his
mother, put it in an antique frame and filmed the scene.
I said to Brontis: "You must bury your mother's picture
and your bear." That was real. But if you notice, when I was
filming, I cut out the bear's head. I'll explain why I did that.

One day I saw an image of myself. I was mute.
I had no tongue. And half of the top of my skull opened up
into eight pieces, in slow motion. And my brain began to
pulsate like a beating heart. Then a large butterfly appeared.
A butterfly with one white wing and one black wing.
It alighted on my head, on my brain, thinking I was a flower.
It lowered its tongue into my brain, between the two lobes,
until the tip appeared through my mouth. And I had a tongue.

I think the bear is waiting for a golden tongue
to enter his brain and speak for him.

COHEN

That's why you cut the bear's head from the frame.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, but I said that with a great sense of humor.
OK, let's continue.

If you look at the first scene, you will see that there are one hundred women. I counted everything in my picture. I mean, there really were one hundred women. I dressed them in white, like brides -- bloody brides. When I saw the scene being filmed, I felt I was seeing one hundred raped brides. In Mexico, bridal gowns are very cheap, two dollars. But I didn't have the money to dress them all in bridal gowns. Otherwise I would have had them all wear elegant white wedding gowns. One day I'll make a movie with ten thousand women dressed as raped brides.

FIRESTONE

What about the man with no arms?

JODOROWSKY

The two men: the one with no arms, and the other with no legs. I designed their costume from one I saw in the Encyclopedia of Film: a John Wayne costume. It was one costume, which I cut into two parts. I put the upper half on the man with no legs and the pants on the man with no arms. Two cripples make one John Wayne.

FIRESTONE

You were talking about the differences between the two men ...

JODOROWSKY

Ah, it was terrible. They hated each other -- hated each other. The man with no legs would ask the man with no arms, "Where is my horse?" And they would fight. One would say, "It's better to have no arms." The other would say, "It's better to have no legs." Then one would say, "If you raise your voice to me, I'll sock you in the jaw." And the other, "If you sock me, I'll kick you."

COHEN

Each one thought he was the best, right?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, they were very proud of what they were. The armless man lost his arms when he was nine years old. He married and had ten children. He sings in a mariachi band. The other lost his legs just two years ago and his wife and two children immediately left him. They took all

his money and left him on the street. Very cruel world.
The arms and the legs fight each other.
Like most people in the world, right?

FIRESTONE

Where did you find them?

JODOROWSKY

Oh, I find ninety percent of my people on the street.

FIRESTONE

They're not actors?

JODOROWSKY

I find them the way I find locations.
When I'm looking for a location, I don't sleep.
I think the best drug is not to sleep. I don't sleep.
I believe that the planet is a live being
who thinks -- logically -- but it also dreams.
And then it makes landscapes that are very different.
So without having slept, I happen on a place
and find these geological draems.

I said, for example, that I needed a man with no legs, and
he knocked on my door. That's how I found all the people.
They came. When I needed a person, that person appeared.
The little dwarf, for example. I saw her on the street.
I spoke to her ... I talked and talked and talked ...
She was a virgin. And when I padded her stomach with the
pillow for the film, she cried, because she never imagined
herself with a baby. But three days ago, she had a baby --
a daughter -- with a very beautiful man. I like her.
She married and had a little girl. By Caesarian.

COHEN

You said when you met her, you had to teach her that she was little.
She thought of herself as normal size, right?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. She didn't know she was little. She thought of herself as
a normal person. When she was photographed, she would sit in a
position that would make her look normal in the pictures. I don't know.
To say "normal" is a mistake because I think she is very normal.
Perhaps we are monsters for Venutians. I don't know. Because I think
she is very beautiful. A very intelligent person, very good as a woman.

I'm not attracted to consumer-women. I fall in love with ugly women -- "ugly" in quotes. I think that all consumer women are men. Anyway, I told the little dwarf, "I think you're crazy, because you don't know what you are ... your size." And she said, "I know now. Because I know you.

And talking to you I know what I really am." I said to her, "If you're going to make the film, you must have a photograph taken with me, at my side holding my hand." We took the picture.

And she saw herself in the picture. And she is. Reality.

It was a great liberation for her.

FIRESTONE

The other two women, the women in the first half of the film?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, the first woman, the blond, came to my home one day. She was in bad shape. At one time in her life she had taken LSD in great quantities, and had suffered. She had been in a hospital for mental illness. I said, "I will make a film with you.

You will have the starring role." And she believed me.

She didn't know who I was. And I didn't know her name. She lived with my children for six months. (When my children came to live with me, I thought it would be good to have two houses, one for myself and Valerie, my wife, and the other for the children and the three cats. One day she said, "My name is Mara." After we filmed the movie, she left. I don't know where she is.

COHEN

She's never seen the movie?

JODOROWSKY

She's never seen the movie.

One I received a postcard from her that simply said, "I'm not dead." This is all I know about her.

FIRESTONE

What about the dark-haired woman?

JODOROWSKY

I saw her in a go-go club where she was dancing. I went up to her and said, "I will make a film with you." And she said, "Good." She is an airline stewardess.

FIRESTONE

She went away, too?

JODOROWSKY

She went away.

FIRESTONE

I saw in the section of the screenplay that was published in *The Drama Review* that there's a scene in which the two women are destroyed. It's not in the picture. They just ... go away.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I didn't use that scene. I didn't use it because I thought ... why destroy the two women? I am not a moralist. If I destroyed the women, it would be a form of punishment. I didn't want to say that in the film, but the audiences can think it. Right? They can imagine that the two women will ultimately destroy each other, if they wish. For me, the story of the film is an internal one, not an external one. But now I regret that it isn't external because a few days ago I saw some Chinese movies with Ira Cohen. I think that was the most important experience of my life as a film director.

FIRESTONE

Why?

JODOROWSKY

Because I learn more from things that are not done well. I think they are wonderful films, especially the swords. I think that the Museum of Modern Art is in Chinatown.

FIRESTONE

What did you learn from the Chinese movies you saw?

JODOROWSKY

Well, I learned the complete break with any aesthetic, ethical, moral, mental, emotional or political commitment. It was really good.

FIRESTONE

I'd like to ask you more about your son.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes.

FIRESTONE

When you abandoned him in the movie ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I abandoned him in the movie.

And I had also abandoned him in real life.

FIRESTONE

In reality also. First he buries the bear
in the picture, right? And the photo.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. And he understood, he understood. I explained it to him;
I explained everything he did in the movie before asking him to do it.
I explained things to everyone. Mara, for example. When I wanted
to do the rape scene, I explained to her that I was going to hit her
and rape her. There was no emotional relationship between us,
because I had put a clause in all the women's contracts
stating that they would not make love with the director.

We had never talked to each other. I knew nothing about her.
We went to the desert with two other people: the photographer
and a technician. No one else. I said, "I'm not going to rehearse.
There will be only one take because it will be impossible to repeat.

Roll the cameras only when I signal you to." Then I told her,
"Pain does not hurt. Hit me." And she hit me. I said, "Harder."
And she started to hit me very hard, hard enough to break a rib ...
I ached for a week. After she had hit me long enough and hard
enough to tire her, I said, "Now it's my turn. Roll the cameras."
And I really ... I really ... I really raped her.

And she screamed.

Then she told me that she had been raped before. You see, for me the
character is frigid until El Topo rapes her. And she has an orgasm.
That's why I show a stone phallus in that scene ... which spouts water.

She has an orgasm. She accepts the male sex.

And that's what happened to Mara in reality. She really
had that problem. Fantastic scene. A very, very strong scene.

COHEN

Do you know that the mole has a cock like a knife?
You know, with a serrated edge, like a surgical instrument.

JODOROWSKY

I think that's fantastic because I wore two knives in the film. You can
see them in the photos. Two knives -- not just one -- I wore two knives.
Maybe one was for the blonde and the other for the second woman.

I don't know ... maybe. I had two knives.

FIRESTONE

And the eggs?

JODOROWSKY

They were turtle eggs. I think the turtle egg is a marvelous symbol. Brancusi's egg, for example, is an egg suspended in time. So is a normal egg. It's the symbol of potentiality. But it rejects you. You can't penetrate a chicken egg; you have to break it.

A turtle egg is very hard when you take it in your hand, but as you hold it, it moulds to the shape of your hand like solid water. And you can relate to it. To break it is to have to squeeze it very hard. And when you squeeze it, the yolk bursts in your hand, and it becomes part of your hand. I like turtle eggs.

What else? Ask me. I'll put all my symbols in order.
When I want to order my thoughts, I put my library on order.
And I feel that *El Topo* is a library ... of all the books I love.

For example, I don't think anyone realizes that when *El Topo* says, "I am God," it is a reference to the Sufi poet Al Halaj. And with the blood -- there is so much blood in the picture -- I was referring to the Essenes. In their Gospel of Peace, they say that all blood comes from the Universal Mother, that stones are blood, flowers are blood, walls are blood, that everything is blood. So when I wound someone in the picture, I exaggerate the blood because I feel it is Truth being exposed ... quite apart from the humor of it.

But there's one thing the audience doesn't know which I should reveal here: to get the blood effects, you must place a little sack of blood inside the clothing of the actor, next to his skin. The sacks I used were prophylactics -- rubbers -- because they are very strong and they worked. It was very funny to watch the workmen filling a rubber with blood ... a blood-filled condom. So when the sacks are broken to get the effect, every wound is a phallus that explodes. For me this is very beautiful.

It's like Rene Guenon's symbol of the lance. There is a close union between the lance and the wound. The blood flows from the lance, falls to the ground and turns into red flowers. Right? In other words, wounds don't bleed; weapons bleed. When I do my next Western, maybe the guns won't shoot bullets. Maybe they'll shoot streams of blood. Maybe. It's a nice idea. And not so crazy, because in the Middle Ages, when someone was wounded by a sword, the wound wasn't treated. Instead, the sword was treated and bandaged. This is history.

OK. Shall we continue?

COHEN

You said that the artificial blood was very sweet.

JODOROWSKY

Ah, yes, yes, it was. The American blood. When I began filming the picture, it was fascinating to work with the blood. I used Mexican technicians who had worked with Peckinpah in *The Wild Bunch*, and they taught me how to do the tricks. They told me that Peckinpah was very bloody, but when I made my effects, they were astonished. I actually used a very classic technique. But as I became more familiar with the technique, I began to fall in love with it and wanted to use it more and more. I started out with five litres of American blood, which is very expensive in Mexico. It tasted very good ... like strawberries. Like vaginal deodorants taste like strawberries. They never taste like blood.

I know the taste of blood. I've eaten blood, human blood. Once during a happening in Mexico, my disciples drew a little blood from their arms. Then they collected it all in a glass and offered it to me with some tequila ... a sangria. I took the glass in my hands and started to improvise a long Panic poem, trying to put off drinking it for as long as possible.

By the time I decided to drink it, the blood had coagulated.

That day I had just finished reading Zanon's works, so there was no turning back: I put my hand in the glass, scooped out the red gelatin, and devoured it. At first it made me sick, nauseous. But almost immediately ... as soon as I allowed myself to sense the taste of it, I felt an exquisite pleasure. It was the finest food my mouth had ever been fed: delicate, velvety, delicious. The next morning I woke up with the smoothest complexion ... and a dry mouth.

Anyway, I needed more blood for the film, so I began to make it myself because it was so expensive. I used Mexican artificial blood ... and it tasted horrible, like rotten metal. I'll tell you how I made it. I used almond cream -- it's very cheap in Mexico -- and I put vegetable coloring in it. Very cheap. But then I needed *more* blood. Five thousand litres, to make the river of blood for the town scene. So I rented a truck with five thousand litres of water and I mixed five thousands litres of red paint.

That's the story.

COHEN

But at the end of the film, you even ran out of that, right?

JODOROWSKY

Ah! I used watermelons. I took pieces of watermelon and threw them like baseballs at the cripples we were writing on the ground in the last scene. The watermelon would hit a body and bounce off. I edited the film to show only the melons bouncing off the bodies. This is very, very amusing: to shoot the last scene where El Topo immolates himself, I took a skeleton of a man, intact, and covered it with beefsteaks -- completely, completely covered

it with steaks. And then I burned it.

COHEN

Did you eat it?

JODOROWSKY

I'm not a cannibal! What I did eat was the honey.

When I direct a film, everybody -- myself included -- falls into such trances that there is dead silence, because our lives are at stake. Animals are killed, for example, and it is a religious sacrifice. In the first segment, we cut open six burros and the Books of Intestines spilled out. I say "Book" because, in primitive times, destiny was always read in the intestines. The intestines spilled out ... without a drop of blood. Like parchment. I had to paint the red.

And there was a religious silence. Only the women were restless. I shouted once, down the long street -- it was half a kilometer long -- and the women remained absolutely still for five hours.

When we filmed the scene on the bridge, it was real.

An old wooden bridge. A hundred years old and the wood was rotten. And at a height of nine hundred meters. I climbed up on the railing and leaned against it without holding on. You can see that in the film.

And the entire technical crew was out on the bridge, running from it, doing all sorts of things. And suddenly an umbrella fell from it, and for several minutes we watched it float down like a feather. Then we woke up and realized that we could die from one second to the next.

And in the desert, for example, when we buried ourselves in the sand, there could have been rattlesnakes there; we killed three of them during the filming of the picture. And every time I got on a horse, I was risking my life, because the first time I touched a horse was in this movie. It threw me three times.

I couldn't direct the horse. But when the camera started rolling, I had complete control over the horse. When the camera stopped, I'd fall off. When the cameras were on, I could have done anything. I was invulnerable, I was invulnerable.

I even threw myself down a mountain. The photographer did, too. When we started the picture, he told me, "I never get tired. I'm never sleepy, and I'm never hungry." And I'd fall into a trance -- we all would -- and when he'd come out of it, he was tired and he was hungry. He nearly died after the film; he was in bed for a whole month. In one day I could climb four mountains and I'd take him with me.

Everybody would fall into a hypnotic trance. I didn't direct them. I think I was directing some unknown force ... I don't know what it was. The basement scene, for example, underneath the bar. We brought in twenty-five whores from the red-light district. And they did everything we wanted them to without saying a word. They understood. And when I was filming in the little town

with my head shaved, everyone in the town thought I was a saint.
Yes, they really thought so. They believed in me.

It was very easy to do the picture. Very easy to make the people do things. Everything was easy. I think we had a kind of communication working among us, a very magical communication. When you live the picture, when you are not acting, there is no dichotomy ... no alienation. What you are doing is real. Because I think that if you want a picture to change the world, you must first change the actors in the picture. And before doing that, you must change yourself. Right? This must be done. With every new picture, I must change myself, I must kill myself, and I must be born. I must kill the actors and they must be born. And then the audiences, the audiences who go to the movies, must be assassinated, killed, destroyed, and they must leave the theatre as new people. This is a good picture.

FIRESTONE

That's what happens, that's what happens.

JODOROWSKY

It's exactly like marijuana, exactly like psychedelic drugs. The picture is a psychedelic drug. But you must not show the visions, what you are seeing, imagining. You must give the way, right? Timothy Leary said in an article that a psychedelic drug is not an end in itself; it is a way. But you can have other ways, like the Sufi way, the Yoga way, the artistic way. We must use art -- artistic activity -- like a way. I pick up this white book of matches, for example. I open it and I see black matches. When I pick it up and open it, I am a poet. If I am a poet, I make poetry. But if I am a politician, picking up the matchbook and opening it is a political act, right? And if I am John Cage, it is music, a musical game. If I am a dancer, it is a dance. What matters is the way ... what you are. If you're a poet, everything is poetry; if you're a politician, everything is politics. But it's the same thing. With a different flavor. OK? Something else.

There are a lot of things in the film that the audience doesn't know. For example, El Topo wears black silk undershorts with two holes: one to expose his balls, and the other, just the tip of the head of his penis. And he wears the black leather pants over them. Oh, and on the shorts there is a green circle around the area of the anus. That's why it's green. But it doesn't mean anything. I drew it on just as a joke, to make me laugh. To make sure I wouldn't act like an actor, I would think about the green circle.

There are other things the audience doesn't know. In the beginning of the scene with the Second Master, I took the Tarot and made a cross to express the unity of all philosophies. The Tarot is a Christian symbol, and a Christian book. I used it to make a cross. Yesterday I was at a dinner with very square people.

And they started to talk among themselves ... private conversations.
I saw a conversation between two men who were sitting opposite each other at the table. At the same time, a woman was talking to another woman opposite her. I saw a line between the two men and a line between the two women,
like a cross. And at that moment I understood one of the symbols of the cross. The vertical line is a masculine principle and the horizontal line a feminine principle.

COHEN

Like the Yin-Yang ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes, like the Yin-Yang. I've always been very interested in the symbolism of the cross. In the sequence of the Second Master, I intuitively made a cross with the Tarot that was on the table. The union of mother and son. Etcetera, etcetera. In the same sequence, the river I crossed was not in a desert; it was in a mine. And the river had traces of cyanide in it. When I finished that scene, the workmen took my shoes off and washed my feet. It was a very religious moment. When I made the film, there was no difference between filming and reality. It was a very religious trip.

The lion. There was only one lion, because I didn't have the money for any more. But my idea was to have seven lions pull the gypsy wagon in that scene.

BRIGHT

When I saw the first lion, I thought there were going to be more.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes, yes. That's good because there *were* more.
I gave you more. It's fantastic. There were more lions.
But we don't see them.

The structure of the Second Master was made entirely of toothpicks. An artist worked for two months to build it. I wanted an enormous structure, but it was so difficult to make, so I got a little structure. I wanted a pyramid, but a huge pyramid, the biggest possible, like Cheops. Why did I use toothpicks? For me, the toothpick is this: when you eat, you use a toothpick because you have eaten well, right? The toothpick is a mystical symbol which means: now I have the Communion within me. I have the Food within me. I clean my teeth. And as I'm cleaning my teeth, I don't speak. Words are no longer necessary. This is what I feel.

FIRESTONE

The voice of the Mother of the Second Master ...

JODOROWSKY

It's a man's voice. The second woman, the one dressed in black, had a man's voice also. When I made the picture, I said, "I'll change the voices any way I like." I changed my voice, too. The first woman, Mara, has the voice of a seventy-year-old woman. Because I feel that in the voice of a 70-year-old woman, there is experience. And if you give that voice to a young woman, you create a great actress.

COHEN

I'm surprised you've never written poetry.

JODOROWSKY

When Mohammed saw his first vision in the cave, he screamed and said, "Why me?" And he wanted to commit suicide. He didn't want to accept the vision because he thought it was too beautiful. One day I was drinking -- I never drink -- and that day I drank Vodka because Vodka is transparent. So it was like drinking the glass. I've always wanted to drink the glass instead of the liquid. Later, I was fucking with Valerie and all of a sudden I started to cry. And I whispered in her ear, desperately and with certain vengeance, "I'm a poet." I think that films must be made like poems. Right? Some people make films like novels: Truffaut. Some people make films like metaphysical stories: Bergman. But I want to make poems. We can make poetry -- we must make poetry. Poetry meant for a poet-audience. That, too.

BRIGHT

Who were the four old ladies in the scene with the young black guy?

JODOROWSKY

They were extras in Mexican films. Old extras. They liked doing that scene very much, and the young man excited them very much. The young man hated those women ... hated them ... but when we shot the scene, he had a problem.

When we filmed the part where they devour him, he had an erection. He couldn't keep himself from having an erection with the old women. And he was very embarrassed. But he had it. And the women were happy. Their lives changed. It was a brief, beautiful moment of life. One of the women used to be an opera singer; another, a rhumba dancer. I don't know about the others. Except for one detail: the scar that one of the women has on her arm. It was inflicted when a two-hundred-forty-five kilo iron statue of Christ fell from a cross and broke her arm.

COHEN

What about the four Masters of the Revolver?
Where did those stories come from?

JODOROWSKY

Oh, it's a very, very, very complex precis. For example, in the sequence of the First Master, you see a white horse. There is so much to say about the white horse. So much, so much. The white horse is a Christ.

Christ is a white horse. A white horse has four horseshoes.

Christ has four horseshoes: four wounds. And the fifth shoe, the wound on his side, are the spurs you kick the horse with. The white horse is also the materialization of instinctive forces.

It stands outside the octagonal building which you enter by climbing a ladder of ten rungs. It's a building without doors or windows where a blind Master lives. You can find the eight-sided tower in Sufism, in the Templars, and in the baptismal font. I think it's a symbol of maternity. Eight is maternity. It's the alchemist oven: the sperm that fertilizes the eggs in darkness. In athanor. That's why I used the tower. I wanted a very, very high tower, but didn't have the money. We did what we could.

in the same sequence, there is a sheep. Everyone knows the meaning of the sheep. I'm not going to say it, but everyone knows that a sheep is a shoe. Sometimes I feel like running with a pair of sheep on my feet -- live sheep shoes. Maybe the First Master is the sheep.

He has a stone figurine in his hand. There is a very nice story about this little sculpture. I have a friend -- his name is Fierro. In English, Fierro means iron. He is very Mexican and one day he was eating mushrooms and his vision was changed. He acquired a new quality: now he finds pre-Columbian sculptures and obsidian stones wherever he goes. He sees the top of something that looks like a little stone and he knows it's something very old and he picks it up.

One day at six in the morning he came to my house. He was high on something. I don't know what ... he was laden with obsidian arrowheads which he threw on my bed. Among them was the stone sculpture that was in the position of Zen meditation. And he said ... it was fantastic what he said. "These are obsidian mirrors. Always look at yourself in an obsidian mirror because it is made of a single material. Don't look at yourself in ordinary mirrors because behind the glass there's a sheet of mercury. It's a duality." And I said to him, "The fundamental quality of a mirror is not to reflect, but to be broken."

And then I picked up the little sculpture to demonstrate the similarity between ancient Mexican culture and the Orient.

Zen meditation exists everywhere.

There is a little story I read in a French book. It is very beautiful.
A man was told to search for a sunflower that shone like the sun.
And he wanted to find the sunflower, but he couldn't find any flowers at all. For years and years, he walked all over the world. But he didn't find a single sunflower anywhere. And one day someone said to him, "I know a person who has sunflowers." He went to see the person, and there he saw thousands and thousands of sunflowers. And he said, "How can you have thousands and thousands of sunflowers when I haven't see one in all my life?" And the person said, "Ah, it's very easy. Every morning I look at the sun and then I see sunflowers everywhere. If once in your life you see the sun, then light is everywhere." Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.
Another question?

FIRESTONE

Was the actor who played the First Master, Mexican?

JODOROWSKY

He's Mexican. He plays an electric organ in a rock band.
I used him because I liked his name: "El Borrado" --
The Erased One. The egoless man. I gave him a woman's voice.

FIRESTONE

In the sequence of the Second Master,
at the very end, when the mother screams ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I wanted to use a bird sound for her scream ...
a dramatic bird sound. But I didn't find what I wanted
because bird sounds aren't dramatic. So I used the
shriek of a rat ... and deformed it a little, electronically.

In the sequence of the First Master, I used Chinese stories.
For example, when the Master says that bullets don't
harm him because they find the empty spaces of his body ...
this is a Chinese story about a king who went to market.
He saw that the meat was very well cut and he asked the butcher,
"How do you do this? You are an artist!" And the butcher said,
"You see this knife? A beginner should sharpen it once a day.
An expert, once a year. I sharpened it only once, when I bought it.
And I've had it now for forty years. I lay it on the meat and let it find
the empty spaces of the meat." I used this story for the First Master.

That Master also says, "I don't need light. I am blind."
I say the same thing with the mole. The mole is an animal
that searches for the sun. And when he sees the sun, he is blinded.

You can take that in a negative way or a positive way. A negative way: we you find your ideas, your life is over. Ah, that's terrible!

People who says this think that they *are*, not that they are *becoming*. And they desire to be, and they don't want to die. I think that you must die each second of your life ... you must die this second and be born this second and die in being born. That's why, when I'm asked to give a lecture on theatre, on theatre theory, I say, "Now I have one theory. Halfway through the lecture I'll have another. And when I finish the lecture I'll have yet another." Yes. But in a positive way, when the mole sees the sun and is blinded, it means the duality has been lost. He's blind but he no longer needs to see the sun. He has it. To be a good Christian, you must kill Christ. I won't explain that. That's why the Master is blind.

Another story about symbols: when the two cripples say to El Topo, "But you search for light in broad daylight." A Japanese poem says, "The roar of thunder in the blue sky of midday." There is no thunder in a blue sky; there is lightning. You hear it within you. Yet you look for light in the day. So at the beginning of the sequence of the First Master there is a lantern that is blown out. It's a Japanese symbol. It means: "Don't look for light outside yourself; you already have it within." That's why the Master is in darkness.

The Second Master is, in one sense, like a Sufi teacher: he is a laborer; he works with his hands. In another sense, he is like an Essene who surrenders himself to the Universal Mother. He works with his hands. He says, "First I strengthened my fingers by working coppers; then I worked delicate things." It is a Chinese story. A king sends for the strongest men of his kingdom and asks them, "Which of you is the champion?" But of course they are all champions. "What can you do?" And one says, "I can lift three oxen." Another says, "I can support twenty men on my back." Etcetera, etcetera. But when the strongest man is brought in and the king asks him, "What can you do?", he says, "I can lift a butterfly by its wings without harming it." This is the story I used for my Second Master.

I used so many things. The honey: I took that from Samson. Samson sees a lion, a dead lion. And bees are making honey in the body of the lion. Honey is the product of your spiritual work. I've always been very surprised when bees came to make honey in the cadavers of certain saints. Honey is the Divine Word. The Bible was written with honey. It was written with honey, and I suppose you could eat the first Bible and it was very sweet. Yes, because there's a part where God comes and gives Ezekiel a scroll, and He says, "Eat the scroll. Don't read it. Eat it." I think that knowledge is to be eaten; if you want, you can digest knowledge. And so when El Topo reaches the moment

of enlightenment, he eats honey. And the eight sides of the tower open up. They are eight petals of the lotus that spring from Buddha's head. And he releases two doves to the air. He releases two because those two doves are his two knives. And it's an Annunciation in reverse. Because, as the dove is the Annunciation for Mary, Mary is the Annunciation for the dove. So when Mary is enlightened, the dove is enlightened.

And Mary made Christ in nine months.
In the first month, Mary grows a mustache;
in the second month, she grows a beard;
in the third month, her breasts fall off
and become two musical instruments
which are supported by the thin thread
of solid milk from her nipples.
In the fourth month, testicles appear;
in the fifth, a penis;
in the sixth, a long foreskin ... long like a tail.
In the seventh month, Christ's sandals grow on her,
because Christ was born with sandals ... and Moses too.
And they had to be removed.
In the eighth month, her chest becomes transparent;
and in the ninth, the wounds appear.
And then she was Christ. And Mary disappeared.
If you don't believe me, how can I convince you?
Because when Christianity was born, it was born like a dance:
everyone was dancing, and shouting. You who don't dance
don't know what we feel. If you don't dance, how can you feel it?

OK. Another question.

COHEN

What about the Third Master?

JODOROWSKY

The Third Master is a Mexican Master. In every Western ever made, the Mexican is always the outlaw, the bad guy. In my picture, the Mexican is a very wonderful man, because Mexico has a very wonderful culture. I'm not Mexican. I'm not talking about my country. But I wanted to use the nobility of ancient Mexico ... the finest of Mexico. The Third Master says, "You have a flute. We'll come to know each other through music." He is very refined. Where did I find this story? Confucius. Once Confucius was listening to music -- it's historical -- and he said, "How beautiful! I love it." And he locked himself in a room for three days. For three days he listened and he listened to the music. And when he came out of the room, he said, "I know the musician's name, the sound of his voice,

how old he is, what he looks like, where he lives, and I know what he's like."
Which means that the music was so good that he was totally immersed
in the music ... embodied in it. Just as I am totally immersed in my hair.
Or as the entire tree is in a leaf; or, as they say, the entire Koran is in its
first sentence, the entire first sentence is in the first word, and the
entire first word is in the first letter, and the entire first letter is
in the first dot, and before the first dot is the non-manifested.
I'll be content with reaching the first dot.

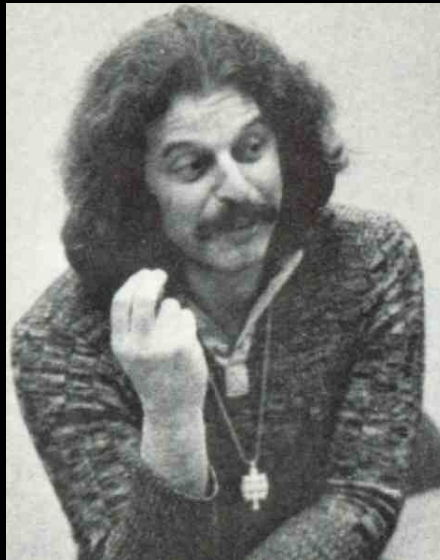
But we were talking about the Third Master. About the music.
And the rabbits. Mexicans count years by rabbits: one rabbit,
two rabbits. Yes. The rabbit is also a solar symbol of reproduction.
You notice that each Master lives with a different animal:
the first one with a horse, the second with a lion,
the third with a rabbit, and the fourth with a butterfly.

COHEN

There was no butterfly.

JODOROWSKY

But there was a butterfly net. Which means there was the shadow
of a butterfly: the net was black. For me, the animals are solar symbols.
Vital fire symbols. Of inner life. That's why the rabbits' grave burns of itself.
Fire is the Word for rabbits. Dragons were enormous rabbits.
Fantastic, isn't it? Fantastic, fantastic!



FIRESTONE

Killing the rabbits ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes, but they were killed by a disease ... by El Topo.
He was the disease, like the plague. I was very illuminated
when I filmed that scene. I had asked for ten thousand rabbits.
But there aren't ten thousand rabbits in the whole province of Torreon.
And I wanted a stampede of rabbits like the great cattle stampedes
in cowboy movies. Wild ... screaming. But they only brought me
three hundred rabbits. So I had to kill them. Because three hundred
live rabbits don't mean anything. Dead, yes. So I invented El Topo's
disease and filmed the scene. But it was so hot, so very hot that the
rabbits swelled up and burst. And the whole company was vomiting --
forty people vomiting. The photographer and I didn't, we were so involved.
And I saved twenty rabbits because they were very beautiful.
And when we finished the scene, people came to get the rabbits
I had saved and took them home. They killed them and ate them.
Because though a rabbit is a dragon for poets, it's a chicken for the hungry.

COHEN

Who killed the rabbits for the scene?

JODOROWSKY

I killed all the rabbits because no one else wanted to do it.
It upset them. I did it with Karate blows on the neck.
To kill a rabbit, you take it by the ears and strike it on
the nape of the neck with the edge of your hand.
And the rabbit dies easily. That's all I look for in life:
to die easily. By killing three hundred rabbits, I learned
how to die peacefully. A rabbit surrenders its life much more
easily than a woman surrenders to an orgasm. Easier.
The vengeance of today's woman is to make the man work to give
her an orgasm. "I'll reach an orgasm by the sweat of your brow."

COHEN

A rabbit can die without a knife, right?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, without a knife. It takes nothing to make a rabbit die.
And it takes nothing for a rabbit to give life.
Those rabbits were agonizing and fucking at the same time.
A rabbit gives life very easily; in a state of agony, he is fucking.
And that's why he gives up his life easily, too.
He's like butter ... unrefrigerated butter. I don't mean American
butter, I mean normal butter. It has a form, and it surrenders
its form very easily because it can acquire its form very easily.

COHEN

That's why Michelangelo sculpted in butter.
And the Tibetans make beautiful butter sculptures.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, because there is a symbol in butter.
Butter is a very profound symbol.
It's mother's food. Well churned. Shall we continue?

Through the Masters I show El Topo progressing
from everything to nothingness.
The house of the First Master is brick, very strong;
the Second Master's house is wooden;
the Third's is of straw;
and the Fourth has no house.
The First Master has two revolvers;
the Second has one revolver with five bullets;
the Third has one revolver with one bullet;
and the Fourth has no revolver.
The First Master has a large animal;
the Second, a smaller animal -- a lion is smaller than a horse;
the Third has a rabbit;
and the Fourth, an invisible butterfly.
It's like this throughout the entire story. And that's why
the Third Master makes his own revolver with his hands.
And makes his own bullets.
And he fires only one shot ... to the heart.
Because the heart is the center of the world for him.
And he begins to talk about the crow ...
and the crow frightens the two characters.
There are two crows in the film.
Two crows. The crow, or raven, is an
alchemical symbol of something rotten.
When you kill a crow, you have light;
when you kill a decayed stone, you have gold.
They kill the two crows, and the Third Master says,
"Put in your heart what you have in your head, and put
in your head what you have in your heart." It's cabalistic.
One principle must rise, and the other must be lowered.

COHEN

You said that when the First Master played in a rock band ...
he played the electric organ. What does the Second Master do?

JODOROWSKY

He's a theatre director.

COHEN

He was beautiful. And the Third?

JODOROWSKY

The Third Master is an antique dealer. He has an antique shop. And the Fourth is a retired actor ... very drunk. At six one morning, he arrived on the set with a bottle of tequila. And I grabbed the bottle away from him as if I were tearing out his liver. No one had ever done that to him. He was a famous actor.

COHEN

I liked the fourth story. It's very beautiful.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes, yes. The Fourth Master. I wanted to tell you something about the Third Master ... Ah! When El Topo says that too much perfection is a mistake. All Oriental culture is in that sentence. Right? I think that the Masters willed themselves to be killed. Because I think they sought out El Topo. They saw a sign in him. Gurdjieff says that when you are the right person, the Master seeks you out. And he gives you the possibility of killing him. The Master wants you to kill him because he wants to dissolve into you. That's why Christ gives his flesh and blood to his disciples. After the Last Supper, Christ didn't exist. He didn't exist because his disciples ate him. And before dying ... before being eaten ... Christ left a toulku, a projection of his body. And it was the toulku that was crucified. And the real Christ was eaten by his disciples ... completely. Beautiful!

COHEN

You're creating this story right now.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, this very moment. It may not be true, but it's beautiful. Fantastic ... this gift came to me from ... I don't know. This is the first time in my life I realized it. He was eaten by his apostles. They were the first vampires, the first cannibals ... of religion. Sacred cannibals.

FIRESTONE

The Fourth Master.

JODOROWSKY

To create that little story, I studied Karate for two years. Really, I studied Karate for two years. One day I think I'll make a movie using all of the Karate movements ... the short, quick movements of Karate. Because I like Karate. Sometimes we must talk for hours about Karate. I think Buddha practiced Karate ... Karate was first done by Buddha. When you practice Karate, you study the Sacred Book. Karate is like the Tarot for me. The most important significance of the Tarot is Karate. Right? Etcetera, etcetera. This is a very solemn subject. It took me two years to learn its meaning.

COHEN

You studied Karate two years to prepare for the fourth story?

JODOROWSKY

No, not to prepare it! We are always in the process of preparing. There are two kinds of priests: one asks for things, the other gives thanks for what he receives. I receive. And the only thing I prepare myself for is to give thanks. Fantastic. Beautiful. I don't prepare myself to obtain something; I prepare myself to give thanks. Thank you, thank you, thank you. I believe that the entire universe recites a poem that says, "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you." Fantastic. And when the Fourth Master says, "But you can't take anything away from me," and El Topo says, "I can take your life," he says, "No, my life doesn't mean anything." And he takes his own life.

A story: a samurai searches for another samurai to challenge him. There are very few samurais, so he doesn't find one. But one day he sees an old man -- this is a beautiful, beautiful story -- and he says, "You are a samurai!" And the old man says, "No, I'm not a samurai. I'm a gardener." So he takes out his sword and hurls it at him. And the gardener catches it with great finesse. He says, "You see? You act like a samurai." And the gardener says, "No, perhaps the only resemblance is that I'm not afraid of dying." Beautiful. And then the samurai says, "I'll fight you." And the gardener says, "I won't fight." The samurai insists and the gardener says, "OK." And then he puts his hands over his eyes and says, "Come." And the samurai says, "You won."

This is why I liked the Chinese movies, because there was a blind hero. I asked, "Why is he blind?" Because a blind person doesn't need to see. He has nothing to lose. Right? He's always a beggar. A beggar like a Sufi teacher. It's a great mystical way ... because to be blind means to have no conscience. I can act. I act. I don't think; I act ... I do. But I do only what is necessary, nothing more. There have been certain moments

in my life when I was very conscious of my body. And when I am conscious of my body and I make an unnecessary movement, I feel that the walls tremble. We make so many unnecessary movements, don't we? Really. I feel this.

JODOROWSKY

OK, shall we continue?

When *El Topo* kills the Fourth Master, he has the Fourth Master within him, right? And then I explained how the eight-sided tower opens up, etcetera, etcetera. He finds his way: he is killed by the woman, etcetera, etcetera. And then see the person in the cave. His hair is dyed and he's been painted like a statue of a saint. But, beginning with this sequence, he will reach the moment when he'll lose his personal problems and will acquire social problems. When you struggle internally in life, and you triumph and are freed of your problems, you become faced with a greater problem: the problem of the entire universe. Right? In other words, you are never liberated from the weight. You increase it. When a mystic reaches a god, he realizes that there is a greater god. And he has to work and work. It's endless. *El Topo* is endless. It never ends. One day we'll all film a movie that will last a hundred years. I feel it. There will only be time out to eat, to shit, to make love, and to work.

FIRESTONE

That's the film we're in.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I know.

COHEN

It'd be hard to watch that movie, in one lifetime.
But it wouldn't be hard to make it.

JODOROWSKY

It wouldn't be hard. I think we could make a fundamental change in film. Those who want to make art try to put everything into the picture, nothing escapes and everything is done for the picture. And they feel that the camera is the umbilical cord to the heart of the world. Yes. I feel that the heart of the world is the heart of the world. And that the camera is an insect which consumes only a part of the world. I never hope to include everything in one frame. I saw a photograph of a medium. A thread of some white substance streams down from his mouth and falls to the ground. And on the ground a foot begins to form ... it's forming a body. If I photograph the foot, I have the body. The same as when a policeman takes the imprint of a shoe,

he has the thief. I believe that each image of the film is an imprint. I can't give the entire body. You have to form it.

Each film must be a sample of the entire universe,
as each grain of sand is a sample of the entire beach.

Rene Guenon says, "Man is a symbol just as a word is a symbol." Every word and every symbol carry man along.

Man is the symbol of the nonmanifested, and you have to live your life like a symbol. Because if you don't want to live your life like a symbol, but as what you think is a real body, you're not living.

The other day I was with Valerie and suddenly I said to her,
"You are the left hand and I am the right hand of a prayer."
Right? Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. What do you want to know.
Etcetera. I always say etcetera, etcetera, etcetera because
there is always an etcetera, etcetera, etcetera ...

FIRESTONE

There's always more to say.

JODOROWSKY

In mathematics I studied Group Theory.

This theory says that there are many kinds of infinities.

Within one infinity, there can be many infinities.

That's why I say etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

We can never finish a theme. Right?

Because within each theme there is a universe that
cannot be exhausted. That's why one should never
write theories with the intentions of including everything.

No book can encompass the entire universe. The Africans say,
"Truth does not exist in a single head." But I say, there are many
Truths, there is a Truth in each head. So we must look for groups
of Truths. One problem has infinite solutions. Marcel Duchamp
said that there are no solutions because there are no problems.
Right? Beautiful. But if there is a problem, there are infinite solutions;
and you must choose the solutions you like. Right? Not *the* solution.
But I like all solutions. I use all solutions at the same time.

And there is no contradiction in that.

In this world, the concept of contradiction doesn't exist.
The concept of contradiction exists if you walk down a street:
you only see the present. But if you travel by plane,
there are no contradictions because you see many presents
and many pasts and many futures at the same time.

I swear that I'll direct my next film from an airplane ...
ten thousand meters away from the actors.

All the actors will wear earphones.

COHEN

I want to ask you how you were changed
by the experience of the movie. I mean,
like all those things with the sacrifices, the rabbits ...

JODOROWSKY

I was born. A new life. Really, a new life.
I think my brain opened up. When I started this interview,
I spoke about my skull dividing into eight pieces, and the
butterfly that came ... Maybe the butterfly was the movie.
Maybe when you do something, you are changed.
When I shaved my head, and when I found the landscapes,
for example, those were very strong experiences -- Jungian
experiences. I took an old woman -- she was a hundred years
old -- from the town, and I kissed her when we ate the beetles.
The beetle is a sacred symbol of Egypt. We entered into Time,
and she gave birth to me. You'll notice she has the Tree of Life
embroidered on her vestment. I had it embroidered for her.



COHEN

Who was she?

JODOROWSKY

An old woman of the town. It was a small town.
She was a very old Mexican woman. I had asked for
a woman who was a hundred years old. They didn't want
her to do the film because she was so old. But she liked it.
And I think I was reborn, like a hero who must die and be reborn.

I think my whole life was changed. For example, when I returned home after filming the movie, I couldn't stand having anything on the walls. And I took everything down from the walls, And now I live in a white house with no pictures on the walls ... nothing. And I put a box in the middle of the room, took all the books that no longer said anything to me, and put them in the box. And I let my friends take them away. I threw away all my clothes because I couldn't wear them anymore. I kept a few pairs of pants and some shirts, that's all. I had the honor of not being admitted into many New York restaurants. Incredible, isn't it? Even the restaurant on the first floor of this building turned me away. That's why now I'm in the heights of the building.

When I finished the film, I felt I had nothing left inside ... empty. And then Joanne Pottlitzer called me to invite me to lecture at universities in the United States. And I said, "Yes." But I never thought it would happen. I don't think she was serious. But later she called me and said, "Now you must come." I said, "I won't go." And I went to Guadalajara. But Pottlitzer is a typical North American woman, and she found me by telephoning Guadalajara. She found me. And she made me come. For one of the lectures, we traveled two hours from New York to go to Philadelphia. To Temple University. And I said, "I am empty." But I went. Two hours by train to say what? I had nothing to say. "Why did I come?" And we traveled at night. I saw the emptiness of the towns, the emptiness. And a Nazi came to meet us at the station. A Nazi who hated negroes. He said to me, "We live in another area of town. And we've left the downtown section of the city for the Negroes." And he took me to the lecture hall. And I walked and walked, trying to make conversation. I felt each step like a gunshot. And at that moment, I realized that I was a dog. I said, "I'm a mysterious dog." Like those dogs I used to see in restaurants when I would eat with the workers in Chile. Right? In those restaurants, you'd sit down to eat beets and a dog would come up to beg for some meat. And you'd give him half of your portion and he'd wag his tail. That mysterious dog was merely giving you the great gift of being able to give. He was giving you the possibility of giving. At the University, I was standing before the group of students like a dog ... begging for the joy of giving. I was prepared to wag my tail, to wag my sex, my hair, my hemorrhoids, anything. To express my happiness. Right? To give. Everything.

When Jewish families sit down to eat, they always set an extra place in case someone else arrives ... a beggar. This unknown

person who might come is always a divine messenger, a seventy-kilo dove. The Annunciation. If you're an unknown person, you may just as well be a seventy-kilo dove or a seventy-kilo dog who comes to a university to bring the Annunciation. And the moment in which the Annunciation is conveyed is a moment of infinite joy.

COHEN

That was Philadelphia.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Philadelphia. And the Head of the Department invited me to eat in the Faculty Dining room. And he told me to put on a coat and tie; he said he would lend me one. I answered him, "Go fuck your mother!" And I drank a cup of coffee in the Student Dining Room. I couldn't eat anything. This is a story about dogs. Right?

FIRESTONE

I want to ask you about the Bandits in the movie.

JODOROWSKY

How I got the costumes for the Bandits? I went to a costume-rental place. And I had each of the Bandits stand in front of me, nude. And I started dressing them from the undershorts and socks on out, like someone who constructs a sculpture. I put women's panties on some of them. That's how I started with the ugly one ... the one who kisses Mara ... the old man. I put the panties on him and he laughed. Ha-ha-ha-ha. And then I put a tuxedo on him, and finally the holsters, which made him feel very manly. But underneath he was wearing the panties.

I constructed everyone. I spent days constructing like that. Because I said, "I don't create like Fellini, in *Satyricon*, for example." I don't make a sketch of the costume first. We must find the costume in reality and construct it like a sculpture. Right? With musketeer costumes, old Mexican costumes, modern things ... everything's in the movie. Some of the Bandits wear priests' vestments.

FIRESTONE

The first three Bandits, the ones with the shoes and the beans. In the original screenplay, there's none of that detail.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. But don't think you should put details in a screenplay. You cannot give details. I wrote the script as a practical thing. But I think the script is a crutch; I won't use a crutch. We can't use a script. It's impossible. A monstrous thing ... a Hollywood thing. We can't do this. We write a script for the producer and

then we change it. We must change it. Right? We must change the script. There are many things in the film that I didn't write into the script. And I asked myself, "Why did I write the script? Why should I write it if I can do it?" Right? I can do it. I can do it. I don't need a script because the unity of a picture is not the director, but the producer, nothing. I think it's the feeling of a poet. If you feel something, you are the unity. Really. OK.

COHEN

What about the scene with the dwarf ...
in the basement of the bar?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. What a scene!

COHEN

Yeah. It was very beautiful.
I mean, when you went down into the
cabaret, all the whores were there ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I wanted to show her nude ... to show that
she was a woman, right? Because when you see
a dwarf, you don't think of her as a woman.

COHEN

But you didn't really make love to her in that scene.

JODOROWSKY

No, no. Because I didn't feel sexually attracted
to her. And she signed the contract stating that
she wouldn't make love with the director.

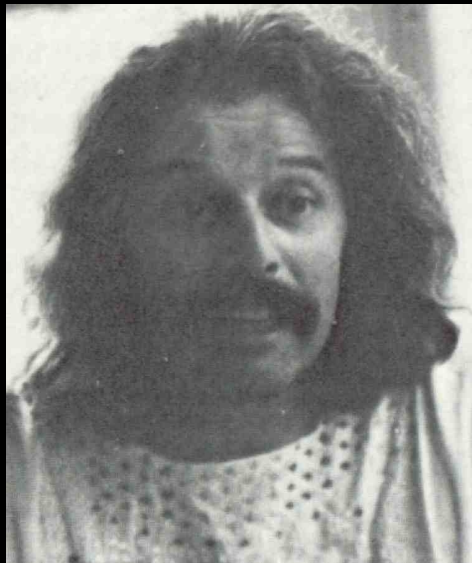
COHEN

What about the other women?
They also signed the contract.

JODOROWSKY

Right. But when you need to do something for the movie ...
in the sand, for example: it's terrible to make love in the sand.
It's very beautiful, but your sex is full of pebbles. It's not so pleasant.
I think that a dwarf is a woman, not a dwarf. And I used the little
woman in the film because I think it's beautiful to use a woman like her.
Maybe in my next film I'll use a woman who weighs two-hundred kilos.
Really. I've always thought that if I ever direct *Hamlet*, Ophelia will be

a giant. Not a two-hundred kilo giant, but a five-hundred kilo giant.
And I'll make an artificial river that runs through Manhattan, and the giant Ophelia will swim down to the river destroying all the skyscrapers.
Really, I want to use a woman who is bigger than her man. Why not?
Beauty is never, never, never used by the movie industry. Like Hollywood in the 40's, right? Hollywood never knew the beauty of a woman.
You *feel* beauty. There's beauty in a woman or there isn't.
You feel a woman, you like a woman, she is very attractive to you.
Maybe you think she is a man. But she's a woman. She's like a man, but she's a very wonderful woman. Like a man. Once I was very attracted to a very fat woman, but big ... huge, who was knitting a very thing little woolen stocking. Red. Little. I thought she was a poet. I thought she was knitting a stocking for her navel. We have a navel in each stocking. We do. We have a navel in our hand. It's a symbol of a large blossom.
And these wounds are "giving" wounds and they can heal.
And the wounds in our feet are "receiving" wounds and they heal you.
That's why it's imperative for you to be able to put your foot anywhere on your body so you can kick yourself.
Yes. So you can kick yourself. OK?



COHEN

Fantastic. What else can you tell us?

JODOROWSKY

The town. I needed a town, a cowboy town. And when I was looking for locations, it was as if I were dreaming. And then I saw a beautiful town in the desert, and I said, "It's impossible.

A cowboy town in the middle of the desert. How can it be?"

And we went toward it. It was a cowboy town in the desert because an American movie with Glenn Ford had built sets in the

desert. They paid for the job, built it, shot the picture, and left ...
abandoned it. It was an abandoned town ... a ghost town.
And the producer said, "We must fix it up, paint it." I said, "No, we'll
use it just as it is. We'll use it like this. An old town. As is. A set.
If I'm going to use a set, you must see it as a set from an
old cowboy movie." I think it was *The Law of Tombstone*.
Yes, I think it was a Glenn Ford picture. I used it.

COHEN

So you're the true sleepwalker ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes.

COHEN

... of film.

JODOROWSKY

Do you want to ask some other questions, Ira?

COHEN

< barks a cough >

JODOROWSKY

You're the mysterious dog. One time I was in Santiago de Chile.
This is very sad, because in those days we used to go to parties
and they never really got off the ground. And once at four or five
in the morning, a dog wandered up with a white stone in its mouth.
And he laid it at my feet. I didn't know what to do. And suddenly I
understood. The dog wanted me to pick up the stone and throw it.
I did. The dog ran off to fetch it and brought it back to my feet.
And so we started to play: a great communication. I reconstructed
my life there. And when I got on the bus to go home, the dog started
to run after the bus till it fell down and pawed at the street.
I left. And all my life I've thought that perhaps I should have
stayed there forever and played with the dog ... that perhaps
I'd ruined my life. Right? Don't you think? Yes, yes.

Every experience gives you a different kind of loneliness.
Loneliness in Greek civilization is different from loneliness in
Egyptian civilization. (I say civilization because people may
misunderstand; they may think I'm referring to today's Greece.
For example, a young boy once came to my house and asked me
to teach him about illumination. And I was very happy and started
to show him piles and piles of books and talking to him. He didn't

say anything. When I finished he told me that what he wanted to learn was how to light a show. He hadn't understood a thing.

But I learned something: before you learn scenic illumination, you have to learn self-illumination.) Loneliness in Roman times was different from loneliness of today. And loneliness in New York is very different from loneliness in Los Angeles. Very, very different.

We can have something and, at the same time, know the loneliness of what we have. So that when we love someone, we love that person's presence and his absence at the same time. Because in everything we have, there is an infinity that we can't have. And that's what I'm searching for.

Loneliness is what I have. Right?

For example, when I see an image in a film, I'm struck with a feeling of dreadful loneliness ... about everything that was outside the camera's range.

Because the other day I saw a little tree in front of my house. And I said, "This tree isn't growing in my garden; it's growing on the planet." And I filmed my picture on the planet. I would have liked for the planet to be in the picture. But I could only have landscapes.

Civilizations don't die. That's not true. They continue. Everything is continual. Films don't begin or end. They're a continuation. OK? Another question? Fantastic, fantastic.

COHEN

What do you think of New York now?

JODOROWSKY

Fantastic. If you ask me, "Can we eat New York?" I'll answer, "Yes, we can eat New York because we don't have a mouth." When you don't have a mouth, you can eat anything you want. Right? When you are blind, you can see anything you want.

FIRESTONE

How about the symbol in the town of the pyramid with the eye?

JODOROWSKY

I'll tell you a little secret, but don't tell anybody.

It's on the dollar bill. I think it's a perversion of knowledge.

Because if you take a sacred symbol of Atlantis, or whatever, and put it on the dollar, this symbol becomes a very terrible symbol: an economic symbol. But in old traditions, all gods, after a certain period of time, become devils. I can say that in five hundred years Jesus Christ will become a white devil who rides a burro ... a red burro. Very red. Because the burro that Christ rides -- like the one El Topo rides -- is the dominated phallus. Yes. It's the union of spirit and sex. The little girl -- the dwarf -- blows a horn in the film. I used this

horn because it's a Jewish shofar. In five hundred years, maybe Jesus Christ will be a white demon with a burro ... an infinite burro. Right? But the burro will be mounted on Christ. And your children will scream in the night. If you mention Jesus Christ, the children will scream, "AYYYYYY ... !" Terror. The symbol of the pyramid, for example, used to be a very, very beautiful symbol. Now it's on the dollar bill.

FIRESTONE

Isn't it a Masonic symbol?

JODOROWSKY

I don't know ... It's a pyramid. But if you look at the dollar bill, you'll see something very incredible. I'll explain what it is. The pyramid has been cut in two. Once I was in Guadalajara and a Mexican asked me, "What is the symbol of the pyramid?" I said, "The top of a pyramid is always cut off. I don't know why. I think it's like a statue. The pyramid is the pedestal and the top ... the statue ... is you. The pyramid is a compound of eternal minerals; but the top of it ... the point ... is you. And what are you? You're the frog."

There's always a frog at the top of the pyramid.

Why does the princess kiss the frog?

Why does the frog become a prince?

Because the frog is Buddha. One day I saw Zen painting of a frog that was meditating like a monk. A frog is a monk. A monk is Buddha. I'm a frog sitting on top of a pyramid waiting for a princess, a beautiful five-hundred kilo princess to come and kiss me. Right? It's the union of spirit and soul.

If you look at the symbol on the dollar bill and you're slightly mad, you can see the pyramid becomes weightless. And the top part of it is a flying saucer. The pyramid. A Masonic symbol, right?

The top of the pyramid is you. This is a symbol.

But I used it in the film as a symbol of guilt: the eye says, "You are guilty, you are guilty." Yes. A guilty society.

In the film. It was a very nice symbol.

COHEN

Who played your grown son? Your substitute?

JODOROWSKY

He is a Canadian: Robert John. He's a Canadian painter ... a striking resemblance to me, physically.

COHEN

Somewhat.

JODOROWSKY

Somewhat. In reality, though, he looks very much like me.
Not in the picture, but in reality he does.

COHEN

That part is all based on *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I took a little story from *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*,
but I changed it completely. It's completely different
in the film. The only thing from it that remains is:
"I can't kill my Master." And then the Master kills himself.

COHEN

Always.

JODOROWSKY

Like in the first part, when El Topo can't bring himself to kill
the Fourth Master, the Master kills himself. Because the
Master has to die. If he didn't, there'd be no new Masters.
That's why universities are so bad ... so sick. Because
the Masters don't want to die. On the other hand, the
students don't always want to be Masters. McLuhan says
that means of communication have increased. They have.
But those who communicate have diminished, because the
communications media are for people who are sitting down. Do
you understand? That is what I say. Maybe the communications
media will become extensions of the senses of one man:
the President. He'll be like a gigantic octopus who'll put
televisionglasses on your eyes. Yes, and sound in your ears and
a communicative skin over your skin. Right? The new media. OK.

FIRESTONE

How did you do the scene with the people in the cave?

JODOROWSKY

It was very difficult to get these people.
I'd always imagined that scene with eight or ten thousand people
pouring out of the cave. I used a hundred because I had little money.
I went to the little town, to the streets, to find a hundred people:
monsters, beggars, etcetera. But the mayor got very angry. He said,
"You'll give a horrible impression of Mexico." And he wouldn't

let me use the beggars. I had to get beggars from another town. He was trying to say: "We don't have people like that. There's no one like that here." And when I finally got the madmen and the beggars, I told them, "You're going to make a movie."

And they did. They worked very hard because they felt useful ... they were actively doing something.

They were very happy.

FIRESTONE

They changed also.

JODOROWSKY

I think they changed because they did something.

And I'd say to the monsters ... the deformed ones,

"Show your legs. They're beautiful. Fantastic."

And they showed their legs, like a ballerina ... like Pavlova.

COHEN

What did the President of Mexico think about your film?

JODOROWSKY

I don't think he's seen it. I don't know.

But they cut half an hour for Mexico.

FIRESTONE

What did they feel about the priest in the second part of the film?

JODOROWSKY

They cut that out. His part was cut out entirely. But it was very, very strange because a modern priest came to see the picture and said, "This is a sacred picture." And a little woman who was there at the time said, "It's horrible! The way you use the triangle with the eye. That's a symbol on the Host!" And the priest said, "I'm talking about mysticism, not about cooking." You see, there are little nuns in Mexico who make beautiful designs on the Hosts. But that doesn't mean they're sacred symbols. These days priests give out Communion with pieces of bread. When I show this picture to people who are truly religious, they like it. But when I show it to limited people who don't really have a mystical outlook, they say it's a sacrilege.

FIRESTONE

Sure. Did you shoot the first part of the film first and then go right on to the second part, just continuous? Or was it done at another time?

JODOROWSKY

It was continuous. In the first part my hair was long and I had a beard; in the second part my hair and beard were dyed; and then my head was shaved.

FIRESTONE

Yes, but I mean the two parts of the film are so different, two such different trips. Did you just continue shooting when you finished the first part? Was there one creative process that continued throughout the whole picture.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I filmed it like *The Odyssey*, like the conquest of Alexander the Great. I started out and kept going. I can't shoot a sequence out of order. I don't feel it. I can't do it. That's good for Hollywood movies. We must do it as a continuum because the actor is changed by the movie, right? I am changed. It's a continual thing. It's a growing process. You must grow with the picture.

FIRESTONE

When the people finished their parts in the first part, did they go home? Did they leave the set, or did they stay there?

JODOROWSKY

No, they left. They left because we didn't have the money for them to stay. They didn't continue on the film, but they continued in life. I told you that the little dwarf became pregnant and now she has a beautiful girl. Right? She continued.

COHEN

What's her name?

JODOROWSKY

Jacqueline. Now she's added her husband's name. His name is Luis. She changed her name. Now she's Jacqueline Luis. And she's very happy, a very happy woman. She continued after the picture. And I continued after the picture. Everyone who participated continued after the picture. Except the professional actors. Because actors are the worst actors of all. They never get involved in a scene. I don't love actors. They love themselves so much they don't need my love.

FIRESTONE

Was the Colonel an actor?

JODOROWSKY

The Colonel was an actor.

He was like Errol Flynn in his day.

He was a very, very nice man ... a beautiful man,
a very successful man. He was a leading man in films.
And then he lost his hair, he got fat, and quit making films.
And I asked him to be in my film.

COHEN

That moment when he's walking away is fantastic.

JODOROWSKY

He was a very, very nice man.

He used to be a boxer, and very good too.

COHEN

You said that whole scene was an old abandoned liquor factory, right?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes, a mescal factory. I found it. It was a mescal factory.
Abandoned. Because the owners died. I found it eight-hundred
kilometers from Mexico City. I found it. I saw a road sign that said,
"Trinity-1". I said, "Trinity and One. I must go there."

It was one kilometer to Trinity. Trinity was what I needed.

And there it was. Fantastic. For twenty years the people
who lived there at nothing but pork, and they didn't work.
Men and women. "I want to film the picture here," I said. So
I went back to Mexico to ask permission. My representative
called the daughter of the deed owner and said, "Never!"

And then the man said to me, "She'll never permit it."
And I said, "Give her my name." And he gave her my name, and
the woman called me and said, "I'm Pedro Coronel's wife."

She was the ex-wife of Pedro Coronel, a painter.

"We are friends. Do whatever you want. Use whatever
you want. It's my house." A miracle ... really a miracle.

Yesterday I performed another miracle. We went to dinner
at the Gerard's. He was with Universal Pictures. And their little
daughter told me her psychiatrist saw the picture at Columbia University
and said that I was sick. And at that moment I put my brain to work
like a computer and I saw everyone in the auditorium at Columbia, like
a photograph. I found the man and said, "Ah! That man!" And I

described him to her, his skin, his laugh, the way he used his voice ...
"And he is a Freudian," I said. And he really was a Freudian psychiatrist.
Really. Then I said, "He thinks I'm mad because he thinks in Freudian terms.
Maybe if he followed the Jungian way, he wouldn't think I'm so mad."

FIRESTONE

What other filmmakers make a film an act of poetry?

JODOROWSKY

Erich Von Stroheim. Buster Keaton.

I think Buster Keaton's films don't have very good techniques.
But he's so beautiful, so strong, he doesn't need to use great techniques.
You don't need to do anything. You only need to use Buster Keaton.
When I made *El Topo*, I said, "I want to use episodes like Buster Keaton ...
very, very beautiful episodes. And I'll forget about technique."
In *El Topo*, there are no techniques ... no dissolves, no effects, nothing.
I filmed things as they were. And always with strong light.
Arthur Cravan is a poet who says, "Mystery in broad daylight."
Andre Breton wrote about him in his book on Black Humor.
He also said, "Spitting: is it an insult or a caress?"
Right? I feel those two concepts are very good.

TOPP

Do you do the editing yourself?

JODOROWSKY

I edited the film with a man who's worked for twenty years
in Mexican film, and he was very ill. His name is Landeros ...
Federico Landeros. When he saw the rushes of this picture,
he was working on something else. But he wanted to edit it
so much. He said, "I won't look at anything without you."
And we worked together. We edited it together. Together,
together. Yes. I think it's terrible if you don't edit your own film.
It's like having a baby and not educating him. It's very important.

And I tried not to have close-ups in the film.
I learned that from *Faces*. When I saw *Faces*, I said,
"Never in my life will I use a close-up of a face."
Because I think it's very easy to convey something with a face.
Right? And with hands. Faces and hands are what are shown in
close-ups. If there were a hungry lion in this room, the first thing
he would try to eat would be our faces and hands, right?
I want to make pictures with the torso ...
with the body. I feel that close-ups are easy.

COHEN

In the Fiji Islands that's the part they love to eat most:
the palms of the hands ... and the cheeks.

JODOROWSKY

They're the most edible. I don't want to work with
human flesh like food. I want to work with the important
parts of the human body, not the edible parts.

TOPP

Alexandro, you once said that you don't put anything
between the actor and his camera.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. No aesthetic effects. When I took Corkidi
on as photographer, I told him, "No more aesthetics.
Think of yourself as a newsreel photographer.

You must shoot a scene directly: between the
object and the camera, a straight line. And the camera
shouldn't judge. No opinions. Objective, clinical."

The photographer was very jealous about his art,
about his camera. And he didn't want me to touch the camera.
So I finally had to take the photographer and move him around
to get what I wanted. And one day I picked him up and said,
"You are my woman, you are my woman. I'll fuck you.
You are my woman." He laughed.

FIRESTONE

In the first part of the film when El Topo was on the bridge,
and in the second part when he's running toward the
town as the crippled people are being slaughtered ...
did you do those scenes with a telephoto lens?
Because it looks like the space is all flattened out.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I used it because the telephoto lens reduces space to two
dimensions. Distance doesn't exist. And for that very reason
Time is changed. It loses its velocity. Everything happens
without transpiring. I ran for two kilometers before doing
that scene. I was very, very tired. You can tell, right?

In my first picture, *Fando and Lis*, I said, "We must not pretend.
We must do things realistically." All the blood in that film
is real blood. There's a man who drinks blood.

He draws blood from Lis' arm and really drinks it.
When people are hit in the first picture, it's real.

In *El Topo*, I tried as best I could to have the actors do things realistically. That's why the falls aren't spectacular. Because the actors themselves do them, not doubles, not those acrobats. And so I was faced with a problem. When a man is hit by a bullet in a normal Western, the bullet throws him down. Maybe that's how it really happens. But I did away with that idea and had the people receive the bullets standing up. I only show the pain, not the physical reaction. I can say that my bullets in the picture don't make people fall to the ground.

That reminds me of something a lady said when she interviewed me for a magazine. It was a very malicious interview.

She asked some questions which I found very funny and I answered them. But when she published my answers, they were incomplete and she didn't publish her questions. For example, she asked me, "Why do you say that moles are blind? Or that they're blind when they see the sun? That's not scientifically true." And I answered, "If you take all the moles of the world and put them in the state of New York and have them all look at the sun, then you will be able to tell me if moles are blinded or not. Because if I find just one mole that is blinded when he sees the sun, my theory is scientific." And in the last analysis, moles are blinded because I say they're blinded in the film. It's my principle ... like the Non-Euclidean mathematicians. Euclid says, "Only one parallel can pass through a point distant from a straight line." Lobatchevski says, "Infinite parallels can pass through such a point." And Riemann says, "No parallel can pass through it." Right? I create my own reality. I create my own logic. Right? If I say the mole is blinded, the mole is blinded.

FIRESTONE

I shouldn't think that would be a problem.

JODOROWSKY

In a few years, I should make a new film ... *Son of El Topo* or *The Return of El Topo*. Yes. About what happens to his son and the little dwarf and the baby. We can do it.

The second installment ... on television.

With the ghost of Cecil B. DeMille playing the role.
One day I wrote music for a play by Leonora Carrington.

[Leonora Carrington is a surrealist painter and writer
who has resided in Mexico for twenty-five years.
She was married to Max Ernst.]

And at one point in the score, I said I would use the voice of Oscar Wilde's ghost. And a critic created a big scandal out of it. "How dare he disturb ghosts!" OK.

RODAY

You said that the film is like a library, like a library of influences, like a library of books. Do you feel that there is no single or unified influence from any one author in your film?

JODOROWSKY

No, I think there are multiple influences in the film -- I have them all: the influence of all the books I've read and all the films I've seen, of all the winds that have blown against my skin, of all the stars that have exploded during my lifetime, of each manifestation of the non-manifested, of each flea that's shit on me. Especially a flea I met in 1945. It shit on me in such an incredible way that it changed my life. I'm sure that flea's in my film.

FIRESTONE

Bravo!



JODOROWSKY

There are moments in the picture when I pay small homages. Homages. For example, when the bandit sucks on the shoe, that's homage to Bunuel. When Mara circles El Topo in the desert saying, "Nothing, nothing, nothing ...": to Godard, especially to a part of his film *Pierre Le Fou*. The duel scene between El Topo and the Colonel in the circular space: Leone. When the camera is

stationary and the action takes place in a single frame, I pay homage to Buster Keaton. Etcetera. The shot that frames one of the bandits with the legs of the Colonel is one of the most common used in film. So I decided to use it to amuse myself.

Another common take is showing someone approaching the camera. I only did that once. The influence of bad movies.

RODAY

I have three small questions about the audience. Do you ever think of an ideal audience for any one of your works, or are they all different? There's an audience for your cartoons, your plays, your films ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes, different audiences. When I draw the cartoons, I think of children. Really, really. I think of children. They're very ... naive. But the content isn't naive. The comic strip is also like a library.

RODAY

It's been my contention for a long time that in novelists like Dostoevski, the individual characters are really extrapolated from different personality traits in the author himself, and merely heightened and intensified, so that if he has an insane man, it's part of Dostoevski's own psyche.

JODOROWSKY

This is one of Otto Weininger's theories. Weininger is a philosopher who wrote *Sex and Character*. He says that a genius is identified as one who lives all lives, one who has many people within him.

A genius can be many people and they live within him.

So, the less genius the person has, the fewer people he can be. It's a study of the characteristics of genius.

There are many such studies. This is Otto Weininger's.

An artists cannot express what he doesn't live. Right?

And the greater his state of sainthood, the greater and more horrible is the devil who appears to him. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche says, "Don't be afraid. Don't be ashamed of what you feel." Because the taller the tree grows, the deeper grows its roots in the ground.

RODAY

Got that. While we're on Nietzsche, and since you mentioned the bridge a moment ago ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. The bridge. I took it from Nietzsche's bridge. I'm very familiar with Nietzsche because I've just directed a play called *Zarathustra* which is adapted from his work. And the symbolism of the bridge is the symbolism of the passage between man and that beyond him. And that's precisely why I wanted to do that scene on the bridge. It's the moment when El Topo passes from one state to another. And I think that's where he reaches his first state of enlightenment: when he crosses the bridge. Good question, I'd forgotten about that, but now that you reminded me, I remember.

FIRESTONE

El Topo opens in Mexico in May.

JODOROWSKY

May, yes. In a theatre where a Fellini film is running now.

FIRESTONE

Is this the first Mexican film to be shown in that theatre?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, the first, the first, because they only show foreign art films there: Kurosawa, Fellini ... I like Kurosawa very, very much. I also did some Kurosawa-like scenes in the film. Not an imitation. I told you I talk about books, about ideas in the picture. I also talk about filmmakers.

RODAY

Yes. It sounds like a reference. You're making a reference.

JODOROWSKY

Yes.

FIRESTONE

So you absorb ...

JODOROWSKY

I absorb it, I use it as I use a book. I use Nietzsche. I think about Nietzsche ... and I think about Kurosawa. There's a Spanish proverb I like very much, "In art, he who is no one's child is a son of a bitch." And I say that I'm everyone's and everything's child. There are films people have hated which I like very much. Like *Freaks* by Tod Browning and *Mondo Cane*. I liked *Mondo Cane*

very much. I think it has some very good things in it.
And for a while I liked James Bond. *Dr. No*. I like
Flash Gordon's first picture. Very much. Etcetera, etcetera.

RODAY

Is there anybody in the world you'd like to collaborate with?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Many. For example, if Robert Crumb would illustrate
this book -- the part about the hippopotomus and the balls
of shit -- I'd be the happiest man in the world.

And if I could make a pirate movie with Frank Zappa.

I'd like that too. Right? I like Frank Zappa.

When I heard his first record, I thought he was a genius.

I think he'd make a wonderful pirate.

FIRESTONE

His mustachioes.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. Wonderful to collaborate with him.

Let me think of people I'd like to collaborate with.

This is good for me. The man who wrote *Operating Manual
for Spaceship Earth* -- Buckminster Fuller. I like him.

I'd want to collaborate with him if I could. I'd like to
work with the author of *Psychedelic Experience* -- Houston.

And I want to do a pirate picture with the author of *Do It* --
Jerry Rubin. A wonderful pirate. If it's possible, we'll do it.

It would be ideal to collaborate with Rubin on that.

RODAY

If anybody in history could be brought back --

any writer, any artist --

who would you like to collaborate with.

JODOROWSKY

With the Spanish Jew who translated the Zohar.

I want to collaborate with him.

RODAY

And with Alexander the Great?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, Alexander the Great. But more than with him,

I'd like to collaborate with his horse.

RODAY

Bucephalus.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Bucephalus is a big phallus.
I don't think Alexander the Great conquered
anything. The ambitious one was his horse.
So Alexander surrendered himself to his horse
and did what the horse wanted to do.
The mythology of the dominant horse
can be found in a story by Poe.

RODAY

The Rider of the White Horse.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. Poe. I think Poe knew that Alexander the
Great was the horse ... I'd like to work with St. Exupery.
And I'd like to film a comedy with Gurdjieff. Right? A comedy.

RODAY

Fantastic.

JODOROWSKY

Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. And I'd really like to know
Rosencruntz' horse. Rosencruntz -- the mysterious figure
who created the Rosicrucians. I'd do a musical comedy
with Rosencruntz, one better than *Hair*. I'd like to
collaborate with the Conte de Saint-Germaine. He believed
he was immortal. And if I could find him, I'd like to talk to
Fulcanelli, who wrote about the secret societies of cathedrals.

RODAY

Do monastic orders appeal to you?

JODOROWSKY

I'd like to read Liza Minnelli's clitoris ...
Yes, monastic orders interest me, but only those with women.
Men and women monks who don't give up the sexual act.
Like in Rabelais.

RODAY

In *El Topo*, you've accomplished something with cinematic time
and space so that one feels in many scenes as though
he were living a late medieval experience.

JODOROWSKY

I feel the Middle Ages ... especially Huizinga's Middle Ages.

The one he describes in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.

I like the Middle Ages because there are so many of them.

But I like Huizinga's. I also like his *Homo Ludens*.

I think it was something very important.

Time doesn't matter to me. I'm not into normal time.

In the film there is no normal time sequence. There can be a thousand years between one sequence and another.

The film can start with pre-historic time and end with the atomic bomb. When I burn the village at the end of the film,

I use the sound of the explosion of an atomic bomb.

FIRESTONE

Fantastic.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. That's in the picture. I found a recording of an atomic bomb explosion and used it ... with horses.

The atomic bomb and horses.

RODAY

Since we've mentioned authors and conquerors and conqueror's horses, I was wondering if perhaps you also pay homage to artists, to painters. Are there Daliesque scenes?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. The tower. Paolo Uccello. Because Paolo Uccello was a geometric artist, a very good one. And in the sequence of the Second Master, with the lion ... the burning lion can be found in Magritte. The burning lion. The owl, too. The owl character is used in surrealist painting ... that's the Second Master, right? And the deformed people: Breughel ... and Goya, right? Etcetera. But when I made the film, the imagery came from within me ... because I've seen so many paintings. But I tried not to make paintings, not to think about painting, not to think about photographs when I made the film. I tried not to make beautiful photographs. But I'm sure that the photographer was masturbating while he was filming. I'm sure of it. But I didn't concern myself with that. Eisenstein's done enough of that already.

FIRESTONE

The music in the film ... you composed it yourself.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I composed the music ... the musical themes. All of them.

And I used Tibetan music and music of Zen Buddhist temples.
Japanese and Tibetan music. Mixed together.

RODAY

Dance. Everything.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Together. Japanese and Tibetan music
with music I composed. I didn't do the arrangements ...
the orchestrations. I don't know how to do that.

RODAY

You weren't trying to do photographic studies,
but it seems that you were portraying the things which people try to paint.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. But I took a position on color.
Everything I looked for -- all the costumes, all the
locations -- I looked for lack of color: black, brown, beige.
And the only strong colors you see are the blue of the sky,
different greens of the plants, and the red of the blood.
Sometimes I use color in the costumes of the townspeople --
the extras -- but that's all.

RODAY

They're *living* images, they're not still images, they're not frozen.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. Of course they're living! Because I told
the photographer that we would put our lives into
each take, and each time he would begin to film a
scene, I told him that our entire lives would be at stake
and that he should never forget that. In other words,
there isn't a single take that doesn't involve our lives.

RODAY

And is that what you meant earlier when you said there
was no alienation, that everybody was involved in the picture,
was involved just the way when you were screaming ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes, everybody was involved, all the workers too. I worked
with technicians who were used to making shitty movies.
But they're very young people and they love movies ...
and they believe in film. So they were very happy

to be doing something different. They knew they were doing something different. I worked with a new workers' union, and they worked very hard. They work all week and take Saturdays off with the whores. And sometimes they land in jail. So when we started to film on Mondays, some of the workers would be missing. But I wouldn't say anything. We'd just go get them out of jail. My technicians are different from the older ones. The older technical crews get drunk on beer; mine smoke. That's the difference ... the essential difference.

RODAY

Were you stoned at all while you were acting?

JODOROWSKY

No, no, no, no. I wasn't. No one was.
On Saturdays and Sundays they're free ...

RODAY

But not when you're working.
Would you like to think your audiences would be stoned when they're watching this picture?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes, yes, yes. I'd demand them to be.
To arrive stoned and to get high on the movie. Both.

RODAY

It happened to me both ways.

JODOROWSKY

I think it's better that way. Both ways. Together.
And I had that kind of audience in mind.
Good. I'd always like to direct my work to that audience.

FIRESTONE

Let me ask you some biographical questions:
How old are you?

JODOROWSKY

I wish I were 38.

[He's 41.]

FIRESTONE

Where were you born?

JODOROWSKY

It's embarrassing for me to answer realistic questions. That's why I close my eyes.

I was born in Iquique, in the north of Chile, where I lived until I was eight. Then I went to Santiago to study. I went to college. I studied psychology and philosophy for two years. Then I left the university to work with marionettes and theatre and everything else. My father was born in Russia and my mother in Argentina. Her parents were Russian. That's the story of my life.

I directed many plays in the university theatre and did a lot of work in mime. By the time I was twenty-three I had a company of fifty people. Then I went to Paris where I studied with Etienne Decroux. He was Marceau's and Barrault's teacher. I worked with Marceau for six years; I wrote two mimes for him, *The Mask Maker* and *The Cage*; and I made a world tour with him as his partner. There were only three of us in the company. I also directed Maurice Chevalier when he resumed his career at the L'Alhambra Theatre. The show was so successful that the theatre was renamed after Chevalier. I was also the first to direct Michel Legrand and I introduced him at the L'Alhambra Theatre.

For a year I directed the Trois Baudets Theatre with Canetti, the impresario. Raymond Devos and Guy Behart got their start at the theatre. OK. There are so many things. Then I went to Mexico where I've directed more than a hundred plays. I did Ionesco's *The Chairs*, *Victims of Duty*, and *Exit the King*. I did *Exit the King* with the best actor in Mexico, Lopez Tarso, in an eight-hundred-seat theatre. We had full houses every night. I did Samuel Beckett's *Endgame*, Strindberg's *Ghost Sonata*, and an adaption of his *Dream Play*. That play has about fifty characters. I reduced them to two, a man and a woman, and I rewrote half of the play. That's the adaptation I used. I also did surrealistic plays ... I wrote one with Leonora Carrington. Then I returned to Paris and founded a Panic Theatre group with Arrabal, Topor, and Sternberg. We staged a happening in Paris that lasted for four hours. Arrabal mentions this happening often in his autobiography. I directed it. Ferlinghetti saw it and published it in his *City Lights Journal*. Arrabal has asked me to write about my theories on theatre for his theatre magazine. An entire issue. But I couldn't do it because my theories on theatre changed every three hours. What else do you want

to know? I've done so much, so much.

I have a comic strip, etcetera, etcetera ... I have a weekly comic strip in a right-wing newspaper in Mexico. *The Herald*. But when they realized what I was saying, it was too late to do anything about it because a million people were reading it every week. It's more successful than *Mandrake the Magician*. I've been doing this strip for almost two-hundred weeks. It's called *Panic Fables*. I didn't know how to draw when I started it, but I'm learning, right?

FIRESTONE

They're fantastic. Beautiful.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I've done much. Let me see. I've worked with marionettes.

I've worked with the circus. I've danced. I was a painter -- a flat brush painter, like Hitler. I painted houses. I have an anecdote about that experience that I like very much. I arrived on the job the first day expecting to find a crude laborer. And instead I found a Master.

The head painter turned out to be a disciple of Gurdjieff. And the man who painted with me was an Arab who celebrated the Ramadan.

He was very religious. So we would paint to the music of Bach.

One day when we were painting a castle, the head painter told me to plaster a crack in the wall and gave me the plaster.

Then he hit me over the head with a stick that had an inscription on it: "In springtime, the flowers bloom." (Like the Zen Masters who would hit their disciples over the head. Actually, the Masters hit them on the shoulders.

So I've had my share of blows from the Zen Masters.)

Then he picked up a piece of iron pipe, broke the plaster, and made the crack larger. And then he plastered it over again. And he told me that as long as I pitied the crack, I could never plaster it well.

To cure a wound, you must first open it.

You must not simply leave it the way you found it.

You must respect it. That's why I don't pity myself.

If I have to cut a section from the film, I cut it.

And if I fail, I accept that too. That's why I saw that I have triumphed in life ... because I've learned how to fail.

OK. This is my biography.

FIRESTONE

Fando and Lis ...

JODOROWSKY

Ah! Yes. I also filmed *Fando and Lis*. I've really made three films in my life. The first picture I made was in Paris, with a girl, Ruth Michelly, and an American. His name was Saul Gilbert.

But this picture was a fable done in time. And it has an introduction by Jean Cocteau. Cocteau liked it very much and wrote the introduction. Saul Gilbert died of cancer.

Before he died he had a beautiful yellowish color, like old ivory. His wife went to live in Germany.

Ruth Michelly. I mention her name because if this interview is published she might read it and tell me where the film is.

That film was lost; she took it with her.

It was based on *The Severed Heads* by Thomas Mann.

I think it was good because Cocteau liked it so much.

But I had no idea of what I was doing when I made the film. It was my first.

The second was *Fando and Lis*. It was based on Arrabal's play. I had directed that play and worked with it so much that I knew it by heart. It has two characters, a boy and a girl, who encounter three other characters during the play. For me those three characters represent the world, society. So I told Arrabal that I would use the two main characters and eliminate the other three, replacing them with whatever or whomever I wanted. In other words, that I would do a film with the young boy and girl. And I filmed it without a script because I knew the play so well ... and I started playing with it.

I filmed it on weekends, Saturdays and Sundays.

And I never thought that it would be shown.

But it was shown at the International Film Festival in Acapulco ... and they wanted to lynch me. The concept of Mexican film was changed. It was quite a scandal.

Now there's a clothing store in Mexico called Fando and Lis.

FIRESTONE

It was made in Mexico.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I filmed it in Mexico. It was my feature film.

RODAY

Did it have scenes with eggs?

JODOROWSKY

Eggs. Yes. Why do you ask that?

RODAY

A Mexican I met yesterday told me. He said they are the most remarkable images he's ever seen. The eggs.

JODOROWSKY

In *Fando and Lis* . The film was sold to Cannon Productions here in New York. But I think they behaved rather stupidly because they cut all the strong scenes. They wanted to directed themselves to the readers of the *New York Times* . They edited the film with the taste of the *New York Times* critic in mind, and they killed it. Of course I don't recognize the version that's here in the United States. But I have a copy of the complete version in Mexico.

There are many things in *Fando and Lis* that resemble Fellini's *Satyricon* , but my film was made three years before *Satyricon* . There are so many similarities that you might think I copied Fellini's film.

RODAY

That's what this man said yesterday. Not that you copied it. He said, "Three years ago I saw *Satyricon* , with the eggs and the ..."

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. That's right. But in black and white. That was *Fando and Lis*. However, I prefer *El Topo* because it was my first professional feature film. And I think that the art of filmmaking is something you learn through actions, by doing it ... not by learning theories. And as you do it, your mind starts to change. I can feel a change in myself, for example. I know that my vision will be more ... more general when I make my next film. And that I'll be able to express myself with greater freedom because I have experience. Without experience, you cannot make films. Right? It's like Karate. You can't learn it from a book. You have to attend a school and be around other people. Yes. Then you begin to feel it in your bones and not in your mind. Yes. That's what I feel ... that is doing. I also think that films should be a form of life. For example, there should be no alienation between the creator, the actor, and the film itself. And certain experiences in the film should be real. Like the first scene of *El Topo*, for example. The bear and the photograph that the child buries. It is really his first toy and the photo is really a picture of his mother. And it should produce a change in him.

FIRESTONE

How long did it take to make *El Topo* ?

JODOROWSKY

Nine months. From the moment I conceived the idea until it was completed. I wrote it, prepared it, Viskin raised the money, I filmed and edited it. Viskin and I got together on a Monday. I had nothing thought out and Viskin didn't have a penny. And we said, "Let's make a film." Then I found the idea and Viskin found the money. Nine months. There were

moments during the filming period when the technicians would queue up to receive their money. And Viskin would race up in his car to pay them. He had just managed to borrow the money. Borrow or steal ... I don't know.

Really, really. I think of Viskin as a very magical person for me.

Because I am ... well, I don't know if I'm an artist, but I live like an artist. Viskin lives like a normal person, but he is as crazy as I am. In this world. We know that you can't make films without money, and to put a crazy person up against the money world is crazy ... I needed someone who was realistically crazy. I never had to ask Viskin's permission to do anything.

I always did whatever I wanted to. And sometimes Viskin didn't even know what I was doing. But he had confidence in what I was doing. At times I would tell Viskin that I needed him to go to Torreon, the red-light district, and bring me twenty prostitutes. He would go without asking questions. Or I would ask him to buy me two hundred rubbers, prophylactics. And with great dignity, Viskin would go to the pharmacy to buy them. I used them for the blood effects.

Etcetera, etcetera. Nine months. Nine months.

Editing, costumes, everything.

RODAY

How did you describe the picture to Viskin when you first started?
At the first meeting, what did you tell him? That you wanted to make a picture.

JODOROWSKY

No. I began working with Viskin when I made *Fando and Lis*. So he knew me and how I worked. We said, "*Fando and Lis* was banned here, but we sold it to Cannon in the United States." When I made *Fando and Lis* the film industry in Mexico was closed to me. But the scandal it created opened the doors for me. So when we were accepted into the industry, we decided to make a film which would be even stronger than *Fando and Lis*. Right. So we made a film. And it wasn't banned. They cut a half hour from it before we could show it in Mexico.

That's the whole story.

RODAY

You've written books too.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, I've written books: *Panic Stories*, *Panic Games*, *Panic Theatre* ...
Panic philosophy. They're out of print in Mexico. Now I've written a novel.

I want to finish it this year. I've been writing it for five years.

Five years ago it was seven hundred pages long.

Now it's a hundred!

RODAY

Which do you prefer, film or novel?

JODOROWSKY

I make movies, but I think I can express myself better in a novel. You have all the possibilities. Right?

RODAY

Except the ones that only belong to film.

JODOROWSKY

I prefer film, but I think I work better in novels. At least one, right? I don't know ... I don't know.

RODAY

Is it a structural question?
Is it a question of the narrative in the novel being easier, more accessible.

JODOROWSKY

No. I read the *Surrealist Manifesto* and Andre Breton spoke about this ... about the novel ... about postcards. He took a passage from a Dostoevski book, the description of a room, the walls, the flowers, the light ... and Breton said, "All these descriptions, all these words ... they're postcards." And another surrealist, Raymond Rousell says, "I try to say as much as possible with as few words as possible." Strong, right? I said that the novel has all possibilities, but I was speaking of the novel as I understand the novel. Anais Nin spoke about the novel. She wrote one novel all her life ... daily: a diary. She was constantly writing it. Like Milareppa, the Tibetan saint who spoke in poetry all his life. He wrote a hundred thousand poems because his whole life was a poem. For a novelist, his whole life is a novel. That's why it's such a pleasure to do this interview. Because it's part of my novel.

RODAY

But don't you feel the same way about the film?

JODOROWSKY

I think my films are also part of my novel.

RODAY

But writing the novel isn't part of your film.

JODOROWSKY

I'll answer the way I feel. The dove is the Annunciation for Mary, and Mary is the Annunciation for the dove. So both the dove and Mary became pregnant. And at the end of nine months, Mary laid a huge egg. And the dove gave birth to a human foetus. Right? And the person born of the dove was Judas. Etcetera. This is a way of saying that everything in the picture is part of the novel, and the novel is part of the picture. But all these things are fragments: part of you, or part of me, or part of life. We cannot separate politics from religion from art. Reality is one. And the person who says, "I am a politician." isn't accurate. He has to say, "I feel politics." We must get to the politics we feel. Right? It's merely a means of expressing yourself. Politics is the means of expression for politicians. But everything is contained in politics, just as everything is contained in art. Like the philosopher Nicholas DeCusa says, "Everything is in everything."

RODAY

The different structures are so intrinsic to each of the forms, each of the media. When you say they're both the same, that you're writing your novel as part of the film and that your film is part of your novel, we wonder about the product.
Will your novel be filled with pictures?
Will your films be filled with narratives?
Will everything you do be parabolic, the way you do it now?
I mean parables about the dove, parables about the Four Masters ...

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I think in symbols.

RODAY

You see, I think you could write a novel with one word.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, and I will. But it won't be with one word, it will be with one dot. It's the story of the Koran, as we said before: the whole Koran is contained in the first sentence, the first sentence in the first word, the first word in the first letter, and the first letter in the first dot. But since the dot is nothing, I can make a novel with nothing. I know a Japanese painter who swam his painting. This is what I mean: if you're an apple tree, you bear apples. That's all you can do. Because you're an apple tree. That's it. We can't separate one thing from another. That's what I mean when I talk about communications media. Nothing is nothing. Right? Everything is everything.

Because politics has become theatre; theatre is film; film is song.
Right? It's art.

RODAY

Why do you make art? Why?

JODOROWSKY

I make art because I'm an apple tree.

RODAY

But you're also a plum tree, an orange tree ...

JODOROWSKY

I express myself. I don't possess myself.

I express myself. I can't even say *myself*.

I clean my plate. Every day I wake up with a dirty plate.

And I clean it. And when I've cleaned it well, the plate
trembles ... and produces an apple. Why do art? Why do anything?
So many people ask me, "Why do you do such and such? There are
so many people who are dying, so many who are hungry, so many
who are killed. Why do you do what you do?" But I'm very old.

I'm a hundred and fifty years old. And in all those years,
people have and continue to come to me and ask, "Why?

Why are you doing this? What for?" And in those years,

I've seen the world give birth to Borges, Frank Zappa, Crumb,
Cortazar, DeBono. These people don't ask why you're doing this
or that: they *do*. But had all these people listened twenty years ago
to people who say, "Why do this? Why do that? So many people are
suffering, so many people are being killed," we'd have nothing today.

Right? Nothing. The person who feels the need to do and to give
must do and give. The person who feels the need to do nothing,

that's all right too. Good. For me, non-action is this:

not pushing yourself, but not holding yourself back, either.

That is non-action ... in you, right? If a song is born in you, sing.

But don't try to sing when you don't have a voice.

Right? But we all have voices.

RODAY

Let's sing.

JODOROWSKY

OK.

COHEN

Everything is permitted.

JODOROWSKY

Everything is permitted. And then we choose ...
I'm very happy talking like this, because when I talk to
Latin American journalists, I have to be very logical.
And really, I'm very happy when I can talk like this
because I can show you how I think, how I feel.
I prefer it this way ... not so serious.
But if you want, I can also speak very logically.

RODAY

I have no more questions.

JODOROWSKY

No more questions? Because I have something wonderful to say.
Yesterday, for example, I thought about a very wonderful problem:
I started to wonder about the meaning of the mummy.
And a girl told me a very beautiful story which gave me the key.
There's an Arab in the desert, nude, meditating. And Death
comes to take him away. And he says, "Wait, because I don't
have a piece of cloth for you to wrap my body in."
So he goes to the city and can only afford to buy a turban.
So he returns to the desert, nude, with a turban. And he says to
Death, "Now you can bury me. Undo my turban and wrap me in it."
Yes. That's why Arabs wear turbans: to have a piece of
cloth they can be wrapped in should they die suddenly.
Even gauze bindings, bandages, are speech symbols for
me. Speech is like a form with emotional contents.
For me, words are like a nut. Right? If I break open a word,
I have an emotion. The mummy is wrapped in its memory
words, in its turban. The turban is worn on the head, right?
So I take the turban off my head and wrap my body in it.
And I turn my body into a cocoon. A mummy.
And a large butterfly emerges from the mummy.
A brain is a cocoon wrinkled up inside the nut of the skull.
One day the nut will open and the brain will unfold like a
huge butterfly. I think this is the symbolism of mummies.
Yes. Something else?

TOPP

Yes, go on. Can you tell us more about the movie?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. There are so many things. As I said before,
I leave impressions in the film, like footprints.
When I started it, I began to play with the Bible.

In the beginning, El Topo is Moses. And I perform the miracles of Moses. The manna doesn't come from above; I take it from the earth.

TOPP

The eggs in the sand.

JODOROWSKY

And there's a paragraph in the Bible that became very magical in the film. Because, as I told you, I found the woman, Mara, by accident in Mexico.

And Mara appears in the Bible. Not as a person ... it's stagnant water. So I did that scene with the stagnant water, the bitter water. And in the Bible, Moses swishes the water with a branch and it becomes sweet.

That's Moses' miracle. I based the scene on that. I created a parable with the woman. She is the bitter water. And El Topo takes a branch from a tree. The water is stagnant; it doesn't flow. But you assume that the branch is a living tree. It's also a phallic symbol. So El Topo put the new life of the branch into the old life of the water and the water becomes sweet for her. Right? I think the scene is about orgasms, too. Mara had never had an orgasm. And El Topo gave her an orgasm instantly. When we speak of orgasms, we also speak of Wilhelm Reich. El Topo is Mara's orgasm, right?

COHEN

And you immediately take the orgasm to water, on the screen -- right into the water, into the swimming ...

JODOROWSKY

**Yes, into the water. Fantastic.
The orgasm is woman in the sea.**

RODAY

Yes, yes. That's the primal orgasm.

JODOROWSKY

She's in the sea.

RODAY

Yes, yes. And he mediates it ... he gives it.

JODOROWSKY

**He gives it. And after she has the orgasm, she never again says, "Nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing ..."
And she finds food in the sand and water in the stones.
And she goes back to revere the stone, which is like a**

phallus ... and also like a mushroom, a stone mushroom.
Right? I made it obvious: a phallus and a mushroom.
I made it with stones. I constructed it.
And the water spurts out like urine.

RODAY

Or like a climax.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, like an ejaculation. I was thinking about Moses.
Because the desert is a woman. I think Moses is a
phallus, right? And the desert is a woman ...
the bitter waters of a woman. And in the
Bible, Moses turns the sun into a woman,
the bitter waters of woman become sweet
when he lowers his branch into the water.

RODAY

But who's the second woman?

JODOROWSKY

I can't say anything about the second woman,
the woman in black. You can say what you like.
If you want, think about Jung ... about light and shadow.

RODAY

Manichean, right? Black and white.
Is it possible that the woman in black
is the alter-ego of El Topo?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. Because she is dressed in black like him.
And she wants what El Topo has.

RODAY

Yes. But take the first woman. In Jung, both egos
want the woman, one in the heterosexual and the other
in a homosexual way, right? The object of beauty in a
Jungian sense is the same one, from both egos. Yes?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Fantastic. Jung is fantastic. Because it's very difficult to explain.
When someone asks me about the orgasm in the picture, I say, "Reich."
And when someone asks me about this woman, all I say is, "Jung."

RODAY

Jung ... yes. I also wondered if you're not saying something about affection for the woman ... the love, the desire, the need for the black woman ... that every man and every woman have both heterosexual and homosexual desires for the same object. And that in this case, one came out and succeeded. You know, first Moses succeeded, and then the woman succeeded.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. And Moses is liberated from his sexual life. It's over with. It's a step toward enlightenment. There are levels. At that point in the film, his human life, his sexual life is over. Finished. He's castrated.

RODAY

That's right.

JODOROWSKY

He has no balls, right?

RODAY

But if Western guilt is burdening him as he kills the Masters, he's getting further and further ... more anxiety ... but he's killing them one after the other, right?

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes.



RODAY

But doesn't that castrate him, also?

JODOROWSKY

No, no. I think of the Masters as symbols: you can't find a Master, the Master finds you. There's a story by Fariduddin Attar. A Sufi is crying. And someone asks him, "Why are you crying?" And he says, "Because I need God so much. But God doesn't need me." And that's the problem: many are called, but few are chosen. So, I can cry out, but if the Master doesn't choose me, I can't sing. So the Masters send a light; they look for a disciple. And they let themselves be killed. Because the great gift of the Master is to let himself be killed by his disciple, to let himself be eaten by his disciple. And that's what Christ does: he lets his twelve apostles eat him. And I saw that they really ate him ... down to the bone. So when El Topo kills the Masters, he has the Masters within him. But he doesn't know that. He doesn't know he's suffering from introjection ... introjection from the Masters. And when he realizes it, he becomes the Four Masters. Right? Like Christ is the Four Evangelists.

Eisenstein, in *Film Sense*, says that the total is more than the sum of its parts. So I think that the Zodiac is its twelve signs, but it's something greater than that. It makes Christ. Christ is the Zodiac. Because if you take a part from it, that part can live by itself. But it doesn't make Christ. OK? This is what I think about the Four Masters. If you think of Four Masters, you can also see the Four Evangelists. Or you can think of fire, water, earth, and air -- the four elements. Or the cross. Etcetera. You can think what you like. I think that reality is a huge plate of food. And depending on the kind of mouth you have, you'll feed yourself accordingly. In other words, you give the food its taste. The food itself has no taste. If your mouth tastes chicken, reality is a chicken. Right?

Everything is a symbol. The Alka Seltzer, for example, packaged in blue foil wrappers. It's a square with words printed on it. Like me. I'm a square with things printed on me: my names, whatever I think I am. But when I open the wrapper, it's silver foil on the inside: negative, water, maternal womb. And inside is a white circular form which isn't a circle. It's a Host. But this symbol, this Alka Seltzer Host doesn't exist yet. Because it's in an evolutionary state of effervescent power. In order for the communion of the Alka Seltzer to exist. I have to put it in a glass of water. And when it enters the water, the Host doesn't disappear. It salts the water. Everything is a symbol.

I believe so much in Rene Guenon. Rene Guenon is a very great philosopher. A metaphysician. A French philosopher. He's dead now. I think it's very important for all of us that he became an Islamic. He was a Christian; he became an Islamic. And he married an Egyptian girl and died in Islam. Fantastic. He said that everything is a symbol and that man is a symbol of the non-manifested. So you can live your life thinking of yourself as a symbol. Not thinking, but *being* a symbol. Every act is a symbol. When you wear that

yellow shirt, for example, I think of Confucius, who only wore yellows, white or black. They weren't diffused colors. When you wear that flower on your shirt, you're manifesting your desire to open your solar plexus ... like a rose of flesh. A rose of flesh is your body wanting to open up. And what does it open up to? To insects? No. It opens up to the sun. Right?

Everything is a symbol. But symbolic expression has been forgotten ... forgotten. Because symbolic language is a metaphysical language. Rene Guenon said that civilization has given us a way of speaking ... logically or illogically. But metaphysical things can only be expressed through symbols, right? And the beauty of symbolic language is that it's a bottle, a receptacle ... much like Superman's cape. As Superman grows, his cape grows; and as he gets smaller, his cape gets smaller. A symbol is Superman's cape. If you're great, the symbol grows; and if you're small, the symbol shrinks. This is *El Topo*, I think.

If you're great, *El Topo* is a great picture; if you are limited, *El Topo* is limited. I took my children to see it. They liked it -- maybe because they're my children, maybe not -- but they liked the picture very much. Because I think they saw it as a fairy-tale ... because they are children.

But people like you, for example, see Jung, you see Reich, you see Joseph de Voragine, you see cultures. Because you have all this within ... and you can put it into the film. I think this is good.

COHEN

For me the greatest thing about the film is just the pure story level.

RODAY

For me it's the most incredible execution of such a vast ambition. I've never seen an execution of such a program. Because the symbols meant to me very specific things, and now I see that I can't begin to even hold on to specific references for the picture. The fact that the symbols are even richer than I supposed is overwhelming.

JODOROWSKY

The Zen say that when you are enlightened, you can burn the Ten Thousand Books. The emperor of China who built the Great Wall was sharply criticized because he burned all the books of the Empire. And for Occidentals, the idea of burning books is terrible. But I don't think it's terrible, it has to do with changing your bones. And when I say bones, I mean changing your essence. If a book can't change the structure of my bones, it's useless. I have many books in my home, and sometimes people ask me why I don't burn them. And I tell them that I was a very solitary child. And that I used to read because I had no friends. So I buy books out of a need for affection. Each book is a caress. When I buy books, I'm buying caresses, not intellectual documents. Right? I think poets -- besides writing poetry -- should go to the

streets and embrace people. For example, I see very little of my children. Then suddenly I'll tell them: "I'm going to give you a large dosage of hugs and kisses." And I embrace them and caress them and embrace them and caress them ... for an hour ... until they scream.

I use symbols very lovingly. I discover very beautiful things. The lance in Rene Guenon, for example. I loved reading about that: the lance that wounds Christ. But the symbol became a lance that weeps tears of blood ... the blood began to pour out of the lance. I like that because I like symbols.

RODAY

Yeah, I understand.
But you did it in the film.
When you come into the village, everyone is dead.
And there's a woman impaled on a spear, right?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Maybe. This is beautiful. In my film, this symbol could mean that the lance created its own victim. Perhaps. And there's a pool of blood beside the lance. It's a lake of blood, not water. And if you think of the lance as a living lance, then it is nourishing its roots from the pool, right? It's growing from the blood. Yes. I like this symbol. Each new symbol moves me. And on the lance a rose blooms ... from the blood. And then you know that the lance is Christ. And that the lance has five wounds. To speak of "five" -- Christ has five wounds, too -- is very significant. It's the meaning of man. I think that "five" is the meaning of man. One, two, three, four, five. Five. Five in Masonry, the Pentagon ... man. Five. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. We must read the Zohar. The Zohar.

This morning you asked me if the cave in the film was Plato's cave. I said yes. I said yes. And when the old woman offers the beetle to El Topo, I think it's an alchemist symbol. Because they are black beetles -- black like the crow, which is a symbol of decay. Putrification. The beetle pushes a ball of excrement ... and this ball of excrement turns into gold.

COHEN

Yeah, that's what the alchemists were doing.

JODOROWSKY

Their mental work.

COHEN

They got a lot of shit in their beards when they were doing that.

JODOROWSKY

**And then you eat the beetle, like a drug.
Beetle. Drug. Yes, I think so. Because once
I was traveling through the north of Mexico
and two hitchhikers were traveling with me.
Suddenly they made me stop the car.
There was a huge beetle in the road. Alive.
And the two men started to fight over the beetle
until one of them grabbed it. He broke it open and
sucked on it. Then he started to fall into a state
of delirium. I think that in certain parts of Mexico,
people get high on beetles.**

COHEN

Do you want to talk about the next movie?

JODOROWSKY

**Yes. I think I'll do two movies, a gangster movie and a
pirate movie. The gangster movie will be a very old one ...
based on St. John of the Cross. He wrote a book about Mount
Carmel. Mount Carmel. And mountain climbing. The movie will
be about mountain-climbing ... treated like a cabalistic problem.
Mountain climbing was always a school of spiritual initiation.
But children will think it's just about mountain-climbing.
The other film, the pirate film: I think that pirates were true
examples of anarchism. I think Hollywood destroyed the
meaning of piracy. Pirates were like the young people of today.
The young are today's pirates. And I want to use only young people
in the film. I want to film it ... I hope I can ... in the streets of
New York. And I'll use all of New York like the ocean. Like the ocean.
And everyone who'll play the pirates ... the battles, etc ... will be
the fish of the ocean. Right? We can make wonderful pirate movies.
I think that the pirate society is very profound. And the pirate women
were the first to proclaim women's liberation. I want the heroine
of the film to be a beautiful blonde who weighs two-hundred kilos.**

FIRESTONE

Who else do you want to be in the pirate movie?

JODOROWSKY

People I know. It'll be a Panic picture with all the young people i know in New York: Ira, Marty, me, you, etcetera. But the other film ... I want to do that Mount Carmel film with Firestone, Douglas, Kleiner and Dennis Hopper ... And myself.

I'll need ten people ... who can live the experience.

Because I think the actor must be involved in the picture.

He shouldn't be an actor. I don't like actors. In my first picture -- *Fando and Lis* -- everything was real:

the physical violence, each drop of blood was real. In this picture I want to use people who will surrender themselves to an experience ... myself included. Contact between Masters and key activities to reach a state of enlightenment. Right?

For example, I want all the actors to go for eight days without sleeping with a Japanese Zen Master who lives in Mexico. Eight days without sleep. I want the actors to have the experience. Actors who will eat mushrooms on a given day indicated in the script and who will let themselves be directed so that they'll reach enlightenment as they do in the film.

RODAY

Soma?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I want to try it ... with all kinds of mushrooms I want to do it.

I don't think of movies as a game, in the pejorative sense of the word. It's a remarkable game. It's a master game. And we must play a master game, not a little game. I think of movies as a way to enlightenment, as much as anything else. I must use it. The first thing a film must change are the actors who are in it; and then the audiences. If a young boy takes acid and experiences a change, the least a film can do is give him more than acid gives him. But you mustn't give him the visions that acid gives him; you must give him the pill. And then let each individual see his own visions. That's it. I believe that not only is it *necessary* to do now, but that is *must* be done. Enough of storytelling and playing little games ...

little acting exercises, little dialogues, little music, little images, little movie houses. Films distributed by human excrement. Right?

All they know how to eat is shit so they want to distribute shit.

Right? So a real film must create its own distributor.

And we must forget the idea of making it with Broadway cinemas. In five years, those theatres will be used exclusively for showing erotic film pamphlets to propagandize war.

RODAY

I'm anxious to see how you will acheieve the epic quality of *El Topo* in your two other pictures.

JODOROWSKY

I've never thought of doing an epic picture. My Master is the *Anabasis of Alexander the Great* by Flavio Arriano. What I like about the book is that as you begin reading it, you think Alexander the Great is mad because he goes and goes and goes -- traveling all over the world. And when he conquers a town, he loses it because he's off to conquer another. He went from one town to the next. But the real conquest of Alexander the Great was the conquest of himself. Right?

RODAY

He plays Adam, like in the Bible. I mean, he names every town.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, yes. Like Moses. He crosses the desert and makes the desert live the way Alexander made everything live ... everything. And he never sets foot into the promised land because he doesn't have to. The promised land was a desert. What could be more of a promised land than one where you get water from stones? Right? That's the promised land. If Moses had wanted to, he would have hit the ground with his staff and each grain of sand would have spurted a fine jet of water. So that the entire surface of the desert would have been covered with a water down. And you could caress it like an animal.

RODAY

It didn't matter that Moses didn't see the promised land.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. He didn't enter it. He didn't enter it. He saw it, but didn't enter. Because he created it. The Bible, like all metaphysical books, is a book of anatomy. They all refer to the human body. The whole Bible takes place in a human body. For example, when Moses starts to cross the desert, he's between his penis and his anus. So he begins to climb up his spinal cord with all the Jews of his day. And then a hole opens in his pineal gland and all the Jewish people turn into an eight-petaled flower. Right?

SUSAN

Beautiful.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, beautiful. Because now I understand why Moses took off his

sandals when he approached the burning bush. As I've said, I think Moses was born with his sandals on. We have shoes, but we don't have feet. So our life's task is to create our feet so that we can take off our shoes ... so that we don't have to walk on our shoes any more, but on our feet. When Moses had feet, he could see God. But when he returned, he had to put on his shoes again so people would listen to him and understand him. But he couldn't talk about feet. He could only talk about full shoes. And the people started to adore shoes. The golden calf was a huge golden shoe.

Right? And he killed the people because they started to adore shoes and not the idea of feet.



JODOROWSKY

The Sufi say, "The only thing you can teach a disciple is how to learn from himself." Which is why I believe that universities of the future shouldn't have professors or lecture halls. The idea of "professor" should end. Etcetera. Good. Universities should be peripatetic ... no ... they should be aero-patetic. Universities should be airplanes. A lecture hall should become an airplane.

I see the university as an enormous hanger, with airplanes. So the students board the plane instead of going to the lecture hall. And instead of a professor, there's a pilot. And he flies to places the students are studying about. Right? The university is an airport. The university is mobile ... traveling to the place you have to study about. For example, no one can understand Greek temples if they don't see them in the context of their landscape. But one one can understand a temple anyway because it's of another era. I propose that a photograph be taken of each one, that they be disassembled,

and that something else be constructed from the pieces. Right? Someone told me, "God needn't be in a temple or in a cathedral."

But it occurred to me that God isn't in a cathedral; he's in a stone of the cathedral. Ezra Pound wrote a poem where someone signs a stone of the cathedral. He made the stone say,

"Adam made me." Ezra Pound. I think he feels the essence of a cathedral. A cathedral is made of stones chisled with love.

And if the stones are made with love, the cathedral is a musical instrument. Right? That you can play if you discover the exact spot to touch. If you go to Chartres with a little hammer made from one of your bones (you must sacrifice something) and with your little bone hammer, you tap the Cathedral of Chartres ... in one precise spot ... and it will sing like a siren for two or three entire days.

I can continue to talk about symbols if you like ... for five days. The sword embedded in the stone, for example. It's a beautiful symbol. No one can get it out. Then someone comes along and takes it out with no effort because it was his sword. You have a woman who's made of stone. No one can remove his phallus from her. You come and remove it with no effort. She's your woman ... your woman. You can do it because she's your woman. Because when she had the phallus inside her, it was immobile.

Because it was yours. And you went through life castrated. But when you laid your pelvis against hers, you recovered your phallus and you were able to enter and withdraw with ease.

And then water came from the stone. Right? And that water fell on your testicles, and your testicles bloomed, like flowers.

Yes, I think so.

One day I had a little illumination ... not a great illumination, but a little one ... about symbols. Someone asked me, "What is the meaning of this animal?" And I told him. And then we found it in a book, and it really was that symbol. I'm not playing a game when I talk about these things. You can talk in symbolic language. If you want, ask me something. We can play with symbols ... or not.

SUSAN

Talk about what you said the other day ...
about society being divided ...

JODOROWSKY

Ah! She asked me, "What's the destiny of society?"
And I told her it would be divided in half: into transparent men, like luminous spheres, and hippopotamuses ...
But hippopotamuses with no legs, with huge mouths,
with no eyes or ears, and assholes the size of their

mouths with a door that opens and closes.

SUSAN

Like Bosch.

JODOROWSKY

And the asshole opens up like a door to shoot cannonballs of excrement to kill other hippopotamuses. All day long they're killing each other with their cannonballs of shit. And instead of a nose, they have a finger ... the only human thing they have left ... to push buttons with. And what they'll like most is for people to suck the finger. It's the only sensitivity they have left. This is what society will be ... And one of the hippopotamuses will surely become President. And it will be very difficult for him to make speeches because he'll kill everyone who interviews him with his cannonballs of shit. The hippopotamuses won't be able to control their digestion. Right? OK. This is what I think.

COHEN

We can make a short film, and ...

JODOROWSKY

Of hippopotamuses and angels.

COHEN

Do you want to?

JODOROWSKY

The hippopotamuses ... Ay! Fantastic!
Look, the hippopotamuses will have only one theoretical, metaphysical problem: since everyone else will be luminous spheres, the hippopotamuses will constantly be asking themselves, "Who shat these luminous spheres?" And so they'll have a god: a transparent hippopotamus who is always shitting angels. OK.

COHEN

Don't you want to make a movie of that
as much as of anything else?

JODOROWSKY

Yes! Why not? I like it. I invented it just now.
The other day, Ira said to me, "You have so many routines when you talk." I said, "There are always new things. Next time we talk I promise you a complete new show."

But really, when I talk I invent. I invent. I never think about it. And I'm a very good audience. I listen to Robert here, right? I don't think you have to have imagination. But you must have seeds. So, in a conversation, you plant the seed and let it grow freely. Right? Let it grow. You mustn't hold anything back.

RODAY

I want to ask you about metaphysics.

JODOROWSKY

Metaphysics, yes. You say the word metaphysics, and I think the most physical thing is metaphysical ... because it's real, right?

Physical. It's something physical. But when we talk about physics, the only body that exists is the non-manifested body.

That's why I understand Ira's photographs so well. Because he puts you in a room of distorted mirrors, and he only photographs the reflection. You are the reflection. He never photographs you. In other words, he photographs your symbol. But he doesn't direct, create the symbol. He looks for it in the mirror. The symbol appears, he doesn't make it.

There's a beautiful sentence that Papus' master said ...

Maitre Philippe. He said, "Hunting is not permitted, but fishing is."

I think that's the attitude of any creator. He's a fisherman, not a hunter. Because if you go after a fish, you'll never catch it. Lewis Carroll wrote a poem called *The Hunting of the Snark*. It's about an unknown animal that can never be caught. Like Melville's *Moby Dick*.

And the owner of Kafka's castle. They're all hunters. But Christ was a fisherman. He throws out a net and many fishes fall into it ...

little ones and big ones. And he takes the big ones.

It's the same as a Sufi saying: "When you know the ocean, you're no longer interested in the rivers that flow into it."

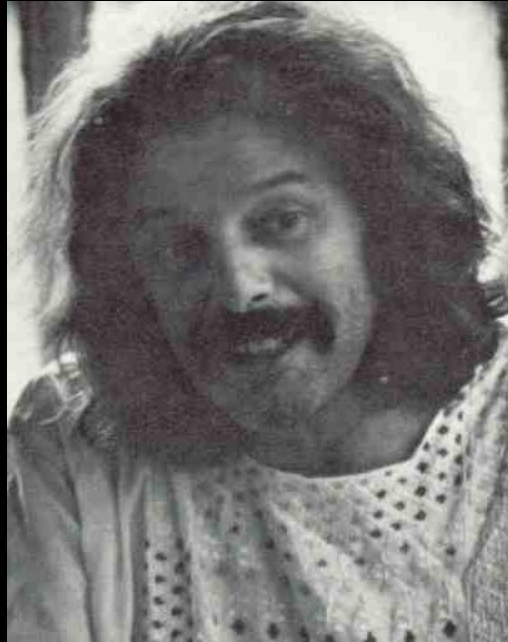
You throw out the net and you receive. Now, you get big fishes and little fishes. There are many people who spend their lives getting little fishes, never the large ones.

The fish is so big that you can't see it.

Beautiful. It's so big you can't see it.

And Anais Nin. I just read her today. I went to a bookstore and saw the book. I think I felt the book there and took it off the shelf and held it in my hands. When I hold a book, the book is mine. I don't have to read it. But I do read it. Osmosis. You can know a book by osmosis. And yesterday, I knew Anais Nin by osmosis. And I said to myself, "How beautiful to write a book throughout your whole lifetime." Like the disciple of Milareppa ... the poet I spoke of earlier ... he spoke in poetry all his life ...

all his life he worked on a novel. Milareppa. You live your whole life like a poem, right? Yesterday, for example, at Ira Cohen's loft, I saw two people rollerskating at four in the morning. And I thought, "That noise is like the birds' song that announces the dawn." I like to go to Acapulco because all the birds gather in one tree to sing ... at dawn and at dusk. In the mornings their song is right, but in the evenings it's a mistake because when they see the red of the sun, they think it's dawn again. They are great poets. I like them.



SUSAN

Talk about bees ...

JODOROWSKY

We've already talked about bees.

COHEN

You know, in Greece they used the bee as a symbol of the soul. When someone dies, he flies away as a bee.

JODOROWSKY

Yes, it's your life work. A bee is a worker. He makes honey. Gurdjieff says, "You aren't born with a soul; you have to make one for yourself." Right? You live through different periods. And with each period you're constructing: first, the emotions, then the intellect. There are mentally retarded people who have never created their intellects. There are spiritually retarded people Who have never created their souls. Right? So the bee is the symbol

of the creator of his own soul. They all work, in the sun, but the queen bee gives birth in darkness. Which is why we say, "she gives light."

In Spanish, "to give light" means "to give birth." And all births take place in darkness. A Chinese poet said, "You must be like a caterpillar who makes himself smaller to be able to move forward." Right? So you must fall into darkness to be able to move toward the light. Because the light you think you live in is darkness. The earth is dark. And when the huge angels who fly through the universe approach the earth, they're blinded by the sun. Because the sun is darkness. The sun is black. And that's why we live in darkness. That's why the mole loses its eyes. And that's why the great samurai in the Chinese movies we saw in Chinatown are blind. A woman is always blind. And a beggar. That's what I say. Poor of spirit, poor in spirit. As Christ said, right? Like the Sufi Masters ... they're all beggars, who don't confuse being with having. I like Speedy Gonzales!

And the sword is very important in Chinese films. I'll explain the symbolism of the sword. The Taoists say that sometimes when a Master dies, his body disappears and only his sword remains in the casket. And they say that the sword is the symbol of his soul which he had created. There's something fantastic about weapons! A weapon never exists without its sheath or case. A weapon always has something to protect it. And for a Japanese sword, or a great Chinese sword, the sheath is as important as the blade. A samurai won't let you hold the blade in your hands because your fingerprints could keep the sword from coming out of its sheath quickly. Cowboys too. The cowboy must keep his holster very, very clean. A weapon is a duality. Right? Very interesting. So are you. You're a weapon. You must be able to take your soul out of your mouth and put it on the table ... like a medium. Very quickly. Right? OK.

RODAY

Let's go back for a moment ... to the Wall of China.

JODOROWSKY

The Wall of China. Ah! When the emperor burned the books, he taught us a lesson: live books; don't adore them. Kill Christ so you can have Him within you. Right? Now, the act of building a wall can also be one of uniting a people, a society. Like *The Prince* of Machiavelli, who united all of Italy. Everyone thought it was an evil book, but it says beautiful things. It's very positive. For example, when archers want their arrows to reach a distant target, they aim for a point beyond the target, demanding the impossible. And thus they attain the possible. They shoot for the moon. They never hit it, but they

become the best archers in the world. It also works in reverse ... with Machiavelli or the builder of the Wall of China: they seem to shoot their arrow a very short distance toward a meaningless target. But their arrow travels with such force that it passes through the bull's eye and reaches the infinite.

COHEN

I wanted to ask you why someone didn't shed real blood in your movie.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I'll tell you what Godard said when someone asked him, "Why do you show so much blood in *Weekend*?" And he answered, "I don't use blood; I use the color red. I like red." There are so many people who don't like red. There's a social barrier against red. If all the violence shown in movies doesn't show blood, people will accept it. The first barrier against red is the red of traffic lights. Then there's the Communist terror. And the menstrual cycles. And hemorrhoids ... which eighty percent of the people in the U.S. suffer from ... from bad eating habits, from eating hamburgers. To solve this problem, I propose that the audience see different colors of blood. Think of green blood, for example, and you forget that throughout each human being, throughout mankind, flows a river of blood. You forget what the Essenes said in their Gospel of Peace: the world is created with the blood of the Universal Mother. Trees are made of her blood. In my pirate movie, I won't have those problems: I'm going to put green blood in the wounds ... blue blood ... violet blood. And the wounds will spill out soap bubbles, red butterflies, pieces of shiny cloth, crystal balls, cows' tongues ... or hamburgers. OK. Ah! Such pleasure! Such pleasure! What a pleasure it is to sing ... !

TOPP

Have you ever used liquid crystals?

JODOROWSKY

Liquid crystal?

TOPP

It's a medical thing. You can inject it into a vein in your hand and it completely colors the hand. It's used to determine the circulation, and to locate tumors, which would show up a different color.

JODOROWSKY

Can you see it with the naked eye?

TOPP

You see the whole outline.
Absolutely. And it's completely harmless.

JODOROWSKY

That reminds me of something. You inject a color into your testicles, and in a tenth of a millionth of a second, your whole body turns blue.

Yes. I think the body is a huge organ that functions as one entity.

It has testicles on the forehead and eyebrows on the pelvis ... everything everywhere at the same time. Everything is simultaneous. Plants, for example. When you put a drop of water on one of their roots, before the processes carry it to the leaf ... much before ... the leaf starts to react. If I touch the tip of this little girl's nose, I touch her whole body ... her clitoris. Speaking of clitoris, I once knew a fantastic man ... a very distinguished man ... who would go to women's parties to read their palms. Then he would lift up their skirts and say, "Allow me to read your clitoris." And he'd start to read the ladies' clitoris. You can read the clitoris. You can read the anus. You can read anything you want.

Because every body is a book. OK? Another question.



RODAY

Before, you talked about Godard ...
Have you talked about other filmmakers?

JODOROWSKY

I like all films. Because with every film I see, I make my own film.
Right? I like them all. I don't look for any one film to like.
All these years, I've been looking for a film *not* to like.

Maybe I'll make one. I like *Dr. Strange Comics!*

If you know the ocean, you don't need the rivers. Right?
Perhaps you must find the ocean. Maybe there is a primal book
from which all books come. So you go from book to book.

They tell of a tree in Tibet ... they write on its leaves.
They talk of a tree that's in your brain, right? The Tree of Life.
These are all books. But there's but one book. I don't know
what it is. It's the primal scream. Yes, the primal scream.
And I imagine ... with great pleasure ... all the horrible stirrings
of the nonmanifested to bring forth the scream which creates the
universe. Maybe one day I'll see you trembling, and you'll go into
convulsions and grow larger and smaller until your mouth opens and
the world will come from your mouth, escaping through the window
like a river, and it will flood the city. And then we'll begin to live.

RODAY

What about something on history?
Some people will want to take a picture as an allegory of time.

JODOROWSKY

An allegory of time ...

RODAY

... beginning sometime in the very primitive state
and then you have this evolving straight through to ...

JODOROWSKY

... to civilization.

RODAY

Yeah.

JODOROWSKY

I accept that. In the primitive beginnings, the hero has personal
problems. After his first enlightenment, he has social problems.
And when he dies, I think he'll have universal problems. Right?
Universal problems. The problems continually become larger and
larger. When a person wants to find God, he searches for God ...
and he finds God, a little god. He has a little god and he wants
to touch this god. Then the god eludes him and grows larger.
2001 says this about space. I liked it. I think the slabs were
steps ... a staircase. No one will every be given a complete
staircase. You can have only one step. And if you take the step, you
create another. If you don't take the initial step, the staircase ends.

Perhaps Borges' staircases which led to nothing were created by people who had no faith ... who reached a certain level in time and then descended the stairs they had climbed. I know a Zen story about a disciple who's standing blindfolded at the edge of an abyss. And the Master is pushing him into the abyss. And the moment he jumped, the abyss was only ten centimeters high. I know another story by Farriduddin Attar about a dog who is very thirsty. He wants to drink, but he can't. Because below the surface of the water there's another dog staring at him. Until he finally jumps into the water.

I could end by saying that he drowns, but he goes on living.

OK? You can also compare my film to the Bible ...

the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The Old Testament and the Book of Revelations.

RODAY

The Catacombs and the Resurrection.

JODOROWSKY

You can think of it in these terms if you like. Because there are always old books and new books. All religions follow this path.

Old books, new books, non-books ... it all ends up with books.

So the creators kill God and he lives within them. But the dead

God ends up becoming a devil. I think we're entertaining an era of

killing God. Right? We're killing famous men. Celebrities. And we're

killing heroes ... so that we can become heroes. And famous people are

the last of the remaining elephants. And we're moving toward a society

devoid of famous men. No one will know who the President of the Republic is.

He'll be a little old man who works in an office picking his nose ... making little balls of mucous. And he'll use his mucous balls to create a Seurat painting ...

a pointillist painting. That's how I see the President.

RODAY

Do you think there's any one great moment in all the Bibles?

Is this the moment of revelation?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I think the greatest moment of human life is ... in *Faust*, for example, the most beautiful moment is when the cock crows.

The birth of the day. The most beautiful moment in the life

of a human being is when he starts to scream. He has a soul

and feels it roar like a clap of thunder. "In a beautiful blue sky of midday." Do you understand? Enlightenment is internal birth.

I believe that every human being hopes for this.

I don't think he hopes for anything else.

I don't think people are hoping for money.

COHEN

Do you want to loan me fifty dollars?

JODOROWSKY

Of course.

COHEN

Yeah? No problem.

JODOROWSKY

I'll borrow it from someone else ...
who's borrow it from someone else,
until everone will be lending each other money.

COHEN

I already gave away some of the fifty dollars yesterday,
I'm afraid, but I figured you might be able to speed it up.

JODOROWSKY

But what was the original question?

RODAY

At the moment of illumination in the film,
it's more than an intensely personal
moment ... if you had said that earlier ...
you get killed, you are crucified,
you are wounded five times on the bridge ...

JODOROWSKY

He loses everything. He loses everything.
He loses his sexual life. He loses his material
possessions, his revolver. He loses his personality ...

RODAY

Right. He lost his vanity. He lost everything.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. If you read Jung's *Metamorphosis of the Soul*,
you'll see his theory about death of a hero and his rebirth.

RODAY

Oh ... right.

JODOROWSKY

Right? So when the hero dies and is reborn. But he's like a newborn child. That's why they cut his hair. He's like a baby.

That's why monks shave their heads. They are nothing. There's nothing behind them. They tell me that the film is really two films.

And I say it's one. Perhaps it's just that they don't conceive of the idea that a man's life changes. They can't conceive of a Gauguin, who changes his life and becomes someone else at forty. I think there can be sudden changes in our lives. But all art, and all theatre, has accustomed us to think of ourselves as Hamlet. You begin as Hamlet and die as Hamlet.

Nothing changes. So Hamlet is a schmuck. And whoever thinks like Hamlet, has to die like Hamlet. He doesn't die to be reborn, right? Do you understand? I think that a normal hero must die in his picture and begin a new life ... as many times as he wants. A true Master dies each moment of his life ... and is born each moment. Why, in a universe which is being born each moment, which is the same age as I am at this very moment -- because I was just born this very moment -- since it is continually being created, why, in this universe, should I live a life of being instead of one

in the process of becoming? I want to be continually being born, like the universe. My thoughts and feelings must be as alive as my corporal matter. If my body cells are dying each moment and being born each moment, why should my thoughts last longer than my body cells? That's why my theory on my film when we started this interview changed half-way through the interview and is changing again now. I don't have one theory; I have a continual death and rebirth of theories.

Right? That's what I think. Lao Tse says, "Be like water that takes on the shape of the container that holds it." Water is very adaptable; it adapts. We're ninety-eight percent water. We are water.

A writer said that a scientist studied water to come to the conclusion that we are water expressing itself. Beautiful.

Do you like it? Beautiful, isn't it?

So you must adapt yourself to reality, like clouds.

There's a very beautiful book. A very, very beautiful book by Kubin, who is a painter as well. Breton discovered the writer in Kubin and said, "He's as good as Kafka." Kubin's book *L'Autre Cote* was written before *The Castle*. And it's also about someone who's looking for the owner of the castle. But in Kubin's book, the man finds the owner of the castle.

And it's marvelous, because the owner is a person who's sitting down and constantly changing shape. A person, a cow ... continually changing shape. That's the owner of the castle. I dedicate this story to so many sad people who've destroyed their lives because they never knew who the owner of the castle was. And they died without ever having solved the problem. Right? In the eternity of eternity, we'll know what

Kafka was guilty of in *The Trial*, who killed him. And the one who killed him will be judged, and we'll know. All mysteries will be revealed.

And we'll know them. One day we'll know the part that's missing ... we'll know what Rene Daumal never finished in his *Mount Analogue* ... what he had intended to write and what he found at the top of Mount Analogue. We'll know what Kubla Khan's poem was like ... the complete poem. And we'll know who interrupted the poem and who sent him.

Perhaps it was another Coleridge who interrupted Coleridge.

Perhaps. Perhaps it was the real poet who knocked at the door. it was an Annunciation. The Virgin Mary was writing Kubla Khan's poem, and the seventy-kilo dove descended and took her away from writing the poem so that he could make love to her. A beautiful blonde weighing two hundred kilos knocked at the poet's door, interrupted his verses, and made love with him. And the poet screamed and created the castle of Kubla Khan. Fantastic. Fantastic. Very good. OK.

I knew a man in Paris who was in love with a poet ...

a Chilean poet. The poet died, so the man married his wife.

He was very fat. And he told me, "There's a difference between knowing and possessing. I learned Italian to possess Dante's

Divine Comedy." He was very big, right? And he wanted to possess the Chilean poet. So he married the poet's wife. He only possessed the wife.

Once the poet had said to the man, "I will make a rose bloom in my poem."

And the fat man said, "I've read the poem twenty times ... two thousand times.

Where's the rose?" The poem crumbled and fell from his mouth in petals.

The first time I saw a beetle was when I saw a beautiful dark-skinned woman --

she was very fat, two hundred kilos -- sitting at a table in a cafe. She said to

me, "Kiss me." I went over to kiss her and she stuck out her tongue.

And there was a beetle on her tongue. And she handed me some Japanese

chopsticks to eat rice with. I didn't understand what she meant because

I used them like crutches. Speaking of beetles, I want to ask a question.

A beetle has shards ... hard wing covers ... which are like wings.

Entomologists say that the shards are wings which have hardened

to protect the beetle. But I ask, "Couldn't the wings be shards

which have become transparent to allow the beetle to fly?"

One day, someone showed me a glass of water that was

half full. And he said, "Is it half full or half empty?"

So I drank the water.

RODAY

The Gordian water.

JODOROWSKY

Finito. No more problem. The most beautiful speeches I know where Plotinus' speeches. (And in parenthesis, I should tell you about Plotinus' death. He didn't want people to draw pictures of him. He never bathed. Instead he had two slaves rub him and clean him with oils. When the slaves died, he never bathed again. One day he was so

dirty that while he was taking a walk along the outskirts of the town, some dogs attacked him and devoured him -- a very choice omelet.) Anyway, Plotinis' speeches ... The city was under siege and the people were afraid they were going to run out of food. So they told Plotinus that he could lift the people's morale by speaking to them because he spoke so well. So he went up to the rostrum, took a glass, poured flour and water into it, stirred it up, and drank it. And the people cheered because of a single gesture. Which means ... as the Chinese say, "If you want to be rich, lower your ambitions." If you want food to last you a long time, make a sacrifice. Right?

There's a story about structures ... I don't know if it's Borges ... a story about map charters, cartographers. They started to construct a map so big that the map covered everything and they began to live in the map. It's by Korszybsky, I like it very much ... the idea that language is a map ... an old map ... and we live inside language, which is like living inside an old map. But this reminds me of something else. When I was little, people would tell me: "Don't build castles in the sky because they'll collapse." But I say that you *must* build castles in the sky and make yourself lighter than air so you can live in your castle. I like Yellow Dog!

Speaking of horses, the Messiah will come on a horse. The horse will be made of water and the Messiah of sugar. And as he's riding, he'll start to dissolve into the horse as sugar dissolves in tea. And when the horse comes to mankind, it will burst and fill all the cups in the world with presweetened horsetea. If we put all the teas of the world together, we'd produce an enormous horse. And just now I'm beginning to understand the meaning of the Trojan horse: we live inside the horse, but we also hold it in our hands. Right? OK?

But who holds me in their hands? In *The Circular Ruins* by Borges, a character dreams another dream. And the dream dreams a dream. And it has no beginning or end. There's always someone dreaming. But we could also say that, instead of dreaming, we could create stones in the air ... like mediums make manifestations of stone.

I once knew a crazy woman who worked with her hands in her air ... she made sculptures in the air. I didn't think she was doing anything.

But, since she was crazy, she used flour for makeup. She was always making immobile sculptures in the air. But one day she moved her face and the flour fell from her face like a cloud covering up something in the air. And I saw a beautiful geometrical form. Then I took a bag of flour, went into her room and started to throw the flour around in the air.

And beautiful sculptures began to appear. That's the story.

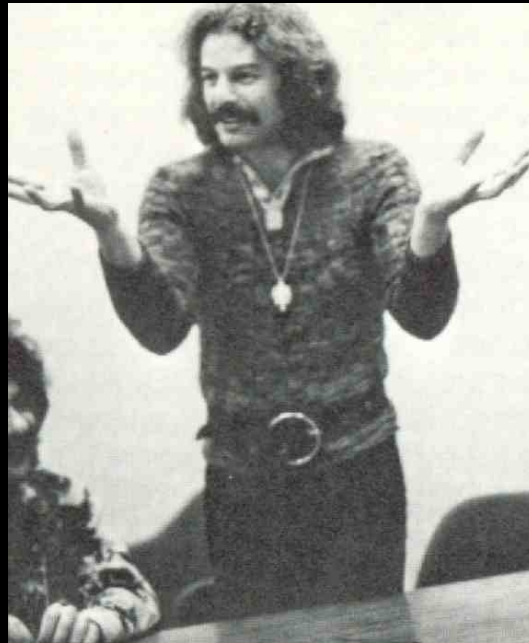
SUSAN

But your stories are like labyrinths.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. People often talk to me about labyrinths.

Many people think in terms of labyrinths. But you must also think in terms of mobile labyrinths with walls that travel at the speed of light ... which is the speed of turtles. We usually think of labyrinths as being immobile, but if we think of a mobile labyrinth with just one wall, we'll have a great labyrinth. Fantastic.



RODAY

Why does the labyrinth as an image continually appear?

JODOROWSKY

The first image of the labyrinth are the intestines. When you open up a dove and read your fortune in its intestines, you're discovering the labyrinth. A labyrinth is an image of human intestines. The Orientals always looked for truth in their bellies. When you look for the labyrinth, you're looking for truth in your belly. It's a descent into your belly to the Hara. That's the meaning of the labyrinth.

You can ask me about any symbol you like. I know the meaning of every symbol there is. So do you, because the meaning of every symbol is recorded in your brain cells. It's already been written down. Everything can be read.

Everything is a book. You can read a hat, shoes ... an umbrella.

The other day I gave a sermon at a church here ... St. Clement's ...

The Episcopal priest asked me what I was going to talk about.

I couldn't think of anything. So just to say something, I said,
"About my umbrella." And then I gave the sermon
on my umbrella. I began to think about the characteristics
of an umbrella ... it comes in a case ... it's a weapon.

And umbrella is a weapon. Like you. Only this weapon is
encased by a zipper ... which is our teeth, our clenched teeth.

Sewn with words, with the words of everyday thoughts, with our
intellectual obsessions. To get down to the umbrella's essence, we have to
open the case and give it a primal scream. But then we have a closed umbrella.

And to open the umbrella, it has to rain. If it doesn't rain, the umbrella
will never open because an umbrella is like a flower. Umbrellas only open
when it rains. And if you don't believe me, try opening the umbrella when it
isn't raining. You won't be able to do it. If you want proof, I'll give it to you.

So you open the umbrella when rain falls. But umbrellas aren't meant to
protect you from the rain; they are meant to collect the rain. So you must
never hold an umbrella as a protective dome; you must hold it upside down.
And the umbrella should collect water the same as a chalice collects sacred
wine ...

the sacred blood. Because rain is blood. Dracula is a heavy drinker of rain.
That's all he wants. And I'm not so mistaken, because just now I see other things
being revealed. When they wounded Christ in the side, blood poured out.

But so did water. Blood and rain. So Christ wasn't stabbed with a spear,
but with an umbrella. Therefore the umbrella is the symbol of the Holy Grail.

All the knights of King Arthur's Round Table traveled all over the world
looking for an umbrella. Fantastic! Fantastic!

RODAY

Do you have a master?

JODOROWSKY

Well ... I've had Masters. Right now, you are my Master. But ...
I studied Karate for two years. And I knew a Master. I studied
Gurdjieff's theories. And I knew a Master. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.
But I think the Age of Masters is over. The contact you once needed with a
Master you can now have with anyone. You can say that anyone is your Master:
a madman, a taxi driver, a great artist (although I don't recommend it),
a laborer. You can choose ... and say that that person is your Master.

Because we live in a state of incompleteness. And each person possesses a
part of the universe. Someone else has something you don't have.

Anyone has something you don't have. So you can decide that anyone will
be your Master. And you give yourself to that person. And the moment
you surrender to him and disappear, you receive him as your Master.

Right? That's it. You have nothing to learn and much to lose.

Because you know too much and you have very little.

The other day I saw two people fighting on the street ... very

beautiful people, a man and a woman. I went up to them and said hello. I interrupted them and asked: "Why are you fighting? You're fighting an obstacle, and you don't know that the more you hit an obstacle, and you don't know that the more you hit an obstacle, the more you make it grow. When you go to visit someone, be careful not to knock on the door, because it will grow. You have to open it." In horse shows, the horse that wins is not the one that knocks down the obstacles, but the one that jumps over them. At the first moment of human vision, there's an obstacle. And the obstacle is not oneself. It's the self behind the obstacle. And the obstacle is not oneself. It's the self behind the obstacle. So if I knock down the first obstacle, the barrier grows. I have to jump it ... and find the Master it holds inside. A dog can be my Master.

I remember Barcelona ... fifteen years ago. The ship docked for a couple of hours. I was on my way to Paris with no money. So I got off in Barcelona and didn't know what to do. And I said, "What shall I do?" And suddenly I saw a stray dog, and I said, "I'll follow it ... for three hours ... wherever it goes." And the dog was my Master. I started to follow it. It took me through the marketplace, through the red-light district ... until we came to Gaudi's cathedral. And that's how I knew Gaudi's cathedral.
An architect dog ...

Something else. Illumination. Speaking of following ... I knew an abbot from a Benedictine monastery. He was a Jew. I asked him how he converted. And he said he had started visiting cathedrals in Italy ... and suddenly found himself going from church to church. It was the architecture. It was doing something to him. Finally he came to a church where a Benedictine monk was waiting for him ... and he converted.

RODAY

Why should anyone go out into the desert ... as you do in the movie.

JODOROWSKY

I think the desert is the most fertile place on earth. It's just that the trees have only been seeded.

RODAY

That's not what I'm talking about.
Why should you go out to kill?

JODOROWSKY

I don't go out to kill. The Masters need to be killed; they asked to be killed. A true Master always asks for death. Because if no one kills him, he'd live forever. And he needs to leave this world. And for a Master to step down from his place, he needs someone to push him, so that someone can take his place,

And that's the symbol of the pyramid: one climbing up to another.
Masters can't progress unless they raise someone up to the place
they occupy. They get there by climbing stairs. That's why I say it's
a pyramid. A pyramid is a stone supported by many other stones.
We spoke about this before.

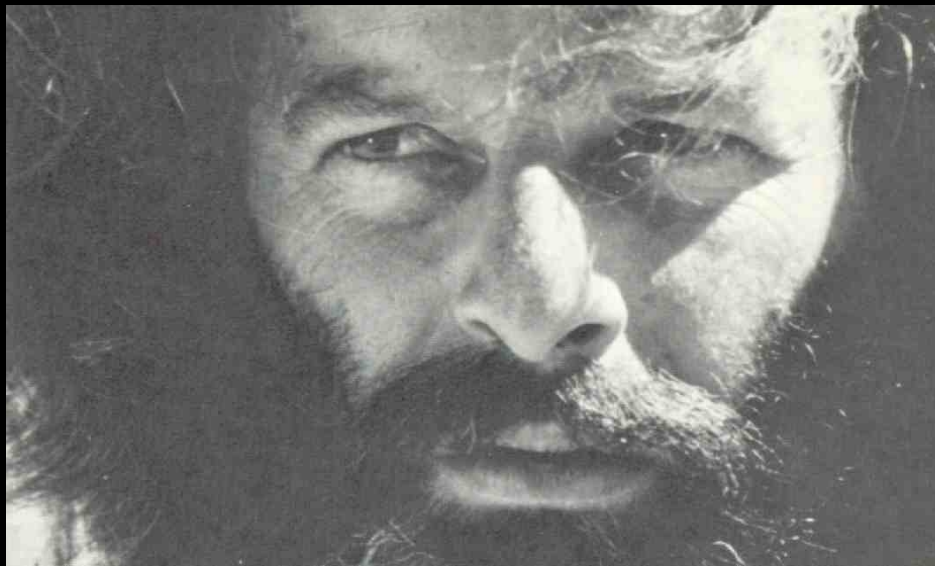
I don't understand English very well, but I heard someone say "wash".
It's very beautiful to talk about washing. For example, why are corpses
washed in the Jewish religion? It's very beautiful to investigate that question.
I've just discovered the answer. Corpses aren't really washed; they're immersed
in water ... like a foetus is born in water. Which means that death is a birth. That's
it.

SUSAN

Like the mummy. The binding of the mummy
is the same thing as the water of the Jews.

JODOROWSKY

That's why the bindings resemble the waves of the sea.
One day we'll lay ten thousand mummies on the floor,
and we'll sail over the bindings. OK.
Now I'm thinking about the film.



RODAY

In the film, your son buries the doll
and picture when he's seven years old.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Seven. Branches of a tree. The Jewish menorah with its
nine branches is a symbol of the different stages of man's life.

We're born with a little trunk, and then we sprout a branch which dies after seven years. Then another one is born. But society accustoms us to believe that we must break off the old branch when the new one is born. So we keep breaking off our branches ... we break off childhood and become boys. We break the branch of youth and become men. We break the branch of manhood and become old men. So the menorah ends up with one single branch. All the others have been broken.

I think that a real man should never break off his branches. He should keep them all and be a child, a young boy, a man, an old man, etc ... all at once. When he reaches old age, he should still retain all his other stages. That's the moment when a man becomes ageless and can live for a hundred and fifty years. Bennet once interviewed a Yogi ... I don't remember his name ... but I saw a photograph of him when he was 129 years old. And he looked thirty-five. When I saw the photo, I was deeply moved ... I cried ... because everything was in the photograph. His body was a living proof of what he was. But on the other hand, I've known Masters who look like hippopotamuses.

RODAY

The two women who ride away ...
and they're no longer in the picture.

JODOROWSKY

No. There's no need for them to be. I thought in theatrical terms: when an actor exits from the stage, he disappears from the audience's view. We can have characters in a film who suddenly disappear. Like friends in your life. Right? Who are with you for a moment and then disappear. And you don't ask yourself anything. You think they're still alive; you think they still exist, that they're the same. But they're not the same. You can't repeat the contact.

In Martin Buber's *Hasidic Tales*, there's a story that says: when two people meet, that union creates an angel. And that angel lasts for a certain length of time and then it disappears ... I think that everyone, every meeting produces an angel. This meeting, for example, has produced an angel. And when someone new comes into this room, the angel will change. There'll be an uncomfortable moment, then the angel is produced and lies on.

When you've found someone and have had an intense relationship and when you leave, the angel you created -- which is the child of your relationship -- dies. And if you see the person again with the hope of finding that angel, you make a mistake and you kill the relationship. You're looking for the past. You have to meet each other like two newborn babes and create a new angel.

And work just as hard as you did before.
As Heraclitus says, "you can't bathe twice in the same river."
Your phallus can't enter the same vagina twice. Right?
In the first place, because your phallus has changed.

RODAY
Fantastic.

JODOROWSKY

But everyone ... almost everyone ... has, at one time or another, has used a rubber and kept it ... and wanted the rubber to last a lifetime as if it were the phallus. If you want your phallus always to be the same, you must remove the rubber and let your phallus die so that another one can be born. Every woman should have a harem. And every man should have a harem ... according to his needs. Like a famous Italian *condottiere* who had three testicles and needed many women. His soldiers made a mistake by wanting as many women as their chief. They only had two testicles. You must never want to be or have what someone else has. You must try to have what you can have and what you want. Right? If you need one woman, you need one woman.

SUSAN
Hitler had only one testicle.

JODOROWSKY

Ah! Speaking of Hitler ... and Mussolini. The most beautiful speeches I know are Mussolini's. I'm against fascism, but I can recognize beauty. That doesn't imply that I'm political. Right? In a corpse you can find a beautiful color of rot. So ... all the university students were waiting for Mussolini to arrive. But Mussolini took a route that led to a boxing ring. He made the students wait for half an hour. His car finally arrived at a hundred and fifty kilometers an hour and came to a sudden halt. Mussolini got out of the car with a shotgun in one hand and a book in the other. He said: "*Fusil e libretto ... fascista perfetto.*" A gun and a book make a perfect fascist. He got back in his car and took off at a hundred and fifty kilometers an hour. It's a masterpiece among speeches. And I think one of Hitler's lines is fantastic. He says, "I'm at a boxing match. There's a very strong contender and a very weak one. The strong one hits the weak one. Now, I'm the weakest boxer there is. When the strong one is about to hit me, I pull out a gun and kill him. Moral: Never fight your equal."

RODAY
What do you think about political constitutions?

JODOROWSKY

How can a society in constant motion be ruled by an immobile book?
There should be a group of people who work all year long
writing the new constitution. So that each year you receive
your telephone directory, you'd get that year's edition
of the constitution as well. That's what I propose.

RODAY

Do you think we're living in a time when the films
that are made now are dictated by the bourgeois aesthetics.

JODOROWSKY

For the moment, yes. Because to produce your art, you need a buyer.
Fortunately, the bourgeoisie is dying. The number of young people is
increasing. So the only way to keep art from being bourgeois is to
make art for the young ... and open a market which will support you
and in which you can survive. The minimum you can invest in a film is
\$300,000, which is very little. I have to find that money somewhere. Right?
Usually you get it from idiotic distribution companies which practice the politics
of the system. If you want overnight success, with no risks involved, you end
up playing the political game of the country that's producing your film.
But you really shouldn't bother yourself with those things; you have to
do what you want to do. And if you have to do it with bourgeois capital,
you should do it with bourgeois capital. Right?

RODAY

Are there certain subjects that you could deal with which
are exclusive of the taintings of bourgeois aesthetics?
Like historical subjects?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. History, sex, love ... success.
The artist who comes to the city and triumphs.
Triumph, history, sex, love ... crime.

RODAY

Like the pirates.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. I don't really know what a bourgeois society is.
When I made *El Topo*, I never thought about it. I realized
how a bourgeois society thinks only when I saw the sections
they cut from *El Topo* ... the half hour they cut in Mexico.
I started to examine the cuts and then I began to understand
the bourgeois myths. Right? The thing that terrorizes

the bourgeoisie is scandal. Because scandal can be the ruin of a politician. And that's all there is to it. You can make a film with the strongest anti-bourgeois themes. But as long as they don't create a scandal, nothing happens. The bourgeoisie doesn't say anything. There's no reaction because no one has been damaged. This is what I feel.



SUSAN

Like pornography.

JODOROWSKY

Yes. Pornography is harmless. Society accepts pornography just as it will eventually accept crime and vice. But my search isn't political ... like Godard's, for example. I think it's a problem of sensitivity. I don't divide the world into problems ... or into bourgeois people and non-bourgeois people. I think that the great majority of people are a formless mass who are not ruled by politics anymore, but by economics. I no longer see political problems; I see economic problems ... which produce human problems. And it's the human problems that interest me. Because human problems create personal problems for me. So I only deal with personal problems. I don't talk about my father or my mother or my phallus, but about the pain that the problems of humanity produce in me. That is my personal problem. Right? And that's my position. I'm not very strong on politics. But I'd like to read Bakunin. I like him very much. I like Kropotkin and Rosa Luxemburg very much. I like them. That's my position. I also like Le Saude de Bonot, the French anarchists who used to hold up banks and kill people in cars.

**I like them. I like anarchism in general. Very much.
I think that anarchism is a mystical movement.**

RODAY
Anarchism?

JODOROWSKY

**Yes. It's a mystical movement ... humane mysticism.
They love humanity. Anarchists love humanity ...
they love the individual. Anarchism believes in man,
in the individual, and in human love. I think that the
anarchists' speeches are very much like those of the saints.
There's not different between a saint and an anarchist. None.
So if you ask me to talk about politics, the only thing I'd be able to
talk about would be the saints of all religions. If I were a politician,
I'd want to create the concept of a lay saint, a secular saint ...
a saint with no God. Dostoevski said, "If God doesn't exist,
every human value is permitted." But I say, "If God doesn't exist,
every human value is permitted." Saints are people who give
up possessions, adornments, petty egos, selfishness ...
and they make love very well, they have tremendous orgasms ...
with God. But a lay saint would have to have them with his woman ...
or his man. But he'd have an orgasm. He'd know what he was eating,
he'd know what he was doing. And everything he'd do would be geared
toward respecting the freedom of his fellow man and toward working
for the triumph of humanity. My politics would be a politics of saints.
And the main thing a university should teach its students is how
to become a lay saint, a saint with no God. When one of the saints --
I think it was Saint Bernard ... it doesn't matter -- started to read
without reciting the words aloud, he caused a great stir among the
people. Because he invented silent reading. When literature was born,
the written word and the spoken word were inseparable. The same thing
happens now with a concept of sainthood. The concept of sainthood was
born inseparable from God. We must take the step of separating it
from God and discover sainthood apart from God. Without the concept
of God ... the limited concept of God.**

RODAY
Saint Augustine.

JODOROWSKY

**Yes, was it Saint Augustine? I don't remember.
Somebody invented it. Maybe it was Saint Augustine.
Why doesn't a politician form a party which would teach people
not only about their economic rights, but also about their human**

rights? Human rights include learning to eat ... and exercises to understand the universe through your body. Etcetera.

RODAY

There've been several recurring images in this interview and also in the film: sainthood, conquest, orgasm ... Are these all related in a way? Alexander and Saint John, El Topo and the bridge scene. Did you find this true? That there's a kind of mystical element throughout the film?

JODOROWSKY

Yes. When I started to talk about sainthood, I was more or less expressing my thoughts on that. And *El Topo* is a quest for sainthood. And my next two pictures are also quests for sainthood. The pirate film is based on the journey of St. Brendan ... a voyage from island to island. I decided to be inspired by the lives of the saints, by their actions ... but without their concept of God. Anyway, there is no clear concept of God. We can't see him or talk to him. Maimonides wrote four long volumes trying to define God, only to reach this definition: "God is that about which nothing can be said." If we can't say anything about him, better to kill him and forget about him. Right? That's what I think ... The lemma of every modern Christian should be: I am Christ. The forerunner of all this was Louis XV. I think he was the one who said, "I am the State." But the state was humanity. "I am humanity, I am mankind, I am God." I am king, I am my own Master. Right? But you are your own Master. We exist together ... but each is his own Master. My sainthood isn't your sainthood. I don't get anything out of your reaching sainthood if I haven't reached it. It's a personal thing. The problems of humanity are personal problems. And they're not selfish ... or paranoid. All humanity takes place in my body. Right? All the politics of the world are in my body. All the suffering of the world and all the happiness of the world take place in my body. The day -- like today, sunny in midwinter -- takes place in my body.

OK?