

FACE TO FACE

William Burroughs Observes Its Rites...

by William Burroughs

Last January, one of the most remote and zealously guarded of the doors of perception, the one beyond which the dance music of the village of Joujouka, Morocco, has always pulsed, opened a crack. The occasion was the Moslem Great Feast, celebrated throughout the land in conjunction with the ancient rites of Bou Jeloud, homologue of the Greek god Pan. Bou Jeloud is legendary throughout Africa, his fame surviving even the infamous Middle Passage of slaves from West Africa to North America and finding its way into American language, music, and dance as boogie, boogie woogie, and the boogaloo.

During the Sixties, outsiders' interest in the village culminated in the 1967 visit of the late Rolling Stone Brian Jones to record the musicians of Joujouka.

This year, OUI asked William Burroughs to write about what happened there and Craig Karpel to describe Burroughs's attendance at one of the earth's few immovable feasts. Let the dance begin.

"Very good. Very good everything. Out of sight." Berdouz the drummer kept saying this throughout the festival.

Nothing is true everything is possible in Joujouka Citadel of Illusion still out of sight with no electric lights to scare away the spirits. When areas of illusion become too accessible illusion fades into TV screens hotels and curio shops, a Kon Tiki Room of the Easter Island Hilton a Bounty Room of the Pitcairn Hilton. At present Joujouka is a self-sufficient village of about 300 inhabitants that can only be reached on a road reminiscent of Missouri country roads in the 1920s. A bus that arrived on the village green of Joujouka after somehow negotiating the road quietly sank to the axles in mud. There is now talk of a paved road a parking lot electricity and TV. A Joujouka Hilton could be on the way and perhaps only Joujouka could absorb and transform the Joujouka Hilton into a cloud-capped tower of illusion.

I once wrote an article on The Discipline of DE. Do Easy. Simply doing everything with the least effort. The foremost practitioners of DE are to be found in Joujouka a place of casual miracles . . . food for 50 people produced on a charcoal fire in a tent no bigger than a bed-sitter (Continued on page 92)



BURROUGHS AND THE GOAT GOD *The author, dressed in a djellaba, is present at the marriage of 4000-year-old music and 300 pounds of recording equipment. Ornette Coleman plays a set.*

(Continued from page 68) kitchen . . . dancing between tables where there is scarcely room to pass . . . magic carpets whisked out from under tables . . . magic moments when you are suddenly in another time and place . . . miracles of sustained breath on the flute . . . miracles of hospitality . . . "Pinchitos chicken fish sheep all what you like" . . . full moon from behind a cloud just in time for the Song of Crazy Aisha . . . Hamri the perfect host.

I was traveling with my spirit assistant John Brady from Cavan County Ireland. We had made reservations for January 17 a Tuesday to Orly Airport in Paris with a connection for Tangier. In Orly we met Brion Gysin who has known the Joujouka musicians for 20 years, who turned Brian Jones on to Joujouka and conducted lengthy negotiations with the Kinney Record Co. to get the record out and get some money for the musicians. He had worked for years to bring about the precise conjunctures of this festival.

There was a search by security men before boarding the plane for Tangier as usual leaving a loophole for potential skyjackers. Hand luggage was gone over with a metal detector and passengers were searched but no metal detector was used on the cartons of whisky and cigarettes almost every passenger was carrying in plastic bags. How many hand grenades and snub-nosed revolvers could be concealed in a false carton of Teachers Whisky or Players Cigarettes? Then a technical fault in the plane. Everybody back to the bar for a free drink then back on the plane without another search? Oh well it's not my department. Next stop the Hotel Muniria in Tangier where I have spent many years, wrote most of *Naked Lunch* and experienced several changes of management. The present proprietor is John Sutcliff retired from the British Civil Service. The hotel offers reasonable rates and a superb view over the harbor. Here we were met by Targuisti and Salah who have worked for Brion Gysin many years. Targuisti, an ex-legionnaire, is a master cook and organizer, a figure of solid authority who can even tell little Arab boys to stop staring and be on their way and make it happen. Next stop the Parade Bar founded by the late Jay Hazelwood who dropped dead there on Christmas day 1965 while I was writing a Christmas story called *The Priest*. The bar is now run by Lilly an ex-circus performer and Jerry a black-belt karate man. Here the foreign colony and many Moroccans as well gather nightly and a telegram or letter sent to the Parade will reach anyone in Tangier within 24 hours.

In the Parade we met Sanche and

Nancy De Gramont who were planning to drive down to Joujouka next day in their desert Volkswagen. Rain had been heavy in the area of Joujouka and it seemed doubtful that an ordinary car could get through. Targuisti arranged for a car to take us as far as the last town on the paved road. So we set out the following morning with blankets, djellabas, loaf sugar and cigarettes for the musicians, bottles of whisky and a supply of codeine pills to keep out the cold. Cold it was and raining by the time we reached the place. Joujouka is about an hour away on a mud road. Like all end-of-the-road towns, this one is a place where you do a lot of waiting. We met Sanche and Nancy De Gramont again and Bob Palmer on his way back to Tangier. Bob told us that Ornette Coleman's recording equipment had been impounded at customs in Tangier. In fact his party had some difficulty entering Morocco which was straightened out finally by Hamri who knows all the officials at customs and immigration. They had employed a broker to expedite clearance of the equipment and it was Bob's assignment to expedite the broker and transport recording equipment weighing 300 pounds from Tangier to Joujouka. Because of a nationwide festival there was no food to be had other than eggs swimming in greasy macaroni and there was a long wait in this town while Targuisti located a cab driver known as El Rubio who was willing to chance the Joujouka road and John Brady bought a pair of rubber boots, the proper wear for Joujouka when it is wet and muddy as we were sure to find it. And here I put on a djellaba that Brion had brought despite curious stares from passers-by. The djellaba is a garment like a walking tent. When we finally set out for Joujouka it was pouring rain and about as cold as it could get without snowing. We stopped off to pay our respects to the Caid in his fort six miles from Joujouka and were ushered in after the customary wait. We shook hands and the Caid took our names and passport numbers to write down in his book and told us his village was honored by our visit a scene reminiscent of my travels in South America like the rain and the roads and the clouds drifting across low hills and vivid patches of green like a Hamri painting. There were some tense moments wheels spinning in deep ruts and the last steep slippery slope up to the village past Hamri's stalled car which was still there when we left.

"Everybody out and push."

Made it. Hamri greets us. Hamri who cooked at Brion Gysin's 1001 Restaurant in Tangier, Hamri head of the musicians union and organizer of the festival who is also an accomplished painter. Hamri

the perfect host. He ushered us into a house known as the school which had been built along with several guest houses since my last visit in 1964. The school is 12 by 30 feet the walls decorated with Hamri's paintings, seats along the sides. It can easily accommodate 50 people and about 30 were there now. Within minutes a hot tagine was on the table.

As dusk was falling Targuisti showed us to the quarters assigned to us in the house of Si Mohamed one of the Master Musicians.

Bou Jeloud in his black goatskins is dancing in a little square lit by a bonfire snatching up switches to whip the women who run screaming before him. If he touches a woman with his switch she will become pregnant before the year is out. Bou Jeloud plays many roles and takes many shapes. At times he seems to grow to the size of a giant then fade into the hills and the sky. He snatches up fire brands dancing sparks in the air. He throws himself into the fire and rolls around in hot coals emerging without a scorch on his goatskins and with hot coals that do not burn stuck to his bare feet, for he is Master of Skins and Master of Fire when the signs are right.

Rain began to fall and we went back to the school for dinner. Here I met Ornette Coleman who makes an impression of quiet strength and competence. After dinner I heard him play with the Master Musicians of Joujouka. This was indeed a meeting of professionals. The Master Musicians are a special caste exempt from farm work. The sons and grandsons of Master Musicians they have done nothing else since birth and perhaps before. While they differ widely in age and appearance they all have the mark of the professional, of someone who does what he does superlatively well. Musicians are magicians in Morocco and they all bear the mark of the conjurer the magic man. They are evokers of the *djenoun* forces, spirits of the hills and the flocks and above all the spirits of music. They share the family name Attar which means "the perfume maker." I quote from Brion Gysin: "At certain moments of mystical experience induced by music, instead of hearing you smell this divine perfume." I was to smell this perfume of music twice during my stay in Joujouka.

These are the musicians. . . .

The Mokadem or Leader of the Master Musicians is Maalem Abdeslam Attar known since his youth as Djenouin from the word *djenoun* for all little spirits and some big ones too. An old man with a fine thin face, he is somewhat austere and remote. He has mastered the secret of breath. Perhaps he can breathe music instead of air.

Berdouz the drummer and jester trail-

BURROUGHS AND THE GOAT GOD *Bou Jeloud is brilliant as God of Panic and Master of Fear. But there are dire indications of a breakdown in the ancient balance between male and female forces.*

ing the smoke of drafty castles and the perfumes of Eastern Courts.

Maalem Fuddal Attar, round-faced, jolly. He has his own special perfume.

Si Mohamed Attar our host. A spectral spirit of music.

Tahir the youngest who sings and plays the violin.

Ornette Coleman began slowly at first feeling his way. He is clearly an expert in this musical splicing—"musical surgery" he calls it—and the music that emerged as the session developed was a palpable force felt by everyone present. Magnetic spirals spun through the room like clusters of electronic bees that meet and explode in air releasing the divine perfume, a musty purple smell of ozone and spice and raw goatskins, a perfume you can hear smell and see. The session went on for three hours of rapt attention and short intermissions punctuated by the litany of the drummer.

"Very good. Very good, everything. Out of sight."

It was two o'clock when we returned to our quarters. The dogs yapped dutifully at our approach which they detect at a distance of 50 yards. I found the straw mattress hard but comfortable enough, ensconced behind the alarm dogs and the cactus fence precautions which seem scarcely necessary once provided. DE. Do Easy. A theft prevented is worth a prison full of convicted thieves. Police make themselves necessary once provided. There is no resident policeman in Joujouka which distinguishes it from any small town in the United States where if there are only two people left one will have a piece of tin on his shirt and a gun strapped to his fibrous arthritic hip. Joujouka is a very special place.

Breakfast was bread fried in the pan and mint tea. This bread is very much like Mexican tortillas except that it is made with wheat flour and not with corn. During breakfast the dogs went into their act which heralds the arrival of a visitor. Unlike South American dogs which are actually vicious and must be kicked and beaten into snarling corners before the visitor can approach, these dogs are quite gentle. They simply announce someone's approach. Having done so and the visitor having been admitted they retreat to a corner and lie down. The visitor was Helena, middle-European middle-aged whose prototype I remember from Puyo in Ecuador where she ran a Viennese restaurant with marvelous chocolate cake. So many people and situations I had seen before somewhere turned up at the Joujouka festival.

The village is on a hill over a valley through which runs a little stream. Beyond the stream hills to the north and

east rise about a thousand feet. John Brady looked around and said it reminded him of an Irish village . . . the exchange of commodities, the water system, and you know how country people stare at strangers so 20 staring children did not disturb him. "Little Leprechauns" he called them.

We walked up to the Cave of Bou Jeloud on the opposite slope from which the Goat God originally emerged according to legend . . . gentle slopes, a narrow stream, foot trails, scrub and olive trees, fields and flocks. The cave itself is like a fair-sized room in the side of a rock. Here young musicians come to practice. From the mouth of the cave you can look down the valley to the sea.

John climbed on up to the mountain-top moving with the agility and sure footedness of the black-skinned yellow-eyed goats that browse and frisk on the slopes tended by shepherd boys in tattered djellabas. No dogs are used with the flocks. Dogs here have one function.

When I got back to the school I found that a tent had been set up outside with seats and tables. A Moroccan-style dwelling can be set up under any shelter in a matter of minutes since it consists of seats and rugs and collapsible-table supports for the silver trays on which mint tea is served at all times and food when wanted. John got back from his climb two hours late for lunch but a plate of hot food was immediately ready for late guests. Several people who had read my article on DE remarked that this was really DE in action. There is Hamri whisking rugs out from under tables, assigning places, looking after 50 people at once.

Thursday, night of the full moon, is traditionally the culmination of the festival and the last night that Bou Jeloud dances in his goatskins. By evening the clouds had cleared and the full moon rose over the mountain a signal for the Song of Crazy Aisha which alternates with the music of Bou Jeloud to mark an ancient balance of power between male and female forces. There are indications that this balance is breaking down. Crazy Aisha owns the village and lures Bou Jeloud down from the hills to impregnate the village women. Suppose Bou Jeloud should try to take the village or Aisha to imprison him in the village? The question once asked will sooner or later be answered.

That night Bou Jeloud in his goatskins danced by a bonfire in front of the tent and six *espontáneos* leaped into the circle. The scene was good-natured foolery, Bou Jeloud in his role as buffoon and jester. Though John waited with camera poised hoping that Bou Jeloud would jump into the fire again he did not do so.

The signs were not right.

Friday January 19 was the birthday of both Brion Gysin and John Brady in the right place. The village elder who is 110 years old put in an appearance. Ornette Coleman's equipment arrived from Tangier . . . Nagras, mixers, 16 mikes, a sound engineer. A whole recording studio was set up in the school.

Saturday was our last night in Joujouka. Around 8 P.M. Targuisti, J.B., and your reporter were having a few whiskeys in the house when we heard Bou Jeloud music from the village. We set out with the kerosene lantern carrying my Sony recorder with built-in mike and recording as we walked down steep muddy paths to the little square where Bou Jeloud danced the first night. All the villagers were now packed around the square. Traditionally the women and small children are on one side the older boys and men on the other, the musicians in between leaving a circular dancing space. Tradition is breaking down and a scattering of women were now sitting on the men's side of the circle. Indeed as I was about to sit down on a vacant rock by Brion he said, "That seat belongs to the lady."

Targuisti found a mat and some cushions and we were all seated beside the musicians. This was a highly charged scene—a counterpoint to the foolery and horseplay of full-moon night. This was Bou Jeloud in his role as the Goat God, God of Panic, Master of Fear. There were three dancers in the circle two with bare feet, one with his face covered by a cloth the other two bare-faced. One boy in a green shirt slacks and moccasins was riding the current like a surfboard. He stands a few feet in front of the musicians his body vibrating as if in contact with a high-tension wire . . . a whiff of ozone and sea air and horses. He spins away thrown by the music around the circle whipping at the women possessed by but possessing and controlling the force of the music. I saw him aim a kick at the face of a young child on the women's side who had stepped out of line and stop his foot an inch from the child's face.

The moon racing through clouds, young pilot faces of the dancers, panel of musicians at the control board, the village the hills and the sky seem to dance away into space like a scene from *Star Trek*. The boy in the green shirt puts on a cloth mask for the first time and dances in front of our party for a few seconds. Pan the Goat God Master of Skins Master of Fear ageless enigmatic impersonal looks out through his eyes. He can look out through many eyes. ■