

REL 3145 Readings on Possession, Spring 2009

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Extracts from *The memoirs of Jacques Casanova de Seingalt*

The rare unabridged London edition of 1894 translated by Arthur Machen to which has been added the chapters discovered by Arthur Symons.

<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/c/casanova/>

Chapter 2: The young Casanova takes up residence in the house of Dr. Gozzi

The family of Doctor Gozzi was composed of his mother, who had great reverence for him, because, a peasant by birth, she did not think herself worthy of having a son who was a priest, and still more a doctor in divinity; she was plain, old, and cross; and of his father, a shoemaker by trade, working all day long and never addressing a word to anyone, not even during the meals. He only became a sociable being on holidays, on which occasions he would spend his time with his friends in some tavern, coming home at midnight as drunk as a lord and singing verses from Tasso. When in this blissful state the good man could not make up his mind to go to bed, and became violent if anyone attempted to compel him to lie down. Wine alone gave him sense and spirit, for when sober he was incapable of attending to the simplest family matter, and his wife often said that he never would have married her had not his friends taken care to give him a good breakfast before he went to the church.

But Doctor Gozzi had also a sister, called Bettina, who at the age of thirteen was pretty, lively, and a great reader of romances. Her father and mother scolded her constantly because she was too often looking out of the window, and the doctor did the same on account of her love for reading. This girl took at once my fancy without my knowing why, and little by little she kindled in my heart the first spark of a passion which, afterwards became in me the ruling one.

Six months after I had been an inmate in the house, the doctor found himself without scholars; they all went away because I had become the sole object of his affection. He then determined to establish a college, and to receive young boys as boarders; but two years passed before he met with any success. During that period he taught me everything he knew; true, it was not much; yet it was enough to open to me the high road to all sciences. He likewise taught me the violin, an accomplishment which proved very useful to me in a peculiar circumstance, the particulars of which I will give in good time. The excellent doctor, who was in no way a philosopher, made me study the logic of the Peripatetics, and the cosmography of the ancient system of Ptolemy, at which I would laugh, teasing the poor doctor with theorems to which he could find no answer. His habits, moreover, were irreproachable, and in all things connected with religion, although no bigot, he was of the greatest strictness, and, admitting everything as an article of faith, nothing appeared difficult to his conception. He believed the deluge to have been universal, and he thought that, before that great cataclysm, men lived a thousand years and conversed with God, that Noah took one hundred years to build the ark, and that the earth, suspended in the air, is firmly held in the very centre of the universe which God had created from nothing. When I would say and prove that it was absurd to believe in the existence of nothingness, he would stop me short and call me a fool.

...In the early part of autumn, the doctor received three new boarders; and one of them, who was fifteen years old, appeared to me in less than a month on very friendly terms with Bettina. This circumstance caused me a feeling of which until then I had no idea, and which I only analyzed a few years afterwards. It was neither jealousy nor indignation, but a noble contempt which I thought ought not to be repressed, because Cordiani, an ignorant, coarse boy, without talent or polite education, the son of a simple farmer, and incapable of competing with me in anything, having over me but the advantage of dawning manhood, did not appear to me a fit

person to be preferred to me; my young self-esteem whispered that I was above him. I began to nurse a feeling of pride mixed with contempt which told against Bettina, whom I loved unknown to myself. She soon guessed it from the way I would receive her caresses, when she came to comb my hair while I was in bed; I would repulse her hands, and no longer return her kisses. One day, vexed at my answering her question as to the reason of my change towards her by stating that I had no cause for it, she, told me in a tone of commiseration that I was jealous of Cordiani. This reproach sounded to me like a debasing slander. I answered that Cordiani was, in my estimation, as worthy of her as she was worthy of him. She went away smiling, but, revolving in her mind the only way by which she could be revenged, she thought herself bound to render me jealous. However, as she could not attain such an end without making me fall in love with her, this is the policy she adopted....

...I was in that state of mind when suddenly I heard outside of my door the gruff voice of Bettina's mother, who begged me to come down, adding that her daughter was dying. As I would have been very sorry if she had departed this life before she could feel the effects of my revenge, I got up hurriedly and went downstairs. I found Bettina lying in her father's bed writhing with fearful convulsions, and surrounded by the whole family. Half dressed, nearly bent in two, she was throwing her body now to the right, now to the left, striking at random with her feet and with her fists, and extricating herself by violent shaking from the hands of those who endeavoured to keep her down.

With this sight before me, and the night's adventure still in my mind, I hardly knew what to think. I had no knowledge of human nature, no knowledge of artifice and tricks, and I could not understand how I found myself coolly witnessing such a scene, and composedly calm in the presence of two beings, one of whom I intended to kill and the other to dishonour. At the end of an hour Bettina fell asleep.

A nurse and Doctor Olivo came soon after. The first said that the convulsions were caused by hysterics, but the doctor said no, and prescribed rest and cold baths. I said nothing, but I could not refrain from laughing at them, for I knew, or rather guessed, that Bettina's sickness was the result of her nocturnal employment, or of the fright which she must have felt at my meeting with Cordiani. At all events, I determined to postpone my revenge until the return of her brother, although I had not the slightest suspicion that her illness was all sham, for I did not give her credit for so much cleverness.

To return to my room I had to pass through Bettina's closet, and seeing her dress handy on the bed I took it into my head to search her pockets. I found a small note, and recognizing Cordiani's handwriting, I took possession of it to read it in my room. I marvelled at the girl's imprudence, for her mother might have discovered it, and being unable to read would very likely have given it to the doctor, her son. I thought she must have taken leave of her senses, but my feelings may be appreciated when I read the following words: "As your father is away it is not necessary to leave your door ajar as usual. When we leave the supper-table I will go to your closet; you will find me there."

When I recovered from my stupor I gave way to an irresistible fit of laughter, and seeing how completely I had been duped I thought I was cured of my love. Cordiani appeared to me deserving of forgiveness, and Bettina of contempt. I congratulated myself upon having received a lesson of such importance for the remainder of my life. I even went so far as to acknowledge to myself that Bettina had been quite right in giving the preference to Cordiani, who was fifteen years old, while I was only a child. Yet, in spite of my good disposition to forgiveness, the kick administered by Cordiani was still heavy upon my memory, and I could not help keeping a grudge against him.

At noon, as we were at dinner in the kitchen, where we took our meals on account of the cold weather, Bettina began again to raise piercing screams. Everybody rushed to her room, but I quietly kept my seat and finished my dinner, after which I went to my studies. In the evening when I came down to supper I found that Bettina's bed had been brought to the kitchen close by

her mother's; but it was no concern of mine, and I remained likewise perfectly indifferent to the noise made during the night, and to the confusion which took place in the morning, when she had a fresh fit of convulsions.

Doctor Gozzi and his father returned in the evening. Cordiani, who felt uneasy, came to inquire from me what my intentions were, but I rushed towards him with an open penknife in my hand, and he beat a hasty retreat. I had entirely abandoned the idea of relating the night's scandalous adventure to the doctor, for such a project I could only entertain in a moment of excitement and rage. The next day the mother came in while we were at our lesson, and told the doctor, after a lengthened preamble, that she had discovered the character of her daughter's illness; that it was caused by a spell thrown over her by a witch, and that she knew the witch well.

"It may be, my dear mother, but we must be careful not to make a mistake. Who is the witch?"

"Our old servant, and I have just had a proof of it."

"How so?"

"I have barred the door of my room with two broomsticks placed in the shape of a cross, which she must have undone to go in; but when she saw them she drew back, and she went round by the other door. It is evident that, were she not a witch, she would not be afraid of touching them."

"It is not complete evidence, dear mother; send the woman to me."

The servant made her appearance.

"Why," said the doctor, "did you not enter my mother's room this morning through the usual door?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"Did you not see the St. Andrew's cross on the door?"

"What cross is that?"

"It is useless to plead ignorance," said the mother; "where did you sleep last Thursday night?"

"At my niece's, who had just been confined."

"Nothing of the sort. You were at the witches' Sabbath; you are a witch, and have bewitched my daughter."

The poor woman, indignant at such an accusation, spits at her mistress's face; the mistress, enraged, gets hold of a stick to give the servant a drubbing; the doctor endeavours to keep his mother back, but he is compelled to let her loose and to run after the servant, who was hurrying down the stairs, screaming and howling in order to rouse the neighbours; he catches her, and finally succeeds in pacifying her with some money.

After this comical but rather scandalous exhibition, the doctor donned his vestments for the purpose of exorcising his sister and of ascertaining whether she was truly possessed of an unclean spirit. The novelty of this mystery attracted the whole of my attention. All the inmates of the house appeared to me either mad or stupid, for I could not, for the life of me, imagine that diabolical spirits were dwelling in Bettina's body. When we drew near her bed, her breathing had, to all appearance, stopped, and the exorcisms of her brother did not restore it. Doctor Olivo happened to come in at that moment, and inquired whether he would be in the way; he was answered in the negative, provided he had faith.

Upon which he left, saying that he had no faith in any miracles except in those of the Gospel. Soon after Doctor Gozzi went to his room, and finding myself alone with Bettina I bent down over her bed and whispered in her ear.

"Take courage, get well again, and rely upon my discretion."

She turned her head towards the wall and did not answer me, but the day passed off without any more convulsions. I thought I had cured her, but on the following day the frenzy went up to the brain, and in her delirium she pronounced at random Greek and Latin words without any meaning, and then no doubt whatever was entertained of her being possessed of the evil spirit. Her mother went out and returned soon, accompanied by the most renowned exorcist of Padua, a very ill-featured Capuchin, called Friar Prospero da Bovolenta.

The moment Bettina saw the exorcist, she burst into loud laughter, and addressed to him the most offensive insults, which fairly delighted everybody, as the devil alone could be bold enough to address a Capuchin in such a manner; but the holy man, hearing himself called an obtrusive ignoramus and a stinkard, went on striking Bettina with a heavy crucifix, saying that he was beating the devil. He stopped only when he saw her on the point of hurling at him the chamber utensil which she had just seized. "If it is the devil who has offended thee with his words," she said, "resent the insult with words likewise, jackass that thou art, but if I have offended thee myself, learn, stupid booby, that thou must respect me, and be off at once."

I could see poor Doctor Gozzi blushing; the friar, however, held his ground, and, armed at all points, began to read a terrible exorcism, at the end of which he commanded the devil to state his name.

"My name is Bettina."

"It cannot be, for it is the name of a baptized girl."

"Then thou art of opinion that a devil must rejoice in a masculine name? Learn, ignorant friar, that a devil is a spirit, and does not belong to either sex. But as thou believest that a devil is speaking to thee through my lips, promise to answer me with truth, and I will engage to give way before thy incantations."

"Very well, I agree to this."

"Tell me, then, art thou thinking that thy knowledge is greater than mine?"

"No, but I believe myself more powerful in the name of the holy Trinity, and by my sacred character."

"If thou art more powerful than I, then prevent me from telling thee unpalatable truths. Thou art very vain of thy beard, thou art combing and dressing it ten times a day, and thou would'st not shave half of it to get me out of this body. Cut off thy beard, and I promise to come out."

"Father of lies, I will increase thy punishment a hundred fold."

"I dare thee to do it."

After saying these words, Bettina broke into such a loud peal of laughter, that I could not refrain from joining in it. The Capuchin, turning towards Doctor Gozzi, told him that I was wanting in faith, and that I ought to leave the room; which I did, remarking that he had guessed rightly. I was not yet out of the room when the friar offered his hand to Bettina for her to kiss, and I had the pleasure of seeing her spit upon it.

This strange girl, full of extraordinary talent, made rare sport of the friar, without causing any surprise to anyone, as all her answers were attributed to the devil. I could not conceive what her purpose was in playing such a part.

The Capuchin dined with us, and during the meal he uttered a good deal of nonsense. After dinner, he returned to Bettina's chamber, with the intention of blessing her, but as soon as she caught sight of him, she took up a glass full of some black mixture sent from the apothecary, and threw it at his head. Cordiani, being close by the friar, came in for a good share of the liquid-an accident which afforded me the greatest delight. Bettina was quite right to improve her opportunity, as everything she did was, of course, put to the account of the unfortunate devil. Not overmuch pleased, Friar Prospero, as he left the house, told the doctor that there was no doubt of the girl being possessed, but that another exorcist must be sent for, since he had not, himself, obtained God's grace to eject the evil spirit.

After he had gone, Bettina kept very calm for six hours, and in the evening, to our great surprise, she joined us at the supper table. She told her parents that she felt quite well, spoke to her brother, and then, addressing me, she remarked that, the ball taking place on the morrow, she would come to my room in the morning to dress my hair like a girl's. I thanked her, and said that, as she had been so ill, she ought to nurse herself. She soon retired to bed, and we remained at the table, talking of her.

When I was undressing for the night, I took up my night-cap, and found in it a small note with these words: "You must accompany me to the ball, disguised as a girl, or I will give you a sight which will cause you to weep."

I waited until the doctor was asleep, and I wrote the following answer: "I cannot go to the ball, because I have fully made up my mind to avoid every opportunity of being alone with you. As for the painful sight with which you threaten to entertain me, I believe you capable of keeping your word, but I entreat you to spare my heart, for I love you as if you were my sister. I have forgiven you, dear Bettina, and I wish to forget everything. I enclose a note which you must be delighted to have again in your possession. You see what risk you were running when you left it in your pocket. This restitution must convince you of my friendship."

The girl's spirit and talent had won my esteem; I could no longer despise her; I saw in her only a poor creature seduced by her natural temperament. She loved man, and was to be pitied only on account of the consequences. Believing that the view I took of the situation was a right one, I had resigned myself like a reasonable being, and not like a disappointed lover. The shame was for her and not for me. I had only one wish, namely, to find out whether the two brothers Feltrini, Cordiani's companions, had likewise shared Bettina's favours.

Bettina put on throughout the day a cheerful and happy look. In the evening she dressed herself for the ball; but suddenly an attack of sickness, whether feigned or real I did not know, compelled her to go to bed, and frightened everybody in the house. As for myself, knowing the whole affair, I was prepared for new scenes, and indeed for sad ones, for I felt that I had obtained over her a power repugnant to her vanity and self-love. I must, however, confess that, in spite of the excellent school in which I found myself before I had attained manhood, and which ought to have given me experience as a shield for the future, I have through the whole of my life been the dupe of women. Twelve years ago, if it had not been for my guardian angel, I would have foolishly married a young, thoughtless girl, with whom I had fallen in love: Now that I am seventy-two years old I believe myself no longer susceptible of such follies; but, alas! that is the very thing which causes me to be miserable.

The next day the whole family was deeply grieved because the devil of whom Bettina was possessed had made himself master of her reason. Doctor Gozzi told me that there could not be the shadow of a doubt that his unfortunate sister was possessed, as, if she had only been mad, she never would have so cruelly ill-treated the Capuchin, Prospero, and he determined to place her under the care of Father Mancia.

This Mancia was a celebrated Jacobin (or Dominican) exorcist, who enjoyed the reputation of never having failed to cure a girl possessed of the demon.

Sunday had come; Bettina had made a good dinner, but she had been frantic all through the day. Towards midnight her father came home, singing Tasso as usual, and so drunk that he could not stand. He went up to Bettina's bed, and after kissing her affectionately he said to her: "Thou art not mad, my girl."

Her answer was that he was not drunk.

"Thou art possessed of the devil, my dear child."

"Yes, father, and you alone can cure me."

"Well, I am ready."

Upon this our shoemaker begins a theological discourse, expatiating upon the power of faith and upon the virtue of the paternal blessing. He throws off his cloak, takes a crucifix with one hand, places the other over the head of his daughter, and addresses the devil in such an amusing way that even his wife, always a stupid, dull, cross-grained old woman, had to laugh till the tears came down her cheeks. The two performers in the comedy alone were not laughing, and their serious countenance added to the fun of the performance. I marvelled at Bettina (who was always ready to enjoy a good laugh) having sufficient control over herself to remain calm and grave. Doctor Gozzi had also given way to merriment; but begged that the farce should come to an end, for he deemed that his father's eccentricities were as many profanations against the sacredness of

exorcism. At last the exorcist, doubtless tired out, went to bed saying that he was certain that the devil would not disturb his daughter during the night.

On the morrow, just as we had finished our breakfast, Father Mancia made his appearance. Doctor Gozzi, followed by the whole family, escorted him to his sister's bedside. As for me, I was entirely taken up by the face of the monk. Here is his portrait. His figure was tall and majestic, his age about thirty; he had light hair and blue eyes; his features were those of Apollo, but without his pride and assuming haughtiness; his complexion, dazzling white, was pale, but that paleness seemed to have been given for the very purpose of showing off the red coral of his lips, through which could be seen, when they opened, two rows of pearls. He was neither thin nor stout, and the habitual sadness of his countenance enhanced its sweetness. His gait was slow, his air timid, an indication of the great modesty of his mind.

When we entered the room Bettina was asleep, or pretended to be so. Father Mancia took a sprinkler and threw over her a few drops of holy water; she opened her eyes, looked at the monk, and closed them immediately; a little while after she opened them again, had a better look at him, laid herself on her back, let her arms droop down gently, and with her head prettily bent on one side she fell into the sweetest of slumbers.

The exorcist, standing by the bed, took out his pocket ritual and the stole which he put round his neck, then a reliquary, which he placed on the bosom of the sleeping girl, and with the air of a saint he begged all of us to fall on our knees and to pray, so that God should let him know whether the patient was possessed or only labouring under a natural disease. He kept us kneeling for half an hour, reading all the time in a low tone of voice. Bettina did not stir.

Tired, I suppose, of the performance, he desired to speak privately with Doctor Gozzi. They passed into the next room, out of which they emerged after a quarter of an hour, brought back by a loud peal of laughter from the mad girl, who, when she saw them, turned her back on them. Father Mancia smiled, dipped the sprinkler over and over in the holy water, gave us all a generous shower, and took his leave.

Doctor Gozzi told us that the exorcist would come again on the morrow, and that he had promised to deliver Bettina within three hours if she were truly possessed of the demon, but that he made no promise if it should turn out to be a case of madness. The mother exclaimed that he would surely deliver her, and she poured out her thanks to God for having allowed her the grace of beholding a saint before her death.

Bettina secretly confides to Casanova that she never liked Cordiani, and was always really in love with Casanova. However, although she is very emotional, he is not entirely impressed:

But she was weeping, and her tears, which at all events were not deceptive, took away from me the faculty of doubt. Yet I put her tears to the account of her wounded self-love; to give way entirely I needed a thorough conviction, and to obtain it evidence was necessary, probability was not enough. I could not admit either Cordiani's moderation or Bettina's patience, or the fact of seven hours employed in innocent conversation. In spite of all these considerations, I felt a sort of pleasure in accepting for ready cash all the counterfeit coins that she had spread out before me.

After drying her tears, Bettina fixed her beautiful eyes upon mine, thinking that she could discern in them evident signs of her victory; but I surprised her much by alluding to one point which, with all her cunning, she had neglected to mention in her defence. Rhetoric makes use of nature's secrets in the same way as painters who try to imitate it: their most beautiful work is false. This young girl, whose mind had not been refined by study, aimed

at being considered innocent and artless, and she did her best to succeed, but I had seen too good a specimen of her cleverness.

"Well, my dear Bettina," I said, "your story has affected me; but how do you think I am going to accept your convulsions as natural, and to believe in the demoniac symptoms which came on so seasonably during the exorcisms, although you very properly expressed your doubts on the matter?"

Hearing this, Bettina stared at me, remaining silent for a few minutes, then casting her eyes down she gave way to fresh tears, exclaiming now and then: "Poor me! oh, poor me!" This situation, however, becoming most painful to me, I asked what I could do for her. She answered in a sad tone that if my heart did not suggest to me what to do, she did not herself see what she could demand of me.

"I thought," said she, "that I would reconquer my lost influence over your heart, but, I see it too plainly, you no longer feel an interest in me. Go on treating me harshly; go on taking for mere fictions sufferings which are but too real, which you have caused, and which you will now increase. Some day, but too late, you will be sorry, and your repentance will be bitter indeed."

As she pronounced these words she rose to take her leave; but judging her capable of anything I felt afraid, and I detained her to say that the only way to regain my affection was to remain one month without convulsions and without handsome Father Manciac's presence being required.

"I cannot help being convulsed," she answered, "but what do you mean by applying to the Jacobin that epithet of handsome? Could you suppose—?"

"Not at all, not at all—I suppose nothing; to do so would be necessary for me to be jealous. But I cannot help saying that the preference given by your devils to the exorcism of that handsome monk over the incantations of the ugly Capuchin is likely to give birth to remarks rather detrimental to your honour. Moreover, you are free to do whatever pleases you."

Thereupon she left my room, and a few minutes later everybody came home.

After supper the servant, without any question on my part, informed me that Bettina had gone to bed with violent feverish chills, having previously had her bed carried into the kitchen beside her mother's. This attack of fever might be real, but I had my doubts. I felt certain that she would never make up her mind to be well, for her good health would have supplied me with too strong an argument against her pretended innocence, even in the case of Cordiani; I likewise considered her idea of having her bed placed near her mother's nothing but artful contrivance.

Bettina is really ill this time, with smallpox, but she recovers:

At last her fine eyes opened again to the light of heaven; she was moved to her own room, but she had to keep her bed until Easter. She inoculated me with a few pocks, three of which have left upon my face everlasting marks; but in her eyes they gave me credit for great devotedness, for they were a proof of my constant care, and she felt that I indeed deserved her whole love. And she truly loved me, and I returned her love, although I never plucked a flower which fate and prejudice kept in store for a husband. But what a contemptible husband!

Two years later she married a shoemaker, by name Pigozzo—a base, arrant knave who beggared and ill-treated her to such an extent that her brother had to take her home and to provide for her.

Fifteen years afterwards, having been appointed arch-priest at Saint-George de la Vallee, he took her there with him, and when I went to pay him a visit eighteen years ago, I found Bettina old, ill, and dying. She breathed her last in my arms in 1776, twenty-four hours after my arrival. I will speak of her death in good time.

Julia: An East African Diviner

MARTHA B. BINFORD

I met Julia by accident. Lamanga, a friend from a Rjonga village in Mozambique, East Africa, where I was doing my fieldwork, dropped by my hut and announced that we were going for a walk. After an hour on the narrow paths, tripping over vines and roots, I stopped lamenting the fact that I had left my notebook at home. Lamanga was giving me nonstop information of the sort dear to an anthropologist's heart, but I couldn't have written it down anyway, since every inanimate object seemed bent on attacking me. I appreciated Lamanga's visits and the whirlwind tours he took me on, but I never knew what to expect next. Suddenly, we emerged from deep

bush into a clearing with two paths leading into a rather large, well-kept homestead of several huts. Three of the huts faced east, as was customary, but the fourth, set apart from the rest, faced west. Lamanga hesitated a moment, then took the public, or eastern, path and walked slowly toward the homestead. I looked curiously at Lamanga; he was usually quite uninhibited and barged right into people's homes at any time of the day or night. This time he stayed on the front walk and called out a greeting, asking permission to enter.

A woman walked slowly out of one of the huts and stood looking at us, her hands on her

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From Unspoken Worlds:

Women's Religious Lives,

Nancy Auer Falk & Rita M Gross (eds.)

(Wadsworth, Belmont, 2000)

hips. I was immediately struck by her poise and dignity and the feeling of power that exuded from her. She was in complete control of the situation. Here was none of the obsequious eagerness to greet me that I had already learned to distrust, since it seemed to hide fear and suspicion of me, the only white person in this village of almost two thousand tribal people. She was looking us over very carefully.

"My gods don't hate whites. Come in." Laughing, she moved slowly forward to greet us. Her husband came out of one of the huts and stood slightly behind her while she initiated the ritual exchange of news. This, too, was most unusual, since it was typically the men who exchanged the news while their womenfolk stood respectfully behind them listening. She asked how I was. I responded, "I am well, mother, thank you." She nodded and began her part of the ritual exchange.

"I am well, my husband is well"—this with a flick of her hand to indicate whom she meant. "And my children are well." She paused to study my face. "My goats are well, my chickens are well, my pigs are well, and my oxen are well." She was looking intently at me, and when I began to smile she laughed with delight. I had understood what she was saying and knew that it was peculiar to detail the health of one's livestock. She was testing me.

"I had heard that this one is different. She is not a mission woman. All they know how to say is 'good morning' and 'good evening.' They don't know our language." She had used bad grammar and pitched her voice in a high falsetto to mimic a missionary, venom in her tone. The other villagers had seemed anxious to convince me that they were good Christians, and those who were pagans had been avoiding me. Since I had begun to despair of convincing the villagers that I wanted to learn about all their customs, not just those they had adopted from the whites, I found Julia's attitude a refreshing change. I was also most thankful for the tortuous hours

spent studying the Rjonga language with my assistant, Valente.

After being introduced to Rolando, Julia's husband, Lamanga asked if we could return later when Julia played her drums and her gods "came out" (possessed her). I finally realized who she was. This was Julia, the famous diviner and healer whose drums I had heard beating in the bush almost every evening since my arrival in the village. I looked more closely at her, understanding why I had felt power in her. For a Rjonga woman, she had a fantastic self-assurance, standing with her head slightly thrown back, looking down her nose at us. One foot was forward of the other so that one hip jutted out, and her hands were crossed over her breast. No other Rjonga woman stood like that, in such a deliberately arrogant pose. I was quite taken by her. She was dressed like other village women—a short-sleeved blouse, a long cloth wrapped around the waist dropping to her ankles, and a dark scarf tied around her head so that no hair showed. But her jewelry was uncommon. She wore a bracelet of red and black beads on her left wrist and, on the second and third fingers of her left hand, rings an inch thick, made of the same red and black beads that were on her wrist.

Julia responded, "This is a good night, a special night, because my gods have asked me to play the drums. I played the drums yesterday a little, out of habit, to keep in practice. I must play even if they don't want to come, but tonight they will." She gestured toward the hut behind us, whose doorway faced west. "I go to the gods' house every morning, where I keep my medicines and bones. I throw the bones to know if it is a special night for the gods or not."

Lamanga stuttered a little with excitement. "What should Marta bring as a gift to the gods?" Julia looked at him somewhat scornfully. Lamanga was a nominal Christian who had stopped attending church years before, but she enjoyed needling him about it still.

"You have walked in the church too long. You should not need to ask, you should know. How can I tell what the gods want? But it must be metallic—coins, pins, needles."

She told Rolando to escort us out of the homestead on the western path. He stayed with us, but behind us, until we reached the main path. He was an attractive middle-aged man, not without his own dignity, but he paid deference to Julia because of the power of her gods. We shook hands at the fork in the path, and, as we walked back to my hut, Lamanga told me a little of Julia's story and explained the meaning of the eastern and western paths and of the red and black beads.

Everyone in the village was surprised when Julia became a diviner, because she had been a staunch member of the Swiss Mission church. Her daughters were married, her husband and two grown sons had good jobs in Lourenço Marques (as the capital was called in 1968), and the family was upwardly mobile. Lamanga hinted that it had annoyed Rolando considerably that his wife had reverted to pagan ways just when the family was doing so well. Nonetheless, about three years ago, Julia had suddenly gone as an apprentice to a diviner and less than a year later had returned to Mitini and "sealed" many of the paths into her homestead. Christian households typically have many paths leading into them, but Julia had blocked all but the traditional eastern and western paths to protect her homestead from the witchcraft or sorcery of people envious of her newly acquired power. Lamanga explained that the east is associated with the living; paths into homesteads are from the east and must be used by all visitors, especially nonrelatives. The west is associated with the dead. Corpses are carried out of homesteads on the western path, which is regularly used only by members of the family or by non-kin who have permission from the family. Anyone using the western path without permission would be accused of witchcraft or sorcery.

Lamanga went on to explain the three major categories of gods in the Rjonga pantheon. Ancestor gods are particular to each family. They may visit an occasional illness on their living relatives if they feel neglected or if they think that their relatives have been misbehaving. The color white is associated with the ancestors and only white cloths, livestock or wine are offered to them. The Rjonga are quite emphatic that their "own" gods never kill people as do the other two kinds of gods. These other two kinds are "foreign" gods believed to belong to the Nguni (Zulu) and Ndjao tribes. The "foreign" gods possess people, so that they are forced to become diviners or be killed by the rejected gods. I knew that these two tribes had actually conquered the Rjonga in battle in the past. Now, it seemed, their gods continued to conquer them in the present. The color black is associated with the Nguni gods, who are male, while red is associated with the Ndjao gods, who are female and less powerful. This explained the meaning of Julia's red and black beads. Most diviners have two possessing gods. The colors of her jewelry let villagers know who her gods are.

People consult diviners for different reasons. Some may want to know the future—for example, if a certain plan or journey is a good idea. The majority, however, have been visited by some sort of misfortune and want to know its cause and remedy. Most people who went to Julia were ill. Her gods would possess her and speak through her in an arcane language, divining the cause of the illness. Sometimes the god would also prescribe a cure; other times it would send the patient to another healer for a cure.

THE GODS SPEAK

I could not return that evening because of a crisis in my homestead, but I made arrangements to go another time. About ten days

later a messenger summoned me. Lamanga, who was visiting again, my servant, Carlos, and another guest went with me through the night to Julia's homestead. When we arrived, the small circular hut was very crowded, and the light was so dim that it was difficult to see. Chairs were brought in for us, and we sat down just inside the door. An oilcan was upended in the entrance with a kerosene lantern set on it, the wick turned very low. The still red coals of a dying fire could be seen behind the central beam, which served as an upright.

A woman, one of Julia's apprentices, was seated in front of the beam in a trance. Another apprentice, a man, was seated to her right. They both lived with Julia. Lamanga whispered that they were in trance tonight so that they might be purified. Angelica—the female apprentice—had four strings of shells around her otherwise bare head. Around her naked torso a string of beads crossed under her breasts and over her back. Over her shoulders, tied loosely under her chin, was a white cloth. She was sitting cross-legged, knees high, her hands on her knees, with a red cloth draped over her legs. A third cloth, wrapped around her waist, appeared to be her normal clothing. During her possession, Shanda—the male apprentice—often retied the white cloth or wiped Angelica's brow with a corner of it. I noticed a miniature mattock on the ground by Angelica's right hand. She was shivering and trembling; occasionally she jerked and twitched convulsively. The drums were beating loudly. The people chanted with the drums while Angelica continued to shiver; sometimes she stretched her hands out rigidly at her sides, just beside her knees, and shook all over. She made horrible groaning sounds like a person being punched in the stomach. Her head twisted spasmodically, jerking high over one shoulder, held there tautly while the rest of her body shivered and trembled, caught by her god. I could see Julia beating the large drum while other people shook

metal carraca-like instruments that rattled. Angelica picked up the little mattock and began shaking it in rhythm with the drum, a smile on her face. When she put it down again, the music and singing immediately ceased; and she began to talk in a small, baby-like voice. The people laughed as someone told me that her god was afraid of whites and would not stay. The drums began beating again, and this time she picked up a knife, which she flourished as if in a fight. When she put it down, all was quiet, and Julia leaned forward, asking her questions.

During her trance Angelica had divined the cause of a person's illness and specified certain measures to be taken. She groaned and grunted as she came out of the trance, and people greeted her by telling her which god had possessed her, since diviners can remember nothing of what happened during the trance. Julia helped her out of her ceremonial regalia, and Angelica dressed in her normal clothes. The people relaxed and exchanged greetings with me and my friends; there was much laughter and talking while Angelica was told what happened when she was in trance. Hardly had she settled back against the upright, apparently exhausted, when Shanda, the male apprentice, began to jerk and twitch and be torn by those awful guttural groans. He was possessed but came out of trance relatively quickly.

Then, within minutes, Julia's god seized her. She began to grunt and tremble, as the other two had, while a young boy helped her take off her clothes and put on the ceremonial attire. Lamanga whispered that her "spirit helper," who is chosen by the god, must be pure, someone who has never had sexual relations. While Julia was dressing and grunting, the rest of the people chatted and laughed as if nothing unusual were happening.

I watched the young boy dress Julia. She wore a band around her head to which was attached a brush made of ostrich feathers. The Zulu used to wear these devices in battle

to confuse the enemy. Julia was dressing as a warrior because her god had been one in life. A gazelle skin fit over her head and extended down over her chest and back, worn like an armor. On her right wrist was a ring made of hyena hide. Beads crossed over her breast and back, and a small trumpet made of ivory or bone hung on her chest. Also on her chest was a pouch with medicines; Lamanga speculated that they probably included the nose of a hyena and maybe part of an elephant's trunk. A black cloth was tied around her shoulders, and shells were strung around her head. The boy handed her a small shield made of cowhide, which she put on her arm. In one hand she held a *tchoba*, a sort of whisk used to brush the head and shoulders, and in the other a long root from which the shield was slung. She continued to wear her ordinary bronze bracelets—circles whose ends didn't meet so as not to "tie up the power of the god." A small knife was laid on the ground near her.

When she was fully dressed, Julia placed the various objects on the ground and began to dance toward the back of the hut. I craned my head to see. A huge forked limb was planted in the back of the hut, with a red and a black cloth draped over it; Lamanga said that the limb was like an altar. Julia stayed on her knees there for about ten minutes. Then she came forward and picked up the knife, shield, and root and began to mimic a warrior in battle. She thrust and feinted with the knife in what seemed an expert manner, then began to come toward me on her knees, the knife flickering and darting in front of her. She came closer and closer, sometimes throwing the shield up in front of her face as if to protect herself. She arrived in front of me, still on her knees, and we stared each other in the eye. I felt that she was very much "there" and was testing me again, as she had done the day we met for the first time. The drums were beating loudly, the people near me drawing away. My guest gripped my arm in obvious fear, but I

shook him off and smiled at Julia, who smiled faintly in return. I was amazed by her enormous power and by the force of her personality. She danced at my feet, always on her knees, the knife weaving in front of her. Then, suddenly, she placed the knife, shield, and root on the ground at my feet. I could feel the knife blade across the toe of one of my shoes. She danced back a little, looking at me, then picked up her paraphernalia and retreated to the front of the hut, where she did a long pantomime of a warrior in battle. She subsided momentarily, then began to tremble and make horrible grunting sounds. Her throat was wracked by the cries torn from her and by occasional fits of coughing. The others were talking to each other, watching Julia from time to time. Obviously all of this was preliminary, and no one would pay serious attention until the god arrived. The grunting, groaning, and trembling continued for some time. Suddenly Julia spoke in a deep, guttural voice totally unlike her own: "I will see all of you, tell everything, destroy all of your secrets." The people fell quiet.

"Kakulu, kakulu, kakulu. Kakulu, white woman." The others replied "kakulu." Then she began to chant. She sang a phrase, and the people repeated part of it.

"What house is this which is preferred by men?"

"It is preferred by men," the people chorused.

"What village is this in which I am so adored by boys?"

"You are adored by boys."

The chanting continued until the drums stopped playing. Julia settled down in a corner by the drums and signaled her young helper to start playing again.

Then her god began to speak in earnest, and the people present sang a refrain after each utterance.

"I want to get out. I want to speak with the gods. I want to speak with my wife. I want you to play the drums. My father showed me

everything. I want to come out. I want to tell you everything. I want to come out and meet the white. I want to come out with my woman. Let me play the drums. With my gods. My father made me see with my eyes. I want to get out to cooperate with the white. I want to tell you everything. In the middle of this land I want to make myself happy with my own spirit. To be happy with the white grandparents. To tell secrets of your grandsons. To cooperate. I want to tell all of you, the whites also. Good, good, good, good, good."

Julia grunted and coughed, then began to sing again. The drumming and singing continued for some time, then she spoke again, addressing Lamanga directly.

"I want to speak to my grandson only" [that is, "to the young man"].

"Yes," Lamanga replied.

"And he will tell his white friend."

"I am here."

"I don't want to leave him. He arrived with his white friend. I come to speak to my grandson only. I want to speak to him only, I want to please him—and his white friend who came here to my homestead. I want to cooperate with the white grandparents. What is it that the white woman wants in my house? Play the drums so that I can come out boiling! I want to live well in the midst of my family. We will visit each other every day. I speak only with the white woman. I will speak with my grandchildren only. Sit down and play the drums; I want to hear them with my ears."

She spoke in this vein for some time, her utterances constantly punctuated by a chorus from the people. When the session was over, Rolando translated the entire episode for us. He also told me that for several nights Julia's god had been visited by my own ancestors, who had "come across the seas" with me to take care of me in the village. My grandfather had gone to Julia's homestead in the night to visit with her god and to learn about his "work." Julia's god had explained that Julia had not wanted to "have the materials of the

gods" but that she had inherited her gods from her family and had no choice. My ancestor and Julia's god spoke for a long time. The former Zulu warrior told my grandfather how he had come many years ago, when there was a war, and how he was killed in battle. His spirit, wanting to be hidden, sought refuge and found it in Julia, in whom he was now sheltered. Occasionally he would "come out" to treat someone who was sick or to help someone about to die. He also helped people who had problems with their family or neighbors. Sometimes he helped good people who came from far away. My ancestor had assured Julia's god that I was a good person with no evil intent. Julia's god was curious about my purpose in the village, so my grandfather had explained that I simply wanted to learn about the people's life and customs. The god was satisfied that I was to be trusted. I was stunned by my good fortune in acquiring unsolicited endorsement by one of the most powerful diviners in the kingdom. I would not fully comprehend the reasons for it until some time later.

Several days later Julia requested to hear the tape I had made of her possession. My assistant Valente and I went to her house in the early afternoon, and Julia, with her two apprentices and her spirit helper, gathered around to listen. There were many exclamations of wonder from the listeners—especially Julia, who reacted to herself grunting and groaning with loud "ohs!" After listening, we chatted and I asked permission to come another day to learn about Julia's conversion, her medicines, and everything else she could tell me. She agreed readily and began a long explanation of what had led up to the god's revelations during her possession. It was essentially what Rolando had already told me but richer in texture and details.

After my first visit to Julia, she wanted to sleep in the spirit house. Her husband was afraid to sleep alone in the other hut, so he went with Julia. Rolando fell asleep immedi-

ately, but Julia lay awake for a long time. Then she fell asleep, and one of her gods, the Zulu warrior, came to her. When he arrived, he shook Julia awake and asked her if she could see the two white spirits, my grandparents, who were just coming into her homestead.

Julia couldn't see them. The white spirits arrived at the doorway and asked permission to come in. Julia's god asked the white spirits, "What do you want in Julia's homestead?" They said they had come to visit and to see all the materials (meaning the bones, clothes, medicines, etc.) of the gods. The god said that they couldn't enter because, once in, they might not want to leave again: He didn't want white spirits in his house because "the races don't understand each other." The whites answered, "We haven't come to do harm," but Julia's god wouldn't let them come in. He said, "Perhaps you want to take these materials outside and burn them or throw them away." Then the white spirits asked for a place to rest outside. They stayed on the verandah, where they sat down on their own chairs, which they had brought with them. They also had some papers in their hands. They stayed there a long time, resting. Finally they got up, said goodbye, and went to the homestead where I lived. After they left, Julia woke up and began to think about what had happened. She looked at the door and saw that it was closed. Then she understood that she had not been dreaming and that the spirits had really come, because when she had gone to sleep the door had been open. She woke Rolando and told him what had happened. He demurred saying, "Perhaps you dreamed all this because Marta was here in the afternoon." Julia insisted, "No, they really came."

Two nights later the same thing happened again, except that Rolando wasn't there. When the white spirits returned, Julia's god asked again, "What do you want here?" They replied, "Nothing; we came only to see." Then the white spirits explained that they had come to Africa because they knew that their grand-

daughter had been sent there and they wanted to take care of her. They were now living in my homestead. Julia's god still wouldn't allow them to enter the spirit house, and this time they didn't stay to rest but returned instead to my hut. On other nights Julia's god went to my homestead to visit with my grandparents, and long conversations ensued. As before, Julia told Rolando what had happened.

I was enchanted by this story and assured Julia that, if my ancestors were indeed with me, it was as they had said. All of us were interested only in learning and meant no harm. She said she knew that. She also said that her god had told her people that I was good and should be helped. I was also quite interested in her husband's reaction, so "Western" in nature. He apparently did not believe in Julia's spirits, and I remembered Lamanga's telling me that Rolando and his sons wanted to become *assimilados*, Portuguese citizens. *Assimilados* were "civilized" people, and I could clearly see that having a "witchdoctor" in the family might be an embarrassment to his ambitions.

Different members of the family came on several occasions to hear the tape of Julia's possession. Her elder daughter told me that she had never believed in her mother's gods until she heard my tape. It was clear to her now that her mother truly "had gods," because she spoke ancient Zulu and in a man's voice. She knew that Julia could not speak or understand Zulu. The daughter also said that she was pleased that her mother was a diviner; she had been very lonely, with her husband, sons, and daughters living in the capital city while she stayed in the bush. Now, said the daughter, her mother had company. This was an intriguing comment. I wanted to hear more about the events that led up to Julia's becoming a diviner, so I made arrangements to speak with her again.

My assistant Valente and I arrived in Julia's homestead around five in the afternoon and found no one at home. Valente, a Christian,

showed none of the nervousness that had beset Lamanga. He led me into the homestead, and we waited for Julia, who finally appeared. She left us soon afterward to go clean up after a day of working in the fields. Being a diviner was a part-time job, and she, like all the other villagers, had to tend her crops in order to eat. A few minutes later she joined us, and we exchanged news and pleasantries. Finally I asked whether she could tell me how the gods had come to her. She gave me a sharp look.

"What will you do when you have that knowledge?"

"I will learn." She laughed and said that it was all right. As she started speaking, her apprentice Angelica joined us.

JULIA'S STORY

"Before I was born, my mother was often sick. She went to the hospital many times, but they could do nothing that helped her. Finally her family consulted a diviner who threw the bones, which directed that she go to the family altar and stay here. She would become pregnant, and she should give the child the name of the god who sent the sickness. So my mother bought the 'clothes of the gods'—cloth of various colors—and went to pray at the family altar. Then she became pregnant. The time came when I was born, and my parents went again to the diviner, who said to call me Musengele because that was the name of the god who had sent my mother's sickness.

"When I grew up, I became sick, and they sent me to the hospital, but they couldn't cure me there. So they went to the bones, and the bones said to send me to my mother's mother's home to live. When I arrived at the entrance of my grandmother's homestead, even before I had a chance to speak, I was cured.

"I have two kinds of gods. The female comes from my mother's house. The male

comes from my father's. The god tells me his name is Mahlabazimuke. He is the chief one. The female is called Nyankwabe."

While listening, I watched Angelica, who was obviously taking vicarious pride in this tale. Occasionally she would look contemptuously at Valente, as if to remind him of the traditional power he, a Christian, had forsaken.

Julia continued her story, saying that she had not begun her apprenticeship until many years after she married and after her parents and grandparents had died. Since I knew that possessing gods become hereditary once they are established in a family, this reference to the death of her parents and grandparents was very meaningful. Julia became the heir to the family gods who, in native belief, sought among the living the descendants of their dead hosts until they found a new host. Refusal to become a living host for the gods could lead to the death of the person the gods sought. The "chosen" person could not automatically become a diviner, however, just by being sought out by the gods. He or she then has to enter into an apprenticeship with an established diviner that might last anywhere from a few months to several years.

Julia went on to say that, after her children were born, she became sick and went to the hospital. She had a pain in her lower right side, but they couldn't cure her. She spent a long time seeking a cure from the European doctors and from native healers, without success. She went to the hospital several times, and finally the doctors at the Swiss Mission hospital decided to operate on her. When Julia arrived at the hospital for her operation, she was told to lie down so that blood could be drawn from the vein in her arm. Her vein collapsed, and she interpreted this event as a sign that the gods didn't like her being there. She indicated that she didn't want to go through with the operation. The European doctor, apparently in disgust at her native "superstitious" belief, told her to go home and seek a cure. By this time Julia was becoming desper-

ately ill, and, though her husband preferred to continue trying European medicine, he finally consented to consult the bones. The bones said that the gods were causing her illness, so the unhappy couple sought a diviner. The diviner gave Julia three kinds of medicines. As soon as she started taking them, the gods "came out" because they had been so long repressed. They possessed her and spoke through her mouth: "We want you to go far away to be treated, so we can work." It is believed that the possessing gods have themselves been diviners and healers in life and that they seek hosts so that they can continue their work after death. Julia didn't like the first diviner she had consulted and insisted that she go far north to a diviner there.

Her husband and sons took her north to this diviner so that she could begin her apprenticeship and learn the "things of the gods." When she arrived, her god asked to be treated as fast as possible so that they could return home quickly. All this was three years ago, Julia told me. She observed that the god was strange in that he liked everything to be done in a hurry. Since he had been well fed and well treated in the north country, Julia was never seriously sick now. Occasionally she might feel unwell, and, if her husband was home, he still tried to get her to go to the European hospital. But her god would immediately come out and say, "I don't like hospitals," and within a few days she would be well again.

I reflected on what her daughter had told me about the loneliness of Julia's life before she became a diviner. Her two sons were unmarried, so she had no daughters-in-law to live with her; her sons and her husband lived in the city where they worked. They came home to the village only occasionally for holidays or weekends. Julia had lived completely alone in her homestead, tending the family fields unaided. Her only companionship came from the other members of the Swiss Mission church in the village, which she attended regularly. Sometimes she would go to the city to

visit her family, but she could rarely stay long because of the necessity of caring for the crops. She was an attractive middle-aged woman, perhaps in her forties, quite intelligent and intense, and it must have been difficult for her to accept a life of drudgery and boredom. Now, instead, her home was full of people. She had two apprentices who lived with her and helped her in the fields. She had the young boy who was her spirit helper and who tended her cattle. The cattle themselves were a sign of her success. Diviners charge their patients fees, and apprentices pay princely sums for their tutelage. She had converted this wealth into cattle, still the most prestigious symbol of affluence to the Rjonga. People sought her out continuously. Her life was now full, and she had achieved an importance rare for a man and almost unheard of for a Rjonga woman.

I asked if I could come back sometime and ask her more questions. After thinking a while, she agreed: "I can't refuse to help you, since you came to learn the life of the people. The country has received you, and I have no right to refuse my help. But the story of the gods is very difficult." Suddenly she began to speak again, telling me in much greater detail how her husband had been convinced to let her become a diviner.

She had gone to the capital city to visit her family and had just finished making dinner when her gods saw that it was almost time for her daughters to return from school. I started, since I had been unaware that her young daughters had also lived in the city. Yes, she assured me impatiently, they had lived in the city when they were children; now they were married and still remained there. It was most unusual for unmarried daughters not to live with their mothers in the village, helping with the daily chores. This put Rolando's upward mobility in a new light. He had been determined, indeed, to surpass the limitations of village traditional life, and Julia had borne the brunt of his ambition, being forced to live alone without the comfort of her daughters.

Village women had told me often that one of the few consolations of married life was having daughters who shared one's burdens and eased the loneliness of a woman's lot somewhat.

Julia continued her story by telling how her gods came out and paralyzed her hands. Her ankles were also paralyzed, so that she was forced to lie down on the bed. When her family came home, she could hardly breathe, nor could she speak. When they touched her, she felt like a corpse, as if the blood had stopped running. After a while her gods began to speak through her: "We want you to send Julia far away so we can be treated. If you don't do it, someday you will find her dead. And we want you to arrange now for all the money for the diviner who will treat us. We don't want to spend a lot of time there in our apprenticeship."

Then the gods disappeared. Julia's husband and daughters were frightened for a while and encouraged her to follow her gods' demands, but, when after a few days she started feeling better, Rolando changed his mind. She became sick several more times with paralysis and convulsions, but again her husband did nothing, although she felt that her life was threatened. Finally a son, Rafael, came home from the north where he was working. He said that his mother should leave the church and seek relief from the diviners. And so, finally, the family planned for the trip to the north. Rolando and Rafael got together the prepayment that would guarantee a speedy treatment. Rafael went ahead and arranged for a diviner to take Julia as an apprentice.

After Julia's arrival, the diviner began to treat her with the special medicines demanded by her gods. After three months Julia became sick for three days, vomiting bile and having difficulty breathing. On the fourth day her gods came out and said, "Why are you making Julia delay? We have already paid the fees, and we said we wanted to go home

quickly. But you still send her to do your work in the fields and around the homestead. If you continue, we will kill her and you will be to blame." The next day Julia was all right again and could sit up. The diviner, convinced of the power of Julia's gods, began treating her with the last of the medicines, then arranged for a big feast. At this feast the power of Julia's gods would be tested to see if they were authentic. People from all over the area would attend this feast and examination, and Julia's family would come north to see if she "graduated."

On the day of the final rituals, many people came to the diviner's homestead bringing drums to play for the gods. This public validation of a diviner's power was very important. Without it, a diviner would be accused of being a quack and would have no patients. Before beginning the tests, Julia was taken out of the homestead into the bush so that she could not see what tests were being prepared. The people in the homestead took the "gods' clothes"—the cloths of special colors in which diviners dressed—and wrapped them in a bundle. They took Julia's gold ring and gave it to a man to hide; he put it in his pocket. The ring symbolized Julia's marriage to the gods and was called "money." Julia removed her head scarf to show me the gold ring tied to a lock of hair over her forehead, which was normally hidden from view. A goat had been killed for the feast; its gallbladder was removed and given to another person to hide. All these hidden objects were tests for Julia's gods. If the gods were "authentic," she would have no trouble finding the hidden objects. One of the primary duties of a diviner is to discover hidden things, be they material items or secrets or knowledge of the future.

Julia was brought back from her seclusion in the bush and given medicines so that her gods would come out. Quickly they possessed her, and she fell to the ground. Then she got up and began to sing and dance. The people called out: "If you are a real god, find the house where your clothes are hidden." Still

possessed, she began to search and found the house and the clothes wrapped in a bundle. She came out of the house dressed as a diviner, her breasts bare and covered with beads, a black cloth wrapped around her waist. She carried the small shield in one hand, a knife in the other. Again the gods began to dance through her body. The people called: "Now find your money," referring to the gold ring. Julia danced and sang a new song. Then her gods told the people to be quiet, and she sat down on the ground to think. The gods began to sing again, and the drums picked up the song and beat out a rhythm that lifted Julia off the ground into another dance. She danced directly to the person who had the ring and sat down in front of him. "You have the money. Put it here," she said, holding both hands cupped in front of him. The man asked where he had put the ring, and her gods pointed to his pocket. He took it out and gave it to her while the people laughed and clapped. Then her gods were told to find the goat's gallbladder; they found the person who had it right away. The people clapped more, the gods danced a while longer, then left. Julia was herself again. This ended her tests; she had passed with flying colors, and the people ate and drank, feasting far into the night. Julia stayed in the north for three more days, finishing the medicines for her gods, then came back to Mitini and started curing. By the time I arrived, she was a famous and powerful diviner.

CONCLUSION

After hearing this story I finally understood why Julia had so unexpectedly endorsed me through her god. She had lived a life of loneliness in the village while her family lived in the city. Other women had a similar lot, but Julia was clearly more intense, vibrant, and intelligent than the majority of village women.

She chafed against living out her life as the family drudge, tending the fields alone day after day. Furthermore, she had a history of spirits in her family. This provided the mechanism by which her life could be changed. After the original hosts of the family spirits—her parents and grandparents—had died, it was natural that the family spirits should seek her out. She had originally been named by a spirit; this in itself would attract the spirits to her. The only obstacle in her way was her husband's ambition, which had led to her lonely state in the first place. Despite Julia's repeated illnesses, convulsions, and paralysis, her husband refused to believe that she "had gods." I have no doubt that she was truly on the verge of death, since she was fighting for her own social survival. The intervention of their son had convinced Rolando to let her go as an apprentice and set up practice.

But it was clear that her family was still quite ambivalent about her power and authenticity. Her daughters said that they had not believed in her spirits until they heard my tape, and Rolando believed that she had dreamed about my ancestors simply because she had met me. Although Rolando was traditional enough to be afraid of her gods and to defer to her power, which was clearly accepted by others as real, he still did not accord her full belief. My journey to their homestead to meet Julia, my attendance at her possession, the questions I asked, and my sincere admiration of her had finally impressed her family to a degree that she had been unable to achieve herself. Being white, I validated her power and eased her family's anxiety about their being accepted as "civilized" people. Each of us was marginal to village life, each was suspected by others of unknown schemes. But Julia had been quick to see what I had not. I had inadvertently helped her gain respect in her own family; her public endorsement of me through her god made villagers relax and be less afraid to speak to me about their lives. Julia had responded to my interest by utilizing a very

important principle in Rjonga life: reciprocity. Thus each of us had helped the other find acceptance and tolerance in the social spheres important to us. I had made a good and powerful friend.

Further Readings

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