

## BOOK REVIEW

**ZauberPilze.** Ronald Rippchen, Ed. (Der Grüne Zweig No. 155). "A Joint Venture" of Nachtschatten Verlag (Ritterquai 2-4, CH-4502 Solothurn, Switzerland) and Medienexperimente (Alte Schmiede, D-69488 Löhrbach, Germany), 1993. Pp. 231. DM 30 (paperback). ISBN 3-925817-55-7.

**ZauberPilze** ("Magic Mushrooms") is an anthology of 26 papers on entheogenic mushrooms, half of which are reprints or translations into German. The translations include Lewis Carroll's section of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* describing the caterpillar and the mushroom, and Valentina P. Wasson's classic article "I ate the sacred mushroom," describing the first psychonautic experiment with psilocybian mushrooms outside of a traditional ritual context (Wasson 1957). There is also a chapter on entheogenic mushrooms by LSD and psilocybine discoverer Albert Hofmann.

There are three scientific papers by German chemist Jochen Gartz, describing a "new" psilocybian species from Europe, *Inocybe aeruginascens* Babos, outdoor cultivation of *Psilocybe cyanescens* Wakefield on wood-chip piles, and the accumulation by mushrooms of environmental pollutants. In addition to this scientific nucleus, there are six unsigned scientific chapters on botany and chemistry of psychoactive mushrooms, descriptions (with illustrations) of seven species, details on cultivation of psilocybian mushrooms and notes on dosage and ingestion of same. There is also a brief note on history of entheogenic mushrooms by German anthropologist Christian Rättsch.

The book is divided into eight sections. The introductory part has the papers by Hofmann and Rättsch, and a pair of short essays by the pseudonymous editor Ronald "Rumpelstilz" Rippchen (who seems to be daring us to guess his name; but here he will remain pseudonymous!). There follow two scientific sections with the papers by Gartz and several anonymous essays with botanical, chemical and horticultural data. A brief question-and-answer section is followed by 22 pages of illustrations of mushroom motifs, mostly quite ugly cartoon-like posters and signs, and a few comic strips. The next section deals with psychonautic experiments with entheogenic mushrooms by Valentina P. Wasson, Ann Shulgin (Shulgin and Shulgin 1991), María Sabina and Timothy Leary. The penultimate section contains the translation of Terence McKenna's paper on entheogenic mushroom motifs in literature (McKenna 1990), a review of mushrooms in science-fiction films, and a discussion of German law regarding entheogenic mushrooms. The final section consists of a solitary paper by Martin Hanslmeier, by far the longest and most detailed in the book. This is the reprint of a paper from the new entheogen journal *Integration: Journal for Mind-Moving Plants and Culture* (Hase-neier 1992), unfortunately lacking the references from the original. This discussion of "the archetypal dimension" of entheogenic mushrooms is a serious piece of scholarship, accompanied by 16 black-and-white reproductions of the author's water-color paintings of psilocybian mushrooms (with 3 others scattered throughout the book). Unfortunately, the exceedingly bad, low-resolution printing renders these muddy and poor facsimiles of the originals, which I have seen, and which are superb. At least the inside covers of **ZauberPilze** are graced by fair color reproductions of two of these (*Psilocybe semilanceata* [Fr. ex Secr.] Kumm. and *Psilocybe cyanescens* Wakef.), which, however, only serves to underscore the awful quality of the black-and-white counterparts.

While this book gathers together reprints of several interesting and significant papers on entheogenic mushrooms, it suffers from poor design and production. Although good quality paper is used, this is not recycled as it should be, and printing appears to have been done using 300 dot-per-inch output from a low-resolution laser printer, not suitable for subsequent reproduction. Worse still, the 22 pages of illustrations in the middle of the book (with a couple of exceptions) had better been left in the obscurity they deserve and from which they were unfortunately dredged up. In combination with another dozen or so cartoon-like mushroom drawings scattered throughout the book, these *kitsch* graphic elements unfortunately give the book a sleazy, frivolous look not in keeping with the serious content of the papers. This is unfair to the authors, some of whom, like the late V. P. Wasson, had no say in the matter. The cover illustration by Kat Harrison

evokes a similar circus-like atmosphere, and could give the impression that this is a comic book. It would have been far better to have used on the covers Martin Hanslmeier's lovely and botanically-accurate water-color paintings which appear on the inside covers. The ugly illustrations and low-resolution typography conspire with a weak design to create a hideous *pastiche* or hodgepodge. I realize this book was the joint production of two publishing houses and at least 16 authors—all the more reason to have hired a competent designer to give a smooth and consistent look to the book. To add insult to injury, in place of a much-needed index or bibliography, we have a final, ninth "section" on "Infospores and Sources" which is in reality eight pages of advertisements, which are at least graphically consistent with the book—yet another *pastiche* of diverse designs and typography! As a writer and publisher it pains me to say that publishers who can't be bothered to hire a graphic designer, and who scrimp so as to produce a book with the crass graphic quality of a Xerox copy, are inviting the reading public to photocopy the book rather than pay for it!

#### LITERATURE CITED

- HASENEIER, MARTIN. 1992. Das Kahlkopf und das kollektive Unbewußte: Einige Anmerkungen zur archetypischen Dimension des Pilzes. *Integration: Journal for Mind-Moving Plants and Culture* 2&3:5–38.
- MCKENNA, TERENCE. 1990. Wasson's literary precursors. Pp. 165–175 in *The Sacred Mushroom Seeker: Essays for R. Gordon Wasson*. Thomas J. Riedlinger (Ed.). Dioscorides Press, Portland, Oregon.
- SHULGIN, ALEXANDER T. and ANN SHULGIN. 1991. *PIHKAL: A Chemical Love Story*. Transform Press, Berkeley, California.
- WASSON, VALENTINA P. 1957. I ate the sacred mushroom. *This Week*. 19 May issue, p. 8 *et seq.*

Jonathan Ott  
Natural Products Co.  
Apartado Postal 274  
Xalapa, Veracruz, México