

poet whose work has been experiencing a renaissance of late, as well as volumes of philosophy by Hazrat Inayat Khan, the Indian teacher/musician who first introduced Sufi thought to this country at the turn of the century, and analytic works by Idries Shah, a Sufi teacher and prolific writer who interpreted Sufism through modern (largely Jungian) psychology.

If Sufism's malleability is part of what makes it so attractive and valuable to modern theosophical pilgrims, then the works of authors Peter Lamborn Wilson and Hakim Bey are notable for the way Sufi thought has jumped-started two very radical imaginations. Wilson, described as an "anarcho-Sufi scholar" by Erik Davis in an article on the writer in the **Village Voice Literary Supplement** (Feb. 1994), has translated poetry—collected in **The Drunken Universe** (Phanes Press, 1987)—and, working with the *Semiotext(e)* publishing collective, has written numerous visionary essays on Islam and Sufism that, according to Davis, "argue for the ultimate unity of imagination and intellectual investigation." Many of them are assembled in the recent **Sacred Drift** (City Lights, 1993) and in **Scandal: Essays in Islamic Heresy** (Autonomedia, 1988). The latter, as Davis notes, is particularly heretical: "Besides praising the mystical use of hashish (and including a recipe for the cannabis brew bhang), Wilson offers a sympathetic portrayal of 'sacred pedophilia,' the [obscure Sufi] practice of staring at beautiful boys as a kind of 'imaginal yoga.'"

Bey's work, believe it or not, can make Wilson's seem fairly stuffy by comparison. Bey's **T.A.Z.** (Autonomedia, 1985), in its promotion of "ontological anarchy" and "poetic terrorism," finds particular power in the Sufi concept of the dervish as *rend*, a secret spiritual journeyman "clever enough to drink wine without being caught." Bey sees the *rend* as a combination of Nietzsche's "overman" and a sort of elegant slacker anarchist, a free spirit who embraces rules (in this case, rules of Islam) in order to realize a will to power in breaking them.

But for all the particular forms that modern Sufism can take, it is perhaps the tradition's own self-effacement that makes it unique. As *Gnosis* editor in chief Jay Kinney points out, "the true Sufi, that is, one who has reached realization, may well step be-

yond Sufism, or any other ism. At such a point, the questions of whether Sufism is Islamic or not, or whether

this path is superior or inferior to others, are largely irrelevant."

—Will Hermes

L A W

FIRST, LET'S DUMP ALL THE LAWYERS

Do-it-yourself legal action, boosted with new books and computer software

A recent public survey found that more Americans could identify Judge Wapner of *The People's Court* than Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist. For lawyers, that finding confirms a troublesome trend. Inundated by lawyer jokes, low-rent TV commercials for personal injury attorneys, and reruns of *L.A. Law*, Americans are losing respect for the legal profession. And now—insult of insults—many ordinary citizens are deciding, in effect: *Hey, I could do that.*

The past decade has seen an explosion of *pro se* litigation (the Latin legalism for representing oneself in court) and other types of do-it-yourself legal activity. California has seen a particularly sharp rise in *pro se* filings. The executive director of a Santa Monica legal clinic told **California Lawyer** (May 1994) that *pro se* filings make up 60 percent of her county's family law cases, up from 30 percent five years ago. Alameda County has a similar percentage, which has quintupled over the past decade.

What's behind the increase? A combination of lack of money, rapidly rising legal fees (one San Diego attorney told *California Lawyer* that a divorce that cost \$1,500 five years ago would cost \$5,000 today), and dwindling access to free legal aid.

Although it's not always wise to represent yourself, it can be a good—

or the only—option. Now, thanks to a burgeoning self-help literature and, more recently, the advent of home computers and on-line information services, more and more Americans are getting the kind of access to legal information once available only to practicing lawyers who knew their way around the statute books.

Self-help legal books have been around for years, flourishing in the wake of a 1978 California court decision that upheld publishers' rights to sell books containing legal advice. Over the

past decade, home computers have fueled a second wave of legal do-it-yourselfism in the form of software packages like Bloc Publishing's Personal Lawyer and Parson Technology's It's Legal, which help guide amateur litigants through a variety of routine legal transactions

such as contracts, patents, and living trusts. Topping the sales charts is Nolo Press' WillMaker, which, as the title suggests, helps the user create a simple will through responses to a computer-guided questionnaire. At last count, the package had sold 450,000 copies. Other useful packages include Meca Software's Home Lawyer, which has common legal forms and documents, and Good Software's Easy Landlord, which contains leases, bookkeeping, and property management help.

Founded in 1971 by two disaffected-

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ed California Legal Aid lawyers, Berkeley-based Nolo Press helped pioneer the do-it-yourself law movement. The company now publishes more than a hundred books, tapes, and computer programs designed to help people decipher the law. Says associate publisher Steve Elias, "If you think about it, the court system is the only branch of government that has effectively privatized the information needed to work the system. Lawyers have a controlled monopoly, and therefore a built-in incentive to perform as much litigation as possible. We're trying to change that. Needless to say, most lawyers hate us."

The booming popularity of on-line computer networks has also helped free the flow of legal information. On the Internet, users can seek out legal advice (at their own risk) through bulletin boards and mailing lists, scan Supreme Court opinions and other government documents, and peruse the catalogs of major law libraries worldwide. Through West Publishing's WIN program, anyone can do on-line legal research.

According to the *Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 18, 1994), several states have recently started creating their own electronic legal libraries. Anyone with a computer and modem can dial in and research statutes, download ready-to-use blank documents, and exchange comments and advice with other amateur legal eagles.

There's more to this trend than just technology, says Gerry Singen, program coordinator for the Program on the Legal Profession at Harvard Law School. "Americans have undergone some fundamental attitudinal changes over the last couple of decades," he says. "Just look at the women's movement, or the consumer movement of the '70s, or the civil rights movement. All of these trends helped encourage citizens to speak up for themselves, to assert their own rights under the law."

Of course, most ordinary citizens will never gain the expertise to tackle convoluted legal issues or argue effectively in a criminal court. But many common legal activities ultimately come down to knowing where and how to find the right information. "We will probably see a continuing decline in the use of lawyers to process routine transactions," says Singen.

As more and more people try to

navigate the legal system by themselves, will they stumble into legal quagmires without lawyers to guide them? Probably not, says Singen. "Numerous studies have found that

pro se litigants exercise pretty good judgment; most people seem to have a reliable sense of when they need a lawyer and when they don't."

—A.G. Wright

L A B O R

STATE OF THE UNIONS: IMPROVING

Membership is up, but Clinton labor policies may pose problems



United Mine Workers members press the flesh at a 1993 Labor Day rally in Evansville, Indiana.

When President Clinton pushed through the North American Free Trade Agreement last fall despite vigorous lobbying by the AFL-CIO and other unionists, pundits wrote off organized labor as a force in American politics. According to conventional wisdom, labor has been all but dead since the early 1980s, when manufacturing plants started shutting down like office lights in a nighttime skyline.

But the labor movement is actually reviving itself with new ideas and strategies. While the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* both viewed the recent Teamsters strike as an indication of the union's waning influence, John B. Judis argues in *The New Republic* (May 23, 1994) that "the strike itself was a sign that the labor movement . . . is slowly beginning to

awake." Nearly 100 percent of the rank and file supported the strike despite heavy fighting between the upper echelons and the union's leader, Ron Carey, who's trying to clean up the Teamsters. And far from losing the strike, the union won wage and benefit increases.

Statistics back up Judis' claim that labor is reviving: "Although union membership steadily declined from 22 million in 1975 to 16.4 million in 1992, it actually grew last year, to 16.6 million—the first gain in fourteen years," he writes. The face of labor is no longer that of the blue-collar white male worker. Unions are seeing their biggest gains among white-collar, service-sector, and government employees. And Peter Racheff, writing in *The Nation* (Feb. 21, 1994), reports that the

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