



When I feel connected to my inner holy fool, I'm permitting myself to listen without all of the mediation of my rational mind . . . In this moment, we have to build resilience and presence with this beautiful world that we long to save. But we also need to trick ourselves into doing scary and unprecedented things. The process is going to be messy, so we're going to need that grace for each other and for ourselves to survive.
– Teyvyn East, “Permission for Holy Embodiment”

STUDY GUIDE GEEZ 64: THE HOLY FOOL

ABOUT GEEZ

Geez magazine is a quarterly, nonprofit, ad-free, print magazine about social justice, art, and activism for people at the fringes of faith in Canada and the U.S.

Geez is committed to naming and raging against oppression while also offering the hope, beauty, and power alive in local communities doing their work.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE

Come friends and neighbours! Gather round! Pitch the circus tent! Gather in the town square! But beware, for the trickster is at work. The jester lurks in mockery. And the holy fool is ready to turn your world upside down! Boundaries will be crossed. The powers will be subverted. It is time to play, to imagine, to embrace foolishness, to expect the unexpected. It is time to make a ruckus! You will see tricks that are ancient and other magic created before your very eyes. It is sacred and irreverent. We welcome it all!

The traditions of trickster and holy fool are recurrent throughout history and cultures. These characters are found disrupting the peace and offering a vision of what could be throughout Greek mythology, Yoruba practices, Eastern Orthodox traditions, Navajo stories, Nordic tales, and scripture (to name a few). The trickster spirit is found on the margins, in the streets, and among those who are most rejected from so-called society. Join us in the work of looking backward, forward, and around us in our ordinary lives for the places the fool is performing in our midst.

Single issues available.
geezmagazine.org/store

PART I FOOLS IN HISTORY

RECOMMENDED READING

Page 13 – Foolish Ancestors: Tricksters from Around the World by M. Ashe Van Steenwyk

Page 31 – The Terrifying Freedom of Simone Weil by Sarah Lynne Gershon

Page 40 – Christ the Clown Takes on Our Humiliation by Damon Garcia

“Christ the Fool”
by Ramona Martinez



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What movement ancestors or historical figures do you feel the trickster spirit moving through? What makes them stand out? What lessons might they have to teach us today?
2. M. Ashe Van Steenwyk notes, “There is an ableist, 21st century interpretation of the deeds of holy fools as those of people suffering mental illness. It is indeed holy fools’ actions that directly confront and undermine the pathological social conventions of our times.” Where/how might ableism be showing up in your ability to perceive the holy fools of our day? What can we learn from disabled and neurodivergent people about the work of holy foolishness?
3. Damon Garcia examines the controversial film *Parable* that was met with backlash from local ministers and Christians. What is subversive about imagining Christ as a clown? What feelings come up for you when you imagine Christ being portrayed that way? How could that change our understanding of Jesus’s life, ministry, and legacy?

ACTIVITY

1. Write a love letter to one of your favourite fools in history.
2. Honour these ancestors with your laughter. Joy in the face of it all. Pay attention to how often you laugh, what makes you laugh. Encourage yourself to lean more into time for laughter.

PART 2 CROSSING BOUNDARIES

RECOMMENDED READING

Page 9 – Ministry of Folly (Elderword)
by Ken Feit

Page 49 – Laughing with Stone
Ancestors by Fuck A Brain

Page 23 – Oríkì (Or the Compulsory
Ableism of Identity) by Bayo Akomolafe

“Radiant Raven”
by Cassandra Mirosh



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Are there identities, practices, or experiences you hold that are seen as contradictory or opposed? How might the spirit of the fool allow you to play, dance, or explore these tensions?
2. Bayo Akomolafe writes about the shape-shifting, boundary-crossing spirits that are embedded in Yoruba mythology. Do you know of spirits or beings like these in your own ancestral mythologies? If so, what do their legacies point us towards? If not, can you imagine any?
3. Fuck A Brain writes about the magical power of “offering our brains up to forces greater than our rational minds.” Does this language resonate with you? Are there ways that you do this in your life?

ACTIVITY

1. Journal about ways you feel out of ordinary. Where and how does that lives in your body? How does it brings you joy? How does it challenges structural ‘norms’ in your own mind?
2. Follow Fuck A Brain’s invitation (p. 51) and “go out into the world in search of a stone that lives nearby that calls out to you.” Speak with it or spend some quality time listening.

PART 3 INVITING PLAYFULNESS

RECOMMENDED READING

Page 10 – Take Up Your Red Nose by
Veena Vasista

Page 16 – The Wild Child Invitation by
Kate Suffling

Page 17 – Permission for Holy Embodi-
ment An Interview with Teyn East

Page 46 – Just Joking: A Theatrical Vi-
gnette in One Act by Kerr Mesner

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What spaces or places in your life do you feel a sense of playfulness come up naturally? What spaces or places does it feel hard to access that feeling? Are there people who help invite you into it even when it’s hard?
2. Veena Vasista encourages you to “take up your red nose.” What playful practices have you always wanted to take up? What’s stopping you from taking the plunge?

ACTIVITY

1. These pieces focus on being in tune with your body, giving permission for holy embodiment. This is not always easy in our culture. Do something that gets you into your body and feeling alive.
2. Gather a circle of three or more and read *Just Joking: A Theatrical Vignette in One Act*. Draw parts out of a hat. Read it or get up and tap your way through it.
3. Borrow one of the board games from the Further Gaming list (p 57-58) and try it out.

PART 4 EXPOSING THE POWERS

RECOMMENDED READING

Page 22 – Meet You in Hell by Jacob May

Page 36 – I Killed Michael Moore
An Interview Turned Conversation
with Michael Moore

Page 44 – Jesters in the Kill Zone
by Carole Sargent

“Romans 12:2”
by The Rain, The Snow,
the Seed



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jacob May quotes: queer theology “takes its place not at the centre of the theological discourses [...] but at the margins.” What ways does queerness subvert dominant forms of theology? If you identify as queer, how do you feel these questions moving in your own life?
2. Have you been part of a movement or action that intentionally used foolishness to expose the powers? (If not, envision an action like this.) What effects did/could this action have on the powers that be, on yourself/your community, or on the general public?

ACTIVITY

1. Send the Do Not Conform postcard from the issue to a place of power. Expose some truth. Make some foolishness.
2. Watch “Montero” or your favourite powers-defying music video. Think of it as very important Holy Fool homework. Sing along or dance if you feel called.
3. Use your crafting powers to expose the powers. Need an idea? Try the papier-mâché recipe on p. 35.