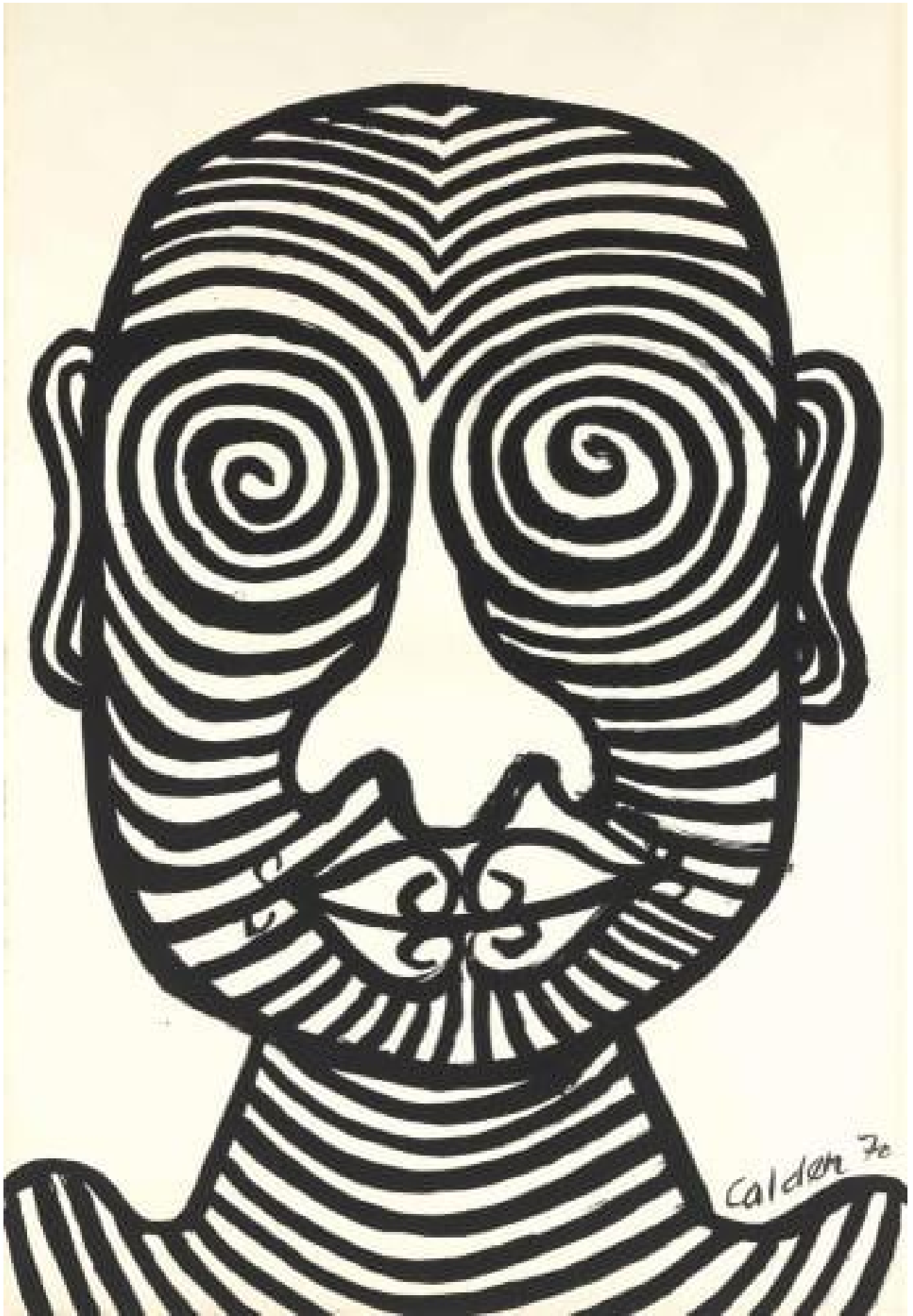


# The Coming of the Skordofálakroi

An Imaginary Catastrophe

by [Peter Dreyer](#) (September 2022)



*The Tattooed Man*, Alexander Calder, 1970

*The razor is a good servant but a bad master.*  
–Koutsovlach saying

They showed up (inevitably) “out of nowhere,”  
with the Even Worse Pissants (EWP) on their tails;  
mercifully, the Garden State Parkway stopped the latter,  
those who did not perish in Pennsylvania,  
hoist on their own petards—and no *pets de nonne* those  
either! [\[1\]](#)

But those dad-blasted Skordofálakroi were said to be extinct,  
too,  
and all of a sudden, there they were, shave-pates à go-go with  
ugly tattoos,  
checking phones, ride-sharing, texting, tweeting, rapping,  
reeking of Versace, Mitsouko, and, for the nonce,  
Jimmy Choo.

*How on earth did they get past the serried ranks  
of security, penetrate the razor wire, survive  
the dark and frozen forests, and cross the sea?  
Are they so much tougher and smarter than we?*

You see them all over now, strolling in malls,  
driving ubers and taxis, delivering mail, writing  
traffic tickets, eating tapas, tending bar, waiting  
on tables, marching in demos, getting clubbed  
by the police, selling fake antiques, curating sociopathic  
art, drinking fine Bordeaux and star-anise *tsipouro*, [\[2\]](#)  
penning syndicated columns for the *Post* and the *NYT*,  
designing barbarian-themed covers for the *New Yorker*,  
pontificating on Fox and MSNBC, podcasting,  
churning out novels, memoirs, and indie movies,  
with those tedious but, it seems, obligatory sex scenes,  
winning Emmys, Grammys, Oscars, Pulitzers, Nobels ...

*O lente, lente currite noctis equi!* [3] Those people will be the death of me!

[1] *Pets de nonne* = literally, “nun’s farts,” little frittered pastries more politely called beignets soufflés.

[2] A Greek distilled spirit resembling grappa or raki, 40–45% alcohol.

[3] \*”Slowly, slowly, you horses of the night!” Ovid, *Amores* 1.13.40, quoted in the final scene of Christopher Marlow’s *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*.

*Note:* Σκορδοφάλακρος = Pilgarlic; a bald head likened to a peeled head of garlic (1529), a bald-headed man; from Latin *pilare*, deprive of hair; “from 17th c. applied in a ludicrously contemptuous way: ‘poor creature’” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The Skordofálakroi, or Pilgarlics, an Amascythian tribe who shaved their heads, invaded the Occident in the \*nth century, apparently driven from the steppe by their neighbors, the Ghuzz. US-EU Joint Emperor Cletus IV Malákagenitos memorably called them “an insatiably greedy lot of barbarians who for good money can be got to take almost any kind of job.”

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**Peter Richard Dreyer** is a South African American writer. He is the author of *A Beast in View* (London: André Deutsch), *The Future of Treason* (New York: Ballantine), *A Gardener Touched with Genius: The Life of Luther Burbank* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan; rev. ed., Berkeley: University of California Press; new, expanded ed., Santa Rosa, CA: Luther Burbank Home & Gardens), *Martyrs and Fanatics: South Africa and Human Destiny* (New York: Simon & Schuster; London: Secker & Warburg), and most recently the

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