

There's no denying the weight of such a sustained and intense probing into the female psyche, and it's readily apparent that you've given considerable thought to a woman's sexual needs from both a psychological and physical perspective. The struggles which your main character experiences in her various stages of enlightenment flow along similar lines, in that the insights she gains about herself are derived as much from physical contact as from bouts of introspection. The amount of background material which Masters & Johnson all having a prominent role to play in the process of discovery, and our hats are off to you for having done your homework in preparing this tale. (As a serious student of sexuality, you might be

the process. your own devising while growing and developing steadily as a storyteller in relationship between us, as you continue to explore new fictional worlds of yours. Hopefully this can be just the beginning of a long and fruitful assist you in your efforts to find a mainstream publisher for your writing and as you know our brochure we're ready and eager to do all we can to brought the first part of DAUGHTER OF THE EXCISION to us for consideration, less well-defined longings. Needless to say we're delighted that you've evidently minded woman in America today, full of specific needs as well as tion. This is a heartfelt, probing study of what it means to be an independent works never ceases to surprise us, and yours is certainly no exception. The variety and ingenuity of needed to put them into words, and who are now trying to break into the writers like yourself, who have interesting story ideas and the imagination to the agency. It's always a pleasure to receive material from newer others in particular in the process -- and of course a most cordial welcome filled, re-examining her relationships with men in general and significant sexually after having reached her mature years somewhat less than full planned trilogy, about a woman coming to terms with herself and her Many thanks for sending us this intriguing story, the first volume of a

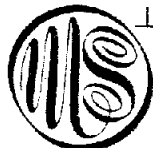
RE: JOURNEYS WITH JC

This letter was heartening--it confirmed the aim to portray male sexualities apart from specific identities. Moreover, I failed to specify before review that the book was autobiographical, and--despite that (by present-day standards?) some material might be received pornographically by some persons--it definitely was not intended to be a "picaresque" novel (but I learned a new word).

Dear Ms. Lenci:

Ms. Tosca Lenci
101 13th Street
West Sacramento, California
95691

SCOTT MEREDITH LITERARY AGENCY INC.
June 22, 1992



Interested in a new book co-written by one of our clients, Phillip Noble, along with Edward Fichel, entitled THE PERFECT FIT: How to Achieve Mutual Fulfillment and Monogamous Passion through the New Intercourse, published by Donald I. Fine, Inc.) Although the mental landscape and the world of sexual ideas generally predominate, you haven't neglected to give the novel a sense of place, with the glimpses of Mexico and the ocean being perhaps the most striking. There are a great many deft touches from your palette of impressions which have been applied in these pages, and your ability to mix and blend emotions and events will undoubtedly stand you in good stead no matter what type of fiction you should turn to in the years to come. We can only urge you to carry on in whatever direction the spirit moves you, because you obviously have something to offer as a creative writer. As we reviewed the manuscript and evaluated its merits and potential salability my senior editors and I often remarked on the frankness and integrity with which you handle intimate details of relationships, and on the intensity of your focus when dealing with the complex business of sexuality. These along with other signs of promise bode well for your future as a yarn-spinner and specialist in introspective yet vigorously female sagas, as long as you can maintain your current level of interest in your writing and its improvement.

Unfortunately, this isn't to say that your story will be the introduction to the general fiction audience you're seeking, not even to those for whom a view of one woman's quest for self-fulfillment and a relationship based on equality and sharing would be most appealing. There are positive features of the novel, to be sure, but at the same time there are substantial problems with it, and ultimately these are more than enough to render the whole unsalable in the mainstream markets. The extent of the difficulties, moreover, and the fact that they are close to the heart of the material, prevent us from recommending any specific revisions as a course of action, leaving us no choice but to decline to represent your tale for sale. We're returning the manuscript to you without further delay, although we do so with regrets and with full appreciation for your potential and dedication to the writer's craft. This decision shouldn't deter you from additional writing, of course, since it's only through sheer persistence and pluck that an aspiring novelist finally achieves the goal of publication and a wide readership, and it would be a shame for one with your evident enthusiasm and ability not to keep at it, refining your ideas and sharpening your approach to the dramatic possibilities in them as you go.

Given the nature of the problems in this story, however, which are both structural and stylistic, it wouldn't be in your better interests to attempt a rewrite. Even in the best of circumstances, when the prospects for making a sale are improved by the effort, revising one's own work is a demanding and often frustrating task, and it's especially hard for a newcomer to the main markets to find the right touch with which to make necessary changes. We wouldn't ask you for them in any event unless there was a reasonable chance for success, which isn't at all the case with this isn't dynamic and compelling enough as written to survive in the highly competitive fiction marketplace, and even an extensive rewrite won't alter that situation significantly. The best advice is to turn your full

attention and energy to new projects and material, and to put this aside for the time being. That's hard advice for any writer to take, we know, but under the circumstances a fresh start is clearly the most viable option, so we heartily commend it to you.

No doubt you're eager to have the particular reasons for our decision, but it would be useful first to consider the principles of plot organization governing nearly all of the fiction being produced or published today, from short stories to novels, screenplays to works for the stage, and from spy thrillers to contemplative tales of marriage and remarriage such as this. Since there are serious structural flaws in this story as presented, it's in order to go back to the basics briefly; once you've the proper tools for narrative assembly firmly in your grasp, we can return to specific trouble spots in your script and take it from there.

The units of plot structure can be arranged into what we refer to as the plot skeleton, and while these have been examined at length in my book WRITING TO SELL, a short outline of them here would be appropriate for our purposes. The five essential elements are summarized easily as follows: a sympathetic protagonist (1), who is confronted at the outset by an immense and urgent problem (2), which looms ever larger and more unresolvable as the lead attempts to grapple with it and as complications (3) ensue, until the ultimate moment of crisis is reached -- the climax (4) -- when the lead is all but overwhelmed by the complexity of the problem and its attendant implications, but manages to rise to the occasion and overcome the dilemma by means of his or her own abilities and devices, thereby resolving the crisis and bringing about a fundamental change in character (5).

That's the plot skeleton in a nutshell. There are variations to this scheme of things, of course, such as when the lead is unable to overcome the central problem and is forced to come to terms with it instead, a process which still causes the character transformation noted above. Yet another option with an especially illustrious history and some relevance in this instance is the difficult and anachronistic bildungsroman, or picaresque novel, in which the lead is an unformed yet individuated and accessible figure, followed through a series of interrelated, highly inventive episodes toward a state of fulfillment or self-enlightenment which is resonant with and fully predicated on the preceding elements of the story. Other possibilities exist as well, but since the novel in hand follows the picaresque and standard forms of the plot skeleton more closely than any of them, they needn't concern us further here.

JOURNEYS WITH JC gets off the track laid down by these guidelines early on, even though it provides the audience with a sympathetic lead character in the embattled woman, the I who is the center of attention throughout the story and from whose perspective the action is viewed. Prominent though she is in the novel, and eager though she may be to analyze and understand who she is and what she wants, she still falls short of engaging the reader fully. One's lack of enthusiasm in approaching her stems partly from a dearth of significant action and sustained dramatic development in this saga as it unfolds. The woman describes her feelings and thoughts quite well, charting a course which leads from retreat to reunion, isolation to

assertion, and marking progress in overall understanding the whole way, but in terms of building a dramatic structure that will support such relentless analysis the plot falters badly. None of the characters, not even the lead, has enough of a spark to really spring to life in the reader's imagination, and without flesh-and-blood individuals to enact the events described and commented on, the novel is doomed to fail. The many JCs who come and go as the lead makes her way to enlightenment could easily be phantoms summoned to bedevil her rather than real men, with their common sexuality being almost the only characteristic the audience is given by which to know them. It isn't sufficient, obviously, and eventually the insular nature of the inquiry begins to prove wearisome, with the changes in the woman's attitude not being either exciting or substantive enough to provide momentum and increasing tension. One has to come away dissatisfied and largely unmoved, and that's certainly not your intention.

There are good things in this saga, of course, but when all things are considered they're unable to render the whole suitable for the main markets. Naturally it can still be useful as a springboard to other projects and ideas once you've decided to move on, and we trust that you will without undue hardship. As you do, the comments in this report should be of value also, since they are meant to give you a better understanding of the demands of the marketplace as well as an appreciation for the preferences of the reading public. If you bear the parts of the plot skeleton in mind when proceeding, especially the need for a fully individual, active lead and a sustained dramatic situation in which the tension builds steadily as she's tested to her limit before finding a way out of her dilemma, you'll be in a much stronger position in the long run to produce salable fiction.

It goes without saying that your confidence in us is much appreciated, and it's also reciprocated, but for the moment we can only offer you advice and encouragement, leaving the burden of writing stories that will sell to rest on your shoulders. Rest assured, however, that we'd be pleased to consider any new work you send, whenever you think it ready for review. In the meanwhile, all best wishes.

Sincerely,

Scott Meredith
SCOTT MEREDITH

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PS. It usually isn't necessary to provide a bibliography for a work of fiction, any more than it is scientific illustrations, so these features can be eliminated next time.