



*JOURNEY WITH JC*

Tosca Lenci

## *Foreword*

*To what degree does Body influence Mind? Can Psyche ever be brought under full control of Conscious Mind? Is there a personified God, or are we children of a nonsubjective universal force?*

There are as many journeys of Consciousness through body, mind and spirit as there are human beings, and this book offers no answers. It is an autobiographical account of just one person's efforts along the way. Who the person is, doesn't matter. What does, is whether a reader finds identification and mutualities of feeling. If so, the writer's work will have been worthwhile. *Journey* also demonstrates how the 'Muse' that possesses every author falls subject to that individual's life, which decides the substance of her or his literary creations.

Over the years, this now 73-year-old writer many times considered destroying *Journey*--times when the Ego, like Freud's, abhorred thought of tainting one's obituarial reputation. Events of the past year renewed faith—that, while experience reduced to fiction may lend solace, truth offers relief to the submerged pyramid of inexpression. "JC" often repeated Aristotle's old saw, that it's impossible for a person to say until the very last moment whether his or her life was a good one. Vital is the ability to lead ourselves through the secret door of Psyche, beyond which we might dwell in peace together.

Lastly, varying perceptions are evocable by this writing, which is not for the over-young and only for adults in age and spirit. Thus, with a tip of the hat to you-know-Who:

*Lest you believe, or from given words inceive  
transcendence can crown all of one's life—  
forever will 'She' grieve  
the Me with heart on sleeve,  
wanting nothing but to be  
one man's wife.*

*So if 'our' shadows have offended,  
think, then, this, and all is mended:  
that you and I but slumbered here  
whilst tawdry visions did appear...*

Sonoma, CA

November 11, 2008

## Part One

### *JC AND ME*

1978

My 25-year marriage was very near its end and I didn't know it.

Two circumstances were extant. The surface one was that JC the First had fallen in love with someone other than me; but each of us had fallen in love briefly with someone else before, without it being the end of *us*. The hidden circumstance was that my caring was lighter on the counterbalance. There was something I once longed to do, which working and raising children had arrested; but I'll never know whether the ending may not have happened, had I not seen the light. Literally, I *saw* the light...

*JC and I were taking a winter ride along a county road near home, my mind musing a poem that spontaneously sprang into it. Wind from the north was cutting sharply across the valley, the long green rye bent flat by its strength. My unfocused eyes were turned toward the passenger window, when all of a sudden entering light canceled thought. The flattening action of the wind was angling the grass such that rays from the overhead sun deflected directly to my eyes. Mind, body and breath were forgotten in a total fusion of awareness with perception. In that moment, thought was perception and mind was body--a union that absorbed my spirit, lifting it to a realm whose descriptive word is divine....*

For years, total blackness was intolerable to me, probably due to the windowless cellar bedroom of early childhood. I needed always to be able to see at least a chink of light. Perhaps that was the basis of my interest in the faculty of vision. Until the above event my interest had been casual; afterward, it went to another dimension. I researched and read voraciously, eyes

moving robotically down pages—books on anatomy, physics and electricity, most of it “Greek” to me. It was as if it was not I but intuition that sought specific bits of information and caused the making of copious notes, whether I grasped the material or not.

Privately, my thoughts and studies began gathering into a magnificent obsession, as if all of my existence was converging on the very generator of it. Then, in the wee hours of Valentine’s Day 1978, JC’s and my first marriage came to its end. At the same time, just when my single income became critical, my employer (the “Diocese”) denied an appeal for reclassification to the higher title my duties warranted.

Outwardly I seemed to be doing just fine. Mind, however, riddled with worry and uncertainty, felt itself on the brink. The future wasn’t just bleak; it was *blank*. I desperately needed *something*, to hold myself together. Persons with a mystical bent are sure believers in ‘synchronicity,’ convinced there is a hidden program to existence. We run into a particular person or event at a privately significant moment. Or, as happened to me, a specific book comes along precisely when it seems we need it....

About a month into the separation, I was drawn on my lunch hour to the bookstore across from the Diocese. The first book I pulled from the shelf was *The Fundamentals of Yoga* by a doctor named Rammurti Mishra. “Now you are unhappy and full of anxiety--” I read. *How true!* I leafed further:

“Yoga is freedom of spirit from fetters of material desires, and permanent victory of consciousness over ignorance. ... Our present life is the result of suggestions during our previous life, and our future life will be the result of present suggestions. ... The body and the mind are interdependent. ... The science of Yoga...prescribes exercises for both the body and the mind, so that they may develop themselves in psycho-physiological equilibrium. ... Never doubt your ability to control your mind. ... Although modern science and Yoga travel different roads, their goals are similar.” (Pages 2, 76, 120, 188, xxvii.)

Psychology had been my intended minor study (writing, the major), in that long-ago, pre-marriage girlhood. I recalled a comment by Carl Jung, at a time when he “stood helpless before an alien world:”

“I was frequently so wrought up that I had to do certain yoga exercises in order to hold my emotions in check. I would do these exercises only until I had calmed myself enough to resume my work...” (*Memories, etc.*, page 177.)

I had found a distracting challenge. I began with simple postures and, as the separation months progressed, gradually initiated meditation practices. A private half hour after work made my evenings measurably more productive; but I still was miserable. At year’s end I added a week without pay to my regular vacation time, and I took myself to the southern coast of Mexico--to a little fishing village the First and I discovered on our first big trip together, in 1973....

*JC the Fisherman at La Ventosa, Mexico didn't wear a long robe and sandals. He wore black trousers and a turtle-necked shirt soft and white, and his hair wasn't gold but coal black in the moonlight. Walking a deserted scape smoothed virginal by the tide, how magical the beach was at midnight--*

"Look--a circle around the moon!" the Fisherman interrupted my thought. "That means good fishing."

I looked up. Indeed, the moon was *en su casa--'in its house*. At center of jet blackness, encircled by a smoky ring, the full moon was as bright as my companion's teeth. He put his arm around my shoulder and turned us away from shore. "Donde vamos?" I asked. *Where were we going?*

"Alla." He pointed to a three-sided thatched hut, a deserted *palapa*, where the tree line met beach sand.

*Over there?....* His stride tugged my hamstrings, and I thought about his younger legs--

young as mine were, when I decided it was time to have a second child--

"Que pienses?" the Fisherman asked.

*What was I thinking about?* I smiled and shook my head...

*JC the First hadn't been able to comprehend, back in '61, how a logical conclusion to a syllogism can be defied by instinct.*

*"Are you sure you want another child?" he asked repeatedly. "I thought you wanted to finish college. I thought you wanted to be a writer."*

*I dredged reason. I might easily give phrase to wild wheat's pale gold from the spectrum's heart; but maternal instinct lay beyond Language's threshold. There, where connections between mind and body disappear, words refused me.*

*Motherhood mornings: my turn for the carpool to the elementary school, still in my robe; back to put on a secretary costume; then off to an office where for \$3.50 an hour I'd perform all clerical work for a lawyer's \$40,000-a-year position. Home in time to start dinner, the morning mess to clear before the evening one got distributed. Yet all of it then seemed the most natural thing in the world for me to be doing, too busy to note: my era was hurtling women into a behavior psychologically unsound--changing personas regularly, repeatedly; housekeeper into business woman; homemaker into breadwinner; eventually, mother into father...*

"Que pienses?" The Fisherman pressed me down to the sandy floor. Then, again, across my ear like a movie script, "Que pienses?"

*I might have been born to be your wife,* was my thought.

He propped himself on an elbow and unstrapped his belt without moving his face. "Tu es muy Linda," he drawled, as if, despite the blackness, he was looking deeply into my eyes.

*...AND, were I your wife, I'd be tending our dirt-floored shack this very moment,*

*wondering, if God was so great, why He'd sent me a handful of children before I'd lived my own childhood...*

A student traveler named Aaron also was visiting the village. He rented a hammock at the Castillegos' open air beach cantina, where usually I had dinner. "I do believe that man's in love with you," Aaron naively had said the previous evening. Like prior nights, JC the Fisherman had sat patiently on damp sand just beyond the restaurant's weak light, waiting to cross my path when I returned to my room. A 43-year-old divorced woman, traveling alone?--*I was a rich mark!--*

The Fisherman pulled off his trousers so exuberantly I almost laughed. How was he to know I was beyond flattery, beyond thinking it was I, the person, that Man reacted to instead of--

"Que pienses?" A whisper this time...

"Be careful!" Dona Castillegos had warned me about walking the beach after dark. "An American woman was murdered out there only last year." More than inadequate Spanish had kept me from responding it mattered not to me, presently, whether I lived or died. "You know the type," she had cautioned further, after seeing the Fisherman engage me in conversation my second morning at the beach. "Like a soulful-eyed dog," she swayed her hips against mine in rhythm with her words, "he'll nudge you, nudge you, nudge you."

The years separating me and Juanita Castillegos were negligible; the cultural differences, enormous. I, the divorced woman, sat long hours staring at the sea, questioning all my prior days. She, pushing aside tables tended in daytime to make room for cots at night, rarely looked at it. No dissatisfaction--least of all, spousal infidelity--could break her marriage's continuity. Yet, had I cared to explain it, I think she would have understood my convoluted use of the Fisherman for my own purpose, as much as his, me, for his—

He grabbed his shirt. "Every single night! You could have had it like this every night if you hadn't been so stubborn. But, no! 'I have *work*, to do,' you kept saying. Always, 'work to do.'" It was true; I had kept busy writing. I had begun work on a piece I called "A Child's Book of Light."

I stepped into my halter dress and slipped its straps over a heavy-cotton maroon shirt with crew neck and long sleeves. Oh, yes, I had played it virtuously during this vacation, at the end of the first year of "The Big D," as one of my 'little jc's' titled it. If with full explanation, Dona Castillegos might have comprehended my "quest," the Fisherman, never: didn't everyone know what a lonely, recently-emancipated, middle-aged Gringa was seeking? And didn't he in bestowal of a simple act provide it? The Fisherman, my second post-divorce sexual encounter, would not have taken kindly being chalked up merely as an objective observation in a 'scientific' study....

Several months into the divorce year, my body had been in better shape than ever, but I didn't stop in front of the mirror. Hot bathwater was running. I whisked the red dress off of its hanger. A slip, knee-high nylons, the silver shoes...

It was late. People most likely already were arriving at the hall, but I took time to make every centimeter outside as clean as in. Three fluffs of powder and I was dressed, running a comb through my hair. Pinning it back simply, I remembered it in rollers, my face in makeup, and father's gentle words to his teenaged daughter. "What's wrong with being natural?" But could any parent wield power equal to Madison Avenue's?

*A handkerchief, a few dollars, the car keys...I wouldn't need anything else--*

JC the Younger will be there!

*No! I'm not going to think about that!...*

A parking space out front--how lucky could I be? Coincidence (was it?) he was the first person I'd see? "Come! Sit with me! Come! Drink wine with me!" The flowers, the silver, the women's dresses, the bright white linen of the tablecloths--the first self I knew was perceiving anew, clarified lustres of every hue. "Come with me! Laugh with me! Come with me! Dance with me..."

*"Your cervix and uterine muscles are in bad shape," my gynecologist had determined six years previous. "If you were a Mexican woman in the fields, you'd simply have to live with the condition; but I believe surgery is justified."*

*Vaginal hysterectomy: while I was upended unconscious on a table, he simply reached in and snipped the uterus out--less painful than a tonsillectomy; no visible scar. But the ovaries remained intact; their hormones still flowed...*

The past was slumbering; the future, undecided. Neither concerned me now; why not be delighted? There was not one thing to taint this night: no commitments to be spoken, no promises to be broken. No fear to be alleviated; no child could be conceived!—purely, in friendship, 'Love' to be seized? The eagerness with which we kissed and touched in the car was as great as that which awaited the touch. I knew where I was going, and why....

In the living room Rod Stewart sang, 'I can see by your eyes that you've probably been crying forever.' Where we were, Time arranged that the moon's light fall at my feet as I sat on the edge of the bed and slipped off my shoes. But I barely had time to see its light glint off their silver straps, before he lifted my hair high and kissed my neck. His fingers fumbled at the ties of my dress but together we managed to loosen them and then his hands cupped my breasts and his lips were running down my spine.

It was as if the soft sheets had been waiting to be smothered by our bodies as we lay back and somewhere there were pillows, but he drew his hands down my hips and thighs as I closed my eyes and realized his first desire also was mine, for he gently placed his lips where I most desired to be kissed. And I did not know I had forgotten my breath until his mouth came to mine and caught a small sigh as his fingers caressed where his lips had left and his words, my ear, as he whispered, "How I love that sound..."

I could have kept forever the silky feeling of his soft thick hair sliding through my fingers but he lifted my arms high. And it seemed as if gravity itself was defied, as I came to rest with my lips on his breast; for it then was I sliding upon him, and my heart was singing the Song of Solomon...

*How beautiful and pleasant are you, oh Love, in delights! Never shall I forget this night of nights...*

One sphere in the void was carrying us perfectly and with it I would go so long as it lasted--an electromagnetic force bonding skins together so evenly, one cannot not tell where one begins and the other ends...

*Come, my Beloved! Let us go out to the countryside. Let us lodge in the villages and rise up early, to see if the vine flowers...*

In the semidarkness I saw his curved whiteness, arm overhead, light-dark ridges of brow and black depths of eyes. Thoughts floated free--separated from the body that moved without thinking; but the mind cannot be!--for there is where sensation is felt sweetly, known instantly. Able no longer to summon an image, I concentrated thoughtlessness on the inner universe; and, in total forgetfulness, amid star points of light, did those things which most please a beloved, causing him to do the same for me...*Darling, I have saved for you the old delights and the new...*

I waded waist-high into the surf and rubbed my body clean. Ego registers coarseness of existence; the self-child exults in finer reality. Memory of the Fisherman wouldn't wash away, however; and I didn't want it to. It was part of a privately accumulating file on one woman's sexuality, to answer her own question: *was she a miscreated anomaly, after all?*

Moon-warmed water slapped my bare feet as I anticipated a leisurely walk back to town. But the reputation of one who offers his body in exchange for bread did not permit dawdling. According to Juanita, JC the Fisherman long had been banned from all the beach cantinas. "We must walk faster," he said, looking nervously in all directions. I hopped to fall in step with him and our shoulders touched. He leaned his head against mine in an innocent gesture. "Isn't there some small thing you would like to give me?" he asked in a little-boy voice.

*Some small thing?--*

"A sweater, maybe? It gets cold out there on the water."

*Sweet Jesus.* The only thing with me in Mexico resembling a sweater, I told him, was the knit shirt on my back. He fingered the fabric approvingly; it would do.

"Come to my room," I said. "So I can change."

"No!" He was afraid to be caught in the act again. "I can't do that."

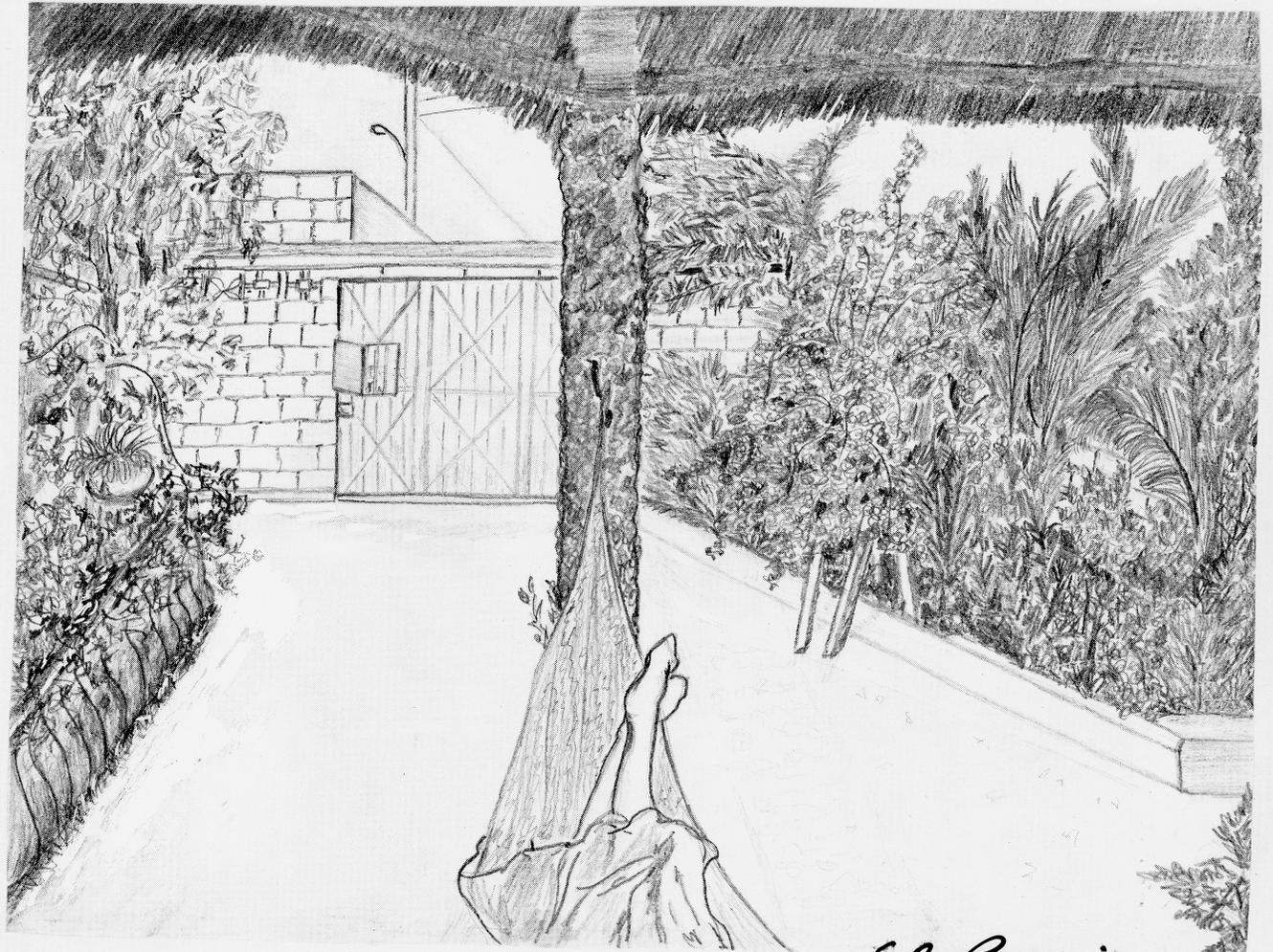
"Then wait--here, in the shadow of the church..."

My belongings were ready for departure on the morrow. I dug to the bottom of the tightly-packed shoulder bag for a blouse to replace the shirt. In a corner of the bag my fingers touched metal. My wedding ring! I had planned to throw it into the sea. I took it out and rolled it between my fingers, a simple gold band that had cost fifty dollars a quarter of a century ago. What might it be worth now? I wondered--a hundred dollars, maybe? A lot, in pesos.

The fisherman had told me he wanted his children to have a better chance at life than he'd had. He hoped to open his own cantina. Early mornings he dove for oysters off the point of Cortez's Hill. Midmornings he took the dilapidated bus to Salina Cruz, to sell his catch; evenings, he sold himself--all to obtain a dream different only in place and degree than that I had dreamed, in the earlier time embraced by that golden band.

I read for a last time the line of Christopher Marlowe's passionate shepherd's poem, which the First had had inscribed around the ring's inner circle: *Come live with me, and be my love--*

*Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's*, I thought, and dropped the ring into my dress pocket.



*El Paraiso*

La Ventosa's cocks had stopped crowing, but next day's light yet had to edge the wood shutters of the paneless window of my plaster-walled room--one of six which, together with a small dirt yard, comprised the El Paraiso beach 'motel.' Amato, El Paraiso's owner, wouldn't throw the generator switch until six.

I awakened to a familiar smell.

At La Ventosa the village women rose early to begin the daily bread. Before the cock crow one smelled boiling limestone, as steam from pots on outdoor fires drifted toward the sea. The corn was left to soak until evening, when it was hand-rubbed to remove the last of the husks and then ground, also by hand. Meanwhile, the "masa" prepared the previous evening would be hand-patted into today's tortillas, some for the family, the rest to be sold at market.

Gradually I became conscious of an aggravated awareness of body: damned (dammed!) energy, in the region of the clitoris. I stretched beneath the corn sacking sheet and contemplated the only recourse. Prior to setting out on my La Ventosa retreat I had done some research in the Shields Library at University of California, Davis, where the main source of information on female masturbation was over an hundred years old....

*"Some lustful women have made all outward show of virtue and morality," Dr. Samuel Gregory spoke from an 1845 pamphlet. "They have prudence enough in the midst of strong desire to refute disadvantageous matches, yet they abandon themselves in this vice when at the same time they would rather die than betray a weakness to any man living."*

*Annoyed, I laid the pamphlet aside and picked up a treatise by Tissot called Diseases Produced by Onanism. "All intellectual faculties are enfeebled, the memory is destroyed and*

*sometimes the patient becomes slightly deranged.... Pimples appear on the face, supporting pustules...."*

*Whew! I thought-- I'd made it well past 40 with, albeit little increase at least no decrease in intellectual faculty; and thank God a tendency to acne didn't run in the family! It wasn't my intent, however, to go backward in time. Knowledge was common enough now, that masturbation was not responsible "more than any other cause, to people lunatic asylums." No; I was seeking new information which, it seemed, did not exist....*

I slipped my hand between my legs. Beneath the flesh the engorged clitoris was firm, tightly drawn at its base against the pubic bone. I trapped the lower part of it on the left side under my right fingers. My other hand stroked my breasts....

*The libido.... Jung saw its ultimate yield in the artist's work; Freud harnessed it to society's development. The energy!--that constantly rushing energy the body absorbs, conducts and must discharge. What determined whether one was directed or victimized by it? So what--if one suspected that the force was purely organic, biological, impersonal? Did it prevent one from experiencing shallow breath, restless distraction, loneliness? When perfectly tamed, Freud said. What, pray tell, was "perfectly tamed?"--eating too much? drinking or smoking too much? jogging to a heart attack?*

*I shoved Tissot aside. I had hoped for some real food for thought to take with me to Mexico, but thus far the stack of books on the small desk of the library carrel had yielded nothing. One book left: The Function of the Orgasm by Wilhelm Reich. The author's name meant nothing to me; I leafed pages perfunctorily. "Sex-economy is a natural-scientific, empirically founded theory of sexuality...an investigation of biophysical energy," I read. "Sexual energy operates in the entire body, not solely in the interstitial tissues of the gonads.*

*Every person who succeeds in preserving a certain amount of naturalness knows this....”*

*Sentence upon sentence evoked a concordance in me. Here had been a medical doctor, psychiatrist, and psychologist who described total energetic interdependence of mind and body-- a first offering of a possibility I longed to believe realizable: consciousness freed toward highest concentration, devotion and power! My search for an authority had ended...*

The bare bulb in the corner of my room at El Paraiso began to glow, as rising sensations dragged thought from contemplation and mind sought fantasy to accentuate the body's feelings...

*I was the newest wife in the harem of a sultan, master of the vast differences between younger and older women. For several nights he had had me readied and brought to his tent, where inch by inch he lowered my bodice, gently kissing the skin as it revealed itself, fingertips exploring exquisitely lightly curves and creases of my form. Each preceding night, when I murmured for more, he had dismissed me to await future summons while he favored another wife with his aroused endowment. Tonight, however, his fingers probed virgin territory as my bodice fell before his lips—*

My armpits were stinging; my eyes, sealed. I threw aside the roughness of the cornsacking sheet, fingers attempting to simulate a lover's kiss. Taut leg muscles felt as if they would snap, but the body was being driven by a force that does not recognize hand or fingers--

*I was the woman of a revolutionary. I watched him pull closed the heavy iron door of the bedroom of our hacienda hideaway as the moon's light, hard through an arched window, cast his shadow larger than life upon the opposite wall. He took a tall, lighted candle from the window casement. With deliberate movements, prolonging anticipation, he let the melting wax drip until he could secure the candle to the floor at the foot of the bed. Then he sat on the edge*

*of the bed and began to unlace his boots--*

Almost there.... JESUS!--are *You* the cause of this incorrigible flame?—

*Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me!*

But the form of 'god' presenting itself would not surrender to identification. He whirled and swirled through the internal universe, refusing name or face—a silent, perfect superman, who through imagination alone would bring about what no mortal can—

One stroke from ecstasy!--

*Lamb of god, who takest away the sins of the world, hear my prayer!*

Finally the soundless explosion occurred. My head went back, my chin was thrust forward; shoulders, too, curved forward slightly. The pubic bone and pelvis thrust upward; the small of the back pressed hard against the mattress. Fission or fusion--what difference did it make? The source was the same, and here only one path could it take, as, with the speed of light, the chain reaction reached the cortex to spark another which separated and flew through every nerve tendril. The process repeated itself with diminishing force, until--

*I was with Him, supreme male ideal, and He, with me--supreme female; mother of his children; mother of all children; Mother of God—*

Again!--a second orgasm; the soft, cunnilingus type of girlhood, a gentle all-pervading sweetness lifting the muscles surrounding the mouth into an involuntary smile. But still, not enough! An alien hand caressed my abdomen; the fingers maintained momentum--

THERE!--the body convulsed again; but before it subsided new thoughts ignited, one palm reaching, pressing above the mons while below it the fingertips of the other hand rapidly sparked the root of the clitoral shaft against bone--

*Oh Lord I am not worthy, that thou shouldst enter under my roof; please, only say the*

*word and my soul shall be healed...*

Touches...touches...touches... At the throat, the waistline; down, down, down...

Yes! Impersonal the force that was moving me--the presence of which pins us to earth, the withdrawal of which lifts birds on high. It can burn like fire or cool like an thousand moons; it penned the signatures of Shakespeare and Mendelssohn. And I--detached, suspended--"I" was witness once again to craving instinct--genderless Consciousness confronting pure Nature, beseeching the Friend with whom forever it might walk namelessly, nakedly, unashamedly....

I tried to imagine touches and feelings only human affection can bring.... Hands, lips and sounds of a trusted loved one doing and saying the things one cannot for oneself. Yet of whom could I think? No mortal in coition could meet this demand!

*I was lying on a white rug on the floor of a room that was my bedroom in a place that was my home, but it did not matter who I was. Beyond open french doors white night flowers glimmered in black foliage. Deep in the glade a bright light caught a falling star.*

*I arose and ran through cool grass to an ideal specimen of a man who emerged from the afterglow. I rested my head against his chest. "I've been remembering thoughts that you sent to me," I said.*

*He drew me down to the grass. "Such as?"*

*"Such as, 'whirling is different from turning.'"*

*He ran his hands along my legs. "'Your body is a vegetable and mineral machine that should be kept well-oiled?'"*

*"And that!"*

*"What fools ye mortals be?"*

*"Am I mortal, then, after all?" I asked.*

*He lifted himself over me. And I knew. He had what no mortal man could have. An organ of unexpendable stamina that would provide both pleasure of penetration and that incredibly forceful friction one infinitesimal portion of me demanded, all perfectly directed by an all-knowing will. He smoothed my hair away from my face and kissed my eyes. "Don't you worry about a thing," he said. "I know exactly what you need and I won't stop until you're satisfied."*

My body was trembling and damp with perspiration but I could not stop--could not be finished, until *It* was finished with me. Not until that last overwhelming release, granted only in one specific area of tissue, bone, and nerve; yielded only by one specific mode of pressure and containment, that would bring the body to a half-sitting position and end an event which had everything to do with formulas of physics and nothing to do with romance.

At that purely mechanistic pinnacle even Fantasy flees. The trick, I knew, was to fight mental interference...

*A centimeter is equal to about two-fifths of an inch. Have you seen an ant carrying a fly? Remember! Mass is united by energy! Escape velocity is seven miles per second. NOW!—when you close your eyes you will see a bright white zigzagged stripe!*

Gradually, I became aware of the outside world. Amato called something to his wife, Josefina; a truck pulled out of El Paraiso's yard. I slid over to the edge of the bed and swung my legs over the side, mind blank except for the awareness of breath flowing unimpededly through me.

Josefina shouted to her son. I heard the regulated bristling of a broom in the courtyard stop and sounds of the boy's feet, as he ran to answer the call.

Very soon I would begin my return journey: La Ventosa via Salina Cruz to Oaxaca; Oaxaca to Mexico City by plane the following day; from there, home, where Monday morning would find me back at my secretarial job. It was time for a last swim and farewells. I drew on my bathing suit and switched off the light, tossed my beach towel over my shoulder and padlocked the planked door.

Coarse pebbles slid through my sandals along the path toward the sea. Ahead of me a young girl was returning home from the village well. She moved slowly, her shoulders hunched under a wood stave bent by water buckets hanging at each side.

I came abreast of her. "¿Ti puedo ayudar?"--can I help you? I asked. The teen's look was dubious; why should I want to help her? I, a would-be-good-Samaritan, was insistent, motioning that I would take one side of her burden.

The girl, intuiting that this silly Gringa had a lesson to learn, gingerly let the buckets down. On my first try I couldn't lift just my one end of the stave! She suppressed a giggle and waited patiently until I secured a stronger hold. When we had gone about fifty paces she tugged me into the yard of a dwelling set back from the path. As we deposited the water buckets near the front door I glanced inside--one large room, no kitchen or bath. Two small children played out front; a baby cried within.

I smiled a goodbye and, turning back toward the beach, thought, *Humankind keeps asking why 'God' created it, when the question should be, why does It create Itself?*

The bay was a silvery platter, fishing boats heavy with the early morning catch cut tarnished slivers toward shore. The tide, although ebbing, still was high. I skirted the waves past the Mendoza restaurant, to a small cove carved between outcroppings of urchin-covered stone, dropped the towel, stepped out of my sandals, and waded into the brim of the southern sea...

One makes the half-hour trip from La Ventosa to Salina Cruz by local bus, sharing makeshift benches in its gutted interior with village fisherman and housewives headed for the public market. There, the men sell their catch and the women buy all necessary supplies, for La Ventosa itself had no store.

Josefina made the trip almost daily and once insisted I accompany her. I felt like a pubescent girl in mother's tow, as Josefina hustled me along the market's crowded aisles. She even scolded me for lagging behind, when I became mesmerized by a beautiful fish wife with raven hair, seemingly oblivious to the sensual body under her simple cotton dress. Fish scales up to her elbows, a totality of persona unquestioning her milieu, she rapidly scraped her wares without looking, while holding hearty conversations with neighboring workers. *Good Lord, I thought, what a life.*

I was familiar with southern Mexico territory because of the vacation with JC the First six years before. With luck, the early bus from Salina Cruz would get me to the cosmopolitan city of Oaxaca, midway between the south coast and Mexico City, in time to revisit a few favorite sites--the Mayan temples of Monte Alban and Rufino Tamayo Museum, for sure, and perhaps the ancient tree at El Tule, to see again the mystically formed figures within its gnarled branches. How much I could cover would depend on a hired taxi.

There was a third possibility--a strange structure in the countryside where, on that previous vacation, I had met some interesting transient artists. Now, it doesn't pay to wonder *what if* I hadn't decided to wait until the cathedral off Oaxaca's square struck noon, before accepting one of many taxis that slowed to make themselves available. Nat, the chosen driver, just happened to know both the structure and its owner, who also just happened to be there when

we arrived.

“El Castillo,” as the place locally was called, was a three-room white elephant, on a large piece of real estate along Juarez’s road in Oaxaca’s mountain valley, and had served as an outpost during revolutionary days. Its large, semicircular front room, all brick, was a later addition. Each of the two original, adobe-walled rooms, with arched brick ceilings, sat on the very ovens in which the bricks had been cast. The property had its own well, several fruit trees, and enough land for sharecropping--all for sale for fifteen thousand dollars!

On the plane home I did some wild calculating. Proceeds after paying off the mortgage on the modest tract house, awarded to me in the divorce, together with a small retirement deposit from my most recent job, could be enough! I could buy El Castillo, and still be able to satisfy Mexico’s modest requirement of sufficient capital to subsist until I became a citizen! A chain of coincidences had taken me to the door of a dream, and it all felt so right....

When I announced a plan to move to southern Mexico, family and friends were mystified. "Why?"

"Because I fell in love with it."

"But why give up everything and *move* there?"

"So I can live cheaper, still have a house where my children can visit, and exist a while without working a secretarial job--a chance to write! To try what I've said I wanted to do ever since I was 12." I didn't bother to try to explain the rest—the extracurricular work as my coworkers’ union leader, the consistent denials of justified promotion.

My mother didn't ask. Her only comment was, "I know you have suffered a great disappointment." It was the one time during the entire process that I cried when someone else could see.

Various people stood ready to give post-divorce advice, all of which had to do with economic risks of single, middle-aged, end-of-the-20th-Century Working Woman. As usual, no one said a word about the body. I gave myself seven months to complete the plan. I hired a bilingual attorney and secured an option to buy El Castillo. I told myself, *I will become proficient in Spanish; if I fail to make it as a writer during the five years of applied-citizenship, then I'll teach English, or be a secretary there.* Thus ran the dream: El Castillo would be the site of my rebirth.

Anger stymies my speech but can make flood gates of my tear ducts. Recalling my mother's simple words over the intervening months still made me cry. Not just over 25 years of lost marriage. but the equal number of a "career" as unrewarded as it had been unchosen.

Culturally and psychologically influenced through one era, materially damned in the current one, I felt myself doubly raped, a disgusting byproduct of the only life livable in consequence of myths and matrices of private institution and public society, into both of which I had invested all I had to give. It felt too soon to have reached the end of the political system of things; it definitely was too late comprehending the forces that drove it and me. What anguished me most was that I had been the type of woman subject to relying on Man's words.

The warp and woof of it all twisted furiously in my mind--the ignorance of young marriage; the lack of a college degree, second-class woman deserving but denied--second-class mother, working double-time! When the flood in psyche finally abated there arose from the mire a double-harnessed Phoenix--Sex and Gender! The former could turn marriage partnerships into travesty; together they dictated a woman's worth. Sex had brought me into existence; gender directed my development. Sex destined when I would marry; gender determined the roles I could play. I hated most the effects of that collusive legacy on female children, especially the

original one in me. Sex and Gender!--the best half of life decided by the throw of those dice.  
*Henceforth, when I toss them, I vowed, I'll not only know why; I'll spit on them first....*

As the days wound down toward August, I kept thinking if I really was going to establish my own republic it would help to have another pair of hands. My upcoming 'adventure' intrigued a liberal co-worker. JC the Christian was a strong bachelor eight or so years younger, with whom I'd enjoyed a long, lively friendship. He possessed invaluable practical skills; and, although he had been only a lukewarm union participant, he claimed to want out of "the system" as badly as I did. Mid-July he said, "I wouldn't mind going, myself! I'd like to hear more. How about if I come over after work to talk?"

Based on his prior attentions and my grand plan, I drew my own self-serving scenario.  
"Sure! C'mon over."

He came; I didn't; he left before dawn.

*Three downs--* undoubtedly par for the first year of a white widow's course; three post-divorce 'opportunities' for neglected body to have 'sexual' need satisfied; no orgasm each time. Although Ego took a sound blow from the changed Younger countenance, 'the day after,' he at least had stomach enough to say, "We'll always be friends." But the two crumpled sticks of Wrigley's Spearmint chewing gum that the Christian left on the bureau took the cake.

Meanwhile, I continued preparing for the big move. It was staggering: securing papers, culling and packing possessions and furniture for storage (necessities, only!), until I was established and they could be shipped; deciding what to carry in and on top of the car, to homestead 'til the goods arrived; arranging transfer of funds; and, of course, finishing my tenure at the Diocese, which was to end July 31.

My Yoga routine was body sustaining, and positive suggestions during pre-sleep

meditation helped keep me on schedule. Keeping hold of confidence, however, was another story. Lunchtime, I would hide in my car and meditate to get through the afternoon. Whenever mind wasn't occupied with tasks, a myriad of fearful thoughts stood ready to enter. *What if the car breaks down? What if I lose the bank receipt for the savings I'm transferring? Etc. etc. etc....*

Again on a noon hour without any forethought I visited the bookstore. The title of the first book to stop my eyes was irresistible: *The Yoga of Light*, an English translation of the Sanskrit *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* of Swami Svātmarāma. The Yogi's writings consisted of a number of *slokas* (terse teachings of method) leading to *raja yoga*....

“There is only one germ of evolution, and that is Om;...only one duty: to become independent from everything....” ... “[S]He who recognizes the true meaning of raja yoga can by the grace of the guru achieve realization, liberation, [and] inner steadfastness....” ... “...Yoga is a refuge for all those who are scorched by the three fires.” (Pages 119, 146, 26.)

The “three fires” were described as sufferings caused by one's self, by others, and by Fate. I felt myself victim of all three simultaneously, and I had found my second literary guru.

By August I was ensconced in El Castillo. Despite everything--the rigors of the long car trip, the hassles making El Castillo livable, and the fear, the fear, the *fear*—my plan was coming together beautifully! I bought a double bed and an unadorned armoire (there being no closets in the place), and fashioned bedroom curtains from yellow-flowered sheets. The main room still had no furniture, but I finally had a working kitchen with sink, stove and refrigerator.

A scant two months had passed, and I had completed the core acts of my first play. I decided I deserved a night on the town, maybe dinner at the El Tule restaurant that overlooked Oaxaca's square....

I turned the steering wheel right, exited Juarez's road, and entered 190's stream of traffic toward town, happily mulling that afternoon's meeting with a farm worker from a nearby village named, like the city of my birth, San Francisco. The man's name was Abel, and he and another man from the village would begin tomorrow to clear El Castillo land to plant a truck garden. The harvest would be shared equally; what we didn't use ourselves, we would sell for shared profit at the public market.

A contented crowd was milling the *zocalo*, the lights in the square seeming sharper than usual. At a table up on El Tule's veranda, I just had moved my chair to rest my elbows on the balustrade, when from under the jacaranda tree at the corner of the park there emerged two long, white-levi-clad legs. Above the white jeans, a green plaid cotton shirt. Around the neck, a knotted paisley scarf, and, above it, a jaw soft and strong at the same time, a battered nose once aquiline, and fiercely-lit eyes under a cro-magnon ridge. *Not* JC the First, obviously. But what an incredible facsimile! *Jesus*, I thought, keep me away from *him*! However--as proverbial luck would have it--before I turned away, JC the Countryman, locally known as 'Cactus Jack,' looked up....

It was happening; I knew its workings in all their palpabilities. But I couldn't slow my heartbeats, which matched the incessant click-click-click of thought, as I searched for a parking spot as near as possible to the banos; nor my feet, which despite efforts to remain nonchalant, quickened with each step.

*You know nothing about him!--*

Yet hadn't he appeared just when I needed someone? There was so much work to be done!



*The Countryman*

The Countryman's directions were poor; the baths weren't just around the corner from the convent, they were farther up the street, and the sign wasn't visible until I was almost there. But then there it was, and there he was, and I, ecstatic at the sight. Nothing could change things now....

The steam took my breath away, the dry air from the lungs rushing into the moisture as, circling each other, first he laughed and then I did; but we didn't touch each other. "How did you manage to stay so lovely?" he said. Although I knew it was a line, it sounded good; but *not* as good as when, later back at El Castillo, he rolled a cigarette, lighted it, and said, "Lady, you've got a deal." I had told him everything--the life that had brought me there and the life I now intended to create. A would-be partner was entitled to nothing less, and I was in the process--*wasn't I?*-- of striking a gentlemen's agreement.

What I hadn't learned, yet, was, when a man called me "Lady," I had better watch out. Yet, if I believed in a conscious God, I would say the Countryman's appearance from under the jacaranda tree at that precise moment was intentioned to cast my true nature in cement. Climaxes withstanding, he and I fit together like halves of an object severed at the beginning of Time. One night during lovemaking he blurted four words into my ear: *Can it be possible?* I didn't ask him what he meant, because I was absorbed by an unverbalizable nagging, from somewhere deep inside of me....

Not a wish--*a desire?* No, not conscious desire. *What, then, was it?*--that 'thought' insisting itself upon me? *Conception!*--conception, Conception, CONCEPTION! Miles from native land, family, and friends, in an unceremonied partnership with a near-stranger, and thinking about conceiving a child? Now that was *impossible*--horrifying even--yet true: instinct, combining with affinity of matter and physiopsychological state of being, completely overriding

psychical comprehension....

Much more was accomplished the next month, occupying El Castillo with JC the Countryman. Abel and his partner were hard at work. The land was ready for crop planting; Abel even had sown flower seeds under the front window.

Supporting the Countryman in exchange for security and companionship felt well worth it. Before his arrival, nights could be frightening, enveloped by rural blackness without telephone or near neighbor. He had solved the electrical switch problem with the pump that moved water from well to cistern; and I no longer worried about the unpaned bathroom window, through which--sitting on the toilet--one had a lookout all the way to the northern ridges. As charming as was that small open circle in the brick wall, it was big enough for a slim body to squirm through.

Then, one day I was sitting at the small hand-carved desk, bought for a song at a local factory and hand rubbed by me, myself, to a smooth finish. The morning sun through the kitchen window made a perfect patch for my trusty little Royal portable. I glanced up from typing to see the owner's Land Rover come through the gate, a male passenger riding with him.

I knew something was up as soon as I opened the gold glass door. Neither man looked me in the eye. "Let me introduce my interpreter," Senor S. said in a newly formal tone of voice. *Interpreter? Since when did we need an interpreter?*

"Yes," I said after the interpreter's little English spiel. "I know my option to buy runs out Friday; but my confirming resident-immigrant papers haven't arrived yet from the State Department in Mexico City. You mean Mr. S. wants to sell El Castillo to someone other than *me?*"

The interpreter nodded. "Someone has offered eight thousand dollars more."

I turned to the Countryman. I could pay the owner the agreed amount, regardless--surely the papers would come any day? We'd work it out somehow!--main thing was that we continue our work, in the spirit I believed we shared--

The Countryman avoided my eyes. Instead he addressed the men. "Will she be reimbursed for the improvements?"

"But of course," the interpreter parroted the owner.

I think I went into shock; things were moving faster than I could think. I turned my back to the three men and faced the empty semi-circular front room. The light through its iron-framed windows was laying diamond patterns on the pink cement floor, that I had scrubbed on my hands and knees my first night in the castle. I had envisioned library shelves surrounding a brightly-colored seating area, a meeting place for libertines--in the original, not Shakespeare's, meaning of the word. Now I saw nothing but the blankness of my mind, upon which a hateful thought was affixing itself: *the Countryman really hadn't given a shit about any of it!*

A later day would come when I would be able unemotionally to marvel at how quickly the matter was settled. For the Oaxaca Sear's stove and refrigerator, hot water heater and sink, and the plumbing it took two workers two days' hammering through two-foot adobe walls to install—for \$1,000 in furnishings and an inestimable amount of personal labor: \$800. Within two days my personal possessions were stored with my car in a Oaxaca garage, and I was snaking with the Countryman through the mountains to San Cristobal de las Casas, where he had someone waiting to buy what I had believed to be *his* Volkswagen but which, it developed, was of questionable title.

The road was unpaved and I wondered how much the little VW could take, as JC the

Countryman took the curves always faster than I would, and over potholes that jolted the axle to the near-breaking point. He had snagged the VW from “the Duke”—his Oaxacan arch rival—and its questionable ownership was about to pass to yet someone else in San Cristobal de las Casas, from whom the Countryman expected to collect some money before we boarded a bus for Guatemala City. First, however, he wished to take a little side trip—

*Do you know the way to San Jose?....* San Jose de la Pacifica--home of the “magic” mushrooms, where the First and I had ventured back in '73; can't say, however, that this was a sentimental journey. The castle was not far behind, but the dream it had held for me had vaporized.

We arrived toward sunset at San Jose, a place the Countryman obviously knew well. His legs were lots longer than mine, but I was hot on his heels as he pushed through bushes to the hut of the woman who sold mushrooms. At first she claimed she had none; but he was persistent until she unearthed a glass jar, from which he extracted a tender palmful. He then led the way to a small, well-concealed cabin where he bade me eat two.

The mushrooms were dark, dank, and distasteful; my saliva took on a leaden sweetness that pierced the throat. It was only about 5:30 p.m.; but day already was retreating rapidly from the mountain's eastern face, and nights are cold in the Sierra Madres. I lighted candles and the Countryman built a fire in the gaping abdomen of a female-shaped clay firepot in the cabin's corner. I sat in the center of a pallet cot along one side. I hadn't seen what quantity of mushrooms he had ingested; but from what I knew it was not just the wrong time but the wrong place to be absorbing psilocybin. The paucity of the cabin provided little upon which to focus expected heightened senses.

Night descended fully; fingers of candlelight played eerily among carton boxes stacked around the cabin's other three sides. The cold grew deeper, penetrating my poncho. The Countryman grew very edgy, not able to sit still. He seemed preoccupied with disturbing thoughts, which--if his facial expressions were any indication--were occurring at an alarming rate. The fire in the clay pot went out; and, of a sudden he growled—literally *growled*, like some beast—and began talking a gibberish I could not follow, alien terms from a private hell in his mind.

I knew its history. Born a half-blood on an Indian reservation in the U. S. southwest, he became a preacher, married young, sired six children, established two churches, was adored by women thus hated by men in his congregations, was driven from preaching, worked for a tractor manufacturer, had an affair, was tossed out by wife, denied custody of at least three of the children as he requested, worked and sent money until, little by little, he drifted away and into Mexico. In tracking 'the bad' (dope), his ego posited, he was protecting ignorant youths; but the soul was not assuaged....

His voice grew louder; no description is possible of the hateful pain the sounds conveyed. I cannot say why in the world I 'chose' it, but as a form of self-defense I began to recite Shakespeare's "Exhortation to Marriage—"

*When I consider everything that grows*

*Holds in perfection but a little moment—*

His voice rose higher; I made mine stronger—

*THAT THIS HUGE STAGE PRESENTETH NAUGHT BUT SHOWS*

*WHEREON THE STARS IN SECRET INFLUENCE COMMENT—*

Then--just as our joint voices reached their peaks--he lunged toward me. I jumped from the cot and threw my arms around him and dropped with him to the dirt floor. I, myself, had not been aware yet of any affects of the mushrooms. Now my vision seemed to penetrate that at which I was looking; and so long as I retain power of memory I will not forget the transformation in his visage—oozing, osmotic apparitions--like special effects in a horror movie, the facial muscles microscopically convulsing, while the contours of his broad brow, high cheekbones, and strong jaw expanded and receded, twitching spasmodically, as his eyes assumed a sightless depth....

Gradually his body relaxed. Like a reflection returning to quieting waters his face became once more that which was loved. I helped him, exhausted, onto the cot. Lying as near to him as possible I tucked the edges of the poncho around us. But before falling gratefully into sleep, I recalled Jung's "Sermons of the Dead"--

*The power of Abraxas is twofold, but ye see it not, because for your eyes the warring opposites of good and evil are extinguished. To know it, is sickness. To fear it, is wisdom. To resist it not, is redemption...*



From San Cristobal, to Guatemala City by bus. From Guatemala City we flew to San Andres, a small island in the Caribbean about 300 miles north of the coast of Columbia; then, to Cartagena on Columbia's mainland. Didn't matter what town it was. Checkered bedspreads, checkered curtains, a smell of mildew. By the time we arrived in Cali, Columbia, I was fully familiar with the James Bond staging: check in; check out the town; check up on the commodities; check out.



Cali 1979

I was tempted, I will confess, to keep moving south, as the Countryman hoped, because I'd fallen in love with the Incas when in the sixth grade. But it was time I paid the piper; I still had a life's work to finish. I took us back to Oaxaca and left him, in a motel I couldn't find again if I had to, with some little money and the very expensive *huipil* he had insisted I buy myself in Guatemala City--a gorgeous pink, heavily embroidered overblouse that was a stake in itself.

What's it like, falling in love with a gigolo? Like being stood up at Heaven's Gate. *Candy, brandy, cigarettes and you. Caribbean sea, Caribbean sand, Caribbean sun, and you.* A classic love story being lived again? Well, everyone knows how the model ends. We actually spoke the lines. "Please don't leave me, Baby," he said; and I listened to one self reply, "If I don't leave you now, I never will."

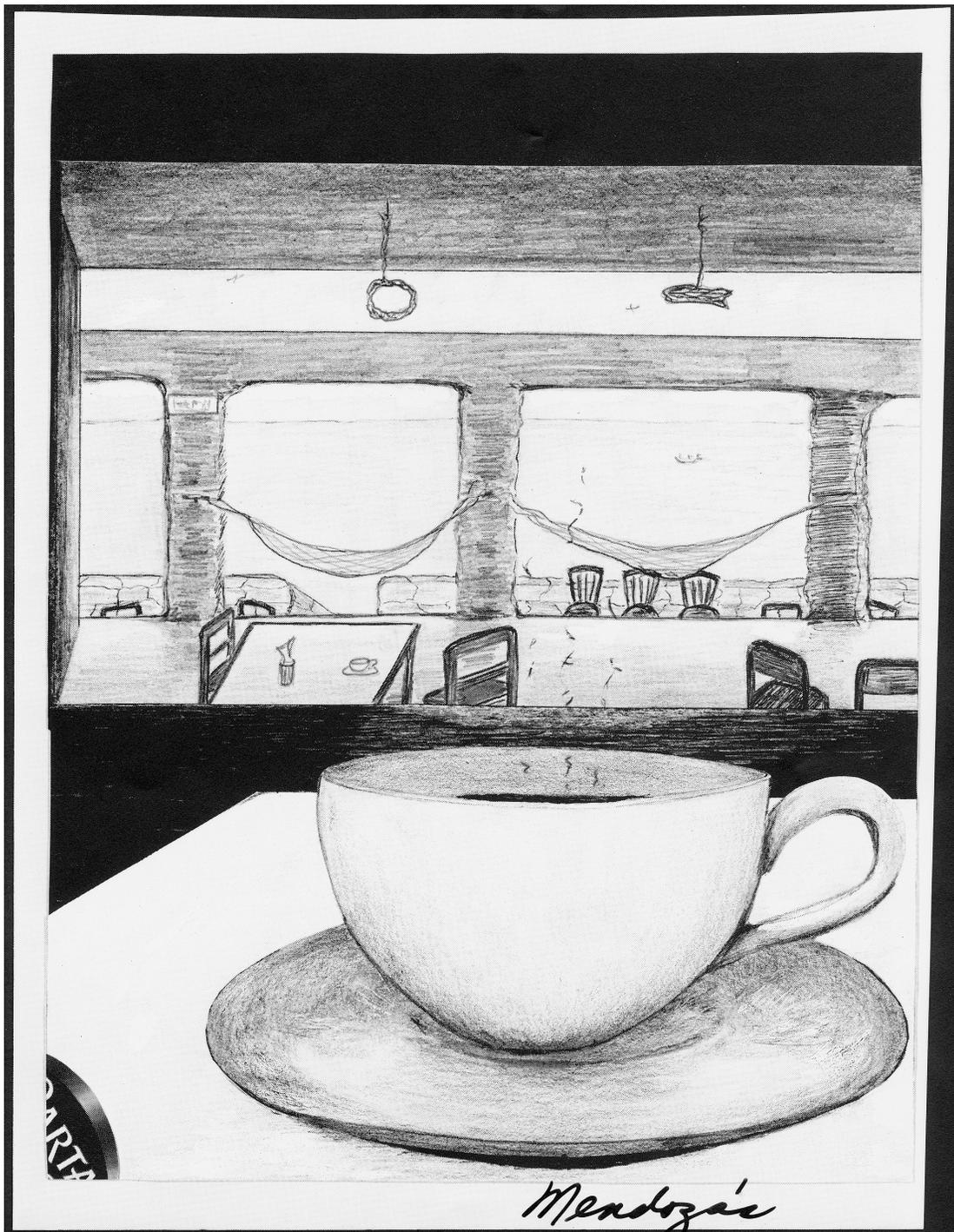
The other self took the next bus out of town toward La Ventosa. Perhaps in a short stay there I would recollect my senses, and redevise a future.

Three days later, back at my favorite cove past Mendoza's restaurant, I lay my body back and floated on the clean clear water. Behind my head the sun reached for the halfway mark to the zenith. Over my toes I saw the monument on top of Cortez's hill, a two-hour hike from the village that I had undertaken the previous year. On the hill's sheer windward side was the west Pacific.

I turned and broke into a crawl, my left arm rising and falling across quick images of the mouth of the bay. I changed to a sidestroke but kept my back to the beach. I didn't want to look north; north was the way back, but not, back home. I had no home--a thought I couldn't reconcile yet. I had sold the stateside house to follow a dream; and, this month, I had lost the home of the dream.

After a second lap across the cove, the early morning coolness of the water had chilled

my skin but the dry sand underfoot already was warm. I shook the sand from the towel and stepped into my sandals. I had said goodbye to Juanita the night before. Now I would have a bon voyage breakfast at Mendoza's, my old customary haunt for a cup of coffee.



Walking toward Mendoza's I scanned the cluster of dwellings on the rise beyond the seawall, and recognized the one to which I'd helped the young girl bear water. I winced in recall; *how naively blind one can be, to one's own cupidity.*

I knew I was being watched, as I searched out footholds along the rocks between the cove and the curious edifice that was the Mendoza restaurant. The rocky strand gave way at the building's west corner to a shallow beach, and midway across it was a weathered stone staircase. At high tide the stairs could be gained directly from the surf, an exhilarating ascent to the restaurant's open-air level. Above it, open to the sea, was a spacious cement recess, where red-painted crustacea hung decoratively in the coolness.

As I waded to the base of the stone staircase I confirmed that it was Mendoza's eyes I was pretending not to feel. A quick glance upward spied him, seemingly asleep underneath a red shark's jaw, in a hammock slung between the restaurant's central pillars. He gave me a gold-flashed grin as I approached. His gazes at toward distant bikinied body never bothered me; skin between neck and knees, however, was highly sensitive to the eyes of Señora Mendoza. I made certain my beach towel wrapped it all before entering the cool recess, where card tables wearing Carta Blanca advertisements completed an impression of lost grandeur.

Mendoza moved slowly barely lifting his feet. His flip-flops hasped the concrete as he made three trips to my table to bring, respectively, a tin can holding halved napkins (paper goods were scarce in southern Mexico), a teaspoon and fork, and a small jar of instant Nescafe.

Mendoza performed the familiar ritual formally this morning; he knew it was my last day. The tepid water for coffee arrived double-portioned, in a rarely-used sundae glass. It would have been out of place for me to fuss over the half-dozen drowning ants lost to his briny focus. I set my teaspoon down when Mendoza returned from the kitchen with my scrambled eggs and

*totopos*--leftover tortillas browned to burnt-bubble tops—and waited until he turned away, before picking up the teaspoon again to dip out the last of the floating ants.

The mien of Señora Mendoza did nothing to discourage the rumor that women of southern Mexico rule the roost. Mendoza's response to his wife's rare word always was action. The dominant mother/dutiful son image was sharpened by their garb--his, an irregularly stretched t-shirt and baggy trousers; hers, the traditionally opulent Tehuana contrast of embroidered velvet jerkin above a trailing skirt.

Not during all my visits was I able once to catch Mrs. Mendoza's eye. Today she sat near the kitchen, faced away from both me and the sea, her plait of thick grey hair and colored ribbon dangling over the back of her chair. She was not many years older than me; and I wondered, how did she deal with her sexuality? In the absence of routine marital involvement, my mind had grown familiar with its body's cycles. Age was lengthening them; but each fertile period of Life's premenopausal procreational thrust, when it did occur, seemed all the more potent.

I asked Mendoza to include a package of Raleighs con filtro and paid the tab. "When will you return to our beautiful bay?" he asked. *Tortuous question!* I snapped the last of my pesos into my leather pouch. "Who knows?" I shook his hand and made my smile convincing. "Next year, maybe?" But I knew it would not be.

A family was arriving as I took my leave. They gathered at a table on the lower outdoor level, four children under five, bellies and ringlets shiny with seawater. The young mother's body in its one-pieced swimsuit was that of a middle-aged woman; waist, a reminiscent dent; abdomen, muscleless. She turned her head and peered up into the recess. Quickly I shifted my stare to the pastel haze over the bay, but the thought evoked by perception finished itself. *What were the odds*, I wondered, *that she enjoyed an orgasm with each conception?*

East from Mendoza's the sand between rock and surf narrows toward the inner headlands, from which the shoreline sweeps a wide curve past the popular beach. At the children's cove, where the last of each breaker gently rolled, the inquisition of dark eyes burned. Not much farther now, out of the sand and across the road to the room at El Paraiso. Just enough time for a change of clothes, before the one o'clock bus to Salina Cruz....

On a small blue shelf high on the Salina Cruz bus station's wall a gold-tasseled, red velvet cloth hung awry beneath a plaster plaque of the Virgin. The visage on this one was confused acceptance. Out in the alley the engine of the noon bus was smoking heavily as it warmed up for the long climb to Oaxaca. On board, a passenger's radio played "Honky Tonk Woman," while small resident cockroaches scurried out of the side panels looking for crumbs along floor and seats.

When the bus veered sharply, exiting the depot's narrow alleyway, I reached beneath the seat to make sure the crammed briefcase--my constant companion everywhere I went--was secure; but I felt absolutely no inclination to extract a book. My study of sex had become circular. I had gathered plenty of material on the subject, but it appeared that fundamental issues raised by statistics in the seventies had been relegated to dusty archives. *Why?*--no common elaboration of Hite's work. *Where?*--public analysis of them, especially vis-a-vis Masters' and Johnson's conclusion, that the very engineering of joined genital anatomies appeared to inhibit female orgasm during intercourse. I thought sadly of those women of the Victorian era upon whom experimentations had been performed, to surgically move the clitoris down to where it might receive better 'contact.'

It had not been especially notable, that I hadn't climaxed with the Younger (despite being

rendered poetic), the Fisherman, or the Christian--one-time episodes entered upon by varying admixtures of persona. The Younger had been a Prince Charming to a freed Cinderella, a non-questioned fling of feeling young, beautiful and desirable; the Fisherman, a coldly calculated submission; the Christian, a phantom of the grand revolutionary's plan.

With JC the Countryman, however, an 'original' being in me had believed herself again truly mated, undeniably again feeling not just natural material affinity but committed love—*yet, during that second, albeit brief 'marriage,' not to have experienced one orgasm in intercourse?...*

No seat mate; I was able to sprawl and enjoy the scenery along the hairpin turns. Range after rising range, rows of maguey cacti marching perpendicularly up them. The sun's brilliance blurred the lavender summits into mystical shapes and flashed against my window on alternate curves, making mirrors of small rios nestled in deep crevices.

Village coming up!--San Jose de Gracia. The bus was making good time. With luck it would reach Oaxaca early enough for me to get settled, have a good night's rest, and tomorrow retrieve Dottie from the parking garage when it opened at dawn.

The road to Guelatao, Juarez's birthplace, dead ends at Mexico 190, about seven miles south of Oaxaca. The t-intersection can't be missed: it's marked by a billboard-sized mosaic that depicts Juarez and his accomplishments. A couple of miles up Juarez's road sat El Castillo, what I had fantasized would be the last home I would establish, where I would work and live until I died. But when the bus passed the intersection, I didn't turn my head and look up Juarez's road any more than I had turned to look back, when the Volkswagen pulled out onto 190 with the Countryman and me in it. I still wasn't ready for that....

It's a short ride by taxi from the bus depot to downtown Oaxaca and the Plaza Hotel on

Trujano, a half-block down from the *zocalo*. The parking garage was across the street from the hotel. It was now late December, a mere five months since I had arrived, the Datsun's roof loaded with essentials for homesteading El Castillo. The Plaza Hotel had been my temporary base of operations. It occupied two floors above shops and was accessed by a staircase sandwiched between. The rooms surrounded a small garden open overhead to a patch of blue.

The Plaza prided itself on shiny tile floors, impeccable service, and a civilized routine that reflected proprietor Raul's own well-ordered existence. Plenty of hot water was provided, but Raul never failed to extoll healthiness of cold showers to a guest. No slug-a-beds were allowed; a perfunctory knock at the door and continental breakfast on a tray promptly began everyone's day at 9:00 a.m., like it or not.

I paid the taxi driver, climbed the stairs, and deposited my bags next to the small, highly-polished desk. It was late afternoon; the sun no longer directly hit any part of the patio garden, and the noise of the busy street below gave way to the joined hush of guests in siesta.

Raul, surprised, appeared from the kitchen. "What has happened?" he asked, when I said I needed a room. "What has happened with your house?"

"Things didn't work out at El Castillo. I'm going back to the States."

Raul didn't press me. I suspected he was thinking, *I was right after all. Well, I did try to tell her.* What he *had* said back in August, was, "You don't intend to live out there all *alone*, do you?"

"How many days will you need the room?" Raul asked.

"I'm not sure; probably two. I need to get the car serviced for the trip back."

I didn't wait for the breakfast tray next morning. My first priority was relief at finding Dottie safe and sound in her stall at the parking garage, after which I walked up to the *zocalo*.



The  
Zocalo  
across  
from  
the Jardin .....



Breakfast in Oaxaca....church bells pealing; the sun just clearing the buildings on the east side of the square. On the west side the light brightened the red of the balcony tablecloths at El Tule. I turned away from memories--the Countryman emerging from beneath the trees and catching sight of his new mark; how he ran up the stairs and charmed her with teasing banter. But I did sit in his chair at 'our' streetside table at the "Jardin," and watched others embarking excitedly on the Oaxaca adventure. Families in the park taking snapshots in front of the gold-domed bandstand before boarding buses to Mayan ruins. Students sporting souvenir ponchos, locking into new friendships on the trail to the magic mushrooms. And, threading through it all, unmarried Mexican girls with slumbering babies in slung rebozos, begging their way through the maze, many of them with a second small child on the hip. Forty-two percent of Mexico's current population already was under 18. That night, another large number would be conceived....

Miguel, the Jardin's head waiter, and a mutual friend of both myself and the Countryman, gave me a big hug, a warm *abrazo*. Where had I been?

"South, at the ocean, getting my head together. I came back to Oaxaca only yesterday, and I'll be on my way again tomorrow. I'm going back to California."

We looked at each other for a while without speaking, thinking about the same person. But I didn't need to ask Miguel what became of our friend after he and I parted; Miguel volunteered it: last seen a few days before, handcuffed and being led away by the police for some macho disturbance in the park. I didn't ask for the particulars.

I left enough pesos on the table to cover the tab, lifted the strap of my heavy bag higher on my shoulder, and picked my way through the tables past the corner newsstand. Stepping out from under the arcade, at the corner where Trujano meets the square, I saw the open door of the old cathedral. But I had no desire whatsoever for a last look at the glass coffin that held a blood-

spattered ivory Christ, or to watch ever again humble expressions of women without respectful love in this world taking refuge in His.

*Respect and honor...*oh, yes, I'd believed enough times that I commanded them equally from a man, to find differently when the chips fell. With this last one, however, I hadn't had enough time even to begin to worry about it....

It was great to grip Dottie's wheel again, and I felt able now to take my ultimate farewell. I skirted the square past the Government Palace, made a left at Fiallo and followed it three blocks to Morelos. There was Sear's, and the house of Senor S., El Castillo's owner. A right then led me onto the Pereferico to the junction with 190. Seven miles along 190, I left its eclectic stream of traffic for the left turn onto Juarez's road.

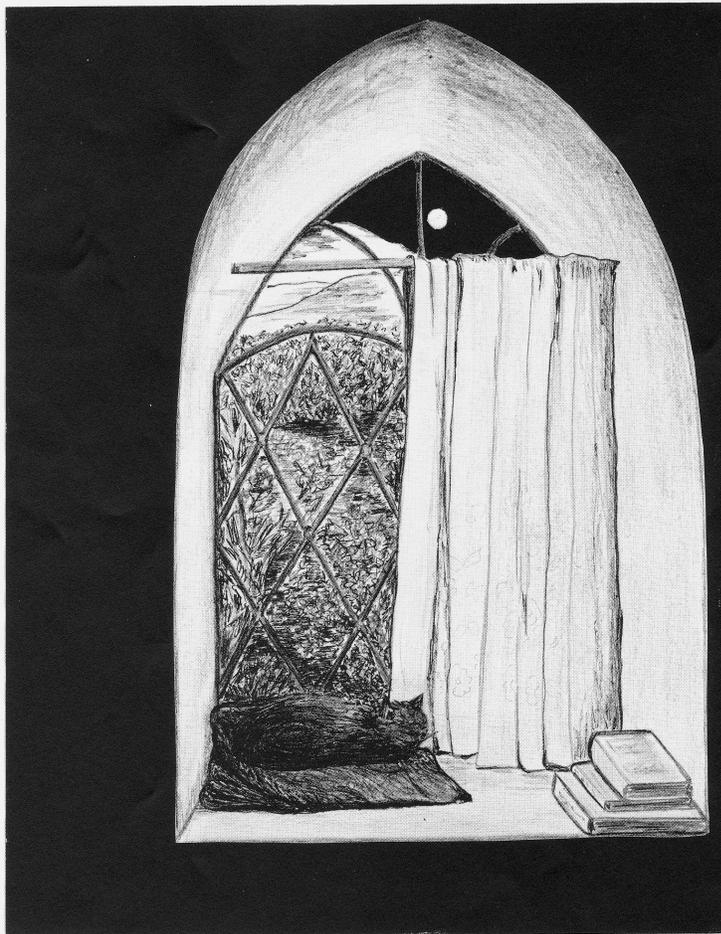


I pulled up to the castle and switched off the engine.

The loose hinge on the driveway gate still needed fixing, I noticed. I lifted and pushed the gate aside, walked up to the gold and blue door and knocked. A long silence convinced me I should turn away, but just then the door opened and I was facing a Mexican girl with a babe in arms. "Forgive me for bothering you," I apologized. "I'm the former tenant. Would it be all

right if I looked around a few moments?" The girl's melancholy eyes scrutinized me for several seconds, then without change of expression shifted the baby to the other shoulder and stood aside to let me enter.

The front room still was unfurnished except for two chairs and a box serving as a table. The door to the bedroom was closed; I assumed that the bed and armoire still were there. The girl's left hand resting on her baby's back bore no ring. "Is your husband home?" I asked. Either she didn't hear me or chose not to respond. I recalled thinking it odd, when the interpreter said that the new prospective buyers were a professional couple--doctors, from Oaxaca--who planned to use it for vacations. Seven miles had seemed to me a short distance for the professed weekend retreat. In the kitchen, the desk still stood before the dome window.



I looked up to the corbel-arched brick ceiling. Someone had hung the black wrought-iron light fixture I had bought at Oaxaca's public marketplace. It looked as good as I had expected it would.

I turned around. The girl was sitting on one of the chairs in the front room. Her baby had fallen asleep at the breast. "Thank you very much," I said and walked out, quietly pulling the colored-paned door closed behind me.

*One, two, three, four....five, six, seven... All good children go to heaven--*

Oaxaca to Toluca, one day; Toluca to LaBarca, one day; LaBarca to Mazatlan, one day; Mazatlan to Guaymas, one day. I left Guaymas in the dark and drove into the desert morning, grey-blue and pink, until the strengthening rays of the rising sun lit the east sides of the sparse trees and turned the tundra pale yellow. One hundred miles before the Nogales border the mileage indicator rolled to 76,000 miles, and I remembered how I loved the smell of him....*oh, yes--one must deal totally with the body, before one can reside in the mind.*

Guaymas to Gila Bend, one day; Gila Bend to Oakland, California--the seventh, the most grueling day. By late afternoon I was using my left foot on the gas pedal. It was three hours into dark when finally I knocked on a relative's door. Wiped out; but it would be morning before I could fall asleep on the makeshift sofa bed.

*No home.... No job.... 44 years old--my god!--I'd passed another birthday without even being aware of it. Need to find a place to live, that's the first priority.... Need to put myself together to go job-hunting. All I had left was an exile's washable cotton wardrobe!*

1980

Someone who looked like a secretary exited an Oakland residence, got into a mildly-battered brown Datsun coupe at the curb, and drove off.

Climbing the highway between the Vaca hills the woman in the car felt foreign within herself, like her body felt in its borrowed clothes. She lifted her dark glasses and surveyed the haze ahead intently, as if broken lines of life were something upon which the eyes could focus. On the other side of the summit she forced herself taller behind the wheel. She lifted her dark glasses again, this time to glance in the rear-view mirror—

*Damn!... The grey under the eyes looked permanent now, as did the furrows between brows and lines linking nose to mouth. She let the glasses down and lifted her chin. Think I care? It's my time of year; the light is soft on the leaves--*

*HEY! Alter-Ego cut in. KNOW HOW MANY TIMES YOU'VE USED THAT LINE, JUST SINCE LEAVING OAKLAND?*

*So, okay, maybe I do care, a little....*

But she didn't want to think about that any more than she did, last night's dream--

*There you were!--sunlight through the gold glass of El Castillo's door making a halo 'round the Countryman's head. "Do you really love me?" you asked. And he answered, in that...you know, in that maddeningly soft way he had that could make you believe, even when you couldn't see his eyes--"I love you more than all the other people I've ever loved, all put together...."*

"Dottie" had reclimbed the southern Sierra Madres with grace, sheaves of journals on her back seat and the woman and her sheaved memories up front. But here now, on the low Vaca hills, the Datsun seemed as reluctant to re-enter Sacramento as its driver, who shook back her

hair and downshifted--

*Sure he did!...*

“God it’s good to see you.” Salome hugged, then scolded me at arms’ length. “Six months and only *two* phone calls?” She steered me through the porch door to the kitchen table and an open bottle of French Columbard, my favorite. “Set your fanny down, pour each of us a glass and tell me all,” she commanded.

“Not much *to* tell. I like the apartment; I’ve made a few new friends. One, a nice guy-- also divorced--lives next door. Every so often we do ‘tea and sympathy.’”

“‘Tea and sympathy.’ That’s it?”

I dropped onto a chair. “You never were one to waste breath on prologues! NO; no *sex*.... That is, unless you count studying. Call it, ‘In Quest of the Female Orgasm.’”

Salome gave her familiar low-pitched chuckle. “*Studying sex??*”

“Precisely--what makes it happen, what it takes to be satisfied, all the differences between Man and Me.”

This time my psychologist friend gave a hearty laugh. “O.K., I’m hooked--fill me in.”

I took a short sip of wine followed by a long breath. “You know my story. I was raised in a culture where, after high school, I was supposed to work at a nice little secretarial job until the proper man saw me for the domestic treasure I had been conditioned to become. By the fifth grade I already planned to have five sons, all boys. I’d dip my pen in the ink well and execute my prospective sons’ names in perfect script: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Dominic. Don’t know how the ‘Dominic’ got in there. What was really weird was, I *never* thought about a father for them or about getting *married*--”

“Except you did--dropped out of college and had two girls instead.”

“True. *Also true, conservatively speaking, I had intercourse at least four thousand times over the course of my marriage. Sounds astonishing, huh? But really it isn't, given 25 years with a potent mate. What is remarkable is that I experienced true orgasm only about a third of the time.*”

I waved my glass. “All those shiny-haired women in ads seemingly *begging* for sex while *I* was getting lots more than *I* needed. Worse! For me, climaxing wasn't simple, even when I really felt inclined. So I'd think, ‘Something's got to be wrong with *me*,’ or, ‘Jesus what an unnatural match I've made!’--despite two wonderful kids to prove that wrong.

“Serving a partner's need may be part and parcel to keeping love,” I continued, patting my pockets in search of a cigarette. “But tell me. Where is Nature's logic there? If it *were* natural for one man and one woman to cleave for life, wouldn't you think that *desire* would be a bit more equal?” I dumped the contents of my book bag onto the table. “Well, I'm determined to find out why *not*--even if it's too late do to *me* any good.”

I selected Masters' and Johnson's *Human Sexual Response* and opened it to a marker. “Want to hear a standard summary of female orgasm?” I began reading before Salome finished an incredulous nod.

“Quote: ‘*Female orgasm has onset with contractions of the uterine musculature and vaginal orgasmic platform (that's the outer third of the vagina). These two responses to overwhelming sexual tension provide the sensations of total pelvic contraction that the sexually-oriented woman identifies with orgasmic expression.*’”

“Humph,” Salome responded. “That's a mouthful. ‘Muscular contractions’.... ‘Total pelvic contraction’.... Well, yes. But all of that's preceded by what I would describe, for want of

better words, as an ‘internal explosion’ at a specific spot-- somewhere underneath the clitoris or thereabouts--that sets off the other processes.”

“Me, too! And we’re far from alone. A study as far back as the ‘70’s by a woman named Shere Hite showed that, for most women, the ‘crucial site’ was somewhere to the side of and underneath the clitoris, with varying right or left ‘preferences’. *However--*” I chose my words purposefully--”the precise spot, the type of friction and the amount of pressure--to say nothing about *duration--*are hard to finger.”

“Listen!” I went on over Salome’s giggle. “Hite found that only 30 percent of women seemed able to climax regularly during intercourse. Moreover, a more recent study found that *fifty percent* of ALL female orgasms occurred *out of the presence of a partner!*”

I shuffled my papers and shoved a sheet across the table. “See this drawing? It’s from a thesis by a woman doctor named Mary Jane Sherfey. Look....the engorgement of the side bulbs of the vagina *after* sexual arousal actually *inhibits* contact at the crucial site.”

“Hmm....” Salome tilted back her chair. “‘Room for improvement,’ so to speak?”

“Ay--there’s the rub! Masters and Johnson stated it: the *very engineering* of male and female sexual anatomies *works against* woman having orgasm easily during intercourse.”

“You aren’t kidding?” Salome dropped her chair back down onto all four legs. “I mean--hey! *My* experience corroborates that; but is it really common?”

“Who knows?” I shrugged my shoulders and poured more wine. “‘In-depth’ research only is beginning to get off, itself. All *I* know is, *I* belonged smack-dab in the other 70-percent group and, what’s more, I had to be on top, my climax came always after his, and it took a lot of effort I wasn’t always up to.”

“Ditto!” Salome exclaimed, foregoing a ‘so-to-speak.’ She smacked my notes with her

palm. “All of which makes for a highly humorous image, provided one is not a struggling participant. Infinite pairs of entwined bodies frenetically trying to hit one elusive spot long enough and hard enough in just the right way! Lord. It’s no wonder poor Victorian woman suffered crazy stereotyping--”

“And think of all the time spoiled for couples when they ought to be doing the best of their living.” Bright light through the open kitchen door hit off my glass and curved a rainbow at my waist. I closed my eyes against the setting sun’s brilliance; gold dots danced against a grey backdrop of consciousness. “If these statistics are true, how could such a fundamental human dilemma be a natural design? What in the world would Nature’s purpose *be*, for such a queer state of anatomical affairs?”

I stuffed the book and papers back into the bag. “I for one can’t agree, however, with Sherfey’s premise, that Woman’s sex drive is stronger than Man’s--”

“But I thought that was established?” Salome interrupted, “--that the female is capable of multiple ‘orgasms’ on one occasion?”

“Yes--of different kinds and degrees, I’d say. But neither that, nor intensity equates with how frequently she needs or wants them, which is why I don’t accept some other ‘feministic’ suggestions.”

“Such as?”

“Such as, Woman had to be subjugated, and her sex drive suppressed on behalf of civilization; that, because her original sexuality was so unbridled, settled family life never could have come about. Sherfey theorized further that Woman’s ‘ungovernable cyclic sexual drive’ was responsible for the long gap in the development of agriculture and beginnings of urban life, from around 12,000 to 7000 b.c. The way *I* see it, it wasn’t that Woman couldn’t govern her

*own sex drive. It took that long just to get some control over Man's.*"

Salome refilled her wine glass and lifted the bottle over mine. I hadn't forgotten that wine can give me a headache but didn't stay her hand; I was too intent on summarizing my thoughts. "While Woman certainly experiences cycles of her own natural aggression, I can't believe that she fundamentally is sexually insatiable and, were it not for male subjugation, she would have sought intercourse 'unbridledly.' To even *consider* that as possible I'd need some evidence that orgasm was as simple for the female as for the male. Imagine if it was!--we'd have twice the population we have."

"Well, if Nature's not on the side of Evolution we're in deep trouble," Salome interjected. "Civilization does not need the excess of six billion people predicted for this century. While 'God' may have had good reason early in Time to say, 'Be fruitful and multiply,' 'Lord' knows Earth now desperately is in need of a new commandment."

I recalled my sulfate allergy and pushed away my glass. "Which brings us back to my main thesis. I'm beginning to think that, despite capacity for intense orgasm, Woman's relative difficulty achieving it just might be a naturally built-in control--*some* insurance at least, on Nature's part, that our species *doesn't* overpopulate itself out of existence."

"If that *is* the case, all to the good on Evolution's side," Salome responded. "On the other hand, that little engineering handicap adds up to one big one on the human emotional scale, confusing both genders."

"I know. My own experience also makes me wonder whether that 'little engineering handicap,' as you call it, isn't what leads wives to evade sex at very times when they need it most--"

"--*because*," Salome sprang forward in her chair, "given uncertainty of orgasmic release

and relief, it's better not to be touched at all than be left more frustrated!"

"Right. We're hearing more and more sex talk without ever hearing how sex really works for everyone; it's damn hard for individual egos frankly to express what truly goes on in their bodies. But what a toll partners' mutual ignorance can levy on the *friendship* between them. And I believe neither Man nor Woman, alone, is to blame. We just haven't been able to figure it out peaceably yet, together--"

Salome lifted her glass high. "Meanwhile, fumbling for release while dying for affection?"

I took back my glass. "I'll drink to that."

Salome stood up and turned toward the living room; I followed suit.

"So...what's the plan?" she asked, stretching out on the divan.

I took a pillow from a nearby chair and lay on the sheepskin rug. "'Plan'?"

"Ho, ho. I know you. You've come back from Mexico hell-bent on finding answers and won't rest 'til you get 'em, pardner."

I yawned and closed my eyes. The wine and the warmth of the summer afternoon were catching up with me. I awakened an hour or so later to the sound of Salome muttering in the kitchen. Cheeks flushed, I padded out and found her, a large pot in hand, standing in front of the stove—one of her least preferred places.

"Nice nap?" she asked.

"Uh huh. What are you up to?"

"Well, I've got these pieces of chicken here and I'm trying to figure out what to do with them for dinner."

I took the pot from her and shoved her aside. "Got potatoes, carrots, celery and an

onion?"

"Left-bottom drawer in the fridge—bless you! I'm going to take a shower."

Some forty minutes later she was back, peering over my shoulder. "What's in the pot, goose?"

"An Italian version of a meal I ate a lot down in Mexico." I twirled a lazy susan that held Salome's herbs, found thyme, and dropped a pinch into the pot.

Salome sagged onto a chair. "Looks like a soupy chicken stew."

"You'll love it."

"You know I *love* anything I don't have to cook. How long 'til supper?"

"Less than an hour but you'll find chips and salsa in the living room." I put the lid on the pot and lowered the flame. "I'll be right out. There's something I want to discuss with you."

Salome stopped short in the doorway and turned with a Day of the Dead grin. "It doesn't have to do with sex by any chance, does it?"

I hopped to her, gripped her shoulders and backed her through the dining room to the living room. "Yes, it *does* 'have to do with sex,'" I parroted. "And you'll love it even more than the chicken *caldo*." I stopped her in front of a bamboo easy chair.

"Chicken what?"

"Soupy stew." I plumped the chair's cushions and pushed her down onto the geometry of their American Indian design. "Here, have a chip. It'll improve your disposition."

The high-ceilinged, eclectic harmony of Salome's living room always entertained me. Its tall windows were swagged with brightly-colored fringed shawls; rough-hewn wood furniture sprawled with the bamboo, over a melange of rugs that could have dropped off some round-the-world truck.

“Okay; you win.” Salome arranged her legs guru-style in the low wide chair. “Shoot.”

I sat on the sofa across from her. "Ever hear of circumcision of the clitoris?"

"Talk about a topic out of left field! *Circumcision of the clitoris!* Well, I *have*, as a matter of fact, a long time ago--25 years, at least--in a journal of Albert Ellis. He printed a letter from a woman who'd had one. She claimed that afterward orgasm was easier for her."

"I've *wondered* about that.... But what literature I've found focuses on barbaric practices still followed in some cultures--"

"I know; various modes of 'clitoridectomy,'" Salome interrupted. "I read one report, when Fran Hosken was adviser to the World Health Organization--a couple of decades ago. For all I know she still might be? Anyway, one practice used when a girl reached womanhood was to, ugh, obliterate the clitoral area with a rock. Reportedly, the theory held by such cultures was that it made Woman a more productive worker." Salome stuffed a dripping chip into her mouth. "I haven't followed the subject; but I am aware that national and international organizations of women have been waging a crusade against genital mutilation."

"Yes--Arab and African women have pursued United Nations' support against it for some time. But exactly *where* female climax is set off remains at issue. A relatively long while ago, Marie Bonaparte found that genital barbarism did not necessarily render a female incapable of orgasm. She reported an interview with one such woman. Nor have barbaric practices been confined to so-called 'third world' countries. A radical operation was used in Europe, during the Victorian era, to 'cure' little girls of what was perceived as 'excessive' masturbation. It didn't work. Another procedure was tried on women deemed 'frigid:' the suspensory ligament was severed, and the clitoris surgically was secured to underlying structures at a lower point, in an attempt to place it where it would receive more direct contact. Apparently that didn't work

either.”

Salome dipped another chip. “Interesting--especially after seeing that diagram of yours.”

“By ‘female circumcision’ I’m not suggesting radical surgery. I mean a simple, non-invasive procedure, like male circumcision. I wonder what the overall effect might be, if the clitoris simply was freed a bit from its ‘hood’--the prepuce--like circumcision around the male gland--”

“To improve a woman’s ability to climax?”

“Forget that for the moment--”

"But isn't that the point?" Salome interjected. “Remember Hite!”

"I know; ‘Dear Abby’ recently ran two more days' worth of letters on the 'faking' dilemma; but bear with me....

“For decades human sexual issues were analyzed as if Nature made gross mistakes, all on the psychological side. Women endured a lot of hours on psychiatrist’s couches, and worse, because it was so readily accepted after Freud that mind was their main inhibitor. It’s the *converse* now, that we need to explore: how woman’s sexuality may be determined by the *very nature* of the female body. Her reproductive drive connection to brain is far more subtle and complicated than man’s.”

Salome untangled her legs. "You mean it doesn't jump up in her face?"

"One way to put it!" I laughed. "Lately I’ve been on the lookout for *my* specific mind-body connection, and when and how it infringes on my mental state. Not just a vague woe. Recognizable effects on mental processing--difficulty concentrating and ricocheting thoughts. I’ve discovered in myself that at those times the clitoris is “swollen,” sometimes as much as three- or four-fold in diameter, and the inner base of the prepuce is aggravatedly ‘alive.’”

"And you think 'female circumcision' would alleviate it," Salome summarized absent conviction.

"Wait, hear me out. There's the ancient theory that male circumcision originated to improve hygiene. Sherfey conjectured that it instead may have originated to slow man's orgasm to compensate woman's theorized stronger drive. But a third case could be made: maybe the true reason male circumcision evolved is buried even more deeply in antiquity--"

"So to speak?" Salome couldn't resist this time.

"Or *shrouded* by antiquity? Anyhow maybe, just *maybe*--long before history began to be recorded--Man became aware of the distracting pull on *his* consciousness and was driven to do some experimenting."

"You mean Man may have been after some intellectual goal by desensitizing himself?"

"Yes. One early source, an odd duck named Bryck who explored the subject, noted that no man among the ancient Egyptians devoted himself to serious study--geometry or astronomy, for example--without first getting circumcised. It's rumored even Pythagoras himself (or was it Archimedes; I can't remember!) had it done for that reason, while studying in Egypt."

"Well....I see your aim." Salome got up to put what was left of the chips and salsa on the wicker table next to me. "You want to wipe the slate clean and start with a pure look, at how the female body affects its mind, instead of vice versa."

I swooped up a passing cat, one of Salome's five so similarly marked no one can keep their names straight, and rubbed it behind the ears. "All I know is, every so often the energy capacity of my central nervous system seems to reach max, for which it appears there's only one sure relief."

"I *will* say it's an interesting theory," Salome reflected, "that circumcision began because

man wanted to gain more control over his mind. But don't feel bad if you don't win a prize for it." She kicked off her slippers and wriggled her toes. "The purported communication from God to Abraham always was hard for me to imagine. God couldn't have used the word, *circumcision*. Abraham wouldn't have known what it meant. 'Look, Abraham,' God would have to have said, 'I want you to gather the skin around the end of the penis of every man in your household, pull it forward and, *very carefully now*, snip off the tip.' If I'd been Abraham I would have said, '*Jesus Christ*, why??'"

"Don't be irreverent. Besides, Abraham couldn't have said 'Jesus Christ;' he wouldn't have known the name."

"Sorry; bad taste. I am, however, getting a distinct feeling here. You're putting up an awful lot of argument on the subject."

I stood up. "Time to check the chicken--"

"Oh, no, you don't! I'm right, aren't I?"

I sat back down. "Alright, I did talk to my gynecologist about it."

"I *knew* it. And?--"

"Disappointing--he said he never had heard of female circumcision. Worse, he politely suggested the problem could be a mental block against masturbation, and a psychologist might help me in that regard!"

Salome whooped.

"Well, I wasn't about to tell him my best friend was an analyst. Just a minute--" I went to the kitchen to my book bag and brought back a tablet. "Nor did I have the nerve to show him this."

"What is it?"

"My 'masturbatory' journal--if there is such a word. Actually, I hate it--the word, I mean; something about the way it sounds. I've been considering using the term, 'mistressbate.' Anyhow, I'm trying to nail down a pattern; so far the journal covers only four months. If this all sounds crazy to you, imagine what my doctor would think. But sex and love are such an intricate maze in Woman! Lots of us get trapped in one or another dead-end and then just hang on in stoic acceptance, until the issue finally becomes moot. Personal gratification aside, I'd like to know more about all of it, that's all." I stood up. "Enough! Time for dinner."

Salome followed, carrying the empty salsa and chip bowls, and peered over my shoulder again. "Is this show really ready to get on the road?"

I pierced a piece of carrot; it broke in two softly. "It is. Rinse out those bowls."

She put the bowls in the sink. "Have you ever known me to wash a dish until it's absolutely necessary? I'll get two clean ones."

"Forget it." I rinsed the bowls and set them on the stove, then supplied a tray with napkins, spoons, butter and a tin of grated cheese. "Here, take this and go sit down. And slice the French bread I brought," I added, turning back to the pot. "It's on the dining room sideboard. Think you can handle all that?"

Salome leaned against the door jamb. "I knew there was some reason why I missed you so much," she said teasingly but too tenderly for the joke to come off. I smiled at her. She kept looking at me until I felt like I might cry. I turned my head quickly. "I love you, too. Now get with it!"

I placed a chicken breast in the bottom of each bowl, covered it with an assortment of the vegetables and ladled in a small amount of broth. I carried the steaming bowls to the dining room.

Salome cut down to the chicken with her spoon and lifted a chunk toward her lips. "So," she said, punctuating the word with a blow on the spoon, "*you* think that Man originated circumcision so he could think about something besides sex."

"Think about it. If sexual information and control are imperfect now, imagine four thousand years ago. Does it seem reasonable that all the arguments about 'circumcision' in the New Testament, especially between Paul and the Greek congregations, were a dispute over an *hygienic* procedure? If Evolution is real, isn't it logical that the farther humankind gets beyond the animal state--the higher developed that Consciousness becomes--the more It *would* be moved, to exercise control over instinct? Humankind's grand questing nature has spent a trillion dollars to explore outer space while neglecting a deep look into its own pants."

"Do I hear more than just a little hostility there?"

I buttered a piece of bread. "How can there not be. Whoever or Whatever 'God' is--He, *She*, or *IT* gave us a brain and mine asks, hey, *how come we let sexual ignorance kill life?* If I do decide to turn myself into a human guinea pig it's because all I have to go on *is* myself. Believe me, I've employed conscious sublimation--writing, sewing, gardening; whatever. Some of the cumulative energy does dissipate, but never totally; especially, never *happily*."

I chewed on my bread. "Yesterday morning, for instance. There was that nagging mind/body distraction; I couldn't concentrate fairly on anything and was bordering on depression. 'Investigating,' I discovered that the diameter of the clitoris was greater--considerably!--than when my mind is in a tranquil state. When I pulled and held the entire sheath away from the pubic bone, I discovered my breathing eased and I could focus thought clearly. So I examined the clitoris closely--"

Salome dropped her spoon in her bowl so hard it sprayed broth on my arm. "How in the

world did you do *that*?"

"With my legs back over my head, knees touching the floor on each side--a yoga position called *Karnapidasana*. With the prepuce hood pulled all the way back, I could see where its skin attaches on the left, at the base of the clitoris where that 'surfaced' aggravation is most intense. And I couldn't help but wonder, what would be the effect of a little snip there?—you know, like toward a curved sleeve seam," I concluded with an analogy from the seamstress side of me.

Salome stood up. "Delicious!--want some more? I do," she said around a last soggy crust of french bread, as if she hadn't heard. But she raised her voice after passing through the dining room door into the kitchen. "Mind you, I'm not going to argue with you on any of this. But you're right; its a little weird even for me."

"I know," I called after her. "If I sound obsessed it's because I am." I lowered my voice as she came back through the door. "I wrote to the English Medical Society months ago but didn't get an answer. I also had asked my gynecologist to find out what he could. He talked with the leading sex surgeon in the state who, hard to believe, claimed to know nothing about the procedure in the female."

"End of the line."

"Happy to say, nope! At the coffee shop the other day I ran into a medical student I know and got into a conversation with him about it. He suggested something I hadn't thought of. He said, 'Why not just ask your doctor if he'll *do* it?'"

"Oh-oh; and?--"

"I'm.... Well...." I decided to stop there. "I'm thinking about it. I'll keep you posted."

*May as well make the bed...there's more than enough time to get ready....*

I shoved the leftover wad of kingsized sheet under the narrow futon mattress. The old sheet had withstood an amazing number of launderings. The First JC and I had slept on it for years and, after he was gone, I cried on it. It even had made the trip to Mexico and back. There was the missing swatch from the hem, used to mend the Countryman's shirtsleeve--the very same sheet on which later I cried over him! (*"Such delicate little stitches," he had said....*)

I sat on the bedroom chair by the window and curved my toes into a clean pair of nylons. *Well, things are about to change for me!* A small surge of defiance rippled Memory's keyboards....

*There'll be a change in the weather and a change in the sea;  
and from now on there'll be a change in me....*

I stretched the stockings smoothly to the waist and stared at the open closet, debating which costume to put on the body. I started with a pink silk blouse....

*I know what kept the woman-in-me going in the past--not orgasm, I thought. It was that attention that represents the security of love, which in turn can make everything in-between worth doing....*

I'd played all the games: worn "in" clothes, the eye-liner, the wired bras; hoofed it in four cities at least--doing woman's work, working like a man. All the while, the Peter Pan-collared transvestitcal psyche in me expected at some point to don a permanent apron. But, instead of it ultimately becoming Lady of the House, the house became divided. Then, the failed Big Escape....

I stepped into a lined purple skirt.

*No.* Never would I be able to go back to that Good-Old-Used-To-Be; but for auld lang

syne's sake I pulled on high-heeled black boots. *Who can be a Lady, when there's no Gent around?*

I have a meeting, this afternoon, with “the Reverend,” in town. Before *that*, however, I have a more important appointment to keep—

*My walk will be different, my talk and my name;  
nothin' about me's going to be the same....*

I sat on the edge of the examining table, fully dressed except for the pantyhose, my skirt bunched up and knees spread wide, my left boot on the stirrup.

"I can't show you the place and point at the same time!" I exclaimed, as the stretched prepucce slid from my hold. "There...where it joins on the left at the base." Finally my gynecologist understood and politely used a q-tip to point to the centimeters of skin it was taking all ten of my fingers to keep exposed. "There?" he queried.

"Yes!"

"Phhhh--that's easy," he said. "All we need to do is put a little clamp here and another here," the q-tip hopped back and forth, "and then snip there. You'll be left with a tiny tag of skin that you won't even notice. I could do that right here."

I hopped off the table and dropped my skirt. I had only one more question. "How much will it cost?"

"Oh?--" I had the feeling he hadn't expected so quick a decision. "Uh...under a hundred dollars."

The receptionist handed me a card. The 8th, at nine.

*The 8th at nine...*The four words hovered in my head until I parked on the county road

where I was to meet Reverend JC, thought then replaced by anxiety over the coming encounter...

A month or so after my return from Mexico I had seen by the local paper that the Diocese had split my old job in two. Applications were being sought for a "Secretary" to perform half my former duties and an "Administrative Assistant" to assume the other, tougher half. The latter was going to be paid a salary even higher than that for which I had appealed for doing *both* jobs. What I felt was far from vindication, more like cruel and inhuman punishment.

The ultra-conservative council member, at hearing and denial of my appeal the previous year, may have suggested it might be better if I simply got lost; but I had an impeccable service record, and no one knew the personnel rules better than I: a prior incumbent, who had left employment in good standing, had first right of re-entry for a solid year, should his or her former position reopen.

Reverend JC had been cordial when I called and addressed the matter of my returning as the Administrative Assistant. He "would see what he could do;" however, my 'right', he informed me, was "subject to full administrative confirmation."

The hills to the west were divided cleanly from cold sky. Inside Dottie, I felt like the proverbial piece of toast about to be buttered. I looked up to the rear view mirror just as his car pulled up. I bowed my head swiftly over the journal on my lap and glided pen in gloved hand above the page, so that when the passenger door opened I looked up as if caught by surprise.

"I brought my lunch," said the Reverend, not meeting my eyes, and ruffling open the brown sack as soon as he was seated. "Want a half of a sandwich?"

"No thanks." I turned the key in the ignition. "Okay if we drive?"

"Sure."

Dottie swang down and around to the I-80 entrance. I felt very warm and rolled down

my window. "Well?" I said, glancing at him.

"Well?" he said, glancing back.

"So?" I said, glancing again.

"So?" he said, not.

I managed to keep exasperation out of my voice. "Did you talk to them?" I asked, referring to his superiors.

He parried. "Why, always, does it seem to be a question of you, the worker, versus you, the woman?"

I kept silent. Travis McGee would have thought, *nothing for me there...*

The Reverend gutted it up finally. "I did talk this morning with the main man-- informally, you understand." He rolled down his window. "You do understand?" he continued to the windshield, "--there *are* rules; and you simply don't possess the education requirement in the new job description." He meant a B.A. degree.

I wanted to shake him; to scream: *YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THE EDUCATION REQUIREMENT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL--STRUCK DOWN IN A PRIOR APPEAL I LED FOR THE CLERICAL STAFF, ONLY TO BE PUT BACK IN AFTERWARD!*

But to what avail? My political adversaries at the Diocese top knew that the only avenue left to me was to spend probably five years, and money I didn't have, on a lawsuit of the unwinnable kind. I took the next exit off of the freeway toward the hills and circled back to the county road. "You're telling me I can't have the top half of my old job back."

He nodded.

"Fine...it won't be on *my* conscience!" The anger shot from my solar plexus down my leg to the foot on the throttle; when I braked behind his car we both jerked forward.

He got out and walked around to the driver side. This time it was I who kept eyes glued to the windshield. My hand was resting at the open window. He stooped and looked in at me, brushing his finger across the curl of my thumb. "Well...I'll see you later. Next week?--I'll catch you. For lunch, maybe."

Okay, so it wasn't his fault; but I couldn't turn my head. The best I could manage was a last glance at him from the corner of my eye. *No*, I thought, slamming Dottie back into gear, *from here on she won't be around to bite the line...*

Prior to my scheduled medical 'appointment,' an unsolicited mail advertisement triggered a decision to spend a weekend at an Ananda compound, in the Sierra foothills.

I was anticipating a simple retreat, quaintly telling myself, *a couple of days solely for the soul's sake, before seeing the origins of the East completed in the West*, having in mind an ancient Egyptian vase that depicted circumcision of daughters of royalty.

At Ananda's front desk, immediately upon arrival, I bumped into a form of JC; predictable or not, I was primed for "synchronicity." The stranger and I simultaneously were informed that the overnight cost for a single accommodation was far greater than either of us had expected. My secret questing self, courting mystical dimension, now allowed itself to be fueled with a notion of serendipitous predestination.

I arrived at the quonset first. He had been nonchalant enough, when he accepted my suggestion that we could share civil double occupancy. However, when he arrived I sensed his self-consciousness. "I was beginning to wonder whether you had changed your mind!" I said jovially, as he locked his small motorcycle under the trees. I waited while he stashed his helmet and took a bottle of wine in a brown sack from under a bungee cord—*ah, the cause of the*

*delay...*

At the door I let him enter first; I already had checked out the interior. "We have two visiting wasps," I said, reaching for conversation. "Except it soon will be dark and they'll settle down."

The room was quiet perfection. Right and left of the door, respectively, were a heater and a dresser, neither of which we would need. Beyond them the wall on each side angled into narrow ledges with pallet mattresses, angling to a tabletop that finished off the cabin's perimeter. The upper portions of the walls were plexiglass pyramided to a skylight, where between black pine needles stars were beginning to appear against deepening blue.

*Well, no excuse...I've done it*, I thought, as I drank the wine, *even if it did surprise me as much as him: a woman brash enough to offer to share a room with a total stranger? Could I blame him, should he be pondering the same thoughts as the Fisherman?* Yet the instant we tossed aside our jackets a natural atmosphere enveloped us, as we settled back on separate pallets and proceeded to share life histories.

His facts were a younger version of mine—divorced, small children, still working through the aftermath. My story took longer. I described *all* the theory and *all* the experience--Nature's challenge: the female orgasm. By the time I finished we were standing very near each other. All the wine was gone; words, spoken. We had exchanged intimate self-revelations, and the impression of decency I received of him was sufficient. It was natural that we embrace, but tonight was neither fantasy nor detachment night. Tonight was lab work--*without data, how can there be science?*

He at first was a bit impatient; the levis caught on my hips. The pallet beds were narrow; the floor was best....

Astride, if I wanted, I could assume control; but I was determined not to *work* at anything. My goal wasn't toward a singularly-directed event of my own doing; all was toward objective observation--one concrete, sheerly anatomical experience with a totally aware participant.

For starters ('out of the gate, so to speak,' Salome would note) he bade me to be a syncopated jockey. When he moved I moved. When he bounced I bounced. After fifteen or so minutes he asked, "Is it working?" I laughed. "It feels nice, but no."

He rolled us over and literally shouted. "I'll strip the skin from the grape!" Another 15 minutes of gait until finally I conceded--by then, not one bit reluctantly--"I don't think it's going to work." He, however, was not ready to abandon the challenge. He jerked to a sitting position. "Show me! Show me the spot!"

It was too dark to *see* anything; but, like my doctor visit, I used all ten fingers. "Aha!" he cried jubilantly, certain he had it, in a renewed effort of variants while I, in vain, waited for the physiological connection that would yield the atomical reaction which in turn produces fusion and ends (I think) in fission. What could be missing, I had to concede to myself, was the requisite *psychological* state...

Overhead, daylight was beginning to sprinkle the pines. The 'experiment' was ending. Not only had the bodies grown weary! Our minds, bored with the action, wandered into conversation. Are mind and body separable?--East says yes; West, no. Is every individual a distinct soul? East says no; West, yes. Finally, sprawled uncaringly like old friends after a drunk, we fell asleep.

A few hours later, as Dottie rolled downhill past mowed hayfields, an old saying in a footnote of Freud's sprang into my head. *Remember?* Memory prompted, '*A young whore*

*becomes an old nun.'* "Yes!" I spoke a retort. "But an old whore also may become an old nun or a young nun an old nun or a young whore an old whore or a young nun and/or whore merely AN OLD ONE!"

It was a long, hot drive back....

*Everyone knows what's meant by 'nun;' all that was needed now was to define 'whore'--*

The apartment, cool and quiet--

*Stekel, bless his soul, might have defined it, 'sex therapist'!*

*The Goddess Kundalini, serpentlike in form, resides at the mouth of the Great Sushumna at the foot of Mount Meru. When awakened through yogic discipline she uncoils upwards; the currents of the tributaries of the stream of life unite—*

***BUT BEWARE THE KUNDALINI!***

***SHE GIVES LIBERATION TO THE YOGIN AND BONDAGE TO THE FOOL....***

I had no impetus to find "God." I was drawn to *Raja Yoga* by what seemed a reasonable underlying science of body and mind. I contemplated what was said of the "three veils of Maya," how they obscure the three cognates of existence—form, substance and experience—perception and emotions barring knowledge of true reality. I dove into a unilaterally contrived program of postures and meditation....

The physical aim: straighten the spine and thus the spinal cord; simplify diet; curtail meat consumption; develop breathing to purify the nervous system. The mental: silence of mouth, mind, and will into one-pointed concentration through meditation--one-half hour each morning and evening, and noon, too, when my job allowed. And I ignored all the warnings.

*Saturday night, alone in the apartment—ideal for practice....*

I spread the soft white cotton mat and commenced my chosen mental recitation. Mind, which cannot accept a personified god, reworked the words of a prayer from childhood...

*In the beginning was the Word—  
In the beginning was the Logos....  
In the beginning was the worded thought—  
In the beginning was Reason!  
In IT was Life, the light of Humankind....*

I had chosen a triangular standing posture, in which legs are spread widely apart, the body twisted with one palm flat on the floor next to its corresponding foot, and the other arm raised perpendicularly toward the ceiling, to which the face is turned. I was concentrating on balance in the pose—

*In the beginning was Reason,  
Reason was toward godness,  
And Reason is a god....*

All of a sudden awareness, which had been withdrawn from perception, returned to it in extraordinary fashion. Consciousness residing behind vision somehow separated from it, yet perceived nonetheless. Yes!--that which the eyes saw was its body; but who or what was this detached, identityless observer? This wonderer, who knew, that were any part of the body mechanisms altered, admitting by the same light different images from the field, it would retain its certainty of existence?

By June I had spent more time studying light than all other subjects combined, while continuing to work through Svatmarama's slokas. Once again I yielded to anciently written words....

*Press one heel into place below the sex organs and the other just above the region. Press the chin upon the chest, sit up straight, and fasten the eyes between the eyebrows. Close the eyes and inhale deeply. This is Siddhasana, whereby all obstacles on the path to perfection are removed....*

Silently, I recited, *I apologize for yesterday's sad thoughts. I give thanks for the good things of life I have in abundance and ask for power to restrain the Ego. Lamb of God that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me....*

The fundamental tenets of yoga, terse reiterations of the meters of the golden rule, were easy to accept: *I pledge to reform my life. I shall always speak the truth. I shall not hurt another by thought, word or deed...* I forced concentration to send impulses from brain through spinal cord to every centimeter of flesh and nerve and then reversed the process, redrawing energy upward. Body relaxed; I lost clear sensation of legs, then lower torso. As I concentrated imagining energy reaching the level of the chest, the heart's beats seemed no longer totally within body's parameters but to thrust against an omnipresent vibration.

I was aware that 'photon' energy that causes sensations of light and color continued outside my closed eye lids; but conscious awareness had withdrawn subtly behind focus—pure thought: timelessness and feelinglessness devoid of history, race or religion; a primal awareness that knows no parents, children or lovers and which, although part of all selves, can wear any identity....

*Mind suspended, the student reaches the state of realization of truth in the form of radiating light which is the source of all things, and the highest objective to be reached--*

Without warning, the lids lifted and again I saw the light!—dancing, racing, bouncing off wall and carpet—click-clicking criss-crossing white-gold, obeying natural laws within an energetic medium, the interaction and relativity of which instantly would be revealed, were one able to freeze its action. The bursting diminished as focus returned toward normal; but perception had been altered drastically permanently: every inch of what once appeared empty space now filled and vibrating in a balanced constant motion—

*And I do love the 'god' my 'lord' with all my might, for 'lord' means, simply, respected overseer, sustainer and governor; and I am Its slave, lamb and subject...and Humankind is confused, because it perceives itself separate from its own substance...*

My interest was objective--I wasn't seeking impressive powers, nor did I need to be cautioned against trying to influence others or enticement by supernormal capacities. All my desire was to succeed at human goals. One caution, however, I ought to have heeded: *never mediate in a supine position*. Weary, forgetting swami Mishra's serious admonition, I lay back without reopening my eyes, and fell asleep—*asleep...perchance, to dream...*

*...There was only an handful of things needed for the larder—bran, yogurt, apples, coffee...I was taking them from the bag, placing them one by one in their appropriate places in the refrigerator and cupboard—but!—*

*Of sudden darkness was descending--rapidly! I had no thought of questioning it; I only wished to place the last item away before it became total But there wasn't time—*

No matter, *IT told me!* YOU are going to come to ME and there is nothing YOU can do about it. *Instantly I knew: I was going to fly! Who cared if the last items were left sitting on the counter. I was going to be allowed to fly and quite happy at the prospect! I relaxed, and I was lifted up, up and—oh, dear! Through the kitchen window? But before I could flinch I realized it was not my body which was to pass through; and, at that moment "I" was out and sailing, sailing into the void.*

*It feels so wonderful, this flying! A sensation of a smile upon nonexistent lips; a song from childhood tinkling softly—'over the river and through the woods'... "I" was going unthinkingly, with lovely feelings--*

JUST A MINUTE HERE, LADY. WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?--SELF-

INDULGENT, KICKING-UP-YOUR-HEELS, COMPLACENT LADY? YOU'VE NOT REACHED PERFECTION YET. FAR FROM IT!

**Wham!**

*Oh, Jesus--*

**Zap!**

TIME FOR A LESSON!--

*Pinned down faster than a turned-out light, back in the body but tormentingly helpless. I cannot open my eyes or move a muscle. I am like a rock conscious in a hurricane, as all around howls a silent torrent I am tongueless in the face of describing, yet how I yearn, how I yearn, how I yearn to understand it!*

*I am allowed, finally, to open one eye but only enough, just enough—oh, horrible sight!—to see my hair swirling with might away from the side of my face. That's all!—enough! I don't want to see more! Then IT pounded against me rhythmically, rapingly. Incubus?-- horror of horrors; was all myth after all?--but...wait...*

*My fingers...I began to feel my fingers again as part of me and could make them move! Ah, if my fingers could move, then--perhaps, perhaps--there was chance to escape. I began to pinch at the 'body' upon me--but was there a body upon me? I do not know. I do not know! And the pinching seemed to have no effect. To that point I had been only thought, only 'mind'. Then--miracles of miracles--I was allowed to move my hands—*

LEARN WHAT IS TO BE LEARNED!

*I have the use of my hands! These hands, that have peeled eggs, braided hair, tied birthday bows, cooked stews, typed one hundred million billion words, moved rocks, dug holes, pulled weeds, planted seeds.... These hands!—which, had they been larger, wider, might have laid*

asphalt, raised bridges, pulled anchors. These wonderful extensions of the soul, second only to my eyes! And with them I pushed against the ‘force’, against the body of its weight, against the weight of its body. But then, for a millisecond I felt—oh, lord, tell me *that’s not* what I feel!

Another’s hands?? What creature is this?—

NONE...NONE...NO ONE.... For, as soon as I felt those alien hands, I was released-- released, reprieved, redeemed, and returned. *Lesson learned!*--the reticular formation is nothing to play around with.

Six-thirty a.m.; rain, the first of the season. Lying abed in the morning gray light I checked the clitoral shaft and discovered it engorged, the small fold of tissue at the base of the prepuce stretched to accommodate the swelling beneath. I worried it might hinder the doctor’s task.

In the waiting room I worried more; should I have “mistressbated” first? Too late-- the scene was set and I doubted resummoned courage if I did reschedule.

In the treatment room all three, doctor and nurse as well as patient, are nervous, palpably. That last inner fold of the prepuce *was* up tight against the shaft, and I felt doubt descend--that the doctor for the first time was asking himself if this surgery was medically “justifiable.” But he couldn’t back out now either.

We had to discuss it all again. "All right," he drew himself up decisively. "We'll not go too near the base," he said to the nurse. I not able to see whereof he was speaking, as he said, "We can put one stitch here, on one side of the major connecting portion of the hood and as near to the inner fold as possible, without running the risk of cutting too deeply." (It was then I realized that he, himself, didn’t know how much bleeding to expect.) "Then we'll put a stitch on

the other side, and snip directly toward the point between."

"The worse part is over," he said when he withdrew the needle that drove the local anesthetic. (I didn't know whether he meant for him or me. No worse was it for me, however, than the dentist's needle, provided one kept one's mind off of the locale!) The doctor, proceeding to make the "little snip," was surprised at the tissue's toughness. "I'm not!" I exclaimed....

In retrospect it seemed but a few more moments before he handed me a mirror, but I couldn't focus on the spot, because of the remaining trickle of bright red blood. No matter; all that mattered to me now was that it had been accomplished. By three o'clock the anesthetic had worn off, and the residual pain was no worse than a toothache's occasional jabbing twinge. At four o'clock I voided my bladder without problem, and concluded all had been as simple as I had felt it might be. I poured a warm boric acid solution over the wound, patted it dry with a sterilized pad, and took an around-the-block walk under a clearing sky.

Miniature wildflower blooms spilled from within star thistle along the vacant lot behind my apartment complex. I stopped, but my hand didn't move to pick a bloom as it would have in the past. A thought supervened--*I did not need to touch a star flower to hold it forever*; and I felt a tranquility not known for a long, long time. Imagination? Wishful thinking? Surely it was too early to read results!

Six weeks later I made a second post-surgery phone call to Salome, then in the throes of preparing for a conference in Oregon. "How soon do you leave?"

"Monday."

"I was hoping we could get together first."

"Wish I could but have a zillion things left to do. Truth is I can't wait to get away from the valley for a while. But tell me, are you all healed?"

"Perfectly. The two stitches were taken out last week. That was more nerve-wracking than the surgery, especially in that the doctor had his nurse do it--and, boy, was she visibly anxious! That's about it; except--not wanting to gross you out totally—there was an unusually strong post-surgical odor considering how small a wound it was. I took a bath the very next day."

"Do you look different?"

"You mean, does the clitoral area look different."

"Yes," she laughed.

"Not so's even I would notice--just the tiniest tag of skin at the base."

"But do you *feel* different; I should say, *differently*?"

"You know, I believe I truly do. The intervals seem longer now before I'm distracted by that annoying little cyclical tug. I seem to concentrate better and longer, too. But a statistic of one can't be counted; nor can we rule out mixed affects--*psychological* along with physical."

"Well, of the 72,000 *nadi* or nerve threads estimated by the East, *one* at least has to have been severed. Main thing, you're satisfied," Salome valiantly humored me.

"Except maybe I just like *thinking* it's made a difference."

"But you're not going to end it there!"

"You mean, I have an obligation to field-test it?"

"For dear Science's sake, if nothing else."

"I admit I wouldn't mind satisfying that curiosity. Besides--quite apart from Science--I happen still to yearn for human companionship, you know. Unfortunately, no one in sight fills the emotional bill. How about, if there's real purpose to be served, we just leave it up to 'God', and let the same force that prompted biblical forefathers arrange a test."

Apparently my words didn't convey enough of the tongue-in-cheek quality I intended. "Don't go *Messianic* on me," Salome responded with a tinge of real worry.

"You mean *Messiahnahnic*," I quipped but immediately changed subject. "Something else. Now that the medical thing is done my thought's taken off in the opposite direction, things I don't know about my own *psyche*. All of a sudden I feel a need to learn about how *it* relates to man...."

"A woman has to get really familiar with her 'Animus,' before she can zero in on a 'Madonna/Magdalena complex,'" Salome replied enigmatically. I recognized the first term-- "*Animus*," one of a pair of "archetypes"--concepts used by psychologist Carl Jung in his model of psychical interactions. "*Animus*," an unformulated, compensatory 'masculine' constellation in the female psyche, of which the counterpart in the male psyche was the "*Anima*?" Of it all, I was uncertain, having only old memories of aborted studies from which to draw.

Salome's second term really caught me. "*That's an interesting combination--'Madonna/Magdalena'?*"

"A topic for our first get-together after I'm back in the fall. 'Til then, promise at least one letter," she commanded.

"Promise. Meanwhile I've picked up on some old writing—no, *not* about sex! However, *on* that subject, one last thing. I need to find a name for the 'procedure.' 'Excision' carries the wrong connotation, and technically it wasn't circumcision."

"Hmmm. How about *laterecision*--from Latin, *a latere*, to the side?"

"*Laterecision*. I like it. So. I've put that subject out of my head for a while, and resurrected a project laid aside two years ago. I'm going away this weekend and do nothing but write."

"Good. Where?"

"I don't know. I'll just get into Dottie, head west, and see where we end up." *Best not to have mentioned, that I let the full moon decide me on a writing retreat that weekend instead of the next, as originally planned.* I hung up the phone and walked to the bedroom chuckling. *'Madonna/Magdalena complex'...what a card that woman is!* But there was a weird coincidence there that I denied myself to dwell on. *How would she have reacted, had I told her exactly what piece of writing I had resurrected?*

Into the briefcase, rough notes, the Greek/English text of the *New Testament* and the *Nag Hammadi* translations. Into the trusty canvas bag that swang from my shoulder all the way through Mexico to Columbia and back, beachwear and articles of toilette. I had some ready cash, would need more, meant to leave earlier, but was compelled to put the apartment in order first. It was after Friday midnight when finally I backed Dottie from her space in the apartment parking lot; yet, alone on the road again under a cloudless night and stars, the mind at the wheel was calmly accepting.

A computerized teller in the first town I tried happened to be out of service. Hunger pangs stopped me before Saturday's daylight at an all-night restaurant, where the waitress tipped me to an ATM in Sausalito. Sausalito was out of the way, but again I felt not a twinge of frustration. By the time I doubled back toward Mill Valley, the sun was rising; only then did "I" decide I was headed for Stinson Beach, and the Sandpiper Motel.

The Sandpiper, however, had fallen into disrepair and there was no manager on the premises. At nine a.m. I consulted a local realtor. Did he know of a room for rent nearby? He shook his head. "You might try Bolinas," he suggested.

"Bolinas? I've heard of it--"

"Just up the road; watch for the turnoff."

I watched, still didn't see it, and had been driving another 20 minutes when I noticed another, a small sign: Vedanta.... *Of course! Why not? What better place to work on an imaginary dialogue between Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ?*

The head monk was gracious but informed me that approval of the chief Swami at San Francisco was a prerequisite to overnight stays at the retreat.

Did he know of another quiet place where I might work?

"Ah--*Bolinas* would serve," he said, "a short way back down the road. Residents there aren't eager for tourists; the turnoff isn't marked. Watch for the lagoon, and turn right at that road. When you reach a t-intersection, turn left."

This time I had no problem finding the turn-off from Highway 1. Through the trees, the still surface of the lagoon beneath the morning haze was opaque glass waiting to diffuse the sun's strike. At the t-intersection I spied a dated wooden building. Overgrown foliage almost hid completely a carved sign, but its weathered lettering was readable: *Church of Mary the Magdalene...*

That second coincidence did strike me, but I promptly buried it and turned left. Over the hump and down into town, the sunny village and squawking gulls belied my fate...

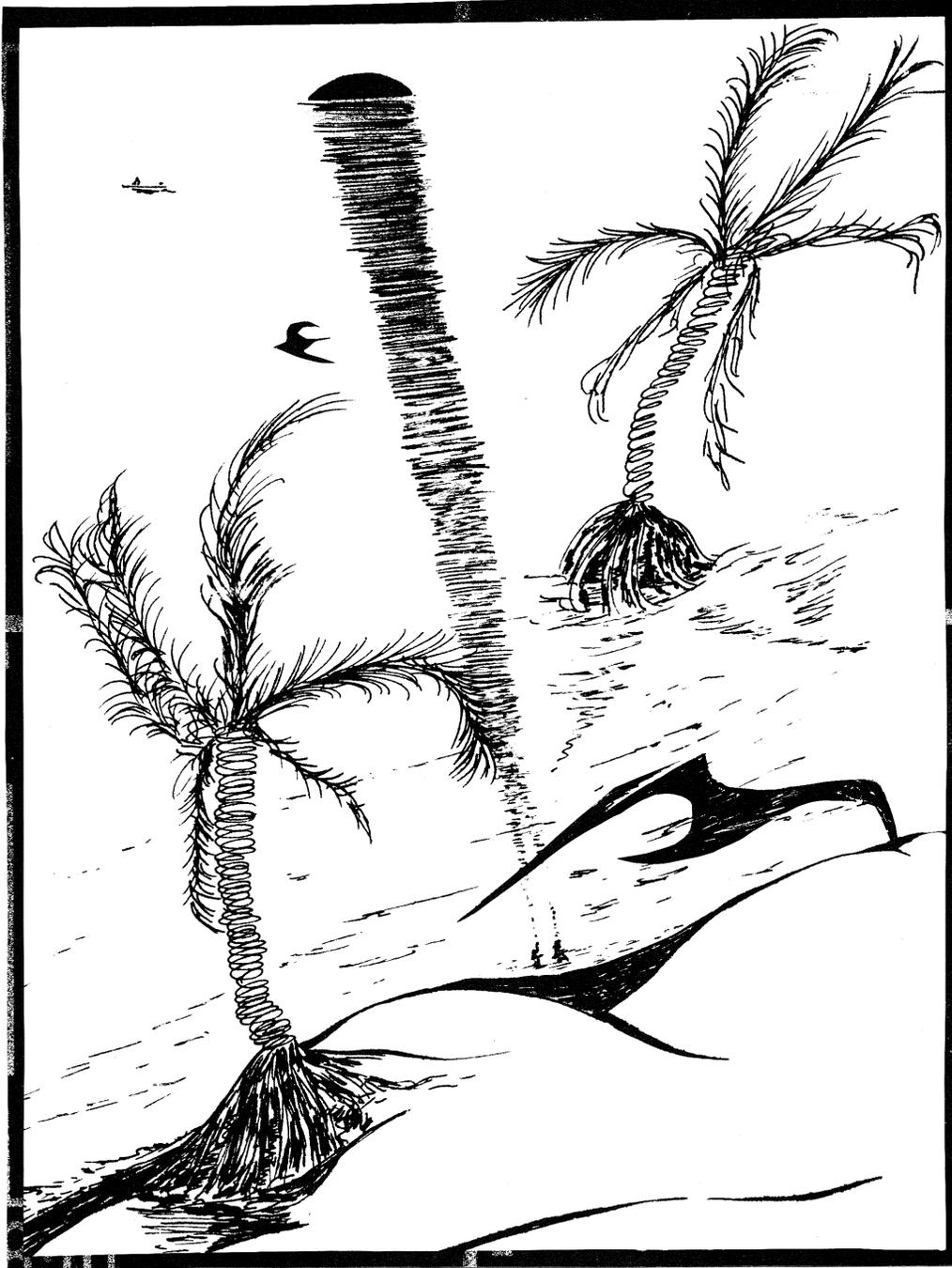
A female yogic adept is called a *yogin*. I needed to see the word only once, to decide that I would study to raise consciousness from the lower limb of the spinal tree of life, and secretly guide it upwards to the heights of liberation. Yoga offered waned faith a scientific basis

unencumbered by rules contrary to Reason; and I was fashioning a personal ‘religion’--that is, religiously following self-specified methods to moor faith not in God, in myself.

My father and mother neither went to church nor disparaged it, while I simply was made to attend catechism, etc. in accordance with their culture. At a very young age I queried my mother: how could she not attend church when I had been instructed that, to miss a Sunday, was a *mortal sin*? (Should one die before confessing a mortal sin, I had been told, one went straight to ‘Hell!’)

Mother responded, “You see, child, it’s like this: your father works from dawn to dusk six days a week, to take care of the family. Sunday, when we have our big family feast, is his only day of rest.” (Sunday feasts began at about 1:30 in the afternoon, and always were attended by various other relatives.) “Now it takes a lot of time for me to get the food and house ready,” Mother concluded, “and I think God understands.”

It made sense to me. *En fin*, my parents were my life’s prime authority, and there was nothing greater than pure reason. I was free to respect the workings of my own mind. When I told Father I no longer was able to accept doctrine I could not comprehend, all he said was, “I understand;” and mother said not a word. Ironically, however, the strict pre-confession “examination of conscience” imbued by the nuns became the very vehicle of my quest....



Low-flying pelicans, sand between the toes, this beach was not La Ventosa and too cold for swimming. Not five minutes after spreading the towel and my body face-down on it, my sidewise right eyeball caught the image of a youthful JC walking along the surf, waved hair reaching to well-defined pectorals. I noted his eyes move back and forth covertly from sea to

me: *scoping*, the Countryman called it....

I jackknifed to a sitting position. No mistaking it. This JC slyly was changing direction straight toward me. Halfway between the shore edge and my towel he smiled. I fought it but felt my facial expression soften--not a smile but, *damn!* Enough to be recognized as non-threatening.

Two paces from me he stopped. "Are you alone?" he asked, in most neutrally polite manner. *What does it look like?*

"Mind if I sit down?" *Why am I not answering, 'YES!'--*

"I honestly don't want to bother anyone," he said quietly toward the sea. "It's just that I'm lonely and would like someone to talk to. Just say so, and I'll leave." *Oh Lord...* How does one, unconsciously or consciously desperately in search of it for oneself, refuse such convincingly abject honesty? At that moment a small child ran by, unheeding his chasing father's call. Midway between us and the surf the father caught up with him. The father was angry. He grabbed the boy up short and then pushed him back up the beach, cussing. The boy began to cry. As they passed I saw in the father's unfocused eyes frustration with his own life. Not a good day for the man; definitely not the right time for his little son to be drawn to the freedom of the sea.

Meanwhile, I not having said I minded, the Last JC had sat down next to my towel. "One hurt child can destroy the world," he remarked. The comment checkmated a straggling thought--something Salome told me?.... No.... *Didn't* tell me.... *What was that term?* All of a sudden I felt like a character who should be written out of existence, while at the same time I heard '*Her*', that other-me reply instinctively, "God. I believe that too. I even have written a screenplay around the subject."

"You an author?"

Our eyes met for the first time. "'Would-be.'"

"What's the play about?"

"'Conscious conception.' It's for third world countries--a sci-fi-carnalized replay of the immaculate conception with music by the Rolling Stones and the Grateful Dead. I want to convince every teenager in the world that birth control is the greatest gift 'God' ever bestowed on his flock."

"Want to walk down by the surf for a while?"

It was heaven having someone listen to me talk about my writing, even be that interest feigned. I stood up and shook the towel before slinging it over my shoulder. "Yes. I'd like that."

At the water's edge he spied a pint bottle of pearly sea-green glass shaped like an armless Modigliani. He handed it to me. "Want to keep it?"

I nodded and took the bottle in hand. A little bit of sea water was captured inside. First I, then he, tried unsuccessfully to unscrew the battered metal cap. "Fused for eternity," he said, holding the bottle up and shaking it. "That sea water will be in there long after the blood's gone from my veins."

"That's pretty morose."

"Yeah. Well," he said, tossing his hair away from his face to look seaward, "too beautiful a day to be morose." The wind flattened his shirt against the concavity between his ribs. "Look at that horizon! Ever see the light play on the water like that?"

"It's beautiful."

"Do you have any kids?"

"Two daughters. You?"

"A son. Haven't seen him in a couple of years." He fished a photograph from his breast

pocket. "This is him. Great kid, huh?"

"Darling. Does he live with you?"

"No; in South Dakota with his mom. I'm saving up money to go see him."

"Do you live here?"

He scuffed the sand with a bare foot. "You might call it that. I work for a local store; do pickups--you know, Santa Rosa for eggs and chickens; Sonoma, for bread. I sleep in their van."

He stopped and laid a hand on my arm. "What time is it?"

I looked at my watch. "Eleven o'clock."

"I'm due at work now." He started backing up the beach. "Do you like Bluegrass?" The water riffled my ankles. He was about 15 feet away.

"Yes."

"There's a good band playing in Fairfax tomorrow night. Want to go?"

I walked toward him, not answering, as he started to jog backwards. "Tell you what," he raised his voice, "meet me tomorrow, around four, downtown. We can talk about it." Then he turned and broke into a serious run.

I returned to my room and wrote the afternoon away, after which it was time for some Yoga. Age-old definitions surfaced in consciousness....

*Kumbhaka*....controlled intake, retention, circulation and expulsion of breath. *Hebrew* "ruahh," *Greek* "pneuma"...to breathe, to blow; when used with reference to god, the 'Holy Spirit.' *Latin* "spirare"...to breathe, from which came "spirit;" literally speaking, all Scripture--words accepted as emanating from 'God'--are 'god'-breathed. As said in the second letter of *Timothy*, translating the compound Greek word, *theopneustos*, "All of The Word is inspired by god."

The philosophers of the *Old Testament* dared not describe ‘God’; and, for me, breath, God and Spirit impersonally united left no impediment to reduction to pure physics—a concept, twisted by time, that existed from the beginning! Jesus would have served as Mohammed’s caretaker and Mohammed, as his: equal “sons of ‘god’.”

I recognized raja yoga’s appeal to an already sensitive nature, before setting foot firmly on its path; but I had no clue how facets of my fundamental nature--psychical constellations forged by early religious training and the deep examination of Conscience invoked--would combine with the material nervous system changes. Through studied raising of *kundalini*, the readings allowed, one could achieve conscious sublimation--not just become a true child of “Brahman,” the undescribed “God.” One could, *like* Brahman, “know all minds.” How lofty that sounded. How otherwise it could be!—as, in my evening meditation, I became *everyone!*—

*“I” was my mother: orphaned, raised in a cocoon, understandably forgiving her inability to speak explicitly of matters physical or emotional. “I” was the refugee, the alien resident, coping with foreign tongue and manners. “I” was everywoman: the welfare mother, born and bred in a slum, missing education, coping with roaches at home and the vermin of prejudiced society; the working mother, saying, “Yes, sir,” “No, Sir,” serving from a cramped space superiors in roomy offices who were where they were simply because they had the good fortune not to have been where “I” had been. Cleopatra!—a girl when she met Caesar, a loving mother, no less noble a monarch than any man, remembered only for her imagined body, her imagined lusting—*

*More even that that! “I” was my father, who stood firm on individual principles, not those proclaimed by any organized religion or governmental entity—those principles that live in the souls of fair-minded, hard-working laborers everywhere. “I” was the surgeon who moved*

*the knife in good faith before the maturity of its science; the priest, who began when he believed, now struggling in the business of Religion; the seamstress, the mechanic, the murderer! And this insignificant "I" no longer would be able to condemn anyone, for every other person was "Me."* *Thou art that*, is the saying; and 'god'-consciousness is *that* and *that* and *that*!

'Liberation,' I was discovering, was not so grand the term initially might give one to think....

Four-thirty the next day I was sitting in the van's open hatch in direct line with the afternoon sun, my back against the jamb. My right foot rested on the van floor; my left, on the ground, the thigh of the outstretched leg overheating inside sun-soaked Levi. The Last JC sat sideways towards me from the driver's seat.

I took a cigarette from my pack, offered him one that he declined, and struck a match. The book cover, an ad for John Ascuaga's Nugget, promised "The Best of Everything." Nervously I rubbed it between my fingers and palm.

"You know, it's not the real you that needs to smoke," he said.

"I know," I blew out smoke. "I've been trying to quit since I turned 30--ever since the statistics began rolling in. I suspect the main reason 'me' who wouldn't smoke can't quit is that it's afraid it'll never be the 'me' it likes to think it could be...."

He let the poor line go by. "Why do you write what you write?" he asked, instead, like when the Countryman asked, *how did you manage to stay so lovely.*" Whether true interest fueled the question mattered not, compared to the pleasure of answering to seemingly interested ears. "It's not something I can explain in a few words," I began, knowing he would listen as long as necessary. That was part of his job here.

I squashed the cigarette between the gravel and my Reebok. "We haven't made the world a place yet where we would *choose* to live. Only a fraction of humanity is born with any hope of a decent life. This very moment a lot of people are being created into hopelessly morbid circumstances and eventually—intentionally or not—they'll take it out somehow on someone else, not just themselves. If more of humankind respected *itself* as creator as much as it did its, quote, 'God', fewer of us would live as potential victims. You said it yesterday. "One hurt child can destroy the world."

"Yep, turn on any newscast", he said forcefully. "Over-crowded jails, rat holes of inner cities, not enough money for the schools we have, much less the ones we need. Surf the channels—hear how we need more prisons, more housing, more roads, more medical services, more garbage dumps. Why, by the very next year there's going to be a billion more of us. But ever hear anyone say?--'Gee, we need to spend some *real* time and money on getting a hold, so to speak, on our reproductive habits!'"

"Oh, some people *do* think and act on it." I popped another cigarette up from the pack, glad he pretended not to notice. "Recently I even heard some talk about our government beginning to look at the problem, but I know we're a sorry long way from a distribution of resources and development of education to solve it. How can people develop resources absent *education*? How can people get educated without *opportunity*? How can they garner opportunity without *resources*?"

He reached over and grabbed my hand. "*And*, how do families get stability and security if *parents* don't have education, resources and opportunity? It's a vicious circle." Keeping hold of my hand he slid off the seat and scooted next to me in the door opening.

I took back my hand. "The only place a person can do anything, I guess, is right in the

middle of where one is, with whatever one has.”

"So you write.”

“Yes. About a whole world tuning into 'conscious conception'--every child, before it's conceived, guaranteed two solid, comprehending, committed creators, whether they live together or not—impossible, until we humans better understand our sexuality.” I looked for a way to get off my soapbox. “There's a quote in a book by Hesse—you know Hesse?”

“'Steppenwolf'?”

"The very book--something like, 'the horrid thought has occurred to certain people that all of life is a bad joke; but then another thought also can come--that maybe we can be more than half-rational animals after all.' It's that last hope that I want to feed..."

I put my hand up to cradle my head against the door jamb. I didn't worry about repinning dangling strands of hair loosed by the wind. Every passer-by looked like a beach comber. I lifted my left foot up next to my right one on the van's floor and pulled my knees toward my chest.

"It's weird--" the Last JC said pensively as if to himself, "you and I meeting like this..."

The sun punched a halo around him. It darkened a high wave of leopard gold hair that swept up from the forehead, curved down to touch the edges of his moustache and became lost in the fringes of his beard.

"Why 'weird'?"

He turned his face toward me. Shadowed, it appeared featureless. "Because I'm 'it'," he said soberly.

"'It'?"

"What you were talking about--handicapped birth."

I tilted my head and waited.

"My real mother was in high school in an ultra-conservative midwest town, when she got knocked up by some local businessman, a married man. Her parents hid her away somewhere so I could get born, and I was put up for adoption." He stopped and nibbled his index finger.

"Oh," I said, not able to think of anything else I might have.

"I've never told this--" (*Well, maybe he hadn't; maybe he had--*) "but I don't think I ever got over being ripped away from her. I just know there's a memory of it somewhere in me that haunts me." He lifted his head and took a deep breath. The halo slipped and gilded his profile, a clean curve that cut beneath the heavy brow and glided into a perfect aquiline nose--

*Suddenly I was 13 again!--waiting for the iron to get hot, eyes riveted to the picture on the religious calendar that hung inside the ironing board cupboard. Saint Michael, the Archangel... My mother and sisters must have become as infatuated with that image as I did, because, once that image of Saint Michael appeared, the month in the ironing board cupboard never changed. Time remained frozen there, until the house was sold after my father's death--*

Remembering certain things always makes me reach for a cigarette. "Did you love your step-parents?" I asked with the first exhale.

He answered indirectly. "My stepfather already was a burned-out alcoholic, when he came back after Korea and took over his father's farm. I did most of the work from the time I was eight and I loved it; I thought I'd be working that farm forever. Then, high school on, things started going bad between us. I questioned the Church. I demonstrated against 'Nam. I got a bad name at school and in town. Meanwhile, my older brother was perfect. There were arguments; my mother always took my side. And...something else--" he stopped short.

"What?"

"Oh...my basic nature. You know--my hair; the way I *looked*. I think my father was put off by that, too; thought, maybe, that--"

"That you were homosexual?"

"I don't know...."

"I guess it's not unusual--is it?--that 'macho'-conditioned men have problems dealing with other men who manifest a gentler nature, especially sons."

The Last JC paused; was it the turn of conversation? When he spoke again I perceived a change in character, defiance combined with flippancy of voice. "But I always could count on Mom. And I still can! Money's a problem for me, and just yesterday I called her and conned her out of--"

"What???"

*Conned? God damn it, I forgot! I forgot how deprivation on one side of the parental coin often results in overindulgence on the other; how sad ones--those one-sidedly raised, also often are tragically despoiled ones. The Countryman, in his 40's, still called Mom when all else failed--*

"'Conned' your mother?? If you can do that to *her*--" I managed to keep my voice even (but why was I taking the pins out of my hair, letting it fall?)--"if you can do that to *your own mother*, imagine what you'd do to *me!*" I didn't wait for a reply, jumped up and stomped off, with a feeling not unlike when I first saw the Countryman: *sure--so sure!-- NEVER* would I involve myself with the likes of *him*....

BEWARE!

DO NOT UNDERTAKE PRACTICE WITHOUT GUIDANCE FROM AUTHORITY!

I had begun to look at all as a matter of sheer physics. The better ‘centered’ I became the less susceptible would I be, I reasoned, to the pull of lesser forces and be nearer to the ‘true’ self Nature intended. However, the energy that travels every body and causes it to breathe and live now seemed to be processing inordinately through me.

Coincidentally (synchronistically?), there had come my way a book by a man named Gopi Krishna. He had undertaken yogic practices enthusiastically at age 17, for the same reasons I had at 42—he, to concentrate mind and cultivate will after failing to live up to his self-sacrificing mother’s hopes; I, my own. In some books Gopi studied, he noted that:

“there was a passing reference to Kundalini Yoga—a couple of pages or a small chapter was all that the authors thought sufficient for describing this most difficult and least known form of Yoga. It was stated that Kundalini represents the cosmic vital energy lying dormant in the human body, coiled [at] the base of the spine a little below the sexual organ....” Page 59.

As to his own experience:

“There was no doubt an extraordinary change in my nervous equipment, and a new type of force was now racing through my system connected unmistakably with the sexual parts.” Page 88.

“To the best of my knowledge the weird phenomena following the awakening of Kundalini have so far never been revealed in detail or made the subject of analytical study...shrouded in mystery not only because of the extreme rarity and astounding nature of the manifestation but...also because certain...features...are closely bound up with the intimate life and private parts of the individual who has the experiences.” “...I am compelled for reasons of prudence to keep back much that should have found a place in this work....” Page 113; 115.

It was possible that my body’s reactions were being intensified by natural mid-life biological changes; yet it was obvious from Gopi Krishna’s narrative, and veiled references in other works, that freeing the spirit through kundalini yoga involved critical anatomical and physiological adjustments to the heightened flow of energy through the nervous system. I could relate to his reluctance to describe them, for I could testify to an increased demand for discharge

of energy via orgasm so much so that the process was assuming mechanical objectivity, completely separate from interpersonal sex. And what was I to make of Svاتمarama’s terse words relative to the “*shakti*?”

“Between *ida* and *pingala* sits the young widow Kundalini. You should awaken the sleeping serpent by grasping its tail. The *shakti*, when aroused, moves upward. Then manipulate the shakti for an hour and a half, both at sunrise and sunset. ... When one moves the kundalini fearlessly...she is drawn upward a little, through the sushumna. In this way the opening of the sushumna naturally is left free and the prana current is carried upward. ... Why talk about it so much? Pages 129, 130; *Slokas 105-112*.

It had struck me that, according to Svاتمarama, Siva enunciated the raja yoga method for “his wife, Parvati;” and subsequently I had pondered a strange rumor that some male kundalini aspirants found it necessary to imagine that they had a vagina. Now I was left hanging in the breech by *the translator’s* comment, at Svاتمarama sloka 83:

“The following slokas, 84-103, describe...[certain named]...*mudras*. ... The purpose of such practices is clear: to enjoy all the benefits of yoga without sacrificing any of the worldly pleasures. In leaving out these passages, we merely bypass the descriptions of a few obscure and repugnant practices that are followed by only those yogis who lack the will power to reach their goal otherwise. ... Any technique that enables a yogi to submit...virility...within his[/her] organism merits approval. Whatever he[/she] does outside his[/her] organism cannot be called yoga[!] ... So let us take a detour around Orcus into the purer fields...”

*Good grief*, I reacted. It put me in mind of how ‘the Word’ can be lost simply because it contradicted a conveyor’s platform. Little is clear about Jesus’ true philosophy. I recalled again how I was taught the first sentence of the *Book of John* concerning “the Logos,” and the more makeable of that rendition on examining the Greek words in which it originally was written. The Greek dictionary provides:

**logos:** I. *The word by which the inward thought is expressed: also II. the inward thought or reason itself—*

yet who was “I” to speculate about the all-important word, *logos*, translated as “*The Word?*” Or, that the Greek word in the second line, translated as “with,” equally could be rendered *toward?* Or, that the word translated in the same line as “God” initially was plural (“divinity” *substituted* in some translations)? Or, that the Greek construction of line three would allow that “the Word[*Logos; Reason*] was *a god?* How many of ‘received’ words can we honor, when, combining the possibilities, we might have had:

*At the beginning was Reason,  
And Reason was towards the gods,  
And Reason was a god....*

Generations of peoples have lived, grieved and died according to the words of “*The Word*” conveyed through subjectivity. Beyond millennia of politics, prejudices, and vanities, words can become pebbles upon which precariously sits an inverted pyramid of misunderstandings. Jesus’ full attitude toward issues relative to women appears to be one, hinted in his response to the question of divorce, and encouragement of Martha’s sister, Mary’s desire to learn. Prior to Jesus’ mother, Mary, only four females appear in the testamentary male-legitimized lineage to Jesus—women who did not meet the ‘requisite’ criteria but without whom a patriarchal gap could not be bridged: Tamar (“a Canaanite”), Rahab (keeper of “the inn” at Jericho who aided Joshua), Ruth (“a Moabite”) and Bath-Sheba.

JC the First’s mother had been orthodoxically Catholic. Maybe his service as an altar boy had to do with his preteen abandonment of religion, earlier than mine; but, according to family stories, he was a rebel from the start. He was astonished at how seriously seven-year-old Me had been indoctrinally affected by authoritative nuns in flowing white hats: *God would know, if I did not examine my conscience completely before confession.*

Among ‘laws’ I also was taught were, eating meat on a Friday was a mortal sin; however, if one self-prayed a true “Act of Contrition” before dying, one escaped “Hell” and only had to serve a correspondent time in “Purgatory.” Well, past one Thursday midnight when I was about 10 years old, in the kitchen whilst Mother was preparing for Sunday, I unwittingly popped a bit of her meat-based ravioli filling into my mouth. Recalling it then was Friday I was frantic! I could not *wait* to be “absolved.”

Next afternoon, I hurried along Union toward Steiner Street, past the tall old buildings, and, happening to glance up, saw the cement gargoyles overhanging the building corners. *What if one fell?* I thought. *I wouldn’t know it was coming; I wouldn’t have time to pray anything!* If I’d had my wits about me, I would have said the prayer there and then. Instead I moved and walked the rest of the way in the gutter.

Yogic rules are easier on Psyche. *Don’t allow yourself to become excited under any circumstances* is one I find most useful. By it one can construct a ‘faith’ that incorporates possibilities of self and scientific determination against outside forces. “Every action has an equal and opposite reaction” could be applied, I figured, to reactive action to psychical reaction—*e.g.*, if I consciously controlled immediate reaction to external acts, subsequent action would be better reasoned—a vein of thought supported by yogic distinctions of *prakriti* and *purusha/purusa*.

That may not be the precise yogic view intended; it fit, however, with the description that *prakriti* in or out of matter is in constant motion, drives individual consciousnesses, and yields life and death. In my view, the concept easily could be reflected by the formula  $E=mc^2$ , where some substantive energy is manifested as matter and some not.

Mind can't work when it's cluttered, as mine was, combating the old domestic conditionings along with religious. And now I was receiving thoughts that made me want to retreat into a little barely-essentialised room, to draw and compose a new order. *But, a closed system of the universe?* To whom could this crazy woman speak about her perplexion? *For god's sake, no one!* Difficult enough to keep up appearances—find something acceptable to wear, remember to put on some jewelry so that I fit in, bring an appropriate dish to the Thanksgiving feast. *Awful to contemplate!*—that, if homage was to be paid fully to the insistent thoughts of this 'new' psyche, the retreat it demanded threatened all bonds to common reality....

The Bolinas boarding house room I'd rented was white with Pennsylvania Dutch flower-sprigged curtains and bedspread. Its one window gave onto the base of a fir-treed hill. The evening birdsong was reminiscent of the *bhakti* twilight, when I first felt purposely claimed by Divinity and uniquely adored by It. With that self-reflected love I strode into Mexico to write words to light the world! *Throw off the harnesses, East and West*, I scribbled at the time; *take with you only the best. From the latter, sounding of conscience; from the former, a rock of science; from both, the precepts: truth, cheerfulness, purity and desirelessness; and let us see what we shall see!*

Through Yoga, I had read, one may learn to not repeat self-destructive experiences and in consequence even alter one's nature. No one said that life afterwards would be easier! Now it was as if, having lived one lifetime *subconsciously* at the mercy of body, *this "I"* was joining league with Freud in a need to justify *its* life. And Jung!—*this "I"* needed to explain the spirit's evolution as Consciousness. And Reich!—*this "I"* wanted to reunite 'orgone' and body, energy and matter!

Even if, since the excision, the observer in me seemed stronger, less agitated and freer to work effectively, there was no proof that microscopic anatomical connections *can* abuse thought; but it had ceased to matter whether intensified discharge of energy, via orgasm, was middle-aged adolescence, menopause, or unleashed *kundalini*. I no longer cared to know *why*, but *what*. The Self was commanding Itself to observe physics apart, and I had begun attempts to describe, along with illustrations, a solid-state “aether.”

It is no small matter, that men have been disputing the essence of reality since long before the time of Aristotle. Despite Mach’s principle, the theory behind an “aether” overwhelmingly was accepted as overturned in 1887 by the Michelson-Morley experiment, from which it was reasoned that, since the earth would be ‘traveling’ through such medium, beams of light projected in different directions through it across earth would travel at different rates. Since that appeared not to happen, the theory was rejected. Einstein eventually was forced to give up his “Cosmological Constant,” but he sensed and continued searching for a field of unified atomic and electromagnetic forces. Now, quantum mechanics seemed inexorably leading back to an all-pervasive medium....

*Yes!* I thought toward a cawing crow. *Dammit! Non-conscious predetermination, evolution, and reason are my ‘gods!’* But what, precisely, was this “Yoga” that had set me so firmly on that course?

The word, *yoga*, is derived from the Sanskrit root, *yug*, meaning to bind, attach, yoke. Yoga, one of six orthodox systems of Indian[Hindu] philosophy, was collated, coordinated, and systemized by Patanjali. His classical work, *Yoga Sutras*, consists of 185 terse aphorisms. As Iyengar states in *Light on Yoga*,

“Patanjai describes Yoga as restraint of mental modifications or as suppression of the fluctuations of consciousness.... The *Kathopanishad* describes Yoga...[as]

steady control of the senses and mind. ... The *Bhagavad Gita*...lays stress upon Karma Yoga (Yoga by action). ... The sixth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, which is the most important authority of Yoga philosophy...explains...the meaning of Yoga as a deliverance from contact with pain and sorrow.” Pages 21-22

Since my interest, however, always has been more inclined pragmatically, Mishra’s brief comments were enough for my desire *to do*, not ponder:

“The material on the eternal science of Yoga perhaps forms the greatest library on any single subject...but you are not interested in useless verbiage to waste your valuable time. You want to know ‘how’... The Patanjali Yoga in its original form is free from these vagaries. Therefore, the name of the Patanjali Yoga is *Samkhya* Yoga. It does not recognize physics without metaphysics and, vice versa, metaphysics without physics. It is the missing link between the two sciences...knowledge through experience. It is the king of all Yogas; therefore it is called *Raja* Yoga. As mathematics is the root of all physical sciences, so the *samkhya* system is the root of metaphysical science.” Page xii.

Although *Purusa* is conceived as Consciousness *per se*--a non-identity with which one is born, before modification by circumstances, associations, and conditioning via the force of *prakriti*—the teachings do not deny genetics, because *prakriti* determines the substance of being. Degrees of successful self-realization, it is asserted, depend as much upon genetics as upon practice. Physical and mental inherited constitution and the nature developed within and upon it determine, respectively, attraction to the science and capacity for development. (Bad conditioning, even of original substantive, highest-possible disposition, can impede the way.) *Prakriti* yields inheritance; inheritance yields initial disposition; conditions determine character. All three, it is said, are necessary to pierce the ‘veil’ of *purusha*.

Spirituality weaves strongly it, but Yoga is not closed to either agnosticism or invocation of subjectivity from religious realms; just so, it may be brought to bear on western biblical issues. (One example is the contradiction in the lineage of Jesus, posed between the *New Testament* books of *Matthew* and *Luke*, where the former traces bloodline patriarchally via the

stepfather's bloodline and the latter, matriarchally, via the mother's, the unstated ultimate determinant).

Yoga for supranormal achievements is disdained by the masters, and I have eschewed some esoteric practices. (There is suggestion of "self-secret" facets that one cannot comprehend unless ready.) Perceptions stimulated by intense practice *can* draw one into mystical considerations; but I seek concrete explanations, as for bizarre 'dreamings.' An exploration of "dark matter" activity in a strict scientific environment, not revealing anything about a 'beyond,' could, considerable, about the workings of the cerebrospinal system—particularly in that area known as the reticular formation, and the experience by some of an inexplicable force in a between-area of waking and sleep.

Further, I have no wish to strive for communication between consciousnesses; I only am curious as to Lingpa's comment in *Mudra*, that, for receipt of understandings, single-minded devotion and faith are necessary to connect with a teacher "who holds Thought Lineage Transmission," which suggests extra-thought-receipt. The force that each of us contains and processes—the full potential of it each of us might emanate—is what cements my interest.

Who would not want to reach the posed ultimate state of *Samadhi*?-- be at one with supreme universal spirit, feeling unutterable joy and peace, all concentration upon whatever is at hand; breathing smoothly without worry, doubt or fear--the state of mind of the undisturbed child in motion or still? If attainable in meditation, possibility of permanence, however, is mitigated by *Mishra's* comment that it is a state, "of which there are various grades, in which the individual mind [is] freed *for a time* from material limits...and gains enlightenment."

While I and others in meditation may have experienced mind absent its usual stream of consciousness--the "I" for a brief time oblivious to elements of the world and personal identity--

the suggestion, that in *Samadhi* the individual mind “takes the form of supreme, omnipotent, and omnipresent mind,” is far too magnanimous for me. The best I can do “in motion,” when I feel anxiety, is consciously take deep breaths and tune into *nadam* (the “divine sound,” which some may equate with “tinnitus”).

Mishra’s meditative method of enabling self-hypnosis of the ‘subconscious’ has appeared to be a saving grace for me; but, there, must be respected Rinpoche’s admonition--that “preaching without firsthand knowledge is like dancing on books”--for my ‘practice’ has been my own assemblage. Regardless the help garnered by me, it is open to the charge of being but a placebo.

Jung, however, had cause to be open-minded about the universal force that each of us contains and processes. The introduction to *The Portable Jung* recounts a 1909 meeting with Freud, then 19 years Jung’s senior.

Freud said he was ‘adopting’ Jung “as an eldest [surrogate] son,” and “anointing him as successor and crown prince” of psychoanalysis.

Jung then asked Freud’s views on “precognition and parapsychology.”

Freud replied abruptly: “Sheer nonsense!”—“in terms”, states Jung, “of so shallow a positivism that I had difficulty in checking the sharp retort on the tip of my tongue. I had a curious sensation. ... It was as if my diaphragm were made of iron and was becoming red-hot—a glowing vault. And at that moment there was such a loud report in the bookcase, which stood right next to us, that we started up in alarm, fearing the thing was going to topple over on us. I said to Freud: ‘There, that is an example of a so-called catalytic exteriorization phenomenon.’”

“‘Oh, come!’ He exclaimed. ‘That is sheer bosh.’

“‘It is not,’ I replied. ‘You are mistaken, Herr Professor. And to prove my point I now predict that in a moment there will be another such loud report!’ Sure enough, no sooner I had said the words than the same detonation went off in the bookcase. ... Freud only stared aghast at me.’”

I envision a system of Physics wherein cause and effect will be found sealedly, predeterminedly relative. There is a yogic saying, that when one dies it is like air leaving a vase. When Jung died, an unseasonal storm occurred over Kusnacht and the tree under which he used to sit was struck and scarred by lightening--a synchronistic coincidence but, as Jung himself would say, not by a personifiable god's mighty hand. Into the vacuum created by our expiration, perhaps a single weed will nod its head. When the force left Jung, the heavens shook....

“Thus, like a precious, fleeting foam over the sea of suffering arise all those works of art [and science], in which a single [consciousness] lifts [it]self for an hour so high above [its] personal destiny that [its] happiness shines like a star and appears to all who see it as something eternal and as a happiness of their own.... To such [persons] the desperate and horrid thought has come that perhaps the whole of human life is but a bad joke.... To them, too, however, the other thought has come: that [they are] perhaps not merely half-rational animals but children of... 'god' ...”

Hesse, *Steppenwolf* [as a 'yogin' might edit it].

In my Bolinas room a breeze squeaked untended pyracantha branches outside against the window glass. I closed my journal, slipped between the sheets, pulled the blanket up to my ears, and fell into a worriless sleep that didn't end until seven next morning....

With sweatshirt collar turned up to keep the foggy chill off the neck I walked to the corner bakery for coffee and a cinnamon roll and began to write again as soon as I was back at the room. Around two o'clock, exhilarated by what had been accomplished, I felt I'd earned an afternoon at the beach, failing utterly to note it was with just such an ego-feeling that I sallied forth from El Castillo, to become socked into orbit with the Countryman.

The beach time was uneventfully pleasant; on return via Bolinas' main street, however, I saw the van alongside the curb and, in it, the Last JC. He waved, smiled, and beckoned; and “I” didn't think one thought before ‘*She*’ smiled back. Before the smile reached its widest point ‘our’ feet had turned toward the van. When he leaned over and pushed open the passenger door, *she* hopped on like a wife who'd kept her husband waiting. (Salome, later, would quote Jung:

*when Ego is permeated by an archetypical personality, the bearer is doomed to become hapless participant in events that unfold with their own force!)*

"Quick! Shut the door," he said. "There's something I want you to see--it's the perfect time."

We passed the town's main intersection and took the next left, an uphill road that wound through groves of eucalyptus, their leaves the colorless shine of slanted sunlight. With expertise obviously from doing it many times, the Last JC swang the van around on a small plateau and backed it to the very edge of a cliff. He pulled on the hand brake, grabbed my hand, and scrambled me across the sleeping bag spread over the van's back floor. Then he lifted the latch on the double doors and pushed them wide.

We were high above Agate Beach, the sun just swallowed by the sea. The wave tips were rhinestones darting toward a white-gold necklace on the horizon. We sat in silence like two kids, legs dangling off the van; and, when the last of the light went, we laid back—alone but together—and let our bodies be our minds.

His climax after long abstinence came quickly. My right hand moved downward, its index finger reaching. He encouraged me, and just the right self-pressure in just the right place a few moments and I convulsed. With a lean arm encasing me, I felt like a pure creature of nature, identityless and thoughtless, as one is, listening to the finish of a beloved rhapsody, its music fading tinklingly like D'Indy's, into mountain air. Alas--if it but could have ended there....

At my current job the next week, delivering a message to one of the attorneys, a slithered shaft of sunlight off of an auto windshield glinted through the window and registered a blind spot in my vision. Back at the computer, all I wanted to do was study light and perception and feed the intellectium of my 'spiritual' quest. On my lunch break I squeezed in reading Hering. At night I reviewed Mishra....

*At this time, you must learn a few points seriously:*

1. *Confidence: you must have tremendous confidence in yourself that you can do anything suggested and given to you.*
2. *Expectation: whatever is suggested is going to happen.*
3. *Continuous suggestions.*
4. *Remove wanderings of the mind at the time of practice so that you may perform practice fully.*
5. *Constant remembrance of eternal consciousness which is operating in you through your heart, and which is manifested in you as your eternal companion and teacher, to teach you and deliver you from all bondages. It is manifested...in the form of different divine sounds...a subtle and constant inexpressible musical vibration in your head....*

I continue following Svatmarama....

*Press one heel into place below the sex organs and the other just above this region. Press the chin upon the chest, sit up straight, and fasten the eyes between the eyebrows.... Close the eyes and inhale deeply. This is siddhasana, whereby all obstacles on the path to perfection are removed....*

My routine includes but a handful of the simplest asanas or postures; but the modest program has limbered my spine as promised, and my posture is best ever. I always have monitored caloric intake but have replaced ‘empty’ foods with more whole grains, fruits, nuts, vegetables, yogurt and seeds, and eat beef only occasionally.

The postures taught by Siva, according to Svatmarama, are 84 in number. The statement reoccured, as I raised my legs slowly by my abdominal muscles, bringing toe tips overhead to rest upon the half-folded sheet before the blazing hearth. I’m concentrating on the thigh muscles, still impossible to stretch to the ultimate due to interlocked cellulite; it isn’t possible yet for the small of the back to rest fully against the floor without my bent knees dropping slightly.

I noticed the higher level of my breasts, swollen recently. I recalled vaguely noticing, passing the mirror, how that additional size lends a matronly look; and I received a silly thought: *does breast form affect males to the extent they are more respectful of, less likely to approach as aggressively a ‘matronly’-chested woman?* I raised my torso and tucked heels under my

buttocks. Straightening my chin, I gained a direct view of my 'mandala', hanging at the end of the hall.

I had no inkling what a 'mandala' was, when several years ago I 'dreamed up' and batiqued that strange figure. Now my eyes riveted instantly to the portion of it where two globes meet and, for the first time, saw that the color configurations at a distance resembled breasts. Before I could think, how strange was this little sequence of thought and perception, my body contracted and there issued from my core a singular, spontaneous *hum!*

All was becoming stranger by the day, and--despite Mishra's admonition that one should not proceed without guidance of "a guru of lineage"--there was no one with whom to talk about it. In *Janus*, Koestler spoke of the growing recognition of parapsychology as a discipline; but I'm not able to anticipate an actuality of 'supranormal' communications.

Changing position, calves folded backward, I slowly lowered my torso to the sheet through the warmth of the flames. *Somehow*, I thought, *by pursuing the most difficult of Love's lessons, it may be possible to reach beyond the subjectivity of relationships, into pure communication of consciousness unfettered by body dictates or ego impediments.*

It was merciful not knowing how much was left to learn....

*It's been a long time since I sat in the passenger seat*, I was thinking. Dottie was headed north on I-5, to a one-and-a-half acre farm the Last JC had seen advertised for sale. He pointed to a western range. Below it, irrigation jets were shooting white sabers over the lowlands. He rolled down the driver's window and shook his hair to the wind. "Jesus, this is pretty. It's not smoggy here like it is farther south."

*Happy?* I tugged at my seat belt; it felt tight. *Well, he's only 28 and in a few months my*

*body will turn 47....*

Ahead, the Marysville buttes hung like a bas-relief above the hazed horizon. "Look, there's that formation I told you about," he said, reaching over to give my hand a squeeze. "I'm damned lucky just to be *dreaming* this dream. If there's a chance for me--"

"Do we turn at Dunnigan?" I interrupted.

"Uh, a little beyond that, I think. As I was saying, if there's any chance for me to make a new life for myself, it's with you."

The bed was smooth when we arrived back at the apartment; I'd had time to make it that morning. I was thinking about the property we had seen....

*The land even has its own well, and that old hot house easily can be rebuilt. Not El Castillo; but there's that small chicken coop, a place for two goats, at least 10 camellia bushes in the front yard, and a wood stove in the family room!... Daydreaming, oblivious to what my partner was doing, a song jumped to mind—*

*What a day this has been; what a rare mood I'm in;  
Why it's almost like being...you could say it's like being--*

Then, in the middle of imagining grandchildren coming to visit, Consciousness returned to where I was being fitted against better than ever I'd experienced—definitely differently—

Orgasm! Simple but sweet--the very first in 'the missionary position' of my whole entire existence! It wasn't only the feelings of it that arrested me; patently, Consciousness had been as distanced as it could get from *thinking* about body, absorbed completely by the non-writer, all-domestically-conditioned arena of psyche.

Alas! Again, alas--that the story could not have ended there.

Four weeks later, morning light interrupted the short sleep the Last's cyclical visits

allowed, and I awakened certain of one thing. Regardless of what was happening with any other bodies of the Universe, mine was crossing the equator of its material life's day. In the preceding 48 hours it had had more sex than it could care about in at least half as many days; and good nature can be forced only so far.

No sooner I was awake he burrowed under the blankets. I tensed up but kept my voice calm. "Look," I said, "how would you like to follow *my* schedule a while? That means, maybe an hour one day and then not again for two weeks? Or all day one day and not again for a month?" I didn't bother with the wider cycles—that at seven-or-so-year intervals another pattern likely would superimpose on the existing one. I didn't shout what I wanted to: *Do you think that Woman enjoys her particular 'control' on relationships? Do you think I asked for my specific type of body? My desire waxes and wanes like the moon. You could service 12 females with overlapping cycles for Christ's sake!—etcetera, etcetera, etcetera...*

"Okay, okay, honey," he said. "Just hold it in your hand for a few minutes and I'll be all right."

"NO. That's *it!* From here on 'til at least a week from Sunday it'd be all *charity* on my part." He ignored the remark and jumped to the window in one of his cat-like leaps. "Come! Look!" I complied swiftly; he never had failed to call my attention to something worth seeing. The sun, about to appear above still trees to the east was creating a sky of diffused orange sherbet between dense-leafed blackness and cerulean blue. Venus' face in the west, full to the sun's upcoming rays, flashed laser-like to my sleepy eyes.

"I saw a house for sale down the street," the Last chose then to say, with early morning enthusiasm I hate. "Want to come look at it with me?"

I humored him in my usual self-disgusting way and dragged on some clothes.

Out the stairs, more light now, neighbors leaving for work--fortunately I had the day off. *It'll be all right*, I consoled myself. *I can go back to bed when we get home.* We looked at the house and I patiently let him daydream a little.

"Okay if we go for a little ride, while the sun finishes coming up?" he asked next.

*Okay. I can last for a little ride.* But my side hurt a bit from overexertion, and my temple was beginning to throb from lack of sleep....

We drove by the lake of the nearby golf course, watched the ducks waddle, heard them quack. "Should have brought some dry bread!" he said.

At last we climbed the stairs up to the apartment. I hadn't said much. "Okay, honey?" he asked, putting his hand flat on the middle of my back.

"Fine; just tired. I'm going back to bed."

I curled up on my side of the bed. *Thank god; now I can get some sleep*, I thought. *Wonder why the woman always sleeps on the inside? Isn't she the one who, especially when there are kids, gets up most often?* I pulled up the rumpled sheet--

No! I couldn't believe it. *Again?* "Whaaaaa....," I didn't finish even the word.

"I'm going to rock you to sleep," the Last JC said.

*How sweet--he's just going to lie on top of me.* I thought; but soon he was working as energetically as ever!

He came.

*Ah! Now, blessed sleep.* I thought--

"Just one more time," he whispered.

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph! My body has had it! Won't be able to sleep now! Just like some dumb rabbit, spoiling my beatific mood. And after everything I've told him! God damn it--*

*long or short, legalized or not, I hate marriage!* I was so mad a few tears fell and I had to snuffle. "Seven in the morning and I'm exhausted! And I had so much planned for today. I give up!"

"Don't cry, honey.... I'm sorry, honey.... I love you, honey.... It won't happen again, honey...."

That earlier afternoon's sexual response was all the proof I needed, so far as the 'laterecision' was concerned. . In the kitchen, checking the three-minute eggs while steaming water warmed the egg cups, my current situation was pitting despicably against the nagging conclusion that, had the cadence begun intelligently (*pour out the steaming water, hold the egg over the cup, tap with a teaspoon*), I might have endured perfectly from the *first* beginning with the *first* one (*scoop out the egg, add salt and pepper*), instead of learning the hard way ('*so to speak, Salome surely would interject*) that a particular state of psyche absolutely was needed to compliment freed body.

On the mundane side I was finding that "Synchronism" can result in 'fallings-away' as much as 'comings-together'. The Last JC kept after me with boyish insistence that we marry.

"There are too many years between us," I hedged, thinking, *I have absolutely no desire to repeat certain experiences I already have had*. "I don't need to make love as often as you do," I said honestly, only to have him reply, "It would be the same, no matter *how* old you were." Well that was true! What I didn't have the heart to say was, *it isn't that I never again can submit body more than it desires to another, to keep a relationship together. I simply don't want to start a lifetime relationship with you*.

"I don't need any more children--could I deny you children?" I said--ridiculously, since I didn't have a uterus anymore--all the while thinking, *thank God I wasn't caught that way, by the*

*summer solstice in the back of an old van!...*

"I have a child already," he said. "I don't need any more."

"I'm forty-six years old!"

"With the finest bottom I ever saw. When I saw it I thought, 'I get *this*'?"

*Jesus...* Supposedly a great philosopher once said woman couldn't think as well as man because her thought processes were obfuscated by vapors from her you-know- what. Well, whatever paths poor Man's sexuality travels through his mental processes, in my opinion it was a wonder he was able to think at all...

### 1983

I sat in my favorite corner of the sofa near the tall window, but there was no hope of sunshine. Fall was deep again for a third time since my return from Mexico.

Salome kneeled in front of the hearth and opened the fire screen. "Maybe you've been going to the wrong places."

"'Wrong' places? I don't go *anyplace* except work and errands—a typical grass widow."

"Aren't we about past the 'grass' age?"

"*Sans* partner, then, in the last premenopausal thrust. So I take a couple of days' vacation--a working vacation, mind you--and bingo. If it had been the vernal equinox, the witch in me might have had a glimmer. I didn't even *consider* the summer solstice."

Salome struck a match and held it to the kindling. "It's done?"

"Yes. He's back at the coast; he still has his job. I settled him in a room and saw to it he had enough money for at least another month's rent. But it torments me! How could I have let it happen?"

"Don't take it too much to heart," she said soothingly, stretching to reach the poker in its stand. "Just chalk it up to another outing of the archetype."

I wasn't ready yet for analysis. I stood up and tugged down on my new Levis, wishing again I hadn't thrown out the old pair into which I'd sewn a gusset. "You know," I said, "I'm beginning to believe what one feminist once suggested, that the impossible fit of women's pants *is* a diabolical scheme to render woman distracted."

Salome slid off her knees to a sitting position and made a point of smoothing the swath of madras she was wearing. "One reason I wear long skirts--"

"It was so patently obvious! The same visage...a likeness often given to Christ and saints in general.... Wait a minute! 'Madonna/Magdalena complex'--is that what I've got?"

Salome drove the poker tip into the front log and jammed it against the back one. Thin waves of flame jumped up in-between. She stood up and shook out her skirt. "I think we each could use a drink. I know--" she lifted her hands as if bestowing a blessing, "you're not a drinking woman. But I also know you're not averse to a couple of fingers of 'Chivvy' Regal if an occasion calls for it. Sometimes alcohol's good to the mind like confession is for the soul."

I pressed my fingertips together and stared at the fire. *Confession...* Now *there* was a work to evoke memory....

*The steep block of Steiner's hill between Union and Green absorbed breath but not attention. Was 'it' a sin? It felt as if it should be, done furtively under bedclothes or behind the locked bathroom door. Tomorrow was Christmas. My eleven-year-old soul craved to be pure, to immerse itself guiltlessly in the festivities--*

*"Remember!" Conscience conjured an image, but it wasn't the face of the aged nun who taught catechism. It was her gnarled pallid hand, gripping the ledge of the front pew where I*

*had sat, and the hiss of her voice across the top of my hair. "True examination of conscience leave nothing out—everything must be confessed, even if you feel the tiniest doubt."*

*Darn. I was hoping for the new young priest, but the only confessional open was Father Long's, whose sermons matched his name. "Bless me, Father. I confess to Almighty God and to you, Father, that I have sinned. It has been three weeks since my last confession and these are my sins: I talked back to my mother two times. I argued with my sister four. I didn't say my evening prayers about three. And...uh...I...uh...I touch...ed myself."*

*"Touched yourself?"*

*"Yes, Father." My eyes strained. In the dark cubicle his expression had to be reflecting the gravity of his voice; but through the small screen his face was only a blob. A rustling sound; the blob shifted; the voice grew nearer. "Where...did you...touch yourself?"*

*"Uh...uh...where I go to the bathroom."*

*"And it felt good?"*

*"Yessss, Father--"*

*"And how many times did you do that?"*

*"Three, Father."*

*"For your penance say 20 Our Fathers and 20 Hail Marys."*

*Absolving Latin flowed. Forgiven...forgiven! On my knees, the carvings on the vaulted roof, the Stations of the Cross, the Madonna's plaster robe and the starched altar linens were higher than high, brighter than bright, bluer than blue and whiter than white—*

*"You look like you're praying for redemption," Salome broke in uncannily near my thoughts.*

*The glass she handed me was cold. "Not exactly, but I was remembering my catechism*

days.” I wrapped the glass to the rim with the accompanying napkin and moved the ice around with a finger tip.. “You know?--I do remember, when I was three, some older kids threw stones at a rat running along the gutter of Pixley Alley, where we lived then in San Francisco. And I can recall when I was five, when a cousin drowned my only doll in an aunt's fish pond. I still can see its swollen reflection, when I discovered it beneath the goldfish-rippling water. So, how is it I have a mental picture of those events but don't, my First Communion? You'd think that I would. It had to be exciting wearing new white shoes down the center aisle of Saint Vincent's, with colored light coming and organ music going through the stained glass windows."

Salome set her drink down on the mantle. "Maybe you didn't get new shoes. Anyhow, it undoubtedly was traumatic. Nearly half-a-century of life and *still* you take everything mortally seriously. Imagine how overwhelming all the dogma must have been at age seven."

"I *do* remember confirmation night. The light in the church basement, where we got ready, was dim. I was wearing an off-white wool dress my mother made; I liked how its princess lines made me look less chubby than I was..." I stopped for a burning swallow.

"The preceding weeks of instruction had been dominated by one theme: *coming of age*. No flesh was pierced; no blood, drawn; but I felt an awesome lucidity. A dab of oil on the forehead, chanted words of authority, and--according to what I had been taught--thenceforth I and I alone had full responsibility for my life, lock, stock and barrel--at age 12 mind you!" I downed the rest of my drink, followed by a tight-lipped shake of the head. "One never gets over it altogether, I guess. But why plod those old trails now?"

"A passage of Jung's sums that up." Salome tilted her head and scanned her bookshelves. "This one." She set her drink on the mantle and thumbed pages. "You know," she stopped to look up, "even Jung's deep understandings were subjected to his own conditioning;

it's a bitch following his reasoning at times because of masculine emphases. I change nouns and pronouns when I read him...like here:

*“For self-realization, it is essential that a woman distinguish not only between what she is and how she appears to herself and others....it also is necessary that she become conscious of her relations to the unconscious.”*

Salome did a little turn in front of the fireplace. "Picture 'psyche' as a pyramid. The world and all your experiences and learning channel into it through the tip, 'The Conscious,' which manifests *consciousness*. It holds only the thought or registry of each specific moment. A hatch beneath leads to 'The Unconscious.' The top portion of it is the bank of 'The Private (or Personal) Unconscious,' and it's unique to each person. It receives two kinds of deposits from the tip. First there are items *consciously* experienced, that is, one is aware of receiving them. Of those, some can be retrieved at will, like remembering a cooking trick; and some can't, like being unable to recall a memory consciously deposited, as forgetting a name. However, deposits can sneak past The Conscious into The Private Unconscious, such as uncognated thought perhaps during a confounding experience--"

"Like, apparently, a seeming absence of 'memory' of my first communion?"

"That's a type of memory hypnosis sometimes can dredge, or some specific provocation resurrect, like sudden recall of a dream. Lastly, at bottom of the psychical pyramid is a kind of universally inherited, totally inaccessible warehouse of human existence—what Jung termed 'The *Collective Unconscious*'. *There,*" Salome passed her hands slowly through the air and put a little of Bela Lugosi into her voice, "in that dark cellar, unqualified root forms of human experience reach up like spines of empty leaves...."

I raised my hands as if to ward off a vampire. "Nebulous skeletons, and symbols--yes, I

recall some of that from the one college psych class I took. That's where I got pregnant and dropped out, so after that I'm lost."

"Literally, as well as figuratively?" Salome was having a little fun with me.

I ignored it. "And The Collective Unconscious is where the archetypes hide out."

"On Jung's model, yes--*archetype*, from the Greek, an original pattern or model, of which things of the same type represent or copy." She sat down and reopened the book. "Here's what Jung said about Collective Unconscious content: "...*qualities that are not individually acquired but are inherited... instincts--impulses to carry out actions without apparent conscious motivation. In this deeper stratum we also find the Archetypes.*" She closed the book.

"Theoretically, Private Unconscious content can fatten the skeletons."

The high ceilings of Salome's house undoubtedly were very warm, but at ground level my hands were anything but. I went to the fireplace to warm them. "Which brings us to my *Animus?*"

"And to the *Anima* of your Animus."

I jiggled my glass. "I think I need another drink."

Salome went to the kitchen; I walked the length of the living room to the west window. A gravel road passed by the scraggly front yard. Fallow fields beyond it diminished to a line of valley oaks over which the Vaca hills were donning their dun-colored winter capes. When I turned from the window a new vividness to the room's colors was not due, however, to change from the drab scene my eyes had left. The alcohol had gone straight from an empty stomach into the bloodstream, and I was aware of feeling glad for it.

Salome was back in the bamboo chair, my refill on the mantle. "You know I love 'talking shop'," she said, "but maybe we ought to call it quits for tonight."

“No! I’m in a listening mood. What about the ‘Anima of my Animus’?”

“Okay, here goes. Woman’s psychical nature classically was conceived as *Eros*, Greek for love and desire--fundamentally intuitive and romantic; Man’s, one of *Logos*, reasoning.” She wrinkled her nose. “Obviously those labels bear updating--”

"To allow for *evolution* of a collective consciousness?"

"Very good! It *is* reasonable that civilized changes in opinion and belief, over time penetrating and modifying individual psyches, *could* be incorporated collectively."

The proposition excited me. “Evolution from *two* directions! Body’s, through matter and adaptation, but also Psyche’s--via the ‘Word,’ *reasoning*?”

"Yes, yes, yes!" Salome stamped her foot in concert. “But only when enlightenment has filtered down long enough. We’ve seen beginning acceptance, already, that 'Eros' and 'Logos' equally can manifest in either material gender, natural psychical potentials of each. If a psyche in all ways was dealt with genderlessly via The Conscious, The Unconscious could lend itself better toward a fully integrated Self from the beginning."

I plopped onto the sofa. "So where does all that lead *me*?"

"Well..." Salome squeezed her lids together for a big blink. "First, think about how personally private circumstances fuel psychological commitment--like yours on the latercision. Jung, for example, was surrounded by dogma--his father and uncles all were parsons--and he wound up making God formless and universally-serving. Freud's life experiences molded his efforts in a kind of negative redemption. The rejection he felt from his father was over-compensated by his mother. As a young man of Victorian influence, too poor to marry when he would have, he and his fiancée had to delay marriage. By the time their love could be consummated, she already was sickly. If that wasn’t enough, he suffered incredible guilt, when

later he became involved with his wife's younger sister, who was actively interested in his work. Jung saw Freud as bitter, never able to ask himself, *why* he was so obsessed with sex."

I raised my hand; I could add to this theme. "Wilhem Reich is another example of 'unconscious redemption.' As a small child he was very secure and encouraged in every endeavor--he even was provided with a little laboratory when he was a boy. But then a terrible thing happened. His mother fell in love with one of his tutors. Reich apparently somehow gave it away to his father, and his mother ended up committing suicide. He went on to devote a major part of *his* life championing sexual enlightenment."

"Wow...." Salome stood up. "Come to the kitchen, but throw another log on the fire first. This time I'll fix supper, even if it's only grilled cheese sandwiches."

I sat in the kitchen corner on the requisite step-stool beneath the old house's high cupboard, second drink still in hand. The room was pure utilitarian artwork. Pans, pots and utensils hung logically at ready-reach above the old-fashioned gas stove.

Salome lifted a fry pan from its hook and set it on a burner. "Find the cheddar cheese--probably second shelf in the refrigerator," she ordered. "Butter, too; and the brown bread from the breadbox behind you."

"Who did you say was preparing this meal?"

"Just hand me the bread then. Boy," she went on, her head halfway into the refrigerator, "some people expect a lot from their analyst." I gave her a loose swat on the behind with the loaf of bread. She turned and grabbed it. "Sit," she said, pointing back to the stool. She spread butter on all sides of four bread slices and sliced the cheese. I heard the click of the gas jet and the swoosh of the flame. When the pan was hot she put two pieces of bread in the pan, laid

cheese on top and covered them with the other two pieces of bread.

“Okay.” Salome held up the spatula like a teacher would her ruler. “Shingle’s up again. Next we cover constellations, or complexes--associations of experience and feeling-thoughts in The Private Unconscious. If a constellation receives proper impetus, an archetype can bypass the ‘Superego’—a major constellation of ‘character’ that reflects parental and societal conditioning on Ego, in controlling Identity and Personality. ‘Animuses’ and ‘animas’ theoretically can manifest a transient persona when, under particular circumstances, they latch on to a specific constellation. Speaking simplistically, if we look at your Animus/Anima involvements, I think we’d find four relating participants.”

“FOUR?”

“First, think of animus as the unconscious governing spirit of your *logos*--that enquiring, adventurous, unorthodox Writer-of you, suppressed under female culture and conditioning. Now, *it* unconsciously could project *its* anima--in effect, an imaginary beloved that best suited it. (Remember, we’re not talking gender, here!) In reverse, the ‘Domesticated-you’ would reflect an anima respondent to your projection of its desired animus.”

She turned off the gas. "Get me a couple of plates, please?"

I moved the stepstool over so I could reach the shelf and took down two plates. "It sounds as if Psyche is nothing but the result of circumstances!--externally-received experiences interacting with internal material, via specific wiring I inherited. Doesn't seem to leave much room for free will."

"Nope. Besides conscious comprehension of the conflict, the related emotional charges have to be defused for choice and will to work together. A person can know that his or her aversion of confined spaces is caused by being locked as a child in a closet; but, unless

constellated forces are discharged, simple cognition doesn't cancel the fear." She dropped a sandwich on each plate. "Conversely, one can 'know' that a certain situation should be avoided, but--"

"Uh huh; I get it.... All of which brings us back to what started all of this," I said, carrying the plates toward the dining room. "Me and a gluttonous archetype that seized identity—it *vis-a-vis* the Last JC."

"Unconscious projections are like mirrors facing mirrors," she continued, following with iced teas. "Conjecturally, your daughter/wife/mother persona identifies around a 'father-*imago*' - a personally idealized concept of Man; you might say, as a 'god of sorts.' Now, what might be the projection by the other—you might say, the misunderstood, martyred 'son'?"

I opened my mouth but nothing came out.

"Say a girl in her formative years had a strong Catholic indoctrination," Salome went on as if I wasn't hunched over with a face screwed into total consternation. "Say she was disposed keenly by both heredity and conditioning to be a faultless wife and mother. Let's suppose, further, that her own mother's persona appeared as near to matching the Madonna as a woman can get. Now, what *other* primary example of womanhood might she have received?"

I kicked her foot but she kept it coming. "Let's suppose further that our little girl's natural sex drive didn't fit the matrix of womanhood presented by her culture and upbringing. What other prospective female, with whom *that* nature could identify, unconsciously may have sneaked into Psyche to conflict with her 'mother-*imago*'?"

I sat up. "Jesus," I said.

"No, but close!" Salome replied playfully. "Think of His mother and lover rolled into one?"

“*Jesus,*” I said again, picking up my iced tea and holding the glass in front of me. On its surface I saw a featureless feminine face. It reminded me of someone...*someone walking alongside the Countryman.... A long haired woman hauling briefcase and shoulder bag, walking half a step behind someone who looked like Christ in a poncho. Curious villagers made way for them as they entered each town, the sun hot, bees buzzing, as she hummed a tune without thinking its words....*

I sang them aloud, then, to Salome:

*“I’m just a country girl; husbands have I none--  
but I’ve got silver in the stars and gold in my mourning son,  
and gold in my mourning son....”*

I stopped short. "So much is coming together in my head right now--"

"Spit it out!"

"The last couple of years before the divorce.... Arrested interests demanding expression. Anger! Ability yearning for recognition.... Disgust!--that I had been perceived always as form, not substance. Grief! The 'me' who had lost all chance of validation; *Her* dying to *live*! Now...."

"Now?"

"I feel a...the only word I can think of is, *gathering*...of fragments of myself, of possibility of an explainable unity."

"Eat." Salome put enough serious authority in her voice to give me reason to heed it. I bit gratefully into the sandwich. She pushed her chair back and hung a knee over the corner of the table. "Here we're touching on what Jung termed 'individuation.' Not becoming a new, different Self, but hauling all the affective unconscious content through Consciousness toward cognated realization, acceptance, and integration of scattered facets into a totality of Self." She blew hard through closed lips, unhooked her knee and got up. "Ready for ice cream?"

All of a sudden I felt ravenous. "Please!"

I tailed her to the kitchen and hung on her back like a child while she plugged the sink and ran hot water to soak the dishes. She patted my hand with her wet one and said, laughingly, "Just remember that, for all the posed modeling, Psychology isn't like other sciences. Einstein's simple equation sits on top of a mountain of formulas; psychological 'math' is reduced to dumb clichés: 'Watch before "YOU" leap.' 'Beware, or "you" might get what "you" want; but "YOU" don't.' No nice formulas yet, to calculate, *who* is **YOU**?"

Salome's clear and funny emphases brought me back to smiling. "I feel as if I haven't eaten anything."

"In that case," she pulled the freezer door open with a flourish, "we'll have three scoops of ice cream, and—all due respect to Freud--a whole banana each!"

The siege lasted several days over which the Last JC called incessantly--in daytime, his sentient self—rational, kind, grateful; night and early morning hours, the lost drunk one--provocatingly insulting, hoping to draw me into debate. It was as if I had become the receptacle of all causes of his misery—the alcoholic, denying Vietnam-veteran father 'humiliated' by his 'feminine' son; the manly brother who had all of the father's esteem; the overprotective mother who finally had given up sending money; the denying 'savior'—all rolled into one.

My private self- review and humiliation sickened me, *bhakti* self-hubris rent by recognition of contributing personality traits, the mistressing of which far from gained! Worse, the thought of archtypes took on disgusting chill as I imagined a murderous turn in him. At every moment there are children being slapped, mentally as well as physically. At every

moment in a lot of other somewheres there are new incarnations issuing from morbid circumstances into similarly morbid lives, while others, presently out and about their business, will at a future moment find themselves by proximity to be their victims. The eighth night, falling asleep with the thought that I would understand, if such were reckoned on me, I dreamed...

*While talking on the telephone with someone who called me about a possible job, all the woman members of my family arrived. They were chattering and causing much commotion. I tried to ignore it to concentrate on answering the caller's questions, only vaguely aware that one of my sisters (the one who in my waking moments I believe would be most critical of my 'secret' behavior) is doing something peculiar to my hands—"pricking" them, "as if with a razor blade.*

*I just had finished answering the last question put to me when I discovered that the other party no longer was on the line. I was mystified. Why should "she" hang up? I strongly noticed the stark white of the telephone, like my bedroom one over which I had endured the miserable calls. I looked at my hands and saw scratches, many of them, along the edges of the palms; a few were showing blood. The woman had done it to others, also, and herself as well. I could not understand why she would do such a thing, such a "sick expression." "That hurts!" I said. "Oh, no, it doesn't hurt!" she responded, as if to a simpering child who has had something mildly irritating but necessary done to it by a parent. But she did not look me in the eye.*

*I turned away and saw a reflection of my face. Opaque, olive green ointment had been drawn on the lower portion--a definite "design," across the lips and down to the chin--*

I awakened with "Sharon Tate" in my mind, a name I had not thought of since its grisly time. Just yesterday the Last JC had said, "If I had a gun, I would shoot myself." I lay in the dark as thoughts the dream provoked ran rampant. It was ludicrous; he was living proof of every

inadequate sentence I had tried to compose, to convey how much tragedy of life won't die until we face and deal fully with the instinctive procreational drive--until we override myths of gods and take creation soundly into our own hands.

During intense talks following my refusal to marry, he often masturbated the entire time, while I, feeling like mother and father rolled into one, said all the things a parent might to a child one wished to restore. And, as with the disturbed child from whom one word or look crumbles defenses, my sympathy was ever vulnerable and he would play upon it. I had extended the option to continue living with me platonically, until he found work and could begin to assemble a reasonable life. He categorically refused, followed by an alcoholic display calculated to cow even the mightiest. I wondered how a psychiatrist would deal with it; I certainly was not one! Nor could I refer him to anyone. I had had to make the break myself.

*Now, I began to feel anger. If he does show up I'll fight! I'll defend myself!* But, then, as I imagined picking up the scissors from the sewing stand to plunge into him, I remembered how much I loved, still, the sad son in him—he who had been at mercy of father, church, and body. No. My main worry was my family sustaining the stupidity and agony of any violence. (I hadn't told Salome that, when finally I had him in the car, driving the freeway, his anger exploded with a smack that broke the windshield.)

I studied the dream's elements and the associations they invoked: the telephone representative of his plaguing calls; my current job search (I had only a temporary job); fear of family involvement--all part of the 'dream day.' The green ointment? *Green* can relate to money...*put your money where your mouth is*, I thought, wincing again at my abandonment of cherished charity. The next thought startled me. *Extreme unction!*--the death-door sacrament!

*The razor pricks?* Well, my hand had been pressed beneath my thighs as I lay on my stomach; had my wrists been constricted, perhaps tingling? That might explain the “pricks;” but the potential Freudian association there couldn’t be avoided! Most curious, however, was that, after “Sharon Tate,” three other words sprang into mind: *cockers and boxers!* From where in the world had come such a to-me-unknown term?--Psyche was unfathomable indeed! Recalling those words, I chuckled in disbelief and decided to fix myself a cup of hot milk. I felt a sudden relief, as if Psyche’s dreaming had allowed Mind to face its fears and secure my hunch, that the suicide ‘threat’ was only a ploy to gain capitulation.

Waiting for the milk to heat, I speculated how plots of interrelationships are predestined by the individually funneled personal histories of the parties. I chose to cling to belief, however, that *archetypes*, good and bad, are not fixed eternally, evolutionarily can fade. The ‘Madonna/Magdalena complex,’ and its equally tortured male counterpart, must come to their prescribed ends! No longer will need be born ‘Jesus Christs’, bastard sons of the flesh destined for sacrifice to our (*how does one type tongue-in-cheekedness?--*) “Heavenly Father!”

”No vas a sacerdotes!”...*don’t go to priests*, I recalled aged Alejandro admonishing me in Mexico City, at the time of my emigration. He and his wife had invited me to sit at their table, and he (*only coincidentally?*) immediately commenced me to practice the Lord’s Prayer in Spanish with the Lord’s Prayer. *Now*, here I was, scheduled on the morrow to meet with the swami at the main Vedanta temple in San Francisco, to ask permission for an overnight stay at its coastal retreat. *And how weird was it?*—that I had learned that the temple was located but a stone’s throw from Saint Vincent’s! There, in the church of my childhood, I had passed the long stretch of mass between Host and benediction watching vaulted panes brightening as earth turned

to catch the truest of Sunday morning's sun. *I shall I shall go to San Francisco early, I decided, climbing back into bed. I first shall visit the temple of my innocence.*

Perhaps it was the warm milk, or possibly desire for total forgiveness that caused me to dream it...

*There were "four" of "us"—two of "him" and two of "me," coupled in different beds. There was "more of me" in one of the women; she was the dream's 'observer' and she was happy. The other couple seemed asleep. "I" was about to rise from my bed to walk outside, where a shadowy male figure on the "next landing" beckoned me—someone I instinctively felt I could trust and follow. But then it was as if another shadow passed across the bedroom window, and "I" 'awakened,' except it was into another dream....*

*The Last JC had climbed to the roof and was coming through the bedroom window. Now he is going to kill me!" I thought, and turned to face him. Instantly, however, we were just two friends again, sitting on the bed, talking; and I felt great peace. The "he" who entered-- the "he" who was there--was the one that could be loved. Then a telephone began to ring--*

I awakened, this time for real; my white telephone was ringing. I picked up the receiver, but was answered only by air waves. Something told me; I wouldn't hear from him again....

At Tubby's cafe on Union Street between Fillmore and Steiner I ordered prosciutto and melted jack on a hot croissant; with coffee, \$4.74. The prosciutto was thick and tough; father, the butcher, wouldn't have approved; but what do tourists know? Across the street was the Lafayette Bakery, one of only two landmarks left since my World War II treks to church, when the big incentive toward Sunday's eight a.m. communion mass was a berry-centered sweet roll, waiting in Lafayette's glass case.

My childhood was in a radius of 20 or so blocks, from the flat at Pierce and Chestnut where I was born, over to Webster and Greenwich where my godmother lived, and up hills to the Green Street library on the east, with Saint Vincent on the west.

I left a five and two quarters on the table and walked to the Steiner corner. The downhill scene to the Bay evoked memories of war factories along the Sausalito harbor, and the hushed drawing of blackout curtains as I climbed into bed in our family flat at Lombard and Webster. I recalled the total blackness that descended over the city, and how I missed the Bank of America bright red neon sign, high over the corner of Fillmore and Chestnut, and the rotating lights on the Golden Gate's towers. Before World War II, I would watch them through the low sashed window, counting seconds between each flash until my eyes succumbed to sleep--warm in bed, but not as before. To my seven-year-old mind it was a real possibility: that whining sound high overhead! A bomb, nose pointing directly at me?....

*And humbly I'll receive thee, the bridegroom of my soul,  
no more by sin to grieve thee, or fly that sweet control...  
Eternal holy spirit, unworthy though I be—  
prepare me to receive Him, and truth—the Word--to me...*

The stained glass of Saint Vincent's was glorious as ever: the bas-relief Stations of the Cross, the Virgin in her alcove, St. Joseph and The Child--nothing altered except the confessionals, where heavy curtains had been replaced by wood doors. A plaque beneath St. Joseph read, "Pray for the soul of James H. Long, fond Pastor of St. Vincent's, who died August 25, 1960."

I walked quietly up the left aisle. At the altar a baptism was ending--adoring family; handshaking and picture-taking. The baby gave a big yawn. The bonnet ribbons and those around the hem of its long dress were pink.

I had seen in my father's eyes gentle recognition of the naive daughter who too easily

could fall into love; a tinge of sadness that, like all women before her, she never would be prepared fully for life among men. I was vulnerably alive, like the apparently random but predetermined scatter of breeze and ocean's foam; and it seemed as if I could read his eyes, as a child in the womb breathes the scent of dormant buds of thought. When he sang Verdi's "Oh, quel' amore--quel' amore che palpita," I just knew he knew whereof he sang.

Mother sang from old schoolbooks—"Father will come to his babe in the nest, silvery sails all out of the west." She had been orphaned as a child and partially raised in a convent. So thankful was she, to be granted a good husband and family of her own, saved from a life of service to strangers. Never more than two dresses in the closet, she never exhibited the badgering of an under-esteemed Ego. An epitome of virtue, she understandably was not able to speak explicitly of matters physical. There were a dozen years difference in age between her and my father; and he--who had received and become caretaker and nurturer of his mother and younger sisters, after they emigrated from Europe just prior to World War I—he, who already was beyond the verge of declining health, needed a stoic wife's support.

At center aisle opposite the altar I genuflected automatically, something I'd thought never to do again. The exiting priest stopped beside me and extended his hand. "Hullo! You're new here, aren't you?"

"No, Father. Just visiting. I had first communion here, and confirmation."

"Oh, yes?" He was insistently, immediately likeable. "Nice memories, yes?" It was easy to nod. But as I sat down in front of the Virgin's candles, flames dancing inside the tiered, red-glass holders I thought, *rather of good works in the field...*

*Oh Lord I am not worthy, that thou shouldst come to me  
but speak the words of comfort; my spirit healed shall be...*

Vedanta's temple was formidable as I later approached it, impressive steps led up; but the

Swami's office was small and unostentatious. He was a reticent man; I was self-conscious and would remember only his clear, dark eyes. I spoke briefly of my practice thus far, and my hope for a stay at the retreat to write. "I believe you would benefit from further instruction," he responded. "But lodging there is for spiritual nourishment, not work. Feel free first to spend just a day. And you can call me here, anytime."

At work on Monday I saw the "diocese" second-in-command park his big van at the next-door office. The heavy dapper-coiffed waves had become studded with gray since our past political grappling. Psyche instantly released all its related frustration. How long was I going to take this?—sit invisibly chained, pounding (*'scuse me, these days, tapping*) a keyboard, dictation earphone in one ear, answering five telephone lines with the other, restraining the writer's self, machine to machine? (*How long?--as long as you need the \$805 a month!*) I hated the hatred I was capable of feeling--the seed in the heart of every revolutionary (*has anyone seen, ever, a rich one?*)—but what a waste of even more good mind time!

When I reached my bedroom at 6 p.m., I hit my fist against its closing door. Tears. Angry tears. *HOW LONG?* Just until the whirl-winding kaleidoscope spins slower, into a tidy mosaic; just until I describe the polygonal heart of existence—our merciless, free-will-less binder to destiny.

"Fortuitous phenomena are those the laws of which we are ignorant," Poincare said. I had no way of knowing whether the 'phenomena' I'd been experiencing could be called *fortuitous*, or if they were the result of hidden laws; but there was, it seemed, no turning back. A yogic 'path,' once on it, appears as insistent as claimed: humbled self-adoring *bhakti* driven into the 'refuge' of insatiable intellectual curiosity.

At times I thought I could escape: seal the physics and perception notes in a box in the depths of the closet; live a ‘normal’ life. Then the ‘third eye’ would invoke a new perception *behind* binocular, the puzzle jumping back in thought, and I was helpless--*helpless* I tell you! Obsession? From where does it come? Not from *me*. *No, no, no. “I” would have it otherwise.* So I kept scratching at paper, drawing strange shapes, beginning yet another painting—the ‘spectangle’--*anything*, to avoid Mind’s useless chatter....

*Where is truth? In your soul; you should get to know it. You never will be the same, for you like “I” have no name. And if you could you would eradicate every word ever writ of mythologies of All Time—Druidism to Christianity—for you are not crazy and you and “I” know it. You by some wild-without-forethought-of-any-God-happenstance of the Universe are wholer than whole, holier than holy, and need no corroboration from your mundane mentality to show it! Would you deny that it is not face, form or name that matters, but what Nature has determined not be hidden? Oh, yes...you have been here before. Not current identity, you simpleton, born in a back bedroom off a back street into the hands of a forgotten midwife. YOU—that Spirit! that Love!—ignorante!....*

It had been startling to discover procreation separated to the silent level of instinct--that, in the Moody Blues’ words, all the love I’d been giving had only been for me. It had been a revelation, losing the last archaic thread of need for all to be dictated by a sentient god, spirit left hanging in the breach. And it had been *astounding*, to see light divided from its reflections into static, stark, omnipresence.

Emotion still could grab me, when I contemplated a next scientific revolution to equate with none since Copernicus’s, and when I wondered whether Joe Newman’s machine didn’t stack up to existing derivations of physics--not because the laws are wrong; because they are

applied with a wrong premise; that the correct one might explain the bothersome matters of ‘double refraction’ and long-standing private reservations of Huygens, Crooks, and others.

It was without any emotion however, now, that mind considered light in union with its essence to produce strength, direction, and color. I may have dropped \$200 at a casino on last weekend’s trip there with a sister (*you could have taken a whole unpaid week off work to write!* my conscience nagged); but at the optic instrument convention I went for, to Reno, *I saw a spectrophotometer!* And, along with two little glass pyramids, I brought back new thoughts: ‘absorption’ and ‘transmission;’ ‘resistance’ vs. ‘disbursion’...

I decided to take my day visit at Vedanta the coming weekend. Looking forward to it got me through the work week...

Saturday I awoke to early sunshine. The drive along highway one was glorious, and Vedanta’s grounds were verdant with Spring.

Leaving the parked car, I followed a path past the library, agricultural outbuildings, and vegetable plots. As the path began an incline, massive loneliness overtook me. To the left, through tears, I saw women working in an orchard beyond a field of poppies. I walked on, while deer to the path’s right serenely watched me pass. I smiled wryly. “You don’t cry, do you?” I called softly. Beyond them a large bull stood in a field of high grass, the cows behind him content also in their habitat.

I trudged ruts deepened by rain, as the path wound around the orchard into tall pines, surprised to see new little lime-colored needles on their branch tips, a subtle promise of another year. The path ended in a canopied sanctuary; and, immediately I entered, two enormous eagles flew from the stateliest pine and floated high overhead in artful slow circles, as if purposely to let

me see the feathered gray and umber intricacy of their wings. I wept again, because there were two--so often I had thought of the First and me in terms of eagles and doves, which mate for life.

At the west of the pine-encircled clearing began a high ridge; I almost could smell the ocean beyond, and suddenly realized I was hungry. It caused me to re-remember, that so long as we exist in body there's no escaping its demands; but I was beginning to feel whole again, grateful for the carrots and cheese wrapped in cellophane in my bag.

On my return walk I encountered a woman worker. How did one become a disciple there? I asked.

"Most of us at Vedanta are older," she replied, evasively.

"Perhaps I'm older than I look. I feel older than my years," I responded uncensoredly.

Back at the main compound I spent an hour in the library. Vivekananda's volume on raja yoga echoed the quintessence of other words I had read to date, and I wondered again why I tried to write any. His, concerning *chastity*, seized me. *Yes, I thought, there's a difference between chastity and celibacy. Before the soul can be chaste it needs to know, understand and serve the body's purely physical, material functioning.... Rare the body that needs not; and I am not an anomaly! Incarnate am not I, only--all are; and all, subjects of the same physical laws. So long as there are laws over the nature of trees, so is it with the human body; and, for as long as there are trees, body too will be vulnerable to stuntedness and distortion by improper channeling and flow of the substantive energy of and by which all is created and sustained.*

*In my searching, it was Reich, only, who straightforwardly addressed the effects of physics on the plant-body. And the way to Shambala....the allegorical spiritual search? How readily we could dispense with the entire struggle, did Reason prevail in The Here and Now, in the evolution of human consciousness/intelligence/spirit through it.... As Gerald Heard*

concluded, “In a phrase, the life of the spirit is no more and no less than the continuation of our evolution; it is our continued growth in awareness, understanding, and grasp of reality.” (Page 45.)

“How do you feel after your hike?” The managing monk intercepted me as I returned to the parking lot, the band at the bottom of my flowered long skirt brushing the grass. As he took my hand, his demeanor flooded me with the feeling of meeting a true friend. I felt like a sexless 10-year-old; there were tears in my eyes. Was this the guide I was meant to find?

*How even more beautiful the hike would have been, with a living companion,* was my thought response; instead, again unpremeditatedly, I replied, “It’s only that I am so lonely.”

“When you find God,” he responded, “loneliness will end. Perhaps you should visit the temple nearer your home. I think you will find the swami there very helpful.”

He watched from the compound’s office door as Dottie crawled past. I raised my hand and tried to smile but numb disappointment tugged at the corners of my mouth; I had hoped for more. Driving back down the coast highway, I thought, *I don’t believe it: the more of ‘god’ I find within, the more I wish to share living!* Once I found ‘my’ guru, it was intimated, things would be better. But I knew no one and nothing could save me except to finish my writings, the derivation of, and will for, still beyond my comprehension.

Instead of going straight to the apartment when I got back, I took Dottie to the edge of a field south of town. A stiff wind was blowing. With my notes spread about dashboard and passenger seat, it put in mind how I wrote my way through a near-hurricane at La Ventosa. Writers’ self-imposed exiles seemed a lot of bother merely for isolation to collect thought....

*A reversal of the theory of gravity?...*

*A reverse-containment nuclear theory?...*

*A primarily physiologically-based concept of perception?*

*Who the hell are YOU?—Mind asked, not the first time--to contemplate focus and accommodation as efferential, proprioceptive reactions, and binocular fusion, an efferential exteroceptive act? To persist conceiving a solidly deterministic psychology which, while it embraces inheritances from genetic ancestry and The Collective Unconscious, and before drawing conclusions as to the state of “Mind,” devolves upon the physiological and environmental state of being—the opening of a new vast unknown that will require total abandonment of dogma and myths?*

Should all of that come to pass, however, rather than say I contributed to it, would I be one *to live*, then! If I was drawn toward “Eastern” ‘philosophy,’ it was because it afforded what “Western” does not. In the words of Vivekananda,

“...Sankhya philosophy...says there can be no god.... If there were one, he must be a soul, and a soul must be either bound or freed. How can a soul bound by nature create? It is itself a slave. On the other hand, why should a soul that is free, that has no desires, no need to create, manipulate all things? ... The gods in the Indian system of philosophy represent certain high offices that are filled successively by various souls. But none is perfect... ..knowledge is only a germ in man.... There is unlimited knowledge, *and that, call God.*”

Driving to the apartment, I reflect on how the Mary Magdalene story begun at Bolinas had thrust me back to the beginning of western biblical history, research which kept accumulating. But that other pernicious work, “A Child’s Book of Light,” refused to be pushed aside. Lately focus had been drawn to energy’s molecular containment in water, to the point of painting an illustration....

*Home...finally....* I would have liked working the night but I needed to be ready for morning at the job. I sat on the bed and watched the second hand of the clock. Yogis

measure lifespan not by time but number of breaths.... *Breath in...1...2...3...4...5...6...  
7...8... hold it in ...1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...breath out...1...2...3...4...5...6...7...8...hold it  
out...1...2...3...4... 5...6...7...8...* The sequence takes 40 seconds; a few repetitive minutes  
of it calmed my mind and sleep came readily. So, also, did dreaming ....

*“I” am going down “stairs,” to see “electricians.” It’s hard for “me” to “make  
my way through the “clutter,” to get a glass of water; I can’t find the “proper  
container”--*

*“I” am sound? The thought startles me!*

*“I” then go up”stairs,” into a large area divided by “low partitions” into “hallways” or  
“aisles,” and make “my” way down one different line and then another--“around in” but always  
also “within” that much larger “block” area....*

*“I” can’t find the right “door’ back to the ‘down stairway’ to the “electrician’s” area;  
instead “I” am “redirected” two or three times as “I” try possible “doors.”*

*“I” go down a very, very steep, narrow ‘staircase’; it is if “I” am like stiletto heels  
hitting each “step” squarely. The substance of the “stairs” is unusual—“pockmarked” in a  
strange way. “I” ‘skip’ a couple nearer to the bottom.*

*Before reaching “the electrician area” “I” pass a female figure in a perfect lotus  
posture, very clearly outlined in a silhouette; “I” ‘know’ her back is toward “me.” “I” reach  
the “electricians’” area, where one lifts “me” and says, “You are light!” “No,” I say, “I am  
not light...”*

Next noon, sitting in La Crepe sucking the last of butter from a croissant, I thought,  
*sources may say that yogic success depends on establishing “lineage thought transmission,”  
with “unshakable faith in one’s guru.” Well, I have yet to encounter a guru, much less learn*

*what is implied by establishing thought contact; I would settle for Einstein sending me a depiction of what it would be like to be a quark!*

I reached into my purse for the current bills--

*“I’M GOING TO GET YOU...ON A SLOW BOAT TO CHINA...ALL TO MYSELF...ALONE”—*

*It’s all right. I’m used to songs going off in my head—*

*“GET YOU AND KEEP YOU...IN MY ARMS, EVERMORE”--*

*And I refuse to conjecture anymore why I can remember so many songs and have them unbiddenly spring into my mind seemingly out of nowhere, when there are so many other things I rather would be able to recall. Here’s the depleted checkbook and pen—*

*“LEAVE ALL YOUR LOVERS”--*

*Jesus! I might be used to it, but recent song waves had become something else, so insistent that I would wind up playing with the words, changing them to fit female terms. This one didn’t need it, as does, for example, “My Mommy Done Tol’ Me”—*

*“My Daddy done tol’ me,  
when I was in pig tails,  
my daddy done told me, Girl...  
A man is a two-face”—*

Lately, feeling more than ever on the brink of unreality, the distanced me talks, walks, types, and reacts in perfect step, but like Deepak Chopra’s description, when he raises first one hand, palm up, saying, *“in the world,”* then, the other, *“but not of it.”* Perhaps it only is that all the constellations of to The Unconscious have been shattered apart harmfully?--what Jung termed *enantiodromia*: introvert or extrovert, susceptibility to an emergence of bewildering unconscious contents that literally can put one “beside oneself.” (*Portable Jung*, pages xxvii, 566).

The overall pattern of body remained constant, still cyclically bound by Nature and subject to Its dictates. I at times felt myself the epitome of Reich's somewhat crude, but apt example of bioenergy--the organ of my being like an over-inflated like a balloon, natural energy stifled by input via dictaphone, telephone, computer and public. Although 'mistressbation' had grown less frequent, recent accumulation was demanding release. That evening, accepting the mental block, I laid myself on the carpet, gave up trying to meditate, and allowed what was to happen happen.

One may want to give up oneself; but, when there is no god, to what can one? Psychically I had been observing another form of consciousness in me, like mine but 'male'—a thinker who, like "my" self, cannot deny (*more, wants to complete*) dignified conscious abandonment in wedded intelligence and love, toward *intentional creation*. When I contemplate, were such a creature with me and asked, "*Would you, with me, recommence creation?*" 'body-mind' sends a message to Eternity: *Yes; a million times, yes...;*

At the finish I decide that the coming Sunday I will visit the temple in the nearby city, as Vedanta's monk suggested. It was midnight when I got into bed. I spent 15 minutes on my meditation program, and I believed I was fully out of the self-hypnotic state before turning cheek to pillow; however...

*The force is working heavily on me again. I'm surrounded by it; it is penetrating my skin, a billion invisible needles attacking the flesh from all sides... and there is a hand on me! It is as if an unknown entity wants to capture my spirit—*

*It clutches after me, at my legs and back, and I know terror. I keep pushing it away even though I am in horror touching it. Then! I am lifted up!—feet, first; then hips, then middle back--my body assumes a wave form and is lifted up into darkness. There are no options against*

*this gravity-defying power, and I am ready to succumb to anything. I surrender and, immediately I do, am lifted to where the 'hand' cannot reach—*

I awaken. The room is alive with energy...buzzing, swarming energy; and I can see its supercharged movement. I lie there, captivated by the streaming infinitesimal points of light, certain I am built within and around and welded as one with it—that it exists; that I do see and feel it; that it is eternal, unchanging, impersonal and real, real, real--and that I am not crazy albeit isolated in the experiencing of it. And I wonder how many persons, for whatever causes of nature and constitution, unwittingly have had the experience and *been* deemed insane.

*I do not want to die yet*, I think. I want to live long enough—just long enough, and then I shall be content—to say with all clarity, sear into the mind of anyone who might read, that there is a better way to live and that much suffering *now* could be overcome; but we will know it only when we can accept that we can know nothing about “another side” and muster all reasoning power we can in the here and now, abandon all conjecture about gods and heavens and hells and angels and devils, and concentrate on using our own intelligence.

I slept again, and the deep dreaming resumed...

*It's a short walk to the parking lot after work. The wind is freshening. It feels good....but...OW!—it smartens all of a sudden and stings the back of my legs... Walk faster; storm brewing! But before I can reflect further I am skidding on my soles, trying to stay aright—*

*This damn wind! So strong!—and the ferocity in it! If I don't find shelter I'll be swept out of control.... There's a doorway! Slide in—*

*But no! Not soon enough. The force has come full strength, and effortlessly from behind it scoops and hurls me, hurls me, hurls me—a conscious projectile flying—no, not flying—sailing!--like a baseball....*

*I hit the ground and a shaft of space wide as a fist shoves through me and out of my side. The pain is so exquisitely horrible all of my attention focuses on it. But it is nothing but light!—sharp, blinding light has pierced and killed me....*

Again I awakened. I am not frightened, only my mouth is open wide to accommodate a silent scream and my spine, arched in insult at the radiating needles of pain. My first thought is, *That is how the spear felt....*

It is the third ‘force’ dream this month. I let down my back and slowly relaxed to the sheet, but I kept my hand under my side, if only to enjoy pain receding into memory, the mind’s eye arrested by an inwardly dissolving image of my body in space. The light in the small entry hall to the bedroom, left on every night since the fearsome dreaming began, seemed unusually bright—

*Oh, my, god—*

A gnome-like creature, torso too short for his legs, was leaning inside, smiling. His hat was cocked to one side and he was tossing a coin up and down. I glanced over him from bottom to top. Not more deformity than one might imagine possible--*Don Gennaro!* I thought. His look was the same as that of a soldier’s watery winking image, on the wall in an earlier dream: “You’re gonna make it, girl!” And then he faded into nothingness.

The next noon hour I had just enough time to get to the bank for a deposit, when—

*Look! There at the head of the next queue!*

*Lord! No!* It couldn’t be true, but it was. There stood a man whose form was precisely that of the previous night’s ‘hallucination’. But I’m less alarmed, now, by mystically-appearing, synchronistical ‘co-incidences’--especially after answering a unique impulse last month....

I had left my job spontaneously at an odd time, to go for a walk, and without thinking walked where I never had before. On a street new to me I came abreast of a stranger who began speaking as if we were old friends. I cannot say how it came about, but we immediately began a conversation about biblical interests. He had a book, he said, that I would find useful.

Indeed, the next day he brought the book to me at my office, to keep as long as I needed. It directly addressed certain points I had been researching. A couple of weeks later, when I telephoned the number he gave me to arrange returning the book, it was his father who answered. The young man had been murdered in a Berkeley park, he told me; I could keep the book.

If I can accept startling external coincidences, certain internal phenomena witnessed behind closed eyes in deep meditation are not coincidences. The 'inner' field is not like the sky's irregular pattern of stars. One 'sees' a shadowy 'grid,' like looking through fine, overlapped telescoping screens. With concentration it is possible to 'focus' through the depth to a single distant central point. A soft sphere of muted light sometimes appears, usually just beyond where the eyes would be looking if converged tightly upward. Only once has there manifested a centered brilliant 'lotus' shape that retained its luster as it diminished to disappearance. What does that 'perceivable' inner matrix represent? Is Consciousness 'seeing' the portion of brain onto which vision normally is received? And what provokes body to jerk and emit that singular sound, a form of *aum*, when 'inner focus' effects a perfect latch of the 'grid'?

Saturday evening before my Sunday nearby temple visit I was impelled to turn on television, a rare occasion these days, and intercepted a program on physics. I said I was through

with pondering synchronicity; yet, over the ensuing hour, I received a review of all the concepts I had been studying—those of Maxwell, Planck, Lorentz, Eisenberg, Bohr....

*Nothing but another coincidence*, I told myself. About that night's dream, however, I would not be able to be so sure; for it did not revolve, as all had of late, around actions of light and sound....

*I encounter a man of unknown identity who had a physical problem in the genital region. I have no involvement with him; I only am shown an inner part of him--an organ that looked like a 'divided globe' containing a clear fluid. A certain part in one half of the globe appeared 'solidified,' opaquely yellowish in color, and bore a distinct form—like a small butterfly, crystalline in structure...*

It was a fifteen minute drive next morning to the temple site where presided the swami recommended by Vedanta's monk. The service already had begun when I arrived. I slipped off my shoes and entered but quickly discovered I had lost tolerance for religious ceremony of any kind. Despite that this 'church' embraced all religions, the ceremony still was too mindful of those of the past: the young choir in adoration (not an organ but the hypnotic whine of stringed instruments); no eucharistic chalice, but portraits at the altar (Jesus among them), with blessed flowers placed reverently before them who in their lives scorned idolatry....

*East, west, north, south; father god or mother church... was it this, which I have come here to learn?—that ultimately the spirit, as Heard commented, will of need proceed beyond it all?*

I left the service to explore the temple's tranquil gardens. Beneath full-blossomed lavender wisteria I spied a wondrously sculpted, full size blue-cast alabaster figure, lips pursed to

a flute. I did not look directly at Krishna at first, as I crossed the small bridge of his pond. In the quiet, the life-sized figure reflecting into the corner of my eye seemed alive. ‘Only yesterday’-- during *bhakti* tribulation--I shed imagined longing for the western ‘son of God’; I had not given thought to the eastern. I turned to the stone face. “Is it You I have come to meet?” I asked audibly. Looking at the broad shoulder, the taut midriff, the supple arms and legs, the human part of me knew it would respond to him as like to the other. *Certainly it is that which I was sent here to learn?*

I didn’t want to stay for the lecture but had yet to see the swami. I re-entered the main lobby and was handed the day’s printed message. My eyes searched for his name in the month’s agenda, but it appeared nowhere in the program list. Finally, at the bottom of the page, I found it: *The swami has been ill. It is not known when he will be able to return to duties. This week, he underwent prostrate surgery...*

I drove Dottie back to my field haunt south of town. Elsewhere I am tenant, mother, clerical worker, taxpayer, daughter, sister and former wife; here, no one. Here I was that which lives to write for its own sake, the egoless and identityless “I” dreaming waking dreams.

It takes some effort to hold fast to fatality reconciled to sentient but impersonal predetermination, and to refuse to speculate whether sleep’s dreams can present information from ‘other’ external sources. I am interested more in a practical explanation of the mixed realisms experienced in ‘semi-conscious’ sleep. Volumes of experimental data have been collected on the brainstem and its relation to sleep. The actual process, still unknown, appears centered in the reticular formation and nucleus of the solitary tract of the medulla. A serious yogic caution is not to mediate in a supine posture.

*Carlson* describes cataplexy, the mind awake in a temporary paralysis of body. Referred to as “sleep paralysis,” the state can occur just before or after normal sleep, from which one can be freed by a touch or hearing one’s name spoken. The French term for nightmare is *couchmar*, ‘pressing devil’; it reflects descriptions of terrifying ‘sleep attack’ nightmares, of being crushed or suffocated. *Carlson* suggests that they occur in a “lighter” form of sleep, as opposed to usual story-like dreams of deep sleep. From *couchmar* evolved the Latin *incubare*, to lie upon—thus, *Incubus*, an imaginary creature whose sibling is *Succubus*.

Is it possible that a state can result in which brain stem disconnect of consciousness occurs only partially?--that deep ‘meditation’ can dislodge the full demagnetization of fully natural sleep? Does the involved brain region shield us, when awake, from experiencing the forces of physics ever acting unsensed upon us--the press of gravity and whirring of the heavens, to which undeniably we are constantly unwitting subjects?--from which, awake, one is shielded and, in sleep, divided; but in-between is a state where one is neither? Can yogic methods, to withdraw sensing from the sympathetic nervous system, concentrate bioenergy in the central nervous system to affect a disconnect?

It tempts frivolous ego-nature to think that perhaps it is singled out to receive guidance from spirit sources, that deep meditation ‘unplugs’ mundane connections and opens mystical frequencies. Equally might it be that a wider avenue only is opened into an unconscious ‘hard disk’ program, to access data on a chromosomal chain. On the premise that individual consciousness *per se* is captured subatomically, ‘receptions’ in a demagnetized dream state could be imbued with elements from earlier incarnations--experiential memories beneath all threshold of retrieval--to combine with registrations of current existence in The Private Unconscious and

produce dreams which, although obviously constructed from subjective experience, appear to have ‘foreign’ content.

Such also might explain a seeming donation of information in cases of dreamed “eureka” revelations. I only can testify that combining dream review and waking associations assists rationalizing temporary psychical sub-polar dives, and that post-meditation dreams are remarkable for the degree to which material often is marked by *distinct words*, as if proffered in a friendly but forcible fashion from a source where a model and answer already are ‘known’. Even be all private-self-constructed, it contributes freedom to Mind to return to life’s work, which in the end is our salvation. Perhaps that is what Fritz Perls meant, when asked by a patient, “Is it possible to use an unresolved life situation as if it were a dream, and work on it the same way?” “Yah,” Perls relied, “just the same.”

As I have understood it, the mode of traveling the yogic spiritual path (depending on individual disposition) can be singly or combinedly through (1) work and duty (*karma*), (2) total love for and devotion to the ‘divine principle’ in all beings (*bhakti*), and (3) pursuing intelligence through knowledge (*jnana*). A “brahmacharyan” leads a life of conscious self-restraint and may be physically celibate; but celibacy is emphasized as a state of mind. Marriage actually is recommended--it being posed that one cannot come to know divinity without knowing human love and happiness.

The word, *karma*--the precept of cause and effect in an inexorably governed universe--is used also to describe a disposition to act and do all work unselfishly without concern for “the fruits of one’s actions.” The religiously emotional person is said to find his or her path through love of a personified god. “One’s innermost aspiration is reflected in the model chosen,”

comments Mishra. Choice of path, however, is subject to the conditioning; and, at the outset, I still carried remnant god-images of childhood.

The *bhakti* state is one of strong, adoring emotion. It was as a *bhakti* aspirant that I boldly left for Mexico, a would-be Mother Teresa *cum* Joan of Arc, a society of one who believed she had tapped the eternal fount: I would allow the body its desire only if and when ‘god’s’ will became irresistible. And hadn’t I renounced possessions, country, friend and, family? I learned, however, that the *bhakti* path is easy to assume if one has money in one’s pocket--that I had not begun to comprehend the intricacies of *renunciation*, and that body could forget all about ‘god.’

Failing to establish my own republic, I came home as I had gone--an unwitting subject of the first definition of *karma*. Enroute, lying on a frayed carpet in a run-down Guaymas motel, I vowed!—henceforth, any ‘sacrifices’ all would be all toward writing truth as I saw it, irrespective consequences. What I yet had to learn was the wisdom of the yogic tenet, *make no vows*; and that *jnana* would tax me to the ‘max,’ as searching data to support a reasonable matrix of living experience mushroomed into complex independent studies.

“Royal Yoga” for *raja yoga* apparently is a misnomer, in that *raja* means “to shine.” Thus, more correctly, *raja yoga* is “the yoga of radiating light.” Regardless, it is a *bull*, leading incorrigibly through one private maze to deposit one in a new heap of personal tripe, the only recourse at each arrival being more of it! One attaches imagined consolations to meanings, only to find each to be a personal interpretation spawned by unenlightened hope, which certainly will be torn aside as Mind is brought to grapple on point with the Soul.

Regardless I actually did progress to *jnana*, I was hooked into a gridded field laid by converging ploughs. From the west, Gerald Heard’s steps of the life of the spirit--awakening

through purgation to perfection--left face to face with the latter's impossibility. From the east, the furrows of yoga. Parallel to them, on the scientific level, the deep cuts of the relation of Reichian 'orgone' to the procreational thrust in animal life, and Einstein's vehicle of relativity.

When Heard said, "You're going to be made to do things against your will," I took it literally—*no*, literally spiritually. I thought, *Ah, the magnificent power that is will have me be its brilliant servant*, coupling Heard's words with Mishra's that, by following raya yoga's path, one *could* become a 'son'/[child] of 'god'—a living example for humankind.

As Mishra stated, *renunciation* is the most difficult concept to apprehend. Initially, one thinks that one can escape mundane obligations and achieve the peace necessary for true contemplation and certain success. As he also pointed out, however, wherever one goes, even into a cave on the most remote of mountains, one's mind goes with one.

A fully dedicated program, rigorous to the extreme was beyond me; however, as Mishra further states, even a small amount affords worthwhile results. I barely scratched the surface, yet even after periods of abandoned practice each return has been rewarded. For me, the 'nobility' of raya yoga's title is warranted by its potential enhancement of perception. Once one *sees* light in action, one cannot forget; it seems a simple thing and--as Vivekananda claimed--accessible to all. Besides that intervening light manifestation between eyes and horopter, occasionally in meditation there are dream experiences of color, the most spectacular being electric sapphire and emerald. Do those relate to similar light analogies in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*?

One day, I have kept telling myself, all shall be pieced together, an unemotional, scientific explanation, of how physiopsychological disciplines might combine with the universal force to induce a clearer apprehension of existence in the material world. But was I kidding myself still overall?—all the explorations and writings merely to keep alive the flickering wish

of a stunted remnant of a long-ago potential persona, so that the time-fixed one might avoid going 'round the bend'?

After the usual Monday hectic typing on the job I try to work on writings; but, "worded" out, I called it a day. After meditation I am soundly asleep, lying on my stomach, when I recognize approach of 'the force' ....

*I cannot help initially reacting defensively, the sensation so profound that fear is evoked instinctively. Again it is as if a condition that normally inures body to the gravitational field is withdrawn, and I summon a Mishra recitation—*

I shall obtain the ultimate truth. and ultimate reality in this world,  
whether my body remains with me or it goes into pieces—

*It feels as if my body is being pinned supermagnetically not just to the surface beneath but to and within all-surrounding energy, no humanly willed exertion possible against it. Consciousness--a helpless, hapless prisoner in a static piercing medium—realizes itself separate from the penetrated body containing it, totally vulnerable to it. The sensations are accompanied by an increasingly intensifying, feverish humming, buzzing vibration. Then I feel 'its' first touch—*

*I cannot turn my head; trying to move is like trying to make one's way free from the bottom of a silo of grain. No, it's worse than that, far worse; obviously I cannot find words to describe it but determine freshly to deal with it. Somehow with all might I manage to slide across and off the bed, onto my feet, for I decided long ago that when I die I wish it to be in my tracks.*

*I make my way down the hallway to the living room but there is no feeling of 'walking.' I feel all contained in 'consciousness'—that is, a continuing stream of albeit startled and uncertain thought (wondering, what is this thing that is happening to me and how can I sustain it*

properly?) My eyes are permitted to be open only half-way; strive as I try to lift the lids they are held down. In order to see anything higher I would need to raise my head, impossible because I seem to be bodiless.

Further, it is as if usual reception of common reality has been limited purposely, in order that I might learn fully how limitedly fixed is human perception. It is as if consciousness is residing behind two reclining, half-moon portholes have been seared into eternal blackness, half moons etched by fire, outlines glowing with the gold of burning sun. And I, this thinking nothingness, know; and 'I, this thinking indentityless 'I' am following them as one who, mercilessly awakened to find oneself flung into some pitch black underground labyrinth, would chase only two lights visible...

I stop before the full length living room mirror. It casts no reflection but that does not matter, because 'I' am trying to see who or what it is, standing at the hall door wearing the long-gone silver slippers I danced in when the quest began. Someone appears to be standing in them there; yet 'I' 'know' what 'I' am 'seeing' is an image presented from another time, a leftover imprint on the inward-dimensional screen of existence: someone waiting to go out the door, keys in hand.

But 'I'?—'I' am interested more in the phenomenon of reality 'within reflection,' for between 'me' (ME?) and those two burning apertures hangs a projecting image of the flowered kimono I keep handy on one of the mirror's hooks. I lift my hands and shake them fiercely between those two portholes and the approaching image; and I apprehend a disturbance in the 'field'—a temporary shattering of the intervening image, conscious at the same time of the intact, reflecting kimono beyond—

*Suddenly I understand! It is a 'concrete' envisioning of the constant omnipresence of reflecting images, of which human perception intersects only the one correspondent to the focus dictated by its specific visual modality—*

*Oh--someone is at the front door! I look out and see that it is the 'deformed one'-- a recent young acquaintance. I open the door; I can tell he is in trouble. A strange man in the street is talking into a portable telephone; I have the thought that my acquaintance's father has sent the man after him.*

*My acquaintance comes into the kitchen with me; he has brought me two drawings, and they are so unusual they divert my concern for him. One involves the action of universal force and illustrates a facet of "A Child's Book of Light;" the other, a landscape unseen by earthling eyes--but I have not time to look long enough, for the man outdoors now has come into the house and is threatening. Yet my attention again rivets to the sketches. I feel torn—*

The dreaming blacked out; I opened my eyes to my body in bed, which it never left. I lay there as I have lain before, after such experiences, seeing the moving energy, able only to wonder, until dreamless sleep kindly rescued me. In the morning I was exhausted; the body, still energized in a curiously coarse manner, felt as if it has done the work of a chain gang.

At the risk of appearing crazy indeed, I decided to attempt to obtain data from the other party, which involved overcoming Ego. Not knowing anything about him, I again would be taking a silly chance exposing myself, would I not?--I had no desire to court another dependent relationship. When we first exchanged words, as he sat next to me at a restaurant counter last week, I sensed we could write each other's lines; and there was that familiar nose, his restraint the more noticeable because of its intensity, and the fact that I never saw once his eyes look beneath mine. He had told me where his parents lived, a local name I recognized.

I tried, now, to reach him by telephone, was given another number, did reach him, and told him of my unusual dream as would one friend to another. He replied, “That *really* is *strange*, because something traumatic did happen to me around midnight. But I’m not free to talk now. I’ll call you this evening.”

Eagerly I awaited the mystery boy’s call. At 11:30 p.m. the telephone rang. I hurried to it but didn’t pick up the receiver until after a second ring, a secret habit of mine. “Hello?”

The caller hung up without speaking.

The telephone rang again, at 10:45 p.m. the next night. Again the caller hung up without speaking; and, not long into sleep, the force revisited....

*The instinct to fight surges but then I receive the thought, “This time you are going to fly!” The accompanying sound is different than before, more like the sharp shaking-out of brown bags, a million hard-cutting sounds through space—and...I’m going to let go! But then I realize that some presence has entered my room and stands beside the bed, except I am faced in the other direction and, pinned by the force, unable to turn.*

*With all my will I manage to raise one arm up and backward toward what I now ‘know’ is the figure of a man, a man dressed in white; and I recall how in preceding meditation my hand and arm twice suddenly had lifted and pointed exactly the same way. The force subsides; the sensation of bright light behind me diminishes with it...*

This time when I opened my eyes the energy in the room was tremendous, racing about with that peculiarly unfocusable speed which makes it almost motionless. The sound inside my head was the even steady hum of an open radio receiver. I rose from bed and walked down the hall, almost afraid to look down it, yet reassuring myself, there was nothing to fear--it did not follow that the unknown is a threat, despite powerfully beyond common experience.

The next day I was determined that, if the telephone rang that night, I would not speak and I would hang up. 11:30 p.m. the telephone did ring, but this time only once! *Oh ho! What kind of game is this?* I decided to dismiss the entire nonsense and turned to my writing, but I didn't stay with it as long as planned. Something other than conscious desire induced me to go to bed shortly before midnight. I initiated meditation on business matters to resolve on the morrow, was aroused from it prematurely, and, turning to my side, instantly fell fast asleep....

*Again, the adrenalized shock... this time not as ferocious. I have a sensation of smiling acquiescence, for I now was more interested in meeting than escaping. A subdued fury envelops me; I feel weight of another body lying behind me, reach back, and feel hands. I am repelled, knowing not whose hands they are; but then I remind myself of nothing to fear. I relax my hand inside 'its,' next feel lips upon my palm, and—I do not hear a voice--I 'receive a thought': a thought of pure gratitude....*

*I want to turn. I want to see. Then light erupts and I am turned, on my knees, seeing a man sitting on my bed, his back against the wall. Although briefly seeing his face I do not capture the visage; it seems unimportant to apprehend. Indeed, it is as if he has no face and is but purely a majestic composite of what is recognizable as Man--as if neither face nor form matter; that there is no reason to see. It is the light of him that absorbs me; I only am with that which contains it.*

*I am given what seems like ten pure seconds; and, just as I am about to speak, the light vanishes....*

I opened my eyes to familiar ordered surroundings. Wanting to recall as much of the 'dream' as possible, I did not want to return to sleep; but I did....

*This time the sound is like the roll of distant thunder. Again I am not alone but the 'creature' beside me too familiar to feel any tinge of repulsion. I object only to 'its' total control of me, but frustration also diminishes into a new patience to await 'its' desire. I am allowed to turn toward 'it' and, as I do, it and I are bathed in glorious light, closely contained to our boundaries and, to my eyes, primarily lighting the lower half of the presence's body, which is covered from waist to ankles by a bright white, pleated garment.*

*The upper half of the body remains in relative darkness, and I do not lift my eyes to look at it. I feel that the part of body highlighted is for some purpose, simultaneously aware of flatness beneath the garment as if there were no genitalia. I am about to put my hand naturally lovingly upon it when 'its' ('his?') 'thought' stops me; and I have the sensation of an arm coming around my shoulder and a mouth brushing my hair, with 'words': "No; not yet." Without willing it, thinkingly I transmit immediate acceptance of the wish: "All right; not yet." And then the force, the light, and the presence left....*

I arose and made my record, feeling it to be exactly what was expected of me, despite knowing that--besides proving nothing--merely putting such experiences into words alienates their truthfulness. Yet--regardless my and others' similar experiences never be explained--I feel I am doing the purposed thing. However, was I allowed, to stay within that light, I would care less about writing anything....

*"Daylight has broken...soft as the..."*

I heard the song before I received first light. Daylight indeed had broken, but I was very sleepy and didn't know how I would deal with going to work. I decided first to sweep the tiny

porch and rearrange the geraniums and spider webs. Meanwhile, ‘something’ said to mind,  
“*What do you want?--someone to rescue you?*”

“For what?” I retorted facetiously. “For all the time and all the peace and all the quiet and all the music and all the silence I need?”

*Don’t you see?* Mind responded. *Body can speak or Mind can speak but not both at the same time. Remember what Heidi’s grandfather said to her: “ You were born good; so live goodly and you will die goodlalee.”*

“That’s incredible!” I responded, and then the telephone rang. Here came the grand explanation, right?

*Wrong.* I hung up the silent call. I had better things to do, than trying to prove the unknowable. As ‘Mind’ just suggested, all that matters is how good one has it while one *is*. If death was but a dream, and life, one day and that day was glorious, would it matter that one died daily?

Completion--if at a point where one has said all that one was destined to say; muteness--conceivably also might include having seen all that one was destined to see and heard all that one was destined to hear and felt all that one was destined to feel: *predestined, predestined, predestined*; the instigator of it all indefinable. Since whatever may be ‘knowable’ beyond body (thus mental) sensing cannot be experienced until the senses are silenced, there’s no way to find it out until one achieves such state, should it exist. Like outside reality, inside reality has its own topography. Whether we call its regions Id, Ego, Superego, and Supraego, or Limbo, Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, our Being resides in various of them at varying times. Beautiful Nature, I believe, wishes to see its Self united more in kind and *It*-- Humankind’s eternal spirit--coming to rest more in Mind.

I didn't want to think anymore about strange encounters and ensuing effects, the omission of extra notes not lamentable. "Identity," Mishra points out, "is like putting on and taking off clothes;" and Ego is stored now on a hanger. But I did have two new drawings that came from all of it....

In bed at about one a.m., after satisfactory sketching and without any intense applied relaxation, I merely tried to focus on 'starpoints' as they appeared behind closed eyes. I fell to sleep with my hands resting on my upper abdomen. Again, the force descended....

*I feel those other 'hands.' I must keep my wits about me...explore what is happening...are they my hands? I shall see! I open (it seems, I am allowed only) the right eye and again see the 'whirlwind'. It is even less distracting this time, because the backdrop is a lovely diffused gold and orange sherbet color. In the foreground ('directly overhead') are tossing streamers in hues from gold to tangerine. At first I think of flames, but they aren't flame-shaped. They are long rectangles of varying widths, billowing and intertwining, their ends blending into each other. I have a fear that I may 'injure my eyes' by continuing to look at such incredible rapidity of form and color.*

*The 'hands' call me back. With supreme effort I 'think to lift my own hands'; again it feels as if I am pushing against the weight of the entire universe. I 'think' to stretch my fingers and force their tips to touch. I open (again, it seems, only) one eye, and I see what I take to be my hands in dark silhouette, in which moment I feel no other hands on me. Have I in fact simply moved my own? Consciousness is too removed from body to tell.*

*However, before I can dwell on that, shapes--again, light orange in color--begin to flow across the field of vision beyond the silhouetted, prayerful hands. The shapes move so fast I cannot make them out well, for the surrounding energy. Some look like butterflies; others,*

*isosceles triangles; showing markings or designs. Then the forms begin to come together. Whereas, at first, some flowed isolated, some in clumps, now they join together into an orderly side-by-side assembly, and a marvelous banner unfurls 'overhead'. The markings upon it become clear: a light pink, terracotta codex unlike any of any culture seen in books....*

*How I wish it would stay still, so I can study it!--not a pictorial language; the forms more approached "letters"—thick; fitting into "squared" spaces--forms easily moldable in clay; self-imposing rolled strips and small flattened bands together; circles and curved portions and combinations of all, finished off with outlining and dots in various places....*

*The silhouetted hands descend. For a split second it seems that the 'four-handed' battle is to begin again. "I am going to give myself up to it," I think, and commence lowering 'my' hands in submission. Instantly, the force subsides; and my lower torso and legs begin to levitate. AH! I 'feel a smile on my lips'-- I am going to get to fly! But as soon as I have the thought I 'feel myself' lowered gently back down....*

I had been so certain during the 'dreaming' that I *had* moved my hands; yet, there they lay still solidly across my midriff. My first thought was about 'sensing with Brain' as opposed to 'sensing with Body'—that, although in consciousness the two types are united, they can be divided each into its own state, but in the same reality.

It was two a.m. I stared into the dark as always, to recollect as much as possible; then for 30 minutes I recorded these notes, before making my way to the kitchen--glad for the switch to turn on the hall light; I didn't care to ponder unseen regions of existence. I fixed a liverwurst and cheese sandwich on rye and took it with an orange back to bed. On the way I stopped to take a "pee." Sitting there, the thought came, "*Maybe not you but someone is going to answer these*

*questions one day.* It was hard, thinking all the seeming craziness came just from inside of little ol' me.

“When you’re dead, you’re dead,” one of my little *jcs* said a couple of days ago, cutting her hand sharply through the air. *Yes....but—God!*—I understand how one can become convinced, that one *could* both ‘see’ and ‘feel’ in another state, that all that mattered was for that state to maintain. “I thank you,” I said into the stillness of the solstice-warmed dead-of-night, before I slid off the bed to the quilt on the floor. “Thank you for an interesting evening and for the wonderful snack” (just in case there might be someone listening, and, perhaps, watching)...

Faith, a thing that as a child I had, simply was knowledge that, when something truly was needed, the wherewithal for it would appear by my parents’ consensual sacrifice. They mortgaged their only asset, our home, to give my older sister and me a proper wedding and celebration. It was a great party for everyone except secretly pregnant me; but I did Mom and Dad proud, and there are pictures to prove it. As a child, the source of the wherewithal was well known to me; after serious discussion between them as to necessity, coins were taken from the sack Father carried home from his shop every night, and kept in the night table drawer. I remember vividly the day I first was allowed to extract a dollar myself for some elementary school need, and the feeling of my hand delving into the hard coins. *End of one era....*

As a girl I harbored *hubris* thinking myself of an enlightened generation. Some things I write might cause one to think me even fuller of it now; but that is far from so. There simply are certain things that this very-long-ago-fallen-Catholic must say, such as, “The Church’s” stance on birth control is a complete ‘miss of the mark’ (an original term *later* rendered, I learned, into the word, “*sin*,” which curiously recalls Siva’s teaching Arjuna how to ‘aim the arrow’). It may

have made sense, following a global flood wiping out at least half of Earth's then-population, for a god to say, "Be fruitful and multiply." My 'father-God', I'm certain, would quote Salome: now is the time *to be less fruitful and decimate*.

Mishra was too right. A passport to "Nirvana" is not easy to obtain. To say?—I live, but not for the self or anything it may gain? To be?—an ever-selfless actor before an empty theater, where one's ultimate worth is but a silent echo through eternity? *Impossible*. But for those who, in the contented morning of life, knew unquestioning love as ample reward for living's efforts-- as the brightest of their days' rays withdraw--is the feeling keenest: there can be no validation of a conscious God's existence, unless there is brought to perennality--extended to all reality and every moment of it for every thinking being—a peaceful, secure livelihood.

## 1984

I attended the May Day celebration at the Vedanta retreat. At commencement of a panel discussion of certain nobles, the audience was asked to participate in brief group meditation. I closed my eyes and made mind as blank as possible. After some minutes, 'the sound' unpremeditatedly was forced from me; and, simultaneously, the entire audience returned to the present. I do not know if or how many others had the same experience, but it's the nearest to 'God' I'd ever felt.

Almost two years since my pilgrimage to San Francisco and the Swami's offer to call him any time; still, I'd like to know: is that unbidden sound and accompanying 'jolt' one of those 'self-secret' things alluded to? Ostensibly, an answer was but a telephone call away, and last night at 8:30 I geared up courage and dialed the number. The answering individual was courteous and put my call on hold to transfer. Eagerly I held on. Then, after a full minute of

waiting, the connection broke. *Well, I thought, replacing the receiver, I guess I'm not supposed to ask...*

It's June, and I am coming up on my yearly one-week paid vacation from the law office where I now work. The play, *Renacimiento*, written with catholic, third world youth in mind, has been in Oaxaca all these years, where persons have been working on a Spanish translation--

*Drat!*—power failure. So much for writing, for the time being. Might as well take a nap....

*"I" am in my "living room." Three others are there talking about me in the past tense. I must move very carefully to pass one man, so as not to touch him. The television is on; a drama is in progress of which I know the plot but not the ending. I realize it's my chance to "experience the end" but I'm not ready. Across is the full-length mirror that hangs in my living room....*

*As I get very near one presence in the room, who I sense most dear to me, my heart (or something within my breast) pushes forward and outward. I can 'feel this power source with my hand'; it has a 'mind of its own' or, rather, materially is acting upon and reacting within the extended energetic medium in which it exists.... The room then plunges into darkness, yet I can see my reflection on the glass. I 'fly' toward and away from it several times, paying attention to the change in the relative apparent size as my figure approaches and retreats from its reflection. As I approach and retreat my face takes on ghostly visages; but I am focused on my mouth, very close up, forming words of a song. I turn and fly into the kitchen and see brightness outside the window--beautiful, waving multi-green trees in the near distance. The lovely sight suspends me until I awaken...*

No power yet. I light a candle and review the dream. The first association is about the sight of my singing mouth, and how creation of sound has to do not only with the evocation of air past the vocal cords into the ‘medium’ but with the *form* in which energy is emitted into and strikes it. The second thought is of the omniconstant images reflecting between the mirror and me, the eyes focusing a discrete one, determined by distance, from the conveyance of impulses along and by way of ‘geometrical’ convergence through the medium--size-constancy *vis-a-vis* horopter distance, a subject of recent deliberations!

Maybe eyes convey as well as receive impulses. As a girl, development of Italian vocabulary was supplanted by immersion in English. As I grew, I experienced certain ‘eye-to-eye’ experiences with my Father--held gazes, during which I felt I was absorbing his thought, as if our minds ‘worked the same way’. Perhaps there communication impulses do pass, in such joined sight—why, at times, one senses immediate affinity with another.

As noted, I have eschewed thoughts of the ‘paranormal;’ however, mind spawned the question, *if your beloved dead father were to make an appearance, how could you be fearful?* “Well,” mind responded to the thought, “if he appeared out of nowhere in the dark, of course it would scare the hell out of me!” *But how about if he did in that bright scene of trees?*

Now that would be lovely...

At the Posada Margarita in Oaxaca, Dona Margarita informs me the garret has been rented indefinitely by some ‘merchant’ who, lucky for me, happened to be gone for a spell. “You can have it, unless Roberto comes back early,” she said.

*Roberto? Who the hell is Roberto? Probably an adventuring ripoff, I thought, buying cheap south of the border and taking his reap north. Well, piss on that! The garret is mine...*

On my last day, the translation safely in my briefcase, in the garret's iron bedstead my eyes opened to morning. As I lay there a scene took shape in the cracked plaster of the near wall. All I had were some cheap water colors bought at a local *tienda*, and no brush; but I jumped from bed, pulled on shorts and a top, tore up some headbands, and began to rub paint on the wall: a big blue-white moon at upper right, with a lake beneath it flowing toward an enormous half-risen sun on the left; drooping trees beneath the moon hovering over huge red flowers along the lake edge, ending in a short path into a triangular door into the sun....

Day turned again into night as I worked. The room's hanging bare bulb threw my shadow life size against the wall; and there emerged in paint the back of an Indian girl, about to enter the sun. Although already packed to leave by plane in the morning, I doubted I could finish the mural, when another "Amato"--a Federale narc staying at the Posada "on business"--appeared at the garret door.

I had made Amato's acquaintance two days before, when I and a few young travelers gathered in his room and he provided the group with the more esoteric of tobaccos. After the others wandered away, Amato pulled out his identification card and handed it to me. I looked back and forth from the card's picture to him and laughed. "That's not you! That can't be you."

I.D. pictures frequently don't look much like the holder; but he seemed surprised that the card itself didn't move me, seeing the government position he held. "You're not afraid of me," he asked rhetorically.

Obviously he had expected a quite different reaction. "No. Why should I be?" After all, he had seemed to enjoy the smoke without any visible compunction!

“Well, others, when they find out who I am, are.”

Amato had ‘hit’ on me but gotten nowhere the other evening; now here he was before dawn, and seeing my artistic frenzy he became a true friend. “Yo soy sus assistante!”—*I’m your assistant!* he sang out cheerfully, pointing to the mural. Every 20 minutes or so, he ran down the delicate wrought-iron circular staircase to the backyard faucet, for fresh water, as I madly rubbed paint onto the plaster. My flight was at 9 a.m. but I *had* to finish--an *entire wall for a canvas!* What an unexpected, joyous, once-in-my-lifetime blessing; and I knew Dona Margarita wouldn’t care....

Night turned again into day. It was done. I stood back. Children gathered at the door to look, along with some touring French students, one of whom took a picture. Suddenly Amato hauled me the distance and exclaimed, “Mira!” *Look!* Then he darted forward and daubed a big black dot in the center of one of the red flowers. *My God! The piece de resistance*—just what the mural needed for the final focusing touch. Madly we dotted black paint into each flowering center. Then there was just enough time to say farewells, and Amato kindly drove me to the airport.

During the weeks afterward, earning my keep at a keyboard, I’d think about that mural; knowledge of its very existence kept mine burning. Then—*then*....

Came a postcard from Rodrigo, one of Dona Margarita’s orphaned houseboys. “I regret to tell you, Senora, that our Virgin is gone. When Roberto came back, he didn’t like the mural and he painted over it.”

I wrote “Roberto” a nasty letter, then flushed it down the toilet. I wrote back to Rodrigo: “Yes, if I come back, I’ll try to bring you a tape deck as you ask. And I’m sorry our Virgin is

gone.” Occasionally I would wonder whether she lived still, in a photo floating around somewhere in France. Meanwhile, the next four years brought new challenges.

First, a coworker from the ‘Cardinal’ days (another job, a federal one back in the ‘70s that I also left for ‘political’ reasons) recruited me to help organize a branch office of a famous regional attorney, at a salary enough to qualify finally for a mortgage loan. I bought a small house, a little Victorian-type bungalow just across the river from the new office’s city. By the time the real estate deal was done, I had only \$800 left in savings but I had a *home* again.

Then, unbelievably, 18 months later, the Diocese’s personnel officer contacted me. There had been a radical change in regime; would I care to apply for the top secretarial position? Fifty-one years old, I was looking at another employed lifetime before retirement, while the outfit I was with was a shaky one without health benefits or pension plan. Old battles aside, it was a chance to found existence again.

I applied and got the job...

## Part Two

### *JC AND HER*

1988

The bungalow's front door stood open to its screen. Outside, a suitor of Emilia, my cat, lay placidly on the porch. Emilia, Her Most Regal Highness, sat equally placid on the dining room table, staring at her prospective suitor through the window, while *I*, bathed and waiting, watched for head-lights. Altogether, we formed a silent testamentary tableau. *I shouldn't be wasting these moments*, I was thinking, *because he might not come*; there always was more chance he would not than would.

Standing where the rose lamplight from the living room didn't reach, I was the epitome of countless widows "black" or "white," always a private society of one. The high heels were squeezing my toes against leather; and I was beginning to feel utterly foolish in the formal dress with veil capelet, a gift donned tonight only for the benefit of its giver. I retreated to the living room and sat on the sofa near the pink-shaded lamp. Time grazed thought like a Foucault pendulum; but mind was oblivious to terrestrial gains, galaxial progressions, or universal creeps toward the ultimate—

*The Ultimate!--I'm going to level with him tonight. Not for his benefit, for **MINE**...*

When I ran into JC the Ultimate five years after the Last JC, nine after the Big D, I recognized a "man's man" in the Mediterranean sense of the word, the perfect mirror for the slivered heart in which originally had been programmed willingness toward submission and unhesitating subjection of intellect. *So...* instead of an archetype seizure of unwitting Consciousness, 'The I' decided to let 'Her' consciously act her fantasy. The crossing of my and the Ultimate's paths was occasioned by my purchase of the bungalow. Now all I needed do was

work another 15 to 17 years; then I could sell the house and live on Social Security in a nice little mobile home until I died. *A Child's Book of Light* now hid in closet darkness, awaiting a future doubtful decade; but research for *The History of the Daughters* was growing into a box of its own. Meanwhile, the writer-persona remained under wraps, laboring midnight hours, as the would-be-integrated-I acquired the true pathos of humanness. I dropped side one of "Rigoletto" on the turntable and lay back to absorb the first chords of Sutherland's *Caro Nome*.

*I will not listen for a car*, I told myself; but I heard his when it arrived. I heard its door slam shut through Sutherland's last lilting notes.

Then, "I thought I would die," 'she' said, "waiting to feel your hands on me..."

"I wanted to kiss you the first time I saw you," he replied.

The neck of the Ultimate's shirt was open. The gold cross was hidden, but the heavy gold chain he never removed glinted through chest hairs. 'She' didn't add, although it would have been true, "I felt the same way toward you." Lines?—in one respect always true. In an archetypal world *all* is reduced to lines, and archetypes *always* mean what they say.

It felt funnily right, like in the movies, to be swooped by him, feel his hunger, and not be put off by it. 'She' laughed, while 'The I' thought, *all is visual illusion where Man is concerned*: brushed-out tresses, bare reaches of skin that introduce thoughts of entryways. In subdued light, extra flesh around upper arms is no more noticeable than grey in one's hair. So simple was it, to *be* an illusion, in a spot of firelight the world and one's history did not enter.

If my parents had been forced to believe in ERA the family would have cracked under the strain. Their cultural history struck its balance; fixed differences in the roles of man and woman supported the framework. They saw that my sisters and I acquired a solid trade in high school, should Fate not marry us soon enough into domestic labor; and they took seriously the duty to

guide us toward a good man and pay for the weddings. The devoted sacrifices and effort in their circumstances was tantamount to funding four Ph.D.'s.

*Fear of Flying* was too late to do me any good, which probably is why I feared and never read it. When my nest fell away the incomplete person who'd helped build it was left naked on the cusp of revolution. Girls did not expect reactions like, “*What?*--you want to study *what?*” More and more young women were acting defiantly to save their individuality, many choosing independence despite unequal, inadequate wages. Antagonized men, on the other hand, asked (not without their own historical justification), hadn't *they* suffered their *own* particular but equal abuse? Hadn't they paid through the nose a great deal of the time, often dying sooner, from the stress?

The expected long-term reemployment at the Diocese, if not elating, had brooked tolerant—until, that is, yesterday. But there was no dealing with Reality between the Ultimate and *Her*. “How's work?” he asked.

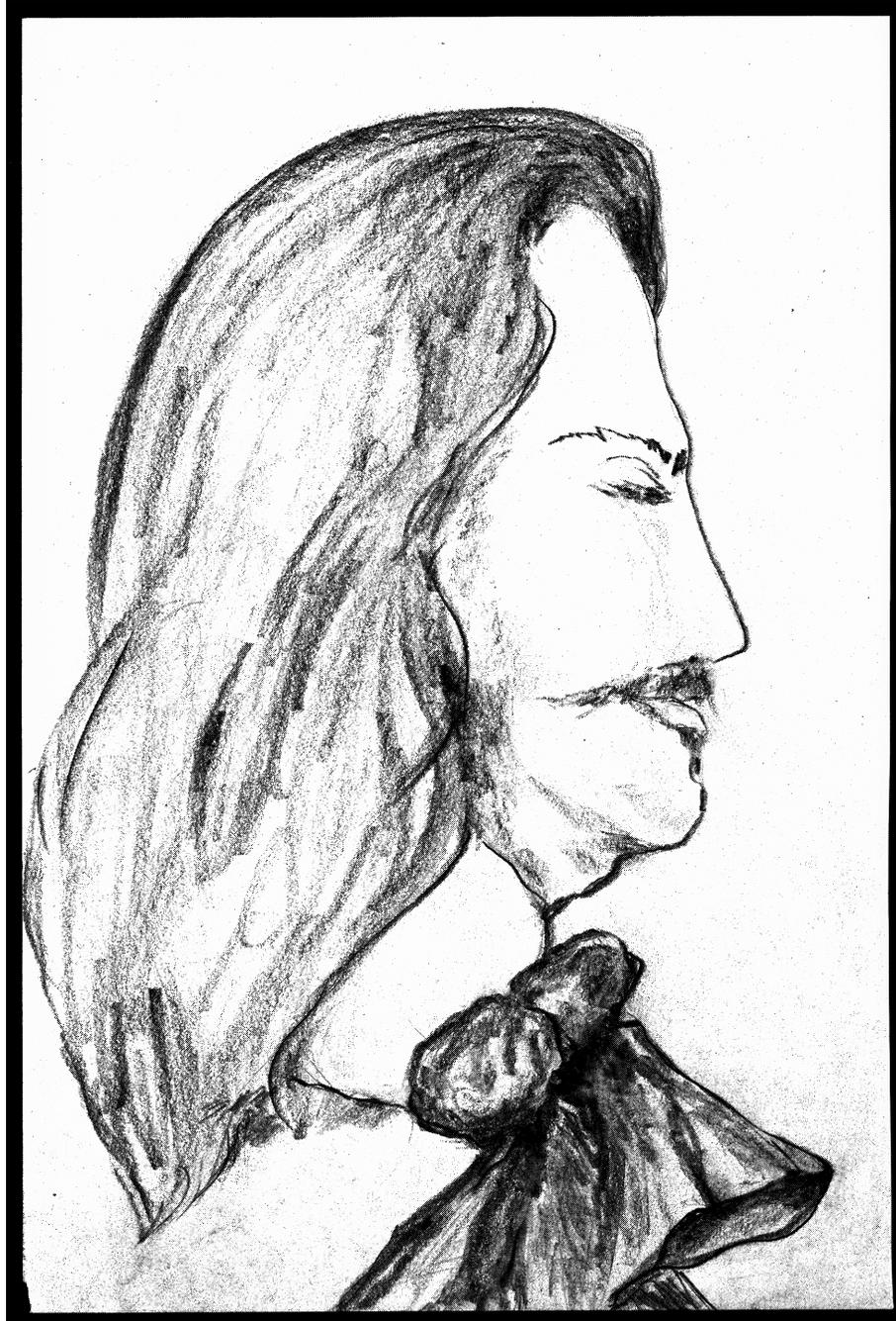
"Not good."

"Why? What's up?"

"I just found out that the Archbishop who hired me is transferring. It looks as if the former foe of mine is going to take his place."

"Well, you're a nice person," he responded off-the-cuff. “Just keep your nose clean, and it'll be okay."

*But tell me! What will I do?--if the diocese is entrusted to my one remaining adversary—he who had fought me tooth and nail? ‘She,’ however, never bores her man with such details; She is the egolessly-working little wife who simply brings home a modest paycheck; double-standard chauvinism doesn't concern her. ...*



At the end of a scant half-hour he was on his way out the door. "I love you," he said over his head. "I love you too," 'She' replied. They do, you know—two who together never had to raise children or hassle unpaid bills, or get up in the early grayness when egos are naked and cold, and a real day is beginning.

"When women went to work, that was the end," the Ultimate said over his shoulder.

‘The I’ had a struggle, letting *her* make an appropriate reply; it turned to a sigh. "I suppose you’re right."

He searched pockets for the car key. "I know it makes women mad when they hear it, but their true nature is to be dependent on man."

This time vehemence jumped Psyche’s barrier. *Oh, SURE!* I thought. *And you never have depended on your wife* (I knowing otherwise)—*you’ve never relied on her, to keep bread and butter coming in while you pursued your dreams!* Silently I pushed open the screen door for him and followed barefoot onto the porch. He paused at the top step. "Are you all right?"

Impossible, for *her* to reply: "No! The feelings of affection solaced my abandoned soul and the physical exercise and exchange of energy was good for me; but I didn’t enjoy a climax." Nor would ‘The I’ allow, "You can’t imagine, how much I miss *shared* love—someone else carrying in wood for a fire; the occasional smell of coffee brewed by another’s hands...."

‘She’ finally spoke. "I feel wonderful." Then an admixture of Psyche couldn’t help but humorously bubble after him. "Just like the Holy Ghost—here one moment, gone the next."

"The perfect relationship," he whispered, back for a last small kiss. "Guilt-free!" Then off he went, twinkle-toeing it down the porch steps.

I took the record off of the turntable, glanced around for its cover and saw coins lying atop the couch cushions. *Again...*twenty cents. ‘We’ found two dimes the last time, too; but this time it didn’t strike either of us as cute. For all we knew, the way money changes hands, they were the same two. *NO!* ‘We’ thought in unison. *THIS IS NOT THE PERFECT RELATIONSHIP!*

I hadn't had dinner after work before his call and I was starved. I tossed a small steak into hot oil, put a saucepan on the stove, and ripped open a package of frozen spinach. Then I

would get to work.

To professional academe I wasn't even an apprentice; and I didn't delude myself that I could digest all the exposition related to *The History*. Instead I took to heart Bryan Magee's phrase, *annihilate the secondary*, and stayed as near as possible to 'original' words, to learn what the *record* might say to *me*. The same held for physics--avoiding conjecture; seeking how established data might support what *I* saw, for Mind had formed its own skeletal concepts and bore strong desire to give *them* flesh. The tread into Yoga was different, in that there was no initial influence by dogma or preformed concepts; but the constellation of personal religious history was bound to be tapped by it....

Salome and I had scheduled a first weekend together at my new home. I took a pleased look around the living room before answering the bell, and purposely adjusted its louvered doors to frame the fireplace beyond. Salome walked straight to the hearth, turned and surveyed the room. "Wow. New bookshelves, too. The place looks great."

"Yeah!--but take a look at my hands," I laughed, holding them out. "Later I'll show you what I've done out back. I'm turning the persimmon tree into a pagoda. But first come into the kitchen." I talked as I walked, Salome following me. "You know, there wasn't enough counter space, and I found this old chopping block. Doesn't it fit perfectly? Oh, good; coffee's ready." I stopped and turned. "So am I, by the way--to get back to our 'project.' Remember? I was going to provide material data."

"What? You've got to be kidding. It's been years--literally!"

I held out a cup. "Just the way you like it, the color of raw umber."

Back in the living room Salome carefully drew her long-skirted Douglass winter plaid

smoothly around her backside, and sat herself neatly on the floor next to the hearth. "Have you finished work on your planned exhibit?" She referred to a series of miniature oil paintings, the result of another long-arrested passion of mine, done to illustrate a narrative poem.

I set a plate of sliced fruit bread on the hearth near her. "Almost. The framer's doing his part."

Salome helped herself to a slice. "Any idea yet where it will hang?"

"I'm still working on that but not worried. You know that old believing-me; if the work's meant to be seen, it will be." I took a slice for myself and sat just above her on the rocker-- another find, only \$50, still wearing its original needlepoint cover. "Like the bread? It's leftover from Thanksgiving, baked with persimmons off the tree." I couldn't refrain from bragging. "I also squeezed seeds of 15 pomegranates. Can you believe it?--only a cup and a half of juice, but it made the best jello salad."

"Still a glutton for totality of experience I see."

"The two years time on this little piece of property truly has been incredible. I've loved it."

Only Salome could have read the wistful intonation. "Loved? Planning something I don't know yet?"

"Planning'...*there's* a word."

"Okay; we won't talk current events; but I take it you've pigeonholed some past ones?"

"Well, I think I understand better your comments about terms like Eros and Logos, Anima and Animus, and the need for degendering classical psychology to serve both genders fairly. I also checked out Bruno Bettelheim on 'unprejudicing' Freud. Interesting, how translators--unconsciously distanced by their individual emotions--used terms that were more

technical, almost medical. Crucial things—like 'mind' for *soul*, and 'mental' for *of the soul*. If I understand it correctly, Freud's theories of *the it*, *the I* and the *above-I* related to overlapping functions of Psyche but wound up as seemingly separate *regions* of mind—the 'id,' 'ego,' and 'superego'."

"That's true," Salome replied. "For Freud, Psyche was a truly inseparable soul. He began with the hopeful vision of psychoanalysis as a process to be used by 'secular ministers' of souls."

"That's what you've done, always, for me, Salome--ministered to my soul! I've come to appreciate, too, your comment, how psychological 'models' only are scaffoldings--a means for The Conscious to 'descend' for information, bring it back, and assess it."

"There've been some new approaches," Salome responded, "but I still believe in classical psychology's fundamental veracity, once purged of male-supremacy convolutions. Fortunately certain facets have ceased to haunt it--like the 'vaginal transfer,'" she ended with a rarely-used smirk. "You know--a presumed feat deemed requisite for well-adjusted woman. I believe the unconscious *male* issue, there, was *security*."

"Security?"

"Why else so critical, that a wife's orgasm be tied to penetration? Remember: there was ample reason for woman to be reluctant about frequent intercourse—*no reliable birth control*, while marriage was man's certain inviolable source. If woman materially healthily was satisfiable by simple clitoral release, it distanced her even more. The concept of the 'transfer' would have crucial appeal to Man's subconscious; there had to be 'something wrong' with *her*." She reached for a second slice of bread. "Bored yet?"

"No way. Go on."

“Well, it was ‘theorized’ women who didn’t meet the male-imposed norm of sexuality had to be suffering an unresolved ‘masculinity complex’, whence that killing label, *frigid*. Any woman not meeting the artificial norm fell subject to it. Some contemporaries of Freud even maintained that female anatomical structure came *biologically after* male--an adolescent male form, the arrested development of which was necessary for child-bearing and rearing! Not difficult, is it, to comprehend why in recent decades women swang entirely the other way, trying to prove that the female form came first.”

She played with her spoon in her coffee. “After Freud, the concept of ‘one woman, one man’ became much more problematical than merely a romantic notion subject to disappointment. When a woman didn’t meet married male’s expectations, she was categorized as deficient or intentionally perverse. Man felt physical neglect while Woman, whose combined physical and mental disappointments constituted *total* neglect, was told she was psychologically inhibiting her own physicality.”

"Say that again?"

"Lacking validation of her own specific sexuality, Woman suffered her disappointments psychologically and then was told that it was *due* to her psychology that she didn't realize all of her physicality."

I started to shake my head but it changed to a hard nod instead. "Well, I’ve distanced body from mind and have taken a good look at both. There may be women who physiosexually never have had any problem, for whom orgasms are as easy as man's; I wish I'd been one. Psychosexually, I see my long-standing current relationship as *Eros* and *Eros*.” My last words were sighed out. “Altogether I feel like that old Grateful Dead song, ‘What a long strange trip it’s been’.”

I should have added, *so far*...

JC the First, single again, had begun to call in late spring.

"You know I love you. I've always loved you."

*Well...maybe...* After all, I still loved him and—as I have been wont to claim repeatedly—love doesn't get killed merely by situations. What he could not know, however, was that in a future between *us*, it would be *Logos* versus *Logos*. I made as deliberate a decision as to my behavior with him as I had with the Ultimate, albeit totally different.

"I don't think I'll ever marry again," he had remarked in our first conversation.

"I understand the feeling," I had replied demurely, and reminded him of his statement, when I patently refused to be bedded after a couple of weeks of dating. "If you're serious about never marrying again," I added, "please don't ask for sex."

"What? Why not?"

"It's not natural."

"Not *natural*? It seems to work for a lot of people."

"Not for me. Anyway, I'm not sure I can trust you," I said sweetly.

"What do you mean, can't trust me?"

"It's *qualities* that I respond to. Real or projected, it doesn't matter--so long as Psyche receives the proper reflections."

"*What* the hell does *that* mean? You mean it doesn't matter *who* it is?"

"Weird as it may sound, yes... Yes! As long he's my true soul-type; and I'm not convinced you mean what you say."

"You don't *trust* me, then!"

"I don't trust *any* man anymore. *Forget* we were married. Forget I'm not a virgin, that I'm 54 and you're 57. Forget I don't have a uterus and you've had a vasectomy. Pretend I'm 30 and you're 33. What would happen if I got pregnant? How would you provide for the family? Where would we live?"

"Look, I'm not courting any young maiden here. This is the end of the 20th century for Christ's sake! You're using sex as a weapon—"

"Am not! It just feels that way, to you. Not so very long ago it was how the average person *had* to think; intelligent men had to wait until they could afford it, before they had sex, because sex meant kids."

"This isn't the old days."

"No, but *my* 'old days' haven't been reconciled. I wasn't conditioned just to believe in the myth, I tried to live it! 'One man, one wife, one joy through life' and all of that—boy, was *I* in for a shock. There was a big difference between my mother and me, you know. Along with the domestic thing, I labored outside the home five days a week, sometimes 10 hours a day, just like a man. It all was so god-damned confusing. I was supposed to finish my education and didn't. All of my jobs were supposed to be temporary but wound up a *lifetime* of jobs, at work I never would have chosen. I'll admit; okay; so it was circumstances, and no one is to blame. But the original promises—some kept, some not, on each side—were based on the myth's premises; and, where you're concerned, I'm still caught between myth and reality. I haven't spent the last 11 years back at the grindstone to throw them into the wind at the drop of your hat."

"All I hear is you, you, *you*," he said. "You want it all your way. What about love? You don't love me."

"That's not so; I always will. But I'm not *in love* with you, that's for sure! I did

everything I could to help you get what you wanted. I wanted you to be what you wanted to be. And that's what I mean. Lately you've been keeping me on the 'phone for hours. I haven't heard you say one thing like, 'Gee, I hope I didn't disturb you; how's the writing going?'"

"O-KAY; I'll marry you for Christ's sake! What more do you want in the way of a commitment? And don't tell me you're afraid I won't respect you in the morning."

I knew I was looking for a one-sided insurance that couldn't be had, but giving free rein to deviousness almost felt like fun. "I can't be what I used to be; do I deserve to be crucified for it? The chimney bricks are falling; the big thorny locust tree here needs surgery again; my teeth, I am told, need \$1,200 worth of work. You are several thousand dollars in debt—"

"You can quit your job and write. There would be plenty of money—"

"What if there isn't? I know myself. I'd never be able to say, 'Too bad; you were mistaken; now you take care of it.' I'd be right back in the system and truly go crazy then, with *no* time for my own work as opposed to the small amount I carve out now. I don't gamble on future promises anymore, especially for *love*."

But my love for the First was not like any other. I always would feel a subject of his existence; he was family. When the Ultimate intimated once that he was looking for a place to stay, I didn't jump to offer him, with me. And I'd felt only a twinge of guilt then, compared to that at the sound of the First's telephone slamming into its receiver...

"So you think the First and you really might make it a second time around," Salome posed at breakfast. It was her way, resuming conversation with a rhetorical statement instead of a question. The french toast was gone but not its fragrance. I poured coffee from the carafe into both our cups. "Well, for one thing, he doesn't have a young man's ego anymore. Remember

the play, 'The Four Poster?' He and I are a lot like that couple now. For instance, y'know what he said to me the other day?"

"What?"

"He's not sure anymore it's wrong for women sometimes to 'fake' orgasm, or at least that it's anything a man should make a case about. And he admitted he was responsible somewhat for the way my life had gone. Question is, can he really live with what *I* need now, what he had in graduate school?—him taking care of details while I do my thing, treat me like a daughter?"

Salome held up a hand, "If a mother can hunch over a washboard—bedstead's too graphic—in sacrifice for a son, why not a father for a daughter? More to the point: if wife for husband, why not the opposite?"

The Ultimate had remarked in a phone the past week that he saw it as the First 'paying his dues'...

"Hello!"

"Hi."

"How are you?"

"Fine--pretty good actually."

"Husband still hanging around?"

"Well—yes. He's asked me again to remarry him."

I hadn't expected the Ultimate to be heartbroken. To be fair, at the beginning, he had said and I accepted that he couldn't promise anything. But I didn't expect what now he said next.

"Play your cards right; you're holding a royal flush. I'll still jump the lemon bush for you—that guy's not going to stop me! But you have to think about yourself, and now you can have the best of two worlds."

I knew precisely what he meant. "No, *thank you!* I did that once, a long time ago. It took years to scrape the guilt off my soul."

"But now you're more mature; you understand more. You'd see; it would be different this time."

Again, no thanks. The plague of it!—living in circumstances that go entirely against one's fundamental beliefs and nature...

"Did someone come in?" The Ultimate broke into what I wasn't saying.

"No...no."

"Want some company?"

It wasn't mere hesitation. So many things I might have said: *It's not because I've decided I am going to remarry, nor because I love you less than I have. But maybe the force that moves reality on all planes—that Spirit I often felt touched us, too—maybe It has something else in store for both of us...*

"Speak your mind," he said.

"I don't have a mind left."

"Well, I can't take any more of this."

*He* couldn't take any more? "I do love you," I said truthfully.

"I hear the words but that's all. Good bye and good luck."

My voice started to make a sound but couldn't form a word before he hung up. *Good bye and good luck?* That's not what one says to a genuinely loved friend! That's what someone "in love" says to the "lovee" who doesn't come across—doesn't matter what not with. Instantly I thought of everything else I might have said: *years of being available when you needed me...no way to reach you when I was in need...no strings, remember?--friends forever, remember?*

*Instead, two instances of ambivalence on my part, and you can't take it?—*

If the Ultimate had been the First and the First, the Ultimate, wouldn't it all be the same, with ME?...

"You were saying?" Salome prodded.

"Oh--I've probably said it already. The Ultimate's only dealt with the old-fashioned European girl, and he sustained *her* projections well because he's an old-fashioned European boy. It would be impossible for me to explain to him how our relationship was but a half-involvement, where only Eros and Eros met—"

"The affection current plugged into its perfect outlet." Salome crimped her lips but I wasn't sure whether it was against her pun or what she said next. "Odd, isn't it? If you weren't 'split' you probably wouldn't tolerate either of them."

I laughed because it sounded so ridiculous. Salome, looking away, didn't--as if she already knew how it had been when the Ultimate encountered the other-Me for the first time, the morning after his telephone call...

There'd been past times when with only 10 minutes notice I'd made a quick change through almost magical powers. This time, however, he showed up unexpectedly just as I was ending an all-night writing jag, face haggard, hair in shreds. The house stunk like a tobacco factory and looked nothing like a good little woman had been in evidence. I didn't put out the cigarette I was smoking. I held it between my teeth and talked around it. "You've never seen me like this before, but welcome to the den." I waved him in and turned, leaving the door open. He followed but didn't grab me in the usual fashion. "How's work going now?"

"Not good. My old adversary's become interim Archbishop and expects permanent appointment. He's putting on the pressure--wants me to 'work a different desk.'"

"Well, you're a nice person. You don't need to worry," his comment again precisely reflecting the degree to which he seriously reflected on my situation.

I hadn't brushed my teeth in well over 24 hours. *She*, barely able to let him look at her, wouldn't let him get near me. "Would you like a cup of coffee?" I asked.

"Uh, no—I can't stay; thanks. Just wanted to see how you were. I'll call you soon..."

I got up from the breakfast table and began collecting condiments and cups. "Too bad transcendence doesn't include forgetting 'what ifs,'" I said to Salome. "*What if* I had had different conditioning and indoctrination? *What if* birth control pills had been available, I'd been told I should use them guiltlessly, and hadn't become a mother in my teens? *What if*, prior to marriage, I'd had unbiased authoritative truth about the unjudgmentable differences between male and female? From current literature, and talking with my daughters, young women might be more knowledgeable now; but the anatomical and physiological issues haven't had much press. Finally, although the latercision may have made my life easier overall, it hasn't been a climax cure-all."

"Is that affecting current considerations, by any chance?"

I sidestepped. "There seems so much logic to the First and I getting back together--work out what we couldn't before, before we die. Two people who love each other remain the same to each other no matter how old they get. That can mean a lot--a doorway back to our younger selves. Something felt so right, sitting with him over a late lunch the other day, knowing onlookers were seeing what I often thought of others: a middle-aged couple— friends!--aging together acceptingly, contentedly—"

"Ahum," Salome broke in cautiously. "On the other hand, *I* know that you desperately

want out of the system, freedom to write. But what you're contemplating will take more than just a little patience and making the right sound at the right time. A transcended-I is subject to delusion too."

She was right. There could be no guarantee of permanent psychical union here: *a God of his Anima with the Madonna of my Animus? The Christ of my Anima with the Magdalene of his Animus?* My self-credibility was straining, to say the least, as when I heard myself saying to the Ultimate, "I'm not who you think I am," and, to the First, "I'm not who I used to be"....

Early the first Sunday of December, the kickoff-morning of The Season, I, asleep still, was unaware it was dawning exactly as had my and the First's last married Christmas together: crisp and sunny, perfect for a drive to the Christmas tree farm. In the eyes of the "one true Church," which would not recognize the intervening hiatus, our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary was approaching; but those immature archetypes, socked into survival in the very beginning and still lurking, had not met yet on the field of battle....

The clanging of the quaint black iron bell on the bungalow's front porch sounded more rude to me than merry; I wasn't expecting anyone, especially Him. I grabbed my robe.

One hand proffered a bouquet of red roses and white carnations, the other dangled a bag of doughnuts. "I think," I said, before he stepped over the threshold, "I just might kill you."

"That's not very nice," he replied, prancing to the kitchen in his lightfooted way, almost feminine in its containedness--surprising, always, from someone so tall. "Great!" he exclaimed, spying the jar on the chopping block shelf. "You've got some instant coffee. Want some?"

Within minutes, those two personae who *could* be eternal friends were having coffee and doughnuts at the kitchen table; and, following a typical spontaneous decision, they soon were

riding comfortably side-by-side along the river road to a Christmas tree farm. Together they chose a tree, cut it down, and hauled it home.

I brought the trimming boxes in from the shed and watched JC hang the old advent calendar in the dining room. I reached into the pocket bearing a white felt "1" and extracted a red and gold duck. "Remember this one?" I asked, clipping it to the green felt tree on the top half of the banner. "We got it at Cost Plus." Pocket two held the impish-looking Santa our older daughter had made when she was 11. "Find out what's in three," I said. "Now what's the date today—the 7th? That's how far we get to go."

It was our first private herald with the calendar, a tradition previously reserved for our daughters. I felt *Her* go all sentimental when JC's long finger fished the next pocket, and drew out the blue satin angel. I turned away while he clipped it to the tree. The chill morning air pulled at the freshly cut pine; the room reeked with Christmas fragrance, but I couldn't enjoy it. Was he right?—that, if I believed reconciliation truly was possible, I'd allow the physical into our current 'courtship?

That night it seemed I was going to give in; but even while disrobing I knew I couldn't go through with it. I had absolutely no desire for sex and I at that moment needed 'my man' (who is supposed to caringly know enough about me) to say, "No; I think we should wait. I can tell you aren't ready yet." And *She*, the one who would have done *anything* to keep her man, wasn't anywhere around.

The charade trailed after me the next morning as I pushed myself off of the sofa and went into the bathroom. JC squinted at me from the futon (yes; I let him have my bed), as I turned on the bedroom light to select clothing. "I'm sorry about last night," I said. "I forgot I shouldn't try to entertain anyone on a weeknight."

"That's O.K.," he replied. "I wouldn't say that I was entertained exactly."

I picked up the enormous lace-edged pillow (one of *her* handmade affectations) and threw it on top of him. "I thought you said you hadn't come over here to *be* 'entertained!'" I growled. "You don't understand!" Even as I commenced again to try to explain myself I knew I'd wind up a shrieking harpie. "Don't take it personally, for god's sake! You don't understand! How many times do I need to say what it's been like for me these past years? Back then, I thought I was supposed to do everything I'd seen my mother do, *seen my mother do*, do you hear?--provide my husband with starched brilliant white shirts and make spaghetti sauce from scratch, put up jams, save money sewing; keep the house sparkingly comfortably neat and clean, to say nothing about the garden!--flowers in the yard to cut for vases inside--be *everything* a husband and children didn't just need but *deserved!*

"I never again could do it," I acknowledged. "I can't go in and work eight to ten hours nonstop and have any grace left. I can't take the stress of high-paced business matters all day, then turn it all off and be a mistress at night!" Except there was a merciful element in it for me now. I was more the way he used to be when we were young, had a fight, and stayed up half the night. He'd go off with his unbroken identity, forget it, and be nourished in other ways. I, hunched over my machine, did *mea culpas* all day. Now *I* could push it aside, too...

"It's not easy for me to say..." I said it anyway, before he left. "I'm afraid I can't take care of a man, any man, anymore." I hated saying it, because the truth was twofold. The myth of Eros, which the young *i* loved as much as *She*, was dead forever; and "I" needed a lot more rest now just to get through a day of life.

I stopped at the door and looked him straight in the eye. "I need to know if you're really serious, about remarriage. Do you mean, absolutely for the rest of our lives?--to the death? I

need to know if you really understand that. If so, there's someone I've got to tell—

"Who?"

"A friend who's sustained me in recent years. I don't want to lose that friendship for no good reason."

"But I love you. I've told you I'll marry you. I think we can make it"....

"You know," Salome said, tucking her hands into the sleeves of her robe, "I think I finally am going through 'the change.' Lately it seems I go from hot to cold for no reason at all. Can't quite accept yet, however, being 'middle-aged'!" I looked carefully at her face. It was so; Dorothy Collinses we were not. Only a couple of years ago it seemed, we could have passed for thirty-five. Today there were fleshings where once there had been perkiness, and a little permanent pottiness to our midriffs.

I set our plates in the sink, added some detergent and ran hot water, then sat back down at the table. "What was that term you used a while ago? 'Affection current?'"

"Before talking about uniting an end-of-the-20th-century, 'traditionally'-conditioned woman's psyche, we need a model of what drives both mind and body. How about we use you as our example? You were born on a Sunday, right?" she began coyly.

"You needed to ask? 'The child born on the Sabbath Day is blythe and bonnie and happy and gay.'"

"How could I have forgotten? Well, while that sunny embryo was early in the womb, four or five months before the big day, a tip of the hormonal scale decreed it would exit in female form. As an infant, it was absorbed totally in bodily satisfactions--feeding, excretion, being stroked and so on. Body registered pleasure in the genital region, too, of course; but its

libido paths were unconnected."

"Explain *libido*."

"A Freudian term for the force of the sexual instinct. Freud characterized the first years of life as the period of 'infantile sexuality.' I prefer infant *sensuality*'—call it 'I.S.' I.S. libido doesn't discriminate between genders in the first years, when psyche receives its deepest unconscious impressions, critical to later relationships. The I.S. *attitude* is affection. Identification with, and dispositions toward genders, occurs between two and five, as the I.S. becomes subject to increasing mental activity. I.S. peaks at about age five, when the instinct for knowledge gathers force.

"Keep in mind that the I.S. libido life *remains in the Unconscious*. The reason I prefer my term to Freud's is because it's easier to delineate early influences on subjective sexual *aim* from the later objective sexual *drive*. It also offers neutral examination of Freud's purported 'castration complex.'"

"Purported?"

Salome sighed, a sure sign this wasn't a favorite part of her lecture. "I wonder whether that part of Freud's theory didn't originate from his personal history. It's reported his father had a mean nature and his mother was dotingly protective. Anyhow, based on the mother being a child's main nurturer, this is how his theory went:

"A boy unconsciously sexually covets his mother, sees father as his rival, resents him, and fears father may castrate him in revenge. The fear causes the boy to repress both the sexual desire for his mother and the hostility toward his father until, finally, he is forced to *identify* with his father—'a condition necessary to his own maleness,' Freud said. That quote stuck in my head because it's a cop-out, compared to what the theory required for a girl to resolve her

'castration complex,' the theorized female counterpart. First she had to exchange her original love object, taken also to be the mother, for her father. She made the exchange because of her 'disappointment' at having only a cavity and not a penis, which 'castrated' condition she blamed on mother. Then, because father had 'the valued organ she wished for,' she transferred her desire to him, thus to man in general. But even then she would continue to carry envy until desire for a penis was replaced by desire for a baby."

"Phew; convoluted reasoning that smacks of a pre-existing chauvinistic attitude of penis supremacy."

"Where's your Freud?" Salome asked, quickly finding the passage she desired when I brought from the shelf the book left over from college days. "Listen to this comment: '*In her childhood, moreover, a girl's clitoris takes on the role of a penis entirely; it is characterized by special excitability and is the area in which auto-erotic satisfaction is obtained*'. Well, he had that latter part right. However—and I quote—'*The process of a girl becoming a woman depends very much on the clitoris passing on this sensitivity to the vaginal orifice in good time and completely.*'"

"Neat. A girl became a woman when the clitoris abdicated to vaginal dominance, and she was ready to serve passivity!"

Salome nodded. "That transfer theory certainly suited the male domination of the time; but the castration complex demands particular consideration where Freud, himself, was concerned. If one's childhood self *had* experienced deep enough hostility toward the father, unconscious self-forgiveness might be found by ascribing an across-the-board condition; whereas, a positive stance reasonably was available. That is, such 'complex' might result *only if* I.S. currents were afflicted by obtuse infra-family environment. Instead, a universal negative

was established, one that *every* newborn supposedly would have to overcome."

I went to the sink and began to wash dishes. "It sounds as if I.S. parallels Reich's 'sexual ideation of the child,' which involves founding of adult attitudes."

"Fill me in on that."

"First, let's call Reich's term for biological energy 'Life Energy' or 'L.E.' He believed we register all of Nature directly through it--that all body chemistry, including mental activity, operates by virtue of it. If biological pulsing meets resistance in the body's 'energy household,' inhibiting or interfering to some degree with function, blockages in L.E.'s normal flow can cause various ills--"

"Both mental and physical--"

"Uh-huh; so Reich believed, depending on the degree of 'armoring' met, and how long it lasts." I returned to my seat at the table. "Take a classic Victorian 'hysteric,' for example: a woman completely uninformed about sex, who, as a developing girl, was inhibited completely from masturbating. As a young woman, she's saddled by allusions to male rapacity, pain of childbearing, and venereal disease. Sex was sacrosanct to marriage; woman servant to her husband. As L.E. accentuates along correspondent maturing pathways of her reproductive system, her urges and associated thoughts are natural; but there's no informed 'free' content in psyche to reconcile them with.

"She finally gets married; her husband equally is sexually ignorant; cumulative unreleased libido force eventually reaches a point where stifled psychically produced energy overcomes physical armoring, and she gradually begins to suffer emotional problems and/or physical ailments."

I could tell that Salome liked what she heard, because she was smiling at me like a

teacher does at a well-prepared student. "O.K.," she said heartily, "pour me more coffee and let's move on, using the I.S. and L.E. models we've drawn...."

"By age six, the affection current of that little Sunday-birthday girl has been uniquely conditioned, and psyche is beginning to associate gender identifications. Next is an intense period focused on acquiring knowledge, which lasts until puberty. On the surface it appears asexual; but it's a time of perception, experience and fantasy combining with I.S. content."

"I remember part of that process!" I couldn't help interrupting, "--those 'half-wonderings' that flit through Consciousness really fast and all those innocent silly grammar school jokes."

"Yes--the *latent* period, per Freud. Then, with onset of puberty, the diffused libido, which embraces the unconscious affection current, begins to gather to the sexual drive, where disaffecting influences would carry over. Finally, at maturity, the psychosexual neurological pathways are fixed."

"Okay, Salome. Let me summarize. I exited the I.S. period with my own unconscious, uniquely-developed affection/disaffectation potential. During the latent period other information--impressions, etcetera, cognated or not—passed through Consciousness and associated with unconscious content. Puberty ended with maturation of the reproductive system's pathways, and the fixing of the psychosexual nexus of libido L.E.—"

"All of which" Salome interjected, "had been amplified further by romantic myths and personal fantasies in concert with your specific nature. Then off went the Ego," Salome sailed her hand through the air toward me, "to bump into a love object upon which all desire, conscious and unconscious, would be projected--"

"And, learned too late!—the younger the person is, and/or the less either or both parties are self-realized, the more certain likelihood of failure in the marital psychological relationship.

Full circle.”

"Pretty much."

I thought I heard dejection. "Something wrong?"

Salome rubbed her eyes in a troubled way. "I don't want to give a 'know-it-all' impression. Understand, the fundamental elements of Classic Psychology still wait to be validated totally in recognized science, and we're skimming only the tip. Although Jung recognized the relation between physical and psychical force, he pretty much confined his work conceptually within psyche. Links between psyche and metabolic processes only recently have begun to be studied in depth, genetics also being involved.”

Salome's concern over her informal 'counseling' felt to me like my gynecologist's all-of-a-sudden wonder, whether he was allowing himself to go farther than professionally he ought. I put a hand over hers. "Don't worry. All you've done is help me draw some pictures against which my mind can self-observe. And look what we have to look forward to!— that glorious day when the real workings of the female mind/body complex will be fully revealed.”

She smiled ruefully. "I should confess I amended Jung a little. But I'm fool enough to think he would agree with me, because 'times, they *are* a'changin, Babe.' The Collective Unconscious *is* evolving. Thought unstrained by form *is* genderless; androgyny of mind *must* precede unity of psyche!" She sighed and touched the tabletop with her forehead. "I sound nuts."

"I think I understand: Consciousness Ever-Virgin?"

She lifted her face and looked wistfully at me. "If anyone understands, you do... *God The Father, Mary The Mother, Jesus The Son...* eventually it's *got* to appear in the form of *The Daughter...*"

I stood up and kissed her cheek. "And I think you're *It!* Thanks for elaborating the difference between 'being in love' and healthy narcissism."

"We *have* thrown some light on the two types of self-love, haven't we?--the subjective, unconscious 'mirror-imaged' one, and a fully-cognated, integrated self-forgiving one. Oh, and one last thing—"

"What?"

"As to that business about the First," Salome continued, "get a copy of Jung's essay, 'Marriage as a Psychological Relationship.' He gives a brilliant description of instinct's initial role in marriage and the way individual unconscious life determines how much real relating a couple can hope to achieve. It's all about how their primary life enterprise originates with projected expectations, to progress from a passionate *I want* stage to the *I must* stage. Only after the unrelenting hustle and bustle of procreation and child-rearing is over, Jung says, is the true work between their psyches forced to begin—"

"Where the *ideal* beginning would be, both parties being 'grown up' enough to mediate instinct with foreknowledge of their individual selves?"

"Yes. Although Jung noted that, even in the best of marriages (I'll add--based on your and my current Collective Unconsciousness--'marriage' whether between same or opposite genders), there are bound to be some differences. The worse scenario is if, at bottom, a couple's relationship rests solely on tradition and custom. On the other hand, if sufficient unconscious mutuality carries through, possibility does exist for a couple to amend unconscious forces that arrest individuated friendship--a chance that each of them, and consequently the relationship, can transcend. *If*, that is, they've got the endurance for it—"

"Hey!" She jumped up and dropped her coffee cup in the sink. "It's almost one o'clock,

and I was going to run into Macy's. Don't you have things to do too? Aren't you taking off for Mexico soon?"

"Two full weeks of annual leave, fourteen whole days away from the Diocese!"

"It'll do you good to get away from both of *them*, too," she said, leaving the kitchen.

"Question is..." I finished it although Salome already was out of earshot. "Will I get myself away *in time*?"

"I must be able to distinguish myself from others. Relationship can only take place where this distinction exists. But although the distinction may be made in a general way, normally it is incomplete, because large areas of psychic life still remain unconscious. As no distinction can be made with regard to unconscious contents, on this terrain no relationship can be established; here there still reigns the original unconscious condition of the ego's primitive identity with others....

"A more or less instinctive choice might be considered the best from the point of view of maintaining the species, but it is not always fortunate psychologically, because there is often an uncommonly large difference between the purely instinctive personality and one that is individually differentiated. And though in such cases the race might be improved and invigorated by a purely instinctive choice, individual happiness would be bound to suffer. (The idea of 'instinct' is of course nothing more than a collective term for all kinds of organic and psychic factors whose nature is for the most part unknown.)

"Unconsciousness results in non-differentiation or unconscious identity. The practical consequence of this is that one person presupposes in the other a psychological structure similar to his own." ...[S]ex life, as a shared experience with apparently similar aims, further strengthens the feeling of unity and identity. (In) this state...extolled as a great happiness ("One heart and one soul")... ..(its) transcendent force obliterates and consumes everything individual..., thus both are robbed of their freedom and made instruments of the life urge."

(*The Portable Jung*, "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," pages 166/167.)

Despite boxing away research and draftings of *A Child's Book of Light*, it seemed Psyche would not be at peace until Mind could see a complete picture. From somewhere in Brain's labyrinths the puzzle, and the dreaming, continued....

*I have in my possession a "device" which permits me to communicate with that 'other' side but I do not want others to know, for they are dubious--outright disgusted--by my tenacity to*

*a real possibility of separate existence. I receive a message that initially does not register; the surrounding distracting disbelief inhibits attention. However, before the distraction is enough to awaken reactive mind completely, I receive the thought that somehow this “device” must be affixed to, find its usefulness through, my keyboard...the written word...*

*An extensive narrow row of “outer” steps along which “I” must carry two separate “assemblages.” There is something subtly ‘mechanistic’ about it all. I am being spoken to in Spanish about the size of “my” apartment—“my” upper quarters, the point being that the lower apartment/”quarter”—the one directly beneath “mine”—is un cuarto (one fourth?) less. A larger “cuarto” at the end and beneath has been “absorbed” into its neighboring quarter...*

*“Hanging squares”...images of black on white...”water on back doesn’t come through as water”...*

*A large empty room of which three sides present themselves, vivid yellow on the upper halves, vivid turquoise on the lower. Free-standing in the center is a partition in which are placed small, half-moon-shaped “windows” of rose-tinted glass, through which the yellow and blue do not register....*

Upon awakening, the first dream felt like encouragement against self-doubt. The second and third definitely involved attempts to describe avenues of a ‘solid’ quantum grid *vis-à-vis* electromagnetic and atomic conveyance, and the last, theories of mosaical distribution of retinal color cells as opposed to superimposition. Stubborn Mind asked again, isn’t the visible spectrum, like the entire electromagnetic scale upon which it plays a tiny fugue, an unbroken line measurable only in secondary reactions? *A cone is a cone is a cone and they all end in a point*, I thought, before I fell again into sleep....

*I am shopping at a Mexican tienda and hold up to the light a 'small-checkered,' transparent, organdy-like fabric, which I see has small angular "snags." Stretching the fabric to its tautest "tells me" that when "furled" some difference exists in the action of the medium through it...*

*I am standing in front of a mirror. Another person stands behind me, off to the right. Facing my own reflection I shift my eyes, only, to the other person's figure; and the 'third eye' notices the limitens of the 'double eye'. There I 'awaken' to find my eyes sealed shut. Try as I might I cannot open them. I leave my bed and go into the bathroom. As I turn to the mirror both eyes open; and, although the room is pitchblack, I can see them, open, in the mirror. Only the right one seems important. In it is a brightly shining light, as if far behind the pupil. Its incandescent reflection off the mirror seems to be a "square" "within me."*

*Before a chance to ponder that reflection of light when there is none, my eyes seal again. I make my way to the kitchen, turn on the tap and try to wedge my eyes open with my fingers, sprinkling water into them. I am beginning to consider the fact that I might never get them open again....*

*Water was first to seize association in recall, visions of alternating quarkian compositions of hydrogen and oxygen slivering through weighty grid. The "only the right eye" finally made a point; long had I speculated why humans were divided into "left-dominant-" and "right-dominant-eyed" beings, noting that of each pair of eyes one appears set back farther—received impulses by each eye isn't simultaneous? Lastly came the thought that perceiving perception is eyeless. The night's dreaming, however, wasn't over....*

*Water and peaking waves...small square sponges tumbling.... "Walking" through water; the surface underneath, ridges and valleys: "walking" on ridges narrowly encased between*

*pointed waves.... Concavities and convexities; meshed fretwork interlaced with multiple points and multiformed shapes; 'my' room is on the 64<sup>th</sup> floor...eight times eight...steps and a "vehicle"...a walker and a vehicle--Boris Karloff? No...car aloft! ...Orson Welles? NO! Sun wells!—*

*I am introduced to "Luce Walker," who opens her mouth but no sound comes forth, only a little interrupted static. A poem springs: the car is light; the path it travels is straight; 'I' am sound; for passage 'I' must wait—*

In the split second between the dream world and this, as I reawakened--out of that nowhere--came the question, "Do you get the pattern now?"

NO! I answered emphatically. *Not yet!*

Another week passed; another Saturday: picking up the remnants of the week's costumes, pressing and rehangng them in the closet, mending a skirt hem that has lost some thread. Tonight I see the Greek. Not because he has asked. I have a question to put to him relative to "Children of Logos," the book centered on Jesus and the Magdalene.

He's surprised to find the screen door hooked. "Anybody home?"

"Yes...I'm here." I pushed the hook from its eye.

"I brought you a pillow." It was needlepoint, light pink roses on teal blue, the color of the lamp shade I'd told him I was going to make.

"I know what you're trying to do, sweetheart," he said, once I had him on the sofa with the Greek-English interlinear *New Testament* on his lap. He placed a palm on the open page of the book. "Don't get me wrong, but you won't find a woman *here*."

I hadn't asked him to find something that wasn't there. I wanted to know exactly what a certain original passage said--he was, after all, as Greek as Greek can be, and had studied Socrates to boot.

At my insistence he settled back on the sofa, sank his thick neck onto ample chest, and rested the book at chin level, muttering the Greek words as he translated. "It says, Mary, Christ's mother, Mary of Clophas, and Mary of Magdala are standing together at the foot of the cross.... Then Christ says...." His voice trailed off. "...to his mother, 'See your son,' and, to the student, 'See your mother'—" he stopped abruptly.

He read and reread silently a minute, until finally I couldn't wait. "It's the word, *student*, isn't it? It doesn't signify a *male* person?"

The Ultimate seemed truly perplexed but answered honestly. "The 'student' has to be the Magdalene."

I didn't want the point won too easily. "Not necessarily?"

"But she is the only other one mentioned."

"I realize it's the only conclusion possible, relating that passage directly to the previous sentence's enumeration of Marys. But for argument's sake, say it was mentioned that other, unnamed disciple-students were standing there. Even in that event, the word *students* wouldn't denote that all of them were males?"

"Correct."

"And the last sentence?" I asked. "Is 'male' inferred, there?—where the 'student' thenceforth, at Christ's request, takes over care of his mother as if she were 'his' own?"

"No--that 'his' refers to the masculine-form noun, 'student,' not the gender of the person who *is* the student"....

A short time later mind was inclined to think, *What a beautiful child might have been made this night.* I--conscious that week of a brief return of Nature's forceful influence, and although the uterusless body had no bed for the living image of spirit that willed itself through it—thought, *Spring's come again, that's all....*

It was an admixture of psyche that knelt before him to tie his shoelaces, a time-honored ritual. I raised up between his outstretched knees and laid my head against his chest. "I know you have to leave, but just another minute?—I need to talk with you."

"What do you want to say?"

I was tongue-tied a few moments. "Well, if I've seemed distant with you of late, it isn't because of you. It's because of my life. Sometimes—" I let him stand, "—sometimes, I just want certain things, things maybe only a woman would--like, after a special time, having my man near me all night."

"Don't be foolish; if you don't choose your husband, someone will come along," he replied.

"OH, NO!" I exclaimed in a rasped whisper, dismayed how his words shattered the last of my archetypical embroideries.

"Now you can have it all," he went on. "Your children will have their father again, and your grandchildren, their grandfather." He spoke as if it had been decided; I felt like I was going to cry. The thought was reaching surface: this truly was the end of *them*—not me and the Ultimate; *her* with 'him.'

"Look at these hands." I held them up. "See the gnarls beginning at the joints? There's so much left I want to do with them, while I still can!" It was then, that I cried...

Next morning I decided I'd best be making a needed water pipe repair at the bungalow. *The Ultimate might remember last night for other reasons*, I thought. For me, however, it forever would mark 'the Word in the flesh' embracing "Yeshu's" concept of spiritually genderless consciousness. I wondered whether, had I gone on about Mary of Magdala and the "beloved" disciple being one and the same (the person who had laid lips along Jesus' ear and asked, because Peter was afraid to, "Who's the one who's doing to do it?"), would the Ultimate (as "macho" as he was Greek) have accepted *that*? Raking leaves later, Mind concocted a conversation between Jesus and 'the Mag,' as they relaxed in a little celestial garden...

*She: Well thank goodness some truths, at any rate, are beginning to come out, from scholarly correlations between the Naj Hammadi texts and the skimpy Canon--like Qumran's and the old one: grammar, forms of consonants, upper and lower case print, syntax, to say nothing of the rendering accounts through various tongues and accents!*

*He: Add linguistic changes in southern Canaan and Late Bronze-written sources of the educated bureaucratic elite, whereas, the language of the earliest sources was of non-elite, dialectical village regions. "Canaan" became characterized as descended from Ham because of Egypt's long ancient domination—*

*She: (interrupts) And then that change in terms, from "Hebrews" in Genesis to "Israelites" after the exodus! And, after David, the struggle between the states, with Judah's survival and emergence of the term, "Jew?"*

She falls thoughtful....

*We went away—I, John, Andrew, and your mother, as you know, to Ephesus—she, mercifully, before Stephen was laid to rest, that is, what was left of him. Peter spent some time there, too, before going east. That was before Saul—I mean, Paul, his name being changed—*

*He: North by northwest?*

*She laughs.*

*He: John never would have got his book written, would he?--if you hadn't badgered him.*

*She: "Badgered's" not a very nice word, Sire. But, if you mean I wanted to live to see it written, and pressured him to be his scribe (as the Latins called it, "amanuensis"), I'll fall to that.*

*He: Was he the one to leave out the 'anointing' episode, or was it you?*

*She: He did. I believe it hadn't anywhere the effect on him, at the time, as it did on me. He wasn't aware of the humility it caused me. Not the act, for God's sake; never any of my acts...*

*( Two thousand years, she still was capable of feeling on the defensive, but conscious of avoiding a point of overspeaking. She smiles that way that indicates willingness to make light of things...)*

*You know how I feel about the reputation I got saddled with. Good thing you came along--the perfect therapist for me--waved your magic wand, and caused six--or was it seven--*

*He: Why not eight?*

*She: O.K., eight—eight ugly demons, to scramble out of me. I always wanted to write a note from here to whoever cooked up that one and send it by angelic messenger. Have her appear dressed in gossamer sheaves in a bright burst of fire in a dried up old bush, point a gnarled finger at him and say, commandingly, WRITE!--'cause Mary wants to know: did the demons come out of her eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth?*

*He: "That's only seven."*

*She: Well, you know the eighth!--but don't you dare say it. (She can't help but laugh at his silent trump) Yet I do believe eight is correct, because, I truly was mentally neuroticized, politically polarized, spiritually paralyzed, publically unanalyzed, personally victimized, privately dichotomized, audibly antagonized, and perceptually sexualized,...*

“I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE!”

I needed a cigarette badly but had none at seven Monday morning when I yelled, threw a new pantyhose package across the room, and then clapped my hand over my mouth because I was afraid the neighbors had heard.

I stopped at the 7-11 for cigarettes on the way to work and bought a cup of coffee too, while Psyche's branches shook out all the monkeys of Memory, like how the Countryman acted when we hit Huehuetenango. *You make the decision this time*, he intimated; *you hustle us a room, steer us around*. In that godforsaken place on the other side of the southeastern Mexican border, where semblances of sidewalks were slimy mud and every dark doorway looked the same, the Countryman decided to stop taking the hit.

Until then, no part of me had considered that he had been. I'd believed *I* was doing all the favors; after all, *I* had some money, he, little; and the law and every dope-hustling bastard between Texas and Oaxaca weren't after *me*. I hadn't appreciated, however, how badly I had *needed* to be taken over. When the chips fell at El Castillo, I could have handed Senior S. the money, papers notwithstanding, and taken the chance all by myself—a truth I only now could allow. No; the Countryman did not turn out to be the man I fantasized. No; he didn't turn to me, when the interpreter gave his scam, and say, "It's O.K., sweetheart—remember? We're in this together; don't lose your nerve now. Look at how far you've come. Have faith! Give the man

his money and let's get back to work."

But it can't be copped by saying the JC the Countryman *lied*. When he showed up at the castle in that battered Volkswagen, I needed a buddy and probably would have taken King Kong. And he didn't *make* any promises; he only said "maybe," and only once about marriage. When I told him my republic fantasy, I took reticence for acquiescence, that's all.

On the same hand, I answered a hearty "Yes!" in '54 when JC the First asked, "How would you like to come with me while I work on my PhD.?" Not his fault, my education and intellectual development was arrested by motherhood and marriage. Not his fault, that he perceived me as an adjunct, the working wife choosing to give all creativity and passion to the domestic side of life, as perforce I succumbed to it. As he went on to become successful in his profession and each of his individual successes put me farther down the scale, how could he comprehend what I couldn't articulate?—the failure of the soul to attain an identity it couldn't describe because it hadn't had the chance to form it? The most for which I legitimately might fault him was, not encouraging me to risk the rest, to develop it.

I knew when we divorced—predictably, just about the time the kids' needs peaked—it was time for me to enter the crucible. Difference was, I had to do it *alone*. But who could judge the real tradeoffs there?—especially in that I probably wouldn't have grown at all, if culture and tradition *had* managed to keep us yoked. Ensuing life may have become 'messy,' but at least we weren't sentenced to plod together niggardly and naggingly to the grave. Working to reclaim an original self, I found how bereft my mind had been, conditioned in one dyed-in-the-wool historical form of woman, and how body and mind together had functioned in consequence of it.

Psyche still was striving to re sew a new quilt from torn patches between Consciousness and Unconsciousness, integration forcing me to acknowledge and accept a Mind made to want it

two ways. It would be no one's fault but *my own*, if I let myself into a situation where I was tempted again to gainsay *any* of it.

The 7-11's clock showed 10 minutes to spare before hitting the freeway. I took the lid off of the styrofoam cup and lit my first cigarette. Rolling down the car window, I was surprised by recall of a flitting fragment of another, previously unrecalled night's dream....

*A runged ladder leading down. The First pointed out danger, but I felt no need to be concerned with risk because of the absence of desires. I stood, neutrally, awaiting a thought I knew was coming:* there was nothing I needed do, ever again, to prove myself to a man.

7-11's clock clicked to 7:40. *Now was the time....*

I took some coins from the car console, pushed open the door and went to the telephone box.

"Hi, honey," JC answered. "I just tried to call you."

"Look. If all you really want is a wife and will help me be a writer, I'm willing."

"Deal!" he said.

"I can wear my hair in a bun—you won't care?"

"I'll love it. Come over after work."

"No way. It's going to be done right this time or not at all. We are not going to begin living together until every single detail is worked out. And you know I'll be gone a couple of weeks."

"Okay. But we *are* going to do it, aren't we?"

"I'm going to try my damnedest. That's all I promise."

Slamming the gearshift into reverse, I thought, if *I'm going to give myself away, it might as well be to my husband*. Besides, it was time to find out once and for all: not what

Love was; what it was *not*.

Next Monday, the day before my Mexico flight, I left the Diocese early and took a detour on the way home. The First was waiting for me, sitting on the back porch stair of the country farmhouse he rented, *Who's sneaking out from under the stairway?* rolling out the window from the kitchen radio.

I followed him inside to the living room and dropped into an easy chair. "Got any coffee? Instant's okay." I kicked off my shoes every bit as grateful as when the heels were two inches higher on those pointed torturers I wore in our 'old' days. I closed my eyes; there was that funny feeling, like inflammation, in my lower right side...

*Burning ovary?—whatever..., I thought. But I'm not sick; just a middle-aged woman who's done one complete tenure in life, feeling if I'm going to salvage any of what's left of my mind I need to get out of the Diocese once and for all--*

JC put a squat Mexican cup on the table beside my chair and spoke just as my fingers reached its handle. "Watch out; those cups get really hot in the microwave—"

"OH!" My fingers already had touched it. "That *is* hot. Maybe you're not supposed to put clay into a radar oven."

"What the hell's a 'radar' oven?"

"An electronic version of Reich's 'orgone box?'" I quipped and immediately changed subjects. "I didn't get in to see the doctor today. The doctor's sick."

"Doctors aren't supposed to get sick," he joked.

"Just like, quote, 'secretaries!' *We* must be *at our desk*, eight a.m. every single morning, usually through the noon hour, and--as to quitting time—" I stopped my tongue. *Don't waste*

*these good moments....*

The music from the kitchen changed. "I always loved the Stones," I said instead.

"Me, too," JC replied. "Hey! Want to stay here tonight? We can go to your place first and get whatever support system you need. You can dye your roots; do whatever you feel you need to—"

"I'm not going to dye my hair," I said with some chagrin. "*Forget* that silly comment I made the other day."

"Let's see...what would be the equivalent for someone like me, who's going bald? Put some fertilizer on my head and grow some hair? Who gives a damn if you've got gray hair?"

"My current 'boss'."

"Your *boss* cares what your hair looks like?"

"That's just an analogy, because of a comment made at my last 'merit review'—*you might try to put a little more lilt in your voice,*" I mimicked snidely. "It seems like what's wanted is a 55-year-old woman's experience and skills, with a 20-year old innocent's charm." I set down my coffee cup and turned to squarely face him. "Look... You claim that you love me. Now, last week you said—with that typical ease, I might add, that your status confirms—you said, you didn't want to live according to someone else's terms. So...how is it?—somehow, when it gets to *me*, my not wanting to live on *your* terms denotes I don't *love* you! Does that make any sense?"

"I thought everything was going to be okay," he hedged. "Then, when finally you agreed to make love, you acted as if you had an orgasm."

"I've told you I did that for your benefit but on second thought it probably was more for mine. Do you mean to tell me you've never provided a service for a woman you cared about

when your entire mind/body wasn't enthusiastic, necessarily, about doing it?--not even *once*? Think about it." I saw that he was. "Now....did it mean you didn't love her?"

"I'm confused. I don't know what to believe anymore."

"Neither do I. Please understand, in the one protracted relationship other than ours that I've had, whether I had orgasm never came up. I never did and he never asked. I reaped some companionship and, in-between, took care of it myself. It'll take a while, I guess, before I can relax enough again to pursue climax with a partner. What I believe I do know, about you and me, is that things other than sex are moving us back together."

The very next moment the First was imparting a fact of interest to him about the Mexican revolution, one of his favorite topics. His change of subjects, whether for purpose or from boredom, didn't offend me. *Au contraire*, it, too, signaled, why waste good time now, jawing about that? Scientist Crick remarked once that the brain in under 10 seconds can process millions of parallel and simultaneous communications. While I listened, mine privately mused...

*The sexual anatomical differences seem clear enough; the woman in Hite's study summed it up best, crude language or no: "Sex in the best of all possible worlds? My clitoris would be in my vagina, for Christ's sake, so I always could come when I fuck!" What, however, were the full effects on sexuality of the female mind/body as vessel of procreation--seemingly a physiological and psychological, unconscious, inborn, cellular knowledge? I remembered Marie Bonaparte's quote about how "Nature had failed" Woman, because of her "far greater frequency of defective adaptation to the purely erotic function."*

*Had Nature presented any other 'failures' in adapting organisms to function effectively in their environment? Where human relations are concerned, isn't it us, not Nature, who fail by imposing ambiguous criteria of 'perfect' functioning on ourselves? I recalled my surprise, to*

*find sex every bit as enjoyable (if not more so?) when I was menstruating. Ever discussed? Yet it seemed such a simple solution for couples undesiring pregnancy, to restrict intercourse to the onset of the woman's period, when conception most certainly could not occur. In-between, there were other ways of mutually achieving satisfaction. Could men live with that? Further, in keeping with the Catholic church's theme of sanctity of intercourse for conception and objection to mechanical birth control, why doesn't It preach that possibility??*

I hoped Salome was right, that Humankind's collective consciousness one day will transcend to a complete distinction of qualities from form, and fully embrace 'feminine Logos' and 'masculine Eros' irrespective gender of body. I could imagine Man as much relieved of awkwardness as Woman; but a long interval of our history would need to pass before such new valuations took hold. Future's dispensations, however, can't cure current conflicting emotions; and I had to finish life in the Present.

I picked up my keys from where I'd tossed them on the end table. At that point, a comment from the First dammed the stream of consciousness. "Ever hear the story about the 'Evil Demon'?" Instantly, private personal drama receded from the world's perimeters. Just as with the free Eroses, body on body, for the free Logoses, nothing that went before mattered—mind on mind, Time itself ceases to exist.

"'Evil Demon'? I don't think so."

"From Descartes... Suppose there's an evil monster who, every time you add 2 plus 3 is 5, something like that, the Evil Demon takes away numbers. He's a maleficent force that can make reality appear to you as something it's not. Suppose that the world really is different from how you see it."

In the past I would have been hesitant, thinking he was driving at something harder than

it sounded. Instead, I answered promptly, "The world very well *is* different than we perceive. A lot of people may never stop to contemplate it but, among those that do, who would believe the world really is what it appears to be?"

"Only some old academics like me care about Descartes' mind exercises, and his suggestion that we might be deceived--that the world is radically different than human beings think."

"If I have understood what I've read," I supplied, "the 'East' has been on to that since before Descartes. Just today I was reading *The Way to Buddha Dharma*—"

"You really have changed," he interrupted. "You used to be a...," he tilted his head. "How do I say this nicely? You used to be a..." *Bless his heart!* I thought. In the past he would have said *woose*—"well...you're a different person now. You're more, you're more—"

"Assertive?" I suggested.

"Yes! Assertive—"

"And you don't like it."

"You're right!" he agreed cheerfully.

I slipped on my shoes. "I'm going now."

"Positive?"

"Yes."

"Okay...if you think so." He paused and looked away; I knew that had taken some effort, too. He followed me to the door.

I stopped just outside and turned around. "You take care of yourself while I'm gone, okay?"

"Oh. Sure. Have a good trip."

"I'll try," I answered and then saw him looking inquisitively hard at the inner door jamb.

"What is it?"

"I don't think you want to know."

*A cockroach?* I thought at first. *But, no, not here; that was Mexico--*

"A baby black widow spider, living in a crack."

"As long as it stays in the crack I don't care," I said.

"They need to live around wood, you know."

"I know," I replied, thinking, *you should know that I know. Remember?—they hung around where we lived in Colorado, your first teaching job. One of the faculty wives got bit one night, inadvertently sitting on one in the dark when she got up to feed a baby.* "They run away; they don't attack," I offered instead, knowing that prolonging conversation is the loner's way of holding on to companionship. I looked at him. He was looking down toward the porch deck and my eyes followed suit. "Nice shoes," I said.

"These are the ones I told you about. They have arch supports. They're the only kind I can wear now." I remembered his pointed leather boots of our "Hippie" days, when we got all dressed up and went to see "Hair;" but I couldn't remember the last time I'd seen those. He'd packed his own clothes when we parted.

I backed down the first step. "Well, still think you need a housekeeper?"

He nodded and came out to me. We kissed like husband and wives do when they're leaving each other for the day. "Be careful," he said.

I waved from the car and he waved back. The old two-story clapboard house, its peeling paint obscured by the sky deepening to night, rose behind him grandly. Taking Pole Line Road south, I conjectured what it might be like, to be the 'Lady' of the manor--different from Amato's

Josefina, who had said, tapping her index finger against breastbone, “Oh, my husband may have a female favorer or two about town, *pero, yo soy la duena!*”—I am mistress on the land!”

I imagined stretching a bit in the morning, before dispensing domestic chores, after which the 'vagabonda' could write her stories. *Be careful*, Salome had intimated. *You might find out who the real I is, this time.* However, I at that moment, oblivious to unconsciousness and the gender-combatant it could make me, was thinking how change requires closures. As Dottie crossed the causeway, mind's eye searched the bungalow. The needlepoint pillow already had been drycleaned, and given back to the Ultimate for his mother--*one item left...*

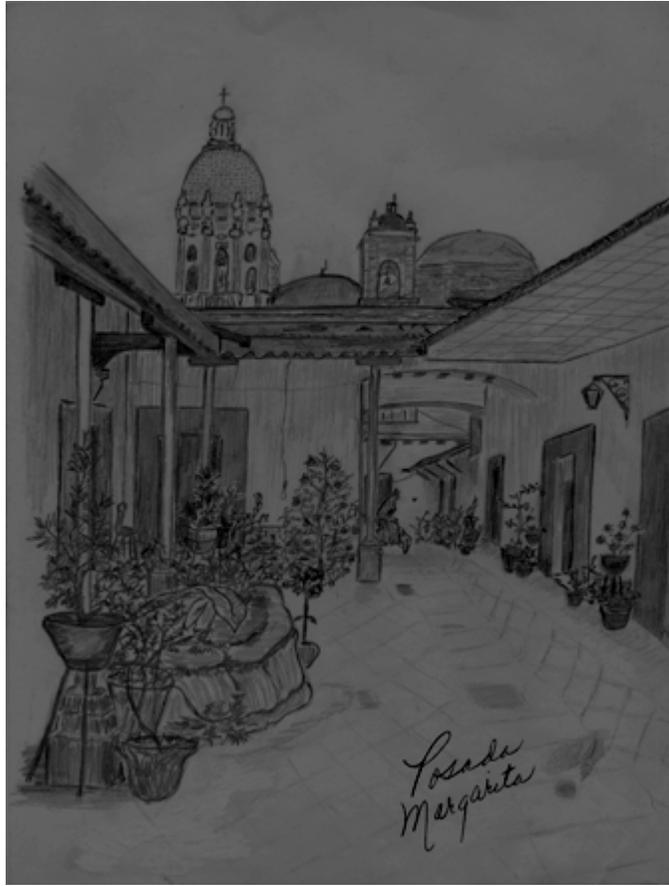
At home I went straight to the cupboard under the kitchen sink. The pearly-glass, torso-shaped bottle was at the very back. I had to move the shoe polish cans before my fingers could circle its slim neck. Swiftly, without thinking: out the kitchen door under a clear sky to the trash barrel. Before let go, the bottle caught the three-quarter moon's light. The Last JC had been right, not a drop of the trapped water evaporated. I replaced the barrel cover, sat on the back stoop and reached into my pocket for a cigarette and matches.

The backyard grass was gray under the moonlight. *Memories...*all the once-felt lines heard as well as said.... *Not much significance left, is there, to what a body's done*, Mind concluded, *when you take it away and Love's still there.* I field-stripped the cigarette, locked the kitchen door, and dropped the filter into the wastebasket, noting the kitchen's pristine condition. I took my nightgown from the hook inside the bedroom's perfectly ordered closet; in the bathroom, everything was in its proper place. *Enjoy it while it lasts!* I thought toward my face in the mirror, mouth full of toothbrush. *More than a few adjustments will be necessary, M'am, if you remarry....*

I turned out the bathroom light and easily made way into bed without turning on any

other. My mind was as blank as possible as I focused into darkness, when a peculiar ‘clear like a voice’ erupted: *Who are you, My Darling? Who are you?* I gave it back. Who are *you*, my darling? Who are *you*?

*Also you*, it replied. And I felt I was beginning to know ‘him,’ that other genderless spirit of me which, if matched by form, could have manifested Man in all his roles: father, brother, son, lover--counterpart of this form-determined other that had been mother, daughter, sister and lover. I wondered what ‘we’ might have done—two beings between whom nothing is too sacred or too profane, speaking without reservation, laying before each other all thought, doubt, sin and virtue, and who—left with only each other, the only survivors on the surface of the globe--those united I’s would have to decide: Should they?.... Would they?—with mutual will embrace all history and with full faith in themselves, and receive Life anew?



The artist's garret at Oaxaca's Posada Margarita had been gutted. Its old rafters lay on the roof of the laundry shed beneath. Beyond where it had stood, Santo Domingo loomed in full majesty against empty blue sky. *The writer* went into a small state of shock: her room!--gone?

Dona Margarita, the Posada's owner, had made ready instead one of the high-ceilinged rooms off the courtyard, complete with welcoming flowers in a vase on the vanity. I unpacked, hung the clothing in the armoire, and took the portable typewriter from its case. I set it on the small table at the window, placed books and notes beside it, and sat on the bed.

The writer was mooning over the loss of her garret, while a seeming new entity in mind was wondering what in the hell *she* was here for. "I" had thought there was a plan: rent a car, see the Mayan ruins at Tulum and Bonampak, and write. However, as classical psychologists cautioned (even those at theoretic war with each other), one can't accomplish anything without a dedicated Ego; and neither of the two sub-"I's," who shared the same one, could comprehend total burn-out.

At that point, it may have served both of them well to re-contemplate Jung's theory of 'synchronicity,' to which both had given great lip service. Being led to El Castillo had been but the beginning, intervening JC's, sound experiences.

The destruction of the garret, however, was a trumpet call for renunciation--identity now fully rent by demolition of the garret as surely as the veils of the temple. A new tiredness of both body and mind seeped into the vacuum.

I considered walking to the plaza for a cup of coffee at one of my favorite haunts--



No urge, to put on a colorful skirt; no desire to stroll the sunlit zocalo of memory...*of being led to the Posada the first time by a young government worker, who offered it while he visited relatives in the States. Except he didn't go right away, because the government's cash flow ran dry; and I wound up sleeping on the floor the first night, awakening to ants crawling over me...*

*'83—back to further Renacimiento's Spanish translation; singing Verdi with an expatriot Italian artist, in town from his jungle village life for an exhibit.... Late-night dialogues with young students gathered at El Sol y La Luna coffee house, all caught up in the magic of crossing paths...*

*The vacationing out-of-uniform priest at Monte Alban, with whom I later was denied to see again, when I knocked on the immense doors of the rectory at Mexico City's Basilica.... The aged lawyer-poet Alejandro Dozal and wife Luz, who treated me like a daughter....*

The room's tall doors to the courtyard stood open. My jointly stupefied middle-aged personae looked out to the patio. Not a plant or pot different but things not as tight as they used

to be; less determination in Dona Margarita's step. Lucy was gone, no decent cook to replace her. Nattie, the laundress, with another fatherless baby, smiled less over the tubs, and everywhere the stink of the latest peso devaluation.

A blond headed woman stuck her head in the door. "Hi!--heard there was another American here." Her name was Judith and in her backpack she carried a unique Tarot deck--a 'hip' version lent to her by, as she described him, a highly unusual young man. "Maybe you're interested in looking them over?" she offered. "I'll get them back later."

When Saturday's nagging sense of purposelessness dragged into Sunday, I did a reading to pass time. NO TRIP WITHOUT THE TRIPPER, the penultimate card concluded. MESSAGES MONDAY, announced the last. It was true! The "tripper" had vaporized; and, Monday, the sky fell--a storm of such magnitude it rendered hundreds homeless in the poorer neighborhoods.

Caught at the zocalo I lost my shoes, wading the intersection at the northeast corner. Barefoot I pushed against the drenching torrent, up Alcala to La Bastida and the Posada's door, as lightning over Santo Domingo pitched its dome's blue and white tiles into daylight relief.

"Don't you think you should take a shower?" Dona Margarita's young niece truly sounded worried. "When it rains like this, *muy feo*—much evil—descends." Fortuitous advice--it was the last of the hot water; next day, there was no water.

Tuesday I felt sick, visited the airline ticket office, and the next day took 'us' home. "I" felt like *no* one. All "I" knew was that "I" had a lot of editing back there for which--like or lump it by one, the other, or both of 'them' --the next week would be better used....

**Part Three**  
**SHE AND JC**

**1990-1997**

I put on my robe and barretted back my hair (it's that lifeless limpness, not the gray, I dislike), walked out to the farmhouse living room, and said, "Want to call a brief truce for breakfast?"

JC didn't look at me and took another drag on his cigarette. Not the *only* thing bothering me; but he wasn't smoking at all before, and part of our deal was supposed to be that he would help me quit. Instead *he* again was smoking, and more than I.

"No," he said finally, keeping his eyes on the Dolphins as they massacred the Browns.

"OH-kay," I said.

"I'd prefer a longer truce," I heard, halfway to the kitchen. I turned on my heel and walked back to the doorway. "At least through lunch," he finished.

It made me laugh but not much.

He stood up. "Come here," he pointed in front of him. "Stand right here."

"So *you* can kick *me*?"

He growled, as he is wont to do when he feels the lion of the den is being dished more than he should be. He followed me to the kitchen, limping. I ignored it.

"You want to see where you kicked my leg yesterday?" he asked.

"No."

"It's got a big bump on it. I'd never kick you like that."

"You deserved it." He growled again.

"You kept evading my question," I said nicely. You drove me crazy."

"I drove *you* crazy? I still don't know what the question is."

"I can't believe it," I rolled my eyes. "The question *was*, what makes you act as if you're entitled to my satisfying your every need when you don't think ever to ask me even if I'm hungry."

"Satisfying my every need'...hmmm...let's start with that. Ho, ho, ho," he leaned over the counter like a dirty old man, being funny.

*God bless it!* I thought. *It's like talking to the frigging wall.* But I was coming down with a cold and had neither the energy nor desire to come out of the corner punching. I whisked two eggs, a half-a-cup of milk, and a little sugar and vanilla in a bowl.

"What's this?" he asked.

"I thought I'd use up the old bread and fix us French toast."

"I'd rather have a salami sandwich--except there's no salami," he replied.

That was the place where *she* would have said meaningfully, "Oh, I'm sorry!--I should have remembered to buy some when I went to the store yesterday."

No, I didn't say that.

"Eggs'll be okay, though," he said, and then came to stand behind me and rested his cheek against my hair. "I love you." I turned and just looked him in the eyes. "I love you, you know that," he repeated, walking 'round to the laundry porch. "If I didn't love you so much I wouldn't put up with your going off the wall. I'm easy to get along with—all I want to *do* is get along. *I'm not expecting anything out of you.*"

"I want to get along too!" I said, with a contradictory clank of the frying pan on the burner. "I used to think *I* was the best 'get-a-longer' in the world. But that's a cop-out on your part. You say you don't *expect* anything, thus you can look on whatever I *do* do as something *I*

choose to do," I said, while an inner voice kept insisting, *You do! You do! You're still not able to stop that self!*

But I couldn't shut myself up. "You think I'm some kind of fool. 'Well, if she wants to take on all that stuff, it's not my lookout just because it's a good deal for me'—*that's* how you think." I took two more eggs out of the refrigerator to fry, for him. "I'm willing to call a truce, but that doesn't mean my resentment's gone. I still would like an answer to the question."

"I just don't see what the *question* is."

I thought I would break the spatula across his nose and then saw it still bore the little red bruise from the tweak I'd given it Thanksgiving Day. Oh, it was more than a tweak I guess but he deserved that, too. The family had gathered at my sister's and I was standing at the stove fixing gravy. She has a small television set on the counter behind the stove and I said, "Gee, this is neat. When you're cooking you can have your favorite program right in front of your nose," at which point JC had interjected, "Well, for *other* people it might be '*almost* in front of their nose'—"

That's when I took his between my fingers and gave it a twist that contained all the force of recollection of a lifetime of nose jokes. (Yes, mine is formidable.)

I added a little butter to flavor his eggs, when a cat fight broke out. The male was trying to climb the female. I scooted the male out the cat door and picked up the female. "This is a perfect example, isn't it, Beatrice?" I soothed her forehead with my fingers. "Not dyed-in-the-wool feminists *yet*; but how much longer will we take it, before we go out and castrate the whole lot of them?"

"That's not nice," JC said. "She usually starts it."

"Oh, com' on. Look at her. She's half his size. Most of the time she's just trying to get

away."

"He can't help it."

"My point, exactly. If you can't reason with them, you can't reason with them. Cut off their balls!" I put Beatrice down.

"Give me a break!"

"You've had nothing *but* breaks, part of the reason you can't comprehend 'the question.' You were put on a pedestal and maintained on it for such a protracted period of time you haven't any *platform* to understand it. I'll admit, I helped foster the situation—in spades! Was that *my* fault? You could have not taken advantage of it, and you won't admit that you did and still can." I turned his eggs over, ignoring that inner voice again. *So why are you fixing his breakfast before yours?*

"Look," he said. "I've told you. I'm not *expecting* you to do anything."

"Oh, I understand the semantics of it, all right. It's the way you take it all for granted." I lifted the eggs to a plate and took the two bread slices from the toaster. He took the plate from my hand, saying "I'm sorry, I'm still confused," instead of "Thank you," and left for the living room to get caught up on the game.

I reheated the pan and cooked my French toast, refilled my coffee cup, and joined him on the couch--at the far end, that is; but I still was too wrought to eat. "I believe I've put everything I can behind this experiment of living together again. I accept my handicap; I'm still a dark horse coming from behind, and it's true you're giving me room and board. But I've brought an asset to the partnership (the bungalow, which now was rented), of at least sufficient value to buy me time to finish one book. I may not be working an outside job anymore, but I'm putting quadruple the time into writing than you need to do your job now. So it should be called at least equal on that

score. Besides, you owe me one year at the very least."

"I *owe* you something?"

"What do you mean? Didn't I support us during your graduate work?"

"But that was *ages* ago."

"What difference does that make? Justice isn't leveled by time. They're just paying off the Japanese now for internment at the onset of World War II and *that* was 50 years ago. And look at the Indians. They're *still* waiting for full justice. So, how about it? For the next six months you do all the menu planning, shopping, cooking, laundry, housekeeping, screening 'phone calls, consultation with our daughters when they need it, *and* household accounting, which includes keeping in mind where the budget stands, paying bills—"

"In other words," he said haughtily, "You want me to do *everything*."

I think the yolk reached his throat before he realized what he'd said. *Someone* in me was *dying* to add, "I rest my case." Instead, I took my first good gulp of the day's first great cup of coffee, cut into the first of my two pieces of French toast, pointed at the television with my fork and said, pleasantly, "What's the score, now?"....

"I think I know what might help here," I said later that afternoon. "We haven't made love in a week, and you're probably wanting it but trying to abide by my desires. I don't want to be stubborn. Screwed-up conditioning spoiled enough of my life; I'll be damned if I'm going to let obstinacy take the rest. So, even if I'm feeling a little pushed right now because you said a few things that put me off, I'm going to put that off. I'd like to try an experiment, to look at you as just someone I'm going to climb into bed with, use, and let use in a friendly way. And you can look at me the same way. Don't say you love me. I won't say I love you. We'll just see how we feel afterwards. Deal?"

"Sounds good to me!" he said....

It worked totally, for him.

Toward dinnertime, slicing three little red potatoes to fry with onions in the same teflon pan (at the moment one real asset I felt I'd acquired in the deal), I looked for the reason it hadn't worked for me. A couple of times I had been to the point where in the past I used to work harder, myself, and get it. The fact I thought the very words, *used to*, should have been a clue.

Driving toward Salome's the following week I saw a pheasant ahead and slowed the car so not to scare it into the bushes. Pheasants equate with my father, who had a stuffed male in full color, one of only four personal possessions he owned to bequeath. No one can say what happened to the pheasant. The Beretta rifle went to one brother-in-law and the carved Meerschaum pipe, another. The squat book of *The Divine Comedy*, from which father read nightly, is in my possession. It belongs to a girl who aspired to communicate accurately from the soul...

*My Father's look at the parental summit meeting in 1954--called when my and the First's parents found out, via the newspaper's publication of marriage licenses, that we had been issued one--was the same unjudgmental acceptance he wore when I as a girl told him that I was eschewing Catholicism. "I can see you're determined about marrying," Dad said. "But do me a favor?--wait until July, so your mother and I can give you a proper wedding." Despite the fact I had made it through 18 months of college (having graduated from high school at 16), I was only 18 that May, when he asked me to wait; and I was sure I was just over a month pregnant. It wasn't going to be fun pretending to be the carefree bride, but I wouldn't let him bear the brunt of that. "Okay," I said...*

The pheasant on the road turned out to be a hen. *Probably looking for something for her*

*mate to eat*, I thought cynically. I was mad again, at JC; and he claimed to have had it with me. "You know, Father," I said toward the windshield, "If only I had a million dollars, I'd take them all, every single one [not meaning the dollars] and—" I looked up to a flock of birds the moving car sent winging from the road's shoulder, tears threatening—"You know! I'd take every single one of them and cram them..." I couldn't find a phrase; but mind's eye saw them all—the First, the Countryman, the Last, the Ultimate!—shrunk into a sharp black and white Doré ball, mouths agape, heads and arms and legs intimately entwined, crammed into one testicle sack!

In all of *her* Past *she* would bite 'my' arm to keep me from saying anything nasty. Currently, however, irruptions from the Unconscious were like cat-o'-nine-tails, every knot hell-bent on leaving its mark. Imagine...*me!* Hitting the wall, throwing things--ugly constellations of psyche and ego at war with all the negative elements that fashioned their functioning--those in the self, those in the world, and those in man—all now personified in *him*, JC. But, like a line I once wrote, *if not on the beloved, on whom can the final fury be wrought?*

I knew the First very well; deep down he was feeding the scene—always his way with his students. Be an unmovable rock; let them hit on it until they hit on *it*. But I wasn't about to suck under. "It's not that I *need* a cup of coffee," I had said that morning when he bounced his naked body back onto the bed, not having made a pot although up already at least an hour. "It's your treating me like a servant. It feels like I just finished cooking dinner. I didn't have enough energy left last night even to do the dinner dishes, I was so wiped out from moving furniture."

Silence.

"I'm treated like either a servant or a mother—" I recommenced.

"JESUS! I'LL MAKE A POT OF COFFEE!"

"I don't want a cup of coffee. That's not the point. I'm not your mother, so am I a servant

or a 'wife'? If you want the Harriet Nelson wife fantasy, then you're going to have to play the Ozzie Nelson husband fantasy. It's the *thoughtlessness* of it. Listen to the way you sounded when you pounced onto the bed a little while ago." I made my voice sound crabby: "'Well, if I'm not going to get sex I at least might get breakfast.' Where's the romance in *that*???" Look. I've said it at least fifty times. I was on my own a long time. I know my nature, my libido, and my self. Don't expect me to want to be humped every day. Probably not even every week. Maybe not even for a month!"

One of the cats crawled between JC's legs and curled his paws against JC's thighs. "Owww! Stop that you wretched cat! Know how that feels? I'll show you how it feels!"

I wasn't watching but I knew what JC was up to. He was taking one paw and forcing its claw, albeit gently, along the cat's other leg. Well, that cat was no slouch. He'd been holding his own with the ferret in the nearby barn and not about to permit *this* little game. JC gave a hoot, loud enough for the migrant worker families to hear in their dwellings a stone's throw to the north. "You \*#S@& +^ cat!" He jumped off the bed. "Look at what he did to me!"

Two scratch marks. Bright red. One about a half-inch long and the other, a third of an inch, separated by about five-eighths of an inch. Each scratch began just where the glans penis met the ridge of the circumcision, crossing over it and down. JC looked stricken. He held his flaccid penis gingerly between his thumbs and forefingers and bent his head way over to look closely. "Oh my God. Do you think it's going to swell?"

"Don't be silly. Go wash it with hot water, put some hydrogen peroxide on it, and keep your fingers away."

"I can't even wear my pants!" He complained for *her* benefit throughout the morning. "Look at it! It's starting to make pus."

"It is not. That's just from the hydrogen peroxide."

But he did seem really worried. *Ah, well*, I thought, *at least he won't be thinking about using it for a while....*

The next night he spent on the couch because of the expletive I'd uttered when he fell unselfconsciously onto the water bed like an elephant again, sometime around midnight (like his mother, insomnia always had been a cross for him). What I'd uttered was, "Jesus Christ!," as would anyone awakened that way from a dead sleep. In the morning, with the coolness of his allegedly hurt feelings cutting a rift between us, I knew that it wasn't the expletive. The rock had been hopeful of ending the siege; but once again, basing behavior on old memories, called it wrong.

For me, being one **I** all the time absent fantasies was quite different from manifesting either of Psyche's two potential personas; and mind only was beginning to admit a brand new fact: the generative drive in my post-menopausal body was winding down, period....

It was warm like summer, the kind of clear-skied day that often graces the Valley before the first fall rain. "God, Salome, I could scream. Just when it seemed I was moving out of box A, I'm in box B. I can't believe it's all been for nothing! Say something to make me feel better."

"'No woman who puts her hand to the plow, and then looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' *Luke 9:62.*"

I responded with a lip-flapping sigh.

"Out front," she turned me from her kitchen steps. "I've put out chairs and iced tea. All I meant was that this is no time to cave in. Tell me what's happening."

I took the chair facing the sun. "I became as obsessed with the orgasm issue as Freud was with *his* issues, and for the same reason. To validate *myself*. Just as he later mitigated evil

id sovereignty with the concept of ego-instinct, I also have been pushed into a second look.”

I pressed my hands on my thighs and leaned toward her. “Looking back, I see the girl in whom masturbation was simple and sweet, like buying a Big Hunk during intermission at the Saturday matinee; the teen wife, ignorantly introduced into the different physical needs of male and female; the vital woman during the body’s fertile years and its energetic drive for orgasm. Then, aimed at establishing the working of my body as natural, I learned a lot about psyche’s influence on my sexual attitudes and compensations of fantasy. *Now*, after all that, here I am dealing with a new body state!”

"It *is* pretty incredible." Salome said. "Society's still debating *any* public sex education, when what's needed is a continuing school—"

"All the way to death," I groaned, leaving my chair and sprawling on the damp grass. My eyes followed a bird that took flight from the tree overhead. "An old friend of mine once remarked how much easier it would be, if the human life cycle was like the birds'. They mate and a couple of months later *both* they and the kids leave the nest--"

“You’ve forgotten the eagles and the doves.”

“Okay. But one man and one woman for life—I mean, one human and one human, one partner and one partner, for life—is an improbable challenge.”

“Yet, of all of Life’s challenges,” Salome posed, “full union of psyches still beckons as the greatest of goals?”

I sat up and clasped my legs. "Sorry; I’m making you my sounding board again."

"I told you when you called it would be okay." Salome reassured me.

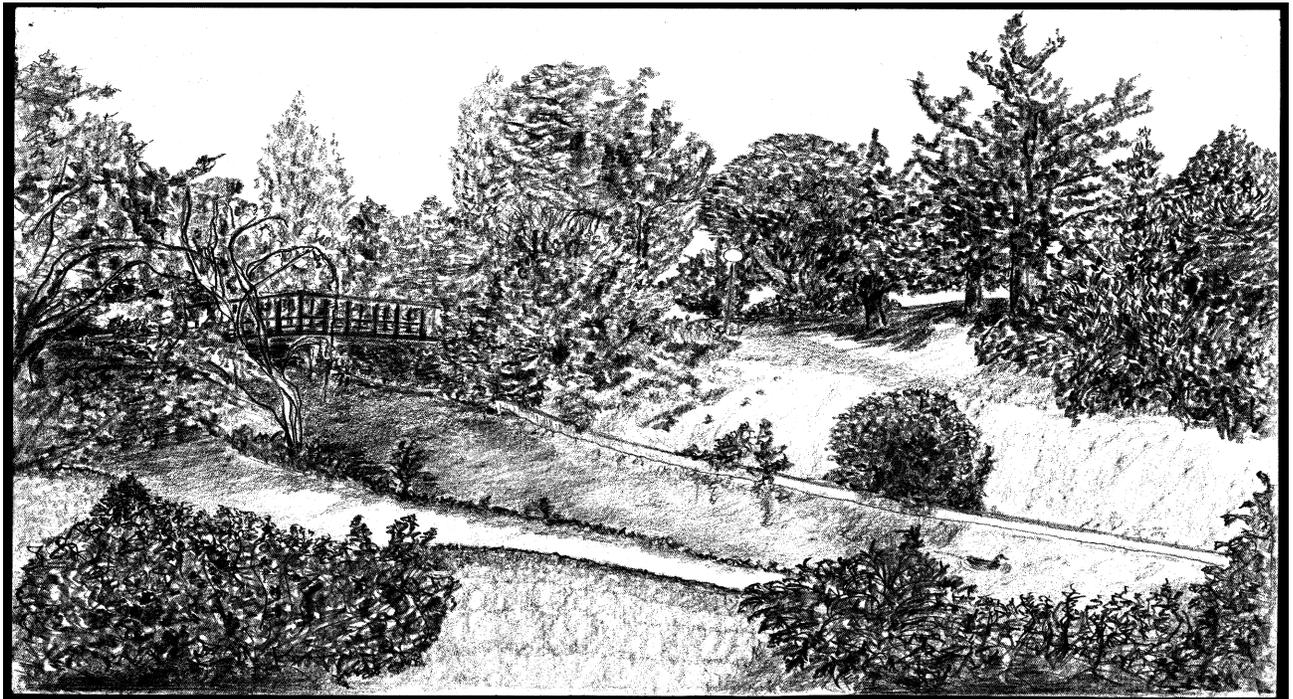
"Well, my body *per se* definitely is not as ‘sexy’ as it used to be. I no longer know that

subconsciously *alive* response to Nature's mating drive—the way JC *remembers* me. If I still had that, everything would be fine."

"But if you guys survived 25 years with him wanting sex more than you, it certainly is conceivable you could do another decade or two with you needing it less than him."

*There has to be a distinction, there, I thought, but a fine one, to be sure....* "I don't know. JC's beginning to sound like a stuck tape—'living together seems not to be working'-- and I seem stuck jackknifing between personae, knowing all the while that my flaring belligerence, combined with my body's age-diminished need, can't help but appear as absence of love." The previous day had been a good example, but I didn't belabor Salome with the details...

*I had suggested going to lunch somewhere by the river. A dinner for new friends was impending, the house wasn't ready, and I was looking for escape. "I'll wear a flowery dress," I thought, "maybe a straw hat, and have a brandy Alexander..."*



Why did he have to say it?—“Well, I could do lunch, but sex would be better.”

Instantly I was crabbing. “I see there was good reason why in antiquity men had more than one wife. They’re like jackrabbits! They can do it every few hours!” I began straightening up the living room vengefully, squaring magazines and stacking newspapers. “If all you want is someone to take care of your things, whom you can screw any time you want—”

“Sounds good to me!” He chuckled.

I knew he was bating me, but my reaction now was less from gender issues than defensiveness over my body’s naturally-waning sexuality. In face of that, and at a loss to express it, I kept falling back on old hostilities. “So why didn’t you just go out, find someone else, and leave me alone? Or stayed single, found a house of ill repute, and frequented it any hour of the day you wanted? But no. You said you wanted a companion, a homemaker, a friend, blah blah blah. So much for your words. Have you thought once about all the words you said before we began this living-together experiment? Right to my face?—”

“I guess this means we’re not going out to lunch?”

“I don’t know what any of it means...”

“You don’t care about me.” The rhetorical inflection was more annoying than his words.

“I think all you want is someone to support you so you can write.”

Those words hit the innermost bullseye. “Bull SHIT! It’s true that I desperately want to do what I see as my real work, in a place where there is someone who really loves me; and I know it’s hard, holding on to love—“

“Especially for you?”

“That’s not true! If all I cared about was someone to support me financially, would I

*have done those first 25 years? NO. I'd like to know, 'though, what the counterpart of that is like: a Daddy!—someone to make me a meal from scratch now and then, and do all the cleaning up after serving it with a smile to me on my lap, complete with napkin. I'd like to know what it's like to reach into the closet and take out clothes I didn't wash, iron and mend myself; have someone wave me off to my day's work with good wishes, knowing, when I'm done, everything will have been held together nicely and dinner simmering on the stove!"*

*Needless to say, we didn't go to lunch. He went to take a short nap, in his estimation justifiably aggrieved for having suffered much rebuke for a harmless joke....*

A quiet voice from Salome broke my recall. "Apart from the aging body problem, maybe not all the psychical conflict has been brought through consciousness." She never was at a loss for a book to make a point and drew one from the shelf. "Here's what Krishnamerti has to say, in *The Awakening of Intelligence* [leave it to her to have all certain pages tagged!]: 'Analysis is a denial of action. Action means not having done or will do, but *doing*. Analysis prevents that. If the analysis is not perfect, complete, true, then that analysis being incomplete must leave a knowledge which is not total. So one must find a way of observing without analysis. You have to do this yourself.'" She looked away then, sharply, as if there was something more she found hard to say.

"What?"

"Well...no one likes the word *neurotic*."

How right she was. I hated it; part of me had shunned all possibility *I* might be. I drank some tea and picked lint off my sweater until my aversion subsided. "I believe you mentioned Jung once in that respect? Why he couldn't agree with Freud?--that in many cases sexuality is subject to other factors, like oppression or social adaptation."

"Yes; I did. Jung also said that, just as our will can't always avoid clashes with the outer world, it also is limited in the inner one if it comes into conflict with the facts of the Self. The Ego stands 'as between hammer and anvil,' he said; and it sounds as if your personae are passing on the blows."

Back at the farmhouse, the ego that went straight into the spare bedroom, and fell on the futon in its corner, was drowning. Later that night, my mood bleaker than ever, I turned on the little black and white television against the miasma. Masterpiece Theater, just beginning, was presenting Chekov's *Uncle Vanya*. Rendered spellbound as one is by language that perfectly expresses the human condition, how badly I wanted, like Uncle Vanya, to rip away wastes of my life. Falling asleep at its end, I dreamed. Thank god; the two of me dreamed their past away...

*Life was taking place in a vast theater in the middle of a bustling city. One long-running drama had ended. The cast was running up a stairway, and I saw their heels leave the upper step and pass out of sight. I realized, there was no mystery! The mystery was a false creation, a plot that had an end. Once finished, the actors would begin anew...*

*The production moved, and the main performer danced now on a high ledge of a building. Then 'he' walked off the ledge and dropped to the street; but 'he' landed on his feet, whole and nonplussed, to become lost again in the throng. 'I' stripped myself of my vest, and that scene was over...*

*I was in my home with my husband and children. It was morning, the time of re-creation. My husband began to make love to me. I responded easily and quickly. How simple it is, I thought, and then saw over his head our older daughter peeking to see if we were ready to begin the day. When I arrived downstairs, she, now all grown up, made a remark about struggle in her life. One play within the play, I thought—the part that follows after we have created the children*

*we were destined to create and they are creating theirs...*

*My granddaughter called loudly from another room. I feared she was hurt but found she was dissatisfied only with some small circumstance. Yet another play within the play: the child born and reborn, by nature clinging to innocence but forced to yield it up, inch by inch...*

*A marriage was to take place. I was uncertain I would attend, but another woman encouraged me to walk where the bride would enter. First, however, I had a task to finish! It was for a middle-eastern young man, who lived with his parents in a workshop. I handed the scroll I had made to him and was about to express self-pride; but then I saw his aged parents, at the end of life's labors, lying side by side in a wood bed. What care can an almost-finished life have, for someone else's accomplishments, I thought.*

*Back up the passageway toward where the wedding was to occur I heard familiar music, but it was not the wedding march. It heralded something other than the traditional concept of marriage. Before the marriage could begin, I stood with my mother looking across the vast stage of life. "I cannot bear this aching in me," I said to her. "I know," she said, "But look!" She pointed to something in the distance to distract me, as a mother always strives to distract the wounded child. I thought, my soul never could return to childhood's state of life; but a later stage is possible, without acrimony over having lived the prior life dealt.*

*A last, invisible woman was there. Her presence came to me softly and said, "I will bring you a mouse; then you will feel better. I will put the mouse right there," and she touched the spot between my neck and left shoulder. At her urging I went back to the wedding area, decorated in every respect in pink and white. Why, there was a branching decoration made by me in a prior life! I straightened one of its flowerlets, but I would not speak of it as mine. Fabrics and stitching were part of an act that was over...*

*I sat near my mother on the floor against a wall. The wedding ceremony had taken place when I wasn't looking. It was not important. Instead, the spirit woman came by, hesitated, then bent swiftly and gently dropped something onto my upper left chest, very near my neck. It was soft. The mouse! I thought, with a little bit of alarm; and then, Oh well, I have overcome my fear of mice I think.*

*Reaching up I took the creature into my hands and lifted it away so I could see it--a rather large mouse, but in no other way unusual. I cradled it like a baby. The mouse had a substance apart from its size. It felt wonderful in my arms; like a good friend. Its eyes were closed; it was wearing a beatific smile...*

Next morning The First came in without knocking, all hulking six feet two of him, and asked, "Do you love me?"

I opened my eyes and thought for a few seconds. There were so many things about him—reflections of *my Self!*—I absolutely knew I loved. "Yes!" I answered, semantically certain, paused, and then added, "But not as much as I love 'The Lord.'"

He looked down at me on the futon with what without question was the most incredulous look I ever have been responsible for causing on his face. "Eh?"

"I said, 'not as much as I love "The Lord".'"

He hit himself on the side of the head. "Run that by me one more time."

"That's just a term for the force that moves me."

"Ever hear the 'ontological argument?'" he asked, walking out the door and leaving it open.

Now there was that quality that always brought **Me** back without asking which part of Psyche was hooked. I grabbed my robe, followed him, and sat in the high-backed white wicker

chair, chin on hand; but I kept a little coolness in my voice. "No, can't say I have."

"Well it's easy. You have the idea of a supremely perfect being--that's what's God's supposed to be, right? All the perfections, goodness and greatness. Now, could that 'Being' you're thinking of be supremely perfect and *not* exist?"

"Wait a minute. We need to define 'exist' first, don't we?"

"Being real."

"What's real?"

"Able to 'be here'--like you and me."

"Okay," I said and reached for a cigarette. "Then why is it considered a perfection simply to exist?"

"It has to be."

"Because?"

"To be wholly perfect a thing would have to possess all qualities perfectly, right? And to *possess* any qualities it would need to exist—also right? Consequently, existence itself is a quality of perfection. So," he continued, "how could there be an all-perfect being, with all the properties that a thing absolutely perfect would need to have, that didn't exist?"

"Well, obviously nothing that *has* properties could *not exist*, in which case it would have no properties, regardless of quality. But I still don't see why 'being here' is considered to be a property of perfection. If one follows Eastern philosophy, as soon as a being reaches *true* perfection it can will itself out of 'here' in the temporal sense.

"There's a distinction between essence and existence. I'll give you an example." JC waved his hand toward his chest in a Pope-like move that plucked affectionate memories. "The *essence* of the nature of a triangle is a line figure bound on three sides and having three angles.

You can separate that answer to ‘What is a triangle?’ from whether there *are* any triangles in the world. So the essence of a triangle can be known without visual proof of its existence. In the concept of God, however, essence and existence are inseparable: if part of God’s essence is omnipresence, any thought about God presupposes existence. That, roughly, is the ontological argument.”

I didn’t say so, but Philosophy always brought to my mind a saying of an Eastern sage. *The logical mind sounds sharp, but it’s really the very seed of confusion...*

"Here's how another ‘First Cause’ argument begins,” JC proceeded. “Suppose what's happening today—everything that's happening today—is the result of certain causes—”

"I believe that," I interposed.

"What are those certain causes caused by?"

"A previous state."

"And what are *those* causes caused by?"

"A previous state."

"And you have to go back and back and back to find out what caused the first previous state--‘Something’ had to start it all—and it's ‘God,’ right?"

"I always thought God's mother caused his state."

"What about the 'Big Bang' then," JC asked. "What caused the 'Big Bang'?"

I’d had enough. "A previous gang-bang?"

He laughed. "With God's Mother?"

"This is getting heretical."

"Worse than that," JC said after me, as I got up and went back to the studio room.

At 5 p.m. I re-emerged, my handsomest outfit over my arm, to enter the bathroom to use

the tub. JC looked up as I passed his chair. "I thought I'd go out to dinner tonight," I said.

"Would you like to come?"

He didn't answer right away. He walked past me into the living room first. "That sounds okay to me," his words drifted back.

When I came out, matronly fashionable in aqua blue and gold, he had spiffed up and was wearing his dressy leather jacket. We had a leisurely dinner in town and spent an hour in the bookstore. He waited patiently while I went through practically every book on the Eastern Philosophy shelf. Returning home, we sat and talked congenially for about an hour, at which point I said, "Well, I'm going to bed now."

I was half undressed, when he entered the studio room without knocking. I held my blouse up in front of my brassiere.

"Oh! Sorry!" He backed out into the adjoining room and then said, through the crack in the door, "I'm confused."

"Why are you confused?--because I gave you a goodnight kiss?"

"Well, yes."

"And you thought that meant something more?"

"Oh, well. I don't know. Well...yes, I guess so. I mean, you *did* say you might consider 'it,' for a price." He was referring to an earlier jest of mine.

"How much?" I queried.

"Ummm, let's see. Two dollars?"

"TWO DOLLARS? The *kiss* was worth at least five times that." But I wasn't able to keep from laughing. "And just because I'm laughing doesn't mean everything's all right."

"Oh, no. I understand. It's okay. But tell me, when *will* we make love again?"

"Not until I've printed out the final draft of *Beloved Disciple*."

"Okay. Now that we've established *what* you are," he said, playing with the old joke, "we still need to establish the price."

"A hundred dollars should do it."

"A HUNDRED DOLLARS?"

"I'm worth it. Besides, twice a month and my rent's paid!"

Later, propped up by the lace-edged pillow, public television was airing an interview by Bill Moyer of Sam Keen. "One should ask first, 'Where am *I* going?' and then ask, 'Who will I take with me?'" Keen said. "If you get those questions out of order, you're in trouble." I slid down underneath the futon's blanket, thoughts meandering through the interview's dialogue....

Catholicism and conditioning had opposite effects on JC and me. He became an isolationist; I thought to embrace the world. His intellect was permitted to catapult to the academic citadel of analytic philosophy; mine devolved unto uncertainty. The first time around we became habits to each other without becoming the best of friends. This time, we were trying to become fast friends through the welter of the past and confusions it had sown. It felt to me now that neither *then* had it been, nor *now* was it a matter of free choice. Perhaps Nature also demanded suspended judgment, in support of Love.

"Marriage is the greatest challenge in life," Keen's voice recaptured my attention.

"Sometimes you look at that other person and think to yourself, 'I couldn't love *that!*' But when you find out who **you** really are, you know that you not only can, you do."

When JC and I began our first marriage we'd known each other eight months, had had intercourse twice, and I was pregnant. Upon this reunion we hadn't know each other any better, and I also was pregnant—androgynously, with the fruit of the intervening years. All of it—the

self-analysis to learn why I had been how I had been, investigating body and its functioning, making peace with the Freudian epoch—all had been critical to advancing my existence; and the reunion had pit the disassembled Self sharply against its history, toward cognizing its true design.

Salome (who now I confess is my alter-Ego, the one fictional entity of this account) always suspected that my private battle of wits was threefold: a 'me' who claimed, *Oh, given half the chance, what I might have been!* Another, *Oh, given half the chance, what I might become!* And the integrated third, that ultimately had to give up all excuses for what it had not been or was not being...

I was very sleepy. I heard the word, "faith." I remembered how I drew upon it at the time of the latercision, now comprehending egoistic contrivance of it as bolstering the self-quest. I pulled the blanket higher. *Latercision.... Circumcision.... Deuteronomy.... 'God told' Moses, "Tell the people: if they want to possess that which rightfully is theirs, they must circumcise the foreskin of their hearts"....*

The latercision had been but a small snip of skin. Looking for a real 'me', I was forced to excise the foreskin of psyche. Like at its opposite pole, mere surgery was incapable of obliterating the origins of its force. When the archetypal shields began to drop, Ego forged many arrows marked 'retribution' and 'restitution' and flung them at JC without heed.

My personal quandary paralleled the collective one of my era's women. It might take decades for Woman and Man to neutralize coexistence completely, but a process had begun. Betty Friedan summarized it: "What we are seeing is a new rising of something larger than the first women's movement. It will have men in it, too, harassed by that no-win definition of masculinity...a new movement...working new patterns, away from relationships based on

polarization of sex roles based on dominance and inequality...a *human* liberation."

JC knocked at and came tentatively through the door. He bent over me and kissed me. "You know, I love you so much I might ask you to marry me again."

"Well," I paused just a second or two. "I love you enough that I just might consider it."

He pulled the door shut quietly, and I heard Keen say, "What we need to do is to exchange the unconscious myth for conscious reality." In that remodeling, much work remained to be done. The blanket's furry fold, dropping between collarbone and chin, sent me to sleep with a rhyme. *Deep down in global warrens, and for some time still to come, dwells that collective little mouse Man has found easiest to love....*

## **December 1997**

If JC had his way he'd have lived his whole life 'on the road.' It's been a trick making time for trips, lots of double-timing to keep the *History* project on track along with family matters; but I love traveling with him. February of '95 we drove Big Red (our then new Jeep Cherokee) to Los Mochis, Mexico; from there by train through the Copper Canyon to Chihuahua and back; by car again via Mazatlan to San Blas, Jalcocopan, and Mantanchen Bay; and, finally, via Puerta Vallarta back to Mazatlan. Afterward, we acquired a home of our own again--a house in the town where my aging mother lived.

At this moment and writing, at Belize City's Bellevue Hotel, I am savoring the last hours of a second, post-remarriage journey....

*The sea breeze through the second-floor porthole window ruffles the napkin under my glass of iced scotch. It is as if the local slogan--You better Belize it!--wafts with the harbor's incoming image across to the bar's mirrored wall. My ankles are swollen from 10 days of*

walking, climbing, and bug-biting; but off the mirror my tanned face looks back contentedly between sea and sea, as I close the journal and lay down my pen. Like one yogi said, one can't record something while in the midst of it; and, when not in it, one is unable to capture the delight...

*The water taxi to Caye Caulker and the longest barrier reef in the world—Go slow! Is Caye Calker's motto; sitting on the second-story deck of Lena's sea-green and white seaside hotel, 8 a.m. after a tropical shower, nothing to contemplate except calm waters...breakfast, eventually, at Glenda's, followed by a souvenir hunt along the main street, and coffee at The Other Side of The Moon....*

Amid Belize's national English one can hear "criole" forms of Mayan/African and Mixteco/African blends. On Belize's mainland our hired driver, Elijah, who had conducted tours for 30 years, educated us on the Garifuna lingo of southern Belize. "What's that mean?" I asked him, after noting a chain of restaurants that claimed, "Dis Da Fu We Chiken!"

Elijah had trouble at first with my lack of inflection, but when he got it he laughed heartily. "Oh, you mean 'Dis da FU WE Chiken'!"

"Oh!" I laughed back. "This, the chicken for US!"...

*Skirting Lake Peten, toward Tikal's twin pyramids, past pretty little Mayan villages, houses resting on pilings, line after line of freshly washed laundry flaring over the moist ground.... Five Sisters Waterfall.... Through Customs into Guatemala, and on to the ruins through jungle forest broken by orange groves....*

From Tikal, on to Caracol and 15-inch-high pyramid steps, a good number of which (in smiling accord with another middle-aged tourist lady) I had to climb on all fours. "How is it,"

she remarked, “every time one starts to climb the sun comes out in full force!” Oh, it *was* hot, and humid....

We sampled all the local foods: fried jack, johnny cakes, stew beans and rice, conch soup, and an all-lobster “salad”--not a leaf of lettuce. No matter where we went, Elijah had relatives. “My grandmother had 22 children, and yes!--all with the same husband,” he told us cheerfully, as the Mitsubishi picked its way through a small herd of Brahma cows. Dense greenery stretched from the roadway to the western horizon--here and there, thatched-roofed huts built exactly as they were 2000 years ago, sides made of slim, neatly aligned strips of tree trunks, but not of mahogany anymore. “The British were first to mine Belize for choice building woods, and gum trees for rubber,” Elijah enlightened us....

The Belize Zoo, a sprawling jungle park where overgrown vegetation hides wire-fenced animal habitats, behind one of which reclined a black jaguar--ink spots on charcoal; I hadn't known such a pelt existed. Kneeling inches from him, the jaguar turned its head and let me look directly into the yellow glow of its eyes. In another area, howler monkeys among enormous trees put on a show, until the macho master of the clan came swagging in front of me, and sounded a call that rose in a crescendo by females, as they emerged one by one above.

We were home in time for Christmas, that afternoon sharing our adventures with “the kids” (so-called by us, no matter how old they become). Inevitably, travel talk sparked fond “Granpa” JC memories of his younger years with his VW van....

“You all would have *loved* Cowboy,” he began with a chuckle out of the blue.

I'd heard the “Cowboy” story before, but I had a journal and pen at hand at hand and--shorthand ever at the ready--it was a perfect time to capture the tale.

“Well...,” Granpa stopped to light a cigarette, to heighten enjoyment in the telling. “One day, when I was at Mazatlan’s camper park, the guy comes to me all excited and says, ‘It’s the right time of year for peyote. Why don’t we go and get some?’

“That meant a three-day trip, but everyone was out of money—literally--for gas or anything else. Cowboy and his friends, living out of a big rig, were all flat broke. So off he goes up and down the beach, offering people shares in a peyote trip! Peyote cactus wasn’t prevalent with Americans in that decade, thus in Mexico it was one of the less lucrative substances.

“Well, good ol’ Cowboy just walked back and forth along the beach, saying to anyone who’d listen, ‘Hey! My friends and I are going up to San Juan Petosi for some peyote. It’ll cost you just a little if you want us to bring some back for you, too.’

“Cowboy!” JC laughed, shaking his head. “Here he wants to give a big peyote party, and he has no money! But he does get a lot of beach recruits who *do*, one of whom happened to be an Ethiopian. Now, that Ethiopian really turned out to be our guide, because along with no money Cowboy had no sense of direction.

“When we get to Guatemala, Cowboy decides we need to stop for food; and he has his huge bong going full steam before he’s even parked. The windows of the van are all open, and Cowboy, smoking, starts shouting, *Brahm-Siva! Brahm-Siva!* Meanwhile, the Ethiopian’s groaning, *Ohhh sheet!--I’m leading these fools to sacred secret peyote grounds, and here’s this dummy smoking marijuana in full public view—with the windows open, mind you!—yelling like an idiot all over Guadalajara, ‘Brahm-Siva, Brahm-Siva!...*

“That Ethiopian—his father was a pilot with Ethiopian Airlines--knew more about marijuana than I or *anyone* knew. When he was a youngster he’d go out after school and play with the pygmy people of the fields; they’d pick the plants starting to dry up. That Ethiopian

grew to be six feet four, and there he had these little munchkin friends who smoked small pipes they called ‘chillums.’ They would stoke the dry marijuana leaves down into their pipe right off the plant, and smoke it.

“He was so funny. One time he asked me, ‘Know what the all-time best marijuana cigarette is?’ and answered himself. ‘First, you take one entire dry ‘cola’ (that’s a whole bud) off of the plant. Then take a bread wrapper, hold it on your palm, lay the cola on top, roll the whole thing up and light it.’”

JC laughed again. “I thought to myself, *this guy’s crazy!*--because, I was thinking of the plastic bread wrappers that Wonder Bread comes inside of. *How in the heck do you wrap a joint in that stuff, much less, smoke it?* I wondered.

“Well, we got back to Mazatlan with no peyote but a bunch of grass. Down there in those days you could buy a huge plastic garbage bag full of fresh marijuana, seedy stuff but it cost practically nothing--only a couple of thousand pesos or sixty dollars American. So we wound up with all this marijuana in the middle of a December vacation.

“So, we’re sitting around a card table in a little tent a stone’s throw from the shore, minding our own business, when all of a sudden some Federales--a bunch of kids with guns bigger than they were--roared into the campground in a red Ford pickup, after some fugitive or other, and busted up the place. They jumped off the truck bed with their guns, and there we were with about four pounds of marijuana on a tray on the table.

“*Good grief*, I thought. *They’re here to arrest us!* We all began throwing towels and shirts and God knows what over the tray, as the boy-Federales ran through the camp, chasing (as it turned out) some poor little bastard who just happened to take a shortcut through it. We all ran out and up to the street and rooted for him--guns going off, *boom, boom, boom!*, and us a

cheering section on the sideline shouting *go, Go, GO!* It was a tourist section--lord knows, they could have shot anyone.

“Afterwards, the kid-Federales come back, get into their truck parked outside our tent, and drive off. I don’t know *how* they could have missed seeing our cache; they had to be almost as scared about what they were doing as we were. A Little Richard tape was playing—I mean, all that dry vegetation lying there. Even the campground’s security guard was there smoking with us, and nobody seemed to care!

“What a place that campground was. On Christmas Day one of the guys dressed up like Santa Claus and went around to all the hippies and elder ‘weirdoes’ and dropped little presents on them--yes, altogether so much grass around the place you could have stuffed mattresses with it...

“Oh! It turned out—well, you know? In Mexican bakeries they have those little squares of brown paper for bread wrappers? *That’s* what the Ethiopian meant. ‘Yes, Sir,’ he was fond of telling, ‘We’d wet the outside, roll it up, and smoke it just like a cigar.’ What a guy. I wonder where he is, now...”

## **1998**

If JC’s and my natures only on rare occasions approached Romeo and Juliet, we could be Holmes and Watson and Boswell and Johnson, and I loved that—like when I expressed once, with a telling smile that really wasn’t one, how much I disliked doing dishes by hand. “Now, as I’m willing to get along without a dishwasher,” I said, “some women might find it worth a gold necklace. But, then, I’ve got that gold bracelet you gave me—“

“And!” he countered, looking straight into my eyes, “*I’ve* got a dishwasher!”

He never failed to get me with that soft brown his eyes took on, when he looked at me with love. We were, however, merely like legendary common man and woman of All-Time, together but individually living his and her own drama, which, as Jung said, each continuously is writing on Mind; and—selves succumbing to pathos of personal plight--bodies at times are forced to take flight....

*Poets and poetesses, laborers and laboresses, writers and philosophers, none gets lasting fame; private stories, toward their end, all become the same...*

Obviously I was ‘in the dumps’ when I ‘journalled’ that line, for JC and I were enduring another separation of sorts. Contributorily, my aid to keep my 90-year-old mother living ‘independently’, as she so very much wanted, had become a daily requirement. I took up residence in a small trailer across from her mobile home, and moved back and forth between it and my home. The trailer’s metal label above its front window, “New Moon,” in itself seemed symbolic.

Manuscript hours, along with forming a one-woman ‘company’ to self-publish *Beloved Disciple*, took place at the trailer--a good thing, in that, despite managing stress well enough publically, my inner siblings resumed getting into each other’s faces. At times their joint force hit the overstuffed Private Unconscious like a pin into an inflated balloon.

After a psychical eruption, one scarcely remembers its utterances; mine generally began with male dominance in general, and--reacting to yet another war--wound up blowing off our nation’s deadly insinuation into tribal regions, the history of which the administration appeared deadly ignorant. Fortunately, no one usually was present for my audible psychical vomitings; but once in a while JC’s ears were present....

*What the 'man' in me is trying to say is, look at the old books, you warriors you!—you on all sides! Haven't you had your fill of spilled guts, drenched ruts? Of foreign missiles flying o'erhead your children and falling into the soon-to-be-again fallow fields, where will drain again the bloods of the sons of all your 'holy' Father's?*

JC had turned a wink and a blink, for the sun through the window was reflecting in spires off the bronze lamp beside his chair. “*And Mother's,*” he added...

I dropped beside his chair. “About a next trip you've suggested, tell you what. Since you don't want to come, I'll go to the Middle East alone, and come over the fertile crescent down into Egypt. *You* can sail down the Amazon like you want to do, then come up around the cape and across, and we'll meet—“

“At Atlantis!” he said, ruffling my hair.

*Happy anticipation!*

It ended in August. JC was struck with a heart attack and underwent a quadruple bypass operation. I moved back home permanently....

I wasn't born with prime qualities for yogic perfection—not born a potential female Adonis nor rich nor a genius; but it was emphasized that neither did such endowments ensure, nor were lesser-endowed barred from realization given purity of motivation and practice. For me, there was the rub: devoted practice is one thing, devoted submission, another. Like succeeding at quitting smoking....

X-rays show my lungs slightly elongated, common to smokers; and the best total breath round I could achieve ( in...hold...out...hold...) is one minute, and that, only if I've been light on cigarettes. Still, even modest practice seemed to yield measurable benefits. Recently, my

“PCP,”stethoscope against my back, had chuckled through a breath intake. “You yoga people,” she remarked at the length of it. But in retrospect the Last JC wasn’t right; it *is* the ‘real me’ who needs to smoke, because it includes Body; and it’s the ‘addiction’ to writing (*e.g.* Psyche in the process needing constantly to sidestep doubt as to value!), that causes Brain to produce effects on physiology, which causes the constitutional smoking ‘addiction’.

I take comfort in the master admonitions to reject “unnecessary speculation” and eschew “consideration of any fruits one might realize:” *no goal*, simply reach for a higher rung; *no grand vision*, simply watch Mind’s varying waves--sometimes like tsunamis; sometimes like the soft receding tide—and, when surges come, make Mind recite a mantra, prayer, or poem, to drag back concentration.

The sutra, “Don’t be a slave to your mind,” is a stitch I have trouble weaving through the unperturbable garment of self I would create. *If I don’t do what Mind tells me to do, whose bidding do I do?* Some Yogic literature comments that certain enlightenments are ‘self-secret,’ graspable only if one reaches the able point, leaving Self to judge comprehension. I prefer, *don’t be a slave to Psyche*, which allows conscious application of Reason in place of conditioned reactivity.

I can accept after Jung that abstract representations manifest spiritual expressions of humankind’s yearnings for tangible signs, but strive to accept yogic admonition that one should not ask for signs. Yet, each time I encounter a writing tangle that seemed unravelable, and fall into dismal paralysis that there is no way out, within a day or two an answer works its way toward me (*e.g.* finally, last night, a concrete grasp on the apparency of ‘transverse waves’). Better to meet challenges to self-faith like Brer Rabbit: instead of dreading entanglement, plead to be thrown into it.

Such is not how I felt, however, when *Beloved Disciple* forced self-identification with Christ as much as with Mary Magdalene. To recreate a male person against the history and politics of his time involved consciously circumventing conditioned influences of both doctrine and femaleness. Mind had to put on particular psychical apparel, so to speak, to compose the portrait desired. At times my shadow figure--cast on sunlit ground of my garden, wearing a long loose-fitting garment, sandaled feet, hair touching the shoulders—easily could have been Man of that time; and I would think, *yes, I can imagine him casting a similar shadow*. But!—to think of oneself as a “messiah?”

My father, more of a god to me than any imagined, conveyed the right to deny religious dogma to obstruct reason, paralleling Jesus’ analyses of hypocrisies of his time. Had I spoken of certain experiences as the work progressed, I would have been seen as just another crank drowned in overly-empathetic ultra-sensitivity and, project-related “synchronistic” events truly simple coincidences. Privately, I found solace in that Jung wasn’t intimidated in relating personal examples of “spontaneous, meaningful coincidences, of so high a degree of improbability as to appear flatly unbelievable,” and in his words, that *synchronicity*:

“[H]as something to do with time or, to be more accurate, with a kind of simultaneity. Instead of ‘simultaneity’ we could also use the concept of a *meaningful coincidence* of two or more events, where something other than the probability of chance is involved. ... When coincidences pile up in this way one cannot help being impressed by them—for the greater number of terms in such a series, or the more unusual its character, the more improbable it becomes.” (*The Portable Jung*, pages 510, 505-506).

Despite refusing to dwell on my own coincidences, certain ones *were* noteworthy....

JC was beautifully on the mend, late fall of ’98, when the newspaper announced the coming Leonid meteor shower:

“While other meteor showers average from 10 to 90 meteors an hour, a Leonid storm can fall at a rate of at least 1,000 objects an hour. The last big Leonid storm fell at a rate of 150,000.”

I’ve always liked astronomy, and the coming meteor shower on my 63<sup>rd</sup> birthday felt like an unexpected present. November 17, however, turned out to be night of heavy rain. Still, I was moved anyway to drive to a nearby mountain, where I meditated an hour in the rain-drenched car, before giving up to impossibility of a change of weather. Then, as I neared Madrone Road, some three miles from home, I spied what looked like a lone star! I turned onto deserted Madrone, pulled over, and parked in the dark.

As I stepped from the car, a canopy was opening in the thick clouds above and—there!—a brilliant fluorescent green meteor hurtled to earth. There I stayed, 20 minutes under a perfect open dome of sky, lone witness of a celestial show that seemed staged especially for me, as every few seconds a bright white soaring meteor showed itself, ending with a very large *pink* one in the southwest. Gradually the clouds closed in again; smaller and smaller became that circle of clearness, until all was heavy grey-black again.

I had accepted the swami’s concluding advice that my strange dreamings *were* “only dreams.” He probably also would say, “only coincidences,” of facts that afterward were presented to me: that the years of existence of the ‘Christ-mind’ were 33; that the years between Earth’s nearest passage of the Tempel-Tuttle comet, responsible for the Leonid meteor showers, were 33; and that, although at the time I didn’t know it, one school placed Jesus’ birthday on November 17. Needless to say, the entire sequence begged belief that some supranatural intent found me of such significance as to take a direct hand in my experiences.

*Nothing*, however, evaporates egotistic conjecture of delusions of self-greatness, than to allow oneself to think it! All too soon I would be made to pay more attention to the yogic

comment, *no one knows in what form a 'guru' [teaching] may be met.* It wasn't but several hours later. In the supermarket, standing in the checkout line, I was moved to do something ordinarily I would not have done--mentioned that it had been my birthday. "Oh!—really?" the woman next in line piped up. "November 17<sup>th</sup>'s my brother-in-law's birthday too!"--not unlike the time when subconscious egoism, about my 'rare' first name, fell before a little dog who happened also to bear it.

I took time the following week to work through a series of postures that Iyengar advised helped hemorrhoids. (Yes, I had a rare one, probably from sitting tensely long hours over manuscripts.) During the *asana* routine, the 'sacred' sound occurred five times, each rising in pitch as if confirming a peak in the pose. As always, there were accompanying musings...

*Life always feels like it can be more than we humans are able to make it, which is another reason I guess that so many gods have been concocted. Isn't it dumfounding?—how every concept, act, word, thought, and feeling attributed to god(s) came from nowhere but the mind, heart and hands of Humankind?...*

*Theology is for the elite; the poor get Religion; and those who can't submerge in either nurse their bastard souls in private. It's the same with human susceptibility to changing partners. So far, Society's condoned only one method of dealing with it. Now, Moses' giving his masses divorce, as compensation for polygamy available to the affluent, served also those times when it was necessary to 'clean up' bloodlines.*

*Paul's way was no way at all for common humankind, as 2,000+ years of hypocrisy have proved. He tried to impose his singular attitude on everyone, as if individual choice and will, alone, could make a body celibate. Everyone seems to ignore that celibacy was Paul's and not*

*Jesus' theme. Even if not as stridently as Jesus' words must have fallen on the ears of the Sadducees, they shout out from his few on the subject that were permitted canonization—such as when the Sadducees tried to trap him on the resurrection issue, with a complicated example of leviratus, or 'brother-in-law' marriage...*

“Okay, Teach,” they said. “How about this one: Moses said, if a man’s brother dies leaving his woman childless, the brother should raise up seed through her on his brother’s behalf. Suppose, now, that there were seven brothers--the first took a wife and died childless; the next took her on and also died childless, and so on through the remaining brothers. Since the seven all got her, in the resurrection whose wife is she?” It would be fine to know Jesus’ precise words of reply; meanwhile we have available three versions:

*Mark:* “Jesus said, ‘Aren’t you erring in this, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? Whenever if out of death they should be resurrected, they neither marry nor are given in marriage but they are as angels in the heavens.’” (12:24)

*Luke:* “And Jesus said to them: ‘The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those judged worthy to attain that age and resurrection from the dead neither are marrying nor being given in marriage...’” (20:34)

*Matthew:* “...[I]n the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are as angels in the heaven...” (22:29)

At times I’ve thought that, if the body/mind complex had been fed according to its original nature, I could have been a ‘female patriarch’ (distinguished from simply being a “matriarch”), with perhaps a half-dozen ‘legal’ husbands—like Liz Taylor, formally marrying each one on the spot and divorcing them as soon as he or she fell off of it. Having crossed and

recrossed common societal boundaries, however, it's no wonder I've searched out scripture for THE Word.

If various and sundry councils and papacies over the whole epoch found it within their power (which power is advanced as bestowed by God) to make choices of interpretation--if it was okay for them to change 'laws' here and there--I think it's okay that I as one of God's subjects take a hard look at it all, and accept interpretations good for *me* via *my* 'God'—which, of course, has to be everybody else's, because--as it never is varied from being claimed by all--there is only one true one!

Taking up my yoga mat from the floor, proceeding to bedtime ablutions, Mind took a 180-degree turn from mankind's ancient beliefs, of what decides kings and sons of 'God'--bloodlines of legitimate line, against which is pitted the word. Patanjali's philosophy, a form of which was Heard's 'training for the life of the spirit'—the process of acquiring self-knowledge requisite to manifest Divine Self—espouses a form of analysis that parallels the gnostic and coptic 'examination of conscience [or, consciousness].' One accepts no answer the mind offers as final, nor makes judgment, until one can answer *that* self with unshakable certainty...

*No, I thought emphatically, hot washcloth against my face, first, thought's fundament is determined by pure physics. The degree of development of the nervous system and its sustainers is dictated by matter—material heredity and developmental nourishment. The composition and configuration of matter determine the number and quality of pathways, thus potential number and degrees of associations.*

*Second, the genetically obtained substance that contains Thought is cumulation of all preceding generations strained through the parents into the seeds of conception, the number of possible matrices astronomical. One brain may carry in its Unconscious the matrix of symbols*

*of the west; a second, east; each will have its specific conglomerate of potential comprehensions, definitions, and associations.*

*Third, Thought is developed by what is fed through the purveyor of consciousness—all that it is told ('taught'), all consciously or subconsciously sensed through ears, eyes, nose, and skin, and the cumulative associations constellated thereby to form the Private Unconscious. There is **That** which thinks. There is that which **It** is thinking and that which **It** is not thinking. Of the that which **It** is not thinking, there are that which **It** has thought, that which **It** has not thought, and that which **It** never can think. And **It** which thinks is subject to all connections of that within....*

None of which was I thinking, when Psyche suffered a major disruption after Christmas--another year ended without an iota of 'professional' encouragement. I had brought *A Child's Book of Light* from its carton box prison and was struggling over it, when the holiday season (always *Her* favorite) intervened. The season evolved without a hitch; Christmas Eve and Day were as good as any family could wish. I had no clue of the emotional energy colliding between Mommy/Wife and Writer/Author, beneath my seeming casual control. The next day was straight out of Hell.

I don't recall what set it off—some offhand remark by JC that I seized as not sufficiently appreciative of my holiday efforts. The facade imploded with a force that pierced to 'id squalor' (whether equated with the 'Devil' or 'the Slime of the Beginning of Time'). Before subsiding, *it* had stripped the tree, stomped on three strings of lights, divested the house of everything that bespoke Christmas; burned in the fireplace—irretrievably, into ashes for eternity—every single item *Her* hands over years had created: the wreath from the front door, several enormous red velvet bows, the embroidered Slovakian wall-hanging, the Santa Claus tablecloth, and, finally,

the 28-year-old felt advent calendar together with its 25 tiny hand-made ornaments. The antique figurine of singing choir boys hit the garbage pail so hard all three heads broke off in a single stroke, receiving on top of them the red and green wax of half-burned candles twisted beyond recognition...

“Salome” would have said, “Remember our discussion about the uglier potentials of repressed psychological energy?” *Here* was a concrete example of the vengeful expression possible if a psychological scale is tipped too far too long, in degrees less only than a truly abused, exploding persona might murder. Squeezed between the Avocator’s failing and Christmas-producer entities, Psyche lashed out to do the impossible, stop something *in both*, by destroying something *out there*. All that the tantrum accomplished was to disintegrate Ego entirely in total override of Superego’s most cherished possession: *self-control*.

Guilt gushed into the vacuum. At first the drowning self seized a piece of jetsam floating up from the vast sea of the Unconscious: *find the nearest priest and make a confession!* Consciousness quickly dismissed the suggestion, but to the Private Unconscious it was the only associative salve. Lying in bed that night, I imagined the entire universe as witness—all the dead people I had loved, along with my father. “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned,” was all I could think, before falling to sleep...

*I am in the company of a priest via whom I intend to obtain absolution. I enter a small room, but it is not a standard confessional. Instead of kneeling in stifling darkness before an impenetrable screen, I stand in bright white light before a large mirror. The priest made as if also to enter the room, but I command him not!--he can listen from without, if he wishes; but whether he heard no longer mattered...*

*I make my recitation: “It has been years, literally, since my last confession; and these are my sins”--but when I look at myself in the mirror I have nothing to say. More than that! There comes this thought!—wasn’t that image, itself, God?*

No one but the dreamer can tell what his or her dream might signify. Its meanings must be pursued wakedly, the Self uncensoredly allowing what *its* Unconscious, only, knows to play against the material. The Superego, subjected to a *Messiahnah* influence longer than any identities to masculine/feminine complexii, had remained intact in the deepest inner orbit.

I had believed I grasped the relationships of Unconsciousness, Subconscious/Private Unconsciousness, and The Conscious between identitylessness, ego and personas. Although psychology had aided refereeing conflicts, psychology alone couldn’t lasso for integration the writer who felt denied half a lifetime and the old-fashioned girl, who’d cleaned too many toilets while contemplating their disposal of remains of meals she herself had cooked.

There are two channels via which psychical implosion can ground itself--like Siva, toward destruction or creation. It can pursue self-annihilation through its own mind and body, and possibly, society; or, it can become hell-bent on self-release by obsession with a private or public cause. Clearly my Ego had grabbed the life preserver of “messiahnahistic” purpose: ‘*I*’ would turn the negative into the positive and contribute saving grace to the world. ‘*I*’ would use not only past experience; ‘*I*’ *consciously* would undertake *new* ones, divide mind as far as it could be taken from body and boldly speak what ‘*I*’ uncovered! (*I know: Salome would add ‘figuratively and literally?’*)

Thus did 1979’s Ego, in defense against irreconcilables, pursue redemption as a Joan of Arc in humankind’s war of Body versus Mind. The deathly alternative was that all its being had been worthless, just another of an abjectly failed sub-specie of Nature. The splintered Ego had

knit itself into a secret persona, a unique ‘daughter’ of God—the first to say, neither am I, this female, less than pure consciousness!...

*There is movement at the door to my mirrored dream room. I glimpsed the priest, but he immediately pulled back out of sight. Now...what was it, that I was going to confess? Oh, yes-- that I behaved in such an ugly way. But that seemed insignificant now, not worth even mentioning; and I couldn't think of any other 'sins'—*

*ARE YOU CERTAIN OF THAT?*

You damned, iron-willed Superego! You have me again, as Jung described, between anvil and hammer. So! You will not leave me alone until Thought digs up, chews to Brain's metabolic absorbity, and swallows in full mindfulness all guilts that plague the spirit of both Madonna and Magdalena! In 1979 I may have lain on the floor of a Guaymas hotel room pledging to my dead father that I would leave no stone unturned, using my life to find answers that might help others. The thought of losing public image through *Journey's* open witnessing, however, sparks *Messiahnah's* neurosis. Meanwhile, *History* would be my salvation; but there was no comparison between Joan of Arc and *me*. Nor could I believe in a god at my back; and, oh!—the things done with body!--

*I looked back at the woman in the dream mirror. Now she was larger than reality, filling the mirror to its perimeters—one faceless, formless, yet unassailable identity; and, before HER, I could set my unspeakable burden down—*

*Curia nato...Curia nato...Curia nato....* That curious little liturgy played in the pictureless place between dreaming and wakefulness, as I surfaced from dead sleep to a new December 27. What (I cannot avoid saying, “or ‘who’!”) caused them to Mind was unknowable, but mine wanted to ask. It recognized three possible answers:

(a) Like between sleep and waking, there is a band of existence between death and life, in and which another consciousness can enter and, if a window is opened, access sleeping mind;  
or

(b) All individual thought comes from one's Private Unconscious; or

(c) Each individual's Collective Unconscious contains cumulated data of reincarnations of a finite number of 'seeds' of consciousness, from which seemingly 'alien' thought can spring.

*Curia nato?...*

Well, I had adored listening to dialogues between my father and educated friends; certainly it was possible my child mind overheard the words. Regardless the source, I felt 'embraced by' and 'sensed meaning beyond' the words; yet, something ('She-Who-Refuses-To-Believe' vs. 'She-Who-Wants to?') kept me from looking up the words, thinking, *will Psychology eventually provide a solid explanation for all mental phenomena, or do there exist saints, devils and devas—spirit consciousnesses of another realm who, in rare conjunctive conditions between theirs and the human state, can affect 'matter' in this realm with force from theirs, and implant conscionable words into a living brain? If the latter is not the case, then the Unconscious is as expansive and extensive as Jung conceived it to be....*

I've chased after dreams because in and of the Collective Unconscious I am given to believe. Any 'god' acceptable to me would not preclude logical establishment of the Science of Body and Mind which Freud, Jung, and Reich envisioned, from opposite and in-between ends of the pole. By such, Humankind could leap its chasms of ineffectiveness, comprehending what It needs in the concept of a 'Son' begotten to manifest 'God' in flesh as well as spirit. Finally I pulled out my dictionaries—English, Latin, Italian....

“Curia nato,” *child of the Curia, to the Curia born....* And the definition of “Curia?” Depending how far back in ancient history one goes, “Curia” meant *either the tribunal via which popes governed the Roman Catholic Church, or, before that, ”a tribunal of a clan that embraced families of the same stock in the male line, with the members having a common name and being united in worship of their common ancestors.”*

To the Senate born? *Yes!* Had I not felt secretly that I possessed a consciousness with as much as male right to capacity of rule of consciousness? But *my* ‘clan’ embraced a family of the same stock *female* line, united in worshipping common ancestors male *and* female; a blood line of genetically transmitted psychical content of unlabeled *universal* qualities that course all the way back to where Infinity becomes, again, Eternity...

Perhaps my father, true patrician of soul, *did* speak of various ancient customs that evolved westward from Persia and Mesopotamia and eastward from Greece, to mingle with those out of Africa, Arabia and India—of millennia in which commingled the kingdoms of Matter, Psyche and Mind into a quadrilineal pyramid through Aton, Yahweh, Allah and Humankind. Perhaps some words did dive through the Child-Conscious onto the vocabulary of the Collected Unconscious, toward a concept of godliness that includes equality of femininity.

*Curia nato... Curia nato...*

Vanity would equal mysticism, to believe such thought potential originated in my matter alone—to say, *It is I, nothing more, who invokes all thought and dreams.* Yet this particular evocation was remarkable, surrounding as it did the entire galaxy of my individual psyche, words so immediately intuitable they had to rise to the Private Unconscious, yet seemed to come from Castaneda’s separate reality....

**2000**

I was able to realize my long dream of visiting the Middle-East, but JC did not go on his beckoning Amazon journey. Much more, than wishing he had wanted and been able to come with me, I wished he had been able to realize his dream; but his health was eroded by severe afflictions. We were smack-dab in the stereotypical movie of a physically aging couple; but he humored it all, fond of quoting a neighbor, that “growing old is not for sissies.” Our days took on a predictable pattern. He read and watched television; I worked on my writings; we looked forward to visits with our children and grandchildren. Occasionally we would take a day trip that involved little walking.

“I’ll never understand someone who doesn’t like mustard,” JC said, as we fixed sandwiches for a just such an outing. “Someone who doesn’t like mustard is plain weird.”

It isn’t that I don’t *like* mustard; I just use it sparingly, like on hotdogs and ham. “Remember the ‘sugar of the earth’ and the ‘salt of the earth’?” I responded, referring to a sermon we sat through, when our younger daughter decided to go to a renegade bible school with neighbor friends, who had been promised a quarter for every prospect they enticed. We had no objection; we taught our daughters human civility and let them find their own spiritual way. It was only fair, however, that we attend that Easter Sunday ‘graduation,’ where the pastor delivered the sugar-and-salt sermon. JC laughed at the memory.

“As I recall,” I went on, closing my sandwich, “the talk made me think that people are divided like that, physiologically--those who, like you, like things pickled and marinated and can do without donuts and cinnamon rolls.”

“You know?--” JC put his sandwich in the bag. “It’s a fact that drug users who like sweets are more prone to becoming addicts. Remember the guy in the ‘Golden Arm?’ When he couldn’t get heroin he just stuffed sugar in his mouth.”

Now that interested me much. I remembered coming away from that movie thinking that a heroin junky could wind up a sugar junky, not the reverse. On the other hand, as already stated, I’ve believed it’s not substance, alone, that makes an addict--that there’s got to be some initial physiological matrix to which addiction glues itself.

A short time later JC and I were riding across the Carquinez Strait on our way to San Francisco. There was to be a big sail on the Bay--the U. S. Oracle and Switzerland’s Alinghi were going head-on-head in an exhibition race, before the upcoming America’s Cup. JC sailed a lot as a young man, crewing for wealthy boat owners; this day was a highlight for him.

As we gained the curve, the twin spans were perfectly perpendicular to the focus of my eyes; and I experienced a concrete dual awareness, of the unseen diverging lines of the image and the cones of lines converging to each lens--

“One of these days we ought to revisit China Camp,” JC said glancing out over the water.

“Where we were, when you ‘proposed’?” I supplied. He laughed, because he recognized the word, *proposed*, in quote marks. (What he actually had said was, “How would you like to go to Seattle with me, while I work on my Ph.D.?”)

“Good old China Camp!” he continued. “A Chinese village straight out of the 19<sup>th</sup> century—where my mother watched filming of that John Wayne movie that used Marin County’s coastline for the shore of China--and that little island some 50 feet away. In the old days there were shrimp boats out there. They and the whole village all were run by Chinese

families, big machines at the pier full of dried shrimp. Beer was a big business too. I had a friend there, went more than once to his home for dinner.”

*That probably was about the time I transferred from junior college to San Francisco State, I mused--when I had to take a room in that funky boarding house up on Pacific Heights, because everything near campus was taken. I remembered stuffing myself with cake and reading “As I Lay Dying,” of which I recall nothing except its essence, as I do, with Kafka.*

*Sad how much stuff one can forget....* But not, chocolate cake with double-chocolate frosting thick and goopy, bought at the Hippo two blocks up on Van Ness, in that second-floor Victorian bedroom on the first ridge of hills above the Bay, the foghorns playing against the window and a mist curtain hanging outside. In the communal living room, Mimi, another student in similar circumstances, played Rachmaniff’s “Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini” as I wished I could, with her entire being.

I was 17, and those were among the best months of my life. *Freedom...* hop on the bus and be down at the corner of Market and Van Ness in minutes, with 15 to spare before the next bus, for coffee in the little shop there, and friendly conversation with a couple of cigarette salesmen—fatherly types who gave us sample packages. Outside, the second-by-second changing scene of the city, where by some miraculous fluke of fate we wonderfully had come to roost, free of our parents, free from the tribulations of their age...

It was humorous now to remember my mother’s admonition, *never take a cigarette from a stranger!* She had omitted the word that would have made sense. Later I understood her fear, knowing my nature--that (*a la* propaganda of her era) I inadvertently might smoke marijuana and be smuggled away to become a sex slave—

“Traffic’s not bad today and no smog,” JC interrupted. We were sailing past Berkeley, its campus spire clear against the blue; and it turned out to be a glorious day for us, indeed.

That evening, back at my desk, my eye was caught by what looked like a bubble on top of the friendship vase that holds desk items. My magnifying glass was standing perfectly upright opposite me, its rim undefined to sight by the small amount of light from the window. The ‘bubble’ was reflecting a small portrait of me, the same passing through the glass; and I imagined the far tinier images of it, entering the bubbles of the eyes’ lenses.

I went to the bathroom and stood very near its mirror. I forced my eyes to ‘cross’ to the point that in the glass there appeared a ‘third eye’, between them. Seeing the ‘third eye’ and oneself looking through it is a bit startling; but I reminded myself that I couldn’t get hurt doing it (although I did lose a retinal cell, several years ago, from fixating a full moon through the tiny square of a screen). I recalled the long-ago sight of light on wind-bent rye grass, and pondered again how perception, alone, can open mind to new cognition. *It* had been responsible for initiating a determination that privately rankled as ridiculous hubris: to unite the forces of *being?*--to ‘see’ the full path from Adam to Man, atom to brain?

I had worn all day not only the bottom partial plate that fills in molars, which I keep in all the time, but also an upper partial plate that supplies a bicuspid and upper molars. The upper plate is like a vise across the palate, just one of the agonies of “decrepitude,” as JC refers to our present conditions. I took the appliance out, laid it beside the keyboard, and opened *World Bible*.

Material gets synthesized more and more over Time, lots lost between the lines, as I discovered between the two *Lempriere* editions used for *History*; “annihilate the ‘secondary’” was sound advice. *World Bible*, a work of highly reputable scholars, dates back to ‘40’s, but nothing more ‘modern’ better could set forth the courses of world religions. It extensively

details the ancient initiation of religious texts, ongoing influences of population migrations through regions of Thought's development, and the resulting generational emergences of sectarian variations. As summarized in its introductory pages:

“...[I]deals of world brotherhood and international human morality were uttered in many places long before the birth of Jesus...”

“During the greatest of all religious eras, roughly from 800 to 500 b.c., India, China, Persia and Israel all were injecting into human thought...a new force [which] has been one of the most powerful influences in human life...”

“But— with the appearance of the *Upanishads* in India (800 to 600 b.c.), Gautama, the Buddha (560 to 480 b.c.)...Confucius (551 to 479 b.c.) and Lao Tze (604 to 517 b.c.) in China, Zarathushtra (660 to 583 b.c.) in Persia, and the Pre-Exilic prophets (750 to 586 b.c.) in Israel—sacrifices, ceremonies, and propitiations ceased to be enough to make up the religious life of man.

“In the Hindu *Upanishads* and in Taoism the ruling principle of the universe was conceived as a single intangible, indescribable,..benevolent force, working for the welfare of mankind. ... Confucius ‘preferred not speaking’ about God, but spoke of ‘the ordinances of heaven’ and human conduct instead. And in [Persian] Zoroastrianism and the Judaism of this period God was worshipped as a single personal, universal benevolent force, a loving Father-God...”

“But regardless of differences in the states sought as the result of religious life, all agreed that they could be achieved only through individual purity of heart and mind, good work, and righteous loving-kindness to one’s fellow-men, in recognition of the essential unity of men, each with all others, and each and all with the divine principle.”

I was born no different from anyone, with a decent brain and some talents, as I believe with all my heart are all save those with genetic defections exceeding the collective norm. Were mothers of the east any different from those of the west? I do not want, however, to pursue theology *per se*. I seek that small segment of birthed humankind whose job it was given to do thought that pursues *reasoning*, which leads to surmounting human foibles.

Perhaps in the process I shall die of a stroke; ‘Lord’ knows, smoking can typify the arteriosclerostically-prone woman. As the masters say of pernicious habits (and as my related

journals would reveal) no amount of meditation can effect quitting nicotine. I try not to speculate, time presently so precious, what it would be like to be thrown by stroke into a useless state of being. Mishra, I console myself, claimed to have had “several” heart attacks but looked quite well when seen by me (that was--*goodness!*--during the time of the Last JC, who took me to a conference in San Francisco. But for that surrogate son’s path crossing mine, Mishra I never would have seen)....

It was time, JC and I decided, to make arrangements for disposal of our bodies when we died. *Dreaded task*...but there’s no avoiding that facet of existence. I lighted a cigarette, next morning, before calling the mortuary to begin the process. At the end of the conversation, I asked Chuck, the mortician, “Tell me: after all your years there, have you learned anything more than the average person knows, about Death?”

“Nope,” he answered instantly. “But I have learned something about peoples *lives*, I think. I’ve seen bodies that suffered all manners of death, and the only thing I can say about it is, you can tell by the facial expression whether the person was content with his or her life when the end came.”

Snow and cancelled flights in Missouri (where JC had his first teaching job) kept me from being with my father at his end. Now, after hanging up the telephone, memories slouched into mind of only two dead faces I so far had seen. From what I knew of their lives, what Chuck said rang true: one, the closed-eyed visage of a woman whose uncompromising insistence on certain religious beliefs unwittingly had affected her family dramatically. Through all kinds of ensuing miseries she intractably held on to those beliefs that substantiated a sacrificial lot; and her death mask was true to the personal tale—unsmiling cold acceptance: she would obtain her

reward in Heaven. A few months earlier, the face of her husband. In his last years I sensed his disillusion, psyche no longer able to allow the cheerful disposition and ready smile once his at all costs. The skilled mortician hand had not been able to erase mixed disgust and anger from the face, he whose hard work and stalwart devotion had come to seem for naught.

After the call, I came across and listened to a tape recording of a hypnotherapy ‘regression’ session, to which I subjected myself experimentally some three years past. I had forgotten about it, especially what I’d said. On listening, my attention was seized by one topic covered—*sadness*. I went to the kitchen for a cup of coffee to ward off its and death’s miasma, and began to sing and tap a little dance, as now and then I’m prompted to do...

*Me and my shadow... strolling down the avenue...tap, tap, tap...*

I had a great love of dance back in that era of the big Hollywood musicals. Beneath our San Francisco flat, in what had been a Victorian carriage yard, I put on my own productions, singing and dancing my heart out. The poverty of my sufficiently loved childhood was of things material, the lack of which Mind unquestioningly accepted; wish for lessons never even surfaced. So, there I was in the kitchen, waiting for the little espresso machine to do its thing, thinking arrested by the song’s words, feet tapping...

*Not a soul, to tell our troubles to...tap, tap, tap--*

when a thought did register: *These sandals are no good for tapping; one needs tap shoes for tapping!*— at which point I received a mental picture of a pair of tap shoes, my cousin’s, the daughter of an aunt who married, as they said, “into money.”

That cousin had *everything*—her own bedroom (I slept in one with my three sisters); clothes beyond closeting (I wore some of her hand-me-downs), her own beveled-glass credenza holding an entire collection of Story Book dolls (I had one, a milkmaid); a beautiful shiny royal-

blue Schwinn (I, when able, rented a bike from the Fillmore Street bike shop, 25 cents an hour); but most of all, she had *tap shoes and lessons*—

All of a sudden, I was crying--aging woman, crying like a little girl? Yes, crying over tap shoes for which the unconscious Soul *so* long ago silently had yearned, while Mind, knowing the impossibility, had repressed even daydreaming of what it would be like, to give them living sounds.

Often I had given voice to Freud's thesis that one might dream a much harsher fate befalling another, than the 'injury' inflicted by that person really warranted. For example, one might think one has dismissed a rude comment as not worth bothering about; but Feeling-Thought, ah, it can continue, stored in that warehouse of the Private Unconscious, and be revived in a dream where the perpetrator gets hung up by the you-know-whats. But I hadn't grasped how deeply sad disappointment can burrow in Psyche, and how the depth of a burrow and the density of its emotions are not in direct ratio to the circumstantial spade that dug it.

I didn't cry long; indeed, I soon laughed. One small moon in Psyche just had been vaporized, a clear example of how intellectual cognition alone is insufficient to neutralize a repressed constellation, and how *emotional* release is requisite to disintegration. But we can make Time our own, at least one yogic master has proclaimed! There might be a discarded pair of tap shoes at the Good Will store, waiting just for me. (You know?--another thought occurs--*I never ever thought of being able to own a set, but oh how much I always loved drums....*)

I took my coffee to join JC in the t.v. room. "The world's moving too fast for this 70-year-old mind to register everything," I said, "like an old p.c. chip trying to process data at the speed of light. But from what we're seeing and hearing in the media of late, it seems the nation's money—its lifeblood—progressed from 'mobster usury' to 'corporate.'"

JC laughed at *usury*. “That word hasn’t been employed for a century!--but if you’ve heard it over radio, maybe it’s coming into vogue again. Next thing you know, it’ll be *pettifoggery*.”

“Hah!” I exclaimed, “Isn’t *that* here already? I never believed that the Chief Officer of My Land had to be invincible; but the territory of presidents has become the entire globe. Inside of borders, everywhere, abide persons of human families that distant individuals call their own. Leaders may not need to have the caliber intellect that gods are imagined to possess, but they sure as you-know-what need to know more now than their *own* little history...”

I went for a coffee refill, thinking, *good Lord, I need to shut up. JC knows futility of voter griping is as certain as spawning of old plots we’re hopeless against suffering, all over again*; but the diatribe silently went on....

*When have ‘The People’—in four recorded millennia!—ever been able to turn the tide? More young people losing lives, limbs, sight? How about the exhilarating anesthesia-less surgeries of World War I? ‘Torture?’ Well, don’t we all remember the exquisite methods employed in World War II? Damaged populations?—*

At age seven, seeing mounds of ghastly skeletons in the Saturday matinee newsreels at the Metro, I thought, *surely* this is the end of Humankind’s potential for atrocity. *How naive!* *Since then countless more Richard Jaeckels have written their last letter home to Mom...*

I recalled the closed-down Texaco gas station at the corner of Lombard and Fillmore, and folks needing little books of stamps before they could buy meat and other staples. At night, the thick black curtains pulled down every window, I no longer could watch the Golden Gate’s tower light swing around until I fell asleep, while the adults sat soberly around the radio listening for news, because I had a cousin in the island battles. I didn’t know, then, that atrocity was not

monogenus but a persistent potential devolutionary state of mind, and the genesis of terrorizing acts was where Life was impeded in repeating generations...

I took my refilled cup out to the small deck of our perfect Sonoma retirement home, leaving the First resting his bad hip in his new recliner. Out in the small garden, the high-rising lavender Society Garlic blooms were taking in near-noon sunlight. *I should be—I could be!—happy*, I thought. Except I couldn't forget the many young of our citizens, who could be my grandsons and granddaughters, trying to keep souls together, facing their whole post-war lives without their whole selves. For all my probably-too-frequently feigned intelligence, I simply couldn't see why it had to be. Regardless epoch, era and names of players and arenas, it seemed History did repeat the falling into place of the same balls. As for the 'modern' world's present inter-nation hostilities, we could use seeing overlay charts of changes of local, regional, state, and imperial demographics of territorial areas over just the past 2,000 years.

*Just whose children are we?*—stymied in contemplation of true mortality (no eternal identity! No second chances! No perfect life, ever!), there hovers the vestige of a personalized god--an old man somewhere up in the clouds who has all the answers. Overwhelmed by the stupidities and vulnerabilities of our existence, *we* eschew responsibility for it all. Still an optimistic determinist, however, I refuse not to see progress, taking solace thinking of Humankind eventually looking back on its comfort blanket of today and seeing its ancient collective childishness as once it accepted that Earth was flat...*Progress!--minute that it may be, toward less carnality.* Twenty-five years between WWI and WWII; should a third really come, at least there will have been a lull of 50 in-between...

*Why did "Christ" become such a symbol?* Because--despite necessity of a last vestige of the concept of gods consorting with human females, despite the adulteration wrought upon his

philosophy by Constantinian era politics--the mission in life that he represented remains intuitable. The issue no longer is, whether he was a son of god or a son of man. The issue is whether 'God' is not a son of Humankind...

I accept being a 'Pollyanna' (as JC lovingly alleges), believing that there *does* exist future possibility of improving Life on Earth for every incarnation, provided we don't blow it all off; but it's not going to happen when that Old Man decides it. It's going to be when Humankind collectively has outgrown myths, purified systems, nourished and developed individual consciousnesses, raised consciences, righted its own wrongs—when It achieves a great 'transference', reversing the projection of Humankind's thought and emotion from imagined *deos* to Itself, and single-mindedly pursues that cooperation suggested by Montague...

"The prejudices of a class have often been mistaken for the laws of nature. Similarly, 'struggle' is correctly interpreted as the striving of living creatures *with their environment* in order to survive. By those who misused it, Stalinism was offered as...a biological justification for competition. This doctrine has become part of the...system of overt release of the western world today. This view is dangerously false. What was wrong with its misuse was the one-sided overemphasis on *competition* to the virtual complete neglect of the factor of cooperation. Cooperative behavior is at least as prominent a form of interaction between animals under natural conditions as is conflict or competition."

Ashley Montague, *On Being Human*, pages 16, 20, 22, 23, 29.

## 2006

Living changed for me; a fall dislodged vertebrae at the joining of lumbar and sacral spine segments, and I was referred for surgery--major and risky. I opted instead to first employ a non-surgical approach--shoe inserts, moving bottom cupboard items up, a board under the mattress, strict watch on posture. The condition warranted prescription of synthetic painkillers, but their side effects were unpleasant. Given JC's youthful experiences, it was logical that he contemplate a prescription of medical *cannabis sativa* for both our arthritic conditions. I had enough past familiarity to admit, *why not try a homeopathic drug?*

Instead of our conservative health plan, we traveled out of town and paid \$200 each for an extensive medical examination by a doctor willing to prescribe the product, if circumstances warranted. It took some weeks for the process; it was late spring when I accompanied JC to a dispensary, also in a different town. At the dispensary I was impressed by its security measures—a fenced parking lot and on-duty ‘guard;’ permission to enter only with prescription; and a serious staff who issued a photograph identity card.

Other authorized customers were of all walks and ages of life; I felt less awkward, seeing a woman of my age in the group. There was a wide, assortedly labeled selection from which to choose; I let JC make the decision there. Anyone with a spine condition will testify it hurts the very most in the morning; starting a day is hard. Over the following days I found that a few inhalations containing the active ingredient delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (“THC”) distanced pain for an hour or more, allowing me ease into the day....

November came, my birthday month. I was pulling on my jacket, trying to count up how many of my birthdays I’d shared with JC, when he chided me through the open door of the bathroom, where he was ‘taking a leak’: “Get a leg on!” Then, before the zipper reached my busom, he emerged, saying, “Oh, wait. We can’t leave yet.”

“Why not?”

“I can’t find my teeth.”

*That reminded me.* I wasn’t ready either; I’d forgot to put in that nuisance of an upper partial plate; but psychologically, I was a lot better after what I called a “mini-csf-overload.”

My mother, age 97, had broken her right femur in three places in a fall in early autumn. A 12-inch metal plate now moored the bone, and she was in a second month of post-surgery skilled nursing rehab. Juggling time with needs, taking care of her property, and my own home

life wouldn't have been too much, had I not been in the midst of editing the *History* appendix, and, over it all, my body's discomforts.

Yoga had been getting me through the action; but I had been bottling up anxiety. There wasn't time for private exultation, that *History's* text finally was in the process of being produced for copyright and Library of Congress cataloguing—*all the years, the places, the fears, tears, and graces*--nor for digesting a major disappointment, failing to secure a hoped-for professional evaluation. Eeking out costs of equipment, supplies, Xeroxing and binding seemed all the more ludicrous.

"Crisis night," my face haggard, JC left me to myself, whilst I, between crying jags at bottom of psyche, privately bewailed not being taken in a firm, reassuring embrace. I wasn't able to sleep and tried to work, but my malaise was not sublimatable. Finally, about 3:30 a.m., I turned again to meditation and, in dreams, Psyche spit out its self-pity...

*It was my responsibility to provide dinner for those around me, and "the mixture was in the bag." All I had to do was to shape it. There was one man who offered help but he was distant from the job. Distraction was growing greater every moment until, thankfully, it seemed I almost was done. But then, as I reached in the bag, my fingers touched something very familiar but "wrong to be in there"—one of my mother's 'diapers!'...*

*I was seeking privacy but persons along my way were inhibiting me with niceties which I did not have aplomb to bear gracefully. I finally gained privacy in a bathroom that looked like one from my grammar school, with wire-meshed windows high on a bleak wall. I saw adolescent boys observing me through the window. One of them managed to 'come through' and made a suggestive comment; I realized he had seen me only in silhouette against the light and thought I*

*was young. I had him turn and face me, and said with force, "I AM SEVENTY-ONE;" and he quickly exited the door when he saw the real me.*

*Of a sudden I was on a sidewalk with people around. A scream erupted from deep inside of me, and my voice was as I have experienced it a couple of times, before, in dreams—slowly, gutturally forced, as if being pulled from me against my will: LISTEN...TO...ME! F...U...C...K...I...N...G MONEY! Instantly another man from out of the crowd dropped down and crouched at my feet in the posture of a crippled beggar. He lifted his hand as if it held an alms cup. I had a complete sensation that he understood and was showing me that he did. I took his fingers in my hand, bent over, and kissed him on the forehead...*

I, too, had been a ‘beggar’ of sorts--never in all years of employment getting equal pay for equal work. Money!—the determinant of so much, childhood through wife and motherhood,; then, beyond, single-year scrapings to invest in writings, and, *nothing!*—not that freedom, which Olga Reich had been so adamant about maintaining; nothing to show for it!

“Validation, too,” JC commented in the morning, when I described the non-monetary-compensation theme. “I remember that feeling, of maybe never attaining the goal after all the self-sacrifice given it.”

“I know you know,” I replied. “I knew, back when, what you were going through; and I knew there was nothing anyone else could do to make it easier.” It was the way it had to be for him, and he couldn’t make my private lot easier either. But we lucked out; we were given the chance to move beyond the residue of struggles of too-early, albeit naturally instinctive mating. I was able to walk to JC and *let* him take me in his arms—letting *go*, literally, for he himself said, “My god, you’re melting.” When finally he extricated himself and sat down, I bent over and kissed him on the forehead. He put his arm around me and said, “Awwwww.”

“I’m going to be a pest from here on,” I said, nuzzling his stomach. “You’re going to be my ‘Bruno’ (the name of our cat, really JC’s familiar).”

“Except you can’t pick me up,” he quipped.

Teeth all in, remembering how he had made me laugh again, I was ready to leave for the birthday dinner, complete with an orchid--the first corsage in memory received from him—and the diamond ‘engagement’ ring that he surprised me with, two Christmases past. Third finger, left hand, I wear the diamond above two bands, wife and writer— both of which I bought myself. The silver one goes on first, my rededication of marriage with JC the second time around (we didn’t exchange rings at the County Clerk remarriage ceremony). The gold one I bought later at a thrift shop, a dedication of self to Self like a reminder string ‘round the finger, never to lose sight of my own dream. (Judging from a permanent bend at the back of that plain, unmarked band, it obviously also resided a long time on a likely-now-dead wife’s hard-working hand....)

Before going out to warm up the car, I took a moment at the aquamarine spire of a crystal vase on the living room table, to smell the roses from a sister--two blooms and a bud of different pink. The house around me was simple but beautiful to my eyes, which lingered on photos of my grandchildren. *In my world*, I thought, switching on the engine, *everyone would have their own sanctuary large enough for two--genders determined by whose sanctuary it was, of course!*

“PEN-DAY-O!” the First bellowed over his hip pain, as he settled in the passenger seat. It sounded like some expletive.

“*What was that?*” I asked, adjusting my bifocals for driving.

“Oh, just something I heard once—not addressed to me, by the way! I don’t know how it’s spelled. I heard it from Daniel.” Daniel had been an ‘old day’s’ hat-cum-marijuana seller *par excellence* along Mazatlan’s *playa*. “Daniel never went near the El Cid, you know,” JC

continued. “They didn’t like him. But it was a short walk past it to El Moro, when one’s legs were young. From there one could climb to the lookout.”

JC talked on, another favorite Beat story, as I backed the car out of the driveway; but my thoughts still were attached to home and family. The old conditioning--the always-striving-to-be-‘total’ female of a dying era’s culture--never would be conquered in me. One who seriously practices Yoga is not supposed to make vows, I’d read; but I was wanting to make one: *that I surrender my history, will remember the beliefs of this day, and continue my utmost to pass on to my children as much as possible of that light which can “enlighten every person who comes into the world”—the Logos...Reason...*

JC reached over and squeezed my hand as he’s wont to do sometimes, when nothing’s being said. It took a long time for me to realize how alike, how ‘self-contained’ each of us was, so aware how anonymous ‘the self’ really is, in existence...

It was anachronistic, not synchronistic, when, back from dinner, we watched Emma Thompson as Carrington, with Lytton. But such was not of what JC and I were capable with each other. We were beyond ‘individuation’ now, as if each of us respectively had to be his and her own ultimate Vulcan to forge “insanity” and “intactness,” in order to continue to become what our individual existences determined us be.

“*God dammit,*” I later imagined Lily saying to Dash. “*Should I live to be an hundred I want someone alive who’ll carry me to the ocean one more time.* What else but a nameless force induces one to keep loving the demons possessed--induces one to keep feeling that the demons can be faced, and love fully beyond them? Dash did, but not long enough to carry Lily to the sea...

I looked up at a still bare canvas, hanging where the past Easter/Passover I removed the female crucifixion painted after the divorce. Going on three decades on a self-constructed cross was long enough. The blank canvas also occupied space she shared with the only print of “Remorse,” painted from a tattered photo the Countryman had carried a long time in his wallet and gave to me: a sculpted gargoyle, with whose pathetic expression I’m sure he identified. With it was a poem in his hand; I do not know who composed it. The next to last line was from *Proverbs 20:1*:

“Terror and darkness a horrid despair  
Agony painted upon the once fair  
Brow of the man who refused to give up  
The lure of the wine-filled, the o’rflowing cup  
Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging  
No wine in death is his torment assuaging....”

The oil miniature of “Remorse” was stolen, with one other from my sole exhibit, in ‘91. Some folks said that I should feel honored that they were stolen; I was sure otherwise, that *Art appreciation* hadn’t been the motive. “Remorse” was a work of many hours, true; but the second, which looked like a Hell’s Angel’s belt buckle, was a toss-off at the very end of the project. It was the *type* of depictions that the thief wanted. I imagined them hanging on the wall of some neo-nazi miscreant, who’d require a great deal more sympathy than the average person would give.

I had to grow old before completing hands equal to eyes, and sight to brain and back through hands into the world, reflection through reflection to projection of image. Being able to seize time to produce *History* now seemed a miracle. Self-hypnosis through Yoga (as I was given to employ it) was work’s undeniable primary fuel. However, as the sages say, it’s not effective when it comes to conflicting emotions, when success isn’t certain by desire and labor alone.

Lately I've needed to fight abandoning efforts to establish *History*—times when I think, *yes, I want to increase knowledge—whose to govern us, if not ourselves?—but I'm not up to this job!* Persistence needs bolstering away from the mundane mind; and, concomitant with relief from chronic back pain, I *have* experienced a welcome, temporary dissipation of doubt via the mind/body state yielded by the THC. Alcohol, which has served much art, never appealed to me. (Matter of fact--having dealt with alcohol addiction in persons I loved--given a choice as to only one of the two substances being in existence, alcohol would be the hands-down loser.)

THC's effects are *nothing* compared to LSD, with which (ever the experimenter) I had two long-ago experiences. The first (I don't recall the year) I later would incorporate into a scene of *Renacimiento*. A friend and I (he was driving) were going to a Grateful Dead concert at San Francisco's Winterland. Each of us had swallowed a tiny white pill, "white lightening" I believe it was called. About a half-hour after swallowing the pill, as the car traveled the 19<sup>th</sup> Street tunnel, my consciousness seemed to be 'hanging' in space, as if my head was all of me that existed.

By the time we arrived at the hall, I was aware again of full body and feeling beautifully perfect, replete with exuberant 'loving-kindness.' The entire arena exuded a feeling of unfettered joy; the crowd seemed all wonderful natural children, faces and white clothing standing out sharply under 'black light,' the air filled with tangible anticipation of the music soon to begin. Of a sudden, a first long, commanding musical note sounded. Instantly it called to me...

My friend was startled, for I immediately turned and began cutting my way through the crowd, which seemed to fall away for me, until I stood in a semicircle of persons right beneath the stage. A young group called "Poco" had struck the chord; its singer looked to me like a boy

angel, and the ensuing music sounded heaven-sent. Then occurred what even to this day I am loath to call an hallucination. I distinctly felt the space above open up and ‘otherworldly’ voices join in. I looked briefly to the person each side of me, each a male, each with eyes riveted front; and I noticed the semicircle was composed orderly of male, female, male, female, etc, all similarly mesmerized. Then, as the music reached a crescendo, I experienced an...*I don’t know what adjective to give...impossible? uncreditable?....* It was as if a current from the right ran all through the bodies in the semicircle; I distinctly felt it pass through my lower torso.

If my mental disposition were so inclined, I might have believed myself initiated into some secret godly society. Regardless, a lingering feeling of ‘sacred awakedness’ stayed with me several hours. Back home, I was reluctant to lose it to sleep, which didn’t seem to want to come anyway. I left bed and went outdoors, where I stood marveling at nature until the dawn’s light crept over the horizon and birds began their morning song.

Serious literature on the subject warns that LSD effects could vary dramatically, depending on individual nature, the environment, and the quality of and quantity ingested—all of which I ignored some months later. I ate a tiny piece of blotter that contained the chemical—a stupidly impulsive act that I expected would provide escape from current bothersome circumstances. The following two hours, still a vivid memory, convinced me *never, ever* to touch LSD again...

*“I” was falling “inside myself,” endlessly falling through an unbounded swirling dark space that could go for a haven of the archetypes, while ghostly visages and figures alternately approached, twirled ‘round me and receded. One of them looked like the “virgin, Mary.” Each time I opened my eyes and saw the world, to which it felt I never would return, was like a punch*

*to an already sick stomach, forcing me to close my eyes again, only to resume the hopeless fall that felt as if it would end only when I got sucked into the sludge of the “Id.”*

Those two long, long ago LSD experiences formed the core of my strong caring to see cannabis legally managed. So long as it is associated with other, so much more potent substances, it remains in the illegal street arena where our youngsters are vulnerable to real dangers. Further, regard for cultivated development of the cannabis herb should be the same as for a bright bunch of organic carrots (the ones in my more memorable stews, that make JC go *umpphhhh* with the first swallow). Its medical efficacy, physical and psychological, is overdue for adequate, objective, controlled study.

Huston Smith, in his *Cleansing the Doors of Perception: The Religious Significance of Entheogenic Plants and Chemicals*, speaks comprehensively on “the mysterious relation among entheogens, consciousness, and faith” (*entheogen* denoting a substance *taken sacramentally*). However, while I have experienced an emboldening by THC of my faith, literature remains sparse, too, on cannabis enhancement of spirituality.

Books were my childhood--the arm-laden, downhill walks from the Green Street Branch Library to the family flat on the flats, where my parents forgave reading at table; how much I loved words, beautiful phrasings and images filling the silence of home. I’d forgotten the arrest of sleep, propped on elbows in bed transfixed by visions between sentences, rapt at the thought that someday I also might weave words to do for a world-dogged mind what the prophet of old said of sleep, *to knit the raveled sleeve of care...*

All of which brings me back to *nicotine*, that half-century addiction I *do* and still have. (If I’d had anywhere near the affinity for alcohol that I’ve had for nicotine, I likely would have become a bag lady; ‘lord’ help anyone who has both.) No question that it has been a ‘crutch’ in

the harnessment of the writer-in-me to write nakedly, avoiding speculation, for example, of family reaction should this volume reach print. It would have been more merciful to Ego to write fiction, whittling facets of self into imaginary characters. I alluded to that concern once, a dozen years ago, when I had the good fortune to speak briefly with Ram Dass.

“I believe I comprehend the concept of *becoming*,” I said, “but how does one deal with the process of *unbecoming*?”

“Have fun with it!” was the guru’s reply.

Can’t say, whether the daughter who today would treat cannabis with far greater awe than those small white wafers of sixty years ago, has had much fun with transcending of identity. A short while ago, I left a meeting at which it was decided that Mother must be placed permanently in a nursing home, forcing Thought full ‘round its psyche’s aging constellations. Coincidentally (synchronistically?), in the hospital waiting room, I came across an article entitled, “High Times for Brain Growth” (*Science News*--typical of waiting rooms, a year old, October 15, 2005, Volume 168). It reported a scientific study from the *Journal of Clinical Investigations*. The work, conducted at Saskatchewan University under one Xia Zhang, strengthened advocacy of medical THC as a cheap anti-depressant and anti-anxiolytic. One dramatic revelation was that the *cannabinoids* in the herb appear to stimulate growth of new brain cells...

## 2007

In the wake of caregiving needs, I began again with meditation; but old mental recitations no longer held attention. Last night I retrieved Mishra’s book from the shelf, to have it fall open to a last chapter, where I had left off at the mantra, *I am Brahman. I am the Supreme. The entire*

*Universe is the supreme. I am unborn and eternal.* I found it hard even to read those words, much less recite them. They were preposterously presumptuous, were they not? And then I fell asleep....

*I was in an area I did not recognize. I had 'passed the fourth level' without realizing it. The lobby in which I now found myself was on the top floor; but I kept looking back at a 'silly person' behind the last 'crystal' door, instead of looking determinedly forward—*

As sleep began to break, Mishra's recitation reinvaded mind with a different emphasis: **I am Brahman; I am Supreme; I have no death**—not statements by a god or myself: simply the claim of the voiceless Universal force, the cause of everything. *That I could live with: after this 'i's' death there are many crystalline doors through which the components of it shall pass into Ultimate Reality, and this "I" shall not remember itself or that it ever had been...*

Sundays, JC and I have our coffee and share the "Chron" and a bit of prescribed THC in the t.v. room. Bruno comes in for his morning brushing. My back pain fades and I allow myself without recrimination to enjoy a nicotine cigarette, while we chat about family matters and conclude that all, for the moment, is as well as we should ask.

Then we're ready to get together in bed, 'spouse' and 'spouse' (not being bothered whether, if Life persists in us yet another decade, we will be able to climb into bed at all!); and, what we *do* there 'ain't nobody's business but our own' (except—*forget the movies*--there are many ways for bodily love to satisfy itself!) The rest of the day we live like brother and sister, when I am given to contemplate, should we live into the 100's, will we live, then, like monk and monness? Regardless, I always will think that something apart from materiality brought and rebrought us together, something that works through Body but is much, much more of *Mind*—for

I cannot imagine us of other psychophysiological natures; and, when all is said and done, gender is not involved at all....

\* \* \*

### **August 2007**

Six months after the fact, I feel ready to open a new p.c. file, and title it “Last Days.” *How callous it could seem to others, I think, that some notes now to be transcribed were recorded as they occurred; but the anonymous entity choicelessly born to write must, simply to keep on living.* When the time lived and died through those days ended, my journal disappeared. I felt relief; I would not need to relive it through words. Then, weeks afterward, I received a telephone call from the hospital. The journal mysteriously had surfaced; but the last days of me and JC were written before the beginning of Time...

### ***Sunday, January 14, 2007***

*“Date day,” for the past few years JC’s favorite day of the week; and this one altogether was going to be a great one. We’re going to the Bay Area, for a belated birthday celebration meal with one of our children....*

It’s early; I’m not awake yet, when JC stirs abruptly beside me. “I’m not feeling well,” he says. “My stomach was upset during the night.” I’m not able to ask details before he jumps from bed, makes for the bathroom, and begins to vomit. I’m with him instantly, and the sight I see in the bright light terrorizes me. He is vomiting blood...*blood...blood...uncontrollably, projectedly...thick red blood everywhere...*

Frightened beyond description, all I am able to say is, “Oh, god, please!...you’re scaring me!” He sat on the commode and I held his head, as if I could stop it. But it will not stop. The

bottom of the sink basin is full of clotted blood. Blood spewed everywhere, as if someone had been murdered viciously in the room's pristine whiteness....

*I wish I could say that the next hour was a blur, but I would remember every moment: calling for an ambulance, the fierce thoughts as I rode beside the driver, JC stretched out in the back being tended by two other men. A person doesn't think about the future at such times; altogether one knows but a succession of minute after minute after minute, in a now for which mind never can be prepared. I am glad for one thing. Not only did I then not know, that in a month he would be dead, but that our life journey together really ever could end....*

### **January 15**

A second blood transfusion has been given. There will be an endoscopy early today and other tests tomorrow. *Bring his eyeglasses and dentures; the hospital will supply his usual meds.*

### **January 16**

JC has been moved from ICU to a room. We wait for test results. The surgeon arrives. The colored image of the stomach is hard to focus on; it's the words I hear that keep me from looking clearly—cancer of the stomach; untreatable; two options: surgery, or go home and wait to die. JC doesn't hesitate a moment: surgery, of course!

I feel helpless; *all is happening too quickly....* “The entire stomach may not need to be removed,” the surgeon says. *Who ever has heard of a person living without a stomach? How does one eat, without a stomach?--through a pump into the intestines, which, if the entire stomach is taken, we are given to believe most likely will be temporary--that, with time and body adaptation, eventually JC will be able to eat by mouth, albeit in very small, frequent amounts.*

### ***January 17-18***

Three appointments are scheduled for the 23<sup>rd</sup>: Surgeon, 11:15 a.m.; Pre-Op nurse, 1:50 p.m.; anesthesiologist, 2:20 p.m. The operation itself is set for the 24<sup>th</sup>. But JC's condition seems so stable and he is able to eat without any trouble! All he wants is to get back home, and he will be allowed to return with me tomorrow, to wait out the intervening days.

### ***January 19-22***

I cook all of his favorite foods. We don't talk about the scheduled operation; outwardly we live these days as normally as we can...

### ***January 23***

*I try to make the 25-mile drive to the hospital like we are going shopping, all the while wondering. When did the cancer begin; how long did it take to develop? Why can't Time be given a chance to reverse it? Other questions I push aside. Will the externally pumped feedings into the intestine be something we can handle? What about the ensuing treatment—radiation!--barely alluded to by the surgeon....*

### ***January 24***

Tenacious hope has not been rewarded; JC no longer has a stomach.

### ***January 25***

In the ICU unit he keeps beating his hands against the bed, wrists trapped with braces and gauze. He wants that tube out of his mouth, especially where the gauze keeping it in place crosses over the side and down under the chin around the cheeks...*it looks so tight...*

He opens his eyes every so often and rolls them. The technician stands at bedside, but the inhalator must remain. It is so tortuous...*he won't remember, but I will...*

The surgeon informs me. It was discovered during surgery that the affected area climbed higher up the esophagus, to a point beyond visibility of the incision. ‘Suturing’ of esophagus to small intestine was done unseen, by a reach upwards the incision. My mind, presented with thought of JC’s subjection to a seemingly unperfected procedure, feels as if it will burst.

### ***January 26***

The pump feeding is underway. JC is on a doubled dosage of diuretic; with so much liquid being pumped in, the heart is struggling to keep up. He is conscious part of the time and able to self-dose morphine, four times an hour. When he dozes, his breathing is laborious enough to lift his head off the pillow, and his mouth gasps...

### ***January 27***

It’s still dark; I think about “heart to heart,” while getting ready for another day in the medical labyrinth. JC has been moved from ICU to a room. I tell myself again, I will try to control myself; *but!*—it isn’t that I don’t trust medical science; it’s that all is dispensed by *individuals*, and human beings have limits—we do, every one of us.

I wonder that appall doesn’t show on my face when the surgeon, in his bedside review, orders a stomach-acid killing medicine. The aide intervenes, to remind him: JC no longer has a stomach to kill acid in!

### ***January 28***

The inhalator mercifully is gone; he is conscious and alert; and, although still assaulted by tubes, he is so accepting of the discomforts it hurts me not to show my own dismay. Tomorrow the sutured area will undergo testing, with the patient rendered unconscious during it, to see if there is ‘leaking.’ *Should* there be, a *second* surgery will be necessary!

I have brought family pictures and an album to put together; it provides some distraction for us in the vacuum of waiting. And, when I leave him late this night he looks so much better; he truly looks like all will be all right. However, exiting the room I encounter a female technician who has been particularly attentive and caring. She is one person from whom I sense more is known than being said. She gives me an unexpected great hug, and, near to tears, whispers in my ear (*still, as I type her words, I feel disbelief I heard them*): “I’m so sorry... He’s never going to leave this hospital alive.” [I will learn, later, that her husband underwent a similar experience.]

### ***January 29***

9:50 a.m., the ‘leak’ test is underway. Half of me exists in a waking strangeness of itself in space. The other half knows it has been much longer than the 15 minutes quoted; yet I expect it to be even later, each time I look at my watch.

10:30 The test is done; JC still unconscious. “The surgeon is checking the results now,” the nurse tells me, “but the radiologist thought there was no leak.” JC’s wearing an inhalator again; meantime, morphine and “midazolam”—sedation and forgetfulness—are being fed through two of five tubes of varying thicknesses all ending underneath his skin, the silence punctuated by the inhalator’s regulated breaths.

Finally the surgeon appears. His explanation is dispassionate. “While everything first looked very good, we have found that there *is* a leak at the sectioning point. If it doesn’t heal itself, a second surgery will be necessary. We’ll run another test Friday”—a fluoroscopic x-ray of the esophagus.

*Four days seems too short a time for any true healing to take place? But who am I, to question?* [I do not know, then, what I later find through some research: the esophagus and

intestines do not have the kind of blood supply that other parts of the body do; that the chance of Nature forming connection between them is a risky gamble.]

### ***January 30***

Information dribbles out.... Chest x-ray reveals small tumor in the lungs, possibly more in liver (those, the surgeon says, can be dealt with “later.” *Later?—while being fed by intestinal pump?*

### ***January 31***

Morning...JC is taken to the x-ray department. There is nothing that alleviates the waiting; but the ratio of floor staff to patient is great—they are all of them so very good and thorough; it is comforting having sincerity around.

When JC is returned to the room I can see he is in pain to the extreme. Obviously something terrible had happened during the test. As he is moved to the bed, his suffering shows through as he never would allow, were it not so strong. He says one thing to me: “*They killed me.*”

One never knows when the doctor will appear. It is the assisting surgeon, who comes to me finally in the afternoon. For the first time I understand that JC had to swallow the fluid to provide the imaging. *Jesus, I thought, it wasn't just a simple test; it was a determinant.* The connection had ruptured, and I couldn't help but think it was the test that did it.

I'm advised that the second surgery that now must be done, through a side incision through the ribs, must wait for more certainty that heart and lungs can sustain it. The IV nutrient feed is removed and all nutrition now is via the pump through a ‘port’ into the abdomen—how JC now will be fed possibly the rest of his life. It is suggested I should prepare for him to go to a rehab home...

I don't know what to make of the changing versions we have had. *I need to talk to the surgeon!* I am emotionally drained. I call JC after getting home. He tries to be lightly humorous about his fate, but I can tell he is demolished by the latest words, not that he will admit how much to me. No one has seen or heard me cry, but that is nothing prideful. One cannot cry as one needs to, in public. [Typing these notes I cry, hard, again, because I know what is coming and how much more he will suffer, before this horrible movie ended.]

At home that night, Bruno, accustomed to sitting hours on JC's lap, sits with me on JC's recliner. It's so quiet in the house. I can hear the heater running. Nothing, however, cancels *nadam*; it feels as if an invisible million wires through my head all are wide open. I do not know what day it is, in the world, for I have not been in it for 21 days. I sit trying not to think of JC as a man lying on his cross, tubes into so many openings made into his body— atrocities to flesh beyond imagination, so like that man on the pole.....

### ***February 1***

Despite more morphine, his increasing agony over the three hours before he is taken to the second surgery is indescribable; his suffering is the hardest thing I believe I ever could witness. His lower abdomen is engorged enormously, as are all of his tissues. The skin on his long legs is tight almost to bursting. Finally he defecates in total humiliation in his bed. *The only thing that could make witnessing his suffering worse would have been, I guess, if it were one of our children.... Forget, that he has become a human guinea pig! Forget, there no longer is hope of connection between mouth and anus. Forget, never to know eating a good meal. All of that is nothing, compared to this....*

Our younger daughter is back at a military base across the country; her husband is leaving for Iraq. Our older daughter and I see JC conscious for the last time in the surgery pre-

op area. She is fighting back tears when he, reaching for his old kidding way, reassures her. “Don’t worry, I won’t die without your permission.” Neither of us can think, this may be the last time we will have him *seeing us*.

There will be little recall of rooms in which we wait. This time his body is being opened through the side; the esophagus, cut short and affixed to an opening made in the side of his neck, to permit mouth drainage; the upper intestine, reclosed.

In the recovery room two tubes out his side drain into containers at bedside, slowly filling with red-black debris. *How terrible it will be!--for that indomitable persona, to live with a bag at the neck, a pump by the side.* Defiantly my self responds: *It can work! Who can say what more that mind still will accomplish?*

Now I am made to understand that the condition of JC’s heart is bad, regardless the quadruple bypass of a few years ago (I learn that giving the heart new vessels doesn’t do a damn thing about the muscle itself). “Remember, it’s a 74-year-old heart,” the doctor says. I know more: the strains the man’s life put on it...

*[This present Sunday , needing to finish this record while I still can, I awakened crying, because I dreamed of us together—not bodily, because that, which can get in Love’s way, is the least most significant thing of It. So I set the sprinklers on the flowerbeds and changed the pillowcase because I ought to wash my hair, and I filled Bruno’s bowls, made some coffee and went to sit in JC’s chair...]*

#### **February 2-4**

It’s as if it’s up to me to keep him alive... *Will he ever return to consciousness?* I bring Sherlock Holmes and read to him anyway, like I did until he fell asleep those oh so many years ago, in bed, our daughters blissfully tucked into their respective ones...*1963 winter in the*

*Rockies, his first teaching job, ice forming on the inside of our windows. But it isn't cold in ICU; it's quiet, just the sound of my reading voice over the ticking sounds of the monitors...*

***February 5***

Driving back to the hospital, Mind tries to 'pray'... *I believe 'God' is an almighty force that governs the Universe....* No. I can't recite that one; I want to say *badly governs...*

On a tree alongside the vineyards fear grips me. I see seven sitting vultures all in the same tree, stock-still black silhouettes in the foggy morning light...*om mane padme hum...om mane padme hum...*the words come to me when I fix consciousness fully on *nadam*, which has been ever more insistent since last night...*om mane padme hum...* I stop at the light at Administration Drive; one more block...*om mane padme hum....*and I remember it was the first mantra I employed, when we parted in 1978—*Valentine's Day, it was!*

***8:30 a.m.***

I speak with the surgeon and technicians in the ICU room. Nothing has changed. In their earlier attempt to wean JC off the inhalator, which requires reducing the morphine, he "went wild." They plan to try again later today.

***Noon***

JC's breathing is down to 34; his body is swollen, more lasix has been prescribed. He still is being fed into the intestines. I'm asked to leave the room; they will see again if he can breathe on his own. I leave Doyle on the window sill; we are up to chapter eight. They will call me from the waiting room when...*when...when...*

***2:10 p.m.***

When I return the inhalator is gone, but now, despite an oxygen mask, his breathing is down to 25; blood pressure down; another blood sample taken—the respiratory technician says it

will tell more about how he is breathing. They are in the process of slowly trying to bring him around; the medazoline sedative has been turned off, although he still is receiving some morphine. He smells bad; I wish I could give him a bath.

An especially caring, truthful nurse checks the drainage tubes that exit JC's body through the ribcage. They are very painful, she says, in that they move with each breath; and, if the liver is somewhat compromised, that too affects elimination of water from tissues. I watch the monitor and its fluctuating measurements of pulse, breaths, blood pressure, and blood oxygen...

### ***February 6***

I feel cursed to be witness to the end of Analytic Philosophy, that most tortuous of paths through the malebolgia of Consciousness--not down into the cerebellum and Id; Identity forced out the frontal lobe into Anonymity. Three weeks, two days have passed. The inhalator had to be replaced this morning; it permits suctioning out the too-much liquid staying in the lungs.

I briefly see the surgeon and ask, *what is the prognosis, for a person who has undergone all of this?* He answers that he has seen many through such; that he believes JC will recover, etc. etc.; yet indications I receive from others are different. Nurse suggests that perhaps I should talk to the surgeon more. "But what can I ask?" I respond. "Maybe," she replies gently, "'is he going to be in hospice in a couple of months?'"

*I don't know what to believe.*

Two attendants arrive to "see how" they are going to "manage his 'fistula'"—that is, attaching a bag to the side of JC's neck, to catch the drainage from his mouth. It was obvious that they had not dealt with one before; they had to modify a bag used for ostomies.

### ***February 7***

When I arrive at 7:15 a.m. JC's breathing is down to 19. I continue reading aloud the "Hound of the Baskervilles," and find several pages two-thirds through are missing. "That's okay," I tell him, "because we've seen the movie."

No word on when the two drains from the side can be removed; they cause pain every time his body even slightly moves. He is heavily jaundiced now. The same nurse asks whether he ever had liver problems; I answer, yes. "Had he been drinking before the 'bleed'?" That I could not answer. Alcohol had been a cyclical affliction; he had been advised by his regular doctor that he absolutely had to stop; and I'd seen no evidence of it in recent history.

Both the staff chaplain and the psychiatrist come to me; it is obvious the medical staff has alerted them, because, fighting back tears when, on arrival, I was asked, "how was I doing," I had said that I was very *angry*, at how JC had been turned into human guinea pig.

### ***February 9***

The tandem continues. One moment I am spoken to as if JC indeed is dying, slowly but for certain, here in the hospital. Other times, he rallies in a small way (less water retention today; not so much oozing through the tissues, except a large strip of rawness around the right ankle must be kept taped). A culture showed no abnormal infection in the lungs—a little piece of good news; and he had a large bowel movement, I am told when I ask. I keep thinking, if the drains were taken out, breathing might be more successful; but I am told, no, and it isn't known when they might be. Another attempt to remove the inhalator was abandoned because of dangerous drops in vital signs.

I give my still unconscious JC messages from his 'girls.' We all have felt ourselves together with him in dreams--he who so stolidly believed there was no such thing as 'out-of-

body' consciousness. I wipe the crustiness from his eyes with a soft, damp warm cloth. Now I am told that the longest he will be allowed to remain as such is seven days, when then a tracheotomy would be done! Again, we wait for the morrow...

**2:30 p.m.**

The surgeon visits and I ask questions. What about cancerous lymph nodes? "Yes, biopsies were done during surgery. Cancer was found in the lymph nodes around the stomach; they were removed with it. Whether more nodes are damaged will be detected by future cat scans, using the abdominal entry [feeding tube] for injecting fluorescence." I ask about the pain of drain tubes. "They shouldn't be any trouble assuming natural breathing is involved," he replies. "For example, a patient who had such after, say, removal of part or all of one lung, by now would be on Advil, where pain is concerned."

It isn't clear to me: *someone on Advil going home from the hospital obviously wouldn't have drain tubes still?* But I am beyond pursuing more. Nothing for me to do now but have a last conversation with the floor surgeon, then realize I can't remember about what. Meanwhile, the lead surgeon is to be gone for the week; another man is filling in. In this current scene enveloping JC, society seems to expect it reasonable that members of its medical professions can contemplate death decisions fifteen minutes at a time. I cannot fault them...

At home late, Bruno stays near as if he understands. I want to think so but know it isn't true. JC always reminded me, Bruno was a cat, and animals were animals....

**February 10**

**5:30 a.m.**

I have had a first oblivious sleep at home since January 14, in that the best nurse, on duty last night, promised to call if something occurred. JC has been unconscious now for almost nine

days. The old entrenched Catholic symbolism haunts me...*a novena*.... *He had such a formidable body. Will it overcome, and live? Will he want to continue living, with the handicaps, the radiation, and lord knows what else?* I remember his saying, times the subject of deathly incapacitation came up between us, that without doubt he would kill himself. And he had a gun collection to permit it...

My eyes cried about as much as they can, last evening and this morning. The ducts are dry but the eyes still squeeze and burn. The morning nurse, when I telephone, tells me the lungs are better, more liquid is being discharged by the body, and the respirator's force has been reduced. "He's so strong," she says. "It takes three of us to move him."

My thought suspends. I must take something with me to work on. We have finished Doyle. There was a line toward the end that I almost choked on: "Evil the man who has not one woman to mourn him." JC has so many that would. I consider "The Perfect Storm," but it is 'too many words,' as we were wont to say of some literature.

When I arrive at hospital the worse news trickles through; I am approached to sign the "DNR."

**8:25 a.m.**

I am to have word before noon from either or both the "Intensivist" and the assisting surgeon. There is one last thing to be heard: what will be done if the next, the last attempt to remove the inhalator fails? Now I am told that a tracheotomy is problematical, under the circumstances, because of its necessary nearness to the "fistula" and what's left of the esophagus. I can't seem to prephrase a question. I want to. I want this time *to know*; but the question only can be put one way, and the soul doesn't want to speak it.

At home for a spell I sit again in JC's recliner; it is very roomy and comfortable; it rocks back and forth if you want it to. I've picked up his clothes and straightened his doodads on the side table; and Bruno's been sitting on me, just like he always has on JC during their 16 years together. *But you know how cats are*, JC also would tell me, *they can change their loyalty at the drop of a hat...*

### **February 11**

*Sunday again...one month ago, it was a different lifetime....*

*By now we would have made love in this decade's fashion and be lying abed shooting the breeze about our kids or what-not, then having our third cup of coffee in the TV room, Bruno lying in the patch of sun, and the Sunday Chron divided between us, always in the same order....*

How many days must "life" be prolonged past all individual hope? Any shred left of Romanticism caves into cynic defiance. *Oh love, don't make Wednesday, Valentine Day, the day the day of our first parting, a day to go down in the infamy of Parapsychology!* Stubbornly I am readying for his return; a supply of pump nutrient has been ordered and delivered to the house, furniture rearranged to accommodate his needs....

At the hospital I now read aloud his last Descartes article, which has lain dormant since he retired. But I feel positively weak as if my body is so far beneath its threshold it barely can exert the force necessary to withstand gravity...

### **5 p.m.**

A scheduled conference but it wasn't one; it was with only the day's Intensivist, a woman. A third--the last!--attempt to remove the inhalator will be tomorrow. Now I have lost the names of days and learn that tomorrow will be "Monday." I'm told that possibility still lives; "It's like a roller-coaster ride," she says.

I finish reading the Descartes draft, editing it clerically as I go as I did his graduate student papers and thesis, this time with silent approval. I have a strong feeling about the article, this being the first time I have read it, that it bears the seeds of the next universal revolution. The Intensivist says, if all goes well, JC will be calm and not need or be given more sedation, in which case consciousness would revive! I am back to planning how we will manage our new life. When I get home I throw out all foodstuffs never again to be eaten.

### ***February 12***

*I'll make you King, by Christ, and I don't need any church or government to confirm that the mind threatening to leave us would not have stood by and permitted Man to impale a living body on a shaved tree trunk... Oh, how JC hated Religion...*

I recall how I thought, years ago, to buy a book for him about Giordano Bruno, only to discover I had a confusion of names, and mistakenly bought one of Benvenuto Cellini, instead. *Why think of such things, now?* I lift his lids; the iris is almost entirely taken by unfocused pupils; I can't accept that never again will his eyes look at me with Life in them...

### ***February 13***

I take a break in the hospital parking lot, sitting in "Big Red," the Ford Cherokee we bought in '95. Rain is pouring down. It's 'way past noon; bile draining from his side; an infection now in his chest cavity from a leak in the intestine (the second surgery also not having sealed).

We are told definitively what was expected all along?--JC is dying. *'All that remains,' is for us to say when...when the feeding tube will be removed, when the breathing apparatus will be removed, when the extra dope is doubled into the bloodstream.* The process will not begin until all who wish have had a last visit with the still-breathing body. *What agony....*

Before I lay myself on the lounge next to his bed, I stand by him and, for the first time, cry in his presence there. I tell him, *how tired I am; how defeated I feel; how terrible it is to see you suffer so!* After midnight I sleep little, awake with each tiny bleep change of the monitor. Then, for a short while, I am out of the world...

***February 14***

Of a sudden I am awake, *and I know*. It is precisely 7 a.m. by the big clock on the wall and all is silent....

*Thirty years before, when, on February 14, I awakened from a brief sleep—our first marriage having ended just hours before—the first thing I saw was a bright morning star shining through the bedroom window. A song began in my mind—Gonna take a sentimental journey...gonna set my heart at ease.... From out of nowhere... Seven...that's the time I leave, at seven... I'll be waiting up for Heaven....*

As I washed his body I tried not to remember that I had said I was finished with *synchronicity*. I had seen him through the rigors of apprenticeship and journeymanship of a Philosopher; he, me, through those of a Writer. And *neither* of us is finished....

*If every hapless woman had a cause  
to breathe her complaints into the open air  
and never suffer inward grief to pause  
or seek her sorrow-shaken soul's repair,  
then I, for I have lost my only brother  
whose like, this age, can scarcely yield another.*

Mary Sidney Herbert

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Articles and Pamphlets

*Arthritis and Medical Marijuana*, Oakland, CA: Americans for Safe Access, undated.

California Commission on the Status of Women, "California Women," Sacramento, CA: 926 J St., Rm. 1506, Sacramento 95814; Jan./Feb. 1982.

*California Legal Manual*, Oakland, CA: Americans for Safe Access, 2007.

Dragonwagon, Crescent, "Rape, An Unusual Opinion," *Playgirl*, May 1979, p. 86.

Feshbach, S. and Malamuth, N., "Sex and Agression: Proving the Link," *Psychology Today*, Nov. 1978, p. 111.

Garron, Frank, et al., "The Hallucinogenic Drugs," *Readings from Scientific American, Altered States of Awareness*, San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1972, pp. 99-107.

Grinspoon, Lester, "Marijuana," *Readings from Scientific American, Altered States of Awareness*, San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman and Co., 1972, pp. 89-97.

Groth, Ph.D., A. Nicholas; Burgess, D.N.S.C., R. N; Wolbert, Ann; "Rape: Power, Anger and Sexuality," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 134:11, Nov. 1977, p. 1239.

Massy, Ph.D., Robert, *You Are What You Breathe*, Boulder Creek, CO: University of the Trees Press, 1980.

*Movement Disorders and Medical Marijuana*, Oakland, CA: Americans for Safe Access, undated.

Reproductive Freedom Project, "The So-Called 'Human Life' Amendment," American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, New York.

Tepper, Sheri S., "The Great Orgasm Robbery," Denver, CO: RMPP Publications 1977.

White, John, "Kundalini—Serpent Power and the Great Purification," *Many Smokes*, Vol. 13, No. 2, Fall/Winter 1979, p. 12.

### Books

Aaronson, Bernard and Osmond, Humphry, *Psychedelics*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co./Anchor Books, 1970.

Benson, M.D., Ralph C., *Handbook of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, Lange Medical Publications, 6th Ed. 1977.

Bettelheim, Bruno, *Freud and Man's Soul*, New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1984.

Boadella, David, Ed., *In the Wake of Reich*, New York, Port Washington: Ashley Books, Inc., 1977.

Boadella, David, William Reich, *The Evolution of His Work*, Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Co., 1973

- Bonaparte, Marie, *Female Sexuality*, New York, NY: International Universities Press, Inc. 1973.
- Bucke, M.D., Richard Maurice, *Cosmic Consciousness*, New York, NY: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1969.
- Bryk, Felix, *Circumcision in Man and Woman*, New York, NY: AMS Press, Inc. 1974
- Campbell, Joseph, Editor, *The Portable Jung*, New York, NY: Penguin Books 1977.
- Carlson, Neil R., *Physiology of Behavior*, 2nd Ed., Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon, Inc. 1980
- Cattier, Michael, *The Life and Work of Wilhelm Reich*, trans. fr. French by Ghislaine Boulanger, New York: Horizon Press, 1971.
- Cohen, Sidney, *Drugs of Hallucination*, London, UK: Granada Publishing Ltd., 1971.
- Corsini, Raymond J. and Contributors, *Current Psychotherapies*, Itasca, IL: Peacock Publishers, Inc. 1979.
- Emboden, Jr., William A., *Narcotic Plants*, New York, NY: The Macmillan Co., 1972.
- Evans-Wentz, W. Y., Ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Ford, David, *Marijuana, Not Guilty as Charged*, Sonoma, CA: Good Press, 1997.
- Freud, Sigmund, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, New York, NY: Random House Modern Library, 1925.
- Freud, Sigmund, *Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, New York, NY: W. W. Norton 1966.
- Freud, Sigmund, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, New York, NY: Avon Books/Discus Edn., 1972.
- Gardner, M.D., Ernest; Gray, M.S., Ph.D., Donald J.; O'Rahilly, M.Sc., M.D., Ronan, *Anatomy: A Regional Study of Human Structure*, 4th Edn., Phila., London, Toronto: W. B. Saunders Co. 1975.
- Hall, Calvin S. and Lindzey, Gardner, *Theories of Personality*, 3d Edn., New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons 1978.
- Hassin, Vijay, *The Modern Yoga Handbook*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc./Dolphin Books, 1978.
- Heard, Gerald, *Training for the Life of the Spirit*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008 (Reprint of Original).
- Hesse, Herman, *Siddhartha*, New York, NY: Bantam Books, July 1971.
- Hite, Shere, *The Hite Report*, New York, NY: Dell Publishing Co., Inc. 1976.
- Humphreys, Christmas, *Concentration and Meditation*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1974.
- Huxley, Aldous, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*, New York, NY: Harper & Row/Colophon Books, 1963.
- Huxley, Francis, *The Way of the Sacred*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc. 1974.
- Iyengar, B. K. S., *Light on Yoga*, New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1972.

- Jacobi, Jolande, C. G. *Jung: Psychological Reflections*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press 1978.
- Jung, C. G.; von Franz, M.-L.; Henderson, Joseph L.; Jacobi, Jolande; Jaffe, Aniela, *Man and His Symbols*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964.
- Jung, C. G.; Jaffe, Aniela, Ed., *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, New York, NY: Random House (Pantheon Books) 1973.
- Jung, C.G., *On the Nature of the Psyche*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Jung, The Portable*, trans. Hull, R. F. C., New York, NY and Harmondsworth, Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Kantor, J. R., *Problems of Physiological Psychology*, Grenville, OH: Principia Press, 1947.
- Kaufman, M.D., Raymond H.; Friedrich, Jr., M.D., Eduard G.; Gardner, M.D., Herman L.; *Benign Diseases of the Vulva and Vagina*, 3d Ed., Chicago, IL: Year Book Medical Publishers, Inc. 1989.
- Krishna, Gopi, *Kundalini, The Evolutionary Energy in Man*, Boulder, CO and London, UK: Shambala Publications, Inc., 1970.
- Krishnamurti, J., *The Awakening of Intelligence*, New York, NY: Avon Books/Discus Edn., 1976.
- Krishnamurti, J., *The Flight of the Eagle*, New York, NY, Evanston, San Francisco: Harper and Row, First Perennial Library Edn., 1973.
- Lowry, M.D., Thomas P., et al., Stilwell, Donald L., *The Clitoris*, St. Louis, MO: Warren H. Green, Inc.
- Masters, Wm. H. and Johnson, Virginia E., *Human Sexual Inadequacy*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co. 1970.
- Masters, Wm. H. and Johnson, Virginia E., *Human Sexual Response*, Boston, MA: Little, Brown & Co. 1970.
- Mishra, Rammurti S., *Fundamentals of Yoga*, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1974.
- Mishra, Rammurti S., *Yoga Sutras*, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1973.
- Montague, Ashley, *The Natural Superiority of Women*, New Revised Edn., New York, NY: Collier Books 1974.
- Neill, A. S., *Freedom--Not License!*, New York, NY: Hart Publishing Co., Inc. 1966.
- Nillson, Lennart, *A Child is Born*, New York, NY: Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence 1979.
- Ollendorff Reich, Ilse, *Wilhelm Reich, A Personal Biography*; New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1969.
- Prabhavananda, S. and Isherwood, C., *How to Know God*, New York, NY: New American Library/Mentor Books; authorized reprint of 1953 edn. of Vedanta Press).
- Prabhavananda, S. and Manchester, F., Translators, *The Upanishads*, New York, NY: New American Library/Mentor Books; authorized reprint of 1948 edn. of Vedanta Society.
- Prophecies of Nostradamus*, New York, NY: Crown Publishers/Avenel Books, undated.
- Puharich, Andrija, *The Sacred Mushroom*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1974.

- Ramacharaka, Yogi, *Science of Breath*, India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Reprint, 1974.
- Ranson, M.D., S. W., rev. by Clark, M.D., L. D., *The Anatomy of the Nervous System*, Phila./London: W. B. Saunders Co. 1959.
- Reich, Wilhelm, *Character Analysis*, New York, NY: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone, 1972.
- Reich, Wilhelm; Schmitz, Philip. Tr., *Early Writings*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975.
- Reich, Wilhelm, *Ether, God and Devil*, New York, NY: Farrar, Staus and Giroux, 1979.
- Reich, Wilhelm, *Selected Writings; An Introduction to Orgonomy*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979.
- Reich, Wilhelm, *The Function of the Orgasm*, New York, NY: Simon and Schuster/Pocket Books, 1975.
- Reich, Wilhelm, *The Schizophrenic Split*, Rangeley, ME: Wilhelm Reich Infant Trust, 1972.
- Rieker, Hans-Ulrich, *The Yoga of Light, (Hatha Yoga Pradipika of Svatmarama)*, Becherer, Elsy, trans., Los Angeles, CA: Dawn Horse Press, 1974.
- Rosenthal, Ed, Gieringer, Dale, Mikuriya, M.D., Tod, *Marijuana Medical Handbook*, Oakland, CA: Quick American Archives, 1997.
- Russell, Bertrand, *Education and The Good Life*, New York, NY: Liveright, Inc., 1970
- Scientific American, Readings From, *Altered States of Awareness*, San Francisco, CA: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1972.
- Serrano, Miguel, C. G. *Jung and Herman Hesse, A Record of Two Friendships*, New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1975.
- Sharaf, Myron, *Fury on Earth*, New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983.
- Sherfey, M.D., Mary Jane, *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality*, New York, NY: Random House, Vintage Books, 1973.
- Simmons, Joe, *The Warrior*, Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982.
- Smith, Huston, *Cleansing the Doors of Perception*, New York, NY: Penguin Putnam, Inc./Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2000.
- Snyder, Gary, *Turtle Island*, New York, NY: New Direction Books, 1974.
- Trungpa, Chogyam, *Mudra*, Berkeley, CA and London, UK: Shambala, 1972.
- Vivekananda, *Raya Yoga*, Pithoragarh, Himalyas: Advaita Ashrama Mayavati, 1978.
- Warwick, B.Sc., Ph.D., M.D., Roger and Williams, D.Sc., M.A., M.B., B.Chir., Peter L., Editors, *Gray's Anatomy*, Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1973.
- Watts, Alan W., Heard, Gerald, et al, *The Psychedelic Reader*, New York, NY: Citadel Press, 1971.
- Wylie, Philip, *Generation of Vipers*, New York, NY: Rinehart, 1955.

Wolverton, Robert E., *An Outline of Classical Mythology*, Towota, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1975.

Young, Lawrence A., Young, Linda G., Klein, Marjorie M., Klein, Donald M., Beyer, Dorianne, *Recreational Drugs*, New York, NY: Berkley Books, 1983.