

**Ancient Terrors:  
Patterns of Archaic Wounding, Archaic Defenses, and Archaic Rage  
in Personal and World Life**

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All good things came to me together with her, that Wisdom of the south, who preacheth abroad, who uttereth her voice in the streets, crieth out at the head of the multitudes, and in the entrance of the gates of the city uttereth her words, saying: Come ye to me and be enlightened, and your operations shall not be confounded; all ye that desire me shall be filled with my riches. Come (therefore), children, hearken to me.... of which [it is said] that men and children pass her by daily in the streets and public places, and she is trodden into the mire by beasts of burden and by cattle?... Nought is more base in appearance than she, and nought is more precious in nature than she.... Her ways are beautiful operations and praiseworthy, not unsightly nor ill-favored, and her paths are measured and not hasty, but are bound up with stubborn and day-long toil. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her, and an unfailing light.... For she is clear to them that have understanding, and shall never fade or fail... for she goeth about seeking such as are worthy of her and showeth herself cheerfully to them in the ways and meeteth them with all providence; for her beginning is the most true nature, whereof cometh no deceit.

*Aurora Consurgens*

Of these prophetic riddles  
And cryptic analyses

Of our original—  
The ancient

Terrors

## Prologues

4/15/2004

Dear Sister...

I have just reviewed again the scrapbook you made for me for Christmas. It is now, as when I first opened up the package to discover what you had created, overwhelming, really, to take this walk with you.

The older I get, the more sensitive I get, and I have always been sensitive. It is an intensive experience, and at times challenging, to visit these photographic places that carry me—and us—back to the memories of the way we were. I used a magnifying glass with the older pictures, to make even more thorough my journey to the lights of those days. As you know, I devote a lot of time and energy to understanding better the way we were, with some hopes to understanding better the way we are!

At any rate, there are so many special moments in these images, and in your presentation of them. I have far too many, very powerful responses to state them all. I will just let one come to mind and share it with pure enjoyment. You cannot guess which one.

It is a Christmas picture of *me*, in my new cowboy outfit, in front of the old Raytheon. I can remember so well how completely thrilling that outfit was. I can remember the feel of it. Not that it made me feel so much like a cowboy, but I surely felt all “spiffy-ed up.” It was just a very wonderful feeling, in one of those most wonderful of Christmases we had when we were little. With this gift, but with all the gifts, with all that we were and all that we found to be true about ourselves, all together at 914 West Sullivan, that Christmas, this outfit brought just an overall feeling of well-being. I felt placed in love, seen, and

completely cared-for. I remember dreaming for that outfit—and receiving it was my dream come true.

There was, as we know and could never doubt, so very much that was so wonderful then. We were blessed with the childhoods we all shared together, in that house, in that neighborhood. I could write on and on and on. I *really* could. And maybe someday sooner than later I will be able to write more, of all that I could write, of those times—in the fullness of the truths that were then, and in the fullness of the truths that are now.

Anyway, to receive this gift from you, crafted in many hours of thoughtfulness and of loving, means more now than the cowboy outfit did then. I think. Of course, I really did love that outfit. But then, I didn't really wear it all that much. It was 'in the moment' more than anything, of course. This book you have made has led me to many contemplations, over these several months, and will continue to do so. It is a lasting light that you bring.

And I thank you.

I love you very much, as you know. As I always have and always will.

Your only brother...

Johnny

*April 1, 2004*

By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and shall ever tell  
the sorrow of being on this earth;

...may God bless my people, my mother, my good father, oh,  
remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of  
their taking away.

...and those who receive me, who quietly treat me, as one familiar  
and well-beloved in that home; but will not, oh, will not, not now,  
not ever; but will not ever tell me who I am.

*James Agee*

Knoxville 1915

As I grew up, I felt my mother was the kindest, most generous, most caring, and most tender being. That she was. Mother worked as hard as she could, with limited resources, for my benefit. She worked hard for all her children. I have no doubt she did the very best she could by us. I believe she not only nurtured us as fully as she was capable of nurturing, she also protected us as fiercely as she knew how, from terrible forces that she knew and felt. Perhaps there was no greater worry on her part than her fear of failing us, in any possible way. Mother defended herself from the pain of her own terrible 'issues' by attempting to serve the needs of others. This was very tricky business for the 'others.' I know she would never have consciously chosen to cause any of us to suffer, nor would she have knowingly impeded our way, and certainly never have knowingly injured any of my three (older) sisters or me. But more simply, more basically, I loved and adored my mother.

Across the street, I felt very much at home in my second home, and I felt very much in 'place' in my second family. There was much excitement there, mystery, some of the ease and intrigue of affluence. From these, I benefited; I gained many enjoyments. I loved my de-facto brother as brother and his parents. I admired them. I learned and gained from the family culture, intelligence, and, I might say, sophistication. There were great powers of vitality, exuberance, possibility, and promise, all to my great benefit, over there.

Largely, it seems to me, the destructiveness that I have to report here was unconscious, in both houses. To whatever extent that is so, only some of my wonderings are resolved, even so.

I am unhappy with this text. No aspect of it brings me joy, except in the possibility of its usefulness (the *raison d'être*, of course). I know the work is askew, debilitating, unfair on so many counts. I feel my personal failure in every dimension of it, but that very statement expresses something of these general enigmas and nausea. I should try to snap out of it.

*June 27, 2003*

*...the end from the beginning...*

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me,  
Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...

*Isaiah 46:9–10 KJV*

My path to arrival in this life was bound up with “prophecy” before my birth. I was told this, in tender expressions by Mother, from the earliest moments I could understand her words. In reverie, my childhood has seemed overwhelmingly light. I was born into a family in which I was highly valued. From birth, I also had a second family and a loving bond with a child who was very much like my twin brother—Keith. As these stories unfold, however, the difficulties of this work will be obvious—tediously enough.

This is *not* a complete or balanced work. The journey goes down, toward the center of the Earth. My task is not to portray all that was wonderful in my experiences of Mother and of Keith, of my family and his. If that were the task, I could write of how so much of the very best of my life reflects Mother and Keith and my childhood with them and with others.

Adolescent memories are more clouded. At the time, I accepted my “existentialist turn” as plain fate marked with prominent culture-linked, generation-gapped factors. From late adolescence on, my studies and personal exploits had led me naturally enough, I had supposed, to the “shadow” dynamics that I found to be increasingly thematic in my life. By midlife, I found

myself scaling perilous terrains, from my origins and throughout the structures of my adult life. When I entered my forties, I discovered that my persona seemed to have evolved under the influence of several generations of adept lying. I was required to take on intensive “moral efforts,” as Jung puts it, to become conscious of shadow forces that I had never foreseen. My personal journey led into the labyrinths of psychopathologies to exhume deeply buried ancestral bones and to identify demonic possessions, hauntings. I found that my work compelled me to describe, as well as I now can, what I have found to be true about myself, my mother, my friend, and others whose lives I have known to be shaped by such forces. There is no end to motives and meanings and interpretations.

*October 2002*

It is a Sunday morning in early autumn as I am barely awake in the bedroom that was mine as a little boy, in the house of my childhood, in Kingsport, Tennessee, a city in the southern Appalachian Mountains. I awake in fear about going to church this morning. I do not want to wake up. Sleep will not return. Another fear comes to me—that of looking out the front window to the house across the street, the sight of which knots my emotions so that I feel a dislocation of my soul. The ability even to find this language seems irrelevant to a dead reckoning with fate.

I feel there are forces poised to steal my soul away—*soul-snatchers*. This is the earliest dream I can recall (I was four or five):

In the north wall of my basement playroom, appeared an iron-grate fireplace (like Grampaw's). From the coal-black depths beneath that grating, a diabolical figure—agent-of Beelzebub if not the very Boogerman Himself—emerged to hoodwink and abduct me forever.

From much earlier years, I recall this recurring, auditory hallucination:

Many men perpetually marching up the steps from the basement are out to get me.

How fabulous it was when I discovered that this sound, which came only as I was going to sleep or awaking, was that of the blood pulsing in my ears. I can still feel the relief of that emergent awareness.

This Sunday morning terror reiterates within me these primal and magical memories. They were surpassed by more complex, mythic structures that later

convinced me that I might could never dwell in my “actual” self without fear of being “snatched” away.

I must, as always, emerge quickly from this panic state to present myself, to assure “others” of the coherency of the status quo. I must be a material witness to the steadfast well-being of all in this house while the sparks, flashes, and flares of own psychic substances dissipate.

This is how I awaken to think again of the stories of the lives consumed by the power of lies, lives so intimately close to me. Shadows are not dispelled by denial. Truth-telling does change the world, I think, and can set us free—the dead as well as the living. I am working to advance that freedom.

## **A. Introduction**

The durability of early traumatic experiences and relationships is probably the most widespread psychological cause of human suffering. [44]

*Stephen A. Mitchell*

### **Borderline**

Perhaps no suffering draws *less* compassion from others than the suffering of those who live their lives in states of “mental disorder.” I have always been drawn to persons at borderlines. Because of the nature of my studies—which have constituted my personal defenses—these portrayals are “psychological” and “pathologized.” This work is very much charged with, and skewed by, my own complexes and compensations. This is a report on how the constellations of the archetypal family look, long-term, when needs of soul are not recognized, respected, and nurtured.

I am deeply beholden to the work of C. G. Jung and of Jean Gebser. I have studied the work of both for over thirty years. In modeling the psychology of archaic experience, I have learned greatly from the work of analysts Nathan Schwartz-Salant regarding “borderline personality” structures and Donald Kalsched regarding the “self-care system” of the “inner world of trauma.” I also gratefully acknowledge the work of many authors and teachers too numerous to specify. There is something of the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead in all my thinking, and I have benefited greatly from the work of quantum physicist Fred Alan Wolf.

### **Stories and theoretical excursions**

To introduce these tellings, I am led to share a few vivid, childhood memories of Oak Grove Southern Missionary Baptist Church, the church where I grew up, in Mount Carmel, a country town in the southern Appalachian Mountains of eastern Tennessee. The first psychological conflicts of my life arose in that country church on a hill overlooking Sawmill Holler and Arnott Creek through it. The architecture and design features of that church are ever-present in my questing imagination—natural woodgrains of pulpit, pews, piano, organ. All were yellow oak, as were the arched windows with mottled yellow panes. A river scene painted on the rear wall, above the baptistry, behind pulpit and choir loft, was the only representational image permitted. In that baptistry I was baptized by full immersion, having been “saved” at age six in a spring revival service.

I am often drawn to the memories of those spaces where God and the angels were invoked and the Devil was denounced in endless diatribes. In those church spaces too were my earliest intimations of the numinous—of sublime and subtle influences. The exhortation and display of countless Southern Baptist preachers very early entered my little boy mind. I think I have heard preached most scriptural passages pertaining to love and light. I am certain I have heard preached every reference to the wages of sin, death, the powers of Satan, the Anti-Christ, the Second Coming, Judgment Day, and the seething lake of hellfire. I felt much, much closer to dirge of “The Old Rugged Cross” than to the triumphal “Up from the Grave He Arose,” and more frightful of the wrathful Lamb of doom than consoled by the loving Shepherd. I was deeply burdened, wearied, and worn down by the preaching of everlasting torment well before my adolescence. By the time I was a teenager, I had long come to experience these tirades as a form of torture.

These exhortations were always followed, in the Baptist order of worships, by the “invitation,” most often an episode charged with very high emotions and sometimes the singing of countless refrains of invitational hymns, such as

“Just As I Am,” made famous by Billy Graham. The invitation was first and above all to be saved, then to be baptized and join the church. A very close third movement was to “dedicate” one’s life to “full time Christian service.” It was to this third calling that I felt deeply obligated each Sunday morning and Sunday night, Wednesday prayer-meetings, and one- or two-week long revivals. These religious rituals—and frequent open-casket funerals—formed my religious imagination from birth.

However, all of these observances were peripheral to my early, highly intimate sense of belonging in the House of the Lord. I was often drawn into the empty church (while my parents were engaged in other matters) with my private itineraries and places of secret communions with numinous powers. In these vacant, quiet zones, I felt at home in the “temple of my own heart” as I contemplated the interplay of divine love and apocalyptic doom that I deeply felt. I was not afraid to dwell with these things. Mother had told me in the earliest language of my life that I had been dedicated from birth to attend to these matters inwardly, in my heart. Outwardly, with Mother, with more than one preacher, and with the congregation at large, the only way I could defend myself from scripturally-based assaults of crumbling patriarchy was to know the Bible better than my attackers and to outwit them with my interpretations. I grew up asking—scripturally and psychologically—*why is it this way?* Finding answers was vital to me from very early on. My ability to defend myself depended on the capacity to use whatever intellectual tools and abilities were available to me. My skills at hermeneutic self-defense also affirmed my inner sense of mission.

Unmistakably, some sense of destiny was still with me in October 2000 when I flew to Tennessee and returned to the church to fulfill one specific mission—to speak at the funeral of my mother, Ruth, who had died early that month at age eighty-two. As I opened my heart for the words to fulfill that prophetic task, I felt an upwelling sense of the tragic element of my mother’s life. I had only

begun, with newly available information, to comprehend how limited the church family had been in supporting my mother. I did not know how many of them knew of the conditions that had led her to live in an “inner world of trauma.” This expression I had just learned from analyst Donald Kalsched, whose book I carried with me on that funeral flight. Again, only a short while before Mother’s death had I become aware that she had lived such trauma as her life-long fate.

Some weeks after the funeral, back in California, this verbal formulation came to me:

*What psychic powers the mysteries and collective rites no longer assuage or contain, we must somehow endure and transform in the vessels of our individual hearts, of our most intimate relationships, of our most crucial arts.*

My religious imagination was shaped in that church community. However, that reality and much more Mother structured, by means of her controlling projections, and I knew that something was weirdly askew for me very early on. My experience at home, 914 West Sullivan Street, always seemed split from the charisma of church. I slowly grew aware of how irreconcilable these oppositions were. Gradually, I came to perceive that house to be located not simply in spacetime, but also as a vortex of psychic energies, a gathering of ghosts. From a very early age I was aware that I was looking away from, walking away from *something*. My curiosity was one of my most powerful defenses against Mother’s disorders, a means of finding ways out.

I grew up probing every ambiance of that house I associated with everything wonderful but also found to be laced with eeriness. I tried to look through the walls. As I grew up, I found that when I was away from that house, I felt that I had a life. Eventually, I came to discover that the psychic field that I had

experienced as warm and secure held corrosive lies that were eating away my heart.

As I neared my fiftieth birthday, I was stunned by the recognition that I had grown up enmeshed in a borderline personality field with the boundary problems and archaic defenses of Mother's disorder. I became aware that her profound struggles, her predicament, had both enlightened and beclouded our mother-son relatedness through five decades of my life and through the final chapter of hers. Mother's story is the first I have to tell. As I have warned, it is by no means a complete or balanced portrait. Mother was an extremely complex person. She loved me as earnestly and genuinely as she could. A great part of the light that Mother projected upon me was a compensation of the shadow forces that had nearly destroyed her. (I have organized her story according to Gebser, retracing each structure of my relationship with Mother to a deeper and earlier structure, from mental-rational, to mythic, to magical, to archaic.

When I was at last able to take up the work of understanding the borderline personality field of my mother, I also became more able to recognize and to describe the archaic wounding of the other most intimate relationship of my childhood—that with my friend Keith. The tragedy of this second relationship was much more overt, ultimately, but as a child and adolescent myself, I was not aware of the conditions that may indicate borderline personality disorder—namely, the vicious and unrelenting threat of violent destruction and soul-murder. Only very recently was I able to recognize how, before my very eyes and throughout our childhood together, Keith had suffered archaic wounds of such magnitude that he was unable sufficiently to defend himself, to adapt, and to emerge psychologically after puberty. With the onset of those hormonal changes we experienced concurrently, Keith suffered a collapse from which he never recovered, and which led to his involuntary suicide at age 31. So it is that my second telling, the story of Keith and life in the house across West

Sullivan Street from my own, is another psychological characterization that is incomplete but, I hope, of particular purpose and value.

The third telling begins with the text of a dream of nearly a decade ago. Through this decade, the vision of this dream has brought me confidence in working through many extraordinary relationships in which I have found myself working to integrate archaic forces. This dream provides the symbols also for my contemplation of the nature of archaic forces in world life.

To conclude, I will sketch as best I can some theoretical excursions stemming from my studies of religion, philosophy, psychology, and the new sciences.

## **B. Stories**

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you...

*St. Paul, Second Letter to the Philippians*

### **1. Mother and I**

#### **Debates**

My mother had little formal education, but her intellect was aggressive and acutely rational in our continual debates from my early adolescence to her final days. I did not understand that her dominating, solar consciousness was her own vehement and adamant defense against unbearable vulnerabilities. Early on, Mother inculcated in me a facility for developing credible arguments on her behalf—siding with her against my father and sisters, and with particular zeal for her religious convictions. Mother survived by a combination of fantasizing and brute force of will. There was a certain childlike sweetness to Mother's

faith, something of the Irish and the Celtic (she surreptitiously venerated the Blessed Virgin) and a heroic quality to her Germanic willpower. As I matured I found myself, naturally enough, with views in conflict both with her faith and her adamant attitudes. These “swervings” required me to further whet my intellectual skills not only in matters of principle but also in continuing to “talk her down,” as had been my emotional assignment from early childhood. Everyone in my family knew that I was the only one who could really “take Mother on,” but none of us knew what effects this was having on me. Coaxing Mother out of despondency was as basic as breathing and eating. With my skills, I was also deploying my own defense against her, saving myself by defusing her neuroses, but also remaining engulfed and enmeshed by these very efforts.

By early adolescence, I was thoroughly familiar with her pattern of evading accountability when the logic or cogency of an argument went against her. This was so even when I was offering my best efforts *to help her*. Mother lived in mirror images; everything in her life reflected herself. Wherever she looked, she saw herself. She had trouble distinguishing anything—any “objects,” physical or psychological—in her life as being apart from or outside of her own projections. It was difficult or impossible for her to accept that any other decent or sensible person might have a divergent and still worthwhile point of view. In fact, the notion that anyone might seriously disagree with her in matters of faith or spiritual practice simply placed the fate of his or her immortal soul in danger.

When the debate became highly charged—concerning liberal politics or sexual preferences, for example—I could predict very well the coming of the split, even if that built up with apocalyptic swiftness. In deadlocks, Mother completely sidestepped the debate to become simultaneously listener-and-speaker. Rather than listening to me (or to anyone), she was already engaged with her counter-argument, preparing her words for the next pause in my suddenly vacuous

rebuttal. In this manner, she repelled all threats and relieved herself of any obligation actually to listen or to speak in direct response.

If possible, Mother would place the conflict in the religious arena where she felt forces of numinous power to be *infallibly* in her favor. Mother would instantaneously identify with the fatefulness of the Battle of Christ and Satan. Her delusional tendencies were all “grounded” in this “battleground.” In battle situations, all arguments would lose reason and abruptly become fiercely magical. Thus, any actual success I ever had at placing her own reckonings in question stirred up quickly escalating, chaotic forces. Never a parlor game or intellectual exercise these contests. Push her too far, and I could feel the stakes rapidly escalate into a full-blown psychotic episode, a scene that, having been played out, led to to an equally quick and devastating collapse.

It was very difficult for mother to comprehend or admit the nature of events and forces outside her will. When I opposed her, she displayed one or both (in sequence) of two behavior patterns: First, with an “evacuation” of affect, she would state that to oppose her was to *not-love* her. To cancel this error and uphold the love-bond, I had to renounce my opposition. Second, with a plunge into intractable self-pity, she would lament that my opposition revealed her defective, faltering personality and her abject unworthiness as a “terrible person.” I could never figure out what it was hidden and out of reach in her self-pity, but whatever it was not communicable.

These polarities were continually displayed in her passive aggression. Mother had a deep need to dominate, to enforce her own defenses by including me within them. It was in peril of perdition that I could ever question her spiritualized ideals; the stakes were truly as real as hellfire. At this core of her wounded self, she desperately *needed not to be opposed*. To oppose her was to fail to recognize and to serve her deepest needs. If I disagreed with her on matters of substance, I was in grave danger and I was acting unjustly or at

least inadequately. Thus she would aggressively demand that I change my position. If I did not—or often, even if I did—the passive side would take over, the side that could never be satisfied. In her self-pity she would continually state that she didn’t “deserve” to be treated better. (I didn’t think I was “treating” her any way at all; I was expressing my own natural mind.) Then, in a spiraling descent, I could sense the psychotic shifts of deep injury and repressed rage. She would plead with me to take pity on her unworthiness, but of course, nothing I said could have any effect, and in the moments, or hours, of dysfunction, she would plead further and further unworthiness and self-diminishment. There was no end to these spirals except in the passing of time.

At the end of her life, I was able to recognize and describe these chaotic attractors as those of archaic power. Earlier in life, I was unable to frame these scenes or to comprehend her abject deference to the demonic. No matter how inscrutable these powers were to me, I still accepted that they somehow pertained to what I experienced to be the unarguable ground not only of her “positions” but of her very soul and of my own. With regard to this core, I was placed in a position of absolute and unwavering moral responsibility and supreme accountability. In undergraduate years and well beyond, I shaped my studies and my grand experiments in personal and interpersonal psychology with respect to the soul of my mother. To appease what I felt to be the absolute requirements of *some* numinous factor of her pietism, I assumed the responsibility for the shadow work as being mine alone. I was as accountable for her madness as much if not more than for my own.

Even in my forties, I could not question that I had been extraordinarily loved. As I betrayed her in thought, word, and deed, in all deviations from her honest and faithful will, I suspected that I was truly adrift in the shadows of my own predilection. With small victories toward asserting my own destiny, I occasionally felt that I had made some intellectual advances with Mother. I had achieved, mostly by concessions to her sensibilities, some reconciliation with

her religiosity—if not with the demonic powers that still roiled very near the surface of every conversation and debate. As she aged, elemental splitting began to appear or re-appear. With heavy resistances on my part, I slowly encountered head-on the emotional blackmail of my mother-complex, and to trace the origins of that blackmail further in my family history.

I found that the emotional extortion, the spiritual blackmail, came down down like this: *You can't be righteous unless you continually make the necessary excuses for me that enable our complete denial of my unrighteousness.* That is how it comes down. At worst, it is satanic; it sets up the abused victim as a permanent self-accuser—to ever think that the perpetrator could be unrighteous only seals one's fate as the unrighteous one even for having the thought. This is an extremely vicious cycle, this annihilating self-accusation, and thus, satanic. To arrive at a genuine “spirituality” of compassion, the victim of such emotional abuse must, I think, identify the difference between genuine compassion and the addictive co-dependence that perpetually requires one to “make excuses” for the complexes and egoisms of an abuser. The real problem is when one is convinced that to be “compassionate” one must make such excuses, or is conditioned automatically to do so. This extortion seems to be formed of an absolute demand for compassion—the child's deepest needs to be seen in love and wonder. When that recognition is severely deficient, magnitudes of these needs are handed down and handed on as abusive and destructive demands.

Loss of soul is the cost of emotional blackmail in states of mental illness and psychosis. The child doubts any self-worth at all, because one's “self” has value only in conjunction with the parental demands. There is no “self” respected in the child apart from the parental necessities. These are terrible chains of delusion in my family. Such was surely the price required of Mother by my grandmother—this price of complicity required by the parent of the child. My

sense is this goes back directly to at least one if not two previous generations in this line.

In my late forties, I realized with austere sadness that Mother was not and had never been capable of loving me for my actual self, at least not since early childhood. Mother and I had always been communicating as false selves, and opportunities to alter this in her last years were very quickly fading. I began to feel in myself a deep sadness unto weariness for Mother, for everyone I love or could love, for the whole world—for all the losses of the exuberance of life as it actually could be, concretely. I began to grieve very deeply for all the possibilities that are squandered by negligence—by not being “picked up.”

### **Battle of Christ and Satan**

There was no more life-defining pattern for Mother than the raging battle between Jesus Christ and Satan—stated exactly as such. Despite all preaching and theology, Christ’s victory was affectively for Mother always very tentative. Mother’s felt necessity in each passing day was to monitor, hour by hour, how the debt-transactions of mortal sin were being paid to stave off God’s dissatisfaction and vouch-safe Christ’s victory.

In her early married-life, Mother seems to have been obsessed with preserving the appearances of moral perfection. She carried extreme concerns for righteousness and obedience well beyond the typical scale of superego. There was a desperate, emergency quality to Mother’s moral vigilance; it had to be satisfied at all costs. There were always unstated magnitudes to the clearly stated fears that we children were almost inevitably going to fall before the snares of Satan. Moral ambiguities in the human condition were unthinkable for her, and it was impossible for her to countenance that any of us could

experience complexities of life requiring any alteration of the reality structure that she demanded of us.

The house on Sullivan Street was to all outward appearances the home of a continuously perfect family. No one could breathe a word otherwise. The mildest flaw or impiety-ness was strongly suppressed. When Mother was forced to accept that *This is real* in opposition with *I wish it to be not-real*, a little girls' tragedy became evident, or a psychotic episode of archaic rage. The endlessly cascading losses that came with encountering unwanted realities were always attributed to a failure of trust in Jesus Christ, in whom all her wishes found repose, in childlike faith.

Mother died never knowing I had ever smoked a cigarette or lifted a glass of beer; she discovered a covert *Playboy* once, and I still cringe at that memory. There were terrible years when my hair was long, my dress incomprehensible, and my late-night hours irrational—the war years. To her dying day, I knew that any of several basic facts of my life would “kill her.” That was not actually hyperbole. Mother *could not know* what *she could not bear*—what would make her go to pieces. What she did *not know*, she could *not know*, and such matters did *not exist* for her. Mother lived her life in a “narcissistic bubble” and in “anti-worlds” (Schwarz-Salant). She was the Inspector. Perhaps, given the amnesiac, non-awaring of her archaic defenses, she may in fact have known quite a lot about my struggling shadow life. If so, no doubt she “protected” me from my own shadow by denying its existence for the both of us.

I now understand that as a little girl Mother surely experienced continuous, elemental, inner warfare. Mother was required to endure and to take on too much, too soon. Perhaps she was hypnotized by the beguiling numinosities of her own circumstances, in the manner of demonic possession. Projecting these powers into her little girl heaven and hell, and by self-numbing, Mother set

limit-case perceptions that were absolutely incontestable. I always knew that it was unthinkable to place in doubt the enigmatic resources that had enabled that little girl to survive and to exercise a woman's and a mother's will-to-power.

In the eyes of many, Mother lived out a life of equilibrium and continuity, even charismatic serenity. Her effectual magic was manifested with her deep courage, rooted firmly in her self-care system and in her absolute moral vigilance. However, she could not always conceal the extremity of the forces that swirled through her days and her frequent nightmares. These powers of her split inner life skewed all her relationships. For us at home, Mother could rarely control her self-loathing, nor could she bring about the fulfillment of her yearnings for light as projected onto us. With advancing age, the bitterness of Mother's everlasting struggles with evil became increasingly evident.

This excerpt from Schwartz-Salant is typical of texts that helped me begin to understand Mother better in her final months:

The *numinosum*, in both its positive and negative forms, poses exceptional difficulties for the borderline patient. It is the root of all religious experience. It is characterized by both sublime and demonic qualities and refers to a dynamic that is beyond conscious control of the will. The *numinosum* seizes one, and though we might rely on all sorts of rational devices to weaken its effect upon us, the fact remains that it is situated at the core of humankind's most central experiences. The function of religious systems...is to separate humankind from the *numinosum*, whose energies are often considered too dangerous to endure. ... [T]he true nature of the *numinosum*...frequently manifests through emotional flooding and archaic imagery.... The borderline person is beset by fear of

the *numinosum* and is exceedingly vulnerable to its overwhelming power. [210]

In Mother's mythic consciousness, a remnant few are to be rescued from *the original sin of being born human*—a sin she felt precisely. My birth as her only and firstborn son aligned me somehow with the necessity for a ransom. Much depended on me. I was Mother's Anointed One. She put me in her imaginal basket and floated me down the river of a little girl's most fervent spiritual hopes. In her scenario for my life, I would survive this dark passage and disembark to climb the steps of a Baptist church. There I would grow in wisdom and stature to fulfill her fantasies of me as her Only Begotten and thus make intercession on her behalf. Mother's choice for my name—reluctantly set aside for my father's wishes to have me carry his name and that of my great-grandfather—was Samuel. From little boyhood, I can remember the telling of the story of how Samuel heard directly the voice of God, calling him out of his sleep to accept a prophetic vocation. In her Old Testament heart, I know—because she continually told me—that she considered me to be her Samuel, given back to God. Her role as mother would be fulfilled in giving me back. This she stated explicitly. In her New Testament imagination, I was held in Pieta archetype—the Mother caressing the body of her fallen Son, slain to save the world from sin—and the dark numinosity of these Mournful Faces of God.

My pre-mythic assignment, however, required a more elemental profession of faith. Whenever I felt the pull of her emotions, I knew I was soon to be called to perform as I had been trained to perform for her. In these conditions, it could quickly become unclear which of us was experiencing what emotion. Although I was very clear about my own panic-desire to escape and run away, I could not run away. I was both to accept the Lord's will in my life and my calling in the world—and to be hers, always true, never allowing another to come between us. I was delighted to love and to serve Mother as my mission. The most intimate truth between Mother and me was our secret pact, continually recited

and renewed well into my manhood. She wanted me to always be at her side, and she struggled with little success to accept that I could not and would not always be with her. The little boy who didn't want to grow up became the little boy who was not allowed to grow up.

The agreement was that I would always come to her in our secret place as the only one who could soothe and relieve her, and hold her hand amidst the combat raging between Christ and Satan. I was to support her while she ever protected me. Although I did devote myself to her in every way I could, I was always failing her. Somewhere as that sense of failure emerged, I began to perceive my love seemed as flawed, because it would not "take" or somehow "measure up," and thus I began to feel myself as dys-lovable. I felt there was surely something wrong with my loving since I could not make her happy. My loving did not bring her satisfaction. Because of the guiltiness that I could never give enough, it has been very difficult for me to feel worthy or capable of receiving love. My failure was a "spiritual" defect as well. These feelings of deficiency have never completely left me.

Mother's crisis of identity was of a nature and magnitude that she compensated against her terrors with acts of will that imposed her own negative experience in the psychic lives of others. Thus, her feelings of not being lovable became my feelings. To her dying day, Mother was adamant that she knew the truth of Satan most thoroughly and that few others could be trusted to have a better awareness than did she of his all-pervading powers. On our own, our acts of will were no match for Satan. Thus it was necessary that her acts of will supersede our acts of will. Again, she felt this was only being a good mother. Her sacred role was to exercise her will in such a way that we would be spared her terrors and her crisis.. To question her knowledge of these matters was direct evidence that I had underestimated the powers of Satan that only she could control by the power of her own defenses. To resist Mother's will even in the slightest degree about any moral or spiritual issues

immediately triggered apocalyptic vengeance sufficient to bring sun, moon, stars, planets, and the whole sky down upon me. There could be no safety outside the defensive fusion-state that she provided.

The power of Satan was technically second to that of Jesus Christ, but on a given day, the contest was as harrowing as her mental instability. When her faith was least available to her, in a psychotic episode, only Satan's power remained effectual beyond all doubt. Under these conditions, only the powers of the Prince of Darkness were absolutely continuous in this world, ever his domain. Mother's despondencies mirrored the Book of Revelation, the end of time, with Christ descending in clouds of glory, the subsequent tenure of the Anti-Christ, the loosing and reining-in of the powers of Satan.

To underplay Satan's power was to betray her personally. Thus grandiose was the ultimate scale of Mother's emotional blackmail. Very recently have I recognized how the patterns of infantile ruthlessness and infantile omnipotence in her behaviors were those of an archaically wounded child. That very little girl could not escape the overwhelming power-complexes that ordered her about, and we, her children and grandchildren, were in this lineage. Since the demands of these power-complexes were insatiable, virtually all of us, one by one, failed her.

Still, in my position as the much-prayed-for son, her only begotten, I carried the "pretense" of the redeemer. Until her final years, my radiant "boy" illuminated the needs and hopes of her inner child. In our mother-son fusion state, we joined in radiance, and I was ever the light unto her path. This radiance seemed clear and charismatic, I know, to others in the Oak Grove community—*Johnny has a calling*. (There was a small group of us "selected" for "full-time Christian service.") I responded to the pressures of this calling, with her and with the others, compensating for loyalty to these projections with the calling of my own inner cleverness and trickery, falsifying myself as necessary.

The pomp, the magnificent display, in my circumstances, my personal condition, that pompousness I know of myself, I feel in some direct and rather highly-charged ways to be extensions of Mother's defense, and thus, of my own defenses as well.

A central struggle of my life has been to emerge from the false radiance in which Mother's false self could find joy, to no longer play *Perfect Johnny* as I have imagined that role on the world stage. I have always accepted the necessity to "explain to the woman," even if a lie is necessary and essential. I was an extremely adept liar, and had I not been, I would perhaps never then, or later, have developed an actual self of my own. Had I not been able to lie to Mother, seamlessly, I'm not sure what portal my personality would have found for emergence. Lying was just what was and had to be—I *had* to work a sufficient spell on Mother.

To make some advance of my authentic self, it was necessary for me to split off and to create another, parallel life, both from Mother and from Oak Grove. I had to shift my shape according to the specific requirements of others—their projections. If I am not Perfect Johnny, then surely I must be Rotten Johnny—two options. It has been a struggle to extinguish my personal identifications with the sin, guilt, and crushing psychic catastrophes of others. It has taken awhile to understand that it is an inflation to feel obligated to do and/or be more than I can possibly do or be.

When I was finally able to tell Mother—obliquely, of course—that I could not and would not strive any longer to be her rescuer and that I could no longer serve as her clear ally in spiritual warfare. I knew that she knew I was rescinding our secret pact. This amounted to breaking her will-to-power in my life. I was well into my forties. It was a heavy plunge from idealization to devaluation for me, and I felt this plunge within her as well in her deeply deflated words as cold as the grave—"I just feel like I have lost you." I felt a

deep chill. This was the final formulation of her emotional ploy—“You don’t love me anymore.” I sensed that for her, this final betrayal was the culmination of my progressive failure at my assigned rescue mission. But this was more than between Mother and me. I felt a chill of perpetration through several generations. My failure, my “not loving her anymore” was an echo through several generations of psychic manipulations and perpetrations. Afterwards, our relationship grew affectively flat. I knew there was only one task remaining for her, and thus for us in our partnership—to prepare herself to die.

In her final years, I came to recognize how Mother felt “existentially” betrayed. Her archaic wounding had been expressed in passive aggression, often camouflaged with religious language. Because her primal needs had been ignored and attacked, Mother seemed to attack herself whenever she acknowledged neediness. She was not so much self-sufficient as she was self-contained, keeping her aggression inside or directed chronically at my father or one of my sisters. She could be very harsh while simultaneously overpowered with sentimentality. From me she craved affection, she also seemed to flare out at any real possibilities of relatedness that would require her to accommodate the actual needs of others. Her aggression was also expressed in the language available to an abused child—the language of the body and the body's primal aggressions. Her trauma was diffused through her body on a cellular level, manifesting in a range of Memory of the trauma stored in the body on a cellular level manifesting in lifelong psychosomatic problems. Rather than turn her aggression outward, she vacated her body in hypochondriac flights thus rendering herself unavailable. She returned to her body primarily by overeating, a lifelong behavior in which I recognize something of her unmet needs to be nurtured. Mother was never genuinely nurtured, thus she could not actually nurture. Nurture in our family always had a wound and a yearning. This is masochism, surely—*I can only feel when I am in anguish; I am only 'present' in reality when I am experiencing pain.* Mother was starving psychically, an infant who was not nursed. She could cook wonderfully, and

she sewed magically. Still, her cooking and eating depressions expressed something of her archaic rage and grief.

All the “object relations” in her life-world could not substitute for her lacking or satisfy her hunger. In the end, I think Mother felt betrayed by the falseness of her self, by the life-plan she had followed, by life itself. At the same time we children were criticized for failing to “recognize” the magnitude of her predicament or to “see *this* for what it is.” She often covered herself with the cryptic injunction, “There’s a lot that you don’t know.” Now I can see her profound frustration in her early struggles to accomplish what she understood to be the great goals of life—the perfect marriage and the perfect, pious family. She was dumbfounded why we did not rally to her cause in helping her to realize this fantasy compensation for and mythic expiation of her psychological doom. Critiques of the marriage myth, or any of her presenting myths, could only be the snares of the Devil himself.

My efforts to redeem her had on some scales been a brutal and vicious power-struggle. For me to be, it was necessary and essential that I stand as her congenital ally, in her debt. To speak my natural mind with empowerment, on matters of substance, was *not to show*. Thus the overpowering shadows of background object became an overpowering force in my life. My (at first very willing) devotion to her self-care system was at odds with authentic selfhood for me. In my fifth decade of life, I finally learned with deadly certainty that one who plays “spiritual rescuer” must fail. My “collusion” with Mother had in the end only affirmed the shadow powers of archaic trauma. In assuming that I *could* compensate for the violations of her perpetrators, I obscured their covert, projective identities. Of course, it was not possible for me to *name* the collective shadows of ancestors unknown to me.

One who is placed-in and wittingly or unwittingly accepts the role of hero-redeemer is intrinsically paired with the demon-lover. It was a horrific shock to me to find that the shadow of my rescuer role was a mirror-image of the perpetrator. In this same complex, I discovered that my own psychic-masochistic roles were enmeshed with sadistic figures in her psyche. It was always strangely painful for me to behold the Pieta—a favorite image for Mother. Mother needed me to die for her, and this profound need of hers was a concrete deadness that we shared. The child within her experienced a deadness that my child experienced as a necessary martyrdom.

In our enmeshment, Mother and I joined the ancestors in a demonic legacy of non-lovability and non-lovingness. I did not know, and did not know even to look for the aliens, abusers, abandoners, humiliators, shamers, strangers, monsters, in Mother's psyche. These figures haunted her madness and my madness. Again, to betray her expectations not only meant that I "didn't love" her any more but also directly evidenced collusion with forces of evil and the powers of Satan that dragged her into her hell of self-pity.

Again, as I neared my fiftieth birthday, I was committed to getting to the bottom of this psychopathology. Along with others in my family, I dedicated myself to exhuming the essential truths. What we found out, in Mother's final months, was that her core wound concerned her illegitimacy, but also other profound wounding patterns in my matrilineal lineage. My ancestors seem to have lived in halls of mirrors. Borderline personality states seem evident to me through at least three generations. Mother once told me that she had no memory of ever being touched by her mother. The most important observable initial condition in my mother's life seems clearly to have been her non-relatedness with her mother. In her pre-Oedipal catastrophe, Mother's turn to the "father" led only to an "anti-father" or "shadow-father." Yet this shadow father seems also to have been a Luciferian light-bearer. There was forbidden Eros set in shadowy abyss, but the lies could not be kept secret within social

boundaries. The boundaries of my grandmother's secrets channeled the forces of her shadow into my mother's psyche. All the boundaries her family maintained—as required by Grandma's controlling projections—intensified the terrors my mother was required to endure. What may have seemed to others a merciful denial of reality, as it may have seemed necessary to mother, preserved without remedy a merciless cruelty. This was the lie my Grandma required my Mother to carry through life, the lie of her own origin in the forbidden love of another man. This lie all her descendents have been required to carry, to bring to the light of truth if we can, stumbling through the perils of our souls, at the borderline of psychic integrity, or otherwise. The extent of the original complexities I am sure we will never know.

For the child for whom there was “no glint in the parental eye,” the child not recognized, the core of profound narcissistic wounding, it seems, is the experience of not-being-wanted. This is the core wound in my matrilineal lineage, with the particular “demonic” shadow of not-being-wanted by “the man.” This shadow of this “man” is so deep as to sustain reiterative eruptions of dissociative archaic rage, obsessive hatreds, dissociative identity disorder. Mother's archaic the rage and hatred was internalized and projected upon Satan and the immediately raging hellfire and brimstone. Still, these extremely toxic reiterations have continued in various forms un-addressed, un-healed, and unredeemed from generation to generation. These origins lead into the mists of the collective experience of abused and neglected women who survive through enormous efforts of great inner powers, the tortures of their circumstances, and sometimes themselves become unwitting or witting torturers.

My fate was that of bearing the radiant light of the child-redeemer, required to show the ‘glint’ of recognition toward the parent, rather than the natural order, which is reverse. Mother met her radiant boy-hero-son-redeemer, and then all the grandchildren in turn in her little-girl paradise where she could actually

function somewhat effectively. Whenever she was challenged to travel *outside* that defense, into mature personality-structures, she experienced a grievous loss, and mourned the “fall” of each of us in turn.

Whenever the parental power-complex aspires to divine power, there will be trouble for the children. Such grandiosities may compensate for the powerlessness of extreme, early wounding. Surely, Mother’s controlling impulses were linked to her primitive needs with regard to establishing and preserving the father-image. Since no human father ever quite showed up for Mother, the Father could be nothing less than the Heavenly Father. For me to vary at all from her expectations was simply to commit a sin against God: *Be as I say because this is so deeply, deeply important to me and to God, our Heavenly Father.*

Thus it was that my ‘glow’ was enkindled to mirror the lost spark in Mother’s soul. This psychic hall of mirrors effect is always with me. This hall of mirrors reflects psychic wounds so deep, dark, and unredeemable that the light is warped and imperfectly reflected or is not reflected at all, is swallowed up and disappears as dark matter in the horror-house of narcissistic wounding.

In my mother’s self-care fortress, the human character of the abuse/abuser(s) was hidden away shadows so deep as no longer to exist. Her defense was as it had to be, strong enough to deny and annihilate any threat of overt acknowledgment of her plight. The god-like powers of the Father-*imago* cast that little girl down into the Hells of her archaic rage and defenses where she had to endure the curse—*Thou Shalt Not Be*. The Boogerman secretly and absolutely seals up the fates of innocent little children *whenever he can*. Affirmative “meaning” of her life was buried in moribund certainty that there is no hope—never was and never could be—in *this* world. Her false self and false selves raged this against faceless void as her “dialectics” with Satan in the pit.

There was no more energizing “personage” in this world for Mother. However, this Luciferean force was also *irresistible* (an irresistible blood bond) and *non-existent* (an irreparable breach). There was nothing to be done about “the mess” in *this* world, and as well, *this cannot and need not be talked about because the problem of this world doesn’t actually exist*. There is absolutely no hope and no choice but resignation in *this* world. This is the nature of satanic fate—an archaic and magical demiurge. This dark force is so great that God must consent to the killing of his own Son to reconcile creation.

Mother could not bring to consciousness her desperate yearnings to demonstrate her self-worth and thus to redeem her mother and herself of complex scandals of unrighteousness by resolving the catastrophe of the shadow-father, that is, to triumph over the Devil and redeem the forbidden Eros. That was the mythic battle and the magical battle that was forever lost to the *unlivable*. In that loss was Mother’s terror of *not-being, of never having existed, of dying in abject meaninglessness*. That is why any crisis that seemed to open up and reveal her existential humiliation quickly led to psychotic scenes. Self-worth for Mother seemed to be advanced only by masculine ideals—idealizations of the masculine—that compensated for the shadow-father. Very primitive identification with and extreme loyalty to these idealizations energized her false self. Only the magical, numinous masculine—preachers, doctors—could redeem the cataclysmic collusion of her own mother/death-mother and her non-father/demon-lover who was also dream-lover and forbidden Eros. Only a male, the perfect Pastor, possessing the authority of the Heavenly Father could preach well enough—rationally, mythically, magically—to assuage the grandiose, apocalyptic images and emotions of her archaic wounding. The apocalyptic displays borderline phenomena in the collective psyche. Only rapture could compensate for rape. Sexual perversions are laid bare by avenging angels. Only Christ can defeat Anti-Christ. Only mediated by a God-

intoxicated male, preaching a way of negotiating cosmic tactics, could intercede on her behalf. As her little preacher, this was my sublime mandate.

As the end was nearing, all the preaching in her world had not yet accomplished expiation. Without the redeeming masculine, Mother had only her little-girl valor and forces of her own anti-worlds with which to defend herself in her inner world of trauma. When I failed her in the end, the moorings of her false self were severed. There was too little masculine perfection in the scene anymore, anywhere, and she was too old and too tired, and the energies of archaic rage were rapidly dissipating. She was again in her original state, bereft, the un-loveable child without a life that belonged to her and without belonging to actual existence. She increasingly turned to the mantras and mana-personalities of televised and audio-taped preachers who in an endless procession addressed the world-destroying terror of sin from which she still craved deliverance. All around her bed, stacked and stuffed throughout the house, were heaps of religious literature—the only “literature” for Mother.

As she lay there in her Final Conflict, the *eschatos* of her very self, configured as, *Why was I never worthy of being loved enough to learn how to love?* With the extreme splittings, her personality was sundered in two. One direction was oblivion. The other was the compensating “luminosity” by means of which she had hoped to build within the fires of hell an imaginal enclave, an archaic defense, a self-care system, a narcissistic bubble, a self-care system, an paradise oasis.

Jesus seemed to be mostly outside—Christ-descending-on-the-clouds to unleash the powers destroying *this* world. In the later years, Mother would frequently tell me that she had “so much learning to offer, but no one asks.” She couldn’t understand why not. Sadly, the depths of experience from which Mother could have spoken, were lost behind the walls of her self-defenses and obscured behind the spiritualized clouds of

“trusting Jesus” as the single answer for all issues at all scales of magnitude. This was not an error of faith. However, faith does not provide specific methods for dealing with the very chronic psychological disorders that afflicted my mother. Thus, at the very core of relationships, family structures, addictions, psychopathologies, the response of “trusting Jesus” was as effective as such response would be to a floundering swimmer from someone who cannot swim—a response well-founded if there are no swimmers and no life-preservers available. For sinking swimmers, and for those with broken personalities, as well as for those with broken arms, there are more immediately practical approaches than trusting Jesus. On some scales, the “psychological” and the “spiritual” must be differentiated, and an appropriate and effective psychological approach may be called for. However, I cannot know if any therapies could ever have helped Mother.

As the clouds of her final conflict steadily thickened, Mother progressively darkened the interior of the house, virtually shutting out *this world*. With each passing day she seemed to recede further and further within the walls of her room and into the darkness of her inner life. I felt with peculiar dispassion how it was becoming too late for us to experience any growth together.

How deeply Mother had yearned all her life to be included in family life, even in world life, and certainly in the communion of the saints. Mother wanted to see and to be seen, to contribute to the plan of salvation, or more simply, to just participate and to have her place in the righteous scheme of things. In many ways, more magically, Mother craved to play. She always spoke of never having had sufficient time to play. She wanted to belong in the lives of her children and grandchildren and was at her best with us all when we were at play, when she could in her own ways join in our play. It was at this level of agony that Mother had no understanding of how she had been psychologically set-up, here at the threshold of the mythic and the magical.

Mother did not relate to ideas of karma or reincarnation. Secretly, I think, she was more open to notions of demonic possession, in legions and legacies of demons. Original sin was an immediate and unrelieved terror for her. Perhaps, at the pre-magical stage, the locale of the battle was the thoroughly totemic, primal scene of the Great Sinner erect in the gaping Pit of Hell. However that was, she did not know that her own controlling projections of a purified, solar righteousness kept her permanently captive in mirrors of *non-selfhood*. She could not face others directly, but only through the interpretations required of her anxieties and defenses. She could not concentrate adequately, or apply herself, or feel sufficiency of grace to experience authentic change. Her relatedness, for all its agonizing yearnings, was not and could not be transformative.

Psychic processes that had never led to actual maturity and growth were caught up in the great attractor of the terminal drama as her eyes dimmed with macular degeneration and her body was more and more rapidly consumed in the fires of cancer. At times, Mother seemed unprepared to die, betrayed and subverted by her dying process. However, she also seemed to accept with fatefulness what she had for a lifetime held as a death-fetish. Mother's unsparing morbidity had at last, it seems to me, culminated in the malignancies that dissolved the inner boundaries of her body and dissipated her life force. As her form diminished, an ever-present, vulnerable, unprotected, and deeply wounded child seemed visibly to re-appear. At times, it seemed to me that her mind was crowded with invisible, haunting voices—ancestors and other spectral persons with whom I am both intimately familiar and do not know at all. She spoke often of strange dreams. We could establish little mental contact across the widening rift between us.

## **Sacrifice**

In a litany of everyday life, Mother always made it clear to all of us that she was making “sacrificial efforts” for us. My mother was an extremely creative woman, a splendid seamstress who sewed many of my sisters’ clothes and my clothes. She had a fantastic talent for making clothes for their smallest dolls. In these designs, and later in her watercolors, she showed great talent. I always had some feelings that her claims to “sacrificial giving” to her caring for us was skewed. She was never required to work outside the home, and every convenience my father could provide, he did provide. Mother actually seemed to enjoy Monday washday, a feast day for me as a little boy, and the other domestic tasks that she accomplished in her own rhythms of housekeeping and according to her whims. Thus, there was no overt basis to describing her motherly occupations as sacrificial. This quality of her being seemed true nonetheless, and I think I always sensed there were hidden reasons for this sacrificial feeling of hers—deeper than the obvious manipulation—and so it never occurred to me to question her on this.

In my body and being, I had “carried” some of the most powerful magic in Mother’s life. For nearly five decades, I dutifully performed that magic as well as I could, but I never succeeded in breaking the spells. All my studies, and all my experience on some level, were shaped by my devotion to achieving this impossible quest. Mother’s imagination was Hebraic, with her formidable Germanic shadow laced with Germanic idealism and a little Greek fancifulness. There was something of the patterning of Persephone in her continual emotional descents—*I am safe, and nothing can hurt me more because I am already ravaged underground*. Demeter, however, never expressed concern over her daughter’s fate.

Mother’s self-care system ultimately dissipated and left had left her in the borderlands of her original trauma, in drowsiness and sleep, in her room. Surrounding her repose, the house had become completely congested, closets and rooms completely stuffed with countless objects and commodities grand

and trivial, the basement engorged with moldy artifacts. Her thinking had become more and more adamant and literalistic. Paralyzed by her own incapacity for change, she couldn't tolerate change in others. She had hated to see each one of us grow up. Letting go of her fervent hopes for each of us, she had—child by child, grandchild by grandchild—let go of her own hopes that, with each one of us, this time maybe life would work out. One by one her idealizations had failed. She had tried fervently to do for each one of us what she had not done for herself—to actualize her fantasies of a real life.

The house had long, long ago gotten sick. The nearness of powers and principalities and spectral forces was palpable, banshees rampaging through the house, in the hours surrounding her dying. I felt I finally came to understand the satanic reality that was in fact something of the torment sealed for a lifetime within her archaic defenses. I felt directly the full force of unbearable pain descending through the generations. In the matrilineal borderland of archaic forces, I felt something of torment of my grandmother and of my great-grandmother. It seems that for several generations in my family there has been a blindness to the reality of one's own children who are un-beheld, un-touched, un-loved, and who are both negligently and willfully abused in all forms that abuse may take. Such appear as transgressions of the love-bonds that in my family constitute "the burden of the ancestors."

In my ancestry, the institutions of marriage and family seem as often to perpetuate the deficiencies of their myths as to sustain authentic values. At worst, the values perpetuated are anti-values that provide license for shadow-carrying perpetrators to exploit, damage, and destroy children, wives, husbands, other relatives, animals, and the environment. Such ancient terrors I observe in matrilineal and patrilineal descents, as can be observed in all our lives when light is cast into the shadows of the human soul.

This is terribly cruel material. The attractor at the core of defective marriage and family structures I find to be something of a black-hole, recognizable and describable as *non-love/non-self*. Archaic rage and the archaic defenses it energizes are constituted with the indeterminacies of *being-loved/not-being loved*, of *being-loving/not-being-able-to-love*. This appears to me to be the hellish and unbounded horizon of Mother's suffering. Not-being-loved brought forth her non-being. In her dying, I discerned a vacuous *self-hatred*. Deeper, in the "psychoid unconscious" as Jung puts it, as I felt the chaotic dissipation of her instincts, I felt the archaic opposition *To be fed/not to be fed*.

At the threshold of the magical and the archaic, the proposition is *Kill or be killed*. Mother deployed me to ward off evil, to dispel the ghoulish provinces of her soul, to make a redemptive stand amidst the stone circle of our dead. I was Mother's best beloved, her true friend, confidant, ally, and masculine alter ego. With all the magic I could summon, through my youth and through my gender, my great commission was to say and to do and to be absolutely anything necessary to *keep Mother from going to pieces*, and, if at all possible, to *make Mother happy*. If I preserved her intact, then she would continue to be there for me. Her archaic defenses encompassed me elementally; I was engulfed to feed her abandonment. I was over-nurtured to be devoured so that she could nurture herself with my substance; such were the magical dynamics of her archaic needs.

Relentless worries, phobias, panicky expectations of sudden catastrophe, and impinging morbidity were just beneath the surface of Mother's best efforts in the best of times. She lived in the perpetual state of emergency that energized her manias, depressions, provocations, resentments, strategies of control, and evasions. She held in very deep denial her paranoid-schizoid aggressions against the humiliations of her childhood and her dishonored femininity. There was no one upon whom and nowhere for the madwoman to "place" any

revenge—except toward Satan. Dissociation was her elemental defense against incoming hostilities and her mode of splitting from her own raw instinct, her inner grief, her unresolved and unrelieved mourning for the loss of her childhood. That little girl did not grow up unified and whole but rather with many conflicting senses of “self.” Her deficient care-givers were unresponsive, insensitive, unavailable—thus rendering in Mother feeling profoundly unwanted and unlovable. Yet she also stood in a peculiarly bright gaze, the child of a forbidden liaison, one of several such siblings. In acute ways, the sadistic-masochistic cycle intertwined esteem, affection, attention with injury, destruction, and reparation. There is no connection whatsoever in this world without pain, and thus pain is about as pleasurable as life can be in this world.

As a little boy, I was deeply disturbed when Mother “made a scene.” Her hysteria—the psychotic episodes—split life down the middle like a many-forked thunderbolt erupting out of the underworld with fiercely destructive power. When Mother went to pieces, the world disintegrated. I couldn't understand the world coming apart at the seams. It was unthinkable for me that anything *could* be “wrong” with Mother; something was perversely wrong with the world for making Mother so upset. *This is what happens when the world goes wrong; I must hold together no matter what; I must pull the world together for Mother and for the good of everyone.* That was the core pattern of my behavior and existence through most of my days.

As I mirrored her with my own defenses, I also learned to split-off non-feelings as non-selves: *I must and I will lie as necessary, saying yes when I mean no and no when I mean yes. I must say that I feel what I do not feel and that I do not feel what I do feel.* I was and in so many respects continue to be the Little Dutch Boy who sticks his thumb in the hole in the dike and saves the village. The clever little boy does whatever mother most needs—outwitting her, outsmarting her, tricking her, deceiving her, lying to her, twisting to her needs,

groveling, dying. Again, Mother is world, and by extension whatsoever shape the world has required me to shift into, I have done so: *I will stick my thumb in the dike. I will do anything. I will falsify and invalidate myself willingly, but please, Mother, don't let the sky fall upon us. Don't let our world come to an end.*

At times, it seemed as if she let archaic forces run through her with manic glee, completely satisfied when I rallied to her side. Later, when she would regain her composure, she would again exact total submission to the forces of her will-to-power that had, after all, restored the necessary defense, having once again prevailed. These were her psychic sagas, and Mother always prevailed. The only portal to survival and to righteousness and deliverance was to confess powerlessness before Satanic forces. Acknowledging infinite indebtedness, I could be re-affirmed to live and breathe and have my being in the orbit of her defenses.

My false self, or selves, had extended the projection of Mother's false self and had presented it back to her in a mutual mirroring, an adaptive resonance: *Here I am, Mother. I am your mirror. I am your little boy. You can see in me whatever you want to see in me. I will be anything you want.* This I have re-enacted throughout my life. Only recently did I recognize that Mother's love had in fact been conditional and linked to my serving in my role as mana-infused son-lover, hero-redeemer. She had cast a spell on me. I had no choice in that. As I dug into the depths of these matters, the patterns showed themselves to be delusional and demonic at the borderline of *our* madness. Schwartz-Salant maps the approach to the borderline:

The "border" has existed in the myths of many cultures. It is the area in the psyche where the ego's orientation begins to fail and where powerful forces, over which one may have little control, constellate. Ancient maps sometimes portray the known world surrounded by chaotic regions of mists and sea serpents. These

symbolic images are simultaneously expressions of fear and awe of humankind confronting the unknown and attempts to circumscribe and define the known. [9]

Enmeshed with my mother, I have lived my life always near the *terra incognita* of archaic chaos, of id prior to ego, of infantile eros prior to superego. This is the borderline experience of the pleroma and prima materia of alchemical description. This is the range of potentials Jung associates with the magma of the collective unconscious. The psychic field of the borderline personality is one of free-floating intensities and valences, the undifferentiated phantasmagoria of significance, insignificance, the unsignifiable.

As a little child, it was not possible for me to discriminate between the forms and shapes and surfaces of my world and those of Mother's fantasizing about me and with me. My earliest memories include her impassioned narratives concerning the trauma of my birth. In compensation for the peril she overcame in giving birth to me, I was expected to be her unfailing ally, to honor her with my complete loyalty, indeed to return my very self to her, and to dwell with her in Eros. She ate for me when I was inside, and she would continue to feed me if I would feed her. Otherwise, if I refused, she might bake me into a cookie. Such is the archetypal depiction of ouroburic captivity in the fairytales. The role of re-membering herself required me to dismember myself to provide replacement parts for the missing pieces of her life. Somehow, I know that I sensed this early on, and established my own primal defenses. I can recall very early struggles to escape captivity—having first practiced my own clever magic and convincing her of my complete loyalty.

For several generations in my lineage—and as with all these matters, extending into the dim mists of the archaic origins of us all—it seems that loyalty has been a substitute for love and for nurture. Loyalty cannot function as a substitute for love, no matter how prevalent this confusion is in human

experience. Loyalty may become confused as a love-object in-itself, but it is not. With discrimination, what is expressed in the term “loyalty” may serve the fulfilling of love, but love is the fulfilling of loyalty and not the reverse. Authentic love informs loyalty, and not the reverse. Loyalty, as a social bond, is also not be confused with faithfulness, a matter of soul, in relatedness. More deeply, however, I find the loyalties of my ancestry have the nature of a blood cult, a pact of vengeance. It seems that initiation into adulthood has been defined by success at affirming the mutual defenses sealed by the blood pact with all sacrifices of truthfulness necessary to preserve the family matrix intact. To question this pact is to invite invasion by “outer” forces and constitutes an intolerable breach of the injunction that *too much truth can get us all killed*. For the survival of the many, the martyrdom of the one may be required—soul murder or actual death as a mode of mutual defense.

The *need to kill* is archaic. It is an archaic fact that there is *no life without death*. There is an ancient Greek notion that the fall of the soul from its immortal abode is brought about by a primal crime of bloodshed or flesh-eating. Life devours life to create new life, more life. Death continually devours all that life has created. With primal, pre-magical, cannibalistic tendencies, some caregivers are poised to evaluate and, based on that evaluation, perhaps to murder the baby. Live with the vitality demanded, or be killed and consumed. In this sense, all of us who survive are “spared” and “allowed to live.” Perhaps this is the archaic ground for understanding the power-complex—how this sparing and allowing is arranged in the complex interactive, intersubjective fields of a given family and culture. Perhaps that is the primal, or archaic/magical objectification when persons come to be seen as objects to one another. This is how I came to understand that the archaic impulse to cannibalism is more primal than the incest taboo.

There are infantile archaic and magical structures of intense psychotic anxieties, rage, and murderous impulses that continue in parental structures

of intense anxieties, rage, and murderous impulses. A parental perpetrator acts with these forces to invalidate and destroy the life of an unwanted and powerless child. The surface manipulations may be *If I do not have my way, you do not love me*, or, *If you do not do as I say, it will just kill me*. The conditional love of a parent is killing. To the child, the deeper life-threat of conditional love is: *Submit to my power, or die. Eat what I feed you when I feed you or you will be killed and become my food. Swallow this or I will swallow you up!* These commands imperil the child's love-ability while demanding instinctual submission.

What is it to see through the homicidal nature within us, to see through the murders all within and around us, through all time? Ultimately, the pattern seems to be that of affirming archaic defenses through projection of the ancient terror of *non-living* into a victim, thus mirroring the creation of life through ritual killing as an archaic resonance out of our origin. From the archaic and into the magical and mythic structures, the identities and motivations of perpetrators remain buried with the trauma of birth. Perpetrating 'background objects'—living or dead—are never to be named because one can be killed for naming them. Several years ago, long before the revelation of our family secrets, I had a dream which referenced the many bodies buried and decayed in the walls of the old family place—the hidden bodies of the murdered. It may be that the ultimate background object of all backgrounds is the archaic-magical *consciousness of death* in itself.

Archaic forces do not differentiate between the making of a life and the taking of a life. Life feeds on life. The sacred clan-alliance of cultivators is bound up with magical violations of the soil, of forests, animals, one another—of the gods. A primal blood relationship among cultivators is a pact between allies in the cultivations, slaughters, and industry. In the magical practices of the clan, the toxicities and terrors of the living and the dead intermingle. In the cults of

sin and transgression, the terrors of the living and the dead are ever-present and malleable, transferable and transmutable.

In the clan, the libidinal project has a different ambiance; individual destiny is secondary to clan destiny. In clan life, for a female to be properly placed is extremely crucial. Mother carried her mother's shadow material, as her mother had carried hers. Mother also carried, along with some of her siblings, the shadowed Eros of her biological father, and the collected shadows of her legal father and her legal siblings. Mother carried transgressions she was genetically and socially assigned. Mother, as a child-object herself, was a necessary martyr, the innocent who vicariously carried the fate of expiation, thus making distinct and controllable those forces that would otherwise have remained ungovernable. The collective narcissism of the rural, southern Appalachian collective life was rooted in a sense of inferiority, generation unto generation, and a compensating drive to dominate and be dominated. Mother was required to guard her family against the unspeakable, while affirming the forbidden Eros of her origins and of her mother's choices, thus, by balancing and compensating among such overwhelming opposites, to preserve their world. Somehow, in the shadows of Gravelly Valley, this radiant little girl was psychologically sacrificed so that a deeply fractured situation—the "mess"—could be contained and purified.

Strangely, even in early childhood, I think I felt this scapegoat motif in Mother's fate. I think I always sensed something of the collective sin that she was ritually designated to discharge and atone. Sometimes I think I plainly but covertly understood, as an unstated codicil of the pact we shared, that Mother was destined to carry the signification/dis-signification of a person of lesser value sacrificed for greater values. In the archetype of the scapegoat, sins are carried off, and they are transformed. Apparently these two vortices of the archetype were energized by my grandmother's non-responsibility for her actions and her defiant glory in her actions. In this ambivalence, Mother was

the outcast and also the privileged carrier of a revolutionary luminosity, or numinosity.

Thus traveled together her despondency and her grandiosity. She carried the aura of an angel fallen into the wilderness zone of demons, a calling she accepted with a little girl's faithfulness and pietistic loyalty, earnest and steadfast. Such an exile seemed preferable to the stoning or beating that lurked more primitively in the shadows.

Aspects of Mother's extreme early wounding surely derived from very powerful superego invasions. In a dream once, I encountered a somewhat romantically configured, armed desperado (of no particular political twist) in the house I grew up in. When I awoke, I knew this terrorist had terrorized mother as much as myself. In the dream, I knew I had to free the house of the terrorist; I knew the terrorist himself—the internal saboteur—wanted to be free. Mother carried disowned evil but also the obscure magic projected onto her. She had to contain the emotional cruelties directed against her while acting in collusion and in solidarity to keep unspeakable truths unspoken. She was given the mission of bringing forbidden Eros to redemption with her redemptive luminosity. Such were the opposites of this little girl, my mother, and these also became my opposites to bear, my mission, my special calling.

To navigate the fissures of these archaic and magical forces, Mother split her feelings into manic fantasies and into non-selves of non-feeling. Denied the actual powers of an actual existence, Mother's fantasizing and manipulations were vehicles of her virtual power. The anti-world in which she chose most to dwell was one that preserved the masculine idealizations and animated with grandiosity. She could instinctively manipulate the internal images of other persons and objects as she wished, like figurines in a dollhouse or puppets in a shadow play. None of these figures could ever be allowed to speak the unspeakable. In such manipulations, I would vanish within her, into the

limitless wonder of our mutual borderlands, our fusion-states. At times, my role was to die with her, to travel through the graveyards and through the underworld with her while the over-world came to an end above and around us. Such was my soul's captivity, or could have been, had I not experienced on my own path the dis-integrating forces of volcanic, psychic eruption.

My life has been dominated by the impulse to keep "the woman" from disintegrating. *If she erupts, we both disintegrate.* The critical factor was always ensuring that critical factors that do not lead to an uncontrollable sequence of eruptive events. My own life could only exist when this primary task was absolutely unfailingly attended. Optimal conditions were achieved by distancing myself from the volcano. With distance came some hope of realizing any quest other than volcano-watching. In the distance, I could travel freely about the world. *It's ok if I explode as long as she doesn't know about it; she is safer if she has know knowledge of explosive realities that might set off her own volcanic nature.*

## **Atonement**

Letting go of even the slightest of her controlling projections was very cruel for Mother. In her later years, with the collapse of our relatedness, I think she gained some understanding that our secret pact had always been delusional. As her personality was dissolving, she may even have become aware that our failed mission had kept her from taking more responsibility for her own soul all along. I think Mother's endometrial cancer was, as I have said, a corollary of her psychically damaged birth, of her own damaging births, and her own agonies for rebirth. Amidst all this damage, and through that malignancy, I participated in her death as it were *our death*, as much as I had participated in my birth as our birth, our marred birth.

By way of female initiation, Mother's four labors and deliveries were each successively riskier encounters with death—and a psychic opening for her rebirthing. Yet each seems only to have led her more deeply into an archaic panic state. Each seems to have contributed to entropic chaos, ongoing decline, and never to the psychic advance she surely craved. None of her babies turned out to manifest the Holy Infant sufficiently tender and mild to fulfill the redeeming power of her “expecting.” As we grew up, no matter how strong the dictates of Baby Jesus Christ-childlikeness upon us—and specifically upon me—we each ended up reiterating her ancient terrors. Each of us in turn seemed destined to walk the precipice of hell undifferentiated from paradise. Our childhoods, and those of her grandchildren, became relentless reenactments of the slaughter of the innocents. Her blood descendants—as well as I can speak for us, including my own children—could not understand why in growing up we seemed inevitably to fail her and to fall. It was the case, as the Baptist hymn has it, that we each emerged with “stains that were as scarlet” and not even the power of Christ seemed quite certain enough to make us “white as snow.” Irreconcilable and unbearable ambiguities forever persisted.

I can now see Mother's identifications with permanent loss as a self-entombment—of genuinely Satanic nature and scale—that destroyed so many of her life's possibilities. Her actualities were, as she felt them to be, perpetually perishing, depriving her of all but the slightest life-enjoyment. Ceaseless preaching did not release her from her obsessions or possessions. She could state rationally the healing power of Christ, but she could not locate this power at the archaic and magical level of infantile fantasizing, the level at which she created her reality, and the level at which any genuine healing, in her lifetime, would have had to have taken place. Thus, her perceptions of permanent loss became the hells of permanent loss for her—up to her dying moments.

Mother's social sense of identity and of marriage had centered in a little girl's fantasy of regular church attendance and a dollhouse-like, perfect home. Nothing outside of this exacting formulation held more than a passing fascination for her—the stuff of novels, and Mother did not read novels. She did, however, for many years attune somewhat carefully to the serial lives of *Search for Tomorrow*, *Love of Life*, *As the World Turns*, and *The Edge of Night*. Mother managed to “relate” by “controlling” in terms of her own self-care requirements what she otherwise experienced only as dangerously “uncontrollable.” As it came to pass, Mother's persona accomplishments naturally began to dissipate with all the psychic dyings happening at once. While she was in the nursing home struggling valiantly to recover from hip-replacement surgery, I could hear in her moments of dementia the flaming rage of *non-being*, the rage of *what-never-was*. She had lived in her fictive world of self-miniaturizing, magical, non-real reactions. She could not quite “show up” in actual relatedness. Little girls don't have a complete life and do not experience life as a woman. Mother was adrift in too many opacities of psyche and world to explain herself to herself. Her life seemed to become increasingly incomprehensible and bereft of meaning to herself.

In her final months, Mother also continually lamented that she could not “do anything” for me, for my sisters, for any of her grandchildren. Mother spoke of how she was “not needed” anymore. But only now can I understand how powerfully Mother's need to be needed reflected her earliest, most extreme needs, and the non-noticing of those needs. Mother needed to be noticed, and her life devotion in many ways consisted of noticing her children and grandchildren and other children in her own quest to have been noticed, recognized, affirmed. It is not sufficient to say that Mother only needed someone to need her. That might describe a lot of motivation in “normal” psychology. Mother's need to be needed cloaked an intense primal rage about extreme needs that were not-meetable. For Mother, being-needed was not differentiated from being-wanted. That was the core injury in Mother's soul—

the injury of an unwanted child. Yet, this unwanted child was an emblem of defiance on my grandmother's part. As Mother's life demonstrated, however, children are not born to be emblems. No matter how powerful my grandmother intended for my mother to be an emblem of her own strength of will, her aloofness from Mother's life was psychologically catastrophic.

A vulnerability that Mother plainly stated was her "fear of change" which I did not recognize until very late as her fear of growing, her fear of growing up. Whenever genuine options had appeared in her life, she would fade back and recede into her anxieties and fantasies. In her sewing and painting, she excelled, and yet she could never allow herself to accept that there could be any excellence in herself.

In the end, her body did not have the strength any longer to withstand the reality of the forces that were opposed within her. Our work of half a century together had been gathered up in completeness at last. She knew that I knew, we are all children of the Divine. As I uttered the words that somehow I knew were my farewell to her, and as I heard her speak, with clear mind, the Yes that was her heart's farewell to me, I intuited the immortality of her very heart.

In some ways I knew I could never live a truthful life until Mother died and I was no longer obligated to enact the lies she required of me. In the end, that veil was rent. I cannot speak for my sisters, for my father, my nieces and nephews of several generations, but for myself, her actual departure was a relief and a release. The doomsday clock ticked to a stop, no longer pacing out the lifelong emergency. I felt and shared with Mother the reconciliation of her tormented life while tears rolled down her cheeks with her final breaths. I believe some of those tears had been held back since her birth in 1918. When she died, Mother lost what was most dear to her, the tender radiant, beguiling child so heavily defended within her own self-care system. In some ways, I

think Mother felt her first actual loss, her first actual grief, as her own child, that little girl, so terribly hurt, died.

Still, in the hour of her death, I felt atonement with her. Somehow I think Mother experienced the child resurrected and perfected. I believe her original, pristine personal spirit became transparent to her. I hope so. I think so. Something of her unutterable longing, her most desirable being, her tenderest nature surely became available to her on her dying day. That was Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in the year 2000. I experienced her dying words as the most profound gifts of sacred wisdom. I felt I had been prepared a lifetime for our final conversation, as if it were forming in eternity.

As I accepted this, to speak these last words, I asked—*Mother, are you secure?* To which she responded very definitively—*Yes*. That was her final word to me: *Yes*. Immediately I heard myself saying—*Well, then, Mother. You have the peace that passes all understanding. You have fulfilled your life. You are in holy bliss. Why don't you just relax?* That was my last word to her.

I felt with her a genuine and complete release, and a basic feeling of relief in her dying body and in my body. I think always knew that I would be required to “let die” the ancient terrors of my mother. Elements of my mission were false, but it was my vocation to witness the dying of her angry little girl.

In her final, single syllable uttered to me, muddled somewhat by the terminal morphine, I felt the ultimate and sacred trust of a little girl born in an Appalachian valley, from whom the endurance of so much psychological pain had been required. Spiritually, I knew that she knew that I knew (this was very, very important) that every child born into this world is conceived of the Holy Spirit. The woman had fought so hard to serve the little girl's faith and to serve the patterns of expiation that were placed on her, in her lowly origin, on behalf of so many. Hers was a divine suffering, requiring her to redeem her “dharmic”

potential. Mother performed her miracles and accomplished her share of the blood and flesh of Christ. She was cleansed at last, and receptive to her unique incarnation, in her final hours, the effusion of the Holy Spirit brought her to the fulfillment to which she had been spiritually devoted: “I live, yet not I, but Christ in me.” I felt with Mother the ancient wisdom that we are born to live out the divine purpose, no matter how opaque that may seem. It was this wisdom in her soul—this personal spirit—that had always assured her survival.

Mother was an artist, a watercolorist. The complexities of her painting seemed often to bring her more frustration and anguish than joy. Her work holds a power of suffering and survival—elemental Eros—so torturous and bittersweet for me that I can hardly bear to look through her portfolio. For several decades Mother painted in one specific perspective the country home of her little girlhood. She was trying to re-create her imaginary relationship to the real conditions of her life. Mother tested all actualities to determine their compatibility with fantasies and spiritualized idealizations.

Mother was a prolific letter writer and diarist in her fashion. After her death, I collected writings from all around the house—from the front and back leaves of numerous, worn Bibles, from appointment books devoid of appointments, from notebooks and scratch pads of sundry description. These texts I have carefully added to the texts of the epistles addressed to me, mostly in my college years. Her themes are her pernicious fears, her confusions about her intractable unhappiness, the struggles and aspirations of her faith, her vast attachments to my sisters and me and the grandchildren, and grand reveries of her little girlhood.

Mother deeply felt her enchantments with nature. In particular, Mother could be extremely conscious of an injured bird. She seemed linked to birds, continually talked about them, and their lives, the innocence of fledglings, the power of the mother, the nest, and in particular the obligations of the male.

Shortly before she died, I asked her about the time of my leaving for college and the subsequent period when she wrote me long, soulful letters of an embittered and disconsolate loneliness. “Empty nest syndrome,” she called it, in retrospect, with the benefit of some sermon or Sunday-supplement article. Empty nest had such terrible meaning for Mother, however, because, other than in the briefest fleeting moments, the nest had always been empty for her. Her self-care defense structure was indeed the effort to construct such a nest, and to make it impermeable—for herself, her children, her grandchildren—

While she lived out her whole life, forever fledgling, with injured wings, never in a nest and never out of one either.

The love of bird songs is in some respects the most liberating legacy Mother left to me. I told her so. From my boyhood, Mother shared with me a secret, magical language. From my earliest days, she drew my attention to her love of birds and their singing. With that language, that actual language, Mother and I could truly share communion. I experience epiphanies when I hear a singing bird.

As I flew from California to Tennessee to the funeral, I re-read these words of Kalsched:

[I]n the earliest ambivalent imagery of Yahweh, the Old Testament God...is also a two-faced Trickster. Yahweh’s left hand is one of divine wrath, vengeance and jealousy—sending flood, disease, and death to persecute the Israelites. Conversely, his right hand is one of mercy, love and protection. But frequently Yahweh’s hands don’t seem to be coordinated and Israel suffers more of his wrath than his mercy. Gradually, through the suffering of the people, and especially of his chosen servants, Moses, Joshua, Jacob, Noah and Job, Yahweh reaches a kind of “depressive position” and integrates his aggressive and libidinal nature. This is the meaning of the

rainbow in the flood myth and of the covenant between Yahweh and the nation of Israel, secured in the Ark and “written upon the hearts” of his people. [39]

The “rainbow” and the “covenant written upon the heart” allow me to contemplate Mother’s life and her death in peace. Still, I am enmeshed with all these things, in the blue flames of my researches, in my deepest loneliness, in the phoniness and grandiosity I feel in almost everything I ever write or speak or imagine that I may. I do know I hold within myself a very profound sense of failure, that I can never do enough, never write or speak without distortion, and that I can only be “wanted” by those who want to use me. Such is the nature of emotional abuse in my case, as it is in variants among so many persons.

Mother’s needs were so enflamed and engulfing that—after her death, and more than three decades after I resided in proximity to her— I am to this day still practicing what it is to know my own needs apart from hers. Whenever I have been able to be present and actual in my own being and in relatedness, it has been when I have felt a deeper connection to my own, intrinsic lovingness, a connectedness more authentic than those parental and ancestral connections that carried along with them so much abuse. This is the transparency that has allowed me ever to be real with anyone, and to find actuality.

For Mother, personal happiness was a little girl’s fantasy, something of a fetish, a doll for whom she made exquisite, colorful, and delicate clothes; she did so with countless dolls. As a grown-up, however, Mother had abandoned the possibility of a genuine or even workable happiness, it seems, long before I was born, in her early thirties, I think. I knew that even with my maximum efforts, personal happiness for her was not to be won—nor for me, nor for anyone really in this “vale of tears.” Pursuit of happiness for me always meant

something of an offense against God, who does not wish to grant his children such delusions, even if codified in the otherwise lofty Constitutional aspirations.

The central struggle of my enduring mother complex is to discern and to let go of the projective identification of her demand that I could be and must be the redeemer of all who suffer, most especially those who suffer from diseases of the soul. My mission was to deliver to her the numinous power of the healing word, and something of that persists directly in this very effort to deliver the words that release her and me both of our project.

Only until very recently, I have carried a deadly sense of betraying my mission. It was extremely difficult to feel that it could be “OK” to set aside my Herculean task, to let go the imago of the Deliverer. As I practice doing so, I can still feel looming powers of reprisal that will retaliate if I accept the possibility of being free. To state what I actually do feel and do need can be terrifying; to do so still can seem forbidden, null and void. I have had recurrent dreams with visitations by her image in terrifying episodes—which is very sad because my mother truly cared for me so devotedly and had no conscious, malign intentions toward me at all. She was so complexly overwhelmed by unconscious forces.

With a great deal of meditation, I have come to understand and to respect that Mother’s moral obsessions, imposed in psychic invasion and controlling projections, were nonetheless something of the substance of her own valor in the face of the ancient terrors. In her marriage and in the fruition of our family—however flawed—Mother did as best she could to integrate the non-integratable. I must say, however, that all the lying did not work out well. Denial leads only to delay unto death. The worst thing we can possibly choose is to lie about who we are, to perpetrate untruths, to create false selves, to live false lives, and thus hardly to live at all.

My mother's spirit is very powerful. I have lived all my life with the seductiveness of her pose that within the perimeters of her defenses nothing ever need change. At the core of it there is a rage and a torment and the effects of wide-ranging collective lies that at least partially skipped her to locate within me. I feel within me a lot of her charisma, the numinosities of her own soul work, worked and unworked by her but carried out by me. I also carry a perpetual fear, a horror of my 'placement' in this life. To say *ancient terror* is as good as any descriptive phrase. I live with the consequences, the wounding patterns, of the child—the trusting child—and more the son, the trusting son, who was needed much too much by his mother. However unconscious she was, Mother misused her position of power to invade my trust that she would care for me *as me* and not as an extension of her own needs. The violation of this trust corrupts and intrudes in every instance of my existence, until now. With vigilant attention and with persistence, I am moving along.

For my healing, I have to express that my mother betrayed me. I was totally convinced that she simply loved me, and I could not discern the difference between love and engulfment. Mother was indeed charismatic and seductive, and I was her radiant star. As long as I was within her defense structure, there were no threats whatsoever for me. In this state, a grotesque fusion-state existed in the simulacrum of a love-bond. It was extremely painful to discover—for myself and on her behalf—that Mother loved the me she wanted and needed me to be, but she did not and could not love me for the child I was or for the adult I became. Now I can write this. Through all those decades, in all my relationships, I could not understand the nature of my “lying” behaviors because the first and all-pervasive lie was the one I was maintaining for Mother pertaining to myself. As a consequence, it has been almost impossible for me to believe that I can be loved for who I actually am. I have felt that my own love means nothing unless it is in deference; my role and function is to pay tribute to a dominant partner or colleague. I have felt that anyone who might see me

as I truly am would *see too much*, would see something terribly wrong. When I have attempted to mirror myself, I come upon a deep self-repugnance. Mother unconsciously placed me in the shadow of her love, such that I could not find my own actual self to be loveable and could not locate an actual self for myself. My own instinctual and spiritual needs for mirroring were overshadowed by her unmet and un-meetable needs for mirroring. This exactly repeats *her problem*.

Within my psyche I seem to have discovered a self-referencing, self-immune response to feelings of humiliation and invasion that seems to have been perpetuated, perpetrated, through several generations. I can feel this complex within me as a relic of my mother's wounding, my grandmother's wounding, my great-grandmother's wounding. Psychic assaults I have experienced seem consistent with the "wages of sin" as "death," and "what I deserve" in this hall of mirrors among the shadows of many anti-selves. Whenever I am attacked or threatened I feel *I'd really rather not be here at all*. Worse, when I am affirmed, the responsibility of being an actual self seems untenable, undesirable, and impermissible.

A lurking, archaic, shadowy force within me blocks my life energy. This force withholds consent or cancels any imaginings I might have of being truly joyful. Mother could be acutely witty, but she could not trust joy and could not easily experience fun. The only general circumstances in which fun was safe were church functions, "socials" and the like, and when she was with younger children. She could play with her children and grandchildren. Even in these contexts, too much fun was a risky. The nature of the danger was always clear: an evil force was lurking near, a force which, if not carefully held at bay, would exploit "fun" and subvert the scene by means of "pleasure." Mother could laugh, and commonly did laugh, with manic, uncontrolled abandon, within the confines of a clearly defined "moment." However, these moments did not have a lasting, palliative effect and never brought a sense of "clear sailing." I can't recall any significant duration of time that Mother that was free of heavy clouds

and serious gravity. To this day, I feel deep within that “fun” seems somehow not consistent with my character or vocation and that traces of joy must be stolen very carefully and without disclosure. Affirmation from others can be excruciating and incapacitating by compromising the necessary and essential secrets of my shadow-obligations. In the dictates of this force, I must accept as a matter of duty my ongoing exploitation and manipulation by others. Such is my life at the boundaries of the anti-world.

However, I cannot and will not live any more of my life serving these patterns of delusion. My philosophy is that the purpose of human relationships—always and all ways—is to serve the increase of love. I have committed my life to overcoming obstacles in relatedness, particularly those arising from the unconscious power-complexes. The dominance of my mother's psychology, and my psychological heritage, was complex and insidious—that of borderline disorder. I have done my best to sort these adamant matters out, to lay together and lay apart her *prima materia*, and thus adequately and effectively to bring to a conclusion my designated Logos function.

I was Mother's constant object, her most continuous Eros-connection. She could not accept compromise with the Logos of my growing up. To compromise, for her, was to have nothing left, to end up where she began in life, bereft of Eros and affection. Whenever I asked and acted for compromise with her engulfment, I could sense (although I could not describe) the archaic depths of her abandonment. The love-object she most desperately needed to keep was me. My freedom, my having choices, was a threat to her self-care system. What for me was logical compromise was for her death, abyss, black hole.

Paradoxically, however, my freedom was the only actual portal for her to grow out of her self-care system into the world. In this sense, my heroic adventures in the world were vicarious exercises for her. Yet my efforts toward authentic selfhood were still a threat because her false self was eventually threatened by freedom and authenticity.

I began the ever-complex process of weaning myself from Mother very early on. As I have stated again and again, I knew from the beginning that only my nurturing would keep her and thus the whole world from going to pieces. I could not fail, and yet I have come to understand, very directly, that self-sacrifice for *non-self* is the sacrifice of authentic selfhood. I have felt obligated all my life to sacrifice myself for what turns out to have been falsehoods. In this way, this work turns out to be a personal examination of conscience. Only with this exhaustive self-examination—psychologized as it must be—can I experience authentic selfhood. I must no longer sacrifice my actual selfhood for falsehoods, namely, the delusions that others may have of themselves. I must never again knowingly serve lies, no matter how obligatory or compelling they may seem. It is not my responsibility to nurture anyone in his or her delusions, and it is not my vocation to wean anyone from his or her delusions. To think that this should be my obligation extends in grandiosity the infantilism of my enmeshment with my mother. I must no longer take this on. My life journey has required me to learn to distinguish between genuine giving and genuine loving. There is no validity in the call to sacrifice if the object is false, a lie. Authentic loving is not based in lying or in the power-complex.

I could hardly have known the effects of Mother's death in advance, but I think I always knew that my 'work' with her material would take on a different nature with her death. The transformations to which I refer are more than emotional; they concern the psychic journey, souls in transit, however that is to be stated. I could hardly be in charge of Mother's death and all the final decisions that she faced. I must concentrate on my own integrative efforts to live out my own life, to accept responsibility for myself with diligence, and to re-enter world life with courage and persistence.

In some ways Mother died in a timely way not to have the face the truths that we have come to know about her. I do not know how Mother could have lived

knowing that I had come to know her terrible truths, and I do not know how I could have lived knowing what I do and continuing to enable Mother's denials and psychotic splits. After Mother died, I flew to Tennessee and the house on Sullivan Street for the sole purpose of cleaning out the basement. In my dreams, so many of these “immovable” objects fly back into place and cannot be cleared away. Somehow, these objects are enmeshed, as are the dreams, with issues of psychic freedom. Something in this work is of the Soul of the World—as all our sufferings and sorrows ultimately are.

In a difficult saying, Jesus said to “let the dead bury the dead.” In cruel ways, what is “dead” within me must bury what is “dead” in all these matters. In this writing, I am striving to serve freedom of soul—in some ways least of all for myself, in other ways only for my own self. It has taken me into my sixth decade to truly begin to identify that the central conflicts of Mother's life do not have to be the only issues of my life. I can often feel that I am not the *me* that I want to be but the *me* that I inescapably am, with this question—*Do I get an actual life of my own before I die?*

However, these contemplations are not only for myself but also with my family—of them and for them. My functions as observer-writer were selected for me as the family's functions of self-reflection and transcendence. The family did as well as it could, working these powers as far as possible, getting as far as they could with instinct and archetype, the energies and the formalities, Eros and Logos. It was not easy for Mother to hold all she had to hold, unforgiven, within her self-care system, but a freeing truth I have found in her life story is that the danger of not-living is much more profound and disturbing than certain death. Living requires the true faith. To be truly and tenderly alive among the living is the ultimate concern of maximum importance. This is the true morality, to maximize the completeness of all the living, at all scales of magnitude, on all occasions of experience. This is the telling.

## 2. Across the street

As I turn to my second story, I am mindful that I am describing a relationship outside my family of origin. Although none of the principals in this story are living, I will withhold details that are not compelling. However, as best I can, I write without apology and on behalf of justice something of Keith's story. It is also our story. I cannot abide with what I find still to be a consensus in my hometown among those who remember Keith at all: "Well, he was just mentally ill." Such consensus strikes against my very soul.

From birth, for me "Keith" meant "friend," and I could never and *can* never use that word apart from the memory of Keith. Keith's birthday I knew as much as my own. We were born in 1950. Keith was born in March, and was brought home from the hospital to the house across the street from the house to which Johnny was brought home from the same hospital in July. Keith's birth was normal. However, after a fall in the front yard, Mother and I experienced *abruptio placentae*, a premature breaking away of the placenta from the uterine wall. As a result, I nearly suffocated on blood in the amniotic fluid, and Mother was in precarious condition from hemorrhaging and other complications. I nearly suffocated when my mother's blood exploded into the womb; then I was born by explosion. Attending this emergency caesarian section delivery was Keith's father—a legendary family practitioner and baby-doctor in Kingsport, our hometown.

Keith and I shared in parallel all the phases of infancy, little boyhood, and pre-adolescence—more intimately than most brothers and more like twins. His parents were second parents to me. I traveled with Keith through all the polymorphous borderlands of archaic consciousness, the object relations of magical consciousness, the fantasies and enactments of mythic consciousness, through pre-latency, latency—the whole gamut.

Our lives were so much unified that I could not perceive the very early and very extreme splitting of our paths. It seems clear to me now that Keith was surely unwanted. At best, he was not very much welcomed into this life. I have no recollection of him ever having been respected or enjoyed in the house across the street. The onset of puberty spelled big trouble for Keith, and impending catastrophe rapidly became apparent. I can remember his earliest psychotic episodes. I could hardly recognize then what was going on. Only vaguely did I associate these with my mother's scenes. I think I just stood in awe and terror as I witnessed the terrors that seized Keith with uncontrollable ferocity. Once again, I stood and watched the chaotic patterns of extreme psychological wounding and psychotic disintegration before my eyes.

Now I can identify more clearly how these terrors were present when Keith and I played day by day. In close proximity as I was, I felt the malicious forces in Keith's house to be, even at that time, like a threat of blood vengeance that could at any moment flood over. When those terrors built up and swirled ominously, as they commonly did, like the worst thunderstorms in the world—but firestorms—I instinctively knew what to do. I quickly raced back to my house to take shelter. Rarely could Keith follow me.

The only option for him was to face those overt aggressions and submit to them. There was only one myth and one rationale at Keith's house—the active and overwhelming will-to-power of his father, the doctor. It seemed that Keith's survival was measured out to him in doses, on the basis of a prescription formulated daily, and the only act Keith could contribute to that calculus was self-effacement and impotence.

The extremity of things is portrayed by Kalsched:

I will be using the word trauma to mean any experience that causes the child unbearable psychic pain or anxiety. To experience

such anxiety threatens the total annihilation of the human personality, the destruction of the personal spirit. This must be avoided at all costs and so, because such trauma often occurs in early infancy before a coherent ego (and its defenses) is formed, a second line of defenses comes into play to prevent the “unthinkable” from being experienced. [1] ...The violation of this inner core of the personality is unthinkable. [3]

Kalsched describes the archaic defense:

Instead of slowly and painfully incarnating in a cohesive self, the volcanic opposing dynamisms of the inner world become organized around defensive purposes, constituting a “self-care” system for the individual. Instead of individuation and the integration of mental life, the archaic defense engineers dis-incarnation (disembodiment) and dis-integration in order to help a weakened, anxiety-ridden ego to survive, albeit as a partially “false self.”[38]

Keith, however, was not able to achieve enough ego-strength to maintain the defenses of a false self. Although he had only one sibling, an older brother, Keith was in the worst ways the runt of the litter. My mother managed to establish her formidable archaic defense. Keith could not quite manage that. Unlike mother, Keith had to contain the emotional cruelty directed against him and carry the disowned evil with very few compensating projections and no myths of deliverance or redemption.

Keith slowly, deliberately, and rationally created his best defense by sitting at home and biding his time at school with an instinctually-based and progressively elaborate panoply of eccentricities, affected mannerisms, bizarre dress, weird food habits, and finicky stubbornness. His coin collection and other extravagant fetishes served as magical and ineffectual elixirs for his

irreversibly mutilated and obliterated instinctual needs. By waging fierce combat to acquire his rare coins and other loot, he also extorted a certain price from his tormentors.

As my life came together in rather stellar style with each new phase of maturation, Keith's life slowly but visibly become "dis-incarnate" and then with terrible velocity began to dissipate in cascades of collapse that led finally to abyss. At school, Keith's privileged status as doctor's son proved finally ineffectual in shielding him from the shadow projections that must be carried by males who do not measure up, who cannot play the game—the non-producers. All the forces of Kingsport culture ruled out such sufferings by a junior-high school boy exhibiting such a failed and in fact lethal pubescence.

Keith's "mad parts" and "psychotic" displays did not fit into the familiar models, and no psychiatric techniques were effective. In his dis-integrative decline, Keith confided what I had always known—that ours was the only heart-connection he had in this life. There was no one else who could walk the borderline of sanity with him, and yet I could not understand his ever more severe travails. Keith was becoming more and more a mentally handicapped person, an effeminate oddity, the mad boy in the attic with whom no one would or could associate. Keith and I would speak explicitly about how he experienced the games of *Everything is normal here*. While our peers—along with myself—jockeyed for high school power and prestige, Keith practiced placing his psychosis wherever necessary for the terror of the moment at home or at school.

With the demise of his socialization, the hypochondria and hysterics increased. Simultaneously, the fires raged more and more hotly across the street. Only in torture was soul actually "felt" in that family. In a perverse way, then, the only way soul was actualized across the street was in psychotic and pathological scenes, episodes, attitudes. Keith was the inverted image of the family's soul-

denial. He was tortured into soul-manifesting-feelings, but in a negative, self-destructive form of the family shadow. To be in that house, in a bad moment, was to experience a page ripped from the script of hottest hell, with speeches distinctly enunciated and acted out with unyielding fury. His chief adversary was dark, demonic, perfectionist dehumanizing, petty, with rigid expectations—a patriarchal tyrant.

I did not realize in those days that I was watching the warped concatenation of powers Keith had summoned to his feeble defense slowly melting into thin air. Such was the dis-integration of his personality. Totalitarian will-to-power—to ensure domination of women, children, other inferiors, and enemies—was the only observable truth before which any gesture of love could be humiliated and flailed on sight. Keith was told that he was hated; he was told by his parents that they wished him dead. Ancient terrors, surely the brutalities of generations, were channeled without mercy into the innocent character of this child, my friend. There were few possibilities of survivable boundaries for Keith as he passed through the abortive liminalities of adolescence. I commonly observed him to experience what Kalsched describes as a pattern of self-traumatization and retraumatization. This is a pattern I have experienced in companionship with many others and in my years of teaching:

[T]he traumatized psyche is self-traumatizing. Trauma doesn't end with the cessation of outer violation, but continues unabated in the inner world of the trauma victim, whose dreams are often haunted by persecutory inner figures.... [T]he victim of psychological trauma continually finds himself or herself in life situations where he or she is retraumatized. As much as he or she wants to change, as hard as he or she tries to improve life or relationships, something more powerful than the ego continually undermines progress and destroys hope. It is as though the persecutory inner world somehow finds its outer mirror in repeated

self-defeating “re-enactments”—almost as if the individual were possessed by some diabolical power or pursued by a malignant fate. [5]

Those who are archaically wounded virtually “attract” projections of the archetypal shadows of others. With Keith, I remember distinctly how he could sometimes even welcome such attention as at least providing some mirroring and participation, as if: *I can only be seen as wounded and defective, but better to be seen as wounded and rejected than not to be seen at all. My completeness includes the shadow of the perpetrator moving invisibly within me and of the shadows moving among us all. This is how it is with me. I was born to be hated and reviled, tortured and destroyed. My natural state is the dis-memberment. I re-member nothing other.*

While I did not see precisely how these forces were killing Keith, I did know without question that these forces were inexorable and that Keith’s doom seemed inevitable as we entered high school. I was not alone with that gruesome perception among our childhood friends and classmates, and some teachers. However, I did not think of Keith’s “fate” abstractly. The threat that he was experiencing and to which I was so near was much more a physical sensation, much more that of an imminent burning at the stake. Such was the feeling-tone of the cultural shadow in which Keith emerged as a despised figment—unwanted and unlovable, uneducable and unemployable, un-enlistable, and un-draftworthy.

Archaic forces persist in the institutionalized, ancient terrors of consensus reality and the trance of ordinary life. There was no place for Keith in consensus reality or in ordinary life. Keith survived tenuously at the borderline, and his institutionalization included—as a perverse instant of fame—the distinguished McLean Hospital in Belmont, Massachusetts, attractor of celebrities, the largest psychiatric teaching facility of Harvard Medical School.

We exchanged many letters while he was there. With me, Keith was always extremely lucid and wickedly funny at times in his descriptions. The diagnosis emerged as “insufficient ego-formation.” This his mother wrote to me in Chicago in my freshman year of college. Subsequently, Keith was shipped home with an array of psychiatric pharmaceuticals and confined in the house across the street for the rest of his life.

At this point, there were no social values to be redeemed by his life other than his riddance—fulfilling the axiom that some are selected for elimination. Now I understand how Keith’s blatant demise constellated the archaic forces of the community with cruel certitude—*Too much truth can get you killed*. As I contemplated Keith’s incarceration, my own questioning had led me to find in our archaic nature, beneath the most exalted social values, the need to kill. While I was in Chicago demonstrating against the war, I was constantly visiting in body and in spirit my twin brother whose loss had already been written off. Every little boy grows up to learn one truth about manhood: *Life feeds on life. You must be prepared to kill, or you will be killed. Must eat or be eaten*. In the rites of male initiation, the young boy, the *ephebe*, must be stripped naked and learn to fight to the death if necessary. This is expected of the boy to become a man. To be a man means to face this truth. To avoid this truth is never to be a man, never to grow up.

This initiatory threshold, both symbolic and very real, was at the core of Keith’s catastrophe of adaptation. Keith’s appointed place was to accept the quiet murder of his own soul and in this grisly manner participate as a martyr in the mutual defense of the many. These collective defenses are not only against enemies foreign and domestic but also against archaic forces that lay restlessly within the social fabric, against the foreign and domestic enemies within.

As my path spiraled ever outward, Keith was always back there, up there in the attic. Keith could not arise; his ego could not congeal. His social function, the

dismantling of his personality, served to affirm the good reasons to avoid mental failure at all costs. Keith's place was to carry in his body and in his person what for others would be unspeakable. Boys like Keith, weak boys, who cannot support the blood pact of the community, must be sacrificed. As I worked through my II-S deferment and reasonably high lottery number, Keith was sitting alone in his room, as days turned into weeks, months, and years.

In his last years, nearly two decades, Keith increasingly cared-for himself with a steady stream of psychiatric drugs, closed off behind drawn curtains, in the air-conditioning, in front of the television. I never understood the subtle but eerie chemistry between Keith and my mother as they would on rare occasions visit during those decades. They lived in mostly exclusionary anti-worlds. They would talk, but each quickly receded into respective bubbles—Mother with her dolls, Keith with his collections. In these, Keith found a currency and a language for the bitter battles of his silent, inner Armageddon.

I have come now to see how the non-integratable was integrated—ultimately—in Keith's short, tragic life. I have come to contemplate in his life the great paradox of the *affirmation of the un-affirmable by the unaffirmed*. Kalsched defines this psychic region:

When other defenses fail, archetypal defenses will go to any length to protect the Self—even to the point of killing the host personality in which this personal spirit is housed (suicide). [3] (parentheses in original)

I think Keith did make certain decisions in the actual experience of his personal spirit. Again, if he could not affirm the affirmation of his life, he could affirm his own negation. He could, by choosing his own death, exercise the available option that was left to him in his utter powerlessness. This paradox I first realized a few years ago when my eyes were drawn again to the glaring

symbol that expressed something of his intentionality and the perfection of his weakness.

A few years after Keith's collapse and his time at McLean, his mother took a tour of Japan. She seemed always to be trying to get away. I remember distinctly Keith's one request of her—that she obtain an item on his behalf. That request was for a hari-kari sword. This purchase she did make. I remember when he first showed me this richly decorated, ceremonial object with his horrifically exaggerated laugh. After I examined it and we discussed his display with ironic and histrionic fascination, he raised it carefully back into wooden brackets above the threshold of the door to the family room. There it remained suspended for thirty years until all in that household were dead.

There are many, many ways to penetrate a body and many ways a penetrated body suffers and may die. The sword was not the literal manner of Keith's death. In the face of aggression, Keith had indeed shown weakness—in his lineage, a lethal mistake. Keith felt aggression, to be sure. Contained within his defenses, his rage could be directed only toward himself. This sword was the only sword he could raise. It was symbolic of his being cut off and cut away. It was also the sword of release, the sword of Logos by which he chose to separate himself from his tormentors and his torment. Yet it remained sheathed, mounted above the door, blatant and hardly noticed, its terrible numinosity obscured as the sun in eclipse. I do not know what became of it after all over there had died.

With archaic wounding, insurgence may be unthinkable: *The only life I have is the fusion-gift of the perpetrator who must at all costs be worshipped and appeased. To question this is a loss of the fusion-state, a signal of my defectiveness and betrayal of the sustaining-controlling personality.* I knew directly how deeply Keith craved for communion with his father, and with his older brother. In samurai tradition, the act of self-sacrifice can be an honorable

means of avoiding powerlessness. Hari-kari may be viewed as a selfless act to bring atonement for the transgressions of self and of others, particularly to bring one's failed lord to reality and to wisdom. In impossible circumstances, the powerlessness of surrender may be the purest power. The act may serve as the ultimate test of kinship and loyalty in the face of failure. Thus, the victim comes to internalize the incontestability of the perpetrator—*You don't need to kill me now because I am dead already, and I willingly died for you.* This is my meditation now, as I remember Keith's death in 1981 as we had just entered our thirties.

In his final years and months, Keith slowly disappeared more and more completely into the darkness of his bedroom, the bedroom of his childhood and our childhood together. He became a creature of the night. For many years, I knew Keith would be awake, somehow expending those numberless nocturnal hours alone. Keith's addictions to endlessly available drugs, to alcohol, and to Coca-Cola brought about his physical deterioration. As with my mother, none of the psychic deaths, the necessary chaos of growth, had ever taken place. All such deaths were denied and avoided. It was always too dangerous to utter a word that anything was "wrong." Keith had to walk in the shadows profoundly, wickedly alone. His fragile self-care system barely afforded his survival. In comparison, my mother's inner world of trauma afforded her largesse. Other than the fantasies and enjoyments of our childhood experiences together—our shared collections of toys and play spots, and forbidden, pre-latent polymorphous acts, secret to ourselves—and other than with our enduring friendship, Keith experienced little of life. Keith became incapable of meeting the world in any circumstance, even to have his hair cut. There was no avenue of escape whatsoever. In the end, no one traveled the path to visit Keith or to assist him with his incommunicable and long abandoned needs to pretend to exist at all.

As his isolation deepened, there could be no doubts for anyone who remotely knew of this situation that early death was the only escape for Keith. As his energies dissipated, it was clear that the sooner death would come, the more he would be spared of mental anguish of the most horrible magnitudes. The victim of attempted soul-murder is in fact deemed blameworthy for existing. Perhaps this is some extreme and perverse reversal of survivor guilt. The infantile “compromise” of the “depressive position” hypertrophies: *How could I have offended my host by thwarting those omnipotent parental plans to kill me? My existence is a sacrilege to the all-powerful. I deserve to die but am not able to disappear. I am guilty of desiring to exist.*

At the extremes, the victim of attempted soul-murder may act in an amnesiac collusion with the parent-perpetrator’s homicidal impulses and become something of an accomplice: *To keep my parent I must submit to my parent’s transgressions. I must serve myself up to be eaten or I will not be fed. The only way I can survive is to numb myself in amnesia. I must call this death something else. I cannot call this death or I may actually be killed.* This can be a direct path to the collusion of the abused with the abuser. The victim himself or herself takes on a phantom or even megalomaniac superego and becomes the supremely introverted Inspector, Accuser, and/or Enforcer, with unachievable, hellish rules in inner life. These rules may also be externalized against others if the cycle of violence is extravertively extended.

The possibilities of experiencing *I too am a love-able person and a loving person* and *I choose to love* were not available to Keith, not in any form that survived our early childhood. His fate seems to have been sealed by the archaic wounding that preceded our brief journey in the light of our play days. It was a weekday, around three a.m., when the devil’s brew of psychiatric drugs and so forth brought about the termination of Keith’s life functions. He was found on

the kitchen floor the next morning, having suffocated with his own regurgitate, as his parents slept on the other side of the wall in the master bedroom.

As I write these words now—twenty years after—tears come to my eyes, my skin chills. I loved Keith, my true brother, as my very self. In our relatedness, Keith may have experienced the only inviolate and authentic love bond of his life. Keith could not escape his situation, and I was just a little boy who grew up as his best and only friend. I feel and want to feel for Keith and with Keith a light beyond, a self-love, such as he and I shared in our earliest fraternal union-states. This is why I choose to tell Keith's story as best I can. I wish to relieve Keith's legacy from the terrors of non-existence and non-significance, to express now the joy he and I shared in living our childhood together. My hope is that his story may advance in this way the *integration of the non-integratable*, the affirmation of the meaning and accomplishment of his life through the tortures he could not survive.

Keith's father seemed unable and/or unwilling to discern and to take the responsibility for his own behavior. As I see it now, Keith was largely destroyed by a psychological terrorist who was virtually a culture-hero in Kingsport. No one would dare breathe a word against the doctor. He was a despot, the lord of the house, an absolute ruler. He had no friends, really. Rather, he cut his reichsmarshal caricature through thin air. His perpetual reign of terror brutalized his son and cowed his wife who I think was both unable and unwilling to take responsibility for protecting and nurturing her child. When I visited across the street, I felt that Keith's father, on a few occasions before his painful death, recognized with enormous grief and remorse how he had never known his second son. I was told that he searched through my visits for some inkling of the continuance of Keith's life as it was not to be.

Keith's mother endured over twenty years cloistered with curtains drawn as Keith had left them, trying, as she told me, to figure how Keith had been so

injured, and what she could have done, differently. In Keith's long, final death-watch, his mother accepted as her own the persona of death-mother. With her progressive decline, she seemed to attempt to achieve penance for her powerlessness to participate in Keith's life or to break his fall. I visited her briefly after she attended my mother's funeral. She died shortly thereafter.

### **3. The volcano**

#### **Dream text**

Suddenly climbing the rim of an ancient volcano. Climbing up slope to look in. In Tennessee, of all places, overlooking all the scenes of my childhood. Had never heard that the ancient volcano existed, although I had noticed it from the airplane on my most recent trip and felt deep curiosity. That is why I am there. It is very dark volcanic rock I am scaling—utilizing all my mountain skills. The cold but shimmering crystals embedded in the black matter are very sharp-edged and tend to slice into my fingertips and lacerate my forearms and shins as I crawl and pull myself upward. At last I have my body over the very edge and behold a vast, unfathomably vast chasm. The ancient crater. On the far side is an even higher rim jutting so steeply into the clouds that it takes my breath away and speeds my pulse to observe its grandeur. I slip myself down gently into the crater zone. There are enormous plunges threatening any mistaken move on my part. The rock itself is also somewhat brittle. My handholds must be tested. Some of these outcrops are not reliable. But I find a body-sized niche to slip into. There I gaze around for an extended contemplation of space-time, history, soul and spirit.

Then, abruptly, a very large mountain sheep, a ram, with charcoal gray wool leaps up from inside the crater. Doesn't at first seem to notice me, but I am sure it has smelled me. I am acutely aware of its immediate, wet, woolly, wild smell. I am afraid it will trample me. Lay a hoof on me, or even deliberately attack and stomp me to death. But it leaps elegantly over me and stands above me momentarily before continuing on its way. After an extended meditation, I pull myself out of my niche with great difficulty.

As always in the mountains, getting there is only half the challenge. As I return, I am soberly wide-eyed and alert and using all my mountaineering skills. My senses are honed. But I am not timid, nor incapacitated by my appropriate sense of danger.

As I descend, I come upon another unexpected animal. This is a very dark animal. Smaller than the one who passed me above. This one in fact has a collar. Also, around its neck are several windings of polyester rope. In fact, tangled ends of many strands of rope dangle from its neck as evidence of repeated struggles somehow to escape some obviously concerted efforts to keep the animal in captivity. I feel sorry for the animal but is also repulsively ugly and grotesque and pathetic. On down slope, I am shocked to find walls covered with layers of knifed and painted graffiti. At the end of the wall is a rack for *USA TODAY*. In the distance, I see that expeditions are crushing the flora, exploiting the scene. (1993)

### **This integrative expedition**

In 1996, in flight from San Francisco to Seattle, developing a design of an abstract sculpture based on this dream, I was glancing out the window to the east. The Central Valley of California narrowed to its northern apex. The

ancient volcanoes of the Sierra Nevada rolled out in grand procession beneath the aileron edge—Lassen, Mount Shasta, the Klamaths, and Crater Lake. Then, with the stillness of level flight, I glanced down at the emerald green terrain of western Oregon, Mount Hood, and the Columbia River. Earth's crust broke abruptly into the features of Mount St. Helens and then Mount Adams. Soon afterward, I glanced down to Mount Rainier and northward to the other summits of the Cascade Range. As the aircraft glided down the approach path, my soul glided through the multitudes of associations that I have with the civilization of Seattle.

It all seemed so simple and lucid, to contemplate volcanic time in contrast to which human lifetimes seem ephemeral. It struck me that a volcano is a “giving way” of a tectonic “vulnerability” that allows the deeply molten interiority of the planet to break out in fractal torrents of hot lava. Along these continental lines of susceptibility come certain volcanic release events. This is something of how Pele creates through rifts and subductions.

I remember that in the original images of the 1993 dream—not included in the text above—the volcano first appeared to my dream-ego through the window of an airplane flying to Tennessee. Through that window, I observed the magnitude of the volcano crater and was completely stunned to think that such a massive event could have occurred near my birthplace without my ever having heard of it. Then, in a quick cut of the dream action, I hiked up to the edge of the volcano rim and peered into the crater as recounted above.

I believe I did not record the introductory phase of the dream because to me it seemed irrelevant to me why the dream placed a volcanic crater among the gently folded synclines of eastern Tennessee. It would have been natural had the dream been placed in Colorado, where I have established roots, or in California where I have lived most of my life. At the time I assumed that the Appalachian setting was an oddity.

In 1993, I was completely engaged with my career as an educator. I thought the psychic work I had to do in Tennessee was more or less complete. The paradoxes of my ongoing work with my mother-complex seemed to me to be largely intellectual enigmas. Nearly a decade passed before abrupt revelations about my mother enabled me to recognize what I am now calling “archaic wounding” in her life. Then I could appreciate more fully the scales of magnitude evoked by the volcano image, and how life with Keith had also taken place in the shadow of the volcano.

Now 2002, the volcano continues to erupt. At the time of this writing, I am drawn particularly to the images of the “knifed and painted graffiti” in “layers.” Though I originally found this phase of the dream also to be somehow out of keeping with the grandeur of the other images, I have grown to regard more highly the power of the “rack for *USA TODAY*.” The dream image arises whenever I pass such a rack anywhere. In the assaults of each day’s headlines I feel something of the ever-eruptive power of the archaic. I am reminded—from the inside out—that this dream and this life of mine and this world life we all share, form a quantum whole. Whether I realize the nature of my climb and descent or not, there are other “expeditions...crushing the flora, exploiting the scene.” I cannot rest within the niche of my personal psychology.

Front page headlines anywhere in the world convey a different sense of the ancient terrors than the headlines that preceded September 11, 2001. As I recently walked through Central Park in New York, the simple awareness of very complex realities came over me: *Things are different now*. There has been a shift in the collective psyche on a planetary scale. The volcano is ever erupting.

I recognize archaic wounding, archaic defenses, and archaic rage everywhere. I am drawn again to Dr. Jung. In *Answer to Job*—what he considered to be his only unassailable text—Jung writes about the visions of Saint John:

The purpose of the apocalyptic visions is...to open the seer's eye to the immensity of God, for he who loves God will know God.... Like Job, [John] saw the fierce and terrible side of Yahweh. [626]

[John] knew, also, that the fire in which the devil is tormented burns in the divine pleroma for ever. God has a terrible double aspect: a sea of grace is met by a seething lake of fire, and the light of love glows with a fierce dark heat of which it is said "*ardet non lucet*"—it burns but gives no light. That is the eternal, as distinct from the temporal, gospel: one can love God but must fear him. [627]

Whatever...wholeness, or the self, may mean per se, empirically it is an image of the goal of life spontaneously produced by the unconscious, irrespective of the wishes and fears of the conscious mind. It stands for the goal of the total man, for the realization of his wholeness and individuality with or without the consent of his will.... Obviously, it makes a great deal of difference subjectively whether one knows what one is living out, whether one understands what one is doing, and whether one accepts responsibility for what one proposes to do or has done.... Before the bar of nature and fate, unconsciousness is never an excuse; on the contrary there are very severe penalties for it. Hence all unconscious nature longs for the light of consciousness while frantically struggling against it at the same time. [636-637]

For Gebser—and for Aurobindo—as well, it makes a great deal of difference whether we are acting out of archaic, magical, mythic, mental, and/or integral structures. Our awareness matters, and our responsibility matters. Acting out of archaic consciousness, or any other structure, in a manner that betrays our

integrative possibilities and our integrative calling, is not excusable and will be penalized. Integration indeed calls for the most profound containment within our very being to live out the paradox of our origin, ever-present.

In the closing paragraph of *Answer to Job*, Jung surveys the scales of magnitude we are working with:

[E]ven the enlightened person remains what one is, and is never more than one's own limited ego before the One who dwells within..., whose form has no knowable boundaries, who encompasses one on all sides, fathomless as the abysses of the Earth and vast as the sky. [650]

Such is the language of the borderlands of human personality, where existence and *nonexistence*, being and *nonbeing*, living and *nonliving*, self and *nonself*, are archaic and integral. The integrative gospel to archaically wounded and to all souls is: *You do not have to remain dead to be allowed to live*. There is assistance for the wounding, assistance to move beyond the defense, release from the rage. The most mysterious and the most sacred of human possibilities are those of deliverance from evil—that is to say, integration, individuation, and spiritual freedom are possible and actual.

### **C. Theoretical excursions**

It is the theory which decides what we can observe.

*Albert Einstein*

#### **1. Archaic consciousness**

Though written through the middle decades of the twentieth century, *The Ever-Present Origin*, Jean Gebser's magnum opus, first became available in English only in 1984. Gebser describes his method as *systairesis*, not as system-building but rather as a pragmatic act of serving integral awareness. In this work, he models the emergence of consciousness, individually and collectively, in *archaic, magical, mythic, mental, and integral* structures. These structures serve very usefully in describing the nature of what Jung terms "the Unconscious," collective and personal.

The first structure of consciousness that can be described as arising—that is, "mutating" or "bifurcating" from origin—is the archaic structure of consciousness. Once again, to speak of archaic consciousness is to speak of the *origin of all human consciousness* collectively as well as the *origin of consciousness in each one of us* individually. Collectively we can speak of *phylogenetic* emergence while individually we can speak of *ontogenic* emergence. As in the biological principle, so with the emergence of consciousness—*ontogeny reiterates phylogeny*. The structure and forces of our archaic consciousness persist throughout life in each and in all of us.

However, to speak, metaphorically in the way of all speaking, of the "emergence" of the "differing structures" as *ever-present* and *atemporal*, is to speak of "future" as much as "past." The archaic-magical-mythic-mental, all-in-all integral are ever emerging and never not-emerging, and as much from the future as from the past in any actual occasion of the "present moment" in any and all our lives.

Psychology maps the primal, instinctual fusion-state of infancy. This origin is reflected in mythic consciousness as *edenic* bliss. Freud describes the earliest conditions in which we are born as the *that*, or *id*. Jung speaks of the *psychoid*

*unconscious* where instinctual-archetypal patterns, not in-themselves manifest in space-time, shape primal motivations throughout life.

In quantum physics, the origin of the manifest macrouniverse may be described as continuous and smooth, the signal-less and non-local background of potentialities and all possible experiences. Archaic structures arise as discontinuities, or quantum wave interference patterns. Inertia and resistance bring about the initial conditions of subsequent, self-organizing actualities at all scales of magnitude. Attempts to model archaic consciousness dissolve at the boundaries of meaning. These borderline states are un-tellable. Archaic consciousness arises without sensations, feelings, intuitions, or thoughts. Archaic forces are not subjective/objective, this /that, I/not-I. Our lived experience of archaic, pre-magical, pre-symbolic, pre-reflexive consciousness consists of the body's primal perceptions.

Psychology has described the primary fusion state of archaic experience, and a secondary state of differentiation "out of" the fusion state toward individual consciousness. With the secondary state of "individual" experience arise *projections* with regard to the newly differentiated "other" and "others." Projections in the interactive field are emergent forms of the original, archaic energies in magical "object-relations." Projectivity and objectivity are two "nodes" of the energy of relatedness in magical consciousness, continuing in mythic and mental structures.

The signalings of projectivity/objectivity constellate in personal identity, or the perception of individual "continuity" and "locality" in relatedness. (Relatedness is not limited to "signals" in projectivity/objectivity, but also consists of "intersubjectivity" and "signal-less communication" in "non-locality.") Projections and objectifications, by means of enculturated signaling, "tell" us where we are and where we fit, and also who we are and what it is possible for us to become. As a child emerges into ever more complexly self-organizing

projections and objectifications in the interactive field, life becomes lifeworld, a locality.

The projective and objectifying signals of family and culture are archetypally patterned. The Great Mother and Divine Father are universal archetypal patterns, or great attractors, that shape the cultural signals that, in projection and objectification, “place” children in the “world.” The power of these archetypal patterns is such that the archetypal parental matrix prevails in defining identity throughout the lifetimes of most persons.

However, a still more powerful archetypal pattern, as Jung describes it, is that of the Great Self (which we also be stated as Non-Self, beyond all possible conceptual expressions). This archetypal pattern is of origin prior to Great Mother/Divine Father and surpasses while encompassing these and all other archetypal patterns.

The emergence of consciousness through the structures from archaic, to magical, mythic, and unto the integral, is a process of ever-increasing freedom from the projective/objective locality that emerges with magical consciousness. With integral awareness comes experience that surpasses projection and objectification, and cultural signaling of consensus-based identities. Integral consciousness is not only signaled but signal-less, not only subjective but consciously intersubjective, not only local, but also non-local. Integral consciousness is freedom not defined by any finite concept.

However, with the transformation and advance of awareness, there are also phases of reiterative regression. The “retro-retrieval,” or regressive reiterative phase is ultimately the attraction of the archaic fusion state, and the originary non-locality. However, non-locality through regression is reiterative rather than transformative. In regression, possibilities are diminished or suppressed by the limits of reiteration. This is the terror of the extreme, early wounding and the

consequent self-care system. In the regression, freedom is associated with the non-locality of the primary fusion state. But to reach for the reiteration of that original state through regression is to swim against the stream, to attempt to reiterate the non-reiterative. This is psychic paralysis.

Again, the energy of emergence has two basic directions, in locality—projective and objectifying. Localizing of self through aggressive and dominating projections toward others-as-objects, as survival response, is extravertive. Localizing of self as object-not-to-be noticed, thus to escape or reduce the aggressive projections of others, as survival response, is introvertive. The first is something of the sadistic, guilt-producing attitude. The second is something of a masochistic, self-pitying attitude.

The magical structure of consciousness emerges with the earliest bifurcation (forking) of consciousness that occurs when objects with enduring, *objective* identity. Archaic consciousness is a chaotic fusion-state. The magical structure is polarized by the self-organizing archetypal *attractors*. Mythical consciousness emerges with perceptions of natural sequences and the psycholinguistic capacity for telling stories that express *causal* relationships in space and time. The structure of mythic consciousness bifurcates into the mental structure with the emergence of perspective, abstraction, and rationalized causality.

With each transition, the preceding structure is surpassed but persists in the ongoing bifurcations or growth processes. With the integral structure the characteristics of archaic, magical, mythic, and mental consciousness are experienced simultaneously without fixed reference points or perspectives—*atemporally* and *adimensionally*.

## **2. Archaic wounding, archaic defenses, and archaic rage**

The expressions *archaic wounding*, *archaic defenses*, and *archaic rage* can be used to describe how the initial conditions of extreme early trauma shape the destiny of a child and how these conditions collectively shape world life. The archaic is “formless” without such attributes as wounding, defenses, and rage. It is the ambiguous borderline of the archaic, the pre-magical, where the energies emerge that do configure as wounding, defenses, and rage. The energies themselves are archaic in these primal transformations, and so it is that my feelings lead me to link the archaic energies with these pre-magical configurings. However, understanding of any of these matters dissolves at the edge of *acausal*, *synchronistic* patterns that are not limited by boundaries of biological emergence or by social or cultural history. The phenomenal world is not split from the noumenal, or unmanifest, potentialities.

Archaic wounding is abandonment anxiety in its most primal, existential state. In *Star Wave: Mind, Consciousness, and Quantum Physics*, Fred Alan Wolf speaks of matter as “trapped light.” [136] He attributes the “basic emotions of love and hate” to “the electron's behavior in physical space manifesting as quantum statistics.”[137]

Somehow at the beginning of the universe an excess of matter was produced that has been trying to get back to its origins as pure light ever since the big bang. Matter, electrons, seeks to return to the blessed, timeless, and spaceless state of pure light. [139]

The electron's electrical charge is a cry for the return to the void. It hopes and fears to attract its opposite, its antimatter partner, the positron, in the dance of death—the return to light. [140]

Psychologically, this original state of creation is mirrored in the polarities of fusion and differentiation. Intentionality, the will-to-power, arises with the transformation of the archaic fusion-state into the magical structure and all

subsequent structures of the individuated self that reiterate this original “cry for the return” and in attraction of life “in the dance of death.” With archaic wounding, this will-to-power is paralyzed at the archaic level of fusion and/or differentiation. As the electron “hopes and fears to attract its opposite,” so the human psychic is torn between the bifurcative patterns of love and fear of *non-love*. This is as far as I can describe the patterns of archaic wounding in the concepts of quantum science, from the electron level reiteratively through the scales of magnitude into the ultimate human fear: *I am not loved; I am not love-able*.

The fear of permanent abandonment and separation is an *unlivable* trauma that can be *lived* only when the energies of the archaic fusion-state energize self-organizing defenses to form *non-self* and *anti-worlds*. The “self-care system” is a necessary lie that preserves a negative fusion-state, that is, anti-love as the only form of love, trapping the victim in a self-encapsulated anti-world that allows for survival but not growth, not freedom from the system itself. The relationship of love and violence is rooted here. When authentic love is experienced, the energies of the archaic fusion-state synergistically energize emergent structures of an individuating self. With the extreme early wounding experienced as anti-love, the energies of the archaic are channeled into anti-worlds of *non-lovability* and the energies of archaic wounding sustain the paralysis of the self-care system or erupt in a clash of anti-world and world. Authentic love never leads to violence. The anti-love of archaic wounding leads to violence or violation, acted out or frozen in.

At the borderline of archaic consciousness, there is no differentiated structure that allows the child even to be aware that wounding has occurred. The false-self structure of archaic defenses may persist through a lifetime, displacing authentic-self experiences. With no distinct “other” toward whom archaic rage can be directed, these highly charged energies must necessarily be self-

destructively self-directed or self-destructively world-directed. Ultimately, entropic chaos culminates in self-destruction. Such is the fate of archaic wounding, archaic rage, and archaic defenses in the borderlands of non-integratable terror.

### **Archaic wounding and legacies of perpetration**

My concern in this paper is the extreme early wounding of infants as a consequence of actions taken or not taken by others. Archaic wounding arises with the will-to-power of a perpetrator, or a dynasty of perpetrators. In personal life or in world life, despotic and totalitarian will-to-power has the purpose of *controlling the uncontrollable, the unknown*. Those who abuse children are unable and/or unwilling to perceive the growth-potentials and ambiguities in the life of a child.

In world life, the powers of a grand perpetrator may be irresistibly attractive to those who have been archaically abused. Veiled in religiosity or pietism, or with the absolute, self-righteousness of an “instruments” of divine will, judgment, and wrath the perpetrator *must* win and any other outcome is unthinkable because victory is God’s: *Do as I say or God will punish you* which to the child may mean *Do as I say or God will kill you*.

### **Archaic defenses and false selves**

As I understand it, the primal structuring of psychic defenses occurs not to “protect” the infant from gross, external threats, but rather from the overwhelming, archaic forces that are experienced in conception and birth. Of origin, the Infinite becomes finite. This is a very painful and brutal contraction. Archaic forces energize infantile rage at this primal borderline of emergence. To become a fetus and to be born is to be vulnerable, to bring

about the certainty of death. We emerge in a cosmic explosion of forces—at all scales of magnitude—so powerful that many, in fact, do not survive the emergence physically or psychologically. To be archaically wounded is to be close to the volcanic origins of the primal stuff, the *prima materia*, the chthonic, volcanic pressures and powers of emergence.

An infant who survives not only birth but also archaic wounding does so with the powerful, self-organizing, instinctual defenses that at the extreme may form auto-immune response such that the individual is repulsed by one's own actuality as too dangerous, and thus one must resist one's own actual being. Archetypal defenses have archaic, primitive qualities, protective of the nascent, archaic *self*. The *non-self* is both “inside” and “outside” the archaic defenses. Archaic defenses allow for survival; however, anti-self/selves, *non-self*/selves, false self/selves subsequently inhibit or block the child's potential for authentic self-actualization. The system that allows for survival also makes the inner world of trauma into a formidably impenetrable isolation chamber where a self-deluding child “plays” at non-realities. The false self may assume pre-mature, precocious “responsibilities” as a “wise child,” while fragmentary anti-selves are trapped in permanent infantilism, an inner playground from which there is no exit.

Human beings grow through what we think we know unto the missing information of the unknown and unknowable. Secure only within the structure of the archaic defense, a false self experiences “missing information” as a threat. A *non-self* or anti-self may choose non-information or non-existence rather than facing the threat of change. Any change, any variation in the orbit of the self-care system may be perceived as a lethal threat that must be eliminated. Basins of attraction form as restricted sets of non-threatening unrealities and self-similar, reiterative behavior patterns. Time hardly progresses while archaic energies dissipate to maximum entropy through a lifetime of self-torture or in a cataclysmic eruption of suicidal and/or homicidal violence. The

perpetuation of these very structures is the legacy of survivors of archaic wounding themselves becoming perpetrators.

However, for a child who survives archaic wounding, the perpetrator's will-to-power may configure as an internal image, a shadow, or "background object." This image constellates with the form of the black hole attractor at the core of the *non-self*, non-selves, or anti-selves. Such is the self-configuring, demonic lineage of perpetration as the infanticidal-suicidal chain of human evil. Nested within archaic defenses are reiterative patterns of the initial conditions of non-love/*non-self*. At the borderline of the black hole attractor of a false self dwells the shadow, or multiple shadows, of the perpetrator or perpetrators. Perhaps the most powerful tyrannies are those injected within the personality of a child as an unrecognizable, inner perpetrator. In greater or lesser degrees, so dwells the collective shadow of perpetration and abuse within us all. It is extremely difficult for an archaically wounded person—and for all human beings collectively—to recognize a need to integrate what is deeply unconscious, that is, submerged in archaic consciousness. Within a defense that is impenetrable, incommunicable, uneducable, and incapable of growth, the false self presents something of the fusion-state-in-limbo, a psychic stillbirth. This limbo is endured as a non-integratable condition of permanent loss with no possibility of healing.

In the cruel, multiply paradoxical condition of the archaically wounded, what is split is non-split—archaic forces remain indistinct and undifferentiated. Archaic wounding preserves as a splitting, the non-differentiation of the archaic fusion state. Again, this is a splitting based in anti-splitting which is the most highly energized splitting of all. At the threshold of the archaic, those who experience borderline personality disorder are split in all subsequent structures of consciousness by the non-splitting of the fusion-state preserved with all its rage within the archaic defense. Truly such persons are beside-themselves-within-themselves in a state of suspended fission that is the fusion-

state. Encapsulated within the archaic defenses, the dissipative self-care system dampens out the energies of growth in magical, mythic, mental, and integral structures. Transformative, psychic deaths and re-births are possibilities no more. The archaically wounded person may perceive actual death as a promise of birth, a death-birth into a paradise to come.

At the core of the regressive, suicidal impulse I sense something of the will for self-annihilation that may be a reiteration of the dissolving of (ultimately all) cell walls, the absorption of unused sperm, and other metabolic dissolution of molecular bonds and boundaries. Thus, there endures in our deep structure, a yearning to retreat into the amniotic sea and further back.

### **Archaic rage and self-destruction**

In object-relations psychology (Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott), an infant experiences a primal, magical, paranoid-schizoid polarization—namely, a “good breast” experience of objects and conditions of loving, and a “bad breast” experience of objects and conditions of hating. Yet these two are still one field of experience, and the child thus loves and hates the same primal objects. Fantasying good breast, the infant channels archaic energies into imaginings of an ideal world. Bad breast is the projective object of uncontrollable, vengeful retaliation as archaic energies, split from the originary fusion-state, are channeled in fantasies of the destruction of deficient and unavailable objects. In the uncontrollable rage of “infantile omnipotence” and “ruthlessness,” however, the field of good breast experience is also disrupted and destroyed. In abject desolation, the infant seeks reparation. After the earliest compromises with reality occur, a “depressive position” ensues as the healthy child “regrets” the ruthlessness that “damaged” the mother. The basic reality principle is set: *I will not hurt Mother again; I will cooperate.* Thus the infantile cycle of life shifts between loving, quiescence, destructive hatefulness, and reparation. If hatefulness is too strong and capacities for reparation too weak, then

wholesome relatedness cannot be sustained, and the infant retreats into the paranoid-schizoid position. Such are the origins of socialization.

Some theorists have recently proposed the notion that babies believe they are suffering because omnipotent caregivers want them to suffer. I take that further, into the darker core of infanticidal tendencies, the very aggressive malevolence of Bad Breast over Good. With extremely, early wounded infants, it may well be true that overtly or unconsciously, parents are ready, willing, and able to murder the infant. This is the core “background object” or the shadow of the perpetrator that I suspect is present from birth, from before birth. Infantile abandonment is not a rare phenomenon in human phylogeny. Simultaneous with the paranoid-schizoid position, perhaps, the energies of the perpetrator internalized as self-destructive rage at having survived and/or the rage of having been born at all. The infant cannot reach a compromise with a parent-perpetrator who does not want a compromise and does not want the child.

More elemental than the pre-Oedipal fantasizing projections and aggressive retaliations described by object-relations psychologists, beyond the incest wound in Freudian psychology, and deeper than the Attis-Cybele myth-motif which Jung identifies, in the archaic structure of the Great Mother archetype is an ouroboric, hungry deity, a primal pattern of infanticide and cannibalism. In archaic consciousness, there is no differentiation between eating and being eaten. The deity eats humans; humans eat the deity. There is no differentiation of life-feeding-on-life, life-feeding-on-death, death-feeding-on-life, kill-*and*-be-killed, eat-*and*-be-eaten. Analytical psychology refers to the *ourobueros*, a universal motif of the serpent coiled into a circle and biting its own tale. As a symbol of the archaic, the *ourobueros* is both life instinct and death instinct, the feeder and the fed, a perpetually self-devouring mouth. In the Hindu pantheon, Kali is the goddess who creates all that is and devours all that is. With individuals who experience archaic wounding, I feel I have recognized as a

psychic factor the archaic rage of soul's refusal of the *ouroboric* dilemma of being born-to-die: *I don't want to be here; life is too painful. Why bother to be born only to be gobbled up by the Great Mother?*

The problem—being born-into-flesh-that-dies—seems to have given rise to the earliest of symbolic behaviors, that is, of consciousness that is uniquely human. In this sense, the emergence of magical consciousness at the threshold of the archaic is signaled by the problem of “what to do” about a corpse. Perhaps with the emergence of magical consciousness, symbolism, and projective identification, cannibalism emerged as a widely practiced solution to this problem.

In researching my personal origins, I long ago came upon the book *Tribes that Slumber* by Thomas Lewis and Madeline Kneberg. In this text is a description of early Native American peoples of eastern Tennessee and the “buzzard men...bone gatherers...highly respected elders who performed the task of cleaning and packing the bones.” [67]

After four or five months, when the flesh of the dead body had decomposed, the family sent for the “buzzard man.” He was an aged man, tattooed and painted in a special manner to denote his office. On both hands, he had long, talon-like nails on the thumb and first two fingers. It was his task, using only his long fingernails, to scrape off the last vestiges of flesh from the bones. Then he placed the bones in a wooden or woven cane chest which he deposited in the “bone house.” ... The last rite was a funeral feast, over which the “buzzard man” presided. Each year two memorial ceremonies were held, one in the spring and another in the fall. There were the great “feast of souls” or “cries of the kindred” that were performed to reassure the dead—whose spirits were supposed to hover nearby—that their bones were properly

cared for. During these ceremonies, the bone chests were brought out and piled up around a “cry pole,” a tall post erected for the purpose. For two days and nights, the piercing wails of the relatives continuously rent the air. Then, after everybody had had a good cry, the chests were replaced in the bone house, and the feast which followed soon assuaged the grief. [67–69]

A few weeks before my mother died, I recorded a powerful dream that I immediately understood as signaling her imminent death:

I look to the sky and see a huge bird soaring on the thermals high above my childhood home. It is larger than a condor. It circles and circles and lands on the roof of the house next door. I am not frightened but much more in awe. The bird is majestic and colored with many colors of plumage and is in complete command....Two long birds are laid side by side on the roof of my house. These birds are much smaller than the soaring bird. They are dying and have already begun to decompose, yet they are not completely dead. The bird is watching dispassionately, watching over the house and over me and over all things. I am deluged with light, dazzling bright light as the bird ascends to soar on the high thermals above the clouds.

The two dying birds represent, I feel, my mother and me and the death of our psychic enmeshment—the necessity of together facing the bone chest. Once again, the emergence of consciousness that is distinctly human may be described as the awareness of matter in the substance of the corpse. The antinomies of existence in the flesh-corpse are somehow contained in the pleroma of archaic consciousness. Those who are archaically wounded are, I believe, closer to this original awareness that precedes subject/object, spirit/flesh, mind/matter oppositions.

As I sensed with my mother's darkest phobias, and as I have subsequently experienced with others, I recognize the problem of the corpse as an ancient terror. The discovery of death is a sudden blow to most six-year-olds.

Archaically wounded children may never lose their intimacy with this terror. I am convinced that in the archaic structure of her consciousness, Mother was never removed from the awareness of the bone chest and the cry pole, however these were manifest in her daily awareness. In my experience, Mother's rage was ever and always a rage against all-devouring death.

When archaic wounding occurs, the earliest life-instincts are entrapped or entombed and a self-negating instinct, an impulse to refuse birth and not-to-be-born may prevail. Identification-with-non-identity may be the initial condition of non-selves recognizable in a wide array of self-negating behaviors. Violence itself may largely consist of counter-measures staged by the archaic defenses of a false self that cannot exist in actuality in the world.

Sophisticated, compensatory acts of creation-and-destruction, killing-and-being-killed, eating-and-being eaten may erupt with the archaic wrath in the violent death-throes of a powerless infant who has no option but submission through self-destruction.

Archaic rage may be acted-out with states of high excitation and shattering outbursts, and/or acted-in with states of morose withdrawal into the tortures of non-being. These are the patterns of homicide and/or suicide. Such states indicate the nature of archaic consciousness in us all. For the archaically wounded individual, the shadow of the perpetrator may quietly organize compulsions and obsessions of the *non-self* to maintain totalitarian control. The self-care system has the character both of messianic grace-*and*-demonic possession. With subtle bifurcation, archaic rage dissipates unto death with the ultimatum of doubled and tripled negatives: *I shall not-be-born-into nor will I tolerate the existence of a world that refuses the anti-world I have been required*

*to create*. The false self can exist in the world only by destroying the world and objects to which the *non-self* exists only in the form of an anti-world. For survivors of archaic wounding, the world that demands birth may become the object of projective shadow forces and viewed as demonic.

The experience of extreme un-love-ability may induce projection of a ghost of the *non-self* as the shadow of the un-loved. The self-hatred of the archaic wound is projected onto others or the ultimate Other. By the abject principle of *You can't kill me because I am already dead*, the suicidal adaptation of the terrorist is acted out magically on the world stage: *I shall die and take the whole world with me—we shall die and take the whole world with us*.

Interphasings of world and anti-world may bring about annihilations of extreme destructive power. Perhaps it is archaic rage that self-organizes collectively with the attractor of a grandiose, mana-infused, charismatic leader to bring about an anti-hero of world-destroying pretensions, as with the figure of the Anti-Christ, or projective identification with the Great Satan. Such is the nature of the archaic depths to the *USA TODAY* headlines from day to day. Such are the infantile origins of world emergency in the archetype of apocalypse.

### **3. Ever-present origin**

#### **Finite/Infinite—Self/Non-self**

In wisdom traditions, the completeness of human experience, the reconciliation of all good and all evil, comes only with consciousness of a greater wholeness described as holy. In the phenomenology of human suffering, the unholy must be somehow integrated with the holy. This ultimate union of opposites is surely the ultimate mystery of human existence and experience.

There are traditional warnings that to “see the face of God” is to die, or at best to invite death. For the finite to approach the Infinite source of all is life threatening. As is evidenced by the lives of those who survive archaic wounding, to remain in proximity with the primal forces of creation is a profound danger to human existence as we know it. There is something to Freud’s remark, quoted by Schwartz-Salant, that “The psychotic knows too much.” Those who do not experience archaic wounding are protected, it seems, by forgetfulness.

Quantum physics and chaos-complexity theories recognize *quantum chaos* in origin, ever-present. The quantum chaos from which all life emerges is of such overwhelming, undifferentiated power that the experience of archaic forces is barely survivable. In the physics of it, we can speak of the archaic as the primordial heat. Something of archaic wounding and of the unreliable, pseudo- and anti-bonds of archaic wounding seems expressible in terms of the primordial creation of anti-matter, anti-electrons, and black holes where the structure of the universe we know is both formed and destroyed. Those who have survived archaic wounding are, I think, “closer” to this heat, this volcanic heat, the primordial plasma of creation, the quantum chaos from which all structures of consciousness emerge.

The actual emerges only with the loss of potentialities. Not all of the infinite potentialities of reality can be actualized in finite form. All living things enter life through the portal of improbability. Something of this improbability is the impossibility of the Infinite becoming finite, of limitless possibilities become limited actualities. Reality requires discontinuity. In this sense, there is no reality and no wholeness without “wounding.” With the archaic, we “actually” experience the indeterminacy of reality at the quantum level as the improbability that we will survive. The finite emerges at the loss of the Infinite. Even so, paradoxically, the Infinite thus becomes *more infinite* as the

*potentiality of loss* in-itself is realized. With the indeterminacy of quantum fluctuations, and by means of “conjugate adaptive resonances,” archetypal patterns of Self/Non-self emerge. The finite emerges from the Infinite as ontogeny repeats not only phylogeny but also cosmogony.

### **Integrating the non-integratable**

Wisdom traditions variously teach that the suffering of humankind is one with that of all living beings, of Creation itself, and of the divine. I believe that individuals who experience archaic wounding experience most intensely a reiteration of the wounding of all of us and the sacred wounding of the All in all that exists.

The ultimate, ancient terrors are our abject fear of abandonment, that is the most profound estrangement of the heart’s imagining—*I am not loved; am not love-able*. Something of this ultimate agony is expressed in the cry from the cross: *Eloi, Eloi, Lama sabachthani*—My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.

The effects of archaic rage in personal and world life in our time are, as is all reality, emerging from the ever-present origin. In personal and in world life, the non-differentiated forces of the archaic are being enacted as the dis-integrative and non-integratable shadow of Self/Non-self.

As the suffering within all our suffering is not limited to our individual cycles of birth, life, and death, so also the ultimate healing patterns of integration are not limited to a single lifetime experience. The wounding and the healing, the sacrifice and the atonement, are of more vast magnitudes and dimensions.

In *Answer to Job*, Jung characterizes the supreme paradox of human existence in terms of the quest for individuation, that is for wholeness:

God wants to be born in the flame of human consciousness, leaping ever higher. How can evil be integrated? There is only one possibility: to assimilate it, that is to say, raise it to the level of consciousness. This is done by means of a very complicated symbolic process which is more or less identical with the psychological process of individuation.

Gebser writes of the integration of origin:

This new spiritual reality is without question our only security that the threat of material destruction can be averted. Its realization alone seems able to guarantee man's continuing existence in the face of the powers of technology, rationality, and chaotic emotion. If our consciousness, that is, the individual person's awareness, vigilance, and clarity of vision, cannot master the new reality and make possible its realization, then the prophets of doom will have been correct. Other alternatives are an illusion; consequently, great demands are placed on us, and each one of us has been given a grave responsibility, not merely to survey but to actually traverse the path opening before us. [5]

In our time on Earth, archetypal shadows associated with archaic consciousness are being projected into the entrancing structures of modern and postmodern societies. Magical and mythic structures of consciousness are colliding with mental-rationalisms of "multiple modernisms" and the integrative emergences of "multiple postmodernities" in global, apocalyptic events. Highly complex socioeconomic controls and technological interventions affirm "consensus reality" and the "trance of the ordinary," vastly extending the

effects of shadow forces while denying, reducing, or dismissing the very existence of such forces. The defense structures and the deficiencies of mental-rational consciousness hypertrophy with cybernetic arrogance and pretension. Technological catastrophe and world terrorism bring forth simultaneously and synchronously the deficient, disintegrative phases of all structures of consciousness.

Each of us lives, with lesser and greater effect, in the shadows of the inner nations of evil. Each life journey is placed in some dynasty of the deep, collective, archaic shadows of humankind. These collective shadows are rooted in our origin and in the very structure of reality. Denying, understating, or underestimating the reality of the shadows only adds to their autonomous, self-organizing power. There is no more cruel work that any of us can undertake than to call out and to name the addictive, dictatorial powers that would enslave any who fall prey to their attractions. In personal and in world life, the consequences of denial are extremely costly. The consequences of bringing these forces to consciousness are also extremely costly. These words are hardly in scale to the reality they are describing. Salvation must be worked out. Only in the effective power of the Infinite, the Infinite Spirit, can we be free.

Intentionality and will-to-power arise with the archaic—as does all consciousness. Despotic, tyrannical, totalitarian will-to-power may be best understood in this, its instinctual, self-organizing, archaic origin. All intentionalities of terror are self-organizing, self-devouring structures of non-being, that are, in the language of Alfred North Whitehead, the patterns of “perishing.” Totalitarian terrorism is archaic rage perpetrating through subsequent structures of consciousness, enmeshing each with autonomous, archaic powers. Totalitarian will-to-power, at its core, makes few if any distinctions no matter how magical, mythic, and/or rationalized its principles and methods. The totalitarian, the tyrant, identifies Spirit with the power-

complex, that is, the archaic is identified as the magical-mythic-mental-integral. This is the very essence of False God and false gods.

Yet the deficiency and destruction of archaic rage confused with the Ultimate Power or Spirit can never be the whole story of humankind. To devote one's life to rage is to perish into the non-identity of a *non-self* without possibility of authentic selfhood. To identify with self-destructive rage is ever to perish. The authentic, integral consciousness incorporates perishing, destruction, and the deficient phases of consciousness in complementarity with the efficient phases of continuous "creative advance" into "novelty" and to "increase," in the expression of Whitehead. A compassionate heart is charged not only with the energies of bifurcation and splitting, but also with the energies of convergence, with authentic Spirit, with the integral. With integral awareness and compassion, we can understand with wisdom that whatever is split-off holds within it a "spark" of the original whole, the ever-present origin. Love surpasses non-love. Non-love can never surpass love. Authentic existence is the actuality of love that includes in wholeness and in holiness the perishing of possibilities as holy sacrifice. In wholeness, the reality of love prevails.

In emerging scientific models, complexification and convergence exist in complementarity, the exhalation and the inhalation of all that is. Those who have survived archaic wounding may—with extreme peril and arduous efforts, and with the support of their allies and companions—bring forth extraordinary gifts of integral awareness. It is unwise to deny the ambiguities of life. Some people discover this in great crisis. Some discover it in the dying process. It is not only poor education to fail to somehow teach the ambiguity in all things. It is worse. It is delusional. And yet the educational system is virtually totally oriented to denying ambiguities. Societies at any stage or locality are built of ambiguity denied, splitting off fragments of preferred illusions, claiming for them an absoluteness, and demonizing the rejected "other."

In an important sense, world life is comprised of individuals, those children, who have experienced (and are experiencing) extreme early wounding—and those who have not. With integral awareness, I feel it becomes transparent—our struggles are “from the beginning” and ever-present. In personal life, extreme, early trauma occurs beneath the threshold of reflexive consciousness, and thus the powers of ancient terrors are covert. Collectively, archaic wounding may form the deep shadow-field of human consciousness, and archaically wounded persons carry collective shadow for families, societies, cultures, and for the species. Awareness of archaic wounding, archaic defenses, and archaic rage offers openings for the integration of these ancient terrors as the very portal to the emergence of a new human consciousness. With integral awareness, these questions arise: *Can this life be lived otherwise? Are there other choices?*

How greatly the wounded, and the most terribly wounded, are to be valued. Our locating them and including them in our lives with compassion brings something of the deliverance, fulfilling prophecies of redemption in the union of opposites. Ashok Bedi writes of “moving from *sva dharma* (selfhood) to *reta dharma* (devotion to higher consciousness),” a sacrifice demanded of some as “Kali overrides our individual well-being in the service of collective consciousness.” [179] The lives of the archaically wounded have meaning as signs of the possibility of the impossible, the integration of the non-integratable shadow of humankind in the atemporal reality of the pleroma, the Bardo. Nothing is split off; there are no barriers between anything and anything; no barriers between anyone and anyone else, living or dead or ever to live; no absolute barriers have ever or will ever exist; thus we are born, live, die, and ever beyond, radically interconnected. Perhaps there is necessary a psychology of the dead.

We are all progeny of the origin. Our consciousness as such is our relatedness as companions of the divine creation. We understand ourselves imperfectly.

Our knowing is a defense against the terrors of unknowing. These ancient terrors shape our abuses of ourselves and despoil our world experiences. We are all together in this journey of actuality. Our integrative journeys emerge in passionate, compassionate, intensive, transformative relationships—infinite in patterns and dimensions, at all scales of magnitude. The faith that has come to me through these lives so close to me is of the infinite beyond all cosmic infinities, possibilities beyond all cosmic possibilities, actualities beyond all cosmic actualities. This is to speak of the peace that surpasses all understanding—spoken also as *nirvakalpa samadhi*. Openness to the unpredictable, the unknown, and the unknowable is the portal and the bridge to emergence, to transfiguration of the finite and Infinite. The field of integrative consciousness is ever-present as a guide for the forming of human intentions. With integrative awareness, each individual is responsible for seeing oneself as one actually is—not reducing the integrity of any actual occasion of experience. Integrity is a choice that can be affirmed or rejected; in any other circumstances, no matter how common, human beings are less human than it is possible for us to be. By working together with devotion and compassion to actualize authentic lives, we may integrate experiences of archaic consciousness in a “new spiritual reality” as we “actually traverse the path opening before us.” The question for each of us in our personal lives is *What is it we may become?* That is also is the planetary question of world life.

## **Epilogues**

*June 27, 2003*

When the healthy nature works as one whole, when one feels oneself to exist in the world as in a great and beautiful whole, when the harmonious sense of well-being imparts a pure, free delight, the Universe—if it could be conscious of itself—having attained its goal, would shout for joy and admire the summit of its own becoming and being.

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

*quoted by Rudolf Steiner*

I think I have reached some end of these attractors of pain, self-perpetuating through so many generations. I believe that I have at last brought to consciousness the most important consequences of being brought up to believe it was my job to eat the spiritual sicknesses of others. These issues I have traced to the marrow of my little-boy psyche. I have walked through many raging attacks in order to understand that my “subjectivity” does not require me to submit to the destroying “grip” of other persons or demons.

However, by way of my own healing, I have been compelled to account for the “location” of the souls of my most intimate loved ones—for my mother for whom it seems no actual “self” ever emerged, and also for my friend whose developing ego-structures were irreparably destroyed. I accept my responsibilities, and the boundaries of my responsibilities, for these two “born victims.” I cannot attribute their victimization to a sum of “causes”—the combined non-responsibilities of many others. For me it is possible also to speak of “acausal disintegrations.” I am not particularly interested in raising metaphysical themes here; I am compelled to consider the nature of the archaic, if I am to

speak of what I actually see, what I behold, and what I feel I have been called throughout my life to integrate. What I can observe of the apparent effects of their archaic wounding, I can and must express.

My mother's blood was Germanic and Irish. Keith's ancestry was heavily Germanic. German Idealism has a native resonance with me, but my life's path swerves from the Goethean text. My devotion has been to lives of un-healthy nature and to those who hardly at all or never feel themselves "to exist in the world as in a great and beautiful whole." There must be some accountability for those who seem separated from any "harmonious sense of well-being" in this life. On my path, there is no "pure, free delight" in the Universe if I have not accepted my responsibility for those who seem lost to joy in this lifetime, and whose "becoming and being" seems never within the sighting of an ideal "summit."

A gnawing responsibility of my life is to come to terms with my mother and my friend—and all whose lives are marked with unremitting psychic anguish—as much after their deaths as before. This is accepting my responsibility even for what I did not do—*that* unlimited accusation. I was given these two lives and the other extremely wounded persons whose ways have somehow converged with mine. My concerns are with those who are trapped in black holes, without a possibility of moral maturity. This is one of the terrible legacies—archaic in origin—of our being human.

Once again then, I ask what are the effects of being overwhelmed by forces to the borderline of psychic obliteration? I know of no greater loneliness than the moral-psychic isolations that I feel my mother and my friend experienced. In their final days in that neighborhood, in houses facing across West Sullivan Street, both Mother and Keith lived out their days trapped in dark rooms with curtains drawn.

Mother's attitude was invincible, obsessive—of the nature of possession—that life does *not* work and does *not work out* in this world ruled by evil. For Mother, the powers of doom prevail—in *this* world. This was her view while denying that she had any psychological problems, even any psychological symptoms, whatsoever.

Keith was quite intelligent and could discuss forthrightly his diagnoses and drug protocols.. With the greatest of shame, envy, and annihilative fear buried in his depths, he never dreamed of having a chance against his father, never fantasized a mother-alliance could or would protect him, and never really conceived of entry into the world at large. It was not possible for him to emerge a footstep outside that house of his permanent wounding.

These catastrophic lives lead me to my own exposure and exile in this life. I feel I am completing, validating (or trying to validate) my mother's prophetic command that I offer myself as a compensatory substitute for her unlivable, unthinkable trauma. After a lot of effort, I think I have come to understand that it was *not* irresponsible of her to command me to sacrifice myself for her. I have come to feel less anger by accepting that in actuality it *is* my responsibility to integrate her command. This text in-itself is a way to bring this very hostage-existence through a portal to some new dimension of spiritual responsibility. Supremely difficult it has been to accept my responsibility to her—albeit *an-archic*, archaic, unreasonable, obliterating—and work to integrate the singularity of her soul-existence with the ethical requirements of my own soul-freedom. Only thus can I truly offer myself not only to her but also to others who experience this life as irretrievable loss. I am ready and willing to be consumed. Here I am. Send me. I am ready to be eaten as much as to eat. This is the nature of things I have had to swallow, and this has been the impulse to martyrdom I have found wandering through me.

To see and to behold the actual self, to hear that self as other, speaking in prophecy, is also to accept the responsibility to say what one hears even if no one else wants to hear. Fields of delusions arise anytime a child needs or wants to say to a parent or authority figure what that child cannot say, very often under mortal threat. What is “real” is what “we” agree can and must be real because “our” lives will be threatened were we to dare speak otherwise. It is a brutal act of psychic terrorism to speak to a child as a definable object—*You are forbidden to be whoever it may be possible for you to become.* The most insidious lie is to speak that to one’s own self, to hear one’s own voice speaking that: *I am forbidden to be whoever it may be possible for me to become.* From her birth, my mother seems to have felt that abject, ancient terror: *I’ll be killed if I really show myself.* I was deployed by her to be her strong little boy and show the world—while showing her also—who she truly was. Thus, to prophesy.

I knew Mother’s need to be loved, and I was capable of loving her and of caring for her. I did love her. I enjoyed all our creation together. I knew Mother loved me, and I loved her for loving me. As I grew up, I knew it would only cause her pain to know almost anything of the actual truths of the person I had become. It was never possible to tell her why I could not be the person she had wanted me to become. And yet, again, it was her prophetic dream, that informed my soul-quest and my deepest love—*looking for understanding.*

I was led to believe that I was not to trust my own feelings. At church, I was told that any feelings that swerved from those that were required—by God and Jesus, by a given preacher or congregational consensus—were sinful. I am resolved no longer to play the masochist for anyone’s predilections. It is not my responsibility to psycho-metabolize the projective *localizations* of others as my necessary, ordained *place*. I will no longer eat these toxins and allow them to sicken me. As far as I am capable, the lying stops here and now. I am

responsible now for who I am and what I choose to do and not to do. Living a lie is no service to anyone. The living of truths, I believe, always changes the world, at least a little. How to not-live lies has been the central challenge of my life, even when I have not known what truth could be. My “center” is the edge where I do not feel compelled to lie as I take responsibility for my own birth. To do so has required re-entering my volcanic, archaic beginnings, the intrauterine depths, the deep body-memory of my birth trauma, but deeper still unto the archetypal Dark Feminine.

I am a determined child.

*December 27, 2003*

Plumbed to the depths and without boundaries, the Dark Feminine has the power of death, but it can just as well send a woman to the heights of life. A woman engaged with her Dark Feminine is capable of exploring life and the world with a “no-holds barred” attitude, with nothing that says, “No, don’t.” In the process, she may cause agony for herself and those close to her because she must be willing to go into wild terrain, unknown territory. Leaving the comfort of well-established attitudes and opinions to encounter her dark nature means confrontation and analysis of guilt that clings with static persistence to the synthetic aspects of her psyche. The Dark Feminine, positive and negative, rises out of the fierce landscape of a woman’s soul. She must journey inward in order to identify and own all parts of herself... Wholeness requires an integration of darkness and light.

*Carol B. Donnelly [63]*

When I first read this newly published text by Carol Donnelly, I was struck, overwhelmed really, by how they apply to my *grandmother*. My response, like to a bolt of lightning, was something of a psychic inversion, if not to say conversion.

Did my grandmother stumble or did she explore? Was she looking-away, or looking-for? I have felt this super-positioning through this writing process. As I have lamented (at times in a whining and whimpering) these “terrors” in my lineage and in my life, I have also become conscious of how much these “dark”

forces have shaped my nature, enriched my life, and led to extraordinary relatedness.

I realize that I should offer another dream, one three years earlier than the volcano dream. I recorded this dream in 1990. This appearance of the Black Madonna has been ever-present in my life, informing all my life and art, in these nearly fourteen years.

An elaborate wedding has been planned. Much wealth is involved. At the door, a young Hindu woman is giving seat numbers. The crowd is large, widely dispersed. I observe that there are many open seats, so I go back to inform the doorkeeper that she needn't worry about the numbers.

Suddenly inside, I am in a changing room. I am wearing overalls, and feel quite inappropriate and grotesque. So I take them off and replace them. I have a great fear that I am in charge of the music, and I know I will disgrace myself. But my sister appears at the last minute, and I am left with one manageable element of participating in the ritual.

The ceremony seems complete all of a sudden, and the crowd is already enjoying an elaborate reception. Outdoors in an up-sloping back yard [the back yard at 914 West Sullivan], many separate celebratory events are being staged.

In the upper left corner some kind of exotic, crypto-erotic performance has a young, black, African princess lying naked in an edged garden plot, the same size as a grave. She is not going to be raped or abused, but is the centerpiece of an artistic production. I wonder if she is humiliated to be so displayed in her nakedness, but she is cool and confident.

I am concerned that this is over the boundary of decency. I look down the street to see police and think they may be coming to bust the scene, but they are merely closing off the street.

The music is delightful. Joyful. Despite the accoutrements and embellishments and laboriousness of it all, it is good, the marriage—the principals of which are unseen by me—and the wedding are good. All is well; all is as it should be. Many connections are being made. I am conscious that some observe with disapproval, but I don't care. The festival has been complete.

Now I perceive how this dream pulls together the “terrors”—and the journey of my life—in a completion too complex and too powerful for me to analyze.

With Carol B. Donnelly (and the others in the text edited by Fred Gustafson), I am drawn to describe the “dark feminine.” The *dark* of which I am speaking means *secret* and *hidden*, *unknowable* and yet *ever-present*, *already* and *not-yet*.

With mental understanding, I can refer to *dark matter* that is said to constitute the greater part of the Universe. With mythic understanding, I can describe the experience of darkness that is mostly associated with negativity and expressed as *darkness* in competition with *light* as irreconcilable polarities, the one winning out at one time or another over the other.

Yet an integral sense of the expression *dark feminine* concerns *that* that is largely repressed and brutalized about the unknowns of the feminine and the femininity of the unknown. I can speak of the Universe of the experience of a woman's body that is barely mentionable, and of the deep experience of a man's body that is equally unmentionable. The extravagance of pornographic images in the covert virtual realities of cyberspace give clear evidence of these

raging, unmentionable energies. When these energies of life are actually integrated and brought into the wholeness of authentic living, in the Tantra, then something emerges of the possibilities of sexual completeness amongst us of whatever gender and sexual preference we are. Thus emerging through the dark feminine is openness and awareness of the exuberance of sacred sexuality in sacred marriage, *Hierosgamos*.

Could it be that my personal journey, traced in this text, incorporates and advances something of the dark feminine as given to me, and herewith *given back*, to my grandmother, and her lineage, as a son? How unexpectedly I return to consider again how true it was that my grandmother explored life with an attitude that contradicted the ethos and mores of Gravelly Valley.

In her choices, she wielded the powers of death, a most powerful mother (fourteen children in twelve pregnancies, by two men living in simultaneous proximity). I don't have many tales of "the heights of life" back there, in those hills, for her or for anyone. But I have a photograph of her, very tough-visaged, in a plain cotton skirt, wearing a bold, even daring, pendant that said-*something*. My grandmother was not quite "no-holds barred," but she was very capable of facing-down a "No, don't" directed toward her. She did this in a distinctly non-progressive sub-culture, and the costs were extremely high. She did cause agony for herself and those close to her. My mother's psyche was, as far as I can tell, catastrophically injured by these very choices the responsibility for which my grandmother accepted somewhat but not completely. Or could it have been possible for her to have been more responsible? She was in wild terrain, unknown territory.

As I feel it and have written here in this work I have followed since my mother's death, my own life has been profoundly shaped by my

grandmother's encounter with her dark nature. Indeed, much of this work has been for me, as Donnelly puts it, a "confrontation and analysis of guilt that clings with static persistence to the synthetic aspects of her psyche." At least some of my work has been for her psyche, by way of reckoning with my mother's traumatized and tormented psyche. This is, as I have done my best to describe and to understand it, a "fierce landscape of a woman's soul."

In a very powerful dream-visitation of many years ago, a terribly wounded little girl (yet an aged soul) is incarcerated in an insane asylum, hidden in the hills, "down in the country" toward my ancestral ground. This insane, ancient, ageless young girl, in a thin, white, cotton gown—soiled—is, I know, not at all insane but deeply intelligent and wise and bearing a great and terrible secret with a smile that is always vivid in my mind. She is secretly the queen of the underworld. She is the missing factor in all formulations of this Past where she is incarcerated, but also where she rules, awaiting her time to be appropriately recognized, honored, integrated. The result of knowing her is also the cause of knowing her: to come to one's actual self.

So it is that I seem to be finding myself continuing my grandmother's journey (and her mother's before her, my great grandmother who was named Mary Magdalene), through my mother's journey, in my own depths "in order to identify and own all parts of" *ourselves* in my actual self. Thus are the configurations of my inward journey, and our inward journey, to wholeness.

I recall, when the two dreams reported here—the volcano and the Black Madonna—were first dreamed, how I was taken aback, as it were, that each dream, in turn, was *located* in Tennessee. The great volcano dream, such a vast, vast, ancient volcano with its almost inconceivable caldera, seemed misplaced in the southern Appalachians. At first, I thought it

was completely incidental. I wondered about (to the point of disregarding) the locale—at first, ten years ago. Even more so, I was perplexed fourteen years ago that the Black Madonna appearance should have been placed in the back yard of the childhood house in Kingsport. Again, I thought this was a bit random on the part of the Dream-maker, or at least that locale was irrelevant to the psychic adventures I thought I was pursuing at the time.

I did become a devotee of the Black Madonna. I have always trusted the core reality—through these experiences of the death and resurrection of Christ in my life—that I can describe as the ever-present Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Love, Paraclete, as Wisdom, Sophia, who gathers all of life to redemption. I did not whatsoever (and could not) imagine where She would be gathering me. That gathering has taken me through vast, vast terrain—including the revelations that preceded and coincided with Mother’s dying. That gathering also brought me to Keith’s dying and the devastation that I had never allowed myself to feel completely.

In 1997, very mysteriously, I was drawn to travel to the Chamundi Temple near Mysore in southern India. In this temple resides the divine goddess Chamundeswari, one of the forms of Kali, in her warrior aspect as Durga, and manifestation of Shakti, mother supreme and primordial force, esteemed more highly than all other gods including her own husband Shiva. Ashok Bedi writes, “The archetype of Kali is the guiding principle in our management of our life’s trauma,” “Under the archetype of Kali, the archaic defenses are activated,” and “...Kali cleanses the consciousness of its darkness.” [157, 161]

Now, in the fullness of return of my archetypal journey, now, I may say I am a progeny of the Black Madonna of the Southern Appalachians. Somehow, that respect of the locality of the dreams given to me—respect for the locality of my birth and my childhood, of the graves of my ancestors and their hopes, their

dreams, their sins—brings me to an integrality of consciousness I have not realized before.

Psychologist Jeffrey Raff writes about the Gnostic tradition:

Psychoidal alchemy is about the transformation of the forces that manifest in the psychoid realm as living entities.... In alchemy, Sophia is fallen nature that holds within itself the mysterious spirit whose liberation redeems not only her but life, itself. She brings death in her fall, she brings death to herself and to her spouse, she brings death to the innocent children, and thereby slays death itself. [90–91]

It rings very true that Mother lived out the patterning of “sin brought into the world by Eve.” I have no doubt she felt this, and that she felt this “sin” very imminently through her mother and probably through her mother’s mother. I also do not doubt that as much as Mother surely felt that “woman brought death” to the world, she also believed that “Mary brings Christ to redeem.” Giving birth to me, commissioning me, Mother was striving somehow to live in a “fallen world.” The tradition of Kabbalah holds “that when creation took place there was a breaking of the vessels designed to hold the divine light. When these vessels broke, the masculine and feminine parts of God turned away from each other...” I believe that she was, in many respects through me, and with the other masculine spiritual-partners she sought out, striving toward that “healing” that “consists of reuniting the two sides of God.” [91]

I will not live a false life. I am devoted to actual life in the actual living. That statement links me, however torturously, to the best I have been able to experience, learn, and to share with all sentient beings, as best I am able. I was always, actually, confident in my ability to know what I felt was/is actual. The actual decision-paths of my life have not been so much guided by intentions as

by intuitions and instincts. I have always trusted my intuitions and instincts, no matter what the cost. I have lived and do live the path of the heart, as was primarily disclosed to me through Mother's passionate needs and her dark brilliance, and as I chose, and as been my initiation. The heart chakra is charged with rectifying death and bringing forth balance, union, harmony. My mission, my bhakti, has been to serve as a partner in individuating processes not limited to my personal lifespan or to the single life spans of Mother, Keith, or any of the other souls with whom I have traveled and do travel.

The spiritual emergence/emergency of my quest to find the dark, divine feminine (by any name and no-name) in the complex oppositions of my life are, now, obviously to me, bound up in my deep sense of failure toward my mother. I feel this failure as a 'staining' of failure on my soul, and more than a stain, it is a volcanic eruption. My failure to heal and redeem my mother, as some part of her wished me to do, is magma, plasma. It burns me up and away and out of existence. I must complete my forgiveness of her—tender, wondrous, most grievously injured little girl that she was—for her unknowing violations of my little boy psyche, which were extensions of the grievous violations of her little girl psyche. I must continue to work to find the divine healing (of both of our injuries) that will allow me to continue to function, to bring forth into the world and to go forth into the world with this darkly feminine gospel of

#### THE COMPLETENESS IN ALL SHATTERINGS

Thus is the secret fire in all my arts. May new beginnings be possible, now.

February 2, 2004

Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

*Galatians 6:2*

The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself.

*William Blake, Milton, Bk 2. Pl. 32*

It is a Pacific-stormy day today in Carmel. I can't quite locate myself, other than where I find myself located, adjusting my daily routine weather-wise. My mind has resumed business on this Monday morning with the usual inventories of phobias, obsessions, compulsions, miscellaneous and unrelenting *psychopathologica*—with the necessary alchemical apparatus in readiness for the essential transformations to make my appearance in my hour upon the stage, today.

I don't know what to do with myself, or, rather, what to do first, having attended the basic obligations. A stormy day reminds me of older impulses, or I should say younger impulses. As these gentle regressions linger, now gentle of the less than gentle disturbances of the holidays now, I guess, safely passed.

As I child, I was not besieged by phobias (thanks be) nor the *psychopathologica* that I now can recognize—the increasingly transparent-now of what was then-opaque (or basically innocent bliss of that childhood ignorance). But then, I am increasingly and darkly aware of the travail of what has become opaque-now of what was then-transparent. I recall vividly how I loved stormy days. I loved heavy clouds, the more ominous the more thrilling. Once I remember a huge thunderstorm of immanent might and transcendent majesty. I must have been

six years old at the oldest. I still remember the exact spot on the road where that '52 Ford Custom was parked, and name all those who were gathered to behold this cosmic drama with me. It was just a fabulous storm on a summer afternoon that challenged the whole structure of the natural order, I felt. And I was fabulously excited. I have felt a numinous wonder at harsh weather ever since.

When I was a child I loved change and novelty. I loved abrupt events, sudden happenings. I also loved shadows, hidden-ness, secret and austere places, and I deeply loved the aloneness of my own contemplations. I was completely confident being alone, and sought aloneness. I enjoyed finding my place to the side of things, obliquely. I never felt haunted, and never felt a curse.

I don't know quite how that changed. It is stunning to me now to feel such deep and abiding trepidations, hypersensitivities to the slightest matters of concern. Hyper-empathic I have become—hardly a passing alarm that I do not draw toward me like iron filings to a magnet. And those alarms can be on any scale of magnitude from the most intimately personal in myself and those to whom I am closest—to include *anyone* I may happen to pass on Carmel Beach, *everyone* I may surge through Grand Central with at rush hour, and then, all living beings over the whole face of the Earth.

These alarms are not limited to human concerns. I seem to feel the burden of crisis in every living thing that must die. I feel the burden of Earth Herself, the Sky, the Moon. Yes, I can feel the midlife experience of the Sun. And feel that I am unequal, as I am of course, to feel so responsible and involved with everyone and everything (the aging Sun?). And I wonder what the psychic craft of me is doing tossed around so chaotically—as if there were really very much of me left around anyway as my cells become increasingly unruly. I guess I woke up this morning feeling battered and beaten up physically, emotionally, psychically, unequal to waking up.

Recently, yet another insight crashes into me about Mother, and how Mother died with her secrets. Somehow, as a corollary, she also died with my cruelest secret kept from her. There was a question Mother asked me, week in and week out, and I could always feel it approaching, on Sundays, phone-call days: *Well, did ye' get to church?* (I shall never forget that inflection.) To which I could respond truthfully, yes, or untruthfully, yes, because there was no other possible resolution of that question, no other answer she was capable of hearing, the condensation of all that Mother could not be told because she did not want to hear.

There was only one question that came more often, a question in the form of a statement: *I just don't know why you have to be so far away.* The answer to that question was always by me answered as *Because it is my destiny; it is what I must do to serve what God has set out for me to do.* That was the only way I could answer that one, in the only terms that would suffice. And indeed that answer was true. It was true. But there was a deeper answer, a truth that I had to keep secret, and it was *Because I must keep my distance from you, Mother.* This was the truth of my only defense from her all-encompassing defense which would have smothered and devoured my soul. It is all so sad, so deeply sad—that the secrets that she found to be so necessary to “protect” me (and us) were so destructive, in the end. I guess that is fairly direct: I had to keep my secrets to protect myself against the effects of her secrets. Thus it is that I do not believe in the values of secret-keeping between parents and their adult children with regard to matters of profound, soul-importance. There is no growth in that; only death, of intimacy, possibility; and only death.

I can feel now Mother's terrible abandonment from her mother, from her existent/non-existent father, from some of her half-siblings. Also, I think can now feel something of what to her must have felt like my abandonment of her

as well—the abandonment of parent by child. Such, I can only surmise, was the sum of Mother's overwhelming drama of abandonment. But then, I did *not* abandon her—nor was she at all abandoned by any of my family. The reverse is true. She was in fact the center of continual efforts by us all, each according to the best of what consciousness could accomplish. But the conscious and whatever was and is unconscious in the family is mostly ambiguous among us.

I can't discern completely (whatever that would be) how “much” it is these toxins that cloud my waking moments every day. How much of the brutalities I learned psyche can suffer—on West Sullivan Street—is still with me? Quite a lot actually, as I am required to reckon more, not less, with demonic powers in the personal arenas of my life that differ only in locale and scale but not in nature from the demonic powers on the global battlefields.

How much of my chronic, psychic fatigue is linked with the toxicities of everyday life in the civilized world? How much of these depressions is only my natural aging process, the natural regression-progression of the deathwatch—and thus rather appropriately convincing and instructive, given the numbers of my next birthday? I am feeling both complete and utter failure at the ugliness in my life, my character, and being, and limitless excitement about what could happen to redeem this work.

It has taken me this long and has required this much work to figure out that some of us are born into the environments of mental illness—if that term is plain and useful enough—such that we have some fear of *that illness*, some righteous awe perhaps, for the diseases of the soul concealed and/or unconcealed. It is very difficult to communicate these fears, never far, of a non-identifiable, psychopathic apocalypse always over the horizon of my ancestral memories, my dreams and imaginings.

For my experience, in all the world, “cultural diversity”—for me—has brought first of all a requirement to recognize new configurations of mental illness and diseases of the soul. I don’t know what terms others may use or have to. I’m not sure where such an approach fits into historical or cultural criticism, philosophy, religious studies. I don’t know if most everyone suspects this psychotic state of the Imagination of who we are, as we have come to regard ourselves as a global community. Maybe this awareness comes, on some scales of consciousness, to anybody who knows anything about anything. I’m not sure. I can speak only on my part.

I am fatigued. I know the processes with which I do my inner work and my outer work, whatever has been revealed or unrevealed, whatever has broken through and broken free or remains bound and unreleased or un-release-able. I am aware that I am participating in this observance, now. This is the place and these are the tasks I have been offered and so I must act. This is the life, whatever the ruthlessness that is in it. I am doing what I can, and I feel that is acceptable. There is a moment of stillness and resolution while I discover myself really enjoying the storm. I am heading out now into it.

February 9, 2004

To V. J., J.B.W., and I.H.F.

## World Parents

*Parent* comes from “to give birth.” Somehow we all come into this world parentally. Maybe that's the obvious answer to all the questions about our complexity—the complexity of what it is to give birth and to be given birth. To be born carries forth all the perils and paradoxes—archaic, magical, mythic, and mental. Maybe finding oneself, finding that one is *a self* is the completion of the birth process. Maybe birth is not actually complete until one somehow integrates it all sufficiently to say *I am actually here. I have arrived. I am completely born.*

I think this is ultimately what “second birth” refers to: being able to grasp what it is to have been born and to arrive in this life and to have some freedom and responsibility for and to oneself by recognizing the birth traumas—injuries, terrors, struggles, quests, enigmas—sufficiently to perceive and to live life fully born. To do so requires perceiving one's parent(s) not as deities or demons but human beings who have come forward through that birth completely or not-completely-sufficient to experience freedom and responsibility. I feel a deep impulse to scream out to my two parents (one living, one not): “WOULD YOU PLEASE BE BORN SO THAT I CAN FINISH BEING BORN!”

Erich Neumann uses the expression, psychologically, of the necessary “slaying of the old parents, their dismemberment and neutralization.... To become conscious of oneself, to be conscious at all, begins with saying 'no' to the uroboros.” [xx]

The uroboros—the serpent eating its own tail (perhaps the oldest psychic image and symbol of the Great Mother)—expresses all of the “reality” of being “born”

and finding oneself in this world. As the particular “localities” of birth into reality is manifest in each of our lives, the imbalances of one’s actual parents and their power-complexes constitute a battlefield of forces. The “ouroboric” is “dragon”-like—the untamed mother-dragon and father-dragon who rule the “realm” of the children and destroy life. As long as “the children” cower in the presence of the dragon and their powers to “wipe out” the child, there is non-differentiation and unchecked violation and mutilation by the dragons.

Neumann calls this *emotional contagion*. Emotional contagion is very serious and can be life-threatening. *Consciousness* as a possibility only arises when an individual faces down and slays a dragon and thus constellates the “heroic” patterns of differentiation. When the battle must be fought, it must be fought. The stakes are very, very real.

(A parent with integrity does not have to be a dragon at all. The way to break the cycle of exploitation and violence is to respect the integrity of the child completely, from birth. A parent whose integrity is rooted in integral awareness, in *consciousness* per se, does not need to control, overpower, suppress, exploit, and violate a child. But this requires ‘sufficient’ consciousness of what the dragon-powers are, in order not to act them out.)

There is little hope for maturity, for 'individuation,' and for actual relationship (rooted in maturity and individuation) until and unless the parental archetypal patterns are sufficiently brought to consciousness. Otherwise, whole lifetimes are lived in the parental trance (generation unto generation).

Some useful new language includes these:

A *chreode* is a time-linked ‘probability’ basin.

An *attractor-basin* is a probability-basin emerging of one or more great attractors.

*Least-resistance pathways* arise with the tendency for basins and chreodes to emerge in patterns of 'minimal' resistance (as rainwater washing out a gully).

In some respects, these terms add to the descriptive power of the term *archetype*.

To speak of the World Parents is to speak of chreodes, attractor-basins, least-resistance pathways that shape almost all of human experience at all times, since one can never exist apart from some relationship to the World Parents—either prior to or subsequent to 'individuating.'

Differentiating and individuating require some consciousness of the World Parental chreode-basins. Otherwise, these pathways of least-resistance will always prevail. This 'prevalance' or 'probability' is virtually certain if one is 'unconscious' of the patterns, and continues to live them out magically, mythically, and mentally.

I think any parent who is efficiently "conscious-enough" not to identify with the World Parental archetype and those powers, that is, not to play the Immortal-Eternal Father/Mother God, has done one's children a great favor. In my experience, this may be one way to describe how any spiritual practice is authentic: There is a consciousness beyond the identification (perpetuation, perpetration) of the authoritarian, parental power-complex. A simple description of this could be 'genuine humility', as a parent, a humility that can actually 'behold' the original self of the child who is an original being and Child of Creation and not an object of property and self-aggrandizement, or vehicle for the healing of narcissistic wounds.

Such practice requires resisting the least-resistance pathways, avoiding the chreode-attractor basins of World Parental power-complexes and authoritarianism. There is no life-experience without some resistance. Thus, the choices are least-resistance pathways that affirm the status-quo and delusions of an eternal homeostasis, or, consciously chosen pathways of pathways that provide for 'adventure' and 'novelty', based in humility, and trusting the processes of 'uncertainty' in an open universe.

In this sense, Dr. Jung advised that the archetypal patterns can "lead" those who develop some sort of faith-practice of such a scale, while the archetypal patterns just "drag" those who experience them as "fate" unto death.

February 12, 2004

To P. D. C.

So long ago you said, “Well, you know we’re all frustrated artists,” and I didn’t say anything. I have learned, three decades later, what it is, and how wrong it is when there’s something I want to say but cannot say it. I think that’s a strong signal for anyone anywhere anytime: *What is it you want to say but you cannot say it?*

Something extremely powerful in my being took over at that point. Now, what I know that I didn’t know then, and what you didn’t know and couldn’t know, was how that statement constellated the Mother Complex. There is no more powerful complex in my being (as is so for most of us males), and mine (as is not uncommon) centers in the *unlived life* of my mother.

It is not only “my mother but throughout my ancestry/family psychology. It is Mother Appalachia. Mother Kingsport. If there is anything at all that we did find in complete mutuality about Kingsport, it was that for us life could not be lived completely in the way we were living then and there. There was something *unlived* and *unlivable* in the culture, the city, in the marrow of our souls. We never talked about this explicitly because we never needed to; it was assumed, like air, sky, ground, water.

In that moment, it was not only your remark I could not respond to. There was a whole genealogy of my own—a psychic genealogy—that was not very complete until Mother died and until I wrote *Ancient Terrors*, that was entangled in my non-response to your statement. To have agreed with your statement, to have accepted “permanent frustration” in my heart would have been, for me, to have acceded to Death and to a lineage of deaths in my anima-history.

This is where we left off.

April 2, 2004

The clowns

...the *lie* is the refusal to stand for what one actually sees, for the perceptions that register the behavior of others and oneself.... It is the lie that is only dethroned by facing the truth of one's long-dismissed perceptions.

*Nathan Schwartz-Salant*

The mission was to keep Mother happy at all costs, to keep Mother from falling apart. That mission is centered my own deep-seated terror of failure—that I will fail her (the future tense applies, even though she has been dead now for nearly four years) and that I will fail my mission if *everyone* in my circle is not happy all the time. This has played brutally into my life, for whatever the positives might be, as in many settings, I have maneuvered to keep it all from coming apart, and trying to keep *everyone* happy, in *every* way.

Late in life, Mother began to paint clowns. This was her only 'symbolic' motif, and she became prolific. I will include as clowns of a particular sort, Mother's series of Raggedy Ann's and Andy's. One painting of Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy she titled "A Happy Coupl." The first time I saw the painting, I was absolutely horrified at the emotional abyss registered in this infantile image. I felt like I was witnessing something of a possession unraveling as the images of these dolls emerged from dear Mother's psyche. The image was so *deliriously* cruel—the very fantasy of the false, little-girl self, becoming *giddily moribund* in her private, artistic Saturnalia.

This false self had always taken ‘itself’ so seriously. And here, at the end, with these dolls and clowns, Mother—who had always taken herself so very seriously—seemed to be pleading for something, for laughter, even to be laughed-at, in the grand finale-resolution of her lifelong, tragic denials. It seemed bitterly ironic to discover these images *telling* something of Mother’s *life-review* by somehow urging—too late—“don’t take me seriously.” These were more than decorative art, the dolls and clowns; they were a removal of masks, in the compounding of masks.

It is very difficult for me even to speak of these images. These paintings were—and the extant ones are—extremely bitter in their sweetness, intensive with inner contradictions. I can hardly bear to look at them. Paradoxically, I feel them as the very depiction of the ‘shadow,’ the ‘background object,’ that stands behind my own little-boy self-image, my *puer*-image. (Mother dressed me as clown at Halloween on more than one occasion. Her toy—but then I did not and could not know that. I grew to hate it when Mother dressed me, as she attempted to do so deeply into my adulthood.)

Mother struggled with her clowns. I’m surprised she showed so many of them, since she often laid back work she considered inferior. Maybe she didn’t see these clowns as inferior even though (in my view) they were, with one or maybe two exceptions, the least adept of any images she ever painted. They are disturbing to me. I feel disturbed right now, as I think of them all stored away in the chest, under a bed, back in Tennessee.

These were unfocused works. Giddy works. They were lies. The clowns were not of this world. They were conventionalized, stereotypical logos, really, of a permanent failure to be amused, to be amuse-able. Mother never went to a circus, and she disapproved of carnivals.

She liked Red Skelton, however. She did not like Emmett Kelly, at all. I think Emmett Kelly was too serious, too demanding a clown. Red Skelton was truly a buffoon. I have seen his clown-paintings—originals. I find them vaguely disturbing in the way I find Mother's to be.

There is such a complete sense of loss in Mother's clowns. These are the images of what she never, ever could have allowed herself to experience. Not actually. No actual release here, I don't think. Maybe.

I think she experienced bubbles of joy, like balloons. But she didn't like balloons. Late in life, she did gain an admiration for the hot-air balloons that were part of the annual, summertime Fun Fest gala in Kingsport. She did paint one or two paintings of them.

However, what I feel in the clowns is an overwhelming anguish, a heaviness that could never get off the ground even for an instant, for all the yearning in the world. These clowns are deadly, leaden, besmirched. *This is not bliss*. Sorry, my dear. Too sorry for more words. In their grotesqueness (to me, certainly), something of Mother was "exposed" that had never been exposed, and it was overtly "unnatural"—in these images.

Actually, prior to the clowns, and the raggedy figures, Mother's only abstract theme was to render segments of patchwork quilts. As she told me, these were directly inspired by the quilts that my grandmother made. Of all mother's themes, these quilt abstractions were the very least successful, to me.

Mother always told me how she did not like abstract work. She was going for realism. Her realism was such a great quest, to make real what had never been actually realized or realizable in her life. Her realism was the fantasy of her own self-care system. It was crucial for her to make her 'depictions' real—the most real of any of these psychic figmentations.

And it strikes me how the patchwork quilt paintings were at the very borderline. They were her renderings of her mother's art, patchwork art: *Use every remnant and make each fragment fit, no matter what.*

In those patchwork quilts were indeed remnants of all the personalities of Mother's childhood, remnants of the shirts and dresses of all her siblings, half-or whole. All were made whole according to the not-quite-random patterns of "left-over" pieces of feed-sack, muslin, flannel, broadcloth, gabardine, brocade, a little silk and less satin. These left-over fabrics evoked the "left-out" truths and desires and so much else that was left-out down in Gravely Valley, where my mother was so grievously left-out.

The Raggedy Ann's and Andy's were descendents of the patchwork quilt-work, culminating in "A Happy Couple" embracing. Then came the clowns—descendents, offspring, of the happy couple.

Such were Mother's final works, as the macular degeneration rapidly ended her artistic hopes and ambitions.

April 2, 2004

The Furies

*e-mail with J.R.*

J.R.: *Tell me about the “banshees,” as you describe them, that you experienced after your mother’s death.*

J.D.: I slept in my (old) room next to the room where my mother was just before she died. I was willing to face whatever was to come, and these phenomena came. I did not run away; I stood my ground. There is no single term for these “psychoidal entities”. Her bedroom I had experienced through the years with gathering fears, some extending from my childhood. I had a distinct childhood fear of her closet, and I had grown through the years to fear her clothes, shoes, pocketbooks that began to overstuff it. Through my life, I had come to fear her chronic, insidious ‘discomforts’ that I associated with her habitation of that room. The room itself seemed to exude her discomfiture and to retain something of her endless retiring-in-failure at the close of her days, or increasingly, during the days. There was my fear of the cedar chest and the photograph within it. Perhaps that chest and the contents of that chest were the most tangible artifacts of her collapsed hopes—her lifelong desires to be seen, touched, wanted, loved, lovable, reachable. These entities in some ways seemed to rise up out of the personal effects in her room, indeed, out of the household objects gathered in heaps and mounds throughout the house and basement—that had grown exponentially engorged.

*What did the entities want?*

I think justice, resolution.

*Why did they come to you at that moment and not any previous time?*

The room in which she lived her final hours, and years, was the same room in which my crib had been when I was brought home from the hospital. This haunting quality, as I said, had been present in some ways, all the time. There was no question that the timing of this violent eruption was closely and profoundly linked with Mother's dying. I had had the profound dream-visitation by the 'spirit-bird' about ten days before Mother died. I knew the dream's message. It was unmistakable.

*Something had been in statu nascendi within yourself that was released at your mother's death?*

I have no doubt of this.

*Perhaps there was something of such great power within you that was kept unrealized by her life, and only through her death (as sad or even frustrating as that might be) could it even begin to be realized or made real.*

I have often said that this was true. There is nothing necessarily of a negative judgment about Mother in the psychic fact there was much in my life that could not advance until she died. I knew this in my inner depths.

*So these phenomena were not entirely your own, not entirely from within your mother, and not entirely independent energies, but from within you and also from within her and from "somewhere" else too?*

Yes.

*As soon as you label them or attempt to classify them they become distinct and defined within human consciousness and begin to have some sort of meaning.*

Jung uses the word 'discrimination.' That is a good term. I think the 'naming' is important. There is the shamanic sense also of calling out spirits.

*That they felt like rampant banshees must have something to do with your own definitions, state of mind, training, perspective, beliefs, especially beliefs. They were banshees, not malicious clowns, or the smiling face of Jesus, or a rainstorm.*

I did not see any beings. I was 'aware' of 'presences,' not apparitional beings but rather apparitional presences.

*Otherwise they are completely unknowable, unfathomable, random, meaningless, capricious, arbitrary, governed by no known laws, completely independent, etc*

For me, this is observing that there are phenomena and 'beings' that are not understandable 'rationally.' (By the way, for a bit of context, such experience is as 'biblical' as can be.) The 'nature' or the 'tras-natural' character of such 'beings' and this 'field' is not measurable.

*One person might say they were this and another that, although, the feeling might be similar—might be the only objective thing, insofar as a group shared experience could be the basis for any objective measurement.*

I am not interested in measurement, and I can use the term 'objective' only very sparingly. As to a group experience, I am certain of it. For many weeks, no other member of my family would stay near the room where Mother spent her final breaths. This was not only grief or sentimentality. No one said a word about this or needed to. I don't expect any of them ever will. This was a

distinct, unspoken, and non-rational comprehension of some of the complexities of Mother's dying.

*So, what exactly was your internal feeling of this banshee quality—threatening, powerful, mean, cruel, revengeful?*

My first thoughts are *awesome* (if you will go for a primal feeling of that word), uncanny, transpersonal, trans-human, non-direct-able, impervious to ordinary intentions, autonomous, fearsome—not respectful of persons. Actually, this is not all that different from the way a mountain does not care for those who choose to climb, nor for those who are injured or who die climbing. These psychic forces or powers were of that nature—*archaic*. I think we are speaking of the consciousness of the archaic nature of the numinosum, as well as of primal psychoidal entities. There were elements of vengefulness but not directed at me or at anyone. Somehow, these entities were lingering among these spaces as if to proclaim something very mysterious and profound about my mother's passing from these dimensions. The proclamations were delivered for anyone who was spatially and temporally near and psychically open. Like the feeling of gathering charges before lightning strikes, these psychic potentials had accumulated. Again, I think the innate perception of these potentials kept others away and kept most of them from getting near this psychic field.

*But you were saying they existed in a realm everywhere but really nowhere, and they were activated at your mother's death.*

For me, that such spiritual dimensions and spirit-beings are all around is a certainty. We do not control these psychoidal beings. I don't believe we can summon or dispel them. We can encounter them. I think the key is an open heart.

*What is it about your mother's death that triggered their release? Were they not there before? Why weren't they detectable all along? Why did they show their faces then?*

No faces—presences. I don't know what the dying process brings about or can bring about. I am familiar with the Tibetan teachings about the bardos. I do not know what dying, or proximity to the dying, *means* in these matters.

*If there is no cause and effect between your mother's death and the appearance of these things, then was it arbitrary, a coincidence?*

Now we are ready to speak of *synchronicities* and *acausalities*. I have for a long time now accepted and understood that the larger patterns of our journeys are acausal connections—signal-less communications. With this awareness we can begin to appreciate what 'more complete' relatedness is.

*Perhaps your exploration into Gebser, Jung, and these ideas of archaic wounding is an attempt to find meaning in the death of your mother rather than it just being the amoral, ambivalent Universe enacting its exacting laws of birth and death. I believe it is important to find meaning.*

I affirm the expression *meaning*, yes, fully; I can use it. There was ambivalence in these phenomena. These were conditions of high ambiguity. As I said, it was like feeling the electrical charges and having no idea when, where, or how they would discharge.

*So too your 'fixation' on her death, the meaning of it, your relationship to it, the redemptive power of it, the many hidden and esoteric levels of it—all are components of your destiny—as I feel your parents passed down to you their mess (as is ever the case) to deal with. Probably a lot of your mother's stuff was*

*given to you—and that's the whole journey of the hero, isn't it? Or the redeemer, and the Puer for any male, for that matter.*

Yes. You have spoken elsewhere of taboos and transgressions, borderline experiences, fears of deep emotions, the necessity to overcome fear of death in order to accomplish emotional stability, as well as the fear of failure, fear of falling into crisis about the meaning of life. You have also raised the notions of 'criminal energies,' and energies of brutality, destructive inner tensions. All these I can feel in particular ways in my ancestry and certainly in my mother's karmic journey. In some respects, this feels like the ancestral spirits, and the background object that are very appropriately associated with the banshee phenomena. Again, there are weird charges here of Mother's soul-journey manifesting in me both negatively and positively. To describe these charges as the 'combined valence' of work that of both Mother and me is very appropriate, and a deep alchemy. Accordingly, I have often and do often go into dangerous areas and borderline situations. I suppose that I do enjoy taking risks that require me to go all out. I have a weird impulse to air secrets, to violate taboos, explore the forbidden and cryptic. I have always felt a deep certainty of being *guided* along paths through these chasms and abysses.

*So the Furies, the banshees, wanted justice—retributive justice, blood vengeance. You're dealing with some pretty gruesome stuff here.*

Yes, the Furies.

*Justice usually means there's been an imbalance related to some expectation or law or taboo. I wonder what it was.*

Again, my sense is of psychic justice—the balancing of soul-injuries. My sense is not the settling of matters of law or taboo but actually *not* those things. My mother suffered *because of* existing laws and taboos down there in Gravelly

Valley. The imbalance I am speaking of concerns the soul of a little girl. This girl carried so much weight for her psychic lineage that she was nearly crushed, and certainly she was severely debilitated emotionally, psychically.

*The dark side of the Terrible Mother takes the form of monsters. Thus the womb of Earth becomes the deadly devouring maw of the underworld, and beside the fecundated womb and the protecting cave of earth and mountain gapes the abyss of hell, the dark hole of the depths, the devouring womb of the grave and of death, of darkness without light, of nothingness, of —ANCIENT TERRORS! The Terrible Mother devours her own children and once sated casts them all out again in new birth, hurling them into life and thus into death over and over again. There is something here of the Furies you saw, I bet. You encountered an aspect of the Terrible Mother. Maybe this was your initiation, and your mother's (life and) death opened the gate to the ancient and indestructible TRUTH.*

My first consciousness of Kali came well before Mother's death, and well before my being informed of her dark secrets. The primitive, dark feminine erupted into my consciousness in my late thirties and early forties. These multiple eruptions were preceded by prescient dreams, most particularly, the appearance of the Black Madonna. Mother died in 2000. My devotions to Kali emerged very fully and in great lucidity some years earlier. Perhaps something of these powers were manifested particular ways in my lineage and were operating from the start. In some respects, I can certainly do a reading of my life with Kali as Queen and Consort. Of course, it is the very work of Anima, in my life, and Anima Mundi, as much as I am summoned unto the All of it all.

I had the feeling that with these furious forces somehow some justice needed to be brought to completion in the correction of the very molecules surrounding Mother's dying. It was something like a Psychic-Resonance-Imaging event with multiple attractors swirling around and through the physical objects and the environment on Sullivan Street, in the air in the hours and days after the

death. I could say “ghostly.” That word, or the word “haunting,” approximates these powers.

*I was reading about the devouring mother last night in Von Franz's book on dreaming—how it saps a man's strength in fantasy and daydreaming, how he has to slay that aspect within himself if he is to be a man.*

We are speaking of the conclusion of The Opus I had to accomplish with my mother in this karmic cycle. This is as far as we got, in the end, together. The Spirit Bird summons the work further, for her, on the other-side while I continue to work on this-side. The dream, of the summons of the Spirit Bird, gave me great comfort in knowing, dispassionately, that it was no longer required of me to work alongside Mother on this great project in these dimensions. The message of the dream was extremely clear: STEP ASIDE for the (her) transition and let it be as it must be. I felt this strongly, and was strengthened to endure our final choices together, our final conversations, knowing that the time had come. This dream apparition also gave me strength for perceiving and weathering the Furies released at her death. The Spirit Bird was and is much more than an ally, rather the Messenger—the Paracletus.

May 2004

The cedar chest

Her name was Lilia Mae. She was my aunt. I know it always hurt Mother to hear her name. However, for me the name also carried some of the brightness that came to me with it in Mother's tellings. Lilia Mae had gone to work in Kingsport, journeying daily from Hawkins County. She had once enabled her whole (sizeable) family to move to Kingsport. In that period, Mother attended city schools. While she grieved for the loss of her orchards and bird nests, she craved the illuminations of city-school learning and above all the opportunity to take art classes.

Lilia Mae, aged 16, was killed on October 16, 1928. Mother had turned ten the previous June. Earlier, in April, Mother had been baptized in Stanley Creek. Yet, as she told me, "I wondered if it was real, a real profession—was it really a new birth?" Then came October. Shortly thereafter, she would make another public profession of faith. Many years later, she said she decided that the first one had "taken" after all.

In Mother's bedroom was a cedar chest, a profoundly and elusively terrifying hermetic vessel. In this vessel she kept a photograph of the postmortem body of Lilia Mae. This photo was of the corpse on a gurney. (Such photographs were not uncommon in those days.) For me, the word "gurney" has always been a horrible word, image, idea. The story was that my aunt had been killed by a drunk driver as she walked along the side of the road, heading into town to get her diploma from business school. Thus, Mother's hopes of returning to Kingsport were dreadfully crushed. (Just before she died, I asked Mother about the oddness of a drunk driving accident so early in the morning. To which query she confessed the family lie—that this charge had been made up only to

try to “get something” out of the driver in the settlement. The proficiency of this lie, however, was maintained throughout my life until this disclosure.)

In my early childhood, I would explore the cedar chest, plying through the new baby blankets, special laces and rare fabrics, searching out my baby book, and rummaging among my baby shoes and those of my three sisters. I remember doing so alone. I would press the latch-release button, lift up the lid, like a casket-lid, and with the rush of cedar scent, I would search out that photograph. I remember feeling profoundly haunted. The photograph very explicitly showed the violence of the death injuries. To say the very least, Mother never ‘got over’ Lilia Mae’s death.

(A few months before she died, I asked Mother to give me the photograph. She refused to do so, saying that Lilia Mae had “always been such a private person.” I don’t have the foggiest idea what Mother thought would ultimately become of the image. After Mother’s death, my oldest sister and I took the photograph to the riverside, in the middle of the day, burnt it to ashes, and scattered the ashes on the river. I felt a profound, tangible psychic release.)

That cedar chest, that photograph, I always associated with my subterranean descent to the basement of the house. The photograph was down in the chest. The chest somehow, with the corpse within it, belonged underground. When I went to the basement under the chest, I was going somehow deeper than underground, to the ‘space’ deeper than the land of the dead. I was afraid of the depths in the chest, and of the corpse. But going further below, I found my fantasy space, the poetic space of infinite adaptability. Here is where I played with Keith and Margaret and the other neighborhood kids. Deeper than death.

In the basement I developed my diametrical fantasies of space travel. I would spend hour after hour after hour communicating with distant bases, winged

vessels, spacecraft. The fantasy there was much more important than reality—it was deeper than death.

And in that fantasy, Keith and my other playmates, from the start, were my associates, my allies in fantasy, and adventurers of the beyond, by first of all, penetrating this domain deeper than death. This is where we played our naked games.

The powers of my subterranean fantasy life continued to expand and to grow well after I was too old to play childhood games down there. Somehow, in that basement, I developed vaster powers of conjuring my deepest yearnings as fantasies that were not only deeper than death but wider and higher than the ‘middle world’ of ordinary life. That middle world I found to be mostly banal and boring and garish. In the unity of the below the below and the above the middle, my most profound and complete determinations arose. I was determined not to live in the land of the dead nor to be imprisoned in the middle world of the ordinary. My soul lived and breathed and had being in the union of the deepest and the highest.

From time to time I would find individuals who seemed ready, willing, and able to be allies in this new reality of the depths and heights, while transforming the middle as fully as could be. I yearned for allies to join me in a complete devotion to these ecstasies, these openings, these tasks.

I have never liked the scent of cedar.

April 2004

*To M.C. and G.S.K.*

Shadow and soul

The facts are better understood if they are seen as a person's inability to distinguish between shadow and soul. This evokes deep feelings of shame, guilt and fear whenever such an individual enters into communion with another soul. In other words, there are infantile and regressive elements in the shadow which should have been assimilated and integrated into the total personality, but this has not happened because of the experience of severe rejection by the internalized negative parental archetype.

*Robert Stein*

Thank you for re-directing my attention to Stein. I am stunned (ever and again) at the immensity of what is to be brought to consciousness, of my ongoing learning (able to learn and needing to learn) of these matters. I find Stein's text disturbing, deeply, so there is something here I must reckon.

Recently, I reviewed some of my unorganized journal notes of many years ago, of conversations with Mother. I have recorded how she stated directly that her mother, my grandmaw, was 'hateful' at times. I read again of Mother's continual recounts of her 'difficult' and 'unrepaired' deliveries. In her later years, Mother told me of a recurring dream she had of "running just as fast as I can" to reach "the tree," a special tree that was the locus of childhood joy and wishes and locale of frequently visited bird nests. In my notes, I have recorded in some detail how Mother was baptized in Stanley Creek in 1929. At Mt.

Pleasant Church—in a church house her legal (not biological) father had built—she had heard the congregational singing of “Bound for the Promised Land” and thought of this land as a “happy place where people wanted to go.” This was in a revival meeting. At that time, she felt the people “had something I wanted.”

On adjacent pages of this journal, I recorded, also in great detail, my own experiences of a “false-call to the altar.” In these notes of over a decade ago, I was earnestly—in a deep and deepening depression—struggling to comprehend the “illness” and “disease” that had usurped my visits to Tennessee. I was trying to analyze those profound, still “sickening” feelings when I was, in fact, “called out” by Preacher S (over and over again), to come forward at the “invitation” to make public my decision (over and over again) to enter “full-time Christian service.” This I had done, in a state of deep emotion, once, and Preacher S had simply fixated on it. A new awareness even here, of how often I have made an honest soul statement, in the spirit of a moment, and then faced the consequences of how someone else had interpreted my open-hearted truthfulness.

I became his spiritual progeny. It was not healthy; and this forced march, this most agonizing inner struggle of mine, was played out Sunday after Sunday after Sunday in my pre-teen years, as from the pulpit, with the full force of the grandiose exhibitionism of a Southern Baptist preacher in full voice, Preacher S invaded my very soul. In fact, it seemed he had only two themes in the twilight of his pastorate at Oak Grove: the sending of poor souls to hell for sin-sickness and sin-death, and, by contrast, the splendid affirmation of his own capacity to spawn spiritual heirs, as figured there in that second pew, one row from the front, in that fine boy, Johnny Dotson.

These are the journal entries I happened upon, again, as you bring Robert Stein’s terrible work back to my consciousness. These are the journal entries

as I discover for the first time and for the hundred-thousandth time, just this con/fusion of shadow and soul in my life, in the dyad I have lived with my mother-complex, with Mother. Stein puts it as “a person’s inability to distinguish between soul and shadow.” I think, as it comes to me now, that this is the very description, at its worst, of my psychological enmeshment with Mother’s borderline personality disorder.

Here it is that I find my very “deep feelings of shame, guilt and fear” in my general communion with others. The Ancient Terrors text does in fact describe these feelings as ancient, archaic, in the lineage. I will generalize and psychologize how it is indeed, in my life, that “infantile and regressive elements in the shadow which should have been assimilated and integrated into the total personality” did not happen “because of the experience of severe rejection by the internalized negative parental archetype.” I have labored to exhaustion to trace how this pattern is not only personal, with me, but in this lineage. It has also been necessary for me to observe this pattern as a karmic, transpersonal pattern, and a cultural pattern.

It is agonizing, the anamnesis, the calling forth from memory and still deeper recollections and associations—in this moment, led by these torturous entries in my Tennessee journal of over a decade ago. It is healthful for me, however, to get these materials out, out of the ‘field’ that precedes awareness and into these ‘forms’ of awareness. It is healthful for me, and perhaps useful for the one who reads this, yet one more iteration of the patterns.

As I recall and am called once again into the valley, back to Gravelly, I can feel again for the extreme wounds, extreme and early wounds, of my dear mother. And just now, as I remember her saying that my grandmother’s favorite hymn was *On Jordan’s Stormy Banks*, I come to this simple discovery. It is that very hymn that has the refrain:

I am bound for the promised land,  
I am bound for the promised land;  
oh, who will come and go with me?  
I am bound for the promised land.

These are the stanzas:

On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,  
and cast a wishful eye  
to Canaan's fair and happy land,  
where my possessions lie.

O'er all those wide extended plains  
shines one eternal day;  
there God the Son forever reigns,  
and scatters night away.

No chilling winds or poisonous breath  
can reach that healthful shore;  
sickness and sorrow, pain and death,  
are felt and feared no more.

When I shall reach that happy place,  
I'll be forever blest,  
for I shall see my Father's face,  
and in his bosom rest.

Thus I find myself, here, now, tonight, in May of 2004, making one more link. I review those old journal notes, and tonight realize that the hymn Mother cited as instrumental in her move for profession of faith, and for baptism in Stanley

Creek, in 1929, is in fact the very hymn that she also cited as having been the favorite of her mother, my Grandmaw.

I am drawn into these attractors, strange attractors, psychic attractors, of my mother's childhood, her little girl soul, her mother's life and story, and then to my own "infantile and regressive elements of shadow." I cannot deny that I recognize these patterns in my soul and being, tonight, aged 53, three years after my mother's death.

I review countless sights of my childhood—an inventory I have kept through my lifetime—of those "places" and "moments" when I have most felt "soul." I have always been taken with how many of those "soul" places, those animated moments, also are *shadowed* places. Such that, in truth, it is difficult for me to discern in my own stories a clear differentiation of my soul experience and this shadow that darkens the psychic landscape.

As I write this, I don't, with all my sense of discovery, feel that this writing reveals much that is new in the ongoing Ancient Terrors saga. Yet, I also feel the arrival of a profound awareness—that I hardly know what it is to accept and to venture forth in soul without also simultaneously venturing forth in shadow. The question that arises is this: what could it be to venture onward in soul and beyond these shadows?

I know I have done this. I know that I do this continuously. But I also know that, in some respects, I have never done this—not completely. I have never discerned this enmeshing confusion of shadow and soul sufficiently to live truly in freedom from it.

So I sit here, at this computer screen, returning to these 18<sup>th</sup> century lyrics, composed by a Baptist clergyman in London, and carrying something of my

soul to me, by way of my grandmother and my mother, and Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church.

I will be attentive to “a wishful eye,” and to that “eternal day” that “scatters night away” through the efficacy of “God the Son” who “reigns.” I am led to “chilling winds” and “poisonous breath,” “sickness and sorrow, pain and death” lived in the form of overwhelming feelings and fears. There I arrive, as my mother arrived, at age 11, in that “happy place” where she could see her “Father’s face” and there rest.

But I am caught with “who will come and go with me.”

No, there is no “promised land” here for me. Not in these lyrics. No. And not with any phantasmagoric congregations of Mt. Pleasant nor Oak Grove. These are inventories, these texts, dictionaries and atlases—hymns and histories and hysterias. These are the mappings, cryptic analyses, I have been working with to locate the ghosts, the autonomous complexes that have survived the deaths of these individuals.

But these are not the boundaries of my soul, not these shadows. That sounds banal. This epiphany. Overworked. Frayed. And extremely important to my actual awareness of what it is to be alive, and what I have to do now. And again, NOW.

NOW! NOW!

Now.

\* \* \*

In this text (*ad nauseam ad infinitum*) is the emerging consciousness of how in my experience soul and of shadow came to be enmeshed. I can see some of the landmarks emerging, some so obvious as to be obscured by obviousness. The inversion, or contraversion or whatever, was that when I sought soulfulness, I felt I could only find 'it' or best find it in the shadow-worlds since the false light of the Logos-fantasy rendered those Heavenly Fatherly domains very dubious or non-effectual or non-efficacious, beyond a certain point. The 'need' to identify with shadow *as* soul was the need to make distinct the fakeness of the 'light-logos' formalities that were upheld as the false and inflationary status-quo: *Because the Brightness that I see is false, the shadow must be my fate, my destiny, and the valley of the shadow of death is my lot (wherein I must fear no evil).*

There is something of my martyr-complex here, and something of mother's repentance-complex, carried for *her* mother. I will offer this as a comment on collective life today, and the martyrs-unto-paradise and repentance syndrome plaguing the young (mostly) men of the Islamic world.

*June 2004*

*Final epilogues 1-6*

## 1. Anima

From our point of view the anima figure is a derivative of the mother figure, which is the first feminine figure to impress the young male child. She is his first encounter with the feminine, which, so to speak, coins his disposition for reaction towards women and gives his anima certain characteristics. So, in their undeveloped or unconscious state, the mother and the anima figures in the man's unconscious are more or less one. [9]

*Marie Louise von Franz*

The archetype does not determine one's life course, and the actual experience is not shaped by a predetermined mold. To this end we need complexes, for they are *the path and the vessel that give human shape and structure to archetypal patterns as they unfold in personal experience*. The complexes provide the link between archetype and ego, enabling the transformation of the archetypal into the personal. [25]

*Erel Shalit*

I want to be done with this *Ancient Terrors* text, and I have determined that these be the final entries. I have exhausted my repentance complex, or it has exhausted me. Insights continue to arrive, day by day, on some scale or another, and I expect they will as long as I live. That would be natural since life

is growth, and this mother-complex of mine is the particular manifestation of the archetypal Great Mother in All her provisions of cosmic power. These are my personal experiences of Her annihilations and creations in eternal time. My work has been dismembering, taking apart these archetypal patterns and complex energy fields.

The time has come for me—for Mother, for Keith, for the others whose stories are vaguely and anonymously gathered in this text by this theme—to be done with this, released. I must begin to direct these energies in other directions. I am blessed that I can remember my original self.

I have stated repeatedly that I know I have radically distorted things here. There was and there is so much more that is brighter than I have expressed. Mother was such a wonderful person; she *could* love, and she did love. She could be very funny and inventive. She would never consciously have injured me. I don't think she had, or would allow, or could allow, much of a conscious idea of how grievously she herself had been injured. Hers was such a thorough and compelling trance. In her persona-life, I am sure the last menacing thought that Mother could ever have feared and dreaded would have been that I would write about her this way.

Keith and I shared many of the joys of childhood, to surplus, and I am grateful for that, and grateful that we had much of the first phase of childhood to experience together with some freedom and indeed innocence of the loss. However, these expressions in this text only approximate the opacities, the toxins, and their deadly effects.

These stories as I have told them bring only a diffuse awareness of the actualities on either side of Sullivan Street. They serve no other purpose than the right-telling of any stories, for the possible good that can arise for the advancement of life.

## 2. Signal-less communication

The story emerges at the instant we sense it, not before. We create both a past and a present, and a future and a present for every story we believe to be true. [XXX]

We create a past and at the same time, depending on the results of what we remember, alter ourselves by redefining our expectations of the future. [137]

*Fred Alan Wolf (2001)*

Quantum wholeness... is a fundamentally new kind of togetherness, undiminished by spatial and temporal separation. No casual hookup, this new quantum thing, but a true mingling of distant beings that reaches across the galaxy as forcefully as it reaches across the garden. [18]

*Nick Herbert*

Truth cannot be arrived at through technique or discipline or logic. It is not something that we agree or disagree about. Truth is what holds us all together, yet each must find it individually out of the terms and conditions of her and his own unique life.

*John Briggs and F. David Peat*

As I have worked with these psychological matters, so extremely complex (as I can reckon them) in my personal complexes, it has been rather odd also to feel resonances with some of the texts emerging in the new sciences.

I loved science very much from an early age. One of my life quests has been to synthesize what I knew to be true about emotions, mythos, religious practices and what I discovered to be true also of science. When I was eight years old, I sat in the pew at Oak Grove Baptist Church, while absolutely rapt with a publication concerning the International Geophysical Year (IGY), 1957–58. Those texts and even more the photographs and graphic images were a ‘safe’ place, on the printed page, for me to escape the emotional assault of the sermons, of the invasions of my soul. Science gave me openings, imaginings, and I always loved science for that reason.

While my personal quest has been primarily psychological, with a mystique as much as an empiricism, philosophical, and with the expressive arts, I have always reached as far as I can through the natural sciences for understanding the fabric of ‘reality.’ There has always been a tension. While I felt from childhood the allure of science as a ‘pure’ escape, I also knew that science would be incomplete and insufficient if it did not include my experience with my mother. The complexity of Mother’s personality rivaled the best of any scientific explorations, to put it positively. Further, I always knew that science could never be complete without integrating the reality of suffering as I experienced it all around me in my community of origin, and of course, ever after.

There is real joy for me, through these recent decades, as science as, in fact, become more descriptive of the radical interconnectivities of the whole of our experience. I recall at Northwestern, in a discussion with a communications studies faculty advisor, how the “subject-object contradistinction” was simply unarguable. It was not only my paralegal activities that had required me to

argue against that distinction, it was also my sense then that my psychic experiences could not fit into the Cartesian coordinate system.

It has been a relief that the best science has expanded that rationalist universe, such that emotional, psychic, and spiritual matters are included in unbroken wholeness. I am glad I can understand even a little bit better how the terrors can be linked with the largest understandings of quantum possibilities. The statements of these scientists, quoted above, add to my sense of belonging, and speak of openings for re-weaving these threads of my personal loss, and of all losses in world life.

Multiple dimensionalities, parallel universes, and various complementarities of integrative science let the 'other' side appear more accessible. These new descriptions of living and dying and emergence bring me solace and suggest future astonishments.

### 3. The Wrath

[T]he law punishes evildoers outside the covenant by visiting them with the inevitable consequences of their acts. This is a retributive process within history which Paul, drawing on Biblical concepts, can call "the Wrath."... The powers administer the law, and "the law works wrath."... There is a further usage, the most important of all, when Paul also speaks of Sin and Death as personified powers. They are really not to be put in the same category as "angels of the nations" or the like, and to distinguish them perhaps they should be called "the Superpowers." If the angel administers the law, and the law works wrath, then Sin uses the process to produce more sin, so that sin is a corporate concept for Paul, and Sin does so in order to pay wages, namely, death. Indeed, both Sin

and Death can be said to reign over all humanity outside the covenant, and it is the importance of these Superpowers which has kept Paul from spelling out more clearly the role of angels or elements as powers. Those outside the covenant are completely subject to the Lordship of Sin and Death, who use the process of the powers administering the law. This is the Gentile predicament.

[9]

*Lloyd Gaston*

It is astonishing, for me, to be able to more completely integrate the understandings of science, religion, and psychology. It is a leap for me, from the advanced theoretical edge of quantum physics, chaos, and complexity, to theology—as in this text where Lloyd Gaston speaks of St. Paul and the Christian scriptures. My relationship with Pauline theology takes me back to my mother’s lap. My sense of Paul is mythic, but it is also very rational.

The Wrath, angels of nations, powers, and principalities, the faithlessness of human beings and the faithfulness of God—these expressions would best engage mother, the language she could use and understand, were she here to able today to speak for herself.

And having said this, I hardly know how I could begin to develop this ‘thesis’ of my own life-long struggles with The Wrath, from birth it feels. I can also feel from the beginning that I have been wrestling alongside my ancestors, living and dead, with the angel of a particular nation that I’m not sure I can name. It is difficult and painful to try to name any of these matters.

Mother lived very close to The Wrath, I think. That *is* the theme of her story. That is what I mean with all I have tried to describe as archaic wound, archaic defenses, and archaic rage—as manifesting the archaic and primal quality of

the divine. This is what I felt at Oak Grove, in the sermons, in the collective consciousness of the congregation. I cannot know how Mother placed herself and her own 'situation' knowingly and/or unknowingly among the others there for whom The Wrath was, and is, an immediate reality, as real as the fire and brimstone of hell, and portent of doom.

Such was the Gentile, and the pagan, fears of the "inevitable consequences" of the acts of the living and the dead, in that country church. Fairly early on, I think I could follow Paul's logic of the permutations and algorithms of sin, although I had some difficulty coming up with the quotient of death as "wages." That metaphor always troubled me.

What I did not realize, rationally, or in the rationality of Paul, or the rational preaching of Paul, that the ghosts of my ancestors, and countless other ghosts of countless other ancestors, were so near. This nearness I did feel, however, without understanding. The deeply familial and personal truths I needed to understand more clearly how these feelings swirled around me, were not available to me until I was nearly fifty years old. These truths were enshadowed, and all I could feel of them was fear and the "burdens of the law" without further clues. This was how my feeling and thinking was organized, along with my religious imagination.

I was taught the faithfulness of God, and that this faithfulness endured human unfaithfulness. Since I was a little child, I wanted above all things to be faithful. I didn't understand the psychic or emotional undertow that preached relentlessly, and affirmed by my Mother's emotions and attitudes, that it was almost impossible to escape the demonic snares of demonic and satanic powers. This conflict was very real for me well before I entered the more abstract expressions of Paul's logic of salvation.

Between Paul, Mother, and me—and the rest of the congregation, and hardly to mention the great world—the powers and principalities were thoroughly enmeshed and enshadowed from a very early age. I guess Mother and I experienced the Gentile predicament and vulnerability to The Wrath notwithstanding all the highly charged sermons and the few visible symbols of transformation, such as baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Any consolations of philosophy and of analytical psychology did not come so early. They are still coming.

#### 4. The *decretum horribile*

The covenant of life not being equally preached to all, and among those to whom it is preached not always finding the same reception, this diversity discovers the wonderful depth of the Divine judgment. Nor is it to be doubted that this variety also follows, subject to the decision of God’s eternal election. If it be evidently the result of the Divine will, that salvation is freely offered to some, and others are prevented from attaining it—this immediately gives rise to important and difficult questions, which are incapable of any other explication, than by the establishment of pious minds in what ought to be received concerning election and predestination—a question, in the opinion of many, full of perplexity; for they consider nothing more unreasonable, than that, of the common mass of mankind, some should be predestinated to salvation, and others to destruction. But how unreasonably they perplex themselves will afterwards appear from

the sequel of our discourse. Besides, the very obscurity which excites such dread, not only displays the utility of this doctrine, but shews it to be productive of the most delightful benefit. We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the fountain of God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with His eternal election, which illustrates the grace of God by his comparison, that He adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what He refuses to others.

*John Calvin*

There is little joy, other than that of advancing consciousness, to integrate at last my birth name, and my paternal lineage, in this arduous work. Simply and directly, this integration seems to come with the awareness of the horrible decree, the pronouncement of predestined damnation, that haunted, I think, my mother's soul. In her personal life, the logic of this decree paralleled the psychological opposites of *love* and *lovelessness*. Psychologically, I don't think Mother could, given her extreme early wounding, ever comprehend how she had as an innocent little girl been born into such a permanent state of lovelessness. That she could actually experience so little what it could be to be loved could only be associated, spiritually, with the possibility that God Almighty might actually choose not to love, while choosing others to love.

This was first of all, archaic in nature, I think, in Mother's awareness, in the story I have tried to tell here. It was mythic, as I have also tried to describe. But it was also rational, very rational. As I have said, I think my mother had great intellectual capabilities, while she lacked much breadth or depth of education. Thus the nature of our debates was highly rational, more than anything, concluding in mythos, magic, and finally, the archaic emotions.

I can't remember a time when I did not know the expression "Calvinism." I don't know why that should be so. Baptists are not explicitly or historically Calvinist, exactly. In fact, it was the mainline Baptist rejection of "predestination" that was the definition by contrast with Calvinism. My earliest associations were with the "Primitive Baptists" who, as I recall being told, embraced this notion. My earliest associations with Calvinism were accordingly those of a religious outlook more 'primitive' than the one I was born to. I was probably a teenager before I actually realized that my name was surely—obviously—linked to some ancestral regard for this man John Calvin. It was later still, in college, that I first actually encountered the man Calvin, and I was thoroughly stunned to find that he was a great intellectual with vast theological powers. I was incredulous to think that an enormous edifice of thought was the bulwark of Calvinism, and that this same structure was at the core of religious experience in colonial America. I had to set aside my earlier equating of Calvinism and fundamentalism (another term I cannot remember not-knowing).

There is a lot of splitting for me, here, in all this, obviously. I feel great gulfs fixed, I suppose I might say, between the archaic and magical and mythic and mental.

What I feel in the mana of all the preachers and all the preachings of my childhood, and what I came to recognize as Mother's massive projections, includes something of superiority/inferiority complexes, expressed in the collective consciousness of the Oak Grove congregation. At the core of the mana is, I think, an archaic, apotropaic force which feeds and requires a strong magic, a crucially important participation mystique in a tribal form, as I can recall most vividly. There were deep wishes here, to be spiritually-religiously superior in a vast, vast compensation for deepest feelings of inferiority—but these feelings were not only social and cultural. More deeply was the primal

fear of inferiority before the archaic forces, annihilatory fears, fears of deepest unworthiness and soul-peril.

Out of these deepest fears and intimidations working through the mana-forces of the syzygy of the Divine, the Preacher, and the congregation, arose the fountain of “blood” in which sins could be, and could only be, cleansed— “washed in the blood of the lamb.” Of course, this was never quite accomplished, and the incurable sinfulness, the ancient terrors, required constant preaching, constant washing, continual bloodbaths. The worship-services for me were phobic, obsessive and compulsive litanies, with preachings of non-renewing decrees. Somehow, the curse of predestination lingered, magically, energizing the pursuit of that unachievable perfection, to become “white as snow.”

At these archaic and magical levels, pre-mythic merging unto the mythic, I could feel, even as a child, that much, much had been lost in the grave. I feel this to this day near any graveyard in that area (though not elsewhere). I am nearly overwhelmed (in that area) with feelings of the dark valley of the Great Mother. Over and against the corpses rotting in the graves, the Spiritual Father burned in two aspects: radiant (without heat) in the streets of heavenly gold and hot (without real light) in the seething lake of hellfire and brimstone. These opposites were split off, archaically and magically, as reflected mythically. This I felt in the collective consciousness, in the life of the congregation of my childhood.

Now, in my present awareness, I can discern the acutely personal splittings in the lineage, as I have exhaustively portrayed it in this work. Somehow, my grandmother could not be ‘good enough.’ Because of her “stains” that were so highly visible in the Gravely community, it was apparently of crucial importance for her to defend herself and her children by urging them all, commanding them all, to “appear” themselves in the image of an absolute

perfection. In my grandmother's household, by compensation for her sins, nothing could ever be wrong. Nothing could be spoken of the wrong. There could be no recognition of flaws that might lend support for the obvious catastrophe of her life in the collectivity. This was a very deep splitting. The utterly damned was cast out from the perfectly good. My mother (and siblings) were born in this chasm.

I think my grandmother looked into face of her baby—my mother—and saw the horrors of her own shadow, the abyss of her own persona. Mother was called to mirror *not-that*, but rather to mirror the defiant will of her mother's visage, the defiance of the horrors by means of brute will to power. Such was necessary to confront and to correct the ancestral father-problem. My mother was charged with redeeming her mother, and this was the charge that was my psychic inheritance.

As I have characterized earlier in this text, at the core of it I find a cannibalistic impulse. The life principles of aggression and relatedness—those core impulses of our survival and emergence as infants, are played out in the context of the parental powers and the powers of the collective consciousness. These are archetypal forces, volcanic forces. At the archaic level, there is no differentiation of killing and loving, of slaying and sexing, of feeding and eating. As I have stated earlier, I find the core, originary “fusion-state” to be a state of non-differentiation of eating/being-eaten. As the infant first yearns to eat, experiencing the ur-need, there arises not only the primal fear of rejection and unprotected exposure, but the deeper fears of being eaten, of being food rather than being fed. There are traditions of consuming the placenta; in non-differentiation, why stop there?

The primal aggressions to survive are fed with archaic rage, the primal impulses to move forward, to establish boundaries are sustained by archaic defenses. All of these are preceded by the archaic wound of being born at all.

In the early magic of infancy, the child must somehow negotiate an unlimited vulnerability of utter inferiority. The earliest power-drives are somehow to come to a survivable balance with the powers of the Great Mother, and the mother, and the father, and then the others.

In circumstances of archaic wounding, archaic rage and archaic defenses are the earliest entanglements and concatenations of overwhelming powers in their primal oppositions. Mother was thrust into this abyss. My grandmother was not good-enough. She did not protect mother from the extreme, early trauma. Mother experienced the full, archaic fury of the archetypal world. There were factors in her environment, among her siblings, to bring her forth with sufficient ego-strength to survive. Yet Mother would never tame these primal forces. She never could overcome the Terrible Mother.

Mother's vast mythic project, the project to create an actual father with the aid of the Heavenly Father, failed, ultimately. Mother could not actualize the idealized father-forces further than the Christ-Satan conflagration. For every possible advance to freedom, Mother found Satan standing in the portal forbidding her escape. The Great Mother of instinctuality and the absconded Spiritual Father of consciousness and light (Yahweistic and Luciferean) engaged in eternal war. Mother was devoured by fears of annihilation instinctually by the Great Mother and spiritually by the Great Satan. Such was the threat she lived with every day of her life. I am convinced.

Yet Mother survived these threats. She developed her own phobic, obsessive-compulsive defenses (perhaps gaining some unconscious instruction from that formidable will-to-power of my grandmother). It was this will-to-power that informed Mother's rational functions, her highly energized mental functions. Her rationality was important to her defense, but it was her very defense of the inner warfare which she could not question or allow to be questioned. Her

defense was to perpetuate the eternal war within her soul—this was her devotion. She was devoted to the eternal war, and she “rationalized” Whose side she had taken, and there could be further discussion, no alternative terms of engagement. Mother could not accept any suggestion that she had any psychological conditions, anything remotely describable as a “complex.” Her symptoms never were able to bring her to the threshold of healing, and she died with them.

It was in her rationalism, so informed and instructed, that Mother suffered the terrible determinism that is the legacy of the Calvinism that prevails in Gravely Valley, and in my maternal and paternal lineages and ancestry. Predestination is the ultimate determinism. This ultimate determinism is what I feel in my name, in the context of its derivations, and in Mother’s story, and in Keith’s story, actually. What I feel is a deep substrate of feeling that some are chosen, and some are not. Some are chosen to be loved by God and man, and some are not. Some are chosen to “make it” while others are chosen by God and man “not to make it.” And for those who are not chosen, all that lies in store is the powers of wrath and the doom of the angels of the Gentile and pagan nations.

I think, in fact I am certain, that Mother lived with deepest anxieties about the ‘determinisms’ and ‘predeterminisms’ that seemed to dominate her entry into this life and this world and to defeat her and those around her with sudden swiftness. This was the rationality of irrational events. Not only the events of this life but also, of course, of salvation were at stake.

In some of our last conversations, I detailed with her again her own ‘profession of faith’ at Mt. Pleasant Church in Gravely. Just before she died, she told me how she had heard a sermon (on television) about the ‘meaning of baptism.’ The transformation symbolism of this ritual which she had witnessed at church hundreds of times seemed to become powerfully comprehensible to her

in a new way in the final moments of her life. With my feelings of astonishment that the message of death and resurrection in this sacrament, or as Baptists say, this ordinance, of faith had seemed to elude her, psychologically, for a lifetime, I was able still to feel a grace visiting upon her.

Yes, I think extreme, early wounding felt a lot like predestination to Mother. I can only begin to wonder how woundings of various sorts might have played into the life of my great-grandfather John Calvin Dotson. To be honest and direct, he seems to have been a rather cruel-hearted man who read the Bible aloud, alone or not alone, somewhat compulsively, as I can gather. Something in these readings, however, did not preclude his driving both his sons (my grandfather and great uncle) in violent separations. Somehow this *decretum horribile* seems to be the entropic decay of a particular attractor in my psychic lineage, a pattern I share with millions of Calvinist descent the world over.

In the struggle for survival, my own great-grandfather seems to have interpreted grace and faithfulness as order and control, in the American milieu of economic steadfastness as evidence of election. Order and control, in these rational and mythic frames, traveled through that Southern Appalachian valley with the full force of a more primal will and archaic powers.

## 5. Will to power

This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force...;...enclosed by “nothingness” as by a boundary;... force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing

together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and flood of its forms... out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of accord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; ...—do you want a *name* for this world?....*This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* [106]

*F. W. Nietzsche*

To early Greek science and philosophy, nature in the wild is apeiron. This is the Greek word for what is “limitless,” “boundless,” or “indeterminate.” [xiv]

*Steven M. Rosen*

On Amazon, on some search, for some reason appears a new book, *Anger, Madness, and the Daimonic: The Psychological Genesis of Violence, Evil, and Creativity* by Stephen A. Diamond, with an introduction by Rollo May.

The back cover notes:

Though the causes of violence in our society are complex, the troublesome human emotions of anger and rage play a central role in the genesis of violent behavior and psychopathology in general.

In this provocative book, clinical psychologist Stephen Diamond determines where rage and anger originate and explores whether these powerful passions are—as most people presume—purely negative, pathological, and evil or can be meaningfully redeemed and redirected into constructive activity.... [H]e traces anger, rage, and violence through their most destructive expressions to their creative and transcendent functions in art, psychotherapy, and spirituality.

I decide against ordering this book for now. The table of contents suggests some very significant text. Perhaps I will consult this later. If so, I want it to be of assistance in my understanding of my own rage and anger, the redemption and redirection thereof. I am, in these lines, drawing this Ancient Terrors text to its close, and this book is on the other side of that boundary, and I am resolved to stay focused on finishing.

I did order and read Steven Rosen's valuable new book on the Greek expression of the *apeiron*, limitless, boundless, indeterminate. Clearly to me, the expression *apeiron* is commensurable with the *archaic*, as my life leads me over and over again to bring more of the archai—the *apeiron*, the *prima materia*, *massa confusa*, the *pleroma*—within me, and out of my ancestry and my deepest relationships, to consciousness.

Of my original self, as it is possible to speak, I know I was always open to the unknowns from the earliest. This was my aggressive urge, I know, to reach out and to survive, and my urge to connect and to live fully. I can feel archaic energies that feed my life and all life, and they are the same energies that threaten and annihilate. I will speak no further now of Kali and Great Mother.

In my own mother-complex, the embrace of love and death came forth, as I can discern it, with a fear of losing Mother (my annihilation) because of misplacing

her or failing her. This is the arising pattern in my infancy, from the archaic unto magical and further into the mythic, and further still into our mother-son debates—all the way through. In the extension of the initial conditions of my personal emergence, my faithfulness could not match God's faithfulness. This limitation of mine was a collapse (in the forming and in the manifesting) for Mother and for me.

I had been charged with replacing for her all that was displaced/misplaced. It was also my place to somehow stand as faithful, or in more faithfulness than God Almighty, the Father Himself could be counted on. My failure to be supremely faithful, to carry sufficient mana-power, to become the father of the woman, my mother, was enmeshed (from the start, really) in that grand predeterminism of the decretum horribile. Little Johnny was John Calvin from the start, and after all. I was unable as Johnny and as John Calvin to replace what was dead within her psyche.

This have I reiteratively played out in various 'vocations'—trying, with mana, to replace what is dead inside anyone and everyone I come in contact with, and, in fullness of this enmeshed, narcissistic grandiosity, to replace what is dead in the soul of the world. A friend (following this text) asks me if this theme is not about the "dying to self" that Paul speaks of time and again. My friend asks: By dying to self—and giving up our most personal flesh-and-mind treasure to God/creator/Universal Mother—can one's spirit not be freed from the perceived necessity of having to run the show, for oneself and for any other shows tacked on along the way?

The problematique is that my mother could not 'die to self' though she tried. She projected this inability to die to self upon me, where it became constellated as a still-born death, spiritually. The problem was that I could not "doe to self" on behalf of Mother. That plagued my midlife years, up to the present moment, and well after her death. Because I therefore projected this into all my efforts to

*do unto others what they really must do for themselves.* In variants, this is what I have lived so often in projective identifications with the salvation-struggles of others. This was injected within my psyche. I couldn't recognize how I was working "out of bounds" since my Mother had required me to have no bounds. This was certainly mirrored by the grandiose mana of the preachers set before me as supreme models. There were overt manipulations and (religious) abuses that contributed to these confusions. In fact, this is probably one description of religious abuse: the active manipulation of mana-powers to create false senses of responsibility in the journeys of soul, creating the *false calling* as an aspect of false self.

So here I am, with you who are reading, once again enmeshed in *the forces*. Erupting also again, in these closing reflections, the monstrous energies across the street where the archaic, magical, and mental dominated while the mythic was explicitly rejected. Johnny had no effects over there, except as Keith's childhood friend. In that household I sensed something that I also sensed, more deeply veiled and buried, at home. This was the "nothingness." If there were an ideology across the street other than crude bias, it was nihilism. Somehow the nihilism across the street aligned with the nihilism, really, of coming out on the wrong side of pre-determinism. Thus was the play of contradictions. I could run away from the sea of forces at Keith's house to find a stillness, an ultimately deceptive stillness, at my house.

These tides flowed between the two houses, without satiety, disgust, or weariness. I did not experience this as Dionysiac joy very often. Actually, to make a leap, I think I could intuit the integral, on West Sullivan Street. It may seem an absurdity to insert Nietzsche into this text, at all, and this way. But on both sides of the street, my house and Keith's house, whatever the fires of the mythic were on my side and the fires of the archaic were on both sides, there is a name that could be applied to that world. And it could be *will to power*. However, I do think there is much more besides.

Perhaps I am drastically over-reaching to find in Nietzsche the culmination of Calvin. On the other hand, as I write it, it seems so obvious that there must be several doctoral dissertations. None of those would be mine. What I sense is this: there is a reaction to the notion that God could choose to love some and to damn others, willy-nilly, as a divine whim. That reaction, completely understandable for those chosen to be divinely unloved, could be to deny God altogether. Rather than be annihilated by God, annihilate God.

This was never expressed in language across the street; it was lived out over there. Such language would have been anathema, anti-Christ for Mother, truly. Still, eating away at her emotional well-being, for a lifetime, in all these reiterations of extreme, early wounding, these archaic forces haunted her with the immediate threat of annihilation. I don't think Mother could ever understand why God could have chosen to leave her out of so much belonging; she could not accept this, did not believe this. But in the nature of her injuries, and in the lineage she bore with my grandmother and great-grandmother as I have described, Mother did endure, I think, pragmatically, practically, day by day, by means of her own fierce will to power. I experienced this, I think, as a form of archaic rage and archaic defenses, in various manifestations. This was not all that kept mother going. There was a most real faith, I feel, but a faith, a soul-experience enmeshed with a profoundly debilitating shadow.

6.

The subject says to the object. "I destroyed you," and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says:

“Hello object!” “I destroyed you.” “I love you.” “You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you.” “While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) *fantasy.*”

*D. W. Winnicott*

One is not only in a position of surviving another *person's* destructiveness, but the destructiveness of a God, of numinous energies. These can be dealt with apotropaically, rationally reduced to a developmental stage, as a failure in passage through the depressive position or some issue of maternal abandonment. This approach, while often an important point of view, also represses and diminishes the *numinosum* involved.

*Nathan Schwartz-Salant*

In your consciousness everything is as you have put it, but then you discover that you are not master in your own house, you are not living alone in your room, and there are spooks about that play havoc with your realities, and that is the end of your monarchy. But if you understand it right... (i)t is the beginning of the great recognition appearing in the most grotesque and ridiculous forms.... That is, we meet there all the power which led us into life, into this conscious reality.

\* \* \*

The whole world is God's suffering....

*C. G. Jung*

If we are all on the path of enlightenment, then why do we suffer so much? The answer is that pain itself is the enlightenment path, or the path of potential enlightenment, because pain is mostly a non-consensus-reality signal, a quantum flirt looking for a lucid observer who will reflect it. Once conjugated, the signals of pain become meaningful events enriching everyday life. [X]

*Arnold Mindell*

I don't understand why Keith couldn't make it. I don't know why he couldn't form a personality, a self, sufficient to survive in the collective consciousness of the world. The doctor was the law-in-himself and as founded in his own enormous, gigantic, voracious person in his Cadillac Sedan de Ville. Keith was shy and sensitive, slow to develop. Keith was exposed without defenses, shrinking before constant ridicule, required to renounce any identity. Ultimately, he was trampled, eradicated, and devoured. He never had a hope of growing up and leaving home, escaping his tormentors. I don't understand why Keith experienced this torment.

I do know that what is termed "spiritual" in practice is not always sufficient to heal. 'Spirituality' or 'spiritual practice' can never, in my experience, travel to the exclusion of 'psychology.' In the extremist spiritual emergencies, I can and I do say, there is no prospect of transformation or emergence without the activity of the living power of the Holy Spirit.

That is my *pistis*—my knowing. I was led in a book by Edward Edinger to a passage in which Jung speaks of wholeness of meaning "which alone makes life worth living and, for not a few people, possible at all." Yes, I am sustained

by a wholeness of meaning, an integrative and integral consciousness, that allows me to survive and to express immense shatterings, archaic in nature.

In this passage, Jung states “In myths the hero is the one who conquers the dragon, not the one who is devoured by it. And yet both have to deal with the same dragon. Also, one is no hero who never met the dragon, or who, if one once saw it, declared afterwards that one saw nothing. Equally, only one who has risked the fight with the dragon and is not overcome by it wins the hoard, the ‘treasure hard to attain.’”

I can say, after Jung, that “everything that menaced [me] from inside” is now made “[my] own.” Jung then concludes with a remark about the alchemical notion of *unio mentalis*, oneness of mind. That would be a treasure indeed.

Oedipus: Born thus, I ask to be no other man  
Than that I am, and *will know who I am.*

*Sophocles*

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