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THE LILIES YAWN, THE TIGER SLEEPS

TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING  
OF  
SUBJECTIVE AND BIOGRAPHICAL KNOWING

By

PAMELA VALERIE MORGAN  
B.A. University of Waterloo

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts degree in Religion & Culture  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
1981

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## PREFACE

This thesis is not about story or therapy. It moves toward an understanding of subjective and biographical knowing. The purpose of the excursion into story, therapy and the journal is to lift out some of the dynamics of subjective knowing. Subjectivity involves both conscious and unconscious activity. The knowing individual is in relationship with this process. Story, the therapeutic experience and the journal are three modalities that permit this relationship to show itself more explicitly.

The subjective aspect of knowing has been overshadowed by the objective. This is an error that needs to be corrected. If this thesis lends itself more to an antithesis of the objective, its intention is not simply to reverse the present position and elevate subjectivity over objectivity. My intention is to explore subjective knowing and the power of the unconscious, and further, to confront the dichotomy of subject/object, conscious/unconscious, health/illness and so on, as distortions that do not lend themselves to further investigation when they are considered in this way. Rather, I suggest that these concepts be seen paradoxically rather than dichotomously. Health is found in the symptoms of disease (Booth:1974;Siirala:1981). The objective is buried deeply within the subjective (Freud, 1960:78). It is the difference between pulling out and examining datum apart from its context, and looking at the

relationship between things. I am emphasizing the paradoxical and relational aspect of knowing. Physicists already know this. Subatomic particles are not ping pong balls jumping in a court; "particle physics...took us down through the stages of matter through smaller and smaller units until at the end there is nothing, no thing, but energy in rhythmic concentration. The core of things is not substance but rhythm (Dixon,1976:410-411)." The physicist speaks of energy in motion rather than substance. I speak of process rather than content. Subjective knowing is movement and the web of connections and relations embedded in that movement.

Since an enquiry into subjective knowing using more objective and traditional methods is bound by obvious contradictions, I use the form and style that informs my own subjective understanding of what it means to know.

The form of this thesis embodies metaphor, story, poetry, and prose. The style is image-filled and circular. It is not a defense of particular arguments as much as it is a journeying into the soul. It is not linear or analytic, although those elements are present. The style is tension-filled and paradoxical, a journey of side-steps. It does not progress toward resolution; it presses for elaboration. The language is often prelogical. It is more like a laboured spontaneity: the ruminations of the unconscious as they strive for recognition. Writing has been associated with childbirth: the pain of labour, the

birthing process, the moment of birth. Laboured spontaneity is not superficially random and impulsive, but deeply random and logical. It is the song of the soul that gives rise to myth, story, meaning and to life in all of its embeddedness with the world. To speak this language is to wait, and permit what needs to be revealed. It is to wait for the image and then find the words to describe it. It is to be always dissatisfied with the description because it is distorted. It misses the point in some way. To speak this language is to be in constant waiting for the image which will be lost before it is completely formed.

If you experience this paper in glimpses and feel its incompleteness and its compulsion and its search, then you are reading what is being said and you are always reminded of what is missing, for what is missing is far greater than the words spoken.

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope  
 For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love  
 For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith  
 But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.  
 Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought;  
 So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing...

You say that I am repeating  
 Something I have said before. I shall say it again.  
 Shall I say it again? In order to arrive there,  
 To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,  
 You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.  
 In order to arrive at what you do not know  
 You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.  
 In order to possess what you do not possess  
 You must go by the way of dispossession.  
 In order to arrive at what you are not

You must go through the way in which you are not.  
And what you do not know is the only thing you know  
And what you own is what you do not own  
And where you are is where you are not (Eliot:24-25).

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## INTRODUCTION

### Subjectivity and the Soul

Human knowing is wedded to human experience. We only know that which has touched our souls. All knowing is subjective and all knowing is biographical./1/ It is embedded in story and history (his/story and her/story): individual and cultural story. But for reasons within and beyond our control, we have relegated "knowledge" to a place outside of the realms of our own souls to objective observable data that can be replicated. Knowledge has located its source outside of itself and outside of the knower. We are only beginning to know again that this is not so. Knowledge is wedded to human experience which has touched our souls, to our own stories and the idiosyncratic notions of our family and cultural heritage. We are bound to the stories of our own age. The relationship between the knower and the known is inseparable. The time has come to leave our Faustian consciousness behind us and begin to reclaim our soul and its journey. It is time to reclaim our individual souls and our collective soul. It is time to speak through our own stories.

Science has prided itself on the delineation of cause and effect. It values the rational, explainable, conscious and analytic. It has been considered a masculine modality. Art has prided itself on the circular, intuitive, imaginative, unconscious and poetic. It has been considered

a feminine modality (Dixon:n.d.). These two modalities have, more often than not, continued to stand apart, romanticizing an ideal of each other or acknowledging one another, sometimes with due respect, utter indifference, or fiery antagonism. This was not always so. Hunting, harvesting, healing, dance, music, sacrifice, craft and building were not always so easily separated from one another. Two separate modalities did not exist. There were distinctions and blendings and a recognition that each form of participation in a community was a necessary part of the whole.

The more current way of perceiving reality by dichotomizing art and science, masculine and feminine, conscious and unconscious, health and illness and so on, distorts human knowing. Knowledge is embedded in the subjective and biographical insofar as it touches the soul, yet the relationship between the knowing person and that which is becoming known is a transcending one. It is a relationship between subject and object that moves beyond both. Knowledge then, is not to be relegated into one category or another, subjective or objective knowledge./2/ This is a false distinction. The relationship between the person engaged in the process of knowing and the particular content that is being contemplated is ambiguous. It faces the tension that exists in the "inbetween" as Buber would say. The "inbetween" is the area of ambiguity in which both

subject and object are lost and then, transformed. It is the moment of kairos (Booth:n.d.). These moments of death and rebirth, of losing old perceptions and discovering new ones are moments of creative affirmation. The old perceptions are not even really lost, only placed in a larger perspective. Einsteinian physics still includes the Newtonian model. What is lost is only the assumption of an absolute.

The absolute with which we contend today regarding knowledge is this dichotomization, this presupposition that the pursuit of knowledge be uncontaminated by subjectivity, human experience and the leanings of one's own soul.

Soul...is not a scientific term, and it appears very rarely in psychology today, and then usually with inverted commas as if to keep it from infecting its scientifically sterile surround. 'Soul' cannot be accurately defined, nor is it respectable in scientific discussion as scientific discussion is now understood (Hillman,1964:44).

...(Soul) is not really a concept but a symbol. Symbols as we know, are not completely within our control, so that we are not able to use the word in an unambiguous way, even though we take it to refer to that unknown human factor which makes meaning possible, which turns events into experiences, and which is communicated in love. The soul is a deliberately ambiguous concept resisting all definition in the same manner as do all ultimate symbols which provide the root metaphors for the systems of human thought (Hillman,1964:46).

I use 'soul' precisely because of the ambiguity implied in its meaning. It dwells in the unconscious, the not yet defineable. It is elusive and embedded in images that are also elusive. We have lost our soul, we are soul-searching,

we have sold out, sold our soul for profit. When music has soul, it moves beyond any verbal articulation. We think of the soul as preverbal or nonverbal. The soul does not speak our language, but it acts (we act in ways we do not always understand) in ways we cannot always explain. "Soul" implies in it the ambiguity of the human condition. We do not yet know who we are. An imperative in human knowing is to know that we do not know. This is the voice of the soul. I think of the soul as a humbling spirit that reminds me in my most arrogant being that I am in a continual struggle between self-deception and self-knowing. My soul knows what I resist most from knowing.

## The World of Consciousness

No human being is wise enough to know from his past experience what course his life should take in the future. He is wiser than average if he can look back and estimate justly about the past. He is much wiser than the average if he can make a balanced judgment about the present, but how can he hope also to include the future? The part cannot comprehend the whole. Consciously, he can only look forward in complete blindness to the future. But his future is determined by his own nature. If he did but know that nature, he could trust himself confidently to it, leaving it to work unerringly to its inevitable end. The only trouble is that we do not know, and we try to make up the deficiencies of our knowledge by our conscious aims and desires (Harding:78-9).

The world of consciousness is the world of everydayness. We go to work, buy homes, rake yards, shop, cook, clean and repair. We discipline our kids, take them to their piano lessons and hockey practice, attend their recitals and games, support or complain about the educational system, pay taxes and hope for a raise. We watch T.V. or do not as the case may be. We read books or do not as the case may be. We attend films, concerts, or go bowling. We spend the day at Canadian Tire and plant a garden. We go to church or do not as the case may be. We speak to our neighbours, see friends and have occasional dinner parties, family gatherings and obligatory visits to the hospital. We try the best we can and believe that that is all we can do, and surely everything will turn out all right. We contaminate the landscape and some of us buy returnable bottles. We need more energy resources, so we build nuclear power plants and only complain when they are built in our own backyards.

We support churches which expend effort to give support and financial aid to the boat people. A few of us even take them into our homes. We try to keep a tidy back yard, but somebody drowned last year in the neighbour's swimming pool. The old widower down the street killed himself. His wife had died six months before. We went to the funeral, sent flowers and stopped by once with a fresh apple pie. The Ku Klux Klan has come over the border and begun to speak about protecting our civil rights. We hope that they don't do any harm. We don't like to think we are racist. The president was shot. The pope was shot. (How many is that now over the past eighteen years?) Black children in Atlanta are beginning to arm themselves against the increasing number of child murders. We watch all this on T.V. We read the papers sometimes. The hostages have returned from Iran, and now the focus is on El Salvador. Here in town we have a new Arts Centre, and the symphony is getting better every year. Five hundred dairy farms were quaranteened because there was poison in the feed. Thirty thousand cattle were slaughtered in mass graves. For two more years the market was still selling poison milk and meat and baby food. We hope that we won't be affected by all of this. Soon we'll need a new roof for the house and better insulation. Some insulations are said to be giving off poisonous fumes. We must be careful what we buy. And it saddens us to realize that the family unit is not as solid as we once thought.

It is an understatement to say that in our conscious, everyday world we have enough to deal with, more than enough. This world resembles the shabby, late night news broadcast with intermittent, stale commercials. We try to be aware of what's happening around us and try not to think about it too much. Once a year we plan a vacation to get away from it all.

We anaesthetize ourselves against this flood of expectation and information and pretend to act responsibly. "I am not responsible for the world's misery" (O'Connor:288), we say to ourselves. We slide into automatic and smile and conform to the amenities with which we are expected to conform. We try not to rock the boat. The individuality that we know exists within us is on the other side of the dam, swelling with rage, fear, guilt and despair. We compulsively plug up the holes in the fence, caulk the windows and go out for dinner. When we are occasionally confronted with our own fear and malice, we feel indignant and perplexed because we know perfectly well that we are good citizens for the most part, doing the best we can. Manicured gardens reflect our ordered lives.

We move into the future in "complete blindness" (Harding:78) for what else can we do? The pain of knowing our own nature may be too much for us. But is the pain of knowing our own nature any worse than the pain of witnessing the stale and mundane commodities we have become? This

world of everydayness lacks the vitality of the whole. It lacks soul, the destructive and creative power of the unconscious. And there is always the fear inside us that the dam will burst, that the unconscious will drown us with its power and force after having been held back for so long. The horror that we feared is multiplied a thousand fold and more. One example of the explosion of the unconscious in this century is the Holocaust.



The Explosion of the Unconscious

Elie Wiesel has lived in the world of consciousness, in the world of everydayness. And he has also lived and witnessed the other side. In his autobiographical account of the Holocaust, in his book, Night, he speaks of this in its beginnings during the war, near the end of 1941.

My father was a cultured, rather unsentimental man. There was never any display of emotion, even at home. He was more concerned with others than with his own family. The Jewish community of Sighet held him in the greatest esteem. They often used to consult him about public matters and even about private ones. There were four of us children: Hilda, the eldest; then Bea; I was the third, and the only son; the baby of the family was Tzipora.

My parents ran a shop. Hilda and Bea helped them with the work. As for me, they said my place was at school (13).

Moche the Beadle became Eliezar's guide and teacher in the study of the cabbala.

'Man raises himself toward God by the questions he asks Him,' he was fond of repeating. 'That is the true dialogue. Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand His answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depths of the soul, and they stay there until death. You will find the true answers, Eliezar, only within yourself!'

'And why do you pray, Moche?' I asked him.

'I pray to the God within me that He will give me the strength to ask Him the right questions' (14).

...Then one day they expelled all the foreign Jews from Sighet. And Moche the Beadle was a foreigner.

Crammed into cattle trains by Hungarian police, they wept bitterly. We stood on the platform and wept too. The train disappeared on the horizon; it left nothing behind but its thick, dirty smoke.

I heard a Jew behind me sigh.

'What can we expect?' he said. 'It's war...'

The deportees were soon forgotten. A few days after they had gone, people were saying that they arrived in Galacia, were working there, and were even satisfied with their lot.

Life had returned to normal...(15).

Several months later Eliezar found Moche the Beadle sitting near the synagogue. He no longer spoke of the Cabbala. He told the story of his expulsion and his journey.

The train full of deportees had crossed the Hungarian frontier and on Polish territory had been taken in charge by the Gestapo. There it had stopped. The Jews had to get out and climb into lorries. The lorries drove toward a forest. The Jews were made to get out. They were made to dig huge graves. And when they had finished their work, the Gestapo began theirs. Without passion, without haste, they slaughtered their prisoners. Each one had to go up to the hole and present his neck. Babies were thrown into the air and the machine gunners used them as targets. This was in the forest of Galacia, near Kolomaye. How had Moche the Beadle escaped? Miraculously. He was wounded in the leg and taken for dead...(16).

Through long days and nights, he went from one Jewish house to another, telling the story of Malka, the young Jewish girl who had taken three days to die, and of Tobias, the tailor, who had begged to be killed before his sons...(16).

People refused not only to believe his stories, but even to listen to them (16).

I did not believe him myself (16).

I continued to devote myself to my studies... Thus the year 1943 passed by (17).

In the spring of 1944, when the German troops entered the streets of Sighet, "the Fascists were already in power, the verdict had already been pronounced ... (and) the Jews of Sighet continued to smile" (19).

Wiesel writes the story of his own evacuation, along with his father, mother and younger sister and the Jewish community of Sighet out of Hungary into the camps of Poland: Birkenau, Auschwitz, Buna. His mother and sister were separated from him and his father at their first arrival. He never saw them again. His father died at his side on January 29, 1945. On April 10th, 1945, the American troops arrived. Eliezar Wiesel survived his family and he was 16 years old. And he says:

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God Himself. Never (44).

The Holocaust reminds us of how little we know ourselves, what little we understand of the human spirit. The Holocaust reflects the most grotesque within us. We shudder at those evil forces so imminent and pervasive at times and turn our backs.

In a convoy of cattle wagons, eighty people to a car, the Jews of Sighet were crammed together and moved out of their homes, businesses, family units, out of the community and away from their world with its smells, rituals, and treasures. They had come under the authority of the German army.

We had a woman with us named Madame Schacter. She was about fifty; her ten year old son was with her, crouched in a corner. Her husband and two eldest sons had been deported with the first transport by mistake. The separation had completely broken her (34).

Madame Schacter had gone out of her mind. On the first day of the journey she had already begun to moan and to keep asking why she had been separated from her family. As time went on, her cries grew hysterical.

On the third night, while we slept, some of us sitting one against the other and some standing, a piercing cry split the silence:

'Fire! I can see a fire! I can see a fire!

...Standing in the middle of the wagon, in the pale light from the windows, she looked like a withered tree in a cornfield. She pointed her arm toward the window, screaming:

'Look! Look at it! Fire! A terrible fire! Mercy! Oh, that fire (35)!'

There was nothing there, someone tried to console her, her son hung to her skirts crying. But she continued her screams. "Jews, listen to me! I can see a fire! There are huge flames! It is a furnace (35)!"

It was as though she were possessed by an evil spirit which spoke from the depths of her being.

We tried to explain it away, more to calm ourselves and to recover our own breath than to comfort her. 'She must be very thirsty, poor thing! That's why she keeps talking about a fire devouring her.'

But it was in vain. Our terror was about to burst the sides of the train. Our nerves were at breaking point. Our flesh was creeping. It was as though madness were taking possession of us all. We could stand it no longer. Some of the men forced her to sit down, tied her up, and put a gag in her mouth (36).

Towards dawn they had reached a station, Auschwitz. The name was unfamiliar. That night, at Birkenau, reception centre for Aushwitz, they all saw what Madame Schacter had seen two days before.

In front of us flames. In the air that smell of burning flesh. It must have been about midnight. We had arrived...(38).

The Paradox

Individuality requires courage... The courage to be...means not just choosing life out there. The real choice is choosing oneself, one's individual truth, including the ugliest man, as Nietzsche called the evil within. To continue life, knowing what a horror one is, takes indeed courage (Hillman:64).

All knowing involves the experiencing of living. It embraces the mystery, the horror and the beauty of the human spirit. It touches the soul. Subjective knowing embraces the elusive, undefineable, ever-changing God. It lives with the unknowable. It is this way of knowing that Michael Novak would define as religious. He says, when speaking of the distortion of religion:

There is nothing human which cannot be corrupted: 'The corruption of the best is the worst of all.' Common to all these distortions of genuine religion is the attempt to defend the placid, secure, ordered surfaces of life--to make us accept as normal and blessed the pragmatic, given, ordinary world of everyday. It sometimes seems that religion functions to take our minds away from terror, mystery, absurdity, pain, madness; to domesticate the human animal. Religion seems to bless the conventional, the trite, the expected. It seems to screen out terror. Yet, surely, that is a reversal of fundamental purposes (1971:10).

And when he speaks of what religion might be, he suggests:

Religion is a conversion from the ordinary, given, secure world into a world of nothingness, terror, risk--a world in which nevertheless there is strange healing and joy. Religion is a way of perceiving oneself, others, the world; a way of acting. Living comes first. Reflection comes afterward. The first religious act is to clap one's hands, to dance, to do. The second, later moment is the moment of reflection (1971:12).

A serious student must advance on two fronts at once; in reflection but also in experience, in science but also in wisdom, in complexity and ambiguity but also in simplicity. It is difficult to become a scholar, more

difficult to become holy, difficulty squared to become both (1971:12).

The field of religious studies is constantly and inextricably involved in the coincidence of opposites... Humans are constantly impelled to speak of what cannot be spoken of... 'I believe in God,' a person says. Then it turns out that he or she talks about God chiefly by way of negations: God cannot be seen, touched, tasted, imagined, or even accurately conceived of. ...

Religious language is regularly and systematically nonliteral and nonlogical because it involves the movement from standpoint to standpoint... We become aware of religious experience as an experience which exceeds any one standpoint, when we find ourselves being converted from one standpoint to another on our unceasing journey (1971:14).

Novak speaks of the paradoxical movement of religious language. The nature of religious experience stretches our consciousness beyond the comfortable, secure landscape in which we live to the edge of the void, to The Experience of Nothingness, as his book is entitled. And he refers to the unconscious as the void when he says:

I need not be afraid of the void. The void is part of my person. I need to enter consciously into it. To try to escape from it is to try to live a lie. It is also to cease to be. My acceptance of despair and emptiness constitutes my being; to have the courage to accept despair is to be. The void is full of danger; insanity, destructiveness, rage, sadism, and other terrors haunt me. My fears of myself derive, in part, from my culture's fear of itself... (1970:65).

The religious person, as defined by Novak, is one who is willing to be at risk with himself and to look at his own "ugliest man" and the ugliness in culture.

I have described the world of everyday consciousness as one that does not attend to the unconscious and consequently

perpetrates phenomenon like The Holocaust partly due to this inattention. We turn our backs, cling to the superficial comforts of our world and hope that nothing awful will happen to us. There is a pervasive feeling of fear embedded in the denial of the unconscious and it is precisely this fear that causes our own demons to come alive. Rage and fear are poignant bedfellows. The first step in reducing the power of our own demons is to acknowledge their presence.

In his early work with hysterical women, Freud peeled back the layers of consciousness to find that repressed responses to traumatic situations were hidden in the unconscious, but at the same time manifested themselves in physical symptoms that were consciously both undesirable and debilitating to the patient.

That release was pathological because veiled, and so, contorted and inadequate. Anxiety, spite, nightmares, depressions, psychotic episodes, obsession--all these were seen as delayed and distorted ways in which the psyche seeks to unburden itself of stimulation. In a healthy situation, strong emotion will be discharged more immediately and straightforwardly, in crying, shouting, talking, pacing, or even 'thinking things through.' With such discharge comes a return to equilibrium and the prevention of pathological distortions (MacIsaac:20).

These distortions are not only limited to individual behaviour but also to cultural behaviour. As a culture, we are far from understanding and integrating what Freud presented to us almost a century ago. As a matter of fact, we have spent a good deal of energy denying the power of the



unconscious, rather than looking into the void as Novak suggests. Freud would say that, after our initial enthusiasm with him and his proposed treatment, we have moved strongly into the phase of resistance.

Denial of the unconscious is wedded to the theories of Behavioural Psychology, an influential movement in North America. One only needs to read the works of Skinner to realize that the unconscious has no place in behavioural research. But it is not only Skinner who denies the unconscious. He, at least, is explicit about his beliefs (Evans:1968). Humanistic psychology coming from Rogers, May and Maslow (client-centred and existential) as examples, have done very little to uncover the complex dimensions of the soul. Jacoby says:

May, Allport, Maslow and Rogers all contributed to a small volume entitled Existential Psychology. It is, however, an existentialism thoroughly cleansed and sterilized of its European accents, so as to be fit for home consumption.... Whatever truth there is to the cliches that European existentialism was spurred by the deathcamps and resistance to fascism, and hence is tinged with pessimism and gloom, is too much truth for its American representatives: they want an existentialism that poses no threats to their optimism and good cheer...

Maslow talks of the tragic sense of life as if it were the special flavor of the month; it is to spark an otherwise dull selection. It adds a 'dimension of seriousness and profundity of living' which is to be 'contrasted with the shallow and superficial life.' A pinch of death is prescribed as the antidote to the dull life. If, as Adorno has remarked, Heidegger transforms the fact of death into a professional secret for academics, the existential psychologists tell the secret to a public that has already heard the news. They promote dying as if it were going out of business (52)./3/

Although some humanistic theories of therapy acknowledge the unconscious in their practice, noting with special regard, dream material, the use of language, nonverbal gestures, etc., there is the implicit assumption in the humanistic movement that all one has to do is to make the unconscious conscious and the individual will enlarge her horizons, actualize her potentials and transcend her situations. This is a simplistic response to Freud. Freud was not enamoured with culture and was aware of the coercive power of society to force the individual to conform to certain social standards of behaviour. Skinner uses positive and negative reinforcement within the cultural framework to change the behaviour of individuals (Evans:1968). The humanistic movement is also inclined to heed cultural norms and to encourage conformity to these norms. Thus, if the cultural pattern is filled with a fear of the unconscious, then individuals within that culture will embody this fear as well.

Freud used psychoanalytic techniques, i.e., free association and transference, in particular, to enable the client to re-member repressed material, but he was not under the illusion that the culture, as a whole, would be willing to open its door to the chaos of the unconscious. Humanistic psychology has not been willing to take seriously enough this polarity between culture and the unconscious.

We do not have to look hard to see the cultural fear of the unconscious. Any situation in which we find ourselves confronted with an outside enemy that permits us to justify our position even to the point of annihilating the enemy exemplifies this fear. Fear unites with rage and we find ourselves in a massive attempt to kill in self-defense. We defend ourselves against the projection of our own internal demons, our own unconscious. The War in Vietnam was seen by the American public as the threat of Communist infiltration. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan was perceived in a similar light. The violence against the Civil Rights movement in the sixties is another example and our own racism against minority groups here in Canada is no exception. Cultural fear of the unconscious is pervasive and needs to be given primary consideration if we are to give serious credence to Freud's formulations.

The Holocaust is the most vivid example of the explosion of the cultural unconscious. Chapter IV of the thesis explores the individual unconscious through the use of Flannery O'Connor's fiction. The willingness to be at risk with one's self and to acknowledge the power of the unconscious is necessary to the process of subjective knowing. The following three chapters use story, poetry, and journal fragments to explore individual consciousness and its relationship to the unconscious and the soul. Here the process of subjective knowing begins to unfold.

CHAPTER 1The Finding

I have found no truth  
in the heart of mountains molded  
against the sky, in stone  
black caves hallowing echoes.

I have found no truth  
in clear, still  
water where pebbles float down  
into depths,  
in pine-filled forests where every  
breath  
is the purest green.

I have found no truth  
in that mystery of lovers' eyes meeting,  
in the comfort of long friendships,  
in a child's laughter,  
in an old man's tears.

I have found no truth  
in wild strawberries, in grass  
mothered with dew.

I have found no truth  
in mounds of gold, in rat filled  
trenches,  
in swollen bellies starving,  
in screeching  
madness.

I have found no truth  
in a pair of old shoes,  
in cocktail parties,  
in empty faces on dirty subways.

I have found no truth  
in bleeding Christians, in spired  
cathedrals, in ivy  
universities, in primary documents,  
in ravaged technology,  
in cold science.

I have found no truth  
in any of this,  
only  
the humble crevices  
in my own soul.

## Story and Therapy

As a child I was told stories. Fairy tales were a part of my life, not just my bedtime life. They were a part of my imagination and, consequently, a part of my reality. Stories of love and death, violence and mercy, were all there, from Bible stories to Aesop's fables, from family stories to dreams and fantasies, to home-made stories. They were bound together by the hopes and dreams, the promises and expectations of a child. Stories were personal then. I was in the centre of them. I was Cinderella; I was the witch. I was a lost child in Hansel and Gretel. I did not simply identify with these stories. I became a part of the story. I changed the story to suit my experience. Sometimes, the story changed me. And there were many stories that reflected my many experiences.

A story is not an individual act. First, it involves, in the telling of it, at least two people, the teller and listener, the author and reader. Second, a story is always told within a cultural context. It is in relationship with its community. Third, the content, itself, demands, movement beyond the singular. The story is not a singular event, but a web of events and circumstances, ideas and feelings. They inter-relate, facilitate, push into a set of dynamics that transcend each of their parts. The story takes on a movement and life of its own. The story, itself, defies individuality even as it recognizes and heightens it. It presupposes relationship and relatedness.

Therapy has this same presupposition. The sense of self that can be defined apart from the world in which one lives, sees, experiences, relates, is a false definition. The self is only the self in process and in relationship with living reality, a dynamic reality, not a static one.

Both therapy and story presuppose the process of inter-relatedness. Because they are process-oriented they cannot be confined to static definitions and unchanging categories. One can only attempt to trace, draw, discover patterns, images, new forms and formless areas that are woven in the space and time of being.

In my life there were several realities, not all of them complementary: my mother and father, our house, my aunts and uncles and cousins, my grandparents, my friends and our games, Santa Claus and his generosity, Roy Rogers and his courage, God and His invisible power, Jesus and His mercy, Cinderella and her prince and castle, my bird, my cat and the pony next door, the race track across the road, Black Beauty, the woods and being lost, Snow White and Hansel Gretel. There was the street and the shops in the village where I lived, bubble gum and baseball cards, marbles, hide and seek, Howdy Doody and snowy television. There was the good Samaritan and Brownies. The story was an externalization of love, mystery and beauty. It was an externalization of pain, anger and fear. It was an externalization of identity, meaning and purpose. Except,

there really was no externalization. The story became the experience and the experience became the story and both were transformed by each other until reality held both in tension and in union, one with the other.

In one sense it is the story that allows tensions and polarities to live side by side, to permit the existence of paradox and transform apparent dichotomies into creative differences, tensions and co-existence.

If the purpose of therapy is to enable one to live in a world of diversity and tension without the loss of one's own sense of uniqueness and to allow beauty and suffering to co-exist without disengaging from either one, then story may be one way to permit us to embrace our world without such disengagement./4/ If therapy enables us to live more fully with ourselves and with our world, then story may be a healing power that re-unites us with our world. I am not speaking here of story in its limited sense, but of the stories we live. I am also referring to the transforming power of story, that which takes us out of ourselves and into another reality, that which superimposes one reality (the story) over another reality (everyday life) so that the two realities live side by side. We must learn to live with the tension and the harmony. We must recognize the similarities and differences. We must embrace the complexity of who we are as individuals in our world, a world that is everchanging, a world that carries us along with it whether we resist or comply.

Our world is burdened by false dichotomies of fantasy and reality, rational and non-rational, conscious and unconscious, good and evil, health and illness, body and mind, religious and secular, masculine and feminine.... I am saying what the explorer, the wanderer, the discoverer in each of us, already knows. I am simply saying that reality is not definitive. Reality is not a closed system. It is not the search for an objective truth. Reality is embedded in our horizontal relationship to the present moment and in our vertical relationship to history.

Part of the human condition is to try to make meaning out of chaos and confusion. Another part of the human condition is to allow chaos to disrupt our given meanings. If we fail to allow this paradox to operate on its own, in tension with itself, then we are in constant danger of a volcanic outburst from the repressed side of the paradox. Witness the Holocaust.

My work as a therapist, struggling with what it means to be human in both myself and my clients, is to work with both chaos and meaning. The telling of the story allows both to stand side by side.

There is joy. There is wonder. There is suffering. And there is finally, death.

But that is not all. In the midst of living there is dying. There is the death experience. In the midst of dying there is living, the life experience and beyond death



there may be reconciliation with the soul and new life. We know this to be so, for we know that in depression, which is one way of experiencing death, there is always the possibility in the midst of despair (without hope, without love, without faith) that transformation may occur, that life may be celebrated once again, and that the soul dies and is reborn. "From the evidence which the psyche produces out of itself, the effect of the death experience is to bring home at a critical moment a radical transformation" (Hillman, 1964:76).

The following story remembers the death of my grandmother but more importantly re-members my relationship to her. It is an autobiographical story fragment which permitted me to witness the vividness of life-filled memories in the midst of dying. In this regard, life and death are not dichotomous. My grandmother continues to live within me because I am her granddaughter, and have inherited some of who she was under her quiet, but willful influence. I also cherish the memories of her. They are photographs stacked high, and do not fade with time.

Waiting for the Rain

My grandmother was 94 yesterday. She is dying. She told me. I sat with her and listened to her stories. I washed her back and touched her loose wrinkled skin, white-grey, heavily veined, freckled, moled. I saw the scar where her breast was gutted. I looked into her small brown eyes, bright and glazed, present and distant. I stroked her cheek and saw her face, lined, worn, soft, peaceful.

She was born in another time when the city jutted out of the landscape smoking and sputtering like a volcano, while the countryside was simply the land, in vast stretches. She was born before highways scarred the earth, before the automobile and all of its appendages: gas stations, garages, suburbs. She was born when sexuality was hidden beneath long layered skirts and crushed beneath sleeves that hugged arms to the wrists. She was born before child labour laws, in the heart of industrialization, in the bleak smog of London, in a Dickens novel. She was born when the moon was still a mystery of the night.

My grandmother loved Queen Victoria, white bread and tea. She and my grandfather came to Canada by boat in 1906. She gave birth to her five children in two small rooms above a store. She sent them outside in the winter to look for coal. They ate bread pudding and potatoes. Sometimes, they had tea. She gave away one son to a nice family who could spend more time with him because he stuttered. He grew up

and made a lot of money. He doesn't stutter anymore and still asks her why she gave him away. She is very proud of him now.

My grandmother thinks about her mother. She is a vessel of memories, old photographs stacked high. She is a child again. She stands beside her mother quietly watching her make soap in her long, white, stained apron. Her greying hair is tied and knotted. She watches her at the scrubboard, bent, with rough, wet, red knuckles, scrubbing clothes for nine children. The water sloshes, sloshes.

It is evening. My grandmother runs to the local public house and has a pitcher filled with warm, frothy stout to bring home. Her father is employed by a rich family. They have given a party that evening and he comes home late with leftover food: cheese, fruit and cakes. Sometimes my grandmother goes to school. Sometimes she stays home to help her mother with the laundry. She likes to be home. She likes the warm, damp smell of wet clothes hanging in the kitchen. My grandmother misses her mother.

My grandmother loves me. She knows nothing of my life. She knows nothing of children raised on television, raised after the bomb. She knows nothing of divorce, of the death of God, of frozen waffles, of feminism. She keeps a handkerchief by her bed at all times. She does not like to be seen with her teeth out. She is always polite and never discusses sex or other private matters. My grandmother

loves me. She is not concerned with how I live my life. She is ready to die and she lets me know what it is like to live and what it is like to die. And I listen because I love her.

She lies in the midst of many moments, in the collage of her life. I am her granddaughter, her mother and her friend. The bed in which she now lies, is, at once, the bed of her childhood, the bed of her childbearing, the bed shared with her husband for over half a century and the bed in which she dies. Almost a century of history swells into her like a great raindrop filled with many waters. The present is narrowing and intrusive, for there is little room for more. The future is unforeseen. It is a new sentence after the period.

We sit quietly together. I think of her old rocking chair. I am a child again rocking on her knee. She reads me fairytales. We rock back and forth, back and forth. One day she cuts my hand with her fingernail. My hand bleeds. I worry. I didn't know her nails were dangerous, like knives. I often ask her after that, if her nails are still so sharp. I am more careful. I stroke her blue-veined hand as she reads, avoiding her nails. She reads on and on, on and on, stories of long, long ago. I try very hard to stay awake. I want to hear.

Metallic hospital sounds retreat. Voices fade. Memories stir into a timeless past lifting scenes into the

moment like a camera lens focussing, capturing colour, expression, detail. Time is lifted into space.

My grandfather takes me out into the alley in his wheelbarrow. We are looking for rats, big, chocolate-brown, fat, dark-eyed creatures with buck teeth and long, curly tails, the kind that peer around corners in picture books. I have never seen a rat. I am so excited. My grandmother comes to the door. Her mouth is narrowed, tight. Her face is white. She takes me out of the wheelbarrow and pulls me into the house. She says something to my grandfather, quietly, between her teeth. I know I will never see a rat now.

It is summertime. I am staying with my grandmother in a big house. She is a house-keeper there. It has two stairways, one up from the kitchen, one up from the front hall. No one can ever catch me here. I am mountain climbing. The landings are big crevices in the rock. The rooms upstairs are caves. I can hide forever. I can climb forever. The house is dark and musty. The furniture is old and stuffed. I like to watch the dust fly in the sunbeams. The pantry is my favourite room. It is filled with a pungent, sweet-sour, spicy smell, thick. I pull the light on from a string that hangs down. It is hard to reach. I sit on a stool in the corner and look at all the bottles and jars and crocks and breathe them in. I steal sweet pickles from one of the crocks in the corner. Crunch, crunch.

My mother and I go to visit my grandmother one day on a bus. My grandfather will not be there. He is working. He punches all the clocks in the Phantom Hosiery Factory down the street. My grandmother might not like me today. The last time I saw her I had yelled, "Go away," and she did. We get off the bus. My mother reaches in to help me down the big steps. The bus driver closes the door on her arm. My mother is gone. I scream. Then, she is there again. I feel a rush of life inside me. She helps me down and I ask her if her arm is going to fall off. I am very good at my grandmother's that day. We have cookies and tea together.

The hospital room is naked white. The side rails of the bed are cold, metallic and hard. It is a cluttered, empty place, crowded with oxygen tanks and tubes and other life-giving obstacles. I am holding my grandmother's hand. We talk a little. I tell her that I have many memories and she smiles. Through the window, the June summer has greyed. A wind pushes against the flower gardens below. It looks as if the overcast sky will last a few days before the rain comes.

I look at my grandmother and kiss her cheek. I tell her I love her. She says she is proud of me. We say good-bye.

## CHAPTER TWO

The Therapeutic Experience as Story

Since the therapeutic experience is as prevalent in our time as the religious experience, and since therapy or many of its models are being applied in education, business, industry and management, as well as family and community relationships, it seems appropriate to ask, what is the relationship between therapy and knowing? The Socratic imperative, "Know Thyself," is implied in this relationship, and there are people in the culture today who pursue this process. Many individuals find themselves in crises during which therapy is sought. Others seek a variety of religious experiences, yoga, meditation, P.S.I., jogging, group encounters, drugs, etc. In the area of therapy there is a variety of options: dance therapy, art therapy, bioenergetics, transactional analysis, gestalt, Jungian analysis, psychoanalysis, primal therapy, family therapy, marital therapy and more. There are also workshops provided for the community on parenting, stress, grief, separation and divorce, career management, sexuality and how to cope with change. Wordsworth's poem as a statement of the dilemma presented to us by industrialization at the beginning of the 19th century, "The world is too much with us, late and soon," is, perhaps, still a reflection of the

need for individuals to seek consolation, alternatives and answers to their own questions, questions pertaining to the soul of humankind.

In a world of rapidly advancing technology, but threatened by annihilation, in a world where knowledge and science move ahead in leaps, but where human misery and death continue to haunt us in spite of these advances, how do we begin to know how to respond? How do we know who we are? How do we face and confront the everyday world around us without shutting down or being totally overwhelmed? And how do we begin to claim participation in this process and actively engage in a world "that is too much with us" on the one hand, and not a part of us, on the other hand?

A well-known playwright in a recent television interview expressed his scepticism of psychiatry by referring to a friend of his, who, within the context of a conversation told him, "My psychiatrist tells me that I still love my wife." The playwright shook his head and said that there must be something wrong if we need to have someone else tell us how we feel. And indeed, there is something wrong, although I'm not sure that psychiatry or the individual in this situation need to bear the entire burden.

La-tsu said, "'The surest test if a man be sane is if he accepts life whole, as it is, without needing by measure or touch to understand the measureless untouchable source of its substance...'" (Friedman:31).



The primary way of perceiving knowledge in the western world is now being challenged. The age of reason has been the embodiment of 19th century man: a sensibility that has pursued knowledge empirically, rationally and objectively. Those of us nearing the end of the twentieth century are beginning to realize the apparent inadequacy of this paradigm and we know that to continue the quest for knowledge in torn methodological garments is threatening contemporary life with impoverishment. It has been in this objective search for truth that we have lost our subjective knowing to which the playwright refers. We have lost the ability to know our own experience, to be in touch with our own soul, "the measureless untouchable source."

The so-called "empiricism of scientism" reduces our concrete meetings with the world to abstract "data," the full-bodied person to a detached and disembodied observer, the interrelationship between scientists to a merely technical interchange of data-gathering instruments, the feedback of a giant system of computers (Friedman:32).

Insofar as this kind of pursuit of knowledge has excavated a wealth of material to learn from, it is not the only modus operandi. The predominance of the rationalist view has made little room for scholarship that embodies the intuitive, imaginative and poetic. And more importantly, it has given little room for us as human beings to struggle with, to speak to and affirm our own subjective experience of humanness. The subjective is as necessary a dynamic to knowing as the objective. The growing popularity of the

therapeutic experience and other experiential encounters attests to this need and desire./5/

The therapeutic experience is an opportunity to tell one's story, to re-member one's self. The narrative quality of subjective and autobiographical knowing develops as one begins to see case history as story. Freud spoke of this dynamic as a fusion of science and art.

'Everybody thinks that I stand by the scientific character of my work and that my principal scope lies in curing mental maladies. This is a terrible error that has prevailed for years and that I have been unable to set right. I am a scientist by necessity, and not by vocation. I am really by nature an artist... My books, in fact, more resemble works of imagination than treatises on pathology...(Wiggins:123).

When people seek out therapy, they experience discomfort in their lives. Although the presenting issues vary, there is always pain. A client's first assumption is that this pain should not be there. The request for therapy is usually a request for the elimination of, or, at least, the minimization of pain. Do we assume that pain is bad, weak, a sign of failure of some kind? Is the pursuit of happiness, success, and autonomy, sought out at the expense of denying our suffering, failure, and bondage to our families, communities, culture, and historical place in the universe?

The myth of the autonomous individual, firm in one's own convictions, one's own identity, free to pursue one's life in an option-filled world in a way that suits one best is a

story, paradoxically, without vision. For that story only gives credence to a limited reality. It does not account for pain, violence, failure and dependence on our very primal life forces. It does not account for the limitations and ignorance of our own consciousness and the well of action that springs from the unconscious. It is a narrow-minded perspective, blindly optimistic, that, when confronted with experiences beyond the limits of that reality, becomes frozen with an inability to acknowledge and accept such human experiences as suffering, anxiety, loss, failure and violence. Human limitation is seen as defeat. Pain and suffering is only an indignity. Evil is projected onto the other, and good intentions are simply enough. We are all victims of these perceptions.

I saw a client a few years ago for only three months because after that time he moved away. It is hardly an example of a completed story. Nevertheless, Tom's story exemplifies the problem of dichotomous reality, a reality broken away from its other side. It is a reality that separates good and evil, rational from non-rational, and so on. We have forgotten the lessons of Freud.

Tom was a computer whiz, about 20 years old when I knew him. He had long blonde hair, sometimes pulled back in a

pony tail, and resented not being able to live his early manhood in the sixties. A part-time student, he also worked part-time, and was terrified that his employer would ask him to cut his hair. His grades at school were excellent, and they reflected his enthusiasm for the world of computer technology. His father was a judge, and Tom was familiar with the language of the law. He had no friends.

He spoke to me with his head down or turned away for the first two months that I saw him. His apologetic attitude about coming to see a therapist indicated that perhaps this was not the right thing to do. At the end of our first visit he said that he was bisexual. I asked him if that meant that he had sexual feelings for both men and women and he said, "No." He didn't like men; he only liked women. I didn't understand, then, what he meant by bisexual and I told him this. He became more uncomfortable and said that perhaps there was another word for it. Then he said he didn't want to talk about it anymore and changed the subject. This was a frequent occurrence in the sessions. He also did not like to speak about his family, but I learned that he was the youngest of three; his older brother was a systems analyst, and his sister, was in medical school. His father was dying of a terminal illness. Tom seemed unconcerned but said that the family "was all upset about it." Although he liked talking to his sister and respected his brother who, he believed, liked his job and

was quite successful, he did not consider himself close to any member of the family.

Tom's teenage years were spent listening to music in his room in the basement, going to school and feeling lonely. He wanted friends but had no one that he trusted. He hated most men because they made fun of his hair. He hated most women because they made fun of his hair. At times he would come into the sessions shouting about how he was going to burn down the school, or attempting to figure out, in legal terms, how he could hurt those he felt were insensitive to him. Then, he would apologize for being loud and angry.

Gradually, and in bits and pieces, Tom told me what he meant when he first said he was bisexual. He had fantasies of being a woman. The woman he saw in his fantasies was sitting in a meadow, on a rock, wearing a white or pastel dress and long, flowing, brown hair. She was always happy and serene. She was also behind glass. The entire image was always behind glass. He wanted to be this woman and only felt at peace with himself when he enjoyed these fantasies. They were his daily retreat from an intolerable and intolerant world. He had the desire to dress in women's clothing, to wear head bands and hats. He hated his body. He felt ugly. Women in his life that reminded him of the woman in the fantasy were women for whom he felt attracted but with whom he was too shy to speak. He would usually hide from them and think about them later. He was unsure

whether he wanted to be with these women or simply be like them. When he shared these fantasies with me, he would only provide brief images at a time, and then move on to speak of his anger with people and their insensitivity, or talk about his work with computers. They were his colleagues.

But Tom appreciated having someone listen to him. Although he had experienced these fantasies since childhood, he had never spoken about them. As he became more comfortable, he frequently asked what I thought of him. At one session, he brought in a computer handout saying, "I'M SORRY." The apology, he said, was for his anger and belligerence the week before. He smiled and laughed more as the weeks passed. He also showed much sadness and tenderness. On his last visit, he said he felt both relieved and embarrassed to have acknowledged so much of himself to me. I have not heard from Tom since he moved.

Tom's story is unique to him and in many ways similar to the dilemma that each of us faces. Our realities are stricken with contradictions that cannot be handled in the usual problem-solving way. Dreams, fantasies, streams of consciousness and feelings flooded with images and sounds, as well as specific beliefs, ideas and ideologies cannot be brought together easily and cohesively. They are simply there in pieces, and there is pain in just witnessing the pieces.

To speak of one's subjective story is simply to tell it as it is being experienced, loose and incoherent at times, with strands of clear precision and silent wonder, streams of poetic vision, volcanic eruptions of rage, wells of hopelessness and despair, and electric currents of fear, a fear that nothing will be gained from being totally and fundamentally human.

Tom's story reflects a piece of our cultural story. The feminine, intuitive, receptive and serene part of our nature is behind glass, visible, but out of reach. We have relegated this part of us to a place cut off from the rest of our lives. To survive demands pragmatism, rationality, conformity, control, manipulation and objectivity.

If we look at the therapeutic experience as an opportunity to re-member who we are, to explore the patterns that connect us to the past, and find the ties that bind us to our roots, then we are discovering and telling our story. The process is not an easy one. Therapy, as Freud understood it, was not the cure for the disease. He said in a letter to a colleague:

I believe that your complaint that we are not able to compensate our neurotic patients for giving up their illness is quite justified. But it seems to me that this is not the fault of therapy but rather of social institutions. What would you have us do when a woman complains to us about her thwarted life, when, with youth gone, she notices that she has been deprived of the joy of loving for merely conventional reasons? She is quite right and we stand helpless before her... But the recognition of our therapeutic limitations reinforces our determination to change other social factors so that men and women shall no longer be forced into hopeless situations (Jacoby:126).

Freud believed therapy to be important, but inadequate without significant social change. Treatment of the individual presupposed an ongoing critique and transformation of cultural institutions. Tom's story exemplifies a cultural dilemma; the splitting of the masculine from the feminine. Tom's dis-ease embodies a cultural malady, one that requires transformation. The nurturing, receptive and intuitive part of our nature (that which we call the feminine), needs to be valued, not as primary or secondary to the masculine, but as complementary, as part of, and in connection to that which we usually associate to the masculine.

The following poem attempts to express the unconscious power of the feminine. The juxtaposition (second stanza) embodies the cultural and individual reflection of its repression. The poem implicitly relates to Tom's story or, at least, to one of the cultural implications of the story. The Funeral is a short story expressing rage, despair, loneliness and the promise of hope. Although the story does not occur within a traditional therapeutic context, it embodies the essence of therapy and healing because, paradoxically, only in the midst of disease, death and crisis, do we cradle the seeds of health, life and hope.

Our health is our disease; our madness is our sanity.  
We die in the midst of our living. We live in the midst of



our dying. We cling to our fears as if they were the bedrock of courage, and we forget that courage is simply to be vulnerably open to that mystery we call life.

Primal Scene

Woman!

You are subterranean, an archaeological  
exploration, where circles of history  
swell

in your belly

and time, that mechanical clock, is tossed  
to the waves and the rhythms of the wind's dance.

Volcanic rumblings ripple in your mountain navel.  
Dry heat heaves its way to the surface  
steaming boulders

in liquid lava.

A convulsive eruption smothers the earth in hot,  
wet rock

tearing its way to the serenity  
of the silent sea.

Meanwhile,

in concrete urban places,  
you walk gracefully

in heeled feet, girdled

in a silken cocoon  
as if you were a butterfly  
not yet in flight.

The Funeral

The small, white coffin lay by the altar smothered in lilies. Beside the coffin stood a young, white-faced pastor in a black robe. There were a hundred people or so and they all looked down, down at their feet, down into the deep, blue carpeted floor as if it were a bottomless pool filled with the shadows that haunt dreams. Most of them sat still, quiet, while the scent of the lilies moved down on them.

The mother, sitting alone in the front pew, wore a burgundy dress that trapped her naked face into a dull stare. Her brown eyes, dry, twisted in on her like two brown knots tied tight in her face and all the lines were drawn down into her neck. She seemed neither here nor anywhere else and she looked like a statue hewn from the hard, grey crust of the earth, brought inside for some reason and put there for the time being, for there was nowhere else for her to be.

The 23rd Psalm bellowed from the organ "and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever...Aa-men." It was a small organ, but you could hear the music outside, a muffled, yawning sound that stretched itself almost to the road.

The small country church, white, with a steeple and a bell that still tolled on Sunday mornings, sat alone back from the road except for the old cemetery on its left side. Weather worn tombstones, some bent and leaning towards the earth, inscriptions washed into themselves and fading out of

memory, stood in random order on the church's north side, determined to remain as if they were waiting for some final siege.

Empty fields stood in silence all around. The snow had melted and left its puddles in the ditches and crevices of the cracked earth. New buds were springing effortlessly from the maples and oaks, birches and chestnuts. Spring was embryonic.

The young pastor had a habit of chewing his lip. His feet shuffled as he opened the book and as he did this his face almost faded, receded as he looked up, so that he spoke slowly and hesitantly at first. It was his first funeral.

"We are gathered here," he paused and cleared his throat, "to ask God to help us accept this tragedy." He paused again. "We are gathered here to give our comfort and support to Sarah Livingstone, the mother of Kate. All of us loved Kate and we will continue to love her and the beauty her life gave to so many of us. And we are gathered here to remember, to remember Kate in the fullness of her life, her laughter, her stories, her pictures, her silence and the love which she so freely gave, the kind of love given only by a young child. We ask God in His wisdom and mercy to help each of us accept the loss of this child from our lives."

The pastor's face was pained and still as he stood there, tall and straight in the lilies. He looked even more

delicate than he was, standing among the flowers, his faded blue eyes receding, not wanting to look out, but rather to stay inside for a while. The pews creaked with discretion: slow mournful sounds. There were some children in the back pews. Their mothers had brought them and they had wanted to come. They were school friends of Katie. One sighed, another yawned, one crunched on a hard candy while another sat with tears rolling down her cheeks and a runny nose.

The coffin was closed, silent, small and smothered in white, pure scent. The pastor paused and breathed heavily and then chewed his lip. His eyes looked around, then buried themselves in the book he was holding as if they were looking for something, some special message, some words, something ...

The mother moved in her pew. Her neck stretched, her face turned upward until her eyes stung the ceiling. A silent scream of horror burned the walls while she clenched her teeth and closed her lips together to swallow her hidden screams. But the thoughts still pulsated loudly through the vessels in her neck writhing in constricted tubes. She wanted to scream out, "Is this what You want from me?... Is this what You want? This sacrifice? This offering on Your altar? My child?..." And her eyes moved in circular form around the ceiling, around and around, biting into every corner. She was looking for something that she realized she was not going to find and her eyes filled with salt water,

ocean water, clean tide water tears and she lowered her head and wept, wept without thinking at all.

A child in the back pew blew a bubble. Smack, it broke. Quickly, he wrapped his tongue around it and pulled it back into his mouth.

The pastor looked up in stern silence. His face was young, intent, tired. His words rang out. "Kate showed me how she could whistle and turn backwards summersaults. She loved to sing and dance and run. She ran through the corn stalks and through the snow. She ran through these fields and through the seasons. She sang to the sun and to the moon. She talked to Jack Frost and told him about the pictures she wanted painted on her windows. She believed in life...in the only way she knew how...with her whole being. She believed in life and she taught us this. Perhaps we can learn from Kate's faith and not lose what Kate, herself, never lost."

The pastor looked down and chewed his lip and one of the children in the back dropped a hymnbook. There were men and women with tear stains on their cheeks and chins. Somebody blew his nose. And the mother mourned, "She lived inside my soul...don't go away, Katie...please, don't go away..." and she looked down into the blurred blue waves of the carpet, down through to the earth's middle, to the centre and sank into the darkness there. Her eyes dried and there was silence washing the air, long sloshes of silence.

Outside, the wind blew restlessly. A hawk circled a field with such grace and lightness that it could have been a kite dipping and diving and circling. Snow tires sang on the pavement. There was still the threat of one more blizzard before spring settled in for its season. The earth was crusty, hard and cracked, as yet unopened.

The pastor's voice rang on. The lilies stood attentively, their necks bent forward awkwardly, leaning, listening.

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;

a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose;

a time to keep, and a time to cast away;

a time to rend, and a time to sew;

a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

a time to love, and a time to hate;

a time for war, and a time for peace."

The pastor looked up. "These are days filled with pain and anguish. These are days filled with aching and despair. These are days without clarity, without certainty, without knowing. We do not understand. These are lost days."

For the first time, the mother saw the church. She saw the coffin. She saw the lilies, leaning and white. She saw the walls, the windows, the cross above the altar. Thoughts churned. Her heart ached and burned. She saw Katie running through the field beside their house. She felt her hand squeeze into her own. She heard her giggling laugh. She saw her face turn stubborn, the "NO" on her lips and she heard her feet clomp away. The mother looked at the cross because she wanted to find the words. She wanted to find the words to say... "You have no power now. You are nothing to me...nothing...nothing. You are nothing but a crippled ragged limb... Your roots are gone, Your leaves are shrivelled up... You are dead. And I am dead too... I am dead." But there were no words, only pictures, images, flashes of fire in a pit of hollow blackness.

Someone leaned forward and put a hand on the mother's shoulder and left it there. A child near the back had the hiccoughs, but the mother felt and heard nothing.

The pastor bit his lip and then he spoke. "We feel lost but we keep our faith. We keep our faith and God will wait. He will wait while we are lost. In Psalm Number 46, we read, 'God is our refuge and our strength, a very present



help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.'" And the pastor began to pray. In God's name, he blessed the people.

Outside, the sun emerged for a few moments behind a dark lake of clouds. A ground hog peered up its head on the shoulder of the road and ambled across disappearing into the dead grassy ditch on the other side. The fields lit up with sun and shade spots and the church windows on the south side captured a few beams of light that marked off the dust on its panes.

When the service ended, the people stood and turned and began to file out of the church, slowly, and nearing the door they spoke to one another in touches and whispers. The mother in her burgundy dress rose in the pew. She waded through the mass of lilies onto the coffin, spreading herself over it. She filled the white box with her bloodless tears and her dry, hot pain, heaving for a while, and then she lay still, covering her child. She lay as still as the morning, just after breaking. The pastor stood beside her in the lilies and closed his book. He watched her for a minute and then moved to put his hand over her arm and waited. He waited beside the white coffin with the burgundy woman draping her dead child like a shroud, or, perhaps, a flag.

The heavy scent of the lilies filled the altar and the cross above remained erect.

## CHAPTER III

The Soul and the Unconscious

The song of the soul gives rise to myth, story, activity and meaning. We live much of our lives unknowing and we learn through this unknowingness. We learn pain, limitations, defeat. We learn that power and arrogance, deceives us into a belief that we know, that we can discern good from evil, lightness from darkness, reason from nonsense, health from illness. At that moment the evil within us reveals its shadow. And finally, we learn that we are the last to know our own deceptions. We fight hardest against knowing what we most need to understand.

Our only health is the disease  
If we obey the dying nurse  
Whose constant care is not to please  
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,  
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse  
(Eliot:25).

Freud sought to remind us of these things through the recognition of the unconscious. The layer of everyday consciousness expands and contracts over the vast rumblings of the unconscious. The earth moves. The heat swells up and molten lava erupts over us all. Freud knew this at both the individual and collective level. He explored the human subterrain. And he knew, as did Eliot, that illness was the reminder of these primal screams. The symptom was the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning. Pain,

confusion and isolation would lead us through everyday reality, through consciousness, into the unknown, into the shadow of the earth.

Freud told an anecdote in his third lecture on Psychoanalysis to illustrate the purpose of a joke. It also illustrates self-deception.

Two not particularly scrupulous business men had succeeded, by dint of a series of highly risky enterprizes, in amassing a large fortune, and they were now making efforts to push their way into good society. One method, which struck them as a likely one, was to have their portraits painted by the most celebrated and highly paid artist in the city, whose pictures had an immense reputation. The precious canvases were shown for the first time at a large evening party, and the two hosts themselves led the most influential connoisseur and art critic up to the wall on which the portraits were hanging side by side, in order to extract his admiring judgment on them. He studied the works for a long time, and then, shaking his head, as though there was something he had missed, pointed to the gap between the pictures and asked quietly: 'But where's the Saviour?' (1962a:57)

It is much easier to see through the deceptions of others than to see our own. Freud uncovered this capacity for deception in his early work with women who exhibited symptoms of hysteria. First with Breuer and the use of hypnosis and then later using his own technique of "free association," he was able to relate the expression of symptoms with material repressed, contained in the unconscious. As this unconscious material (memories, fantasies, wishes) was re-membered, re-integrated into consciousness, the symptoms were no longer necessary. At the same time, Freud did not consider psychoanalysis a

pathway to happiness. He said "much will be gained if we succeed in transforming... hysterical misery into everyday unhappiness" (Jacoby:122). He was convinced that the individual was oppressed by the group. One did not act outside the context of one's own story, history and culture. The subjective unconscious flowed into the fabric of historical and cultural mythos. Deeply embedded in the subjective psyche was the objective. And the objective manifested itself into the particular subjective patterns of the individual. Each lived inside the other. The purpose of studying psychic life was not to dichotomize subject and object, health and illness. It was not to establish the idea of the normal versus the neurotic. It was to study the complex and interwoven patterns that tie the person to her own idiosyncratic notions of herself. It was to study the patterns that connect the individual with history and culture. It was to study the deeply logical movement of the unconscious, the primal forces in life that compel us to live, to relate, to create and to die.

Freud was not so much concerned with healing as he was with understanding the human network of life. He succeeded in elevating this pursuit into a respectable scientific endeavour. His claim was that the human psyche should be removed from the area of romantic mysticism shrouded in inarticulate rituals: preconscious and unexplained in rational language. Freud insisted that psychic life was

logical and explainable. At the same time, he insisted that the unconscious had its own logic: symbolic, hidden and non-linear. The science of psychoanalysis is not the science of conscious reason, but the exploration into symbolic pathways and hidden roads that connect human beings with their own souls and their bondage to the human race. "It is the science of the conscious study of unconscious laws" (Grimes).

The Journal

Just as the technique of "free association" is a pathway to the unconscious, so the process of journal writing is a gesture to the soul. This journal is a preconscious wandering. It lives between everyday consciousness and the unconscious. Images form and are followed for their own sake. The need for precision and giving accurate description to the images prevents a fuller exploration of the unconscious. We resist (as Freud would say) and there is no one else there to push us further than we care to go. But it is an attempt to visualize and touch the soul. The soul, however, is elusive and once grasped, escapes and moves on into its own terrain. The pursuit never ends for the soul is process and cannot be contained. The journal is a form of completed incompleteness.

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years--  
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre  
deux guerres--

Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt  
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which  
One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion... (Eliot:26).

I use the journal with students as part of their course requirements. It gives the student permission to wander within herself, to pay attention to her own internal rhythms

and to attend her perceptions with more precision and detail. It is a task that stretches the tensions between the internal process and external world (social reality) so that clearer distinctions can be made. It permits one to own one's own story and to notice the similarities and differences between "I and Thou." The emphasis of the journal is not with conscious considerations, although these things can never be excluded, but with pre-conscious images, the stuff that dreams are made of. There is no clear delineation between conscious and unconscious. In our culture there is a tendency to push for rational, common-sense language that produces specific and linear causes and effects. My journal only slants in the other direction, not demanding rational conclusions. but rather following the question, the quest, and watching where it leads.

My concern is that intellectual curiosity be reunited with the passion of the soul, with the compulsion to move in one's own way, not autonomously or in isolation, but with some awareness that the tensions that exist in the matrix of life can never be totally one-sided and never be totally compromised. Michael Novak writes:

What is it that intelligence aims to understand if not human experience? In whose service is it if not in the service of human action? The imagination organizes the matrix of patterns and structures and relationships in which insights occur. Many people of good intelligence lack imagination, and hence insight. Dumb data, randomly arranged, yield no insight until the imagination captures the intelligence and tempts its



attentions toward unities and relations which the imagination shapes.

Thus, pedagogically, good teachers aim directly at the experience, imagination, stories of their students. Only in that matrix can understandings occur. The teacher tries to surprise students, explore their too limited patterns of expectation, raise the counterexamples that direct their attention in new ways. Good education is a constant series of new births: new ways of experiencing, perceiving, imagining, proceeding. When breakthroughs happen frequently, education is a joy (1971;57).

Historians and biographers, in particular, have found rich sources of information in personal letters and diaries. From the New England Puritans to the correspondence between Freud and Jung, letters have reflected the climate of the culture, intellectual issues, personal idiosyncrasies and intense feeling. In this century and in North America, specifically, letter writing is becoming a lost art. Air travel and telephone reduce the need for written correspondence. But, we are generally, a non-reflective culture. The temptations for distraction are immense. We are amply provided with television, films, concerts, tasteful restaurants and lounges, the theatre, bars, and discos. I am reminded of pleasure palaces in science fiction stories.

The journal or diary has made its return as an educational tool, and it is an important return./6/ At its best, it is a reflective art form that can begin to bridge consciousness with the unconscious. It is a process in subjective knowing that values the preconscious wanderings

of the self. In this way, it is a cousin to "free association." At the same time, it invites the censorship of consciousness to give clarity and form to that which is cloudy and subliminal. Chaos and meaning embrace in the process of journal writing. Dichotomy is transformed into paradox.

The following journal fragments were written over the past two or three years. I did not consciously intend to connect these fragments, however, implicit connections and themes have emerged. We are repetitive and ritualistic in this regard. Conflicts, tensions and questions are replayed in our dreams, fantasies, and actions throughout our lives.

## Journal Fragments

## Cliff Hanging

A helicopter view would see her  
dangling over a precipice,  
both hands clasped  
around a piece of rock jutted out from  
the boulder.

She looked like a kite string hanging there,  
wispy,  
in the mountain breeze  
as if to decorate the hard greyness  
of the craggy peak  
with green and yellow spring harmony.

She dotted the dullness of the day with colour flecks

and when she fell,  
down, down  
into the first snow of the year,  
we watched those rainbowed rhythms dance  
in celebration  
of peaks and valleys.

She seasoned the elements of time.

January 10

My head is dead heavy, like a water balloon, the kind that drops splat, out of high windows. It hurts and teeters and my back and spine are tight and carry this balancing balloon on the tip of an arrow. My stomach aches deep inside and waits for my head to change.

These headaches are thought-stuffed, a marsh of words to be waded through, tangled by water weeds, knee deep. Moving is impossible. Today, there is no land, no solid ground, no sun-stroked meadow, no relief from shade trees. There is nothing but water-logged earth, murk.

I could feel all this coming, wading out off-shore and then dropping, like an anchor off the side of a ship, an iron in the mud dragging against ocean bottom.

This dredging through history for lost pieces, fragments to fill in spaces, is a dangerous voyage. It's so easy to get lost before the discovery. There I am. I can see myself captured by those memories, stacked high and yellowed with age like old photographs, memories blessed with simplicity, the unambiguous dreams of what would be, like Norman Rockwell's "Walking to Church," getting a haircut or drinking a coke at a soda fountain. I remember God and the church and hot baking in the kitchen. I remember Amos and Andy and Lassie and Heidi. And there is my house with wet roses, red and dew dripped near the picnic table. Sunday dinners were as predictable and absolute as the hundred year

old pines that divided the property. Reality was as real as the living room. But when my father died, the living room fell away from the house. I walked from the kitchen into space. His absence obliterated the room just as his presence had filled it. And then there were dues to be paid.

Strange forces were unearthed, subterranean life forces, things that had nothing to do with childhood dreams. Where once there had been a living room, there now was a cliff, a cliff to be scaled down, down to an arid land of sand and craters, a land that led to the sea and its sea monsters, to night winds and creeping tides, to lightening storms thundering the sea to its depths.

A golden sea child, cradled in the power of the waves emerged. Life broke from the past. The mother and child lived on the beaches collecting shells and fossils in the open sky near the water's edge. And life was serene once more, except for the memories. The memories pulled them back.

These memories give me the headaches. They pull me back into the land of formed thoughts, the land of living rooms and manicured gardens, the land of the repentance of sins, the land of the defined and the home of vanished dreams.

And then the sea, green and endless, nourishing the life of diving gulls, looms in a formidable way again and turns indigo. Serpentine reptiles move incidiously and I am afraid to move.

I am half way to death,  
statistically speaking of course.

How little I have become thus far.

and yet with such magnificence have my dreams soared.

In those dreams my accomplishments  
have outreached myself  
and made my life, in fact,  
so superfluous.

## Journal

February 6th

I am wandering through my soul, fog filled and muddy, like a late November afternoon. Grey rain, muddy alley ways and fog, thick fog turns the skyscrapers into blurred ghosts hovering inside heavy smoke. The crisp winter sun is not yet present and the faded, lazy greens of summer have long passed. Only the fog rolls in and walking feet vanish into the mist filled pavement.

The thick wet fog swirls through the grey, concrete streets, eerie and cold and heavy like a late night detective prowling through London streets, listening for clues, night sounds. Tower clocks chime to mark the passage of time in dead space. The sound of shoe leather taps the pavement. The dull drone of occasional traffic moans through the mist. The beating rhythms of my own internal clock are tightly wound, coiled in a posture ready to leap at any given time. The tight night turns in on itself and the black rose folds its petals while a vaporous, sooty mist hovers in dead air space and I wait for the wind.

This is what it feels like to have the world as enemy and the enemies within my own soul crawl around like black beetles on a lettuce leaf. Biting, munching, swallowing.

February 8th

The night wind has come and pushed the fog. It slithers along the streets and into the river. And the day is clear and new, crisp and clean. White pigeons flutter around crusty red chimney tops. Icicles hang from eaves troughs like heavy satin skirts, white and shimmery in the morning sun. Snow tires sing on the pavement. The church over there through the brittle branches of the trees stands in stately grace, its two towers gently jutting above other buildings. An old man with short, grey hair and a grey overcoat way below the knees walks by with his shopping bag on the way back from the market down the street. He spurts out white breath as he walks, stooped a bit. Maybe he's a tired dragon, retired from active fire spewing, and just smokes pipes now. Two women in cloth coats and cloth hats pace by, nodding and chattering with their parcels. And a young girl with stringy yellow hair and glasses walks with her head down watching her feet.

The day is textured now with its crunchy crust of snow, wire fences, silver and coiled, rough, brown bark spreading thinly in upward reach, muddy metal cars and trucks and buses spewing white gas fumes from their exhausts. The green rippled shingles and the yellow grey brick, the few patches of straw-like grass here and there all watch the sky, longing to be blue.



And the beetles have left the lettuce leaf.

## First Funeral

She lay in her brown box, her goiter still in tact.  
Her white hair was so real I wanted to touch it,  
but didn't for fear it might crumble like a cigarette ash.

The minister stood in the pulpit  
and spoke for a long time  
words I did not hear.

I watched the white faces, some tear stained,  
lined in brown pews.

Then, I remember  
being in the house of someone who served me chocolate brownies  
with milk  
while tall people gathered and spoke  
words I did not hear.  
But I watched rumbled voices,  
the moving mouths and the blinking heavy eyes, darting.

That was thirty years ago.  
There have been other funerals since then,  
only some with brown boxes.

There is no date

There are a lot of things to say about pain but I never know where to begin because it starts out like a grey fog for me. Pain is blur. Pain is muck, decay, death, murk. It is the confusion and chaos of a film speeding by on a screen: too many images and not enough time and space to form words to describe them. Overkill. I recede farther and farther away from the screen. I grow smaller and smaller and the theatre grows larger and larger and the screen races its silent story and the blur of the white noise screams in silence.

I turn inside out and hope that nobody sees. Don't come into the theatre! Stay away from here! Let me lie curled up in the back seat by myself for awhile. What to do now? What am I to do with this film, this drama, this silent screen race? I go to sleep. I wake up. Things are just the same: sped up fog. I go to sleep. I wake up. Things are just the same. It goes on and on. I act as if nothing is wrong. My eyes don't focus. I pretend that I'm not in the theatre at all. I pretend that I'm in the world where I am. I pretend to listen and talk and understand. I pretend that everything is alright. Other people probably think I'm stupid. I can't hear very well. I'm absent minded. I drop things. I don't see very well and drive through stop signs. I hate talking on the phone. I'm not sure who it is that I'm talking to. I don't know what it is that I'm expected to say.

"Hello," I say.

"Hello, how are you?" they say.

I don't know how I am, where I am, who I am or what the movie is. I don't know anything except that fog is everywhere and I am far away and you act as if I'm not far away, that I'm right here and I act as if I'm supposed to be right here even though I'm not here at all. I'm curled up in the back of a theatre somewhere, waiting, waiting for the projectionist to slow the film down. Waiting for the lights to come on. Waiting for someone to come and take me out.

Pictures. I begin to see the pictures. Tall buildings burn while someone dives out a top window. Splat. Swollen empty bellies breathe on tiny living skeletons. They wait to die. Graffiti on grey walls. Miles of wreckyards feast on streamlined expressways. Dead fish float on top of dirty rivers. Hollow laughter echoes in lush chambers. Martinis are served after five. An olive and a toothpick. Protein enriched cereal is stuffed into chubby little cheeks. An empty face sits on a park bench while pigeons peck. The grass is trimmed and manicured. Skyscrapers soar upward in smooth lines. It is the city scape. In a hospital corridor, a grey face, lined, with shallow breath sees all.

There is the pain: right in front of you all the time.

Today is death and after. Life speeds into time future when time present is no more and time future is space in motion, and the film is slowing down. The theatre is

receding and that means I must be nearing the end. I see a light, perhaps big enough to crawl through. It's like crawling through the narrow end of a light bulb that gradually opens itself into a globe. And it feels like a fat sunbeam, warm, and white. I walk through the white fog, through the motionless light, still as a hazy sky. And the light begins to blend itself into faded tones of yellow, beige, pink-grey tones of a sand dune, a hillside in Greece, Mediterranean pastels that stretch into eternity, an eternity where yesterday and tomorrow mould into the apple of original sin nurtured by the sun.

February 20

I cannot write. My dreams fly by in racing images leaving sight traces behind, but no words, no pictures. My thoughts circle up in smoky wisps. My soul is locked up somewhere below, welded in constricted muscle, tight, impenetrable, unyielding.

There is a forest, deep and thick and a lost child and the roots of the immense trees entangle each other down into middle earth, the heart of primal scenes and their leaves and branches spin up onto the sun until they burn yellow and crimson. And the lost child is a tiny particle of dust in this eternal spiral through time. Her whole life is the size of a raindrop that moistens a leaf. Her death, an absent sunbeam.

## Another Way to Die

(An Adaptation)

The breeze tickles the long, meadow grass, its silken stems bleached yellow in the dry summer sun. Rippled waves of heat shimmer the air. The sky fades into an ocean blue haze and a few down-pillowed clouds rest low over the meadow like a child's comforter hugging and warming the earth.

The edge of the forest stands tall in the distance, a cool, green-black dignity. A small, curly haired child, smelling of meadow earth and yellow sun, stands on tiptoes and runs a path through the silken grass to the forest edge. The child stands so small, so very small, by the giant trees with rainbowed branches bowing to middle earth.

The child smells the velvet moss of the deep forest and smiles a child's smile and with eyes of delight yields to the mystery of the embracing darkness and steps out of the meadow and into the enfolding blanket of trees.

Pine needles munch beneath his footsteps. Cool breezes brush music with sun-stroked leaves. Squirrels play leap frog across branches. Birds sing their own songs and the small child follows the scent of deep green into its middle. Branches thicken to black out the sun. The forest floor is soft and dense.

The child follows a pebbly stream and fills his pockets with old moss stones. He gathers pine cones and twigs and sits, sits in the wet mud by the pebbled stream and builds a

mudhouse, soft, shiny and wet...and he talks to the tadpoles. The child talks to the tadpoles and rests beside his new brown house and sleeps in the nesty ground until the owl screams at the moon.

The child shivers and wakes and turns back toward home...hungry and running now, running from the owl's screech, running from the black middle of the forest, running from the heavy, green smell of the moss, running even from the tadpoles and the mudhouse. He runs through the blackness into the dark, into the deep dark of the night, into the silence, into the arches of the giant trees. And the child runs and doesn't stop. He runs and pants and runs until his legs hurt and the child keeps on running...running through the night.

Dawn breaks on a chocolate cottage in a small open space in the forest where the dew is heavy and the child eats the doorknob. An old woman with a wrinkled neck and small black eyes opens the door and invites the child in for tea. The old woman serves tea and cookies with her brown spotted hands and then she puts the child in a cage and fattens him with good food and sweet chocolate. The child eats in the locked cage for hundreds of days. He loves the sweet chocolate and doesn't love the cage.

One morning the old woman lights the oven and unlocks the cage. She tells the child to crawl inside the oven. He is afraid now...the oven is too hot, too dark. The child



waits. The old woman is patient. She tells the child again to crawl inside the oven but the child only waits. The old woman is not as patient as the child. She scolds him, "Crawl in, you fool. It's not hard, can't you see?" And she crawls in first to show the child how.

The child slams the oven door and the old woman bakes herself in the oven instead. The child does not need to wait any longer. He stuffs his pockets with sweet chocolate and leaves the cottage and the smoking chocolate chimney and the hot ashes.

The child wanders through the giant forest trees and the heavy scented smells of green and the dark music of the wind. He wanders through the darkness once more for two days until the sun-bleached meadow grass appears through the rainbowed branches and the child smells the sun grass again. The child runs. He runs to the edge of the forest and stands so small in the long grass. He smells the meadow earth and the sun heat and smiles a long smile. He looks at the sun and then turns back to the forest. The child slowly empties his pockets and throws the remaining pieces of chocolate back into the forest earth and then he runs a running path through the silken meadow grass in the open, ocean sky toward home.

## The Table

A fool is under the table.

A magician strides the top.  
Magic mesmerizes all who see.  
The mass of stone faces turn doughy,  
kneaded and moulded by his fine, agile fingers.

Rigid limbs limp to the strings of the puppeteer,  
in rhythms of awe and wonder,  
in rhythms of awe and thunder.

The fool sits in stillness.

The magician waves his wand parading his sorcery,  
his inventive mind, his slight of hand.  
Promises unfold to watchful eyes.  
A stone is transformed into bread.  
Water brings forth full, red wine.

Hollow eyes yield to hope and follow the man on the table top.

The fool sits in silence.

The magician speaks in eloquent tones.  
He leans into words of might and majesty.  
He wears the face to inspire faith and purpose.  
His keen magic captures small minds.  
Men are managed by the sorcerer's gifts,  
a swinging, hypnotic pendulum of hope,  
hidden and now revealed.

The magic complete,  
the magician leaps from the table.  
His platform vanishes in a clean sweep of his cloak.  
With a long, low deliberate bow, he sneers an exit.

The fool remains sitting under  
where the table used to be.  
His smile, benign, lingers still,  
though few remain to see.

February 25

I don't know what I'm doing. For some reason I think I should. It's a measure of success to think that you know what you're doing. On talk shows, for example, people who are interviewed usually appear to know what they're doing and they talk about it, out loud, to millions of people across the country. It's a measure of success. Then there are people you meet in supermarkets. The cashiers, the produce manager, the stock people, the customers all act as if they know what they're doing. They just do it and you can see them doing it. It's the same everywhere I go. People know what they're doing. Except me. I don't know what I'm doing. But I think I should.

I know how to fool people. People think I'm competent, that I know what I'm doing. But I don't. I don't know anything. I don't even know what I want. Out of life, I mean. Some days I think I just want to be held forever and ever. Other days I want money, and all the things that money can buy. Most of the time I'd like to be perfect. I worry a lot. I worry about my daughter, that I don't give her what she needs. I think I love her too much. I worry that she isn't happy. She seems fine but then I worry that I'm overlooking something. I probably can't fool her. She knows me very well. But then maybe she doesn't. Even when you love somebody too much, you can fool them. Sometimes I get mad at her when I'm scared and I end up scaring her

instead. I don't want to scare her but I do anyway. Well, sometimes I do want to scare her because I don't want her to get hurt, so I hurt her instead, instead of letting somebody else hurt her. I don't know if she knows all that. I think sometimes I do fool her.

I don't like hurting people, but I do anyway. Sometimes I hurt people the most when I don't want to. I hurt people most when I'm scared. I'm like a coiled spring or a cornered wildcat. If you come too close I'll tear your eyes out even though I don't want to. I'm a killer at heart.

March 1

This is a lonely day. They usually begin, days like these, from an outpouring of disturbing dream images, the kind of images that you really can't remember but they linger somewhere like the odour of fish still hanging in the air from the night before. There is something stale about them. They are old dreams still hanging around without resolution. Some dreams are energy filled, alive, accomplished. They have a power to them that leave blossoming residues. Other dreams are satiny. They shimmer in serenity. They leave you warm and sleepy and content, stretched out lazily like a cat on a sunlit spot on the rug. Then, of course, there are nightmares, the monster dreams that wrench you into twisted distortion and you awaken to escape the awesome features of your own grotesqueness. But these dreams, the ones that lead to lonely days, rest on their own historical laurels. They have been around before and they reappear, perhaps to keep you humble, to keep you unknowing, to keep you eternally separate from yourself. If they say anything, they say that no matter how much you've done, how hard you've worked, you're still paying off old debts. You're no further ahead. These dreams are old familiar farts. And the loneliness has nothing to do with other people. It doesn't matter whether there is someone around to love you or not. It has to do with an essential isolation and separation within yourself. It has to do with

the independent life of your own soul that crosses its own terrain whether you will it to do so or not. It's the battered soldier that goes from war to war because that's all he knows. It's the clown getting on and falling off his bicycle over and over but without the audience and without the joy. It's ritual without consciousness. And so on.

It's the kind of morning when you wake up slowly, you shake off sleep and move for the sake of moving. "Just get going, maybe the day will be better," you say to yourself, knowing full well it won't. But you don't think about it. You don't want to think about or wonder about or feel anything. You just grind into automatic and move. And of course, you become the unthinking idiot you are, the unidentified identity that your dream constantly reminds you of. You are the embodiment of it. You are your own knotted not.

And that is loneliness. And this is my lonely day. I am the not me that I will always be. I am the circle of repetition. I am the period between centuries. I am the dot at the end of a sentence. I am yesterday becoming tomorrow. I am recycled air in a ventilation system.

## Dreaming

Dreaming is middle earth terrain  
where twisted roots  
entwine into turreted castles  
while the music of rusty bells sifts  
through porous layers of historical dust.

## Field Notes on Middle Age

March 8

I am full of doubts. I get so full of them I can hardly stand it. My stomach churns and tugs like an old steamer with the engine pulling a full load at top speed. And this later winter snow doesn't help. It's winter turned in on itself, puffing and blowing and spewing out snow, knowing full well that spring will come anyway but not wanting it to. It's like this late blizzard is going to push us for all we're worth: big fat flakes thumping down, pushing new, spring shoots back into hibernation. The whole month is dreadful. It's death without resurrection, that's what it is. And Lent, that awful forty days that started last Wednesday, the days and weeks of deprivation when all you have to look forward to is the crucifixion. No wonder I have doubts. Anybody would if they thought about it.

So, I just keep on being buried in this white blizzard and when I walk, it is always into the windy, white wetness of burning cold. I don't even have the satisfaction of mountain climbing here, of working hard to get to the top of something, of making some new connections, of moving toward some new terrain. So, I hide. I go inside and hide until the weather changes.

Inside, I live in a world where climbing is as easy as crawling, where branches are made to swing from and the tree house is dense with comic books. It is a fantasy world



where super human feats are normative and I can fly a wonder woman's flight and land in a pyramid to explore ancient tombs, wombs that give birth to stories embellished with golden thread and defended by bronze tigers with emerald eyes.

And that's where I go in March when the winter crust rusts new birth. Now if I could really travel there in body, mind and soul, it would be alright. But I don't. I can't. I always have one foot here in the cold, white crust; the ghost of the present. If I could really fly away, then I could escape from these days of doubt and anxiety. But I don't. I live half here and half there. I am cursed by the duality of existence. I live in two worlds. There is no way out. I have one foot in time present and another foot in time past or time future or a timeless fantasy. I am torn, ripped in two. It is not a nice place to be. I am in the rabbit hole, falling into another dimension and sitting in my living room reading cancer statistics. I am preparing dinner for my daughter and talking to the cheshire cat. I see his grimaced smile, his smirk and I scream, "What would you do if you were me, you fat cat?" And I put dinner on the table and ask my daughter about her day in school.

I love my daughter. She is the most beautiful, precious part of my life. I want to protect her from everything bad. I want her to grow up happy and healthy and wise. I know I

will fail on all counts. She will not always be happy, she will die someday and if I keep protecting her like this she will certainly not be wise. I hate the fact that I will fail her. I worry about her hating me. I don't want her to hate me. I would rather die than have her hate me. And she might very well hate me. She might hate me like I hate March winters. After all, I do things to make her hate me. I get scared of her getting hurt and so I hurt her instead. I get mad when she doesn't do the right thing because I'm afraid that one day she'll get into trouble for not doing the right thing. I love her so much I hurt her and if I hurt her too much, she'll hate me. Why not? Anybody would. Life is balancing on a thread. If the balance is tipped either way, just a bit, just a tiny bit, BOOM, you've blown it.

I don't know what to do. You'd think by the time you reach my age, which is the half way line, give or take a few years, that you'd know what to do. I knew more when I was twenty than I do now. Of course, I really didn't know more then. But I sure thought I did and that must count for something. I mean when I was twenty, I was teaching school. I had the responsibility of thirty-three little kids all day. I had the responsibility of moulding minds, stimulating growth, nurturing and sustaining life. Now I'm scared to death of what I might do to one child. I used to know what I was doing and I don't anymore. I can't handle the

responsibility of teaching. I'm afraid of mothering. I gave up being a wife. I couldn't do that either. And I went back to school to learn how to do something else better. And now here I am, almost finished, ready to start a new life, a new goal, a new challenge and I'm scared to death. When I was twenty, I thought I could change the world. Now at almost forty, I can't even change myself. I am shrivelled, hiding in a shell like a snail, all wet and curled up. It's despicable. Not that I wish I were twenty again. I don't. I'd just have to go through this all over again. I just wish I knew what to do with all of this so-called life experience of growing and shrivelling.

Of course I know what I want to do. I want to write. Writing is more innocuous than teaching. I mean you don't have to bear the burden of messing with other people's lives. In a classroom, these children are stuck with you for a year and that's it. They can hate you. You can hate them. You can hurt, betray, deceive them and they have to take it. But, if I write, well, if you don't like what I say, close the book, throw it out, ridicule it, forget it. And if you do like it, then I'm only saying what you already know and agree with. I never say anything new. Writing seems like a good thing to do. But, I don't know how I'll support my daughter this way. I worry about that. And I'm not sure that I know how to write anyway. I have no idea what to write about, except myself, of course. And even if

I do write about myself, I have to be careful, because if I divulge too much, I could really be an embarrassment to my family and friends and if I say too much about my family and friends, then, I could hurt them and they would hate me and I certainly don't want people hating me, particularly people I love. So I have to be careful even when I write about myself. And if I only say safe things about myself, anything I might write would be pretty boring, so I have to make things up: lie, in fact. On the other hand, it has to be honest enough to be faithful to who I am as a person. You see the dilemma? It's the thread balancing thing again. Writing isn't as easy as I thought it would be.

You're probably wondering why this is such a problem for me. Most writers, fiction writers, don't need to bother with their autobiographies. They discover characters who develop and come alive and move in some dramatic series of events. And you're probably wondering why I simply don't just create a character. Well, I've spent the better part of a year trying to do just that and I can't. I don't have enough imagination to create a character. I am a writer without an imagination. I'll have to see where that takes me.

There's another reason I write. I take in too much. It's like overeating, only I over see, over smell, over hear. There are too many things coming in. That has always been a problem with me. Icon flooding. I don't know how to

handle the surplus flow. I'm a lake over-stocked with fish. There are images diving and swimming around in my head, schools of images swimming faster and faster until my whole head is a swirling pool of leaping, helpless images longing to be still, to be cradled in a small, silent pool rocked quietly to sleep. It's terrible living in this frenetic lake. I hate it and the frenzy makes me wonder if I'm not completely mad. I mean if your past and present were bubbling up in front of you like some kind of volcanic spewing, you would wonder too, if you were mad.

So I don't write out of some aesthetic desire to portray a dance of pastels. I write because I'll simply go crazy if I don't. I have to get rid of some of these fish.

The End

### Considerations

How does the journal relate to the subject matter of this thesis? How does it relate to subjective and biographical knowing?

I have suggested that the journal is a cousin to free association. It is a subliminal or preconscious wandering. It reveals the most private of public thoughts and illustrates the circularity and paradoxical movement within myself between faith and doubt, health and illness, clarity and confusion. This movement gradually gives way to a more censored articulation and elaboration in theory. The journal is precognitive. The thesis, itself, is a movement towards cognition. Consequently, the journal illustrates the most subjective articulation of my knowing. It tells me how I know and how I do not know. It is a metaphor of self. The stories and poems are also a metaphor of self. They focus not so much on preconscious wanderings for their own sake, but more on the elaboration of a particular set of images held together by a larger metaphor. The story has more cohesion. The process is tightened and transformed to portray, for example, the theme of dying, in Waiting for the Rain, or a statement of despair and hope in The Funeral. The poetry contains a set of images or two sets of images juxtaposed to give an impression, a picture of something. Finally, the theory is an attempt to speak about my own process, rather than embodying it. It is the most objective

expression of myself because I have had to stand back and look. It is the most reflective.

However, each mode of expression is autobiographical and subjective. The journal has embodied the thesis in embryo. The poems and stories have captured an interpretation of certain aspects of my process. And finally, the theory has transformed the images into thoughts and ideas.

Subjective knowing can be illustrated in this way: a movement from precognition through censorship and elaboration to cognition. It is a movement embedded in the self but pushing towards the other, towards a language that can be grasped and understood by the other. It is a movement towards the objective.

Even the most abstract and esoteric constructs are authored by the subjective self in an attempt to make sense of the subjective process. Erik Erikson's biography of Luther is an excellent example which illustrates the relationship between the personality of Luther and his struggle to define reality apart from the Roman theological tradition.

I have tried to show this movement from precognition to cognition through the use of my journal and its eventual transformation into story, poems and theory.

## CHAPTER IV

The Paradox of Knowing

There is abundant experimental and clinical evidence to indicate that traditional conceptions of how human beings think and learn have started from a natural but totally misleading assumption that we think and learn consciously. This is not true. Conscious processes are important not for thinking but for sampling, checking and correcting, and as tools for communication. The intake of factual data about the world around us is overwhelmingly preconscious, i.e., subliminal. This preconscious input consists of an incessant subliminal bombardment, which goes on both when we are awake and when we are asleep...

Second, the bits of information which are furnished to us this way, whether subliminal or conscious, are then processed...on a subliminal level. All of this is just another way of saying that most, if not all, of our thinking is preconscious rather than conscious. Here again, the conscious component is only a weighted and fragmentary sample of the continuous stream of preconscious processing of data...

It is clear that what remains cannot be a true representation of the external world, or of what we are trying to learn, or what is processed internally in the learning process, or of what we "create" by recombining units into new patterns. I once put it that unwillingly we distort what we perceive, and then learn what we have distorted. Psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, neurophysiologists have erred together in their undue emphasis on the conscious component of mentation. This has misled the educator into neglecting the preconscious instruments of recording, processing and creating (Novak:1970,49).

Knowing is not limited to intellectual curiosity or to the inarticulate wanderings and eruptions of the soul. Knowing is embedded in the human experience of living, touching, probing. It is engagement with and connection with one's own story, one's cultural and family heritage and



prevailing notions of reality within a specific time and space. Knowledge is paradoxical. To know means also that we do not know. To know entails both precision and distortion. It is ever unfolding, unwinding, revealing. It is also hidden and locked away. Knowing is conscious and unconscious. It is discovered in the midst of a process of exchange, or dialogue both within oneself and with others. It moves and cannot remain static. Static knowledge is the truth that was before.

We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time (Eliot:48).

The starting point, the turning point where scholarship begins is the revolving door where imagination, intuition, observation and precision come together with a passion to be immersed in a world charred with violence and childhood innocence, where polarities co-exist. Scholarship behind an ivy wall of objectivity and detachment is to play an intellectual game. Scholarship demands a willingness to know and not to know, a willingness to confront one's self and the evils within. Scholarship implies that we move blindly into the future, not knowing, but with a willingness to taste, to touch, to listen, to see and to own our own blindness. Finally, scholarship demands that we speak of this with as much precision as our distorted vision permits. What is required is the courage to be involved and to live

with the pain of our own limitations. To participate in a world filled with horror as well as beauty, acknowledging both in their extremes as well as the ambiguity of the in-between, is what I believe Freud meant when he implied that the purpose of psychoanalysis was to convert neurotic misery into everyday unhappiness. The equation of contentment, success and the good life with health, perspective and objectivity diminishes the human spirit and ignores gross inhumanities.

Participation requires a leap into the unknown. Moments of happiness, success and well-being may be bi-products of this leap. Pain, despair, confusion, fear and anger will undoubtedly be there too. Perhaps the ingredients of humility and humour would serve us more than the expectations of success and well-being. We act with at least as much stupidity as we do intelligence. Humility may allow us to recognize this at times. Humour may compensate for some of our despair over these actions.

The Emergence of the Unconscious

Flannery O'Connor, an American short story writer of the fifties, exemplifies humour in depicting the limitations of our own visions of reality. She also heightens the tragedy of limitations through the use of grotesque imagery, and at the same time, ushers in the hidden promise that pushes us beyond these limitations into further distortions and new truths. O'Connor wrote out of her Roman Catholicism. She was born and raised in Georgia, wedded to red clay, farms, niggers and a southern Baptist tradition.

At the age of 39, she died with Lupuserythematosus, a chronic disorder that gradually debilitated her. She moved back to Georgia in the early fifties at the onset of her illness and lived with her mother on their farm until her death in 1964. It was here in this rural landscape among her peahens and peacocks that she created most of her stories. O'Connor had a feeling for the grotesque, much like Faulkner, Capote, Welty and a handful of other southern writers. Her sharp, disarming wit, her devout theological convictions and her ability to intuit the depth of human turmoil and infect the surface of things with the soul's dis-ease sustained the integrity of her stories. And they have survived her.

The emergence of the unconscious is pervasive in all of O'Connor's works. The revelation of the grotesque depicting the torment of both body and soul is always juxtaposed with

theological symbolism. O'Connor locates her religious symbols in the midst of the grotesque. Good and evil are heavily drawn and paradoxical. There is the invitation to accept grace and redemption in a world envisioned with horror.

While Wiesel writes of the explosion of the unconscious within a culture in his descriptions of the Holocaust, O'Connor explores the emergence of the unconscious within the individual. Both writers give credence to the power and willfulness of the soul, the cultural and individual soul. They move beyond the limits of everyday consciousness and touch, in this case, the demonic depths of the human condition. A writer's work, if it is to survive must acknowledge the power of the unconscious. To see only the surface of things, without embodying the complexity and ambiguity which encompasses the beauty and horror of life, is a betrayal of the human experience. This is the difference between literature and pornography in its broadest sense. The crusade in the United States right now on behalf of the Moral Majority to "clean up" television is an attempt to eradicate pornography (sex and violence) in its narrowest sense. They are not asking for quality programming but for the elimination of what they consider to be the portrayal of immoral life positions. This kind of censorship pushes for a portrayal of reality that ignores the unconscious just as much as the programming they are protesting against. (In

this case, sex and violence are exploited for their own sake and are not woven into the fabric of human life.) Both positions are pornographic and neither position takes seriously the question of what constitutes the human comedy and the human drama.

The difference between a good story and a bad one apart from the quality of form and style (which should not be diminished), is the delicate balance of consciousness in the characters, and the sensitivity and precision in which the author draws these characters in their life situations to permit the emergence of the unconscious to sit in tension with conscious perceptions.

The following short story is entitled The Displaced Person. I have used lengthy quotations from this story, not to bore the reader, but to share O'Connor's images and the way in which she merges consciousness with unconscious dynamics to heighten the absurdity and tragedy of the story.

Mrs. McIntyre, a widowed farm owner, has just hired a Polish immigrant and his family as hired hands. The Shortleys: husband, wife and two daughters are the present dairy hands. Astor and Sulk are the two employed negroes. The Guisacs have just arrived accompanied by an old priest who has helped to negotiate this transaction. Mrs. Shortley is observing the arrival of the Displaced Person from a distance.

Mrs. Shortley's vision narrowed on him and then widened to include the woman and the two children in a

group picture. The first thing that struck her as very peculiar was that they looked like other people. Every time she had seen them in her imagination, the image she had got was of the three bears, walking single file, with wooden shoes on like Dutchmen and sailor hats and bright coats with a lot of buttons. But the woman had on a dress she might have worn herself and the children were dressed like anybody around... The boy was in the centre of the group, talking. He was supposed to speak the most English because he had learned some in Poland and so he was to listen to Mrs. McIntyre's English and say that in Polish. The priest had told Mrs. McIntyre his name was Rudolph and he was twelve and the girl's name was Sledgewig and she was nine. Sledgewig sounded to Mrs. Shortley like something you would name a bug, or vice versa, as if you named a boy Bollweevil. All of them's last name was something that only they themselves and the priest could pronounce. All she could make out of it was Gobblehook. She and Mrs. McIntyre had been calling them the Gobblehooks all week while they got ready for them...(263).

Mrs. Shortley recalled a newsreel she had seen once of a small room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap, their arms and legs tangled together, a head thrust in here, a head there, a foot, a knee, a part that should have been covered up sticking out, a hand raised clutching nothing. Before you could realize that it was real and take it into your head, the picture changed and a hollow-sounding voice was saying, "Time marches on!" This was the kind of thing that was happening everyday in Europe where they had not advanced as in this country, and watching from her vantage point, Mrs. Shortley had the sudden intuition that the Gobblehooks, like rats with typhoid fleas, could have carried all those murderous ways over the water with them directly to this place. If they had come from where that kind of thing was done to them, who was to say they were not the kind that would also do it to others? The width and breadth of this question nearly shook her. Her stomach trembled as if there had been a slight quake in the heart of the mountain and automatically she moved down from her elevation and went forward to be introduced to them, as if she meant to find out at once what they were capable of (264).

It soon became apparent that Mrs. Shortley's doubt regarding the displaced person increased at about the same pace as Mrs. McIntyre's enthusiasm.

Mrs. McIntyre

had survived. She had survived a succession of tenant farmers and dairymen that the old man himself (her dead husband, the Judge) would have found hard to outdo, and she had been able to meet the constant drain of a tribe of moody unpredictable Negroes, and she had even managed to hold her own against the incidental bloodsuckers, the cattle dealers and lumber men and the buyers and sellers of anything who drove up in pieced-together trucks and honked in the yard.

She stood slightly reared back with her arms folded under her smock and a satisfied expression on her face as she watched the Displaced Person turn off the hose and disappear inside the barn. She was sorry that the poor man had been chased out of Poland and run across Europe and had had to take up in a tenant shack in a strange country, but she had not been responsible for any of this. She had had a hard time herself. She knew what it was to struggle. People ought to have to struggle. Mr. Guisac had probably had everything given to him all the way across Europe and over here. He had probably not had to struggle enough. She had given him a job. She didn't know if he was grateful or not. She didn't know anything about him except that he did the work. The truth was that he was not very real to her yet. He was the kind of miracle that she had seen happen and that she talked about but that she still didn't believe (284).

But Mrs. McIntyre was initially pleased. The Displaced Person was well equipped to handle all the farm machinery. "He was an expert mechanic, a carpenter, and a mason. He was thrifty and energetic. Mrs. McIntyre said she figured he would save her twenty dollars a month on repair bills alone. She said getting him was the best day's work she had ever done in her life" (269).

"That man is my salvation!" she said.

Mrs. Shortley looked straight ahead as if her vision penetrated the cane and the hill and pierced through to the other side. "I would suspicion salvation got come from the devil," she said in a slow detached way.

"Now what do you mean by that?" Mrs. McIntyre asked, looking at her sharply.

Mrs. Shortley wagged her head but would not say anything else. The fact was she had nothing else to say for this intuition had only at that instant come to her. She had never given much thought to the devil for she felt that religion was essentially for those people who didn't have the brains to avoid evil without it. For people like herself, for people of gumption, it was a social occasion providing the opportunity to sing; but if she had ever given it much thought, she would have considered the devil the head of it and God the hanger-on. With the coming of these displaced people, she was obliged to give new thought to a good many things (270-271).

Mrs. Shortley grew to hate the Pole. "She wondered whether if the Pole found Chancey's still, he would know what it was. The trouble with these people was, you couldn't tell what they knew. Every time Mr. Guisac smiled, Europe stretched out in Mrs. Shortley's imagination, mysterious and evil, the devil's experiment station" (272).

She had said earlier to Mr. Shortley, "'She says it's ten million more like them, Displaced Persons, she says that there priest can get her all she wants'" (268).

And with the priest's continuing visits, Mrs. Shortley began "to read her Bible with a new attention... She saw plainly that the meaning of the world was a mystery that had been planned and she was not surprised to suspect that she had a special part in the plan because she was strong. She saw that the Lord God Almighty had created the strong people to do what had to be done and she felt that she would be ready when she was called. Right now she felt that her



business was to watch the priest" (276).

One day when Mrs. McIntyre told the priest that she could no longer afford to keep the Shortley's on and that she would have to give Mr. Shortley his month's notice, Mrs. Shortley was there to overhear. To avoid the humiliation of being fired, she gathered the family together, and for the rest of the day and most of the night they stuffed the car with their belongings and a crate of chickens and before dawn of the following morning, they drove off "as it began to drizzle rain" (279).

Where are we going?" Mr. Shortley repeated and when she didn't answer again, he turned and looked at her.

Fierce heat seemed to be swelling slowly and fully into her face as if it were welling up now for a final assault. She was sitting in an erect way in spite of the fact that one leg was twisted under her and one knee was almost into her neck, but there was a peculiar lack of light in her icy blue eyes. All the vision in them might have been turned around, looking inside her. She suddenly grabbed Mr. Shortley's elbow and Sarah Mae's foot at the same time and began to tug and pull on them as if she were trying to fit the two extra limbs onto herself.

Mr. Shortley began to curse and quickly stopped the car and Sarah Mae yelled to quit but Mrs. Shortley apparently intended to rearrange the whole car at once. She thrashed forward and backward, clutching everything she could get her hands on and hugging it to herself, Mr. Shortley's head, Sarah Mae's leg, the cat, a wad of white bedding, her own big moon-like knee; then all at once her fierce expression faded into a look of astonishment and her grip on what she had loosened. One of her eyes drew near to the other and seemed to collapse quietly and she was still.

...They didn't know that she had had a great experience or ever been displaced in the world from all that belonged to her (279-280).

Mrs. Shortley died of a stroke. Mr. Guisac continued his work and Mrs. McIntyre was pleased to have somebody who had to work. It was not until she found Sulk with a photograph that Mr. Guisac had given him, that she lost her bearings. The photograph was of a young blonde girl, in a camp for displaced persons in Poland. She was Mr. Guisac's niece, and he was trying to arrange her transport to America. If Sulk would help financially, he could marry her on her arrival. Mrs. McIntyre spoke to Mr. Guisac.

"Mr. Guisac," she said, beginning slowly and then speaking faster until she ended breathless in the middle of a word, "that nigger cannot have a white wife from Europe. You can't talk to a nigger that way. You'll excite him and besides it can't be done. Maybe it can be done in Poland but it can't be done here and you'll have to stop. It's all foolishness. That nigger don't have a grain of sense and you excite..."

"She in camp three year," he said.

"Your cousin," she said in a positive voice, "cannot come over here and marry one of my negroes."

"She sixteen year," he said. "From Poland, Mamma die, pappa die. She wait in camp. Three camp" (288).

Mr. Guisac did not understand Mrs. McIntyre. Mrs. McIntyre said she was not "responsible for the world's misery" (288). And she told the priest on his next visit to the farm that Mr. Guisac didn't fit in. "He doesn't understand how to get on with my niggers and they don't like him. I can't have my niggers run off. And I don't like his attitude. He's not the least grateful for being here" (290). The priest reminded her that he had nowhere to go.

"He didn't have to come in the first place," she repeated, emphasizing each word" (291).

The old man smiled absently. 'He came to redeem us," he said and blandly reached for her hand and shook it and said he must go (291).

When Mr. Shortley returned a few weeks later, Mrs. McIntyre decided to take him back. She decided to give Mr. Guisac his thirty days notice at the beginning of the month, but when the priest didn't return she waited. Mr. Shortley blamed Mr. Guisac for his wife's death. And while Mr. Shortley spoke to Mrs. McIntyre of his resentment towards Mr. Guisac, the priest's concern was for the Polish family. However, she realized that it was her "moral obligation to fire the Pole and that she was shirking it because she found it hard to do" (297). Everybody "in town knew Mr. Shortley's version of her business and...was critical of her conduct" (297).

She could not stand the increasing guilt any longer and on a cold Saturday morning, she started off after breakfast to fire him (297).

Mr. Guisac was lying under the small tractor repairing it. Mr. Shortley had brought around the large tractor and "braked it on a slight incline" behind the small one, "jumped off and turned back toward the shed" (298).

Mrs. McIntyre was looking fixedly at Mr. Guisac's legs lying flat on the ground now. She heard the brake on the large tractor slip and, looking up, she saw it move forward, calculating its own path. Later she remembered that she had seen the Negro jump silently out of the way as if a spring in the earth had released him and that she had seen Mr. Shortley turn his head with incredible slowness and stare silently over his shoulder and that

she had started to shout to the Displaced Person but that she had not. She had felt her eyes and Mr. Shortley's eyes and the Negro's eyes come together in one look that froze them in collusion forever, and she had heard the little noise the Pole made as the tractor wheel broke his backbone. The two men ran forward to help and she fainted (298).

That evening Mr. Shortley left without notice to look for a new position and the Negro, Sulk, was taken with a sudden desire to see more of the world and set off for the southern part of the state. The old man Astor could not work without company. Mrs. McIntyre hardly noticed that she had no help left for she came down with a nervous affliction and had to go to the hospital. When she came back, she saw that the place would be too much for her to run now and she turned her cows over to a professional auctioneer (who sold them at a loss) and retired to live on what she had, while she tried to save her declining health. A numbness developed in one of her legs and her hands and head began to jiggle and eventually she had to stay in bed all the time with only a colored woman to wait on her. Her eyesight grew steadily worse and she lost her voice altogether. Not many people remembered to come out to the country to see her except the old priest. He came regularly once a week with a bag of breadcrumbs, and after he had fed these to the peacock, he would come in and sit by the side of her bed and explain the doctrines of the Church (299).

Flannery O'Connor's stories explode the consciousness of everyday life into the nightmarish world of the grotesque. Through her dark images the unconscious is revealed. O'Connor says,

The writer's gaze has to extend beyond the surface, beyond mere problems, until it touches the realm of mystery which is the concern of prophets. True prophecy in the novelist's case is a matter of seeing near things with their extensions of meaning and thus of seeing far things close up (Feeley:172).

And when she was asked why she drew such grotesque characters, she said,

(b)ecause we can still recognize one. In the South, where most people still believe in original sin, our sense of evil is still just strong enough to make us skeptical about most modern solutions, no matter how long we embrace them. We are still held by a sense of mystery, however much against our will. The prophet-freaks of Southern literature are not images of man in the street. They are images of man forced out to meet the extremes of his own nature. The writer owes a great debt to everything he sees around him, and in Georgia he is particularly blessed in having about him a collection of goods and evils which are intensely stimulating to the imagination (Mueller:44).

O'Connor focuses on the distorted vision of her characters. In The Displaced Person, Mrs. Shortley is a false prophet. She sees evil projected onto the screen of Europe and is blind to the evil embedded into her own landscape. She sees its infiltration but misses its focus. All her projections go out to Mr. Guisac and "its ten million more like them" (O'Connor:268). Thus, her intuitive sense, marred with rage and fear, in which she sees herself tied to nature, to the earth, a symbol of a powerful maternal force, is dislocated and displaced. Her repeated memory and vision of a "room piled high with bodies of dead naked people all in a heap" (264), the embodiment of the evils of Europe, becomes, ironically, the way in which she, herself, dies, struggling against death by grabbing at anything she can: "Mr. Shortley's head, Sarah Mae's leg, the cat, a wad of white bedding, her own big moon-like knee" (280). She dies and sees and becomes displaced. Her death is comic and pathetic.

O'Connor juxtaposes these grotesque images, not always without humour, to confront our own distorted visions of ourselves. We have glimpses that spring from the unconscious, but they often lead us to mistaken conclusions because our consciousness is too myopic, too arrogant and too trivial to accept the evils within. "She justifies her grotesque method to express a religious subject when she observes that 'to the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost blind you draw large and startling figures'" (Martin:163), to an audience too frightened to face the grotesque within themselves.

Mrs. McIntyre, preoccupied with money, possessions, status and a trite morality, has the opportunity to be redeemed by the Pole. The priest knew this when he said that Mr. Guisac had come to "redeem us." But Mrs. McIntyre's response to these conversations with the priest was summed up when she said, "'As far as I'm concerned"... and glared at him fiercely, "Christ was just another D.P.'" (O'Connor:294). She colludes with Mr. Shortley and Sulk in Mr. Guisac's death. And she too, becomes displaced. The farm is lost, the cattle auctioned and her health deteriorates. The grotesque manifests itself in her physical disintegration.

There is much more to say about this story and O'Connor's stories in general. The unconscious, unexpected, hidden motivations in her characters are revealed and the

consequences of actions are often tragic. The weight of responsibility and freedom in human life and its relationship to the limitations of consciousness is a theme that is played over and over again.

O'Connor was not at all sympathetic to Freud. She did not conceptualize the unconscious in her writings. She was a strong Roman Catholic, who believed that grace, redemption and salvation were the basic life issues within the Christian context. At the same time, she wrote stories that recognized the power of the unconscious, as Freud would see it, and like Freud, she was not concerned with people's conversion to happiness and well-being. She wrote about suffering, distorted vision and the human spirit. She dealt with the limitations of conscious knowing and the movement within the unconscious that pushed towards a resolution of these limitations, a resolution that would break the chain of consciousness into a new understanding of the self. These new understandings were usually not cognitive. They were transformations, sometimes in death, sometimes symptomized in illness, displacement, loss and confusion. And often the transformations were tragic. Nonetheless, they occurred. In *The Displaced Person*, only the priest and the peacock remained unchanged. The Pole was sacrificed as a Christ figure and the revolving community was transformed into displacement. The Peacock and Priest, both symbols of Christ, remain in the midst at the beginning and the end.

The unconscious is not interested in morality, judgment or justice. The unconscious is a corrective for the limitations of consciousness. We die with the disease that has enabled us to live, precisely in the style we have chosen (Booth:1974). The symptoms of our disease provide an opportunity to know ourselves. If we accept this opportunity, we may begin to see again, to open our vision. If we refuse the opportunity, it is presented to us anyway, only in ways that remain unknown to our conscious selves. Either way, we learn to know "the place for the first time" (Eliot:48).



## CONCLUSION

Subjective and Biographical Knowing

I have attempted, in this paper, to lift out some of the dynamics related to the process of subjective and biographical knowing. Knowing, in distinction to knowledge, is always in process, in movement. Knowledge is the culmination at the end of the process, although this is at best a weak distinction. One could say that knowledge occurs at those points when one reflects back on the sets of dynamics that have occurred during a journey. The journey itself is the process of knowing. Knowledge could be seen then as a crystalization of the process, the articulation of it from a distance. Knowledge is what you do with your knowing. It is the form that is given to it during a pause in the process. It is the conscious articulation of our living engagement with life in its particularities.

I have said that all knowing is subjective. It is the living out of our stories in relationship to our own family and cultural history within a given space and time. In another sense, knowing is timeless and spaceless. Memory, dreams and fantasies are not limited to time and space. They are lifted out of it. All knowing is biographical because who we are is expressed in how we know, what we know and with whom we know. We tell our stories with our words and actions, thoughts and beliefs, feelings and fantasies.

These dynamics are wedded to one another and to the complexities of life around us.

I have been exploring story and prose, journal fragments and poetry to express this process of knowing. Knowing occurs in therapy through the telling of one's story, through the silence and through the repression of one's story. What is unsaid is always as important as what is said. The story is incomplete. Our stories are always incomplete for we only speak through consciousness, through limited and distorted vision. Yet we learn through pain, confusion, despair, anguish, rage and depression to see ourselves differently, not completely, but differently. This, in itself, is a transformation.

Knowing occurs in the imagination of childhood. We learn the richness of symbols and the interweaving web of human life. In the beginnings of our lives, there is no dichotomizing. There are differences that are played with and reality is everything perceived and felt and heard and dreamed. There are monsters and witches and princes and kings. There are picnics and palaces, lakes and dragons, flowers and caterpillars, friends and enemies, homes and secret hiding places. Reality is myth and myth is reality and if my world is not like your world, then there is mystery always at the centre of everything. But that mystery often grows into fear. And that fear is often repressed and projected.

Knowing occurs in our own wanderings, the internal rumblings of the soul, trying to speak, acting without our knowing, moving against our own control at times. In intellectual life, knowing must be faithful to this process; it must be compelling and impassioned as well as precise and disciplined. It involves a fidelity to ourselves in tension and harmony with our world. It involves the willingness to embrace the evils within, the courage to see, the courage to be all that we are, knowing that we can never see with clear vision. To be at risk with ourselves is inherent in the process of knowing.

Both Wiesel and O'Connor exemplify the unconscious in their stories. They speak of blindness in the midst of knowing. They speak of not knowing. They speak of the volcanic power of the unconscious, the soul, that which we do not know, that which we are afraid to know. Freud also spoke of this in his writings. He knew the power of the unconscious and the pain of seeing it. He knew that the symptoms of our disease held the potential for health, for seeing and knowing ourselves "for the first time."

Knowing is embedded in one's own biography. It commands us to be faithful to who we are. We are filled with dreams, hopes and desires. We are filled with rage, fears and despair. If love emerges out of the chaos of these passions, it comes as a gift. And when love and knowing merge, it is only a moment of transcendence in a long

journey in which we strive to be caring human beings (MacIsaac:97).

I have tried to show in each chapter of the thesis some of the dynamics in the process of subjective and biographical knowing. There are limitations to this approach. It is more a lateral exploration of the topic than a linear one. Therefore, it is more elaborative than definitive. It raises questions and is less concerned with an analytic understanding of the process. It is circular and paradoxical/7/ in its images and presents these images more as metaphor than explanation. This kind of circumspection leaves many spaces in between the connections. I am just as aware of the spaces in the web as I am of the threads that attempt to weave it together.

It is for this reason that I include in my consulted works other authors who have moved into parts of this material with much more analysis than I have attempted to do. The literature pertaining to, what one might call, the end of the age of conscious reason is becoming increasingly abundant in many fields of endeavour. I include a handful of these authors in the works consulted. New ways of understanding knowing and knowledge represent a new wave at the end of the twentieth century. We are only beginning to ask new questions, and only beginning to know how to formulate the questions we need to ask.

## END NOTES

- 1 Subjective and biographical are not synonymous. Subjective refers to the experiencing of the self which encompasses bodily sensations, thoughts, feelings, fantasies and dreams. The subjective is all the subject embodies both consciously and unconsciously. For example, one might scratch one's nose during a meeting and be unaware of doing so. One might have a dream and not remember it. These activities are still part of the subjective self. Biographical broadens the subjective through time. It embraces the past and present and their patterns that stretch themselves like tentacles into the future. It represents the self in context and in history. Biography always moves beyond the immediate. It also includes conscious and unconscious activity: the repressed parts of one's story conceal and protect the underside of one's biography.
  
- 2 The process of subjective knowing does not exclude the objective. All knowing is both subjective and objective. It is a dialogical process. The experiences of the self are subjective. They refer to the subject experiencing. The screening, sensing, categorizing and verbalizing of these experiences are both conscious and unconscious. As these experiences are expressed they move toward the objective. The objective is considered to be a cultural truth, the consensus of many subjects. The articulation of the subjective is not idiosyncratic if culturally acknowledged as fact or truth. Objective truth is culturally defined reality. For example, "cat" defines a particular species of animal with certain observable characteristics. At the same time, each cat is different in some way. But one's subjective experience of the word "cat" might bring several different associations, other than the standard use of the word. One's subjective experience might include allergies, a specific predisposition to like or dislike the texture of the fur, preference for colour, size and personality. "Cat" may have an immediate association to larger wild cats, such as the tiger, leopard, etc. There is a superstition of black cats of which one may be aware. This superstition may or may not be taken seriously. Consequently, the word "cat" is filled with idiosyncratic references, some conscious, some unconscious. These references lead to one's subjective experience of the word "cat." It is in this way that knowing is subjective. Let me give a second example. I experience feeling hot. My skin is damp with perspiration. I have a nasal discharge. My eyes

are sore and red. My head feels heavy. I conclude that I have a cold. If I see a physician and she corroborates the evaluation of my symptoms, then I can conclude with more certainty that I have a cold. However, this specific bacteria or virus surrounds me most of the time. What, then, are the circumstances that lead me to develop these symptoms at this particular time and place? This kind of question is being asked by researchers in the area of psychosomatic medicine. It is well documented that the personality of the individual and the points of stress that surround the person can be related to the onset of the symptoms of disease. It is also known that each person is predisposed to particular disease patterns related to her own personality development. Freud found this to be true in the area of hysteria. Thus, we are no longer simply dealing with the objective information that certain symptoms can be accurately diagnosed. We are asking questions pertaining to the subjective experience of the patient both in her conscious and unconscious life. This movement into the subjective is the concern of this thesis. It does not, nor cannot, exclude the objective, but rather the focus is on the subjective network of life: the body, the soul, conscious and unconscious activity as it is being experienced, expressed or repressed.

- 3 Although I agree with Jacoby in his criticism of contemporary therapy, I do not agree with his criticism of the subjective. He believes that the subjective should be couched in terms of the objective. In other words, the subjective should be overridden by the objective. I do not believe this needs to be the case. A paradoxical approach implies that polarities exist in tension. At the same time, these polarities are always embedded within each other. Therefore, there is no need for the subjective to be ruled by the objective or visa versa. They simply exist beside and within one another and such a complementarity should simply be acknowledged.
- 4 Such a broad understanding of therapy implies the potential for therapy as a healing of a dichotomous world view or a mending of splits. When we live dichotomously, we perceive ourselves as either, or. We are either sick or well, good or bad, strong or weak, masculine or feminine, rational or irrational and so on. This kind of conceptualizing perpetrates disengagement from one side or the other. When we are broken in this way, we are only half present to life. This semi-presence disengages us with our world. It is alienation. Therapy, when it is viewed as a mending of

splits, is based on the premise of facilitating a re-union with the world and with ourselves. It is a move back to the subjective and away from an objectification of ourselves and of reality. But, therapy does not exclude the objective anymore than the subjective is exclusive of the objective. Therapy pushes towards a paradoxical relationship between subject and object. Each is embedded in the other. When therapy is viewed as a mending of splits, it presupposes, as an example, the idea of original sin, that we are all split and alienated from ourselves. It is not just the "sick" among us that are in need of therapy. We are all in need of therapy and not only in the traditional sense of the word. Therapy could be substituted for grace, redemption, forgiveness. Its purpose is as much an acknowledgement of our alienation as it is the thrust towards reunion. For reunion is an "ideal," a practical impossibility. But the acknowledgment of alienation implies that we accept our humanness and this acknowledgment demands that we "know ourselves" as we are. Paradoxically, when we acknowledge our alienation, the potential for moments of re-union are created.

5 Here again, this position that challenges the objective continues to presuppose the interrelationship of subject and object. I am only challenging the idea that the objective has not taken this relationship seriously enough and this has resulted in a diminution of the subjective.

6 My first contact with journal writing in this context was five years ago in a Religious Studies Course. Thereafter, I encountered other courses with journal requirements.

I am not including, in this thesis, other kinds of journals, such as a business journal or a captain's log. The word "journal" is a broad term which includes a variety of styles, forms and contexts.

7 The concept of paradox is difficult to conceptualize within a dichotomous framework. It requires that we replace the framework, the glasses with which we view ourselves and the world. Paradox embraces opposites and inconsistencies. It allows them to remain as they are. For example, knowing also implies that we do not know. This implication presupposes that the unconscious holds within it our "not knowing," or that which we resist from knowing. "Not knowing" does not imply ignorance. It only implies the existence and power of the unconscious and our need to repress certain knowledge

about ourselves because this knowledge is too painful to bear. Therefore, ignorance is only the unwillingness to acknowledge our "not knowing." However, in order to acknowledge our "not knowing," we must first accept the concept of paradox: that knowing and not knowing can co-exist simultaneously. In this one example, one can begin to grasp the circular nature of paradox. Paradox, is non-linear. It folds into itself. It incorporates rather than isolates and separates phenomena. It allows apparent contradictions to exist side by side.



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