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MEMORIES OF
CHILDHOOD

Cry It Out

The following is the memory of a vivid memory I had many years ago.

As a young adult I had a vivid almost lived memory as follows: I am lying on my back, unable to move alone. The loneliness is cosmic and feels permanent. There is no sense of personal identity or of embodiment. There is a sense of pervading life in a glittering firmament of stars. However, this ocean of life (that I was enveloped by), was devoid of feeling and emotion, and was impartial and indifferent.

As an infant I would not have recognized any of the objects in the room and in fact, young infants can't focus their eyes well. I would not have understood what was going on. There would have been no context at all and nothing to compare it to.

Many years later my mother told me that when I was an infant, she would swaddle me and leave me alone, lying face up. She wanted to do the right thing as a mother as she had read in Dr. Benjamin Spock's book which advised letting the baby cry without touching or comforting it. This would train the baby to go to sleep without fussing. So, she let me cry. She would stand outside the door, herself crying and let me cry. She wanted to comfort me but forced herself not to. Finally, after a while, of course, I would stop crying.

In a sense, I taught myself to not react to the deep, pervasive, endless sense of abandonment and just, stay. You could say that I learned to meditate as an infant. Perhaps, none of the above was how I understood it to be and was only how my rational mind has put it together.

In 1946 Dr. Benjamin Spock published his first edition of *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*. His 7th edition was published in 1998. Parents of many generations parented following his advice; we know this because throughout the 52 years that it was published it was the second bestselling book next to the Bible. In the 1976 edition, Dr. Spock's advice is basically the "cry it out" method.

"The cure is simple; put the baby to bed at a reasonable hour, say goodnight affectionately but firmly, walk out of the room, and don't go back. Most babies who have developed this pattern cry furiously for 20 or 30 minutes the first night, and then when they see that nothing happens, they suddenly fall asleep. The second night the crying is apt to last 10 minutes. The third night there usually isn't any at all."

This technique was originally offered by Dr. Emmett Holt as far back as 1895 and was called the Cry It Out (CIO) approach. Many know it as the Ferber Method as it was later promoted by Dr. Richard Ferber.

A new study published in *Pediatrics Magazine* concludes, "...strategies that let babies cry it out for

limited periods while teaching them to sleep on their own can help families sleep better in the short term without causing long term psychological damage in kids or weakening the bond between babies and parents.”

In this technique, the baby is put down to sleep. When she cries, the parent lets her cry for a few minutes, picks her up, comforts her, then puts her back down to sleep again. This process happens repeatedly for a while. Gradually, the child learns to comfort herself. This seems to be the current favored method.

I wonder if the psychic bond to my mother was broken or damaged by this experience. It might explain why for much of my life, I have not looked to others for help, but mostly tried to rely on myself. And it might explain why I never developed a deep love for her. Even now, though she is deceased, I rarely think about her. She, on the other hand, loved me a great deal and I knew that, but was unable to feel it emotionally, and I did not love her back. I wonder how many children have gone through the same experience. Please understand that all the above is theory.

Invisible Mouse Friend

(My mother told me this story.) As a child of 3-years-old, I had an invisible mouse as a friend. The sink in the bathroom was old fashioned and too high for a three-year-old to reach. My mother would lift me up to it so I could wash my face. One day a “mouse” came out of the drain and stayed as my constant companion for about a year. In my bedroom I would tell my mother not to sit on the chair because the mouse was there. It had a name, which is long forgotten. One day about a year later, as I was lifted to the same sink, the mouse went down the drain, never to return.

Holes

When I was a boy of 10, I had an overpowering fascination with what might be below the ground. I imagined there to be great adventure and mystery inside the Earth, and that if I kept digging and did not give up, whatever might happen, I would come out the other side. I would emerge from the ground in China, where people spoke a strange language, and wore different clothes and had unusual customs. Would everything be upside-down? It seemed logical that it should at the time. I knew that could not be right. Some fuzzy thinking going on there.

This musing lead to hole digging. Imagine my father's puzzlement when he saw his backyard pockmarked with half dug holes resembling the craters on the moon. You see, although my resolve to dig deep was great, each time I began to dig I would get to hard, rocky ground after a foot or so and would give up to try again in a new spot in hopes of finding softer digging. Of course, he put a stop to my efforts.

Undaunted, I mobilized three other boys on the block, and we began what turned out to be an ambitious digging project in one of their backyards. I do not remember what it took to convince the other boys to throw in with me, but it probably did not take much as boys will do a lot of mischief for no good reason at all. We made good progress

through the clay layer and the ground was softer in this yard. The digging went on for a few days and the hole got deep, way deeper than the height of a boy. We used a bucket attached to a rope that the boy in the hole would fill up. The boys on top would haul it out and dump the soil, then lower the bucket again.

As luck would have it, some hecklers appeared and stood at the border of the property, verbally abusing us. They taunted us and threatened to wreck our project when we left on one of the days. When they were gone, we carefully covered our work with sticks, leaves, and dirt to hide the hole. One of these boys did come back in the evening, fell in the hole, and broke his collarbone. At that point we were forced to fill in the hole. Thus ended my ill-starred preoccupation with hole digging.

Stink Bomb

When I was a young boy of nine, I would visit my friend, Danny Dank from time to time. He was a few years older, a genius and an albino, of all things. I was convinced that he knew pretty much everything. We lived near a forest and sometimes Danny would take me there on a walk and explain its mysteries to me. I remember being in awe at these experiences.

Danny had a chemistry set in his basement and would show me the wonders to be experienced by combining different colored and textured substances. We used to experiment with making small “stink bombs.” We would wrap a bit of sulfur in paper, twist it up and light it. Profuse smoke would then billow around us, releasing a most obnoxious odor.

If you do not know about sulfur, it is a yellowish rock which can be obtained in powder form. It is sold in hardware stores in the form of a candle, which when lit will rid the house of insects and rodents. Spiritualists use it to rid an area of spirits. Actually, the smell is so obnoxious it will rid any area of anything. Years later, a close friend made me breathe it in to cure the flu. That turned out to be a bad idea.

One day, Danny devised a plan to play a trick on his parents. We light a large stink bomb in the basement. The whole house fills up with the nauseating thick smoke. While that is happening,

we escape from the house unseen. We climb up the duct work into the crawl space above the first floor, which was high enough to stand in. From there, we make our way onto the roof and then escape.

Returning later, with innocent expressions on our faces, we then tell them that we had nothing to do with the incident. And, of course, his parents would have no idea that we had done the foul deed. The plan seemed foolproof.

Everything was going according to plan. We lit the stink bomb in the basement, made our way into the crawlspace and began walking from rafter to rafter. We had to keep silent because the parents were right under us. Nervous and in too much of a hurry, I slipped off one of the rafters coming down with full weight between the rafters. The ceiling caved in and I tumbled down, landing on my back on the floor in the hallway, along with a cascade of plaster and dust. Surprisingly, I was not hurt at all. I think children must be made of rubber. I looked up to see Danny's father standing right over me. Scrambling to my feet, I ran out of the house without saying a word. After that, I was totally embarrassed and put the incident out of my mind as soon as I could and never went back there again. Danny's father was a kindly person and never told my dad. Anyway, he probably realized Danny was the responsible one in this case.

Buzzing Sound

I was a young child less than 10-years-old. In the evening when it was time for bed, I had to make a terrifying passage from the living room through a long dark hallway to the bedroom. I ran as fast as I was able, jumped into bed, there to face another terror. I sensed presences at the juncture of wall and ceiling.

I was being watched. This feeling was intensified by a buzzing sound with no discernible source. I would hide under the covers and finally fall into sleep.

It occurs to me now that the presences were likely friendly and might have helped me if I had been open to them.

Seeing Through Walls

I remember sitting in Miss Murkin's fourth grade class in Cherry Hill School in River Edge, N.J. I stared hard at one of the walls with the strong desire to see through it. I was certain that if I did it intensely enough that it could be done. This practice waned after a while and the failure may have blunted my fierce spirit somewhat.

Sometimes, I remember that experience of so many years ago when practicing wall staring, which I periodically do at a Japanese Zen Buddhist temple. It is an open eye meditation practice. One sits facing a wall staring at it.

Swim Instruction Class

Sometimes I do not know when to give up.

When I was 11 years old, I was going through swim instruction at a local outdoor pool. The instructor dropped a lead belt into the deep part of the pool by the diving boards. In turn, each of the boys jumped in the water, went to the bottom, retrieved the weight, and swam back to the surface with it.

My turn came. I swam to the bottom of the pool, grabbed the weight, and started back for the surface, but no matter how hard I tried I was only able to get back half-way. I was completely intent on bringing the weight to the surface, but I was a scrawny kid and it was not happening. I ran out of breath but refused to give up.

I would still be down there today, if the instructor had not reached down into the water, grabbed me by the shoulder and hauled me out of the water.

This is how I was for many years and still am to some extent. My motto has always been “anything worth doing is worth overdoing”. Maybe not always a good idea.

The First Time

The first time I noticed that my mind was out of control occurred while practicing the piano. I was 14 years old. I was playing a reconditioned 1920 baby grand Steinway.

I was playing a classical piece. But I could not get to the end of the first line and stay focused on the music. Thoughts were all over the place. So, I stopped and began again. This went on many times, but I was not able to quiet my mind so that I could hear the music without being drowned out by loud thoughts. I remember thinking “what is the point of playing music if I don’t hear it.”

It is curious that I had a highly active mind at the very beginnings of my intellectual life. And it is also clear that I had learned something very important so young. However, not much came of it, as I had no idea what to do about it. Gradually, I forgot what I had learned about the importance of focusing to attain a quieted mind, as the realization was quickly covered up by (my) overactive mind.

This was in the early 60’s and meditation was not yet part of the general culture.

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ADOLESCENCE
&
ADULTHOOD

Surrealistic Writings

Mind Caves

I lie on the floor of the mind caves
where time is enslaved
and desire drips from the walls.
I rise and search the tunnels for clarity
But only encounter the demons of my aching
lonely inner world.
Like a lean and hungry lone wolf
I match my prowess against each looming horror.
But the tunnels change form and confound me
and new demons always appear.

A long time past, I had been happy.
I have tried to go back, but with no luck.
Obsessive memory traps me and blocks my path
forward with a brutal morass of confusion and
of dark-spirited dreams and illusions.
I view myself with contempt
Infested as I am
with parasitic monsters of my own creation
who nourish on my fear.

I lie on the floor of the mind caves
where time is enslaved
and desire drips from the walls.
The world of my creation is the dreaming of my
sleep.
Lost, though I am, I will not have new and brighter
dreams.
More than anything I crave clarity.

I, tragic self, must awaken and heed these wise
words,
Dream no more.
Have no dreams.

Oak Tree

I once knew peace in a forest as an oak tree.

Retreating from worldly pain,

deep into the source of my strength,

there I abided alone.

My tree eyes closed, and a great oldness soothed
me.

Old Woman

I was in the habit of going to the ocean at night to play the violin. Usually, I was alone, but this time I perceived an old woman seated on a hard-backed chair facing the water. The tide was coming in around her, but she did not appear to notice. She was carving her finger into a tiny figure with a razor-sharp knife. She did not appear to be in pain and her face was expressionless. Her other nine fingers had already been made into human figures.

When we were done communing, I was filled with an eerie feeling. She, then, continued whittling her tenth finger and, gradually, I recognized the figure as myself.

As I was walking away, I watched the incoming tide receive her with leaps and bounds.

The Surreal Baby Farm

I went to see Marga who had a baby farm. She would insist to everyone she met that the dawn made her babies grow. The farm was on the shore where the land is flat. I chose a baby and Marga dug it up, put it in a big flowerpot and told me to put it on the windowsill so that the light would hit it.

At home I placed it in the closet for the night with the intention of putting it on the windowsill in the morning, as instructed. However, I forgot. It was left in the closet.

Scorpion Love

Eight-Legged Treachery

Am I not handsome in your eyes?
Does not my voice echo soothingly sweet?
Do you not sense the odor of desire all about me
like a shroud?
If so, no longer hold yourself at a distance,
For no male has yet existed,
Who would not want to know the pleasure of
intimately knowing me?

Do not believe the evil slander concerning me.
I did not kill and eat your brothers, though it is said
that I did.
It is true that I did sting them with my eyes, but not
my mouth.
Surely you can believe that?

And if no one has since seen them do not fault me,
For I wanted you alone.
I was not willing to be content with less.

Am I to be condemned for being me?
Surely, the mother who bore and nurtured you was
not so unlike me,
That you could not draw near to receive my love.

I Had a Dream

I had a dream. I was walking past a naked middle-aged man sitting on a wooden straight-backed chair. There were chunks of flesh missing from different places all over his body.

I politely enquired how he got to be that way. His response was as follows: While staring straight ahead, he calmly produced a razor-sharp blade, impassively sliced a thin strip of flesh from the top of his thigh and ate it.

Hell Mind States

Deep Dark Pit

In my 30's and 40's I felt like I was in a deep, round pit, psychologically. It was a place with no light. The walls were smooth and hard. There were no hand holds and there was nothing in the pit at all, so there was no way to fashion a tool to assist me to climb out of there.

Interesting enough my meditation teacher had the image of me being underground. I went to see a shaman and she did a soul retrieval during which she found my soul in a cave.

Little Mean Man with Knives

When in my 20's I suffered intense psychological torment that was physically painful. The pain brought up a vivid image of a small, squat man with a mean face and eyes, who was inside my torso. He was holding a razor-sharp knife in each hand. He slashed at my innards in a random malicious way.

Fun fact: On MRI, psychological pain “lights” up the same areas of the brain as does physical pain.

Giant Jigsaw Puzzle

When in my 30's there was a vivid image that my life was like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Picture a building, say in the Chicago Loop, which is a block long and about five stories tall as the puzzle's size. There is an immense pile of jigsaw pieces. Several pieces have successfully been placed in the lower left corner and a few pieces here and there have been put in wrong. Most of it is blank.

It would be easy to despair, as the puzzle is my life. But what real choice is there? One must carry on.

Pushing an Ocean Liner

Swimming in the middle of the ocean, I am pushing the bow of a huge ocean liner from left to right in an attempt to change its course, as it is on a path that will lead to its certain destruction.

I realize that with continuous effort it will be moved perhaps a few inches per year, as it is so large, and I am so very small. The ship is my life.

Walls of Thought

We are all the same
differing only in particulars.

We are in conflict
conditioned and fragmented.

We are caged by walls of thought
stronger than steel, reinforced concrete.

Is it possible to live unconditioned, integrated, and
non-conflicted?

These images are formed of thought.

Awakenings

An Out of Body Experience

For months I had been filling my head with stories of mystics and wise men who had wonderful spiritual experiences. My favorite was Sri Ramakrishna. He was a Hindu saint who lived in the mid 1900's. He had an extraordinary inner life, the experiences of which seemed to be inaccessible for the rest of us. My thinking was that he was a human and so was I. Theoretically, I should be able to accomplish anything that he could. Thus, thinks a 19-year-old.

Therefore, one night I swore to myself a solemn oath. I would sit in meditation double-cross-legged style like a Hindu Yogi and would not quit the posture until I had had a direct spiritual experience. This was my 1st attempt at meditation. Since this was the first time I had sat in full lotus position, I soon had pain in the legs. Gradually it encompassed the whole body and became severe and unremitting. Not willing to renege on the oath, I passed hours in agony. The pain felt like hot blood oozing out of every pore, slowly rolling down my motionless body.

Spurred by the pain, I dove into the inner self, looking for a way out. I prayed to be out-of-body and imagined myself up in the atmosphere. At that, I was catapulted with great speed through the top of my head, up through the roof and into the air, where there was easy freedom with no body and no pain, then quickly found myself back in the pain-wracked body. This process repeated many times. Had I had

inner training, I would have stayed out-of-body and gone exploring.

For hours I was caught in a circular loop of thought keeping me in the activity. When I finally realized that I had had a direct spiritual experience, I ended the session. I had fulfilled the oath by proving that the soul is independent of the physical body since I had come out of it.

I had disproved my parents' soul crushing belief that there is no God, and that people are not spirit beings and do not continue after death.

Apparently, directed bungling can sometimes bring a good result.

Spirit Mother

One unforgettable Thanksgiving night when I was 17, I had to figure out how to gain control of my out of control acid-laced, freaking out nervous system. My first impulse had been to run down Fargo Street in Chicago towards Lake Michigan. My intention was to throw myself into it. There was no rational reason behind this, only that the lake was attracting me to it. I was so high that it felt like I was moving in slow motion through a thick substance and my feet were not touching the ground. I became frightened as it seemed obvious to me that I looked abnormal, and that I would be picked up by the police. So, I went back to my apartment and lay supine in bed, meditating to save my life. My arms and legs were twitching spontaneously. My brain felt like it was lit up with electricity, like in cartoons. It took a while but gradually with tremendous focus I brought the mind to an extraordinary state of clarity. Gradually, my body relaxed and thus began an extraordinary night.

It should be mentioned that I had spent the previous five months meditating and praying most of the time.

Lying immobile on my back, I continued prayer and meditation. A spirit came to me with a mother energy. Although I could not see her, I knew she

was hovering in the air above my feet. I felt “liquid love” with the consistency of oil flow into my chest from her chest.

In the morning, Spirit Mother oversaw my shower. I felt as if I was her young child. She watched over me as I dressed, noticing as I started to put on mismatched socks. She was with me when I went for a piano lesson and played a piece the way I would have played had I been a little kid. I felt like a child. It was like this all day. On the bus home, we communed with mutual love passing back and forth between us. In the late afternoon, I lay down to sleep and when I awoke, she had gone.

Creation Witnessed

How many people have wondered about creation? I had spent many hours pondering this question. One night it was given to me to witness creation taking place.

While deep in prayer, I came out of the body and witnessed mountains of matter tumbling out of an abyss. It kept coming in a magnificent, wild chaos, crashing all around and at me. The noise was unbelievably loud and continuous, like colliding worlds. There was a momentary numbing fear, but as I was not crushed or buried and the matter went through me without harm done, the fear passed and gave way to wonderment.

My hypothesis is that this is the raw material used by Will-Beings to fashion the forms of physical reality. It is an ongoing process. All That Is takes on form, persists for an instant, is destroyed, then is created anew.

River of Lights

Unceasingly, thoughts stream out from the mind like water gushing out of a spring or fountain. Most of the time, we go along with the outward direction of flow, but did you ever go against the current of thought and try to trace it back to its source? One night, I did just that and came out the other side in a different world of no time. It was Thanksgiving evening, 1969.

Spurred by intense loneliness and by the overwhelming need to go to the root of reality, I wanted to know how the human race is a family, albeit a dysfunctional one. I imagined all humans to be as nonmaterial living lights, which were not contained or affected by matter. For hours, I lay motionless in bed praying to see how this is true, as my inner self told me it was. I imagined multitudes of the cube-shaped apartments common to the densely populated city I then lived in. At this time, I lived in an apartment on Fargo Street in Rogers Park, Chicago. Gradually, the walls, floors, and ceilings dissolved, and with rising joy, I realized that we are all connected and are not separated in any meaningful way. Even our physical bodies dissolved, leaving only living lights suspended out of time and space.

I lost awareness of my body. Then, with the speed of thought, I found myself suspended in a black firmament surrounded by utter speechless silence. This was not Earth because sight in any direction was limitless, having no horizon. Below was a vast “river” endlessly visible in every direction. Looking closer, the waters were composed of myriad tiny lights, which moved in a slow unceasing current from an unknown source to an unknown destination. Somehow, I knew each light was an individual soul on its personal adventure of evolution through the universes of reality.

I suddenly became aware that what seemed to be above, behind, and to my right in relation to myself, was a bearded man. His body was covered with a long, white robe made of light. His face had strong, regular features bearing no sign of age and yet he was mature. Nor did his face show any emotion. His most striking features were his eyes, which were filled with “Life.” From them, shown beams of light like laser beams, which projected into the blackness like two searchlights. The man appeared to be “brooding” over the scene below. The scene was starkly silent. I was in awe, having never experienced anything like this before.

Of course, I had no idea where I was or how I had gotten there. It was not until years later that I realized that this being was probably a guide who had brought me to this scene in answer to my

fervent desire to know if we are all connected and if so, how.

Some years later, I read a book in which the writer had quoted from Sikh Scripture within which was a description of what I had observed. The book is called *The Tiger's Fang* by Paul Twitchell.

What Are Thoughts and Dreams Made of?

In my mid 30's, my mind was tortured by painful, out-of-control, thoughts. I often woke at 3 a.m., went into the living room. I sat in a sling chair wrapped in blankets as it always seemed to be cold.

Then I watched the thoughts trying not to react to them and finally after 2-3 hours, the energy changed. The tenseness disappeared and my mind was relaxed. At that point I slipped in and out of a semi-sleep state. The self-aware "I" witnessed how the mind transited into a sleep state as thoughts became more and more cartoony and dreamlike and then as I transited into a wakeful state the dreams gradually became more thought-like. This back-and-forth movement happened repeatedly.

Thoughts are wakeful dreams. Dreams are sleepful thoughts. The difference is one's state of mind. Thoughts and dreams give information and meaning and are made of the same stuff. But, what stuff?

I Died: Sort Of

Many years ago, I was with a group of meditators at a weekend retreat, and we were doing walking meditation. Yes, it is possible to do these two activities simultaneously. Anyway, I was doing it, minding my own business. When suddenly a great sadness came over me as I realized that I had died. I began sobbing. I said goodbye forever to loved ones and to (my) life. Yet, at the same time, I was aware that I was not literally dead and that it was absurd to mourn my own death.

There is an explanation for this. My identity (sense of self) was constructed of thought. Thought created the story of my life, who I was in this world. Everything about me such as my name, my roles, my beliefs, etc. All of that was wiped away when, through meditation, there was no thought. And when there was no thought, there came with it a huge sense of loss. It was in fact a death to the illusion of identity.

Assorted Writings

Cat in a Paper Bag

Did you ever see a cat in a paper bag? The cat thrashes about as if trying to get out but cannot quite manage it. Of course, she knows how to get out and is just having fun.

Similarly, we try to make sense of a confusing, basically unsatisfactory existence, when all along the answer could not be more evident.

Like the Cat, we know better, but pretend not to.

Dream Chiropractor

I visited a chiropractor in a dream. He sat me down with my back to him. I held on to a post for stabilization. Placing one hand against my spine and one hand over my shoulder, he delivered a mighty thrust which released the thoracic spine. I then lay supine on an examining table with abdomen bared. My abdomen had become transparent. A soft diffused light radiated from an unseen source within the interior of my body, making visible all its contents. The effect was similar to the appearance of an aquarium without fish. He and I could see right through the abdomen to the sandy floor of my back, upon which were rock-like objects.

Suddenly, the distinguished dream chiropractor said, "this will never do." Deftly, he ripped off the skin starting from the area of the right groin exposing the abdomen and proceeded to pull out objects from there and fling them over his shoulder. Amongst the debris were bottles, beer cans and rocks. When he was satisfied that all had come out that needed to, he put the skin flap back, told me that he was done and that I could go. When I woke in the morning, I felt fine and there was no scar.

Dust

(To be read aloud)

The dust doth drabble along the wall,
On wooden furniture or metal,
Not to mention in the air.

Each speck a whirling cosmicle,
An altogether unaccountable counticle
Way past beyond canticulating,
Eachly housing interiorly
Within an unfathomababble
Imponderable
Ineffibable speckticle.
Sputterspewing
Multitudes of dustlings into orbit
Which unbeknownst to us
Land audaciously
On and around our persons
And cling tenaciously
Thereto

We us human animals,
Great heaving whirls,
Prisoners of our own ideologies
And tormenting dreams,
We in and out of these seething vesicles
And not mentionable
Of floating flocculent flatulent particles

Consider for a diddle

A dustling poised precipitously
At the side of the edge
Of an unsuspectful object
Like a secret pair of lovers
Panting in the pantry
Without pants or other
Intensely present
In carnal concupiscence.

Are they frightened disheveled scabies
Or adolescent caffeinated comedones?
They are.

What think we when we think on it?
That someone or other
Might be breathing us
Like dangling dust partic(ip)les
Adrift in a celestial airhead

Have You Had Your Non-Sleep Today?

Sleeping is distinctly out of fashion, as it competes with too many other diversions and with work. The fact is, we cannot sleep even if we wanted to. Why not? Read the following partial list of sleep destroyers and find out.

Ambulance sirens, police car sirens, fire engine sirens, loud passerby in the street, pain from injury, illness – fever, headache, stomachache, itch, cough, pain, indigestion. Loud and late returning neighbors, quarreling neighbors. Neighbor gives party – shrill laughter, loud voices, blaring hi-fi. Fear of spirits. Spirits. Fear of the dark, fear that the world may end. Fear of prowlers – therefore checking on every noise. Fear that mice or rats might bite you or the baby. Fear of insects. Insects in the bed or in the room. Strong emotion – grief, joy, fears, anxiety, paranoia, depression, an exciting day. Sick children to care for. Crying babies. Young child resets alarm clock for 3 a.m. Late phone call. Foul odors – gas leaks, cigarette smoke. Uninvited late-night visitors. Violent rain on the roof, furious winds tear at the walls. Thunder. Mating alley cats, loud drunks, angry swearing drunks who charge through the alley knocking over trash cans, motorcyclists who drag up and down the block all night, gunshots, backfiring trucks, carousers in the street. Too cold. Too hot. The air is so dry it hurts the throat. Getting tangled up in the bed covers. Bed partner snores, snorts, babbles, thrashes about with or without kicking, slapping, or landing on top of you. Loud “L” train shakes the building and seemingly goes through the bedroom every 30

minutes. Airplanes. Radiator clicks and clacks. Little furry animals such as squirrels and raccoons jump from overhanging trees onto the roof and scurry about in their work boots. Too much light from streetlamp. Mice run along or in the walls. House cat is wide awake at night (sleeps all day) jumps on you, licks your face, knocks over objects, meows. Noisy bar across the street. Old house has disconcerting sway in high wind. Someone wakes you with bad news or about an emergency. Rain comes in hole in roof. Uncomfortable bed – too hard, too soft, lumpy, sags. Floor is tilted.

This is a basic list but following are some exotic disturbances to which the reader could probably add. Once we were awakened at very late at night by what sounded like exploding bombs. A fanatic religious devotee was dropping flowerpots from the third floor back porch onto the concrete courtyard below as a protest religious apathy. One late night, lightning hit the building at the northwest corner of the roof, dislodged several huge cornerstones sending them crashing to the ground four stories below. Fire leapt from electric sockets, while outside there was a terrific flash of light. I have not been awakened by a flying saucer, but my friend Kimberly often was. Each night in summer she slept on the roof and was awakened by Martians who landed their spacecraft in her yard. She was the self-appointed emissary on behalf of Earth. Late one night, I awoke to see a light on the floor in the closet. It was shaped like a beach ball and was softly undulating. I woke my wife in a low urgent voice, and she sat up straight. “Do you see that light?” I asked. She said “yes,” laid back down and

was instantly asleep. I stayed awake a while enjoying the soothing light, then drifted back to sleep.

According to ancient Sumerian myth (circa 3000 B.C.), Enlil, God of Heaven, sent a flood to exterminate humankind because they made too much noise, which interfered with his rest. One man, Utnapishtim, and one woman, his wife, along with the obligatory pairs of animals were saved in a cube-shaped ark by Ea, the God of Wisdom, who realized that without humans, the gods could not continue to receive offerings.

Apparently, this problem has been way out of control for a long time. All in all, we are a quarrelsome, noisy race and not likely to change anytime soon.

Anyway, have a good night, sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite. – (“Or the crocodiles”, as my daughter used to say).

Hidden Spring

Inside my eyes there was a hidden spring
then
they beheld your thirsty love.

My sorrow washed away in a flood of tears
and
you drank deeply from a hidden spring.

The Large All-White Tripped-Out Tomcat

In the early 1970's, I worked in an occult shop in Chicago called El Sabarum on 2447 North Halsted Street. I opened the store at sunset and closed at 11 pm six days per week. Monday was the off day. We sold candles, incense, essential oils, and herbs.

One day, an all-white cat came into the store for an uninvited visit. He proved to be quite the charmer so after a few visits we became "friends". He would stay for a few days with me in my living area behind the store and then would leave. Every so often he re-appeared at the door of the store at opening for another few day visit.

While the store was open, he would sit under the catnip jar which was high on a shelf. When I had the time, I would sprinkle a handful on the floor behind the counter. He would roll in it, eat it and throw it in the air. From the other side of the counter, one could see the herb flying up in the air from behind the counter without seeing the cat.

At closing we would go into the living area behind the store. Picture the following: A tripped-out all white cat lying on his back in a big white antique clawfoot bathtub with front and back legs splayed in all directions. He was totally motionless except for

his eyeballs which followed the slow drip coming from the bathtub faucet.

One day a man came into the store, noticed my cat, and called him by a different name than the one I had given him. At that point I found out that everyone on the block knew him. He would stay a few days at someone's home, then on to another, etcetera.

Knife

I was putting away the good silverware in its box after a party and noticed that a knife was missing from the set, leaving an empty slot.

I thought to myself that life is just like this. It is never quite right.

Then I found the knife.

Love's War

Come, let us fight in Love's war.
Prove yourself a worthy adversary.
Open wide your gates
And we will do battle in lush fields.
Do not force me to lay siege to your territory.
Do not hold back,
For whoever fights with the most valor takes the
best prize.

After all, this is our heritage.
We are all children of warring lovers.

Mystic Love Affair

(Inspired by Traditional Indian Poetry)

When my Lover was near

 I shaped my soul to complement His contour.

And when we united,

 I longed to disappear beneath the waves of His
body.

The depths within Him were where

 I wandered in joy.

I am still to you as when you left.

 Taking all but my grief.

The unfeeling days mock my waiting.

Lately, I am wishing for oblivion

 for I carry an unbearable ache within.

Yet perhaps you will return.

Gazing through appearances, my once Lover,

Do you not see how my soul has formed of sadness?

Sex and Babies

So long as eyes shall see and lips shall kiss; so long as lust exists, men will impregnate women, and children will be forthcoming. Young fertile women may not want to have a baby. They may only want to make love but as they grow older, they commune with their wombs. The ovaries send telegraph signals to the brain and the heart receives sonar messages from the uterus. Gradually, after many of these top-secret communications, the woman discovers an ache in her belly for a child. She imagines it growing and moving inside of her and longs to bring it into the world.

The question for most people is not whether to have children, even if they think it is. Anyway, a world without children is unthinkable. Rather, the real question is what to do with them after they arrive. Parenting children is a fulfilling endeavor, hopefully, but surely an exhausting, perplexing task. And these days, all of life, is perplexing.

The real issue is not pro-life versus pro-choice. The attraction between the sexes is violent enough to easily overcome any argument or social commentary. Also, the Pill and all other contraceptive devices are of negligible importance in the scheme of things. This is the same force that causes a stallion to go berserk when he senses a

mare in season. The mare will also become violent and may injure herself. The human animal is no different despite an intricate web of social restraints to repress the expression of passion.

Nature has neatly packaged all Her mysteries somewhere in and about a woman's thighs. Men are irresistibly drawn to them and in the end because of them he sacrifices his beloved independence. He mounts her, exhausts himself into her, thus satisfying the tremendous pressure that had built up in his viscera. She becomes pregnant, gives birth. He probably accepts responsibility and almost without meaning to has defined the issues he will deal with for the next twenty plus years; namely that of father, husband, and provider; each of these a demanding endeavor.

It is not fair that men are often criticized as "only wanting a woman for her body". That is the honesty of desire. It is simple and direct. It strives only for union and does not consider the future. This has much significance to people's destiny. Relationships are conceived at the primal level of gut attraction. Intellectual evaluation is thereby undercut. This is the meaning to the saying that "love is blind". Further, love is aligned to the water element because it finds its own level and is uncontainable. So, knowing beforehand the consequences of love would change nothing.

Apparently, there is a primordial unconscious purpose of procreation imbedded in the irresistible urge to mate. One could confidently argue that on Nature's part for the purpose of continuing the race, lust is "the oldest trick in the book" before there were books.

Some Women

Some women enjoy being impaled with a strong thrust.

Love is a battle to them,
in which the vanquished are victorious.
Intense fighting opens wounds of fiery passion in their wombs.

At a touch,
you melt into languidly turning pleasure.
I savor your excellent sweetness on the tip of my tongue.

Entranced and distracted.
I drown twice, once, in my own raging blood
And then, in a gentle sea of swirling pleasure.
All else is forgotten.
Oblivion of delight are you.

The Trick of Life

The trick of life is to transform a bitter world
into a sweet one.

This magical alchemy occurs only in the soul.

As we re-form the self,
the world changes.

Horseman

There is no past or future.

I ride the present moment like a horseman

at a fast gallop through space.

Bewitchment

I have wrestled with my inner nature for as long as I was aware of having one. I do not understand why you, a woman, affect me, a man, so profoundly. There is a litany of parts; fleshy thighs, a heavy bottom, tantalizing vagina, gently curving back, soft belly, jiggly breasts, eyes large and shapely, neck, legs, lips, teeth, tongue. There are lines everywhere that I follow ardently with eye and hand trying to solve your mystery, but I am left with a loop-to-loop that leads nowhere.

When I am with you and when I am not with you, passion blows through me like hot wind, of which you are somehow its object. I scrutinize your body to understand why this is so. You cannot speak but that it is an expression of your womanness. There is nothing about you that does not partake of the very essence of womanness. You are in every way a woman and my passion is never fully resolved, only temporarily assuaged.

Woman, why do I need you?

Why is it that when you will not give yourself to me there is anguish? I whimper quietly like the dog when it is put out for having muddy paws. Why is it that without you I am half insane? Life becomes a well of pain. I hallucinate. My vision is

blurred. I pick up objects for no reason. I go somewhere and do not remember why. Or I stay home and wander mechanically through the rooms. I hear people talking; the meaning of their words escapes me. My sleep is disrupted. I fight the blanket in my troubled dreams. Life proceeds in a fog of misery.

You study your face in the mirror and it is just a face. You hold up your arm and examine the skin for dryness. You groom your hair the way you like it, but it is only hair. You say you are too fat, that the breasts hang. What are you measuring yourself against?

I want to tell you that I cannot find any reason to criticize you. I like your looks, taste, feel, smell, and the sounds you make.

If you could see yourself through my eyes, you would know true bewitchment.

Cat

Young cat poised on the edge of the bathtub
Intently watches the swirling water
With her motor running.

In turn, I study the cat.
Assuredly, there are unseen eyes observing me.
Any child knows that!

Life, you are a shameless voyeur.

Breath

Breath

Born out of nothing in the belly

Wind of life

Moves the inner body like wind moves a sail

With quieted thought and emotion

One goes anywhere

3

MATURITY

Whirlwinds

I, you, are whirlwinds of a sort

formed by swirling energies
which animate detritus from the environment
creating its distinctive appearance

only to sink back into its surroundings when
exhausted.

I, Paul,
think that whirlwinds are illusory.

But Also

Everyone agrees that God is wonderful and praiseworthy, but also:

God, if it is God, is the one designer of how rain hits a puddle and splatters our cloths.

God, if it is God, is a wilted flower, exquisitely still and with its putrid odor.

God, if it is God, is, at times, careless and may knock over the drink. A magnificent explosion of water and glass and temper.

God, if it is God, can be a clumsy dancer. There are often bruises.

God, if it is God, at times embraces devils, glories in their disgusting ways, and is one of them.

God, if it is God, will often say, ‘If my brother gets one, I better get one, and mine better be as big as his.’”

God, if it is God, shamelessly pretends friendship. Speaks badly of you to others.

God, if it is God, is nosy. More than that.
Absolutely uncontainably curious. Be careful!
Trouble is near! Let's open all the boxes!

Do not trust God, if it is God, to hold the baby.
Tragic events do occur. It might drop on its head.
What did the doctor say? Some thoughts are
unthinkable. God, for the most part, is unacceptable.

God, if it is God, debates whether He is lovable. He
wants everyone to think He is what they want Him
to be but is only partially convincing.

God, if it is God, sometimes insists there is no God.
Irony, as well. If there were no God, there would be
no one to say, there is no God.

God, if it is God, is All That Is.

A Walk by a Lake

A man and a woman walk by a lake.

Glistening foamy waves,
lake scents, bird sounds,
bright, round, slow-moving moon above.
Sand crunching underfoot.
Our bare feet making distinctly human footprints in
the sand.

Our ancestors must have walked here in the
achingly deep, long forgotten past.
Archaeologists find their bones and stone
implements
yielding intriguing clues of life then.
Those were the parents of our parents,
extending back in time for a multitude of
generations.

How many uncountable generations of our children
will walk here after we are gone?

We send along our greetings and heartfelt best
wishes
upon the winds of Time
to all who come along in later ages.

As they will experience the same sand and water
and will wonder on the same moon
just as we are doing tonight.

The End of Thought

Confessions of a Recovering Thought Addict

Between night and never,
I watered a plant of sorrow
'til its roots were deep and its branches all-
enfolding.
I tended the plant incessantly,
fed it with desire
and it grew lush in the ground of Being.

Between night and never
I nurtured the image of a bird of prey
with beak, talons, and cruel eyes.
It perched on the plant of sorrow
and tore at my psyche in a kill frenzy.
Its name was Thought.

You, Thought, are the bones of fear,
the ligaments of grief,
the very flesh of anguish.
You are what bleeds in me.

You are trickster – the ultimate salesman
trying to obliterate the ground of Being
with your smooth chatter
but you are false as a shadow.
You claim the Self exists through you alone
but I cannot find that Self anywhere in you.
I am a riddle, unsolvable through Thought,
and without a center.

Beyond night and never,
beyond the shadowy flickering of thought spasms,
I stand at the last desolate outpost of imagery

and with wild stillness enter Otherness—
the end of Thought.

The plant of sorrow withers with neglect,
the bird of prey has no place to perch.
I bury the body of Thought
in the ground of Being.

This poem is its last voice
and it is now ended.

Covenant of Selves

A young boy of ten came out of his house one summer midmorning and stood straight and still at the end of the driveway. The sun was directly above him. Tightly enveloped in its intense heat and light, he felt its hot pressure on the top of his head, the hot ground through his shoes, and the still, hot air all around, cooking his body deliciously. He felt profound exultation. He felt strong, unbroken, and whole. Boundless unfocused enthusiasm. Unmovable purpose. Wild joy. There were no thoughts. There was clarity. In those few moments he glimpsed another dimension that was more spacious than his ordinary world and though the experience was intensely sensorial, he somehow accessed the real nonphysical World beneath the world of the senses. At that time, he did not know how to duplicate it again.

Right after, he deeply etched the incident into memory, so that it could be passed on to his older selves. In those few moments of celebration, he formed a searing commitment spanning decades. It was the conscious gesture of a boy briefly overflowing with a profound vision of Life and his unbending resolve to remember that vision, so that years later the man would be touched and enriched by it. The boy wanted a covenant of selves. This covenant would be a psychic bridge to connect the young boy with the mature grown man, whom he one day would become. He sensed that there would be many years of hopeless muddle and anguish. He sensed these things in an intuitive way and could never have articulated them. The bridge would be a

way over the coming chaos of emotional turbulence, confusion, and a disordered out-of-control mind and life. He had no idea how to bring it about but resolved to make it happen whatever the cost.

Now, in my mind, as the adult man, I tear up as I “see” that small, lovely boy fervently trying to have a glimpse of me over the obscure, far distance of many years, wanting to make contact, hoping to create a bridge to me. The boy bequeathed a beautiful vision of life and though just as he foresaw, it has taken many years filled with much physical pain and inner suffering, and though I am well into my 60’s, I have finally taken possession of that vision in a stable unwavering way and though life is still and will always be difficult, I now know how to process that pain and anguish and am grateful for my life and am happy. I am whole, enthusiastic, with purpose, have daily joy and a quiet, pliant mind. Most of all, at will, I can access the same self-aware ecstatic state of presence that that child briefly experienced and by so doing, have fulfilled the wish that young boy made so many years ago. Indeed, a covenant of selves.

From These Intangibles

I live in a volatile mindworld of electric thought and desire.

I construct thought from primordial cosmic energy and mold it to the contours of my will.

I landscape thought into the ever-changing terrains of my world.

I radiate continuous streams of energy in all directions, permeating all dimensions.

I am architect of belief and carpenter of events.

I am builder of roads that I then walk upon.

I am fashioner of meaning and poet of dreams.

I am designer of self.

The world I create is fleet.

For a fraction of a moment, it floats under a fallen leaf in the back yard,

then navigates silent and unseen in the shadows of earthly shadows,

like a fish swishing furiously through deep waters.

My world swirls rapidly through mystic visions,

rides a wild torrent of rising vapor,

then moves out and away through tortuous dreamscapes.

Dreams of night and thoughts of day,

the intangibles, of which, I, my self, create.