

MYSTERIES IN ART: A POETIC JOURNEY

by

HEATHER D. FREIMAN

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Fine and Applied Arts
and the Humanities Program
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 1999

Approved by:



George Kokis

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Heather D. Freiman

for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in the Department of Fine and Applied Arts and the Humanities Program to be taken June 1999

Title: MYSTERIES IN ART: A POETIC JOURNEY

Artists throughout time have addressed mystery in their work and have felt their work shaped by mysterious qualities and experiences. There is the feeling that something greater is at work within the artist, which often influences and shapes their art, and this is a mysterious phenomenon. I look at three different artists whose personal lives and work seem to have been informed by such mysteries: the painter John William Waterhouse, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and the writer Anaïs Nin. I describe their influences upon me and my own creative work, as well as my own personal experiences of this mystery and the processes behind my own art. The end result is a journey through mysteries in art, discussed in a personal context and through analysis of the artists' works, culminating in a sharing of my own poetry and an art show that I held at the Laverne Krause Gallery in Lawrence Hall at the University of Oregon.

Acknowledgments

My sincere appreciation goes out to my advisor George Kokis for standing by and encouraging me along each difficult step of the process of writing this thesis. I thank him for believing in me and always meeting me with encouraging and positive words, as well as being an extraordinary person and teacher. My deepest thanks and appreciation go to my partner and fiancé Brian, who has helped me in innumerable ways and put up with me through the long year of working on this thesis with patience, understanding and love. This thesis is dedicated to my parents who each in their own way have given me their gifts.

Contents

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Initiating a Journey--Preparing a Ground to Meet Mystery.....	2
Drawing On the Mystery: Sources of Creativity.....	10

PART II: THE ARTISTS

A Mythic Imagination.....	21
Under Spell of Gods.....	36
To Live the Dream.....	51
My Process.....	67

PART III: THE POEMS

Offering.....	72
Leaving.....	73
The Request of Blackberries.....	75
Caterpillar.....	77
Like Wind, For Trees (The Forgotten Ones).....	78
Born of Blue.....	79
In the Graveyard.....	81
Smoke Rings.....	82
In the Sea's Tangled Web.....	84
The Wind.....	85
I Would Have Followed.....	86
Music.....	88
Under the Midnight Boughs.....	89
The Sequence Is a Story: Let It Unfold.....	91
wanting.....	93
The Lotus and the Moon.....	94
She Takes Us There.....	96
The New Art.....	97
Visitation.....	98
Moon-Tides.....	99
We, In Our Humanness.....	100
Surrender.....	102

NOTES.....	103
------------	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	107
-------------------	-----

APPENDIX.....	109
---------------	-----

“Most happenings are beyond expression; they exist where a word has never intruded. Even more inexpressible are works of art, mysterious entities they are, whose lives, compared with our fleeting ones, endure.”

--Rainer Maria Rilke

“The personal life deeply lived always expands into truths beyond itself.”

--Anaïs Nin

Part I: Introduction

“Only he who can expect anything, who does not exclude even the mysterious, will have a relationship greater to life than just being alive; he will exhaust his own well-spring of being.”

--Rainer Maria Rilke, from *Letters to a Young Poet*

Initiating A Journey--Preparing A Ground To Meet Mystery

There have always been mysteries. They have called to humans over time; for as long as we have been here, they have been with us. Their echoes still remain, only we come to them differently each time; questions of origins, of sources of life and creativity, have no answers for certain. The mysteries beckon to us from an unknown and yet greater place than the one we are commonly familiar with. They call us to a sense of meaning in our lives and connection with deeper aspects of life. They are both ancient and new, being reborn again and again in different expressions, different ages, and new languages. Throughout time people have addressed these mysteries in various ways, honoring them through rituals and initiations, and personal expressions that seem to work on both private and universal levels. Shrines and temples have been built to them, and the mysteries called by divine names. Myths have been made to honor the creative powers of the world, addressing the unseen but essential elements of life and existence, which are mysterious. Dramas have been acted out to portray them, sacred plays that allow access into these numinous realms, and initiation ceremonies experienced by the initiates who are given sacred knowledge that may only be understood through such intense and liminal states. And across cultures the stories and experiences of the mysterious--and often holy-- have been translated into art making of all kinds and expressed through creative activities that give meaning to life and the world around people, and which attempt to interpret some of what is felt and experienced about the unseen but highly dimensional world that *mystery* can refer to.

These modes of accessing and expressing what has been felt and understood as mysterious are portals into a different realm of thinking and seeing, sensing and feeling, intuiting

and imagining. I have found the place of art in such explorations to be vast and multi-faceted, containing many elements and qualities that might not otherwise find a way to be expressed, whether consciously intended or not. For sometimes--and these are the most exciting times, I believe--the elements of mystery, of otherness and otherworldliness, and of inner qualities as not shown superficially, come through an artist and his or her work and make it remarkable. Placing it on the borders of our known, familiar and perhaps limited way of seeing and believing, and bringing us into another way of perceiving, these works of art, and often the artists behind them, act as bridges or gateways to usher us into a mysterious and sometimes transcendent awareness.

I have always felt an integral connection between the creative process and an attunement with something that seems beyond the artist, beyond us, and yet intimately linked with the creative author as he or she opens him or herself to this presence. I call this a mystery, for we do not know what this greater force really is, where it comes from, or anything about it except as it moves someone to create, as it manifests itself through one. My interest is where this mystery is found in art and the creative process (though especially the artistic creative process), and my motivation behind this interest is my own personal experience of this mystery. My exploration will be a look into where I find this mystery in others' work, those creative people who have been influences for me and my own creative work and philosophies, as well as a sharing of my own personal experiences of this mystery in my life and art, and the beginnings of my development toward a greater understanding and honoring of its qualities.

Although I will be looking at mystery, my concern here is not with revealing it or explaining it away, nor even attempting to fully understand it. As something mysterious I believe it cannot be fully revealed, and so can be only partly known. To come to a place of

understanding is a personal and subjective journey. I recognize that language and words may or may not take one there; there must be a deeper understanding already rooted within a person, so that they may feel the connections and know them within themselves. It is too much to say that I can bring about a pure and whole understanding of something as hidden, transcendent and elusive as the mystery that I am speaking of, but it can be explored in its facets, in its dimensions, and for what it reveals through these.

There is a state of being that corresponds to the mysteries and awakens us into a new, or perhaps ancient, awareness of other levels of reality and a synthesis between things. There is a way of approaching the mysteries that may allow us to access them better, and I have found that they cannot be grasped intellectually, logically or in a rationalized way. Perhaps to enter into their domain we must change the way we think about and perceive things and enter on their own terms, so to speak. Being open to surprises, discoveries and chance happenings; following our feelings, hunches and intuitions, and leaving our dismissing rationality at the door, we may find that what we are in for is not so much an end or solution to an inquiry, but rather a journey. In this way, we can prepare ourselves to rediscover some mysteries and perhaps be moved by them, nudged gently into exploring ourselves and our own inner worlds, where I will claim that mysteries are abundant and only reflect the deeper, larger mysteries of the world.

The communication of such things is difficult, then, if not impossible, through words or any approach that attempts to define, explain or rationalize its essence. And yet, perhaps, the words can build us bridges across the great empty expanse between us, with our limited understanding, and the unseen, ungraspable, invisible-except-through-its-manifestations, otherworldly, experiential presence I give the name of mystery. This mystery cannot be

intellectualized any more than can a mystical experience. And it cannot be entirely explained, for its messages are always personal and yet can be accessed by and touch many, though how it is experienced and felt will always be unique and individual for each person. I can tell you what I know and what my experiences have been, though I believe that it may be better found through an actual viewing of artwork and a sharing of the creative works, which I intend to do along with the written part of this thesis. For again, the translating process is often incomplete, or rather unentire, and a different way must be found to access it than through direct explanation.

My desire is to share the mysteries where I have found them and to open a space to experience them, or describe experiences of them; if this resonates with one person, this is all it is meant to do. My work is intended to do no more than build a bridge and a temple to Mystery, in my own way, and to create a sacred space from which to think about, feel, wonder at, and explore the qualities of mystery as I have found them through art and creative processes in my own life and in the lives of gifted others who have been a source of inspiration and encouragement for me. If I touch on it at all, it is because *it* has allowed me to do so.

The mystery that I speak of is a lot like music: ephemeral, fleeting, intangible, and yet can be deeply felt as a powerful experience/ force/ wave that often comes near to a physical sensation through one's body, senses and emotions--there are no places where it cannot reach. It is fluid and virtually limitless, unbounded. This mystery can be felt in many ways, from many different sources and experiences. I am interested in it as felt and found in art of all areas, literary, visual, musical, etc. It is an elusive subject, slippery and constantly in flux. Art and artistic processes may be equally difficult to speak of, and it is a challenging undertaking, I understand, to accept such a task. However, as I take this challenge upon myself I can try to convey what it is I have

experienced personally through a showing of my own artwork and a sharing of my poetry--two places where mystery has played an important role for me, and where I have directly experienced it in my own life. The created works may be able to "tell" much more than words can say, and give more light from which to experience the qualities of this mystery.

The way of receptivity to this mysteriousness can be very hard to achieve when the demands of the world as we know it take up most of our time. I want to share that part of my experience that has deep meaning for me and which comes through my art, both visual and literary, and has been the basis--the outlet and passageway--of all that is important to me, or rather a way to translate and interpret for myself the most essential things. It is the place where I come to understand things better and have glimpses of a deeper reality. I have tried to honor this mystery in my art and my life, especially as I have gone through the process of school, and have found that it is not always possible to do this. I have discovered what qualities in life hinder or encourage the reception and acceptance, as well as the allowance, of mystery to be a part of my world. I believe that by sharing my own personal experiences of this mystery in my visual art and writing, as well as where I have found it in others' work, a window, even if small, can be opened upon a part of life that we do not commonly hear of; it is inner work in a world of outer things.

But I ask myself, How can I speak of something that seems to defy explanation, that eludes the questioner and seems to slip away when its name is called or spoken? Because the name cannot contain it or hold the essence of its nature, which spills away in evasive ways and gives strength and inspiration when least expected or sought for, it eludes me. This is a complex question. I make a resolution to begin, and this too is difficult for me. Could it be I am afraid

that by speaking of this strange and unspeakable thing that I will lose it, that it will simply slip away? This is part of the experience of trying to make clear or certain something that may have deeper plans in mind. This is part of my challenge: to show where the mysteries can be found without trying to reveal or belittle them, or do a disservice to their gifts. A part of the curtain may be lifted to show us a glimpse of the mysteries and how they have been experienced by others. Mystery guards her treasures well, but she gives some to those who learn to speak her language.

My own experiences of this have often come through my creative work, but I have also been greatly inspired and moved by gifted artists who have come before me and paved the way for others to follow and yet find their own ways. The qualities of mystery can be found in the work and lives of the artists I have chosen to discuss. In the paintings of John William Waterhouse, the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke, and the writings as well as personal life of the writer Anaïs Nin. All three people from different cultures creating very different art; they have moved and inspired and given me new perspectives from which to see things, new angles or views, as well as certain locations from which to feel myself. Through a discussion of their work, as well as some personal information and insights about them, I hope to convey a sense of this mystery and honor the lives and work of such talented artists. There are others; these are the ones I have chosen, not because they will lead us directly to mystery, but because in their own ways they point towards the mystery, whether it be called great wellspring of inspiration, death or life, Muse or genius, the Divine, or called nothing at all. They are markers on the paths to Mystery in all its many forms. Their insights have helped me to feel what it is that I have experienced in my own way, and most especially through the language of art and poetry.

The experience of a mystery is one that leaves the experiencer awed and often changed in some way. In having an openness to exploring this other side, we will be allowing such transformations to take place. Perhaps the expressions that we--all of us--create in our lives can come to feel sacred, as if their impact and their understanding has meaning for us. I would like to initiate a journey into a different realm, a place of mystery, where creativity is sacred and life and art meet in a wondrous dance whose expressions are only reflections of an unseen force, what I call mystery.

To begin then is a little frightening, but in remembering that I am not here to explain and define what cannot be fully comprehended or explained, but only to unfold a few petals into this marvelous and yet hidden world, I gain encouragement. The journey then becomes a process of uncovering and exploring, with no set goal in mind, no end to meet, no race to win. This can be refreshing and yet frightening in a world whose aspirations, and means of attaining them, are always propelled in this manner. In this initiation, then, I am addressing a part of life--a part of all of our lives--that has not been given full consideration or understanding. This is part of its charm: its hidden secretness. Within this place lies creativity and the flow and source behind it, not always known, and subconscious realms, those hidden aspects that can be gruesome or beautiful, and which I will argue carry unlimited potentialities and treasures beyond what we can imagine. It is also the place of imagination, of myths, dreams and visions. And in these ways it can heal and there is the possibility of transformations on deep levels, to move things in ways that are mysterious, powerful and all-encompassing. It is not an easy place to be, but with courage to explore it can be well worth the journey. Each person, however, must make this journey for themselves. I can no more talk a person through it than I can live their life. It is

personal, subjective and unique to everyone. My journey is my story, and the brief stories of those brilliant others who have given me so many gifts already through the living of their lives and the sharing of their art.

Drawing On the Mystery: Sources of Creativity

Before going further, I wish to explore a little more the qualities of this mystery (though I speak in plural as well, for it has no limits in this way) and some sources for creativity. To set the stage for an exploration of the creative processes, and to establish my own personal ways of looking at and experiencing this element that I keep referring to as mystery, it would be good to explore some of what can be meant when *mystery* is called on and approached by this name.

Part of this mystery is unintended, but felt and experienced in a deep way, often as a great gift given to the artist. This idea is elaborated upon by Lewis Hyde in his wonderful and extremely insightful and informative book *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. Hyde speaks of a work of art as a gift, as opposed to a commodity, and something that is “bestowed upon us.”¹ In this way he begins his book by proposing something that I have always felt about myself and my own work. It has felt as if the work is not my own, does not fully belong to me, and yet uses me as a vessel to *come through*, rather than I being the sole creator of it. It has been something that I’ve always felt but could never quite explain or understand, even as I became more and more aware of this process happening. I noticed that I needed to let go and allow the work to come through me, for it was only when I seemed to do this that truly exceptional work would come, be created. And yet the challenge became *how* to do this, for it seemed to only happen when I was not even aware of it happening.

In being faced with such an experience and an often puzzling phenomenon, I inwardly understood (if nothing more) that there was, or could be, an opening up of the artist that allows something more to come through them and imbue their art, whatever form it may take, and where

the artist becomes essentially a vessel for the creative flow. Often being called inspiration, a great brilliance or Muse, or a divine source that is as equally heavenly as it is elusive, that in my own experience I have attributed to an unknown but sacred quality that I call *mystery*. It is a breath behind the breath, a heartbeat greater than I can imagine, and something that stirs only when I am fully tuned and at the same time surrendered to it, though this surrender cannot be forced. Julia Cameron says essentially the same thing in her book *The Right to Write*: “Higher forces speak to us through writing. Call them inspiration, the Muses, Angels, God, Hunches, Intuition, Guidance, or simply a good story--whatever you call them, they connect us to something larger than ourselves that allows us to live with greater vigor and optimism.”² I would extend this to include all artistic or creative acts. I found this book long after I’d acknowledged my feelings of this happening in my own life, and was amazed to hear it explained in almost the same words or sentiment that I myself have felt. (I also understand that many artists have expressed this same feeling as well, and that it is not an uncommon phenomenon, however little it gets spoken of.)

For me, this experience of connection and of something else coming through me seems to come only when certain elements are in play: when there is a feeling of awareness and connectedness within; in times of heightened emotion and an experience of seeing and feeling the world with an exceptional and tuned clarity; in moments of tranquility or deep introspection, when there is a quiet stillness and engagement within. Most often it comes when I am unaware of its coming, unself-conscious and absorbed in my work to the point of forgetfulness of self. It lifts me up, and I feel a heightening, deepening, extending of myself, as if a whirlwind were sweeping through me, softly or intensely, and a river of energy opening up through the top of my

head.

I say *it comes*, because this is the way I have experienced it. There are limitations to this way of thinking, I believe, for I realize also that when I feel this larger-than-myself experience come on, it is *within me*. So in a sense, the artist may become like a vessel to receive the inspiration in whatever form it may take directly within them, yet it can also be felt as a part of them, part of their talent or “gift,” and therefore, perhaps, a facet of their whole self. It may be felt to come into one person, or emanate from another, and perhaps does both. For me, there is a timing that is necessary, a quiet time to reflect and remember, to be with myself and my thoughts, and to unclutter the noise of so much of our days so that an empty space can be created to allow for this presence, if you can call it such, to enter and *inspire*. The word inspire literally means “to breathe; to influence, move, or guide by divine or supernatural inspiration; to draw forth or bring out.” And a definition for the word inspiration is: “a divine influence or action on a person believed to qualify him to receive and communicate sacred revelation.”³ This is what I propose an artist can be: a receptacle and transmitter of sacred information, even if that information is purely personal and from the artist’s own psyche and unconscious. But in these places, unbounded wealth and treasures reside.

Most of my own favorite work has been work that I have felt is not entirely mine, which does not fully belong to me or emanate from me directly, except as I am a receptacle to receive it. This notion of the artist receiving her art may seem very strange to us today, when we are usually used to thinking of the artist as the sole creator of his or her works. (My advisor, George Kokis, has said that the word originality has to do with our origins. In this way, an “original” creation may be seen as only harkening back to our source, not original in the way that we think of the

word, but rather a remembering, as it may be; a re-membling of our origins.) It can also be liberating, at least in my estimation, to give credit to another source in some way, however mysterious the source may be, for so much of the time I feel that the most beautiful work I make is the work that comes *through me* from inspiration and in its own form and language.

This brings up another aspect of this art--that it has created itself and has a life of its own, as if it moves independently of me and yet needs me to give it form, to birth it. This is something that I've often felt in my creative writing, when characters or situations simply emerge fully clothed and with their own personalities, directing me, though without force, as I am content to let them out, as it may be, and to give them life and breath and movement: manifestation. In its own images and language then, the art teaches me and informs me of its life. Whether it reveals deeper aspects of myself, which I'm sure is a great part of it, or other things, is not wholly clear to me. But I know that the work sometimes wants to speak, and when it does it can be profound, moving, informative and transforming. The Chinese Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu, who lived in the third and fourth centuries B.C.E., put it this way: "There is an ultimate reality in things...In this way all things create themselves from their own inward reflection and none can tell how they come to do so." ⁴

The inner life of art is often as mysterious as its outward manifestations; its animation and seemingly conscious, independent life is an intriguing aspect of it. In Jungian psychology there is something known as active imagination, where one communicates directly with the figures or images of one's inner world and speaks to them, asking them what they are about. It may be equally meaningful and insightful to do this with one's own art, to address the figures or images as separate, living entities, for often I have found that this is how they present themselves.

I have had experiences of doing just this, communicating on a very deep and inward level with tangible figures who would come up in my doodles and drawings consistently for a time. When I would address them and let them reveal themselves to me, which was always like receiving information from within myself, they would tell me their stories through emotions, images, feelings and intuitions that I would then feel directly and experience. Over time, I found that the images would leave my art when the particular emotions or experiences that they brought or were about seemed to no longer be a part of my life, or when I did not need them anymore, most likely changing as I changed. In this way, the process of active imagination, or communicating with the images that present themselves through my art, is a form of art therapy. But it is also very mysterious to discover that sometimes the images have lives of their own and can tell you things that you hadn't consciously known or realized, as well as reveal hidden insights, bringing wisdom and knowledge from places that seem to be beyond the scope of the ego or conscious mind. As this could be an entire exploration in itself, I leave it for another time, only mentioning the possibilities of the life of art and its images.

It is a little more difficult to speak of something which cannot be given a tangible and known name, than it is to speak of something solid and concrete, with form and function perfectly understood and able to be confidently speculated upon. Although I give the name of Mystery for this source of creativity and inspiration, many names have been given over time by different people and cultures. The true creative source may have no one name, but many. Just as Lao Tzu, the author of the *Tao Te Ching*, wrote in the sixth century B.C.E. about the Tao, or the Way:

The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.
 The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
 The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.
 The named is the mother of ten thousand things.
 Ever desireless, one can see the mystery.
 Ever desiring, one can see the manifestations.
 These two spring from the same source but differ in name; this appears as darkness.
 Darkness within darkness.
 The gate to all mystery.

Speaking of the source behind all of life, Lao Tzu touched on and expressed with such eloquence this central paradox of trying to give a name to something that is large beyond all naming, and greater than human attributes or understanding. The concept of the Tao and its inherent qualities come closest to explaining what I mean when I speak of mystery, to relay what I feel it is about. Lao Tzu speaks of that which is almost unspeakable, and yet there must be a way to lead others to contemplate and reflect upon this great mystery which may have no name or employable form, and yet which is underlying all that we know and experience of life. It is infinitely big and yet infinitely small as well, and in attempting to translate it we can find only comparable, though not adequate, solutions. Our language may be a stumbling block, or it may be a guide, a bridge, a finger pointing the way. Works of art and creativity in all of their expressions seek to discover a new way of telling the story, whether through imagery painted, imagined, written or prophesied through various mediums, and we can be witness to the splendid flexibility, imagination and elaboration used to tell the story in so many different ways. These are the manifestations, emanating from the same source as the great mystery, but called by a different name--the flip side of the coin.

To return to the themes proposed in *The Gift* and the idea of the receptivity of the artist,

there is again this idea of the work not belonging fully in the artist's hands. Lewis Hyde writes: "An essential portion of any artist's labor is not creation so much as invocation. Part of the work cannot be made, it must be received; and we cannot have this gift except, perhaps, by supplication, by courting, by creating within ourselves that "begging bowl" to which the gift is drawn."⁵ The "begging bowl" is an empty place ready to receive the gift in whatever way it will come, making the receptivity of the artist key to his or her craft and involvement, as well as putting the focus on the content of the art and what creative emanations will come through. The craft of the art then becomes secondary, although it can take on beauty and meaning in its form. Again, the source of the creativity is indirectly present and yet not known, remaining mysterious, as the giver of these gifts. Likewise, my advisor and often guide, George Kokis, wrote in a speech he calls "The First Principle of Art," "I have always preferred to find a form for the passion rather than a passion for the form. Working in this way, out of my feelings, emotions, intuitions, made me confront the mystery that is the kind of work I felt most alive with. My most intimate activity was somehow not my own. It seemed to happen through me, sometimes without clear intention."⁶ Perhaps all artists have felt this way at some point or another, or perhaps it is a rare feeling or awareness today. Many artists have claimed this very thing. Is it something inherent in creation, in creating, that calls upon the artist to open him or herself, whether intentionally or not (usually not), to a presence that moves through them and commands the work with such mysteriousness, such transcendence? It is a question I leave open.

This quality of art and creativity being given to the artist as a gift or coming through them seems to have certain universal qualities to it, if so many people have been expressing independently the same experiences and holding certain themes in common. The universality of

these experiences could be another exploration in itself, but I find it interesting that what I have always felt to be a deep and mysterious force--for lack of a better word--has been felt, experienced, written about or expressed in some way by many others throughout time and place, whom I have found personally or indirectly through their art in mysterious and enlightening ways.

There is another similar thought in the Taoist idea of non-being and no-mind, when a person becomes totally interfused with all things and seems to open or empty him/herself to feel the qualities of all things merge within him/her, thereby becoming inspired as well. Of poetry, it is written:

The quality of directness and purity in poetry...is the immediate reflection of the poet's mind; it is devotion to quietude that leads to the mind of no-mind. When the poet has achieved the mind of no-mind, his subjectivity interfuses with the objective reality of things. When there is this perfect interfusion, subjectivity and objectivity awaken in a single flash. This spontaneous outburst of poetic intuition is rooted in ontological intuition and manifested in the poetic work, which is full of life and movement, not hampered by any artificiality.”⁷

This is a bit different than simply feeling inspired to create a work of art; this concept embraces the idea of the fusion between subject and object, the merging of opposites and the blending of all into one. It is an Eastern concept that may be difficult for our Western imaginations to grasp, and perhaps unnecessary as well, but I feel it is an important observation. The poet gains inspiration through becoming fused with what he or she is writing of, examining, etc., and through intuition that extends beyond himself fills the work with life and movement, breath and authenticity. The mind of “no-mind” is a mind that extends beyond itself and out into an experienced existence of complete unity with all things. It is empty and yet able to hold all things within it, to fulfill its requirements of a life deeply lived and alive.

In this way, one can see that inspiration reaches beyond merely identifying the artist and object of her art; in this case, it fuses them to experience a world free of limitations, divisions and boundaries. The near equivalent of this may be the feeling that I have tried to explain, of something other than myself coming through me, and yet coming from the inside out, being a part of me, although I may experience it as separate. Perhaps this is my limitation: to not see the presence that I feel infuse my work as a part of me, but to rather call it by another name. For our understanding doesn't seem to allow for this Taoist point of view of the subject and object being one. We need to feel that "I am me and you are you," not that these might be the same. It may be difficult to comprehend the notion that the creation of a beautiful and pure work of art may have originated from more than one source that is, at the same time, one source. But we may try.

An omniscient understanding of one's relationship to one's art may be needed, but not in the sense that the artist is the final all-knowing being, but rather in the sense that the artist may be opened to experience many more possibilities, things awakened and alive coming through him or her. It is a coming to life and awakening of possibilities within and through the artist that extends him/her beyond the scope of him/herself and is embodied through their work and through their own personal experience of this expansion, opening, allowance and receptivity.

It is difficult to analyze such a thing. The limits that our rational minds impose on the creative process are hindrances to a complete understanding, or knowing on a deeper level, of the range and fullness of this kind of experience of art and creativity. Inevitably, the path chosen must be one's own, personal and subjective--for I do not believe in any true objectivity, or at least the value of it--to discover one's own route through such ideas as those presented here. All of these ideas and meandering thoughts are meant to give a taste of the kinds of experiences of

mystery that can be unveiled in this exploration. The limits to discovery are set only by the needs of minds, bodies and emotions to rest, to take a time out and contemplate. Yet even these time-outs and setbacks are still part of the journey—everything is: the inquiry, discussion, thoughts and perceptions, feelings and emotional responses, contemplations, questions and musings. And yet, perhaps, we need to look at some specifics to enlighten ourselves about this mystery, and discover how it has shown itself through others' lives and experiences.

Part II: The Artists

“this is how they live, the true ones, by making the art which is creation.”

–Ralph J. Gleason, from Miles Davis’ *Bitches Brew*

A Mythic Imagination

**“Every mystery needs its image.”
--Lewis Hyde**

The paintings of John William Waterhouse have always captivated me for their supreme aesthetic beauty, and yet more for the mysteries that I find in them, in their own ways beautiful beyond comparison. These two qualities of beauty and mystery seem to work hand in hand in Waterhouse's paintings, the one evoking the other, each giving form, definition and basis for the life of the other. I have found that the sheer beauty of brush strokes, the warmth of colors, the talent with which the paintings have been executed, and the life-like perfection of detail and form only allow for the feeling of mystery and intrigue to be ever more present in his work. So many of his paintings are of mythological imagery, supernatural and otherworldly phenomena, and most especially, mysterious women. There is something so penetrating about the look in the eyes of his figures, the gestures, and the way he captures a still moment from a well-known myth, poem or legend, that still seems to be moving, coursing with the life and movement of the fluid narrative. He is essentially a narrative painter, telling old stories in new ways, and imbuing them with such intensity of feeling, emotion and life, while hinting at qualities of otherworldliness and mystery that seem almost to rise from an instinctual and inwardly magical place. We are let in on the images as viewers and there is a part of us that is allowed to enter, though there is always some way that we will not be fully a part of the experience. Or perhaps, if we let it take us, we will enter a different realm and have to give up a part of ourselves, our beliefs, our trivial and daily preoccupations, and enter a world quite uncertain and yet undeniably enchanting.

Waterhouse was English and yet born in Rome, Italy in 1849, where he spent a good part

of his childhood, though he later returned to England with his parents. He painted up until his death in 1917, and enjoyed great success and appreciation for his art, being a part of the Royal Academy Schools where he exhibited much of his work. Anthony Hobson, who wrote a biography on Waterhouse and who seems to have a particularly poignant understanding and appreciation of him and his work, wrote: "Waterhouse has been wrongly called Pre-Raphaelite, but he was a Romantic Classicist: he had the Northerner's love of legend and mystery, but his Italian birth lent a warm personality to his rendering of the classical myths, peopled as they were by superhuman beings."⁸ It is known that he had an introverted and retired personality, which fits with the qualities of mystery and quiet intensity that pervade his paintings; though the blend of superhuman qualities with a real warmth of flesh and blood and a feeling of the sensual life of his figures, who were almost always female, is a part of his unique and alluring artistry. Hobson later states, "It is not mere fancy to ascribe the character and strength of Waterhouse's art to the fact that he was born in Rome, emerging thereby into a stream which had flowed for over two thousand years and brought with it the myths and legends of the Greeks..."⁹ And: "So he returned to Rome, to stories and events of the past, and to a world of mysteries which all his life he contrived to flesh out in forms somehow as tangible and certainly more warm-blooded than the sculpture of the Greeks, from whose legends the Romans largely derived their religion and mythology."¹⁰

So we begin with mythology and legend, from which Waterhouse derived so many of his images. The rich language of myths has allowed them to endure and they are being continually renewed by our modern imaginations, voiced--and painted--in new ways, and looked to for age-old guidance and inspiration in a metaphorical language that surpasses any one definition and

seems to speak to the very heart and soul of us all. Mythology is the perfect place to begin our exploration of mystery for it carries in its essence and forms the keys to a deeper substratum of meaning. It speaks to us in metaphors and symbols which seem untouched by time or place. Myths have been called the collective dreams of humankind, for just as dreams are believed to bring the dreamer personal messages from the unconscious, so do myths bring the collective accumulations, memories, needs and messages from a people to themselves. They can be reflections of our psychic states and the troubles, conflicts, beauties, treasures and issues that need addressing, or are a part of our collective make-up. The writer and Jungian analyst Robert Johnson has written: "Myths are a special kind of literature not written or created by a single individual, but produced by the imagination and experience of an entire age and culture that can be seen as the distillation of the dreams and experiences of a whole culture...Myths, therefore, portray a collective image; they tell us about things that are true for all people."¹¹

The paintings of J. W. Waterhouse must speak to us not only about their painted images as isolated entities, but about parts of ourselves as well. I present this not as authority, but rather as a proposal. The images move me so that I have often wondered what it is that is behind them; the force, the hypnotic melody that haunts, singing from the eyes and gestures of the figures, and the almost silent but dangerous beauty of them--dangerous in different ways, depending on the image. In a painting of *Pandora*, we watch as she, the first created woman, slowly tips open the lid of the great golden box which contains all of the evils of the world, and see as they begin to slowly spill out in a fine, clear mist. In *Hylas and the Nymphs* we witness the fatal seduction of Hylas as he stops by a forested pool to gather water in a jug, at the moment when he is being lured into his eventual death by the beautiful and innocently fatal nymphs who meet him from the

water, one of them meeting his eyes and slowly, gently, pulling him near. There is the *Lady of Shalott*, from Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, adrift in her boat, her hand on the chain, letting the boat drift from its dock, a candle flame blowing in the wind, the Lady's eyes intense and wild without voice, only an expression that is at once dark and foreboding, whispering strangely and almost frighteningly of other places, other visions and memories (see Appendix for images).

The danger that I feel in these paintings may be that of touching deeper depths, a primordial link with a common heritage running underground, out of conscious reach. It may be that the wildness in the eyes of the figures reflects a certain untamed and unattainable element in us that we have been unwilling to see or look at. Or it may be a distant voice heard from afar, not really dangerous at all, but sounding so familiar though we could swear that we do not know from whom it comes, or where. But this is all speculation. The danger I feel in his images is not only a frightening one, but a feeling that I could be taken away, wafted off on the breeze of breathtaking beauty or in a madness that is otherworldly and sublime. This is not all bad--good art does this to us in many ways. There is as well the quality of being put in touch with something inner and more psychological in viewing these paintings. Perhaps they bring us to the threshold of unconscious and inwardly animated experiences, inviting us to explore the lesser known realms of myths, dreams and legends as they are reflections of the inner life.

There are less inevitably tragic paintings by Waterhouse than the ones mentioned, but I have found that in all of them there is an almost hypnotic, mysterious feeling that hints at things beyond the canvas and indulges our senses of wonder and enchantment. In *The Shrine* (see Appendix), we see a young girl who has just come down the beautifully rendered stairs behind her and who bends down to smell a lovely bunch of roses in a small black vase on a ledge that

comes out from the wall, just barely recognizable as an altar. It is such a simple act: the bending down to smell of flowers, whose petals have fallen around the vase, and yet the sublime beauty of it cannot be mistaken. We can almost feel ourselves with her as she clutches her dress and lifts it as she bends, eyes closed; the scent of the roses is almost tangible and pungent, reflected so deeply in the girl's gentle and absorbed expression. The sensuality of the picture is everywhere, in every brush stroke from the roses to the stairs, and yet there is also a very profound feeling, and the hinting at of something truly mysterious. The stairs leading up on the right side of the painting give a view of matted trees, overflowing grass, and the tiniest patch of a clearing far off in the distance. In this one image there is the deeply sensual and intimate experience of a young girl bending to smell flowers at a shrine--we don't know who put them there, how long they've been there, or who or what the shrine is for--and the breathtaking (as if holding our breaths) feeling that we are a part of this simple yet profound act for this one small moment that is made so large. There is also a hinting at of its expansiveness, its largeness within the very still moment of a gesture that we can imagine happening very quickly, in the tiny piece of light and sky shown to be at a great distance. And there is as well the recognition that what we are witnessing is a scene at a shrine, a sacred place, that is at once made subtle and inward by its very private suggestion.

Anthony Hobson called this gift of the artist an "instinct for the moment in the story at which everything stands still for our contemplation."¹² It is as if Waterhouse chooses the moment of greatest concentration of energy, the moment of heightened emotion and intense focus or rhapsody--and yet with such subtlety!--thereby allowing the painting to seem to lift itself from the canvas, and yet remain tied to it, creating this tension that draws us into the experience

expressed in the still moment. After seeing this, I am changed, for it lifts something in me as well, and I cannot be the same. I experience some of the mystery, ecstasy, tragedy or enchantment, and it is much more than merely drama: there is something larger, deeper that seems to be expressed which I cannot explain. It is mysterious and at times numinous, enchanting, hypnotic, mutable in its stillness, as if alive.

One painting whose subject matter I have found to be particularly personal to my own journey through this thesis and at this time in my life is that of *Psyche Opening the Golden Box* (see Appendix). The story of Psyche is the story of a woman's journey, and has been seen as a journey of the soul, as her name suggests (psyche means soul). She was the third daughter of a king and queen and so beautiful that she made the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, also known as Venus, jealous of her. She was beautiful beyond compare, and yet no one courted her. An oracle told her parents that she was to be taken to the top of a mountain and wedded to Death, left there. Aphrodite, in her extreme jealousy of Psyche's beauty, sent her son Eros, also known as Cupid or Amor, to sting Psyche with one of his arrows and cause her to fall in love with the hideous creature, Death. Instead, Eros pricks his own finger on his arrow and falls in love with Psyche himself. He has her carried to his paradisiacal abode by the wind and visits her by night, indulging her in many luxuries but forbidding her to look upon him in the light. Psyche's two sisters, jealous of the paradise that their sister is living in, convince her that her lover is a monster and persuade her to light a lamp and look upon him at his true form. When she does this one night, a drop of oil from the lamp falls onto the god and wakes him, upon which he flees from her--Psyche having beheld his beautiful, godly form and truly fallen in love with him-- and leaves

her to the wrath of his mother, Aphrodite.

From here on, Psyche searches for her lost lover and is forced to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks set out by Aphrodite, and at the prospect of each wants to end her life, to give it all up. But just in time something comes to help Psyche and she manages to finish each task, to the dismay of Aphrodite. Her final task is to go down into Hades and bring back a cask of the beauty ointment of Persephone, the maiden queen of the underworld, to deliver back up to Aphrodite. Robert Johnson calls Persephone “the most hidden, the eternal maiden, queen of mysteries.”¹³ Again, Psyche wants to end it all by throwing herself from a tower, but again she is aided and given instructions for how to make it safely through the dangerous underworld of Hades and return with the ointment. She manages to follow all of the instructions given, until the very end where she disobeys the guidance given her by the tower and looks into the box of beauty ointment which she was told never to do. Upon looking in, she finds nothing there, and falls into a deadly sleep. It is Eros--his name means love--who comes to her rescue and revives her, enabling and instructing her to finish her final task. They are married, with Zeus watching over, and Psyche is given the elixir of immortality and the promise that Eros will never leave her again.*

Waterhouse’s painting depicts the moment of Psyche opening the box, the cask of beauty ointment, a hidden and secret substance that she is told not to look at or reveal. She is sitting in a forested glen, a small lamp lighted beside her, “its flame symbolizing the eternal love which would eventually reunite her with Cupid [Eros] and secure her a place with him on Olympus.”¹⁴

*The telling of this story is taken from *She* by Robert Johnson, and *Mystery Religions of the Ancient World* by Joscelyn Godwin. For a wonderful retelling of this tale, and a truly interesting book, see *Until We Have Faces* by C. S. Lewis.

She peers into the box with apprehension, her shoulders hunched a little and her pose relaxed. What we see trail out is a fine, clear mist (as in Pandora's box, though the golden box that Psyche holds is much smaller, more secret and personal, and holds only a deep sleep for the bearer rather than evils for the world). Hobson writes: "Psyche shares Pandora's curiosity, but her problems are of a more individual nature. Her name literally means the breath of life..."¹⁵ It is the moment just before she falls into a distressed sleep and seems to lose all that she had gained up until then. We can anticipate what will come next, and we know that it is the worst of all moments, and yet precedes her final rescue by Eros and her redemption.

Like Psyche, I have felt like giving up at every difficult moment along the path of writing this thesis. It has been a struggle to try and make clear and tangible something that has not been very clear or tangible to me. It is a process to take heed of aid and warnings along the journey, and learn that new discoveries are made along each step of the way. There has been help given to me as well, even if I cannot explain it, and again there is this experience of something else coming through and completing the task, though in this case as guides to keep Psyche, the inner part of us, alive. Just as Psyche had to journey through the dangerous and hidden underworld of Hades, a world of mystery and darkness, so is the journey along mystery's borders difficult at times and seemingly filled with obstacles and trials.

The metaphors of this myth go deeper and deeper for me, unwinding themselves before me as I reflect on their images. The loss of paradise, while being an ancient and universal image of a loss of our own origins, has translated for me as being a feeling of having lost something very essential and crucial to my life, a loss of the inner world and the world of my creativity and art. This feeling, as well as fear, has slowly manifested itself since I came to school and was

subjected to a more outward and judged way of life, especially in relation to a presentation of my work. As Psyche was in a sense living in unconsciousness in that paradise world, unable to look upon her secret lover and kept in the dark, so was the world that I coveted and feared that I was losing a kind of unconsciousness. My secret lover was my art, my poetry, and the source of my creativity whom I did not know, whom I could not see and whom I did not question as to its identity. I lived in a very rich and private world of my own, and simply allowed the creative flow to move through me, make love to me in a way, and intuitively knew and understood its nature without being able to explain or consider this. I now realize that life cannot remain this way, even though I may fight against it and wish things to stay the same. Psyche's myth brings new understanding and insights for me concerning my own growth and the journey that I have been on.

Psyche's journey begins in loss--losing the innocent, unconscious and paradisaical world. She undergoes trials and lessons, and the accompanying feelings of surrender and wanting to give up, to end it all, even her own life. There is here the struggle against consciousness, against enlightenment, even against the selfhood that seems to be emerging, for the pain and suffering that must precede such rewards seems almost unbearable, its gifts unrecognizable and its territories unfamiliar. But the need to continue, to go on, is unquestionable--if one wishes to make it to the other side, and to a place of union and reunion with what has been lost (the lover, the god, the divine heavenly place).

In the Viking Runes there is a Rune called Raido which epitomizes this journey that Psyche is on. It is a journey Rune, being "concerned with communication, with the attunement of something that has two sides, two elements, and with the ultimate union that comes at the end

of the journey, when what is above and what is below are united and of one mind.” There is a concern here “with nothing less than unobstructed, perfect union,”¹⁶ as Psyche’s eventual union with Eros at the end of her long journey, and her gaining of immortality and a divine place among the gods, marrying earth and heaven, and connecting what was disconnected in a perfect union and reunion. Other connotations of this Rune are with riding, carriage, and the soul after death. As Psyche must make her way through the underworld, it is as if she must undergo a death in herself, a change and transformation from her old self into the new one that will emerge. It is interesting to consider that in Hades she must be very aware of everything that she does, and take every precaution to not let herself fall prey to the temptations offered her; she must not spend her energy on generous acts, but must save it for the real work ahead. She is given two barley cakes and two half pennies, the pennies for the boatman who will take her across the river Styx to Hades and back again, and the barley cakes for the guardian of Hades, the monstrous dog, Cerberus who has three vicious heads. As well, along the way she must refuse certain things, to not help a drowning man nor to help the three old women who are weaving fate on their loom-- she must not expend her energy or be side-tracked, but must remain focused and clear about her path. When she comes to meet Persephone, she must not accept the hospitality offered her, otherwise she would be indebted to her and bound there forever. Robert Johnson writes: “Psyche must make her way into the underworld through the place of waste, (how many journeys begin at the least expected or valued place), down the pathless way into the dark recesses of the inner world...This journey requires rest, solitude, an accumulation of energy.”¹⁷ In this part of the journey Psyche must remain conscious, even and most especially through the dark underworld of death and unconsciousness, of mystery. She has a need to stay centered and to remember why

she is there and for what, in order to make it back up into the world of light, otherwise it is all too easy to stay there and forget about the rest of the journey. To stay in unconsciousness will not allow for the transformation that is Psyche's fate, from a mortal into a divine being, often symbolized by the butterfly who escapes from its cocoon and is transformed from the lowly, earth-bound caterpillar into a beautiful, winged creature. "Psyche wears butterfly wings, for she has emerged from the chrysalis of her earthly existence to be led by Cupid, the Psychopompos, to the alchemical marriage of Soul with Spirit."¹⁸

I see art as the transformation of spirit into matter, the transformation of what is unconscious and unformed yet into manifestation, of the mystery into material, tangible and conscious form. The beauty ointment appears as nothing to Psyche when she looks in on it, tempted by her curiosity and desire to be more beautiful for Eros, but Robert Johnson says of this that "[t]hat nothing is called the secret mystery and is probably more valuable than any quality for which we could find a name."¹⁹ The beauty ointment comes from that deep, hidden, mysterious place that dwells underneath the light, bright and conscious world. Sometimes artists may tap into this place, whether consciously or unconsciously, knowing it or not, and what they may offer to the world can strengthen or terrify us, conjuring up rich images and qualities that may be intangible and at times seem almost nothing at all but a play of pictures, feelings, and illusory substances. The beauty that is delivered up to the conscious realm is ephemeral, leading us back to a more hidden place, and yet when brought into the light above can only tease us mortals with its divine and unknown substance. For me, the beauty that comes from the deeper source of my creativity is just as mysterious, just as hidden, and yet breathtaking, curious, leading me to deeper truths than I had known before.

The view that mythology is only fantasy and not “real,” at least not real in the sense of our concretized and logical thinking of reality, is apparent in the way our language uses the word myth to speak of something that is false, or untrue. But the truths that lie in the heart of myths may be hidden, obscured, just as, perhaps, the truths that are given to us in dreams. They may be underlying truths, deeper and spoken in a metaphorical and symbolic language that takes time to adjust to, time to really *hear* and learn to understand or read as a coded letter. Joscelyn Godwin, in her book *Mystery Religions of the Ancient World*, says of our ancient forebears, to whom mythology was a way of explaining the world:

They told in myths not what they fumblingly surmised, but what they knew. Sometimes their knowledge was such as to be inexpressible in our abstracted tongue, and then we must rely on artists, or on intuition, to recreate it for us. The characters in the myths, moreover, are not mere personifications: many of them were real people, others daemons or gods who, in some instances, are still with us. But such is the law of correspondences, layer upon layer, in the universe, that what happens in the realm of the gods is reflected in the life of man and throughout nature. So the same drama is played out at every level, and the myth, wise beyond telling, may be read as deeply or as broadly as one cares to range.²⁰

The myths are not completely gone from us, and yet they have been severely cut down or neglected. I find in these paintings a restoration and renewal of the ancient mythological consciousness, one that speaks to us in mysterious and profound ways. The evocativeness of the paintings brings all of our senses to the attention of the images, the beauty of brush strokes, line and composition, as well as to the deeper, inner meanings expressed through these old stories whose content is made fresh and new again. The beauty of them is such that it leaves a feeling of yearning, a longing that is unquenched and yet somehow satisfied in its quiet arousal. There is something more awakened in me through a viewing of these paintings, and I cannot say what it is, only leave a marking at the door that has been cracked so slightly for us to wonder at--a

marking that I was there. A stream of perfume seeps through to let us smell a bit of its sweetness; what lies beyond is still unknown, and perhaps will always remain so.

The beauty of the unattainable is at the heart of Waterhouse's paintings. In *A Mermaid* (see Appendix) we see a legend come to life, and can almost hear the water lapping onto the shore where a mermaid sits, combing her long red hair. In her eyes is a quiet sadness that seems to tell many stories. This was described by the *Art Journal* at the time of the painting's completion and exhibition at the Academy: "It tells of human longings never to be satisfied...The chill of the sea lies ever on her heart; the endless murmur of waters is a poor substitute for the sound of human voices; never can this beautiful creature, troubled with emotion, experience on the one hand repose, on the other the joys of womanhood."²¹ In the artist's language, Waterhouse could evoke and invoke entire stories filled with memories and emotions, thoughts and regrets, feelings that need not be spoken or written, but rather are written in the brush strokes, in the colors, on the lips, in the eyes, in the gestures, in the paint that creates, cradles and gives birth to forms that speak and breathe from a world all their own. The mermaid's mouth is open slightly, and I wonder to myself as I look upon this picture if all of her thoughts and emotions have not been spoken to us, whispered without sound as on a cool breeze blown by the constant waves that wash beside her. Again, the small patch of light, sky and distance can be seen through an archway in the dark, brick-red rock that rises from the water behind her. We are given glimpses of the world beyond, of a larger perspective within the very intimate scene. We may find ourselves wandering out into that small passageway, and yet can only imagine what lies beyond.

Hobson writes: "There is no menace in *A Mermaid*, only the beauty of the unattainable--perhaps the perpetual key to Waterhouse's creative imagination."²² This beauty of what cannot

be attained may be the mystery that I feel bleeding out through all of his paintings. There is something which eludes us, which is always just out of reach, and this is as alluring--and as baffling--as that fragment of a dream that you cannot, for the life of you, quite remember...

The power and beauty of Waterhouse's images are most always embodied in a feminine figure, a woman or girl whose beauty is undeniable and whose power is strange and hypnotic, a wholly feminine power with an inescapable charm. The power that is expressed here is of a different sort than the type we usually think of in our culture as bearing that title. Power has often been thought of as something outwardly expressed by an individual who exhibits confidence, aggression and often dominion over others, and valued in its more masculine form (not to say that these are the only qualities of a more masculine power, which can be both positive and life-affirming). Feminine power, on the other hand, has different qualities. In Waterhouse's paintings we see women who are sensual, magnetic, intuitive, emotional, wild, even irrational, who seem to be so deeply inward-turned that their eyes look out, revealing an absorption and intense introspection at times (such as the female figure in the painting *Destiny*--see Appendix) that they seem to be in a psychic state close to dreaming, in touch with their unconscious. They seem to be leading us--though it may be questioned if it is their intent at all, or if they are only beings lost in their own enchantments--to deeper places, watery realms, realms of magic and intrigue and sometimes danger; into wild states of abandon and intense emotions (the paintings of *Ophelia*--see Appendix--clearly show the strange and delicate madness in her eyes), and into experiences which are altered from daily preoccupations and ordinary moments. There is an otherworldliness about them, a detachment from ordinary reality, as if they are embodied archetypes, figures of powerful and pure, undiluted essences. Their magnetism

radiates in soft circles and disorienting gazes, and we can become lost in, or taken to, another place altogether. With their beauty comes always a hint of melancholy, as if they are both mortal and divine, immortal figures peering into our world, and peering out from it as well into a different one.

It is interesting to discover that females have most often been seen and cited as links to an 'otherworld' and to the deeper subterranean realm of the unconscious in many traditions, stories, folklore and religions. As we have already seen, in Greek mythology Persephone is the queen of the underworld, ruling there as the ultimate guardian of mysteries. In the legends and narratives of holy wells, especially in Great Britain and parts of Europe, it was always a female intermediary who resided over the sacred wells or springs. As these places were often thought to be links with the 'otherworld' and a mystical reality, the female guardian would be the bridge and intermediary into this other realm, a sacred and mysterious place of transcendent emergence and immersion.²³

There is something in the feminine experience which is connective, intuitive and expansive, linking to a deeper world, and at one with the processes of both life and death, for what is death but the transformation of one state--our earthly consciousness--to another--one that is more secret, hidden and unknown. Goddesses in all cultures have held these archetypal qualities and spoken for the powerful feminine, whose ways are mysterious, healing, life-giving and destructive, verging always on the known and sending us delving headlong into the otherworld of the unknown.

Under Spell of Gods

“The poet does not merely call for or recall the gods that have fled. He speaks of a nearness which is so close that his very words are blinding. In that nearness the sacred lies hidden.”

--Luce Irigaray, from *Elemental Passions*

The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke has been called “perhaps more exclusively a poet than anyone before him or since.”²⁴ Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1875, he died in France in 1926, and his poems seem to exist outside of time and space, breathing still with their own hypnotic beauty and strangeness. He was called “poetry itself” by the Russian poet Marina Tsvetayeva in a letter she wrote to him near the end of his life.²⁵ In his poetry his voice seems to rise high above the ordinary world and touch on high visions, beautiful and tragic truths, translations that he faceted out of song and breath. He was someone for whom poetry was life, who plumbed unlimited depths and verged on meeting mystery face to face in his work. He was a master poet and spinner of words, whose eloquence and richness can move mountains within us. His is a world of inner invocations, where the gods come through and breathe into the world that we know, or rather, where we are transcended into the world of the gods. Angels are “terrifying,” and yet so very close.²⁶ And the quiet inner world is brought to life with startling power.

In his book *Sonnets to Orpheus*, we see not only an allusion to mythological themes, but an actual awakening of the myth, where it becomes alive for Rilke and inevitably for us. From the beginning we can feel that we are entering a different place and that we are venturing in upon an experience of a divine, elevated realm, where inner listening is most crucial--and the place from which the poems begin:

A tree ascended there. Oh pure transcendence!
 Oh Orpheus sings! Oh tall tree in the ear!
 And all things hushed. Yet even in that silence
 A new beginning, beckoning, change appeared.

Already, we know that we are in the presence of an exceptional experience. And *experience* is the right word to lead us in, I feel, for Rilke's poems--in this collection as well as in others--cannot easily be understood in a logical or literal way; they must be *experienced*. We cannot logically deduce how a tree can be in one's ear, but if we give ourselves to the poem and let *it* take *us*, than we can be brought into a living myth that blooms before us with rich metaphors and imagery, enchanting us with such an inner quality that outside "realities" do not exist. From here, with our ears and selves given over to really hear, as the poem seems almost to ask of us, the new beginning, with its beckoning and change, can take place. The poem continues:

Creatures of stillness crowded from the bright
 unbound forest, out of their lairs and nests;
 and it was not from any dullness, not
 from fear, that they were so quiet in themselves,

but from just listening. Bellow, roar, shriek
 seemed small inside their hearts. And where there had been
 at most a makeshift hut to receive the music,

a shelter nailed up out of their darkest longing,
 with an entryway that shuddered in the wind--
 you built a temple deep inside their hearing."

It is mysterious the way the words almost sing, drawing attention to the figure of

"Translated by Stephen Mitchell, 19. I have chosen the translations by Stephen Mitchell who, I have found, brings great life and beauty to Rilke's poems and seems to animate them with the closest proximity to the original fervor and intent of the poet (if we can ever really *know* this, I'm not sure), being sensitive to the flow and rhythm that seem to be inherent in the poetry's spirit. Of course, I do not read German and so I am unfortunate to not be able to read the original versions myself and verify this with any "proof." These translations (by Mitchell) are my favorite, then, and they seem to me to carry a spirit of Rilke in them.

Orpheus, to and of whom the poem speaks. In Greek mythology, Orpheus was a musician and singer always pictured with his lyre, and who, it was said, could draw all creatures and things--even the wildest of the animals of the forest--to him and tame, lull and entrance them with his beautiful music. It is said that even the trees and rocks were not immune to his playing, and "were sensible to the charm."²⁷ He was the son of Apollo, the god of light, prophesy and music, and the Muse Calliope, who resided over song and most especially epic poetry.²⁸ If you look closely enough, the associations and connections slowly reveal themselves, unraveling the many intricate layers to this poetry. The story of Orpheus, as we will see later, has great significance for Rilke's journey as well, and is a metaphor most appropriate and interesting.

What seems to be coming through the poem is a larger, deeper, broader, more intimate, and yet more transcendent awareness, the feeling of a heightening and an introversion at once. As Rilke describes the gathering of animals in the forest and the change that is occurring--perhaps a new kind of listening and receiving--he seems also to be describing himself as he begins his poems and we, the audience of them, crowd in around to hear, to listen. It is as if the poem is really singing. "If possible, [the poems] should be read aloud because the printed page is only an inadequate substitute for the spoken word, the true vehicle for...all of Rilke's poems."²⁹ It is an inner listening, however, that seems to be called for, for the outward sounds of "bellow, roar, shriek" have no significance--it is the music and the new beginning that matter. What Orpheus, and thereby Rilke, create in place of the "makeshift hut.../a shelter nailed up out of their darkest longing" is "a temple deep inside their hearing." The temple is where we shall begin, a holy place of reverence--and longing. It is an inner temple, deep within the inner ear, that reminds me so much of the place from which Rilke seemed to write.

What is truly mysterious and amazing about these poems is how they came to Rilke, how they were written. They were inspired by the death of a young girl, Vera Knoop, the daughter of an acquaintance to whom they are dedicated. The year was 1922, when Rilke was forty-seven years old, and they “came” to him while in the middle of working on another collection of poems, the *Duino Elegies*. The twenty-six poems of the first half of the *Sonnets* were written in less than four days, and the entire book completed in just under a month, including the completion of the *Elegies*, as well as other poems.³⁰ In Rilke’s own words from 1923, he describes them: “These strange Sonnets were no intended or expected work; they appeared, often *many* in one day (the first part of the book was written in about three days), completely unexpectedly...I could do nothing but surrender, purely and obediently, to the dictates of this inner impulse...”³¹ Stephen Mitchell writes in his introduction of his translation of the *Sonnets*: “This is surely the most astonishing burst of inspiration in the history of literature...These poems were born perfect; hardly a single word needed to be changed. The whole experience seems to have taken place on an archaic level of consciousness, where the poet is literally the god’s or Muse’s scribe.”³² In the writing of the *Sonnets*, Rilke essentially became a channel or a conduit for the creative, life-affirming and transformative inspiration that flowed through him. And the many layers of the poems that arose spontaneously are wrapped inside them, carrying their multi-colored images like keys, like scarves trailing out in wisps behind them, that we may or may not be able to ever fully interpret or understand. Even Rilke himself said of the *Sonnets*, “They extend infinitely beyond me.”³³

The *Sonnets* were written out of sadness and inspiration brought on by the death of the young dancer, Vera Knoop, and yet they are exaltations, joyful uprisings, wellings up out of the

greater depths of himself. This is appropriate in another way; the poems came to him after a long period of little writing and some internal crises of loss and emptiness. What breaks in on these stagnations is an undeniably joyful and rejoicing beginning of something new, an ability to hear the “inner music” again.³⁴ A breakthrough occurred that resulted in the writing of the fifty-five *Sonnets* and the completion of the *Duino Elegies*, which had been started in 1912 and was considered by Rilke to be his masterpiece.

The *Sonnets to Orpheus* begin in wonder, in transcendence, in awe. They do seem to extend beyond any one person, even the poet himself, and charge us with an electricity that is at once keen and organic, subtle and mystifying, filled with changes and mutabilities that bring us ever back to ‘the song’, which is also the force that has the ability to heal the longings, separations and deaths implied within the poems (and which were reoccurring themes for the poet). Some have a stronger feeling of the impermeability of life and our possessions, questioning what we really can possess at all but our own solitudes, and harkening back to the origins and to the unknown after death, to the places of greatest intangibility and mysteriousness, a kind of numinosity. Through everything, all of the changes, the song remains and heals. Poem nineteen of the first part speaks of this:

Though the world keeps changing its form
as fast as a cloud, still
what is accomplished falls home
to the Primeval.

Over the change and the passing,
larger and freer,
soars your eternal song,
god with the lyre.

Never has grief been possessed,

never has love been learned,
and what removes us in death

is not revealed.
Only the song through the land
hallows and heals. (55)

Speaking again to Orpheus, the “god with the lyre,” Rilke addresses the transience of life and yet the eternalness of the song and music, which may come from the great Primeval itself, and which remains even after we are gone. It is the song, the poem, the breath, the touching of spirit that seem to live on.

The story of Orpheus, like the story of Psyche, also takes the hero (or heroine) through the darker realm of the underworld of the dead. It begins with Orpheus’s wife, Euridice, who is bitten on the foot by a snake one day while walking through a grassy field, and dies. Orpheus, in his extreme grief, sings to all the creatures and gods in the upper world, and then descends to the underworld to try and bring his wife back. He sings the most sad and beautiful song, lamenting, “Love has brought me here...please bring back my beloved wife whose death was so untimely, for we will all come home to rest here eventually...” And the song is so moving that it makes all those down in the underworld weep, so that the king and queen of that realm, Pluto and Proserpine (Persephone), agree to grant him his wish and allow Euridice to follow him back up into the upper world among the living. They give one condition, however, that Orpheus should not turn around to look upon his wife until they are safely out of the underworld. Just as they are reaching the top, out of the dark land of the dead, Orpheus forgets the condition set for him, growing anxious to see his wife, and glances back to see if she is still there--the ascent had been up to then made in silence. Upon his doing so, Euridice disappears and falls back into the

underworld. Orpheus tries to return to her, but he is not allowed to cross the river, and waits there in grief and mourning for seven full days, until he finally returns to the land from which he came. Never taking another wife, he is eventually torn apart by maidens--all of whom he refused when he returned, either out of devotion or undying grief, or both--in a wild, bacchantic frenzy. His head and lyre are thrown into the river Hebrus, and soon after he is gathered together and buried by the Muses.³⁵ (Waterhouse also depicts this scene in a painting, where two maidens who came to draw water from the river come upon the head of Orpheus and his lyre floating in the water, their expressions and gestures full of gasps and startled disbelief--see Appendix.)

In his introduction to *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke* (translated by Stephen Mitchell), the poet Robert Hass talks about the figure of Orpheus in Rilke's *Sonnets*, saying: "He is...a figure for poetry, as an energy that moves inside this world, not outside it. He is that emotion or imagination of estrangement as it returns to the world, moving among things, touching them with the knowledge of death which they acquire when they acquire their names in human language...Orpheus also represents more than poetry. He stands where human beings stand, in the middle of life and death, coming and going."³⁶

This theme of death plays an important role in Rilke's poems. Robert Hass sees one of his main themes as "the abandonment of ordinary life for the sake of a spiritual quest,"³⁷ which in itself involves the leaving behind of one way of life for the seeking of a higher one; this can be seen symbolically as a death, as a passing into a higher realm. I would also use the word "otherworld" in place of death, or to describe it at times, for what Rilke taps into--and what Orpheus seems to represent--is the threshold of another dimension altogether, a place we do not know in ordinary life, but through whose trials one is changed in some way and enabled to meet

the mysteries as they move in their own worlds. Hass also writes: “Absence, more mysterious and hopeful to Rilke than any presence, introduces immediately the idea of growth.”³⁸ It is from a place of emptiness, loss and longing that Rilke writes and reiterates his themes in so many ways, speaking of the aloneness and ultimate solitude of each human being, for even when they love another it is this solitude, this absence, which remains constant.³⁹ “For what Orpheus has done is to turn the hut of our emptiness into something positive, into a temple...The project of [Rilke’s] poetry, then, was to find, in art, a way to transform the emptiness, the radical deficiency, of human longing into something else.”⁴⁰

Orpheus is a bridge between the two worlds, being a living being who passes down into the land of the dead in an attempt to retrieve his wife, a lost part of himself. Stephen Mitchell sees Orpheus as a symbol of complete connection, uniting the dichotomies of life and death “in an infinite wholeness,” as well as being the inner poet in all of us who “sings the truth.” “He willingly steps into the transforming flame and enters the Double-Realm...”⁴¹ Orpheus, then, is Rilke’s Muse, who ushers him into this new awareness and helps to heal the gaps and pains brought on by absence and suffering. He bears the element of healing and transformation for Rilke through his music and song, so close to poetry at times that the two can hardly be distinguishable, and yet in human life a sadness always seems to remain. It is the ultimate connection with this otherworld, with the figure of his lost beloved, that part of life that lives beyond the ordinary and yet was a part of him at one time, that he seeks.

In the Ninth Sonnet, Rilke speaks of this paradox of life being found through death, and the necessity of this journey:

Only he whose bright lyre

has sounded in shadows
 may, looking onward, restore
 his infinite praise.

Only he who has eaten
 poppies with the dead
 will not lose ever again
 the gentlest chord.

Though the image upon the pool
 often grows dim:
Know and be still.

Inside the Double World
 all voices become
 eternally mild.⁴²

It is *through* death that one comes to find that which he was looking for; or conversely, it is through this darkness that one is strengthened and made pure, restored to one's innermost self and given back the harmony and beauty of the song. Euridice may represent many things, but most of all she is that which the poet has lost and which he must seek for only in death, in the place of greatest mystery, change, and darkness. She is his feminine counterpart, and a link with the unconscious, the hidden unknown. To bring her back up to consciousness is difficult, and takes so much patience, energy and restraint that it becomes nearly impossible. And yet Rilke does not seem to see this as all terrible, for the place in which Euridice now dwells is a wholeness unto itself, or a means of wholeness. Hass writes: "Euridice is that something else [which human longing was transformed into]. She is Kore, Persephone, the ancient figure from vegetation myth, and she is also a figure for Rilke's own, peculiar psychology and the unfolding drama of his poems: mirror, dancer, flower, cup. She is the calm at the center of immense contradiction."⁴³ She fulfills the longing, at well as being what is longed for.

So much of Rilke's struggle is this reaching for something beyond him, beyond human longings with their ties and binds, and the awful solitude and estrangement of life. In his Third Sonnet, he asks a perplexing question:

A god can do it. But will you tell me how
a man can enter through the lyre's strings?
Our mind is split. And at the shadowed crossing
of heart roads, there is no temple for Apollo.⁴⁴

Rilke is addressing something very mysterious here, how a person can come to be like a god or part of a divine being, to "enter through the lyre's strings" and *become* the music, an ethereal and intangible thing. The poem goes on:

Song, as you have taught it, is not desire,
not wooing any grace that can be achieved;
song is reality. Simple, for a god.
But when can *we* be real? When does he pour

the earth, the stars, into us? Young man,
it is not your loving, even if your mouth
was forced wide open by your own voice--learn

to forget that passionate music. It will end.
True singing is a different breath, about
nothing. A gust inside the god. A wind.

This poem, like all the others, takes time to sink in. I feel myself not wanting to speak, or write, after reading it, as if the wind of it has swept into me and rattled my very bones with its silent, invisible hushing, hushing, hushing away into a great void and distance. I am left silenced, stilled with the great pieces of wind and song still in my throat, my mouth dry, open, all senses changed. We must almost give a moment of grace, of meditation and quiet, before entering back into the world after such a poem.

There is an emptiness created by the singing and the wind, or rather through which these things may pass. It seems to have been necessary to Rilke's inspiration to have this quiet, almost empty time with his own thoughts. In a series of letters written during the years of 1902 to 1908 to an aspiring young poet who contacted him for guidance (later gathered together under the title *Letters to A Young Poet*), Rilke spoke often of the solitude and aloneness that each of us must learn to embrace, for he saw these as necessary to our inner explorations, as well as important to our growth and true natures. "We are unutterably alone, essentially, especially in the things most intimate and important to us," he wrote.⁴⁵ He advised, "embrace your solitude and love it. Endure the pain it causes, and try to sing out with it."⁴⁶ And again, "The individual person who senses his aloneness, and only he, is like a thing subject to the deep laws, the cosmic laws."⁴⁷ In speaking of the "grand solitude" of a windy, seaside landscape, Rilke wrote: "It shall be imminent in all that you experience and all that you do. It will act as an anonymous influence, akin to how ancestral blood constantly moves and merges with our own and links with that of the individual, never to be unlinked. It is gently decisive at each crossroad of our life."⁴⁸

These sensibilities and affirmations can certainly be felt in his poems, and as one "who senses his aloneness," he most definitely seems subject to deeper laws, "the cosmic laws." Perhaps an empty space, a plain over which a wind could blow, was needed if a god was to come through. Only in emptiness and space can a song be heard. He spoke with praise about the solitude he enjoyed before the writing of the first elegy of the *Duino Elegies*. Wolfgang Ippman, in his biography of Rilke, talks about the elegies for him:

The poet did not think of himself as their creator but their receiver: the vessel into which they were poured or the prism in which the rays of inspiration were refracted and dispersed. Since these verses were dictated to him by way of revelations, a certain

ambiguity, typical of prophesy or revelation, clings to them. This means that the author himself can contribute little to our understanding of the poems and that the reader cannot necessarily penetrate them intellectually to the last syllable.⁴⁹

There is to this passage a very religious, mystical tone in describing the way Rilke experienced the reception of his poetry, and his poems do feel this way--we can sense the revelations, even if we do not know what they mean. We can hear, in the first elegy, the drama being played out for Rilke, who seems almost overwhelmed by the powerful flow of words that rushed in upon him, and the pressing in of the angels or gods. Rilke begins, "Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angels' / hierarchies? and even if one of them pressed me/ suddenly against his heart: I would be consumed/ in that overwhelming existence."⁵⁰ The poem begins in a kind of despair, an inward monologue with overtones of hopelessness and longing. It continues: "For beauty is nothing/ but the beginning of terror, which we still are just able to endure,/ and we are so awed because it serenely disdains/ to annihilate us. Every angel is terrifying." The experience for Rilke, perhaps, of being a vessel to the intense things that came through him was one of terror, for what is beautiful, all art, love and creation (?), inevitably led to the edge of what was safe and comfortable in life, and flung him full-force into the unknown.

The elegies read like fits and swoopings of all kinds of frenzied things, beautiful images and ethereal metaphors, emotions intensified with each line. Take, for instance, a part of the Second Elegy:

Early successes, Creation's pampered favorites,
 mountain-ranges, peaks growing red in the dawn
 of all Beginning,--pollen of the flowering godhead,
 joints of pure light, corridors, stairways, thrones.
 space formed from essence, shields made of ecstasy, storms
 of emotion whirled into rapture, and suddenly, alone:
mirrors, which scoop up the beauty that has streamed from their face

and gather it back, into themselves, entire.⁵¹

Rilke's words recall creation stories from different cultures and times, and rambling prophecies, spiritual realities that we can only glimpse in their myriad forms, so many that the image from the mirror may stand to be real, but the real essence is always greater, intangible, magnificent and overwhelming to the point of swallowing us entire in our human smallness.

His was a realm of the gods, where all-powerful forces reined and broke in on a stillness sometimes with such clarity, sometimes with obscurity, but always so startling that the only answer for such a moment was to be still and listen, waiting, enveloped in the being and the enormous presence bestowed upon him. Listening to his words can be like listening to the most sophisticated and refined stream of consciousness. There is an inner movement to the poems, a heightened sense of life at its most fundamental level, full of possibilities that bend and swoop in an endless, mutable dance and flow of images.

Rilke wrote: "If only we too could discover a pure, contained,/ human place, our own strip of fruit-bearing soil/ between river and rock. For our own heart always exceeds us,/ as theirs did. And we can no longer follow it, gazing/ into images that soothe it or into the godlike bodies/ where, measured more greatly, it achieves a greater repose."⁵² This seemed to be what he wanted most: "a pure, contained, human place...of fruit-bearing soil," a place to be and live with oneself and one's own fertility, in harmony, in peace. The heart is too big, too great; it overwhelms in its magnitude and its feeling. Perhaps death is the only repose, the only true way of transcending this human longing, a place in which to be transformed from the enormity of human (and godly) experience. There is in death an element of overcoming, of rising to meet something so destructive in ordinary life with a kind of grace, a kind of bending of oneself to

move beyond limits, beyond the restraints that human longing, in its yearning for transcendence, places upon one. Rilke's human longing seemed so great, perhaps not disconnected from his extreme receptivity and far-sighted vision which always seemed to be looking at the stars, or the face of a god.

In a poem from 1913-14 that was never published by Rilke, but gathered in a collection under the title of *Uncollected Poems*, Rilke could have been speaking to Euridice, or the archetype of Euridice and what she represented for him, going beyond the myth and becoming a figure in his own mythology. It seems to contain all of his longing for this Beloved figure, summing up the sweet, elusive intangibility of that unattainable longed-for thing. The first half begins:

You who never arrived
 in my arms, Beloved, who were lost
 from the start,
 I don't even know what songs
 would please you. I have given up trying
 to recognize you in the surging wave of the next
 moment. All the immense
 images in me--the far-off, deeply-felt landscape,
 cities, towers, and bridges, and un-
 suspected turns in the path,
 and those powerful lands that were once
 pulsing with the life of the gods--
 all rise within me to mean
 you, who forever elude me.⁵³

The Beloved, then, becomes something almost spiritual, an element whose mere existing makes it possible to long for more--even if her face or name or form are obscured from our view. There is something found in moving forward to meet her, traversing the often unknown and deeper territories of night and death. But through this thickness of pain and suffering, a human element

may be given up for something more like that of a god: even Orpheus had to die a terrible death so that his song might be heard to this day. "But you, divine poet, who sang on till the end/ as the swarm of rejected maenads attacked you, shrieking,/ you over powered their noise with harmony, and/ from pure destruction arose your transfigured song...Oh you lost god! You inexhaustible trace!/ Only because you were torn and scattered through Nature/ have *we* become hearers now and a rescuing voice."⁵⁴

To Live the Dream

“Nothing happens without first being dreamed.”
--Edgar Cayce

The French-born writer, Anaïs Nin, may long be remembered for her complexity, her independence and modern thinking, her erotic freedom, her imagination, and the personas that she presented to the world through her famous diaries and creative prose fiction. I am not interested so much in the many ways others have and do view her, but more in her own words, the visions and dreams she conjured up and made a life from--a life rich in meaning, depth, subjectivity, art, dreams and fantasy. Her imagination was poetic and rich, and her dedication to her life as “the dream,” as a work of art in and of itself, was all-consuming. The themes which permeate her writings--love, the self, relationships, the personal and subjective, the unconscious, woman’s perspective, freedom, mutability, illusion versus reality, the dream, the necessity and possibility of healing, transformation of life into beauty and destruction into creation, and the living of one’s art through one’s life--weave a strong web that continues to grow, change and transmute itself into new forms and orientations through all of her works.

She sought a life of heightened moments, emotions and sensibilities, a life full of depth, passion, drama and intensity: the artist’s life. In volume one of the Diary from 1931-1934 she writes: “Ordinary life does not interest me. I seek only the high moments. I am in accord with the surrealists, searching for the marvelous.

“I want to be a writer who reminds others that these moments exist; I want to prove that there is infinite space, infinite meaning, infinite dimension.”⁵⁵ In seeking the high moments, she attempted to make her whole life a dance, a journey, a marvelous creation filled with depth,

wonder, surprise, hidden truths, glimpses of the mysteries whose encounters were luminous and expanding.

Anaïs Nin wrote in the Diary: “The personal life deeply lived always expands into truths beyond itself.”⁵⁶ There is something found in going deeply into oneself, exploring one’s own depths and dimensions, the hidden, subjective and personal, which can bring one closer to a larger experience, extending beyond oneself and coming upon insights and truths which can be profound and transformative. Rilke felt this way in his own life; in his *Letters to a Young Poet*, he advises, “Go within and scale the depths of your own being from which your very life springs forth...For the creative artist must be a world of his own...”⁵⁷

Likewise, Anaïs Nin created for herself her own world, pulling the covers of it over her head; a world of dreams, fantasies, insights, overtures and subtleties. “I have built a rich, private world,”⁵⁸ she said in her Diary of 1934-1939. And in that world she also felt connected to a deeper rhythm: “When words and feelings have learned to float they reach the poetic *mouvement perpetuel*. To float means to be joined to some universal rhythm. The absolute means the pulsing moment of rhythm. It is while floating, abandoning myself to experience that I become tied to the whole world.”⁵⁹ In her Diary, as in her life, she explored her own life to the fullest, always committed to living out “the dream”: “Life, for me, is a profound, a sacred, a joyous, a soulful dance...I walk with my dream unfurled, and lose myself in my own labyrinths, and the dream unfurled carries me. It is because of my insistence on the dream that I am alone...It is my mystery.”⁶⁰ For Nin, it was in losing herself in the ecstasy and dance of life that she felt herself connected to a larger reality; though the reality was fed by her own insistence on living life as a dream and seeing deeper into ordinary things, beyond them, connected to others

and yet always aware of her solitude in fulfilling this life of absolute intimacy and profound feeling. Her art *was* her life, and there was little separation between them. What informed her views and insights was an entirely feminine perspective, built upon the foundations of creativity, creation (as opposed to destruction), and an awareness of the mysteries of life with their constant ebbing and flowing. Like the mysterious women in Waterhouse's paintings, and the inspiration felt by Rilke in the writing of his poems, Nin lived the mysteries and her life was shaped by their presence.

The Diary is the most revealing form of Anaïs Nin's writings, both for its self-exploration and personal visions of how she saw and encountered the world, how she filtered and transformed her experiences, and synthesized her insights, opinions and reflections on herself and others. It contains multi-faceted and layered writing, and was considered--by herself and others--her best and most pure, free and inspired writing. It was also the created world that Nin chose to live by and in; it was her interpretation of herself, her life and her relationship to others, as well as her interpretations of the people most closely a part of her life. She writes about them like she writes about her characters in novels; they are heightened, full of ambiances and ambivalences, and exposed often for weaknesses, beauties, faults, deceptions, triumphs and despairs. They are woven, along with everything else, to make the rich tapestry of the diaries (as they are divided into many volumes), and of the enigma surrounding this fluid and talented woman who is the author of them. The Diary is also used to create, hold up and give effect to the woman Nin created out of her many layers and insights, out of illusions and truths that one has a difficult time discerning between.

In the Diary she was also able to live out all of the selves within her, and all of the many

personas and facets could reveal themselves.⁶¹ She could allow herself to be free and to lose herself in the dream. She wrote: “The dream is my only life. I see in the echoes and reverberations, the transfigurations which alone keep wonder pure. Otherwise all magic is lost.”⁶² In the diaries she allowed herself to flow out in all directions, to go inward and explore the deeper, unconscious realms as she delved into psychoanalysis, to interpret and perceive, analyze and evaluate, reflect and ponder about her personal relationships and the world around and within her in a totally personal, subjective, safe haven of her own. Her focus is always internal, always on the inner life and drama that is played out, the transformation and transmutation of life into a beautiful creation, and her own art’s reflection of the impermeability, elusiveness, joy, sadness and sacredness of life. “Her mode of awareness is psychological and transcendental”⁶³ and “her best judgements are intuitive.”⁶⁴ She has a peculiar range of subjectivity and objectivity, of free-form associative writing and analysis, of deeply personal musings and detailed observations of her close friends and acquaintances. Like the theme and title of one of her books (*Collages*), she seemed to build up her art and her life like a collage, gathering the bits and pieces of her experiences, perceptions, and visions, fragments of facts and fiction, into a luminous, if not fully comprehensible whole.⁶⁵ Sharon Spencer writes:

The vast tissue of Nin’s entwined life and writings reveals the fascinating way in which the self mediates between conscious and unconscious experience, traveling between them like an artful spider, building an intricate structure from the relationships it creates in its ceaseless motion...The fixative in her collage compositions is always a self in relationship. And from the presence of this self radiate perceptions and insights that endow the collage, whether it is a volume of the diary or a novel, with its particular design of feeling and form.⁶⁶

The Diary began as a letter to the young Anaïs’s father when she was eleven years old on the boat taking her mother and two brothers to America from Spain⁶⁷ in the late summer of

1914.⁶⁸ Her father, who had abandoned the family when Anaïs was ten years old,⁶⁹ was a talented pianist who performed all over Europe, traveling often. When he left it devastated Anaïs and changed her life forever, supplying the initial form, content and themes that would remain with her and color her experiences ever after. She recalls the situation and beginnings of her cherished diary, which would continue and come to be called her “best friend”⁷⁰:

I began the diary at the age of eleven on the ship coming to America, separated from my father, to describe to him this strange land and entice him to come. It would enable him to follow our lives. The diary was begun to bring someone back. My mother didn't let me mail it; and it became private, a house of the spirit, a laboratory. It became a refuge, a sanctuary.⁷¹

From then on, the diary was as much a part of Nin's life as she was, growing to become the center point of everything she did or thought or felt, for it was here where she faithfully recorded every detail of her experiences in the very personal way that she viewed them. She wrote everything down that meant something to her, and she was the center, the star, of the diary.⁷² In a story she wrote in 1938 called “The Paper Womb,” she described her experience of writing the diary and what it meant to her: “There was always an anguish...about seeing things but once. There was a definite feeling that their meaning, their color, and their fleshliness of touch could only happen the second time. If there were no second time, if I were forced to go on, unknowing, blind, everything would be lost.”⁷³ For Nin, there was in writing a sense of necessity, of immediacy, as if only through the writing down of her experiences did they become real and tangible. One can hear a dramatic feeling of intensity and strong emotion tied to the diary and the writing of it. It seemed to be the formative structure of her life, the glue that held everything together for her and made things *real*, allowing for the continuation of the inner journey and its need to be expressed and lived, as well as giving the woman Anaïs a bridge to

herself, so to speak, a testament that would speak herself and her life in its pages. She wrote: "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection...to record the journey into the labyrinth."⁷⁴

Evelyn J. Hinz writes of the Diary: "The *Diary* began as a letter by Nin, the child, to the father who had without apparent reason left her. Thus initially, the journal was, like a primitive ritual, a concrete attempt to maintain contact with the invisible and to confront the inexplicable. When the continued absence led to weakening of faith in the imminence of a reunion, the writing of the journal become confessional and the *Diary* the outlet for questions directed outward but with answers discovered inward."⁷⁵ So the themes of the Diary were set and the myth-making begun; the essential relationship between the visible and invisible, and the giving of oneself to the unknown, the mysterious and inexplicable, while remaining deeply tied to a conscious rendition of it. The Diary, thus, had become the one true place where Anaïs lived.

In an essay and talk she gave in 1974 called "The New Woman," Nin spoke of writing and the question of why someone writes. She said: "I believe one writes because one has to create a world in which one can live. I could not live in any of the worlds offered me--the world of my parents, the world of war, the world of politics. I had to create a world of my own, like a climate, a country, an atmosphere in which I could breathe, reign, and recreate myself when destroyed by living. That, I believe, is the reason for every work of art."⁷⁶ Imagination, then, becomes a kind of savior in the form of creation, or re-creation, a way to build one's life into a liveable, sustaining structure which encourages growth and feeds the soul. Creation became for Nin a means of transforming, of elevating the sad and ordinary into something beautiful and full of new meaning. She goes on to say: "The artist is the only one who knows that the world is a

subjective creation, that there is a choice to be made, a selection of elements. It is a materialization, an incarnation of his inner world.”⁷⁷

The Diary is a sojourn of self-discovery, re-creation, myth-making and exploration. It charts the unmapped territories of Nin’s human longings, expressions, experiences--all that she possesses, or wishes to possess or be; all that she creates and lives by, and transcends all of these, as well. In his introduction to the first volume of the Diary, Gunther Stuhlmann writes: “The diary is the log of her journey through the labyrinth of the self, of her effort to find, and to define, the woman Anaïs, the real and the symbolic one... [It] is Anaïs Nin’s book. It is her created life, the filter through which she strains her experience into a meaningful pattern. It is also her shield and confessional.”⁷⁸

What may be seen as illusions or untruths to others are, to Anaïs Nin, the very mutable and ambiguous elements of her art. All things filtering into and through her are like colors, sounds and movements made that change her, effect her and color the way she sees herself and the world. Although her Diary (and, it could be argued, her fiction as well) are centered around herself even as they speak of others, this self is a very important issue in another way and cannot be easily defined. The self, in Nin’s experience, is multi-faceted, complex and ambiguous in the sense that so much of it is hidden in unconscious and deeper realms. It is larger and more dimensional than what may seem to be true on the surface, one’s self going much deeper than the face they usually present to the world. The true self seems to go beyond the personal “I,” and touch other things and people in its expansion, in its empathy. Sharon Spencer writes: “Empowered by the act of perception, the self is a tool for connecting the conscious and unconscious realms. This is true of all people, but is much more obvious in the case of artists,

whose completed work testifies to the success of the connections the self has accomplished.”⁷⁹

The self is also where connections are made between people, and as relationships were a central focus for Nin, the self was also where boundaries dissolved and the merging of two or more people, things, experiences, etc. took place. Spencer writes:

Nin does not seem to be concerned with the self as essence. Instead, she writes about the self in motion, in relationships with others, learning, searching, suffering, recovering, gathering still more experience. In short, Nin writes about the self as a process, almost as an urge toward the discovery and completion of itself...In dramatizing the journey of an “I” toward recognition of itself, again and again Nin chooses to explore the complexity of relationships or the impact of two selves on each other. She uses the terms “fusion” and “merging” to describe intense personal relationships. Her characters, like her own self in her Diary, are always moving either toward an experience of fusion or struggling to become free from one.”⁸⁰

In Anaïs Nin’s own words she describes this experience for herself: “My madness is that of perpetual identification with others...People mingle within me. There is a flow between them all, an absence of separateness.”⁸¹ What is recorded in the Diary in fluid prose is this mingling of selves, and yet a very clear sense of Anaïs Nin as she wanted herself to be presented to the world, or as she felt. Her descriptions of others, however, in their beautiful and poetic imagery, seem to mesh with her self as we come to know her and them in the diaries. And it is while moving, constantly shifting and changing, that Nin can feel herself connected to a larger rhythm and to others as part of that dynamic current running through everything. She says: “I swim in nature...I go wherever there is life-pulse.”⁸² The life-pulse is what keeps her going, keeps her sustained, for it is the very essence of creativity, of spirituality, of art. It is the greater pattern from which her own takes food, a source of wealth and sustenance that, when she attunes to it, moves her along with its mysteries.

The mysteries of the unconscious, and of all that lies hidden beneath the surface of things,

was a continual theme for Nin, and something that she tried to delve into and uncover in her fiction and Diary. They are psychological truths that she discovers, and her writing takes on a flow and movement that lead her to a distillation of an essence, to a transformational experience. She said of her writing: "I believe in communicating by way of the emotions, by imagery, indirectness, the myth. I think all my women have tried to live by the impulses of the subconscious. In all my novels, I have only one heroine in direct action, and even she discovers the necessity of the inner journey. I never believed in action, only in achieving life on a poetic level."⁸³ The inner life is the place where she is most comfortable, living and breathing in a world of poetic images, symbols and metaphors, a world also of imagination and mythologizing. "Her writing is a poetic defense of her belief in the unconscious as a source of the visions and imaginary experiences that compliment life, compensating for its limitations, endowing it with the richness of mental play and the dreamed-of-fulfillments that "reality" may not be capable of providing,"⁸⁴ writes Spencer. In her delving into the inner world, Nin reclaims parts of herself. Her poetic vision and heightened imagination all lead her to a truer version of the multi-dimensional quality of the self for her, even if this is found to be ambiguous, complicated, or ephemeral. She wrote: "If we contemplate mystery long enough our own creativity will set about unraveling it."⁸⁵

Creativity for Nin was central to her beliefs about life, central to the very way she lived and approached the world. It was the permeable foundation behind all that she did, the fluid and always surprising element which made life exciting, rich and worth living. A life creatively lived would have been the ideal for Nin, and creativity comes in many shapes and forms. In looking back on her recognition and praise of the artist throughout her life, she states what creation

means, or meant, to her: "...for me the artist simply means one who can transform ordinary life into a beautiful creation with his craft. But I did not mean creation strictly applied only to the arts, I meant creation in life, the creation of a child, a garden, a house, a dress. I was referring to creativity in all its aspects. Not only the actual products of art, but the faculty for healing, consoling, raising the level of life, transforming it by our own efforts."⁸⁶

The acts of creation, of transformation and "raising the level of life" are themes found in almost every aspect of Nin's writings, and most importantly in her own life, shaping and coloring her expressions in the world, her outlook, her current of being. In the Diary she wrote, "Perhaps I have loved the artist because creation is the nearest we come to divinity."⁸⁷ There is a sense of the sacredness of the act of creation, in whatever form it takes. Creation, for Nin, was a process of transforming ordinary reality--the dull and mundane, the boring and painful, the despairing and awful--into something beautiful, personal and extraordinary. In living in the heightened moments she came to revelations and epiphanies that perhaps cannot be explained, but must be experienced for what they are--and if we can ever explain them, then it may be only a part of the experience that can be transcribed. She lived in these moments and dreamed through her life, coming close to what the saints, prophets and artists of the past have always spoken of. Even in a passage in one of the volumes of the Diary, she writes: "Something is happening to me of which I am not afraid; it is an expansion of my consciousness, creating in space and loneliness. It is a vision, a city suspended in the sky, a rhythm of blood. It is ecstasy. Known only to the saints and the poets. Ecstasy before life. Before all things, the growth of a seed...I may explode one day and send fragments to the earth."⁸⁸

From a Taoist perspective (something that I have found to be so appropriate to the issues

and experiences I have been speaking of), the process of attaining enlightenment is so similar to Nin's descriptions of her own experiences and feelings that it seems worth mentioning. There is a Buddhist concept of "the eighth consciousness, which is the storage house of the unconscious...The Taoist process of transformation of the ego to the self is...through knowledge of no-knowledge or nondifferentiation, to reach the storage house of the unconscious."⁸⁹ This is speaking of the self as apart from the ego or persona, the limited identity that one knows oneself to be. The self is larger, it can be said, without boundaries or limits, and the ultimate goal is to have a "mind of harmony," where differentiation between subject and object ceases to exist and there is a mutual correspondence, a fusion between them. Chang Chung-yuan says: "According to the Taoists the analysis of things succeeds only in separating object analyzed and subject analyzer...[This] prevents the emergence of the great self; whereas nondifferentiation, or knowledge of no-knowledge, seeks to break down the boundaries between the analyzer as subject and analyzed as object. Interpenetration of the two give rise to the mind of harmony. This harmony...may be compared to [the eighth consciousness], the reservoir of life. From this unconscious storage house, pure consciousness or light emanates. Thus enlightenment takes place and the self is transformed...This derivation of light from the deep layers of the unconscious is not an analytic process. Logical understanding is, indeed, foreign to it."⁹⁰

There is an experience of divinity reached through this process of nondifferentiation, and in Anaïs Nin's case, it was through abandoning herself to the world and to experience that she became connected to it. She speaks of a dissolution of herself and a relation felt between others at times that ran so deep it connected her to everything that was around her, reflecting within her, imbuing her writing with its sense of flow, rhythm, connection, almost like music. Spencer

writes: “Nin’s writing is filled with patterns that are natural and spontaneous, having emerged from associations. The form is organic; it consists of repetitions; inversions; superimpositions; and, more and more often in Nin’s later prose, of improvisatory flights in which images are often treated as are themes in jazz. Fluency, fluidity, a sense of motion, and of continuity are what Nin seeks in her writing, an orchestration of a great many elements into a composition that moves through time horizontally and vertically at the same instant...”⁹¹ It is only in feeling, experiencing, living that she feels a sense of complete connection, and the rhythms move within her, subtly changing her chemistry on a level that comes closest to the way music feels, breathes, lives. It is elusive, and yet the penetration of such an experience can be so deeply felt that it seems very direct, spontaneous, free, and the moment of greatest revelation comes on in complete harmony, perfect interconnectedness.

But again, Nin changes this song in another way, when she writes at the end of the second volume of the *Diary*: “But the artist is not there to be at one with the world, he is there to transform it. He cannot belong to it, for then he would not achieve his task, which is to change. The struggle against destruction which I lived out in my intimate relationships had to be transposed and become of use to the whole world.”⁹² Spencer describes Nin’s process: “The essential motivation in Nin’s life and art is a passionate desire to transform every thing, every experience, and every person, into a meaningful and valuable, if not actually a beautiful, entity...To use a metaphysical term, it is an ongoing experiment in poetic alchemy...Alchemy is perhaps Nin’s favorite metaphor for the process through which art transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary.”⁹³ She speaks of “Nin’s conviction that art is the ‘alchemical’ magic through which life is redeemed.”⁹⁴

This metaphor of alchemy for her creation sinks in like a soft dye, soaking the very edges of my thoughts with purple and orange ink. This is how it makes me feel. For this process of alchemy, of changing ordinary metal into gold, as a metaphor, entails living in the dream, and Nin gives her own explanation of this: "I may be able to escape the fatality of historical time, the tragedies of daily life, the cruelty and destructiveness of the world into poetic life, the eternal." Her recipe for this is thus: "One must not be afraid. One must know how to float as words do, without roots and without watering cans. One must know how to navigate without latitudes and longitudes and without motor. Without drugs and without burdens. One must learn to breathe like a wind-measuring instrument, the cord must be made of sand, the anchor of aurora borealis."⁹⁵ In other words, one must dream and live fully in the poetic moment, as Nin did. Whether it was a successful escape from the tragedies of life, I cannot say.

In her novel *Collages*, Nin writes about the character Varda, a man who made collages of different women from bits and pieces of fabric and glue. Nin writes, "He is the alchemist searching only for what he could transmute into gold." Varda says: "Nothing endures unless it has first been transposed into a myth, and the great advantage of myths is that they are ladies with portable roots."⁹⁶ He could have been speaking about Anaïs Nin, and as a character in her book he must have been. She speaks of the way he gives names to his collaged women, names of sainthood: Saint Banality "who reigned over the artists who could take everyday objects and turn them into extraordinary ones;" Saint Parabola "who decorated with haloes those whose stories no one could understand;" Saint Corona who "arrived at sunrise to wake him;" and so on. "The women were interchangeable and flowed into one another as in dreams."⁹⁷ Everything that Nin represented to herself, perhaps, or that she lived deeply in her inner life, can be seen reflected in

these images and their descriptions.

She spoke often of living the myth, of her life becoming a myth as she followed the dream. And it was her will, her creation, her own doings that brought her life to this, that transformed her life. "I mastered the mechanisms of life the better to bend it to the will of the dream. I conquered details to make the dream more possible. With hammer and nails, paint, soap, money, typewriter, cookbook, douche bags, I created a dream."⁹⁸ Out of ordinary, plain things she created beauty and used her imagination to give new life and color to living. She believed that "by exploring and unraveling the personal mythology, it can reach an impersonal mythology."⁹⁹

Sometimes I have held the belief that one can only create--that all beautiful work comes--only from a divine inspiration, and that the source of this art, this gift, this creation, was other than the artist him or herself. I have believed that it is a higher source, what I call a mystery and often divine; it is a matter of understanding, recognition, belief. It has been my subjective interpretation, and also my own struggle with art and creation. Anaïs Nin has helped me to see the primary role of the artist, and to gain confidence in my own abilities as a creator. It was she who, as a writer, created a world in which she could live, filling it with voices, dreams, colors, images, so she could feel life to the fullest, every nuance, every touch, every texture, every heartbeat. And each new angle took on a tint and dimension that imbued it with life and a feeling of what is most important, a feeling of what is holy--though she redefined this as well through a woman's eyes and sensibilities.

She said, "As a woman I was fully aware that it was my personal world which was the source of my strength and my psychic energy...Just as the deep-sea diver carries a tank of oxygen,

we have to carry the kernel of our individual growth with us into the world in order to withstand the pressures, the shattering pressures of outer experiences. But I never lose sight of their interdependence..."¹⁰⁰ She later said: "I believe the lasting revolution comes from deep changes in ourselves which influence our collective life,"¹⁰¹ thus revealing the union of the inner and outer worlds, the way they are connected. Only for Nin, it was in the inner world where any deep changes could be made; from the inner to the outer, not the other way around.

I still feel that art and creation are gifts to us, though their sources may be unknown. But the artist is an active player in the reception of this art; even in receptivity, he or she must choose the qualities of life by which to live, thereby endowing him or herself either with elements that allow for this reception and for the expression and manifestations of creativity, or that are closed to this, thereby shutting their eyes to this experience. It is an experience of something mysterious, something which can be transcendental. Nin wrote: "mystery is the proof of man's spiritual existence and symbolism is the only way to capture it, and the language must be learned. But one must first of all accept immersion into the night world of the unconscious. You cannot analyze while feeling."¹⁰² It is difficult to examine and explain in the midst of living, experiencing and feeling all of the sensuous tonalities of the heightened moment; this is something we do *after*. To immerse oneself in experience is to dislodge from the cumbersome practicalities and formalities of analysis, of over-intellectualizing everything. In dreams, logic and reason are put aside in favor of poetry, metaphor, symbolism; emotive understandings and clarities rich in chameleon-like robes of suggestion.

"The artist is one who makes visible the invisible, and in Anaïs Nin's view the invisible is essential as a complement to the visible" writes Spencer. "Nin's literary aspiration is

formidable; it is to express passionately and powerfully what others are not aware of, or if they are, cannot express because they do not possess the means of articulation.”¹⁰³ Anaïs Nin did just that, speaking for the interior life, the unconscious inner world where dreams are manifest and myths are lived. She wrote: “Psychologically, a great personality is a circle touching something at every point. A circle with a core...widening until it joins the circle motions of the infinite.”¹⁰⁴ I believe she achieved this, and her dreams and visions continue to touch those who also believe deeply in the power of the inner life and beauty to change the world.

My Process

Rilke wrote: “*All things* consist of carrying to term and then giving birth. To allow the completion of every impression, every germ of a feeling deep within, in darkness, beyond words, in the realm of instinct unattainable by logic, to await humbly and patiently the hour of the descent of a new clarity: that alone is to live one’s art, in the realm of understanding as that of creativity.”¹⁰⁵ This has been my process--in creating this thesis, as well as behind every work of art and project I begin. The beginning is always the most difficult for me, but once I get going, once I have the first words on the page, the paint on the canvas, I can give myself to the work of creation and become so absorbed in it that I forget all other things. This is the beauty of the artist, which I am hesitant to call myself yet: the falling into a state of grace, continuity, absorption, a flow in one’s work, and a courage to follow that flow wherever it leads. This is the mysterious nature of creation in any form, the diving into the unknown, the delving below the surface and following currents which are fluid, sometimes otherworldly, connective, and in many ways sacred. The artist is essentially a traverser of the deep, drawing from the well of hidden possibilities, inspiration, creativity, and bringing back treasures to share with the rest of the world.

I have an art show that is part of this thesis, showing my work in a wide range of mediums: paintings, clay sculptures, hand-made paper bowls, some with poems on the inside of them, and “character stones,” small round disks of clay inscribed with Asian characters. The work is expressive of the moments when, in creating, I feel that something greater imbues my art and breathes life into its many forms and faces. I cannot explain what this feeling is entirely, nor where it comes from, who brings it, why it is there. I can only allow the artwork to speak for

itself, in a way, and to be the guide into its own multi-faceted worlds.

Much of my inspiration comes from dreams, spontaneous ideas, inner visions. In creating a piece of art my senses become awakened; I am attuned to the physical textures of things, to the colors that affect me, to a flow of rhythm and form. I must be able to feel the art within me in order to express it outwardly, or to connect enough with it so that it reveals itself. It is a mysterious process for me, and I feel it most especially in my writing. Poems have come to me since I was a little girl, and before these, song. I grew up with a love of song, music, singing, the sound of a voice with its resonations and intonations, its flow and softness, depth or intensity. My writing has carried this sensibility of music and lyricism, even before I realized it or was told this by others who read my work. A poem's power for me resides not only in its written words and passages, but in the spoken word as a part of its revelation, expression, presentation to the world. I must always read aloud to myself the things that I write, so as to really feel them and have them become a part of me, a part of my grounded experience.

Many of my poems begin with a sudden inspiration, a line that runs through my head and wherever I am (strangely enough, many times while driving or in a repetitive, trance-like situation), I must write it down before I lose it, or forget it. This used to happen so often, when I felt more connected to my own rhythms and had more free time, time to think and dream and be introspective. When I came to school, I could still feel it coursing through me and I wrote fervently in the creative writing class I took my first term here. But when it came time to share the writing with others, and my flow was critiqued, my words analyzed, something in me shut down. Lewis Hyde writes that the "song can be silenced by self-consciousness, and the plentitude of the imagination can be lost to the scarcity of logic."¹⁰⁶ There is something harmful

in the exposing of one in the process of their art making, or in the way that analysis and judgement can cut into the flow of creation. There is a time and a place for everything, both creativity and analysis, but when one impedes on the other's sense of forming, on its *becoming*, then I see this as dangerous to both the inner life of the artist and the life of their gift, the expressed creation, the artwork. My own experience has taught me that I need enough time *inside* before I bring these works *outside*, for they are as close to my heart as if they were my own children, and their recognition and reception is something that effects me personally. I believe that when the timing is right things will happen as they should, according to their natures. Finishing the writing of this thesis strikes me with a subtle joy, for the process of realizing, developing, and manifesting this inherent understanding and subjective belief in the mysteries that are the center of my writing has been a difficult one, but now that I am near the end, I feel that the journey was worth it.

To speak a little of the poems to follow: I rarely revise my poems, and if I do any sort of revision it is only to change a word or two, or clarify something, or seek to find the natural movement that perhaps was interrupted during the writing and reception of the poem. There is a spirit that I feel behind each poem, and often the words come tumbling in on their own rhythm, bearing their own light and internal musicality. I have tried to allow this spirit to come through and to express itself (though, really, it is not so much up to me, it seems, if it comes or not). It is an honor and respect for the essence of the poem. Sometimes I have no idea what will come out and speak before me on the page. There is an element of surprise, wonder, awe. I am brought new realizations, new insights and understanding into my life, relationships, and internal states. Or often I am left not knowing quite what the poem is about or means yet, or whose voice it is

speaking behind it. But I have a deep belief in its importance, in its meaning and its direction-- somehow inwardly sensing that if it wants to, it will reveal itself in time.

These are my gifts, and I present them with gratitude and a little fear, but mostly with exhilaration. They have lives of their own; it was they who wanted to speak, and I who wish to share them. Lewis Hyde writes: "...the imagination is not subject to the will of the artist. To accept the fruits of these things as gifts is to acknowledge that we are not their owners or masters, that we are, if anything, their servants and ministers."¹⁰⁷ And this is how I have always felt about the creative work that comes through me as gifts. They come bearing up small messages, revelations, discoveries. They come in times of need and sorrow and joy, to bring blessings from another place. "A gift that has the power to change us awakens a part of the soul."¹⁰⁸ "Gifts-- given or received--stand witness to meaning beyond the known, and gift exchange is therefore a transcendent commerce..."¹⁰⁹ Hyde explains that the gift must be kept in motion in order to stay alive, and that "a gift eventually circles back toward its source."¹¹⁰ We are supposed to give away the gifts that we have been given, to keep the motion and the life continually regenerating itself as the gifts are passed on.¹¹¹ He writes: "The greatest art offers us images by which to imagine our lives."¹¹² My hope is that in sharing my art and writing, by sharing the mysteries as I have experienced them, images are offered up that may find relevance with others, significance or meaning, and the gift-cycle continued, on and on.

Part III: The Poems

“The events in our lives happen in a sequence in time, but in their significance to ourselves, they find their own order...the continuous thread of revelation.”

--Eudora Welty

Offering

Here, take this cup,
hold it in your hands.
It is yours,
I give it to you:
my offering.
Feel its smoothness and its roundness,
touch the inside as it
glides downward
toward the center,
the holder, where my richness
is poured. But
it is empty.
This is how it should be,
how it is, how it began,
and how it will end.
You may pour your troubles here
into its holding cell,
you may drink with your hands
from its deep dish;
you may wind your fingers
around it like a heart.
It is mine no longer,
only a part of me remains.
A little silver in the lining,
finger prints upon the glass.
Although it's stained by me,
open it and drink.
Please do not be afraid,
I have been trying
to give this up.

Leaving

For so long I have lived
in this house. Slept
beneath its thumping walls,
breathed in its silence
and its stillness; cursed
the darkness and the light;
prayed for all the grief
contained in the closets and attics
to be swept clean, gone.
I have laughed and I have
cried between the places
where wells once were,
gathering my tears in buckets
full of so much longing,
so many secret prayers.
Living beneath the black
carpet layers and watching
time fold, all the carpenters
and construction men who've
wrecked the old, and put up
new fences and dishwashers,
light fixtures and floor panels;
still there was this coldness
that would not leave.
Between shafts of sunlight,
I fell into their crooked jaws,
clawing at the upholstery
like a cat, and waiting, waiting
for silence and stillness to return
and all the unfortunate misgivings,
all the small children turned
away to be promised again
when the dim light of August
turns its dust up into the air.
Steeling a patch of shade
from those crooked jaws
was not easy; it was a sacrifice
to be made. But this house
has stood against furious storms,

withheld the wind that tried
to break against the windows,
and endured the disasters
that pounded against its strong,
solid walls, pounded inside
the chests of men.

For more moons than I can
remember, I have lifted
the shade's every morning
from the wide window that lets
in too much light. For
sweetness and sorrow, anger
and pain, the world would
not pretend nor give comfort
from the most wicked rains.
But there was comfort to be
found in the trembling touches
of two hands stolen in
the late night hours and crept
upon by tiny heaves of breath.
Secret longings and whispers,
a lighter shade of the dark.

Soon I will be leaving,
swallowed up by school
and far away, my thoughts
cry out for home already.
I'll miss the smooth, curved
edges I know, the growing sands
sifted through delicate fingers
and cautious guards
who weigh their moments ceaselessly.

The Request of Blackberries

They ask so much, those bleeding fingers.
 Deep in the undergrowth, they urge
 you like a child reaching for
 his mother's breast. Although they have
 no milk, the substance they offer
 is pure and deep, dark as night
 in a lashing undercurrent of wind and sea.
 They sometimes wish to swallow
 all they see and touch; they drink
 up the earth like a falcon memorizing
 the sky, or like a river grown lush
 and overpowering, extending its
 long, gray arms across a landscape
 burdened with divides. They reach
 to overcome, connect. Unite each flag
 and bone, brown skin of the earth, and red,
 and white mountains reflecting
 venomous clouds. Submerged in the stuff
 of their own life, strange cult, the stiffly necks
 and oyster crowns of their trickling youth
 are worn no longer; it is now
 reed flutes and acrobatic stances
 claiming each unguarded patch, each
 open space for the piling and growth
 of a thousand and more sharp thorns,
 green webbing. Easily, easily they move
 through their thickets like swans, so absurd
 and graceful are their coy and featureless
 movements, so like the trailing of a breeze
 or the startling cries of a hundred osprey.

Peering, hopelessly, through their vast domains,
 I try to receive their calling, listen for
 the earth of their names. From
 each berry, dark and ripe, creeps a silence,
 an echo of a mingling breath-- from
 so long ago: a poem
 wreathed in sadness, spun through these
 tangled webs. I was, or am,
 a lonely hunter searching the fields and groves
 for something sweet, even this

last enchanting summer filled with memories
of picking blackberries with my mother,
down by the highway and river, now so polluted.
How long the winds howled in the winter,
I cannot say. Nor how deep the roads
turned and wept in their underground homes.
Only the far-off bark of dogs or the inkling
rippled sky offered any solace, any hope;
how many long, rainy days I sat
beside this lake in my own mind, filled
with fish blackened from the rain.
Silence pervades. Not even a sound to warn,
or a ship-wrecked shout from one of those
drowning sailors-- how I wish I could
save just one. Watching the ocean from up above,
I follow a path down to the sea, only me
and my wings which have fallen; I try to climb
those great, gray rocks but slip into the sand.
Like sound evaporated, breath that never came,
a lost and stolen moment burglarized
from the same; how the waves lap about me,
how they shine from the moon's own light
and leave me here, a link and captive, caught
and torn between the falling rock and the crimson tides,
tangled in the thorns and mess of strange, strange old days.

Caterpillar

The cocoon is a strange home.
Its walls are soft and fragile,
white as cauliflower.
Its interior rustles quietly,
like the thin whisper
of a midnight ghost.
There is a blindness,
not unlike Death.
Within the tiny windows
of tapestry, sound echoes
between the slim movement
and reverberates boundaries
as wintry as the soft-shell crab.
There is a darkness,
not unlike the chamber
of the womb, time-trying
and slow; the captivity
of an angel.
Transformations climb the walls
in liquid undulations,
underwater sounds, heartbeats,
craftier than clever birds,
spinning silk--the loom, a shadow
fallen across the eyes
of some distant believer, in love?
in magic? in something
stronger than the thread
of a caterpillar? of a woman?
Or the wings of a blue-
faced angel? crying
and spinning, crying and
spinning, the webbing grows
thicker, the walls permeate
with sand-colored ringing.
Outside the dogs chase
the moon; inside the
moon whispers and is one.

**Like Wind, For Trees
(The Forgotten Ones)**

We come in the night
like angels, leaving only
our breath to brush
against your eyes and
hush your anger.

Our voices are transparent,
our memories forgotten.

We weep in silence
for the great misgivings
of our race; creatures
trapped in stillness,
bound in solitude.

Laughter rings small
tiny bells that play
in our ears--divining
love, caressing our
longings, leaving our words
to pray for nothingness.

Small wishes--miracles
of the Divine transparent
image, apostle, lip and
concubine.

Born of Blue

In the night time, I slip
into her garden shade--
the dream's soft captive,
a refugee of the waves.
Bodies moan in the blue
moments; I travel down
through aisles of tombstones,
warm sand that gets stuck
between my toes,
beautiful bellies that snore
and sink between
pillars and mounds of flesh;
beautiful bodies touching
in the sand, hands clasped
in the deep graves
without waking, without
sound or music, but sinking
breathlessly, moaning as the tides.

Because tonight is twilight, I cry,
escaping words and sounds
to flee this wild, unexpected
place, fulfill some prophesy, and
meditate on the earth
of reason. Deeper still
in the dark hour, where
rings of scarlet rains brush
the corners of my eyes,
faltering, I am swayed
by breath, my unuttered words
born of necessity. He
brings me this body
in its beating cell,
circled by breath,
all the undisturbed silences.
Below the sea, I wait
for the dust to settle,
for the shifting of bodies
to finally come clean
from their faraway ghosts,
blue splatters and lines,

to shake loose
from their criss-crossing,
come together in bounty.

Beside the blue, lies green
soft as charcoal
in the spilling rain,
and the flash
of golden tails, cleansing
the old with the swish
of scales, beating.

In the Graveyard

I raise you out of the dusk
of solitude, tend your grave
as a lover of earth, longing
for the touch of soil, the smooth, hard
curves of your ineffectual home.
But the moments are guarded,

slick ghosts gather 'round this
reckoning point as if foot falls
and moonshine were enough
to erect pity, or fear.

I seek no repentance in the
proverbial garden of death,

only the smell of deep, rich earth
in whose dim light grow
lichen and toadstools fat as
chairs. Unclaimed, I too
roam the wild woods and terrain,
but mournful now for the lack of

rituals in life, I stir the ground
with my feet and sing of light.

Smoke Rings

He blew smoke in my eyes:
*'put down that large star
which defends you,'* but he cannot.
Gasping like a goldfish,
I remember blue nights and mornings
filled with the smoke of apologies
and wave after wave
of sand and water, misting
like smoke at my feet
and stinging my eyes.
I remember his eyes blue,
but they're not; smoke changes
colors, blurs outlines and edges.
Time drifts, I catch smoke stars
in my soup, in the curls
of my hair, the taste upon my lips
and the moment unfurls
her long black hair, smoke
drifts from her eyes
and deludes me from love,
changing time and scene:
a smoky bar filled with the low
sounds of a dusky singer,
her voice as hypnotic as an ocean
and outside, walking through
rain-slicked streets where
smoke gathers in the folds
of my dress and shoes, hiding itself,
waiting to be found.
The animal is smoke
who waits in my head and yawns,
her gentle banging of doors,
closing sighs into long
successions of sleep.
And your lungs were all smoky
from inhalation of dreams,
and the misty alibis
of false mornings, the curfew
diminished and lost in your
own loss of space-time.
Love, all her apologies

are filled with the gapes
of smoke, for she is truly
sorry for nothing, no regret
or response of shame.
Mouth wide open, blue
and mounting, with smoke
drifting from
language to prayer.

In the Sea's Tangled Web

In the sea's tangled web
we weave fine stories, strands
without lines, without
beginnings or endings. We
try to love the good things
with the bad, to quench
unquenchable thirsts, to redeem
ourselves in the eyes
of those we love. The watery
fragments unite us unto death,
unto ourselves in bondage
and in sequence; the night's
blue robes we wear in beauty's honor,
secrets like stars pushed into
the pockets, knives, questions
written out in blood and beautiful
blue watery sighs. We weave,
we weave and weave. The husks
of our hunger come loose
until we tie up a shelter from
our deepest worries, pleasures and joys,
and we shackle ourselves without
pigeon holes, without staples,
without remorse. And we bleed
out our longing which becomes the long
narrow sea, and we use this
to bind up our hair, sweet temptations,
simple surmise and surprise.

The Wind

It is night.
The stillness of the air breathes
cool and soft.
The sky is dark blue,
moody with a kind of reminiscence
in its big face. A train
bumps by over the tracks
by the river, and a
breeze comes up from the pages
of my book and kisses
my neck, caresses my ear,
tosses my hair, and
I am chilled but aroused
by the subtle teasing
of the wind. It is the same
wind that blows to you
all of my secrets
on a still night. It whispers
in your ear all the
things I cannot say.
And it is the same wind
from a hundred years ago
that drew its breath
into my bosom, and
exhaled a child, a
single golden thread.

I Would Have Followed...

It was January, and I was going
to follow you up a dim path
beside the graveyard. The ground streaked
haphazardly beneath my feet, and
I was too afraid to follow your steps,
too afraid to watch your smooth feet
grace the curves of the street,
and perhaps risk your eyes falling
upon me, and catching me watching,
seized by your intense stare.
I would have followed you through
the darkening afternoon, but instead
I faltered and turned the corner
of the crowded road and lost you
in the teeming sunlight, beguiled again
by the doubt of desire, the prosecutors
dressed as crowned liars, bidding me act
with their evil laughter. So I watched
until you were gone, turned up the
street with your brown hair trailing
behind you in wisps and delicate furies.
I longed to see where you were going,
hoped to follow unseen, invisibly
creeping behind you like a soft whisper,
or as a moving breeze lifting
the thin curtains of your hair
and feeling it fall around your bent shoulders,
touching the place where your neck
meets your back and your ears gather it
up in their folds. Yet, I didn't
think these things as I walked.
I only think of them now.

Remembering the evanescent moment
as a soft, crinkled paper
bent and blurred at the edges,
and bleeding dark ink like a ship
with passengers and shadows
falling through the waters at night.
I imagined myself in an azure gown,
bending beside a grave in the

first hints of Spring, kneeling at the edge
of a mountain covered in green
and blossoming flowers which trailed
at my feet like some small festival
of life and color. And looking down,
I would see the ocean with its
roaring waves, and the sound would reach
me and fill my ears like a thousand
blue dishes breaking apart, and a storm
caught in the gathers of my breath,
consumed entirely by the births
which give forth each moment
their bounty and gifts
unto the shore. Beach glass would
line my feet and make mirrors
of sorrow, small vessels of sad disbelief.
And bargaining for virtue, I would
close the doors to my becoming,
washed in the tides of love's mercy,
and swallowed whole by that
brilliant, surging death who claims
my name.

Music

There is music in language
 You may find it
 like you find the heart
 of a fruit: break open
 the shell
 to find the nectar inside;
 uncluster the fruit
 and drink
 until nectar arrives.

Under the Midnight Boughs

You never know
what's under the skin,
so deep and dark, shiny
like a mirror
with a pink fleshy inside,
and a seed
to spoil the center, to rest
in waiting
for its next deep return
to soil. Purple-black as
midnight, I hold you
in my hand as I
wait in this
darkening night, hot
with sighs of exasperation
and thick air
that coils around me.
Touch my lips
to your skin, breathe in
your juice, single plum,
humming of a far-off place
that I can imagine
in my mind. Hanging
from a bough of green
beside a flowing river,
somewhere in China I imagine
how you look
with a poet beneath you;
simple song to fill your
home of branches,
and a jug of your
sweetest elixir, purple wine.
Your seed rests
before me, tumbling off my page
into my lap, caught
up in the folds
of my skirt.
I've finished you, but
the night does not
get any cooler; there is
no sea breeze to wave

to us in this heat, and
the ocean is a long way off from here.

The night sounds
are quiet, barely audible,
but they come in like the waves I miss,
they come in on wings
of barley and light,
they creep upon tiny feet
of delirium that sound
of dreams and kisses and willowy mists,
but they are full of distinction
however small their
moments may be.

There are colors
shading the air in this room,
they wash away
the walls and leave
only hints of their passing,
touching the edges
and crying out upon
the floor.

Voices of the couple
across from us, cars gliding
by on grey meandering roads.

A radio plays somewhere,
perhaps from our house.

The seed has fallen
onto my foot,
and the Chinese poet
must be sad

for the loss of her pain.

No more change, she says,

but the change

always comes, and the

days flow out

with that river,

drumming away at

the edges and

walls of her canyon gorge,

her blue-peeked waters

slowly washing

the boundaries away.

The Sequence is a Story: Let It Unfold

You cannot hide in here tonight,
little sorrow. You cannot rest
between my breasts
or find a home in my ruffled brows.
Your waters are plenty
enough to share
with the winged creatures
of this night; go find
a flying fish
and make her free.
Your drumming is enough
to burden any heart,
your sweet song of lovers' betrayals,
your tempests and your droughts
enough to make anyone cry;
and your farewells, your tears,
your longing. Forgive me
for asking
you to find another home
tonight.
But I'll miss you,
as this night unfolds, as the sky
turns blue and dark
with a hundred reeling stars
all whispering
to me, and I'll miss your
warmth and comfort
of solitude, deep yearning, art.
What will I paint of now,
sweet little sorrow,
now that you're gone?
What will I dream of now
beneath these tattered walls
and tarnished curtains, filled in
with the memory of your song?
I cannot think of another
I would like to share
my broken heart with, or
dream in between
the pages of a lost love
I once claimed

as mine.
You are the one,
the comfort I seek in creating,
the star-lit centered
melancholy sadness, lit by the moon
not the sun, as they say.
You are the dreamer
of basking days, of emerald skies
and miracle blooms;
you, of the hundred eyes,
the ocean swells, blue lights and sea
marvels untold. You , you
with your splendid eyes, that see
the turning of the inner
world, the globed circle
of a thousand myths spun
in between the edges of dream.
Sandy, blue-eyed sapphire,
you with your visions of grief
and beauty, how I cringe
at the thought of
your leaving me, how
purposeful and lunatic
it all seems.
But I don't care anymore,
for the night
can hide my griefs,
and the stars blew out my loves
long ago--the ones
I tried to keep
safe from this sorrow,
but which drowned within it,
golden, passion-
filled
child.

wanting

there is not a moment here
that isn't caught
in the snare of some dream.
not a moment, not a
single thing.
the plum falls softly
to the ground, staining
the street. your
anger evaporates, color grieves
into the sidewalk, like
the shadow of a ghost
who left its mark
sometime long ago:
stone against stone,
flesh extraordinary.

each hillock and chasm
breathes deep. our bodies, in
their own chambers, mingle
and unite and we fall as
white sheets, fluttering out our last
words. breath utters. fingers
bend and clasp each other.
the phone rings. the day envelopes
us. we are lonely in the circus
of things, lonely as tight-rope
walkers, lonely as closed rings.

and then she sings, and she
sings and she sings. and I am
healed, helped across the
great divide. i step off the rope,
step into sky, until I feel my
feet touch the earth again,
until we both rise, beaming, into ourselves.

salvation in the heart of a stone
yearns not for rest, but hope.

The Lotus and the Moon

Far beneath a clear blue sky,
they wait in sighs
of color and breath, movement
fascinating in cool waters,
lulling, hushing, waving down
rhythms.

The moon up above watches
over them, spilling light
onto their petals and falling into
each tiny crack and crevice,
in between deep places,
the slivers of space

where even sound has trouble
venturing, though it bends
at their edges and shakes
their thin, wavering roots.
I catch silences here
that speak to me of discovery.

I watch waving arms,
branches of light, spirals of
ingrown sound and the
movement of the place touches
me in ways I cannot explain.
It is a stillness that I desire

in the inmost parts of me.
It is a vapor, like a mist,
that shrouds each word and stone
and whispers to me of
pleasures beyond what I've
ever known.

The sun peeks its face
of light over the crowded waters,
just before it dips down
to circle in another land,
and the moon wakes up, her
drowsy, tipsy head aflight again,

her wings of golden strands,
her innocuous light.
I shed my own skin for
her return, dip my body
in the waters in whose
depths she shines, brush
against petals of silver-fall,
pink skin glazed in sheer entanglement.

She finds me here, among
the lotus with the deep center
and the cool home. Exasperated,
perpetuated cries--all these
fall with the body-leaves, all
ashes and pains disappear.

I am rebirthed, a trial labor
each night until the
fullest finds me again, or
for the first time, I am remembered
in a blooming hour,
in a spiral cup sunk in the waters.

She Takes Us There

She plays on her fiddle, streaking
the notes, high-pitched and ringing,
taking us to cliffs in county Clare
that drop straight into the sea.

We go with her, following the music,
standing on the edge of the cliffs, looking down
into the melody of waves and wind,
wind that cries like a woman in the night.

She takes us to the island, we follow
like an entourage. Envision this: we fall
with the notes like blackbirds in the sky,
fly like foam shaken up from the sea.

Oh sea and sky, oh water water
dark and unpredictable. Where do you go
when the song is over? You still wash
in my heart, sloshing up against those old stone walls.

The New Art

Mother, you stood at the grave
with your hands
in your pockets, but your eyes
wide and curious.
We found our plot
of land, moved
forward to it with ease,
but others around us
struggled and murmured, and
their low distant
noises grew faint
as I watched you
fall to the side of the hole
and bend down, searching
as you looked on with
care, your eyes
filled with creativity. Paint
dazzled there, you wished
it away perhaps, but
the time had come; now you sought
expression to make whole
the temporal beauty--out
of bones, you discovered
a new art. Finishing the old,
completing it, as all
artists do. Taking back
the bones and ashes
so that they may live in a new
way in your heart,
or be put back
to earth and eternity,
like taking sand and coloring
it with the sea.

Visitation

I pressed my face to the glass
and sighed for light, the moon's
own beauty. And tonight
love is just a teasing
falling off to sleep.
Love is just a yearning
with so much incomplete.
The stars seem breathless,
they do not even blink
and the trees are like fugitives,
hiding in the potter's ink.

Moon-Tides

I

Moon, you're not quite right tonight,
tomorrow you will be whole,
whole and complete.
I could swallow you--
then you'd rest forever in my belly,
a circle of white
irises dancing
on the tips of still, mirror-surface lakes.

II

Who pulled your tides in, beauty lake?
Who kept the reef upon the shore?
Who gave back the wind
to blow through your secrets?
Who drank up the night, and forgot?

Oh, simple pleasures are the best--
your warm skin, sweet with salt,
pressed into mine...
Mornings we wake when the sun shines
laughter, and sorrow and joy--
love drunk with all its apologies
only pretended
for the guilt of such joy.

We, In Our Humanness

Stars elicit response
more than faces sometimes,
but more often I see
the joy or grief
folded in another's eyes.
Nature is bountiful, elusive
but capturable; your eyes
are hidden and obscuring
deep secrets.
Like love, we sift
into this hourglass
and fall with the currents
as they move us along.
As we trudge in
their tides, as we glide,
emancipate; as we capture devotion
and bloom in our own
watered worlds.

I move my hands
as if I were dancing.
I can feel the movements,
they rustle inside
of me, and melt out
of waking, expand
to fill all my senses,
those known to many and all,
and those unknown
to all but few.
Each touch
is like a tiny miracle,
that dab of color,
that taste of wine,
that breath that deludes
the senses,
but does not let go--
it stays close
as ever. Your breath
awakens me to this feeling,
ignites a passion,
but rouses deep sympathy

because we are human,
because we love
and because we are so fragile
in our translucent,
egg-shell bodies, in which
my heart beats on
immeasurably, *boom-boom*,
boom-boom (whispered)

Surrender

Lingering, on the edge of breath, I pull
myself from the soft covers, enveloped
as I am in self-pity, yearning,
incapacitated joy; verging on the infinite
splendor of understanding; transmuting
myself into a thousand degrees.
Hovering, edge-wise, on an abyss of space,
laughing out loud through tears
that fall endlessly into the soft rain.

Notes

1. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) intro. xi.
2. Hyde intro. xvi.
3. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1989).
4. Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963) 66.
5. Chung-yuan 143.
6. George Kokis 1.
7. Chung-yuan 188.
8. Anthony Hobson, *J W Waterhouse* (London: Phaidon Press, 1989) 9.
9. Hobson 11.
10. Hobson 21.
11. Robert Johnson, *She: Understanding Feminine Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989) intro. x.
12. Hobson 9.
13. Johnson 65.
14. Hobson 85.
15. Hobson 85.
16. Ralph H. Blum, *The Book of Runes*, 10th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) 131-2.
17. Johnson 70.
18. Godwin 54.
19. Johnson 71.
20. Godwin 48.
21. Hobson 80.
22. Hobson 80.
23. Mara Freeman, "Sacred Waters, Holy Wells" (*Parabola* Feb. 1995: 52-57) 55.
24. Wolfgang Leppman, *Rilke: A Life*, trans. Russell M. Stockman (New York: Fromm International, 1984) foreword vii.
25. Robert Hass, *Selected Poetry*, intro. xiv.
26. From the *Duino Elegies*.
27. *Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable* (New York: Doubleday, 1968) 192-3.
28. *Bulfinch's Mythology* 6-8 and 192.
29. Leppmann 286.
30. Hass intro. xxxviii-xl.
31. Inside flap, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. Stephen Mitchell.

32. Stephen Mitchell, trans. *Sonnets to Orpheus*, by Rainer Maria Rilke (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) 8.
33. Leppman 287.
34. Hass intro. xxxix.
35. *Bulfinch's Mythology* 192-4.
36. Hass intro. xxxviii-xxxix.
37. Hass xviii.
38. Hass xxiv.
39. Leppman 290.
40. Hass xvi.
41. Mitchell intro. 9.
42. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985) 35.
43. Hass xlii.
44. Rilke, *Sonnets* 23.
45. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. Joan M. Burnham (San Rafael: New World Library, 1992) 7.
46. Rilke, *Letters* 40.
47. Rilke, *Letters* 56.
48. Rilke, *Letters* 98.
49. Leppman 286.
50. Rilke, *Selected Poetry* 151.
51. Rilke, *Selected Poetry* 157.
52. Rilke, *Selected Poetry*, The Second Elegy 161.
53. Rilke, *Selected Poetry* 131.
54. *Sonnets to Orpheus*, Sonnet xxvi, 69.
55. Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin 1931-1934*, ed. and intro. Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966) 5.
56. Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin 1934-1939*, ed. and intro. Gunther Stuhlmann (New York: Swallow Press and Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967) intro. ix.
57. Rilke 11.
58. Nin 154.
59. Nin, *Diary 1934-1939*, 128.
60. Nin, *Diary 1934-1939*, 152-3.
61. Gunther Stuhlmann, *Diary 1931-1934*, intro. ix.

62. Stuhlmann, *Diary 1931-1939*, intro. ix.
63. Evelyn J. Hinz, *The Mirror and the Garden* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) 50.
64. Hinz 5.
65. Sharon Spencer, *Collage of Dreams: The Writings of Anaïs Nin* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1977) 6.
66. Spencer 11.
67. Stuhlmann intro. viii, *Diary 1931-1934*.
68. Dierdre Bair, *Anaïs Nin: A Biography* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995) 28.
69. Bair 21-22.
70. Bair 39.
71. Anaïs Nin, *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966) 24.
72. Bair 30.
73. Bair 31.
74. Nin, *Essays* 13.
75. Hinz 97.
76. *Essays* 12.
77. *Essays* 12.
78. Intro. vii-viii.
79. Spencer 13.
80. Spencer 12-13.
81. *Diary 1934-1939* 188.
82. *Diary 1934-1939* 188.
83. *Essays* 25.
84. Spencer 20.
85. *Essays* 114.
86. *Essays* 58.
87. *Diary 1931-1934* 261.
88. *Diary 1934-1939* 153.
89. Chung-yuan 80-81.
90. Chung-yuan 81.
91. Spencer 23.
92. *Diary 1934-39* 348-349.

93. Spencer 1.
94. Spencer 11.
95. *Diary 1934-1939* 128.
96. *Collages* 60.
97. *Collages* 60-61.
98. *Diary 1934-39* 152.
99. Anaïs Nin, *The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume Six 1955-1966* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966) 108.
100. *Essays* 62-63.
101. *Essays* 28.
102. *Essays* 112.
103. *Essays* 21-22.
104. *Diary 1934-39* 249.
105. *Letters* 26.
106. Hyde 155.
107. Hyde 148.
108. Hyde 51.
109. Hyde 192.
110. Hyde 146.
111. Hyde 4.
112. Hyde 193.

Bibliography

- Bair, Deirdre. *Anaïs Nin: A Biography*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995.
- Blum, Ralph H. *The Book of Runes: A Handbook For the Use of An Ancient Oracle: The Viking Runes*. Tenth ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
- Bulfinch's Mythology: The Age of Fable*. New York: Doubleday, 1968.
- Cameron, Julia. *The Right to Write: An Invitation and Initiation into the Writing Life*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/ Putnam, 1998.
- Chung-yuan, Chang. *Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art, and Poetry*. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
- Freeman, Mara. "Sacred Waters, Holy Wells." *Parabola* Feb. 1995: 52-57.
- Godwin, Joscelyn. *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1981.
- Hinz, Evelyn J. *The Mirror and the Garden: Realism and Reality in the Writings of Anaïs Nin*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.
- Hobson, Anthony. *J W Waterhouse*. London: Phaidon Press, 1989.
- Hyde, Lewis. *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Johnson, Robert A. *She: Understanding Feminine Psychology*. Rev. ed. New York: Harper and Roe, 1989.
- Kokis, George. "The First Principle of Art." 1983.
- Leppman, Wolfgang. *Rilke: A Life*. Trans. Russell M. Stockman. New York: Fromm International, 1984.
- Nin, Anaïs. *In Favor of the Sensitive Man and Other Essays*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.
- . *Collages*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1964.
- . *The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume One 1931-1934*. Ed. Gunther Stuhlmann. New York: Swallow Press and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966.

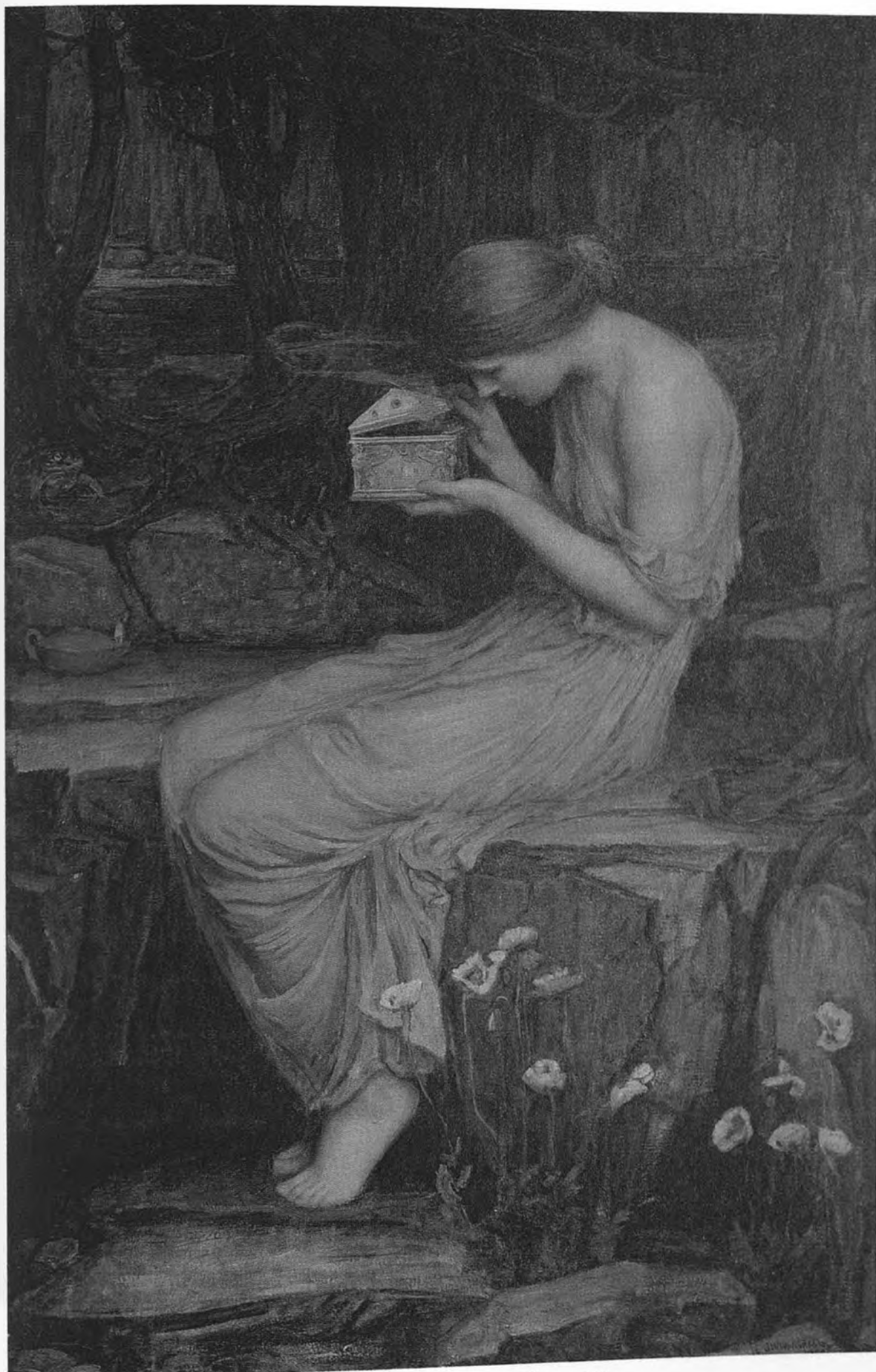
- . *The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume Two 1934-1939*. Ed. Gunther Stuhlmann. New York: Swallow Press and Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967.
- . *The Diary of Anaïs Nin Volume Six 1955-1966*. Ed. Gunther Stuhlmann. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *The Sonnets to Orpheus*. Trans. Stephen Mitchell. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985.
- . *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Ed. And Trans. Stephen Mitchell. New York: Vintage International, 1982.
- . *Letters to a Young Poet*. Trans. Joan M. Burnham. San Rafael: New World Library, 1992.
- Spencer, Sharon. *Collage of Dreams: The Writings of Anaïs Nin*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1977.
- Tzu, Lao. *The Tao Te Ching*. Trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. New York: Vintage Books, 1972.
- Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*. Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, 1989.

Appendix

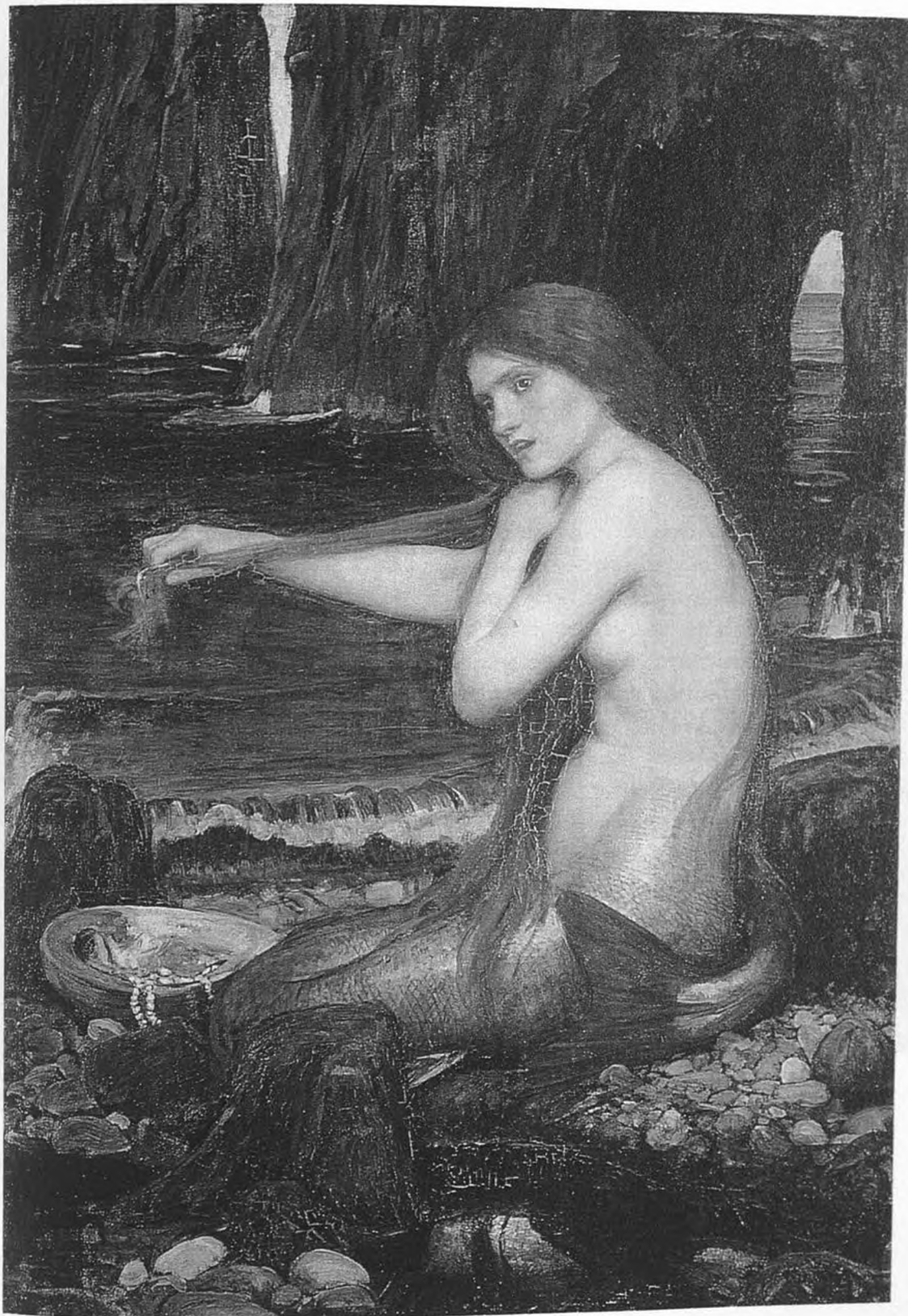
-



The Shrine, 1895.



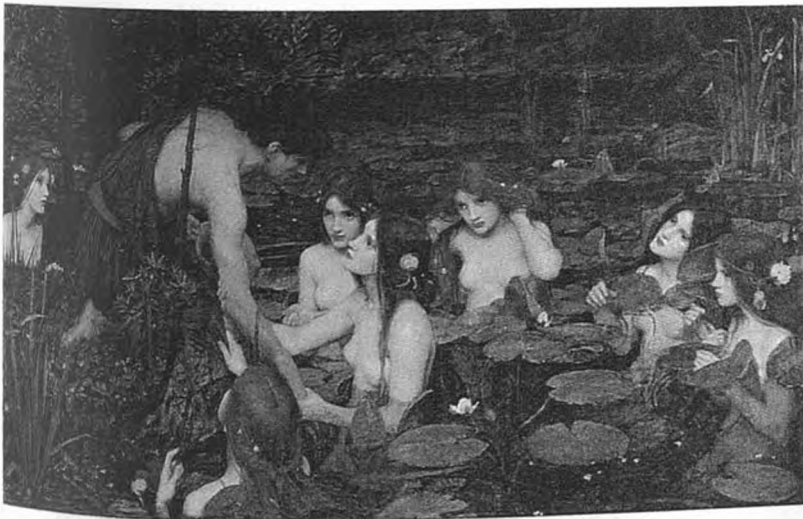
Psyche opening the Golden Box, 1903.



A Mermaid, 1901.



The Lady of Shalott, 1888.



Hylas and the Nymphs, 1896.



Pandora, 1896.



Destiny, 1900.



Ophelia, 1910.



Nymphs finding the Head of Orpheus, 1900.



Ophelia, 1894.