

## THE BOY NOBODY WANTED

In my childhood I was never able to clarify why I was subjected to exorcisms, but I most certainly was. Please understand, these were not the elaborate Catholic ceremonies with priests rigged out in fancily embroidered stoles and ornately carved mother-of-pearl crucifixes. I had no skin-searing holy water splashed on me, the sonorous tones of Latin did not reverberate through a vomit-splattered bedroom, nor did furniture move by itself and, to the best of my knowledge, my head never turned all the way around. My experiences were not even fire-and-brimstone Pentecostal affairs with speaking in tongues and demands for the demon to identify itself before taking a powder.

But they did happen. Let's examine some of the background involved, as this will provide more keys to the understanding of what has shaped my art.

First of all, the person given the name Myron Conan Dyal fell very far short of the child my parents had hoped for. While my brother was considered a shining example of splendid young manhood, he was also considered in need of a sister to balance out the family gender books. I was intended to be the one who would water the family tree with estrogen, but my genetic make-up had other ideas. So, from the very outset, I didn't fit in with the plan for the family Dyal.

Admittedly, there is nothing unique about this. Many couples try to plan how many sons and daughters they will have and oftentimes things do not work out. Usually, the parents are glad merely to have a healthy baby bounce into their lives, but sometimes husband and wife will aggressively try to thwart the will of nature and somehow turn their offspring into the opposite sex. We can all guess where this can and often does ultimately lead.

Add to that trauma the complications of a serious and highly misunderstood illness and the game is afoot, to quote Arthur Conan Doyle. Could there be the slightest doubt in any completely sane mind – if there even was one in my immediate environment – that little Myron was going to turn out to be the archetypal “problem child”?

With all of this going on and affecting the mind of a child in the earliest of the formative years, some gracious power watching over me sent me into a coma at the age of four. Upon my return from merciful oblivion, I found myself among the untouchables, a delicate balance between sickly and possessed. It goes without saying that a child with any sort of physical affliction is going to present significant challenges all around and play havoc with the usual family political machinations, but when it is seizure-oriented as is epilepsy, numerous other dynamics, almost all of them unpleasant, come into play and, unfortunately, are aimed at the already suffering youngster.

As an age-old, identifiable, medically categorized malady, epilepsy is frightening enough, but when the added dimension of suspected “demonic possession” is added to the scorecard, the

game can get very complex and extremely ugly with surprising alacrity. I was destined, by God, fate, or karma, to show up in this old world as a member of a family whose unsophisticated simplicity would eradicate any semblance of a chance to develop along normal lines. Rather, the entirety of what I was boiled down to a few common denominators: incorrect genitalia, demon possessed, bizarre seizures, an academic underachiever, angry, confused, sort of a Satanically-inspired rebel without a cause.

The above list of alleged shortcomings stretch back to my earliest recollections and, to a certain extent, still exercises a degree of influence over my behavior to this day. The promise of perpetual, incurable (but by no means medically uncontrollable) illness acts as sandpaper to the nerves of all involved in such a scenario and after awhile, no one really wants to have to wrestle with it any longer. To have to deal with an ill child can be as draining as caring for an elderly parent and for essentially the same reasons. And when you are the one who needs the special care and attention, it must be nice to receive special love and compassion along with it. Either way, you cannot simply stand up and hie yourself away to some pleasant retreat; it's damned hard to get away from yourself. In my unique circumstances my parents sincerely believed that exorcisms were the answer and I was ill-equipped to argue the opposing point of view. I was alone and they provided every opportunity to evolve (or perhaps, more accurately, involve into myself) as the social misfit they had decided I was. The attitudes of parents towards their child carry immeasurable force and can shape or misshape a young psyche for the remainder of this life and who knows how many others in the future.

I suppose that in a left-handed way it was better that they left me alone to become whatever it was I might have wanted to be, but the downside was the paucity of loving support and parental guidance that is the foundation of a successfully lived childhood. To be absolutely blunt, my mother and father had virtually no expectations for my life. Perhaps their greatest fear was that I would devolve into some sort of hopelessly retarded cretin requiring unpleasant physical care and financial support the rest of my life. Or maybe they just hoped I would make it to the age of eighteen and be able to get myself some sort of little sustenance job, thereby removing myself from the family room-and-board roll with the added benefit of their having out of the way a major embarrassment to friends, folks, and fellow Christians at church. Not only are young children highly telepathic and empathetic, picking up far more from the thoughts and emotions of those with whom they spend time in close proximity, but my parents' outward displays towards me only compounded the subliminal effects upon my youthfully sensitive consciousness with overt demonstrations of the quality of their feelings for me.

A major part of these overt demonstrations of hostility was the physical abuse meted out by my father on a rather regular basis as punishment or payback or something for behavior he considered below his standards of acceptability. As you can well imagine, this strapped another weighty load to my already serious pathological condition and deeply impressed further levels of instability into all my relationships, familial, personal, school, and with just about anyone and everyone I encountered. It also bred within me a tremendous craving for acceptance from whatever quarter I could secure it and that, in turn, led to further problems.

So, the bell had tolled and I did not have to ask for whom. You now have a fairly complete idea of the matrix within which my life was shaped. I have not appended my story to my artwork in

an attempt to elicit sympathy, nor to bash my parents long after the facts or cast them in the role of inhumane monsters. But I do feel that because of the nature of my art it is important to understand the roots of whence it comes. If it is true that all artists feed off of their inner agonies, it helps one appreciate their art if they have an idea of what those inner agonies are, how they originated, and what role they played in shaping the artistic consciousness expressing itself. Certainly, no one wakes up the morning of their eighteenth birthday having gone to sleep the night before with an absolutely clean psychic slate ready to be impressed with a fully formed mental and emotional constitution. Artisans of all media, like anyone else, have their personalities shaped very early in life and this cannot help but find expression in their creative endeavors.

Ideally, childhood is a time filled with magic and wonder, the joy of new discoveries and accomplishments on a daily basis to the chorus of parental and sibling praise and delight. Children are intended to grow up happily, feeling safe in their environment, loved and wanted by their family, secure in the certainty that all of their needs will be provided for, even if all their desires are not. The latter might mean a candy bar uneaten, a toy not played with, the opportunity to tag along with older brother or sister not extended, all of which might bring forth a small pout and a few tears, which are quickly forgotten as the next thing catches the short attention span and all is forgiven

I think we all want that for our children and we all undoubtedly wanted that for ourselves. It is my sincere hope that this is the kind of childhood you experienced, because it is what every new life brought into this world deserves and should receive. No one's young years should be about death, isolation, loneliness, and fear. Frankly, my childhood did have elements of the positive, but the negative, dark, painful atmosphere definitely predominated. The fruits of such psychological conditioning are not hard to fathom. Distrust of the world and its people, of goodness and truth and knowledge, lack of stability, feelings of inferiority in every avenue of life. Simply fighting for one's life on a daily, hourly basis destroys the luxury of trust and nullifies the feelings of confidence in oneself that are supposed to emerge along the normal lines of development.

It is entirely possible that "normal" people find war an effective means of purging themselves of one set of disturbing psychological traits even as it inadvertently builds into them a whole new set. The unique circumstances of war, steeped in fear and violence, do have a tendency to alter one's perception of reality, but with the supporting buttresses of patriotic jingoism and the it's-them-or-us bravado that gives rise to the comradeship of *esprit d'corps*. In short, life can be as unreal as it needs to be; you are surrounded by brother soldiers, people watch one another's backs, save each others' lives, and the family idea is much in evidence. Or, as Richard Hooker so vividly portrayed in his novel *M\*A\*S\*H*, one can create a self-contained world of controlled insanity in which sanity remains intact. (Orwell also spoke of controlled insanity by means of perpetual war).

My war certainly was perpetual. The precise cause of my coma was never determined, but the prevalence of opinion was that it was either epilepsy or some mystery illness whose diagnosis remained stubbornly elusive. During the month or so that I remained in the coma, my mind was

wiped as clean as Lieutenant Uhura's after her encounter with Nomad. She was successfully re-educated; I was four years old.

Upon awakening, I remembered no one. My consciousness was a clean slate, ready for anything to be written upon it, for good or ill. It should come as no surprise that I have always cast myself in the role of the changeling, one without family, an orphan of the world, a soul in exile. This concept of myself would later emerge as failed relationships, a feeling of existential futility, the establishment of mental kingdoms that always succumbed to the invasion of adversaries unseen but very real and extremely powerful and effective in their capacity for destruction.

I was the outsider, wandering in a wasteland whose vastness I couldn't begin to grasp because it had no borders to lend it definition or substance. The strong connections that underlie the family unit were non-existent as far as I was concerned. With no roots in a home I felt worthy of the name, my inner worlds were being shaped well below – or above – the reach of my objective awareness. This lack of connectedness to the very concept of “home” more than likely appears in my art and its disconnect from any of the established “schools” of painting and sculpting. Yes, I am, indeed, one of those dangerously subversive individualists who insists on thinking their own thoughts, painting their own pictures, and exploring their own inner consciousness, and if I am to be damned for it, that same mindset is what causes me not to give the proverbial shit, if you will pardon my English. With a mind trapped in terrible darkness, I had an extended fall from what should have been the grace of early childhood into the even greater darkness of recovery from the coma.

I had been the “star of the morning,” an appellation which, interestingly enough, was applied to both Jesus the Christ and Satan, two personalities which just about sum up the entirety of good and evil of which any human being is capable of manifesting.

One thing we all have is a past, some good, some bad, most mixed. I did not have a dark night of the soul, but a dark life, of spirit, soul, and body, and this admixture displays itself in my artistic creations. I placed all the unfulfilled longings and all-too-real pain into my own version of Pandora's box, locked it tightly, and vowed never to open it. That plan was flawed, of course, in that a soul imprisoned will do anything to break out of its cage.

I learned, as do most artists, the necessity of internalizing the messages of darkness and then transcending them. If the box remains unopened, it swells until it bursts and then the contents fly where they may, with no control. Rather than being the building blocks of creativity they were intended to be, they become the harbingers of destruction. The psychological cancer then spreads and consumes every fiber of our being, physical and spiritual. From thence spring addictions to drugs, liquor, sex, and any other artificial or natural anesthetic one can get their hands on. One mask is as good as another. The contents of the box are always the ingredients entering into your own development and it is probable that the only means of real salvation (there are many ways leading to unreal salvation) is to open the box and release its contents, knowing that instead of scattering to the four winds and polluting the world they will fly right into your face and unleash their forces in your own life, daring you to transmute their destructive nature into creative energy. The measure of your success will be the closeness of your attunement with the universal trend towards creativity and artistic expression.

Many of my visions involve trees without roots, disconnected from the ground, freely floating or suspended in mid-air, thusly summing up in an appropriately symbolic way my feelings towards myself. Never did I have a place where I felt secure, no refuge to which I could run and feel safe. Normally, that place would be home and family. Although I have never had an addictive personality in terms of chemical substances or anything else, I do confess to an addiction to returning to my hometown of Inglewood, California hundreds of times in a search for something, anything, that could be considered roots. Fast trips, slow odysseys, treks up and down Brett Street, to the cemetery where my grandparents are buried, downtown, to my old school, always in search of the lost cord. Undoubtedly I am searching for something that is not available to be found because it never existed nor never could have existed within the circumstances of my childhood.

Some of my earlier childhood visions were centered on isolation, fear, and loneliness, but also contained an inexplicable quality of vastness. In the “real” world I never felt contentment or happiness; I always felt on the edge of being somehow lost, perhaps because I did not want to found. I could never quite believe in the world as it was, as my life within it made no discernible sense.

Outsiders were those who dared challenge the world, who could look all humanity in the eye and, like Sigourney Weaver in *Aliens* defiantly shout, “Come on!” Most were swept away by the irresistible tide of the world-as-it-is, but they made their stand, fought their fight, and every now and then, one would emerge victoriously, having passed through their personal crucible whole and cleansed and, like Job, coming forth as gold. I was the outsider, hence my specialization in what is often referred to as “outsider art.” I didn’t coin that term, but if it hadn’t already been invented I probably would have. As with most outsiders, I never felt comfortable with the typical ideal of God as a loving, welcoming Father. He was an accusatory figure, almost like a prosecutor, adjudging me guilty of crimes without the benefit of trial. Even without understanding the concept of guilt, I identified with its consequences and incorporated its guilt into my self.

The struggle had many ramifications and shadings. Sometimes I fell in battle, crushed by defeat. Just as often I would rage with all my strength, storming the ramparts of all that is called guilt, shame, and God. “When you’ve got nothing you’ve got nothing to lose,” as Bob Dylan said in *Like A Rolling Stone*. This at least allowed me to face outwardly rather than having to stare continually at the interior void. Eventually, however, I came to love and fear that emptiness, from deeply within which came something that assisted me in the warfare. An ally.

I sometimes wonder if I could today be so creative if I had not been forced by circumstances to swing to the other extreme of the pendulum and dwell so long and so deeply in the vibrations of destruction. I find it interesting that in the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, Shiva the destroyer is also known as the *transformer*. I wish I had known this in my youth, as the very concept might have led me to seek the valuable in the destructive, harnessed the energies, and done something useful with them rather than permitting them to rampage all over, around, and through me. But I didn’t and at that time I could see no way out of the destructive mode. Self-doubt and self-hatred were reflected in my inner world, as darkness and destruction and this may

be why some of my art appears to have a foreboding, even sinister quality about it. If so, I am delighted to have it outside of me in physical form rather than remaining within to wreak psychic havoc.

You will also notice that much of my work portrays nocturnal scenes, a remnant of my early obsession with creatures of the night, real or imagined. It sometimes seems that wickedness is stronger and has a greater chance for victory when the Sun is not around and I accordingly was driven by certain parts of my nature to act out stories where the hero was vanquished. Later I memorized works of literature that elevated the outsider to hero status, my unreality identifying with theirs. As with most outsiders, they didn't completely understand the whys and wherefores of their outsider status but they usually made the most of it and appeared to quite thoroughly enjoy themselves as they inflicted varying degrees of discomfort on the normal world. Despite all this (or perhaps because of it), occasional rays of light would fight their way into my world, especially through music. I played the piano and violin and composed musical pieces. In retrospect, there was always a sliver of goodness, somewhere, though no matter how eagerly I seized upon them, attempting to capture, savor, and amplify them, they never seemed to linger very long. Never did I come anywhere near realizing the peace to which I aspired.

I also found comfort in picturing myself as the archetypal trickster, the shaman, the jester, the magician, the Merlin-type character who figures so prominently in the mythology of dozens of cultures, manipulating kings and peasants alike, absolutely secure in his magical power, controlling the spirits of nature, feared and respected by all, and even loved for his good natured pranksterish ways.

I used the magic to control my friends, fear was my ally and weapon, the interior vastness my home. Magic always resides inside the mind of those who behold it, believer and skeptic alike. Who cannot be controlled, in some measure, by the unknown? Is not fear of the unknown the basis of all religion? I specialized in the creation of illusions, despite the fact that sometimes it would backfire upon me, my own machinations exerting control over me. When one fills one's minds with ghosts of their own creation, occasional terror is not to be unexpected.

Then one summer there appeared in my life a being, a creature, a personality, infinitely above and beyond anything I had created out of my own mind. This spiritual playmate, guide, teacher, best friend, mentor, lover, father, mother, has sustained me throughout my life. Becoming anyone or anything I need, this is my spiritual ally whose very presence in my life is invaluable and irreplaceable. After years of association, I finally named him: Charon, the boatman who carries souls safely across the River Styx.

My association with him was a wonderfully refreshing break from my own family lineage. My parents were both southerners, from Georgia, my mother hailing from a rural farm. They were strictly fundamentalist Christians, Baptists, who would have no use for a Charon except for a futile attempt to condemn him to the pit of hell in the name of the great high priest, ad nauseum. In their spirituality there were no gray areas, no matters for dispute, no unanswered questions. They dwelt at the farthest perimeters of reason and open-minded investigation. The Bible was the word of God, it could only be interpreted one way, and anyone who chose to believe anything else would be consigned to eternal damnation. We attended church, where my father

was some sort of leader in this and that group and activity, as was my mother. My father spent enormous amounts of time at God's house, perhaps to keep away from his own home. He taught Sunday school and all in all received large amounts of ego nourishment from his religious activities. Mother was always reading her daily devotionals and Dad never failed to recite the dinnertime prayer. It was prim and proper in a maddeningly southern way and just as mindlessly simplistic. I couldn't have cared less about their faith. All I knew was that I didn't belong there with them and their religion.

One thing I could not figure out was why they never saw visions. Didn't they have the Holy Ghost, as did all the people in the Bible to whom they gave slavish allegiance, and who had supernatural experiences on a daily basis? Maybe they were the bad Christians? They had no contact with the infinite as I was certain I had, nor did they experience the night terrors as did I. Neither did they have the grand mal seizures I did.

Grand mals, or tonic clonic seizures as are so alliteratively called today, are what most people think of when the discussion turns to epilepsy, which I expect is rather infrequently in most circles. One moment the epileptic is behaving normally, the next they are emerging from the seizure. The exterior sight is difficult to describe to one who has never witnessed it and the interior experience is impossible to convey to one fortunate enough never to have gone through it. They were a very common occurrence in my youth and as you can expect, I spent most of my time living in fear that one would come upon me. The sheer strain of the uncertainty of never knowing when a seizure would strike cannot be imagined by anyone who has never felt it. Seizures do not gently linger on the horizon like a storm, making a gradual, graceful landfall; they are more like tornadoes that suddenly appear and violently inflict their carnage before departing. Were it not for my brother's on-site reportage, I never would have known what an awful scene such a seizure presented to those who were unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and had to watch one take place.

Not all the visions you will be reading about are epilepsy-related, and I have not had a grand mal seizure for many years, so please do not visualize me thrashing about on the ground each time I have an inner journey, getting up, and running to my easel, as though seizures were necessary preludes to my work. On the other hand, you will find some experiences that are associated, directly or indirectly with other types of seizures. Many of these episodes, however, proceed naturally out of my unconscious mind. For reasons not entirely clear, the normal protective barrier between conscious and unconscious mind is, in my psyche, extremely thin.

As related earlier, and to my great misfortune, my parents were of the attitude that anything not attributable to God was of the Devil and had to be dealt with swiftly and sternly. Although never treated for epilepsy, I experienced more than one demon-crunching exorcism. All told, my parents had three ways of dealing with my illness: denial, claiming demonic possession, or punishment for unusual behavior. As my situation embodied qualities of the latter two, my parents formulated strategies for dealing with them both.

Demonic symptoms were handled with prayer, laying on hands, casting out of the offensive spirit, and so on. Unusual, or odd behaviors (usually the result of seizures) called for beatings with leather straps. Let me make clear that my parents, for all their brutality, always believed

they were doing the will of God, not wanting to risk spoiling the child by sparing the rod and all the rest of it. My supposition is that they sincerely felt they were doing the good and godly thing and were somehow securing my salvation by wailing the tar out of me. They were far from being the first parents or the last to think this way and may the God they thought they were serving have mercy on their souls.

(My mother never accepted the undeniable fact that her son was epileptic. Even after comprehensive medical testing proved beyond a doubt that I had a seizure disorder, she stubbornly held to her position that no son of *hers* could have any such affliction caused by demons and evil spirits, principalities and powers, and so on and so forth).

Having to pull myself up out of the stifling pit of Christianity as I had experienced, albeit a very primitive backwoods form of it, and the offbeat personal values of my family, I needed a cornerstone upon which to build some sort of foundation for childhood sanity. This was music, my creative endeavors in which long preceded my involvement with the visual arts.

I spent a great deal of time writing and playing music. It was my Zen practice, the only thing that could absorb me in the moment and make me a part of itself. For me it had a unique reality; sound itself stimulated my imagination and I was ready and more than willing to travel wherever the music decided to take me. To make a technical point, music, with or without programmatic title, is an abstract art, nor could it be anything else, lacking the concrete nature of physical actuality.

As did my visions, music had the power to carry me into other worlds, other dimensions of being and feeling. While not visions in their own right, these musical sojourns had their own very special quality, that of the non-visual. Thusly they formed a sort of counterpoint, a balance, to the visions themselves. I was captivated by the idea of the purity of sound, its lack of restrictions, without form, the non-material created out of physical implements, going forth in absolute freedom to the ends of the universe, the sound waves traveling onward and upward, unhampered and unchanged, forever.

I was able to wander just as freely through these abstract landscapes of free tonalities, possessing nothing external unto itself, a place where I could climb the mountain of unified reality and see all the way to my home, my true home, wherever and whatever that was. Although as you will see, my childhood encounters with the unconscious were few and far between they were always deeply meaningful.

There are many obvious differences between the behavior of the elements of the outer world and their inner world counterparts. A storm, for example, in the physical world, will brew, spend its fury, move on, then eventually dissipate and come to an end.

In the interior world of thought and emotion, storms can rage an entire lifetime, and this was certainly true with me. The severe disturbance of my emotional nature not only continued to churn but would appear and reappear in myriad guises.

In the mid- to late-1960's I had developed some type of palsy, a continuous shaking with no discernible physical cause. Living with the constant uncertainty of the sudden appearance of a

seizure was bad enough, but these tremors were unceasing. The need to tie down the source of the palsy was imperative, and if that could not be done I had to have something to relieve it.

After explaining this new condition to my physician, he prescribed one of those wonderful new miracle drugs, which somehow almost invariably wind up creating a new condition as bad or worse than the one they are intended to cure. The one my doctor recommended for me was a hot little item called Valium.

I was told Valium would calm my nerves, which it certainly did, bringing with the relief unexpected bonuses, such as addiction. By the time I was able to sever my relationship with it, my original dosage of 2 milligrams per day had grown to 30 plus milligrams. Perhaps it would have demonstrated prudence on part to have discussed this exponential increase in my Valium intake with my doctor, but I kept putting off this confab with the medic for a half dozen or so years, finally extricating myself from the dependence.

It goes without saying that Valium and I stayed together for so long, and so greatly intensified our relationship, for the simple reason that it did what it was supposed to do, calming the storm or, rather, exercising restraint upon it, while simultaneously lulling me into a wonderful sense of false security that I had signed a covenant of peace with the world and all grim remnants of the past were somehow obliterated.

Wrong.

It took only a few short months following the closing of my Valium epoch for the old hurricane of fear, disturbing imagery, and anger to swirl once more through my dreams. I assured myself I was experiencing anew the old night terrors, perhaps not a week on the Riviera but something familiar and able to be handled.

Again, I was wrong.

One morning in February 1975, flowered a new unconscious seed whose fruit would be a life-and-death struggle manifesting first in a variety of physical symptoms, including headaches, muscular strain, digestive problems, and nightmares. I was roaming the dangerous, dark, mean streets of the unconscious mind with not the slightest indication of what it was that was stealthily and relentlessly stalking me.

At the time I was performing in several symphony orchestras throughout Southern California and except for the above-mentioned ailments, with a few dizzy spells thrown in for good measure, my affairs were in order and, for the most part, all seemed well. It was almost as though I were a tuxedo-clad Fred Astaire smoothly waltzing through life, the world itself as my gloriously attired Ginger, the lovely strains of *The Blue Danube* the anthem of my existence. Every storm must be preceded by a calm.

I began to notice that, at certain moments during my orchestral performances, I began to lose track of time and forget where I was, suddenly snapping out of it and returning to normal consciousness. If I am not mistaken, the technical psychological term for this is “spacing out.”

And if it is not, it should be, because that is exactly how it feels, having a space of awareness lifted out of the stream of consciousness. We are all eager to engage in self-diagnosis and I am no exception. Despite my personal health history, I decided to call these episodes “lack of concentration” or “over-tiredness.”

Concerned, and perhaps more than a little upset that one of their number was drifting in and out of a condition that could conceivably throw them all off and ruin a performance, my fellow musicians inquired about my health status.

I next began losing memories of entire events. I would play a concert on a Sunday evening, only to awaken Monday morning unable to remember clearly not only what occurred the previous night but the entire day before. The frequency of these memory lapses increased and as they did my fear multiplied geometrically. When dealing with health issues, I can demonstrate what I like to call stoicism (the healthcare industry often refers to it as “denial”), but the reality factor involved dictated that, with my health history, I avoid bringing this new problem to the attention of my doctor.

My usual explanation to others was that I was investing too much of myself in partying, or consuming too much alcohol, even though I did not drink. My state of mind is made clear by the fact that I would rather have been known as a carouser or a drunk than admit to having a health problem. The pattern set in childhood of concealing the fact I had a seizure disorder once again came to the fore, and even though there was some uncertainty about my self-diagnosis, I had spent my life hidden in the epilepsy closet and I certainly had no desire to come out this late in the game.

The terrible old memories of my younger years began to rumble to life, percolating to the surface in bubbles that should have burst and left me in peace, but somehow continued hugging the surface of those dark mental waters. Fear once again emerged with full force out of the nooks and crannies into which I had forced it, falling into step beside me with an ease and comfort that seemed both casually friendly and mockingly brazen. I had been working on a woodwind quintet and by the time I had finished the composition, the situation was out of control, anxiety having led me to the breaking point. The quintet, entitled *Summer Evening*, is somewhat reflective of the dissonant darkness but also included melodic respites and interludes of peace. In certain ways, it exemplified the state of my interior consciousness during that extremely difficult year of 1975.

Sometime later I was invited to compose the score for a stage production, *Come Before Winter*, a one-man play dealing with the final days of my fellow epileptic, St. Paul. The title, taken from Second Timothy 4:21, is a request by Paul that the young pastor of the Church at Ephesus hasten in his impending visit to the apostle, imprisoned in Rome and awaiting execution for following his personal path according to his understanding of God and Christ. Another dangerous individualist.

The play’s production manager insisted that the score reflect a tonal center, largely in the key of A minor. I was able to write the score for solo piano in about six weeks and though it was well received by audiences it was a little too heavily spiked with saccharine to suit my taste. In spite

of my absorption in composing, the inner storm was beginning to gather renewed strength and was making its way towards land.

The visions returned, crowding out the relief I had found in the creation of music. Out of tender moments flew flashes of insight, gently hovering near me before being plunged into the black abyss. Small wisps of pleasant times past lightly caressed my memory, then they too were swept away in the advancing path of the storm. My music was fading away, dying a slow death in the overarching shadow of grief, wresting from my grasp my only refuge from having to deal with the monsters of the unconscious. Sound was not a suitable receptacle for the images that poured out of the darkness into the field of my conscious awareness, it was too fragile, too delicate. My attempted solution was to try composing music that would give voice to the coming tempest, to cooperate with the approaching onslaught, but it seemed useless.

I had done this before, however, and successfully. My 1970 piece, *Quintet for Piano and Strings* conveyed the desolation of war by way of glissando representing the tears of the world. Although music does powerfully impact the consciousness through bypassing the objective reason and entering directly through the emotions, it cannot begin to have the direct effect upon us as does that which reaches us visually. It is a matter of simple scientific law; the speed of light is much greater than that of sound. We can take in an immense work of art, such as a Turner canvas or the roof of the Sistine Chapel, with one look, whereas music must, by its nature, unfold sequentially. It is impossible to compress an entire Wagnerian opera into a single note or chord.

The abstract nature of music, of sound, was not equipped to help me deal with what was coming. Only art, visual art would be my light in the ensuing years of darkness. The stream of imagery that my unconscious would produce, its own visual art, required a similar medium, a sympathetic repose if you will, for exterior manifestation. The medium had to have life, for it had to give life, a life separate and distinct from my own being yet pervaded with my own energy, to that which arose within. At the time, I had no idea just how physical this process would become.

As the old wise men of certain traditions, I found myself performing ceremonial rituals, dances, creating totems, painting, sculptures, drawings, even blood sacrifices, the importance of all of this manifesting in the words and drawings of my journal entries. They would not be flat, two-dimensional things; they would be living expressions of myself. The difference between them and my musical creations were that the latter were essentially creations of the intellect, the thinking, rational mind, whereas the art was more atavistic, emotional, epigastric, often sardonic, sometimes downright ruthless in both its appearance within me and its eventual actualization without.

As you will see in my journal, my art is formed in a state of purity, the unadulterated power of the content is driven by the will of the unconscious. In a sense, their wish is my command. I have no formal education or training in the visual arts as I did in music, which had carried me through the turmoil of my earlier life. I had never expected, much less planned to work in the visual media. But 1975 was my year of change in many ways.

The dam was about to burst. Everything I had experienced up to that point had, according to the necessity of retaining sanity, organized itself into what was, for me, a pattern of normal expression, a pattern that was torn to shreds by the outrush of a new set of images, so extreme in their dark foulness and power to terrify they could only be dealt with by the creation of masks, actual face masks whose visages showed the inner truths repressed for more years than I cared to count. My ego, my lower nature, had no defenses against their destructive power, so I had to hide them behind masks.

I was blessed beyond my ability to describe by the discovery that within the Pandora's box of my mind there did, indeed, reside that character called Hope, in my case, an angelic being I would later come to name Charon.

Charon had been with me since 1948, the manifestation of all within me that was good, that was light, that was pure, even holy if you will. Charon would act as a check and balance to the dark forces, oftentimes restraining them to allow my consciousness to recover from their ravages. When events rampaged out of control and threatened to crush me beneath their awful weight, it was Charon who was, in the language of the old Psalmists, my sword and shield, and the hedge of protection around Job.

The injection of art into my life would be what constituted the "work" which was my version of the Great Work of alchemy, the removal of the dross from the material through successive stages of purification that would eventually produce the gold of the perfected self. In my work, I would be transmuting the inner demons through the application of the fire in the crucible of artistic creativity. (It is no coincidence that in the Rosicrucian Order, which produced virtually all of the great alchemists of the past, the most advanced class of students is still referred to as Artisans).

As images flowed out of my unconscious in a never-ending stream, the only way to keep from being carried away in the floodtide was to objectify them in whatever way I could, hence the tremendous import of my journals, where they safely reposed. From 1975 to the time of this writing my journals have become home to over five thousand drawings contained in some thirty-seven volumes.

I began with simple stick drawings which would evolve into more sophisticated renderings in my journals, on canvas, and as sculpture. I found the physical work involved in bringing these images into the world eased the psychic pain, which prompted me to work for hours, days, weeks at a time, as my safety valve to release the pressure of the forever-running steam boiler of my unconscious.

Thankfully, my physical body was a cooperative player in all of this, making available levels of energy to match my need. All in all, the process can best be described as manic. I continued to work at my day job in the telecommunications industry. After arriving home, I would go to the mountain, Stony Point in Chatsworth, California for meditation, then return, ensconce myself in my study to work on my journals until the next morning, then begin the next round of "civilian" work and artistic creation. I literally had the proverbial energy of a madman. It was amazing how much artwork I was able to produce as a part-time avocation. Those who knew of my creative endeavors could scarcely believe what I was able to accomplish in short periods of time.

They didn't understand the drive behind it, that I was compelled to bring forth the visionary images in the most applicable formats. I did not want to stop myself, nor was there any way I possibly could have.

There were, of course, dormant periods when the visions gave me necessary rest. This was possibly, indeed probably, due to the intervention of Charon, who knew that the physical and psychic vehicles would have broken down under the constant strain, to which he commanded a halt at certain well selected times. During these more restful periods, I devoted myself to large sculptures that required extended periods of time for completion. Despite the protection of my guardian angel, I could still drive myself to exhaustion and the inevitable crash and burn and descent into darkness.

It could take weeks, sometimes months before new material would present itself to me out of the workshop of my unconscious. I learned it could take that long for a particular vision to properly organize itself into a coherent whole in my conscious mind. There are still things, images from long suppressed and half-forgotten memories that I still have not completely worked through. There are journal entries, which, even after repeated readings, will still bring forth an unsuspected element that has remained elusive for many years.

There are also drawings and entries that to this day I cannot even look at, much less cogitate upon. The pain associated with them still cuts too deeply. I have experienced opening one of my journals and have a drawing or written entry leap off the page and hurtle into the depths of my being, wrenching forth what I did not even know was there. As I said, the speed of light is much faster than that of sound, and the speed of the effect of some of my journal pages, even glanced at, is ferocious and must still be avoided. Other disturbing visions can be glanced at, but even these bring forth tears and anxiety attacks as I turn the pages of these sections.

I know that deeply within me there are dark, secret passageways within whose dank atmosphere and cobwebbed walls lurk monsters I am as yet unprepared to deal with. They may reach out to touch the record of the visions from which they sprang, but I cannot yet do so. Even as I acknowledge that I have achieved wholeness in many areas of my being, some of which I was never before able to access, there are experiences that wait so silently and exist so deeply, that they may never be retrieved, confronted, and handled, at least not in this life. I am cognizant of the fact that they still affect my behavior and, therefore, I am helpless against their influence. I do, however, remain constant in my efforts to overcome or at least contain and manage, their influences.

What might appear to the reader as "one event after another" are in fact stretched out over a period of many years. I have selected incidents that reflect particularly important moments in my overall development. Many visions and episodes have been intentionally left out due to the enormous number of them. It would require ten books to record them all.

I ask that as you read these journals, as my inner life unfolds itself before you, you will not be overly harsh in your assessment of their content. I hope you will try to understand the deeper

meanings they express and that by accompanying me on my journey through word and art you will find, as have I, a deeper and profounder meaning to your own life.

Myron Dyal

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