

Further Work, Placements

S: Another thing: in your readings did you find that the liver symbolized anything in other cultures?

M: I think I've read things but I've blocked them out. But I should tell you...right after I did the liver pictures, I drew a little sketch. I was meditating and had a fantasy...I drew a little sketch of this big nail that I had. In my sketch this nail or a dagger was in the liver which was on a table - blood was dripping down off this table. And I actually had a fantasy, right after I drew that, of a scene where there's a liver on a table that is knifed like that, and I am sitting under it with blood dripping, on me, but I have on this black nun's habit or veil, where the blood wouldn't go onto my face but would drip down, like so...

C: A rain hat, gutter...
(laughter)

S: Out of your meditation, which is not a dream...

M: Not a dream. I was meditating and sort of, pictured that. But what was most striking about that was that it felt fantastic. The blood flowing onto me was a like a - release.

S: It sounds so scary...it was like you experienced the flow of blood yourself.

The further work that was happening at this time, April-May of 1981, was, simply, a further letting out, a further letting go, listening inward, following the still small voice (sometimes quite loud) inside myself. I continued to meditate, daydream (in Bachelard's sense of reverie, sinking into reverie) and write out my insistent dreams. I used my camera as an available and friendly tool. On Passover, as I removed the skin from our chicken, I saw it, was jolted by its resemblance to a recently sacrificed baby, or being. I followed my impulse to put a peacock feather in it and take pictures (see reproduction).

I continued to follow my connection to bones, saving and cleaning chicken bones, dreaming about their deeper meaning...

I have recently discovered that the liver was used for divination, and thought of in ancient times as the solid form of blood. See bibliography for books discussing the liver.

See reproductions, related to this chapter, of an open chicken, as I saw it one day before putting it in the pot, and the Passover chicken, with a peacock feather in it...

More reproductions related to this chapter include "placements": a box with bones and feathers and metal in it, a pillow with a "wreath," photograph, and bottle of "blood" on it, and three large bones on our lawn.

M: The flow and the pulsing. I could feel it - and then I wrote a couple of pages in my journal 'cause I knew...I wrote about Gabriel being born, and hemorrhaging. And the placenta has blood in it.

S: And your birth...

C: It makes me think of someone dying, bleeding to death, that feeling. And nosebleeds when I was little... that feeling of release.

M: Can you imagine going into a past life and finding out I died by a knife with blood flowing out? But it was disturbing, like things you don't understand - when I have these things in this life, my biggest superstition is, "Is that going to happen to me?"

C: That you bring them on yourself.

M: Even today I thought - what I really want to know about is the relation of light to dark and I really want to understand death.

S: That's a continual question you have, isn't it? That fascination with death...and blood...a sort of pushing past the superstitions we have, and the fears.

M: It's not just death. I can't really say that...but somehow you're right about the fears. Like when I picked up that mourning scarf, I really was a little shaky, to say the least.

(laughter)

M: I was afraid I was gonna bring death down upon myself...by getting a mourning cloth? Or...

April 20, 1981 Journal. Bone, Carcass Dream

"Looking for bones. I'm sent down to lower lower levels of an academic museum/department store. Glassware and perfumes above, in room with men around a large circular table drinking wine from the glassware. Lower levels are light, full of clean white bricks and kilns. (As I write I think of Nazi gas/shower chambers, clean, light?) I find a few bones on a sand table type shelf but as I reach for more they are attached to large animal carcasses floating in metal wax heating machines, in water or oil. Preserved or freshly killed. Like the chicken on Passover. Practically alive. I'm horrified.

"Alarms on doors. Circa has climbed out and fallen, is trapped on the fire escape. We can't get her. Can't tell if doors will open or not. (Circa is our dog).

"On way up I pick up dusty reject bones from near scholars' offices/under stairwells, etc."

And my reflection on the dream:

"Feels like going to Savenor's for bone/liver and getting/seeing fresh carcasses. The shock. The connection of death to life.

"Dead bones of the animals they came from.

"What is this all about?"

My son Gabriel was becoming aware of all the bones around...

May 15, 1981

"Me: 'Gabe, was Anne sad tonight because of her kitten dying?'

~Gabe: 'No...but Mom, can we got to Anne Burke's house tomorrow.. can we R° there?'

~Me: 'Do you want to see the kitty?' -

"Gabe: 'No...I want to see its bones. I have never seen a cat's bones before. Have you, Mom?'"

C: But people have been dying...

S: It's so interesting to hear what you're saying, though, because neither of you were brought up Catholic, yet you have a lot of the same

C: Everybody's Catholic!

S: Yeah.

M: You wouldn't have believed the kind of Christ stuff that came up while I was working...it was uncanny!

C: Pre-Christian, that stuff about the blood is pre-Christian, people were actually baptized in blood...priests were...

M: Blood...see I told that to Howard I think, my fantasy about the blood...or maybe I just showed him the bottle of blood and the pillow and stuff. I started picking things up out of thrift stores and stuff that I just, like, hooked on...hook! I've been using the word hook...

C: All day today. It's your hook day...

M: I went in near Mass Art one day and there was a...a lace and satin pillow. Did I show you this pillow?

S: Unh unh.

M: Well, I knew I liked lace and satin 'cause I had been examining things that I clicked with, and I liked lace and satin, and ribbons, and these girly things... so I said, I looked at this pillow and I said, I've gotta have this

"My own bones
"My own liver/heart
"My own carcass

"My own death. Death of Jews.

"Bodies low down always feels like torture chambers or? Is all this really inside me?"

I continued to pick up things from the street, and to photograph what I couldn't pick up. Another theme or image was wanting to be heard here...the "flip side" as Lowry said when he saw my little collection of rusty and silvery washers. The flip side of the blood, bones, flesh, rust?...perhaps an image of wholeness, simplicity...I wasn't sure what those circles were alluding to, but I followed them up first with about 60 photos of gas and water meters that caught my eye as I walked to Harvard Square one day. I began to carry a larger satchel that would hold the tops Or tar containers and paint cans, things that said "Me, take me home." I looked at circles in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston - Greek mirrors and a wonderful shield - and I made two trips to local Junkyards to find some larger discs that spoke to me enough to be used in my "placements" as I would call them: groups of my resonant objects that felt like they belonged together, no questions asked.

The circle as an image or symbol must have many many meanings, many levels...Jung says that an archetype, a living archetypal symbol, bears the meaning of the person experiencing it at that time, or life stage, of his or her life. Circles to me at that time meant two main things - a "getting it all together," understanding the whole of my tree and my psyche as it was growing and branching outward; and coming into center - a mandala-like whole; and second, coming to terms with the hole that makes me a woman and not a man...some continual hint from my psyche to accept my female aspect as a central fact. The latter has been strangely hard to admit to myself, perhaps because of the masculine tone that the "art world" has had for me...

a Christening, or something, it's got a look to it. I wanted that pillow!

S: Oh yeah, I know what those pillows look like, they're great.

M: Well, ya know what this was, it was a pillow from a casket.

S: Oh really, oh...

M: I had this pillow, she charged me fifty cents for it 'cause it was dirty. I brought it home,, and I had mixed a jar of this color that looked exactly like blood, 'cause I was mixing substances that had a feel...and, well I've always like menstruating, since I was thirteen, I loved the color of blood...

S: Did you like menstruating when you first started?

M: I don't know if I liked it when I first started...but I really like that...that blood!

S: It's a beautiful color.

M: Maybe it's 'cause I didn't want to be pregnant...

(laughter)

M: So I had this jar of blood, and I put this jar on top of the pillow, 'cause it looked just right, and I somehow spread this, uh...this is funny 'cause it has so much to do with all that blood.

C: I know...

The following journal entries show what was coming to my mind about the meanings of the blood, the circles, and the first "placement" using resonant objects:

Journal April 27, 1981

"I have this image of spurting gushing blood out of a tube, tunnel, or vaginal opening. Either the vessel has broken naturally or been opened/broken by force. The pulse is evident in the blood's rhythm.

"Two things come to mind.

"The hemorrhaging after Gabriel's birth.

i' Interesting, after the liver which may be placenta . Something pointing to birth or rebirth or after birth. I have given birth. Now I am gushing blood. A feeling of creative source in the gushing blood. As from a well or center. A flow.

"The other image was of the nail hitting the flesh of the liver, crack, and blood spurting out. Christ's blood came to mind. Nailing him to the cross. Christ's flesh. Christ's blood. My flesh, my blood. Not being Christian - what to make of this. It would sound pretentious. Also I thought about Marion Milner. Something about bloody dismemberment of the god. My psyche is moving in its own tracks deep down under (even) the cave."

There is a great deal written on the meanings of the circle/mandala image. Jung discusses these at length in Psychology and Alchemy and The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. Eliade discusses the mandala in Patterns in Comparative Religion (see appendix for a quotation). Herbert Read discusses the circle in the Forms of Things Unknown and Dante of course uses the concentric circle/spiral form as the central structure of the Divine Comedy. I searched out the Inferno after a dream about "the central hole." See the appendix for a quotation from Dante with commentary by Alan Watts.

When I noticed the water and gas meters, it was not only the shape of circle and square that attracted me. It was something about the metal. From my journal on April 7, 1981:

"Wondering about the qualities that attract me. Metal objects of all sorts, especially rusty or 'patina'-ed. Now what do those have in common? Rust and Patina?? Carl says Einstein asked about peculiar characteristics of metals - that they emit electrons when light is shined upon them. Maybe electrons are bouncing up at me from these metal things.

"I notice many now but only some have a resonance with the deeper parts of me. Ineffable. Something ineffable."

M: At least one third of everything I did felt like it had to do with...menstruating blood, or blood that came out of me when Gabriel was born, or,.,

S: Your liver.

M: Like the liver, or also like Christ getting nailed, and blood flowing. You know, when I did the fantasy of the liver, it was all in my mind, but I immediately said, Wow, what is this? I mean I knew that, that the feeling of something being stabbed, and blood pulsing and gushing forth was some sort of thing that had a whole bunch of levels of meaning to it.

S: Like the blood of the lamb...

M: So I brought this pillow home I had found in the street something wired together, out of twigs, like this (drawing an arch in the air).

C: Kind of a wreath...

H: Like a piece of a giant wreath it felt like a wreath but it wasn't round...and my jar of blood. And somehow...I put the pillow in the other room, put the wreath on top, and put the Jar of blood plop in the middle. It said "blood" on the top, with the recipe...and I left it there. It looked just right! And Lowry had said I should play around with the things I was picking up, with no thoughts, Just to see what felt right together. Jed walks into the little room, she looked at the thing and she said, "It's the bleeding heart!"

"This imagery on the male/female level. Penetration. Receptivity. Opening. (Hitting the vein).

"On the Christ metaphor level. I identify (again) with the aggressor and the flesh.

"On the birth/rebirth level. Many things lately point to this. The bones and 'living' carcasses, the liver. The circle in one dream is the 'central hole'

"And what hole is the 'central hole'? Feeling of looking down into the bowels of the earth. And I had thought those washers were suns? The central hole is my vagina. My femaleness. Also – 'the central whole.' The mandala. Carl says find Dante, end of the Inferno.

April 27, continued

"How much does my life need to 'coincide' with all of this - death, rebirth, sacrifice, blood... I think these need, these strong images need birthing from me. That is all. Give them birth and air. They need to come out from the bowels of the earth, from my bowels..."

See reproduction Or a water meter in Harvard Square. When I got it enlarged I noticed its resemblance to an I Ching coin. round with a square in the middle.

My fantasy of blood pouring onto my head from the liver was one with many resonances and "descents" into the past. Jung in Man and His Symbols discusses Initiation/Rebirth archetypes related to bleeding. Further he describes a woman's dreams heralding rebirth...See also Jung in The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, in the chapter, "The Psychological Aspects of the Kore ," for more on blood, related to the Earth Mother archetype.

See the appendix for an amazing quotation describing the consecration of a priest in the religion of "The Great Mother."

C: Not the bleeding heart, the sacred heart.

S: Right, the sacred heart.

H: I said the bleeding heart because I still think that liver is a heart! All the time I thought the liver was really a heart.

S: You know, I thought of heart...

M: Did you Bet that feeling?

S: Yes, it has the same...when I thought about what it should feel like when you asked me what it would be (made of)...it's the same feeling, I mean it has the same look and the same feel and even the same shape almost, and it's sort of triangular or something,...

M: It's either, it's like a placenta-heart-liver. I feel like it's some sort of combined thing and it must mean something internal, that bleeds.

M: What do the Chinese say about the liver?

S: I can't remember that much...all I can think of is physical signs, people who drink a lot, smoke a lot, drink coffee a lot...

April 29, 1981 Journal

"Yesterday, with boxes. Staining, pouring on tincture of blood. Nailing a chain over the large cow bone. Adding a small pearl. The title I thought of was. "They got her bone, but she escaped." Carl says, as I recall too, it's the same theme, slightly changed perhaps, of me, chained down to the sufferers in hell me, chained by my ankle, and reaching for the sun. 1967! And before that, my sophomore year, people in a circle of fiery hell, chained and suffering. I really felt the pull and sought escape. From what have I escaped? Is

this about death, our death, and the spirit that escapes? The bud flowered, in a way. The same theme recurrent...

My placements seemed to have a lot of metal, chains, nails in them...also bones, blood, and "feminine" materials. That feeling of the female and feminine being bound...

Jung suggests that we are "chained" to the earth by being human (see appendix for quotation).

Something explicitly masculine-feminine seemed to be coming out of my work, though. I tried to let it go and it cropped up again in my show. (See especially the hanging bone with ribbon and feathers).

I was far deeper into an "Initiatic Journey" than I could understand intellectually. See the appendix to this chapter!

C: All toxins go to the liver.

M: I drink too much coffee, eat too much sugar.

S: Right...they usually have problems...

M: I wouldn't doubt if my dream was telling me something physical and I went and made an art product out of it, and I still have a sick liver!

C: I wouldn't be surprised if making the art product...

M: Helped out my liver?

C: Helped out your liver.

M: I wouldn't doubt it, to tell the truth.

C: 'Cause your whole body has been different, since your show.

S: Your whole face is different, that's what I've noticed. I guess that's why...your face has a more relaxed quality, a different...look to it, a younger, more attractive look.

M: Isn't that funny! I let out a lot of dark...(laughter)...no, keep out "dark." I had a ball doing this!

C: You let out a lot of energy!

In May I followed that irresistible urge to return to Savenor's - I had to photograph those sides of beef! The resulting series was, to my sense of where I was going, about as far down into coldness as I could go. And I had been in "the cold room" of the meat market! See the reproductions of a hanging cow, and the man slicing up a cow for us to eat...

The Show Looming Up

M: Well, at this point I was really ready to let out ~~something I had been wanting to~~ ~~be something I had been wanting to~~ those fantasies for months, the ones about tombs and dead bodies of my relatives in the hospital. I had let them go. I had let everything go. Sometime in May, in the middle of all this photographing and putting things in boxes, I went into the empty gallery and sat there. I sat there and meditated... and I imagined drum beats, African drum beats, and rattles being shook. I imagined concrete blocks or my foot lockers as the tombs, and big enormous spikes sticking out of the walls. And somehow I imagined water being there. A pool of water, the gallery floor partly a pool...it just felt like it needed water, calm water...

S: Wow, you could have tried that, with the concrete... and... but the water would be hard.

M: I thought of it. Hiring people, getting big blocks of concrete. But I let that go too. I let it all go and kept following my nose day to day. I just refused to panic.

C: But you were doing little sketches, weren't you? And picking up that table with wheels...you were working on your show . . .

M: I was just doing it the same way then...what I had to do, from my dreams or my inner voice. I was getting my photographs developed then, in June, the ones from Savenor's... I'd been

The show had actually been looming up for months. After all, I had been nurturing my inclinations, for the whole year. I knew something was growing in me which would "come out" when I had my show in the summer.

From my journal, Feb. 17; 1981

"A birth collage to go along with the show. To echo the pregnancy and birth of this. Reminds me of the eggs, birds, dinosaurs...Photos of me with Gabe in the delivery room. My print of me nursing (nurturing my works?!) A picture of my pregnant belly. A blow up. A drawing. Pregnancy and birth. Maybe women artists don't deal with them because that process is echoed in their work. Gestation, bringing forth, nurturing, putting into the world. That process...I am a lady in waiting."

I was still "following" my inner voices. On April 7 I wrote in my journal:

"I still feel more noticing - a viewer, a seer/thinker - not exploiting..."

"Some concern about the 'show' but in a way - who cares? Boxes of rusty metal. Photos of tofu, flesh. Rubbings or photos of metal discs..."

In February, when I had begun to meditate regularly, I experienced a "total resignation" about my show. I can remember saying to myself, "It will be o.k. if I have my show, and the gallery is empty. Zero. Because that will be the most honest thing. I'm absolutely empty. I'm wiping it all out." After that I had a very vivid fantasy of placing piles of shit in the gallery, perhaps some on glass. Something like the "primum materium" I had read about in Jung.

"I remembered an earlier discovery, that internal act of the wiping out of myself, of all my plans and purposes and confidence in my own powers, the wiping out of all those stirrings after the good things I wanted for myself and others that usually filled my days.

Marion Milner, An Experiment in Leisure

afraid of those for a while. They were so cold. I really hid from them for weeks. And the chicken ones. I knew I'd do something with those chickens, the open vulnerability and that one that looked like a baby. I already had a sketch of one, a kind of ritual table with an open chicken.

S: I never got to see that one in your show.

M: You came too late. That was the one that Elise put the flower on...it felt too vulnerable to her.

S: Weren't you scared, doing all this, letting all this out?

M: I don't know. I was scared in some ways, but in some ways I gave up. I gave up trying to keep it in or something. I mean I was nervous, but...

C: Lowry was helping you, that helped.

M: He wasn't really, directly I mean. I probably saw him in April...and then he was giving this course, a week long course at the end of June down at the Children's Museum. Can you imagine? My show was supposed to open July 20 and here it was, the end of June, and I had a few little sketches, some of enormous hanging bones

S: Hanging bones?
(laughter)

M: The sketches made me laugh. They just came out of my hands. Huge bones, and that circle piece with the feathers, and the ritual table. I let

Even before I had "let go" I had had a very important dream. I was clearing away the debris and self-doubt, and making room for the real thing to emerge; I called the dream "the basic gesture."

"A critique of my work. Two women faculty members are there. I put out my simple things, small clouds. Like my cards or simpler. D or someone says, 'Not developed enough - maybe you need a man to tell you when to push further.' The other woman says no, she doesn't think so. When there's a problem with critical image (or a hole in it, or something like that) the critiques Bet to you more. She intimates that I'm growing past this. I wait, then I say, 'I want my work to be accepted at the gesture level, the gesture level! I hold up one finBer and say, 'As if I were Buddha doing this, or Christ. Not that I'm Buddha or Christ. But the part of me that's infinite, that's clear. Not the Marilyn, the personality that you know. That (clear) part, if it can look at you and connect with you on a deep level with just this gesture, well, that's the best art I could do.' D's mouth opens, amazed. I wake up."

Images would arise in my mind (and sketch book) that led directly to those I used in the show.

Journal May 2

"Images now I have in mind to do. More boxes with nails and bones. Even teeth if I can get some. Heh heh. Fighting tooth and nail.

See the appendix for more on the meaning of water from Eliade and the I Ching. The Eliade quotes bring together other symbols and aspects of my work. As you read about water, think about (also) the pools of blood in my sketches for the show. Some connection in meaning?

"...I could also say that the living processes I needed to understand were not exclusively physical, and that the mind used the idea of the physical facts of sex and maternity themselves as symbols, symbols of the truth that all real living must involve a relationship, recurrent moments of surrender to the 'not-self.' Richness from the earth...the dark wealth of mines, all these were equally apt ways of talking about either the powers of generation in the body, or the unknown creative depths of mind."

Marion Milner, An Experiment in Leisure

See p. 161 in Marion Milner's book: A pregnant woman has a "belly full of bones."

them come out. I was in Jeff's Kitchen, that restaurant, and they Just...came out!

C: Didn't you get sick again though? Was it then?

M: That dream came around then. This dream where Gabe and I got impaled going up a mountain and then we were inside the mountain it was awful I went back into the dream and it was like those torture chambers, monsters, dark waters...a nightmare, I was really kind of shook. I wanted a guide right there...

S: What about Lowry?

M: Well, at the end of June, when I finally saw him...I mean I'd call him but I could never see him, he was too busy...so it was about June 25 and I showed him my small photos of beef hanging and the guy slitting the beef, and the chickens, and my little sketches. And he said, "The work is done, it's only the presentation now!" Well that was something!

S: He meant the inner work, all the going into yourself...or that you had those sketches?

M: I don't know. The "presentation" sounded small and large at once. I mean, it was my show. And I'd never had a show, I'd always been inward about my work.

C: She has a trunk full of drawings...

"Unfinished-movie or photo of liver nailed and dripping blood. The 'table' in the garage - paint it black. Put a white sheet over it. A dead chicken. Some utensils. Maybe even flowers. Call it 'The Sacrifice.' A ritual table of black and white. Blood. Knives. Scissors. Holders. The dead chicken skinned, open, with skin piled nearby. Possibly a plate. A glass vase of 2 or 3 flowers.

"Something like an operation. Also the fact of our eating animals I don't know.

Also, the noose. The noose hanging on the wall holding a body."

Journal May 11 (after sketching a hanging bone and carcass)

"I am not 'obsessed.' If I let myself go I go right back to the comfy area of dismembered sides of beef huge bones, puddles of blood, and flowers strewn about. What does it matter what it is? If I'm not pushing this out, I certainly don't have to reach beyond it either. Just giving my psyche freedom feels best..."

"The artist in man knows that we can't suddenly be a certain way... We have to become what we are growing to be. Inner growth takes time. And trust. It takes a sense of the seed forces in ourselves, and some knowledge of the stages of development, seasons, deaths and rebirths, something about a feel for life processes at work, patience. It takes patience and steadiness and humor and commitment, like a farmer has."

Mary Caroline Richards, The Crossing Point

The dream referred to in Column I was really terrifying. It is recounted in the appendix, along with the "fantasy return" back into it.

The I Ching says, in the hexagram entitled "Shock":

"When a man has learned within his heart what fear and trembling mean, he is safeguarded against any terror produced by outside influences. Let the thunder roll and spread terror a hundred miles around: he remains so composed and reverent in spirit that the sacrificial rite is not interrupted."

M: But what I want to say is...I told

Lowry then, I had maybe five minutes to talk to him...I told him my dream and that I'd been identifying with my dark side, and getting sick...and he said, I remember his exact words, "You have to let those things out."

S: And you did.

C: She sure did. Our living room and basement were full of...

May 14, Journal

"Meditation is such pleasure. A basic necessity, even if only to 'give myself up' for a second. Up in smoke. My vision of a show that goes up in smoke. No precious objects. 'Protect the universals in dust and ashfulness.'"

"I don't want to make anything outside myself, really. Who needs more objects? Weight of excess...I only want to fathom my Self, in the deepest sense. My Self, at all levels..."

The following dream shows some of the pleasure I was gaining from letting out so much:

Dream May 15

"Large cement bed-blocks in a circle. Like Stonehenge. Each has a huge bone imbedded/calcified on the top. Earth movers are crashing the blocks and moving the bones. A man swings atop a cement cube headache ball-like machine. He has to move his body to avoid being squashed but he's 'having a ball.' Enjoying the swinging and excitement. A claw machine lifts up each cement-bed-bone and the other block smashes the first. Then the bone is carried off to a pile. Flat land, but some excavation."

See the reproductions of the little sketches I did of the ritual sacrifice, the hanging bones, and the "transformation piece." They all, literally, came though my hands from a part of me "deeper" than my head. I watched them appear.

"The instinct that guides the hand is a sure one, the movement not consciously calculated, but responsive to intimations that are beneath all sensations, primordial."

"What we must admire, in the modern artist, is the confidence with which he accepts as a gift from the unconscious, forms of whose significance he is not, at the creative moment, precisely aware."

Herbert Read, The Forms of Things Unknown

Chung Fu/Inner Truth

"The wind blows over the lake and stirs the surface of the water. Thus visible effects of the invisible manifest themselves."

From the I Ching, R. Wilhelm edition

Letting Out the Show

M: Bones. I started with the bone image. Lowry had suggested I do those sketches. I mean he Just gave me the go ahead which I needed. I got some very large cardboard tubes.

C: She'd find them in people's trash...

M: It's true. They Just turned up...like the cart. That cart from the trash. But the bones. I got this plaster wrapping stuff...awful and powdery. But kind of hospitably too, you know...

S: For casts. The kind they use for broken bones?

(laughter)

M: Yes, that exact stuff! I wasn't sure about it at first - it was so odd to use. The bone things were ENORMOUS - like 6 or 7 or 8 feet long. And I had forgotten - not forgotten but I had let go of them, of those images of my relatives in the hospital. My bone sketches were kind of humorous to me, you know... "Bone flies over the city," or "dinosaur bone rising..." (laughter). They really were! And I loved actually making them... it was hard, getting these huge wads of newspaper to hook up right onto the tubes.

C: They filled the living room floor.

M: And the table and the sunroom. Later the landlord went out of town and I moved them into the basement.

At the end of May I was still "filling out" my tree, and trying to let things fall where they might. I had so many sources to draw from...I used this mandala in the show:

May 25 dreams. Translucencies, light. Repeated feelings.

May 26 Journal

"I've let myself make a mandala of a rusty tar container top. I've thrown together a lot - beginning two weeks ago with the only 'translucencies' that I've found on the street - plastic from car reflectors and a bit of mirror. I like the circle as a form to start with. Things feel like radiating from it...I dribbled aluminum paint on the rust, I glued on tar, used tar-like paint, 'blood' paint, metal found objects, feathers, ribbon..."

May 26 Journal

"The trick is now to play with them (all my materials) but not judge so much what comes out. I just want to make some SIMPLE GESTURES."

Journal June 6

"I have a whole array of bone ideas. I keep wanting to feminize a bone, wrap it, ribbon it, make it pink and lacy. Sounds so kitchy but I'll have to let myself go with this one."

"In the Orient there is a saying that 'transformation is the aim and purpose of all practice.' This is a big order (...) to move slowly toward friendship with what is unfamiliar or shameful in ourselves, as well as toward concern for others."

Mary Caroline Richards, The Crossing Point

From our tape discussion:

M: You know how I knew when I was doing something right? As soon as I cackled, I knew I was on the right track. If I was going to mix up some color, and I'd go "Heh heh!", I'd get this funny grin, and I'd say, "That must be right!"

S: That's so neat. You were so in touch with some part of you that it just came up and approved of you.

C: Yeah, that's it, the one that came up and approved of her own actions!

(laughter)

S: Just the right place, huh?

M: Yeah, you're right... It was down there...actually I had made the huge slit down the gut of that feminine one up here...

S: Vaginal slits again, Marilyn...

M: Actually this was...this was really heavy to me, stabbing and ripping at that bone body...they became like bodies right away.

C: You should have seen her sawing the big one in half...

S: Like the meat market,...

M: God, I never even thought of that. Not that exact memory. But I did have this feeling of letting out my aggression on these. Some desire to rape, kill, plunder...

S: Whew...

M: But you know, I was loving it, all that energy flowing in me. But something was hurting or...Some feeling that I was having to own all this. It's one thing in your head, but bashing at pretend bodies and hacking them up...I went and got Marion Milner's book out again because I remembered her talking about dismemberment...

S: Like the Osiris myth, is that what you mean?

M: Part of it. I mean she was asking about her own inclinations too. And she did realize the deeper meanings, the myths about death and regeneration...But I can't say I understood it all, intellectually.

My Journal from early July through the opening of my thesis show on July 20, 1981 shows the seriousness of the process I was going through:

July 6 Journal

"See! I want to say. See the death of the chicken and see its vulnerability, its open hole. See the large bone there, dripping its life's blood out into a pool. The blood used to be there, inside that bone/being/animal/person. Now it has died but it maintains its stature. Throw flowers onto it. Repent. Something like that.

"Some feelings about deaths. Vulnerable openings. Savage plunder - the hook. The feather/bone things. I don't have words for their meanings. I don't know if they are about resurrection or not. The huge flying bone - like its spirit almost - I don't know, I have to let the objects flow even more to let this feeling out.

"Hung up with strengthening the large bone so I can hang it. It still asks to be sliced. Something wants to come out of it. I am binding it tight. I don't know what will come out.

"Fear of the smell of the chicken and the meat bones after a few days. Maybe that is a part of it. The smell of death.

"Blood and guts of course go with it all."

See the reproductions of some of the pieces from my show: the "transformation" piece, the chicken two bone/bodies with "guts" coming out, one hanging "feminine" bone with a tool in its middle and a pool of "blood" beneath it, a piece with a veil over some mysterious rusty shapes on the wall, with large bones on the floor beneath it, a bird wing with feathers (the "redeemed bird"). I also included in the show, where they felt right, two mandalas of found materials, a series of liver photos, photos of the Passover chicken and the man at Savenor's and two raw bones, the kind I had photographed on my lawn. After a week or so I added to the gallery some of my earlier work: the large brown paper drawings, a large cloud painting, a box of rusty shapes, some glass with a lacy sandblast pattern...more dark, light, and "flesh" to the show, more filling out of my tree...

C: But here you are, doing it.

S: Living the myth on some level...

M: And I wasn't Just stabbing and sawing. After a few days I felt...I don't know...they just needed to flow out. blood...and guts...I visited the chemistry store one day and got Carl to bring home that awful tube for me. It was so awful, I had to have it. I hooked it into that one bone and.. .uk... it really led to those humps that were like insides...and I had already taken apart that pheasant...

S: What?

M: You know that piece with the hoop and the dirt?

S: Yes. I really like that one, it has an Indian feeling to it.

M: Well, I knew I had to have some "sacred feathers for it, hanging down, so I went to Savenor's. . .

C: She gave them a lot of business...

M: And I couldn't get just a few so I bought a whole pheasant. The head is in our freezer, want to see it? It's beautiful, those iridescent soft feathers on the neck...

S: And you used its feathers?

M: Just a few. But it took days to pull out all the feathers. I have huge jars of them in the other room. Green and blue ones and reddish and tail feathers; I'll give you some...

July 7 Journal

"Now that I have mutilated the large bone, I am so relieved. Relief from tension, as if I had to do it. I want to let the blood drain.

"Use cornstarch, Lowry suggests. These bones are cold? but bleeding. Deaths, fresh deaths. Memories of guillotine - from Tale of Two Cities.

"Memories.

"I get so hung up with presentation. I need to do only the essentials - not for a show. but to let ME out. Me is what? Some very very buried memories of deaths. bodies, blood flowing everywhere. Concrete slabs. Graves. Bones strewn about.

"A past life? Tapping some memories of the race? I don't know. It's frightening to think about, strangely satisfying to do it. Not decorating as much as aiding in the feeling. Like the vaseline on the tofu.

"These cold bones need something. Either warmer color. or even more nausea. Nausea and blood coming out. Heart and guts rent asunder. Mutilation. Something awful. 'Just some part of my psyche,' I say. Not me, but an inner ME that wants OUT. Doing my work then is like a bee making honey, or a homing pigeon flying home. Simple and necessary. Nothing added, nothing removed."

"'Sorcery and sanctity,' said Ambrose, 'these are the only realities. Each is an ecstasy, a withdrawal from the common life.'"

Alan Watts,
The Two Hands of God

"The mysterious force by which one is lived, the 'not--elf' which was yet also in me, it was this force that I must learn to know, and to remember continually without fear, a force which had seemed sometimes like a beast within, sometimes like a god. And if to find a continual conscious relation to the source of life inside you, the thing that lives in you, that possesses you, if that was what all my wanderings had been aiming at, it was no wonder that the theme of physical sexuality had also been involved."

Marion Milner,
An Experiment in Leisure

S: Wow.. I'd love to have a few of those.

M: Anyway, then I took the whole bird, the entire pheasant, apart. I took pictures of it whole, on the lawn, and then photographed all the organs; the lungs were beautiful, with little delicate lines of red on green.

C: He kept them in jars for awhile. the organs. I brought home some ethanol from the lab.

M: But they wouldn't last. You know what the most incredible part was...that on my early memory list was this memory of my mother cleaning out the inside of a chicken. It made me nauseous...And here I was, cleaning out this pheasant, and the insides looked gorgeous to me!

S: Something coming full circle...

M: Yes, you're right. Even with the nails and metal, even those rusty mandalas and the dagger thing in that bone - those first memories of my back yard with the wire and rocks and broken glass, the abrasive memories...I still can feel them in my body.

S: But you've used those memories, you've transformed them into beauty...

M: That word is hard for me - "beauty." It's one of those "art" words.

C: Except for that phrase you always quote...about truth and beauty.

M: Yeah..."Truth is Beauty, Beauty, Truth; That is all we know on earth and all we need to know." I love that; it really makes sense to me.

Journal, a few days before the opening on July 20.

"Why is all this going through me? Sadness. Humble. The bone bodies have been looking so grown. Like adolescent yuk. In me, yes. How I love to saw to gnaw on bones and flesh. I told Carl last night that I needed to work more to smooth the body of the large bone/body with huge tube.

"I patted and poured some plaster over it, followed my inclination to wrap and attach some chicken bones to it. As I worked I got even more gentle. Odd. The pouring plaster was like a libation, some sort of holy water. The bones...? Whose body is this? I asked. 'Christ's body,' came the answer. And I began to cry. Why?

"The echoes of the bleeding liver/heart. The sexual flesh, pierced, flowing blood that became Christ's blood and the body. Christ's body. Echoes of Jed seeing the pillow, saying 'The bleeding heart!!' I feel very humble. Some other forces are at work here. I feel I need not worry. Things will be taken care of, somehow.

"I am the slayer and the slain. Who said that?

"That is my feeling. I am the sadist, the cannibal, and the mourner of the death, the sensor of the spirit rising."

"We are told that man may receive the secret knowledge only through divine inspiration, or from the lips of a master, and also that no one can complete the work, except with the help of God."

Jung,

Psychology and Alchemy,
P. 34b

The Response

M: And what do grownups do? What did J.S. do when he saw my show? He said, "You need a psychiatrist to find out why you are so obsessed with bones!" Can you imagine? And I said, "You need a psychiatrist to find out why you're not more interested!"

(much laughter)

C: Right on!

M: I couldn't believe it! I think I even touched his arm and said, "What do you think is in there?" And I was thinking, well, why am I so interested in bones, bones...cowbones... and, we're made of bones! We're so disconnected from our bodies! Why would anyone be interested in flesh?! Even all the gore - all those insides I took pictures of, the pheasant insides, the guts coming out, all the stuff that was in my show that looked like insides coming out...it's like there's a boundary, and our skin - closes it!

M: I don't want to lose the kind of... courage I had, 'cause I was kind of in the swing of it. I didn't even feel like I was being courageous. I was just doing it, it didn't take anything...

S: I know, I know. It never dawned on me that it was courageous...it was Just something that you were doing, until...I read that book.

Journal July 20 after the opening.

My show opened today.
Comments were fantastic.

'You're obsessed with death!'

'Recently my father died in the hospital, looking Just like that, hooked up to tubes.'

'You need 10 sessions with a psychiatrist to find out why you're so obsessed with bones.'

'You're crazy!'

'It's primal, isn't it?'

'This one of the 2 bones looks like a couple after sex - sitting up. stark naked.'

Many of the people who visited the gallery were horrified, offended... On the second day I had to remove the raw bones and raw chicken - tiny fruit flies had attached themselves to the meat. The strongest complaints were from a 'refined' maintenance person and the secretary way down the hall and in a closed office; she complained about the 'smell.'

I had let go of those images of my relatives in the hospital. The bone/bodies grew naturally into their forms, before and even during the installation of the show. I was touched when the woman came up and told me that one of the sculptures reminded her of that awful experience of seeing someone close to her near death or in it, being kept alive by a machine. The sculptures were aesthetically appealing enough to draw people close to them. Once faced with the allusions and resonances, they were touched on deeper levels. Many (see column II) did not like that aspect at all! For others, it satisfied some of their own needs to see their fears and horrors expressed in (safe) form.

M: Until you read the book and...

S: And thought about it...I was just shocked at first. I was Just...when I really thought about it...boy, those people were vicious; I mean, it was weird...and so upset, and so offended.

That was what struck me the most, that people were offended. How could people be offended by that? And that was when I realized that...that you had really put yourself out.

M: I didn't realize either, and Lowry agreed. I had had this dream that said, "You really knew that this was powerful when you were doing it," 'cause I was telling myself that I didn't know what I was doing. But he agreed that I didn't feel I was doing anything particularly vulnerable or courageous because I was so involved in it.

S: Well also...this is my prejudice that...thinking that people in the art world would be more responsive and open to that.

M: But they're not!

C: On the contrary...

M: The art world is just like people, that's the shock.

C: They're just like people, right.

Here are a few negatives, from a 'response' book I left available:

"I have never seen so much shit accumulated in one place, at one moment for the purpose of art."

"If art's purpose is to move you - this has made my eyes ache and stomach turn and nauseate."

"P.S. I work in clinical/anatomic pathology - which is clean and leaves you with a wonder at how perfect the human physiology and anatomy is - this is gross!"

"You must have an interesting ORAL sex life - "

. "The act of striving for emotional response in an unsubtle fashion is not one of the most viable traits an artist should possess very obvious and the idea of the display reeks of conceit."

"It's fairly obvious that you are impressed with yourself - but without sufficient cause. I am wondering if you can do better - if you would be capable of something more sincere and genuine if you applied yourself..."

"This would be a great place to get 10 or 15 people to Just sit around on the floor and party - almost like a Kienholtz installation. You ARE Jewish, aren't you?"

Of course part of the inner meaning of my show had to do with life and death. When the death images for the show had first entered my mind, I thought about the "smell" of death. Consciously, I didn't need the smell of decaying raw meat in my show. I needed those bones and that open chicken; the smell and flies sort of sneaked up on me.

A written response to the smell:

"Marilyn,

"I was not in the least impressed with your art show. I found it tasteless and, well, rather smelly..."

S: Yeah, that was shocking too... I talked to Jed about this because... I was just so amazed by those remarks and stuff, and she was talking about her whole experience being in art school... and how much you have to un-learn from that whole thing, just like any other kind of education.

C: Most education is anti-education.

S: Yeah...

M: That's a shock, though. I feel like the real meaning of some of the stuff I did is very... I'm kind of understanding more why people were offended. Of course! It goes against what they're taught in art school. I mean it goes against even more than that. I don't know, but something about it was, shaking.

And a few helpful hints:

"The feelings are strong (that's great!) but need to be expressed in a more developed way. Look at the early paintings of Francis Bacon - he used to visit slaughterhouses."

"There are some well done areas in the piece. It seems the artist is attempting to sort through a personal catalog of images which, perhaps, need to be exorcised... I would suggest the artist become a little more spare and eliminate all the unessentials - in order to make it easier for the viewer to find the essence..."

"It is true art is a question for the creator, but is it humanly possible to sincerely explore these questions you have handed us (the viewers)?..."

As I sat in the gallery one day, a man came in and stood quietly. He said to me: "This feels like a funeral... like a cattle bleeding."

One bone-body had slime green "stuff" (tapioca, cornstarch, slime green oil paint, all cooked up together on the stove) coming out of it.

And a written response from someone who also "saw into" the work...

"Marilyn

"I came early morning on Friday and left thinking of Auschwitz, sexuality, hospitals, and the deep peace of coral reef. Your exhibit has a lot of courage, and it shows me the juxtaposition between the Light and the Dark in our society. The bone with the nail in it I felt like was me when I had an abortion - clean white surroundings with a bloody screaming rip in the middle...

"P.S. I went back and read the comments people made - it's too bad that there is such a great fear of looking at 'nausea,' 'slime green,' and 'blood' that people - even supposedly sophisticated artists - react like the most cloddish of concentration camp guards when faced with their own internal material..."

And another:

"You have inside-outside, sexuality, religion."

Alan Watts writes about slime and the idea of evil:

~...The principle of evil is very frequently associated with corruption - that is, with slime, excrement, mud, worms, and everything that might be described as 'goo.' One of the common beliefs about Satanism and witchcraft is that it involves transformations of the human form so that it flows from shape to shape, assuming such aspects as one sees in the diabolical figures of Bosch and Breughel. The only thing to be done with the final, stinking, green goo to which all this leads is to burn it up: and that leaves us with nice, clean, dry ashes. On the other hand, the principle of goodness is commonly associated with structure with that which is clear and firm, organized and reliable, crystalline and pure. Goo is the flesh and structure of the spirit. Soul, according to Aristotle, is the form of the body. As the corruptible and impermanent, matter tends toward goo. But as the perfect and eternal, spirit tends toward purely abstract structure.

Here is my response, two days after the show opened:

Journal July 22

"Some parts are not finely done. But neither am I, 'finely done.' My gutsy relaxed open female quality comes out in the show. And my spiritual self, reflected in the mandalas and wheel of fire, 'transformation piece' as Jamie called it.

"That piece came right out of my hand, really with no thought. Just feeling of circle and bone.

"The experience of seeing my sexuality, sadism, sensitivity, and spirit, reflected, projected there, in form, is really moving today. Did I, Marilyn, do all that? Clearly not. 'My way' is evident - lack of refinement, open, raw... religious, funny.

"A lot of people have been disgusted. That's okay. Of course I want to be taken seriously, but the truth is that I have had to take myself and all my parts and inclinations, my fears and secrets and sensitivities, very seriously to do this kind of work. The work has been inner. But having to put it outward really did draw on so much - more than the sum of the parts, it seems. Or feels.

"The trouble with pure structure, with ashes, bones, crystals, and perfect abstractions, is that it is quite dead. It is not truly spiritual at all because it is completely static and comprehensible. On the other hand, the greenest and sloppiest goo is a sort of compost from which living forms will again emerge. The body, just because it is impermanent and corruptible, is the true expression of spirit... the romantic will therefore tends to favor goo, and the classicist, structure. Likewise, mysticism is in the direction of goo, whereas moralism and dogmatism go toward structure. But the obvious truth of the matter is that life is always structured goo, or goeey structure..."

Alan Watts, The Two Hands of God pp. 172-173

Aftermath

S: Didn't you add to your show later?

M: Lots of stuff. I filled up the whole gallery with all the parts of...all the higher parts of my thesis. My brown drawings and more dark things...really black thinB. A black sheer dress and those tools, and a crow feather...

S: More dark? (laughter)

M: Really, those things you saw were more...more fleshy you know...And then I added the light things, a sort of lacy light canvas and some glass with a lace pattern...and the opalescent purse. And a huge baby drawing and bird drawing...

C: And her big cloud at the top!

M: Yeah, I put it up high. It felt fantastic. Letting it all out, filling it out...and then I started to understand a little bit.

C: What do you mean?

M: Don't you remember that day I had that headache and we were near the Peabody (Museum) and I sat down and meditated...

C: Yes, how can I forget that...you had a glow around you...

M: Well, that was when it started dawning on me...I remember...that it was all me. I mean, this wasn't all just my show, it was me. I am the one who is all those qualities!

Refer back to a journal quote just after my show in the chapter, "Letting Out the Show," where I began to feel that the whole show was a mirror for me.

S: The female, open ones...

M: And the harshness, the metal. How can I explain it? I felt or thought something like, I am the sadistic and the sexual one, I am the flesh and the blood and the bones and the spirit. I wrote about it.

C: Jesus!

(laughter)

M: Jesus is right. I mean I was beinB opened up to some painful self-awareness..

S: Why painful?

H: It's like I have a killer inside of me. And a spirit? And my heart? It's something...it's something hard to describe, it's like I identified with all the stuff that came out. all the substances, all the inclinationS...

S: But you're not like that, not totally, I mean.

M: Not "Marilyn." Like that dream I had about Buddha and Christ holding up one finger. Like "Thou art that!" Something like that. I am that at my human level. My human female level.

S: No wonder you are looking so much... so different. Something about this really has grown you up, owning all these parts of yourself. You must feel totally different!

M: No, I'm still me. I still have that little thumb sucking girl in me. (laughter) But I'm just beginning to

It is hard to describe how jolting this realization was. And how confusing to my conscious mind that wants to know clearly, for instance, what part of Marilyn is spirit. See the appendix for an experience I had many years ago (1963 or 1964) of a part of me separating from my body that's how it seemed - and going to a place full of light. I knew I had had a "spiritual experience," but owning that aspect of my self, as well as the dark powerful sadistic aspect of my self...owning these as aspects of my psyche, of my own inner self...that is the beginning awareness that was occurring here.

In November 1981 I wrote:

"Between the liver and the Bone
lies
my strength
my vulnerability
My hardness my teeth my Power
My softness my yielding flesh, my
bloodiness and fat

Now I see
more
How the liver is me
And the bone
Could it be
That I am
that
Too? And you
Who are you?"

I thought about death...and I felt my spirit go right up to the sky and become a star.

"(...) the myth of the Skidi Pawnee of the Great Plains dealing with 'the last day': the command for the ending of all things will be given by the North Star, and the South Star will carry out the commands. Our people were made by the stars. When the time comes for all things to end our people will turn into small stars and will fly to the South Star where they belong."

from H.B. Alexander's NorthAmerican Mythology quoted by de Santillana and von Dechend in Hamlet's Mill

wonder about the change. That phrase "rebirth from the bones" keeps popping up into my consciousness. I never understood it. But did you see that funny sketch I did for the announcement where I wrote "bone again" over a huge bone...

S: Oh, no.

M: "Bone again", like "born again."~ I laughed, but some part of me knew something was happening there...

C: You are reborn in some way now.

It's as if you're whole awareness, your whole consciousness, has moved up a rung...or two or three rungs...

M: Yeah, my whole sense of everything, of what's in me, what's in everybody...or what's available to people. What's available is...its' really way bigger in some way. Like the Shamans...I was just thinking today, now what if I were going to give a class, how would I state what it was about? What kinds of questions would I pose? One would be, I thought, "How high and low do you think you extend?"

Because we think - we extend up to here and we go down to there, that's it!
(laughter)

I'm 5'4", and everything's contained in there. There's my brain, there's my nose...

S: But it's really the sky and the core of the earth?

"Bastian states that the natives of Bamba say their great fetish dwells in the bush, where he cannot be seen by any one. When he dies, the priest carefully collects all his bones, so that he may preserve and nourish them, that they may revive again when they acquire new flesh and blood."

Gerald Massey,
A Book of Beginnings,
p. 666

From my Journal, August, 1981:

"What is the valley of dry bones?"

See Eliade's book, Mephistopheles and the Androgyne for experiences of Light of many people, having nothing to do with their education or class in society.

Eliade's book, Shamanism, describes the celestial ascent that Shamans regularly make. They have control of this going out of the body, or "astral travel," as it is popularly called. They also can descend to the Underworld at will, to aid in healing those who have "lost their souls."

M: Something like that. Psychically it is very dizzying, My dream last week was very dizzying. I had a dream where I shot up in a rocket...it was an overwhelmingly large feeling. No wonder nobody wants to go up or down!

C: Everybody's afraid of "what's in the closet."

M: I think it stands for...for the whole unconscious - But beneath the unconscious is...the collective unconscious... where does a child get its fear of the dark?

C: It's not a personal thing...it's a...

M: Maybe it's something of the whole human race...like Or the dark, of the abyss...

C: In fact, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is in there...those things from childhood...the child is right there, in the middle of cosmic...

M: But the dark is death. And the dark is also life before birth.

S: It's also enveloping, it's warmth, it's...

M: Well look, what's a womb? It's dark, dark waters, It's not all death. I'm still wondering...I ended up wondering the whole second semester about dark and light and what they meant to me.

Dream. September 28, 1981

I'm in Belmont, walking up Fairview Ave. Out for a night walk, weightlessly leaping up the middle of the street. I hide behind a bush so a car won't see me, then continue up. At corner of Payson Road, I cross over, catty-corner, and there is a huge abyss right there, a block square. Enormous. It is pitch black out. I see down into the bottom of the abyss - there are white Stonehenge-like structures, and black pits or holes in the floor of the abyss. A black hole appears right next to me, and the dirt starts to slide down under my feet. I think something like oh, it's only the black hole, and I let myself slide down to the bottom. Suddenly, I shoot straight up into the sky, in a rocket. There are red, green, blue, and yellow squares of color making patterns on a control screen. I am half in control, and the rocket moves sideways and diagonally as well as up and down. A voice says, " You are over the Grand Canyon ~ and I am thrust out of the rocket, hovering over the Grand Canyon, spinning like a top or gyroscope. Earlier. men with whitewashed faces. Jan E.'s face, half whitewashed. Half black, half white.

See reproductions for a photo I took several months after the July show, of "spirit."

A sense of wholeness was entering my consciousness - an awareness that I was light and dark, masculine and feminine, and in me too was heaven and hell, spirit and flesh. When Lowry had told me to push the extremes of my tree, I didn't realize that these opposites would come together in me. Jung writes, in Psychology and Alchemy:

"The self is made manifest in the opposites and in the conflict between them; it is coincidentia oppositorum. Hence the way to the self begins with conflict."

Alan Watts entire book, The Two Hands of God, deals with the problem of the opposites as expressed in different religions. See also Seonaid Robertson's book for her ideas on "the sacred marriage."

And more from Jung:

"Without the experience of the opposites there is no experience of wholeness and hence no inner approach to the sacred figures."

Jung, Psychology and Alchemy

S: It sounds like you have gained such awareness...such...it's like now you have a sense of power over your own dark side, the power of having brought all this out and looked at it. You can have some control...

M: It's true, I have gained some control; I can go into these places and not go crazy...I can go in and come out and be me, straight as I am...(laughter) But it's true. A schizophrenic person goes to these places, into the abyss or into the stars...and looks around up there...

C: Like Lenny in Buffalo...totally crazy!

M: Because he couldn't get out! He couldn't focus it all through a form and keep his bearings - but his vision was incredible...

C: Yeah, but he just wanted to stay a kid. He was like a babbling kid.

M: But who knows what's in people, you know? Who knows if the guy next door who goes back into his early memories won't get lost in the basement! I don't know if I'd prescribe this for everyone. I had a guide you know, and without a guide I wouldn't have even thought I could find out these...these little ways that help you go into yourself. It was really all very small in a way. I mean big stuff came out, but it was all in small little ways that I got to...

S: That you were able to gain some power over all this...in the end you gained some power.

"The problem of opposites called up by the shadow plays a great - indeed, the decisive - role in alchemy, since it leads in the ultimate phase of the work to the union of opposites in the archetypal form of the hierogamos or 'chymical wedding.' Here the supreme opposites, male and female (as in the Chinese yang and yin), are melted into a unity purified of all opposition and therefore incorruptible."

Jung,
Psychology and Alchemy

~:

"... easy is the descent to Avernus: night and day the door of gloomy Dis stands open: but to recall thy steps and pass out to the upper air, this is the task, this the toil!"

Virgil, The Aeneid
quoted by Jung in Psychology and Alchemy

M: Yeah, now I do feel like I have some power. I feel like I have, almost, shamanic powers, in one direction at least.

S: Mm *hmm*.

M: Not the rocket direction so much. But I feel like I have powers to B°, to this part of...it's like if I were Boing to go down below the tree, I feel like I have...it's like the power of having a roadmap.

C: Yeah.

M: And that's exactly what I wanted, I wanted a roadmap. That's the reason I did it, I said, I want to know...what's in me, or something like that...

"Life that just happens in and for itself is not real life it is real only when it is known."

C.G, Jung,
Psychology and Alchemy

S: Or how to get there.

M: Why not! (laughter)

M: I didn't know where to go, it's not how to get there, because I don't see, an end...I just want to know...I guess what was in me.

S: It's almost like a little light, I mean you just kept following a little light, you just wanted a little pinprick of light, so you could go in that direction, and that's what you're doing.

M: Exactly!

S: You're still doing it; I wouldn't say this is something that's ended.

C: No, it's a life work.

S: Yeah. it's a life work...

What About Education?

M: When Lowry teaches a course about art, he puts in poetry... weird things...you know, it's like the real stuff.

S: Instead of another isolated little narrow-minded way...

M: It's like the stuff that touches you from where you make your stuff, make things.

S: That's the problem also for your thinking of mastery and of art school and of all that, and of all the things we have...all people are reacting to and dealing with is the end product, not where art comes from, not the creativity at all, but Just, getting something on a canvas, or whatever...

M: And selling it!

S: And selling it.

M: Like when we moved to town...

C: (laugh)

M: People said, "What does your wife do?" Carl said, "She's an artist. And somebody said, "Well, where does she show?"

S: I remember you telling me that...

M: Which has always been very intimidating to me. It has. I guess it doesn't have to be if you feel strong enough about who you are, but it always was...because I wasn't producing products that looked like anyone was going to buy them.

How many art teachers think they are teaching mastery? Mastery of what? Of technique? of color? of creating the illusion of three dimensionality on a two dimensional canvas?

"...Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright lines, those curves, angles, dots! No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the ground and sea, they are in the air, they are in you..."

from Walt Whitman, "A Song of the Rolling Earth" quoted by M.C. Richards in The Crossing Point

And what about "making it" as an artist?

"Art divorced from life has no great significance. When art is separate from our daily living, when there is a gap between our instinctual life and our efforts on canvas, in marble or in words, then art becomes merely an expression of our superficial desire to escape from the reality of what is. To bridge this gap is very arduous, especially for those who are gifted and technically proficient; but it is only when the gap is bridged that our life becomes integrated and art an integral expression of ourselves."

J. Krishnamurti,

Education and the Significance of Life, p. 121

I remember that first course with Lowry. We all kept personal records of our assignments - one question he asked us to think about was what time of day or night we felt most creative. I had never thought about it! I also felt the revolutionary quality of the question...don't we all expect our students to turn it on and off at will? (If not by the end of class, at least by the next day!)

Mary Caroline Richards. from The Crossing Point:

"It is essential to enter into these explorations from the inside, otherwise they quickly turn into decorative tricks. It is not the effect which we must have a care for, but the feeling which precedes the act: the feeling which may turn into speech or form. Life is known by an inner sense therefore its way is an inner way. If this is forgotten, we fall instantly into a concern for technical virtuosity and artistic style. It is not a question of putting things together, it is a question of starting at the center where they are together and proceeding toward their articulation, like an organism with all its functions. The hope is that we may enter into those parts of ourselves that are yet to be awakened."

S: Mm hm. And because you felt that was necessary.

M: Plus I didn't have the nerve to go into myself as much as he'd helped me to do. There were hints of that, but nobody was helping me, so that, I was torn between feeling that there was, that art was really a real deep thing, and seeing what people said art was, which is this mask of...a lot of it is crap, ya know, I mean, more or less...Some of it would look like really good paintings to me, but I wouldn't know, how they got there. I wouldn't know, how do I go in me, to get there. Or how do I get anywhere? I really didn't know. And, all along he has, just, helped me to go in more. I guess...and now... I want to feel strong enough about doing the work I've been doing, which has depth and integrity and be able to put it out in a powerful way.

S: And in a way that more people could see it.

M: Exactly.

C: And with you getting a little less grief for it.

S: Do you think you'll ever go back to teaching now. or what?

M: Not exactly back. I mean. I loved teaching kids at Green Acres, I really was using all my creativity and... and it was satisfying...but something was wrong. When I stopped, when we moved...by then I had gotten so out of

"When one really wants to write a poem, one writes it, and if one has the technique, so much the better but why stress what is but a means of communication if one has nothing to say?"

J. Krishnamurti
Education and the Significance of Life,
p. 124

"We must realize that one cannot pour from an empty cup and that to become true guardians of our children's souls, teachers need time to cultivate their own."

Florence Cane,
The Artist in Each of Us

"It is not outside, it is inside,
wholly within."

C.G. Jung quoting Meister Eckhart in Psychology and Alchemy

touch with my own creative process, I hardly knew who I was. as an artist I mean. I had lost touch with that flow...

S: Well, that's really what you've done, you've reconnected with that flow.

M: Flow! You said it. At points it felt like a geyser! But you're right Sarah, it was like retapping, like tapping a well or...that blood felt like the well...

C: The well of creativity.

M: Funny, I never used that word the whole year. And now I guess that's really what I'm interested in, in reconnecting people, especially women I think, in reconnecting them to their own creativity.

S: Why women?

M: I don't know. It's just that, at least from where I am now, I realize that what I've been tapping is the psyche of a 34 - 36 year old woman, a female in a certain stage of life you know... and maybe I'd do best with other women my age. I've learned some particular ways to tune in...

C: And remember all that anti-female stuff you experienced in grad school.

M: And before that. Remember that guy who taught painting when I was a sophomore? He used to call me Miss DeKooning" because I painted such a large canvas of a nude once...but it felt condescending, and then this same guy said to me, or a few of us, I can't remember, he said something like,

I've been wondering lately about major life changes, times of transition. At those times, at adolescence for instance, very powerful inner shifts are occurring, in bodies but most importantly in psyche and outlook of the individual. Inner upheavals and earthquakes confuse and often overwhelm their "victim." At times like these, archetypal energies and images seem to be unusually close to the surface, easily brought up. (Have you every had a teenage student paint a sentimental, full of feeling sunset or draw a full sized nude as full of meaning to its creator as the Goddess figure?)

What other major transitional points might there be - crisis points that we could tap into as educators not just for the purpose of art - though the power of the work is increased greatly in these areas are tapped - but for the purpose of helping our students to see themselves in their work - to help them project "real stuff" into the work and them to reintegrate into themselves the meaning, the owning of "that stuff"... and to grow from that wider self awareness...

Mary Caroline Richards writes about some of the power of "that stuff" in The Crossing Point..

"...We have to discover what fire is - what heat is; if we want to change, we have to undertake it. We have to undergo the unknown. We cannot pull back and say No, I can't, I'm afraid...of course we are afraid.

Times of transition – to childhood, puberty, onset of young adulthood, mating, child bearing, establishing one's territory... going into middle age, "mid-life crisis," onset of old age, nearing of death... these are some that come to mind. In "primitive" societies, elaborate rituals help the individual to understand what he or she is going through. There is clear acknowledgement of the crisis and the changeover to a new level of maturity. I can't help feeling that we've lost something in becoming so "smart" and so civilized. We as a culture have let go of so many rituals (at least we retain a few - baptism, bar mitzvah, marriage, communion ... but often they are hollow, formal... as if we've lost touch with those powerful energies beneath the surface, those deep needs for bringing those energies out, sharing them, holding hands with helpers who have been there before us). (See any book on Shamanism. See also The Spiral Dance by Starhawk).

See Seonaid Robertson's book, Rosegarden and Labyrinth. Much of her discussion centers on this theme of adolescence and the deep subterranean images that come up in their art products.

See Florence Cane's book, The Artist in Each of Us. She felt it was necessary to encourage the expression, through art, of emotional conflicts,

"No woman can really become an artist. Their boyfriends are always more important than Art." Art with a capital "A" of course.

S: What a message!

M: And not only that! Then came this slew of classes telling me I should see like Cezanne...(laughter). I mean I learned a lot about planes and planes moving in space and through things, and how to turn corners with line...

S: Rut not...

C: They didn't mention Georgia O'Keefe, right?

M: God forbid! It was really a masculine trip, almost the whole thing. Except for Schleppe, and Lund who put up my...he had the nerve to put up my sloppy nightmarish stuff next to all that cool art school clarity...and then Bileck, who did help me tune in to my own way. He even suggested poetry, using poetry as inspiration.

C: But he had no clout.

M: Right! The ones with clout wanted professionalism. It's just what we were talking about. Put it out, get a gallery, do it big, you know, but who cares if you become more human, or learn anything about yourself.

C: But some of what you got, you use. I remember you saying this year that you were glad you had learned something about drawing...

M: Right, or those tree drawings wouldn't have flowed out so easily.

But are we not afraid anyway - afraid of war, of the bomb, or death? Is it less fearful to die in a way than go through the ordeals of self-creation?

"Yes, of course, it is - it is less fearful to be a passive victim of a stronger force than it is to undergo inner loss and heed a kind of inner death which precedes the birth of new capacities...

"It takes a lot of time and a lot of energy. It is slow and painstaking work. It is a full-time job. Leisure time? That's a laugh. Who has any leisure time?

"Yet it is difficult to say what we are doing when we are doing this kind of work. We are trying to move into a new relation to the Power who flows in us. People act as if nuclear power is all OUT THERE somewhere, stored in big bombs. They don't realize that we are all WALKING STOCKPILES. Every nucleus in our bodies is full of THAT STUFF. NO WONDER WE CAN DO SO MUCH DAMAGE AND SO MUCH GOOD TO EACH OTHER."

These three teachers were men but all had in common the awareness that, if one has nothing to say, why say it? And they all responded openly and supportively to work that came from true strong impulse.

By "masculine trip" I mean the "macho" idea of Art as something big and great that you strive for, something "out there" for which we must learn the rules of composition and the ways of the Old Masters to begin

psychological conflicts...personal material coming from all levels of the students' experience, from problems at home to deep level psychic shifts making themselves felt at puberty or transition to young adulthood...

See Gail Sheehy's popular book, Passages, for some light on the transitions we experience as adults.

"Now, what is the significance of life? What are we living and struggling for? If we are being educated merely to achieve distinction, to get a better job, to be more efficient, to have wider domination over others, then our lives will be shallow and empty-. If we are being educated only to be scientists, to be scholars wedded to books, or specialists addicted to knowledge, then we shall be contributing to the destruction and misery of the world.

"Though there is a higher and wider significance to life, of what value is our education if we never discover it? We may be highly educated, but if we are without deep integration of thought and feeling our lives are incomplete, contradictory and torn with many fears; and as long as education does not cultivate an integrated outlook on life, it has very little significance."

J. Krishnamurti, Education and the Significance of Life

M: But there is something else that seems really important in all this. How can I explain this...it's like the difference between...like in Jung. Jung is talking about psychic development as an entity...as if the psyche goes through its own growth process and finally leads to the spirit, to spiritual connection, and it's as if he thinks what we have to do is to tap in there, through dreams or fantasies.

S: But that's what you did...

M: Right, it is. But that connection. We really can make those...those little inroads. That's what it is! What I've been learning...some more little paths in. Like that tree out there, the way the bark makes waves over itself. Now what does that mean - why do I respond to that?

S: It's your same question. Why you responded to the purse, or the forceps.

M: Yeah, but it's earth shaking! This sounds very tiny but...but it connects to the memory work too. That's what really opened me up to all this...in a personal way. That the memory of tinsel or a cloud or a cockroach...or my little canary. That those memories could drop me right down into archetypal space!

S: You've gained a lot of tools. You could almost do therapy with people who have creative blocks.

M: Yeah, like the ones who've been through art school, and are more stuck than ever! (laughter)

"The right kind of education, while encouraging the learning of a technique, should accomplish something of far greater importance: it should help man to experience the integrated process of life. It is this experiencing that will put capacity and technique in their right place. If one really has something to say, the very saying of it creates its own style; but learning a style without inward experiencing can only lead to superficiality."

J. Krishnamurti,
Education and the Significance of Life

See the appendix for a few specific ideas I've had on connecting students to the meaning inherent in holidays.

I am feeling that we really must go both ways at once - deeper into ourselves, to connect with that flow, that energy, that sometimes painful recognition of who we are (at any moment, at any level) - deeper in, and farther out, to really reach out to others and connect and help them through this difficult passage of education, of learning who each person is, and who we all are...

#48 Ching/The Well:

"This hexagram applies also to the individual. However, men may differ in disposition and in education, the foundations of human nature are the same in everyone. And every human being can draw in the course of his education from the inexhaustible wellspring of the divine in man's nature. But here likewise two dangers threaten: a man may fail in his education to penetrate to the real roots of humanity and remain fixed in convention - a partial education of this sort is as bad as none - or he may suddenly collapse and neglect his self-development.

THE IMAGE

Water over wood; the image of
THE WELL

Thus the superior man encourages
the people at their work,

And exhorts them to help one
another."

The I Ching

R. Wilhelm, trans.

But really, there's some difference, at least in what Lowry's helped me do...insisting that I bring it all out in form, in an art product or in something...something that kind of puts it out loud. I've had to turn my whispers into speech. Not Just a scream in a therapist's office. That's a huge difference. Because art communicates...

C: It speaks on many levels. Like a Beethoven sonata...

M: It's something about the going inward, the having to bring it out...some transformation...and having to look at it, let myself be changed, and then...to talk about it too!

S: You sound like you will end up teaching again, Marilyn. You have so much to share, if you can do this with other people.

M: Well, hopefully I can speak in both ways. I would never give up this process now, this inward process. And bringing it out is really hard in a way...

S: In the art world...

M: Yes, It's not as hard in my own space anymore. But putting what belongs there, more into the world, that's the real challenge for me...we were talking about that.

C: Well, I think you'll do OK, Mar. I'm not worried.

M: Well...I've had good helpers that's all I can say.

"Now to come to dwell in oneself consciously as a human being, neither brute nor angel, this is a path of inner development

"It is easier, I think, to make a pot or a painting, or a weaving or a bracelet or a chair or a poem or a house than it is to create ourselves - and yet it is the creation of being which is our human craft (...) If life is the greatest art or craft, then as human craftsmen we seek to know ourselves and to do what we can do to embody the strivings of our souls. In the Orient there is a saying that 'Transformation is the aim and purpose of all practice.' This is a big order (...) to move slowly toward friendship with what is unfamiliar or shameful in ourselves, as well as toward concern for others..."

M.C. Richards,

The Crossing Point, pp. 21-22

I have had a lot of helpers
Jung, Bachelard, Florence Cane,
Seonaid Robertson, Eliade, Marion
Milner...and Mary Caroline
Richards, full of ideas for putting it
all together and sharing it. And my
earthly helpers, my encouraging
friends, my family, Sarah Sinnott,
Janice Nardone who is helping me
put all these words in print, and my
guide, Lowry, who seems to exist
in many realms at once!

