



C G Jung's Study  
Ascona, Switzerland

Sitting on the couch  
 In his study  
 Lined by books and artifacts,  
 The closest space to Ascona.  
 This Jungian analyst  
 I trust...  
 But so far a drive from work...  
 Each time a pilgrimage,  
 An annual dialysis of the soul.

This time, the events of life  
 The struggles and challenges  
 Are recounted once more,  
 The ritual dance between analyst and analysand.  
 The pet peeves, the resentments,  
 Most have not changed since the last visit.  
 (why would they? A prisoner of the soul's making)  
 Some are new.  
 The tears flow easier here,  
 A safe space.

As an acute listener he takes it all in,  
 And at strategic times will mirror my feelings  
 But add a vital insight that changes my whole perspective  
 As if I had been blind to that seemingly trivial point all along  
 And that missing piece of the puzzle shone a light on the whole  
 Making it coherent,

Yes, coherence is what I am looking for.  
 Not answers,  
 There are none,  
 Our lives and destinies are more or less predetermined.  
 (The genetics and epi-genetics accounts for 99%)  
 But to make sense of it all  
 Yes, *that* is the relief from the slings and arrows of outrageous misfortune!<sup>1</sup>

And I leave each time with a sense that my biography and struggles have meaning  
 To him at least,  
 He is moved by my fears, anxieties, triumphs and accomplishments.  
 He has made sense of the acute pain that drove me here to drive for two hours or more.

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<sup>1</sup> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
 Or to take Arms against a Sea of troubles,  
 And by opposing end them: to die, to sleep  
 No more; and by a sleep, to say we end  
 the heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
 that Flesh is heir to? 'Tis a consummation  
 devoutly to be wished. Hamlet Act iii sc i

As I recount in this recurring aging narrative I hear myself telling a story  
 Of a boy, traumatized in post War England,  
 a young man in search of meaning, the long years in medical training,  
 The relationships, parenting, mentoring, teaching,  
 And this story, like the parables of midrash, is a “fictional truth”  
 As it filters through my biases, colored memory,  
 My unconscious wishing him to respect me,  
 My conscious downplaying the darker aspects of my desire,  
 My failings,  
 My betrayals,  
 The deceits and lies laid open on the surgical table for dissection,  
 Allowing the surgeon to see the abscess without shame  
*“that to be restored the sickness must grow worse”<sup>2</sup>*

But, as a good reader of texts, he sees through all this  
 And, seeing a gap or fault line in the text, he jumps in,  
 Correcting my misperceptions, and narrative bias,  
 All the while with grace and compassion.

And, as I ponder the visit and the meeting,  
 I realize that the Torah text is my text  
 I am the very written word, the *logos*  
 My life, my drama, my endurance,  
 The Genesis family intrigues are mine  
 The betrayals of Joseph by his brothers, I own,  
 The backroom manipulations by the Genesis women behind the scenes  
 Controlling the destinies and marital choices are the same as produced my victimhood,  
 The power struggles in the king’s (father in law) court and his generals are mine.

And as of the analyst?  
 Well he is the midrashic interpreter  
 The strong rabbinic reader,  
 Disclosing the biases within this sacred text of mine,  
 He hears both protagonists and the angelic greek chorus?  
 This Shakespearean drama and its heroes and villains.  
 He, above all reads my plot line like he would a biblical text,  
 And his parables unpack the hidden desire of my soul.

He makes coherence where there was only a question mark.  
 And uncovers, dis-covers the true unconscious desire of the plot.  
 Leaving him each time is cathartic,  
 Not because the pain is any less,  
 It isn’t!  
 But the narrative has more cohesion.

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<sup>2</sup> The wounded surgeon plies the steel  
 That questions the distempered part;  
 Beneath the bleeding hands we feel  
 The sharp compassion of the healer’s art  
 Resolving the enigma of the fever chart. Our only health is the disease  
 If we obey the dying nurse  
 Whose constant care is not to please  
 But to remind of our, and Adam’s curse,  
 And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse. TS Eliot,<sup>3</sup> Easter Cocker

The story of my life gains dignity  
I become more and more comfortable with my role  
Like a Bach fugue I struggle with performing  
Until practice makes it easier each time.  
The healing is how he places my struggle as part of a larger human mythic struggle  
Between the *nomos* and the *eros*,  
Between law and narrative,  
Between orthodoxy and free unfettered anarchic spirit.  
He shows me just how archetypal the battle I wage is,  
How I incarnate a millennial struggle  
Of culture and faith  
Between religion and spirit  
Of autonomy versus authority.

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And reading the biblical text this Shabbat  
And the midrashic theme of "*Moses hitting the Rock*"  
And the Chassidic free-wheeling meditations on the midrash,

I realized in a moment, a flash of insight,  
That the struggle to make sense of this enigmatic pericope  
Was parallel to the struggle of my own on the analyst couch.

That each week the text I wrestle with is my auto- biographical text  
The text reflects my hidden desire, my own narrative.  
Each year the parallel lines grow closer and closer.  
The text slowly becomes me. inhabits me, and the biblical narrative is a mere trigger  
for the eternal struggle to make meaning of the mystery of my life.

The interpretation is my reading into my narrative, not the accident of the *parsha*  
And the sleepless Friday night is the deep aching need  
To refuse the night,  
Refuse the darkness,  
Refuse the incoherence.

The pacing in my study surrounded by my sacred friends (*seforim*)  
Who, like soldiers in a theological army at attention, on the shelves,  
with the books piled on my round desk, in disarray inform me and allow me to mine them for  
An insight that resonates rhythmically with my insides.

Slowly like giving birth, painfully an *chidush* is born from deep within.  
Until recently seeking validation in some other reader's commentary  
I no longer seek such approval,  
For the one authority that will allow credence to my reading.

I think now I have found my own voice.  
(Like the midrash recounting greatest gift Moses received on high  
when receiving the 10 commandments....Was paradoxically from the Angel of Death!  
Instead of seeing it as the gift of the mysterious miraculous incense like the commentators  
suggested, as I saw it as the gift of the angel himself the gift of mortality.)

This voice that comes up now  
Has no need for theological or rabbinic back-up  
(The weight of the tradition was always heavy!)

There comes a point when you embody a response  
With all the (limited) reduction you already bring to the table.  
This audacity (put-down as a child too often)  
Only came with the realization that this text was mine, was me,

That the greatest gift fo me ever  
Was the realization of my own limited lifespan  
How fragile it really is  
How time slips through my fingers like water<sup>53</sup>  
Despite best efforts to delay or fill with meaning.  
The days accelerate  
There is so much still to do  
So much to learn  
So much left unsaid.

So this angel of death was my gift  
My reading,  
And the text was my life.

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<sup>3</sup> What is an oath then, but words we say to God? Listen, Meg. When a man takes an oath, he's holding his own self in his own hands like water. And if he opens his fingers then, he needn't hope to find himself again. Some men aren't capable of this, but I'd be loathed to think your father one of them. Sir Thomas Moore, "A Man for All Seasons"