



A Retrospective

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Have you ever looked back at the narrative of your life and tried to interpret it as if it had been a fictional adventure, or a dream? When we have a special dream we often ask, 'I wonder what that meant.' Psychoanalysts train for many years to learn how to read the symbols of dreams, but when it comes to our real physical life, we often dismiss our history with a shrug and assume stuff just happens and that's all there is to it. For a visual artist, creating images is a way of absorbing and elaborating on what happens, of studying outer form and glimpsing its personal inner significance. Unlike dreams which usually vanish too quickly we have copious records of our unique odyssey and can put it all together. Then seemingly inconsequential elements can start to make sense.

One of the earliest images to impress itself on my memory dates back to when I was about ten. In the late 50s and early 60s Adrian Hill presented a programme called *Sketch Club*. Each week he appeared on our tiny black and white screen, always wearing his flowing artist's smock and an expression of gentle encouragement. He was like a kindly uncle to all the young aspiring artists, teaching us about techniques and then inviting us to submit our creations for him to judge. My ever-positive mum urged me to enter these competitions. Once we were asked to think of a name for an imagined pub and then design the sign for it – come to think of it, a slightly odd project for such a young audience. My pub was entitled the 'Horse and Python,' specially chosen because it would give me the chance to include my favourite subject – a horse. I had no practical experience of these creatures, but drew them incessantly, even across the tiles of the mantle piece in our living room. So my pub sign showed a proud equine specimen rearing up on its hind legs with a huge snake spiralling round its plump body. The drawing was duly posted off and we waited expectantly. When the results of the competition were to be announced the family gathered around the TV set in eager anticipation. As soon as the programme music started we all yelped with astonishment – there was my horse filling the screen! He had been singled out for a special mention.

Of course, this drawing is now lost in time, but when my memory conjures it up, it seems as if my child self had already been aware of the themes that would shape the artwork to come. Horses were potent symbols for many young girls. They represented the wild animal soul that wants to express itself in an utterly free way; to gallop and dance and shriek with joy to be alive. So much unawakened passion is there just waiting to be ignited. Then there's the serpent... we'll come to him later. In the drawing the lovely horse is entwined by this sinuous creature, but what would be the outcome of this entanglement? Is the horse about to be suffocated? No, they were simply engaged in a sensual dance together. This combination of images now seems strangely apt.

At school, my creative work was entirely conventional. I dutifully painted and drew whatever the teacher suggested – a still life, some flowers in a vase. Then one day, out of the blue, when I was about 14 and not sure what to paint in my art class, a spontaneous image started to take shape on the cheap sugar paper – the portrait of a woman. Her face reflected a deep suffering and she looked as if she had been cast in greenish bronze. But who was this desolate woman painted in the colour of Venus? I didn't know where she came from.

How idealistic, how innocent, how unworldly I was, and also how disconnected from anything earthy. Classical ballet enthralled me with its purity of line and weightlessness. To dance like an angel was my girlish aspiration, and I dreamed of meeting a great romantic love some day. To express these aspirations there were endless attempts to draw a man from my imagination – a man with a beautiful noble face like Jesus, or the stern features of an old biblical prophet. But instead of reflecting depth and wisdom, the eyes of my mystical men just resembled my father's with their deeply etched expression of anxiety. Inexperience and ignorance of men in general led to the need to idealise their images, although in the predominantly female family in which I grew up, there tended to be a definite prejudice against all things perceived as masculine.

As puberty set in the images became more specific. I remember one theme that excited me to draw, but I kept it very private. It had a touch of the Arabian Nights. A beautiful princess with long hair is tied to a post with rope, her bosom heaving as she contemplates the determined looking young man approaching, whip in hand, to make her



submit to him. The expression on her face is a mixture of outrage and disdain. I imagined how pink her cheeks would be and how passionate her demeanour. Her outrage was self-righteous and highly questionable but it seemed that this forceful approach on the part of the rather glamorous prince was the only way I could allow myself to experience what came next in the fantasy. What did come next? I had no idea, but whatever it was I could never admit to wanting it. 'No no, a thousand times no!' This power struggle between the sexes formed the basis of a great deal of my later illustrative work.

Recently I dug out an unfinished painting from my art school days. It suddenly lit me up and I felt impelled to put the finishing touches to it – not something generally recommended, but in this case it seemed the right thing to do. Memories of a Welsh landscape came flooding back, glimpsed during a holiday with two of my sisters when I was 16. Why did this suddenly appeal to me again now? Viewed from the vantage point of today, this unfinished work seemed to show a foretaste of landscapes to come. Those spindly trees looked familiar.

They merge with the landscape so that everything seems to connect in a network of vital energies, all reaching and clamouring for life. There is majesty in the mountain and the chiselled chasm within it resembles an earth yoni, pouring out its jagged boulders. This theme reverberates through my later *Bodyscapes*, which made me wonder whether that early experience of profound awe had been so deeply etched it has been informing my work ever since.



My third decade started when I came to London to be an actress. This period was an interesting time to be in the theatre as censorship was relaxed and productions became more and more experimental. Personal breakthroughs happened too, like the wonderfully exhilarating experience of being in *Hair*. Clothes came off, sexual inhibitions seemed to melt away, and we all thought we were completely liberated from every stultifying middle-class inhibition. Sensuality, generosity and love prevailed and for a few months the sun really did shine in, more brilliantly than ever before. But this did not lead to any permanent transformation. Just a few years later I was beginning to discover that there were still deep-seated emotional blocks that were blighting relationships and preventing fulfilment in my work. The only roles I had enjoyed were the ones that allowed me to be exactly like myself. Miranda in *The Tempest* being a

case in point. Here was a character of extreme innocence and naivety. All her life she has known only two men – one is her papa and the other a pathetic monstrous creature who has tried to rape her – the idealised and its opposite. So when other males appear suddenly on the scene, her amazement knows no bounds and she falls for the first one she sees.

Towards the end of the decade, I retired from the stage and started doing commissions for children's book illustration, theatrical portraits, posters and other sundry projects, but a big change was ahead – something else was waiting to happen. I had an inkling of it one evening when my partner and I were strolling on Barnes Common. It was one of those magical twilights when the very air seems to caress you and whisper suggestions into your ear. I had a powerful inner command to strip off my clothes and run naked through the grass but fear of being seen by dog walkers was strong. I felt paralysed by indecision but luckily my companion's words of encouragement broke the deadlock.



So, I scoured the landscape for a few minutes and deliberated. Then, taking a deep breath, I took off everything I was wearing, collected the garments into a pile and placed them under a nearby tree. Then I rushed into the centre of the grassy clearing with my arms outstretched, yelling 'weeeeeeee!' It was lovely. I jumped and danced and rolled in the long cool grass, feeling thoroughly alive and at one with everything. There was strong magic in the air that night and all around me the trees danced. Yes, they really danced. The very air was dancing as if it were full of undulating rhythms and currents – all nature's elements sharing in my joyful exuberance. They were part of me and I was part of them and we all delighted in each other.



That peak experience has never been forgotten. It stands out as a glimpse of something that I have tried to recapture in my work ever since. However, it was only a brief foretaste of things to come. Fluctuations of mood and feelings of alienation persisted. I can only describe this period as the lull, just before a tipping point is reached. This state of mind seemed symptomatic of our whole social structure in the late '70s and a veritable tsunami was about to sweep in bringing with it a new momentum, new political

direction, new economics and the breaking down of old assumptions about sex and gender. The old order of sexual hypocrisy was finally giving way, having been weakened by powerful tremors for several decades.

A Giant Leap in the Dark

Up until now the underworld of erotica and so called 'adult material' had been tucked away in the seedy shadows of Soho sex shops, while in the streets mysterious ladies of the night plied their trade. Into this underworld anonymous men crept furtively in search of forbidden satisfaction. Women were usually the object of their desires, but, apart from making their bodies available, females had absolutely no participation in the production of magazines, films and articles, even though many of those articles purported to be written by them. No one knew quite what women really desired. Their genuine voices had rarely been heard in this context. Like many of my generation, I had been influenced by this vacuum and found it impossible to be honest about my desires – sexual or otherwise. This denial made for a personality that could never initiate... but it went further than that. It meant that I was in danger of losing touch with the deeper levels of creativity.

The pressure to do something daring to break the deadlock became almost unbearable until eventually, as an experiment, I took a bold decision to launch myself into this unexplored territory of forbidden sex, first as a model and then as an artist, and shine a light into that very area that had been closed to women. Then all the unhealthy creeping about and dishonesty could stop. At the time it seemed like the biggest leap I had made in my whole life to date, going against everything I had been brought up to believe. I knew it would expose me and I could never go back. Even so, my intuition told me that I had to try saying yes to a few adventures instead of the constant 'no'. In this way I might gain real knowledge and make some unexpected discoveries.

Here is a strange painting I remember doing at this time. The small figure of an amazon walks up a rift between gloomy rocks. Two solitary trees wave their leafless branches in expectation as a shaft of light from a sun disk pierces the darkness and appears to split the rock to its foundation. The figure walks towards the light with determination, carrying a flimsy bow... but I only noticed much later that the little warrior carries no arrows.

Making the decision to explore sex in this way is not something I would necessarily advise others to do. It just happened to be something I needed to do. The immediate result was electrifying. I had a powerful dream of an alien whose blazing light went right



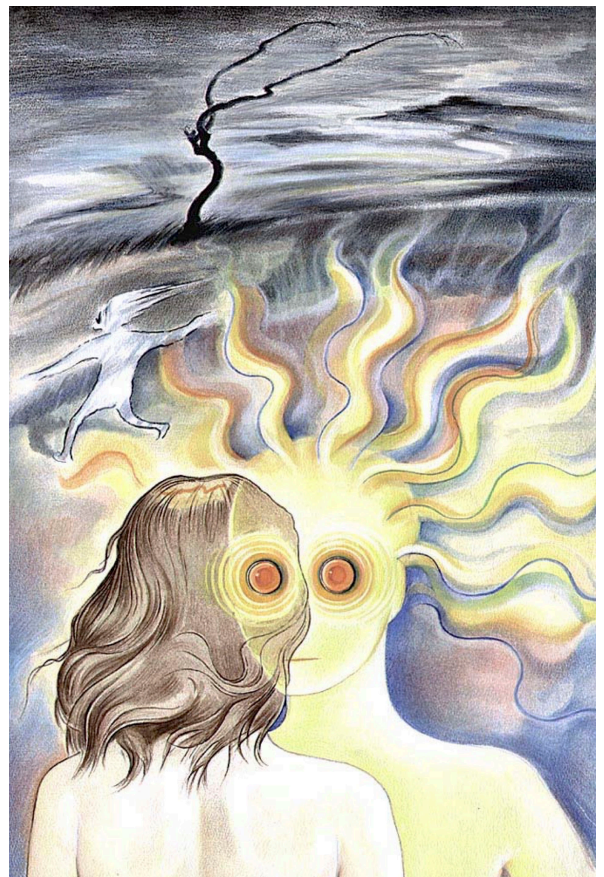
through my insubstantial body. A dwarfed unhealthy part of me is expelled and runs shrieking towards a grey desolation. This was definitely a 'big' dream and I felt impelled to paint it.

At this time all notions of sexual morality, in the conventional sense, had to be suspended. Until I knew myself, knew what the instinctual drive was in itself, how would I be able to know what real love is? There would always be a fear of mistaking erotic attraction for love, of being enchanted and falling under a spell. But to separate the two was a risky business... and actually, as it turned out, quite impossible. The two are part of the same thing. Thus as the shackles fell away from my physical body, it felt at first as if I were in a perpetual state of being in love. All notions of shame just evaporated and the energy that had been tied up in years of concealment and tension was suddenly released in a huge gush.

Childhood fears were purged away and a new liberated adult body could emerge – one which did not have to stop at the bikini line and have segments of itself separated off into rude, ugly bits. To really look at intimate parts of the body that up till now one had averted ones eyes from was a wonderful exercise in real looking. Leonardo da Vinci drew everything that interested him and it was this exercise that enabled him to analyse and fully appreciate the meaning and structure of a living

thing. The exact form is so important. To draw something is to meditate upon it and thus perceive it on a new level. The genitals had an ancient beauty that seemed to set them apart from the rest of the body. They represented the very wellsprings of life. Why had they been so denigrated? Now I could appreciate why the lingam and yoni were venerated in India.

This was a most creative period. A series of *Bodyscapes* expressed this new-found release. Energy ran high and the natural world was full of magic – so much so, that at times it threatened to engulf me in its teeming life. For a time I was overwhelmed. Mischievous little imps popped up and they seemed to be saying, 'and you thought you could deny this? This is your life force and the fount of your creativity. It is bigger than you and





you haven't yet learned to handle it.'

No, I hadn't learned to handle it, let alone master it. There were shocking revelations ahead. A veil had been drawn back and I began to see that this vital force was being used by everyone, everywhere. It gave us our *joie de vivre*, and it was also the drive that gave us our feeling of personal power. It was in use all the time and not just in sexual situations. Some people were generous with it, but many used it to exploit and dominate. Some stole it by leaching it away from others as vampires do. In the human world there were carnivores and herbivores... there were even human reptiles. All of this took me by surprise. I painted a magnificent lion, who was also a man. A little vulnerable girl stares mesmerised through the bars of his cage, on the wrong side of the safety barrier. Was this a defenceless part of me? I began to dream about hungry lions chasing me. In one of these dreams a huge tiger leapt silently onto my bed and was about to sink his teeth into my rump... I felt inexplicably excited by this – the predator and the prey were in league with each other! Then I woke up.

Now the erotic power games playing out between dominant and submissive personalities began to fascinate me. There was a tendency towards masochism lurking inside and I allowed myself to experience it, in a safe way, discovering how the 'exquisite and the painful intermesh...' to quote Simone de Beauvoir. It also came to my attention that there really was a secret underground community, inspired by Pauline Réage's *'Story of "O"'*, and my forays into this hidden world provided great inspiration for my art as well as personal revelations. Thus began the next chapter of my life.

Beautiful Slaves

As a child I used to peruse my older sister's art history books – art books and galleries were the only places, outside the so called pornographic, where you might legitimately see naked bodies. One of the images I kept returning to was Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*. There was a weird ambivalence about it. Here was an extremely sensual young man who

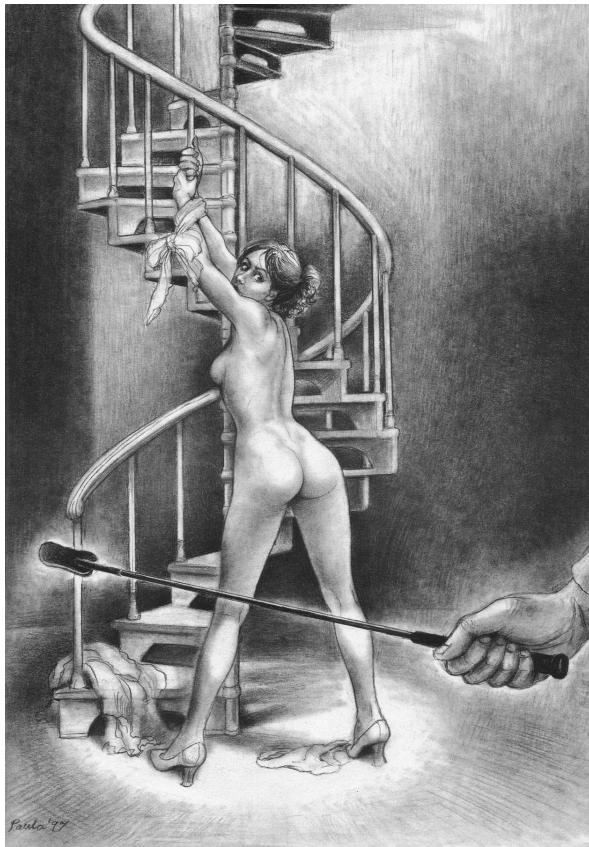
was clearly supposed to be suffering, and yet he stands in a similar pose to the one I had seen adopted by female models in pin-up magazines! We are even told he is dying... but dying of what? He looks extremely healthy; he is not suffering from malnutrition; he does not appear to have any serious injury and the expression on his face does not express any real excruciating agony. In fact, his feminine features convey the impression of someone in the throes of sexual ecstasy. Somehow all these factors got rather muddled in my young mind.

Many years later this confusion of pain and sex presented itself again. I met a real 'Sir Stephen' and was able to act out my 'O' fantasies for real. For me, and many other women like me who were reluctant to admit to any physical needs, to play the role of submissive allowed erotic experiences to flow freely without our having to take any responsibility for what happened. Furthermore, I found that a short sharp sting of pain immediately banished any low moods or feelings of alienation. With the instant release of adrenalin, I was wide awake, alert and tuned in to the present moment, having bypassed the heavy burden of decision making. Then, of course, there is the other point – allowing someone else to guide and dictate automatically trains the 'slave' in trusting another human being and along the way, you get to discover what you really like and don't like. Unexpectedly, it also revealed to me how much I distrusted men.

The dominant's role requires enormous self confidence and a good supply of imagination too. If there is the slightest lapse of self-belief, the slave becomes restless and bored. How much more rewarding it was to be the submissive – that way I got to discover so much about men's preferences... but what did men discover about me? I'm not sure.



Looking around I noticed that this desire to play CP games took many different forms. The English tended to enjoy lighthearted childish spankings or the more solemn disciplinary punishments – rekindling fond memories of the canings dished out in schools and institutions during earlier eras. But the more extreme rituals acted out in *The Story of O* are quite another matter. Here we see a woman going through a training so harrowing that you fear for her safety. And all this that she might prove her undying love for a man... just like a devoted, selfless saint dedicated to serving her beloved Saviour. Or was she seeing herself as the suffering saviour? It all seemed to resemble an upside-down version of Christianity. However, O is on a journey in the opposite direction from the spiritual aspirant. In the final pages she is led in on a lead, naked, except for a feathery mask covering her eyes. Here she is, a slightly horrifying spectacle... just a body, tempered to



yield passively to the desires of others. 'I have conquered all inhibitions, all moods, all selfishness and inability to give – now I give to everyone. My flesh is here to be used. I ignore my own needs... I am free... I am nothing. I am entirely extinguished as a personality'.

This is where it all appears to lead, but paradoxically it is not where it actually winds up. If you place a woman with a tendency towards passivity into a situation where she has to become more and more passive and accepting, eventually she wakes up with a bang and says, 'That's enough!' All that time her will has been silently developing and gathering strength. Now she just has to leap into the driving seat and have the confidence to take control. I can appreciate why feminists were infuriated by this sort of imagery but nevertheless, women's buried masochism had to be looked at, and I had to look at mine and explore it in my artwork.

One day, a great truth revealed itself to me: we are all engaged in a dance with one another, attracting partners through the signals we give out. In life, many people, particularly women, may be subliminally inviting manipulative partners to take advantage of them, or even abuse them, and they have no idea they are doing it. To act out and consciously observe myself relishing my own submission demonstrated what was going on in a way that could not be argued with. I smiled to recall the outraged princess tied to a pole. How prescient that childish fantasy now seemed. Many innocent young girls might have had similar thoughts before the dawning of real experience, but in my case, the story had persisted into adulthood, albeit in a more sophisticated form. Surely these patterns cannot be irrelevant and separate from our 'real' lives? We must acknowledge them because they offer a unique clue to underlying imbalances in our natures that need to be sorted out.

My illustration work brought to the surface a further insight, one that I had hardly been aware of until now. When I drew the people playing these power games, I wasn't only identifying with the recipient – I was identifying with the one who coerced and wielded the whip too. I entered into both, and both roles were strangely gratifying. Being honest about this was difficult, because it implied that I had been deliberately conspiring in my own exploitation! Owning up to our ambiguities is always tricky: they are invariably well concealed on our blind side. Even so they may have been undermining us for years without our knowledge.

One particular painting from that period conjures up an almost religious ceremonial atmosphere. The figures, both the observers and the supine woman spread out on the

altar, are in a trance, as if participating in a sacrifice, but at this moment they appear to be under the spell of subconscious drives. I had first hand experience of these impulses and at times, they filled me with trepidation. In the picture the men are like worshippers at a shrine, bodies transfixed and heads ignited by a cold fire. What are they actually thinking? And what of the female observer? Everyone is supremely controlled, each actor in the drama consents to take part.... but can it be a real consent when they are in the grip of a post hypnotic command? I needed to understand.

Allowing others to lead was a dangerous precedent. It did have its advantages, though – it allowed the submissive an opportunity to observe how dominant, manipulative people made their impact. I found myself observing powerful men. It was not that I wanted to emulate them... just to be more aware and better equipped in the world.

I have noticed how often women are attracted by extremely successful men, and feed off the adrenaline that power produces. In this period, just after returning from a long stay in New York, where I had taken a big gulp of its super-dynamic energy, an image of an apocalyptic landscape appeared in my mind, and this developed into a colour sketch. A gigantic art deco skyscraper soars upward, reaching for the sky. There's nowhere else to reach actually. All around is an arid wasteland. Has the world been poisoned? There is no greenery, not a single tree, and the entire population is huddled together in this single phallic building.



Eventually I realised that it was time to stop challenging myself and trying to jump through hoops – after all, it was now clear that I had been imposing all this on myself. Now you might well be wondering, why all this complicated analysing and probing? Why not just be yourself and enjoy life as it comes? Yes, that is a sensible point. Some people are born knowing exactly how to be themselves. Others have to spend a long time searching for their identity. Like an explorer who cannot rest until they have found out what lies over the ocean, I was driven along on a current of inquiry. My quest had been barely formulated at first, and it had gone off course on



numerous occasions – or maybe ‘into interesting detours’ would be more accurate – but at last I was beginning to glimpse land on the horizon.

The most recent decade of my life has been devoted to more gentle reflections. What are the qualities of masculine and feminine really? Our parents’ relationship tends to form the foundation of our assumptions and if that relationship was fraught with difficulties there will be an imbalance in ourselves that must be repaired. This was the crux of the matter. I started to look more sympathetically at women and stopped punishing them in my imagination, and punishing myself. This harsh approach no longer seemed necessary. The shortcomings of the past were now healing.

More importantly, it was time to consider these matters on a bigger scale – why is it that women so often have to battle to find their identity and build their self esteem?

This brings us at last to the underlying theme of this particular adventure. Now I want to go right back to the very beginning and revisit the Garden of Eden. What other story could have had a more detrimental effect on the reputation of womankind than the myth of Adam and Eve? It has coloured the thinking of all who have read the Book of Genesis over the centuries. Do we fully recognise what we inherit from bygone eras, even though our conscious modern minds no longer acknowledge archaic beliefs? It was a shock to me to realise that despite the liberal attitudes of my world, old prejudices about women still lived on subliminally and affected how I thought.



The Redemption of Eve

The myth of Adam and Eve has long fascinated me – although nowadays many thinking people would simply dismiss it. Let’s leave aside any arguments about the existence of God and how life really started – this is not the point, and I am no ‘creationist’. I am just interested in the symbols that have affected people through the ages. I feel sure they must have a meaning that goes far beyond obvious interpretations. Perceptions have become more and more literal over the centuries, leading to a disregard for symbolism in ancient myths – hence the tragic misunderstanding of the Adam and Eve story and the heavy burden of guilt heaped onto the heads of unfortunate Eves throughout history. This misunderstanding, along with many other factors, has contributed towards a disastrous

imbalance between the sexes, and as a result, an imbalance in the way we are governed, the way we think and the way we relate to each other.

Now change is happening at a galloping pace. We seem to have reached the point where the terms masculine and feminine as concepts have become more and more blurred. Sometimes the differences become so blurred that they cease to exist, except to describe physical functions. The old clear-cut meanings and associations are no longer seen as helpful. They are fraught with political nuances.

Let us look at what the original creation story in Genesis actually tells us.

...And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, but the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

After this the animals are created so that Adam has companions...

...but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she has been taken out of Man.



It is significant that Eve has been ‘taken out of Adam.’ This means that at the beginning she must have been originally a **part of him** and therefore a facet that has been up till now quite invisible to him. Perhaps we should stop calling Adam ‘him’. At the beginning he has no gender in the way we understand it. What has been done is to separate Adam’s hermaphroditic self into two parts and place them in separate bodies with different complementary attributes. It is not as if they are opposites exactly, but they have different polarities, like the yang and yin of Chinese symbolism.

But why has Eve been taken out? To provide a companion we are told. Yes – but perhaps also in order that Adam can see that hidden part of himself.

Eve will provide a mirror that can reflect himself back to him and thus help him to get a picture of his whole being. Bear in mind, these are symbols and are not to be read literally. Adam is not a man; he is generic humanity.

There appear to have been two trees in the Garden of Eden – the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Eating fruit from the first leads to certain death while

the fruit of the second brings everlasting life. So the second seems to be the antidote to the first, which is very reassuring. It means that God had already provided for what was about to transpire.

Doing something you've been warned not to do is always going to be a leap in the dark – but we are used to questioning scaremongering stories, especially from authority figures. Sometimes we get a pleasant surprise and find that the outcomes were not quite as dark and hideous as we had been told they would be. Instead, life opens up and pours forth all manner of unexpected bonuses... but there is generally a downside somewhere too – an unforeseen factor that wasn't immediately obvious at the outset.

Before eating the fruit, Adam and Eve appear to have been in a beautifully cosy realm comparable to an idealistic dream state, where they are surrounded by love and know they are one – even though they have separate images. This must mean that Adam didn't recognise Eve as a separate being at all. No harsh demarkations here, no competition of egos, no jostling for attention and absolutely no fears about safety. They must have been in a symbiotic relationship, entwined in a perpetual embrace.

Yes, Adam and Eve are one being, and yet it is only Eve who hears the voice of the Serpent. When you think about it, that is how it would be for we usually assume that it is the feminine side that is in touch with nature, and the Serpent is certainly part of nature. Lets just say that Adam gets a strong intuition from this feminine side (Eve). Maybe it comes as a sensuous tingle – she stands there before him with a new shimmering beauty, offering him a glimpse of a possibility that could open up his world in some as yet unknown way... perhaps even bring him power.



Without the Serpent's intervention those thoughts would never have occurred to Adam and this Serpent is said to be very 'subtil', so what chance does he have? It makes its approach to him through Eve and when she repeats God's injunction, it says to her...

Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.



And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

Imagine the shock when the unconscious portion of your nature – your anima or animus, to use convenient Jungian terms – suddenly materialises and becomes a separate individual, looking back at you. I am trying to understand the meaning behind the story in this psychological way. Eating the fruit produced a jolt, a waking up into the physical world from a pleasant dream. Adam and Eve opened their eyes to see their bodies zipped up tight in separate skins, cutting them off from each other. They noticed their bodies were different, they felt embarrassed and covered up the offending bits.

I remember once an old friend telling me that he had been intrigued once to dress up in female garb. He decked himself in a skirt, women's shoes and a wig – even a touch of make-up – and then gazed into a full length mirror. To his horror he saw his mother staring back at him and this visitation so disturbed him he hastily

removed the garments and never attempted the experiment again!

Looking back at the hidden side of our own self is not necessarily an instant pleasure. We might picture Adam being seduced by Eve's charms and then making off with her down the primrose path to procreate, but can you imagine the hostilities that would ensue, after their ejection from the Garden?

I want to ask, why have these trees been placed in the Garden, if their fruit is so deadly? And why has Eve been singled out for blame? It is interesting to note that God issues his dire warning before Eve has even been created so she didn't hear it directly. Also, in Genesis, God doesn't actually heap any blame onto her. It is the 'subtil' Serpent who is ultimately held responsible and punished by being doomed to slither in the dust. The man and woman are not punished – they are just told that they will suffer and know death. Having chosen to know Good and Evil they have opted for a path that **must** mean the experiencing of evil – you can't know what good IS without knowing what it is NOT. We can only define it by seeing it in contrast. Adam and Eve will be seduced by the pleasures

of the senses and they will also be exposed to pain. One is not possible without the other. They have entered a world of duality, through which they must now find their way.

The Serpent is not being punished either. There is no punishment here... just the results of actions. The creature is simply told what will now follow as a result of his deeds. The Serpent will be debased and forced to slither in the dust.

Who or what is the Serpent? Well, obviously, the first thing that strikes you about a serpent is its phallic shape. This particular shape speaks to everyone. We all know what it means. It represents a very definite masculine power, the ability to fertilise... and the very desire to procreate. It also has a wiggly shape, reminding us of electricity. This animating power of nature emanates from the source of life itself – ie God – so what is God doing letting this irresistible power loose on Eve? It is almost as if one aspect of the Creator is saying ‘Take heed! If you eat this you will die,’ while simultaneously another aspect is whispering, ‘If you do this your eyes will open and you will eventually create as I create.’

Both God’s and the Serpent’s statements appear to be true and this brings to mind the situation I had been in many years ago when I had a strong intuition to leap into something unknown and forbidden. My conscious, thinking self immediately warned me that I could be thrust out of respectable society and my reputation destroyed, while my intuitive (serpent) side whispered in my ear, ‘Ah, but your life will expand and you will learn something valuable’... which I certainly did.

Here is a most profound mystery. Can this potent Serpent really represent a power that is separate and contrary to the Creator? This simply cannot be (unless, of course, God has an unconscious side). So we must only assume that this drama was acted out with God’s knowledge and had to come to pass. Indeed, it appears He even engineered it. The baby must grow into the adult in order to fulfil the potential that is there at birth. Staying in the Garden of Eden is no longer possible. Initially it does feel like a ‘Fall’. The first thing a baby does when it comes into the world is howl its head off. It comes from the protective warmth of its mother’s womb and suddenly light, cold, heat, discordant noise of all kinds appear to assault it from all directions. The child has to learn how to focus and see and interpret. Being in a physical body is never comfortable for a baby. Is it ever really comfortable for anyone?



‘You will not die,’ the Serpent said, by which it meant that ultimately life can never be extinguished, but what it didn’t say was that to understand good and evil you will have to experience the material world and become mortal. This will lead to death of the physical body – many, many deaths over and over again.

Each of us has Adam and Eve in us – we all have a conscious and subconscious component. For the purposes of this life we are functioning through a particular gender and experiencing the world in that partial way. But we all seek wholeness, however many difficulties we have to negotiate to find it. Engaging in sex is the nearest we get, however transitory, to feeling at one with our complementary half – and this will apply to gay as well as straight relationships.

Esoteric traditions use the symbol of the feminine to represent all that is subconscious and receptive – that which connects us to Mother Nature and the inner workings of our soul. It is from out of the depths of our subconscious mind that impulses, revelations and original ideas arise. Responding to them helps us integrate them into our conscious life.

Did Eve really believe she was offering wisdom to Adam or was she being disingenuous, like the Serpent? If she were on trial, this would be the crux of the matter. The story gives the impression that she colluded with the enemy. Does our sub-conscious lie to us? Well, it can’t really. It can only reflect back to us the hidden desires that are there. When Adam/ Eve swallowed the fruit they saw at once that they were separate and as the old memory of oneness faded they would become more and more at loggerheads; they will taste pain and pleasure, beauty and ugliness; they will experience suffering, as well as personal gratification. And with that comes the possibility to possess, to dominate and to exploit. As long as Adam and Eve knew they were a single entity this could never have occurred.

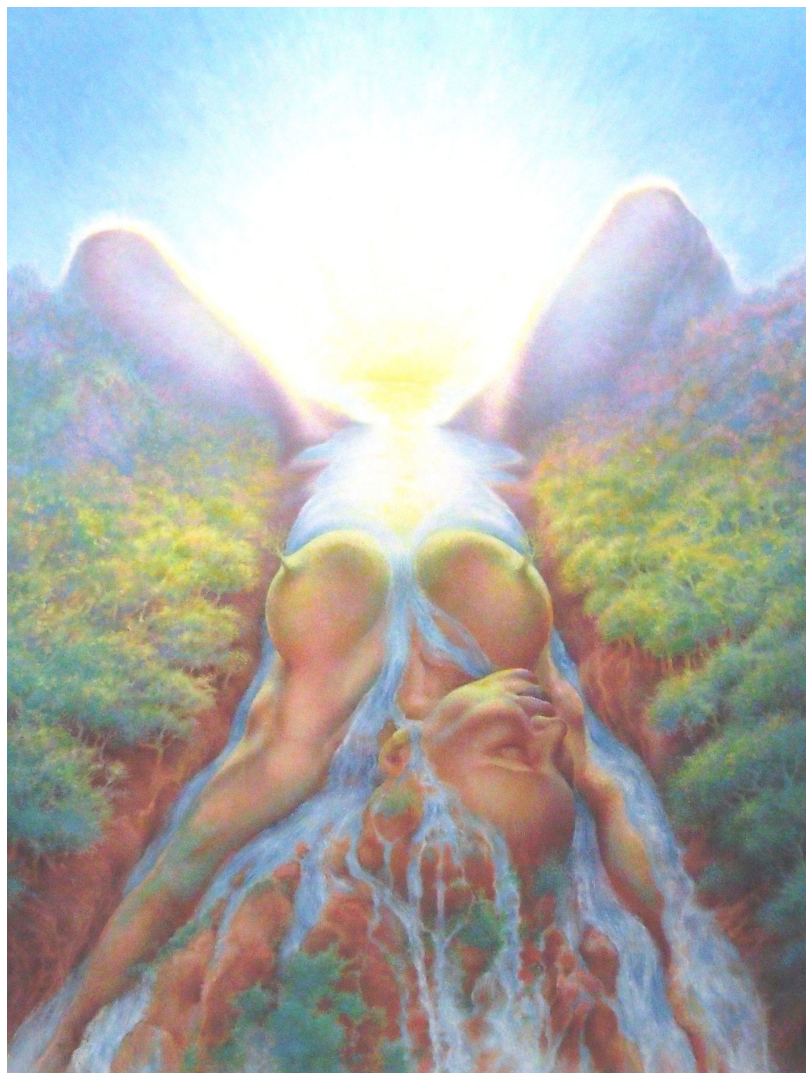
So, as a result, the Serpent now has a very bad reputation. Over the centuries human sexuality has become tainted, dragged through filthy mud and generally messed about. It expresses in so many different ways, from passionate love, to selfish exploitation, to downright cruelty and violence. That life-giving force that vitalises, gives us lust for experience, and fuels our creativity has been spoiled and misappropriated. As predicted, the Serpent has been well and truly debased, that is for sure. Why can’t we acknowledge and respect our sexual potency – both male and female – and stop acting as if it were a shameful stolen pleasure?



It might well be said that many of the world's woes stem from the fact that we still do not have understanding between the genders and because of that sex is a minefield, instead of being a fulfilment. Granted, it is that very minefield that can make for exciting adventures sometimes, but those adventures, however exhilarating, will soon lose their appeal if they lead to constant repetition of suffering and disappointment. Yes, there are intrinsic qualities associated with masculine and feminine, but we all embody them in vastly different combinations, not always matching the appearance of our bodies. The main thing that matters is that we are all on the path to becoming well-rounded, fully fledged individuals, by whatever means we choose.

So let's stop demonising Eve! She is the Great Mother of all that lives; she is fertility and sensual delight; she is the gateway to all inspiration and creativity. We have all been seduced by her, we've all suffered pain and we've all grown as a result.

This theme has been the thread of inspiration that has kept me fascinated throughout my personal odyssey. I have watched the world change out of all recognition since my teens – although there is still a long way to go before the genders fully value and appreciate one another. But change is underway and Eve is finally being restored to her former glory.



'... the attainment of consciousness was the most precious fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, the magical weapon which gave man victory over the earth, and which we hope will give him a still greater victory over himself.'

Carl Jung (from *'The Meaning of Psychology for Modern Man'*)

'And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived...'

Genesis 4 verse 1