

**The Wilderness of Belonging:  
Finding Home through Literature and Labyrinth**

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**Lost**

*Stand still. The trees ahead and bushes beside you  
Are not lost. Wherever you are is called Here,  
And you must treat it as a powerful stranger,  
Must ask permission to know it and be known.  
The forest breathes. Listen. It answers,  
I have made this place around you.  
If you leave it, you may come back again, saying Here.  
No two trees are the same to Raven.  
No two branches are the same to Wren.  
If what a tree or a bush does is lost on you,  
You are surely lost. Stand still. The forest knows  
Where you are. You must let it find you.*

...David Wagoner, 1976

Sitting, silently staring at the keyboard, I feel lost. The distance between me and the story—my story—feels infinite, and there is no bridge with which to cross the chasm. David Wagoner's poem, *Lost*, captures the essence of the feeling, the empty terrifying void of fear that engulfs us, when caught in the dark, seemingly alone in the forest, or in life. Yet his poem misses the mark for me, and as I read it, and re-read it, I can feel it leaving me, receding from view. Wandering in the forest, in the company of trees and birds—Raven, Wren, others—in the Catskill Mountains outside New York City, I never feel lost. In the embrace of this wildness, in fact, I feel most at home. No, it is on the inside, by the warmth of the fire, sitting before the blank screen, staring at the face in the mirror, where I feel truly lost. At home in the forest, I am lost in my own house.

Yet, in spite of the searing silence emanating from the keyboard, words do come to me. Poetry, the voice of the soul of the world, lies all around me, in word, image, even newspaper, and it, like the trees outside, is not lost. Where there is poetry there is movement, and in this case the NY Times, poetry of the metropolis, that wilderness of culture, religion, art and desire, has moved within eyesight. Today's headline has come to bring my poetic voice alive:

*E.T.* returns to the silver screen...fairy tales, which end in comfort—the listener drifting toward sleep, the characters sent off to the land of happily ever after—originate in darker emotions: dread, loneliness, the primal fear of being left behind. In nearly every culture and time, the heroes of bedtime stories are orphans and castaways, unloved stepchildren and disenfranchised princes, who must overcome the indifference and malignancy of the world and find their way home. (Scott, 3/22/02, p. E1)

It seems that Steven Spielberg's celebrated film, *E.T.*, is about to be re-released into theaters nationwide again, after twenty years, treating us once more to that

archetypal story of the abandoned extra-terrestrial and his fateful journey home. This revelation makes my heart jump, my eyes widen, my fingers tremble. The words above seem to fairly leap off the page and into my solar plexus, so near and dear to the story—my story—do they appear. Suddenly, the feeling of emptiness diminishes, and a bridge, in the form of a question, constructs itself across the chasm, emerging in words, thoughts, feelings, provoking my fingers to tap out this code: what is it about the need to belong that is so primary, so deeply resonant with the human soul's journey through life? Why is the search for identity so important, yet always so fraught with danger? Why is the journey home, that endless trek across the wilderness of life, always connected intimately with death?

In the wake of these questions, other poems emerge, peering out from under the newspaper, some recent some ancient; they come to quicken the pulse and support my trip across the man-made span of these questions. Carved from trees once forest now tamed, bound in paperback, they rise to remind me of the universality of *the quest to belong*. First, from the third millennium B.C., I encounter that ancient yet still modern frontiersman, Gilgamesh (1992), perhaps the first true hero of the Western world, whose image, in relief, stands out eerily reminiscent of the newspaper montage of *E.T.* Juxtaposed, they make me chuckle, for they are otherworldly companions, extra-terrestrial kin. Meeting across space and time in this prismatic, imaginal space, I feel the urge to flatten my bulky three dimensional form down to join them, to form a trio of inter-galactic, a-historical statuary—a brotherhood.

Next up, buried only inches away on my desk, lies another heroic narrative, Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness (1999). Suddenly, the centuries flash forward, and

in the flick of an instant, I, earthbound and frightened, gaze on the infamous Marlowe, who waves to me across the bow of the *Nellie*, as he sails off on his journey into the underworld of the African Congo. A question flickers across the screen, but fades quickly into the mist of his departure: mind if I ride with you? Finally, a short ninety years later, but only a centimeter distant in the poetic pile before me, my gaze falls on the modern-day tragedy of Vivian Bearing, Ph.D. in *Wit* (2001), the film by Mike Nichols based on the Pulitzer Prize winning play by Margaret Edson. Pursuing my vision, I fall too, into bed with the cancer patient, into the wilderness of disease and loss, disintegration and daring. It seems I am surrounded, tightly held, wrapped in the companionship of this newly formed imaginal community. Welcome poets, I say, for in this moment, in this paper, you are my brothers, sisters, soul-mates. Like E.T., we are all star travelers across space and time, attempting it seems with little success, to “phone home”.

E.T. is a lost, abandoned creature, a misfit lodged mysteriously in the backyard shed of a profoundly mundane suburban landscape; he is a soul lost in a soulless space, an upper world being dropped, seemingly carelessly, in the underworld. I too am an orphan. Born in 1959, I was abandoned at birth by my mother, a nineteen year-old student who wanted desperately to find her own voice before taking charge of another. I was raised in a foster home for two years, and then adopted by a family, taken in once and for all, and in deep, unfathomable ways, finally loved. The truth of my birth went underground, became taboo, yet it has always haunted me around the edges, kept me distrusting and distant with strangers, edgy in lust, hesitant in love. Until recently, with the help of healers and poets, within and without, I had only fantasized about my true

identity, my genetic and ancestral codes, my archetypal homeland. Today, I have embarked upon the search for the story, the truth, or the real poetic fiction, that will fill the void within my heart, and bring my soul home to that deep place of nurturance called belonging. And so, as poets have gone before me, I inch forward. Catching my breath as I glimpse the bottomless pit of the underworld in the black swirl of my coffee, I turn to my companions and ask: where do we begin? The answer comes back ferociously, instantaneously, in a cacophony of languages and dialect, but nonetheless loud and clear. To belong, we need many things, they remind me, but four, at a minimum, are essential: we need a name; we need a body; we need a soul-mate; and we need a home.

**We need a name.** “My name is Dr. Bearing, and I too, am a doctor, doctor,” declares our star cancer patient in “Wit”, as she stands at the threshold of the underworld wilderness of modern medicine. Straightforward, upfront, and direct, she knows who she is; her credentials, her demeanor, and her name all proudly hail her arrival as one who holds a place of stature in the world, one who belongs. Like a billboard of human pride and self-assurance, the name, “Dr. Bearing”, bears down upon the doctors and nurses, proclaiming her strength, her courage, her “toughness”. Dr. Kelikian is impressed. Soon enough, however, as Hades did to Persephone, he will carry her off into the depths of the underworld and defrock her of all that stature, bravery, and fortitude, ultimately even stripping her of her name. By the end of the play, she is but a skeletal shadow of her former self, and her name has long since been removed from the reams of research—all that remains of her legacy. She is no longer Dr. Bearing, Ph.D., but only an oncological case study, a loser in the endless war

against cancer, whose name has been submerged into the mass of tumors that claimed her body, her life, and her soul; both have been reduced simply to—"it".

Gilgamesh wants to speak. His name, his legend, he wants to remind us, remains alive. Like a God, Gilgamesh has written his name across the sky of space and time, he has found a place in our literature, our history, our hearts, for centuries. He speaks briefly, with force, "My name lives on." I'm not convinced. Stunned by the egocentric flair of his declaration, I am drawn back to his story; down with him into the wilderness of ancient Assyria, and like Enkidu, I gaze upon my brother's mighty countenance. He's right I see, at first glance, for here in the middle of the forest he speaks his truth: "I am committed to this enterprise: to climb the mountain, to cut down the cedar, and leave behind me an enduring name." (p. 73) So far so good, but my poor Gilgamesh we are only halfway through the story. Where is your name later, after you have entered the mountain, whose "heart is oppressed in darkness" (p. 98)? Like Dr. Bearing, I see a slip of a man, a hollowed out charade of a hero, and in his own words:

Why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one who has made a long journey. It was burned with heat and with cold...Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness and cannot rest...do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much. (p.101)

In the underworld, in his descent on the path towards death, it seems that his name has lost its power to hold us in reverence; its light has flickered and gone out. And in the end? What sort of name does he bear, what credentials, what Ph.D. in divinity can he inject into the sad lament of his demise: "Fate has spoken; like a hooked fish he lies stretched on the bed, like a gazelle that is caught in a noose." (p.119) He says that his name remains alive forever, but his story bespeaks a different truth: "On the bed of

fate he lies, he will not rise again, from the couch of many colors he will not come again.” (p.119) And so, nameless Gilgamesh, you too, are lost.

Among you, my imaginal brothers and sisters, it is only Marlow, Conrad’s buoyant boats man, who retains his name in the face of the “heart of darkness”; he and he alone emerged intact, untainted by the dark forces of the nether world. “Not so fast.” I hear Marlow speaking, a faint echo, a willow wisp of sound, “It is Kurz, and only Kurz, who held fast to his name on the journey within. He wore the mask of death, died in my company, but kept his label, if you read my words, to the end.” I am stunned by the voice, but not surprised, for Marlow is correct. Unlike Gilgamesh or Dr. Bearing, *his* name is never spoken during the journey, never claimed by the author or brandished like a sword by the character. It is the name of Kurz, perhaps the dread God of death himself, whose name drives Marlow forward into the darkness. Marlow is but a disembodied voice, a mouthpiece for the pivotal pronouncement, by Kurz, on which the whole journey depends: “The horror, the horror”. True, Marlow carries his own name, alive and aloft, throughout the journey, and home again, but Conrad is clear, in the coda, about where this name has brought him: “Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha.” (p.148) Marlow ceased—as did Gilgamesh, as did Dr. Bearing.

What then are we to make of this need for a name? I, myself, have fantasized for years about the name I was given at birth, for it wasn’t “Jeff”, that I know. I have always felt that to claim an identity one must first possess a name, a namesake, a title. James Hillman (1975) warns us, however, that there is a distinct and potentially pathological difference between personifying and personalizing: “Psychology has taken

the metaphor of personifying and literalized it into an ontology of persons. We have *personalized the soul* pressing it all into the human being.” (p.48) No wonder it is “I” who yearns for the given name, the name bequeathed to me by the Gods, and no wonder my poetic pals have all been stripped of their names. The soul, the energy of life that breathes and speaks through me and them, cannot be confined within a blockade of four, five, even six ignominious letters, let alone three initials—Ph.D. We need a name, it seems, but only to suit the soul’s purpose—she giveth and she taketh away—to teach us a lesson about who is really in charge. In the end, we all remain nameless, asleep, held in her arms, entranced by her charms. Perhaps, I ponder, we do not need a name.

**We need a body.** Can it be a surprise, in this time of profound alienation, separation and loneliness, where human identity has become synonymous with machinery and technology—reduced to robotic isotopes lost in cyberspace—that up from the ashes of materialism has arisen a cult of the body? In our endless race against time, against death, we have succumbed to the theory that our body is one more consumer appliance, which much like the endless proliferation of kitchen gadgetry, is in constant need of upkeep, renovation, and fixing. Even depth psychology has newly embraced the body, brandishing the healing elixir of “embodiment” like a salve for the soul suffering in exile. Unlocked from the ego-prison of the brain, the soul that would be healed must first be heard through the body.

As I venture forward on the dark journey with my trusting companions, then, it feels right, like a necessary evil, to reconnect with the vehicle that is carrying me forth: I pay the cab driver I should thank the cab. Yet, like all orphans in our culture, both literal and figurative (which probably captures us all), I look in the mirror and hit a wall. Who is

in there? What does it want? It is better that I just keep it acceptably trim, feed it regularly, walk it as I walk the dog, and leave alone any search for its archetypal pattern, its genetic predispositions, its pulsing, disturbing neediness. Better take a Prozac. Like Dr. Bearing and Marlow before her, I come from a long lineage of disparagers of body—for only the body of the poem truly matters. That should be enough.

It is not an accident that Marlow, throughout his long soliloquy, comes through as voice, as dis-embodied poet, while only the black figures take on the heathen face of human flesh:

Near the same tree two more bundles of acute angles sat with their legs drawn up. One, with his chin propped on his knees, stared at nothing, in an intolerable and appalling manner; his brother phantom rested its forehead, as if overcome with a great weariness...While I stood horror-stuck, one of these creatures rose to his hands and knees, and went off on all-fours towards the river to drink. He lapped out of his hand, then sat up in the sunlight, crossing his shins in front of him, and after a time let his woolly head fall on his breastbone. (p.78)

Only the lowly, shadowy black man is given shape, body, desire. In Marlow's colonial, Victorian lens, the body of the white man is always described clothed, dirty perhaps, infected with the virus of Africa, but nevertheless, covered up, veiled from view. Likewise, Dr. Bearing, Ph.D., a professor of sixteenth century English poetry, holds fast to her identity as scholar, whose body she has forgotten along the way: "Oh yes, doctor, I have had physical examinations, of course, well, not recently. A few years ago, yes, a few years, but no matter, I feel fine, fine."

It seems that we have reached an impasse, my companions and I. They are the ones who proclaimed that my journey to belonging requires a body, a container for the trip. Yet, I stand before them lost in the pull of two extremes: to join the cult of the body I

would need to gaze in a full-length mirror—the horror, the horror—take ownership of the sags and tears and overfilled pockets of flesh, and head off to the gym, poetry be damned. On the other hand, if I follow their lead and disregard the body altogether, I am left locked in my mind, likely to be swallowed whole by the hubris of my pathetic ego. Is there no way out of the morass of the body?

Wait, I hear the phone. It is E.T. calling from home. His voice is soothing, otherworldly, reminding me that the body is but a temporary shrine, not a literal container for anything, but an imaginal landscape upon which soul may write our story, if we allow her to pierce the veil of our humiliation, guilt and pride. The body's ugliness or beauty is not ours to claim, for the aesthetics of soul do not bifurcate into black or white categories. Seen through the empathic and aesthetic lens of love, as a perspective of soul, the body is a deeply haunting psychic mirror of truth; the way in which the self, as fleeting image, makes its presence known in the world.

Ah yes, E.T. I remember you now, on the big screen—bug-eyed, mottled, mud-caked, rickety—and still we thought of you as beautiful, knowing that you came to us intentionally ugly. Spielberg, the trickster, knew what he was doing, for to venture into the underworld is to turn reality upside down: beautiful suburb becomes ugly wasteland; horrible creature becomes cuddly pet. It is the way of soul.

Hillman's poetic meditations on the underworld remind me that psyche *uses* the body to bring us down into the underworld perspective; the decay and destruction of the body is a rite of passage, an initiation into the land of soul:

The transition from the material to the psychical perspective often presents dream imagery of sickening and dying. The hospital and doctor's office are not only dream places of getting better. They are also places where the collapse of the corporeal is given refuge. The rotting and blackening processes of alchemy,

dreadful wounds and suppurating sores, the ritual butchery of animals or their contagion and poisoning, and other such shocking imagery point to where something material is losing its substance and thrust, where a physical impulse or animal drive is descending toward the underworld. (1979, p. 54)

We must have a body with which to dispense, to wear as a badge in the upperworld and to shed as mere dross in the lower. It is, like our name, a ticket to soul. The flesh, on which our uniqueness is sketched, or better, etched, may be brittle and time-bound, but it is nonetheless a doorway to belonging in the world, for its frontier marks the borderland between this world and the next. It is the physical and fictional, timeless and temporal, gateway to who we really are.

**We need a soul-mate.** As an abandoned child, in the literal sense, I have long appreciated the support and companionship of therapists who listen with empathy to my enduring tales of trauma and woe. I employ them as guides of a sort, and they willingly wear the garb of mentor, coach, and cheerleader, supporting the shift of my fantasy of finding my roots into action. Yet, in this moment of contemplating the need for a soul-mate, something my companions are insisting is a requisite purchase for the journey, I wonder if therapy, for me, for many of us, has really a darker, more insidious feature: are we “buying” a soul-mate? Let’s hold off on that question for a moment and check in with Dr. Bearing; she seems to be the only journeyer to have made the trip alone.

“Alone? I think not,” she chides me, “I had the companionship of millions of viewers thanks to Margaret and HBO. And unlike you and your therapist, they paid me for the visit!” She remains a bit haughty and smug, but again, I am not convinced. I remind her that in health her stance was to not need anyone; her most endearing, and enduring companion was John Donne, the supreme poet, but he died centuries before. It seems that when the journey became hard, as she entered the underworld of cancer

and hospitals and was reduced to a lab rat, something humble, tiny but alluring, came alive in her, some deep yearning to connect poked through the aloof façade—she no longer wanted to travel alone. In fact, she tried, desperately, heart-breakingly, to pull first Dr. Kelikian, then Jason, and finally the audience down into the underworld with her. In the end, of course, we all withdrew, and she descended aghast, exhausted, and defeated, alone.

As did all the others, now I recall. Gilgamesh, bequeathed by the Gods a brother of equal beauty and prowess, “the brave companion who rescues his friend in necessity” (p.67), travels with Enkidu through the underworld to defeat the wilderness and plant his flag on the mountain of the divine. In the end, however, his soul-mate is taken from him. As swiftly and unexpectedly as he arrived, Enkidu is dead, and Gilgamesh is left to continue his search alone, disheartened and embattled with the grief of lost love. Without the mirror of brother-lover to reflect back on him courage, strength, and stamina, he, too, is soon lost.

No wonder we moderns turn to therapists. The pay as you go soul-mate appears to be a pragmatic, less emotionally costly alternative. The dark urge to be met in the wilderness by a lover, a mirror, a twin, is fraught with risk, the marriage doomed to failure. Yet, my companions insist that the search for identity requires such a companion, and they, brave souls, have all tested the waters, and swam in deep. Hillman, that underworld purveyor of soul-making, chimes in broadly here too. He writes of the importance of “imaginal love”, that love of a soul for its image as regarded in another, for that deep unearthly bond that only forms in dreams; the love that brings

soul to the surface in flesh and blood and pulse and desire, but which always ends in death:

In the darkness of this initiation, the two people instinctively move nearer to each other. A bond forms, as if an eros between the dying, something that is other than the transference of past emotions, other than love between pupil and guide, between patient and doctor, a quite rare and inexplicable feeling brought on by the mystery of the image (of the other). I do not know what this kind of loving is, but it is not reducible to other more familiar forms. Perhaps it is an experience of the eros in thanatos. Perhaps it is an experience of telestic eros...the eros of the mysteries and initiations of the soul; or it may have something to do with the creative eros that always occurs when one is close to soul...(1979, p.197)

Marlow's story perhaps tells it best, for he ventured deep into the belly of the viperous snake of Africa, and seeking something unknown, unspoken, himself perhaps, he was drawn like a lover to seek out Kurz—the devil, the arch-rival, the soul-mate. In finding this Kurz, this captain of “the farthest station”—bigger than life, smaller than human—Marlow could finally peer into the face of his own grand and doomed poetic story. To learn the truth about the meaning of our journey, it seems that we must fall under the spell of this queer love of dark beauty, seething rivers, demonic friends, if only to glimpse a momentary reflection, a soul's eye view, of the dark truth of our miniscule existence. Perhaps, sad but true, it is the hard lesson we must learn on dry land first, before we can dive naked and swim in the timeless ocean of soul. I heed, with dread, the words of Marlow: “No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essences. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone...” (p.90)

Now I am beginning to understand my friends, forgive me for being a slow learner. The path to belonging, the journey towards a nowhere place called now and here, is impossible without a name, without a body, without a soul-mate, for we must

acquire these tangibles in order to experience our selves as real, as valuable, if transient entities of life moving across a landscape of beauty, and we must love these names, these bodies, these soul-mates as ourselves: they are, in the practical, visible present, the things we can claim as ours. The quest to belong, however, like any trek, is a narrative in motion, and we must move on, we must let them go. The journey down towards soul is a deeper journey through a deeper wood, to a land of disappearing ink, ethereal bodies, and deceased companions; it is a place of death. Into the land of Gods who are not in the least concerned with what “I” need, at some point along the way we fall, un-named, un-clothed, un-partnered by the transient stuff of the upper world. Down into the masticating maw of “meaning”, “mind”, “matter”, and “mine”, we are chewed up and spit out, broken and battered and anonymous, into the arms of soul, for it is she who will carry us through the wilderness, to the other side.

**We need a home.** I hesitate here. Frightened, bereft, I reel in the horror of the unmasked truth of this journey, for it does not take a genius to intuit where I am headed. E.T., it seems, got away, only to return, poor fellow. But what of the others? The companions, all human, all mortal, who offered themselves to me from across the loneliness of my keyboard, who rose up in valor to carry me forward on this quest to belong, what fate befell them? They tell me that we need to find home, to come home, to return home. Yet, the path they have followed has only deposited them far from home, it would seem, in the wilderness, the forest, the hospital—the underworld—where the flesh of their bones, the scratch of their names, the breath of their loved ones, dissolves, slowly and excruciatingly disintegrating into the dust of a black abyss. Is there a place of belonging in the wilderness? Is there a homeland hearth before the fires of

death? The time is past for regret, reversion, repression, running away; my companions are here to remind me that the land of soul is a frontier place, a middle ground, untouched by sentimentality, hope, or therapy. It is the home of the imagination. Dare I enter? I have, it seems—I have.

It is all coming clear now. I have always been told that fables and journeys and quests for enlightenment always move in full circle, that the end always takes us back to the beginning. Yet it startles me to arrive there, nonetheless. It seems, like Dorothy in the “Wizard of Oz”, I have never left home. Or as Hillman might scold me: the literal writer with his literal story—“I am an orphan”—goes on a literal journey to find his literal place in the literal world. Thank you, James. Stuck in the literal landscape of keyboard and blank screen and painful trauma and haunted past, I confess: I was lost. Yet, it took only a soulful shift, a movement downward, literally and figuratively, into the soft, sensual, sonorous sensibilities of the poets—James Conrad, the ancient Sumerians, Margaret Edson, Steven Spielberg—to bring me to my senses, to bring me to soul, to bring me, perhaps for the first time, to life.

How does this happen? It is simple really, but profoundly counter to our usual heroic, rational stance in the world: I welcomed the *daimons*. Spirit guides, gurus of truths beyond time and space, E.T. and Gilgamesh and Marlow and Dr. Bearing, are not, and never have been, figments of my imagination; they are autonomous messengers from that contiguous yet contingent cosmos of the “really real”, that deep interior, exterior landscape lodged somewhere between subject and object, fiction and fact, myth and truth. I have been more the imaginal character on this trek in the wilderness, just a shadowy bystander, graced by their presence, enriched with their

wisdom. What have I offered them? I am a new entrant into this middle ground of soul, a neophyte wanderer, for Hillman and Jung, and a great many poets of life have traversed that bridge of their own making, the one of isolation, separateness, terminality, only to find themselves in a luscious, lucid, lurid landscape of swirling, multitudinous paradox—a wilderness of belonging. Here is how Hillman, after Jung, describes it:

To “know thyself” in Jung’s manner means to become familiar with, to open oneself to and listen to, that is, to know and discern, daimons. Entering one’s interior story takes a courage similar to starting a novel. We have to engage with persons whose autonomy may radically alter, even dominate our thoughts and feelings, neither ordering these persons about nor yielding to them full sway. Fictional and factual, they and we, are drawn together like threads into a mythos, a plot, until death do us part. It is a rare courage that submits to this middle region of psychic reality where the supposed surety of fact and illusion of fiction exchange their clothes. (1983, p.55)

In the moment it feels silly really, to have paid a therapist to urge me forward, yet backward, to excavate the remains of an abandoned child. In the casket, I will surely only find bones and dust, not life, not truth. It seems that just writing this paper, just listening deeply to the lessons of my daimon visitors, I have descended more deeply into the murky, mystical mists of origins and endings, birth and death (for death haunts me still as I write this, that grave companion whose shadow follows me from desk to driveway, from drama to dreamland) in one series of sittings, or rather sightings, here at this keyboard than in all those years of dream interpretations and bountiful boughts of the blues.

We have come full circle, back to Wagoner, that lucky unfortunate who got left behind on this journey of the imagination, whose poem triggered the demise of this paper yet ultimately brought forth a new story, and the birth of a tribe. Truth is, I have

always loved the forest, the trees and birds and rivers and endless movement of nature, for she has always been a doorway to my imagination. But I see clearly now, the threshold of inner and outer worlds, like that barrier between consciousness and unconsciousness, between literal history and imaginal homeland, is but a factitious feature of my stubborn ego's hold on "reality": it is all wilderness. And I have always belonged there, for in the wilderness of the imagination, we are never alone. Sitting, staring silently at the keyboard once again, I am found.

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April 3, 2002

Dear Dennis,

Just a note to apologize for going over the length requirements for this paper. I only hope that you will indulge me a bit, as the journey of writing this paper turned out to be a very powerful imaginal process for me—both transformational and healing. In any case, I really appreciated your class and your voluminous knowledge of and facility with the texts—it just opened me up to a whole new, underworld perspective on my own life and poetics. Thanks again.

Jeff Hull