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## Fragments: of Nature, of Myself

Jan Groenemann

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# ***Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself***

***Jan Groenemann, BS, Art Edu.***

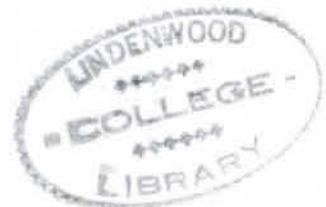
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1997

***A Master's Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the  
Department of Art of Lindenwood College in  
Partial Fulfilment of the  
Master's of Art  
1997***



Thesis  
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1997

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**1997**

*This thesis is dedicated to all of you who walk the path  
that is this human existence. May the broken pieces of  
your lives be put together to create a  
greater whole.*

**Professor Elaine Tillinger, Ph.D.**

**Chairperson and Advisor**

**Professor Jon Grant Hargate, MFA**

**Professor Hans Levi, MFA**

### Acknowledgments

I want to thank the faculty of the Linderoed College Fine Arts Department, who have made this one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life. In addition, I want to thank my parents, my children, and my students, all of whom have been both patient and supportive of me when things became a bit stressful over the past two years, due to my work load.

***This thesis is dedicated to all of you who walk the path that is this human existence. May the broken pieces of your shattered dreams shine like diamonds in the dawn of a new day, as you gather them together to recreate a greater Truth.***

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# Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself

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# Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself

## *Chapter One: The Journal*

### *Introduction:*

Ozark County in Southern Missouri rolls with ancient hills created through long centuries of erosion. It is sprinkled with national forests and hunters' woods and dissected by spring-fed streams and rivers that were at one time so clear and clean you could drink from them. It was as a child that I walked these hills, a hunter of dreams. I explored, I danced, I sang, and all the while I felt the presence of tree fairies dancing along with me in the tree tops coaxing my spirit to join them in celebrating life. At times I sat in my tree house in the huge walnut tree in our back yard, or swung in my rope swing equipped with a perfectly fitted wooden seat and communed with God, listening, thinking, "who am I, why am I here, what am I here to do." At night I lay at the foot of my bed looking out my east window and watched the moon rise over a silhouette of trees as the hoot owl spoke his words of wisdom. I felt God's presence so strongly at times that it literally overwhelmed me. I now know that psychologists call these "peak experiences;" I have learned to think of myself as a mystic. These events were a part of my normal daily existence; they were a familiar part of my childhood experience.

It was through this connection with nature and her Creator that I came to know myself as an artist at a very early age. Not an artist in the formal sense, perhaps, but a keeper of the iconography given to me as I searched for my own path. My drawings covered the refrigerator door, the long wall in our living room, and the walls of my room. I drew, I saw, I drew, and, still, I saw more. In this

drawing from and of nature I discovered the beginning of the direction for my life's journey.

This love of the beauty that is nature inspired me to be a realist painter for many years, painting what I saw in landscapes, old houses and barns, flowers, woods, animals, and people. My southern Missouri roots supported this subject matter, as did St. Charles County, where I settled after a period of moving from project to project with my engineer husband. My accumulation of awards, and purchases, soon brought the reputation as one of the top artists in my local area. Around 1982, something changed for me. Perhaps it was the words of an important friend and mentor who had appreciated my landscapes, barns and houses painted in the traditional sense. I was excited to show him a new piece that was more abstract and filled with much feeling. He responded with the comment, "Well, this is much more powerful than your 'little Ozark paintings.'" I was also influenced by the comment of a very well-known local artist, during a show in which a new piece I was excited about did not win an award. She said, "It could be that your composition is weak." In fact, both of these statements, coupled with personal events in my life at the time, stirred within me a growing restlessness and a dissatisfaction with what I was doing. There was so much more that I wanted to say than; "look at this beautiful painting; allow it to trigger nostalgia in you." There was so much more within me that pressed for expression.

It was at this point on my path that I began to connect the imagery of my daily experience with the metaphor that underlies it. I became aware that when I painted I was in touch with a deeper knowing. I began to hear the messages that each piece of art had to share with me. In The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America, Jamake Highwater writes, "It is here, in this emblematic and visionary realm, that all art of the world finally possesses its vividness and power." <sup>1</sup>

As a vision often divorced from its motivating power, art becomes decorative, a dubious achievement. I was longing to move beyond this point in my own art. On a technical level, I began a personal study of composition. I had heard a lot about composition: "this composition is very effective; here your composition is rather weak...." But never had I had a solid definition of what this really meant. What made it strong? What made it weak? Where are the limits? How do you push beyond the limits? I determined to answer these questions for myself. To my surprise, I was unable to glean much tangible information from visual art books. I began to search through photography books where I found more specific information. I studied the subject thoroughly, outlined, combined new information with what I already knew, and came up with a presentation on composition that not only answered my questions, but has benefited my students as well.

Technique is important as are the principles of design; and, it takes long hard work to learn to effectively apply these skills. However, good technique and composition is not "the answer." Somehow, it is important to derive your particular technique and design from your struggle with more important questions. What does an idea look like? How can I give form to feeling? How can I ask the question that isn't quite there yet? Where does the answer lie? What does all of this mean?

Armed with much study and background on composition and technique, I began to paint pure feelings. I would begin by sitting quietly in front of a blank sheet of watercolor paper. Sometimes I would wet it with clear water, sometimes with a wash of color. Always I would begin painting, focusing on what I was feeling inside. Joseph Zinker, in his book Creative Process in Gestalt Therapy, says "Art is prayer." <sup>2</sup> But for me, art is not only asking the questions as we

beseech God in prayer, but it is a listening for the answers as in meditation, or its Christian equivalent, contemplation.

In the process of making anything, a person not only illuminates and illustrates his inner life, but moves beyond personal expression to make something which stands by its self. The work acquires its own internal validity, its own integrity. It is in this process of making something which stands on its own integral structure that the creator contacts a concrete reality outside his subjective life and moves into the transcendent.<sup>3</sup>

By painting in this intuitive way I was transcending my roots. The first piece I completed in this manner was a rendition of ocean, wave, and sun. It was identifiable as such, but very abstracted. The second painting was a woman leaning over what seemed to be a ball of light. She was done wet in wet, very free, and abstract. I titled her, "Bringing Forth." This was the beginning of a true "bringing forth" for me as an artist. Both pieces sold almost immediately. I was encouraged, yes, even inspired. I began to add texture with gesso, but technically the medium was watercolor. I entered two new paintings in a show at the St. Peters Cultural Arts Center. I did not win. As I was picking up my work, Rich Brooks, the director of the center for the city, came to speak to me. "I wanted to tell you that both of these were worthy of awards. The judge was very impressed, but he said he was sure you could not achieve this effect with watercolor." We discussed my technique, which, of course, utilized watercolor as the medium. Rich announced to me that he would like to purchase both pieces for the permanent collection of the city of St. Peters. This was further validation for the new work. I was finding that to let go, to paint what I felt, and to intuitively let the painting flow out from me, was the best choice I could have made toward transformation in myself and my work.

A new journey began for me at this point. Becoming both prayer and contemplation, my work is a conscious exploration of all I feel, of all that I am. By doing my art in this way, I fell in love with the process, which became a means of listening, learning and discovering. I awakened to the fact that my work speaks to me. It revealed things to me that were never before in my consciousness. It became a means of self discovery and understanding.

It was, indeed, this step in my development as an artist that finally led to creativity classes and workshops and to the development of a philosophy that ultimately evolved into the book Through the Inner Eye: Awakening to the Creative Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

I'm not sure just when it first occurred to me that I should be writing down my thoughts and feelings each time I worked on a painting; but at some point in time, I realized that doing so expanded the opportunities for insight. For some time now, I have been periodically writing my thoughts in a journal as I paint. It is in this new series, "Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself," that journal writing has become a consistent part of the process. I am finding that insights are increased by utilizing journaling as a part of the painting process, working back and forth between the two.

I began this series with a focus on getting in touch with my inner self and allowing that self to flow out through the various media that I chose. I wanted to feel free to utilize watercolor, acrylic, pastels, watercolor pencils, ink and pencil, depending on the mood that I was expressing. My connection with nature being very strong, I wanted to experiment by adding natural objects such as weeds, leaves, sticks, and stones in a collage fashion to the paintings. As I worked with these objects, sometimes mixing them into the acrylic paint, sometimes melding them into the painting ground, other times gluing, tying or sewing them onto the surface, I thought of the possibility of using natural dyes as an additional media.

This led to experimenting with boiling blossoms, berries and nuts in order to create color. I am excited by the metaphoric method of approaching my art. Each medium, each object and each subject that emerges speaks to me of life and gives me further insights into myself as a participant in it.

The creative process is a process of self revelation. In a sense, it is a process of creating the self as well as discovering the self. The creative encounter keeps us at a perpetual crossroads. At every moment we are faced with decisions that may send us off in some new direction toward still greater discoveries.

The creative process is also a wonderful healing tool. It enables us to contact our inner child in an open and playful way, to nurture that child, and to validate him or her.

"Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself" is a journal record of the creative process at work within myself. For this reason each part is dated and written in present tense. In this way I can share with you the thoughts, feelings and insights as they came to me while I worked on this series of paintings. By recording in detail how this process has worked in my own experience, it is my hope that you might gain insights into how a similar process might be utilized to enhance your own life journey.

### ***Part I***

***September 19, 1995***

Fall is my favorite time of year. Metaphorically it personifies "letting go," dying, if you will, to what has been and is no longer relevant. This has certainly been the deepest message and the greatest challenge for me in this process we call "life." So it is appropriate that this series begins in the fall of 1995 as I look back over events that have resulted in the ending of a long-term marriage. It has been a

traumatic and painful process, but I am beginning to see just how much positive change and growth has resulted from this experience.

Change in my life always means change in my work. Now, in the fall of 1995, I am feeling a need to make changes and to explore different painting grounds and mediums in order to express the intensity of change that I feel in my life experience. In August I enrolled in the graduate program at Lindenwood College hoping to utilize the time spent working toward my MA to do this exploration.

*September 30, 1995*

"I Am The Wind Blowing" (figure 1) is the first painting of this series. It begins with texture created from the leaves of fall. I use Pin Oak leaves, rust and brown, fragile, dry, still clinging to the branches. I am fascinated by these tenacious leaves. The most strong-willed hang on for dear life throughout the entire winter, a tendency that I was also discovering and dealing with in my own personal psychology. It is as if they do not know that the branches are dead; there is no nurturance for them there. Still they cling, hoping the sap will begin to flow. Eventually, some will give up, realizing that the season is passed.

For those tenacious leaves that do hold on until spring and her nurturing sap arrives, an amazing insight is in store. They find they cannot drink of it. It no longer satisfies nor nurtures them. They have grown beyond the need of it, and they must move on, taking a new form.

I pluck such determined leaves from the branches. Then, from the clinging leaves I build a textural ground of glue and leaves, some whole, some crumbled and spent, all pushed reluctantly into their future. To the glue and leaves I add coat after coat of gesso until the fragments meld together and form the foundation for layer upon layer of color. All this is built upon primed canvas stretched over extra wide stretchers in a gallery wrap method.



*Figure 1*

*I Am the Wind Blowing*



A landscape emerges with distant hills in purple, nearer hills in greens and grays, changing colors that are filled with energy. Bursting out of this landscape in splashes of color are exploding forms, circles and leaf shapes, blowing from the inner energy, shooting out, coming forth. Change is the music, wind is the vehicle. The wind plucks the reluctant leaves and carries them onward. The dance of life is carried on the wind. Am I the leaves, the wind?

*October 15, 1995*

A student walks into the studio. Her attention is immediately caught by the new work. "Jan, that is you. That painting is a self-portrait. I can see the wind; you are the wind blowing."

She does not know how determined I have been to remain the attached leaf, how much force it has taken to shake me free so that I might become one with this wind. Because she always sees me as a free spirit, like the wind, she experiences this bursting, exploding, moving, changing, composition as a self-portrait. And, so it is. I am the clinging leaves, the last to let go; yet, once I do let go, I am the exploding energy. I am ever changing, moving, flowing, like the wind. "I am the wind blowing."

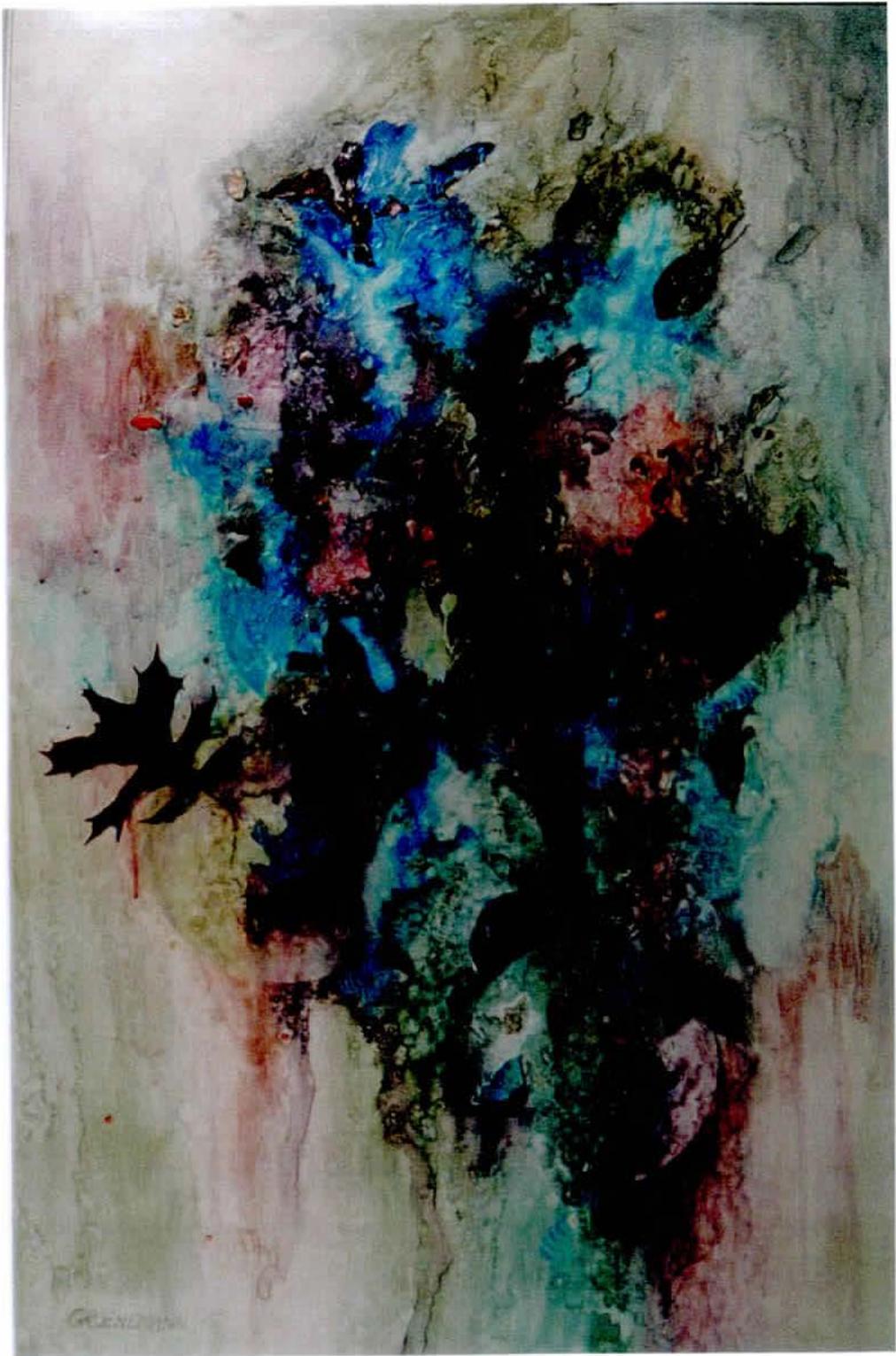
Still fascinated with the leaf textures and curious about this new "stuff" (clayboard) I picked up at the Dick Blick art supply store, I once again crumble, glue, place, and paint fragments of leaves. I feel a need to explore this letting go. This painting expresses a quieter place, a feminine expression, more passive, no explosion, but a quieter energy. Nature brings me peace on a warm quiet day, a still day. The coolness of fall is only hinted at. The coolness of peace quiets the heat of passion that has been stirred by the intensity of change.

Nature can storm and rain down in rage. She can warm and calm and fill with peace and knowing. Aha, and so can I. These fragments of nature are



Figure 2

*Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself*



fragments of me. I name this second of the series what is eventually to become the title for the series itself, "Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself" (figure 2).

As I choose shells to incorporate in the next painting, I allow myself to be free. For me the ocean is like weather itself. It contains a power that is awesome in itself. It is like danger, yet, it draws me as a child to a flame. There is so much beyond the surface that cannot be seen. This is discovery of life itself. When I collected these shells, I had no idea just how much lay beneath the surface, just out of sight, within my marriage. The discovery of these secrets was a painful, yet, enlightening path.

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I take some of the smaller, more fragmented shells and crush them with a rolling pin. This creates wonderful textures. Then I start the application of watercolor to the deckboard. I love the greens, violets and blues of the sea. Use the colors first and pour and blend as naturally as possible. Once I establish a pleasing environment of color, I begin to apply the crushed shell particles using glue

*October 30, 1995*

I love working with the natural objects, the gesso, and clayboard. I remember the basket of sea shells that I collected on the beach in St. Petersburg, and I carry them into my studio. Again the memories begin to flow. The trip was in November, 1992. Gary, my ex-husband, and our youngest son, Jeremy, and I flew to Orlando where Gary had a business meeting. Only two months before, I had learned that our marriage was in serious trouble. The trip was not an easy one. After the meetings were over, we drove to St. Petersburg, visited the Salvador Dali Art Museum, then spent the night in a lovely motel on the beach. It was a magical twenty-four hours. I walked the beach in contemplative silence and collected these shells. I found their broken, and fragmented bodies more interesting, and even more beautiful than had been their original forms. Like me, they had experienced life. They had survived much. I, too, would be a survivor and become more beautiful for the experience.

As I choose shells to incorporate in the next painting, I allow my mind to flow. For me the ocean is like creation itself. It contains a power that is awesome to behold. It holds danger; yet, it draws me as a moth to a flame. There is so much beyond the surface that cannot be seen. This is descriptive of life itself. When I collected these shells, I had no idea just how much lay beneath the surface, just out of sight, within my marriage. The discovery of these secrets was a painful, yet, enlightening path.

I take some of the smaller more fragmented shells and crush them with a rolling pin. This creates wonderful texture. Then I start the application of watercolor to the clayboard. I love the greens, violets and blues of the sea. I let the colors flow and pool and blend as naturally as possible. Once I establish a pleasing movement of color I began to apply the crushed shell particles using glue



*Figure 3*

*Ode to the Sea*



to hold them in place; then, I take the special shells I have chosen and place them into the composition.

I make myself a promise to visit the ocean at least once a year for the sake of renewal. I christen the painting, "Ode To The Sea" (figure 3).

## *Part II*

*November 8, 1995*

Passionate people touch me deeply. In "Re-creation" (figure 4), the fourth painting of this series, the passionate influence comes from my cousin, Tom. I was reunited with him at a family reunion in June of 1995, after almost nineteen years. A few months later, after we began communicating through letters, I saw him in a meditation. There was a man's hand holding an iridescent marble. The man rolled the marble in his fingers, and I watched it grow to the size of a tennis ball. It began to glow and to pulse. Next, he held it to his eye. On the end of the marble I saw an eyeball. The man pulled it outward forming a sort of telescope with the large eyeball on the end. I could see his face, it was Tom; and, I knew he could see much more than most people see. He is a teacher to me, as I am to him.

The painting is created on a canvas ground. Watercolor paper, weeds, glue, and gesso create texture and shape. The shapes, forms, textures and colors become faces. They emerge one by one. Each appears as the time is ready, one growing out of the other.

The wolf figure in the painting represents "the teacher" in Native American mythology. It is one of Tom's totem animals. He is an encouragement to me in this time of change. We share a December 1 birthday, with mine being four years before his.

The dove remains symbolic of Spirit for me. This is a spiritual journey I am on; and learning to trust that these changes will bring great growth on a spiritual



*Figure 4*

*Re-Creation*



level is important to me. Other figures within the painting emerge: a butterfly, another symbol of change, unfolding into a greater beauty; my son sees a horse, he points it out to me, and I enhance the features only slightly. The horse has always been important in my life, especially in my childhood. Now I see her as representing a new sense of freedom that I am beginning to find within myself. The painting is full of life forms.

At the top right is a female angel figure? Is it me? Yet, I am as physical as the wolf, the horse, and the dove. This painting represents my duality, the human and the divine within me and within all of us. In it is reflected both present and future. This is seeing into what is to come, a re-creation of the self that only comes from much pain, much joy, much feeling; that only comes from pure passion. This painting points me to both the new and the already known. I call it, "Re-creation."

*December 1, 1995*

It is my birthday. Another meditative vision on this day inspires the next painting. I see faces and forms of beings in a giant, rotating mass, moving clockwise. They are all familiar to me. They speak great wisdom. These beings come to me from the North of my being, which represents a final direction that is opening to me. Again, Tom plays a role in the message of this painting. The Indian Circle that lies in Ozark County, the county of my birth, has been visited by Tom. He means to take me there. He shares poetry that he has written there the year before. The circle is laid out in accordance with the directions, North, South, East and West. I sense a connection with this vision and the Indian Circle.

The mass of beings continues to move. They speak to me saying, "When we hang on to something or someone who holds us back, we slow the movement. When we learn to let go we enable the movement to increase. We are all guided. There is nothing to fear, explore the North, the unknown." I am awakened to the



*Figure 5*

*Where the North Wind Speaks*



understanding that Native American teachings have something to say to me about who I am and why am I here.

The circle was called by Tom, "The Place Where The North Wind Speaks." So my painting is named "Where the North Wind Speaks"(figure 5). It is a transition piece for me. Letting go and moving on is the message. Someday, I will visit this place. Already I listen to the words and their wisdom.

### *Part III*

*January 16, 1996*

I have a quiet time following the completion of "Where the North Wind Speaks." It is during this interim that I meet Steve. He is a musician and composer in San Diego. We connect on line through the internet. We have in common our creative intensity. He sent a tape of his music in December. I listened and I wept. Something is touched deep within me. Something of his own pain touches mine. A new painting began to form in my mind.

"Season of Change"(figure 6), as I name it, brings a sense of even greater change. There is the feeling that I am moving on all levels, intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and possibly even physically. I feel some fear connected with these changes, fearful only because I have drawn the "knowing" of them to me before the time is right that I can accept them.

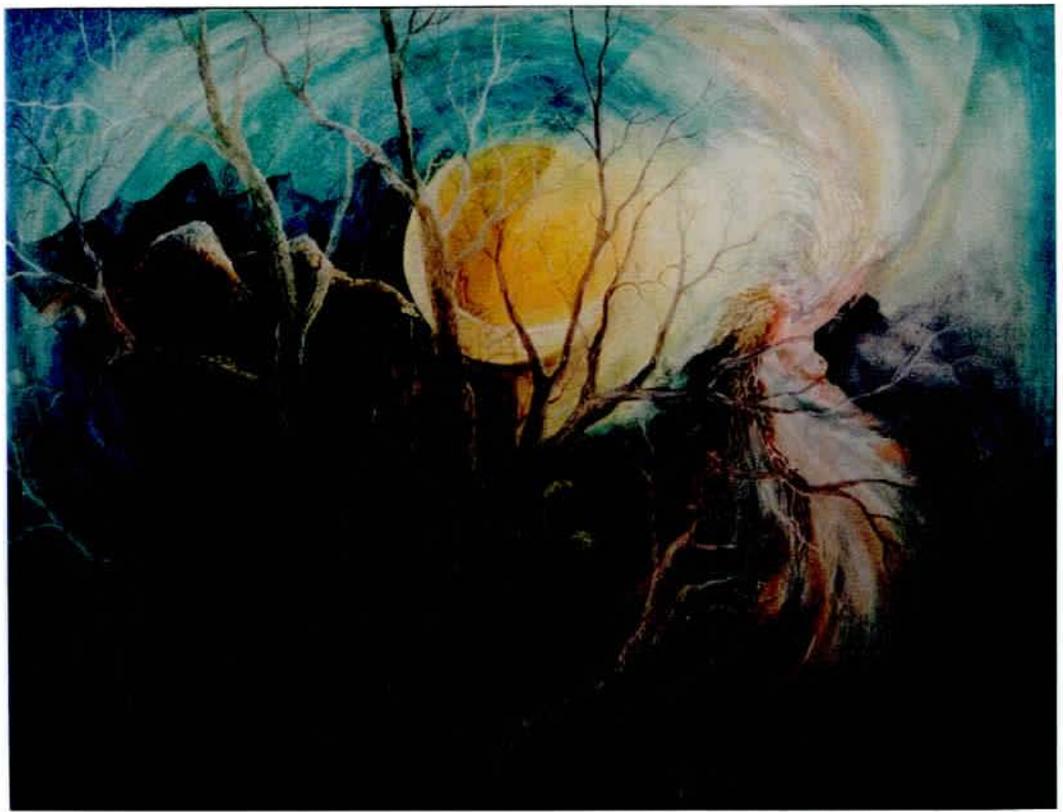
*February 2, 1996*

The painting, "Season of Change," expresses great power and great energy; a great goddess emerges. She was intended to be a dove, but a goddess insists that she be born in this painting. The goddess inspiration must come from Dr. Elaine Tillinger, who awakens the sleeping goddess in each of us in her Women's Art History class. It is through this painting that the goddess begins to speak to me.



*Figure 6*

*Season of Change*



Steve, too, stirs me to a deeper awakening with his music and lyrics. I know before I feel ready to know. Never have I struggled with a painting as I struggle with this one, obsessively beginning it in early evening and painting into the wee hours of the morning, painting in, painting out, painting over. This is my past, my present, and my future. These are my fears, my hopes, and my dreams.

"I'm going up to the mountain, I've been in the valley long enough..."<sup>5</sup> These are the words to the song. It is the season of change, major change, life changing change. I welcome the change; but it also scares me. Can I trust; can I rise above and beyond pain, beyond betrayal? Can I know love in the way I believe it can be? Again, as I write, deeper understanding comes. I believe my destination to be the mountain, which in some way includes relationship with Steve. I feel that the lion atop the mountain on the left represents him. He has written a story about a lion born with wings. But when we actually meet will I be forced to go beyond even this. I see that the mountain is behind me to the left in the painting. And, I am amazed to find that unconsciously I have painted a female lion atop the second mountain. What does she represent? Perhaps she and the male lion represent the male and female aspects within each of us. I believe that the balancing of these aspects is an important part of evolving on a spiritual level. Many creative people have a more balanced anima and animus. The movement of the goddess is upward and to the right. Perhaps the changes bring me not to relationship but to the time of aloneness. It is a time of finding even deeper aspects of myself and of touching my inner power, as I explore the goddess within.

#### *Part IV*

*April 3, 1996*

Four feet by four feet, stretching primed canvas over hand-build on top of store-bought oversized stretchers, wrapped gallery style, carefully, stressing

muscles, stressing out, I work. Finally the painting surface is ready. I walk through the yard carefully choosing "two by two" twigs from each tree that we planted in the yard, the we being Gary and I. Two by Two: White Mountain Ash; Sugar Maple (that began in another's garden, transferred to mine, was pulled for a weed, transplanted to the yard); another maple that came up from a seed that my eldest son rescued in the flower bed and planted in the back yard; Red Bud from a dear friend's woods (no longer hers, she is no longer there, ran over when we sold the piano, I gave up on it, it survived); towering Black Walnuts in the corner; flowering Crab Apple; Pin Oak and, finally, Bradford Pear (you weren't supposed to grow so large, one third destroyed by storm, that same spring that welcomed the summer Taffy, our Cocker Spaniel, died and the fall my marriage died, all symbolic, even the "growing too large"). Death in threes: the tree, the dog, the marriage. I tie the twigs to the canvas, tying the knots one by one, like marriage vows. How can I make them hold the twigs in place? Wet them, shrink them? Shrink myself?

Carefully I place the delicate twigs. Some are so brittle you cannot bend them, others are pliable and flexible. Only the flexible ones can withstand the stress of the bend, the give and take. They still retain enough fluid for flexibility. I am reminded of Noah's ark and cleansing through journey by water, the Ark filled two by two, mates, companions, joined in purpose....

The twig carried by the dove (my dove became a goddess) signified land in sight, a new beginning, the ordeal over, the crisis past. Where to next?

I finish tying the square knots in strips of leather that attach the twigs to the canvas and stand the painting against the wall. The twigs cast their own changing shadows. Appropriate! You cannot capture them in paint; they will change. I like this. There is no evolving without change.



*Figure 7*

*Two by Two*



*April 10, 1996*

So, I am ready to apply the gesso. Is it the white out that will make all the twigs look alike? But underneath they do not blend, they are two by two of their own kind. And not even two of the two are alike.

An insight: the twigs will become the skeletal shape for people. Separate figures will be formed around, in, among them, committing themselves to walk "two by two."

*April 20, 1996*

Finally I begin applying color; pinks, flesh tones, violets, purples, golds, and browns. The figures begin to emerge like dancers out of a white mist. Their bodies are built around the twigs. Two by two, male and female, they come. Do we move from left to right or right to left? The figures on the right stand back to back, but their hands are reaching, touching. The center figures seem more intimate; still they are somewhat slow in movement, static. The figures to the left begin to move together, begin to dance.

*May 2, 1996*

Some ask which way to read the painting. I move toward the dance; but the interpretation is your own. The dance is unique to each pair who chooses to move together or apart, as the title suggests, "Two by Two" (figure 7).

I realize that through this painting I have worked through many remaining questions of relationship which enables me to truly move forward and to move on. Relationship is a dance; and moving with the flow of music is not only important, but necessary. If the music changes, the dance will change, and the relationship must change.

*Part V**August 20, 1996*

Nancy, my assistant, stretches the unprimed canvas for the next work. She builds two canvases of the same size.. A graduate research paper on the abstract expressionist artist Helen Frankenthaler <sup>6</sup> has inspired the use of unprimed canvas. I like the idea of allowing the paint to penetrate the canvas, to stain it, thus making it more involved as a part of the painting.

*August 24, 1996*

I wet the canvas with water using a brush and a spray bottle, then begin applying acrylic in the fashion of watercolor. It runs and bleeds into the wet canvas, giving the effect I have been looking for. The acrylic color remains vibrant. A landscape in violets, browns, golds, deep pinks and burgundies begins to emerge. The sky forms, then the hills and some distant feel of mountains. I feel a need for a dry, brilliant color emphasis and find my pastel sticks. The movement begins; the feeling of river forms. It is at this point that I know I want this in two-parts. "The River" (figure 8), begins at the base of the mountain and flows down through the second canvas, like a river flowing to the sea "taking us where we need to be." <sup>7</sup> I continue the movement. It doesn't stop with the canvas. It flows even after the painting ends.

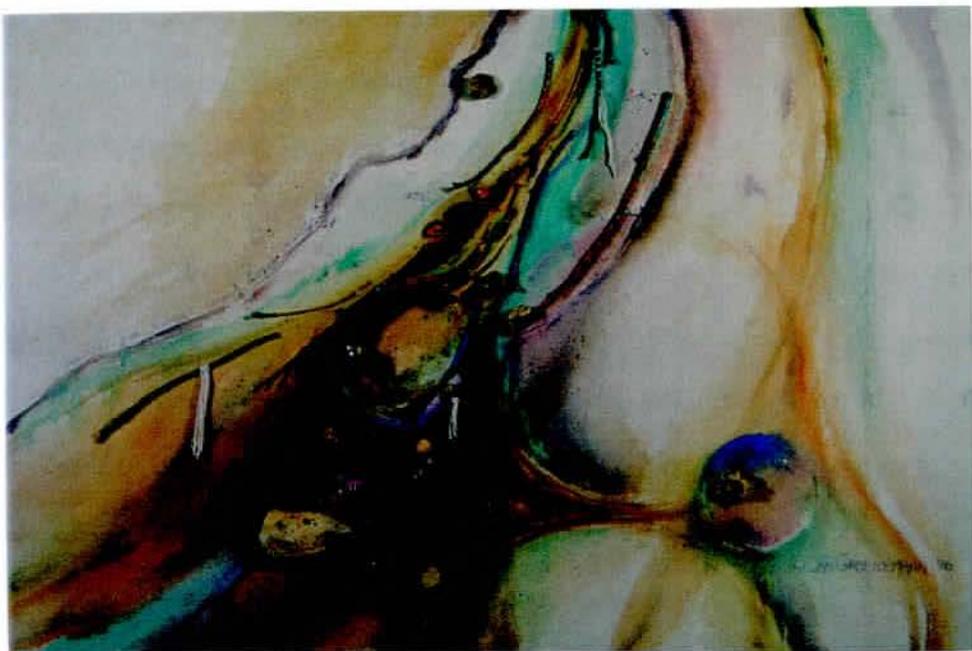
*August 29, 1996*

It is at this point that the idea of sticks and stones comes. Both are carried by the river, symbolic of the blocks and barriers to the flow of life and relationship. The twigs come from my Bradford Pear that has almost been destroyed by a recent storm. Yes, this is the same tree that had a third taken down when trauma came into my life last fall. It has continued to take a beating, mirroring my own life, giving up parts of itself for the sake of survival. Appropriate that thunder, lightning, rain and wind have removed these twigs for me. I pick them from the



*Figure 8*

*The River*



fallen limbs and paint some gesso-white, others I paint in colors. Some I paint in intricate designs directly onto the natural brown surface. Why? Maybe because some of us are covered over and some of us are bare. All of us show our colors to the world in the form of personality. All of us, twisted and broken, are brought low by storms, yet recover to be exhibited in an even greater more beautiful way.

So, I place the twigs in the river beginning from the source where sky and water meet. I place them so that they flow with the river, bumping, moving and changing as they flow together. I have collected stones from various places throughout the country. I learn that stones with holes all the way through represent friendship. Thus, my offering to the river, to the twigs, is that of friendship. They are a symbol of those stones we must flow around, over, and through as we flow through life.

I desire to be friends with life, with the river, and the twigs that I bump and flow with. I work at becoming open, to accepting the lessons and the learning as my friends. I can neither control nor anticipate all that comes, but I can experience it to the fullest, without fear and with acceptance.

*September 7, 1996*

I leave the painting, "The River," hanging in my studio; no, it is not yet finished. I see a need for more depth and deeper color as the river flows toward me. More to develop here.

Nancy calls me to the studio from my computer. She is excited that she very clearly sees a figure in the painting. She asks if I did this intentionally. I have not. I walk out into the studio to look, and upon seeing "The River," I say, "Yes, I see a male figure lying on his back, his head extends off the bottom of the canvas." "Oh, Nancy says, "I see a female figure, arched back...." She walks to the canvas and points out the female figure. Both figures are definitely there, and appropriately so as "The River" is about relationship!

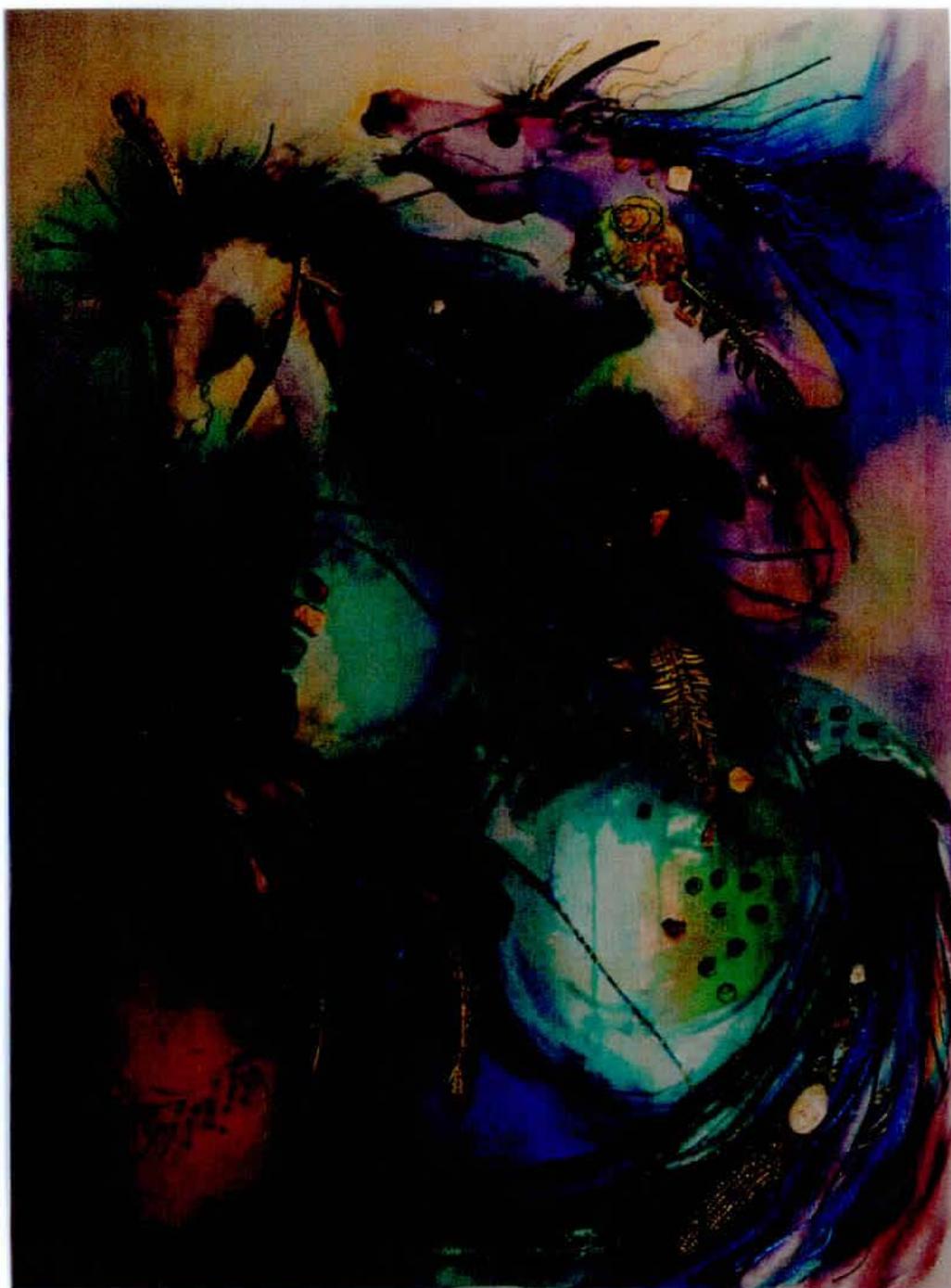
Now, I cannot see this painting without seeing the male and the female figures. They came from my subconscious to make their statements. The female figure is reaching and stretching. She seems in control of her movement. She has a head dress that is feather-like. When I did what now appears to be a feathery head dress, I intended it to be an angel's wings. She feels strong, proud, and peaceful.

The male figure is flowing downstream on his back, head first. I see the underneath of his chin, his head is thrown back, his mouth slightly open. Is he in pain, is he caught in something he can't control? Perhaps here is the struggle to let go of control? There is not a feeling of peace from him.

*September 9, 1996*

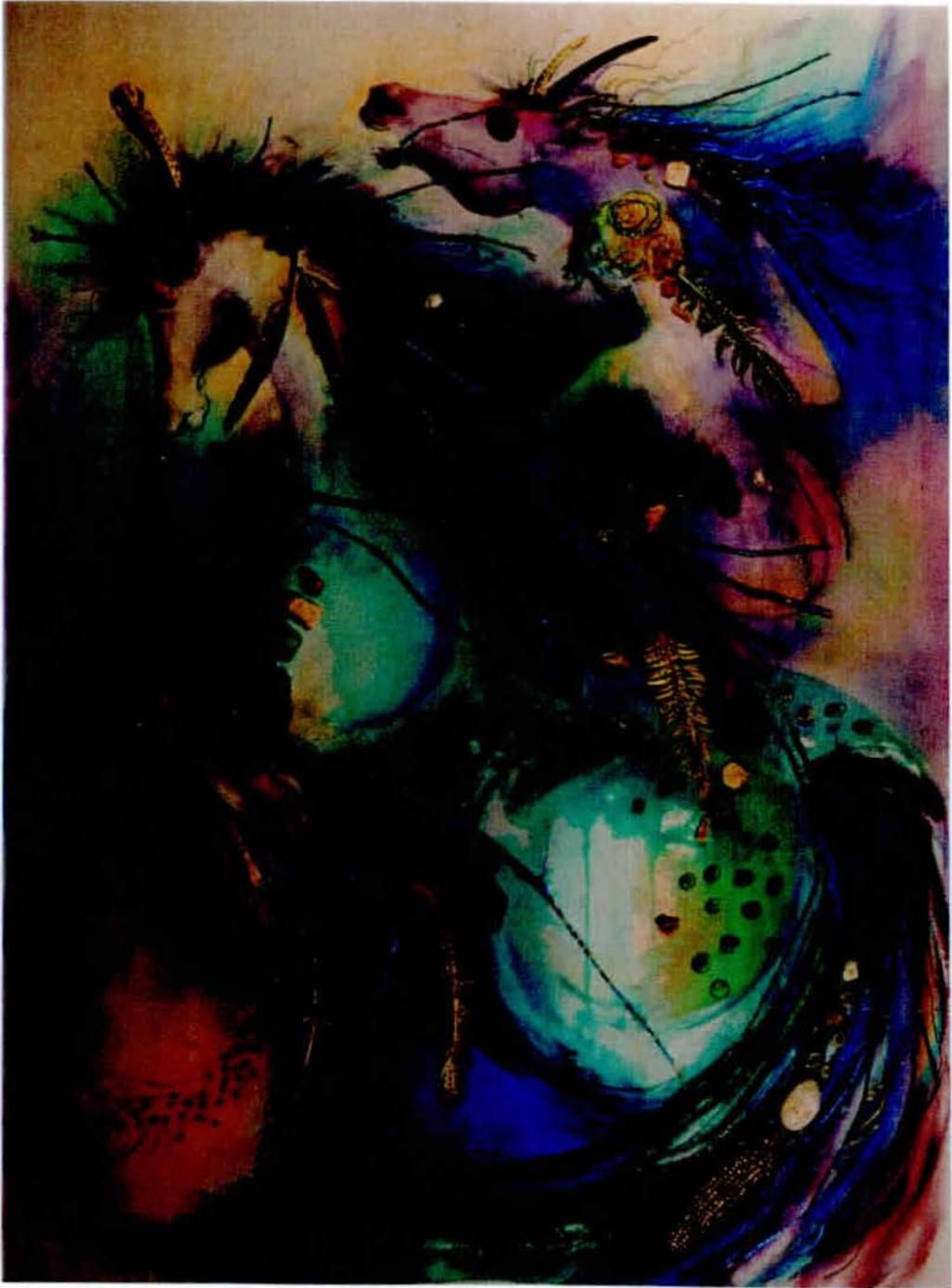
What is this painting's message to me? Are these, once again, the female and male aspects within me? In another piece that I began while still working on "The River," which I have titled, "Two Horses" (figure 9), the male horse is more domestic, the female is wild. These two paintings seem to have a similar theme that deals with the power of the feminine. Maybe I am more comfortable with the female in me. My outward expression feels natural. Yet, the male qualities of assertiveness, independence, and aloneness are less comfortable and trigger feelings of being less in control. I realize this is most apparent in my relationships with men. I give away some of my power in male/female relationships. Now I am facing this head on, living alone for the first time in my life, and I realize that this is good.

There are periods of the creative process when we must stand alone. If we cannot be alone, if we take being alone as being lonely, we will infrequently (or only partially) allow ourselves past the threshold of the ordinary and into the arena of the creative process. For to be at the very center of the creative act means to stand quite alone, without external companions with whom to share the burden of bringing something forth from apparent nothingness. There are essential moments when we must be without allies



*Figure 9*

*Two Horses*



to point out the way, to reassure our faltering steps, to set limits, or to affirm hesitant beginnings. At the center of the creative act is our solitary self, away from the world as it is, facing the world as it becomes, as it emerges from our fingertips.<sup>8</sup>

### **Part VI**

**September 19, 1996**

Goldenrod Blossoms should be cut when they first reach full bloom, and should be used within a few hours after cutting. They cannot be frozen or dried for later use (wonder if finding them on my morning walk, late September and stuffing them in my pocket for two days before I remember them counts?). Cut the goldenrod blossoms and that part of the stem nearest the blossom into 1" to 3" lengths, place in a container, cover with water and boil for about two hours. The water may need to be replenished as it boils away. Cool. Remove the refuse. The liquid has now become the dye bath.<sup>9</sup>

It is done. The water is boiling, the smell of cooking goldenrod is floating through my house. No doubt, few people have experienced this. It mingles with the lingering acrylic spray odor from last night's work on "Two Horses."

Now, I have time to write, nails freshly clipped, filed smooth, thoughts already flowing, this must be how writers become recluses, a world unto themselves, senses so overloaded that the time to record it all takes more than the allotted twenty-four hour day.

I was awakened this morning to the sound of the phone ringing. Mary-marketing-lady was returning my call from yesterday. She is ready to begin marketing *Creative Pathways*, the creativity workshops that I have designed for the corporate arena. We agreed, at her suggestion, to barter the first two months, her focused attention on marketing needs in return for my painting, "Fishers of Dreams." We excitedly discuss the preliminaries and agree to talk later in the day to determine priorities. So, I hang up the phone. The rhythm of rain beats on the roof, the low chime of a single drop-at-a-time at heart beat pace hits the guttering

just right. I stretch and moan, it is 8:30am. So much to do, but it's such a perfect morning to sleep....but, I can't. I have to get going on this thesis. I walk down the stairs, my eyes are heavy, fighting even the low light of a rainy morning.

My trek across pebbled concrete to get the morning paper at the far end of my drive is an awakening experience. Rain splatters, then trickles down my nearly bare skin; I tip-toe-run, feeling the wet on my bare feet. It is cold. Could there be a touch of winter in this fall rain? Shaking the water from the clear plastic cover, I drop the St. Louis Post Dispatch onto the floor. The headlines jump up to my attention. "Dole is ready to take on the President." I hate politics. "Seven have been killed as Israelis and Palestinians shoot it out in the worst violence in three years...." I ran into a cold downpour to retrieve this?

Hot tea warms me from the inside out and triggers thoughts of my late night conversation with John which also warms me from the inside out. He is my comrade, spiritual guru, late night frolicking-in-the-kitchen, making-Yoga-tea-together friend, ahhhhh, my tantra lover. Actually we are yet to meet. We commune through the latest, most modern method, via internet and the somewhat antiquated phone lines. He is flying here, when? As soon as he can afford the \$391 plane fare. Another struggling artist/musician, a recording engineer in Los Angeles who spent eight years of his life in Ananda Village, a sort of yogi ashram. Never married, he is the Eastern equivalent of the Christian Monk.

I assured him there are advantages to these long distance relationships. After all, he works long into the night, sleeping late into the day; I work day and night, well almost anyway. We would hardly have time to get immersed in an affair of the heart. After all, the goldenrod beckons me!

Freshly clipped nails, amazing how this aids my speed in typing. Time to check the water that must be replenished as it boils away. The aroma is getting stronger. "Ahhhhhchooo!" Oh, no, this is me, "nature girl," the one who found out

four years ago that I am so allergic to grasses, leaves, trees that I have to use an inhaler. Still, the tingly smell filtrates throughout my house reminding me of some sort of herb tea.

Nature inspires my greatest creative expression. My morning walk in the park behind my house where I gathered the goldenrod, assorted lichens, and a few berries, is my daily renewal. The park comes complete with my own Walden Pond where just a few moments of contemplation refreshes my outlook for the entire day. It was in this park, on a windy fall day almost a year ago, that the idea for this project was born. I had just come from a lecture by Grant Hargate, Professor of Art at Lindenwood College, on his own evolvment as an artist. He had shown slides of some earlier work, complex, detailed, filled with interesting color. It was an extreme contrast to the exhibit of his work that was at the moment hanging in the Hendren Gallery. This exhibit was stark in its simplicity, basic black and white with smatterings of yellow and brown, done on small recycled papers. I was most impressed with Grant's sharing of how he seemed to work in cycles between complexity and simplicity. He was attempting to simplify. He certainly had accomplished this. I drove home feeling an inner frustration. My first journal entry for the year 1995 was, "This is the year I will simplify my life." Had I done so, here in late fall? No, instead my life was even more complex. I was healing from a very painful divorce, the attempted suicide of my youngest son, and dealing with financial stress that came with one crisis after another. I had enrolled in graduate school with these words to Dr. Elaine Tillinger at our first meeting: "I have no money and no time; can you tell me how to go about getting my MA?" A relationship began with her words, "Well, there is always a way, " that I have come to treasure deeply.

So, here was my life reflected in my work, this new work, so intricate, so complex, so full of, of what? So full of me. Why could I not simplify? I stood

staring out my studio window, still feeling the frustration. The wind was whipping the fall colors all around my drive. It was a strong wind. I reached for my paint shirt and walked out into the mass of swirling leaves, dust, and twigs, heading for my park. Here were masses of leaves, fallen, walked on, pulverized by the feet of others seeking refuge from urban living. Here the trees were spilling yellows, reds, rusts, greens, browns onto the pavement, some teasingly touching me here and there, never lingering except when one might tangle in the wild of my hair that was straining to loosen itself and go with the wind. I could smell the smoke from neighboring fireplaces, smell the bits of dust and leaf as my nostrils stretched wide to take in the crisp freshness. I wrapped my arms around my chest, snuggled my hands, feeling the texture of my shirt and the warmth of my body. A thousand sounds of birds, rustling leaves, creaking branches, and wind filtering through it all, filled my ears to capacity. The floor of the woods I walked was a mass of tangled, complexity. I felt alive, invigorated in all my senses, even a bit wildish! This was nature; nature speaking to me of anything but simplicity. No, I could not simplify; I could not paint simple paintings amid all this. The nature that danced before me was full of complexity. Life that opened before me, also, was full with complexity. I would paint who I was, what I saw, and how it spoke to me of life. I would paint these fragments, fragments: of nature, of myself. The idea was born.

The buzzer yells to me from upstairs. It is time to replenish the water on the goldenrod once again. Stirring, I observe the water (which will become the dye bath); it looks much like tea. Maybe the blossoms were picked too late to give me yellow? I stop by the bathroom to use my inhaler. Ah, the sacrifices we make for our art!

## *Part VII*

*September 23, 1996*

The sun, peaking between the blinds, teases my eyes to open. "Oh, too tired, it can't be 7am already." I strain to see the digital clock sitting on the window seat. It shines gleefully at me, 6:48am. No need to try to catch another ten. "Pull yourself out. Ugh." Why did I glance in the mirror on my way down to check the mail? There is a message from Steve, the musician, composer and friend, who is doing the new workshop with me, "An Environmental Experience in Paint and Rhythm."

I make my morning trek to get the paper. The rocks that I collected in Ozark country spill out of plastic bags just outside my studio door. They anxiously await being washed and polished and painted with images. The pebbled concrete, worn and weathered, cracked in interesting patterns, is cold to my bare feet. There is the feel of fall with its attendant endings and promises of beginnings. I stretch, feeling the soft cool breeze on my left cheek, an easterly wind, and the warmth of the sun. It is a perfect fall day. A single dove waddles out of my way, obviously feeling that I am no threat. She stops silently at the edge of the flower bed, eyeing me. Is she trying to tell me that her life mate also flew the coup? I smile to myself, even to her; we are survivors, yes we are. This heaviness I feel in the air is a prelude to the promise that I have learned to trust from forty plus years of watching the cycles come and go. There will be spring, there will be the thrill of the new.

The fresh brew of coffee greets me as I return to my studio, morning paper in hand. I lay the paper aside picking up the painting I am working to complete. "The River" has come alive to me in this past week. It was what kept me up so late that I am finding it difficult to awaken this morning. It is a relationship painting; relationship is like a river that moves and changes, flowing around and over the

sticks and stones like challenges or struggles in its path. We, in relationship, ever flow, we ever change, we grow closer, grow apart; we grow. I lean the canvases of the diptych against the easel and stand back observing the male and female figures that seem to leap out at me now. It is amazing that only a week before I was not even aware of them. I stand, studying the painting. I had not consciously created these figures, though they emerged from the canvas as if they had been the focal point all along. This is the thing I have to explore, myself as the guinea pig. The creative process certainly taps into the subconscious knowing. The completed piece becomes a message from the inner self. It is on this level that we know more than we know that we know!

The rest of the day I work, stopping only to teach my scheduled classes. I sew each painted twig with threads of color, some blue, some violet, some brown, and some gold. I carefully attach the glued pieces, making them firmly secure to the canvas. The figures seem to watch in appreciation. I watch them with a sense of awe.

I am working on two paintings at once. It is time to complete "Two Horses" in this same way. Painstaking it is, my fingers, sore from working the needle in and out of the heavy canvas, aching, bringing my attention to the physical plane. My feet ache, my head has a slight throb from leaning over in order to reach the areas still to be sewed. "Two Horses," the two selves within, struggling, straining, each to be. Somehow one is male, the animus perhaps, the more domestic one for me, the one more tied to the status quo; while the other, wildish in nature, fiery eyed, and leaping forward, is the female, the anima.

The painting had been initially inspired by a quote from Steve's father, "You can't ride two horses." I, immediately, on an inner level, took issue with this. I thought of the circus performers riding two great white galloping stallions at once. Since then I have read how risky this is, how often performers are seriously

hurt, even killed while performing this feat. Maybe Steve's father was right. But, there are rodeo performers who also ride two running horses. Steve liked the fact that I concluded: "Yes, you can ride two horses," and thanked me for allowing him to be one of those two horses I labeled "Creativity" and "Relationship." These are the two horses I have struggled to ride most of my lifetime. I thought about what circumstances would make this possible. First, you would have to be in good physical and emotional condition with steady nerves, knowing technically what you were doing, in tune with your body. Then, you would have to have a degree of control sanctioned by the horses, different as they might be, that enabled you to prevent one from being too far ahead or behind the other. The more you practice this discipline, the more you can keep the horses in step and in rhythm with one another. I see the woman emerge (a self portrait perhaps) in a squat position, concentrating, attempting to keep her weight equally balanced. As I continue to work this painting, choosing the stones that represent hooves, eyes, points of interest, the sticks that create pattern, rhythm, and design, adding feathers simply because something about this triggers feelings of my Native American heritage, Cherokee to be exact, I began to gain new insights. Indeed, I ride two horses, not only on the externally expressive level of creative and relational energies, but also on an inner level of the domestic versus the untamed nature within me. The painting takes on deeper meaning. My inner life is also this risky balancing act. I cannot become too passive or I become dull, static, I stop growing and changing; yet, I cannot release too freely the wild nature of the second horse or I lose control and lack the discipline necessary to gain insights from my experiences.

*Part VIII**September 26, 1996*

The end of the day races through two hours of children's classes. Too many questions, too many students beginning new projects; I have no time to think of anything except who is next as I move briskly from student to student. This is the way I walk through my weeks, a running walk. Yes, it is good. There is a sense of rightness about it. But, where is the time going? One week from today I will have been divorced two years. Where has it gone? Two years ago the pain seemed unbearable. Today, there are still times I feel the pain, but they come seldom now. I like my life, the solitude, the freedom. I have made some wonderful, interesting, and stimulating relationships as a result. I am a world unto myself, the artist, the writer. There is no time for boredom. I am anxious to get back to my studio.

The goldenrod I painted on 140# paper before I left for the children's classes went on a pale shade. Now, as I rush into my studio to check it, I find it is a brilliant yellow. This is exciting. I turn it in various directions, studying the shapes created by the puddling and running of the wet solution. There seems to be an embryo emerging.

*September 28, 1996*

Two days have passed. I have eyed the paper, with the goldenrod stain and the embryo, each time I pass near it. This morning I boil blueberries and raspberries, separately, carefully saving the liquid remains. A phone call in the midst of the process steals my mind away long enough that the raspberries are somewhat scorched. Frustrated, I scrub, mumble, and scour the pans; still they aren't coming clean. I allow the liquid dye to cool, taking a few minutes to put my feet up and read from "Man's Eternal Quest." <sup>10</sup>

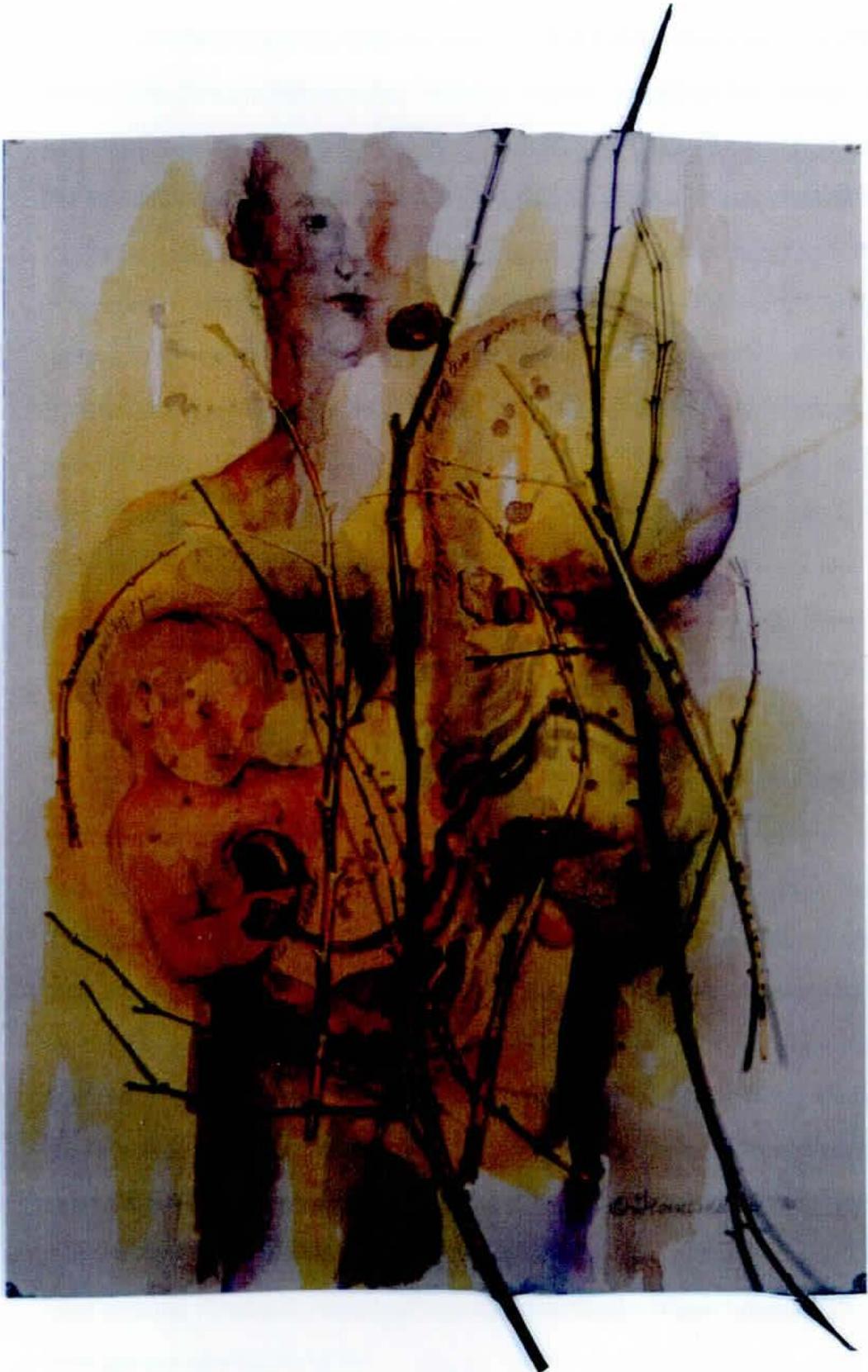


Figure 10

*Fathers and Sons*



I decide to begin applying the blueberry and the scorched raspberry dyes, letting them flow and mix together, dripping, dipping, dragging color across the goldenrod yellows. The embryo becomes a male child in almost a fetal position. His eyes are already there, his arm is curled, his fist against his chest. I stand back, looking at what has emerged, and I see the second figure, a male holding the child in his arms. "Fathers and Sons," this is what I call it. I add a bit of color here and there, adding some violet watercolor to the natural dyes. The man's face and shoulder emerge, then his hand. To his left a sphere, again, the sphere that so insistently presents itself in each painting I do these days. I allow it. Why not? It symbolizes many things to me: the fullness of time, the oneness of all things, the cycles of life, eternity....The sphere also speaks to me of learning the pain and keeping the joy as we experience this life. I write the title, "Fathers and Sons" (figure 10), in the lower section of the painting with pencil and the words "security stems from standing still." What does this mean to me? I begin to glue stones, picking "just the right" ones from my collection box. I place one at the thumb point of the infant. It is curved like a cup, my thumb fits in it, it is smooth, soothing. I like this idea. I dip my own thumb into violet acrylic and stamp my thumb print onto the stone. A thumb was my middle son's security when he was small. I see a face emerging near the head of the child. It is that of my oldest son's childhood security, "Puppy." I enhance the image just enough that a viewer would find him. Now, my youngest son's blanket must be in there somewhere. There are the stripes, I bring them forward with a bit of violet watercolor. A thumb, a puppy, a blanket, and a father, all gone, all out grown? Here I see my children's false childhood security, and my own. There he stands, my ex-husband, my once false security. This is an emotional experience, as most of these "fragments" paintings are turning out to be.

I add the sticks, the twigs, painted and decorated, placed just right in the composition, "security stems from staying still," here are the stems, sewn and glued into place, a memento. "No thing stays still." I add these words to the painting. It is a false security that stems from staying still; no thing stays still.

*October 7, 1996*

The past few days have been filled with research into dye materials and recipes. I begin to see that though I have all this information, I will have to learn what I want to know through experience. The location, the weather conditions, the time the stems or blossoms are picked, all affect the color that will result. Also affecting the color is the type of mordant used to make the dye color fast. I won't be using a mordant, just the pure dye bath; so the color is not totally predictable.

*Part IX*

*October 10, 1996*

It is October. I have been divorced two full years as of the third. The Mountain Ash in my front yard is ablaze with a profusion of gold and yellow. She is the first piece played in the symphony that is fall 1996, here in my home studio. Around the house is a variety of trees, Black Walnut, Elm, Silver Maple, Pin Oak, Mulberry, Crab Apple, Redbud, White Pine, Spruce, and a nameless grove in the corner that will soon splash reds from deep violet to oranges across the back. The finale is the Bradford Pear that stands wounded and misshapen. She will sprinkle her lush dense greens with yellow, orange, and red before they fall like a carpet on my deck. All this color I will play with, experiment with for dyes and for collage materials. And I will feel the changes that these cycles bring: birth, death, birth. This is for me a mixture of all.

*October 12, 1996*

Today, I pick up walnuts from the Black Walnut trees hugging the northwest corner of the yard. They are bare of leaves now, their branches reach skyward. I often think of how much I share in common with these trees. They are so firmly rooted in the soil that is earth, grounded. Yet, their fragile fingers reach upward, as if begging the heavens to reveal more of her secrets to them. They long to know, they long to grow closer to the sun.

Cisco, my absent son's Rottweiler, keeps wanting to play ball, dropping his tennis ball, slimy and soupy on my shoes. I will have to wash them off once inside. He loves for me to share his yard, to give him the least bit of attention. We all love attention.

My hands are full of black, partially shriveled walnuts. There are not many to be found. The squirrels scurry off with and hide them as quickly as they fall. Is this a sign of a hard winter coming? These walnuts trigger many memories for me. Picking up walnuts, filling large burlap sacks one after another, was the way my brother, Bud, and I made money for Christmas each year. Mom always helped us. We covered the entire farm, over 1,000 acres of it, over which many Black Walnut trees were spread. It was a big job. I remember that some years there were so many walnuts we could not pick up them all; other years they were sparse. We usually shared this job with my aunt Nelita and my cousins, Don and Dan. My brother, Rob, was but a baby, and cousins Dennis and Debbie were younger children. They ran and played; occasionally they proudly dropped a single walnut into the bucket. Bud and I were older, this was serious business to us.

I carry my bounty into the house placing it in the enamel pot I have purchased just for dyeing purposes. I cover the walnuts with water, leaving them in their whole state simply because they are so shriveled, turn the burner on medium and set the timer so as not to forget to add water occasionally. They cook

most of the afternoon. I work on my thesis journal, do a few things to my developing business plan, and occasionally check the water level.

It is late afternoon. I feel like getting out of the house, so I turn off the burner, leaving the pot sitting, and run some errands. The sky is filling with low, gray clouds. A wind is beginning to whip the trees around, spilling their colors over the pavement. I can smell rain in the air. I stay out longer than intended; but it gives me a nice break from the intensity of this project.

Back in my studio, I pull out the 4' x 6' unprimed canvas that has been waiting for my next inspiration. The walnut dye has cooled. I spray the canvas with clear water, let it bead and spread, then begin applying the dye. I paint tree forms, walnut trees? These, no doubt, are the walnut trees in my life, those in my childhood that watched me grow, supported my tree house, taught me about free enterprise, and those standing now in my back corner, having observed the changes in my life over the last nineteen years. These, in truth, have watched me "grow up." The brown created by the walnut dye is rich, textured with tiny particles that I choose not to strain out.

There is so much going through my mind. *Creative Pathways*<sup>11</sup> is ready to be marketed. I am working on a business plan to present to investors. And, this "Fragments" project is still to be completed. Is this why the trees are what I keep coming back to? I long for a walk in the woods, a visit with the tree fairies, and a time to just sit and contemplate the smells, the colors, the sounds. There is a simplicity in nature's complexity that is still missing in the complexity I am living. Simplicity in the complexity. This is what I am searching for in this painting.

A visiting art dealer speaking to our Gallery Management class said, "The only way an artist is likely to make it big in this day and age is to have a patron, someone who believes in him or her enough that they will back them financially." I recall thinking, "Well, forget it, Jan. It is totally unlikely that someone is going to

drop into your life and offer to back you financially!" Now, only six months later, I am checking out books on business plans trying to determine exactly what I want to do and where. I have a backer, a new friend I have made from Atlanta. He is very excited about my work. Thoughts of "this is too good to be true" keep running through my mind. Maybe it will all fall through. We will see. But at the least I will have done a lot of soul searching and made a lot of decisions as to exactly how I want to promote my work, both the workshops and the art.

The changes continue. I am no longer as surprised. I begin to think "what will come next?" It is an adventure, this unknowing. Perhaps I am learning at last to trust.

#### **October 21, 1996**

October has brought a busy workshop schedule. My *Creative Pathways* partner, Dr. Worth, flew to town on the 19th, and we presented the first workshop, of what we hope will be many, that is designed to awaken the creativity of those who spend long hours in a business setting. We have titled this workshop, "Plugging Into Your Power Potential: Utilizing Creativity In The Workplace." It was a smashing success among those who attended by special invitation. Now, we have to begin serious marketing. Other workshops are presented in Augusta, Missouri where my friend, Jody McWilliams runs a small art gallery called Augusta Arts.

#### **November 11, 1996**

The first of November, Steve came to St. Peters to collaborate with me in facilitating a workshop I have designed, utilizing his expertise as a musician/composer and my experience in the visual arts. This is "An Environmental Experience in Paint and Rhythm." It is an experience created for enhancing awareness of sound and translating that awareness into both a musical composition and a visual composition. What fun we all had! Ideas for expanding

this concept are flying through both our minds. My painting of the trees watches silently. Simplicity in all this complexity. How do I find it? Expanding my business with the help of financial backing, marketing *Creative Pathways*, designing new workshops, marketing and presenting them, continuing the present workshops on "Awakening the Creative Spirit" and "Breaking the Barriers," and still having time for the solitude necessary for my own creative expression, as well as teaching weekly classes to make ends meet. How can this happen? And somewhere in there must come some sort of personal/social life. Riding "Two Horses" while I search for simplicity in complexity, this is my challenge.

*November 15, 1996*

Here they stand, three trees created on unprimed canvas from the staining dye of walnut hulls. My past and my present stand before me, silently. Three of them, three winter-bare trees, there is always a third element. That is the missing piece? Ah, the third element is the path I follow! I stand amidst complexity, seeking simplicity, and the movement I make becomes my path. The painting, as always, begins to speak to me. My path neither follows nor finds complexity nor simplicity. But, in exploring each, I find balance. I find myself.

*Part X*

*November 25, 1996*

Today is the twenty-fifth of November; it is raining and sleeting, the temperature hovering around freezing. Aloneness is something these spitting winter days can really trigger in me. Combine this weather with a full moon, and I can feel some of my deepest feelings. I turn my *Road Less Traveled* calendar to the date:

I make a distinction between aloneness and loneliness.

Loneliness is the unavailability of people to communicate

with on any level. Powerful people are surrounded by others only too eager to communicate with them; hence they are seldom lonely and may even yearn for loneliness. Aloneness, however, is the unavailability of someone to communicate with at your level of awareness.

Aloneness is "shared" by all who travel the farthest on the journey of spiritual growth. It is such a burden that it simply could not be borne were it not for the fact that as we outdistance our fellow humans our relationship to God inevitably becomes correspondingly closer. In the communion of growing consciousness, of knowing with God, there is enough joy to sustain us.<sup>12</sup>

Can it be a coincidence that this is what is there for me to read on this particular day? This must be what I am feeling. I can't tell you that I want to get on the phone and call up half a dozen friends, even one really close friend, right now. This aloneness is something other than a need for companionship. Within I feel a deep knowing that this time of aloneness is somehow very important for my own spiritual growth. Still, it is unsettling at times, burdensome, as M. Scott Peck states it.

I move into my studio. "The Third Element" (figure 12), stands before me, looming large on the easel. I have added a clay red into the background. The color brings to mind the soil in Ozark county where I grew up. It is less brilliant than when I applied it late last night. I wet the canvas again and begin adding blues and bluegreens to the background. It is beginning to make sense to me that the simplicity I seek comes from the weaving of the thread of Truth through these fragments of my life. This weaving is my path, the third element that is being brought to my awareness. These colors are very peaceful and earthy.

I notice a restlessness within myself. I paint, then I move back to the computer and write. I write, then I paint. I observe. This constant movement is interesting. All of this is connected to the aloneness I am experiencing at the same time.

I recall one of my earliest abstract paintings titled, "I am." Initially I had painted an airplane flying through a stormy sky. It was to be a gift for my then husband Gary's birthday. When I presented the painting to him, he was less than enthusiastic. I was very disappointed. I doubt that he would even recall this event today. I painted over it. It was a wonderful large canvas, and I began a still life painting in acrylics on it. I was very unhappy with it and began to gesso it out. Before the gesso was even dry, I began applying watercolor to the canvas. I felt a deep melancholy within as I painted. I realized that this feeling usually accompanies my need to paint. It is not depression, not a negative emotion at all. Rather, it is a feeling of dipping down into my very depths to where feelings lie that I am not even conscious enough of to describe with words. This painting touched on creation, the act of creating, and upon my very beingness. Thus, it was titled "I am." Like God's description of himself, this was my description of me. How appropriate that underneath the finished painting is my need to please others, first my ex-husband, and secondly those lovers of photographic realism. I have had to let go of this need in order to really discover myself as an artist, no, even more...as an individual. "The Third Element" is touching upon these same core feelings. This time, however, I am not dealing with another's demands on me, but upon self-imposed shoulds and should nots.

*December 9, 1996*

Days have passed. I seem to have trouble getting to this new painting. The Christmas holidays are approaching, and with this time comes a deep melancholy. My holidays are not at all what they used to be and certainly not what I idealized them as being for so many years. I am essentially alone. I decorate the house, put up a tree, and listen to Christmas music alone. This was once much family festivity with lots of noise and excitement. Oh, I will be with my family over the holidays, but it is not the same.

*December 30, 1996*

The winter landscape has slowly emerged out of the color of fall. Now the hills are shades of gray and beige. The bare forms of dark oaks, maples, elms, and assorted others are sprinkled with the stark white of the river birch. I love this contrast. I love the bare trees. The soft yellow-beiges and greens of the winter-dressed grasses provide a carpet-like cushion for our feet as Maripat, Elizabeth and I hike the trails on the 128 acres of Ozark ground just south of Bourbon, Missouri. Maripat and her husband have purchased this land a little more than a year ago. She feels led to begin a women's retreat here, and she has invited Elizabeth, a lady ten years into the Native American Path, and myself, who will bring "growth through the creative process" to the program. We hike to the spring pond, across the singing creek and up the hill into a wood that feels like dancing trees. If this were my property I would be naming this wood so, "Dancing Trees." We stop to overlook the valley and the hills that stretch behind the log house. There is a trail of smoke from the chimney where we just sat in front of the huge stone fireplace and shared lunch and our life stories in order to know one another better. Maripat points out a site designated for the camping area and we begin our descent to a meadow where we sit in a semicircle of cedars. Here the medicine wheel will be built. In the center of the circular area is a brick with a large crystal sitting atop it. We sit here for a long time in silence. I am meditating. I keep seeing red clouds with soft yellows and oranges spiraling in a counterclockwise fashion like some sort of vortex. Later, I tell Maripat what I have experienced, and she says, "Oh, yes, there is a vortex here; I transplanted it from my gardens." I think, "I have a lot to learn."

We cross the creek to a large oak where Maripat suggests the sweat lodge be situated. Elizabeth is taking this all in. I see her mind working. She has moved to St. Louis from Spokane, Washington because "my spirit guides told me to move

here to begin a retreat center." We then climb the next hill and follow the tree line near the top. There are places here for a pipe ceremony, solitary meditations, painting, all with the woods caressing your back as you look out over a beautiful view of the valley. We walk back to the log house. I stand, looking out over the area we have hiked. A red-tailed hawk circles among the trees. This place has been named *Hawk Springs*. I think of this as a sign to me. My maiden name is Hawkins, and I have long identified with the hawk. This is a magical place of rolling hills, meadows, springs, creeks, hawks, and this cabin that most certainly has been built with a lot of love. It is much like southern Missouri where I grew up. It occurs to me that here is a new part of my path, another insight into the "third element."

An anonymous writer once wrote, "Some people talk about finding God-- as if He could get lost."<sup>13</sup> I see that finding God is a remembering of who we are. Nature helps me to remember. All true learning is also an unlearning. We have to unlearn all the limitations and disbeliefs we have been taught in order to, as Donald Walsch repeats over and over in *Conversations with God*, find "Who We Really Are"<sup>14</sup>

Ann Morrow Lindbergh said, "For we are, actually, pioneers trying to find a new path through the maze of tradition, convention and dogma. Our efforts are part of the struggle to mature. In such a light, every advance in understanding has value. Every step, even a tentative one, counts."<sup>15</sup> I find it interesting that parents think children have to be given wisdom, and so we spend most of our lives trying to peel back the layers and find out who we really are at our deepest source. What will happen when the time comes that parents realize that wisdom is there from the beginning, and we have but to teach our children how to reach within themselves and hear it?

I stand, looking out over the rolling Ozarks hills, watching the red-tailed hawk soaring on the air currents, and I remember who I am. This isn't the first time; but the remembering always comes in flashes at special moments only to be forgotten to varying degrees in between. The "third element" is essentially who I am. It is the path that is uniquely mine, winding through the maze of tradition, convention, and dogma. At times I have to use hatchet and knife to remove things from my path that hinder it, sometimes I simply side step and walk around. But, slowly and deliberately my path is created bringing me constantly nearer my true self.

I am ready to paint again. The canvas is the largest I have worked on yet. I study what has already been applied. Three large trees painted in walnut hull brown. As I study them, I see the dancing figures begin to emerge.

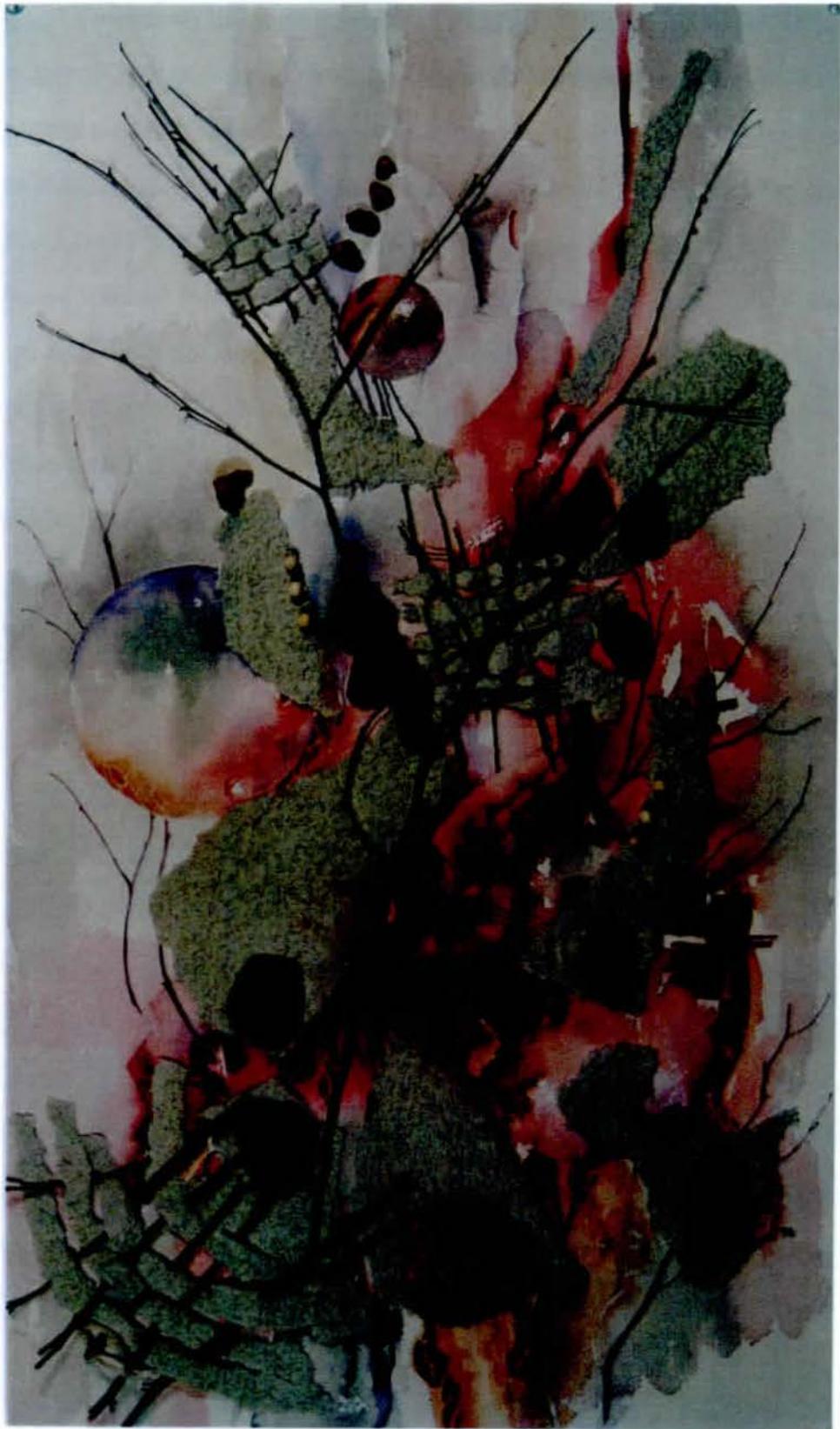
## *Part XI*

*January 6, 1997*

It is a Tuesday morning. I have much to accomplish on such a day as this. It is filled with classes from 9am to 5:30pm. But this need to paint is growing within. I have a small group in the afternoon class; this gives me the opportunity to get out the new papers I have purchased. I choose a 300# sheet of Arches cold pressed watercolor paper and cut it to the size I need for the shadow box frames I have built. I have also purchased some very unusual textured paper that looks like piled oatmeal. I begin to tear it into pieces. Funny how even such an exercise as this triggers memories. I grew up eating oatmeal as one of my favorite winter breakfasts. I fed my sons oatmeal until now that they are grown they resist eating it at all. It seems appropriate that this "oatmeal" paper be used in one of my "fragments" paintings. I lay the torn shapes on the sheet of paper, observing. I feel a need to do some watercolor washes before I glue the paper in place. I have

absolutely no idea what type of painting will emerge, no theme, no color scheme. I get my watercolors ready, spraying the color to soften it in the palette, placing my favorite brushes and a container of water nearby. I reach for the black tin box on the counter behind me. It is filled with rocks I have collected from Missouri creeks. I begin to pick the ones that speak to me at the moment. The color scheme emerges. I am choosing grays and yellow beiges, clay reds, and oatmeal colors. I pick out all the stones that fit this color scheme and lay them beside the paper. Now I can mix my colors. I feel strangely unaware of any sense of direction for this painting. I will follow my intuition.

Deep clay reds and rusts emerge from my brush. The colors are as intense as what I have been feeling. I decide to go with the feeling. I add the grays and yellows that I see in the stones, and then some warm gray to incorporate the oatmeal paper. Now I am ready to place the torn paper on the full sheet of Arches. I like the contrast of texture. I begin to glue the paper in place. I pick up the stones one by one, laying them on the paper where they seem to best fit. I see a hand in the lower center. Using my own left hand as a model I draw this in detail. Now I want a right hand above. Awkwardly I study my own right hand then draw with it, study then draw, study then draw. I like it. I lay some twigs on top. The color is perfect, and the twigs are delicate enough to add a needed contrast. This is feeling good. I study the hands, the stones, the papers; the painting is like a weaving, a web of life. This gives me the idea to weave some strips of the paper into the twigs. Now I have a theme, "Weavings" (figure 11). This will give me insight into the weavings of my own life. I am the creator, thus my own hands are a part of the composition. The papers, made from natural cotton fibers, blend well with the stones and twigs. I let myself work without thinking, without analyzing. This piece will speak to me later, I can feel it. "Don't break the flow with self analysis," I tell myself, "just work."



*Figure 11*

*Weavings*



I work bit by bit on the painting throughout the day. The woven paper and twigs are very interesting. I repeat this pattern letting the weaving get smaller toward the top. There are some wonderful designs on the stones that I enhance with watercolor. In painting these designs I realize that the mosaic-like pattern that I have repeated over and over in my work must come from such stones as these. There is the identical pattern. I had not noticed this before. Within the top left hand I place a small circle and use the compositional colors to develop it. Ah, this is similar to the ball held in my cousin's hand in "Re-creation." This time the hand is mine, and this time I am aware of my own abilities to "see" beyond. This project, this thesis has been a "weaving" for me. I have woven a sense of awareness into my daily life that was not there before. I am aware, more than ever before, of myself as the creator not only of my artwork and my journal, but of my life. The design is strong, the colors are rich; and the texture has developed into a powerful part of the composition.

I set the painting against the wall and step back to study it. From this distance I see a figure of a Native American woman with a papoose on her back. She is bent in a forward movement. It appears that she is carrying all her belongings as well as the child of her labor; she is moving. This is what I have been weaving within my own life, moving on. This painting tells me that I am ready. There is a joyful feeling that accompanies its completion. I am ready to move forward, ready to finish "The Third Element" (figure 12), which still stands against the studio wall having not been touched for over a week. Ready to move on to where ever these weavings take me next in my own life. I breath a sigh of release. It is good.



*Figure 12*

*The Third Element*



*Part XII**January 30, 1997*

It is a new year, already the end of January. I have had to take some time to work on taxes; this is certainly not my favorite thing to do. But oh, how things work as they should. It was at my father's insistence that I began my college career in business. I switched to Art Education after the first semester. I knew, always, that I wanted to be an artist. No, I knew that I was an artist. However, I ended up with a strong minor in Business which has been invaluable in organizing and running my own art business.

It is time to complete "The Third Element." Simplicity is beginning to peak around these wonderful walnut trees. She wears a mischievous grin. What is her secret? I know the answer is here, within this painted canvas. It is time to help the dancing figures emerge, freeing them to dance. Could it be that simple? Simplicity is simply freeing one's self to dance?

*February 7, 1997*

I spend a lot of time studying "The Third Element." Strangely, I still cannot begin painting on it again. Instead, I cut paper and begin a watercolor. The mountains emerge along with a rocky hillside and a waterfall. In the waterfall I see her, a female figure, her back arched, her head thrown back, her bare body unprotected. She is totally vulnerable. And, yet, I see that she is not afraid nor shy in her nakedness. It is as if she has become one with the nature that surrounds her; and I am made aware that this has happened for me through this process of working hand in hand with nature as I create my art. I am "one with."

The rocks are strong, supporting the weight of the mountain and the water that cascades down it. The trees and shrubs are rooted deeply, growing in, around, and sometimes right through the stone from sheer persistence. Here is a

foundation of strength and stability. Yet, the woman flows over the edge, full with power and beauty. She knows no fear; she trusts in all that is to be.

This is a joyful painting. I have completed the initial washes and included some pencil line to enhance the figure. I turn to look at "The Third Element." I see the dancing figures. It is time to help them emerge. It seems that they are saying "it is time, let the celebration begin." There is a connection between these two final paintings of the series. This "One Woman Waterfall" (figure 13) symbolizes me as I determine to follow the flow of my own life. I choose to be open and vulnerable. Yes, I have been betrayed, as most of us must be at some time in our lives. But I choose to trust. It is not in another human being that I trust, for we all disappoint and betray one another sooner or later, whether it be in minor ways or major ways. But I choose to trust in the "rightness" of it all. All things are working exactly as they should. We are here experiencing ourselves for who we really are in a variety of chosen situations. I would not truly know who I am had I not had to survive deep pain. I would not have known just how very blessed I am to still feel the joy of life. We are truly here to "learn the pain and keep the joy." <sup>16</sup>

*February 13, 1997*

My "Tribal Winds" CD<sup>17</sup> is playing the sounds of Native American flutes. The sounds fit the mood of "the Third Element." I begin to enhance the figures that I feel already there. The first one is to the left of the painting. She is the largest and seems to be the main focus. Her arm is thrown back across her face. The most defined parts of her body are the torso and the right foot. I don't want to make her too obvious. It seems important that she simply emerges from the tree forms.

There is also a figure to the right of the painting. She is facing me directly, a smile across her face. I know that she represents all the "shoulds" in my life, the



Figure 13

One Woman Waterfall



"right way" to do things, the "white and pure" way to find the approval of all who observe. She has a smugness about her. We are taught that to be pure we must remove parts of ourselves, get rid of the dark and muddy color, the shadow side, disown it. But as Walsch writes, in "Conversations with God,"<sup>18</sup> just as it takes all colors to make white light, it also takes all parts of us to make spiritual purity. We must learn to accept our shadow side rather than reject it. It is in this way that we truly love ourselves. And, loving ourselves is a necessary piece of loving others unconditionally. I enhance the presence of the figure and stand back to study the painting. I know there is a third figure. She is harder to find. Ah, there she is facing away from me. I see the back of her shoulders. Her left side is emerging from behind the middle tree....so simple now that she has appeared. Again, I put in only the minimal amount of detail, working wet on wet with the acrylics, and adding pastels and watercolor pencils in loose line. The three figures move as in a dance with the three trees. I realize that the one I have just completed with her back to me represents the "should nots" or the "wrong way" to do things. And to the right is the figure representing the part of me that explores her world with open vulnerability and makes her choices. She is seeking the third element as it winds in and around and among and through the other two. She is seeking her own unique path. This is my journey. And, yes, this is true simplicity. We have to learn to follow our hearts in order to express the fullness of our hearts to the world.

I have chosen stones that naturally match the colors in the painting. Some are from Payson, Arizona where I went hiking with two good friends. We followed a creek bed of colorful rock for miles. At one point we sat in quiet meditation in the center of the creek at a point where the water was flowing underground. I remember the sound of the wind as she also followed this same path. The aspen danced and sang as they felt her pass.

There are also stones from the Missouri creek in Ozark country where I grew up. I picked these last summer when I visited my relatives there. There is a sense in which Ozark country will always be home to me. She birthed me and grew me. She introduced me to nature, my most important mentor.

I have an assortment of twigs that have special meaning. I lay these in compositional form. There is a piece of cedar, a curl of root, and a Black Oak twig from the six acres of land that my Mom has kept of the original home place.

In my rock basket, I find three pieces of weathered wood that I collected near Pike's Peak, Colorado. It was almost four years ago, and it was the last family trip Gary, the boys, and I took together. Colorado will be important in my future. I have felt this for some time, though I am not specifically sure in what way. I place these along with the objects from Arizona and Missouri. I will have to study this for awhile. Am I sure I want to add these to the composition? It seems so strong without them. I will have to give myself some time to decide. I lay the 4' x 6' canvas on the floor of my studio with the objects in place so that I can study it.

*February 17, 1997*

I decide that I like the addition of the stones and twigs. The nature objects carry much meaning, and they work smoothly into the composition. I sit on the floor and slowly glue each piece in place. I will allow the glue to dry and then decide what threads to use to more securely attach the twigs. A bronze color would be perfect. I will see if I can find this at one of the craft stores.

I am suddenly exhausted. I have been working on the two paintings steadily for six hours. My eyes are burning. Strangely enough, I did not notice this before. It is time to take a break and celebrate what I have accomplished.

### *Part XIII*

*February 28, 1997*

It is Friday evening.. I have had dinner with a friend and begged to get home early as I am in need of dealing with the final stages of "One Woman Waterfall." My friend said he understood, but I saw the disappointment on his face. Today I turned in a draft of this thesis to Dr. Tillinger. I am nearing completion on this project.

I build a fire in the fireplace. It catches quickly and the warmth of its heat touches my cheek. I sigh a deep sigh. Life is good. I enjoy coming back here to my space, building a fire, feeling the warmth, and just sitting for awhile as my mind wanders over several subjects.

Yes, "One Woman Waterfall" is on my mind. She represents somewhat of a culmination of all this project has been for me. I have found even deeper aspects of myself, as I have explored my connectedness with nature. I have healed from deep and painful wounds. Just five days ago I turned the calendar to February 22, noting the thought copied from M. Scott Pecks, The Road Less Traveled. A few minutes later I sat at my computer to begin a letter to my dear friend in Kansas City. It was as I typed, "February 22, 1997," that it first hit me that "today is my wedding anniversary." For me, this is an important sign of my healing, of my letting go, and of my ability to move on. I am ready to be open and vulnerable, ready to flow with whatever comes into my life.

I walk into my studio where I have my paints all laid out and ready. I stare at the painting before me. This woman is alive to the joy of life, she is ready to express all that she is. She is open, she is vulnerable.

It is time to apply sticks and twigs to this painting. I choose a gracefully delicate piece and lay it on the surface. It is perfect. I apply the glue and weight the twig with stones to hold it in place while it dries.

Coming back into the studio from answering some Email, I find the glue is dry. I create circles in washes of color. Feeling a need for an intermediate surface that rises from the paper but not so much as the twigs, I tear some hand-made paper I find on my shelf. Yes, this helps to make the transition. I apply glue and washes of color. I very much like the effect.

I choose stones from the Colorado mountains. They are too large, so I wrap them in paper towel and crush them with a hammer. The colors blend with the reds and beiges of the rocks over which the water falls. The composition is finally coming together. The colors are jewel-like. I add a bit of gold to the twigs and then paint similar designs that create a flow of movement over the surface.

The woman blends with the nature that is around her. She flows with the natural cycles of life. She is open to whatever comes, confident that she belongs to this landscape.

The thought passes through my mind, "This is both a difficult and a wondrous time to be a woman." I like being a woman. I like knowing what it is to care for, to nurture, to feel deep empathy. And, because I am also a woman of the 90's, I have the unique opportunity to express my assertiveness and independence as well. I see all these things in the woman that flows through this painting. I want this to be a self portrait; but something within me tells me that I still have much to learn from this image. I am not there, flowing openly and fearlessly over the waterfall. But I do stand on the edge, ready to risk, ready to discover all that is yet to be in this lifetime for me. I look down from this rocky height and feel the thrill of anticipation. I can stand at this point and celebrate.

**Summary:**

And, what am I celebrating? This project has consumed me for more than a year and a half. It came at a time when I was healing from divorce and its effects

on my children, and a time of struggling with "letting go" of my life as I had known it for more than twenty-four years. I have known aloneness in the deepest sense. Yet, through it all, "I am." And I know more surely than ever before the meaning of this. I have literally emptied out my box of ideals with its shoulds and should nots, its black and white, its right and wrong. I have had to carefully examine, remember, and choose. I have chosen, and I am ready to celebrate the choices.

My art has been a necessary part of both the healing process and the growth process. It is through the conscious experiencing of the subjects of my art and the free and flowing expression of that experiencing that I have gained new insights and moved into a deeper understanding, not only of myself, but of the human experience.

We are all constant creations. It is our choice as to whether we create blindly or from a conscious awareness. The creative process facilitates our ability to create what we truly desire to have in our lives because of its ability to enhance our consciousness of all things.

Creativity is the encounter of the intensely conscious human being with his or her world. In this conscious experiencing of all things within our environment and within ourselves we become able to feel our feelings to such a degree that they simply must flow out in a fresh and glorious celebration of all that is life.

As I end this thesis project, I will not end my exploration of nature as a metaphor for my life and art as my means of discovery. It is my desire to develop still more workshops designed to enhance the development of the creative potential. In addition, I plan to create a workbook filled with projects that will guide the reader to creatively explore their own nature connections.

Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed....<sup>19</sup>

And so it is with our own creative natures. To find God includes finding this grandeur within ourselves and allowing it to flame out, to shine out, to gather to a greatness. It is in this discovery that we can fully realize "who we really are."

<sup>19</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, 1903, 115.

<sup>20</sup> *Zen Buddhism*, 1957, 100.

<sup>21</sup> *The Zen Way of Zen Buddhism, Through the Zen Way*, published by the Center for Zen Buddhism, Boston, Harvard Publishing, 1977.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Hopkins, "Going Up to the Mountains," in *Zen and Spirituality*, 1996, revised, 2001 and 2005.

<sup>23</sup> *The Zen Way of Zen Buddhism, Through the Zen Way*, unpublished essay, 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Seawick, "Seasons of Change," 1977, mostly left as is, revised, 1980 and 1985.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Lowman, *No More Soundless Bell*, *Reclaiming the Zen Within* (Shambhala: Boston & London, 1980), 47.

<sup>26</sup> Joan Leach, *Vegetable Dyeing* (Werner and Phoenix: York, 1976), 11.

<sup>27</sup> Perichlanas Yogamanda, *Man's Eternal Quest* (Zen Center Fellowship: Los Angeles, 1992).

<sup>28</sup> *Center for Buddhism* is an organization devoted to the advancement for the purpose of facilitating personal growth through the Zen Buddhist tradition. *Center for Buddhism* workshops are designed for both individual and the corporate settings.

<sup>29</sup> "The Road I've Traveled Calendar" was originally published in 1995. The quote was taken from the Nov. 25, 1995 issue. The Road I've Traveled.



## End Notes

## Chapter One:

<sup>1</sup> Jamake Highwater, The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America (New York: New American Library, 1982) 86.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Zinker, Creative Process in Gestalt Therapy (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) 16.

<sup>3</sup> Zinker 16.

<sup>4</sup> Jan Groenemann, Through the Inner Eye: Awakening to the Creative Spirit (Dubuque, Iowa: Islewest Publishing, 1994).

<sup>5</sup> Steve Saracino, "Going Up to the Mountain," rec., music and lyrics, 1990, revised, 1994 and 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Groenemann, "Helen Frankenthaler: Chasing the Muse," Unpublished Essay, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Saracino, "Season of Change," rec., music and lyrics, 1985, revised, 1990 and 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Peter London, No More Secondhand Art: Awakening the Artist Within (Shambhala: Boston & London, 1989) 47.

<sup>9</sup> Alma Lesch, Vegetable Dyeing (Watson-guptil Publications: New York, 1970) 43.

<sup>10</sup> Paramahansa Yogananda, Man's Eternal Quest (Self Realization Fellowship: Los Angeles, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> *Creative Pathways* is an organization founded by Jan Groenemann for the purpose of facilitating personal growth through the creative process. *Creative Pathways* workshops are designed for both individual and the corporate settings.

<sup>12</sup> "The Road Less Traveled Calendar" was originally published in 1993. The quote was taken from the Nov. 25, 1996 reissue. The Road Less Traveled,

by M. Scott Peck, was originally published as a Touchstone Book by Simon and Schuster, 1978. Touchstone is a registered trademark of Simon and Schuster, Inc. Compiled by Jean Lowe.

<sup>13</sup> Rick Fields; Peggy Taylor; Rex Weyler; Rick Ingrasci; Editors of "New Age Journal," Chop Wood Carry Water (New York: A Jeremy P. Taracher/Putman Book, Putman's Son's, 1984) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Neale Walsch, Conversations With God: an uncommon dialogue (New York: G.P. Putnam's Son's, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Fields; Taylor; Weyler; Ingrasci 49.

<sup>16</sup> Groenemann 35.

<sup>17</sup> David Swenson, Tribal Winds: Music from Native American Flutes, cd ( Redway, California: Earth Beat, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> Walsch.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair, The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1973) 81.

## **Chapter Two: The Poems**

### ***I Am the Wind Blowing***

*Hardly knowing how to speak this season,  
Circling within, without, things changing  
From the very core,  
I walk a path of solitude and the many,  
Alone.  
Feeling a bit shy in all this wildness  
That tempts my soul to come out  
And play these winds like music,  
I am reluctant; the time is not quite yet  
That I will walk the waters and soar the updrafts,  
Knowing that it is in this circle  
I belong.*

*Re-Creation*

***Fragments: Of Nature, Of Myself***

*I walk the woods,  
Tasting words on the tip of my tongue,  
Like dust, difficult to spit out.  
Fragments of leaves and twigs  
Twine in my hair,  
Teasing me.*

*I marvel at these leaves,  
Singing and dancing  
On the wild of wind,  
Spilling their colors before my eyes  
Against a Cerulean sky  
And on the Payne's Grey path.*

*I walk, heavy with the labor of knowing,  
Sorting, filing, feeling frustrations.  
As I pass,  
The great green frog jumps flatly into the pond,  
Which responds with a giggle and a whisper:  
"Don't take life too seriously."*

**Re-Creation**

*White moccasins walk in muffled sounds;  
 They move like spirits over the earth.  
 Still, I hear....  
 My senses, fine-tuned,  
 Catch his whispers  
 Before they are wrapped up and washed away  
 On a gentle wind.  
 In his hands the world revolves,  
 Glowing with violet light.  
 I am a part of the part which he speaks....  
 He comes to me on the night of the full moon,  
 Staying just a distance removed,  
 And like a shy kiss, he touches me  
 Softly.*

*Side to the Sea*

***Where the North Wind Speaks***

*She walks a path of this land,  
That is ancient and worn  
By peoples she will never know.  
Nor can she know their ways,  
Though their fears  
Are much like hers,  
And their hearts grow weary  
Of the same heaviness.  
She stands,  
Listening to the whisper of the wind  
Through cedar.  
Its song carries longings  
Of which she is familiar.  
He stands at a distance,  
Not wanting to be  
A part of the landscape.  
In his hand he holds  
A world of knowing,  
Which he keeps hidden  
As if teasing her with the answers  
While still she seeks  
The questions.*

### *Ode to the Sea*

*The sea touches me.  
Though I am here  
In the mid-section of this land,  
I hear it in my breathing  
As the earth breathes.  
I meditate.*

*On my table,  
Scattered in a pattern,  
Random, but so pleasing,  
Are bits of glass,  
Textured  
By salty waters.*

*I taste them in my soul,  
With each meal  
That nourishes me,  
As I sit by candlelight  
With friends,  
Or alone.*

*And on the shelf  
Sits a sampling,  
Assorted shells,  
Chipped and weathered,  
Each with its own story,  
Reminding me.*

*I must give this gift to myself.  
It is the promise,  
A drive to the ocean,  
A cradling of my very being  
In the warm salty arms  
Of God.*

### *Season of Change*

*It is no longer the time for toys  
Nor innocent romance.  
You have moved far beyond the days  
Of dreaming dreams  
of "happily ever after."  
Change....  
She screams at you,  
In your sleep, your solitude,  
And even when you think  
Someone is pulling close enough  
To playfully whisper  
In your ear.  
Change....  
She charges through  
Feelings of "this is enough."  
You keep focusing  
On the "light at the end of the tunnel"  
Only to find  
It is but another lamp  
Lighting the way.  
And change takes you beyond the mountain,  
Away from the forested hills  
Filled with those who watch,  
Higher and higher,  
Beyond where the swan can fly,  
Beyond even your wildest dreams.*

**Two By Two**

*Here we stand,  
Living it in such varied ways  
This dance of relationship,  
Touching of bodies,  
Baring of souls.*

*Yet, the aloneness  
Stands between us,  
Always,  
Like a whisper,  
Or a scream.*

*Two by two  
We attempt to walk,  
Stepping in rhythm,  
Grasping hands,  
Clinging.*

*Until we draw so close...  
Unable to breathe;  
The dance takes us apart  
Before we can see  
The other.*

**The River**

*This flow follows no sure course,  
Turning and bending, stretching,  
Trying to expand within the banks.  
We become too broad;  
Swelling and rolling, we try to remain contained,  
Lapping edges, digging deeper into the soil, eroding  
The safe boundaries.  
Twigs and stones are tossed,  
Swept and swirled,  
A liquid whirl-wind  
Along our path,  
Until once again  
We create  
A quiet pool  
Of peace.*

**Two Horses**

*"You cannot ride two horses."  
This is his fear, not mine.  
"Risky," he says,  
"Can't do all I need to do,  
Too much energy  
Required."*

*My horses trot and gallop  
Around the ring, a circle.  
I have been doing  
This balancing act,  
Weight shifting,  
All my life,*

*The chaos of relationship,  
The calm of creativity,  
The domestic, the wildish,  
Straining together  
Against the reins  
Within me.*

*Some cannot survive it;  
Some things cannot survive  
My surviving it.  
Some relationships,  
Some beliefs,  
Must be let go.*

*Two horses,  
Let them go;  
Control  
Is the illusion.*

***The Third Element***

*I have walked the path of should,  
Marked right and wrong,  
In black and white.  
Things seemed so simple then.  
Now I find a maze  
of gray,  
subtle shades,  
And a strange music  
Begins the dance.  
No one calls the steps;  
There is nothing left but self  
To hinder me.*

**Weavings***(for false security)*

Nature nurtures my naked needs.  
 Twigs and twines and textures  
 Weave in and through  
 Over and around,  
 Assuaging like bandages  
 My healing wounds.  
 The wind teases  
 My winding waves of ochre hair,  
 Navigated by brush and comb,  
 Like a maze of wheat.  
 I smell the scent of pine and cedar,  
 Dust and crumbled leaves,  
 That mingle with the smoke  
 Of seasoned oak  
 Warming the chill of wooden houses.

We cannot live without nature  
 Who breathes our breath  
 And give us hers,  
 Exchanging life for life.  
 We are woven around these branches  
 And rooted about stones like tendrils  
 That work their way upward  
 From her very center.

The organs of the body  
 That are made of  
 Clay and mud  
 And are so fragile  
 To carry  
 Are here to  
 And father and mother  
 Among the things that are made of  
 So precious  
 All our life is  
 But we give  
 Myself over  
 Security comes in weaving still  
 And we keep our

**Fathers and Sons**  
**(or false security)**

Ours was no glass house.  
 Instead, I felt no need to hide.  
 Didn't we, after all, "have it all?"  
 Three bouncing boys,  
 "My three sons," ours...

I was wife and lover, friend and mother  
 Creating the "perfect" home;  
 And security was implied...  
 Assumed.

The puppy that our first son held close,  
 Bumping its nose against his own,  
 Was so very "real."

And our middle child  
 Carried his security safely with him;  
 His right thumb, always available,  
 And it didn't fall onto the floor,  
 Having to be tucked away  
 Until it could be washed.

My thumb fits into the stone  
 That is his.

I place my print there  
 As a reminder.

The stripes of the blanket,  
 That son number three  
 Carried and cuddled  
 Until he was far to large

To carry,  
 Are here as well.

And father, too, takes his place  
 Among the things that seemed so safe,  
 So permanent,  
 All our false securities.

But we grew,  
 My sons and I.

Security comes in standing still,  
 And no thing stands still.

## **One Woman Waterfall**

*I stand staring over the edge,  
 Having found form like the mountains,  
 Ancient as the stones,  
 Bare and sun-soaked among the boulders,  
 And feeling my toes  
 Dig into the soil,  
 Twining happily  
 Around the rocks and roots  
 That have surfaced nearby.  
 I feel myself leaning forward,  
 Flowing, falling,  
 Arms spread wide, spilling  
 Open to what is to come,  
 Vulnerable in my nakedness,  
 But far from shy.  
 There is too much energy  
 In the falling  
 To feel fear,  
 Too much joy  
 In the letting go,  
 And such great power  
 In trusting the unknowing.*

### *Chapter Three: The Recipes*

One of the most fascinating aspects of natural dyes is the variability and unpredictability of the colors one can expect, even under what appears to be uniform conditions. The plants themselves vary, depending on their age, soil conditions, and growing conditions; the dyer will vary in the techniques used as to timing, mordanting, dyeing, and subsequent procedures. The basic materials dyed will differ as well. All of this, we feel, adds to the pleasure and spice of using natural dyes and provides a charming variability not approached by synthetic dyes. The warmth of natural colors has a glow, the glow of nature and man working in close conjunction. To us, even a less than ideal color has a warmth and beauty to it when we think of the plant and the circumstances under which the plant grew.<sup>1</sup>

Recipes for the following dyes have been taken basically from the sources listed in my bibliography. I quickly found, however, that because I used these dyes for very different purposes than for dyeing fabrics, the process had to be somewhat changed and adjusted to my own purposes. It was my desire to acquire the results as quickly and as efficiently as possible. I did not use chemicals for creating permanency in fabrics, therefore the colors achieved varied somewhat at times from what was expected when such chemicals were used. As a result the recipes herein are original though based on information found in books relating to creating natural dyes for the dyeing of fabrics, mainly wool and cotton.

I have also chosen to utilize natural objects that occur frequently in the Midwest where I grew up. The greatest enjoyment of working with nature in the creation of art comes from your own exploration. For this reason, I urge you to not be limited by my findings. Experiment on your own using any natural source that might come to mind. Consider a lumber mill as an excellent source of bark and some types of wood, for example. Health food stores and organic food stores can provide a surprising number of roots, leaves, and flowers useful in dyeing, usually in the form of dried plants packaged and marketed as teas. Fruits and nuts can be

harvested freely without fear of destroying the plant populations, as can common weeds such as goldenrod, pokeweed, dock, and plantains. Garden plants can be harvested freely without fear of depletion. However, roots and barks are another matter, and their removal can damage trees and plants if carried to extremes. Be sensitive to the environment as you collect your materials.

### ***Part I: Yellow, Gold, and Brassy Dyes***

#### ***Apple Bark***

Chop the bark, cover with water, and soak overnight.  
The next day boil for 2 hours and strain.  
Discard the bark, and add water to consistency for  
a golden yellow.

#### ***Chrysanthemum Blossoms***

Blossoms can be used fresh or dried in the sun or slow oven.  
Blossoms should be picked when they are in full bloom.  
Place chrysanthemum blossoms in container,  
cover with water and boil for about 45 minutes.  
Cool. Remove the refuse, and the liquid becomes the dye bath,  
makes various shades of yellow.

#### ***Chrysanthemum Blossoms and Marigold Blossoms***

Pick late in summer, can be used fresh or dried in sun or slow oven.  
Place the combined blossoms in container,  
Cover with water and boil for about 45 minutes.  
Cool. Remove the refuse and use for making  
various shades of brass.

#### ***Cocklebur***

Cut the cockleburs from their stalks,  
place in container,  
cover with water and soak for 12 hours.  
Boil in water in which they have been soaked for about 2 hours.  
Add extra water as it boils away.  
Remove cockleburs and use dye bath to make  
a soft yellow.

***Dahlia Blossoms***

The red, pink, and yellow dahlia blossoms will produce various shades of yellow.

Place blossoms in container, cover with water, and boil for 45 minutes.

Cool. Remove refuse and use for making various shades of yellow.

***Dandelion Blossoms***

Blossoms must be used fresh (the more sunshine they have received, the deeper the color will be).

Place blossoms in container, cover with water, and boil for 45 minutes.

Cool. Remove refuse and use for making various shades of soft yellow.

***Day Lily Blossoms***

Cut when in full bloom, different varieties may be combined.

All varieties make yellow dyes.

Place blossoms in container, cover with water, and boil for 45 minutes.

Cool. Remove cooked blossoms and use liquid to make yellow dye.

***Goldenrod Blossoms***

All varieties make good dyes.

Cut blossoms when well opened and ripe.

Use within a few hours after cutting for best results.

Cut blossoms and stem nearest blossoms into 1" to 3" lengths, place in container and cover with water.

Boil for 2 hours.

Cool, remove refuse and use for making various shades of yellow, becoming brighter when dry.

***Lily of the Valley***

Yields no color in early spring, in late spring and early summer, makes yellow-green, in late summer and fall, makes gold and rust.

Cut the lily of the valley stems and leaves into 1"-3" sections, place in container, cover with water, and boil for 1 hour.

Cool. Remove refuse and use for shades of yellow and gold.

**Marigold Blossoms**

Can be dried in sun or used fresh.  
 Can be mixed with various varieties.  
 Blossoms should be picked when in full bloom.  
 Place blossoms in container and cover with water.  
 Boil for 45 minutes.  
 Cool. Remove refuse and use for making  
 shades of yellow or gold depending on variety used.

**Peach Leaves**

Best results achieved when picked in late summer until first frost.  
 Leaves must be used fresh.  
 Place fresh leaves in container, cover with water, and  
 boil for 2 hours.  
 Remove cooked leaves and use to make  
 shades of yellow.

**Queen Anne's Lace**

Also known as wild carrot.  
 Gather when in bloom, use blossoms, stems, and leaves for dye.  
 Must use when fresh.  
 Cut whole plant into 3" or 4" lengths,  
 place in container and cover with water.  
 Boil for about 2 hours.  
 Add extra water as it boils away.  
 Cool. Remove the refuse and use to make  
 a range of yellow colors.

**Red or Yellow Onion Skins**

May mix various varieties.  
 Results are unpredictable.  
 Onion bulb will also make a dye.  
 Place onion skins in container and cover with water.  
 Boil until the skins are almost clear.  
 Cool. Remove refuse and use for  
 a dark gold.

**Zinnia Blossoms**

Pick when in full bloom.  
 May mix varieties.  
 Place fresh zinnia blossoms in container and cover with water.  
 Boil for 30 minutes.  
 Cool. Remove refuse and use for  
 making shades of yellow.

## **Part II: Red and Pink Dyes**

### ***Bloodroot***

Cut roots into 1" to 3" lengths.

Place in enamel container and cover with warm water.

Soak for 12 hours.

After soaking, simmer roots in the same water as soaked in for about 2 hours.

Cool. Remove the refuse, and use liquid for making a purple-red.

### ***Crab Apples***

Place in enamel container and cover with water.

Boil until the apples are soft.

Cool. Strain. Use liquid for making shades of pink.

### ***Lavender and Rosemary Extract***

Pour one ounce of extract of lavender and rosemary in enamel container.

Stir in about 3 qts. warm water and heat to simmer temperature to make a dark rusty rose.

### ***Madder***

Place 1/8 lb. of powdered madder in enamel or glass container.

Add enough water to make a thin paste.

Let the mixture soak for about 12 hours.

It will thicken and expand during this time.

After soaking, transfer the mixture to a one gallon container and add 1 qt. of water.

Stir until all thick masses of powder are dissolved, heat liquid to a simmer temperature (180 to 200) and hold there for 10 - 15 minutes.

Do not boil (boiling will bring out the yellow dye substance).

Cool.

Makes red.

### ***Pokweed Berries***

Pick late in summer after they have turned dark purple color.

Dried pokweed berries make brown.

Cut the pokweed berries and stems into 1"-3" lengths, place in enamel container, and cover with water.

Boil for 45 minutes.

Crush berries while cooking to obtain all the color substance.

Cool. Strain and use liquid for a red with a yellow tone.

### ***Scarlet Sage Blossoms (Salvia)***

Pick blossoms from stems.

Place in enamel container and cover with water.

Boil 30 minutes.

Cool. Remove blossoms and use liquid to make deep red.

## ***Part III: Blue Dyes***

### ***Elderberries***

Pick purple-black elderberries when completely ripe and use within a few hours.

Cut the elderberries and their immediate stems into 1"-3" lengths. Place in enamel container, cover with water, and boil for 1 hour.

Crush the berries while they are boiling and add more water if needed.

Cool. Strain and use liquid to make deep purplish-blue.

### ***Indigo Extract***

The safest simplest method of dissolving indigo powder for making an extract is to dissolve with fermented human urine. It requires a minimum of two weeks to complete the process. This method can be used safely for creating a dye to use as paint.

However, due to the undesirability of this method, I chose not to use it and instead used watercolor and acrylics to achieve the blues I desired for my paintings.

The procedure is as follows:

1 pt. human urine

8 tablespoons indigo powder

Put the human urine in a tightly sealed glass jar and place in sunshine until the urine ferments (takes about a week to ten days at 75 degrees).

Odor is very offensive and liquid spews when the jar is unsealed when urine is fermented.

Add powdered indigo, a little at a time, and stir well after each addition.

Allow mixture to remain in the sunshine or in a temperature above 75 degrees for another week to ten days.

Stir or shake it well at least once a day.

When powder is dissolved, the liquid is the extract.

When diluted with water to make the dye bath the odor is no more offensive than many other vegetable dyes odors.  
Makes deep blues to light blues depending on how diluted.

### ***Part VI: Orange and Rust Dyes***

#### ***Hollyhock Blossoms***

Various colors can be mixed.

Blossoms should be picked when in full bloom and used fresh. Place hollyhock blossoms in enamel container and cover with water.

Boil for about 30 minutes.

Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make oranges and rusts.

#### ***Lily of the Valley***

Pick blossoms in the fall for gold and rust dyes.

Cut lily of the valley stems and leaves into 1"-3" lengths.

Place in enamel container, cover with water, and boil for 1 hour.

Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make gold and rust.

#### ***Pokweed Berries***

Prepare as for red with yellow tone dye from red dye section.

Prepare red Onion Skin dye from yellow section.

Use one dye over the other to produce various shades of rust.

### ***Part V: Green Dyes***

#### ***Barberry Plant***

Any variety of barberry plant will make a dye.

Cut in late summer and fall, use fresh or dried.

Cut the barberry canes and leaves into 3"- 4" lengths.

Crush canes before cutting to help release the color.

Place cut pieces in enamel container and cover with warm water.

Allow to soak 24 hours.

After the barberry has been allowed to soak boil in same water 2 hours.

Cool. Remove the refuse and use liquid to make a range of shades of green.

#### ***Sumac***

Use Sumac with red berries, cut in late summer and fall after berries have turned red.

May be used fresh or dried for later use.

Cut sumac into small pieces, place in enamel container and soak 24 hours.

After soaking, boil in same water for 2 hours.

Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make shades of green.

## ***Part VI: Lavender and Purple Dyes***

### ***Blackberries***

Pick blackberries when they are absolutely ripe; they can be used fresh or frozen.

Place blackberries in enamel container and cover with water.

Boil for 1 hour or until the color has been boiled out of the berries.

The berries should be crushed while boiling to obtain all of the color.

Cool. Strain and use liquid to make a purple which has a brown tone (will fade some in sunlight).

### ***Concord Grapes***

Use ripe and fresh purple Concord grapes.

Pick and place in enamel container and cover with water.

Boil for about 1 hour or until color has boiled out of the grapes.

Crush grapes while boiling to help remove the color.

Cool. Strain and use liquid to make a range of lavenders and purples.

### ***Elderberries***

Use purple-black elderberries picked when completely ripe and used within a few hours of picking.

Can also be frozen for later use.

Cut the elderberries and the part of the stem nearest the berry into 1" - 3" lengths.

Place in enamel container and cover with water and boil 1 hour.

Crush berries while boiling and add water to keep from scorching.

Cool. Strain and use liquid to make shades of lavender.

### ***Wild Grapes***

Can be used only when ripe.

Can still be used for a few weeks after the frost has hit.

Pick grapes from stems, place in enamel container and cover with water.

Boil for 1 hour.

Crush to release all coloring matter.

Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make various shades of

lavender to dark bluish-purple.

### ***Part VII: Tan and Brown Dyes***

#### ***Acorns***

Collect acorns after they are mature from tree or ground.  
Do not use last seasons due to fading.  
Place in enamel container and cover with water.  
Soak for 12 to 24 hours.  
Boil acorns in same water for 2 hours.  
Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make shades of tan that is color is fast.

#### ***Barberry Plant***

Use green and red leaf varieties of the barberry plant.  
Cut in late summer and fall, use fresh or dry (dry plant gives lighter color).  
Cut the barberry canes and leaves into 3" to 4" lengths.  
Bruise or crush the canes to help release the color.  
Place in enamel container and cover with water and soak for 24 hours.  
Boil in same water for 3 hours.  
Cool. Remove refuse, and use liquid to make a range of tan colors.

#### ***Beets***

Not an excellent source of dye, but can be used.  
Wash soil from beets.  
Place in enamel container and cover with water.  
Cook until beets are soft.  
Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make various shades of tan.

#### ***Blackberry Vines***

Young blackberry plants produce strongest dyes (use 1 to 2 year olds).  
Mid summer after several weeks of hot sunshine is best time to gather.  
Cultivated or wild varieties may be used.  
Cut vines and leaves into 1" to 3" lengths and place in enamel container.  
Cover with water and let soak for about 12 hours.  
Boil for 3 to 4 hours.  
Cool. Remove vines and leaves, and use liquid to make a reddish-tan.

***Black Walnut Hulls***

Produce best dyes when fresh and when hulls are green spotted with brown.

Can be dried and used later.

Do not use last seasons walnuts.

Break hulls from walnuts, place in enamel container.

Cover with water and soak for 24 hours.

Add water as needed, boiling for 3 hours.

Cool. Remove solid matter and use liquid to make brown.

***Red Cedar***

Known as juniper in some geographical areas.

Collect berries and twigs in late August.

Other seasons may give different colors.

Cut twigs with berries on them into 4" to 6" length pieces.

Place in enamel container and cover with water.

Soak for 24 hours.

Boil in same water for 2 hours.

Cool. Remove refuse and use liquid to make various shades of red brown.

***Sassafras***

Cut sassafras twigs and leaves in late summer until frost.

Cut into 1" to 3" lengths and place in enamel container.

Cover with water and soak 24 hours.

Boil in same water for 3 hours, adding water as necessary.

Cool. Remove the refuse and use liquid to make various shades of tan.

***Scarlet Sage Blossoms***

Also known as salvia.

Pick blossoms when they are in full bloom, can be used fresh or dry.

If blossoms are exposed to extended hot sunshine it will make the pigment stronger and give the best dye.

Pick blossoms from their stems and place in enamel container.

Cover with water.

Boil for 30 minutes.

Cool. Remove blossoms and use liquid to make tan to brown.

***Sumac Berries***

Use red sumac berries (white berries are poisonous).

Make a very fast vegetable dye as it contains tannic acid.

Use berries, twigs, and leaves fresh or dried.

Do not use last years berries.

Cut or break the berry heads into small pieces.

Place in enamel container and cover with water.

Soak for 24 hours.

Boil in same water 2 to 3 hours.

Cool. Remove the refuse and use liquid to make shades of tan.

### *Sunflower Seeds*

Use mature dried sunflower seeds.

Place sunflower seeds in an enamel container and cover with water.

Soak for 12 to 24 hours.

Boil in same water for 2 hours.

Cool. Remove seeds and use liquid to make a yellow tan.

## End Notes

## Chapter Three:

<sup>1</sup> Arnold and Connie Krochmal, The Complete Illustrated Book of Dyes from Natural Sources (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1947) 2.