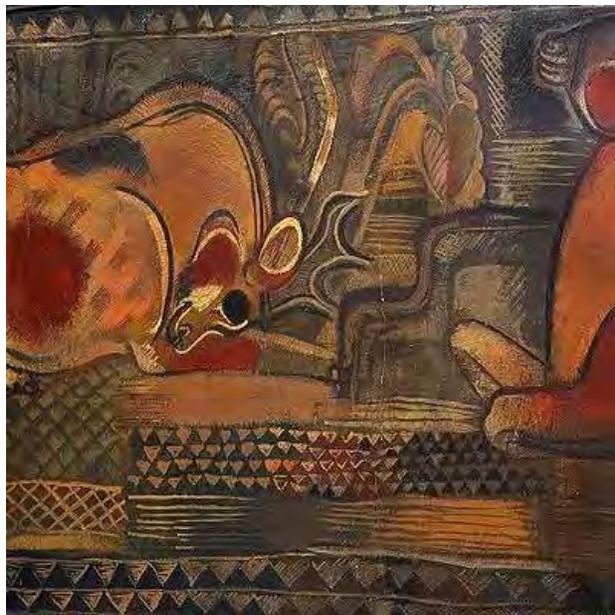


My Long Journey (Part Five)

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September 8, 2020



There was in the main room as well a large fireplace, and over the mantle hung a portrait of an enchanting Spanish lady of obvious high pedigree. Edgar had painted it impressionistically. As I stood there lost in the overwhelming complexity of the hundreds upon hundreds of brush strokes which made up this incredible work of art something very strange happened. A voice suddenly spoke, as if there was an invisible someone standing next to my shoulder. The voice said, "He is going to ask you to work with him and you are going to accept, and this is the biggest step you have taken in your life so far". A few minutes later Norman asked me if I wanted to be his student and learn how to be creative in any area of life. What could I do but accept?

Speaking of strange things, something happened a few days later which convinced me I had been led

by unknown forces to work with Norman. One morning, as we sat in our customary places around Edgar's table, Norman was trying to draw me out of my shell by getting me to talk about my life, and in particular the events that led up to my working with him. While searching my memory for something interesting, I remembered an unusual experience I went through the winter before while living in the commune. I had taken a large quantity of a particular form of LSD known as 'windowpane acid'. I don't know why I took so much. The individual panes were all stuck together so I just said "the hell with it". Yet my underlying motive for using LSD was not recreational. My real reason, although not consciously understood much of the time, was to escape the unending, subliminal torment of brain trauma.



This particular trip was intense. It began with me pounding my head against the back of my chair and screaming my name as loud as I could so I wouldn't forget who I was, and it just got more weird from there. Somewhere in the wee hours of the morning I got the idea I had to hitchhike to California and work with the writer Henry Miller. I had read he was living in a commune near Berkley.

I don't know where I got this idea. It had apparently been repeating itself on the fringe of my awareness for some time, and now had moved to the forefront -- where it became an overwhelming compulsion -- something I had to do right NOW. As it was mid-February and the outside like a deep freeze, I dressed in my warmest clothes, put on multiple pairs of socks, and topped it off with a heavy German overcoat left

over from WWII I bought in an Army/Navy store. I then set out west along the railroad tracks not far from where I lived, my boots crunching in the frozen snow which sparkled under the full moon overhead. I got as far as Chicago that night before I realized I didn't know what the hell I was doing.

As I thought about this experience I was struck with a profound insight. I realized it wasn't Henry Miller I was supposed to work with but Norman Miller, and it wasn't California I was supposed to hitchhike to but Florida. However on that cold winter night in the midst of an intense LSD trip I didn't know of a Norman Miller in Florida but only a Henry Miller in California.



When I recounted this Norman wasn't the slightest bit surprised. In fact he expected as much. He told me he put the word out to something he called the 'program' that he was looking for a student. When he met me he received certain esoteric signs (the number 19 on my room at the hotel; the appearance of a butterfly cocoon on the side of his porch; etc.) I was the one so chosen. What was the 'program'? The way Norman described it to me it was made up of a great number of people, both living and dead, who were collaborating together on the level of the 'collective unconscious' to bring about a renaissance of Western Civilization. It actually wasn't too difficult for me to believe this program existed. After all, what other explanation is there for my inexplicable impulse to hitchhike to California in the dead of a winter night, to work with someone I didn't know for a purpose I couldn't fathom?

Working with Norman Miller, though exotic in the beginning, became increasingly difficult as time went by. Part of it, no doubt, was Norman's personality. He was not an easy person to like. He had neither warmth nor humor, nor the capacity to make 'small talk'. (Neither had I for that matter, but compared to Norman I was a charming socialite.) Yet the real problem was the constant drag of being 'under pressure'. Outwardly this pressure was caused through being compelled to discipline myself to do intellectual work. Norman referred to the underlying dynamic of all intellectual work as the act of thinking to a point, and he stressed repeatedly the ability to think to a point was essential to cultural development.

Fortunately neither one of us had any idea in the beginning what an uphill battle it would be for me to think to a point or we might never have made the effort. What made it excessively difficult in my case was the underlying reality of brain trauma. Learning to think to a point, to apply myself to intellectual tasks, unavoidably meant becoming aware of the pain-pressure which was always present, though normally pushed to the fringe of my awareness. As long as I was 'spaced out', as I had been my entire life, I could avoid to some extent dealing directly with the experience of trauma. However the moment I made an effort to carry out some task under Norman's direction which entailed thinking to a point or sustained mental focus, I was brought directly up against it, though I didn't consciously realize what it was I was experiencing.

Part of the problem was the trauma had occurred in early childhood, leaving me no direct memory of the event. So even though I knew I was somehow 'broken' I didn't know why. Thus when working with Norman, because I had no memory of suffering head trauma, my experience of being under extreme pressure was a mystery to both of us. Yet I don't think it took long for Norman to realize something traumatic must have happened to me. When, for instance, I showed him the album cover to 'Court of the

Crimson King' he said the face on it mirrored my inner state.

(It wasn't until I was in my mid-forties, after moving back to my hometown, I was finally able to connect the dots. It happened when I was visiting my mother. I mentioned to her I was haunted by the idea something bad had happened to one of us (my brother, sister, and I) when we were kids. My mother said "Michael, it was you". She told me how, when I was two years old, a pair of shears used to cut roof shingles slid down off the roof of my grandfather's barn and landed point first on top of my head. The moment she recalled this I saw with a flash of insight how deeply my life had been impacted by this tragedy, and how it had irrevocably changed my destiny.)



Not knowing its source, the experience of being under enormous pressure only got worse over time. This was partly because Norman was relentless – constantly pushing me to exceed myself. Eventually there came a point when I would periodically explode in anger and frustration. These outbursts increased in magnitude and frequency until, after one particularly violent one I told Norman I couldn't work with him anymore. He was visiting me in my apartment, and when he left that day it was the last time I ever saw him.

After we stopped working together Norman got involved in Scientology. The Scientologists had opened a world headquarters in Clearwater and someone must have introduced him to it. Then, many years later, the last time we talked by phone, he informed me he was working with his father Edgar, helping him with his art exhibits. After that I lost contact with him until about three years ago when I learned from Jeff Kruse, director of Edgar Miller Legacy, Norman had passed away. More recently, while reading Edgar's biography in the book 'Edgar Miller and the Handmade House' there was a brief mention of Norman, that he had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and was living somewhere in Florida (this being a few years before his death).

I believe Norman's life ended tragically because he had not been fortunate enough to find True Parents and receive the blessing. Nor is there any doubt I too would have met such a sad end had I not been led to our movement. Neither Norman or myself were/are equipped to deal with this world. I was lucky enough to find spiritual protection in the movement and someone (my wife) to cover for me and give my life some semblance of normalcy. Unfortunately for Norman he was on his own to the bitter end.

Photos: Edgar Miller's art. Edgar believed human beings should live surrounded by and immersed in art. To make this dream come true he mastered many mediums and brought them together in homes and art studios he built by hand; album cover of 'Court of the Crimson King' by the group King Crimson. Norman thought it mirrored my inner state caused by brain trauma.