

Two
Love's Two Insomnias

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The rhetorical strategy in all of Jung's books employs blockbuster numinous experiences to shake us up and transport us from the superficial notions of our ephemeral lives and introduce us to our archetypal foundations. In this spirit of Jung, therefore, I invite you into the Halls of Venus. Because erotic entanglement is our most wide-spread and familiar source of the block-busting numinous, I find it to be the natural starting point for discussing the terrible vitality of the psyche. What we discover about ourselves through Eros, can be used to illuminate virtually *any* break-through of archetypal realities into the superficial swirl of consensus assumptions. Mystics the world over have used the analogy of falling in love to illuminate the nature of spirituality. Here's an example drawn from Swami Muktananda's *Play of Consciousness* (pp. 44ff):

A man becomes like the object on which he meditates. He becomes permeated by whatever object he holds in his heart with love. Meditation on a Siddha Guru is very easy because we know our beloved Guru so well. We have been with him often, have traveled with him, have heard him talk about many things. . . .

Everyone knows that whatever is stored in the mind can come before us even when we do not summon it. Once a young man came to see me. "Babaji," he said, "I am very confused--give me peace. Some time ago, I fell in love with a girl, and since we both liked each other, we decided to get married. However, as we were confirming our decision, she met someone else whom she liked better and married him instead. I am suffering terribly because of this. I can't bear this pain."

I said, "There's nothing to worry about. Just find another girl and marry her."

He replied, "That's all right, but my mind has become possessed by her, and even if I tried a million times, I could not get her out of my mind."

"But why do you remember her like this?" I asked.

"It's not that I remember her," he replied. "The memory of her comes to my mind by itself. Without my doing anything, I see her image moving in front of my eyes."

Isn't that remarkable? He had not worshipped the girl over a long period according to any prescribed ritual; he had not meditated on her using the seed mantras on each part of his body; he had not received a mantra containing her name from any great Siddha or holy man. Yet her image would not leave the young man's mind. He came to Babaji to ask for a means to get rid of her. These are the consequences of being together. When we set someone in our heart with love, we cannot remove him, even if we try. We say, "Leave my mind!" but he does not leave. This is the fruit of meditation united with love. Then why don't you meditate on your Guru with the same kind of love? He has only to enter your heart and mind once for his image to form and settle there; then he won't leave it, even if you try to make him.

Worldly people constantly repeat this refrain: "Babaji, I try to meditate, but as soon as I sit down, worldly things come before me--the office, the factory, the children. What should I do about it? I just can't meditate."

I answer, "But you certainly are getting meditation. To have your office or factory appear within you is meditation. To see visions of your children is meditation. Aren't you satisfied with the fruits of your meditation? All the things you have loved, thought about, and pursued in your everyday life are now bearing fruit for you. You have visions of your factory and your office and your children; yet you do not consider it meditation. Look brother, I am in the same situation. I meditated on Sadguru Nityananda. I adored the different aspects of my *sadhana*. I embraced and kissed the feet of my dear Gurudev. Now all this continually rises in my heart. 'Gurudev, Gurudev' repeats itself within me even when my mind is not thinking of him. My Guru floods my body; he is in every part of it. He comes to me in dreams and is perfectly real to me."

When the object of your thought begins to vibrate in the heart, you are meditating. As these vibrations continue, the object itself is forgotten. This is a very high level of meditation. It is why the scriptures tell us to think incessantly of the Guru, whose very nature is God.

I read this passage at length because it has so much to tell us. First of all, meditation is not some special activity we have to learn how to perform. All of us are meditating all the time upon some object or other. The object shapes us into its own image and resists replacement by another object. Nevertheless it *can* be changed, providing we manage to give our hearts to someone or something else. We might well want to do this, because some objects are more satisfying than others--ultimate satisfaction deriving only when the object of meditation is of the "very nature of God."

We have already encountered some of these propositions in our survey of erotic attraction. Both Heathcliff and Majnun spend their lives meditating on their beloved. But what a difference! Heathcliff never becomes the veil that hides his Cathy. No doubt she "continually rises in his heart." There is no question but that the name, "Cathy, Cathy," repeats itself within him, "even when his mind is not thinking of her." But it is clear that Heathcliff would never say that his Cathy "floods his body and is in every part of it." She comes to him in his dreams, but only as a pursuing ghost, mocking him as the possession he may not have. Her nature is never "divine" for him, but always demonic.

To grasp how it is that Eros effects a spiritual transformation, let's begin where Muktananda begins--with the individual who finds the object of his meditation dissatisfying. Most dramatically, there is the young man who wants to drive the image of his lost beloved from his mind. More prosaically, there are the aspiring disciples who can't stop thinking of their factory, their office, or their children. These are people just like us. We sit down and try to quiet our mind--to take it away from all those ephemeral and hectic concerns that fill our waking hours. Inevitably we find ourselves "distracted." If it's not by twinges in the body, then it's our habitual concerns coming back to haunt us like the ghost of Catherine Earnshaw--our jobs, our children, and so on. We'd like to be taken away from all that. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just throw a switch and sink into God-consciousness? But unfortunately the John Haule who sits down to meditate is the same John Haule who's filled with the ephemeral and hectic concerns of his everyday life.

This problem begins before we ever sit down to our yogic task. Muktananda tells us that when we look upon meditation as a unique and isolated practice we overlook its very nature. We deny the dissatisfaction we have with our *habitual* meditation, the one that goes on day and night whether we attend to it or not.

According to the spiritual practice with which *I* began to alter *my* consciousness, this is both a familiar and a radically new doctrine. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, the

Society of Jesus, defined his goal in a three-word phrase: *in actione contemplativus*. His Jesuits were to be "contemplatives in action." Periods of meditation were built into the daily order--especially for novices. But as time went on, the Jesuit was to resist frequent and lengthy meditation sessions. He was to be constantly in the presence of God. Every activity--whether administrating a college or bringing medicine to the sick--was to be a spiritual activity. Those who are contemplatives in action are constantly in dialogue with God. I intuit the divine will for me, right now at this moment. My contemplating soul is to be filled with God and my body and mind doing the work of God on earth--much as Muktananda's body and soul were filled with his Satguru Nityananda, "whose very nature is God."

In the spiritual practices of the East and the West, this is by no means a radical doctrine. It is what all of the spiritually accomplished have discovered. The radically new piece--although it's so obvious we can't help but wonder how we've overlooked it all our lives--is the fact that we are all meditating, all the time, even if we've never heard of meditation.

This doctrine appears to be a kind of Hindu version of the teachings of Don Juan Matus, Carlos Castaneda's guru. He calls it our "internal monologue." We are constantly sustaining our unconsciously constructed and socially sanctioned lifeworld by talking to ourselves about it all the time. The factory owner, for example, talks to himself about the price of his raw materials, the idiosyncrasies of his suppliers, the difficulties of getting his machinery repaired, the frustrations of motivating his employees, and the fluctuations in the price of his product. He meditates on his factory day and night, not only when he is sitting at his desk in his office, but also while driving his car, taking his dog for a walk, chewing his dinner, and making love with his wife. His life is filled with his factory. And his factory, the object of his meditation, shapes him into its image. He's a factory owner and nothing more.

This man's factory ownership is his survival strategy. If he can keep his factory productive, he can pay his bills, support his family, and enjoy some pretty nice vacations. The factory is more than a source of income, however; it defines his existence. Its success makes him a successful man, a person who can hold his head up in society and expect admiration. It makes him "a mover and a shaker," a man of considerable power, one who has negotiated the hectic and ephemeral world of survival and come out on top.

In Jungian language, we call this *persona*. It's important to note that while our persona is surely a mask we don for social purposes, this facile Jungian description seems to turn *persona* into an arbitrary object--something we can put on or off as we choose. But Muktananda's factory owner finds he cannot escape from his persona. Even when he tries to "meditate"--in the sense of a disciplined and special activity--, he finds that his factory continues to be the object of his preoccupation. Whether he's sitting down with crossed legs and closed eyes or overtaking "semi"s on the interstate, his meditation takes place in the *field of the persona*, that set of assumptions and beliefs that might also be called the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times, or consensus reality.

We all live our everyday lives completely immersed in the *persona field*, speaking words and performing actions that are "politically correct," playing the game of economic struggle, acquiring degrees from graduate schools, hiding our aggression behind polite facades. Our persona is not merely the facade, however; it is the whole life strategy lurking behind that

facade by which we struggle to survive. The persona field of consensus assumptions exerts a force upon us like the gusty wind that sea-gulls have to correct for, as they dive for bits of garbage floating on the waves. We have become so attuned to the comings and goings of those gusts that we never think about them. We correct our course thoughtlessly and with great precision. Negotiating the hectic and ephemeral world of the persona takes a tremendous amount of energy. And you can be sure that we do not neglect it. It is the object of our internal monologue, our habitual and constant meditation. We monitor the world about us incessantly, like the gull who picks up the slightest changes in the direction and force of the wind, as well as the approach of his brother and sister gulls and their rank in the local pecking order. Furthermore, none of this automatic internal talk distracts us from the succulent morsels bobbing below.

What *does* distract us from the morsels and the strategizing is the sudden appearance of someone who better satisfies our heart. Suppose Muktananda's factory owner runs into some Layla or Isolde. His meditation changes abruptly. He learns how shallow the infatuation with his factory has always been. Perhaps he had long known this in some remote corner of his mind. We might compare him to Jung, during the years of his infatuation with Freud. There seemed to be so much to gain from an association with the Father of Psychoanalysis that Jung worked very hard to suppress his objections. You can see this process taking place if you read the *Freud-Jung Letters*, where in the beginning Jung takes pains to outline his reservations regarding Freud's theories. But then, after meeting the great man, he says, "No one can understand your theories until he knows you personally." Later he confesses to having a religious/sexual "crush" on Freud. During this whole process, Jung is doing his best to confine himself within the narrow dimensions of Freud's worldview. It all falls apart when Sabina Spielrein comes upon the scene.

Muktananda's factory owner is hardly struggling with the philosophical issues that lay between Freud and Jung. For him there is the practicality of running a factory and the persona-field prestige that this can engender. Possibly he had little awareness of how confining and shallow such pre-occupations were. Certainly they had been powerful enough for many years--perhaps decades--to assert the factory as his only object of meditation. But when he meets his Layla, the bottom falls out.

Certainly there are impediments to his union with her. He's married. The Naked Sword is unmistakable. He wants to relinquish neither the prestige of his factory ownership nor the family life that gives him security and warm connection. Yet this strangely compelling woman he has met speaks to a part of his nature that is incomparably deeper and more important than anything he has ever concerned himself with before. It is as though he had been contemplating the trees of the forest and the way they change with the seasons, when suddenly his attention is drawn to "the eternal rocks beneath." He understands the perspective of Catherine Earnshaw, for his Layla is "always, always in [his] mind--not as a pleasure, any more than [he is] always a pleasure to [him]self, but as [his] own being."

In no time at all, the factory owner and his Layla are immersed in a passionate affair which he conceals from his wife. He may even tell himself that there is no conflict, here. There's no reason his family life and the factory cannot continue as they always have. Why should the trees of the forest grieve if the eternal rocks are rejoicing below? He discovers what it means to connect with another human soul in archetypal fashion, self-to-self. The owner and his

Layla dwell in a magical, sacred sphere, reading each other's minds--like Majnun and the birdsongs--placing telephone calls to one another at just the right improbable moment when the coast is clear to arrange their next clandestine meeting. The two of them are like Tristan and Isolde, whose trysts were arranged with divine connivance and who escaped detection by impossible strokes of luck. When two individuals have drunk the Love Potion, such exemption from the laws of consensus reality is not at all unusual. Sometimes it last for months. But it never lasts forever.

Reflecting on Jung's entanglement with Spielrein, John Kerr writes:

A man having an affair is always busy. He can't be reached, he doesn't return calls, he falls behind in correspondence, and there is always someplace else he has to be. Being interminably busy is of course useful in explaining one's whereabouts; it is also useful in keeping the demands of the lover at bay. Jung's . . . notes, of 6 July and 22 July, have this flavor. Both are quite short, both suggest he is pressed for time just now, and both give Spielrein only the briefest of slots when she may meet him. The tone suggests that Jung had begun to weigh the extent of his indiscretion, though by the same token, he clearly was not prepared to break off from her completely. Then, too, he had lately learned that Freud would be coming to visit in two months' time, though whether this was a chastening thought is impossible to know. (p. 197)

In some manner such as this, the Naked Sword is bound to assert its presence. If the factory owner goes on with his affair, his wife will come to know about it soon enough and register her rage. But even if this doesn't happen, it's unlikely his erstwhile Layla will remain content with her secondary position in his life. Probably she'll simply leave. But whether the affair ends or continues, the Naked Sword *will* not be ignored. When he sits down to meditate, when he broods at his desk, when he drives his car, the object of his meditation continues to be Layla. But whereas he formerly contemplated her image in joy, he now does so in sorrow.

I think we have considered the pain of this situation thoroughly enough. It's time to take up another question. Has our factory owner *gained* anything by changing the object of his meditation? Formerly, the image of his factory anchored his existence in the ephemeral and hectic realm of the persona field and his strategies for success. But from the day he met Layla, his factory's place in his heart has been supplanted. During the period of his naïve joy, it was impossible for him to doubt that he had stumbled upon something monumental. The bottom dropped out of the superficial world of consensus reality. He and his Layla were joined in the much more profound *self field*.

The self field is a realm of experience most of our contemporaries ignore. Erotic experience gives us our most common entrée to it. This in itself is reason enough to ignore the self field. For everyone "knows" that love is blind, foolish, adolescent, and altogether beneath our notice. Everything that happens in the self field is an object of scorn for the persona field. The self field accounts for telepathy and all the other dubious synchronistic experiences that are so frequent among lovers. But Eros is not the only doorway into this disreputable plain of psychological existence.

The self field is also the realm Jung wrote about so eloquently in describing his experiences in Africa--the time he witnessed a white bearded marabout astride a white donkey directing the furious work of men with picks and shovels building a railroad. He spoke of how the drums beat insistently from sunup to sundown, and the men worked apparently without ego

consciousness, connected by a common emotion as long as the percussive rhythm continued and the marabout's calm, commanding presence lent them purpose. At the Great Man's word, the drums ceased, and the men lay down to sleep beside their tools. Jung said that he himself was so affected by the force of this *participation mystique* that he suffered an attack of dysentery that lasted days.

The self field is more powerful than we are. It even makes sense to say that we have created the persona field as a defense against the self field's influence. People who are unable to consistently remain in the persona field--schizophrenics, for example, and borderlines--have a powerful effect upon the rest of us. Those of us who have worked with them in therapy find we have no defense against their self-field wisdom. It is as though they zero in on our weaknesses and most shameful secrets. They seem to read our minds and put us on the defensive.

Something very similar happens when we drink the Love Potion. We know our beloved better in that first instant than we have known anyone else in our lives, and we find that we, too, are known just as profoundly. We enter an ontological reality completely foreign to consensus opinion. This is why it seems to us that the bottom drops out when we meet our Layla or Majnun. It is truly as though time has run backward and we enter that prehistoric time when our ancestors knew by some extrasensory means where water was to be found and beyond which ridge the game were grazing. When the reality of the self field is opened for us--in the *we* that comes to presence through our beloved--we glimpse the oneness of the world and all the beings that comprise it.

Therefore, when our factory owner contemplates his Layla in the naïve joy of the first months of his affair, he knows what Jung meant, when he said about his trip to Africa, that he felt as though he was the very first human ever to see the world, that somehow the world came into existence in that numinous moment when he surveyed its plains, and the rivers of animal herds moving through them. To enter the self field is an *originary* experience. Every time it happens, we are Adam and Eve, rejoicing in the very fact of our existence, brimming over with life, drinking from the source.

When the thread breaks, and the Naked Damoclean Sword falls, the rapture of the self field turns to despair. Now for the first time we may wonder whether exchanging our object of meditation--our factory for our Layla--was a favorable event. We don't ask whether we made a "good choice." There was never any choosing to be done. It happened on its own, all at once. We had no need to worship her over a long period of time according to any prescribed ritual. We never evoked her image by placing seed mantras on any part of our body. No great Siddha or holy man ever gave us a mantra containing her name. And yet she is like a goddess for us. Oneness with her is our salvation. Distance is eternal torment. Whether, like Heathcliff, we beg her to haunt us to the end of our days or, like Muktananda's young man, we wish to be relieved of her image, she is the ineradicable object of our meditation.

This is the situation that prompts our question: is the factory owner in better shape or worse, now that Layla's image has rooted the factory from his heart and occupied that shrine herself? On the one hand it seems that he has gained, for Layla represents the self field. His meditation has deepened. He's relinquished the hectic and ephemeral for the originary. He has left the superficial realm of consensus reality and gained access to something far more

fundamental, the domain of the archetypal self. He has become a madman. But is he a Majnun or a Heathcliff? Is his madness divine or demonic? We can hardly expect to get a dependable answer to this question by taking a Harris Poll. Jelaluddin Rumi, the thirteenth century philosopher/poet of Sufism, addresses this conundrum rather effectively in one of his quatrains:

Those on the way are almost invisible
to those who are not. A man or a woman
recognizes God and starts out. The others
say he, or she, is losing faith. (*Rain*, 44)

When Romantic Love opens up the domain of the self field, we rightly speak of faith--but not the kind that can be written down as a set of propositions. Rather it is the faith that is rooted in our life experience, what the Greeks called *gnosis*. Either you've had the experience and know the truth about the invisible, or you have not. Gnostics, the mystic *cognoscenti*, love their madness and believe it has peeled the scales from their eyes. Their opponents say that love has blinded them. Rumi says,

Let the lover be disgraceful, crazy,
absent minded. Someone sober
will worry about events going badly.
Let the lover be. (*Rain*, 7).

When *his* Naked Sword fell, Majnun became the very prototype of the disgraceful, crazy, and absent minded. Accepting the inevitability of the Sword, he left the habitations of men--the persona field--and retired to desert caves where he made friends with the animals. Fortunately enough for him, he lived in a time when people knew what love is. They let him be. Unkempt and isolated, he meditated on his Layla, drank from the source, and was transformed:

Love was glowing in [Majnun]. When it burst into flames it also took hold of his tongue, the words streaming unbidden from his lips, verses strung together like pearls in a necklace. Carelessly he cast them away. . . . Was he not rich? Was he not free? Had he not severed the rope which keeps men tied together? (Nizami, 126)

If you've been to the Mountain of Venus, if you dwell in the *gnosis* that comes of a close encounter--nay, an abduction--by Eros, you know that I'm speaking the truth. If not, you may be storing up objections. Isn't this the flimsiest of cases I'm making here? Didn't I start out with a vague allusion from that dubious Hindu romantic, Muktananda, about a man who could not eradicate the image of his factory from his mind when he sat down to meditate? And did I not spin out a fabrication, whole cloth, about a love affair he may never have had? Have I not justified it with the story of Layla and Majnun--a couple who may never have lived? Tell us about *real* people, you may be grumbling to yourselves. Save us from this concatenation of fantasies and legends. Tell us about the real world. Where are the Majnuns who dwell among us? And what is "divine" about their madness?

Perhaps I should start with Rumi, for there was no greater poet of love than he, and Majnun was his hero. He was an Iranian whose family fled the Mongol invasion to Turkey when he was still a child. In the small town of Konia, in Turkey, he succeeded his father as an expert

theologian and had a sizable following of orthodox believers. He scandalized them all, however, when one day a weirdly dressed Sufi appeared at the edge of his audience. This man, Shamsuddin of Tabriz, fascinated Rumi, who closeted himself with the newcomer to learn a more emotional and flamboyant way of loving God. He came out of seclusion dancing; and introduced musical instruments--forbidden to orthodox Islam--and the whirling dance of the dervishes to his skeptical followers.

The Naked Sword fell for Rumi the day his jealous followers killed Shams in hopes of getting back their beloved teacher. Still intoxicated with the Love Potion, Rumi at first could not accept the loss of Shams--refused, in fact, to believe that Shams was dead. He abandoned his teaching post and began wandering the land, as disreputable as Majnun, searching for his vanished Shams. Arguably the greatest saint of Islam was undone as badly as you or I when the Sword fell and he lost the fleshly object of his meditation. He wandered distraught and unhinged, calling out for Shams, stopping everyone he met. He made no effort to uproot Shams from his heart; but going more deeply in, he followed the example of the legendary Majnun who learned to become the veil that hides the face of Layla. She who was lost in the outer world had been found within. Rumi's experience was very much the same:

Not alone I keep on singing
Shamsuddin and Shamsuddin,
But the nightingale in the garden
sings, the partridge in the hills.
Day of splendor: Shamsuddin, and
turning heaven: Shamsuddin!
Mine of jewels: Shamsuddin, and
Shamsuddin is day and night.
(Schimmel, 1982:88)

Having lost the fleshly Shams, Rumi did not give up. He held onto the image of Shams as the object of his meditation--and also to the sorrowful separation he felt so deeply. Persisting in this tension, he came to find Shams everywhere. Shams became for him what Nityananda was for Muktananda, his Satguru, his Being-Guru, the teacher of absolute, eternal, unchanging Being, who is himself that eternal Being, "whose very nature is God." Shams is in everything: the songs of the birds and the splendor of the heavens. Indeed, his very name, Shams-ud-din, "Sun-of-the-religion," is but another name for God.

There's another remarkable fact about Rumi. Although he sang of Shams, he continually found replacements for his mentor, human beings who became the object of his meditation and thereby mediated God for him. One of these, an illiterate goldsmith named Salahuddin Zarkub, was particularly repugnant to Rumi's followers. Rumi, however, defended him:

He who came in a red frock in years past,
He came this year in brown garb.
The Turk about whom you heard that time
Appeared as an Arab this year . . .
The wine is one, only the bottles are different--
How beautifully does this wine intoxicate us! (*Ibid.*, 91)

Thus Rumi describes a whole series of men who became transparent for him. As he contemplated them, he reached God. The Arabic language has a word for this, *fana'*, a verb

that means to disappear, vanish or perish, pass away. It refers to the "passing away of the individual self in Universal Being" (Nicholson, 1921: 17). "The transient, evanescent side of a man must pass away in order that something or someone lasting may reign supreme in him" (Rice, 76). *Fana'* is a state of ecstatic contemplation of divine beauty (Nicholson, 1963: 18).

The passing away of *fana'* is always joined with the continuation in a greater, more real existence, which is called *baqa'*. The Iranian psychologist and mystic, Reza Arasteh, describes this pair of concepts in almost Jungian language: "*Fana'* is the loss of ego and *baqa'* is gain of self" (x). By *ego* and *self*, respectively, he means the conscious agent and the greater, eternal personality.

The Sufi passes away into God by passing *through* another human being. There is typically a three-stage process. The individual Sufi passes away into his own guru or sheikh. The sheikh's authority proceeds from the fact that he has already passed away into the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad, for his part, expressed by his very being the ultimate *fana'*, the passing away into God. Very likely *fana'* is but another name to describe the process by which Nityananda became a Satguru for Muktananda, flooding his body, vibrating in his heart, generating that automatic *japa* whereby "Gurudev, Gurudev," repeats itself within him, even when his mind is not thinking of the Great Man.

All this raises an interesting question for *us*. What would Muktananda have said to the factory owner if he had come back after the end of his affair with his Layla, complaining that he couldn't get her image out of his mind, and begging for peace. If Muktananda were to say: "There's nothing to worry about. Just find another woman and marry her," we'd have to suspect that this answer was designed to provoke further reflection. For we know exactly what the factory owner would reply, "Even if I tried a million times, I could not get her out of my mind."

Surely Muktananda knows what the real solution must be. The peace this man is looking for will come to him only when Layla becomes his Shams. Only when she fills his body, vibrates in his heart, and her name becomes his automatic mantra--only when he passes away and is annihilated in his Layla, will his greater being emerge. Only if he can allow his Layla to be lost as his mistress, his possession, the companion who opens his heart through her physical presence--only then can she become his Satguru. Until that moment, he will continue to drown in his misery. Hundreds of years after Majnun retired to the desert and a millennium and a half before Muktananda met the factory owner, Augustine of Hippo had grasped this central insight: "Our hearts are restless, until they rest in Thee, O Lord."

I can tell you on the basis of my own experience and from the reports of people who've come to me complaining that they can't stop meditating on a lost lover who will not leave their hearts: there is no easy way out. It seems that regardless of what we do--whether wise or foolish; whether rash or patient--our suffering is going to last as long as it lasts. Surely months. Perhaps years. Nothing we do will speed up the process. There's no trick to perform, no virtue to acquire, no perversity that will provide escape. When the Naked Sword falls between ourselves and our beloved, there is nothing for us to do but to dwell in that excruciating tension. We'll feel hopeless much of the time. We'll have periods when we will believe our only hope of solace is the lifting of the Sword so that we can again unite with the

Layla or the Majnun whom we have lost. Such illusions will bedevil us like the temptations of the desert saints in early Christianity. There is no hope for us but to remain in the tension--meditating on the object we never chose but seems to have chosen us--until one day we'll know what Rumi meant when he wrote:

When I am with you, we stay up all night.
When you're not here, I can't go to sleep.

Praise God for these two insomnias!
And the difference between them.
(*Secret*, quatrain #36)

The name *Layla* means "night." Night is the time when the hectic and ephemeral fades away, leaving us alone--either in the *presence* of our beloved, or in her absence. Whether present or absent, she looms before us as the object of our heart's yearning and *will* not let us sleep. The distractions of the day have ceased; we are in the grip of our insomnia; and we have no choice but to meditate upon our Layla.

I'd love to spend the night with Peggy Day. Everybody knows about the night. Our pop songs from Tin Pan Alley to rock and roll all agree. When our lover is gone, the night is unendurable. How do I get me through the night? Tears on my pillow. Love the one you're near. Set 'em up, Joe. Oh, Momma! Can *this* really be the *end*? The Sufi poet, Nasimi, sings a different song:

Old Man Love:
"Come in, come in:
don't loiter around
outside!"
Inside:
SPLENDOR
cups of pain. (Wilson and Pourjavady, 74)

The mystics know what the benighted songbirds of our stereos have never guessed. The pain is not to be fled but embraced. Sixteenth-century Spanish mystic, John of the Cross, says that the pain increases as the soul draws nearer to God, because nearness leads to a progressively "greater experience within yourself of the void of God" (*Canticle*, 13.1).

God is the ultimate absent lover. Unattainable for our senses, God willfully teases us with hints of what divine union might mean, drawing us in. Setting fire to our longing. Withholding. Shamelessly bestowing a favor when we least expect it. More withholding. Foolish madmen that they are, the mystics wait all day long for the insomnia that besets them every night. They can't wait to be toyed with. They're crazy for punishment, thirsting for their cups of pain. John of the Cross says, "Why, since You wounded this heart until it has become sorely wounded, did You not heal it by wholly slaying it with love?" (*Ibid.*, 9.3).

Ignatius of Loyola began his love-career as a soldier whose imagination had been quickened by the ideals of courtly love. He dedicated his efforts to a woman of flesh and blood, far above his station, a high-born Lady whom he had little hope of seeing--even from a distance.

The Naked Sword came down for him in the form of a cannonball that shattered his leg, making it impossible for him to serve his Lady. In the misery of his confinement, he sought distraction, but could find nothing to occupy his mind other than the bible and a *Lives of the Saints*. Reading them with the eyes of a courtly lover, he passed away in *fana*'. The object of his meditation assumed more sublime features. His motto, "All for the Honor of the Unknown Lady," became "For the Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary." His heart was ravished by the one woman in the history of the world whose body had transcended its fleshly limitations, who became the feminine embodiment of God. She was the Satguru who filled his body and whose name was ever on his lips. As soon as he could limp, he set off like Rumi, wandering and disreputable, searching the world for traces that she had lived and he had found her.

Eros took a similar course for Teresa of Avila. Having become a nun for the vaguest of reasons, and moved exclusively by the ideals of a late medieval persona field, she found herself falling in love with her confessors. Whether they came last year in a brown habit, or this time in a black robe, she was drawn to the wine with which they intoxicated her--a heady ferment of bodily vibrations and spiritual dialogue. If in chapel she offered her prayers feeling listless and dry, she entered the confessional wet and full of expectation. The wine she first shared with her confessors became truly intoxicating, however, once Augustine's *Confessions* had been translated into Spanish and she began to discover where her longing was taking her. For Augustine's God was the ultimate seducer, invisible just beyond the veil, breathing, "Love! and do what thou wilt."

When Rumi rhapsodized about Layla, he referred to the night of his longing, the Divine Lover in whose dark tresses he was entangled, and the two insomnias of his agonized and rapturous meditation. The sharp edge of the Naked Sword is the longing that heightens devotion. When we recoil from the pain it inflicts, we seek refuge in the past. Either we want that first moment when we drank the Love Potion to remain frozen in time, denying all growth, denying life itself; or we curse the Potion's effects and try to undo our drinking of it. But time cannot be reversed. Denial and flight are inherently neurotic. The sleep of the innocent is eternally foreclosed to those in whom awareness has stirred. Eros, Son of Chaos, is the father of insomnia.

When, with Rumi, we embrace the two insomnias and stay up all night with the object of our meditation, our longing grows into worship. Longing, when persisted in, is the refining fire that burns away the dross of our petty attachments, the last vestiges of the ephemeral and hectic. Painful and hopeless longing constitutes what John of the Cross calls "The Dark Night of the Soul," that interminable stretch of insomnia when our early delights have decomposed into unsettling memories, and there seems no way to go on. He describes the only course of action open to us:

If those in whom this [night] occurs know how to remain quiet, . . . they will soon . . . experience the interior nourishment. This refection is so delicate that usually if the soul desires or tries to experience it, it cannot. (*Night*, 1.9.7)

He means this: When the insomnia of a night spent in God's absence has you tossing in misery, stop fighting it. Don't run away. Don't heap up more spiritual practices. Stop besieging God. Give in to the Night. Give in to Layla. Remain quiet. Hold yourself open. God is trying to speak to you in a manner so subtle, you haven't learned to detect it. Your

tossing and turning makes so much noise you can't hear the divine whisper. Stop trying to do it all yourself. Be quiet and let your Beloved approach you.

Rumi reached the same conclusion but puts it more vividly:

Night comes so people can sleep like fish
in black water. Then day,

Some people pick up their tools.
Others become the making itself. (*Rain*, 38)

The ocean is Rumi's favorite image for what it is to live in the world that love has made. It is the self field: subtle, despised, and feared by the land lubber who dwells exclusively in the ephemeral and hectic persona field. To live in the ocean of love requires a different kind of breathing and a different kind of movement. The water we dive into lies deeper than the land we walk upon. And the deeper we go, the darker becomes our night of love. Those who dwell in those depths, the beings whom love has transformed, become unable and unwilling to return.

The Ocean will not allow its fish out of itself.
Nor does it let land animals in
where the subtle and delicate fish move.

The land creatures lumber along on the ground.
No cleverness can change this. There's only one
Opener for the lock in these matters.

Forget your figuring. Forget yourself. Listen to your Friend.
When you become totally obedient to That One,
you'll be free. (*Longing*, 35)

Never one to mince words, Rumi used the sledge hammer of his poetry to shatter our hearts. Muktananda's words are more coy and sinuous, trapping the factory owner in his own confusion--"That's easy, find another girl and marry her." He knows that Layla will never leave this man's heart. Tossing in his insomnia, the factory owner has become wholly entangled in the raven tresses of his beloved. Extraction is not possible. There is only one answer to this predicament: "Breathe water. Become river head to foot." (*Three*, 42).