

38. THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Cody had the knowledge to rule the world. Would he come out of his coma all inspired by his own monstrous visions? Was this all part of Lee's secret plan? Ultimately, Lee Tate feared the disintegration of the will before the delights of the world. He believed our pursuit of happiness would always be weighed down by depravity. He admired self-denial. He adopted a more austere manner to deal with the extremes of human emotion. He knew how to dish out suffering without hardly being affected by the pain of another. He had perfected raised his sociopathic behavior to an art form.

I had enough of Lee's bullying. He hadn't really got to me. But I could tell what he was feeling down deep. At this point, I felt that I needed to look at Harriet Fleming's book. I held it in my hand and proceeded to open it. Its title seemed intimidating: *Myth and the Structure of the Self: Dissolving Psychological Defensiveness*. Despite her predisposition to engage in cultural analysis through her study of myth, she left little room for any consistent political criticism of the dominant culture. Instead she transferred the burden to a critique of the weaknesses of the self insofar as they were revealed by myth.

Harriet viewed herself as some kind of a life coach. And she recognized at what point her players would start to slack off. They would choose the path of least resistance. And they would get locked into a pattern of repetitive behavior. It was almost as if their muscles fused into an inflexible form that allowed for no other kind of motion. Breaking the pattern was like cutting into stone. This gave Harriet's approach a very hard edge. Harriet believed that her observation demonstrated to her how to analyze the action. Thus, she could direct it towards her intended goal. Without her intervention, the individual would never acquire the awareness to take things to the next level.

As much as Harriet subscribed to her own skill at coaxing others, she also focused on the development of individual effort in the face of a host of societal influences. Such a contact resulted in the enhancement of the psychological nature of the self. The structure of the self reflected deeper patterns of societal influence. These patterns helped protect the individual against external forces that could disrupt its integrity. Beyond that recognition, Harriet argued that there was a well of symbolic activity that linked the self with the rest of society. This was the foundation of the study of psychology. In her book, she took it upon herself to elucidate these symbols.

While the individual first noticed these patterns in daily interaction, their complete nature was somewhat obscured. In the symbolic dialogue in dreams, there was a clearer picture of these symbols. But the mysterious character of dreams guaranteed that much of this structure remains hidden. That would appear to privilege the analyst's vantage point. But Harriet suggested that ritual gave people a clearer impression of the abolition character of the psyche.

In ritual, Harriet remarked upon the more profound awareness on the part of the individual in regard to these structures. At the same time, the self threw himself into these experiences. He let himself become absorbed in what was happening. In this manner, the ritual opened the self up to an altered state of consciousness. Ultimately the self let things get out of control. He gave himself over to personal gratification. Fleming could not help but make her moral judgement a central tenet of her reading.

The writer was motivated to chronicle his own exploits as a way to incite the reader. The reader felt a sense of envy that the writer could be so adept at his craft. He had more than enough reward for what he had accomplished. The writer was not directing the attention towards a transcendent experience. Instead, he was going over old territory, his past, and was trying to invigorate it with lurid detail. In writing the story, the author became caught in his own pleasure. His text betrayed the extremes of his emotion. His description was lavish. He observed how his success was related to his collaboration with privilege. Flattery begat more flattery. And the tale moved long with all the ecstatic energy associated with the heightened imagination. In turn, the body was moved by the tale. The reader could not help but get more involved.

The story was very literal in its presentation. The reader relied on such immediacy of expression. If the writer doubted these details, it only made the writer exaggerate more. Harriet mocked the self-centered character of the narrative. At the same time, she credited the writer for the fact that he does resort to symbolic representation to justify his viewpoint. But his exaggeration was very much a feature of the ritualistic. Such over-production pushed the resources of the society to its limits. The writer required a symbolic representation to accommodate his presentation.

While the writer could never satisfy the appetites that he had stimulated, he needed to push further and further out there to maintain his position of dominance. In such a place, he could not help but sustain a perversity in the depicted tastes. In her analysis, Harriet more less took all this for granted. She attributed the excesses to the realistic nature of the story. People in desperate situations did desperate things. Since this was a case of realism, her analysis stopped there.

She was much more severe in her judgement when the writer tried to use a symbolic registry to poke fun at the realistic portrayal. It wasn't that Harriet lacked a sense of humor. But when she went face to face with such obvious depictions, she resented the writer's imposition. It was almost as if he was doing the work of the critic, and she did not want her role supplanted. She spared no venom in her attack. This was not simply an extreme of human behavior. Harriet felt that the writer had taken advantage of the situation to push his agenda.

The writer was employing a key component of ritual in Fleming's study. But she went off to no end against this strategy. If the writer was going to display his own intentions, she expected nothing less than puritanical restraint. It was permissible for Harriet to mock the realist. But if the writer did the same thing, he was using the perverse as a prop for his own satisfaction. He had no excuse.

Harriet Fleming wanted to keep the notion of ritual intact in her critical study. The satirical writer pointed out a glaring contradiction in Fleming's approach. That was why he challenged realism in the first place. The ritual presentation expected a rigid conformity on the part of the reader. If the reader had desires, that was all part of biology. Actual situations only brought the pursuit of satisfaction to its natural conclusion, a taste for the bizarre that bordered on depravity. The satirist questioned this progression. He observed how such a reverence for the natural proceeded from the writer's efforts to gratify his own extravagant tastes.

This hardly fit Fleming's rendering. She was ready to heap more venom on the satirist. In Fleming's scheme, the ritual layer of human experience was more than simply real. It was the very thing that held together the cosmos. Ritual explained the form of communication because

its order derived from the order of matter. In the human psyche, Harriet Fleming had localized a new version of substance. While the satirist demonstrated that ritual seemed to proceed from the realist's obsession with the phallic order, Harriet read the realistic narrative as an expression of myth.

Harriet ignored a whole set of actions that accompanied the writer's exaggeration. He was not simply moved by circumstances. He sought those experiences that justified his desire. Even if the circumstance were portrayed in their totally abject nature, this entirely supported the writer's perspective. The satirist was about to hurl. He couldn't let such a feeble model hijack his narrative. But the realist wanted it both ways. And in the end, he would not yield in achieving his own satisfaction. He was ready to plunge back in the womb.

Fleming loved the imagery. It gave authenticity to her academic prose. The writer would risk himself in shooting galleries. And she would make heady pronouncements about his intentions. It was Ok to be all about self-destruction. The writer was simply not allowed to display his desire pure and simple. It made it easy for her to dismiss the modern Hemingways. She was a little more approving of a writer whose self-doubt plunged him again and again in harm's way.

The writer was simply a cypher. He didn't invent the terrible situations. He accepted the moral judgement upon his own condition. So he had the licence to descend further into the depths. The writer needed to atone for the sins of his pornographic imagination. It was necessary to wrest the narrative from his hands.

Harriet explored how the writer created a surrogate to carry on his story. A young girl seemed like the perfect candidate for this task. She could meet the erotic phantasms of the narrator's imagination with a more skeptical tone. The writer was still using his narrative as a way of gratifying his own desire. But he had to face his own moral disquiet. So he had to limit nature of his portrayal. Of course, his new narrator was a prodigy. She had the knowledge of sin, but her inexperience gave the writer justification to rescue her before her dilemma became too onerous.

Under the tutelage of a lesser sort, the girl would gravitate toward the same moral decay that had afflicted the writer. Of course, the bookshelves were full of the tales of such nasty girls. They all found redemption before page one hundred. And they ended up resenting their days of profligacy. But their censorious present did not inhibit them from enumerating every detail from their tawdry past. Confession was the best means of cleansing the soul.

Such a creation was meant to expose the writer's own voyeuristic tendencies. But it was difficult for him to attain respectability while he still wallowed in the filth. It would be counterproductive for him to return to his own past for his story. This was the trap of the realistic narrative. In this alternative case, the writer engaged his craft in his presentation. He was not interested in titillating the reader. Instead, he was exploring the psychology of his characters. And Harriet Fleming seemed to credit this approach.

The writer realized that he could not leave the girl to her own means. This only challenged his dominance in relating the tale. Thus, he created a rival whose intent was to restrict her efforts. And the writer seemed to be facilitating the rival's intent. She continued to struggle against these impediments. She didn't want to become a prop for the writer's frustrations,

Harriet Fleming again admired the realistic aspects of the portrayal. She also viewed the girl as symbolic of the writer's desire to escape the impositions placed on him by the world. If his desires could fly free, the girl would be the ideal vehicle to advance his perspective. In a sense, she represented the untrammelled representation of the mythic influence on the psyche.

It would not be a stretch to say that Harriet identified with the girl. This seemed quite obvious by her commentary. This was all the more surprising since the girl would not feel at one with Harriet and her opinions on literature. But Harriet wanted to play along, and she relished being part of the game. If the writer allowed the girl to be a more chaotic type, this would probably please Harriet more. Then she would yield to the more mythic influences on her character.

The girl resented Harriet's interference. It was almost as if Dr. Fleming saw the stars as some kind of overriding influence on our personality. The more that we detached ourselves from the society, the more that our haphazard behavior was pulled by the dominant influences in the universe. This took the independence away from the self. It was not as if Harriet questioned the nature of our freedom. Instead, she observed how our will became corrupted in society. It was the duty of the self to find harmony with the deeper order of the universe. Myth was the vehicle to express that order. While the self could move in or out of that orbit, the self could not herself create the myth. And the myth itself was a human expression of the fixed nature of the psyche.

Of course, Harriet Fleming would quarrel with my reading. She did not see myth as so inflexible. On her view, myth simply complemented our natural urges. It was a response to the fluid nature of the psyche. I myself hated the imposition that was depicted in myth. The heroic character was stifled by jealous gods. He was forced to bear their witness once they had delivered their crushing blow. He was not to reach for the stars. He was to stay within his means.

When the writer recognized that his character was not so easily circumscribed by his portrayal, he strove further to express his own frustrations. The tale became more absurd. If the rival had failed in his task of disciplining the girl, then the writer needed to forge a deeper analysis of the psyche. The girl had been left too much on her own. Her wishes ended up lunging head on against the theories of Harriet Fleming. The portrayal was hardly accurate in its effort to capture an actual situation. The author went in the opposite direction. He used a more extensive contrivance to make his point.

It was his belief that the most corrupt nature of experience gave the truest picture of human motivation. And only severe damage to the psyche would allow such influence. And the author was prepared to tell a tale of such horror. In a sense, he was trying to get himself off the hook. While he preferred a more rigid view of human nature, the only conditions that would permit a person to escape this moral order would involve a harrowing encounter with the morbid underbelly of society. He reveled in this carnival. The girl was now part of his freak show. And her trainer was a distorted portrayal of the writer. In this form, he could easily deny that he was so immovable with regard to his own opinions.

How had the story progressed to this point? Wasn't the writer simply admitting to his own psychotic impulses. Fleming made her defense of the writer. It was his intent to expose the nature of the creative process. Again, Harriet deferred to myth. The writer was an aberrant Pygmalion. And our psychological obsessions could all be linked to myth. Not only was she

absolving the novelist, she was blunting the full character of his gesture. Sure, he was using the mythic for his own benefit. He thought of the psyche as a mold that provided the structure for all human behavior. But he was also forcing his characters to fit this architecture. The trainer believed that he simply getting the girl to perform in a way that was most natural for her.

Here, things got really weird. Under what conditions would individuals submit to these fetishized behaviors? The writer suggested that people's own past mimicked the kind of conditioning that he observed in his fiction. Individual would proclaim that they were free as they gave in to the most ritualistic conduct. They wanted to surrender to these forces. They wanted to belong. Harriet almost delighted in this depiction. Again, she could explain such extreme devotion in terms of myth.

What propelled people to such extremes of conformity? Rows of prefab houses. Malls with the same chain stores that were stock full of uniforms for the security-minded. How could differences in personality be disciplined by a single command structure? To escape such pressures, people resorted to extraordinary forms of deviance. This only shut them up deeper in their obedience to the norm.

Harriet had an audience for her beliefs. If the psyche was out of whack, wouldn't it be wonderful if that was a single idea that could explain it all. Harriet demonstrated the effort to escape conformity was itself a allegiance to the dominant culture. People knelt to pay their respects to their fearless leader.

People found sympathy in zoned-out zombies that clutched their wallets as they rushed out for the latest deal. If you had enough money you could customize your purchases to accord with your personality. The desire to vibrate at the frequency of the cosmos was the foundation of such idolatry. Sure, Harriet was picking on an easy target. That only made her theory more extravagant as she collected further evidence to document her study.

What would Cody make of all this? Perhaps, he would could feel the power that would allow him to dominate his constituency. Was he searching for this type of validation?

What would the result be if the self gave in completely to these desires? There would no longer be any distinction between the machine and the individual. But how could a person survive the pressures to conform. The toll on the tremendous would be tremendous. People would be immersed in non-stop competition. The weak would fall by the wayside. Even the helpless would battle to see whose tale evoked the most sympathy in the audience.

Harriet was elaborating a new ideal that became the foundation of the writer's task. He had discovered the exquisitely damned. And they begged for attention. They could not survive except in their lovers' eyes. Religious adoration proceeded from such recognition. It paid tribute to a cult of the body. The physical world yielded completely to domination by the psyche, and vice versa. There was complete transparency of motive and gesture.

As each worshiper moved closer to the model, she attained a transcendent glow. But such radiation was dependent on a more illuminated source. So what seemed to be the origin of the energy was itself only a reflection. At the heart of this experience was the ultimate form of myth. The psyche was resplendent. More than ever, the writer needed to be up to the task. He was creating the foundation of a spiritual devotion. The body tingled with this realization. But that was only the beginning.

If the individual could attain a physical awareness of transcendence, that would only

increase his motivation for more. He would accept his commitment to this radiant order. The ritual drove the participants to a frenzy. But as the body became more involved, the self became more conscious of the imprint of myth on his experience. There was no holding back. The psychic form ruled triumphantly. Physical desire was thus linked up with a spiritual fulfillment. There was no way to contradict this form of belief. If such a feeling could be promoted in Cody, then he would overcome his limitations. He would wake up from his coma.

I continued to read from Harriet Fleming's book. Much of the description was so abstract that it might have made no impression on Cody. I disagreed with Harriet. But if Lee had been in the room with us, he would have found the book subversive.

If such devotion was not successful in liberating the individual, then the self would be subject to the most extreme forms of imbalance. The writer previewed the dissolution of the self. For a time being, anything was allowed. There were no longer any reference point that allowed the self to control its actions. Again, myth imposed its order. The psych gave in to its primal drives.

Harriet found this stage transformative. She exhibited such a strong personality. At the same time, she embraced this wild liberation of the individual. It seemed like a contradiction. She loved the spectacle. She observed from afar and held to her position of power.

The writer did what he could to put together the pieces. Fleming claimed that myth held the key. Thus, even the extraneous elements fit as part of the puzzle. The erratic behaviors led to a pattern, and in this pattern, there was a new order. Harriet returned to where she had started.

All along Harriet had placed the emphasis on the self. But she felt guilty about such an attachment. Myth allowed her to accept that focus while qualifying her commitment to its nature. She played along with the consumer society while railing against its excesses. But she understood that the excesses were at the heart of its message. She was not the sort to let down her guard. She had advanced by her strong will. She felt her position as a reward for that work. Although she welcomed the representation of the wild frenzy, she had a distaste for anything that really deviated from the norm. She developed a way that she could make conformity into a radical gesture. She had found her liberation.

How could I accord my own story with Harriet Fleming's book? I had so many alternative versions to choose from. I had been a runaway from the home of June and Bill's. My friend Rose had encouraged me. I was the victim of a kidnaping, and I was being held in this strange house. I was here in this house with Cody. He was my sick father. I was a college student with an overactive imagination. I lay on the bed in my dorm room with my textbook for abnormal psych open. It talked about disassociative personalities. It struck a chord with me. I was having flashbacks to lives that weren't mine. That was how it seemed. I had built up these stories in my mind to help explain the way that I was. I had memories which supported my feelings. Much of this was like a dream. I couldn't figure out where to go from here.

I wanted to know my maker. Who was the writer who put these stories in my head? I felt as if I was getting closer to making sense of it all. My situation was hardly ideal. So what was the purpose behind my story? I only felt more divided as I sought an answer. My own inventiveness was getting the best of me. For a while I believed if I discovered the thread that tied it all together, then I could sort out all my feelings. Harriet helped me realize that the split in my personality was intentional. And if I wanted to repair it, I would have to follow the narrative

back to its apparent source.

I started off by eliminating the most far-fetched alternatives. For the time being, I accepted my life as a college student. I had been reading Harriet Fleming's book. It had raised a great number of questions, I had made an appointment to meet with her in her office. She could help me with my assignment. The more that I thought about the book, the more that I understood that I was the assignment. I needed some kind of origin. Had this couple, Bill and June, found me and attempted to make me their own. I tried to call on memories with them from my early years. I remember pictures. But there were few memories if any. My isolation created a need for explanation. Bill and June had left me in this emotional limbo. That explained a great deal about my own nature. I didn't want such a messed up childhood. But then there was Rose. Her life was so much worse. And did I create a stable picture to help ward off all the bad influences that had affected her.

The story was getting more complex. Harriet's book was really taking me for a spin. I wanted to go to Cody's room and keep reading to him. That would help me settle down. I had a problem. I was in my room by myself. I had been doing my homework. I had been reading a book. Now I was getting thoughts about Cody. If I went down to his room, and he wasn't there, that would add to my own fear about myself. It would prove that the whole world was screwed up. I couldn't take that chance. I needed to work through my doubt.

What promise had Harriet offered me? How could my story relate to the tales that she examined. Everything went back to the narrator. I was the narrator. I was telling my own story. Who was listening? If I made up Cody, what was my purpose. I needed a listener. But Cody was more than that. He was like a child. I was creating the world for him. But I was still a child. So I was helping this adult get back to his normal life. How did he have a normal life when I lacked one. How would I be able to help him?

Hadn't I been through all these questions before after my dream? And they were all coming back again. I needed to answer them anew. Did this mean that they were the real questions of my life. No amount of analysis could give me the answer.

I felt that the key to my dilemma lay with Cody. If he woke up and recognized me, then it would all make sense. But he wasn't going to wake up any time soon. I had no one to help me on this quest. However, I did have the book. I reviewed the blueprint that it offered. On her view, I was creating this story to make up for my inability to accept the real story. There were too many tough choices in my life. I wasn't ready to grow up.

Harriet Fleming's answer was all too simple. It didn't help. She was trying to create order in her life by conforming. I didn't want to conform. It didn't make me crazy. It just made me different. It meant that there wasn't a textbook that could give me all the answers. That proved that I wasn't a college student. If I was, I'd be more accepting of my college textbooks. Even if I was old enough, I wouldn't be hanging out in college. I was on a journey. I couldn't sit around a classroom. I already had enough school. What were they going to teach me? I ran away from that life.

If I ran away from the normal life, I couldn't be living with my parents. They would only reinforce the traditional path. Even if Cody was my father, my guardians would keep me in school. I had rejected that. So that meant that Cody couldn't be a relative. I was still afraid to go downstairs. The fact that I had been kidnaped was an unlikely scenario. But I had eliminated

most of the other possibilities. And it was seeming more and more probably that was the only alternative. Damn! Why hadn't my dream got rid of all this crap. I was slipping down further. Harriet's book had done a number on me.

I wanted another book that would sort it all out. I didn't want my life to be so haphazard. Harriet's book had made it more difficult to get back to sanity. I supposed that it gave her a rush to mess with people's brain. She probably thought that she was so together. I had too much to think about. But how could that be? I didn't want to favor ignorance. Harriet's perspective couldn't be so dominant that it was freaking me out like this.

My helplessness was directly a product of the fact that I was not the author of my own story. I understood all the details. I had loads of awareness. But there was still this gap that I couldn't fill. I was getting more and more confused. A writer could deal with all these twists and turns. He needed a clear story. His characters could be confused. But he needed clarity. That was it. Some event had messed me up. If I could get to the heart of the matter, then I could disentangle these threads.

I was in a coma. I couldn't move. I had been in an accident. Before the accident, I could see that I was headed for disaster. I didn't heed the warning signs. Here I was, helpless in a bed.

I woke up early. The day was chilly. I didn't want to get out of bed. I thought that sleep would cure my confusion. I was only walking around in a daze. I took a shower. It brought me back to life. After breakfast, the haziness had worn off. The fog had cleared.

I went to Cody's room. Nothing had really changed since yesterday. I sat down by the bed, and I started to read. I thought about my dream from last night. I had been in a bed. And someone was reading to me. I wanted to tell him something. But I couldn't move.

I was tired of shuffling my deck again and again. I wanted to lay the cards out on the table and play from how they were dealt. I didn't want to be someone else's excuse for a story. I wanted my own life back. But I had so many influences, and they seemed to affect me without my awareness.

My questions didn't bother me for long. I went back to reading to Cody. After a while, I was totally distracted from my former thoughts.

We returned to our readings on current affairs. I entered a theater where the entanglements seemed much more complex than anything that could ever affect me directly. We examined how governmental operations grew more and more remote from the actual citizen. The intent appeared to be that the citizens in assembly could affect the decisions of their rulers. Democracy required such directly influence. The representatives of the people needed to keep their ears the ground. But on key issues they had learned to ignore the people.

It was important for the smooth functioning of the society that citizens together could attain a critical mass that would alter the course of their everyday lives. But individuals discovered that an incredible effort on their part was insufficient to affect anyone but themselves. They could not make their voices heard.

Sure, they could show up at public events and root as fans. But that was where their participation ended. They often had difficulty getting their opinions known to elected officials. Those in the inner circle or those who could command loads of money seemed to have a better in on the process. In true demagogic fashion, these so-called leaders would rally the crowd when they could count on a vigilante segment to stifle the majority. However, in the final analysis,

they were afraid of democracy.

So the world terrain became a scarier and scarier place. Once the weapons had been drawn, the opposing sides didn't want to stand down. It was hard getting the kids to put the toys back in the box after they had been playing with them for a while. So world destruction became a favorite video game for these overgrown tykes. And it really didn't hurt to push things to the brink now and then.

It was one thing to have Cody listening intently. But it would be next to impossible to apply this method to the rest of the world. They weren't ready to listen. If Cody ever was to become a player in the geopolitical maze, he'd let the rush go to his. That was how the world turned.

What had happened to the democratic impulse that roared across the plains. Would it be possible to revive this perspective? Would Cody stand down from the brink of his own confrontations? Wasn't that what Lee had taught him: a desire to never give up? He was stubborn to the point of wrecking the opportunity for everyone else. That was part of his definition of character. There wasn't much that I could do. I tried valiantly to reshape the course of history. For once, we could avoid the same insipid resolution. I could change Cody without the influence of Lee. That was my sincere hope.

I had been attempting a rational analysis of what was often an irrational phenomenon. What if things manifested themselves in an even more irregular way? I imagined if people had the same nightmare. Perhaps spending the time in the same haunted house could create this effect. How could the same result be accomplished on a mass scale? It would have to begin from a common fear. If everyone witnessed the same event on television it could have that hypnotic effect. If such an event could be totally staged, it would have just the right effect. This suggested the basis for a mass hysteria. The leader could whip up a common fear. He only needed to utter a few magic words to get people going. At night, the psyche would do the rest. This collective brainwashing would spread like wild fire. The audience could do most of the work to make it happen. It would waft out like some nasty gossip. The momentum couldn't be slowed. Then the fire would flash and engulf everything in its path.

In such crisis-packed moments, it became even more important to find satisfaction in literature. The writer understood the immediacy of his mission. His readers were trying to cushion the blows from a difficult situation. There weren't simply looking for an escape. Instead, they expected insight. If the writer could break down the complexities into simple emotional terms, the reader would be able find peace of mind. Literature was not meant to be a political tract. But it could supply the foundation of a perceptive character analysis. The writer helped to discern what factors influenced behavior. Even if the readers felt helpless in their lives, fiction could allow them to see things from a different angle. Then they might feel that their input was again significant.

The writer reinforced the notion that literature put ordinary people in touch with a deeper understanding of their lives. It encouraged them to look closer at their accumulated experience and demonstrated what they shared in common. The writer caused his readers to ask significant questions about themselves and their lives. But he was not engaged in trickery. Harriet Fleming seemed to endorse a view of literature that was propagated by experts. Consistent with this perspective, the writer created a puzzle for his more adept readers to follow. Those who failed in

this task were somehow morally bereft. Her role as critic was all the more essential to this style. She could elucidate the difficult passages, and the readers would rely on such expertise to help guide them through the obscurity of the illuminati. Formerly, writers had asked the really hard questions about our social and political makeup. They challenged the status quo. Fleming felt the writer needed to help people relate to the dominant order. They were not supposed to give in to their sense of self-absorption. But Harriet's fixation on the manias of the writer did that very thing. While the writers put up a pretense of difficulty, they became lost in word games. Fleming credited this playfulness as a sign of the writer's brilliance. If these games were rather remote for most readers, Harriet did her utmost to defend their usage. It was better that writers analyze the psyche than get lost in the myriad of political issues. Writers discovered their political being in dealing with psychological complexities of personality. She was again fitting the self to a normative model. And the reader s felt that their freedom was thus curtailed. Harriet dismissed such defensiveness. The world did not allow such independence on the part of the readers. The academic critic needed to discipline her flock. The writer was constantly fitting his language to a standard. Even his deviations were measured according to a norm. The only form of departure from the norm that she accepted was a belief in the excellence of expression that she attributed to the writer. Ultimately, she sanctioned a form of pedantry that she excused as erudition. Writers were encouraged to pack their books with loads of research. On the other hand, significant social analysis was discouraged as overly subjective and extraneous. It was more important to reinforce the traditional lessons of myth.

Harriet interpreted politics as literally personal. In other words, the great issues could be reduced to psychological disorders and dealt with accordingly. She shied away from the apparently masculine character of assertiveness; she associated that with aggression. In its place, she emphasized a deconstruction of psychological complexes. Men wanted to act like Zeus. But this was their mythic downfall. Society needed to be protected from such predators. It did not matter that her emphasis on human agency allowed equally aggressive assertions of power. She allied herself with institutions that wielded massive political power. But she ended up restricting the citizens from opposing this dominance.

Fleming's puzzles were not that different than the riddle presented to Oedipus. The hero was allowed to confront the plague on the city so he could reinforce his noble nature. At the same time, he was forced to curtail his desire to live within society. He was not allowed to exercise his will like the gods. In a contemporary social context, he would appear self-centered and stubborn. Fleming liked to use modern psychology in an almost anachronistic fashion to reinforce her thesis. It enabled her to neutralize the radical character of literature's message.

I wondered how Cody was able to connect all these ideas. He had been fascinated by the historical panorama. Harriet Fleming gave a whole new perspective. But it was very similar to a attitude about moral conformity that Cody cherished. He wanted historical truth that could support his political beliefs. I was presenting a significant challenge to him.

Cody had followed me down the river. But I could sense that I carrying on without him. My lessons had revealed a truth too deep for words. Such a burning ideal was too much for his world. He couldn't allow me to continue my endeavor. But Lee still had no idea what was really going on. So I remained in my place as the reader. If I was exploring forbidden territory, so be it. I had done what I could to guide Cody through danger. He would have to take it from there. I

only hoped that he would not give up. If there was something truly contradictory in my approach, that may have been the jolt that Cody needed.

I wanted to do more. I had taken Cody through all of Harriet's arguments, but I felt that I had left something out. I was staring into space unable to say a thing.

It had been an exhausting day. I was tired and ready for bed. As I started to fall asleep, I thought that I would review Harriet's argument one last time. I tried to recapitulate my own story. I was a bored college student. I imagined myself as a runaway. My curiosity had got the better of me. I enjoyed partying too much. It had led to a showdown with my parents. They had punished me too severely. The whole situation unearthed a deeper level of psychic instability. A trauma. For my own part, I couldn't imagine myself getting in that over my head. But even though this story was about me, it wasn't my story. I couldn't control things. They just got out of hand. But I couldn't very well wander forever. Cody was there to give me a purpose. And if my end of the world was biased in my direction, then the same phenomenon would radiate out in the other direction. Cody's story was important as well. And this story that I made up from scratch was becoming more complex. All the twists were there to bring the story closer to reality. Too much for a girl who was supposed to be doing her home work. I was nodding off. This was like counting sheep.

As I faded into the dreamworld, I realized that it didn't make any difference where I had been, or where I was. All that mattered was where I was going. And I surrendered myself to the journey. All the while I felt that there were these indelible marks on the soul that I could not erase. This imprint followed me wherever I went. I couldn't get rid of it. It was my ghost.