

# **A LIFE OF YOUR OWN**

**Michael**

**The tale of a young man**

**undergoing**

**three shamanistic**

**identities.....**

**1: NEW YORK 1976**

**2: AMSTERDAM 1979**

**3: PINDUS MOUNTAINS OF  
CENTRAL GREECE 1980**

a shaman  
a medicine man  
who in primitive ages  
would occasionally  
leave the village  
in order to undergo  
a solo crisis of identity  
to communicate with  
spirit worlds  
  
on completion  
he would return to the village  
and give to the people  
the benefit  
of his knowledge

As I remember, the image of a young man and woman walking hand in hand down the street, with their backs to me, away from me as it were, is enough to make my heart burst.

In a bedsit basement flat in West Kensington, London, in the mid 1970s, I have come home from work. I am burning the books.

I was just ridding my mind of other people's views in one grand gesture of immolation.

Through my teens my passion for music developed.

Leaving University meant leaving the indoctrination of words and music. Now I was to explore myself.

.

I've been trying for a life of my own for some time now.

## **Shamanistic Crisis 1**

### *New York 1976*

Image is for me pure drama

I was going to New York.

1976 bi-centenary year.

New York.

Wonderful.

All the avenues in New York

Great marvels of our fin de mondal last quarter of the

Twentieth Century

Lights; at night it is especially colorful

Ablaze with reds and greens and yellows and blues

Streets displaying infinity

Traffic that bleats

Swiftly moving activity

Shops cinemas restaurants supermarkets museums

churches

Offices apartment blocks

Subways

All the people

All kinds

Millions of them

Hustle

Shoulders

Eyes

Intensity

Joy

Fear

So many people's experiences

And I was to do battle in New York and to discover that

war permeates

the atmosphere with fallout signs armed police and the

imagined but ever

possible mushroom clouds reflecting in the mirror-

windows of the

Skyscrapers.

I settled down

I was off the streets

I had my own little place to curl up in and it seemed quite  
cool and safe

I could pay my rent and live off 25 dollars a week for  
food and still have  
a little for fun for two whole months

Wasn't going to be a tourist

I was to be  
an outsider  
living in New York idly  
absorbing its wonder

I wasn't  
to be a visitor

I'll get the rhythm  
live here for real  
alone  
like all shamans

One of the things about conditioning is that we never  
really know  
the extent to which we are conditioned.

But as for the Avenue of the Americas; it must surely be  
one of the great wonders of the world.

It is enormous, the skyscrapers are  
unimaginably high  
and what's most about it is that there are so  
many of them.

A row of skyscrapers  
Can't always see their tops  
Beautifully cleaned  
Gorgeous

The skyscrapers drifted by like large ships passing in the docks.

Everything moved.

Movement became the essence of existence.

The streets of New York move in multiple ways all revealed by the light

reflecting on the mostly glass walls of the tallest structures ever and

there down at the bottom like two little ants, prey to a hovering hawk

And

Sunday I was up in the air once again hurtling across the Atlantic returning to London and another phase in my life of my own.

# **Shamanistic Crisis 2:**

A m s t e r d a m 1979

I could see him at the other end of the flat  
pretending to be asleep.

I slowly stood and walked out,

Down the stairs,

Into the street.

Along the Damstraat

Towards the railway station.

I stopped part way along and almost

turned back but something

told me Joe would not be interested in me doing that

and so I got to the railway station.

I queued and as my turn came near I felt foolish and

irrevocable about purchasing that ticket to Paris.

Once bought that would be it.

I cried all the way back on that train; just tears  
quietly flowing down my cheeks;  
and when I got back to Paris I told my wife all about it.

I reunited with my wife in Paris

We lived on the compass-needle point of Paris;  
everything to hand; cinemas, art galleries,  
and culture galore.

I saw myself as an aesthete

the experience had a late nineteenth century feel to it.

Added to the culture was the sexuality of Paris

A happy and fulfilling time...BUT

everything was everyone else's

I still had to sort one thing out

A day without human contact

Were it possible to spend a waking state of consciousness  
without any human being in view or sound?

**Shamanistic Crisis 3**

The Pindus Mountains of Central Greece 1980

the feet are marching.

Their little plimsolled selves are treading along the dusty  
road and up the grassy sides of the mountains.

The lesson I learned that day was that mountains are a  
long way away.

They were almost unattainable

When I did "attain" them I scarcely noticed,

the slopes ascended from the plain so imperceptibly.

At the base grassy slope

Middle layer wooded

Third layer was of naked snow. It used to glint gold  
and blue

and violet in the sun's rays.

I came across a shepherd with his flock

My eye caught sight of the biggest hornet

I felt its barb dig into my skin and sting me

My hand brushed it from my neck

My mind was swimming

My legs give way

The bee had presented me with a juice

of the natural world

I walked slowly

Light was fading

Sleeping outdoors ever nearer

Find some shelter

Sanctuary for the night

It was a roughly made shrine

My sleep was fairly undisturbed.

I marched up from the sanctuary

The road still zig-zagged

The mountains seemed to bellow back at me:

"What are ... clocks?"

I remember standing high up on the edge

of the road looking down onto

another level of road when

I saw a group of peasants,

(I had never seen peasants before)

straddling along the road.

They were on donkeys and seemed

to be off to some fields.

Soon I was to see a village; minute, basic, natural.

Hours later, I arrived up a sandy slope that approached three or four boulders. I had come across it just round a bend, at the moment when I was beginning to despair of ever finding anywhere suitable.

I was escaping most everything.

The boulders,  
or stones as I'll call them,  
were about midway down a slope of the mountains.  
They were off and above the dirt-track.  
As you descended from them, and crossed the track,  
there was a second drop, and a spring poured from  
clefted rock.

Then the mountain fell deeply for a long way, until it became a line of villages, and disappeared towards the valleys, and eventually to the plain where I had begun my trek.

It must have been three days and nights I lingered  
by those rocks

Throughout each waking consciousness,  
there would be someone come by,  
often with a herd of goats, but we would pay no  
attention to each other.

After emanating best wishes to all,  
I floated my mind beyond our  
coarse material world of the cosmos-universe

**I tried to probe beyond dualism, which all that  
was.**

**I was defining mind and spirit as dualistic,  
just as man and woman  
good and evil,  
up and down are.**

## **Could there be anything else?**

It was night, and the stars were.

In the distance

Far below

Electric lights of a village

It twinkled white light in the blackness

The cluster made the village a spaceship

Drifting through black star-struck crashes of universe

It was unknown to me

I did not know what the village was called

I could create their identity

Something would be mine by definition

This felt wonderful and free

I could go beyond dualism

I didn't need to deny dualism

Far from it

But I didn't need to limit myself to it

If I didn't want to

If I wanted to be free

All I had to do was re-create

This was to be the night of nights.

I could be only what I wished

And so another barrier fell

I pretty soon ended up

being an indefinable

Something was becoming mine

I was escaping that

"everything is everyone else's".

There was a marvelous sunny morning,  
when sitting by the stones,  
I was disturbed by a goatherd and his goats.  
The goats streamed down the hill  
and round the boulder.  
The goatherd, forytish and  
dark with a moustache,  
came and sat by me.  
He wanted me to tell him what I was doing here.  
So I wrote with a pencil the Greek lettering that  
spelt Socrates.  
He was amused by this.

"Ah Socraaateeze!. Ha-ha!"

"Yes, Socraaateeze," I replied.

And we laughed and the goatherd's little boy  
behind us laughed.

The boy had a face as innocent and  
as gentle as those of the goats.

A kind of blind seeking-out quality.

They left me shortly after that.

I was going beyond happiness

**Then I seemed to remember the objective of  
passing**

**a day without human contact.**

**I had to leave, so I did.**

I walked for several hours

The cliff rocks ceased

The land folded in grassy slopes

I passed a concrete shelter

I decided I had better leave the road

Started to climb

Plenty of trees and bushes

Little clearings

Went as high as I could

I picked a clearing and settled

Late in the afternoon

**I made up a bed and dined  
on bread and cheese,  
whilst gazing over the vast  
valleys and mountains.**

**There was, just to my right in the way off distance,  
a glimpse of the road.**

**There was nothing human:  
no villages,  
no buildings,  
no communication posts.**

I fell asleep re-musing over the night of nights,  
remembering the people I had met this day,  
wondering if my next day would fulfill  
my strange ambition...

I realised on this, the last day,  
that I was on my way back to the world  
I had left.

Apart from glimpsing a car in the distance,  
I spent the day  
without  
human contact.

The effect of this was restful  
  
the sense of losing one's conditioned identity  
freed one to become whatever one wished.  
I remember a sense of loss of body,  
a loss of mind;  
it was no longer in my mind that I thought.  
My mind was no longer my brain.  
Thoughts seemed to come from the  
mountains if anywhere.

In the afternoon, there was a rustling sound behind me,  
and I turned

to see a very large goat staring at me.

I waited a while.

Then it disappeared

into the thickets.

I was drifting; everything was changing

much to explore

ideas about not identifying and setting down

pliant , ever-changing and spontaneous

not concrete

open and free.

The night came and sleep took me away from these things

Rain woke me.

I ran back to that shelter I had seen.

The valleys and mountain-ranges were  
engulfed by the rain.

At last the rain eased

I came to a sandy village

There was a bus stop

People were gathering

I felt encouraged

They were on their way to market

The bus took us to Trikala

I felt like a Martian.

Trikala gave me my bearings and so I got out  
a map and worked out an itinerary.

I would travel across land to the West Coast of Greece,  
cross the sea to Brindisi,  
travel up to Rome and onto Paris.

We are all foes and friends to each other  
in these days of dualism.

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you have to train everyone to leave you alone.

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