

on—revolution, earth changes, the political upheaval, the norms, changing values, religion. The future part is looking back at that transition from the Piscean age to the Aquarian age, from el mundo quinto sol, the fifth world sun, to the sixth world sun. So part of it is very visionary in terms of looking to the future. I'd so been concentrating on the roots and the past that I forgot to mention that. Sometimes I overdo the looking forward, and not—you know?

LS: So that's going to be in this book also?

GEA: Yes. I have a section called "Five Movements," which is the Aztecs' name for this age. Olin, this is the fifth movement, and according to the Aztecs it's going to end through earthquake and fire. So you can see the enormity of the task. And I get very impatient because it's so slo-o-o-o-w. I mean you write a page, then you revise it and revise it again and again.

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Within the Crossroads

Lesbian/Feminist/Spiritual Development

An Interview with Christine Weiland (1983)

(1998–1999)

ALK: In this interview, as in the previous interview with Linda Smuckler, you describe your earliest remembered spiritual experience as a type of self-multiplication or self-extension that occurred when you reached for a piece of fruit. Can you elaborate on this experience? In what ways is it relevant to your life today?

GEA: There are certain cultural assumptions, injunctions, teachings that didn't take with me. One of them concerned the physical body's limitations. When I reached for that fruit, somehow or other my arm got longer and I noticed concentric selves like sheaths, one within the other within the other. But I realized that I wasn't supposed to be able to extend my arm beyond what I'm physically capable of doing, that I shouldn't have been able to reach that high. This also has to do with the first time I touched myself, masturbated, which I also knew I shouldn't do. (I wrote a story, "El segundo corazón/The Second Heart," about it.) I have this part of myself that's stubborn and wants to keep doing something; if I have to hide to continue doing it, I will. So I kept on entertaining spiritual experiences and I kept on masturbating.

At the time I had no way of explaining this experience, but later as an adult I started putting together its significance, its meaning. I came up with the idea that the body doesn't stop at the skin, that it extends—I don't know how far, maybe it could extend down to San Francisco, maybe to the moon. But we limit the body, we shrink it. It has to do

with belief. People who can experience things from a distance *believe* that they can, like shamans who travel great distances; their souls leave their bodies and suddenly they're across the ocean. You can teach yourself how to do this through certain practices and techniques. I've only been able to feel that my soul has left my body when I dream or when I've had out-of-body experiences, which have always resulted from some kind of shock—something traumatic, unexpected, something unplanned for—not through willed intention and self-discipline. So anyway, here's this child who could extend her body, but was it a physical body or was it some kind of invisible body that she elongated?

ALK: Somehow or other you got the fruit, right? Did you think someone else brought the fruit to you? Did you get the fruit by literally extending your hand? Or did it occur on a spiritual level?

GEA: Yes, I got the fruit. No one else brought it to me and it's not that my muscles and bones grew, became elongated. There's an invisible body, your soul, that can leave the physical body and actually manipulate by remote. It would be wonderful if I could believe that if I wanted to be five eleven, I could just elongate my body and become that tall! But human beings have made a contract about what's possible, and one of these contracts concerns the belief about bodily limitations.

I believe that humankind is coming to a point where there's going to be a huge metamorphosis and our physical bodies—or maybe it's our invisible bodies—are going to change. I'm revising a story titled "Puddles" where la Prieta turns into a lizard-woman; she has a lizard skin and her sense of smell changes. It happens in nature. Look at the difference between a butterfly and its larval state. Or look at salamanders: Some are terrestrial and become aquatic and some regenerate, they change their form. (I'm also writing an axolotl story.) I think humanity is going to take an evolutionary leap and things are going to be different.

ALK: In this interview you claim that spirituality is a tool of the oppressed, the "only weapon and means of protection oppressed people have. Changes in society come only after that." How have your views on the political efficacy of spirituality changed in the seventeen or so years since this interview?

GEA: My views have become more solid. When you're going through a lot of emotional pain and don't have anyone to support or help you,

you're thrown back onto your own resources. You kind of surrender to the will of universal consciousness, to God. Or you say, "I need help; I have to make changes in my life." You have to commit yourself through intention, so prayer is really good for that. I had some horrendous experiences where I was totally isolated and totally alone. (Some of the poems in *Borderlands*, like "Antigua, Mi Diosa" are about this.) I had to find sustenance somewhere. I needed a connection with something outside myself that could sustain me but I was really fighting it. I didn't want to accept la diosa, that spiritual help—or maybe it's imaginal help, as it all takes place in the imagination. So when a woman or a group of women or men or a whole race has been oppressed historically, over and over, they have to create some means of support and sustenance in order to survive.

ALK: A lot of people would agree with you but would argue that this spiritual survival become a form of escapism which maintains the status quo: "Things will be better in the future, but we can't change the fact that we're oppressed now." For you, however, spirituality is very political.

GEA: When beliefs become institutionalized (like certain aspects of la Virgen de Guadalupe), they become an opiate for the people. But if you maintain a connection that doesn't have all these institutional trappings, it's political. This is one of the reasons I'm so weary of political, religious, and academic institutions: They come with agendas and trappings which lull you into not challenging things.

ALK: You're saying that spirituality can be a force and energy for bringing about change?

GEA: Yes! I don't even know if "spirituality" is the right term because it's been so misused.

ALK: What would you use instead?

GEA: I've been trying to think of another term. I keep coming back to Mexican indigenous terms to see if I can appropriate cultural figures or words and apply them to the twenty-first-century experience, but I haven't come up with anything yet. I know it has something to do with the imagination, the inner life, but the terms that I come up with don't work. It's like the problem with the word "gay": if you use "gay" to describe medieval homosexual activity, you're transferring from one

age to another. You have to somehow reformulate it. Likewise with "spirituality."

ALK: Let me know when you find a new word! Your view of good and evil in this interview is very nondualistic: You state that you've always believed "God and the devil are the same person, that evil and good are the same." Do you still hold this belief? If so, could you apply it to the manifestations of evil that confront us—in everything from racism/sexism/homophobia we experience today to the decimation of indigenous American peoples to the Holocaust?

GEA: Yes. It's a very real paradox. We live in physical reality in order to experience certain things. Often people don't try to make order out of the chaos, turmoil, oppression, and pain in their lives. Left to ourselves, we don't want to deal with any of that—right? But say you have a chronic disease which some day will give you an aneurism or a heart attack. That adversity forces you to try to give significance to the negative experience and the doubts, confusion, and ambiguity. We cocreate our experiences and the things around us. The things which have happened to me—the diabetes, the near-death experience on the operation table, the racism, the homophobia, the sexism that comes with being a brown girl living in ranch country—forced me to mine some kind of meaning from these events, experiences, feelings, thoughts. That's how we make our soul, how we evolve as humans. Sometimes we can evolve through the good things—through the connections, the love, the empathy, the joy, the enthusiasm. But the good experiences don't force us to search for meaning. I've been mugged twice. I spent a lot of time figuring out why this happened to me: Did I provoke it? Should I have been out on the street? I don't scrutinize a happy experience as much. I don't dwell on it, I don't do the soul work that I need to do as a writer. I'm not saying that Jews created the Holocaust or that the woman who's been raped has created that experience for herself, because she doesn't. We don't do it individually. We don't even do it as a human species, we do it as all life. We do it in conjunction with the creative life force. Does that make sense to you?

ALK: Yes. From one perspective events can very clearly seem evil, but from a much different perspective they're actually a part of a larger evolutionary process.

GEA: Look at my experience with diabetes: it's not just about my immune system killing off the beta cells so that my body no longer

secretes insulin. It's not the cells; it's not about one antibody configuration of cells killing off another configuration. It's the whole person, every system in the body. Every biological system, every emotional system, every soul system. Similarly, it's not just about the individual person; there's something greater. I really do believe that we have to create our souls, we have to keep evolving as souls, as minds, as bodies—on all the different planes. If it takes adversity to force us to learn, to do, to create souls, to evolve, then we're going to get adversity. Right now, we learn through adverse experiences. Maybe in the future it won't be this way and maybe some people can learn through their dreams. If I had a choice of being raped in this reality or in the dream world, I'd rather be raped in the dream because it's a different plane, a different signification system; it's not flesh and blood. At least I don't think it is. If I've come into this life as a Chicana born of Amalia and Urbano who were farmers and ranchers of campesino working class, and I wanted to go through certain experiences and build my soul up in certain ways, then it seems to me that if I'm part of this greater universal soul I would know exactly what sort of things I needed to deal with in this life. If I needed to deal with depression or with being too prideful or with greed, then I'd suffer these experiences until I learned to detach enough to get perspective, to give it meaning. I believe that the universe is a text which we cocreate. But when you're in flesh and blood—when you don't have that distance—when you're in the midst of that pain—you can't see anything but its immediacy and so this enemy becomes all powerful; there are no redeeming qualities. But by stepping back and asking "OK. What's my responsibility in this? What part did I play? What's the meaning?" you get into symbolic and archetypal patterns.

ALK: So you're talking about a way of attaining agency. When you view good and evil dualistically, the negative events have tremendous power over you. By shifting your perspective you acquire power to bring about change.

GEA: It would be ineffective for me to look at white people or men with hatred and see them as the enemy. It would not serve me and it would not serve them.

ALK: And this perspective empowers you.

GEA: Yes, and it often changes the other people as well; they begin acting differently. I've been with people whose racism continued no

matter what anybody did, but I've also been with racist people who, when I didn't reciprocate in hate, changed their behavior toward me. At least for that moment, they changed. Those too entrenched in their patterns keep repeating them. I know this sounds kind of Pollyanna, but I really think that when someone does you wrong you have to forgive them; you have to let go and get on with your life.

ALK: I've realized that recently; it's very true. Otherwise, you're enslaved to your own anger.

GEA: It takes your energy and whatever takes your energy and attention enravels you, enslaves you. If you dwell on this person who did you wrong, you're giving them energy which you could be using in more positive ways.

ALK: In this interview you assert your belief in an underlying/overarching commonality that goes beyond human beings to include everything. You suggest that if we all recognized our commonality "there'd be no more violence" because we'd realize that harming someone else harms ourselves. Doesn't this belief in a cosmic universal energy/force contradict your use of labels? And if not, why not? (I'm playing devil's advocate here!)

GEA: No. We need to be able to switch between looking at differences and looking at commonalities. I don't think one is superior to the other; we just need some kind of negotiation or balance. Have you seen drawings that seem to represent two very different things—like the picture of a vase that when examined from a different perspective seems to be the profile of two human faces? It depends on your perception, what you focus on. During the last few centuries—or maybe even longer—people have focused on differences, on the stranger. Difference is threatening to the perceiver. From the beginning of time to the present, all the wars, ethnic conflicts, class conflicts, and so on are based on the belief that people who are different from you may harm you. What I want to do is blink my eyes and see the other from a different perspective, focusing on what we have in common with a rock, a tree, a bird, a black person, a Jewish person, a gay person. Look at the commonalities: We have a consciousness, we have a soul.

ALK: I believe that to get beyond racism we need to get beyond the idea

of "race." As long as we use labels we'll create unnecessary divisions among people.

GEA: I use labels because we haven't gotten beyond race or class or other differences yet. When I don't assert certain aspects of my identity like the spiritual part or my queerness, they get overlooked and I'm diminished. When we come to a time when I don't have to say, "Look, I'm a dyke," or "I'm spiritual," or "I'm intellectual," I'll stop using labels. That's what I want to work towards. But until we come to that time, if you lay your body down and don't declare certain facets of yourself, they get stepped on.

But we do need to start talking about a time when labels won't be necessary. The idea of getting beyond race comes first and then people open up to it. They begin saying, "Yeah, I could act this way," and then several decades later maybe it becomes a cultural fact, a part of consensual reality. But you're right, the idea of race has to change. I think we can invent other categories, rather than race, but we'll always have categories because our languages demand it and because as humans we're such a diverse species. We have to redo the old categories or we need to create new ones as we go along.

ALK: I'm fascinated by your concept of a "yoga of the body." Do you still have this concept? If so, in what ways has it developed since this 1983 conversation?

GEA: "Yoga of the body" has to do with flexibility and fluidity—going beyond physical boundaries. It has to do with extending beyond limitations. Yoga is the ability to move your body in a flexible kind of way. You have these stretching exercises, you curl your legs a certain way, you work in conjunction with the breathing. (In my younger days I did Kundalini yoga.) We need that kind of flexibility when we work with the imagination and with our minds and feelings. We need a yoga of the body which includes the mind, the spirit, the imagination, the soul. If you're an artist, creativity is a yoga of the mind, of the imagination. Everything that writers do—whether it's fiction or images—has to go through the body. Readers are also affected physically. Every word you read hits you physiologically—your blood pressure changes, your heartbeat changes; your cells, your bones, your muscle are moved by a beautiful poem, a tragic episode. So that's the kind of yoga that I want: a yoga filtered through the body and through the imagination, the emotions, the spirit, and the soul.

"Within the Crossroads: Lesbian/Feminist/Spiritual Development"

An Interview with Christine Weiland (1983)

Early Life

CW: You said you were born when you mother was sixteen. Did your mother plan on having you at that time?

GEA: No. I was conceived before the marriage ceremony and was born a month or something like that before I was supposed to be, and I think she had some guilt about it.

CW: When you were born it was pretty obvious to everyone that you were early. How did your mother feel about it?

GEA: Well, I don't know if it was very obvious to everyone (there's not that much difference between nine and eight months), but I think it was obvious to my mother, my father, and the immediate family. They knew. I think my mother felt OK until I was three months old and blood started appearing on my diaper; I began having a period. She probably thought, "What did I do wrong? . . . Oh, it's the result of a sin." My mother has a pretty healthy attitude towards sex, except that she's adopted all the standard ideas—that it's dirty, that all men want is your body. But otherwise, she has a much healthier attitude towards it than most people in South Texas.

CW: Do you know how your father felt about your mother being pregnant?

GEA: He was in love with her from the time she was eight years old. He was the school bus driver when my mother was eight. (When he was in school, he was also the bus driver.) He was six years older than my mother. He wanted her and was already madly in love with her. He knew that she was going to be his wife. My mother wouldn't have anything to do with him. At eight she didn't like boys. I don't know how he felt about my birth. I think he felt that I was a special child. I always felt he treated me like I was special because I had this handicap—I bled. Technically, I was menstruating and able to bear a child, even though I was so young. I mean, there was something special and something freaky about it, but my mother felt the freakiness more than my father. I think he was in awe of this event.

CW: You mean of your having a period so young?

GEA: Yes. He was always with me in my head, in my consciousness. He stayed away from me but it was like he was always there, watching me. His presence was always with me, so when I was little I felt this intense sexuality towards my father; I don't know whether I picked it up from him or he from me. Or I could have mistaken this connection, this spiritual connection, for sexuality. As a child I knew there was an energy between us. I also felt it with my mother but we weren't supposed to touch her because my sister and I were girls. It was OK for my brothers to be intimate and touch her, but we weren't supposed to. However it was OK for the male parent to touch the female child and play with her, and my father did that until a certain age.

CW: Do you remember what age?

GEA: I think it was when I was five or six because around then my breasts started growing. That's when I realized I was really strange, really different from everyone else. It's just real strange—the relationship I've had and still do have with my father though he's dead. I still feel his presence strongly.

CW: What kind of person was your father?

GEA: My father was strong, a leader in the community. He adored his father, who was a womanizer and had mistresses, four different houses he visited. He was married to my grandmother but he also had these other "wives." He'd take my father and his second son, David, with him, and they'd play with his other children. It was a real close family thing except that it excluded my grandmother. It was just my father and the children of the other women. His father died early of a heart attack, just like my father died early of a heart attack. His father's death was a great shock. There were nine in his family and he became the head of the household. He began supporting them at the age of twelve.

My father was not as talkative as my Uncle David, and not as loving—my Uncle David was always touching and kissing and hugging. I had that connection with him, that physical connection with my uncle that I didn't have with my father. My father was afraid to touch me. After I was six he'd only touch my head.

CW: So you were cut off from touching anyone, because you couldn't touch your mother and—

GEA: I couldn't touch my father. I knew—very early—that there were a lot of these incestuous feelings between myself and my father which I may have transferred to my brother around the age of ten or twelve, or maybe even earlier than that because it was so incorrect to have those kinds of feelings about your father. The sexual feelings were very strong in the whole family, between me and my sister. Maybe more on my sister's part than on mine. There was never any of that with my brother. I had daughter-father fantasies but I didn't put my face or his on the fantasy. There was just any father, any daughter. They were all heterosexual fantasies until I discovered that there was another sexual way of being. Then I started experimenting, creating sexual fantasies with women—or with men and women. But I had sexual fantasies about father-daughter, sister-brother, woman-dog, woman-wolf, woman-jaguar, woman-tiger, or woman-panther. It was usually a cat- or a dog-type animal.

CW: Do you remember any of the fantasies specifically?

GEA: Yes. In the father-daughter fantasies there was a lot of physical contact between the father and the daughter, like bathing and disrobing from a very early age, from the time the child was a baby. And then three years old, five years old. Most of the erotic fantasies had to do with touching, kissing, and holding, with the girl child feeling pleasure. Then gradually as she got older, very gently—it wasn't like a rape—very gently the father kissing the body, licking the body, touching the breasts, and as she got older, going down on her. As she got older, she would touch him and play with his penis, put it in her mouth. When I was younger most of the fantasies never got to the point of intercourse. When I got older, the fantasies became more graphic and more sexual. Then it was strangers. It wasn't father-daughter but just any woman, any man. The animal fantasies were because I lived on a farm and observed animals copulating. In my animal fantasies I was outside in the jungle or on the grass or on top of a hill. The panther was usually a pet. In the fantasies it was OK for me to see that it was happening to me. I'd be playing with the animal and then getting fucked. Usually I'd be on my stomach and the animal would be pretty large, a large dog or panther. Later, when I found out about homosexuality, sometimes the animal would be a she-lion or a she-panther. It wasn't always a male.

CW: Did you talk to other people about it, or was it something you kept to yourself?

GEA: It was something I kept to myself. I've always been pretty much of a loudmouth; it's hard for me to hold secrets. I might have started telling people, and they probably shut me up. My mother says I'm shameless because to me, nothing is private. Maybe that's why I became a writer. My sexual life, my fantasy life, my spiritual life are unveiled, divulged. If there's a veil, it's for myself, but once I realize something, then the whole world can know it. I didn't start talking about my fantasies until I met Randy. I had a few women friends with whom I tried to talk about these things, but women aren't as eager to talk about their sex lives as men are. Especially faggots. So it was fine talking about fantasies and my different sexual experiences with Randy.

CW: After you were born, did your parents plan the other children or were they surprises?

GEA: My mother had a diaphragm, I remember that. We lived on a ranch, miles away from anything. The only kind of planned parenthood people had was that the man wouldn't ejaculate into the vagina. Women took certain herbs if they didn't want to get pregnant and they'd go see a curandera. I don't think my mother ever bothered with that. She wanted to have children but she didn't want to have me. I came too early. Once I came, though, it was OK for her to have the others. She wanted to do it early and had all of us before she was twenty—a child every fifteen months. So it's like we grew up together. She stopped having children after my father watched my little brother's birth. The doctors didn't allow fathers to watch the childbirth, but my father insisted. He watched and found it horrendous. He didn't want my mother to go through that painful process again. He thought she would die. I mean, my mother was very healthy; she probably could have had another four kids, but to him that experience—! And then having helped animals on the farm giving birth. So he had her tubes tied. He said, "No more children. Four is enough." So that was it.

CW: She didn't have anything to say about it? It was your father's decision? You said, "He had her tubes tied."

GEA: Yes, he insisted. But he couldn't get away with anything if my mother didn't want it. She had a strong voice in the household and stood up to my father. I think my father was weak only to her. I guess the Pisces predominated in him with his relationship to my mother because she could do pretty much what she pleased. There were certain points where she put her foot down. He probably listened to her more

than she listened to him. My family is very atypical because in other families it's not that way. My mother kept the money. But my father loved her so much he couldn't see her go through this pain again, and I think she was ready; four was enough.

My parents were very loving and intimate towards each other. They would always be fighting and arguing. And very intimate; they fucked a lot. It was very sexual. I don't know where my mother got this thing about women being subservient to men because she never was—not to her brothers, not to her father, not to my father. But she paid lip service.

CW: Did she find the birth process horrendous?

GEA: No. I think she thought that's just the way it was. It probably would have been less painful had it been natural childbirth, but she was proud that we were born in the hospital and the clinic, whereas most of the other kids were born through a midwife which, I think, would have been better.

CW: But she thought it was better for the child to be born in a hospital?

GEA: Well, my father thought it was safer in case anything came up. I think my mother got over her fear after I was born, her fear of dying or whatever fears women have when they're having a child for the first time. I've never had a child, but I'm sure there's a basic fear that something is going to go wrong: you're going to bleed to death; you're going to die; the kid is going to be born abnormal, dead, or a monster, or something.

CW: Has your mother talked about those fears?

GEA: Only if I ask her point blank. Mostly she says she doesn't remember, it's been so long. She and I can talk intimately. She's like me—a big mouth. I mean, she told me about my father having intercourse with her and how she felt about it. I don't know if I've ever asked her how she felt about the birth. I've asked her things because I'm writing an autobiography and there were certain things I want to know that only she can tell me. I ask when my sister's not around because my sister will think, "Oh, well, she wants it for her book."

CW: Did your parents have a preference in the sex of the children? When they found out that your mother was pregnant the first time, did either of them desire to have a male or a female child?

GEA: I think that they wanted some boys and some girls, but I don't know if they wanted them in any kind of order. I always felt like my mother would have wanted me to be a boy. I think with my father it was OK—as the firstborn. There was, and still is, a strong preference for males in my culture and in my family—which doesn't mean my mother doesn't love me and my sister as much, just differently. It means that there are certain things we're supposed to be and do as women. Our role is to wait on our brothers. That was the first thing I rebelled against: ironing their shirts, fixing them dinner, and serving them food. I love to serve people and make food, and I'll do it for friends, whether male or female, but to have it imposed on me—!! My brothers are intuitive. They're very atypical and have a very strong feminine aspect to them, especially my brother, Nune.

CW: How is Nune atypical?

GEA: He had to fight his feelings, to become strong and not cry inside. I don't mean physical, real tears; he had to grow a thick skin and become less sensitive to the world—because he was born male. My brothers, it's almost like they had to work hard at their masculinity because they had so much of the other. If the pressures hadn't been on them they both probably would have wanted women's things. I had to grow a thick skin for the same reasons: to not get hurt, to not be so sensitive to the world. But I didn't have to live up to a macho image. I had a knack for male activities: I'd fix things and fool around with machines. But I also did female work like knitting, crochet, and leathercraft. I did both traditional women's and men's work. For me one wasn't better than the other. My sister didn't do men's work. She has no knack for things like putting up curtains or plugging in a TV; you have to do it for her. She has so much energy in her body that she gets shocked. Sometimes when I touch a doorknob I get shocked too.

CW: Were you encouraged or discouraged in doing any of the various activities you did?

GEA: I was discouraged from the male acts, but I've always been real stubborn and I'd just go ahead and do them. I got away from punishment by saying "Oh, sure" but still doing what I wanted to do. When something got under my skin, I'd stand up and protest: I'd yell and scream and get punished. That was fine, but things didn't seem to get under my skin very often. I mean, if my mother was yelling and screaming that I should do this and that I should do that.

CW: What kind of things specifically would she say you should or shouldn't do?

GEA: Clean the cupboards, clean the house, iron the clothes, wash, grind the corn, can tomatoes, can corn. Those are the kinds of things I should do. I shouldn't go out, get dirty, jump across ditches, shoot the twenty-two, go hunting snakes, but it was OK for me to mow the lawn, learn how to drive a tractor, and do that kind of work. My brothers wouldn't help around the house, so I had to do the men's work outside—pruning, cutting, watering, putting up the clothesline, fixing the roof, digging holes for the trash. (We buried the tin cans and burned the paper.) It was OK for me to do these male tasks because it helped my mother.

My brothers didn't do work around the house, but they didn't get away with stuff. My father punished them whenever they disobeyed. They were always fighting (they still are). He'd make them kneel in or by the closet for a certain length of time. He might have struck them a couple of times, and my mother struck them on their bottoms with her hand—but never with a belt or a stick or anything. My mother would yell and scream at my sister and me, but my father didn't even have to raise his voice for us to obey. He was that kind of person. But I never got spanked by either parent. They were so strong, Christine; they had such strong personalities.

As I grew older I put out that I was book smart but not smart at anything else. But I was very cunning in another way. I always knew how to do any task in the shortest amount of time with the fewest number of movements. Like picking cotton: I'd figure out a way to move my hands fast and to position the opening of the sack properly in a special way so that I could pick my hundred pounds or whatever and then go home to read. With the hoes, I'd make sure that my back was straight, that when I lifted the hoe and put it down I wouldn't strain my back. I figured out these kinds of things with my body that people who'd been working in fields for generations hadn't figured out. So when I became an adolescent, the role I played was that I lacked common sense, was absentminded, forgetful, didn't know about relationships. It was all a mask. But when I was little there was no mask; everybody knew I was real sharp. My sister was so dumb, she'd always get punished. I mean, if you know that if you say "no" you're going to get punished, but you keep doing it a million times, don't you learn?

CW: So you'd deal with that by just saying "OK" and then not doing it anyway?

GEA: I'd deal with it in a variety of ways. Sometimes I'd say that I'd do it later, a postponement. Or I'd just say, very calmly, "I'm not going to do it." My mother didn't know how to handle me. Out of all her children, she says, I've been the most disobedient and given her the most trouble; I've been the rebel, the black sheep, everything. But I haven't, I've just been myself. When I felt very strongly that I wasn't going to do something, I'd just say it.

CW: How did she react?

GEA: It would infuriate her. She'd give up in disgust or she'd say, "I'm going to let your father deal with you," or she'd yell at me. If I didn't want her to get upset, I'd be very vague. I tried not to upset her too much, she had four of us to deal with. I love my mother, I always tried to make things easy for her. I bought her stuff, I made sure she didn't work too hard and even if I hated washing dishes all the time, I'd help. I looked after her. When we cooked, I made sure she got good food instead of my brothers always getting it. She was like a prima donna to me. You know, we were poor; we were working all the time. I felt very close to my mother. She's also Libra. Her birthday is October 4th, about eight days away from mine. When I was young, a lot of my manipulation was done to help her. I really got into hating her when I was an adolescent. I wanted to hurt her, stick the dagger in her back. There was this love-hate between us, but I think a lot of it had to do with sexuality and being at the age when you want to establish an independent life of your own—fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. For me, I think it was earlier.

CW: Why did you want to take care of your mother at such a young age?

GEA: I've always been that kind of person, and I did the same thing with my sister and brothers. If I love someone, I don't want them to be upset or to suffer. Part of my problem was—and to some extent still is—not telling people certain home truths because it hurts them. If I see someone very vulnerable, I won't confront them. I've learned to be very diplomatic and say things in ways that don't hurt people. Don't you agree that I usually say things in a way that doesn't hurt them a lot?

CW: Yes.

GEA: I don't know. I just have a lot of love for people, and a lot of love for my sister, my brothers, and my parents. It wasn't because I was protecting my mother more than I was protecting the others. She had a heavier burden, and she was also the person I interacted with the most because the mother rears the child. She was the one laying down the way we should be and what we should do—the traditional, cultural thing. Up until I was eight or thirteen I was my mother's little kid and I did a lot of the tasks that would take weight off of her, like shopping and cooking. When I was in high school, I took homemaking classes. The teacher would come to the house and see my menus and the cakes and breads and stuff. Then at one point I gave it up; I just didn't do it anymore. My sister always says that I never cooked, but my mother remembers. Everybody in the family was angry that I had stopped being this kind of person.

My sister had never cooked or done any housework, but she decided to take over those tasks. I think I told you about her decision to stay in the house and do the housework and the cooking. It was that or work in the fields. She hated the sun and would get heat strokes. She was gaining weight and didn't want to be around people looking at her. At my urging, my mother allowed her to stay home. She was about thirteen.

I stopped cooking for the same reason that I stopped obeying my mother: because it was a female role. As long as I liked to do it, it was fine. But I was really heavy into learning, into books and exploring, and the cooking and cleaning took time out from the books. There was another reason as well: once I become good at something, I give it up. It's real bizarre. I got good at working leather, and I gave it up. I got good at crocheting, knitting, sculpture, whatever. I've done it and want to do something else. There was a switch, I think, for me around the age of twelve, thirteen, fourteen—a switch from using my hands and doing fine embroidery to working with my mind. Part of it was rebellion against working in the fields like an animal, where the work was so brutalizing and made you into a numb animal where you only did mechanical things. You worked in the hot sun with the sweat, the dirt, and the thirst. It was sort of a rebellion against the body, which again was connected to the sexuality. Everything was connected.

CW: You mean not working in the fields was a rebellion?

GEA: Working in the fields meant time away from the books, which

was the mind or the spirit. Working in the fields meant working with your body, with the animal body, and mine was always in pain. It was horrendous, because out of every twenty-four days—my period came every twenty-four days—ten of them were painful. I had fevers of 106, tonsillitis every time, throwing up. Horrendous pain all the time, all the time, all the time.

CW: Would you stay in bed during those ten days?

GEA: It didn't matter if I stayed in bed or if I was sitting or walking because the pain was always there. Often I missed school, but sometimes doing things—rather than staying in bed—would distract me.

CW: Did you work in the fields?

GEA: When my father was alive, I went to school and worked in the fields in the afternoon. After he died, we worked in the fields in the summertime, on Saturdays and Sundays, whenever we could. Sometimes my brothers would miss school to work because we needed the money.

CW: Who owned the fields you worked in?

GEA: Not my family. My family lost their land to whites because of taxes and dirty manipulation by these people, so my father was a tenant farmer, a sharecropper. He kept 60 percent, and 40 percent went to this corporation called Rio Farms, Inc. These white landowners had just incorporated and bought all the land from the mostly Mexican small farmers. My father would get in debt to them for the seed and the water. We were like slaves, Christine. When my father was alive we'd go out in the fields and cover watermelons with paper plates so they wouldn't freeze in the wintertime; we'd hoe and pick cotton. My father had braceros when they were still legal and later he had *mojados*—*trabajadores sin papeles*, workers without papers.

CW: What's that?

GEA: Braceros are people from across the border, from Mexico, who come and live here. We had some good relationships with some of those braceros, they were wonderful. When my father died we didn't have anything and had to work for other people. We worked for my Uncle David and for the farmers around the area, mostly whites. A Mexican, a Chicano, would come up and round us all up, put us in the back of

a truck, and take us to the fields. Sometimes my mother was able to get a stretch of land only for us, so she'd load us up in the car and we'd go the fields and just work on our own, without a supervisor. The fields were not ours. Even when my father was farming, they weren't ours.

CW: When did your family lose the land?

GEA: Gradually. I had a very irresponsible grandfather, the one with all those women. He went through a lot of money and land through carelessness. Also, the whites knew how to take land away through trickery. My grandmothers, uncles, and aunts sold their mineral rights for a few dollars. This happened before I was born on both sides of my family. My grandmothers ended up with a little land which they then parceled out to their sons and grandsons. I ended up with around twelve acres which I deeded over to my mother. It's so senseless to chop up the land and give everyone a little piece.

But my other grandmother, Mamagrande Ramona, on my mother's side, her husband, her husband's father before her, and her husband's grandfather had amassed some land—land grants from the time when Texas was Mexico. It was shared collectively. At that time people weren't into private ownership. Private ownership didn't occur until the whites came. Because they settled there, it was their land. Their ownership was even acknowledged by the U.S. Land Grant but it was taken away through carelessness, through white people's greed, and my grandmother not knowing English.

CW: There must have been a lot of resentment involved with going to the fields, too?

GEA: Oh, yeah. To work in the fields is the lowest job, and to be a migrant worker is even lower. If you work in the fields but you stay home, you're pretty low down in the social scale, but if you work in the fields and move with the harvests—to West Texas, Arkansas, Indiana—you're even lower because you have to pull your kids out of school and you're at the mercy of other white growers who were considered worse than Texas growers. We migrated one year, during my second year of school. My father swore never to do it again because I missed two months of school. We went to the Texas panhandle, lived in three or four different houses and moved around. To me, it was a new experience, I have a lot of memories. After that year my father would go by himself. When my brother wanted to drop out of high

school, he started migrating with his family. We were the kind of people who worked in the fields but didn't migrate. My father insisted we go to school. He wanted me to go to college. Nobody else did. They didn't even know what college was, but my father was different—probably because of this aristocracy (it's really weird, very poor aristocracy but aristocracy anyway) on my father's side and a sense of superiority, that the Anzaldúas were always different. We were the poorest of the poor and we were different, but not in a privileged way. We were different in being so odd. My mother's side was very india, working class, with maybe some black blood which is always looked down on in the valley where I come from. So here was this peasant-type with this aristocratic, Spanish-German, blond, blue-eyed, Jew, whatever on my father's side. (I told you he looks exactly like the man who runs the laundromat in Brooklyn, near my apartment—very Jewish features, curly hair, the nose.) Very proud, silent, doesn't want any charity, but I don't know where it's from because all I've ever known is poverty.

CW: What was the physical environment of your home like? You had a house, right?

GEA: We had several.

CW: Start with where you were born.

GEA: I was born and raised in Jesús María and in Los Vergeles, which means "the gardens." It was a little ranch settlement made up of several surrounding ranches. Our house was on my maternal grandmother's land. Her people had settled there when she was young. Schooling was in Spanish because Texas was Mexican territory then. Even when it became part of the U.S. the little ranches would gather money and hire a teacher. It wasn't like the government did anything. (My grandmother had been born further up into Texas, in Gonzales, and she'd traveled down and married my grandfather, who had brown eyes and was fair, a very handsome man. On my father's side, my grandmother was born in one of the first settlements in South Texas.) It was just a little ranch, no electricity, no running water. We got water from the windmills and the well. It was semidesert, lots of cactus until irrigation came ten years later and the whole valley was transformed.

It was very peaceful. I felt very much connected with the sky and the trees and the dirt; I have wonderful memories. Then my father started moving around, he became a tenant farmer, a sharecropper in different types of farms. Every two or three years we'd have a differ-

ent house within a 30-mile radius. One was a dairy farm, one a chicken farm, they were all farms and ranches. When I was about to start school my father didn't want me to go on the bus, so he had this house built about two blocks from the school. Our house was really special because it had a toilet. We lived there one year, my first year of school, and I'd walk to school and come home for lunch. Then he got another tenant farm, so we all moved into the tenant farm and he rented out our house to white people who didn't take care of it: The screen started falling down; the toilet got this big hole in it; all the boards in the porch were broken; the grass and roses my mother had planted were ruined. They treated the house very badly. My mother was really upset. She's neat, she wouldn't treat furniture or doors like that. We rented the house out for about five or six years and returned to it when I was eleven or twelve.

CW: So you kept changing schools when you moved?

GEA: Oh, no. The same school but different buses would pick us up.

CW: How many people were in a class at that school?

GEA: About forty or forty-five. We were all Mexican. The whites wouldn't dare have their kids with us. All the whites were bussed to Edinburg which was the same school district but had better teachers and facilities. Once in awhile there'd be one white family, usually a family that had moved from another state and who weren't so prejudiced yet.

CW: Did you have Mexican teachers?

GEA: No. They were all white.

CW: What was their attitude? Were they prejudiced?

GEA: I had one teacher, Mrs. Garrison, who encouraged me. The rest thought Mexicans were dirty and dumb. I was very smart, so I was the exception. It wasn't that I was smart, it's just that I didn't believe in that stereotype. My aspirations were higher than those of the other kids and I knew I was smart. The other kids were smart too, but they believed they were dumb because that's what they were told.

CW: When did you have Mrs. Garrison?

GEA: I was seven years old when I entered school. My birthday falls

in September so I had to wait a whole year. I think I was in second or third grade. Mr. Leidner was another white teacher with whom I was real close. He taught me leathercraft, history, and I was sort of like his teacher's aide: he'd let me teach his class and make tests for him. When kids didn't know how to read or had problems with their arithmetic, I'd help them. If some kid was really dumb, I'd let him copy from me. I was such an outsider and felt so abnormal. I was super skinny and tall for my age because of the hormones. (I was born with a hormone imbalance, and it made me grow really fast.) I was a freak and had only two loves—books, literature, learning, and dogs. I also loved people, and I think I let them copy to get them to love me or accept my freakiness but also because I didn't want them to be dumb. The teaching career came very early in my growing up.

CW: Did the teacher ask you to help other students who were having trouble with reading, or did you do that on your own?

GEA: The students asked me.

CW: You helped them after school?

GEA: During class, during recess, after school, or in the morning before school began. Once the teachers realized that the kids were asking me, they let me help because I could explain things that they couldn't. During recess I'd rather do that than play. I was growing so fast that my movements were very awkward. I was always chosen last for ball games. The teachers liked me because I didn't give them any trouble, because I was smart, and because I helped them. The kids liked me because I was smart without being obnoxious about it. I didn't put them down for being dumb.

I was extremely sensitive, Christine. I was wide open to everything people were feeling, thinking, sensing. Everybody knew this, and they were extremely careful with me. Once in a while the kids would call me "the brain" or "teacher's pet" or "shorty." (This was later when they kept growing but I had stopped growing. When I was tall they called me "huesos" for bones.) Kids can be cruel, but they were very gentle with me. They weren't as gentle with my brother. They laughed at him because they thought he walked like a girl.

God, I must have been this walking sponge. It was amazing, Christine. I always felt so alien and so strange, because I was bleeding. I had these breasts I wasn't supposed to have, and I was smart. I think I survived by cutting my body off, by blocking certain feelings. I didn't

know how bad it all was. And I always felt so alien and so strange because I bled. The kids didn't know I bled or had breasts.

Bodies and Health

CW: Did your brothers and sister know about the hormonal changes?

GEA: My sister suspected something was going on, but the only people who knew were me, my mother, and my father. It became such a good secret that we forgot. You know how that happens sometimes? You just put it out of your mind. I couldn't talk about it until '78, when I was operated on. I was in Yosemite and I went into this pain. I just fell on the floor and went into convulsions. My friends didn't know what was wrong with me. I'd have these very high temperatures and then I'd have these very cold flashes. It was the hormones. A year before my operation, '78-'79, I went to six gynecologists and they wanted to do a hysterectomy. They said my uterus was abnormal—lopsided or whatever; my cervix opening was abnormal, I had the opening of a woman who's had a child. The ovaries were enlarged, especially the left ovary. I had fibroids, scars in the uterus. I started reviewing my past and it just came back to me: "Oh, I had started bleeding at an early age."

CW: You mean you really had forgotten prior to that?

GEA: Off and on during my life. I remember thinking about it when I was a teenager and then forgetting it, but to really talk about it with my mother. . . I called her and told her what the gynecologists said, and she said, "Yes, you started bleeding when you were three months old. The doctor said it was because you were a throwback to the Eskimo." (I have a lot of that very old Indian blood in me.) She told me she had to make these little girdles so that the kids wouldn't see my breasts, and she had to make sure I had a piece of cloth in my panties in case I bled. Guess we couldn't afford Tampax or Kotex.

I remembered it all. I remembered washing the bloody cloths: I'd take them out into this shed, wash them out, and hang them really low on a cactus so nobody would see them. It was painful, Christine. I was a child with no way of protecting myself. Dealing with my sexuality was bad enough, without having to deal with the bleeding! It became a black monster and grew out of all proportion. And the pain was horrendous. Waves of pain would sweep through me. It felt like my insides were going to come out when I threw up. Then there'd

be these jabs. When the waves receded I'd be really weak. In my autobiography I describe it as a vulture picking my insides.

CW: When that was happening you couldn't really deny it because it was so painful?

GEA: No. But I got used to it and repressed it so that I had no way of gauging when I was hurting, when I was ill. In 1980 when Randy had hepatitis and everyone in our house got checked, I went to the doctor. He said, "You've had this virus for God knows how long. At least two months. Haven't you felt the pain?" I was in pain. I had an intestinal tract infection but I'd repressed the pain. Pain was a way of life, my normal way of life.

CW: Were you concerned about the blood showing, about people finding out?

GEA: My mother was, but I wasn't. She was scandalized because at a very early age, I was the only one in the extended family to wear shorts or a bathing suit and she'd say, "Oh, but your pubic hair is showing through the suit." No, I don't think I've ever been ashamed to show the body. The shame was something I internalized from my culture, from my mother and grandmothers. Women have internalized from men the belief that a woman smells and is dirty when she has her period. I had no defense against that belief; I was three months old. When I found myself, it was the beginning of my spirituality, because it was like getting in contact with who I really was, my true self. My body wasn't dirty.

CW: But you were a part of the big secret. You and your parents.

GEA: Yes I was, for the first thirty years of my life. That was the big secret, the big shame. During the operation—it came as an initiation—I discovered that I didn't feel that shame about my body but had internalized it. It wasn't innate. Even when I was little, I was very uninhibited about my body, and then I'd remember, "Oh, I'm supposed to close my legs." So for thirty years I repressed my body; I feared and hated my body. But it wasn't me; it was something I was taught. It's really weird, Christine.

CW: But children are usually at least part what they're taught. It sounds like you were always a rebel, even though you had the desire to be good, to be what you're supposed to be.

GEA: It was like there were two people in me—one part saying, “This is bad, this is dirty, you’re evil. You’re bleeding,” and the other part saying, “No, that’s their perception. I don’t feel that way.” The two didn’t come together until ’78, when I found out that I couldn’t possibly have caused the bleeding because I was only three months old. Later I realized that yes, I had caused it: my soul, my greater total self, had chosen that I struggle with this imbalance. And that was fine. My greater self chose it. It wasn’t me, the evil Gloria, who caused it; it was me, the total self. So then the guilt split and I didn’t feel evil. Part of the reason I helped people by teaching was to compensate, because evil was always tied in with what my mother and sister called “selfishness.” I realized that being selfish was being myself, and they called me selfish only because I didn’t do what they wanted me to do. But it took me thirty years to realize this. During this time I had terrible guilt and I blamed the body. I thought I was bleeding because I’d done something bad, there was something in me that caused it.

CW: So you took on more your mother’s view of it than your father’s?

GEA: My mother as a personality, no. My mother representing the culture’s laws, yes. She represents a whole culture: her mother, and my father’s mother—all grandmothers, all women. I think it’s because women are the law givers, the carriers of tradition. My mother is a pretty amazing woman. She gives lip service to the culture’s laws, but it wasn’t really her stuff, you know? When you’re little, though, you don’t distinguish. It’s the mother. She’s the one.

Religions

CW: What religion was your mother?

GEA: No religion. My family was not religious at all. We were all baptized as Catholics and made the first communion and confirmation. My grandmothers believed that if you hadn’t had a first communion or baptism your soul might have to wait a while in Purgatory or somewhere, that the process would be slowed down, and that’s the only reason they’d have us baptized. But my mother isn’t the kind of woman who says, “If God wills it. If God wishes.” Nothing like that. She believes there’s a God, but we weren’t religious. (I mean, I never heard about the Pope until I was eighteen.) My mother’s upbringing was very Spanish and very Mexican and very Indian, which has always repressed

women and sexuality. My grandmother was more pagan than Catholic. She had candles and la Virgen Guadalupe on a little altar, and sometimes she’d pray to or have medals from the different saints. My father never stepped into a church unless someone died and when his corpse was taken into a church.

Catholicism has survived because it’s so loose and has incorporated indigenous religions. Everybody has their own brand of Catholicism. I always felt like the Crucifixion and all that has more to do with the religion of the planet at this time: whether you’re Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Buddhist. Cross-culturally, people have similar attitudes about sacrificing the body.

CW: How was God presented to you as a child?

GEA: The way it filtered down was that he was this very gentle spirit, that if you were true to him he’d stop your suffering, lighten your load in some way. The Mexican people always refer to God in very endearing terms, Diosito mio, very gentle, very feminine. It wasn’t this God of the Old Testament—judgment, hellfire, brimstone, and punishment.

CW: You said that if you were true to God he would take away or lighten your load?

GEA: That’s what the Mexicans believed.

CW: So what did you have to do in order to be true to him?

GEA: Believe in him, and this is the great ripoff: All religions impoverish life because they renounce it. They especially divorce the flesh from the spirit or the mind. To me, it always seemed like this division is where the oppression of myself as a woman, as a lesbian, as a brown woman, as a working-class woman comes in. To me religion has always upheld the status quo, it makes institutions rigid and dogmatic. Anything threatening—people like me (dykes, creative people, heretics of some sort)—must be eliminated. I saw established religions keeping the Mexican poor, keeping the Mexican satisfied with his life.

CW: So you didn’t feel any conflict about not following church rules?

GEA: No, because I didn’t have anything to do with the church. But I got very angry at the Catholic Church because of how they oppressed people who are different. I think religions are bad.

CW: Did you ever think that you should believe what the church taught you? Did you every try to integrate into that teaching?

GEA: No. It was just another system I could study, like mythology. When I was young, I went to several churches to see what they were doing. Baptists and Methodists had a lot of prejudice against Catholics, but the Catholics I knew didn't care too much about what the Baptists or Methodists were doing. I was outside looking at this rivalry between Protestantism and Catholicism. To me it was ludicrous, it was like looking at two sides of the same coin. They were similar except that the Catholic Church has kept a lot of the ceremonial stuff. Later I studied the life of Christ, the New Testament, and the Old Testament in college courses.

CW: Was there anything you took from those experiences with organized religions?

GEA: My religion was the stories my mother and father would tell, which had to do with spirits, with devils. I'd feel their presence. The folk myths like *la Jila*, *la Llorona*, the spirits riding in the wind. And those were more real to me. If you breathed them in, if *mal aigres* entered your body, you'd get sick. My religion was more like the earth religions of the Indians, which people now call witchcraft. I believed that certain people have powers, like the *curanderas*.

CW: What stories of spirits were important to you?

GEA: Stories where things aren't what they seem—supernatural powers, the ability to fly, changing form, transforming shape. (You know, my fiction shows this a lot.) These stories are indigenous, where a man becomes a cougar, a snake, or a bird. Very much like the *don Juan* books by Carlos Castañeda—stories of transformation, about powers and abilities existing and manifesting themselves in the wind, the ability to feel a presence in the room. A lot of my father's stories were about similar incidents where a black dog would race along the truck, and he would step on the gas. He'd be doing fifty, but the dog would still be right by the door. Then he'd be doing sixty, seventy, eighty and the dog would keep up. As a teenager I rejected these stories as superstitions, but I'd had similar experiences.

The religion of the Mexicans—Catholicism—is just a veneer. I don't know with white people, but with Mexicans it's a veneer for the old gods and goddesses. People only go to church, believe in Christ, and

eat the host because that was happening in the Aztec religion: they ate the flesh of the sacrificial victim. If you eat part of a bear, you become fierce like a bear. That's what I meant about Catholicism being loose: it allows other religions to survive and it builds its churches in the sacred places of the older religions.

CW: Whereas Protestantism actually got rid of the gods and goddesses altogether?

GEA: Right. Protestantism exterminated the india. So did the Catholics but they incorporated them, intermarried, so that in Mexico, South America, and the Caribbean you have the mixture of white and black and Indian. But there's no difference in the oppression and genocide of the Indians. You know what I mean?

Religions always side with those in power. If you deviate, you're burned as a witch, as a faggot, as a lesbian. The great guilt forced on us is that they want us to merge with the normal, to cut off the unacceptable parts of ourselves—you know, our sexuality. We have to keep silent and can't say who we are. I really believe that religions have to be gotten rid of.

"Yoga of the Body"

CW: What's the earliest personal spiritual experience you remember?

GEA: Very early, Christine. I was maybe three: I was on the floor, reaching to get apples or oranges or something, and I was extending to get them; my body was extending. I had the feeling that I was two or three people. It's an image I use in the novel. It was like looking in a three-way mirror and seeing three parts of myself but all connected. But it wasn't me, it was almost like I could see sheaths. It was all the same body, but not in one place.

When I started hearing the stories I mentioned earlier, I became aware of presences and spirits, and very afraid of them because I thought they were evil. Only in the last few years have I recognized that what I sensed was actually the soul's presence, either that of my own soul or those of other people. I repressed all this stuff until I started taking drugs, which really opened up my memories of things. I had a childhood of spiritual happenings that I buried and forgot, and I'm still trying to dig them out. The drugs opened up a second phase of my life: I had out-of-body states and precognitive experiences, knowing that something was going to happen. My grandmother appeared to me the night she

died, although I wasn't told that she died until two days later. I'd sense the presence of my dead father. I'd go into a trance and see things that have happened either in a past life to myself or to other people.

But the main spiritual experience has been a very strong sense of a particular presence. One of the reasons I don't get lonely is because I don't feel I'm alone. How can you be lonely when there's this thing with you? This awareness was the strength of my rebellion and my ability to cut away from my culture, from the dominant society. I had a very strong rhythm, a sense of who I was, and I could turn this presence into a way of shielding myself, a weapon. I didn't have the money, privilege, body, or knowledge to fight oppression, but I had this presence, this spirit, this soul. And that was the only way for me to fight—through ritual, meditation, affirmation, and strengthening myself. Spirituality is oppressed people's only weapon and means of protection. Changes in society only come after that. You know what I mean? If you don't have the spiritual, whatever changes you make go against you.

To me, being spiritual is awakening to the fact that you're a spirit, that you have this presence. Any spirituality that doesn't see that presence on a daily basis and work to awaken it, to give it more life and make it a part of your everyday life, is not spirituality. The spirit evolves out of the experiences of the body; it's not something finished and perfect. Spirituality has nothing to do with religion, which recognizes that soul, that spirit, and then puts a dogma around it, saying, "This is the way things have to be." Religion eliminates all kinds of growth, development, and change, and that's why I think any kind of formalized religion is really bad.

CW: Did you feel as though you had to break away from religion?

GEA: No, because I've never been in the clutches of religion. After my father died I waited four years for the promises of religion to kick in, but its rituals didn't bring him back. I thought it was beautiful to have faith, whatever you had faith in, but the words they gave to this faith were false. The kind of belief and faith they had went beyond any personal representation of God. It was like a real faith in the spirit, and they just gave it the wrong body, the wrong words, and the wrong forms. But I don't think of that kind of faith as religious; it's spiritual.

CW: What did you and your mother believe happened when your father died?

GEA: I think my mother believes he's in heaven, that he's part of this soul of God, this spiritual consciousness. I think he's returned to the creative life force. He didn't reincarnate for a long time because I felt his presence so strongly. When that happens, they haven't taken another form. I think my mother always felt that the masses to save my father's soul were more in celebration of his soul.

Very early I also believed that I could go through the wall. I'm writing a story about this woman who does walk through a wall. I've always believed we have the means to do so; it's a matter of believing. First of all, it's a yoga of the body. "Yoga" means union of body with mind and spirit. To do a yoga of the body and really walk through the wall, I would have to expand myself. Each cell is a miniature universe; the sun is like the nucleus, and the planets revolving are neutrons and electrons. Everything has this type of vast space within its cells. Everything in existence. So there's space. If you're looking at it from the perspective of a cell, there's millions of miles between the nucleus and the revolving electrons and protons. In water, there's more space; and in air, there's even more space. In iron, there's very little space. The denser something is, the more compact. So if I could expand, open up my cells and expand them, I'd go through this wall because there would be nothing. The molecules in my body would be flexible enough for me to go through the wall. It's like watching *Star Trek* when they energize; they decompose the molecules and recompose them in the place that they want to be. I think that process happens naturally when you sleep. You leave your body. You go out in the astral. The minute you think "L.A.," you're in L.A.; even though your body is over here, your consciousness is over there. I believe this can happen by doing yoga of the body, which means that instead of renouncing the body—wanting to leave the body and become spirit—you work the other way around, make the body divine, make every cell divine. And those kinds of ideas I was having at a very early age.

The idea central to my autobiography is the return of the spirit, the idea that God and the devil are the same person, that evil and good are the same. I've always believed that. Like the yin and the yang. If you go so far to evil, you get to good. They're one; we only separate them because of the duality, the way we work. I'd been having these ideas off and on, and I'd jot them down as poems or stories, or whatever. About a month ago I started reading *The Mother*. I told you about *The Mother's Agenda*.

CW: Who's that by?

GEA: Mirra Alfassa, a half-Turkish and half-Egyptian woman born in France. She died in 1973. She has these books called *The Mother's Agenda*. She was connected with Sri Aurobindo, an Indian sent to England when he was little. His father didn't want him to grow up with Buddhism's "superstition" and mysticism or with anything to do with India. So he was educated in England until he was twenty-one, and then he took up his language and his culture and all that. He was put in jail, where he had a conversion. He became a self-realized person by plugging into this oversoul or whatever. I don't know how to explain it. But he met the Mother around 1926. They became part of the same consciousness. Some people think he was the last avatar on earth. I started reading his stuff about two or three weeks ago. The ideas I already had were very similar to his, so I did a meditation. I said, "OK. Did I get these ideas from him?" I had never read or heard of this man. And this whole bunch of stuff came through, Christine. It's going to blow you away, because you're part of it. . . .

"Off the Rational Track"

GEA: I want to talk about the Bible verse, "In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was God." This statement, before it got corrupted by the church fathers, meant that in the beginning was the sound, the vibration—a rock, a plant, an animal, a human, a particular area. That vibration is like the song of its being, its heartbeat, its rhythm.

A lot of the ideas that have come up in the autobiography are spiritual ideas. Especially, the idea that everything is spiritual, that I'm a speck of this soul, this creative consciousness, this creative life force; and so is a dog, a rock, a bird, this bedspread, and this wall. In recognizing that soul—which is what Native Americans have always recognized, they've always respected the elements—nothing is alien, nothing is strange. Spirit exists in everything; therefore God, the divine, is in everything—in whites as well as blacks, rapists as well as victims; it's in the tree, the swamp, the sea. . . . Everything is my relative, I'm related to everything.

The church has taken the very essence of what spirit is and subverted it. The people who are "righteous"—the ones on the correct path, the lawmakers and lawgivers—those who profess to follow Christ aren't following Christ or Buddha, or whatever.

When I was reading this book by a man named Satprem I thought, "WOW! These are the things I'm trying to talk about." One belief is

that your body, your mind, through dreams, through some sort of internal unconscious process, works things out. Sometimes even before they happen, you deal with problems. You make the inner changes first, and then you make the outer changes. I've always believed that. Sometimes you can do both at the same time: work to create outer change, through political movement, at the same time that you're trying to do meditation and developing yourself. And then I started meditating, and these are the things I came up with. Are you ready?

CW: Yes.

GEA: OK. There are about three thousand people being prepared in the astral realms—through dreams and even when you're awake but you're not paying attention to this other part of yourself. (Because the conscious mind is very small. There's this whole subconscious and unconscious that's really deep.) The preparation has to do with what I was talking about earlier—expanding the body. He called it "supermentalization." There's a little group of people, like fourteen people, that I'm supposed to be connected with. And out of those fourteen, seven were named, and you're one of them. There's a kind of preparation we have to go through. I don't know. It's really weird.

I started thinking, "When did all this stuff happen?" I already had these ideas, before I knew of this man's existence. How did I get his ideas? Maybe the ideas were everybody's. In the meditation it came through that I *had* gotten them from him, beginning in 1977, through the mental realm, through ideas and dreams I had when I was not really aware. So I was trying to figure out what happened in '77, but I can't remember. It was a time of great change in my life because I moved from Austin, tore up my Mastercharge and BankAmericard, and gave up the idea of becoming a university professor. I was teaching at the university, and I just threw everything out. I was going to be a writer full time, committed.

In the meditation I learned that this kind of preparation takes place on four levels: the spiritual, the mental, the vital (which is the emotional, like desires, cravings, hungers, likes, dislikes, fear, jealousy, envy, joy, happiness), and the physical. My preparation is on the vital. I was really blown away, because I thought I had to do the work on the physical. This preparation has to begin pretty soon. We have to become fully conscious, fully aware, and be fully ourselves. We've talked about this before. It's so hard to do. The first step is becoming aware that you're more than your thoughts and emotions. Superlaid on top is

this thing that you sometimes get glimpses of, which I call "the presence." I used to think of this presence as the daemon, which is an old term that means the luminous spirit that dwells inside you. But then, probably during the time of the witchburnings, society made "daemon" synonymous with "demon," possession, like *The Exorcist* and other popularized, trivialized motion pictures.

I want to read to you something from my journal: "June 1: There's definitely someone in command of my life, and it's not the ego. The ego has abdicated, run for cover, is shrinking in the shadows and doesn't return except for clandestine skirmishes during the night." Of course, the returns are more often than that. "Something else pulsates in my body, a luminous thin thing that grows thicker every day, bigger. Its presence never leaves me. I am never alone. I cherish the time I am by myself, for then I can be with her, him, this secret lover, this in-dwelling spirit, the daemon, the divine presence within."

I had a type of conversion three years ago, during the operation and shortly thereafter. After the conversion, this thing that was hateful—that was ugly and put down and oppressed—was beautiful. The female body and serpents are two of the most feared things in the world, so I used the serpent to symbolize female sexuality, carnality, and the body. Snakes used to represent to me the body and everything that was loathsome, vile, rotting, decaying, getting hair, urinating, shitting, all the conditioning I've had—that all people have—about the body, especially the female body.

I made this little sketch: in the middle is the personality, which I called "Gaudi" because that's what I'm called at home all the time. Around the personality, which is like the nucleus (well, it's not really the nucleus, it's very small in the middle) is the body, the life or emotions, and then the mind. Each of those parts has a little ego. And then, around that, is the individual soul or the psychic being, the little speck or spark from the big flame which is life, which is consciousness. I'm this little flame which is part of a bigger flame, what the Buddhists call "the self." Some people call it the spirit. I call this part the "angelos" because my middle name is Evangelina.* Then there's the universal self—the spark—that's in me, in you, in the tree, in the rock. It's the same substance; it's universal. And then there's the thing that incorporates everything—the body, the personality, the little soul, the bigger soul, the self. Some people call it "God"; some call it the "creative force," whatever. It's in everything.

* From the Greek "eu" (well) and "angelos" (messenger). [GEA]

The people in training have to start realizing and acknowledging this soul, this presence. Instead of giving power to and identifying with one part of your being, the ego—the petty self, the emotions, the anger, whatever—people must start giving power to the total being. (Religion taught us to give power to the ego. It said, "There's parts of you that are not permissible and therefore they don't exist. You have to be like the rest of us.") We have to recognize the total self, rather than just one part and start to be true to that total self, that presence, that soul. And we have to work with the body. To not say "Oh, the body is dirty and vile and we should escape it because it's a prison. The flesh is a prison, and the spirit is all-important; we should discard the body and let it rot." No. It's the other way around. Matter is divine also. We have to start doing that on a daily basis.

Around '73 I spent a lot of time by myself in Indiana. I didn't have any friends. I had a job that required me to travel a lot so I was by myself in hotel rooms and motels, on the road. When you're by yourself things come up that you have to deal with. My way of escaping was to read romance books and novels. When it got too scary, I'd go into a book. I also did the opposite: I'd read scary stuff to confront these things. I used to love thriller movies and stuff that other people were scared to see. It was like I was attracted to this other world and what it had to offer, its visions and stuff, but I was afraid. So I'd take some little timid steps forward and then I'd run back and put my head in a book.

When I went to Austin I started having very intense psychic experiences. One occurred in December 1974. It was my first semester there, and I'd been mugged on November 7th. That mugging opened me up because it was a violation of my spirit, an invasion. I'd felt exposed; I realized that the cosmos was indifferent, that it's good and bad both, that it's just and unjust, that ultimately it probably balances out, but at any given point it could be one or the other. So, I was lying in bed, doing a brief meditation. (I don't remember what. It was some little thing.) Suddenly I found myself flat on the bed with my hands crossed over my chest. (I never sleep like that.) There was this weight on me, like a house that suddenly fell on top of me. I couldn't move; I couldn't even blink. I couldn't do anything. I was so glad that I'd left a night-light on in the bathroom because I wanted to see how much time had elapsed; it seemed like forever. It literally felt like I was in the bottom of the ocean, waiting. It had like a sound, a vibration. Do you know what the vibrations of fear or anger are like? Every emotion is like a vibration.

Well, this was a different vibration. It was very big—almost like you could crawl on it, it was so big. It was like oatmeal. I don't know what the correct metaphor for it is, but it was thick. I was sensing it, and it had an intelligence. Now here's the scary part: the whole time this amazing thing is going on, this thing is breathing—a rhythm like breathing but it was really a vibration. This presence, this very thick thing was testing me. I wasn't really scared of it; it didn't seem evil, but it seemed like it wanted to invade me. And I didn't want it to. It felt benign yet foreign. Somehow or other, I must have passed the test because then I was able to move my little finger and then—gradually, inch by inch—I was able to move my hand. And then with the right hand I started prying the fingers off my shoulder. And then gradually I unwound. It was so weird that I didn't even record it in my journal until a month had gone by.

These experiences, and others, showed me the existence of other worlds. If you focused a little bit differently, you'd be in them. I'd start trancing real easy. I just had to concentrate on something, like a little spot on the wall or a space a foot away from me. I'd just concentrate on the blank air, just one little point, and do my breathings. And then I'd be gone. I mean, I'd see other things. This started happening more and more frequently. Sometimes it would happen in public places. The whole thing just scared me, so I backed off. I thought it might be the onset of madness, insanity.

CW: What do you mean, it started happening in open places?

GEA: I'd be sitting in a restaurant or walking in the street and I'd look at someone; all of a sudden, I could see who they really were. Sometimes I'd see shadows or little layers around them, which I later learned was the aura. I could just see thickness around them. A lot of this was happening with Randy. We'd stop in the middle of the street and it would be like this world opening—like this abyss had opened up and the street was not the street anymore; the street signs were not the street signs. Everything had a different meaning, yet everything was the same. There are other worlds superimposed on this one, occupying the same space we occupy. Right here in this space there might be a city. We don't see it because its vibrations are much faster; they're much higher. It's sort of like looking at a hummingbird fly: its wings are flapping so fast that you don't see them. We're in these other worlds, but we don't see them. We're only aware of being in this world.

I was also experiencing strange intuitions. I'd think of someone and the phone would ring and it would be that person. Or I'd see a number in my head and five minutes later some friend had given me their new phone number and it was the same number. Also, there was this presence in my room. Sometimes it would say words in my head and I'd type them up. I thought it was the spirit of Cortázar, a writer I admire very much. This was just a vibration, a sensing, that would always be over my left shoulder. I clothed it in my imagination because it didn't have a form. I could have given it a female form, but at the time I probably wasn't a strong feminist yet, I still thought a lot in terms of male things. I didn't tell anyone about it. Sometimes I'd take walks, and it would walk two or three blocks, but it would always return to the room. It would never go as far as school with me. It was friendly.

CW: When was this?

GEA: It was 1974, '75. I lived in that apartment for a year and a half, and that presence stayed with me. I never told anyone, because they'd think I was crazy. One day Randy and I were walking to visit a friend down the street in another complex, and he said, "Oh, you know that presence? He's following us. Did you know that?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You know, that tall man." He described this presence exactly the way I had clothed it—tall and thin, almost cadaverous. And he said, "It's your father." But I said, "No, my father is stocky and he's not even 6 feet tall."

That blew my mind, that somebody else could see it. Randy had been seeing, feeling this thing all along, but he knew it wasn't harmful, that it was good. So he didn't want to say, because it might freak me out or something. Sometimes he walks into a house and he knows if it's haunted. Or you've seen the cat in this apartment? He'd see that. He'd see the whole history, all the people that had lived there. He reconstructed a house in San Francisco where I once lived. It used to be a mortuary. He described this whole scene of the ambulances bringing in the bodies which were then pulled up to the third floor with a rope on the outside of the house; they'd be brought in through these large windows. Nobody believed a word. It sounded really strange. But then they started checking on the people who had owned the house before. It used to be a mortuary, and they did use a pulley to bring the corpses up to the third floor and then in through the big windows.

I also experienced some negative presences—not presences, "apparitions" is a better word. The apartment complex where I lived

at the time was sort of like a labyrinth, with columns, partial walls, and full walls. I'd be walking between these pillars and walls, and I'd turn to my left and see a man dressed in black pants and shirt walking. But then the wall would obscure him, and then he'd be opposite me walking in the other direction. Wherever I walked and looked, he'd be walking—sometimes to my right, sometimes behind me, in front of me, to the left. The man looked like a regular person. He had flesh and everything. I mean, I thought it was alive, a real person. It seemed really peculiar that this happened again and again. One day Randy was walking with me and he saw the very same thing. (Thus far nobody else had seen it.) We were both looking at the man, and I got this hint that it was Randy in the future, an evil Randy. Randy said no, it wasn't him. Julie came to visit in July, and—without me or Randy telling her—she saw the same man. She also thought it was a future or past Randy, and all the hairs in my body went !!!!!

It was evil. So Julie, Randy, and I did all kinds of cleansings, spells, and circles, and he disappeared. But this man didn't feel like the presence, like the apparition. This felt like a real man, flesh and blood. The other wasn't; it was just a feeling that I pictured as a tall, thin man. Later, as years went by, I started thinking of it as the muse, *la musa*, as a woman. I mean, it will always be whatever it was, but I can put different forms on it. And then I moved.

So that time in Austin was pretty weird. After the presences, I think I started doing mushrooms. Some of the things I'd felt were verified. When you're doing drugs, colors are different and things don't seem to be as solid. You make connections that you don't make when you're sober, so that you see behind the curtain. So I thought, "Well, I'm not crazy." The drugs put the ego—the customary glasses that you see the world through—down, and you see the world through eyes that aren't censored by the mind, by rationality. I wasn't afraid anymore of being crazy, because it just meant that I had opened certain doors.

CW: How did those things lead to your recent meditations?

GEA: I learned that what I was seeing was my soul. Because of the stories I was told as a child, I had clothed the soul as these evil apparitions. Not all evil. Some were good. I was also sensing the soul in other people. If you think you're evil, your soul is going to look real evil. If you think you're good, it's going to look good. So I think the soul is always neutral. I mean, it's got your best interests at heart. It's evolving and it wants you to grow, because it has to grow.

But however you see it, the mind is not in your head. The mind is the area around you, about 4 feet in diameter. When psychic people read you, they're not reading your mind, they're reading your thoughts—that area around you, in your aura—and then just translating them into words. So if you think you're bad and evil, that thought is around you, and people who read you, read it. Now, maybe somebody very enlightened would be able to go through the 4 feet surrounding you to get to the real soul, or whatever, and find that it's good, joyous, or whatever.

I was seeing these evil things because other people were; it was their fear. Not only did I have my own fears—and for me to see you, I have to look through my space, the 4 feet in front of me, so that everything I see is going to be colored by my perception—but I then have to filter through your perceptions. Also, I'd had all these horrendous experiences, like being mugged.

So of course I was seeing all this bad stuff. But somehow or other I got through. It's sort of like in swimming the breaststroke, where you extend your arms and make a little opening. It culminated March 20, 1980, when I had that operation. Right after the operation when I was healing I had a strong sense of this presence—my greater self or whatever you want to call it. Part of this feeling was the influence of having died for twenty minutes. It's like I was off the rational track and therefore could see more clearly. This feeling didn't last, but I started doing the psychic development class with Tamara Diagaleu, took some training in Tarot with Angie Arrien, worked with dreams. I was doing psychic readings. I set up an altar with candles. I consecrated the altar. I had my knife. You've seen my knife? It's shaped like a moon.

CW: Oh, yeah.

GEA: I went very seriously into finding out how to call forth this soul, this spirit, how to draw it out of me or into me, or whatever. And then I thought, "Well, the East Coast is not like the West Coast, and maybe my spirituality is going to suffer." But I think it's gotten stronger, because I've just developed it by myself. On the West Coast, if you want your palm read or your numerology done, it's real available, so you depend on external authority. And here, on the East Coast, there aren't courses I can go to. There's nothing readily visible; you have to hunt for it. Of course, there's a catalog that comes out with all the names of people doing things, and there's Santería. But they don't give information to just anyone who goes in and asks.

During the month of May—when I went into my sixth house where I was dealing with a lot of conscious growth of the self, really working at it—I had very strong meditations. And she appeared—this soul, whatever you want to call it. It's sort of like a light all around me, and I smile when she's there. Even if I'm depressed. If I was depressed ten seconds before, I just find myself smiling and feeling very peaceful. That whole month was beautiful, from May 5th to about the 29th.

CW: That was when you were doing all the spiritual work?

Meditations, Making Love to the Divine

GEA: Yes. And then I went into a depression. During this time in May I was doing a meditation which became a sexual fantasy. I was making love to the divine, to this soul. And she had a penis, Christine. She was a woman. She had breasts and everything was womanly. Even her penis was womanly. I thought it was so strange. It was like her little clit just grew. I thought, "Oh, what is this? I'm not supposed to be having these heterosexual fantasies. This is a regression. What is this Goddess? Why does she have a penis?" Then I figured out that she's probably neither male nor female. I don't know what the divine is, but I'm sure it's not a man. And if it's not a man, why should it be a woman? Maybe it's both. So that was really weird.

CW: And that was in a meditation?

GEA: I was sitting cross-legged on my little pillow there where I always meditate. It's a special, really thin pillow which I fold. I sit on it at the edge of the bed, and I cross my legs on the floor.

CW: What kind of meditation do you do?

GEA: To still my thoughts, I breathe very slowly into and out of my abdomen, relaxing and letting go of everything. Then, to be connected to the middle of the earth, I put a root down into the earth through my cunt. And then, to be connected with the heavens, I shoot another tentacle out of my head out into the sky. At this point, I just concentrate. It's sort of like locking in. You know how two magnets lock in?

CW: Yes.

GEA: But it's hard to lock in. I really have to search. It has to do with the focusing, and I have to cross my eyes. (I can't do it if my eyes

aren't crossed, which is really strange.) Somewhere here, about a foot from my forehead, I'd lock in and just concentrate. (Sometimes I'd lose it and have to go back and do it again.) By then, the thoughts start, ideas for stories.

Either I'd do a visualization—like staring at a little spot, a little black spot or a white spot—or I see her shape. Sometimes I give her a form, like a woman, and she'll be this ghostlike figure that keeps moving. Or I use the words, the mantra, which I say to myself mentally. But sometimes I don't have to. I get to the point where I don't have to do that to keep the thoughts out. I'm just silent. And that's when it happens: it's this incredible connection. I think this is where the fantasy started, because the connection is so incredible that you feel like you're in sync: your heart is beating, you hear this heartbeat, and then your cunt is having an orgasm. The cosmos—the spirit, or whatever you call it—is like a fist, like a heart, and it's beating. In that beating of the cosmos my heart and my cunt are in unison, in one rhythm. It's so pleasurable that I don't want to leave. It's incredible. Sometimes I do have orgasms, but the rest of the time they're not physical orgasms. They start out in the mind and then after the meditation, I'm wet.

During that particular meditation, it was like I was fucking: the Goddess was fucking me and I was fucking the Goddess. She took me in her arms, and I was sucking her tits. It was as if I went through her body, like she was holding me in her arms, in her body, but I could also pass through her body and come out the other side, and move back and forth. There was no separation. Then she lay on top of me and we were rocking and rocking. Suddenly, I feel her little clit, which is like a little button, getting bigger. It's closer to a tit than to a penis. It looks like a long tit. I don't know if you know what I mean. Some women have really rounded breasts, but I see some women who have very skinny breasts that are like phalluses. They're very phallic, because they're elongated. (Maybe the phallus is really the breast. I don't know what the difference is between the penis and the breast, but they have the same kind of shape.) I'm clothed, but suddenly I feel this little thing entering me, and it's her. She enters through the vagina and the rest of her follows the little penis. It's like all of her came in through the vagina, and she's inside me. It was so intense that I just fell backwards on the bed and stretched out. I had this incredible physical orgasm. Forget the mind. It was physical.

I don't know. People would probably think I was—I don't know what they would think, to have an experience like this. But they must think it's pretty weird, because people think you need another person

to be able to have this kind of experience. And maybe you do. But occasionally, I've found that you don't. Isn't that weird?

CW: Yes.

GEA: In the next few weeks when I had sexual fantasies, it had nothing to do with meditation, it had to do with masturbation. It was her again in different forms.

CW: Did she have a clear form?

GEA: Sort of like fog with a light shining on it. Sometimes her hair would be very long, and it would be part of her body, and other times it would be invisible hair. Sometimes she would be very small, like the size of a thimble or the size of a matchstick, but other times she would be as big as this room—and sometimes bigger.

CW: She kept changing size?

GEA: Not in the same meditation. In different meditations. Sometimes she's black and sometimes she's white. But in the meditation that went into the fantasy, she was like a flame. And a flame has some blue and some orange and some yellow and some white, depending on what it's burning and how you're looking at it. She was mostly like intense fire, almost whitish yellow at that time. But when I do other meditations, it's different. Lately, she hasn't had a form. It's just like a drumbeat or something. It's so hard to put into words. It's like a vibration. It's like the wind, listening to the wind, but it's a different rhythm. I put on my earplugs, and I still hear it. But if I put my earplugs on, I won't hear the subway rumble. It gets very intense, and I think, "Oh, it's going to wake up Gerry, two floors down."

CW: What does it sound like?

GEA: It sort of sounds like the ocean. All oceans have—I call it a breath because they come in and they go out. It's like a breath. Have you ever been in a forest, when the wind suddenly goes through it?

CW: Yes.

GEA: It's like that, but it's regular. It's like a machine, like a metronome. But with the feeling, like the chimes of the wind and the ocean and the trees. But it's steady, like a metronome or a pulse. It doesn't go real slow and then real fast. First you think it's a mechanical thing,

like a motor. Then it becomes like a song, like music. That's why I think the stuff about the word is really about vibration. It's like a heartbeat and like your cuntbeat, but it's not. It sounds more like what the ocean would sound like if there were trees in the ocean and it was autumn and the wind was blowing. I don't know how to describe it.

CW: And that sound comes to you in the meditations?

GEA: If I work hard, yes. I have to work really hard, and you know how I am: I'm very lazy.

No matter how good the feeling is, the next day it's hard for me to meditate. It always is. Even if I say I'm just going to sit for half an hour. It's wonderful when I'm doing it. Now why do I have such a resistance? Do you have a resistance?

CW: Yes.

Spirituality and Power

GEA: The meditations where I hear the pulse are rare, but they've been happening more often lately. They haven't happened in about a week, because I've been a social butterfly. The meditations with the orgasm, of the heart and the cunt and the cosmic part, are much more rare. It's only happened twice in my life. Or maybe more. I think it started happening when I started studying under Tamara in San Francisco. I'd go home and do my meditations, and I'd have these incredible experiences. They're beautiful, you know? I mean, I can watch *Star Trek* or *Twilight Zone* for an hour, but I'd get more pleasure out of meditating for an hour. So why don't I do it? That's what I don't understand. It's the same with writing: I get so much pleasure from doing it, but it takes me a tremendous effort to get myself to sit at the typewriter and write. It's like something has made the creative act and the meditative act so out of our reach. I think it's this religion I've been talking about, that I'm so opposed to.

But I would have gone stark raving mad had I not had the spirituality. Because it helped me get over everything—being mugged and almost killed, being this very shy and timid little country girl. Before, I didn't want to speak. I'd hide when people came to visit. And now I put myself before classrooms and before hundreds of people.

CW: How did spirituality help you over that shyness?

GEA: It connected me to the strength—to the soul and the source of power—which I can channel into myself. Part of this power is myself. It's sort of like there's an ocean out there that you call consciousness, and I have a little part of that ocean within myself. I realized this when I was about ten years old, when I almost drown. I told you about that?

CW: Well, tell—

GEA: My father took the family to Padre Island. It was a Sunday, and we'd picnic there. We'd take the truck, and my father would put this big awning on it for shade. My mother would bring a little table and put out the food, and we'd have this freezer full of Coke and juice and stuff. We'd play on the beach. We were only allowed to go into the water up to our waists, because none of us could swim. But I'd always go in over my head. My mother had given up trying to stop me because I loved being in the water. I'd go to the lake by the house, and we'd go down to the Gulf of Mexico. All the time I was with water, water, water. People thought I was water crazy.

So that day, I was in the water and this big wave takes me a little bit out. I'm not worried because I can dog paddle back. But this undertow pulls me by my feet. To me, it felt like something had reached a hand and pulled me under the water. I got really scared. I'd been practicing holding my breath, but I could only hold it for three minutes. In my panic, I didn't even hold my breath that long. I lost the air and swallowed all this water. Then I was swallowing water through my nose. My body was not accepting the water; it wanted air. Just before I lost consciousness, I had the feeling that the ocean inside me had joined the ocean outside me. There was no boundary. There was no skin. Our two oceans were touching. My ocean and the physical ocean were touching. I felt very happy. It was very peaceful, and I loved just being there.

But then, my feet touched sand and I regained consciousness. I remember uncurling and my head coming out of the water. Thirty, forty, fifty yards from the ocean there's a sandbar, and that's what my feet had touched. I was able to stand up and, by standing on my toes, giving a little hop, and tilting my head, I could breathe. I don't think I was conscious, because I was so weak that I don't know how I could have done the little jumps. I was really out of it, Christine. I guess that was like the second death, the second time I died, and part of me realized that I couldn't die yet. I waited about three hours for the tide to go in.

The whole time I was doing these little jumps so my head would stay above the water and I could breathe. The sandbar was about three feet in width, so I'd put out my foot and try to stand on the ocean floor but I'd be under water. So then I'd jump back onto the little sandbar.

And at the end of three hours, I dived or pushed myself off the sand bar and paddled. When I came up, I was in shallow water and could stand. While I was on the sandbar, I looked for my mother in the red truck, but I couldn't see anyone. When I got to the beach, they were these little tiny specks far away. I started walking back. Before I got there, I had to figure out what I was going to do. I went into the sand dunes so that my clothes were caked with sand and then came out through the direction of the dunes. My mother wanted to know where I'd been all afternoon, and I said I'd been hunting for treasure. (The ships that used to go from Mexico to Spain would always stop off at Padre Island, and there were legends of buried treasure. Everybody was always digging.) She was very upset with me. I think she knew what had happened, but she didn't want to make a fuss. I mean, part of her knew. But if I had told them what happened, we would never come to Padre Island again. Ever since then, I've been afraid of the water.

In college my sophomore and junior years I took swimming classes. Every time I had to dive into the pool, I was terrified. It wasn't because that earlier experience in the ocean hadn't been pleasant. It had been very pleasant, except that the initial struggling was terrifying. But that horrible part stayed with me. I didn't remember the pleasant part until I started doing the autobiography. So to this day, I won't go into the ocean. I'll go into a pool, because the wave won't sweep me away. That's also the fear of sexuality, of losing your border, your border being swept away, engulfed. All of it ties together.

Becoming Lesbian?

CW: Tell me a little about your lesbianism, about being a lesbian.

GEA: I was a lesbian in my head, in ideas, before I was a physical lesbian with my body. It started a long time ago. There was a woman who lived in the lot behind our house. The townspeople would talk about her. They called her "una de las otras": for six months, she was a woman and had periods and for six months she was a man and had a penis. They were called "half and half." At the time I thought I was real smart and knew that wasn't true, but now I'm beginning to think

it might be true. Psychologically, lesbians may be women with the potentiality to be whole, to be neither male nor female, to be both male and female, to be neuter, to be. . . . I don't know. But it's not the official way of being; it doesn't have the male-female polarity.

Two of my female cousins were having an affair. They only confided in me. People always confide in me.

CW: When your cousins confided in you, was that the first you had ever heard of women being lovers with one another?

GEA: No. I'd seen one of these trashy books that had the two lesbians on the cover, so when they talked about it, it seemed oh, yeah, it exists. But at first it was just an intellectual thing. That experience in Texas that I mentioned earlier—when I saw the two women fucking—made it more of a reality. It was the body. Before, all I'd heard was talk and words. Then when I was in school, I met this woman. I told you about my experience with her. We were really good friends and really close. I always felt this intensity, this energy, between us. This energy was similar to the energy I'd felt between me and my father, my brother, and sometimes between me and my mother. (I really repressed the stuff with my mother.) One day I asked this woman, "Why don't we talk about this feeling between us?" and she said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You know, the lesbian stuff. You know, the lesbian feelings." She just got up and walked out the door. The term was about twelve days away from the end of the semester, and the next day she had packed everything and left. I waited a little while and then wrote her a letter, but there was no answer. I waited a few more weeks, and then I called her home. Her sister answered and in the background I could hear the woman saying, "Tell her I'm not here." I waited half a year and then called again. Her mother answered and said, "She doesn't live here anymore."

Later, when I was teaching high school, there was a coterie of little baby dykes that formed around me—these little groupies, my first experience with groupies. They'd make jokes: One of them lived on a street called Gay Street, and they'd make jokes about Gay Street. They'd pass each other these notes which they wanted me to see. Teachers were supposed to intercept love letters, but I just let them get away with it. They'd show me their letters. They wrote to me for many years. They used to call me "Shorty." They were real confused kids. I mean, they thought what they were doing was bad because their religion said it was. They had no one in the whole school, but they knew I was OK,

that I'd listen. So they'd come and tell me about their lover's quarrels. If they misbehaved, I wouldn't send them to the counselor. I'd talk to them, and it would turn out that the problem was sexual. They felt like creeps. There were also some faggots.

So then I went to Indiana and there was a woman who's a lesbian or a bisexual or something. She's not heterosexual. She and I get real close, and she starts talking about her attraction for women and all this and all that. Then I went to Austin and met Randy, who was this flaming faggot. He introduced me to a bisexual woman. He also introduced me to his roommate, Norma Funderberg. (She just recently wrote to me. I'm going to see her when I go to Austin.) And he took me to bookstores. He was always shoving me towards the feminist section, but I didn't want to be caught there. I was liberated, but I wasn't a women's libber, that kind of thing. There was a meeting at this place called the Y, which was where they had political meetings, organizations, and workshops. They put out this paper called *The Rag*, and the radical part of the city took place there. I said, "I don't want to go to the meeting—all those white women, all those lesbians." But I went. I was the only so-called straight woman. By then I had begun to wonder. I noticed that all my friends were faggots and dykes. I had one straight woman friend who had a crush on me. (I don't know how to explain it to you, Christine. This married woman had the hots for me.) Everybody else was queer. So in my head I started thinking that I must be one. To myself, I was one of them. I still didn't use the word "lesbian," but I felt like I was one of them.

CW: Why didn't you use the word "lesbian"?

GEA: Well, it wasn't part of my culture. We used the words "half and half." We used filthy words, like "culera," which means ass-licker. Even my cousin and those people didn't call themselves "lesbian." They didn't know what they were. "Lesbian" is a modern word, I think. I don't know what people call themselves, but others called them "queer." I wasn't sure what I was. All I knew is that I wasn't straight.

But also because I've always been attracted to men. Even now, I'm attracted to men. I'm attracted to children; I'm attracted to animals. When I was at McDowell's,* I made love to a tree. "Lesbian" is the nearest thing that identifies me, but I don't know what I am. "Lesbian" is not an adequate term. I know that I consciously chose women. During

* Artist colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. [GEA]

that period of time, I consciously chose that I was going to love women. If I was attracted to other beings, I was going to consciously change that attraction by changing my fantasies. You can do that: You can change your sexual preference. It's real easy.

I made a conscious choice. But I think that my Self had taken me to this place where I had to make the choice. I know it was meant. My whole head got turned around. I started seeing things from the perspective of the feminine. All my life, all the readings I'd done in literature, religion, philosophy, psychology had always been male. So I did a complete turnaround and chose feminist literature as one of my areas. I mean, that's how complete the turn was, changing from this person who didn't like the words "feminist" or "women's libber." I didn't think I was oppressed as a woman. Randy and I had this huge argument: "You are so oppressed," he said. I said, "I am not oppressed. I can do whatever I want to do. I come from a very poor background, and I was able to get an education. If I want to walk through that wall, I can. I can do whatever I want." Which is true. A lot of people can't do it, because they haven't concentrated; they don't have the ambition. But I was wrong in believing I had never been oppressed. I'd been oppressed all my life. So oppressed. So that was the complete turn. And I started looking at women's bodies. I think I'd always looked at women's bodies, but now I was conscious of it.

So I became a lesbian in my head first, the ideology, the politics, the aesthetics. I started looking at history differently; I learned that Christianity is based on a female religion, the worship of the mother. Psychologically, spiritually, philosophically, and politically—it was all women. The touching, kissing, hugging, and all came later. First was in my head. But I had a pretty terrible time, because these women fall in love with me, Christine. I don't know. I can't explain it. I wasn't a name in the community, I was nothing—just this little Chicana.

One of the reasons I was turned off to the term "lesbian" was because I only saw these motorcycle dykes. They wore boots, jeans, and big T-shirts with their big breasts bulging under their shirts. Those were the only visible lesbians, these truck-driver, stocky, masculinized lesbians. In the early seventies, that was the stage of the movement. If you were a dyke, you wore these awful boots and these awful jeans and you never changed them; it was a uniform. At that time I was still shaving my legs. (I'd stopped shaving my underarms.) I thought it was disgusting, the hair on their legs. Now look at mine! I'd go home and my mother would give it to me: "Why don't you shave?"

When I was in Indiana working with the school districts I had to wear nice clothes. I used to set my hair and I wore makeup. But after Indiana I stopped shaving. I stopped the mascara and the rouge. I stopped curling my hair. I started wearing this uniform, this awful uniform—not quite, because you know how I like color, so I'd have my red shirts and my wines. Even in queer community, I was queer. I didn't know there were other spic dykes like me. Now, there are a lot of spic dykes dressing up—wearing makeup and heels. You should see Sonia and Mirtha when they dress up.

Then I went to California, where I had my first sexual experience with a woman. I also had a very serious relationship with a woman, that I told you about. Again, she fell in love with me but I didn't reciprocate. I very easily could have, but I have these high standards, fears, and a very very picky Venus in Virgo. But my first sexual experience was with a woman who had a husband, a male lover, and a female lover. Another woman who was bisexual would give me massages. So then I became a lesbian in the flesh, temporarily anyway.

CW: Temporarily?

GEA: Well, my celibate periods are so long. I don't know if I'm a lesbian when I'm celibate. Do you think I'm a lesbian when I'm celibate?

CW: Are you?

GEA: To myself I am. For a while, people were suspicious: Is she or isn't she? And the extent of my sexual relationships with women has been brief, very short term. I have yet to have a full sexual relationship, a live-in relationship with a woman. Even the relationships with men were like that.

The mainstream community has laws that you're supposed to live up to: you have to be silent and you have to merge with this greater herd, these cattle or sheep. But the small community—the lesbian, homosexual community (which is not as small as you think it is. If everybody would come out, it would be half the population, at least in this country; I don't know about other countries)—has rules. Even within this community, I don't fit because I don't have these relationships. I don't fuck. I don't go to the bars. I'm not coupled, and I'm not looking to be coupled. Or if I'm looking, it's not with that kind of desperateness. So there's always something wrong with me. Why don't I go to the bars? Why don't I pick up someone? Why don't I

fuck more often? Why don't I have a lover? Am I afraid of sexuality? Am I afraid of relationships? And the answer is yes. But the answer is also no. It's like they're missing some of the picture.

Within that lesbian community is the smaller community—the third-world dykes and faggots. And then within that community is a smaller one—the spic dykes, the Spanish-speaking ones. Even in that community, it's like I'm not a Latina. I'm not from South America, Puerto Rico, or Mexico. I'm from the U.S. My Spanish is different. My customs are different. Everything is different. So if I'm with Juanita and Mirtha, I'm still different. But when I'm with Chicana dykes, there are some mutual territories that we experienced, that we had grown up in.

Ethnic Pride, Worldwide Oneness

GEA: But I'm sure that with the Chicana dykes I've met, I'm odd, an outcast. Because a lot of them are nationalists and I don't believe in nationalism; I'm a citizen of the universe. I think it's good to claim your ethnic identity and your racial identity. But it's also the source of all the wars and all the violence, all these borders and walls people erect. I'm tired of borders and I'm tired of walls. I don't believe in the nationalism. I don't believe that we're better than people in India or that we're different from people in Ethiopia. One billion people go to bed hungry every night. One billion, with a "b"! There are droughts in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Eastern Africa—a three-year drought, Christine! People are dying every day. And then people talk about being proud to be American, Mexican, or Indian. We have grown beyond that. We are specks from this cosmic ocean, the soul, or whatever. We're not better than people from Africa or people from Russia. If something happens to the people in India or Africa—and they're starving to death and dying—then that's happening to us, too. Because what I see in meditations is that if I can see this presence, which is my soul, and that the substance it's made of is in everything—in the trees, in black people, in yellow people, in red people, in white people—why should I be proud to be Chicana? Yes, I'm proud to be the different ethnicities that are in my blood. But I'm not going to kill for that. Do you know what I mean? It's like saying, "Oh, yeah, air exists, trees exist, roses exist, Chicanos exist, Basques exist, the people, the races that are in my blood exist." So there's a mystique.

If everybody was thinking like this, nobody would starve, because it would be like you were starving. You'd be this little baby in Ethiopia

dying of hunger. So you'd make sure that baby didn't starve. If people thought this way—that the soldier dying in Israel or wherever was you—you'd make sure to stop that war. There'd be no more violence because it would be like taking a dagger and plunging it into your own heart. Because we're all from the same speck. We're just different specks from this big fire. You know what I mean? We just have different forms. Some of us are black, some of us are white, some are short, some are tall. Some of us are in vegetable flesh, some of us are in animal flesh. It's a matter of the vibration of consciousness: The vibration of the consciousness of that plant over there is different from that of a towel and different from that of a person.

So for me, to say "I'm a lesbian"—I say it because there's nothing else. But I'm also all these other things: I'm that plant, I'm that towel, I'm the little kid starving in Ethiopia. You know what I mean? But you use the word because you have to, because if you don't say what you are—if you don't say "Look, I'm me. I'm a lesbian"—then that part of you gets killed. If the world was different, we wouldn't have to say we're lesbians. We could just be whoever we are and fuck whomever we wanted to.

CW: And nobody would care.

GEA: Right. But we haven't gotten to that point yet. So when I go off into this future I have to be pulled back to reality because the borders exist, wars exist, starving people exist. Whenever I eat a salad, I remember the one billion people who go to bed hungry on this planet, and all the little children who are starving. I hate to go into restaurants because I see all these people throwing away food.

"The Gathering of the Tribe"

CW: What kind of spiritual work do you see yourself doing in this lifetime?

GEA: In the meditation it came through that in June of 1985 I have to call a meeting. I already knew I have to do this: years ago a psychic reader, a man named Eric, told me there'd be a gathering of the tribe. He didn't give me the date. In a recent meditation I received the names of seven people who are going to be under preparation; they're going to be training themselves, working out towards recognizing the spirit, awakening it, promoting it, and living it. They're going to be working

on different levels. It's a meeting of kindred spirits. What's so funny is that I'd already written about this meeting in my autobiography; I called it "The Gathering of the Tribe." It's just really weird how the stuff comes out in the writing before it comes out in real life. The same thing happens in dreams: first, it happens in dreams and then, months or years later, it happens in real life.

So, the work I see myself doing is being a channel. I can either be a channel for the oral or the written word, probably through the writing. The kind of channel that I am is in these points of view I've just given you in this five-hour interview. Those are the kinds of things I need to communicate but not in the way I communicated the ideas to you. I'm writing a story about the idea that the soul is a luminous thing. The story is about a woman who fears the soul and thinks it's a demon. It's inside her and comes out; it's so repressed that it has to leave the body. Then she's nothing without it. I sort of fictionalize the idea that the luminous spirit dwells within. I communicate the ideas. They're not my ideas; I don't know where they came from. I *thought* they were mine, until I started reading Sri Aurobindo.

So my spiritual work is a path of self-discovery. If I discover it, I communicate it in the writings or in talking. It's being a teacher from a very early age; I always teach what I have to learn. Also at the same time that's happening, there's the Aries part of me (my moon is in Aries), the trailblazer that initiates new projects. So I look at a person, think of their potential, and say, "Oh, you should learn to do this. Why don't you try astrology, or why don't you do the I Ching, or why don't you read this book?" Or I'll say, "Oh, you should really contact this person, you don't know each other, but . . ." I'm a connector, I connect people to each other. I have to make sure that the ego doesn't take over because there's two people connecting it: me, the little petty ego that gets a good feeling from having put someone on the right path or said, "Look, have you thought about this?" and the higher self. It's like picking up the lamp and lighting the dark places.

I have to make sure it's real spontaneous, that it's from the higher self. It sees a person's spirit, soul, whatever, and automatically thinks, "Why don't they do such and such." Sometimes the mother archetype, the all-powerful mother, is in me, looking after people and taking care of them because it gives me control over them and because it makes me feel that I'm better than they are. But I'm no better. Mostly I love doing it, I love the people, it gives me great pleasure and it's part of who I am. There are always two motives. The one from the ego is the

source of all my problems because I get on my high horse and I have to be knocked off of it. I think you can tell which me it is.

CW: Do you think most people can tell?

GEA: I know you can tell. The people I'm close to can tell. I don't know if strangers can tell. I usually can tell. If I'm riding in a subway and some man is speaking forth on something, I know if he's fake or not.

There's an ego of the mind, an ego of the emotions, and an ego of the body. If we shut those three egos up long enough, then you can hear the vibration of its presence, of its soul, this music that I was telling you about. Quieting the mind is fairly easy. Well, it's hard, but you can do it by concentrating on something, by having a mantra or something, where you shut it down. The breathing helps to shut it down. The emotions, however, are something else. For me, they're much harder because I get confused about whether it's a legitimate desire working for my good and my growth or whether it's a habit I've developed out of fear, greed, jealousy, or laziness.

And then the body is really hard to tackle. I think that aspect is going to take two thousand years. So when you've got the three egos quiet, then you can start the supermentalizing that Sri Aurobindo talks about: instead of operating from this mind, you operate from the supermind which is outside of the body and slightly above. Certain people have certain connections to it. There's the higher mind, which is slightly above your head. After that, there's the intuitive mind and then the illuminated mind. Then there's the overmind. (You sometimes plug into the combination of the intuitive mind and the illuminated mind in your writing, like that card that you wrote to Gerry and some of the things that you said about poetry. That's when you're connected.) I have to work my guts out for thirty hours and then I get this flash the last second: it's the perfect metaphor, image. I say the thing, and it's the right thing to say. But then it's gone and I'm back to using the rational mind and the right brain and the left brain.

When you came in, I was working on this one sentence, trying to take the emotion of fear in the story I'm writing about the soul, and to present it in a palpable, concrete way. You know what I'm talking about? So then I have to write—what is fear? It's a stench, a metallic taste in the mouth. It's like being wrapped up in tentacles of an octopus. I'm trying to put all of that in one sentence, so that people will read it and say, "Oh, yes, that's what fear is."

"La Facultad"

GEA: I think lesbians and faggots have access to this other world. In my autobiography I call it "la facultad." In Santería you call it "having the capacity, the faculty to." It's almost like cultivating an extra sense that straight people don't have, or that straight people who are insane or persecuted, or poor whites or creative people have. Most lesbians and faggots have it because it's a matter of survival. You're caught between two worlds. You're a half and half. You allow yourself to have the qualities relegated to the male—assertiveness, independence, going out into the world—you use those qualities, yet you're a woman. A faggot uses the emotional qualities of a woman—the feminine stuff. So we're like half and half. Because we're not supposed to be this assertive or this complete. It's not because we cultivated it; it's because the world forced it on us. And blacks, street people have it too. It's being connected to the other world, because we were pushed so far back, so far away that we had to confront what other people repress: their sexuality, their fear, their racism. We had to confront everything—all the stuff in them—that they projected onto us: that we're sick, we're vile, we're criminal, we're not good mothers. People like me get double and triple projections, because there's the Indian and the Mexican. Blacks get it even worse, because they're so black. I mean, the darker your skin color, the more projection because you're the opposite of white.

In my book, I call us "divine warriors" because we have to fight. But it's not a physical fighting. It's fighting with the spirit. To be healthy, you must awaken a sense of who you are and keep it strong and assert that you're OK, that you're not sick, that society—religion, political systems, morality, the movies, the media, the newspapers—that they're all wrong and that you're right. It takes tremendous energy, courage, and perseverance to keep that awareness awake. So you start tapping into your strength, your source of power. Some of us don't. Some of us go mad, get locked up, get knifed in the streets, kill ourselves, or pass for straight. To me, passing for straight is the same thing as a light-skinned black passing for white. If she said she was black her friends would reject her, she'd lose her job, her husband would leave her, she'd be an outcast among not only the white people but also among the black people. Some of us sell out; that is, we revert back to being straight.

I think there are some legitimate changes. Sexuality—sexual preference—you can change. But a lot of the changes, if they happen, happen out of the heavy oppression, not out of choice, not out of an equal free choice. You know what I mean?

I believe that lesbianism and homosexuality existed from the beginning. We've been strangled in Aztec villages. We've been burned alive in Incan villages. We've been hanged, put in gas chambers, concentration camps. We have always existed, but we've always been persecuted. And for some reason or other we have to exist, we have to survive. This is my idea, Christine, that there are certain things in the body, certain faculties that we haven't used yet. We use 10 percent of the brain. That's all we use. The other 90 percent—or even if it's 75 percent—we don't use. Its time of flowering has yet to come. It might be thousands of years but there will be a time where those capacities will be used, where the other 75 percent of the brain will be used, where we'll be able to fly. These capabilities are latent in us, in the human race. And I think that the ability to choose your sexual preference is also latent, but very few use it. Or maybe everybody does. I don't know.

I think gay people have a role. I have a double role: as a mestiza, a person of mixed blood, my role is to unite people—the blacks with the whites with the Indians. Not in any grandiose way but just in calling attention to the fact that we're all human, we all come from the same spark. And to show that humanity. Showing the white man something he doesn't know about the black or showing the black man something he doesn't know. Just through the writing. The me who's a mestiza, a person in the middle, between cultures and the me who's a lesbian, who's also straddling the culture of my people who are Chicanos, the me straddling the culture of my people who are queer people, and—in between those two extremes—I'm also all these other people. That is the spiritual to me. We are like crossroads, Christine. I think faggots and lesbians are crossroads, because we come from all colors, all cultures, all nations, all time periods. Every single people on the planet has queer people. So there's a way we can help ourselves and other people, and there's a way we can harm them. I think that's why there's a lot of pressure on us.

It's not an accident that creativity, music, art, acting, and stuff like that are activities for faggots. I think more of it is going to be attributed to lesbians. Lesbians haven't been as visible, because we're not as visible in the street as the flaming faggot. But I don't think it's an accident because when you're up against the wall—when you have all these oppressions coming at you—you develop this extra faculty. You know the next person who's going to slap you or lock you away. Then you make use of faculties that belong to the other realm so that you already know the rapist when he's five blocks down the street. We have this radar, and it's connected to the same thing, to the creative life force. It's creative. It's connected to creativity.

But there are straight people who have this creativity and are free from sexual bias. Many straight men are. I think all the great writers are. They're still indoctrinated by the culture, but when they write they give up being a man and become a woman too. Because they start using the left-handed side, the feminine side. To create you need both sides. People like Faulkner or even Henry Miller: at some point when they were creating their characters they had to give up being only a man; they became both, half and half. Without using the feminine, you can't be a creator. You cannot create works of art, music, painting, or films. Einstein, too. You don't have to be queer to have it. All I'm saying is that if you're queer you probably have it, unless you're in a real sheltered place.

It's not elitist. It's in everything. It's in everybody. But they start knocking it out of you when you enter school. If you talk to children, they have an incredible imagination. The smaller you are, the wilder your observations and images and the connections you make; everything is real. But the older you get, the more society knocks it out of you. So what I'm saying is that it was knocked out of us when we were six or seven. But some of us kept a little tiny part of that imaginative realm. Sometimes violence opens it up. Drugs can open it up, can give you access to this other realm.

CW: What is this training leading you towards?

GEA: Well, becoming myself. That's something I've just lately been observing. I've gone through stages where I was what people expected or wanted me to be. I had to leave my mother in Texas, go away to school when I was eighteen, to start being who I was. I had to leave. I couldn't be who I was at home because certain conceptions were placed on me—some true, some not true.

The development is leading me to greater awareness of who I am and therefore of what I came into this lifetime to do—my path, my function. It's leading me to pick up the pieces that were chopped off: reclaiming the body, sexuality, spirituality, anger. It's leading me towards wholeness. If you're whole, you're perfect. It might take us—this human species—another thousand years or more. We're at the beginning of moving beyond the mind, the vital, and the physical. We're also going to have the superconscience. Growing whole means becoming divine. If the divine is in everything, then we're also the divine. So, development is in recognizing that and working it out in the flesh. You can't go off into a disincarnate sphere and work it out. You have to work it out in

a body. You have to work it out in life. If we were some other life form then maybe we could work it out in a spirit.

The development isn't about finding myself—because I've never been lost. It's about recognizing myself, taking the veil off. It's like building a bridge to the source—to the creative life force, the substance that's in everything, that has tremendous power, just like the nuclear bomb—and connecting to that strength.

CW: But you think in this process another spirit will enter you?

GEA: In the meditation it was called a "habitation." It wasn't like a spirit taking over. I talked to you a long time ago about avatars and the walk-in—disincarnate spirits that are enlightened, that have real life themselves. Like Sri Aurobindo dying. He's a spirit. He's a teacher. He can come and teach you through dreams or through meditation. Disincarnate spirits are enlightened souls, souls that have realized themselves, realized that they have a soul. A habitation is almost like putting on earphones and hearing instructions from a tape recorder. The instructions might come in other ways. Maybe through a coincidence: A book falls off a shelf and hits you on the head; you open it and read it. It might be overhearing a conversation. When the spirit inhabits you, then you get direct information. But it doesn't mean that your spirit leaves. It's like a teacher teaching you, except you're not in a classroom. You're not in a physical classroom. You're in a different kind of classroom, one you can reach when you're meditating or when you're quiet or when your conscious mind is asleep, like through dreams, if you can get a handle on your dreams and if you start working with them. So this spirit is probably going to be instructing three thousand people or more.

In the meditation it said, "Read *The Mother*." So I went and started reading it. The Mother, when she became a realized woman—it's like she had everything at her command. I mean, she knew what people were thinking. She knew what they needed. She knew that she was total consciousness. She was the earth. She was everything, this little skinny woman. She was the only one who could do the yoga of the body and work on the cellular level.

I had already started working with the cells when I broke my arm. (Sometimes the RNA sent the wrong messages to the DNA and there was all this foul-up, and that's why you need to take antioxidants—Vitamin C and Vitamin E, etc.) I was already working with this idea—ever since my operation—with the hormones and stuff. To read that

was like—!!! And then to see all of my ideas in there. I thought, “Where did I get my ideas? This man copied from me.” Then I realized that he had probably given them to me. So I meditated, and it said that in 1977 I had become acquainted with him and his work; in ’83 I had become acquainted with him on the mental realm through dreams; and in ’84 he was going to inhabit my body for short periods. And I got certain dates like that for people. He’s just a teacher, except that he doesn’t have a body. It’s like me giving a creative writing workshop and people coming to it. He’s doing this but in another realm. So it’s not like the avatar. According to Buddhist traditional theology, the last avatar is called Kalki and, according to what some people think, it’s divided into three: Sri Aurobindo, the Mother, and humanity—and it’s going to take maybe two thousand years for humanity to achieve that. But in the meantime, there are these people who are getting this training, for whoever wants it or—I don’t know. I don’t know! I don’t know! That’s all I know. I was real suspicious of it because of the avatar and all that other stuff we’d gotten into before. I was real skeptical. But when I started reading, it was like—you know? All the stuff, it’s all in the poems I’ve been writing for the last ten years. It’s all in the stories. And this is one of the reasons spirituality is so important! It was so strange, and I thought, “What the hell is going on?” Was I right the other time when I said that the spirit had entered my body when I was three months old and then it got knocked out when I fell off the cliff? What was going on? I don’t know. I only have my meditations to go by, the writings, the Tarot cards, the I Ching. I don’t know. I could just be an egomaniac, thinking that the spirit is going to inhabit my body. But then I think maybe there’s millions of those things happening because I really feel we’re going to be saved. Maybe not the whole race. I don’t think it’s going to be an apocalypse or anything like that. Maybe that’s what it’s supposed to be. Maybe they’ve always been there. We just don’t see them because we’re so busy trying to stay alive. All these presences I’ve felt, all these apparitions and stuff—maybe they were this guy showing up for a few seconds. I have no idea. I could be totally off the wall. But then it said to tell people. And I’ve only told three people.

CW: Who have you told?

GEA: I’ve told Randy, Clover, and you. With Clover, I left it very, very superficial. I gave him the title of a book to read, and I said that he was going to be getting instructions, he was going to be preparing

himself. This was about a month ago. The last time I talked to him, he still hadn’t gotten the book. So he might never. Maybe he doesn’t need the book. I wasn’t going to tell you for a while, because of the stuff about the avatar. I wanted to wait and be sure before I opened my big trap. But then it came up. I really don’t think you need to read any books. I just think you need to meditate more. Because your spirit is very evident. It’s very much there. I see its presence. So I don’t think you have to work on the mental. I wonder what you have to work on, whether it’s the vital or the physical. I doubt it’s the mental, because you’re not the kind of person who gets stuff from books. I think you get stuff from life and from people and maybe secondarily through books. And Clover, I don’t know. He’s really messed up. He’s really scared. Maybe this shock of being scared of AIDS and dying and stuff, maybe that will open him. Or maybe it will drive him away.

CW: Maybe he’ll work on the physical.

GEA: He needs to work on the vital and stop smoking grass. So maybe my little job is just to communicate. God knows where these ideas come from. I know it’s connecting the spiritual with the political and all those kinds of connections of what I told you, living in crossroads.