

# IN THE BEGINNING



## *First Love*

*Susan Jordan*

In the beginning you were the waters I swam in, the tree that gave me life. As I grew I learned your body through its blood. You were sound and silence, light and dark, and your discomfort banished the sun. Our hearts spoke to each other in a language without words: we knew one another through embraces without touch. You were the bounds of my protection, the container of my limitless light, the form inside which I did not need to be 'I'. You were not: there was only the universe, and the completion of love.

After the separation our hearts had walls, and I learnt your outside through its feels and smells. Our eyes met, or did not, and words were created to keep us apart. Food came between us, but was always the medium of love. As I left milk behind, your chicken soup, sweet and thin

and golden like urine, became the amniotic fluid in which you hoped our understanding would grow. But I consumed it without consuming you, and left you lonely.

I remember the thickness of your body, the hair on your legs, the size of your breasts and their dark nipples which disgusted me at my own womanhood. I remember you washing your armpits and using 'Mum'. I remember being ashamed of your clothes when you came to the school, ashamed because you were so ordinary, ashamed of your poor old feet. I remember jumping on your best hat till you cried and locked yourself in the bathroom and the sting when you once slapped my face. I remember us eating oranges and laughing till we wept, and sitting on the beach smiling in the hot

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sand. In the kitchen I remember the warm bodyish smell of chopped liver, and the chicken's feet, the fiesselech, in the soup. I remember your Yiddish words when I was good or bad: 'Susele', 'bubele', or 'you shloch', 'you shlemiel'. A long long time ago I thought you were beautiful. Slowly I grew away, and when the break came I no longer knew I loved you.

Seeing you now, with your hands too big for your slack-skinned arms and your mouth lined where your false teeth don't fit, your brittle grey hair and a pinny over

your nice dress, you could be any old lady, no more than one of a generation. You have stopped looking like the picture of you that looks like me. Already I imagine how it will be when you are not there, the pain of losing you and the freedom from you. Long ago I hid from you behind a wall where I could grow into myself. I don't know if I can let the wall down and find again the person I once loved.

*This piece was written in March 1991. My mother died in August the same year.*

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## ***Foetal Drama and the Roots of Religion***

*David Wasdell*

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**W**ar is the collusional enactment of perinatal psychodrama. Religion, on the other hand, is the collusional construct of the foetal unconscious. The common saga of pre and perinatal imprinting is handled in displacement by symbolism, myth and ritual. We have created the gods in our own image, but it is a part of that image which lies buried behind the defences of the trauma of birth. It is part of the image that is disowned, dissociated from its ground, projected to the edge of the cosmos, reified and reintegrated as

revelation from the beyond.

Three great levels of religion can be seen, nesting one within the other like a set of Russian matruska dolls. The outer layer, precipitated by perinatal trauma, is characterised by myths and symbols of the uterine ecology, bounded by the convulsive struggle of birth. It is impossible to see any earlier levels until the myths of this outer shell have been deconstructed and the precipitating traumata integrated. The second and more primitive level of religion is one associated with the trauma

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