

*The topography of* THE OTHER WORLD  
AREA A THE LAND OF MYSTERY

The land of mystery is the state of being in which the ultimate upagainstness of life dramatically intrudes into consciousness. That finality is the everlasting mystery that is above, beneath, before and after all that is and which at the same time is ever present in the very midst of everyday life. It is the one absolute presence and power from which none can hide and before which all stand nakedly exposed in fear and fascination. It is the state of consciousness in which both the self and its universe experiences radical transformation. It is the awareness in which one feels irrationally compelled to live that awful mystery. Finally, one knows that with no credible reason or assurance he has submitted in singular adoration to the last power.

TREK I

THE  
AWEFUL  
ENCOUNTER

One day a man is driven, by whatever vicissitudes of life, into the consciousness that he himself must die. It's like a state of shock. A strange force intrudes. Suddenly he's submerged in awe. He feels it hovering all around him. He feels its penetration into the deepest corners of his innermost being. In quiet terror and inexplicable fascination he knows the fragility of his life, feels his contingency and beholds the passingness of all things. It is a mortal wound from which he knows he will never recover. As the absurdity, the irrationality of it all seeps deep within, a burning objectless anger rises and rages until futility itself turns it into heavy numbness. Everything's disoriented. All is nothingness. No place to stand. Just terrible mystery. Hanging helpless, whirling in emptiness, engulfed in awe, it dawns at long last like the rising of a black sun that exactly here is the finally real before which he is fated and invited to live and die his life. This is the great encounter with the awful mystery.

TREK II

THE  
INESCAPABLE  
POWER

Having beheld the mystery, one experiences it everywhere. Right in the midst of his life. In every little trifle. In every sweeping event. He feels it waiting at every turn. He sees it peering out from rocks and trees, ready to pounce. He meets it in the other. He senses it in himself. Like white hot light. Scorching his consciousness; searing his inner depths. He feels himself condemned by lucidity. Every fibre screams for darkness. And there is no darkness. Imprisoned with awe, he flees in frantic desperation. But there is no escape. Mystery is everywhere. His shuddering being in angry rebellion beats upon invisible bars. But there's no way out. No escape. Slowly, painfully, he becomes aware that before this unavoidable power every force expires. It will slay him. Almost in horror he finally sees that mystery always wins. And that the game is fixed. The dice are loaded. In bursts of anger he admits into his consciousness that the mystery knew this all the time. In a state of unrelievable helplessness he finally knows what he has always known. That all is known. The mystery knows all. Suddenly, abruptly, he experiences himself stripped naked. With the last remnant of dignity gone. Naked, defenseless, helpless—he knows himself to be known. Utterly known. And to be utterly known is to know yourself—the most dreadful fascination of all.

TREK III

THE  
TRANSFORMED  
STATE

When one finally acknowledges with his being that there is no way out, that the mystery always wins, he experiences an uncanny stirring deep within. He senses hidden springs of strange life beginning to flow. It's like unknown vital powers are loosed. Suddenly he is aware that things are different. An uncommon liveliness seems to inform everything. All is strange, foreign. The world isn't itself anymore. The same old world, yet incredibly new, like waking up in a foreign land. Waves of fear meet tides of hyper-fascination within him, and turn into a gale as he himself is not himself anymore. It's as if he is experiencing transmigration, new birth, recreation. He scarcely knows himself. It's all disconcerting and agonizing and frightening and wonderful. His being now seems unbearably precious. And all of life suddenly turns into a dance. It's alive, really alive. Everything is dynamic. Everything is becoming. Everything is change, with endless surprise. He senses that both he and his world are ceaselessly occurring anew, caught up in an endless swirl of impenetrable awe. This is the state of transformation by mystery.

TREK IV

THE  
INFINITE  
PASSION

In the very midst of consciousness of the wonder-filled mystery and the perpetual newness of all things a man, without warning, suddenly senses himself caught in some cosmic joke. He's been had. It's like he isn't in on things. Like he feels things ought to be a little bit clearer, but they aren't and he knows they never will be. A sense of being everlastingly ridiculed wells within. And dubiety racks the foundations of his being—doubt of self, doubt of the world, doubt of the mystery. Here an uncontrollable hate for all drives him to the dark portals of madness itself. Here in this agonizing despair he faces the eternal unknowableness of the mystery. Suffering inhuman pain he allows himself to know that ultimacy is hidden forever. Now he sees with suffering that the mystery is eternally absent even when it is present. Hatred turns into a resentment that he knows will never wholly go away. He feels himself rejected, denied, abandoned. And though this shall ever be, he now, in the midst of the doubt and hurt, experiences a strange kind of homesickness surging within. He feels a burning desire for no-thing. Incredible as it is to him, he has fallen in love with the mystery. He is driven into absolute love. He is enraptured by the mystery.