THE OUTLAW RELATIONSHIP AS AN
INTERTWINING OF TWO IDENTITY CRISES: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL/PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC
REFLECTION UPON FEMALE AWAKENING AT
LATE ADOLESCENCE AND MALE REJUVENATION
AT MID-LIFE

Richard J. Alapack

The collision of two worlds is the subject matter of this investigation. A young woman and a middle-aged man meet, each ripe for an "Outlaw Relationship" (Alapack, 1975). She is poised on the ambiguous threshold of womanhood; he is caught upon the cutting edge between youth and old age. Both are ready to mount, and vulnerable to endure, a total invasion into each other's life. Their Outlaw Relationship intertwines their life predicaments, refracting, like a prism, the meanings of their situations.¹

Coming to an Acquaintance with the Phenomenon

As a psychotherapist, I have been a privileged listener to accounts of intense psycho-sexual-spiritual relationships told to me by both adolescents and adults. Likewise, as a researcher, I have asked people to describe their most intense and most poignant heterosexual relationships. Finally, I have struggled, as a fragile man, to grasp patterns in my own heterosexual involvements. My personal search continues, but I have gained sufficient distance to elaborate the structure of the Outlaw bond.

What are the characteristics of this Outlaw experience/metaphor? By an Outlaw Relationship I mean an encounter with a significant stranger who comes from a context different from my habitual, everyday situation, and who represents a realm of meaning outside of my law of living. My Outlaw's overpowering sexual/spiritual presence shakes the roots of my existence, tumbles my taken for granted world, and invites me to
transgress my ordinary ground. In the confrontation with my Outlaw, I am forced to confront myself radically, and to make choices which reveal genuine preferences and actual priorities. Under the provocation of this life/death crisis, I eventually make decisions for which I must own responsibility, and which irrevocably shape the face of my future.

The Rationale for the Presentation of a Dramatic Parable

On what basis have I chosen to express this Outlaw Relationship in the form of a Dramatic Parable? Firstly, the attempt to synthesize the meanings of life-stories gathered from multiple sources required a genre broader than the case history. Besides, Hillman (1975) has already exposed the imaginal core of case history material. Secondly, Anais Nin (1971) has demonstrated the positive power of capturing the essential meanings of human encounters by transforming them into parables or myths (pp. 77; 127; 152). But the most trenchant theoretical justification of the Dramatic Parable is that it exemplifies one way to execute a phenomenologically based concrete psychology which converges with psychoanalysis.

In Giorgi's (1984) lucid exposition of Politzer's project to found a "concrete psychology" we find the central position given to "human drama," or "human action in the original Greek sense of doing and acting" (p. 3). The Outlaw Parable which follows meets the criteria for a concrete psychology envisioned by Politzer. It describes "a human event . . . expressed in the world" which is intricately connected to "the human subject undergoing that event," and which is prior to any "inner/outer distinctions" (Giorgi, 1984, p. 4). Psychological relevance emerges because, as the Outlaw Relationship unfolds, we witness "first person" subjects who are considered in their "totality" as respective "centers" of a multiplicity of acts (Giorgi, 1984, p. 4).

The Dramatic Parable

By a Dramatic Parable I mean an idealized, situated exchange between people, partially experiential, partially imaginative, which integrates and symbolizes many actual, concrete variations. We will now view both sides of the interface between the young woman and the middle-aged man.

Her Side of the Interface

She is nineteen years old, at home for the Christmas holidays after finishing her first semester at Nursing school. Tonight she is in her