

INTRODUCTION, Part 1

I'm JP. You know me. When I turned fifty, I had fifty birthday parties—one-to-one with friends in many locales. Now I'm about to celebrate my seventy-second by completing this writing project which I began in 1978 (MCMLXXVIII). It's a fictional distillation of what I've felt, observed and learned over the past forty years. After my creative partner Lillian publishes this carefully crafted chaos, I will seek out friends and—for my personal satisfaction—give them (you) this volume as a gift.

You may not know that I had seventeen years of psychological therapy. Overcoming rapid-cycling manic depression, killing my relentlessly accusatory inner voice, and learning to face death are I believe the most important achievements of my life, certainly the most liberating. This book celebrates those *triumphs, fictionally.

If you undertake to read it, keep in mind: before the cure comes the illness, before the courage the paranoia, before the liberation the enslavement. This book is “selvagem,” which is Portuguese for “wild, fierce, savage.” *MCMLXXVIII* wildly interprets my struggle against fierce feelings which began at age eight when I learned of the savage murder of my grandmother, years before my birth. By eleven I was firmly in the grip of guilt and fear. If you read ahead, ignoring the preface, you'll be challenged by disorientation, dream illogic, and manic-depressive surreality. *MCMLXXVIII*'s uncertainty, contradiction,

horror, joy, lies and truths do not at all tell the story of my life, but express, rather, the essence of my inner experience.

This book is also “selvagem” because it’s a lament. How absurd that in this infinite universe each of us is required to struggle torturously to construct an individuality, which is then demolished by death. Even if we mature enough to face this “natural” end, we remain defenseless against a more horrifying possibility. Now, even more so after the 2016 USA election, humanity is confronted with the possibility of annihilation—the end of our hopes for a just and creative society and vital earth. In a flash or filthy meltdown we may be forced to witness the destruction of harmonious nature and innumerable species, including our own. No wonder this book screams.

I’m JP. You know me. I hate the debilitating effects of guilt. Please don’t feel guilty if you don’t read all the way through or even a single page. I thoroughly endorse my book, but it may not be your cup of tea. As long as we know one another you need never refer to it again. Our friendship will remain true. What’s important is that we met one more time.

*“Triumph” from Latin triumph(h)us, probably from Greek thriambos ‘hymn to Dionysus.’