



Jane Roberts: Modern Medium

by C. C. Chambers

Jane Roberts sits in her pleasant living room. She talks animatedly, and suddenly, almost at the snap of a finger, she goes into trance. The lights have not been dimmed, nor have any elaborate breathing exercises preceded her trance. Her voice lowers to a male register, the pupils of her eyes darken and dilate perceptibly. The personality of Seth has come.

Most mediums supposedly receive messages from another realm, often from the recently departed. Some have special guides, or "alternative personalities." It is not yet clear who or what a control personality is. Eileen Garrett, for example, has Uvani; Douglas Johnson, Chiang; Mrs. Leonard had Fedra. Jane Roberts has Seth.

Seth uses Jane Roberts' body to some extent. Her facial characteristics change. Her eyes look directly at you as she speaks in Seth's voice, but they are no longer her eyes.

One may wonder at first if she is only acting, but after hours of trance, the personality of Seth becomes sharply delineated.

The above is actually in sharp contrast to the usual seance, as an example from personal experience illustrates. THIS medium, whom I will not name, arrives in sneakers and a sweat suit, carrying his collapsible aluminum trumpet in a knitting case. He explains his clothing by telling us that in trance he sweats profusely. It is, as a matter of fact, beastly hot, but the windows must be covered with many layers of the *New York Times* to keep out any flicker of light. We form a circle, hold hands, put water with salt in a bowl, sing songs to send up positive vibrations. The medium gasps frequently, and finally after much time has passed, says *things like*, "Who knows a John. I get a John." No one apparently knows John. Any information produced is fragmen-

tary at best. It is endless but comedic. The medium admits that it is not a good night, explaining that he had not realized that our vibrations were at such a high level. We are told that things are terribly successful in New Jersey where the trumpet has floated in mid-air many times.

Was he fraudulent? Someone with exhibitionistic desires? Or just someone not too advanced in his mediumship? The quality of information gained in these types of seances, unfortunately, is neither enlightening, nor stimulating. It is all surprisingly like bad theater, for which I might add, there had been a small admission charge.

In contrast, the quality of the Seth material is interesting and thought-provoking, flowing furthermore out of Jane's mouth almost non-stop. The range of information is wide: personality expansion, the nature of physical reality, reincarnation, time, religion, dreams, illness, etc. These are dealt with in depth according to the ability of the questioner to

question. Seth responds like a teacher (which he claims to have been in previous lives), always trying to present the material in symbols or analogies that will be understood. His style and personality are quite his own.

Robert Butts, Jane's husband, meticulously records each session in shorthand, and has been doing so since 1963 when it all began. A session usually lasts about an hour and a half, sometimes longer. The collected material now covers more than 5,000 double-spaced, typed pages.

Jane Roberts thought she had her life all planned out. She is a published writer and her husband a painter. They were living the way of the normal world. She had not had psychic experiences as a child like most mediums, nor was she acquainted with the occult. Trance was a vague term to her. Interestingly enough, her first psychic step came through her poetry. Perhaps for this reason she believes that the creative experience is the gateway to the unconscious for us all. In her book, *The Seth Material*, recently published by Prentice-Hall, she relates the whole step-by-step development of her mediumship and the appearance of Seth. She describes her first experience very well. It is late at night and she is working on her poetry.

... Between one normal minute and the next, a fantastic avalanche of alien ideas burst through my head with tremendous force, as if my skull were some sort of receiving station, turned up to unbearable volume. Not only ideas came through this channel, but sensations, intensified and pulsating. I was turned in, turned on, whatever you want to call it; connected to some incredible charge. I didn't even have time to call out to Rob. It was as if the physical world were really tissue paper thin, hiding infinite dimensions of reality, and I was suddenly flung through the tissue paper with a huge ripping sound. My body sat at the table, my hands furiously scribbling

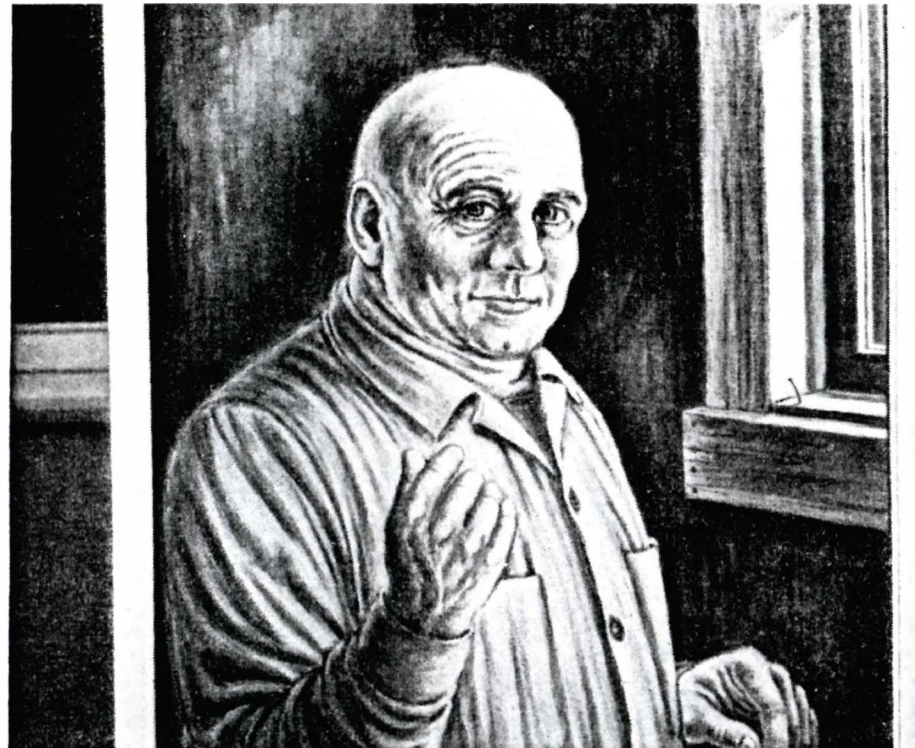
down the words and ideas that flashed through my head. Yet at the same time I seemed to be some place else, traveling through things. I went plummeting through a leaf to find a whole universe open up; and then out again, drawn into something else. I felt as if knowledge were being implanted in my very cells, so that I couldn't forget it—a gut knowing, or a biological spirituality.

This is certainly a startling creative experience. Keats would have called it the "heat of the mind", or Blake, an inspiration from an "eternal realm." Later, Jane was to say that this experience was as different from the ordinary inspiration of creative work "as a bird is from a worm." Jane learned from Seth that this was one of his first attempts to contact her. In her book, she rather humorously remarks that if Seth had gone any further at that time, or if she had started speaking in *his* voice, she would have been frightened and overwhelmed. Further communication would have been impaired.

Jane and Rob then tried the Ouija board. The first hint of something unusual was when Jane began anticipating first the words and then whole sentences. She began to "hear" the words and began wanting to speak them. Finally, she did so and Seth came for the first time.

Understandably, she suffered a long period of doubt about Seth and herself. Partially, she kept the sessions up out of curiosity, for she felt that the material was interesting and far better than she could consciously do herself. Naturally, she and Rob plied Seth with questions. Who or what was Seth? Why did he pick Jane?

Seth replied: "The designations 'spirit,' 'medium,' etc., are ridiculous. You are simply using your inner senses. These senses are not magical. I am not some secondary personality, nor some beady-eyed spirit sitting on cloud nine. It is simply a fact



A portrait of Seth, painted by Robert Butts.

that I have lived as a human being. I make contact with you through your subconsciousness, which is the inner senses. I have absolutely nothing to do with that portion of the subconscious which is involved with your personal memories or your personality make-up. You ask me why this material is being given to you. My answer is, beside my strong affection for you both, that you are unaffiliated with any cult, or particular school of thought. You are open-minded, and not fools; not ready to cast me in the guise of a pot-bellied cupid, Buddha, saint or devil. Such people are hard to find.

In other sessions, Seth further explained that Jane had been chosen because her ego structure was sufficiently strong, for one too weakly structured would be shattered by such an experience as trance, which involves the introduction of another personality into one's life.

What of Jane and Rob's reaction to these startling events? They were fascinated and sceptical simultaneously. Jane especially won-

dered. Was she producing all this from her subconscious mind? Was this some sort of new creative outlet? Was she only seeking attention? Was the personality of Seth like some psychotic manifestation as in *The Three Faces of Eve*? To live with such questions and leave them unresolved did not seem a very pleasant solution. In some respects, the only way to find out was to keep experimenting with the sessions.

Jane also began to remember her dreams in detail, and also to have out-of-the-body experiences (astral projection). Her doubts were now alternately soothed and inflamed by much reading as well. Her opinions remained unresolved:

I found the ideas presented in The Seth Material fascinating, but I was not about to accept them as the same kind of solid fact which I accepted, say, as the bacon I eat for breakfast. Now I know they are far more important... The impact of my own experience was too undeniable to ignore, yet I held back also. To me, it was tantamount to intellectual suicide to even admit the possibility that Seth was ac-

tually someone, a personality who had survived death.

Finally, one experience began to reassure her that she had not at least been making it all up. During one session while her physical body sat in her own living room, Seth was speaking and Rob taking notes, she experienced an out-of-the-body projection to California 3,000 miles away. Seth's voice described what she saw. When these details were verified by two complete strangers (it was their home she had described) her doubts began to melt. Jane knew this had not been faked—could not have been faked. Accurate clairvoyant information had been received. Since that time numerous other similar examples have occurred, further convincing Jane that Seth, regardless of his nature, aided her in obtaining accurate ESP.

Perhaps the most difficult doubt to resolve was the idea that Seth might be a secondary or alternative personality. In studying other such cases, she discovered that the secondary personality almost always tried to undermine and take over the ego, causing the personality to disintegrate. At no time has Seth ever tried to intrude upon her "sense of self." When she feels his presence she can always prevent him from "coming through". Rather, there has been a stabilizing of her ego, and an enhancement of her life as a whole.

And what about the Seth Material itself? Below are just a few provocative quotes taken at random from Jane's book, *The Seth Material*:

The personality is multi-dimensional. The individual is basically free of space and time. The fate of each of us is in our own hands. Problems not faced in this life will be faced in another. We cannot blame God, society, or our parents for misfortunes, since before this physical life we chose the circumstances into which we would be born and the challenges that could best bring about our development. We form physical matter as effortlessly and unselfconsciously as we breathe. Telepathical-

ly we are all aware of the mass ideas from which we form our overall conception of physical reality.

The ego is that portion of waking consciousness that deals with physical manipulation.

Many concepts, and practical inventions, simply wait in the dream system in abeyance until some man accepts them as possibilities within the physical frame of reality... Imagination is waking man's connection with the dream system. Imagination often reinstates dream data, and applies it to particular circumstances or problems within daily life. The dream universe then possesses concepts which will some day completely transform the history of the physical world, but a denial of such concepts as possibilities delays their emergence.

Telepathy operates constantly. If you continually expect an individual to behave in a particular manner, then you are constantly sending him telepathic suggestions that he will do so. Each individual reacts to suggestion. According to the specific conditions existing at the time, such an individual will to some extent or another act according to the mass suggestions he receives. These mass suggestions include not only those given to him by others, both verbally and telepathically, but also those he has given to himself both in waking and dream states. If an individual is in a state of despondency, this is because he has already become prey to negative suggestions of his own and others.

Rob has had his life affected in a very practical way. Through the sessions he has gained great insight into his own family. He has also corrected his mental attitudes enough to rid himself of a painful back condition. His painting has taken on a new twist. Rob now sees visions, in the Blakian tradition, which inspire his paintings. He may be driving to work, and one will pop into mind. Having a fine visual memory, he sketches it immediately and later paints it. He has even gotten detailed directions on how to obtain certain skin tones as well as such sage advice as:



... physical matter is like plastic that we use and mold to our own desire, not like concrete into which our consciousness has been poured.

One can only imagine the feelings of Jane Roberts upon being told that this material had come through her. Before the sessions, Jane had not even believed in life after death, much less reincarnation or mass telepathy.

Jane expresses her new attitude towards life. "The Seth Material has completely changed my ideas of the nature of reality, and reinforced my sense of identity. No longer do I feel as I did before, that man is the slave of time, illness, decay, and at the mercy of built-in destructive tendencies over which he has no control. I feel in control of my own destiny as never before, and no longer ruled by patterns subconsciously set in my childhood."

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"Imagine the individual as the center of all life, so that when the painting is completed, it automatically suggests the whole universe of which the individual is part. Nothing exists in isolation, and this is the secret that the old masters knew so well."

Both Rob and Jane have widened their mental horizons, but they continue their normal lives. Jane still writes, Rob paints better than ever, but they both put more into their lives and get more out of it. They both feel that through the compilation of the Seth Material they can help other people. Seth agrees with them, and for this reason Jane Roberts does not give individual readings to the public as do most mediums, nor does she ever accept money even for expenses.

Guided by Seth, Jane has taken on the task of teaching ESP classes, along simple informal lines. The classes are small, only about 10 or 12 people. They are local people who are interested in trying out tests and experiments twice a week. Quite a few of them have improved, and some have shown real ability. Seth regularly appears during sessions and makes commentaries.

For those interested, I would certainly advise reading *The Seth Material*. There are parallels with the Cayce material, and other philosophical ideas that have kept cropping up through the ages. But there is a good deal that is presented rather originally.

Regardless of its source, the Seth material is filled with constructive ideas, humor and wit. It is a fine change from being told that man is simply a finely tuned computer, or a predetermined puppet of his early environment, etc. Is it not because we are more than we know that we all so resent being numbered and categorized? According to Seth, one of his purposes is to show us how much more there is to life—to enable us to appreciate ourselves more fully.

