
PORTI

FORUM
MAGAZINE

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FORUM

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Entries for the 1993 edition will be collected in the fall.

Editors' Notes

Putting the Forum together this year has been a horrifying and wonderful experience. The best parts included getting three times as many submissions as last year, reading a great selection of pieces, and choosing the best of the best from among them. The worst parts were getting three times as many submissions as last year, reading a great selection of pieces, and choosing the best of the best from among them; as well as managing to erase an essay just when we were ready to send them all to the printer. We had so many submissions they took weeks to read, which put us behind schedule, and they were so good that, given the money, the Forum you now hold in your hands would be twice as thick, to accommodate all the pieces we enjoyed. It was a grueling experience, but well worth it, as the high quality of essays in this edition should show. To everyone published, "Congratulations!!" To everyone else, "Please try again!" There were so many excellent essays we didn't have space for, as well as many that just needed a bit more work before they were ready for publication. To sound like one of your professors, "Revise, Revise, Revise" and please resubmit your pieces. Maureen will look forward to reading four times as many essays next year, I'm sure.
We tried to include a variety of topics and viewpoints, from racism to pottery, baseball to calligraphy, to provide something of interest to everyone. Please gratify us by arguing about them.

Finally, I want to thank everyone who helped out, especially the typists who did a lot of work for little thanks. But I especially want to speak to the contributors. Thank you for the divine torture! I'll miss it.

Leslie Pessagno

"The more things change, the more they stay the same," so they say. It seems that they (whoever "they" may be!) could have been referring to my second year as FORUM editor. Yes, there have been changes — the most prominent one being that I've lost that free-fall feeling when handed a batch of essays and being ordered to "Create! And make it good!" The task of putting FORUM together is no longer insurmountable.

It has, however, remained challenging. Deadlines lurking just around the corner, fifteen page essays lost to the puzzling workings of a hungry computer, too many superb essays to choose from, wishes of "If only I had written that," questions regarding commas versus semicolons, "i's" before "e's" and parallel structure... all have become old buddies, friendly obstacles that could not have been faced without the empathetic understanding of Leslie; the assistance of the production staff; the "artistic eye" of Amy, our art director; and the support and encouragement from Dr. McGuiness.

I hope you find FORUM to be an enjoyable magazine—read it, absorb it, experience it... and you, like I, will be amazed by the remarkable talent of Loyola's aspiring writers and artists. The "long, strange trip," the "FORUM experience," is far from being over for me, and it's just begun for you as readers. Enjoy!

Maureen Marron

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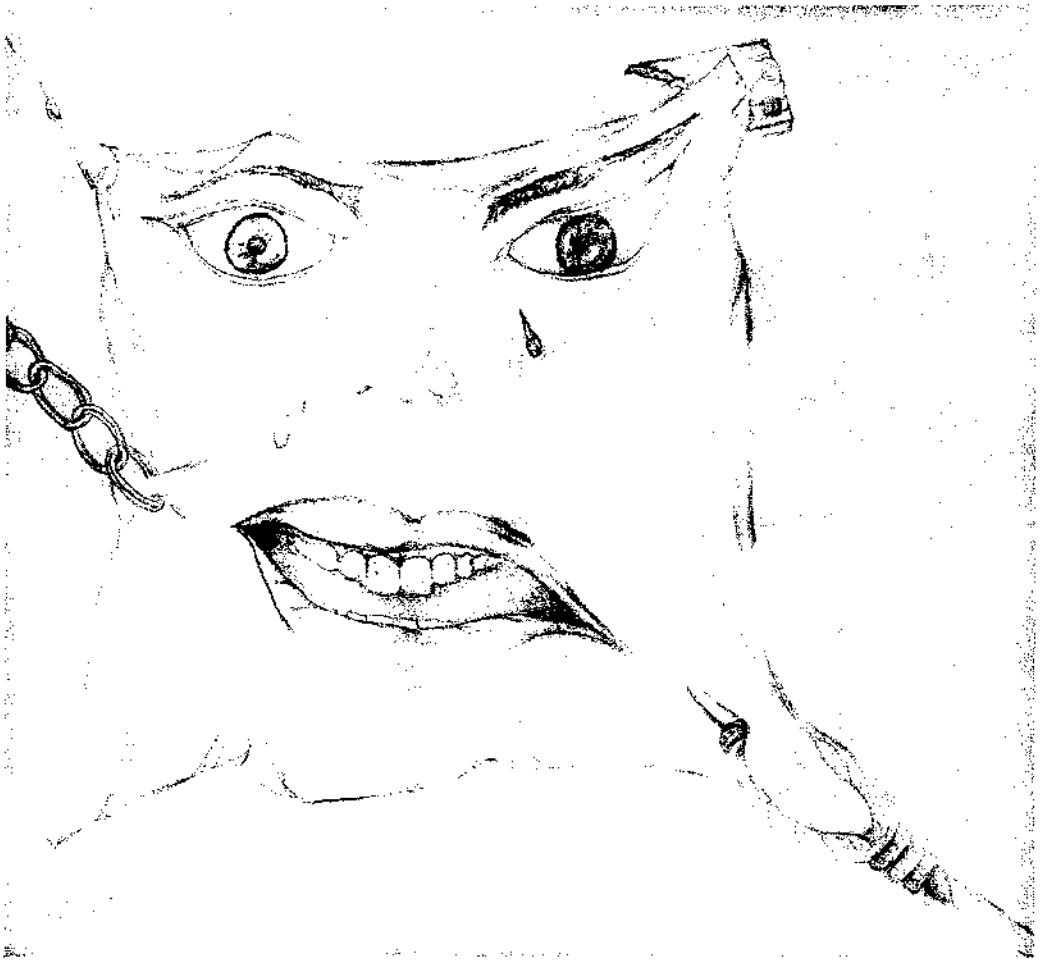
ARTWORK BY:

Cover Illustration Designed By: Amy Sullivan

Art begins with resistance—at the point where resistance is overcome. No human masterpiece has ever been created without great labor."

André Gide



Dust of the Ground

by Kirsten Sundell

The results of a conception and its completion are almost never the same. An artist, of whatever method, begins, as motivation, with an image of the perfect painting or poem, and sets about to put it down on paper, canvas, clay or stone. From there, the act of creating is a sort of transfusion, a process of transferring one's consciousness through the hands into a pliable and receptive medium, an act that requires balance and understanding between hands, eyes, and brain.

The potter is not often considered a fine artist, but watching a wide-mouthed and perfectly symmetrical bowl arise out of a deftly handled lump of wet grey clay makes molding earth seem no less artistic or creative than dabbling in a box of pigments. The potter before me is making a set of utilitarian bowls and vases, all in a wide, sweeping style. His hands are white and cracked like a sere desert, thoroughly saturated with clay. He slaps down an angular slab of grey-brown earth, briefly pounds it into a rounded mass, and pumps the treadle of his potter's wheel. "Call me a ceramicist if you think it sounds better," he laughs, flicking me with muddy water and applying now wet and darkened fingers to the spinning earth beneath him. The clay responds to his touch, edges spring up where there was only a shapeless lump, the mass starts to resemble a bowl. The potter talks thoughtfully, slightly distracted, as the earth spins beneath his hands, describes how he got started making pottery, what he tries to create in his work. "It has to be functional," he says, "but the shapes come from inside, really, I just see them in my head and try to get them into the clay." His fingers leave thread-like trails as he shapes and balances; he breathes quietly, scrutinizing the depth of the bowl, the thickness of its gracefully sweeping rim, giving the treadle an occasional push. He gives the bowl a delicate base, small in circumference, that expands out into a beautiful and arching space, almost perfectly round. The wheel slows, then stops, he steps back and studies his handiwork, a smile forming under his mud-spattered moustache. "Not quite what I had envisioned," he comments, "but I like it." He slices the bowl from the wheel with a thin wire, while I sit amongst the greenware on the studio shelves, pursuing his remark.

As an artist, I have contemplated the disparity between the visualized goal and the finished product, the process by which an original idea is conceived into form. I begin with a vague idea, a flash of color or graceful line seen with brief clarity in idle moments or while I sleep. Conveying it the way my mind sees it is sometimes frustrating, the task complicated by new ideas, distractions, the obscurement of time making recollection hazy at best. Standing in front of a canvas of bright flowers, brush poised in hand and ready to apply the perfect hue,

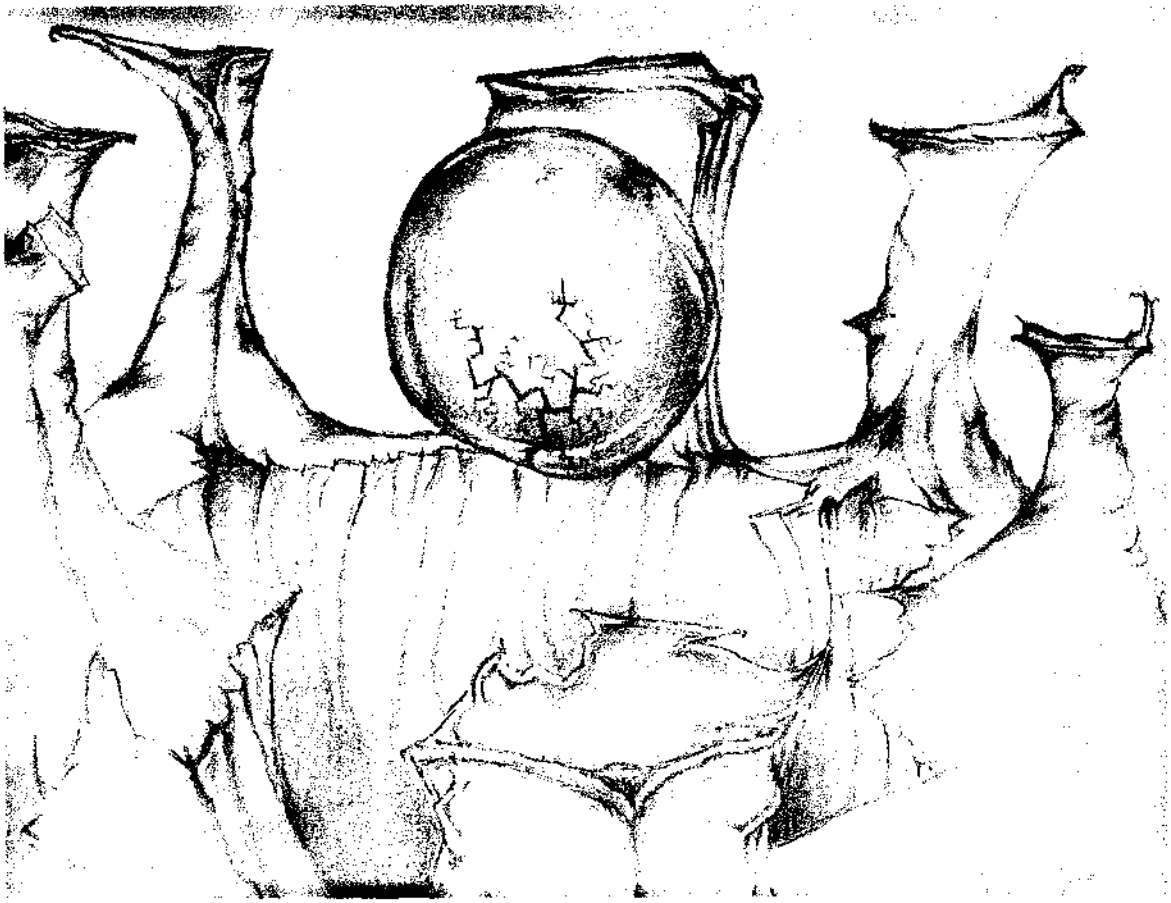
I may be struck by a sudden insight or doubt, a fresh idea leading me to alter the direction in which I take the work, or to scrap the piece entirely. The distraction of daily occurrences and the pressures of other responsibilities pull me away from a work in progress, and when I return I often lose sight of what I was attempting to achieve. Being only a fledgling artist, I do not have the ability of the experienced craftsman to accept the disparity between what I envision and what my mind and hands create, to accept as equally beautiful the seemingly imperfect work. Putting it on paper or canvas, or shaping it in the wire foundation of a sculpture, I am dependent on what my eyes and mind conceive as good, on a dim remembrance of a perfect form or color. At some point, I see that I am finished, that there is nothing left to be done with the work, that further molding or application of paints would make the work seem forced, false to its own nature. The potter appreciated the divergent beauty of what his hands had molded, pleased by the bowl he sliced from his wheel, but I am usually disappointed by my inability to completely translate my ideas into form. In creating, the artist is reliant on the accuracy of memory, the skill of his hands, an innate and intuitive sense of balance. The finished work resembles the envisioned only if the artist can accept and appreciate the variation between goal and realization, and only then can he release his visions in the form of great or useful art.

A week has passed, and I have returned to the studio to watch the newly-fired bowl receive a glaze. It has come out of the enormous Swedish kiln a light brownish pink, the color of the pueblos. Holding it up to the light, the potter studies its curves, deciding on the colors and textures of glaze that he will apply, choosing an appropriate finish. As I sit making a pinch pot out of a spare lump of clay, he shakes and mixes great plastic jars filled with liquids and sediments, talking about how he chooses the colors he uses, where his designs come from. "I like abstract designs, big swatches of rich color, transparent hues, a heavy gloss and sheen to the finished product," he says, stroking a glaze laden brush quickly over the surface of the bowl; "Sometimes I just try to show things I see in my dreams. Isn't that strange?" Watching the opaque and sandy solutions sink into the fired clay, I don't think so. I watch carefully, studying the lines and expressions that cross his face as he works. He bites his lip, seems almost absent-minded as he spatters and swathes the surface of the bowl. "It's done," he says, and I snap back from my contemplation, eye the bowl that he holds out before me. The colors are washed out, pale and rather lifeless, like all glazes before they are fired. "I've chosen a lot of blacks and blues," he says, "and a very lustrous leaded glaze. You couldn't eat out of it, but it will make a lovely ornament or flower bowl." I thank him for letting me watch him work. He wishes me luck with my own creative endeavors. I cannot come back to see him again soon.

As I leave the plain brick studio, I think again about the creation of art, about the constantly different results that come out of a creative inception. My own work comes out unlike the way I conceive it, possessing a different character from the brief vision upon which it is based.

Like musical variations on a single simple theme, each work captures only a portion of the central idea, elaborating and expanding it into new dimensions. The artist, like the composer, must embrace what he has created, acquiesce to his finished work whether it has captured completely the form or musical concept he has envisioned or not. The true artist welcomes variation in his works, celebrates the singular beauty and worthiness of every piece he creates.

Weeks later, I arrive home to find a low box on my doorstep, addressed to me. Pushing aside the shredded paper, I see the bowl, gleaming black and blue like a great winking eye. Lifting it carefully, I see words inscribed on the smoothly hollowed base. "For K," it reads. "Good luck." I carry it inside, clear off the table, opening the windows so that I can see it in the light of the sun. It is gorgeous, iridescent in the light, with dreamlike waves of deep blues and black covering its surface, speckles of an emerald green rising out of the blue base like evening stars. I am spellbound by its simple elegance, by the depth and clarity of color, by the confidence and creative intuition the potter had in foreseeing his finished work. Guided only by a half-seen vision, his hands and eyes shape what he knows to be good, balanced, harmonious. Conceived in the mind, the creative idea takes life in the hands of an artist; given proper care and gentle encouragement, it can be born into a glorious sculpture, a vibrant painting, a rhythmic poem, a shining bowl waiting to hold lilies and water.



"Gone — glimmering through the dream of things that were."

Byron

Natchez

by Sara Moran

Every Easter my family traveled to Natchez, Mississippi to spend our annual spring vacation with my grandparents. We always looked forward to this trip. Everything about Natchez was beautiful this time of year, with looming, beautifully green trees draped in Spanish moss, dogwoods in full bloom, and the sweet smells of jasmine, crape myrtle, and sweet olives lingering in the warm air. I loved it there. In Natchez, the beginnings of spring mark the week of the historic Pilgrimage, where tours of the beautifully kept mansions go on throughout the town. While tourists came from all over the country to experience history, for us children in my family, it only meant dressing up in hoop skirts and pantelets, sitting on the front porch welcoming visitors, and celebrating with tea parties on the back terrace.

Since the time spent in Natchez always fell during the Pilgrimage, we were always able to attend the annual pageant held in City Hall. My grandparents took us children out for quite a magical night, staying up late watching the different dances and skits take place in the huge auditorium. The pageant remains vivid in my memory. I remember watching the children dancing around Maypole, the girls in their brightly colored dresses and hoop skirts, the boys dressed in knickers, and colorful streamers looping through the air to the music of the orchestra. I watched as Natchez residents depicted the marriage of Jefferson Davis to Varina Howell, the landing of the riverboat, and the Audubon, where the dancing master instructed the students, with the girls dressed as boys in velvet suits and other girls in tutus. Every time the polka started up, I was so excited when the dancers came up into the audience looking for partners.

I can still hear the black singers, dressed with long skirts and aprons and kerchiefs tied around their heads, singing spirituals and "Dixie." My mother now tells me that the blacks refuse to do that scene anymore. They believed it depicted them in a lowly, degrading manner. The blacks were simply tired of being portrayed in such a menial way. To me, it was just beautiful music. But finally, when the magical night had ended, we walked home, stopping only to buy pralines from the man outside City Hall.

The pageant, as well as many other memories from my childhood, revolve around our Easter trips every year. Gradually the temperature warmed as we left the cold behind in New Jersey and neared our destination. The weather always seemed perfect in Mississippi. We watched the trees transform along the road from dingy and bare to full and green. With me and my three siblings cooped up in the back seat of our station wagon, we certainly never let my parents forget we were still back there, anxiously awaiting our arrival. The twenty-three grueling hours in the car required as much entertainment as we could possibly

fit into a five by four area of car space, including walkmans, unopened books, word puzzles and many snacks. Entertaining ourselves with as many contests as we could possibly have in the car, including counting all the different license plates traveling to Natchez for the Pilgrimage, only momentarily occupied us; therefore, for my family to actually get in the car and travel for so long, the trip had to be worthwhile. It was. For me, Natchez represented many things when I was younger. First and foremost, my grandparents were there. Because we only got to see them twice a year, once at Christmas in New Jersey and once during Easter in Mississippi, we were always ecstatic to see each other. They were so special to us. Every Sunday, I remember anticipating the weekly phone call from the South and listening to my mom's Southern accent instantly return as she heard her parents' voices. I could picture my grammy and grampa in their home, each on a different extension, relaying the news to the family, and not without each of the parties talking at once. It was always completely different, though, to finally be down there with them.

Finally we would arrive to see my grammy and grampa waiting by the front window of their beautiful house, just as excited as we were to see each other. I was always especially excited to see my grandmother. I remember believing she was going to be a saint, in this far away, almost heavenly town that seemed another world to me. She had such an impact on me. Often she slipped me candy or a two dollar bill, telling me to just put it in my pocket. I remember climbing into her huge canopy bed where my grandfather had been born to lie next to her with my brother and sisters while she held her rosary and said her morning prayers. Every morning my grammy woke up with a tear in her eyes, yet she didn't seem sad—I thought God had dropped them in there as some kind of symbol of her holiness.

At night we'd climb back up and she'd tell us story after story, usually about three little girls and their little brother and the mischief they would get into. On some days, holding my grandmother's hand, I used to walk down the street with her, past the mansions of Natchez to just a couple blocks down where there were poor, weather-beaten shacks. Here, she would give poor families that she knew through her parish baked goods and casseroles, but I never knew why. I also never understood why my sisters and I were never allowed to walk further than the front sidewalk by ourselves. I never realized there could be any poverty in a place I loved so much.

For us, Natchez meant Easter time—a time for dyeing eggs and later finding them hidden among the boxwood and rose bushes in the backyard. It meant staying in our Easter dresses long enough to have our pictures taken in the crape myrtle tree. Here my parents taught us the names of different trees and bushes, from the gardenias to the dogwoods, which were my favorite. Here my grand-

parents' colored gardener Abe planted each of the girls a different little tree. He planted Jennifer a flowering cherry, Amy a flowering pear, and me a white dogwood. My grammy would bring out refreshments, and we would all sit with Abe on the terrace while he took a break from the hot sun and told us stories about when he was a boy.

In Natchez, I grew accustomed to the thick, friendly southern accents that I always wanted to have. These lifelong friends of Mom's family brought over cakes, lemon squares and dozens of more desserts in welcoming the relatives from the North. The overall beauty of the people and the place will always remain with me. But recently some things have really changed my outlook on Natchez.

With the death of both my grandparents, I see Natchez in a new light, and it is amazing to me how much a person's presence can change your outlook on things. Of course, the physical things have changed. Now all the flowers that were kept so nicely in my grandparents' backyard have wilted. The old house that I loved in a town that was so incredibly special to me suddenly changed. For me, the picture transformed from white to black, just as life perishes into death.

When my family learned of my grandparents' deaths, the journey down South was no longer fun, but treacherous. It was wintertime. No flowers were in bloom, and the trees Abe had planted looked lonely and dead. Abe was unemployed. The whole atmosphere seemed dark and dingy; the days, rainy and cold. The life was sucked out of Natchez as we were left with a chilled, unwelcoming air. The house was desolate and quiet, forcing me to look around at what Natchez had to offer now.

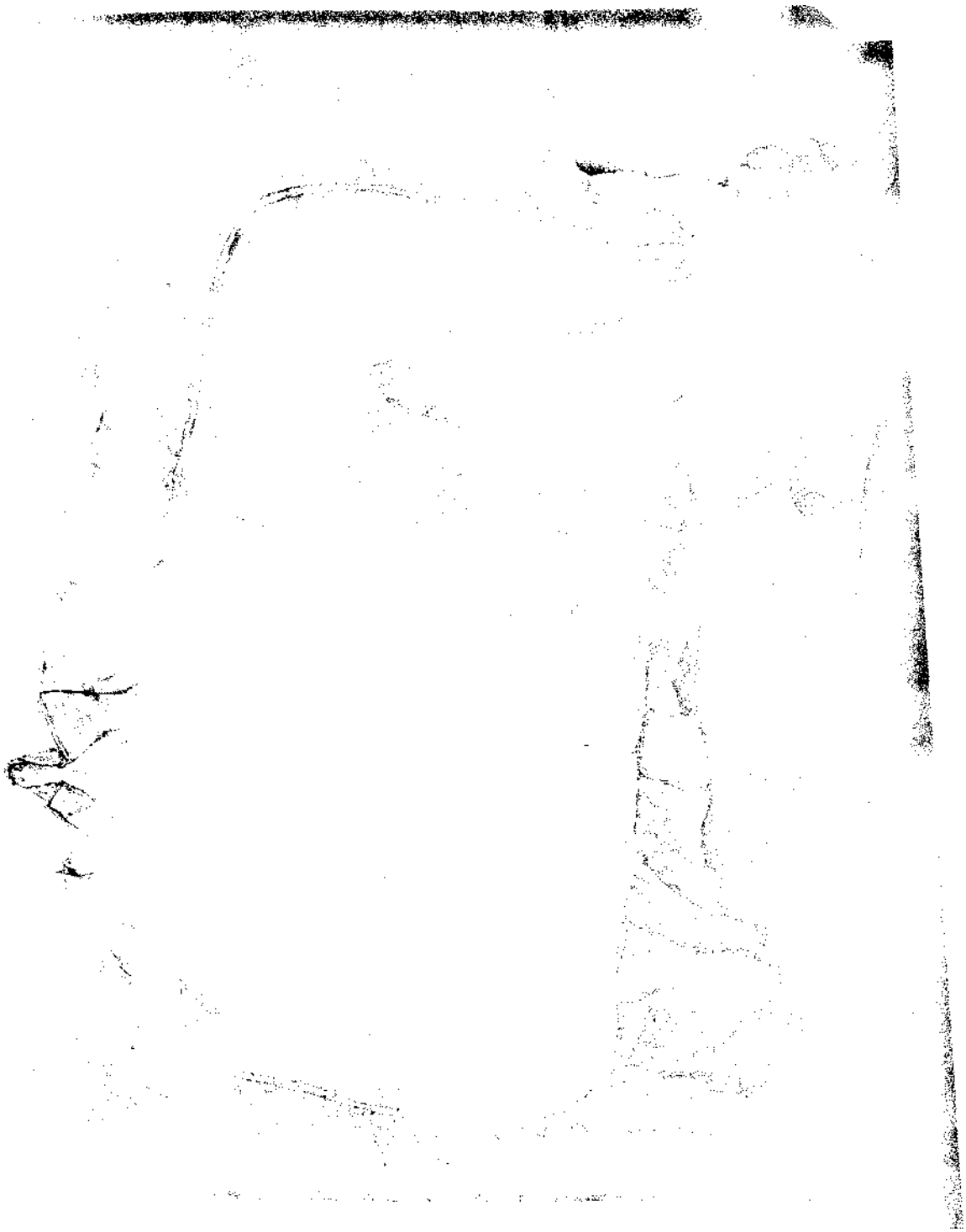
I thought back to the Pilgrimage, one of my favorite things about Natchez throughout my childhood. I thought about all the people it draws in annually, and all of the money these people are making from the tourists. But, on the tours, the horsedrawn carriages of sightseers never venture into certain sections of Natchez. For the citizens of Natchez, it meant only showing all of the beautiful, presentable parts to the tourists and omitting the impoverished and still segregated black areas. What I had thought to be a wonderful pageant represented a lot of strife and tension between the black and white population. When we had stopped to buy pralines from the old black man outside City Hall, I didn't realize that that man did not have a home, and he'd been selling candy there for years.

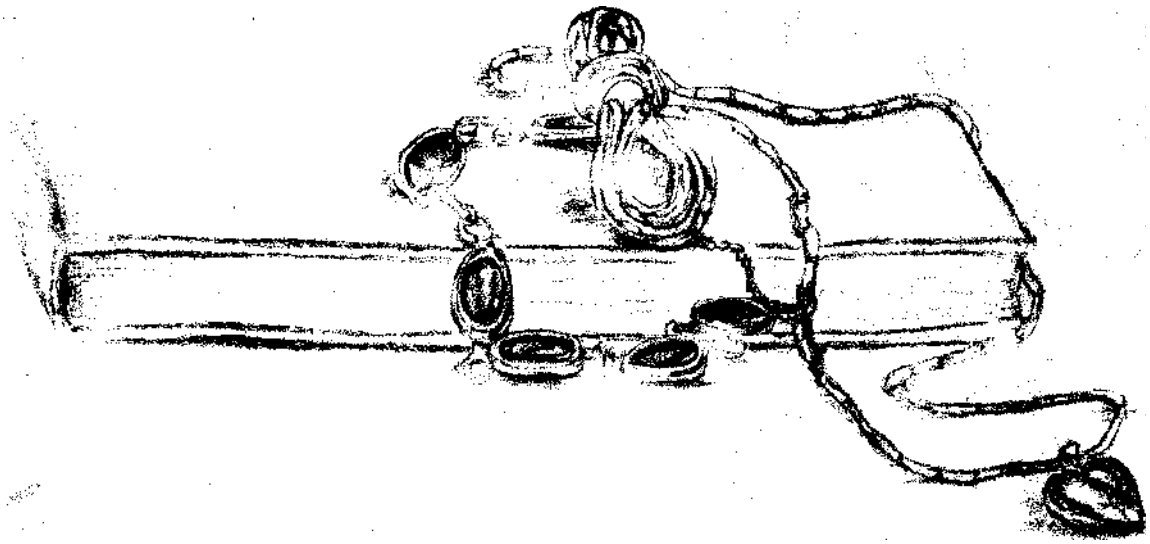
Now I see Natchez as a completely different place, a town that seems set back in time and out of touch with reality. When my grandparents' maid Annabelle and gardener Abe, along with some other friends of my grandparents from the black community, came to the viewing and funeral, I saw tears in their eyes, yet they remained to themselves and in the back. It seemed as if they felt they didn't belong there, that they were going to disturb someone, when these people had

been dear friends of my grandparents'. This journey of my own has made me aware of a place where an underlying segregation still exists between the blacks and the whites. I finally realized that if I did go past the front sidewalk of my grandparents' home, and beyond the rows of mansions lined up the street for blocks and blocks, eventually the next block over yields shack upon shack for the impoverished black population. I see a place that is coming to economic failure, and it is not only due to the busting of the oil wells, but also due to the unrest between blacks and whites. With the Civil Rights era, the blacks boycotted the stores, causing the economy and employment rate to suffer. I did not see all of this before.

Natchez had once marked springtime and happiness, a sense of carefree youth—life. Now there is just a sadness lingering about, as well as a resentment towards a place that can be so deceiving. It is unfair that people can be sheltered from the realities of life. Not only was I wrong about my perception of the blacks, but the entire community of Natchez, as well as many other cities in the deep South. There is still this subtle or not so subtle segregation taking place, and it took me many trips down South to become aware of what was going on.

I still have good memories of the Natchez I remember—those of my grandparents, Easter, the beauty of spring in Mississippi, and family friends. Unfortunately, however, for me to best preserve the good memories I have, it is probably best that I don't go down there again to experience the realities of racism and poverty. With such a beautiful, heavenly town that was so far away from home, I guess I was in kind of a dream world when I was down there—with opportunities to attend late night events, get dressed up, and have relatives fuss all over the grandchildren. I really needed to go through a pilgrimage of my own to realize that you need to look beyond what's in front of you to learn more about the world, and more about yourself.





"An intention to write never turns into a letter. A letter must happen to one like a surprise, and one may not know when in the day there was room for it to come into being."

Rainier Maria Rilke

The Most Intimate Art

by Tavia A. Kowalchuk

The true life of a man is in his letters.
John H. Newman

The letter writer must above all possess the intimate note, for without it he will produce an essay, but not a letter.
William J. Dawson

Please excuse me if I ramble; I just completed writing my second letter of the day and am feeling a bit heady from all of what I had to say. I will try to stick to the topic at hand; that is, the art of letter writing. Understanding any art, I find, is just a tad more tricky than trying to get some of my corresponding friends to write back. Not everyone writes letters, which is unfortunate, because people usually have some interesting tidbit to relate to a favorite remote address. Letters, like any art form, are a personal product of the artist. They are a product of the moment, like a photograph. Letter writers place the events of one's life in the proper context, time frame and emotional focus, just as photographers focus on some thing or some action and capture it forever on film.

It has been said that "Art is the epitome of human life, the truest record of insight and feeling." Susan K. Langer lays claim to those words in her essay "The Cultural Importance of Art," and goes on to say, "Art...may be defined as the practice of creating perceptible forms expressive of human feeling." Using Langer's ideas, it is safe to assume that art can--and does--go beyond the classical sense of the fine arts. Letter writing, under these terms, is an art form, and my art of choice.

Art, Langer's "perceptible form," is meant to be experienced by others, and because of this the audience is an intrinsic aspect of its development. It is the reader's understanding and personal knowledge of the letter writer, and the letter writer's trusting relationship with the reader, which sets letter writing apart as an art. In this way also, the letter writer is unique. The letter writer and reader have a common background consisting of experiences, jokes, interests, acquaintances and acquired knowledge. These things create a more intimate, more personal and personalized exchange; the audience exists as an individual, rather than a vast demographic group, as it often does for the writer hoping to be published. This is the beauty, the true art of letter writing: Langer's "epitome of human...feeling" is fiercely, humorously, painfully and lovingly etched in the letter, in its own delightfully rare manner. The letter's deeply personal nature requires and fosters a more intense, honest expression of the writer's inner

emotions. The letter writer creates art with the expression of these feelings.

When a painting, performance or poem is particularly moving, we say its conception was "inspired," and is "inspiring" to the viewer. Inspiration is initially a key factor in how, why, and when a piece of art evolves into its final version. Michelangelo did not just take a hunk of granite and start hacking away, hoping David would appear. He must have been initially inspired, whether by the texture of the stone, by the Biblical story of David, or by divinity itself. This is true, too, for the letter writers. A letter must beg to be written, it must itch to flow from our pen. Otherwise, it is merely on the level of the grade-schooler's "thank you" note for socks. The structured formality of the thank you note does not leave much to imagination and muse. The letter is ideally a free-form which encompasses whatever strikes the writer's fancy. Often letter topics range from comments on the mundane trivialities of life to deeper examinations of the letter writer's surrounding culture and society.

Art is, at the same time, a mirror and a mold for society. Great artists reveal the good along with the bad, the beautiful along with the ugly, and the unexamined idiosyncracies about the society they live in. At times art is a critical assailant of the world. Through such critiquing, art can redefine its society by raising our awareness. Keith Haring, a famous NYC Greenwich Village pop artist, designed illustrations which raised social awareness by discouraging the use of drugs and dangerous sexual practices. His art also brought many types of discrimination and repression into the public eye. Slogans such as "Crack is Wack," his famous subway posters of the crawling baby, and his "Absolut Equality" advertisements spread these messages so they became part of society's consciousness during the late 1980's. Similarly, a letter, while it does not immediately affect society, gives future generations a perfect, capsulated idea of everyday life. It is almost impossible to write a letter without including some of the characteristics of the era in which the letter is being written. For example, the letters of world leaders have given us a clearer understanding of historical events.

The advantages of appreciating the art of letter writing were discussed by Jacques Barzun when he wrote, "If one guards against the fallacy of 'How odd!' they [the letters] will be found to disprove every cliché," in his essay, "The Paradoxes of Creativity." Letters are, ideally, written without a self-conscious eye on the possibility of future publication. Good letters incorporate opinion, everyday events, and personal confidences into the sketch of the writer's life. The lifestyles of America one hundred, fifty, or even twenty years ago are incredibly different than they are now, and if one reads without Barzun's stated reaction of "How odd!" important discoveries can be made about values, virtues, and any other topic prone to opinion. In this manner, a letter can be as,

or more, artistically enduring and historically valuable than some pieces of music, novels, theatricals, or dance productions which are produced purely for entertainment.

Dance is a very evocative art form; the dancer's motions express pain, joy, love, loneliness. Just as the speechless ballet requires the viewer to understand from only body language and music, so does the soundless letter require the reader to understand only from written language. Both the letter writer and the dancer must compensate for one of the lacking sensory emotional stimuli. The three dances recently performed by the Ballet West Dance Corps expressed many of these emotions. The first dance was pure ballet—dance for the sake of dance. The ballerinas were performing exact form, each one in concordance with the others. The standard form of a letter—date, salutation, body and closing—is this dance for the sake of dance. Each artist, the letter writer and the ballet dancer, adheres to the classical, traditional structure of their art.

Writing a letter is a dance of my pen on the paper. The tip on my pen is like the point of the ballerina's toe shoe. It arches, points, kicks, glides and runs across the paper stage, exuberantly performing intricate dance steps choreographed by my hand. My pen leaps from the stage in preparation to land with a flourishing exclamation (!). It skips and pirouettes swiftly, graceful in its single-minded flurry of words, ideas, and thoughts rushing to meet each other as the whole ballet corps surges on the stage.

Intrinsic to the deliberate, exacting flurry of ballet is the score of music to which it is choreographed. Classical music, of course, is an art form in itself. Going to the symphony is like reading a letter—the music speaks to the listener on an intimate level, near the heart and soul, just like the personal letter. Composers express their personalities in their compositions, and letter writers obviously invest aspects of their personalities into the letters. Beethoven had a preference for a rhythm of four uniform beats and used them throughout his symphonies, such as the 5th and the 8th. Those beats must have meant enough to him that he felt they were worth repeating. A letter writer may frequently write about a personally meaningful topic in many letters, exploring it so that it becomes dynamic and understood.

The organization and construction of the symphony and letter reflect each other in many ways. The very nature of classical music—seemingly seamless and free-flowing, yet completely premeditated—is the same as that of the letter. Letters are written as one goes along, throwing in side comments, new topics, and ideas constantly, all centering around and relating back to some other part of the letter. Such is the symphony—central melodies, harmonies, and base lines are all echoed and repeated in relation to each other. This stream of consciousness organization in the composition and correspondence effectively pulls the audience

through an artful, emotive experience.

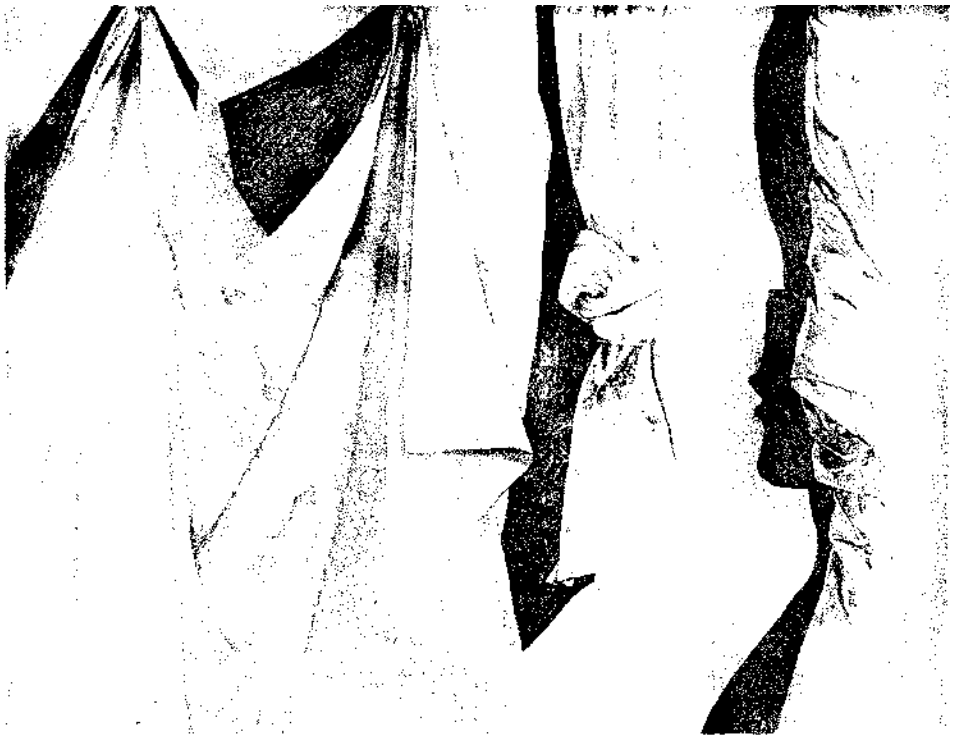
Both artists, however, know that their audience could not handle the intensity of constant music or heavy writing. Each artist employs techniques which give their audience a mental break. While the composer may use a block of silence to accomplish this, the letter writer may tell a joke or digress for a time. The composer's first movement, the exposition, is the letter writer's salutary paragraph. They both set the tone for the rest of the respective piece of art. Each following movement in a symphony represents a shift in thought, an expansion of the melody, a variation of the harmony. An artful letter also includes these shifts in thought, the doubling back of comments, and the weighing of ideas. The music and letter writers' moods—or the moods they wish to convey—are apparent in their arts. The symphony grows louder in surges of full orchestra harmonies and melodies and the letter pours forth powerful, emphatic words written in hasty hand to express major, strong points. The tones and rhythms mellow and the writing lazily winds itself through several minor topics when the composers wish to soften the audience's response. Both art forms pulse with the composer, and imbue their pulse onto the audience. Once again, Langer's "truest record of insight and feeling" is blazoned throughout art forms.

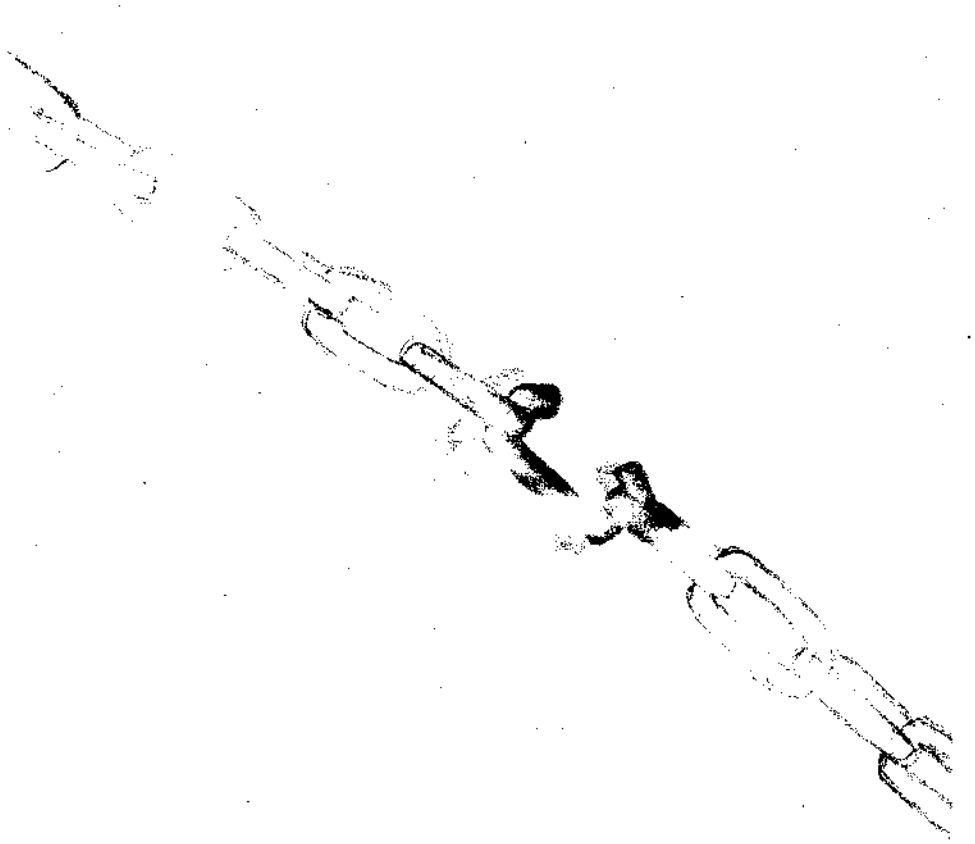
Cinematic film is a more familiar art form than ballet, classical music, or fine paintings to the average person, just as the letter writer is much more familiar to the reader that the formal essayist would be. Good movies are an art whose basic intent is to tell a story about people and their joys and pains. Letters also express everyday trials and tribulations. Movies and letters also both require a special understanding, something extra on the part of the audience. While letters are based on the reader's knowledge of, and closeness to, the writer, movies require a certain suspension of reason. The viewer must allow for certain improbable events in a movie in order to reach an understanding. In the movie "Queen of Hearts," the director used the vision of a talking roast pig to set an essential premise for the rest of the movie. The pig gave the film's paternal character a gambling tip which affected all of his post-vision actions. The viewer is required to accept the utterly fictitious concept of a talking roast pig in order to understand the rest of the movie. In both the case of the movie and the letter, the audience brings something to it which better enables them to appreciate and learn from the art.

Because of the intimate relationship between the writer and the reader, the reader always has an immediate response to the letter. This is true of any fine piece of prose or verse. The art of literature is enhanced and made more personal by being read aloud by its author. The author's voice becomes almost akin to the internal voice the reader hears while reading the letter. Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer gave a special tilt to her short story "Home" when she read

it to the Loyola College community. The emphasis, tone and reading speed she chose to use all established the "intimate art" commonly found in correspondences by bringing her personal interpretation to the piece. This gave the listeners a small insight into the author's character and motives for writing, making the piece and its message more accessible and distinctive to the listeners than if they had not been privileged by hearing Gordimer read.

The letter writer makes the pen sing in the spotlight of the paper. The letter writer also is an artist who takes the palette of his experience and paints a marvelous vision of arabesques and vivacious colors on the previously blank canvas of stationery. This visual concreteness of the letter itself—the distinctness of the script, the tangible weight, feel and color of the stationery—gives the letter writers' expression a permanence beyond the letter's initial reading. The most intimate art form is an art of pure expression, and this purity is inherent in the unassuming letter. This expression is selfish and selfless at the same time; the writer unconsciously records his life's course for posterity, and at the same time delights, warms, and reaches out to his reader. Letters are a kind of ongoing autobiography. The writer is the main character who narrates and develops plot, minor characters, and anecdotes about his or her life for the entertainment of the reader. Letter writers live externally, even though their hearts bleed endless ink.





"Life is an uncurable disease."

Abraham Cowley

On Living and Things Resembling That

by Angela Delclos

The red-inked diagnosis on the board next to acute room three says "turning blue." And I wonder what that means. Usually, the description says "fever, 103," or "SARA" (for sexual abuse or assault cases) or "spice" (an AIDS baby) or "sore toe." But I never saw "turning blue" before that day. The nurse says he—call him Joe—is anencephalic; basically born with only a brain stem, capable of basic life functions (sort of). "Sort of" because sometimes he still turns blue, when he cannot get enough oxygen on his own; and he cannot feed himself or bathe himself or even go to the bathroom. For the twelve years since his birth, nurses and his mother have done it all for him. But at least he remains alive. Right?

According to the medical dictionary, anencephaly is "a congenital developmental defect consisting of absence of the vault of the skull, with an exposed, poorly developed, degenerated brain, resulting from the neural tube's failure to close in the cephalic area; the affected infant usually dies within a few days after birth." This affected infant did not die; he is now an affected adolescent—affected but saved from death.

Joe has no cerebral functions; nothing like cognitive thought or emotion happens inside of his mind. He does not tell his mother, "I can't breathe." He just turns blue. He does not cry because his lungs hurt and his head aches. He turns blue. So that is his descriptive diagnosis on the main board. "Turning blue."

I wonder who decided to try so hard to keep Joe wondrously living; I wonder if they know him now. I wonder if his mother felt eternally grateful, or if she protested. I wonder if she does now. Peeking into the room, I can see her sitting next to her son, grasping his hand—but her face is unreadable, because her back is to me. Joe is lying on his back, but he doesn't look very blue to me, maybe because they have been pumping oxygen into him for awhile; even at home he is occasionally put on a respirator to get his lungs going. He appears fairly normal from where I stand trying not to gape; the sheet covers him, but he is obviously small, thin and pale. He has light brown hair, a nose, two eyes and a mouth. I do not know why this surprises me. But it does. Like the spice babies that come into the Pediatric Emergency Room (termed for affection and for ease "PED's ER"—long "e" in PED).

The first spice child I encountered surprised me; he was having problems with something called his "porta-cath." The attendant on duty one of my first weeks there luckily knew something about "porta-caths," which are internal portals for the catheter needle. They provide for easier, less painful insertion of needles for IVs and blood samples, and are surgically implanted under the skin. I can

remember seeing the bump the porta-cath made on the little boy's chest, as I grasped his arm to brace him for the prick (that this device made easier to bear, because it eventually creates a sort of "needle callous"). He came to the ER so the doctors could take a fluid sample, because the bump was a little inflamed and he was feverish, so they thought the area may have become infected. I suppose this is too complicated to explain in the seven inch space left on this board for diagnosis, so it just says "spice"—in blue letters because his case is not acute enough for red. When I first heard the doctor explaining the "porta-cath" to the residents and students, it interested me enough to want to watch the short procedure. His mother did not care so the doctor said "yes."

While the necessary paraphernalia (special needles, saline, sample bottles—aerobic and anaerobic) were gathered, I began to wonder why a nine month old baby would need a little portal under his skin. It would make sense in the elderly and infirm, but in one so young it seemed misplaced. Why would he need the numerous IVs and blood tests implied by the presence of the porta-cath? So I looked again at the diagnosis and tried to think of what spice might be an acronym for; although it had appeared on the board before, its meaning remained a mystery. Finally, in answer to my question, the nurse explained, "Oh, that's an AIDS baby." Hence the porta-cath; he had already had several extended hospital stays (with a new one about to be added to the number) and it can be hard, in babies, to get into the small veins, which have an aggravating tendency to roll around when you try to get a grip on them.

Luckily for the baby, his mother was a nurse and knew how to care for him. She held his hand while we took the blood; I wanted to take my gloves off, even though it is procedure to always wear them in the presence of any patient's bodily fluids, to show her that I didn't care and that I knew I wouldn't be contaminated by just holding his bare arm. Or maybe to show the baby somehow that someone besides his mother was not afraid to touch him without wearing latex over their hands. But bare hands are made impossible because of our rules; I sometimes wonder if I would have taken them off even if we did not have the rules and am unreasonably ashamed. Afterward, the doctor threw the needles carefully into the "uncapped only" needle receptacle—uncapped because it is too easy to prick oneself when putting a cap back on after use. The needle collectors count every one each month and keep a tab of how many capped needles each department has. They can get in trouble for too many caps.

It is still not clear what spice stands for—I mean if it is an acronym or just a disguise word so other patients do not treat AIDS babies like lepers. Enough people that come through these doors are familiar with the word anyway, so that the latter might not be the case. For instance, the very next week, a six year old boy came in with a one hundred and six degree fever (after Tylenol). When

ON LIVING AND THINGS RESEMBLING THAT

I saw that temperature on the board and sucked in my breath, the nurse said that he was a spice baby, born with HIV. He has AIDS now, and it allowed him to spike a fever that was a record high in the PED's ER. This boy's parents are not with him; his foster parents brought him in, but they could not stay because they have too many others at home. So we gave him Tylenol and kept him under watch. He would have to be admitted. By the time his fever finally went down to 'safe' range, he was sitting out with the doctors and nurses, laughing as everyone teased him about the colorful jungle picture on the wall. He laughingly insisted on the wrong names for all the animals, trying to fool us all. I rubbed his arm a little and squeezed his hand while I sat with him for a while. When I went back to help the nursing extender stock rooms, he told me I should be careful because the little boy has scabs all over his body. He was recovering from scabies which exploded out of control due to his weakened immune system. Touching an open scab could cause transmission (of scabies). Though it could probably have harmed him substantially, for most people scabies is easy to control and cure.

This child was only two degrees away from the dying; he will be about that close to it for the rest of his life—however long that might last. For now he is affected by the AIDS virus, but still saved from death. And his real parents, both HIV positive, remain in jail while he is shuffled from home to hospital to home to hospital.

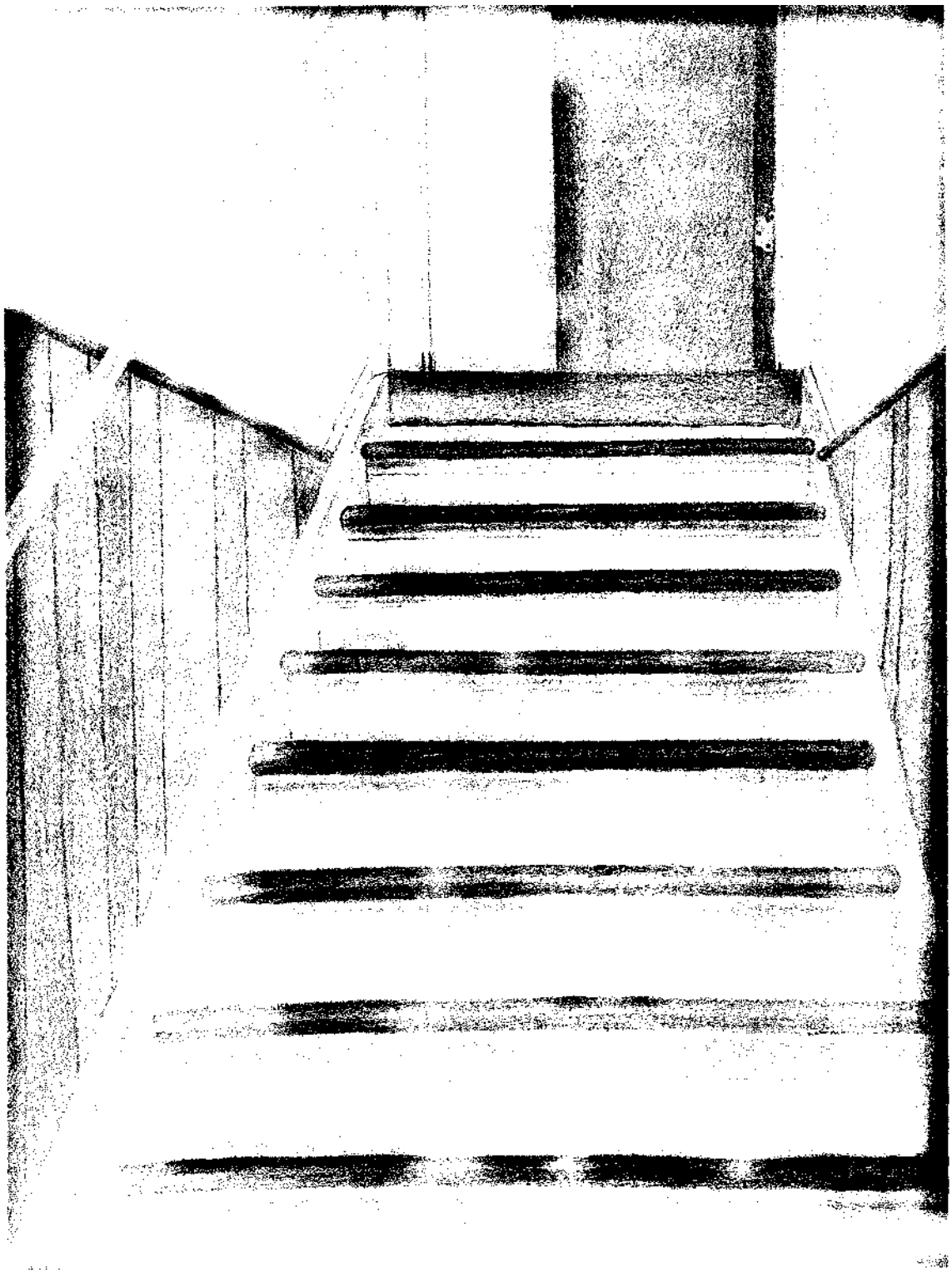
None of these children had any chance to choose their "quality of life" before birth; they were born into circumstances uncontrollable. The spice children, well, who knows how long they will live; they are a fairly new phenomenon. Joe could live forever, because we saved him from certain death. We are so afraid of children dying that we go to any length to keep them alive, whether they stay in foster homes living from fever to fever, or in their own intensive care home environment living from emergency to emergency. I wonder what they would say if they had a choice, or if they are truly glad that we always so presumptuously saved them all from death. Then again, do we really have any other choice?

Like most ethical problems in medicine, it is much easier to fix the physical problems than to envision the consequences that might arise from our patch and repair jobs. We are so intent on keeping patients alive that it becomes difficult to ever let them go. Joe was saved from death at birth—where could his doctors go from there? They went to huge lengths so that he could live to, and probably through, adolescence, but left him with no imagination, no emotion, no feelings—just a heartbeat and correctably faulty machinery. And once they saved him, they could not kill him—because he is alive; just not alive. Now his family must live the rest of their lives dealing with that, wondering what is

left for their son. Is that even as much as the spice babies, born destined to die, but at least capable of awareness? They probably will not live to see the end of their first decade, and doctors cannot do anything about that. We would all like to play God, ending death and pain. Sometimes, our hands are tied; in trying to untie them we take the risk of making a bad situation worse. By the same token, in not trying, we risk losing the chance of making the situation better.

I was determined to learn the difference between knowledge and foolishness, wisdom and madness. But I found out that I might as well be chasing the wind. The wiser you are, the more worries you have; the more you know the more it hurts.

(Ecclesiastes, 1:17-18)



"The woods are made for hunters of dreams,
The brooks for fishers of song;
To the hunters who hunt for the gunless game,
the streams and woods belong."

Sam Walter Foss

On the Hunt

by Jim Niessner

"Painting becomes stimulating and exciting to me, like hunting."

-Vincent Van Gogh,
in a letter.

Every year, right after Thanksgiving, my father and brother retreat to a trailer in the Virginia woods to hunt. I go also, though for different reasons. It's the atmosphere I'm seeking. It's the solitude. It's the stars—buckets of them—tossed up against the black sky, and so low it seems I could crack my head on them. It's the campfires I sit around for hours, engrossed, as if I had just discovered heat and flame for the first time. Most of all, under these primordial conditions, I tell myself I will truly write. Yes! in the morning, when everyone else has slipped into the woods with their Winchesters and Marlins, I will crawl from my sleeping bag, position myself before a little table in the trailer, and ruthlessly stalk the ideas which have thus far eluded me. I will pick up their scent. I will track them. And I will flush them out from the scrub and into the clearing, where I can get a good shot.

Sometimes it works, although many times I drive home empty-handed and dejected. My father and brother often have the same results.

When one thinks of the struggles involved in art, one tends to think of the extremes. So and so—an author, let us say—has writer's block and cannot produce a lick of work; or his thousand-page novel is long-finished but no one will publish the thing. But we hear far less about that process in between, the development of the idea—the hunt. Yet that, as Van Gogh remarked, is the exciting part. That is the part when the artist roams a mental landscape in search of a unique kind of prey.

At first it sounds incongruous to speak of hunting and art—be it writing, painting, you name it—in the same sentence. Indeed, it sounds even improper. The person who attempts to link something as visceral as shooting and skinning with something as aesthetic as "sweetness and light"—which is so ethereal it needs quotation marks to keep it from floating away—runs the risk of looking like a clod or a philistine who knows as much about the finer things as he does about laser surgery or the Japanese tea ceremony. But ideas—what to write, what to paint, what to do with a mental image or a snatch of overheard dialogue—are a kind of big game to the artist. And these things make the same grueling demands upon their practitioner as the woods make upon the hunter.

Undoubtedly, ideas are the slyest and most elusive of creatures. How they leap away when we come tromping through the leaves in hot pursuit! We put words to paper in hopes of conjuring something up, but nothing appears. So we

try to be stealthy. Just as the hunter stands perfectly still, we lay aside a poem or a story and pretend not to be working on it. We couldn't care less, we tell ourselves. Secretly, of course, we're aching for inspiration. We wait and wait. And when we are distracted, as we inevitably are, and attend to the unavoidable affairs of life—work, school, and so on, things we cannot abandon at a moment's notice—we are like the poor chap who has just leaned his rifle against a tree in order to take a cigarette break. The idea leaps up before us, snorts in our face, and bolts. We are fooled again. And there is no way we can chase the creature without being irresponsible, neglecting our affairs—shooting ourselves in the foot, as it were.

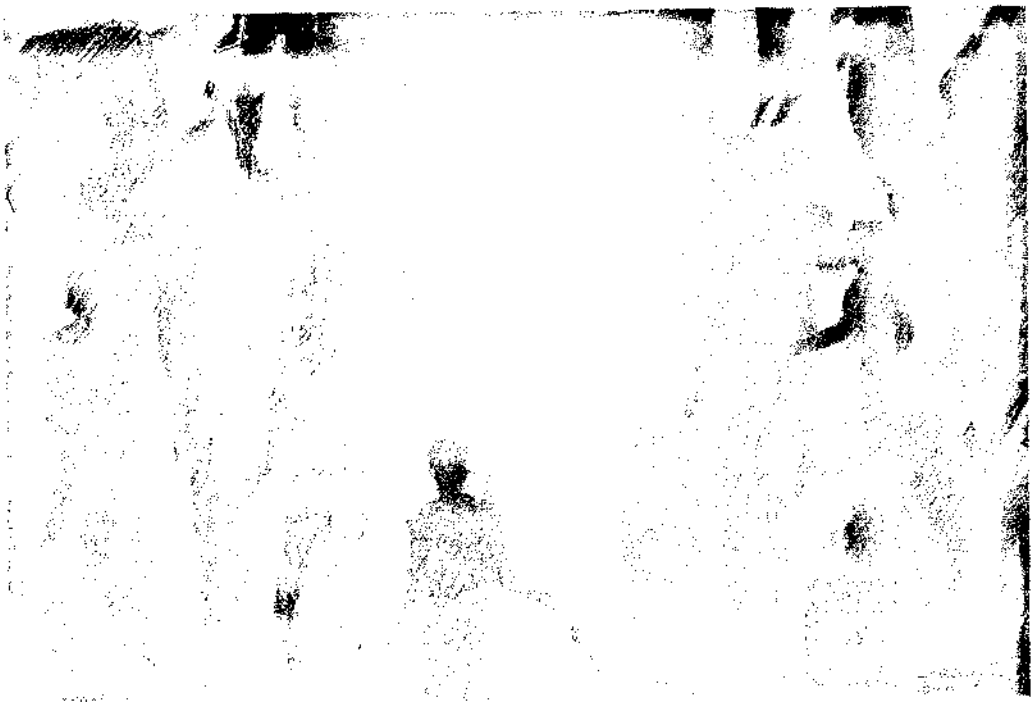
Ideas are slippery. This is why the vigilant painter keeps a sketch pad with him constantly. The writer, likewise, must make a habit of getting to his desk every day. One never wants to miss a chance. Never. On the subject of inspiration, a writer once said: "The angel will touch us on the shoulder, but it's a good idea if we're at the typewriter when it happens."

As the hunter rises early and disappears into the thicket, so the artist disappears into himself. He descends into the ravine of imagination and crawls through the bramble of what is ordinary—always in silence, careful not to drive away his prey. He must find his spot, where he can be left alone to survey his imagination. This degree of solitude is as important to the artist as it is to the woodsman. Whether it's Van Gogh making his solitary treks into cornfields to paint crows, or Charles Dickens roaming at night through the graveyards of London searching the tombstones for names to put to characters in his novels, the artist must go it alone, quietly and patiently, though everyone near him may think he's thoroughly strange.

An artist returns to his spot day after day. Hour after hour he pushes his scrutiny, sniffing for those untold secrets—the truths of imagination. This level of absorption can drive one to near hallucination. A thousand fraudulent ideas rise up and dance before one's eyes. Every rustle, every shadow makes us flinch. Every sycamore, so to speak, looks like a prize-winning deer. At last, however, the artist gets what he is after. An idea breaks into the clearing or goes wheeling across the sky, and the artist takes aim. Bang! Then he rushes to it, prepared to carve away.

This is where matters get dicey. Sure, the hunter was man or woman enough to bag this prey, but now, face to face with the animal, does he or she have the stomach to field-dress the thing? Art is messy, let's not fool ourselves. When we are in the thick of it, up to our elbows in red paint, or dissecting the plot of a story, a gutted carcass lies before us. The lungs—purple as plums—are pulled out, the intestines rest in a pile, and the heart lies steaming in the cold grass. Are we ready? We have proved we can drop an idea dead in its tracks, but our work

is far from over. Besides, death is not art's object. We are engaged not merely in a kind of aesthetic taxidermy—putting the beast of art back together—but full-scale resurrection—putting it back together and breathing new life into it. So we begin. We try to resuscitate it. We pound its chest; we listen for a pulse. We try this way and that. And when the thing does finally draw breath and open its eyes—if it ever does—it may spring up and bound off in a direction we never anticipated. We never imagined, for example, that our story idea about a dinner party in the city would really be about a dead lover in the country. What is happening? This is the hardest part to face: we must serve our idea, not vice versa. Though we have stalked it, chased it, and finally caught it, once the idea is alive we must set it free again. Then we follow the idea once more, hoping it knows the drama of the landscape better than we do, and hoping it will carry us to greater and deeper rewards.



"It will be helpful in our mutual objective to allow every man in America to look his neighbor in the face and see a man—not a color."

League of B'nai B'rith

The Worm That's Eating the Big Apple

by Rachel Pomerantz

In 1986, an incident occurred in Howard Beach, Queens, NY, which involved the death of a black boy by white youths; it became a story that remained in the papers for over two years. This was a racially motivated incident.

On August 23, 1989, in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, a sixteen year old boy named Yusef Hawkins was beaten and killed by a group of white teenagers. Five boys were charged in the murder, and the case went to court. The amount of publicity was overwhelming. Again, this incident remained in the courts and newspapers for over two years because it was racially motivated. Those involved became household names for many in the area: Joseph Fama, Yusef Hawkins, Keith Mondello, Pasquale Raucci, Charles Stressler, Steven Curreri, and James Patino.

On August 19, 1991, in Crown Heights, New York, two years after the Bensonhurst murder, a Hasidic Jew, travelling with an entourage for the Lubavitcher Grand Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, accidentally struck and killed a seven year old black boy, and severely injured a seven year old black girl. The incident stirred the people in the New York area for several days. This incident was made racially motivated by the media, unlike the other two, which were racial incidents.

As a resident of New Jersey, I found the end of my summer filled with talk of the Crown Heights incident. Travelling to school less than a month later, the details still on the tip of my tongue, I found that away from the scene, it was not a well known or interesting topic. At the time, it had been very exciting. Yet, even my family back home, when I called to gather information for my essay, had forgotten the issue entirely. I was informed that the issue was no longer on everyone's mind, but rather discussions of bad economies and possible war threats.

Pausing in my information gathering, I remembered seeing reporters who said that the people of Crown Heights no longer felt so much racial tension. But yet the media was still drawing our attention to the incident by making it the top news story every night. Then I began to wonder why. This was not any different than a white man accidentally running over a white boy. So why did it even need to be investigated and become the top news story? Was it only because one person involved was black and the other white?

Some people tend to think we have gotten rid of the old tension between blacks and whites, but when I asked Kiah Stokes, a fellow African-American student at Loyola College, she replied emphatically "Hell, yes, there's racial tension. There's a lot of it." She preferred not to be called "black," but "African

American." "It's [black's] not wrong, but it's just not the most correct term."

The media, unfortunately, seems intent on sensationalizing the incidents, involving both sides. It is not enough to raise awareness of what goes on around us, but rather, they must continually fight a battle. This is the case despite the wishes of those involved in the matter. How often do you see the families involved asking everyone to continue the fight? Instead we see reporters and outside individuals, who are involved for personal gain. The story might boost someone's career, as in that of Al Sharpton, who seems to get involved in every racial incident, large or small. He constantly tries to get his name known. There was even an article in The Baltimore Sun one month after the verdict in the Crown Heights investigation about his plans to sue the driver.

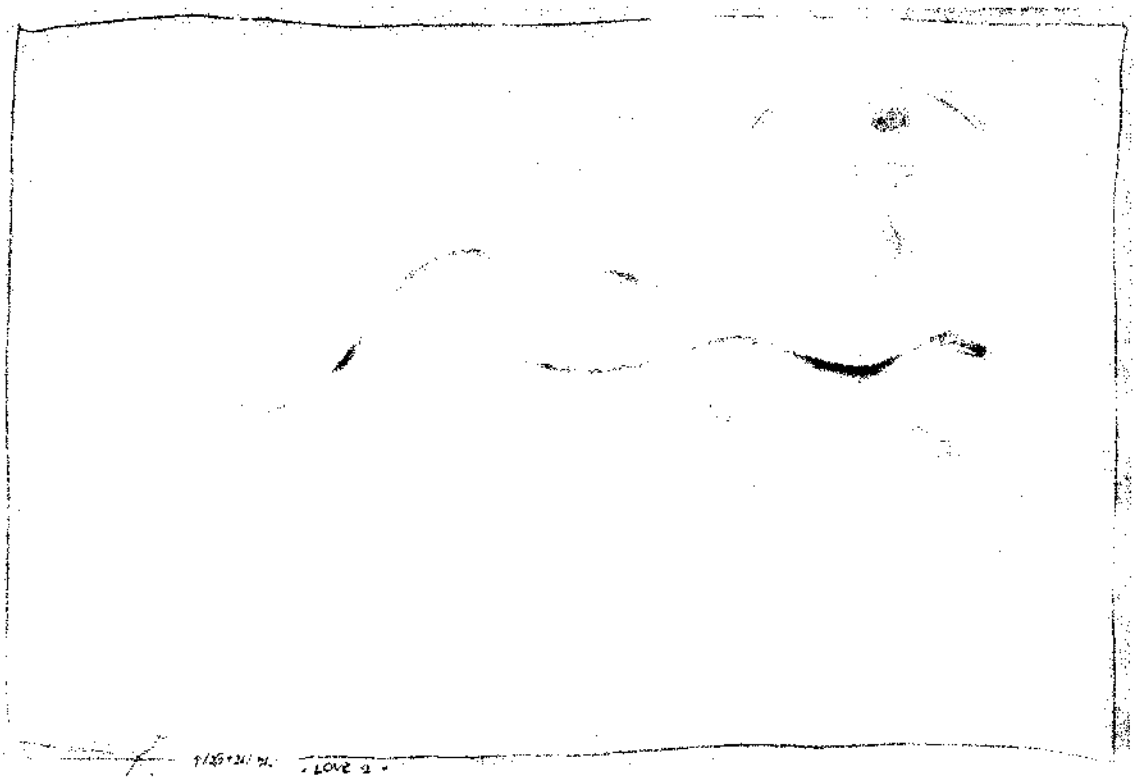
Newspapers find it necessary to plaster large, bold headlines on their covers to attract more attention. More often than not, it is known how tense the issue is before the media even tells us. Issues like those previously mentioned are in themselves tense. Anytime there is a death of a child, sympathy tends to head toward that family, and hatred focuses on the person responsible, as we try to find a reason why this happened. Yet, this does not make it a racial incident. Newspapers find it necessary to plaster large, bold headlines on their covers to attract more attention. This is not only the case with racial issues. The William Smith incident became widely known because of the media's involvement, focusing on the background of the woman allegedly raped. They found it necessary to give graphic details of her testimony and of what occurred that evening. The media also clouded the issue of the sexual harassment proceedings against Clarence Thomas. They made Anita Hill look like a woman unable to handle obscene comments, and they make Thomas look like a mass murderer. Judge Thomas became part of household discussion, when he interrupted daytime shows and entered the world of national television. It also became front page news, while we slipped deeper into a recession.

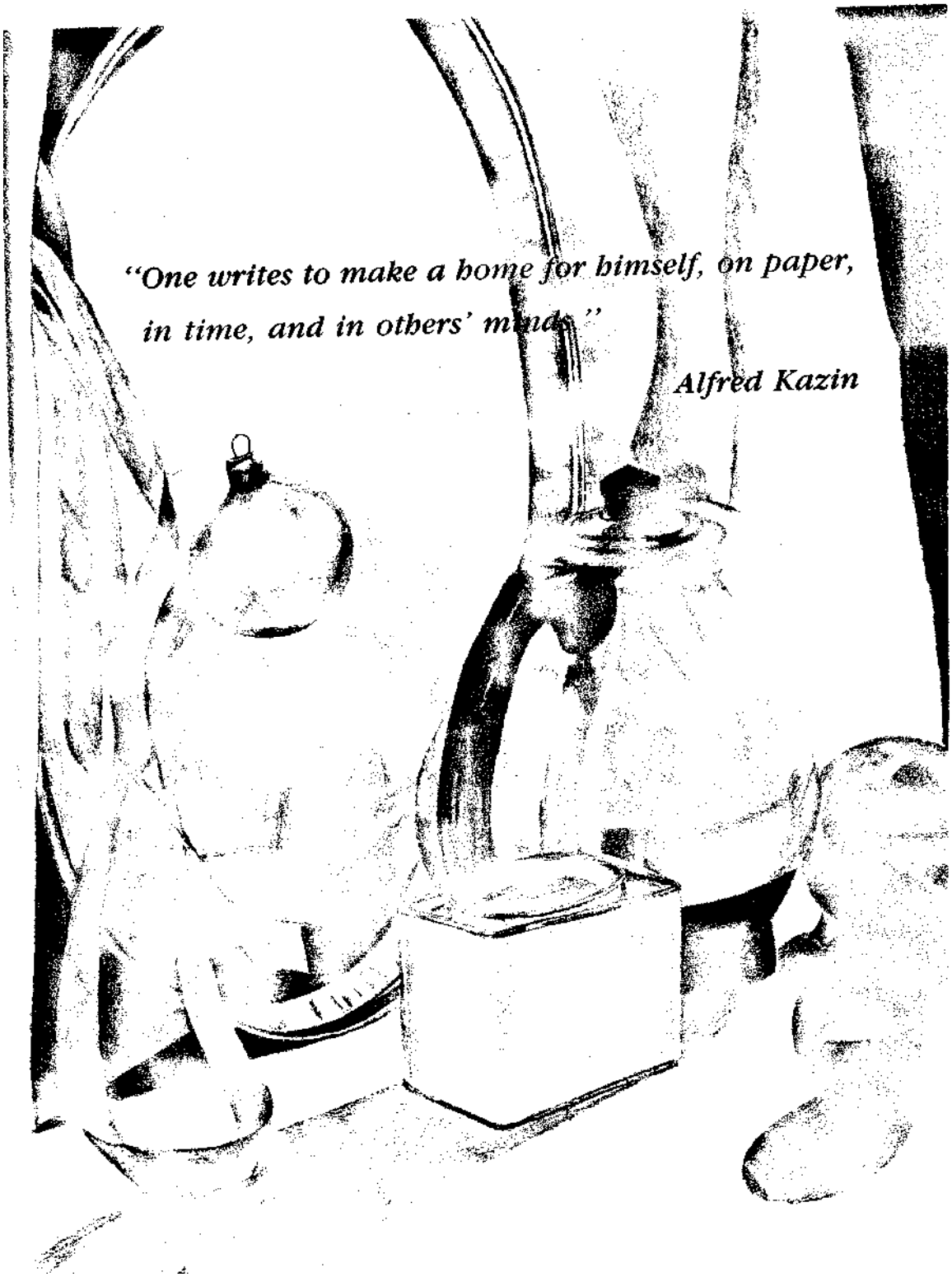
It is not to say that the events in New York City were not bad. However, they had the chance to be worked out more smoothly, had the media not played such a key role. Some more responsible forms of journalism, such as Time and Newsweek, chose not to make a big issue out of the Crown Heights incident. Since they come out weekly, they had the opportunity to feature this incident at some point. Instead they both only found it worthy of a one-page article, covering the facts, as opposed to the NY Post's oversized headline which read "DRIVER WILL WALK."

As the child of a Jewish father, I found it ridiculous to find fault with anybody involved in the Crown Heights incident. I felt deep sympathy for the family of Gavin Cato, the child killed, but the same sympathy for Mr. Lifsh, the driver of the car. Neither of them meant to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, but

they were. It was an accident. I chose not to take sides, though my religious background could have forced me to do so. Neither did my Jewish father. I was never told to believe only Yosef Lifsh. I have always been taught to listen to the facts. There was a lot of sadness at the time. Yet, the people of Crown Heights did not allow the incident to take over their daily lives. In that town, blacks and Hasidic Jews regularly converse with one another. Only a few days after all the outrage spilled forth, these people were shown discussing the event as friends, not enemies.

Regardless of the media's need to inform the public, there is sometimes a need for the media not to sensationalize and to present just the facts. They have a job to report the facts and what is going on in the world. They do not need to cause tension to flare up in areas where it already exists. Instead the public needs the media to keep them on top of the events of each day and report to them without bias. If they are unable to do this then the role of reporters needs to be revamped. People are more than able to form their own opinions. They just need the time to do so without outside influence. The people of Crown Heights, when they stopped listening to outsiders, found it unnecessary to fight with each other.




"One writes to make a home for himself, on paper,
in time, and in others' minds."
Alfred Kazin

The Paper Soul

by Anita Anderson

There is a trick that mimes use—the invisible rope tow—that is something like reading, and a lot like writing, too.

When a short story is good it is usually impossible to say why, but we are nevertheless drawn in. In a good story the original consciousness of self and surroundings wears off quickly. The shout of black letters on that white page becomes the bubble and hum of the sentence tributaries as they become a larger, deeper body—a whole story. Things live here. The creatures that swim in a story are rhythm, color, voice, character, setting, and others that we know are there lurking, breathing, but in the nebulous murk we cannot name. So we get sucked down river, pulled under, read on, it sloshes, we're crashing, and drowning, read on...

But the reader's not the sucker. The old mime trick works on the writer, too. And we are yanked out of ourselves, hand over hand over hand, yanked plum out of ourselves.

I have heard about as many hypotheses on what a writer is, as I have about what exactly makes a good short story. Probably the funniest thing about writers is that they never really define themselves. There is this sort of awkwardness toward describing what they are. So we get a lot of "maybe's," "perhaps's," "it is possible's," "sometimes's." Most of the time these wavering first words lead straight into some tiny truth. I find myself saying, "That's it! That's exactly what we are!" But by the next sentence there is always the feeling that there is still a whole lot of uncovered territory.

At twenty years old I am leery of defining anything, and still I find myself agreeing with hordes of other writers as they grope about to reveal themselves for a moment.

Tobias Wolff:

There is something of Gerasim in every good writer—the willingness to say that unspeakable thing which everyone else in the house is too coy, or too frightened, or too polite to say.

In real life people have sex, they belch and pass gas, they don't get along. Anybody can see it. A writer has eyes, he has ears, and a pen and a piece of paper. We are all characters. We "do it," we burp and fart, we hate. The writer takes it down.

Margaret Atwood:

We have all been little pitchers with big ears, shooed out of the kitchen when the unspoken is being spoken, and we have probably all been tale-bearers,

blurters at the dinner table, unwitting violators of adult rules of censorship. Perhaps this is what writers are: those who never kicked the habit. We remained tale-bearers. We learned to keep our eyes open, but not to keep our mouths shut.

Everybody loves a juicy secret. Perhaps, (there I go) a good writer is someone who gives the impression of having one. She saw, he cried, they touched. The writer told. The secret is shouted, it is whispered, it leaks like a punctured tire. The story is the megaphone, the cupped hand, the knife.

But as much as we think we get away with as writers, we are always found out. We reveal. We are revealed. Our values, our vision. Do we write about relationships with others, or are we feeling around for ourselves? Light, shadow, color. How do we paint our page? Sound and rhythm. Some pulse at each beat, each thump, each breath. Some hear laughter floating—silvery sounds from smiling mouths.

Voice. Voice. Can we copy? Mimic? It takes a steady hand to remove it from life and transplant it in a story. It takes zoom-lens eyes, ultrasonic ears, hypersensitive touch, and guts, yeah guts, to say it like it is.

A writer, an artist, is a person at risk. At risk of being discovered. At risk of discovering himself. He deliberately steps to the edge of the cliff knowing that he may plummet into Truth. We fall first through the black and swirling shadows of the abyss careening toward a clouded bottom. Where will we land? On flower beds or nail-beds? Or maybe we will crash down next to a big red and white sign. The sign says, "YIELD." Move it, sister, bigger truths coming through!

So, hey, does the story tell about the writer or does the writer tell the story? I'd like to say that it's definitely a lot of both. But, for one thing, the root of "definitely" is "define," and for another it's glaringly incomplete. True, the story reveals the writer, and the writer reveals the story, but most importantly a can of worms is opened on humankind.

There are people who write about the neon problems of a nation—homelessness, political corruption, race relations, nuclear war. They realize that words move people. That friction can happen between pen and paper, between a reading eye and a ready heart.

Stories can deal with terrorism, and drugs, and other issues that need healing, too, but that is not really why we read them. We read stories because they are about loving, and fighting, hating, making-up. They hold out a hand and say, Come feel tears, feel a kiss, hide from death, hold a baby. Anything. Come kiss, a crying, dying baby.

A writer is in the business of legitimation. Not that he is putting his stamp of approval on how we treat each other, and on the way we live—No way. But his writing about it gives think-time to things that we would like to call routine.

THE P A P E R SOUL

Writing is a rebuff to the idea that the everyday is ordinary. It is an affirmation of how traumatic it is just to live. I feel pretty sure that most writers could not tell you why men and women have trouble communicating. They are thinking about it, though. Why? Because writers are men and they are women and they can feel the gap. Life is an epic movie, the short story is a kink in the reel, a chance to pause and reflect and look forward. "What a long, strange trip its been...," sing The Grateful Dead. The writer, by writing, chimes in, "Hey there, take a break, sit for a minute, look at the map, but get up, keep going, this trip is worthwhile."

Unfortunately, the positions of Professional Thought-Provoker and Emotional Archeologist aren't very lucrative. Excepting such literary giants as Stephen King and Danielle Steele, though, most writers aren't in it for the bucks. This can pose a problem though, when trying to briefly encapsulate what exactly it is you do over a glass of nice wine and some obscure dip at a dinner party. An engineer has designed a canal, a cosmetologist has invented a new shade of lipstick from the extract of the root of the Loopa-Doopa Berry bush. This dentist has performed a root-canal. What can you possibly say? What phrase really describes what you spend your life doing? Should you yank the tablecloth out from under vases and glassware, throw the linen about your shoulders in cape-like fashion, leap up on your chair, and with fork held high scream, "I GO, I WATCH, I WRITE DOWN!"

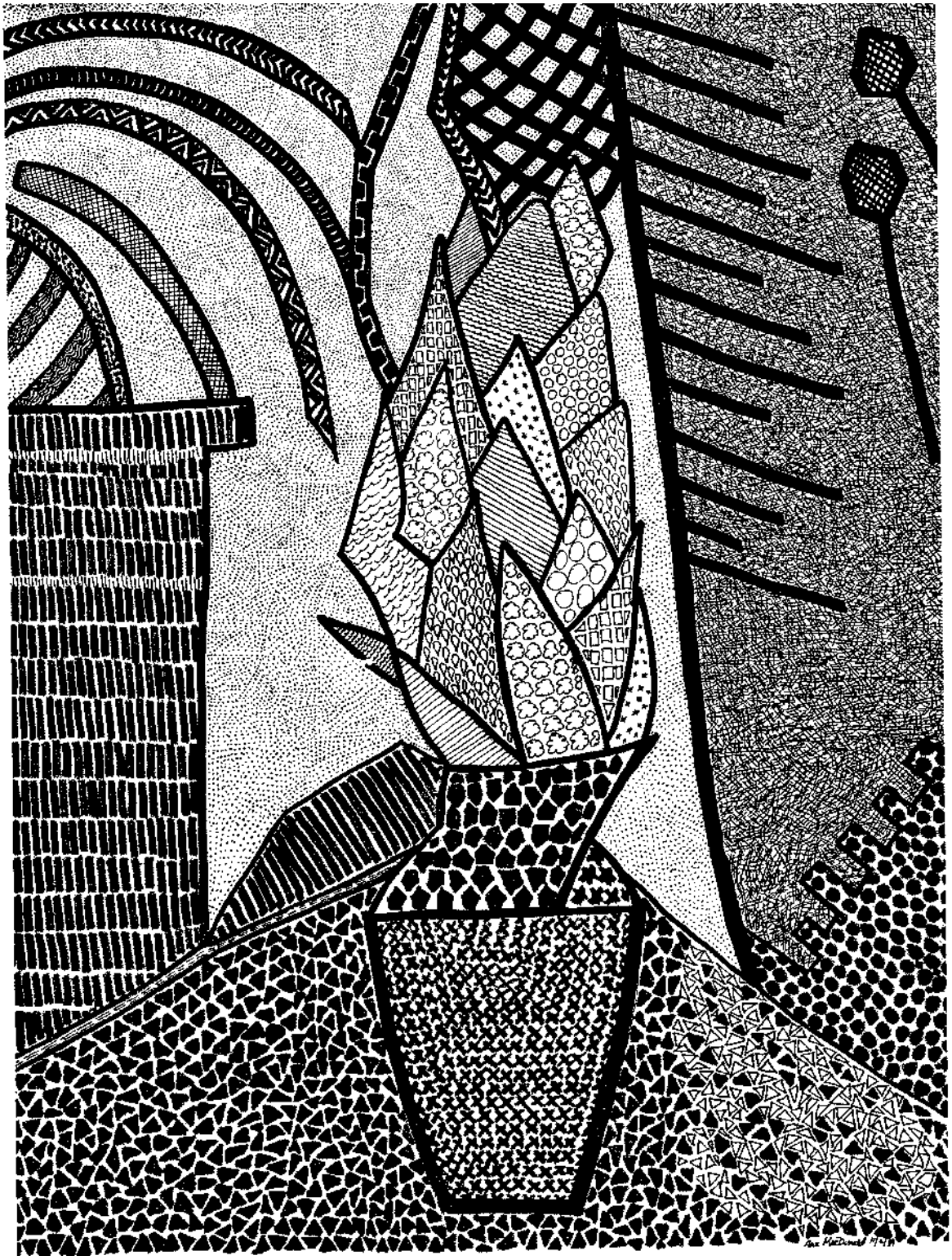
Probably not.

Suffice it to say that you are a writer. Then the inquiring party will ask what kind of writing it is you do. Respond by filling in the blank with your specific genre. For example, "I write_____ fiction___" At this point expect a profound and intellectual response such as, "Hey, that's neat!" or, "Wow. All right."

But don't fret. We don't have to know what a writer is, or what makes a good story so good, to enjoy writing and to know what it does for us, which is definitely (note the bravado) more important than what we do for it.

Every career has its challenges. Ours is to look without blinking. To hold a glass up to the world and listen closely. To read textures with our fingers as though every surface is speckled with Braille. The world has seen the sun set every night. Make them see it your way. Is it slipping into the horizon? No. Too, cliché. It is an electric red yo-yo spinning down into night. What do you hear through the glass? Heartbeats, cuss words, whispers, screaming. What does it sound like? Big thump and small, forks on teeth, mice in ball gowns rustling past your ear, cars with bad brakes suddenly stopping. What do your fingers cling to? There are different kinds of soft. Smooth and cool, warm and fuzzy. Baby bottoms, puppy dogs.

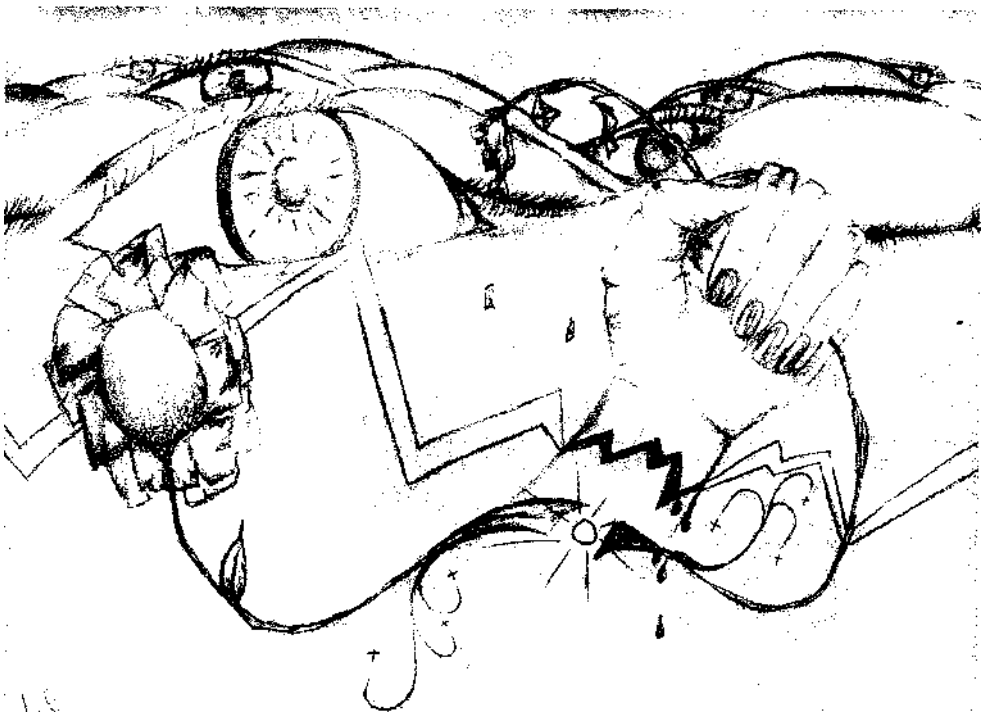
Watch, Listen, Touch. Then run like crazy home to tell about. Tattle. We thought about it, we felt it, we wrote it down. It belonged to us for just that long. It is a story, and it is meant to be told, read, shared, lived for a moment, and then passed on. The writer must pass his paper soul.



1991
Writing Department
Prize Winners

"The writer, when he is also an artist, is someone who admits what others don't reveal."

Elia Kazan



"...Sometimes the light's all shining on me, other times I can bearly see, lately its occurs to me — what a long, strange trip it's been..."

The Grateful Dead

Can You Pass the Acid Test?

by Mika Uematsu

The Capital Center parking lots are filling steadily on March 21, 1991, just after the main gates opened at 3:30 p.m. The community of Deadheads, Grateful Dead followers, are setting up their vending shops four and a half hours before the show begins. A double-decker bus, with California license plates, sits in the Liberty Bell parking lot, with "Oseh Shalom" painted in purple above the cracked windshield fringed with tassels. Cactus, brightly colored mushrooms, and butterflies hovering over blue flowers are painted murals all over the bus. A kite with a long, whipping tail soars in the blue skies, bucking and kicking in the wind. Farther down the aisle, a large circle of barefoot dancers linked with hands, skips slowly counter clockwise, then clockwise, then counterclockwise—to bongos slapped by a young man wearing a Mexican serape. Oil splashes tie-dye the pavement. Bells jingle from the dancers' hair, adding a touch of tambourine. People clad in worn birkenstocks mill through the parking lot, waving one finger, holding up a sign reading "MIRACLE," signaling the need for one ticket on this last Thursday night show to be performed by the Grateful Dead in Landover, Maryland.

"Ice-cold draft. Mushrooms. Sodas," sings one man wearing a loose, flower print shirt; a cooler by his moccasined feet. He stands in front of a renovated school bus painted in curling oceanic waves of pink and blue. Dingy curtains are pulled back by thong strings. A bumper sticker reads,' 'Grateful Dead Melts Your Mind."

In the next aisle over, ten vendors set out clothes on blue tarps. Tie-dyed pants, shirts, and skirts. Knitted caps resembling psychedelic rainbows. Beaded necklaces. Sellers crouch by their items, flicking cigarette ash to the pavement. Two Capital Center security guards are asking a pale man, with a tumbleweed of brown hair and swollen eyes, for some kind of license to authorize the vending. The hippie raises empty hands, shrugging bony shoulders, a Camel smoldering between his fingers. The tarps are rolled up along with the clothes, like a scroll, and put back inside the vehicles.

"Shrooms. Buds. Doses." (Mushrooms, marijuana, LSD). The whisper passes like an arrow through the shuffling feet, tinkling bells, and sizzling stir fries. Turning around to find the archer and the bow, I only see someone painting the side of a bus, another person reading somebody's aura, and a large man walking towards me with a Burmese Python slung over his shoulder like a guitar strap. "Sugar Magnolia" plays from a pickup truck's radio. A man wearing a T-shirt with the Grateful Dead logo of multicolored dancing bears, rolls past in a wheelchair. Rosary beads hang off the hand grips. "Reefer Madness" and the Dead's skull and roses motif illustrate the back of the wheelchair's vinyl seat.

A skeleton, adorned in a wreath of roses, smiles wide.

"A rose is the most prominent image, as far as I'm concerned, in the human brain," says Jerry Garcia, guitarist and silver haired guru of the Dead. "Beauty, delicacy, short-lived. There is no better allegory for—dare I say it?—life, than roses."

The skull image is rooted in a folk story called "The Water of Life." Once there was a dying King who sent his son to find the Water of Life, the only substance that could heal the King. Setting off, the son came upon a beggar pleading for alms. The son, a hunchback, responded to the beggar's needs. In return, the beggar gave the prince magic arrows and a magic flute, that when played would make people dance. At another point in the quest, the prince used the last of his money to pay for the burial of a man who died in debt. Later, the prince met a mysterious stranger who offered to help with the quest. The Water of Life was found in an ogre's castle, and the mysterious stranger healed the prince's hunchback deformity. The two traveled back to the King and healed the man. The King asked what he could offer the stranger for helping his son. The stranger then revealed himself as the dead man the prince had given that funeral. The grateful, dead man picked the magic flute and arrows and wine for his journey to the after world (Jenson, Built To Last).

In the Capital parking lot, located on the other side of the concert hall, a U.S. flag flies high. In place of the fifty stars is the peace sign, resembling a dove's foot. In the outer most aisleway, a Caprice Classic idles, three antennas waving, door flung open. An Oriental police officer wearing an Izod shirt, leans against the car's grill.

"...when life looks like Easy Street—
there is danger at your door..."

The almond-eyed officer is speaking to a man, thirtyish and wearing a T-shirt with the Dead philosophy: All you can do is SMILE, SMILE, SMILE.

The hippie slowly waves his hands in the air, brandishing an unlit joint. "Come on," the hippie says, smiling easily, "you know they're just gonna make me pay a fine." Somewhere farther down the aisle, there is a faint whistle like that of a train. People cut through cars carrying inflated balloons.

"To get really high is to forget yourself," said Garcia. "And to forget yourself is to see everything else. And to see everything else is to become an understanding molecule in evolution, a conscious tool of the universe. That's why I think it's important to get high. I'm not talking about unconscious or zonked out. I'm talking about being fully conscious."

Drugs have been a big part of the Grateful Dead and its community of followers

since the 1960's, when the band and friends resided at 710 Ashbury in San Francisco. LSD was legal then and being governmentally tested at Stanford University, where Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Robert Hunter, one of the songwriters for the Dead, were guinea pigs. Deadheads are what remains of the counterculture turned off by nationalism, patriotism, the Vietnam War. People began experimenting with LSD on their own, desiring a good-natured evening of music and dance in a new state of consciousness. Acid Tests were held at Ken Kesey's house, the Golden Gate Park, and ballrooms. The Grateful Dead, named the Warlocks then, performed at these gatherings, where musicians were free to tinker with different sounds and play improvisational tunes.

"The acid test was a prototype to a whole basic trip," explained Garcia. "It was incredible because of the formlessness. Everybody was creating. Everyone was doing everything."

"We became the Grateful Dead at the Acid Tests," said Phil Lesh, bass player of the band and the only member educated in music theory.

These gatherings were promoted on billboards as "Can You Pass the Acid Test?" During these experiments, held even after the government declared its own creation illegal, the Grateful Dead began opening traditional structures and tight forms in music with extended improvisation. Not only did this band sing to the audience, they did so through musical notes, too.

"Verbal communication is open to interpretation, just like songs are," said Garcia. "I've prefaced interviews in the past by saying that I can't do anything but lie. All talk is lying...go hear me play. That's me—that's what I have to say."

For the last twenty-five years, the Grateful Dead has been able to speak to people through their mentally and physically moving music. The band carries minds away with lofty notes for people who dedicate their lives listening to the band play.

The Capital Center's gravel parking lot opens at 5:30, since the main areas are sardined with two-tiered family size Volkswagen vans, plus Mustangs, pickup trucks, Saabs, and Volvos. A large flag featuring the earth flutters above a full size MTA bus splattered with yellow, pink, and green paint. Bumper stickers wallpaper the two back windows. Global ReLeaf. Make Love Not War. Deadicated. Legalize Hemp—Stop The Prohibition. Shakedown Street. Thanks Jerry. "Viola Lee Blues," the first Dead song to play on the radio in the 1960's, filters out of the MTA causing people to stop and listen, dance and spin, then skip on by.

A soft whistling sound, like wind passing between two buildings, whispers from the hairline of trees that wall in the Capital Center parking lot. Three six-foot whip hit (nitrous oxide) tanks are set up in the meandering ravine that dips down seven feet before the bank rises and runs into a large green field. A whip hit balloon pops, pinching the air, causing surrounding people to cry, "Ahh, too bad."

In the distance, cars chug up Arena Drive, heading for the Capital Center North Gate. A thin trickle of water moves along the stream bed, though mostly there are only muddy areas with water-filled footprints. A woman, seven months pregnant and wearing a dull purple dress and no shoes, walks past. She's humming to herself, bell anklets jingling with each step. A whip hit tank whines like a tea pot.

There are longhaired guards posted at the top of the ravine, watching out for any Capital Center security or plain clothes policemen. The field beyond is spotted with clusters of people who sit in circles passing a communal balloon. In other groups, the people have their own balloons extending from the mouth like bubble gum blowing out of control.

"Ahh, hippie crack," says a young man, head slung in a bandana, to three laughing girls sitting Indian style on the hillside and passing a half-filled balloon. One woman with beads strung in a section of dirty blonde hair, drops back in the grass, jean legs bent, gazing at the sky. She points to a cloud and says, "A rose." Another girl with woven bracelets tied on the left wrist, inhales from the balloon then says, "See you on the other side." The smaller woman, with two ponytails resembling handlebars, smiles at the passing man's remark, holding her arms in the air like she's holding up the sky.

"Four dollars—fresh balloon. Three dollars—refill," says a stocky man to the fifteen people lined behind a whip hit tank. Refills are important. Nitrous oxide leaves the user high for thirty seconds, then leaves the person wanting more.

Back in the thin wall of trees heading for the Liberty Bell parking lot, I come upon three young teenage boys wearing commercially manufactured tie-dyes. They pass a marijuana pipe. The scent fragrances the air like a warm fire. About seven feet away, two older men stand beside a large maple tree. One man has long hair fastened in a ponytail and holds a crumpled zip-lock bag of mushrooms. The other man with short blonde hair thumbs through green bills. They make the trade with a single enthusiastic handshake.

"Enjoy the show. Dance yourself away." The seller, wagging his ponytail and smiling, smacks the blonde buyer lightly on the back, holding up the peace sign with split fingers. He lopes away, calling "'shrooms...'shrooms."

In 1989 the Grateful Dead wrote a letter to fans, attempting to put an end to on-site vending and camping at shows. The Dead now include with mail-ordered tickets, information on campgrounds and inexpensive lodging. That information is also available at the Dead office in California, where Eileen Law sits manning the phones as she did in the 1960's.

Dead publicist, Dennis McNally said, "It's not that we think vendors are bad, but they have become the locus of a small community which we can't control."

No other band in history has had such an enormous following of fans, called "The Family." The Grateful Dead, existing in an industry muddled with musical

impostors such as Milli Vanilli, has a dedicated group of approximately one thousand people who attend every concert the Dead play in the U.S. and abroad. In 1971, when the *Skull and Roses* LP was released, the mailing list had 30,000 names. By 1973, another 50,000 names were added.

Success hit in 1987 with the album *In The Dark,* which held the band's only Top Ten release, "Touch of Grey." In twenty-five years of playing, the Dead have never managed to record more than one Top Ten song. The determinacy, the structure, and the form of studio recordings hinders and petrifies the mainly improvisational music of the Dead. The sensual power and sense of abandonment can not be captured in technology.

"I prefer playing live for sure, just as an experience, it's definitely richer, mainly because it's continuous," said Garcia. "I mean, you play a note and you can see where it goes, you can see what the response is. It's reciprocal."

Beth, a twenty-two year old whose home town is Hollywood, California, explains that the "Grateful Dead experience is a shared moment with musicians and fans. Something intangible. The end result is nothing but happiness." Beth supports herself by pedaling the beaded jewelry she crafts. A rose is painted on her cheek. Beth travels across the country with six other people in a Volkswagen. She goes back to Hollywood on major holidays.

A magical side exists in Grateful Dead shows, a moment where miracles can happen as Garcia sees it. Yet large recording studios such as Warner Brothers, have never succeeded in capturing the magic on compact disc.

Mickey Hart, one of the two drummers of the Dead, calls the experience a pyschochomp. "A pyschochomp is an escort of souls to the other world. We do something besides entertain. We have the ability to transform."

A young girl walks by chanting, "I need a miracle," also the title of a Dead song. She holds up a finger, windowwashing the air.

"Lisa," a short man, mid-20's, calls to the girl searching for a miracle.

Lisa turns. "Timmy!" She skips, with long, honey brown hair fanning her back, over to the man. "How long's it been? New Year's Eve, California?"

Timmy nods. They embrace and twirl like ice skaters.

High overhead of a pick-up truck, a banner flies, illustrating a unicorn head encased in a circle with a slash through it, similar to No Smoking signs. The flag flaps, like skull and cross bones, warning the Deadhead community that paper acid with the unicorn print is not clean. The cloth banner was raised by concerned Deadhead community members.

Marty from West Virginia stares at the unicorn flag from inside a large VW cab. The vehicle is equipped with a makeshift kitchen, beds, and worn cushions. Marty had tickets to all four concerts at the Capital Center and heads to Nassau, New York, at the end of the week for the next show, in hopes of finding a miracle.

"It's the people who come to the show to make a quick buck. Scam artists," Marty says pointing to the banner, "who sell cheap drugs at high prices."

Problems with drugs and hippies infiltrating the communities where Dead shows have been held have caused many long time Dead venues to cancel shows. For example:

University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University: "Hippie" crowds too large. Grateful Dead uninvited.

The California State University at Dominquez Hill: Three LSD-related deaths. Dead canceled.

Merriweather Post Pavilion, Maryland: Extensive drug sales. Dead show terminated.

Hartford, Connecticut: 5000 Deadheads camp in downtown park. Dead's future undecided.

RFK, Washington D.C.: Councilmen lobbied that the Dead and its disciples not return. Lobby overruled.

Civic Arena, Pittsburgh: Fans and police fight outside Arena. Sophie Masloff, mayor of Pittsburgh, says band cannot return. Videotapes illustrating apparent police brutality of Arena incident are aired on television. Mayor recants. Dead are welcomed back.

Dead promoters will converse with concert halls a year before the performance in order to help them prepare for shows. The Dead explains policies regarding how drug-related problems are to be handled at shows.

"We let the venues know that there may be people who don't have experience with psychedelics coming in contact with them at shows," said singer/guitarist Bob Weir. "We consider it a medical problem. If they need to be arrested, they must receive medical attention first."

The band also hinders alcohol sales at their performances. If promoters complain that too much money would be lost, the Dead offers a lower fee or early closing time for alcohol booths.

Bob Weir wants to see the Grateful Dead continue to be a rock 'n roll alternative. "This can be the circus of human splendors without the nefarious trapping."

But the band also gives back to their dedicated audience and the world in which they play. Fans are allowed to tape shows, almost unheard of in the music industry. Fans are encouraged to trade tapes so past performances can be captured for old and new ears to hear. The "tape heads," folk historians armed

with tape recorders and shotgun microphones, can be found sitting by the sound board at each show.

And to the world, the Grateful Dead holds benefit shows to aid their favorite environmental, anti-war, and human service projects.

Columbia University, May 1968: Dead hold surprise show supporting student strike.

Monterey International Pop Festival: Dead scheduled to perform with Jimi Hendrix, The Who, and Otis Redding. The band, led to believe a large amount of money would go to charity, found this not to be true. The Grateful Dead refused to be on concert film or album. When organizers refused to make tickets available to 1,000 in San Francisco, the Dead played for free the evening before the Festival at a nearby college.

Grateful Dead's 10th Anniversary, 1975: Band plays free concert for 500,000 at Lindley Meadows.

Kezar Stadium, 1975: Benefit for Students Need Athletics, Culture, and Kicks (SNACKS).

Grateful Dead's 15th Anniversary, 1980: Band played 93 songs in a 15-night run. Money raised went to:

- Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic/Rock Dept.
- The California Coalition Against the Peripheral Canal
- Abalone Alliance of Northern California
- Planet Drum Foundation
- Big Mountain Defense Fund
- Goodman Building Artists Cooperative
- America Friends Service Committee

$300,000 raised at show to aid victims of San Francisco earthquake.

Rainforest Benefit, September 1988: In NY Madison Square Garden, the Dead with other bands, raised $500,000 during nine-night stretch of shows.

The Capital Center doors have not yet opened at 7:30 p.m., though the tickets state that's when the show's to begin. People, still looking for a miracle, hold an index finger high. On Wednesday night's concert, an unknown saint gave out twenty free tickets fifteen minutes after the show began. A teenage boy wearing a CB jacket is surrounded by three young women with long hair and skirts.

"How much for tickets?" a girl asks through pale rose lips, jingling a bell bracelet.

"Seventy-five dollars."

The girls wave their hands and walk away, leaving the teenage boy prey to a long haired hippie who's overheard. "Ahhh, beat it, scalper. It's miracles, not money."

The crowd at the Liberty Bell Entrance has become congested. Murmuring voices, light singing, and easy laughing move through the dimming night like music—though people farther back in line have grown impatient, pushing forward, packaging bodies tightly together. I can feel a man's swelling belly press into my back. He mutters apologies to my ear, then raises his arms and calls, "People hold up. Relax." In recent years many audience members have been trampled at heavy metal rock concert rushes. Bodies are jammed so close together now, that I can stand without any effort, pillars of people supporting and suffocating. I see no guards. Suddenly there is a shuffling, a jeering, then a surge, like a panicked heartbeat. I concentrate to keep my feet in contact with the pavement. Then there's a glare of light and a smack of brisk cool air. The four Liberty Bell entrances are seven feet ahead. Guards, clad in yellow jackets, swarm around the doors like hornets. One of the four heavy steel doors is opened, funneling in the mass of poeple. Ticket holders are being frisked, standing like Jesus spread on the cross, authorities' hands patting along torsos and legs. A deflated red ballon lays on the pavement like a crushed rosebud.

A security guard, with round cheeks but no smile, taps my front jean pocket and asks, "What's in there?"

"Cigarette pack," I lie.

The guard nods and points me towards the door.

People fill the circular hall, most dancing to music that hasn't started yet. Eyes are wide; dark pupils dilated. Half-cocked smiles sea-saw on faces full of wonder, hair cascading down from heads like waterfalls. Hundreds of tiny silver bells dangling from necks and wrists and hair jingle like faint sleigh bells.

I find a space in Section 223, although Row X, stated on the ticket stub, is already full of people. I find empty seats in Row M, level to the men suspended on spider webbed structures to control the spotlights. A lit joint is being passed down Row L. People pass by the hallway entrances like they are looking for the next train to catch. The entire hazy arena buzzes with voices, like bees ready to brew some oldfashioned, golden honey.

The arena lights shut off and crystal green spotlights illuminate the stage. Bob Weir pulls the guitar strap over his short brown hair. The slim man wears worn jeans, cowboy boots, and a cranberry colored shirt. Weir cradles the guitar, with mother-of-pearl vines twisting up the thin wooden neck, like a newborn baby. Jerry Garcia stands plump like a tender, sundried raisin. His head, topped with bushy hair ignited to a tinsel green, is lowered as if he's deep in thought.

Garcia tunes the guitar, plucking the strings with a four-fingered right hand, for he lost the appendage as an infant.

A teenage boy named Rick is standing next to me clapping enthusiastically. The boy is round with a bow smile and he reminds me of a teddy bear, belly full of honey. Rick turns to me says, "Phil got his hair cut." And sure enough, Phil Lesh, wearing the red, white, and blue wristband and fiddling with the bass guitar, has shortened his strawberry blond hair.

Keyboards, drums, cymbals, and guitar notes tinker through the air. The crowd roars a welcoming hello, like relatives gathering who have been apart too long. People pack the hallway entrances, a sea of bobbing heads and waving arms. A high F note holds—then lofts up and lingers like a bird drifting in flight—soaring into "Hell in a Bucket." Spiraling pinwheels of light polka dot the audience. A thin girl with flying, long blonde hair, twirls in the center of a yellow spotlight, as if she were a worker bee come home to the honeycomb to tell where the gold-dusted pollen hides.

The sound of the Grateful Dead is unique and unmistakable, with soft velveteen notes mixed with those played poignantly. A custom made sound system was produced after years of electronic tampering. The Dead use a completely computerized 1990 PA and pump out 50,000 watts RMS through 195dE, creating a crystal clear sound turned up halfway. For larger concert halls, the usual 900 speakers, and eight foot block of eighteen foot bass speakers, are helped by sound towers that extend into the audience. The band also uses CAD programs to mark out perfect speaker positions for any concert hall, so that unintended echoes are avoided. (Carls & Simon, *Playing in the Band.)*

Bruce Hornsby, having temporarily given up his own solo career, now plays the keyboard since Brent Mydland died last August. The pianist pounds on the white tooth keys, chiming out high pitched notes like raindrops falling onto glass. The drummers, Hart and Kreutzmann, play not like two men, but one man with eight arms, an octopus. The guitar notes bounce along a mountain range of sound. The audience moves in rippling motions, each person following a certain note—the piano, drums, guitars, or the entire musical entity. The notes appear to beckon each person on an individual journey, entering the chest, coursing up the spinal cord, ricocheting in the head, flushing down the arms in waves until the notes escape through the fingertips, splitting out like a thousand myriad rays of light. And underneath Bob Weir's husky voice, the audience sings along:

"...it's a lesson to me
the Abies and the Bakers and the C's...
the ABC's we all must face
and try to keep a little grace..."

"We were playing for salvation," Jerry Garcia spoke of the 710 Ashbury days. "We weren't playing for $3.50, we were playing because that's what we had to do. We used to call it church."

The audience dances along with the rollicking musical movements. Free-flowing bodies. A formless, psychedelic gospel gathering.

"You can't control or manipulate the music like you can religion," said Garcia. "That's one of the reasons you can trust it."

"We're just a piece of it," said Phil Lesh.

"That's right. We're not it..."

"No. *It* is informing us."

Grateful Dead shows contain a religious experience which holds no religious standards. It's an experience—the power of notes to entice the listener forward, beckoning the mind into a new state of consciousness, a journey which has nothing to do with the redemption of sin but more with the gospel of life.

Lighter flames flash like fireflies looking for mates in the night. Marijuana and hashish smoke fog the arena. A man four seats away is in the process of rolling a generous joint. Soap bubbles, blown by audience members, sink in the grey haze, thin spheres tinted blue by the spotlights. One bubble pops on an unsuspecting head three rows below. Neon glow sticks spiral in the air, trailing green tracers. A security guard stationed at the bottom of the steps points a flashlight beam in Section 223, scanning over the dancing bodies. Outside, the hallways tremble with jigging people resembling a feverish Indian rain dance.

Suddenly the notes have spun away from each other as band members enter on an improvisational journey. The music shifts smoothly from mood to mood, so that one listens not only to the individual notes but also the organic whole, the sum of which is so much greater than its parts. The drummers glance at each other, arms blurred with speed. Bob Weir, head cocked and mouth ajar, plays the guitar strings quick and fast, like pebbles skipping across water. Bruce Hornsby smiles and nods tickling the keyboards into following Bob. Jerry's head twitches slightly with each low note he plays, and this heavy man with head bowed to the guitar seems oblivious to everything but strings meeting fingertips. Phil Lesh, standing straight and looking ahead, plays the bass guitar deep and hollow like a bullfrog. These improvisational techniques blossomed at the Acid Tests.

"We played extended pieces from the beginning," said Kreutzmann. "We just never thought of stopping; it never crossed our minds to play three minute songs."

Spontaneity and diversity is the Grateful Dead's fundamental characteristic; unity the second. The band has no leader within the group. The musicians, along with approximately one hundred "family" members, prefer the multiple points of view that prevent things from flowing too far in one direction. And this

natural system of checks and balances applies to the Dead's redefining themselves every time they play, allowing musicians to go off on their own musical tangents, expressing the self with the notes they individually choose.

"We're dealing with several consciousnesses at once—everybody going through their own individual changes," said Garcia. "And when everybody feels right about it, the form provides an opening, then miracles can happen. That's what we're in it for, those moments of unexpected joy."

"Ours are conversations," said Hart, "not solos. We're trying to sculpt the air."

"There is no leader of the Grateful Dead, because it doesn't go Bob's way, it doesn't go my way," said Lesh. "The music goes its own way as long as it's performing as a unit."

The band members are illuminated only by spotlights so that they appear suspended in black space, huddled over their instruments. Weir and Garcia nod at each other and suddenly there is a gathering of musical notes like children collecting eggs in one basket—and the miscellaneous notes melt into "Truckin'":

"...sometimes the light's all shining on me,
other times I can barely see,
lately it occurs to me—
what a long, strange trip it's been..."

The crowd's cheer reverberates off the high ceiling, walls, and warm bodies. Personalities come through music.

"Interaction is what makes the Grateful Dead happen," stated Weir.

The band helps retain the surprise, freshness, and spontaneity of the music by avoiding rehearsals, writing songs with definite musical structures and set rhythm patterns, and already knowing what songs they will play when walking on stage. These methods began in the Acid Test days, where the band was free to play experimentally with different sounds and had no time limits. The performances played in the 60's and into the 90's run more like soulful rehearsals.

"You don't want to rehearse the material," Weir told Kreutzmann when the drummer joined the band. "You know the tune, don't play it between gigs. Go do whatever else you want to do...rehearsing would just get you stuck in a groove and you won't be so open."

"Rehearsals take place on stage more than anywhere else," said Brent Mydland. "The tunes are worked up real loose, then it's like, OK, that's pretty much how it goes. Let's leave it a little loose, that way we've got something to play with."

"We're really just playing by the seat of our pants," said Weir.

A security guard lumbers his way up the steep, narrow steps. He stops at Row M, where an old man, with a wash of long gray hair, has just finished rolling a joint.

"Busted—down on Bourbon Street.
Set up—like a bowling pin.
Knocked down—it gets to wearing thin.
They just won't let you be."

"What you got in your hand?" the guard asks the crouching old man. The hippie's friends stare at the sudden apparition of the security guard. The old man makes no move, gesture, or sound.

As the scowling guard uproots the hippie, the seat snaps closed like a jaw. The apprehended man bends over, frail shoulders sloping down, the hair falling across his face like the closing curtain. The guard cajoles the hippie down the stairs with yanks and tugs and a scratchy voice.

The second Dead set ends with "Not Fade Away." On stage, Bob Weir is held in a single shaft of white light, kneeling down with the guitar as though he was proposing to the audience. His arms sweep across the strings, painting a picture by stroking notes through the air.

"I want to tell you how it's going to be,
you're going to give your love to me.
I want to love you night and day,
you know our love will not fade away..."

Voices harmonize on stage, washing over the people in waves. The audience joins in. The lights dim away like a car's headlights passing by your house late at night. The chant continues, yet the band's voices have become but a lingering whisper.

"Not fade away...not fade away...not fade..."

The stage is empty.

Time ticks by with this rhythmical chant.

Shadows are rushing out on stage and the crowd praises in glorifying shouts as though they hadn't heard the band play for over three hours. The encore is "Box of Rain."

"Look out of any window
any morning, any evening, any day.
Maybe the sun is shining
birds are winging or
rain is falling from a heavy sky—
What do you want me to do,
to do for you to see you through?
For this is all a dream we dreamed
one afternoon long ago..."

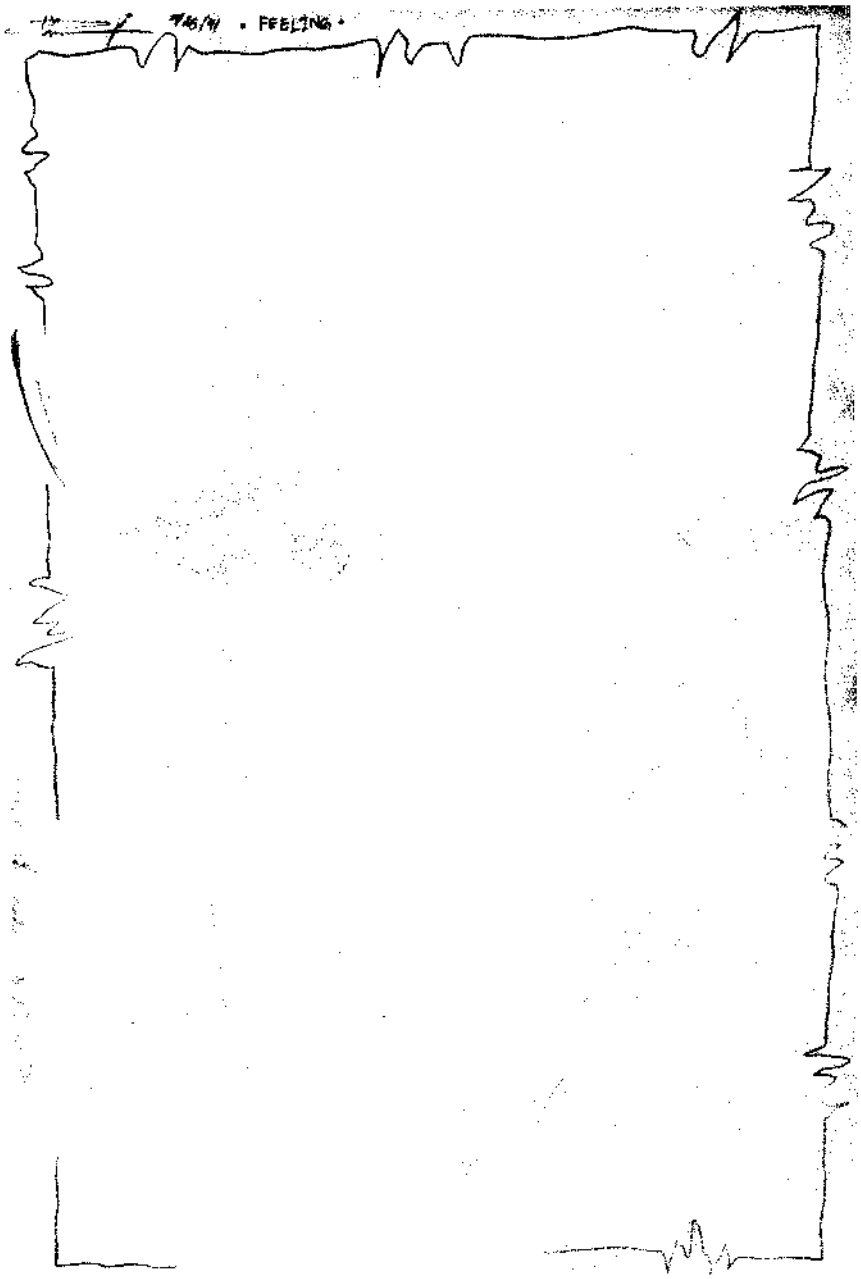
CAN YOU P A S S THE ACID TEST?

The spotlights tie-dye the arena. Everyone is singing, a church singing in all that they believe, and sounding like the evening tide rolling in, washing out, then rolling back in again.

"Walk into splintered sunlight
Inch your way through dead dreams
to another land.
Maybe you're tired and broken
your tongue is twisted
with words half spoken
and thoughts unclear.
What do you want me to do,
to do for you to see you through?
A box of rain will ease the pain
and love will see you through..."

"Look well into thyself; there is a source which will always spring up if thou wilt search there."

Marcus Antonious



From Under the Bridge

by Jennifer Martyn

A glimmer of orange darted from behind the plastic seaweed toward the front tank. The fish hovered at the front for a few seconds, then dove to the blue and grey pebbles covering the bottom. Back to the left sat a stone bridge with an arc for the fish to swim under. The filter bubbled in the back right corner and a flourescent bulb caused pink light to permeate throughout the tank. It even gave the plastic mermaid scene leaning against the back panel a soft glow.

My gaze shifted back to the goldfish now peeking out from underneath the little bridge. I stared at him for a while and then realized he was trapped.

My brother trapped me once. I was five years old, and he was eight. We were swimming in Lake Okoboji in Spirit Lake, Iowa, one late afternoon in June when he suddenly pushed my head below the water and held it there.

I let the air out slowly. A few bubbles escaped from my mouth and scrambled up toward the surface. I imagined my puffed cheeks starting to turn a shade of blue dangerously similiar to the color of the lake water. I twisted my head to the right, my thick hair swishing frantically in the cloudy water. It was pointless. My brother's hands were still clamped to my head, forcing me to remain under water for at least another minute. My lungs pounded against my rib cage, screaming for just an ounce of air. My body could no longer fight, however, and I gave up. At that point, he let go. The release seemed a painful relief. I coughed in the air, and it pierced my clenched lungs. My brother gave me a smart smack between my shoulder blades, grinned, and swam away. I looked around. I could move freely again.

I blinked and peered into the small world of the trapped fish. He almost looked frightened. His scales were rising and falling more rapidly now, as if he had started to panic. The slight current inside the tank had dislodged one of the blue rocks; it floated past the helpless fish, just like dirt clumps travel down Aigburth Creek in West Des Moines, Iowa.

The creek resembled a wet conveyor belt. The water rippled and led debris and stray crawdads to the pond. The pond was in the middle of Aigburth Cemetery, and tall oak trees lined the bank. Three creamy swans floated aimlessly around the island in the center of the pond. Their direction changed, however, when they realized I had brought with me an offering of stale bread crumbs. They stopped drifting; it was as if a motor started whirring beneath them, propelling them toward my red sneakers that were sinking into the bank's moist earth.

One swan stretched upward and balanced itself on its two webbed feet. Its long neck craned out toward me; I backed away from the curious fluffy bird. I was only six, a year had passed since my brother first held me underwater. The bird's feet matted into the mud; it opened its beak with a snarl. My hands trembled as I tried to drop the morsel, but the swan snatched the bread away and trapped my finger inside its mouth. It tugged, trying to pull me to the water's edge. I yanked my smarting finger out and watched it throb in horror. The swan squawked hideously and swaggered in frustration back to the water.

I smiled confidently, knowing I had saved myself singlehandedly.

I wondered if the fish under the bridge could save himself, or if he needed a slight nudge to help him get out. I saw him struggling to get away from the barrier that surrounded him. I glanced out the window and saw oak leaves rustling, almost whistling one of Bach's violin concertos. It was the same kind of music my mother listened to.

The sewing machine hummed along with the classical music that danced out of the speakers, then stopped. Mom was hunched behind the machine; she leaned forward, her eyes squinting at the needle's eye as she guided the silvery thread through.

She had perched me on the "naughty chair" for grabbing at my brother's fish. It was black and had big eyes that bulged out. She had caught me with it flipping around in my hand. I had wanted to play with it, but it wanted desperately to go back into the water. Now I sat on the hard metal folding chair, toying with the slightly soiled laces of my tennis shoes.

I was tying my shoes by myself. I did it, and no one had to supervise or help me. Then I tied them to the sides of the chair. I was trapped, but this time I laughed because I knew I could get myself out of it. I untied the knots and slid off the chair. Mom raised an eyebrow at me, ordering me silently to get back to the chair. Defiantly, I walked over to her and informed her that I didn't need to sit on the chair like a caged animal. I was seven years old, I knew how to tie my shoes, and I knew how to behave. I watched as her eyes widened and then as the corners of her mouth twitched upward. She nodded, and I strolled out of the kitchen. I had moved forward.

The fish looked as if he had moved forward somewhat. He looked anxious; his gold fins were twitching. Just the end of the fish's tail stuck out from behind the bridge, and it started to swish more fervently. He wanted to free himself.

When I was eight years old, my brother attempted to push me underwater again. This time we were swimming in our neighbor's pool. When he grabbed me, I freed myself and laughed at him. He no longer had control over me.

His size was an advantage to him physically, but no one could restrain me from doing what I wanted to do. I don't think he expected me to laugh at him. I don't think the swan expected me to fight back, nor did my mother expect me to question her authority. It was as though my inner strength increased with every challenge that I faced. I didn't have to worry about being pushed or pulled in any direction or forced to stay somewhere I didn't want to stay . I suppose if my brother had really wanted, he could have tried to drown me again. Part of me thinks that he wanted to see if I could get out on my own.

The fish gave one final thrust forward and burst out from under the arc. Ecstatically, he swam upward, lips ready to kiss the surface of the water.

"Statistics will prove anything, even the truth."

Lord Moynihan

The Paradox of Statistics

by Scott Shannon

Baseball is a sport built around statistics. The number of home runs, runs batted in, and the batting average determine whether someone makes $300,000 or $3,000,000. For pitchers, the key statistics are: earned run average, winning percentage for a starting pitcher, and saves for a relief pitcher. In his book, *All About Baseball*, Leonard Koppett called statistics "the lifeblood of baseball." I wholeheartedly agree with Koppett's assessment. The word "lifeblood" captures the indispensability of baseball statistics, as they fill sports pages, media guides, and baseball history books, and cover a side of every player's baseball card.

Koppett also wrote, "In no other sport are so many [statistics] available and studied so assiduously by participants and fans. Much of the game's appeal, as a conversation piece, lies in the opportunity the fan gets to back up opinions and arguments with convincing figures." Koppett highlights two key points. The first is that baseball compiles an amazing number of statistics. One can find dozens of sources that chronicle past statistics in baseball, though *The Baseball Encyclopedia* is the most comprehensive source for today's fan. The second key point is that statistics arouse a great interest in the fans.

The game of baseball could be played even if statistics were not kept, but much of the intrigue would be lost. Fans are enthralled when a player has a chance to break a record or reach a milestone that very few players ever achieve. It was a magical moment in 1985 when Pete Rose broke Ty Cobb's all-time record for hits. Hit number 4,192 was a hit that every fan awaited, and a hit many thought was unattainable. But Rose did it, and his name now stands on top. The electricity of that moment could be felt through the television screen. As the ball dropped into left field and Rose hit first base for a single, a mark that had stood for five decades fell. Pete embraced his son, and the Cincinnati crowd roared. This moment would not have occurred if each hit, one by one, was never recorded.

I can feel the same electricity when I see a replay of Hank Aaron's 715th home run to break Babe Ruth's all-time record. When that baseball landed in the bullpen over the left field fence in Atlanta, a four-decade mark perished. As Aaron hit third base, an enduring vision is a young man running to Aaron to shake his hand. These achievements were closely monitored and are now admired by all fans. Longstanding records, marks deemed insurmountable, were eclipsed. Rickey Henderson is just three stolen bases away from Lou Brock's all-time record; Henderson will break the record next April. Statistics chronicle these spectacular performances to be stored in the annals of baseball history.

Over the course of a season, it comes down to simply wins and losses as we

follow our favorite teams to the division championship. Fans look at statistics and form opinions. Many different opinions exist about the Orioles' 1991 season. After finishing only two games out of first place in 1989, the team finished in a disappointing fifth place in 1990. The production of key players significantly dropped between these two seasons: left handed starter Jeff Ballard went from eighteen victories to two, third baseman Craig Worthington went from seventy RBI to less than fifty, and catcher Mickey Tettleton dropped from twenty-six home runs in 1989—while missing a month of the season—to only fifteen in an injury-free 1990 season. Questions exist about these players.

Some believe that the Orioles should venture into the free agent market and acquire a "big name" power hitter to impact the offense. Darryl Strawberry comes to mind as a free agent who fits this description. Others believe that a Tettleton and a Worthington back to '89 form, combined with the emergence of first baseman Randy Milligan as a power hitter (twenty home runs in 1990 with an absence of almost two months because of an injury) and the consistency of shortstop Cal Ripken (at least twenty home runs for nine consecutive seasons), would repair the offense nicely. The future of the pitching staff is bright with such names as Olson, McDonald, Schilling, Milacki, and Harnisch; the resurgence of Ballard would be a fabulous boost. I agree with the latter view; I think that the 1989 statistics are good enough to merit another chance. If these players fail in 1991, they become expendable.

As Koppett said, fans support their opinions with statistics they have cited. They will attempt to make valid points. Listen to a baseball talk show on the radio. If statistics were not kept, I would find it extremely difficult to be an ardent fan. The athletic ability of the players could still be admired, but we enjoy labeling talented teams and players versus mediocre teams and players. Recorded statistics are used to form viewpoints, and spirited debate arises from conflicting views.

Statistics are the objective historical records of the national pastime. What happens in games becomes part of baseball history. With all of baseball's recorded statistics, it would be easy to allow them to shape all of our views about history. This is not the case. They do not tell the whole story. The desire to win, the unexplainable, and the unpredictable, play undeniable roles in the game.

Suppose a team has runners on first and second with only one out; the team is down a run in the bottom of the ninth. The batter hits a grounder to the shortstop that could be a double play to end the inning. The runner on first could just assume that the double play will be converted and not hustle. However, his inner desire to win ignites him to set his sights on the second baseman. If the runner is able to take out the second baseman, the double play might not be completed and the inning would continue.

The adrenaline begins to pump, and his determination allows him to do just

that. Because of a hard slide, the second baseman's relay throw to first not only doesn't get to the runner, but is also wild and the ball rolls into the dugout. The runner who began at second scores to tie the game, and the batter goes to second. The next batter gets a base hit to drive in the winning run. A loss has become a victory. An error will show up for that second baseman, but the runner does not get credit for a "hard slide that breaks up a double play." His play is nowhere to be found in his personal stats, but it was the most crucial play. If he did not hustle, his team probably would have lost. The intangible, the passion for winning is what baseball is all about.

Statistics cannot explain miracles either. In *The Natural,* Roy Hobbs, in the hospital less than twenty-four hours before the game, came through with a majestic pinch-hit, game-winning home run off the light standard; he barely made it around the bases. His team won the National League pennant. It was an incredible scene.

One could argue that this was only a movie, that nothing like this could occur in reality. In October 1988, it did, although no lights were shattered. The Oakland Athletics' outstanding relief pitcher Dennis Eckersley stood on the mound. With two outs, he issued a walk; that in itself was unbelievable since he had issued only nine the entire season. The Athletics were leading 4-3, but the tying run was now on first, and the possible winning run would be coming to the plate.

Out from the Dodgers' dugout stepped a limping Kirk Gibson; he could barely walk because of a strained left hamstring and a sprained right knee. This man could not possibly get the job done. His initial swings were weak; no one in his right mind could think that Gibson would come through. I certainly didn't, and I was ready to listen to Vin Scully's call of the third strike to end the game and give the Athletics the first game of the 1988 World Series. What happened next was *The Natural* revisited. Gibson did it—his two-run homer gave the Dodgers an incredible 5-4 victory, and the Dodgers went on to win the World Series over the heavily favored Athletics. Whenever the Gibson home run is replayed, it is often accompanied by music from *The Natural.* This moment in baseball history cannot and should never be analyzed statistically; it was a miracle. Something inside of Kirk Gibson allowed him to hit that remarkable home run. A totally healthy Gibson hitting this home run would not have been utterly incredible; he had always been a good clutch hitter and was the key figure in the Dodgers' offense. But this situation transcended all rational explanation.

Statistics cannot determine the future. The logical analysis last month was to pick the Oakland Athletics to win the World Series. They had the explosive hitting and overpowering pitching; their statistics demonstrated superiority. The Dodgers had upset them in 1988, so it couldn't happen at the hands of the Reds. But it did happen, and did it ever. The Reds proved to be the better team and

scored the impressive four game sweep. The statistics going into the 1990 World Series should have yielded an Oakland victory; the fans of Cincinnati are the ones celebrating.

The significance of statistics is not discredited by the importance of the emotional and unpredictable aspects of the game. Statistics are still very significant, especially in the area of individual performance. The 1990 season had an especially impressive individual performance in Detroit Tiger first baseman Cecil Fielder, who became the first major league player to hit at least fifty home runs since George Foster hit fifty-two for the Cincinnati Reds in 1977. With two home runs in the final game, Fielder ended with fifty-one. He also led the majors with 132 runs batted in. His statistics speak for themselves; his fantastic accomplishment should earn him the 1990 American League Most Valuable Player award.

Years of consistent individual excellence is the trademark of the Hall of Fame. Studying the statistics of the players in the Hall of Fame, one can see the consistency year after year. One good season may earn an MVP award but not a place in Cooperstown. Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Ted Williams, and Joe Dimaggio are five immortals whose statistics fill volumes. Baltimore's most beloved pitcher and baseball's most recent Hall of Fame inductee, Jim Palmer, has statistics that speak loudly. His 268 career wins are very impressive, although not the most amazing figure in baseball history. His most impressive statistic is his winning of twenty games eight times in nine seasons from 1970-1978, the only exception being 1974. He also never allowed a grand slam in twenty major league seasons, a feat which appears on his Hall of Fame plaque. Jim Palmer's enshrinement is no fluke; he has the statistics to prove that he is one of baseball's greats.

Statistics provide a framework to evaluate players and teams and make logical predictions about the game, even though the predictions may never come true. Every game must be played; the outcome is never etched in stone before the two teams battle. Statistics provide the blueprint for the game, a two-dimensional diagram that is vital for information and understanding. The third dimension, the human factor, gives baseball its true shape and substance.

"Oh—nature's noblest gift—my gray goose quill!
Slave of my thoughts, obedient to my will,
Torn from thy parent-bird to form a pen,
That mighty instrument of little men!"

Byron

Penning an Art Form

by Jennifer Eibner

The goose quill pen scratches as the old monk laboriously draws it across the page, the Latin words slowly forming from its point. The work is not complex—just a simple prayer being recopied from an ancient missal. But each letter of the time-worn words is a mannequin; at the touch of the monk's pen it becomes living and he clothes it. Garbed in the swirls and loops of the calligrapher's hand, the words parade across the parchment, turning the ordinary prayer into a work of art. The monk carefully applies gold-leaf onto the scrollwork of the ornate first letter, adding color to the system of vines that border and complete the time-consuming endeavor. The illumination will be worthy even of the eyes of God.

Many miles away and many centuries through time, I sit and stare at an Old English dictionary I am compiling as a project for my British literature class. To make it authentic-looking, I have decided to transcribe it in calligraphy on parchment-like paper. I sympathize with the patience of monks in ancient times. I try to pretend I am one to make the work go faster. My goose feather is the 1990 model—a Schaeffer pen slick and black like an old rosary bead. I have no gold-leaf, nor brilliant paint made from berries or leaves, but I do have more ink cartridges than Joseph had colors on his coat. I select an authentic, old-looking shade of brown and begin.

My interest in this style of writing comes from my mother, who is an amateur calligrapher. When I was in grade school, she enrolled both of us in lessons at a local craft store. I was the youngest person there, but I took to it naturally. We were taught the Chancery Italic hand, the most common form of calligraphy which was developed by the Vatican Chancery at the beginning of the Renaissance.

For years after this, I practiced the Italic hand faithfully. I even taught it to my fifth grade class as a part of my cultural project on the Renaissance. During this time, I also became interested in Medieval England. As a result, I taught myself both the Uncial and Gothic hands, which I felt were more true to calligraphy's history than was Italic. These forms are also more unique; Gothic is the medieval soldier—rigid and stiff with ornate swirls on his armor, while Uncial is a monk—very round and plain and functional.

I chose to do my British Literature dictionary in Gothic, the style of writing most widely used throughout the Middle Ages. I decided that the hand monks and kings had practiced would be best for my assignment. Chancery is easier to work in, but Gothic carries the true spirit of Medieval Europe; its stiff, unyielding small letters and large, ornate capitals draw to mind the society of the period—mostly poor peasants with an occasional rich noble. My choice

did not simply mean more hand-numbing work for me, it meant being transported back in time with each word I wrote. The dictionary took me days, but my teacher was absolutely thrilled with it. She hung it on the bulletin board and later told me that she thought it was a work of art. And that was the first time I had ever thought of my casual hobby as an art form comparable to other pieces of art.

At first glance, the calligraphy of ancient scribes serves one purpose only—to preserve the written word. Had calligraphy remained just that, a monk mindlessly, rotely copying words, it would never have been elevated to the position it occupies in the art world today. As Susan K. Langer states in "The Cultural Importance of Art," "art is the epitome of human life and the truest record of insight and feeling." She also claims that language is a device for communication among members of a society. The old monks simply did not record language, they put their feeling and insight into each work. They wanted their pieces to communicate not only as words, but as art, so that those reading it could get a sense of God. They did not desire to remain silent; they expressed themselves in the only way they could amid days of tedium—through their illuminations. In light of Langer calling art a true record, take all the illuminations that we have preserved. Surely you cannot find a better record of all that transpired during those middle centuries. For example, there is the Domesday Book, which is an account of a county of England that spans several hundred years and is written in calligraphy. Everything about that part of the country is recorded in that book—births, deaths, crop abundance, festivals, cattle ownership—which provide present-day historians with an excellent medieval slice of life.

I am sure that the scribes of yesteryear had no concept that their work would one day become priceless. They were simply, faithfully preserving the word of God. I wonder if they thought about the manuscripts as valuable art, for that is what they have become. In my eyes, calligraphy is an art just like painting, sculpture, or photography. One look at my mother's instruction books could tell you that; chapters are headed "Calligraphy—the Art of Fine Writing" or "The Art of Beautiful Writing." Art is a way of seeing life and communicating what you see. Langer calls it "a perceptible self-identical whole, with a character of unity and individual reality." In combination of both of these definitions, I would say that art, with particular reference to calligraphy, is an individual yet unified, or common method of communication (using the word "common" in the sense of a shared experience).

When the term "Art" is used, it generally conjures images of dance, music, and painting—the stereotypical fine arts. In each of these areas, there is a specialist who creates the art, which is then shared with others. The musician writes the pieces to be played, the choreographer designs dances for other people, and the artists desire their work to be displayed. And yet each initially gives free rein

to imagination. It is the individual inside that dictates the art; no outside forces generally step in the way of an artist. The experience of art is a common one, a unifying one—as in my definition—because the public shares it—they see the dances, plays, or paintings, and hear the music. What starts out as a private idea becomes known to all through art. A dramatist opposing war might write a play on his views, and through the staging of his sentiment, affect hundreds of people.

Calligraphy is art in the same way. Calligraphers start with an idea, something they would like to see done in calligraphy. They choose their style and layout of the words on the page, spending hours lining up letters. The finished result, whether school project or proclamation, is artistic literature to be enjoyed by all who see it, and plenty of people do.

In this aspect, calligraphy is very unique. Other art forms communicate on a higher level. Fine art expresses emotions, opinions, sentiments, and societal views, but only if you have the ability to appreciate it. To become the truly effective communicator art claims to be, it must be practical. Murray Ross, in his essay "Football Red and Baseball Green," does not mention calligraphy but rather concentrates on baseball, which he calls an "unfettered vision of ourselves." Baseball mirrors our culture; its presence is felt everywhere—not just as a sport on a field—but as an advertising force, with team endorsements for milk, clothes, and other necessary pieces of life. Calligraphy, too, reflects us and our society, and like most valued things, it is practical. This the old monks knew as they recopied prayers. They tried to make their illuminations artistic and beautiful for God, while preserving and multiplying the written word of the time. Its use has changed throughout the years, but it still holds a place in our world. While the calligraphy of the Middle Ages reflected the power of the Church, today's calligraphy reflects the power of advertising. This ancient form of writing appears everywhere—on signs, potato chip bags, announcements, anything where attention is needed. It demonstrates our society's need to say ordinary things in an ornate way to get a point across.

As Langer states, all art has a common denominator—it is the epitome of human life. Therefore, one type of art can be compared with another. Calligraphy appears to combine two major art forms—painting and writing. A passage in calligraphy is a powerful way of writing something ordinary—it is a piece of literature that has caught multi-colored fire. The writing side of calligraphy also conveys an intellectual message. Unlike a book or an essay which must be able to entice you to pick it up, the passage written in calligraphy demands to be read. Anything which has been so carefully rendered must be of importance to the calligrapher, who has dedicated a lot of time to its completion. To enscribe something, it does not have to be your own work, but something you feel is worthwhile—something you think the people would benefit from seeing in a new

way. This is very much the idea behind forming a concept for a new piece of literature.

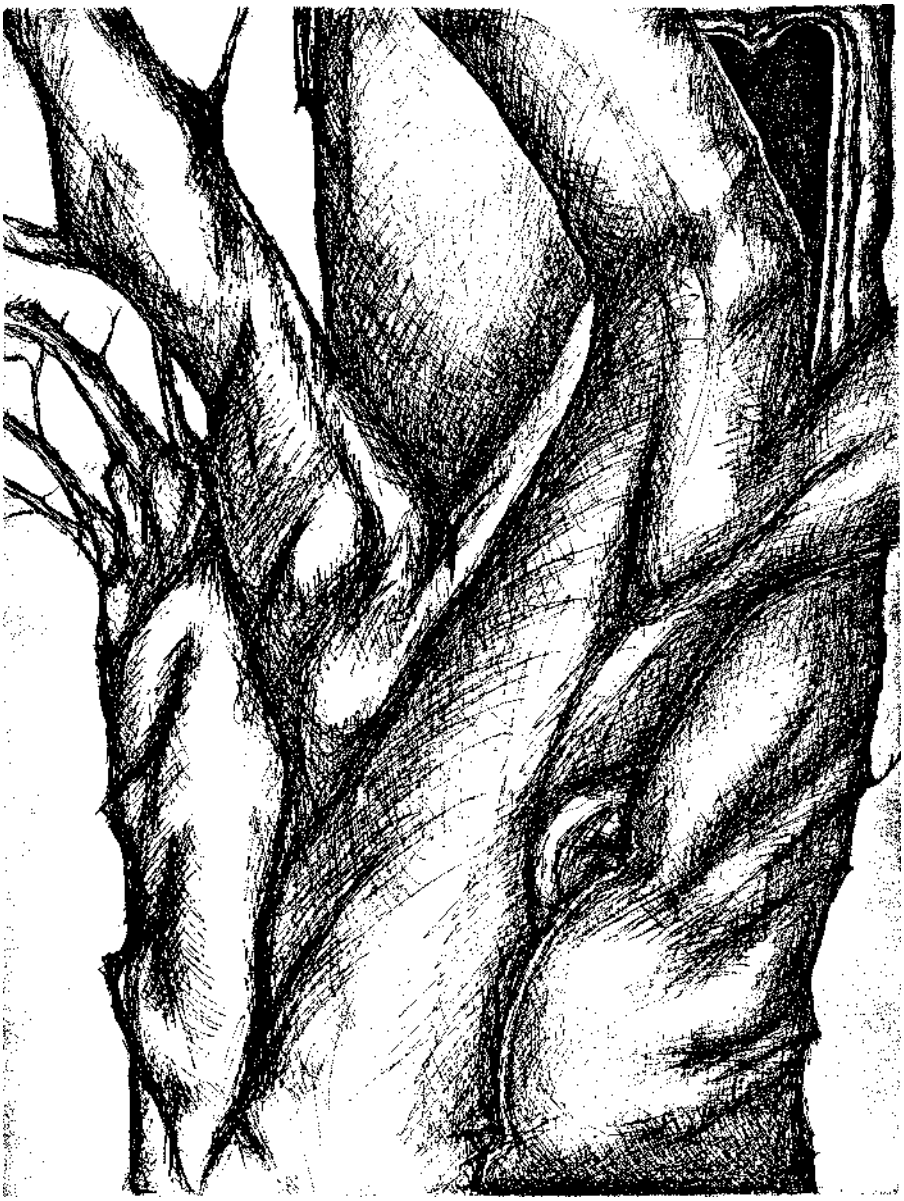
Calligraphy is also a very visual art, like painting, with the primary tool being a pen rather than a brush. Letters can have different textures due to the thickness and thinness of the ink. Color can be changed, so can the width of lines. The calligrapher can experiment with white space and the proportion of letters. There are even many mediums to work in—parchment, linen, paper, cloth, anything. By selecting from among these options according to your own personal taste, calligraphy can become a very individual thing, unified by the fact that it is a particular way of communicating.

Calligraphy can also be thought of in terms of other art forms, such as theater. On a technical level, this style of writing is not much different from the arts found on a stage. Compare for example, an Italic "Our Father" and Synge's "Playboy of the Western World." In both, lighting is an important factor. Lights set the mood for "Playboy," being bright at light-hearted parts of the play, and dark and somber to emphasize the important pieces. In the same way, the lighting of the "Our Father" would convey a message. Words we should notice, like God's name, might be written in a heavier ink. Everything is expected to flow honey-smooth—the actors' lines and the words across the page. Poetic license is allowed; a director may change a scene to his or her liking and a calligrapher may put a trademark flourish where one is not called for. Both can be written with a certain audience in mind. Synge wrote for the Irish; a calligrapher en-scribing an Irish poem might choose the Celtic hand. And, of course, there is little room for mistakes. A missed line in a play could cause a whole scene to fall apart while a missed word could ruin an entire manuscript.

On another level, calligraphy and theater are both means of expression. They bring out the individual. In the play "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom," by August Wilson, the main character, Leavey, fights to express himself. He must be his own person and do things his way, not conforming to the old norms. A calligrapher, too, fights to be noticed but in a more subdued way. How many times has an ad caught your eye for no real reason except for that it looks nice? Calligraphers develop their own styles to express themselves—a particular type of flourish, a special way of making a letter, etc. Leavey wrote jazz, so that he would be recognized by the up and coming music world. I write in calligraphy because it is fun and unique and it impresses teachers.

At the onset, people make many assumptions about art. Susan Langer, in stress-ing that art is an expression of insight and feeling, gives us a definition that well describes calligraphy. She says that it presents forms to the imagination, which, to me is the base goal of art—to communicate in a fresh way that is pleasing to the senses. So, under these terms, calligraphy is an art. Its original yet unified

impact on society will persevere because that unique perspective is needed. Calligraphy is a mingling of old and new traditions—an old style of writing with new uses. It is practical art for all time. Who knows, perhaps one day my English dictionary will be considered art. But according to my mind, it already is.



"A day's work is a day's work, neither more nor less, and the man who does it needs a day's suspension, a night's repose, and due leisure, whether he be painter or ploughman."

Bernard Shaw

Work is a Four Letter Word

by Rudolph Miller

Don clicks on the radio as we ride to work just in time to hear the business report. Oil prices are skyrocketing. I leaf through Don's copy of *The Wall Street Journal*, and the newspaper echoes the sentiments of the radio. The upcoming recession will definitely slow business or at least that's what Don thinks. We exchange views on international economics for a while, and gradually our discussion veers into religious theory. All too soon, we arrive at work. With a discussion like that, one would might think that we work for an accounting firm, or a bank, or some college or university. Actually, the job is a construction site.

When Don steps out of the truck, he transforms from Don the economist into Don the electrician. I, on the other hand, am in a quandary. During the summer, while I fill the role of "electrician's apprentice" for my father and his partner, Don Dellose, in their electrical construction business, there is the student in me, who enjoys reading and playing the piano and engaging in activities that don't necessarily involve hand tools. The scholar and the laborer seem about as miscible as oil and water. Yet on the construction site there is a wealth of opportunity for the academic to exercise his skills and enhance them. He may even learn something.

For the anthropologist in me that spends his life pushing pencils and drawing diagrams, the job site is a brand new society. The place is veritably a different culture, and admission isn't granted instantly. Certain challenges must be met. Language is one of the first barriers. Technical terms must be mastered. When someone asks for a trunion, a grommet, and a handful of romex connectors from the truck, you'd better learn to identify them, and do it quickly, or you'll have one incomplete outside light mount and one irritated electrician. Grammar is altered as well as vocabulary. Rules are relaxed. Prescriptive grammar supplants formal English. After a few days on the job, I thought that the grammar was atrocious, but I soon realized there ain't no rule that can't be broken. There is one exception to this rule. Formal English is permitted to euphemize our titles as employees. We are "power installment specialists" rather than electricians, and "soil relocation experts" instead of ditch diggers. Of course, four-letter words are a fundamental component of this language.

I had still other games to play to try and amuse myself at this job. There are different customs and mores to add new dimensions to this peculiar culture. There is an honor code that must be learned. To complain of fatigue or hunger is a sign of weakness. While I personally wasn't criticized for these flaws (as the boss's son I had certain immunity) I witnessed others who did fall victim. One had to push himself to the brink and hang on until mid-morning break or

lunch or quitting time. Tyrone "Calvin" Burroughs was a co-worker of mine whose complaints were many and whose breaks were frequent. Other workers resented Calvin; they felt he wasn't pulling his fair share. Management promptly responded and Calvin was dismissed.

This code of ethics seems to draw from the old code of chivalry. The historian would see parallels with a medieval honor code—even the succession of electricians from apprentice to journeyman to master follows medieval tradition. There is a feudal aspect in the hierarchy of labor. The developer takes the place of the feudal lord. The developer can expel any sub-contractor the same way any lord could refuse protection to any citizen. I think this parallel is actually taken more seriously by the developers than the laborers, though. One job I worked on in particular was visited daily by a black BMW, where developer Andy Robbins sat crouched at the ready, waiting to throw any slackers off the job who tracked mud into his houses. He was as drunk on power as any tyrannical medieval monarch.

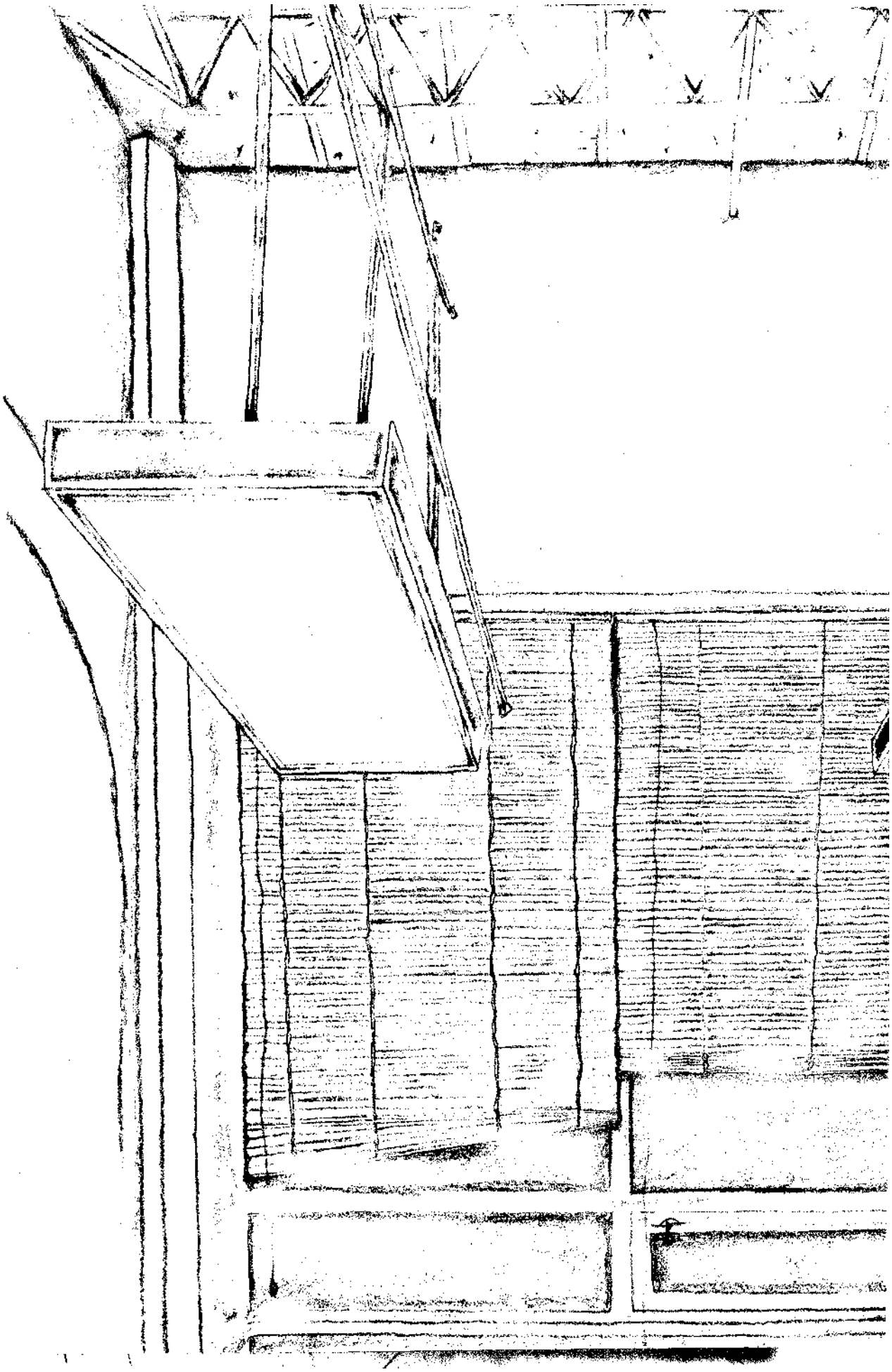
Robbins is certainly not a fluke; there are definitely disturbed people in the construction industry. Eccentricity abounds, and this is what keeps work interesting for the academic. The psychologist in me sees many cases of unwarranted aggression. There are people who have irrevocably altered their minds with chemicals. I worked with a nineteen year old, rehabilitated drug addict who, in my opinion, will never be able to realize his full mental capacity again. He was fired for incompetence. Some people are just inexplicably crazy. A classic example is building contractor Pete Bonargo. He has a history of bizarre behavior. He told his wife that he wanted to test drive his car for a bit. He ended up in West Virginia. He has a type-A personality and does unpredictable things when pushed beyond his stress limit. He screams and complains and makes rash judgments under pressure. Pete got into a shouting match on the phone with my father one day, because he received a complaint that a smell of burning rubber was wafting up from a basement my father wired. Pete expected my father to drop everything and rush over to check it out. It turns out that the smell was actually coming from the newly pressed carpets. Once, Pete went on a rampage when my father didn't show up for a meeting at the designated time. When he did show up, Pete rushed forward, embraced him, and gave him a wet kiss on the lips. I doubt anyone will ever fully understand him.

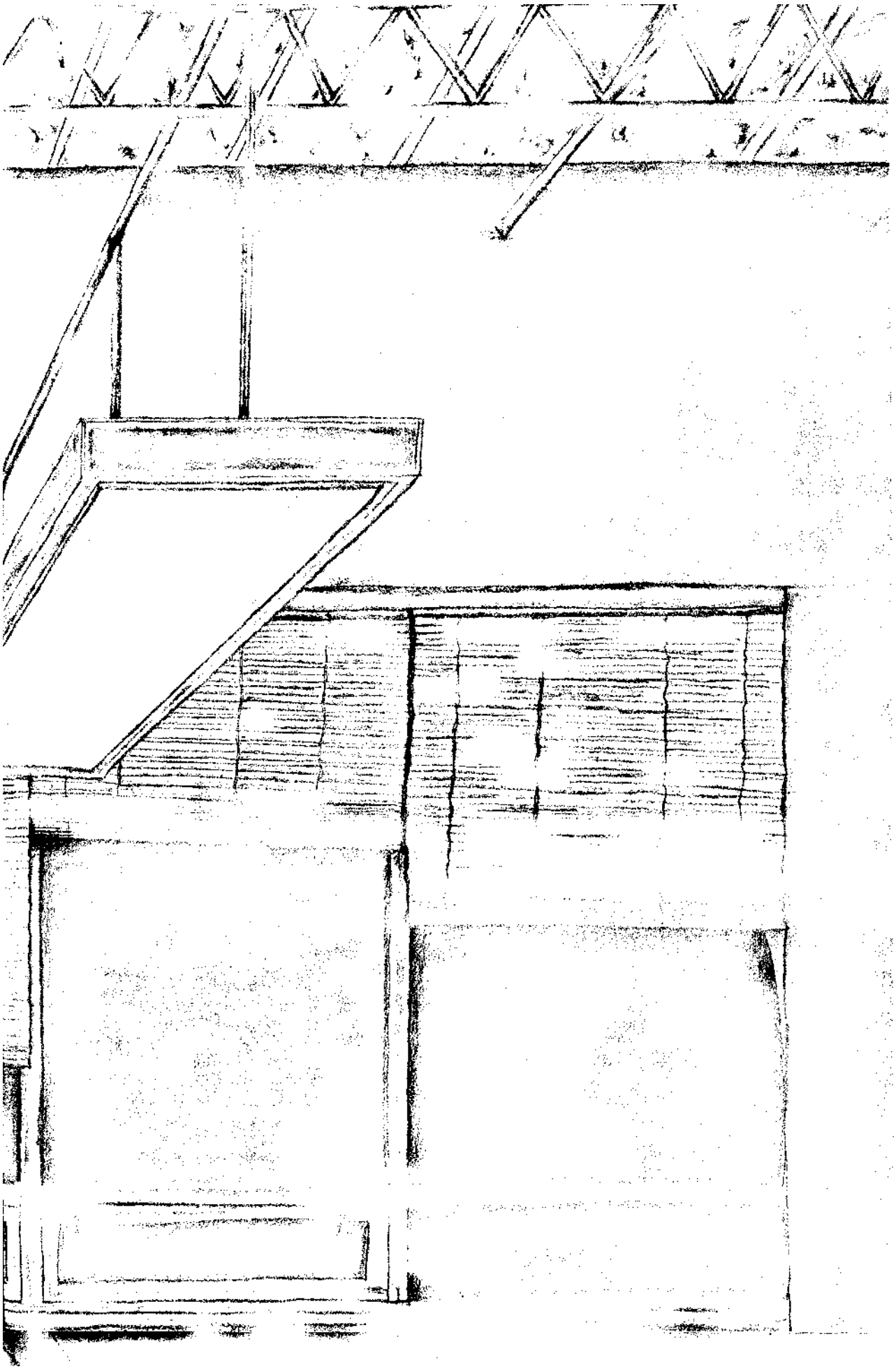
I try throughout the workday to see things through new perspectives. With a bit of effort, the job can provide an interesting backdrop for the intellectual to let his mind run wild. Work is a whole new world to explore. The one instrument, though, that for me was the most conducive to thought was the shovel, a device used in the very solitary practice of digging. Most people don't associate digging with electrical wiring. Actually, a lot of digging must be done

to bury PVC conduit to house wires in the foundations of buildings, protect wires from weathering under the ground, and bury elaborate landscape lighting systems. Sometimes this digging can be accomplished with rented machinery, but if the job doesn't warrant a rental, it can be done by a peon who doesn't have enough technical knowledge to contribute in any other way. Last summer, I was one of the peons.

While most of the peons dig, they attempt to break up the monotony of the action by whistling, or talking about the upcoming evening's debauch, or the likelihood of engaging in sexual intercourse in the near future. When I dig, though, the scholar in me is set free. Some days, I feel like an Irishman laying the transcontinental railroad. Others, I'm Tom Joad laying pipe to help "feed the fambly" in *The Grapes of Wrath.* The action of digging is so simple, and methodical, and even straining, that it seems to force ideas to the surface for want of sheer entertainment. New corners of my mind can be explored because there are no TV shows or magazines or conversations to distract me. There is only me, my mind, and a shovel.

There is almost something noble, and also humbling in this. The stress put on the body is a humbling experience. When I dig, most of my digressive thoughts are turned inward, rather than outward. This is because in digging I am forced to look inward as some sort of coping mechanism for avoiding despair and exhaustion. The body and mind are in harmony. Work is not merely something completed with a pencil here. Work is a completely sensual experience. Muscles strain and expand in ways that can never be done in the synthetic, antiseptic environment of the Nautilus machine. In retrospect, I have acquired an admiration for those who work in the field not for merely a summer, but for their entire lives. Their fortitude transcends my haughty analysis over the course of the summer. I attempted to categorize and manipulate them in my mind, but there is a knowledge they possess, and a life they experience, that will always be beyond my reach. When they work, actual work is being done. This much I learned from this summer. Earth moves from point A to point B, and the laborer can be proud to say that he is responsible. I think this much is true not only for me, but for the entire industry. Unlike the rough unfeeling vulgarians they purport to be, laborers feel a harmony with their work, though I'm sure they'd tell you it's all a crock of shit.





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