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Trail markers: Entries, views, reminders of passage

Michael Flecky

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Trail Markers:
Entries, Views, Reminders of Passage
by Michael Plecky

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Master of Fine Arts Photography Program
School of Photographic Arts and Science
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York

5 December 1980

Owen Butler
Owen Butler, Chairman
RIT, School of Photographic Arts and Science

Neil Croom
Neil Croom
RIT, School of Photographic Arts and Science

Jeffrey Wolin
Jeffrey Wolin
University of Indiana at Bloomington, Fine Arts Dept.
Title of Thesis Trail Markers: Entries, Views, Reminders of Passage

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Michael J. Flecky

Dept. of Fine and Performing Arts

Creighton University

Omaha, Nebraska 68178

Date 9 December
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Note to the Reader:

Throughout the text of this report, I have included original poetry and largely unedited journal material that accompanied my work and travel. These sections are indicated by indentation from the left margin and single-spacing. They are otherwise undocumented except for a place name or date where it might be important.
I. Introduction: Another Movin' On Down the Road Song

Perhaps the first one to put it into words was the ancient epic poet Homer, although the final editor of the Old Testament book of Exodus was probably not far behind. The audience that heard the first draft of the story of Odysseus' wanderings in the kingdom of the Cyclops, his journey through the straits of Scylla and Charybdis, and his passage while tied to the mast in defiance of the Sirens' song must have indeed been impressed. This fellow can write! Though more probably he sang.

Or on the contrary, it could be they had heard it many times before. C.G. Jung urges the opinion\(^1\) and many scholars of ancient literature add weight to the argument—that the Odyssey and stories like it are but a surface of the archetypal myth of passage and initiation, a story springing from human instinct and the specific energy of the collective psyche. The tale comes before the teller, the myth of Odysseus before the eloquence of Homer. Long before Homer's redaction, the argument goes, ancient Greeks had told and retold the story of the hero's wanderings, finding in the journey adventure an analogue for their own collective identity. The mythic journey, with its challenge of trial and doubt, occasions for survival and compromise, and opportunities for creative management, is a cornerstone of classical and medieval mythology. Outcroppings in the 20th Century alone, from James Joyce and Jack Kerouac to 2001: A Space Odyssey and Easy Rider, are overwhelmingly apparent.

All of which is another way of saying, alas, that it has been done before. And even that has been said before—by the authors of Old Testament Wisdom literature thousands of years before T.S. Eliot.\(^2\) This at a
time when many artists, not the least of whom are photographers, strive
to burst forth with shocking boldness as the messengers of a new way of
thinking. Could it be that the one thing new about their thought is the
fact that they are the ones who now think it? The question is not intended
to devalue the personal flavor of thought, but rather to suggest it as the
primary value. Value not found in newness and uniqueness for its own sake,
not even in craft for its own sake, but in honest expression faithful to
lived experience. Art need not be exhibitionism, confessional or auto-
biographical material, or even particularly serious in order to manifest
the personal preferences, tastes, cares and infatuations of the artist.
It need only be honest.

And that is what journey can and should be about, engagement in a
sincere process of discovery in which the markers along the trail do not
simply trace a predetermined direction, but also indicate the entrance into
mystery and unknowing. It is less about thinking, more about learning;
less about art as demonstration, and more about art as participation.

12:30 a.m. near murdo, s.d.
in the dark
a black angus
outside a hole in the fence
eats goldenrod
its butt hanging over
your side of the road
like truth
it looks up for a second
as you swerve by at 95
you sweat
and the bright copper eyes
hypnotized by the headlights
haunt
and make you see steers
over every rise
in the moonlit road
up ahead
And a lot about eyes open to the unexpected event that gives shape to momentary passing and direction to the future's path.

Michael Flecky
December 1980
II. About Trails And Markers

Thousands enter poetry today by starting from where they are and going in their own direction. People are feeling justified in entering the arts, whatever their talents, and whatever their prospects for being welcomed "at the top." Discovering your own periphery, wherever it is, entices you along. ....Using the tradition that comes from all your experience, rather than just from the experience established by study, enables human involvement from the beginning, a validating in terms of your own life.

William Stafford,
Writing the Australian Crawl

Some four or five years ago, I became aware of how I could profitably view my own life as a journey covering many thousands of miles—from towns in the Midwest to even smaller towns, from large cities to inner cities, from a dusty Indian reservation in South Dakota to the lush liberal paradise that is northern California. I was quite aware at the time that I had traveled extensively, but I was totally unaware of where I had been or where I was going. I had photographed a good bit at the time but had little idea of how my photographs reflected my feeling for the people and places that had been a part of my life. My photographs were trail markers, but I could not understand them or the feelings they represented. I was unable at the time, in fact, to muster much personal feeling at all.

With the help of a wise and patient friend I slowly learned over a period of two years the topography of my experience, the trails and resting places that had marked my journey. A part of the discovery was the important function my photography had performed along the way. My manner of photographing, the reverence and care I directed toward my subject matter,
and the wonder and respect I felt for the finished work were perhaps the only positive human emotions I had at a time of doubt, confusion, cynicism and depression. I became aware that photography, my own and that of some others, was the one thing that moved me, a thread of hope in a tapestry of indifference and despair. My friend encouraged me to continue my photography as well as to return to writing poetry. In my work and continued reflection, I gradually gained appreciation of my life's journey, with a past and future and intermediate points along the way, a process as well as product, energized by a desire for beauty and to see the face of the lord of creation. I began to keep a journal, to photograph more seriously, and to see in these activities a way of communion, a contact in prayer. I attended especially to experiences which provoked wonder, awe, love, and respect. It was in such experiences that I most readily felt the presence of God and found the map of my own happiness and satisfaction.

I suspect that many artists find themselves similarly driven. The sense of wonder and the passionate need to respond to what is awesome is certainly not new to photographers. It is exhibited in the work of early photographers such as W.H. Jackson, Timothy O'Sullivan, C.E. Watkins, and the western landscape photographers whom Weston Naef has competently grouped in The Era of Exploration. The 19th Century aesthetic of the sublime, reminiscent of landscape painting, is manifest in the view camera work of Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Paul Caponigro, and Robert Adams, to begin a long list. The work suggests, among other things, the belief of 19th Century transcendentalism that the face of God may be seen in the sublime forms of nature.
The photographs of Frederick Evans employ a more obvious, if less
grandiose, subject matter for the revelation of spirituality in material
substance. His compositions of light and space in English cathedrals,
seen with a heart patient for revelation and crafted to please the eye,
are a personal source of inspiration and admiration. No matter that he
provoked the scorn of his peers for failing to promote then-current trends
of art.

Stieglitz himself, for all his modernity and bewilderment with Evans
(who went a bit out of his way to encourage it), would come to an under-
standing of spiritual presence from a different direction. Only after he
fell in love with Georgia O'Keefe and the renaissance of personal photo-
graphy that followed, did he turn to the subject matter that had provoked
his interest as a young student in Europe—the spiritual beauty and
symbolism of clouds. He photographed clouds for their ability to shape
an analogue for his own internal feelings, and he called the process the
making of photographic "equivalents." What he says about his equivalents
expresses my intent in finding and making trail markers in the process of
individual journey.

What is of greatest importance is to hold a moment, to record
something so completely that those who see it will relive an
equivalent of what has been expressed....If I have done some-
thing and consider it well done, I am glad it exists; if not
well done, I am sad. That is all that I feel. I can do nothing
because another does it, nothing that fails to stem from a deep
inner need. I clarify for myself alone....I want solely to make
an image of what I have seen, not what it means to me. It is
only after I have created an equivalent of what has moved me
that I can begin to think about its significance.7

In contrast to what could be called the "classical sublime" of the
19th Century landscape tradition, the notion of equivalents introduces what
could be called the "neo-sublime" of the 20th Century inner landscape. The new sublime initiated by Stieglitz, Strand, and others attends to an inner, psychological and religious, landscape as the place wherein the face of God is detailed. Stieglitz' use of line and tonal values to associate inner feeling states is further described in the writings of Minor White as the element of interior revelation in photographic experience. Important to my own work is Minor's search for material objects and phenomena that, upon intent inspection, yield up signs of life and direction writ large in the cosmos as well as in the smallest detail. His search is a form of prayerful meditation founded on the belief that there is a trail to discover and that it makes sense to create markers as a clue to finding the trail's meaning.

Minor White wrote some notes in an Aperture edition in 1958 titled, "Substance and Spirit of Architectural Photography." Some personal reflections that I wrote after reading his notes and applying them to the architectural photography of Frederick Evans say a bit about my perception of Minor, a bit about my appreciation of Evans, and a lot about my own prejudice as a seeker or pilgrim marking my trail with words and photographs to signify the spirit and substance of the journey.

In Minor White's title "Substance and Spirit of Architectural Photography," I believe he is careful to use the conjunctive rather than disjunctive connector. This implies that spirit and substance are not discreet and that the pursuit of both is not an either-or proposition. He seeks to rehabilitate, perhaps, a world of matter and spirit, substance and form, through which the epistemology of Descartes has driven a wedge, in order to reconnect spirit and substance, intellect and feeling. He mentioned in an important introduction to Octave of Prayer that intense concentration of the senses on objects yields what for the artist is termed creativity, for the religious person contemplation, and is in both cases the sense of ecstatic union, effective love. And so when the photographer sees intently
with concentrated vision, he sees beyond what is immediately apparent to what might be revealed in mystery. And in seeing beneath the surface, a union is achieved that reveals what the artist is and might become. Minor says that the photographer of architecture must be able to see with faith what is revealed beneath the appearance of surface and fact and stone. The artist must respond directly with wordless, perceptible spirit to the feeling of the breath or heartbeat of space. In this way work becomes spirited--animated by a life force. Concern only with resemblances and formal appearance results in death.

It is important, then, in the work of Frederick Evans that indirect, conceptual and intellectual perception of architecture is transcended by direct, wordless, animated perception. His concern with tactile perception, the feel of stone and mass, the feel of tonal space on the surface of the print is material or substantial, at the same time transcendental. Evans is aware that substance reveals beyond itself a manifestation of what spirit suggests. He remarks that stone steps can move and become like waves at sea and that the quality of light is uplifting and weightless. In this he has achieved what Minor White articulates as the union between intellect and feeling, spirit and substance, artist and subject. The artist, mystic, or lover has for a moment of exposure overcome the barriers to union imposed by the intellect.

In all unfairness, there seems to be a strong urge in every age to turn away from nature, from instinct, from God, and an embarrassed hesitation to look anything or anyone (including oneself) in the face --with as much as a human feeling of reverence, patience, love, or joy. For all the pleasure of photography about photography, its problems, issues, and concepts, I am not wealthy enough to ignore what recalls me to a better part of myself. In fact, I found the thesis an excellent opportunity to indulge my pleasure in the process of journey, to photograph freely what occurred to me along the way, to write spontaneously. I put myself in a wilderness and worked myself out of it with a map of my own making. The results are trail markers: a collection of entries, views, and reminders of passage.
III. About Entries

...I found myself drawn to write meandering sequences of thoughts, or spun-out patterns of words, before the stove late, or in the early morning before work and before anyone else was stirring....during a quiet interval, without felt obligation to do other than find my way from impulse to impulse. I feel ready to follow even the most trivial hunch, and my notes to myself are full of beginnings, wavery hints, all kinds of inconclusive sequences sustained by nothing more than my indulgent realization that if it occurred to me it might somehow be justified.

William Stafford,
Writing the Australian Crawl

The word entry suggests both participation in a process as well as the product achieved. An entry is a passageway into a forest or castle, as well as an act of beginning. But an entry is also something made, the product of work and activity. One "gains" entry or "makes" an entry in a journal or ship's log. In addition, I found in the course of my thesis work that entries can be both active and passive, a process in which I gave myself through effort and decisions, as well as a process of receiving and discovering wonderful gifts that the journey afforded. I wanted that to happen, and I am grateful that I was able to begin my work freely and openly with no particular point to prove. I am grateful also that my entries by way of photography, journals, and poetry were graced by so many unexpected revelations.

When I began thinking a year ago about a possible project for my thesis work, it was tempting to seek out a particular technical investigation or photographic angle and work it into a packaged presentation with a cozy beginning, middle, and end. My old literature teachers would have
liked that. It also seemed safe because it would offer a natural consistency or "look" that an audience could comprehend. The more esoteric the look, the more innovative the technique, the easier the work would dictate its own surface quality independent of my experience or intention. I decided, however, that I would probably learn little beyond how to package information or market a look. I also found that I was not as concerned about an audience as much as I was about a pleasurable and interesting experience.

It was, however, not a safe feeling to admit that I was not, for instance, going to exploit a particular camera format, that I was open to working in color as well as in black and white, that I was going to travel and backpack but I didn't know where, that I would keep a journal and write poetry but had no idea how it would look in presentation. But it was also very exciting and made for a definite learning experience. I had only the hope that if I put one foot in front of the other, kept awake and working, something valuable would happen.

I spent the Winter months of 1979-80 reading through journals of travelers and adventurers. I sent away for maps of upstate New York and entertained fantasies of backpacking and camping in the Adirondacks. It had been five years since I had camped out. Only once, while making a hanblecheya (Sioux Indian "vision quest") had I camped out alone. But I recalled that times alone in the natural wilderness were among the most memorable and inspired times of previous journeys.

From Annie Dillard's marvelous book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* I became acquainted with an exciting personal style of journal-keeping. I started writing again in my own journal. Map-reading became serious when
I obtained my first set of geological survey maps of the Adirondack wilderness. The accounts of Anne LaBastille in *Woodswoman* helped to give surface and texture to the two-dimensional maps on my walls. I began to acquire a few survival items to go along with my backpack and sleeping bag, as well as to envision ways of accommodating my 5x7 Eastman view camera, film holders, and tripod to the pack. Winter was a wonderful time of reading, fantasizing, and doing preliminary work with my view camera.

As ideas of my own possible journey began to take shape, I was pleased to find connections in contemporary writing with others who reflected on the question of discovery in artistic expression and personal journey. I re-read *My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok and *The Dharma Bums* by Jack Kerouac. I discovered *The Snow Leopard* by Peter Matthiessen, *Another Roadside Attraction* by Tom Robbins, and *The Starship and the Canoe* by Kenneth Brower. These materials proved to be a source of wide-ranging journal and travel accounts; examples of varying styles of imagination, expression, and interpretation of experience; and occasions for pure pleasure.

At the time when my plans to photograph and journey in the Adirondacks became more manageable and realizable, I received an unexpected letter from Cambridge, England. A person I had never met, a scholar of ancient history on sabbatical at Cambridge University, wrote to offer me a job photographing Roman archaeological ruins in Tunisia, Algeria, and Italy. I had been recommended by a friend of his who had seen my work the previous summer. He had research money saved to cover the costs of travel and materials and only needed someone willing and free to do the job.
I was amazed and frankly frightened by the entire prospect of the work, travel in a foreign country, and collaboration with a person I would meet only for the first time in London. I had never been abroad before and the fears that this adventure excited made the prospect of sleeping alone in the mountains a picnic. My first inclination was to refuse promptly on the grounds that I would be at work camping and photographing as I had already planned.

As I considered my original decision to photograph whatever occurred along the way of a journey, I realized that this opportunity should not be refused out of hand. In fact, it was such a neat six-week package that it might have been a thesis project self-contained. I had important options and decisions to consider. At this point, entry became an active process. On the one hand, I wanted to follow my initial intention to allow the journey to evolve of its own energy in as much of an unpremeditated way as possible. I had become quite taken with the plans to spend late Spring and Summer working in the Adirondacks. On the other hand, the trip to Tunisia, Algeria, and Italy was too good an opportunity to reject. The very different challenges, ways of working, and the purposes of distinct projects seemed almost irreconcilable.

Because I would be photographing not out of my own interest, but at the behest and expense of another, I decided that the work abroad might not be personal enough to meet the expectations I had for my thesis. But to confine my journey to what might be safe and pleasant in the Adirondack forests, and thereby miss an opportunity of a lifetime, seemed to allow fear and a concern for neatness to defeat the original openness of my purpose. I attempted a compromise.
I decided to commit myself enthusiastically to the work of documenting Roman ruins in the hope that I would: (1) survive, (2) experience a great deal from the journey, and (3) make some few personally meaningful photographs in the spirit of the thesis proposal. I also decided to continue my plans to explore and photograph in the Adirondacks after I had fulfilled my commitment to the Roman history project. My purpose in the second phase of the work was: (1) to explore and live in the outdoors, (2) to contemplate whatever occurred in the experience, and (3) to photograph the things that I found visually significant. I had begun my entry into the process by wanting to avoid confines too neat and narrow and finally settled on conditions so broad and far-ranging as to be difficult to control. I decided to make the entry when the way out was not clear with the conviction that finding the way out might be the most profitable work.

The differences in the two methods of working were great. Because of customs restrictions, the availability of film, and the demands of our itinerary, I was forced to use 35mm. roll film and my Nikon SLR camera with normal and 28mm. lenses. My director in the work abroad also wanted color photographs, so I planned to do approximately a third of the work in color slides and negative film. The itinerary in Tunisia and Italy called for two or three stops a day with distances of 50-150 kms. between sites. This necessitated rapid appraisal of the sites and work with lighting situations that were rarely ideal. I was unfamiliar with the geography, language, and history of the areas we photographed and frequently felt very uncomfortable.
road to sbeitla, tunisia (5/11)

Some of the most primitive, isolated, imposing countryside I have ever seen. The road winds through narrow passes and broad valleys. The few people we see are riding donkeys or horses—wild, dark nomadic tribesmen wrapped in heavy robes that show only the tops of their faces. The hills we encountered earlier were low-slung and wandered off across the horizon like the long, graceful flow of Arabic script. But the mountains before us now are craggy and fierce, ominous in the distance toward Algeria, cruel and unforgiving. On this stretch there is little margin for error.

By comparison, the leisure with which I chose to work in the Adirondacks allowed for the use of 5x7 and 4x5 view cameras. I limited myself to working in black and white. I was able to choose my own path, to camp generally where I liked, and to photograph as slowly or as rapidly as I chose. Lighting circumstances were usually of my choice. After a few weeks in the wilderness I felt quite comfortable and safe; the people I met were friendly and helpful, the terrain beautiful and welcoming.

There were precise advantages and disadvantages in both ways of working. The only element common to the two phases of journey were the activity of photographing in unfamiliar locations and of noting personal responses in a journal. As it turned out, I would discover integrating patterns in the work that I did not suspect or appreciate at the time.

carthage, tunisia (5/8)

Fortunately, there are always the rolls of Tri-X to be developed late into the night. The craft and occasional insights of photography are the one way I maintain contact with myself. All else seems disorientation and chaos: language, geography, money, religion, traffic, time. I write in my journal in order to see familiar words in my own language. I long to hear English spoken. To think with words is now a very private affair.

A final word about entries. I was glad I had the courage to enter into the work, haphazard as it seemed, and to let the sense of the journey emerge of itself. I was aided in this decision by an encounter I had in
the Spring with the poet William Stafford. He is an optimistic, gentle, and encouraging man whose poetry I first admired ten years ago. His remarks during the course of a reading at Monroe Community College in Rochester and later in an informal discussion at RIT were perhaps the greatest encouragement I received to enter the journey with its many inconsistencies, uncertainties, and random directions. He explained that writing poetry was a way of being available to all sorts of whispers and whispy signals. He described his efforts at enhancing availability to those as yet unrealized impulses by attempting to free himself from what are forceful commands, aggression, competition, and emulation. He expressed the conviction that poetry is not a reservoir, a form in which images are contained and stored, but a fountain which constantly produces new materials in different relationships. The more one writes and gives oneself to the process, the more one has to write about. What he says about poetry can easily be extended to photography as well: Poetry is not simply a technique but an entry into a process, a process which enables an experience that never would have been possible if the process were not begun. One begins the process with an "attitude of welcoming: there must be some reason for whatever occurs." The fact that an idea or an image or a feeling occurs is its one justification; there can be no greater validation.

No one else can guide me. I follow my own weak, wandering, diffident impulses.

I took great strength from Stafford's personal presence and words of encouragement. Through parts of North Africa and Europe, his book Writing the Australian Crawl was the only written material I could read besides
a prayer book. His words of confidence in the process of spontaneous experience and artistic effort gave me courage at many times when I had felt my entry had no direction.

Just as any reasonable person who looks at water, and passes a hand through it, can see that it would not hold a person up; so it is the judgment of the commonsense people that reliance on the weak material of students' experiences cannot possibly sustain a work of literature. But swimmers know that if they relax on the water it will prove to be miraculously buoyant; and writers know that a succession of little strokes on the material nearest them--without any prejudgments about specific gravity of the topic or the reasonableness of their expectations--will result in creative process. Writers are persons who write; swimmers are (and from teaching a child I know how hard it is to persuade a reasonable person of this)--swimmers are persons who relax in the water, let their heads go down, and reach out with ease and confidence.21

Set free, the mind discovers shortcuts and arabesques through and over and around all purposes.

Now--what would happen if you ventured into a sequence of these arabesques and shortcuts, straying from conscious intention but staying true to the immediate feel of what is happening? Would a pattern emerge? Yes, it would. Do you have to be careful to make a meaningful pattern emerge? No. And could that pattern that naturally emerges become a poem? Of course.22
IV. About Views

I remember when I was a little kid, my father took me out for a hike in the country and we were looking for a hawk that we thought had landed in a line of cottonwood trees. . .and he said, "Now Billy, look carefully, in these trees—you might be able to see the hawk better than I can." For me, this is just a little emblem in my life. . .because I remember the jolt I felt: could I see the hawk before my father would? And his tone of voice just said, "Maybe you can, maybe you can't. . .give it a try."

William Stafford,
Writing the Australian Crawl 23

A. England, Tunisia, Italy

Having taken the first steps in making and accepting the broad outlines of a journey, much of the Spring was spent making arrangements for travel, obtaining passport and visas, and organizing innumerable small details. I decided I would not worry about subsequent trips to the Adirondacks until I had finished my travel and work abroad. I resented the time spent on details. Much energy was spent writing letters, sending telegrams, and carrying on business by mail across the Atlantic. There were revisions and adjustments of the itinerary that seemed only a waste of time and energy.

I had some limited opportunity in the Spring to photograph and consider what it was I was trying to do with pictures and words. I wanted to let the particular subject matter take care of itself and was hesitant to prejudice my seeing by looking at too many photographs of Roman ruins. I did little to familiarize myself with the sites we would photograph, and
discovered that relevant material was scarce anyway. I concentrated rather on the way I photographed in my most satisfying work, a method of concentration, and how to respond to my experience and environment with spontaneity.

Lake Canandaigua, Bristol Hills (4/20)

I photographed yesterday near the golf course along the lake. The most excitement occurred after I had walked away from the camera and started to look for wild flowers and golf balls. I was in the mood for something absolutely free, something given. Looking up from the undergrowth, I was startled by what the late afternoon light was doing to the trees and hills. I left with some pleasing photographs and four handfuls of golf balls.

I became aware that there were certain times that I was more awake, alert, and sensitive to what I saw. At other times the awareness was more gradual as I became more awake through concentration and involvement with a thing of interest. I learned that I could induce and prolong this fragile awareness by avoiding noise, the demands of others, and many encounters and activities that were characteristically pushy, destructive, inhumane, and wasteful. Most often, the most productive times were when I was alone, quiet and in a nourishing environment. I attended to this discipline and practiced it. It became not only a method of prayer, a "spirituality" that I found helpful in my photography, but also a need in my life and something I preferred not to do without.

Florence, Italy (5/31)

...to allow the magic to flourish moment by moment, to seek it and nourish it, and do nothing destructive! It means consenting to the jeopardy of being patient and awake, seeking grace and power revealed in its own time, gratefully and reverently refusing possession...to work madly and let go gracefully.
There were also gifted times of awareness that came while walking down a busy street or sitting in a crowded cafeteria, even while driving in heavy traffic.

florence, early afternoon

is to want to touch

and to caress

and to caress

and to caress

and to caress

and to caress

and to caress

And there were times when it was simply impossible to contain feeling in an act of writing or photographing, when my desire was to rest simply in the pleasure of experience.

good friday (4/4)

The appreciation of music is a good example of the kind of experience that, when you try to explain it, disappears. I have been led to believe that the reality of an experience depends on one's ability to describe and communicate it. Granted the in accessible thought is not very useful or admissible as evidence, yet I must admit that much important activity in spirit and feeling is not very useful. To try to make it so or publicly understandable is to change the form and manner of occurrence, to perhaps create something new of interest; but it is to destroy the thing itself.
Peter Matthiessen speaks about this phenomenon as the price of bringing a feeling state into consciousness. Jung speaks of it as an essential dialogue in which both parties (feeling and consciousness) are respectfully represented. Robert Henri demands it as the all-important passion of the artist. And yet, it is death-dealing as well as creative. As Annie Dillard says, as soon as you become conscious about patting the puppy, you kill the puppy. I cannot understand or speak about how music moves me. I would just as soon let it bounce around, work and do whatever it does for my mind-heart-spirit-art, not have to think about it. At other times, I am tempted to try.

To write a poem is to quiet and change the beauty of raw experience. The way I photograph is to do the same. Is what is gained worth the sacrifice? I sometimes wonder. And sometimes I refuse. At other times I make something out of nothing, and that is a lie. Whether I will make a Good Friday photograph or not, I don't know. But there is music, feeling, and thought—and I am grateful.

I was glad to have taken the time and energy to prepare myself mentally and spiritually for the journey, because from the time I landed in London from Toronto on May 3 each day's experience was like a week's. I met my guide for the trip, L.D. Davis, S.J., a Jesuit priest who had done his doctoral studies at Harvard, taught at Gonzaga University and Weston College, and was doing post-graduate sabbatical studies at Cambridge. He had researched various sites in Tunisia, Algeria, and Italy that were representative of the Theodocean period of Roman history and associated with the life of Augustine of Hippo, a fifth century bishop, preacher, and teacher of the Church. We had only a few days in London to become acquainted with each other and the particulars of the trip.

I spent the time in London recovering from jet-lag and getting comfortable with 35mm photography again. Not having used my Nikon very seriously in over a year, it took a while to feel handy using it in unfamiliar situations. I had also acquired a 28mm wide-angle lens to complement my normal lens. The wide angle of acceptance, extensive depth of field, and ease
of framing close to monumental subjects allowed me to make many photographs that would simply have been impossible, others that occurred with more spontaneity. I walked for miles each day and enjoyed exploring the streets of London alone.

While in London, I had an unexpected preview of what would become a common but frightening experience during my travels. While walking and photographing in Hyde Park I was stopped by police who had secured a large area of the park bordering on the Iranian embassy. Terrorists had occupied the embassy and were holding hostages. The British police were courteous but nervous about unauthorized photography. Probably as much for my own protection as anything, they were adamant about refusing photography beyond a barrier a great distance from the disturbance. My lenses were not appropriate for the distance and the resulting photographs were not very interesting. Later in the day as I headed toward the park for a quiet walk after dinner I was surprised by the sound of an explosion and gunfire. As I hustled the three blocks that separated me from Hyde Park I saw the embassy engulfed in flames and smoke. The SAS (government special forces) had bombed the building, rescued the hostages, and killed the terrorists inside. A rather startling way to emerge from jet-lag the first time in a foreign country!

There would be reminders of such harsh reality in Italy where the red brigade and anti-terrorist measures were a daily news item and in Tunisia where Libyan-sponsored guerrillas and insurgents provoked reactions from government military forces. Concern to avoid such danger figured heavily into our decision to postpone plans to photograph in Algeria. Quite frequently, and almost without fail around embassies, important residences,
and government buildings, the appearance of my camera would be greeted by a naked machine gun pointed in my direction. I have never much liked guns, especially ones loaded and trained on me, and I found this harsh reality of life abroad personally unnerving and photographically restrictive.

**carthage, tunisia (5/8)**

I rose at 6 a.m. and went down to the Baths of Apollinus near the sea and the president's residence. The baths are extensive, but I was unable to have the run of the place because of the guards I had hoped to avoid by coming out so early--the light is also perfect. Had to be very careful, and even while doing so aroused the suspicion of the palace guard at the wall of the sea. It was touch-and-go for awhile. He came toward me pointing his machine gun and I looked the other way, pretending to be a very dumb tourist who suspected nothing. Very unnerving, the typical paranoia and defensiveness of a third-world dictator perhaps? Or do I perhaps envy the dictator, and thus the flicker of the moth to the flame?

As impressed and intrigued as I was (in a not very positive way) by this characteristic of the journey, I could not overcome my fear to photograph in the face of such situations.

We left London for Tunis on May 6 and from Tunis drove by rented car to Carthage, home base for our first few days. The randomness of my journal observations reflect the fluctuations of feeling, seeing, experience, and photography.

**carthage, tunisia (5/8)**

I am photographing in a distracted way and the work is average postcard quality it seems. I rather expected that. But I am very distracted when I work, by the numberless children and men with phoney artifacts. If the Romans and Carthaginians had all the money these people claim to have found, they would still own the world and could afford to pay taxes in New York. It is difficult to work amid the distractions of these hucksters who are among the ruins like insects or the ever-present cats sitting in the sun and preying on vermin. They drain my energy and are relentless. So does the sun and the humidity here in Carthage.
I was surprised to find that the one thing I was most concerned and anxious about, my photography, became my most comforting source of orientation and integration.

carthage, tunisia (5/9)

I woke at 5 a.m. We were to have driven out to Tabourbo Majus and Zagouan, but Don is still sick and not up to the trip. So we both rolled over, he for the rest of the morning and I for a couple of hours. I was out on the streets by 7:30 to photograph at the Cisternes down the hill where we got caught in the rain yesterday. I made some good photographs for myself, it seems. I think I should make a point of making at least one important photograph for myself each day.

...My feelings are starting to crack. I am lonely, excited, depressed, pining, alienated, exhuberant, introverted, free--seemingly all at the same time. This can't last. I am thrilled at being able to photograph here, at being able to carry this all off! But at times I ask myself what good is it, what good is anything? Mass and prayer are a consolation, but filled with sadness and loneliness. I hope the need to communicate will grow and find purpose even when it is most challenged and questioned.

...I must send postcards for my own sanity. I need to communicate even in so pathetic a fashion, just to know that I have some connection, that I am not totally lost. I am so discouraged by the time they will take to be delivered--I need to be heard, seen and noticed.

Much of the pattern of the journey was characterized by a struggle between the need to survive by communicating, the need to discover personally meaningful photographs while working for someone else, and the necessity of making sense out of all the unexpected, unpredictable, and strange events of the journey.

There seem to have been three general categories of subject matter that were fairly constant in our travels. We were interested in photographing both the man-made and natural features of Roman civilization.

In both Tunisia and Italy, that interest led us first to sites of archae-
ological excavations and restorations. These we found in remote country locations as well as in the middle of population centers. Some "ruins" were literally being lived in. Our second concern was for antiquities from the period that were housed in museums and churches. And our third concern was for the natural features of the land which, especially in Tunisia and Algeria, remain virtually unchanged in the past 1500 years and offer a plausible image of life in the fifth century. The photographic challenge was to represent these in a visually interesting and historically accurate way. Some notes about the subjects that came into view:

**Carthage, Tunisia (5/8)**

We photographed a Roman villa off the main street in Carthage that was quite remarkable. The floor mosaics, carvings, and statuary were well excavated and impressive. The baths are also quite interesting. The massiveness of the stone was almost impossible to represent with any sense of scale. The wide-angle lens was helpful to include information. But I fear it rendered the scale and proportions sadly diminished.

**Jendouba, Tunisia (5/10)**

Once out of the city we encounter expansive, medium-sized mountains on every side. The passes are gentle and the Renault seems to take them quite well. The skies are a bit hazy, however, and this seems to dim the power of the landscape. The groves on all sides of the road are of olive trees, some occasional palms, and an unidentifiable fruit tree. Some few grape vines. The economy here seems to be based on wheat, olives for oil and eating, and perhaps wine. Animals are scraggly little goats with curved horns, some sheep, fewer cattle, and a rare horse. There are many donkeys used for work and often I see and pass on the road old men and children riding to fetch water in their ceramic jars. I saw a beautiful horse along a rough road to a stone quarry. In the country children are friendly and wave or call Salute as we pass. The roads are decent but narrow, and as I occasionally pick up the camera to make a picture I find myself drifting dangerously. Like the aqueducts I have photographed, the roads are engineered to be precisely serviceable and not to waste a stone.
bardo museum, tunisia (5/7)

Today was able to photograph at the Bardo. What beautiful mosaics. They are lavish in earth-tones, they have a luxury and easy opulence about them. What a world it must have been--life in the Roman villas under the Mediterranean sun with the sculpture and mosaics so much a part of every day.

rome, italy (5/21)

I much prefer the Roman basilicas over the Italian baroque. They rise clean and simple and use the space in an evocative way. They are more about space than decoration or construction. And there is a spare quality to them that seems to match my point of view more readily. I spent time sitting and appreciating this quality at S. Maria Cosmedin and S. Sabina. Hope the photographs are as good as they feel.

The notes about views could go on at great length, documenting the journey through Tunisia and Italy. But at some point the photographs must speak their own story as the most important result of the work. During the trip I exposed over 100 rolls of black and white 35mm film and 30 rolls of color negative and slide film. From the black and white negatives I selected thirty images for enlargement and included approximately twenty of these for the final show. Among those not printed are many photographs that I look forward to printing in the future.

Since my color work was not continued in the Adirondack phase of the journey nor was any color work included in the final show, a passing note about what I saw in color would seem appropriate. I photographed in color at the request of Don Davis and in the interest of future publication. The experience of seeing color was gratifying, however, especially in Tunisia where the absence of commercial dyes, neon, and graphic advertising left me both appreciative to the subtlety of earth colors as well as thirsty for an occasional splash of bright red or purple.
jendouba, tunisia  (5/10)

After working through the Tunis traffic (I found out how to use the horn on the Renault and am now armed and extremely dangerous), we broke into the country. The sights along the road are remarkable--pure white mosques decorated in beautiful green and blue that seem to suck up all the color that the white allows. Women hauling large piles of brush on their backs--so much that you can barely discern a form under the load. Children everywhere with their book bags, some seeming almost too small to walk. One small girl in a beautiful red emroidered dress, a book bag and some purple flowers in her tiny hands. The fields are literally strewn with red brilliant flowers that look like poppies. They grow in among the wheat along with purple thistles and what look like bright yellow daisies. The sight is quite rewarding as I glance off the narrow road often lined with eucalyptus trees.

florence, italy  (5/31)

I have been particularly aware of color during the journey, as I think I have noted before. The color of flowers, the tiles and wrought iron in Tunisia, the color of materials used in different places for dress--these have all caught my attention and drawn my admiration. I wish I had been more prepared to deal with color photographically, and I plan to get an SX-70 for still lifes and color work when I can manage it. I would be interested in the possibilities of color with 4x5 and 5x7. The Italians are particularly gifted in the arrangement of store windows and clothing, china, and furniture. What I have seen here as well as in Rome and Milan is quite compelling, lush, and sensual. They can make a small window look so appealing, while at home large window displays look shabby and careless by comparison. The eye for color and illusion is the difference.

B. The Adirondacks and Upstate New York

After I returned from Europe by way of London and Toronto, I gave myself a week to rest and unpack. I had photographed almost constantly for six weeks, with a short break in Florence, and I was glad to be home.
rochester  (6/12)

I am awakened this morning after only about four hours of sleep in the last forty, but the sunrise and an unbelievable Rochester morning grabbed me out of bed by the shoulders. Red eyes and all, I had to go out to meet the day. The grass is green and covered with dew after a very chilly night. When I arrived home at about 2 a.m. the sky was clear and the temperature about 45°. This morning is a very gracious gift, the air very fresh, roses blooming, and woodchuck and pheasants out grubbing and picking at gravel. It is quiet compared to Italy and London, and there is not another person anywhere in sight. Such a homecoming welcome; it is too chilly to stay out long without a jacket.

During those first days back I was in another world. Everything seemed so quiet and peaceful, so green and full of richness. I found myself walking through doors before I had opened them, dialing wrong numbers, driving away from gas pumps without my gas cap. I was unable to concentrate on anything but raw sense data, and that not very successfully. I had difficulty sustaining a conversation or driving in traffic, and I awoke in the middle of the night sure that I was in London or Rome. But gradually I was able to subject myself to the ordeal of rewashing, filing, and proofing 150 rolls of film and sending off the material in the mail. I had hoped to be finished by July 1 and back on the trail, but it was not until July 7 that I made my first entry from within "the blue line" of the Adirondack Park.

saranac lake, adirondacks  (7/7)

When I got off the Thruway at Utica and headed into the hills, the feeling was magnificent. The foliage was green and wealthy, the water clear, undisturbed and patient. Last night's sparkling weather continues and gives me a good welcome to the Adirondacks. I stopped in Old Forge and at the museum in Blue Mountain. I enjoyed the landscapes and photography, but I decided that too much pre-packaged lore and viewpoints or the traditional aesthetic might be dangerous. I need to wind my own thread of experience first rather than fill myself with the viewpoints and stories of others.
The time spent in the Adirondacks, in comparison to my previous months in which personal photography was the by-product of a job, was a time of photographing from pure pleasure. From the time I took my first walk from Saranac Lake out around McKenzie Pond toward Haystack Mountain until my last hike past King's Flow up to Puffer Pond, I was simply overtaken by a sense of belonging each step of the way. At first I was very careful to pace myself with the heavy 5x7 camera, tripod, and film holders in the pack. I was more concerned with the activity of walking than with making photographs. But in a short time I was able to comfortably walk at least three miles in an hour over uneven terrain. I was able to give my attention back to looking.

*trail to puffer pond, adirondacks (9/16)*

To be walking today is intense pleasure. The air is particularly fine and the colors of fall wrap me around. Yesterday’s climb up Chimney got the cobwebs out. Again I am breathing through my nose from my stomach. When I am breathing this way I seem to fit in the palm of the trail. No need to concentrate, a one foot in front of the other innocence. Walking takes care of itself. Buttocks stretch confidently to apply the weight of my pack to the pitch of the path.

I am content to walk, to see and breathe, to feel the work of my body, to react to the light as it breaks through skimming clouds. It is bright, dims, vanishes and as unexpectedly returns casting the shade of a fern against a boulder face—the first time in that specific arrangement.

I am reluctant to break the spell by unloading my camera, so great is the apprehension of rightness and pleasure.

When I was rather young growing up in Council Bluffs, Iowa, I used to play hide-and-seek with my friends in the wooded hills and tall grass behind our house. I became quite good at running fast to a hiding place and keeping very still to avoid being found. I can vividly remember trying to breathe slowly through my nose and to quiet the heart that pounded in
my ears. It seemed that my eyes would dilate so that I could see everything as if on the periphery of vision, aware of the total pattern, but focusing on no particular detail. As I became one with the rustle of the leaves and the shaking of the tall grass, my senses became very acute and the feeling was pleasurable. I can remember times my friends had long since given up and even gone home when I would continue to look and listen in a kind of quiet, pleasing reverie accompanied only by the slow beat of my heart and the intricate rhythms of nature. I was reminded of this childhood pastime while in the Adirondacks. Frequent was the time while hiking or photographing or sitting on a stump looking at the lake that I would be aware of a kind of fragile equilibrium to which I was granted a particular view or audience.

hesitation before exposure
a godless most act
to grasp mystery by the shoulder
and ask its name

a fragile time
when all is but a slight reach away
light air and a high sky morning
restrained by a delicate membrane

and searching for a way
to use the word
tamarack
in a poem

The receptive state of seeing is a type of reverie, but it is not a state of unconsciousness or sleep. I found some helpful elucidations of this experience in the writing of Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space.* He argues an understanding of artistic inspiration proceeding from a pre-intellectual state of reverie in which images invade from the
outside world into light cast by the soul. He links the productive imagination to a kind of dreaming consciousness.

...as soon as an art has become autonomous, it makes a fresh start....Knowing must therefore be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. This is the price that must be paid for an oeuvre to be, at all times, a sort of pure beginning, which makes its creation an exercise in freedom.²⁴

I think the preceding passage could be just as true if the word seeing were substituted in each case for the word knowing and vision in each case for knowledge.

Such occasions for peaceful dream consciousness were frequent while camping and investigating new sights in the Adirondack journey. Photographs and poems emerged from these special perceptions.

durant lake, adirondacks

or perhaps
a bronze toad at land's end
suns on a rock
one soft flank nudging
the glacial boulder
its thirst for color
an urge yet to be named
and wonders are the mists
the clouds that spill over
blue mountain
smoke from the earth's brain
or the breath of future time
strolling sometimes drifting
upward into patient valleys
the gaps and scars on the mountain
where analogy fails
and more can be seen
in the lake's reflection

west canada creek, adirondacks (8/24)

This new site is infinitely better. It sits out on a point with a view of water in three directions. I regret not having enough food to stay for a week! Made some photographs in the late afternoon light, water plants and rocks near shore. I am
increasingly surprised that what I am moved to photograph are the common things near me. I touch them and look at them for hours. Such humble subject matter to justify walking in ten miles! This part of the journey has been less a discovery of totally new things and more of a look at what is old—with intense respect and quiet wonder.

**stephen’s pond, adirondacks (7/24)**

Yesterday I stayed in the Stephen’s Pond lean-to for a couple of hours while the weather front moved through. It rained hard, but in between showers I made some photographs from shore that I think I will like a lot. The sun poked through the forest with chartreuse brilliance and illuminated some foliage damp from the rain. It occurred to me that I am receiving carefully laid gifts from a devoted lover who knows the time and place to put a curious or joyful surprise in my path. I am glad to be awake and to see such seemingly intended signs and to be thankful—I have felt very alive today.

My first trip took me to Saranac Lake and later south to Indian Lake. I stayed there at a state campsite and hiked west into the wilderness of the Canada Lakes region. On subsequent journeys I returned to the Indian Lake region most frequently, camping at Durant Lake between Blue Mountain Lake and Indian Lake, Tirrell Pond and Stephen’s Pond on the Northville-Lake Placid Trail, and Lewey Lake campsite. I also moved south some ten miles to West Canada Creek in the Moose River wilderness area, northeast to the Newcomb area, and further north for day-hikes off the highway northeast out of Lake Placid. I hiked well over 150 miles in trips of varying lengths. Some specific journal notes recall for me the pattern of experience of photography, so different from that in North Africa and Europe.

**lewey lake, adirondacks (7/11)**

I’m sitting here watching a very ambitious ground squirrel clean up the rest of my mushrooms in butter sauce. I decided to splurge tonight, probably my last night in the wilds for awhile. After eating powdered and freeze-dried, I decided to dine decently.
I got some mushrooms and a quarter of a pound of butter to sauté, some bananas for desert, a bottle of white wine, and a cantaloupe for tomorrow's breakfast. The whole thing ran about $10.00 which is lavish but worth it. It was delicious—the ground squirrel agrees.

(the next morning) (7/12)

This morning I woke early to see the narrow band of light—about 15° above the horizon and below the dark clouds of last night's rain. After the wonderful dinner of mushrooms and wine I barely got into the tent before the wind, rain, and lightning. I'm glad the tent held out most of the rain—I slept better than any night yet.

It is chilly and windy and I duck in and out of the sunlight to get warm, dry things out around camp, and make some pictures. It is quiet and people do not yet move around in the vicinity. The wind dies down and the water perfectly reflects the mountains and brilliant shore line. Clouds skip from the west to join the bank of darkness hiding the sun now. Some do not survive and are burnt off in mid-leap. The sun holds its own, but what do the clouds think and see and feel?

**early morning, past o'neill flow**

gossamers lean into my face
they cast no shadow
on a forest floor
where all the bootprints
are from the other way
what do they suspect
that I perhaps should know
have already perhaps forgot
why I am
the first this morning
to make passage
through the silver web

**indian lake, adirondacks (8/10)**

I made what I think will be interesting 4x5 pictures, not because of the beauty of the subject (I found the place—Mitchell Ponds—rather ratty, the sun hazy, and the forest mangled) but by my imagination while working. If the pictures prove me out, it will be a significant occasion. Good pictures from poor material. In the evening the stars were quite clear and I sat for what must have been two hours simply soaking them in and the cool, quiet night air over Indian Lake. The shadows of Baldface and Crotched Pond Mountain were a powerful presence.
Most often while I was in the Adirondacks I hiked and camped alone. But at different times I was joined by particular friends, shared a cabin for a few days, or made the acquaintance of strangers along the way. Although I tried to maintain a sense of my own privacy as I photographed, I enjoyed the time spent with others. I made some portraits and included some of them in the final show. I regret not having made more. My thought was that there would always be time for portraits, but I let other interests take priority and my time was over before I could work on the portraits as much as I would have liked. And yet, some of my most prized photographs are from the portraits and photographs in which human figures are a part of the landscape. And some of my fondest memories are of the people I met on the trial and with whom I shared a view, a cup of coffee, or a meal at the fire. I had no experiences in North Africa or Europe that could compare with such moments of comraderie.

saranac lake, adirondacks

children yell bear to the old people
not caring that they well might
have heard it all before
but the woman smiles and waves
folding back the fringe of a pink bonnet
carefully fitted by her birchbark hands
that split logs this morning early
and this evening will spasm
and go numb for long moments
until the early east light wakens
her thin fingers
and her delicate ears
are pleased to hear children's fooling
and the breeze that rustles the fog
clear of mckenzie mountain

And at times when I was alone I would often be reminded of my parents, family and friends. I considered it a particularly intense time, a gift,
when I felt the life and love of another surfacing in my feelings and experiences. These were powerful times of intimate connection.

indian lake, adirondacks

my father does not know I came here
though he must have also seen
himself have known
the fitful moments of clarity
to which I awake from time to time
must have felt his heart grow large
and breathed such fineness
that made his brain go silly

desolate bay cradles a stone in amber
sand ground and worked to radiance
in the slosh is craft
and something that sings to belief

my father is moved
though he does not know I came here

There were times when the solitude of my journey was not particularly joyful; it was even sad. My view was that of one who came as a stranger and remained so, in spite of the discoveries enjoyed, the photographs I made, and the friendships I initiated or deepened. The times of intense vision were rare, and the realization that I could not hold on to them in their completeness and that I could not continue my Adirondack journey indefinitely brought deep sadness.

newcomb, adirondacks (8/28, labor day weekend)

It feels like the last summer day. Perhaps I have felt too many summers pass in too many beautiful places. The beach in its beautiful but deserted state seems like something left by life as it passed by. Where are the people who built the docks for swimming, the pavilions for family reunions and dancing, the launches for boats? It seems they have gone off to another world or already curled up in a sunny corner of their cabins in the hills.
Time is evident in its passing in these mountain communities. Winter will force them again into isolation and a no-win struggle against the inevitable push of the forest to reclaim meadows and beaches cleared for short summer vacations. The people who remain are fewer, the days shorter, the evenings colder, the leaves more colorful but brittle. I am reminded of Hopkins' poem, "It is Margaret you grieve for."

...an observer, poor participant, coming and going away with a few precious photographs. I will not possess the clear stream more than for an occasional drink from a cupped palm. I must leave tomorrow, envious of the men who see these golden twilight paths a thousand times on their way home from work. Envious of the children who wait on crisp mornings under those wide birches for the school bus. Envious of the teenage lovers who clutch hands along the road and giggle off down the path to the forest preserve. Envious of those who have a home and know when they are there, know who and what in their hearts is home and what is stranger.

In a wistful, wishing way I suspect that my journey will open out into further trails and that the process of discovery and friendship and self-expression is not completed--but rather begun.

gammarth plage, tunisia  (5/16)

One thing that has allowed me through these worrisome and difficult days is the effort consciously directed to do the job at hand carefully, deal with others respectfully, and approach the mystery lovingly. When I remember, the fears and impatience and sadness fade away. The trick is remembering.

As I got ready for bed I just read something that seems to explain what I wrote above. It is about the connectives and kharma that I see in nature and in myself: "The life and death of each of us has its influence on others. (Rom. 14:7)"

Simple enough. Things make a difference, time is cumulative, and each action and choice is full of meaning and further opportunity. Good actions and a positive spirit are contagious.
V. Reminders of Passage

Connections

Ours is a low, curst, under-swamp land
the raccoon puts his hand in,
gazing through his mask for tendrils
that will hold it all together.

No touch can find that thread, it is too small.
Sometimes we think we learn its course--
through evidence no court allows
a sneeze may glimpse us Paradise.

But ways without a surface we can find
flash through the mask only by surprise--
a touch of mud, a raccoon smile.

And if we purify the pond, the lilies die.

William Stafford,
The Rescued Year

Stafford's poem "Connections" is an excellent response to the
questions that now arise after I have completed my journey and the photo-
graphs and writing. When I prepare to make a photograph or set my pencil
to a page of my field book, I am like the raccoon that "puts his hand in"
to the raw emotional and psychological materials of experience, the "under-
swamp land." Gazing with masked desire, I sometimes "think I learn its
course," a random path with occasional markers. But discovery and revela-
tion yield a fragile fruit ("a sneeze may glimpse us Paradise"), an uncertain
course, and "evidence no court allows."

There are, however, "ways without a surface we can find," fleeting
glimpses of a direction into mystery, that will "flash through the mask
only by surprise." I suspect, or perhaps more truthfully hope, that from
my random entries, views, and reminders I will find "tendrils that will
hold it all together." There is also the fear that "no touch can find
that thread, it is too small," or that there is no thread at all! But I have found that the hopes and fears, discoveries, fragile fruit, and glimpses that flash through the mask are satisfaction enough.

Though my work has yielded many reminders of an intensely pleasure-able and rewarding passage, I am hesitant to refine the conclusions too smoothly, to recite my lessons too glibly, or to summarize my journey too cleanly. I am reminded by Stafford's poem that "if we purify the pond, the lilies die." I believe this to be true. Better to allow the photographs to remain as they are, faintly mysterious reminders of pas-sage.

Some six months after I began my journey I am left with fifty-six finished photographs and five or six notebooks of various sizes and lengths. They recall with particular vividness the wonderful creative time of journey; but now, that time and experience is completed, and the reminders have a life of their own. They are a way of looking back, but a poor one.

the lessons taught by a rancher
to his young children
are well taken
for the wilderness passage

when a gate is open
leave it so when you pass
close a fastened gate behind

and remember to look back
where you came
from time to time

The connections between various images and written remarks are tenuous and delicate. At times they are an opened gate; at other times, the act of materializing the image is an act of closing a gate. When I finally
attempted to hang the photographs in the gallery, I was confronted with conflicting feelings about the work. All along, I had feared that the final selection of photographs would be impossible to present as a unified show. They represented a variety of formats including enlargements from 35mm negatives and contact prints from 4x5 and 5x7 negatives. They were made in England, Tunisia, Italy, and New York State. There are portraits, landscapes, still life studies, architecture, and street photographs. They were made with feelings of comfort, alienation, fear, pleasure, and joy. The only thread of continuity possible was the fact that they were all made as part of one person's vague process of exploration and self-discovery--noting and marking whatever occurred and seemed important.

I was very concerned that the poems and notes would be a distraction to the visual statement of the show. I had given much thought to ways of incorporating both visual and written sketches into a unified form of expression. I found myself the day before the show with a large body of work, including particular pictures and poems that had become very dear to me, but with little sense of how it all fit together. Since I had not been particularly careful along the way to seek out obvious connections or visual statements, I did not try to effect these when I hung the show.

I determined the final sequence of photographs and written material in much the same way as it had originally occurred and according to how it had appealed to me at the time. I allowed images to stand next to each other on the wall in much the same way as I allowed them on the ground glass, view finder, or syntax of a poem. Whatever arrangement seemed to allow an image to rub its neighbors well was allowed to stand.
Two decisions made the organization of material much simpler. Because of a lack of time to satisfactorily solve the problem of a large body of written material, I decided to limit it severely. I had considered covering the walls with journal entries, incorporating written material within the frame of the photographs themselves, and sequencing the photographs and written passages in a book layout. I decided as a compromise to do a layout as an announcement of the show and to incorporate enough of the writing to suggest its importance in the thesis. I then limited the actual poetry in the show to five pieces arranged to act as punctuation marks among the photographs. This simplification prevented the written material from getting totally out of control and distracting from the photographs. However, I regret not having had enough time to come up with a riskier and more exciting solution.

The second factor that contributed to simplification of the material was the decision to display all the photographs behind vertical window-mats of the same size. The 35mm. negatives were enlarged to approximately 6"x8½", while the 5x7 and 4x5 negatives were printed contact size. Some 5x7 negatives, in addition, were cropped in the camera and in printing to 5"x6". All prints were floated inside window mats measuring 11"x14". The effect of all of this was to round off the differences in format and to discourage the temptation to compare photographs as examples of a particular technique of camera format. Since the question of format was a minor one as the work evolved, I did what I could to minimize it in the final show.

In spite of attempts, by compromise and by choice, to simplify the elements of the work, I was still very conscious of the large number of
photographs and their enormous dissimilarities. Some few others who had seen the work, among them my thesis board members, had remarked that I might be surprised by the consistency of many of the photographs, but I had found that difficult to believe. It was not until I set the work out along the bottom of the gallery wall that I was able to see for myself an amazing similarity in the work, a quality that could be called more than a thread of unity, perhaps even a heavy-handed consistency. It strikes me now that there is a certain particularity of viewpoint in what I selected and return to as reminders of passage. That viewpoint is determined as much by an unconscious integrating factor as by choice.

**returning to limekiln lake, adirondacks**

Making photographs is a matter of comprehension and seems to always include a "base+ fog" -- the subconscious thoughts and random incidents that lead across the threshold of awareness and appreciation.

This fogging goes on constantly; a song heard on the radio, a blurred color seen out of the corner of the eye or in a rear-view mirror, a snatch of conversation while waiting in line at the bank, a shape in nature that recalls a dream previously unremembered.

Out of mysterious necessity things are made. I have a feeling, now a belief as a result of my work, that things do add up, that experience is cumulative like the effect of light on film. Connected and related in the final exposure curve of each one's experience are the contours of each path and the shadows of others met on the way.

I am aware that the images associated with experience, the random reminders of passage, have a way of arranging themselves as important as any conscious intention. They flow from decisions and choices made in seemingly unconnected orders of operation. It is often by hindsight that these patterns emerge and then only in function of an apparently unrelated urgency.
I woke this morning after the thesis sharing yesterday tasting the impression that I had not answered an important question: What is the unity in your work? I must have been lulled to sleep by the discussion because I really did not answer that question, did not even recognize it, although it is the one question I have had on my mind from the beginning and have probably asked myself a hundred times. I answered that I would be hard-put to admit similarities in feeling and experience connected with the work. But the question was not about the different backgrounds and environments from which the work came. The question was about the work itself and about me—and I dodged it. I hope that the answer is finally contained in the work itself, sincerely I do, but that is a dodge, too. I am aware of some tentative, unifying conclusions that I should have been more prepared to discuss.

The following "tentative, unifying conclusions" are partial answers that I can own as integrating elements in my work—and in myself, for that matter. They are extensions from passage as well as personal "inscapes", something of what I discovered of myself in the process of journey.

1. My work is a way of asserting what I see as positive, a method of resisting and placing myself over against what is destructive, wasteful, and inhumane. It is my way of demonstrating respect for life and rejection of what is threatening or brutal.

2. Photography and poetry are a method of survival, indulgence of a personal admiration for craft, and nourishment for my soul.

3. My work is an almost ritual re-enactment of what are for me life-giving qualities of solitude, reflection, peace, reverence, and gratitude.
4. Photography is my way of exercising what I feel is a particularly Christian religious viewpoint, the belief that material things are radically suffused and incarnated with the life of God. Materiality, flesh, natural signs reveal the core of God's love and beauty in a necessary way. This is the cornerstone of the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola, an insight that I find personally rewarding.

5. I am a collector, and I like to touch and see and display meaningful artifacts. It is, however, difficult to be both collector and sojourner.

6. I think of photographs as maps; and I am intrigued by maps of all kinds, not only for their independent beauty and wealth of information, but also because they are a generalization for individual experience. They indicate a parameter in which an individual can find a personal direction and evoke a response.

7. In my work I am able to express joy in being and trusting myself. I can develop a language of appreciation and respect for others.

8. And finally, I am driven to photograph and give accounts of my personal experience in the belief that my partial efforts are part of a larger purpose. In a small way I believe that the insights and discoveries of my journey support and enlighten the journey of others.
2 September

When people learn that I am a photographer there is the inevitable question, "What kind of pictures do you take?" I find the question disturbing, not just because I don't like to think of myself as "taking" pictures. But aside from that, to answer it honestly and sincerely would be almost an admission of defeat. If my photographs are a visual statement of what I find personally interesting, or beautiful, or strange, or important in the flow of my experience, then it doesn't seem that they can be stuffed into broad descriptive categories. Or that those categories would be helpful--unless, of course, I should become such a broad, categorical (and lifeless!) person. That kind of defeat is quite possible, but I am not ready to admit it yet.

"But do you take pictures of people, or landscapes, or still lifes, or nature...?"

The answer is, "Yes."

Very often, however, I suspect that the real question is not "what?" but "why?". I don't have much of an answer for that one either, but it's one question I frequently roll around in my head. I can get much more excited about it and will probably be trying to come up with an answer the rest of my life.

The particular journey, the circumstances and experiences from which a photograph emerges, may distract the viewer from the work itself--or provide confused and imprecise evidence. On the other hand, the two--photograph and life experience--just might act as complements and provide a mysterious connectedness. It is this connectedness that I pursued in my work, as well as specific revelations that could be found. I can only hope that the combinations and connections provide a richer experience for the viewer. I am deeply convinced that the pictures and words that mark each person's trail, the specifics of each one's journey, are a richness to be shared.
VI. Notes


13. Chaim Potok, My Name is Asher Lev (Greenwich, Conn., 1973).


19 Ibid., 18.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid., 23.

22 Ibid., 29.


VII. Bibliography


APPENDIX A

Itinerary: May-September, 1980

May 1       Rochester
May 2-3     Toronto-London
May 4-5     London
May 6       London-Tunis
May 7-8     Carthage
May 9       Carthage (Thuburbo Majus)
May 10      Carthage-Jendouba (Medjez El Bab, Bou Salem, Bulla Regia, Chemtou)
May 11      Jendouba-Teboursouk (Dougga, Aqbia, Musti, El Krib)
May 12      Teboursouk-Sbeitla (El Kef, Maktar)
May 13      Sbeitla-Sousse (Kairouan)
May 14      Sousse
May 15      Sousse-La Marsa (El Djem, Zaghouan)
May 16      Gammarth (Sidi Bou Said)
May 17      Gammarth-Rome
May 18-19   Rome
May 20      Rome (Ostia Antica)
May 21-22   Rome
May 23      Rome-Milan
May 24-25   Milan
May 26      Milan (Cassago, Pavia)
May 27      Milan (Brescia)
May 28      Milan-Florence
May 29-June 2
Florence

June 3
Florence-Rome

June 4-5
Rome

June 6
Rome-Cambridge (London)

June 7
Cambridge

June 8
Cambridge-London

June 9-10
London (Kew)

June 11
London-Toronto

June 12
Toronto-Rochester

June 13-July 6
Rochester

July 7
Rochester-Saranac Lake (Old Forge, Blue Mountain, Tupper Lake)

July 8
Saranac Lake (McKenzie Pond)

July 9
Saranac Lake (McKenzie Brook and Mt, Placid Lean-to)

July 10
Saranac Lake-Lewey Lake

July 11
Lewey Lake (Colvin Creek)

July 12
Lewey Lake-Rochester (North Creek, Minerva, Newcomb)

July 13-17
Rochester

July 18
Rochester-Limekiln Lake (Inlet)

July 19
Limekiln Lake (Limekiln Falls, Fourth Lake)

July 20
Limekiln Lake-Rochester (Big Moose, Stillwater Reservoir)

July 21
Rochester-Durant Lake

July 22
Durant Lake (Cedar River)

July 23-24
Durant Lake (Stephen's Pond)

July 25
Durant Lake-Tirrell Pond

July 26
Tirrell Pond-Rochester
July 27-August 4  Rochester
August 5  Rochester-Indian Lake
August 6-14  Indian Lake (King's Flow, Newcomb, Long Lake, Mitchell Ponds, Tahawus, Minerva)
August 15  Indian Lake-Rochester
August 16-20  Rochester
August 21  Rochester-Indian Lake
August 22  Indian Lake (Chimney Mt.)
August 23  Indian Lake-West Canada Creek (Moose River Recreation Area)
August 24  West Canada Creek (Silver Lake)
August 25  West Canada Creek-Lake Harris
August 26  Lake Harris (Boreas River)
August 27-28  Lake Harris (Long Lake, Newcomb)
August 29  Lake Harris-Saranac Lake (Whiteface Mt.)
August 30  Saranac Lake (Ausable River, the Flume)
August 31  Saranac Lake
September 1  Saranac Lake-Rochester
September 2-12  Rochester
September 13  Rochester-Indian Lake
September 14-17  Indian Lake (Chimney Mt., Puffer Pond)
September 18  Indian Lake-Rochester
APPENDIX B

Thesis Proposal

Submitted February, 1980

Purpose:

I propose to involve myself in a process of journey as a way of photographically exploring the unknown. My photographic journal will be combined with personal written reflection as a contemplative exploration of the external and internal experiences of journey.

Background and Scope:

I have been drawn to the image of journey as a satisfying, provocative, and wealthy analogue for personal experience and growth. There is in the image a creative tension between the process that the journey provokes in via and the product or goal to which the journey leads. The tension between process and product has been important in my life and a constant concern in my photography. I am by turns fascinated by the unique opportunities and satisfaction of involvement in a process as well as the need to progress in the direction of some gradually evolving goal.

The integrating image of journey is a very rich one for me. In the Scriptural accounts of the Hebrew people, the journey theme of the exodus from slavery to happiness in a promised land was perhaps the most central revelation of their identity as a people. Homer's Odyssey is an example from early Greek art, a powerful journey myth that is appropriated by Vergil, Dante, James Joyce, and Kazantzakis. For the mythic hero, the times of trial and doubt, the necessity for survival and compromise, and the opportunities for creative management provide the basis for the eventual goal of personal insight. In the New Testament, Christ's journey to Jerusalem is used as a formal device to organize what was experienced by his followers as the process of salvation. In the Middle Ages, a popular ritual re-enactment of the journey experience was the practice of pilgrimage, artfully described in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The advent of the Renaissance and Modern Ages provided artistic consciousness with data from explorations of the "new world", a terra incognita encountered by various seagoing and land expeditions as a challenge to the scientific and artistic imagination. In the nineteenth century, the development of photography supplied an important visual methodology to the exploratory journey. The French primitives in Europe and the frontier camera workers in the United States not only documented their journeys but involved the larger public in the appreciation of amazing visual images of the unknown.

Realization of the journey experience and its importance for personal orientation to the process and direction of life has deepened in the twentieth century. In the present age, attention is given to the internal
significance of images of a personal journey. The psychologist C.G. Jung has emphasized the archetypal images of rites des passages as important spiritual and psychological moments in human expansion and maturity. And the concern of certain photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz and Minor White who consider image-making an exploration of the internal landscape of experience and their work as a journey or pilgrimage is quite suggestive.

My personal artistic and spiritual experience has led me to a conviction of the value of the journey process as a method of understanding and self-orientation. Photographically I find myself somewhere between the nineteenth century romantic who sought the face of God mirrored in the natural wilderness and the contemporary spiritualist who seeks enlightenment in the recesses of the subjective consciousness. I find the material and spiritual radically inseparable.

I have found my own experiences of journey as the times in which my own imagination and appreciation are most alive and productive. Traveling on a journey is a contemplative time for me, a time when the monotony of hiking or driving organizes my bodily activity and I am able to think, see, pray, and unite myself to transcendent power and beauty in an affective and loving way. I am able to see and appreciate what is within as well as outside myself. The photographs and poems from such journeys are some of the ones from which I learn and appreciate the most.

My inclination to explore unknown ground meditatively, to get somewhere as well as to browse along the way, to produce meaningful images that reveal my personal process, and to deal with my experience physically and literally, as well as photographically, leads me to join others who are pilgrims and photographers.

Procedure:

I will plan and undertake a series of photographic journeys through unfamiliar environments. I will photograph for sustained periods, return to process and evaluate images, and select photographs in light of the complete experience of the journey process.

I have done preliminary work in the Adirondack Mountains, Alleghany Mountains, and Finger Lakes Trail. I will make repeated journeys there in the Spring and Summer of 1980. I have been working most comfortably in large format black and white images, but I would allow myself the freedom to work in smaller format and color as well.

In addition, I am trying to work out the details for a 26-day photographic study through Tunisia, Algeria, and Italy tracing ancient sites associated with the journeys of Augustine of Hippo. This would take place if it can be finalized in May, 1980, and would provide the opportunity of making images while journeying in a foreign culture.

I plan to present for show a selection of photographs by late Fall, 1980. In addition, I will consider the suitability of presenting written journal entries and poetry to illustrate the visual images and their relatedness.
APPENDIX C

Technical Notes

1. Travel Abroad

a) Materials and Equipment

I exposed 35mm. roll film while I was out of the country. My black and white film was Kodak Tri-x and my color films were Kodacolor 400 and Kodachrome 25. I was careful to keep the film dry, relatively cool, and protected from airport x-ray machines by a lead packet.

I carried with me two SLR cameras, one a Nikkomat FT2 with black and white film and the other a Nikon F with color film. I interchanged a normal 50mm. lens with a 28mm. wide-angle; both were Nikkor lenses. In addition, I used a haze filter or polarizing filter in almost every outdoor situation, as well as a lens shade.

b) Exposure

Exposure was determined by starting with the meter in the camera as a point of departure. I rated the Tri-X at ASA 320 and the color film at the manufacturer's recommended speeds. When in doubt, I over-exposed one-half stop. Film that I acquired in Tunisia was a few years out of date and seemed to require more exposure and development than the fresh film. It was impossible to get fresh film in Tunisia, and film was reported to be in even worse supply in Algeria.
c) Development

I developed most of my 35mm. film wherever it was convenient in the field: in bathrooms, showers, closets, bedrooms. I mixed small packets of chemicals in plastic bottles that I carried for that purpose. I developed eight or ten rolls at a time. My developer was D-76 diluted 1:1, and standard development time was 9½ minutes at 68° F. Often the coolest water temperature I could obtain was 76° and I compensated by subtracting one-half minute of development for each two degrees in excess of 68°. A common time was 7½ minutes at 76°. Agitation was for 5 seconds every thirty seconds. Fixing time was 5 minutes and wash time 20 minutes. I rinsed all my negatives in hypo-clearing agent and re-washed when I returned to the United States to compensate for poor washing in the field. I was really quite proud of the results I achieved with primitive and improvised facilities and more than once felt that the experience was a fitting lab experience at the conclusion of my time of study.

d) Printing

I did all my printing at home, enlarging 35mm. negatives to 6"x8½" on Kodak Polycontrast F double-weight paper. I developed paper in Dektol diluted 2:1 for 2½ minutes. My normal filter grade turned out to be #1½ or #1. All prints were fixed, washed, but not toned, for archival permanence.

e) Presentation

The finished prints were floated within a 4-ply window-mat that allowed ¼" on each side of the print. Outside dimensions of the board were 11"x14", and the prints were all mounted above center vertically and centered horizon-
tally. All prints were shown on the gallery walls behind glass. The mat sizes were a uniform 11"x14" and hung vertically.

2. **Backpacking in the Adirondacks**

a) Materials and Equipment

While backpacking and camping I exposed 4x5 and 5x7 sheet film, Ilford HP4 in both sizes. A supply of unexposed film was kept in marked holders as well as in boxes. Exposed film was stored in numerical sequence in boxes and kept separate for individual development. The whole process of packing, recording, storing, and changing film holders was a laborious ritual, especially in make-shift camping conditions.

My 4x5 camera was a Takahara field camera and my 5x7 camera an Eastman view, originally manufactured by Graflex. Both cameras are relatively light and compact. Although I carried a Caltar 10" lens, I only used a Goerz-Dagor 6½" lens with interchangeable lens boards to fit both cameras. I carried the 5x7 camera with a large tripod, film holders, and lens in my pack for most trips. For more difficult or strenuous trips I used the 4x5 camera and lighter tripod.

I also carried a Soligar spot meter and an exposure record book. My experience with filters was not profitable and I rarely used them.

b) Exposure

I employed a working zone system for exposure and development of sheet film. My tests suggested an exposure rating of 250 for the 5x7 film and 320 for the 4x5 film. I tended to overexpose my negatives by ½stop, placing
shadow detail in the subject within Zone III. I then anticipated optimum development as that which would push or pull highlight detail into Zone VIII. Sometimes I eye-balled exposure and at other times I guessed on the basis of past experiences.

c) Development

Individual sheets of film were developed as prescribed at the time of exposure. I found that if I developed more than ten sheets at a given time, the negatives would not receive enough agitation or development. My developer was Edwal FG-7 diluted 1:15 with water. I used 7cc. of undiluted developer for each sheet of 5x7 film and 4cc. for each sheet of 4x5 film, then diluted accordingly. Normal developing times were 11 minutes at 68°F, (N+1) 13 minutes, (N-1) 6½ minutes.

d) Printing

Each sheet of film was contact-printed on Kodak Polycontrast A surface paper and filed as a proof. Finished prints were made on Ilford Ilfobrom double-weight paper developed in Dektol diluted 2:1. Minimum developing time was 2½ minutes, although some prints were developed as long as 6 minutes. Over-exposure in the negative, underexposure and overdevelopment in the print, combined to give me the desired richness of tones, softness of highlights, and maximum legibility. Prints were toned in Kodak Rapid Selenium Toner diluted 1:7 and washed for archival permanence.

e) Presentation

The presentation of finished prints was the same as for the 35mm. enlargements. The whiteness of the Ilford paper, however, necessitated
the use of white rag mount board. Ilford papers are extremely bright compared to other papers I have used. The paper stock matches rag board but will not match the conservation board I was accustomed to use.
APPENDIX D

Slides from the Show