



JOE BRAINARD

'I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT WHEN THEY SEE ME
AND TALK TO ME THEY WILL STILL WANT ME':
SOCIAL AND ARTISTIC INSECURITIES IN JOE
BRAINARD'S LETTERS TO RON PADGETT



I REMEMBER (1970)

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE FORM OF
NON-CHRONOLOGICAL REMEMBRANCES

NEUTRAL MEMORIES OF FOOD, FILMS, BOOKS, ARTISTS, SCHOOL,
CHURCH, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

'COURAGE IN REVEALING THINGS ABOUT HIMSELF (OFTEN SEXUAL)
THAT MOST
OF US WOULD BE TOO EMBARRASSED TO INCLUDE' (PAUL AUSTER)

AN HONEST NARRATOR MARKED BY AN INCREDIBLE OPENNESS AND
ABILITY TO RECOLLECT AND DESCRIBE VARIOUS UNEXPECTED
PROVOKING AND EMBARRASSING DETAILS

BOLINAS JOURNAL (1971)

'A MEMOIR OF DISAPPEARANCE' (TIMOTHY KEANE)

ANTI-MEMOIR: ELIMINATION OF DIFFICULT AND PAINFUL
INTERNAL EXPERIENCES

THE NARRATOR FOCUSED ON EMOTIONS AND UNCERTAINTIES;
AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE

THE ANALYSIS OF WHAT THE NARRATOR IS TRYING TO FORGET RATHER THAN
REMEMBER

JOE BRAINARD'S LETTERS TO RON AND PAT PADGETT (1965-1966)

'BETWEEN PARIS AND AVENUE B': THE COLLECTION OF RON PADGETT'S PRIVATE
CORRESPONDENCE WITH JOE BRAINARD

UNPUBLISHED NOTES FOCUSED ON DAILY LIFE SPENT AWAY FROM THE LOVED ONES

A CONVERSATION WITH BEST FRIENDS DEVOID OF AN AUTHOR-READER RELATIONSHIP

JOE BRAINARD BEING JOE BRAINARD - BUT ARE WE SURE?

DEAR PAT & RON

IT IS ABSOLUTELY WINTER HERE IN NEW YORK AND LOTS IS NEW. I HAVE NEW SHORT HAIR. SOME PEOPLE LIKE IT AND SOME PEOPLE DON'T. MY APARTMENT GOT ROBBED, BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T TAKE ANYTHING EXCEPT FOR SOME CHANGE. KULCHUR TOOK 8 OF THE ROSE BOOK DRAWINGS. THEY WILL BE IN NUMBER 21. I HAVE BEEN WORKING HARD ALTHO I CAN NOT SAY THAT I AM HAPPY WITH WHAT I AM DOING. I HAVE BEEN DOING SKY BOXES AND SKY OBJECTS. THEY LOOK VERY NICE BUT THEY ARE NOT MUCH FUN TO DO. THINKING ABOUT THEM IS GREAT, AND THE PLANING, BUT AFTER THAT THEY ARE NOT MUCH FUN TO DO. AND AT THE SAME TIME THAT I AM WORKING WITH SKY I AM ALSO WORKING ON TWO CONSTRUCTIONS BOTH OF WHICH ARE DRIVING ME CRAZY. I DO INSANE THINGS TO THEM EVERYDAY IN HOPES THAT SOMETHING UNBELIEVABLE WILL HAPPEN. AND EVERY DAY WHAT I DO ~~CANCELS~~ CANCELS OUT WHAT I DID THE DAY BEFORE. AND EVERY DAY WHAT

I END UP WITH IS A GIANT MESS. BUT I REFUSE TO GIVE UP ON THEM. "THEM" I CAN THINK OF NOTHING TO COMPARE THEM WITH EXCEPT VOMIT. I HAD A VERY FATHERLY DREAM ABOUT YOU, PAT, IN WHICH MY ONLY CONCERN WAS TO CONVINCCE YOU THAT YOU HAD NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT AS TO THE SHIP RIDE. I TOLD YOU OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT I FELT CERTAIN THAT YOU WOULD NOT GET SICK OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. I HAVE NEVER LOVED YOU MORE. IT IS SORT OF FUNNY THO, BECAUSE I AM ABOUT AS FATHERLY AS A HOLE IN THE HEAD. ACTUALLY, IT WAS FUN BEING THAT WAY. ALTHO, I CERTAWLY AM NOT. TOMORROW I HELP TED RUN OFF "C." WE SEE PRACTICALLY NONE OF EACH OTHER AND THAT OF COURSE IS TOO BAD BUT THERE IS NOT MUCH ONE CAN DO ABOUT IT. WHEN WE ARE TOGETHER NOTHING CLICKS. THERE IS A LITTLE OBLIGATION LEFT BUT THAT IS ALL. I SUPPOSE THIS IS DEPRESSING, BUT NORMAL. I AM GLAD THAT YOU ARE AWAY FOR A YEAR BECAUSE WE WILL ALL BE SORT OF

POET. SPEAKING OF POETRY,
I WENT TO TONY TOWLES'
READING LAST NIGHT (WITH LOTS
OF DRINKS) WHICH WAS GOOD
BUT NOT VERY EXCITING. THERE
IS AN UNDER-CURRENT OF SARGAS-
UM (?) ← SPELL? IN HIS POETRY

DEAR PAT & RON — I AM TAKING PILLS TO GET
NORMAL: "TROPHITE." (VITAMIN B, & VITAMIN B₁₂)
WHAT THEY DO IS MAKE YOU HUNGRY SO YOU
EAT ALOT AND THEN YOU GAIN WEIGHT. ALSO
I AM DRINKING MILK. DID YOU KNOW THAT
ZACKERY SCOTT DIED? I DON'T KNOW WHY. I
AM ENCLOSING SOME NANCY STRIPS BECAUSE I
AM SURE THAT YOU MUST MISS HER, AND ALSO
IN HOPES THAT IT MIGHT ALL TURN INTO
ANOTHER ERNIE PADGETT. THE ONE I HAVE ON
MY WALL IS NOT TO BE BELIVED IT IS
SO FUNNY. I AM SORRY TO HAVE MISS-LEAD
YOU TO THE...

OR
SPON
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TONIGHT WILL BE MY USUAL "NIGHT-OUT-ALONE." I
GO TO TIMES SQUARE AND I HAVE A BLOODY-MARY
AND HAM AND SWEETS AT "TOFFINETIES" AND THEN I
GO TO THE MOVIES. I DO THIS AT LEAST ONCE A
WEEK THESE DAYS. THERE IS SOMETHING VERY
COMFORTING IN DOING THE SAME THING OVER AND
OVER. IT MUST BE A BIT LIKE BEING MARRIED.
I MEAN, THE SECURITY OF IT ALL. I GOT YOUR POST
AND ALSO A LETTER TO YOU FROM THE

16.

VERY DEPRESSING THINKING ABOUT YOU ALL
BEING DEPRESSED ABOUT CHRISTMAS. I WISH
I COULD THINK OF SOMETHING TO SAY. I CAN'T
THINK OF ANYTHING TO SAY. I AM ENCLOSING
A FEW OF MY NEW WRITINGS. I DO NOT
HAVE COPIES OF THEM SO IF YOU HAVE TIME
TO TYPE ME A COPY IT WOULD BE GREAT. EVERY-
THING IS WONDERFUL IN A WAY. I AM WORK-
ING HARD. I THINK I WILL SEND YOU SOME
DRAWINGS IN HOPES THAT IT WILL TURN INTO
A BOOK. HAVE A
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

THIS AS A PUT-DOWN. A LOT OF THINGS ARE
ENCLOSED. ALSO A NEW STORY OF MINE CALLED
BRUNSWICK STEW. I DIE LAUGHING EVERY TIME
I READ IT. AND IT IS A GOOD THING THAT
I DO BECAUSE NOBODY ELSE THINKS IT IS FUNNY
AT ALL. IT IS SO DIFFICULT BEING A REAL
ARTIST. THE HOURS ARE LONG AND THE REWARDS
ARE FEW. EVERYBODY HATES YOU BECAUSE YOU
LOOK "DIFFERENT." AND THEN THERE IS THE
RENT TO BE PAID, AND THE CHILDREN TO BE FED.
THE LITTLE WIFE NEEDS A NEW DRESS BUT THERE
IS NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.

MARCH 22ND 1.

[1900] [35]

DEAR PAT & RON

I GOT MY FIRST AND ONLY "JAPANESE CITY" REVIEW TODAY. (ARTS MAGAZINE) IT GOES AS FOLLOWS:

"A MOTLEY BUT INVENTIVE SHOW WITH NO APPARENT THEME TO LINK THE 3 SCULPTORS AND A PAIR OF PAINTERS.....

..... AND THE GALLERY WAS DOMINATED BY BRAINARD'S WALL-SIZED, GLITTERING "JAPANESE CITY", A COMPULSIVE PILE-UP OF HUNDREDS OF CAREFULLY ARRANGED TOKYO TOURIST-TRADE SOUVENIRS. ITS IMPACT WAS IMMEDIATE AND VISCERAL, AND ONE'S REVULSION WAS OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE SIMPLE COMMENT OF THE PIECE, WHICH AMOUNTED TO SOMETHING LIKE "ISN'T THE AMERICANIZATION OF JAPAN AWFUL." THEN ONE WAS IMPRESSED BY BRAINARD'S PATIENCE IN AMASSING THE "KITSCH." FINALLY, THOUGH, THE SCULPTURE BOILED DOWN TO SHOCK-VALUE SOCIOLOGY.

..... WITHIN FIVE

DIFFERENT BY EQUALLY "ACCEPTABLE" MODES, THE ARTISTS MANAGED TO SHOW THEIR TECHNICAL FINESSE AND INDIVIDUALITY."

MARCH 24TH
POSED FOR ALEX AGAIN THE OTHER DAY. WHAT I LIKE ABOUT POSING IS THAT YOU CAN JUST LET YOUR MIND WONDER, AND I RARELY GIVE IT THAT CHANCE. THE ONLY THING IS THAT LAST TIME ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS YOU. I HAD TO FACE LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AT THE FLAT IRON ~~WORLD~~ BUILDING WHICH SAID IN BIG LETTERS "FLAT IRON BUILDING." ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS CROSSING OUT THE "I" IN IRON AND LEAVING IT AS "FLAT RON BUILDING." AT FIRST IT WAS FUNNY, BUT THEN IT WAS SORT OF INFURIATING BECAUSE I COULD THINK OF NOTHING ELSE. AS MORE OR LESS OF A FAREWELL TO CONSTRUCTIONS I AM DOING AN ALL GREEN CONSTRUCTION SORT OF COMPILING THE BEST THINGS I HAVE DONE, BUT ALL GREEN.

DEAR PAT & RON _____

PAT, ARE YOU REALLY PREGNANT? I TOLD
SANDY & KENWARD THAT YOU MIGHT BE
PREGNANT AND THEY BOTH SEEMED VERY HAPPY
ABOUT IT. I'LL BE GLAD IF YOU AREN'T.
BUT THEN, I'LL BE GLAD IF YOU ARE TOO.