sciendo Studia Anglica Posnaniensia 56 (2021): 235–248
doi: 10.2478/stap-2021-0030

"HOUSES. CATS. CARS. TREES. ME": OUTWARD AND INWARD JOURNEYS IN JOE BRAINARD'S COLLAGE TRAVELOGUES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines two brief travelogues by the American writer and visual artist Joe Brainard (1942–1994) as formally unique fusions of the travel journal and literary collage, in which the experience of travel becomes a catalyst for introspection. "Wednesday, July 7th, 1971 (A Greyhound Bus Trip)" is a record of a bus journey that Brainard made in the summer of 1971, from the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City to Montpelier, Vermont, while "Washington D.C. Journal 1972" is a diary of a three-day car trip to the capital, taken with Brainard's oldest friend (and future biographer), the New York School poet Ron Padgett and his wife and son. In both texts, a description of the particulars of the trip is combined with meditation about the author's life and career. After introducing the structure of the travelogues, the article demonstrates their formal indebtedness to literary collage, which relies on fragmentation, heterogeneity, parataxis, and the use of appropriated content. What follows is an analysis of the texts' oscillation between an account of external stimuli and a record of Brainard's train of thought. It is argued that, gradually, the inward journey becomes more important than the outward, leading the author towards pushing the boundaries of his candour (in "Wednesday") and towards an artistic self-assessment (in "Washington"). The article interprets those works as a manifestation of twentieth-century travel writing's turn towards self-reflectiveness and concludes by considering the relationship between fragmentary, collage-like form and introspective content in the texts at hand, as well as in Brainard's entire artistic output.

Keywords: New York School; collage literature; travel writing; collage; life-writing.

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1. Introduction

During his relatively short but intense artistic career, Joe Brainard produced works as unique and distinct as a minuscule still life of four toothbrushes, an assemblage combining figurines of the Virgin Mary and cartons of Tide washing powder, an ink-on-paper drawing of his crumpled pants titled *Self Portrait Number Two: My Underwear November 14, 1966*, a short story in cartoons called "People of the World: Relax", and a radically fragmentary autobiography composed of 1,504 entries beginning with the phrase "I remember".[1] In such company, a series of collage travel journals, which I shall examine here, may not sound particularly eccentric. As noted by Constance M. Lewallen, Brainard was "too protean to be stuck with" a single "label" or genre, and therefore he "drew his materials and images from everywhere" (2001: 10). Among his many sources of artistic inspiration were his relatively infrequent travels – to his family home in Oklahoma, to his lover in rural Vermont, as well as to Washington, California, and Jamaica. Each of these excursions prompted a literary account, a peculiar travelogue of sorts: "Back in Tulsa Again" (1962), "Jamaica 1968", *Bolinas Journal* (1971), "Wednesday, July 7th, 1971 (A Greyhound Bus Trip)", "Friday, June 16th, 1972", and "Washington D.C. Journal 1972".

This article will present "Wednesday" and "Washington" as formally unique fusions of the travel journal and literary collage in which the experience of travel becomes a catalyst, if not a pretext, for introspection. Although the choice of collage as an organizing principle for an account of one's personal and artistic self-examination may appear surprising, I will argue that they are not mismatched. I shall consider Brainard's works in relation to what Rebecca Steinitz diagnoses as "the diary's general turn toward introspection and self-reflectiveness" in twentieth-century travel writing (2013: 333) and survey both travelogues as records of Brainard's pursuit of autobiographical candour. After introducing the structure of "Wednesday" and "Washington", I will demonstrate their formal indebtedness to literary collage. I shall then examine the texts' oscillation between an account of external stimuli and a record of Brainard's train of thought, which leads to a candid meditation on the intimate aspects of the artist's personal life and his career. The two works were selected as the most overt combinations of travel content and a collage form. They are also, in my estimation, among Brainard's most successful and formally audacious literary works, as well as among his most personal.

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[1] The first two works referenced here are *Untitled (Toothbrushes), 1973–74* and *Untitled, 1964–65*.

"Wednesday" is a record of a bus journey that Brainard made in the summer of 1971, from the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York City to Montpelier, Vermont — the nearest town to the property of his long-term partner Kenward Elmslie. The text begins with the departure of the Greyhound and concludes with the artist's arrival at the destination. Brainard chronicles each time he has to swap buses, takes note of the changing landscape, observes fellow passengers, and complains about the discomforts of a ten-hour journey. All of this is to be expected from a conventional travel diary, but for Brainard these sensations serve as a trigger for meditations about his personal and professional anxieties. "Washington", in turn, is a diary of a three-day car trip to the capital, taken with Brainard's closest friend (and future biographer), the poet Ron Padgett, Padgett's wife Pat and their five-year-old son Wayne. Again, the particulars of the trip (the journey, the motel, the sightseeing) are combined with personal reflection; in this case, predominantly concerned with Brainard's artistic sensibility.

2. Towards collage

The most immediately apparent feature of both texts is their fragmentariness, a quality not necessarily unusual in a travel journal. "Washington" consists of four sections (from Thursday to Sunday), each of which is divided into very brief paragraphs. Some of them, like "Friday the 13th!" (382)[2] and "The National Gallery!" (383), are as short as three-word interjections; most are one- or two-sentences long. The longest and the most disjointed of all of Brainard's travelogues, "Wednesday", is composed of over two hundred extremely short paragraphs (across 19 pages). Sixteen of them are constituted by a single word, such as "Harlem" (335), "Oh" (343), and "No" (346). With few exceptions, the paragraphs are no longer than two sentences and do not forge connections with neighbouring passages. For the most part, the reader has the sense of being confronted with images, snippets of observed inscriptions ("Insurance" [349]), spontaneous thoughts ("I want to see Kenward" [348]), and momentary sensations ("My ass hurts" [348]).

As a result, "Wednesday" reads like a literary collage, understood as a seemingly arbitrary juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements.[3] At its most collage-like, the text takes the form of an enumeration of perceptions; for instance, of objects seen outside the window:

[2] All quotations from Brainard's travelogues come from Ron Padgett (ed.), 2012, *The Collected Writings of Joe Brainard*, Library of America, 334–352 and 383–388. References include page numbers.

[3] In *Collage in Twenty-First-Century Literature in English: Art of Crisis*, I propose the following formal requirements of literary collage: "extensive appropriation, fragmentation, heterogeneity of material, multimodality and reliance on juxtaposition" (Drąg 2020: 2).

Factories.

Houses.

Rocks.

Cars.

Trees.

Lots of sky.

“CONSTRUCTION NEXT 11 MILES.” (335–336)

Brainard’s decision to place each object in a separate paragraph accentuates the fragmentary quality of the list. Although the order in which the elements appear may be sequential and may reflect the changing landscape, the reader experiences it as a collage of randomly combined objects. The sense of arbitrariness is particularly noticeable in the case of the last entry, which represents a hardly noteworthy road-sign inscription. Its status as a quotation reinforces another characteristic of visual and literary collage — the work’s reliance on appropriated elements. In “Wednesday”, appropriations are not frequent and remain confined to snippets of text glimpsed through the window, such as “NO U TURNS” (336), “Odd Fellows Block” (346), and “White River Junction” (348). A far more conspicuous intrusion of borrowed content occurs in the other travel diaries. For instance, the entire second page (out of five) of “Friday, June 16th, 1972”[4] is filled by a scan of a religious leaflet distributed on the bus by a fellow passenger. Such acts of appropriation grant Brainard’s texts a sense of immediacy and authenticity — the reader is shown snippets of the real world, exactly as it appeared to the author.

3. “Wednesday, July 7th, 1971 (A Greyhound Bus Trip)” — towards candour

Whereas the outward journey recorded in “Wednesday” is destined for Montpelier, VT, Brainard undertakes at the same time another, inward, journey, which leads to moments of radical frankness and new insights into his anxieties and desires. “Traveling”, he muses soon after leaving Port Authority, “makes me

[4] An account of the exact same journey from New York to Vermont as the one described in “Wednesday”, which Brainard made the following summer.

want to try to figure out what everything is 'doing' here. Houses. Cats. Cars. Trees. *Me"* (336, original emphasis).[5] Each excursion is thus, for Brainard, a quest for understanding and self-understanding; the latter, as indicated by the italics, is of particular importance.

The opening pages of the journal testify to Brainard's thoughts wandering between the practical aspects of the journey ("Hope I can keep this whole seat to myself all the way"), its anticipated rewards ("It sure does feel good to be going someplace I know I'll 'be' for awhile.... And to see Kenward again"), most recent memories ("Dinner last night with J. J. Mitchell"), and firm resolutions ("I want to really write good today") (334–335). The first meditative remark appears prompted by an image of a "sexy construction worker": "So strange, always, to be reminded how tentative everything is" (335). Following the poetics of the interior monologue — and of collage — Brainard does not make it easier for the reader to grasp the logical connections between adjacent elements.[6] At a later point, he declares he will not edit what he jots down or rewrite "for clarity" or to "pinpoint things" (341). "If this book is going to be about what's going through my head during a nine-hour bus ride", he resolves, "that's what it's going to be" (342). Such a project still lies within Philippe Lejeune's liberally conceived parameters of a diary; in "Writing While Walking", the critic asks if the genre "can ... have any other subject than whatever comes to the mind or attracts the attention of the person writing it" (2009: 127).

Several entries after mentioning the attractive worker, Brainard ponders the image of "a real beauty with no shirt on driving a truck", which triggers the observation: "—I want (as usual) *too much"* (335). Rather than develop that insight, he proceeds to take note of an ashtray by his seat, which bears the inscription "ashtray". An enumeration of objects viewed outside the window, followed by random thoughts about donuts, Ted Berrigan, and other friends, leads Brainard to muse on his social insecurity — one of the recurrent motifs in his autobiographical writings: "I hope people know I don't *want* to glance away, or down, sometimes, when we are talking" (336). That thought is followed, several entries down, by an admission of familiar travel anxiety — the nagging fear of being on the wrong bus. (In a later part, Brainard worries he has missed his transfer stop.) Among other concerns is the overwhelming number of book covers he has committed to design,[7] which creates a sense of

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5 Henceforth, each instance of italics within a quoted passage will mark original emphasis.

6 A similar strategy is used consistently in Brainard's most acclaimed work *I Remember*, which juxtaposes over 1,500 autobiographical statements without providing any overt links between successive entries.

7 Brainard was also a prolific illustrator, who designed covers for numerous magazines, albums, and poetry collections, including those by John Ashbery, Ted Berrigan, and Ron Padgett.

unease and pressure. Negative realizations such as this one are sometimes accompanied by a hasty reassurance: "But I *do* want to do [those projects]. And I *do* want to have done them" (349). The statement "Here I am, a *very* lucky person, and still life is tough" (338) captures the tenor of many of Brainard's ruminations: the awareness of being in an enviable position (both professionally and personally) coupled with a nagging undercurrent of dissatisfaction and anxiety.

The earlier asserted wish for "too much" propels Brainard — in the most confessional part of "Wednesday" — to push the limits of his candour. After a change of buses in Springfield, his thoughts turn to what he calls "the truth game" (339) — the effort to tell the truth in his writing. Brainard admits to having consistently avoided three topics that have been too embarrassing to address in his earlier autobiographical texts. The first one is his partner's money, which he has come to "like" and depend on more than he feels he should. He then clarifies that he feels less embarrassed about accepting the money than about "*admitting* to others [he] take[s] it" (339). The second shameful fact that Brainard preferred to conceal is his use of speed to enhance his creative work. His unwillingness to write about this springs from the wish to "impress" and "please", and from the desire for his work to appear the product of his "genius" rather than of drug-induced inspiration. The third source of humiliation is Brainard's inability to have sex with strangers (including hustlers), which he attributes to his conviction that he is not very attractive. That leads to self-consciousness and the sense of being "outside" the moment. The outcome is frustration: "I want to be able to have more *fun*", he announces (340).

At this point, Brainard pauses to ponder his act of self-disclosure in relation to the reader: "I *don't* wonder why I'm telling you all of this. I wonder if *you're* wondering why I'm telling you all of this".[8] He admits to a sense of insecurity about the appeal that such confessions might have for a stranger, although he stresses his belief that one should be free to write about whatever they "feel like writing about" (341). The concern about boring the reader with a detailed record of his thoughts is a familiar motif in Brainard's diaries (which were written with the intention of being published). In an entry from 15th July 1969, Brainard admits, "I have nothing that I know of in particular to say, but I hope that, through trying to be honest and open, I will 'find' something to say" ("Diary 1969", 243).

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[8] Brainard's decision to address the reader directly may be an influence of his friend, collaborator, and New York School poet Frank O'Hara, whose many poems feature an addressee. O'Hara's ideas about what poetry should be and do are expressed in his "Personism: A Manifesto" (1959), some of whose tenets — simplicity, the avoidance of abstractions, and the preference for direct and conversational tone — underlie much of Brainard's prose. The latter principle is manifest in Brainard's much-quoted statement from "Self-Portrait: 1971": "Writing, for me, is a way of 'talking' the way I wish I could talk" (360).

Honesty, or candour, can, therefore, be thought of as the *raison d’être* of Brainard’s writing. It is also, argues Edmund Berrigan, “an inviting point into his work” (2019: 35). The inclusion of embarrassing content — also strongly present in *I Remember* but nowhere as deliberately showcased as in the just summarized “truth game” — demonstrates that Brainard is not afraid to appear vulnerable to his reader, “vulnerability,” besides “joy”, being, according to Berrigan, the principal effect that his literary and visual works tend to produce on his audience (2019: 34). In their meditation about Brainard’s entire artistic output, Andrew Epstein and Andy Fitch wonder about the secret of his “arresting, innovative, and complicated” exercises in “radical honesty” (2019: 178).

Although Brainard aspired to what might be called radical honesty throughout his entire career, the fact that he is compelled to overcome his inhibitions about owning up to the three remaining sources of shame in his life in a travel diary is not, I believe, coincidental. The link between travel and honesty is not articulated by Brainard, and I am not familiar with any research regarding that connection.[9] However, the point of departure for an investigation of their interconnectedness might be Laura Marcus’s remark about modern travel writing (exemplified by Jonathan Raban, Paul Theroux, and Jan Morris), which narrates two concurrent voyages — “to place and into the self” (2018: 38). Simon Cooke speaks of the “twinnings of outer and inner journeys” in the modern travel book and of so called “parallel journeys, in which place provides a vehicle for self-exploration”, while Lawrence Durrell noted that physical movement often leads to an inward advancement (Cooke 2016: 19–21). The completion of the journey is expected to yield a truth about the space being explored and about the explorer themselves. As has already been intimated, for Brainard, the latter journey is of greater significance. Consequently, the account of the changing landscape occupies less text than that of his personal ruminations. At one point towards the end, when it becomes dark, Brainard makes a telling remark: “Looking out the window is a bit confusing now as mostly all I can see is myself. My reflection” (349). The window onto the unfolding scenery thus becomes a mere screen for the projection of the self. This may be interpreted as a symptom of Brainard’s inability to perceive the world without constantly relating what he sees to himself or as an expression of his choice of inward rather than outward attention.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson also emphasize the introspective dimension of travel narratives, which, as they argue in *Reading Autobiography*, grants the author an opportunity for “resituating the mobile subject in relation to home and

[9] The relationship between the genre of travel diary and embarrassment is briefly discussed in Andrew Hassam’s “‘As I write’: Narrative occasions and the quest for self-presence in the travel diary” (1990). Hassam sees embarrassment as an outcome of the genre’s inherent self-referentiality, of making the narrator “an object of consciousness” (1990: 37).

its ideological norms" (2001: 207). The act of being physically displaced occasions an inner displacement — the need to redefine oneself in view of the newly acquired knowledge or experience.[10] In *Abroad: British Literary Traveling between the Wars* (1980), Paul Fussell stresses the etymological link between "travel" and "travail", which points to the aspect of travelling as hard work, not solely physical but also mental. The classic travel book is, for Fussell, "a record of an inquiry and a report of the effect of the inquiry on the mind and imagination of the traveler" (1980: 40).

"Wednesday" certainly qualifies as such "a record of an inquiry" which leads to a degree of newly acquired self-knowledge through physical and mental travails. Whereas the inconveniences of the body are dutifully documented — hunger, the seat in front pushed too far back, the sun shining directly in Brainard's eyes, his "ass getting a bit sore" (342) and then "hurt[ing]" (348), "no water to freshen face with" (351) — the inconveniences of the mind are not dwelled upon. It appears that the work of introspection causes Brainard discomfort only insofar as it concerns the reader. He struggles with a sense of shame when listing the aspects of his life that he has previously felt unable to address in his writing. He precedes these confessions with phrases such as "it does embarrass me to admit" and "[n]ow this is something really embarrassing" (340). The second source of inner discomfort is the earlier signalled anxiety that the reader will be put off by what these days might be called oversharing ("I wonder if *you're* wondering why I'm telling you all of this" [341]).

As for "the effect of the inquiry on the mind … of the traveller", it is difficult to pinpoint a specific response such as a sense of catharsis or self-satisfaction. Brainard's anxieties, small (about being on the wrong bus) and great (about his relationship to Kenward and about his artistic development), persist until the end of the journey, but what might be detected after the most introspective part of the travelogue is a sense of gratitude (for Anne Waldman, Ron Padgett, and other "people I especially love" [345]) and a greater capacity to notice and appreciate the beauty of the landscape. There is also a flash of reassuring insight conveyed in the statement, "If the secret of life is not stopping I'm a winner" (342). Alternatively, that remark could be read as a subtly ironic, self-deprecating comment on Brainard's inability to function without speed and his tendency towards professional overcommitment. The piece ends on a note of excitement about reaching the destination: "Hey, you know—I'm nervous!/ A new restaurant./ A new car wash./ A new furniture store./ The same old river./ *I guess*

[10] Displacement is a key notion in travel criticism. In "Notes on travel and theory" (1989), James Clifford defines travel as "a figure for different modes of dwelling and displacement." The term is central to critical explorations of postmodern travel such as Caren Kaplan's *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (1996).

this is it!” (352). The fusion of the new and the old can be interpreted as a mark of what Smith and Watson call “resituating the mobile subject in relation to home” (2001: 207). The arrival in Montpelier is an arrival at a place familiar but changed, the new elements of its landscape offering a parallel to the insight gained during Brainard’s inward journey.

4. “Washington D.C. Journal 1972” — towards artistic self-definition

The second travelogue gives an account — equally fragmentary — of a weekend car trip to the capital, which Brainard took with the Padgett family (Ron, Pat, and Wayne) on 13–15 October 1972, a year and three months after the bus journey described in the previous section. Whereas the introspective gaze in “Wednesday” is turned towards private, even intimate, matters, “Washington” offers an insight into Brainard’s artistic sensibility. Because, in this case, the author explores a city that he has not been to before, the travel diary becomes a record of newly acquired knowledge. The educational aspect of the excursion is humorously emphasized by the following compositional frame (composed of the third and the very last entry):

> I really must find out what D.C. (as in Washington, D.C.) means. (382)
>
> Oh, and about “D.C.” (just in case I’m not the only dumb-bell in the world) it means “District of Columbia”.[11] (388)

Besides the ability to work out the abbreviation, Brainard — in the course of the trip — gains first-hand experience of the cultural riches of the nation’s capital, including the National Gallery of Art (visited three times), the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Museum of History and Technology, and the Museum of Natural History.

The first visit to the National Gallery, which begins with a quick tour of “the Italian, Venetian, Spanish, Flemish, and German sections” and is followed by an individual session of “eyeball[ing] in on Titian, Goya, Rubens, and Van Dyck” (383), leaves Brainard exhausted and unable to look at any more art that day. That sense of weariness becomes the first trigger for the first artistic self-assessment: “As museums often do to me, I am reminded of my lack of patience. (As a painter.) My lack of focus. And perhaps even my lack of dedication” (384).

[11] The laughably meagre learning outcome of the trip might be interpreted as a parody of the cultural idea that travel broadens one’s horizons, which was epitomized by the tradition of the “Grand Tour” – an obligatory trip across Europe undertaken by upper-class men in their early twenties in order to gain refinement and knowledge.

Such admissions of self-doubt are a familiar trope in Brainard's writing. In "Nothing to Write Home About" (1979), for instance, he speaks of "patience" and "confidence" as "the two things I want and need most in my life right now" (475). A companion during the Washington trip, Padgett writes in *Joe: A memoir of Joe Brainard* (2004) that Brainard blamed his "lack of patience" for his inability to grasp advanced concepts or to persevere with a "single artistic direction" and develop a "signature style" like his more acclaimed friend Alex Katz (2004: 256).

In "Washington," Brainard continues his professional self-analysis, "What I mean is that I feel I am more of an 'artist' than a 'painter', which is O.K. except that, secretly, I want to be a painter" (384). What is apparent in this statement is the sense that collage and design, which were Brainard's main occupations at the time, are inferior to painting. In *Joe*, Padgett maintains that throughout the 1970s Brainard "took an increasingly dim view of his work, seeing it as lightweight, facile, and lacking in the qualities of the high art of the oil painters he so admired, such as de Kooning, Manet, Goya, Katz, and Porter" (2004: 253–254). Here, in 1972, Brainard still hopes that he will be able to steer his career in the desired direction: "I feel the choice is mine to make whenever I feel like making it". However, the seeds of self-doubt are certainly present, as the last quoted statement is immediately followed by the sober admission, "I may be kidding myself". Still, the inner dialogue ends on an optimistic note, with Brainard's declaration of a strong belief in "making definite decisions" (384), which can be interpreted as a firm resolution that he wishes to concentrate on oil painting — his "ultimate challenge — and his nemesis" (Padgett 2004: 254).

The diary entry for the following day, Sunday, brings a continuation of Brainard's artistic introspection. The previous day's remark about the need to make decisions about one's path is countered by the grim observation that "we are very little in control of things as they come and go" (386). During the second visit to the National Gallery, Brainard chooses to explore seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century art. He finds himself particularly impressed by Sir Henry Raeburn's *Portrait of Colonel Francis James Scott* (1800), which he describes as "slick, and accurate, and minimal, and without the device of too much style". "This is how I want to paint", he concludes (386). This artistic resolution echoes Brainard's remark formulated in a letter to Padgett the year before, where he confesses that his greatest fear is to become "Brainardesque", which Padgett interprets as a "refusal" to develop "a signature style" (2004: 179). Considering his entire legacy, Constance M. Lewallen, the editor of the exhibition catalogue *Joe Brainard: A Retrospective* (2001), argues that he succeeded in eluding easy classification and calls him — in the already cited passage — "too protean to be stuck with Pop or any other label" (2001: 10).

Raeburn’s painting also appeals to Brainard’s preference for the “minimal”, which he formulates more explicitly upon seeing, during his second visit to the gallery that day, Jacques-Louis David’s *The Emperor Napoleon in His Study at the Tuileries* (1812) and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s *Portrait of Madame Moitessier* (1844–1856). The two paintings, he records in his diary, “leave [him] surprisingly cold”. Brainard adds that he “like[s] the postcards of them better” as it “bothers” him “when a painting doesn’t ‘need’ to be as big as it is” (387). That wariness of large size manifested itself throughout Brainard’s career in his preference for miniature forms — a number of his collages are as small as 6 x 4 inches, whilst the smallest are merely 2 x 2 inches. In a letter from the following year, he admits that the single thing he cannot envisage himself doing is creating a work “larger than life [size]” (quoted in Padgett 2004: 275). The quintessential product of this artistic strategy was Brainard’s 1975 exhibition at Fischbach Gallery in New York City, during which he presented close to 1500 miniature works. Several critics have commented on smallness or minorness as a signature device of Brainard’s art: Padgett speaks of the “surprising power” that he found in “the diminutive” (2004: 275), though Shamma argues that the “depths” of Brainard’s art are “deceptively diminutive” and only “disguise themselves as minor” (2019: 15–16). For Brian Glavey, Brainard’s “investment in … minor aesthetic categories” makes his output “especially vital right now [2019], at a moment when critical vocabularies are shifting” (2019: 140).[12]

Brainard’s small journey of artistic self-definition — his exploration of the great masters in search of qualities that he particularly values and wishes to emulate in his own work — concludes with a meditation on Édouard Manet, whom he calls “one of [his] favorite painters”. “Nobody, for me”, he adds, “is more realistic” (387). Looking at *The Railway* (better known as *Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1873), he wonders if Manet’s realism “hits home hard” because of a “basic ‘black and white’-ness in his color” (388). Interestingly, several of Brainard’s attempts at realist painting undertaken in the years following the visit to the National Gallery of Art evoke the brushwork, use of colour, and subject matter of many of Manet’s works. Examples of such paintings include untitled miniature still lifes of cherries (1973), scallions (1974), and the earlier mentioned toothbrushes (1973–1974), *Whippoorwill* (a portrait of Kenward Elmslie’s dog, 1974), and *Tumbler of Flowers* (1976). The latter is perhaps Brainard’s most evident homage to Manet and his flower paintings such as *Lilacs and Roses* (1880) and *Roses in a Champagne Glass* (1882). His rediscovery, or renewed and enhanced appreciation, of Manet might be read as the final stage of the inward artistic journey that Brainard records in his brief travelogue.

[12] In his analysis, Glavey is more concerned with Brainard’s literary work. At one point, he calls his magnum opus *I Remember* “a conceptual machine for producing minor affects” (2019: 140).

However, unlike “Wednesday”, which closes with Brainard’s exclamation communicating the joy of having arrived at the destination, “Washington” ends on a more ambiguous note. After leaving the museum, Brainard and his travel companions — all “dead tired” — head for the car to begin their long drive back to New York City. Brainard writes that he feels the need to “say something conclusive about Washington” but, after considering a few unsatisfying journalistic labels, he capitulates: “(I’m tired) and words lose me” (388).

In “Wednesday” and “Washington”, Brainard, as I have shown, uses a collage form in order to give an account of journeys whose particulars are important insofar as they offer an opportunity for introspection. His travel diaries are thus less a record of “a journey to place” than an investigation “into the self” (Marcus 2018: 38). Although the choice of collage as an organizing principle for an account of one’s personal or artistic self-examination may appear surprising, I want to argue that they are not mismatched. Since Brainard declares that “Wednesday” is to be “about what’s going through my head during a nine-hour bus ride”, then collage, alongside the interior monologue, with its reliance on fragmentary and heterogeneous material and on paratactical logic (the preference of juxtaposition over synthesis), offers an effective formal solution. Brainard, who complains in a letter to Padgett that he always has “so many different ideas all at once, that [he] can’t get them all done, nor really develop any of them” (quoted in Padgett 2019: 74), found in collage a perfect vehicle for conveying the workings of his mind and the quintessence of his artistic sensibility. Brainard’s scepticism about grand projects, his resistance to dogmatism, and lack of ideological or political allegiance, as well as his egalitarianism and readiness to make art out of anything at hand, are all further reasons for his life-long engagement with collage. In “Wednesday” and “Washington”, he meets the challenge of creating a space for his two sustained commitments — to the formal principle of collage and to the pursuit of autobiographical candour — within the parameters of the travel diary. By doing so, Brainard turns the traditional “outward gaze” of the travelogue inward and pushes at its formal boundaries (Steinitz 2001: 887).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Ron Padgett for meticulously fact-checking this article and to Dr Rona Cran and Dr Simon Cooke, whose insightful comments substantially improved this text.

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