

the jail- i wish i had written about it sooner, because i already feel it was nothing really, feel and believe like all the rest of us when we come out of jail that it is really nothing, while knowing at the same time that it is a particular horror. it is like discovering pits of sadness in the wrld, worlds of sadness, that you never really knew of, in the way that you've come to see is the only way you can know things. i am ashamed now of the way i felt when i came in, exhilarated and kind of nervous, body alive, mind jumping, taking in al of it. i kind of lay back on my cot, smiling kind of to myself, digging the filth and horror as a kind of justification of why i was there. and then everything was so much like i was told jail was- filth, cruelty, the petty world of the prisoners and trustees, the humming, singular harmonica, solitary singing, prisoners sneaking up to my cell to tell me their sad stories, roasting peanuts for me on the gas heater, bringing coffee, and beyond my cell which looked out on the large room where the rest of them lived, 23 men and boys, a table where one boy read the bible, another wrote to his wife, and the others stood shooting crap. i was relaxed now and kind of already easing into the jail routine. i was impatient just a little to get out, but not too, because i knew i would be out in at least a few days. the furthest into it i really got was playing the game of trying to think it would be like to have to stay in there for a month or more, not knowing why i was really there, and having nothing really to go back to. it was a kind of a bad ego game, trying to trade consciousness with others.

then george came in and ran over to tell me how it was going outside. they put him upstairs in the bullpen, an iron cage, solitary i guess, except that i could holler up to him and him back. they didn't like the others seeing us talk together. when george went to sleep i had kind of begun to lose my double consciousness and was kind of becoming a prisoner like the rest. i was tired. the thoughts i would normally have weren't relevant. i knew that if i were to stay a long while i would have to start a kind of rigorous mind discipline to keep me from becoming a prisoner, reading the books i'd brought w th me, writing something, or trying to think problems through- those were the things i thought might help, and at the same time i began to feel that something new would happen, that the mind games i would devise to keep me singular and whole, would be new ones, that i couldn't predict them in any way, and that they would not really be singular, but total, and maybe not games. i was really scared in a very real way, because i didn't want to rely on transposing the old mental exercises, but the possibility of allowing my surroundings to be real and kind of take their part with what was myself was really risking something i couldn't be sure of the outcome of. to trust myself and my own strength to flow with the jail and the totality of my surroundings was something i hadn't really foreseen, and couldn't ~~be~~ plot. i don't really know what would have happened, except that i know it would have been valid, even if destructive, which is a word i could never apply to any changes that come from anything i do, but that i must allow others to use in relationship to me. maybe it's clearer if i can say that both freedom songs and the book of rilke's letters that i had with me were both equally irrelevant to what was beginning to happen to me inside, and if i took up one or the other i would be denying the reality of where i was and who i might become there. i didn't really have a chance to find out, because they called george out and then he screamed my name. the next 20 minutes of his hollers and the scuffling broke ~~the~~ apart the singular personal meaning of being in jail and instead the whole meaning of people in jail, jail, cruelty, humanity, society- really all the social entities began crystallizing in my body and emotions (and the mind which abstracts nonverbally for the body and emotions). i was screaming back to him, and then talking to the other prisoners in a loud voice between the screams from george. when george was returned to his cell i began to do the things that needed to be done. some of them were dangerous, like demanding to see the sheriff and make my phone call immediately after they had finished with george. the beauty was that i had no double consciousness about it, that i could do these things without ego, and with no sense of the heroic. and maybe because there was no ego, there is no fear.