

Mr. Harold Weisberg
Old Receiver Road
Frederick, MD

September 7, 1991

Dear Harold:

Please do not be offended by anything in this letter. Try to stay calm and hear me out.

With reference to your letter of 9/4/91, I swear to you that there is nothing in my letter to you that can remotely be construed as "an order." You are misreading me. I am working at break neck speed since Christmas and maybe didn't phrase something perfectly, but you are dead wrong. How could I have any intent to order you?

Does it ever occur to you that you are too hard on people?

Look, did it ever occur to you that I have good will? But all that I ever experience is such extensive abuse and runaround from certain people that I'll never know why this is, other than it seems to stem from a libelous story that David Lifton and Robert Groden conspired to plant in the paper years ago.

I have been trying to get the MDW file for perhaps twenty years. I have never been able to get legal help for FOIAs, and in fact whenever I went to a lawyer, it was turned around to backfire on me in some fashion. I came to your house repeatedly to obtain this file, in 1978 or so, and last year with Rick and Dave. Again this year more than once. It just got lost. This year you pushed me to obtain the file, after I had already been there 2-3 times in the last two years to get it, with reference to Lifton's charges which I am trying to refute. You forgot that I have come there repeatedly to obtain it. Once again I wrote the National Archives and the MDW, and neither has it anymore. When I told you that, you said "those bastards!"

You told me one morning this year after I had talked to you about it several times in the preceding days that you had it and told me to drive right then to see you. I did, in a terrible rain storm, and was almost killed. The file was "missing" when I got there. You said Rick had it, you thought. At the time I did not want to talk to him, and now I am talking to him. He just got another \$800 "loan" out of me, but you say he returned the file to you. I never had any contact with Dave and don't want to. He demonstrated a certain dishonesty with regard to the court suit he said he would file.

Rick's phone number is (301) 574-2788. Could you ask him to retrieve it for me, or copy it. Or I'll go out there, as I offered to do again when you said you found it or Rick returned it, two weeks ago, but you turned that off.

*rick got it
I found it*

I will be glad to copy it myself, if you will simply mail it to me. You can trust me, you know.

I am exhausted with this. Is that the idea?

As for Rick, I have very mixed feelings about him. He got thousands of dollars out of me, and I felt that I had to give the money to him. What I got for that was almost nothing. I lived with fear, and I suspect that certain other people pointed him at me, because he sure went to a lot of trouble to get to me, maybe even take me out. It had the opposite effect. He was getting some money from Lifton when he met me, and dealing with another who was trying to wipe me out. I would have quit this investigation long ago if I did not encounter people with such bad character in it who tried to take me out at the start. That gets my Irish up.

I can still call Rick my "chief investigator" and be on the outs (we never had a fight or anything else. I just chose not to talk to him because he was running me down and I needed to work) I can dislike someone and still quote and praise their work. I can tolerate irascible old curmudgeons who are like train wrecks at times.

Please do not be offended by anything here, but you hurt me deeply, and many times. Harold, you have got no understanding of me at all. You hurt me in a way that almost no-one has. My father did it with letters like yours, because he never understood me, and you are the same way. His letters caused two suicide attempts. You have mis-read me so many times I cannot count. I am not "ordering" you to do anything. You choose to read that in.

Does it seem possible to you that sometimes your mind plays tricks on you? My mind and I think most people's minds play tricks on them.

Harold, I do not need such hurt and abuse. I do need your help. I was willing to do a lot more for you. I wanted to publish your book, I wanted to buy you a new copier. I may be able to get more money for you, but you are just like Groden and Lifton. You spit on what was given. I am not somebody to be constantly betrayed and dumped on. If there is anyone in this that can do something about this case right now, it is me. Not me alone, but I have got something pretty important (though I know that you will convert that to being just my own opinion of myself and therefore worthless.)

Harold, I am heartily sorry for your declining health and infirmities. My heart is with you. I am a religious person in my way, and I am not here to hurt anyone.

Telling you to raise the price of your book was just intended to be helpful. Certainly not an order, and I wasn't

even serious, but I just wanted to be sure that all the information was still correct. I'm trying to do you a favor and you jump down my throat. I know, you don't want any favors from me.

How can I know if you charge more or less for it these days? Most people cut the rate, as I am doing on some of my backlisted books, rather than charge the same price year after year. You have demonstrated your moral superiority, and I'm sure you will get on your moral high horse about something else soon enough. I am sure that you think you are superior to me and everyone else, which is doubtful. I have more scruples than you might ever imagine. I have never, for instance, denigrated what someone has done for me under any circumstances. I have never deliberately misdirected people or double talked them or shook them down.

Harold, for Christ sake, don't you ever let anything go by? Let it go? I didn't mean in any way to offend you.

I only read a page of your letter, and I may not be able to make my deadline for the publisher, taking time to answer that.

I find it very hard to accept or believe the stuff I am put through to get certain information. I know that you can't just run out to do something for me, but you don't have to write me a book denouncing me--the way you do. The energy you spend trying to hurt me in your letters could have solved this case and helped me a great deal. Telling me I know nothing of the King case. Almost true. I know something, but that does not give you the right to scorn me out of hand. I do have the right to make the comments that I make in my book about the case. I don't have the right to be grossly wrong.

My heart is with you. God bless you and Lillian. I am sorry that you choose to misread me once again.

God bless you.

Sincerely,

Harrison E. Livingstone

Monday, July 22, 1991

The 'poor ones' tell of their torture

CRY OF THE INVISIBLE: Writings From the Homeless and Survivors of Psychiatric Hospitals. Edited by Michael Susko. A Harrison Edward Livingstone Book by the Conservatory Press. 334 pages. \$19.95 hard cover. \$16.95 soft cover.

FEW NIGHTMARES can be as horrific as that of finding yourself in confinement without power or rights and forced to live according to a system in which the rules are either never explained or simply changed according to the unchallengeable will of the authorities.

And how much more invidious if you are taught that everything is being done for your benefit and that your proper obligation and one hope of release is to demonstrate with uttermost sincerity

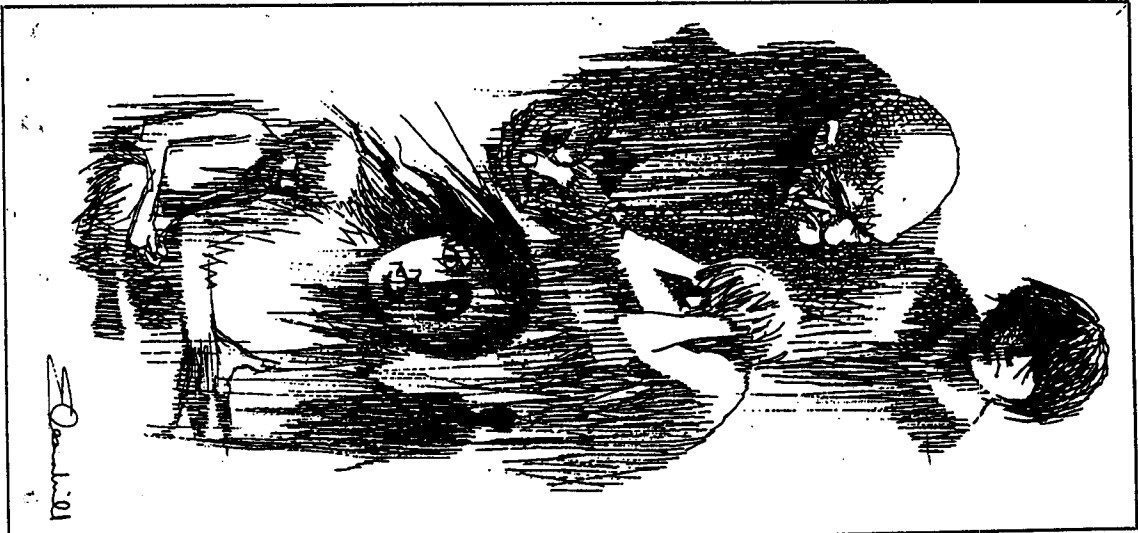
George Schepfer

your love and appreciation for your captors. It is the stuff of Kafka and Orwell, but it is also, at its worst, the situation of the psychiatric patient, except that in that case the patient must act normally while enduring a steady regimen of drugging and electrical shocks over which he or she has no real control.

By now a great deal has been written about the homeless and about psychiatric patients, some of it by sympathetic and even crusading reformers. But nothing written about them reveals their world with anything like the directness of what is written by them.

What Michael Susko has done in "Cry of the Invisible" is to perform a most invaluable service for the powerless, the invisible, the forgotten, the unconsulted. He has yielded to them the forum of public discourse. It is no less radical and important an act than that. Who, after all, has access to print, to the power and dignity of the written and published word, to the book? The educated, the affluent, the professional — and even those must satisfy the needs of the arbiters of public discourse: the scholarly, commercial and journalistic publishers and editors. It's called free press.

But Susko and his publisher have yielded the floor to those the Bible calls *anawim*, the "poor ones" who are otherwise never heard from. But here we hear them. There are amazing literary riches in this anthology, sometimes as precise and startling as the title of one poem, "Supper-time: or Pull Course with Seizure Salad." Among the other poetry in the collection we find the Sylvia Plath-like "Lady Schizophrenia" and its companion "The Angels of Mercy Meet Lady Schizophrenia." In one untitled poem by D. Cherubin, the poet says,



with powerful directness, "I need you to be there for me/ When the razor blade screams." A woman sexually abused as a child fantasizes, in a poem called "What She Thought About at Six (And Had Nightmares About at Thirty)," about escaping from the hated smothering male presence by turning into a big black balloon. Then she could "let all my air out at once/ so I can flit and dart through the room/ . . . like a crazy drunken bun-blee . . ."

There is a great deal of poetry and prose-poetry in "Cry of the Invisible," and it seems clear that there is something finally liberating in sheer imagery for people immersed in an environment of analyses, reports and prescriptions. The anthology in fact includes a set of selections produced in a creative writing class at Sheppard Pratt.

The heart of the book is the series of personal stories of "psychiatric survivors" — some of whom have indeed died since telling their stories. Nothing, I think, can be more telling than Lois' simple report that "When we could manipulate our minds right, we were allowed to get up and put our cotton dresses on," or Jack's testimony that when he asked what the purpose was of the pills he was being given, he was told by the psychiatrist, "They're like a *thought-straightener*." Sometimes the reader is struck by the poignant witness of what it is like, always, to be a "marginal" person, as when Michael P. writes that "Everywhere I go, I feel I make people uncomfortable and make them feel I'm strange. *They want to understand why I'm ruining their experience*" (italics mine).

As the publisher, Harrison Edward Livingstone, testifies (for his too, is one of these stories), society seems to have a "short fuse" in its concern for people on the margin, and the line from concern to annoyance to hostility is readily crossed.

Livingstone concludes, "We overlook the fact that most paranooids have a good reason for it."

It is important to realize that these writers are not just ex-patients and not just people who need help. It is also true that we need them and that they are our teachers. The editor, publisher and most of the writers of "Cry of the Invisible" are Baltimoreans. They teach us about a part of Baltimore few of us know.

George L. Schepfer is professor of humanities at Esser Community College and Johns Hopkins School of Continuing Studies.