



(Blotsplotch only wants
Blotsplotch only wants out of the maze.)

There is a sense in which biographical knowledge informs the work of art. Consider, for example, Beethoven's deafness, Milton's blindness, or Monet's cataracts. Likewise, there is a sense in which political and cultural knowledge are prerequisites to the apt appreciation of art. Consider the influence of the Catholic Church on medieval European book illumination or the First and Second World Wars on 20th century modernism. Van Gogh's *Road with Cypress and Star* (1890) conjures information external to the painting to a degree that some observers *see* life at the Saint-Paul Asylum, the effects of mental illness on perception, Van Gogh's relative youth and destitution, his beautiful anonymity.

In perceiving, we are accustomed to make-believe, imagining what it would have been like to be there, then, creating that, and seeing that. We must ask ourselves, to what degree are these biographical events, these outmoded socio-political circumstances transferable in the first place? Are we deluding ourselves in pretending, or is this the fundamental practice of art appreciation, in which the viewer's sophistication is measured by the verisimilitude of her make-believe?

The question becomes, if the reception of an artwork is rightfully enhanced by viewer-delusion, should we not attempt to maximize our enhancement by maximizing our delusion? Should we not suggest that these drawings were spared the blaze by the asylum warden, who was later institutionalized after claiming how the Smoking Mirror manifest before her desk in a maelstrom of inky clockwork, commanding her, "Hurry! Let the patients fend for themselves, but save the drawings at all costs!"

Blotsplotch is a signature, a signed confession.

