

## WALKING TO BACH

*David Ward—Department of English*

Since I decided  
to walk to Bach  
my days have been composed,  
informed by a fugal rhythm  
that unifies the disparity of  
responsibilities,  
worries,  
wants, needs,  
disappointments, and expectation  
into a daily harmony  
within which agonies, ecstasies,  
contradictions, and oppositions  
are blended through point and counterpoint  
creating a music of trial,  
making symphonic sense of adversity.

One foot in front of the other  
seems to be the theme taught  
early in the morning as I tread  
rhythmically to a double violin concerto  
in D minor. Millstones about my neck  
hung there through sustained critical memory,  
made more heavy by the constant antagonism  
of fighting resentment and self-pity,  
dissolve as I walk to keep pace  
with a first movement,  
then a second,  
replaying one minute and forty seconds  
into the first,  
over and over  
until confusion separates into order,  
and beauty resonates  
within me as I walk with assurance  
that suggests I finally understand  
a portion of the master's genius.

At one mile and nine tenths,  
(a little over a half mile yet to go),  
my pace has quickened.  
It registers 3.4 on the counter.  
Head tickling as sweat trickles toward my forehead

I adjust my headband right before  
turning up the volume  
on a slow movement  
that features two violins  
competing with each other  
to render a melodic line  
that touches me with an intimacy  
surprising in its sweetness.

My heart is anything but restful.  
I am at full pace now, blood pounding  
timpanic and full, muscles becoming taut  
through the long extended exposure to  
portions of miles counted out in measures  
expanding simple melodies  
and simple counter melodies  
into a symphonic wholeness  
that brings me to tears.

My mind is at peace though active,  
focused upon patterns  
clarified by repetition and patience,  
listening, drawn to listen again  
to hear unexpected phrasings  
that confuse, irritate, then amuse  
until the sense, the genius,  
reveals itself through moments  
of ecstatic wonder.

I turn the dial, slowing the belt,  
slowing my pace, listening once again  
for patterns made familiar as I walked  
through confusion into community  
with a composer whose turn in life  
had not the power to reveal that  
one day beyond his time,  
beyond his chapel,  
someone would rise early  
put on shorts and a tee-shirt,  
don a headband, and descend into a basement  
to walk to his greatest compositions  
in the privacy of a corner  
capable of spanning centuries.