



2021

## In Terms of Grass and Dirt

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### Recommended Citation

Scott, Jhonathon (2021) "In Terms of Grass and Dirt," *Floodwall Magazine*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 7.  
Available at: <https://commons.und.edu/floodwall-magazine/vol1/iss2/7>

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# In Terms of Grass and Dirt

Today will make a week of cataloging  
Baseball cards—two sometimes three hours a day,  
Back bent over shoeboxes, aching.  
They all have rounded corners, talismans  
Of greasy fingered youth. Value lost  
Is value gain—the thermodynamics  
Of worth at work.

Should I take the back-ache  
As penance for shoplifting Topps, as same-  
Life, pop-karma for slying-out a pack  
Per each that whittled our savings away?  
We teach children not to steal but never  
Not to want. We talk of the covetous  
In terms of green grass—luxurious acres  
Of lop-eared bunnies rising and falling  
From shin-deep oceans of turf. Vis-à-vis,  
That is, one's patch of dirt.

Today's for nineteen  
Eighty-five—the nascence of illicit record-  
Shattering veneered in extant gum-chalk.  
I will touch the times my brother and I  
Walked the hot train-rails: We scoured  
Our packs, announcing prodigious rookie  
Cards, cursing duplicate managers.  
Tomorrow's for tasting my first cigarette  
At a funeral the day Rose passed Cobb.  
(Some poetry writes itself.)

Yesterday  
The cards cut into the top-knuckle

Of my middle finger. Entranced, I filed  
And only felt the injury distantly—  
An athlete in full adrenaline stride.  
The science of labor is blood; the red,  
Thin line along the rectangle ridges  
Is just another crease, another worth  
To consider.

I consider in terms  
Of dirt. As where the pitcher hides a curve  
Between his lips and his mitt. Where the balls  
Come whistling hot off the bat and Ozzie Smith  
Turned flips. I consider in terms of grass.  
As where I dug up worms with a cleat-toe  
And waited for a lefty who could hit  
To right-field. Where better boys beside me  
Spat, grabbed undescended crotches, chattered  
At the batter, hey batter, hey batter,  
And the batter in the box would swing.

You can graph our dwindling interest  
As stacks become shallower. You can guess  
What other hobbies came along, how sweet  
The batted lashes of girls gaining flesh.  
Part time jobs for the purchase of pendants  
And matching earrings. Full-time jobs  
For the fueling of last-leg cars.  
The paucity of nineteen-ninety-fours  
Should come as no surprise.

Two thousand cards  
Still checker the floor: the poses of farm-  
League fodder—quasi-immortalized stint  
In the Bigs, the unglossed gloss of stats  
On flip-sides—last year's hits and RBI,  
A whole career of strikeouts and steals.

## About Jonathan Scott

Jonathan H. Scott lives in Birmingham, Alabama. His poetry and short-stories have been published in *The Able Muse*, *Hospital Drive*, *The Louisville Review*, *Measure*, and others.