

## 16. **A Personal Symbol**

I have a forty-seven-year-old dark transparent blue Sheaffer cartridge pen with which I enjoy a mystical relationship. It is compact, sturdy in my hand, dependable, never leaking, never clogging -- almost the archetypal pen. Endlessly refillable, it changes colors from emerald green to peacock blue with a quick twist.

When I take exams using my magic pen, I make A's. When I use it for journals, I am astounded at the brilliant words that flow from it. I am easily witty, my words well put, my penmanship even unrecognizably admirable. Sheaffer in hand, I dare anything, from the Great American Novel to notes for Literary Criticism 5673.

As a logical well-educated twenty-first-century adult, I know that the pen is not really magical. Consciously, I know that I write well when I use it only because I am comfortable and confident. Nonetheless, hidden deep inside, a superstitious primitive lurks and laughs at such glib rationalizations -- and clutches that pen ever more tightly.

Confidence? Creativity? Or the catalyst that in my hand makes magic in my head.

