

## THE ORGAN

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[Assignment: Based on direct observation, write a description of some part of the Chapel or the Union which conveys a recognizable feeling (delight, awe, disappointment, etc.) more through the use of specific details than by overt statement of attitude. Arrange the details in a logical pattern from the point of view of a fixed or moving observer.]

(1) I am sitting in the balcony of the chapel, close to the pulpit. It is a little past 2:30 in the afternoon. In the rear of the balcony a music student is sitting at the organ keyboard practicing. The teacher, a gray-haired man dressed in gray and black, stands behind her listening intently. Above the seated organist the pipes rise on three different levels. They are arranged in six groups and are of graduated heights. They reach upwards in sweeping motions. The pattern they make is like the rise and fall of ocean waves, with dramatic ups and downs. Most of the pipes are made of a metal that reminds me of pewter, a dull silvery gray, but with a soft glow or shine. A few sections of pipes appear to be made of wood and have a square shape instead of the round shape the metal ones have.

(2) The pipes are mounted on what look like brown wooden boxes. They are arranged symmetrically with respect to the wide strip of stained glass reaching vertically from the floor of the balcony to the ceiling. The glass is various bright, rich, colors: emerald green, scarlet, blood red, gold, purple, and ice white. The afternoon light glowing through the organ's own window spots the sides of the wooden boxes reddish and goldish.

(3) The music sounds very professional to me, a person who knows nothing about playing the organ. Still, the organist occasionally interrupts herself to replay a phrase. The voices of teacher and student echo quietly and clearly through the chapel when they interrupt the music to comment or instruct. When it begins again, several full chords are struck and they hang in the chapel alone, filling the entire space. The pipes look like physical representations of the music--some notes skinny, short, and reedy, others long and thin, some bold notes tall and fat.

(4) During a pause in the music I can hear the whisper of pages turning even from where I am seated at the opposite end of the gallery. About three fourths of the way up the window, the figure of a saint looks down on the organ with her head cocked to one side as if listening.

(5) Now, half an hour after I began my observation, the sun has moved to strike other panes of glass and stains the upper wooden sections of the pipe-boxes with greens and oranges. The sun moves behind clouds and back out again, making the chapel alternately warm and glowing, and full of brownness. The organ remains mostly in shadows.

(6) The musician has left now, so I walk down to the organ. The slumbering instrument smells of wood and varnish and all its surfaces are covered by a film of gritty dust. The smell of the plastic coating on the keys reminds me of the odor of a newly-opened box of band-aids. The clatter of shoes on tile is approaching. They belong to a man wearing a dark suit and a mustache who asks me not to touch anything, so I turn and leave the organ, a sleeping giant.