

Stylus

26/97



Stylus

1996-97

The Literary Annual of
Midlands Technical College

Stylus 1996-97

Editor-in-chief: Keith Higginbotham, English Department

Assistant Editors:

Helen Baldwin-Kingkade, Humanities Department

Douglas Capps, English Department

Valarie Edwards, Associate in Science major

Jackie Frederick, English Department

Design & Layout: Travis Gordon, English Department

For their assistance, support, and advice, the Stylus staff wishes to thank

James L. Hudgins, President

Jean Mahaffey, Vice President

Dianne Luce, Chair, English Department

June Zacharias, Administrative Specialist, English, Math, and Humanities

Katsy Stewart, Administrative Specialist, English, Math, and Humanities

Minnie Thompson, Administrative Specialist, English and Humanities

Muffy Allison, Administrative Specialist, Developmental Studies



© 1997 Midlands Technical College

Columbia, South Carolina

All rights revert to authors and artists upon publication.

Contents

Scars in Green Seas <i>story</i>	Elena Baylor-Elks	7
11 O'clock <i>poem</i>	Willie E. Kelly, Jr.	18
5 <i>poem</i>	Christopher B. Watts	21
What I Learned from My Mom <i>essay</i>	Joanna Wang	22
Self Destruction <i>poem</i>	Jason L. King	26
"Shall I compare thee..." Ten Years After <i>poem</i>	Gregory J. Paulsen	29
I Am. Are You? <i>poem</i>	Mike Cecil	32
Morning Song <i>poem</i>	Doris Edwards	34
Gray Filtered <i>poem</i>	Jason L. King	37
Prejudice Learned <i>story</i>	Lynda Stroud	38
A Reminder <i>poem</i>	Jason L. King	43
Can We Be Shockable Again? <i>essay</i>	Judith E. Scurry	45
Endless Journey <i>poem</i>	Alicia Burnett	48
Shame <i>poem</i>	Christopher B. Watts	49
Father <i>poem</i>	Paula Wieszt	50
Twisted Women in Beth Henley's <i>Crimes</i> <i>of the Heart</i> <i>essay</i>	Raquel Madison	51
Observations <i>poem</i>	Christopher Young	58
Sunflower <i>poem</i>	Donna M. Lewis	60
Evolution <i>poem</i>	Marshall Danenburg	60

Art

Jung-Mei Chiang	cover, 25, 35
Jarrett Jenkins	20, 36, 42,
Michael Bixler	30–31, 57
B.J. Neblo	44
Michael Bixler	57

Stylus Awards



Art

JUNG-MEI CHIANG

Essay

RAQUEL MADISON

Fiction

ELENA BAYLOR-ELKS

Poetry

JASON L. KING *and* CHRISTOPHER B. WATTS



Scars in Green Seas

By ELENA BAYLOR-ELKS

WELCOME to South Carolina.” The sign appeared through a hazy drizzle that had lingered since he’d passed a similar announcement for North Carolina. An adjacent sign told him that he had another seventy-nine miles to go and he rubbed his eyes wearily, trying to rid them of the stinging that had plagued them since somewhere in West Virginia.

No wonder Marissa never liked this place. The weather sucks. “South Carolina is a lot like hell,” he recalled her explaining, “only hell is cooler in the summer.”

He smiled at the memory. The last time he’d seen her she was only seventeen but he could still picture her, an impish face, with wide green eyes and an unruly mane of chestnut tresses. She was standing in the sun when they’d said goodbye, the bright light dancing off her hair, her cheeks wet, her hands over her belly as if protecting the baby from the whole world.

My baby. Kari. The thought carried a strange kind of sadness that troubled him sometimes, usually when he opened the huge, leather-bound scrapbook that he’d collected over his thirty-seven years. Marissa’s photo was there, among piles of sniper certifications he’d worked so hard to maintain, a diploma from Penn State, the divorce papers that cleared him of responsibility for Christina’s wild spending sprees and a gold medal from the State

Martial Arts Competition. Letters from high school sweethearts vied with pictures of his best friends and newspaper clippings for space on the meticulous black pages.

The newest addition would be an obituary. Death wasn't an unfamiliar topic to him; he'd spent years preparing to deliver it from behind the anonymity of a rifle, but it was different this time. The Reaper had delivered it to Kari in the guise of epilepsy, and he found it difficult to rationalize. *No one dies of epilepsy.*

Questions that were once fodder for occasional speculation now seemed important. *What color was her hair?* He guessed it was brown like her mom's, but he liked to think that she had blue eyes like his. Sometimes, when the questions surfaced, he'd overlap mental pictures of himself and Marissa to outline the child's face. He'd imagine her voice and what he'd say to her when she appeared at his door as an adult searching for her father. He pictured a graceful, beautiful girl, and he'd hug her and invite her in and spend hours getting to know her, explaining why he wasn't there when she was born, making her understand things her mother couldn't fathom.

All that was void. She'd never come looking for him, and the finality of the fact made him want to hit something, anything. That he'd never get the chance to explain himself to his daughter frustrated him beyond reason, but the origin of the frustration eluded him.

Hence his journey to hell. If Kari couldn't listen then Marissa could, and he was determined to make her understand. He'd come to that conclusion while the mechanics were crawling through his car and swearing they couldn't replace the alternator in two hours. No amount of insisting had done him any good, they were quite unaffected by the urgency, and he'd been raging at the waiting room wall when the idea hit him. Marissa hadn't understood his reasons for leaving Colorado that sunny morning, but it was different now. They'd both had time to put the pain and anger to pasture, and all that were left were misunderstandings. Once she understood him the wires would uncross themselves, wiping the slate clean for whatever fate had in store for them, and he vowed to make it a friendlier fate than the one that preceded it.

An increase in traffic interrupted his thoughts. He'd reached Columbia. He shuffled through a stack of papers wedged between the visor and the

roof, his fingers seeking the envelope on which he had written directions to the small cemetery. He'd called the funeral home to ask for specifics. He hoped he wasn't too late for the ceremony but knew with a futile despair that he was. No one was expecting him but something compelled him to be there, to see for himself the truth that was so absurd it had to be a lie. It compelled him to see Marissa's face and speak with the woman who'd been hardly more than a child when she'd borne his.

He followed the instructions to a quiet street lined with comfortable houses and old trees that drooped dejectedly in the miserable drizzle. He searched the sides of the roads as the car wound slowly through the neighborhood, knowing in his gut that it was somewhere nearby. An uncomfortable anxiety settled in his bones.

The aged headstones appeared suddenly, their forms almost lost in the gray shrouds of mist that hung over the ground. He turned the car past whitewashed gates and scanned the area intently, seeking the willow tree that the funeral director said was going to guard his daughter's final resting place. There it was, in a secluded corner of the graveyard, its sweeping branches swaying in the wind. A still form knelt beneath the limbs, and his heart contracted painfully as he brought the car to a stop at the curb.

The clouds chose to empty themselves the moment he pulled the keys from the ignition, and he hesitated before pulling a heavy wool cloak over his head, its black stark against his silvery blonde hair. He tugged the cowl over his face and stepped out into the downpour, his strides faltering as he walked toward a mourner sitting at the grave, pale hands entwining with the red sail, shoulders trailing beneath a curtain of long chestnut hair.

A lump in his throat choked him, and he swallowed it before speaking. "Marissa?"

She didn't respond for a moment, the only clue that she'd heard him a slight tightening of her shoulders, and then she turned to stare up at him, disbelief melding with grief in her features. "Jared?"

His conscience writhed at the sight of her. She looked so much older, so much more careworn than she had when they'd spent entire week-ends wandering through the mountains. "I...I'm sorry I didn't make it sooner, but my car broke down...." He watched as her face contorted in fresh grief, and

he fell to his knees beside her.

He held her and rocked her in silence until the gale gained momentum, battering the masses of colorful flowers that covered the disturbed earth and pushing the rain into angled sheets of water. He rose and lifted her to her feet, her body limp in his hands. "Let's go somewhere and talk."

She tensed beneath his grip and turned toward the mound of red dirt, shaking her head. "I don't wa...."

"You're going to catch a cold in this mess," he insisted over the wind's mournful wail, his grip on her arms firm against her half-hearted struggling. "C'mon, let's get you home."

He led her through the maze of headstones to his car. She was compliant by the time he slid her into the seat, her expression as cold as her hands. He started the engine with a roar and switched on the heater before speaking. "How do I get to your house?"

She mumbled directions as he drove, her voice lifeless. He barely felt the motion of the car as he made turn after turn, his thoughts a whirling mass of conflicts. He parked before an apartment building, searched through her purse for her keys and asked, "What number?"

"Six-thirteen."

He pulled her from the seat and tried to lift her, but she shied away and walked past him, waiting as he unlocked the door, her face an unreadable mask. With the flick of a switch the room was lit with a harsh brilliance. She led him into an explosion of flowers, letting her coat fall to the floor before disappearing into the back, leaving Jared to stare at the blossoms that littered every available surface and filled the air with their memories of spring. She reappeared moments later, her wet dress shed for a faded pair of jogging pants and a sweatshirt that reached her knees. She collapsed in an overstuffed chair, mindless of the water that dripped from her hair onto the bright fabric.

Jared studied her before searching the kitchen and returning with a decanter of brandy and two tumblers. He poured the amber liquid into the glasses and handed one to Marissa. "For once I think this'll help."

She looked at him as if he had appeared in her living room out of thin air. "Jared?"

He smiled wryly. "Yeah."

"You've changed," she said in a small voice. "You're hair, it's lighter."

"Old age." He emptied the glass in one swallow. "You've done some growing up since I last saw you. How long has it been?"

"Nine years."

He shrugged out of his cloak and fell onto the couch. "It's hard to believe it's been that long."

"No, it's not. I was five months pregnant...." The words trailed off into disbelieving silence. "What are you doing here?"

"I just wanted to be here."

"That's a first."

Her words were as accurate as his bullets. "I don't want to fight. I came because I needed to."

She sipped at the brandy as he watched, her green gaze as intense as he recalled it. "Are you tired?"

He nodded. "It took almost twenty-four hours to get here, but not all of it was drive time."

She stood and turned to walk down the hall. "I'll get the guest room ready."

"No, Marissa, not yet. I want to talk."

She hesitated, then returned to the chair and fell into it listlessly. "About what?"

"About you and Kari and what happened."

"If you'd been here you'd know," she replied.

He accepted the rebuke with a nod. "I know, but I wasn't, so tell me. I need to know."

The silence before she spoke was tortured. "She had the seizure at school, on the playground." She wiped a stray tear from her cheek, her voice as tremulous as her hand. "My grandmother called me later that day and said that she was in the hospital. I got there as fast as I could, but they'd already pronounced her....she was...." Soundless tears overcame her.

"Oh God," he groaned, the reality of it prodding a hidden part of him he'd only recently recognized. "Why didn't anybody call 911 or something?"

"She was playing with a bunch of kids. I guess they thought she was goofing around."

"I...I can't...I just don't understand how a seizure could kill her," he murmured from behind his fingers. "I mean, she was a healthy kid, right? She had to be. Every child in my family is healthy as a horse, and there's no reason why mine should be..."

"She was *my* child!" Marissa wailed. "I don't care what you or the judge or anyone says. She was always mine..."

He glanced up to find her curled into a tight ball, her head buried in her arms. He drew a rough breath, running his hands over his face as he went to her side, cursing himself. "Of course she was. Nobody could change that."

"They changed her name. They wouldn't even let her call me mommy." She looked up at him beseechingly. "Do you think she knew anyway, Jared? She was so little when they took her. Do you think she remembered?"

"I think she did. Christ, I wish I'd have known what was going to happen. If I knew I never would've signed those papers."

"I begged you not to," she whispered. "Remember, I begged you to say no, but you wouldn't."

He sank to the floor. "You called while I was studying for a final." Silence. "I thought it would be best if they had her. You were so young, and I thought you'd see the logic in it."

"It wasn't best," she snapped. "It was never best. I love her more than anyone, but no one believes it. All they care about is money and who has the most of it, but you could've stopped them. You're her father. You could've said no."

"I couldn't take care of her," he answered harshly, "you know that. I didn't want to be a father when you got pregnant, and I sure as hell wasn't ready then. Don't you think I've suffered enough for that?"

"No, not as much as I have."

He turned away from her, rising. "Yeah, you're probably right."

"I know I'm right. Do you know what it did to me? Do you know?" Her anger was almost tangible as she waited for a reply, and he couldn't help but wince when he heard her lurch from the chair and stalk toward him. "It ruined me. All I wanted to do for years was die, but God wouldn't let me. He made me watch her grow up in that house. He made me listen to her call my

grandmother 'mama,' and He made me look at her in that casket while they all shook their heads and whispered what a pitiful woman I turned out to be, and all I could do was look at her in that awful box and beg Him to let me take her place! And all that time you didn't have a care in the world. All you had to do was refuse to sign the papers, but you wouldn't even do that, so don't give me this 'probably' bullshit!" He swung around to face her, his jaw clenched, his vow forgotten. "You weren't the only one who got hurt, you know."

"Oh sure, Jared, you really suffered," she mocked.

"Yes, I did. I fucked up and I've paid for it too, so don't take up all the room on the cross!"

She raised her fists and pounded on his chest, screaming. "You son of a bitch!"

He was momentarily stunned. He grabbed her arms and forged them behind her back as he pulled her flailing body to his. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't mean it." Her knees buckled and he lowered her to the floor. "I'm so sorry, Marissa. I didn't mean it, I swear."

When at last her cries subsided he jumped to his feet and paced the floor for long minutes before clearing his throat. "I didn't mean that. I just meant that I'm having a hard time with it, too." When she offered no reply he sighed heavily. "I know you've done most of the hurting, but you think I've led some playboy existence and I haven't. I've spent so much time kicking myself in the ass I'm surprised my knees still work."

She raised her head from her arms and wiped the tears from her cheeks. "Well, that's one thing we have in common," she muttered, "although you'd never know you suffered so much. You never called, you never came down to see her. You didn't even hesitate when they asked you to give up your rights. It's kind of hard to believe you've spent a lot of time in self-persecution." She pushed herself from the floor and circled around him into the hall.

He followed her into the bathroom and watched from the door as she splashed water over her face. "Do you really think that?" he asked.

She raised her eyes from the porcelain and stared at his reflection in the mirror. "What am I supposed to think, Jared?"

"You could try a little faith."

He trailed her to the guest room, where she fished sheets and blankets from a closet and spread them over the mattress. "In what? You made sure you took all of that when you went back to Pennsylvania and left me in the Springs."

He watched her make the bed in frustrated silence. When she turned from the bed and tried to move past him he grasped her arms and forced her to face him.

Her expression was venomous. "Let me go," she warned, trying to free herself of his hands.

"You hate me, don't you?" he whispered as she struggled against him, his voice strained.

She ceased her struggling. "No I don't, but I probably should."

His hands dropped to his sides and he stepped back to allow her to pass.

Minutes later he found her curled upon the sofa, a fresh glass of brandy clutched in her hands. He shuffled to the monstrous bookcase that occupied a wall, attracted by the photographs it contained. He chose a frame from the collection and plucked it from its spot, holding it up to the light to study the towheaded little girl.

"She was six in that picture," Marissa commented.

He was right. His daughter had blue eyes. He returned the frame to its place and stared at the cream parchment above it. "So, you're a doctor now. I never thought you'd go into chemistry."

"I'm a molecular biologist. I only have a bachelor's in chemistry."

His eyes swept the spines of the books that jostled for space with the pictures. "I always thought you'd go into a creative field. You always liked drawing and reading and stuff like that."

"I create more than you know." She took another swallow of the drink, oblivious to the gaze he turned on her.

"When did you find a taste for brandy?"

Her shrug was a motion of defeat, her voice flat. "It helps sometimes."

"Be careful. It can become a problem."

"Who do you think you are?" she hissed, her eyes blazing. "What gives you the right to come down here and pass judgment on me?"

"I wasn't trying to make a judgment. I'm just concerned...."

"Like hell! 'Be careful'," she mimicked. "If you're so concerned about my

well-being, why didn't you ever warn me about getting involved with you?"

The frustration exploded. "I did. When we first met I told you I had no intention of staying in Colorado when my hitch was up, and I never once said any different. I told you I was going to college and I did. I told you I didn't want to get serious about anyone and you said you didn't care. I warned you about my plans, so don't act like it was some great surprise."

"I was pregnant! That was the surprise."

"I'm not so sure."

Disbelief was rapidly replaced with disgust in her features. "You would think that," she replied coldly as she pushed herself from the sofa and reached for the decanter.

A sigh came from the depths of his chest. "I didn't mean that."

"No matter what you think, I didn't try to trap you into anything. I loved you, God help me, and even though I wasn't ready to be a parent I loved Kari, too. She was my link to you, and when they took her I lost everything."

"That's not true. You still have me."

The look in her eyes was painfully brief. "Oh yeah, right." She drained the tumbler and disappeared into the kitchen.

He pondered her words as he stood alone in the middle of her apartment and after a moment he followed her, his resolve strengthened.

She was leaning on the refrigerator, her arms wrapped around herself, her face turned to the ceiling as tears wound their way down her cheeks. He gathered her into his arms and held her, his face buried in her hair, unsure of what to say. Lacking words, he lifted her chin, smiled tremulously, and kissed her.

She tore from his embrace and staggered away from him. "Oh no you don't. Get out."

"But Marissa...."

"Get out," she warned.

He stepped toward her. "But I have to tell you something."

"No! Just get out."

"Please listen to me."

"Go away!"

He caught her shoulders and shook her. "Listen to me. I'm sorry I left. I'm

sorry I didn't call. I never meant to hurt you like that. I was wrong, I admit it. I was a jerk." He paused but she didn't move, didn't speak. "Why you don't hate me I'll never know, but I love you, Marissa, and I'm sorry."

Her gasp was sharp and deep, and before he could stop her she swung at him, the harsh crack of skin against skin reverberating on the walls. "Get out of my house, you bastard."

He was stunned into momentary silence. "I mean it."

"You're a lying sonofabitch, and if you don't get out of my house I'll call the police."

He rubbed the welt on his cheek. "I'm not lying."

Her revulsion filled the space between them as surely as the miles had once before. "Get out."

He whisked past her and plucked his cloak from the couch. She watched him from the kitchen door, her face a study in furious skepticism as he slipped into the heavy wool and jerked the cowl over his head. "It's a little late to be declaring love, don't you think?"

He shrugged, his voice shaking. "If you say it is, then I guess my thoughts don't matter much anyway."

The fury faded from her features. "No, I guess they don't."

He reached for the doorknob and glanced back to find the tears returned to her eyes, but when he turned to go to her she shook her head. "Leave."

He jerked the door furiously and slammed it behind him. The sun was struggling to peek through the clouds before it began its descent but he didn't notice it as he splashed through the miniature lakes and streams that had formed in the parking lot.

He brought the car to screaming life and raced from the complex. He drove like a man possessed, going nowhere in particular but in a hurry to get there, lost in the unfamiliar neighborhood and not caring in the least.

The cemetery appeared before him and without thinking he drove in, guiding the car to the terribly small, terribly fresh grave beneath the spreading willow. He stumbled to the wound in the sea of green grass and knelt beside it, shoulders quivering.

There was no headstone yet, just the flowers, hundreds of them, cringing beneath the battering chill. At the head of the grave, precariously balanced on

green wire legs, stood a wreath of white roses trimmed in flowing white ribbon that rustled with each puff of wind. The tender buds defied the frigid onslaught, their petals free of the withering that ruined the other blooms.

He clambered to his feet and skirted the raw soil to the spray of roses. Reverently, he storked a length of the ribbon before pulling an ivory blossom from its carefully chosen position in the arrangement. He inhaled the soft scent, kissed the velvet form, and gently laid it atop the mound of dirt.

He stared at the flower for a long moment, then turned back to the wreath. He reached for another rose and stopped, his gaze rivited upon a trickle of crimson that wound down his finger and ended in a fat droplet that fell from his flesh, branding the pale petals.

Mesmerized, he watched as the drops slipped from his hand, gradually slowly until the stream was gone, leaving only a scarlet trail to betray its presence. A sad smile curved his lips as he tugged the stained rose from the bouquet, glanced down at the exposed clay, and turned toward the road, the flower clutched in his hand.

11 O'clock

A TIME

When shops are rednecks
And heritage is a symbol of hate.

The summer of peace was a big explosion.

A TIME

When Bruno Magli takes the stand
And injustice is justified with
Another injustice.

The abortion of
An abortionist.
Who's really playing God?

A TIME

When our crime
Preventers
Are committing the crimes.

"Can't we all just get along?"

A TIME

When the alphabets are all
Screwed up.
H. I. V.
Before
A. I. D. S.

What's really going on?

A TIME

Of babies having babies
And
Babies killing babies;
Innocence
Is No More.

— WILLIE E. KELLY, JR.

What I Learned From My Mom

By JOANNA WANG

WHEN I was a child in China I used to live in an apartment on the fourth floor of a building which had the shape of a match box. It had a big bathroom and a big kitchen. There were two small rooms in it also but no difference between living room or bedroom. Two small windows in each room faced to the east. The rooms were dusky because a big tree was in front of the windows. Two rooms were filled by old furniture, three beds, three clothing shelves, three desks, three big bookshelves, and a lot of other stuff. It had no room to let us move around. The floor was rough because this building had been a “battlefield” of the university for which my mom used to work during the Chinese Great Cultural Revolution. The whitewashed wall was not white anymore. In the middle of the high roof hung only one light. In this place, small but nice, old but clear, I spent my childhood with my mom and my older sister. It was most wonderful time I’ve ever had.

The first thing I saw every morning was Mom’s kindly face. The tender morning light came to the windows through the leaves while mom woke us up. It was the most beautiful time in our rooms. Everything was covered by golden sunlight. Mom always told us a story while we got up. The Kitten Goes Fishing, Three Buddhist Monks, The Racing of Turtle and Hare, and The Beautiful Monkey King — Sun waking. The most wonderful stories I heard were from mom every morning.

Breakfast time was my favorite time, because mom thought it was the most important meal, so it was always nutritious and delicious. We ate steamed bread with fried egg and a bowl of corn flour soup, or boiled egg with some vinegar, that tasted like crab meat, or egg with noodle soup, or egg fried rice. Every breakfast we had eggs, because we didn’t drink milk. Mom could cook eggs in many different ways, but my favorite was egg pancake. It’s made with flour, egg, sugar, salt, and some water. After mixing them mom added some small pieces of fresh fruit. Apple was best. Then, she used oil to fry it. When the color turned to golden, it was ready to eat. The taste was sweet and a little bit salty, and also had a fresh fruit taste. I could eat three to four pieces at one time.

Mom always stood on the balcony and watched us go to school. There were a lot of plants on our balcony. Mom loved flowers and took care of them every morning. She watered them and took of the dried leaves, so our plants were always luxuriant.

Mom was not just a housewife, but also was a teacher at Beijing Normal University. In China, both men and women had to work to support their families. Mom taught physics and also was the head of the physics department. She had a lot of other duties besides teaching class, so she’d almost never come home on time.

I always had lunch at school and came back home for supper on school days. Since I was seven years old, I’ve learned some cooking from mom, because sometimes I needed to prepare our supper. The university’s mess hall was very close to our home. Sometimes I went there and bought our supper back home.

I remembered one cold late fall evening when I was eight. After school I went back home and did my homework. It was almost supper time. Mom still had not come back, and my older sister was out of town. “I have to prepare our supper again!” I said to myself, and ran to the mess hall. I bought the supper, and then I found out that I didn’t bring the key. I could not get in the house. The only thing I could do was wait. I held our supper and stood outside the “matchbox.” I watched a great number of people coming and going, and hoped that mom would show up. When no one walked on the street anymore, I became hopeless. The appetizing smell came to me from other

peoples' kitchens. I lowered my head and watched my cold food. The sky turned dark and the street lamps were lighted. The cold wind and dark sky made me shake. I was alone. Only the street lamps swayed in the wind with me.

I hated mom. It was not the first time. Why was she too busy to spend time with me? Everyone stayed at warm homes with their families, enjoying their parents, playing, talking, laughing. But I had to stand in the wind with my empty stomach. I wanted to cry.

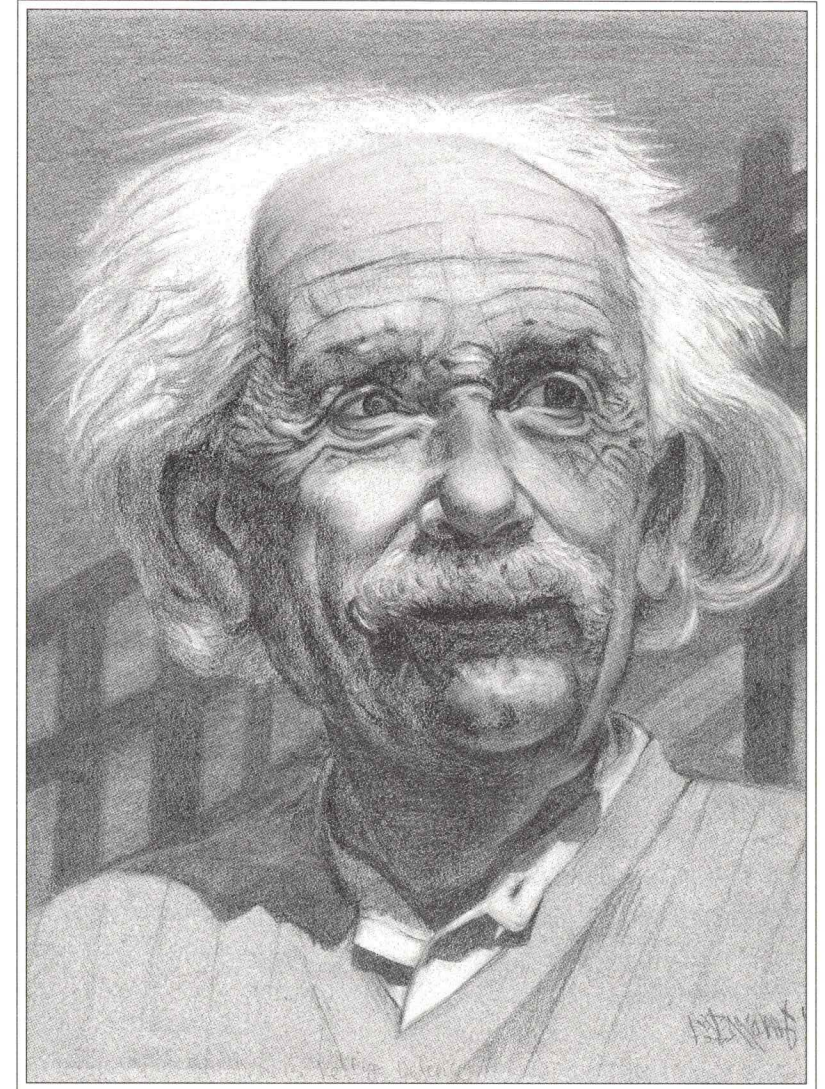
I also missed her very much. I missed when mom came back early and we cooked supper together. While cooking, we talked about my school, my school friends; we exchanged the news we'd heard. After our meal we watched TV, played cards, and then she helped me with my homework.

Finally, mom came back. We had our cold supper.

Now, everything is in the past. I'm grown up, and I'm here in the United States, but mom is still in China. She drove me away from her, from my home. The last morning I was in China with mom, when the morning light came to our windows through the deep green leaves, like before, mom also told me a story:

A fox mom fed her baby fox until she thought he could take care of himself. She drove him away from home, even though she loved him so much. The little fox wanted to go back home badly, but his mom didn't let him. The little fox was forced to give up and run away. While he was running, he stopped and turned around to watch his home frequently. His mom stood near the home and watched him. She seemed to shed tears. After several years, that little fox came back with his own family. He became strong enough to take care of his family and hunted for his baby fox. He was independent already.

I know what mom means and what I have to do. I just miss her. I miss her stories, her teaching, her love, her nice smile, her wonderful food. I miss everything of her and all the time with her.



JUNG-MEI CHIANG

Self Destruction

I had a dream,
full formed and clear,
vividly rendered in my slumber,
but vaguely recalled by my wakened mind.

Somehow,
without warning or apparent cause,
I was in a place whose name the morning sun obscured.

Battling,
aching with rage,
my hands clenched
tightly with hate
into two solid fists
that pummeled and beat
with unabated ferocity.
My feet kicked,
repeatedly crushing
the ribs of my fallen foe.

Finally,
his movement ceased,
as he lie slumped in my mind's gutter,
bloodied and broken.

I turned away.

My rage had been spent
and my body tired,
yet satisfied
like a full stomach that has been empty too long.

I heard a voice,
over the blood thundering through my veins,
from an unseen mouth.

“He’s dead,”
spoke the mouth,
its voice blurted out over its tongue
in the awe and confusion of a passer-by.

I turned slowly
as the body was rolled over
and the hands of a thousand good Samaritans
reached to probe for life.

The body moved slowly,
its arms pushing away
to defend its self from the hands’ unwanted touches.

The body’s face,
bloodstained and bruised,
turned to look at me
and I saw myself,
beated and battered,
smiling weakly,
mockingly reassured.

“No,” I said weakly.
“He’s not dead.”

—JASON L. KING

Shall I compare thee
to a summer's day?

— *William Shakespeare*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chace, or nature's changing course, untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade.
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as me can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

“Shall I compare thee...” Ten Years After

Shall I compare thee to a winter's day?
Methinks tis would insult Winter's Old Man.
Words are icy winds with which you play,
You who come to rant at me yet again.
Leaves afire to shrouds of snow are welcome.
Sweaters, then parkas add to season's change;
You here, my dear, is cold as space' vacuum.
My mind surely you will sweetly derange.
No fires, with cold, will bring bitter slow death,
But not as slow for me as tis our nupt.
How long must I endure my love's asp breath?
How long before my pump's strong stroke disurpt?
Sir Grim, I pray, Let me live not like Job!
'Stead come tis night and purge me my abode!

— GREGORY J. PAULSEN



MICHAEL BIXLER

I Am. Are You?

I am the only son
of the revolution to come
I am a father figure
Executioner and grave digger
I've been robbed of diversity

I am Apocalyptic Society
Watch your mother earth bleed
I am the Apocalypse of society
It is your knife in me

I am fury and rage
I am love and pain
I am young, I am cold
Always changing, always bold
Say its me, I say you
But it runs through them too
I am every place you'll be
Slave and thief
your religion and belief
A small price to live free

I am Apocalypse You are me

I am prophet to man
Rapist of the land
I am the information super highway
I grow stronger every day
I am death
I am life
I know your name
And its price

Over me this shadow cast
By society and demons past
I am known of hopeless name
Carry the burden to keep you sane
It is me you must see
Not the apocalypse of society
I am Hope, I am free
There is life through me

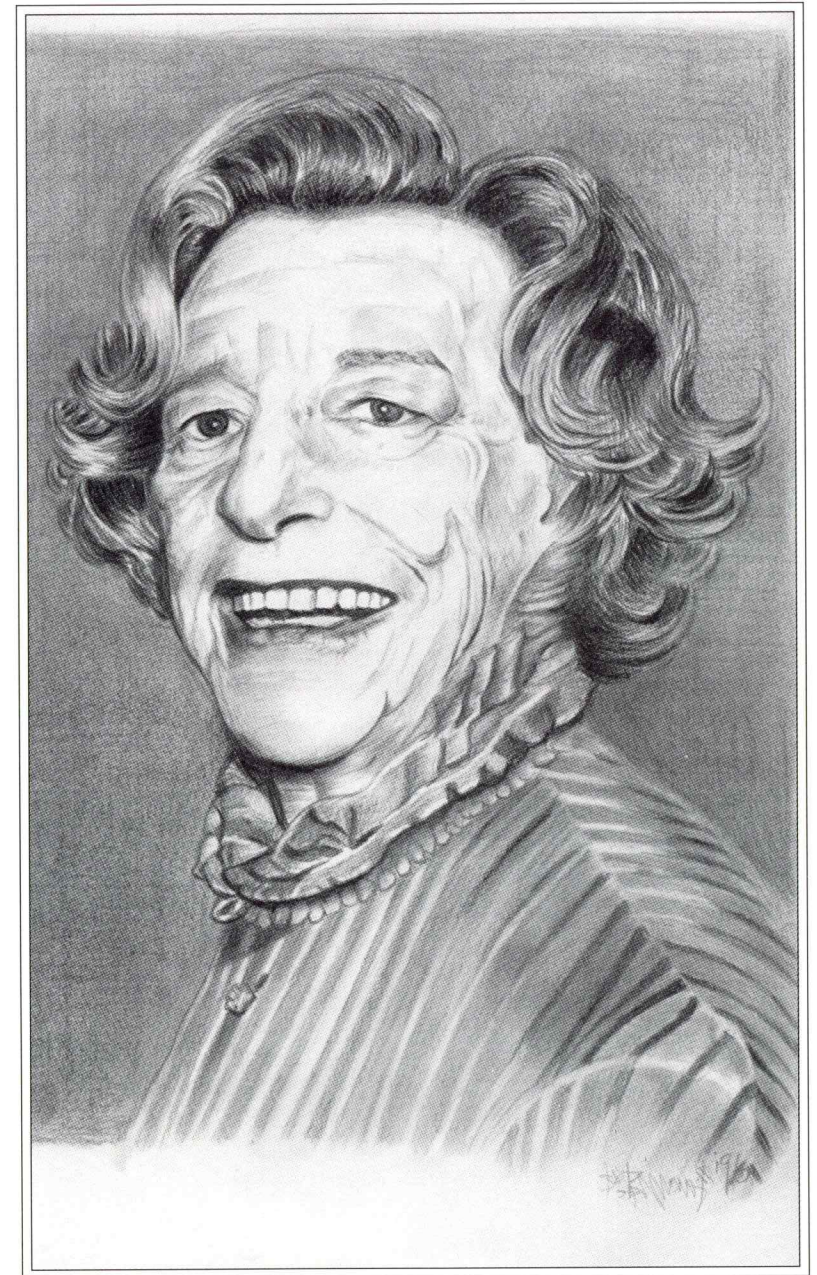
— MIKE CECIL

Morning Song

Morning awakens with a gentle sigh
Sleepily stretching and rubbing her eyes.
With sunrise she paints a brand new sky
A palette too wondrous words deny.
Silvery stars she restores to the deep
Washing her canvas in watery blue.
Cradled in arm the moonchild sleeps.
Day flows, day grows, a harmony of hues.
Shining beads of morning's due
Trickle down my window pane.
Time yields many, and yet so few
In all she does, she does not in vain.

Morning awakens with a gentle sigh
Sleepily stretching and rubbing her eyes.
I am lost in the lyric of dawn's creation
Swaying to songs of sweet revelation.
The still silence bows to the first bird song
For these glorious moments do I wait the day long.

— DORIS EDWARDS



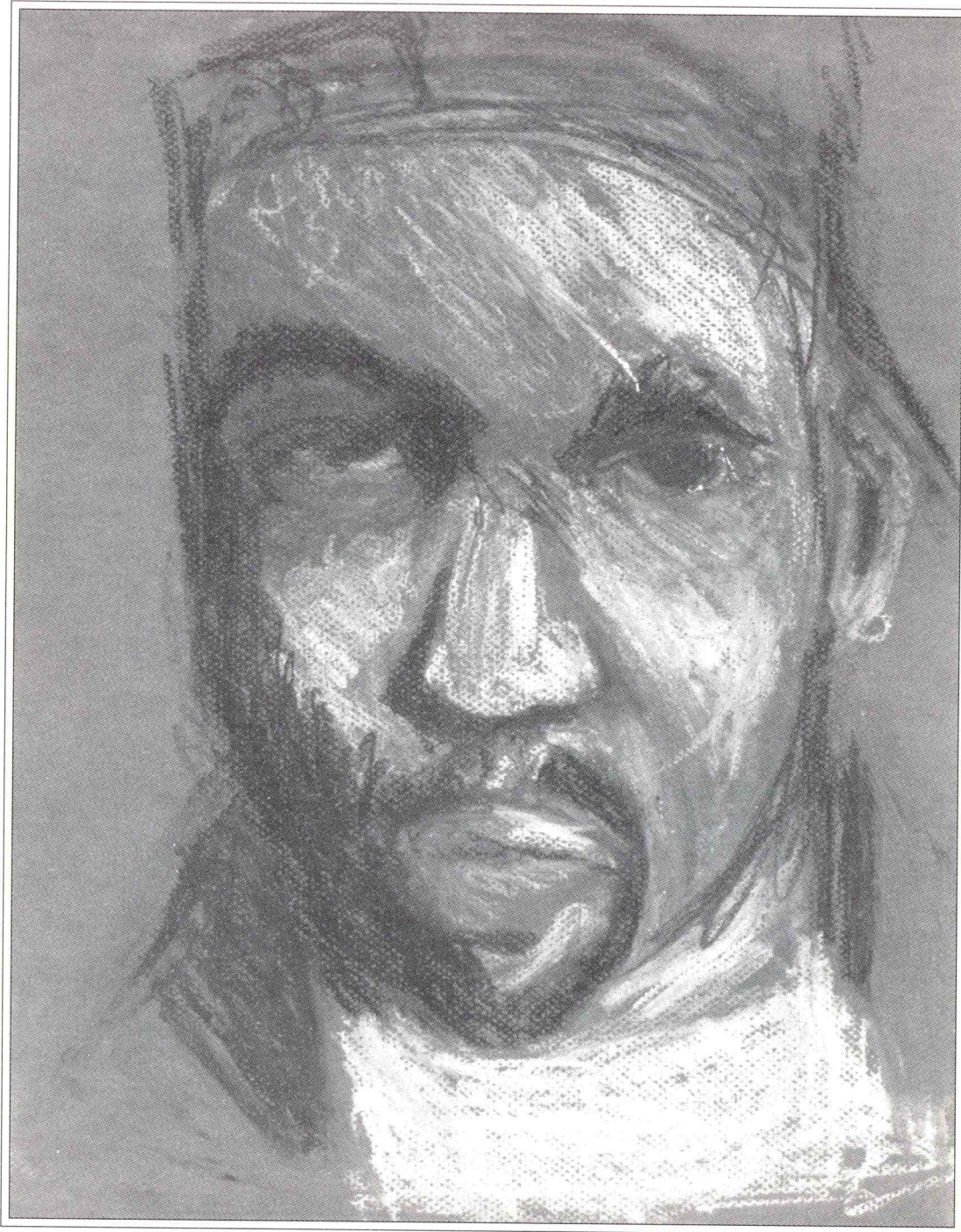
JUNG-MEI CHIANG

Gray Filtered

I looked out over the wilderness
 and saw buildings rise and rot,
 grimly grayed by the exhalations
 of a million soiled mouths,
 and shrugged away the final flaws
 that hid under the joyous adulation of achievement and glory.
 I listened to the excited mumblings that echoed from stale
 alleyways
 as unearthly, liquid shadows smiled wicked-eyed
 and silently evaporated.

We take a respectful sip from our empty glass
 and pass it down the line
 occasionally, spitefully laughing
 as if only to push away the pain of a mouth too dry.

—JASON L. KING



JARRETT JENKINS

Prejudice Learned

By LYNDA STROUD

Mary Anne scrunched her face, and held onto the dressing table while her mother pulled the hairbrush through her thick hair. “Honey; remember, it is not that we do not like colored people. We do not associate with them on a social level. I think it is ridiculous that they want to come to our schools, but be polite. If one should sit beside you in class, move to another desk.”

Mary Anne breathed a sigh of relief as the ordeal with her hair was over, and her mother began to tie the wide blue ribbon into a bow at the nape of her neck.

“What do I do if all the desks are taken mama?” Mary Anne looked at her mother with a puzzled expression.

“Sit like a lady sweetheart, but do not converse with them. Stay with your own friends.”

She finished tying the bow, and turned Mary Anne to face her. “There, it looks perfect. Now go tell Sadie to walk you to school. I’m running late, and will never make the garden club meeting in time.” She leaned to kiss her daughter good-bye.

Mary Anne headed towards the kitchen knowing Sadie would have her lunch fixed. She adored the tiny sandwiches Sadie packed in her lunch box along with homemade oatmeal cookies.

“Mama said you should walk me to school. She’s running late.”

Sadie was a large woman. Her hair was held in a tight knot at the back of her head. She always wore a crisp starched apron, and Mary Anne loved the bright patch-work patterns in them.

“You sure do look like an angel this morning.” Sadie smiled at Mary Anne.

“Let me finish these dishes and I’ll walk you to school. Do you have all of your school things, and your umbrella?”

Mary Anne peaked inside the lunch box, and breathed in the aroma of the oatmeal cookies.

“Yes, I have everything except milk money. Should I get some from the money jar?”

“Yes child, but no ice-cream money. I packed oatmeal cookies in your lunch box, and too many sweets aren’t good for you.” Sadie smiled as she wiped her hands on a clean towel, and hung it on the towel rack.

As the two of them walked towards the local school grounds Mary Anne put her hand into Sadie’s. “Why does mama say I shouldn’t talk to the colored children at school? I talk to you everyday. You’re my best friend.”

“Honey, you mind your mama, and do as she says. She wants you to be lady.” Sadie looked at Mary Anne with loving eyes. Mary Anne was confused, but she didn’t ask any more questions. As soon as she saw her friends on the play-ground, she let go of Sadie’s hand and ran towards them. Sadie watched until she was sure Mary Anne had caught up with the neighborhood children.

Sadie headed back towards the house knowing there were sheets to wash, and floors to mop. She had taken care of Mary Anne since she was one year old. This was the third year she had walked her to her first day of school. Sadie felt a sense of loss at watching Mary Anne grow up. She loved the child, and understood her confusion with the lessons she had to learn in order to fit in with the society circle of this small Georgia town. It was hard to explain to a child the way things had always been, although Sadie knew changes were coming.

Mary Anne’s family was not wealthy, and didn’t live in a house on the oak-lined streets where the old money of the community rang with names like

Jeffers, Cooper and O'Neal. Mary Anne's mother had joined all the right clubs, and became friends with all the right people. Sadie may have been the only one in the world who knew how badly Mary Anne's mother wanted to be on the oak-lined street, and her determination to plant her daughter in one of those houses.

Mary Anne followed her Mama's rules, and did not talk to any of the colored children. Miss Suggs had assigned her a seat next to her friend Liz. Lucille Brown had to sit next to the only colored girl in their classroom. She didn't seem to mind. Mary Anne saw her talking to the girl, and wondered if her mother had given her the same instructions.

ooooo

Mary Anne bounded in the back door, and dropped her books on the kitchen table. "Sh-h-h-h," Sadie held her finger to her lips, "your mother's bridge club is here today, and that is no way for a lady to enter a room."

"Oh Sadie, why must one always be a lady?"

"Sit child. I will fix you a snack as soon as I serve the ladies their tea." Sadie left the room carrying a tray filled with china-cups.

Mary Anne sat at the kitchen table, and untied the ribbon that held her long black curls. She shook her head, and the curls fell loose down her back. She could hear Mrs. Horne's voice coming from the living room. The ladies were talking about Lucille Brown. Mary Anne slipped close to the door, and listened.

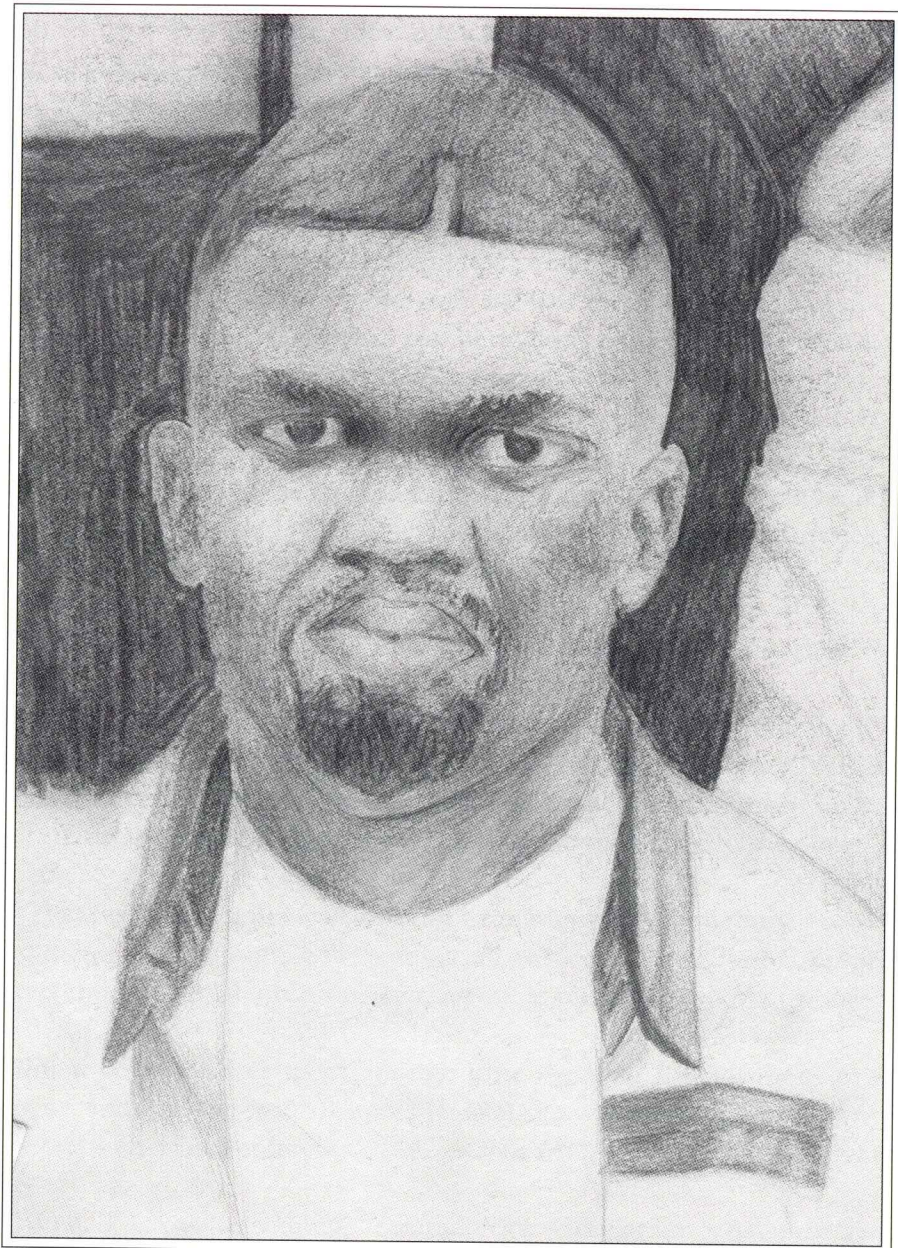
"That poor child will never amount to anything. Do you think any of the fine families of this town will ever accept someone who has befriended a colored child?" Mrs. Horne's voice rang out as the other ladies murmured in agreement.

"Ellen Brown never spent enough time teaching Lucille about proper behavior, and did you see that horrible dress she was wearing Saturday night at the club? It was absolutely trashy," stated Mrs. Jeffers in a matter of fact tone.

"Well, I know one thing," stated Mrs. Cooper in a haughty voice. "Lucille will not be accepted in Mrs. Baldwin's dance class this year. I spoke to her about that yesterday."

Mary Anne walked back to the kitchen table, and sat with her face in her hands. "God," she whispered, "please don't let me ever do anything to make the bridge club talk about me the way they are talking about Lucille."

Sadie came back into the kitchen carrying the empty tray. She looked lovingly at Mary Anne. Mary Anne hugged Sadie as tight as she could, and went quietly to her room. The lesson had been learned.



JARRETT JENKINS

A Reminder

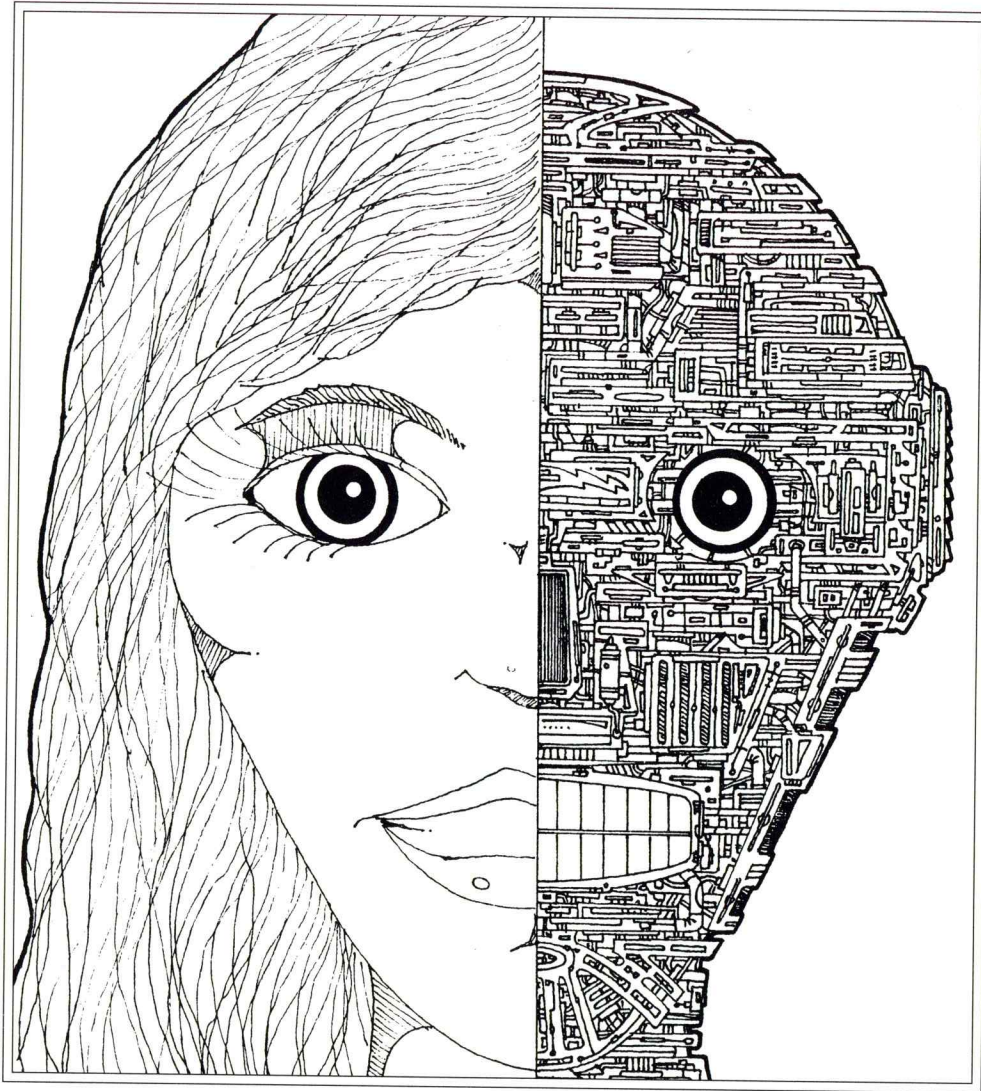
A body swings,
swollen
broken
cold
from a knotty branch that
bends callously clinging to a sinewy rope.

A puddle collects,
an unholy mix of ruddy life
and murky earth
fresh with rain

sometimes smiling under God's yellow eye
sometimes dying under a nocturnal glow

I pull my collar around my throat.

—JASON L. KING



B. J. NEBLO

Can We Be Shockable Again?

By JUDITH E. SCURRY

I REMEMBER vividly that night in the early sixties, sitting with my family in front of the TV set in our living room watching “The Evening News with Walter Cronkite.” There, before our eyes, a young Vietnamese man was shot at point blank range through his right temple, splattering blood and gray matter from a large hole in his left temple. We all sat for a few moments in stunned silence. I saw tears in my Mother’s eyes. My Dad said nothing. Grandma left the room with an expression of sadness and nausea on her face. It seemed to me that something changed that night in the households of North America. We had all received the first inoculation in a series that could eventually make us immune to a deadly virus. One which, though we might survive, had the potential to cripple us emotionally, both as a family and as a society.

Many years later I was to sit with my own children, two in their early twenties, one still a teenager, watching a video of a movie directed by a favorite child TV star of an earlier era. The production company had given us Snow White many years ago and it seemed a union between little Opie and Uncle Walt should have been family-friendly fare. I glanced at their faces during a particular scene where an explosion hurls a man backward with such tremendous force he is impaled on a wrought-iron fence post, dying an excruciating death. I saw no visible reaction. Has the virus completed its

course? Are we immune to violence, suffering, and death so long as it doesn't affect us or our loved ones?

In the Vietnam-War era we heard nightly body counts on the evening news and were genuinely appalled. We saw the bodies of dead Vietnamese children lying in pools of blood and were shocked to see the reality of the war coming into our homes. At the same time that reality was being forced on us without our consent, our movies and TV dramas were still portraying bloodless executions. The crime dramas such as "The Fugitive," "The Untouchables," and "Dragnet;" the westerns, "Have Gun Will Travel," "Bonanza," and "Wanted: Dead or Alive;" the war drama, "Twelve O' Clock High," all depicted dramatized acts of violence. There were countless fistfights without black-eyes, bloodied knuckles, broken jaws or bruised limbs. Guns were fired and knives wielded. Bodies fell to the ground, but not a drop of blood or other body fluids were ever seen.

I'm not sure I remember when the horrors of reality began to ooze over into our fantasies. We drilled into our children's minds that the TV shows and action movies they loved were only make-believe and they strove to emulate their fantasy heroes with fantasy weapons and pretend fisticuffs. But just as they began to perfect their abilities to depict the lives of the lead characters in these stories some changes crept in gradually. The bullet and knife wounds bled more profusely with every new TV season. From "Dragnet," to "Hill Street Blues," to "NYPD Blue," the changes were steadily progressive.

The producers of these programs claim they are merely reflecting society while trial lawyers defend their clients by placing the blame for their criminal actions on these very producers and the programs they generate. It sounds like the unsolvable riddle of the chicken and the egg. Can this riddle be solved?

The last few years TV and movie producers have responded to a cry for gentleness, decency, and a new moral consciousness. We have applauded such films as *Mr Holland's Opus*, *Shadowlands*, and even *Babe*. TV found acclaim for "Dr. Quinn" and added "Touched By An Angel," and "The Promised Land." All seem to have found acceptance by families trying to instill values in their children. Occasionally these dramas have, in their storyline, a violent scene, but the depiction is never graphic and always casts the perpetrator in a negative light instead of portraying him or her as heroes.

Usually punishment is swift and appropriate. If the trend of the past holds true and children are raised with such quality entertainment, possibly they will again emulate their fantasies and violence in the streets may even begin to decline. The responsibility for these changes lies squarely on the shoulders of parents to encourage their children and to once more be shocked by those things that offend their sensibilities. Please, let us be shockable again.

Endless Journey

I swim in a sea of contention
 measured by calculating innovations,
 where knowledge is paramount,
 and the kings and queens have the power
 to make or break your dreams.
 But I know the royalty well.
 The strong reach out to potential.
 And the weak wage petty wars.
 But the feeble are few and fallible,
 so I brush their bodies aside.
 Yet I will never conquer wisdom
 in its regal and infinite glory.
 For absolute erudition eludes us all.
 Knowledge has no destination.
 It merely provides a perpetual path.
 And one day that path will lead me
 to the other side of the kingdom,
 where I too will claim my throne
 and walk amongst the strong,
 extending my hand to the new generation.

— ALICIA BURNETT

Shame

Feel no shame for the things that shape you
 They convulse your soul: keep you fresh
 Never become cracked and pitted
 Juicier and smoother
 Like a cat
 Soft and smart but with no talent
 Blessed and sleepy
 Unconditionally attractive
 Unfortunate soul
 Unattainable without refrain
 Sing your songs from the inside
 Let your sweat be melody
 Your kisses harmony
 Hold no chains to Time
 Such a wicked jailer
 His dance has two left feet
 And no right to step
 Feel no shame and take me with you
 Let us create light and purity
 Write the Weaver's tale with a threadbare loom
 Leave nothing absent
 Content is the one true law.

— CHRISTOPHER B. WATTS

Father

I'm told to write of my childhood
 in an essay format,
 Well teacher don't you see I've
 learned to forget all that?
 The yelling man who spermed
 my being,
 And the mother bruised, hurt and
 fleeing, carrying with her
 the six unfullfilling,
 And I remember the swing I swang upon
 high
 and twirled and twirled and thought
 how rich was I,
 That the father I Know would never
 be sly
 Funny how that day ended,
 with the knowledge that my dad befriended
 My older sister's virginity stolen
 and how my heart feels dead and swollen.

— PAULA WIESZT

Twisted Women in Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*

by RAQUEL MADISON

IN the controversial tragicomedy *Crimes of the Heart*, Beth Henley creates a family of Southern women who are extremely emotional, overly concerned about what others think, and who are influenced greatly by their parental figures. There are three sisters Lenny MaGrath who is thirty, Meg MaGrath who is twenty-seven, Babe Botrell who's twenty-four, and their cousin Chick Boyle who is twenty-nine. There is also the mother of the sisters who has committed suicide, an act which has ruined the MaGrath family's reputation. All four women have been brought together to reconcile a family crisis in which Babe the youngest sister has shot her husband Zachery who is "the richest and most powerful man in all of Hazelhurst" (1607). The MaGraths, just like "normal" sisters, argue and criticize one another but are able to come together and give each other emotional support when necessary. Through love and unity Henley's women change (all except cousin Chick) and manage to move on despite the rough hand that life has dealt them.

Henley's women are depicted as too emotional. The way in which these women react to the challenges they face leads the reader to believe that they are emotionally unstable. For instance, after Meg's arrival to Hazelhurst from Las Angeles, Lenny and Meg begin discussing Babe's crime. Lenny becomes emotional and begins to fall apart while shouting, "It's horrible! It's just horrible" (1605). Henley also allows the reader to see Lenny's emotional state

by the telegram that he sent to her sister Meg concerning Babe: "Babe's in terrible trouble — Stop! Zachery's been shot — Stop! Come home immediately — Stop! Stop! Stop!" (1605). Meg also becomes emotional when trying to deal with the family's problem. She gets a little bent out of shape while discussing Lenny's choice of a lawyer to represent Babe: "Doing Annie a favor? Well, what about Babe? Have you thought about Babe? Do we want to do her a favor of thirty or forty years in jail?" (1605). According to Gerald M. Berkowitz, "the emotional displacement makes the sisters' response to events always somehow just off-centre" (200). For instance, Babe in the beginning of the play doesn't show signs of emotional distress until being questioned about the shooting. She smoothly changes the subject by saying to Meg, "Come look at my new saxophone" (1609). Chick, on the other hand, is an emotional timebomb just waiting to explode: "It's just too awful! It's just way too awful! How I'm gonna continue holding my head up high in this community, I do not know" (1599). She has already condemned Babe because, according to Alan Clarke Shepard, "In Chick's eyes, resistance is indeed manslaughter" (105), and the only thing that concerns her is her own reputation.

Because of the suicide of the sister's mother, the entire MaGrath family has been publicly humiliated and everyone in town is watching them. Because of this they have become terribly concerned about what others think of them. For instance, Lenny defends Meg's past when Chick calls her "Cheap Christmas Trash" by saying that "she was popular" (1600). Chick, of course, tries to put herself above the MaGrath sisters; she is one of the heads of the Ladies' League, a position for which she had to beg Doc Porter's mother in order to get. Chick says to Lenny:

I had to go plead with that mean old woman and convinced her that I was just as appalled and upset with what Meg had done as she was, and that I was only a first cousin anyway and I could hardly be blamed for all the skeletons in the MaGrath's closet. (1601)

All three sisters are concerned about what their old Granddaddy thinks about them, according to Paul Rosefeldt, "they have tried to live out their dreams for them" (77). But the women finally realize that "old Granddaddy

keeps trying to make us happy, and we end up getting stomachaches and turning green and throwing up in the flower arrangements" (1627).

The influence on the sisters by their parenting figures began when they were young. Their mother, according to Billy Harbin, "Psychologically abandoned them, just as the father had done physically, retreating into a solitary meditation with herself, the old yellow cat her only companion" (84). She slipped into a coma of depression; "she started spending whole days just sitting there and smoking on the back porch steps" (1611). Then "she deserted them completely by committing suicide" (Harbin 84). After this, old Granddaddy took full responsibility for the girls. He taught them their first lesson of non self-control. He allowed them to devour their pain with banana splits. So as a result of this act they continued this behavior through the rest of their lives. For the MaGraths "food is devoured not for substance, but as the compensation for grievance of the Heart" (Harbin 85). After Babe shot her husband Zachery in the stomach she put the gun down and made some lemonade: "I made it just the way I like it, with lots of sugar and lots of lemon—about ten lemons" (1620). According to Harbin, "she gorged herself with lemonade to anesthetize the painful reality of her act" (85). Meg and Lenny indulge themselves with a coke while discussing Babe's crime: "Now calm down, Lenny. Just calm down. Would you like a coke?" (1605).

According to Paul Rosefeldt, "The absent Old Granddaddy is in some ways the guiltiest character in the play because his 'crimes' have precipitated the self-destructive sins of the MaGrath sisters" (76). For instance, he had their lives all planned out for them. He started with Lenny; because she was born with a shrunken ovary he declared her unfit for marriage. He instilled in her the weakness of being responsible for the family's happiness instead of her own, which made her frustrated at times: "I try to do what's right! All this responsibility keeps falling on my shoulders, and I try to do what's right!" (1605). "Her only appropriate function was that of nurse and housemaid to her grandparents in their old age" (Harbin 38). Old Granddaddy has caused Lenny to be not only weak but unhappy and lonely. He continued his abuse with Babe by declaring her "the prettiest and most perfect of the three" (1607). He called her "sugar plum" and decided that because Zachery Botrelle was one of the richest and most powerful men in Hazelhurst that

“Zackery was just the right man for her whether she knew it now or not” (1607). “Following the path Old Granddaddy has pointed out for her has left Babe alienated, perplexed, and suicidal” (Rosefeldt 77). He also misled Meg; he pumped her head up with the idea that she could be famous: “With your talent, all you need is exposure. Then you can make your own breaks!” (1607). Because of this, “Meg is metaphorically stuck in cement, trapped in the dream she and Old Granddaddy share” (Rosefeldt 77).

The effects of the emotions discussed earlier lead the women to lash out by arguing and criticizing each other. Babe and Chick have a confrontation because Chick is badgering Babe about what she’s going to say to the lawyer: “What are your reasons going to be?” (1609). Babe answers her question very sarcastically: “I just didn’t like his stinking looks! And I don’t like yours either Chick-the-stick! So just leave me alone” (1609)! Chick also bothers Meg by telling her, “You shouldn’t smoke!” (1609). Meg strikes back by saying, “Mmm! gives me a sense of controlling my own destiny. What power! What exhilaration! What a drag!” (1607). According to Shepard, Chick consistently attacks what she takes to be the MaGrath’s lack of obedience to a code of womanhood that emphasizes decorum, not subectivity; submission, not independence” (104).

The sisters also quarrel over petty things that seem to have a bigger underlying problem. For instance, Lenny gets angry with Meg for taking a bite out of each piece of her candy. She exclaims, “You have no respect for other people’s property! You just take whatever you want” (1628). This argument is not about the candy at all; it’s about “Lenny’s own image of herself is an isolated and forgotten martyr, long trapped by her own inability to evade the dominance of her grandparents, while Meg and Babe fled elsewhere to do what they please” (Harbin 83).

Despite all of the problems that the sisters face, both pschologically and physically, they change. Through love and unity they give each other strength. All three sisters finally realize that they can be happy. Lenny gains strength by throwing Chick out and proclaiming, “This is my house! Get out! Out!” (1641). Her character further becomes strong by realizing that she doesn’t want to be “all alone” (1637). As a result of this newly found strength, she calls her old boyfriend on the phone in hopes of rekindling the romance.

According to Nancy Hargrove, “she regains confidence and self-esteem, and perhaps she is not doomed after all to a lonely spinsterhood” (68). Babe gains strength when she tries to kill herself again. She realizes why her mother committed suicide with the cat: “It’s cause she was afraid of dying all alone” (1643). Through this and the help of her sisters, she realizes that she is not insane and not alone . Meg tells her, “We’ve just got to learn how to get through these bad days here. I mean, it’s getting to be a thing in our family” (1644). According to Lisa J. McDonnell:

When Babe recounts her shooting of Zachery and her making of the lemonade as he bleeds on the floor, she claims freedom from her marriage; when she tells about her affair with Willie Jay, she asserts her sexual freedom; and when she and Lenny laugh about old Granddaddy’s going into a coma, they affirm their adult independence. (101)

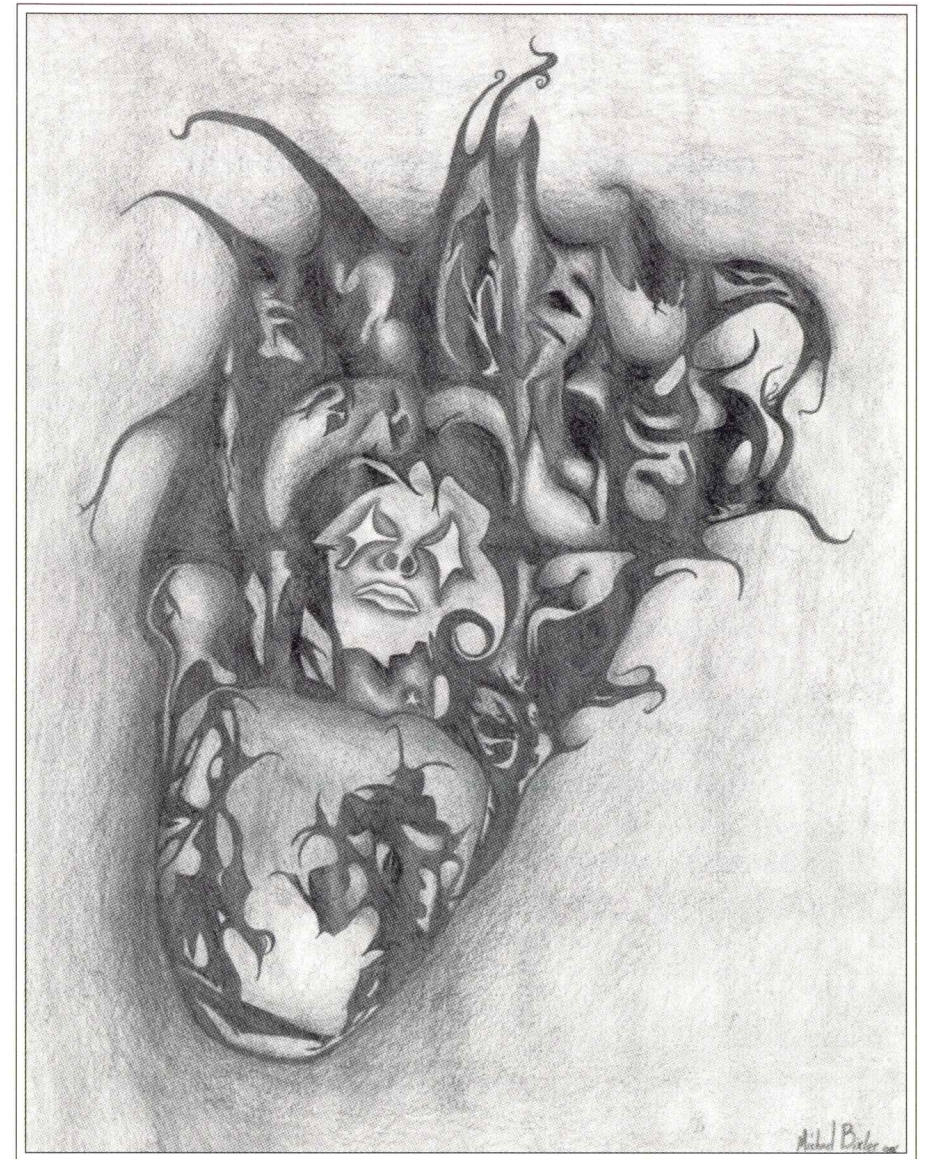
Meg also improves her self-image. She regains her singing voice after the date with Doc. She exclaims, “I’m happy. I realized I could care about someone. I could want someone. And I sang! I sang all night long!” (1636). She “brings home an awakened sense of the restorative powers of familiar trust and communion” (Harbin 88). Chick is the only one who doesn’t change. She holds her ground firm, down to the last word before being chased from the MaGrath’s home by Lenny: “Why, I’ve had just about my fill of you trashy MaGraths and your trashy ways: hanging yourselves in cellars, carrying on with married men, shooting your own husbands!” (1641). According to Joanne Karpinski,

Cousin Chick, proud possessor of a husband, two children, and a modern home, who sees the sisters’ actions not as consequences of a desperate emotional plight but as “trashy ways” that impede her social striving. (232)

All three Magrath sisters rise form their self-defeating ways and “join physically and spiritually as sisters to celebrate a newly discovered fund of strength and nourishment” (Harbin 89), although, according to Henley, “it wasn’t forever, it wasn’t for every minute. Just this one moment and we were all laughing” (1646).

WORKS CITED

- Berkowitz, Gerald M. *American Drama of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Longman, 1992.
- Harbin, Billy J. "Familial Bonds in the Plays of Beth Henley." *Southern Quarterly* 25.3 (1987): 81–93.
- Hargrove, Nancy D. "The Tragicomic Vision of Beth Henley's Drama." *Southern Quarterly* 27.4 (1984): 54–71.
- Henley, Beth. *Crimes of the Heart*. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. 6th ed. Eds. X.. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. New York: Harper Collins, 1995. 1598–1646.
- Karpinski, Joanne B. "The Ghosts of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* Haunt Beth Henley's *Crimes of the Heart*." *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon*. Ed. June Scheueter. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1990. 229–45.
- McDonnell, Lisa J. "Diverse Similitude: Beth Henley and Marsha Norma." *Southern Quarterly* 25.3 (1987): 95–105.
- Rosefelt Paul. *The Absent Father in Modern Drama*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995.
- Shepard, Alan Clarke. "Aborted Rage in Beth Henley's Women." *Modern Drama* 39 (1993): 96–107.



MICHAEL BIXLER

Observations

Observations on a pressing day:
 the sun winds up, the people wake,
 four wheels and more they undertake;
 organic matter taking shape.
 Through dirt and clay, through gray and black,
 like ants, they march until they brake;
 as each one tries to make his mark,
 until they wounded sky is dark.

An ambulance's siren rings;
 an old soprano's bellowing,
 as rush hour traffic's vibrance beats,
 brings vagrants to the parks and streets.
 Their eyes are glazed in tireless wear,
 like bottles filtered from the air;
 A daze more adequate than death
 expounds their gate, impounds their breath.

With trousers torn by winters blight,
 and jackets mirroring the night,
 the autos flashing through the dark
 emulsify their fleeting spark;
 the city smoke entrances them
 to drag their eyes along the ground:
 as hollow as their hearts have been
 this darkness is the more profound.

What thoughts will torture hopeless men,
 with time their enemy, and fate?
 With pertinence, and fortitude,
 they do attest, and we abate.
 Observations on a pressing day:
 the sun turned cold, the sky loomed gray;
 and burned in snatches overhead,
 as clouds of dust commingled red.

— CHRISTOPHER YOUNG

Sunflower

Yellow petals,
Darkened center,
Great tasting seeds as long as I can remember,

Created by God,
Beautiful to behold,
A sunflower in summer,
Something precious we can hold.

—DONNA M. LEWIS

Evolution

O'er
the trees the dinos
aur

—MARSHALL DANENBURG

*The Literary Annual of
Midlands Technical College*